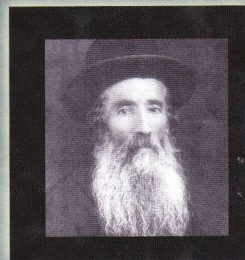
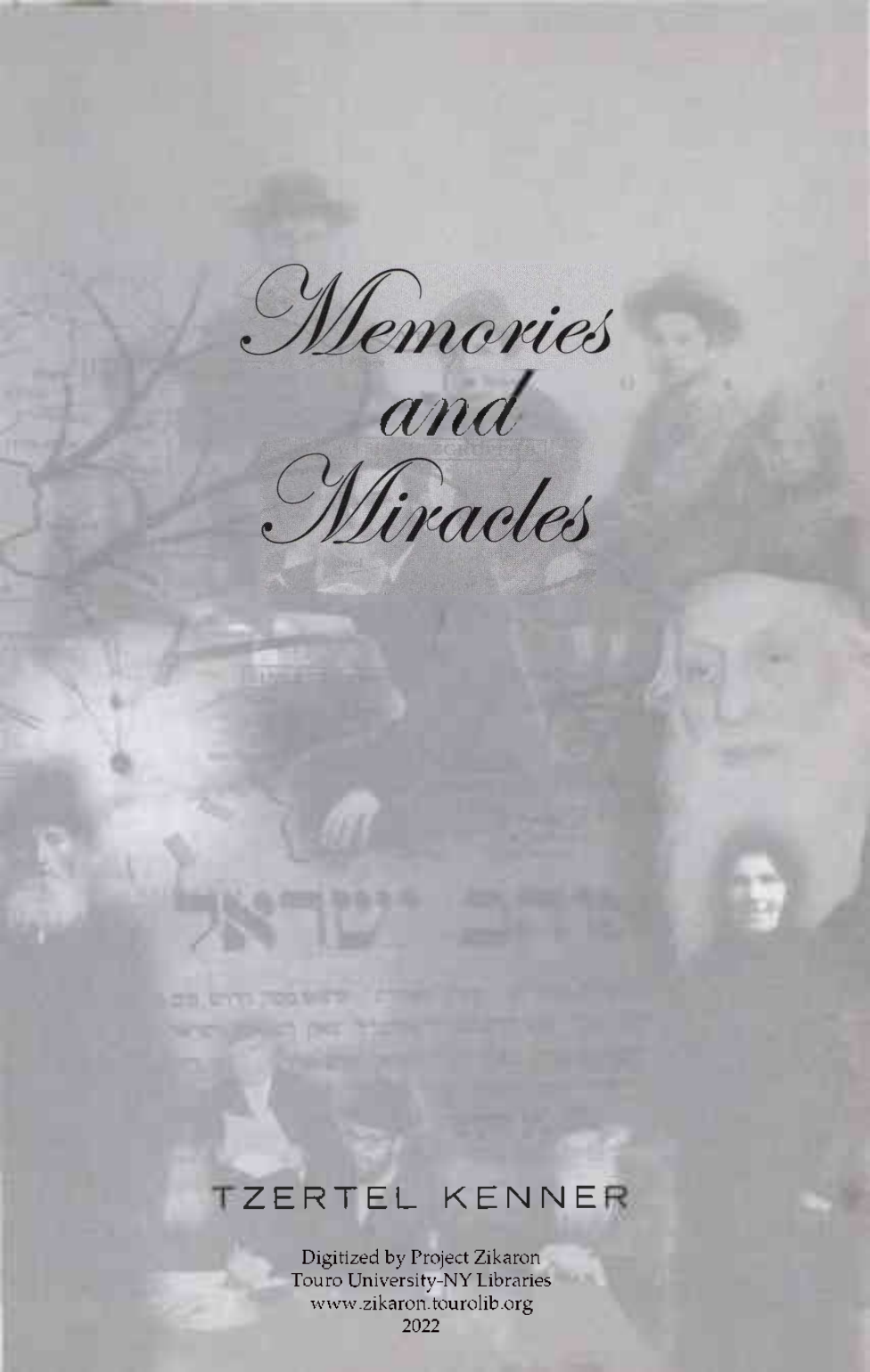


MEMORIES AND MIRACLES

TZERTEL KENNER







Memories and Miracles

TZERTEL KENNER

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לזכרון נצח

הרב גדלי' ב"ר צבי פעלדער ז"ל - כד' טבת
רב דקהילת שומרי שבת, טורונטו

הרבנית הענא אידל פעלדער ע"ה
בת הרב ישכר דוב טייכנר - כ' אדר שני

הבתולה רחל מירל
בת הרב גדלי' פעלדער ע"ה - יח' תמוז

In loving memory

Rabbi Gedalia Felder

Rebetzin Henna Aidel Felder

Rochel Mirel Felder

In Memorium

לעלוי נשמות

דוד בן שמעון ע"ה David Hyman

סימא בת יהודה ע"ה Shirley Hyman

whose friendship and loyalty

to my parents

will always be

gratefully remembered

Preface

SEVERAL PEOPLE ENCOURAGED ME to write my memoirs. Mrs. Helen Hellman kindly allowed me to read her autobiography and graciously presented me with a copy, saying, "Why don't you do the same?"

Mrs. Felice Blau, as well as others, repeated that time and time again. Rebetzin Chana Lubart told me that she, and others, were collaborating on writing about the life of her late mother, Mrs. Miriam Fishbain, *oleha hashalom*, for the sake of future generations. "Let them know about their Bubba who provides *zechus avos* for her descendents," she said. It was Rebetzin Lubart who suggested that I, too, record all the stories about my late Father, *z"l*, "so that all your generations shall know".

I am ever grateful to all my good friends for planting the idea in my mind.

My nephew, Reb Elli Rosenblum, lives in Toronto. On the occasion of the *Bris Miloh* of his second son, Shlomo Ephraim, he called me up the day before, to ask me for any information that I might have about our ancestor, the Kli Yokor, Horav Shlomo Ephraim Lenchitz, *zechuso yogain oleinu*. Being one of Reb Elli's close relatives who could fill him in on some of the details of the life of that *godol*, he called upon me.

There were still more reasons why I established, in my mind, the plan of writing everything down. If I would not, all these facts and memories would, eventually, be lost.

And finally, my great nephew, Yissochor Dov Felder of Baltimore, expressed profound interest in his great-grandfather, my father, Horav Yissocher Dov Berish Teichner of blessed memory, after whom he was named. I decided that I must satisfy this curiosity of his, and so the idea of writing this book was born.

The purpose of this project is to tell, to all future progeny, many of the interesting facts and stories in order to impress upon our loved ones the lessons to be learned from the experiences of the righteous souls in the family. By so doing, we will attempt to inspire them to attain ever-greater heights and levels in the fear and service of Hashem.

The inspiration I received from so many people spurred me on to further achievements. I am forever indebted to them, amongst whom is my dear brother, Rabbi Moishe Teichner, for his brilliant insights, for his help in research and for his constructive criticism. *Yeyasher Koach* to my dear brother, Duvid, for adding his memories to the information for this work.

My heartfelt thanks and appreciation go to my friends and family members who inspired me to continue in this work, and especially for the confidence placed in me, in great measure, by Rebetzin Tzippoiry Halberstam, the Klausenberger Rebetzin, and all my colleagues in the Bais Esther Sanz Klausenberg School in Boro Park where I was privileged to serve as principal of the Limudei Kodesh department for nine, wonderfully productive years.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those, who helped make the project of producing this book, a reality.

Special appreciation goes to, amongst others, Ephraim and Barbara Rosenstock, Alice Schuck and Pamela Weiman.

And last, but not least, recognition and appreciation for the faith and trust invested in me by my esteemed husband, Rabbi Dovid Kenner, must be mentioned, for it was he who provided me with the consistent encouragement and impetus to bring this project to fruition. May Hashem grant us the *z'chus* to see steady *nachas* from our dear children, in good health, for many years to come.

I am ever-indebted to my saintly parents who seemed to emanate from another world. Reb Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rav Yochanon: Hashem saw that there would be few *tzaddikim*, so He planted them in every generation. Rashi explains this by saying, "Hashem scattered them in all the generations so that they would be foundations for the world" (*Yoma 38*)

In every generation, there are *tzaddikim* who could have fit in very well in the generations of old. However, they were placed in their own

particular times in order to teach those around them and to serve as inspirations to them.

In the various chapters of this book, I shall attempt to restore to life these rare individuals who remain everlasting models of *osai chessed viyereiei Hashem* all the days of their lives. I was privileged to be their daughter, to be raised by them, and to learn, on a day-to-day basis, what the real purpose of life on Earth is all about.

On a particular occasion when Mother was about ninety years old, we were sitting and *schmoozing*. She was talking about her Father and she had tears in her eyes. I wondered to myself — “Mother is ninety years old, and she is still crying — what a relationship she must have had with Grandfather”.

I didn’t realize then, what I know now, that the love of a parent is so meaningful, that the need for it never leaves you all the days of your life, and now, I too, shed tears when I think of my beloved parents.

All the memories I have of my parents warm my heart each and every day, and when I commit these memories to writing, my parents seem to come to life!

How then, can I possibly hold back my pen from recording these memories for posterity? You, too, will cherish every fact just as I do. They will bring you peace and tranquility, solace and happiness, *emunah* and *bitochon*.

Rav Shimon Schwab,¹ *z”l*, once spoke about *z’chus ovos* saying that “One benefits from the merits of his forebears according to how much he appreciates them”. There is hardly a day in my life that I do not think about or quote my beloved parents. May their merit stand by all their descendants, forever.

This book was not written for the purpose of being read once and then to be neatly tucked away. It is a chronicle of love and inspiration to be read and reread as Shlomo Hamelech says in *Mishlei*, 6:21: “*Koshraim al libchoh tomid, ondaim al gargeroisecha*” (“Tie them always to your heart, adorn your neck with them”).

1) Rav Schwab was the second Rav of K’hal Adath Jeshurun in Washington Heights during the lifetime of Rav Breuer and succeeding him after his *petira*.

The Ramban wrote his holy *Igeres* to his son so that the strong ties between them would never be severed. His instructions were that he read his letter at least once a week for the rest of his life.

So, too, do I implore you, my dear children, to read my “*Igeres*”, regularly, so that we shall never be separated. If, indeed, any of my words influence you to *teshuvah* and *maasim tovim*, then you will give meaning to my life both in this world as well as in the World of Truth.

Tzertel Kenner

Rosh Chodesh Elul, 5765

New York, NY

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CHAPTER ONE

Remembering

IN MY CHILDHOOD YEARS, I was saved four times from the clutches of the Angel of Death. When I was a baby, my carriage, with me in it, caught fire. The carriage was engulfed in flames when Father grabbed me out of it just in the nick of time.

At the age of two years, I fell down a full story onto stone steps and lost consciousness. Even though I was taken for dead, I soon recovered without having a single scratch.

I almost drowned when I was four years old. We were swimming in the brook at Kleinberg's Hotel in Woodridge, New York. I fell into a hole and the only one who saw it happen was the late Rebetzin Singer, the mother of the Rabbonim Singer¹. In subsequent years, whenever we met, she would say, "*Ich hob dich gerottevet!*" ("I saved your life!"). Indeed, she did, for she extricated me from the watery depths to which I had sunk.

At eight years of age, I had been spending the summer in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada with my newly-wed sister and brother in-law, Rabbi and Rebetzin Gedalia Felder, *zichronom livrochov*. My brother, Moishe, who was fifteen years old, was there too. For some reason, we missed our train, and our trip home to New York was delayed. Needless to say, we were all upset. How were we to know that the train we missed was going to crash, resulting in many fatalities?

1) Rebetzin Singer's oldest son was the well-known Rav Dovid Singer, Rav of the Sfardishe Shul in Boro Park.

In the meantime, our parents were in the Grand Central Station awaiting our arrival not knowing that we had missed our train. Imagine their mental anguish when they heard that the train had crashed, thinking we were on it.

Hashem Yisborach had His plans, and in His infinite kindness, kept me alive. How much *kavonoh* must one have when saying, in the *tefiloh* of *modim*, the words “*V'al neesechoh shebchol yom eemonu*”.

It is for such reasons that one should publicize the miracles which one experiences, to allow future generations of ever-expressing gratitude to Hashem. We read about the *Tosfos Yom Tov* who left a will that all his descendants should fast on the day of his deliverance from disaster and then celebrate that event by participating in a *seudas hodo'oh* for the great miracle that happened to him. So should everyone else do if they are fortunate enough to be rescued from an untimely death.

The *Baal Soles Belula* writes regarding the obligation of giving thanks. “It is proper and fitting that a person who was saved through a miracle should give praise and be happy. He should relate the miracle to others, each year, on the anniversary of that miraculous salvation. The *Ralbag* also mentions this obligation. *Dovid Hamelech* talks about a family sacrifice offering in *Samuel I* 20:6, “If your father should miss me, then say, *Dovid* earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to *Bais Lechem*, his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.” This was possibly a thanksgiving offering that *Dovid Hamelech*’s family brought, every year, to give thanks for a miracle which Hashem performed for them.”¹

1) From the book. “Your Rod and your Staff” (Sinai Adler)

CHAPTER TWO

Siyatoh Dishmayoh

IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE that once the idea of this book became fixed in my mind, I always seemed to find relevant material wherever I turned. One could definitely call that *Siyatoh Dishmayoh!* I began to accumulate and save every scrap of information. By the time I began to work on this project, I had a full valise of papers and notes.

There is a story told of the Baal Shem Tov — that one of his *chasidim* engaged in making kosher wine with all the *hidurim*. Upon completion of the task, he brought a wagon-load of wine to his Rebbe. When he reached his Rebbe's door, he jumped down from the seat, left the wagon with his non-Jewish driver and ran into the house to inform the Baal Shem-Tov of his arrival with the wine. When he realized his grave error, the Chossid was inconsolable. He asked his Rebbe why it happened that he momentarily forgot the *halochoh* that kosher wine may not be left with a non-Jew. He was told that it had occurred because he did not pray for *Siyatoh Dishmayoh*.

In addition, to all the time and effort invested, the most important element in any given project, is definitely *Siyatoh Dishmayoh*. One must pray for it in life every step of the way, for without it, nothing can be accomplished.

Father told me about an interesting occurrence in his own life which held a tremendous blessing of heavenly assistance.

As a young man in Vienna, during the first World War, he had the rare opportunity of meeting quite a number of *gedolei Yisroel* from Galicia. They had escaped to Vienna, and to other places as well, since Galicia was the front for many of the battles, and their lives were in grave danger there.

Once, also, while visiting in Kashau, Slovakia, (then Hungary) Father met a refugee, the great Gaon, Harov Shmuel Engel, the Rav of Radimishla. Father recognized him to be an "*Ish choshuv me'od*", and asked him his name. The great Rav, wanting to hide his identity, simply answered, "My name is Shmiel".

Later, when the Rav was finally identified, Father had a lengthy conversation with him. The Rav was born and bred in Tarnow, the seat of Father's maternal family, and Rav Engel knew Father's family tree even better than Father did himself.

Harav Shmuel Engel was born in Tarnow in 1853. His father died when Rav Shmuel was a very young child. He was raised by his widowed mother. As a young child he was stricken with an eye ailment. His mother took him to the Divrei Chaim of Sanz for a *brochah*. The Tzaddik blessed him and gave him three directives: "One, do not learn any secular subjects. You have a good head, and they dull the mind. Two, *daven* from a *siddur* and three, always listen to your mother. Shlomo Hamelech listened to his mother, and and he became a king!" When Rav Shmuel became a Rav, he said, "Now I understand what the Divrei Chaim said about becoming a king."

Rav Engel held a number of very prestigious rabbinical positions. One of them was in Radimishla, Poland, where he remained the spiritual leader for thirty years from 1888 until the time when, in World War I, he fled to Hungary. Rav Engel remained in Kashau for the last eighteen years of his life, but he always identified himself as the Radimishler Rav (who was a world-famous *posek*.)

In Vienna, Father met Rav Avrohom Steinberg, spiritual leader of the great city of Brody in Galicia. He was the author of the classic sefer, *Machazeh Avrohom* and was considered one of the foremost poskim of his era. Father had many Torah discussions with this great Rav, and he decided to ask him for *semichah*.

The appointment for the *farhehr* was set. On that very same day, when Father went to shul to daven Schacharis, he saw someone selling *seforim* and pamphlets in the *poolish* (lobby) of the shul. Father happened to pick up a pamphlet that caught his interest. In it he read of a rare *shaaloh* and *teshuvoh* in a particular *halochoh*.

That very same evening, Father kept his appointment with the Broder Rav. The Rav opened the discussion with the following statement, "*Yungerman, ich vell dich freigen ein shaaloh. Oib dee vest mir entfernen dee eine shaaloh, vell ich dir geben semichoh oif an ort.*" ("Young man, I shall ask you one question. If you will answer this one question, I shall give you *semichoh* immediately") The question was the one Father had read about that same morning! Incredible!



A meeting of Rabbonim near Vienna.
Bottom right: The Brody Rav,
R. Avrohom Steinberg. Bottom left:
Rav Meir Arik, Rav of Tarnow

When Father gave the exact answer without any hesitation, the Rav of Brody was absolutely amazed, and true to his word, gave Father the appropriate *semichoh*. Of course, the Rav was well aware of Father's ability in *horoah* and knew that he deserved the ordination, but he never expected him to know the answer to that specific, complex *shaaloh*.

In addition, to the *semichoh* of Rav Steinberg, Father received *semichoh* from Horav Moishe Meisels, Rav of Premysl, Poland, Horav Nochum Schlesinger, Rav of Topolcany, Slovakia and others.¹ We are fortunate to possess two of those *semichos* because they are reprinted in Father's *sefer*, but the rest, unfortunately, were lost. One of the cleaning ladies who worked for Mother, stole the steel box containing all the important documents including Father's *semichos*. She most probably thought that the strong box contained money or jewels. Understandably, my parents were very upset about

1) Rav Chaim Gelerenter, Rav of Kitov, also gave Father *semichah*. He was the *Mesader kiddushin* of my parents. Rav Gelerenter was the author of many *seforim*. Amongst them are: *Oneg Chaim L'Shabbos* on *zemiros*, *Simchas Hachag* on Pesach and *Kol Hakosuv L'chaim* on the *halochos* of *Kesubah*.

this loss. Some of the documents could, obviously, never be replaced. There were letters of commendation from various *Gedolei Yisroel* — one of them was the Maharsham — Horav Sholom Mordechai Schwadron, the Rav of Berzhan, in whose presence Father had spent some time.

Other letters were from Father's Rebbes testifying to Father's achievements in his studies during the years spent toiling in Torah in the various Yeshivos.

כתבי תעודה

מאת כבוד הרב הנאמן המפורסם ערות הבושם הצדיק כשית מויה	מאת כבוד הרב הנאמן המפורסם ערות הנולה משיב לשואליו דבר ה' כשית מויה
נחום שלעזינגער זצ"ל	משה מייזליש זצ"ל
האבדיק נר. טאפאלטשאן והגליל (אונגארן)	האבדיק פרעמישלא.

בעיה

כשם השם

נוצר תאנה יאכל פריה ואוהב ושומר
תורתנו הקדושה התהלה והתפארת לו
למורשה על כן לא אחשוך את ברי עמי
לכבוד יירדי והביבי דרב הגדול בתורה
מופלג בחריצות ובקייאית איצר בלום כשית
מויה ישכר דוב טייכנער נ"י מקיץ טארנא
הנה מכיר אני את האיש זאת שיתו זה
כמה שנים וכמה פעמים השתעשעתי עמו
ומצאתי שידיו רב לו בסוגיות הש"ס ובספרי
הפוסקים ראשונים ואחרונים יורד לעומק
ההלכה ורודע לדמות מלהא למלתא בסברא
ישרה ודרך סלולה והיום בא לפני ובקש
ממני לעשרו בעשרת התרה ואחרי כי
צדקת לבבו והין מדותיו צמודות הם עם
פניני חכמתו ורב ידיעותו לכן לא אמנע
טוב מבעליו וגם לא אכביר מלין ואבוא
בקציר דאומר נברא יקרא כהאי מלא
וגדוש בתורה המוכתר במעלות יקות
יורה יורה ידן ידן יגדיל תורה ויאדיר
בקהלה נאה והסירה יהי חבל נהלתו
מאד ישנה אחריותו כפלים מראשיתו
וינידו בשערים המצוינים בהלכה תהלתו
בעה"ת י"ט כסלו תרע"ה לפ"ק
נר. טאפאלטשאן תע"א.

איכלע לאתרין בכוד הרב ההר"ק
ובקי משנתו סדורה לו ירא ושלם כ"ש
מויה ישכר דוב טייכנער נ"י מקיץ טארנא
אשר כבר סמכתי אותו במסכת חכמים
זה במה שנים סדס השערורית ונאבד
מאתו הכתב הורמנא ע"כ בא לפני ובקש
ממני אשר אתה על קנקנו גם עתה
לראות אם לא שכח ההלכות ונסיתי אותו
במידו שישנו בשאלה ומצאתי אותו נאמן
לדי ולתורתו כימי קדם קדמתה לכן כל
אמנע פרי עמי להניד לאדם ישרו כי בקי
הוא בהוראה ביתר שאת ויתר ע"כ כל
מן הלין יורה יורה וכו' והוא דאי לאותו
אצטלא להיות רב בעיירות הכשרים והחדידים
לרבר ד' וגם ראיתי בי נתנו עדיהן ויצדקו
דבני זמננו עליו אשר רשות לו להורות
הוראת ע"כ כל מן דין סמוכו לנא ולמען
שתהי' לאית על ידי באמי על התחום
לאשר ולקיים כל הגיל היום יום ב' נצבים
דילך שנת מלך דיבר שלום לפ"ק
פה פרעמישלא.

נחום שלעזינגער

הק' משה מייזליש

בהנאון מהריה"ל ציל האבדיק פרעמישלא. רב ד"ק נר. טאפאלטשאן והגליל.

CHAPTER THREE

Topolcany

TOPOLCANY (PRONOUNCED TOPOLCHAHNY), SLOVAKIA, at the turn of the century, boasted an excellent *cheder*.

Since Vienna, where Father lived, was only a few-hours train-ride away, my grandparents decided to send him there. They were intent on making sure that he had a first-rate Torah education. After all, he came from a great Torah family, and he was their first son born after five girls!

Father told us numerous stories of his childhood years in Topolcany which the Yidden referred to as *Tupplechoin*. As was customary, Yidden would *yiddishize* the secular names of the cities because the names often identified with gentile deities.

There was no dormitory for the out-of-towners so the boys had to eat *taig* (days)¹ in the homes of the various families. There were many stories circulating about the hosts in those houses and their kind treatment of their young guests. Father was not yet Bar Mitzvah.

Father told us of the warm, almost parental love and attention, that were showered upon him by the Felsenbergs. He always looked forward to that day, each week, when he was scheduled to eat the mid-day meal with them.

1) Each day the boy would eat the mid-day meal in a different home.

Mrs. Roiza Felsenberg was especially motherly to him. Father always remembered, into his old age, how kind she was on a particular winter day. The pond in front of the Felsenberg's house had frozen. Being a normal, fun-loving child, Father was sliding back and forth on the ice enjoying himself immensely, totally forgetting the time. When finally he remembered, it was past the lunch hour. What was he to do now? If he did not eat lunch, it would be like a fast-day for him, since the mid-day meal was the main meal of the day. Breakfast and supper consisted of little more than a dry roll. Father decided to try his luck and cautiously knocked on the door. Mrs. Felsenberg opened the door wide and with a smiling countenance said, "Go and wash for lunch". When he came to the table, no other family member was present, and he noticed that the table had already been cleared. Nevertheless, a delicious, hot repast was graciously served to him.

Father was convinced that Mrs. Felsenberg had observed him through the window and had understood his childish heart. When he was old and grey, he still told the story of the *tzaddekes*, Roiza Felsenberg. Little did he know at the time, that two generations later, her granddaughter, Judy Felsenberg (Moeller) would become my good friend.

It was typical of Father to remember that favor. His *middah* of *hakoras hatov* was exceptional. He always said, "If someone does you a favor, never forget it!" He lived up to that motto throughout his life. Even in his last hours, when the nurse did a small service for him, he thanked her.

There were some adorable stories about the *cheder* that Father used to relate.

Once he was somewhat misbehaved for which the Rebbe made him stay in for the lunch hour, locking the door. The Rebbe then went home for his mid-day break. His *cheder* chums took pity on Father and brought a tall ladder to extricate him, through the window, in order that he be able to go for lunch. Upon everyone's return, the Rebbe insisted that Father tell him who his rescuers were. Of course Father would not *masser* them. When he was forced to answer, Father said, "Rebbe, the *malochim* felt very sorry for me and didn't want me to suffer, and so they came and released me from my imprisonment!" Seeing that it was no use, the Rebbe simply let the matter ride.

Incidentally, Father always said that that Rebbe was a marvelous educator who did his work purely *L'shem Shomayim*, taking no remuneration for his great efforts. The family owned a large textile business, and his wife and daughter ran it, thereby leaving him free to teach. The teaching profession was his very life!

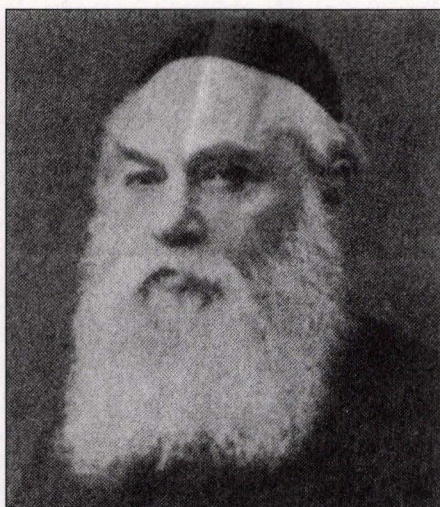
Before administering corporal punishment which the Rebbe referred to as a *kalte haplissah* or a *heisse haplissah*, he would recite a special *yehi rotzoin*, slowly and with great *kavonah*. It went as follows: "*Hinini meecheon imzeemon l'haplis es hatalmid hazeh behaplissoh achas*". In the meantime, the poor child was trembling with fright. This method was exercised in order to instill fear in the student so that he would behave properly from then on and would concentrate on his learning. By the way, a *kalte happlissah* was a few drops of cold water down the back, and a *heisse haplissah* was a smack of the ruler on the palm of the hand. No one knew the origin of the word *haplissah*. The Rebbe probably made it up, but no matter, his method achieved the desired result — absolute obedience.

The Rebbe made the Gemorah come alive. He would appoint one boy to be Abaya and another, Rovoh, who would act out the arguments in the Gemorrah. The Rebbe would tell each of the boys, "Give him a *potch* if he's wrong". The children absolutely loved it!

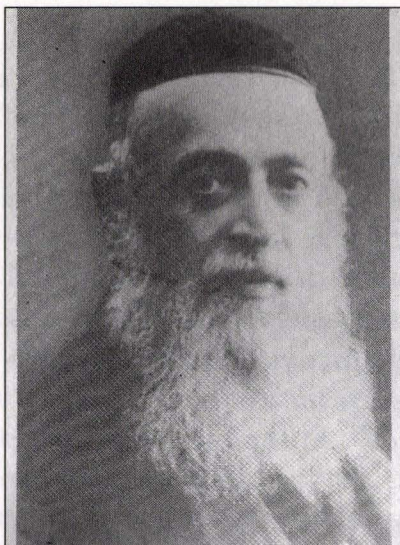
Since the Rebbe wore glasses and was also lame, the boys, in jest, would always call out the place, no matter what the place was, by saying, "*A'yin daled, omud aleph*" alluding to his "four eyes" "and one lame leg", proving the old adage, "Boys will be boys"!

While learning in Topolcany, Father, once fled from a barking dog that was pursuing him. He attempted to climb a tree in order to escape, but, unfortunately, he fell down and broke his leg. The *Rosh Hakohol* came immediately, with a horse and buggy and took Father to have a cast put on. Father always remembered that the *Rosh Hakohol* said to him, "Now I know that you must be smart, for it says, "*Shomer P'soyim Hashem*". ("Hashem watches (over) fools.)"

Later, Father was sent to the nearby mineral spa, Piestany (pronounced *Peestchahn*) to take the baths that would help his leg to heal. He stayed with the Rov of the city, Harav Kalman Weber. At the end of his life, about seventy years after the broken leg incident, Father had a visitor, in the Home, by the name of Kalman Weber who was a Monsey resident. Father said to him, "You must be a grandson of the



הרה"ג ר' קלמן וועבער, אבד"ק פישטיאן
Rabbi Kalman Weber, Pystyan



הרה"ג ר' ישעי' פירסט, וויען
Rabbi Jeshaye Fuerst, Vienna



Rav Mandl Deitsch

Rav of Piestany — I knew him! The visitor was thrilled to hear stories of his late grandfather — what a surprise!

Rav Mandel Deitsch of Topolcany, who served as Dayan of the Kehilla, was the one who prepared and taught Father his *pshetl* for his Bar Mitzvah. About sixty years later, Father met a nephew of Reb Mandel, Mr. Aryeh Abrahamson, a resident of Washington Heights, New York.

The speech must have been really terrific considering how impressed everyone was. In those days, the parents of the Bar Mitzvah boy invited everyone up to their home on Shabbos afternoon after he was called up to the Torah. Cake and fruit were served, and the Bar Mitzvah boy said his speech.

The family was especially honored by the presence of the Rav of the Schiff Shul — Rav Yeshaya Fuerst, who later said that he recognized definite talent in Father.

Everyone was moved to tears by Father's impressive performance. That was very remarkable because Father had great difficulty with speech as he was growing up. In fact, as a child, he did not speak until the age of four.

Grandmother was worried about his inability to speak. She took Father to the Belzer Rebbe, Reb Shea'le, *zaycher tzaddik v'kodosh livrochoh*, who was nearing the end of his life. The Rebbe Reb Shea'le (Yehoshua) was *niftor* on the 23rd of Shevat, 1894. He was born in 1825 to his holy parents the Sar Sholom of Belz and his Rebbetzen Malka. He was their youngest child and successor to his father as the second Rebbe of the Belzer dynasty. Thousands came to his court in Belz to receive his *brochoh*, my grandmother being one of them.

The Rebbe gave Father a *brochoh* saying, "*Er vet git reden*" (he will speak well). It actually took years until he could speak well. At the age of ten, he still could not pronounce the "K" sound. His little Viennese friends would tease and taunt him, as children will, making up a little phrase, "*Tzutter, Tuchen, Taffee*" instead of "*Zucker, Kuchen, Kaffee*" — emphasizing the fact that he was unable to articulate the words correctly.

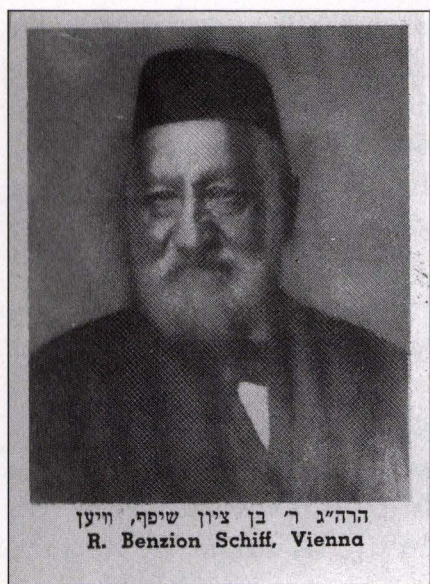
The *brochoh* of the *tzaddik* came true, in full measure, years later. Father became a marvelous orator. His speeches were very much in demand. They were like precious pearls. Even in his old age, he was always asked to speak wherever he went. It was a treat for his audiences to listen to him.

Father told me that if a person is blessed with special talents, he should use them to benefit others, as *chazal* say about the mitzvah, "*Kabed es Hashem maihonchoh — Al tikroh maihonchoh, eloh migronchoh*" — Honor Hashem with your resources — Honor Hashem with your throat — that is, with your voice. That is exactly what Father did!

He was very generous in sharing his talents. Various Rabbonim would come to him for his original speeches and for instruction in homiletics. As usual, he went out of his way to help them. He put tremendous effort into his *droshos* since he took the matter very seriously. Not relying on his talent and ability to improvise a speech on the spur of the moment, he would prepare his address taking both the content and the structure into very careful consideration.

He would practice the speech again and again until it was perfect. Then Mother would listen to a rehearsal. When Father asked her what her opinion was, the inevitable answer was “*Wunderbar*” or “*Ausergeventlich*” (“wonderful,” “outstanding!”) Mother always said to us, “*Azoi vee der Tatte ken, ken keiner nisht!*”¹

Father was always surprised, (and perhaps a little annoyed with me), when I delivered a speech in a perfunctory manner. He would say, “*Ich ken dich nisht fershteyn*”. “I can’t understand you — I work so hard on my *droshos*”.



הרה"ג ר' בן ציון שיפף, ווינען
R. Benzion Schiff, Vienna

Speaking about Father’s Bar Mitzvah, one of the elderly gentlemen who came to hear the *droshoh*, was Reb Ben Zion Schiff who was one of the most respected *baalei-batim* of the Viennese community. Father met Reb Ben Zion one *Rosh Hashonah* at *Tashlich*. The elderly man took a liking to him and invited Father to his home. When he arrived one Shabbos afternoon, there were many family members present. As soon as he came in, the delighted Mr. Schiff said, “Come with me, I have not learned my regular *shiur* for today yet”. He then left all his guests and closeted himself with Father, in his study, to learn with him.

1) “No one surpasses or equals your Father in the talent of public speaking”.

From that day on, the two became fast friends. Many years later, Father met Mr. Lowinger of Washington Heights, a very dignified Yid, who was a grandson of Reb Ben Zion Schiff. Mr. Robert Grunwald and *lehavdil*, Mr. Karl Grunwald, are great grandsons, as well.

The world is, indeed, very small. The Rav of our *Kehilla*, K'hal Adas Yeshurun, of Washington Heights, Rav Zacharia Gelley, was born in Topolcany and lived there until World War II. When I related to the Rav some of the facts of Father's years spent in Topolcany, Rav Gelley remarked that he knew the families which I had mentioned.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mesiras Nefesh

TANTE HENNA BANDER WAS THE ELDEST of Father's siblings. She was an "*Isha Chashuva*"; Father owed her his life!

At the outbreak of World War I, in 1914, Father was of draft age, having been born in 1890. Of course, going to war was not only life-threatening, but an almost impossible situation for a *shomer Torah u'mitzvos*. Therefore, one did whatever he could to avoid conscription into the armed services.

One day, while sitting and learning at home, in Vienna, with Grandfather, Rav Aharon Teichner, the police came in, asking for Father. Since they happened to be looking straight at him and did not realize who he was, Grandfather said, "He's not at home". No sooner did the officers leave, when the hasty decision was made that Father leave town immediately. First, he stayed up all night trying to decide how he could alter his birth certificate effectively, proving him to be younger than his real age. I surmise that he must have changed the zero of 1890 into a nine making the year of his birth 1899, and that would prove him to be only fifteen years of age in 1914 instead of twenty-four. Father would then be ineligible for service. Since this birth certificate was Father's only official I.D., it had to look authentic. To the best of my knowledge, it did.

Actually, appearance-wise, he could pass for fifteen or sixteen since Father was of slight build and grew a very sparse beard making him look much, much younger than his real age.

The next step was to flee to another location without having to cross any borders where they might be watching for him. The decision was for Father to go to Topolcany which was also part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He would be comfortable there since he had spent a number of years studying there in *cheder*.

Upon arrival in Topolcany in the middle of the night, Father made his way to the *Bais Medrosh* which was open all night, every night of the year, as was every *Bais Medrosh* in Eastern Europe in those days. He sat down to learn until dawn. In the morning, one of his old acquaintances met him in Shul and took him home for breakfast. Father was famished, almost starving! His host engaged him in conversation with a lot of *divrei Torah*. Later, Father would always say, "*Koidem git men zum essen, dernoach redt men in Toirah*" — ("First feed your guest and then talk in Torah") — "you have no idea how hungry he may be!"

This brings to mind a story about the Chofetz Chaim who once hosted Rabbi Yehuda Leib Chasman on a Friday night. The Chofetz Chaim sang the *Sholom Aleichem* only after he had made *kiddush*, washed, made *hamoitzzi* and ate the fish.

His honored guest was very puzzled and later approached the Chofetz Chaim and with great *derech eretz* asked him to explain the change in the pre-meal behavior. The Chofetz Chaim explained, "You, my dear guest, had just arrived in town shortly before Shabbos and surely must have been famished. The *malochim* are not hungry — they can wait for our *Sholom Aleichem* until later!" I read recently, in the book about the life of Rav Elya Lopian by Rabbi Dovid Schlossberg, that Rav Elya followed the same procedure for the same reason.

Father always insisted that his guests be served right away. He could not bear it if someone was hungry. He once visited a particular person who was considered a man of stature, and had to stay in his home for several hours. He could never understand why the host did not offer any refreshments.

Father felt very much at home in Topolcany. He knew quite a few people from his *cheder* days and the Rav, in particular, was very warm and kind towards him. He gave Father *semichah* during his stay in the city.

Father felt quite safe and secure until one day, Rav Schlesinger sent for him and said, "They're watching for you — you must leave town at once — do not go back to your room." Father responded, "Without my *tefillin*, I will not leave town", so he went to his room,

put his *tefillin* into his pocket without taking any valise in order not to appear conspicuous. He also put a few shirt collars in his other pocket. In those days, collars were separate from shirts, and people would change collars frequently to look neat. Then Father proceeded to the train station.

The Rav suggested a plan of travel for Father, that he travel further away from Topolcany and then head back to Vienna, in a round-about route, where he would hide out until War's end.

When Father was near Vienna, he disembarked from the train and got in touch with his sister, Henna. Soon after, Henna arrived with a farmer and his hay wagon. Father was "buried" under the hay and transported into a far-off section of Vienna where he stayed until the end of the war. No one ever bothered to look for him there.

Henna endangered her very life to help her brother. She could have been imprisoned for aiding and abetting him to avoid the draft. What might have happened to her and her husband and young children? She gave the matter absolutely no thought. Her brother was in danger, and there was no other way! Such was the *mesiras nefesh* of that great *tzadekes*.

Henna remained in Vienna after the rest of the family had left for America. She died before World War II, of an aneurism, at the young age of fifty-two. Her two daughters escaped to America, but both her sons perished along with their father.

After the war, Father was visited by a man who was in need. Father did whatever he could to help him. This effort of his was caused by Father's remembering how much the visitor's father had helped him — in Topolcany, when Father was a fugitive. The world truly resembles a *galgal hachozair* — a revolving wheel — sometimes we are on top and other times it is just the opposite way!

CHAPTER FIVE

Ahavas Yisroel

MAASE AVOS SIMON L'BONIM — We should learn from the selfless behavior of our Tante Henna, that one should always exercise *mesiras nefesh* for our relatives and friends, as well as for every Yid. Nothing should hold us back from giving succor and support to them even if it means giving up precious time or financial resources. No one ever has any free time or even extra money for that matter — but what are we willing to give of ourselves to do someone a favor even in the face of sacrifice and tremendous difficulty? How much more so if there is no particular hardship involved?

Father was a genuine *baal tova*. He was always ready to help someone out even if it meant that he would lose popularity or favor in someone's eyes. That did not faze him at all.

When he was old and weak, the administration of the then Yeshiva K'tana Zichron Moshe of the Bronx would frequently ask him to accompany them to the house of some wealthy people. By virtue of the visit they were hoping for a generous donation for the Yeshiva. Even though it was quite difficult for Father to go, and we discouraged him because we were aware of his precarious health, he never refused. The Yeshiva emissaries were delighted to have him accompany them. Father's *hadras ponim* never failed to make a profound

impression on one and all and lent an aura of importance to their mission. Naturally, they were then very generous towards the Yeshiva.

An old and lonely man *davened* in our *shul*. Mr. Riemer was a very sweet person whose congenial nature made him a real favorite amongst the members of the congregation. As he aged, it became increasingly difficult for him to manage living alone, and he needed to go into an Old Age Home. However, the local institution refused him because he was poor. No one could convince them to change their decision. In those days there was no Medicaid to take care of the needs of the old and destitute. In order to enter a Home for the Aged, one had to give up some hefty savings, and woe to the person who had none. When the situation became very desperate, Father decided that he would force the issue.

His plan was pre-meditated. One afternoon he went to *daven Mincha* in the Home. At the conclusion of the services, when all the people were still present, Father approached the administrator who was known to be a very hard-hearted person, and yelled in a very loud voice, "Why won't you admit a poor old man into your Home? Why do you refuse him?!"

The administrator, was understandably, very embarrassed and answered, "Why do you say that? Of course we'll accept him- right away!" Now there was no way out for them. Mr. Riemer was admitted into the Home, and Father acquired an enemy! He did not care a bit. His mission was accomplished. Mr. Riemer was very happy and finally taken care of. After all, that is what really mattered. There was simply no other way.

Father always put his own needs and interests aside for the benefit of others. He did not care about his own image and comfort, and Mother was the same way. Numerous times an unexpected guest would show up, and all of a sudden, Mother "wasn't hungry and didn't feel like eating supper". Of course, our guest enjoyed a fine meal, and Mother was happy.

Once a child of close relatives was seriously ill. His parents needed fifty dollars, immediately, to pay a specialist to make a house call. This took place in the beginning 1930's when fifty dollars was no small fortune. Father, set out for East New York from the Bronx, by subway, of course, to deliver the money. He had to borrow it! Who had an extra fifty dollars handy in those days? The private nurse who

was in attendance remarked, "That Rabbi looks like a holy man. Who else would travel for close to two hours on the subway in the middle of the night?"

When Father was a young man and new to America, he found it difficult to find adequate *parnosoh* for his family. Nevertheless, he consistently went to various *shuls* to make appeals in order to raise funds for other needy *Rabbonim* and their families. At one time there was a great *talmid chochom* who davened in our *shul* who was in need of financial help. All of a sudden, he started to, regularly, find money in his coat pockets.

During World War II, we had many rabbonim as steady guests for Shabbos. They came on a very regular basis and felt very much at home with us. Of course, they returned home after Shabbos well fed and with necessary funds.

Those *Rabbonim* were poor, unfortunate souls. They had come to America from Eastern Europe to raise money for their families. In the meantime, war broke out, and they were stranded here, suffering mental torture not knowing what was happening to their loved ones back home. In the end, it was discovered that most of them had perished.

These *Rabbonim* subsisted on very meager diets all week, not only because of lack of money, but because one could not buy ready-made foods or eat in restaurants in those days. They were non-existent. They had to depend on their good-hearted, generous friends to provide them with plentiful, nourishing foods, at least, on Shabbos. They found all of this, and more, in our home. Father lavished great honor on each of the visiting *Rabbonim*. He insisted that they share the head of the table with him. They were made to feel entirely at home.

These are but a few examples of my parent's *ahavas Yisroel* — of their selflessness and kindness towards every person without consideration of any personal gain.

When we attended the Bar Mitzvah celebration of Yissochor Dov Steinhart, his father, Reb Shmuel Zanzvil Steinhart, in his speech about the Bar Mitzvah who is named for my Father, stressed the importance of *ahavas cheenom* which he said was a strong attribute which Father possessed. He needed no reason to love every Yid. It was truly part of his nature to love every single Yid and to do acts of chessed for him at any time.

The grandparents of the afore-mentioned Bar Mitzvah, Mr. and Mrs. Aaron M. Steinhart, A"H and Y"LCH, their family, have been very dear friends throughout the years. Their loyalty is legendary. They too, were always ready to help Father in every way.

May Hashem repay them and their progeny, in full measure, until the end of time.

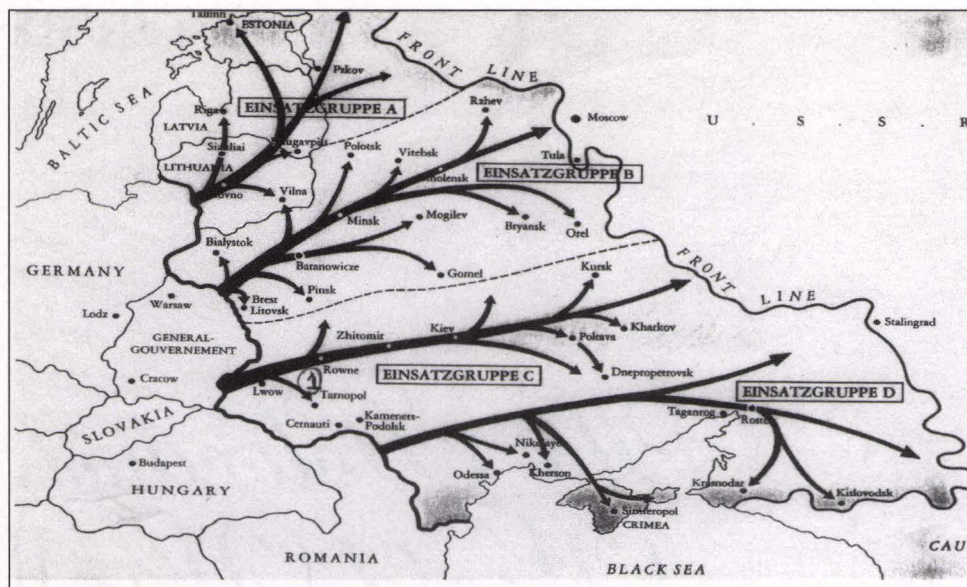
The Holocaust, World War II

IN SEPTEMBER, 1942,¹ Isaac Sternbuch sent a message via Polish diplomatic channels, to Jacob Rosenheim, president of the World Agudah in New York, informing him of the destruction of Warsaw Jewry. The cable, which was transmitted by the Polish Consul General in New York to Dr. Lewin, was the first authentic document about the extermination of the Jews of Warsaw to reach the United States. It shocked American Jews into an awareness of the magnitude of the Jewish tragedy in Europe.

On November 25, 1942, a small article appeared on page ten of the New York Times with the first official news that, up to that point, two million Jews had been killed in Europe.

Howard Elting, a United States diplomat, who, in 1942, as vice counsel in the German consulate, was one of the first American officials to pass on to the State Department information on the Nazi plan to eliminate the Jews of Europe. The information that Mr. Elting forwarded was a cable drafted by Dr. Gerhardt Riegner, representative of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva. Dated August 11, 1942, it said

1) From Isaac Lewin's book, *In Defense of Human Rights*.



*The invasion of the notorious Einsatzgruppen.
The C Group wrought havoc in the area inhabited by Mother's family.*

that the Nazis planned to exterminate three and a half to four million Jews that Fall. The Cable suggested that the plan approved the Wansee Protocol of January 1942, the plan to exterminate the Jews. State Department officials, however, declined to pass on the cable to Dr. Stephen S. Wise, head of the American Jewish Congress as Dr. Riegner had requested.

Even though we were in the safe haven of America, my parents were ever-vigilant to know what was going on in Europe with all our brethren, in general, and with their close relatives in particular. I was a very small child at the time. However, the memories of those years are clear in my mind.

I remember witnessing a family argument. The wedding date of my older sister was fast approaching (14th of Kislev 5702, 1942) and the horrible news had just recently leaked out of what was happening in Poland. Father was talking in a pained voice, "*Dorten harget men Yiden in dee vilst hooben musik?*" ("There they are murdering Jews, and you want music?") My sister was all of 18 years of age, and she innocently wanted some music at her wedding! In the end, a compromise was reached.

Shortly before the outbreak of the War, Father told Mother that he finally put together some money which he could use to buy her a diamond ring. In the past, he was not able to afford to buy Mother any jewelry besides a pair of coral earrings which he gave her as an engagement present. Mother was so generous that even that pair of earrings she gave away to a close relative in order to make her happy. That was typical of Mother. She was a model of selflessness throughout her life, never needing anything, ever-giving and caring for others.

Father gave Mother a choice — did she want a ring, or would she prefer sending the money to Poland to help with the wedding expenses of her niece? Being the kind and sympathetic individual that she was, Mother, of course, said to do the latter. Unfortunately, while the funds were enroute, war broke out, and the money was lost along with the many innocent lives of members of the family.

Mother later learned, that all the people of her home-town, Rimilov, in Eastern Europe Galicia, were shot and killed in cold blood by the Special Action Groups otherwise known as the *Einsatz-Gruppen*. That included the Rav of the town, Harav Yitzchok Weidenfeld, son of Harav Yakele Rimilover who authored the famous work, *Kochav MiYaakov*, and his family, together with all the other Jews of the *shtetl*.

In the beginning of the war, before Auschwitz and other infamous concentration camps were erected, the Nazis would send in motorcycle squads to shoot the Jews, either at the mouth of a large pit or at the shore of a river. The latter was the brutal method used by the Nazi beasts in Rimilov, since the town was situated on the shore of the Bug River. They had invaded Rimilov on June 1, 1941. There were then 2200 Jews in the town, some of whom had arrived as refugees during the Soviet rulership.

Al aileh ani bochiyoh (Upon these do I weep).

These are the precious souls of our relatives in Rimilov, who died a martyr's death *Al Kiddush Hashem*: Mother's eldest sister, Esther Rochel and her husband, Mother's brother, Yehoshua (Shea), his wife, Menya Basya and their children. Mother's brother, Moishe Michel, his wife, and their children. Mother's sister, Nechama Ronnis, her husband and their daughter were living in Vienna. They, too, died *Al Kiddush Hashem*.

All the nieces and nephews were grown up and of marriageable age. Two cousins were engaged to each other, Shea's son and Moshe Michel's daughter — two beautiful people who could have built a world together, but it was, unfortunately, not meant to be. May Hashem avenge their innocent blood. Their names are inscribed on the back of Mother's *matzaivoh* to memorialize their *neshomos* since they, unfortunately, were not *zoicheh* to *kever Yisroel*.

One of Father's very close friends of his youth was one Rabbiner Weiss who studied in Yeshiva with him. He was the father of a large family. When he was newly-wed, Father visited him in his home. Rabbi Weiss introduced him to his new wife as, "the handsomest bochur in the yeshiva". Father told us that he was very embarrassed, adding, "*Ich hob kein mol nicht gevist az ich bin shain!*" (I never knew that I was good-looking!) Actually, his *hadras ponim* was evident until the very end of his life. I met someone after Father's *petirah*. When he heard that I was Rav Teichner's daughter, he told me that when Father walked on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, people would stop to gaze at him. Indeed, he looked like a prince!

Later, with the outbreak of the World War II, Rabbi Weiss contacted Father, beseeching him, to rescue him and his family. An application was made, immediately, to set the wheels in action.

In order to bring over a family, one had to assure the authorities that a living wage was guaranteed. At that time, our *shul*, owned by Father, was already in existence, but we barely eked out a living. The group of people attending services and *shiurim* was quite small, and the daily bread was hard to come by.

Nevertheless, Father informed the authorities that our congregation was in "need" of an assistant rabbi, a position for which Rabbi Weiss was well-qualified. Of course, the "congregation" guaranteed his wages.

An investigator was due to arrive imminently. Father devised a plan to bribe him in order to acquire a favorable decision. He purchased the most expensive Havana cigar and gave it to Mother, with the instructions, that when the investigator would be sitting and discussing the matter of the Weiss family, Mother should approach him and put the cigar into his pocket. Perhaps that would "do the trick", but if not, he would add more substance to the "present". By accepting the cigar, it would be evident that the man was "on the take".

Well, that is exactly what transpired. The man did not object to this little present. Addressing himself to Father, he asked, "Rabbi, what do you want me to write in my report?" Relaxing, Father said that he needed an assistant who would be paid a regular salary. Then the investigator asked, "How much money does your congregation have in the bank?" Innocently, Father answered, "None". Unfortunately, that wrong answer was the death knell for the Weiss family. Father was not aware that there was a special "public charge" clause in the immigration law that required a sponsor to have, at least, five thousand dollars in a bank account. This was considered a tremendous sum at that time. The investigator would have written down, in his report, that the congregation had the full amount in its non-existing bank account. Unfortunately, Father did not know that.

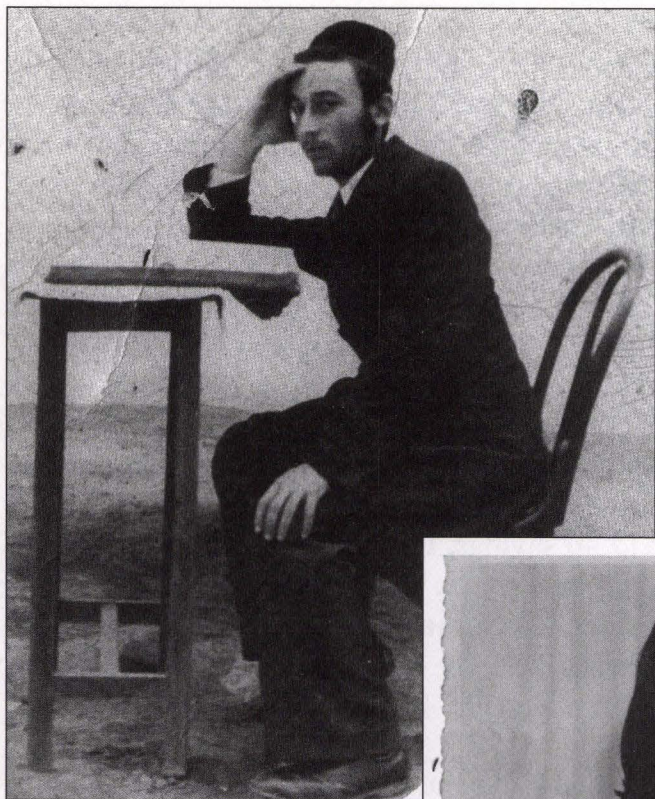
If the congregation had no savings, they could not guarantee a living wage. The new immigrants might then very well become public charges. That was something which the government would not allow. The application was rejected. Alas, the entire Weiss family perished in the Holocaust. For the rest of his life, Father bemoaned his failure to save them.

Among the victims of the Holocaust were also Father's beloved nephews, Bertchie (Yissochor Dov) and Chaim Bander, children of his oldest sister Henna, who had passed away in Vienna before the War.

Growing up in America during the War, left a number of indelible memories in my mind. All children had to wear I.D. tags around their necks, giving their names, dates of birth and special I.D. numbers. There was an inspection made daily, in school, to make sure that we wore those tags.

Then there were the frequent air-raid drills. We had to crawl under our desks to practice, in the event of an air-raid attack. There were air-raid drills at home, too. All lights in the homes and on the streets had to be turned off — to create a virtual black-out in case any enemy bombers would fly over us from across the Atlantic Ocean. Thank G-d they never did.

I remember an air-raid drill one Friday night where we could not extinguish the Shabbos candles. The Air-Raid Wardens came up to our house to find out where the light, which they detected, was coming from. No wonder, that the light of the Shabbos candles could not be hidden by the window-blinds, for Mother lit many candles, seven-



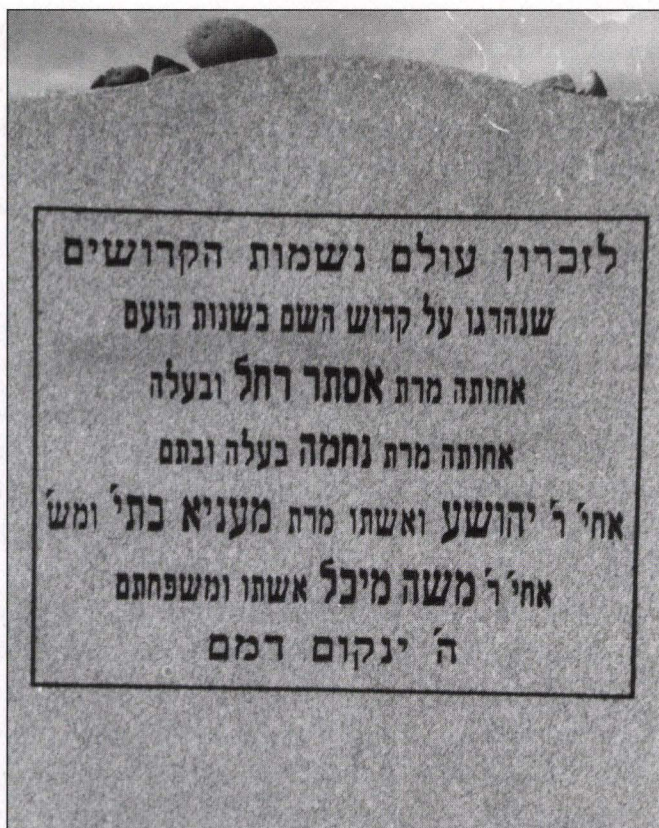
*Victim of the Holocaust,
Cousin, Shloime Kanner, Rimilov*



*Victim of the Holocaust, Cousin,
Fritzi Ronnis, Vienna*



*Victim of the Holocaust, Cousin,
Fania Kanner, Rimilov*



The back of Mother's matzeiva inscribed with the names of her loved ones who perished in the Holocaust

teen to be accurate, in honor of the holy Sabbath. In fact, these numerous candles produced so much light that there was no need to use the electric lights in our dining room.

When we explained that it was Shabbos, they respectfully removed the burning candles from our dining room and placed them in the bathtub of the washroom that had no windows facing the street.

For civilians who remained on the home front, World War II was a time of great shortages. Food was often hard to come by, and so were many of the materials used to make common consumer goods. The government took over the control of raw materials such as rubber, tin, and aluminum. As the war went on, many more items were added to the list of controlled goods.

On May 14, 1942, Americans received their first War Ration Books which limited each of them to one pound of sugar every two weeks. Butter, coffee and meat could not be purchased without coupons as well.

The rationing caused inconveniences, but all the civilians were eager to do their share for the war effort. People planted their own vegetable gardens in their backyards and even on city rooftops. The produce of these "Victory Gardens", as they were called, made up for rations sent to the soldiers overseas. By the end of the war, twenty million victory gardens produced about forty per cent of the country's vegetables. Because of all the baking done at home, Mother found the rationing of sugar difficult, but it was the least we could do, and somehow, we managed.

Many boys were spared the hardships of going to war because of their being in yeshiva. Rabbinical students were exempt from the draft. Fortunately for them, and for their parents, the threat of death did not hang over them. There were, however, quite a number who did have to go to war.

I remember the women, mothers of those Jewish boys who were members of the armed forces, who would frequently come to Father, to ask him to pray that their sons should come home safe and sound.

We used to see special, small flags hanging in neighborhood windows. They had gold stars embroidered on them, one for each of their sons who was serving, or for each one that had already given his life for the cause.

Mother's first cousins, Basha and Yisroel Mager lost their son, Yochonon, in the Pacific, in the most vicious, infamous battle of Iwo Jima. There were countless tragedies such as this one. In those cases, the parents were relieved if, at least, the bodies of their sons were returned to them for burial.

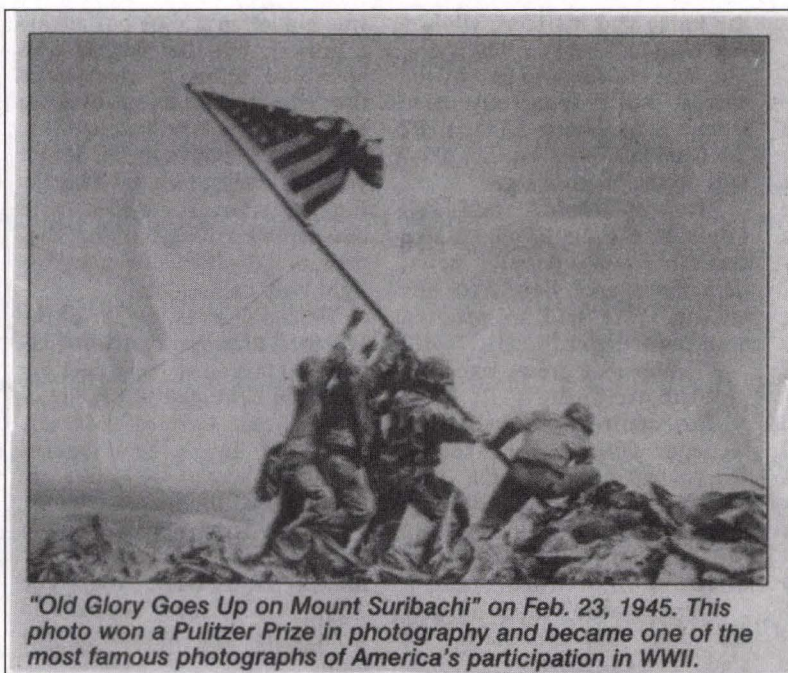
World War II was a time of patriotic fervor which was exhibited by the selfless soldiers who fought its numerous battles.

The tiny island of Iwo Jima witnessed one of the fiercest battles fought towards the end of the war. The island is only five miles long and two miles wide, but its location is strategic, and that is what counted more than size. It is 660 miles south of Tokyo and therefore, Japan considered the island as necessary in defending its homeland. The United States wanted this island in the Pacific Ocean as a military base and a safe landing place for crippled bombers. They needed the island, also, as a spot from which they could launch air attacks on Japan.

It was the bloodiest battle of the war in the Pacific. The invasion took place on February 19, 1945. It was a clear and sunny day. It was



From this map¹ one can see the proximity of the island of Iwo Jima to Tokyo. They can then realize why each side was bent on possessing the island.



The Iwo Jima Memorial in Washington D.C. It depicts the raising of the American Flag on Mount Suribachi on the island of Iwo Jima. It is copied from the photo taken by Joe Rosenthal. The battle took place in the Volcano Islands in the Pacific Ocean. Iwo Jima was the first Japanese territory to be captured. This photo won the Pulitzer Prize in photography. It became one of the most famous pictures of America's share in World War II.

- 1) From *HaModia*, August 16, 2005
- 2) Arrows indicate close proximity of Iwo Jima to Tokyo, Japan

only after the battle was over that they realized how awful it was. It took the Americans thirty-six days to take the island. The first Americans to arrive at Iwo Jima were unpleasantly surprised. The tiny island had been bombed for three days prior to the invasion, but the blasts had little effect on the Japanese whose troops were hidden in deep tunnels.

The enemy was relentless, and they were nearly invisible. Their machine gunners were hidden inside small, well-protected bunkers, known as pillboxes, which the Marines could flush out only with well-aimed hand grenades or blasts from flame-throwers.

In that horrible battle, almost seven thousand American soldiers lost their lives and twenty thousand more were wounded. Twenty thousand Japanese soldiers were killed. Finally, the battle was won by the Americans, but our family suffered the great loss of our cousin, Yochanon Mager. May Hashem avenge his death.

Another case of a fallen soldier that we knew was that of Moshe Gross. Reb Yitzchok Gross was a very distinguished Yid. He would frequent our *Bais Midrash* on a regular basis, and he was always welcomed enthusiastically by Father and all the *baalei batim* of the shul. He and his wife lost their son, Moshe Alexander, in the D-Day Invasion of June 6, 1944, another of the terrible battles that claimed so many lives.

Reb Yitzchok and Mrs. Gross eternalized the memory of their beloved son by founding the well-known Yeshiva Zichron Moshe in the west Bronx. Later, it became known as the Yeshiva Gedolah Zichron Moshe of South Fallsburg, New York.

Father always supported the Yeshiva in every way possible. Most of the boys who came to our shul were Talmidim of Yeshiva Zichron Moshe. Today, there are hundreds of *b'nei Torah* who learned in that *makom Torah* at one time. What a *zechus* it is for the *neshama* of that young man who fell in battle, HYD.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Family Loyalty

FATHER ALWAYS WENT OUT OF HIS WAY to help anyone who was in trouble. When a problem had to be attended to, nothing else mattered. Helping someone out of a dilemma was on top of the list — in fact, the only item on his agenda.

Especially when someone in the family had a problem, regardless of how distant the relationship was, Father was in the forefront to bring him aid and salvation. I remember him saying that being kind to relatives is a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *kibbud av va'em*.

It is not an unusual short-coming to forget one's own relatives. Perhaps that is why the *Novi* says, "*Umibsorcha al tisalom*" and the *halocha* is that the poor of our own family are to be the first recipients of our largesse.

A story is told of a Rebbe who, once, brought it to the attention of one of his chassidim that he should help out an indigent Yid. The chossid assured his rebbe that he was ready to do his utmost. The Rebbe then proceeded to introduce the *chossid* to his own brother!

Why didn't the *chossid* realize that his brother needed help? Why was it necessary for his Rebbe to remind him? Why did he ignore the needs of his own flesh and blood at the very same time that he was ready, willing and able to help a stranger?

Father always sought out every relative who possibly needed help, and he gave it with an open heart and a full hand, often recruiting oth-

ers in the family to do the same. He employed all kinds of strategies to make sure not to embarrass the recipient of his kindness.

We too, should learn from his regular acts of *chessed* and not allow ourselves to forget, or even to inadvertently ignore, the needs of our loved ones. It is our duty, and, indeed our sacred privilege. Surely, that is why Hashem has blessed us with plenty, to be of aid to those less fortunate than us. Merely *krechtzing* about the troubles of others does not accomplish anything. Action is what counts! That is the real challenge.

Our ancestor, the *Kli Yokor*, comments in *Parshas Mishpotim* on the mitzvah — “*Im Kesef Talveh es Ami*”. The giving of *tzedokoh* to the poor allows us the opportunity to gain entry into *Olom Haboh*. That is the reason Hashem made it so that there would be poor amongst us, to give us the *zechus* of helping them, thereby helping us to reap tremendous rewards. That is why it is said the poor people actually do more for us than we do for them! Following is a very relevant passage from Rav Shlomo Breuer’s¹ commentary to *Parashas Vayeroh*:

Every particle of the possessions in our hand are G-d’s property, gifts bestowed upon us by G-d. In the spirit of Torah, loving-kindness is Tzedokoh, duty in the highest sense. It is not an act of mercy, which causes the giver to become haughty and the receiver to be humbled, but an act of duty to which each needy person is entitled in the name of G-d. It causes the poor to stand upright and the rich to consider themselves only as the administrators of the property belonging to the impoverished. Therefore, the Sages teach “More than the rich do for the poor, the poor do for the rich. The rich satisfy but a temporary need of the poor, but the poor help the rich to secure the eternal happiness of their souls. The poor can be supported by G-d without the rich; but the rich without the poor cannot fulfill their Mitzvah. By giving to the poor the rich take and receive. This genuinely Jewish seed of blessing, blessing for the rich as well as for the poor, was for the first time implanted in the breast of our ancestor Avrohom. וְאֶתְּתֶנּוּ לָהֶם — יִקַּח נָא I wish to take: By giving to you and by receiving from me ...”

1) His son, Harav Levi Yosef Breuer, was the founder of K’hal Adath Jeshurun of Washington Heights, N.Y.

Father's devotion to his loved ones, as well as to *Klal Yisroel* should be emulated. The *Ollelos Ephraim* (otherwise known as the *Kli Yokor*) talks about this *middoh*. He explains the reason for the long night of *golus* with the words, *mah nishtanoh halailoh hazeh* — Why is this night (of *golus*) so long — longer than any other? The reason for that is — *kulo matzo* (matzo meaning strife and arguments) that we are not living in peace. However, if we change these ways of being selfish — “*shelo echod bilvad*” each person should not be *bilvad* — for himself only- If we truly care about every Yid, sharing his successes and his failures, his sorrows and his joys, then Hashem will surely send us the *geuloh shelaimoh*.

May it be speedily and in our days, *Amen!*

CHAPTER EIGHT

An Rx for the Eyes

FATHER WAS ALWAYS CONCERNED about the good health of our eyes, even though we were all blessed with excellent vision. He would often say, “*m’darf heeten dee oigen*” — “One should take care of one’s eyes”. He would caution us not to read by the light of dusk (saying that such light is harmful to the eyes according to the teachings of the Rambam.)

Father was extremely careful to guard his own eyes especially in the spiritual sense. When a woman entered his home, he would never look towards the door to see who it was. He would greet her with a smile and a friendly countenance, but his eyes were closed! Even though he kept his eyes closed, it did not hinder Father from giving sage advice to whichever woman came to discuss vital issues. One lady once said to him (not understanding his holy conduct) “Rebbe, you have such beautiful eyes, why do you keep them closed?” Indeed, he had penetrating, deep blue eyes that were full of feeling and which shed copious tears upon hearing of one’s *tzoros* and misfortunes. Father’s favorite *Sefer Tehillim* was the one with the commentary — *Tefilla L’Moishe* written by the Yismach Moshe. The pages bear stains of his tears which were shed while being mispallel for the relief of the suffering of many unfortunate people.

It is difficult to imagine how he was able to watch his eyes so carefully — but then again, he was an unusual person whose actions could not be measured with a regular yardstick. One of the rather precocious, small children in the family being regularly exposed to Father's habits, once said to him, "*Tatte, Tatte, mach tzee dee oigen, a froi geht!*" ("Father, Father, close your eyes, a lady is coming!")

It is said, "The eyes are the mirror of the soul". Father truly possessed a lofty soul. This was reflected in his "*heilige oigen*". Even when he addressed the ladies of the Sisterhood at their gatherings, he kept his eyes closed. That, however, did not, in any way, diminish the impact of his address.

Father devised an ingenious way in keeping with his habit of guarding his eyes. When he had to attend a special function where he could not keep his eyes closed, he wore a special pair of eyeglasses which he referred to as "*dee blinde glaizer*" (the blind glasses). He instructed the optometrist to put special lenses into the frames. The glass was similar to the opaque glass of bathroom windows. Of course people would notice the unusual glasses, but no one could figure it out.¹

A frum young man once remarked about some ladies that they were not dressed modestly. Father said to him, "How do you know?" It was natural to him that one does not look around to find something wrong. The wife of one of Father's grandsons once greeted him with, "*Mazel Tov, Zaida*" at a family *simcha*. When she walked away, Father asked his son who that was!

Our cousin, Rav Shimon Teichner of Eretz Yisroel, upon hearing these stories about Father, remarked, "*az men heet dee oigen nisht tzu zain vos men tor nisht, zet men voos andere sehen nisht*". (If one guards his eyes from forbidden sights, he can "see" what others cannot see.) Reb Shimon's words were really apropos as is proven by the following stories:

My late Tante Rosie, Father's youngest sister, told us two vignettes about him: On Tu B'Shevat, 1924, Father was in America in Grandmother's house pacing the room to and fro. Suddenly he stood still, turned to his mother and said, "*Mamme, heint hut Chaya geboiren ah meidele!*" ("Mamme, today Chaya gave birth to a baby

1) I recently learned that the Maharash of Lubavitch did the same thing.

girl"!)) In fact that is what happened. Upon Father's departure from Vienna to America for the first time, Mother returned to her parental home in Rimilov, Galicia, to await his return. A few months later, my sister, Henna Aidel, was born on *Chamisho Osor B'Shevat*. Father had not yet received word from Poland, but he "knew" of the birth.

Once Tante Rosie accompanied Father to the Grand Central (train) Station on East forty-second street in Manhattan. He was to depart that day for a particular destination, and Tante Rosie was there to see him off. Standing on line and approaching the ticket window, Father promptly did an about-face saying to his sister, "*Ich fuhr nisht, dee mamme fielt nisht git*". (I am not going, Mamme doesn't feel well.) When they returned home, they found Grandmother ill.

Father once related an incident to me. He was walking in the street one Shabbos morning when he met a Yid and his little boy. The man was smoking a cigarette, a not unusual occurrence in the Bronx of those days (circa 1930). Father, undeterred by the man's blatant chillul Shabbos, struck up a conversation with him. You might say, according to today's jargon, that he was into *kiruv*. Then he said to the man, "Your wife must be a religious woman". Father was alluding to the fact that she observed *taharas hamishpocha*. The man was astonished since Father did not previously know him or his wife. He replied, "Yes, Rebbe, but how do you know that?" Father answered, "Why, I can see by looking at your child's face!"

Father himself, told me this story in innocence, merely relating the incident as a point of interest. I, too, was amazed and asked, "How could you tell?" Father replied, "Why, of course, such a child looks very different from children born of an unholy union". Indeed, to him it was obvious.

Father's ability to "see"—to size up a situation, was phenomenal. No wonder, then, that many would seek his sagacious advice and his brochoh. His many admirers recognized his greatness and placed their total confidence in him. He did not disappoint them with his sound judgement for he seemed to have heavenly protection proving what Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Gabirol says, "Nothing protects a person like the closing of his eyes".

A Tzaddik's eyes cannot tolerate seeing anything which is an antithesis of *kedushoh*. The story is told in the sefer, *Ohr Hameir* on *Parshas Chaye Soroh*, that once an immodestly dressed woman

entered the home of the holy Magid of Mezritch. Inadvertently, the glance of the Great Magid fell on this unholy sight. The eyes of the Tzaddik could not stand it. A wave of nausea overcame him, and he began to throw up.¹

The Baal Shem Tov's grandson, author of *Degel Machane Ephraim*, writes in his explanation of the *possuk*, "And Hashem saw the light that it was good," that he heard his holy grandfather say, "Where was that original light hidden? Hashem hid it in the Torah." The *tzaddikim* of every generation are able to use this light by diligently studying the Torah. They are then able to see from one end of the world to the other."

My favorite siddur is the *Siddur Bais Yaakov*. It was composed by the great Rav Yaakov Emden who was the son of the Chacham Tzvi. It is actually disintegrating; the binding is falling apart. Even so, I would not consider committing it to the *shaimos* box. It gives me a special thrill to open the *siddur* to the pages of *Dinei Chanukah* and *Bircas Ner Chanukah*. The melted wax from Father's shammos candle can still be felt. I love to look at those pages and to feel them. It is as if the wax has just recently dripped down onto the pages.

I am reminded of the days of yore, of Chanukah, when Father lit the menorah while looking into this *siddur* and making the brochos loud and clear with great *kavonah*. It was truly inspirational to watch Father sitting in front of the menorah for quite some time gazing at the flickering lights with such love and utter devotion.

The Bnei Yissoschor teaches us that if one keeps looking attentively upon the Chanukah *lecht*, he will merit seeing the *Ohr Hagonuz*. I have no doubt that Father benefited, spiritually, in great measure, from the fulfillment of this *mitzvah*.

It is not surprising that Father held the "formula" of watching the eyes and keeping them holy, for he learned it from his holy Rebbes. The Ksav Sofer — said that of the hundreds of Talmidim which he taught, seven of them had *heilige oigen*. Three of them were world-famous; Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, Rabbi Yehuda Grunwald, and Rabbi Moishe Grunwald.

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld later became the chief Rabbi of the Eida Hachareidis of Yerusaholaim. Rav Yehuda Grunwald was the

1) Der Rebbe Reb Ber fun Mezritch — Ch. D. Bakan

Rav of Satmar, and his best friend, Rav Moishe Grunwald, was the Rav of Chust in Hungary. Both Rabbis Grunwald led very large and famous yeshivos in Hungary. Each of them had hundreds of students, many of which became great Rabbonim and Roshei Yeshivos.

Actually, the Chasam Sofer, (1762-1839), was the one who decisively influenced the development of Orthodox Jewry in western and central Hungary. Torah study was widespread among large sections of Orthodox Jewry with vibrant yeshivos established in every large community. The most renowned of these, besides that of Pressburg, were in Galanta, Eisenstadt, Papa, Chust, and Satmar.

Father studied in Galanta under Rav Yosef Zvi Dushinsky, in Chust under the *Arugas HaBosem* Rav Moshe ben Amram Grunwald and under Rav Yehuda Grunwald in Satmar.

No wonder, then, being their loyal disciple, he learned to emulate their holy ways, and he, too, had *heilige oigen*. The righteous ways of his rebbes had a profound influence upon him, and the reflection of their teachings was evident in both his behavior and in the expression of his holy eyes, for they were, indeed, the “mirror of his soul”.² It is interesting to note that our grandson, Yissochor Dov Loewi, is married to Goldie Gross, the daughter of Rav Menachem Gross, whose grandfather, Reb Yechiel Hammaker, was also a *talmid* of both the *Arugas HaBosem* and Rav Yehuda Grunwald. The influence of these *tzaddikim* is now doubly inherent in our offspring.

Rav Yuda Grunwald was known for his wondrous ways in Torah and Avodah and in his open, generous hand when it came to giving Tzedokah. Even as a young boy, in yeshiva, coming from a home that was very well to do, he was sent an abundance of food, clothes, and spending money. He gave it all away to his poor friends in Yeshiva, and Rav Yuda subsisted on very little. His rebbe, the K’sav Sofer said of him at his wedding, “You think that the *choson* is holy, but I tell you, he is *Kodesh Kodoshim!*” — (holy of holies). Later, Rav Yuda became the son in-law of Reb Yozpe, the son of the Chasam Sofer and brother of the K’sav Sofer.

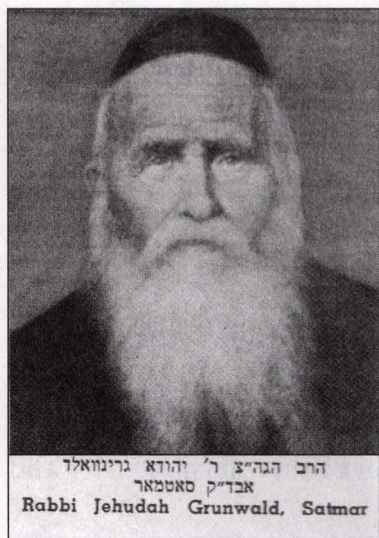
Once a man came to the Rav and told him that he had no money to marry off his daughter. Rav Yuda Greenwald went to his Rebetzin and said, “I found out that there are beautiful silver candlesticks to be had

2) Father later named one of his sons, Moishe Yuda after both his Rebbes.

at a very low price — two hundred dollars.” The Rebetzin suspected that there was a “catch” to the deal, but she, too, was a *tzadekes* and gave him the requested sum. After a while, the Rebetzin asked her husband to show her the candlesticks. The Rav answered, “You should know that those candlesticks are lighting up the heavens like the moon and the stars”! Of course he was alluding to the great mitzvah of *Hachnosos Kallo* which they had both performed.

The Arugas HaBosem, Rav Moishe Grunwald was a *marbitz* Torah par excellence. He had thousands of *talmidim* over the years as did his dearest friend, Rav Yuda Grunwald. Each *talmid* was outstanding in his acquisition of Torah knowledge as well as in his *yiras shomayim* and *kedushah v'taharoh*. Perhaps, some were greater than others in various ways, but each one was unique.

When the new *z'man* began, the Rebbe would emphasize the purpose of their learning. He stressed that each one bore the responsibility of behaving in an exemplary manner that would prove to the observer, that *talmidei chachomim* excel in their *midos tovos* and they serve as steady examples to everyone else. Then their behavior would cause a tremendous *Kiddush Hashem*.



Father carried these lessons in his heart and in his mind all the days of his life. His bearing caused a genuine *Kiddush Hashem*. Those who knew him can never forget him. Such was the power of his influence on others.

In the years that Father spent in Chust as a *talmid* of the *Arugas HaBosem*, he roomed with a family Kahan. Several boys shared that room. On Thursday nights the *bochurim* would stay up and “burn the midnight oil” in preparation for the Rebbe’s *farher*. The fire would burn out, and they were left in the cold.

The boys would frequently “borrow” some wood from the *baal habayis* in order to rekindle the fire and to stay warm. Apparently, Father was always trying to find a way to pay back the unauthorized “loan”. As luck would have it, many years later, a family Sicherman moved into our neighborhood, and they

came to daven in Father's Bais Medrash. Father was overjoyed! Mrs. Sicherman was a daughter of Mr. Kahan of Chust. From then on, whenever Mr. Sicherman was called up to the Torah, Father never allowed him to donate. Thus he was able to repay the loan of his youth. Father was delighted that this opportunity presented itself. He told us, his children, about his good fortune in being able to pay back the debt. What a profound lesson he taught us in honesty and the duty to pay back a loan.

Rabbi Moshe Grunwald was one of the greatest rabbis in the modern history of Hungary. Considered the most authoritative halachist among the Hungarian Rabbonim who followed the Chasam Sofer, Rav Grunwald pioneered in incorporating *Chassidus* into his teachings.

The Yeshiva in Chust was among the finest half-dozen in Hungary. It was open to anyone with aptitude and a desire to submit to the rigors of Orthodox education. A student described his feelings regarding the yeshiva. "He was my master for three semesters and during that time, more than four hundred of us listened thirstily to the words of his mouth. We starved on dry bread, we shivered with cold in unheated rooms, only to listen, twice a day, morning and evening, to his profound teachings, to be able to enjoy the radiance of his face reflecting the splendor of the Divine Presence".

The prophet, Yishaya says,¹ "May your eyes see your teacher". That is the ultimate influence of your teacher because the inner *kedusha* of the Rebbe is revealed on his face.²

When speaking of his Rebbe, the *Arugas HaBosem*, Father would say that he was the most talented man he had ever met. He had a very beautiful voice, and he was an excellent orator and a man of outstanding brilliance. Father's rebbe never gave *mussar* to any *bochur* and never told any one of his students that he did not understand his teachings. The *bochurim* loved their Rebbe intensely. He showered his *talmidim* with an abundance of love and affection often referring to them as *kinderlach teiere*. The boys responded to him in kind.

They wished to please him and make him proud of them. When they learned in the *Bais Medrosh*, there was a tremendous wave of noise and excitement as they engaged in the *milchamto* shel Torah.

1) *Yishaya* 30, 20

2) see *Maseches Eruvin* 13B

The Rebbe encouraged them to express themselves and to share in the loud discussions. It was euphonic to him to have his students challenge him even in the midst of a *shiur*. Therefore, each *talmid* experienced joy and excitement as he learned. This encouraged each one to aspire to greater heights and accomplishments in his acquisition of Torah knowledge. Thus every *talmid* was motivated to achieve the maximum in his level of learning.

I heard a similar story told about Horav Eliezer Gordon, Rosh Yeshiva of Telz, who gave a general *shiur* to all five levels of the yeshiva one day a week. It was considered a day of battle for the sake of Torah, when they would furiously debate

the topic with the Rosh Yeshiva. One day, all the students decided not to challenge the Rosh Yeshiva and not to interrupt the *shiur*. After a very short while of lecturing without response, Rav Gordon announced that he would not give his *shiur* in a cemetery and left the *bimah*!¹

Father also learned for a number of years in the yeshiva of Rav Yosef Tzvi Duschinsky, in Galanta, Hungary, who later became the Chief Rabbi of the Eida Hachareidis in Yerusholayim after Rav Sonnenfeld. Rav Duschinsky's methods were entirely different, but there, too, the level of learning was very high.

*Father's Rebbe, Rav Yosef Tzvi
Duschinsky of Galanta, later
Yerusholayim*

1) *The World That Was: Lithuania*, by Rabbi Yitzchok Kasnett

Rav Duschinsky headed his yeshiva in Galanta for close to thirty years teaching, literally, thousands of talmidim. He kept a rigorous schedule for approximately ten hours a day. Besides his intensive shiurim in Shas, Rav Duschinsky also delivered regular classes in *poroshas hashovuah* with the commentaries of Rashi and Ramban, *neviim* and *sifrei mussar* such as *Chovos Halevovos* and *Shulchan Oruch* with the Mogain Avrohom. Until well into old age, Rav Duschinsky always gave his *shiurim* while standing.

Later, when he became the Rav of Chust which was home to one of the most prestigious *kehillos*, the yeshiva also transferred from Galanta to Chust where it grew and flourished.



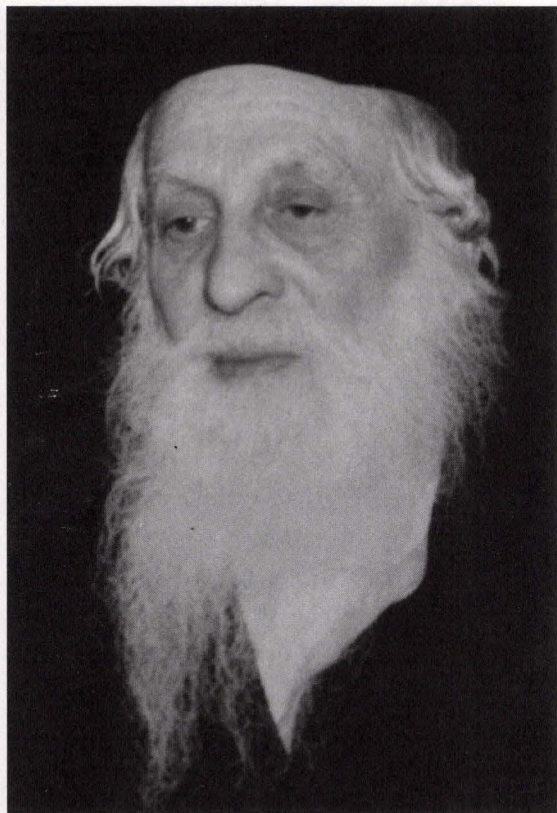
Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld,
Chief Rav of the Eida Hachareidis
of Yerushalayim

In Adar, 1932, Rav Duschinsky made a visit to the Holy Land where he familiarized himself with all the yeshivos and the *gedolei hador*. Now it was time to pay a visit to the Chief Rabbi, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. On that very day, Rav Sonnenfeld became very ill and took to his bed. Nevertheless, Rav Duschinsky came to visit the sage.

When Rav Sonnenfeld was told that his visitor had arrived, he stood up from his bed with great effort, to greet his illustrious guest. He could not control his trembling and had to be put back in bed. His last words were, "The Rav of Chust should stay here", and with that he expired. The last words of the Tzaddik constituted his last will, that Rav Duschinsky should be his successor as the Chief Rabbi of the *Eida Hachareidis* of Yerushalayim and Eretz Yisroel.

Father, also spent some time in the yeshiva of Berzhan, Eastern Galicia, home of the Maharsham, Harav Sholom Mordechai Schwadron. The Maharsham was a genius! The Chofetz Chaim said of him that he was the only person in his time, familiar with every aspect of *Shas*. When Father came to Berzhan, the Maharsham was quite old. Still, he benefited from the experience of having known him.

Father's Rebbes were angels in human garb who propagated *Toras Hashem* to their numerous Talmidim, Father being one of them. He



Father, at approximately 80 years of age

was in awe of his Rebbes whose influence had a profound effect on him throughout his life.

Not only did Father protect his eyes from impurities. He followed the same practice regarding his speech, adhering to the dictum of Chazal that one should never allow an unrefined word to emanate from his mouth.

When he would have to discuss a sensitive issue which concerned a person's personal behavior, Father would say it in a guarded manner adding — “*es pahst mir nisht tzu zugen*”, (it's not fitting for me to say it outright). When discussing matters of public

behavior when the genders were not separated properly, he would describe the situation as a mixture of “*lukshin mit bebbalach*”, (“noodles and beans”). Father would remind his daughters to arrange their skirts properly saying, “*Der Montag is lenger vee der Dienstag*”, (In other words, your slip is showing!)

The Kosnos Ohr on *Parshas Shemini*¹ quotes Chazal in *Maseches Pesochim* (Daf 1), that one who speaks a *loshon of taharah* and never uses an expression of *tumoh*, will merit to be a *moreh horoah* — a Rav B'Yisroel. This proved true of Father who was extremely careful to use only a *loshon nekiyoh* to express himself.

As worldly as he was, Father could not make peace with the low moral standards of the world at large. Even as an old man, being in

1) Chapter 10, verse 11

the nursing home, observing the care given to the patients, (which did not apply to him personally because he was taken care of by family members and others hired, by them, to attend to his needs.) he could not acclimate himself to usual practices.

Father once remarked to me, in amazement, “Can you believe that here in the Home, a woman gives a man a bath?!” What is a regular daily practice in a health care facility was shocking to him. The immoral ways of a decadent society were totally foreign and unacceptable. His pure soul could not tolerate it.

Father’s purity of soul had an effect on his entire being. People would say that he had a *heilige tzuroh* — a holy face. He would never consciously allow his picture to be taken. Fortunately for us, there are some pictures of Father taken without his knowledge. Let his descendants look at them and be impressed. For me this is not necessary for his *demus diyukno* is always before me.



My grandmother, Miriam Bibelman Teichner with her four youngest children: Left to right: Tante Leah, Father, Bobba (with her first grandchild on her lap), Uncle Sheya Volf, Tante Rosie (Vienna, circa 1907)



Father, sitting at extreme right, at the chasuna of Horav Shalom Ginsberg



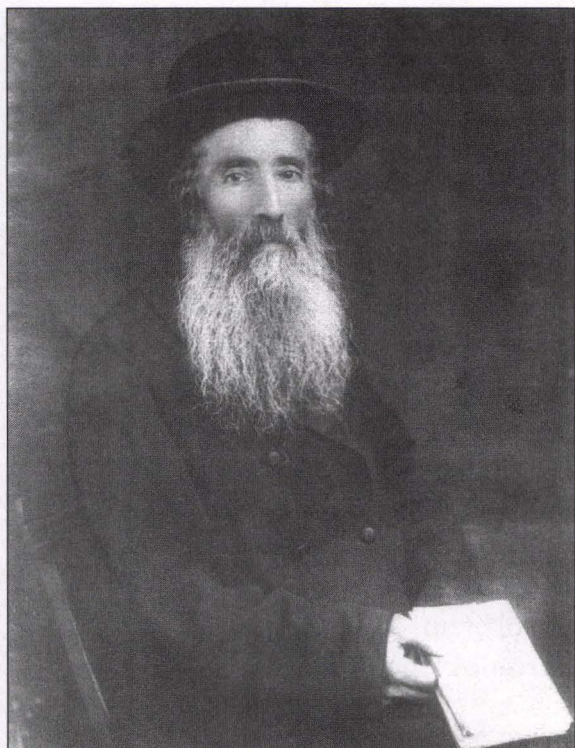
*The last Simcha Father attended: The chasuna of Shmuel Zanvil Steinhart.
At Father's left sits Harav Aharon Teitelbaum, the Chenskovitzer Rav*

CHAPTER NINE

Rimilov

MY MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS lived in Rimilov for generations. The Zaida, R' Duvid Kanner, arrived there at the tender age of eighteen (circa 1870), having been taken across the Bug River on the back of a

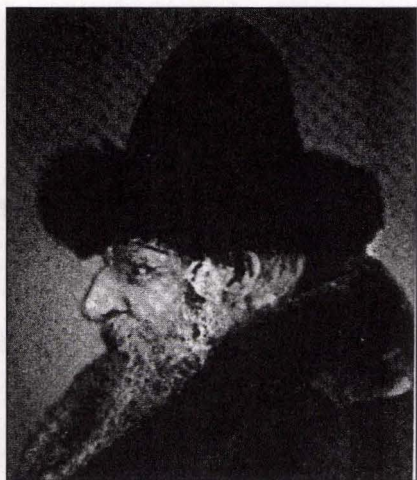
man who had been hired to smuggle him across the Russian/Galician border. He had run away from his hometown, Lyubar, in the Ukraine, because he was going to be imminently drafted into the Russian army. Being drafted in the nineteenth century meant spending twenty-five years away from family and friends and being coerced into rejecting anything connected with *Yiddishkeit*. There would be no Shabbos and no *kashrus*. The company in the army was comprised of rough and tough



My Grandfather, Reb Duvid Kanner of Rimilov

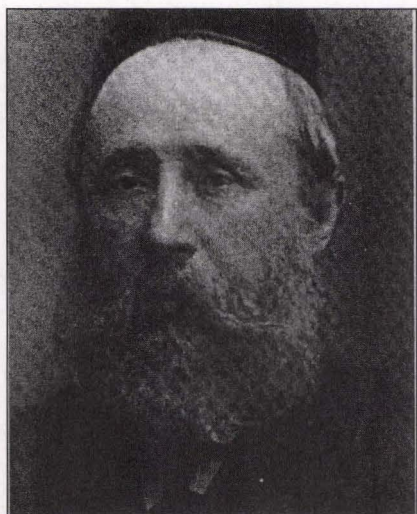
gentiles who would treat Jews with hatred and violence, sometimes forcing them to convert.

The Zaida's parents urged him to escape, for they had, unfortunately, already lost a few sons who were conscripted and had never returned. Zaida took their advice, thereby being forced to sever all his ties with his loved ones, forever.



*The Chortkover Rebbe,
Admor R' Dovid Moishe Friedman*

Many people have asked us about Kanner relatives, but we have no answers, since the Zaida ran away so early in his youth. We do know that he was descended from the Maharsha and from the holy Maggid of Skuhl and that his family were ardent followers of the Rebbe Reb Itzikel of Skver, the founder of the Skverer dynasty who was one of the eight sons of Harav Mordechai, the Maggid of Chernobel. He never discussed anything about his past with his children, for he feared that it might lead to his being found out by the authorities.



*The Husyatiner Rebbe,
Admor R' Yisroel Friedman*

When he arrived safely on the other side of the river, which was the easternmost area of Galicia, the Zaida found himself friendless and forlorn, not knowing where to turn, nor what to do. Being a *chossid*, he decided that the best way for him now, was to ask the advice of a great Rebbe. He proceeded to Chortkov, which was in that vicinity, to consult with the Rebbe, Reb Dovid Moishe (1827-1904). The Tzaddik was a son of Rebbe Yisroel of Rizhin and his Rebbetzin, the daughter of Rebbe Aron of Chernobel.

Chortkov was not far from Tarnopol, as was the town, Rimilov. Its existence dated back hundreds of years. The town of Chortkov steadily grew in population, and the Jews were in the majority. The Rebbe moved there in 1867, shortly before the Zaida arrived there as a young boy of eighteen.

The Chortkover Rebbe was a nephew, by marriage, of Zaida's Rebbe, Reb Itzikl of Skver¹. Therefore, the Zaida felt confident in seeking his sage advice and his blessing.

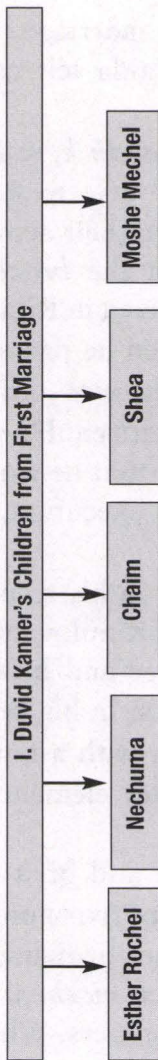
The Rebbe told Zaida the following, "*Fuhr arein kein Rimilov un ver dort chazen, dee vest hooben nesias chain*" (Go to Rimilov and take the position as cantor; you will find favor in their eyes) — and so it was. Zaida arrived in Rimilov armed with the *brochob* of the *Tzaddik* and was accepted for the position. He lived in Rimilov for the rest of his life until the age of seventy-nine when he passed away on the fifth of Teves, 5691 (1931). All his years, he was an illegal alien never being able to become an Austrian/Polish citizen. He was always apprehensive when he saw a policeman, fearing that he would be sent back to the Ukraine to face the music, probably execution, for deserting his country and not serving in its army.

Zaida had a very hard life. He was gratified in his respected position having a close relationship with the Rav of Rimilov, HaRav Yitzchok Weidenfeld, son of Reb Yaikele Rimilover and brother of the Dombrover and Tchebiner Rabbonim. However, in his personal life, tragedy struck. His first wife died, leaving him with a family of five young children. His *yiras shomayim* was the key element in helping him overcome his numerous difficulties.

Bobba, Tzertel (Lenchitz) Kanner, was born and bred in Rimilov and lived there all her life. Her father, Reb Avrohom Yitzchok Lenchitz, was a *Gemorra melamed*. Grandmother, growing up in such a home frequently used the expression, "*Is doch mashma*" ("so that means")! She married and gave birth to two daughters. When the children were very young, an epidemic broke out wherein she lost her young husband and one child. Bobba was only in her twenties at the time. It is told that when her husband died, the older child said to her mother, "Mama, don't cry too much, it might bring another tragedy

1) Reb Itzikl of Skver was a brother of Reb Aharon of Chernobel.

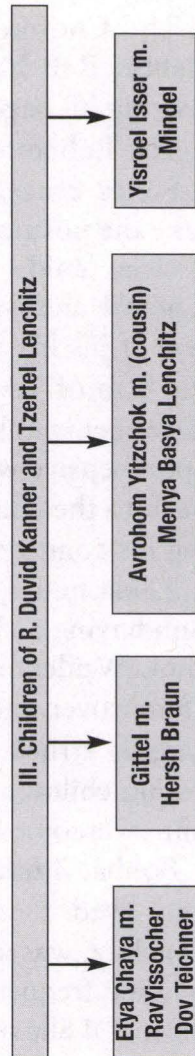
Family of Tzertel Kanner (nee Lenchitz) and R' Duvid Kanner of Rimilov



They and their spouses and families all perished in WWII



They and their family all perished in WWII



All came to America and established families

in its wake". That is what actually occurred. One of the little girls passed away soon after. Now the Bobba was left a young widow with her little girl, Menya Basya.

Not too long after that, the Zaida, Reb David, married the Bobba. Theirs was a blissful marriage which produced four children, the oldest being my Mother followed by Tante Gittel and their two brothers, Avrohom Yitzchok (who later became my father in-law) and Yisroel Isser.

All the children, "yours, mine and ours" were very loving towards one another. Growing up in a home filled with warmth and affection fostered the closeness of all the siblings.

The Zaida was an especially loving father. Even when a child would misbehave, the worst admonishment he could expect from his father was his taking hold of his lapels, shaking him back and forth and Zaida proclaiming, "*Na dir achtzig gute yohr!*" (Take 80 good years!) So even when he was angry or annoyed, all he could do was bless them.

Mother must have acquired this lofty habit from her father, of always blessing her children. Both Mother and Father, upon noticing any good deed by their children, would react with *brochos* upon us. They would say one of the following; "*Ah leben oif dir!*" or "*Leben zolst dee!*", or, "*Ah leben oif dein kop!*" If any of the children would be frightened by a dog, or for any other reason, mother would automatically respond, "*G-tt is mit dir!*" You can imagine what encouragement and love we felt every time anything happened in our lives to cause Mother and Father to express themselves in this manner.

Mother told me that her father always blessed his children that they should have "*chein*". I did not fully understand this *brochob* until I recently read the following article in the *Hamodia*; December 9/04.

SEFER AHAVAS CHESSED

PART II CHAPTER XII

Heaven holds a blessing that everyone wants, yet it is possibly the most elusive of blessings. If a person wishes to have the blessing of wealth, he can enter a profession or start a business to open up a channel through which money can flow. If a person wishes to become a scholar, he can put his time into learning. If he wants the blessing of children, he can get married and establish a household. There is almost always some groundwork a person can lay to draw a blessing

into his life. One exception to this is the blessing of chein, which means “grace.” A person with chein has a pleasantness about him that makes him likable. People respond to him with warmth. They enjoy his presence and seek his company. Chein turns a person’s life into a long series of wonderful, happy encounters, yet one cannot bring this attribute upon oneself. In fact, it is often the case, that the harder a person tries to curry favor with others, the less he is liked.

This precious quality of chein is represented by the letter ches. From the previous letter, zayin, for zon, one learns that Hashem takes care of material needs of those who study Torah and help the needy. Now, through the letter ches, one is assured that emotional needs will also be met. Unlike zon, which might mistakenly be thought to emanate from man’s efforts, chein is clearly a gift of Heaven. The person blessed with chein experiences life completely differently from those who lack this blessing. His life is filled with joy and friendship rather than loneliness and strife, yet it is almost impossible to define what this person has that others do not. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch points out that the root of the word chein is also the root for the word chinam, which means “nothing”. Often there is no clear reason why a person is liked, except that he has received a special Divine blessing. While it is true that a person cannot force others to like him, he can increase his own allotment of chein, through the proper mix of Torah study and acts of kindness.

Even among small children, it becomes immediately apparent that some of them have “got it” and others do not. One 6-year-old marveled that his friend, the most popular boy in the class, went on to become the most popular boy in day camp as well, even among a completely different group of children. “Nobody told them that they were supposed to like him,” the child told his father. “They just did.” In truth, however, Hashem “told them” to like the child. Whether child, adolescent, adult or elder, the warmth and friendship of others is a life-sustaining gift and it need not be elusive. One can reach for this gift, grasp it and enjoy it for a lifetime, simply by embracing the trait of kindness.¹

1) The sefer *Ahavas Chessed* was compiled from the shiurim of Rabbi Fischel Schacter, written by Chana Nussbaum. Taken from *Chofetz Chaim: Loving Kindness — Daily Lessons in the Power of Giving*, a project of Mesorah Publications and the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation.

THE POPULATION OF RIMILOV 1765-1931

YEAR	GENTILE POPULATION	JEWISH POPULATION
1765	?	693
1843	3626	1729
1880	4,329	2931
1890	4472	2977
1900	4170	2700
1910	3930	2435
1921	2748	1494
1931	?	1550

Incidentally, Shea, Zaida's son from his first marriage, married Basya, the Bobba's daughter. All of the children from their first marriages married and had families. Only Esther Rochel, the Zaida's first child, was not blessed with children. She was very bright and talented. Before her marriage, she was the private teacher of the daughters of the Rebbe Reb Yisroel of Husyatin (1858-1949).

The holocaust put an abrupt end to the lives of most members of the family, they and their spouses and all their children. The only ones who were spared were the four children of the second marriage. They had all left for New York and Montreal in the 1920's. Of the rest of the family, not a single member survived.

Luckily, my grandparents both died a natural death, the Zaida, as mentioned, at a ripe old age, by the standards of his time, on the fifth of Teves, 1931, and the Bobba, only thirty days later on the eighth of Shevat. She was ten years his junior. Fortunately, they passed away before the holocaust and did not have to suffer the agonies which befell their precious children.

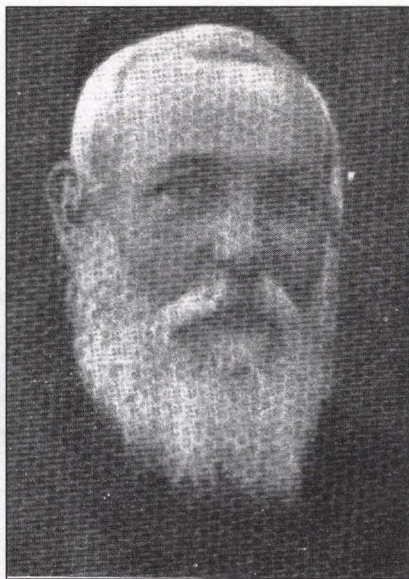
Rimilov was a tiny *shtetl*. Tarnopol, the home of the *Minchas Chinuch*, was the nearest large city. The Jewish community of Rimilov was founded around the beginning of the eighteenth century. Some people think that Rimilov already existed during the fifteenth century, but actual proof of its existence is available only from the eigh-

teenth century and on. The Jews were among the founders of the town. At the end of the nineteenth century — about the time when Mother was born (1896), the Jews made up sixty per cent of the population. Only about seven or eight hundred Jewish families lived in Rimilov during the tenure of Rav Yakele, (*Kochav MiYaakov*) Weidenfeld, which was during the second half of the nineteenth century until 1894.

Rav Yakele was the son of Rav Eliezer of Strye who was an ardent follower of the Rebbeim Reb Moishe Leib Sassover and the Chozeh of Lublin and was one of the significant chassidim of the Rizhiner. He was a very holy man who would learn through the night without resting at all. In his old age, he was blessed with a son, Reb Yakele, who was a genius. Rav Yakele became the Rav of Rimilov. Even though the town was very small, it became a shining star on the map of Poland because of the outstanding reputation of its Rav.

Rav Yakele was born in Stanislow, Poland (1839). He was one of the youngest talmidim of his Rebbe, HaRav Meshulom Yissochor ben Reb Aryeh Halevi Horowitz who authored the *sefer Bar Livoi*. Harav Horowitz gave Reb Yakele *semicha* when he was only fourteen years old! The great Rebbes and Rabbonim of his generation marveled at Reb Yakele's genius. The *Minchas Chiniuch*, HaRav Babad, of Tarnopol, exclaimed about him — quoting the *possuk* — “*Dorach Kochov MiYaakov*”¹. The *Bais Shlomo*, who sat with him at several *Dinei Torah* said of Rav Yakele that he resembled Rabbi Yonoson Eibenschutz. The Sanzer Tzaddik, Rebbe Chaim Halberstam, once stayed up the entire night with Rav Yakele, discussing *divrei Torah*.

A story was told to me by my brother-in-law, Rav Sholom Ginsberg of Los Angeles. It filtered down to him, having originated from Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach who heard it from the Tchebiner Rav. The Tchebiner Rav was the youngest son of Rav Yakele Rimilover. When his father was a very young man and on a visit to the Sanzer Tzaddik, they were in the Bais Medrosh being *mefalpel* on matters of the Gemorah. The Sanzer tzaddik told Reb Yakele — “Come into my private room — I'll show you that I am right.” Reb Yakele followed the Tzaddik into his room and together they studied the matter. Reb Yakele observed that wherever the *Sanzer Tzaddik* pointed, a light emanated from his finger! That is why he wanted to learn with him in private, so that no one should observe that holy light!



Rav Yitzchok Weidenfeld of Rimilov



Rav Nochum Weidenfeld of Dombrova

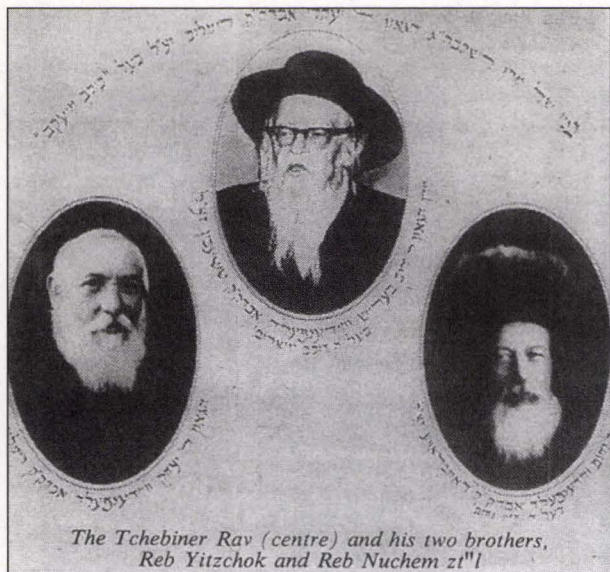


Rav Dov Berish Weidenfeld of Tchebin

At the tender age of twenty-four, Rav Yakele became the Rav of Rimilov. His diligence was most unusual. He frequently learned all night with his sons and never wasted a minute. Even when the Kaiser came to his city, he did not spend much time in order to see him. Rav Yakele possessed wonderful characteristics and was extremely humble. He was beloved by all, young and old, as well as by the great Torah giants of his time.

Rav Yakele authored tens of thousand of responsa. Unfortunately, most of his manuscripts were consumed by fire at the beginning of the first World War. Only a small amount remained which were published by his sons under the name *Kochov miYaakov*.

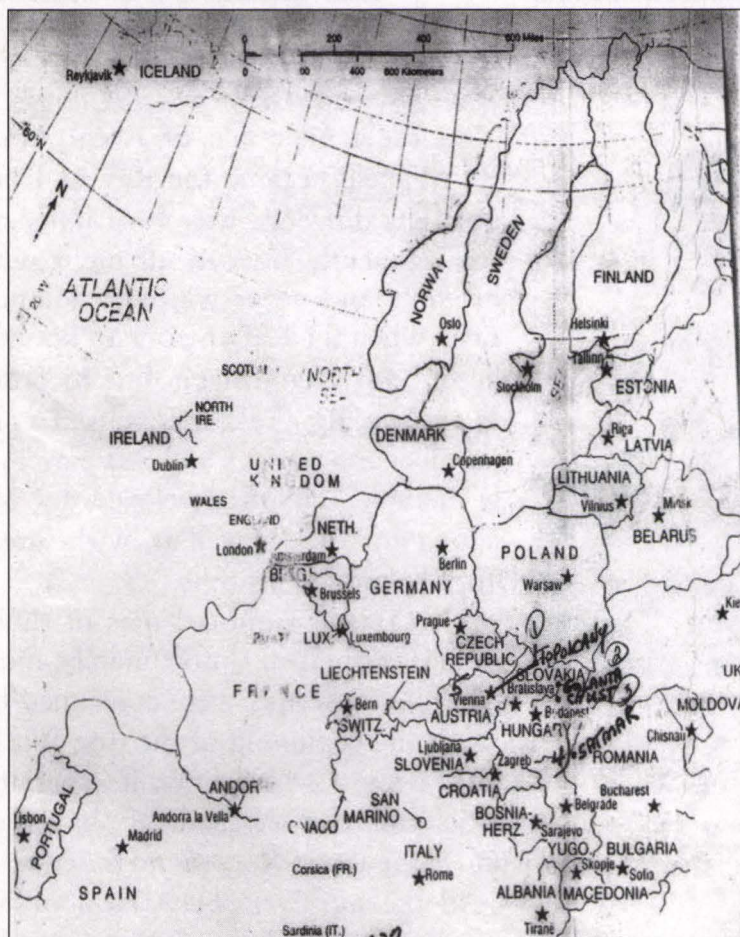
All the *talmidei chachomim* of his time, and even later, attested to the



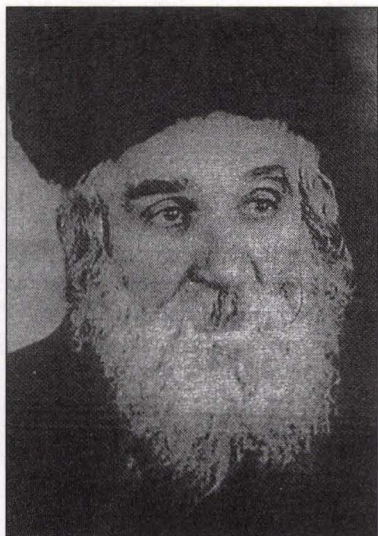
The Tchebiner Rav (centre) and his two brothers, Reb Yitzchok and Reb Nuchem zt"l



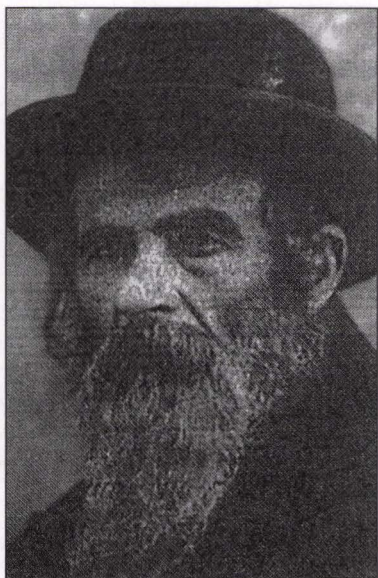
The Tchebiner Yeshiva, Yerusholayim



1. Topolcany
 2. Galanta
 3. Chust
 4. Satmar
 5. Vienna
- (1-4: Cities where Father learned in Yeshiva)



The Maharsham of Berzhan, Poland (Galicia), The Rebbe of Rav Meir Arik



*Rav Meir Arik,
Rav of Tarnow and Butchach*

fact that the *sefer* was a work of genius. The Steipler Gaon of Bnai Brak owned this *sefer*. He bought it at a low price from a seforim store in Tel Aviv. However, he never used it. Once he explained the reason for this. He was under the impression that the seller did not understand the value of the *sefer* and therefore did not ask the right price for it¹. How could he use it, then, not having paid what it was worth?

Besides Rav Yakele Rimilover, also his sons were three of the most prominent Rabbonim of their time.

The Zaida, Reb Duvid Kanner, arrived in Rimilov at about 1870, when the Rav was a very young man and his sons tiny children. He lived long enough to be the *chazon* in Rimilov during the tenure of Rav Yitzchok, his father's successor. A number of years back, I had the good fortune to meet an elderly lady, a Mrs. Aschkenasy, who lived on the Upper West Side. Mrs. Aschkenasy was the daughter of Rav Yitzchok Weidenfeld, Rav of Rimilov. Mrs. Aschkenasy told me that she remembered my Zaida very well, since he often came to the house of her father, Rav Yitzchok.

Rav Yitzchok was the oldest of the brothers, and therefore he was the successor to his father's rabbinical position².

1) *Sefer Tallelai Oros*

2) Rav Yakele had six children. The oldest daughter, Chana Mattel, was the wife of Rav Yaakov Mendel Rubin, Rav of Toste, Galicia. The second daughter, Yittel, married Rav Eliezer Weinberger. The third child was Rav Yitzchok the fourth Rav Nachum who authored *Shaalos U'Teshuvos Chazon Nochum*. The fifth child, Leah, married Reb Shraga Feivel Turkel, and the youngest was Rav Dov Berish of Tchebin.

[illegible]

מאיר אראם
אבדיק
סארנא.

[illegible]

His brother, Rav Nochum Weidenfeld was the Rav of Dombrova and Rav Berish was the Rav of Tchebin. He was the only one to survive the war.

All three brothers were great and holy men who figured prominently in the Torah world because of their genius and their noble bearing, their outstanding characters and their unusual modesty. It was to be expected that they would rise to greatness not only because of the traits which they had inherited from their unusual father, but also because of their mother, Rebetzen Rochel, who was the brilliant daughter of Rav Shabsi Hakohen Rapaport, Rav of Dombrova, Galicia, a direct descendent of the Shach and the Ramoh. Many were the words of wit and sharp humor for which she was famous. It was a known fact that the Rebetzin was very familiar with *Gemorrhah* and *Tosfos*. No wonder then, that she merited such sons.

When her father, the Rav of Dombrova was *niftor*, her second son, Rav Nochum, became his successor at the young age of twenty-three. He sat on this rabbinical throne for forty-three years when the city was destroyed by the Nazis. Over the years, Rav Nachum had many offers for the position of Rav in a number of significant *kehillos*, but he chose to remain within the small *kehillah* which he loved so much.

During World War II, even though he succeeded in crossing the Russian border, he expired as the result of a heart attack that came because of the oppression which he suffered earlier at the hands of the Nazi beasts. They threw his *tefillin* to the ground. Rav Nachum stooped silently and retrieved them only to have them thrown down again and again. He could not bear these acts of desecration, and heartbroken, he met his tragic end soon after.

Rav Berish Weidenfeld, youngest of the three illustrious brothers, was the only one to survive the war after having suffered countless trials and tribulations in Siberia. He lived until a ripe old age, a highly respected and beloved leader of Klal Yisroel, the founder and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Kochav MiYaakov, the famous Tchebiner Yeshiva in Yerusholayim.

Besides the Rabbonim Weidenfeld, Rimilov was also the birthplace of other Torah giants, among them Rav Meir Arik (1855-1926), who later became the Rav of Butchatch, Galacia and subsequently Rav of Tarnow, Galicia. He was considered the *Posek Hador*. His brother, Rav Fishel Arik, also figured prominently in the Torah world. Their moth-

er used to say, “*Nisht in yeder gurten vaksen azelicha meirin*” (not in every garden do such *meirin* (carrots) grow, and “*nisht in yeder vasser shivimmen azelecha fishelich*,” (not in every [body of] water do such *fishelich* swim). This was alluding to the greatness of both her sons.

Rabbi Fishel Arik, (1855-1928), son of Reb Aron Yehuda of Rimilov was a talmid of Reb Yakele of Rimilov. He was a *gaon*, proficient in *Shas* and *Poskim* quoting by heart, all his learning as if he were reading from an open book!

His brother, Rav Meir Arik, (1852-1926), was also a talmid of Rav Yakele (Rimilover) Weidenfeld and also of the Maharsham. He received *semichah* from both his Rabbeim. He was remarkably diligent in his studies, and remained so for all the years of his tenure as the Rav of various *kehillos*.

Eventually, Rav Meir Arik became the Rav of the city of Batchooch in Poland. The Maharsham considered him to be his spiritual heir as the *Posek Hador*. Two of Rav Meir Arik's most famous talmidim were the well-known Rav Meir Schapiro of Lublin and Rav Yekusiel Yehuda Halberstam, the Klausenberger Rebbe. In 1914, Rav Arik fled the battlefields of the Great War and settled in Vienna. During his flight, Rav Arik lost five thick volumes of his responsa. That loss caused him tremendous sorrow.

At the end of World War I, he was appointed Rav of Tarnow, Poland, a very large and significant Jewish metropolis. Nevertheless, until the end of his days and beyond, he was referred to as the Rav of Batchooch — after his previous rabbinical position. After his demise, there was never any replacement found for the rabbinate of Tarnow.

Rav Meir and Rav Fishel Arik were the sons of Reb Ahron Yehuda Arik who descended from the Bach and the Taz. He was a wealthy merchant who lived in Rimilov. Obviously, Torah learning was the most important thing in his life, for he merited the tremendous *z'chus* of having sons who were outstanding *talmidei chachomim*.

Rimilov was a beautiful town which also served as a summer resort. It had a great abundance of lilac trees, many parks and beautiful avenues. Rimilov was also famous for its magnificent Shul. People came from far and wide to see it. Its ceiling resembled the heavens, and the lions and other creatures painted on the walls were life-like. Imagine though, that the Shul was not heated! In the freezing, below-zero weather of the Polish winters, there was absolutely no heat.

Returning from his first trip to America, Father was invited to speak in the Great Shul of Rimilov. The people flocked to the Shul to listen to the *Amerikaner Rav* as they referred to him.

I recently read a description of the old Belzer Shul in the city of Belz. It was said that it is not permissible to build an oven in a Shul. The Sar Shalom of Belz, however left a place open for a chimney in the ceiling of his Shul, for when *Moshiach* comes, this rule would not apply. Perhaps now we can understand why there was no heating system in the Shul in Rimilov as well.

Incidentally, Father was a *chossid* of the Rebbe Reb Yissocher Dov of Belz. He would tell us stories of his experiences in Belz. Father described what he called "*die kneppalach*" on the roof of the shul. They were round copper balls which decorated the roof of the magnificent Shul of Belz. When the sun shone upon them, the balls seemed to be made of pure gold. Father told us that while traveling on the train towards Belz, the beautiful *Shul* could be seen from afar, and the gleaming balls of copper were distinctly visible. That sight added to the excitement of the multitudes that were making the pilgrimage to celebrate the *yomim tovim* with their Rebbe.

The new Belzer *Shul* in *Yerushalayim* which is, in fact a replica of the original Shul in Belz, also has *kneppalach* on the roof, though they are made of white stone.

In his stories about Belz, Father told us that once he was in Belz on *Taanis Esther*. After *davening Shacharis*, everyone lined up. The Rebbe, Reb Yissocher Dov, went past the line in a slow pace instructing each *chossid* whether to fast or not, saying to him, "*Dee zolst fasten*" — (You should fast), and to another, "*Dee zolst nisht fasten*", (You should not fast). Perhaps he was looking into their eyes and came to each decision, individually.

It is possible that the Rebbe based his decision on that which is mentioned in the *Kitzur Shulchon Oruch*¹ where it states that on *Taanis Esther*, "one may ease up on the fast if necessary, even if he has a minor problem with his eyes". This difficulty is not to be taken lightly.

My brother, R' Moishe, explained this to me. He told me that the eyes have a significant bearing on the condition of the heart as is men-

1) Siman 141, paragraph 2



*The famous shul in Belz, built like a fortress.
Note the Kneppelach—the copper balls—on the top of the battlements*

tioned in *Maseches Avodah Zorah*,¹ He points out that our late brother in-law, Rav Gedalia Felder ז"ל discusses this in his sefer, *Yesodei Yeshurun*² under the heading, *Chilul Shabbos Bishvil Sakonas Aiver*. He says that any problem of the eye could be dangerous to the heart.

This phenomenon, that of the heart being affected by the eyes, is relatively new in the field of opthamology but known to our sages for thousands of years!

Father spent his last Shabbos in Europe in Belz. When he left Rimilov, he traveled to Lemberg where he would take the train to Belz. All of a sudden, Mother's first cousin, Moishe Aron Lenchitz, appeared on the scene! He had received word that Father would be arriving at the railroad station in Lemberg where Moishe Aron lived. He used all his powers of persuasion to convince Father to spend the Shabbos in

1) Page 28, side 2

2) Volume 4, page 253



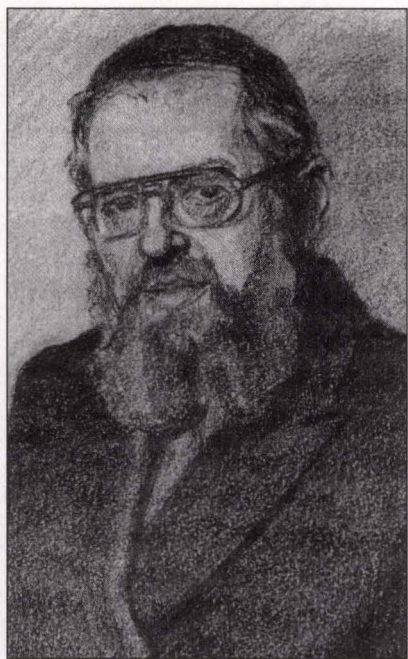
*The Rebbe, R' Yehoshua
(R'Sheyale) of Belz*



The Rebbe, R' Yissochor Dov of Belz



The Rebbe R' Aharon of Belz



My brother-in-law, Harav Gedalia Felder, of Toronto, Canada, author of many seforim on Halacha—*Yesodei Yesburun* in six volumes, etc.

his home, but to no avail. Father's mind was made up — the last Shabbos in Europe was to be spent in Belz!

Father needed the *chizuk* which he would receive there to face the future spiritual challenges which he would encounter in the America of the 1920's. For the mid-day Shabbos meal, he was the guest of the Rebbe's son, Rebbe Aharon, who later succeeded his father as the Rebbe of Belz. Rebbe Aharon walked Father all the way out when he left. The warm feeling that Father experienced then was clearly remembered throughout the years, and he often spoke of it. Here we can see, as stated in the *Sefer Ahavas Chessed* by the Chofetz Chaim, that by escorting a guest out the door and on his way, according to

the Rambam, the person is performing an act of kindness whose reward surpasses that of every other form of *chesed*. The send-off the person receives from his host creates a lasting impression on the guest. Therefore, the act of escorting a guest even four *amos* (about eight feet) carries tremendous reward.

Kabboloh teaches that when a person escorts someone, part of his presence accompanies the traveler as he continues on his way. The Alter of Navardok explained that a friendly send-off provides a person with a sense of well-being. The send-off which the Rebbe of Belz bestowed upon Father served as an elixir of substance to provide him with strength and courage for the future years in America.

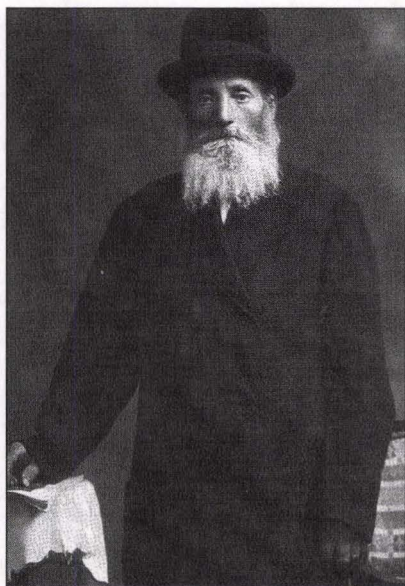
Rimilov was within walking distance of the city of Podvolochisk which was, at that time, the border-crossing point between Russia (Ukraine) and Eastern Galicia. Grandmother's brother, the "*Feter Shloime*" (Lenchitz) as mother referred to him, lived there. He was married to Hinda Brochoh Pomerantz who became his wife when she was only fourteen years old.

Grandmother's sister, Chaya Freyda (Lenchitz) also lived in Rimilov with her husband, Reb Gedalya Mager. Both of these couples were *Mechutonim* Feter Shloime's son, Moishe Aron Lenchitz married Chaya Freyda's daughter, Sorah Rivka Mager. Their first child, Menya Basya, later married Avrohom Yitzchok Kanner (Tzertel's son). Thus, all the siblings were *mechutonim*.¹

Dear Reader, do not be confused about the various Menya Basyas:

- 1) The daughter of our Bobba Tzertel who was the child of her first marriage later married Shea Kanner (Zaida Reb Dovid Kanner's son from his first marriage.)
- 2) The daughter of Feter Shloime Lenchitz who later married her cousin, Yisroel Mager of Rimilov.
- 3) The daughter of Moishe Aron and Sorah Rivka Lenchitz. (she was my mother in-law).

In order to differentiate among them in the family, the first Menya Basya was referred to simply as Basya. The second was called, "*di*



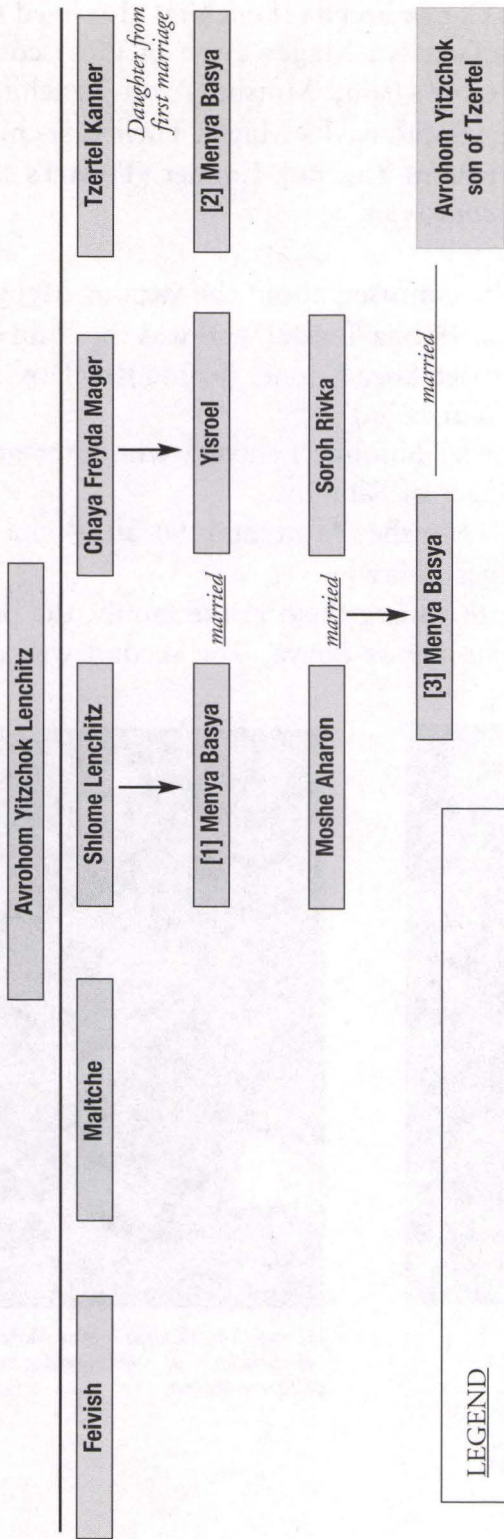
Feter (Uncle) Gedalya Mager of Rimilov, brother-in-law of R'David Kanner



Meema (Aunt) Chaya Freyda Mager (nee Lenchitz) of Rimilov, older sister of Tzertel Kanner

1) See diagram

The 3 Menya Basyas in the Family (before WWII)



LEGEND

- [1] Menya Basya, Shloime's daughter, married cousin Yisroel Mager. She was known as "Dee Groise Bashe".
- [2] Menya Basya, known as "Bashe" was Bobba Tzertel's daughter from her first marriage. She married the Zaid's (Duvid Kanner's) son from his first marriage
- [3] Menya Basya, known as "Dee Kleine Bashe" was the granddaughter of both Shloime and Chaya Freyda and the daughter-in-law of Tzertel.



(Feter) Uncle Shloime Lenchitz of Podvolochisk,
brother of Tzertel Kanner of Rimolov and his wife,
Hinda Brochob

groisse Basya” since she was taller, and the third and shortest of the three was known as, “*di kleine Basya*.”

You may have noticed that sometimes the family name is spelled Kanner and at other times Kenner. The name originally was Kanner, but was changed, in America, to Kenner.

The Bobba Kanner had another brother, Feivish, and another sister, Malche. Both of them left Rimilov for Argentina and settled in Buenos Aires soon after their weddings. Except for occasional letters or messages of regards, contact was practically non-existent — typical for those days.

The Yidden of Rimilov, just like those of many other Polish cities, experienced the bitterness of numerous trials and tribulations.

After the first World War, one Semyan Petlura (1879-1926) proclaimed himself commander-in-chief of the Ukranian army declaring the Ukraine an independent state joining the Poles in fighting the Russians. He was later betrayed by the Poles who joined forces with the Bolshoviks. After escaping to Paris, Petlura was assassinated by a Jew who was avenging the deaths of thousands of innocent Jews in Poland among which were members of his own family. This assassin, Simon Schwartzbard, was acquitted by the French court.

Mother was in Vienna during the first World War, stranded for four years, experiencing all kinds of hardships including standing frequently on bread lines all night only to be refused any after all the waiting. She had gone to Vienna to visit her married sister, Nechama Ronnis and her family. That was in 1914, when war broke out. Mother was eighteen years old.

Mother was fortunate to have left Galicia for Vienna at that time. Her family suffered a great deal during the war. The Russian troops invaded the Galician towns along the Russian border. Rimilov was one of those towns. A large number of Jews escaped from that area to

Austria proper and to Hungary. Many chose not to return to their home towns after the war. Among those were leading Chassidic Rebbes. The Rebbes of Sadigura, Chortkov, Husyatin, Boyan and Kopycznitz all decided to remain in Vienna after the war was over.

Mother did return to Rimilov bringing with her all kinds of goods and commodities which helped the family re-establish itself after the horrors of the Great War were over. However, they were not over yet.

The Petluras were members of the terror gang under the influence of the afore-mentioned Semyan Petlura. They were notorious for their on-going attacks on innocent people, especially Jews. Many fell victim to these murderers.

Mother used to tell us the horror stories of the vicious Petluras who entered Rimilov to rob, loot, and murder its innocent victims, most of whom were the Jewish inhabitants of the town.

It was *Tisha B'Av*. Her father was plodding his way home from Shul in his slippers when one of the Petluras suddenly appeared astride his high horse. He dismounted, raised his whip and began beating the Zaida. Even though he was very close to home, Zaida was unable to run because of his being hampered by the loose slippers. He was totally helpless.

Mother happened to look out the window and saw what was transpiring and began screaming on top of her lungs. Her cries of terror were so loud that the horse suddenly panicked. The soldier fearing his horse would run away, gave up his "sport" and pursued his horse.

Zaida lay on the ground motionless, until family members dragged him into the house. Times were so difficult and the hunger so great, that out of desperation, the first thing they did was search the Zaida's pockets, to see if, possibly, he had brought something to eat for after the fast. No wonder then, that Mother could not bear to see any food wasted, ever.

B'chasdei Hashem, Zaida recovered from the beating. After hearing this story from Mother, we used to tease her that her loud voice could even frighten a horse!

Once a *Petlura* soldier entered their house with the intention of looting their belongings. Mother's brother, Yisroel Isser, would not let him open a trunk that contained some of their good things. The soldier struck him on the head with the butt of his revolver. Uncle Yisroel was so frightened, that he began to laugh hysterically. His reaction

was confused. Instead of crying, he laughed. Fortunately, the soldier left the house without killing anyone. This bordered on the miraculous because usually, the paths of those devils were strewn with corpses.

It is difficult to imagine that such occurrences were not unusual in those times. We, who were fortunate to grow up in America, have every reason to be grateful for being spared such vicissitudes of life.

Life, in general, was very difficult in Poland. What we take for granted was to them the height of luxury. Besides the terror of the robbing and the killing, most people lived below poverty level. Galicia had no industry. There was widespread unemployment and a failing economy. Many wonderful people who were astute and ambitious could hardly make ends meet and sometimes went hungry. That is why so many young men and women made their way to America.

Mother would tell us of some close relatives, wonderful people, who would regularly come to them for some flour and other basics in order to be able to make a very simple Shabbos.

Sanitary conditions were also very poor. This caused epidemics of various diseases to break out resulting often in loss of life. Mother contracted typhus when she was a teenager. Both she and her brother, Yisroel, were both victims of this dread disease. Typhus is a terrible sickness.¹ It is accompanied by terribly high fever causing the organs of the body to feel as if they are burning up and the mind as if it is on fire. The patient cannot rest when he is awake or even while unconscious. Most victims die or suffer deafness or blindness. Nevertheless, both Mother and Uncle Yisroel recovered and each of them lived to a ripe old age unaffected by the typhus. When Mother finally awoke from her delirium, her hair was so knotted that her head had to be shaved, but that was the extent of the damage suffered.

In Rimilov, as in many other towns, they lived under extremely primitive conditions having no running water. Mother told of the time, in the middle of the winter, when she had just given birth to my sister, Henna. There was no water in the house. Mother's youngest brother, Yisroel, went out to draw water from the frozen well. When he had finally succeeded in filling up the pail, drop by drop, he joy-

1) This disease is described in *Someday We'll be Free* (Leibel Sanok)

ously hurried home only to slip in front of the door spilling all the water. Being utterly frustrated and disappointed, even though he was already a young man of twenty, he cried bitterly.

If we ever complained as children, Mother would not be understanding. Compared with the hardships they endured in Europe, we had a very easy life. Mother would say to us, "*Kinderlach es geht eich tzee git*". (Children, you have it too good!) Mother never complained about anything. She accepted every difficulty with amicable equanimity. She had complete faith in Hashem. This she learned from her parents and from her experiences in her early life in Rimilov.

Mother would tell of the day she left for America. The entire family accompanied her to the train station enveloped in an aura of a funeral. Her brother, Shea, went up onto the train and refused to leave her until the train was already in motion. He could not bear to part from her. He shared the family's feelings that they would never see each other again, and they never did. Tante Gittle wrote home to her Mother, "If I could only see you even through a *shmoole shpareh* (a thin crack in the wall)!"

My mother in-law, Basya Kenner, would relate how she came to her grandparents, Shloime and Hinda Lenchitz in Podvolochisk, to say good-bye before her departure for America. Her grandfather was drinking coffee, and his tears were dripping into the cup as he was saying to her, "Do you mean to say that I'll never see you again?"

This heartbreaking scene repeated itself again and again as the young people left the *shtetl* never to return.

Fortunately, the four youngest children born in Rimilov, were spared the horrors of the Holocaust as they had left Galicia and immigrated to North America in the 1920's. Uncle Avrohom and Tanta Bashe, who later became my parents in-law, and Uncle Yisroel and Tante Mindel arrived in Canada as they could not get visas to the U.S.A. They remained in Canada for the rest of their long lives. Tante Gittel and Uncle Hersh and Mother and Father came to New York City. They maintained close ties with their brothers by telephone, occasionally, and by frequent correspondence.

Mother crossed the Atlantic to America in the summer of 1927 on the White Star liner, Olympic, built in 1911, just a few months before the completion, also, of the famous Titanic, her sister ship. Both ships were built in the shipyard of Harland and Wolff in Belfast, Ireland.

The design and construction skills of the yard were outstanding. The work force took great pride in the many famous ships that they had built. Harland and Wolff employed six thousand workers, but the number of workers was doubled to cope with the construction and fitting out of both the Olympic and the Titanic. Unfortunately, the Titanic sank to its watery grave while the Olympic, almost identical in size and style to the Titanic, enjoyed long life and usefulness in transporting thousands of people in hundreds of voyages across the Atlantic Ocean for more than twenty years until 1935. Its passenger capacity was 3,500, passengers and crew.

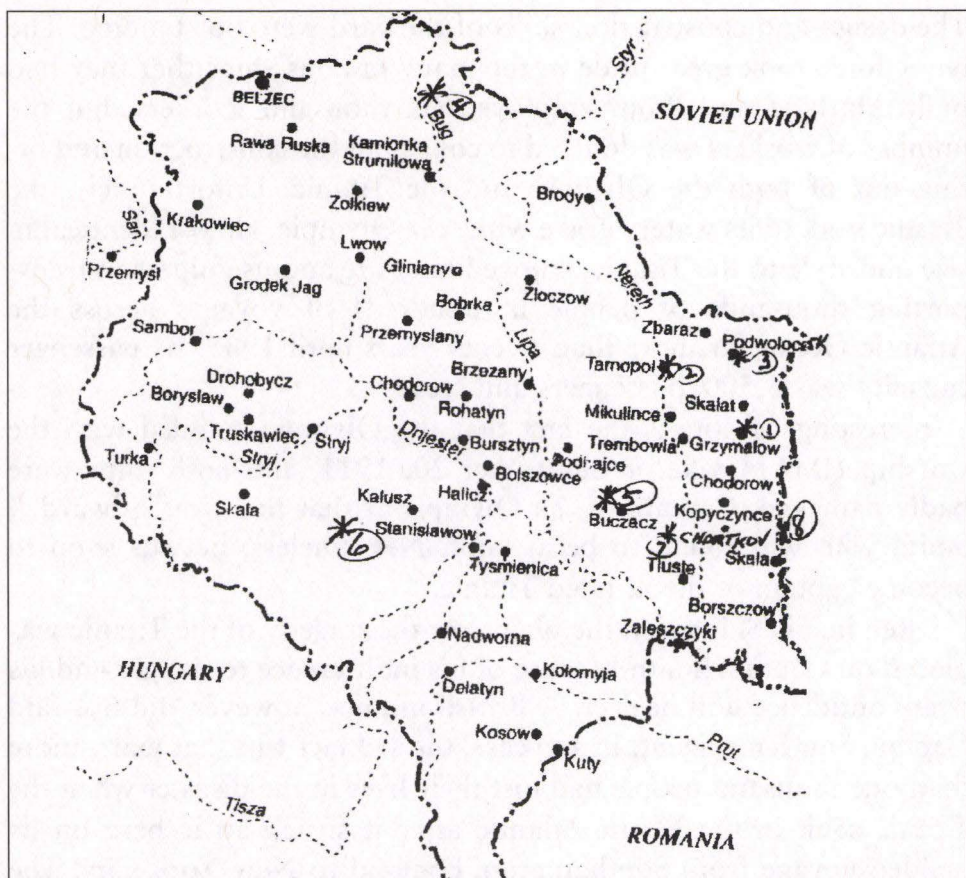
Interesting to note is the fact that the Olympic collided with the warship HMS Hawke on September 20, 1911, and both ships were badly damaged. Captain of the Olympic at that time was Edward J. Smith who was found to be at fault. Nevertheless, he was soon to become captain of the ill-fated Titanic.

Later, in a U.S. inquiry, the blame for the tragedy of the Titanic was placed on Captain Smith because of his indifference to danger and his over confidence and neglect. A British inquiry, however, did not find Captain Smith negligent. In any case, the sad fact was that many more than one thousand people had lost their lives in the disaster when the Titanic sank in the North Atlantic after it struck an iceberg on its maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York City. The date was April 15, 1912.

Mother missed her parents and siblings terribly. It was very difficult for her to deal with her homesickness until a few short years later when both her parents passed on. Then came World War II, and all her loved ones in Rimilov were annihilated.

I often wonder if the town of Rimilov still exists or has it been wiped off the face of the earth? It was known by the Polish name Grzymalow pronounced *Jimahlov*. Its tragic end in Jewish history brought about by the Holocaust terminated a glorious chronicle of centuries of Jewish life. Is it possible that the ancient *Bais Olom* is still standing? Many of our forbears were put to rest there.

So many of our loved ones were brutally slaughtered in Rimilov. They scream out to us from the blood — soaked earth. *Hashem Yinkom Domom*. May Hashem avenge the spilling of their innocent blood.



EASTERN GALICIA

1. **Rimilov** (Grzymalów)
2. **Tarnopol** — the nearest large city (from Rimilov)
3. **Podwolażysk** — walking distance from Rimilov (home of the Feter [Uncle] Shloime)
4. **The Bug** — (pronounced Boog) River. Rimilov was on the border of the Bug River.
5. **Buczacs** (pronounced Bachooch) — Rav Meir Arik identified himself — always as the Bachoocher Rav
6. **Stanislaw** — birthplace of Rav Yakele Rimilover
7. **Chortkov** — Home of he Chortkover Rebbe
8. **Husiatyn** — Home of the Husyatiner Rebbe

CHAPTER TEN

Dinner Time At Home

MY PARENTS WERE ALWAYS VERY PARTICULAR about their children being well-fed and properly nourished even though their financial situation was not an easy one. We had no luxuries of any kind. Nevertheless, delicious food was always available in abundance. We children, therefore, never felt deprived. We looked forward to coming home each day to an enjoyable dinner, and we were never disappointed.

We were always greeted by Mother, upon our arrival home, with a tall glass of freshly-squeezed orange juice (squeezed by hand, of course). The delightful aromas emanating from the kitchen were tantalizing.

Our meals were well-balanced with plenty of fruits and vegetables. East European families, new to American standards of nutrition, hardly served fruits and vegetables. They were not accustomed to that fare from *der alter heim*. It was largely due to Father's credit that we were taught to love all kinds of salads and vegetables, raw and cooked. He always helped to prepare the fruits and vegetables, peeling, cutting, and slicing them, especially so in preparation for Shabbos.

Many years later — when I was already a mother of several children, I remember Father purchasing a pumpkin and bringing it home to Mother saying, “*Ich vais nisht vus m’tit mit dem*”, (“I don’t know what one does with this), but let’s prepare it like other vegetables, cutting it up and steaming it.” (Who ever heard of pumpkin pie?!!)

Mother spent countless hours each day preparing the evening meal which was, at least, a four-course dinner. Of course, everything was made from scratch. Half a grapefruit was usually served first followed by an entree, which we called a *forshpeiz*, of avacodo, chicken salad, or the like, with lettuce and tomato. There was always a delicious soup followed by a main course of chicken or beef accompanied by a salad and side dishes. Dessert consisted of some kind of fruit compote. Later in the evening, cake and tea were served.

The occasional milchige meal consisted of melon, tomato soup, fried flounder, french-fried potatoes, salad, and chocolate pudding for dessert. Sometimes we were treated to mouth-watering cheese kreplach.

Mealtime was most enjoyable because besides the delicacies served, Father always had interesting things to tell; *divrei Torah* and *chasidische maasos* of the Baal Shem Tov and other *tzaddikim*. He was a master story-teller, and we were always fascinated. Father never neglected to compliment Mother for her culinary talents. He would often eat with his eyes closed, and he seemed detached from us then. It was an inspirational experience to be present at Father’s table as we witnessed his *dveikus* and *avodas Hashem*.

Many years later, I happened to take notice of the *Tzetzl Koton* of the Rebbe Reb Elimelech, *zechuso yogein oleinu*, which states that when a person eats, he should have in his mind that, even under the most difficult of circumstances, even if his very life would be threatened, he would be willing to fling himself into a great fire and be consumed by the flames in order to sacrifice his life *Al Kiddush Hashem!*

The Rebbe Reb Melech points out that if a Yid thinks these thoughts at every free moment, or when he is eating, or in similar instances, or during the reciting of *Krias Shema* and during the first brochoh of the *Shemoneh Esrai*, then he is fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem*. He is totally, and correctly, keeping the *mitzvos* of *Krias Shema* and *Shemonah Esrei* with the proper *kavonah*.

As a young child, I would frequently hear Father saying to himself one of the following statements, “*Shechten zich far’n Bashefer*” (to be

slaughtered *al Kiddush Hashem*) or "*Farbrent tzu veren far'n Bashefer*" (to be consumed by fire for the sake of *Hashem*) Father's eyes took on an unusual expression. He seemed to be in another world at those times. Frankly speaking, as a little girl I was somewhat frightened when I heard these words, and I would react-thereby breaking "the spell".

Much much later, I understood all of the above when I chanced upon the *Tzetzl Koton*. I never heard anyone else making such statements. Therefore, I came to realize that Father was, indeed, a *tzaddik*. At first glance it was not so noticeable. Upon closer scrutiny, it became obvious that Father was far from the ordinary type of person he attempted to personify. Rav Nachman Breslover says that, although Eretz Yisroel appears to be like every other land, it is really very awesome in its holiness. The same is true of a *Tzaddik*. He may appear as others do, but his inner being is completely holy and different from the ordinary person.

Shown in the picture (see page 78) is the first part of the *Tzetzl Koton* which contains basic principles of how to work on one's middos to succeed in coming close to Hashem.

Mother went about her duties in the kitchen with utmost love and devotion. Her days were filled with the planning, preparation, and serving of the meals with great joy. Seeing someone enjoying the meal brought her unlimited satisfaction. Her oft-repeated remark was, "*Koiach gefint men in der schissel*", ("One finds energy in the [soup] bowl"). When a child was cranky, she would say, "*Er miz zein hungerik!*" ("He must be hungry!") More often than not, she was right. After a nutritious, delicious snack, the air would usually clear, and the mood totally changed. Mother always packed marvelous lunches for me to take to school. My classmates would, daily, question me about what I brought for lunch since I was the only one with such a widely-varied menu.

In our house, mealtime was "all day" because of each family member's individual schedule. Nevertheless, Mother was a good sport and always made herself available.

There were no machines or short-cuts in Mother's kitchen. Everything was made from scratch and by hand. Father was very particular about the level of *kashrus* in our home and even more so for himself. He did not eat meat in America for twenty-years. Later, when

הצעטיל קטן מרבינו אלימלך מליזענסק

אלה הדברים אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם.

א בכל עת ורגע שהוא פנוי מן התורה ובפרט שהוא יושב בטל לבדו בחדר או שוכב על מטתו ואינו יכול לישן יהיה מהרהר במצות עשה זו של ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל וידמה בנפשו ויצויר במחשבתו כאלו אש גדול ונורא בוער לפניו עד לב השמים והוא בשביל קדושת הש"י שוכר את טבעו ומפיל א"ע להאש על קידוש הש"י ומחשבה טובה הקב"ה מצרפה למעשה ונמצא שאינו שוכב ויושב בטל רק מקיים מצות עשה דאורייתא.

ב בפסוק א' של קר"ש וברכה ראשונה של שמונה עשרה יהרהר כנ"ל ועוד יכוין אם יענו אותו כל או"ה בכל עינוים קשים ויפשטו עורו מבשרו להכחיש ח"ו ביחודו יסבול כל היסורים ולא יודה להם ח"ו ויצויר בדעתו ומחשבתו כאלו עושין לו כנ"ל ופזה יצא ידי חיוב ק"ש ותפלה כדין.

The first part of the Tzetzl Koton which contains basic principles of how to work on one's middos to succeed in coming close to Hashem

glatt-kosher meat became available, and his doctor advised him, for health reasons, to eat meat, he began to do so.

No cans or frozen foods were ever used for Father's meals. In the early years, Mother made her own cheese, butter and noodles and often baked her own bread for week-day consumption. That was in addition to the challos that were always made for Shabbos. I recall, that as a young child, I was sat down on the floor next to a big glass churn and was told to turn the handle until I'd see pieces of butter develop. I regret not having saved the churn to show my children and grandchildren — that, and the laundry washboard, as relics out of the past.

There was a couple, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, by the name of Weitman. They made their own soft cheese and sour cream and were trusted for their high standard of *kashrus*. We used to travel down and back by subway, an hour each way, for some delicious

dairy treats, but we were often disappointed when they were all sold out, and we went home empty-handed.

Vegetables and fruits were scrupulously checked for insects. That was long before the furor arose within the Jewish community for the necessity of examining fruits and vegetables. I felt very flattered when Father ate the salads I checked and prepared. He was confident that I was meticulous in the task.

I always wondered how Mother never tired of the tedious work, but when Father would say that the food had *taam Gan Eden* or when we children would eat with relish, it was to her *sechoroh mikol amoloh*, her just reward. No wonder that even now, so many years later, I look back with nostalgia to the wonderful memories of my childhood in my parental home. My salivary glands are activated when I recall Mother's culinary "works of art".

The delicious repasts that one partakes of leave such indelible memories that even in old age, one looks back longingly to the foods that his mother prepared. The meals also serve to enhance social relationships and feelings of friendship and brotherliness. That is why our Rabbonim forbade *bishulei akum* so that those foods would not foster closeness that would encourage mixed marriages.

Furthermore, good food prepared for Shabbos gives us a small taste of the delights of *Olom Haboh*. The B'nai Yissoscher teaches that just as one must prepare himself for the next world, so does he need to make elaborate preparations for Shabbos. Then he can expect to derive great pleasure from the effort he invested in doing that as was promised by the *Anshei Knesses Hagedolah* in *Mussaf* of Shabbos.

וְזֵכֶר מִעֲנִיגֵי לְעוֹלָם כְּבוֹד יִנְחֲלוּ טוֹעֲמֵי חַיִּים זֶכֶר
“Those who delight in the Shabbos will derive honor, those who taste it will be privileged with life”.

Father was able to achieve his high standards of *kashrus* only because Mother was the true *Aizer K'negdo*. She was the one who made the whole system work because of the tremendous respect she had for him. In fact, I never saw Mother sitting in Father's seat at the table even when he was not at home. She understood him and realized his greatness, as it says

וְקוֹרוֹת בֵּיתוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם הֵם מַעֲיִדִים בּוֹ — מִסַּכַּת חֲגִיגָה טִיָּבָה

The walls of one's house bear testimony about him. One might refer to the wife and children as the "walls" of his house, for they are the witnesses of his every action,

Someone once remarked that Mother's personality changed after Father had passed away — that she seemed to become more verbal and opinionated. However, just as a *talmid* does not *pasken* before his Rebbe, Mother always accepted Father's judgements as the last word despite the fact that she was, by nature, quite opinionated.

Despite her advanced age, Mother retained her youthfulness both in her appearance as well as in her perspective. One of my friends suggested a *shidduch* for her not realizing how old she was. I didn't think that she would consider the offer, but just to flatter her, I told her about it. Her reaction was much different than I had anticipated, for she was not pleased at all. She began to cry and said that there could never be any replacement for Father. She said, "I was married to a *Sefer Torah*"! Mother told my brother, Dovid, that as a young girl she fasted Mondays and Thursdays to be worthy of marrying a righteous man, and she achieved that goal!

I am reminded of an incident that occurred shortly before Father's petiroh. Father was in Nyack Hospital in Rockland County, and Shabbos was approaching. Nyack Hospital did not cater much, then, to frum Jews and, consequently, the Gentile administration did not understand or have any feeling for our needs.

Mother spent her entire day, all week, at Father's bedside caring for him. On Thursday she approached the Head Nurse and requested permission to stay in the hospital through Shabbos. The administrator would not hear of it. It was absolutely against the rules!

Mother was undaunted. She fearlessly announced, "All right, I will not break your rules. I shall leave the hospital on Friday night at closing time, and I shall stay outside, on the doorstep, in the cold, until you will re-admit me in the morning. The Head Nurse was so impressed with this seventy-seven year old woman's courage and devotion that she embraced her and said, "You can stay"!

So Mother was not meek or reticent after all. Quite the contrary, she was very strong-minded and fearless in the face of all odds. We all admired her determination, especially in this instance, for on that *Motzoei Shabbos*, Father was *niftor*, and he was not alone all through his last *Shabbos* on Earth. Mother stood faithfully at his side.

My mother was a very strong woman and a very strong Jew. She was a very strong woman and a very strong Jew.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Pesach

THE PREPARATIONS FOR THIS WONDERFUL YOM-TOV are repeated each and every year in every Jewish family. The scrubbing and the scouring, the hustle and the bustle are part and parcel of the yearly cycle, but some of the memories of Pesach in my youth are dominant.

Over the years, I learned, from experience, that the earlier one begins pre-Pesach work, the less wear and tear on the body and psyche of the *baalabusta*. Thus, even though I have a miniscule kitchen with not too many conveniences, it has always been manageable. Also, the rule of not eating anywhere in the apartment all year-round except for the kitchen and dining room, and that of not eating over a book or *sefer* precludes many difficulties and reduces the level of stress, by far.

In my parents home, however, *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* was the beginning of the “season”. Since time was so limited, it meant concentrated hard work with almost no respite. It was quite exhausting, to say the least.

Father would take care of the *mechiras chometz*, and all his congregants and neighbors would come to him to sell their chometz. Somehow, part of this annual ritual was for the ladies to come upstairs to visit Mother and to wish her a *Guten Yom Tov*. Each time this occurred, there was understandably, an interruption in our work. Mother was, as always, very gracious to her visitors, and she expected the same from me, so pleasant conversation was the order of the

day. Mother behaved as if she had nothing better to do. This would happen frequently, the result being that we usually had to work far into the night to complete the quota of work scheduled for that day.

There was no grape juice to be bought so we made *rozhinke vein* for the whole *yom-tov* before Pesach began. The recipe was as follows: two parts water to one part dark raisins brought to a boil and then simmered on a low flame until the raisins were very, very soft. Then the raisins were pressed with a spoon or potato masher until all the juice was squeezed into the water. This made perfect raisin wine which was poured into glass bottles and refrigerated. It's delicious taste was a real treat — but what a job, it was to make it!

Of course, years later, when Kedem began producing grape juice, life became that much easier. You might like to try making the *Rozhinka vein* for *Shabbos*, as we did all year, and get the feel of what it was like making it every week or in great amounts for Pesach.

We were accustomed to having *Rozhinke Vein* for every single *Shabbos*. That's how it was in Galicia in every household. Once Tante Henna, Father's sister, who lived in Vienna, wanted very much to send a gift, of some kind to the Ostrovtzer Tzaddik. It was, however, a known fact, that the Rebbe did not accept any presents. Henna figured out what she could send that would not be refused.

There was a scarcity of raisins at that time. Henna purchased a whole case at a high price and sent it to the Rebbe. She was right — the Rebbe was happy with the gift and did not send it back, for he needed raisin wine for *Kiddush* and *Havdolah*.

Tante Henna was delighted with her success! Her wish was to bring pleasure to the Tzaddik of the generation and to fulfill what the *Gemorah Kesubos* (*daf* 111) says, "He who brings pleasure to a *talmid chochom* and shares his possessions with him, the Torah considers him as one who cleaves to the *Shechinah*."

The Ostrovtzer Rebbe, Harav Meir Yechiel Halevi Halstock, was born in 1852 to his parents, Reb Avrohom Yitzchok and his pious wife. He was a baker, and every morning, bright and early, he and his wife would bake bagels, bread and other baked goods to sell in the market. After that Reb Avrohom Yitzchok would spend all his time toiling in Torah. His delightful child, who was an *ilui* did the same, day and night.



The Ostrovitzer Tzaddik,
Harav Meir Yechiel Holstock

As a young, married man, Rav Meir Yechiel, became the Rav of Skrenevitz, Poland. It was at that time that he began his holy practice of fasting daily which he continued for forty years up until the time of his demise. After about ten years as spiritual leader of the *Kehilla* of Skrenevitz, Rav Meir Yechiel was appointed rav of Ostrovitz where, for forty-years, he lived an ascetic life. His extraordinary *pilpulim* are printed in the sefer, *Maier Einei Chachomim*. He left many outstanding talmidim amongst whom was the Klausenburger Rebbe.

There were numerous stringencies (*chumros*) that were observed by us for Pesach. Nothing was bought ready-made, canned, or prepared in any way. In addition, all the chickens and meat for the entire week had to be made

kosher at home. All these were major tasks amongst all the other jobs we had to do for the approaching holiday.

Everything was made from scratch with no machines. Grinding was done with a handgrinder or with a chopping knife in a wooden bowl. Since we could not buy fish from a "*frumer*" fish monger, our fish was bought whole and untouched and cleaned at home. Usually it was white fish because its scales could be easily removed. Removing them was fun as we had a special implement which we used to scrape the fish. I still possess that tool since I inherited all of Mother's Pesach utensils.

Of course, we ate only "hand matzos" which were *Shemurah Mishaas Kitziroh*. In his later years, Father bought special matzos for his personal use. They were called "*Raichaim shel Yad*" meaning ground by hand. These were super-expensive and were marked "RASHy" for *Raichayim Shel Yad*.

One year, when, my daughter, Esther Rochel, was a baby in the high chair, I kept giving her pieces of matzoh from that special box marked "RASHY" wondering what did Rashy have to do with these matzos?

Later, when Father discovered that his precious, super-expensive matzos had been consumed by his then youngest grandchild, he laughed out loud and exclaimed, "*Derfar is sie azoi klig!*" ("That's why she is so smart!")

Father did not get excited with the disappearance of his matzos. However, he did not wash for anymore meals on that *Chol Hamoed*. For the last days of yom-tov, one of the neighboring *Rabbonim* had some extra "*Rashy*" matzos, and he was kind enough to give Father a matzoh for each yom-tov meal.

The *seforim Hakedoshim* tell us that if one is careful about even an iota (mah shehu) of chometz on Pesach, he shall be spared the pitfalls of sin throughout the entire year. No wonder, then, that Father excelled in his spiritual ways.

Cholov Yisroel was not sold in our neighborhood in the Bronx. All year round we received a delivery twice a week from the "Kahal" dairy company in Brooklyn. The truckdriver brought milk, cottage cheese, sour cream and butter. Compared with the prices we paid, the stam milk and milk products were, by far, much cheaper. However, we were happy, no matter how much we had to pay, grateful that they were available.

Almost all of the frum people in our neighborhood used the cholov stam. However, for Pesach, Father insisted, or better said, begged everyone to use *Cholov Yisroel*. He himself took down the orders. The night before Pesach, in addition to all the other work still left to be done for yom-tov, we had to take care of the milk! When the big delivery arrived, my brothers and I were recruited to bring over the milk to our friends and neighbors. We were quite reluctant, but we had no choice. Besides all the work, the time and effort we expended to do the job, we had to put up with all the barbs and innuendoes of the housewives who couldn't understand "how come the milk is so expensive?" We children felt that they suspected us of keeping part of the profit. Like it or not, we had to deliver all the milk, and right away, no matter what the hour, because we had no refrigeration facilities to keep it fresh. When the milk came, we went running all over the neighborhood, and if that wasn't enough, the whole scene was replayed with the second delivery on *Chol Hamoed*!

Father was delighted that everyone cooperated with him in using the *Cholov Yisroel*. It didn't matter that this took up so much time and energy. What did they count when a mitzvah was involved?

The sugar we used, way back then, was called "*Hittel Tzucker*". It was a solid mass of sugar in the shape of a small cone-shaped hat. The Bostoner Rebbe of Boston writes about this sugar in his book, "And the Angels Laughed" (page 55). The sugar was imported from Poland— before World War II, of course. The Rebbe writes that this sugar was highly reliable for its kashrus for Pesach, being under the supervision of the Rav of Pshevorsk. We bought it from the brothers Rosenberg who were known for their *yiras shomayim*. At that time, they operated a grocery store in the Bronx. They were good friends, and they would later visit Father, in Monsey, every Friday at the end of his life. The surviving brother Reb Avrohom Rosenberg lived in New Square until his passing on the thirteenth of Elul 5758, at the ripe old age of 102!

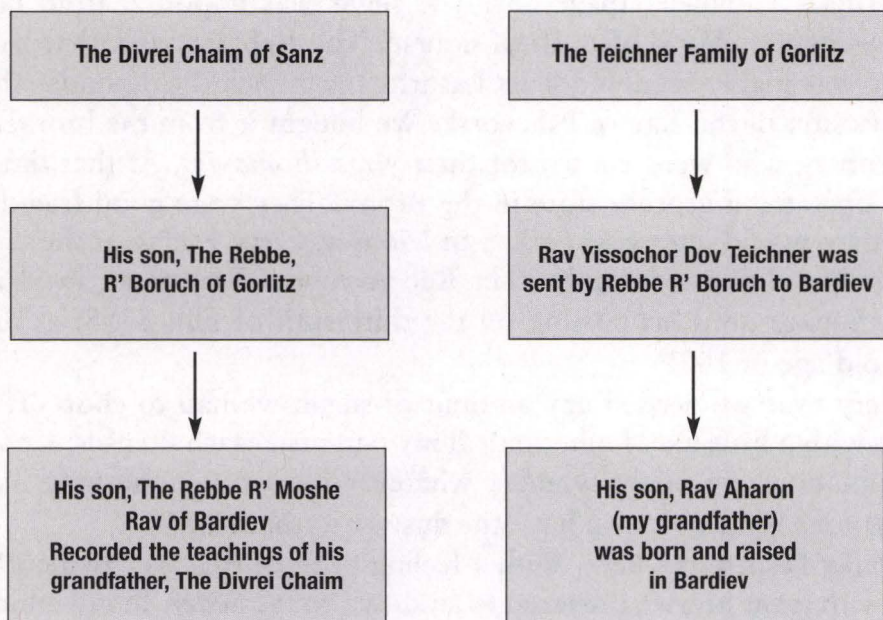
Every time we needed any amount of sugar, we had to chop off a piece with a little axe. I inherited all my parents Pesach utensils. Upon examination one might wonder, whatever did we use the little axe (*hekl*) for? Well, now you have the answer to that riddle.

Finally Pesach was here. With a feeling of relief that we "made it", and with great joy, we prepared to sit down to the *Seder*. In my minds eye, I can clearly see Father dressed in his sparkling white *kittel* resembling a *malach elokim* especially when he rose to say "*Boruch Hamokom*". His appearance and his *Dveikus* at that moment always made a lasting impression on me. Even at this time when I write these lines the tears well up in my eyes. Would that I could actually see that precious sight again!

We used only glasses for the *arba kosos* at the Seder. I often wondered what the reason for that was, until one day, I discovered the possible reason in the sefer, *Otzar Hachayim* — minhogei Sanz". That was the minhag of the Divrei Chaim of Sanz who was a sixth generation descendent of the Chacham Tzvi.

Later, in my close association with Sanz, as principal of the Bais Esther Sanz-Klausenberg School in Boro Park, I discovered that the minhag of using only glasses and glass bottles for the wine of the *seder* originated with the *Chacham Tzvi*. One reason was that the color of the wine, (red, the symbol of blood, the first of the ten plagues) could

The Teichner Family's Move from Gorlitz, Galicia to Bardiev, Slovakia



be seen through the glass. Another reason is that the taste of wine remains perfect in glass whereas it could change in cups of silver. Since my grandfather, Rav Aharon Teichner, and great grandfather, Rav Yissocher Dov Teichner were Sanzer Chassidim, that is probably where the family *minhag* originated.

Great grandfather, Rav Yissocher Dov Teichner, originally came from Gorlitz, Poland which was in Western Galicia. The fifth son of the Divrei Chaim, Rebbe Reb Boruch Halberstam was the Rav of Gorlitz at that time. He sent my great grandfather to Bardiev, Slovakia (then Hungary) to be the *schochet* in that town where the Rebbe's son, Horav Moishe Halberstam, was the Moroh D'asra. That is how the Teichners originally settled in Bardiev. (See Diagram). I read a description of that city in the days before the outbreak of World War II. There are Teichners listed in that book who were victims of the Holocaust. They were probably relatives.



In this map, you can find the Western Galician cities of Krakow, Tarnow, Sanz, and Gorlitz. You can also see the city of Bardiev in Slovakia. Notice the close proximity of Gorlitz to Bardiev.

Great grandfather, Rav Berish (Yissocher Dov), was known for his Tzidkus and was highly regarded in the Court of the Sanzer Tzadik. On one occasion of his visits to Sanz, he took his son (my grandfather, Rav Aharon) along. Standing in the back of the *Bais Medrosh* he heard the Sanzer Tzaddik call out, "*Shalom Aleichem* Reb Berish". Everyone wondered at the *ruach hakodesh* of the Rebbe. Normally he could never have noticed Great grandfather because he was standing in the very back of the hall crowded with hundreds of Chassidim besides the fact that he was short. Nevertheless, the Rebbe knew that he was there and called out his cordial greeting.

Reb Berish Schoichet, (as he was called), was a wonderful *Baal Tefilloh* who inspired all those who heard him *davening*. Even the modern professionals in town were so enthused by the *tefillas*, that they clapped their hands and stamped their feet in ecstasy!

No wonder then, that his son, my paternal Zaida, Rav Aharon Teichner was such a *yerei Shomayim* whose sole occupation in life was the study of Torah. He was known to complete *Shas* every year! The credit for this is due his wife, my grandmother, Miriam, who supported their large family by engaging in business.

Even in his old age, his love for Torah was first and foremost. The Zaida spent his last years in *Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh* as a member of the Kollel of Yeshiva Ohel Moshe founded by Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin. He loved to listen and participate in the shiruim of the great Polish Rav, Rav Eliyahu Klatzkin (1852-1932) who was the *gaon* of Lublin and arrived in *Yerushalayim* in 1925. His position in Lublin was later taken by Rav Meir Shapiro.

When the Zaida was no longer able to learn because of his old age and his being infirm, he still went to the yeshiva and lay down on a bench in the *Bais Medrash*. He said, "Let me, at least, listen to the *Kol Torah* even if I cannot actively participate in the study of it." The Zaida was *zocheh* to have his eternal rest on the *Har Hazaisim*.

Father took all of us on a *Chol Hamoed* trip each and every year to the Bronx Zoo. This was our one and only family excursion, and we children looked forward to it from year to year. Mother would pack up a gigantic bag of food and send us off. She opted to stay home to enjoy a little well-deserved peace and quiet.

The *baalei batim* of our shul were also provided with a special *yom-tov* treat, namely Father's *yom-tov* lecture. It was the highlight of the pleasures of *yom-tov*, for his pearls of wisdom were cherished by all. Father invested a tremendous amount of effort into his *droshos* so they would come out perfect, and they, invariably, did.

We children, looked forward to Pesach all year round even though the work was so hard. Mother, with her inimitable sense of humor, used to say "If someone experiences all the hardships of the work for Pesach and survives, he should *Bentch Goimel!* And Father would consistently encourage us all to do the work with great joy saying that the strenuous work we do for Pesach would bring *gevaldige* rewards.

Even in her old age, when Mother no longer made her own Pesach for she was always our honored guest, she was, nevertheless, worried about all the work that had to be done for *yom tov*. The weeks before Pesach at the very end of her life were spent in the hospital. Hashem, in His infinite kindness spared Mother her usual worry for she was not fully cognizant of what was going on around her.

Mother was in a comatose condition for several weeks. Even so, we could always observe her adjusting her *tichel* with both her hands. Her inherent modesty was so obvious that even when she was in that

state, nevertheless, the position of her head-covering was uppermost in her mind!

Mother was slowly, but steadily, sinking into her eternal sleep. It was only a matter of days until the end would come. Mother was niftor on *Erev Shabos Chol Hamoed*, the eighteenth of Nissan 5750. It seemed a merciful end and a just reward for her habitual concern about Pesach, that she found her final rest at that time. Then, too, she followed Father with not having a hesped said for her since it is not permissible throughout the month of *Nissan*. Even though Mother made no provisions and gave no instructions for her *levayoh*, Hashem saw fit to help her to continue to go in Father's ways.

Mother merited to have a great granddaughter named for her the very next day after her demise. Etya Chaya Kenner, daughter of Shloime and Itta Raizel, was born shortly before Mother's passing and is the very first to bear her name. Subsequently, there were more great grandchildren who are likewise privileged.

May each of them grow up to be a credit to her memory and live a fruitful life. May they all enjoy a length of days, at least as long as Mother did, for she lived past her ninety-fourth birthday!¹

1) Mother enjoyed relatively good health into her nineties.
She was able to fast on Yom Kippur past her ninetieth birthday!



Mother's Matzaiva

CHAPTER TWELVE

Growing Up

WHEN THE TIME CAME FOR ME TO GO TO SCHOOL, a problem arose. For boys there were *chadorim* and Yeshivos, albeit on the Lower East Side or in Brooklyn which meant an hour away by subway. Mother would send her little six and seven year-old sons downtown, on the subway, alone! Mother told me that she would stay at the window in the evening watching to see when her precious children would return home. She was praying that nothing happened to harm them. Such was their *mesiras nefesh* for *Torah*.

For the girls, there was no Jewish school which meant that we had no choice but to attend the local public schools. The Bais Yaakov elementary school of the Bronx came into being right behind me, too late for me to become one of its students.

I attended P.S. 90 in the Bronx. Actually that school had a good reputation and many Jewish children were enrolled in it although, none of them were from religious homes. I was very unhappy there. The older I got, the more miserable I became especially during the Winter season when the celebration of their holidays was manifest.

When I entered the fourth grade, the problems seemed to escalate. In desperation, Father consulted an old friend of his youth, Rabbi Leo Jung, who had studied with him in yeshiva in Galanta, Hungary, at the feet of Rav Yosef Zvi Duschinsky. Rabbi Jung was then, the spiritual leader of the Jewish Center on West Eighth-Sixth Street on the



The Jewish Community School, 110 Manhattan Ave., New York City

Its second home

Upper West Side. Rabbi Jung informed Father that a new school had just opened on the Upper West Side which might be the right place for me. I was enrolled there on the very next day!

The Jewish Community School was housed in a brownstone private dwelling on West Seventy-Fourth Street off Central Park West. Dr. Arthur Spier was the principal and Dr. Joseph Kamenetsky the executive director. They had classes up to the fourth grade. I was in the fourth grade, but I was half a year ahead. In those days the school year was divided into A and B classes. The A class started the year in September, and the B class started in February. A student could begin attending first grade in February. Her eventual graduation from eighth grade would then take place in January. When I arrived at the Jewish Community School, I was in class 4B. In order to become a student there, I would have to go back to class 4A. I was very willing to do that. I would do anything to be able to attend a Jewish school! By the end of grade four, in June, in my new school, I had excelled sufficiently to be skipped into the sixth grade which they then instituted — so in the end I gained back the term that I had relinquished and another term of six months in addition. These events proved to me, at that time, that a sacrifice for Torah would always bring great rewards.

JCS was a wonderful school which held a very high academic standard and a student body, which consisted exclusively of children from

fine, observant families. One of my close friends was a girl by the name of Fanny Dym whose father was a prominent rav on the Upper West Side. Later, my best friend was (Chaya) Carol Rothschild, the daughter of Dr. R. Rothschild who was a well-known physician and a fine *Talmid Chochom*. As soon as I began my studies at my new school, I felt at home and loved everything about the place. Even though I was only nine years old, I did not mind the subway commute which took thirty minutes. I had, finally, found my place.

Dr. Spier was from Germany, a veteran of the school of thought of *Torah Im Derech Ertetz*. He was a paragon of total dedication to the cause of *chinuch*. Nothing else held any significance for him. He was born in 1898 in a small German town, Ballanstadt, near Bad Schwalbach. Dr. Spier was a brilliant student of the sciences and mathematics. At the same time, he studied at the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary founded in the nineteenth century by the great Rabbi Ezriel Hildesheimer.

When at twenty seven years of age, he was offered the elevated position of principal of the Talmud Torah Realshule of Hamburg, Germany which boasted a registration of more than one thousand students, Dr. Spier hesitated. He did not think he could command sufficient respect necessary for this high position. The average age of the members of the staff was forty years! Rav Yosef Carlebach, Rav of Hamburg, recognized his outstanding qualifications and urged him to accept the post. With his parents' permission, Dr. Spier agreed to the job not knowing then, that he was to be the last principal of this school before Rav Carlebach and practically all the teachers and pupils were murdered by the Nazis.

While holding this prestigious position, the Nazis came to power. Dr. Spier endangered his life a number of times for his staff members. When they were arrested during *Kristallnacht*, Dr. Spier braved appearing before the Gestapo and effected their release from the lions' den. Before that was accomplished, the Nazi goons threw him down a staircase which caused him injuries from which he suffered for the rest of his life.

In February, 1940, Dr. Spier was appointed head of all remaining Jewish schools in Germany. He was also given the task of organizing a network of Jewish schools in the ghettos of Poland. In addition, he

Geheime Staatspolizei

Staatsschutzamt Hamburg

S. Nr. III 128/39 / 40

Hamburg 36, den 1. März 1940
Steinhausstraße 2

Herrn Arthur Israel Spier
Direktor der Talmud Tora Schule
Hamburg
Carolinenstrasse 35

Das Geheime Sicherheitsamt in Berlin hat Sie mit Zustimmung der zuständigen Reichsministerien zur Leiter des gesamten jüdischen Schulwesens im Reich bestellt.

Zunächst werden Sie beauftragt, in Judenreservat Polen ein jüdisches allgemeines Unterrichtswerk nach dem Vorbild der entsprechenden Einrichtungen in Altreich aufzubauen.

Nähere Anweisungen erfolgen bei Übernahme Ihres Amtes nach Ihrer Rückkehr aus dem Ausland.



Göttsche
Pol. Inspektor.

Translation: The Secret Security Office in Berlin has appointed you with the approval of the State Ministry to the leader of the total Jewish school system in Germany.

In the first instance, you are ordered to build up a general Jewish educational network, following the example of similar schools in Germany itself, in all ghettos in Poland.

Further details of your assignment will follow after you assume your position following your return from abroad.

Secret State Police

State Police Office — Hamburg (N)

The orders given to Dr. Spier by the Secret State Police in Germany, to create a Jewish educational network in Poland.

accompanied groups of children in the Kinder Transports to England after which he always returned to Germany.

Trusting him implicitly, the Nazis were planning to send Dr. Spier to America to raise money for the support of Jews in Poland. Dr. Spier knew that they would never give a single penny to the Jews. However, he accepted this assignment in order to escape to America, for he decided then, with the approval of Rav Carlebach, that this was his last chance to save his life.¹

Dr. Spier's decision was a blessing for American Jewry for now he gave unstintingly of his unusual talents to promote Torah education on these shores.

Unfortunately, Dr. Spier and his wife had no children of their own. His students were his children, and the love Dr. and Mrs. Spier lavished on them was readily felt. That was probably, the main reason for his success in the pursuit of his lofty ideals.

Here is a copy of the orders given to Dr. Spier by the Secret State Police in Germany, to create a Jewish educational network in Poland. Had he done so, Dr. Spier would never have survived the war. Fortunately, he escaped to America, in time.

After my completion of the elementary course of studies under the aegis of Dr. Spier and his competent staff, I was ready to move on to high school. I was fortunate to be able to attend the Bais Yaakov High School in Williamsburg as was previously mentioned.

With the school situation settled, there arose the next question as to what to do during the summer vacation. Our parents never took a bungalow in the mountains so we children had to more, or less, keep ourselves occupied. We used to go to the neighborhood playground where we could use all kinds of sports equipment and play all sorts of games, but even that was insufficient.

Fortunately, a new Bais Yaakov Camp opened in Ferndale, New York, in the Catskill Mountains. It was headed by the late Rabbi Avrohom Newhouse. Even though it was difficult for my parents to pay for my camp vacations, I eagerly returned to Camp Bais Yaakov, year after year, for the entire season.

1) from the article written by his student, Dr. M.R. Lehmann

Many wonderful friendships were forged in camp, friendships which have endured up until this very day. Rabbi Newhouse was an educator par excellence, and the web of influence he wove was extremely beneficial in the spiritual sense. In fact, most of the well-known educators in America today acquired their fundamental beginnings in Camp Bais Yaakov under the leadership of Rabbi Newhouse^{ל"ה} and his worthy Rebetzin תבדל לחיים — and their co-workers who were all great *mechanchim*. Amongst them were Dr. and Mrs. Herman Ullman, principal of the Bais Yaakov School of the East Bronx, his brother, Mr. David Ullman director of the then National Council of Beth Jacob Schools, Rabbi and Rebetzin Meir and Shoshana Levy of the Bais Yaakov D'Rav Meir and Rabbi and Mrs. Walden of the Bais Yaakov of the Upper West Side. What a unique privilege it was for us to know all these great *chinuch* personalities, and to gain from their knowledge and expertise.

I had the privilege later on, to serve as director of Sheurim for a number of years in Camp Chedvah, founded by Rabbi and Rebetzin Levi. My dear friend, Rebetzin Felice Blau of BYA was the Head Counselor and Program Director during those summers. What a pleasure and inspiration it was to work together and to be her colleague.

I vividly recall one summer when I was chosen to head one team of Color War in the Bais Yaakov Camp. The names of the teams were Tzion and Yerusholayim — our team was Yerusholayim. At this point in time, I cannot recollect which team was the actual winner. However, I do remember that spirits ran high, and the inspiration gained was awesome.

It was during that time that we composed the still-famous song depicting the yearning of *Klal Yisroel* for the ultimate redemption — “The Little Bird is Calling.” The credit for its composition goes to Rebetzin (Millie Steinberg) Malka Sachs of Yerusholayim. I quote the well-known words here from the original copy which I still have in my possession.

"THE LITTLE BIRD IS CALLING"

(from the original)

- | | |
|---|--|
| I. THE LITTLE BIRD IS CALLING
IT WISHES TO RETURN
THE LITTLE BIRD IS WOUNDED
IT CANNOT FLY, BUT YEARN | IV. HOW LONG IT CHIRPS,
HOW LONG
HOW LONG WILL IT BE?
WHEN WILL COME THE EAGLE
AND SET THE LITTLE BIRD FREE? |
| II. IT'S CAPTURED BY THE VULTURES
IT'S CRYING BITTERLY
OH TO SEE MY NEST AGAIN
OH TO BE WITH THEE. | V. THE LITTLE BIRD IS YISROEL
THE VULTURES ARE OUR FOE
THE PAINFUL WOUND IS GOLUS
WHICH WE ALL FEEL AND KNOW |
| III. THIS LITTLE BIRD OF SILVER
SO DELICATE AND RARE
STILL CHIRPS AMIDST THE
VULTURES
AND OUTSHINES ALL THERE | VI. THE NEST IS YERUSHOLAYIM
WHERE WE YEARN TO LIVE
ONCE MORE
THE EAGLE IS MOSHIACH
WHOM WE ARE WAITING FOR. |

At the time, we also included a chorus
which has since become obsolete.

The words were:

Chorus:

ירושלים זה שנות אלפים לשוב אליך אנחנו מחכות

Hashem, help rebuild the הר הבית,

אלא בזכות אבות — מעשים Not for our

THE LIFE OF

(1800-1850)

CHAPTER I

1800-1810

1810-1820

1820-1830

1830-1840

1840-1850

1850-1860

1860-1870

1870-1880

1880-1890

1890-1900

1900-1910

1910-1920

1920-1930

1930-1940

1940-1950

1950-1960

1960-1970

1970-1980

1980-1990

1990-2000

2000-2010

2010-2020

2020-2030

2030-2040

2040-2050

2050-2060

2060-2070

2070-2080

2080-2090

2090-2100

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Bronx

WHEN MY PARENTS CAME TO NEW YORK in the 1920's, it was to be expected that they would settle in Brooklyn. Any Jewish life that existed then was either in Brooklyn or on the Lower East Side. Since Mother's younger sister, Tante Gittel, lived in the East New York section of Brooklyn, Father, in anticipation of Mother's arrival from Europe, rented an apartment on Hinsdale Street right near them. However, that arrangement was of relatively short duration.

Grandmother lived in the Bronx, and Father, being a dutiful son, wished to give her the proper *kovod*. He, therefore, set out, on the subway, for the Bronx, more than once a week- a trip of three hours there and back, but usually was unsuccessful not finding Bobba at home. She had no telephone and more often than not, was not at home when Father arrived. Not being able to fulfill his obligation of *kibbud aim*, Father decided, with Mother's consent, to move to the Bronx. Tante Gittel and Uncle Hersh followed right behind them because the sisters wanted to live in close proximity of one another. However, this arrangement did not last, since Uncle Hersh could not find the means for his livelihood in the new neighborhood. Mother and Tante Gittel, then, maintained contact via the telephone and with frequent visits.

Life in The Bronx presented many difficulties for *frum* people. Kosher products were not available resulting in Mother having to

make all her own foods by herself. There were no yeshivos or girls' schools, and we were forced to travel alone on the subways even at a very young age. We had no friends in the immediate neighborhood, and we were surrounded by Jews who were irreligious. They did not understand our ways. Later on the situation improved, but by then we were already grown up.

There were quite a few *rabbonim* in the Bronx. Father was on good terms with all of them. His closest friends were Rav Moishe Bick, Rav Teitelbaum the Chenskowitz Rav and Rav Friedman the Ulmer Rav who was his *chavrusa*, and of course, Rav Gottlieb, the Samborer Rebbe. In their intimate friendship, Father referred to him as "Reb Mottele". The Gottlieb family lived only a few blocks away. In his frequent evening walks for exercise, Father would stop off at the Gottliebs for an amiable visit with Rabbi Gottlieb and his sons; his Rebetzin had passed away very suddenly at a very young age leaving him with the task of raising his orphaned children. In their loneliness, they were always thrilled with Father's visits and the warmth of his friendship.

Father was also close with the Minsker Rav, Rabbi Levine, a talmid of the Netziv. Rabbi Levine lived on Intervale Avenue in the East Bronx. Rabbi Levine, unexpectedly gave my brother, Moishe, *semichoh*, when he was a mere eighteen years old. When Father took Moishe on a long evening walk to the East Bronx, they had an involved Torah discussion on *Horo'oh*. The Minsker Rav was so impressed with Moishe's knowledge that he took pen in hand and wrote out a *semichoh* for him. We were so proud!

Father established his own *Shul* in the Bronx, Congregation Shearis Yisroel, which was located at 1060 Morris Avenue near the Grand Concourse and East 166th Street. The people who davened there made a homogeneous group, and there was a strong feeling of *achdus* amongst them. Father was especially fond of all the little boys who came to shul with their fathers. He would always inquire about them if they missed attending. He did not mind the noise or commotion they would make. To him it was vital that they come and feel comfortable in Shul. He was very proud of their accomplishments in *cheder* and derived a great deal of *nachas* from each one, especially when they learned well.

Father loved children. It seemed to be a family trait. All his siblings loved children, too. And the children responded in kind. They knew how welcome they were, and they were always anxious to accompany their parents in coming to *Shul*.

The feelings of *achdus* and comraderie were especially enhanced on Sukkos when everyone came to eat in the communal *Shul Sukkah*. The ladies, too, ate together upstairs in the *Bais Medrosh*, for only the men ate in Father's *Sukkah*.

The Schneiders, Hochmans and Moskowitzs were all part of one family and all of them davened in our Shul. Their parents and Father's parents had been neighbors in Vienna. By chance, they found us and came to daven in our *Shul* soon after their arrival from Vienna just before the outbreak of World War II.

David Hyman and his family were faithful followers of Father and came to daven frequently. We have remained close friends until this very day. Mr. David and Mrs. Shirley Hyman have gone to their eternal rest. Their son, Stanley (Shea Mendel) and his wife, Enid and their children are staunch, upright Yidden. Stanley holds the honorable post of President of the Board of Laniado Hospital of Natanya, *Eretz Yisroel*.

Of course we cannot forget our dear friends, the Steinharts mentioned previously in this book. Mr. Aron Moishe Steinhart was always first to volunteer his time and help for any important task for the *Shul* and its members and especially for Father.

The Podolski's came later with their parents, the Gornicki's. Mr. Podolski showed extreme generosity in helping with repairs to the Shul thereby benefitting all the members and their families.

Reb Meyer Blond, his wife and children, were our upstairs neighbors for about thirty years. Their way of life was commensurate with ours. Their *Torah'dike* home was filled with *yiras shomayim*, and it was a *z'chus* to have them as our *shechainim*. They were privileged to raise a generation of true, dedicated Yidden among whom Simcha Felder, the renowned councilman, is their grandson.

There were many others who made up our close-knit Shul family. There is no doubt in my mind that Father has always been a *mailitz yosher* for each of them, for even in life he cared for each and every one. He rejoiced to hear of their good fortune, and he mourned with them in their sorrow.

Each one of our faithful *Baalei-batim* was of great significance to us, and they proved their loyalty even as Father and Mother aged, and the *Shul* was no longer in existence.

Each member took great pride in belonging to our *Shul*. They all admired our parents for their *tzidkus*, their integrity and their pure intentions. They were very beloved and respected in their lifetime and are surely not separated from them even after their demise.

From his own, small, private corner in the Bronx, Father made an indelible impression on many individuals. With his friendliness and love of his fellow *Yid*, he drew them ever closer to our Father in Heaven.

Harav Avrohom Pam זצ"ל wrote about honoring Torah and describes how one with a pleasant personality has a wonderful opportunity to bring people closer to *Hashem* and his Torah. This description matches Father's personality succinctly:¹

It gave Father unlimited satisfaction to witness an upsurge of *yiras shomayim* in any of his followers. He would always ask them, "*Bisti ein ehrlicher yid?*" ("Are you a faithful Jew?") It seemed as if he was saying it in jest — or so it appeared — but he really meant it!

To Father, that was all that really mattered. He was the epitome of an *ehrlicher Yid*. Rav Moishe Bick advised Father to move to Boro Park. Father asked him what purpose that would serve. Rav Bick replied, "*Zollen zai sehen vee ein ehrlicher Yid seht ois!*" ("Let them see what an *ehrlicher yid* looks like!")

It was a frequent occurrence for ladies to bring their chickens to Father to *pasken shaalos* even though some were quite lax in other matters like the covering of their hair. Nevertheless, they were very strict about kashrus. Others, although few in number, were meticulous in various levels of *frumkeit*.

1) "A person with a pleasant, warm personality and good *middos* has an enormous influence on other people. He attracts followers like a magnet and can have a major impact on their lives. This is a proven method to be mekarev to *Yiddishkeit* those who are estranged from the heritage of their forefathers. While philosophical discussions and proofs of the existence of a Creator are certainly tools in bringing *baalei teshuva* back to their roots, a critical factor is showing how "the ways of Torah are pleasant and all its pathways are peace" (*Mishlei* 3:17). This has the drawing power to influence people to a *Torah* way of life. This is a way of truly honoring the Torah: to inspire people to honor it."

There was a *tzadekes* whom I cannot forget who was the epitome of religious perfection. Her hair was always covered with a turban or a hat, a rare phenomenon in those days. She would often fast during the week and attended the davening in shul even on week days. She never spoke a word of *loshon hora* and was careful in every aspect of her behavior. In the Bronx of those days, her conduct was the very same as it probably would have been in Europe in olden times.

What a pity that all her children which she raised in America were non-observant. They had absolutely no interest in any religious practices. They were products of the new American way of life depleted of every last vestige of *yiddishkeit*. How heartbreaking it was for their pious mother who could neither eat nor drink anything in their homes.

This situation was very common when I was a young child. The generation gap was tremendous. Children drifted far away from their parents. They were part of a new world with which their parents could not be reconciled — until *Hashem Yisborach* sent a *malach hamoshiya* in the person of Rebetzin Vichna Kaplan who established Bais Yaakov on the American continent. Rebetzen Kaplan was joined by her friends and colleagues all of whom were former students of Sorah Schneirer in Cracow, Poland. Amongst them were the Rebetzins, Rivka Springer, Basya Bender, Chava Pincus, and *l'havdil bein Chaim L'chaim* — Rebetzins Wachtfogel and Bas Sheva Ziv-Hutner. I was especially fortunate to have forged a very close relationship with Rebetzin Springer.

Young Jewish girls in their teens, were now taught the beauty of Yiddishkeit and were imbued with a fierce loyalty to mitzvos and *maasim tovim*. They became the proud bearers of the torch of Torah. A new era had begun which brought a tremendous salvation for *Klal Yisroel*.

Father would often exclaim, "*Dee Bais Yaakov hut gerattevet Amerika!*" (The Bais Yaakov saved America). How ecstatic he was about my progress in my studies and in the reinforcement of my *haskofos* which I was taught at home. Now they were taught in high school as well.

Even though I had to travel from The Bronx to Williamsburg by subway every day, it did not seem to be a difficulty but merely a means to

achieve and acquire much spiritual and intellectual pleasure. I looked forward to each day at school with a great measure of enthusiasm.

There were a number of very *choshuve talmidei chochomim* who taught in Bais Yaakov. It was a tremendous z'chus to be inculcated with *Torah* knowledge by them. I remember, in particular, Rav Shereshevsky, Rav Meir Pantel, Rav Scher and Rav Rottenberg. Rav Godlewsky taught us the importance of chess when he founded *Keren Haya'eled* for the children in *Eretz Yisroel* and enlisted the help of his *Talmidos* here in America.

Yibodel L'chayim — Rav Hellman taught us *chumash* and *m'forshim*. He later became the *Menahel* of the Bais Yaakov High School, an exalted position which he still holds today. May Hashem give him the strength to continue in this role for many years to come. Perhaps part of the *hatzlochoh* of the school, which is the largest Bais Yaakov High School in America is due to the fact that age is respected and valued. We see the same phenomenon existing in the Bais Yaakov elementary school in Boro Park which is under the capable leadership of Rabbi Ehrenreich. By virtue of his age and experience and his expertise in the field of *chinuch*, the *hatzlochoh* and growth of the school is manifest. *Chazal* say, "There is no wise man greater than the experienced man", and so we see that Rebetzin Kaplan ז"ל also saw the blessing in maintaining her staff of teachers even after they aged. She knew full well that those teachers who sat at the feet of Sorah Schenierer were superior to any others.

This brings to mind the story of the *Shaagas Aryeh* when he became the Rav of Metz. The leaders of the Jewish community of Metz were thrilled to appoint the great Rav as the spiritual leader of their *kehillah*. However, the *Shaagas Aryeh* understood that they were very concerned about his age. He assured them, that even though he was old, he would live long enough to be their Rav for at least fifteen years, and so it was. Rav Aryeh Leib, the famous author of the *Shaagas Aryeh* proved to them that age is a virtue, not a shortcoming— and that the aging leaders are a blessing that bears the fruits of success for our generation and for the future of *K'lal Yisroel*.

In tribute to Rebetzen Vichna Kaplan צ"ל, the following is a song composed by my dear friend, Rebbetzen Blau, principal of Bais Yaakov Academy.

Rebbetzin Kaplan had a dream
To build Bais Yaakov on these shores
Way back in תרצ"ו
Bais Yaakov opened up its doors
Its beginning was quite humble
No more than seven daughters came
Yet she taught these future mothers
How to build a *Yiddishe heim*
Many flocked to hear her teachings
She lit a fire in their soul
To restore the *בת ישראל*
Was Vichne Kaplan's sacred goal

REFRAIN:

As she taught us *שיר השירים*
Tears were streaming down her face
Yes, the *שכינה* was upon her
As she spoke in Hashem's praise

Thousands learn, today in כולל
In the Talmud they do toil
While her daughters, from Bais Yaakov
Stand beside them, *נשי חיל*!
Your dream came true, Vichne Kaplan
You have sent forth scores of *מורות*
To distant lands and far-off places
To teach *תורה* to the *דורות*!
We pledge to follow in your footsteps
Your *מדות* to emulate
For in Bais Yaakov *של מעלה*
You shine amongst the very great!

Even the department of secular studies in Bais Yaakov was of a superior nature. Dr. Gershon Kranzler served as the distinguished principal, and we advanced rapidly and successfully under his capable tutelage. His brilliance was something to be admired and his constant encouragement was a genuine inspiration.

In general, the atmosphere in Bais Yaakov was permeated with a spirit of *simcha* which made the learning experience unforgettable. It is said about Rabbi Moishe Leib Sassover, that when the Rebbe taught his students, it was with great joy. The *talmidim* were told that if they learned *b'simcha*, they would never forget what they learned.

The feeling of joy and happiness sweeten the memories of those wonderful years and hopefully, will continue to inspire us for all the years of our lives through the Torah knowledge that we were privileged to acquire in our youth.

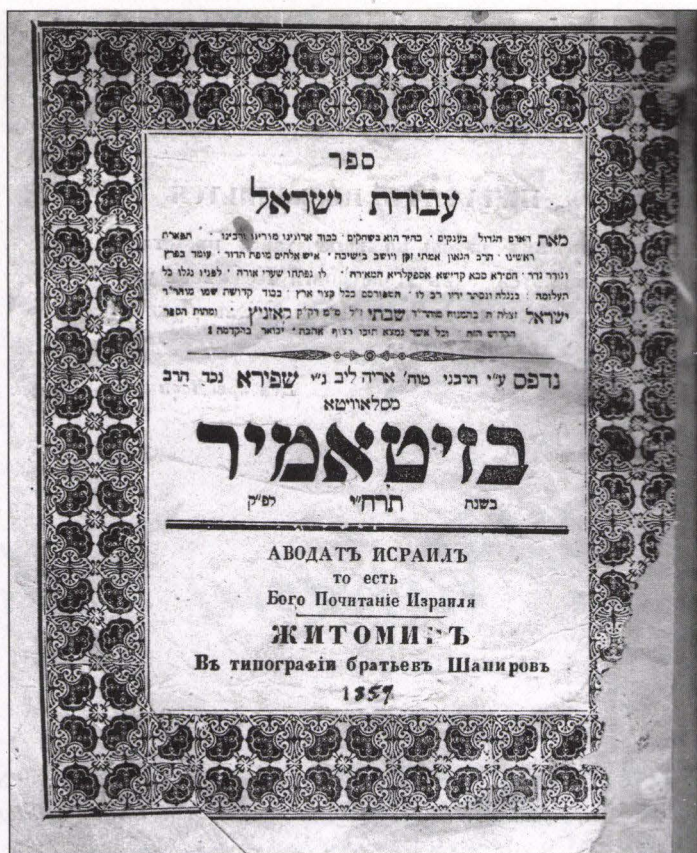
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Nursing Home

FATHER WAS EIGHTY-THREE YEARS OLD AND AILING. Mother was his constant care-giver, and it was becoming more and more difficult for her to continue. She was seventy-seven years old and not very vigorous although she enjoyed general good health for a person her age. However, the burden of running a household, while at the same time caring for Father, was rather overwhelming. It was a task that she could not do for much longer.

Plans were being formulated. After careful deliberation, Father and Mother decided to try out the new Maple Leaf Nursing Home in Monsey while leaving their apartment in the Bronx intact. In case things didn't work out, they would return to their home. One of the main reasons for which Father wanted to go to the Home was the fact that now he would be able to daven with a *minyán* — something he couldn't do were he to remain at home because he was physically unable to walk any distance, even to the nearest Shul.

Mr. Sidney Greenwald, the owner, was very accommodating in making life for Father and Mother comfortable and pleasant. He assigned them Room 118 on the main floor which was spacious and which had a very nice view overlooking the schoolyard of Yeshiva of Spring Valley. They loved looking out and watching the *yiddishe*



The Shaar Blatt of the sefer *Avodas Yisroel*—First edition

kinderlach at play. All the furnishings were brand new, for the Home had only just opened a few weeks before.

Father had a bookcase in the room where he kept some of his favorite *seforim*. Two of those seforim were antiques which I merited later, to inherit, after my parents' demise. They are the sefer *Avodas Yisroel* of the Maggid of Koznitz, printed by the Slavita Press in Zitomer in 1857 and the sefer, *Ohaiv Yisroel* by the Apter Rav, first edition, printed in 1863, also by the Slavita Press in Zitomer. Father always used to tell me how *heilig* the *seforim* that were printed by the Slavita Press were.

A beautiful dark wood table with matching chairs were placed in their room so that meals could be served them in private. This was a very special privilege because everyone was expected to take his meals in the communal dining room.



The Shaar Blatt of the sefer Ohav Yisroel—First Edition

There was, as yet, no organized week-day *minyán* in the Home, but Father was taken everyday, by wheelchair, next door to the Klauzenburger Minyan in Yeshiva of Spring Valley. In no time a steady stream of visitors began to appear at their door. Some came very frequently, amongst them the brothers Reb Avrohom and Reb Shloime Rosenberg, old friends from the Bronx.

The only apparent difficulty in Mother's adjustment to the Home was the problem of *licht bentchen*. The Home, being a public institution, adhered to the law of never having any lit candles on its premises. They accommodated the ladies by providing them with electric candles.

Mother used to light seventeen candles every Friday evening in her home. Those were the only lights which illuminated our dining room, on Friday night, and the light was sufficient. One *leichter* was a silver candelabra which held five candles. It was an especially beautiful

work of art. Later we had it appraised by an expert who told us that it was an old antique. Father had sent money from America so that Mother could purchase whatever she wished before leaving Europe. Mother traveled from Rimilov to Lemberg to go shopping. Her cousin, Moishe Aron Lenchitz, (the father of my Mother in-Law) met her and took her to the silver store where she bought the *leichter* which later graced our table at every family *simcha*. Mother would recall how Father lovingly polished the *leichter* before my brother Moishe's *Bris Milah*.

In order to make Mother more comfortable with the idea of lighting electric "candles", I came up with the following suggestion: I would light her five-tiered silver *leichter* every single *Shabbos* and say that these *neiros Shabbos* were being kindled in the *z'chus* of Etya Chaya bas Reb Dovid.

Mother was pleased with that arrangement, and true to my word, I continued this practice until her demise. After that I would still light the candelabra — but each candle was lit in memory of various deceased members of the family, including Mother.

The first candle is always lit *l'ilui nishmas* my Mother, the second for my Father, the third and fourth in memory of my grandparents and a few more close relatives. In this manner, my Mother's *mitzvah* of the *neiros Shabbos* is forever perpetuated as well as the memory of our dearest and closest relatives.

Life at the Home settled into a regular routine. Our parents were content, and they were adjusting to this new chapter in their lives. Mother did not join in any of the scheduled programs or activities. She was Father's constant companion, attending to all his needs.

The family felt assured that all was well. Our complacency, however, was short-lived. All of a sudden, Father's condition took a turn for the worst, and he was admitted to the hospital. His only kidney had begun to fail. To our great dismay, within five days, he was gone. He had been at the Home for only six months.

We were under the impression that Mother would now leave the Nursing Home and return to her own apartment, but that was not the case at all. Mother chose to remain in the Home. The Nursing Home administration assigned Mother the best room in the house, a private room in the center of the main floor.



*Mother at age 85
in her private room
at the Maple Leaf
Nursing Home in
Monsey, New York*

Mother began to take an active part in the scheduled activities and made sure that all the monies awarded the winners of Bingo would be donated to *tzedokoh*. Each time the winner would receive a quarter, she would immediately turn it over to Mother. Over the years, a few thousand dollars were raised for *tzedokoh* in this way. Fourteen years after her demise, we were told by Mrs. Bouskila, who works with the Seniors at the Nursing Home, that the custom of donating the winnings of Bingo to *tzedokoh* is still in effect, a practice instituted by Mother.

On Erev Shabbos, she would lay the tablecloths on all the tables. She would also hide the toaster to make sure that the nurses would not make toast for the patients' breakfasts on Shabbos morning. Mother could be seen on every week-day evening checking if the dining room lights were shut. Wasting electricity, or anything else for that matter, was abhorrent to her. Whenever her tray was removed, she would always save anything that was left. One of the young nephews once remarked that whenever he visited Mother, she would keep taking food out of every drawer to serve him!

Some people would ask, in innocence, if Mother was an employee of the Home! Indeed, she was fully occupied there and barely had any free time. If she did, she would usually be sitting at her sewing machine making clothes for her grandchildren or doing mending for them or for her friends in Monsey. Sewing was her favorite pastime. She once made a beautiful dress for one of her grandchildren with a piece of material purchased at a bazaar for ten cents! That dress was worn by three children, consecutively.

Mother attended various *shiurim* in the Monsey area, and she would spend one day a week, usually Tuesday, visiting with us. We looked forward to her weekly visits, and we are ever-grateful to Reb Yitzchok Feldheim who would bring her to our door in the morning and pick her up in the evening on his way home from work.

Mother and I would sit and chat and enjoy the time spent together. She would call her friends in the city and sometimes receive them as her guests. They would reminisce about by-gone days and Mother would surprise them with her phenomenal memory.

One of her frequent visitors was Mrs. Matilda Weinberg, nee Reiser רייזער. Her mother's family was from Rimilov and she loved to hear all the stories about her family. It made Mrs. Weinberg so happy since Mother was the only one alive who could give her that information. She deserved this courtesy in the merit of her Mother, Devorah Reiser, who went out of her way for my Father. As a newcomer to America, Father visited the Reiser family in Philadelphia, because they were *Landsleit* from Rimilov. Mrs. Reiser made a special party for him in order to introduce him to her family and all her friends. Father never forgot that favor and the warm welcome he received then.

Seventeen years is a very long time, but Mother made good use of the duration of her stay at the Home. She was, forever, encouraging her fellow residents, attempting, usually successfully, to instill in them a feeling of contentment and appreciation for having a comfortable place to live in, in which to spend their "Golden Years". Some would complain about the meals, but Mother would always try to help them learn to be satisfied with everything. She would say, "If you were in your own home, you'd never prepare such nice meals for yourself — you'd probably be eating *challah* and coffee every single day — so why are you complaining?"

The young women who visited Mother in the Home often bringing their little children would say "I don't know who benefits more from these visits, the Rebbetzin or I!" It was therapeutic and enjoyable to talk to Mother. People would come away from a visit with her feeling good about themselves.

After she passed away, a plaque was placed on the wall right outside her room which reads, "For 17 years, always an inspiration to others" and to us, her children, she was much more than that.

Mother used to say that coming to The Home was the best thing that could happen to her in her old age. She found satisfaction and fulfillment thereby helping others all the time. We used to quip saying that she found employment in her later years.

At the end of her life, however, she became unhappy because she was ill. She missed being vigorous and independent. She was very giving in her nature, but, unfortunately, now, she was forced to be on the receiving end, and that bothered her very much.

It is to the credit of the *noshim tzidkonios* of Monsey and New Square that they were instrumental in being so kind and helpful in attempting to ease Mother's plight at this crucial time of her life. For a period of two years, they organized a rotating system to take care of Mother. They never left her alone from late morning until her bedtime each and every day. They kept her company and gave her the *chizuk* which she needed. Special *hakoras hatov* goes to two ladies in particular, who outdid themselves in their *chesed* towards Mother — Mrs. Necha Reichhardt and Mrs. Chani Bernfeld. May Hashem repay them in full measure.

Mother's best friend in Monsey was Mrs. Leah Herzog. From the outset, Mrs. Herzog devoted much time and attention to Mother above and beyond any expectations. Mother referred to Leah Herzog as her "new daughter", and the Herzog family treated Mother as another *Bobbi*! How fortunate for Mother that she developed all of these wonderful relationships which enriched her life in her late years. No wonder then, that she loved it so in Monsey.

We children were happy to see Mother grow in her social life and in so many other ways. It gave us peace of mind knowing that she was content. Only at the very end did Mother become fearful and restless for she realized the gravity of her precarious health situation. She passed away, just a few months later.



After Mother's demise, this plaque was affixed outside her room at the Home

She was greatly mourned by all her family and friends. We strive to emulate her outstanding characteristics of kindness, dedication, and devotion to everyone, which she carried out with so much love. Her unusual sense of humor also brought a great deal of happiness into our lives. We shall always miss her.

Mother's long stay in the Nursing Home and her numerous accomplishments there served to prove that, in any place, even at an advanced age, one can bring about a *Kiddush Hashem*. She did that in a most exemplary way earning the respect and admiration of her friends and the staff at the Home and everyone else who shared the privilege of knowing her.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Sun Sets

MOTHER WAS A REALIST WHO LOOKED FACTS straight in the eye. Because of this trait, she was able to weather many difficulties which came upon her over the years. Now too, because Mother was his constant companion, she realized a few days before, that Father was nearing the end. She called his youngest sister, Rosie, to come and see him at Nyack Hospital. Tante Rosie said that she was planning to come on the following Sunday with her children. Mother said, "Do not wait, come today" which was Friday. When she arrived, Father was too weak to talk to her, but he took her hand as a gesture of parting — something which he had never done before. Tante Rosie was very grateful to Mother for urging her to come immediately, thereby allowing her the opportunity to say good-bye to her beloved brother.

Mother stayed faithfully at Father's bedside from that Friday morning until he breathed his last. She was his staunch support, forever, the symbol of a genuine *Aishes Chayil*.

Father was *niftor* that Motzoei Shabbos, the sixteenth of Marcheshvon, 5734, which marked the thirty-fifth anniversary of the infamous *Kristallnacht*. That tragic night produced yet another "churban", as the *chazal* say, "The demise of a *tzaddik* is *Kisraifas Bais Elokeinu*.

Father left explicit instructions for his *levayoh*. We were not allowed to make any public announcements about the *levayoh*, not on the radio, as used to be done in those days, nor by any other means.

We could only convey the message by telephone. We were forbidden to make any *hespedim*, and we did not dare to disobey.

Father was very much against *hespedim*. He used to say that a *hesped* can be very harmful to the *niftor* even if it contains only mild exaggerations. The *niftor* would have to answer before the *Bais Din Shel Maaloh* for anything said about him that he actually did not live up to. 'Tis better not to say anything than to cause such a serious problem. Even as a Rav for many years, being frequently called upon to deliver a *hesped*, Father would speak very eloquently about life in general; the beauty and advantages of a long life or the tragedy of a life cut short. If the *niftor* suffered a lot, Father would mention that his suffering was a medium for him to be cleansed from all his misdeeds as it says in *Tractate Brochos (5A)*, it is a *Bris Melach* — a covenant of salt — that afflictions cleanse the misdeeds of man". Suffering removes his sinful deeds. The term *Bris Melach* is used in connection with afflictions. Just as salt cures meat, so do troubles purify one who has sinned even if he does not realize the cause of his suffering. Thus, one who suffers a great deal will surely gain entrance into *Olom Haboh*.

Father would never speak about the *niftor*'s so-called good deeds for fear of causing him suffering in the *Olom Hoemes*.

After Pesach, in the year of our *aveilus*, the monument was erected over the *kever*. Even then we had no decisions to make. Father had prepared the wording for the *matzeivoh* and gave it to us in writing so there would be no mistakes.

We were instructed to have the following inscription made:

פה נטמן הרב ישכר דוב בעריש

בן מוה"ר אהרן ומרים ט"כ כנר נפטר ט"ז מרחשון תשל"ד תנצב"ה
(Of course, we added the date later).

Father took his cue regarding this brief inscription from his friend, HoRav Avorohom Levine who did the same many years before.

In their early years in America, Father, Mother and their children took up residence on Washington Avenue in the East Bronx. Their neighbor was the great Gaon, HoRav Avrohom Dov Levine also known as the *Malach*. He was known as such because of the super-human strength he displayed in the hours and energy he could spend in learning. The *Malach* developed a following in those early years in the 30's.

His *talmidim* were known as the “*Malochim*”. They were a very unique group that adhered meticulously to *Hashem* and His *Torah* in every facet of their lives at a time when they were about the only ones, as a group, who did so. This included their way of dress as well.

Father was their good friend and admirer especially with the *Maloch*’s prize pupil, HoRav Yaakov Schorr זצ”ל who later became the leader of the group. He was Father’s faithful friend to the last. The *Malach*, too, respected Father and would stand up for him.

Father’s and Mother’s place of eternal rest is in the Beth Israel Memorial Park in Woodbridge, New Jersey in the *karka* of the *Chevra Eitz Chaim* otherwise known as Tree of Life.

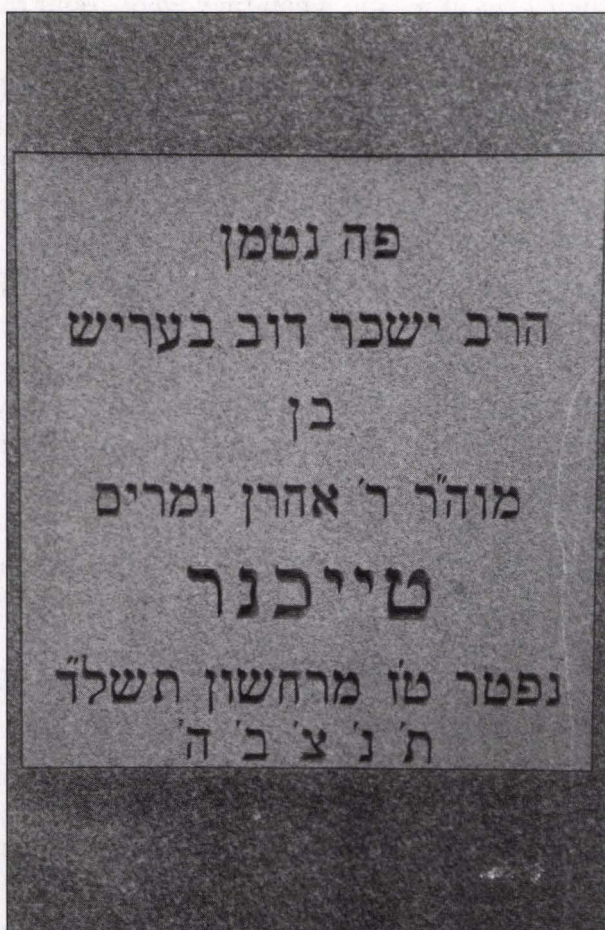
Father was very realistic and not afraid to face the inevitable. A number of years before his demise he began saying to me, on a regular basis: “You know, a Father does not live forever. (*A Tatte lebt nicht aibik*). He wanted me to get used to the idea. I was totally unreceptive to these words at the time.

Father seemed to be making preparations for his transition to the Olom Hoemes. It is said that a *tzaddik* simply moves his dwelling from one world to the other.

My nephew, Rav Aron Felder, related the following story to me. When he was a very young man, he would regularly visit my parents. The purpose of these frequent visits was to learn *Yoreh Daioh* with Father. Mother would prepare a delicious supper after which Father would be well-prepared to learn with him. Once, after the learning was concluded, Father asked R’Aron to accompany him on a walk. While doing so, Father said to him, “Aron, I want you to “pay” me for the lessons I am giving you. Since I am getting on in years, I want you to reassure me that you will learn *mishnayos* on my behalf throughout the year following my *petiroh*”.

R’ Yossie Felder, Aron’s brother was also asked to learn *mishnayos lillui nishmas* their Grandfather. R’ Aron and R’ Yosef were the only grown grandsons, at that time, of whom he was very proud for their being *talmidei chachomim*.

Father was very particular in leading his life in an organized way. So it was until the very end.



Father's Matzaiva

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1060 Morris Avenue

THE ADDRESS OF OUR HOUSE AND OF THE SHTIEBEL which Father founded was 1060 Morris Avenue near the west Bronx. The house was in the middle of the block which was a broad tree-lined street in a middle class neighborhood.

Father bought the modest house in the 1930's for a mere six thousand dollars. The main floor served as the *Bais Medrosh* and the floor above it as our living quarters. The top floor was a rental apartment which served as a means of income. It was rented out for twenty-five dollars a month.

Our first tenant was a very fine family. Although they were *Shomrei Shabbos*, their views on educating their children were far to the left. Father and Mother were very concerned as to how this would affect the upbringing of their children. Faced with this dilemma, Father delicately approached our neighbors and explained the situation. They agreed to relocate. Father and Mother were afraid that maybe that tenant would be so offended that they would become enemies. On the contrary, this entire family remained lifelong friends! They admired Father as being a man of principle, true to his beliefs and ready to sacrifice his all for his ideals.

The family that subsequently moved in were people who shared the same perspectives as far as *Torah* and *Chinuch* were concerned. Mr. and Mrs. Meyer Blonde ז"ל and their family lived with us for thirty years in perfect harmony. Their children and grandchildren follow the path of *Torah* and *Yiras Shomayim* true to the teachings of their illustrious forbears.

The Blondes were aging and decided to move near their children in Brooklyn. This was about 1965. Their apartment remained vacant from then on. Likewise, the group of people who attended services in our Shtiebel was steadily diminishing. When the number dwindled to the point where its future was threatened, it was suggested to Father that he, too, should move. However, Father responded that he would not and could not destroy what he, himself, had built, and since there was still a *minyan* for *davening*, albeit on Shabbos only, he would stay.

In 1968, a family with three male adult members announced their imminent move, the *minyan* then ceased to exist, and Father and Mother knew that the time to relocate had arrived.

The big question now was what to do with the house. Father was aware that he could profit greatly by selling the building as a public place rather than as a private home. He held all the permits of the Building and Zoning Departments which were difficult to obtain. The fact that these permits were available meant that the house could continue to be a public gathering place.

Father was certain that his potential buyers would be anxious to establish a non-Jewish house of worship just as those who purchased the beautiful, spacious, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi Shul on our corner, did. Father was determined that this would not happen to a property which belonged to him.

Construction workers were promptly hired to restore the *Bais Medrash* to its original design as a private home. The walls which had been removed so many years back were now standing again. No one could tell that this house had ever not been a private domain, and it was put up for sale as such.

Apparently, Hashem was supporting Father in his will to protect his house. Before the sale came up, the house had been uninhabited for a period of time because they had moved out months before. It was highly unusual that no vagrants had settled in there since it was obvi-

ous, even to the casual observer, that there was no activity in and around the property.

The house was finally sold to an African American couple that planned to live in it. They paid sixteen thousand dollars for the house, a far cry from what it could have been sold for if it were to be used as a house of worship. Father was delighted with the purchasers and could not have cared less about the money. He was bent on preserving the sanctity of the *mokom kodosh* which he had founded.

Father founded his *Shul* with no compromises in *Yiddishkeit*. Once he had found the right building to house the Shul, Father proceeded to secure a mortgage. After he had given a sizeable deposit, he discovered that the mortgage was issued by a Jewish-owned bank. That would never do because of the prohibition of paying interest to a Yid.

Father went to the office of the Kuhn Loeb Bank to try to retrieve his deposit. He was directed to the head of the bank, Mr. Felix Warburg, a reformed Jew. Felix Warburg was the son-in-law of the famous Jacob Schiff. He came to America from Germany, at the age of twenty-two years, and therefore still spoke an excellent German. Father, having grown up in Vienna, Austria also could easily converse in that language. Mr. Warburg cordially invited Father into his private office and asked Father to explain his problem. Father proceeded to enlighten Mr. Warburg, as to the reason he could not take the mortgage from Kuhn Loeb. Mr. Warburg was duly impressed and immediately refunded the money!

The saga of 1060 Morris Avenue was not over yet. On Chol Hamoed, Sukkos 2002, our son, Yisroel Meir, suggested to us that we go and take a look at the place. It was but a ten-minute drive away, and so we agreed. We did not realize that we were in for a shock!

When we drove up to the address, we realized that there was no house there! The houses on either side were standing, but number 1060 was gone! It was an empty space with grass growing there. A padlocked gate closed off the property. The house had probably burned down.

To me it was obvious that the One Above did not want impurity to rest on a house that once was a *Bais Hashem*. The *kedushoh* of a Shul or a *Bais Medrash* is so great that it remains in that place even after it is destroyed.

The Baal Shem Tov once visited the city of Ostropoli, home of the holy *Mekubol*, Rav Shamshon Ostropolier. He told his talmid, Rav Yosef of Kaminka, to open the window even though it was a freezing cold night. he said, "The light of Rav Shamshon's *Torah* is sending a beam all the way up to the sky!

Rav Yosef answered the Baal Shem Tov, "All I can see is a garbage heap." The Baal Shem Tov then turned to the people sitting there and asked them if any of them understood why he sees the great light of Rav Shamshon Ostropolier. They replied, "Of course, this is the site of Rav Shamson's *Bais Medrosh* that was destroyed during the terrible *gezairas Tach* and *Tat!*" (1648-1650)

After hearing that story, I was convinced that here too, on the property that once housed the *Shechinah*, the *kedusha* still lingers, and that is why Father was so anxious that it should remain so.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

*Yichus*¹

THE RIZHINER SAID “THE WORD YICHUS, lineage, comes from the root word meaning barrier. It serves as a protection against all harm.”

Being born with lineage is a privilege but also a tremendous responsibility. Following in the footsteps of aristocratic predecessors makes the road to travel that much easier. However, we must consistently ask ourselves, “*Mosei yagieu maasei l’maasai avosei?* — When will my actions reach the level of those of my forebears? I must strive to follow the patterns set by them and try to do them justice. *yichus* should not be something with which to show off — it should be left “under wraps”. One should make every effort to acquire *yichus atzmo* — our own *yichus* which will make our future generations proud.

Admor Reb Naftoli of Roposhtitz comments on *Parshas Korach* — the Torah mentions Korach’s *yichus* all the way back to Levi ben Yaakov. He says *yichus* is wonderful, but it should cause a person to reflect on how insignificant he is compared to his forebears. This should cause a person to make every effort to achieve the greatness of his ancestors. However, his *yichus* only caused Korach to become more proud and did nothing to make him improve his character.

1) lineage

2) The Rizhiner - Dr. M. Brayer

When the holy Maggid of Mezritch, the Rebbe Reb Baer, was a young child, a terrible fire broke out in his home which consumed all of their belongings. The five-year old boy noticed his mother crying bitterly. He asked her, “Mamme, why are you so upset; it is the will of the Almighty that this happened to us. To which the mother responded, “I’m not mourning the loss of our belongings, but rather the loss of our “*Yichus Brief*” — our record of lineage that proves that we are descended from *Dovid HaMelech*”. Her son answered, “Don’t worry, I shall create a new *yichus*, beginning with myself that will make you proud.” That is what each person should do — live an exemplary life that will serve as an inspiration for his future generations.

If one has *yichus*, he is fortunate for the merit of his forebears will protect him and all future generations as our sages say,
 (Yoma) אשריהן לצדיקים שמזכין לבניהם ולבני בניהם עד סוף כל הדורות
 “Fortunate are the righteous who bring merit to their descendants until the end of time.”

We too, must always be cognizant of the fact that our actions have an effect on our forebears in the *Olom Hoemes*. They will derive pride and pleasure or shame because of our behavior. That is a significant point to ponder.

RAV SHAMSHON OF OSTROPOLI

Rav Shamshon of Ostropoli (1600-1648). The years *TACH* and *TAT* (1648-1650) were years of terror for the Jews of eastern Europe. Bogdan Chmielnicki, the head of the Cossacks, engaged in a savage revolt against the Polish ruling power. The Cossacks lived in the Ukraine and enjoyed special privileges because they were so powerful. They planned to attack the Polish nobility. Chmielnicki was apprehended and sentenced to death. However, he succeeded in escaping from his imprisonment and was bent on taking revenge against the nobility. He claimed that the Jews, too, were responsible for his troubles because they were connected to the noblemen and tried to kill him.

The holocaust that ensued destroyed 600,000 men, women and children murdered in cold blood. One city after another was captured, its inhabitants destroyed and their belongings looted. The first massacre took place in Nemerov on the 20th of Sivan, 5408/1648. The



G'zairos Tach and Tat

1. Nemirov – Chmielnicki's hordes murdered thousands of Jews here on the 20th of Sivan
2. Polnoa – Rav Shamshon Ostropolier and his 300 followers were murdered here, Al Kiddush Hashem, during the Nine Days

Rabbonim established a fast day on the 20th of Sivan¹ which is still observed today — to remember those who perished *al Kiddush Hashem*. The enemy wreaked havoc on both Jews and non Jews of Polnoa. Among other cities that fell were Dubna, Belz, Kaminitz, Narol, Brody, and Lvov. In all, 300 Jewish communities were destroyed.

The great gaon and holy kabbalist of the time was Harav Shamshon ben Harav Pesach of Ostropoli who was in Polnoa during those terrible days.

The Admor Rebbe Shloime of Bobov said that it was told about Rav Shamshon Ostropolier that he was משיח בן יוסף. Rav Shamshon was destined to be the *Moshiach* if only the generation would have been worthy. Alas, that did not happen. *The Tzaddik* warned the Yidden that terrible times were approaching and that they should make haste to do *teshuvoh*. Rav Shamshon gathered 300 of his *talmidim*. They all

1) This *Taanis* was originally decreed by Rabbeinu Tam in memory of the Jews murdered by the Crusaders in 1171 and was reconfirmed after TACH and TAT. A number of *Selichos* and *Kinos* were composed in commemoration of this day.

donned their kitels and gathered in the local Shul for a *Tefilla* rally. The enemy forced itself into the Shul and slaughtered Rav Shamshon and his followers and an additional 12,000 Jews in that city on that very day, the third of Av. Each one made the supreme sacrifice to give up his life to sanctify *Hashem's* name.

One of the sages living at that time was Harav Yom Tov Lipman Heller, otherwise known as the Tosfos Yom Tov. Horav Heller was of the opinion that the tragedy of *Tach V'tat* occurred because Yidden were negligent in upholding the honor of the *Bais Haknesses*. *Halochoh* dictates that one is not permitted to talk during the reading of the Torah nor during the *chazon's* repetition of the Shemoneh Esrai. If he does, he is committing a very grave sin. For this reason, the Tosfos Yom Tov composed a special *Mi Shebairach*, to be recited in all Shuls, in which he promises, among other rewards, that those who guard their tongues and do not speak during the times when it is forbidden, the reward will be that they will be privileged to witness the success of their children — “*V'yiru B'hatzlochas B'neiheim U'venosaihem.*”

*The One Who has blessed Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov,
He will bless every man and woman who watch their
mouths and tongues from speaking during the davening
and/or the reading of the Torah. In the merit of this, the
Holy One, may He be blessed will watch over them and save
them from all harm, and He will bless the work of their
hands and reward them to witness the success of their sons
and their daughters who will be ready to serve Hashem, our
G-d, with a full, heart, Amen.*

מִי שִׁבְרַךְ

אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבָרְהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, הוּא יְבָרַךְ אֶת כָּל
אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה הַשּׁוֹמְרִים פִּיהֶם וּלְשׁוֹנָם, מִלְּהַפְסִיק
בַּעַת הַתַּפִּלָּה וּקְרִיאַת הַתּוֹרָה בְּשִׁיחַת חוּלִין, בְּשִׁבְרַךְ
זֶה, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יִשְׁמְרֵם וְיַצִּילֵם מִכָּל צָרָה
וְצוּקָה וְיִבְרַכֵּם בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵיהֶם, וְיַזְכֵּם לְרֵאוֹת
בְּהַצְלַחַת בְּנֵיהֶם וּבְנוֹתֵיהֶם, מוֹכְנִים לַעֲבוֹד אֶת ה'
אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּלֵב שָׁלֵם, אָמֵן

Rav Shimon Schwab, the spiritual leader of K'hal Adath Jeshurun of Washington Heights for thirty-seven years, would recite aloud, the *Mi Shebairach* of the *Tosfos Yom Tov* on the last day of Pesach, Shevuos, and Succos, to reward his congregants for not speaking during the davening and *krias haTorah*. This custom has been in practice ever since.

What a wonderful *brochah*! Who would be foolish enough to ignore the promise of the *Tosfos YomTov* and engage in idle chatter thereby forfeiting such great rewards?

The seforim say that one who is careful not to converse during davening, is bound to live a long life and have a pleasant old age. The word *שיבה* stands for *בשעת התפלה*. The word *שיבה* is an acronym for the words bearing the message that silence should prevail during the *Tefilloh*.

Also, let us not forget that responding *Amen* to *Brochos* is a very great *mitzvah*. Even very small children who are taught to respond *Amen*, are automatically eligible for a great reward — the gates of heaven are opened to them. And those who answer *Amen*, *Yehai Shmaih Rabbah* in *kaddish* with complete *Kavonah*, reap tremendous rewards.

Here is an article written by my son, R' Yisroel Maier, for the Agudath Israel of Washington Heights newsletter, Sivan, 5751. It bears an important message.

The Power of One Word

Omein. Ubiquitous. One of the most common words used daily. We say it when we hear a brocho. We say it when we hear Kaddish. We say it when we want to specify agreement. But the habitual usage of the word may cause us to forget its profound power. The following insight may keep us from ignoring the great Mitzvah which is the usage of this word.

The Shulchon Oruch Orach Chaim writes (56/1) that proper concentration is required to answer the Kaddish. The Mishna Brurah emphasizes how important it is not to talk during Kaddish. He quotes an anecdote from the Sefer Chassidim where one great man had a vision of another great man after the latter's passing. To his great consternation, he noticed that the deceased man's face was green. When

asked the reason, he was told. “throughout my life, I would habitually talk during Vayechulu. Mogen Ovov, and Kaddish.”

With regard to reward, the Gemoro in Mashecta Shabbos (119B) states that “whoever answers Omein with all his strength will merit having the gates of Gan Eden open for him.” The Maharsha explains that there are two chambers in Gan Eden; an outer one and an inner one. The reward for meticulously observing the laws of Omein as stated above is that even the doors to the inner chamber are opened for him.

Specifically, in reference to the “Omein Yehei Shmei Rabbo” of Kaddish, the Gemoro cited above assures that whoever answers it with all his strength will have his Heavenly decree torn up! Rashi explains that “all his strength” refers to total concentration while Tosfos explains it to mean in a loud voice.

A story is told about a Rav in Europe who was giving a speech in his Shul regarding the importance of answering Omein. He quoted the words of Rabbi Moshe Kordavero that the first letters of Shtika Yofu Beshas Hateffiloh — “Quiet is proper during the time of davening” form the word “Seivo — long life”. If one is careful not to talk during Davening, he will live a long life.

The next day, there was a commotion in Shul. One of the congregants reported having a dream during the night in which he was tried before the Heavenly Tribunal. He was condemned to die. At that point, he pleaded for the reason for his punishment as he had not yet reached old age. He was then reprimanded for talking during Davening and not answering Omein. etc. He claimed that he had been unaware as to the gravity of the sin. One of the judges angrily retorted, “How can you say that? Didn’t your rabbi speak yesterday regarding the severity of talking during Davening and that refraining from doing so prolongs life”? Only after promising that he would tell everyone what had happened and that they should be careful in the future, was he pardoned.

Let us all attempt to always answer Omein and to do so properly — not before the Brochoh is finished, nor too long afterwards — and thereby strengthen our Emunoh and merit the coming of Moshiach soon. Omein!

Yisroel Maier Kenner

Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss says that one who is careful in answering Amen, gains the master key for all of the gateways to *Gan Eden*.

Let us not allow this unique opportunity to be missed out on.

Furthermore, my dear children, we who are descendants of Rav Shamshon Ostropolier should make every effort to follow the rules so that his horrible death will not have been in vain. Let us sanctify Hashem's Name with exemplary behavior in *Shul*.

My great, great grandfather, HoRav Avigdor Charif (Bibelman) was the one who informed the family, at the end of his life, that we are direct descendants of Rav Shamshon Ostropolier. His granddaughter, my grandmother, Miriam Teichner, nee Bibelman, was my father's mother.

Who was Rav Shamshon? What were his origins?¹

The great great grandfather of the Maharal of Prague, whose name he bore, was Rav Yehuda Leeva. His *matzaiva*, in Prague reads as follows; (free translation)

Yehuda, Rabbi and genius, totally knowledgeable in *Shas* and *Talmud*. There is no other in all the world in brilliance and with such a memory. Descended from great gaonim whose ancestor was Dovid, son of Yishai.

We learn from the *matzaiva* that there was no one in his lifetime who could be compared to him in his clarity of Shas and in his sharpness of mind, his total knowledge and his outstanding memory and in his *yichus* — descending from Dovid Hamelech.

Rabbi Yehuda's grandson, Rabbi Chaim, lived in Worms. He was the father of three outstanding scholars, Betzalel, Yaakov and Hellman. Rabbi Chaim was their Torah teacher until they grew to maturity. The most brilliant of the three was Betzalal. These three young men aspired to travel to Poland to study in the yeshiva of the famous gaon, the Maharshal. Rabbi Chaim granted permission to his two younger sons to do so. However, since he and his wife were not young people, he asked his eldest son, Betzalel, to remain at home to care for them. He stayed behind and leaned Torah, at home, with his father.

Years later, when his brothers returned from Poland full of Torah knowledge, Betzalel felt very bad that he had missed out on that wonderful opportunity. His father, noticing his son's disappointment, called out to him, "In the merit of your remaining behind to help and to serve us, you will be blessed, by Hashem, with four sons who will illuminate the eyes of Jews with their profound *Torah* knowledge.

Indeed, the *brochah* was fulfilled. The four *Torah* giants were: Rabbi Chaim, the Rav of Worms and subsequently Friedburg, Rabbi Sinai, Rosh Yeshiva in Prague and then Rav of Nikolsberg and all of Moravia, Rav Yehuda Leeva, the Maharal who was the youngest, and before him, the third son, Rabbi Shimshon, Rav of Kremenitz. Rabbi Shimshon's daughter, the wife of Rabbi Pesach, was the mother of the great *gaon* and *Mekubol*, Rav Shamshon of Ostropoli. From here we learn that Rav Shamshon was the great nephew of the Maharal of Prague, who descended from *Dovid Hamelech*.

Incidentally, the Maharal also composed a special *Mi Shebairach* for those who are careful not to speak out (even *divrei Torah*) from *Boruch Sheomar* until after the *davening*.

HARAV AVIGDOR CHARIF (BIBELMAN)

Rav Avigdor Charif was born in Turkey. He was of Ashkenazic descent. During a pogrom, in order to save himself, Rav Avigdor flung himself into a pit of dead bodies. He lay there for several days until the danger passed. Then he arose, washed himself clean from the blood and made his way out of Turkey to Galicia.

Eventually, he reached the city of Tarnow in western Galicia and was recognized as a *godol hador*. He was offered the position of *Av Bais Din*, but he refused. Rav Avigdor said, "The *Gehinom* for the Rav of Tarnow is burning already for thirty years!" Perhaps he did not want to assume the tremendous responsibility of being the Rav of that prestigious *kehilla*. He did however, accept the secondary position of *Rosh Bais Din*. Rav Avigdor Charif refused the salary that was offered him. His wife opened a small store in which she sold herring, and they lived from that income. Many people wanted to pay a higher price for the herring, but the Rav did not allow his wife to take it.

Rav Avigdor was a tremendously diligent learner. Once they found him in the next town dressed in his shirt sleeves and only a yarmulke on his head. He had been in the backyard of his home, thinking and

1) The Maharal of Prague/ by Menachem Mendel *Der Maharal Fun Prague*

learning. He became so deeply engrossed in his thoughts that he began walking and did not realize that he had reached the neighboring town!

Every six months, Rav Avigdor took it upon himself to go into *golus*, incognito, of course. Once he went to Hungary. The holy *Yismach Moshe*, the Rav of Uhel knew, with his *ruach hakodesh* that Rav Avigdor was coming to Uhel. He then instructed his gabbai that when he sees someone who answers to his description of Rav Avigdor Charif, he should tell him that the *rav* of the city has ordered him to appear before him. Rav Avigdor had no choice but to do as he was commanded, and he spent a day and a half in the home of the *Yismach Moshe*.

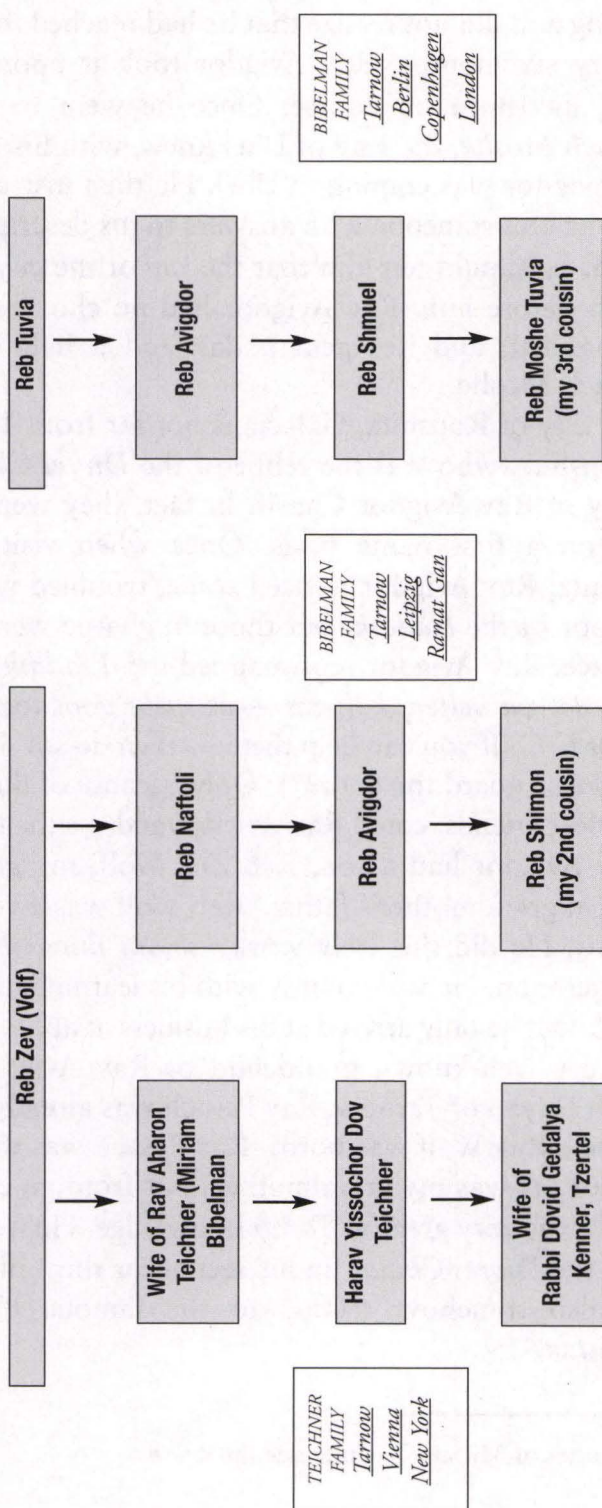
The city of Ropshitz, Galacia is not far from Tarnow. The Tzaddik of Ropshitz, who was the rebbe of the *Divrei Chaim*, was a contemporary of Rav Avigdor Charif. In fact, they were so close, that they were on a first name basis. Once when visiting the Tzaddik of Ropshitz, Rav Avigdor noticed some, troubled women standing near the door of the *tzaddik*, but those in charge were not allowing them entrance. Rav Avigdor reprimanded the *Tzaddik* saying, “*Naftoli, az dee kenst zai helfen, helf zai — az nisht voos lozt dee dee hint shtain bei der tir!*” (If you can help them — then do so! If not, why do you let the “dogs” guard the door?”) Only because of the fact, that they were such close friends, could Rav Avigdor address the *tzaddik* in that way.

Rav Avigdor had a son, Reb Zev Wolf, my great grandfather, my paternal grandmother’s father.¹ Reb Wolf was a very popular mohel in Tarnow. He did this holy work *l’shaim mitzvoh* — never accepting remuneration. He was so busy with his learning, davening, and being a mohel, that he only arrived at his business at about 3:00 p.m. every day!

A very well-known grandchild of Rav Avigdor Charif, was Rav Pesach Dayan of Tarnow. Rav Pesach was already an older man when his uncle Rav Wolf was born! Rav Pesach was the descendent of Rav Avigdor (as was my grandmother) but from an earlier marriage. Rav Pesach was very great in *Torah* knowledge. He was married to the sister of the *Divrei Chaim* (in his second or third marriage). Rav Pesach was also somehow related to the famous Plancher Rav as his *mechutan*.

1) the father of Miriam Teichner nee Bibelman

Some Descendants of Haraf Avigdor “Charif” Bibelman of Tarnow, Poland



Rav Avigdor Charif was worried that his children might be tested from Above with the trial of being wealthy. He prayed and fasted that Hashem should spare them that trial.

Shortly before his demise, Rav Avigdor revealed that he was a direct descendant of Rav Shamshon of Ostopoli. Obviously, he must have been a holy man. Once a woman approached the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz for a brochoh that she should have children. The *Divrei Chaim* said to her, "You are from Tarnow — go to the *kever* of Rav Avigdor. He can help you more than I."

The name Bibelman originated with Horav Avigdor Charif. Its connotation is "Man of the Bible". The Kaiser of Austria, Joseph II of the Hapsburg dynasty, decreed that all Jews adopt a last name. That was in 1787. Since Galicia was under the rulership of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Jews there were compelled to comply with that rule.

My father's mother, Miriam Teichner, nee Bibelman, was born in Tarnow, West Galicia circa 1850. Tarnow is situated approximately fifty miles from Cracow and is a very important city on the Jewish map of Poland and Galicia. All the other members of the Bibelman family were born and bred in Tarnow up to the period of World War II.

THE BACH, HORAV YOEL SIRKIS (1561-1640)

The *Bach* was born in Lublin in 5321¹ (1561). He studied under his father, Rabbi Shmuel Yaffe who was, also, a very wealthy man. He was equally inspired by his mother, Sor'ke. In fact, even though the family name was Yaffe, the Bach called his name Sirkis (Sor'ke's) in honor of his mother who made a tremendous effort to support her husband and her son who were great *Torah* scholars. Rav Shmuel Yaffe lost all his money. If not for his pious wife, he and their son would not have been able to make strides in their Torah learning.

The Bach grew up in Lublin, Poland. *The Maharshal*, Rabbi Shlomo Luria, got to know him and was very impressed with this budding genius. After his Bar Mitzvah, the Bach left Lublin for Brisk, to learn Torah from Rav Zvi Hersh Schor Malzes, a disciple of the *Ramoh*.

Two years later, the Bach left Brisk and traveled to Cracow where he studied under Rav Meshulum Feivish, his relative.

The *Bach* was recognized, while still young, for his great ability and was appointed rav in a number of *kehillos*, among them Mezhubush, Belz, and Brisk. Finally, in 1619, at the age of fifty-eight, he became the Rav of the prestigious *kehilla* of Cracow, and for the next twenty-odd years, he served with distinction. It was in Cracow that he was niftor on the 20TH of Adar and was interred in the ancient cemetery behind the old *Ramoh Shul*. Today, many people visit his kever. One of his masterpieces was the *sefer*, *Bayis Chodesh* whose acronym is *BaCh*.

The *Bach* suffered great poverty for years, until he became the Rav of Cracow. In fact, he was so poor that while being the Rav of Belz, he could not afford to buy candles by whose light he would be able to learn at night. He would learn Torah, by heart, in the dark. Some people thought, for that reason, that he did not learn at night. This created friction between the Bach and the members of the community. They decided to dismiss him after only three years of service in their city.

Simultaneously, a contract for the rabbinical post in Shidlov, Poland arrived. Since it was also a most significant position, the Bach accepted the offer. Immediately after, the Bach and his family left for their new home in Shidlov. This was a stepping stone in his climb to fame and success which he ultimately achieved in great measure.

All in all, the Bach served as the Rav in more than a dozen Polish communities wherein he headed a series of yeshivos. Hundreds of young scholars considered him their mentor. His *Bayis Chodesh*, together with *Bais Yosef* is a main commentary to the Tur.

My Zaida, Rav Ahron Teichner, was a direct, twelfth generation, descendent of the Bach. As was mentioned, the Yahrzeit of the Bach is Adar 20. Other members of the family share the very same Yahrzeit — my sister, Rebetzin Henna Felder was niftor on the 20th of Adar II, and our cousin, Reb Yissochor Zvi Teichner of Bnai Brak was also *niftor* on the 20th of Adar.

THE MAHARSHA

The Zaida, Reb Dovid Kenner of Rimilov, was a descendent of the Maharsha. Maharsha is an acronym of Moreinu Harav Shmuel Eliezer. We do not have too many facts about the Maharsha's background. Some say he was born in Cracow (1555), others give his birthplace as Posen. Rav Reuvan Margulies of Lemberg, who wrote the sefer, *Toldos Odom* about the Maharsha, says that he does not know the sources of their information. Observing the Maharsha's signature we learn that his father's name was Yehuda Halevi for the Maharsha would sign his name, שמואל אליעזר בן משה יהודה הלוי.

The Maharsha was a descendent of Rav Yehuda Hechossid, one of the *Baalei HaTosfos* who descended from Dovid haMelech. Maharsha's mother's name was Gittel who was a scion of the family of the Maharal of Prague.

Maharsha married the daughter of the Gaon, Rav Moshe Aschkenasy Halpern of Posen and his righteous wife, Eidel. Maharsha's mother-in-law founded a yeshiva in her home in which he served as Rosh Yeshiva. This Yeshiva called Hachavuroh Hakedosha, was supported by Eidel for many years. In gratitude, the Maharsha called himself Eidel's. Many of his descendents bear the name Eidels/Eidlis.

After Eidel's demise, the yeshiva ceased to exist. Maharsha then became the Rav of Chelm. When the Maharam Lublin passed away, Maharsha became the *Av Bais Din* of that great city. There, too, he conducted a yeshiva whose students were great *Talmidei Chachomin*. This is where he recorded most of his *chiddushim*. Maharsha was a proponent of the premise that *chiddushei Torah* should be recorded. That is why *chachmei HaTorah* are called Sofrim.

Next, the Maharsha became the *rav* of Ostroha, Poland, a city with a very large Jewish population with many *Torah* scholars. The Yeshiva which he founded attracted thousands of *Talmidim*.¹

Maharsha was a great man who was always the *Rosh HaMedabrim* — the main speaker, at the meetings of the *Vaad Arba Arotzos*, the ruling body of all the Jewish communities. He was responsible for making many improvements in Jewish life in Poland. Acts of loving kindness were an integral part of his life. Above the door to his home

1) Hamodiya

was engraved, "A stranger shall not lodge in the street, I shall open my door to the traveler". (*Iyov* 31; 32)

No doubt the Maharsha was a genius. Thanks to a phenomenal memory, he retained all that he learned. Gemorroh cannot be understood without his explanations. Unfortunately, many of Maharsha's written works were lost. However, those which remained are treasures whose value cannot be estimated. The *Kanfei Yonah* said that without *ruach hakodesh*, it would have been impossible to write such *divrei Torah*.

Maharsha was *niftor* on the fifth day of Kislev, 1631. The Baal Shem Tov gave testimony as to the righteousness of the Maharsha, saying, "If the world would know the *Tzidkus* of the Maharsha, they would lick the dust above his grave."

In 1590, he participated at a session of the Vaad Arba Aratzos (Council of the Four Lands) which pronounced a ban on those who purchase rabbinic office. The *Bach* (Rabbi Yoel Sirkis), in his address said about the Maharsha, "You have in your midst the greatest man of the present generation with whom to consult and deliberate."

On his *matzeivoh*, the Maharsha is described as "A holy man exemplary in his generation whose fame traveled far and wide. His great work was a light to the eyes of the Sages of Israel."

One of the classic works composed by the Maharsha is his *Chidushei Halachos*. It is included in almost every edition of the Talmud together with his *Chidushei Aggados*. It is an indispensable aid in the study of *Gemorrah*, *Rashi* and *Tosfos*.

It is no wonder that the Maharsha is considered the primary Polish commentator to *Tosfos* and the *Talmud*. His incisive analysis of *Talmud* and especially of *Tosfos*, became so popular in Poland that the phrase, "*Tosfos* with *Maharsha*" became synonymous with intensive and accurate *Talmudic* study.

THE KLI YOKOR — 1550-1619

Harav Shlomo Ephraim Lenchitz was born in the city of Lenczyca, Poland. The Jews referred to this city as Lunchitz or Lenchitz, hence the family surname. His name was Ephraim until late in life when he became very ill, and the name Shlomo was added. From then on, he was known as Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Lenchitz.

In his youth, he studied under the Maharshal, Harov Shlomo Luria. At an early age he had already gained a reputation as an outstanding preacher, in which capacity he traveled to Lublin, Lemberg, Jaroslaw and other towns. He became head of a yeshiva in Lemberg when he was already past fifty. He succeeded the Maharal of Prague as *Av Bais Din* and Rosh Hayeshiva until a year before his demise. He addressed the heads of the *Vaad Arba Hoaratzos* (Council of the Four Lands) when they met in Lublin. The Council was composed of three illustrious Rabbis and nine outstanding communal leaders. The Council had powers that had the sanction of the Polish Crown. Therefore, the Jews of Poland had the powers of autonomy until 1764. The Kli Yokor excelled in homiletics and authored a number of *seforim*, the most popular being the *Kli Yokor* and the *Ollelos Ephraim*.

The story of the Kli Yokor's origins is a fascinating one.¹

The Kli Yokor was born in a dungeon! His father, Rabbi Aharon, was an innkeeper in the city of Lunchitz, Poland. The local *Poritz* rented the *Arenda* (inn) to him. The entire village and its surroundings belonged to the *Poritz*. At first, Rabbi Aharon made a good living, but later his luck changed, and his business became a losing proposition. The situation, ultimately, became so desperate, that there was hardly a morsel of bread to be found in his home. In the meantime, the deadline for payment of the annual fee for renting the inn was rapidly approaching. When he failed to appear with the money, the order was given to throw Rabbi Aharon and his wife into the dungeon where they would surely die of hunger. Rabbi Aharon begged the servants of

1) *Hamodiya*

the *Poritz* to take pity on them, especially because his wife was expecting their first child — but to no avail. Their pleas fell on deaf ears. They were mercilessly flung into a deep, dark dungeon— where they surely would have perished were it not for one man who took pity on them. One of the servants happened to be quite friendly with Rabbi Aharon. Once when he was in trouble, Rabbi Aharon helped him out of a serious situation. The servant said he would never forget Rabbi Aharon's beneficence.

When Rabbi Aharon and his wife were flung into the dungeon, that same servant decided that he could not stand by and watch them perish. Every night, the servant secretly brought a loaf of bread and a jug of water to the prisoners who were so grateful to him for saving their lives.

Within a short period of time, the young woman gave birth, in the dungeon, to a healthy baby boy. On his eighth day, their benefactor brought a sharp knife to Rabbi Aharon who proceeded to perform a *Bris Miloh* on the baby.

Meanwhile, the *Poritz* was reminded of his forlorn prisoners, and he sent a servant to place the corpses in a coffin and to give it over to the Jews of the town for burial. When he entered the dungeon to retrieve the bodies, he was shocked to see them sitting on the ground alive and well and the woman holding a baby in her arms! When the *Poritz* heard this report he could hardly believe it. He decided to go and check out the situation himself. When he saw that whatever he was told was true, he asked Rabbi Aharon how it happened that they remained alive. Rabbi Aharon replied, "Hashem has not forsaken me and has supplied me with my needs. He has kept me alive and even blessed me with a beautiful child."

The *Poritz* was dumfounded! He stood frozen to the spot. A few silent moments followed, and then the *Poritz* came up with a suggestion: "Give me the child for I am childless, I'll raise him as my very own. You, too, will benefit — you can have your inn rent — free for the rest of your life, and you will be prosperous. Rabbi Aharon and his wife thought the matter over carefully and decided to go along with the plan. They figured the *Poritz* could take the child away from them easily. This way, the child would remain alive and hopefully,

1) from "Der Maharal Fun Prague" (Menachem Mendel)

with time, they would be able to retrieve him from the hands of the Poritz.

Unfortunately, both the young mother and her husband passed away only a short time later, and little Ephraim remained in the home of the squire not knowing that he was a *yiddish kindt*.

The child, Ephraim, grew up in the home of the Poritz, and since he was given every educational opportunity, he was famous for his knowledge and brilliance. At the approach of his *Bar Mitzvah*, he began to regularly dream of an old Jew who identified himself as his father. The man told him that he was his real father, and that he was a Jewish child. Soon he would become *Bar Mitzvah*, and all the laws of the Torah would be incumbent upon him.

The boy still thought that those were only dreams and that which he dreamt was unreal, until the night when the dream recurred and this time his father told him, "It is the day of your Bar Mitzvah, I am taking you to Prague and will deposit you next to the *Bais Midrosh*. In the morning, when the *Shammos* comes to open up, tell him to bring you to the Rav. Tell the Rav, that I, Aharon of Lunchitz have sent you to him to put on *tefillin* and to learn Torah with the Rav.

When the lad awoke, he saw that he was right near a large Bais Midrash. Since it was still night, he sat down on the steps until day-break. The *shammos* arrived and as requested, brought Ephraim to the Rav, the Maharal of Prague.

The Maharal put *tefillin* on the boy and brought him into his yeshiva where the Maharal, himself, began to teach him the aleph-bais. Since he was such a genius, it took the boy but a few months until he was one of the best talmidim of the yeshiva.

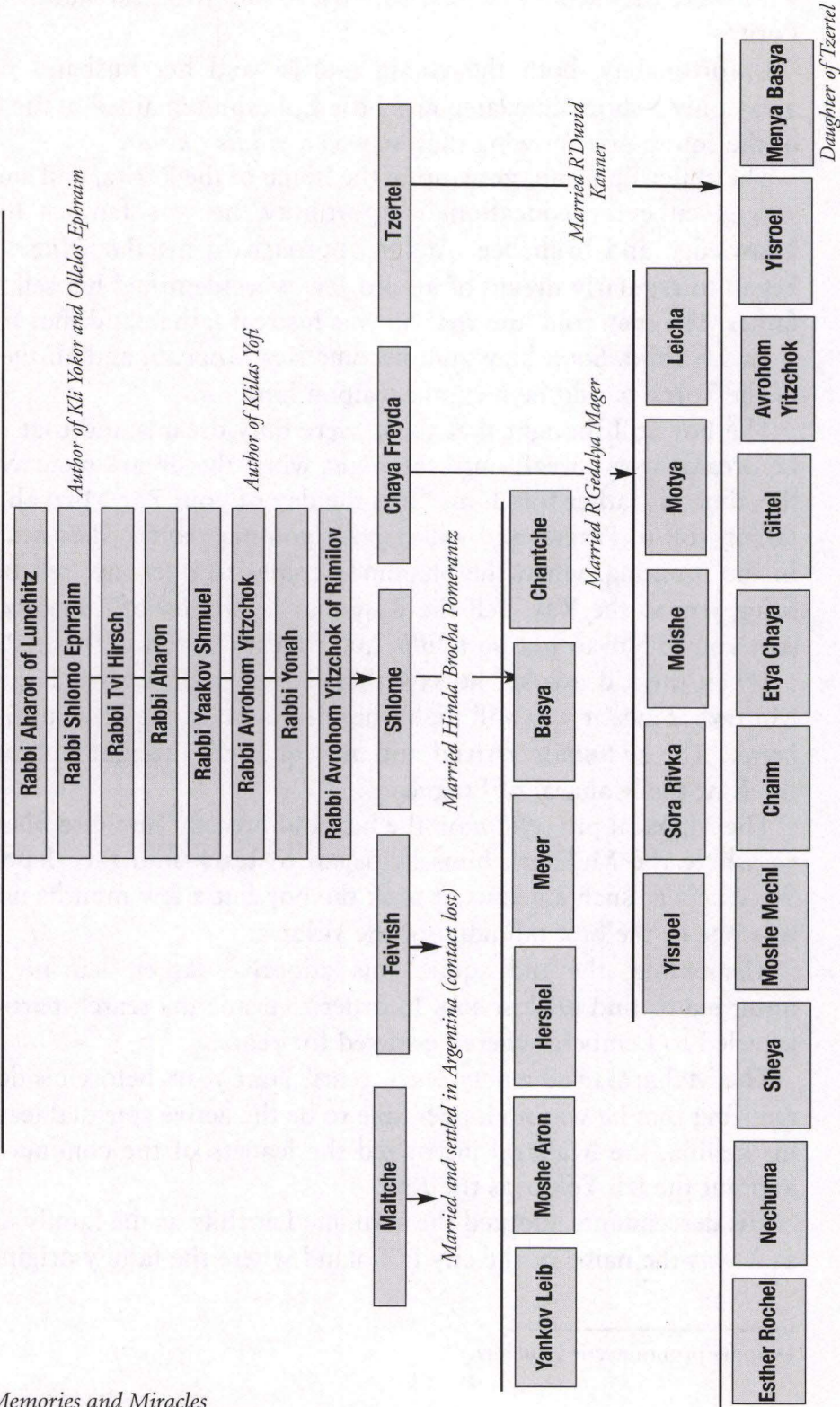
Meanwhile, the old squire, his adoptive father, left no stone unturned to find his lost son. In order to evade the search parties, he traveled to Lemberg where he stayed for years.

The Maharal lived ninety-seven years. Four years before his demise, realizing that he was no longer able to be the active spiritual leader of his kehilla, the Maharal instructed the leaders of the community to appoint the Kli Yokor as the *Rav*.

His descendants adopted the surname Lenchitz as the family name¹, as it was the name of the city in Poland where the family originated.

1) Some pronounce it Lunchitz.

According to the sefer, Klilas Yofi, the following is the order of the descendants of the Kli Yokor:



Our great-grandfather from both sides, mine and my husband's was Reb Avrohom Yitzchok Lenchitz who lived in Rimilov, Poland all his life. He was a direct descendent of the holy Kli Yokor.

THE REBBE REB SHLOIME LUTZKER, A.K.A. THE SKUHLER MAGGID

After the passing of the holy Baal Shem Tov, the leadership of the Chassidic Movement passed on to the Great Maggid, the Rebbe Reb Baer of Mezritch. The group of followers of the Maggid was known as the *Chevraya Kaddisha* of which the Rebbe Reb Shloime of Lutzk, also known as the Skuhler Maggid, was an outstanding disciple. Rebbe Reb Shloime was related to the Great Maggid, and he also served him and studied privately under him. His was the lofty task of spreading the teachings of his Master. In 5544 (1784) he published the sefer, *Maggid D'vorov L'Yaakov* and *Likutei Amorim* in 1781.

He said of the Great Maggid¹ "We despair of conveying the greatness and the holy level of the Rebbe, our master and teacher. Even if we were to tell of them, who would believe in the wondrous miracles that he performed, or the efficacy of his prayer?"

Rebbe, Reb Shloime, originally from Lutzk, Ukraine, served as the Maggid — preacher of Koretz, Ostroh and at the end of his life in the city of Skuhl. He spent his last years in Skuhl in order to assist his late brother's wife to raise her orphaned children.

The Rebbe, Reb Shloime, authored his famous sefer, *Divras Shloime*. The word *Divras* is an acronym of Talmid Rabbeinu Dov Ber, דברת — תלמיד רבינו דוב בער.

Some of the greatest *Tzaddikim* of the generation lauded this holy work — among them, the Chozeh of Lublin, the Rebbe Sar Sholom of Belz and the Rizhener who proclaimed that anyone possessing the *Sefer Divras Shloime* would benefit greatly.

For some reason, Rebbe R'Shloime was denied the privilege of being the leader of many *chassidim*. As a matter of fact, he had only one

1) The House of Rizhin (R' Menachem Breyer)

talmid. By divine inspiration, the Great Maggid predicted that Reb Shloime would have only one disciple whose greatness would be equal to that of very many followers combined! Indeed, that *talmid* was the Sar Shalom of Belz — founder of the dynasty of the Rebbes of Belz.

The Sar Shalom was an orphan. His father passed away when he was a young boy. His Mother's brother, Rav Yissochor Dov, was the *Av Bais Din* of the *Kehilla* of Skuhl. He took the young boy into his home and raised him to be a great talmid chochom and a tzaddik. Because of his unique accomplishments in Torah scholarship and his acquisition of a great measure of *Yiras Shomayim*, Rav Yissochor Dov took the Sar Shalom as his son-in-law, a husband for his righteous daughter, Malka. At that time, Rebbe R' Shloime Lutzker was the *maggid* of Skuhl. The Sar Shalom began to frequent the home of the *maggid* to gain the knowledge of the teachings of the Maggid of Mezritch.

The Sar Shalom said that he heard from a number of sages of the generation that the Rebbe R' Shloime was worthy of being the *Moshiach*.

His demise took place on the tenth of Shevat תקע"ג, 5573 (1813).

Our Zaida, Reb Duvid Kanner, was his descendant.

קדושא * בנור קדושת שם תפארתו מה' יעקב יצחק וליה מרדכי

1. המחיר של המוצר
 2. המיקום של המוצר
 3. הזמינות של המוצר
 4. ההבטחה של המוצר
 5. ההבטחה של המוצר
 6. ההבטחה של המוצר
 7. ההבטחה של המוצר
 8. ההבטחה של המוצר
 9. ההבטחה של המוצר
 10. ההבטחה של המוצר

[Faint handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

Upper, by the Holy Chozeh of Lublin. Lower, by the Holy Rizhiner.

Our Ancestors

MY PATERNAL GRANDFATHER

Rav Aharon Teichner
 was a 12th generation
 descendent of
The Bach
Rav Yoel Sirkis

MY PATERNAL GRANDMOTHER

Miriam Teichner
 nee Bibelman
 was descended from
Rav Shamshon
Ostropolier
(Dovid Hamelech)
 and
Rav Avigdor "Charif"
Bibelman

MY MATERNAL GRANDFATHER

Reb Duvid Kanner
 was descended from
The Maharsha
(Dovid Hamelech)
 and
Rav Shloime Lutzkger
 a.k.a. **The Skuler Maggid**

MY MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER

Tzertel Kanner
 nee Lenchitz
 a 7th generation
 descendent of
The Kli Yokor
 a.k.a.
Rav Shlomo Ephraim
Lenchitz

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

What's in a Name?

MANY HAVE THIS QUESTION. Some people come to the conclusion that there is no special significance in a name. When a child is born to secular parents, they might study lists of names and then choose one to their liking. They then decide on a name that is popular for their particular generation. They certainly do not feel obliged to name their child for a deceased relative.

However, amongst Torah-observant Jews, finding the proper name takes on a very special significance. Many *chassidim* will ask their Rebbes to decide on a name for their children. Rabbi J.I. Schochet author of *The Great Maggid* quotes Rabbi Reb Dov Ber of Mezritch who says that "Parents are guided by the Hand of the One Above in making a proper choice when naming their new-born child". The Maggid explains further, "Personal names are not acquired accidentally, or simply because the parents wish to confer a certain name. The Holy One, blessed is He, inspires the parents with a spirit of wisdom and knowledge to call their child by the name which corresponds to the very root of its soul". Rabbi Dov Ber says that that is why a person is aroused when called by his name (even when he is pre-occupied

מניח דבריו ויעקב

הזכר

הזכר לבית הרומם נשיאת עינא בקיחא על עיני מידור
המפר' הה' הה' הרבני המופלג בחורה וביראה
ובחמירו' מו' שלמה נמו' הורה' מלו' ציק' שלם' כעלו' מ' מ' ש'

גדלם בה קק קארעץ

תחת' ממלכת ארזינו אמרום הגדול המסיד הדוכס יורק
טארס אריסקי טאלניק ליעטלפקי טאלרהבני' לאצקי יר"ה
ברפוס' המשותפים ה"ה מו' צני היזש בהרצני מו' ארית ליב יצ"ו
ותתנו ה"ה מוהרר שטאל' זמלה' ישכר בער סג"ל

בשנת מגיד דביו ליעקב חוקיו ומשפטיו ליעקב-אל לפ"ה

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or sleeping) for one's name is related to one's very soul. Religious Jews attach tremendous importance to a name.

According to the *Artscroll Siddur*, in the section for *Bris Milah*, I found a profound and meaningful statement, "The spiritual destiny of a person is contained in his name".

The Sheloh Hakodesh states that the name is the lifeline of the person through which one receives all divine blessings.

In his *Sefer Hagilgulim*, the Arizal states that when a baby is born, and his father and mother give him a name, Hashem places in their mouths the name which fits this particular soul. He should not forget that name, ever. Even after one hundred and twenty years of life, a person needs to remember his name. The Sheloh Hakodesh tells of a seguloh which can help a person to remember his name and that is at the end of *Shmoneh Esrai*, before the words **יהיו לרצון אמרי פי** he should say a posuk beginning with the first letter of his name and ending with the last letter of his name.

The name a person has has a definite influence on its bearer or his progeny as the *Gemorroh Brochos 7b* tells us that Rus was called by her particular name because it had an influence on Dovid Hamelech her descendent — as it says, **מאי רות** -Why the name Rus?

אמר ר' יוחנן שזכתה ויצא

ממנה דוד שריוהו להקב"ה בשירות ותשבחות דשמא גרים

She merited having as one of her progeny — Dovid, who saturated Hashem with songs of praise because of the influence of her name.

Rav Chayim Sonnenfeld had always been an energetic person. It is told that when his teacher, Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin, once complimented him upon this trait he immediately retorted, "The Rebbe made me energetic." "How is that?" Rav Yehoshua Leib wondered.

"Does the Rebbe not recall," Rav Chayim replied, "that upon my arrival in this country I became critically ill, so ill that the Rebbe added the name "Yosef" to my own, Chayim, in the hope that Hashem would bless me with added years of life? The numerical sum of these names is identical to that of *zariz*, which means quick and alert. We find in holy works that a person's name plays an important role in his character development".¹⁾

1) From the book, "The Heavenly City" by Menachem Gerlitz

Chazal teach us that the reason the Children of Israel merited redemption from the Egyptian exile was that they held on tenaciously to their Jewish identity by retaining their Jewish names. They, therefore, were able to keep the Jewish chain unbroken.

I was present at a sermon given by Rav Gelley, the spiritual leader of K'hal Adath Yeshurun of Washington Heights, where he quoted the Chazon Ish that it is a *z'chus* for parents to give a name from the weekly *Parasha*, and that it is also a *z'chus* for a *niftor* to have a child named for him.

On the ninth of Shevat, 5761, while attending the Bris Milah of my great-great nephew, Moshe Felder, I heard the grandfather, Mr. A. Ettlinger, quote a Maharal who says that the name one gives the baby at his *Bris* is the very same name that Hashem gives him in the heavens above.

Parents should, if possible, give the newborn child the exact name of the *niftor* and not change it or translate it from Yiddish to Hebrew, for then it is really not the same name after all, and the purpose of allowing a *z'chus* for the *niftor* might be defeated. In certain cases, however, it is not always possible to give the exact name. Under such circumstances, one should seek the advice and guidance of a *godol* and name the child according to his directions.

I recently read an interesting story in an old edition of *Dos Yiddishe Licht*¹. A chossid once came to his Rebbe, the tzaddik, Rebbe Dovid Moishe of Chortkov to ask his advice. His late wife had given birth to several children who did not live long. He had recently remarried, and they were expecting a blessed event. Would the Rebbe advise him as to what name to call the baby that would dispel the *Ruach Ro'oh* and ensure long life for this child?

The Rebbe thought for a while and then gave the following answer. "When the time comes, give the child its name, one that you will find in the portion of the week." The child was born during the week of Poroshas Nosso. The father could not find a name for his daughter in that *sidrah*. Not knowing what to do, the *Yid* approached a *Godol hador* and told him what the Chortkover Rebbe had said. The *Godol* then started searching through the poroshoh. In the haftorah — *Sefer Shoftim*, Perek 13. Shimshon and his parents are mentioned — his

1) P. Vayishlach 5,746

father, Monoach and his mother — but her name is not mentioned. The Rav suddenly remembered that in *Gemorrhah, Bava Basra*, 91, the name of Shimshon's mother is mentioned — “Tzellponis”. The Rav instructed the *Yid* to go ahead and give the name to his new-born daughter.

A few days later, the Rav delved into the *Gemorroh* which he mentioned and found an explanation of the Maharshal. “Tzellelponis was the mother of Shimshon. She is mentioned in *Divrei Hayomim* at the end of the *yichus* of *Shevet Yehuda*, and that name (Tzellponis) is a protection against a *Ruach Ro'oh*.”

The Rav was extremely impressed with the *Ruach Hakodesh* of the *Tzaddik* of Chortkov.

Father loved his name. He referred to himself as “Berish”. I often heard him say, “I have a *shem Koidesh* (Yissochor Dov) and I have a *shem chol* (Berish). He would use both names in his signature, Yissochor Dov Berish. However, when Father was called up to the Torah, only the name Yissocher Dov was used.

Father spelled his name *ישכר* and not *יששכר*. That is the way his grandfather and namesake spelled it. In the sefer *Nachlas Shiva* written by Rav Shmuel ben Rav Dovid Halevi, *talmid* of the Taz, it states that both spellings are correct.

At the Pidyon Haben of my grandson, Yissochor Dov Schwab, we had the privilege of having the great grandfather, Rav Shimon Schwab¹ ז”ל and his brother, Rav Mordcha Schwab², *zatzal*, gracing the table. Rav Shimon Schwab, in his address, gave his own original interpretation of the combined name Yissochor and Dov: In *Birkas Yaakov*, Yehuda was compared to a lion — *Gur Aryeh Yehuda*, and Naftali was compared to a deer, *Naftali Ayoloh Shluchoh*. Therefore, many named Yehuda are also called Leib (lion), and those called Naftali, also, often have the name Tzvi attached to it. But Yissochor is mentioned together with a donkey — *Yissochor Chamor Gorem*. One cannot combine the name Yissocher with a donkey. The name Dov, therefore, is used instead, for the following reason: Yissochor is combined with Dov because Dov is an acronym of *Daioh U'vinah* (meaning knowledge and understanding), for these are the character-

1) Rav of K'hal Adath Jeshurun of Washington Heights

2) of Mesivta Bais Shraga - Monsey, New York

istics inherent in *Talmidei Chachomim* who are represented by Shevet Yissochor. They are *Yodei Veenoh*, scholars who use *Beenoh* (understanding) *l'ittim* (at all times) in order to (adjudicate) *pasken the sheilos* of *Klal Yisroel*.

What a perfect match, then, for Yissochor to be combined with Dov — each one representing vast *Torah* knowledge. What a fitting name for Father whose only goal in life was to learn *Torah* and to observe its *Mitzvos*. What tremendous efforts he invested in *Horoah* in particular, and what admiration he had for those *rabbonim* who excelled in that speciality of clarity in the knowledge of *Piskei Halochah* and the application of that knowledge to real-life situations. Father was especially fond of Rav Moishe Bick *z"l* and held him in high esteem for his expertise in that field. Rav Bick was from the city of Mezhibush in the Ukraine. Father used to say that the *Rabbonim* of the Ukraine were especially expert in the field of *Horoah*. He would often confer with Rav Bick regarding various *shailos*, and he always came away completely satisfied with the results of those meetings.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Newfound Relatives

FATHER HAD AN ON-GOING CORRESPONDENCE with his first cousin, once removed — Reb (Yissochor) Zvi Teichner of B'nai B'rak. They had met as young children in Bardiov, Hungary, where Zvi Teichner was born and bred, and again as young men in Vienna where Father lived. They still maintained contact even after Father had emigrated to America and Reb Zvi to Eretz Yisroel after having lived for a number of years in Berlin. They never saw each other again after their last meeting in Vienna, yet “Blood is thicker than water”, and a spirit of brotherliness enveloped them and passed down to future generations.

After Father passed away, I did not want that special relationship that existed between him and Reb Zvi to be lost. I decided that I would continue to write to him several times a year just as Father had done. In fact, it was because of that on-going relationship that Reb Zvi was inspired to visit the kever of my grandfather, Rav Aron Teichner, who was his great uncle. In one of my letters to Reb Zvi, I had told him that we were instrumental in erecting a new monument over my Zaida's grave on the Har Hazaisim. The original one was gone. We do not know for sure, but our guess is that it was removed by the Arabs who had vandalized the graves on the Mount of Olives



This is a picture of R. Zvi Teichner's parents, Golda Kohn nee Teichner (R. Zvi took his mother's maiden name) and R' Shimon Kohn. Golda's father, Reb Abraham Teichner was a melamed in Bardiev. He was a brother to my zaida, Rav Aron Teichner. My brother, Duvid, met some old men who told him that Reb Avrohom Teichner was their Rebbe.

when they were in control. Reb Zvi wrote back that he was going to visit Zaida's grave. Afterwards, he sent us a picture of himself at the gravesite. It was a good feeling and a comfort for him to have been there because up until then he did not know where Zaida's final resting place was. Reb Zvi wrote that when he arrived in Eretz Yisroel in 1933, he tried to find his great uncle — my zaida, in Yerusholayim. He was told that Zaida had only recently passed away just a short while before Reb Zvi and his family arrived in Eretz Yisroel. Now, by visiting his kever, he had come full circle.

On Adar 20, Reb Zvi passed quietly away in his sleep, after making *Kiddush* Friday night, at the ripe old age of 94 years. His son, Reb Avrohom Teichner wrote us the sad news. It is interesting to note: The Teichners are direct descendants of Rav Yoel Sirkes also known as the BACH which is an abbreviation of his sefer *Bayis Chodesh*. The BACH passed away on the twentieth of Adar — the same date as the Yahrzeit of Reb Zvi and also of my late sister, Rebbetzin Henna Felder of Toronto, Canada.

Even after the passing of Reb Zvi, the correspondence between the Teichners of B'nai B'rak and us continued. Reb Avrohom and his wife, Yaffa, kept up their contact with us.

A few years later, their daughter, Miriam Lieder, won a free trip to America. We hosted her for a Shabbos, and what a Shabbos it was! We could not stop talking about our roots. We had so many stories to tell each other. In the course of our conversation, I told Miriam about my Grandmother, Miriam Teichner nee Bibelman. She said, "That's interesting — I have an uncle through marriage, my Father's sister's husband, whose name is Shimon Bibelman. They live in Ramat Gan."

That is how Shimon Bibelman and I found each other. We were second cousins, and we had never met! His father lived in Tarnow, the seat of the Bibelman family and he had passed away in his twenties. He was my father's first cousin, but they did not know each other. Shimon Bibelman's wife was also related to me since she was a nee Teichner.

Shimon and I began corresponding, and a great friendship developed, albeit a short one. Fortunately, we had the privilege of meeting him and his wife on our trip to Eretz Yisroel in 1990. A few short years later, both Shimon and Yaffa Bibelman passed away, one right after the other. They were both in their seventies.

In one of Shimon's letters, he mentioned that he had heard that there were Bibelmans living in Copenhagen, Denmark. Now, anyone with the name Bibelman is definitely our relative since the name originated in our family. It was the name taken by Harav Avigdor Bibelman who was the *Rosh Bais Din* of the famous Polish (West Galician) city of Tarnow.

One thing led to another — Rav Gelley's daughter was staying in our house when her parents were on vacation. She overheard me talking about Bibelmans, and she said, "My father had a few Bibelman boys as Talmidim in Sunderland. One of them was Avigdor Bibelman." Now, I knew, for sure, that I was on the right track. I also asked Mr. Norbert Hellmann about the Bibelman family because he had lived in Copenhagen after the war. Mr. Hellmann told me that he had taught two Bibelman children in Copenhagen! I later discovered that they were closely related to me.

For a while I lost my way attempting to track them down until one day, while on a short vacation in Lakewood, New Jersey, we met a young Englishman, a Mr. Leib Mandel, who hailed from London. Out of curiosity, I asked him, "By any chance, do you happen to know a Mr. Bibelman in London?" He replied, "Of course, I see him every day!" I promptly wrote a short note for Mr. Bibelman telling him who

I was. A little while later, Theo Bibelman called me from London, and we got acquainted over the phone. We decided then and there, that on their next visit to New York, we would meet with Theo and Eveyln Bibelman. That wish was realized a few short months later. What a wonderful experience it was! We have had contact with these old/new relatives ever since.

It warms our hearts to know that these new-found relatives are all *shomrei Torah U'Mitzvos*, and we are very proud to claim that we are connected.

Our cousin, Rav Shimon Teichner, a grandson of Reb Zvi Teichner, told us how happy his uncle (my cousin), Shimon Bibelman was, that he had discovered us. He was always under the impression that he had virtually no relatives except for his immediate family.¹

Suddenly he acquired a sizeable group of relatives. That was a great consolation to him before he passed on.

1) His parents were deceased and his only sibling, his brother, perished in the Holocaust.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Another Miracle

WEDNESDAY, THE 16TH OF TAMMUZ, 5759, June 30th, was a very hot day. Life in the Loewi family¹ was settling down after the June 21st *chasunah* of Yissocher Dov² and Goldy. Miriam Loewi decided to take her nine-year old, Avrohom Yitzchok³, to her friend's pool for his regular swim. He loves this sport, and he is an excellent swimmer.

Mrs. Malka Schreiber⁴ always makes her friends and neighbors welcome and very graciously allows them the use of her pool. There is one rule, however. Every child must be accompanied by his mother who has to watch him while he swims.

Another boy who frequents this same pool is the then eleven-year old Reuven Mashitz. Reuven had chanced upon a swimming and life-saving manuel the night before and studied the methods of life-saving which challenged his curiosity. He did not imagine, then, that he would, very soon, be called upon to employ those very same methods! Reuvain decided, too, to go swimming on that fateful day.

1) Our daughter, Miriam and her husband, Shloima

2) Their B'chor

3) Their youngest child

4) Miriam's neighbor in Monsey, N.Y.

While enjoying his swim, Avrohom Yitzchok decided to play a certain water game which proved to be almost fatal. The result was that he was drowning. At that very moment, Reuven dove to the bottom of the pool and noticed him. At first glance, he did not suspect that anything was amiss. However, he soon realized that Avrohom Yitzchok was not moving! He attempted to pull him up and out of the water, but could not muster enough energy to do so since he is a thin boy and Avrohom Yitzchok is rather hefty for his age. With a sudden, miraculous burst of energy, he succeeded in his second attempt. As soon as he surfaced with the victim in tow, he cried out for help. All the mothers who were sitting at the side of the pool sprang into action. They were all screaming!

Hashem Yisborach, as usual, prepared the *refuoh* before the *makkoh*. Joe Knip, a handyman, had just arrived that very day, at Malka Schreiber's home to do some work. Upon hearing the cries and commotion, he ran out back to the pool and immediately started doing CPR on the child and successfully restored his breathing. This, too was miraculous because Mr. Knip had learned this life-saving technique many years before. Incidentally, Miriam had discovered the talented Mr. Knips years before. When she recognized his abilities, she shared the fact with all her friends. This, kept him in the Forshay neighborhood of Monsey indefinitely, up until that very day.

The call went out to Hatzolah and was answered immediately. Avrohom Yitzchok was taken to the closest hospital in Suffern. Observing his critical condition, they were advised to transfer him, by helicopter, to Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, New York. Seven minutes later, upon his arrival there, he was diagnosed as being very much in danger. They said that they would only know, after seventy-two hours, to what extent damage was done.

Would he live? If so, would his brief loss of oxygen cause permanent brain damage, mild or extensive? These were the questions that plagued family and friends — questions that even the great specialists were unable to answer. Only time would tell.

Avrohom Yitzchok's close relatives and friends rallied around him. His parents, especially, were there for him, unfailingly, staying in close proximity day and night. And the *tefillos* went on, accompanied by the hopes for his complete recovery. There were a number of problems that cropped up, but miracle of miracles, after seventy-two hours, his

improvement was rapid and remarkable. He soon returned home from the hospital, and there were daily changes for the better. In no time, he was back to his usual routine with no restrictions! The *Yad Hashem* was evident every step of the way.

A short time later, Miriam and Shloima Loewi sponsored a festive *seudas hodo'oh* to express, in public, their gratitude for the *Chasdei Hashem* in sparing and restoring to life, their youngest child. Shloima expressed his *Hakoras Hatov* to the Monsey branch of *Hatzolah* and to Reuven Mashitz for being the *shlichim* for saving a precious life. We, the grandparents, presented Reuven with a beautiful *sefer* about the Bais Hamikdosh. In the *z'chus* of his courageous act, may he be *zocheh* to see the *Binyan Bais Hamikdosh*.

To all those who were instrumental, through action and through prayer, in this divine service of *Hatzolas Nefesh*, we shall be eternally grateful.

And, now at Avrohom Yitzchok's Bar Mitzvah¹, we had but another reason to rejoice and be thankful.

“הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו”

1) *Shabbos Hagadol*, 5763

In Conclusion

ON SHABBOS, POROSHAS BAMIDBAR, 5765, Rav Gelley mentioned in his *deroshoh* that every Yid should write a *sefer yuchasin* describing his parents and their goals and aspirations in life.

”מצוה לשמוע דברי חכמים”

It is a mitzvah to follow the teachings of our sages. I hope that by writing this book, I have fulfilled that obligation to some degree.

Mere words do not suffice to describe the ultimate endeavors of my parents, but perhaps one can, somehow, derive a bit of a “taste” of what they aimed for in their sojourn on Earth.

I am very grateful to the One Above for so many favors that I have been granted in life; for my righteous parents and illustrious forebears, for my husband, children, siblings, and mechutonim, for my teachers and principals and for my wonderful friends, especially those of my youth, whose friendship has endured for decades.

I have gained immeasurably from all my teaching experience in various schools and from their students “ומתלמידי יותר מכלם” from the Bais Yaakov High School under Rebetzen Kaplan ז”ל, the Bais Yaakov Elementary School and Esther Schonfeld High School on the

Lower East Side under Rabbi Yisroel Garber, Beth Jacob High School of the (Breuer's) Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch under Rabbi Joseph Elias, Mr. Jacob Breuer ז"ל and Mrs. Miriam Tropper and as principal of the Bais Esther Sanz-Klausenberg Elementary School of Boro Park, Brooklyn. Being head-counselor of Camp Emunah in its early stages and director of *Sheurim* at Camp Chedvah, also enriched my "treasure-trove", of *chinuch* experience. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have gained so much from it.

Living in Washington Heights for most of my life is indeed a privilege. The values taught by the *Rabbonim* of our *Kehilla*¹, K'hal Adas Yeshurun, are priceless. In this day and age, when so much emphasis is placed on luxurious living and the emptiness of *Chayei Olam Hazei*, the attitudes and practices here are absolutely refreshing! My Father used to say, "One can learn a lot from them".

Rav Breuer, ז"ל, arrived on the North American continent before the outbreak of World War II at an age when most people are preparing for retirement. Realizing the seriousness of the moment and the necessity of the hour, Rav Breuer threw himself into the task of rebuilding the Frankfurt *Kehilla* on these shores, thereby strengthening *Yiddishkeit* for so many others as well.

Rav Breuer gave his lifeblood to this holy task and was duly rewarded with great success and length of days, having reached the ripe age of ninety-eight years. Rav Breuer's motto was מעלין מעלין בקודש.

I pray that that goal of consistent spiritual improvement will be realized by myself and all those near and dear to me.

1) Rav Levi Yosef Breuer, Rav Shimon Schwab and YLCHT, Rav Zacharya Gelly.

To my dear friends, Stanley and Erid LIND,

It is a pleasure and privilege to enjoy
your friendship! May it endure for many
more good years. With every good wish,

From
Agertel Kennes

