

# HERE'S *my* STORY

## SPECIAL REGARDS

**RABBI MOSHE KUPETZ**

**M**y Hebrew name is Sholom Moshe Ben Avraham and my English name is S. Murray Kupetz. The reason for the 'S.' is because my parents meant it to stand for Sholom but they couldn't come up with an English-sounding equivalent, so they just wrote S. Murray Kupetz on my birth certificate. Whenever people question this, I tell them that Harry S. Truman had the same problem — his S. stood for nothing and he managed to become president of the United States.

In 1962, shortly after *Sukkos*, I became engaged to the daughter of Rabbi Yehuda Zev Segal, dean of Manchester Yeshiva, and he took us to receive a blessing from the Rebbe.

It was a very special audience. The Rebbe quoted from the Torah portion of *Shoftim* — which begins, "You shall establish judges and guards at all the gates of your communities..." And then he gave over a teaching from the Maggid of Mezeritch that the word "gates" also refers to all the entrances into the body of the human being — the eyes, the ears, the senses — all of which admit information from the outside. All these have to be guarded, he said.

He then went on to say that a *Bais Din*, a Jewish court of law, in order to be effective, must have a "*makel lirdos v'shofar l'hariya* — a staff with which to punish, and a trumpet to blow," meaning, they must have a method with which to threaten, if necessary, and an instrument with which to announce and publicize.

"What are the parallels for the human being?" the Rebbe



asked. If the judges and guards are the gateways to the body, what do the stick and the trumpet represent?

He answered by quoting the Talmud which states "*L'olam yargiz adam yitzro hatov al yitzro hara* — a person should stir up his good inclination to overpower his evil inclination". In other words, rouse your good inclination in order to prevent you from sinning.

Having said that, the Rebbe then went on to give us a blessing. He said that the wife as much as the husband is obligated to have an awareness and fear of Heaven, and therefore the relationship between the two of us must be not only a physical

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continued from reverse

connection but also a spiritual one — that we must have togetherness in spiritual terms as well. And he instructed us to learn either from *chasidic* literature or from books that inspire fear of Heaven.

I cannot honestly say that I fulfilled that dictum literally every single day but, because of the Rebbe's advice, we did create and sustain a relationship that was not only physical, but was spiritual, as well. And we just celebrated our 50th anniversary, thank G-d.

My second encounter with the Rebbe took place on the Shabbos before I left the United States to get married. My wedding was to be in the month of Adar 1963 in Manchester, and the Shabbos before my departure I spent at my brother's house in Crown Heights.

My brother used to pray at the *Bostoner Bais Medrash*, which was located on President Street, literally next to where the Rebbe lived at that time. Morning prayers began there at 9:30, but I was not particularly punctual in my timekeeping, so I was approaching the synagogue at about a quarter to ten. And just then the Rebbe came out of his house. On this morning, he was alone.

It was an exceedingly cold winter and the path was icy, and there were four or five steps at the end of the path which were iced over. As he got to the end of the front path of his home, I happened to also be standing right there. At that moment he lost his balance and slipped, but I stuck out my arm, and he held on to balance himself. I stayed with him until he came down the steps and then accompanied him to the corner. Before we parted, I told him that I was getting married this week and I asked him for a blessing. He gave me a *bracha*, smiled and wished me a good Shabbos. I went on my way and forgot the incident entirely.

A year later — it was the Fast of Esther — I was called up to the Torah in the synagogue in Manchester. Of course, I was called up by my Hebrew name, Sholom Moshe ben Avraham. As soon as I returned to my seat, an elderly Lubavitcher *chasid* named Reb Yitzchak Dubov, who taught at the Manchester Yeshiva, approached me and practically shouted, "It's you!"

"Wait a second, what have I done?" I asked.

He explained that six months previously, just before Rosh Hashana, the Rebbe sent a telegram with regards to the Lubavitcher *chasidim* in Manchester, and at the end of the telegram he wrote, "Special regards to the young man, Sholom Moshe." But they had no idea who I was. They went through all of the Lubavitcher *chasidim* in Manchester and couldn't find anybody by that name. It was not until this moment, when I was called up to the Torah, that Rabbi Dubov put two and two together.

I said thank you very much, and although the message was delivered six months late, I was delighted to receive regards from the Rebbe.

Then, of course, he wanted to know why the Rebbe had singled me out for special regards. I told him the story of the near mishap on the ice, but then I got a *real* dressing down. He said, "So you're sitting on a story like this for the last year and you're not telling us? How could you not tell us such a story?"

The reason was because I had thought nothing of it. The Rebbe, however, remembered — six months after the event, he remembered my name and he made a point of letting me know that he remembered. This was amazing to me.

My third encounter with the Rebbe took place in the middle of that summer, during the month of Av, 1964. I came to the United States for the wedding of my brother-in-law, and again my father-in-law took us to see the Rebbe.

In that audience, the Rebbe asked me what I was learning, and I said I was learning the laws of *mikvaos* — the ritual bath. To which the Rebbe responded with these words: "A *mikvah* can easily be made *pasul* and rendered unusable, but a spring, which can also serve as a ritual bath, cannot be made *pasul* as easily."

He continued, "*Yafutzu maynosecha chutzah* — Let your wellsprings flow outward. If you will teach Torah with others, if you spread the word of G-d and teach Torah to others, that will give you a personal protection from the outside world."

I have tried to follow that dictum ever since. To this day, I continue to direct in Manchester the *Reshet Shiurei Torah* through which I teach Torah to adults in various communities and places, wherever I am allowed, and whenever I can.

*Rabbi Moshe Kupetz is a lecturer, mentor, and coordinator of outreach programs in the UK and abroad. For close to 30 years, he gave classes in the Manchester Yeshiva. He was interviewed in Jerusalem, Israel in the summer of 2013.*

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> **5730 — 1970**, on the eve of the Rebbe Rayatz's twentieth *yahrzeit*, the Rebbe held a unique *farbrengen* on Friday afternoon, just hours before Shabbos. At the *farbrengen*, they completed the Sefer Torah to greet *Moshiach*, which was initiated twenty-eight years earlier by the Rebbe Rayatz. This was the first *farbrengen* to be broadcast via telephone hookup to multiple Jewish communities throughout the world.<sup>1</sup> 9 Shevat

1. *Sichos Kodesh 5730 Vol. 1*, p. 378

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