



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

Story #1417 (5785-19) 5 SHVAT 5785 (Feb. 3, 2025)

Discover! the "TillesTells Stories for Saturday Night"

[WhatsApp group](#) – 1 Video, 1 Audio, 1 Printable

THE EAVESDROPPER IN THE REBBE'S ROOM

These were the days of the Communist Revolution in Russia. After World War 1, **Rabbi Simcha Gorodetsky** was then a student in Chabad's *Tomchei Temimim yeshiva*, which itself had gone through difficult upheavals. When Simcha became weak and fell seriously ill, the yeshiva's supervisor, Rabbi Yechezkel Feigin, took him to one of the most renowned doctors for an examination.

The professor left the room after completing his examination of the yeshiva student. He turned to the rabbi who was waiting outside and quietly remarked, "The young man is fading. His heart is weakening; his lungs are deteriorating. I don't see any chance to save his life."

"What did the doctor say?" Simcha asked Rabbi Feigin anxiously.

"You need to rest," the supervisor replied curtly. "Go home until you recover."

"Absolutely not," Simcha responded firmly. "I will go to the Rebbe."

When Rabbi Feigin saw he could not dissuade the young man, he accompanied him to see the *Rebbe Rayatz* (**Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn**, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe), who was then residing in Rostov.¹ The supervisor entered first to brief the Rebbe on the gravity of Simcha's condition. Then Simcha was allowed in.

"According to the supervisor," the Rebbe told him, "you must not stay in yeshiva any longer." Simcha stood breathless, unable to respond. "But I say," the Rebbe continued, "that this is not so. You will continue to be a student in the yeshiva, and you will also serve as my emissary for various missions. I promise that you will be healthy and live a long life."

The Rebbe tasked young Gorodetsky with traveling across Russian cities to gather information about Jewish life there. As Simcha embarked on his mission, the weakness that had overtaken him disappeared, and he grew stronger with each passing day. Periodically, he would set out on his travels and, upon his return, would personally deliver detailed reports to the Rebbe.

* * *

One day, Simcha was standing in the Rebbe Rayatz's office, not yet finished with his report to the Rebbe on his latest journey. The *gabbai* (attendant) knocked on the door, announcing that the time had come for *yechidus* (private audiences). Simcha started to leave the room, but the Rebbe surprised him by gesturing for him to stay.

¹ Rostov-On-Don is a port city in southern Russia, bordering Ukraine.

Simcha was astonished, but moved to the corner of the room, trying to be inconspicuous, standing there in awe so as not to disturb the proceedings.

The first person to enter was an elderly man with a beard. His meeting with the Rebbe was very brief. Upon entering, he asked, “Rebbe, did I understand the sign correctly?”

The Rebbe nodded affirmatively and said, “Yes, yes, yes!”

Next came a second individual, who burst into tears, crying, “Rebbe, it’s me!” before fainting.

The gabbai quickly revived him, and the man left the room.

The third visitor was an older man who did not seem to be a Chassid. He handed the Rebbe a letter containing several questions, holding a copy of it himself. He went through the questions one by one with the Rebbe, receiving an answer for each. However, to the last question, the Rebbe gave no response.

The man pointed out that there was one more question in the letter. “I am not blind,” the Rebbe replied.

When the man tried again, the Rebbe said, “I am not deaf.”

When he persisted, the Rebbe signaled that the yechidus had ended.

* * *

Simcha left the Rebbe’s office amazed. In the study hall, he saw the first man and asked, “Perhaps you could tell me what was behind your question?”

“Gladly,” the man replied, and began his story:

“Many years ago, the **Rebbe Rashab** (Rabbi SholomBer Shneersohn, father of the Rebbe Rayatz) sent me to Siberia to strengthen Jewish observance there. I asked when I would know that my mission was complete, and the Rebbe replied that when the time came, I would receive a sign.

“Years passed. I fulfilled the Rebbe’s directive, opening a *shul*, establishing a school for children, building a *mikveh* and in general, strengthening the local Jewish community. My greatest success was with one Jew who had been distant from Torah and *mitzvot* but became a full-fledged *baal teshuvah*.

“In 1920, after the Rebbe Rashab passed away, I wondered if it was time for me to return. I wrote to his son, our Rebbe, and soon received a reply. To my amazement, the Rebbe wrote, ‘It seems to me that my father said you would receive a sign when the time comes.’ I was astonished—how did he know? I had never told him!

“Not long ago, I received another letter from the Rebbe. I opened it with great excitement and began reading aloud the Rebbe’s words. At that moment, my *baal teshuvah* was in my room. In the letter, the Rebbe requested that I assist in locating a man who had abandoned his wife, leaving her an *agunah*. Suddenly, I noticed that my companion turned pale as a ghost. It dawned on me—he was the man!

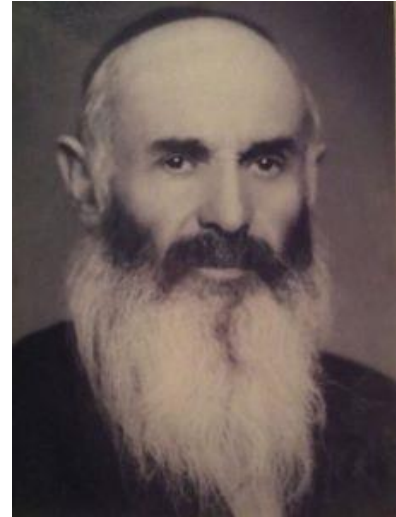
“We decided to travel together to see the Rebbe. I asked him if this was the sign I had been waiting for. The Rebbe confirmed it. My companion then entered the room and confessed, ‘It’s me!’”

* * *

Years later, Rabbi Simcha Gorodetsky encountered the third visitor. “Do you remember your meeting with the Rebbe?” Rabbi Gorodetsky asked.

The man’s eyes lit up. “Of course!” he replied. “As you may recall, the Rebbe refused to answer my final question. At that time, I was considering a second marriage. That was my last question, and it was very important to me, but the Rebbe avoided answering it. I left confused.

“However, shortly thereafter, I learned that the woman in question had fallen ill and passed away. It was then that I understood the Rebbe’s silence.”



Rabbi Smincha Gorodetsky

~~~~~

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *Sichat HaShavua* (#1570), based on a report to them from Rabbi Michil Vishetzky of Kfar Chabad, who heard it from Rabbi Gorodetsky of the story.

*Why this week?* This Shabbat, the tenth day of the Jewish month of Sh'vat, is the 75th yearzeit of the Rebbe Rayatz.

*Biographic notes* (in order of appearance):

**Rabbi Simcha Gorodetsky** [27 Menachem-Av 5663 – 30 Tishrei 5744 (Aug. 1903 – Oct. 1983)] was an emissary of the Rebbe Rayatz to the city of Samarkan and the entire Central Asian region of the Soviet Union. He was arrested several times for his efforts to strengthen Judaism. In 1964, he emigrated to the Holy Land. Settling in Kfar Chabad, he served as a spiritual guide and mentor at an immigrant absorption center there, and in the 1970’s he was among the founders of the Bukharian Yeshiva in Kfar Chabad. He passed away at the age of eighty, one day after returning from being with the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Brooklyn for the ‘Month of Holidays.’ [Excerpted and translated from <https://chabadpedia.co.il>]

**Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson** [12 Tammuz 5640 - 10 Shvat 5710 (June 1880-Jan. 1950)], known as the **Rebbe Rayatz**, was the 6th Lubavitcher Rebbe, from 1920 to 1950. He established a network of Jewish educational institutions and Chassidim that was the single most significant factor for the preservation of Judaism during the dread reign of the communist Soviets. In 1940 he moved to the USA, established Chabad world-wide headquarters in Brooklyn and launched the global campaign to renew and spread Judaism in all languages and in every corner of the world, the campaign continued and expanded so remarkably successfully by his son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

**Rabbi Sholom-DovBer Shneerson** [20 Cheshvan 5621 – 2 Nissan 5680 (Oct. 1860 – April 1920)], known as the **Rebbe Rashab**, was the fifth Rebbe of the Lubavitcher dynasty. He is the author of hundreds of major tracts in the exposition of Chasidic thought. In 1915, after 102 years of four Chabad rebbes living in Lubavitch, he transferred the center of the movement to Rostov-on-the-Don.