

Rabbi Elimelech Lippman of Lyzhansk

THE NOAM ELIMELECH

The 21st of
Adar marks
the 205th
yahrzeit of Rabbi
Elimelech Lippman
of Lyzhansk,
known to us as the
Noam Elimelech.
For fourteen years
he headed the
chassidic move-
ment, whose reins
he took after the
death of the
Maggid, Rabbi Dov
Ber of Mezhirech.

Born in 1717 (5477), Reb Elimelech was over 40 years old when the Ba'al Shem Tov passed away, but never merited meeting the founder of Chassidus. Reb Elimelech always regretted this. He had in fact gone to Mezhibozh to see the Ba'al Shem, but arrived after the Ba'al Shem had passed away. Afterwards, with the suggestion of his older brother, Reb Zusha of Hanipoli, Reb Elimelech went to see the Ba'al Shem Tov's successor, the Maggid of Mez-

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hirech.

Not only did Reb Elimelech become a chassid of the Maggid, but he eventually rose to such greatness that he became the Maggid's successor. When Rabbi Elimelech died, in 1787 (5547), he left behind three sons, two daughters, and a great number of followers, who were to further spread the fires of Chassidus.

Reb Elimelech and Reb Zusha traveled all over Galicia to the various Jewish towns and villages. By wandering from one town to the next, they symbolized the fact that the *Shechinah*, Hashem's Divine Presence, wanders with the Jewish people throughout the *galus*, the

exile.

The Noam Elimelech saw the role of the chassidic rebbe as being a leader in all areas of life which concerned his disciples and followers—not only the spiritual needs, but the material ones as well.

He also believed that the rebbe had to bring himself down to the level of his followers for the purpose of subsequently raising them to higher and higher levels of purity.

Rabbi Elimelech's most famous work is *Noam Elimelech*, a commentary on Chumash, which was published in the year of his death by his son Eliezer and by Zechariah Mendel of Shendishov, one of Reb Elimelech's students. He wrote several other books as well as numerous letters regarding religious issues.

On his deathbed he told his son Eliezer:

"I have already divided my legacy among my students: I gave the light

AMONG THE

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, known as the Ba'al HaTanya, used to tell the following story:

An Inn belonging to Reb Eliezer Lipmann and his wife Mirish attracted many travelers. When it occasionally happened that someone couldn't afford to pay, the couple made him feel just as welcome as the paying customers.

One day a group of beggars walked in. They were looking for a place to stay overnight, before they resumed their wanderings from town to town. They were quite tired — and above all, hungry.

The innkeepers greeted them warmly. They heated water for their scruffy guests to wash

themselves, and they set up the table, complete with a fine cloth and utensils, and lavish food. The beggars had a banquet.

Among them was an elderly man. He wore a garment that was one big checkerboard of patches; his face and hands, a mass of scabs and scars, were enough to frighten anyone who saw him. Even his fellow beggars kept away, seating themselves separately.

Immediately Mirish set aside a special table. She laid out all her silverware and served the old man trays of food. Like a mother she doted on him, tending to all his needs.

The following day, the group thanked the couple

of my eyes to Yaakov of Lublin [the *Chozeh* — Seer — of Lublin]; the strength in my heart to Yisrael of Koznitz [the Koznitzer Maggid]; the soul of my mind to Mendele of Pristik [Rabbi Mendel of Rimanov]; and the power of my mouth to Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apta [the Apta Rav].”

“Father,” his son asked, “what are you leaving me?”

“You will have to work. My father also left me with nothing,” was his reply.

Rabbi Elimelech added, “Anyone who ever gave me a *pidyon* [sum of money accompanying a request] will merit not to die without repenting.”

There later was heard a story about a man in the city of Rimanov who lay on his deathbed for three days. Although he was in terrible pain and about to die, his soul simply would

not leave the world.

Finally Rabbi Mendel of Rimanov, by then a great rebbe in his own right, came to see the sick man. “Did you know Reb Elimelech of Lyzhansk?” asked Rabbi Mendel.

The man managed to answer yes. He even mentioned having visited the Noam Elimelech with a *pidyon* and a request.

“Then that explains it,” answered Reb Mendel. “You cannot die, even though your time has come, because you have not properly done *teshuvah* for all your wrongdoing. I will help you recite confes-

“That explains it. You can't die, even though your time has come, because you have not properly done *teshuvah*.”

sion, the *viduy*.”

Slowly the man chanted the confessional prayer. As soon as he finished the last word, he fell back and expired.

The Noam Elimelech left behind an enormous legacy. The dynasties of Ger, Vizhnitz, Bobov, and others continue to draw from his philosophy, which influences the lives of thousands around the world.

Editor's Note: The year of the Noam Elimelech's passing was either 5546 or 5547. While 5546 was a leap year, 5547 was not, and so we could not determine if he died in Adar, Adar I, or Adar II.

THIRTY-SIX

for their generosity. The stranger waited in the corner for the others to file out the door; then he privately approached the woman.

“Because of your extraordinary kindness and attention,” he said, “you will be rewarded with children who will take after me.”

With that, he hurried out and joined up with the itinerant group.

When the woman related to her husband the old man's blessing, he said, “It sounds more like a curse to me. Why, who'd want to take after a man like that? Filthy, scabby, a beggar wandering from town to town?”

But Mirish understood that this old man was no

ordinary beggar. He was, in fact, one of the thirty-six hidden *tzaddikim* (holy men) whose righteousness supports the world. Only time would tell whether his prediction would prove correct.

Eventually time did tell. Mirish became the mother of two great sages: Reb Zusha of Hanipoll and Rabbi Elimelech of Lyzhansk, both of whom lit up the world with their holiness.

But was the beggar truly one of the thirty-six *tzaddikim*? After once telling the story, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi was asked this question. The chassidic leader didn't answer, but his silence indicated that, indeed, the beggar was.

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**"The Children of Israel
shall keep the Sabbath"**
(Shemos 31:16)

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TO OUR READERS

Last issue we featured "The Widow," about the Shpuler Zeide.

"Mendel," a two-part story concluding in the next issue, is another story told about this great chassidic leader, who was known for his miracles on behalf of the common folk.

"Unshaken As the Continent" makes its return this issue. The story jumps several decades ahead, in the continuing saga of the Cordoba clan.

Our cover this issue features the Sabbath, which is the topic of "Torah Highlights."

This is a leap year in the Jewish calendar, and "This Month" details some of the differences between Adar I and Adar II.

Before the Inquisition drove the Jews out of Spain, they experienced a Golden Age there, marked by great strides in Torah. "Our Story" features the Golden Age of Spain.

The cover art for this issue
and last month's issue
is by
Tova Leff.

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MAIL ROOM

Good Artist

Your story about the Rambam ("The Runaway," Shevat) was enjoyed by my entire family, even my second-grader.

I would like to know who drew the portrait of the Rambam which appeared in the story. It was a very impressive drawing.

Shelly Dombroff
Forest Hills, NY

The artwork for "The Runaway," including the portrait of the Rambam, was drawn by the very talented Norman Nodel.

The Jewish Reader welcomes submissions from writers. Please keep a copy of your manuscript. If you wish to have your work returned, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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