

BAR-MITZVAH CELEBRATION
of
Menachem Mendel HaKohzin
Katzman

חגיגת הבר מצוה
של
מנחם מענדל הכהן שיחי
כצמאן

כ"ב סיון ה'תשנ"ט
כאן צוה ה' את הברכה

Sivan 22, 5759 - June 6, 1999
Crown Heights

יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

כצמח - ברוקלין

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEBERSON
Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11213
493-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן סארקוויי
ברוקלין, נ.י.

בי"ה, כי"ד סיון תשמ"ו
ברוקלין, נ.י.

הרה"ח אליה נר"נ זכר'
מוה' יוסף יצחק שלי הכתו

שלום וברכה

במענה על ההודעה אשר בולד להם בן למזל טוב,

הנה יה"ר מהשי"ת שיכניסוהו לבריחו של אברהם
אבינו, וכסם שיכניסוהו לברית כן שיכניסוהו לתורה
ולתופה ולמעשים טובים, ויגדלו ביחד עם זוג' תי'
מחור הרחבה.

בברכת מזל טוב

The Rebbes
letter on the
occasion of
Mendel's
birth



Mendel
receives
a dollar
and a
Bracha
from the
Rebbe

22 Sivan 5759
June 6, 1999

Greeting and Blessing:

We are thankful to Hashem for bestowing upon us His kindness to be able to celebrate with you the Simcha of the Bar Mitzvah of our dear son, Menachem Mendel. May Hashem grant us much Chasidishe Nachas from him and from all our children, as he grows to be a real Chasid who will follow the ways of Torah and Chasidus and will bring much Nachas to the Rebbe.

As it is customary among Anash, to share a souvenir with all the assembled at the Simcha, we have chosen to publish selected letters of the Rebbe which were written to the maternal Grandfather of the Bar-Mitzvah boy, Reb Nosson Vogel from Yerusholayim, who has come to celebrate this Simcha with us. These letters are being published for the first time and are of special significance, as they give the Rebbe's view of how a Chasid is to view another fellow Chasid or any other Jew for that matter. We also find very clear instructions as to how one can create a vessel for Hashem's blessing to bear healthy children.

We are also including several choice articles that were written about the paternal grandfather of the Bar-Mitzvah boy, Rabbi Yehoshua Zelig Katzman A"H who passed away last year and this is the first major family Simcha that he is not with us. These articles were written from very different points of view and they give a comprehensive picture of a true Chasid as perceived by a fellow Chasid, by a student Baal-Teshuvah and by his grandchildren who knew him only as youngsters. The essence of these articles brings out the aspirations of every Chasid to behave in a way that our Rebbes have taught and expect from us. It is our hope that reading these articles will inspire the reader to strive for and acquire these chasidishe attributes and bring Nachas to the Rebbe, for the benefit of Klal Yisrael.

It is our hope, that Mendel will learn from the ways of his late grandfather, to be a true Chasid, a Yerei Shamayim and a Lamdan. As the Rebbe once put it, the acronym "ChaYaL"--a soldier [in the Rebbe's army]—refers to the great Shluchim who are out there fighting to win the war of Golus, and to usher in the final Geula. Then we will be reunited once more with all our loved ones, and the Rebbe Mh"m will teach us Torah Chadasha speedily in our days.

Thank you for joining us in our Simcha,

Yosef and Tamara Katzman

Table of Contents

The Rebbes letters

Letter of the Rebbe to Bar Mitzvah.....	5
Letter of the Rebbe 4 th Menachem Av, 5718 regarding Taharas Hamishpacha.....	6
Follow-up letter of the Rebbe 9 th of Elul 5718 and of Ahavas Yisrael.....	8
Letter of the Rebbe 8 th of Adar 5722 regarding Ahavas Yisrael.....	10

The Zeide - Reb Zelig A”H

Zelig my dear friend, by Yehoshua Dubrawsky – Allgemeiner Journal.....	12
The grandfather I never knew, by Jacob Pinsky – L’Chaim Magazine.....	15
A man of kindness, by his grandchildren – Tzivos Hashem Newsletter.....	17

כצמון - ברוקלין

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.
HYacinth 3-9250

מוחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש
770 איסטערן פארקוויי
ברוקלין נ. י.

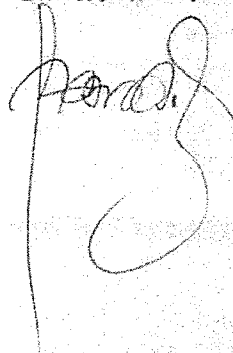
ב"ה, כב' כסלו תש"ל
ברוקלין

האברך יוסף יצחק שי'
הכהן

שלום וברכה

במענה על החודעה ע"ד הכנסו לגיל
מצות,

הנה יה"ר מהשי"ת אשר מבן שלש
עשרה למצות יגדל לבן חמש עשרה וכו'
כסמק המשנה (אבות פרק ה') ויזמיק
התורה ושקידה בלימודו בתורה, בתורה
הנגלה וכן בתורה החסידות ויהודי בקיום
המצות, והשי"ת יצליחו להיזון חסיד ירא
שמים ולמדן.


בברכה

Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.

HYacinth 3-9250

By the Grace of G-d
4th of Menachem Av, 5718
Brooklyn, N. Y.

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקווי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

Mr. Nathan Vogel
76, Wellington St., East
Salford 7, Lancs.
England

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter, in which you write about the condition of health ⁽¹⁾ and the mishaps that occurred to her in the form of miscarriage, etc.

Generally speaking, such mishaps as you describe in connection with ⁽¹⁾, are explained in the Holy Books to be the result of the unobservance of the laws of Taharas Hamishpocho. For, these laws, as all the other laws of the Torah, were given not for the benefit of the Creator, but for the benefit of the observer, and for his good health, both physically and spiritually. They are meant for the good and happy life of man, not only in after life, but simply also in this life. Therefore, when a person lives in a way which involves a contra-vention of the laws of the Creator, it is not surprising that this brings about regrettable effects. As cause and effect are connected, so it is to be expected that where the laws are connected with certain organs of the body, the breach of these laws affect those organs in particular. For instance, the dietary laws are connected, of course, with the digestive organs, and the laws of Taharas Hamishpocho are connected with the reproductive organs; hence, they unfortunately suffer from the lack of observance of the respective laws. The very fact that the physicians do not find any organic reason for the mishap of the person in question, only confirms the suspicion that the mishaps are directly connected with the breach of the said laws.

It might be asked: If there is such a direct connection between the laws and the physical health, is it not to be expected that those who observe the laws should be immune to unfortunate mishaps, while those who do not observe the laws should always suffer the consequences? However, a little reflection will reveal that this is no argument or excuse to be lax in observing the laws. For, firstly, physical ailments or mishaps may be connected with inborn organic defects, or with accidents. On the otherhand, one can never be certain that a person who appears to be strictly observing the laws, does so really in fact, for no one will publicize one's failure.

At any rate, even if the observance of the laws would not be an absolute insurance, but only a partial one, one would still be wise and justified to observe them. By way of illustration: In recent years parents have been strongly urged to give their children polio shots. And, although the incidence of polio is perhaps one in a thousand, or even much more rare than this, nevertheless parents will be wise to take this precaution, even where the chance is so remote. How much more so would parents be wise to take the precaution, by the observance

Mr. Nathan Vogel

4th of Menachem Av, 5718

of the Divine Commandments, where the breach of them unfortunately brings dire consequences at much closer range.

It is not my purpose just to preach. However, when I am asked for help or advice, I must state the facts clearly. I wish to add that no matter what the past has been, repentance is always effective, and even more effective than the best medicine. For, whereas medicine cannot act retroactively, repentance can. If the woman and her husband in question will resolve from now on to observe the laws fully, with sincere regret for the past failing, the Almighty, Who is the Essence of Goodness, will surely accept their sincere repentance and will forgive them for the past, and bless them in the future.

I hope you may have good news to report in connection with the above.

With blessing,

By

Avraham Shindler

Inasmuch as the problem was brought to my attention by yourself, the letter is written to you and not to the party concerned. But, needless to say that you can convey the contents of my letter to the said party.

As requested, I will remember your wife in prayer when visiting the holy resting place of my father-in-law of saintly memory, that the Almighty bless her to complete her pregnancy, and that she have a normal delivery and give birth to a healthy child.

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.
HYacinth 3-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
לובאוויטש

By the Grace of G-d
9th of Elul, 5718
Brooklyn, New York

770 איסטערן פארקווי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

Mr. Nathan Vogel
76, Wellington St. E.
Salford 7,
Lancs., England

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter postmarked August 14th. In it you write about _____, and also observe that in my letter to you you did not find an explanation in connection with her operation. However, every specialist in that field will tell you that the operation to which you refer is indeed connected with the reproductive organs. Therefore, the connection with the laws of Taharas Hamishpocho readily suggests itself.

As for the best way of influencing her in the right direction, obviously a personal conversation is more desirable than a letter. But if that is impossible, then there is no other choice but to try writing to her, unless you know someone in the place where she lives who could speak to her and try to influence her in the right direction.

In your letter you ask how can my statement that every addition in Torah and Mitzvoth brings additional Divine blessings, be reconciled with the Rabbinic statement that there is no reward for a Mitzvah in this world. In this connection let me point out to you the following: Firstly, that the said Rabbinic statement obviously does not refer to such Mitzvoth which are mentioned in the Mishna and Braysa which we say during the morning blessings, whose fruits are enjoyed in this world. Secondly, and this would refer specifically to the terms "vessel" and "channel," which I used, in the sense that even though this does not create the reward of the Mitzvah, nevertheless the very performance of the Mitzvah removes the obstacle that would have otherwise been created through the non-performance of the Mitzvah, preventing the flow of G-d's kindness to reach the person. This, therefore, refers to the flow of G-d's benevolence of the kind which is given even to children and to other people who are not duty-bound to observe Mitzvoth. In other words, G-d is always ready, willing and able to bestow blessings upon His creatures, whether merited or not, but the sin of commission or omission acts as a barrier. Therefore, the more Mitzvoth one performs, the more obstacles and barriers are removed to receive the flow of G-d's benevolence.

With regard to your question as to how to begin the study of Chassidus, surely Rabbi Dubov who lives in Manchester, could help you, and explain to you anything difficult. At any rate, generally speaking, one begins to study Chassidus with the Tanya, starting the third part of it, Iggeres Hateshuvo (especially pertinent this time of the year),

Mr. Nathan Vogel

9th of Elul, 5718

going on to the second part, Shaar Hayichud Vehoemuno; going on from there to Kuntres Umaayon, etc. After you have done the above, you will be well on your way to continue your studies of Chassidus.

You ask if it is right that a Chassid should decry those who are opposed to the Chassidic movement, etc. Needless to say, I see no benefit in decrying or criticizing others, especially when one can find so much to criticize in one's own self, namely, the "animal soul" and all those things connected with it, from which no one is absolutely immune.

wishes

With prayerful ~~wishes~~ for a Kesivo Vachasimo Toivo, and

With blessing,

M. Schneerson

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.

HYacinth 3-9250

מוחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקווי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
8th of Adar II, 5722
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. Nathan Vogel
10, Heathland Rd.,
London, N. 16,
England

Greeting and Blessing:

After not having heard from you for a long time, I received your two letters of the first day of Rosh Chodesh Adar II.

You write that certain individuals and certain matters could do with some improvement. You surely know that generally speaking, there is no perfection in this world. Therefore, everything has well as every individual, has room for improvement, as our sages expressed it "all things of holiness should be on the upgrade". There are no exceptions from this rule, for even the greatest Tzaddik must not be content with his present status but must seek to advance further and higher. At the same time, every commandment of the Torah is also a delegation of power and ability to fulfil it, even for the individual who has not yet attained the rank of Tzaddik. For the Torah does not expect of an individual more than he can accomplish, and that which he is commanded to do, he can surely accomplish.

It is important to bear in mind the above, because it is one of the tried strategies of the Yetzer to attempt to discourage the Jew from fulfilling his obligations by suggesting that it is impossible to fulfil all the Torah and Mitzvoth, or that it is a waste of effort, and so on.

You write that you fear that the people of Lubavitch will look askance on or will not accept etc. I must take strong exception to this, for as you surely know, the attitude of Lubavitch is quite the opposite, and one of the basic principles of Lubavitch is the emphasis on Ahavas Yisroel, which, as the Old Rabbi declared, is a "vessel" for Ahavas Hashem, and

that "love your fellow Jew as yourself" means literally, as yourself. This is further expanded in Chapter 32 (25) of the Tanya. This attitude of Lubavitch extends to all Jews without distinction, especially to a person of your background.

With regard to your plans for moving into a new home, may G-d grant that the change of place will be a change for the better in every respect.

Hoping to hear good news from you, especially as we are now in the auspicious month of Adar. It is said, "With the arrival of Adar, Simchah (joy) should be on the increase." This does not mean that we should rejoice for the sake of rejoicing, but that the reasons for increased rejoicing are surely there. If one reflects on the benevolent Divine Providence, it should not be difficult to discover some of them; and, with complete faith in G-d, others in addition will become apparent.

Wishing you and yours a happy and inspiring Purim, and hoping again to receive good news from you, including also about your participation in the work of Lubavitch.

With blessing, *M. Schneerson*

ZELIG, MY DEAR FRIEND, MY DEAR MECHUTAN AND MY - SOMETHING MORE THAN JUST THAT...

By Yehoshua Dubrowsky

And this "something" is so deep that it can't be expressed in words. This "something" has prevented me from writing about Zelig till now, just as it prevents me from writing about my dearest and loved ones, My late Father, Mother and my little sisters. However, strangely and paradoxically, this "something" is currently urging me to write.

I wonder if Zelig's dearest ones--his wife and children--would care for my current article, and it would probably be to the dismay of some of the readers who would rather have simple, smooth and grandiose sugar coated articles.

However, I hope that this time they will forgive me and put up with this article, just for the honor of Zelig, who could not bear unnecessary pompous exaggerations. This is also the

reason why I did not add any titles to his name, such as "*Harav Hagaon* Reb Zelig" or even just the title "*Harav*" I simply call him "Zelig" even though in comparison to most of those among us who are titled "*Geonim*," Zelig was the true *Gaon*!

Zelig is so deeply nested in me, ever since the "Samarkand experience," which is so ingrained in my heart. Whenever I would meet Zelig, I would revisit memories of Samarkand and the images of all our dear ones who had been torn from us at a very young age. Zelig became my acquired brother. During the war years (WW II) we found ourselves in Samarkand, together on a sinking ship, struggling against the most horrific waves of disease and sickness which consumed most of our families. There in the heavenly Samarkand (in the earthly Samarkand there was nothing left for me), I lost my father and two very young sisters in less than one year, and Zelig lost both his parents and a little sister.

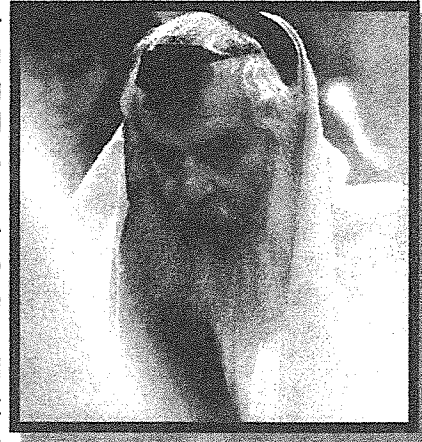
When Zelig first visited our home (if you can call it such) he fitted in perfectly. An old hut made of mud with a soil floor, a tiny window and narrow door and a *saraytchik* with a dilapidated roof. There we had a little "something" that also served as a kitchen, because on the mud floor there was a little mud pile that was shaped like an "oven" that could contain some wood splinters to heat the pots.

It was in that yard that 12-to 13-year-old Zelig appeared with a 100-years-old worth of pain and sorrow. It cried out with deafening silence from his deep, beautiful tearless eyes. Already at that instant, I felt an eternal inner bond with this young lad with the tattered sleeves of his jacket and worn out galoshes on his feet. Zelig stood there for a while, his head slightly on a side in silence. I too, stood there facing him in silence, he concluded his silence and left. I watched him leave, and his departure somehow really pained me. But it was not to be for long.

Actually, this visit was business related. His uncle (Reb Shmuel Yosef Pindrik, a "*h*" - who took him in with his brother after the passing of their parents), and my grandfather, were trying to save themselves from certain death from hunger. They dealt in contraband (in the then Soviet Russia). His uncle would fetch the skin of an animal, and my grandfather would tan it out to make leather. His uncle would then sell it on the black market, and share the profits.

Zelig actually returned to our home later, but with a complete different type of business in mind.

At that time I was fighting to hold on to life. I was unable to walk on my swollen feet, had



had a bout with typhus and suffered a hunger disease that disabled my stomach from digesting food. My mother also survived this disease miraculously (even though the hospital refused to take her in, claiming that they were not a cemetery).

Our family was visited by two wonderful *tmimim*, who came to inform us that they are about to open a yeshiva (as the famine had let up somewhat), and they wanted to have me register in the yeshiva. I was a total wreck, but these angelic young men suggested that registering in yeshiva would be a good omen to help me recover. And since there was no chance medically that I would recover, it must have been that the registration in yeshiva did the job.

However, since I was immobile, and there really was no school facility to go to, they worked out that Zelig would come to study with me in the dark cave that we called home. Later, it turned out that Zelig and I were the first students in the Samarkander Yeshiva "Tomchei Tmimim."

In our home, there was no table or chair to speak of, so we sat on something that served as a bed (a hard board laid over some bricks). We held the tattered *Gemara*, and we sort of studied. On occasion, my grandfather Reb Mendel, would join us to listen in to our learning. From my mother's red eyes, I could tell that when she would observe us in study, she would end up crying her heart out. This new orphan in our midst somehow managed to open a new source of tears, even though her tear ducts had already dried out through, crying throughout the long nights.

(By the way, every time Zelig would arrive, my mother would somehow find a piece of bread to share with him. I could never figure out where she got it from, and I could only guess.)

How much time we spent together or what we had learned, I don't remember. But I do remember those bitter moments, when in loud silence we would moan out our heartache. Zelig was a master of saying so much with his deep thinking eyes, artful smile and tight mouth--a magician in silence. I too, was very actively silent, but somehow we understood each other very well, communicating without words. And since no words had to be exchanged, we were not embarrassed at consoling one another. How, you ask? An eye-language, a heart to heart outpouring--which is impossible to describe with words.

As mentioned earlier, I am here to describe a "something," a few moments, some feelings. I am not here to deliver a eulogy or to describe Zelig's personality, or even to recall some of his biographical sketches. But I do want to describe some of Zelig's inner traits, which were part of his deepest essence. You could notice it only from up close, and then, only if you have clear, solid vision.

Just a few chronological details. Zelig grew up in Yeshiva *Tomchei Tmimim*, to become one of the best students. In study --since he had a brilliant head with an exceptionally good healthy, thinking mind. He was also one of the most *chassidische bochurim*, a phenomenal thinker of *Chassidus*, and he served G-d in prayer--an *oved*. Zelig was the quintessential *Yerei Shamayim*, a very chassidic Jew who was extremely connected to the Rebbe his entire life.

Enters "Zelig the silent one," and his qualities need an explanation. What is this "good healthy mind?"

Allow me to illustrate this from my own experience. Zelig had a study partner, a boy who was 5-6 years his senior. This fellow was a quick thinker with a lively mind, and was known to be a genius. The two were once engrossed in decoding a difficult part of Talmud, when Zelig's mate was abuzz with ideas and thoughts with all his thinking faculties. Zelig just sat there listening silently. His friend who was so excited by his own comprehension and explanations of the Talmud, and just carried on begging for Zelig's approval, or any other response for that matter. But Zelig just sat there gazing, and on occasion he would stare directly at his friend, till

he finally murmured, "No, this is wrong, it is not so."

The fellow sprang to his feet in amazement, and Zelig continued his silence. So the classmate decided to force the issue, what is wrong with my dissertation? Until Zelig, in a few short sentences, managed to undo the entire basis for his thesis. The study partner, being quite brilliant, quickly comprehended the depth of Zelig's measured words, and I observed how he remained sitting in resignation, while he was quite flabbergasted at the genius of his friend Zelig.

I, myself had similar experiences with him when we were study partners, first in Samarkand and finally in Brunoy, France, before he departed to be with the Rebbe.

In our yeshiva, there was an abundance of good heads, and there were even quite a few who could easily be described as geniuses. But you could not find such a forthright, solid, thinking mind such as Zelig had. His head was like a precious diamond hidden somewhere in a corner in silence. And perhaps this precious diamond was just not polished well enough, compared to the glass impressions all around him that were glistening in their full glory and sparkling color. To appreciate Zelig's head you had to be a *maven*. But where are such *mavenim* to be found?

Even fewer were the Mavens of Zelig's emotional world. It would seem at times that he was so cool and emotionally reserved that he could not express his feelings towards his close ones. But truth be said, this was not at all the case. From close observation, I noticed that he was full of emotion and at times his emotions would simmer. But Zelig, the solid human being on the one hand, and the expert of silence, control and concealment on the other, would create a barrier around his emotions, which would prevent them from revealing themselves.

For Zelig this was a double effort. First of all it was his nature to be silent. But much more than that; Zelig was this remarkable chassidic Jew--and by true Chassidim, there is total control of emotional outbursts. Therefore, it was impossible to notice even a tiny interest on his part to demonstrate his wealth of knowledge, or any of his other brilliant faculties. His inner honesty and solid personality would prevent him from demonstrating any pretentious show-off, masked with false humility.

Truth to be told, that honesty and inner strength was characteristic not only in Zelig's mind and emotions. Not merely in learning and emotional character was he solid, but also in his chassidic *davening*, his service of G-d, his fear of Hashem and his ordinary behavior. Always and everywhere was Zelig's being dominated by truth and honesty. It was an amazing and spiritually uplifting experience to watch him Daven even on an ordinary weekday. Even the most bitter begrudger and critic, would have to admire the unusual inner spiritual mode of his prayer to Hashem. Zelig could never adjust to the modern-day style of successes. The one that claims that the inner essence is not important, rather that the outer effect is what really matters: "Inner spirituality aside -the superficial is what dominates and inspires," and that the emphasis should be in the external. No, not by Zelig!

There is a good parable to the very momentous qualities of a Zelig Katzman--but even the parable is already old fashioned: Once upon a time in Russia, there were all kinds of materials for clothing--there were all kinds of fabrics in all colors and all combinations of designs and quality. Some were also very attractive with their color combinations and stripes. But there was one very expensive, top quality, fabric, in one color only, a dark blue, called a "Boston." This material was only for the elite and the wealthy, who could allow themselves the luxury of such an outfit. Just by touching the fabric an expert would realize the fine quality of this rare, good, and solid material.

Zelig exemplified the best human, Jewish and chassidic-quality fabric sample!

SLICE OF LIFE - RABBI YEHOSHUA ZELIG KATZMAN, O.B.M.

By Jacob Pinsky

I suppose, in a way, I look back upon Rabbi Katzman as the grandfather I never knew, but wish I had had. It's comforting to know that on some level there was a man in the world whom, in secret at least, I could call Zeidy. I picture him covered in his talit, sharing a Torah thought, at a Shabbat Kiddush, teaching me an insight into a Mishna, tossing down a thimble glass of Loch Du Scotch whiskey and saying "Oh, that's pretty good, pass me back the bottle!", and most especially, sitting at the shalosh seudot [third Shabbat meal] teaching the special meanings of the Mishna Pirkei Avot.

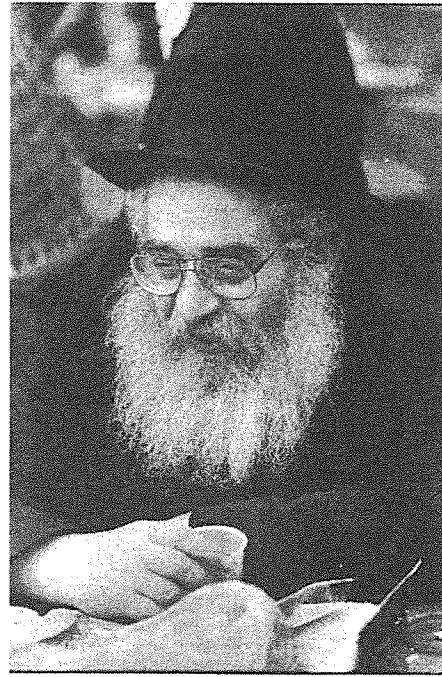
The first time I met Rabbi Katzman was about ten years ago, in his Crown Heights two-family home. My wife was meeting Goldie (Baumgarten - one of Rabbi Katzman's daughters) to go someplace, and I came along for the ride. To my horror, my wife left me at the Katzmans' by myself! So there I was, sitting across the dinner table from Rabbi Katzman, absolutely scared stiff because I had never in my life sat across a dinner table from a real Chasid! Here was the real McCoy; a man dressed in a black suit, a white shirt, with a great flowing beard and a heavy Russian accent. A holy man. What do I do, what do I say to a man like this?

Rabbi Katzman was very kind to me - he didn't ask me more than two questions. I spent the quiet meal with my face in my plate, wondering how I had gotten into this mess, and when I would get out of it. When my wife finally returned, I breathed a huge sigh of relief and fled as fast as I could.

Over the years I saw Rabbi Katzman at various Chabad of Coram [Long Island, NY] functions, and he would nod at me and smile, often with a twinkle in his eye. I'll bet he was thinking, "There's that young man from my son-in-law's Chabad House on Long Island who tried to stick his face in his dinner plate." It was all I could do to say hello to him, and I would think, "Wow, there goes that real Chasid again!"

When Rabbi Katzman became our summer rabbi for the weeks that our rabbi, Leibel Baumgarten, was away conducting Shabbat services in the Hamptons, I finally learned to talk to him. There was a tremendous personal warmth and force of personality within him. There was a wry sense of humor, too. There was an admirable intelligence as well, that made sense of difficult Torah topics for me. I even started looking forward to Fridays when I would see him again.

Every Shabbat eve, Rabbi Katzman would motion me to the front of the Shul to lead the



services. It didn't matter if I protested with a thousand excuses; for some reason he always wanted me to lead the service. Eventually I gave up my protests, resigning myself to the fact that I was powerless against his requests. How could I argue with the person whom we soon came to call the Rav of Coram Chabad?

On Shabbat morning Rabbi Katzman would read the weekly portion for us from the Torah scroll. I found out later that he had done very little leining [chanting] prior to his summers with us, and that he invested a great deal of time in preparing the weekly portion. As anyone who has ever chanted a Torah portion knows, this is a time-consuming and difficult task.

At the Kiddush following the service, Rabbi Katzman would always have something to say on the weekly Torah portion. Sometimes the discussion would go on for half an hour or more, with our attention riveted on the words of Chasidic wisdom. Because he spoke in a low voice, and had a heavy accent, we had to gather closely around him, with our heads tipped forward in his direction. It often reminded me of pictures I had seen of intimate Chasidic gatherings. His talks took us on journeys far beyond the confines of Coram.

For me, the best part of those long summer Sabbaths was shalosh seudot, near the end of Shabbat. Those hours were spent studying from Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers. Rabbi Katzman was a source of light and elucidation during those delightful late Shabbat afternoon hours, as evening fell and crickets began to sing outside the open windows. It is written that the last hours before the end of Shabbat are the holiest hours of the Sabbath. I never felt the holiness more than during those hours I spent studying with Rabbi Katzman.

When Rabbi Katzman's granddaughter, Menucha Rachel Baumgarten, took ill, Rabbi Katzman organized a class on the difficult Chasidic discourse entitled Eitz Chaim. Often, Rabbi Katzman would make the 90-minute trip from Brooklyn by himself, just to spend an hour or 45 minutes with us on a few verses. How he had the patience for us dunces, breaking our heads to understand a few words of this complex text, was beyond me. It was clear to me, though, that he understood the deepest essence of every verse and philosophical nuance we were studying.

I suppose that for me, Rabbi Katzman was the prototypical Chasid. He was exactly what I thought a Chasid should be. Here was a man whose personality was surely honed by a lifetime of devotion to Torah Judaism, the teachings of the Torah, and fierce loyalty to his Rebbe. He combined tremendous personal warmth with a sharp mind and a wry sense of humor. He was a pivotal force for his large family, and his untimely passing has been a tremendous loss for them, the Chabad community at large, for Chabad of Coram, and for me personally.

I don't think there is a day that goes by now when I fail to think about Rabbi Katzman. He still lives on in my mind, walking across the Shul to wish me a good Shabbos, saying a "lechaim" on Loch Du, teaching a small group the intricacies of a single verse. This, I think, is one of the true legacies of the righteous Jew, who continues to live on in our hearts and minds after he has gone to olam haba, the next world, influencing us and encouraging us to follow in his path.

May G-d grant his soul everlasting peace, and may we be reunited with Rabbi Katzman with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.

"A Man of Kindness"

By his grandchildren,
Aidy Katzman, together with her cousins and family,
Pessy and Mirele Gurevitch,
Levi, Aizik and Chaya M. Katzman,
Aizik Baumgarten, Sheina and Chaya M. Weiss

Our Zaide, Rabbi Yehoshua Zelig Katzman was a true Chossid, a man of kindness, devoted to the Rebbe, and to helping and teaching others.

His early life was very hard. When he was a young boy when the war began. His family fled before the Germans, but it did not help for both his parents and his younger sister died of hunger. As an orphan, with no home or family, he had a very difficult time.

Even so, he became a serious student in the makeshift Lubavitch yeshivas that were established at that time, in Samarkand, then in Peking in Germany, and in Brunoy just outside Paris. Eventually in his early twenties he was at last able to come to America to be near the Rebbe.

He became very knowledgeable and a real Torah scholar, especially in Chassidus. Often you would find him sitting in a corner of the shul, learning with someone much younger than himself, or explaining ideas to a student from Russia or some other place. It was natural for him to spend many hours learning, davenning and farbrenging with others.

We cannot remember seeing Zaide without a sefer in his hand. Whenever we came to his house to play, he would be learning. He would always take time to talk with us, but then he would go back to his learning.

The most important thing in Zaide's life was to be able to involve himself in the activities of the Rebbe.

When the Rebbe started the tefillin campaign, he began taking tefillin with him everywhere. Once Zaide was in Korea at the time of the winter games. Even though he had many business meetings scheduled, he canceled them to go put on tefillin with the Israeli basketball team. When they won, they said it was in the merit of the tefillin!

On another trip, he printed a Tanya in Korea, which gave the Rebbe great pleasure.

It was a great joy to Zaide that all his children also became involved in spreading Torah and yiddishkeit as shluchim of the Rebbe. He often visited them, and was anxious to do whatever he could to help in their activities, whether it meant giving money, teaching classes, shopping, shlepping benches or tables and chairs.

Sometimes, when everyone was busy setting up, he would quietly take the children aside and tell them stories to keep them entertained and out of the way. That was the way he did things.

During the last few years, he was asked to take over as 'summer Rabbi' of the Chabad House of Coram, to make sure that the minyon and classes went on without interruption, when



the regular rabbi, his son-in-law, had to be away. Even though he didn't speak English so well, his warmth and his sincerity made him everybody's favorite.

Zaide was a kohen, and like Aharon, he was a man of kindness. You never heard him say a bad thing about anybody else.

Once, at a Shabbos farbrengen with the Rebbe, it was obvious that the Rebbe was suffering great pain from his feet. Zaide was so upset that he stood up and blessed the Rebbe with Bircas Kohanim (the Priestly Blessing). While making his way over the benches to his seat he stumbled, and it looked as if someone had pulled him down.

The Rebbe gave a very sharp look and said to the person, "He's a Kohen. You must ask mechila (forgiveness)!" Hearing that, Zaide suddenly stood up and said with a smile, "It's alright, I fell by myself." He didn't want anyone else to be blamed or get in trouble. Then the Rebbe gave him a BEAUTIFUL smile.

Everybody loved Zaide. All kinds of people used to come to talk to him about their problems. He would tell them stories, and make some jokes, ask them some pointed questions, and in the end, they wouldn't have the problems any more.

Afterwards, if you asked them, "What did Rabbi Katzman say to you?" they could never remember exactly, just that he straightened everything out.

One time, at a bris in his house, a young man who had never had any children said, "Rabbi Katzman, give me a brocha to have a son!"

Zaide laughed and said, "If I do, you'll have to let me be sandak (to hold the baby at the moment of the bris)."

This is a very big privilege. The young man started thinking to himself, did he really want Zaide as his sandak? Perhaps he wanted someone more important. Then his friends began to shout at him not to be a fool, and make the deal!

So he said okay, and Zaide gave him a brocha, and everybody laughed and said Amen. Sure enough, the year did not pass before the man was blessed with a baby boy, and Zaide was the sandak.

Zaide was a clever person, and a big yirai shomayim. Once, when he was working in diamonds, he was coming home on the subway on a Friday afternoon, with a case full of jewels. Suddenly he remembered that the clock had changed, and he was running late. It would be impossible for him to get home in time.

What was he to do? He would never be able to carry the diamonds home without breaking Shabbos! He got off the train at once, and ran to a nearby police station and told them of his problem, but they refused to help.

Zaide just sat down. He decided to spend Shabbos in the police station. He wouldn't dream of breaking Shabbos, and he didn't want to risk causing any loss to his employer. Without looking for a heter (a loophole in Jewish law), he just did what had to be done. Eventually the police called his employer, a non-Jew, who came and got the diamonds. Then Zaide walked all the way home for Shabbos.

The most amazing thing is that even members of the family never knew how much Zaide was doing to help out others all the time, both financially and with his wise advice. Last year, just after Purim, Zaide suddenly passed away. At the shiva, we first began hearing stories about all of his acts of kindness that no one ever knew about.

Zaide was a strong believer in the Rebbe's prophecy that Moshiach is coming now. We all pray that it should be very soon, and we will be together with our beloved Zaide once again.