



BADERECH

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The “Kedushas Tzion” of Bobov, Rebbe Ben Tzion Halberstam, was one of the most influential and respected Chasidic leaders of pre-war Poland. Respected for his brilliance and leadership, the Rebbe was a prolific *baal menagein*, musical composer, and a great *ohev Yisrael*, embodying the highest expression of *mesirus nefesh*, self sacrifice.

In the early 20th Century, years before the chaos of WWII and the horrors of the Holocaust, a wealthy and generous businessman travelling through Europe named Reb Yisrael Koenigsberg, arrived in Bobov. He had heard so much about the wise and inspiring *tzadik*, and arranged a meeting with the great Kedushas Tzion.

In those days, men of stature were accustomed to walking with a decorative cane. Reb Yisrael carried one with a silver handle, just like the Rebbe’s. Before parting, Reb Yisrael asked, “Let us exchange canes. I will take the Rebbe’s, and the Rebbe should take mine.”

Smiling, the Kedushas Tzion agreed. This interaction made an impression on the Rebbe’s son, Rav Shlomo, and later he would reminisce about the generous visitor Reb Yisrael swapping canes with his father.

Reb Yisrael later traveled to Eretz Yisrael. On the way to Meron to daven by Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai, Reb Yisrael’s wagon overturned on a badly damaged road. Taking this as a personal responsibility, he repaired the road for future travelers. It became known as “Derech Yisrael”, adding to his wonderful reputation as a generous and open-hearted Jew.

For years, the Kedushas Tzion discouraged his followers from leaving Poland for lands he feared would be spiritual deserts. When World War II broke out and bombs began to fall, in the face of deportation and often certain death, the Rebbe was offered escape abroad, and refused: “How can I leave a place from which I can still assist others?” When the Nazis entered the city in Menachem Av /July 1941, the Kedushas Zion asked quietly, “Can one really hide from the *chevlei Moshiach*, the suffering of the birth pangs of the Messiah?”

That month, the Ukrainian militia and local

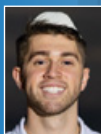
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‘civilians’ launched a pogrom against the Jews of Levov (Lemberg). The Kedushas Tzion was forced out of hiding and taken to a larger round up of Jews in the street. An eyewitness account was given by Naftoli Eherenberg in his book, *Eilah Azkerah*: “I saw from his window how the Rebbe, dressed in his Shabbos clothing, was ruthlessly attacked by the soldiers. The cruel Ukrainians beat him on his head with their rifle-butts and his yarmulke fell to the ground. From time to time the Rebbe bent over and stooped to pick it up, and they beat him even more.”

Besides the Rebbe, most of his family and tens of thousands of Bobover chassidim were murdered in the *churban* of Europe. The Rebbe’s son, Reb Shlomo, lost his wife and two children. Miraculously, having survived with his son, Naftali, Reb Shlomo made his way to London, and then crossed an imposing sea to the United States. He arrived on Ta’anis Esther, 1946, afraid and uncertain. He had been raised from childhood on the belief that America was a desert of spiritual danger, where even the stones were *treif*. He doubted whether anything could be rebuilt from the ashes of Jewry and Yiddishkeit in this atmosphere of impurity.

When Reb Shloime disembarked, a small group of surviving Bobover chassidim and refugees came to greet him. Among them stood Yitzchak Koenigsberg, holding a familiar walking stick, the cane the Kedushas Tzion had once given to his father, Reb Yisrael. He approached the Rebbe and said softly, in Yiddish: *Du hut ir dem taten’s shtok*, “Here is your father’s cane.”

Trembling with emotion, the Rebbe exclaimed, “My martyred father has sent his cane ahead to America to greet me!” It was a clear *siman*: a sign that the chain had not been

broken, that rebuilding was possible, that a new generation of *ehrliche* Yidden would yet rise on distant soil. Filled with faith and hope for the future, he gave himself to rebuilding the glory of Bobov, raising up generations of Yidden who continue to carry the glory of Torah forward.

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Moshe Rabbeinu stands before Pharaoh with a simple *mateh*, a staff through which comes *simanim* and miracles that crack open a dangerous, impure empire. This *mateh* becomes a serpent, strikes the waters, carries within it the potential for redemption, and finally becomes the conduit for splitting an imposing sea. Again and again, the Torah emphasizes: “*Take the staff... stretch out your hand...*” The salvation does not descend abstractly from Heaven; it is funneled through a physical object, a wooden stick, held, lifted and carried forward by Moshe Rabbeinu. As a shepherd uses a staff to lovingly corral his flock, the *Raya Mehemna*, Moshe the Faithful Shepherd, guided his nation toward redemption.

Maharal explains that physical objects can embody spiritual lights when they are bound to a Divine task. They become vehicles of purpose and a brighter future — not mere relics of the past. Rav Kook carries this insight further. When objects bound to Divine purpose become vessels of spiritual form, *kedushah* settles into material reality. This is especially true of objects connected to the life and destiny of a holy community or to the Nation as a whole.

Chassidic masters describe such objects as extensions of a tzaddik’s *avodah*, conduits through which their mission—to rebuild after losses, to infuse this physical world with *kedushah*, and to continue walking toward redemption—passes from generation to generation.

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Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer (Ch. 40) teaches that Moshe's staff was created on the *bein ha-shem-ashos* of the first Erev Shabbos. It was passed from hand to hand from Adam to Chanoch, to Noach, Shem, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, and to Yosef. It later fell into Pharaoh's possession, but was removed from his palace by Yisro. Ultimately, Moshe Rabbeinu inherited it when he proved himself worthy.

Similarly, a *mateh*, a *rebbishe* cane exchanged in mutual admiration, was carried across continents, preserved through catastrophes, and returned at the moment of greatest need. Handed from father to son and through destruction to rebuilding, when Rav Shlomo held it upon arriving in America, it was as if the glory of the Torah itself was placing something in his hand, telling him: *You are not alone. Continue!*

Like Moshe's staff, it was not the object itself that mattered, but what it carried and what came through it: memory, the inheritance of sacred mission, trustful continuity, and the accompaniment of Divine presence *baderech*, along the path to redemption.

Dedicated to the memory of Itamar ben Yisachar Dov haKohen Koenigsberg z'l, and in honor of the beautiful family he raised in Eretz Yisrael. ■

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