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# My Brother Levi

BY MRS. TOBY BERNSTEIN  
SHLUCHA TO MAPLE, ONTARIO



## Lessons We Can Learn from Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Deitsch ע"ה

**A** shliach is not born in a vacuum. My brother Levi Yitzchok Deitsch, olov hasholom, grew up in a home where the ideal of shlichus was constantly espoused, and boruch Hashem, many of his siblings chose to become the Rebbe's shlichim. Levi's warmth, love of people and for the Rebbe, excitement for Yiddishkeit, and uncanny ability to maintain long-term relationships with people made him a perfect candidate to be a shliach.

Levi was the Rebbe's shliach in Tyson's Corner, Virginia for ten years. Although Levi's life was tragically cut short, he left a legacy that each one of us can learn from and aspire to live up to. Even though he was my little brother, I, myself, learned much from him. If we would each consider taking upon ourselves even one of his following traits and improving on it, our shlichus would be immensely enhanced.

### **Keep up to date on the details of the lives of others, and call them on their special dates.**

Levi was a people's person and had a knack for coming up with the right line for the right person at the right time. As shlichim, we know how hard it is to halt

and keep track of people's lives, but Levi would pick up conversations with his acquaintances where he'd left off the last time they'd spoken. This made a powerful impression on people; they felt he really listened to them and took an interest in their lives. Levi would call people regularly, take them out for coffee, and keep reminders in his phone to call people, when to call, and about what. This is something every shliach can do.

### **A shliach cares about the gashmius of his mushpaim just as much as their ruchnius. Social visits "just because" have an immeasurable impact.**

Levi made many shiduchim between



“TO HEAR SUCH CLEAR AND CONFIDENT WORDS COMING FROM SUCH A YOUNG MAN, TO SEE HIS COMPLETE DEVOTION TO HIS REBBE, LEFT AN IMPRESSION ON ME FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.”

the young people in his community. When one young couple was not showing signs of having a child some time after their chasuna, he helped them get information and financial aid for fertility treatments. He had a lot of nachas from “his couples.” He would visit them in the evenings with his wife Miriam just to shmooze. These visits made them feel like equals and friends, and it gave them a lot of chizuk, as well as many practical lessons on how to run a Jewish home. He would also try to help his mekuravim by making business connections for them, sharing contacts, and getting involved in their personal gashmiusdike lives.

**Be real. Yiddishkeit does not have to be watered down.**

We were always amazed how Levi was not afraid to tell people the truth

according to Torah, no matter who and no matter what. People much older than he would come to him for advice on sholom bayis, ethical issues, and personal matters. He would tell them in his uniquely candid manner, without mincing words, the right thing to do. He would encourage people to take on more mitzva observances and helped them along while being sensitive to their feelings and not offending or embarrassing them. He meant it with all of his heart, so it entered their hearts.

**Think big, but don't forget about the individual.**

Levi was a big believer in setting high goals. He was always on the lookout to find ways to grow his activities, to make a shturem, and find bigger and better facilities for his Chabad House. He would make a huge Chanukah

wonderland every year with all kinds of activities and entertainment, and though he would bring out bochorim to help him, he remained on site as much as possible to personally greet everyone. That personal touch made a great impression on so many.

**A shliach represents the Rebbe and Lubavitch. Classes and programs must be organized, professional, and presentable. Finances must be aboveboard.**

Levi had very strong values in the way he ran his Chabad House. He believed that a shliach is a true representative of the Rebbe and must, therefore, always act in a way that makes a kidush Hashem and kidush Lubavitch. For example, Levi always made sure to be early to his shul for tefilos and classes, to show people his excitement to do mitzvos and serve Hashem. He felt it was important to present Chabad as a professional organization, so he was always very well prepared for his classes with handouts and PowerPoint presentations. He made huge efforts to rent nice spaces for his activities and made sure the space was kept clean and in good shape. Levi was also very aboveboard with his finances and transparent about all donations, keeping receipts and separating his cheshbonos for the mosad and his personal needs.

**Support your fellow shliach b'gashmius and b'ruchnius.**

While being so incredibly devoted to his community, Levi was also always there for his fellow shluchim.

A great fundraiser, he was capable of helping out his fellow shluchim, and he lent them money whenever he could. Once, we came to visit him in Virginia, and he showed us a small stack of checks (without the names) from shluchim who owed him money who had sent checks but asked him to wait before cashing them. Once, a certain fellow shliach who was feeling very down about his finances called Levi to borrow money. Levi gladly lent it to him but then told



him, “You are such a chevreman! Es past nisht for you to be borrowing! You should be lending!” At the shiva, this shliach told us that hearing this comment was the beginning of a huge turnaround for him. He gained the confidence to move forward and raise much needed funds. Today, boruch Hashem, Levi’s brocha has begun to materialize, and this shliach hopes to be helping other fellow shluchim in the near future.

**Keep focused on the tachlis hakavana, especially in the face of adversity.**

Levi was a great rodef sholom and stepped in to make peace whenever he could. He also stood by this principle when it came to his own shlichus and did not allow his chayus for shlichus to be interfered with, even at times when he faced adversity from within. He just kept up his own work and closed his eyes, not getting involved in “politics.”

**A creative way to get kids involved in your shlichus is to teach them nigunim, sing together at Shabbos meals, and play parsha games at the Shabbos table.**

Levi would get his children involved

in his shlichus even when they were very young. Every Shabbos on the way to and from his shul, he would teach them nigunim that they would then sing at the Shabbos table for guests. In addition to being a wonderful chinuch opportunity, it also gave his children a meaningful way to be part of the Shabbos meals, and this proved memorable and inspiring for his children, as well as his guests. He made a really fun parsha review game that would get his children all excited, and in turn, the guests would see how wonderful Yiddishkeit could be; even the children love it!

**Ensure your Chabad House is presenting a joyous version of Judaism.**

Levi loved his shlichus to the extent that, for a long time, he did not let his community know that he was ill so that no one would be embarrassed to come to him for guidance or assistance. He wanted their picture of Yiddishkeit to be happy, robust, and positive. He kept up his work with mindboggling stamina, even while enduring overwhelming pain.

**A shliach gives, loves, and cares unconditionally.**

There was a young father in his

community who had a brain tumor, lo aleinu. Levi and Miriam תבלוט"א would visit them, send food, and be mechazek this young man and his wife in every way, never telling them that Levi was going through the exact same thing. When this young man eventually succumbed to his illness, Levi and Miriam continued helping the family, accepting their children in to Hebrew school for free and including them in all Chabad House programs.

**Don't give up on those who give up on you.**

One thing that struck me was how my brother would never give up on anyone. There was a naturopathic doctor who would sometimes come to shul. When Levi became ill, the doctor wanted to try to heal him with natural means. After several months of unsuccessful attempts, Levi felt it was time to try conventional medicine. This doctor was very insulted and refused to speak to Levi anymore. Levi never gave up on him. No matter how ill he was, he called him every Friday for the next two years to wish him a good Shabbos. The doctor never picked up his phone calls or returned his messages. When Levi was extremely ill, he found out that this doctor’s son had become a massage therapist and was



taking patients in the doctor's home. Levi made an appointment for a massage just so he could get into the house and talk to the doctor! Unfortunately, Levi passed away the day before his appointment.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many shluchim who stepped in to help make Levi and Miriam's lives more comfortable when Levi was ill. There were shluchim who came to visit from far and near, flying, coming by train, bus and car, leaving their families for several days at a time to be at his bedside. The shluchos who cooked meals, did their carpools, even mailed baked goods so Miriam would have something ready to serve the steady stream of guests, did it with thoughtfulness and graciousness. The biggest yasher koach goes to the local shluchim who sat at Levi's bedside day and night, never leaving him! Thank you from our family, and may we never have to reciprocate! 📧

*May he be a mailitz yosher for all of us and help the Rebbe bring the geula now!*



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