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## ***Growing a Spiritual Present***

**Rabbi Abraham Gluck** of blessed memory was a successful English businessman. In the early 1970's, he met **the Lubavitcher Rebbe** for the first time. The Rebbe said to him, "You manufacture light bulbs, correct? Well a person in the lighting business knows that a bulb must be lit. Every Jew is like a light bulb, and we should help him glow. So everywhere you happen to be you must ignite and illuminate Jewish souls."

In a short space of time Rabbi Gluck became the emissary of the Rebbe in Europe. He was the Rebbe's "*shadar*," – ***Shliach D'Rabbanim*** / "emissary of rabbinical leaders" -- a venerable title, in Chabad bestowed upon select individuals who travelled the world at the Rebbe's behest, promoting Torah education and observance.<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Gluck was accustomed to travel to 770 on *Yud-Aleph* (11<sup>th</sup> of the Jewish month of) Nissan for the Rebbe's birthday and each year he would deliberate as to what birthday present he could give the Rebbe. Clearly it had to be something spiritual that would bring the Rebbe joy. One time, before he was due to fly, he decided that this year's birthday present would be to stop shaving and grow a full, untrimmed beard.

This was not a simple resolution in those days, given that it was quite unusual then for even orthodox Jews in the UK to grow a beard; for a number of reasons. One is that the vast majority of men in England were clean-shaven. Bearded men were easily identified as Jewish and open to anti-Semitic abuse.

The week before his flight to New York, and now sporting a fully-grown beard, his business took him to Leicester, a town in The Midlands. Arriving at the outskirts of the town, he saw to his dismay that the roads had been closed by the police and he was unable to proceed in any direction. "No doubt this is Divine Providence, so I will get out and see what is happening," he thought.

He soon discovered that a new shopping mall was opening very close to where he was parked. Shopping malls were still a great novelty in the UK having only been recently imported from the United States. So much so, that none other than the Queen of England, Queen Elizabeth II, and her husband, Prince Philip, were opening this new mall.

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<sup>1</sup> A mission in which Rabbi Glick was famously successful – y.t.]

Joining the large and excited crowd, he decided to take this special opportunity to get a glimpse of the royal couple when they came out of the mall. Somehow or other he managed to find himself at the very front of the barriers which were to separate the public from the Queen and the Prince Consort on their upcoming 'walkabout.'

After the ceremonies inside the mall were over, the royal couple came out to the cheering crowd. Those at the front strained forward to try to greet them. Prince Philip scanned the crowd and his eyes fell on Rabbi Gluck. Before his protectors could stop him, he walked straight over to him and struck up a conversation.

"That's a magnificent beard you've got. Were you in the navy?" Prince Philip had been a senior commander in the British navy for many years even after his marriage to the Queen, and explained that he was wondering if he was talking to a comrade-in-arms.<sup>2</sup>

Rabbi Gluck explained that no, he was not a sailor, but rather an orthodox Jew and growing a beard was part of his religious observances. The prince expressed his admiration for a man who adhered to his religion with such obvious happiness. Then followed a very friendly and lively discussion between the two men.

The conversation continued for quite some time, much to the annoyance of those people whose job it was to get the prince to his next engagement on time. He finally walked away, smiling.<sup>3</sup>

A few days later Rabbi Gluck flew to the Rebbe. Arriving at 770 he knocked on the door of the Rebbe's office without the intervention of the Rebbe's secretaries, as he was allowed to do, in order to give the Rebbe reports of all the activities that he had been busy with since his last visit.

The Rebbe looked up and upon seeing Rabbi Gluck broke out into a broad welcoming smile. The Rebbe put his hand up to his own beard and gently moved it around his face. "Thank you for such a beautiful birthday present," he said.

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*Source:* As heard by **Rabbi Yaakov Cass** from Rabbi E.Z. Gorman of London who heard it from Rabbi Gluck ע"ה.

Rabbi Cass is a Lubavitcher chasid living in Jerusalem. Before his recent retirement, he was a senior official in the Israel Ministry of Health.

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<sup>2</sup> Sailors who were out at sea for a long time under difficult physical conditions were accustomed to grow beards. Thus, a beard was considered a 'naval thing.'

<sup>3</sup> For another story with Prince Philip and a mitzvah-observant Jew, see [story #1111](#) in this series.

*Connection:* The first paragraph reminds us of Chanukah. The theme of beards is mentioned in the Torah reading of last week (Gen. 42:8 with Rashi).

*Biographical note:*

**Rabbi Avraham-Yitzchak Gluck** was a successful British lighting contractor with interests in many European countries. The Lubavitcher Rebbe once told him that his mission was to spread spiritual light as well as electric light throughout the continent. Rabbi Gluck dedicated himself to this purpose with self-sacrifice and as a result there are Chabad Houses in Hungary, Germany, and Spain. [from Chabad.org]