

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles** <[editor@ascentofsafed.com](mailto:editor@ascentofsafed.com)>

**Story #1176** (5782-37) 23 Iyar 5782 (May 2022) FREE [email subscription](#)

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## ***The Rebbe and Gen. Moshe Dayan***

It was 1968. As a reporter, I (*Gershon-Ber Jacobson*) travelled to many places. This time I went to Israel, still flush with victory after the Six Day War, in order to meet with defense minister and famed general Moshe Dayan. I was especially eager to congratulate the general for his military exploits and heroism the previous year that rescued the little nation from savage destruction.

We arranged a meeting at Ammunition Hill, in Jerusalem. The defense minister tried to be friendly, but clearly he was struggling with physical discomfort. I knew he was still recovering from a recent car accident, which made me doubly grateful that he took out the time for me.

We shook hands, and I saw him wince. I asked, "Mr. Dayan, how are you feeling?"

He grimaced. "I am not feeling totally better from the crash. I still feel pain from time to time."

"If you want," I ventured, "you could write a *pidyon nefesh* to the Lubavitcher Rebbe."

"A *pidyon nefesh*?"

"A *pidyon nefesh* ['soul-redemption'] is a note that chasidim submit to their Rebbe when they want to ask for a blessing."

Moshe Dayan, ever the secular Israeli, shrugged. "I don't know about these things. Writing a *pidyon nefesh*? I've never really done it."

Although hesitant, I managed to press further. "I'm flying back soon to New York. Why don't you try it? If you're interested, give me a bottle of liquor. When I get to the Rebbe's *farbrengen* (chasidic gathering), I'll place it on the Rebbe's table. Then surely he will bless you."

Diffidently, Moshe Dayan removed some Israeli bills from his pocket. “Here. Go buy a bottle of liquor and place it on the Rebbe’s table in my merit.”

Back in New York, I sat among hundreds in the cavernous hall of 770, hearing the voice of the Rebbe at the *farbrengen*. Somehow, I made my way through the sea of bodies and placed the liquor bottle on the Rebbe’s table.

“This is from Moshe Dayan,” I said. “He is still in pain from a car accident.”

The Rebbe turned to me and asked, “Reb Moshe son of whom?”

I was at a loss of words. I had forgotten to get the mother’s name – an indispensable element of a *pidyon nefesh!*

“I don’t know,” I stammered.

A *yeshiva* student saved the day. A young Israeli, seated not far, approached me and whispered to me the mother’s name. Apparently he knew a lot about this famous general, a hero and patriot to so many of his countrymen. Well, this young man was definitely *my* personal hero – that someone was within earshot of the Rebbe and me conversing was clearly Divine providence.

The Rebbe then raised his cup and said, “*L’chaim*, Moshe ben Devorah Leah. May he have a *refuah shaleimah*, a complete recovery!”

Afterwards, the Rebbe returned the bottle of liquor to me and asked that I make sure it got back to its rightful owner, the defense minister.

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Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from an email of the Avner Institute: [RebbeBook@gmail.com](mailto:RebbeBook@gmail.com).

Connection: This week is the anniversary of the Six-Day War (and it culminates in ‘Jerusalem Day’).

*Biographical note* (excerpted from the obituary in *The Forward*):

**Gershon Jacobson** (1933 – 2005) was born in Moscow in 1933. In the early 1950s, he moved to Paris and then to Toronto, and then to New York City where he studied at Columbia University’s School of Journalism. His biggest scoop came in 1960 when connections at the Israeli consulate in New York helped him break the story of Adolf Eichmann’s capture by Mossad agents in Argentina. In 1972 he launched the *Algemeiner Journal*, which became the largest-circulation Yiddish weekly in the USA. He remained its publisher and editor-in-chief until his death, often [receiving important advice](#) from the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Currently it is still published by his sons, and has a 4-page English supplement.