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# FARBRENGEN

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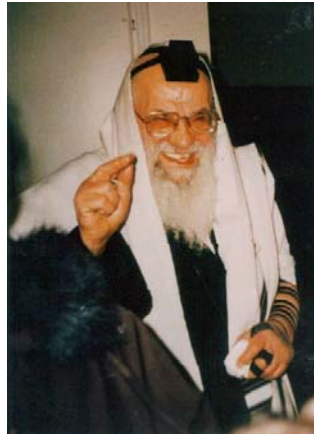
# REB MOSHE

# RUBIN

*IN*

*SLONIM, OTWOCK,  
SHANGHAI AND MONTREAL*

*דברי*



*By Rabbi Chaim Dalfin*



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## Author's Bio

## Introduction

I was drawn to Reb Moshe Rubin long before I chose to write this book.

As a child, I was deeply moved listening to a tape recording of Reb Moshe's beautiful nigunim.

Reb Moshe sang from his heart. More than a blend of old melodies, sounds and words, he expressed his very soul, -you could feel it in his voice.

Reb Moshe was a lively, colorful and relevant chasid who had the faith and determination to thrive in two worlds. He lived in his davening, chasidus and nigunim, and also in the current here and now.

Reb Moshe blended his old time shtetl and Yeshiva spirit and values with life in the modern world.

Reb Moshe's davening was unique; his nigunim, and his (long) one-liner 'vertlach' were special, and his love for a fellow Jew was contagious.

I came to realize that this beloved Reb Moshe was among the Who's Who in Lubavitch. He surely stands out in my work of documenting the great Lubavitch Chasidim of the last century.

Reb Moshe's son, Reb Yisroel, the Rebbe's shaliach in Albany, his daughters, family and friends shared their memories with me for the readers' benefit. I thank them all for this wonderful inspiring experience.

Reb Moshe was a master at giving a relevant twist to a pasuk or phrase, so let's begin with a "Vort" on him!

Pirkay Avos (chapter 3) states: “Kol shemasav m’rubin mechachmaso, - one whose actions are more than his knowledge... will endure.”

It is interesting to find Reb Moshe’s initial and family name in this multi meaning word “m’rubin,” which is most appropriate to his personal quality.

Reb Moshe could take abstract concepts from the higher realms of thought and meditation, and bring them down to earth, translating them into words and action we can understand and relate to.

Indeed, the Gimatria numeric value of this Pirkay Avos phrase equals = “Moshe Ben Yisroel Eliezer”!

It is important for us to relive and retain our memories of those genuine Chasidim.

May Reb Moshe’s story continue to inspire us to learn and daven better, and to fully love every yid, as is, to hasten Moshiach, speedily in our days!

Rabbi Chaim Dalfin  
Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan, 5766  
10<sup>th</sup> yahrtzeit of  
Reb Moshe ben Reb Yisroel Eliezer Rubin

## Slonim of Old

Fondly known as “Reb Moshe,” Rabbi Moshe Rubin was born on Tammuz 29, June 27, 1919 in the city of Slonim in Belarus.

A city of 25,000, Slonim occupies 1,500 square km in the southern Grodno province. The Schara River flows through the area crossed by the Baranovichi -Volkovysk railway and connected by highway to Baranovichi, Ivatsevichi, Ruzhany and Lida.

A quick review of Slonim’s history will give us a better understanding of the factors that influenced Reb Moshe growing up there as a young boy.

Originally a wooden fortress, Slonim was the site of many battles and changed hands many times. In 1040, Kiev’s Russian forces won a battle at Slonim, but Lithuanian Graf Radziwill recaptured it in 1103.

In 1241, the Baru-Kahn Tartar (Mongolian) hordes overran Slonim, but were forced to retreat. When Poland and Lithuania united in 1569, Slonim became an important Lithuanian center within greater Poland. This lasted for 226 years.

Slonim was taken by Russia in 1795, recaptured in 1920 by Poland, and Stalin forced it into Soviet Russia in 1939. When the Nazis invaded Slonim in 1941, they killed 70% of its Jewish population in the first year.

Although Slonim had been an active cultural center, it had become a minor administrative point by 1990. At his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration Reb Moshe remembered Slonim as an “Ir V’em B’yisroel,” a landmark ‘mother city’ and expressed his desire to visit “my birthplace.”

## Jewish Settlement

Envious of Poland's prosperity (thanks to the Jews who escaped the Crusades), Duke Veetold granted Jews rights to attract them to Lithuania in 1388. Tombstones in the Jewish cemetery date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Slonim Jews were expelled in 1495. 400 returned when the decree was voided in 1503, 15% of the population.

R. Moshe Lima, Slonim's first rabbi early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the highest Halachic authority in Lithuania, and later served in Bresk and Vilna.

Slonim's main synagogue, built in 1642, was the most beautiful in all Lithuania. Reb Moshe recalled that this shul was built like a fortress with walls two meters thick!

The Haskalah movement encouraged the Russian government to assimilate the Jews of the Pale. They introduced math and Russian language in its Talmud Torah, and established a secular library in Slonim.

A wave of pogroms halted the cultural rivalries in the 1880s. Pogrom mobs failed to organize in White Russia where Jews were 80% of the population, but they burned Jewish homes, so Slonim's Jews organized a fire department for self-protection.

Czar Nicolai ordered Jewish communities to supply teenage boys to serve 25 years in his army. Rich parents bribed the authorities, so government "catchers" filled their quota with poor boys, leading a clash with the rich. Slonim had 10,000 Jews by mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Most rabbis then were not fluent in Russian, so the government created a "rabiner" post to represent the Jews and manage the vital statistics bureau. The first Slonim rabiner was hired in 1879.

Slonim became a hub of commerce at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but the Russo-Japanese War slowed it down.

Socialists and Bund Revolutionaries sent agitators to Slonim in 1902, while secular Zionist orators in Slonim were opposed by the Religious Poala-Zion and the Bund.

Slonim was fertile with “isms,” but self-preservation united the organizations. The 1903 Kishinev pogrom pushed immigration to America and 2,500 Jewish youth emigrated from 1907-1914.

Slonim was a military center with army barracks during the Russo-Japanese War. The military offered the Jews 50 Cossacks and 2 commanders for hire to prevent pogroms. Besides paying the commandant, the Cossacks got 5 kopeks a day and officers 3 rubles a day plus food.

The barracks also had Jewish recruits. Reb Moshe recalled that they spent a few hours on Shabbos in Shul, and were treated to cucumbers at Shalosh Seudos.

Despite the many political changes 1880 to 1914, Slonim remained a stable, idyllic shtetl.

The Grodno Governor’s motorized staff toured Slonim on Rosh Hashanah Sept. 8, 1915. Crowds turned out to see the first automobiles, but Slonim’s muddy streets couldn’t handle the cars. Jewish workers had to surface the streets on the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

## Slonim’s Milieu

Slonim’s Jews developed into four factions in 1900-30s:

1. Litvish Misnagdim and the yeshiva emphasized Talmud scholarship and ethical Mussar.
2. Slonimer Chasidim. (The other 3 Ukrainian groups are: Lubavitch, Karlin-Stolin, Breslov.)
3. The Zionist “Lovers of Israel.”
4. The Haskala Enlightenment.

Many “isms,” including communism, flourished. Amid the poverty, pogroms and WWI, Secular Zionism was a panacea, but detracted from religious observance. A “Torah factory” in Slonim printed non-kosher scrolls.

## Slonimer Chasidic Dynasty

Slonim’s Chasidic dynasty started with R. Avraham Weinberg (1804-1883), author of *Yesod Ha’avoda*, a chasid of R. Moshe of Kobrin, who in turn was a chasid of R. Mordechai of Lechovitch, a student of Rabbis Aaron and Shlomo of Karlin. R. Avraham Weinberg also wrote “Chesed L’Avraham” and “Be’er Avraham” on Mechilta, and impacted Slonim’s strong “Litvak” area.

After Reb Avraham’s passing in 1883, his grandson Reb Shmuel was Rebbe. After his passing in 1916, the older son Reb Yissachar Leib remained in Slonim, while Reb Avraham moved to Bialistock and later Baranovitch.

## Slonimer Shuls

Slonim had 40 shuls, mostly small shteiblech for specific groups, i.e. the schnyder (tailor) shul and the maller (carpenter) shul etc. The main shul and the shteiblech were all located in the Shulhof, - the shul courtyard.

Slonim’s Chief Rabbi from 1925 was Rabbi Yehuda Leib Fein, killed in the Holocaust while trying to intercede for the community. Reb Moshe recalls the Chief Rabbi as an impressive Patriarchal figure with a tall aristocratic bearing, big flowing beard, wearing a Cilinder top hat.

The biographic *Sefer Gedolei Hadoros* writes that Rabbi Fein studied by Der Alter fun Slabodka and Reb Itchele of Ponivitch. He corresponded with the famous R. Chaim Ozer of Vilna and delivered exceptional sermons.

Slonim's Lubavitch "Damske" shul had chasidim going back to the Rebbe Maharash. Reb Moshe would sing a beautiful nigun (unlisted in Sefer Hanigunim) that he heard as a boy in Slonim's Lubavitch shul.

"Damske" means feminine; a reason given was that they were viewed as 'weak' Chasidim, or because Lubavitch was smaller compared to the larger Slonimer group.

The Lubavitch shul was located away from the shulhof, about which Reb Moshe told the following:

The Governor once came on an official tour of Slonim. The non-Chasidic deputy mayor took him on a tour of the city, proudly pointing out the various Shuls.

But as the Governor was about to leave he heard noises. What was his host hiding from him? The deputy mayor pointed to a house on the hill. "Oh, that's just an asylum; the crazies are screaming..."

The Governor noted, "That's a good idea to designate a disturbed persons' shul, so they don't bother others."

Hearing that they were snubbed and their farbrengen "noises" derided, the Lubavitchers reveled in their status. "Meshugah zeinin mir, ober tzuzamin zeinin mir," They think we're crazy, but we are together!"

Others dismissed them as "Damske," but Reb Moshe and his father lived and loved the Lubavitch spirit. Yet aspects of Reb Moshe's warmth and "bren" can be traced to the Slonimer roots of his youth.

Reb Moshe searched for his family roots when visiting Israel in 1984, and met the respected Rubin family in Bnai Brak. The son Rabbi Avraham Rubin was away in Rechovot, but when he later met his father, he was still elated and inspired by Reb Moshe's visit, exclaiming: "Od Slonim Chai, the Slonim spirit lives!"

## Family Lineage

### Illustrious Family

The first known Rubins, Dovid Leib and Ruchama Rubin, had 6 children, including Moshe Rubin, born in Piesk who married Dreizel Kviat, also of Piesk, in 1840.

Moshe and Draizel Rubin's children included Dovid Leib, who married Merra Gittel Kviat and had Binyamin and Yisrael Eliezer Rubin.

Yisrael Eliezer married Rachel Devora, also of Slonim. They had a "condiktur," a grocery/ condiments store.

Reb Moshe recalls his father as stern, "the mere look in his eyes would stop you from doing something wrong." His mother would give him hot potatoes to carry in his pockets, that kept him warm during the freezing walk, and then he ate them in school. When Moshe left to Yeshiva, his mother would send him a tort cake with fond regards of home.

During the holocaust, Michael Jourdan, a starving partisan (aka Maxime Rafilovich) originally from Warsaw, approached several Jews in Slonim for food. They turned to their leader, "Reb Rubin," who gave him bread and cheese.

Later, watching from a rooftop, Michael saw the Nazis shoot Yisroel Eliezer to death.

Years later Reb Moshe visited Saratoga, NY, and heard Michael (who didn't know his name was Rubin) relate his war experiences.

Reb Moshe told him, "My name is Rubin, and that was probably my father!" He verified it by describing his height, looks, and where it occurred.

Bubbe Dreizel's big welcoming house was located between Piesk and Drezint, near the dirt road from Slonim along the Zablinke River, at the Bridge 7 miles from Piesk. The entrance had a big guest room, and also a little shul with an Ark and Torah scroll.

The estate was leased from the old count by Reb Moshe's paternal great-grandmother Ruchama who established there a factory for copper vessels.

Her husband Reb Dovid studied Torah all day while Dreizel directed the business. Her home was open to rich and poor, and she was respected and trusted by all, including peasants who sought her advice.

Their daughter Mrs. Chava Bernblatt, now in Brooklyn, recalls her grandfather Moshe Rubin: "He had a broad heart, was a very wise, noble and respected figure with a long white beard, sharp penetrating eyes, and a stern visage. Yet, he was soft and easy going, folksy, friendly even with kids, friends and neighbors."

Bubbe Dreizel was the daughter of the wise Chasid Yisrael Eliezer Kviat. When grandmother Ruchama passed on, Reb Moshe inherited the estate and his wife Dreizel continued to manage it. Combining Torah with wealth, they engaged in charity and good deeds.

When the old count died, his nasty son demanded Moshe Rubin's keys to his safe, hired hooligans to beat Moshe and Draizel Rubin, stole their belongings and threw them off the property, leaving them penniless.

Bubbe Dreizel lived 94 years until 1935, and saw her family grow as G-d fearing Jews. Two books were published on her very productive and exacting life.

Dovid Leib was not a chasid,\* but his son Yisrael in Slonim was a Chabad Chasid. Yisrael Eliezer and Rochel Devora had four children: Moshe, Tzvi Hirsh, Nachman and Aidele. Only Moshe and Tzvi survived the Holocaust.

<sup>1</sup> Distant cousins and Slonimer landsleit, Reb Moshe and Reb Noach Silver of Detroit would meet at the Rebbe's farbrengens.

## Reb Moshe's Family

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson officiated as Mesader Kiddushin<sup>2</sup> when Reb Moshe married Yocheved Miriam Backman of Brooklyn Rosh Chodesh Elul, 5707, August 17, 1947.

Their oldest is Yisroel Eliezer Rubin of Albany, Rochel (and Tzvi Hirsh) Zaklos of Detroit, Esther (and Moshe Leib) Chanowitz of Montreal and Sorah (and Yaakov Dovid) Yuzewitz of Crown Heights.

Reb Moshe often wrote his children and grandchildren loving and heartwarming words on relevant verses for their Simchas, and patiently waledk his grandchildren in Montreal to school, with personal love and attention.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on genealogy by Israeli writer Aaron Surask, a second cousin. \*According to Rabbi Avraham Yisroel Rubin of Rehovot, also a relative, Dovid Leib Rubin started the family's Lubavitch branch.

<sup>2</sup> The Rebbe officiated only for select people during the Previous Rebbe's lifetime in the 1940s.

Yeshiva Years

## Slonim Talmud Torah

To better understand Reb Moshe's hearty personality, let us review his youthful years in yeshiva.

Reb Moshe studied in Slonim's Talmud Torah, founded in 1825 and associated with R. Shabsai Yagel, from 1923 until 1935.

## Otwock Lubavitch Yeshiva

There were great Litvish yeshivos near Slonim, such as R. Elchonon Wasserman's yeshiva in Baranowitch, but Rabbi Fein recommended that Moshe, 16, and his brother Hershel go to the Chabad Otwock yeshiva near Warsaw.

The yeshiva, with 300 students in the upper grades, was known for its high standards. The Amshinover Rebbe sent some of his chasidim there after observing the students' high level of kavannah and yiras shirayam.

In Chabad yeshivos, the mashpia mentors in matters of the soul, while the Rosh Yeshiva expounds on Talmud.

The Otwock Yeshiva faculty were: R. Yehuda Eber (author of Shaarei Yehuda) aka Reb Yudel Eber; the Mashpia R. Boruch Friedman, aka Boruch Polisher; and the Mashgiach, R. Berl Kurenitzer. All three studied by Reb Michoel der Alter, Reb Zev Wolf Levitin, Reb Shmuel Groinem Esterman and Reb Shilem Kuratin in the original yeshiva founded 1897 in the city of Lubavitch.

## Yeshiva Friends

Moshe Rubin was part of a serious group of quality Litvish accented students.

Reb Moshe Elye Gerlitzky, a classmate, recalls: “We Polische chevra studied, but we could also enjoy a prank! Moshe Rubin was a peacemaker, like Leibush Altman saying ‘kumt adurch’” if issues arose.

## Reb Moshe’s Specialty

The whole yeshiva studied Talmud, Halacha and Chasidus, but individual students “majored” in certain areas more than others.

It is evident from later discussions that Reb Moshe knew a lot of Gemara, and was very familiar with the in-depth Reb Shimon Shkop analyses on Chazaka and Migo subjects, but Moshe Rubin got more involved in studying chassidus, long davening and nigunim.

The students would sing nigunim before and after the Rebbe said a Maamar, but they once sang a nigun incorrectly.

The Previous Rebbe was concerned. He said that since Reb Yudel Eber was a master of negina, he should teach the students the right way to sing.

The students had no idea that their esteemed Rosh Yeshiva, known for his analytical Talmud lectures, was also a master Menagen!

Since then, a group of select students, including Moshe Rubin, would walk to Reb Yudel’s house Shabbos afternoons to learn nigunim, which they then sang at the Rebbe’s farbrengen. Reb Moshe’s love for a nigun went beyond public singing; he internalized it, learned and davened with it until it permeated his very essence.

Instead of “Zing a Nigun,” the Chabad idiom is “Zog a nigun,” say a nigun. Rather than just entertaining and comforting, a nigun reveals our heart and mind.

Reb Moshe expressed himself with deep feeling in each stanza and nuance of a melody. He also had his own “labels” for certain nigunim. This nigun he called: “kmayim karim al nefesh ayefa,” like cold refreshing water on a tired soul, and another he described as expressing “Geon Yakov’ -pride of being Jewish.

## Sings at Rebbe’s Farbrengen

Once in the late sixties, the Rebbe asked Reb Moshe to sing a nigun, and he triumphantly sang his favorite ‘Vnizkeh Vnichye” of faith and hope.

Reb Moshe taught his 10 year old Yisroel a new nigun each Shabbos as they walked back and forth from their house on Clark Street to the Yeshiva on Park Avenue.

Some of Reb Moshe’s nigunim are recorded on a Tfila l’Moshe CD and can also be heard at Heichal Menachem’s Heichal Hanginah.

## Rabbinic Ordination

Reb Moshe received Yoreh Yoreh/Yadin Yadin smicha at age 18 while still studying at the Yeshiva by Warsaw’s respected Rabbis Kanal, Kahan and Flato on the third, fifth and eighth of Adar 1937.

Besides the Warsaw Rabbis, Reb Moshe also received smicha from his hometown Slonim chief Rabbi Yehuda Fein and Rabbi Shabsi Yagel.

## Vilna Chabad Yeshiva

When WW II broke out in September 1939, many students returned home, while 40 followed the Rebbe’s

advice to go to Vilna, not yet under Nazi occupation. Vilna's Lubavitch yeshiva was headed by Rabbi Yisrael Gustman, and Reb Moshe's arrival in Vilna introduced him to his beloved Mashpia Reb Yehoshua Isaac.

## Reb Yehoshua Isaac Baruch by N.Y. Gotlib

This Yiddish poem describes RYI special character:

“O Lubavitch! From afar, from childish years, show yourself, shine again in my memory...

We pass small streets, old markets, poor stores, hunkered houses, to the Rebbe's court.

At the Rebbe's Yeshiva, bochurim daven with intense meditation and learn in a story manner.

...I sneak quietly into the large zal study hall, where they study with fire

Students –twenty and older, with narrow and wide beards,

At long tables with backs bent, creased foreheads, with burning eyes,

Singing into Talmudic tractates, Chasidic manuscripts and maamarim discourses,

Their ecstatic and fiery voices carry through the zal, ...permeating my limbs, entering body and soul,

I stand as a young boy, and observe them absorbed in learning in all sorts of voices,

Shaking like trees in a storm, a stirred forest of students,

I'm drawn to know them better, their soulful matters and absorbing their essence,

A pale student with narrow shoulders, bent a bit, with a blackish little beard,

With brown color eyes, dripping with kindness,  
absorbed in spiritual thought,

This student, Yehoshua Isaac his name—in Lubavitch  
a model “Tamim.”

A learner –fiery, a davener –even hotter, in chasidic  
wisdom, vast knowledge,

In all manuscripts he knew, to draw buckets full of  
wisdom and knowledge,

This student excelled in behavior and character, a soft  
approach to all: good or bad, religious or not,

In the Jew, a spark there is—a mild approach can  
ignite it, a soft approach will develop it...

But one must begin with oneself, to correct each  
moment and movement,

Through holy bodily G-dliness with Torah, with  
prayer, through pure thoughts

This student removed himself from base behavior and  
desires...

Dedicated to serving through intent in prayer, he did  
all possible between man and G-d...

## Reb Yehoshua Isaac’s Character

Reb Yehoshua Isaac was a Tamim in the fullest sense.

Upon reviewing the distinct styles and personalities of  
Reb Boruch in Otwock and RYI in Vilna, it seems that  
Reb Moshe was most affected by Reb Yehoshua Isaac,  
and the two shared many common traits in their lives.

Reb Boruch was a profound thinker who meditated on  
Chassidic thought for hours, while Reb Yehoshua Isaac  
was extroverted, a user-friendly mashpia who davened,  
and also ate lunch, together with his students/

Typically, Reb Boruch explained the verse “G-d saw that Leah was hated; so He opened...” According to Kabbala, “Rachel” represents speech, while “Leah” represents thought. “Leah was hated” i.e. a lazy person doesn’t make the effort to meditate and would rather talk than think. Just speaking, “Rachel,” is easier. Yet one who thinks earns the higher “G-d opens” level.

Reb Yehoshua Isaac, an “ish nilvav” a “nafshisdiker, was very down-to-earth with a joyous, simplistic sincerity that some students considered naiveté.

He cared for others. After the students with visas left, RYI returned to Kovne. Having a visa he also could have left, but he refused to leave his sister behind.

Rabbi Efraim Oshri z”l tells in his sefer “Out of the Depths” that only two Jews, Lubavitchers, didn’t shave their beards during the Kovne Ghetto horrors. It seems one of them is RYI.

## Previous Rebbe’s Letters

Reb Yehoshua Isaac’s special connection with the Previous Rebbe is seen in several letters.

In a letter to RYI<sup>3</sup>, the Rebbe thanks and compliments him for teaching chasidus to the (Vilna and Kovna’s misnagdic) Torah scholars.

The Rebbe also asks for a roster of Lubavitch descendants who moved from Lithuania to South Africa, to follow up and encourage them.

At the end, the Rebbe responds to RYI’s question whether it’s safe to write to his relatives in Zitomer. The Rebbe encourages him to write in a secretive code.

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<sup>3</sup> *Igros Kodesh, volume 16, p. 110-112.*

## Explaining Chasidus

In other letters the Previous Rebbe explains chasidic concepts to RYI. In one letter<sup>4</sup> he cautions not to read it shallow or superficially.

“I hope that one who will put mind and heart to what is being explained will thoroughly understand it. Since the idea is fundamental, and introduces many chasidic ideas I ask that the reader take care to study it meticulously, not to use a pre-conceived notion to grasp it; but rather interpret it in a right manner.”

In another letter<sup>5</sup> the Rebbe shares with RYI a principle in understanding chasidus.

“Your letter...stating the requirement of using “figurative language” and various expressions, is a great rule in studying chasidus.

Chasidus is a profound study with deep Divine intellectual concepts. One must be extremely careful not to veer from the truth...”

RYI understood chasidus and the Rebbe wanted him to communicate it to others. Reb Yehoshua Isaac shared chasidic concepts with all he met in scholarly Vilna and Kovne.

Reb Shimon Goldman, a fellow student of RYI, relates that the Vilna Lubavitch yeshiva students were not welcome to teach chasidus in the Litvish yeshivos.<sup>6</sup> But they allowed Reb Yehoshua Isaac, because the Truth melts away cultural differences.

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<sup>4</sup> *Vol 4, letter 1097, pp. 484-486.*

<sup>5</sup> *Igros Kodesh volume 14, letter 5236, pp. 318-319.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Previous Rebbe writes, with satisfaction, to Reb Yehoshua Isaac about a Tanya shiur in the Telz yeshiva. See Igros Kodesh, volume 3, letter 793, pp. 428-429.*

Characteristically, Reb Yehoshua Isaac once said, that when a Chasidic youngster visited a town, people would gather around him like bees around honey!

## Eating and Davening

The<sup>7</sup> Previous Rebbe concludes a letter with good wishes for his wife.

“May G-d strengthen your wife’s health. She should eat bread and butter upon rising in the morning.”

The Previous Rebbe clarifies:<sup>8</sup> Not to eat before washing hands and the morning blessings, but after that, she can eat bread and butter before the prayers.

## Affection for Reb Moshe

In another letter<sup>9</sup>, 17 Menachem Av, 5700 (during the war) the Rebbe writes to Reb Yehoshua Isaac “...May Hashem strengthen the health of Moshe Rubin and Yechezkel Deren, and strengthen them in all physical and spiritual matters...”

The Previous Rebbe addresses the students here as “children,” basically to avoid enemy censors, but also a loving reference to Reb Moshe among his “children!”

## To the End

The previous Rebbe wrote several letters<sup>10</sup> to Reb Yehoshua Isaac in the Kovne ghetto.

Besides RYI’s work to sustain the Chasidim in Warsaw, including the Rebbe’s daughter Shaina and husband

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid letter 661, p. 16.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid volume 13, letter 4780, p. 289.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid volume 5, various letters.*

Mendel, the Rebbe thanks him for an account of Vilna's yeshiva students daily program and their High Holiday activities.

Reb Yehoshua Isaac continued the Rebbe's work even in the midst of disaster, knowing that the end is near. To quote Reb Moshe, of his prodigy students, "the holy tzaddik, Reb Yehoshua Isaac Baruch of Kovne."

## Letter to Wife

Once when Reb Moshe was in the hospital, another patient gave him a book to read, which happened to have a poem about his beloved mashpia RYI!

Reb Moshe wrote to his wife on the book cover:

"It's Divine Providence! Our mashpia in Vilna was the holy tzaddik, Rabbi and chasid, Reb Yehoshua Issac of Kovne..."

A Jew in the hospital gave me a book to read. ...As I read a little, I cried.... On page 27 the author describes Reb Yehoshua Isaac in a most heartfelt way. I suggest dear Miriam (Reb Moshe's wife) to read it. Although poetic, he expresses it very well."



## Japan & China

### In Exile

Although a German ally, Japan welcomed 25,000 Jewish refugees into their country during the war.

Reb Moshe was among the 40 Lubavitchers who received visas from the Japanese Ambassador Sugihara to Kobe, Japan, and then spent over 5 years in Shanghai, China.

The visas were intended for Curacau via Holland, but that changed, so Japan accepted them. Japan knew little about Jews, and Germany was too busy with their death camps to educate Japan about Jew-hatred.

The Yeshiva boys traveled east from Vilna through Russia for 11 days until Vladivostok, the last port before crossing the sea to Japan.

Japan later brought engineers with plans to build crematoriums for the Jews, but the A-bomb on Hiroshima stopped their evil plans.

### Reb Moshe in Japan

Reb Moshe continued his intense prayer and service in Japan, as Rabbi Landa recalls:

“I was out for fresh air late on a hot summer night, when a student from another yeshiva ran over very frightened, “What happened? Don’t you hear the crying and wailing?”

It was “just” Moshe Rubin saying krias shema shel haMita. We all recited it without a sob, but Moshe let it all out, asking forgiveness etc.

That fellow had never heard Shema said so intensely, so I calmed him: “It’s no problem... let’s all learn from Moshe Rubin’s Shema.”

## Life in Shanghai

Preparing to attack Pearl Harbor, Japan invaded China in 1941 and sent the refugees on to Shanghai, where 1,000 Yeshiva scholars, including 40 Lubavitchers, continued to study.

Besides publishing sichos and maamarim, the Lubavitch students reprinted chumashim and siddurim for the broader community, and made a Talmud Torah to teach Shanghai’s Jews.

Besides their own personal spiritual growth, the Lubavitchers mingled with other refugees, sharing insights, stories and nigunim of hope.

Reb Moshe kept encouraging people in those dismal years in distant lands, like his mashpia Reb Yehoshua Isaac who inspired Jews in the Kovna ghetto to the end when they perished in the Ninth Fort.

The students also helped feed Shanghai’s poor non-Jews, despite the Chinese attitude that the poor are destined to remain poor.

## Rabbi Ashkenazi

Reb Moshe developed a special affinity with Rabbi Ashkenazi, a Lubavitch chasid who served as Shanghai’s communal rabbi before the war. Kind, sensitive and compassionate, Rabbi Ashkenazi helped all Jews regardless of affiliation.

Moshe Rubin was on kitchen duty with his friend Shmuel Dovid Raichik (later the Rebbe's emissary in LA). Unaware that rice expands, they filled the pot to the top. When it boiled over, the "chefs" kept pouring on more and more rice to 'quiet down' the boiling...

## Reflecting Period

His beloved parents, sister Aidele and brother Nachman; his mashpi'im, Reb Yehoshuah Isaac and Reb Boruch Freidman perished among the millions of Jews, yet Reb Moshe's faith and commitment helped him overcome the tragedies in the transition period between the "old" and "new" worlds.

Unlike certain anxious students, humorously described as "Chadatz:" Chevra Daaga V'atzvus, Members of the Worry Committee, Reb Moshe was resilient and optimistic, remembering the Rebbe's words to him and his friend, "the ocean doesn't separate us, it connects us." He believed and inspired others to believe, singing of hope and faith.

Life eventually came together for Moshe and his friends in the U.S. and in Canada.



The New World

## Arrival

Reb Moshe and his friends arrived in the US July 23, 1946. They were greeted by Rabbi Yosef Weinberg, who was with them in Japan, but had left earlier to Canada.

## “770” New York

They visited Seattle and Chicago, and finally arrived in New York, where they were housed in the newly purchased yeshiva’s dormitory on Bedford corner Dean, a 30 minute walk from “770.”

Reb Yosef Muskal recalls the 40 mattresses placed on the yeshiva’s top floor for the new arrivals, referred to as “chinks” as they came from China. Muskal recalls the American yeshiva boys’ great respect for the arrivals’ as living examples of chasidische yiras shamayim.

## Quality Students

The local 770 students were awed by the new arrivals, who wore long frocks and full beards and knew a lot of Gemara and chasidus despite their exile in the Far East.

## Reb Moshe Farbrengs

The new arrivals farbrenged in 770 with Rabbis Shmuel Levitin, Yisrael Jacobson, Shmuel Zalmanov and Avraham Paris etc.

Besides learning from the older chasidim, they also inspired the local yeshiva boys with what they learned

from Reb Yehoshuah Isaac, Reb Itche Masmid and Reb Boruch Friedman.

Here is part of Reb Moshe's farbrengen in 770 in 1946, recorded by Rabbi Weingarten.

#### CHASIDIM BAALEI TESHUVA

R. Chaim Voloziner asked the Alter Rebbe "Why did you choose such a high level name 'Chasidim'?"

The Alter Rebbe explained that the Besht emphasized teshuva, so chasidim should be called baalei teshuva. But if chasidim were named 'baalei teshuva,' it would imply that others were reshaim!

#### REB ZALMAN KURENITZER

Reb Zalman once saw two brothers care for each other lovingly, and said that they loved each other with the level of love that chasidim had for each other.

#### REB BORUCH FREIDMAN

R. Boruch Freidman farbrenged that "Di mesechta fun shvantz iz erger fon di mesechta fon gehenem, the 'tractate' on a fool is worse than the 'tractate' of Purgatory!" i.e. A fool can be worse than a sinner!

#### One Page Gemara

R. Hillel Paricher said: it's easier to learn 100 Talmud pages inside, than memorize 1 page outside; it's easier to memorize 100 Talmud pages, than daven sincerely from the heart; and it's easier to daven from the heart than to apply it all into real daily action.

#### MAGID BECOMES CHASID

The Mezritcher Magid was once traveling with the Baal Shem Tov and had to daven mincha. The Besht went to find water to wash his hands, and was gone for a long time, so the Magid went to find him.

He found the Besht on the ground crying, "If I don't find water to wash my hands before mincha, I can't continue living!" Seeing how meticulous the Besht was about a minor mitzvah made him a chasid.

MISSING TITLE PAGE

Reb Itche Masmid said that Reb Hillel Paritcher was initially a Tzernobler chasid, and became a Lubavitcher after learning in a "hidden" Tanya without the title page. Before he thought he was a tzadik, but then he realized that he was hardly a benoni. "Tzaddik? halevai benoni!"

## Master Farbrenger

Reb Moshe developed a deep love for "farbrengen" from his years in Otwock. His friends recall that Reb Moshe enjoyed every farbrengen and never get bored.

## Moshe Rubin equals 613!

Truly humble, Reb Moshe didn't stand on ceremony. He was just as comfortable to farbreng with young ignorant teenagers as with prominent scholarly elders.

The following describes Reb Moshe's farbrengen on visiting his Chanowitz children then living in Har Nof.

"The word is out: a chasid from a different time and place is here, let's get him. Reb Moshe was invited to farbreng at the largest Chabad shul in Jerusalem.

The atmosphere was warm and lively. Reb Moshe farbrengs, tells stories, conveys inspirational teachings, and the crowd is aroused, singing and swaying.

At the end, the gabbai said:

“We thank Reb Moshe for farbrenging with us. Chasidim don’t praise, yet we recognize the honor of having such a chasidishe personality with us.

Dovid HaMelech says, “Shomra nafshi ki chasid ani,”- the Hebrew word shomro is an acronym for -Reb Moshe Rubin sheyichye!

Furthermore, the numeric equivalent of the Hebrew letters Moshe Rubin equals the 613 mitzvos!”

From Reb Moshe’s farbrengens:

Don’t care for the world’s “hu ha” tumult of material matters, Just care for the “ha hu,” G-d, the only real thing that matters.

Poseiach es yadecha u’masbia lchol chai ratzon – when working for a living, we discover why we were created. If your “yadayim” hands open by working, you know the “chai ratzon” the reason, the ratzon for chai—for being alive!

Reb Itche der Masmid spoke a lot about Reb Hillel Paritcher. The nigun “Reb Hillel’s Kup” came to him from Reb Pesach Malastovker. When Reb Hillel heard it, he said that der nigun macht dem kup! He asked to include it among the 3 nigunim before saying chasidus.

Reb Hillel took along a minyan including a kohen, a Levi, when he traveled.

Reb Hillel drank a l’chayim before krias shel hamita!

Reb Zalman Zezmer once visited on parshas Zochor and was honored with maftir. Hearing Reb Zalman say the haftorah, Reb Binyamin Kletzker asked him: “Where did

you learn to hate Amalek like this?” Reb Zalman said, “for in Lioznia un du vest vissen,” Go to the Alter Rebbe and you’ll know!

“Darsha tzemer u’pishtim”-one can make a scholarly drasha on advanced Torah subjects like Kilayim, but unfortunately “vataas bichefetz kapeha,” in practical action, he does whatever he wants!

“Roshei chodshechem” – naieh kepalech, on Rosh Chodesh let’s get ourselves a new head and attitude!

Hu osonu vlo anachnu, G-d made us -we didn’t make ourselves; v’lo with a vav means yes, v’lo with an alef means “no.” If we admit that we ourselves, are nothing but credit Hashem, then we are his-v’lo with a Vov!

Modeh Bmiktzas, partial admission (Bava Metzia 3) is not just a financial monetary issue between a defendant and a plaintiff, but a spiritual issue between a person’s body and soul. “Hai”, this one, the body would deny Torah completely, but he can’t, so he admits partially. The soul’s attitude is just the opposite; it wants to submit to G-d fully, but the body won’t let, so it compromises.

A chasid offered his Rebbe ad chatzi hamalcus-I’m prepared to give you all the money you need. The Rebbe responded, yehi loch asher loch, that’s not what I desire, rather make more Chasidim. The chasid replied, “How can I when I am hardly a chasid myself?” The Rebbe said: that’s exactly what I want. You be a living example of a good chasid, and others will follow!

Kaf achas asara zahav- kaf loшон kfiya, asara 10 refers to a yid. “Ein beig,” when one bends himself in a little way it is very precious to Hashem.

Limate Yosef Lemateh Menashe Gamliel– the Slonimer said, even though you came lemata to increase, Yosef, but actually Lemata here below menashe, you seem to have forgotten, but Gam li keil, you too have a G-d!

Montreal

## Shochet

Reb Moshe's application to serve as a shochet for the Montreal Vaad Hair states that he mastered shechita in Shanghai, was ordained in NY by Rabbi Chaim Notelevitz, and Chaim Plotkin in Shanghai.

Reb Moshe was also recommended by Rabbi Alpern of Worcester, MA where Reb Moshe taught a few months before his wedding. Rabbi Shabsi Alpern of Brazil recalls the great Yiras Shamaym the students got from Reb Moshe, seeing how careful he was with Shaymos from the edges of a sefer.

Another classmate of Reb Moshe, Rabbi Hershel Fuchs, relates that once Reb Moshe's shechita position was challenged, so the Rebbe commented, "There's still a shochet in Montreal with yiras shamayim, Moshe Rubin, and they want to remove him?"

Reb Moshe served several years at Cong. Anshei Ozeroff across the street from his house.

## Life in Montreal

In Montreal, Reb Moshe reunited with his yeshiva friends from Otwock, Japan, Shanghai. In addition he discovered a whole new world.

He was close with Reb Peretz Mochkin, the community's senior mashpia, who was also a great menagen and Farbrenger.

Reb Peretz, who studied by the Rashab, was his link to the original Tomchei Temimim. Reb Peretz was a dear

friend of Reb Yehoshua Isaac Baruch, so Reb Peretz also helped Reb Moshe connect to his beloved mashpia.

This story illustrates their connection: Reb Shilem and RYI were once on a train with Bachurim. Reb Peretz boarded the same train, so RYI went over to farbreng with Reb Peretz at the other end of the car. Shilem compared the two to his students: “Whether Yehoshua Aizik (then unmarried) proves to be as great as Reb Peretz, remains to be seen. But Reb Peretz (already married) can never reach Reb Yehoshua Isaac’s level.”

Other prominent Chasidim in Montreal were Reb Yudel Chitrik, Reb Shlomo Simanovitch and Rabbi Wichnin. Reb Moshe’s son Yisroel recalls his father learning Zohar on Lag Bomer with Rabbi Greenglas on top of Mont Royal.

Yisroel recalls how his father and the above Chasidim stayed in shul Shabbos after everyone left, as he and his sister Rochel waited up till 2 pm to go home. On Rosh Hashana night they’d daven individually in different corners of the shul until after 10 pm.

Waiting impatiently, his children, little Yisroel and Rochel, would go check where their father was up to in davening to know how much longer they had to wait. One of them returned and reported that he was up to “Vayevorech Dovid,” but knowing how much their father spent on each word, the other asked: “Where exactly? Is he up to “Vayvorech” or to “Dovid”?”

Reb Moshe avoided busy S Viateur on Shabbos, preferring Fairmount, or the alleys between S. Urbain and Jeanne Mance to see less chilul Shabbos traffic

On Fairmount he would knock on the windows of Jewish stores to protest their opening on Shabbos. If he saw a Jewish woman carry bags he’d go over and say with great pain, “can’t you shop during the week?” He

encouraged non-religious Jews to lay Tefili, long before the Rebbe's Mivtza Tefilin.

Reb Moshe would read the Previous Rebbe's Sichos to his children on Tom Tov. He mentioned to his son Yisroel that he once borrowed, and returned, from the Rebbe (in the late 40's) the Sefer Torah Sholom of the Rebbe Rashab.

Montreal's Lubavitch community was imbued with great chasidische warmth, lively farbrengens and davening. In the '60s, "770" bochurim came to Montreal to experience the chasidische milieu where they "drank" from Reb Peretz, Reb Moshe, etc.

## Materialism

Reb Pinye Korf recalls Reb Moshe's saying:

"S'iz nit [asur] al pi din; s'iz [asur] al pi grub" - (a Yiddish pun: "din" - thin, "grub" - coarse), Even what is halachically permitted - is still a grube zach -coarse, s'past nit, not befitting!"

As a student in Montreal, Reb Pinye asked Reb Moshe, "Why do people exert so much effort regarding kosher laws, Shabbos laws, etc. (laws between G-d and man) but are not as careful about laws between man and man such as monetary laws, not cheating, etc.?"

Reb Moshe made a hand gesture indicating his displeasure, and told him this story:

People in a shtetel decided to raise 10 rubles to help a poor melamed. They got 9 rubles and hid it meanwhile in a crack in the Cheder wall.

The next day, the Melamed noticed the money and [unaware it was for him] took the 9 rubles.

When the people finally raised the last ruble, they were shocked to find out the 9 ruble were missing. Word got back that the melamed indeed took it without their permission. They said, “Oib S'hot g'kent zein tzen ruble b'heter, farvos zol men nemen nein b'issur?!”...

## Reb Moshe Rubin's Fan Club

Besides Lubavitch, Reb Moshe was a popular “visitor” in Montreal's other Chassidic circles.

As the original nine Lubavitchers grew into a large community, Reb Moshe was one of its colorful personalities. In the last ten years of his life, he actually had a fan club!

During the '60s, when free love and open society was in vogue, Reb Moshe utilized his loving nature to captivate the lost souls.

Montreal's leading Chasidim were occupied in their roles as Rabbis and teachers, but had no patience, attitude or humor to hear people's problems, as Reb Moshe who'd shmooze and have heart-to-heart talks.

His work as a shochet occupied him, but Reb Moshe found time, and gave his whole heart and soul for searching souls. This was not a paid official position, - Reb Moshe was just being “good for nothing!”

Having no car to get around, people took Reb Moshe along as a “lift” for which he'd offer to pay ... with an inspirational vort. His driver was once surprised by his “pay” of an orange, but realized that Reb Moshe had no money to treat him to a fancy dinner, but his orange given with love was more valuable than expensive gifts.

Treasuring a vort, he'd add: "Carry this vort along with you. It's precious, but you don't have to declare it (the vort) by customs at the border!"

During a "lift" Reb Moshe would offer personal tips. He davened long and hard, but he also understood people and the modern times. He reminded people to eat well, and counseled singles on marriage, often referring to the Gemara (Bava Mezia 59) on being sensitive to a spouse.

His "fan club" still lights up when discussing Reb Moshe. "Just thinking of Reb Moshe, 10 years later, makes me smile!" They consider him a tzaddik, an angel, and feel that he had spiritual intuition!

A recent baal teshuva once became so joyous after havdala that he danced with his brother.

Suddenly the phone rings and it's non other than Reb Moshe. "Thank you rabbi for calling, what an honor! What can I do for you?" Reb Moshe says in his broken English, "you know tonight we're in the Nine Days when happiness is not allowed, so you shouldn't be dancing!"

"How did Reb Moshe know I was dancing?"

Soulful Prayer and Neginah

## Heartfelt Prayer

From the start, Reb Moshe's Birchos Hashachar blessings were a whole experience. He encouraged his children to listen carefully and answer amen to each Bracha, pronouncing each word with enthusiasm.

His davening was a 3-5 hour operation on a regular weekday, trying to fit in Korbanos on his way to shul. A taxi driver asked other shoachim: "Where's the mumbling Rabbi?"

Reb Moshe enjoyed each word of davening like others savor each morsel of delicious food, chewing it over again. Or as it says that one should recite the Shma "Kmoneh Maos," slowly counting out money. He'd repeat a word to be sure he articulated it right. His ecstatic davening reverberated throughout the shul,

Reb Chay Amar, shaliach in Florida, wanted to leave Yeshiva, but was drawn by Reb Moshe's davening.

Rabbi Chaim Grossbaum, shaliach in Long Island, once asked Reb Moshe: "If passion for Tefila is so crucial, why isn't there a bracha asking G-d to have Rachmonus to inspire us?" Reb Moshe showed him the Ahavas Olam Bracha before Shma "vesain Blibenu ..." It was right there in the siddur, but I had no idea what I was saying until Reb Moshe showed me!"

Reb Moshe could not finish his davening in time for the Rebbe's 1:30 Shabbos farbrengen. He'd squeeze in with all his strength into a table of people. Once he was up to amida just as the Rebbe entered, so after the first sicha,

he jumped up to daven. The Rebbe waited for him to finish before starting the second Sicha.

## Albany, NY

Reb Moshe took his Yisralik, age 8, with him by train to celebrate a Yom Tov by the Rebbe in Crown Heights.

The train stopped in Albany. It was Mincha time, so Reb Moshe stood between the train cars to daven.

The conductor asked him to move, because the cars had to be changed, and the connection was right under him, but Reb Moshe kept swaying and didn't respond.

Embarrassed that his father was blocking traffic, little Yisroel explained to the conductors that his father was praying and couldn't be disturbed for 15 minutes! After Reb Moshe finished, they changed the cars and the train proceeded.

Yisrael credits his father's davening stop as the catalyst for coming to Albany in 1974 as the Rebbe's shaliach!

## Davening with "V'Yadaita"

Reb Moshe read each word layered with various meanings, depending on one's level and personality.

Reb Moshe explains 3 perspectives on the verse: V'Yadiata Hayom... Know, today (now) and reflect that Hashem (G-d's supernatural side) is Elokim (G-d in nature).

The Maskil, deep thinking chasid, understands it intellectually: "Hayom!" it should be clear to you intellectually as the day is clear.

The emotional Oved emphasizes “Hayom,” today, “now.” Know here and now, not later, that both aspects of G-d are really one.

Finally the Chasid emphasizes “V’Yadaita,” You shall know. To actually live with the reality that both nature and the supernatural are truly one, one must be an “insider” who knows that the verse is not just talking to you, but about you! We must be fully into it, that very moment, to realize that Hashem hu Ha’Elokim.

A Maskil and Oved try to bring G-d into their lives, yet G-d remains distinct; but a Chasid transforms his very self into “V’Yadaita.”

## Double Blessing

Rabbi Nissim Hayward (who lived in Montreal) was behind Reb Moshe in line after a Yom Tov farbrengen when the Rebbe distributed shel brocha wine, and witnessed this:

The Rebbe gave Reb Moshe some wine, and he walked on. The Rebbe called him back, “Reb Moshe, you repeat your words twice, so here is l’chayim twice !”

According to Rabbi Greenglas, Reb Moshe sometimes found privacy to daven in Gan Eden Hatachton next to the Rebbe’s room, so the Rebbe heard him davven.

The Rebbe was validating Reb Moshe’s style, which others may have ridiculed, implying “continue your davening way -you really mean it with all your heart.”

Reb Moshe confided to R. Itche Meir Gurary of Montreal, that his repeating a word until articulated with

kavana was based on the Previous Rebbe's direction to him in Yechidus!

Reb Moshe would verbalize in Yiddish the kavana (in Siddur) before putting on Tefilin "Ich gay mekayem Zain di Mitzva fun...."

Master of Neginah

Chabad emphasizes Neginah as the pen of the soul. Reb Moshe's articulation of each word and syllable was also evident in his neginah.

Reb Moshe also sang hearty Folk songs, like Yavo Eliyahu and Paam bayar in Yiddish, English and Polish on Shabbos night, and Chad Gadya at the Seder in Ukranian, climaxing Vaani Evtach Boch!

He sang heartily the verses "Zechar Dovor Leavdecha" (Tehilim 119) that faith helped him survive danger and ridicule.

## Whistling

Besides neginah, Reb Moshe would whistle powerfully at a Simcha. Unlike other Rebbes, our Rebbe encouraged whistling to express joy, and that it pierces the evil side.

On Shabbos Vayeishev 5752, the Rebbe said a Sicha in French, sang Ha'Aderes Ve'Haemunah, and put two fingers in his mouth encouraging people to whistle. The rabbis on the Farbrengen dais seemed uncomfortable, as some do not whistle, especially not on Shabbos.

But taking his cue from the Rebbe, Reb Moshe whistled with all his might and soul, shaking to and fro with fingers in his mouth, cheeks full of air. Guests from France said l'chayim, and when it was Montreal's turn, R' Moshe Rubin said "l'chayim" on a large cup, and the Rebbe encouraged him to finish the whole cup.

Yossi Jacobson, then a young student, asked Reb Moshe what inspired him to whistle when all the elders frowned at it? “Ani Mezaftzef al haolam, Ich faif oif der gantze velt. I laugh at the whole world...”

## Nigun of Hope

Rabbi Garfinkel, Reb Moshe Rubin’s friend from Otwock, Japan and Shanghai related:

“In Shanghai we were very worried. It was wartime and we might be killed. Food was rationed and it was hard to be happy. The Nazis had killed our parents, siblings, teachers, and now had fight for our survival.”

But Moshe Rubin came to the rescue.

As we pondered our dire situation, Reb Moshe breaks out into his Vniske Vnichye nigun, giving us hope and encouragement. We were inspired by his faith and joy.”

As Rabbi Garfinkel re-sang the song, you could hear exactly how Moshe taught it 60 years earlier! When Reb Moshe sang a nigun—it was a real experience!

Once Reb Moshe began to sing v’nizke v’nichye aloud just as the Rebbe was about to talk. Reb Yoel Kahn and others asked him to be quiet, but the Rebbe said: “Men zol em aroys helfen” they should help him sing it!

Reb Moshe conducted a seder nigunim for the older Bachurim in Montreal Shabbos after Mincha, upstairs in a dark classroom in the old Yeshiva on Park Ave. Reb Aaron Eliezer Zeitlin recalls Reb Moshe teaching stories and songs Shalosh Seudos with bar Mitzva boys.

He would go out of his way for a Mitzva. He once missed the bus to be at his Grandson’s bris, so he took a taxi (!) all the way to Albany (Bpoel he came late)

## Hiskashrus

There are various ways to bond with the Rebbe. One is Chitzonius through action, fulfilling a tzaddik's directions with fanfare. Pnimius hiskashrus in heart and mind is inward. We act after we are motivated intellectually and emotionally.

Reb Moshe's submission to the Rebbe is reflected in his comment on the verse in Tehillim, Al Yeivoshu be kovecha, meaning, G-d please do not let those who put their hope in You be ashamed. The word Kovecha can also mean the Rebbe who outlines how to serve G-d and gives us hope. Al Yevoshu, zy nisht mevayesh der rebbe, let's not embarrass the Rebbe with our behavior.

The sign directs us to the marketplace in Leipzig, but the sign itself has no merchandise. The sign itself doesn't leave to Leipzig, because its role is to stay here to direct others to Leipzig."

## Humility

Like other great people, Reb Moshe also had his detractors who didn't appreciate his "all welcome open admission policy."

All his pictures, from the Slonimer Talmud Torah, to the Rebbe shaking his hand, to crouching at the end of the table at Reb Peretz's farbrengen show his bitul and humility. Reb Moshe lived by the dictum "allow yourself to be insulted, but don't insult others."

Reb Moshe quoted the Previous Rebbe's secretary, Reb Yechezkel Feigin, a.k.a. Chatsha. Besides being the Rebbe's "right arm" in the difficult 1920s-30s, he was a brilliant master of Chabad chasidus. When the Previous Rebbe was in Otwock, Chatsha farbrenge'd with the Yeshiva students.

"Reb Yechezkel Feigin said at a farbrengen, we recite after Borchu before krias shema, kulam mikablim ..u'bnima kedosha, the heavenly angels praise G-d with subservience and holy sweetness.

The word neima also means delight. Besides kedosha literally meaning holy, also means separation and ego removal (Tanya chap. 46).

Another meaning is u'bnima having pleasure from kedosha, bitul, not delight from ego and arrogance."

Reb Moshe lived with bitul and humility until it became part of his nature.

## Saying L'Chayim

Reb Moshe discussed drinking lechayim properly: It says, "L'shoni et sofer" my tongue is like a scribe's pen. To speak –lishoni-tongue, one must dip his "et" "fountain pen" into ink, i.e. dip the mouth into l'chaim to communicate better!

The holy R. Yisrael of Ruzhin said, when two yidden say l'chayim, it helps them get parnasa.

In the Hebrew word l'Chayim, the two yuds represent the two yidden toasting each other. The remaining lechem means sustenance.

When G-d sees the love and care that two Jews have for each other through l'chayim, G-d gives them another reason to rejoice- parnasa!

## L'chayim Purpose

Reb Moshe also explained the l'chayim response. Others respond: l'chayim tovim u'l'sholom, to a good and peaceful life.

But the Chabad response is l'Chayim ul'brocha, to life and blessing. The Hebrew word l'brocha is composed of two words, lev raka- a soft and gentle heart. We wish the drinker that the drink should soften his heart!

Drinks can be harmful. The right way to say l'chayim at a simcha or yartzeit puts things in the right perspective. Saying l'chayim Reb Moshe expressed his wish that as the mashke should go in properly, the drinker should also go properly.

There are dangers in drinking alcohol, so we say l'chayim before to help it be a positive, not a negative result. L'chayim means "to life" - the holy life of a Jew who walks in G-d's way.

## Elul and Basic Training

Reb Moshe repeated this from his mashpi'im about the avoda of Elul and the High Holidays.

To be good soldiers, we learn from army training.

"Basic training" is when a soldier changes his comforts and lifestyle. If he used to rise at 7 am, basic training demands rising earlier at 6. It's hard to change our behavior, but this helps the soldier rise to the occasion.

Elul is like basic training. It hurts to review our mistakes in the past year, but it is absolutely necessary.

## Rosh HaShanah Field Exercises

The next step in army training is field exercises, falling down on the ground to shoot the enemy. These exercises are tedious and difficult. But without them one risks being shot. We fall down to ensure safety.

So is the spiritual activity of Rosh HaShana. We prostrate ourselves in our prayers to show total commitment to the king, G-d almighty.

It is uncomfortable and humbling to fall flat on your face, but it helps us to know that this reaches higher than our regular experiences.

## Yom Kippur Fasting

The next step is to position our self on high trees overlooking the enemy. To do so we must be fit, and requires not eating for hours. Imagine being on a tree overlooking the enemy without eating. Will he leaving his position because he's hungry? He needs to train for stamina to continue without food.

We fast 24 hours Yom Kippur, exerting ourselves by davening and fasting as soldiers in G-d's army.

## Sukkos Scepter

The soldier main goal in life is to win the war. After combat he waives his scepter in victory.

The Midrash teaches that after Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur one doesn't know who won; good or evil. We wave the Lulav to all sides to show that we won!

## Elul Diet

Reb Moshe also shared this parable on Elul.

A person visits a doctor to improve his health, so the doctor gives him a 6-week diet. After 6 weeks, the person returns for a check up. The doctor says to him, you are much healthier now than 6 weeks ago. The diet helped, but that's only a beginning.

To remain healthy we must continue the special diet during the year! The person almost faints, pleading, "Dear doctor, I can't diet so much!"

The doctor tells him, "my friend, if you want to be healthy you better diet the rest of the year."

We are on a "Elul diet," then we go on a Tishrei diet and think that since we dieted for 6-7 weeks, we can eat whatever we want the rest of the year.

No. Continue this spiritual diet throughout the year to stay good and healthy.

## Worldly Knowledge

Far from naïve, Reb Moshe was informed on worldly matters. He could quote Shakespeare or discuss constitutional amendments, using worldly knowledge and humor to inspire "in the Blue Mondays."

He'd apologize for his accent, "I didn't go to Oxford" (to which some commented: "That was Oxford's loss.")

Reb Moshe interacted well with college students because “he spoke their language.”

“Bell Atlantic once conducted a survey from the Atlantic to the Pacific and found out that the most common word used in the English Language is I.”

## Lesson from Rope

Reb Moshe related a 1937 Previous Rebbe sicha.

In Europe a customer who bought things in the market had to bring his own rope to tie it up and carry it home.

After a Tzadik guides us, we must “tie it up” with our own rope, or we can’t take it with us.

Actually, Reb Moshe had lots of rope in his house and would give it as a gift to others!

## Tehillim Power

It’s hard to be simple in today’s sophisticated society. But Jewish simplicity isn’t naiveté. He was scholar, but Reb Moshe emphasized simplicity:

Most don’t understand what they are saying. Yet we say it and pour our hearts out, because G-d assured Dovid HaMelech that when we say Tehilim in trouble, G-d receives it favorably.

Saying Tehillim isn’t sophisticated and intellectual? That’s why Tehilim is important for all, not just the simple ones who can’t study deep parts of Torah.

“Mitzvah lharbos bseudas Rosh Chodesh” isn’t just to eat a lot a multi course dinner, but to increase guests, noch a Yid, noch a Yid.

The Rebbe Maharash’s furnishings and carriage were regal. A chasid who was a smith meditated kabbalistic yichudim while making special wheels for his Rebbe’s wagon. He brought the wheels to the Rebbe and said, “Rebbe I brought you oifanim, give me chayos hakodesh (a play on a verse in Birchos Krias Shema) holy vitality!



## Remembrances

### By Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak Block

There was a time when you could hear stories about “Elterer Hasidim,” of a previous generation – stories about dveikus in davening, a geshmaker farbreingen and ahavas yisrael that wasn’t just a slogan but a feeling that permeated the very being and flowed out into a warm, heartfelt shalom aleichem, a smile, a friendly slap on the back and a rikud with eyes streaming with tears.

Today we have videos, speeches, programs, workshops and banquets. All very nice, but very cold. The Hasidisher varemkeit is missing.

Moshe Rubin of blessed memory was one of the few in whom you could still find it. Moshe Rubin knew what it meant to daven and if you wanted to farbreing there was absolutely no one better to farbreing with. I clearly remember being snowed in one Motzoei Shabbos in the yeshiva in Montreal at a student Shabbaton. There was nowhere to go as the airports were closed and the streets were impassable. What else could you do but farbreing?

Farbreing we did – all night long and at the end in the wee hours of the morning, when students and Hasidim were sleeping under the table or on the table, Reb Moshe and I were the only two left. We danced a rikud, fell on one another and kissed—a Hasidisher kush.

It could be that Moshe Rubin was one of the last of the “Elterer Hasidim.” There are not many left with whom one can farbreing like that or who had the warmth and the love that Reb Moshe had for Hasidim and Hasidus.

Some years ago, I visited Eretz Yisrael and. I davened in the Lubavitch Yeshiva in Har Nof and everyone – bochurim and baal habatim were talking about a Lubavitch Hasid from Montreal who had just spent a couple of months in Har Nof. During the time he became the unofficial mashpia in the yeshiva and the official farbreinger in the shul on Shabbos mevorchim. “Don’t tell me who it was, let me guess, I said. “It was Moshe Rubin, wasn’t it?” “How did you know?” they asked.

It was easy. Reb Moshe left his mark wherever he went. You remember him with a smile that makes you feel good inside, as I am smiling now, as I write these remembrances. The bochurim and Hasidim in Har Nof smiled when mentioning Moshe Rubin.

What better testimony than the smile his memory elicits from those with whom he farbreinged.

## Rabbi Aaron Chitrik

Written to someone who criticized chasidim  
“You weren’t in Montreal to hear Reb Moshe Rubin daven a weekday mincha, each word with the greatest kavana, I wish I could daven like that on Yom Kippur.”

## Rabbi Sholom Ber Chaikin

“Rabbi Isaac Schwei told me (in ‘61) at your Bar Mitzva what he once observed.

You had come running to your father that a boy had hit you. Rather than scolding that boy or telling you he’d take revenge, your father sat you down and explained in words you could understand that it wasn’t worth making a big deal about it and getting angry.

Rabbi Schwei was very impressed by your father’s response.”

### Last Days

Reb Moshe Rubin helped mold my character, and an appreciation of elderly Chasidim. During the evenings I stayed with him in the hospital, I realized what a privilege and honor it was to learn from a true and sincere Chasid.

I had the Zechus to hear elderly Chasidim Daven, but what really moved me, was how Reb Moshe said Birkot Hashachar. Not just that he said each word with deliberation, but with deep sincerity, like a grateful subject addressing his king.

Among my fondest memories are the evenings I spent with Reb Moshe after he returned home from the hospital. We took walks together, and when he began to tire, we stopped at the nearest bench and he would sing a nigun. Those memories still resonate within me.

I had the Zechus that the last time he farbrenged was on my birthday. That Farbrengen continues to motivate and inspire my Shlichus.

Zalman Gansburg

### Rabbi Chai Amar

“I didn’t want to learn with my grandfather when he offered to teach me. After my grandfather’s passing I felt bad I didn’t utilize the opportunity.

In the summer of 1988 I was in the Montreal yeshiva and I saw this Chasid davening with great kavana. I never saw something like that. I felt my innermost gravitating to him but I didn’t know who he was.

I got the courage to speak with him by starting a conversation. I wanted to ask him to learn with me but

felt uncomfortable, so I asked him the meaning of a sentence in Tuesday's Song of the Day to break the ice. He immediately gave me with an elaborate explanation.

He considered me a peer rather than looking down at me. I asked him if he would learn with me. He said he was going to the mountains for a week but he'll be more than glad to learn with me upon his return.

After his return he learnt with me at his house daily the whole summer. He'd bring a cup of grape juice mixed with water for me to drink and teach me 2-3 hours, flowing with wisdom of Torah. His love and warmth made feel that this was the answer to my anguish from not learning with my grandfather.

Reb Moshe's last name Rubin sounded like my grandfather Rabin in Morocco. He was a shochet. - my grandfather was also a shochet.

Reb Moshe loved me, and I loved him. There are few such Chasidim today and I had the good fortune to be taken under his wings."

## Friends of Reb Moshe

There was a "club" of Reb Moshe's admirers who shared: Deep Admiration and Profound Respect for Reb Moshe) – [no other criteria for membership and no "association fees"]

"The first time he told me: "I am at your service." It turned out, that he really was. He got me out of emotionally troubled times...I got a lot of love and support from him. He got me through marital problems. Once he stayed up with me all night at the yeshiva telling me how to conduct myself.

He was able to predict and to understand, even an unpredictable fool. We loved him like a father...If not

for him I would have no parnassa. I wanted to quit school and he forced me to continue until I got my degree...”

Anonymous

“The holy Farbrengen/Shabbos Table of the humble Chasid ‘non oxford graduate’ Rav Moshe Rubin

With sweet tears, love, joy, patience, expertise and self sacrifice he served ample servings of sweet delicious homemade chassidishe treats in generous portions to all, friends and strangers, too, with abundant ahavat Yisrael (all the while emphasizing ruchnius, yet eating and drinking simply to serve). His original heartfelt style, wit, wisdom and sense of humor, vertlach, divray Torah, Da”ch, prayers Kiddish, Havdala, birchas Hamazon, and most of all his beautiful heartrending Nigunim are deeply ingrained and engraved in our hearts, minds and soul forever, for all generations to come.”

### Mr. Abraham Abenaim

He knew how to simplify things. He knew how to get through to the young, -He could talk to a college student because he was emes. At his funeral you could see from all who attended that he attracted so many youth.

### Mr. Hayim Sherraf

I was an estranged Israeli leading a secular lifestyle. My artistic talent drove me worldwide and I came to Montreal, like many Israelis, after army service.

I met Reb Moshe in a train station. Reb Moshe was waiting for a train. Noticing me with my long hair, he asked if I am Jewish. I say yes. Reb Moshe starts up a conversation. I tell him my name is Hayim from Israel.

Reb Moshe talks with me like a brother. Despite my appearance and my secular Israeli background, Reb Moshe treats me as an equal. I think to myself, this guy is an old fellow; what does he know about real life?

Reb Moshe continues to warm my heart. I can't leave him although I need to go. I'm drawn to him. I feel my pintele yid on fire. I never felt so special. This is the first time a religious Jew treated me with dignity.

He invites me to the yeshiva. He tells me he wants to teach me Judaism. I accept. We met every week and learnt Torah. I found out what it means to be a Jew.

The rest is history. I became a baal teshuva, married and have a wonderful family. I use my artistic talent to make special ketubah designs and draw pictures of tzaddikim.

I'm most thankful for meeting this angel, Reb Moshe. He was the epitome of being non-judgmental and loving.

## Mr. Avraham Bloomstone

He really cared for everyone and when he looked at a person he tried to help him totally (not just a flippant whimsical passing interest) but with total concern. His desire to help a person was an obsession in its dedication but as gentle as a feather-touch in its sensitivity.

## Constructive Criticism

Reb Moshe was a chasid par excellence with great ahavas yisrael. This love included constructive criticism. People knew that if they were fortunate to get criticism from a most loving, humble man, Moshe Rubin, it was constructive as in the following story.

Reb Moshe once attended a wedding in Williamsburg, where he met a younger Chasid, R' YMW, who lived in Crown Heights. Reb Moshe asked if he could ride back with him after the wedding. Knowing Reb Moshe as a warm person who shared inspirational and humorous anecdotes, he readily agreed.

After the wedding, RYM returned home, but forgot all about taking Reb Moshe back.

Next morning, RYM was in 770 and feels a tap on the shoulder. He turned around- it was Reb Moshe, who - just the night before- asked him for a favor!

RYM felt bad and wished to excuse himself. Reb Moshe was warm-hearted and loving, but he wanted to fulfill the mitzvah, "You shall surely rebuke," even when it is with a sense of strictness and severity.

Reb Moshe asked him, "Why didn't you take me back to Crown Heights?!" Without waiting for a response, he continued with a story:

"When the steamboat was first invented, it was a great amazement; How could a ship travel without sails or oars?! Thousands of people flocked to observe this amazing wonder.

"The boat was scheduled to leave at 12 noon, but crowds began to gather at 10 waiting for the great occasion.

"Another amazing feature announced was that preceding the actual departure, it would blow eighty-three loud blasts, starting 11:45 a.m.

Then, when it was actually supposed to leave, the ship couldn't budge an inch.

"It turns out that the boat had spent all its energy to sound its horn, and lost its steam."

“We can talk and talk about Ahavas Yisroel, but  
“HaMaaseh Hu Haikar - action is the bottom line!”  
When a Jew asks another for a ride, we can't forget!”

## Good Rav

To understand a Talmudic Sage's statement, we must know his background to get a better idea of who they were and what they felt.

The Rebbe taught in Pirkei Avos that a sage teaches what he experienced in his life. By knowing their life we understand why they made such a statement.

Reb Moshe would say that a good rav can be meikel, lenient in a specific case, but he should not be a kal, have a careless attitude. He can be machmir, stringent in specific case, but should not be a chamor, i.e. a fool!

Reb Moshe was personally very frum, some say almost fanatical, but he taught others a balanced temperament.

Family Memories

## Last Days

Reb Moshe's illness was diagnosed in the summer of '94. Besides following the doctor's instructions, he continued to daven and do Mitzvos to the best of his ability.

Rabbi Moshe Leib and Esther Shaindel Chanowitz and their children living in Montreal were extremely dedicated and helped care for Reb Moshe in every way.

Bochrim of the Yeshiva, especially Zalman Gansbourg, and his many friends and admirers, assisted at the hospital, at the shul and in hospice, until Reb Moshe passed away Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan, 5756.

His tombstone begins with a very appropriate verse of Tehilim, that Reb Moshe used to point out has the initials CHABAD

“Cham Libi bkirbi, Bhagigi Tivar Aish, Dibarti  
Blilshoni”

My heart is warm within, my words burn with fire, that I speak with my tongue.”

Reb Moshe expressed Chabad through a fiery heart.

## Going Through the Motions

By Rabbi Moshe Leib and Esther Chanowitz

Remembering our father's fiery davening and Chasidishkeit, we recall a story he told that expresses his ecstasy and enthusiasm in every Mitzvah he did.

There was a flagman whose job was to wave his lantern at approaching trains signaling them to slow down or to stop while going on tracks through the city.

Unfortunately, one night a tragic accident happened; the train did not stop and people were killed and hurt.

The flagman was brought to court. The judge asked him: "Were you at the tracks at 10 pm. Thursday night?" "Yes, Your Honor," said the flagman. "Did you see the train approaching?" asked the judge. "Yes your Honor," answered the flagman. "Did you wave the lantern?" the judge asked. "Yes, your Honor!" he answered. The flagman was dismissed, not guilty.

But the judge forgot to ask one crucial question: Was the lantern lit! Waving an unlit lantern is useless in the dark!

In Judaism, it is not enough just to go through the motions, but we must fill our actions with fire, warmth, enthusiasm, true light! Especially with Ahavas Yisroel, we need to show our friends and family that we are excited to be with them and help them

We are all lamplighters in this dark Galut, lighting the way to a better world of Moshiach, the light at the end of the tunnel.

Our Zaidy, affectionately known as "Reb Moshe," was like a walking Haggadah. He loved to share his "sayings" with his children, grandchildren, friends, students, and just about anyone who listened.

We fondly remember our Zaidy for the long hours he spent davening, the beautiful melodies he would sing, and his Chasidic stories and expressions.

This collection of Zaidy's sayings, selected from several hundred, are not all his original creations. He may have read them in seforim, or heard them at the Yeshiva in Poland, or during World War II in Shanghai.

But Zaidy's sensitive and charming style was certainly original. It was not only what he said; it was how he vividly described the people and places, climaxing with his fiery "stress and emphasis" on the moral of the story.

Rather than being literal interpretations, these stories are often truths told in jest, inspiring with a smile.

Unfortunately, we cannot retell these vertlach with Zaidy's fervor and enthusiasm, but we hope the reader will enjoy his style and message. - Mendel

#### **Learning from Zaidy**

Zaidy also knew Gemara and Chasidus, but that wasn't how people knew him. He didn't make big new ideas of

his own in Gemara or Rambam, but he was known for his warmth and his smile.

Even if you already heard the vort before, but this time it was different, the way he said it, the fire how he described it, as if you were actually there. Then if he said it over again to another person, the flavor didn't go away, it was still with the same fire of the first time.

It didn't matter to him if you were big or small: he made you feel at home. He didn't speak great English, but even if they didn't understand every word, they saw a living chasid full of fire, with a big heart. That was better than any words he may have said.

His talks weren't prepared but they were true words from the heart that entered the heart, because the person sees where it comes from. We can learn from him that even if you don't have the right words to express it, it will be accepted if it comes from the heart.

As a child I remember how he davened in the dining room, he said every word clear. By brochos he made sure that we answered Amen loud. We should learn from him what means a chasidishe davening. When I left in the morning to school he was davening, and when I came back home from school he was still davening, I watched how he davened and said shma. I would go to eat, and come back, and he was still davening...

Abba

## "Life is Strife"

My Zeide Reb Moshe Rubin told us a vort on Rashi's comment in the beginning of parshas Emor "L'hazhir

Gedolim al haktanim" which means that adults should warn their children and instruct them in the proper way.

But its not just adults and children, we also have this aspect within ourselves. We have 'gedolim' days when we are more spiritual and tuned in, and "ketanim" days when we are low key, that Zaidy called "Blue Mondays." Some examples are: shabbos vs weekday; prayer vs work; learning vs doing.

At times when we are on a spiritual low the Baal Shem Tov says the word "L'hazhir" means not just warn, it also means "shine." Let it shine from one to the other, let the inspiration of the good times spill over and affect the more regular stuff we do. Don't let it stay two separate entities; let's communicate better with each other.

When Zaidy would ask another perosn to light fire from his cigarette- he would say "Ain Yid darf geben a Tzvaiten Yid Fire"

-Yossi

Being very young at the time Zaidy Rubin was with us, I don't remember much, but the few memories are clearly etched like in stone.

When he used to come down to Albany from Montreal, sharing stories, he sometimes brought us a fat salami or a big piece of liver. I am sure he wanted the whole family to share in making a bracha and uplifting the meat, but I know that my brother and I were in competition who would get the first and the most slices of liver to dip in the ketchup on our dining room table, near my father's seat on his right side.

I also recall when our family and the Yuzewitz mishpacha joined the Chanowitz's in Montreal at a

picnic in their back yard. The children were playing tag, swinging on swings (which later broke). On the table were wafers which we dipped in hot chocolate on the burner. Everyone sat around the table, with Zaidy singing his deep yet simple melodies, bringing richness into the family gathering.

Zaidy will forever be remembered for his great love and care, warm melodies, love for another Jew and the many themes he brought out. Those who knew him should relate all those diamond memories of his avodas Hashem to the younger generation.

Simmy Nachman Simcha

## Afterword

After reading 100 pages about an individual's life one may wonder: Fine, Reb Moshe survived the Holocaust, lived through tough times and yet was happy and joyful. Great. But how does that make a difference to me?

The answer is the question itself. The word, "me," is the reason why one would not feel it's relevant to him. When beginning with "me," one ends with a "me." If all life amounts to is a "me," no one else matters.

Reb Moshe reminds us that a person's essence isn't "I" rather G-D's "I." Hashem's "I" permeates a person to have healthy self-esteem and connection to G-d.

Reb Moshe's desire was making another Jew happy. He did this not as some great rabbi, tzaddik. Rather he as a down-to-earth, folksy fellow, rubbing shoulders with your average Jew, lived and exemplified humility.

Reb Moshe taught by example. He spent countless hours speaking with the simpleton. If I may be so bold and say, Reb Moshe found more commonality with the unlearned and simpleton than with the scholarly and sophisticate!

Let us teach our children what a real chasid needs to be. Let us share the stories and messages in the book with the new Chabad generation. Let them see that it is quite feasible for them to live like a chasid.

The youth of today, who didn't lose parents to a Holocaust, who didn't have Reb Moshe's struggles, can live a rich Chasidic life. All that is needed is humility.

Reb Moshe inspires us to live this lifestyle with joy and ahavas yisrael.