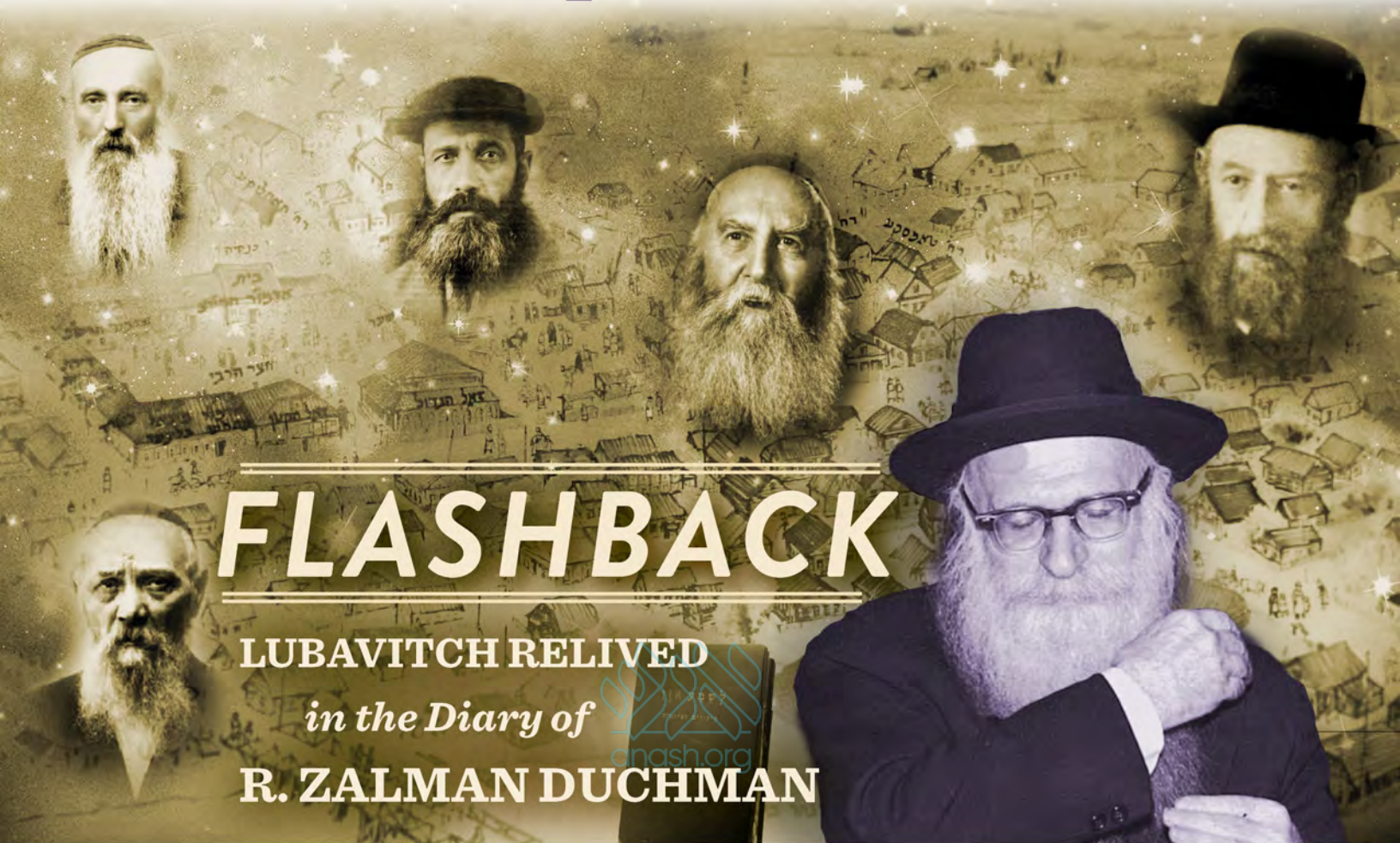


Perspectives^{ב"ה}

TWENTY ONE



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FLASHBACK

LUBAVITCH RELIVED
in the Diary of
R. ZALMAN DUCHMAN



BY RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER



THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF STORYTELLERS.

Some are historical storytellers who have a remarkable memory for facts. They recall occurrences they experienced or stories that they heard years earlier, down to the intricate details. If you need an exact date or figure, ask these people.

Others are fanciful storytellers who mesmerize their listeners with whimsical tales. They bring their stories to life, and fill in any missing details with their creative imagination. Their stories are fascinating, but don't entirely reflect what actually transpired in that time and place.

R. Zalman Duchman wasn't either of these; in fact, he wasn't much of a storyteller at all. R. Zalman lived and breathed precious memories of the Rebbeim and their chassidim, sharing their lives with his listeners.

When R. Zalman told a story, he relived the moment and aroused the emotion he felt at the time. As R. Zalman writes of himself, "I usually remember the Rebbe's appearance, and the place — but I don't remember the date very well."

For someone looking for academic precision or a charming story, other storytellers may have done a better job. But for someone seeking a glimpse into Lubavitch of yesteryear, R. Zalman was the man. His stories, thoughts and manner of speech were straight out of the Lubavitch he had left many decades earlier.



BORN A CHOSSID

Schneur Zalman HaLevi Duchman

was born on 11 Elul 5651 (1891) to Dovber Menachem Mendel and Chaya Feiga Risha in the town of Chometz, not far from the city of Homil in Belarus. His *bris* took place on Chai Elul, the Alter Rebbe birthday, and the boy was thus named Schneur Zalman.

At a young age, the family relocated to Homil. Zalman spent his formative years in the presence of his paternal grandfather, R. Mordechai Yoel Duchman, a third-generation Chabad chossid who had studied in the Tzemach Tzedek's court, had been a prize student of R. Aizel Homiler – one of the Alter Rebbe's most outstanding chassidim – and was himself a leading chassidic personality in Homil.

Homil was a major industrial city, and at the time it numbered well over 100,000 inhabitants, some 55% being Jewish. Almost all of the Jewish residents were Chabad chassidim, and the city *rav* for many years had been R. Aizel Homiler. The Lubavitcher *shul* had a "*Chabad'nitze*," (a second room for *ovdim*), and the regular *minyán davened* nearly two hours, in accord with the Alter Rebbe's instructions in *Iggeres HaKodesh*.

LIFE IN LUBAVITCH

Following in his grandfather's footsteps, Zalman left for Lubavitch at the age of fifteen. He arrived on Lag B'Omer 5666 (1906) and joined the branch of Tomchei Temimim in Horoditch. A year later, at age sixteen, he transferred to the *yeshivah* in Lubavitch, in close proximity of the Rebbe Rashab.

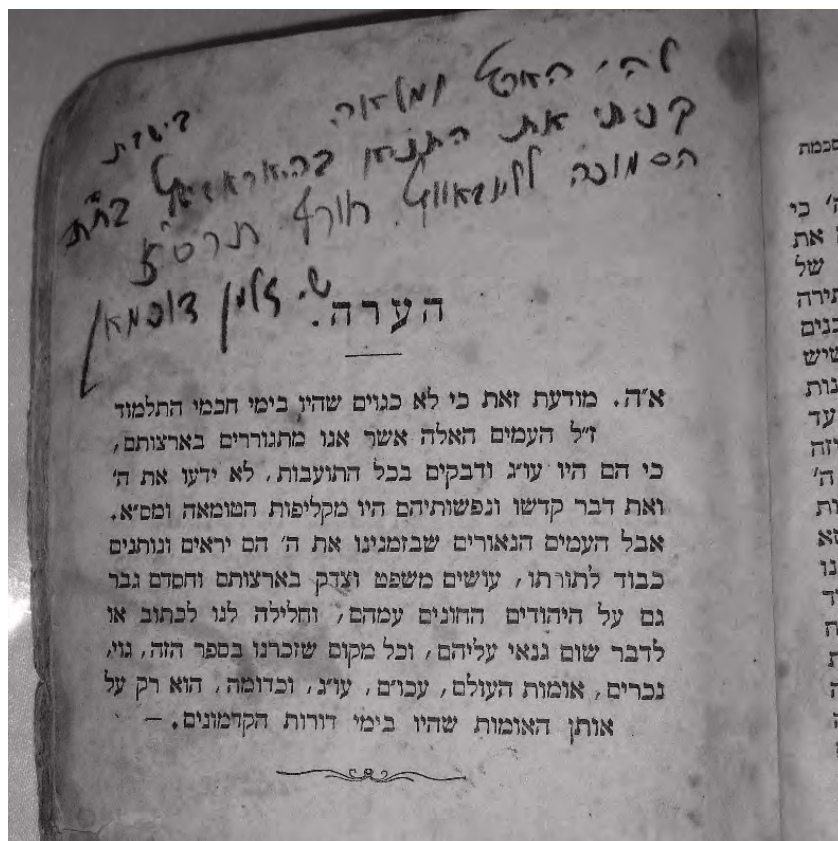
Zalman soaked in the surreal atmosphere of Lubavitch and its memories remained with him for life. Describing those times in Lubavitch, he writes, "To record one's memories of Lubavitch one must have the talent to paint on a canvas – to be an artist."

After overcoming his initial apprehension of nearing the Rebbe, he sought out opportunities to spend time in the Rebbe's presence and to absorb his holy visage. As he related:



"TO RECORD ONE'S MEMORIES OF LUBAVITCH ONE MUST HAVE THE TALENT TO PAINT ON A CANVAS – TO BE AN ARTIST."

THE REBBE'S BEAUTY,
THE RADIANCE OF HIS
EXPRESSION... FROM
HIS SHOULDERS AND
UPWARDS HE WAS TALLER
THAN ANY OF THE PEOPLE.



Tanya that he bought while in Tomchei Temimim of Horoditch - Winter 5667 (1907).

The Rebbe was particular to have a *kohen* and a *levi* present for the Torah reading. The *kohen* was R. Nachman, the Rebbe's attendant, but it was necessary to look for a *levi* outside in the courtyard. Initially I was afraid to be called up to the Torah in the Rebbe's presence, but when the children would call out, "Here's a *levi*," I would go inside.

For *mincha* on Shabbos, people would *daven* with the Rebbe in the room where *yechidus* was held. The first time I was called up to the Torah my hands and legs were trembling, but afterwards — in the few weeks before the Rebbe left to go to the country — I looked for the opportunity to be called up. The Rebbe's beauty, the radiance of his expression... From his shoulders and upwards he was taller than any of the people. When they lifted the Torah at *hagba* and he gazed at it, voicing the words "*Yagdil Torah veyadur - G-d magnifies the Torah and strengthens it*," the pleasure we felt can surely never be written."

His immense yearning to watch the Rebbe's service motivated him to take audacious steps, as he records:

On *erev* Rosh Hashanah — 5667 (1906) or 5668 (1907) — when we were at the *ohel* of the Tzemach Tzedek and his son, the Rebbe Maharash, some children said to me: "Do you want to see how the Rebbe is standing in the *ohel*? Climb up on the wall!" (since the *ohel* was open to the sky).

The Rebbe stood wearing his silk hat and a black coat; a white silk scarf was visible on his neck. In one hand he held a *pidyon*, a large, long sheet of paper; his second hand held a large bundle of additional requests. His countenance was extraordinarily pale. Terror seized me and I leaped down to the ground.

(I always regretted my action, but when the Rebbe Rayatz' notes arrived — printed in *Kuntres Beis Nissan*, 5710 — in which he extolled the merit of gazing at his father at the *ohel*, I was filled with joy.)

His profound perception and feeling towards what he witnessed in Lubavitch are apparent in this depiction:

While the Rebbe Rashab said a *maamar*, the Rebbe Rayatz would stand opposite him. In the middle of the *maamar* the Rebbe would stop and they would look into each other's eyes.

On *Shabbos Teshuvah* 5673 (1912), the *maamar* was extraordinary. The Rebbe paused frequently and rapped on the table, and at each pause they would look into each other's eyes. It is similar to what I wrote in the name of my *zeide* — regarding his description of the Tzemach Tzedek and R. Aizel of Homil — that he saw how two souls were talking with one another. I can only say the same, for each pause lasted a while and was extraordinary. Thank G-d that my memory retains this as though I saw it yesterday.

CLOSE CONFIDANT

Zalman quickly became close to the Rebbe's household and was often present at smaller, more private occasions.

The Rebbe Rashab was accustomed to break his fast *motzaei* Yom Kippur at the house of his mother, Rebbetzin Rivkah. On one occasion the Rebbe sat at the head of the table. On a small bureau near the door there was a samovar. The Rebbe stood up — and all the chassidim stood — walked over to the samovar, poured a glass of tea and served it to his mother.

"Starting the new year with a *mitzvah*," she said.

And sometimes he saw things that no one else did:

It was very late on *motzaei* Yom Kippur, 5675 (1914); the Rebbe was in the dining room. The *Neilah* prayer had been late, followed by *Maariv* and *Kiddush Levanah*. I was standing near the wall

when Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah came in and spoke to the Rebbe about the Rebbe Rayatz — she was accustomed to call him by his first name, Yosef — that he had not yet ended the fast. When he came into the room the Rebbe said to him: "What are you doing?"

"I drank a glass of cold water," he answered. "We finished *davening* so late that there was time enough for Yechiel the *chazan*" — who traveled around, raising funds for *Tomchei Tmimim* — "to have visited several villages already."

"I already said long ago that hurrying comes from a soul's lowliness," said the Rebbe. "Sit down."

But he didn't want to.

"You're starting already in the new year?!" the Rebbe gently scolded.

Still an eighteen-year-old *bochur*, he was entrusted with helping arrange a conference of chassidic *rebbe*s from Poland headed by the Rebbe Rashab. Before leaving for Warsaw, the Rebbe gave Zalman instructions in a *yechidus* at his vacation home in Babinovitch. Upon exiting, he had an interesting conversation with the Rebbe's son — the Frierdiker Rebbe:

It was after Shavuot in the summer of 5669 (1909), when the Rebbe Rashab was vacationing in Babinovitch. I came out from *yechidus* and the Rebbe's son called to me from the woods around the house. "What did my father talk to you about?" he asked.

"The trip to Warsaw," I answered.

The Rebbe's son walked with me and spoke at length. The focus was not to be influenced by the world, and to carry on the same as in Lubavitch. "We see how the Chinese who come here walk around the same as they do at home, for they know that at home everyone conducts himself the same way."

WHILE THE REBBE RASHAB SAID A MAAMAR, THE REBBE RAYATZ WOULD STAND
OPPOSITE HIM. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MAAMAR THE REBBE WOULD STOP AND THEY
WOULD LOOK INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES.

"I ALREADY SAID LONG AGO THAT HURRYING COMES FROM A SOUL'S
LOWLINESS. SIT DOWN."

BACK IN HOMIL

After several years of learning in Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch, Zalman returned to Homil. The little information we have from this time period is gleaned from allusions in his stories.

Zalman always thirsted to be in Lubavitch. He would travel at least once a year – for Rosh Hashanah – and whenever else he could. But when another opportunity arose to go to Lubavitch, he didn't pass on it.

In the summer of 5674 (1914) the railroad added a fourth class that was half the cost. Normally from

Homil to Krasnoye one paid four rubles and five kopeks, but now it was only half as much.

I had wanted to go for Shavuos. Taking my *tefillin* and heading for the train, I told my brother that that evening he should say that I left for Lubavitch. [Apparently, he was afraid he would be chastised for running off to Lubavitch unnecessarily – Ed.]

When I returned from Lubavitch, my *zeide* told me: "You acted correctly; sometimes you have to do things that way. But *me* – you should have told! I would have given you a three-ruble note for the way!"



R. Zalman Duchman (center wearing glasses) looks on as the Rebbe is mesader kidushin at the wedding of Mendel and Sara Shemtov, 10 Teves 5716 (1956).

From Krasnoye I went on foot to Lubavitch. The spiritual pleasure of that Shavuot was extraordinary. The Rebbe — it was the mourning period for his mother, Rebbetzin Rivkah — led the *davening* [during the weekdays].

Such a *baal mochin*, such a wondrous mind he possessed! Yet, one time, while reciting the *Shema* and saying *Echad* in deep thought — he snapped his fingers.

In the winter of 5673 (1913), a new project of the Rebbe Rashab excited Homil:

The immense tumult that took place in Homil in the winter of 5673 (1913) is fresh in my memory, thank G-d, as well as what I heard through my brother Baruch, of blessed memory, of the events in Lubavitch. The Rebbe established *Orach LeTzaddik* (Way of the *Tzaddik*) in order for people to travel to Haditch every year on *Chof-Daled Teves*, the Alter Rebbe's *yahrzeit*.

There were people from Homil — my *zeide*, my father, and two wealthy men, Alter Shur and Moshe Leviant, as well as other chassidim — who joined the Rebbe's two *shluchim* passing through Homil by train. It was a *minyán*, I think. They established the tradition that every year people would learn a chapter of *Tanya* in Haditch.

In the summer of 5673 (1913), he traveled with his *zeide* to Petersburg for a wedding of a cousin, and he records exchanges with various chassidim there. His father R. Ber Mendel visited the Rebbe Rashab at the *datche* in Zalsha in summer of 5674 (1914) in support of Colel Chabad.

In the summer of 5674 (1914) his brother, Boruch, fell ill with tuberculosis and Zalman accompanied him to Kiev for surgery. Zalman sent the Rebbe a request for

a *bracha*, and he had a miraculous recovery. For Rosh Hashanah 5675 (1914) the two of them traveled to Lubavitch. Due to the influx of refugees from World War I they could not have *yechidus*, but the Rebbetzin allowed them to enter through a back door. Zalman introduced his brother and the Rebbe straight away recalled how four months earlier a *bracha* had been requested for his leg.

In the summer of 5674 (1914) my brother became ill with tuberculosis. We brought him from Homil to Kiev for surgery, and a year later he underwent another operation. Following a third operation he was very weak. (People were given sedatives to drink before operations in those times.) I wrote a *pidyon* and sent it to the Rebbe's summer home (*datche*) in Zalsha. Hashem helped; an opening developed there and the phlegm gradually drained. When the doctor — Kostritzky was his name — observed this, he said it was the first time he ever saw this.

I brought him to Lubavitch for Rosh Hashanah 5675 (1914). The war had begun on Tisha B'Av, 5674 and the flow of guests was immense. We were unable to have *yechidus*, and at the end of Yom Kippur we had to leave since we lacked funds to remain through Sukkos. As mentioned earlier, I was in the Rebbe's dining room to break the fast, and afterwards — when the Rebbe left the room — I told the Rebbetzin that we had to leave. She let me wait in the small room between the dining room and the room where the Rebbe held *yechidus*, and when the Rebbe came out of his room very late, I said to him — for the Rebbe knew me quite well — “This is my brother.”

“This is the one whose leg hurt?” the Rebbe asked.

SUCH A BAAL MOCHIN, SUCH A WONDROUS MIND HE POSSESSED! YET,
ONE TIME, WHILE RECITING THE SHEMA AND SAYING ECHAD IN DEEP
THOUGHT — HE SNAPPED HIS FINGERS.



The Rebbe in conversation with Reb Zalman

In his classic style, R. Zalman concludes with his own impressions:

Isn't this extraordinary? — there is no way to estimate how many people passed through that year from after Shavuot until *motzai* Yom Kippur!

In the summer of 5675 (1915), we find R. Zalman in Pinsk. He relates how he lodged with R. Yisroel Yitzchak Lubinsky ("the celebrated chossid known for *davening* every word of the *ketores* in Yiddish translation") and he records a story he heard from him there.

TRYING TIMES

At the beginning of 5676 (1915), the Rebbe Rashab decided to leave Lubavitch, as the German army approached the area during World War I. On 16 Cheshvan, the *Beis Harav* (the Rebbe's family) traveled for a few weeks and arrived in Rostov. R. Zalman would continue to travel to the Rebbe in Rostov, and the last occasion he merited to see the Rebbe Rashab was on Simchas Torah 5679 (1918), a year-and-a-half before the Rebbe's passing.

After that Simchas Torah he returned to Homil. On *erev Shabbos* 5 Cheshvan, at four a.m., his *zeide* R. Mordechai Yoel passed away at age 83. R. Zalman describes his *zeide's* passing and the intense mourning that followed:

We stood there throughout the night as he turned from side to side, holding his *yarmulke* on his head, not letting it fall. As his soul departed my

father cried out to us, '*The crown of our head has fallen,*' and so he wailed in anguish for six hours uninterrupted.

R. Zalman records how, before his passing, his *zeide* asked one of his friends to place a *Tanya* in his burial place; they placed only the title page (*shaar blettl*).

Soon after, the deadly disease of typhus raged in Homil and the Duchman family was stricken. R. Ber Mendel loyally nursed his family back to health, but that dedication and courage cost him his life. Having just completed saying *kadish* for his father, R. Ber Mendel returned his soul to its maker.

Half-a-year later, on 2 Nissan 5680 (1920), the Rebbe Rashab passed away in Rostov. Understandably, this was a difficult period for R. Zalman, who had been so connected to the Rebbe.

R. Zalman's intense love for the Rebbe Rashab drove him to make the long and arduous trip to the Ohel for the Rebbe's *yahrtzeit* each year. Before Beis Nissan, R. Zalman would board the train to Rostov, without knowing what lay ahead of him. Communist spies roamed the train looking out for "suspicious persons," and anti-Semitic thugs would regularly attack anyone they recognized as Jewish. But R. Zalman's burning desire to be by his Rebbe on that special day made him ignore those fears.

In 5680 (1920) R. Zalman married Chaya Grunya Minkowitz and for the first year of marriage the couple lived in Homil. On Shavuot 5681 (1921), they were blessed with a daughter, who they named Beila Rochel (Lipskar).

WE STOOD THERE THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT AS HE TURNED FROM SIDE TO SIDE,
HOLDING HIS YARMULKE ON HIS HEAD, NOT LETTING IT FALL.

IN THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S COURT

A NEW REBBE

Having had such a soulful connection to the Rebbe Rashab, R. Zalman found it difficult to assume another Rebbe in his place. Although he had immense respect for the Frierdiker Rebbe, he couldn't manage to bind himself to him. Yet, after consideration and effort, he became the Frierdiker Rebbe's dedicated chossid.

As he wrote:

Sometime after the passing of our Rebbe, I would say: 'If my father is not here, can I take another father?' But only afterwards I understood: it is the same father, but with greater strength.

This element of continuity is further illustrated in this story:

In the winter of 5683 (1923), I was in Nevel on business and hearing that the Frierdiker Rebbe was in Leningrad, I traveled there. The Rebbe was staying at the home of the prominent chassidic *gvir* R. Shmuel Michel Treinin.

We were sitting in the dining room at Rizenska Prospect and R. Shmuel Michel was speaking with R. Meir Simcha of Nevel: 'He gave his son everything; there are even matters where *פה כח הבן מכה האב* – *the son's strength is greater than the father's*.'

I was a young man then, but I could 'lean on a sturdy tree' – my *zeide*, R. Mordechai Yoel – and I said: 'I heard a story from my *zeide* that something occurred with the Mitteler Rebbe for which they told him that *the son's strength is greater than the father's*. And the Mitteler Rebbe cried out: "But it all comes *מכה האב* – *from the father's strength*.'"

LIFE IN LENINGRAD

Soon after the Frierdiker Rebbe relocated from Rostov to Leningrad (in Iyar 5684 [1914]), R. Zalman and his family relocated there as well, to be near the Rebbe. For the next three years, R. Zalman observed and absorbed whatever happened in the Frierdiker

Rebbe's court, and his memories of those times fill many pages in his book.

At one point during *Simchas Torah*, 5685 (1924), in Leningrad, the Rebbe Rayatz exclaimed passionately: "What sort of chossid sleeps until nine in the morning and, already by ten, has finished *davening*, eaten breakfast, and is strolling along Nevesky Street (Leningrad's main thoroughfare), directing his eyes at the wrong places? With the notion that by wearing a *kapotah* and *gartel* he is a chossid. Or, he imagines, by giving three rubles [to the Rebbe], he is a chossid. Now three rubles are three rubles – but that won't do it..."

It was then that the Rebbe gave instructions to learn a portion of *Chumash* every day with Rashi. And on *Yud-Tes Kislev*, 5685 (1924), he gave instructions to learn an *amud* (page) of *Gemara*, and commented: "Tomorrow we will already be able to count the pages of *Gemara*...and by whom will it be felt? – the person who made it happen."

Sometimes R. Zalman records also the story behind the story:

One *Yud-Tes Kislev* the Rebbe lifted his holy head, looked up at the people standing, and said:

"He was in Lubavitch, in *Tomchei Tmimim*, and nowadays it's a question whether he put on *tefillin* at the appropriate time. He may be the steward of a train carriage, but at the brakes he will do *teshuvah* and melt like a candle."

(The young man was already in Tashkent, critically ill, and they amputated his foot. He told me: "You know how I became someone very different a few years ago? The Rebbe (Rashab) came to me and said, 'Moshe, *enough!*'")

Or when he personally observed another dimension to something that he heard:

In 5685 (1925) the *tomim*, R. Yisroel Zuravitzer – my friend, R. Yisroel Jacobson, who was living in Homil – was in Leningrad. The Rebbe Rayatz sent him to Rostov for *Beis Nissan* (the Rebbe Rashab's *yahrtzeit*), and when he came out of *yechidus* he told me:

AS I HEARD THEM

The collection of stories by R. Zalman Duchman is unique among the various volumes of Chabad stories – both in content and in style.

Many of the stories in his collection are exclusive and not recorded elsewhere. R. Zalman drew his stories from a variety of sources: his grandfather R. Mordechai Yoel Duchman, a close student of R. Aizik Homiler and other early chassidim; happenings that he witnessed himself; tales shared by the mashpi'im and chassidim in Lubavitch; personal incidents that fellow chassidim shared with him.

What's even more unique is his raw and authentic style. He shares with us many short recollections and quotes that made an impact on him. His own impressions and commentary lend insight into the mindset of a warm, uncomplicated tommim. Sometimes he will trail off midsentence, expressing a feeling or thought that can't be captured in words.

The following are selected stories.

NOT BLOCKED BY A DOOR

They told the story in Lubavitch of the time when the Rebbe came to the *ohel*. There was a *shul* there, and a small door opened from the *shul* into the *ohel*. One of the *ohel's* four walls was the *shul's* wall and it had no roof. On that occasion the door was locked and the *shamash*, unnerved, came running with the key.

"If a pile of earth doesn't obstruct [their presence]," the Rebbe asked him, "will such a thin door?"

THE REBBETZIN'S CONTEMPLATION

My uncle, R. Yehudah Leib Chasdan — the *shochet* from Homil (they called him the Sebezeshesher *shochet*) — told me the event he witnessed: when he was in Rebbetzin Rivkah's home he heard her *davening* in the next room. When she reached *Kriyas Shema* he saw on his watch that her meditation on *Echad* lasted 20 minutes.

"I BARELY SURVIVED!"

I heard from the *gvir*, R. Yosef Yozik Gurevitch of Warsaw, that — together with his son-in-law, R. Feivel Zalmanov (may G-d avenge his blood) — when he traveled to the Rebbe outside of Russia, the Rebbe instructed them to *mekabel shalom* (shake the Rebbe's hand).

When they were invited to come to the Rebbe on Shabbos evening and there wasn't any wine available, the Rebbe said: "It doesn't feel right to hold a knife while reciting *Kiddush*," and instructed them to make *Kiddush* over liquor, although he personally recited *Kiddush* using *challah*.

When they returned Shabbos morning the Rebbetzin asked them: "Have you *davened*?"

"Yes," they answered.

"Ah! How he *davened*!" she said about the Rebbe. "I barely survived!"

SEVEN NIGHTS OF STUDY

My brother Baruch, of blessed memory, told me in Homil over a couple of *LeChaims* that when he was studying in *Tomchei Tmimim* in Lubavitch, the Rebbe Rashab instructed him in *yeichidus* to stay up (and study, “*zitzen*”) seven nights. *How?* “For example: when you awaken on Thursday morning, you must not lie down that entire day; then stay awake the whole night and — for the entire next day — not lie down until the evening.”

Each time he was apprehensive: perhaps he had dozed off? So he would do it again. In short, he stayed awake in such a fashion for 15 nights.

“HE PUT HIS HAND ON MY HEAD AND WE CRIED...”

One *erev* Yom Kippur in Lubavitch, after *Mincha*, I saw the venerable chossid R. Pesach Kuper of Taganrog come out of the Rebbe’s room wearing a *tallis* and *kittel* and saw that he had been crying. He had gone inside, he told me, to ask the Rebbe for his *erev* Yom Kippur blessing, and the Rebbe wanted to *bentch* him.

“I was privileged,” he told the Rebbe, “that your grandfather and your father placed their hand on my head when *bentching* me, and I ask you also to place your hand on my head when you *bentch* me. He put his hand on my head and burst into tears; both of us wept.”

“WHAT WAS SAID – WAS SAID”

In the time of the First World War, R. Zalman Havlin passed through Homil with his brother Lipa from Postov, near Kiev, whom he had gotten released from his regiment for a half year. He related that when he asked the Rebbe about his brother’s draft notice, the Rebbe replied that he should think about obtaining a passport. Now R. Zalman was quite well-versed in these matters, and he raised some other ideas.

“Listen, Zalman,” the Rebbe told him, “there’s a life at stake. *What was said – was said*. But when you start [reasoning] with me this way, I don’t know what to say.”

TO SING WHILE DAVENING

A *yungerman* came to the Rebbe for *yeichidus* one summer day in the large *zal* in Rostov. The Rebbe’s face was radiant. “I am accustomed to sing while *davening*,” he had asked, “would it be better to hold myself back?”

“No... no,” answered the Rebbe, “these are the G-dly soul’s powers revealing themselves.”

JUST OPEN A TANYA

When R. Yosef Lipschitz of Kariokovka was being treated by Dr. Brook, the eye doctor in the hospital in Homil, I went with my *zeide* to visit him. R. Yosef recounted what he had heard from the Rebbe: “When something happens to a *Yid*, every *Yid* has the power to open up the *Tanya* and say: ‘*Rebbe, help me!*’”

(This seems to be where the custom of placing a *pidyon* inside the *Tanya* came from – S.Z.)

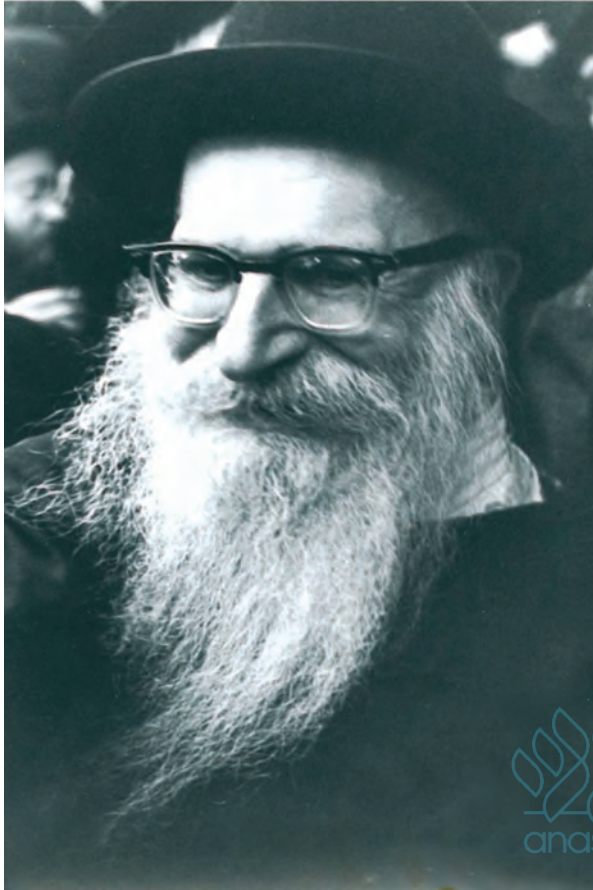
AT LEAST YOU WON'T BE ELSEWHERE...

Yekusiel Golodetz told me in Leningrad of an occasion when the Rebbe was in Petersburg.

The renowned *gvir*, R. Shmuel Gurary, was staying in a room there, and one of the Rebbe’s relatives — his Uncle Zalman’s wealthy son, Alexander — dropped by to visit. R. Shmuel Gurary began to chastise him for not coming to the Rebbe more often. When the Rebbe passed by the room where they were sitting, Alexander, who was quite self-assured, told him how he was being browbeaten.

“Regarding your presence here,” answered the Rebbe, “I don’t know. As long as you’re here, though — you won’t be somewhere else!”

"YOU KNOW HOW I BECAME SOMEONE
VERY DIFFERENT A FEW YEARS AGO? THE
REBBE (RASHAB) CAME TO ME AND SAID,
'MOSHE, ENOUGH!'"



R' Zalman Duchman

IT BOTHERED ME THEN: HOW COULD
THE GREAT MEKUBAL R. LEIVIK OF
YEKATRINOSLAV NOT HAVE BROUGHT
SUCH SPECIAL CHILDREN TO LUBAVITCH
OR TO ROSTOV?

"The Rebbe said to me, 'You were with my father in *yechidus*; you should speak to him now as you would in *yechidus*: "Rebbe, I am a *shliach* of my mother — you know her name — and me..." (i.e. Rebbetzin Shterna Sara and the Rebbe Rayatz). And you should go to the *ohel* early — for you it will be after *davening*; for me it will be before *davening*. Maybe as a result I will *daven* better.'"

I'm no authority but I can testify that on that *Beis Nissan* after *davening Shemoneh Esrei* — before reciting *chazaras hashatz* (the Rebbe Rayatz served as *chazan* for the *yahrtzeit*) — the Rebbe signaled me to bring him his chair. Exhausted from his efforts, he had to sit.

He also had the opportunity to *farbreng* with the many chassidim who visited Leningrad, and he heard from them many unknown stories.

During that time R. Zalman came to know the Frieddiker Rebbe's future son-in-law, our Rebbe. The Rebbe would visit the Frieddiker Rebbe in Leningrad and R. Zalman had the opportunity to observe him. As he recounts:

It was *Yud-Tes Kislev*, 5685 or 5686 (1924 or 1925). The table was standing near the dining room door. On the Rebbe's left side stood the one designated to become the Rebbe's son-in-law, the *gaon* R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the Rebbe); his brother R. Yisroel Aryeh Leib was on the other side. The Rebbe said to him: 'Aye, how regretful you should be that my father didn't see you.'

[Years later, after the Frieddiker Rebbe's passing, R. Zalman shared his inner thoughts about this incident with the Rebbe. In his candid style he wrote in his letter:

It bothered me then: how could the great *mekubal* R. Leivik of Yekatrinoslav not have brought such special children to Lubavitch or to Rostov? Yet as the Rebbe Rayatz made it quite clear in a talk, the Baal Shem Tov did not give instructions for the Alter Rebbe to be brought to him, for he belonged to his disciple, the Maggid.]

Life in Leningrad was far from easy. One small sewing machine provided a minimal income for him to feed his family. Owning one of these machines proved very critical for the *frum* Yidden at that time, for it enabled them to work their own schedules without worrying about taking off on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Those who observed him

working pleasantly recall the noble sight. There he was, dressed in his full Chassidic garb, with one hand turning the machine and the other clutching a Tehillim, lovingly reciting its comforting words.

THE ARREST

On the 15th of Sivan 5687 (1927), the NKVD entered the Frierdiker Rebbe's home to arrest him, and immediately set about searching the home for incriminating evidence. Our Rebbe, who was not in the home at the time, went straightaway to hide whatever documents could be used against the Frierdiker Rebbe. R. Zalman was around that evening, and the Rebbe deposited a trunk of manuscripts for safekeeping with him.

[In a letter he received from our Rebbe in 5709 (1908) the Rebbe wrote in a postscript, "If I'm not mistaken, during the time when the Rebbe was arrested you were among those I entrusted with the sacred documents?"

To which he responded in his letter, "Indeed, you gave me a large box of manuscripts. With Divine providence on the 12th of Tammuz, while you were sitting on the west side of the study hall, I returned the manuscripts. It was then that you told me that for my efforts you would give me good news – that the Rebbe will return [from exile] in time for Shabbos."

Once at a Yud-Beis Tammuz *farbrengen* in 770, he stood up and said that if the chassidim would know of the Rebbe's involvement in the Frierdiker Rebbe's

release, their celebration would be much greater. The Rebbe turned to him and said, "*Shal!*" and he never disclosed any additional information.]

On Tuesday, Yud-Beis Tammuz, our Rebbe was sitting in the *beis midrash* in the Frierdiker Rebbe's home, and R. Zalman brought him the trunk of manuscripts that he had been holding. As gratitude for holding the box, the Rebbe disclosed to him the fresh news that the Frierdiker Rebbe would be returning from exile before Shabbos.

After spending a few days in Leningrad, the Frierdiker Rebbe received threats of being arrested again and he decided to relocate to Malachovka, a quiet suburb of Moscow. Though chassidim were cautioned not to visit the Rebbe, R. Zalman and his family vacationed there for the summer to assist him. Many of the stories known from the time of the arrest and the release originate from R. Zalman.

THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S DEPARTURE

In Malachovka the Rebbe continued to suffer from constant surveillance. The Rebbe decided that he had no choice but to leave Russia entirely, and was scheduled to leave on *Isru Chag* of Sukkos 5688 (1927).

That Tishrei was a very emotional time for the chassidim. For many this would be the last time they would see the Frierdiker Rebbe. For Simchas Torah, Chassidim traveled from all across the Soviet Union to be with the Frierdiker Rebbe before he left.



ON TUESDAY, YUD-BEIS TAMMUZ, OUR REBBE WAS SITTING IN THE BEIS MIDRASH IN THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S HOME, AND R. ZALMAN BROUGHT HIM THE TRUNK OF MANUSCRIPTS THAT HE HAD BEEN HOLDING.

R. Zalman was with the Rebbe for Tishrei and he recounts his memory of that historic day:

The last dance [with the Frierdiker Rebbe] engraved in my memory took place on the last Simchas Torah during the day. The Rebbe held his holy hands up high and sang *Nye Zhuritze Chloptzi* ['Friends, don't worry about what will become of us...'].
anash.org

On *Isru Chag*, all of the chassidim gathered to bid the Rebbe farewell. R. Zalman brought his eight-year-old daughter Rochel to the Rebbe's house where the Rebbe gave her a warm *bracha*. He would later say that it was this *bracha* that protected her throughout the war. He then accompanied the Rebbe to the train station. He records how before departing the Frierdiker Rebbe handed over a farewell letter and said, "I didn't write this letter *with* my heart — it is my heart."

Rochel later recalled what it was like at the train station:

"The platform was black from the crowd, not only Jews, but all kinds of people were there, hundreds and hundreds of people. Yet, my father was right near the train. In those days, you had to go up 3 or 4 stairs to the train. I remember the Rebbe standing on top of those steps with his hands holding the handles, he may have been blessing the people or telling them something.

"When the train started going, it was going very slowly, and all the people were walking after the train. Then the train started going faster, and the whole crowd of people started running, we ran too, alongside the train. Everybody at the station was crying, you see tears just falling, not one dry eye."

The period after the Rebbe's departure was particularly tough for the chassidim, yet they found the strength to endure the hardships. As R. Zalman records:

On Purim 5695 (1935) in Leningrad, R. Elchanan Morozov told me and my friend Pinchas Altthoiz:

"The *posuk* states: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light*. How can we understand this? It was darkness; how could they "*see a great light*?" Rather: *How can one possibly go through darkness?* Only when — earlier — "*they saw a great light*."

Likewise, when they felt dejected by their difficult state, it was a *vort* from the Rebbe that uplifted them:

R. Michael Dvorkin came in once when I was working at the machine. Noticing my expression which, in all likelihood was gloomy, he said: '*Serve G-d with joy!*' — mirroring the Rebbe Rayatz's words: '*Six days you shall work — is a mitzvah.*'

WITH THE REBBE'S FATHER

Even after the Frierdiker Rebbe left Russia, Leningrad remained a center of chassidic life. It was there that R. Zalman met and spent time with the Rebbe's father, Rav Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, *rav* of Yekatrinoslav.

In his first letter to our Rebbe, R. Zalman writes:

I met your father in Leningrad in the winter of 5688 (1928), and saw him in Lubavitch in 5666 or 5667 (1906 or 1907). And in Lubavitch, I heard that the Rebbe Rashab said that he will pride himself with three *yungeleit* both in this world and in the World to Come: *HaRav* Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, *HaRav* Menachem Mendel Chein and *HaRav* Shneur Zalman Schneerson.

He continues to describe the time they spend together in Leningrad:

The pleasure, the delight we had then in Leningrad is beyond description. We went to visit him nearly every night and he explained *midrashim* according to Chassidus. '*Nu, Zalman,*' Pinya [Altthoiz] would ask me, 'are you overwhelmed already?' R. Michael Dvorkin once mustered the courage to ask him,

BEFORE DEPARTING THE FRIERDIKER REBBE HANDED OVER A FAREWELL LETTER AND SAID,
"I DIDN'T WRITE THIS LETTER WITH MY HEART — IT IS MY HEART."



"THE TRAIN STARTED GOING FASTER, AND THE WHOLE CROWD OF PEOPLE STARTED RUNNING, WE RAN TOO, ALONGSIDE THE TRAIN. EVERYBODY AT THE STATION WAS CRYING, YOU SEE TEARS JUST FALLING, NOT ONE DRY EYE."

'How do you know all this?' He [the Rebbe Rashab] gave me the basic rules,' R. Leivik answered.

Shabbos in wintertime Leningrad begins at three in the afternoon, and after the Shabbos dinner we — R. Michael Dvorkin, both *Pinyas*, Menashe [Altthoiz] and I — would come to him. When we came once and saw him resting on a small sofa, he told us that the Rebbe Rashab had said to him: 'Above all, one must always be engaged in thought, even when resting for a while.'

Elsewhere, he speaks of R. Leivik's genius:

Once when R. Leivik finished speaking, R. Michael asked him: 'Where does all this come from?' 'In such-and-such *sefer*, on such-and-such page,' he replied. (It was from *Eitz Chaim* [a work of *kabala* by the Arizal].) Now Pinya was quite sharp. 'Zalman,'

he said to me, 'open another page.' R. Leivik was a gentle person, and he proceeded to recite a number of pages in the way a *Yid* recites *Ashrei*.

(I once noted that before becoming fluent in *Eitz Chaim*, one becomes fluent in other works — S.Z.)

Finally, he tells of R. Leivik's emotional departure from Leningrad:

When he left Leningrad, we accompanied him to the platform for Moscow-bound trains. A young student was there as well, and R. Leivik told him: 'Remember: וחזקת והיית לאיש — *Strengthen yourself, become a man!*' (This young man later went through a spiritual decline, but is today doing well in a distant country.) When the train was about to depart, R. Michael Dvorkin burst into a joyous dance with us.

DIFFICULT TIMES

COMMUNIST RUSSIA

As a dedicated chossid, R. Zalman opened his home for Torah study despite the communist threat. He knew that the building's superintendent had been placed there by the government to keep tabs on its occupants, and that the traffic of visiting chassidim was certainly being watched, yet he was determined to continue teaching Torah in his home.

At last, the inevitable occurred and the Yevsektzia targeted R. Zalman. Most people brought in for questioning did not return quickly, but R. Zalman was subject to a different arrangement. At the end of his grueling interrogation he was released, only to return the following morning. Day after day he was forced to come to the NKVD headquarters for long and painful interrogations. The interrogators demanded that he hand over the names and addresses of all of his "accomplices" in spreading Torah, but R. Zalman kept his lips sealed.

While his family knew why he was absent each long and frightful day, they didn't know of the tortures he was enduring, since R. Zalman was careful not to alarm his family. His daughter Rochel, around seventeen years old at the time, would accompany him to the Yevsektzia offices, and faithfully wait outside until her father was done. Yet, even to her, he never said a word about what had transpired. R. Zalman's physical pain was intensified by the burden of keeping it all to himself, but he was resolute not to pain his family. Only years later did he briefly mention some of the suffering he experienced.

ESCAPING THE WAR

After the war ended, R. Zalman and his family left Russia with forged passports, eventually settling in a Displaced Persons (DP) camp in Germany. While

waiting for the necessary documents to leave Europe R. Zalman did not sit idly. He gave regular *shiurim*, especially in Tanya, and began writing regularly to the Frierdiker Rebbe. He would copy the letters he received and would share them with his fellow chassidim.

In one letter to the Frierdiker Rebbe, R. Zalman asked to be sent recent *sichos* and *maamorim* of which he had not yet received a copy. In a letter from Cheshvan 5709 (1948), our Rebbe replied that although the policy was to send one packet for all the chassidim in the camp, he was nonetheless sending a separate copy to R. Zalman on two conditions: that he shared its contents with others, and that he send recollections of his grandfather and great-uncle, as per the Frierdiker Rebbe's wish to collect all known details of elder chassidim, ultimately to benefit the community at large.

THE BEGINNING OF A VOLUME

At the Rebbe's request and prodding, R. Zalman began transcribing his memories, sending them to the Rebbe a page at a time. The Rebbe would thank him for the stories and sometimes include comments and suggestions.

In a letter from Teves 5709 (1949), the Rebbe thanks him for installments 7 and 8 and adds, "It is self-understood that my father-in-law, the Rebbe, knows that you are sending me your recollections, and about which he said, 'It's a very good endeavor.' From time to time I relate some of the stories to him, and each time he derives satisfaction."

A few months into the project, the Frierdiker Rebbe himself wrote to R. Zalman. "I have great satisfaction from this; it is important to diligently record whatever you remember and know. You should also correspond regularly with the elder chassidim – the gifted

storytellers – to encourage them to record the many Chassidic stories that they heard and received from previous generations. For those who find it difficult to write in the *Lashon Hakodesh*, they should record the stories in Yiddish and my son-in-law, the Ramash, will G-d willing organize all the stories correctly and with precision.”

After the Friediker Rebbe’s passing, the Rebbe continued to encourage R. Zalman to record and send his stories. In a letter written shortly after the *histalkus*, the Rebbe is quick to remind R. Zalman to carry on with his mission, and in another letter from that time period, the Rebbe highlights the importance of the stories in light of the *histalkus*.

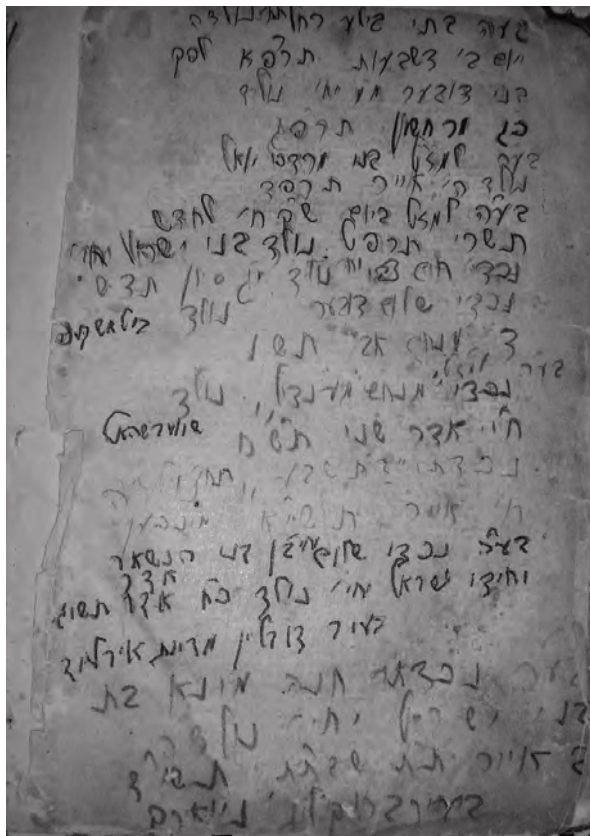
For close to 25 years, the Rebbe prompted R. Zalman to record his memories, and R. Zalman on his part continued to send the pages. In almost every letter to R. Zalman, the Rebbe would express his thanks and praise for the stories.

A LIVING REBBE

Shortly after the Friediker Rebbe passing, R. Zalman wrote our Rebbe a long letter accepting the Rebbe as his successor, though the Rebbe would not accept the mantle of leadership until a year later.

Several months after the *histalkus*, R. Zalman wrote to the Rebbe, “Nu... we need to update the honorific titles...” meaning to replace the wishes for health with a mention of his righteous memory. Then R. Zalman added, “Although my grandfather R. Yoel Mordechai of Homil, when he would talk about the Tzemach Tzedek – even years after his passing – would say ‘the Rebbe, *zol gezunt zein* (may he be well),’ and then, realizing his mistake, he would add ‘in Gan Eden.’”

In his response, the Rebbe addressed this point, “You write that you are afraid to say ‘*zol gezunt zein*’ [about the Friediker Rebbe after his passing] since it is not customary to do so. Why the fear? It is explained in [Tanya] Epistle Twenty-Eight, that the real life of a *tzaddik* is faith, love, and fear. In that case he is very healthy.”



Opening page of R. Zalman’s Tanya where he inscribed the names of his children and grandchildren.

LUBAVITCH TRANSPLANTED

REUNITED WITH THE REBBE

After four years in the DP camp, R. Zalman and his family received visas for entry to the United States. On Wednesday, 4 Elul 5711 (1951), they arrived in New York and settled in Crown Heights near the Rebbe, where R. Zalman lived until his last day. Having been through so much suffering, the death of his two sons, and just narrowly escaping the NKVD, R. Zalman decided to dedicate the rest of his life to serving Hashem in Torah, *davening* and acts of kindness.

The day after he arrived in New York, R. Zalman went in to the Rebbe for *yeichidus*. When he entered the room, the Rebbe rose from his place and said, “So, if one is persistent enough, one succeeds!”

It was more than a standard *yeichidus* between Rebbe and chossid; it was a sort of reunion from days gone by in Leningrad with the Frieddiker Rebbe. The Rebbe spent a considerable amount of time with R. Zalman reminiscing about those special times.

In his diary entry about this monumental event Reb Zalman writes:

“On the fifth of Elul I went into *yeichidus* and almost immediately the Rebbe asked me, ‘Do you remember the *farbrengen* on the staircase?’ Clearly referring to an event that had taken place with both of us present.”

DAILY SCHEDULE

Though he lived in the US for over twenty years, R. Zalman could not speak English, living all the while as he had back in Lubavitch.

R. Zalman would go to bed at 11 pm and rise before 3 am. He had a set program of daily study: Zohar on the *parsha*, *Torah Ohr* or *Likutei Torah* on the *parsha*, and the portion of Tehillim as divided for the days of the week. No matter what, R. Zalman made sure to complete the entire *parsha* of Zohar, the *parsha* of *Torah Ohr* or *Likutei Torah*, and the entire book of Tehillim by the end of the week. At the conclusion of his regimen, R. Zalman would immerse in the *mikvah*, and then after a little more study, he would head to *shul* for *shacharis*.

R. Zalman had a corner in the original 770 *shul* where he would *daven* each day. He would wait to hear *kaddish*, *chazoras hashatz* (repetition of the *amida*), and *krias haTorah*, and then, wrapped in his *talis*, he would pour out his soul for hours. How much more so on Shabbos, when he wouldn't finish until two or three in the afternoon.

Chassidic discourses – whether from copies of handwritten manuscripts of earlier Rebbeim or the Rebbe's most recent *maamorim* – took up an important part of his day. He also had a special delight in the Rebbe's *sichos*; he attended R. Mentlik's

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Reb Zalman Duchman dancing at a simcha with his son-in-law Reb Eliyahu Akiva Lipskar.

weekly *sicha shiur* and would toil to understand each footnote.

Even in his advanced age, R. Zalman had a youthful energy to him, and he enjoyed spending time in the company of the *bochurim*. He wouldn't hesitate to ask a *bochur* fifty years his junior to repeat a *sicha* of the Rebbe for him or to learn together with him as a *chavrusa*.

TRAVELING SHLIACH

Though he had been through a lot, R. Zalman wasn't looking to take it easy. The Rebbe chose him to be a *shadar* [messenger and collector of funds], and twice a year he would travel across the country to collect for Colel Chabad. Shortly before setting out on each trip, R. Zalman would go into the Rebbe to receive a *bracha*, and upon returning, he would again be admitted to report on how the trip went.

The trips were challenging for R. Zalman, who could not speak English and did not have many contacts. He did not bring in a great amount of money, and he wanted to put an end to his travels. But the Rebbe insisted that he continue, for his mere presence in

those places was accomplishing great things. The Rebbe told R. Zalman that he was sending him to Chattanooga, TN, "*az men zol zen aza hadras ponim* – that they should see his remarkable countenance."

In truth, the purpose of such trips by travelling chassidim had always been to "sow spirituality and reap material fortune." The objective wasn't simply to return with funds, but also to leave a lasting impression of *Yiddishkeit*. With his warmth and genuine care, he connected with so many *Yidden* and guided them to the Rebbe.

UNTIL THE END

Even in his final years, R. Zalman remained steadfastly dedicated to the ideals of Chassidus. As his son-in-law R. Eliyahu Lipskier *a"h* related:

During his last days, his situation was not good, and we came in from Toronto to be with him. I visited him in the hospital on a Friday morning, and as soon as he saw me he said, "I'm glad you came since I have an important question to ask the Rebbe, and I want you to ask it. Try to ask today, and if there is time, please relay to me the Rebbe's answer. Please do it



yourself, since this is something that is causing me much agony.

“I have been careful for some many years to go to the *mikvah* each day and always remain in a state of purity. However, here in the hospital, at a time when purity is so important – you know what I mean – I have non-Jewish nurses, and this causes me great pain.”

Honestly, I was uncomfortable asking the Rebbe this question, since I didn’t think it was a big deal, but when I saw how important it was to him, I decided to go right away. I arrived at 770 and stood near the Rebbe’s door, and when the Rebbe came out I relayed the question. The Rebbe considered the question seriously and responded. When I told the answer to my father-in-law, his face shone.

On the 8th of Adar I 5730 (1970), R. Zalman’s soul ascended to Heaven, and he was buried in the Old Montefiore Cemetery, near the Ohel.

A BOOK FOR ETERNITY

At the Rebbe’s instructions, R. Zalman organized his stories for print in book form. The Rebbe advised him to have the stories reviewed for accuracy, but instructed him not to delay the printing.

[The Rebbe later urged R. Zalman to publish a second volume of stories. On *erev* Pesach 5727 (1967), as R. Zalman came by to receive *matzah*, the Rebbe said to him humorously, "If you publish another volume of *Leshema Ozen*, I'll give you a full *matzah*. If not, you'll get broken pieces!"

When Reb Zalman asked what was the importance of another book would be, the Rebbe replied, "From when the gates of wisdom were opened in the year 5600, as described in Zohar, every book of *kedusha* that is printed withholds the publication of another kind of book!"]

When R. Zalman asked the Rebbe for a letter to print in the book, the Rebbe replied, "You already have *several* such letters. You can choose one of them or print them all." R. Zalman followed the Rebbe's advice and included excerpts of 33 letters (!) in which the Rebbe praises the stories.

The book, published in Elul 5723 (1963), under the name *L'Sheima Ozen* ("The Ear's Hearing" – Tehillim 18:45), became a popular source of Lubavitch stories. The book became widely known for its exclusive material, and moreover, for its authentic unedited style which offers a glimpse into Lubavitch of old. **P**

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