

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles <editor@ascentofsafed.com>
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Dedications:

The 22nd of Tammuz (2022: July 21) is the yahrzeit of Rebbe Shlomo of Karlin, and also of my mother, Ella Bas Eliyahu Halevi, may her soul be elevated.

The Master and the Lad

After the passing of the Maggid of Mezritch in 1772, when the spheres of influence in spreading the teachings of Chasidism were divided up among the inner circle of the Maggid's disciples, **Rabbi Shneur Zalman**, the "Alter Rebbe" of Chabad Chasidism, was allotted Lithuania and White Russia. However, being as **Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin** had followers in the towns of Beshenkovitz, Tzeshnik and Liepli, he was allowed to continue visiting there.

When Rabbi Shlomo decided that he wanted to permanently move to Beshenkovitz, he first asked permission of Rabbi Shneur Zalman. The Alter Rebbe agreed with the following conditions:

- 1) Reb Shlomo would not demean those who devoted themselves seriously to the study of the revealed parts of the Torah;
- 2) Reb Shlomo would not disparage those who had an innate fear of Heaven; 3) Reb Shlomo would teach his own chasidim that faith alone in the *tzadik* (pure, righteous leader) is not sufficient to enable one to ascend to higher spiritual levels, but that one must personally toil in one's G-dly service.

Reb Shlomo was willing to agree to the first two conditions but could not come to terms with the third, for he taught his chasidim that those who are bound to the *tzadik* are elevated by his service; the mission of their Divine service is simply to be enthusiastic about the study of Torah and the observance of its commandments.

But his teachings conflicted with the school of thought known as Chabad Chasidism established by the Alter Rebbe. The Alter Rebbe taught that each individual must personally exert effort in understanding G-d and His world, and in one's Divine service. Therefore, Reb Shlomo did not move to Beshenkovitz, though he continued to visit there periodically.

Despite their disagreements and differences, a number of years later when Reb Shlomo visited the Alter Rebbe on a communal matter, the Alter Rebbe treated him with utmost respect and deference. When Reb Shlomo left to travel to Beshenkovitz for one of his visits, the Alter Rebbe sent a number of young scholarly chasidim to accompany him, among them Binyamin of Kotsk.

Along the way, Reb Shlomo and the Alter Rebbe's chasidim engaged in deep discussions of all areas of Torah. Reb Shlomo was very impressed with the depth of knowledge of his escorts. Upon their arrival in Vitebsk, the Alter Rebbe's Chasidim got ready to return to Liozna, but Reb Shlomo asked R. Binyamin to travel with him to Beshenkovitz. Reb Binyamin agreed.

When it was time for the afternoon prayer, Reb Shlomo instructed his wagon driver to stop the coach so that he could pray. Reb Shlomo climbed down and looked for a stream to wash his hands but there was none nearby. He climbed back up into the coach and sat there for many moments in meditation....

...Suddenly the horses started to gallop undirected. Before long they stopped near a stream, whereupon Reb Shlomo descended and washed his hands. He prayed the afternoon service with his usual fiery devotion, and then alighted upon the wagon.

When the wagon driver informed Reb Shlomo that he had no idea where they were, Reb Shlomo told him to allow the horses to proceed on their own. The horses galloped along until they came to a highway. From there they traveled until they arrived at an inn.

Reb Shlomo told the wagon driver to stop at the inn. He and R. Binyamin prayed the evening service followed by *Tikun Chatzot* [the after-midnight set of prayers in remembrance of the destruction of the Holy Temple]. At dawn they prayed the morning service and then continued on their way. They arrived in Beshenkovitz on Thursday afternoon, in time for the afternoon prayer.

At this point it was impossible for Reb Binyamin to return to Liozna in time for the Sabbath and so, he decided to stay in Beshenkovitz for Shabbat. Throughout Shabbat, R. Binyamin met many of his fellow Chabad chasidim. They were amazed that the Alter Rebbe had accorded Reb Shlomo so much honor as to send such a scholar as R. Binyamin to accompany him. Thereafter, they accorded Reb Shlomo much more honor than they had previously.

Reb Binyamin remained in Beshenkovitz for another two days, walking around as if in a daze from all that he had learned from Reb Shlomo and from everything he had seen in Reb Shlomo's prayers and Divine service. He had even had a fleeting thought to stay on in Beshenkovitz to spend more time in Reb Shlomo's company. In the end, R. Binyamin decided against staying and called on Reb Shlomo to take his leave.

Reb Shlomo spoke passionately to R. Binyamin for many hours, entreating him to stay and become one of his chasidim. He promised that he would share with him wondrous secrets of the Torah and he would hand pick a group of students for him to teach who would be worthy of his keen intellect.

Reb Binyamin listened and responded by quoting a Ukrainian rhyme (just as Reb Shlomo would often spice his conversation with Ukrainian sayings):

"The master's a master...but he's not mine;
The lad's a lad...but he's not thine."

And he returned to the Alter Rebbe in Liozna.

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*Source:* Edited and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the excellent translation by Basha Majerczyk in [lchaimweekly.org](http://lchaimweekly.org) (#750).  
[lchaimweekly.org/lchaim/5763/750.htm](http://lchaimweekly.org/lchaim/5763/750.htm)

*Biographical notes* (in alphabetical order):

**Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin** [1738 - **22 Tammuz 1792**], was a student of the Maggid of Mezritch and Reb Aharon the Great of Karlin, whom he succeeded in 1772. Most of the Chassidic leaders of the next generation in the Lithuanian region were his disciples. He died *Al Kiddush HaShem*, stabbed by a Cossack while in the midst of the *Amida* prayer.

**Rabbi Shneur Zalman** [18 Elul 5505 - 24 Tevet 5573 (1745 - Dec. 1812 C.E.)], was one of the main disciples of the *Maggid of Mezritch*, successor to the Baal Shem Tov. He is the founder of the Chabad-Chassidic movement and the author of *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* and *Tanya* as well as many other major works in both Jewish law and the mystical teachings.

*Connection:* This Thursday, *Tammuz 22* (July 21), is the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin.