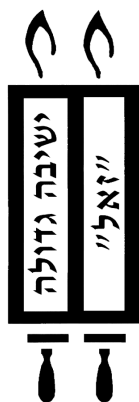


Ashkavta De'Rebbi

The Story of the Histalkus of
the Rebbe Rashab



Kovetz Ashkavta De'Rebbi

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By

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Introduction:

With gratitude to Hashem, we present before you a free English translation¹ of sections of the *Sefer, "Ashkavta De'Rebbi"* "The Story of the *Histalkus* of the Rebbe Rashab." This translation is being published in connection with *Beis Nissan*, 5780, commemorating one hundred years since the *Histalkus* of the Rebbe Rashab.



About the author:

Harav Moshe Dov Ber Rivkin was born to R' Ben Tzion and Esther Rivkin on 21 Kislev 5650/1891, in Zintsi, Ukraine. R' Ben Tzion was the *Rav* of the town and was considered an expert in *Shas Bavli*, *Yerushalmi*, *Shulchan Aruch* and *Sifrei Kabbalah*. Many *Gedolim* corresponded with him in *halachah* issues.

From a very young age, Moshe Dov Ber was known to be a prodigy. He began learning *Gemara* at age 5. In his early years, he learned in *Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim* in Lubavitch, under the close tutelage of the famed *Mashpia*, Reb Michoel Blinner. After his studies, he married Nacha Heber of Kalisch, daughter of the *chossid* Reb Yaakov Tuvya Heber. He later followed the Rashab to Rostov where he learned with him privately and remained near the Rashab until the *Histalkus*.

In the year 5684/1924, he immigrated to Eretz Yisrael where he was appointed Rosh *Yeshiva* of *Yeshiva Toras Emes* in Yerusholayim. He was Rosh *Yeshiva* there for 4 years and following which, he was invited to join the faculty of *Yeshiva Torah Vodaath* in America.

¹ As is the way with translation, much of the beauty and richness of the original is lost, hence, readers are encouraged to look into the original Hebrew/Yiddish edition. The translation used in this print is a liberal one, focusing on flow and clarity.

During his time at *Torah Vodaath*, he gave *smicha* to hundreds of *talmidim*. He had close personal relationships with the *Gedolim* of the age including R' Moshe Feinstein, R' Yaakov Kaminetzky, R' Yitzchak Hutner, R' Yosef Ber Soloveitchik and others. Through his years, Rabbi Rivkin published extensively in *Torah* journals and also collected a selection of his *chidushim* in his *Sefer, Teferes Tzion*. In his later years, Rabbi Rivkin would often attend *Farbrengens* of our Rebbe and is clearly visible sitting behind the Rebbe in many videos. Rabbi Rivkin passed away 18 Cheshvan 5737/1976 and is buried in the Lubavitch section of the cemetery on *Har Hazesim*.



About the *Sefer*:

Rabbi Rivkin wrote this *Sefer* narrating us through his own experiences. He was 28 years old at the time of the story. As mentioned, Rabbi Rivkin was a “*Ben Bayis*” in the house of the Rebbe Rashab, a close confidant of the Frierdiker Rebbe and a devout *chossid*. He wrote this diary in the summer of 5680/1920, a few months following the events. The *Sefer* was published many years later [5712/1952]², with Rabbi Rivkin’s lengthy and extensive footnotes. Rabbi Rivkin was an exceptional *Ga’on* and *Talmid Chochom*, and these footnotes are an in depth *halachic* and *Kabbalistic* analysis of the Rebbe Rashab’s every move. In this translation we have included only the sections of the *Sefer* that describe the story of the *Histalkus* excluding the footnotes.

² In the year 5695/1935, Reb Chatche Feigin asked Rabbi Rivkin for permission to print this *sefer* in the *Hatomim* journal. Rabbi Rivkin refused, explaining that he had previously shown the diary to the Rayatz and it had pained the Rayatz greatly. However in the year 5712/1952, following the *Histalkus* of the Rayatz in 5710/1950, the *Sefer* was printed at the behest of our Rebbe.

A general note on perspective:

Being that much of the content of this *Sefer* discusses the condition of the Rebbe Rashab's physical health, one can mistakenly understand the events in a "coarse/crude" manner.

It is important to keep in mind the following: In a *Maamor* printed in *Sefer HaMaamorim Melukat Aleph*, "Atah Echad" Chapter 7, the Rebbe writes as follows: "The imprisonment of the Frierdiker Rebbe was with his consent. Every *Tzadik* controls the physicality of his life, and every physical occurrence is by his consent."

It is clearly evident and obvious from this *Maamor* that the *Tzadik* agrees to the heavenly decree to impose sickness or suffering upon him, i.e. the *Tzadik* controls these events.

Additionally, the *Tzadik* is *Bedugmah Shel Maalah*, meaning, all that transpires to the *Tzadik* in our physical world is reflective of the events occurring in the spiritual realms of *Seder Hishtalshelus* and the *Sefiros*.

The *Sefer* before us was written by a *chossid* observing the events with what we call, "fleshly eyes," i.e. the *chassidim* watching the events only saw the external physicality of the story. *Chassidim* over the generations always knew that what we see occurring to the Rebbe is just the tip of the iceberg and the events are not to be gauged by the regular measures of human beings. Therefore, as we read through the events which superficially appear to have human properties, we must remember that our understanding and view of the matter barely scratches the surface of the true reality.

For ease of reading, please note the following references:

"The Rebbe" refers to the Rebbe Rashab.

"The Rebbetzin" refers to the Rebbe Rashab's wife, Rebbetzin Shternah Sarah

"The Rayatz" refers to the Frierdiker Rebbe.

“The Rashag” refers to Reb Shmaryahu Gurary. At the time of this story he was but a *bochur*, he would later be the son-in-law of the Rayatz.

The times of day written are all approximate.



Many thanks to Hatomim Hashliach Shmuel Kesselman for the translation and editing, (for comments, suggestions and questions, please email shmulykesselman@gmail.com). Many thanks to Hat' Yechezkel Lever, Hat' Menachem Mendel Perlow and Hat' Dovid Perlow for the assistance and editing.

Note regarding the footnotes: Throughout this translation there are footnotes with additional information. They have been added by the translator for the purpose of furthering clarity.

Additionally, a *chossid* by the name of Avrohom Boruch Poizner, mentioned in this *Sefer* as being the one charged with preparing wheat for *Matza*, also wrote brief snippets of a diary documenting the story of the Rashab's *Histalkus*. His notes are printed in the *Sefer* “*Shemuos Vesipurim*” by Reb Refoel Kahn. Reb Refoel writes that he attained a copy of this diary from his brother-in-law, Reb Hillel Poizner, the son of Avrohom Boruch Poizner. [The brief diary is also printed in Hebrew in the *Sefer*, “*HaMashpia Shelo Chozar*,” a biography of Reb Avrohom Boruch].

It is interesting that when comparing the 2 diaries, although the gist of the story is almost identical, there are a few small differences. We have included a few of those discrepancies in the footnotes and clearly indicated the source.



May it be the will of Hashem that very soon, we will merit the fulfillment of the prophecy, “And those that lie in the dust will

awaken and celebrate.” With the arrival of *Moshiach*, when we will be reunited with our Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab and with all the *Rebbe'im*, may it be speedily in our days.

2 Nissan 5780
27 March 2020

Ashkavta De'Rebbi

Rostov, Thursday Night, 15 Adar.

Following the *Purim Farbrengen*, which took place in the Rebbe's home, the Rebbe returned to his room and sat down to rest. Yankel Landau³ - a young student who had a close bond with the Rebbe and spent much time in the Rebbe's home - followed the Rebbe into his room. Beaming with inspiration and excitement gleaned from the fervor of the *Farbrengen*, he said to the Rebbe, "On this night we experienced great happiness. How lucky we are to have celebrated with the Rebbe, an event no one had dreamed would occur. May Hashem grant us the opportunity to celebrate next *Purim* in a similar manner, with the Rebbe, back in Lubavitch." The Rebbe did not respond. Yankel Landau repeated the sentiment, and again the Rebbe did not respond. Meanwhile, the Rebbe stood up and walked into a second room nearby. Yankel Landau followed him, and repeated himself a third time. Following which, the Rebbe responded, "May Hashem bless us to be near one another, spiritually."

Yankel Landau exited the Rebbe's chamber, and excitedly recounted his discussion with the Rebbe. He supposed, based on the implication of the Rebbe's words, "near one another spiritually," that the Rebbe planned to journey overseas within the year. (Being that, at that time, many prominent *chassidim* suggested that the Rebbe re-establish his court outside of Russia⁴.)

³ Who would go on to become the *Rav* in Bnei Brak.

⁴ The Rebbe had originally consented to travel abroad and Reb Shmuel Gurary actually purchased boat fare for himself and the Rebbe to travel to Turkey. However, a mere few days after the tickets were purchased the Rebbe decided not to travel. (A Chassidisher Derher, Elul 5779)

No one entertained the thought of the tragedy that would take place barely two and a half weeks later.

Motzo'ey Shabbos, 17 Adar.

A few minutes after *Havdolah*, I stood outside the Rebbe's room. I had a pressing personal issue regarding which I sought his advice. Together with me stood R' Yisroel "Nevler" Levin and the Rashag, they too, had urgent issues they wished to discuss with the Rebbe. We waited in the antechamber near the door to the Rebbe's room, hoping that the Rebbe would walk out for a moment and we could approach. Soon, a member of the Rebbe's family knocked on the door to the Rebbe's room and entered, he too, sought the advice of the Rebbe. Almost immediately, the door reopened and he walked out. He turned to us and said, "You cannot meet with the Rebbe tonight. I could not ask him anything. He is preoccupied, sitting and writing with intense concentration and involvement."

Nevertheless, we continued waiting outside his room, perhaps he would walk out for a moment and we would be able to converse with him. Soon enough, the Rebbe did indeed walk out of his room. His face was burning with a fierce expression, and he appeared weighed down by many thoughts. He saw us and motioned that he could not meet with us. When he reentered his room a few minutes later, he closed the door and locked it from the inside.

We despaired from any chance of seeing him that night and understandably, we were disappointed. Slowly, we parted ways and returned to our homes. We were most surprised by his response that night. Regularly, the Rebbe would receive visits with a glowing and joyful countenance, yet that night his response was cold and uninviting.

Yet, none of us even entertained the thought that tragedy would soon strike, and that very night the Rebbe had sat and wrote his last will and testament. Following the *Histalkus*, we discovered this fact.

The Rebbe spent that night as well as the next few days writing his will. He instructed that many *Seforim* from the large library in Moscow be brought to his disposal, books of *halachah* and *Kabbalah*. Many of these *Seforim* were then quoted and referenced in the lengthy *halachic* and *Kabbalistic* discussion, regarding the recital of *Kaddish*, included in the will. Within a few days, the Rebbe finished writing the will and placed it in the drawer in his desk. Clearly with the intention, that when his drawers would be opened following his *Histalkus*, the will would be obviously found. So it was, a short while after the *Histalkus*, the drawer was opened, and the will was found.

Thursday Night, 22 Adar.

That night, I found myself in the Rebbe's home. By the time I had finished tending to the issue that brought me there, it was already past curfew. For in those days, the government forbade walking in the streets after 9:00 PM. I had no choice but to sleep in one of the rooms on the ground floor of the Rebbe's house.

That night, the Rebbe did not eat dinner because he felt unwell and a slight stomach ache. (In truth, he had begun to feel unwell on Wednesday but had not told anyone.)

10:00 PM⁵: The Rebbe descended to the ground floor to inquire regarding the health of his daughter-in-law, the Rebbetzin Nechomah Dinah, who at that time was suffering from spotted typhus⁶. He appeared overly weak and exceptionally tired. He sat in

⁵ According to the record of Reb Avrohom Boruch Poizner: This occurred at 11:00 PM and the Rebbe remained downstairs for ½ an hour, not 15 minutes.

⁶ A spotted fever is a type of tick-borne disease which presents on the skin. They are all caused by bacteria of the genus *Rickettsia*. Typhus is a group of similar diseases also caused by *Rickettsia* bacteria, but spotted fevers and typhus are different clinical entities.

the dining-room for 15 minutes, and then went upstairs. He went to sleep at approximately 12:00 AM. Following which, the Rayatz and his family went to sleep, except for his daughter, Mushka⁷, who remained awake the entire night at her mother's bedside. I too, retired in one of the rooms on the ground floor.

2:00 AM: I awoke, hearing a commotion. I immediately got up, dressed and walked out of my room. As I walked out, I noticed Mushka scurrying about, carrying a cup of milk. When I asked her what was happening and who the milk was for, she responded that her grandfather, the Rebbe, felt sick. His wife, Rebbetzin Shternah Sarah, had measured his temperature at 37.5c. I panicked, ran upstairs and the Rebbetzin repeated what Mushka had told me. Nevertheless, I soon went to sleep and slept soundly.

Friday, 22 Adar.

In the morning, the Rebbe's temperature measured a concerning 38.5c. The family asked him if he would like Dr. Landa, an expert doctor and a close confidant of the Rebbe's family, to be summoned. The Rebbe refused and remained in bed for a while, suffering from an aching head. Following midday, the Rebbetzin and the Rayatz begged the Rebbe to allow the doctor to be called. He said, "Nu, if you want him to come, let him come." At about 3:00 PM, Dr. Landa arrived. He examined the Rebbe and announced that the sickness is a light case of influenza⁸ and a slight stomach ache. His diagnosis calmed us all very much⁹.

⁷ Who later became the wife of our Rebbe

⁸ A highly contagious but not dangerous viral infection of the respiratory passages causing fever, severe aching, and catarrh, and often occurring in epidemics

⁹ According to the record of Reb Avrohom Boruch Poizner: This visit of Dr. Landa occurred on *Shabbos* and not on Friday.

Friday Night, 23 Adar.

After *Shabbos* began, the Rebbe lay down on his bed and slept for a short while¹⁰. When he awoke, he went into his office and *davened Kabbolas Shabbos* and *Maariv*. The table, that the Rebbe was wont to sit at while reciting *Chassidus* was set for the *Shabbos* meal. The Rebbe recited *Kiddush* in an undertone, ate a piece of bread, some soup and a baked apple with sugar. Following which, he *bentched*, said *Krias Shema* and returned to his bed. The night passed uneventfully.

Shabbos Morning, 23 Adar.

Shabbos morning, the Rebbe awoke and entered his office for *davening* as usual. Following *Birchas Hashachar* the Rebbe had to return to his bed, the headache and fever had intensified. Dr. Landa again came for a visitation, and repeated his diagnosis of the previous day. At the appointed time for *Shachris*, the *Minyan* took place in the dining room, and for *Kerias HaTorah* the *Minyan* moved into the Rebbe's office. He sat, wearing his silk *Shabbos* clothes albeit without a *Talis*, in a small room leading off his office with the door slightly ajar. *Mussaf* took place in the office also, and following the *tefilos*, all the *chassidim* went home confident that Hashem would heal and strengthen the Rebbe. I too, went home and only returned later that evening. Upon my return, I was informed that the Rebbe had felt sick and rested for most of the day.

¹⁰ This was not an unusual occurrence and it was not due to weakness. The Rebbe would regularly fall asleep at the time of the onset of *shabbos*. This "nap" is a *Kabbalistic* custom practiced by many *Tzadikim* including the Alter Rebbe; see *Toras Shalom* pg. 13.

Motzo'ey Shabbos, 24 Adar.

Following *Havdolah*, the Rebbe asked for a cigar. He smoked, and suddenly felt very unwell and almost fainted. We sprayed cold water on his face and he came back to himself. (From that moment on, I did not budge from his side for even a second. From that moment on, I remained in his presence until his holy coffin was laid to rest.) Dr. Landa was immediately summoned, and he calmed us. Dr. Landa brought with him another doctor, who was hired to stay in the house throughout the night. The Rebbe was not informed that another doctor was in the house. The second doctor sat in the dining room all night, ready to be called should the need arise. But thank G-d, the night passed uneventfully.

Unfortunately, the Rebbe's general weakness deteriorated, and he was too weak to stand or even sit without help. During the following week, the doctors, the Rayatz and I would assist the Rebbe when he wanted to sit up and stand. I would also assist the Rebbe when he wanted to wash *Nettilas Yodayim*. The first few days of his illness, he would sit up in his bed and I would wash his hands. Towards the end of the week however, he would remain lying down and I would wash his hands in that manner.

Sunday, 24 Adar.

Dr. Landa returned and examined the Rebbe. After a thorough examination, he declared aloud, so that the Rebbe would hear, "It appears that the Rebbe's spleen is inflamed." Dr. Landa walked out of the Rebbe's bedroom and into the Rebbe's office, to have a word with the Rebbetzin and the Rayatz. I remained in the Rebbe's bedroom. The Rebbe turned to me and said, "Nu, what did Dr. Landa say? Is it not typhus?" "Heaven forbid," I cried out, "the

doctor believes it is typhoid¹¹, nothing more.” He asked again, “Is it not typhus?” “No! no!” I exclaimed.

The doctor reentered the room to take leave of the Rebbe and receive a blessing. The Rebbe asked him again, “Have I contracted typhus?” The doctor affirmed that it was not typhus, and he told the Rebbe not to worry. The doctor then went on his way. The Rebbe said he wished to *daven Shachris*, and the Rayatz and I assisted him to do so.

On that day, a Dr. Lazinski of the city of Babroisk arrived to treat the Rebbe. I introduced him to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe remained under his care until his final moments. [The doctors were professionals, not committed *chassidim*, with limited understanding of the concept of a Rebbe. Nevertheless, they felt a deep affection for the Rebbe, and they stood before him with the fear and trepidation common amongst old-time *chassidim*. They worked day and night, with total selflessness and devotion, and when the *Histalkus* did occur, they all cried bitterly.]

The Rebbe instructed me to give over a message to Hatomim Avrohom Boruch Poizner. I was to tell him that the Rebbe charged him with the job of grinding wheat to bake *Shmurah Matza*, being that in the past he had been in charge of the project. Additionally, the Rebbe wished to be informed about all the details of the *Matza* making process.

3:00 PM: The Rebbe requested that we aid him as he wished to *daven Mincha*. The Rayatz (who would not vacate his father’s side for even a moment, day and night) and I waded in to provide assistance.

I washed the Rebbe’s hands, and we wound his *Gartel* around him. We laid *Rabbeinu Tam’s Tefilin* on the Rebbe, and he finished *Shachris* without using a *Siddur*. He continued *davening*, reciting

¹¹ An infectious, non life-threatening, bacterial fever with an eruption of red spots on the chest and abdomen, and severe intestinal irritation.

many indeterminable *tefilos*, followed by *Korbonos*, *Ashrei* and *Mincha*. We removed the *Tefilin*, and the Rebbe rested.

Over the entire course of his illness, it was clearly evident that the Rebbe was deep in thought. His face held a grim expression, and he rarely smiled. It seemed as if he was mourning over the heavenly decree placed upon the *chassidim*, that were to lose their crown and glory, the Rebbe.

In hindsight, over the course of the winter 5780, the Rebbe gave clues and indications to the Rayatz and the Rebbetzin vis a vis his own *Histalkus*. Yet, even in our wildest dreams we did not interpret these messages from the Rebbe to mean that the *Histalkus* was coming. We did not imagine that we would be struck with such a fierce blow, 'Woe unto us! May Hashem have mercy on us, *chassidim*, amongst the entire Jewish nation and rebuild our broken fortress.'

In my estimation, the Rebbe did not want the *Histalkus* to come as a result of typhus, and it became obvious as the illness progressed, that indeed it was not typhus. The illness sapped the Rebbe's strength with alarming speed. The doctors themselves were unable to determine the root of the sickness, or even what it was called. Prof. Zavadski claimed that it was potentially typhus, but Dr. Landa - who was indeed an expert - was willing to swear that it was not.

10:00 PM: The Rebbe *davened Maariv*, and at 12:00 AM he recited *Shema* and went to sleep. Dr. Lazinski, the Rayatz and I remained awake throughout the night. The Rebbe's sleep was fitful and inconstant.

Monday, 25 Adar.

The Rebbe awoke, and I washed his hands. He recited *Birchas Hashachar* and drank what appeared to be milk or coffee.

8:00 AM: Prof. Zavadski arrived. He examined the Rebbe for quite some time, and then walked from the Rebbe's bedroom into the Rebbe's office. The Rebbetzin and the Rayatz were there, and the professor told them that in his opinion the Rebbe was suffering from a severe form of typhus. The situation, in his opinion, was critical due to the Rebbe's age. I stood near the Rebbe's bed and listened in to the conversation. The Rebbe himself could not hear the conversation, all he could hear was the sound of the voices. The Rebbe realized that the Rebbetzin and the Rayatz were badgering the professor with questions. He turned to me and joked, "They are harassing him with their questions like the snake's oven¹²." The professor returned; the Rebbe turned to him with uncertainty filling his eyes and asked "Nu?". Prof. Zavadski said, "As of now, I cannot determine what will be. However, do not worry, you will yet be healthy." Prof. Zavadski then went on his way.

Dr. Landa returned and performed yet another lengthy examination. He said, "I am sure that Prof. Zavadski is mistaken. I see no symptoms of typhus." He then proceeded to make light of the professor's diagnosis. His comments calmed us very much.

About an hour later, a laboratory doctor arrived and performed many tests. He took blood from the Rebbe, etc.

The Rebbe said he wished to *daven Shachris*. The Rayatz had left to go *daven* himself, so I alone aided the Rebbe. I tied his *Gartel* on, gave him his glasses and held the *Siddur* before him. He said the *tefilos* and *Korbonos* up until *Hodu* while lying down. I then took a pillow and propped it beneath him so that he would be half-sitting half-lying down, and placed his *Talis* on him. Wrapping the *Talis* with the many stringencies that the Rebbe usually practiced was

¹² The reference here is to a story mentioned in *Bava Metziah* 59B, where the sages argued with Rabbi Elazar regarding the status of purity of a certain type of oven. The *Gemara* writes, that the oven was called the "snake's oven" because the Sages surrounded the topic with so many questions, just as a snake coils around its prey.

difficult for me and taxing for him. Once the *Talis* was on, I suggested to him to rest for a minute from the exertion of putting on the *Talis*, and he did. I placed his *Tefilin* on, and he *davened*. He stopped after *Shimusha Raba*, and would continue with *Rabbeinu Tam's* at *Mincha* time. He drank coffee and milk, and dozed off.

4:00 PM: The Rebbe wanted to *daven Mincha*. We placed his *Rabbeinu Tam's Tefilin* on him, and he completed *Shachris*. After he finished *Shachris*, I heard him reciting random chapters of *Tehilim* but I could not make out the words. I did hear him say aloud (*Tehilim* 23;4), "Even if I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." He raised his voice, and completed the verse, "For you are with me." He then began *Korbonos* for *Mincha*, recited a few verses from *Tehilim* chapter 27 and *davened Mincha*.

Towards evening, a Dr. Mirski arrived to remain at the Rebbe's side together with Dr. Lazinski. He too, remained with the Rebbe until the *Histalkus*.

The family suggested to the Rebbe, that his bed be moved from his room to his office which was bigger and roomier. The Rebbe refused without reason. Later, we discovered that he did not want to remain lying in bed in the presence of holy books and *Chassidus* manuscripts. Even when the Rayatz offered to place sheets over all the bookshelves, the Rebbe refused.

11:00 PM: The Rebbe *davened Maariv*, drank something, recited *Shema* and went to sleep.

The *chassidim* of Rostov declared Monday as a day of fasting and prayer. They read the *Parshah* of "*Vayechal*," and recited much *Tehilim*.

During the course of the week, 10 *chassidim* gathered each night at the home of R' Yaakov Heber. They remained awake all night, reciting *Tehilim* with great concentration and fervor. They poured out their souls and begged Hashem to heal the Rebbe. Amongst

them were, R' Yitzchok Yoel Rafelovitch, R' Shmuel Gurary, his brother R' Nosson Gurary and their children.

Tuesday, 26 Adar.

Early morning: The Rebbetzin asked the Rebbe, "How do you feel? Did you sleep well?" The Rebbe answered, "I slept sufficiently." The Rebbe's morning schedule was similar to Mondays, he washed *Nettilas Yodayim* with our assistance, recited *Birchas Hashachar*, etc. However, it was evident that the Rebbe was even weaker, and he required more assistance for everything he did. Dr. Landa returned and repeated his opinion that it was not typhus. He suggested slightly different forms of treatment than the day before but as a whole did not change much.

The Rayatz again suggested that the Rebbe's bed be moved to his office at least for an hour or two, to allow the bedroom to be cleaned and aired out. The Rebbe agreed; the bookshelves in the office were all covered, and the Rebbe was carried in while lying on his bed.

When it came time for the Rebbe to put on his *Talis*, I suggested to the Rebbe that he use his *Shabbos Talis*. It was cleaner, and the doctors had warned him to maintain optimal hygiene standards. He said, "The *Shabbos Talis* is heavier," paused, and then said, "but *nu*, bring it to me." From that day, he *davened* only wearing the *Shabbos Talis* until he was eventually buried in it.

I had a personal matter to deal with, and the Rebbe (who knew about it) instructed me to go and take care of the matter. The Rebbe *davened* while still in the office in a similar fashion to the day before with the Rayatz at his side. Meanwhile, his room was cleaned.

By the time I returned, he had finished *davening*, and I found that the Rashag had taken my place.

2:00 PM: We carried the Rebbe back to his room. He began to cough, and the Rayatz said to him, "Father, you are coughing." The Rebbe said, "Indeed, the light does not rest in the vessel properly¹³." The Rebbe *davened Mincha* in a similar fashion to Monday, and again recited extra verses and prayers that I could not make out. That night there was not much change, the Rebbe *davened Maariv* without a *Siddur* and prepared to sleep. The Rebbe's sleep was fitful.

Wednesday, 27 Adar.

Early morning: The Rebbetzin asked the Rebbe if he had slept through the night, he answered, "*Nu*, another night of suffering has passed." That morning, the Rebbe's schedule was similar to Tuesday.

9:00 AM: Prof. Zavadski arrived and immediately summoned Dr. Landa to join him. The professor noticed that the Rebbe's general state of health had improved slightly but he was weaker. The doctor advised that dry "bunkes"¹⁴ be administered, as well as other medication.

The Rebbe wanted to *daven* and I went to find his regular red *Siddur*. He called out to me, "Bring my old *Siddur*." (The "Old *Siddur*" was the *Siddur* with the Rebbe's commentary on *Shaarei Tefilah* written in the gloss. Previously, the Rebbe only used that *Siddur* on special occasions. The year that he said *Kaddish* or on a day that he observed a *Yartzeit* as well as on *Rosh Hashonah* and *Pesach*. The

¹³ A *Kabbalistic* reference to an unbalanced relationship between G-dly energy and the acceptor of energy.

¹⁴ Cupping therapy is an ancient form of alternative medicine in which a therapist puts special cups on skin for a few minutes to create suction. People get it for many purposes, including to help with pain, inflammation, blood flow, relaxation and well-being, and as a type of deep-tissue massage.

Siddur was later bequeathed to the Rayatz, as stated in the Rebbe's will.) I brought him the *Siddur*, and from that day on he used only that one. He *davened Shachris* in a similar fashion to Tuesday.

Later that day, the Rebbe turned to the Rayatz and said "It would be preferable if you leave this room." The Rayatz immediately obeyed and exited the room, but he remained standing right near the door. A moment later, the Rayatz could not control himself and walked right back in. The Rebbe turned to him and said again, "You should not be here." The Rayatz responded in a pleading voice, "Father, why do you want me to go away from here? Why can't I remain near you?" The Rebbe answered, "This is how it must be. We do not know the nature of my illness and you have a weak heart. Your mother too, should not be here." (The Rebbe's intention was that if he had indeed contracted typhus it would be highly contagious. Those with heart conditions needed to be careful not to come in contact with the sick.) The Rayatz responded, "Father, it is not as bad as you make it seem. You have not contracted typhus. Hashem will protect us. I want to remain in your presence." The conversation ended at that.

That evening the bunkes were administered as per the instructions of the doctors. The Rebbe *davened Maariv* without a *Siddur*. The night passed in an uncomfortable manner, the Rebbe's sleep was sporadic. He continuously would fall asleep for a few moments and wake up, and from moment to moment he appeared weaker and weaker.

Thursday, 28 Adar.

Thursday morning: Prof. Zavadski returned and noted that the Rebbe's condition had significantly deteriorated. Dr. Landa came after him and calmed us slightly compared to the grim diagnosis of the professor. However, Dr. Landa too, was highly concerned about the Rebbe's weakness which had deteriorated. The professor

instructed that the Rebbe receive camphor¹⁵ injections five times per 24 hour period. Practically, the injections began to be administered on Thursday night. The doctors also instructed to place about 30 dry “bunkes” on the Rebbe’s body near his lungs, as well as 8 “bunkes” that would draw blood.

11:00 AM: The “bunkes” were administered. Even though the treatment pained the Rebbe greatly (as he later told us), he gave no indication of any pain, not even a sigh escaped his lips.

Following the treatment, the Rebbe rested, drank some coffee and prepared for *davening*. The Rebbe was weaker than he had been the day before, and the doctors had instructed us not to touch the areas of his body that had come under the “bunkes”, so donning the *Talis* and *Tefilin* was a challenge. Nevertheless, Hatomim Yaakov Aizik Balanter and myself assisted the Rebbe, and he *davened*.

Throughout the course of the day, the Rebbe appeared sicker and sicker. The situation seemed dire indeed.

An additional, expert doctor was brought in to remain at the Rebbe’s side around the clock. Dr Rabinowitz was his name. He arrived late afternoon and remained until the *Histalkus*. He too was tremendously devoted to caring for the Rebbe and was completely selfless. He amongst all the others, held a strong affinity for the Rebbe.

From Thursday and on, it was difficult for the Rebbe to sit up or even turn himself without assistance, he was too weak. Furthermore, the doctors warned him not to exert himself and not to move at all.

The Rayatz summoned Yehoshua Folik Gurary, his brother the Rashag, and myself, and appointed us as a *Beis Din*. In the presence

¹⁵ Camphor (Cinnamomum camphora) is a terpene (organic compound) that's commonly used in creams, ointments, and lotions. Camphor oil is the oil extracted from the wood of camphor trees and processed by steam distillation. It can be used topically to relieve pain, irritation, and itching.

of the *Beis Din*, he made a legally binding pact that he accepted upon himself certain acts of *tzedaka* with the hope that Hashem would heal the Rebbe.

10:00 PM: The Rebbe was asleep. I sat in the Rebbe's room together with Yaakov Aizik Balanter, and Dr. Landa would occasionally walk in and out. Suddenly, the Rebbe awoke and began to speak as if he was in the middle of a discussion. Yaakov Aizik and myself approached the Rebbe's bed to hear what he was saying. These are the words we heard, "One surrenders to Hashem at an essential level, his entire existence becomes nullified in a manner that is beyond intellect. The reason being: When the essential light of Hashem shines, automatically one surrenders their entire self at the deepest level. That is what the *Possuk* says, "To you Hashem, my soul will soar," this regularly occurs when one *davens* on *Shabbos*." The Rebbe then concluded, "I am at that level, right now." He then continued speaking but it was difficult to make out the words. We did however hear him say, "Understanding and contemplation. When one contemplates with a wide berth of understanding, he becomes totally nullified. The ego and selfishness of his soul are destroyed."

When Dr. Lazinski heard him speaking words of *Torah* which was forbidden for him, primarily because the doctors did not want him to exert his mind with deep thoughts. The doctor interrupted the Rebbe, saying, "Rebbe, now is not the time for you to say *Torah*, now you must sleep. When you are healthy, you will teach *Torah*." The Rebbe responded, "Indeed, that is why one must be healthy," the Rebbe went quiet and went to sleep.

Three people heard the Rebbe saying the words "To you Hashem my soul will soar" myself, the Rashag, and Yaakov Aizik. We were thunderstruck and our hearts fell within us; I began to sense doom, however, we did not tell a soul.

Later that evening, the Rebbe turned to Dr. Mirski and said, "Lazinski sits here, takes me by the hand, and says 'do not think about certain things.' He does not warn me to avoid things that are forbidden to think, but he encourages me not to think about certain matters in the present situation. [However, he does not understand,] for me, saying [*Chassidus*] is different, [i.e., *Chassidus* will not negatively influence my health, on the contrary]."

11:00 PM: The Rebbe *davened Maariv* without a *Siddur*. Throughout the night, the Rebbe appeared weaker and weaker, and it was evident that he was critically ill. The camphor injection was administered three times over the course of the night.

Friday, 29 Adar.

8:00 AM: The Rebbe appeared weaker than Thursday. Prof. Kastarian arrived to treat the Rebbe. He joined Dr. Landa, Rabinowitz, Lazinski and Mirski. Following a careful examination, the professor gave his verdict. He told us that the Rebbe was indeed in grave condition, but he sided with Dr. Landa that it did not seem to be typhus. He warned the Rebbe not to exert himself or move at all.

I washed the Rebbe's hands while he remained lying down, and he remained in that position throughout *Birchas Hashachar*. I held the *Siddur* open before him, and he did not move at all. Besides for the fact that he was too weak to move, we would not let him.

10:00 AM: The Rebbe asked for his *Siddur*; he wanted to *daven*. I held the *Siddur* open in front of him, and he began to say *Korbonos*. As he *davened*, I could see that the activity was taxing his strength terribly. I wanted to interrupt him so that he could rest for a moment, but I was afraid to do so. However, immediately, I said to myself, "I do not care what happens to me, I will not be a foolish

*chossid*¹⁶, I must ask him to rest for a moment.” So when he reached *Ketores*, I leaned in and said, “Rebbe, would you like to stop for a moment and rest a bit?” He immediately consented because he could feel the negative affect the effort was having on him. He was given some tea to drink and injected with camphor, but it was evident to everyone that his strength had abandoned him.

I entered a side room to consult the Rayatz how we should proceed with preparing the Rebbe to *daven*. The issue; the doctors had strongly warned the Rebbe not to strain himself or move and placing the *Talis* and *Tefilin* on him would necessitate movement and exertion. Especially, due to the fact that the Rebbe was meticulous about how the straps should be wound around his arm and arranging them in the desired fashion would require much exertion. We could not make a decision, even though *halachically* due to his weakness and illness he was definitely exempt from both *Talis* and *Tefilin*. Eventually, the Rayatz decided to ask the Rebbe to, at least, shorten his *davening*. The Rayatz walked back into the Rebbe’s room and said, “Father, you need to shorten your *davening*. The doctors do not want you to move too much.” The Rebbe did not respond, but he clearly heard what the Rayatz had said.

A few moments later, the Rebbe said to me, “Berel, bring me my *Siddur*.” I thought he wanted to continue saying *Korbonos*, and although I wished he would rest more, I had to obey. When I brought the *Siddur*, the Rebbe indicated to turn to the back of the *Siddur*. I realized that the Rebbe wanted to look into the *halochos* of *davening* regarding someone that is critically ill and immobile¹⁷. I began to turn the pages slowly, stalling for time; I knew that a *Halachic* investigation would tax his mind which was forbidden for

¹⁶ This expression is a reference to a statement in the *Gemara*. The *Gemara* describes an individual who avoids doing a kind act to another person, out of fear of transgressing an *Avairah*.

¹⁷ At the back of the *Siddur Torah Oir*, one can find the section called “*Derech Hachayim*,” containing many *halachos* of *davening*.

him. I hoped he would forego his plan of figuring out the *halachah* himself and leave it to others. I did not ask him which page to turn to, I just began turning pages. He suddenly stopped me and said, "Bring me a *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken* volume 1," [evidently, he had decided to deduce the *halachah* from the source, in *Shulchan Aruch*].

I walked out of the room, and I immediately turned to the Rayatz and asked what to do. He advised me to not return to the Rebbe's room but rather to remain outside. A few moments later, the Rebbe turned to the Rebbetzin and asked, "Where is Berel?"

She answered, "He will probably walk in any minute." After a considerable chunk of time, the Rebbe realized that I was abstaining from returning and giving him the *Shulchan Aruch*. He turned to the Rayatz and said, "Tell Berel to look into the *Shulchan Aruch*, infer the *halochos* of how one who is very ill should *daven*, and then inform me of his conclusion. I will rely on his decision." I stood right outside the door and overheard the conversation. The Rayatz walked out and repeated the dialogue to me. We were unsure how to proceed. We were afraid that if we tell the Rebbe that *halachically* he is entirely exempt from *davening*, his spirits will dampen and his mind will be unsettled. On the other hand, to allow him to *daven* with his *Talis* and *Tefilin* would be dangerous, and the doctors would not approve of it. We did not know what to do, so we decided to stall for time. A few moments later, the Rebbe said to the Rebbetzin, "Please summon Berel." She answered, "He is busy checking the *halachah* in the *Shulchan Aruch*." A few moments later, the Rebbe asked for me again and the Rebbetzin again said that I was busy checking up the *halachah*. A few moments later the Rebbe asked again, with a very surprised expression, "Where is Berel, he is still busy checking up the *halachah*? I meant for him to investigate the possibility of a leniency not a stringency."

The Rashag and myself, who were both standing outside the room listening in, realized that I had to walk in immediately. Clearly, the Rebbe was concerned about this matter, and delaying was not making him any calmer. I told the Rayatz that I would try to be as lenient as possible, and hopefully the Rebbe would accept my decision. I would forbid the Rebbe to wear *Tefilin*, for that involved the most exertion which the doctors had warned about, but as for saying words of *davening*, that was not so taxing and I would permit it. The Rayatz answered that under no circumstance would he allow that. On the contrary, the one thing that, in his opinion, the Rebbe must do is wear *Tefilin*.

Meanwhile, I was forced to enter the Rebbe's room, and as soon as the Rebbe saw me he asked, "Nu? What [did you come up with]?" [My knees were shaking and] I began to mumble, stutter and stumble. I blurted out a few non-conclusive irrelevant half-sentences, "Generally, the most important part of *davening* is *Shema* and *Shemona Esreh*. *Mideoirasa*, one can fulfill his obligation of saying *Shema* by just reciting the first line, and with regards to *Shemoneh Esreh*, even someone that is busy or travelling can suffice by reciting *Havinenu*¹⁸. Although, in the rainy season, we avoid saying *Havinenu*, one may still suffice with a shortened *tefilah*, comprising the first three and last three *Brachos* of *Shemoneh Esreh*." I stopped speaking, and thought to myself, "I will not even mention *Pesukei Dezimrah*." Almost immediately, he asked, "What about *Pesukei Dezimra*?" I answered, "I believe that *Boruch She'omar*, one chapter of *Tehilim*, and *Yishtabach* would suffice." He listened to everything I told him. I had not mentioned one word about the *Tefilin*, I decided that if he would ask about *Tefilin* I would do everything possible to make sure that he would not wear them. Again he immediately grasped what I was thinking and asked, "What about *Tefilin*?" I began to mumble, "I believe that *Tefilin* is

¹⁸ A one-paragraph abbreviation of the *Shemoneh Esreh*.

like all other *Mitzvos*, and for a critically ill person even *Shabbos* and *Yom Kippur* are violated.” I did not finish the verdict. I had thought to say, “and since the doctors have forbidden you to lay *Tefilin*, you are exempt.” Before I had a chance to say those words, the Rayatz interrupted me and said, “No father, you may certainly lay *Tefilin*.” The Rayatz called Dr. Mirski, and whispered in his ear, “Tell the Rebbe that he may wear *Tefilin*.” Dr. Mirski turned to the Rebbe and said, “Rebbe, I permit you to wear *Tefilin*.” The discussion ended there, as there was nothing more I could say, the doctor had permitted it. I did however add, “But Rebbe, we will tighten the knots of the *Tefilin* for you, you are not to assist us at all,” and he agreed.

I brought his *Siddur*, opened to *Boruch She’amar* and held it open before him. He recited it and I turned to *Ashrei*; I thought that the one chapter of *Tehilim* he would choose would be that one, (as stated in *Shulchan Aruch*). However, he did not begin saying the words so I understood that he would prefer a different chapter. I turned to *Hallelu Es Hashem Min Hashamayim*, he nodded and began to read. I then pointed at *Yishtabach* which he recited also.

I put down the *Siddur* and said, “Rebbe, now we will put on your *Tefilin*.” The Rayatz and I wound the *Tefilin* on him, he did not assist us at all. It was a very difficult task because we tried as hard as possible not to move his body at all. I then took the *Siddur* and pointed to the *Bracha* of *Yotzer Oir*, [even though we had not discussed whether he should recite *Birchos Krias Shema*, I was sure that he would like to say at least the opening short *Bracha*]. He recited the first paragraph of *Shema*, the first 3 and last 3 *Brachos* of *Shemoneh Esreh*. Interestingly, he also recited the *Brachos* of *Velamalshinim* and *Veliyurashalayim*, he recited them quietly and without Hashem’s name. As soon as he concluded *Shemoneh Esreh*, we removed the *Tefilin* and left him to rest.

Over the course of the day, the camphor injection was administered many times. A Dr. Tatarski joined the medical team that day. During the course of the afternoon, the Rebbe asked me on numerous occasions what time it was.

6:30 PM: The Rebbe said to me, "Berel, go and have a look on my desk, there is a calendar. Check what time *Shabbos* begins." I went to check, and astonishingly, that very moment was exactly the minute that *Shabbos* began. I returned to his room and told him as such. He said to me, "Please call the Rebbetzin." I went to call her and found that she had just lit *Shabbos* candles. The Rebbe said to her, "I would like to have my nails cut in honour of *Shabbos*." She answered, "Now, it will be difficult for you, soon, with Hashem's help, you will be healthier, and then we will cut them." The Rebbe responded with an exasperated and doubtful tone of voice, "Sunday...?" As if to say, who knows what will be by Sunday. The Rebbe then turned to the Rebbetzin and said, "Now is the time to light *Shabbos* candles." She responded, "I have just done so."

9:00 PM: Dr. Abramowitz came to administer the leech treatment. He prepared it and proceeded to place 3 leeches under each of the Rebbe's ears. When we, who were all standing around, saw the blood flowing out, our hearts melted and we cried bitterly. We could not contain the feelings anymore. The doctor removed the leeches and wrapped the Rebbe's head in bandages. The image was heart-breaking, we could not control ourselves and we cried and cried. However, we made sure that the Rebbe did not see us so emotional.

Throughout *Shabbos*, we did whatever was necessary to improve the Rebbe's health and comfort. We did not refrain from touching and moving *Muktzeh* objects. The Rebbe noticed this, but did not comment. We gave him coffee to drink and let him rest. He slept sporadically and appeared even weaker.

Later that night: I went to sleep on a bench in one of the side rooms of the Rebbe's house, and Yaakov Aizik took my place at the Rebbe's bedside. The Rebbe began *davening Maariv* in a loud voice, even though already then, it was difficult for him to speak. Once he had finished *davening*, and had taken the medication that the doctors prescribed for the evening, the Rebbetzin asked, "Can I give you some coffee to drink?" and she placed some of the liquid on a spoon and offered it to him. The Rebbe refused, [as he had not made *Kiddush* yet].

Soon after, Yaakov Aizik too went to sit down in a nearby room and dozed off, leaving the *chossid* Tzvi Hersh Gurary to tend to the Rebbe. Yaakov Aizik was dozing off and he heard the Rebbe calling him, "Yaakov Aizik..." he immediately came running in to the Rebbe's room. He asked, "What is it, Rebbe?" the Rebbe said, "*Kiddush*." Yaakov Aizik asked, "Would you like to make *Kiddush* on tea or coffee?" the Rebbe answered, "on a *Kezayis* of *challah*." Yaakov Aizik consulted the doctors and they permitted the Rebbe to eat a *Kezayis* of dry *challah* soaked in coffee. The Rebbe then asked Yaakov Aizik to call the Rebbetzin but she had fallen asleep for a few moments, (she had barely slept the entire week). The Rebbe inquired, "Has she heard *Kiddush*?" and when the response was confirmed as positive, the Rebbe agreed to make *Kiddush* without her.

The Rebbe's hands were washed, and the soaked *challah* was handed to him. He recited *Yom Hashishi* quietly and *Hamotzi* out loud. He began reciting the *Bracha* of *Kiddush* and stopped 2 lines in, at the word *Hinchilonu*. He was silent for a few moments and said, "*Nu*," Yaakov Aizik thought that the Rebbe had finished *Kiddush*, so he said to the Rebbe, "Do you want the *challah*?" and the Rebbe did not answer. Yaakov Aizik realized that the Rebbe had not finished *Kiddush*, so he said, "You are up to the word *Hinchilonu*," and the Rebbe said again, "*Nu*." Yaakov Aizik realized that the

Rebbe wished to complete *Kiddush*, so he asked the Rebbe, "Would you like to finish *Kiddush*?" and the Rebbe motioned in the positive. So Yaakov Aizik began reciting the words of *Kiddush* from where the Rebbe was up to, leading the Rebbe word by word, and the Rebbe repeated after him until the end of the *Bracha*. The Rebbe said a few more words following the *Bracha*, and then said the *Bracha* of *Hamotzi* again and ate the *Kezayis*. We did not hear him recite *Birchas Hamazon*.

Following which the Rebbe turned to Yaakov Aizik and said, "*Kerias Shema*." Yaakov Aizik asked, "Should I read it to you?" and the Rebbe nodded. Yaakov Aizik led the Rebbe word by word through the first paragraph of the *Shema*. Dr. Lazinski then said, "Enough Rebbe, it is time for you to sleep." The Rebbe said, "I will recite the paragraph that brings protection," and he turned to Yaakov Aizik and said, "*Nu*." Yaakov Aizik asked, "Would you like to recite the second paragraph of *Shema*?" the Rebbe did not answer. Yaakov Aizik asked again, "Would you like to recite *Hamapil*?" and the Rebbe nodded. Yaakov Aizik recited word for word of the *Bracha*, and the Rebbe recited the *Bracha* in an undertone. However the phrase, "Illuminate my eyes, lest I sleep until death" was recited by the Rebbe in a loud voice. The Rebbe then went to sleep. He would sleep for a few moments at a time and wake up, the night did not pass smoothly.

Shabbos, Parshas Vayikra, 1 Nissan.

The *Rav* of the city, Rabbi Y. Berman, announced that every member of the Jewish community of Rostov must gather in their respective *shuls* that afternoon to recite *Tehilim* and beseech Hashem to have mercy on the Rebbe. So it was, Jews of many affinities came to *shuls* and prayed for the Rebbe. Being that all the Jews of Rostov, *chassidim* and not, trembled at the mention of the name of the Rebbe. However, alas, all our prayers were to no avail.

Early morning: I noticed that the Rebbe was sweating profusely, and I pointed this out to Dr. Rabinowitz and Dr. Lazinski. They were on duty at that time but had both dozed off. They measured his temperature, and it measured 37.5c, which was lower than his average of 38.5c. I saw their expressions denote fear so I asked them, "Why is he sweating so?" They answered, "We don't know, but it might be a good sign."

8:00 AM: Prof. Zavadksi and Dr. Landa arrived. The professor interpreted the recent change as being negative and his prognosis was dire indeed. In his opinion, all hope was lost and it was a matter of time. Dr. Landa was more optimistic and he said, "We will see over the next hours if the sweating is a good sign. If his temperature rises, we will know that it is a step in the right direction." [His words calmed us slightly. In truth, Dr. Landa already knew that the end was imminent. However, he did not want to break the spirits of the Rebbe's family and the *chassidim*, so he pretended to be doubtful.] The professor's words spread throughout the *chassidim* and had a strong impact on them; their faces fell.

It was very difficult for the Rebbe to speak. His breathing was weighty also, as if his throat was blocked. It was hard for him to even drink a bit of coffee. A few times during that day, the Rebbe asked me the time. He received many injections that day, camphor, caffeine, etc. almost every half an hour another injection would be administered.

2:00 PM: The Rebbe asked me, "Have you *davened*?" I answered that I had, and then he asked, "What about everyone else?" I answered, "There are probably some *chassidim* that have not *davened*." [I did not want to tell him directly, that it was late in the day, and almost all the *chassidim* had already *davened*.] A few moments later, the Rebbe turned to me and said, "Please gather a *Minyan* to *daven* and read the *Torah* here, and have Yankel Landau

(who was the regular *Ba'al Koreh*) join them. I will listen in, after all it is *Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh* and *Parshas Hachodesh*. The doctors are trying to prevent me from doing anything, but their rules and limitations must also be bent a little." I said, "I will go and see if I can find a *Minyan* who have not *davened* yet." I did not go gather the *Minyan*, I remained near his bed and he did not mention the *Minyan* again.

2:15 PM: The Rebbe turned to me and mumbled, "I want you to recite the first *Bracha* of *Birchas Hashachar* with me." I asked, "*Al Nettilas Yodayim* or *Hanosen lasechvi*?" he did not respond, and I did not know if he heard me or not. I did not persist because every time he wanted to speak he had to muster all his energy and it clearly exhausted him. I decided to begin reciting *Hanosen lasechvi* because I did not want him to recite *Al Nettilas Yodayim*, for that would require him to wash his hands which would strain him. A moment later, he indicated that he wished to wash his hands. I wet his hands slightly, and led him in reciting the *Bracha*. Even though that day he spoke with great difficulty, to the surprise of everyone around, when he recited the *Bracha* his voice boomed clearly. He then laid back to rest, and I remained at his bedside.

5:00 PM: I walked out of the Rebbe's room and Reb Tzvi Hersh Gurary took my place standing near the Rebbe's bed. Tzvi Hersh noticed that the Rebbe's face had changed and its appearance was frightening. Tzvi Hersh came running out of the room to call me. I immediately reentered and noticed that indeed the Rebbe's face was burning red. His gaze rested upon us and we were shaking in our boots, we did not know what to think or do. The doctors noticed and did all they could, using whatever medicine and treatments they could get their hands on, irrespective of cost or energies used. They monitored his pulse constantly. The doctors did not inform us of the goings-on, but at that point they all knew that naturally there was no hope for the Rebbe to make it out. They

later told us that most of *Shabbos* the Rebbe's pulse was almost non-existent, by that stage the injections bore no results. The *chassidim* who were all gathered, understood that the situation was dire indeed.

Towards evening, the entire community of *chassidim* in Rostov gathered in the *Zal*, (the big room at the left side of the complex where the *Minyanim* took place), they did not enter the part of the complex where the Rebbe's house was, so as not to disturb the Rebbe. They all said *Tehilim* and begged Hashem for mercy with incessant tears.

Motzo'ey Shabbos, 2 Nissan.

Immediately following *Shabbos*: The doctors instructed that much water be heated to warm the Rebbe's feet which had begun to go cold.

Dr. Landa called over the community leaders, Shmuel Gurary, Tzvi Hersh Gurary and Reb Avrohom Boruch Poizner and he revealed to them that naturally there was no hope for the Rebbe's survival. He asked them to relay this information to the Rayatz, in case he had any final matters he wished to ask his father, the Rebbe. However, none of the *chassidim* agreed to be the one to relay the awful news. They decided that the next time the Rayatz would ask Dr. Landa for an update, Dr. Landa would begin to break the news to him slowly. A few minutes later, the Rayatz did indeed ask Dr. Landa how things are progressing, and the doctor began to slowly try and give the devastating news over to the Rayatz. The Rayatz listened but did not internalize the harsh reality, (his mind would not let him), all he gleaned from the doctor was that the situation was critical. [In truth, it is difficult to describe what was going through our minds at that time. It was absurd, everyone knew and understood that the Rebbe was on the verge of *Histalkus* but our minds refused to grasp the facts. Even at the moment of *Histalkus* when all the *chassidim*

cried out *Shema Yisroel* in one joint voice, our minds would not accept the reality that our Rebbe had departed from among us.]

9:00 PM: The Rebbe spoke indiscernible words, the only few words we could hear were, "The unification of *Yichudah Ila'ah* and *Yichudah Tata'a*." His speech was heavy and difficult, he spoke softly and seemed to be talking to himself.

10:00 PM: The Rayatz did not move from the Rebbe's bedside for even a moment, he stood bent over near the Rebbe's bed.

The Rebbe suddenly turned to the Rayatz and said,

"איך גיי אין הימל, די כתבים לאז איך פאר אייך נעמט מיך אין זאל וועלען
מיר זיין אין איינעם"

"I am going to heaven. I am leaving my writings for you. Take me into the *Zal*, we will be together."

Understandably, when the Rayatz heard these words addressed to him he was shocked to the core.

When the Rebbe saw that the Rayatz was so deeply moved and emotionally affected, he said,

"!...התפעלות?... התפעלות?... מוחין!... מוחין!..."

"Excitement...? Excitement...? Intellect...! Intellect...!"

It was evident to all of us standing around watching the interaction that at that moment, with his holy words, the Rebbe removed the Rayatz's natural emotion of excitement and placed into him great intellectual powers. It was blatantly evident; from that moment onwards the Rayatz become calm and calculated, he engaged the events with powerful intellect. It was incredible to see how from that moment, the Rayatz stood by the Rebbe's side until the *Histalkus* dressed in his *Gartel* and his *Shabbos* hat. He stood for those few hours in the same position that he would stand when he would face the Rebbe during *Maamorim*. It is impossible to describe the scene, how much more so, to put it down on paper.

We carried the Rebbe in his bed up into the *Zal* - the room where he had always sat learning and *davening*, the room from which he

spread his great light to the whole world - we placed the bed at the eastern wall of the *Zal*, his head towards north and his feet towards south. [The Rayatz led the *davening* for the following year from exactly that spot.] The bed was a small distance from the wall, enabling people to stand around on all sides. The doctors were all at hand, administering injections every 20 minutes or so and keeping the Rebbe's feet in warm water.

The Rebbe began speaking and requested something, it was difficult to understand exactly what it was he was asking for. Yaakov Aizik suggested, perhaps the Rebbe wanted to wash *Nettilas Yodayim*, and some water was brought. The Rebbetzin asked the Rebbe if he would like some milk or coffee, he indicated that he wanted coffee. When the cup of coffee was brought near his mouth, his lips were moving and it was evident that he was reciting *Havdolah*, [reminiscent of the Alter Rebbe who was also *Nistalek* on *Motzo'ey Shabbos* and recited *Havdolah* on coffee]. He drank some coffee, and laid back. His lips were moving and the Rayatz leaned in and heard him reciting the second paragraph of the *Shema*. Most of the time, his eyes were closed, and his breathing was difficult and heavy. It was obvious that he was suffering terribly, and each breath escaped with a deep sigh crushing the body and spirit of every *chossid* present.

12:00 AM: The *chassidim* remained in the *Zal* reciting *Tehilim* with heart rendering sobs praying that Hashem lengthen the life of the Rebbe. They decided to add the name "Chaim" to the Rebbe's name. The *chassidim* formed a *Beis Din* of three members, (Reb Shmuel Gurary, Reb Zalman Havlin, Reb Yisroel Nevler), and in their presence many *chassidim* came forth and pledged to gift the Rebbe with years from their own lives. The three members of the *Beis Din* themselves each donated half a year to the Rebbe. The Rebbetzin approached the *Beis Din* and with bitter tears donated 10 years of her life to the Rebbe. The *Beis Din* did not deem such an extensive

period as appropriate and they encouraged her to donate half a year or a full year, but she persisted. Eventually they agreed that the Rebbetzin would give 2 years. I, too, donated half a year. Following the *Beis Din* scene, the *chassidim* continued saying *Tehilim* and *davening* intensely.

The Rayatz walked out of the *Zal* for a few moments and stood in the hallway near the stairs. He stood, wearing his *Gartel*, bent over, deep in thought. He was reciting some words of *tefilah* or *Tehilim*, crying deeply, and singing a *nigun* with great *dveykus*. The nigun he sang was the well known nigun of the Alter Rebbe that the Rebbe used to sing while *davening* on the high holidays. The Rayatz went back to the *Zal* and called in his daughters to come join him near the Rebbe's bed, he wanted the Rebbe to see them.

2:00 AM: The Rayatz stood next to the bed with his head bent. Suddenly the Rebbe lifted his hand and began to move his lips, the Rayatz understood that the Rebbe wanted to bless him. The Rayatz lowered his head and rested the Rebbe's hand on his head, and the Rebbe's lips continued to move. Following which, the Rayatz arose and said, "Tateh, father, here are the children, Chanah, Mushkah, Sheindel." One by one, they each bent down and the Rebbe's hand rested on their heads as his lips continued to move.

The Rayatz asked all the *chassidim* to leave the room, just the family should remain. Within seconds the room emptied, even the doctors walked out. [I, too, walked out but later the Rayatz recounted to me what had occurred]. The Rayatz's eldest daughter, Chanah, stood before the Rebbe. He looked at her face and lifted his hand. The Rayatz assisted him to place his hand on her head, just as he blessed them on *Erev Yom Kippur*, and this time his words were clear. He said *Yevorechecho* and some other *tefilos*, and they could hear him say the name Chanah. So it was with Mushkah and Sheindel, they received the same *Bracha*, and both heard their names being mentioned. The Rebbe then placed both his hands on the Rayatz's

head and said *Yevorechecho*, as well as many more *tefilos* and *Brachos*. [Later, when the Rayatz recounted the events, he told me that he could not determine many things the Rebbe had told him. However, I suspect that he understood a lot more but did not want to reveal them.] The Rayatz clearly heard him recite the *Possuk*, “May Hashem be upon him, and may he be elevated.” A certain young man was called into the room, and the Rebbe blessed him too. It was the Rashag, (at that time he was not yet engaged to the Rayatz’s daughter, Chanah). The doctors and *chassidim* all returned. The Rayatz walked out of the *Zal* again and sat on a bench in one of the nearby rooms. He sat crying and *davening* with a soft *nigun*. I followed him and sat down in that room, also. He paced the room, walking to and fro, and then walked over to me and grabbed me by the shoulders. He screamed at me, “*Gevald !!! Gevald !!!* We have stone hearts.” He continued crying, and then turned to me again and said loudly, “Berel, what do you say?” I had no idea what to answer. I said, “Hashem Himself can help us.” He returned to the *Zal* and stood in the same position as before. The Rebbe was lying with his eyes closed, sighing deeply with each difficult and heavy breath. Every few moments it would seem as if he stopped breathing, and the Rayatz would cry out, “Tateh, Tateh.” When those standing around heard the cries, their hearts were torn to shreds. Each time it happened, and it did happen a few times, the same story would repeat. Each time the Rayatz would cry out, the Rebbe would open his eyes and stare at the Rayatz.

This continued until about 4:00 AM, when it became clear to all that these were the final moments. The Rebbe’s eyes were closed and he had almost stopped breathing, the Rayatz cried out, “Tateh, Tateh,” and the Rebbe opened his eyes wide and smiled at the Rayatz. He closed his eyes again and it seemed as if he had stopped breathing, the Rayatz again cried out, “Tateh, Tateh.” The Rebbe’s eyes opened and he looked at the Rayatz, two tears streamed down the Rebbe’s

cheeks, and his breathing grew weaker. A few moments¹⁹ later, he drew in his hands and feet and turned his head upwards (until then he had been lying slightly to the side, facing the Rayatz and the *chassidim*), his face contracted²⁰ and it was clear that his breathing had ceased. Every person in the room cried out in unison, “*Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad.*” The people screamed, cried and wailed bitterly. Many candles were immediately lit. The doctors tested the Rebbe’s breathing using a feather beneath his nose, but alas it was to no avail. The hysterical screaming and wailing intensified from all the *chassidim* and *Anash* standing there. They immediately covered his face and his holy *Neshomah* ascended to heaven in holiness and purity, leaving us behind to grieve and sigh

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Chassidim who had been to *Mikva* on *Shabbos* morning were requested to come forth. Reb Zalman Havlin, Reb Yisroel Nevler, Reb Avrohom Boruch Poizner and Reb Tzvi Kutman came forth, as well as a few others. They lifted the Rebbe’s body and placed it upon the floor, near the entrance to the room, his feet facing towards the door. The Rebbe’s body was covered in his silk *Shabbos* clothes. At that point, many *chassidim* ran to the *Mikva*, while the remaining group completed the *Tehilim* in the *Zal*.

The members of the *Chevrah Kadisha* arrived. A group of *chassidim* left to the cemetery to choose a plot for the Rebbe, they were: Reb

¹⁹ According to the record of Reb Avrohom Boruch Poizner: The Rebbe first drew in his hands and feet and then 2 tears fell from his eyes.

²⁰ According to the record of Reb Avrohom Boruch Poizner: The Rebbe face contracted just as it would when he blew Shofar on Rosh Hashonah.

Shmuel Gurary, Reb Nosson Gurary, Reb Tzvi Hersh Gurary, Reb Zalman Havlin, Reb Yisroel Nevler, and myself. We chose a spot and returned to the Rebbe's home. Reb Shmuel Gurary then took the Rayatz to the cemetery to show the Rayatz the spot we had chosen and get his consent. They returned about an hour later. By that time the news had spread like wildfire, the entire community of Rostov began to come to pay respects.

The Rebbetzin and the Rayatz immediately handed the keys of the Rebbe's office to Reb Shmuel Gurary instructing him to search if the Rebbe had left a will with instructions regarding the burial. Reb Shmuel Gurary and the Rashag went looking in the Rebbe's office and immediately came across the will in the top drawer of the Rebbe's desk, he had clearly placed it there with the intention that it be clearly visible and easily found. They also found a personal letter from the Rebbe to the Rayatz near the will. However, the will did not contain instructions regarding the burial or anything of that sort.

Reb Shmuel Gurary and the Rashag also gathered all of the Rebbe's handwritten books and binders that had been in his office, and brought them down to the Rayatz's house. By that time, almost all the *chassidim* had been to *Mikva* and returned, as well as many other community members.

The *Bimmah* used only on *Rosh Hashonah* and *Yom Kippur*, as well as the *Shtender* that the Rebbe used everyday in the *Zal* were dismantled to use the wood for the Rebbe's coffin. A few more *Shtenders* from the *shul* were dismantled to create a platform/bed for the Rebbe's coffin to be carried on.

Before the *taharah* began, the Rebbetzin walked into the *Zal* and requested that everyone leave. She stayed inside alone, and from the outside we could hear her crying profusely and speaking many heartfelt words.

Sunday, 2 Nissan.

1:00 PM: The *taharah* began. Two announcements were made, a) anyone that had not been to the *Mikva* should not enter the room, b) only *temimim* and a few of the older *chassidim* should be involved in the *taharah* process. [Understandably, every *chossid* wished to have a part in the great *Zechus* of performing the *taharah*. However, there was a collective understanding that those that served the Rebbe so faithfully during his lifetime, should have this merit. Other *chassidim* assisted in other ways, by bringing the equipment and supplies etc.]

A large table (that later became the table that the Rayatz would sit at while he said *Maamorim*) was brought into the *Zal* and placed in the middle of the room. They placed the table at a slight angle and lifted the Rebbe's body onto the table. A certain *Polisheh chossid* who was well versed in the process of *taharah* stood near the table instructing the *temimim* how it should be done, he himself did not touch the Rebbe's body.

Many *bochurim* that were *Kohanim* also did their part in joining the *taharah*. Some of them did not even ask the *Rabbonim* if *halachically* it was permitted, they simply felt that they had to. Others asked the *Rav*, R' Rafolevitch, and he answered from amidst an overwhelming emotional turmoil, "Of course it is permitted, the body of a *Tzadik* does not become *tamei*."

The Rebbe's body was washed with linen. The linen was an inheritance passed down from generation to generation within the family of the Rebbe'im. These very strips of linen were the ones that were used for the Alter Rebbe's *taharah*, as well as all the other Rebbe'im until that point. The Alter Rebbe's handkerchief was also inherited through the generations in the Rebbeim's families and that was used to wipe and clean the Rebbe's body also. [Astonishingly, a mere few weeks before the *Histalkus*, the Rebbe

had asked the Rebbetzin if she knew where the linens and handkerchief were kept.]

Before the *taharah* began, Reb Zalman Havlin and others were appointed in charge of dividing up the *taharah* between the *bochurim*, so that each *bochur* would receive a fair share. I washed the Rebbe's hands and face. Following which Reb Shmuel Gurary and myself were given the *Zechus* of pouring the water over the Rebbe.

The Rebbe's body was then clothed. The shirt was one that had belonged to his father, the Rebbe Maharash. The hat and pants were sewn from new linen, this too was done by the *temimim*. The *Kittel* was the Rebbe's own, that he would use on *Yom Kippur*. The Rayatz then stepped forward and wrapped the belt/*Gartel* around the Rebbe's body, and then he tore *Keriah*.

During the *taharah*, we were amazed to see that the Rebbe's face was radiant, it seemed alive. Until the moment that his face was covered for the final time, he had a hint of a smile on his face.

The Rebbe's body was wrapped in his *Shabbos Talis*, (the *Talis* mentioned above, the one he used while *davening* during the final few days). An additional layer of linen shrouds were wrapped around the Rebbe's body over the *Talis*. Moments before the Rebbe's body was about to be carried out, the Rebbetzin and the rest of the Rebbe's family approached the table and ripped *Keriah*.

The body was then transported to the cemetery. After the Rebbe's body had been lowered down into the grave but before it was covered, the Rayatz appointed 3 *chassidim* (Reb Avrohom Boruch Poizner, Reb Eliezer Karasik and one other) as a *Beis Din* and declared that the Rebbe was being buried there on the condition that it would be permissible to relocate the Rebbe's body to Lubavitch in the future. Following that, the pit was filled and the Rayatz said *Kaddish*.

When everyone returned from the funeral, the Rayatz and the Rebbetzin entered the Rebbe's office and removed their shoes as per the *halachah*. The meal following the funeral took place there, too. The rest of the community returned to the house also, and they too removed their shoes and sat on the floor.

The Rayatz was *chazan* for *Mincha* and *Maariv*, and he *davened* at great length crying deeply throughout. Afterwards, many of the *chassidim* went home. A select few *chassidim* including myself, remained at the house and slept there for the duration of the week of *Shivah*.

Following *Maariv*, when most of the *chassidim* had went on their way, I remained in the Rebbe's office with the Rayatz. We spoke for quite an extensive period of time and amongst other things he said to me as follows, "Now, I look back and I can see that the Rebbe was preparing for this event. Over the last few months he told me many things that were a "will" of sorts. I did not dream that this was his intention in telling me these matters." The Rayatz raised his tone and in a broken voice said, "*Gevald Gevald*, where was my intuition?! The entire winter the Rebbe had been telling me so clearly and pointedly that the *Histalkus* is coming, and I did not realize it."

In the forthcoming weeks, the Rayatz was *chazan* for all of the *tefilos* and he recited *Kaddish*. He *davened* at length, with great fervor, devotion and flowing tears. His *tefilos* caused all those surrounding him to feel a spiritual awakening and an emotional connection to Hashem. When he *davened*, all those *davening* with him felt like one would feel on *Yom Kippur*. The Rayatz later mentioned that during the year of mourning he *davened* with the intentions spelled out by the *AriZal* in the books of *Kabbalah*. The tune in which he *davened* was identical to that of the Rebbe.

Shabbos, Parshas Tzav, 8 Nissan. (The Final Day of Shivah)

Between *Mincha* and *Maariv*: The majority of the *chassidim* present were in the *Zal* waiting for *Maariv* time to come. The Rayatz was alone in the Rebbe's office and he summoned me into the office. I entered; he began to speak with words that bespoke a broken heart, he said, "My father instructed me to teach *Chassidus* to the community, but who am I? How can I bring myself to stand before the *chassidim* and teach *Chassidus*?" His great humility drove him to continue bemoaning the fact that he was not worthy or befitting of saying *Maamorim*, however, I was not too interested in hearing him speak negatively about himself and I told him that. He continued, "But my father instructed me to teach *Chassidus*, therefore, I want to recite a *Maamor* to you, thereby I will fulfill my obligation to heed my father's instructions." I obviously agreed. He did not want to sit down, rather we walked about to and fro and he repeated the final *Maamor* of the Rebbe, "*Reishis Goyim Amalek*" that the Rebbe had taught at the *Purim Farbrengen*. He repeated the *Maamor* verbatim and added many words of his own explanation.

He finished, and as I was about to walk back from the office to the *Zal*, he asked me not to tell a soul what he had just done. I asked, "Why not? I would love to tell everyone," (I was sure that the *chassidim* would be overjoyed to hear that the Rayatz had begun to say *Chassidus*, which is a sign of being a Rebbe.) However, he persisted in his request.

As I walked out, I turned to Reb Shmuel Gurary and secretly told him what had happened. He, who had not been warned about the privacy, went ahead and excitedly told as many *chassidim* as he possibly could. Very soon, all the *chassidim* knew about the *Maamor*, and many were comforted by the knowledge that sooner

or later the Rayatz would take over the mantle of leadership of the Lubavitch dynasty.

Epilogue:

Introduction²¹: The year was 5708/1948. A member of the *Chabad* community of Rostov successfully escaped the clutches of communism that gripped the Soviet Union and regularly did not allow its citizens exit. Upon his arrival to democratic Paris, he penned a letter to the Rebbe Rayatz, who was then living in the USA.

In the letter, he describes in detail an event that had transpired in the month of *Adar*, 8 years prior, [5700/1940]. In that year, the *chassidim* and *temimim* of Rostov displayed much *Mesiras Nefesh* and performed the illegal task of relocating the Rebbe Rashab's grave. They removed the grave from the old cemetery which had received government permission to be demolished and industrialized. The Rebbe's body was then reburied in the new cemetery of Rostov and the *Ohel* was built around it. [That *Ohel* stands to this very day.]

The letter is out of order and vague, the terminology used is awkward, however there is enough information there for the reader to understand the intention of the author, and to appreciate the extent of the *Mesiras Nefesh* involved.

For obvious reasons, I have excluded sections of the letter as well as the names of the *chassidim* involved²², (their merit is great and their names deserve to be engraved among the righteous for generations to come).

²¹ This introduction was written by Rabbi Rivkin at the time that this *Sefer* was first published.

²² Seemingly, the intention here is to maintain the safety and security of some of these *chassidim* who at the time of the printing of this *Sefer* remained under communist oppression.

The following are the excerpts:

... When Reb A. returned from the city of Charkov, he informed us that he had received a letter from the Rayatz with instructions to relocate the Rebbe's grave. Immediately following that, Reb M. L. travelled to Yekaterinoslav to consult Reb Levi Yitzcok Shneersohn²³ for instructions on how to go about the task of relocating the holy remains of our Rebbe.

Reb M. L. returned and gathered a *Minyan*, they were, Reb T. K., Reb M. K., Reb M. Sh., Reb Y. K., Reb M. V. L., Reb Ch. Y. E., Reb N. L., Reb A. from Charkov, Reb Y. A. and me. We all accepted upon ourselves to fast that day, and to pour 9 *Kavin* of water on ourselves²⁴. We gathered in the house of Reb M. Sh., and we fashioned a sturdy, smooth bed built with no nails or screws.

Late that night, we went to the cemetery. The darkness was heavy and unusually thick, the skies opened and it was pouring with rain, and there was still snow and ice remaining on the ground. We neared the grave and all individually asked forgiveness from the Rebbe beginning with Reb Y. K. and Reb T. K.. We dug around the grave and sent three members of our group down, Reb T. stood near the Rebbe's head, Reb M. K. stood near the middle of the Rebbe's body, and I stood at his feet. Reb M. V. remained above the hole instructing us how to proceed.

The *Talis* was intact and covered his face and beard; the head, body and feet were all complete. There was one slight "injury", one of the heels was bent out of shape and slightly cracked, Reb T. corrected this. We lifted the holy body together with three *Tefochim* of earth from inside the grave, brought it up and placed it on the bed.

The daughter of Reb N. L. gave us 12 meters of linen sheet, and I brought a large new material covering [tarp] with which to cover the bed. Originally we had intended to carry the bed from the old

²³ Our Rebbe's father.

²⁴ A lesser form of purification, in situations where a *Mikva* is unavailable.

cemetery to the new one, but we quickly realized that it would be impossible. The bed, body and earth together were too heavy and we were all weakened from fasting that day. Additionally, the heavy foggy darkness combined with the rain made the job of carrying it on our shoulders physically implausible. We realized that the only possibility was to procure a hearse, but without a permit that too seemed impossible.

An idea was raised, to contact a gentleman, the son of Reb Y. L. who had deserted the path of *Yiddishkeit* and had joined the communist party. He, as a government employee, was in charge of and had access to the hearse we sought. I went to his house, and with tears in my eyes, I begged him to lend me the hearse so that I could use it to bury someone. Obviously, I did not dare tell him who it was I wished to transport and bury, for if he would have known the truth he would have instantly banished me from his house and no amount of begging would help. He was an ardent communist and fiercely opposed to any sort of religion. For that reason, I hid the truth and told him that a family-member of mine needed to be buried. He refused. I begged and pleaded, and I said, "I will not leave your house unless you accede to my request." After much nagging, he finally bent to my pleas and feeling bad for me, agreed. He made a phone call and arranged the hearse to be given to me.

I returned to the old cemetery with the hearse, and it was with great difficulty that we managed to move the body and the earth into the hearse. We then all entered the back of the hearse and created a human wall around the casket so that the driver would not see what was inside.

We arrived at the new cemetery, but the hearse could not drive in, from there onwards, we carried the casket. We began carrying it to the designated spot where we had already dug a grave, and it was with great difficulty. Many times along the way we had to stop and

rest as the weather and our physical state both contributed to making it even harder of a process.

When we arrived at the spot, we did everything precisely as per the instructions of Reb Levi Yitzchok, in a manner befitting of the honour of the Rebbe. . . [Parts of the letter are cut out at this point.]

The following day, the son of Reb Y. L. discovered that we had used the hearse to transport and rebury the Rebbe. Reb Y. L. informed us that his daughter-in-law, was terribly afraid that this illegal business would be discovered. She was sure that were that to happen, her husband would lose his job and would suffer terrible punishments from his employers. I returned to their house to calm their spirits, and I said, "You have done a noble and holy deed, I promise you that the merit of the Rebbe will protect you from any harm." So it was, Thank G-d, the job was done without having been noticed. Within a few days, Reb T. K. also relocated the remains of Reb Shmuel Gurary and Reb Nosson Gurary. He gathered their remains, bought graves, transported them to the new cemetery and placed them in the same order as they had been laid in the old cemetery.

Reb M. L. travelled to the city of L. to visit the *chassidim* there and collect money to construct a new *Ohel* using the stones from the old *Ohel*. The new *Ohel* was slightly smaller than the old one and we used the extra stones to build a *Mikva* in the home of Reb N. L.. I would visit the *Ohel* periodically to keep it in shape, recently, not many people have been coming to the *Ohel* but many letters are sent there, Reb N. L. and I would receive the letters and place them in the *Ohel*.

After Hitler (may his memory be obliterated) and his armies were defeated, I returned to Rostov. I returned to the *Ohel* and found the door broken, I borrowed money from ... and fixed the door. I then wrote a letter to Reb L. in Moscow who gathered money from the *chassidim* there, to repay me; he himself also paid a handsome sum.

I constructed a spiky metal fence around the grave so that no foreign hands will touch it. I also placed an eternal candle in the office of the cemetery. I spoke with Mr. S. and he agreed to oversee the upkeep of the *Ohel*, and in return, I promised to mention his name to the Rayatz.

Many of those who helped bury the Rebbe were themselves later buried within a few meters of the *Ohel*.

May the merit of the Rebbe grant us the opportunity to see the Rebbe Rayatz very soon with the coming of the righteous *Moshiach*.
Signed...