

Weekly Biography

9 Iyar 5664/1904

Harav Chaim Friedlander, the Tal Chaim of Liska, zy”a

The ninth of Iyar marks the 104th *yahrtzeit* of the second Rebbe of the Liska dynasty, Harav Chaim Friedlander, more commonly known by the name of one of his *sefarim*, the *Tal Chaim*.

Liska is nestled among the hills of the Tokay countryside (three hours from Budapest), where the famous Tokay wines come from. One hundred years ago, it had a population of around 2,682 inhabitants. Liska is also the birthplace of one of the most illustrious Chassidic lineages.

Beginnings of Chassidus in Liska

There are no exact dates given as to when Yidden decided to settle in Liska. However it is documented that Yidden began to settle in Liska after the Turkish were chased out of Hungary in 1686, arriving from Poland, Galicia and Czech. An influx of Yidden came in about 1830-1840, together with the young Reb Tzvi Hersh Friedman of Liska. There is no question that the driving force behind the growth of the Jewish population was Reb Tzvi Hersh, father-in-law of the Tal Chaim, who, with his great knowledge, wisdom and understanding of people, attracted vintners from Poland and Russia, who came for the purpose of buying wine and subsequently settled in Liska to be near their Rebbe. The original founding fathers of the town were mainly occupied with the selling, trading and buying of the famous Tokay wine.

The Jewish population grew considerably, along with its brisk and successful wine trade. Religious life was at its peak, led by the Rebbe, who, at an early age, was known as a great *talmid chacham* and *tzaddik*. In a short time, the town of Liska became the focal point of *Chassidus* and its Rebbe was named the father of the Chassidic movement in Hungary. Both in his youth and later as a Rebbe of thousands of Chassidim, Reb Tzvi Hersh traveled to other great Rebbes of his time, such as Harav Yisrael of Ruzhin, Harav Meir of Premishlan, Harav Shalom of Belz, Harav Tzvi Hersh of Rimano and others. However, it was his Rebbe, the Yismach Moshe of Uhel, that played a dominant role in shaping his life and his way of thinking. It was he who appointed Reb Tzvi Hersh as Rav in Liska, Hungary. As a result, thousands of Chassidim converged on Liska, eager to bask in the warmth of the Rebbe's benevolence. The Liska Rebbe was acknowledged as an eminent *talmid chacham* and a *posek*. He wrote the *sefarim Ach Pri Tevuah* and *Hayashar Vehatov*.

A special relationship was forged between the Liska Rav and the Divrei Chaim of Sanz, whom he visited at least once a year. In the last year of the Ach

Pri Tevuah's life, the Sanzer Rav instructed his Chassidim to go *gezegenin* (bidding farewell) to the Liska Rav upon taking leave of the Sanzer Rav. The Liska Rav refused to receive the chassidim in Sanz, but the Sanzer Chassidim persisted, saying that their Rebbe had sent them. The Liska Rav relented and agreed to take *kvitelach* only at the edge of town. Several months later, it was understood why the Divrei Chaim acted in the way he did when the Liska Rav was *niftar*.

In the *sefer Ach Pri Tevuah*, the Sanzer Rav writes: "In these past days, when the *Aron Elokim*



Tzvi Hersh Friedlander, *shlita*. "He looked at everything, including current events, from the perspective of Torah."

His mind was so immersed in Torah learning that he did not know the value of money, and would need someone to safeguard his funds, so that he would not carelessly give away the money he had been given. In fact, once when a person wanted to give him a *pidyon*, he extended a blue coin (of a lesser denomination), then realized his mistake and corrected himself, extending a red coin (of a higher denomination). The Tal Chaim enquired why the chas-

Darkei Teshuvah, the second Munkatcher Rebbe, requesting a *brachah*. Upon inquiring where he was from, the Darkei Teshuvah asked the man why he hadn't gone to see the Tal Chaim, who lived closer to him. He replied that the Tal Chaim rarely interrupts his Torah learning to see people and held himself unworthy of giving *brachos*. The Darkei Teshuvah told him that when he returns to Liska, he should go to the Liska Rav and relay, in the Darkei Teshuva's name, that he should "open his doors to receive people and that he is worthy to be a *poel yeshuos*."

With the Tzaddikim

The Tal Chaim was very famous among the Rabbanim and *tzaddikim* of the generation. His *sefarim* contain 17 *haskamos* from the *tzaddikim* of that generation, including the Rebbes of Shineve, Vizhnitz, Munkatch, Bruzhan, Tolshove, Borgenfreund, Dezh, Chust, Ma'ad, Satmar, Vi'atzen, Selish, Brodi, Bonihad, Harav Avraham Binyamin Kluger, son of Harav Shlomo Kluger, and more. Indeed the Tolsheve Rav called him a *Gaon Hagoanim*. Harav Yaakov Moshe of Kamarna declared, "I heard of the Tal Chaim's greatness in *Kabbalah* from my father, Harav Eliezer Tzvi of Kamorna. However, I did not know of his greatness in *Toras Hanigleh* until now."

The Arugas Habosem, Harav Moshe Greenwald, wrote in his *haskamah* on Tal Chaim, "I, too, was *zocheh* to know him," obviously considering it a *zechus* to have had a relationship with the Tal Chaim.

Rav Mordechai Winkler of Mad, author of *Levushei Mordechai*, who was regarded as one of the Torah giants of Hungary, writes of Reb Chaim in his *haskamah*, "*tzaddik yesod olam*," recalling his Torah discourses with the Tal Chaim. In his words: "I was stunned by the deepness of his holy words, highlighting his depth and vast knowledge in Torah."

The previous Mattersdorfer Rav, Rav Shmuel Ehrenfeld, once recalled that his father, Rav Simchah Bunim Ehrenfeld, the Mattersdorfer Rav, used to quote in his daily *shiurim* from the *sefer Tal Chaim U'brachah* and that he regularly sent his *talmidim* to the Tal Chaim. His respect for the Tal Chaim was so intense that he once escorted him, together with all his *talmidim*, to the edge of town, upon the conclusion of a visit.

Rav Menachem Mendel of Vizhnitz, the Tzemach Tzaddik, used to visit the Tal Chaim when he traveled to Hungary, and his grandson, the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz, wrote a warm *haskamah* on the Tal Chaim, writing "that although I personally did not know the Liska Rav, my grandfather held

He married the third daughter of the first Liska Rebbe, Harav Tzvi Hersh, the Ach Pri Tevuah; but after having three children together, his wife passed away. The Ach Pri Tevuah, who was very close with his son-in-law, wanted the Tal Chaim to stay in the family and declared that he would not find a wife outside of the family, and indeed, so it was. Some time later, the Tal Chaim became engaged to his 12-year-old niece. They were married three years later.

After his marriage, the Tal Chaim was Rav in Erdobeny; thereafter, he was *Dayan* in the town of Liska, working alongside his father-in-law. His close connection with his father-in-law was legendary. When the Ach Pri Tevuah was *niftar* on 14 Av 5634/1874, the Tal Chaim inherited the mantle of leadership, becoming Rebbe at the age of 34.

Dedication to Torah

The Tal Chaim was best known for unswerving dedication to Torah learning, submerging his feet in cold water to keep himself awake and neglecting to eat for days at a time. "His whole life was Torah," says his great-grandson, the current Liska Rebbe, Harav



was taken from us..." The Sanzer Rav continues: "Whoever merited to bask in his holiness and glory..." Such was the esteem that the Sanzer Rav had for his friend, the Liska Rav.

Credible Son-in-law

Harav Chaim Friedlander, the *Tal Chaim*, was born in 5600/1840, in the town of Klienverdan in Hungary. He was a sixth generation descendant of the Maharsha (the Divrei Chaim of Sanz was able to trace his direct lineage), the Maharal of Prague, the Taz, the Bach, the Shelah Hakadosh, the Smichas Chachamim and others.



The Liska Rebbe, *shlita*, davening at the Ach Pri Tevuah's *kever*. At the left is the Tal Chaim's *kever*.

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