



"SELF SACRIFICE"

*A Story of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn,
the Rebbe's Father-in-Law and Predecessor.*

Farbrenge – 12 Tammuz, 5745-1985

The Rebbe Rashab once sent his only son, the Rebbe, to the capital city of Russia, which was then known as Petersburg. When he asked his father "How long shall I stay?" his father responded: "Until self-sacrifice!"

The response was puzzling. What does "until self-sacrifice" mean? These were normal times, and he was acting in accordance with the law —definitely not doing anything punishable by death. So he waited expectantly; "when will I have an opportunity to fulfill it?"

The opportunity came. He discovered that there was a decree pending against the Jews. Not a decree involving the "three cardinal sins"; a decree involving children's education, or the education of the rabbis who would be influencing the children.

The Rebbe went straight to the top. He approached the former mentor of the Minister of the Interior. At that time, he was the most powerful official, who had a direct influence on the Czar. The Czar, as is well known, was not too smart. In fact, you might say he wasn't smart at all! The Minister of the Interior made decisions for him. And this minister had a mentor who had taught him. He had finished educating the minister, but they still lived in the same city.

The Rebbe realized that this was the occasion for self-sacrifice: To contact the mentor of this thoroughly evil person. The Minister of the Interior at that time was an inhumane, evil man; he instigated pogroms and all kinds of other things. The Rebbe went to that mentor and requested documents of authorization, and discussed possible ways of canceling the decree.

The person said: You should know that this is an absolute danger for you. Now the Rebbe understood what his father meant: "until self-sacrifice." The mentor gave the Rebbe a pass with which to enter the building where the Minister had his office.

The Rebbe therefore knew what it would mean for a Jew to enter this building; a Jew with a beard and Peyot, and a long black coat, who didn't speak the most eloquent Russian. He did, in fact speak a good Russian, but it wasn't necessarily "accent-free."

He went to the building. He saw the Minister of the Interior leaving. He immediately approached the guard at the door and showed him the permit allowing him to enter. The guard didn't understand what was going on: He knew that a Jew was not allowed in Petersburg altogether —let alone in this building. And this building itself required a special pass for entry —even for non-Jews, even for officials of the highest rank. But he knew that he



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could not argue, for this was a special pass. If he did not belong, why would he have such a permit?

The Rebbe entered the building, but he didn't know where the Minister's office was located. He wandered around, and searched, until he was forced to ask one of the non-Jews working there where this office was. This was tremendously dangerous!

He then made his way into the office, found this decree, and stamped it "annulled." He placed the documents back on the table in the pile of rejected decrees, and left the room. He made his way out of the building and went home.

This isn't something that can be rationally understood or explained. It isn't something that could be done by an ordinary person: To disregard sovereign rule, especially of a superpower is, —according to the Midrash, to Kabbalah, and Mussar, and to common sense— only possible for one who is himself royalty.

The Rebbe was acting as the Shliach, agent, of his father, who was the leader of his generation, the Jewish king. So it was his father's authority that made it possible. But who actually stamped and transferred the documents, and earlier received the pass, and later thanked the Minister's mentor? It was a Jew who—although he was indeed the only son of the Rebbe— was not a Rebbe at the time!

Yet, in this mission, since a "Shliach is like his sender," he became royalty, he became his father.

What is the lesson for ordinary people like us? The Ba'al Shem Tov teaches that when a person hears a story, it should be a directive to him, it must add to his actions.

What this means is: A Jew must know that if he was told, or he realized on his own, that he has a mission from the King of the World, he becomes His Shliach, agent who is "literally his sender," as is well known as explained in Likuttei Torah based on Zohar and Kabbalah. However, there is no need for deep explanations and secrets; it is a Halachic law, and it is a reality.

Therefore, when a Jew meets a non-Jew and can influence them, he mustn't make the mistake of believing that the purpose of their meeting is what he will learn from the non-Jew. Jews were created to be as "a light unto the nations!"

G-d created Jews in order to illuminate the world; not only "his own world" in the synagogues and study halls and amongst other Jews, but rather "a light unto the nations!" To each nation and to all nations.



