

HERE'S my STORY

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THE PAPER TRAIL

RABBI ZEV KATZ



In the summer of 1966, my parents decided to visit Israel and they took me along — I was a young man at the time, not yet married. Of course, before we left New York, we went to see the Rebbe for a blessing, and at that time, the Rebbe gave me a mission to fulfill in Israel.

"I hear that in the synagogues in Jerusalem, there are vintage Chasidic pamphlets just lying around," he said. "And I have been wondering whatever happened to the library of Radatz."

By Radatz, the Rebbe meant Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Chein, the legendary Lubavitcher *chasid* who served for many years as the rabbi of Chernigov, Ukraine, and who, at the end of his life, moved to Israel where he passed away in 1925.

"Also, there was a collector of Chasidic literature named Bichovski," the Rebbe continued. "What

happened to his collection after he died? Can you find out when you are in Israel?"

I took on this mission very seriously, and I spent the entire three weeks that we were in Israel going from synagogue to synagogue, looking, searching.

My efforts were greatly aided by Rabbi Chanoch Glitzenstein, who invested a great deal of his time in locating many of these pamphlets. As well, I received help from Zelda Schneerson Mishkovsky, the well-known Israeli poet, whose mother was the daughter of Radatz and whose father was the Rebbe's father's brother, which made her a first cousin of the Rebbe.

Among other things, she gave me a notebook belonging to the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana, detailing the hardships the Rebbe's parents suffered in Russia after the Rebbe's father was imprisoned and exiled to a remote village in Kazakhstan. This is the notebook that begins, "I am not a writer, nor am I the daughter of a writer..." and which has since been published and widely distributed.

I met other members of Radatz's family and also of the Bichovski family, and they were kind enough to give me whatever they had. But one of the most interesting things that happened was my meeting Rabbi Nisan Horowitz, a spiritual mentor to the Chabad *chasidim* living in Jerusalem. When I approached him to ask if he had any old Chasidic literature to turn over to the Rebbe, he replied, "I have to tell you a story."

"A week after Bichovski passed away," he began, "I was sitting in the Chabad synagogue in Jerusalem when Bichovski's daughter came in. She had just

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**EVENTS. IDEAS.
PERSONALITIES.**

Marking 70 years from the anniversary of the Rebbe's leadership, each week, JEM will be focusing on one event, idea or personality in the Rebbe's life.



continued from reverse

gotten up from *shivah* for her father, and she brought in a big sack and left it there.

"I was curious," he continued, "so I looked inside. It was full of old hand-written manuscripts and many old pamphlets. I decided to take these home to preserve them. And now you have arrived — by Divine Providence! — and I am happy to send them to the Rebbe. Please make sure he gets them."

The day I returned from Israel with my parents, the phone rang. It was Rabbi Leibel Groner, the Rebbe's secretary, calling to say that the Rebbe wanted to see us that very night. The Rebbe would normally not receive anyone in the days leading up to Rosh Hashanah, but in this case, he wanted us to come right away.

I vividly recall coming into the Rebbe's office, carrying a large blue valise filled to the brim. And the first words the Rebbe spoke were: "Thank you for fulfilling your mission and finding these Chasidic books and pamphlets."

During that trip to Israel, I was introduced to my future wife and we became engaged, but the wedding was delayed until the following summer because the Rebbe instructed to me to first receive the rabbinic ordination required of a halachic judge. However, as time progressed, it became apparent that the situation in Israel was growing very tense, and we didn't know when we would be able to hold the wedding. These were dangerous times — the prelude to the Six Day War, as it turned out — but, of course, we didn't know what would happen.

Our relatives were all asking my parents, "Why are you planning a wedding in Israel at such a time?" In fact, in those days the US authorities would only allow Americans to travel to the Middle East with a special permit because the situation was that scary.

Not knowing what to do, my father wrote to the Rebbe asking for advice. And the answer came back: "The wedding will take place as scheduled at a good

and auspicious time." And, by the grace of G-d, that is what happened.

The anticipated war broke out on June 5th but, miraculously, it lasted only six days, and the wedding took place two weeks later — at a good and auspicious time — in Kfar Chabad, in the Land of Israel, just as the Rebbe said.

Rabbi Zev Katz serves as a gabbai in the synagogue at Chabad Headquarters and is a member of Agudas Chasidei Chabad, the umbrella organization of Chabad-Lubavitch. He was interviewed in his home in Crown Heights in November of 2018.

ב"ה

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This week in....

לע"נ ר' ישראל יעקב וזוגתו מרת קריינא ע"ה לאקשין

> **5748 - 1988**, as the fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz was drawing to a close, the Rebbe delivered a talk. He referenced an obscure custom to study the biblical verses of the Prophets concerning this fast during the course of the day, and he explained that learning about these tragic events in their Torah source, exposes the potential for good which is buried within them and serves as a precursor to the coming of Mashiach.¹

17 Tammuz

1. Sefer Hasichot 5748 vol. 2 page 547

MY ENCOUNTER with the REBBE

While we have done our utmost to authenticate these stories, they reflect the listener's recollection and interpretation of the Rebbe's words.

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