

The tenth of Cheshvan marks the tenth *yahrzeit* of Rav Dov Baer Weidenfeld, known to us as the Tshebimer Rav. One of the greatest sages and lawmakers in contemporary Jewry, the Tshebimer Rav also headed the Yeshiva Kochav MiYaakov in Jerusalem.

His extreme modesty is exemplified in a story concerning his friendship with the Chazon Ish. The Chazon Ish had the custom, every Pesach, to put away all his holy books for the duration of the holiday. He would, however, make an exception for one volume of Gemara. Scrupulously he went through the volume, page by page, to ensure that no *chametz* clung to any of it.

One day the Chazon Ish received a visitor, who presented him with a freshly printed edition of *Dovev Mesharim*, the new *sefer* authored by the Tshebimer Rav. The Chazon Ish joyfully received the book.

After Pesach, the Tshebimer Rav encountered one of the Chazon Ish's students, who profusely thanked Rav Dov Baer on behalf of the Chazon Ish.

"Do you know," said the student, "that the Chazon Ish kept your *sefer* at his side on Pesach, along with the Gemara? He didn't put it away with the rest of his library!"

The Tshebimer Rav smiled. "That can only mean that he didn't even look at it! That's why he was certain there was no *chametz* in it!"

## No Small Service

By DEVORAH KIRSCH

The *shaliach* (traveling fund-raiser) shot glances at the Ark's velvet curtain, its sheen made even more intense by the Jerusalem sunlight.

The Torah was placed on the *bimah*. The *kohen* was a clothing manufacturer from Ohio, one of the numerous Americans in the synagogue. The second man, the Levi, was a diamond dealer from Antwerp and a survivor of Auschwitz. When approached by the *shaliach* the other day, he had magnanimously whisked out his checkbook, all the while bemoaning the potential loss, G-d forbid, of a Jewish life. Certainly he, more than anyone else, could empathize.

The third man was a young bridegroom whom the *shaliach* had seen countless times -- at Yeshiva Kochav MiYaakov, of which this hall was the *bais midrash*. During the week it was packed tight with students just like this bridegroom, budding scholars and the cream of the crop. Their Talmudic arguments echoed through the walls, so that the velvet curtain nearly trembled.

On Shabbos, however, the *bais midrash* was even more crowded. Not only the *shaliach*, but Jews from every

comer of the Diaspora swarmed there, wanting to partake of its purity. Thus, Yeshivas Kochav MiYaakov represented a glorious cross-section.

At the sixth man, everyone hushed and rose. Rabbi Dov Baer Weidenfeld, the head of the yeshiva and the "Tshebimer Rav," advanced to the Torah.

The rabbi quietly took his place by the waiting Torah scroll. Watching him, the *shaliach* made sobering comparisons to another rosh yeshiva, now lying in a hospital bed. After all, that had been his own reason for such a busy week. He, Asher Kraus, had banged on quite a few doors the past few days -- the diamond dealer's and those of virtually everyone who was somebody -- begging for funds to cover the operation. So far he had, thank G-d, been successful. He only needed a few thousand dollars more. This he might be able to obtain from a certain jade dealer.

At the end of the service the *shaliach* put away the prayer book and clutched his *tallis*, about to head for home. But first he took his place in the line to wish Good Shabbos to the Tshebimer Rav, now standing against the wall.

"Good Shabbos, Rabbi Weidenfeld," he said upon reaching

the saintly man. He bowed slightly.

"Good Shabbos, Reb Asher," replied the Tshebimer Rav, resting his eyes on the *shaliach*. He bade the *shaliach* stand aside, while he himself nodded silently to the passing crowd. Then, with the unsteadiness of one advanced in years, he turned to the fund-raiser.

"I tried to get in touch with you all week. You were quite difficult to reach."

"Yes," said the *shaliach*. "I'm sorry. I'm afraid I have been away."

"Your wife, then, never gave you my message?" the rabbi pressed.

"No . . ."

"Then I suppose I shall have no choice but to discuss it now," said the rabbi. The two of them walked through the doors, thrown open respectfully by the rabbi's students. "I would very much like to make a contribution."

Asher gasped. "Rabbi . . . I don't think I can request such a thing."

"It is my request, Asher."

"But Rabbi," stammered the *shaliach*, "I don't feel that it is right to take money from you."

He shrank away from the fiery eyes, which clung to him relentlessly. His own eyes, a more pale variety, squinted in the light as the two men stepped onto the Jerusalem

# Rabbi Dov Baer Weidenfeld, zt"l The Tshebimer Rav

cobblestones, which disappeared rapidly under the feet of worshippers pouring out of the neighboring synagogues.

"Asher," bade the Tshebiner Rav with sudden sternness, "you are not taking from anyone. You are giving. This money, I believe, is meant for a man's operation. A fellow Jew and a **rosh yeshiva**, whose life, G-d forbid, is in grave danger. For something like that it is never a sin for you to approach me. On the contrary, it would be a sin if you didn't."

Asher bit his lip. He still kept his eyes averted from the rabbi's shining face. What a contrast existed in the **baia midrash** -- Rabbi Weidenfeld in his modest **garb**, surrounded by businessmen and professionals in tailor-made apparel. Difficult as it was to raise money under any circumstance, here Asher would be taking a good cut out of the rabbi's meager salary.

He turned his head and caught sight of the jade dealer. "Rabbi," he said, "let me explain. I . . . uh . . . normally would not deny anyone the chance to fulfill such a **mitzvah**. But you see, I am in need of very large sums. I'm talking . . . thousands of dollars, you see."

He shuffled his feet, like a boy being chastised. "I . . . one reason I never returned your message, you see, is . . . well, I have spent my time approaching wealthy men. You know, big men -- the kind that come here to **daven** -- tourists, visitors from overseas. People who can afford to donate something substantial."

He looked up briefly, caught the rabbi's face, and looked down. "It would be an affront to your honor, I think, to take from the rabbi such a small amount compared to what these men have been offering. I do not wish to embarrass you, G-d forbid -- you, of all people." The **shaliach** gulped, and his voice lowered to a murmur. "And to ask something more . . . I feel it would be depriving you." He shook his head. "That is no **mitzvah**, Rabbi Weidenfeld."

He breathed heavily, praying for a way of escape. He raised his head and noticed that the jade dealer had disappeared.

The rabbi studied him. Not one wrinkle on his face moved. Finally he said, "Reb Asher, may I ask how much more you need to raise?"

"Rabbi, I don't think it is neces--"  
"How much?"

The **shaliach** sighed. "About . . . two thousand dollars."

"Two thousand dollars . . ." The sage did not blink. "Please see me after Shabbos."

The **shaliach** was about to object, but at the rabbi's intense gaze he



retreated. "After Shabbos, then."

Well, he didn't specify when after Shabbos, the **shaliach** thought guiltily. It was Tuesday now, and Asher had made sure after Havdalah to forget about the appointment. He rationalized that the rabbi might be too busy to remember -- he hoped so, anyway. When, while making his rounds through the Jerusalem streets, Asher caught sight of Rav Weidenfeld's students, he would slink away.

A knock on the door startled him from his work. Absently he went to open it.

To his chagrin, he recognized one of Rav Weidenfeld's students.

"The Tshebiner Rav wishes to see you," said the young man.

The **shaliach**'s heart pounded. Then he sighed. There was no avoiding the inevitable. Solemnly he reached for his coat.

The rabbi's office was quite small, and bursting with holy books and second-hand furniture. When the **shaliach** came in, he found the Tshebiner Rav hunched over a **sefer**. The rabbi looked

up, squinted, and abruptly shut the covers.

"Ah, Reb Asher," he said, "how fortunate that I at last get to see you. Apparently we became quite busy again after Shabbos."

"Yes," mumbled Asher.

The rabbi opened his drawer and fished about with great determination. He withdrew a musty envelope, bulging as if swollen.

"I am afraid I could not give you the total sum," he said sadly, "but I think this should be sufficient."

Trembling, the **shaliach** took the envelope and opened it briefly. His eyes pulsed as they counted the bills, and he gasped. "Rabbi," he stammered, "this must be your life savings!"

"Please take it."

"Rabbi," cried Asher, "I can't."

"You would deny me the **mitzvah**?" the rabbi asked, shocked and hurt.

"Rabbi, I can't take this away from you. Why, this is your sustenance." He wheedled, "If you like, I shall take a few bills. But . . . all of this? Never!"

Passionately he placed it back on the desk.

Calmly the Tshebiner Rav scooped up the envelope. "Perhaps I'll tell you a story."

"Rabbi," the **shaliach** murmured, "please! I know what **tzeddakah** means to you." His voice was tearful. "But from such a personage as you . . . a scholar, a leader of our generation . . ." The **shaliach** wiped his eyes. "Please. Allow someone else the opportunity for this **mitzvah**. Someone with better resources."

The rabbi toyed with the envelope. "No, Asher, I am not referring to charity. It is another story, and another **mitzvah**. Then perhaps you'll understand why this appeal of yours means to me what it does."

He began, "No doubt you have heard of Rav Shlomo Kluger?"

The **shaliach**'s eyes widened. "Why, yes. Everyone knows that he was a great **tzaddik** and Torah scholar."

"His brilliance made the sun pale in comparison," said the Tshebiner Rav. He raised his eyes mistily. "What people did to hear his words of Torah. Including Rav Shlomo Dov."

"Shlomo Dov? The first Belzer Rebbe?"

Rav Weidenfeld nodded. "One  
(Continued on page 26)

from a body of water."

Undeterred, Rabbi Eliezer said, "If the law is according to me, the walls of the house of study will confirm it." The walls tilted and were about to fall. But Rabbi Yehoshua rebuked them, saying, "If Rabbinic scholars are arguing about the law, what business is it of yours?" The walls didn't fall due to the prestige of Rabbi Yehoshua, but neither did they return to their upright position, due to the prestige of Rabbi Eliezer.

Finally Rabbi Eliezer declared: "If the law is according to me, Heaven will confirm it." A voice from Heaven said, "Why are you contending with Rabbi Eliezer, when the law is always according to him?" But Rabbi Yehoshua stood up and quoted a verse from the Torah, which says, "It is not in Heaven" (Devarim 30:2), adding that Rabbi Yirmiyah had explained that "we do not listen to a voice from Heaven," as it has already stated in the Torah, "Follow the

said, "Come in peace, my teacher and student; my teacher, in that you are smarter than I, and my student in that you accepted my decree."

Had this been the only incident between them, the matter would have been closed. However, there were other occasions when Rabban Gamliel treated Rabbi Yehoshua in a very harsh manner. Finally Rabbi Yehoshua's colleagues could take it no more. They suspended Rabban Gamliel and appointed Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah in his place (Berachos 27b).

With Rabbi Eleazar's ascension to nasi, the number of students attending the house of study climbed sharply. Rabban Gamliel had been of the opinion that only scholars whose character matched their wisdom were to come to the beis midrash. Rabbi Eleazar did not subscribe to this view. The new policy resulted in a marked increase in Torah scholarship. On the very first day many

majority" (Shemos 23:2).

The Talmud continues that Rabbi Eliezer was banned, placed in *cherem*, due to his stubbornness. Although Rabban Gamliel was related to Rabbi Eliezer, the nasi presided over the affair.

The forceful nature of this story makes its clear that the issue before Rabban Gamliel and his colleagues was nothing less than the integrity of the entire halachic process. It was clear to them that Torah law was to be decided by men, not by G-d. Having given the Torah to human beings in a form that allowed for different interpretations, G-d put jurisdiction over the law in their hands; He could not be called on to give His opinion or decision. Rabbi Eliezer's failure to recognize this put in danger the entire foundation of the Sanhedrin. How could it function properly if the majority did not have the power to impose its decision? There would be no system by which to establish the

## No Small Service (Continued from page 24)

day Rav Shlomo Kluger came to visit the Belzer Rebbe. Rav Kluger came there to learn and exchange wisdom."

He sighed enviously. "After they had finished, Shlomo Kluger rose and quite casually advanced through the hallway to the door.

"Rav Kluger, wait!" called the Rebbe.

"Shlomo Kluger turned. The Rebbe hurried over to him. Panting, he clutched Shlomo Kluger's coat, which he had seized from the servant, and held it forward.

"The Belzer Rebbe motioned to Rav Kluger to raise his arms.

"In bewilderment, Shlomo Kluger did so, and the Rebbe inserted the coat squarely.

"Still puzzled, Shlomo Kluger stared as the Rebbe tugged the coat straight.

"There," said the Rebbe, satisfied.

"Rebbe," said Shlomo Kluger, 'I

don't understand why you are paying me this attention. I feel embarrassed by such an honor.'

"It is you, Shlomo Kluger, who are honoring me," answered the Belzer Rebbe excitedly. 'I wanted so much to fulfill the mitzvah of being **meshamesh** a **talmid chacham** -- tending to a Torah scholar. A rare gem like you among the people of Israel must be polished and cared for.'"

As Rav Weidenfeld completed his story, his eyes wandered to the bookcase in wistfulness and reverence.

"If the Belzer Rebbe, of all people, would clamor for such deference," he concluded, "then how much more so did I have to vie for this honor. For a trifling item such as money I have the opportunity not only to give charity, but to help a Torah scholar have, G-d willing, a speedy recovery."

The rabbi continued, "On what is

Jewish leadership based? Money? Fame? Business? No, it is the Torah. The wisdom of the Torah sustains our link to G-d, our faith in the end of this bitter exile, and our hopes for the Messiah. Without our scholars, we are bereft of leadership. We are like sheep without a shepherd, a ship tossed at sea without a captain. No money can compensate for guidance, for without that guidance so many souls are lost."

He leaned forward. "You, Asher, are concerned with the here and now. You are trying to save a Jewish life. I am concerned about the future. All my life I have had people support me. For once I wish to be on the other end. A Torah scholar is our very foundation. That is no small service. Likewise, neither is mine."

With that, the Tshebiner Rav handed the envelope back to Asher Kraus, who now understood a bit more.

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## TO OUR READERS

We trust that you have had a happy and fruitful Tishrei.

Our cover this issue features the Aleph-bais, as drawn by the renowned artist Michel Schwartz.

Our Sages teach that the world was built upon the twenty-two letters of the alphabet. "Torah Highlights" features a look at the Aleph-bais.

"To Repay" is the true story of how the Sha'agas Aryeh's closest pupil was kidnaped by the Church, in its quest to undermine the Jewish religion in general and the Sha'agas Aryeh in particular.

The second installment of "At Mama's Knee" continues the fascinating story of Glückel of Hameln, based on her 17th century diary of Jewish-German life.

"A Challenge for Angels" is the true story of how a family dedicated to Torah struggled in early twentieth-century America.

"Our Story" focuses on the trials and tribulations of Rabban Gamliel's Sanhedrin in Yavneh, shortly after the destruction of the Second Temple.

We welcome your comments, praise, criticisms, and suggestions. While we cannot print all letters, we make an effort to present a representative sample.

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# MAIL ROOM

## Enjoyed Cover

I loved the cover of your September issue. It is your best cover yet.

Chanah Greenbaum,  
Chicago, IL

## New Series

Your new series "At Mama's Knee" and "Stranger in Shanghai" are interesting and different. But I hope these won't each continue for ten issues.

I'd also like to know if these stories are true.

Sherry Kirsch,  
Rego Park, NY

Don't worry. There will be several

stories about the Jews of Shanghai during the coming year, but for the most part these will be separate episodes. As for "At Mama's Knee," the entire series involves the same main characters, but the episodes are not related to one another.

The events that take place in "At Mama's Knee" all happened, and are described in the diary of Glückel of Hameln. The stories are built around these events, but the dialogue is fictional. The characters and stories in "Stranger in Shanghai" are fictional, and are meant to give readers a flavor of Jewish life in the Far East during World War II.

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