

MACHO'OH – PUBLIC PROTEST

By: **Rabbi Asher Zeilingold**

I am publicizing this protest against the website “Failedmessiah” initiated and maintained by Scott (Shmarya) Rosenberg (SR). I include a definitive response.

SR uses this website to attempt to disgrace the Lubavitcher Rebbe with libel and slander and thereby defame him and shame the Lubavitch movement. The Lubavitcher Rebbe is a *Godol B'Yisroel* who has brought many, many thousands of our people to strengthen their commitment to HaShem and His Torah. It is forbidden to speak against, and most certainly it is forbidden to vilify, an accepted *Godol B'Yisroel*. Mr. Rosenberg must immediately disband the website and must provide evidence that he has done *Teshuva*, which includes accepting upon himself never to do anything like this in the future.

I will respond to the accusations and allegations of the website by showing that it is all based on *Sheker* – Falsehood.

Falsehood has no independent existence. It must be built on a truism, and so SR uses the age-old tactic of starting out with an indisputable fact, leading into a BIG LIE, and then claiming license to smear and discredit and disgrace to his heart's content.

The only indisputable fact is that in November of 1983, SR wrote a letter to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, questioning why Lubavitch was not involved with Beta Israel of Ethiopia.

It is also a fact that the Rebbe dictated to his secretary an answer to Mr. Rosenberg, and it is a fact as well that Mr. Rosenberg never received that answer from the Rebbe's office. Therefore, there is an open question as to whether the Rebbe reconsidered and decided not to send the letter, or not, as I shall discuss. The BIG LIE is that the letter which the Rebbe dictated to his secretary was the Rebbe's definitive statement of his position on the matter of the Beta Israel of Ethiopia. With that lie securely in place, and his self-serving interpretation of the Rebbe's “response” promulgated, Mr. Rosenberg uses his website for unbridled vilification of the Rebbe and the Lubavitch movement.

Let me walk you the details of the BIG LIE.

SR wrote his letter to the Rebbe in November of 1983. As I have already pointed out, Scott Rosenberg never received a letter from the Rebbe. The first that he heard of the letter which the Rebbe had dictated, was after I saw a letter published in the Hebrew language magazine, K'far Chabad, with the salutation printed as “Mr ... SP MN 55116”. I asked SR if the letter had been sent to him and he told me that he had indeed written a letter to the Rebbe, but he had never received a response. It has since been verified that the letter, published in Hebrew in K'far Chabad, was indeed dictated, in English, as an answer to Mr. Rosenberg.

How could it be that the Rebbe would dictate a letter to his secretary and the addressee not receive it? There are several possible answers.

It was not out of the ordinary for the Rebbe to dictate a letter and then reconsider sending it, even if he had already signed it. (It is not a certainty that the Rebbe did sign this letter, even though K'far Chabad uses the Hebrew letters to denote that the Rebbe did so. I have in my possession a copy of the letter which K'far Chabad editorial staff translated into Hebrew. On this copy, it is apparent that the Rebbe left it for the secretary to sign. However, it does not really matter, since, as I have already indicated, there were letters, that, even after signing, the Rebbe directed should not be sent.)

Another possibility is that the letter was ready to be sent in the mail, but was lost in the office or lost in the mail.

From my personal knowledge and understanding of the Rebbe's procedure in replying to letters, it is fair to say that we must assume that the Rebbe specifically ordered that the letter to Mr. Rosenberg not be sent. Firstly, as stated, there were many letters that the Rebbe specifically withheld even after signing. I know for a fact that the Rebbe would take a bundle of letters that were ready to be mailed and hand them to his secretary, Dr. Mindel, telling him to hold on to them and not mail them until he (the Rebbe) would tell him to do so. I would have to say that the Rebbe certainly had an understandable reason to withhold this particular letter. It is evident that the Rebbe was offended by the tone and substance of SR's letter to him, and perhaps that is why the response is uncharacteristically harsh. Having met thousands of people, the Rebbe had a good grasp of human nature, and perhaps on reconsideration, he realized that his letter would have an adverse effect if it were received by SR. This is exactly what happened twenty years later! It is my contention that this assumption (that the Rebbe decided not to send the letter) can only be rejected if proven false.

I must make it clear that really I am not making the above point a part of my definitive response. You can judge for yourself whether or not it is germane to the issue that Scott Rosenberg never received the letter from the Rebbe!

Let's talk about SR's BIG LIE that this letter (which SR never received) was the Rebbe's definitive response on Beta Israel of Ethiopia. Let's take a closer look at the letter from the Rebbe, dated 12th Shevat, 5744 and published in the K'far Chabad issue dated 5 Shevat, 5764. This letter was not by any stretch of the imagination, a statement from the Rebbe about the Beta Israel of Ethiopia. As a matter of fact, it was a statement from the Rebbe that he was refusing to share with SR his views/opinions on the matter which SR had addressed to him, and would not allow SR to draw him into discussion about it. Again, the letter is very clearly not about Beta Israel of Ethiopia, and does not mention them at all!

It was the Rebbe's normal correspondence practice that whenever he responded to a particular issue, he would start the paragraph by saying something like, "in response to your question to me about ..." and then state the issue specifically. This letter pointedly does not name the issue which SR had questioned.

The Rebbe dealt with SR's questions about Beta Israel of Ethiopia by telling him that he should address his questions to an authoritative rabbinic body such as the Agudat Horabbonim. That is the extent of his comment on Beta Israel of Ethiopia. He said nothing more, and began the next paragraph with the words "Aside from that," meaning that the previous subject was closed and he had no further comment.

SR can state as much as he wants to what he thinks the Lubavitcher Rebbe should have or should not have done, but if he takes a letter in which the Rebbe makes it very clear that he refuses to discuss a particular subject and deceitfully uses the Rebbe's wording to attack, malign, and slander him in the worst way, then that is a BIG LIE.

The following statements on the website are part of SR's BIG LIE:

1. Under the link, "The Rebbe's Failure," and the headline "The Rebbe Abandons Ethiopian Jews," SR writes "In early 1984 during the height of the horrible Ethiopian Famine, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, refused to help starving Ethiopian Jews. The letter he wrote refusing to help was published for the first time in February, 2004. Why did the Rebbe refuse to help? Because, he wrote, Jewish education was a greater priority."

- The Rebbe never wrote a letter "refusing to help." To say that he did is a BIG LIE.
- The Rebbe never wrote that "Jewish education was a greater priority" than helping Beta Israel of Ethiopia, and to say that he did write that is a BIG LIE.

2. Under the link, "The Rebbe's Evasion" and the headline "History," SR makes reference to an item posted on a Chabad message board, then states that it was posted "twelve days before K'far Chabad published the Rebbe's 1984 letter on Ethiopian Jews."

- The Rebbe never wrote a letter in 1984 on Ethiopian Jewry, and to say that he did is a BIG LIE.
- K'far Chabad magazine never published a letter from the Rebbe on Ethiopian Jewry, and to say that they did so is a BIG LIE.

- As a matter of fact, the editorial staff of K'far Chabad had no idea whatsoever of the question the writer of the letter to the Rebbe had asked, and they had no way of knowing, as the Rebbe's letter mentions nothing at all about the Beta Israel of Ethiopia. What K'far Chabad had was a letter from the Rebbe telling the addressee, in essence, that each one of us must remain ever mindful of our direct responsibilities, and never be distracted from what we know to be our solemn duty.
K'far Chabad saw this as a fair statement with which no one could take issue. They therefore captioned the letter with the Hebrew that translates, "Do Not Waste Energy on Anything Not Connected with the Service of Shlichus" (Mission from G-d).

3. Under the link headed "The Rebbe's Diatribe," SR publishes an English translation of the K'far Chabad letter of the Rebbe with the heading:

The Letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Refusing to Help Ethiopian Jews. “The Spiritual Needs of American Jews Come First.”

- In the letter, the Rebbe never refused to help Ethiopian Jews. To say that he did is a BIG LIE.
- SR writes “the spiritual needs of American Jews come first,” as a direct quote from the Rebbe. This is not true and is a false quote. Also, the Rebbe did not say anything that suggests that the spiritual needs of American Jews comes before helping Beta Israel, and to say that he did is a BIG LIE.
- The heading SR uses, is printed, as above, in large, bold characters. This is an intensification of the BIG LIE.
- Before beginning the Rebbe’s letter, SR quotes the K’far Chabad caption as “Do Not Waste Energy on Any Work which is not Connected with Fulfilling the Mission of Lubavitch.” He deceitfully makes it appear as though the Rebbe’s definitive response in reference to helping the Beta Israel of Ethiopia is not to waste energy on them because they are not Lubavitch. This is a *Sheker V’Chozov*, an outrageous and heinous BIG LIE.
- The last word of the K’far Chabad caption is *shlichus*, which means “mission”. The mission of each one of us comes from HaShem. K’far Chabad **did not** write “the mission of Lubavitch” and to say that they did is a BIG LIE.

Mr. Rosenberg now takes his BIG LIE to his next step, and writes on the home page that the Rebbe “abandoned the Black Jews of Ethiopia to starvation, disease, horrible suffering and death, ignoring not only the pleas of the dying, but also the legal rulings of the very rabbis he claimed to rely on for Jewish legal guidance.”

Now that SR has deceitfully established with his shocking BIG LIES that the Rebbe and Lubavitch don’t care for anyone or anything except what is on their own agenda, he can continue to smear and discredit and disgrace without any consideration of the true facts or whom he is defaming.

I will end with the demand that Mr. Scott (Shmarya) Rosenberg immediately disband the website and provide evidence that he has done Teshuva which includes accepting upon himself never to do anything like this in the future.

May Moshiach come soon and bring peace to the entire world.

