

Foreword

Since the passing of my dear friend Reb Shlomo Carlebach, of blessed memory, I have seen many hagiographic accounts celebrating his life and teachings. I have also seen other not-so-complementary accounts of his life. It is usually one or the other, but not both. Until one vessel is strong enough to contain the different sides of his story, strong enough to hold the paradox of his humanity *and* his holiness, Shlomo's legacy will remain divided. But with this work, I believe Reb Aryae has begun to shape that vessel of wholeness.

Through his own humble witness, Reb Aryae takes us back into that world of the House of Love and Prayer, and allows us to relive the unique *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the '60s that permeated it and all of us. Along the way, he gives us a glimpse into the complexities of Reb Shlomo's life—the holy ecstatic teaching, the joy-filled concerts, the humor and learning, the profound loneliness, and the conflicted feelings of many of his students after his passing. A good chronicler, he does not judge what he has heard, but simply reports the thoughts and feelings of others.

But that is not to say that it is a dispassionate book, for Reb Aryae courageously gives the reader a glimpse into his own soul, his own exaltations, his own inner struggles and exasperations occasioned by the upheaval of those times and Reb Shlomo's quirks and amazing capacity for touching people in the heart. This is *his* story as much as Shlomo's, and in some sense, the story of all the "holy beggars" who were touched by Reb Shlomo and the community they created together.

Though there are some who will be troubled by the complexity of Reb Aryae's portrait, I believe his honest reflection on those complexities, and his own deep love for Reb Shlomo, which shines from every page, raises this book to level beyond simple notions of right and wrong, black and white, to a place of simple, loving acceptance of the whole. It is this non-judgmental attitude that makes this a truly important look at a pivotal time in the renaissance of Judaism in America, one that opens a door to understanding a more ecumenical view of Judaism, and one that offers an opportunity for all of us who lived through that time to understand ourselves a little better.

It is of vital importance that we understand the difference between an *archetypal model* and an *accessible model*. Many who have heard Reb Shlomo's songs and teachings have put him on a pedestal and set him up as an archetypal model. This book, which treats him as a human being, will not serve those who insist on this view of him. Hagiographies, the biographies of saints, create big halos around the people they describe, but they also make it impossible for others to emulate them with much success. Reb Shlomo didn't ask people to call him 'Rabbi Carlebach.' He didn't even ask them to call him 'Reb Shlomo.' He was always just 'Shlomo,' and related to people in a very accessible, human way. And those who saw in him an accessible model became truly creative in the way in which they gave over the teachings and melodies that they inherited from him . . . and those that they created themselves.

Remember, all of us are concerned about his legacy, for *the legacy is not the person*. My friend Reb Shlomo left us over 16 years ago, and what remains? The stories of his bottomless kindness, the countless lives that he inspired, his profound teachings, and the thousands of songs he composed. While the person is no longer with us in body, his spirit inhabits his legacy. In that, there is still so much to nourish souls that may not be able to find what they need in more traditional sources. This is his legacy; its value is immeasurable, and it deserves to be preserved. All of us can help in this effort by contributing to the Shlomo Carlebach Legacy Trust (www.carlebachlegacy.com).

— Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *Boulder, Colorado, 2011*