

## Harav Levi Bistritzky, *zt"l*

Some 20,000 people, led by *Gedolei Yisrael*, attended the funeral Sunday of Tzefas' Chief Rabbi, Harav Levi Bistritzky, *zt"l*. He was 54.

Tzefas residents were grief-stricken at the news of the sudden passing of their revered Rav, who had led the Tzefas Chabad community since 1978, and who, for the last nine years, was the city's Chief Rabbi.

Born in New York, Harav Bistritzky moved to Eretz Yisrael at the age of 28. His father, Harav Leibel Bistritzky, *ylc"l*, is a prominent member of the Chabad community.

When he became bar mitzva, Harav Levy Bistritzky was sent by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, *zy"l*, to learn in the Chabad yeshiva in Montreal, where he learned for 10 years, eventually receiving *semi-cha*. For the next two years he did *shimush* in the Montreal *beis din*, and became proficient in *piskei halacha*, specifically in *gittin*, *chalitza*, *shechita* and *bedika*.

At 18, he was tested on all of *Shas* by the Rav of Montreal, the renowned Harav Pinchas Hirschprung, *zt"l*. A short while later, he married the daughter of Harav Chaim Menachem Teichtel of Jerusalem.

Just after his wedding, Harav Bistritzky's *sefer*, *Mareh Mekomos Vetziunim Lekuntres Acharon on Shulchan Aruch*, was published — the first of a set of 10. In 5736/1976, he was sent by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to Tzefas, where he fulfilled the aspirations of the Rebbe, who foresaw that he would become a *Gadol BeYisrael*.

Harav Bistritzky was appointed Rav of the Tzefas Chabad community, initially given responsibility for the city's *eiruv*, and later ap-

pointed by the city's Chief Rabbis, Harav Kaplan and Harav Dayan, to be responsible for mikves.

Harav Bistritzky became known for his great erudition and halachic knowledge, and on 23 Av 5753 was appointed Chief Rabbi of Tzefas. During this time, together with the Sefardic Chief Rabbi, Harav Shmuel Eliyahu, Harav Bistrizky made a veritable revolution in religious observance and kashrus in the city Rabbinate. Word of his *hechsher*, known for its strictness and high standard, quickly spread throughout the *frum* communities of northern Israel.

Harav Bistritzky was a popular, well-loved figure in Tzefas and throughout the Galilee. People from all segments of the community saw him as their spiritual leader and approached him for halachic advice or assistance, which he, in his typically pleasant manner, dispensed freely. He was especially known for his dedication to the English-speaking community of Tzefas.

Despite his position and responsibility, Harav Bistritzky was a very humble person. His father, Reb Leibel, ran a well-known food mart for many years at 39 Essex Street in New York City. When visiting his parents, Harav Bistritzky did not think twice about helping his father in the store, standing behind the counter and serving customers.

"Who is that?" asked one longtime customer. "That," Harav Bistrizky's father answered proudly, "is the Chief Rabbi of Tzefas."

When it came to preserving the bastions of *Yiddishkeit*, however, Harav Bistritzky was forceful and uncompromising, standing his ground in the face of repeated attempts to undermine halacha.

On a few occasions, Harav

Bistritzky was the victim of abuse — which chareidi Jewry vehemently protested, rallying to his support — yet this did not prevent him from fulfilling his role as Rav. He delivered *tochacha* and *mussar* to the offenders, with obvious *ahavas Yisrael*. In April 2000, he was the victim of a hit-and-run murder attempt, which resulted in fractures to one of his legs and the dislocation of the other.

Harav Bistritzky suffered from heart problems and was hospitalized on July 23. He remained at Rebecca Sieff Hospital in the ICU all week and underwent emergency treatment.

He was forced to miss the *bris mila* on Friday of his first grandson, which caused him great anguish. On Sunday at dawn, surrounded by his family, Harav Bistritzky returned his pure soul to Hashem.

The *levaya* left Sunday afternoon from the Chabad shul to the Tzefas cemetery. Figuring prominently were the Gerrer Rebbe; the Lelover Rebbe; Harav M. Ernster, Rav of Meor Chaim; Harav Moshe Yehuda Leib Landau, Rav and *av beis din* of Bnei Brak; Harav Meir Brandsdorfer, a member of the Eida Chareidis; Harav Mordechai Eliyahu, the Rishon Letzion; Harav Yisrael Meir Lau, Chief Rabbi of Israel; Harav Shmuel Eliyahu, Chief Rabbi of Tzefas; as well as many Rabbanim of cities and towns. Harav M. Ashkenazi, Rav of Kfar Chabad, appointed Harav Bistritzky's eldest son, Reb Mordechai, to be his father's successor as Chief Rabbi of Tzefas and Rav of Chabad.

Harav Bistritzky is survived by his Rebbetzin, children and newborn grandson — all of whom follow in his path.