

Walking in Faith – R' Yitzchok Breiter

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People who knew R' Yitzchok Breiter described his magnetic effect on people. He had a magical power of speech, and his words directly entered the hearts of all who came in contact with him.

Yet despite his penetrating wisdom, he conducted himself with the utmost simplicity in his studies and devotions. He spent much time in hitbodedut (secluded meditation and prayer), gathering a circle around him who never let a day go by without this practice. With all R' Yitzchok's breadth of Torah learning, his profound knowledge of Breslov literature, and his capacity to arouse and fire his followers, he never presented himself as anything other than their friend and equal, and they knew him simply as Yitzchok.

The intensity of R' Yitzchok's faith and trust in God was summed up by R' Avraham b'Reb Nachman (1849-1918), leader of the Breslover Chassidim in Uman: "R' Yitzchok walks in faith like someone walking through a most amazing garden."



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It once happened that R' Yitzchok was arrested by the Polish authorities on trumped-up charges, together with a neighbor. In the anti-Semitic climate of Poland, such arrests were not infrequent. As they were being taken into custody, their hands were chained. R' Yitzchok saw that his neighbor was depressed. "Why are you sad?" he asked. "Imagine if they bedecked you with chains of gold. Would that be a reason to get depressed?"

R' Yitzchok was sentenced to five years in prison. When he heard the verdict, he rose to his feet and joyously made the blessing over bad tidings, "Blessed are You...the True Judge." In the prison, the authorities wanted to shave off all the prisoners' beards. R' Yitzchok prayed fervently to God not to let them touch his beard. Just as the prison barber was finishing the prisoner before R' Yitzchok, the razor broke and he was unable to continue. Within a few days, the Russians

occupied that part of Poland and released all the prisoners.

In World War II, when the Nazi persecutors overran Poland, R' Yitzchok was one of the leading figures in the Warsaw Ghetto. In the early 1940s he was deported to the Treblinka concentration camp, where he lost his life in the gas chamber in sanctification of the Name of God.