

Yisroel Kalmanowitz is a really special person. The Gerrer Rebbe once said of him, "He's a Litvak, but he has a *heiligge ponim* (holy countenance)." Kalmanowitz and Hillel Zacks used to play handball back in Brooklyn. They beat everybody in the neighborhood, even the goyim.

There was a time when I wanted to have Rav Dan Segal and Rav Yisroel Kalmanowitz join the staff of Itri, but Rav Shach was opposed to it. He loves them both, but he said they were too ascetic for the yeshivah.

So I was there in Bnei Brak studying with Kalmanowitz under Rav Levinstein. After three months, he didn't see any change in me. He began to realize that he might be the wrong address for me.

Until that time, he had never given me permission to go to Jerusalem. I was dying to speak with the Brisker Rov, but I had been to him only once. Rav Chatzkel saw that that was where I belonged, so he let me move on the condition I would come to Bnei Brak every Shabbos. He gave a talk in Ponovezh and he made me sit in the front row. But he saw that the traveling back and forth was tiring for me, and that he wasn't getting anywhere with me, so he relented altogether.

Rav Chatzkel looked like Eliyahu HaNovi (the prophet Elijah). Just seeing him was an experience. He wasn't in the habit of kissing people, but he would kiss me every time I came. There was a time when people were spreading some stories about me. He told one of the people involved, "Leave Elefant alone. He's devoted many nights to Torah."

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RAV ELYA'S TRIP TO HEBRON

It was the Sunday of the Six Day War. That was the fifth day of the war, and it was all but over by then. Goldie was in the States doing fundraising. I wanted to be prepared for any eventuality. I wanted to have extra money in case we had to continue under Arab rule, G-d forbid. I was staying with Rav Aharon Cohen, the *rosh yeshivah* of the Chevron Yeshivah. Rav Chaim Brand used to come to study with me at Rav Cohen's house. When he would show up and I was asleep, Rav Aharon would tell him, "Don't disturb him now. He's sleeping." He really took care of me.

Back then, Rav Dov Yaffe, who today is the *mashgiach* of Kfar Chasidim, was like my stepbrother. In those days he had the idea that he had to become a Brisker lamdan, and he wanted to join my kollel. He showed up one day, but I thought I wouldn't be fair to him if I accepted him. It wasn't his calling. He was meant to be what he became – a great *mashgiach*.

I knew Rav Elya Lopian from my early days in Jerusalem. He used to visit Jerusalem occasionally from Kfar Chasidim. Rav Elya called me that day at the end of the war, NOT CLEAR TO ME WHERE RAV ELYA WAS WHEN HE CALLED and told me that he wanted "to visit Avrohom Ovinu (our father Abraham)." I asked him if he wanted to visit the Kotel, and he said no, just Avrohom Ovinu. Rebbitzen Chanah Shimonovitz used to care for Rav Elya then – he was over ninety already. When she

heard that I was going to take him to the Cave of Machpelah, she began to shout at me that he wasn't up to it. I said, "What are you shouting at me for? This wasn't my idea. I'm just the chauffeur." Those were the days when I still drove. All Israel was in peril.

We left in two cars on Sunday morning. NOT CLEAR TO ME FROM WHERE. Rav Elya sat next to me in my Ford Falcon. Rav Elya Mishkovsky's mother, the daughter of Rav Itzele Peterburger, was in the other car. It was a blazing hot day. I had to stop for Rav Elya every half hour, and I wasn't much of a driver. We left Kfar Chasidim at 6:00 in the morning and we didn't get to Jerusalem until 5:30 in the afternoon. SO THE TRIP ORIGINATED IN KFAR CHASIDIM. THEN YOU SHOULD EXPLAIN WHAT YOU WERE DOING IN KFAR CHASIDIM FOR SHABBOS. Throughout the ride, Rav Elya kept talking about what a *chizuk emunah* (intensification of faith) the Six Day War was.

I was worn out by the time we got to Jerusalem. Who do we see on the street when we get there but my friend Yankel Yellin. He joined us and took over behind the wheel.

It was still dangerous to visit Hebron. Remember, this was Sunday, and Hebron had only fallen the previous Thursday. But Rav Elya was adamant. He had to visit Avrohom Ovinu.

We arrived in Hebron shortly before sundown. There was an officer standing guard at the Cave of Machpelah. He wouldn't let anybody in because there was a curfew in effect.

Rav Elya had traveled all day just to pray there. I couldn't let him down. Rebbetzin Chanah was there with us, too. She said if Rav Elya couldn't go in, he might have a heart attack. That really put me in a good mood. I told her again that this wasn't my idea.

All of a sudden, I see Rabbi Shlomo Goren's car pull up. He was chief rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces at the time. I knew Rabbi Goren, and I called out to him that Rav Elya was here waiting to get in. He didn't even glance at me. It's a miracle he didn't shoot me. He was at the pinnacle of his career at the time.

I went over to the officer in charge. I told him, "That's Rav Elya Lopian over there. He desperately wants to go inside."

"That's Rav Elya?" he said. "He's my rabbi." This was a religious fellow who used to learn with Chaim Brand in the Pressburg building in Givat Shaul. He said, "I'll take care of everything." He cleared away an area for Rav Elya. I told him that Rav Elya wanted a *minyan* (a quorum of ten men) to say the afternoon prayer, and he took care of that, too. All the way back, too, all he talked about was *chizuk emunah*.

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RABBI GOREN

Moshe Dayan was no great fan of Rabbi Goren. He once asked me, "Rabbi, I can understand authorizing the use of a helicopter to find corpses of soldiers so that their