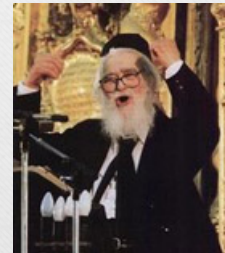


Rav Shach vs. Lubavitcher Rebbe

Great Rivalries



Rabbi Efraim Goldberg
Boca Raton Synagogue



Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach

- 1899-2001
- Born in Vaboilnik, Lithuania
- At the age of 11, he went to learn in Ponevezh under the Rosh Yeshiva R' Itzele Ponovezer.
- At 15, he went to learn in Slabodka under R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein.



Early Years

- A year later, in 1914 WWI broke out and Rav Shach began traveling around Europe from town to town, sleeping and eating wherever possible while he continued to study Torah.
- For two years, Rav Shach hid in an attic with only a Sefer Rav Akiva Eiger and a Yevamos. He survived thanks to a woman who brought him food and water every day.
- The woman survived the war and moved to Israel. At her funeral, Rav Shach walked accompanying the aron in the pouring rain.



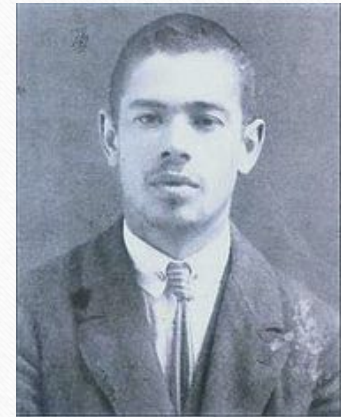
Passport Picture

Personal Description

- In his introduction to *Avi Ezri*, he writes:
 - “How can I thank Hashem for all of the kindness that He bestowed upon me during my youth, when I had nothing? It is impossible to describe the conditions in which we lived during this period when the authorities deported all of the Jews from Lithaunian cities and I did not know where my parents were. I was alone, and I did not have any way of contacting them. I lived this way for several years and I suffered terribly.”

Early Years

- In 1915, he traveled to Slutsk to study under R' Isser Zalman Meltzer.
- In 1921, due to regional political issues, the Yeshiva split. Rav Isser Zalman stayed in Slutsk and his son in law, R' Aharon Kotler started a yeshiva in Kletsk.
- R' Shach went to Kletsk with R' Aharon and was appointed a rebbe in the yeshiva.



Passport Picture

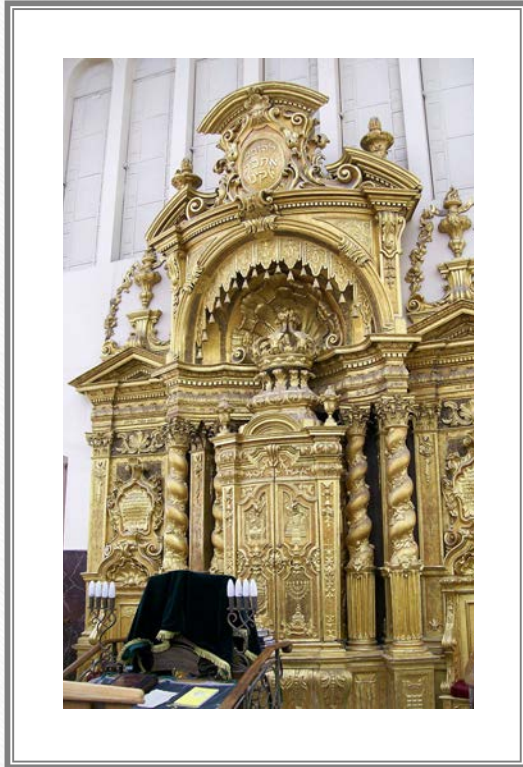
Marriage

- In 1923, R' Shach married R' Isser Zalman's neice, Gittel Gilmovski and they moved to Mir where she was from.
- Shortly after, they moved back to Kletsk. R' Isser Zalman moved to Israel and Rav Shach became involved in the leadership of the yeshiva.
- After R' Meir Shapiro passed away, Rav Shach was recruited to lead the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. He consulted with R' Chaim Ozer and turned down the position.
- He spent a short time as Rosh Yeshiva of Novardok and then became Rosh Yeshiva of the Karlin Yeshiva.

Move to Palestine

- Shortly before the Holocaust, Rav Shach's uncle helped R' Aharon Kotler escape to the United States.
- In 1939, Rav Schach and his family went to Vilna and stayed with R' Chaim Ozer. His mother and eldest daughter passed away at that time.
- In early 1940, after consulting with the Brisker Rav and R' Chaim Ozer, the Shach family moved to Palestine to be with his wife's uncle, R' Isser Zalman.
- Rav Shach joined Yeshivas Etz Chaim as a Rosh Yeshiva when they first arrived.





16th C. Italian Aron

Ponovezh Yeshiva

- After the Ponovezh Yeshiva was re-established in Bnei Brak, The Ponovezher Rav, R' Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman asked Rav Shach to join him which he did.
- Rav Shach served as Rosh Yeshiva and gave a weekly shiur until his passing.
- He also served as chairman of Chinuch Atzmai and Va'ad Ha'Yeshivos during that time.



Gadol Ha'Dor

- From 1970 until his passing, Rav Shach was considered the Gadol Ha'dor among Litveshe Chareidim.
- He was instrumental in creating a presumption of yeshiva study and kollel learning in that community. Torah was primary to him above everything else.
- Story of his son and he not talking after the Rebbetzin passed away.

View on Israel

- He was adamantly opposed to secular and religious Zionism though he did encourage every citizen to vote. He felt, a vote not cast for the right party is effectively cast for the wrong party.
- He participated in the Israeli election system and backed and led various parties during his lifetimes.
- Rav Shach waged numerous public battles against anything he deemed inconsistent with Torah about which he said:

"There is no need to worry about *machlokes*, because if it is done for the sake of Heaven, in the end it will endure...one is obligated to be a *baal-machlokes* . It is no feat to be in agreement with everybody!"



Israeli Flag - Ponovezh

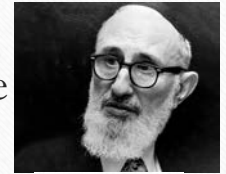


When talking about the Israeli flag over the Ponovezh yeshiva on Yom Ha'atzmaut, Rabbi Berel Wein wrote:

"Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman, the Ponevezher Rav, told me that he flew the Israeli flag from the roof of his yeshivah building in Bnei Brak on Yom Ha'atzmaut. When some locals complained about this, he answered them with the following: 'I flew the Lithuanian flag on the roof of my yeshivah in Ponevezh on Lithuanian Independence Day. My friends, it is no worse here.'"

Opposition and Controversy

- Attacked the Rabbi Soloveitchik saying the Rav, “Endangering the survival of Torah true Judaism by indoctrinating the masses with actual words of heresy.” (See handout)
- Accused Rav Steinsaltz of heresy and put him in cherem saying “ein tocho k’boro, he is not a genuine person” and everyone must keep their distance from him. (see handout)
- Wrote that Yeshiva University poses a threat to the survival of authentic Judaism and talked about the possibility of YU in Israel as an “absolute disaster causing the destruction of our Holy Torah.”



Opposition and Controversy

- Described Touro college as a terrible disaster, a “churban ha’das,” destruction of our religion.
- Said it is forbidden to serve in the Israeli army and “it is necessary to die for this.”
- He believed for true peace, it is “necessary to compromise on even half of the Land of Israel.”
- He also criticized Israeli yishuvim in Yehuda and Shomron and Gaza as “a blatant attempt to provoke the international community” and called on chareidim not to live in those areas.



Wife and Children

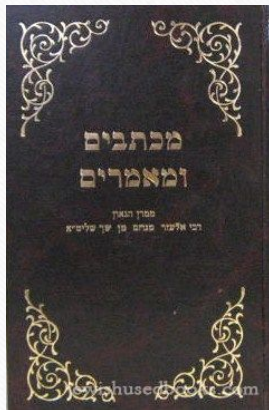
- Married to Gittel who passed away in 1969
- Three children born in Kletsk in the 1920's
 - Miriam Rasel died at age 14.
 - Devorah, married to R' Meir Tzvi Bergman, Rosh Yeshiva
 - Ephraim

Dr. Ephraim Shach

- 1929- 2011
- Learned in the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim
- Influenced by reading Jabotinsky books and joined the Irgun
- When his father first saw him in uniform asked if it was Purim.
- Received a doctorate in history and philosophy from Revel of Yeshiva University.
- Worked at the Israel Ministry of Education



Seforim



- Avi Ezri on the Rambam
- Michtavim U'Ma'amarim – 6 volumes of letters

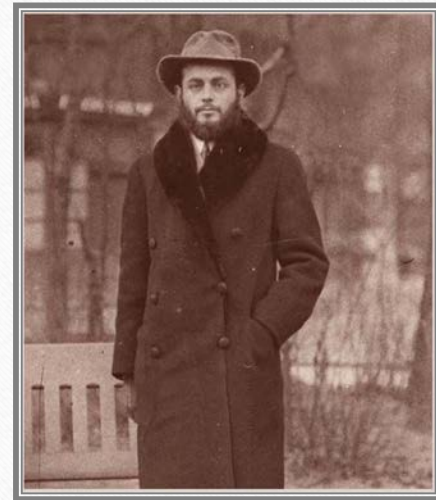
Death and Funeral



- Rav Shach passed away on November 2, 2001 at almost 103 years old.
- He is buried in Bnei Brak and over 200,000 people attending his funeral.

R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson

- Born 1902, the 11th of Nissan in Nikolaev, Russia to R' Levi Yitzchak, a great kabbalist and Rebbetzin Chana, a righteous woman.
- He was named after his great-grandfather, the third Rebbe of Chabad.
- From early childhood, he was considered a prodigy, immersing himself in Torah study.
- In 1929, R' Menachem Mendel married the 6th Rebbe's daughter, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka in Warsaw.





R' Menachem Mendel

- He then studied in the University of Berlin and later in the Sorbonne in Paris where he studied mathematics and physics.
- In June, 1941, the Schneersons escaped Europe to the United States.
- Shortly after his arrival, as per his father in law's urging, he began publishing and his genius was soon recognized broadly.
- He assisted his father in law and established three central Lubavitch organizations – Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Kehot Publication Society and Machne Israel social service agency.



Becoming Rebbe

- In 1950, after his father in law, R' Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn passed away, despite hesitation, R' Menachem Mendel was recruited to be the 7th Lubavitcher Rebbe.
- The Rebbe launched numerous campaigns including u'fartza, the effort to send shluchim across the globe and launch Lubavitch centers and Chabad Houses everywhere.

Stroke and Passing

- On March 2, 1992, while praying at the grave of his father in law, the Rebbe suffered a major stroke that paralyzed his right side and deprived him of the ability to speak.
- Two years and three months later, the Rebbe passed away on the 3rd of Tammuz, June 12, 1994.
- The Rebbe did not have any biological children.



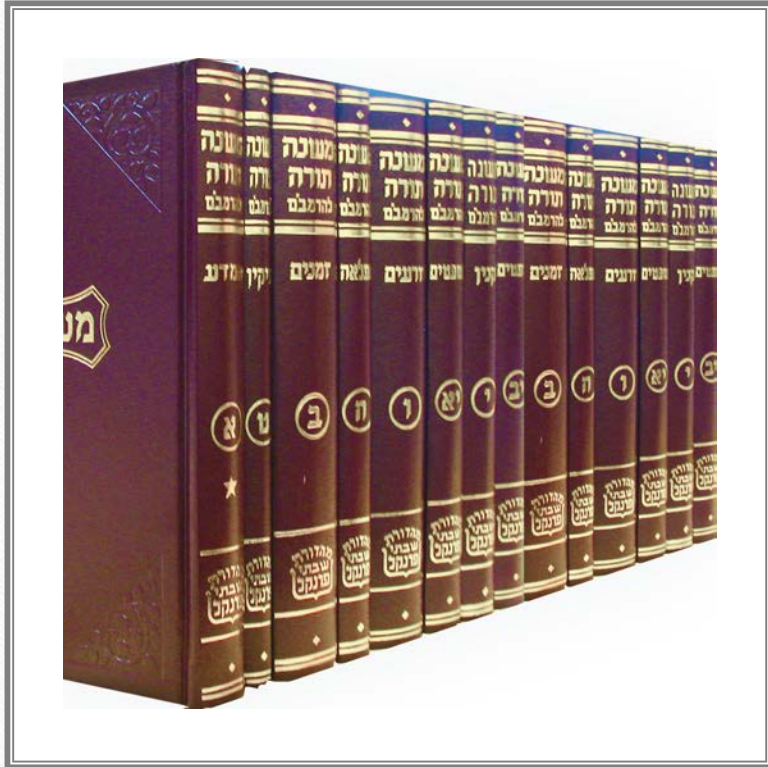
We Want Mashiach

- The Rebbe placed a great emphasis on Mashiach and longing for his arrival.
- His father in law placed an emphasis on personal redemption and perfection but he placed one on repairing the world and bringing the end of days.
- In a letter to Israeli President Yitzchak Ben-Zvi, he writes:
 - “From the time that I was a child attending cheder, and even before, the vision of the future redemption began to take form in my imagination – the redemption of the Jewish people from their final exile, a redemption of such magnitude and grandeur through which the purpose of the suffering of the harsh decrees, and annihilation of exile will be understood”.



Controversy Begins

- In 1980, the Rebbe adopted the phrase, “we want Mashiach now,” to promote a sense of urgency and longing for Judaism’s time of future promised bliss.
- Great controversy surrounded the Rebbe over his focus on Mashiach.
- In 1942, Rabbi Soloveitchik said:
 - “The Lubavitcher Rebbe speaks and publicizes about the Mashiach and a tumult has erupted, an uproar and an outcry. What is wrong, I ask? That people who are heretics decry him; I understand. That those who violate the Shabbat decry him; I understand. But that those who study the Talmud and Chassidus decry him; this is inconceivable...are we not allowed to talk about the belief in the Mashiach anymore?”



Rambam Campaign

- The Rebbe introduced an campaign for an annual siyum of the Rambam's Mishna Torah.
- A scholarly journal was produced to celebrate the siyum and the first edition included essays from R' Moshe Feinstein, R' Yaakov Kamenetzky, R' Aharon Soloveitchik, R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg, R'' Menasehe Klein and R' Pinchas Hirschprung.

Opposition

- Suspicion began to arise that the Rebbe was promoting the idea that he was Mashiach. (See handout)
- This controversy and debate continues until today.
- Rav Shach was the most outspoken and vocal critic of the Rebbe. He opposed the Rebbe's campaigns for Shabbos candles, tefillin, Rambam study, children's parades on lag ba'omer and teaching the Noachide laws.



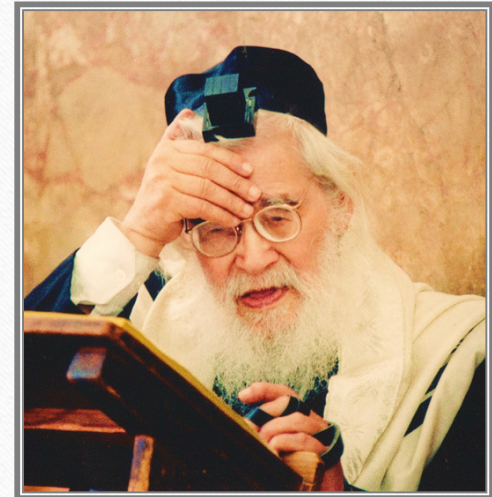
Boycott – Cherem

- When some of the Rebbe's followers outright declared him to be Mashiach, Rav Shach responded by calling for a complete boycott of Chabad, invalidating Chabad shechita, gittin and conversion.
- Rav Shach called the Rebbe a false messiah and compared him to Shabbtai Tzvi.
- He once called Chabad a “cult” and sarcastically defined it “as the religion closest to Judaism.”
- He described the Rebbe as, "the madman who sits in New York and drives the whole world crazy.”



Response

- The Rebbe usually refrained from responding to Rav Shach's attacks and chose to ignore them. There were exceptions
- He once commented that since tefillin have the effect of refining the mind, he doubted whether Rav Shach's tefillin were kosher. (see handout)



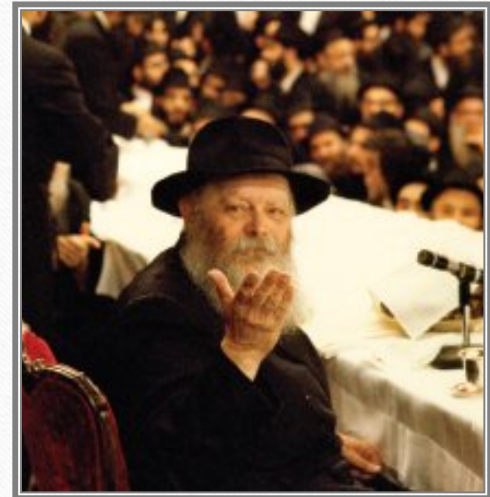
Israeli Politics

- In 1990, it was rumored that the Rebbe intervened in Israeli politics to thwart Shimon Peres' attempt to form a new government. Peres had the number to form a new government after Shamir lost a vote of no confidence.
- When the time came for the new government to be sworn in on April 15th, two members of Agudat Yisrael, Eliezer Mizrachi and Avraham Verdiger did not attend and Peres failed. Shamir succeeded in reforming the government.
- It was reported in the media they didn't show up at the instruction of the Rebbe.



Interference

- The New York Times reported that politics in Israel, “has again focused attention on the role of a charismatic Brooklyn rabbi who asserts an unusual amount of influence in Israel.”
- Yediot Achronot lamented that Israel’s fate was, “in the hands of a rabbi who lives in Brooklyn, who has never set foot in Israel.”
- The Rebbe and his emissaries denied involvement in the affair. The Rebbe did get involved in one way.



Yad Eliyahu Speech

- Peres had planned on forming the new government together with the Chareidi party controlled by Rav Shach who was known to be in favor of a land for peace deal.
- At the height of the affair, on March 26th there was a rally in Yad Eliyahu Stadium in Tel Aviv broadcast live on national Israel television.
- Rav Shach took the opportunity to deliver a scathing attack on secular Israelis.



Yad Eliyahu Speech

- He said, “Today one can meet children who don’t know what shabbos is. There are kibbutzim that don’t know what Yom Kippur is. No idea, and they raise rabbits and pigs there. And this is called the Jewish people?”
- He denounced the secular as “eiver meduldal, a distended limb.” He asked, “do they have any links with their forefathers?”
- This sent shock waves through Israel as the media interpreted Rav Shach to be saying that secular Israelis are no longer Jews.



Rebbe's Response

- While the Rebbe had ignored the personal attacks, this challenged everything he believed in, namely the inherent holiness of every Jew.
- The next Shabbos, the Rebbe delivered a sermon that quoted extensive sources on the concept of inclusivity and then called on Rav Shach (not by name) to repent for his error. (see handout)
- “Verbal expressions such as these which dishonor the Jewish people, especially in public, in the presence of countless Jews and non-Jews, requires correction and repentance.”

Rav Shach's Words -

- See Handout - kiruv story that resulted from Rav Shach's words
- The speech set off a great storm. Broadcast during peak hours, almost every household in Israel heard. At the home of the Kish Family at Kibbutz Ein-Charod Ichud, Yair and Shay Kish listened intently and HaRav Shach's words stuck a chord deep inside. The two brothers secretly began to keep mitzvas, laying *tefillin* and reciting *brochos* before eating. Their father, R' Yonoson Binyomin, followed suit.



Holocaust

- A few months later, the Rebbe responded to another public statement of Rav Shach.
- In December 1990, the Israeli media was outraged because Rav Shach declared the Holocaust, “definitely a punishment. The Holy One Blessed Be He kept score for hundreds of years until it added up to six million Jews.”
- He was convinced that God brought the punishment on Jews for violating Shabbos and eating pork and suggested, “because of the sins, the Almighty may bring another Holocaust upon us and it may already be tomorrow.”



Holocaust

- The Rebbe had generally not spoken publicly about his views on the Holocaust and theodicy. He believed Judaism should be driven and motivated by positive sentiments and ideas.
- However, following Rav Shach's words, he gave a sermon most thoroughly spelling out his feelings on the subject.
- He noted that Rav Shach's analysis is an ineffective method of bringing Jews closer to Judaism and moreover, it is "untrue, disrespectful to God and disrespectful to the Jewish people."





Rav Shach on the
Lubavitcher
Rebbe

Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz

- When the Lubavitch movement began its messianic propaganda, Maran girded himself to fight this group and the one who headed it. During this period, when Maran first came out with his opposition in public, the messianic message was still somewhat covert with innocent sounding mottos and slogans. The public was not yet aware what lay behind them. At that time only one blessed with a sharp eye could discern this blind belief in a messianic Rebbe which was swelling and taking on a more real proportion under the guise of *chassidus*.
- Maran, with his wise vision, understood what would eventually happen and to what dimensions this movement would reach if he did not take steps to quell it with an uncompromising battle.
- He did not stir up this steamy cauldron with equanimity, but with reluctance. On one occasion he said to me that he would have preferred that others wage this war in his stead. But seeing that no one wished to involve himself, he felt responsible to do everything in his power, brooking no compromise.

Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz

- Maran's *mesirus nefesh* in this battle knew no bounds; I have already described in the first chapter the outcry of his heart, "Even if I knew for certain that they would burn me alive, I would still not desist in my campaign against false messianism, for this is bona fide *avodoh zorah*."
- It should be noted that in spite of his pitched battle against Lubavitch, Maran nevertheless recited *Tehillim* when the Rebbe became sick. At the time I asked him for an explanation, and he obliged, "My battle is against his erroneous approach, against the movement, but not against the people in any personal way. I pray for the Rebbe's recovery and simultaneously, also pray that he abandon his invalid way."

Rav Shach Legacy

- Enormous Talmud Chacham
- Rav Chaim Kanievski would go to his apartment every 30 days to recite the beracha on an outstanding scholar.
- Led hundreds of thousands in Israel and around the world.
- Students describe as humble. Insisted on carrying his own seforim into his 90's.
- Story of toast with Rambam



This point, which stirred up harsh criticism in certain circles - to the point of a battle to crush the phenomenon as it involves the Rebbe, the Chabad movement and every element and aspect of it - has definitely cast a shadow in recent years over the way that many people think of both the man and his movement.

This truly was a serious problem. However, in my opinion, this development, terrible as it may be, must not be allowed to overshadow our veneration - in retrospect - of the man and his movement and make us forget their tremendous achievements and the lofty status they attained.

I want to begin from precisely this problematic point. It never occurred to anyone to declare that Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Rabbi Aharon Kotler, or the Rav was the Messiah. And did they not have followers? Did they not have a tradition? Were they not part of a long dynasty? They certainly did. It seems to me that at the root of the matter, the concept of Messianism attached itself to the Rebbe because of his image and status - **their positive aspects**. The Rebbe embodied - and in a powerful way - a certain combination in which one who wished to could see the reflection of a reflection of the Messiah King.

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein



Side by Side in my office

