



HaRav HaChossid Rabbi Sholmo Aharon Kazarnovsky

Memento
From the Wedding of
Yankele & Frumie
Eidelman
10th Day of Tammuz 5781

We thankfully acknowledge* the kindness that Hashem has granted us. Due to His great kindness, we merited the merit of the marriage of our children, the groom Yankele and his bride, Frumie.

Our thanks and our blessings are extended to the members of our family, our friends, and our associates who came from near and far to join our celebration and bless our children with the blessing of *Mazal Tov*, that they should be granted lives of good fortune in both material and spiritual matters.

As a heartfelt expression of our gratitude to all those participating in our celebration — based on the practice of the Rebbe Rayatz at the wedding of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin of giving out a *teshurah* — we would like to offer our special gift: a compilation about the great-grandfather of the bride, HaRav HaChossid Reb Shlomo Aharon ע"ה Karzarnovsky.

May Hashem who is Good bless you and all the members of *Anash*, together with all our brethren, the Jewish people, with abundant blessings in both material and spiritual matters, including the greatest blessing, that we proceed from this celebration, "crowned with eternal joy," to the ultimate celebration, the revelation of *Moshiach*.

May we continue to share in each other's *simchas*, and may we go from this *simcha* to the Ultimate *Simcha*, the revelation of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu*, at which time we will once again have the *zechus* to hear "*Torah Chadashah*" from the Rebbe.

Rabbi Mendel & Rivky Eidelman Rabbi Nachman & Chavie Bronstein

* The body of this letter was taken from the letter accompanying the *teshurah* given by the Rebbe Rayatz at the Rebbe's wedding.

It is with a tremendous sense of humility and pride that I present to you this short compilation about my grandfather, HaRav HaChossid Reb Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky a”h.

Reb Shlomo Aharon was one of the first Tmimim who came to America, and here in America, he exemplified to all the essence of who and what a Tomim is.

During the six years that he was in Tomchei Tmimim, he was extremely close to Beis HaRav, and that closeness remained throughout his life. This was true during the fourteen years he was in America before the Frierdiker Rebbe settled in America, as well as during the forty-three years afterwards.

No, he wasn't one of the Rebbe Rashab's *chozrim*, nor was he considered one of the *ovdim* or *maskilim* of Tomchei Tmimim. He was a regular Tomim, but a Tomim who was devoted with his heart and soul to the Rebbeim.

Knowing that the financial situation in Beis HaRav was desperate, he began collecting *maamid* from the chassidim in America, and would send it on a monthly basis to the Frierdiker Rebbe in Riga and Poland. Later, as you will read, he was instrumental in saving the Frierdiker Rebbe and bringing him to America. Once the Rebbe was in America, Reb Shlomo Aharon was a trusted servant, involved in every aspect and was available whenever the needed someone. Yes, there were other members of Anash who were also part of Agudas Chassidei Chabad and were involved in many aspects. However, Reb Shlomo Aharon was at the Rebbeim forefront. This is evident from the numerous pictures where you see only Reb Shlomo Aharon in close proximity to the Rebbeim and in many letters that they wrote, only he is thanked for his dedication.



At the same time, this collection barely touches the surface of his greatness and everything that he accomplished. So I ask of all of you who know additional details of his rich and productive life, to please share them with me, so that with the help of Hashem, a comprehensive description of his life achievements can be published.

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi Nachman Bronstein Rabbibronstein@icloud.com

P.S. This compilation was based in part on Rabbi Michael Seligson's article that he published some years ago about Zeideh, as well as additional details that some members of the family contributed.

I thank Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon for helping put this booklet together.

HIS BIRTH

Shlomo Aharon was born in 5657 (1897) in the city of Mohilov (Mogilev) to Lubavitcher chassidim, Moshe and Shifra Kazarnovsky.¹ Reb Moshe's father Reb Dovber was a grandson of Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel, and he was therefore named DovBer after her father, the Mittlerer Rebbe.

He had an older brother and sister.

Reb Moshe was considerably well-to-do and helped out in communal matters with an open hand.

COMING TO TOMCHEI TMIMIM

Shlomo Aharon was a young boy of thirteen or fourteen years old, living in the province of Mogilev (Mogilev Guberna as he called it). Although his father was a Chabad'ske chossid, he wanted his son to learn in the Volozhin yeshiva.

One Friday in 5671 (1911), there was big news in Mogilev: two Tmimim had arrived in the city. These were real, live talmidim of the famed, almost other-worldly yeshiva of Lubavitch, and these larger-than-life young men would be spending the entire Shabbos in Mogilev.

That entire Shabbos, Shlomo Aharon did not take his eyes off the Tmimim. He was mesmerized by their presence and studied their every nuance, watching how they davened and conducted themselves. Not a word was exchanged with them; he was much too in awe to approach them.

¹ Her maiden name was Elkonen

On Sunday morning, in shul after davening, he was at the other end of the shul when one of the Tmimim caught his eye. He turned towards him and strode right over to the young teenager. "*Ich zeh az du bist a yirei shomayim,*" I see that you are a reverent young man. "*Tommer du vilst oisvaksin a mentch, zolst du forin in Lubavitch.*" If you want to grow up to be a mentch, you must travel to Lubavitch.

The young Shlomo Aharon was too stunned to speak. He ran home and told his mother of the epiphany. His mother thought for a short while. "*Kum,*" she announced, "*mir forin in Lubavitch.*" Come, we are going to Lubavitch. And without telling her husband a word, she hired a wagon and driver and off she went with her young son to Lubavitch.

There is a verb in English with an interesting etymology: to stump. It hails back to the days of unpaved paths cut through dense forests. As trees were cut the roots were not always removed, and the result was a tree stump which served as an inverted pothole. Sometimes it would stop the wagon wheel in its tracks—hence the verb stump—and oftentimes it would catch the wheel and upturn the wagon, which is what it did this time. Shlomo Aharon's mother Shifra was blessed with the very Russian virtue of ample girth and the Russian highways were blessed with ample *blottes*, potholes that filled with rain and become thick mud. The wagon got stumped and Shifra got catapulted from the wagon into the *blotte*. Shlomo Aharon grabbed hold of her and tried to tug her out and up.

"Oy!" she exclaimed. "Are you sure this Lubavitch trip was such a good idea?" she asked only half-jokingly. And her young son retorted, "*Besser di blotte fun Lubavitch vi di bank fun Volozhin.*" Better the *blotte* of Lubavitch than the benches (the seating of choice) of Volozhin. And with these words of resolve, the young chossid was born.

They arrived in Lubavitch where the Menahel, (the director whom we know as the Frierdiker Rebbe), promptly informed them that the *zman*, the term, had already begun and that they do not entertain the notion of admitting a new *talmid* until the next *zman*.² Come back later, was the dismissal.

"I don't care what," Shlomo Aharon told his mother, "I am NOT going back to Mogilev!"

There was a custom then, that visitors to Lubavitch paid their respects to the Alte Rebbetzin, the *tzadeikis*, Rebbetzin Rivkah, the widow of the Rebbe Maharash, mother of the then-present Rebbe (Rashab) and grandmother of the then-Menahel. It is gripping to see the reverence with which the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote of his grandmother.

Shifra and her son entered to the Alte Rebbetzin's audience. "What is your name?" asked the Rebbetzin. "Kazarnovsky," she replied. (The accent, as my grandfather told the story, was on the *zar* syllable, not the *nov*.)

"Velche Kazarnovsky—which Kazarnovky?" the Alte Rebbetzin asked with a slight startle in her voice, and Shifra told her. "*Zets zach aveck, ich'll aich dertzeilin de yichis.*" Sit down and I will tell you your *yichus*, your lineage. She proceeded to tell them how they descend from the Mittlerer Rebbe.

"So what brings you to Lubavitch?" she asked.

"My son would like to go the yeshiva, but the *Menahel* informed us that he cannot be accepted at this time."

The Alte Rebbetzin thought for moment. "*Zolst zich ibernechten doh in Lubavitch.*" Spend the night here in Lubavitch. The next day young Shlomo Aharon got an urgent message; report to the Menahel.

"You've been accepted," the Frierdiker Rebbe told him. "Report to *Seder* tomorrow morning." He and his mother went to see the Rebbetzin. (It is not clear if she had summoned them, or they understood that she helped and went to thank her.)

"*Zolst du wissen*, you should know that you were accepted in yeshiva thanks to me, but I only got you in on a *tnai*, on a condition: from now on you must come and make Kiddush for me every Shabbos morning after davening."

"And every Shabbos until she passed away three years later," said my grandfather, "she heard Kiddush from me."

² The *zman* began after Tisher and after Nissan.

Years later, when Reb Shlomo Aharon reminisced about his six years in Lubavitch, he would say, "It was a different world. It was a spiritual world that was completely removed from this physical world." Although he left after his marriage and then lived in America, he remained a Tomim, devoting his entire life to the Rebbeim and their ideals.³

His Wedding

Some weeks after the *histalkus* of the Rebbe Rashab on Beis Nissan 5680 (1920), a *shidduch* was proposed to Reb Shlomo Aharon. Would he consider Chaya Freida Grossman? She was the youngest daughter of the famed chossid Reb Asher Grossman, or, as he is affectionately called by chassidim, Reb Asher Nikolayver, who had recently passed away.

As a chossid, one doesn't decide on his own, so he went to ask the Frierdiker Rebbe about it. However, as is known, at that time the Frierdiker Rebbe wasn't accepting *pidyonos* or answering most questions. He replied, "I don't respond to such questions. Go to the *Tzion* of my father and ask him directly."

Obedying, he went to the *Ohel* and requested that the Rebbe Rashab instruct his son, the Rebbe, to reply. He then returned to the yeshiva.

Two hours later, the Frierdiker Rebbe opened the door of his room and asked, "Where is Shlomo Aharon?"

When he arrived, the Rebbe said to him, "My father came to me and instructed me to reply to you: 'It is a good *shidduch*.'"

The Frierdiker Rebbe then took out or pointed to an envelope and said, "Before he passed away, your father-in-law, Reb Asher Nikolayver, gave this to my father to hold as the dowry for his youngest daughter, [your *kallah*]. Here it is."⁴

Shortly afterwards, they were married in Kislev of 5681 (1920).

IN RUSSIA

After their wedding they lived in Moscow and they were blessed with a daughter Sarah and a son Moshe.

Coming to America

Six years passed since they were married, and the Communists were doing their thing, harassing religious Jews and especially Tmimim. Then, one day, Reb Shlomo Aharon received papers from his brother who had already established himself in America, for him, his wife, and their two children to come to America. These were his tickets to go to freedom: America. Yes, Shlomo Aharon was from the lucky ones; he had family in America who could help him.

On the one hand he was jubilant; he could now escape from the persecution of the Communists. Yet, the Rebbe was encouraging everyone to do whatever they could to strengthen Yiddishkeit in Russia. So should he run away? Also, he was afraid of the dangers of raising a family in Golden America, where so many wonderful Jews lost their children to the American way of life.

He went into *yechidus* and asked the Rebbe.

The Rebbe replied, "You should go to America."

Prior to going, he went for what he thought would be his last *yechidus* and began crying.

³ This story was related by Shimon Posner as he heard it from his grandfather, Rabbi Kazarnovsky. He concluded, "So ends the story my grandfather, Reb Shlomo Aharon, told me during a Yom Tov walk back to my parents' home in Nashville, Tennessee. He told me that this story was his way of thanking him for always walking with him, whether in Nashville, Bensonhurst, or Crown Heights."

⁴ As an addendum to this booklet, we are publishing a brief outline of Reb Asher's life.

“Why are you crying?” asked the Rebbe.

“I don’t know when I will see the Rebbe again [if I accept my brother’s offer],” cried the anguished chossid.

“Nonsense!” said the Rebbe. “Not to worry,” was his *brochah*. “With Hashem’s help, we will see each other in the near future.”

Reb Shlomo Aharon thought to himself, “Where will we meet?”

Reading his mind, the Rebbe added, “There.”

Reb Shlomo Aharon was both in awe and jubilation. He had just seen open *ruach hakodesh*, as the Rebbe had read his thoughts, and the Rebbe had indicated that he planned to come to America.

“And now,” continued the Rebbe, “let me tell you the story behind your coming to Lubavitch.”

“That evening [when you arrived in Lubavitch with your mother], my grandmother [Rebbetzin Rivkah] called my father [the Rebbe Rashab, her son] and told him that he must accept you, and it is on her *acharayis*, her responsibility. He, in turn, called me and reiterated his mother’s demand.”

Rochester, New York

When Reb Shlomo Aharon first arrived in America in 5686 (1926), he settled in the apartment that his brother had arranged for him in Rochester, New York. A few months later, he became the Rov in the Ein Yaakov shul there, and spoke to the congregants about the importance of retaining Yiddishkeit.

However, the situation in Rochester was not ideal. The salary that the shul was able or willing to pay was inadequate. Furthermore, there was some friction, as the community was not ready for a Rov that only followed the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law) and didn’t accept the opinion of the board of directors.

At that time, Agudas Chassidei Chabad needed a secretary and director. After hearing about Reb Shlomo Aharon’s predicament, they realized that he was the best one suited for this position and offered it to him.⁵

Reb Shlomo Aharon accepted it and moved to Brooklyn. Shortly afterwards, he became the Rov of two shuls in Bensonhurst, in the Brooklyn section of New York, and settled there.

SAVING THE REBBE FROM PRISON

One of the members of his community in Rochester was Congressman Meyer Jacobstein,⁶ with whom he forged a close relationship.

The year after he settled in Rochester, the Rebbe Rayatz was arrested in Russia. The chassidim felt that the only way to save him was by exerting immense pressure upon the communists from world leaders. To this end, Reb Shlomo Aharon turned to his friend the congressman.

⁵ *Zikoron L’Bnei Yisroel*, p. 154.

⁶ He was a fierce opponent to the Immigration Act of 1924, which severely limited the amount of Jews that were able to come from Russia and Europe.

The congressman in turn turned to his friend Senator William Borah of Idaho, who was the chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee.⁷ He also turned to two senators from New York, Senators Kaplan and Wagner.

Boruch Hashem, their intercession (as well as the intercession of others, such as Justice Brandeis) bore fruit, and the Soviets instructed the Yevsektzia to free the Rebbe.

Becoming Rov in Bensonhurst

In Kislev/Teves of 5689 (1928/9), Reb Shlomo Aharon became the Rov of two shuls in Bensonhurst, Bnei Yitzchok and Tiferes Yisroel. He remained the Rov there for the next fifty-four years, until his *petirah* in 5743 (1982).

Being in Brooklyn, he became one of the pillars of the fledging Agudas Chassidei Chabad of America. In Elul of 5693 (1933), Reb Yitzchok Horowitz (Gurevitch) came to America for almost two years. The Rebbe sent him to be a *shadar* and influence Jews to come closer to their heritage.

During the months when he was in New York, he stayed in Reb Shlomo Aharon's apartment/house, and that is where he conducted his *farbrengens* in New York.

Fulfilling the Frierdiker Rebbe's instructions to him that a Rov should give *shiurim*,⁸ Reb Shlomo Aharon gave weekly shiurim in Chumash and Rashi and in Ein Yaakov, as well as in the Tanya.

A few years later, in 5697 (1937), the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote a letter addressed to him, Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, and Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson. In this letter, the Rebbe stated that they should arrange a weekly shiur in *Chassidus*, and that they should also dedicate themselves to teaching the daughters of chassidim, *sichos* and *farbreng* with them twice a month.

Saving the Rebbe Again

Thirteen years passed since he was involved in saving the Frierdiker Rebbe from the Russians. Now he had to do it again. The Rebbe was now trapped in occupied Poland. He needed to escape Poland and then leave Riga and come to the United States.

One of the members of his shul was none other than the president of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, Reb Yekusiel Kramer. While Reb Yekusiel was extremely warm to the Rebbe's needs, it was thanks to the pleas and inspiration of Reb Shlomo Aharon and others that Reb Yekusiel and his family stood up and gave all the financial backing and additional support needed to help save the Rebbe.

Buying 770

After the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived, he lived temporarily in the Greystone Hotel in Manhattan. After Pesach, when the Rebbe left Lakewood, the search for a house for the Rebbe began in earnest. Many chassidim were involved in this endeavor of finding a suitable place, as well as encouraging Jews to contribute towards purchasing it. However, Reb Shlomo Aharon, who was also on the committee, threw his entire energy into it⁹ and helped arrange the purchase of 770 Eastern Parkway.

⁷ It is interesting to note that in general Senator Borah was an isolationist, and he felt that America should not become involved in the affairs of other countries. Yet, here he chose to become involved, although there were very few Jews in Idaho.

⁸ *Igros Kodesh* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, vol. -- p --.

⁹ From a letter of the Frierdiker Rebbe to him, thanking him for devoting his energy toward finding a suitable place.

Greeting our Rebbe

Once the Frierdiker Rebbe was safe in America, the efforts were now geared toward saving his other two daughters and their husbands. For over a year, Agudas Chassidei Chabad worked tirelessly to rescue them, and finally their efforts bore fruit: a visa was granted to his second daughter and her husband, our Rebbe and Rebbetzin.

Despite the Previous Rebbe's joy at their arrival on the 28th of Sivan 5701 (1941), his poor health prevented him from coming to greet them personally. Instead, he delegated four of his elder chassidim: Reb Yisrael Jacobson, Reb Shmuel Levitin, Reb Eliyahu Simpson, and Reb Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky to greet his son-in-law at the port. By way of introduction, he told them: "I will reveal to you who my son-in-law is. He recites *Tikkun Chatzos* every night. He is proficient in the [*Talmud*] *Bavli* by heart, together with [the glosses of] *Ran*, *Rosh*, and *Rif*, the [*Talmud*] *Yerushalmi* together with its commentaries, *Rambam*, and *Likkutei Torah* with all its references. Go and greet him."

The Frierdiker Rebbe told his son-in-law, our Rebbe, shortly after his arrival, to *farbreneg* every Shabbos Mevorchim. At one Shabbos Mevorchim, when the Frierdiker Rebbe was still alive, the Rebbe told the story of how Shlomo Aharon was accepted in the Yeshiva and ended off with the words, "Not only did we lose nothing from accepting him, but we gained from it as well." A startling and understated compliment from a Rebbe.¹⁰

Buying the Beis HaChaim

In 5702 (1942), the Frierdiker Rebbe founded the Lubavitch Chevra Kadisha, under Agudas Chassidei Chabad. Around that time, when the Frierdiker Rebbe was in Chicago, his mother, Rebbetzin Shterna Sara, was *niftar* on Shabbos morning, *Parshas Bo*, the 13th of Shevat. The Frierdiker Rebbe was informed on *motzei Shabbos*, and he cut his visit short, leaving Chicago on Sunday afternoon and arriving in New York on Monday morning.

While in Chicago, he sent instructions to Reb Shlomo Aharon, who was one of the appointed *gabba'im* of the newly established Chevra Kadisha, to buy a lot in a cemetery. He further specified that the cemetery should be located in a place that doesn't require crossing a bridge to get there.¹¹ That very Sunday, he found a plot in the Montefiore cemetery in Queens and completed the purchase, and she was buried there on Monday.

In recognition of his dedication and efforts in arranging everything, the Frierdiker Rebbe gave him an envelope and instructed him to insert it in his mother's closed hand, and she was buried with it.

The Rebbe's Representative

The Frierdiker Rebbe sent Reb Shlomo Aharon to the various cities and towns where he had sent his students to open up yeshivos. The purpose was twofold: He was to *farbreneg* with them and give them encouragement, while helping out in whatever manner possible (sometimes also in fundraising). Additionally, he was to observe and be the Rebbe's eyes, and report back to the Rebbe on what was happening.

Everywhere he traveled, the situation was devastating. The local *shliach* (back then usually a single *bochur*) would almost invariably tell him about his arrival in town. He went straight to the local Rabbi who welcomed him with open arms. After all, there were very few Orthodox Jews in town, and certainly someone with whom the Rabbi could engage in a Gemara discussion. The

¹⁰ From an article by his grandson Rabbi Shimon Posner. He added that So ends the story my grandfather, Reb Shlomo Aharon told me that Yom Tov walk back to my parents' home in Nashville, Tennessee, and he told me that was his thank you for always walking him, in Nashville, Bensonherst and Crown Heights.

¹¹ Until then, Lubavitch used a different cemetery in a different section of Queens.

bochur would typically board at the Rabbi's home. Rapidly he opened a yeshiva and began a weekly Mesibos Shabbos group, amongst a whole host of other activities. The Rabbi eventually saw how popular these activities were becoming. Fearing he might lose his status in his community, he'd then inform the *bochur* along with the local community that his *shul* was taking over the school and all the other activities under its own auspices. The Rabbi and his *shul* would then happily reap the fruits of the Lubavitcher *shliach's* hard labor. The hapless bocher would then need to begin anew, building himself from the bottom up.

Upon his return to 770, he entered the Rebbe's room to report to him about his visits. In line with prevalent practice then, Reb Shlomo Aharon wished to spare the Rebbe the devastating story he had heard throughout his visits, considering the Rebbe's precarious health. So he reported about the extensive educational and outreach activities he had found wherever he visited and the *shluchim's* hard work throughout the States.

The Rebbe asked, "און וואס נאך?" (What else?) (The Rebbe did not usually grill in this manner.) So Reb Shlomo Aharon shared some more details about his visits. "און וואס נאך?" The Rebbe asked again. And Reb Shlomo Aharon elaborated some more. "און וואס נאך?" The Rebbe persisted. Reb Shlomo Aharon finally realized that he could not hide anything from the Rebbe, and he was compelled to share with the Rebbe everything you just read. But to his pleasant surprise, the Rebbe laughed very deeply, "דאס איז דאך געווען דעם גאנצן כוונה" (the entire purpose of sending *shluchim* was to get the local Rabbi and Jews involved in education and outreach)..."

VISITING THE REFUGEES

The Frierdiker Rebbe recognized his talents, especially how he won over people with his sincerity. So therefore, when President Roosevelt established a refugee camp in Oswego, New York (many of the close to one thousand people who arrived there on August 5, 1944, were Jewish), the Frierdiker Rebbe set out to help them.

Shortly afterwards, he sent a delegation to see how Lubavitch could assist them. The delegation consisted of two of his secretaries— Rabbi Hodakov and Rabbi Dr. Mindel, as well as Reb Shlomo Aharon.

While there, they established a *cheder* to teach the children, and a Chevra Tehillim and Chevra Mishnayos for the adults. This was in addition to attending to their physical necessities.

In addition to being involved in all of these special projects, the Frierdiker Rebbe asked him to help with his three newly established mosdos: Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Machane Yisroel, and Kehos. Not only was he instrumental in implementing the Rebbe's vision for these *mosdos*, but, as will be related, he raised funds for them as well.

Publishing Seforim

Reb Shlomo Aharon was a gifted speaker, and his warmth drew many people to him. The Frierdiker Rebbe asked him to find or speak to potential sponsors, and he was successful in helping get numerous seforim published.

The following is the story of one of the seforim that he was instrumental in getting published.

In the mid-1940s (I assume it was 5707/1946), the Frierdiker Rebbe called him in after Yom Kippur. He told him that during Yom Kippur, the Rebbe Maharash appeared to him and wanted a

certain thing to be accomplished. The Frierdiker Rebbe concluded that he wanted him (Reb Shlomo Aharon) to be in charge of that specific project.

In the 1940's, Mr. Glazer spent Yom Kippur with the Frierdiker Rebbe. After Yom Kippur, he decided to do something for the Rebbe. Reb Shlomo Aharon suggested that he enter into *yechidus* with the Rebbe and discuss it with the Rebbe.

Reb Shlomo Aharon went into the Rebbe's room prior to Mr. Glazer's *yechidus*. The Rebbe told him, "My grandfather [the Rebbe Maharash]¹² visited me and asked that I publish his father's [the Tzemach Tzedek's] *seforim*. I don't intend to say this directly to Mr. Glazer, because I don't know if he is a vessel for such a revelation. I rely on you to know what to tell him and how to tell him."

Mr. Glazer then entered into *yechidus* with the Frierdiker Rebbe. The Rebbe mentioned the sum that was needed to publish the Tzemach Tzedek's responsa.

Mr. Glazer said that he was happy to participate, but he didn't know if he could afford to publish the entire set.

The Rebbe responded, "When a Jew commits to contribute a large sum of money for *tzedokoh*, new channels are opened for him."

¹² According to another version, the Frierdiker Rebbe said, "My father, the Rebbe Rashab, asked that I print his grandfather's [the Tzemach Tzedek's] *seforim*."

Mr. Glazer accepted that and contributed to the publishing project.

יעמוד על הברכה

בן מכבד אביו ואמו הנדבן הנכבד והנעלה

מר אלהנן שי' גלאזער

אשר בעזרתו יצא ספר זה לאור

לזכות הוריו שי'

מרת

אסתר בילא בת אלהנן

שתחי'

מר

יצחק בן שמעון העניך

שי'

בהשתדלותו של הרב

שלמה אהרן שי' בן משה קאזארנאווסקי



An addition to the story was related by Reb Shlomo Aharon's son-in-law, HoRav HaChossid Reb Zelig Sharfstein OBM, who served as a Rav in Cincinnati, Ohio:

"In order to convince Mr. Glazer, Reb Shlomo Aharon explained who the Tzemach Tzedek was. Reb Shlomo Aharon told the story of a woman who was an *agunah*. Her husband had left her, and the

Tzemach Tzedek helped her find her husband. The Frierdiker Rebbe was very pleased with Reb Shlomo Aharon's approach."

From then on, Reb Shlomo Aharon would *farbreng* every year in 770 when Yom Kippur came to an end. His reason was because of the *zechus* that on that day the Frierdiker Rebbe related to him what he was told by the Rebbe Maharash (i.e., the *zechus* that the Rebbe revealed to him such a thing).

It should be noted that in his letter to *Sefer HaChassidim*, Reb Shlomo Aharon noted that over the years, he had the *zechus* to help publish the following *seforim* (in addition to the Shaalos U'Teshuvos of the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek):

2. Piskei Dinim of the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek
3. A reprint of the Tanya
4. Tehillim Yahel Ohr
5. Kitzurim V'Haoros L'Tanya of the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek
6. Derech Mitzvosecha
7. Kuntres Heichultzu
8. The *maamar* Vehu Omed Aleihem
9. The Lubavitcher Rebbe's Memoirs
10. The first two volumes of Our People
11. Sdei Chemed—10 volumes, sponsored by Mr. Robinson
12. Toras Sholom, sponsored by Mr. Ganeles

Beis Rivkah

As noted, the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote to him that he should give classes to girls. So therefore, when Beis Rivkah was established, his wife became involved in it, as one of the founding members of the ladies auxillary. One year our Rebbe asked him, how is his wife's work going and from then on he also participated in it..

Citizenship Papers in 770

In 5708 (1948), the Frierdiker Rebbe expressed his desire to become a citizen of the United States of America. One of the hurdles was that according to the law, anyone who wished to become a citizen needed to go to the courthouse. However, the Rebbe was wheelchair bound, and it would be difficult for him to go to the courthouse.

Reb Shlomo Aharon, as a member of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, worked tirelessly to find a solution. The result was that Congress passed a special law that the judges are allowed to administer the oath of citizenship in a person's private house.

He then arranged for Judges Leo Rayfiel and Phillip Kleinfeld with their assistants¹³ to come to 770, and he accompanied them on the 16th of Adar (March 17, 1949).



They administered the oath of citizenship to the Rebbe and his Rebbetzin to become American citizens.¹⁴

Building the Ohel

As noted, Reb Shlomo Aharon was a member of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, as well as a *gabbai* of the Chevra Kadisha. After the *histalkus* of the Friediker Rebbe, the Rebbe instructed Agudas Chassidei Chabad to begin building the Ohel by first building a wall around his place of interment.

A few months later, when they had the plans and were ready to build it, they first showed them to the Rebbe. The Rebbe dismissed it, saying, "How do you know he is here? Maybe he is here?" and he pointed to the left side of the *matzeivah*.

As a true chossid, and a member of Agudas Chassidei Chabad he expanded the Ohel by extending the wall to the left.

¹³ The lawyer was Samuel Kramer.

¹⁴ Our Rebbe became a citizen in 5706 (1946).

He noted that one of his *zechusim* was that he went to court and won for the right to build the Ohel.¹⁵

Guaranteeing the Continuation

At the *shloshim* after the Frieddiker Rebbe's *histalkus*, a meeting took place to discuss the outstanding debts of the Lubavitch *mosdos*. Reb Shlomo Aharon was among the active older chassidim who were present at the meeting. He announced, "We are Chassidei Chabad in America. Although we don't have money, we need to give what we have, since at a certain point it could end up in court. Until now the Rebbe carried this yoke, but now we must all be involved." Many were inspired by his sincerity to contribute to support the *mosdos*.

Then, in Sivan of 1950, the Rebbe called a meeting. He saw that unfortunately, there was no great concern on behalf of the chassidim to maintain the *mosdos*. The Rebbe stated that he would continue with his responsibilities, but the new projects that he took upon himself would slow down. The assembled felt traumatized by these words. Reb Shlomo Aharon stood up and declared, "The Rebbe can send everyone who is present here where he wishes, and as we were with Moshe [the Frieddiker Rebbe], we will obey your orders."

Convincing the Rebbe to become Rebbe

Reb Shlomo Aharon was one of three chassidim who published a notice in the *Tug Morgen Journal* that on Yud Shevat, 5711, Chassidei Lubavitch would be accepting the Rebbe as the Rebbe. The Rebbe called them in and instructed them to place a disclaimer the following day. Somehow, they convinced the Rebbe not to demand that.

Then, two days before Yud Shevat, Reb Shlomo Aharon entered the Rebbe's room and informed the Rebbe that he had a dream, and he asked permission to relate it to him.

When the Rebbe answered in the affirmative, Reb Shlomo Aharon related:

"Throughout the last two weeks, I have been dreaming that I am in the Frieddiker Rebbe's room. Present there are the Frieddiker Rebbe, our Rebbe, and myself.

"The Frieddiker Rebbe says to our Rebbe, 'Nu, when are you going to accept the mantle of leadership?'

"Our Rebbe replied, 'I am not ready!'

"The Frieddiker Rebbe replied, 'What does it says in Parshas Beshalach? Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu, "Speak to Bnei Yisroel and they will move on!"'

"He then explained, '*Speak* means to say Chassidus. *To Bnei Yisroel* means to the chassidim. *And they will move on* means that with this they will greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu. In simple words, you should say Chassidus to the chassidim and greet Moshiach."

¹⁵ When Agudas Chassidei Chabad began planning to build the Ohel, they hired an architect to design it. After receiving his plans, they chose to modify them and use a different engineer to build it.

For some reason, the person who had the original plans went into a phone booth and accidentally left the plans there.

Someone who entered the phone booth afterwards noticed the plans and the architect's name and number, and he called him up, telling him that he found his plans. The architect realized that Aguch had decided to use someone else, and he sued Aguch, the Rebbe, and Rabbi Karzarnovsky.

At the beginning of the trial, the lawyer for the claimant asked, "The papers say that Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn is the president. Since he is no longer among the living, who is the president of this organization?" The Rebbe pointed to himself. At that moment, Rabbi Karzarnovsky understood that it was only a matter of time until the Rebbe would assume the *nesius*.

The Rebbe didn't reply to this directly. Instead, he opened up his drawer and removed two telegrams, one from Rabbi Herzog and the other from Rabbi Uziel, the two chief Rabbis of Eretz Yisroel. Both of them wrote a blessing of Mazal Tov to the Rebbe on the occasion of him accepting the *nesius* of Lubavitch and becoming the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Later, Rabbi Kazarnovsky said that he realized from this that the Rebbe would accept the *nesius*.

Eretz Yisroel

When Beit Sefer L'Melachah – Lubavitch Vocational Schools in Eretz Yisroel opened one of their buildings, the Rebbe called in Reb Shlomo Aharon and told him that he wanted him to represent him at the dedication ceremony.

From then on, he became involved in raising substantial amounts of money for that *mossad*.¹⁶ In the summer of 5722 (1962), the Rebbe told him that he together with his wife should go to Eretz Yisroel and participate in a major event of the Beit Sefer L'Melachah.

In a similar vein, an anecdote that demonstrated his devotion to the Rebbe was told by Rabbi Sharfstein. "My father-in-law received a call from Rabbi Hodakov on a Wednesday, notifying him that the Rebbe wanted to see him. In *yechidus*, the Rebbe told him that he wanted Reb Shlomo Aharon to represent him at the *Chanukas Habayis* of a *shul* in Kfar Chabad, Israel.

"The Rebbe added, 'It is not worthwhile to travel on Thursday, because it is doubtful if you will get there before Shabbos. Therefore you should travel today.' My father-in-law did not have a valid passport, a visa for Israel, or a ticket. But when the Rebbe ordered, it was done without asking questions. Within three hours, my father-in-law arranged everything and came home to pack his suitcase. *Boruch Hashem*, my mother-in-law was home at that time. Otherwise, my father-in-law would have left to catch his flight without my mother-in-law having any knowledge of her husband's whereabouts."

Our Rebbe's Representative

On Friday, 7 Menachem Av, 5737 (1977), at 6:30 p.m., five days after Prime Minister Begin visited the Rebbe, Rabbis Mordechai Aizik Hodakov, Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky and Binyomin Gorodetsky entered the Rebbe's room and received instructions to visit Begin in his hotel room in Manhattan. The delegation returned from the visit a few minutes before the onset of Shabbos. After Minchah, they entered the Rebbe's study to give him a report, and the Rebbe handed them each a Kuntres Ahavas Yisroel.¹⁷

Pegishah

In the early sixties, Tzeirei Agudas Chabad – Lubavitch Youth Organization began arranging *pegishos*, encounters with Chabad for college students. During either the first *pegishah* or one shortly afterwards, the featured speaker was Rabbi Zalman Posner, a son-in-law of Rabbi Kazarnovsky.

Rabbi Kazarnovsky attended the event, and everyone thought that he simply wanted to have *nachas* from his son-in-law. However, after the students began asking their questions, Reb Shlomo Aharon asked Rabbi Kastel (who was the organizer) for permission to speak.

¹⁶ One of his initial large donors was Mrs. Emma Schaffer (Lazaroff).

¹⁷ *Here's my Story*, Parshas Devorim 2013.

While Rabbi Kastel knew that Reb Shlomo Aharon spoke English fluently, he didn't know if the students would relate to a sixty-year-old, European born rabbi. But on the other hand, he was a *chassidische* Yid and involved in so many of the Rebbe's activities, so how could he refuse his request? So he said, "Go right ahead!"



Before his son-in-law was called up, Reb Shlomo Aharon went to the podium and said:

"Here is not the place to ask about the war in Vietnam or about the march on Selma [social issues that stood at the forefront in college campuses those days]. Those issues you can discuss with anyone and everyone. You came to meet Lubavitchers, so you should ask questions that only Lubavitchers can answer—namely, what is the purpose and importance of a *mitzvah*. Why should one do a *mitzvah* in its fullest sense and measure, and not try to cut corners?"

[Rabbi Kastel related that hearing this, he was somewhat lost. Here they had just told the students that they could ask whatever was on their mind, and after they indeed did so, this old rabbi was reprimanding them for doing just that! But afterwards, the feedback he received from the students was that they enjoyed his speech more than the others, as they saw he was truly genuine.]

The students there were surprised that the rabbi with the immaculate black coat and long white beard could speak English, and they listened intently. He then began to relate a story.

A little boy was walking with his father down a steep hill in the heat of the day. They saw a man coming up the hill towards them, sweating, with a heavy sack on his shoulders weighing him down. When the man reached them, the little boy asked him what he had in his sack, why he was going up the hill, why he was working so hard.

The man told the little boy that his hut is on top of the hill and his oven had broken. So he had come down to the valley to get more stones to build himself a new oven.

“Why not get more stones,” asked the little boy, “and build a bigger oven that will keep you warmer, and you can have more food? There must be more stones still in the valley.”

“Oh, you little boy,” said the man, “You don’t yet know what it means to have to work, how hard it is to schlep additional stones.” He put his free hand on the little boy’s shoulder. “When you’ll be big like me, you’ll be happy with a little oven too.”

The little boy and his father continued down the hill.

They saw another man coming up the hill towards them. Same size man, same size sack, but this man didn’t seem so weighed down; in fact, he was smiling.

“What do you have in the sack?” the little boy wanted to know. “Is it stones? Are you going to build yourself a small oven?”

“Oh no,” the man smiled broadly, “no oven building for me! See, I was down in the valley digging for turnips, and I hit upon a treasure. Diamonds! Rubies! Pearls! I have two daughters, two weddings to make. I’m going to open a store and stop peddling from town to town, build myself a house with wooden floors, and...”

“Why not get more diamonds?” interrupted the boy. “There must be more left in the valley.”

“Son,” said the old man, putting his free hand on the little boy’s shoulder, “believe me, I searched the valley clean. I don’t think there is another diamond down there.”

The little boy and his father continued down the hill.

“You see,” said the little boy’s father, “when you’re carrying diamonds, they’re never too heavy, and the more the better. The first guy may have had diamonds too, but he didn’t know what they were.”

The old rabbi with the long white beard looked at the college kids.

“You see what the father was telling the boy? A *mitzvah* is a diamond. Every *mitzvah* that we do is a precious, precious thing. This is why you come to Chabad: not just to learn about a *mitzvah* or many *mitzvos*, but to learn that each one is a diamond. When you know they are diamonds, then most of your questions will be answered.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Twenty years passed since that *pegishah*, and Reb Shlomo Aharon’s grandson was sitting at a Shabbos table with college students when his host repeated this story. The host said, “The questions have shifted with the times: Why do we need *mitzvos* when we can meditate instead?”

He ended with the words, “It’s been twenty years since Rabbi Kazarnovsky stood up that night to tell that story. I could tell you dozens of experiences I’ve had since then, but nothing touched one/me like this one.”

Compiler’s note: This story was taken from an article by Rabbi Shimon Posner.

Through My Efforts...

Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky was one of the most prominent activists in the early years of Chabad history in America. He served on the boards of virtually every one of Chabad's central institutions, and was entrusted by the Frierdiker Rebbe and Rebbe with many sensitive missions.

In his submission to Sefer HaChassidim, he filled out a full paper detailing a long list of activities he had done over the years, including getting U.S. politicians to push for the Frierdiker Rebbe's release from Soviet Russia, being involved in the printing of a list of *seforim*, helping purchase the Rebbe's house on President St, and fighting in court for the right to build the Frierdiker Rebbe's Ohel. Here is a picture of that list.

But it wasn't only the people of his community that he had time for and made an impact on their lives. The Friediker Rebbe once read a letter in the newspaper from a girl who had doubts in *emunah*. The editor's response to the girl was unsatisfactory. The Rebbe asked for Reb Berel Chaskind before Shacharis. He wanted him to see the article and to obtain the original letter that the girl had sent.

Reb Berel obtained the letter for the Rebbe. The Rebbe handed the letter to Reb Shlomo Aharon, who contacted the girl and guided her back to her roots.

On Shabbos, Reb Sholomo Aharon's schedule was full. He would awaken early and go to the *mikvah*, a thirty-minute walk each way. When he came home, he would sit down to learn Chassidus for an hour and a half. He would daven Shacharis in one *shul* and go to the second *shul* for Musaf. Once the Rebbe accepted the *nesius*, on Shabbos Mevorchim after Musaf, he would walk the six miles to 770, which took at least an hour and a half. He continued doing so even when he was seventy. On the way he would say Tehillim by heart.

His son Chaim Asher and daughter-in-law lived for thirty-five years in Worcester, Massachusetts. As a father, he visited them often. But as a chossid, he knew that he wasn't just coming to his son's house; he was coming to a community. So he helped the Lubavitch Yeshiva there, as well as the Lubavitcher *shul*.

His Children

Sarah Stock, born on August 30, 1921

Moshe Kazarnovsky, born around 5685 (1925)

Risya (Didi) Posner

Chaim Asher Kazarnovsky

Reba Sharfstein

His Petirah

On the seventh of Cheshvan, 5743 (1982), Reb Shlomo Aharon completed his *avodah* in this world and returned his *neshomah* to its Creator.

The Rebbe participated in the *levayah* with many chassidim present and escorted Reb Shlomo Aharon to his final rest. The Rebbe instructed that a bus should be available for chassidim to travel to the *Bais HaChaim*.

Stories

AN ANGEL OF ONE THOUSAND

In the early 5700's (1940's), Rabbi Shmaryahu Gurary of blessed memory, who was married to the eldest of the three daughters of the Frierdiker Rebbe, was sent by his father-in-law on a mission to Toronto along with Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky. They arrived to find the city completely paralyzed by a blizzard. Deep snow had buried practically everything and storm winds blasted through the streets. Since no transportation of any sort was available, they were forced to take refuge in a nearby hotel.

A number of chassidim and admirers of Lubavitch found their way to the place where they were staying in order to pay their respects to their city's distinguished guests. Among them was a prestigious local rabbi, a leading Torah scholar in the city, who expressed great respect for the Frierdiker Rebbe and explained why with an amazing story.

"Not so long ago, one of the members of my shul, Reuven, a wealthy man, fell seriously ill. It actually happened in *shul*, on a Shabbos. His was called for an *aliyah*, and on his way to the *bimah* he suffered a stroke! An ambulance was summoned, and he was taken quickly to the hospital.

"As soon as possible after Shabbos, I went to visit him. When I arrived at his floor, I encountered the members of the family who had stationed themselves in the room next to the patient's. They told me the frightening details of his condition: in addition to one of his legs being paralyzed, he was also barely able to speak.

"Their mood was gloomy. The unpleasant situation of the head of the family would have been reason enough. In addition, his son was supposed to be getting married but had postponed his wedding because of the sudden tragic development.

"They warned me not to go into the room. However, the patient heard my voice while I was speaking to them and asked his nurse to call me in. I entered.

"As soon as he saw me, he managed to say: 'I heard that the Lubavitcher Rebbe now lives in the United States.'

"That's true,' I replied. 'He came in 5700 (1940).'

"Please!' he implored, gasping the words. 'Write to him on my behalf and ask him what I can do to save myself from this ghastly illness and regain my health.'

"Of course I agreed. As soon as I got home, I dispatched an urgent telegram. The Rebbe's answer arrived very quickly, also by express. He instructed me to tell the stricken man that a branch of Lubavitch's Tomchei Tmimim Yeshiva was being established in Montreal and that he should donate \$1000 to it, for 'tzedakah saves from death.' Specifically one thousand, because the angel [advocate created by the *mitzvah*] of [giving] a hundred is incomparable to the angel of a thousand, as it says

[in the Book of Iyov], 'If a man will have an interceding angel—one of a thousand...'.¹⁹ The Rebbe concluded that in this merit he would get well and have full use of his legs.

"I hurried back to the hospital with the Rebbe's letter in hand. The relatives were all still there. When the patient's wife saw me, she said in surprise, 'What! Did you already get an answer from the Rebbe?'

"I told her what the Rebbe had said. Her brother, who had also come to visit, overheard. He remarked to her sarcastically, 'Ah! They've already started to try to squeeze money out of him. You know how these people are.'

"I didn't bother to respond. Instead, I went directly inside to the patient. I told him what I had written and that the Rebbe had answered right away. I then read to him the Rebbe's letter. When I finished, he turned to his son, who had been standing next to the bed the whole time. 'Son!' he said, as emphatically as he could manage. 'I want to live! Please take one thousand dollars and deliver it in person to Montreal, to whatever address that the Rabbi tells you.'

"The son, the one whose wedding was postponed, did exactly as his father requested, without hesitation. A few days later, a doctor in the hospital, who was known to be a leading specialist for this particular problem, came to do an examination. The room was cleared for him, and he remained alone with the bedridden man for some time. When he came out, his face was contorted with fury. He went directly over to the relatives of the patient, who were still maintaining their faithful vigil.

"'Who gave you permission to bring in an outside doctor and for him to initiate treatment?' he demanded. 'And without informing me, no less. This is outrageous!'

"The relatives looked at one another and then back at the doctor, thoroughly perplexed. 'Doctor, please, we don't know what you are talking about. We haven't consulted any other doctor, nor do we know what extra treatment you are talking about.'

"'If that's so,' responded the doctor in a calmer tone, but with lingering overtones of suspicion, 'then a miracle has occurred here. The patient's condition has changed radically. There are no longer any internal signs of the disease. I can't understand it. Still,' he said, shaking his head, 'if this present situation persists, we will discharge him very soon.'

"And that's what happened. Shortly thereafter he was released, and although he needed crutches to help him walk, it wasn't too long before he was able to discard them. His condition continued to improve rapidly until he was better completely.

¹⁹ In *Avos* 4:11 it says, "With every *mitzvah* a person does, he acquires for himself an advocate-angel...." The full quote from *Iyov* is: "If [he has a merit, then] there will be for a man an interceding angel, one of a thousand, to declare his uprightness on his behalf; then He will be gracious to him, and say, 'Redeem him from going down to the grave; I have found atonement for him'" (Job 33:23–24—this verse is utilized in the Kapparos atonement custom on the eve of Yom Kippur, see *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 198).

"The rescheduled wedding was celebrated with exceptional joy."²⁰

He Would Be Considered Unique

Rabbi Tuviah Blau related the following story:

"For Simchas Torah of 5728 (1967), as a guest from Eretz Yisroel, I was among a select group of chassidim that was invited to eat with the Rebbe upstairs, in the Frierdiker Rebbe's apartment.

"During the meal, the elder chossid Reb Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky wanted to say something. When his friend Reb Shmuel Levitin realized this, he motioned to the Rebbe, who in turn said that he should say what was on his mind.

"Reb Shlomo Aharon became red as a beet, and timidly he prefaced that since today was Simchas Torah, he would dare to talk.

"He began that the *alter Rebbetzin* told him that her husband the Frierdiker Rebbe said to her, 'Our middle son-in-law is unique. In the times of the Alter Rebbe he would also have been considered unique!' All present were shocked to hear this said in front of the Rebbe himself. The Rebbe commented, 'This story was inappropriate for this time and place. Say L'chaim.'"²¹

Chazzonos

In the year 5690, the Previous Rebbe visited America and stayed in Brooklyn for Shemini Atzeres.

During the Yom Tov, the famous chazzan Reb Yossele Rosenblatt walked from the Bronx, where he lived, to visit the Rebbe. The walk took him many hours. When he arrived, the Rebbe honored him to sing several pieces of *chazonus*. When he finished, the Rebbe turned to Reb Zalman Havlin – who sang *niggunim* with Heavenly sweetness – and said, "*Vaizt vos ir kent*" (demonstrate what you can do). Reb Zalman sang several *niggunim*.

When he concluded, Reb Yossele said, "*Ir mit ayere nigunim macht finster mayne chazonus*" (You, with your *niggunim*, darken [comparatively] my *chazonus*).²²

²⁰ Translated and freely adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles (and first published in *Kfar Chabad Magazine - English*) from *Shemuos v'Sipurim* by Rafoel Nachman Cohen (vol.1, p.191-192), who heard it directly from Rabbi Kazarnovsky. (Subsequently expanded in 2016 based on *Sichat HaShavua* #1515.)

²¹ *Lma'an Yishme'u*, no. 176.

²² Reb Shneur Zalman Baumgarten heard this story from the elder chassidim Reb Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky and Reb Eliyahu Nochum Sklar, of blessed memory. Reb Schneur Zalman also related that he heard from others that Reb Yossele Rosenblatt visited the Frierdiker Rebbe in Warsaw in 5688 (1928), after the

Reb Asher Nikolayver

Reb Asher Grossman, known as Reb Asher Nikolayever, was one of Reb Hillel Paritcher's prized *talmidim*. After his *chassunah*, he became the *shochet* in Nikolayev. He was a chossid of three Rebbeim: the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Maharash, and the Rebbe Rashab.

The Rebbe Rashab asked him to work on various projects and missions, the most famous one of which was to reprint the Tanya and make sure all the printing mistakes were omitted.

Reb Asher worked diligently on this, making over one thousand changes. Some entailed the spelling of a single word, while some were additions (or deletions) of many words. This edition of the Tanya was printed in 5660 (1900), and Reb Asher's name appears in every Tanya since then.

Less known is that when the Rebbe Rashab was considering the *shidduch* for his only son, he sent Reb Asher to Kishinev to see if the prospective bride was good for his son.

When Reb Asher came back with a positive response, the *shidduch* took place.

He Saved My Life

The following story is told about the Rebbe's maternal grandfather, Rav Meir Shlomo Yanovsky, and Reb Asher

Since he served as the *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) in Nikolayev, needless to say, he was good friends with the Rebbe's grandfather, Reb Meir Shlomo, who served as the city's Rav.

On the occasion of the future Rebbe's *bris*, which took place on 18 Nissan, 5662 (the fourth day of Pesach), Reb Asher went to wish Rav Meir Shlomo "Mazal Tov" but declined to eat at the meal, in keeping with his personal standard of not to eat anything outside of his own home on Pesach.²³

One may have expected Rav Meir Shlomo to be upset by this, as he was the Rov of the city and the food served at the *bris* was prepared to the highest standards of kosher and Passover observance. Rabbi Meir Shlomo said, "In truth, I should really take you to task for not eating here today. But what can I do to you since I owe you my life?"

Here is the story:

Many years prior, when typhus was raging through the region, Rav Meir Shlomo fell ill. The illness was highly contagious and had (and still has) no known cure. In an effort to contain its spread, the authorities ordered anyone who contracted the disease to be quarantined outside the city and essentially left to die.

Rebbe had just left Russia. Those present expected him to sing. However, he understood from the Rebbe's facial expression that he did not want that.

When he left the Rebbe's presence and went into a side room, he met the Rebbe's daughters and sang something in front of them. He had a very strong voice and was heard in the next room where the Rebbe was. Afterwards, the Rebbe said, "*Er hot mir aroisgenumen fun atzvus, er zugt gut, er ken pirush hamilos*" (He took me out of a depressed mood. He [sings] well. He knows the meaning of the words).

²³ This follows the more widespread version of the story. According to our family tradition, it was merely the fish that was made with black pepper that he declined to eat, as he didn't use spices on Passover.

Completely isolated from anyone not stricken with typhus—other than a lone doctor who delivered medication and food to the other side of a closed door each day—the gravely ill patients languished in depression and despair. Rav Meir Shlomo, too, was forced into this quarantine, where he watched hopelessly and helplessly as the people around him died one after the other, abandoned and alone.

When Reb Asher learned of his friend's illness he did not sit idly by. Determined to help Rav Meir Shlomo, Reb Asher would travel to the quarantine camp daily. Unable to enter, he would stand beneath a window and read loudly the 11th chapter of *Iggeres Hakodesh*, from the third section of the Tanya, known colloquially as “Lehaskilcha Bina” (“To enlighten you with understanding”).

The epistle is a somewhat mystical letter that describes how “...no evil descends from above and everything is truly good,” so one should view their own sufferings as actual good that has been disguised as the opposite of good. In fact, if one works on oneself enough, one can come to view it as actual good!

“...No evil descends from above, and everything is good. When man will contemplate how he is continuously being brought into existence and absorbs this, how can he possibly think he has ever suffered or had any afflictions relating to children, life and sustenance, or any other kind of worldly sufferings...?”²⁴

Although he was unsure if Rav Meir Shlomo could even hear him, Reb Asher returned every day for thirty days to read to him, hoping to encourage his good friend through those dark days.

Against the odds, Rav Meir Shlomo recovered and returned home. When he was able to meet Reb Asher, he thanked him profusely. “You gave me life! Every day, after hearing the Tanya I felt stronger and healthier. The Tanya you read encouraged and inspired me to stay strong and positive. It sustained my faith and enabled me not to succumb to illness.”²⁵

²⁴ *Iggeres Hakodesh*, siman 11.

²⁵ This story was written by Yehuda Shurpin.

לזכות

החתן הרה"ת **יעקב יוסף**

והכלה **פרומא שיחיו**

איידעלמאן

לרגל נישואיהם בשעתו"מ

ביום י' תמוז ה'תשפ"א

יה"ר שיזכו לבנות בית נאמן בישראל

על יסודי התורה והמצוה

*

נדפס ע"י הורי הכלה

הרה"ת **נחמן** זוגתו מרת **חווה שיחיו בראנשטיין**

ולזכות בני משפחתם שיחיו

הרה"ת **שניאור זלמן** זוגתו מרת **פייגא**

ובניהם **מנחם מענדל**, **יוסף יצחק**, **ישראל**, **מרים**, **חנה**, **שמואל** וחיה איידא לאה שיחיו רייבין

הרה"ת **מנחם מענדל** זוגתו מרת **דבורה לאה**

ובניהם **מרים מושקא**, **לוי יצחק**, **חנה ואיידלא** שיחיו **בראנשטיין**

הרה"ת **משה חיים** זוגתו מרת **פריידא**

ובנם **יהושע שיחיו רייצעס**

הרה"ת **דוד שלמה אהרן** זוגתו מרת **חי' מושקא**

ובניהם **מנחם מענדל**, **בתיה אסתר ואיידא לאה** שיחיו **בראנשטיין**

חיים אשר ושאל זעליג