



## Shabbos Heilege Shabbos

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E23)

*תשגחה פרטית comes in many shapes and sizes – and sometimes in a song.*

### *The city of Kishinev - revisited*

The city of Kishinev, once part of Romania, used to host a thriving Jewish community. After WWI there were reports of seventy Shuls and Shtibelach in Kishinev. There had been a great Yeshiva there and חסידיית of nearly every stripe and lineage. Sadiger, Beyan, Chortkov, Chernobyl, Slonim, Skulen, and others. The chief Rav of Kishinev was Rav Yehudah Leib Tsirelson who, together with the Skulener Rebbe, R' Eliezer Zisha Portugal, co-founded אגודת ישראל.

But the Hashgacha had other plans for Kishinev. During WWII Kishinev was occupied by the Germans and Romania was subsequently divided up and Kishinev became part of the Soviet Union, a section called Moldova. Jewish life was virtually wiped out, save the Yeshiva building which was spared. The Jews there were separated from their Torah roots by the Hammer and Sickle of the Soviets.

### *Rebuilding Kishinev*

Even before the Soviet Union began to crumble in 1990, a visionary Rav, R' Mordechai Neustadt זצ"ל founded ועד להצלת נדחי ישראל with an eye to reconnecting the Jews of the Soviet Union with their heritage. The outreach operations prior to 1990 were all clandestine as the government did

not tolerate the dissemination of Yiddishkeit. But in 1990 with the fall of the Iron Curtain Rav Neustadt moved the operation into the open. One of his projects was to rekindle the flame of Yiddishkeit in Kishinev by rebuilding the Yeshiva which stood there. Hashem blessed Rav Neustadt's efforts and a great yearning and interest in Yiddishkeit sprung up among the young Russian Jews who had been robbed of their heritage.

By 1992 there was already a boys' and a girls' division to teach the children and 60+ children had graduated from the rebuilt Yeshiva. For the following 15 years or so the Yeshiva continued to prepare young people for a lifetime of involvement with Yiddishkeit.

A school cannot exist without staff and Rav Neustadt זצ"ל recruited two couples, Rav Yona Lazar, already a promising Mechanech, left

Lakewood with his wife, Mrs. Shira Lazar. They were joined by Rav Elazar and Mrs. Aviva Tabak who also left their homes in the US to take a turn teaching the youngsters in Kishinev.

### *Lonely times*

While their schedules were full – the husbands taught the boys, and the wives taught the girls – life there was hardly a picnic. There were local and governmental politics to deal with, financial

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constraints, and perhaps most challenging, the loneliness associated with being so far from the families and communities that they came from.

### *Thriving on Friday night*

R' Yona reported to me that what made their stay not only bearable but uplifting and memorable was Davening with the students on Friday night. Not only did they teach the children the content of the *ליל שבת* Davening, but they also started singing with them and the children picked up the melodies. Naturally, they started with *לכה דודי* but slowly R' Yona got bolder and added more songs from *שבת קבלת*.

One of the tunes that he sang with them was *מקולות מים רבים*. The tune is slow and has a low part:

מקולות מים רבים, מים רבים אדירים, מים רבים אדירים, אדירים משברי ים.

And a high part:

אדיר במרום, אדיר במרום, אדיר במרום, אדיר במרום,

And then comes back down:

אדיר במרום השם, אדיר במרום השם

The chorus of boys rang out and the walls reverberated with the sound of their sweet voices and Neshamos reaching out to the *בורא עולם*. Those moments made everything worthwhile.

### *R' Levi Yitzchok's Niggun*

Once the youngsters got used to the tune, R' Yona kept the tune and inserted the words of a short song written by R' Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev in which he sings out his love for the

Holy Shabbos. That song is often sung to the same tune (perhaps that use of the tune even came first).

R' Levi Yitzchok's Niggun was simple:

ווען איך וואָלט געהאַט פֿח  
וואָלט איך געלאָפֿן אין די גאַסן  
און איך וואָלט געשריגן שבת  
שבת, הייליגער שבת

שבת, שבת, שבת, שבת, שבת, שבת, שבת, שבת  
שבת היום לה', שבת היום לה'

שבת, שבת, שבת, שבת, שבת, שבת, שבת, שבת  
שבת היום לה' שבת היום לה'

The song translates to, "If I had the ability to, I would go out to the street and loudly call out Shabbos – Heilege Shabbos!"

Shabbos, Shabbos, Shabbos Shabbos... today is Shabbos for Hashem."

R' Yona even inserted a JEP-inspired ending to the rhyme, "We are not like them." He taught them the meaning of the Yiddish words and the few words of English he had added.

And the children picked it up. Their voices moved each of them to a different zone, to the place of the Heilege Shabbos.

### *Back in Los Angeles*

After a year, the couples came back, and others took over. R' Yona became the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Rebbe in Toras Emes in Los Angeles. But he did not forget the children in Kishinev. Every *ערב ראש חודש* R' Yona would share stories from Kishinev with his students. The students could not get enough. Indeed, the then-young Shaya Twersky reported that his grandfather, Rabbi Dr.



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Abraham J. Twersky זצ"ל would be going to Kishinev to visit קברי אבוח. The students were delighted that they now had yet another 'connection' with Kishinev.

### *Connecting the old and the new Kishinev*

The surprise came when someone showed R' Yona an account of the earlier Kishinev written by Aaron Wasserman. He described life in the city graced by so many Chassidic dynasties. What struck R' Yona was the description of Friday nights in Kishinev. The Chassidim of all types would converge on the Yeshiva after their

*Takeaway: I will try to see the Hand of Hashgacha in the details of my life*

meals. First, they would make sure that the Bochurim had eaten properly and would bring them food to supplement their fare.

But then, Wasserman described, a Slonimer Chosid, a watchmaker by the name of R' Zechariah, would always sing R' Levi Yitzchok's Niggun!

R' Yona realized that seventy years later the Hashgacha had brought that same song back to those same walls! A bit of the earlier glory of Kishinev had returned.