

Q&A

WITH THE BOSTONER

REBBE OF YERUSHALAYIM

by: Ari Hirsch/
Country Vues



BOSTONER REBBE OF YERUSHALAYIM FAST FACTS:

Boston is a Chasidic sect, originally established in 1914 by Grand Rabbi Pinchas Duvid Horowitz. Following the custom of European Chassidic Courts, where the Rebbe was called after the name of his city, Bostoner Chassidus was named after Boston, Massachusetts.

The most senior and well-known of the Bostoner Rebbes in contemporary times was Grand Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz who was niftar on 18 Kislev 5770 (December 5, 2009).

Amid a spectrum of notable accomplishments and "firsts in America," the Bostoner Chassidim are known for acts of kindness, the ability to apply ancient Jewish values in modern society, outreach to students, and tangible help for the sick and their families during crucial times of need. The Bostoner Chassidim also have a rich musical tradition with many unique songs sung in the Chassidic Courts of Boston in various locations around the world. The Israeli community of the late Bostoner Rebbe Levi Yitzchak Horowitz is headquartered in Har Nof, Jerusalem.

Bostoner Chassidim may be found throughout the world, especially in Beitar, Israel; Brookline, MA; Brooklyn, NY; Monsey, NY; Highland Park, NJ. The title of Grand Rabbi was bestowed upon the late Rebbe's three sons. The Bostoner Rebbe of Yerushalayim is Admoor Rebbe Mayer A. Horowitz shlit"a.

Grand Rabbi Mayer Alter Horowitz was born in Boston, Massachusetts, to Grand Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Horowitz, the second Bostoner Rebbe, and Raichel Unger Leifer. The Rav is a ninth-generation descendant on the male line of Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke Horowitz, the Nikolsburger Rebbe (1726-1778). The Rebbe received smicha at the Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak and Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey.

Why are you currently visiting America?

I don't enjoy vacations. I enjoy meeting Jewish people. I enjoy seeing what they've accomplished all over the world. I began by visiting communities which were unique in different ways. The visits

give chizuk to these communities. We try to go to communities that Rebbes don't come to. Like here in New York, most Rebbes would go to Boro Park or Williamsburg, whereas I went to West Hempstead and North Woodmere.

Instead of going to Manchester, we went to Whitefield which is right outside of Manchester. We received a letter from one of the member's of the congregation who said he never thought he'd have contact with "chareidim" so to speak. So I go to see what Jews accomplish all over and it's amazing. You can't measure the value of a Jewish soul and what they can accomplish.

How would you define Bostoner Chassidim?

We have a connection to the community. Everyone should have a connection to a community. Boruch Hashem, the communities have grown so large that there's no need to be personally involved with someone.

Years ago, to get a minyan it was "Oh- so and so is missing today! We have to get someone else to be the 10th guy." Now it's just counting to get another guy. In Har Nof, we introduced the idea of being involved in the shul and not just finding a Minyan with 9 people so you can be the 10th to just stand next to the other nine.

When you're a part of something, you have an obligation, a connection.

And you never know who's going to give more to the community.

My father used to say, you should even get a miser involved in giving to the shul. If he sees other people giving, it might push him to give too. Another example is outreach to people who aren't frum. The

Rebbe zt"l was one of the first to demonstrate the idea of reaching out to collegiates, bringing people who are not religious into your house.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l said in the '40s it's forbidden to go to a reform shul and make an orthodox minyan. But when NCSY asked him if they could do so in the '50s, he said yes. Was R' Moshe contradicting himself? Obviously not. It would seem that in the '40s Jews in America were in the trenches, but in the '50s, when NCSY started, Yiddishkeit was branching out and expanding. So there are different rules that apply for different situations. Every situation has to be considered.

There is a story with the Steipler that a Chassidische person came to him and told him his son was going to the Israeli army and he was afraid there might be outside people who would influence him. The Steipler said to the soldier, "Satmar doesn't say Tachanun on Friday and that is your family's Minhag. Keep that Minhag." This is a strange idea, but this is why he said it: In order not to say Tachanun on Friday, you have to daven with a Minyan. So he went to shul every Friday and that kept him connected. When he left the army, he was more religious than when he went in.

What is the secret to kiruv?

Usually I find that that kiruv comes when somebody has taught them something in their lives and we awaken it. We just point out that it's doable. At some point in their education, they saw that not only was someone teaching Judaism, but it was a Jew teaching Judaism.

So there was an essence of being a Jew within it, and that is the main message. My father used to say over the Kotzke Rebbe "If I am I because you are you, and you

are you because I am I, then I am not I and you are not you. But if I am I because I am I, and you are you because you are you, then I am I and you are you." If I do things because of what my friend might say, I'm doing it not because I want to but because my friend is doing it.

It's social pressure, and I'm not being true to myself. If my friends are doing it because I am doing it, then they are not being true to themselves. But if I do it because this is what I believe and the other person does it because this is what they believe, then you are who you are and the other person is who she/he is. And that's part of the message the Rebbe was always saying.

The Rebbe once told a young lady who came and said she was a sculptress, "Why don't you sculpt yourself?" Take your life and sculpt it, make it beautiful. We see young people who go off to do many things, whether they go to camp to teach young campers or they go to institutions to teach young people, or they do things for themselves.

What would the Rav say are the top 3 issues Klal Yisroel faces right now?

There's a book: The Fight for the Soul of the State. We have to understand that Judaism is expanding. Religious Jewry is going to be the largest contingency of the



LEFT: ADMOOR GRAND RABBI PINCHAS DUVID HOROWITZ OF NEW YORK, ADMOOR GRAND RABBI MAYER ALTER HOROWITZ OF JERUSALEM, ADMOOR GRAND RABBI NAFTALI YEHUDAH HOROWITZ OF BOSTON, MA

We're not imposing our will on anyone or telling them what to do. We're not telling them they can't walk around without a Yarmulke on their head. We just want them to know that this is what a Jew is. That is the first thing and that is regarding the state of Israel.

The second thing is we have to do is to give children opportunities to make decisions.

I'm not sure how to do that. We protect our children too much.

The third thing is the Shidduch crisis that is coming upon us. I have no solution to it. Years ago, I was told by my parents I had to get married and the selection was small. Nowadays the selection is so huge!

What is the first Midah someone should look for when looking for a Shidduch?

Someone that makes you happy.

The Bostoner dynasty is known for its composition of music. What would you say is your favorite nigun to sing at the Shabbos table?

I make my own Nigunim. Ata Ha'reisa from NCSY was one of my Nigunim and Ano L'vado. Whenever I have a new Nigun that's my favorite one.

Of the words themselves, Ka Echsof, is the one that seems to be universally accepted. When I hear the tzibur singing, it's better than hearing myself singing.



THE BOSTON CHASSIDIC CENTER IN ISRAEL ON RUZHIN STREET, HAR NOF, JERUSALEM