

FROM POLAND TO THE UNITED STATES



Memento from the
Wedding of
Moishy and Rivka Raichik

משה הלוי ורבקה רייטשיק

אור ליום כ"א סיוון, ה'תשע"ג

May 29th, 2013

By the Grace of G-d

From Poland to the United States

The harrowing tale of
Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik's journey
from war-torn Europe to freedom

By Rabbi Shimon Raichik

Brooklyn, NY

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lubavitcharchives@gmail.com

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פתח דבר

אנו מודים לה' על כל הטוב אשר גמלנו, ובחסדו הגדול זיכנו בנישואי צאצאינו למזל טוב בשעה טובה ומוצלח. באור ליום כ"א סיון.

התודה והברכה מובעת למשפחתינו, ידידנו ומכירינו שיחיו אשר הואילו לשמוח איתנו יחדיו ביום שמחתינו ולברכינו בברכת מזל טוב וחיים מאושרים בגשמיות וברוחניות.

בשמחה ובטוב לבב ולאות תודה והוקרה, הננו מכבדים בזה כל הנוטלים חלק בשמחתינו מקרוב ומרחוק במזכרת המוגשת בזה.

מזכרת זו כוללת סקירה על הצלת סב החתן הרב שמואל דוד הלוי רייטשיק ע"ה מאת אביו של החתן הרב שמעון שי' רייטשיק.

הא-ל הטוב הוא יתברך, יברך את כל הבאים להשתתף בשמחתינו ואת בני משפחותיהם בתוך כלל אחב"י בברכות מאליפות מנפש עד בשר, ובקרוב ממש נזכה להייעוד של נשואי הקב"ה וכנס"י, ועד ל"שמחת עולם על ראשם", מתוך הרחבה ובריאות הנכונה בגשמיות וברוחניות, מתוך מנוחת הנפש והגוף.

משפחת רייטשיק – סימפסאן

FOREWORD

To all our dear family and friends,

It is a family tradition that on all happy occasions, we begin by thanking G-d for having granted us life, sustained us and enabled us to be here (together) at this time. We are overjoyed that you could be present to share this *simchah*, happy occasion, with us. Indeed, Jewish law enjoins the entire community to bring joy and happiness to the *chosson* and *kallah*, the bride and groom.

Presented is a brief history of the life of the grandfather of the chosson Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik, of blessed memory, during WWII, as penned by the father of the chosson Rabbi Shimon Raichik. This booklet is an excerpt from a future volume on Rabbi Raichik.

It is our fondest wish that you enjoy the festivities and become involved in every facet of the celebration, in order to share with us the joy, merriment and *simchah* that we feel on this day.

With thanks, appreciation, and best wishes to all participants from far and near, we hope to share *simchahs* with each other.

It is our heartfelt prayer that the merit of bringing joy and happiness to the *chosson* and *kallah* bring us to greatest joy of all, the celebrating of the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdosh*, with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.

The Raichik and Simpson Families

The Yeshivah in Otvotsk, Poland

The Rebbe Rayatz was in Otvotsk at the outbreak of World War II. The Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Warsaw opened in Tammuz 1921. (Igros of the Friedike Rebbe, vol. 1, page 160).

In 1928 after the Rebbe Rayatz left Russia he came to Poland and visited the Yeshiva where he said several maamorim. He examined the students and expressed great satisfaction with the Yeshiva. On the 14th of Kislev 5689, November 27, 1928, the *Chupa* of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka was held in the Yeshiva.

Later in Elul 1933, the Rebbe moved his residence from Riga to Warsaw – and the the Yeshiva in Warsaw – experienced golden years.

In the summer of 5695 (1935), upon the advice of his doctors, the Rebbe moved to Otvotsk, a city about 30 miles from Warsaw famous for its green pastures. The Yeshiva moved with the Rebbe, and a new and bright era began for Tomchei Tmimim.

My father, R. Menachem Shmuel Dovid Raichik, o.b.m.,



arrived in Otvotsk to learn there in Elul 1936 – and was there until the outbreak of the war. My grandfather, R. Shimon, was a *chossid* of Rabbi Shimon Shalom Kalish, the Amshinover Rebbe – known as R. Shimileh, who lived in Otvosk, Poland. The Amshinover Rebbe advised and encouraged my grandfather to send my father, R. Menachem Shmuel Dovid Raichik, to the Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Otvotsk. and he - R. Shimileh - would keep an eye on him. (R. Shea Bronshtein told me that once he came into the Amshinover Beis Medrash and my father questioned him at length about the Lubavitcher Yeshiva.)

Getting accepted into the Yeshiva was no easy task. There were already a few hundred bochurim learning there and the Yeshiva was packed. Room was needed for the mesivta bochurim who were arriving from outlying Lubavitch Yeshivos Ketanos in Warsaw, Lodz etc. Without the recommendation from the Amshinover Rebbe, my father would not have been accepted as a student.

After entering the Yeshiva, my father's *hiskashrus* with the Rebbe Rayatz was so great that when his father came



to Otvotsk to visit the Amshinover Rebbe, he had a great deal of convincing to do to encourage his son to join him at the tish of the Amshinover. Notwithstanding, throughout his life my father always held the Amshinover Rebbe in highest esteem.

The following article was written by R. Avrohom Garfinkel, a *chaver* of my father from Otvotsk and later a *maggid shiur* for over 50 years in Yeshiva Tomchei Tmimim in New York:

The Yeshiva was in a large three-story building, surrounded by trees and woods. The air was fresh and sweet with the smell of flowers. In the building itself there was a large study hall and *Beis Hamedrash*. The Yeshiva also rented smaller buildings as dormitories for the students.

In Otvotsk, the Yeshiva's *sedorim* continued

as in Warsaw, except that the spiritual atmosphere and level of learning were even higher. At all hours of the night, wonderful students toiled in Torah study with diligence and perseverance. One delved in a *K'tzos Hachoshen*, while another enthusiastically poured over Tanya or Likkutei Torah. The sound of Torah was heard from afar, among the trees of the forest. In the early morning, some students studied Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deya in preparation for receiving S'micha (rabbinic ordination), since these quiet hours are appropriate for delving into the Pri Megadim's brief words and for understanding the words of the Shach and Taz commentaries. The perseverance and diligence in the study of both *Niglah* (Talmud and Halacha) and *Chassidus* were amazing.

R' Yehudah Eber, o.b.m.

Rabbi Yehuda Eber, o.b.m., was Rosh Yeshiva in the underground Lubavitcher Yeshivas in Russia. In 1930 he and his family escaped Russia and came to Riga where the Rebbe lived. In 1932 the Rebbe appointed him Rosh Yeshiva in Warsaw and later in Otvotsk. Here were revealed all of his genius talents. He was also a member of the committee appointed to oversee the Yeshiva's financial affairs.

He would give a lesson every day for the students of the higher level, and a general lecture to all students of the *Zal* once a week, in the winter on *Motzei Shabbos*, and in the summer on Friday. The lesson took between one-and-a-half to two hours. In the beginning of the semester, his lesson would start at the beginning of the tractate, and he would continue until the end of the chapter or tractate by the end of the semester. To us it seemed like one long lesson.

His explanations were amazing. The students would derive immense satisfaction from his *chakiros* (analyses), forgetting about the passing time. At the end of the lecture, the students reviewed it and those who were talented with understanding and good memory did not need to review it more than once.

Everyday, Rabbi Eber would sit in the study hall for 2-3 hours. Students who did not understand anything in his lecture or who had any other question on what they



were studying, had the opportunity to ask him. When no one was asking him, he would call upon individual students to examine and question about the lecture. This interest on the part of their teacher evoked a feeling of closeness, leading to greater diligence among the students.

Rabbi Eber typed his own lectures and gave them to top students to copy for themselves, and in turn spread among all the students. The students of the *Zal* learned approximately four hours of *Chassidus* each day, in the morning before *Shacharis*, from 7:30 to 9:00, and in the evening from 7:30 until 9:30. The younger students learned *Likkutei Torah* and *Derech Mitzvosecha*, and the older ones learned the profound *Hemsheichim* of the Rebbe RaShaB, such as those of the years 5661, 5666, and 5670.

R' Boruch Friedman

The head *Mashpia*, Rabbi Boruch Friedman, gave a daily lecture to the whole Yeshivah in Tanya. Born in Poland, in his youth he had studied in Lubavitch where he was one of the outstanding students. He was both a *maskil* (expert in Chabad Chassidic philosophy) and an *Oved* (one who labored constantly in service of G-d), and was appointed by the previous Rebbe as the *Mashpia* in Tomchei Tmimim.

In order to understand the depth of his words, one had to be intelligent and knowledgeable. At first glance it might seem that Reb Boruch was saying nothing new, adding little to the words of Tanya, giving no explanation or commentary. In fact, however, if one paid

close attention to his words, one saw how, in his brief style, Reb Boruch was explaining the words of Tanya in a way that removed many questions. What a pity that his explanation on Tanya were never written down!

On Shabbos the Mashpia would pray much longer. He would come to the Yeshiva for Seder Chassidus in the morning, which started at 8:00.

After wrapping himself in his tallis and listening to all the prayers and the reading of the Torah, he would start his prayers on his own, at length, with meditation and depth, and finishing at about 5:00 in the afternoon. Only after ensuing that the students had started their second Seder Chassidus, which began at 5:00, did he go home for *kiddush*.

On Rosh Chodesh and other special occasions, Reb Boruch would *Farbrenge* with the students all night. During these hours he would speak words from his heart, words of concealed chastisement emanating from a revealed love, which would enter into the depths of their hearts was brought into practice immediately. At these *Farbrengens* he would also explain deep concepts in *Chassidus* with wonderful explanations.

The students of Tomchei Tmimim were very lucky. They had many opportunities to become acquainted with many of the older Chassidim from other lands and to glimpse their spiritual heights. From time to time, senior Chassidim would come from all over to bask in the light of the Rebbe: from Riga, such as Reb Mordechai Cheifetz;



Rabbi Jacobson from America; Rabbi Leib Shinim of Dukshitz, Reb Yaakov Baruch of Kovno, with those who now arrived from Russia, such as Rabbi Shmuel Levitin and others. The senior Chassidim would also *Farbrenge* with the students after requesting permission of the teachers. They would especially enjoy the visits of the *chossid*, Rabbi Yitzchok Masmid.

R' Dovber Kurnitzer

In the year 5696 (1936), Rabbi Dovber Kurnitzer (Garfinkel), o.b.m., escaped from Russia and arrived in Otvotsk. He was immediately appointed by the previous Rebbe as *Mashgiach* (Supervisor) and general examiner in the Yeshiva for *Nigleh* and *Chassidus*.

He was a wonderful role model, well-versed in *Nigleh* and *Chassidus*. It was said of him that he knew the entire Talmud by heart. Often we saw how he conversed with another faculty member and would quote the *Gemorah* and *Tosafos* by heart. He also had an exceptional talent for explanation and grasp, speaking very clearly, so that we would really enjoy listening to him. As soon as he was appointed, he won the hearts of his students. He would mingle with everyone, greeting all with a smile and a joke.

He would enter the Beis Hamedrash during the study hours, walk over to each table, good humouredly slapping the students on the back to arouse them, with a melodious voice. "*Lebidiker! Lebidiker!*" (Livelier! Livelier!). He brought a special enthusiasm into the learning of *Niglah* and *Chassidus*.

First he came to recognize well the nature and character of each student, and later he introduced and directed various new *Sedorim* into the yeshiva.

He organized study groups for all students of the *Beis Hamedrash*, appointing one of the senior students over each group to take care of his group's needs, material or spiritual, and to give them a helping hand through conversation and *Farbrengens*. Each senior student was guided by Reb Dovber who gave them all necessary advice, submitting also a detailed report to the Rebbe.

Every *Erev Shabbos* evening between *Minchah* and *Ma'ariv*, one student of each group would review a *Ma'amar* of *Chassidus* by heart in front of his group. How glorious was the scene when all the groups would go separately into the forest surrounding the Yeshiva and sit down at the tables set up among the tall trees! Each group would sing its own songs of *Dveikus*, and then listen as a young student reviewed a *Ma'amar Chassidus* by heart with great enthusiasm, while his friends were deep in thought on its depth and wisdom. Then they would go back inside to pray *Kabbolas Shabbos* with exalted spirits. It was the taste of *Olam Habo* and *Gan Eden*!



Reb Dovber would sit in the *Zal* during the Seder of *Chassidus*, calling individual students over to his table to discuss with them subjects of *Chassidus* that they had learned.

Once he called me over with my study partner. We were then learning the *Ma'amar* "V'nikdashti" in *Likkutei Torah*, and he asked us a few questions on it. We had thought we understood it really well. But Reb Dovber showed us that we had not even begun to understand it. Then he started explaining it, and it seemed as if he had opened the door for us to a room full of light; he enlightened our minds. We stood there for two full hours, marveling and enjoying his words of explanation which stimulated the mind and uplifted the soul. A new approach to learning of a *Ma'amar* of *Chassidus* had been opened to us!

The students who excelled in their diligence and conduct received a special prize: permission to be present in the Rebbe's room when he would say a *Ma'amar* of *Chassidus* on Shabbos. Not everyone was allowed into the Rebbe's room, due to his weakness, but on Yom Tov and special days everyone was allowed to enter. Some of the *Farbrengens* on special days took place in the Yeshiva's hall; the Rebbe would partake of the meal together with everyone and *Farbreng* with all the Chassidim and students.

The Previous Rebbe's Persistence to Avert the War

World War II broke out in 1939. This milestone gives us cause to reflect once more about that devastating chapter in our history and how it has shaped our lives today. In particular, as Chabad Chassidim, when we recount the trials of our Previous Rebbe we can draw forth a phenomenal koach to face the challenges and difficulties that we encounter. The Rebbe provides a model of how a Jew must never give in to despair but rather must always remain resolute and confident in Hashem's salvation, even under the most dire of circumstances.

When Rabbi Yitzchak Hendel (currently the Lubavitcher Rav of Montreal) asked the *magid* of his town in Poland in the summer of 1939 if he thought there would be a war, the *magid* replied, "Yes". "But", responded R. Hendel, "It appears that the Lubavitcher Rebbe is of the opinion that there will not be a war."

The *Magid* then answered" "Great people are fighting (spiritually) that it shouldn't materialize."

Starting from Rosh Hashanah of 5699-1938, Chassidim detected various differences in the

Rebbe's conduct. In retrospect, they realized that the Rebbe was mounting a *ruchnius* campaign to avert the war which he surely saw coming with his *Ruach Hakadosh*.

The famed secretary of the Rebbe, R. Y. Feigen wrote a letter describing the conduct of the Rebbe during Tishrei

5699, (Igros Kodesh of the previous Rebbe, Vol. 4 pp. 17-18):

"... 'On the first night of Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe davened in shul and his own Maariv lasted around five hours, as is his holy custom. What was different this year was that he instructed before Maariv that those congregants who wished to remain in shul until he concluded his prayers, should not only listen to his *davening* (as many do each year to gain inspiration) but should recite Tehillim in a loud voice as well' Before *Tekias Shofar* he recited the *kapitalach* and *pesukim*. As he chanted the *posuk*, '*Min Hameitzar*' the Rebbe incredibly pronounced the word 'Aneini' as 'Anaani', thus changing the meaning from 'answered me' (past tense) to 'answer me!' (imperative form) ...

... On Motzei Yom Kippur, the Rebbe held a *farbrengen*. His words were uplifting. He mentioned the general situation of the past year and continued, "This year is from On High surely a good one. We need that Hashem should help that there should not be any obstacles in the channels of subsistence that goodness should be drawn down below in a revealed state ... The Almighty will surely treat us as if he is indebted ... No one should have to perform self-sacrifice and be forced to defend himself ..."



The Previous Rebbe in
Otvosk, Poland.

...Also on Shabbos Bereishis the Rebbe said Chassidus on the posuk 'Breishis Bara Elokim'. He explained something about this posuk that is new to me. He explained that the term 'Bara' could also mean 'Briyus' - 'health'. The term can also connote 'revelation'. 'Elokim' is the numerical equivalent of the word 'teva' (nature) - how Hashem's power is encloded within the natural processes of the world. So it is incumbent to make 'teva' healthy. And how is this done? 'B' - with, 'reishis' - the things that are called 'beginning', how Yisroel accepts and fulfills the Torah ...'

The entire year before the war saw open revelations from the Rebbe. Some of the Maamorim that he delivered dealt with the concepts of the revelation and the essential being of Moshiach, a noticeable departure from the usual format. Of particular note was the farbrengen of Yud-Tes Kislev, 5699. (See also Chodesh Magazine, Kislev 5759). As described

by eyewitnesses, this gathering was a watershed event in the annals of Lubavitch:

“The face of the Rebbe was shining in a special way, yet serious as well. All the chassidim came, even younger ones, and it was organized in a way that each and every one could see and hear. Suddenly, in the middle of the farbrengen, the Rebbe began to say, “Yidden! You should know that Moshiach is standing behind the wall! Those who have eyes can see him and those who have ears can hear him. When you climb a mountain and reach the peak, it gets harder. Then you have to hold on to every little twig and blade of grass. When one is awake all night and the final fifteen minutes approaches, one must strain oneself not to fall asleep. If you doze off then, you will be tired the entire day.”

On Acharon Shel Pesach the Rebbe discussed the topic of the new Torah that Moshiach will teach. On Shavous, he delved into the great bitul and humility of Moshiach who, regardless of his unparalleled wisdom and knowledge, will nevertheless learn with the simple folk as well. The sefer Likutei Diburim provides transcripts of the Rebbe's sichas of this era in which he expounds at length about various aspects of Moshiach's qualities.

As the fateful Elul approached, the Rebbe ordered the maamor 'Mi K-el Kamocha' to be reprinted and distributed for public learning for the second time that year. Its central theme is that although a Yid must subjugate his ego to the Supernal Will above, Hashem, on the other hand, must always proceed with forgiveness, for forgiveness leads to teshuva ...

On Rosh Chodesh Elul, Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson arrived in Otvotsk, Poland, the locale of both the Rebbe and the Central Tomchei Temimim Yeshiva, with a group of bochorim from the U. S. (to be elaborated upon later). In their honor, on Shabbos Parshas Shoftim, the Rebbe said a maamor on the posuk 'Shoftim V'shotrim', in which he explained how the pain of the judged causes pain on High, similar to how a son's pain affects his father. On the next Shabbos, the Rebbe's maamor was based on the famous cry of the Yomim Noraim, 'U'seshuva U'sefila U'tzedaka Maavirin Es Roa Hagazeirah' ('And Repentance and Prayer and Charity Turn Aside the Evil Decree').

Later, after the war began, a few days before Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe said to the Chassid R' S. Z. Shmotkin in Warsaw that when the Mittler Rebbe was a young boy, he once reflected upon the posuk 'For His anger endures but a moment; life results from His favor. In the evening one lies down weeping, but with dawn - a cry of joy!' Chassidim later asked him what was the outcome of his mental reflection. He responded that one needs to perceive the inner truth

that even when Hashem displays 'anger', He is still the giver of 'life'. The intent of heaven is that through the process of teshuva, a person can stimulate 'His favor' above and then the 'weeping' of the evening will be transformed into the 'joy' of the morning. The Rebbe later recorded this teaching in his hemshech 5700 in the midst of the bombardment of Warsaw.

As documented above, the Rebbe was attempting to prevent an earthly war by waging a spiritual war in the supernal realms. When a Rebbe speaks words of Torah, it has a dual effect on both levels. He tried with all his might to avert the 'Birth pangs of Moshiach', which he surely foresaw with his Ruach Hakodesh. By revealing heretofore-concealed secrets of Chassidus and spreading a spirit of Bitachon and Simcha in the coming of Moshiach, he heroically sought to annul the harsh decree of utter darkness that was to characterize the final hour of the long, long night of Galus.

Some have explained the Rebbe's approach by citing the known teaching in regards to Noach's 'deficient faith'. Noach understood that a Tzadik could actualize events through his emunah. Therefore, in the beginning, Noach intentionally doubted the coming of the mabul in order to forestall it. This to was the aim of the Rebbe.

The Rebbe's attitude is further illustrated by a fascinating episode involving a group of American bochorim who wished to travel to Otvotsk to learn in the presence of the Rebbe in 1939. When their Mashpia, R. Y. Jacobson asked if they should still come in spite of the persistent rumors of imminent hostilities, the Rebbe responded in the affirmative.

Rabbi Avrohom Hecht, describes his experience as one of those boys in the journal Di Yiddishe Heim:

Though still being a student in Mesivta Torah V'daas, through Hashgacha Protis and the encouragement of my older brother, R.

One of the buildings of the Yeshivah.



Shlomo Zalman Hecht, I learnt Tanya once a week from R. Jacobson. This led slowly but surely to a greater interest in Chassidus. When the famed Chassid R. Mordechai Chafetz came from Riga on a special Shlichus from the Previous Rebbe and gave a truly chassidishe farbrengen, the seeds of yearning to meet the Rebbe personally were planted.

But as our group formulated our travel plans throughout the year 5699, the world was increasingly filled with alarm at the heightened tensions in Europe. The accursed Nazis had already occupied various lands; a sense of foreboding and despair permeated the world powers.

It can be understood that the bochurim were fearful to travel and especially the parents

were quite reluctant to send their children to Otvotsk. One of the talmidim wrote to the Rebbe that his parents were fearful to send him to learn due to the probable outbreak of a huge war. The Rebbe answered him that “there is nothing for him to fear”. It was if the Rebbe took upon himself the entire liability for the journey of the bochurim to him. This letter helped ease the resistance of the parents and eventually we all obtained permission to go.’

My father related to me that the summer of 1939 was called the “hot” (tense) summer.

One of the prominent Rabbis in Poland commented shortly before the war that if he was in the Rebbe’s place, a citizen of a foreign country (the Rebbe was a Latvian citizen), he would have already left Poland.

The Talmud says, 'Your own life comes first'!

His son-in-law, R. S. Gourary (the RaShaG), came back to Otvosk from abroad a few weeks before the war. He devised a plan for the Rebbe and his family to leave for Riga. The Rebbe replied to him that the RaShaG and his family may leave but he refused to do so.

The Second World War broke out on Friday, Elul 17,5699. Rabbi A. Hecht remembers:

In the morning of that day, around 8:15, we heard a terrifyingly loud explosion, as if all of a sudden a thunderclap had boomed overhead. But it was actually a very pleasantly warm summer's day and no clouds were seen in the sky. We rushed out of the house and saw how six German aircraft were dropping bombs. The bombs soon hit targets and immediately there were innocent casualties. Amongst the destruction were an old age home and an orphanage not far from the yeshiva. Scores of lives perished on the spot.'

R. Avrohom Y. Garfinkel also recalls that fateful morning:

When we heard the attack, the talmidim didn't want to believe that this was an actual German bombing raid. They thought at first that the explosions were merely caused by training missions of the Polish air force. But walking back from the mikvah, we encountered the horrific truth since many of the bombs fell in the Jewish neighborhoods in the town demolishing and leveling many structures with many fatalities and casualties. The news spread throughout the town that the war had started.' (taken from

Kfar Chabad Magazine)

R. Moshe Beitch was also present during the attack:

When we saw the rows of military airplanes in the sky, my friend asked me, "Do you think that these are German or Polish aircraft?" I responded, "Do you imagine that the Polish have been defeated so quickly!" But when we heard the explosions, we understood the grim reality ... The yeshiva building itself was not damaged because it was located in a semi-rural area some distance from the town itself. On Shabbos I was still eating in the yeshiva but by Sunday they told the bochorim to disperse throughout the surrounding environs and find refuge in Jewish homes. Shabbos was Chai Elul, the birthdays of the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe. The Rebbe wished that these two holy tzadikim would protect us.

Meanwhile, the Rebbe's was displaying an incredible presence of mind and instilled a sense of calmness into all those around him. When my father, A"H, used to describe the attitude of the Rebbe as the war erupted, he said that the Rebbe adamantly declared that, "I don't accept war!" "And tonight is Chai Elul!"

A. Hecht writes:

We were frightfully scared and didn't know what to do! We ran to the Rebbe's courtyard to hear instructions from him ... The RaShaG opened the door and came out to us and told us to run to the Rebbe's mother and calm her down; she shouldn't fear and all will be good.

The RaShaG then told us to pack our clothes and prepare to leave. But first we went in to the Rebbe for a Farewell Bracha ... It

was around 12:30, Erev Shabbos Kodesh, and we were all standing before the Rebbe. He was wearing his Shabbos clothes and these were his holy words: "I am sending you to my chassidim in Riga, Latvia. I wish you a K'siva V'Chasima Tova and a G'mar Chasima Tova."

One of the bochurim asked, "What will be if we are forced to be Mechalal Shabbos?"

The Rebbe gave him a strong look and answered, "It is fitting that in the merit of the two holy tzadikim, the holy Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe that you should not have to be Mechaleil Shabbos!" And with these holy words we left the holy sanctuary of the Rebbe.'

After Shabbos, the Rebbe left Otvosk to Warsaw. The Rebbe said,"It should be that this is all for nothing."

When one of the roshei yeshiva mentioned the names of certain bochurim to the Rebbe, the Rebbe said, "In my Pedyon which I read every day before my father, they are included in my thoughts."

On Tuesday, Elul 21, at 3:00 in the afternoon the Rebbe left Otvosk. A large crowd came to see him and receive a farewell beracha.

At the parting, the Rebbe was strongly and deeply upset and his eyes expressed great pain. He said, "Zeit aleh Gezunt, You should all be well, and receive the yoke of heaven ... A king watches his servants and Yidden are children. May Hashem watch you wherever you will be and ourselves ","here we will be."

On the road to Warsaw, German bombs fell on the long lines of traffic. Everyone left their cars and fled to the side of the road, but the Rebbe didn't leave his car. He told his family there was nothing to worry about. "Right now, our Father is working on our behalf," he said.

By the time he arrived in Warsaw, the borders had been closed because of the fighting. It was impossible to travel to Riga. He was forced to remain in Warsaw for the first months of the war.

Bombardment of Poland

During the entire month of the German attack on Poland, Jewish areas were targeted by the Nazi military machine to receive especially brutal attacks. In an attempt to escape the advancing enemy, Jewish refugees flocked to Warsaw as a last refuge. But even though the capital was still holding out in desperate resistance, its swollen population was not safe from the onslaught. Heavy German artillery pounded the encircled city from all sides with cruel precision. The guns paid particular attention to the civilian population of the Jewish neighborhoods. At the same time, German planes flew unhindered at rooftop height, releasing their bombs upon Jewish homes. Huddled in shelters and cellars, those who survived felt each earthshaking explosion as if the bomb had hit the house next door - even when, in fact, the planes had dropped their deadly loads a mile or two away.

Rabbi Yosef Weinberg followed in the Rebbe's path. He writes:

I arrived in Warsaw on the evening of Elul 22. Before I could determine what the situation was in the capital, the government requested that all young men should leave Warsaw. That night the news spread that the Germans YM'S were already in the Warsaw vicinity and that the government had fled.

However, I didn't want to flee the city without first finding out if the Rebbe had left already. (The plan

was for him to go on to Riga, Latvia.) On my way there, I witnessed crying and moaning. When I arrived at the Shmotkin residence where the Rebbe was staying, I found out that the Rebbe was indeed still there. Many people had asked the Rebbe where to go. The Rebbe indicated to some to leave Warsaw and to others to stay put. With endless floods of tears, everyone around the house and the adjoining shul continuously recited Tehillim, praying and beseeching Hashem for mercy.

I inquired about the Rebbe's situation. I was told that at the present it was premature to consider continuing on to Riga. The hope was that as a Latvian citizen, the Rebbe would be able to reside at the protected Latvian consulate. This course was now being pursued.

On Thursday or Friday of that week, the consulate granted its permission. The problem was that it was impossible to travel by vehicle due to the various roadblocks throughout the city. So they decided to carry the Rebbe on a stretcher. When the Rebbe's mother, Rebbitzin Sterna Sarah, saw the stretcher she was overcome with emotion. She began to scream, "Where is the Alter Rebbe? Where is the Mittler Rebbe? ..." Her screams were horrific. Suddenly, word arrived from the consulate that there

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was no possibility for the Rebbe to enter its grounds. So the Rebbe remained in the Shmotkin home until Erev Rosh Hashanah.

Rabbi Avrohom Y. Garfinkel was also a witness to the siege. He recalls:

The fighting was increasing in intensity and the enemy approached the gates of Warsaw. By that Thursday, the last train pulled out of the city. It was chartered especially for diplomats and foreigners. The talmidim who had come from America succeeded in gaining passage aboard it. There was the possibility that the Rebbe and his family would embark upon it as well. But the Rebbe refused to leave Poland even though his family begged him to do so. He said that he wished to remain together with the Jewish community and with his talmidim.

So the Rebbe remained with his flock, even though this entailed enduring appalling conditions. The bombardment continued unabated and there was a critical shortage of food.

A day before Rosh Hashanah the Rebbe asked R. Shneur Zalman Shmotkin to concern himself with the needs of the talmidim who were in Warsaw. The Rebbe instructed that they should be provided with plenty of food and gave R. Shmotkin all the money necessary for their needs. This is yet another illustration of the ability of the Rebbe to think lucidly during a time of terror. This truly is the thread that weaves between all the forms of *ohiskasharus* - the love and concern shared between a rebbe and his chassidim.

R. Weinberg continues:

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe appeared one time only to receive the *pidyonos* (lists

of names and requests for spiritual and physical necessities for the coming year). For the tefillos of the yom-tov they requested that only an exact minyan of ten should come due to the apprehension that a larger assembly would attract the unwanted attention of the Polish authorities who were conscripting men to build the fortifications around the city. Suddenly, bombs began to fall in the neighborhood. One of the bombs fell upon the Shmotkin home and the structure caught on fire. All of the apartment dwellers began to scurry and take shelter at the front gate of the building. The women and children were loudly wailing. We stood around the Rebbe in order to ascertain that he should not be pushed by the crowd. A chair was brought and the Rebbe sat upon it. His holy face was very serious. He said repeatedly that the firefighters should be called. He sat the entire time and his lips were murmuring constantly. One of the Anash began to recite Mishnayos by heart. Whenever he was imprecise, the Rebbe corrected him.

Afterwards the Rebbe turned to me and asked where the bochorim were. He requested that they should stand at his side. They came and surrounded the Rebbe. The Rebbe also inquired about the wife of R. Shefsil Meir who was pregnant and also about a young girl who initially was missing.

The bombing intensified. A big explosion rocked the house across the street and immediately it was destroyed. (It later was known that there was a great loss of life.) A



great cloud of dust filled the air, choking all the huddled mass of people in the entranceway of our building. People thought that it was a gas attack and they began to scream. Mrs. Gourary (the Rebbe's eldest daughter) took a damp cloth and placed it upon the Rebbe's mouth. A short time later the dust settled and all were assured that in fact it hadn't been gas.

The bombing did not let up. A message was sent to the Rebbe from a different district of Warsaw that he should come there since it was being spared. The Rebbe refused to acquiesce to the suggestion, disregarding the urging of his family. He said to Mrs. Gourary in a humorous tone, 'It is already time to bentsch licht.'

Then his grandson approached him and said to the Rebbe, 'Zaide, if this doesn't stop we will be forced to go from here.'

The Rebbe answered him, 'After it lets up, we will still be here!'

When the fires around the house grew and the family relentlessly pleaded with the Rebbe to leave to safety, he lowered his head in approval while making it obvious that he was not pleased.

It was very difficult to obtain transport for the Rebbe. Only through exhaustive efforts was a wagon procured for him.

The Rebbe departed with the carriage in the evening. Tongues of fire lit up the gloom. Debris fell around and upon the carriage itself.

A group of talmidim and I walked to the

location where we heard that the Rebbe was taken to. The Rebbe told me that we should return back to the Shmotkin home. I asked the Rebbe if it would be possible for us to first daven. (I wanted to make sure that this locale was in fact a safe haven for the Rebbe and that no fires were threatening it.) The Rebbe responded affirmatively.

Back at the Shmotkin home, we found that the chassidim were very worried about the Rebbe's elderly mother. The inferno around them was spreading and strengthening. They felt that the young could evacuate at a moment's notice. But this would be extremely difficult for her to do.

The Rebbitzin herself was not concerned. She said, 'Let me stay in my son's room and I will feel secure.'

In the end, the Rebbitzin was transferred to the home of one of the wealthier chassidim, which was not hit. I remained to tend to her needs. She asked for her siddur, machzor and glasses that were left behind at the Shmotkins' since she wanted to daven. When I returned she asked me what were they doing there. I related that in truth they were preparing to daven shortly. The Rebbitzin's expression was pained as she said, 'It is a shame that I am away from there.'

On the first night of Rosh Hashanah the Rebbe davened alone since it was not possible to arrange a minyan. By the next day a minyan was formed and the tefillos were held in relative calmness. Nevertheless, the Rebbe was not comfortable in his new location. He said we would much rather be back at the Shmotkins' together with the 'heimishe'.

After Rosh Hashanah the Rebbe said, 'In Tanya it is explained that the possuk, "Make for me delicious foods" refers to two types of gratification in front of Hashem. One is "food" that is made from sweet things and the other is "food" that is made from sharp and spicy things.

We had a bitter and sharp Rosh Hashanah, but the gratification to Above is more than a sweet one etc. '

In the days leading up to Yom Kippur, the bombardment became even more horrific. The authorities instructed that we should try to protect ourselves by staying in narrow passageways. Therefore the Rebbe with his family spent most of their time in the corridor of the house. Nevertheless, many times the Rebbe motioned with his hand that this precaution was unnecessary and returned to his room, ignoring the barrage outside.

At that time it was announced on the radio that the foe ym" was letting out word that they intended to desolate Warsaw and all who wished to flee were advised to flee by way of Garvalin. The Lubavitcher talmidim requested me to ask the Rebbe if they should heed this advice. When the Rebbe heard my question he retorted, 'Where is there to flee?' I answered, 'To Garvalin'.

The Rebbe responded that if this route was secure, they should flee. But if not, they should stay and Hashem would guard over them wherever they may be.

Even though each new day brought with it ever more violent assaults, the shadow of terror never was seen on the Rebbe's holy face.

One time there was a raid in the area and the

shock waves reverberated throughout. The Rebbe's hand shook as well. He said, 'I am not a fearful person. But from a strong bang the "flesh" reflexively recoils.'

Before Yom Kippur it was decided that for yom-tov the Rebbe should come back to the Shmotkins'. On the night of Tishrei 8, R. Leib Raskin was sleeping at the Rebbe's house. That night the assault was vicious and the Rashag (the Rebbe's son-in-law), thinking that the Rebbe was asleep said to R. Leib, 'Perhaps it is a good idea to wake up my father-in-law?'

The next day in the morning, the Rebbe said that last night, when the Rashag thought to wake him, he was in fact awake. He was at that time communicating with the neshama of his father, the Rebbe Rashab. His father was expounding upon the possuk, "v'Hiem Tuku L'raglecha Yeesa Medabrosecha" "For they planted themselves at Your feet, bearing [the yoke] of Your utterances" (Devarim 33:3). The Baal Haturim comments that the roshei tavos (initials) of these words spell out 'TeHiL YM'. When we fall upon the feet of Hashem and we ask for mercy, then "He will bear your utterances" of the Yidden ...

During the night of Erev Yom Kippur, I went to the Shmotkin household to deliver meat for the Rebbe's family. That night, the attackers zeroed in on our area. The Shmotkin home took direct hits but, boruch Hashem, not one person was injured. But in consequence, the thought of returning the Rebbe to that house was shelved.

The Rebbe spent the entire day of Erev Yom Kippur reciting Tehillim with heartrending cries and great bitterness. When R. Shraga

Feivish Zalmanov went to the Rebbe to receive a bracha on Erev Yom Kippur, the Rebbe said to him, 'The Almighty should bestow a chasima tovah and a g'mar chasima tovah.' The Rebbe then broke down and cried out, 'Let me please fall into the hand of Hashem ... ' The Rebbe's customary Erev Yom Kippur theme of teshuva was not mentioned at all. A while later he added, 'A contrite and broken heart, Hashem, You do not disdain'.

The Yom Kippur tefillos were sparsely attended by Anash due to the constant shelling. Those who came did so at great risk of life and limb.

The Rebbe chanted Maftir Yona. During his recital of the maftir, the bombing reached a crescendo. If the Rebbe hadn't been in the middle of the maftir, everyone would have run away in fright. This is exactly what happened in all the other shuls.

The Rebbe commanded to make haste during Tefilas Ne'ilah. He also instructed that the Kohanim should duchan during Ne'ilah and that the daily portion of Tanya could be learned after davening. It seemed to me that also the tekiyah was blown while it was still daylight. The Rebbe wanted everyone to leave early and not be endangered by the barrage.

After the fast, the Rebbe's household ate in the dining room and the Rebbe ate in his room. There really wasn't much to eat. We were afraid that the meat that I brought was now toxic since pieces of shrapnel were imbedded in it. In addition, there were only two eating utensils so each person had to wait in turn to eat.



Another onslaught of shelling began. For forty-five minutes we were huddled together in the hallway. We had donned our overcoats and had clasped our packed bags, ready to flee if forced. Next to the Rebbe laid his valise with his talis and tefilin and amongst other things the siddur of the Baal Shem Tov.

However, the spirit of the Rebbe on that night was much different than the distress of Ere v Yom Kippur. As we sat together, we began to feel uplifted by the Rebbe's optimistic demeanor. His daughter began to hum a stanza of a chassidische niggun. The Rebbe said for us to sing the niggun and he accompanied the singing with forceful movements of his hands.

The Rebbe retired to his room before the attack concluded. He wished us, CA good

night and may success be ever-present.'

The next day, Tishrei 11, I went to visit my brother. Once again a hail of shells began to fall from the sky. I was filled with concern for the Rebbe and I made my way back during a lull, my path strewn with death and destruction. My heart was trembling as I neared the Rebbe's building.

I almost fainted when I beheld that there was a large hole in the wall of the Rebbe's room and all the windows were shattered.

To my delight, I was soon told that the Rebbe was fine and that he and his family had descended into the cellar of the house.

In the cellar there were small connecting chambers. They emptied out one especially for the-Rebbe's use and provided him with a small table, chair and water for washing. The

Rebbe said, CA new home ... ““

Mr. Mordechai Reichrot merited witnessing firsthand the Rebbe's staunch resolve to not give in to despair. Writing in the magazine *Bais Moshiaich* (#104), he recalls the Rebbe's indefatigable spirit:

At one point, the thunderous artillery volleys reached deafening proportions. The chassidim grew panicky and they asked the Rebbe if he wanted to transfer to a different location. The Rebbe refused. “Every bullet has its address; don't runaway!” So we all remained with the Rebbe in his refuge. I was greatly impressed from the greatness of the Rebbe that he placed upon himself the responsibility for the lives of tens of people and instructed them to stay put.

During one of endless attacks, the Rebbe was deep in thought. Suddenly, he stirred and turned towards the people around him saying, ‘Succos is approaching and we need to prepare for the yom-tov.’ My father, who was a Sochtshover chassid, had tremendous faith and bestowed great honor upon the Rebbe. But he had trouble believing that the Rebbe actually meant that they should construct a sukka in an open courtyard, exposed to the projectiles of the accursed Germans. He turned to the Rebbe and asked him if this indeed was his intention. The Rebbe nodded his head in the affirmative. We would have been less surprised if the Rebbe had told us to fly to India ...

My father accepted the instruction of the Rebbe and he proceeded to cut some lumber. He enlisted me and my older brother to assist in the task. In a few hours, the pieces of a small sukka were finished, ready for erection outside at the proper time. In our hearts, we

were not certain that we would be able to sit in it when yom-tov would begin. But in the meantime we fulfilled the directive of the Rebbe and we built the sukka.”

R. Weinberg also recalls the shocking instruction of the Rebbe. He heard the Rebbe say, “We need to do our part by preparing a succa and the Aibeshter will do His part in order that we should be able to sit in it!”

The Rebbe's succa, of course, also needed s'chach. Owing to the extreme difficulty in obtaining branches, the Rebbe promised a brocho of long life to whoever succeeded in getting some. A certain Yid, not a Lubavitcher chasid, took upon himself this formidable task and with true mesiras nefesh he fulfilled the Rebbe's wish.

The 12th of Tishrei marked the climax 'of affliction for the Rebbe. The morning began with an all-out blitz by the Luftwaffe to pound the brave defenders of Warsaw into submission. The Rebbe and his family went down to the cellar. The Rebbe commanded the talmidim to say ‘Avinu Malkanu’ and certain chapters of Tehillim (including Ch. 22 and 109). When they realized that the cellar might collapse upon them, the Rebbe decided to vacate it immediately. The talmid L. Edelman had not yet finished his davening. The Rebbe said to him that there are times when we must daven in a short way. This means not to shorten the text but to say it quickly.

In his memoirs, the Rebbe describes the subsequent events (See *Sefer Hasichos* - Summer 5700, pp. 6-12):

For the next few hours, we ran from place to place looking for shelter from the bombs that were falling all around us. In one of the shelters, hundreds of different kinds of Jews had taken refuge. Some had beards and payos; others were clean-shaven. Some

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of the women wore shaitlach; others did not cover their hair at all. Despite all their differences, everyone was united by fear and despair. My group, which consisted of myself, my family, and some of the students from Tomchei Temimim, began to recite Tehillim. Suddenly, the whole place began to vibrate with the sound of an extremely loud explosion. A bomb had fallen very close to us. Sheets of flame shot up around us, and each person saw death in front of his very eyes. A loud, spontaneous cry arose from everyone. "Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokainu Hashem Echod!" Each person was sure that he had reached the end of his life. I never heard a cry as sincere as that one. It came from deep in the hearts of every single one of the different kinds of Jews there. I pray that Hashem will let it remain engraved in

my memory forever.

During those terrible days in war-torn Poland, in addition to the Divine providence we witnessed so many times, we experienced how the Jewish heart can absorb everything with pure and simple faith ...

After a few dreadful moments, all who were in the cellar recognized that the merit of the Rebbe once again lent protection from the surrounding fury. Not one person was harmed.

On the night of Tishrei 14, the Rashag pleaded with the Rebbe and said to him, "Father-in-law, it should be enough already. What has happened till now I will accept but enough is enough."

The Rebbe blessed all who were gathered in the cellar and all K'lal Yisroel with tremendous brochos. He wished that everyone should have all their needs met. When my father would tell us he indicated

that the Rebbe had perceived that the Poles would soon surrender and a new challenging period was about to commence. Sure enough, the next day, the bombardment ceased.

The mother of the Rebbe was staying with the chassid R. Beryl Bezfalov. All the people who were in his apartment wanted to flee but she argued that under no circumstances would she leave because there was a sefer torah there. So they remained with her and in that merit they were saved because afterwards it was known that all the other inhabitants who had fled the building perished.

After a month of absorbing the furious onslaught of the Germans, the Polish commander realized he had no choice but to surrender and end his suicidal resistance.

The cease-fire was set for noontime on Wednesday, September 27, 1939, Erev Sukkos.

The Germans were punctual in holding their fire, and the ear-shattering noise of exploding bombs stopped abruptly. The sudden silence was a strange contrast to the days and weeks of uninterrupted shelling from the ground and bombing from the air.

R. A. Garfinkel remembers that when the armistice went into effect, people began to dig themselves out of their shelters. Hundreds of Warsaw's Jewish survivors leaped from the cellars and rubble grabbed broken doors and window frames, and pulled them together for the construction of sukkos. By the arrival of sunset, numerous sukkos greeted the yom-tov (even though others had been destroyed by roving bands of German soldiers and their Polish helpers). Even in this most dire of straits, Yidden were joyful that they could fulfill the mitzvah of sukka even

though their meals within them consisted of a few morsels of bread.

Since the Germans had bombed all of the trains and moving stock before Rosh Hashanah, no esrogim reached the capital. Through a miracle, the Rebbe secured three Esrogim before the outbreak of hostilities. Whenever Jews heard that it was possible to bentsh Lulav and Esrog hearts were filled with gladness.

Rabbi Garfinkle recalls standing in line for hours with thousands of Yidden on Yom Tov, the day after the ceasefire in bombed out Warsaw, with shattered homes, ripped up streets and no food but no giving up in order to bentsh Lulav and Esrog.

R. Weinberg recollects that it was a certain Mr. Trokenheim, a prestigious Warsaw philanthropist, who provided a lulav-esrog set for public use and over 3000 people availed themselves of the opportunity. The Rebbe sent an esrog to Rabbi Yitzchak Ze'ev (Velvel) Soloveitchik, the venerable rabbi of the city of Brisk, through R. Weinberg and thousands of people bentshed there also.

As the Rebbe had foreseen, they were able to indeed sit in the succa that had been built. The Rebbe spent Yom Tov in the home of Faivish Zalmanov, 7 Nalevki Street, in the heart Jewish Warsaw. Even though the bombardment had ceased, serenity did not reign. Fires still raged throughout the city and the sky was filled with dark smoke. When the Rebbe went into the Sukkah the first night of Yom Tov, he told R. Weinberg he should immediately go to R. Zalmanov's button store in a cart to quickly retrieve the merchandise before flames destroy R. Zalmanov's only means of survival.

Escape from Poland

World War II broke out Erev Shabbos, the 17th of Elul 5699, September 1, 1939. The Friediker Rebbe was in Otwock, southeast of Warsaw. On September 4th the Rebbe left with his family by taxi to Warsaw. My father, Rabbi Menachem Shmuel Dovid Raichik o.b.m, always mentioned that he got the taxi for the Rebbe. The Rebbe then gave a Brocha to everyone that they should be protected.

For the time being the bochurim stayed in the Yeshivah, in Otwock, which was just a 1/2 hour from Warsaw. Many bochurim had gone home at the outbreak of the war but many stayed right through the Yomim Tovim.

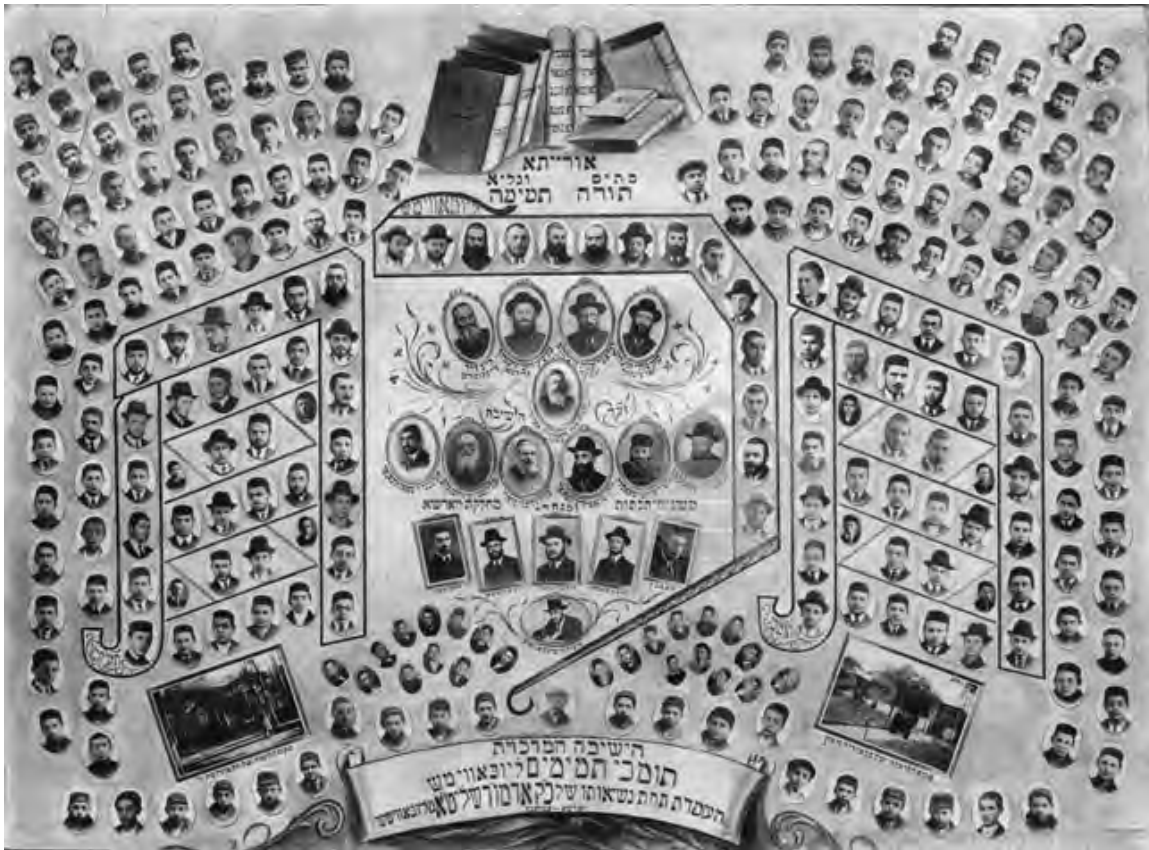
The Poles soon realized that they were losing the war, and encouraged everyone to flee towards Lublin. As mentioned before Rabbi Wineberg was told by the Rebbe not to flee but to remain in Warsaw. However, many of the bochurim in Otwock being cut off from the Rebbe decided to flee. R' Shea Bronstein asked Rabbi Shimon Kalisch, the Amshenover Rebbe, when running, if the Germans start shooting where is it safer, should I run into the forest (where there is also bombing), or should I stay on the road. He was answered that a person must do something, even a small thing, in order to protect his life and then Hashem will help. (Meaning, run into the forest.)

Those fleeing soon realized that running was of no help, since as soon as they got somewhere which they perceived

to be safe, the German air-force would start bombing the town and they would be forced to go on the run again. After weeks of fleeing they returned to Otwock. R' Avrohom Baum (Boymelgreen) remembers that when they returned, they went into the Rebbe's now deserted house and found some flour and other staples, which helped them survive. My father and Rabbi Ebber went to the market to purchase food, with Rabbi Greenglass, blond, blue-eyed and conversant in Polish, ahead of them to make sure the peasant market was safe. That along with the salvaged food helped keep the hunger at bay. My father and Rabbi Greenglass were privileged to eat soup lunches at the home of the Yachiver Rov. Stranded in his summer residence because of the war, the Yachiver Rov, soon realized that winter would be coming, and asked Rabbi Greenglass to go back to his town and bring him his winter coat and boots. Rabbi Yaakov Bunim, the brother of the Aleksander Rebbe, asked that while on his way, Rabbi

Greenglass should stop off at cities and raise funds from the other Aleksander Chasidim to sustain him. Rabbi Greenglass did all that and more, he wore the Rov's coat and boots and carried his own, so that in case of robbery the Rov's belongings would remain safe. (Rabbi Yaakov Bunim later passed away in Warsaw)

On Shemini Atzeres, mashke was obtained and the mashpia of the Otwock Yeshivah, Rabbi Boruch Friedman, held a farbrengen. The topic was the words of Dovid Hamelech,



“I rejoiced when it was said to me we shall go to the House of Hashem.” Based on the Yerushalmi in Shekalim, the test of Dovid Hamelech was the subject of joy. Rabbi Friedman said that once the test was whether to be a Jew or not, but that today the test is whether to accept the decrees from Above with joy or not.

After Simchas Torah the Germans lifted the blockade on Warsaw. My father and Rabbi Greengalss were able to bring some meat to the Rebbe. One could see the pain and agony on the Rebbe’s face.

The children of Reb Velvel Brisker came to ask the Rebbe where they should be in the German side of Poland or in the Russian side of Poland. It was known that the pact the Germans made with Russia divided Poland between them. They felt that the worst thing was to be under the Russian communists. The Rebbe’s answer was, “Wherever one should be,

Hashem should protect.”

After the Yomim Tovim, the remaining bochurim who could do so went home. This was not an option for my father, as his village was burned to the ground. In the middle of the month of Cheshvan, one Friday night, as the bochurim were praying the Maariv service and were ready to start the Amidah, Nazi soldiers walked in the Yeshiva looking for young Jewish men for forced labor. They wanted a large ammunition cache left by the retreating Polish army personnel moved and the Poles advised the Nazis to use bochurim. The whole Friday night they whipped these young men, forcing them to move inhumanly heavy loads to the nearby German army base.

On the ground, the political situation for Jews was changing rapidly, and a ray of hope appeared. In December, the Russians had granted independence to Lithuania, which provided Jews and others, unoffi-

cially, a country to run to. The Rebbe now encouraged my father and others to escape from Poland and go northeast to Vilnius or Vilna, providing travel expenses of 100-150 zlotys per bochur.

Indeed, anyone who came to the Rebbe for advice was told to flee Poland for Vilna. Word of this spread fast.

Rabbi Avrohom Y. Garfinkel recalled:

During the month of Kislev, we came to the house of the Rebbe. Immediately, his son-in-law, Rabbi Shmaryahu Gourary (the Rashag), who was overjoyed to see us, greeted us. He informed us about the recent positive development that the Russians had agreed to return the city of Vilna to Lithuania; all of the Lithuanian yeshiva students who were detained by the Russians during their conquest of eastern Poland were able to relocate themselves to Vilna.

...We were accepted into the Rebbe's room for Yechidus. His face was joyful and radiant. He gave me his brochah that I should arrive in Vilna in peace and that I should assist in the formation of the yeshiva there. The Rebbe asked us if we were prepared to flee and to smuggle ourselves over two borders; the German-Soviet border and the Soviet-Lithuanian border. He also requested from me that I publicize to all that I would encounter on the way the Rebbe's firm conviction that everyone should leave Poland, not seek sanctuary from the Soviet regime but rather to continue on to Vilna, Lithuania."

I readily agreed to leave the very next day. Rabbi Gourary gave me 100 zlotys plus an additional 50 zlotys to take along to my older brother, since my parents refused to

give their consent to my plan unless we went together.

My father left with a group of 10 bochurim from Otwock and on the way they stopped in Pragy, a small suburb of Warsaw. My father and Rabbi Greenglass were chosen to bring a Pidyon to the Rebbe to ask for a brochah for their escape.

My father, along with Rabbi Greenglass, saw the Friediker Rebbe in Warsaw on the night of Yud-Tes Kislev. The home of Rabbi Heshel Gourary, where the Rebbe stayed, had a sign on the door stating that the occupant was a Latvian citizen, not of Polish origin, with the hope it would offer those inside some sort of protection from the German onslaught.

Rabbi Greenglass disguised himself so as not to be identified by the Germans or the Poles as a Jew; my father did not. Rabbi Greenglass persisted in his disguise despite protestations by Rabbi Shmaryahu Gourary, the Rashag that "Volf, you can't go into the Rebbe looking the way you do." Rabbi Greenglass replied, "sometimes the Rebbe has to see me as I am." The Rebbe gave Rabbi Greenglass a broad smile when he did indeed remove his disguise, along with the brochah that they should leave safely and arrive safely, and meet again b'simchah. The Rebbe was writing a Ma'amar of Chassidus, "Ma Mevorech" printed in Ma'amarei Chassidus 5700. On Yud-Tes Kislev my father would tell us the story, and he would say, "Even under the Germans you could see the Yom Tov of Yud-Tes Kislev was reflected in the radiance of the Rebbe's face.

After receiving the brochah from the Rebbe, the bochurim took a train from Warsaw to Shadlitz. They arrived after midnight, and a curfew was in effect. The Wermacht captured my father and Rabbi Greenglass at the station, and searched their belongings for money. Rabbi Greenglass had hidden his money in the spine of a Tanya. The Germans

threw the Tanya around, but miraculously the money was not discovered. Indeed, this Tanya is in Rabbi Greenglass' possession to this day.

However, the Nazis found their tefilin and asked its purpose. When my father and Rabbi Greenglass explained that it was for prayer, the Germans forced them to strip to their underwear, put on the tefilin, and shake in the freezing weather for ten minutes. Again, another miracle - they let them go.

My father and the other bochurim had to smuggle themselves through the German-Russian border of Poland and then across the Russian-Lithuanian border. They hired a non-Jewish wagon driver to take them to Zamita. For safety reasons, they split into small groups, each group experiencing miracles of their own.

From there, they hired a gentile man with a small boat to take them across the Bug River to the Soviet side of Poland. They could not enter the port, for fear of being caught by the Russians, so they zigzagged down the riverbank until they came to a place safe enough to disembark.

The group walked 100 yards or more in the freezing river and climbed a muddy, slippery hill to get into Soviet territory. It was December, there was snow and the weather was bitterly cold. Many became ill from the expedition. But it had only just begun.

Some bochurim regrouped in Bailystock, some took

the train to Branowitz. Rabbi Greenglass remembered that before leaving Otwock they made one last visit at the Rebbe's empty home and found olive oil to light the menorah for Chanukah. At one stop they met up with a few hundred refugees and when they lit the menorah, the people jumped with joy, in the midst of all the danger.

The bochurim split up into many groups. My father crossed into Lithuania with his chaver, Rabbi Mendel Tenenbaum, ob"m. Once again a gentile was hired to guide them, this time through the forest. It was so dark, so cold, and the snow so deep that my father lost his boots and had to walk without them. That night they walked, calling each other's names so as not to lose a soul in the forest. Rabbi Mordechai Bryski remembers my father in Vilna, sick and in pain from his feet. But he never complained. He worried instead about everyone else. My father suffered all his life from frostbite on three toes from the walk that night.

Rabbi Greenglass told me his group, once inside Lithuania, went to an inn to get out of the freezing weather. As they huddled in a corner trying to get warm, a group of Lithuanian soldiers sat around toasting their New Year. One soldier noticed them and warned, "Bochurim, what are you doing here? These soldiers are on border patrol!" The group left immediately, and hired someone to take them to Kovno.

Escape to Vilna

In Vilna the Yeshiva was located in the Lubavitch shul known by the name “Aptov’s Kloysz..” It was under Rabbi Yitzchok DuBer Ushpol. In the beginning of the war Rabbi Shmuel Zalmanov and Reb Moshe Leib Rodshtein escaped from Poland to Vilna. They were involved with the Yeshiva, and they later left with him to America. Once the talmidim came to Vilna, the Friediker Rebbe sent different letters to them.

On Teves 20, 5700 (1940), the Rebbe wrote a letter to the students exhorting them to keep the seder of the Yeshiva with the true spirit. (We have to remember that this was during the Second World War.) The Rebbe went on to say, “Talmidim, do not change your garments of the weekday or of Shabbos. Do not let go of your customs. Let us unite and go arm in arm together in the path established by the founder of Tomchei Temimim. My hope is that my request in this letter to you will be accepted with your great love and connection to me, as a decree to be fulfilled with love of the holy.... I want to know in detail how each of the students is doing....” (Igros Kodesh of the Friediker Rebbe, vol. 5, p. 14)

On Shevat 8, there was a letter written to Reb Yosef Partovich, in answer to a letter that he wrote notifying the Rebbe that he, along with Reb Menachem Mendel Tenenbaum and my father, had made it to Vilna. The Rebbe wrote to them, “Surely you are writing to your brothers (the other students) who remain in other places that they should come quickly--

nothing should hold them back. They should strengthen their trust in Hashem Yisborach that He will help them, and they will make the journey successfully, and they will come to strive in Torah and Avodah. Send me exact accounts of those you wrote to; keep on writing to encourage them, because time is of the essence” (Igros Kodesh of the Friediker Rebbe, vol. 5, p. 20).

On Adar Rishon 3, the Rebbe wrote a letter to another student: “Every one of the students has to write to his friend to encourage him to come quickly, and each one should try to help to search and find the students whose addresses are unknown. They should speak to those who are hesitating to come, whatever their reasons may be. They should have mercy on their souls and they should stand strong against anything that is holding them back and come to the Yeshiva. They must also stress to those who learnt in the small Yeshivas like Chelm and Lodz, that they should come to Tomchei Temimim. Please notify me of all the news that is received regarding this matter” (Igros Kodesh of the Friediker Rebbe, vol. 5, p. 26).

The Rebbe sent many letters to various bochurim who came to learn in Yeshiva, urging them to sit and learn, keep the seder, and fulfill the requests contained in all his previous letters.

The Rashag, the Friediker Rebbe’s oldest son in law, Rabbi



Shmaryahu Gurary, came to visit the Yeshiva in Vilna (from Riga, on his way to America). He demanded of the bochurim, in the name of the Friediker Rebbe, to send letters to everyone they knew, urging them to leave Poland and come to Vilna.

Rabbi Garfinkel noted that on his way to Vilna, when he crossed the border to Lithuania, whenever he knocked on the door of a Jewish home, the door was opened wide for him when they realized he was a bochur in need, notwithstanding their own destitution. They shared their last bits of food and gave away their own beds to help provide for a yeshiva bochur in need. We saw openly what the Friediker Rebbe spoke about so often in his sichos: the Lithuanian Jews' love of Torah.

In Poland there was a lot of open anti-Semitism and there were many troubling incidents with the Polish neighbors. My father told me that when he came to

Vilna it felt very liberating to be able to walk around without anti-Semitic hatred following one's every step. Vilna was very different from Warsaw because Vilna was more modern (in a religious sense). The bochurim came from Poland, which was a war-torn country, with food shortages etc., to a place that was like a paradise, a neutral country without the ravages of war.

When they arrived, the bochurim involved themselves in writing letters encouraging others to come. Also, my father and Reb Yosef Weinberg started sending telegrams to the bochurim in Poland. They would sign them "Yossel Raichik," which was a combination of their names, so that in case they were intercepted, they could not be traced to a real person. One of the questions which lay heavily on my father's mind was who would pay for the expense of the bochurim's escaping Poland. As mentioned in a previous article, the Friediker Rebbe gave each bochur 100 to 150

Zlotys to help them. Now, the Rebbe was in Riga on his way to America. The Friediker Rebbe responded to my father's question with the following letter, which he wrote in Stockholm (he was there only one day) on his way to America:

The letter was sent from Stockholm to Riga, to R' Yechezkel Feigin, who was the Friediker Rebbe's personal secretary. He then typed up the letter and sent it on from Riga to Vilna. The stationary was cut off because my father later traveled to Russia, and while in Russia all mention of Lubavitch was taken out of their papers.

In the first part of the letter the Rebbe acknowledges his arrival in the Yeshiva, and he wishes him that Hashem should bless him in his learning, that he should be a Yiras Shamayim, a Chosid and a Lamdan.

On the bottom of the letter Rabbi Feigin adds:

I received the answers for the letters from Stockholm. The letters itself I did not see. But it's clear that you wrote another letter to the Rebbe, in a separate paragraph there was another answer to you.

He should write to them that they should go and ask Reb Tzvi (Hershel) Gurary, concerning their expenses. With out any demands, quietly that it shouldn't become public knowledge. There's a possibility that he could help them. Because I wrote to him concerning this matter.

Reb Shlomo Hochler told me that he got a postcard from R' Hershel Kotlarsky, which read "Our father (the Rebbe) wants you to come, nothing should hold you back from coming; for expenses go to Hershel Gurary." He went to Hershel Gurary, who sent him to his brother-in-law, who in turn gave him the money to escape. One problem people faced when crossing the border was that they had to trust strangers to take them across and not bring them to the Police. Another

problem is that many people were left halfway through the crossing to complete it themselves, not knowing where they were or which direction they had to go in. It took time to find trustworthy people to cross you over. Often the bochurim on the Russian side had to notify the bochurim in Vilna that they were coming and that there should be someone waiting to pay for them. This was done to ensure their safety, that they would be crossed the full way, and not robbed during the trip and left alone. My father was once caught by the Lithuanian border patrol, waiting for some bochurim who were coming over. He sat two days in prison for it. When he was released he was asked what happened in prison and his answer was always "gornisht"--nothing happened.

The last group which came over in that period of time was R' Chaim Meir Bukiet, R' Laibel Kramer, R' Shlomo Hochler and R' Moshe Leder Hender. They crossed over on Pesach Sheni, and my father was waiting for them. The guide was a woman who wanted an exorbitant sum of money. My father said, "If you won't bargain on the price, just take the 'merchandise' back!" (He said this knowing obviously that this guide wasn't taking anyone back.)

When the Friediker Rebbe left Poland and came to Riga on his way to America, he stayed in Riga for two and a half months, since they needed time to get the papers to come to America and his mother, Rebbitzin Shterna Sara, needed an operation. The borders between Riga (Latvia) and Vilna, Kovna (Lithuania) were open. Chassidim came to visit the Friediker Rebbe. During this time Rabbi Yehoshua Issac Baruk came to visit the Friediker Rebbe from Kovno, Lithuania. The Friediker Rebbe told him in Yechidus, "I'm appointing you to be the mashpia of the Yeshiva." Rabbi Yehoshua Issac once farbrenged with the bochurim in Vilna. He related that when the Friediker Rebbe appointed him as mashpia he cried to the Rebbe that he was not fit for such a role. To

יוסף יצחק שניאורסאהן

ליום אדמו"ר

ב"ה כ"ה אדר ש"ת
מסוקהולם,

אל ההלמיז החסוב

מר מנחם דמואל דוד

שי" רייטשוק,

שלום וברכה,

כמענה על מכחבו המודיע שבא

ח"ל לשלום לישיבת חו"ת הנני מברכו בברכה

בברכה כרוך הבא, ובשח קרא אח מכחבי להחלמיזים

ומקיים ככל האמור בו, והשי"ת יעזר לו להצליח

בלימודו וישי"ת יר"ש חסיד ולמדן,

בשם כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א

המענוח על המנחכים קבלתי מסוקהולם המנחכים עצמם
לא ראיתי כפי הנראה כי הי"ת ממך עוד מכחב לכ"ק כי
בסעיף מיוחד הי"ת כחוב עוד מענה על סמך בזה"ל
ינחוב להם סיכואו ויפנו לר"צ צבי שי"ת גורארי" ע"ד
הוצאות מוכן בלא חביעות זכאסי שלא יפורסם אפשר יוכל
לעזר להם כינהבחי לו כנדון זה, עכ"ל המענה השני אליו,

The letter from the Rebbe with the addition from Rabbi Y. Feigin.

anyone whom he met he used to relate the words which the Friediker Rebbe told him to convey to all of the chassidim: "The (Atlantic) ocean is not an ocean which divides us but an ocean that unites us. Everyone should strengthen themselves with emunah and hiskashrus as it used to be." Often at farbrengen he recounted the last words which the Rebbe said to him, "We will meet again with Moshiach." He said that from this he understood his future: that only when Moshiach comes would he physically see the

Rebbe again.

The Yeshiva ran in a very normal state until the first day of Shavuot 1940, when the Russians marched into Lithuania and annexed it. Things started to change right away: Food became scarce, people were afraid of the communists and everyone was looking for a way to flee.

Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik Writes:

“The Great Kindness which Hashem Did for Me”

This is a letter that my father wrote to the Frierdiker Rebbe when he was on the run from Poland to Vilna in 1939 with my notes. He traveled from the 18th of Elul thru the 29th of Teves. He traveled from parts of Poland that were under Germany to parts of Poland that were under the Russians. Later they were smuggled across from Poland into Lithuania to get to Vilna. The Rebbe instructed the bochurim that they should all go to Vilna and that those that arrive in Vilna should write to their friends in Poland to come to Vilna, as well:

...With this I can notify the Rebbe about the great kindness that the Hashem did with me. After much tribulations and great difficulty I returned to Tomchei Tmimim here [in Vilna], the night of the 29th of Teves. [My father and Rabbi Greenglass traveled together to the Frierdiker Rebbe with a pidyon from the group of 10 bochurim that were leaving to Vilna.]

This is how I traveled. We got the bracha from the Rebbe on the the night of the 18th of Kislev, we were still in Praga [a small city next to Warsaw] until the next day. On the night



of Yud Tes Kislev we farbrenge. Afterwards we traveled to Shedlitz, Boruch Hashem, after many obstacles, on the night 26th of Kislev, we crossed the border [from the German occupied zone of Poland to the Russian occupied zone]. On the 29th of Kislev we arrived in Slonim. The night of Rosh Chodesh, the 30th of Kislev, we farbrenge with Hatomim Shmuel Zilberman. He was involved with us and collected for us a nice sum of money. [At that time he was also involved in the Mikvah because the Bolsheviks YM”S closed the Mikvah. Boruch Hashem together with the Rav, he was successful and the government assured him that they’ll allow the Mikvah to be reopened.]

On the night of the 3rd of Teves we arrived in Lida after we got what we needed to continue our travels. On the night of the 8th of Teves we continued traveling together with Moshe Berman and Zelig Dovid Zilberman to the shtetl Ashmina. During this time the government had devalued the Polish currency [the money collected was now worthless], so we traveled to Glubuka on the night of the 14th of Teves. The Rav in Glubuka, Hatomim Yitzchak Mandelbaum, gathered a nice sum of money for us. He really wanted to join us and leave Glubuka with us, but he felt responsible for the city and

didn't feel he could leave. Since it was difficult to cross the border near Ashmina, Mendel Tenenbaum and I traveled to Fostov on the 15th of Teves. We stayed for Shabbos by the Rav [Rabbi Yehudah Leib Freiden]. Hatalmid Mendel Tenenbaum chazered a maamer of chassidus. The Rav also collected money for us. From there we travel to Haduzushka and we stayed by a Hatomim Hershel Kurlanshuk. From there we traveled to Shventzian on the 20th of Teves. We stayed at a chassidishe shtiebel there and a Chossid Menachem Mendel Berlin, a Shochet, helped us. Boruch Hashem after many hardships we crossed the border [between the Russian occupied zone of Poland and Lithuania] and on the night of the 29th of Teves we came here [Vilna].

[My father told us that when the group was supposed to cross the border to Vilna, it was wintertime and the snow was so high that it was up to their knees. My father got separated from the group and he was calling "Mendel... Mendel" eventually they heard him and he caught up to them. He lost his boots and when he came to Vilna his feet were frozen and his toes were frostbitten. He had trouble with his toes the rest of his life. Rabbi Mordechai Bryski told me that he remembers how my father was in pain because of his feet but he didn't complain about himself as he was worried about others, as we'll soon see in the rest of the letter.]

Boruch Hashem we found many bochurim from Otwock here [in Vilna]. The yeshiva is settled and boruch Hashem the yeshiva is mesudar b'gashmiush and b'ruchnius and one can see the effect the yeshiva has on other yeshivas. A whole new world opened up for some talmidim of these yeshivas, and they come to learn chassidus every night. Shabbos Kodesh when we chazer chassidus there is a big crowd from those yeshivas and we hope that with time the yeshiva will be at the level that it was in Otwock, at the standard that it is supposed to be. The Eibishter should bentsh

that Tomchei Tmimim should continue forever till Moshiach comes.

On Shabbos Parshas Teruma, Reb Moshe Leib Rodshtein farbrenghened... The Eibishter should give me the strength that I should be a Tomim, like I was meant to be, and I should be matzliach in learning nigleh and chassidus and there should be no obstacles keeping me from being involved in torah and avodah (davening) and I should hear good tidings from my father together with all of klal Yisroel.

When my father and Rabbi Tenenbaum arrived in Vilna, Rabbi Greenglass, a close friend of my fathers who was already in Vilna, wrote to the Rebbe that the bochurim arrived. The Rebbe responded with a request that everyone in Vilna should write to their relatives in Poland asking them to leave Poland as fast as they can and travel to Vilna. He blessed them that they shouldn't meet any obstacles and they should strengthen their bitochon in the Eibeshter, that he will help them and they'll be successful in their path and they will show diligence in Torah and Avoda. The Rebbe wanted them to let him know who they wrote to and to keep on writing with urgency because time is very precious. In response to that request, on that Mozoei Shabbos, Parshas Ki Sisa, my father wrote to the Rebbe on Motzoei Shabbos, Parshas Ki Sisa 15th of Adar I, 5700:

...I wrote letters to hatalmid Yitzchak Noach Lieberman, Zalman Feivel Bizsinsky, Yaakov Leib Markovitz and the Goldberg brothers. From the bochur Noach Yitzchak I got a response that he is healthy. Since I wrote to him in a disguised manner he didn't understand exactly what I was referring to so I wrote to him once again more explicitly. At the border of Ashmina there are students, Shlomo Moshe Eisenberg, Yosef Sable, Yaakov Friedman, Benzion

The Yeshivah in Vilna

As mentioned in previous articles, the Previous Rebbe requested that the Bochorim escape to Vilna in Kislev of 5700 (December '39). Each bochur experienced hardships in the process of escaping the Nazis at the border. In the Yeshiva of Vilna, the bochorim learned under Rabbi Ushpol. Rabbi Shmuel Zalmanoff and Rabbi Rotstein came at the beginning of the war, and Rabbi Yehoshua Isaac of Kovna was made mashpiah by the Rebbe, as mentioned previously.

The Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Vilna, Lithuania tried to maintain its regular, rigorous schedule of learning and prayers. However, even if the Yeshiva students were in a relatively safe haven, their families were too often in critical circumstances in Poland.

While in Stockholm for only one day (on the 25th of Adar I, 5700, Tuesday, March 5, 1940) the Rebbe sent my father 2 letters. (The other letter was printed previously.) This letter to my father and Rabbi Bornstein, obm, Rabbi Moshe Fedder, Rabbi Avrohom Yitchak Garfinkle instructed the bochorim to orally review their *chidushim* (innovations) in Niglah once a week. They were to take care, however, that this should not detract from their Chassidic studies. Reb Moshe Fedder told me that he remembers the *chiddushim* that my father said to this group of four.

How amazing it was that, even while escaping the war and on a one-day layover, the Rebbe gave this advice and the bochorim took it to heart with such energy under wartime

conditions.

The letter was sent to Rabbi Yechezkel Faigen in Riga and he typed it (and the other letter) and sent it to Vilna. (Later these four ran the Yeshiva in Shanghai, as we will discuss, please G-d, in the future.)

While onboard the Rottingholm on the 27th of Adar I, 5700, Thursday, March 6, 1940, the Rebbe wrote to the students of Tomchei Tmimim Lubavitch, in the city of Vilna, as follows:

I am traveling with the hope that the students, especially the older students, take upon themselves the responsibly of running the Yeshiva, the learning of Niglah Chassidus, davening, and farbrengens, and it should run in the spirit of the Yeshiva in Otvosk ... and the older talmidim should run the Yeshiva physically and spiritually, and make sure everything is proper, and they should write me weekly, via air mail, regarding everything, the physical and spiritual ...

This is letter 11653 in Volume 5 of the Previous Rebbe's Letters. (In Hebrew)

When Rabbi Ushpol, then Rabbi Shmuel Zalmanoff, and Rabbi Rotstein, left to America in the Winter of 1940, the Yeshiva was run by four or five senior bochorim including Rabbis Rodal, Weisberg, Handel and Kramer. When the Rebbe settled in America, the goal was to stay in Vilna only

Rabbis (from left to right) Raichik, Feder, Borenstein and Garfinkel in Vilna.



temporarily and then move to the States.

When in Vilna they sent food packages to their families in Poland. Rabbi Yeshia Isaac, a Lithuanian citizen, often went to the post office to ship the packages, as it was easier for him as a citizen to do so.

As related in a previous article, my father a”h, along with Rabbi Weinberg, created a “company.” To hide their identities they mixed up their names when they sent telegrams concerning the all matters relating the bochurim escaping Poland or Vilna. I found a letter from the Previous Rebbe addressed to ‘Shmuel Dovid Weinberg,’ replying to a telegram. “...that your travel should be safe, in the right path, and you should please notify me upon your arrival...” This letter was sent from America after the last group of bochurim escaped to Vilna.

On Shavuot, in 1940, the Soviets stole back Lithuania,

Estonia, and Latvia because the Germans occupied the Baltic area. Nine months of independence came to an end, and things immediately changed in Lithuania. Food became scarce, and even basic commodities were hard to find in stores. People became very scared.

Rabbi Hendel relates that when the Russian troops occupied Vilna, he advised the bochurim to buy anything non-perishable: light bulbs, soap, and anything else. The bochurim brought all their purchases to the shul and warehoused them (where the taleism were kept) and later, if necessary, sold them, often on the black-markets. This practice was designed to have merchandise available to sell, to keep the Yeshiva bochurim clothed and fed.

In the summer of 1939, which was considered a “hot summer” due to the pending war. The Imperial Japanese government set up a consulate office in Kovna, Lithuania. At that time the Abishter planted a

seed to allow Yidden to escape from Eastern Europe. This is how it worked:

Many consulates closed after the Soviets took over because the new capital was in Moscow, not Kovno. A few consulates still had their offices, but only for a few weeks during this transition period. One such office was the Japanese consulate. Refugees were going from consulate to consulate seeking refuge. The Japanese consulate agreed to issue a transit visa if the refugees could find a destination. That was when two Dutch students from the Mir Yeshiva, who were unable to return to Amsterdam, learned that Curacao, a Dutch controlled island, allowed everyone in without a visa.

Yet the bochurim did not just need a destination; they needed exit visas and transit visas. These were not routine matters. For one thing, they needed proof of identity, and this was difficult in itself. Some had their birth certificates or military documentation. Some escaped Poland with nothing.

It was possible to go to the Polish Government in Exile, located in the English embassy, with 2 Polish citizens to serve as witnesses. If their testimony was satisfactory, a document was issued that attested to the person's identity and citizenship.

Some, like my father, got documentation of his identity and citizenship from the Lithuanian police. My father's town was totally destroyed, and all of the court and legal documents were destroyed with it. Rabbi Kramer, became the "ambassador" for the Yeshiva to deal with these matter in all of the consulates and embassies. Some yeshivas let each student deal with these matters individually, but to maintain the seder, the Lubavitch Yeshiva used Rabbi Kramer to represent the students.

Once they had obtained their identity documents, each student and refugee's documents were stamped by the Dutch (in charge of Curacao) with the words

"No Visa Required" to enter Curacao. Then, the Japanese consul, Sugihara, gave a temporary 60-day visa to travel through Japan to Curacao.

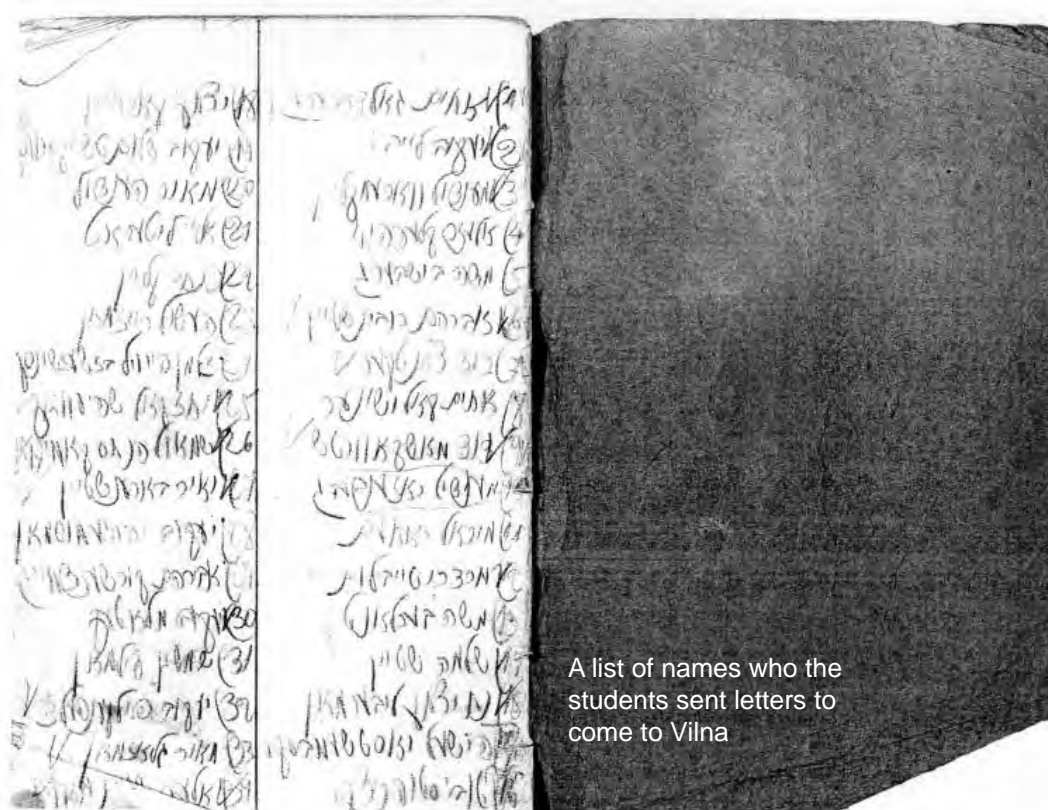
Because of the Soviet occupation, the Japanese government wanted the Lithuanian consulate to be shut down. The Consul General approved the transit visa for thousands of refugees, some even without the Curacao stamp present. This act of kindness saved thousands of lives, and therefore he was reprimanded by his government for acting without authority.

Exit visas were issued by the Soviet NKVD. The officer in charge was a Jew named Rabinovitch. The idea was to take the trans-Siberian railroad to Vladivostok, and then sail to Kobe in Japan. Rabbi Landau relates that Mr. Rabinovitch came out and said, "Where are the Lubavitchers? Are they all sleeping?" Because of Rabbi Kramer, they weren't "hanging out" in the government offices.

But the Rabbinic leadership was sharply divided on this approach. My father related often, and his words were full of pain, that many of the prominent leaders of the Jewish Community felt it was too dangerous to apply to the Russians for the exit visas.

There was a basis for their fears. Previously, when Yidden applied for exit visas, tragic events followed. In the winter of 1939, when Poland was split between German and Russian control, many refugees escaped to the Russian controlled areas. The Soviets promised that any Jew wishing to return home would have to register, and they would be allowed to return. The NVKD collected the paperwork, captured the applicants, and sent them (perhaps several 100,000) into exile to Siberia. Knowing this, it was not an easy decision to apply to the NKVD for exit visas.

At that time, it looked terrible for the Jews. How could anyone have known that many of these people were actually saved from the onslaught of the Nazis. At the conclusion of the war, many of the Polish Jews



who survived and Chabad Chasidim left Russia on these Polish passports.

The Rebbe communicated that they should take the visas. The Amshinover Rebbe backed the process, and he actively advised that the Yidden should exit through Russia. Many of the community leaders didn't follow his advice. Lubavitch did, however, as did the Mirrer and Chomchei Lublin Yeshiva. Some of the other Yeshivas did as well, but many did not apply. Those able left Vilna in the winter of '41. The process of obtaining visas and travelling took many months.

The bochurim observed the Yomim Noraim of 1940 in Vilna. Because of the wartime difficulties in transportation and communication, they had worked throughout the summer looking for esrogim. They sent telegrams to Rabbi Teleshevski in Finland, to Rabbi Zuber in Stockholm, Rabbi Schmerling in Switzerland, and Rabbi Korasik in Eretz Yisroel.

Four esrogim were obtained. The plan was to "divide the City" into quadrants, and share the 4 esrogim amongst all of the Jewish residents. Reb Velvel Brisker approached the bochurim and requested a private esrog. The bochurim initially refused. Reb Velvel replied that the previous year, when he in war-torn Warsaw, he had been sent one by the Rebbe. The bochurim immediately relented and gave him one of their four precious esrogim.

On another front, the Lubavitcher bochurim knew that Rebbe was working hard and had already secured many visas for America, and they were waiting for them in route at the American Embassy in Moscow. In the previous article we discussed the bochurim leaving Vilna. In January and February of 1941 (Shevat),

the bochurim and refugees left Vilna for their destination of Kobe, Japan via the Russian city of Vladivostok, The previous Rebbe worked diligently

to obtain visas for the refugees to enter the United States. The paper-work was approved and obtained and was promised to be in the American consulate in Moscow. So the over- alljourney of two weeks, using the Trans-Siberian railroad, would entail a stop in Minsk (without a change of trains) and a three to four day layover in Moscow.

A major obstacle was funds. The Russian government charged about \$500 per person for travel expenses, accommodations and the visa. Some of the money came from "The Joint" (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) and the rest from the Previous Rebbe. See the letters, telegrams and other correspondence from the Previous Rebbe, Igros Kodesh, Volume 5. See especially the Introduction and pages 31 through 41, concerning the hardships of securing visas and funds for travel.

My great uncle, Reb Moshe Horowitz, OB" M, once related to me that they used to sign the visas when the Japanese consulate was still open. This was too time-consuming and they created a rubber stamp to speed the process, so that the Consul would not need to sign personally. Even after the Japanese offices were closed, they still used the rubber stamp. They also needed proof of residency. One method the authorities used was to examine the official register of residents in each housing complex. Hundreds of Jews wrote their names on the housing rosters and backdated the records--many, many more than could ever have lived in those dwellings. In those desperate times many peoples tried to get different types of forged visas to leave and they had to present them to the Russian office in Vilna of the NKVD to get an exit visa to travel through Russia. One of the people in this office was a Jew named Schlossberg. Once he noticed a visa and its irregularities, but still let the person through, commenting "Next time, use a better forgery!"

The bochurim in charge gave counsel to those

stranded to try to obtain visas and join the group in Japan. One of the great Chassidim, Reb Shainin from Dochshitz, was among those who were stranded.

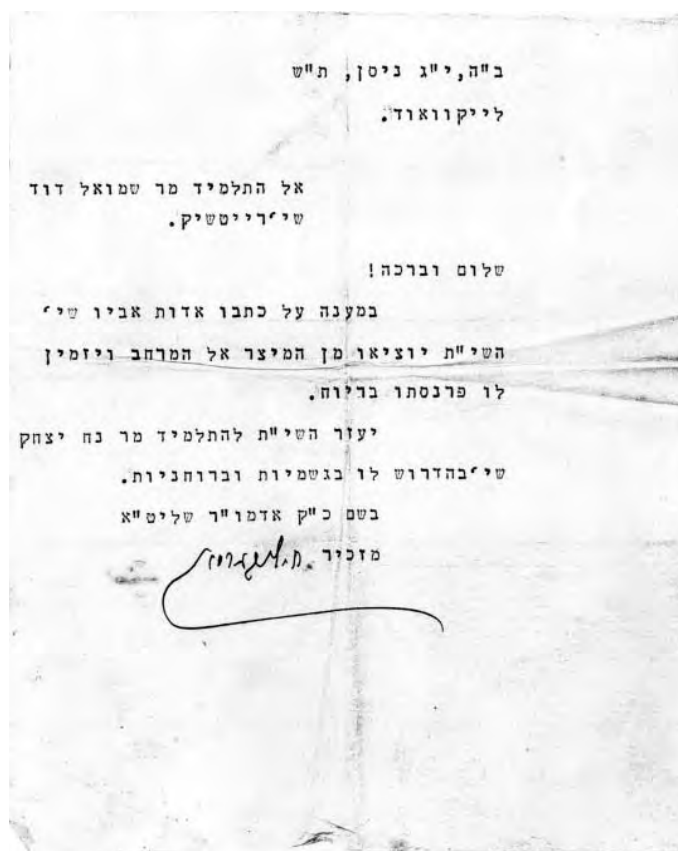
Even when they were in Shanghai they tried to send visas to the Chassidim in Riga and ViIna.

Since nobody knew what lay ahead, the departure from Vilna was quite emotional. Many _ bochurim attempted to get their visas after the Russians took control of Lithuania. The Japanese consulate was closed and this was impossible. Nobody knew if those trapped in Vilna would ever be seen again. It was later learned that these people did not make it out.

Before leaving Vilna, Rabbi Hendel traveled to Riga to farbreng with the Lubavitchers there. He was to give the Rebbe regards from the Riga Chassidim when he would finally reach America. After all, they expected the journey to be routine, the visas were arranged, and America was easily in their reach. So they thought. When Rabbi Hendel was in Riga, he also met with the respected Chosid Reb Mordechai Dubin, who gave hundreds of dollars 10 the bochurim for the Yesniva in Vilna.

In Moscow, the bochurim who escaped were treated like tourists by the Soviet government. They were placed in the finest hotels, used for diplomats, and were given escorted tours of the famous city, including (to the chagrin and horror of the refugees) shrines to Lenin. They were offered the finest food in the fanciest places, but requested only raw eggs, fresh fruit, hot water, and cans of sardines. One morning, while waiting in line to purchase food for the remainder of their journey, they were escorted to the head of the bread line by the Russian police. It wasn't proper for guests to see that the "communist utopia" had lines for food, let alone stand in those food lines.

While in Moscow the bochurim made contact with



This is a letter to Rabbi Raichik from the Previous Rebbe in response to a letter asking for a brochah for safe passage for his father in Poland.

the Lubavitcher community although everywhere they went, there were spies. The refugees wanted to help the local Lubavitchers, but they were afraid of the Soviets. In the Russian synagogue, the Marina Genera, they wouldn't co-mingle. The escapees wanted to leave siddurim and mezuzahs behind, but they couldn't hand them over directly. Instead, they just left the items on tables after they davened. They avoided the public areas, where they were being watched, and met in the mikvah to discuss issues. The bochurim lived in a constant state of fear, that from being "tourists" and treated with the utmost respect, they could be charged for being spies and sent to Siberia.

When the bochurim went to the American consulate in Moscow to be issued the appropriate visas, they were told it was too much work to issue the visas then and there. The visas were approved, but the paperwork would take too long to process. "Don't worry" they were assured. They were told to just go

to Kobe, and the bureaucratic paperwork would be waiting for them. The bochurim didn't want to stay longer in Russia, so they left without the visas.

From Moscow, they traveled to Vladivostok by train. At each stop on the long train ride they asked for hot water and other food (such as vegetables). They were not always successful with the food, but they always had hot water. There were many beggars coming onto the train to beg for food, but eventually the authorities stopped them because it looked bad.

After arriving at Vladivostok, before boarding the ship to Kobe, the refugees were carefully screened again by the Russian authorities. One bochur had a small Sefer Torah, which they confiscated. As long as the boat was still escorted by the Russian coast guard, they were very anxious because anything could happen and their escape was still uncertain. When they reached international waters, a simchah broke out on the ship.

The Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Kobe

In Nagasaki, the refugees found many exciting things--after all, this wasn't Europe and the war situation had not had the same effect on the people. Firstly, the people were different. The way they dressed was foreign to the Europeans, and there was also a great deal of difference in the way they conducted themselves.

Additionally, the streets and stores were different. Markets had food, especially fruit and vegetables. This was unlike what they had seen or experienced in Poland, Lithuania or Russia. And stores had clothing--racks were filled with suits and jackets and belts. These were rare communities where the refugees had come from.

From Nagasaki, the Lubavitchers took a train to Kobe, where they were pleasantly surprised at the Jewish community. When they arrived in Kobe, even though the refugees must have looked so strange to the Japanese, they were treated surprisingly well. The small Jewish community in Kobe was well established. It was organized with a shul, a chazzan, even a shochet, and they took good care of the refugees, striving to meet all their needs. The community helped the Lubavitchers with all of their necessities including housing and food.

The community initially housed them in a hotel (where the custom was to sleep on mats and eat close to the floor), until they located a suitable 2-story building to rent for the

Lubavitchers. (Other groups were similarly accommodated.) Another building served as the Yeshiva. On the upper floor, lived the Amshinover Rebbe, Reb Shimon Kalish. On a personal note, Reb Shimon is the person who sent my father a.h. to Lubavitch, in Otvosk, and he remained close to Lubavitch, especially the Yeshiva, during the war. The Friedieker Rebbe advised the bochurim that if communications failed, they should ask the Amshinover for advice. The Amshinover Rebbe had his own sefer torah, and Reb Avrohom Yitzchok Garfinkle remembers reading the Torah for him. Generally, he participated with the Yeshiva's minyan.

The refugees encountered interesting predicaments in the Kobe Yeshiva. The bochurim, about 30, were used to a different diet than the indigenous Asian foods they were being introduced to. Instead of wheat flour, they had rice flour, and rice became their staple.

Since they had no cooks, the bochurim took turns, in rotation, in the kitchen. Being unfamiliar with rice, the "chef-for-a-day" bochur felt that about one cup of rice per student would be adequate. Needless to say, the entire Bais Medrosh was inundated with cascading rice and water.

The weather was hot and humid. It was so humid that once a fish dinner they had prepared for Shabbos, spoiled. (They had no iceboxes, and this was before Japan had refrigeration in



Lubavitch students arriving in Kobe, Japan.

homes.) It wasn't just sour; it was spoiled to the point of serious poisoning. The next morning, whatever few students hadn't suffered food poisoning were helping Dr. Seligson pump the stomachs of those poor young men who had become seriously ill.

For Pesach the situation was also difficult. Where could they find hand-made wheat matzo in Kobe? The answer was not to be found in Kobe, but in Shanghai. Reb Meir Ashkenazi, the Rav of Shanghai, sent matzos to the Lubavitch Yeshiva in Kobe.

Several questions on Torah law arose while the refugees were in Japan. One issue, the location of the International Date Line according to the Torah Law, challenged Torah scholars worldwide.

The majority opinion felt that the calendar and the days of the week, as observed in Japan, was correct and that one could satisfy the Shabbos laws by keeping Shabbos on the local Saturday. A minority

opinion felt that due to the location of the date line, Shabbos should be observed on the local Sunday.

The Mirrer Yeshiva was advised to keep Shabbos on the local Sunday from a celebrated world recognized Poseik. Because of this, my father related to me, that even though Lubavitch kept Shabbos on the local's Saturday, for several weeks they put on Tefillin on Shabbos afternoon, because of the "safeik" – the question. After being informed that most of the Rabbonim disagreed with that opinion, he ended the Shabbos tefillin practice. Nonetheless, many refused to violate any Shabbos Torah prohibitions on the local Sunday because of the other opinion, in addition to keeping Shabbos on the local Saturday.

The Mirrer Mashgiach, although his Yeshiva kept Shabbos on the local Sunday, came to the Lubavitcher Yeshiva on Saturday to listen to the Shabbos Torah reading. As we discussed previously, the bochurim

came to Kobe with the intention of going to America. The visas that were arranged to be picked up in Moscow, and later to be picked up in Kobe, became null and void. The US Department of State changed its policy, and said that anybody who had family in war-torn Europe would not be allowed to enter America. Their travel visas became useless. So, while they were learning in their Yeshiva, the transit visas for Japan were soon to expire. They received an extension to stay longer than 90 days, but that was not enough to see America change its mind.

And Japan wanted the refugees out. And they knew where to send them: Shanghai, an “international city” which would reject no refugees. Meanwhile, on the 23rd of Av, corresponding to August 16, 1941, the Rebbe telegraphed the Jewish Community to try to convince the Japanese officials to let them delay their departure as he was trying to get them admitted to the Americas.

The Rebbe tried to get visas for the bochurim to go to Canada or Paraguay for admission, but those options were cut off. They knew that they wanted to be near the Rebbe in America, but their next destination was to be Shanghai, China. Only nine bochurim were later to leave Shanghai for Montreal, Canada in November of 1941. There, they established the Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Montreal. (In the summer of 1946, the remaining bochurim came to America.)

When they knew they were destined to be relocated to Shanghai, they actually left in Elul, to avoid yet another serious matter of Jewish law. With the question of the location of the “halachic” international dateline, and with the Torah prohibition of eating on the quickly approaching Yom Kippur. In Shanghai, there was no question concerning which day to observe, so on a Friday afternoon in Elul, they arrived in Shanghai, and they were warmly greeted with open arms at the port by Rabbi and Mrs. Ashkenazi. They took them in, and all of the other

refugees, for the remainder of the war.

A Report from Kobe

The following a letter sent from the bochurim from Kobe, Japan, to New York Summer 1941.

This is excerpted and translated from a letter sent to Rabbi Shmaryahu Gurary (known as the Rashag), the older son-in-law of the Previous Rebbe, who served as the head of the Lubavitch Yeshivas. It was sent by the bochurim who escaped from Poland through the Soviet Union during their stay in Kobe, Japan. It was the Raslag’s task to support these bochurim - students of Luhavitch Yeshiva.

The bochurim are explaining what they have been trying to do to save Anash still trapped in Riga - they borrowed money and later asked the Rashag to pay. Although the Bochurim were far from home they strove to save others trapped in Europe. The Bochurim were for the most part unable to turn to any established sources of funds to save Anash in Europe. They had lists of people to match addresses in Europe. They had to convince Intourist (Soviet travel bureau) to permit travel through the Soviet Union to Vladivostock. The Bochurim had to help furnish visa and travel documents. All this collapsed with the entrance of Germany into war with the Soviets. Much of the letter is redundant--they repeat themselves again and again to try to explain their actions. We tried to retain the style of the original letter, which was written in informal fashion, as one chossid speaks to another.

...We received your letter of the 17th of Sivan.

You are wondering about the list we sent to Rabbi Ashkenazi [of Shanghai] without your knowledge. It may have been a mistake on our part that we didn’t inform you of our activities and the people on this list. You write that it is not proper to borrow money

and come [to you] and request payment. You have to understand our situation. There was no time to wait because this was a question of saving people, by the time a letter would be sent or even a telegram would be written, sent, received and a response made, time would be wasted; and we had to get all the names from all the Anash, and anyone [else] we could. R. Yehuda Eber and R. Chatzchel Feigen requested and begged that we should help them get out [of Europe] so we got involved and hence, and we did their mission. The Anash in Riga told us to ignore any expense and just try to save them. We had no doubt that you would agree to this. It was a time of saving lives. We had a petition we sent to R. Ashkenazi that he should do everything in his power for this matter. There were also some individuals who traveled to Shanghai to meet personally with Rabbi Ashkenazi about other people in Europe. The delegation is made of Mr. Newman, Mr. Warhaftig, and one more person to handle pressing immigration issues particularly what to do with us - the refugees in Kobe.

Here there is a committee, the "Vaad", established to save Bnei Torah of Lit a [Lithuania]. When we came to the Vaad they said that their objective is saving Rabonim and bochurim and we gave them a list of baalei batim. What should we do now? Sit and fast? Start writing letters with questions and answers? We already have enough experience to know that time is of the essence. If war had not broken out between Germany and Russia, everything would have ended up properly. Our plan was to first contact Intourist (the Soviet travel bureau). In the beginning Intourist did not want to

listen to our proposal.

After that, they agreed, so we sent telegrams with all the information to Moscow. Afterwards, they compromised and we sent telegrams with applications and affidavits to Moscow, then we had to show them the travel arrangements - and more. All this was through telegrams which are costly. We tried to get permission - all the visas, the train tickets and so forth - for travel to Vladivostock.

Intourist already started gathering the documents and permission for the travel plan. The list was very long and for everyone on the list we had to have a separate application. One of the families was a family of thirteen people

Surely you forgive us for not informing you earlier of our activities. But the Aibishter had different plans and He should protect all of them from all distress and save them, for when Germany went to war (against Russia), all our expense and effort became worthless. What should we do?

There was no time to ask and get answers, for when it comes to saving lives time is very short. We even planned to use the money we put aside for our food to save people. We received telegrams from Anash "Do everything which you can to save us!" We had to telegram to Riga, Latvia and we didn't have the correct addresses until we received the right addresses more time passed.

True, in regular times we first ask and then spend; not the opposite. But it must be understood that this is not a normal time. When it comes to saving lives, one must sometimes ignore the formalities, especially

when telegrams are received from R. Yechezkel Feigen [secretary to the Previous Rebbe] and R. Yehudah Eber [Rosh Yeshiva in Otvosk] and others. They write to us “have mercy on our souls, do what you can to save us.” We couldn’t limit ourselves. The problem was the names did not match the addresses on our list. The first thing we want to ask R. Ashkenazi is whether he knows the correct addresses for the people on our lists....

Shimon Goldman went to make fingerprints and he had all his papers and a visa. Additionally contact was made with Washington, DC about his case and they approved that within seven days he would get his visa. But there came a new ruling from the United States that no visas were to be issued to people with relatives in the occupied European countries. This is a new obstacle.

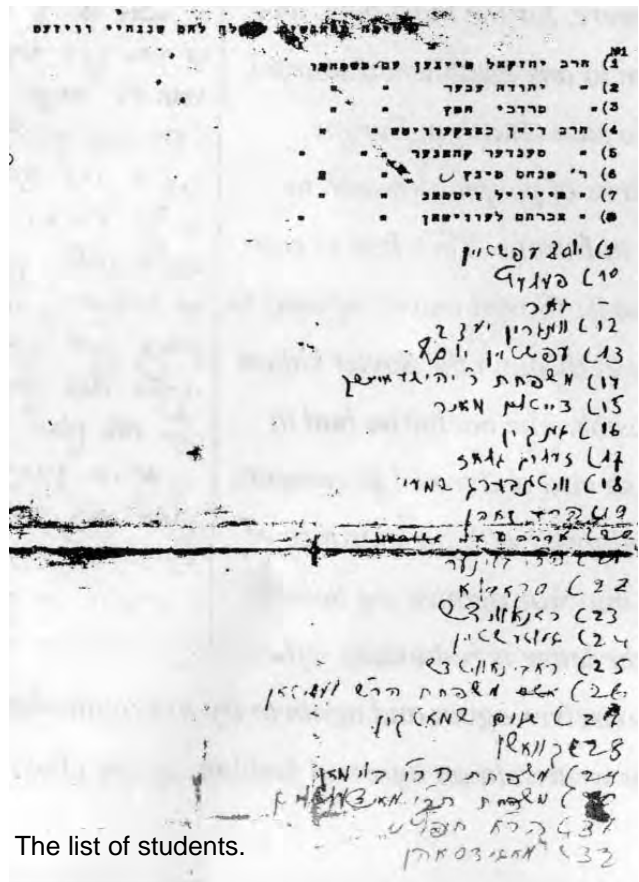
Surely you are going to start some work in Washington. The Polish ambassador called a meeting with all the Yeshivos and Rabbonim and said he wanted to help them emigrate to various English Colonies and he will have one hundred Canadian visas in a few weeks. He wants a complete list and a plan how this will be carried out. How many individuals to Canada, how many to South Africa and so forth. Although there were many difficulties, we managed to get our names on the list to go to Canada, with all the other Yeshiva bochurim and Rabonnim. And the Aibishter should help us that all this should come to fruition

...For the Chag HaGeulah of Yud-Beis Tammuz we made a very big farbrengen. The Amshinover Rebbe spoke at the

farbrengen. We were able to get many bnei Torah to attend. The Yeshiva was full and everyone wondered how such a small number of bochurim could get such a big event together.

Members of the committee to help the bochurim from the yeshivos to get visas were in attendance. One of them is from an Anash family - R. Yochanan Levin--the farbrengen made a great impression on him which encouraged him to help procure visas....

In the middle of Elul (August 21, 1941) the Japanese expelled the Jewish refugees and it was then the bochurim traveled from Kobe to Shanghai. Right after Yom Kippur nine bochurim received Canadian visas enabling them to travel to Montreal. Once there they established a branch of Yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim.



The Move to Shanghai

After the yeshiva and the refugees left Kobe by ship, Wednesday, 27th of Av, (August 20, 1941), they arrived in Shanghai on Friday, a few hours before Shabbos.

The situation in Shanghai was quite different than in Kobe. Shanghai was a far more “Western” city. The Europeans there had a stronger presence and a longer history than they had in Japan. For example, the European community included 20,000 German Jews who had escaped to Shanghai fleeing from the Nazis.

Compared to Kobe, the Jewish Community was much stronger. The Sefardic community had two shuls, and the Russian community had one. Their Rav, Rabbi Ashkenazi, served as Rav of the entire European community. Shanghai had kosher food, shechita and other cornerstones of an established community. Politically, the city was divided into four quarters: the French Quarter, the American section, etc.

The refugees initially stayed in one of the Sefardi shuls, but later moved into the Jewish Community Center. This was in the American quarter. As soon as it was possible, they re-established their Bais Medrosh, established a kitchen, and assigned sleeping quarters. Although they were establishing themselves in Shanghai, their stay in Kobe was still lingering with them.

Many of the students and refugees started getting unusual medical symptoms which involved a swelling of the lips and

a blistering of the tongues. A physician from Poland, Dr. Seligson, examined them and prescribed a vitamin regimen, which was not very effective. Finally, he ordered them to add raw yeast to their diets. It didn't taste good, but in relatively short order, the symptoms went away!

But they still had “diet” worries. The flour was infested with worms, and it needed to be sifted, and re-sifted. After cakes or breads were baked, they were sliced into small pieces for re-examination.

Rabbi and Rebitzen Ashkenazi were very committed to the Lubavitchers in their care. Others that helped were Mr. Chanin and Boruch Stein, who, with Rebbetzen Ashkenazi, made sure that they had all of the necessities for farbrengens, especially on Yud Tes Kislev and Yud Beis Tammuz.

As we discussed earlier, nine of the senior bochurim were able to leave to Canada two days before Yom Kippur, 5702 (via America). Rabbi Hendel relates that they went to Rabbi Ashkenazi, told him there was room on a ship departing before Yom Kippur, and asked that arrangements be made for their departure. Rabbi Ashkenazi was somewhat reluctant, since it was just before Yom Kippur, and the bochurim would be leaving the new Yeshiva. Motza'ei Shabbos, Rabbi Ashkenazi called the bochurim in and told them “You won. The Previous Rebbe telegraphed me and told me to do everything in my power to help you leave. “



Rabbi Raichik, bottom row, second from the left.

After they left, Rabbi Garfinkle, Rabbi Moshe Feder, Yosef Bornstein obm, and my father Rabbi Raichik shouldered the responsibility for the rest of the bochurim. (These were the same four who received the letter from the Rebbe regarding learning while in Vilna.) My father told one of the “Tamim,” Mordechai Lurie, “Mottle, sit and learn. I will take care of you.”

All the Yeshivas needed money, but the one with the least support was the Lubavitch Yeshiva. The Vaad Hatzoloh was a group based in New York that supported all of the Yeshivas stranded during the war. The Mir Yeshiva had reliable and steady funding. In Chabad, there were certain months when the money arrived and certain months when it didn't. (See Previous Rebbe's letters, Vol. 5 pg. 368 - Vol. 6 pg. 171-173, 196-197)

The Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, Rabbi Chaim Shmuelovitch,

saw that the Lubavitch Yeshiva boys literally went without basic food and other necessities, so he graciously offered to absorb the Lubavitchers into his Yeshiva. He would tell his committee of supporters that he had 30 more talmidim. They sent the yeshiva a stipend (\$19 a bochur according to my father's records).

Nevertheless, the Lubavitchers would not abolish one of the Rebbe's Yeshivahs. Moreover, the seder of the yeshiva was quite different from that of Mir, and the times for learning, davening and meals were quite dissimilar. So, the Lubavitchers decided to “stick it out.”

Rabbi Ashkenazi collected funds for the yeshiva, and kept extensive records and a clear accounting of monies collected and dispersed. This became the preferred channel for ba'alei batim to contribute funds to the yeshiva.

One such donor was a Mr. Aryeh Leib Berelovsky, a Russian Jew who lived in Shanghai. My father became closely attached to both Aryeh Leib and his son. Reb Mordechai Bryski relates that after Mr. Berelovsky donated funds, they were able to cook a soup, and they celebrated as if it were a Yom Tov!

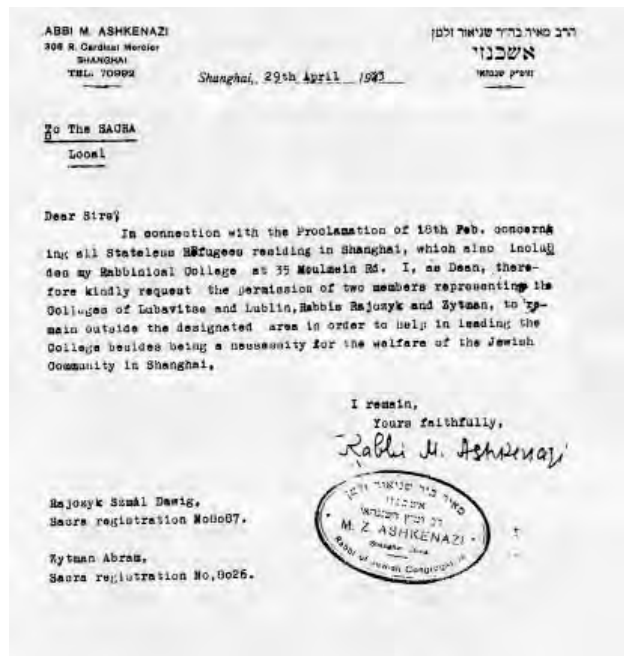
Rabbi Chaim Meir Bukiet obm related a story that happened to Rabbi Ashkenazi. One of his Baalei Batim said “I had a dream where an honorable-looking Rabbi asked me ‘Why are you not taking care of my children?’” Rabbi Ashkenazi showed him a photograph of the previous Rebbe, asking “Is this him?” “Yes!” Rabbi Ashkenazi continued, “You must support the Yeshiva to have all that they need.” And he did.

Even though the Lubavitchers could merge with the Mir Yeshiva, Rabbi Shmuelovitch was concerned about the welfare of the Lubavitchers. Rabbi Shmuelovitch arranged that two of his students would meet the Lubavitchers, who could pick up unmarked sacks of basic provisions clandestinely from the Mir Yeshiva weekly at 4 o’clock in the morning. Rabbi Chaim M. Bukiet was one Lubavitcher that was assigned to pick up the rice and onions from the Mir commissary in the darkness of night. Many years later, in Chicago, Illinois, Rabbi Bukiet came across his Mirrer colleague. They hugged and reminisced about the situation in Shanghai. (This story was related by his son, Rabbi Levi Bukiet.)

To collect money to help support the Yeshiva, Rabbi Garfinkle and Shmuel Moshe Lederhandler traveled from Shanghai to Teintsin. They had a very successful trip and the kehilla in Teintsin offered to support the entire Yeshiva. Rabbi Garfinkle departed as soon as possible with the bulk of the funds, but on his train ride back to Shanghai, soldiers confiscated the money. After pleading, the soldiers returned half of the money. The community to Tseintsin wanted to host the yeshiva and cover all expenses, and Shmuel



Front page of the Yeshiva's accounting book.



Letter from Rabbi Ashkenazi asking permission for the Lubavitcher and Lubliner bochurim to leave the ghetto and make use of the facilities of the Mirrer Yeshiva.

Moshe was left to finish the details.

As it always seemed to happen in this saga, the unplanned and unpredictable occurred. Japan attacked and invaded Pearl Harbor and invaded China. Travel within China became impossible, and Lederhandler was trapped in Teintsin for the remainder of the war.

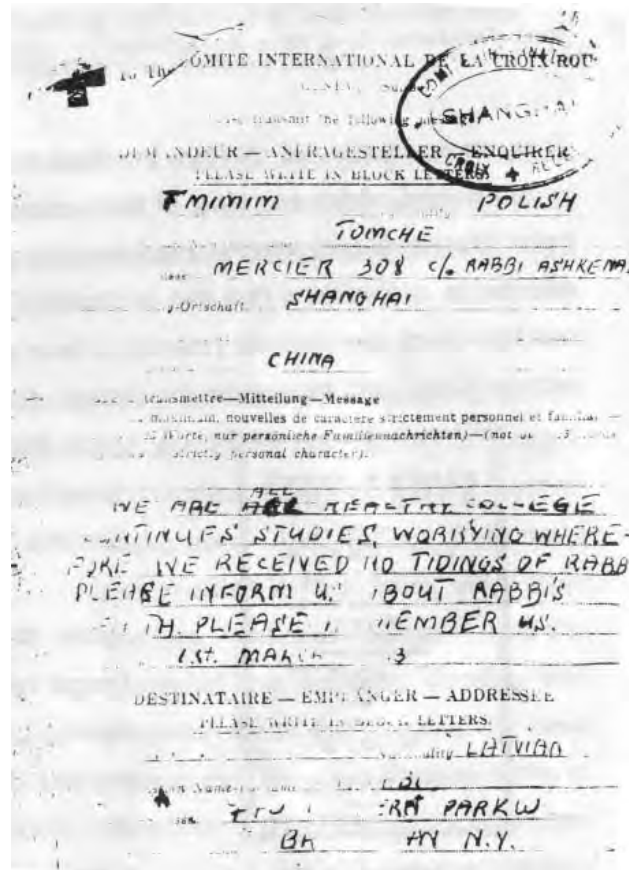
The morning after their Yud Tes Kislev farbrengen, the bochurim in Shanghai heard the tragic news about Pearl Harbor. Hopes for departure to America were dashed, and the situation in Shanghai also changed dramatically.

In February 18, 1943, the Lubavitch and Chochmei Lubliner Yeshivas were ordered to move, within 90 days, to a different quarter, the Hongkew (or Chinese) section. This was a much poorer area with fewer Europeans. (The Sefardic and Russian communities were not ghettoized, and the Mir was not uprooted, however.) To leave Hongkew, they needed permission to exit. To be caught going between the two quarters without a pass would incur a significant fine.

The one way to get a pass was to visit the Japanese military government officials. A short and very heavy Japanese officer, Officer Goya, went crazy when he saw tall, fair, Europeans. He had a very unique way of “charging” for a transit pass to the other quarters. He would stand on a chair and slap the face of the applicant. My father, needing to meet with Rabbi Ashkenazi, met with Officer Goya daily. It was not pleasant, but also not life-threatening, and this was part of the process to keep the yeshiva financially viable.

The Germans were telling their allies, the Japanese, how to deal with the Jews. After all, they were spies! At one time, they ordered the leader of the Jews to the Japanese Military command. The Amshinover Rebbe was ordered to their office.

They curtly asked him why their allies, the Germans, hated the Jews so deeply. The Amshinover Rebbe



Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor all contact with the U.S. ceased.

This brief communiqué, from March 1st, 1943, was sent through the International Red Cross who had a 25 word limit:

We are healthy college continues studies. Worrying wherefore we received no tidings of Rabbi. Please inform us about Rabbi's health. Please remember us.

answered, without a pause, "They hate us because we are from the East. They believe that all Easterners, including those from Japan, are inferior to them."

With that succinct reply, the attitude of the Japanese military immediately changed.

The monthly stipend that was sent to the yeshivas on behalf of each student was not fixed, as my father's documentation shows that the monthly amount. For some months it was \$19 and for others \$27 or \$29. Extra funds were sometimes provided for clothing or other expenses. (For a telegram from the Previous Rebbe to Rabbi Ashkenazi, see Igros Kodesh of the Freideker Rebbe, Vol. 6, p. 1.)

Shanghai was a hot city, and as a result of the heat, many became ill. This affected such a large number of the students that it took a toll on the seder of the learning in the Yeshiva. An accounting of the medical bills was kept, and many of the Shanghai Jewish residents took it upon themselves to pay for the medical and pharmaceutical expenses, especially a Mr. Boropolsky. Dr. Seligson, who davened in the Yeshiva and saw the toll that illness was taking, handled the students' health issues. He helped students from all of the Yeshivos and the refugee and Jewish community as well. (Even many years later, many of those who escaped through Shanghai trusted only Dr. Seligson and relied on him for their medical care.)

One of the health problems that afflicted the students and other refugees caused their mouths and tongues to swell and split. Doctor Seligson diagnosed it as beriberi, a condition often caused by a Vitamin B deficiency (related to diets based on white rice.) After that diagnosis was made, the remedy was self-evident, and the students recuperated well from Beriberi. But other health issues remained and unfortunately, one bochur, Shmuel Chanowitz passed away in Shanghai.



Cover page of the Shanghai Gemach.



The rules of the Gemach.

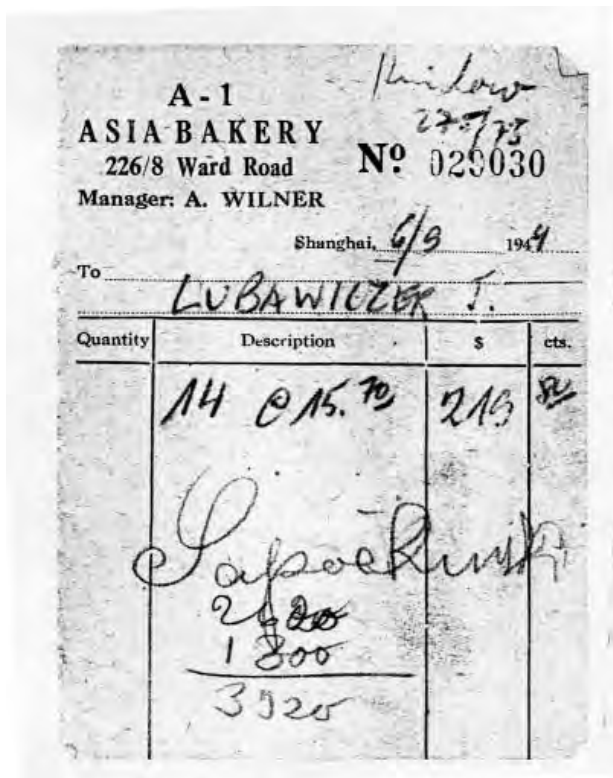
While in Shanghai, the bochurim attempted to keep the same seder as they had in Otvosk. They learned Talmud Tractates Kesuvos, Baba Basra and Gittin. Some of the Chasidus they learned were the Rosh Hashanah Maamorim from 5694 and Maamorim of 5660 and 5659. Rabbi Ashkenazi gave frequent shiurim, whenever possible.

The seder was hard to keep. During some months, the learning went well. At other times, it went less well. Some of this was due to the health issues. But other matters contributed greatly: in the early 1940's, the housing was not equipped with air conditioning and fans were a rarity. To compensate for the heat and humidity the Europeans wore lightweight clothing. Additionally, they took baths to cool down, often several times daily. But because of the heat, the frequent cooling baths, and the accompanying illness, it was challenging to maintain the normal study program.

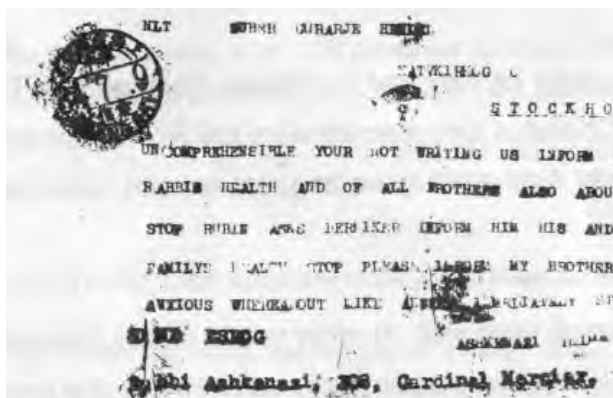
Secondly, the bochurim were getting reports about the horrors in Europe. The students' families were all in Poland, and we cannot imagine the emotional strain of being a young bochur stranded in China, not knowing how the inferno of Europe had affected his family.

Thirdly, they were stranded in a nation at war. After Passover 1943, after the forced move to the Hongkew ghetto, the Lubavitchers maintained separate living quarters, but shared a Bais Medrish with Yeshivas Chochmas Lublin. It took time to acclimatize to their new housing and learning situation.

The Hongkew ghetto was near military plants including an aircraft factory, a strategic military target. Towards the end of the war, bombs were dropped in this vicinity. Jews were hurt, but Boruch Hashem no students were injured. For their safety, however, a "bomb shelter" of sorts was created in the basement. Obviously, the learning schedule was



A 1944 bakery invoice for the students of the Yeshiva in Shanghai.



This telegram was sent to R' Zuber in Stockholm requesting an Esrog in addition to other things.

severely compromised.

So they suffered: The seder was difficult to keep, and morale was at times low. And yet, throughout this ordeal, they kept the directives and customs of the Lubavitch Yeshiva. But all was not sad. During this period, two bochurim found shidduchim and married. Yosef Protovitz married a Shanghai Jewish girl from a German background. And Pesach Rabinowitz also married a “Yekkeshe” girl. Rabbi and Mrs. Ashkenazi took care of all the details of the wedding, cooking and preparing for all the needs of the newlyweds. And they had other triumphs in Shanghai: Rabbi Moshe Liss organized and ran a Talmud Torah for 100 students.

Every religious observance had its challenges. Rabbi Ashkenazi had one of his ba’alei batim plant an esrog tree. One year, somehow it was destroyed. They telegraphed Rabbi Yisroel Zuber for, amongst other items, a Kosher esrog. Rabbi Herschel Fox related that before Sukkot, my father searched far and wide for an esrog, but found one that had only the ridges and no body. This esrog (called a “Buddha’s hand” because of its long, finger-like projections) was very questionable. The bochurim of Lubavitch shook the 4 minim using it (saying no beracha.)

They were virtually cut off from the Rebbe. Communications, usually via telegram, were few and infrequent. Most of them came through Rabbi Yisroel Zuber in Stockholm. Whenever they telegraphed, they did so in code. For example, the Rebbe was referred to as Davidson (the son of Shalom Dov Ber). From the telegrams, it is obvious how much the students yearned to hear about the wellbeing of the Rebbe and to receive sichos and maamorim the Rebbe. (See Previous Rebbe’s letters, Volume 8,

page 212 and footnotes, shows the communications through Stockholm about the situation in Shanghai.)

Rabbi Mordechai Bryski and Rabbi Nochum Prager helped in printed seforim for learning, including Likutei Diburim. China had a printing process that Europe did not have: a “photo offset” process. This may be similar to or the precursor of the modern photo-offset process, but in any case, it made reprinting of texts much easier. One such “printing press” was donated – used, but in working order – to the Lubavitch yeshiva in Shanghai. Throughout the years, many different donations were given to maintain the printing operations. The bochurim reprinted the “Kol Koreh” “Call to Actions” and sent them to Techin and Harbin (in Russia). In Harbin, Reb. Avrohom Koifman, reprinted them (once even with the Rebbe’s picture) and distributed them again.

And the printing press was put to use for farbrengens. The two major farbrengens that were celebrated were Yud Tes Kislev and Yud Beis Tammuz. All the yeshivas were invited, and the Roshei Yeshiva were encouraged to join in, as well. Records show that the Amshinover Rebbe, Rabbi Shimon Kalish, was a participant. In 5702 (1942), the talmidim distributed copies of Tanya that were printed in Shanghai. As was previously stated, Likutei Dibburim was also distributed at a farbrengen. They tried to mekarev other b’nai Torah and community members to be closer to Chassidus and the Rebbe.

In HaKriah v’HaKedushah Volume I, p. 10, there was a “Shir HaGeula.” Reb Yisroel Dovid Rosenberg put the shir to music. The song, about the hope for Moshiach, was sung frequently in Shanghai.

Censorship and a Tallis

By Leo Hanin

What has censorship to do with a prayer shawl – a tallis?

During the period when the refugees were in Kobe, all the mail and cables were subject to censorship. If a letter or cable was sent in a language unknown to the censor – a translation was to be enclosed (All translations had to be done in English, French or German).

One day I received a call from the censor at the Kobe Post Office, which was also accepting cables- to come down and translate a cable that was written in Latin letters- but the words were very foreign to him. The cable was signed by Rabbi Kalish (Amshinover Rabbe) and-the censor knew that the Jewish – Community is where the – Rabbi could be located.

Upon arriving at the Post Office and identifying myself, I was handed a cable which was addressed to a Rabbi in Kaunas, Lithuania, and I read the following:

Shisho Miskadshim B'talis Ehad

Rabbi Kalish.

I translated to the censor that this is obviously a cable dealing with some religious rituals, one rabbi explaining to another that six people can pray under one prayer shawl (tallis).

The translation and explanation satisfied the censor and the cable was sent. But, I was very puzzled and could not

understand the meaning of such a cable – I know very well that the cable did not mean what I told the censor – how can 6 persons pray under one Tallis?

I was intrigued and had to have an explanation.

I approached the Rabbi about this cable; he looked at me with his deep eyes (in which I read a reproach, how can it be that I don't understand such a simple thing) and asked me:

“*Vos farshtaist du nit, Laibel?*” (My name is Leo but he always called me Laibel from the first hour we met).

“Six persons can travel with one visa.”

It then became clear to me – Japanese visas in Kaunas were issued whether single or collective per family. It took some time, for formalities, applications etc. It would take very little time if, let us say 6 persons belonging to two or three different families of relatives apply to the consul as one group, a family will then get one visa instead of waiting for three visas.

The Rabbi was just out of Europe and he was worrying constantly on getting more people out of Lithuania which was then occupied by the Soviet Army and the Nazis were advancing through Poland.

“*Yetzt farshtei ich!*”

As told by Leo Hanin.

Shanghai: Port of Refuge - Port of Danger

A group of almost forty Lubavitcher bochurim escaped the Germans by traveling east through the Soviet Union until they arrived in Kobe, Japan where they stayed for the six-month span their transit visas permitted. On August 1941 the Japanese sent the bochurim by boat to Shanghai, China since it was an international city and no entry visa was necessary. By Divine Providence, R. Meir Ashkenazi was well established in Shanghai before the war as he had been sent by the Previous Rebbe to the Russian-Jewish community of Shanghai in the 1920s to serve as their Rav. He had contacts politically and socially which enabled him to be of great aid to all of the refugees. In 1941, when the refugees of World War II arrived in Shanghai, he and his wife did everything they could to help them. Many stories are told about his endless dedication, helping all the bochurim no matter which yeshiva they learned in. The Lubavitcher bochurim were in more threadbare circumstances than everyone else, and my father (who ran the Lubavitch Yeshiva) was in the Rav's house to report to him almost every day about the conditions of the yeshiva, both physically and spiritually.

The Lubavitcher Bochurim had United States visas and hoped to leave Shanghai for the United States. But in May of 1941 the United States canceled visas held by anyone with relatives in Germany or Russia. With great personal effort, the Previous Rebbe was able to procure visas to Canada for nine bochurim, who arrived in Montreal in all of 1941.

Upon their arrival, this group of bochurim established the Lubavitch Yeshiva in Montreal. The Lubavitcher bochurim stranded in Shanghai asked these nine bochurim to keep in contact and to send sichos and maamorim and news of the Rebbe and the Chassidim. Aside from the historical significance of the reports to the Previous Rebbe, we see the obvious mesirus nefesh of the Lubavitcher bochurim as they steadfastly kept the unique Chabad customs and learning schedule with which they had lived in Europe. If they had agreed to join with Mir Yeshiva or Chochmei Lublin, they would have had a much easier, more comfortable stay in Shanghai, as those yeshivas received regular funding and had significantly more food. These few Chabad bochurim willingly sacrificed what meager comfort was available in Shanghai to retain their connection to the Rebbe without any outside encouragement, as their report states, "We were a small group of young bochurim without a mashpiah, or a madrich or elder Chassidim or Anash to awaken us; to guide us..."

The following are drafts of reports that were sent to the Previous Rebbe that give insight to the conditions and the feelings of the bochurim in Shanghai while they were cut off entirely without guidance or communication from the Rebbe. The final versions were sent by the bochurim in Shanghai to the Rebbe right after the war (since from the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor all direct contact with the



The students in Shanghai, China, with Rabbi Meir Ashkenazi (center). Rabbi Raichik is sitting third from the right.

United States became impossible). The first report was dated Tuesday, Parshas Beraishis, 25 Tishrei 5706 (October 2, 1945):

...We are very happy to have contact with the Rebbe and [to hear] that the Rebbe is working to get visas to bring us close to the Rebbe. We are delighted to hear of the wellbeing of the Rebbe and the Chasidim. We are hoping to the Aibishter that all the obstacles will be removed and the will of the Rebbe will be fulfilled that we should be able to be close to the Rebbe and throw ourselves into the work the Rebbe would assign us and prepare ourselves for the coming of Moshiach soon. The day that we received this news we wished each other Mazal Tov and the joy was obvious that we made contact with the Rebbe — the joy poured over on Motzoi Yom Kippur and Simchas Torah. Truly the Rebbe received by mail the letter that we sent on Chai Elul in which we gave a short description of our situation. On the 27th of

Elul we sent a telegram through R. Yisroel Zuber (of Stockholm). On the seventh of Tishrei we sent a letter but it was returned, so on Hoshanah Rabbah we sent another letter and we hope it was received.

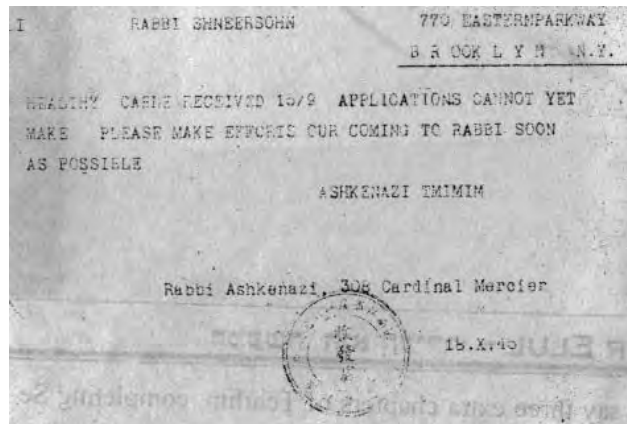
We would like to write here about the past four years. When we came to Shanghai Rabbi Ashkenazi wanted us to be together with the yeshiva of Lublin and also with other yeshivos. He explained that we would have one big room for learning. This would be good for us, but we did not want to agree to it because of the varied schedules of the Yeshivos. R. Ashkenazi sent a letter to ask the Rebbe what to do, but didn't receive an answer. At that time finding living quarters was very hard and expenses were very great. We wrote a letter to the Rashag about the money, but did not receive any answer. We were forced to combine with Yeshivas Chochmei Lublin and with another small yeshiva in one building. Every yeshiva had

its own sleeping quarters, but we were together for learning. We worked very hard to keep the regular schedule of Nigleh and Chassidus as we had in the yeshiva in Otvosk (Poland) and Vilna (Lithuania). We chose from among us someone who made sure that we kept seder and who organized chavrusas and the recitation of Chassidus, and the davening with our nusach and our minhagim.

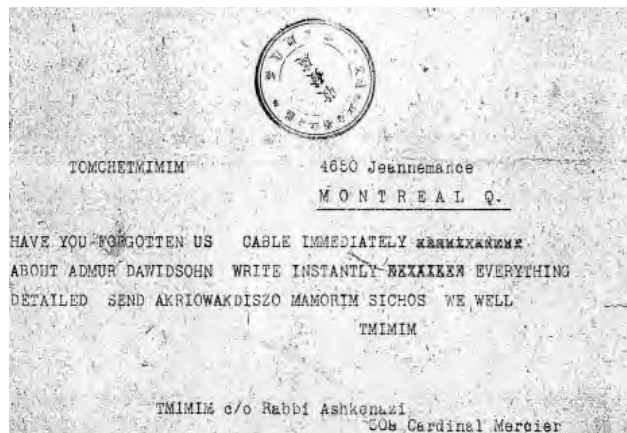
In the winter of 5702 (1941-2) we learned Tractate Kesubos and for Chassidus we hoped to prepare copies of Samach Tesamach of the Rebbe Rashab from 5657 (1896-7). We tried to have everyone learn the same subject in Chassidus but it wasn't possible. R. Ashkenazi came and farbrenged as often as possible with the Yeshiva, but not regularly because of his weak health and communal responsibilities.

For the Yom Tov of Yud Tes Kislev we prepared a big seudah and invited all those who had a connection with Chassidus as well as bochurim from the other yeshivas. We strengthened ourselves, although we were broken by the news of the day before, 17-18 Kislev 5702 (December 7, 1941 - the outbreak of the war between Japan and the United States — ed.).

We received a letter from Hatomim Zev Greenglas who is in Canada. He sent us a copy of the Rebbe's letter to one of the tmimim in Canada, bringing us a great awaking to the responsibility that everyone has and the work everyone has to do. When we received this letter, we made a farbrengen where we resolved to keep our seder. [We also resolved to] recite chassidus by heart on Shabbos when we sat together at meals with all the bochurim from the other yeshivas, and to get involved as much as possible to be close with all the individuals here who have a connection to the Rebbe and awaken people to geulah and tshuva. Bochurim from other yeshivos were moved and began to learn chassidus because of this. We reprinted — by offset press — Likutei Diburim and distributed it among Anash and the



Telegram to the Rebbe from Shanghai dated October 18th, 1945.



Telegram to their friends in Montreal, Canada.



Telegram asking to assist Dr. Seligson in obtaining a visa.

yeshiva bochurim. Chaim Boruch Chanin of Nevel accomplished the bulk of this task.

One of us gives a daily shiur between Mincha and Maariv in Ein Yaakov in the big shul that was established for Russian Jews. And many times we reviewed Chassidus there during Shalosh Seudos accompanied by Chabad nigunim.

The Kol Koreh from the Rebbe about Geula was printed up and handed out in all the Yeshivos. We also sent it to all the Jews here and hung it up in all the shuls. On Achron shel Pesach before Yizkor one of us spoke in the big shul before 500 Russian Jews. He spoke about the Rebbe, how the Rebbe cares for every Jew, and his call for tshuva and to prepare for geulah. Then we handed out the Kol Koreh printed in Hebrew and English.

Hatamim R. Eli Moshe Liss became the menahel of the Talmud Torah for the German Jews and under his direction hundreds of children were enrolled. This also affected the general atmosphere by bringing many families closer to Yiddishkeit.

If it wouldn't be for the financial hardships which are greater on us than on the other yeshivos, many bochurim from other yeshivos would want to join us to learn with us and learn chassidus.

The seder of the yeshiva in the summer of 1942 was that we learned Mesechta Kesubos, and in chassidus a discourse of the Rebbe Rashab from 5660. We also constantly sent letters to Anash in Tainjin and Harbin. From Harbin we received letters from Dr. R. Avrohom Kaufman, the head of the Kehillah there. Our letters brought back to him memories of Lubavitch and

he was much moved. In the Russian paper which they distribute in Harbin he printed a picture of the Rebbe and the parts of the Kol Korei in Russian. Together with R. Daniel Haskin he collects funds for our yeshiva.

For the Chag haGeula (Yud-Beis Tammuz) of 1942 we made a big farbrengen in the largest shul with a big crowd made of descendents of Anash and Bnei Torah of the other yeshivos, and Rabbonim. The Amshinover Rebbe participated and spoke about the greatness of Yud-Beis Tammuz. The seudah was sponsored by Anash and there was singing and dancing. R. Ashkenazi also spoke about the significance of Yud-Beis Tammuz, and during the farbrengen the whole story of Yud-Beis Tammuz was told. One who is connected to the branches of Anash is R. Aryeh Leib Berlovsky of Kremenchug (my father was mekarev him to Yiddishkeit) who spoke very emotionally with a great impact on everyone. We divided mishnayos among everyone to be studied during the year in honor of Yud-Beis Tammuz.

The summer here is unbearably hot, and the days and nights are very hot and very humid, making it difficult to breathe. One must frequently bathe in cold water, or lay in bed; therefore it has been impossible to keep a regular seder in Yeshiva during the summer.

In the months of Elul and Tishrei we conducted ourselves according to the instructions of the Rebbe. During Sukkos we farbrenged with R. Ashkenazi together with Anash. After Sukkos all the bochurim met together with Rabbi Ashkenazi and resolved that during the fall and winter term we would keep the specific daily schedule and picked three bochurim to be in charge. In nigleh we learned Masechta Gittin and in chassidus we learned the discourse of 5659 from the Rebbe Rashab (which we printed by photo offset, funded by a women in memory of her husband). We thank Hashem that the resolutions came to fruition and that whole season attendance and learning was with great diligence. We reviewed Chassidus by heart at seudas shlishis of each Shabbos.

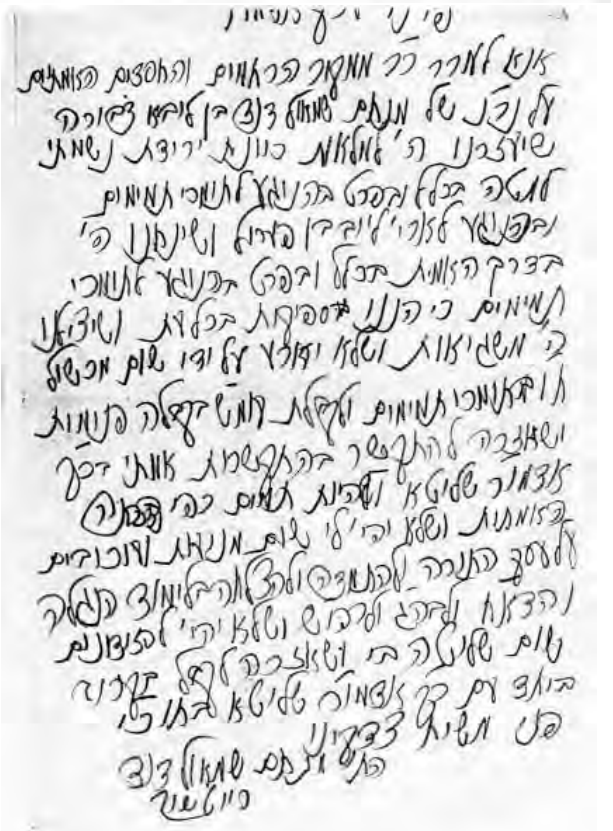
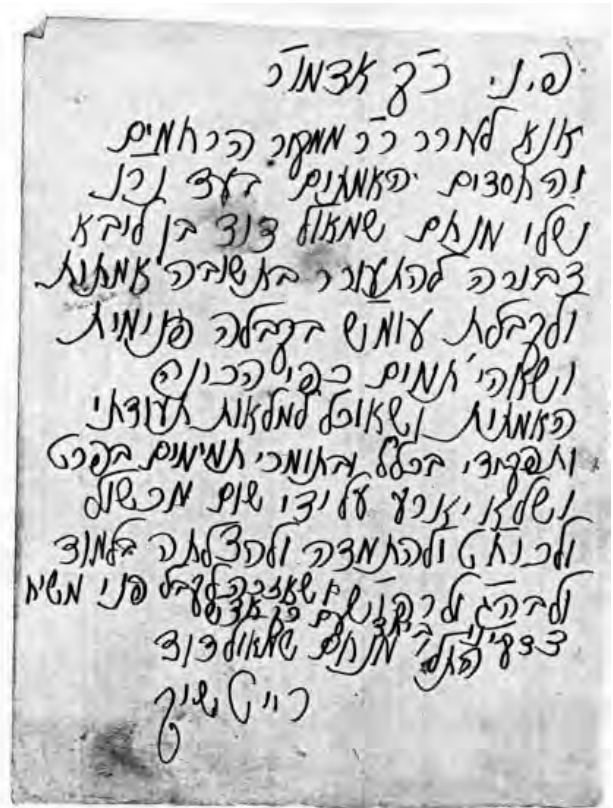
For the Chag Hageulah that year (1943) we made a big farbrengen in the shul, R. Ashkenazi spoke and the Megillas Yud-Tes Kislev was read.

With the help of some of Anash, especially Mr. Velensky who was born in Southeast Asia and did not receive an in-depth Torah education — he is an extremely warm person — we printed a Tanya on beautiful paper via offset press and it was distributed to all participants.

At the end of that winter Jews in Shanghai learned of the decree to create a ghetto. Immigrants from Germany or Poland would be moved into this ghetto after Pesach. (The Mir Yeshiva was exempt from living in the ghetto.) In addition, we also got the news of what was happening with our families in Europe. This broke us entirely; nevertheless, we celebrated Purim and Pesach with an inner awakening and bitachon that the Aibishter Who protected us until now will protect us further from the birth pangs of Moshiach. After Pesach we received a letter from the Rashag dated Cheshvan 5703 (six months late) and a letter from a tomim in Canada dated Kislev discussing the work they are doing in the Yeshiva and the work the Rebbe is doing to strengthen Yiddishkeit and Torah.

We dictated parts of the Kol Koreh of Sisu V'simcha V'simchas HaGe'ulah and different quotes from sichos of the Rebbe and this gave us new energy.

We did not receive any letters from the Rebbe and felt we were so far away from the Rebbe physically as well as spiritually, and the older bochurim had gone to Canada. We were a small group of young bochurim without a mashpiah, or a madrich or elder Chassidim or anash to awaken us; to guide us to infuse us...so from time to time our inner spirits became weaker and our souls became dry in this “dry and weary land” (Tehillim 63 — ed.); also the news we received from Europe and the worry over our families broke us entirely. Additionally our physical situation was very bad, worse than any of the other yeshivos who receive constant support from overseas, while from the outbreak of the war with the Japanese in December



Letters from Rabbi Raichik to the Previous Rebbe.

1941 until the end of 1943 we had 300 American dollars which sufficed for only two months. Anyone who was considered to be among the Bnai Torah was allotted funds. However, for a number of reasons, our group was different. Only when we put much pressure on the administrations of the various other Yeshivos did we receive money. (See Igros Kodesh of the Previous Rebbe, vol. 6, pp. 171- 173, 196, 197— ed.) In 1944 we received another 300 American dollars which sufficed for about a month and a half because of inflation. In the beginning of 1945 we received 2000 American dollars. Because of this inflation and the lack of support, we became even more broken. So therefore many of the bochurim had to get involved to find the funds (this was the task of my father, R. Menachem Shmuel Dovid Raichik — ed.).

That summer (1943) the seder of the Yeshiva became very weak, aside from the terrible heat, humidity, and physical illness, we had to move to the ghetto with one hundred bochurim to a room without even a

kitchen. After a few months, at the end of the summer, we got permission to find apartments and we worked hard to establish our own place in which to daven and learn according to our seder. Our souls are thirsty to hear how the Rebbe is doing, and we are anxious to receive strengthening and the guidance of the Rebbe....

In the winter of 5705 (1944-45) we learned Tractate Bava Basra and in Chassidus maamorim of the Rebbe Rashab from the year 5672 (1912). The Yom Tov of Yud-Tes Kislev we celebrated in Yeshiva with a festive farbrengen as in previous years.

Since the Yeshiva entered the ghetto, its presence changed the attitude of the Jewish refugees already there, bringing them closer to Yiddishkeit and many of them have become more observant. A group was founded by the name of Machzikei HaDaas. This group made a successful campaign for Jews to



Cover page of the Shanghai edition of the Lekutei Diburim.

close their stores on Shabbos. They also organized shiurim in Chumash and Mishnayos for young men. Together with the bochurim of Yeshiva Chochmei Lublin we learned with various members of the Jewish community. The Talmud Torah which was supervised by Rabbi Ashkenazi and run by Hatomim Eli Moshe Liss was successful to the extent that a Yeshiva Ketana was established and dozens of boys were taught Gemorah and Tosfos. Again together with the bochurim of Chochmei Lublin, we helped these boys in their studies and instilled in them yiras shomayim and midos tovos. Through this work many of them (originally from Germany) became Bnei Torah and the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Mir brought them into his yeshiva and organized shiurim on their level. We had no physical space nor funds to absorb this Yeshiva Ketana in our Yeshiva.

After Pesach we learned the other half of Bava Basra

and continued with the same topic in Chassidus. At that time the battles came closer to the city and everyone was preparing bomb shelters against air raids. Without reviewing all the troubles and difficulties of day to day existence, we made a big Kiddush in the Beis Medrash for Yud-Beis Tammuz. We called the other bnei yeshivos to attend and many people stayed for Seudos Shabbos. Sunday, Yud-Gimel Tammuz we made a big farbrengen in the shul with R. Ashkenazi in attendance. We reviewed Chassidus and we prayed and wished that the Rebbe should have a Refuah Shelaima and be healthy and that we should be saved from the war and have peace.

At that period of time the danger became worse. Every day there were bombs from the Allies and every day people were killed. Jews were also killed, heaven forbid. Thank Hashem, by miracles, all the bnei Torah were saved — including us. The native inhabitants of the city escaped (evacuated Shanghai) but those of us in the ghetto were made to stay. We were surrounded with military factories, which is why there was heavy bombing near us. Each day we were forced to leave the yeshiva and find ourselves a strong building as shelter — the ghetto buildings were weak, and the shaking of the ground from the impact of the bombs nearby would cause the buildings to collapse.

On the first day of Rosh Chodesh Elul we held a meeting to determine how to get back to our regular seder of learning. We decided to find a building far from the munitions factories but close to a shelter so that when we would hear the sirens we could run to the shelter. But that night, Friday night, Parshas Shoftim, we heard the news that the war had ended. We saw the open miracle that the Aibishter did to save us, and the Aibishter should give us the merit to save us completely and bring us to the Rebbe to bring Moshiach.

Regarding the seder for Elul and Tishrei, we kept the

seder according to the instructions of the Rebbe; and the days of Sukkos were very b'simcha, especially in the light of the miracle the Aibishter did to save us.

From a duch of 25 Cheshvan:

We have sent many letters to the Rebbe telling him of our situation here, about the past four years up to the present. We are hoping any moment to receive information of the Rebbe's wellbeing and the Rebbe's family's wellbeing and of all the Tmimim and Anash, as we have not received any information until now. We are hoping and waiting for the salvation from the Aibishter to take us out of this Golus of Shanghai and bring us to the place we want to be next to the Rebbe and to prepare for the arrival of Moshiach. All twenty six of us are, B"H well. We are now learning Masechta Kesubos and in Chassidus the discourse T'ku of 5694.



Letter from Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitch asking permission for the Lubavitcher and Lubliner bochorim to leave the ghetto and make use of the facilities of the Mirrer Yeshiva,

We sent a telegram through Rabbi Zuber (Stockholm). We cannot make applications here for visas as the Consul is not yet involved with them. Our request is if it is possible to prepare all the applications in America and do everything necessary for us before we apply for the visas here. We do not know whether that telegram reached America, so we telegraphed again. Now we have a question: should we apply from Shanghai or another city. We do not know how to decide. Here there are many refugees that want to leave to America. Daily there is news that affidavits are being made for people so it shows that maybe Shanghai is the place to apply. But since it depends on the Consul, and if the Consul is not in a good mood, he will decline the request. In the city of Tainjin or Yokohama the Consul has given many visas perhaps there the Consul is more favorably disposed to us. It is dangerous to travel there and we feel we have to apply here in Shanghai.

We want to notify the Rebbe of the names of Anash who have come closer to Yiddishkeit through our personal attention. R. Chaim Moshe Boruch Chanin of Nevel; Aryeh Leib Berelovsky of Kremenchug; Shneur Zalman Paley of Peterberg; Shaul Shofrin also from Peterberg and Aryeh Leib Lipsitz. From the students who participated in our farbrengens: Gavriel Sigelofsky, the son of Hatomim Aharon Zelig, a shochet from the city of Breslov. He was originally a Mir Yeshiva bochur, but he wants to learn Chassidus and has a regular study session with one of us. He wants remain together with us and when we go to



Portion of a report of the Yeshiva to the Rebbe.

the Rebbe he wants to go with us to fulfill his desire to become close to the Rebbe and to be part of the Yeshiva.

Additional reports request visas to the United States and describe the efforts to receive them. The bochurim of Tomchei Tmimim did not reach the shores of the United States until July 7, 1946 (18 Tammuz 5706), a full year after the end of the war.

From Shanghai to America

During their stay in Shanghai, the bochurim tried to do something remarkable. They tried to arrange for more Jews to take refuge in China. Many times they sent correspondence to family and friends, but the letters were returned, “Addressee Unknown.” They had no direct advice from the Rebbe on how to proceed, but they knew it was wartime and that Jews were being killed.

Some other organizations had similar objectives, but they, for the most part, only wanted to save “b’nai Torah.” In a 4-page letter to the Rashag (distinguished son-in-law of the Rebbe), the Lubavitchers explained their dilemma. “If a family has 13 members, how can we leave two behind”

They contacted the Russia Intourist organization. In the beginning, they weren’t interested. Later, they convinced Intourist in Kovna. All of this took money, which was one commodity that the bochurim did not have. They had no time to ask New York if this project should be continued, so they did it on their own, hoping that, with Hashem’s help, they would be successful. They actually arranged for a ship from Vladivostok to Shanghai, but the world situation again suddenly changed. Germany attacked Russia. There was no way for them to leave Europe by traveling through Russia. The attack on Russia sealed their options.

Finally, they got the good news.” The war had ended! Their goal to join the Rebbe in America was close at hand. Or so

they thought.

At the conclusion of the war, the students composed a 5-page letter to the Rebbe giving details on their stay in Shanghai. The letter needed to be resent because it never reached its destination in New York.

In Volume 9 of the Previous Rebbe’s letters, we see the deep involvement of the Rebbe to obtain the visas. After 3 years of having no contact with the Rebbe, they received a letter dated Chof Kislev 5706, “I received your letter dated 25th MarCheshvan. The Rashag shlita and your friends in Canada are working on visas, too.” [I have found reference to this letter only in my father’s notes - not in the printed versions of the Previous Rebbe’s letters.] They also had to make arrangements for the bochur, Lederhandler, who was stranded in Techin, to rejoin the group. That was successfully accomplished.

As we discussed, the Japanese had control over Shanghai during the war. But when they were defeated, the Americans took over. When the Yankee soldiers arrived, the refugees were happy to see Jews among them! Jewish soldiers from America, some of whom even spoke to them in Yiddish!

It took a year, but the visas finally arrived. Now they had to determine how to get to America. Regular ships were not yet crossing the Pacific. Airplanes were so outrageously expensive, that this was not even a viable option for the



whole group. Three talmidim needed to fly home. They were M. Prager, M. Bryski, and A. Garfinkle. The rest were finally able to procure passage on a U.S. Naval warship, the US General Meigs, on 5 Tammuz (July 4, 1946). Accommodations were far from luxurious, they slept on military cots. Many of the bochurim got quite seasick. But they finally arrived, 18 Tammuz (July 17th) in S. Francisco.

The Previous Rebbe wanted the communities of

different cities to host Kaballos Panim for the students (See letters of the Previous Rebbe, pages 144-145, and 147) When they arrived in California, they were met by Rabbi Yosef Weinberg and Rabbi Moshe Hecht. It was a beautiful Kaballos Panim and everybody celebrated with great joy. It was decided, to fulfill the Rebbe's request, that the talmidim would split into 3 groups, and visit different Jewish communities before going to see the Rebbe. One

Students Arrive After Five Years

It's taken them a long time, but 26 rabbinical students who started from Poland for a theological seminary in Brooklyn, N.Y., more than five years ago arrived here yesterday on the last leg of their journey.

Managing to filter out of Poland when Warsaw fell to the Nazis in 1940, the bearded students headed for New York via Shanghai. They had just arrived in Shanghai when they were trapped by that bastion's surrender to the Japs, who interned them until war's end. Since then they have been awaiting transportation.

The students, led by Rabbi Elijah Liss of Shanghai, were met here yesterday by Rabbi Maurice I. Hecht of New York, who will accompany them across the country, during which they will be feted at receptions in the larger cities.

Last night, the students were honored by leaders of the local Jewish community at a banquet at the Jewish Home for the Aged, 325 S. Boyle Ave. Chairman of last night's dinner was Harry Altman, with Joseph Friedman as master of ceremonies.

The Los Angeles Times, July 22nd, 1946.

group went to Seattle, Washington. Another group visited Los Angeles. The remainder stayed in the Bay Area.

Traveling by train, they met up again in Chicago when another Kabollas Panim was celebrated, and then traveled together to Brooklyn and finally were reunited with the Rebbe. (See letters of the Previous Rebbe, 15 Av, 5706, Volume 9, page 152, 153 -- A 2-page letter to the Bochorim from Vilna.) Excerpts from the Rebbe's letter:

Dear T'mimim:

... Don't slumber and don't contemplate external things. Understand that the inner purpose that Hashem Yisborach brought you here. You should warm up the cold of "gashmistic" (physical) America with Yiras Shemayim and chasidische warmth with the feeling of Ahavas Yisroel. Throw yourself into the work using the path of kindness as in the known saying "one must see his own faults and other's strength's ...

The Rebbe thanked and blessed Rabbi Ashkenazi and all of those who aided the Jews in Shanghai. Details can be found in Letters of the Previous Rebbe, Volume 9. The Rebbe made a point that the students from Shanghai (on the 25th of Menachem Av, 5706), should have influence on the temimim in Brooklyn, and to affect their learning of Chasidus, in a proper fashion. (Sichos 5606, page 55)

The following Tishrei, these bochorim were allowed into Farbrengens, whereas many others were not allowed in because of the Rebbe's health. Shabbos Chol Hamoed Sukkot 5707, the bochorim of Shanghai were allowed admittance to the Rebbe's sukkah. They sang a niggun. At that farbrengen., the Rebbe spoke about the pain they went through:

You must absorb and internalize it. You need to know what you accomplished.

Memento from the Wedding of Moishy and Rivka Raichik

The Abishter should help your spiritually, physically (yiddishe Gashmius is Ruchnius) and the Abishter should in help you physically Ruchnius so that you may fulfill the purpose of your neshoma being put into your body. This is what Hashem and Torah wants from you...

At the end of the farbrengen the Rebbe said that every small move of a Jew is by Divine Providence.

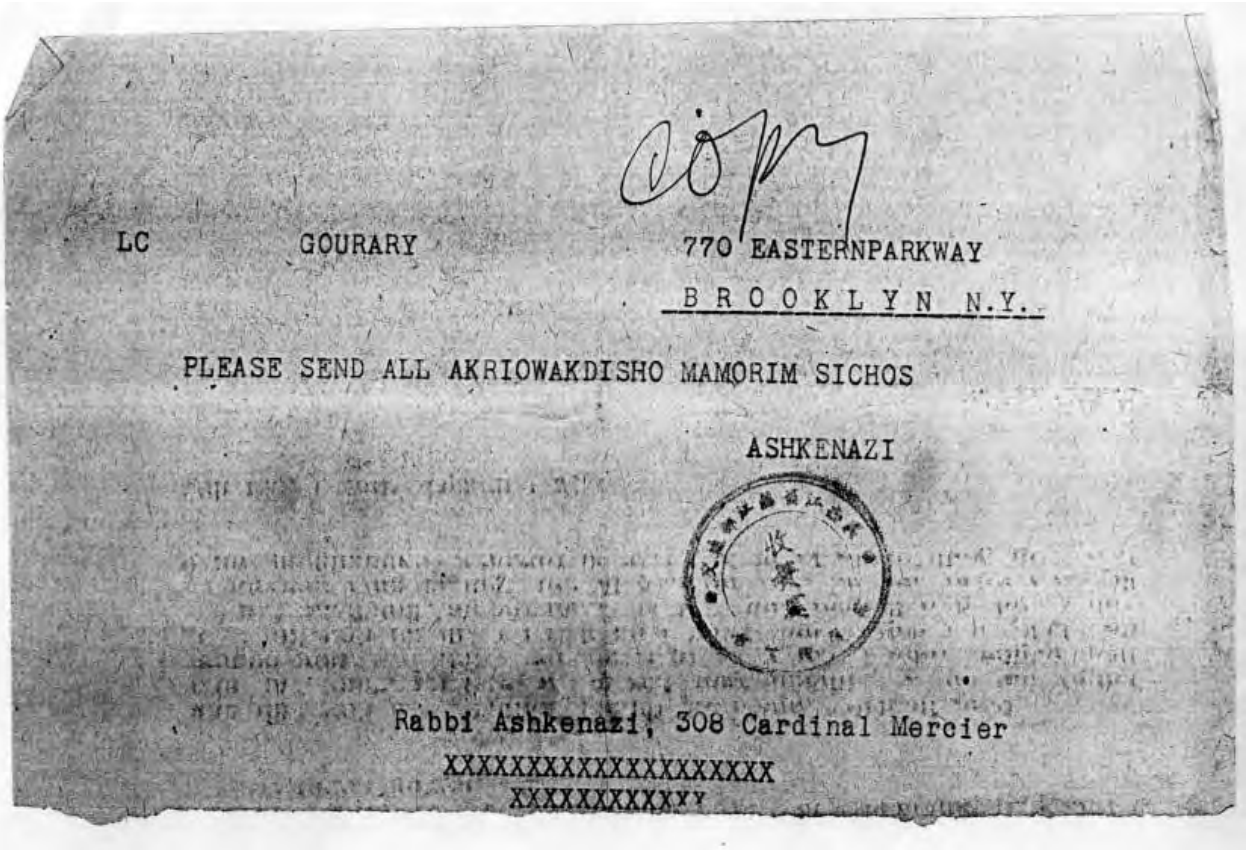
“You were in many places. A Jew doesn’t travel on his own. A Jew is led by Divine Providence, and in every place accomplishments are necessary, Hashem should grant you success ... “ (Sefer HaSichos 5707 pages 67 - 69)

(This chapter is based, in great part, from a report that the Bochurim sent to the Previous Rebbe after the war and also to Reb Chaim Rosenberg, grandson of Reb Yisroel Dovid Rosenberg and Shimon Goldman.)

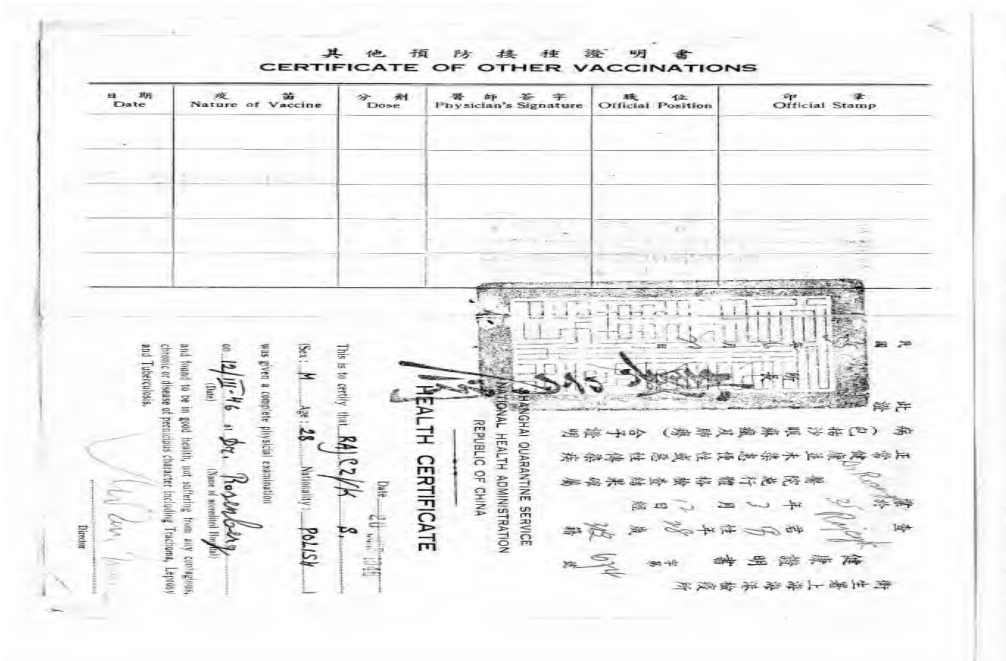
LIST OF STUDENTS OF THE COLLEGE "TOMCHE - TMIMIM"
now at Shanghai, China.

<u>Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Nationality</u>
1. BORENSZTAJN	Josef	1916	Solec	Polish
2. BUKIET	Chaim Majer	1919	Wiszlice	"
3. BRONSZTEJN	Szyja	1919	Wyszkow	"
4. BRZYSKI	Mordka Majer	1923	Chmielnik	"
5. BLAT	Finchos	1922	Otvocek	"
6. CHANOWICZ	Gerszon	1919	Glebokie	"
7. CHANOWICZ	Israel	1925	"	"
8. DEREN	Chackiel	1925	Wyszkow	"
9. FALLMAN	Abraham Hersch	1918	Nowy-Sacz	"
10. FEDER	Mojzesz	1920	Lodz	"
11. FUKS	Mojzesz			
11. FUKS	Szmujla Hirsz	1921	Dzisna	"
12. GURFINKEL	Abram Icchok	1921	Warsaw	"
13. GOLDMAN	Szymon	1925	Sjedlce	"
14. HOCHLERER	Szloma Nechemia	1920	Wojslawice	"
15. LIS	Eli Mojsze	1909	Dlugoszodlo	"
16. LURJE	Morduch	1919	Molodeczno	"
17. LEDERHENDLER	Szmul Mosze	1920	Ryki	"
18. PORTOWICZ	Josek	1920	Wyszkow	"
19. PORTOWICZ	Gerda	1927	Frankfurt	"
20. PREGER	Nochum	1922	Maloryta	"
21. PROPST	Chaim Lajb	1918	Lodz	"
22. RAJCZYK	Szmul Dawid	1918	Mlawa	"
23. RABINOWICZ	Pejsach	1921	Grodno	"
24. RABINOWICZ	Lina	1924	Berlin	"
25. ROSENBERG	Srul Dawid	1919	Ryki	"
26. RUBIN	Mowsze	1919	Slonim	"
27. RUBIN	Hirsz	1921	"	"
28. SAPOCKINSKI	Mowsza	1923	Suwalki	"
29. ZAK	Chaim Hersz	1921	Biala Podlaska	"

Dean: Rabbi M. ASHKENAZI, 308 Cardinal Mercier
Tel.: 70992



The students telegram to the Rashag with a simple request.



Rabbi Raichik's certificate of health, which was needed before he travelled to the United States.

ALL ALIENS arriving at a port

S. S.

1	2	3		4	
No. on List	HEAD-TAX STATUS (This column for use of Government officials only)	NAME IN FULL		Age	
		Family name	Given name	Yrs.	Mos
			59		
		n.y. - 0900-228678 - 12-1-48			
RAB ✓		Probst	Chaim Lajb	28	✓
RAB ✓		Pruzanski	Chaim	26	✓
RAB ✓		Pullen	Albert	53	✓
RBA ✓		Rabbinowicz	Peifach	25	✓
RBA ✓		Rabbinowicz	Lina WASSERMANN	22	✓
RBA ✓		Rajter	Mojnze	34	✓
RAB ✓		Raitson	Gabriel	53	✓
RAB ✓		Raitson	Marcelle	41	✓
RAB ✓		Rajczk	Szmuel David	28	✓

Ship manifesto of the S.S. China, July 5th, 1946, Rabbi Raichik is last on the page.

Arrival in the United States

After my father arrived in America and reached Crown Heights, he still maintained contact with Mr. Bralovsky, a major supporter of the refugees in Shanghai. I am excerpting significant portions of this letter to illustrate not only my father's manner of maintaining a connection with people, but the situation with the Friediker Rebbe, and how the Rebbe established my father's shlichus in America:

I am sure that you have complaints that I have not yet written to you. I wanted to meet with the Rebbe first and to convey your requests to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe was quite weak, and every day we were told that tomorrow or the next day we would be able to enter.

This situation continued until a week before Rosh Hashanah. The Monday before Rosh Hashanah we went in to see the Rebbe for [only] a few minutes, and we left very quickly. I couldn't convey your requests. I hope that after the Yomim Tovim I will be able to communicate your needs.

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, I wrote a pan (Pidyon Nefesh). The Rebbe was feeling very weak. Everybody went into the Rebbe's room through one door, and left through another.

On Rosh Hashanah we davened on the second floor

of 770 outside the Rebbe's room. The first day of Rosh Hashanah, the Shanghai students came into the room. It is hard to describe the Rebbe's face after tekios. And before tekios his face was flowing in tears.

For Tashlich we all marched like soldiers, two by two. The Rebbe stood near the window and smiled as we marched and sang Chassidishe niggunim. From all sides people looked and were reminded that today was Rosh Hashanah. When we reached the Botanical Gardens, we said Tashlich at the lake, and then we marched back and danced into 770.

There is so much to tell you, but I am extremely busy with my work in the Yeshiva...

Please notify me that I can tell the Rebbe that you have a kosher kitchen in your home. This would strengthen the Rebbe's health. You should try your utmost in this matter. Can you imagine the great z'chus that one has to strengthen the Rebbe's health? The 'Nachas Ruach' if you do a favor for the Rebbe is repaid with health, children and sustenance.

One can see depth of the relationship my father had with those in the Shanghai Jewish community.

Tel. SLocum 6-3337 - 8

YESHIVOTH
"TOMCHE - TMIMIM"
LUBAVITZ
(RABBINICAL COLLEGES)
Founded 1897

הישיבות הקדושות עומדות תחת נשיאותו
של ב"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א מליובאוויטש
These holy world-famous Lubavitcher Yeshivoh
are under the auspices of the
celebrated Lubavitcher Rabbi
המשרד המרכזי
CENTRAL OFFICE
770 EASTERN PARKWAY
BROOKLYN 13, N. Y.
253

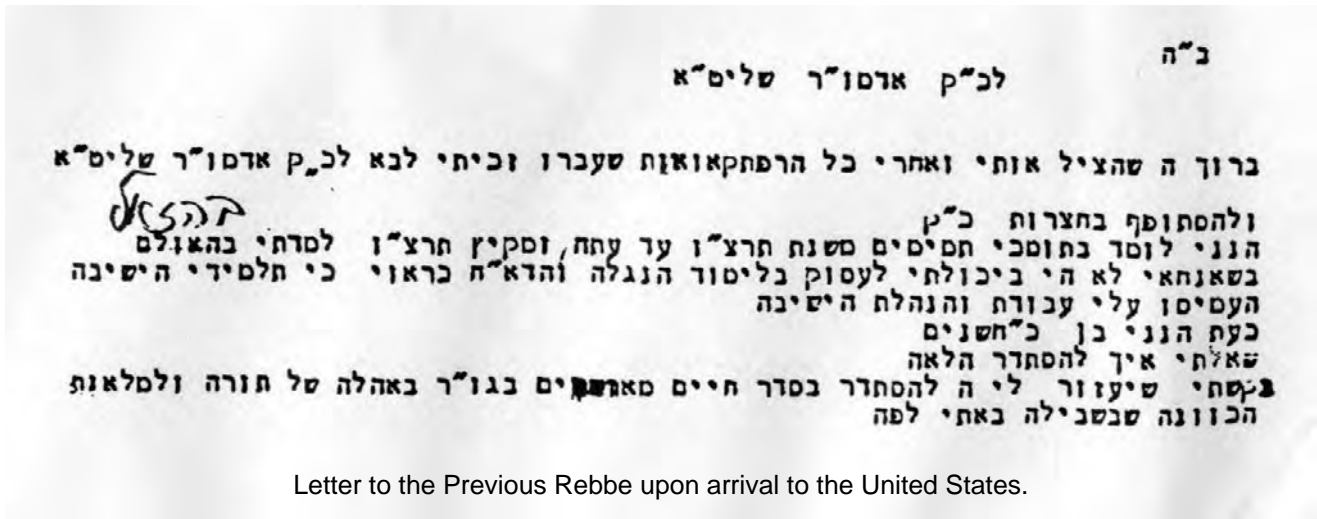
ישיבות
"תומכי תמימים"
ליובאוויטש
נסדה בליובאוויטש תרנ"ז

RABBI S. GOURARY,
Chairman of Exec. Comm.

הרב שמרי נורארי
נשיא ועד הפועל

ה' תש"א (1940) ואלה הברכה הגדולה הרבנים
המנוח רבי יצחק יצחק רבלי יצחקי והכי מצליח המעלה
ומצוי סגור כ' אורייתא הדאיתא אלוהי
שלום והרבה
אין פארהיליגן אז אוהר האט צו מיר שלטאנדיג אלעס פארהיליגן אין הארץ
היינט אין פארהיליגן פארהיליגן, פארהיליגן מיט אין צאס אלעס אין מוציא
צ"ל ואלו אין קלון אין חוץ נישט פארהיליגן, נישט מיר אז בארץ יצחקי
פארהיליגן האט אין קלון זיין, אין אין הארץ הארץ נישט פארהיליגן צאס וואס
מיט פארהיליגן אהרן אהרן היינט אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
הארץ הרב היינט נישט פארהיליגן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
זיין היינט רבי'ן שלום אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
הארץ מיר פארהיליגן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
צ"ל פארהיליגן צ"ל אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
שלום אין יצחקי אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
וואס אויפן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
פאר הארץ היינט, אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
צ"ל רבי'ן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
אין מיר צ"ל אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
אחי'א הארץ אין פארהיליגן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן
אז נאך צווא ימים אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן

The letter to Mr. Bralovsky.



After my father came to New York, he wrote the following letter to the Previous Rebbe:

Boruch Hashem who saved me and now I have the z'chus to come to the Rebbe.

I learned in Tomchei T'mimim in 5696 (1936); and in the summer I learned in the Zal (study hall). "In Shanghai, I did not have the ability to learn Niglah and Chasidus properly because the bochurim gave me the responsibility

of running the yeshiva. I am 28 years old. I am asking the Rebbe how I should proceed further. I am asking that the Abishter should help me to get established in life ... physically and spiritually and to fulfill the purpose for which I was brought here.

That year he was appointed as the emissary of the Rebbe.



