

TWENTYTWO

ב"ד

Perspectives

ONE Rebbe,
TWO Barons,
THREE Years,
AND **FOUR** HUNDRED
THOUSAND RUBLES

The **BATTLE** for the **SOUL**
of the **RUSSIAN CHEDER**



DEFIANT SPIRITS

Rabbi Binyomin Cohen

SNAPSHOTS

The Rebbe on Chinuch

THE REBBE'S YESHIVA

Tomchei Temimim - Part Three



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Perspectives

TWENTYTWO

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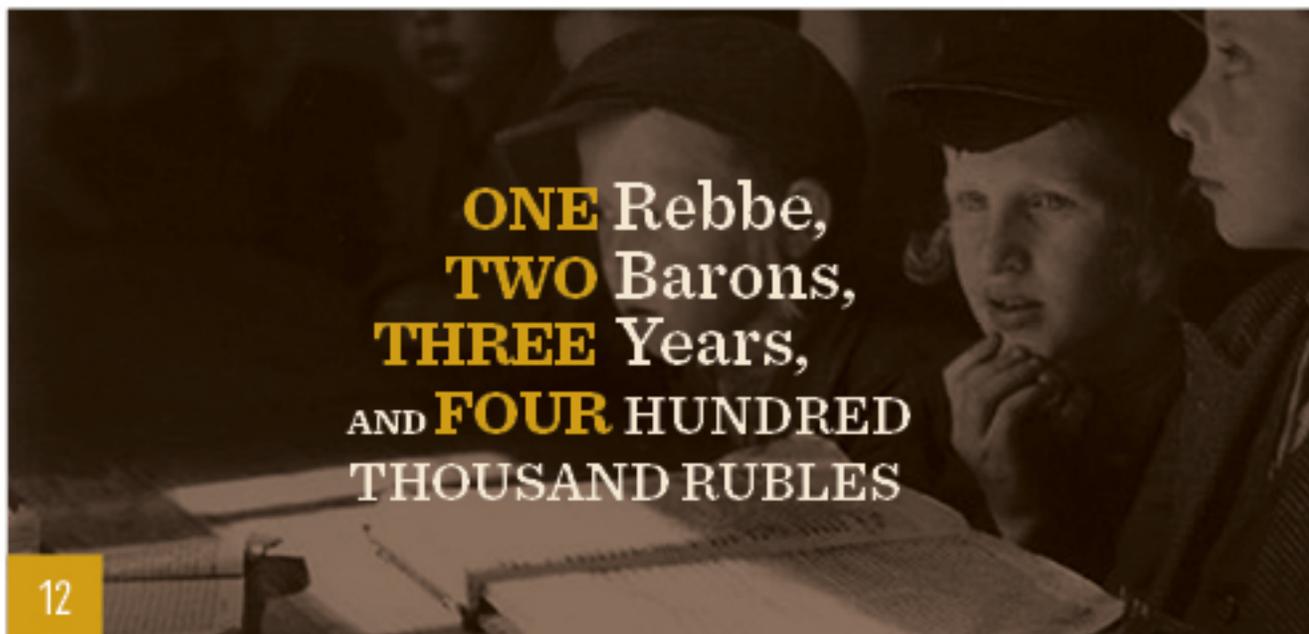
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Rabbi Boruch Werdiger



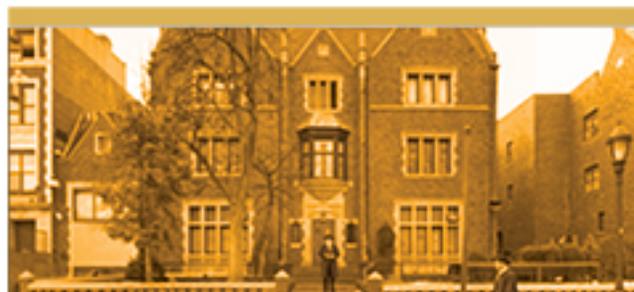
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FOREWORD

When Google is Better than a Rov



Visual media didn't just add a measure of amusement and distraction, but it caused society to view much of life through the lens of a video screen.

One simple villager, a “*yishuvnik*,” lived far from a Jewish community, and would often travel to a nearby town to present his latest *shailos* to the local rov. After a long while that he hadn't come, the rov met him and expressed his puzzlement that he no longer had any *shailos*. The man explained that the trip from his village was becoming increasingly difficult for him, and he decided to resolve the *shailos* on his own.

“How so?” inquired the *rov*.

“Well, I decided to be lenient with the easier *shailos*, and to be stricter with the more serious ones,” came the studious reply.

Curious about the villager's judgement, the *rov* asked him to elaborate. The man shared one difficult *shaila*:

“One day, my wife took the needle which she uses to sew the stuffed chickens and sewed feathers into a pillow. I ruled that it was *fleishig* and could not be used during the Nine Days!”

Social scientists have pointed out that new technologies don't merely add to our existing culture, but they redefine whatever we do. For example, visual media didn't just add a measure of amusement and distraction, but it caused society to view much of life through the lens of a video screen – expecting people to always appear put together and cheerful, and produce rapid responses instead of thoughtful introspections.

What does this have to do with Torah guidance?

Traditionally, besides for being an authority on matters of *kashrus*, *shechita* and monetary disputes, a Torah leader was also the go-to for issues of *chinuch*, *shalom bayis*, and personal dilemmas. It was understood that with Torah insight and wisdom a *rov* could see through life's quandaries and offer profound and relevant advice.

With the proliferation of Torah literature and halachic compendiums, the influence of the rabbinic figure was lessened. Suddenly, one could

resolve many practical dilemmas on one's own. While this is convenient and sometimes necessary, a person can now delude himself to think that he can resolve all his predicaments without skilled input.

However, the problem goes even deeper than that.

Since halachic queries have been relayed to compendiums, the *types* of questions being asked have also changed. One wouldn't think to look up how to resolve a quarrel or how firm to be in *chinuch* since encyclopedias don't handle those questions well. Instead, *shailos* have become highly focused on specific, technical facts. The new resources don't merely provide answers, they also regulate which questions to ask.

Thus, even when a person does consult a live *rov* he often only thinks to ask "Googleable *shailos*," such as the reliability of a specific *hechsher* or the *bracha* on a certain food. And should the wise and scholarly *rov* not be able to produce a reply in 0.056 seconds, he is "incompetent..."



Living as a Torah Jew is not just about reciting the correct bracha over granola bars. What is more important is that we live our lives and conduct our homes according to the Torah spirit and lifestyle. And for that we need Torah sages who have carefully preserved and clarified the soul of the Torah.

Traditionally, a Jew lived by the Torah, and *halacha* was an outline of its practical implementations. From a cursory review, it appears that the use of the term *halacha* as divorced from Torah living – following Shulchan Aruch though otherwise living a secular lifestyle – is the product of the last two centuries, encouraged by progressive movements to allow for secularization of Jewish life.

In "Torah life," the desired conduct inevitably varies between individuals. What could be appropriate for someone else might not be appropriate for ourselves, and vice versa. Answering a *shaila* isn't just about conveying what is written in *seforim*, but about conveying what Hashem wants of that person in that circumstance. You may be able to find the *halacha* of *yichud* for a given situation, but who will tell you if this situation is one you should be in at all?

A *rov* would try to assess the whole person and not dispense blind prescriptions. Being personally familiar with the individual's lifestyle, or at least by looking him up and down, he could tell him what the Torah expected of *him*. As one respected *rov* from the previous generation said, the telephone (!) tainted the art of answering a *shaila*. And today, with so much halachic information at our fingertips, it is for the Torah spirit that we need *rabbonim* most.

We need to know what to ask where. If it is halachic facts that we need, it can be more efficient to Google it. But if we want Torah wisdom, we ought to seek out a wise Torah mentor who can pave for us the Torah way.

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger
General Editor



Living as a Torah Jew is not just about reciting the correct bracha over granola bars. What is more important is that we live our lives and conduct our homes according to the Torah spirit and lifestyle.

WE ARE DIFFERENT

Sicha of Simchas Torah, 5715 (1954)

Likutei Sichos vol. 3, pp. 793



Wherever we choose to raise our families, our children will invariably be exposed to others who hold a lower standard than we do. How do we impress upon our children to stick to their values? Can we get a young child to appreciate our ideals?

A UNIQUELY HOLY HOME

One of the most overwhelming influences on a child's life is the atmosphere of his home. It follows, in an effort to raise upstanding Jewish children, that we should endeavor to imbue our homes with a pure spirit of holiness.

That is to say, besides conducting our homes in a manner clearly distinct to gentile homes, our dwellings must be marked by a particularly superior level of holiness, even relative to the homes of those Jews who – though observant of Torah and *mitzvos* – nevertheless heed to worldly ethics and values. Our homes ought to be permeated only with the spirit of the Torah, *Yiddishkeit*, sanctity and holiness.

DIFFERENT THAN OUR NEIGHBORS

The Torah relates that Reuven went out during the wheat harvest and found flowers in the field. As Rashi explains, the fact that this happened at that season speaks in praise of the *shevatim*: although it was harvest time, Reuven did not take grain, but only wildflowers, which are ownerless.

It is clear from Rashi's comment that no one else around them was particular about this. Yet the *shevatim* knew that they must conduct themselves differently, with Torah and *kedusha* in every detail. That was how Yaakov conducted his household – they knew that they were different than everyone else.

We should not follow the spirit of the times. This principle should be so apparent that children recognize

We should not follow the spirit of the times. This principle should be so apparent that children recognize that their parents are different from other parents.



Even when the child is too young to comprehend the meaning of Torah and kedusha, he can still sense that his home is different than all other homes – veniflinu, we are different and proud!

that their parents are different from other parents. For example, the modesty of other women's clothes might not be so *behiddur*, but their mother is completely modest. Other fathers may be not so scrupulous in their business ethics, but *their* father has no interest in dishonest dealings: he deals honestly.

JUVENILE PEER PRESSURE

Even when the child is too young to comprehend the meaning of Torah and *kedusha*, he can still sense that

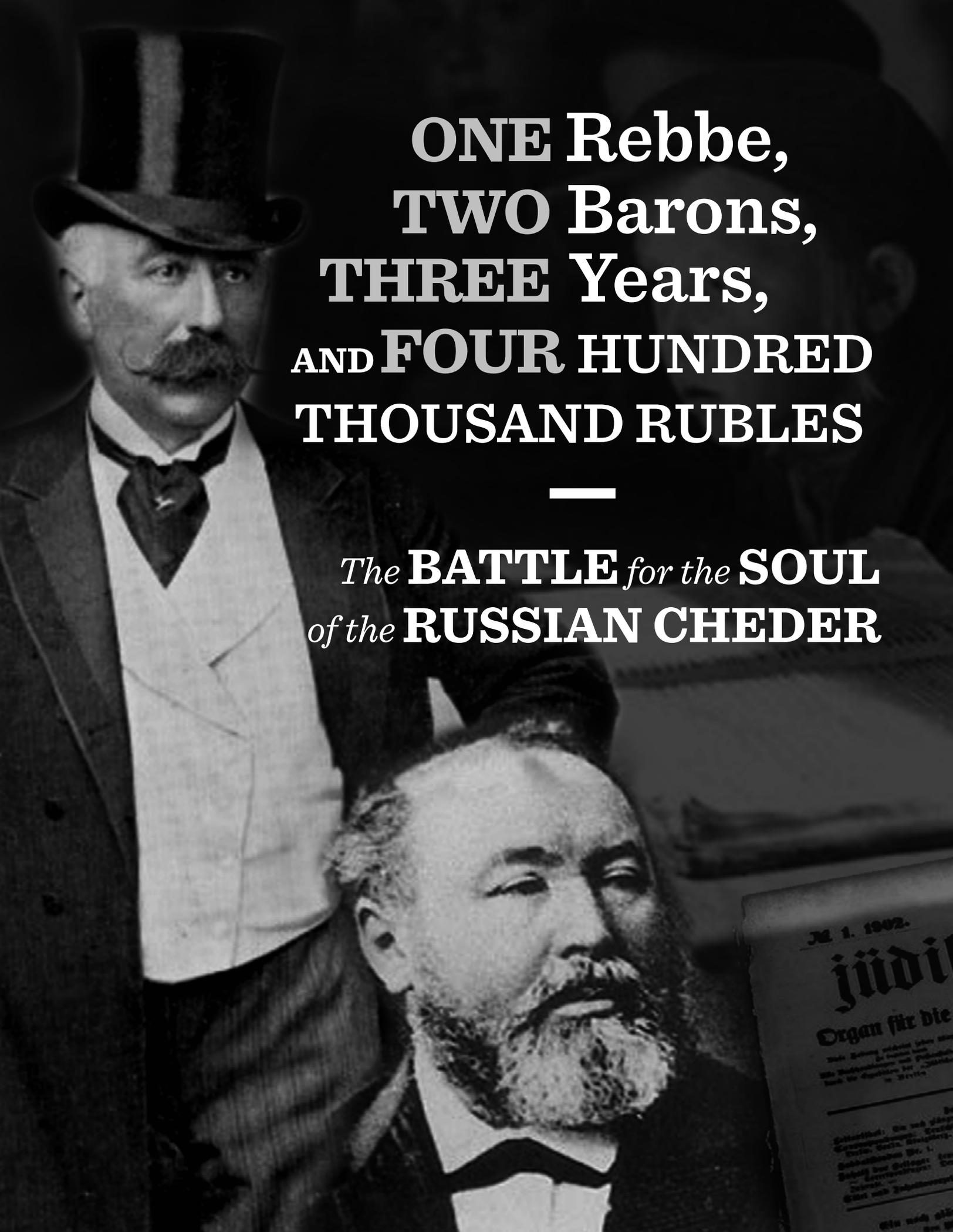
his home is different than all other homes – *veniflinu*, we are different and proud! Consequently, the child doesn't mimic the conduct of other children. On the contrary, when he sees other children behaving inappropriately, for example taking things that do not belong to them, he knows that they're not suitable friends for him.

This attitude produces a *shevet* of Reuven and a *shevet* of Yissachar. (Yissachar's birth followed the incident involving the flowers.) And those two *shevatim* produced heads of Sanhedrin and pillars of Torah law.



IN SUMMARY:

- Parents should train their children how to be different than their surroundings. They must show them by example how their lifestyle is richer than that of their neighbors.
- It is acceptable and worthy for a child to know that there are different standards among observant Jews, and that he need not learn from those with lesser standards.
- Even if a child cannot understand the meaning and importance of his own standards, he can appreciate that they are higher, and choose his friends appropriately. **P**



**ONE Rebbe,
TWO Barons,
THREE Years,
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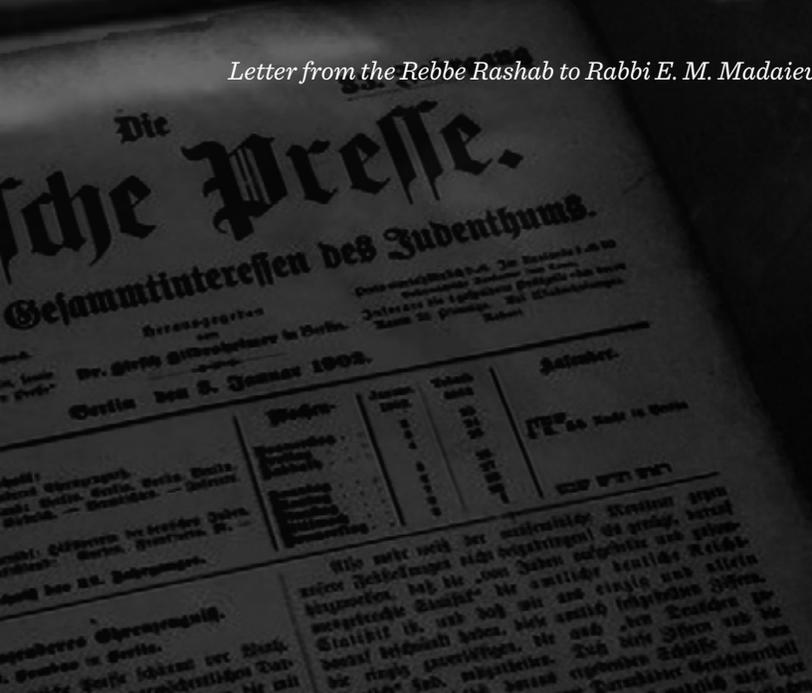
The **BATTLE** *for the* **SOUL**
of the **RUSSIAN CHEDER**

BY RABBI BORUCH WERDIGER

... As for the JCA matter, were I to explain to you everything that transpired this past winter in detail, all the parchment in the world not suffice to contain it; nor, if the seas were ink [would there be enough to write it].

The brunt of the work, however, was in Paris. Our dear R. Avrohom Persohn exerted himself tremendously, expending much effort; many words were spilled upon deaf ears; the great pain and heartache this has all caused is understandable...

Letter from the Rebbe Rashab to Rabbi E. M. Madaievsky, Igros Kodesh §746, vol 3, p. 277.





IN 1812, Napoleon's eastward march across Europe came to halt, and was then reversed, as his *Grand Armée* began its disastrous retreat from Moscow back to France. Famously, the Alter Rebbe had opposed the Emperor's Russian excursion all along. He feared that the physical toll of Czarist oppression would ultimately be outweighed by the spiritual price of a French victory, and the accompanying socio-religious changes that would come in its wake.

Indeed, once the legal barriers to emancipation were ripped down in 1791 France, and then in various German states over the next few years, Jews became paradoxically exposed to a tremendous new set of pressures. The drive to conformity, assimilation, and even conversion had never been stronger. Spiritual and socially, at least, the Yidden still ensconced in the ghettos and Pales of Settlement had it safer than their brethren in Western Europe.

But as this battle for Russia, and Russian Jewry, passed, a larger war was only just beginning; it was around that time that the Enlightenment movement – and its Jewish variety, the *Haskalah* – began its own eastward march. Unlike Napoleon's soldiers, with all their horses and guns, its values wouldn't be turned back so quickly.

So writes the Frierdiker Rebbe:

...[F]rom 5534-6 (1794-6) the *maskilim* waged an offensive campaign against the leaders of

Chassidus in Galicia, Poland, Wohlin, and Ukraine using libel, treachery, and forgery...

For some 125 years, the Rebbeim of Chabad stood at the forefront of the war with the *maskilim* with wise and knowing counsel, 75 of those years fighting a two-fronted war against both the *maskilim* and *misnagdim*. With time, they overcame their foes and opponents, so that they would bow before the way of Chassidus, the branches of the Baal Shem Tov's Tree of Life in general, and the way of Chabad Chassidus in particular.¹

This is the story of one particular battle in that long war. It is the story of an initiative by a group of wealthy Russian *maskilim*, backed by French money, to remake the face of Russian Jewry and its education system in their own image. It is the story of how one young, relatively unknown chassidic Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab of Lubavitch, rose to the challenge with a sophisticated counter-initiative. It

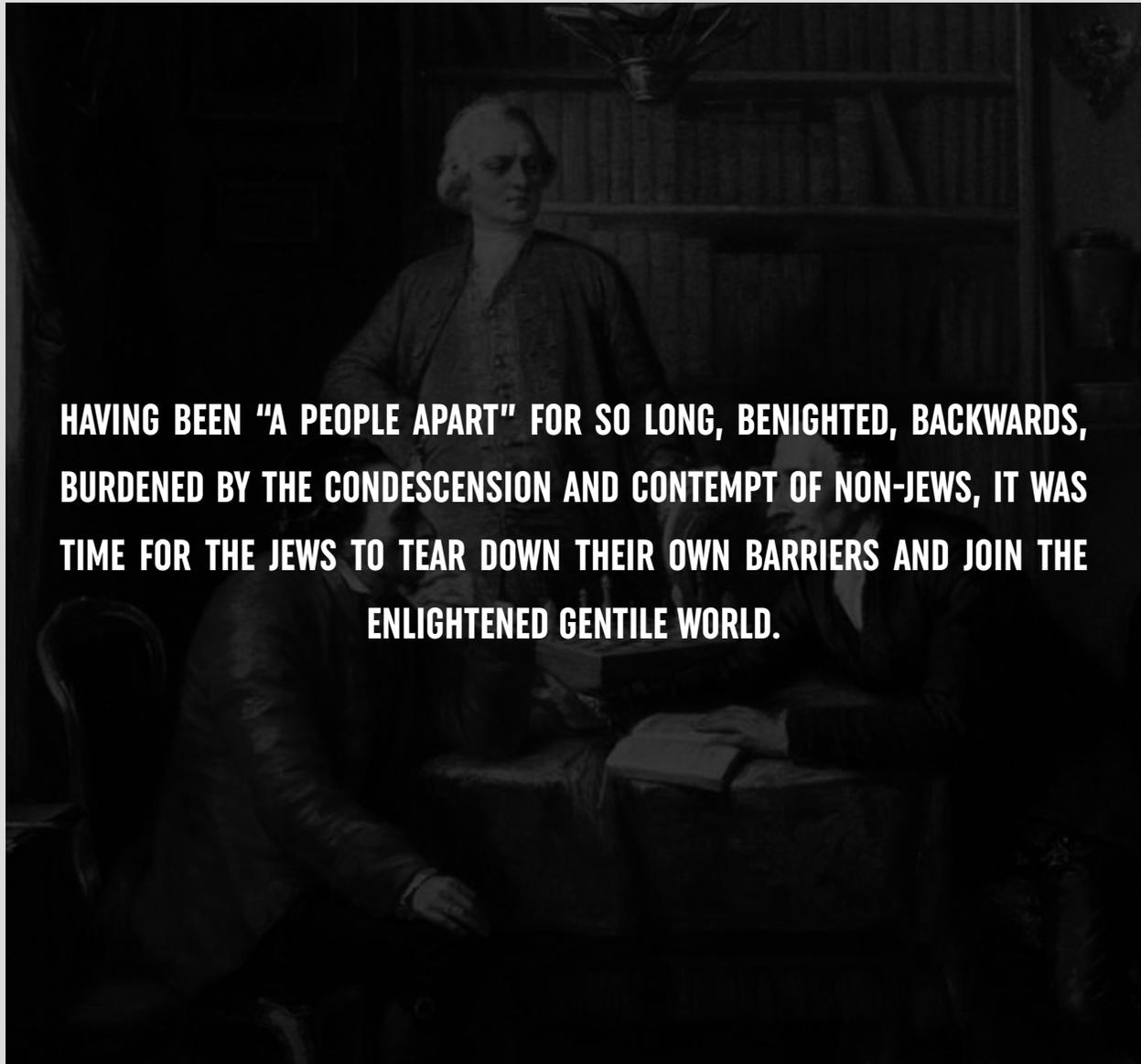
is the story of how he galvanized rabbinic leadership beyond the parochial world of Lubavitch, in cities across Russia and beyond its borders. It is the story of an adamant commitment to the integrity of

traditional Jewish education, firm faith in the face of dismal odds, and a tenacity that the Rebbe would eventually take across the face of the Continent, all the way to Paris.

ENLIGHTENMENT AND EDUCATION

But first, who were the *maskilim*? If Emancipation refers to the Jewish attainment of civic equality by loosening legal and political restrictions, Haskalah went well beyond this goal. Even as they boosted and were bolstered by the former phenomenon,

the maskilim aimed to achieve integration in other spheres as well; the cultural, intellectual, and religious. Having been “a people apart” for so long, benighted, backwards, burdened by the condescension and contempt of non-Jews, it was time for the Jews to



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tear down their own barriers and join the enlightened gentile world. One meeting of Odessa maskilim in 1865 resolved that, "It is truism accepted by all, and borne out by Jewish history, that our brothers must be firmly bound to the peoples amongst whom they live, and to distinguish themselves only in matters of religion and faith."²

This isn't to say that the early maskilim opposed Yiddishkeit per se, or advocated apostasy. As the Hebrew writer Y.L. Gordon³ rather infamously put it in one of his poems, one ought to be "a person in the street, and a Jew at home." That is, the Jewish people needed to start talking, dressing, and working like "normal" people; they ought to be familiar with the sciences and immersed in secular culture; to embrace reason while discarding superstition and irrational belief; at the least they should be able to explain and justify their religion in terms understandable to others. Torah study was worthy enterprise no doubt, but it must proceed as other academic discipline ("*Wissenschaft des Judentums*," or the "Science of Judaism," they called it), with the tools of modern scholarship and an emphasis on its historical, literary, philosophical dimensions. Hebrew was promoted, and Yiddish shtetl-jargon scorned.

Of course, this renewed enthusiasm for the tongue and textual traditions of ancient Israel began to wear off quickly enough. Compared to the natural sciences and contemporary philosophy, the younger maskilim came to see the study of Hebrew letters and



history as a load of “useless knowledge” that did nothing for the purposes of integration.⁴ Within a generation or two, their elders were already complaining about “our young people, who... have no knowledge of Hebrew... [and] publicly degrade our holy language.... [A]ll of our work we have done for the Hebrew language and Haskalah literature has been but a drop in the bucket, but even for this... they have heaped scorn upon us...”⁵

Internal differences aside, the educational system was key to the aims of the Haskalah.

Although the maskilim had been making inroads from Berlin to Poland, Lithuania, and beyond since in the 1780s, it was only in the 1820s that they set up a serious eastern beachhead, with the first Haskalah-aligned schools: Uman in 1822, Odessa in 1826, Kishinev and Riga in 1838. In the 1840s, the principal of the latter school, Max Lilienthal, eagerly worked together with the Czarist regime to found a network of governmental Jewish schools that would replace the traditional cheder system.⁶

At the historic S. Petersburg summit convened to discuss the matter, the two representatives of the religious establishment, the Tzemach Tzedek and Lithuania’s Rabbi Yitchok Volozhiner, put up a valiant, but ultimately doomed fight for the chadorim. The Crown had already decided to set up its schools and, as a leaked directive from Czar Nicholas I later revealed, to eventually have them run by Christians, and make them mandatory, so as to “bring [the Jews] nearer to the Christian population.” It was everything traditional Jewry had feared, and nothing the maskilim had promised.

Lilienthal himself later became disenchanted by the regime’s incorrigible contempt for its Jewish citizens and left the country, while the Crown schools’ ultimate unpopularity all but guaranteed their demise. Still, the danger had not passed: The Haskalah collaboration with the Czarist government had set a dangerous precedent, emboldened the fledgling movement, and increased their influence throughout Russia.

The battle over education had only just begun.



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THE TWO BARONS

wealth and power

IT WAS 1863, and again with the support of the government – now under the more benevolent Czar Alexander II – a few wealthy Jewish families in S. Petersburg formed a new organization dedicated to the “promotion of culture among the Jews of Russia”: Chevras Mefitzei Haskalah, or ChaMaH for short.⁷ Its mission statement broadcasted the intent to “[I]ncrease the knowledge of the Russian language...to publish, or assist others to publish books... and newspapers both in Russian and Hebrew that aim... to spread Haskalah... and extend assistance to the youth dedicating themselves” to studies deemed worthy.⁸

Equally important was who the founders were, and most prominent amongst them was Evzel (Yosef) Ginsburg, whose work in the vodka, military provisions, and banking industries had brought him wealth, power, and influence. Later on, they also brought him nobility, when he was granted a hereditary barony by a German duke. His grandson Baron David Ginsburg would go on to play a leading role in Chamah, but it was his son Horace (Naftoli Hertz) who dominated the organization after his passing in 1878. The (now) senior Baron Ginsburg was a bear of a man, his broad face offset by shrewd eyes, with an easy charisma about him. Supremely educated, fluent in Russian and French, a self-

assured defender of his ancient heritage and advocate for his people, Ginsburg was for some the very image of the civilized Jew.⁹ In Jewish communal affairs in Petersburg, Russia, and beyond, Ginsburg would be a prime force for years to come.

For some time, however, things were quiet. Chamah’s membership base was limited to a relatively small, insular circle of elites concentrated in the larger cities, and growth was stymied by modest ambitions and internal tensions. They distributed a few stipends, published a few books, and sent money to a few approved schools.¹⁰ For the most part, there was a significant disconnect between the maskilim and the masses of salt-of-the-earth Russian Jewry still faithful to the institutions of traditional Yiddishkeit.

In 1881, the assassination of Alexander II unleashed a wave of pogroms, anti-Semitic legislation, severe economic restrictions, and mass expulsions. Oppressive enough as it was, life in the Russian Empire became desperately difficult for its Jewish denizens, and new aid organizations cropped up in response to their most urgent needs.

One such major organization was the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), founded in 1891 by the Paris- based German-born financier Baron Maurice de Hirsch. Having made a tremendous fortune, first in banking, then the rail, sugar, and

THE SENIOR BARON GINSBURG WAS A BEAR OF A MAN, HIS BROAD FACE OFFSET BY
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copper industries – by that time he had amassed an estimated \$100 million¹¹ – de Hirsch and his wife Clara gave generously to a wide range of philanthropic causes around the world.

Baron de Hirsch was a brilliant entrepreneur, as well as a man of dignified bearing – his thick moustache appears impeccably groomed in every picture – who lived a life of luxury. He strolled comfortably in the palaces of European royalty and the halls of international finance. But whatever one might have surmised from his extraordinary privilege, immense wealth, and impressive moustache, de Hirsch’s heart was never too far from the lived realities of his Jewish brothers and sisters in distant Russia. After encountering the Baron during a stay at the Prince of Wales’ Sandringham country house, the future Czar Nicholas II noted with some surprise that he seemed “less interested in horses or even railway contracts, than he was in philanthropic plans to succor the oppressed Russian Jews.”¹²

A bold business visionary, Baron Hirsch brought the same ambitious spirit to his philanthropic ventures. The JCA’s primary mission was to assist in providing Jews with agricultural and other economic opportunities, especially by encouraging them to emigrate from Russia, settle, and develop newly-purchased lands in the Americas. Headquartered in Paris, the new association’s capital was to be split up between Jewish communal concerns there, as well as in London, Brussels, Berlin, and Frankfurt.¹³ Critically, the JCA also maintained a Russian central committee in S. Petersburg, headed by a now familiar name – Chamah’s very own Baron Horace Ginsburg.

Despite this kind of community-charity cross-pollination, Chamah and JCA were still distinct groups, with their own charters, and with

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Cast of CHARACTERS

THE REBBE'S CIRCLE

REB YESHAYA BERLIN

Successful businessman and guided merchant, close confidante and cousin (by marriage) of the Rebbe, gave advice and financial support. Lived in Riga.

REB MENACHEM MONISH MONEZSOHN

Chossid, confidante, and financial supporter of the Rebbe. Lived in Petersburg, maintained government contacts there, including "The Launderer."



R. ELIEZER MOSHE MADAIEVSKY

Rov and government rabbi of Chorol. Acted as representative of the Rebbe, received a salary for his work. Also in touch with "The Launderer."

"THE LAUNDERER"

Government source, apparently in the ministry for religion.

REB AVROHOM ABBA "ABELE" PERSOHN

Chossid and the Rebbe's representative throughout the affair. Lived in Königsberg, Prussia (today Kaliningrad).

THE MODERNISTS



BARON MAURICE DE HIRSCH (1831-1896)

German-born Jewish philanthropist, banker, and railroad tycoon. Founder of the JCA.



BARON JOSEPH EVZEL GINSBURG (1812-1878)

Russian Jewish banker, patriarch of the Ginsburg family, founder Ginsburg Bank and Chamah, father of Horace. He was ennobled by the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt in 1871, and Joseph received the title of baron in 1874.



BARON HORACE (NAFTOLI TZVI) GINSBURG (1833-1909)

Russian financier, advocate, philanthropist, head of Chamah, chairman of JCA Committee in Russia. Lived in Petersburg, son of Evzel, father of David.

different missions for Russian Jewry, one broadly educational, the other economic.¹⁴ To generalize somewhat, the difference was where they directed their efforts: The former aimed at Jewish hearts and minds, while the latter was more concerned by the state of their bodies. It was this question that would shape the view of these organizations in Lubavitch.

SUNRISE, SUNSET?

As these developments took place, and in part because of them, cracks began to appear in the traditional communal establishment.¹⁵ And, as its membership grew and more money came in, Chamah adopted a more aggressive footing; from 1893, it began to advocate for the introduction of Russian language instruction in chadorim,¹⁶ a certification requirement for melamdim in said schools, and a plan to establish their own rabbinical seminaries.

As always, the maskilim professed the noblest of intentions, and provided all of the appropriate assurances: "There are three things upon which Israel's salvation rests," they declared in Chamah's early days, "and the welfare and happiness of our people depends on them: On good education, on the increased [use of] language of the land... and on the spread of the true light of Haskalah amongst us."¹⁷ Likewise, in their efforts promoting the Russian language, Chamah resolved to supply schools with early learning materials scrubbed of "every place and every statement containing a sentiment that at odds with our faith."¹⁸

Still, the Rebbe Rashab sensed a larger desire to subvert existing traditional institutions, and eventually do away with them altogether.¹⁹ Speaking of their efforts to introduce Russian into the chadorim at the turn of the century, the Rebbe wrote:

It isn't such a bad decree in and of itself and it has a positive aspect, in that it will diminish the [other, teacher-certified schools], and it's better that Russian instruction should take place in a cheder, under the supervision of the melamdim. However, what makes it so terrible, G-d forbid, is that through it the members of Chamah will insinuate themselves into the chadorim, and exert influence in them, through their teachers... presumably they will withdraw from the [other, less popular, more secularized] schools²⁰, and direct their energies towards the chadorim and Talmudei Torah.

This is their ultimate intention, with their malevolently clever efforts in this matter... I have understood this from fragments of my conversation with Harkavy²¹, and pieced them together myself; it is clear to me this is their intent. May Hashem thwart it."²²

These initiatives met with minimal success,²³ but they were only the beginning.

In 1896, Baron Hirsch passed away, and the estate he left behind meant a massive injection of funds for his favored philanthropic causes. The very next year, as it happened, Chamah's activities exploded, as they went on a school-building spree across the Russian Empire. The impact of these schools went well beyond their student populations, which is why, in 1899, the maskilim opened up a new "Talmud Torah" in a site deemed to be of particular value: the town of Lubavitch.

After a scouting visit to that "historic nest of Chassidus, where thousands of Jewish from every part of Russia visit each year", a representative of the organization reported that the "Haskilic influence" of the school would extend "not only on the town's residents... but on the entire Chassidic population, that is on millions of this country's residents."²⁴ This is despite the fact that in 1897, Lubavitch was a town of less than 3,000 permanent residents, of which only 1,660 were Jewish.²⁵

This school, which had grown to hold 135 students within a couple years,²⁶ would prove a source of

terrible heartache for the Rebbe Rashab, and a future flashpoint in the struggle between Chabad and Chamah. Not for the last time, the Rebbe wrote and met with Baron Horace Ginsburg, imploring him to at least leave Lubavitch alone;²⁷ "Spare me Yavneh!" he had cried, echoing Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai's request before the Roman destruction of Yerushalayim. For all his warm, outspoken attachments to Jewish traditions, the head of Chama was not quite so forbearing as the Emperor Vespasian. The school in Lubavitch stayed open.

More pressingly, the school in Lubavitch was only one among scores. By 1900, there were already 150 of its kind.²⁸ In a letter from that year, the Rebbe Rashab registers his alarm:

"...[F]or some years [Chamah] has set its heart and mind on the young. Their most cherished goal is to establish, in every town, schools for young children aged 7 and 8, as well as Talmudei Torah offering a small smattering of Torah learning, deliberately taught in Russian (and in some places without a head covering). Their

MORE MODERNISTS



BARON DAVID GINSBURG
(1857-1910)

Russian scholar, activist, was involved with Chamah and JCA, son of Horace, grandson of Evzel.



YAKOV POLIAKOV (1832-1909)

Russian philanthropist, banker, was involved in JCA and Chamah. Having grown up near Lubavitch, along with his influential businessman brothers Shmuel and Eliezer, he was sympathetic to the Rebbe Rashab's views. Based in Petersburg.



TZADOK KAHN (1839-1905)

Chief Rabbi of France, member of JCA, frequently served as a liaison between traditional Jewry and the organization. Lived in Paris.



NARCISSE LEVEN
(1833-1915)

German-born, French Jewish philanthropist, politician, and lawyer. President of JCA, lived in Paris.

THE RABBONIM



R. CHAIM OZER GRODZINSKI (1863-1940)

Rov and Av Beis Din of Vilna, communal advocate and leader, former student of R. Chaim Soloveitchik in the Volozhin Yeshiva. supporter of JCA campaign, signatory to Rebbe Rashab's letter.



R. CHAIM SOLOVEITCHIK
(1853-1918)

Rov of Brisk, author of Chiddushei Rabbeinu Chaim, born in and formerly taught at Volozhin. Supporter of JCA campaign, signatory to Rebbe Rashab's letter.



R. ELIYAHU CHAIM MEIZEL (1821-1912)

Rov of Lodz, Lithuanian-born, musmach of R. Yitzchak Volozhiner, advocate of communal causes, widely respected and influential amongst Orthodox Jewry.



R. TZVI HIRSH RABINOVITCH (1848-1910)

Rov of Kovno, son and successor of the great R. Yitzchak Elchonon Spektor. Maintained an affiliation with Baron Ginzburg.



R. ELIEZER GORDON
(1841-1910)

Rov of Telz, and Rosh Yeshiva of the Telzer Yeshiva.

R. AVIGDOR CHAIKIN

Chossid, Rov in Sheffield, England. Produced the original French translation of the Rebbe Rashab's letter.

RABBI DR. TZVI HIRSCH HILDESHEIMER (1855-1910)



Editor of the Orthodox newspaper Die Jüdische Presse. Son of the early Modern Orthodox Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer.

teachers are utterly estranged from Hashem and His Torah, and so teach according to their twisted ways... most of them are brazen heretics whose wickedness is on full display. They educate the children according to their evil ways, and their personal conduct has a deeply detrimental effect on the children's character.

Some of these institutions purported to focus on secular studies without encroaching on Torah subjects. But even these secondary schools took a toll on the existing cheder system, as the Rebbe Rashab notes in that letter:

“For the first half of the day, the *chadorim* are empty. Afterwards, when [the students] do come to cheder, their hearts and minds are distracted, and already filled with school studies. Their Torah study becomes utterly peripheral, and

as time goes on they become colder and colder, as they waste away, their souls corrupted, Heaven forfend.”

As influential as the Haskalah schools were, this rapid expansion also meant that costs of maintaining them had ballooned out of budget.²⁹ If this new educational network proved incapable of gathering the funds it needed to be sustainable, it would quickly collapse. It was for this reason that Chamah put in a request for financial support with the JCA, now flush with money from the Hirsch estate. Baron David Ginsburg (the son of Horace) made the emergency plea personally, backed no doubt by the airtight logic of nepotistic self-dealing; the elder Ginsburg, after all, was a trustee of both organizations.

The breadth of the Haskalah's influence in Russia now turned in a large part on how the JCA would respond.

THE REBBE WROTE AND MET WITH BARON HORACE GINSBURG, IMPLORING HIM TO AT LEAST LEAVE LUBAVITCH ALONE; "SPARE ME YAVNEH!" HE CRIED, ECHOING RABBI YOCHANAN BEN ZAKKAI'S REQUEST BEFORE THE ROMAN DESTRUCTION OF YERUSHALAYIM.



הַמְלִיטָז

מחיר המודעות: כל שורה בעמוד קצת... או סקופט: כסף הגליון... 10 קופ.

מכתב עתי לכל דבר הנוגע ליהודים בפרט ועניני מדינה ספרות ומדע בכלל.

תנאי התחייבות: ברומים: לשנה... לחצי שנה... לרבע שנה...

THE PLEDGE

The answer first appeared on page 3 of the Friday, 1 Adar II, 1900, edition of the Russian Hebrew journal daily Hamelitz. Tucked away in the middle of a serialized dispatch from its French correspondent, in a digression from a longer report of the Middle Eastern activities of the Haskalah-affiliated Alliance Israélite Universelle, appeared the following few lines:

Having mentioned the Haskalah, I can also report, from a reliable source, that Baron

David Ginsburg, who spent the past few days in Paris, has succeeded in securing for the JCA a sizeable sum (one million francs) for the purpose of establishing elementary schools for Jews in Russia, by the "Promoters of Haskalah" association (Chamah) in Petersburg.

One million francs. Simple arithmetic reveals the impact such a staggering sum stood to bring. At the time, a million francs would have converted to

Scanned image of the original Hebrew newspaper page with a red circle highlighting a specific paragraph in the middle column.

TIMELINE

5660 (1899-1900)

WINTER – Chamah schoolhouse built in Lubavitch.

WINTER – Rebbe Rashab meets with Baron Ginzburg about chadorim, to no effect.

1 ADAR – Notice appears in Hamelitz.

4 ADAR – Rebbe Rashab hears about article from MM Monezsohn.

5 ADAR – Rebbe mentions it in a letter to R. Eliezer Moshe Madaievsky (635).

– Rebbe spends two weeks in Petersburg to formulate plan of action, to draft letter, translate, get other Rabbonim to write their own letters.

13 ADAR – Attempts to arrange a meeting before Pesach with Monezsohn, Madaievsky, and Yeshaya Berlin in Lubavitch. (Meeting did not eventuate.)

SPRING – JCA internally discusses sending inspectors to Russia to supervise expenses.

7 TAMMUZ – Rebbe travels to dacha for his persistent health problems.

SUMMER – Rebbe spends two weeks in Petersburg taking advice.

20 AV – Letter to Chaikin (660) asking him to translate letter into French and English, and to find a lawyer to make several copies of the letter “on good paper” and to send them all back to the Rebbe. Asks for addresses in London and Paris, and instructs for English letter to be delivered to the JCA office in London by Chief Rabbi Adler. Discusses prospects for success and mentions his poor health.

11 ELLUL – Letter to Yeshaya Berlin (661) mentions sending someone to Paris committee, and dubious prospects for success. R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinski and R. Chaim Soloveitchik commit to sending letters of their own.

LATE SEPTEMBER – JCA authorizes and advance of 25,000 for Chamah schools in Bessarabia.

roughly \$200,000 USD,³⁰ and over 5 million USD today. Of greater relevance was the value of the pledge in the currency it would be spent: 400,000 rubles. The new schoolhouse in Lubavitch – which had already been paid for from Paris, by way of Petersburg³¹ – had cost some 5,000 rubles, plus 6-800 per year to be kept running.³² This meant that this single JCA pledge could be used to *build at least eighty new schools from scratch*, or to keep afloat all of the Chamah schools in the Russian Empire for several years. And for all anyone knew, this was only the start of a closer relationship between Chamah and the JCA.

The Rebbe Rashab, having caught wind of this report almost immediately after publication,³³ spelled out its implications succinctly: “With the power of Baron Hirsch’s vast wealth, they are able to establish schools in every place, and G-d forbid they will destroy the world.”³⁴

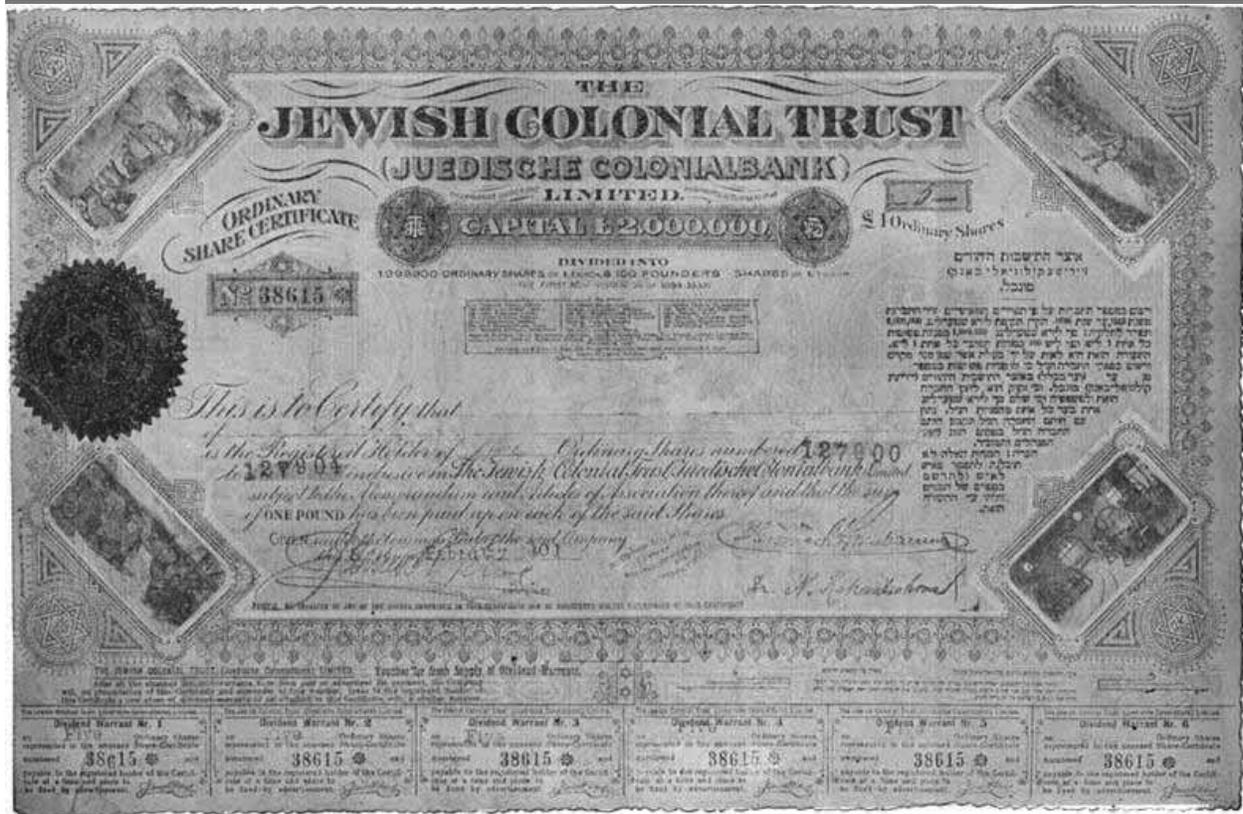
A new front in the battle with the Haskalah had opened.

THE UPHILL BATTLE

In the days that followed, the Rebbe Rashab began to consult and discuss the development with a small circle of trusted chassidim: Reb Yeshaya Berlin of Riga, an elder relative by marriage who, with his profits from the timber trade, was major financial supporter of the Rebbe’s yeshiva and other projects, as was Reb Menachem Monish Monezsohn, a well-connected Petersburg-based businessman. Reb Eliezer Moshe Madaievsky, the official town rabbi of Khorol, was another confidant, and both he and Monezsohn frequently acted as the Rebbe’s emissary in his various public campaigns.³⁵ All three made for a valuable sounding board throughout this entire episode.

From the beginning, the Rebbe was under no illusions about the feasibility of having the pledge rescinded: Considering Baron Ginsburg’s studied indifference to the concerns of Lubavitch, it was clear that the Rebbe Rashab would have to reach over the heads of Chamah. His only chance for success, therefore, was appealing directly to the JCA, now headed by the French lawyer and statesman Narcisse Leven. But why on earth should the urbane Leven, or his other associates in enlightened Western Europe, even take note of some zealous, relatively young, and obscure, Chassidic rabbi living in a tiny shtetl in a backward corner of the Pale?

For this reason, the Rebbe Rashab would have to build a broad coalition of the faithful in order to amplify his voice, and make it heard across a continent. The problem was that there was precious little coordination amongst the Russian Orthodox Jewish leadership of the day; most were



"WITH THE POWER OF BARON HIRSCH'S VAST WEALTH, THEY ARE ABLE TO ESTABLISH SCHOOLS IN EVERY PLACE, AND G-D FORBID THEY WILL DESTROY THE WORLD."

focused on the more immediate affairs of their own *kehillos* and *yeshivos*. “[P]erhaps when the leaders of Israel... implore them to spare the children, they will have a limited effect,” he writes in his letter to Madaievsky, “but who will rouse the leaders? How will one communicate with the other? Days, even years, pass before we manage to have a conversation together...”³⁶

The Rebbe Rashab had some rapport with the great Lithuanian sages, and was already working with some of them on other communal matters, but it had been nearly a lifetime since the Tzemach Tzedek and Reb Yitzchok of Volozhin joined forces in defense of the cheder, at the great S. Petersburg conference of 1843. A case in point: After a similar 1894 “Rabbinic Commission” – attended by the Kovno Rov R. Tzvi Hirsch Rabinovitch, son of the famed R. Yitzchok Elchonon Spektor – decreed that Rabbonim would

be required to hold an academic degree, it was *three years* before the Rebbe Rashab even heard of this decision, and was able to launch a determined fight against it.³⁷

What was clear from the case of the 1894 Commission held true for this fight with Chamah: Information, along with basically everything else, still moved very slowly. Coalition-building in 1900 meant a lot of meetings, a lot of railroad travel between cities all over the Continent, and even more time. Telegraph was only used for brief and urgent communiques; writing, printing, translating, copying, and sending letters was a time-intensive business.

Thus any chance of success depended to a large degree on the Rebbe Rashab’s intelligence-gathering abilities. The fact that he had learned of the JCA pledge from a few lines in a Haskalah newspaper and seized its significance so quickly was testament

to their rapid improvement. Further testimony abounds, like the government insider code-named “The Launderer” (*Hakovets*) referenced in his letters. Apparently an acquaintance of Madaievsky and Monezsohn, “The Launderer” served as an important source of the goings-on of Petersburg.

Still, there was a steep hill to climb: The Rebbe had to find out where to write – that is who had influence in the JCA, who knew whom, who was more receptive to the cause, and so on – and to find out quickly. But, as a letter written in Av of that year shows, for the first few months of his campaign, the Rebbe didn’t even have the addresses of the JCA committee offices in London and Paris.

In his very first published letter regarding the matter, written to Madaievsky on the Tuesday after the *Hamelitz* article, there is a somber tone to the Rebbe’s voice, as he frets over the traditionalist camp’s impotence for effective action against the Haskalah: “[E]very step of the way there are obstacles and delays, most of which needn’t cause any delay at all, and in the meantime they act, and keep on acting, Heaven forbid.”³⁸

FROM DRAWING BOARD TO WRITING DESK

Could this pledge be cancelled? Why would the JCA be dissuaded from a previous commitment? Was it possible to slow the advance of the Haskalah? No matter! It had to be done. The Rebbe Rashab pressed on undaunted, despite these challenges, his health problems during this time, and the myriad other communal concerns of the day.

At first, plans for a Pesach-time meeting in Lubavitch to discuss said concerns with his kitchen cabinet of close chassidim failed to eventuate. On Erev Pesach, he writes to Madaievsky, “I wish to meet with you. However, you must be here at the same time as R. [Monezsohn], and it seems... his trip here will be pushed off for some time, perhaps several weeks, after Yom Tov... Please G-d, when I know when he’ll come, I will notify you by telegram.”³⁹

It is clear that the profoundly stressful demands of their communal efforts had taken their toll on these two chassidim, and ultimately on the Rebbe. After returning home to Khorol from a lengthy tour of duty in S. Petersburg, R. Madaievsky was reluctant to accede to the Rebbe’s plea that he travel back to his station in the capital after Pesach. Meanwhile, Monezsohn had come under serious financial strain in his efforts on the Rebbe’s behalf, and had written him “bitter letters” describing his situation.

“To tell the truth,” wrote the Rebbe to Madaievsky a month after Pesach, “this has been terribly painful for me, and from all sides; that is, on the one hand from knowing how... very urgent this matter is, and especially now; and on the other hand, from what our friend [Monezsohn] says. For this reason, I would like you to be here [in Lubavitch] when our friend will be, and we will speak together... but I still do not know when he will be here... If this goes on, I do not know what to do...”⁴⁰

Despite continued efforts throughout the next few months to arrange this meeting, and to have R. Berlin present as well, no such meeting eventuated. No doubt these communicative speed bumps, along with the levels of exhaustion being reported by the Rebbe’s regular deputies, meant an even longer runway for a proper counter-initiative to get off the ground. However, when that summer he ended up spending a couple weeks in Petersburg taking on advice, a plan of action began to emerge.

Firstly, he began to prepare a long letter to the JCA council of administration in Paris and London. The Rebbe Rashab apparently understood that the JCA would be unconvinced of the spiritual devastation he foresaw accompanying Chamah’s school expansion, and by the corrosive effect it would have on the existing cheder system. Therefore, he developed a critical line of argument that was likely to resonate more strongly with the JCA. Simply, the Rebbe insisted that *their money was being tragically misspent*.

The letter eventually sent, in a tone by turns respectful, grateful, critical, furious, and distraught,

WAS IT POSSIBLE TO SLOW THE ADVANCE OF THE HASKALAH?

NO MATTER! IT HAD TO BE DONE.

the Rebbe Rashab sketches a picture of life in the Pale of Settlement, and of its Jewish inhabitants “sighing in distress, groaning, crushed beneath many mighty waters, and beneath many waves of hatred... spread over their heads in terrible fury.”⁴¹

“Our people, *Bnei Yisroel*, need sustenance; they are hungry for bread... They are crowded in places empty of industry, in which business is scarce, with many people clinging onto a few trades permitted to them... Most are shopkeepers... in a few places there is trade in timber and flax; ten buyers will leap on every little forest and bundle of flax available, such that only the sellers can profit, and the Jewish buyers are left with no livelihood and see no profit... Tens of thousands of our brothers... even after receiving aid, are left in utter deprivation... without even a small sum to start any business... they have literally no opportunities for a livelihood.

Instead, they sit in worry, sit with bitter tears over their terrible misfortune, for the souls of their children starving for a piece of stale bread, may Heaven help us. [...] Many illness have resulted from this hardship and poverty, and since they can afford neither doctor nor treatment, their poor condition is especially embittered. Some of our brothers die before the time as a result of all this. *Our eyes flow with tears over the destruction of our people, and for what has come to them.*⁴²

“Any reasonable person,” the Rebbe continues, will see “that the Committee’s first purpose and action must be to worry how to produce livelihood for our brothers.” He commends them for founding a wholly

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"SEARCH THE ENTIRE LAND
OF RUSSIA; CAN YOU FIND A
YOUTH WHO DOESN'T KNOW
THE NATIONAL TONGUE?
EVERYONE KNOWS IT, AND
ANYONE WHO WANTS TO
IMPROVE HAS FRIENDS WHO
WILL TEACH HIM FOR FREE..."

Jewish-run weaving mill in Dubrovna, but urges them that more must be done, while making a few suggestions of his own:

"The Committee must use its substantial wealth to set up different factories in many places throughout the Pale, so that many of our brothers will find in them menial or skilled labor, to earn their bread by their labor and toil." The JCA's capital investment could be left untouched, to all the profits to go to Jewish workers and managers. Elsewhere, there were opportunities to buy land on which thousands of families could be settled and subsist by agricultural labor.

Instead of desperately needed economic programs, the JCA's money was being thrown at misguided and inefficient educational initiatives. The agricultural schools they funded were producing students without any practical know-how or experience – and besides, "of what help is learning how to work the land, if we have no land to work?"

In the elementary schools, children were being taught a language they could pick up on the street – "search the entire land of Russia; can you find a youth who doesn't know the national tongue? Everyone knows it, and anyone who wants to improve has friends who will teach him for free..." – and the trade schools spent far too much time on non-practical academics. In fact, even calling some of these institutions trade schools was itself an act of downright deception. Eager to ensure a decent living for his son, many a Jewish father signed up to these schools unaware that many were dominated by an educational agenda quite unrelated to the acquisition of a trade.⁴³

The crux of the Rebbe Rashab's argument was this: While thousands of Jews starved, Chamah was essentially funneling massive amounts of money towards a large-scale, often mendacious program of cultural and social engineering that would likely be disastrous for Jewish families and religious communities.

Haunted by the image of the embarrassingly unsophisticated shtetl Yidden, the maskilim came to see secular education as the cure for every ill. Once educated, they could become cultured; once acculturated, they could become accepted in society; once socialized, economic integration and prosperity would finally follow. The questions of whether higher education would actually translate to improved job prospects, or whether promoting white-collar careerism was in fact the best fit for the provincial patterns of traditional shtetl, were scarcely thought of, if at all.⁴⁴ In the meantime, as the maskilim obsessed over their social status, thousands of Jews

were starving. The real outrage, argued the Rebbe, was that this approach was being endorsed by a,

“philanthropic, charitable organization capable of, and founded in order to alleviating a large portion of our people from its poverty, misfortune, distress, and pressures. The Committee ought not interfere with these matters... focus on providing a material livelihood for our brothers, so that they may live, with G-d's help.”

After all, he added, wasn't that the JCA's original charter?

“As I heard from a trusted source, Baron [Hirsch] specifically said [he wanted] to work towards providing a livelihood for our brothers inhabiting these lands... Even after the Baron left his estate to the discretion of the Committee, isn't it still incumbent upon the Committee to choose that which is truly beneficial to our brothers?”⁴⁵

From far-off Paris, the JCA had delegated its responsibilities to the agenda-driven Chamah in S.

"INSTEAD, THEY SIT IN WORRY, SIT WITH BITTER TEARS OVER THEIR TERRIBLE MISFORTUNE, FOR THE SOULS OF THEIR CHILDREN STARVING FOR A PIECE OF STALE BREAD, MAY HEAVEN HELP US."



Petersburg, with both organizations controlled by a distant elite unfamiliar and out of touch with the actual concerns of the Jews living in the Pale of Settlement. Thus the letter concluded:

“We request that the honorable Committee... take into account these words spoken on behalf of tens of thousands of Israel and with forgiveness accepts these words and truth – regardless of their source – with affection and good will. May Hashem... pay their reward in full, and grant them... their every desire, in spirit and in matter.”

It is no doubt a searingly powerful document – only parts of it are quoted here – but without a good translation for the benefit of the French and English speaking JCA members, its rhetorical impact would be blunted. After all, the case he had to make was as important as whom he made it to. So, later that summer the Rebbe Rashab turned to the prominent chossid Rabbi Avigdor Chaikin, then serving the

Jewish community of Sheffield, England, to produce several copies of the letter in both languages.

“Although I could have retained someone in Petersburg to translate it into French,” he writes to Chaikin, “I did not want to put my faith in an outsider without any real concern or enthusiasm for the matter, so that the translation does not come out as a dull and lifeless document. Therefore ... I can rely on you... that the translation will be alive, since I know your heart and soul, and know that this matters to you deeply.”⁴⁶

The next step, then, was ensuring that the letter would have its desired effect. On the sender’s end, this meant rallying support for its message; on the recipient’s, pinpointing those best positioned to make sure it landed with appropriate impact within the JCA.

HAUNTED BY THE IMAGE OF THE EMBARRASSINGLY UNSOPHISTICATED SHTETL YIDDEN,
THE MASKILIM CAME TO SEE SECULAR EDUCATION AS THE CURE FOR EVERY ILL.



ALLIES, ENEMIES, AND INBETWEENERS

On its own, the Rebbe Rashab realized that his letter to Paris would not be enough. To lend his message the heft it needed, he had to ensure the rabbis of Eastern Europe's most prestigious Jewish communities would give it their backing. In his estimation, such leading lights as R. Eliyahu Maizel of Lodz, R. Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk, and R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinski of Vilna fit the bill. But all of this took time and considerable diplomatic effort. In the meantime, the Rebbe Rashab set off a letter-writing campaign by sending a flurry of dispatches all over the map, urging others to get involved by writing appeals of their own.

"Letters like this one will be sent to the Committee from many other places, by several great rabbis, like the great sages of Lodz, Brisk, Vilna, Kovno, as well as several other cities, from rabbis and prominent laypeople. Please G-d, the religious rabbis from overseas, like Rabbi Munk of Berlin and Rabbi Breuer of Frankfurt, will be encouraged as well as others... who will assist us in this matter."

Perhaps as a result of the terrible strain Moneszohn and Madaievsky had been under on account of their work, the Rebbe Rashab had to look elsewhere for an emissary to enlist these other leaders. Instead of the regulars, the Rebbe Rashab recruited Reb Avrohom Abale Persohn, a respected chassid, and a loyal, longtime friend of the Rebbe's household. As it happened, Persohn had run into some troubles of his own a few years earlier, after being hounded into bankruptcy by some aggressive creditors. At the time, the Rebbe encouraged several chassidim to come to his legal and financial aid – amongst them Madaievsky and Moneszohn.⁴⁷

Despite his relative lack of experience in this type of work, Reb Abale was a man of stellar character, and prodigious energy. "It is difficult to find men of his

caliber today," the Rebbe once wrote of him. "My dear father loved him greatly."⁴⁸ Reb Abale would be the point man for the entire project, enlisting support amongst the rabbinate, reviewing, translating, and delivering letters where necessary, and meeting anyone with ties to JCA.

Finding the right person to follow things through all the way to Paris, however, was a different matter. Here, Persohn balked. "Unaccustomed to speaking with such a class of people, and not knowing their language,"⁴⁹ he was hesitant about holding forth in the alien, and frankly intimidating, circles of Franco-Jewish *haute société*.

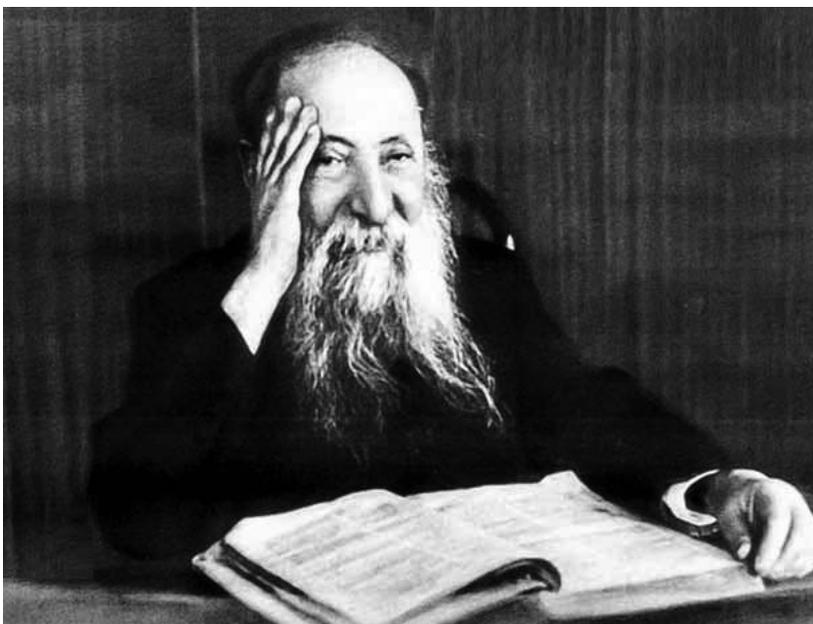
Although half a year had already passed since the news first broke, in a Tishrei letter to Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, the Rebbe Rashab urged patience and proper pre-planning:

In my view, we must wait until we have a commitment from an honorable individual to travel to Paris and explain our case before the members of the Committee. The honorable Reb A. Persohn... can encourage several rabbis and religious philanthropists who he knows overseas, which is critical for our cause, but we need someone... to speak with the Committee members themselves... I ask of his sage eminence to express his opinion... on whom he thinks would be worthy and fitting of this task.

The correspondence between the two Torah leaders speaks to their warm working relationship: "With great affection I learned of his desire to come together," wrote the Rebbe to the Lithuanian sage, "and to work as one man on this matter pertaining to basic observance of Yiddishkeit amongst [our] youth and children. It is my firm hope that, by joining forces, we will achieve much good, with the help of Hashem."⁵⁰

"I DID NOT WANT TO PUT MY FAITH IN AN OUTSIDER WITHOUT ANY REAL CONCERN OR ENTHUSIASM FOR THE MATTER, SO THAT THE TRANSLATION DOES NOT COME OUT AS DULL AND LIFELESS DOCUMENT."

THE CORRESPONDENCE
BETWEEN THE TWO TORAH
LEADERS SPEAKS TO
THEIR WARM WORKING
RELATIONSHIP:



R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinski

Even before the Rebbe had settled on the man who would win their support, several names of potential allies within the JCA began to swirl about.

For one, there was the R. Tzadok Kahn, the Chief Rabbi of France since 1867, who was heavily active in communal activities, and had been a prominent voice during the Dreyfus affair just a couple years earlier.⁵¹ More to the point, Rabbi Kahn was a member of the JCA's administrative council. There was also a Dr. Klein, understood to be a close acquaintance of JCA president Narcisse Leven. Parisian Rabbis Shlomo Cohen and Altman were closely aligned with the Rebbe Rashab and his mission, but by the same token were more removed from the levers of communal influence. Alternatively, and closer to home, the Russian banker Yakov Poliakov was a passionate advocate for Jewish welfare causes who had been receptive to the views of Lubavitch in the past.⁵² Crucially, he was a both a member of Chama *as well as* the vice-chair of the Russian division of the JCA.⁵³ Would he be able to prevail over the council in Paris? The Rebbe Rashab pressed for advantage wherever he could find it.

At one point, he asked his chassidim to personally petition Rabbi Dr. Solomon Breuer of Frankfurt, son-in-law of the great R. Shimshon Refoel Hirsch; Breuer was deemed important because of his relationship with Baron Edmond James de Rothschild; Rothschild had recently handed administration of the new Yishuv

settlements he had founded over to the JCA, thus increasing his influence within the organization.⁵⁴ Rabbi Mordechai HaLevi Horowitz of Frankfurt was likewise understood to have some pull in the JCA; perhaps his teacher Reb Eliyahu of Lodz could persuade him to use it?⁵⁵ This was how things went: No matter how remote, no matter how contrived, the Rebbe kept pushing, prodding, probing, and pouncing on every opportunity for leverage that came up. "In general," he wrote, "it is impossible to know in advance through whom salvation will come."⁵⁶

Still, even with an address book full of names, and yet more prospects, there were no guarantees. Though the Rebbe's attitude to Jewish enlightenment was vehement and unequivocal, there was no black-and-white demarcation between the affiliates of Haskalah and its opponents. That is, it was not always easy to distinguish between friend or foe: Alongside their genuine concern for the physical plight of Russian Jewry, there were members of the JCA who remained sympathetic to their spiritual concerns and deferential to the traditionalist leadership. Similarly, many opponents of secularization remained sympathetic to some of the Haskalah's aims, and committed to improving the educational and material standards of all Jewry.

This kind of nuance extended even in the Rebbe's attitude to Chamah, as is evident in his early, albeit unsuccessful appeals to Baron Ginsburg, and

his subsequent overtures to the more moderate Poliakov.⁵⁷

Thus the Rebbe Rashab's hope was that these liminal figures, especially those in and around the JCA, could be swayed by demonstrating a broad base of Orthodox opposition. "In truth," he wrote, "we must assume that the Committee, and certainly R. Kahn, will not want the great rabbis of our region to think of them as wrongdoers, to be considered as sinners causing others to sin."⁵⁸ That is to say, as informed by Enlightenment values and embedded in Western society as these people may have been, they had not broken away from the religious leadership, and still thought of themselves as part of traditional Jewry.

A remark of the Rebbe Rashab to Reb Abale Persohn gives a sense of the knife's edge they had to walk in the early days of the campaign.

At that time, the *Die Judische Presse* was one of most influential organs of Orthodox Jewish opinion in Europe, and certainly in Germany. Since 1883, it had

edited by the son of the prominent neo-orthodox Berliner Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer, R. Tzvi Hirsh, who by then had become well known in his own right as a bold and outspoken campaigner against German anti-Semites.⁵⁹ The Rebbe Rashab grasped that such a person was an important ally to have on board his influence campaign. He therefore wrote to Persohn, "It is important to maintain correspondence with R. T. Hildesheimer in this matter, since he may prove critical" further down the line, "whether to implore and encourage the [JCA] Committee members, or G-d forbid, to go to war against them."⁶⁰

In the meantime, Lubavitch had to tread deliberately as it made its case; the JCA leadership was still largely an unknown quantity, liable to emerge as either friend, foe, or something in between. Only when Reb Abale headed west would they find out which one it would be. **P**

The second and final installment will appear in the next issue of Perspectives.

EVEN WITH AN ADDRESS BOOK FULL OF NAMES, AND YET MORE PROSPECTS, THERE WERE NO GUARANTEES. IT WAS NOT ALWAYS EASY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN FRIEND OR FOE.



1. Sefer Hatoldos Admur Hazoken, pp. 545-6.
 2. Rosenthal, L., Toldos Chevrav Marbei Haskalah, Part II, p. 129
 3. From 1872, Gordon in fact served as the secretary for the haskalah-promoting Chamah organization at the centre of this story. He died in 1892, several years before the events described below took place.
 4. See Brawer, N., "Resistance and response to change: The leadership of Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn (1860-1920)", pp. 39-40.
 5. Rosenthal, L., *ibid.*, Part I, pp. 75-6. Cited in Brawer, N, *ibid.*
 6. "[T]he *maskilim* looked upon the Russia government as a supporting force in their struggle for the realization of their ideas. In memoranda submitted to the authorities, the called for the imposition of reforms on the masses, such as the change of their traditional dress... the strict supervision of Hebrew printing presses... The government accepted these proposals and had them enforced. The *maskilim* found particular satisfaction in the government's program to establish a network of... schools. (Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. Haskalah, pp. 1448-1449.
 7. Originally name Chevrav Marbei Haskalah; not to be confused with the diametrically opposed Kovno-based Chevrav Machzikei Hadas founded at around the same time, or the Chaburas Mezakei HaRabim formed by underground Lubavitcher activists in the Soviet Union nearly a hundred years later.
 8. Rosenthal, L., *Toldos Chevrav Marbei Haskalah*, Part I, p. ix.
 9. Horowitz, Brian J. *Jewish philanthropy and enlightenment in late-Tsarist Russia*. University of Washington Press, 2017, pp. 21,
 10. See Brawer, N., *ibid.*, pp. 34-42 for a discussion on this period of relative calm.
 11. Jewish Virtual Library, s.v. Baron Maurice de Hirsch. Adjusting for inflation is somewhat difficult over larger periods of times, but dollar amounts from the late 19th century should probably be multiplied by a factor of 25 for present-day value, at the very least.
 12. Cited in Grunwald, K. *Turkenhirsch: A Study of Baron Maurice de Hirsch*. Transaction Publishers, 1966, p. 94.
 13. See here for more on JCA's history and organization: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8633>
 14. Brawer, N., *op. cit.*, p. 41, phrases this point somewhat differently.
 15. Brawer, N. (*ibid.*, p. 43) cites an 1897 law that allowed Jews to establish umbrella charitable organizations independently of the existing religious establishment, thus challenging the "exclusive authority of the religious *kahal*, effectively setting up an alternative community alongside it."
 16. Jewish schools were banned from teaching Russian. "The 25,000 *chadorim* schools, with 300,000 pupils, were forbidden to teach Russian, to stop children getting a secondary education." Johnson, P., *A History of the Jews*, p. 363.
 17. Rosenthal, L., Toldos Chevrav Marbei Haskalah, Part I, p. viii.
 18. *Ibid.*, Part II, p. 13
 19. Brawer (*op. cit.*, pp. 33-4) writes that historians like Simon Dubnow and Jacob Raisin have accepted at "face value" the maskilim's claims that organizations like Chamah had no intention of "interfering with Halakhah or traditional Jewish practice or doing "*open* battle with the Chassidim" [*italics added*]. Other historians' judgment seems closer to the Rebbe Rashab's, however. Citing Heinz-Dietrich Loewe, he writes that the "maskilim were interested in restructuring organized Jewish life" to "weaken the position of the traditionalists..." See there.
 20. This letter was written after the expansion of Chamah's own schools, described below, was already well under way.
 21. [Vladimir?] Harkavy, the head of the Moscow chapter of Chamah, as noted previously in the same letter.
 22. Igros Kodesh, vol. 3, p. 328 (§774).
- In an earlier communique regarding the proposed seminaries, the Rebbe Rashab writes that while Orthodox and Progressive institutions might coexist in other parts of the world, Russian law only recognized a single Jewish religious establishment. Thus, "the introduction of seminary-graduate rabbis, G-d forbid, will not allow for the existence of other opposing rabbis; they alone will be the leaders, and will G-d forbid destroy the world; they will lead the youth away from the faith, G-d forbid, and revert the world to nothingness. Anyone who desires to keep the Mitzvos will have to do so in secret, out of shame; just as people are too embarrassed to study Torah now, so will they become embarrassed by the observance of practical Mitzvos. This is entire goal of that wicked society – to make them forget His Torah, and turn them away from the statutes of His will, may Hashem protect us." *Ibid.*, vol. 3., p. 45 (§583).

23. See *ibid.*, pp. xvii-xviii on the ultimately successful letter-writing campaign the Rebbe Rashab directed against the rabbinical seminary proposal.
24. Letter from Mordechai Ben-Hillel Hacohen, cited in Levin, S. D., *Toldos Chabad BeRussia HaTzaris*, pp. 265-6.
25. Brawer, N. p. 76, fn. 138.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Toldos Chabad BeRussian HaTzaris*, *ibid.*
28. Igros Kodesh, vol. 3, p. xxi.
29. *Ibid.*; *ibid.*, p. 141.
30. See Brawer, N. op cit., p. 45, fn. 76
31. Igros Kodesh vol. 3, p. 221.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 142. In all likelihood, the school in Lubavitch received a larger investment than the average; when the JCA forwarded the first 25,000 rubles to Chamah in September 1900, the money was slated to be spent on “training teachers, to create and maintain six schools in the colonies of Bessarabia, and the annual upkeep of another eleven primary schools.” Brawer, N., p. 60, fn. 98. Thus the above estimate of the pledge’s spending power is probably conservative.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 58, fn., s.v., *Sheyihiyu*.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 142
37. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 113
39. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-5
41. Igros Kodesh, vol. 1, p. 238.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 240
43. The Rebbe would stress this point later on, in preparation for meetings with JCA members in Paris. See Igros Kodesh, vol. 3, p. 222.
44. “Generally speaking, in this respect, our people is different from other peoples: In all other nations, the youth who study in school do so while maintaining manual employment. He spends half the day in school, before returning to his shovel or plough. Knowing how to read and write is sufficient, and having done so he has little desire to carry on; instead, he will then become a farmer or laborer.
- Not so amongst our people. Once [the student] has achieved basic literacy, advancing in his studies becomes his sole desire. He will not so much as look at a blue-collar trade or at business, and even once he has achieved his [academic] goals he will not earn a living from it; as we often see so many physicians, lawyers, and the like starving for bread, since they are overly [educated]. Many of them don’t even achieve said goals, and instead are left with their toast burned on both sides...” Igros Kodesh, vol 1, p. 243.
45. *ibid.*, p. 245.
46. Igros Kodesh, vol 3, pp. 142-3.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 16, 18, 19-23, etc.
48. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 113.
49. *Ibid.*, vol. 3., p. 148.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Rabbi Kahn had in fact officiated in the wedding of Captain Alfred and Lucie Dreyfus in 1890, three days before the young artillery officer was admitted into France’s foremost military academy, and four years before convicted of treason on charges fueled by anti-Semitism.
52. A couple years before, the Rebbe Rashab had organized a letter-writing campaign to him, to protest his leading role in Chamah’s plan to establish Rabbinical seminaries. “I am of the view that it’s possible to prevail upon him to separate from them,” wrote the Rebbe at the time, before instructing that “the letters should be written with gentle, positive words.” *Ibid.*, pp. 47-8.
53. Brawer, N., op. cit., p. 69.
54. Igros Kodesh, vol. 3, p. 144, p. 178.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
57. The same could be said of Lubavitch’s other ideological battles. Despite his entrenched skepticism and opposition to the fledgling Zionist movement, for example, the Rebbe Rashab did not see its adherents as a monolith. He once denounced a certain Zionist delegation from Odessa as “terribly wicked men,” for their scorn of Torah tradition, before singling out one of their number for exception: “[A]part from R. A. Greenberg [a leader of the (Chovevei Tzion) Odessa Committee at the very center of Zionist activity in the Russian Empire], who is still said to be a fearer of G-d.” It was not unthinkable for a sincere person to have been caught up in the frenzy of excitement surrounding political Zionism.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
59. Hartston, Barnet Peretz. *Sensationalizing the Jewish Question: Anti-Semitic Trials and the Press in the Early German Empire*. Vol. 39. Brill, 2005, pp. 87-92.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 210.



DEFIANT
SPIRITS

RABBI BINYOMIN COHEN

ROSH YESHIVA - YESHIVA GEDOLA OF MELBOURNE

Like many other Lubavitcher Chassidim, Reb Chaim Zalman Kozliner and his family had fled the more populous towns of Central Russia at the beginning of World War II, and arrived in the city of Samarkand, the capital of Uzbekistan. Life there was not easy. Food was scarce. People were dying from epidemics and starvation, and for a religious Jew to bring up his children as he would like was almost an impossibility. The same restrictive rules which governed the rest of the Soviet Union applied here too. The teaching of Torah in public or to groups of pupils was strictly forbidden, and, if so, how could the younger generation receive a proper education? Despite this, Reb Chaim Zalman did all in his power to ensure that his son, Mottel, be brought up in the traditional Jewish and Chassidic way.

One day, not long after the end of the war, Reb Chaim Zalman informed his son, that he was taking him on a trip Mottel, as curious as any other fifteen-year old would have been, asked no questions. They arrived at Samarkand's main railway station, and the father

purchased two tickets to Tashkent, which was about 300 kilometers distant. They boarded the train and, arriving in Tashkent several hours later, went straight from the train station to the local shul.

"There," related Reb Mottel many years later, "I saw a Jew sitting and learning Torah with the greatest diligence. His head was almost buried in a large volume of the Gemara, and he paid absolutely no attention to what was going on around him. We stayed in the shul for some time, and then my father beckoned me to accompany him. We went from the shul to the railway station where we caught the train back to Samarkand, arriving home late in the evening.

I was totally mystified by the day's happenings. "What," I asked my father, "was the point of all that? We had to spend a whole day, not to mention the cost of the train tickets, just to go into a shul in Tashkent?"

"I wanted to show you something," replied my father, "which I don't think you would see anywhere else. Did you see the man learning in shul? Did you notice how totally absorbed he was in his Gemara? I wanted you



Reb Zalman Leib Estulin

DID YOU SEE THE MAN
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HE WAS A POWERFUL
(AND ALMOST
OVERPOWERING)
PERSONALITY WHO
SPOKE ABOUT ONE
THING – TORAH



totally absorbed he was in his Gemara? I wanted you to see with your own eyes that even in these difficult times it is possible to learn Torah with diligence and devotion, and that there are Jews here doing just that. This was the whole purpose of our journey.”

Who, in fact, was the Jew they saw poring over his *seforim* in Tashkent? His name was Zalman Leib Estulin, and it is no exaggeration to say that his story is an inspiration.

If he would have been interested in complaining, the young Zalman Leib could have compiled an impressive list of grievances.

His mother passed away soon after his birth, and, since his father was unable to look after him, he found himself in the care of foster-parents. Similarly, from a spiritual point of view, being born in 1913 in Shumyatz, a White Russian village, proved to be quite a handicap. By the time he was seven or eight years old, and ready to start serious Torah study, the Soviet government had already succeeded in closing down all traditional *chadorim* in his district, and sending off their young pupils to more enlightened institutions where they were taught to shun and despise all things religious.

Somehow or other the young Zalman Leib managed to find his way to the local shul where an elderly, retired *melamed* was ready to teach him Torah. Naturally, the N.K.V.D (Soviet secret police) were not too happy about this, and did their best to persuade his foster-mother to force her son to attend the State-school. Smart and determined as she was, she managed to convince the officials that her son was a rebellious and

unstable half-wit who refused to go near any normal educational institution, and who was absolutely not worth worrying about. They apparently accepted her assessment, and ceased to display any interest in the boy or his upbringing.

Meanwhile, Zalman Leib spent all of his early and adolescent years studying with local Rabbis, some of whom were great Torah scholars as well as gifted teachers. By the time he was twenty years old he was an accomplished *talmid chochom* who had already mastered a major portion of *Shas* (the whole Talmud) and its commentaries. With the departure of his Rabbi/teacher to Eretz Yisroel in 1933, he decided to move to Moscow.

There, supporting himself by earning whatever meagre livelihood was available in those difficult times, he never forsook his learning. Hours every day were spent in front of a Gemara, and everything else was, at best, of secondary importance.

Conscripted into the Soviet army at the beginning of World War II, Zalman Leib did not have too many opportunities to learn his beloved Gemara, but displayed great self-sacrifice in his tenacious clinging to the laws of Shulchan Aruch under the most trying circumstances. In 1942 he had the misfortune to have his foot severely injured by a German artillery shell. After languishing for a year in hospital, he was discharged from the army and spent the rest of his life on crutches. His wife and child had already been living for some time in Tashkent, where Zalman Leib now joined them. Once again his life was able to center around his *seforim*. It was forbidden by law to teach children Torah, but his one-room dwelling permanently hosted a class of the local Chabad Cheder. His pupils were in his home all day, and

somehow survived several unwelcome visits from the local N.K.V.D.

If the pupils were in danger, the teacher was doubly so. Zalman Leib, however, had dedicated his life to Torah and its study. His own learning, and teaching coming generations to do the same, were his life-blood. The dangers involved were just shrugged off, and never allowed to silence the voice of Torah-study.

Of course, he would have preferred to be able to live in a country where he would be free to learn and teach his beloved Torah without danger or difficulty. However, Divine Providence ordained that not until 1966 was he able to leave the U.S.S.R. with his family and settle in Eretz Yisroel.

Now he was in his element.

I remember eating on the first night of Succos 5727 (1966) in the Succah of Rabbi Gorelik, the Rov of Kfar Chabad. There I met for the first time the recently-arrived Reb Zalman Leib. He was a powerful (and almost overpowering) personality who spoke about one thing – Torah. His continual quotes from the Gemara were punctuated only by stories of *tzaddikim*. It was inspiring to be in his presence, and I can understand in retrospect, why Reb Chaim Kozliner, twenty years earlier, had wanted his son, Mottel, to just see Zalman Leib as he sat, absorbed and involved in his learning.

Reb Zalman Leib lived and flourished in Eretz Yisroel for nearly forty years. The freedom to learn Torah was wonderful, but he himself recognized and appreciated the very special nature of his Torah and *mitzvos* as practiced in Soviet Russia. “Nothing can compare,” he said on several occasions, “with the *mesiras nefesh* which we needed to arouse in order to serve Hashem in that total wilderness.”

At about the same time that Reb Zalman Leib was poring over his Gemara in Tashkent, another special person was being no-less challenged just a few hundred kilometers away. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneerson, the father of the Rebbe, the Rav of the Ukrainian city of Yekaterinoslav for thirty two

years, had been arrested and tried for his counter-revolutionary (i.e. religious) activities. Having been found guilty, he was sentenced to five years of exile in the village of Chi’ili in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Soviet Asia.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok (Reb Levik) was, at the time of his sentencing, quite old and in rather poor health, not least as a result of his ten-month incarceration in Soviet prisons. After a full month’s journey by train, he arrived at his destination. There he found a swamp-ridden, mosquito-infested area with a miserably hot climate. People died there from malaria, and the local villagers lived in extreme poverty.

Reb Levik managed to rent a room for himself (shared later with his wife) in the house of one of these villagers. Life was difficult not only because of a chronic food shortage, but also because there were no more than one or two Jews in the whole area. Thus Reb Levik, who was accustomed to discussing Torah topics at great length, found himself deprived of that type of environment which could at least have helped him to forget his material hardships. Here, in the middle of nowhere, he was in both a physical and spiritual wilderness, the Jews in Tashkent and Samarkand also had nothing materially, but at least they had each other. They davened together and studied together (albeit unobtrusively). They got together at farbrengens and somehow managed to bring up their children the way they wanted. Reb Levik and his wife had none of this. They were almost totally alone in a miserable and depressing situation.

One day of the year, however, all Jews are happy. Into the darkness of misery shines the light of rejoicing. On Simchas Torah, Jews come together to celebrate. Even Jews whose shul attendance is not particularly regular still make a point of turning up on the night of Simchas Torah to sing and dance with the Sefer Torah. The members of Reb Levik’s congregation in Yekaterinoslav had not necessarily been the most religious. They were mostly professionals – doctors, judges, engineers and accountants. However, on the night of Simchas Torah the shul was packed, and

REB LEVIK WAS CERTAINLY AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THERE IS, IN FACT, NO HALACHIC
OBLIGATION TO SING AND DANCE ON SIMCHAS TORAH.

hundreds of pairs of eyes were on Reb Levik as he led the *hakafos*.

The situation in Chi'ili was vastly different. There was no shul, no Sefer Torah and almost no Jews. The room in which Reb Levik and his wife lived was small and narrow. On one side was the bed, and, a few feet away, on the other side of the room was the table.

Reb Levik was certainly aware of the fact that there is, in fact, no Halachic obligation to sing and dance on Simchas Torah. It is indeed a universal Jewish custom which can be based on any number of valid reasons, but that does not make it obligatory in the same way as one is, for example, obligated to hear the *shofar* on Roth Hashanah. In addition, it is fairly clear that the custom only applies to a congregation i.e. if ten Jews come together, they should include the *hakafos* and rejoicing as part of their davening. We are not, however, aware of any tradition which enjoins an individual to observe this custom in any form.

None of this deterred Reb Levik. Tonight was Simchas Torah. Tonight he was in a state of supreme happiness. When the time came to begin *hakafos* he called out, verse by verse, the entire Atoh Horeisoh (recited before the *hakafos*) in exactly the same way as he would do in his own shul, leading a congregation of hundreds. The nearest thing he had to a Sefer Torah was his worn copy of Mishnayos. Clutching it to his chest, he danced with all his might in the narrow space between the table and the bed. Simultaneously chanting the accompanying verses

and singing the same *niggunim* as he was accustomed to in Yekatrinoslav, he cheerfully rejoiced with his beloved Torah. His wife, meanwhile, sat on a stool in the corner and marveled at her husband's greatness and strength.

Inspired as I am by the story of Reb Zalman Leib Estulin and his Torah study, I still feel that Reb Levik's Simchas Torah scales new heights.

Reb Zalman Leib knew exactly what he had to do with his life. The Torah was given to the Jewish nation to study and to live by, so Reb Zalman Leib spent his whole life doing just that. For him the Gemara was the most important *sefer*, and therefore his head was continually buried in it. Since nothing existed in his life other than his Gemara, the difficulties and distractions of his surroundings did not disturb him. He focused completely on his learning and totally ignored his environment. Once a person is capable of such concentration and detachment, it does not really make that much difference whether he finds himself in a Beis Hamidrash with five hundred other Jews who are also learning, or whether he is all alone in a totally foreign environment. Give him his *sefer* and he will be fine. For him, nothing else exists.

Reb Levik's situation was entirely different. He was acutely aware of the fact that it was Simchas Torah, but that itself would have broken the heart of a lesser mortal. How could a leader who had for more than three decades rejoiced with hundreds of Jews,



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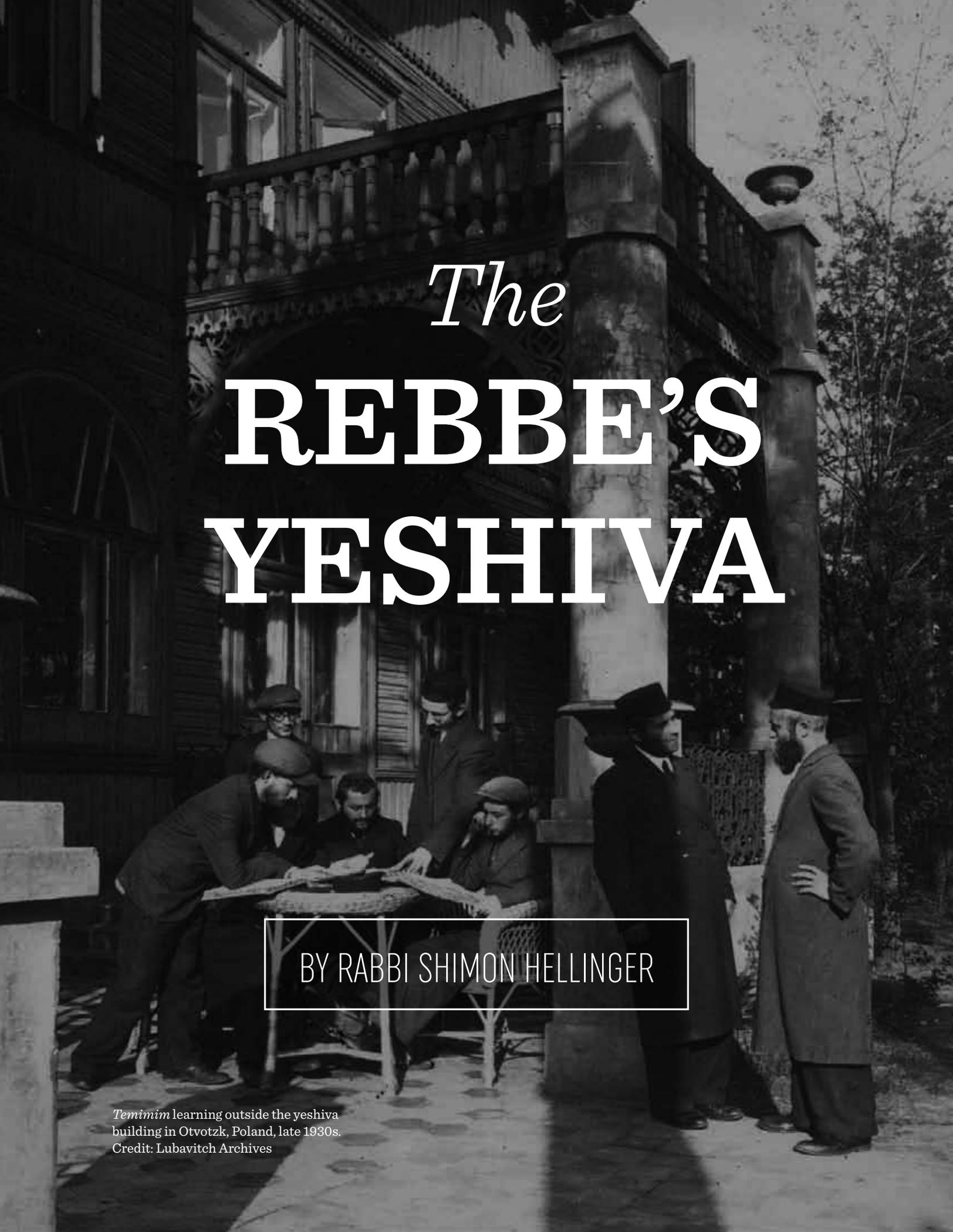
be reduced to this? On Simchas Torah he had been the focus of all eyes, and now he had nobody. In place of an imposing shul all he had was a cramped hovel. He had nothing materially and nothing close to what he needed spiritually. His whole situation was nothing short of heartbreaking, and yet he danced and rejoiced with all his might.

The pitiful, mosquito-infested shack became for him a magnificent shul. The worn volume of Mishnayos was his Sefer Torah. The narrow space became an enormous floor. This was what he needed. The elderly, sick Jew sang, danced and rejoiced with his Creator. He was not ignoring his wretched surroundings. He was, rather, transforming them as he made them a part of his celebration. The tiny room and its ramshackle furnishings danced and sang with Reb Levik as misery turned to joy.

No wonder that Rabbi Zevin, a man not given to exaggeration and empty rhetoric — commented on the above incident, “Such a song, it seems to me, had never before been heard. This song pierced the firmament and shook the highest heavens — ‘I will sing Your judgment.’”

Every person may find himself in situations and surroundings which are not to his liking or for his benefit. May Hashem help us to stand firm as we learn to both ignore the negative aspects of our environment at the same time as we elevate the positive. **P**

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The
REBBE'S
YESHIVA

BY RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

Temimim learning outside the yeshiva building in Otvotzk, Poland, late 1930s.
Credit: Lubavitch Archives

TOMCHEI TEMIMIM *in* LUBAVITCH

third and final installment

PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

Scanning the documents regarding the Tomchei Temimim *yeshiva*, it becomes apparent that the Rebbe Rashab did not just found Tomchei Temimim; rather he was heavily involved in its everyday management, guiding both staff and students in how to conduct themselves. It wasn't a Lubavitch *yeshiva* with the Rebbe as its leader; it was literally the Rebbe's *yeshiva*.

The Rebbe Rashab was given regular reports about the *yeshiva* and the status of each *bochur*. He would give instruction on the overall direction of the *yeshiva* – in learning, *avoda* and conduct – and also on how to guide specific *bochurim*. As the Friediker Rebbe writes:

In 5658 (1898), my father sent seventeen students to R. Groinem in Zhebin. I have the list in his holy handwriting with his notes – each one's talents, character traits, conduct in *yiras Shamayim*, and a general assessment of what will be of him.¹

And in his diary from summer 5658 (1898), the Friediker Rebbe records a staff report to the

RebbeRashab at his country home in Bolivka:

18 Sivan (5658, Bolivka), 11 p.m.

As I wrote in my entry from 23 Iyar, my father decided that straight after Shavuos, R. Hendel should travel to Zhebin to evaluate the students and test them, and that he should then bring the report to the retreat in Bolivka. Last night, R. Hendel returned from his journey and brought short notes about the students with him, regarding their studies of *nigleh* and Chassidus, and their daily conduct and lifestyle. I spent all night organizing the preexisting notes, adding in the notes that R. Hendel brought.

Today, is the day that my father designated to hold a meeting regarding the *bochurim*...

The first meeting began at 10 a.m. and continued until 1 p.m. My father, R. Hendel and myself participated. R. Groinem provided detailed information in response to the questionnaires that he was sent over the last seven months (Cheshvan-Sivan). These were 27 letters, all outlining what



each student studied in Gemara and *poskim*, what they studied in Chassidus, how many times he held a *farbrengen* with the students, and what the content of those talks and stories was. R. Hendel also filled out a detailed questionnaire. Based on all this information, I prepared a comprehensive and methodical account of each student.

My father was pleased with the orderliness and praised me. He read the account with attention, enquiring about each student.

First, he reviewed the list of students in Zhebin. After reading what I wrote about each student, then questioning R. Hendel and myself, he expressed his opinion about the student: (a) What he should study in Chassidus, and (b) What the *mashpia* R. Groinem should discuss with him. He then instructed that I record all of this in detail.

We concluded the first meeting, and my father set the second meeting for 4 p.m. During the break, I organized the financial account, since I had been waiting for the final figures that R. Hendel brought with him. I organized it all in two hours, ready to present at the end of the second meeting.

The second meeting lasted four hours, one and a half of which went for the financial accounting. R. Hendel suggested that a *meshulach* (fundraiser)

be sent around on behalf of the *yeshivos*, but my father turned it down. He said that until he sees the students in Zhebin himself and ascertains the impact that the study of Chassidus and the influence their *mashpi'im* had on them, he cannot send a *meshulach*.

At 8:15, my father went walking with me until suppertime, which was half-an-hour before sundown.² While walking, he spoke of our meetings, the good impression that the report made, and his hope that it will *bez"H* succeed.

"It is critical," my father said, "to prepare a treatise on proper conduct, so that the *mashpi'im* – R. Groinem and R. Hendel – will have a correct idea of how to give guidance. I have some notes on guidance which I wrote around ten years ago [in 5648 (1888)]. I'll give them to you to copy, and I will then review them once again. With Hashem's help, I'll organize them according to the students' needs."³

That treatise later became well-known as *Klalei HaChinuch VebaHadracha – The Principals of Education and Guidance*, a fundamental discourse on how to influence students.

In a letter to the Frieddiker Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab addresses how Chassidus was taught:

Regarding the complaints of Mordechai [Chefetz] from Disna: This is new to me that R. Michael [Beliner] explains and elaborates, since until now I have been told that he doesn't explain anything, and only reads what it written inside the *Likutei Torah*. To precede the explanation to the plain meaning is indeed a problem, for as a rule, only once you have the primary thing can you have something extra. You can speak to R. Michael about it and tell him the problem and how to correct it, since he accepts the truth without any inner resentment, and works to correct it.

I have already told you that you should enter the *zal* often to be there when they learn Chassidus to listen to how they learn. If you can't avoid being seen, it is best that you do it officially, sitting by a

table and listening to them learn.⁴

And in this letter to the Frierdiker Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab sends a reminder about applying study to *avoda*:

Please be so kind as to notify me of the *bochurim* and *yungeleit's* status in Torah and *avoda*, and if they are befitting (that they don't forget to attach the "freight car" to be pulled along with the "engine car") since this is the entire purpose, as Chazal have said, "The purpose of wisdom is *teshuvah* and good deeds"... Please let me know the truth about their situation in this matter. May Hashem illuminate their souls with the light of the inner Torah to serve Him with truth and sincerity according the true G-dly intent.⁵

INDIVIDUAL CARE

The Rebbe Rashab was often away from Lubavitch, for health reasons or for communal efforts, and he would continue to oversee the development of the *yeshiva* through correspondence. In letters to the Frierdiker Rebbe, the *yeshiva's* principal, we encounter many detailed instructions regarding the *bochurim*:

"My son, I asked you what is happening with ... whether he is learning and acting as he should, and

you did not respond. I need to know this, to decide whether he should stay in Lubavitch or better that should travel home and come back for a future term..."⁶

"How is Avrohom Dovid [Posner] doing? Does he have enough time for both *davening* and learning?"⁷

"How is...? Is he learning with R. Yechezkel and



LEFT:

The mashpia R. Michael Bliner

RIGHT:

R. Mordechai Chafetz, years after he graduated the yeshiva

with R. Z.? Is he learning with gusto? How are his manner and conduct? Did you learn with him, and what? May Hashem strengthen his mind and heart that he be a *yerei Shamayim* and a chossid. Please let me know everything in detail. Also, let me know what is happening with..., and with.... may Hashem help him...”⁸

“I trust that the *bochurim* who learn on the two tables on their own are under the supervision of R. Volf [Levitin]. They should be forced to accept his authority in learning, since it is for their benefit. Amongst them I see listed Peretz from Nevel, I assume he is the son of R. Meir Simcha [Chein]. He is a *mekabel* (absorbs well). He probably learns together with Zerach of Pahar or someone similar. I would like to know his manner and conduct, both in study and in overall *kabalas ol*.”⁹

In one extensive letter, the Rebbe Rashab explores one *bochur's* intricate obstacles to reworking himself:

“To ... I said before I left that he should learn the *maamar* ‘*Acharei Hashem*’ in *Shaar HaTefilah*, (he should cursorily learn the topic of *Baruch Sheamar* that is explained there since the matter is not yet within his realm to understand it well). I trust that he learned it by now. You should not tell him to learn the *maamar* ‘*Im yihyeh nidachacho*’ in the beginning of *Shaar HaTeshuva*. I also told him to study *Reishis Chochma*, and I trust that he is practicing it. However, it is important that whatever he learns should not be self-deceiving.”

The Rebbe Rashab goes on to elaborate on profound elements of *avoda* and a person’s inner workings, negative character traits and the way to correct them, and concludes regarding the *bochur*:

“Now, you should rouse him about all this that he should work on correcting them [negative character traits], since this is his primary work at the moment in correcting his soul, and with Hashem’s help he has the ability to correct it. Aside from the fact that otherwise he would not have been given this burden, as Chazal say, ‘According to the camel’s strength is its load’... he has power in his *nefesh haElokis* to do things with force against the power of his *nefesh habehamis*...”¹⁰

When the *hanhala* reported that a certain *bochur*

wasn’t living up to the expected conduct of a *tomim*, the Rebbe Rashab brought to their attention that the problem was deeper than they imagined, though the solution was perhaps easier than they thought.

“In spiritual matters, he needs much correcting, and he is yet far from the early levels of a chossid (and as a result there are issues in *davening*, learning and inner conduct). Although he repeats the *maamorim* that are said on Shabbos, and learns Chassidus inside the text, his learning is minimal, and even that hasn’t had an effect. He isn’t attracted to the matter, and whatever he studies remains detached from him.

“Truthfully, he isn’t at fault, since he is still a young lad, and has no experience in the ways of working against one’s nature. Yet, the primary cause for his deficiency is the lack of a good and effective *madrish* (guide). This is a noticeable deficiency, and it is literally crucial to his essence.

“We must recognize that today’s generation is not like previous ones. Today, we must invest tremendous effort and great consideration, to understand the ‘weak one’ – ‘the delicate and wise lad’ (the *yetzer tov*) – to arouse him and give him the strength to overcome the ‘old fool’ (the *yetzer hara*), who has the first claim. And the arguments must be completely different than in previous times. [A *mashpia*] can no longer conduct himself in a passive manner, but rather he must rise and act with tremendous effort.”

And in a revealing letter, the Rebbe Rashab shares his veiled concerns over a certain *bochur*:

“My son, I will reveal to you in secret what I’m thinking about... Although he seems to be conducting himself well, a thought comes to me all the time that perhaps it is all in *chitzoniyus* (superficiality). He studies Chassidus and accepts all that he is told only for the sake of show, since he feels obligated to be in our camp, and he wants to find favor in our eyes. He is clever and capable of hiding this, behaving exactly as if he were legitimate. Perhaps this is why we don’t observe any inner change in him. Pay close attention to this, but do not *ch”v* tell him this suspicion, so as not to cause him ruin *ch”v*...”¹¹



Students of the Tomchei Temimim yeshiva in Otwozsk, Poland.

"MY SON, I WILL REVEAL TO YOU IN SECRET WHAT I'M THINKING ABOUT... A THOUGHT COMES TO ME ALL THE TIME THAT PERHAPS IT IS ALL IN CHITZONIYUS"

Other memos from the Rebbe Rashab to the Frierdiker Rebbe regarding the *bochurim* include topics such as: opening a division for married students, a *bochur* who learned diligently but also

liked to chatter superfluously, long jackets for the *bochurim*, a student who wouldn't submit to the *mashpi'im*, and the *bochurim's shidduchim*.¹²

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Running a *yeshiva* at no cost to the students is an expensive endeavor. It was the Rebbe Rashab who was personally responsible for both bringing in funds and overseeing the expenditure.

Glancing through the Rebbe Rashab's letters, one cannot help but be astounded by the immense effort that the Rebbe Rashab invested in building Tomchei Temimim. As he notes himself, building an institution and collecting funds ran entirely against his character, but he cast himself aside for the sake of educating the *bochurim*.

"It is written that one who saves a Jew from sin, and especially if he places him on the straight path of Torah and G-dly service, is heard by Hashem.

"I won't conceal the fact that for more than eight years I have forfeited my time, schedule and even my life, and I am occupied solely with Tomchei Temimim, so that the students can sit undisturbed

and study Torah as it should be, with a pure heart.

"I therefore bless you to become extremely wealthy."¹³

And in a letter to the Frierdiker Rebbe, he lauds the hard effort that running the *yeshiva* entails:

"If the work demands more effort, it will then be more precious."¹⁴

While the Rebbe Rashab had several wealthy chassidim who gave large sums to cover the *yeshiva*, it was not enough. He was frustrated by the shortage of funds with which he could have impacted so many more students, as he writes to his supporter R. Yeshaya Berlin:

"It pains the heart to see how many of the 'others' donate and establish schools gladly, with an open hand and large funds, without any outside prompting. Hashem has not left us and He has

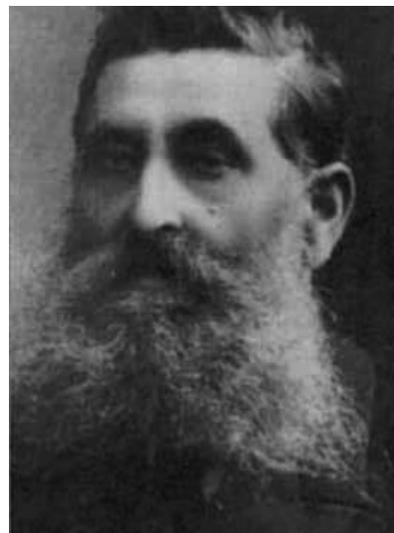
Two of the Rebbes supporters

LEFT:

R. Shmuel Michel Treinin

RIGHT:

R. Shmuel Gurary



given us men of wealth – may Hashem give them more – but they don't do anything. Every good project requires an arousal of intense effort ... and they don't find satisfaction in it. As a result, no project is completed fully, since anything done by force is not done properly, if it is done at all."

The Rebbe then rebukes R. Yeshaya, his dear patron, for not being sufficiently dedicated to Tomchei Temimim, and focusing instead on philanthropic activities that could be tended to by others. He quotes the Rebbe Maharash who bemoaned the fact that materialistic charities attract many donors, but for *ruchniyus* needs, there are few...¹⁵

To raise additional funds, the *yeshiva* had to expand its base. The Frierdiker Rebbe and his office at the *yeshiva* sent letters to magnates and communities asking for donations.¹⁶ *Shadarim* (collectors) were sent around the country, and the *yeshiva* ran several fundraisers – including a raffle and the printing of a newly edited Tanya with the proceeds going towards Tomchei Temimim.

In letters to the Frierdiker Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab guides his son on the correct approach to fundraising. He instructs him to simply describe in the letters – concisely and factually – what they had accomplished, and warns against exaggerating at all. After all, the real source of blessing is Hashem alone, and the fundraising is merely a gesture of *hishtadlus*, the divine requirement to do something.¹⁷

No matter how dire the situation, the Rebbe Rashab was always full of faith that things would work out. The *yeshiva's* administrator, the Frierdiker Rebbe, suggested that money could be saved by curtailing certain expenditures, but the Rebbe Rashab insisted that whatever was needed should be paid for, and the money will certainly show up.¹⁸

The Rebbe Rashab's G-dly attitude towards finances also expressed itself in the fact that he only took what the *yeshiva* needed at the moment. When one year there was a surplus, Rebbe Rashab actually turned down a donation.¹⁹

FUNDRAISING CHALLENGES

One of the major challenges to financial development was the fact that the *yeshiva* was not an official school, since that would invite the government to set requirements, such as secular studies, study style and immaculate facilities.

Being an unofficial school, they could not own a bank account or fundraise openly. *Shadarim* had to travel secretly, a mass campaign could not be mailed (censors read the mail), and donors were afraid to make large donations which might have been picked up by government officials.

Throughout the years, the Rebbe Rashab and his close confidants contrived various loopholes in the law that would allow for the establishment of a legal

organization that could collect funds. They weren't particularly concerned if it didn't allow for a full-scale *yeshiva*, since they were on good terms with local officials who agreed to look the other way.

In 5665 (1905), the idea arose to form a formal society – to be called Yavneh – which would offer classes among its members. This would allow them to run *shiurim* and collect funds for it without being a registered school. To do so, a professional outline in Russian of the organization had to be submitted to the appropriate offices to be approved.

“[Bernstein] came up with a realistic plan through which we can maintain *yeshivos* legitimately (obviously not as a *yeshiva*, but nonetheless totally legitimate), and definitely *chadarim*... We hired an attorney who we can trust to prepare the bylaws so that it will be legal.”

Still, many obstacles stood in the way. Though there was a plan, it was necessary to intervene with the officials, and those qualified for it, namely the wealthy magnates, were too preoccupied to get involved. Soon, the *maskilim* caught wind of this idea and opposed it fiercely, causing it not to be approved.

Two years later, the Rebbe Rashab offered a different suggestion which would allow them to publicly solicit donations for the *yeshiva*, as well as for the poor in the holy land. A fund, named Philanthropy, was created outside of Russia, in which people could buy shares of investments in homes in Eretz Yisroel. Some homes would be used by the poor, while others would be rented out and the proceeds, belonging to the “shareholders,” would be “invested” by the fund’s governors in Tomchei Temimim. (They had hoped that this umbrella organization would also allow for the establishment of *yeshivos*, but that was not approved.)

AN APPEAL TO GERMAN JEWRY

One interesting element of the fundraising effort was a detailed brochure about Tomchei Temimim that was circulated in Germany, written in both Hebrew and German. Aside from the unknown facts and figures that it contains, it is fascinating to read how an intense Chabad-*chassidische yeshiva* in a small *shtetl* is portrayed in terms that are digestible for a modern Jew.

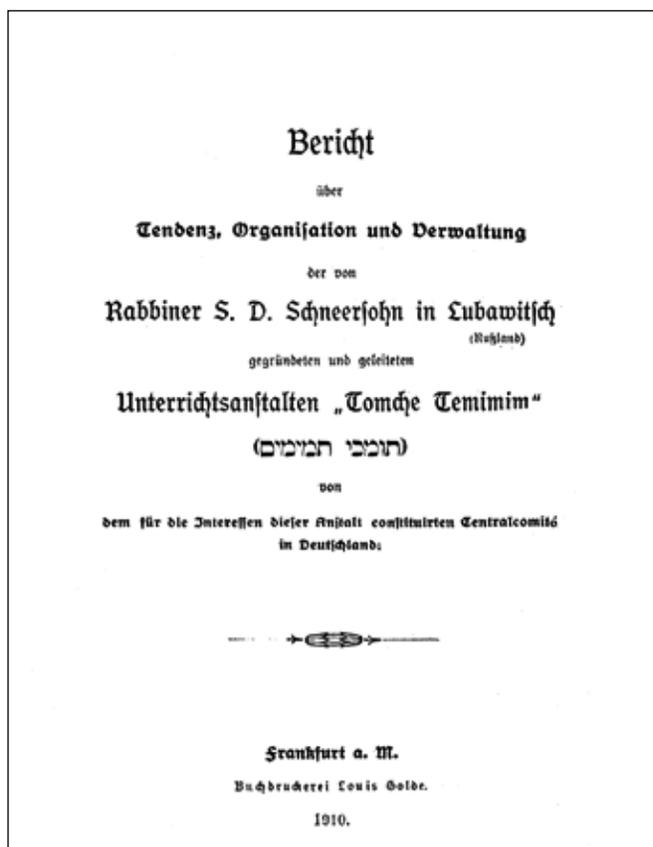
After prefacing why the state of Russian Jewry should be of interest to the affluent *Yekke* in distant Germany, the pamphlet elaborates upon on the plans of the “Philanthropy” foundation, established by the Rebbe Rashab during his nine-month stay in Würzburg, Germany.

One of its objectives, reads the pamphlet, is the establishment of Torah institutions similar to the *yeshiva* in Lubavitch wherever possible. The first step, therefore, is to grow and develop the “prototype” after which all future institutions will be modeled.

THE YESHIVA WAS NOT AN OFFICIAL SCHOOL, SINCE THAT WOULD INVITE THE GOVERNMENT TO SET REQUIREMENTS, SUCH AS SECULAR STUDIES, STUDY STYLE AND IMMACULATE FACILITIES.



Yeshiva masqueraded as a store for seforim, tefillin and mezuzos, and wine for Pesach to evade government interference.



Printed reports about the yeshiva

At this point the pamphlet writes of the *yeshiva's* accomplishment:

Since the *yeshiva* was established, hundreds of students have been educated in it, and all, without exception and notwithstanding the difficulties of the time, have remained faithful to traditional *Yiddishkeit*, as *rabbonim*, *melamdin*, *shochtim*, *sofrim* and businessmen. They are immunized against all the many seductions and tests, and their commitment to Jewish ideals illuminates their surroundings.

What is the key to their success?

The secret behind this accomplishment is first and foremost the impressive personality of the founder of the institution and its administrator. Yet, no less important is the manner of which that he devised to pour his spirit into it and to grant it its unique character.

The institution is particular to accept only students who have passed a specific test regarding their spiritual and moral status. Wealth, pedigree, and connections alone will not gain a student acceptance.

The study of Chassidus is described in these simple terms:

Hand in hand with the study of Torah, it is necessary to instill the inner spiritual content in the students' souls: the living spirit, of a pure and faithful knowledge of G-d, as explained in holy books for which we must thank our sages of blessed memory. This lofty knowledge of G-dliness, which uplifts the human spirit from materialism, must become so absorbed in their body and blood that it will shape and uplift not only themselves, but it will positively influence the spiritual and moral development of broader Jewish circles.

Although serious study and personal growth only begins in the older division, a younger division is essential to prepare them when they are still receptive:

In order to achieve this goal, the institution opened classes for boys ages 13 and older. Generally, around 17-18 years of age, youth develop a desire to pursue a profession – be it physical or intellectual. It may be that this pursuit is itself justifiable, yet it doesn't inspire a pursuit of the pure knowledge of G-d, and not even the study of Torah with self-sacrifice... Whereas, the spirit of a 13-year-old is still pure, and is capable of receiving the spiritual seeds of pure knowledge of G-d.

The function of *mashpi'im* and the study of Tanya:

The education of the students in the older division is placed in the hands of 2-3 exceptional teachers [*mashpi'im*] who introduce their listeners to the meaning and depth of fear of G-d. Every day, one of the special teachers explains a chapter of the book

of Tanya, an unparalleled book in its ability to guide the heart of the reader or listener to his Father in Heaven.

The booklet also speaks of the *yeshiva's* discipline tactics:

If the conduct of a student is not befitting, he is warned three times. The fourth warning comes with a penalty – his stipend is cut. Depending on the student's temperament, he will merit a harsh or light reprimand, to remind him of his duty. The fatherly care with which the institution treats each student is apparent in its keen efforts to bring back those who err and stray.

The students all recognize the psychological insight of their fatherly Rabbi [the Rebbe Rashab], that no sentiment – however slight or deep – will elude him. They are afraid to lose his trust and love, and they are therefore particular to fulfill his good will with impeccable conduct.

“The words of *tzaddikim* are eternal.”

One hundred and twenty years later, as the network of Lubavitch *yeshivos* Tomchei Temimim flourishes in countries around the world, it is incumbent upon us to revisit the original model to understand and apply the founders' vision and methods as they are relevant today. **P**

Endnotes

1 *Likutei Diburim*, Vol. 1, p. 59.

2 Sundown in the summertime in that part of Russia is around 9:30 p.m.

3 *Sefer HaSichos* 5703, p. 180.

4 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 4, p. 79.

5 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 1, p. 328.

6 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 3, p. 93.

7 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 1, p. 98.

8 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 4, p. 77.

9 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 3, p. 204.

10 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 1, p. 232.

11 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 3, p. 94.

12 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 4, p. 30; *ibid.*, p. 40.

13 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 1, p. 340.

14 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 3, p. 395.

15 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 4, p. 66.

16 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 3, p. 166.

17 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 3, p. 183.

18 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 1, p. 224; Vol. 3, p. 246.

19 *Igros Kodesh Rashab*, Vol. 1, p. 304.

SNAPSHOTS

16 SHORT STORIES

— OF THE REBBE ON —

CHINUCH

ONE CHINUCH – A PRIORITY

Reb Tuvia Blau served as principal of the Beis Chana Girls' School in Yerushalayim. Additionally, he was involved in many projects of *hafatzas hama'ayanos* throughout Eretz Yisroel.

His two responsibilities often conflicted. Reb Tuvia felt that it would be appropriate to leave his teaching position and dedicate himself entirely to his other important responsibilities. After much deliberation, Reb Tuvia presented the idea to the Rebbe during his next *yechidus*, in Tishrei 5728 (1967).

Although the outreach work of Reb Tuvia was very dear to the Rebbe, the Rebbe did not allow Reb Tuvia to leave the school. The Rebbe explained, "You are successful in *chinuch*. I do not think there is anyone in our generation who could take upon himself the responsibility of 'freeing' you from your *chinuch* work in order to concentrate on other activities, worthwhile as they may be."

(Heichal Menachem, vol. 2, page 216)



TWO A HEALTHY FUTURE

At the *farbrengen* of Yud Shevat 5733 (1973), the Rebbe said:

“It was once thought that when there are available funds, they should go towards organizations for *bikur cholim*, or for building new *shuls*. Today, however, it is clear that all available resources should be invested in *chinuch*, for the future depends on *chinuch*.”



“Today, it is clear that all available resources should be invested in chinuch.”

THREE IMPERATIVE TO AMERICAN CHINUCH



On 28 Adar 5728 (1968), the Rebbe held a *yechidus* with a delegation from Beis Yaakov of Borough Park, who came to receive inspiration and direction for their work.

The Rebbe said, “There are two points which are imperative to stress in the education of youth in America, especially with girls.

“The first is the opening passage of the *Shulchan Aruch*, ‘One should not be embarrassed by scoffers.’ Even before the *Shulchan Aruch* talks of the qualities a person should have, it established this premise, not to be ashamed of *Yiddishkeit*.”

The second point: “Children must be taught *kabalas ol*. This simply means having respect for parents and teachers and doing as they say.”

Another thing mentioned during the *yechidus*: “The *alef-beis* and the *nekudos* should be taught before the children learn the sounds.”

Additionally, the Rebbe remarked, “You should talk to the girls about the greatness of Hashem, the greatness of the creation and the sanctity of humanity.”

FOUR WHO ARE PREFERRED TEACHERS?

During that 5728 (1968) *yechidus* with a delegation of Beis Yaakov of Borough Park, the Rebbe touched upon many issues. Here are some points from the transcript written following the *yechidus*:

The Rebbe said that it is important not to use secular reading books. If necessary, suitable parts could be excerpted and should be printed separately, in accordance with the copyright laws.

Regarding text books, “It is not advisable to erase or remove inappropriate pages. This will only arouse the child’s curiosity. However, recently, Torah Umesora has published appropriate material for us.”

The Rebbe then moved on to discuss how to select teachers.

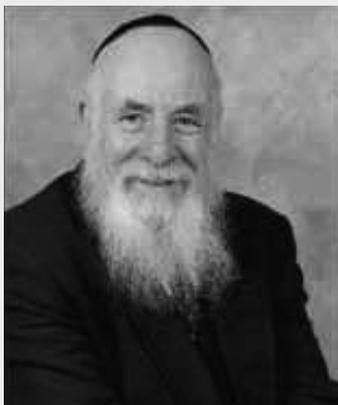
“A woman teacher is preferable to a male, since her *yiras Shamayim* is stronger. Additionally, being that she is a woman, her influence will more apparent in the students.

“Teachers must be role models. It is therefore preferable to hire – even for secular studies – a Beis Yaakov graduate rather than someone who has learned in college.”



*“A woman teacher is preferable, since her
yiras Shamayim is stronger”*

FIVE THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING A MECHANECH



Reb Yosef Goldstien, famously known as “Uncle Yossi,” began working in *chinuch* in the early 5700s (1940s).

Upon arriving in America, the Rebbe *farbrenge*d every *Shabbos Mevarchim* as per the instruction of the Frierdiker Rebbe. During one such intimate *farbrengen* of 5705 (1945), in the small *shul* in 770, Reb Yosef was present.

After saying *l'chaim*, the Rebbe turned to look at him and said, “How fortunate you are that your *parnassa* is from being a *melamed*! Your livelihood comes from influencing students, *un nisht fun porken zich in bloteh* (and not from sludging around in mud...).

(Ymei Melech vol. 2, page 270)

SIX TENDING HASHEM'S GARDEN

In a heartfelt response to a demoralized *mechanech*, the Rebbe wrote:

“A person is likened to a tree, and *Klal Yisroel* to Hashem’s garden. The fruits are the children – boys and girls. How great is the *zechus* of the watchman, with whom the Owner has entrusted His garden!”

“Indeed,” the Rebbe developed further, “it is quite apparent, that every improvement, however small, in the seed, significantly increases the quality of the tree which grows from it.”

(Likutei Sichos vol. 6 p. 309)



“How great is the zechus of the watchman, with whom the Owner has entrusted His garden!”

SEVEN WHY THE WAY HE WANTS, NOT THE WAY I WANT?

There was an American *shliach* who served as a teacher in the local school. In 5736 (1976), he decided that he wanted to dedicate himself totally to outreach work.

When he asked the Rebbe, the Rebbe refused to let him leave his *chinuch* post. The Rebbe’s sharp response is recorded in the following handwritten note:

“Why does he think that his place of *shlichus*, and type of *shlichus*, must be just the way he wants it, contrary to the way I want it?” *(Likutei Sichos vol. 23, page 488)*

To another teacher who was frustrated with his employers and wanted to leave his position, the Rebbe wrote:

“How could you desert the flock? Even if a replacement will be found, he will certainly not have your qualities, especially since your job requires a person who is ready to fight the ‘street,’ including the orthodox ‘street’... and regarding the apathy of the school board, this only underscores the need to stay.”

EIGHT THE ELEVENTH RULE

Reb Avrohom Meizlish relates:

When the Rebbe established the network of Oholei Yosef Yitzchok schools in Eretz Yisroel, Reb Alexander Bin-Nun A”H was appointed as supervisor to oversee the many schools.

After some years working with teachers, Reb Alexander decided to do something to assist them in their sacred mission. He meticulously prepared a list of ten most critical rules for *chinuch*, to the best of his understanding, which he planned on giving out to the teachers.

When Reb Alexander was in *yechidus*, he showed the Rebbe his “ten rules” list.

The Rebbe reviewed the list, looked up and remarked, “There is one rule missing: the rule in *chinuch* is that there are no rules.”

(*Sha’ari Chinuch* p. 231)



R. Alexander Bin-Nun (left) at a Reshet conference

The Rebbe reviewed the list, looked up and remarked, “There is one rule missing: the rule in chinuch is that there are no rules.”

NINE THE ALEF-BEIS REBBE

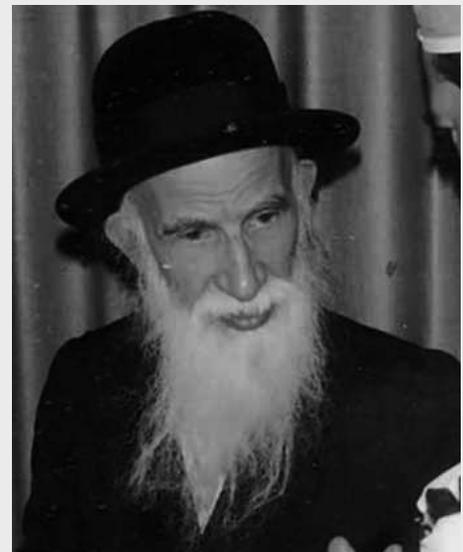
During one of the *farbrengens* of 5718 (1958), the Rebbe announced that all who were involved in *chinuch* should say *l’chaim*.

Reb Elya Chayim Roitblat, the founding *melamed* of Oholei Torah *cheder*, was also present at the *farbrengen*, but he did not say *l’chaim*. Even as others encouraged him to do so, he refused, saying that he has his reasons.

The Rebbe noticed that Reb Elya Chaim had not said *l’chaim*, and turned to him:

“When a *rosh yeshiva* says a *pilpul*, there is reason to doubt the accuracy of the *pilpul*. We could therefore never be sure that he is actually teaching the true Torah of Hashem. But when one teaches a child *kamatz-alef-OH*, we could be certain that he is indeed teaching Hashem’s Torah.

“Therefore,” the Rebbe concluded with a smile, “say *l’chaim!*”



Reb Elya Chayim Roitblat

“The reason we are losing so many of our youth,” said the Rebbe at the Yud Shevat 5734 (1974) *farbrengen*, “is due to the collapse of the family unit. All difficulties in father-son relationships, with all the fancy English terms given for them, stem from the laxity in educating the principles of honoring one’s father and mother, the obligation of a father to teach his children, etc.

“When the *Yidden* were counted in the wilderness, they were organized according to their family. Every nation in the world is dependent on family ties, especially *Am Yisroel*.

“The previous generation made the mistake of not investing enough into family time, thereby neglecting many youth, who were left despondent to climb the *galus* walls themselves. Not surprisingly, they strayed...

“Today too, there are families where the husband, wife and children all *daven* in separate *shuls*. This is a recipe for disaster! Families must be together!

“An opportune time for togetherness is Friday night. The entire family should sit together, in a *Shabbosdike* atmosphere and discuss *Shabbosdike* topics. This is the formula for a healthy family and success in *chinuch*.”

“Chassidus is for everyone,” the Rebbe would always say, “even for small children.”

Whenever the Rebbe would speak at Tzivos Hashem rallies, the *sichos* would always be directed to the young in their language. Nevertheless, they contained messages culled from the depths of Chassidic thought.

Reb Zusha Posner, *mashpia* of Tomchei Temimim Lod, relates:

“There was a teacher of nine- and ten-year-old boys who was in *yechidus*. The Rebbe told him that he should teach his pupils about *gadlus haBoreh* – the greatness of Hashem.

“The *melamed* was befuddled. ‘*Gadlus haBoreh*? How will these children understand?!’ he exclaimed.

“The Rebbe answered with a smile, ‘If Hashem has managed to condense Himself so much that we are able to realize His greatness, surely He could be *metzamtzem* Himself just a little bit more so that a child will comprehend.’”



TWELVE DON'T JOIN A HOSPITAL

During the early years, the concept of not having a secular education was very difficult for many chassidim to swallow.

One Lubavitcher chossid told the Rebbe that he wished to have his son learn *limudei chol*. As a justification, he argued that the Frieddiker Rebbe had incorporated secular studies in the Lubavitcher *yeshiva* school curriculum, which he himself had established.

The Rebbe answered him by way of parable:

“When one enters a hospital, at first glance it could be very impressive. The hygiene, the order and the individualized attention. It all looks very good. Still, no healthy person would consider becoming a patient...

“You must understand this,” concluded the Rebbe. “The secular education department of the Lubavitcher *yeshiva* is a hospital, for those not yet ready to join the full-time healthy society.”

(Likutei Sipurei Hisva'aduyos, p. 345)

“The secular education department of the Lubavitcher yeshiva is a hospital, for those not yet ready to join the full-time healthy society.”



THIRTEEN CHINUCH ATMOSPHERE

Situated in the center of Eretz Yisroel, the Tel Nof Israeli Air Force base is a fortress of defense. Thousands of officers and technicians live there, ready at a moment's notice to protect the nation.

Brigadier General Ron Pekar, the celebrated commander of the base during the Yom Kippur War, was in a *yechidus* on 21 Cheshvan 5736 (1975).

During his lengthy *yechidus*, many defense and political issues were discussed. However, one point the Rebbe made took Ron by surprise. The Rebbe expressed, “I understand that the officers must be available for any given situation. Still, I believe they should live adjacent to the base and not on the actual campus.

“You see,” the Rebbe explained, “the children of the officers should not be brought up in the base, in the shadow of war planes. It is not healthy for their *chinuch*.”

“Still, I believe they should live adjacent to the base and not on the actual campus....”

FOURTEEN YOUTH NOVELS

Shmuel Argaman was one of the first authors of *frum* Hebrew children's novels, paving the way for many to follow. In 5738 (1978), he published *The Submarine Submerged at Midnight*, which included some science fiction. It tells the story of a group of *Yidden* fleeing Russia, and how they battle a terrorist organization who seeks to rule the world using death-rays.

He sent his book to the Rebbe, asking for constructive criticism.

After thanking Shmuel for sending in the book, the Rebbe wrote: "While it is true that children's educational stories ought to be packaged just right so

that they are drawn to it, being that they are children, if the messages the author wishes to transmit are too obscure, they may be overlooked.

"One cannot rely on youth to pick up the subtleties, when so little text is dedicated to the message. Especially since it is not an integral part of the narrative."

On a practical, detail-oriented level, the Rebbe advised: "Enough text must be devoted to *yiras Shamayim* ideas, and pictures or sub-headings would also help direct their attention to them."

*"One cannot rely on youth to pick up the subtleties,
when so little text is dedicated to the message"*

FIFTEEN IF YOU WILL BE, HE'LL BE...

Mrs. Martha Stock related:

In 5721 (1961), we went into *yechidus* with our family in honor of our son Benjy's *upshernish*. My husband Reb Shimshon said to the Rebbe that he was requesting just one *bracha*: that Benjy should be a *chossid* and a *lamdan*.

The Rebbe answered, "Shimshon, you have to show your son how to do it. He can't do it on his own. You must teach him. If you will be a *chossid* and *lamdan*, he'll be."

At another *yechidus*, Shimshon went in with our children. Benjy and his sister Chani, five- and six-years-old, were already attending school, and the Rebbe tested them on their studies.

After completing the questions, the Rebbe got up from his seat, came around the table and put his hand on Shimshon, saying, "*Ken ich dir farheren?*" (Can I test you?)

Shimshon said, "Forget it, Rebbe." But the Rebbe would not hear of it, "*It is not right. Epes darfst du lernen.*" (You need to learn something.)

After the *yechidus*, Shimshon began consistently attending a *shiur*.



Reb Shimshon Stock

Reb Berl Futerfas relates:

“My father, the *mashpia* Reb Mendel, would spend a few weeks every winter fundraising for Russian Jewry. This was a continuation of his work there: to help *Yidden b’gashmius*.

“One year he was also asked to collect funds for Oholei Torah *cheder*. Not knowing what to do, he asked the Rebbe in a *yechidus*, and was encouraged by the Rebbe to fundraise for the cheder as well.”

“My father was still troubled. He said to the Rebbe, ‘But someone who gave a thousand dollars last year will give the same again, to be split between the two causes. Won’t this mean that *cheder* donations are on the account of *pidyon shevuyim* (redemption of captives) funds?’

“The Rebbe looked at my father and said, ‘Saving children from learning *limudei chol* is the greatest *pidyon shevuyim!*’”

(As heard from Reb Berl)

“Saving children from learning limudei chol is the greatest pidyon shevuyim!”





ANASH NEWS

You May Have Missed

A SUMMER REVOLUTION

For years, many parents have wished for their sons to receive proper chinuch throughout the summer. This past summer, one parent stood up and did something.

Rabbi Yitzchok Wolf, a *mechanech* in Crown Heights, had a son who completed second grade. As the summer neared, he debated what to do with him. He could not bear the thought of having him lose two and half months of proper chinuch and substantial learning.

He decided to put together a group of boys his son's age and hire a qualified *Rebbi* to learn with them. But before he knew it, he was swamped with requests

for enrollment of boys of all ages. Could he make a fourth-grade class? What about sixth?

"This was not exactly my plan for the summer," says Rabbi Wolf. "But how does one say no to so many Yiddishe *kinderlach* who want to learn Torah?"

And so, Yeshivas Kayitz of Crown Heights was born. The eight-and-a-half week program ran five classes ranging from first to seventh grade, consisting of a total of 80 boys throughout the summer.

The daily schedule, Sunday through Friday, was full. First through fifth grade started their day at 9:00 am

BEFORE HE KNEW IT, HE WAS SWAMPED WITH REQUESTS OF ENROLLMENT FOR BOYS OF ALL AGES. COULD HE MAKE A FOURTH-GRADE CLASS? WHAT ABOUT SIXTH?

with davening, followed by regular cheder learning until 1:30 pm. On Monday through Thursday, they continued with outdoor activities, crafts and swimming until 4:00 pm, led by mature married staff. Once a week, they went on a trip after their regular learning, finishing their day at 6:00 pm. The Bar Mitzvah Division, sixth and seventh grade, learned every day from 10:30 am until 3:30 pm, followed by activities until 7:00 pm.

If you're wondering how much learning children can accomplish during "vacation time," look at this list. Over the summer, first grade covered the entire Parshas Lech Lecha and six *perakim* of *Mishnayos* Brachos. The combined class of second and third grade completed two *parshiyos* and the entire *Mishnayos* Yoma. The combined class of fourth and

fifth grade learned the entire *Mishnayos* Zevachim and the fourth *perek* of Gemara Brachos, besides for learning a large portion of each weekly Parsha inside. Sixth and seventh grade learned 40 *blatt* (!) of Gemara Sanhedrin and 10 *simanim* of the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, among other subjects. And to top it all off, classes were conducted in Yiddish.

Did the boys feel like they missed out? Not at all! The feedback – from both parents and students – was exceptionally positive. Small class sizes (10-15) with experienced, qualified *melamdim*, allowed for more effective learning, as well as for each student to receive positive individual attention. The success of this model was evident from the boys' big smiles as they came to Yeshiva daily and in their competing to arrive first. As one parent commented, "My son runs

TORAH IS OUR LIFE, YEAR-ROUND

From the sicha of Yud-Beis Tammuz 5745 (1985)

We are witnessing the bizarre phenomenon of *yeshivos* and schools closing during the summer months so that the children can have a 'vacation'. **This doesn't just run contrary to *frumkeit*, but is an expression of unbridled *vildkeit* (recklessness)!**

Torah is our life, and studying it is our children's source of life. But the message our actions send is that 'life' is important for ten months of the year, but we're then willing to give our children a 'break' from life!

People argue that it's a *rachmanus* (pity) on the children who wear themselves out over the course of ten months, attending *yeshiva* almost every day where they can't play and have fun, and so they deserve some time off. But it's impossible to take time off from life! And how can months of growth and vitality be described as getting worn out?

We need to raise the alarm about the closure of *yeshivos* and schools during the summer. Our Torah institutions cannot conceivably be closed for even a single day, never mind weeks and months...

Ultimately, this practice is plainly the outcome of the belief that Torah is tiresome, *chas veshalom!* **Torah is here in order to improve our lives.** While we can't make conditions with Hashem and tie our observance to a favorable outcome, we have in fact been promised by Torah that its study results in tremendous blessing.

If we lack for something physically, it certainly isn't due to learning too much Torah. Whatever the cause actually is, were we to learn Torah properly, our problems would disappear, and it's only because we don't that our difficulties endure...

Certainly, children should be allowed to play during their free time as a means of staying healthy, especially since, as a holy nation, our bodies are holy as well. But a significant amount of the summertime should be devoted to increasing Torah study, and it should be the kind of learning which leads to action, setting the children on a lifestyle of Torah.



Second month group picture

to Yeshiva with the same excitement on Sundays and Fridays as he does the rest of the week, despite the lack of afternoon activities on those days.”

How did he do it? How do you get fun-loving boys to sit and learn while their friends are out playing?

“You have to believe in Yiddishe *kinderlach*,” says Rabbi Wolf, “A Yiddishe *kind* has a *neshama* and is drawn to Torah and *mitzvos*, so long as it is provided to him with confidence and joy. On the first day, we spoke to the boys about how fortunate they were to be learning in a Yeshivas Kayitz where their *neshamos* would be nourished through Limud Hatorah, *davening* and exhibiting *midos tovos*. The enthusiasm in the room was palpable, and the boys felt extremely proud to be giving the Rebbe so much *nachas*.”

One of the students was approached by his father’s friend in *shul* and asked where he went to camp. The boy answered proudly, ‘I don’t go to camp, I go to Yeshivas Kayitz!’”

And what about the funding?

Pricing for the program was similar to that of local camps, with discounts granted as needed. Of course, with a smaller class size, and respectable pay for the *Melamdin* and afternoon staff, the Yeshivas Kayitz was left with a significant deficit, which Rabbi Wolf took upon himself to fundraise.

“In our program, the children spent 50 days learning,” Rabbi Wolf concludes. “Think about it like this: Four summers is the equivalent of an entire school year!” **P**

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MIAMI TEACHERS SPEND THE SUMMER IN KOLEL

By Rabbi Eily Smith

Any teacher knows how long it takes to properly prepare a lesson. It fills up all your spare time and no amount of time is enough. It's like preparing for Shabbos: you work until candle-lighting no matter the time of year. With a full schedule of teaching every day, how can a teacher possibly squeeze out the time for the preparation he craves?

Perhaps more importantly, when does the teacher have time to learn himself? When will he internalize his learning, apply it to himself and grow spiritually? Of course he's studying when he is prepping, but he's not studying at a level or depth that is satisfying and inspiring. How is he supposed to teach and be an example of "living Torah" if he hasn't been exposed to the depth of Torah since his days of *yeshiva* or *kollel*? Summer!

One of the perks of being a teacher is to have ten weeks off in the summer. The teacher can finally go to the local *beis medrash* and sit and learn. Or can he? Day camps and overnight camps cost money, forcing teachers to take summer jobs to cover the costs, and we're back to the same problem.

Enter the Summer Teachers' Kollel.

Inspired by a local *kollel* established for teachers of a nearby Chofetz Chaim school, the Lubavitch Summer Teachers' Kollel of South Florida was born. Encouraged by and with assistance from the Lubavitch Educational Center of Miami, ten motivated teachers gathered five years ago for the first time to experience *yeshiva* learning during their summer vacation.



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THE TEACHERS BROUGHT THEIR CHILDREN TO CAMP WHILE THEY, THE FATHERS/
TEACHERS, WENT UPSTAIRS TO LEARN.

Since then, every summer the *kollel* participants have been learning a specified Gemara in depth from one of the *mesechtos* that are being taught in one grade in the school. All the teachers in the *kollel* thus learn, while simultaneously assisting the teacher who will be teaching that *mesechta*. In turn, the teachers of the earlier grades will strive to guide their pupils to be ready for that coming *mesechta*, while the teachers of the subsequent grades will be in a position to incorporate the learning of that *mesechta* in their lessons.

This year, the *kollel* met in the same building as the camp, Lubavitch Educational Center of Miami. The teachers brought their children to camp while they, the fathers/teachers, went upstairs to learn. From 9:30 am until 3:45 pm the teachers studied Chassidus, Gemara, Shulchan Aruch and Navi, and participated in teaching workshops. Teachers shared successful teaching techniques with each other at round table discussions and were encouraged to practice their teaching methods with model lessons given to the other teachers.

When asked to say how they benefitted from their experience at the Kollel this summer, participants had the following to say:

“The Summer Teachers’ Kollel is a unique opportunity. I use the time to work on my own ruchniyus, learning Torah simply for the sake of learning, not just to prepare a class. The chance to sit down in a pair and simply learn nigleh and Chassidus, like back in the yeshiva days, is a true spiritual pleasure.”

“Sitting around with other mechanchim who share the same ideals and aspirations is a booster. We have the chance to exchange ideas. The fact that there is a kollel stipend is the cherry on the cake. Being able to sit and learn without worrying about supplementing my income during the summer adds to my ability to enjoy this me’ein Olam Haba.”

“What is the best way one can prepare to give students a geshmak and desire to want to learn? Having a geshmak in learning yourself! This is what the kollel has accomplished for me. It gave me the opportunity to spend a full day learning without any worries. This is without a doubt the best preparation for a new school year. Thank you to Rabbi Smith and to all those that made this kollel happen.”

With a successful model in place, the road is paved for other communities to replicate it. The project’s far-spreading ripple effect inspires the teachers, benefits the students, strengthens the schools, and brightens up the entire Jewish community. For sponsors, this is one investment that has enormous returns. **P**

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