

bs'D

From: <http://www.ascentofsafed.com> Story #1199 (5781-11) 15 Kislev 5781 (Dec. 2020)
From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles editor@ascentofsafed.com

Tehran Tanya Miracle

In 1978, The Lubavitcher Rebbe initiated a campaign to print the book of *Tanya*, the seminal work of Chabad Chassidic thought, in cities around the globe. To date (Nov. 2020), more than 7,500¹ editions of *Tanya* have been printed, from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe.

About a year before the Revolution in early 1979, two emissaries of the Rebbe came to Iran in order to print the *Tanya* in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. The Jewish community there decided to print many copies of the *Tanya* in order to distribute them to the Jews of the city.

The *Tanya* was sent to be printed, but there were delays and it took a long time. In the meantime, in Feb. 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the *Shah* ('king' in Persian), Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. R. Yehuda Eizrachian, who was responsible for the Jewish community's spiritual needs, arranged to remove all the copies of the *Tanya* from the printer in order to bring them to the community's library. There, in the large hall of the library, they were stored temporarily, in messy piles.

The new government announced a law, called 'cleansing,' stating that every Iranian citizen and all public organizations had thirty days in which to burn all the documents, papers, and books they owned that had on them the Shah's royal emblem, or even just his name, or anything connected to his reign. It ominously stated that after thirty days, anybody who possessed anything with one of these symbols would be severely punished. And if it was determined that he purposely did not destroy them, he would be executed.

R. Yehuda Eizrachian relates: "We faced a serious problem in that we had archives over a hundred years old, and most of the documents and books had the royal emblem on them, as well as the name of the Shah and his government. We also had a collection of special gold coins that the community produced in 1967 in honor of the king's coronation and in celebration of 2500 years since the coronation of Koresh.² On one side of the coin was a *menorah* and on the other side was either the royal emblem, the name Koresh or a crown.

"As Jews, it was very hard for us to accept the 'cleansing' of the entire valuable library and huge archive of our traditions, but we had no choice. Anyway, clearly there was no way we could comply with the law in such a short time.

¹ My primary source for the story was published in 2012, and there the number was "nearly 5000."

² 'Cyrus' – founder of the first Persian empire. The king after him was Achashveros of Purim notoriety. Korush's relationship to the Jews is discussed in the Book of Ezra 1:3.)

"When the month ended, we had not yet managed to complete the job, as expected. A day or two later, the secretary came into my office and said that two government inspectors had shown up to inspect the entire building, in order to see whether we had followed the cleansing law.

"I was terrified. I understood that I was doomed and that the entire Jewish community was in great danger. I said *Vidui* (Confession) and *Shma Yisrael*, and prepared myself for what I knew was coming.

When the inspectors entered my office, I was able to outwardly remain calm. For some reason, and still to this day I can't explain why, it occurred to me to take them first to the library.

"They immediately noticed the piles of books that were strewn all over. One of the inspectors bent over and picked one up. It was a *Tanya*! He asked me what it was, and I told him first about the author, about the *Baal HaTanya*, then about the *Chabad* movement, the Baal Shem Tov and *Chassidut*. I also said that this book was one of the primary texts of the movement.

"He opened it at random and asked me to explain to him what it said on the page he had opened to. It was the first page of Book Two, *Shaar HaYichud V'HaEmuna*. I translated into Persian and explained the entire page.

When I was done, the inspector closed it, kissed it, and said, 'In a place with books like these, and with such a person in charge of a place like this, there is no need for any additional inspections.'

"We were stunned. When I recovered from this unexpected but very pleasing shock, I said to him that we would be extremely happy if he would sign our guestbook before he left. He agreed with a smile, and wrote: 'On such-and-such a day, I visited the offices of the Jewish community, and inspected and ascertained that all was as it should be.'"

The following Shabbat, in *shul*, the entire Tehran Jewish community celebrated with R. Yehuda Ezechian the miracle that took place in the merit of the *Tanya*.

~~~~~

*Source:* Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from an interview with R. Yehuda Ezechian in *Kfar Chabad Magazine*, as translated on [chabadmanhattanbeach.com/2639065](http://chabadmanhattanbeach.com/2639065) (and with a bit of the editing of Michael Dobry in the *Beis Moshich* version).

*Connection:* Seasonal -- This Shabbat is **Yud Tes Kislev**, the Chasidic festival celebrating (in reverse chronological order) the miraculous release of the first Chabad Rebbe from Czarist prison in 1798, the first printing of *Tanya* in 1796, and the passing of the Rabbi Dov-Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch, successor to the Baal Shem Tov, in 1760; all three events happening on the same date, the 19<sup>th</sup> (*yud-tet*) of the Jewish month of Kislev.