

love, his simple joy, and his simple glory in being a creature of God in this world. And even after everyone who was there in Baden bei Wien in 1939 is dead, Moishel's simple melody, sung on *Shabbos* by men and women in their thousands and ten thousands in synagogues all over the world, will live.

Brooklyn, New York – December 10th, 1949

Shlomo Carlebach and Zalman Schachter, young rabbis in their mid 20s, are standing in a narrow, dimly lit hallway on the second floor of 770 Eastern Parkway, the three-storey headquarters of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, waiting nervously, with their eyes fixed on the door in front of them.

Even the fact that they are here together is a miracle in itself, a blessing from God. They had first met in Baden bei Wien, before the Nazis had taken over, when Zalman, then 11 years old, showed up on the Carlebach's doorstep, holding a dead chicken. Zalman's father had sent him to ask Rabbi Carlebach if it was kosher. Rabbi Carlebach examined the chicken and declared it kosher. Then he introduced Zalman to his sons, Eliya Hayyim and Shlomo, who were 10 years old. The three boys ran off to play ping-pong.

Zalman's own family was not able to leave Austria by train as the Carlebachs had; but with the help of smugglers, the Schachters escaped on foot across the German border into Antwerp, Belgium. From there, they fled to France and wound up in an internment camp for Jewish refugees, before eventually being released to travel to Marseilles. There, Zalman met a charismatic rabbi with whom he was very taken. After his family finally arrived in New York in 1941, Zalman learned that this rabbi was Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the son-in-law of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, head of a great Hasidic dynasty. The Rebbe had also escaped from Europe and arrived in New York just a year before Zalman, setting-up his home and headquarters in Brooklyn.

Zalman soon became a Hasid (student, follower) of the Rebbe, and when Zalman and Shlomo found each other again in New York, Zalman learned that Shlomo and his brother Eliya Hayyim had already been to see the Rebbe.

At first Shlomo was hesitant about becoming a Hasid. He was already studying at America's foremost Torah academy, Lakewood Yeshiva, the intellectual center of the Orthodox Jewish world, where he was recognized as an *illui*, a genius. It was rumored that Rabbi

Aharon Kotler, the renowned head of the *yeshiva*, was grooming Shlomo to succeed him. But over time Shlomo came to realize the life of the mind, even in a community of brilliant minds, would not satisfy him. He needed something more. What the Rebbe offered him was a path with heart. So Shlomo left Lakewood to learn with the Rebbe.

The door opens. An older Hasid, Berel Haskind, sticks his head out. In a soft voice, almost a whisper, he says in Yiddish: *Die Rebbe ruft eich*, "The Rebbe's calling you." They follow him into the Rebbe's mother's room where he held a small *farbrengen* (gathering).

The Rebbe is one of the few Hasidic masters to get out of the Holocaust alive. He is driven day and night to do what he can to rebuild in America what was decimated in Europe: the holy communities of his people. The Rebbe is a *tzaddik*, a righteous person, a fully realized being whose every waking minute is devoted to serving God. He is like a king who commands the love, respect, and loyalty of those around him. But lately he has been sick, and spends much of his time in bed.

Wearing a black silk robe, the Rebbe sits propped-up on an upholstered chair at a small table. Standing around the room are several old men with long, white beards, whom the young men recognize as the Rebbe's closest Hasidim. The Rebbe nods, and one of the old men fills three shot glasses on the small table with vodka, passing them to the Rebbe, Shlomo, and Zalman. They make a blessing and everyone says, "*L'Hayyim!*" making a toast to long life for the Rebbe.

The Rebbe looks at Shlomo and Zalman. He takes one more sip of his vodka, and hands the glass to one of the old Hasidim, who also takes the glasses from the two young men, and puts the glasses on the dresser. The Rebbe speaks softly in Yiddish. His voice is weak, but his eyes are filled with fire.

"The time has come," the Rebbe says, looking first into Shlomo's eyes, then Zalman's. *"You have been chosen. God has given you both great gifts. With great gifts come great responsibilities."*

The Rebbe coughs. Berel Haskind hands him a handkerchief, then a glass of water. After a moment, the Rebbe continues: *"I am sending you both as my personal emissaries. I want you go to college campuses, many college campuses. I want you to find the Jewish students there."*

The Rebbe takes a sip of water.

"What do you want us to say to them?" Shlomo asks.

going from story to story as more students gather. Zalman talks about Kabbalah and the *Upanishads* at his table, where students are also gathering. Pretty soon, everyone in the room is gathered around these two tables. The stories and discussions continue late into the night.

The following month, on January 28th, the Rebbe leaves this world.