

# Exhibit A

**DR. MICHAEL BERENBAUM**

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February 22, 2000

Professor Harry Reicher  
Agudath Israel World Organization  
84 William Street  
New York, New York 10038

Dear Professor Reicher:

I have been asked to render judgment as to what percentage of the victims of the Holocaust were Orthodox Jews. This cannot be established with precision since no such records exist.

It must be said that the Nazis targeted all Jews – men, women and children. They did not differentiate between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox, between secular and religious, Zionist and non-Zionist, assimilated Jews or socialists, even those of Jewish ancestry who had converted to another religion. The Nazis aimed to destroy Jewish blood not just Jewish faith.

I believe that we can say with certainty that a majority of the Jews who were murdered were Orthodox. In some areas, Orthodox Jews were an overwhelming majority of the population.

Permit me to tell you how I arrived at this estimate.

Jews were killed in each of the countries the Germans occupied and in many of the countries allied with Germany. In Western Europe, Orthodox Jews were a minority of the population. In Germany, they constituted some 15-20 percent of the population. In France, Orthodox Jews constituted some 25 percent. But in Eastern Europe, the percentage of Orthodox Jews was far larger.

In Poland for example, the Jewish population of the city was diverse. Even there, Orthodox Jews constituted a majority of the older generation and probably one third of the younger generation. Yet in rural areas, the small towns, villages and hamlets, at least four in five Jews were Orthodox, and in some areas more than nine in ten. In Poland alone, three million Jews were killed, 50 percent of all Jews killed in the Holocaust. The more rural the Jews, the larger were the percentage of the dead and the greater the number of Orthodox Jews. The elderly had less chance of survival and the older the person, the greater the chance that they were Orthodox.

In Hungary, the killing took place in areas outside of Budapest. In Budapest, Jews were a minority of the population, but in the Carpathian Mountains Orthodox Jews were four in five of the dead, perhaps even 9 in 10. And in Hungary alone 437,402 Jews were sent to

Auschwitz between the 15<sup>th</sup> of May and the 9<sup>th</sup> of July from those areas of Hungary that were predominantly Orthodox. At least three of four of the Jews killed in Hungary were Orthodox. In some areas certainly more.

In areas that had long been under communist rule Orthodox Jews were a significant minority. The older generation was far more Orthodox than the younger generation. The old were victimized in greater numbers and percentages than the youth. The young fled in greater numbers than the elderly. They had greater endurance and were more likely to speak their native language without an accent.

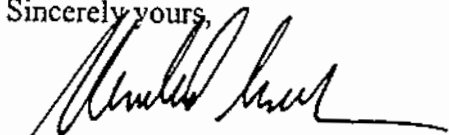
I have also undertaken an exercise with two of former colleagues at the Shoah Foundation, Dr. Michael Nutkiewicz, who has a Ph.D. from UCLA in History, and Dr. Karen Junglutt, our director of cataloging who has a MA. from the Free German University in Berlin. I asked them to review the attached figures of Jewish dead taken from Lucy Dawidowicz's *The War Against the Jews* and estimate the percentage of Orthodox Jews. While we differ in numbers and percentages, we came to the conclusion that the majority, somewhere between 50-70 percent was Orthodox.

Permit me to stress that these are estimates and that an entirely accurate judgment as to the religious identity of the dead is impossible, but this is a good faith effort to arrive at an informed estimate.

Permit me also to stress again that all Jews were targeted, not on the basis of their religious observance but on the Jewish identity of their grandparents. The target was Jewish blood, not Jewish faith.

As to my credentials, attached is a copy of my resume.

Sincerely yours,



Michael Berenbaum

Lucy S. Dawidowicz

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THE WAR  
AGAINST  
THE JEWS  
1933-1945

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(BANTAM BOOKS, NEW YORK, 1975) p 402

*The Final Solution  
in Figures*

No one can establish with certitude the exact number of Jews murdered in the course of the Final Solution. The first estimate, made at the Nuremberg trials in 1945, of 5.7 million Jews killed has been shown by subsequent censuses and statistical analyses to have been remarkably accurate. The data of the 1959 census in the Soviet Union confirm the staggering Jewish losses during World War II.

The Jewish population figures for each country in the following table are estimates of the population within the country's borders at the time the Final Solution began to be carried out.

**ESTIMATED NUMBER OF JEWS KILLED  
IN THE FINAL SOLUTION**

COUNTRY	ESTIMATED PRE-FINAL SOLUTION POPULATION	ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION ANNIHILATED	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Poland	3,300,000	3,000,000	90
Baltic countries	253,000	228,000	90
Germany/Austria	240,000	210,000	90
Protectorate	90,000	80,000	89
Slovakia	90,000	75,000	83
Greece	70,000	54,000	77
The Netherlands	140,000	105,000	75
Hungary	650,000	450,000	70
SSR White Russia	375,000	245,000	65
SSR Ukraine*	1,500,000	900,000	60
Belgium	65,000	40,000	60
Yugoslavia	43,000	26,000	60
Rumania	600,000	300,000	50
Norway	1,800	900	50
France	350,000	90,000	26
Bulgaria	64,000	14,000	22
Italy	40,000	8,000	20
Luxembourg	5,000	1,000	20
Russia (RSFSR)*	975,000	107,000	11
Denmark	8,000	—	—
Finland	2,000	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,861,800</b>	<b>5,933,900</b>	<b>67</b>

\* The Germans did not occupy all the territory of this republic.

# MICHAEL BERENBAUM

*curriculum vitae*

September 1, 1999

**Home Address:** 2101 Hillsboro Avenue  
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Los Angeles, California 90067-4784

**Phone Numbers:** 310 559-6353 (h) 310 557-3484 (w)  
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**Social Security #:** 069-36-2938

**Date of Birth:** July 31, 1945 Newark, New Jersey

**E mail:** berenbaum@vhf.org

**Personal Status:** married (Melissa Patack 6/25/95) three children  
(Ilana 26, Lev 21, Joshua b. December 1998).

## EDUCATION:

Queens College, 1963-67; A.B. (Philosophy) 1967.  
Jewish Theological Seminary, 1963-67.  
Hebrew University, 1965-66.  
Boston University, 1967-69, (Philosophy).  
Florida State University, 1971-75, Ph.D.  
(Humanities: Religion and Culture), 1975.

## EMPLOYMENT RECORD:

Ida E. King Distinguished Visiting Professor of Holocaust Studies, Richard Stockton College 1999-2000.

Consultant in the conceptual development of museums and the historical development of films; Writer and lecturer.

President and Chief Executive Officer -- Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, 1997-1999. Currently acting as consultant.

Professor of Theology [Adjunct -- The University of Judaism, 1998-present.

Director -- The United States Holocaust Research Institute of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1993-1997.

Project Director -- U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1988-93.

Research Fellow -- U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1987-1988.

Hymen Goldman Professor of Theology [Adjunct] -- Department of Theology, Georgetown University, 1983-1997.

Editor, *Together*, 1986-89.

Senior Scholar -- Religious Action Center, 1986-88.

Adjunct Professor of Judaic Studies -- American University, 1987.

Opinion Page Editor -- Washington Jewish Week, 1983-86, (Acting Editor 1985).

Executive Director -- Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington, 1980-83.

Visiting Professor of Hebrew Studies -- University of Maryland, 1983.

Associate Professorial Lecturer -- Department of Religion, George Washington University, 1981-83.

Deputy Director -- President's Commission on the Holocaust, 1979-80.

Adjunct Assistant Professor of Religion and University Jewish Chaplain -- Wesleyan University, 1973-80.

Associate Director -- Zachor: The Holocaust Resource Center, 1978.

Instructor -- Department of Philosophy and Religion, Colby-Sawyer College, 1969-71.

Instructor, Park Avenue Synagogue, New York City 1966-67, 1968-69.

**AWARDS:**

Doctor of Divinity (Honoris Causa) -- Nazareth College of Rochester (May 15, 1995)

Emmy Award: Best Informational Program 1995 -- *One Survivor Remembers: The Gerda Weisman Klein Story*, co-producer.

CableAce Award: Best Educational or Instructional Special or Series -- *One Survivor Remembers: The Gerda Weisman Klein Story*, co-producer.

Charles E. Merrill Fellowship -- Department of Religion, Florida State University, 1972-73.

George Wise Fellowship -- Tel Aviv University, 1974.

Underwood Fellowship -- Danforth Foundation, 1976-77.

Elected Fellowship -- Society for Values in Higher Education, 1977.

Ezra Styles Fellowship -- Yale University, 1979.

Simon Rockower Memorial Award in Jewish Journalism for Distinguished Editorial Writing -- American Jewish Press Association, First Place, 1986.

Simon Rockower Memorial Award in Jewish Journalism for Distinguished Commentary Writing -- American Jewish Press Association, Second Place, 1986.

Simon Rockower Memorial Award in Jewish Journalism for Distinguished Coverage of the Arts -- American Jewish Press Association, 1987.

Editorial Board, *Tikkun, Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies*.

Contributing Editor, *Sh'ma*, Associate, Gannett Center for Media Studies.

## AREAS OF TEACHING AND SCHOLARSHIP

Modern Jewish Theology, Holocaust, Literature and Theology, Ethics, Sociology and Psychology of Religion, Jewish History and Rabbinics.

## PUBLISHED WRITINGS:

### Books:

*The Vision of the Void: Theological Reflections on the Works of Elie Wiesel* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1979). Paperback edition, 1987. Reprinted as *Elie Wiesel: God, The Holocaust, and the Children of Israel* (West Orange: Behrman House, 1994).

*Report to the President*, President's Commission on the Holocaust (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1979).

Editor, *From Holocaust to New Life* (New York: American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, 1985).

Co-editor with John Roth, *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications* (New York: Paragon Books, 1989).

*After Tragedy and Triumph: Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Editor, *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis* (New York: University Press, 1990). Published simultaneously in the United Kingdom by I.B. Tauris.

*The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1993).

Co-editor with Israel Gutman, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

Co-editor with Betty Rogers Rubenstein, *What Kind of God? Essays in Honor of Richard L. Rubenstein* (Lanham: University Presses of America, 1995).

*Witness to the Holocaust: An Illustrated Documentary History of the Holocaust in the Words of Its Victims, Perpetrators and Bystanders* (New York: Harper/Collins, 1997).

Co-editor with Abraham Peck, *The Holocaust and History: The Known, The Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

Co-editor with Michael Neufeld, *Bombing of Auschwitz: Should the Allies Have Attempted It?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

### Articles:

"What Happens When the Good Word Dies?" *Sh'ma* (March 1969).

"Women, Blacks and Jews: Theologians of Survival," *Religion in Life*, (April 1976).



- "The Dialectics of Structure and Anomie: Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber Reconsidered," *Response*, (Winter 1976-77).
- "The Additional Covenant," Irving Greenberg and Alvin Rosenfeld, eds., *Confronting the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).
- "The Ambivalent Jewishness of Jakov Lind," *The Reconstructionist* (April 1978).
- "Theories of the Holocaust," Harry J. Cargas, ed., *Responses to Elie Wiesel* (New York: Persea Books, 1978).
- "The Void at the Ground of Being," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* (Spring 1979).
- A review essay of S. Z. Abramov's *Perpetual Dilemma: Jewish Religion in the Jewish State*, *The Journal of Church and State* (Fall 1979).
- A review essay of Eugene Fisher's *Faith Without Prejudice*, *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Fall 1979).
- "The Holocaust as Commandment," in *Sh'ma* (November 1980).
- "The Centrality of the Holocaust: An Overemphasis?" *The National Jewish Monthly* (October 1980). Translated and reprinted in Hebrew in *Tefutzot*.
- "Reflections on the Process of Learning and Teaching About the Holocaust," *Conservative Judaism* (January 1981).
- A review essay of E. Yonker's *God, Man and the Planetary Age: Preface for a Theistic Humanism*, *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Winter 1981).
- "The Holocaust, Human Rights, and the Jewish Condition," *The Reconstructionist* (April 1981).
- "What We Should Tell Our Children About the Holocaust," *Sh'ma* (May 1981).
- "The Uniqueness and Universality of the Holocaust," *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* (Fall 1981). reprinted in Richard W. Rousseau, S.J., *Christianity and Judaism: The Deepening Dialogue* (Scranton: Ridge Row Press, 1983).
- A review of Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, *Review of Books in Philosophy and Religion* (Fall 1981).
- A review essay on Eugene Fisher and Daniel Polish, eds., *Formation of Social Policy in the Catholic and Jewish Tradition*, *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Fall 1981).
- "Concluding Reflections" with Dr. Mary T. Glynn in Mary T. Glynn, R.S.M. and Geoffrey Bock with Karen Cohn, *American Youth and the Holocaust* (New York: Zachor, 1982).
- A review essay on Yonatan Netanyahu, *Self Portrait of A Hero*, *Conservative Judaism* (Spring 1982).
- "On the Politics of Public Commemoration of the Holocaust," *Shoah* (January 1982).
- "West Bank Peace Plans," *The Washington Post* (April 9, 1982).
- A review essay on Yehoshafat Harkabi, *The Bar Kokhba Syndrome*, in *Reform Judaism*

(December 1982).

"Beyond Recrimination: The War in Lebanon and the Media," *The Jewish Frontier* (April 1983), co-authored with Linda Bayer-Berenbaum.

"A review of Yad Vashem Archives of the Destruction: A Photographic Record, in *Microform Review* (Fall 1983).

"Jan Karski: To Redeem Humanity and To Indict Humanity," *Perspectives* (Fall 1983).

A review of Robert McAfee Brown, *Elie Wiesel: Messenger to All Humanity*, in *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Winter 1983).

"Is There Hope for the Year Ahead?" *The National Jewish Monthly* (September 1983).

"A review essay on Yaffa Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, in *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, Vol. 1, (1984).

"The Changing Covenant," *Sh'ma* (January 1984). Reprinted in Carol Toll Oppenheim, *Listening to American Jews: Sh'ma 1970-1985*.

"Snyder's Suicide Tantrum: What Does He Do For An Encore?" *The Washington Post* with Judith Rosenfeld (November 11, 1984).

"Richard L. Rubenstein," *Encyclopedia of World Biography* (1985).

"Elie Wiesel," *Encyclopedia of World Biography* (1985).

"A Shattered Dream Beyond Renewal", a review of *The Tragedy of Zionism*, by Bernard Avishai, in *Sh'ma* (December 1985).

"Journalists' Responsibilities," *The Reconstructionist* (January-February 1986).

"The Paradox of Prayer," *Reform Judaism* (Spring 1986).

A review essay on Irving Abrahamson, *Against Silence, Martyrdom and Resistance* (Spring 1986).

"When Synagogues Ask the Wrong Question," *Sh'ma* (May 1986).

A review essay on Nathan Rotenstreich, *Jews and German Philosophy*, *Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (Spring 1986).

"The Nativization of the Holocaust," *Judaism* (Fall 1986).

"The Inner and Outer Dimensions of Hell," in *Tikkun*, (Vol. I, No. 2., November 1986).

"The Americanization of the Holocaust," in Ilya Levkov, ed., *Bitburg and Beyond: Encounters in American, German and Jewish History* (New York: Shapolsky Books, 1986).

"The Cost of Dissent," *New Outlook* (January 1987).

"From Auschwitz to Oslo: The Journey of Elie Wiesel," *The World and I* (February 1987).

"Political Zionism and Its Would Be Successors: Sectarianism, Messianism, Nationalism and Secularism," Richard L. Rubenstein, ed., *Spirit Matters: The Worldwide Impact of Religion on Contemporary Politics*, (New York: Paragon Books, 1987).

An Introduction to Gerald Reitlinger's *The Final Solution* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1987).

"Will Israel Divide Where It Once United?" *Sh'ma* (May 1, 1987).

"Jacob Neusner and The Renewal of Judaism," in *The World and I* (November 1987).

"Jewish Views of Hi-Tech Births," *Moment* (November 1987).

"Beautiful but Askew," A Review of the *Encyclopedia of Jewish History: Events and Eras of the Jewish People*, Edited by Ilana Shamir and Shlomo Shavit. *Moment* (January 1988).

"Effectiveness and Professional Responsibilities" A Symposium, *Sh'ma* (January 22, 1988).

"American Jews Opt Out," *New Outlook* (January 1988).

Richard L. Rubenstein: A Renegade Son is Honored at Home," *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Spring 1988).

A Review of Denise Carmody and John Carmody, *How to Live Well: Ethics in World's Religions*, *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Fall 1988).

A review of Richard L. Rubenstein and John Roth, *Approaches to Auschwitz*, *The International Journal of World Peace* (Spring 1988).

The Spoken Word and the Temptation of Silence," *America* (November 19, 1988).

"Hinnenu," A review of Leonard Fein's *Where We Are?: The Inner Life of America's Jews*, *Moment* (January 1989).

"God is One: An Ancient Mystery once Discovered, Often Rediscovered" in *Ehad: the Many Meanings of the Oneness of God: Essays in Honor of Eugene Borowitz* (Sh'ma 1989).

A review of Marc Ellis, *Toward a Theology of Jewish Liberation*, *The Journal of Church and State* (Spring 1989).

"Interpretations of the Holocaust" in *Simon Wiesenthal Annual VI* (1989).

A review of Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living The Holidays*, *Moment* (May 1989).

"The Problem of Pluralism in Contemporary Orthodoxy" in Jeffrey Gurrock, Editor *American Orthodoxy: Essays in Honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Ramaz* (Ktav Publishing Company, 1989).

"The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum" in *The Macmillan Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (1989).

"Reflections of the Uniqueness of the Holocaust," Michael Berenbaum, ed., *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis* (New York: New York University Press, 1990).

A review of Graham B. Walker, Jr., *Elie Wiesel: A Challenge to Theology for Theology*, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Winter 1990).

"Ghetto Diary Relates to Jews' struggle for Life," a review of *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary* by Abraham Tory, *The Washington Times* (May 28, 1990).

"The National Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors: A Review Essay" in *Dimensions* (Summer 1990).

"The Mystifying Burden of Goodness" in *Dimensions* (Fall 1990).

"High Intensity Judaism Or We Wither Away," in *Sh'ma* (October 19, 1990).

A review of A. James Reimer's *The Emanuel Hirsch and Paul Tillich Debate: A Study in the Political Ramifications of Theology* in *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Fall 1990).

A review of Lawrence Langer's *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* and Debrah Dwork's *Children with a Star: A History of Jewish Youth in Nazi-Occupied Europe*, in *Moment* (April 1991).

"In A World Without a Redeemer, Redeem!" in Steven Jacobs, Editor, *Contemporary Religious Responses to the Holocaust* (University Presses of America, 1993).

"The Struggle for Civility: The Auschwitz Convent Controversy and the Forces Behind It" in Carol Rittner and John Roth, eds., *Memory Offended: The Auschwitz Convent Controversy* (New York, Westport, and London: Praeger, 1991).

A review essay on Judith Miller's *One, By One, By One* in *Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (December 1990). Reprinted in *Midstream* (January 1991).

A review of Siegfried Jageendorf, *Jagendorf's Foundry: A Memoir of the Romanian Holocaust* in *Moment* (June 1992).

A review of Eugene Borowitz, *Renewing the Covenant*, in *Theological Studies* (December 1992).

A review of Raymond Weiss, *Maimonides Ethics: The Encounter of Philosophic and Religious Morality*, in *Theological Studies*, April 1993.

The Covenant and the God of Israel, in *Moment* (April 1993).

*An Earthquake for American Jewry: Reflections on the Israel-PLO Agreement*, *Sh'ma*, October, 15, 1993).

"Questions for the Unredeemed," *Tikkun*, November-December 1993.

"After After Auschwitz," in *Reflections on the Thought of Richard L. Rubenstein: Triage, the Holocaust and Faith* (1994).

"Reflections on Hope and Despair," *Arts: The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies* (Spring 1994).

"When Memory Triumphs," a review essay on Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*; Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crisis in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*; Luisa Passerini, ed., *Memory and Totalitarianism: International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Series, Volume I* in *The Journal of Oral History* ( Fall 1994).

"Le Chambon-Sur-Lignon" and "The White Rose" *Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action* (1995).

A review of Hans Ucko, *Common Roots New Horizons: Learning About Christian Faith from Dialogue with Jews* in *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Winter 1995).

A review of E. Thomas Wood and Stanilaw M. Jankowski, *Karski: How One Man Tried to Stop the Holocaust*. *POLIN* (Spring 1995).

A review of Mitchell G. Bard's *Forgotten Victims: The Abandonment of Americans in Hitler's Camps* in *Shofar* (Spring 1995).

A review of Weaver Santaniello, *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews: His Critique of Judeo-Christianity in Relation to the Nazi Myth* in *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Fall 1995).

An Introduction to Cara De Silva, ed., *In Memories Kitchen: A Legacy From the Women of Terezin* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1996).

A review essay on Mordcai Paldiel's, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers During the Holocaust* in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (Winter 1996).

"The Holocaust," *World Book Encyclopedia* (1996).

30 articles on the Holocaust for the, *Grollier Children's Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (1997).

"The Holocaust and American Theology," Eugeniusz Sakowicz, *Religion on Roads of Peace and Tracks of War* (State Museum at Majdanek, 1995.)

"The Situation of the American Jew" and "Pluralism and Orthodoxy" in Emanuel Goldsmith and Raphael Patai, eds. *Events and Movements in Modern Judaism* (New York: Paragon Books, 1995).

A review essay of Efraim Zuroff, *Occupation Nazi Hunter: The Continuing Search for Perpetrators of the Holocaust* in *Israel Yearbook on Human Rights* (Volume 25, 1996).

Foreword to Raphael Shalev's *Liberating the Ghosts* (1996).

A review essay on Eliezer Schweid's, *Wrestling Until Day Break: Searching for Meaning in the Thinking on the Holocaust*, *AJS Review* (1996).

A review essay on David Hackett's, *The Buchenwald Report*, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (1997).

A review essay on John H. Dippel's, *Bound Upon a Wheel of Fire: Why So Many Germans Made the Tragic Decision to Remain in Nazi Germany*, *AJS Review* (1997).

"The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: A Guided Anticipatory Tour" in Henry Knight and Marcia Sachs Littell, eds., *The Uses and Abuses of Knowledge: Proceedings of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference on the Holocaust and the German Church Struggle* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997).

"Encountering the Void," in John Roth and Carol Rittner, R.S.M., eds., *From the Unthinkable to the Unavoidable: American Christian and Jewish Scholars Confront the Holocaust* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997).

Introduction to Randolph Braham with Scott Miller, eds., *The Nazi's Last Victims: The Holocaust in Hungary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997).

A review of *Proceedings of the Center for Jewish-Christian Learning: Jews and Christians Speak of Jesus* (Volume 10); *Jews and Christians Speak of the Ten Commandments* (Volume 11) in *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Fall 1997).

Introduction to Hermann Wygoda, *In the Shadow of the Swastika: A Jewish Resistor's Story* (Urbana-Champaign: The University of Illinois Press, 1998).

Introduction to *Holocaust: An Eight Volume Series* (Woodbridge, CT: Blackbirch Press, 1997).

"Displaced Persons," in John Michalczyk, ed., *The Resister, the Rescuer and the Refugee* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1997).

"Can American Jewry Handle Good News?," A review of Jerome Channes, ed., *Antisemitism in America Today: Outspoken Experts Explode the Myths*. *Tikkun*, Volume 2, No. 4 (July/August 1997).

Foreword, Miriam Weiner, ed., *Jewish Roots in Poland: Pages from the Past and Archival Inventories* (New York: 1998).

"Eleanor Roosevelt and the Holocaust" and "Varian Fry" in Maurine H. Beasley and Holly Shulman, eds., *The Eleanor Roosevelt Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1998).

The Search for Nazi assets: A Historical Perspective, *Whittier Law Review* (1998).

Non-Jewish Victims of the Nazis," "Theological Responses to the Holocaust," "The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," and "The Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation" in *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, 1999.

Introduction, Sigmund Tobias, *Strange Haven: A Childhood in Shanghai* (University of Illinois Press, 1999).

Review Essay Zev Garber and Richard Libowitz, eds., *Peace in Deed: Essays in Honor of Harry James Cargas, Shofar* (Summer 2000).

Introduction, William Ungar, *Destined to Live* (University Presses of America, 2000).

Introduction, *Holocaust Chronicle* (Chronicle Publications, 2000).

In addition, author of over 500 articles, editorials, columns, and reviews on political and intellectual issues confronting the Jewish community, Israel, and America, and co-authored many columns on Contemporary Ethics and Domestic Politics. A complete portfolio is available upon request.

#### TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY:

Co-Writer -- "Holocaust: The Survivors Gather in Washington", broadcast nationally on PBS April 20, 1984, with Linda Bayer-Berenbaum.

Co-producer -- *One Survivor Remembers*, broadcast nationally on Home Box Office (May 1995). Academy Award Winner for Best Short Documentary, 1995.

Chief Historical Consultant -- *The Last Days*, Academy Award Winner, 1998.

Washington Correspondent for a 40 station FM weekly radio program on public affairs.

Producer and Moderator -- Scores of television shows on Judaism and the Jewish community. Served for four years as the producer and moderator of the *Jewish Community Hour*, a monthly educational program broadcast in Washington by WDVM, the local CBS affiliate. Tapes of these broadcasts are available upon request.

#### MUSEUM EXHIBITS:

Project Director, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Guest Curator, "America and the Holocaust: The Crucible of Witness," an exhibit at the National Museum of American Jewish History. Part of the permanent collection since 1985.

#### LECTURES:

"Dawn and Delicde: Wiesel's Doctrine of Israel," New England Region of the American Academy of Religion, April 1974.

"Survival as Liberation in Contemporary Black, Women's and Jewish Theology," New England Region A.A.R., April 1975.

"Ambivalence and Ambiguity: The Jewishness of Jakov Lind," New England Region Modern Language Association, March 1976.

"The Possibilities of Contemporary Midrash: Holocaust Literature as Midrash," A.A.R., October 1977.

"Messianism and Political Activism," Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, October 1977.

"Reflection on Children of Survivors," First International Conference on Children of Survivors, November 1979.

"Crisis in Teaching the Holocaust," Institute for Holocaust Studies, Bar-Ilan University, December 1979.

"The Uniqueness and Universality of the Holocaust," First International Conference on Holocaust and Genocide, Toronto, October 1980.

"The Implications of the Holocaust for Artistic and Religious Consciousness," Yale University Divinity School, September 1981.

"On Judaism and Social Action: The Biblical, Rabbinic and Contemporary Traditions" -- Three Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary, May 1983.

Scholar-in-Residence, Council of Jewish Federations, General Assembly, Los Angeles, California, November 1983.

"The Problem of Historical Memory," Brown University, April 1984.

"The Abuses of the Holocaust," International Conference of Children of Holocaust Survivors, May 1984.

"The Problematics of Teaching Modern Judaism," Brown University, National Endowment for the Humanities, Teacher Training Seminar, July 1985.

"Cheap Grace Versus Real Hope: The Search for an Authentic Past After the Holocaust," The University of Hartford, July 1985.

"Reflections on the Uniqueness of the Holocaust," International Conference on The Other Victims: Non-Jews who were Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis, Department of State, Washington, D.C., February 1987.

"The Holocaust and Contemporary Jewish Consciousness," Florida State University, April 1987.

A Symposium on the Role of the Christian Church During the Holocaust, First Annual Days of Remembrance Lecture, The United States Holocaust Memorial Council, Georgetown University, April 1987.

"The Holocaust and Genocide," An International Conference on Operation Reinhard Death Camps, The University of Lublin, Lublin, Poland, August 1987.

"In A World Without A Redeemer, Redeem" Conference on Jewish Views of Redemption, Council for World's Religion, September 1987.

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"The Situation of the American Jews," An International Conference on the Reconfiguration of Judaism in Modern Times," in Toledo, Spain, November 1989.

"Religion and Public Policy," American Academy of Religion, Anaheim, California, November 1989.

"The Holocaust and Western Civilization," The PAGE [Plan for Alternative General Education] Strand Lecture, George Mason University, December 1989.

"The Individual and Moral Responsibility," National Defense College, Washington, D.C., April 1990.

"The Implications of Memory," Wesleyan University, April 1990.

"The Mystifying Burden of Goodness," A Conference on Christian Rescuers of Jews, Princeton University, May 1990.

"Theological Implications of the Holocaust," Ryder College (February 1991)

"The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," Graduate School, City University of New York (March 1991)

"The Holocaust and the American Experience," The University of Oregon (April 1991)

Contemporary Orthodoxy: Modern, Militant, Messianic Consultation on Religion and War, American Academy of Religion (November 1991)



"The Holocaust and the Culture of Western Civilization," Keane College (December 1991).

"Germans and Jews: Reconciling the Irreconcilable," American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Johns Hopkins University (December 16, 1991).

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"The Boundaries of Memory," Organization of American Historians Conference (March 31, 1995).

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"The Garden Must be Worked and Guarded," Religion and Ecology Consultation, American Academy of Religion (November 20, 1995).

"The Philosophical and Ethical Implications of the Nuremberg for Contemporary Society, " An International Conference to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Nuremberg Trials, Wayne State University (October 14, 1996).

"The Holocaust and American Identity," International Conference on The Holocaust in Education, Yad Vashem (October 14-17, 1996).

"Religion, Gender, Genocide: A Symposium" The Holocaust Education Foundation and the University of Notre Dame (November 4, 1996).

"On the Holocaust and Its Remembrance," The Katz-Newcomb Lectures on the Social Psychology of Ethnic Conflicts, The University of Michigan, November 6, 1997.

"Fifty Years Since Nuremberg," International Conference on Judaism and Contemporary Medicine, Rockefeller University New York, November 9, 1997.

"From Reality to Memory: The Holocaust in Contemporary Consciousness," The Taffy Gould Lecture, the University of Miami Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies, January 26, 1999.

Three Lectures at Denison University, "The Uniqueness and Universality of the Holocaust;" "The Spiritual Relevance of the Holocaust;" "The Holocaust and Its Memorialization," (February 1999).

"The Vatican Statement: We Remember," The Jewish Vision: A Journey Through Time, Keane University, March 1999).

"Memorialization and Documentation of the Holocaust for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," Jews, Germans and the Future of Memory, Princeton University, April 1999.

"Ethics in the Shadow of the Holocaust," Catholic Theological Union and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, May 1999.

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Available upon request

## Dr. Michael Berenbaum

Bio – September, 1, 1999

Michael Berenbaum is a writer, lecturer, and teacher consulting in the conceptual development of museums and the historical development of films. He is also serving as the Ida E. King Distinguished Professor of Holocaust Studies for 199-200. For the past three years, he was President and Chief Executive Officer of the *Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation*. Before that he was the Director of the United States Holocaust Research Institute at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Hymen Goldman Adjunct Professor of Theology at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. From 1988-93 he served as Project Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, overseeing its creation. He also served as Director of the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington, Opinion-Page Editor of the *Washington Jewish Week* and Deputy Director of the President's Commission on the Holocaust where he authored its *Report to the President*. He has previously taught at Wesleyan University, Yale University and has served as a visiting professor at three of the major Washington area universities - George Washington University, The University of Maryland and American University.

Berenbaum is the author and editor of twelve books, scores of scholarly articles and hundreds of journalistic pieces. Of his book, *After Tragedy and Triumph*, Raul Hilberg said, "All those who want to read only one book about the condition of Jewry in 1990 would do well to choose Michael Berenbaum...In his description of contemporary Jewish thought, he sacrifices neither complexity nor lucidity." Charles Silberman praised *The World Must Know* as "a majestic and profoundly moving history of the Holocaust. Berenbaum's spare and unadorned prose enhances the power and eloquence of the testimony...It is must reading for anyone who would like to be human in the post-Holocaust world." Walter Laqueur stated that *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* is "a huge volume that is bound to become a standard work...It is about as chilling as historiography gets." The Village Voice echoed, "The scholarship, broad and deep, makes this the definitive book on one of our century's defining horrors."

Among his other works are *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*, *The Vision of the Void: Theological Reflections on the Works of Elie Wiesel*, and *Witness to the Holocaust: An Illustrated Documentary History of the Holocaust in the Words of Its Victims, Perpetrators, and Bystanders*. He was co-editor on several works, including *The Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications* (with John Roth) and *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed and the Reexamined* (with Abraham Peck).

In film, his work as Co-Producer of *One Survivor Remembers: The Gerda Weissman Klein Story* was recognized with an Academy award, an Emmy Award and the Cable Ace Award. He was the historical consultant on The Shoah Foundation's Documentary, *The Last Days*, which won an Academy Award for the best feature length documentary of 1998. For his work in journalism, he won the Simon Rockower Memorial Award of the American Jewish Press Association three times in three different categories during a two-year period.

Berenbaum takes special pleasure in his work as a teacher. His course at Georgetown was named by the student newspaper as one of the ten most important courses in the University. Among his former students was the famed American entertainer, Pearl Bailey, who wrote of Berenbaum: "The wisdom I gained from his class is priceless. He is young, aggressive, tough, wise as some sages of yore, and as brilliant as a diamond. When class ended, you felt filled, drained, and filled again. He would surge into the classroom as if he'd just arrived by Amtrak, put down his bundle of papers and get started. We didn't open copy books right away with him; he preferred to listen, question, discuss." (Pearl Bailey, *Between You and Me*)

Berenbaum is a graduate of Queens College (BA, 1967) and Florida State University (Ph.D., 1975), and also attended The Hebrew University, the Jewish Theological Seminary and Boston University. He has won numerous fellowships including the Danforth Fellowship, the George Wise Fellowship at Tel Aviv University, and the Charles E. Merrill Fellowship at FSU. Berenbaum was an elected fellow of the *Society for Values in Higher Education*.

He is married to Melissa Patack Berenbaum, who is the Vice-President and General Manager of the Motion Picture Association of America, California Group. He is the father of three children: Ilana, a Brown University honors graduate and currently a third year Rabbinical student at the University of Judaism, currently studying in Israel; Lev, a junior at Georgetown University who just returned from a year at Hebrew University in Jerusalem; and Joshua, who was born in December 1998.

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# Exhibit B

*23. November 1940, Krakau (Kraków). - Rundschreiben der Regierung des Generalgouvernements an die Gouverneure der Distrikte, in dem ihnen der Erlaß des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes vom 25. 10. 1940 über das Auswanderungsverbot für Juden aus dem Generalgouvernement zur Kenntnis gebracht wird.*

Das Reichssicherheitshauptamt teilt mir mit Erlaß vom 25. X. 1940 folgendes mit:

„Da im Falle der Auswanderung von Juden aus dem Generalgouvernement die ohnedies immer kleiner werdenden Möglichkeiten der Auswanderung für Juden aus dem Altreich, der Ostmark und dem Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren entgegen dem Wunsche des Reichsmarschalls wiederum wesentlich verringert würden, bitte ich, eine Auswanderung nicht in Erwägung zu ziehen.

Die Nachwanderung von Ostjuden bedeutet eine dauernde geistige Regeneration des Weltjudentums, da in der Hauptsache die Ostjuden, infolge ihrer religiös-orthodoxen Einstellung, einen großen Teil der Rabbiner, Talmudlehrer usw. stellen, die besonders von den in USA tätigen jüdischen Organisationen nach eigener Aussage gesucht sind. Darüber hinaus bedeutet diesen jüdischen Organisationen in USA jeder orthodoxe Ostjude ein wertvolles Glied in ihren steten Bemühungen um die geistige Erneuerung des USA-Judentums und dessen Konzentration. Gerade das USA-Judentum ist bemüht, mit Hilfe der zugewanderten Juden, besonders jener aus dem europäischen Osten, eine neue Plattform zu schaffen, von wo aus es seinen Kampf, besonders gegen Deutschland, forciert vorzutragen gedenkt.

Aus diesen Gründen ist anzunehmen, daß nach Erteilung von einigen Auswanderungsgenehmigungen, gewissermaßen nach Schaffung von Präzedenzfällen für Juden aus dem Generalgouvernement, ein großer Teil der Einreisegenehmigungen, in der Hauptsache für USA, in Zukunft nur noch für Ostjuden zur Verfügung gestellt wird.“

Diese Stellungnahme des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes mache ich zu meiner eigenen und bitte Sie, davon abzusehen, Auswanderungsanträge von Juden zur Entscheidung oder Stellungnahme an die hiesige Dienststelle zu übersenden. Diese Anträge müßten von hier selbstverständlich abgelehnt werden.

Ich ermächtige Sie, von dort aus Auswanderungsgesuche von Juden aus dem Generalgouvernement ohne weitere Prüfung abzulehnen. Lediglich soweit es sich um jüdische ausländische Staatsangehörige handelt, wird ersucht, diese Auswanderungsanträge nach hier weiter zu leiten. Da eine Auswanderung von Juden aus dem Generalgouvernement grundsätzlich nicht mehr in Frage kommt, ist es auch nicht erforderlich, daß ein Jude zur Einholung eines Visums bei einem ausländischen Konsulat im Deutschen Reich einen Passierschein nach dem Reich erhält. Es wird ersucht, auch derartige Anträge von Juden auf Ausstellung eines Passierscheins zwecks Einholung eines Visums bei einem ausländischen Konsulat im Reich abzulehnen.

I. A. Eckhardt

[ROUGH TRANSLATION]

*November 23, 1940, Krakow - Circular of the government of the General Governor to the district governors [of German annexed Poland], informing them of the decree of the German Highest Security Office of 10/25/1940, about the prohibition of the Jews to emigrate out of the General Government.*

The German Highest Security Office advises me of the decree of 10/25/1940, as follows:

“With respect to the emigration of Jews from the General Government [German annexed Poland], the already reduced emigration opportunities for Jews from the German Empire, the Ostmark [East Germany] and the Provinces of Bohmen and Mahren [Bohemia and Moravia] would be further reduced against the wishes of the Reichmarshal [Goring], I request not to consider it [the emigration of Jews from German annexed Poland].

“The immigration of Eastern European Jews signifies a permanent spiritual rejuvenation of the World Jewry, since it is mainly the Eastern European Jews owing to their religious Orthodox attitude and comprising a great part of the Rabbis, Teachers of Talmud etc, particulars which are mainly looked for by the USA Jewish organizations according to their own testimony. Therefore, each Eastern European Orthodox Jew is considered an important and valuable organ [member] for these Jewish organizations in the USA in their constant effort to promote the spiritual renewal of American Jewry and their concentrations. American Jewry is making every effort with the help of the immigrated Jews particularly from Eastern Europe to create a new platform, from which to launch a new fight, especially against Germany.

“It is to be assumed, based on the above reasons, after distribution of some emigration permits, that there will be a precedence for Jews from the General Government; a great portion of the immigration permits especially for the USA in the future would be available only for Eastern European Jews.”

This position of the German Highest Security Office I make as my own, and I ask you to disregard any application for emigration of Jews and not to send for decision or opinion to this office. It is self-understood that such applications would have to be rejected from here. I authorize you to refuse without any examinations any application of emigration from Jews from there. However if it is from Jews of foreign countries' citizenship, I ask you to direct here any emigration application.

Since an emigration of Jews from the General Government does not come into question out of principle, there is no point for a Jew to ask for a visa of a foreign consulate in the German Empire, therefore he should not receive a safe passage certificate to go to Germany. It is therefore also requested to refuse applications from Jews for safe passage certificates, in order to get a visa from a foreign country consulate in Germany.

I. A. Eckhardt



AGUDATH ISRAEL  
WORLD ORGANIZATION

HISTORICAL RESEARCH  
PROJECT

STAGE ONE

PROGRESS REPORT AND EXCERPTS  
FEBRUARY 2000

Presented as an appendix to AIWO's submission to  
Special Master Judah Gribetz in  
In Re Holocaust Victim Assets Litigation



AGUDATH ISRAEL WORLD ORGANIZATION  
HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT  
STAGE ONE

PROGRESS REPORT AND EXCERPTS

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# PREFACE

## **AGUDATH ISRAEL WORLD ORGANIZATION'S HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT: ORIGINS, OBJECTIVES AND CURRENT STATUS**

- (1) Agudath Israel World Organization (AIWO) respectfully presents extracts from the product of Stage One of an Historical Research Project initiated by, and currently proceeding under the auspices of, AIWO, in conjunction with the recently-formed Committee to Preserve the Legacy of the Pre-War European Yeshivos. It is presented as an appendix to AIWO's Submission to the Special Master in the context of the proceedings in In Re Holocaust Victim Assets Litigation, in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York (Master Docket No.CV-96-4849 (ERK) (MDG) (consolidated with CV 96-5161 and CV-97-461)).

### THE ORIGINS OF THE HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT AND ITS UNDERLYING OBJECTS

- (2) The Historical Research Project was authorized by, and is proceeding within the framework of, resolutions adopted by the Hanhalah Hametzumtzeemes (Inner Cabinet) of AIWO, which convened in Bournemouth, England, on September 7 and 8, 1999. Delegates to the meeting came from Israel, the United States, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland. In addition, a number of individuals with special expertise and perspectives attended by special invitation.
- (3) The resolutions adopted at the Bournemouth meeting were as follows:
  - “(a) That a project be undertaken, under the auspices of Agudath Israel World Organization, to research and prepare a comprehensive study of the centers of Torah learning and chassidus that were destroyed in Churban Europe, and the rebuilding of such centers in the years since 1945.
  - “(b) The product of the study will be made available for historians, educators and students, and those involved in restitution-related issues.”
- (4) The Hanhala Hametzumtzeemes envisioned that the project would have both intrinsic and utilitarian value. An Explanatory Memorandum, circulated to attendees at the Bournemouth meeting, outlined the objects of the project in these terms:

“The central object of the project is of major historic significance: to prepare the first comprehensive, systematic study of the European Torah world that was sought to be destroyed during the Holocaust, and the rebuilding of that world in the last half-century.

Thus, quite apart from the utilitarian objects to which the resulting study will be applied, as summarized below, there is a profound intrinsic value in what is now being undertaken.

“The practical uses to which the study will be put arise in the context, and as a result, of remarkable historical, political and moral forces that have converged in the last few years, some five decades after the Holocaust itself. In particular, despite the persistent attempts over the millennia to destroy the Jewish people, or various parts thereof, this is the first time in the course of that history that those who have carried out destruction, and their accomplices, have made restitution, and paid reparations. The amounts that have already flowed in the direction of the Jewish people as a consequence are already large and the amounts which are projected to flow in over the coming five or ten years may be larger still. And it is that fact that poses a challenge of historic proportions to the Jewish people: To ensure that the huge resources created by the anticipated inflow of funds is dealt with with great wisdom, for the true benefit of the Jewish people.”

#### THE FIRST STAGE OF THE PROJECT

- (5) The resolutions of the Hanhalah Hametzumtzemes, which were adopted only a matter of months ago, contemplated a comprehensive project requiring sustained effort extending over a full year, if not longer. At the same time, however, those centrally involved in the project were acutely conscious of the temporal constraints on the work imposed by deadlines set outside AIWO; in particular, those set by courts in restitution-related litigation.
- (6) Of particular relevance was the time frame established by the Court in these very proceedings. Specifically, we were conscious that a presentation would have to be made to the Special Master within a short time frame after the meeting of the Hanhalah Hametzumtzemes.
- (7) The considerations outlined in paragraphs 5 and 6 above resulted in the development and implementation of a strategy involving two stages, with the goal that the first stage be concluded before AIWO would make its submission to the Special Master. That goal has now substantially been met, as Stage One of the project is at this point nearly complete.
- (8) Stage One has focused on identifying and collecting as much data as possible about yeshivos and kehilos that were sought to be destroyed during the Holocaust, and that have rebuilt themselves in the post-World War II era. As elaborated below, this involved two basic types of activities: work with a team of historians and archivists who assisted the project in gathering historical information and material from a variety of sources; and work with the revitalized yeshivos and kehilos themselves in gathering primary source information and material.

(9) The professional historians and archivists with whom the project director has consulted in working on Stage One of the project included:

**Rabbi Meir Wunder, M.A. (Chief Consultant)**  
Head, Legal Deposits Department,  
National University Library of Israel (retired);  
Author, *Encyclopedia of the Sages of Galicia* (5 vols)

**Michael Berenbaum, Ph. D.**  
Ida E. King Distinguished Professor of  
Holocaust Studies, Richard Stockton College;  
Formerly, Director, Research Institute,  
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,  
Washington, DC; formerly, President and  
Chief Executive Officer, Shoah Visual History  
Foundation, Los Angeles

**Martin C. Dean, Ph.D.**  
Applied Research Scholar,  
Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies,  
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,  
Washington DC; Formerly, Senior Historian,  
Metropolitan Police War Crimes Unit, London

**Mr. Joseph Friedenson**  
Editor, *Dos Yiddishe Vort*

**Rabbi Binyomin S. Hamburger**  
Director, The Institute for German Jewish  
Heritage, Bnei Brak

**Severin Hochberg, Ph.D.**  
Senior Historian, Center for Advanced  
Holocaust Studies,  
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,  
Washington DC

**Rabbi Eliezer Katzman**  
Consultant for Judaica and Hebraica for  
Sotheby's and other major auction houses;  
Associate Editor of *Yeshurun*, a semi-annual  
scholarly journal of Jewish history

**Rabbi Moshe Kolodny**  
Chief Archivist, Orthodox Jewish Archives,  
New York

**Yitzchak Mais, Ph. D.**  
Acting Director, Museum of Jewish Heritage -  
A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, NY

**Saul Stampfer, Ph. D.**  
Senior Lecturer in Jewish History,  
Hebrew University, Jerusalem

**Rabbi Berel Wein**  
Well-known lecturer and  
author of works of popular history

(10) The work of these consultants has resulted in the retrieval of an outstanding set of photocopies of secondary sources describing and analyzing yeshivos and kehilos that existed in Europe before the Holocaust. These sources range from those published over the last few years to others, appearing in periodical literature as well as in monograph form, dating back over a century. Likewise, a large quantity of secondary material, describing yeshivos and

kehilos that have rebuilt themselves after the Second World War, has been accumulated. All of this constitutes a veritable treasure trove of research materials, much of it providing statistical data as well as descriptive narratives.

- (11) The second method of obtaining data for Stage One of the project consisted of approaching yeshivos and kehilos themselves, inviting their participation in the project and seeking information from them, both of an historical nature as well as contemporary information drawn from their own archives and records. The rationale behind this approach was twofold: on the one hand, these institutions are often the best repositories of information about themselves; secondly, and for this very reason, this was the quickest way of obtaining the maximum amount of material in the shortest possible time.
- (12) These efforts have thus far elicited responses from close to 300 institutions, listed in Part III of this submission. To date, the majority of the respondents have been Israeli-based yeshivos and kehilos. (This may reflect the fact that the outreach efforts to yeshivos and kehilos have been co-ordinated by Rabbi Wunder in Israel, and explains why several of the selected case studies presented in Part II of this submission may contain a disproportionate focus on the rebuilding of certain yeshivos and kehilos in Israel. Additional work with yeshivos and kehilos in the United States and Europe should eventually yield a better rounded and more comprehensive picture of the worldwide rebirth of the educational and communal institutions sought to be destroyed in the Holocaust.)
- (13) Stage One of the project is at this point nearly complete. Several points clearly emerge from the work that has been done to date, including the preparation of the sample case studies that form Part II of this submission:
  - (a) The material illustrates the central role played by yeshivos and kehilos in pre-War European Jewish life;
  - (b) It demonstrates how they were targeted for persecution and destruction by the Nazis;
  - (c) It affirms how yeshivas and kehilos have labored assiduously and heroically to rebuild themselves in the post-War era.
- (14) The picture that emerges from these materials is both graphic and powerful in demonstrating these points – beginning with the names of so many of the yeshivos and kehilos themselves, which are transplanted directly from a map of Europe. So much so that, as far as the Jewish world is concerned, those European names are now indelibly associated with the places in which yeshivos and kehilos are themselves located today. And in saying this, it is important to bear in mind that the accompanying materials represent only a small fraction of the total number of yeshivos and kehilos which have been transplanted in this way.

## PROJECTED WORK FOR STAGE TWO OF THE PROJECT

- (15) Stage Two of the project will include the following steps:
- (a) Revision, editing and polishing of the material obtained from the yeshivos and kehilos themselves;
  - (b) Expanding, to the maximum extent possible, the range of yeshivos and kehilos that are presented and described in the work, and collecting more information from institutions in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere;
  - (c) Integrating the material obtained from yeshivos and kehilos with secondary (as well as primary) material identified by the consultants to the project;
  - (d) Extraction, analysis and presentation of statistical data obtained from all the various sources;
  - (e) Preparation of narratives and commentaries on various subdivisions of the project, based on geographical locations and types of institutions;
  - (f) All other steps necessary to present a final version of the work.

## THE PRESENTATION OF THE ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL

- (16) The accompanying material, extracted from the product of Stage One of the project, is divided into three parts:

**Part I** is an Historical Essay entitled *The Yeshiva: Its Historic Mission in Jewish Life; Its Central Role in Pre-War Europe; Its Remarkable Rebirth in Contemporary Times*. This essay provides a general overview of the educational system that has occupied, and continues to occupy, a critically important place in the history and culture of the Jewish people.

**Part II**, which forms the bulk of the accompanying material, presents selected case studies of yeshivos and kehilos that played a significant role in pre-War Europe and successfully re-established themselves in the post-War era. These case studies, taken together, portray the world of vibrant Orthodox Jewish educational and communal life that once was – and, miraculously, still is.

**Part III** lists the nearly 300 yeshivos and kehilos that have submitted information to the project as of February 2000.

Dated: New York, N.Y.  
February 22, 2000

**Historical Research Project Steering Committee of Agudath Israel World Organization**

**Harry Reicher**

Director of the Historical Research Project

Director of International Affairs  
and Representative to the United Nations  
of Agudath Israel World Organization;  
Barrister at Law, Australia and England;  
Adjunct Professor of Law,  
University of Pennsylvania Law School

Rabbi Chaskel Besser  
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Member of Presidium,  
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Mr. Pinchos Kornfeld  
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Mr. Abraham Biderman  
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Rabbi Yaakov Litzman  
Member of Knesset, Israel

Rabbi Chaim Yaakov Davis  
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Councilor H.J. Lobenstein, M.B.E.  
Mayor of the Borough  
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Mr. Benjamin Fishoff  
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Mr. David Moskovits  
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Endowment for Democracy in  
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Executive Vice President for Government  
and Public Affairs  
and General Counsel,  
Agudath Israel of America

Mr. George Klein  
Chairman,  
Park Tower Group



PART I

HISTORICAL ESSAY:  
THE YESHIVA



## PART I: HISTORICAL ESSAY

### THE YESHIVA: ITS HISTORIC MISSION IN JEWISH LIFE; ITS CENTRAL ROLE IN PRE-WAR EUROPE; ITS REMARKABLE REBIRTH IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Jewish life in Europe developed over many centuries. Its scope was wide-ranging, its culture colorful and varied. The Jewish population of Eastern Europe was itself a rainbow of different ethnic groupings and various religious centers. The Jews of Lithuania were different from the Jews of Poland who in turn differed from the Jews of Hungary and Central Europe. Such differences helped create the vast multi-colored tapestry of Jewish diversity that characterized Jewish Europe before World War II.

However, all of European Jewry shared a heritage of Torah study and religious faith. All Jews, religious and secular, Chasidic and Lithuanian, had a common heritage and tradition of intellectual study, human compassion and caring, a belief in the absolutely vital role of education and an unshakable optimism and faith that the Jewish people would survive and yet prosper in a harsh world. In fact it was this spirit of learning and knowledge that was the true hallmark of European Jewry in all of its diversity and variety.

Over the millennia of Jewish existence, the Jewish people has been profoundly identified with the Torah. In Jewish tradition, Torah means not only the Bible but also includes the Mishna and the Babylonian and Jerusalem versions of the Talmud, which works are the codifications of the Oral law of Sinai and serve as well as the vehicles for the presentation of Jewish thought, life values, and history. It also includes Midrash, the homilies of Torah, and the commentaries of all of the great scholars and sages to all of the component works of the Torah. Finally, Torah also necessarily includes the codes of Jewish civil, domestic, criminal and societal law and ritual and all of the responsa and opinions of the great rabbis of Israel on these matters from sixth century Babylonia through the end of the twentieth century America and Israel.

Thus the Torah is huge – indeed, limitless – in scope. But it was never meant to be a research tool solely, an encyclopedia or dictionary stored on a shelf and referred to only occasionally and sporadically. It was meant to be studied and reviewed regularly, preferably on a daily basis. Every Jew was bidden to add his or her insight or comment to this eternal, never-to-be-finished body of knowledge and wisdom. Studying the Torah or “learning” (the Yiddish word *lernen*, meaning learning, was always associated almost exclusively with Torah study) was always the highest priority in Jewish life. The scholar of Torah was respected, as was no wealthy or powerful person. The search for knowledge, the devotion to study and intellectual creativity – these were the hallmarks of

all Jewish societies the world over in all ages. The Jews took to heart the warning of the Rabbis of the Mishna that an ignorant Jew will find it difficult to be a pious Jew. Jews therefore throughout their history were always literate and always engaged in "learning".

The prime training ground for such Torah study was the institution called "yeshiva" – in Aramaic, "mesivta". Both in Aramaic and Hebrew the words meant the same – a place to sit and study Torah. The rabbis traced the origins of such institutions of study of G-d and His value system to the time of our father Abraham. From that time onwards, the rabbis commented in the Midrash, the institution of the yeshiva never disappeared from the centrality of the Jewish scene.

The great academies of Torah learning that existed in Babylonia from the sixth century BCE till the eleventh century CE, the schools of Torah that marked Jewish Spain (and produced among others the great Maimonides) from the seventh through the fifteenth centuries, the Ashkenazic seminaries of France and Germany of the Middle Ages, all were part of this chain of Torah learning and were all components in the yeshiva system of education. The language of instruction, the methodology of teaching and the physical circumstances of the schools naturally varied from place to place and from time to time. But the similarity of goal and the common devotion of all of the schools and their students to the concept of "learning" Torah as being above all other life achievements united all of the schools in the eyes of Jewish history and culture.

At the very beginning of the nineteenth century the system of "yeshiva learning" became much more formalized than it had been in Europe in previous centuries. Formal schools of learning were founded with established curricula, recognized heads of the institutions, entrance exams for those applying to become students and a system of stipends and scholarships for outstanding students. This formalization of the "yeshiva learning" system was strongest in Lithuania, but it also occurred in other countries in Europe as well.

The great "Yeshiva Etz Chaim" was founded in the small hamlet of Volozhin by Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (the main disciple of Rabbi Elijah Kramer, the Gaon of Vilna) and by 1830 it had become the prototype for the new formal type of yeshiva in Czarist Eastern Europe. In Lemberg (Lvov), under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a Polish-style, less formal yeshiva study-group for exceptional advanced students was operating in the 1830's under the direction of the great rabbi and philanthropist of Galicia, Rabbi Joseph Saul Nathanson. This study-group yeshiva attracted some of the best young Jewish minds in Galicia to come and study with the great rabbi. In Pressburg (Bratislava), the leading rabbi of Central Europe, Rabbi Moses Sofer-Schreiber, established a formal yeshiva in the 1820's that served as the center of Torah learning and rabbinical training for that area until 1939. Many other such institutions were founded and in fact flourished throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe, serving to strengthen and revitalize traditional Jewish life in Europe in those centuries.

Due to the intensity of time and study effort demanded by the rigorous daily study schedule, discussed in greater detail below, almost all yeshiva students lived away from home. Thus those small villages that housed a yeshiva in their environs basically lived off the yeshiva, furnishing housing, meals, laundry facilities, etc. to the students, much as a "college town" economy today is based on the university that is located in its midst. In fact, as the yeshiva in town grew in reputation and numbers, the town grew with it in population in order to be able to supply its needs. Most, though not all, of the schools in Lithuania were located in what were originally very small villages, which in the nature of things would not afford the students any social distractions from study, distractions which were always present in large urban centers. Thus the Yeshiva Movement was not only an educational boon and a vehicle for spiritual renewal in Europe, it also became a vital and almost irreplaceable source of economic activity for the impoverished villages that housed the schools.

The economic ripple effect was strong, for the students required books and other study materials. It is no coincidence that the major publications of the Talmud and its commentaries in Eastern Europe occurred in the latter third of the nineteenth century when the Yeshiva Movement expanded greatly. Thousands of Jews found their employment in printing, publishing and distributing Torah books, as these books served as the necessary equipment for the army of scholars studying Torah in great institutions of learning in Europe.

Most of the students at these formal yeshivos arrived at the age of sixteen or younger and remained as students for a decade or more. The daily schedule of study in a yeshiva included ten hours of classroom and individual studies. Many students would stay awake all night every Thursday, pursuing their studies until daybreak Friday. The school vacations were at Passover and Succos, as well as for three weeks in the summer. There was no formal graduation upon students leaving the yeshiva. Most students of the yeshiva married in their middle or even late twenties, though exceptional students were much sought after as sons-in-law and therefore often married much earlier.

The curriculum of each yeshiva differed slightly. There were those institutions that covered the entire Babylonian Talmud in a ten or twelve year cycle. Others devoted a seven to ten year cycle to studying seven or eight specific volumes of the Talmud, concentrating on the laws of commerce, torts, bailments, partnership, marriage, divorce and domestic relations. Still other institutions concentrated on studying "sugyos" – specific subject matters whose relevant texts may be scattered among the many volumes of the Talmud – and intensely researching those particular subject matters. The common denominator in all of the curriculums was the intensity of effort required, the long hours, the unrelenting pursuit of academic excellence and pristine intellectual honesty joined with the appreciation of the holiness of text and sacredness of received tradition.

The Talmud itself is basically a detailed study of the text of the Torah. Every letter, every word, every nuance of the Torah is carefully examined therein, held up to the

light of intellectual and practical analysis and discussed thoroughly. The underlying premise was, and remains, that the Torah is the word of G-d, and there is therefore no limit to the profundity of meaning embedded therein. The task of the student of the yeshiva was and is to appreciate the text of Torah and the Talmud and analyze it – to continue the endless discussion, so to speak. The holiness of text has thus been extended from originally only the Torah itself to the Mishna and the Talmud and even to the great medieval commentaries on these works. “Why was this word used?” and “Why does this phrase or odd word appear in the Torah, and why is that relevant to our understanding of the phrase or word?” – these are the usual questions that begin any discussion of the subject matter under consideration in the yeshiva curriculum. Even the order in which subjects are discussed and their classification in one chapter and not in another chapter is to be noted, questioned and analyzed. Practical Jewish behavior and life-style throughout the centuries as well as the details of ritual observance of Judaism’s commandments were all derived from the nature and order of the text of Torah, the Talmud and the great commentaries themselves. Careful and meticulous examination of the text is the basis of all Torah scholarship and it was the backbone of all scholastic endeavors in any yeshiva.

But the yeshiva set for itself a far loftier goal than merely producing great Torah scholars. Especially in Lithuania, the yeshiva combined the study of “mussar” – ethics and probity in relations with G-d and with one’s fellow man – with the study of Talmud in its curriculum. The student was not meant to be only a scholar. He was meant to be an upright, considerate, compassionate and productive human being. The yeshiva was determined to produce not just a “good Jew” but a paradigm of a “good Jew”, one who would serve as an inspiration and role model for all Jews everywhere. The object was to allow humans to “see” G-d, so to speak, through the behavior, attitudes and speech of another human being. Whereas many religions regularly attempt to sanctify godlike individuals, Judaism was sanctified in its goal of producing godly people. The yeshiva was seen as the manufacturer of such people.

In Poland, the structure of the yeshiva differed markedly from its sister institutions in Lithuania. There were no great central large institutions of learning (with the exception of one in Lublin that opened in 1930) but there were smaller houses of learning scattered throughout Poland. They were located in small synagogues and study halls (called *shtieblach* – small houses) located in every Jewish town and many minor communities as well. In this type of smaller yeshiva there were usually twenty to thirty young men who studied Torah and Talmud in depth with intense devotion, though the more rigid and formalized norms of classroom schooling that were common to the Lithuanian yeshiva were usually absent in this Polish counterpart. Since Poland was the heartland of the Chasidic movement, most of these smaller schools were closely affiliated with a particular Chasidic court or dynasty, so that the total number of yeshiva students belonging to a particular Chasidic sect (such as Gur, Belz, Bobov, Alexander, Lubavitch, etc.) easily numbered in the many thousands.

The Polish style of learning tended to be more lively and free-spirited than that of the Lithuanian schools. The Lithuanian schools emphasized deep analysis and grinding intellectual integrity in solving Talmudic problems and contradictions. The Polish yeshiva was distinguished by students of quick minds who favored lightning insights and clever comparisons and often were able, intellectually speaking, to put an elephant through the eye of a needle. The works, stories, parables and thoughts of the masters of Chasidus supplied the ethical curriculum of the typical Polish yeshiva study program, and served as a counterpart to the study of "mussar" in Lithuania. These studies were oriented much more towards the study of "kabbalah" – Jewish mysticism and spirituality, which was a mainstay of Chasidic thought – than were the more practical subjects of "mussar". Nevertheless, the goal in both of these types of institutions was the same – the creation and forming of an ethical, scholarly, exemplary person who would reflect in human living the noble teachings of Torah.

The yeshiva was a place of idealism and idealists. It was a place where young people strove to create a better and fairer world for themselves and for all mankind, and was permeated by idealistic goals and an atmosphere almost utopian in scope and direction. But its main goal, though, continued to be the education of young men who would devote themselves to the perpetuation of the study of Torah amongst the people of Israel. And in fact this remains its main goal today as well.

Efforts over the years to destroy the institution of the yeshiva – whether in czarist Russia or elsewhere – failed, and the Yeshiva Movement continued to grow. In particular, Jewish Poland and Lithuania as well as Central Europe experienced a great surge of growth in the yeshiva world and its institutions, especially between the First World War and the Holocaust. Students from the West – Germany, England, France and the United States – flocked to the small hamlets and cities of Lithuania and Poland to study Torah in that time. In spite of the blatant and violent anti-Semitism that infected Poland and Lithuania in the 1920's and 1930's, the yeshiva movement grew and strengthened during those sad decades. So, as Jewish Eastern European stood unknowingly on the brink of extermination, its spiritual strength and Torah knowledge through its yeshiva school system reached new heights of development, creativity and influence.

During the Holocaust, the Germans and their Polish and Lithuanian collaborators took special glee in wreaking their bloody vengeance on the yeshiva. They were aware of the special role that this institution played in Jewish life and the love of the Jewish people for the schools, their teachers and students. Thus the yeshiva received special sadistic treatment at their hands. The institutions were closed, the building either destroyed or converted into barns, warehouses and soldiers' quarters. The Torah scrolls were desecrated and made into slippers and gloves while the book of the Talmud and the commentaries on it were consumed in great public bonfires as bands gleefully played to entertain the hate-filled German, Polish and Lithuanian onlookers and drown out the sobs of the Jews. The rabbis and teachers of the yeshiva were brutally tortured and murdered

while the Einsatzgruppen killer squads shot most of the students to death. Some of the students and faculty somehow "escaped" to the main ghettos but most again met their death there through starvation, disease and murder. However, individuals from almost every yeshiva miraculously did escape to the West or survived the Holocaust camps and ghettos; these were the people who rebuilt the yeshiva world after World War II. Just as in the aftermath of a great fire, seeds somehow survive and begin the process of reforestation, so too did these few individuals plant again and rebuild Torah study throughout the Jewish world.

Most of the great Chasidic courts of Jewish Poland were destroyed during the Holocaust. Millions of Polish Jews went to their deaths - Grand Rabbis, porters, teachers, merchants, students, housewives, teamsters, scholars, poets and authors. So did almost all of the faculties and students of the Polish-style yeshiva. A very small number of Chasidic masters - *rebbe*s - escaped to Israel and the United States. Their dynastic courts, their hundreds of thousands of followers, had all been reduced literally to ashes. Yet, they began again. However, the mass use of the system of small *shtiebel* study-group type of yeshiva learning all but ended after the Holocaust. The Chasidic world, which has rebuilt itself mightily both in Israel and North America over the past half-century, has in the main now adopted for itself the model of the more formal, centralized, larger, Lithuanian-type yeshiva as its system of Torah learning, though naturally retaining its Chasidic curriculum and flavor. Nevertheless, in Brooklyn and Monsey and Bnei Brak and Jerusalem, the old type of small *shtiebel* yeshiva can still be found operating amongst certain Chasidic communities.

There was one entire yeshiva that was successful in escaping almost to a man from Lithuania in 1941. That was the yeshiva of Mir. That yeshiva and its story appear as one of the subjects of the case studies that appear in Part II below.

Had there been no yeshiva survivors of the Holocaust, the yeshiva would nevertheless surely have been created anew, since there never was a time in Jewish history that the institution did not exist in Jewish society. Yet, if not for these survivors, the chain of continuity linking the new yeshiva to its past, a chain of custom and nuance and tradition and folklore, would have been severed. Continuity is not easily created anew. Because of the heroic efforts of these survivors and others whom they taught and inspired, the institution of the yeshiva has once again gained its preeminent role in Jewish society. In terms of numbers, there are probably more full-time yeshiva students today amongst the Jewish people than there have been for centuries. And this is in spite of the fact that the general financial state of yeshivos the world over is less than sanguine, tuition is high by historic standards, and other forms of education at all levels are now easily accessible to most Jewish youth almost everywhere. It is the attraction of Torah, its mysteries and logic, its holiness and practicality, its life-realism and optimistic view of the future, which appeals now as always before to thousands of young Jewish people. The existence, growth and popularity of yeshiva institutions today is in itself the single

greatest testimony to the importance and centrality of the yeshiva in the Jewish community at large.

The Jewish people is known as "The Eternal People." It is the Torah that has kept the Jewish people eternal. And it is the yeshiva, throughout Jewish history, that has perpetuated the relationship between the Jewish people and the Torah. The yeshiva is thus more than a school or a university or a seminary. It is more than an institution of education and learning. It is the heart of Jewish renewal and hope. It is the guarantor of the future of the nation of Israel and the guardian of the Jewish past. Like the nation that it leads, it was seemingly crushed by the murderous Holocaust only to rise again – in greater strength and devotion. If there ever was an institution deserving of the gratitude and support of all of the Jewish people for having helped preserve them to this very day, it is the yeshiva.



PART II

SELECTED CASE STUDIES  
OF YESHIVOS AND  
KEHILLOS



# GALICIA

# BELZ CHASSIDUS

Before the Holocaust, Eastern Europe was the home of the Chassidic world and indeed the cradle in which it was nurtured from its infancy in the early eighteenth century. Cities and towns from the borders of Germany all the way across the Pale of Settlement in Russia far to the east throbbed to the pulse of Chassidic life. Men in long caftans, beards and earlocks, chaste women in modest attire, children frolicking in the streets, virtually all of them speaking Yiddish, virtually all of them intoxicated with the sheer joy of being Jewish.

Chassidism was born in the Ukraine, but during the last century before the Holocaust the heartland of the Chassidic world expanded to include Galicia in southern Poland. The nucleus of Chassidism in eastern Galicia was in the small town of Belz.

The Belz movement is centered on a hundred-year-old dynasty of illustrious, charismatic leaders or *Rebbes*. By the late nineteenth century, Belz had become a dominant force in world Chassidism. The followers of the Belzer Rebbes numbered in the many thousands. They formed a significant portion of the population in just about every town and city in Galicia, as well as in many far beyond. Innumerable rabbis and Chassidic leaders all over Eastern Europe looked to Belz for spiritual guidance.

Many venerable Chassidic institutions, veritable galaxies of Chassidic life, were so thoroughly destroyed by the Holocaust that they were never rebuilt. Of those that survived and recovered, Belz is one of the oldest, largest and most dynamic.

Today, Belz occupies a dominant position in contemporary Chassidic life. With great effort, dedication and sacrifice, it was revived after the devastation of the Holocaust. Today, it continues to grow and flourish, and it is regaining size and influence.

## **The History of Belz**

Geography played an important role in the expansion of Belzer influence among the Chassidim of Eastern Europe. Of all the lands of Eastern Europe, Galicia is probably the most centrally located. It lies between the Dniester and Vistula Rivers in southern Poland. To the south, the Carpathian Mountains form its boundary; beyond the mountains lie Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. To the north lies Poland, to the east Podolia, Wallin and the Ukraine, to the west Germany. Galicia is essentially divided into two districts, East Galicia, whose principal city is Lwow (Lemberg), and West Galicia, whose principal city is Cracow.

Galicia was originally part of the Kingdom of Poland. In fact, Krakow was the original royal capital of all of Poland. Over the years, the seat of government shifted to Warsaw, and when the dismemberment of Poland was begun in 1772, Galicia

became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At that time, there were over a quarter of a million Jews in Galicia.

The Chassidic movement began in the Ukraine just to the east of Galicia. By the end of the eighteenth century, fully six sevenths of the Jews of Galicia had joined the movement, well over two hundred thousand people.

Belz is located in the southeastern part of Galicia, in the heart of the Chassidic world. But geography alone does not account for its phenomenal growth and success. The Belzer branch of Chassidism was founded and guided ever since its inception by a dynasty of extraordinary leaders.

The first Belzer Rebbe was Rabbi Sarshalom Rokeach. Appointed rabbi of the city in 1817, he was soon recognized as not only a great scholar but also as a man of incredible piety and holiness. Many of the Chassidim in Belz and the surrounding towns and cities accepted him as their Rebbe, and thus did the Belzer branch come into being.

Belzer Chassidim grew rapidly, and within a short while, it became one of the most important branches of Chassidism. People did not become Belzer Chassidim by filling out applications and registering with the organization. Anyone who frequented the Belzer gathering, prayed in the Belzer synagogues, studied in the Belzer study halls and sought the Belzer Rebbe's advice and blessing when he was having personal problems could justifiably be considered a Belzer Chassid. Consequently, there are no hard statistics, which will help us project the size of Belzer Chassidism at the time with any degree of accuracy. Still, there is evidence that points to the extent of the Belzer movement.

For instance, in a letter written at the time to the Austrian government, the twelve major Chassidic leaders of Galicia are enumerated, and the Belzer Rebbe is among them. Considering that the Chassidim in Galicia at the time numbered in the hundreds of thousands, we can safely assume that Belz had many thousands.

In *Chassidism: The Movement and Its Masters*, Professor Harry Rabinowitz writes:

*In Eastern Galicia during the 1850s Jews accounted for one third of the population in cities such as Lwow (Lemberg), Drohbycz, Stryj, Kalish, Tysmenista, Jaroslaw and Przemysl. Jews formed an absolute majority in the cities of Tarnopol, Kolomya, Turka and Rzeszow, and the bulk of them were Chassidim of Belz (emphasis added).*

One of the projects near and dear to the heart of the Belzer Rebbe was the construction of a large synagogue in Belz. The Rebbe labored for fifteen years on this project, paying meticulous attention to the design and the actual construction. The

building was massive, resembling a castle. When it was completed, it was a powerful symbol of the beauty and strength of Belz. The Rebbe, his successors and the Chassidim had a very strong sentimental attachment to this building, which had only risen as a result of so much toil and sacrifice. As the years went on, it became a fabled place, the setting of many wonderful stories and anecdotes about Belz during the hundred years that it stood before it was destroyed by the Nazis in 1939.

In 1856, the first Belzer Rebbe was succeeded by his son Rabbi Yehoshua Rokeach, who guided his flock for nearly forty years with a strong and steady hand. Under his leadership, the Belzer branch of Chassidism became one of the largest and most influential in all of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to the *Encyclopedia of Galician Scholars*, Graf Adam Potocki, the provincial governor, visited the second Belzer Rebbe, because he controlled thirty thousand young men.

In 1878, the Belzer Rebbe joined Rabbi Shimon Sofer--son of the illustrious Chasam Sofer--in founding Machzikei Hadas, an umbrella organization encompassing all the religious communities of Poland. The purpose of the organization was to shore up the community from within and present a united front to the outside world. Within, it sought to preserve and bolster the spirit of true Torah Judaism, to preserve the education of the young in its original form and to build ever more primary and secondary schools. Without, it was to represent the needs of the Jewish community to the Austrian government.

Many prominent rabbis joined forces with the Belzer Rebbe and Rabbi Sofer in this undertaking, among them Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Orenstein of Lwow. Machzikei Hadas began with two hundred and thirty-seven communities as charter members and continued to grow from year to year. A bi-weekly newspaper expressed the philosophy of the organization, and reported on new members and on developments relating to the organization.

During the elections for the Austrian parliament in 1879, Machzikei Hadas fielded a slate of candidates and won a large part of the Jewish vote. Rabbi Sofer was among those elected to Parliament.

In 1882, there was another convention of Machzikei Hadas, at which two hundred additional rabbis joined. There were delegates from over eight hundred communities. At the 1887 convention, it was decided that the organization would undertake to establish and strengthen *yeshivos* and primary schools in every town and city of Galicia.

In 1894, Rabbi Yissocher Dov Rokeach succeeded his father as Belzer Rebbe and continued the expansion of Belz. He fed thousands of Chassidim in his communal kitchens and supported many hundreds of Yoshvim, married scholars who practically lived in the Belzer synagogues, studying and praying, from morning until night. Moreover, through Machzikei Hadas, Belz was a guiding force of most of the

communities in Galicia. According to the *Encyclopedia of Galician Scholars*, the Belzer Rebbe was considered the "recognized leader" of all Galician Jewry, not only his own Chassidim.

This gives us an intimation of the size of Belz at the dawn of the twentieth century. Belz itself probably had at least tens of thousands of adherents, while many thousands of others in the broader community respected the Belzer Rebbe's views and accepted his guidance.

Since Galicia belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the borders with Hungary were open, and this helped spread Belzer influence deep into Hungary. Belzer influence was also strong in Russia to the east, Poland to the north and Germany to the west. In a newspaper account, we read:

*On the train to Belz, we met not only people from Galicia but many people from beyond, from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and more... Galician Chassidim with their broad-brimmed hats, Polish Chassidim, with their round hats, Czechoslovakian Chassidim with their pointy trimmed beards, German Chassidim dressed in Western European garb.*

Many Rebbes, scions of Chassidic dynasties, accepted the Belzer Rebbe as their spiritual leader and visited him often. Among these were the Rebbes of Sanz, Shinive, Gorlitz, Kaminke, Dinov, Bukovsk and Bluzhev in western Galicia; Lublin, Tomaszow, Oszrowa, Kaluszyn, Valbrum and Porsov in Greater Poland; Sighet, Kashau, Pupa, Mishkolc, Makave, Semihali, Serdaheli and Tzelim in Hungary; and Ratzfert, Kleinverdan, Munkacz and Chust in the Russian Carpathians. Some Rebbes and rabbis would travel to Belz together with their disciples and followers, and quite often, a number of these became staunch Belzer Chassidim.

By this time, many of the communities within a large radius of Belz had come over to Belz. Many of the rabbis, the lay leaders, and the school administrators eventually became Belzer Chassidim. Even cities more distant experienced an upsurge of Belzer influence, since for the most part, the Torah disseminators and the leader of benevolent projects were Belzer Chassidim.

During the First World War, as the Russian armies advanced towards Belz, the Rebbe escaped to Hungary, where he had many Chassidim. Many thousands of Hungarian Chassidim came to see him during his stay in Hungary and were much taken with his greatness. After the War, when he returned to Belz, many of these Hungarian Chassidim continued to consider themselves his followers and traveled often to Belz to spend the festivals with the saintly Rebbe.

Prior to the First World War, the system of Torah education in Galicia was not based on a structured yeshiva system, although there were dormitory facilities for the

students. Teachers hired by individual parents gave instruction to children and young adults in the informal environment of the synagogue or study hall. In Hungary, however, there was an established and formal yeshiva system with staff, administration and dormitory facilities. When the Belzer Rebbe returned to Galicia from Hungary, he decided to introduce the yeshiva system to his own community. Using the existing Yoshvim as the nucleus, he brought in a number of younger students, hired teaching and supervisory staff, and formed the first Belzer Yeshiva. Based on this model, Belz established an entire network of yeshivos throughout Galicia.

In a major effort, the Belzer Rebbe dispatched Yoshvim to many cities and towns to spearhead the organization of formal yeshivos. With a sense of mission, they delivered lectures and were closely involved in the organizational process. The Rebbe also encouraged all the rabbis who came to visit him to go back to their communities and establish formal yeshivos. The philosophy and methodology of these yeshivos is perpetuated today by the worldwide network of Belzer yeshivos.

In 1926, the third Belzer Rebbe passed away, and the vast crowds that attended his funeral were greater than at any public gathering in Galicia during the period between the two World Wars. Special trains had to be added to the railroad schedule to accommodate the countless thousands who came to pay their last respects.

After Rabbi Aharon Rokeach succeeded his father as the fourth Belzer Rebbe, Belz continued to grow by leaps and bounds. He improved and expanded the network of yeshivos, drawing many students from beyond the immediate Belzer circle. He also organized Belzer institutions in Palestine and the United States. In addition, many Chassidim of other Rebbes in Galicia began to make periodic visits to Belz in addition to their regular pilgrimages to their own Rebbes.

The fourth Belzer Rebbe was very involved in the progress of Machzikei Hadas, as were his predecessors. In 1928, he called a conference on the future of the organization. Virtually all the rabbis of eastern and western Galicia attended and reaffirmed their continued participation and support.

In 1929, there was an assembly of all the rabbis of Poland and Galicia in Warsaw. Huge crowds came to the railroad station to welcome the Belzer Rebbe. During the assembly itself he was one of the most honored attendees, and as a result of the assembly, he was chosen to be part of a select delegation to petition the Polish government on behalf of the Jewish people. In 1934, a public proclamation by the leading rabbis of Greater (northern) Poland was signed by dozens of dignitaries. The place of honor of first signature on the list was given to the Belzer Rebbe, who was also the only rabbi from Galicia to be asked to sign alongside all the rabbis of Greater Poland.

Indeed, Belz became so prominent and celebrated that even the Gentile world stopped to take notice. In 1938, Prince Peter of Greece, a cousin of the King of England, visited the Belzer Rebbe and came away very impressed.

Up until the very beginning of the Holocaust, Belzer Chassidism and the Belzer network of yeshivos continued to expand. The central yeshiva was, of course, in Belz itself, where four hundred students studied day and night under the tutelage of outstanding teachers. But Belzer yeshivos in other cities were equally remarkable. By way of illustration, let us read what *Sod Yesharim v'Eidah* writes about the Belzer yeshiva that was established in Lwow.

*In 1924, they rented an apartment on Rapaport Street 15 across from the Jewish hospital. They started with a few dozen boys and open their doors. The yeshiva was unlike any other in Lwow and its surroundings. In a short while, the yeshiva grew, and the administrators were able to secure space on Zrodlna Street. Eighty to a hundred boys attended this yeshiva year in [and] year out, their ambitions sharply focused on growth in Torah and Chassidism. Next door to the yeshiva was a Belzer center for the distribution of funds and goods to needy students ... Many of the graduates of this yeshiva went on to become judges, ritual slaughterers, scribes and enlightened laymen. A small number became rabbis famous throughout Galicia and Poland.*

This is a description of a typical Belzer yeshiva, not in Belz itself but in another city. The goal was to promote scholarship and alleviate suffering. It was a story repeated innumerable times in all the corners of Eastern Europe touched by the influence of Belz.

### **A Pre-War Appraisal**

As we come to the threshold of the Holocaust, let us pause for a brief review of the assets of the Belzer movement. The history and accomplishments of Belz are well-chronicled in numerous books on the subject.

First, there were the Chassidim themselves, the living breathing devotees of the Rebbe and his ideology.

Second, there were the buildings. These included the massive synagogue constructed by the first Belzer Rebbe, which in 1939 contained over one hundred Torah scrolls. In addition, there was a large study hall in a separate building and another spacious building which served as the communal hall for assemblies and festivities, a hospitality center for the numerous Chassidim and guests who came from far and wide, and the personal residence of the Belzer Rebbes. There was also a building that housed the mikveh (ritual bath) and dormitories for the use of students and visitors. Outside of Belz itself there were hundreds of small synagogues known as

*shtieblach*, which belonged to Belz. These *shtiehlach* were centers of Torah study, prayer, acts of kindness and gracious hospitality. The incidence and population of the *shtieblach* only measure the baseline of the Belzer influence. In actuality, Belzer influence was far greater than indicated by the *shtieblach*, because innumerable Belzer Chassidim frequented the larger synagogues in their towns and often even constituted the majority of the membership.

Third, there was yeshiva network that extended all over Galicia and beyond. This group of dynamic institutions provided the Torah education for most Belzer Chassidim and many thousands of other Jewish children, and as such, it was one of the pillars of Belz.

Fourth, there was the Machzikei Hadas organization, with its offices and staff in just about every community in Galicia. This was a critical asset for Belz, since it influenced education, social services and political affiliation throughout Galicia.

In brief, Belz enjoyed a very strong and advantageous position by virtue of its huge numbers of Chassidim, the physical infrastructure of its vast network of schools and organizations, and the political clout it enjoyed as a result of Machzikei Hadas.

### **Belz during the Holocaust**

In the fall of 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned Poland. Belz was the easternmost point which fell into German hands. As soon as the Nazis entered Belz they immediately made a target of the old synagogue. They attempted to destroy it with explosives, but the walls were too thick. Finally, they called together a large group of Jews and ordered them to take the synagogue apart, piece by little piece. The old and venerable edifice that had housed the glory of Belz for nearly one hundred years was no more.

The Gestapo, apparently well-informed about Belz, immediately came looking for the Belzer Rebbe who had gone into hiding. His picture was published in all the papers. His family was killed, as were many tens of thousands of Belzer Chassidim.

The Rebbe, always just a step ahead of his pursuers, moved from city to city, from ghetto to ghetto. From almost the beginning he was together with his brother Rabbi Mordechai Rokeach, the rabbi of Bilgoraj. Finally, they reached the relative safety of Budapest. However, when the Nazis demanded the Hungarian government extradite the Rebbe, he and his brother were once again spirited away by devoted Belzer Chassidim. In 1944, after much danger and hardship, the Rebbe and his brother arrived in Palestine. Gone was the royal Chassidic court. Gone were the multitudes of fervent Chassidim. Just a handful of Chassidim congregated around the venerable Rebbe.



Disregarding his own tragic losses, the Rebbe immediately set out to bring solace to the broken-hearted refugees who trickled into Palestine. He was also very active in organizing rescue efforts.

### **After the Holocaust**

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the Rebbe labored mightily to mend the broken spirits of the survivors and to bring them back to a devout Torah life, something that could not be done during the Holocaust years. He and his brother also did everything in their power to repair shattered lives. They raised money to pay for the weddings of orphans. They used their contacts and influence to help people find work. They soothed the hearts of the survivors with warmth and love. Indeed, many survivors chose to go to Palestine because they wanted to be near the Belzer Rebbe.

The Belzer world that had existed before had been destroyed. But a new Belzer world slowly began to rise on the ashes of the old. The Belzer Chassidim who survived the Holocaust settled in many places. In 1946, the Belzer community in Antwerp, Belgium, opened a yeshiva and a primary school, the first such institutions to be reborn after the Holocaust. In 1948, the first Belzer primary school was opened in Tel Aviv. It grew rapidly, and branches were opened in Jaffa, Shechunat Hatikvah and Neve Achiezer. In 1955, a large new building brought together all these branches under one roof. In the following years, schools were opened in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak. Today, the enrollment in these Belzer primary schools in Israel numbers in the thousands.

Meanwhile, Belzer communities were developing all over Europe and the United States. In 1949, the Bilgorajer Rav, the Rebbe's brother, visited many of these communities to encourage them to build schools and other Torah institutions. Among the places he visited were Paris, Antwerp, Switzerland, London and Manchester. In the same year, the Belzer Yeshiva was established in Jerusalem with twenty students. It was but a pale shadow of the past, but it was a new beginning.

In a letter, the Belzer Rebbe wrote:

*I have founded a yeshiva in Jerusalem called Yeshiva of the Belzer Chassidim. Its purpose is to develop the students . . . especially to embrace those refugees and orphaned students who have spent years adrift in Europe . . . We take them and provide all their needs so that they are given the opportunity to study with peace of mind.*

Once again, the two-fold ideals of Belz come to the fore. The advancement of Torah scholarship and the alleviation of suffering. The students were taught Torah, but they also had all their physical needs taken care of, bed and board, clothing, even some pocket money.

Throughout this whole period, the Belzer Rebbe was a symbol of hope and faith to many thousands of Holocaust survivors, his own Chassidim as well as others. Remnants of shattered Chassidic groups which were unable to rebuild on their own attached themselves to the growing Belzer world. The Belzer Rebbe was revered and respected because he was completely above politics. He loved every single Jew, regardless of origin or affiliation, and in turn, he was beloved and sought after by all in times of need or distress.

### **The Belzer World Rebuilt**

In 1966, Rabbi Yissocher Dov Rokeach, the son of the Bilgorajer Rav, succeeded his uncle, whose children had perished in the Holocaust, as the fifth Belzer Rebbe. Under his inspired leadership, Belz has continued to recover from the losses it had suffered during the Holocaust. Belz has regained its position as one of the most respected and admired Chassidic movements in the world. It is internationally recognized for its emphasis on excellence in Torah scholarship and for the large number of outstanding Torah scholars that it consistently produces.

The process of recovery has been steady and gradual, decade by decade from the fifties until the present day. The Belzer presence spread over the world with the establishment of *shtieblach* in fifteen different communities. These *shtieblach* are just the tip of the iceberg, since many Belzer Chassidim do not pray in the *shtieblach* but in the community synagogues. The many thousands of Chassidim give Belz a high profile all over the world, spreading Belzer ideas and concepts among the broader community.

The scope of Belzer activities and institutions today cannot be portrayed in any degree of detail in a few short paragraphs. The following is a general summary of what Belz represents today. (A listing of Belzer institutions is attached):

**Structures:** The heart of Belz is the Belz World Center, a massive building in Jerusalem which attempts to recapture under one roof the atmosphere and accommodations of the complex of building that served Belz in Galicia for virtually a century, before it was demolished piece by piece by the Nazis in 1939. The Center, which is a large-scale replica of the synagogue built by the first Belzer Rebbe, contains within its walls a synagogue, study hall, assembly hall, rabbinical courtroom, guest house, communal kitchen facilities and a mikveh (ritual bath)

Construction is under way on an immense new assembly hall in which the Rebbe will present his Torah discourses. This new building will also provide ample space for the huge crowds that gather in Belz for the holidays and special occasions. It will accommodate the many thousands of Chassidim who come every year from all over the world to spend the holiday season with their beloved Rebbe.

The present Belzer Rebbe devoted fifteen years of hard work to making this building a reality, at a cost of over thirty million dollars. Interestingly, the first Belzer Rebbe also devoted fifteen years to the construction of the original Belzer synagogue.

Furthermore, Belz has built an entire *kiryah* (development), which stands as a memorial to the city of Belz, around the Belz World Center in Jerusalem. Hundreds of Belzer families live in these apartment houses, just a short walk from the Center.

**Memorial projects:** Belz maintains a large archive of photographs, books, documents, manuscripts and periodicals. It employs researchers to investigate the Belzer past and compile histories to memorialize the world destroyed by the Holocaust. Researchers also construct models of the Belzer structures that were destroyed by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

**Shtiebel Network:** Today, in addition to the main synagogue, twenty-three Belzer *shtieblach* scattered all over the globe serve four thousand families. They are all focal points of Torah study and community services.

**Torah institutions:** The ultimate goal of Belz has always been to establish the highest standards of Torah scholarship and dedication to community service among its Chassidim, and it is the mission of the Belzer school system to implant this wisdom and inculcate these values in the younger generation. The Belzer school system is the crown jewel of the Belzer world movement. The total enrollment is over 12,000. The staff is outstanding, the curriculum is broad and challenging, and the methodology is creative and enlightened.

Today, there are four large primary schools for boys in Israel, and five in the Diaspora. There are four secondary schools for boys in Israel and five in the Diaspora. Furthermore, there are four rabbinical colleges in Israel, as well as numerous *kollelim* (advanced research institutes for married scholars).

For girls' education, Belz provides a comprehensive program, called Bais Malka, which begins at age three and carries through the seminary level. There are three such systems in Israel and five in the Diaspora.

**Supplementary Torah projects:** In Belz, Torah education is a lifelong process, which continues after graduation and entry into the work force. Chevrah Yagdil Torah organizes *shiurim* (Torah lectures) in the *shtieblach*, as well as organized learning programs in the early mornings, before work, and in the evenings, after work. Chevrah Lomdei Shass is an organized program of daily study. Participants complete the entire Talmud every fourteen years. Chevras Avos Uvanim is a program that periodically pairs fathers and their young sons as learning partners, creating a direct bond between them on an exalted spiritual level.

In a special after-hours program called Chevras Kinyan Torah, contests are conducted for young students, and prizes are awarded for excellence in Talmud and Jewish law.

**Community service organizations:** In accordance with its strong emphasis on acts of kindness and alleviating suffering, Belz offers a full spectrum of community services for its own Chassidim as well as for the general public.

Mifal Oneg v'Simchah provides basic sustenance and financial assistance for needy families and individuals. Large numbers of food packages are distributed before every Shabbos and Festival. For many families, these packages stave off hunger and malnutrition.

Mifal Halbashah, which is concerned with providing adequate clothing for needy people, was founded immediately after the Holocaust to clothe survivors. Today, it continues to provide for survivors and their families. It also operates two clothing stores that sell to the general public at cost price. Needy students are not charged. The fund also gives needy bridegrooms a grant of two thousand dollars towards the purchase of a decent wardrobe.

Ezra Lamarpeh is a medical referral service, which directs people to the appropriate doctors or other health care providers. Ezra Lamarpeh lends wheelchairs, hospital beds, walkers, oxygen tanks, monitors and other medical equipment to the public free of charge. It also has two medical clinics and three dental clinics.

Vayizra Yitzchak Old Age Home was established for Holocaust survivors. It provides them with a genuine "old-world" atmosphere so that they can live out their lives in comfort and dignity. Bikur Cholim visits and comforts the ill and the elderly, many of whom are Holocaust survivors.

There are many other organizations that provide advice, financial assistance or free loans, with special stipends for just about every occasion and milestone in life.

**Machzikei Hadas:** This is the central communal organization of Belz. It manages and supervises the rabbinate, judgeships and rabbinical courts, kosher certification, and burial services. Belz has two rabbinical courts in Israel and one in America. Machzikei Hadas is also the organ through which Belz exercises its political clout and provides advocacy with the authorities for ordinary people.

**Outreach programs:** Belz directs Tzohar-Naaseh v'Nishma, one of the oldest organizations reaching out to uncommitted Jews. The organization conducts seminars and weekly encounters in the informal setting of private homes. It also has well-stocked Judaica libraries. Yeshiva Torah v'Emunah is a yeshiva and *kollel* specifically for newly committed Jews who want to devote themselves to serious full-time study.

**Publications:** Belz's publication arm produces many works expounding the Torah discourses and philosophies of the great Chassidic leaders, collections of the sayings of the Belzer Rebbes, scholarly journals, works of Jewish thought, biography and history. In addition, Belz publishes *Hamachaneh Hacharedi*, a popular weekly newspaper that promotes the Belzer outlook and philosophy, and *Alim Litrufa*, a weekly leaflet with Chassidic commentary, distributed at no charge to thousands of synagogues around the globe.

## Summary

Belz suffered a devastating blow during the Holocaust. Belz was an entire world, a Chassidic galaxy which radiated from Galicia into all the lands that surrounded it. It is difficult to make an accurate count because of the fluidity and informality of Chassidic society, but based on the sheer number of synagogues, *shtieblach* and other indications, it would not be unreasonable to assume that there were more than 100,000 Belzer Chassidim before the Holocaust.

Belz had buildings, Torah scrolls, books, priceless manuscripts, and religious ornaments. The Nazis confiscated or destroyed all of these during the Holocaust.

But most important of all, Belz had people, countless thousands of men, women, and children, young and old, rich and poor, scholars and laymen, most of them indiscriminately and brutally massacred by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

In all his public appearances, the Belzer Rebbe invariably makes mention of the terrible losses that Belz sustained in the Holocaust and the responsibility incumbent on all Belzer Chassidim to rebuild the edifice that was Belz.

Belz has succeeded in rebuilding a monolithic world movement. Belzer institutions the world over are unified and in constant touch with the World Center in Jerusalem, the hub of all Belzer activity. Every Belzer Chassid travels to Jerusalem at least once a year to pay his respects to the Belzer Rebbe and ask for his blessings and good wishes. Thousands of Chassidim make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the holiday seasons to be with their beloved Rebbe. The Belzer Rebbe, in turn, constantly travels to the Belzer communities all over the world to give them encouragement and strengthen their morale. His visits are always gala events, and he is greeted by thousands with much fanfare wherever he goes.

Belz has risen again from the ashes, but the losses can never be recovered. No matter how much is accomplished, Belz would have been manifold larger if not for the Holocaust. Belz was crushed but not obliterated. It rebuilt its synagogues, yeshivos, schools and institutions. Its numbers are large and constantly rising. Belz stands as a monument to the indomitable spirit of Chassidism and the ultimate victory of good over evil.

PARTIAL LIST OF BELZER INSTITUTIONS

## Belz World Center

### **Kiryat Belz Jerusalem - residential development.**

Founded in 1977, houses 600 families.

Presently building more buildings for additional 300 families.

Apartments subsidized for large families, scholars and immigrants.

### **Belz World Center - Beis Hamedrash Hagadol**

Synagogue and study halls.

Cornerstone laid 1984. Partial completion 1990-present.

Rabbinical position: The Belzer Rebbe, Grand Rabbi Yissacher Dov Rokeach.

Features:

**Great Shul.** 5000 sq. meter, 5000 seats, center for Belzer Chassidim worldwide.

**Study hall.** 825 sq. meter, 1000 seats. Used on weekdays and Shabbos.

8 additional **smaller shuls.** Used for daily prayers.

4 additional smaller **study halls,** used daily by *kollelim*.

**Main Mikveh.** 800 sq. meter, and smaller mikveh 138 sq. meters.

**Memorial Hall.** 129 sq. meter, with plaques and names of deceased Belzer Chassidim, in the holocaust and after. Meeting place for holocaust survivors of different communities. Contains library about pre-war Belzer communities.

**Communal kitchen.** 748 sq. meters, can accommodate preparation of 15,000 portions.

**"Eishel Avrohom" Guest House.** 4508 sq. meters, provides lodge for many guests who come for the holidays to the world center.

**Matzoh Bakery.** 649 sq. meters, used for Jewish ritual of baking matzo for the Passover holiday.

**Assembly Halls.** 987 sq. meters, used for large Chassidic conferences and assemblies.

**Conference Rooms.** 385 sq. meters, for educational and Rabbinical meetings.

**Grand Rabbi's office.** 82 sq. meters, waiting rooms and facilities for the many Chassidim who come to seek the Rebbe's guidance and advice.

**Rabbinical court Room.** 50 sq. meters.

Lounges, rest rooms, cloak rooms, refreshment rooms, 383 sq. meters.

Separate entrances and hallways for men and women, 1359 sq. meters.

Historic and beautiful site that attracts more than 10,000 visitors annually.

## Yeshivos (Seminaries) in Israel

### **Yeshivah d'Chasidei Belz, Jerusalem.**

165 Agrippas Street, Jerusalem. Tel: 02.625.2223/5/6

Founded in 1950. 270 students, 24 educational staff members, 10 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Shmuel Rosengarten. Director: Rabbi Yitzchak Landau.

3 large-scale buildings, big study hall, 77 dormitory rooms, 7 classrooms, library, offices, dining room, kitchen, mikveh and more.

**4 Kollelim** (*Yeshiva, Iyun, Metzuyanim, Iyun Gavoha*) for advanced study. 196 students who receive monthly support for their families.

### **Yeshivah d'Chasidei Belz, "Dover Shalom" Rishon Lezion**

Kiryat Kaliv, Rishon Letzion. Tel-Fax: 03.356.0111

Founded in 1994. 196 students, 18 educational staff members, 11 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Yosef Koth. Director: Rabbi Yomtov Klein.

1 large-scale building, big study hall, 39 dormitory rooms, 8 classrooms, offices, dining room, kitchen, mikveh and more.

**1 Kollect** (currently in Ashdod) for advanced study. 44 students who receive monthly support for their families.

New building planned in Ashdod.

### **Yeshivah d'Chasidei Belz, Bnei Brak**

Admor MiBelz Street, Bnei Brak. Tel: 03.570.0146 Fax: 03.579.9107

Founded in 1992. 190 students, 20 educational staff members, 6 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Shapiro. Director: Rabbi Reuven Breish.

1 large-scale building, big study hall, 47 dormitory rooms, 5 classrooms, dining room, kitchen and more.

**1 Kollect** (independent, founded in 1955, 2 study halls), 98 students who receive monthly support for their families.

### **Yeshivah d'Chasidei Belz, "Ohel Yehoshua" Haifa**

Hatishaa 29, Haifa. Tel: 04.832. 1175 Fax: 04,832.1742

Founded in 1997. 150 students, 11 educational staff members, 6 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Meir Dov Rechnitzer Director: Rabbi Eliezer Nachman.

1 large-scale building, big study hall, 40 dormitory rooms, 6 classrooms, offices, dining room, kitchen, mikveh and more.

**1 Kollect** for advanced study. 10 students who receive monthly support for their families.

Yeshivah Ketanah planned to open next year



## **Yeshivos Ketanos (High Schools) in Israel**

### **Yeshivah Ketanah "Tzur Yaakov," Telz Stone**

Kiryat Yearim, Jerusalem. Tel: 02.534.0969

Founded in 1955. 135 students, 18 educational staff members, 5 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Yermiya Damen.

2 buildings, big study hall, 32 dormitory rooms, 3 classrooms, dining room, kitchen, mikveh and more.

### **Yeshivah Ketanah d'Chasidei Beiz, Tel Aviv**

Achad Ha'am 61-63, Tel Aviv. Tel: 03.570.0146 Fax: 03.579-9107

Founded in 1955. 110 students, 19 educational staff members, 6 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Yitzchak Landau. Director: Rabbi Reuven Breish.

2 buildings, big study hall, 27 dormitory rooms, 3 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

### **Yeshivah Ketanah d'Chasidei Belz, Beth Chelkia**

Moshav Bet Chelkia. Tel: 08.869, 2660 Fax: 08.869.2917

Founded in 1991. 90 students, 12 educational staff members, 5 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Yosef Zvi Breuer.

Ten caravans, study hall, 23 dormitory rooms, 5 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

### **Yeshivah Ketanah Beis Mordchai, Ashdod**

Admor MiBelz 10, Kiryat Belz Ashdod, Tel- 08.856.6872 Fax: 08.856.1589

Founded in 1990. 100 students, 14 educational staff members, 5 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Asher Zeev Weiss. Director: Rabbi Ephraim Weber.

2 buildings, big study hall, 26 dormitory rooms, 4 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

3 Kollelim, 3) study halls, 133 students who receive monthly support for their families.

## **Talmud Torah Schools (Boys) in Israel**

### **Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadas, Jerusalem**

Pri Chadash 30, Pri Chadash 32-36, Jerusalem.

Divei Chaim 21, Kiryat Belz Jerusalem.

Tel: 02.538.5365 Fax: 02.537,5205

Founded in 1949. 750 students, 67 educational staff members, 14 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Mendel Pesach Goldklang. Director: Rabbi Ahron Deutch.

3 buildings, 30 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

### **Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadas, Bnei Brak**

Admor MiBelz 3-5, Bnei Brak

Tel: 0.3.570.0146 Fax: 03.579.9107

Founded in 1955. 571 students, 27 educational staff members, 8 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Eli Shalom Berkowitz. Director: Rabbi Reuven Breish.

2 buildings, 26 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

### **Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadas, Ashdod**

Chativat Hanegev 11, Ashdod. P.O. Box 8200 Ashdod

Tel: 08.853.1048

Founded in 1979. 500 students, 35 educational staff members, 15 workers.

Principal Rabbi Tzvi Shuvaks. Director Rabbi Ephraim Weber.

2 buildings, 19 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

### **Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadas, Tel Aviv**

Achad Ha'am 61, Tel Aviv.

Information will follow.

## **Bais Malka Schools (Girls) in Israel**

### **Jerusalem**

Malchei Yisrael 38, Jerusalem.

Tel: 02.538.4181 Fax:02.538.5725

Founded in 1973. 1100 students, 55 educational staff members, 9 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Mordchai Rand. Director: Rabbi Zvi Farkash.

3 buildings, 37 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

### **Bnei Brak**

Sharet 18, Bnei Brak.

Seminary: Ezra corner Chazon Ish, Bnei Brak; Rechov Makabim, Bnei Brak.

Tel: 03.578.0161 Fax: 03.570.2793

Founded in 1977. 1056 students, 52 educational staff members, 9 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Mordchai Rand. Director: Rabbi Arye Zeltzer.

3 buildings, 35 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

### **Ashdod**

Chativat Hanegev 32, Ashdod.

Tel: 08.856.0832 Fax: 08.856.1589

Founded in 1979. 420 students, 40 educational staff members, 6 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Mordchai Rand. Director: Rabbi Ephraim Weber.

4 locations, 17 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

# Global Shtibel Network

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Jerusalem.**

Yitzchak Sholel 4, Jerusalem.

Founded in 1939.

Serves 50 families.

**Beis Hatefilah Shel Haadmor MiBelz, Tel Aviv.**

Achad Ha'am 63, Tel Aviv.

Founded in 1944.

Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Abraham Dierenfeld.

Serves 100 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Bnei Brak.**

Admor MiBelz 5, Bnei Brak

Founded in 1954.

Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Moshe Weber.

Serves 200 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Zichron Meir, Bnei Brak.**

Ben-Yaakov 7, Bnei Brak

Founded in 1970.

Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Chaim Yechiel Rothman.

Serves 100 families daily and Shabbos.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Ramat Elchanan, Bnei Brak.**

Zonenfeld 4, Bnei Brak

Founded in 1940.

Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yeshaya Schneebalg.

Serves 50 families daily and Shabbos.

**Beis Hamedrash "Beis Pinchas" d'Chasidei Beiz, Bnei Brak.**

Yoel 18, Bnei Brak

Founded in 1993.

Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Traube.

Serves 100 families.

**Beis Hamedrash "Kehilas Vaakov" d'Chasidei Belz, Bnei Brak.**

Kehilas Yaakov 21, Bnei Brak

Founded in 1998.

Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yaakov Grinwald.

Serves 50 families.

**Beis Hamedrash Hamerkazi d'Chasidei Belz, Ashdod.**

Chativat Hanegev 35, Ashdod.  
Founded in 1978.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Chaim Pesach Horowitz.  
Serves 300 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Rova Gimel, Ashdod.**  
Founded in 1995.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yosef Hochausser.  
Serves 150 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Rova Zayin, Ashdod.**  
Founded in 1998.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Stark.  
Serves 150 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Haifa.**  
Arlozoroff 13, Haifa. Founded in 1965.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Berl Rechnitzer.  
Serves 300 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Boro Park.**  
(Cong. Belzer Shtibel)  
4814 16th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11204  
Founded in 1951.  
Serves 200 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz (2), Boro Park.**  
(Congregation Sar Shalom)  
1321 34th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11219  
Founded in 1980.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Shlomo Gross.  
Serves 250 families.

**Beis Hamedrash "Lomdei Torah" d'Chasidei Belz, Boro Park.**  
1779 50th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11204  
Founded in 1985.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Asher Eckstein.  
Serves 100 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz (4), Boro Park.**  
(Cong. Ohel Yehoshea)  
1173 50th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11219  
Founded in 1991.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Pesach Langsam.  
Serves 150 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Williamsburg.**  
150 Hooper Street, Brooklyn, NY 11211  
Founded in 1953.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Meyer Mayesz.  
Serves 100 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Monsey.**  
12 Maple Terrace, Monsey, NY 10952  
Founded in 1978.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Tuvia Wettstein.  
Serves 150 families.

**Congregation "Machzikei Haddas" d'Chasidei Belz,  
Montreal Canada.**  
5340 Jeanne Mance St., Montreal PQ H2V 4K4  
Founded in 1952.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Neuman.  
Serves 250 families,

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, London.**  
98 Clapton Common, London E5.  
Founded in 1957.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yosef Babad.  
Serves 200 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz (2), London.**  
49 St. Kildas Road, London N 16.  
Founded in 1995.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yosef Babad.  
Serves 80 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Manchester, England.**  
28 Broom Lane, Salford, Manchester M74FX.  
Founded in 1979.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Grinfeld.  
Serves 87 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Antwerp, Belgium.**

Van Spangenstraat 2. Antwerpen, Belgium 2018.

Founded in 1947.

Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yidel Grinfeld, Rabbi Weber.

Serves 250 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Zurich, Switzerland.**

Vest Strasser 151, Zurich 80003 Switzerland,

Founded in 1985.

Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Pinchas Padwa.

Serves 45 families.

**Chasidei Belz, Vienna, Austria.**

Krunn Baum Gasse 2-4, Vien, Ostreich

Founded in 1980.

Director: Rabbi Shlome Keren.

Serves 20 families.

**Chasidei Belz, Australia.**

11 Rockbrook Road, Melbourne, Australia

Founded in 1950.

Director: Rabbi Chaim Hersh Fogel.

Serves 50 families.

**Chasidei Belz, Lakewood, New Jersey.**

615 West Kennedy Blvd., Lakewood, NJ 08701

Founded in 1990.

Director: Rabbi Yitzchok Brezel.

Serves 50 families.

### List of example pre-war towns with Belzer Shtiblech and Yeshivos

E=East W=West G=Galicia P=Poland

S=shtibel Y=yeshiva MH = machzikei hadas

Name of Town	Location	Instit.	Information
Belz	EG		Belz World Center Great Shul and Study hall Central Yeshiva & Yeshiva for children Communal hall
Antwerpen	Belgium	S, Y, MH	
Bielitz (Biale Bielsk)	WG		Many Belzer Chasidim, Rabbi published Belzer discourse. Belz Rebbes visited often.
Bilgoraj	Poland	S, 2Y, BY	Rabbinic position was held by Belzer family.
Bilkamin	EG	1 S	
Bobarka	EG	S	Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Bochnia	WG	S	
Bolechow	EG	MH	
Brody	EG	S MH	Center of Belzer chasidim
Brzesko (Brigel)	WG		Many Belzer Chasidim. More information will follow
Burlow	EG		Residents Belzer Chasidim
Bursztyn	EG		Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim.
Busk	EG	1 S	Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Cheim	Poland	S Y	
Cholojow	EG		Residents Belzer Chasidim
Chrzanow	WG	2 S, MH	
Chust	Hungary	S Y	
Cieszanow	EG	1 S	Big famous <i>kloz</i> , and center of Belzer chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer family.
Dimitrov	EG	S	
Dobromil	EG	S	Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim.



Drohobycz	EG	2S, Y MH	Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Druzhkopol	Russia		Many Belzer Chasidim
Glogow	WG		Many Belzer Chasidim
Gorlice	WG	2 S	
Grodek-Jagiellonski (Greyding)	EG	S, MH	Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim.
Hrubieszow	P	1 S	
Istryk (Ustrzyki Dolne)	WG	2 S	Majority of (4700) Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Janow (Yanov)	EG		Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim.
Jaroslaw (Yerslov)	WG	3 S, Y	Rabbinic position was held by Belzer family. Many Belzer Chasidim.
Jaryczow Nowy (Yartshov)	EG	S	Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim.
Jaworow (Yavrov)	EG	1 S	Belz <i>kloyz</i> biggest in town. Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer family.
Korczyna	WG	1 S	
Krakow	WG	# S #Y	Many Belzer Chasidim.
Krasnobrod	P	1 S	
Kresczow	Poland	Y	Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Krystynopol	EG	1 S	Big <i>kloyz</i> (picture available)
Lancut	WG	S, MH	Many Belzer Chasidim.
Laszczow	Poland	S, Y	Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Lesko (Linsk)	EG	S	Very Many Belzer Chasidim.
Lezajsk	WG		Many chasidim and occasional gatherings.
Lopatyn	EG	2 S	Half of (500) Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Communal positions were held by Belzer Chasidim.
Lubaczow	EG		Many Belzer Chasidim.
Lublin,	P	1 S	Also chasidim in famous Yeshiva.
Lubycza Krolewska	EG	S	All 630 Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim.
Lutowiska	EG		Rabbinic position was held by Belzer family. Many Belzer Chasidim.

Lvov	EG		Big Belzer Shul. Many Shtiblech. Central Yeshiva "Machzikei Lomdei Torah. Center of Machzikei Hadas organization.
Magierow (Magrov)	EG	S	40% of 600 Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer family.
Medenice	EG	S, Y	Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Mielec	WG	S, Y,	Many Belzer Chasidim. Communal positions held by Belzer Chasdim.
Mosty - Wielkie	EG		Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Main Synagogue was built by Belzer chasidim.
Munkacs	Carpathian	S Y MH	Big community of Belzer Chasidim. Belzer Rebbe stayed there during WWI
Nadworna	EG	S	
Narol	EG		Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Nawarja	EG		Rabbinic position was held by members of the Belzer family.
Neumarkt (Novo Targ)	WG	1 Y	
Niemirow	EG		Great influence.
Nitatanish (near Radichov)	EG		Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim.
Nowo Zamki	P	1 S	
Oleszyce (Holoshitz)	EG	S, Y	Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Residence of Belzer Rebbe after WWI
Oswiecim	WG	1 S	Hundreds of Belzer Chasidim
Podhajce	EG	S	Many Belzer Chasidim.
Podkamein	EG	S	Many Belzer Chasidim.
Podwoloczyska	EG		The Rabbinic position was held by Belzer chasidim.
Probuzna	EG	S, 2Y	Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Przemysl	SEG		Many of (17000) Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Communal positions were held by Belzer Chasidim.
Radziechow	EG	1 S	Belz <i>kloyz</i> biggest in town.

Rawa-Ruska	EG		Big center of Belz. In 1933 Belz won 25% of the total 5600 votes (1500).
Rohatyn	EG		Belzer chasidim (more information will follow).
Ropczyce	WG	S	Many Belzer Chasidim.
Rozdol	EG	1 S	
Rudki	EG	1 S	Majority of (1825) Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim
Rzeszow	WG	Y (Evening) MH	Many Belzer chasidim lived in town, and had the most influence. All religious positions were held by Belzer Chasidim.
Sambor	EG		Almost 18% of (6000) Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim.
Sanok	WG	S	Many Belzer Chasidim.
Sasow	EG		The Rabbinic position was held by members of the Belzer family.
Skalat	EG	S	
Sokal (Skuhl)	EG	Y MH	Majority of (5000) Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by members of the Belzer family and communal positions were held by Belzer Chasidim.
Sombately	Hungary	S Y	60 regular Students in Yeshiva.
Stanislawczyk	EG	1 S	
Stanislawow	EG		Many of the towns 23,250 Jewish residents were Belzer chasidim, and had the most influence.
Stojanow (Stoyanov)	EG		Majority of (800) Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Communal positions were held by Belzer Chasidim.
Streliska Nowe (Strelisk)	EG	S	Majority of (1000) Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Communal positions were held by Belzer Chasidim.
Stryj	EG	S Y	All students of local Yeshiva, Belzer Chasidim.
Suchostaw	EG		The Rabbinic position was held by members of the Belzer family.
Szczorowice (Sterwitz)	EG	Y	Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim.
Szczebrzeszyn	P	1 S	
Tarnograd	P	1 S	
Tarnopol	EG	Y	Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Tarnow	WG	S Y	

Tartakow	EG		Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Tishevitz		S	
Tlumacz (Tolmitch)		MH	
Tomaszow Lubelski	Poland	S Y	Many Belzer Chasidim. Rabbis Belzer Chasidim.
Toprow	EG	S	
Turka	EG	S Y	Rabbinic position was held by Belzer family. Many Belzer Chasidim. 120 students in the Yeshiva.
Ubiad (Apta)	WG	S	Rabbinic position was held by Belzer family.
Uhnov (Huvniv)	EG	5S	Vast majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Warez Miasto	EG		Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.
Warsaw	Poland		Residents Belzer Chasidim
Wienna	Austria	Y	
Witkow Nowy	EG		Residents Belzer Chasidim
Zaloscie	EG	1 S, MH	
Zamosc	P	1 S	
Zborow	EG	S	
Zloczow	EG	1 S	Big shul for Belzer and Zhidichover chasidim, with a majority of the former.
Zolkiew	EG	S, 2 Y	Majority of Jewish residents were Belzer Chasidim. Rabbinic position was held by Belzer Chasidim.

## PARTIAL LIST OF BELZER INSTITUTIONS

**Belz World Center****Kiryat Belz Jerusalem - residential development.**

Founded in 1977, houses 600 families.

Presently building more buildings for additional 300 families.

Apartments subsidized for large families, scholars and immigrants.

**Belz World Center - Beis Hamedrash Hagadol**

Synagogue and study halls.

Cornerstone laid 1984. Partial completion 1990-present.

Rabbinical position: The Belzer Rebbe, Grand Rabbi Yissacher Dov Rokeach.

Features:

**Great Shul.** 5000 sq. meter, 5000 seats, center for Belzer Chassidim worldwide.

**Study hall.** 825 sq. meter, 1000 seats. Used on weekdays and Shabbos.

8 additional **smaller shuls.** Used for daily prayers.

4 additional smaller **study halls,** used daily by *kollelim*.

**Main Mikveh.** 800 sq. meter, and smaller mikveh 138 sq. meters.

**Memorial Hall.** 129 sq. meter, with plaques and names of deceased Belzer Chassidim, in the holocaust and after. Meeting place for holocaust survivors of different communities. Contains library about pre-war Belzer communities.

**Communal kitchen.** 748 sq. meters, can accommodate preparation of 15,000 portions.

**"Eishel Avrohom" Guest House.** 4508 sq. meters, provides lodge for many guests who come for the holidays to the world center.

**Matzoh Bakery.** 649 sq. meters, used for Jewish ritual of baking matzo for the Passover holiday.

**Assembly Halls.** 987 sq. meters, used for large Chassidic conferences and assemblies.

**Conference rooms.** 385 sq. meters, for educational and Rabbinical meetings.

**Grand Rabbi's office.** 82 sq. meters, waiting rooms and facilities for the many Chassidim who come to seek the Rebbe's guidance and advice.

**Rabbinical court Room.** 50 sq. meters.

Lounges, rest rooms, cloak rooms, refreshment rooms, 383 sq. meters.

Separate entrances and hallways for men and women, 1359 sq. meters.

Historic and beautiful site that attracts more than 10,000 visitors annually.

## Yeshivos (Seminaries) in Israel

### **Yeshivah d'Chasidei Belz, Jerusalem.**

165 Agrippas Street, Jerusalem. Tel: 02.625.2223/5/6

Founded in 1950. 270 students, 24 educational staff members, 10 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Shmuel Rosengarten. Director: Rabbi Yitzchak Landau.

3 large-scale buildings, big study hall, 77 dormitory rooms, 7 classrooms, library, offices, dining room, kitchen, mikveh and more.

4 **Kollelim** (*Yeshiva, Iyun, Metzuyanim, Iyun Gavoha*) for advanced study. 196 students who receive monthly support for their families.

### **Yeshivah d'Chasidei Belz, "Dover Shalom" Rishon Lezion**

Kiryat Kaliv, Rishon Letzion. Tel-Fax: 03.356.0111

Founded in 1994. 196 students, 18 educational staff members, 11 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Yosef Koth. Director: Rabbi Yomtov Klein.

1 large-scale building, big study hall, 39 dormitory rooms, 8 classrooms, offices, dining room, kitchen, mikveh and more.

1 **Kollel** (currently in Ashdod) for advanced study. 44 students who receive monthly support for their families.

New building planned in Ashdod.

### **Yeshivah d'Chasidei Belz, Bnei Brak**

Admor MiBelz Street, Bnei Brak. Tel: 03.570.0146 Fax: 03.579.9107

Founded in 1992. 190 students, 20 educational staff members, 6 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Shapiro. Director: Rabbi Reuven Breish.

1 large-scale building, big study hall, 47 dormitory rooms, 5 classrooms, dining room, kitchen and more.

1 **Kollel** (independent, founded in 1955, 2 study halls), 98 students who receive monthly support for their families.

### **Yeshivah d'Chasidei Belz, "Ohel Yehoshua" Haifa**

Hatishaa 29, Haifa. Tel: 04.832.1175 Fax: 04.832.1742

Founded in 1997. 150 students, 11 educational staff members, 6 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Meir Dov Rechnitzer. Director: Rabbi Eliezer Nachman.

1 large-scale building, big study hall, 40 dormitory rooms, 6 classrooms, offices, dining room, kitchen, mikveh and more.

1 **Kollel** for advanced study. 10 students who receive monthly support for their families.

Yeshivha Ketanah planned to open next year.

# Yeshivos Ketanos (High schools) in Israel

## **Yeshivah Ketanah "Tzur Yaakov," Telz Stone**

Kiryat Yearim, Jerusalem. Tel: 02.534.0969

Founded in 1955. 135 students, 18 educational staff members, 5 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Yermiya Damen.

2 buildings, big study hall, 32 dormitory rooms, 3 classrooms, dining room, kitchen, mikveh and more.

## **Yeshivah Ketanah d'Chasidei Belz, Tel Aviv**

Achad Ha'am 61-63, Tel Aviv. Tel: 03.570.0146 Fax: 03.579.9107

Founded in 1955. 110 students, 19 educational staff members, 6 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Yitzchak Landau. Director: Rabbi Reuven Breish.

2 buildings, big study hall, 27 dormitory rooms, 3 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

## **Yeshivah Ketanah d'Chasidei Belz, Beth Chelkia**

Moshav Bet Chelkia. Tel: 08.869.2660 Fax: 08.869.2917

Founded in 1991. 90 students, 12 educational staff members, 5 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Yosef Zvi Breuer.

Ten caravans, study hall, 23 dormitory rooms, 5 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

## **Yeshivah Ketanah Beis Mordchai, Ashdod**

Admor MiBelz 10, Kiryat Belz Ashdod. Tel: 08.856.6872 Fax: 08.856.1589

Founded in 1990. 100 students, 14 educational staff members, 5 workers.

Dean: Rabbi Asher Zeev Weiss. Director: Rabbi Ephraim Weber.

2 buildings, big study hall, 26 dormitory rooms, 4 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

3 Kollelim, 3 study halls, 133 students who receive monthly support for their families.

# **Talmud Torah Schools (Boys) in Israel**

## **Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadas, Jerusalem**

Pri Chadash 30, Pri Chadash 32-36, Jerusalem.

Divei Chaim 21, Kiryat Belz Jerusalem.

Tel: 02.538.5365 Fax: 02.537.5205

Founded in 1949. 750 students, 67 educational staff members, 14 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Mendel Pesach Goldklang. Director: Rabbi Ahron Deutch.

3 buildings, 30 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

## **Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadas, Bnei Brak**

Admor MiBelz 3-5, Bnei Brak

Tel: 03.570.0146 Fax: 03.579.9107

Founded in 1955. 571 students, 27 educational staff members, 8 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Eli Shalom Berkowitz. Director: Rabbi Reuven Breish.

2 buildings, 26 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

## **Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadas, Ashdod**

Chativat Hanegev 11, Ashdod. P.O. Box 8200 Ashdod

Tel: 08.853.1048

Founded in 1979. 500 students, 35 educational staff members, 15 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Tzvi Shuvaks. Director: Rabbi Ephraim Weber.

2 buildings, 19 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

## **Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadas, Tel Aviv**

Achad Ha'am 61, Tel Aviv. Information will follow.



# Bais Malka Schools (Girls) in Israel

## Jerusalem

Malchei Yisrael 38, Jerusalem.

Tel: 02.538.4181 Fax: 02.538.5725

Founded in 1973. 1100 students, 55 educational staff members, 9 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Mordchai Rand. Director: Rabbi Zvi Farkash.

3 buildings, 37 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

## Bnei Brak

Sharet 18, Bnei Brak.

Seminary: Ezra corner Chazon Ish, Bnei Brak; Rechov Makabim, Bnei Brak.

Tel: 03.578.0161 Fax: 03.570.2793

Founded in 1977. 1056 students, 52 educational staff members, 9 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Mordchai Rand. Director: Rabbi Arye Zeltzer.

3 buildings, 35 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

## Ashdod

Chativat Hanegev 32, Ashdod.

Tel: 08.856.0832 Fax: 08.856.1589

Founded in 1979. 420 students, 40 educational staff members, 6 workers.

Principal: Rabbi Mordchai Rand. Director: Rabbi Ephraim Weber.

4 locations, 17 classrooms, dining room, kitchen.

# Global Shtibel Network

## **Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Jerusalem.**

Yitzchak Sholel 4, Jerusalem.  
Founded in 1939.  
Serves 50 families.

## **Beis Hatefilah Shel Haadmor MiBelz, Tel Aviv.**

Achad Ha'am 63, Tel Aviv.  
Founded in 1944.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Abraham Dierenfeld.  
Serves 100 families.

## **Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Bnei Brak.**

Admor MiBelz 5, Bnei Brak  
Founded in 1954.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Moshe Weber.  
Serves 200 families.

## **Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Zichron Meir, Bnei Brak.**

Ben Yaakov 7, Bnei Brak  
Founded in 1970.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Chaim Yechiel Rothman.  
Serves 100 families daily and Shabbos.

## **Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Ramat Elchanan, Bnei Brak.**

Zonenfeld 4, Bnei Brak  
Founded in 1940.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yeshaya Schneebalg.  
Serves 50 families daily and Shabbos.

## **Beis Hamedrash "Beis Pinchas" d'Chasidei Belz, Bnei Brak.**

Yoel 18, Bnei Brak  
Founded in 1993.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Traube.  
Serves 100 families.

## **Beis Hamedrash "Kehilas Yaakov" d'Chasidei Belz, Bnei Brak.**

Kehilas Yaakov 21, Bnei Brak  
Founded in 1998.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yaakov Grinwald.  
Serves 50 families.

**Beis Hamedrash Hamerkazi d'Chasidei Belz, Ashdod.**  
Chativat Hanegev 35, Ashdod.  
Founded in 1978.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Chaim Pesach Horowitz.  
Serves 300 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Rova Gimel, Ashdod.**  
Founded in 1995.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yosef Hochauser.  
Serves 150 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Rova Zayin, Ashdod.**  
Founded in 1998.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Stark.  
Serves 150 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Haifa.**  
Arlozoroff 13, Haifa.  
Founded in 1965.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Berl Rechnitzer.  
Serves 300 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Boro Park.**  
(Cong. Belzer Shtibel)  
4814 16th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11204  
Founded in 1951.  
Serves 200 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz (2), Boro Park.**  
(Congregation Sar Shalom)  
1321 34th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11219  
Founded in 1980.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Shlomo Gross.  
Serves 250 families.

**Beis Hamedrash "Lomdei Torah" d'Chasidei Belz, Boro Park.**  
1779 50th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11204  
Founded in 1985.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Asher Eckstein.  
Serves 100 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz (4), Boro Park.**  
(Cong. Ohel Yehoshea)  
1173 50th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11219

Founded in 1991.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Pesach Langsam.  
Serves 150 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Williamsburg.**  
150 Hooper Street, Brooklyn, NY 11211  
Founded in 1953.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Meyer Mayesz.  
Serves 100 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Monsey.**  
12 Maple Terrace, Monsey, NY 10952  
Founded in 1978.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Tuvia Wettenstein.  
Serves 150 families.

**Congregation "Machzikei Haddas" d'Chasidei Belz, Montreal Canada.**  
5340 Jeanne Mance St., Montreal PQ H2V 4K4  
Founded in 1952.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Neuman.  
Serves 250 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, London.**  
98 Clapton Common, London E5.  
Founded in 1957.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yosef Babad.  
Serves 200 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz (2), London.**  
49 St. Kildas Road, London N16.  
Founded in 1995.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yosef Babad.  
Serves 80 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Manchester, England.**  
28 Broom Lane, Salford, Manchester M7-4FX.  
Founded in 1979.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Grinfeld.  
Serves 87 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Antwerp, Belgium.**  
Van Spangenastraat 2. Antwerpen, Belgium 2018.  
Founded in 1947.  
Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Yidel Grinfeld, Rabbi Weber.  
Serves 250 families.

**Beis Hamedrash d'Chasidei Belz, Zurich, Switzerland.**

Vest Strasser 151, Zurich 80003 Switzerland.

Founded in 1985.

Rabbinical Position: Rabbi Pinchas Padwa.

Serves 45 families.

**Chasidei Belz, Vienna, Austria.**

Krunn Baum Gasse 2 - 4, Vien, Ostreich

Founded in 1980.

Director: Rabbi Shlome Keren.

Serves 20 families.

**Chasidei Belz, Australia.**

11 Rockbrook Road, Melbourne, Australia

Founded in 1950.

Director: Rabbi Chaim Hersh Fogel.

Serves 50 families.

**Chasidei Belz, Lakewood, New Jersey.**

615 West Kennedy Blvd., Lakewood, NJ 08701

Founded in 1980.

Director: Rabbi Yitzchok Brezel.

Serves 50 families.

# GERMANY

# FRANKFURT KEHILLA

## Germany

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch's call in 1851 to the fledgling congregation Israelitische Religions Gesellschaft (I.R.G.) in Frankfurt, Germany began a revitalization of Orthodox Jewish life in Frankfurt which spread to many other major cities in Germany. This German Orthodox Kehilla life was eventually reestablished in Washington Heights in New York, as a result of Nazi persecution during World War II.

The vehicle for this revitalization of orthodox Jewish life was the full-service, independent Kehilla - a concept which through its implementation was to serve its members with all possible Jewish needs, communal and personal, free of any outside influence. The Kehilla was not only a place for prayer or burial services. Its aim was to direct all the affairs of the community and to serve the needs of its observant Jewish membership. The religious, cultural, educational and social life of the membership was experienced within the framework of the Kehilla whose authority was its Rav (Rabbi). The Rav had the final word over all Kehilla matters and shepherded its members through all phases of life, from the "cradle to the grave".

The Kehilla's components, through which it provided its unique service, were as follows:

- Shul - Religious Services
- Yeshiva - Educational Services
- Mikveh - Family Purity
- Kashrus Organization - Dietary Observance
- Beth Din - Rabbinic Court
- Charitable Organizations - Free Loan Society and Economic Assistance Programs
- Chevra Kadisha and Cemetery - Funeral and burial
- Sisterhood - Social, charitable and communal activities

As Torah study is at the core of all Jewish life, educational institutions were therefore the "crown" of the Kehilla. For Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch the ideology upon which all of the Kehilla's components were based was Torah Im Derech Eretz ("Torah with the way of the world"). In brief, Torah Im Derech Eretz ideology maintains that the manner in which every Jew maintains himself in all of what the world has to offer must be experienced within the strict confines of the Torah. Torah is supreme, but one may also experience the secular culture of this world, as long as it is done through the Torah's precepts. Our primary goal is the acquisition of Torah knowledge and its application to all phases of our existence. However, G-d has placed us within a secular world, and its culture should also be studied as long as it is compatible with the Torah's requirements. Torah Im Derech Eretz gives us the tools to cope with the surrounding culture and its everyday demands without compromise.

The I.R.G. was established in Frankfurt in 1849, and in 1851 Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch became its Rav. Rav Hirsch soon thereafter established the educational system by founding the Realschule, which opened in April 1853 even before a synagogue building was erected. This was a school in which the elements of religious living and general education were both cultivated and furthered. Education was primary to Rav Hirsch and therefore his first priority was to establish a school system.

The schools established included the following:

Volkschule - Elementary school for boys and girls, grade 1 through 8. A large edifice of four floors with an enrollment of 300 students.

Realschule - High school, separate for boys and girls, grade 6 through grade 11. A building of three floors with an enrollment of 300 students containing classrooms, gymnasium, teachers' rooms and administrative offices.

Yeshiva - A school for Torah study for young men who wished to continue their Torah study more intensively after completion of the Realschule and before preparing for a career. This was established by Rav Salomon Breuer, Rav Hirsch's son-in-law and successor. Rav Joseph Breuer, the son of Rav Salomon Breuer, became its dean. This institution for post-high school study had between 80 and 100 students. It boasted approximately fifty sections of classes, a staff of twenty-five lecturers, and a very large, distinguished library which was lost during the war.

It should be mentioned here that there were several affiliated institutions that were heavily supported by the I.R.G.:

Rothschild Kinder Hospital, a pediatric hospital which was under the direction of Dr. Sali Rosenbaum, a distinguished member of the I.R.G.

Rothschild Hospital, a general hospital, also under the same directorship.

Israelitisches Waisenhaus, an orphanage under the directorship of Isidor Marx.

Siechen Haus, a home for "incurables," heavily endowed by the I.R.G. and its membership. The Selig and Clementine Goldschmidt Endowment Fund for the Volkschule, congregation, and other Kehilla institutions was established by the Goldschmidt families, members of the I.R.G., in 1888.

Other prominent donors of the I.R.G. were instrumental in the establishment of the Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem. Rav Salomon Breuer sent Dr. Wallach to become its first director.

The Kehilla and its educational institutions thrived in Frankfurt and became the model for observant Jewish life in many other cities in western Europe. The events of the



night of November 9th, 1938 changed all that. "Kristallnacht" inflicted a mortal wound to Jewish life in Germany and began the series of events that annihilated Jewish life in all of Europe. On that infamous night during which almost 300 synagogues were set ablaze, the great synagogue of the I.R.G. in Frankfurt was totally destroyed. The other buildings of the I.R.G., housing the Volkshule, Realschule, Yeshiva and the old synagogue building were not harmed. Of course, because of the mortal danger in which Frankfurt's Jews found themselves, all of the I.R.G.'s institutions forever ceased to function on the European side of the Atlantic.

Many of its members did not survive the holocaust. A number of refugees, however, achieved prominence in their fields of endeavor in Israel, the United States and South America. Yakov Katz went to Israel and became the Chancellor of the Hebrew University. Yitzchok Breuer, one of the founders of Agudath Israel, became an outstanding Jewish philosopher and writer in Israel. His son Yakov Baror (Breuer) became a renowned attorney and was on the prosecuting panel at the Eichmann Trial. Rav Schlessinger, a former Dayan (rabbinical judge) of the I.R.G., was the founder of Yeshiva Kol Torah in Jerusalem. J.A. Samuels, Jakob Michael, and Herman Hollander went on to become prominent businessmen and philanthropists in New York. Mr. Samuels provided the Affidavit for Rav Joseph Breuer to come to New York. Of course, Rav Shimon Schwab, the successor to Rav Breuer in New York, also went through the school system of the Hirsch Yeshiva in Frankfurt. Rav Oppenheimer, a contemporary of Rav Schwab, also achieved prominence as the Chief Rabbi of Argentina in Buenos Aires.

### **Rebirth in Washington Heights**

Rav Joseph Breuer fled Germany with his family and arrived in New York in February 1939. During the first week after his arrival, a group of German Jewish refugees who had already settled in Washington Heights asked him to be their Rav. He accepted and agreed to lead a small Shabbos minyan that had already been established in two rented rooms in Washington Heights. That minyan quickly grew, and became a daily minyan which convened in the Rav's home until the more suitable quarters at 90 Bennett Avenue were secured. The congregation became known as "Khal Adath Jeshurun" (the Hebrew name of the Frankfurt I.R.G.). Many of its members were members of the I.R.G. in Frankfurt, and nearly all were German Jews or refugees from the Holocaust. These refugees were attracted to Washington Heights and Khal Adath Jeshurun because they saw the potential for recreating the lost I.R.G. Kehilla on these shores. Their vision and the vision of their Rav saw fruition. The influx of German Jews to Washington Heights led to its being called "Frankfurt on the Hudson". Rav Breuer was successful in recreating his father's and grandfather's Kehilla and was able to maintain the independent orthodoxy which had characterized the I.R.G.

Rav Breuer saw to it that all of the functions of the Frankfurt Kehilla were reestablished quickly. This took approximately five years, and was completed with the founding of the Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in 1944. In a number of ways the Kehilla in Washington Heights surpassed what was available in Frankfurt and a number

of components were added, including a preschool program, teachers' seminary for women, and Kollel for young married men.

The full complement of the Kehilla's functions included the following:

- Shul – Religious Services
- Yeshiva - Educational Services
- Mikveh - Family Purity
- Kashrus Organization - Dietary Observance
- Charitable Organizations - Free Loan Society, Economic Assistance and Grant Programs
- Chevra Kadisha and Cemetery - Funeral and Burial
- Sisterhood - Social, Charitable and Communal activities

As in Frankfurt, the Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch with its more than 600 students, is the crowning glory of the Kehilla Adath Jeshurun Kehilla and it deserves more elaborate mention here. The Yeshiva combines religious and secular studies and is considered the prototype successor to the I.R.G. educational institutions in Germany.

It consists of:

- Pre-School Program for boys and girls (ages 3 to 5)
- Elementary School for boys and girls (ages 6 to 11 - separate classes)
- Middle School for boys and girls (ages 12 and 13, separate classes)
- High School for boys and girls (ages 14 to 18, separate classes)
- Beth Medrash for boys and young men (ages 18+)
- Kollel for young married men
- Teachers Seminary for young women (ages 18+)

As in Frankfurt, the Rav is the supreme authority over all components of the Kehilla. Rav Shimon Schwab, a student of Rav Breuer's in Frankfurt, succeeded him in Washington Heights. With the passing of Rav Schwab, Rav Zechariah Gelley assumed the position of Rav over all of the Kehilla's functions.

The Kehilla today, with close to 1,000 member families (many with familiar I.R.G. names: Katzenstein, Stern, Weis, Rothschild, Kaufman, etc.) flourishes on the banks of the Hudson River with all of its components intact. It has spawned a branch located in Rockland County, New York, which recently built its own synagogue. All of the branch's functions remain under the auspices of the Kehilla in Washington Heights.

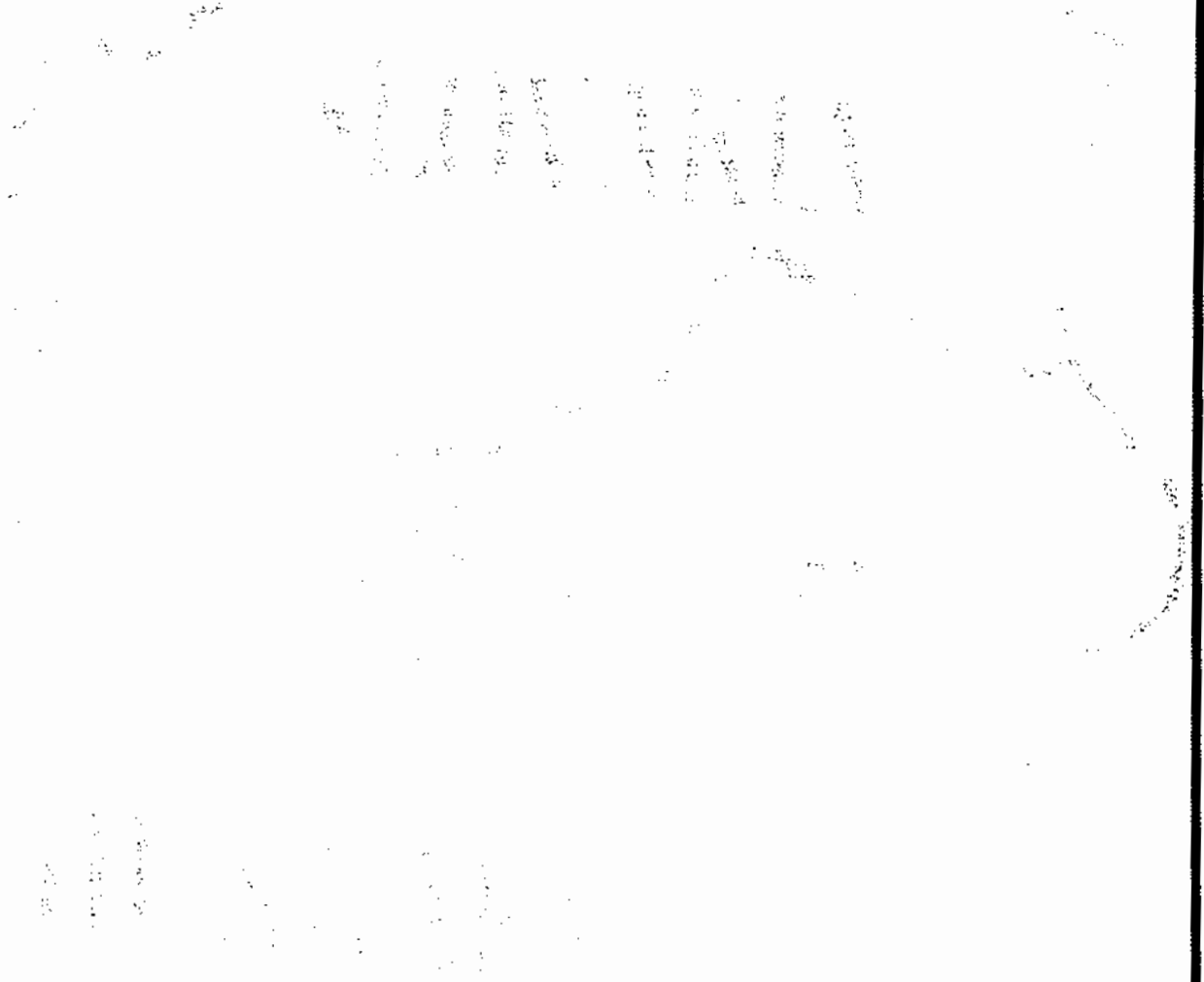
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## INTERVIEWS

Meta Bechhofer  
Marc Breuer  
Felix Lehmann  
Morris Wincelberg

# HUNGARY/SLOVAKIA



# HUNGARIAN JEWRY

## Introduction

Prior to World War II the Hungarian Jewish population stood at 725,000. Throughout the country thousands of synagogues, cultural institutions and Jewish schools, reflecting all points along the Jewish religious spectrum, flourished in 473 communities.

Under the pro-Nazi Government the decimation of the Jewish population began in 1940. The subsequent internment and genocide resulted in the death of 565,000 Hungarian Jewish men, women and children. With the liberation of Budapest by the Allies in 1945, a large proportion of Hungarian Jewish survivors emigrated to the United States and Palestine.

Communist rule came to Hungary in 1949. Under the strictures of an atheistic, anti-Semitic regime, the indigenous Jewish population disintegrated and/or went underground. Jewish names were altered to hide their origins, intermarriage was rampant and a Jewish education essentially ceased.

The Hungarian uprising in 1956 resulted in nearly 200,000, the majority of whom were Jews, departing the country in the course of one week. The Soviet authorities reasserted their domination, however, and migration was stemmed.

By 1967 the Hungarian Jewish population had dwindled to between 80,000-90,000, most of whom lived in Budapest. These figures reflect only those courageous enough to identify themselves as Jews. The actual Jewish population was undoubtedly higher. Under the Communist rule the infrastructure of Jewish life - synagogues, schools, ritual baths (*mikvahs*), cemeteries, even hospitals and community centers, were allowed to decay or were converted to secular use. The Rabbinate, as it were, functioned in a highly limited symbolic capacity under the dictates of the Communist Party, which was determined to hasten the demise of Jewish life. Thus, activities such as kosher animal slaughter (*shechitah*) and religious burial services virtually ceased to exist. Circumcisions, the cornerstone of Jewish identity, could only be performed clandestinely, at great risk to health and engendering social persecution.

## Regeneration Of Hungarian Jewish Life

The collapse of the Communist Empire at the end of the 1980's presented a unique opportunity for embarking on a Jewish regeneration program in Hungary. The impetus for Jewish revival was created through the establishment in 1988 of the Endowment for Democracy in Eastern Europe, under the leadership of Mr. Albert Reichmann as Chairman, and Mr. David Moskovits as President. Its mandate was to foster throughout Eastern Europe the ideals of freedom, democracy and individual rights by promoting cultural pluralism. It asserted the right of every individual to be a contributing, productive citizen of the State, while confidently proclaiming his or her cultural heritage.

By 1990 liberalization of policy and newly emerging ethnic pride made possible the identification of 150,000 Jews in Hungary, with 40% residing in Budapest. Recognizing the existence and needs of the local Jewish population, as well as the status of Hungary as having been the most liberal of Soviet satellite states, the Endowment targeted it, and especially Budapest, for its initial efforts.

Within two years a number of steps were taken to provide the Budapest Jewish community with vital religious services. These included restoring a major synagogue, employing a team of Hungarian-born Rabbis, renovating the disused ritual bath, refurbishing the Jewish Home for the Aged and expanding the facilities of the Jewish Hospital. The crowning achievement was the opening of the first private, parochial school in Hungary, Massoret Avot, in the heart of the Jewish Quarter. An initial enrollment of 438 students, and a teaching faculty of 67, attested to the yearning for knowledge and experience of Jewish tradition which had been repressed so ruthlessly for more than half a century.

Before the Second World War Hungary was blessed with an assortment of Jewish schools. Every community maintained an intricate educational system, both at elementary and secondary levels. In addition dozens of cities and towns supported centers of learning at tertiary and post-graduate academies. Massoret Avot is built on the traditions of these institutions, endeavouring to transmit to the present generation all that was best in pre-war Hungarian Jewish education.

The combined effects of the Holocaust, and the stifling of religious expression under the Communist regime, have deprived Hungarian Jewry of a generation of leadership. With the need to create a new cadre of religious and lay leaders, the Endowment has expended no little effort within Massoret Avot in developing an educational system to promote and nurture local talent and skill. The students are provided with the knowledge and experience they will need to decide their own individual, family and communal futures. Whether they opt to lead fully religious lives, whether they follow a traditional orientation, or whether they will foster a sense of pride in their Jewish identities without any formal religious affiliation--all these possibilities are deemed successes.

### **The College of Modern Business Studies**

The Endowment quickly recognized that attempts to revitalize Jewish life in Hungary would only succeed if the Jewish educational infrastructure continued beyond secondary education. As a result in 1995 a new entity, the American College of Modern Business Studies, was set up in partnership with the Tatabanya College for Modern Economic Sciences.

In order to create a vigorous and self-sufficient Jewish community in Hungary, with responsible and proactive leadership, it was necessary to develop a strong middle class with a powerful economic base. The College provides these tools, as well as the economic knowledge and strength for self-sufficiency.

Further, the College has been built upon the traditions of the educational institutions that dotted the landscape of pre-war Hungary and which were the pride of world Jewry. It endeavors to maintain some of the spirituality, pedagogical methodology and overall culture that was the hallmark of these great learning centers. In this way, through emphasis on the development of the total personality, the College seeks to nurture the growth of those qualities so vital to effective leadership.

### **Hungarian Jewry Today**

Since 1995 tremendous progress has taken place in reconstructing the Jewish community at large. More importantly, self-help initiatives have become the order of the day. The seeds that were planted ten years ago are today flourishing and bearing fruit. These developments indicate that the values of yesteryears--respect for individual beliefs, freedom to practice religion at the level of one's choice, consideration for the individual as a member of the community at large, regard for law and order out of conviction rather than force--all have become deeply rooted in Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe.

The above are the results of an educational system that is operating successfully in Hungary today. It is no mean achievement that in the dozen or so years since the collapse of the Soviet Empire, Hungary has established 3 Jewish Day Schools, 3 Kindergartens, a College of Modern Business Studies, 6 informal education centers and more than 20 organizations teaching Jewish culture. Religious and traditional services are conducted on a regular basis in 40 synagogues throughout Hungary, while the social and welfare needs of the Jewish community are taken care of by 19 national and international foundations.

### **The Lost World**

And yet all of the above is but a fraction of what was pre-war Hungary. By 1945 the Holocaust had claimed the lives of almost 600,000 members of the Jewish community, most of whom had been practicing Orthodox Jews. The extermination of more than 325 Rabbis and 300 teachers virtually destroyed the religious teaching force in Hungary. Further, the systematic demolition of religious institutions and places of worship resulted in the disappearance of 150 ritual baths, 67 Rabbinical seminaries, nearly 50 synagogues and several hundred prayer halls.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to calculate these losses in financial terms. At today's value it would probably run into hundreds of millions of dollars. What is perhaps more readily calculable is the sum total of monies or valuables confiscated illegally from individuals and from bank accounts held by Jewish companies. In particular innumerable religious articles, including 600 Torah scrolls together with their silver appurtenances, were seized and disposed of. The expropriation of jewelry, gold and valuable paintings merely added to the organized plundering of assets held by Jews.

## **Conclusion**

To replace a lost world takes time, endeavor and resources. The past decade has seen much endeavor in a relatively short time and with minimal resources. The gradual rebuilding of the infrastructure of Hungarian Jewry is underway. There is no lack of determination to replace the great Jewish institutions of the past, all of which were illegally and brutally destroyed. However, to restore to Hungarian Jewry what was lawfully and morally theirs requires a significant injection of financial resources that would enable it to return to its former glory.



## MATTERSDORF KEHILLA

The town of Mattersdorf (now the city of Mattersburg) was home to one of Europe's oldest Jewish communities, dating back to approximately the tenth century. It was a well-known center of Jewish scholarship whose influence on Jewish thought and opinion permeated the entire Jewish world.

Mattersdorf was the central community of seven famous Jewish communities in Austria's Burgenland: Mattersdorf, Eisenstadt, Kobersdorf, Zehlem (Deutschkreutz), Lachenbach, Frauenkirchen, and Kitsee. The Rabbi of Mattersdorf was always the president of the Rabbinical Council of the Seven Communities, and the position was held by six successive generations from the Chasam Sofer until the last Rabbi of Mattersdorf, Rabbi Shmuel Ehrenfeld.

Residents of Mattersdorf suffered abject poverty in the material sense, but owned enormous intellectual wealth. A number of its rabbis were not only world-famous in their own time, but are still widely quoted today, and their works are basic components of every Jewish library. These included: the Chasam Sofer; his son-in-law Rabbi Shimon Sofer, also known as the Chasan Sofer; Rabbi Akiva Eger; his brother, Rabbi Bunim Eger; Rabbi Meir Eisenstadt (author of the "Ponim Meiros" and son-in-law of the Shach); Rabbi Yissochor Bloch; and Rabbi Simcha Bunim Ehrenfeld and Rabbi Shmuel Ehrenfeld, who were both descended from the Chasan Sofer.

During the approximately twenty years before the War, Rabbi Shmuel Ehrenfeld, a grandson of the Chasan Sofer, served as Rabbi of Mattersdorf and the head of its yeshiva. He was a man of staunch conviction and ingenuity who believed that it was essential that the students at his yeshiva remain within a religious environment. When the government required that yeshiva students attend public school so as to receive a secular education he introduced secular studies into the yeshiva--taught by religious teachers. He thereby satisfied the government's requirements while ensuring that the community's new generation remained within a religious framework.

The Mattersdorf synagogue was built in the thirteenth century, and a plaque on an exterior wall of the synagogue records that reconstruction works were carried out there about 650 years ago. The curtain in front of the ark was named the Sephardi curtain since it dated back to the time of the Spanish Inquisition. It was adorned with precious stones, donated by women who had escaped from Spain and wanted to express their gratitude to G-d for sparing them and their families from the horrors of the Inquisition.

In 1938 Rabbi Shmuel Ehrenfeld was summoned to the Gestapo headquarters and told that he was a traitor, because he remained loyal to the previous regime. The medal he wore, which had been awarded him by Austria's previous government, was ripped off his chest and hurled into a toilet. The Germans wanted to shave off Rabbi Ehrenfeld's beard, but relented when he said he would never again appear in public. He went into hiding, but was offered the position of Rabbi of the Czechoslovakian town of Malelowitz. The Nitra

Rabbi, Rabbi David Unger, whom he consulted on whether to accept this offer, advised him that Czechoslovakia would not remain free for long, and that he should flee.

Rabbi Ehrenfeld found himself unable to obtain the certificates that would have allowed him and his family to immigrate into the Land of Israel. He then tried to find refuge with his uncle in Hungary, but was unable to get across the border. Driven back to Austria, he decided he must try to obtain papers to leave the country. He was aware that the Gestapo was following his movements and that it was dangerous for him to come out of hiding, but he felt that he had no choice. Out of desperation he went to the American consulate in Vienna to ask whether they could help him in any way. An official then informed him that visas had arrived for him from the U.S., but that the consulate had not known how to reach him. He, his wife and their seven children set sail on the first possible boat. They were deeply aware of the Divine Hand that allowed them to escape the Nazis. All their worldly goods were taken away from them, apart from some Jewish books.

### **Mattersdorf Restored in the United States of America**

Immediately on his arrival in America, Rabbi Shmuel Ehrenfeld reestablished his yeshiva in New York's Lower East Side, naming it for his grandfather, the Chasan Sofer. The yeshiva grew into a yeshiva complex, comprising, in addition to the yeshiva itself, a kollel, a mesivta and a cheder--serving eight hundred students. The institution thus provides the full gamut of schooling from pre-school through post-graduate. The modern buildings include classrooms, laboratories, libraries and all the other conveniences of a progressive educational institution. Many of its graduates are now leaders of the community and they can be found holding key positions in every field of endeavor.

### **Mattersdorf Restored in Israel**

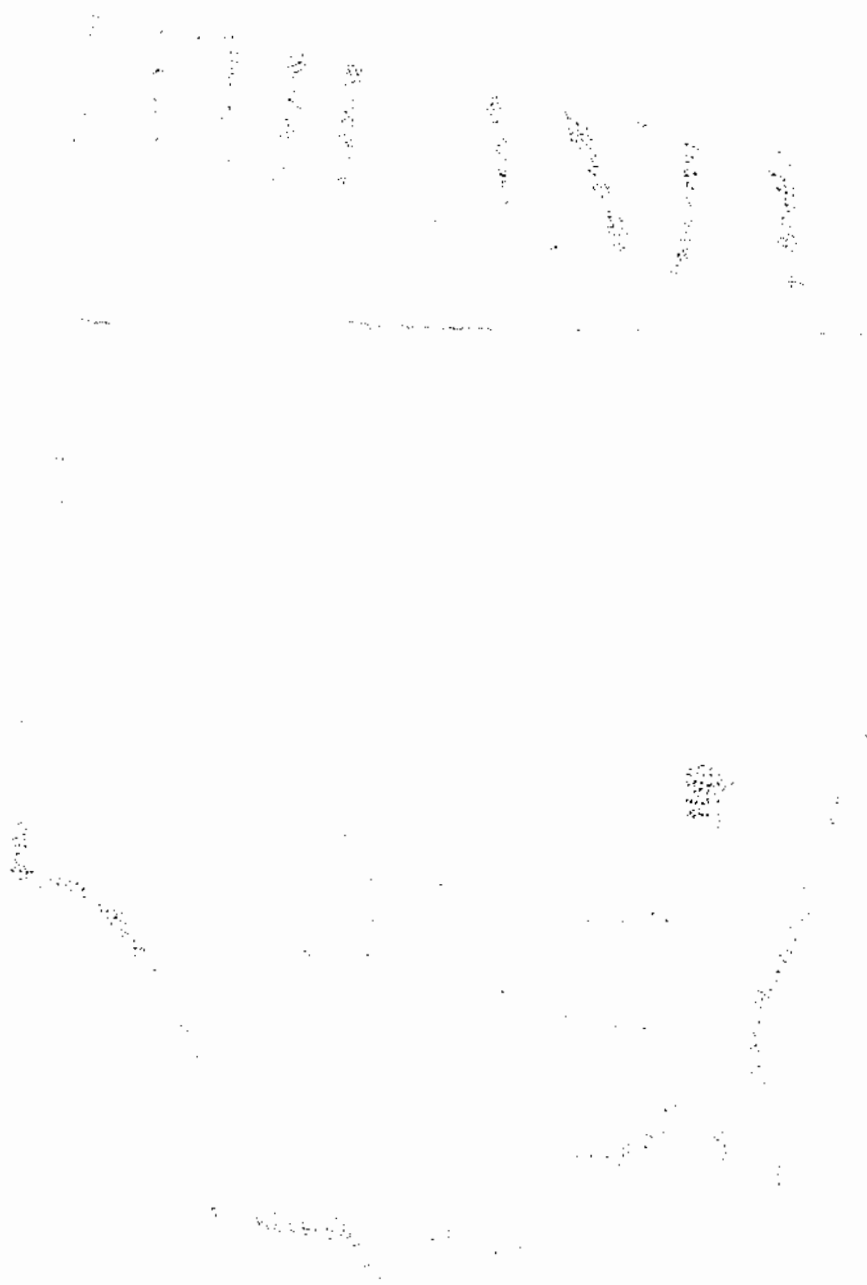
Starting during the early sixties, Rabbi Shmuel Ehrenfeld, with the assistance of his family, constructed the "Mattersdorf-Seven Communities" neighborhood on what was then a desolate hillside to the north west of Jerusalem. This existence of this neighborhood--known as "Mattersdorf" for short--encouraged other developers to build further, similar developments, and the once forlorn hills are now home to thousands of families. Mattersdorf alone has several yeshivas, schools and other institutions, as well as a retirement home whose hundreds of residents range from the active-elderly to the totally bedridden.

Children from all over the city are enrolled at one or other of Mattersdorf's day schools or chadorim, while its residential yeshivas have attracted students from all over the country and from abroad.

The Maane Simcha educational complex, which was set up directly by Mattersdorf's developers, comprises: a talmud Torah with 530 pupils; a yeshiva ketana for young teenage boys with 94 students; a yeshiva gedola for older students with 122 students; and a kollel with 31 students.

Mattersdorf in Jerusalem is recreating the Austrian community that gave it its name. It is replicating the educational, sociological and religious services that exemplified the original Mattersdorf--except that the new facilities possess the modern amenities that were not yet invented in 1938 when Austrian's Seven Jewish Communities were so brutally destroyed.

# LITHUANIA



# ETZ CHAIM YESHIVA

## Origins

Beth Medrash Govoha, known as the Etz Chaim Yeshiva of Europe, was founded in 1897 by Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer in Slutzk, Russia. After the Bolshevik uprising of 1919, which persecuted Jewish existence--outlawing Torah study and open religious practices--the Yeshiva moved to Kletzk, Poland, where it went by the official appellation, *Kleckie Izraelicke Seminarium Duchowne*. In Kletzk, Rav Aaron Kotler (affectionately known as Rav Aaron) succeeded his father-in-law, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer as Head of the Yeshiva. Under his leadership, it developed into a preeminent Torah institution, attracting students from all over the continent, as well as America. Etz Chaim, first in Slutzk, then in Kletzk, was a central institution of European Jewry, which revered Torah scholarship and revolved around its teachings. The guidance of its remarkable Rosh Yeshiva, one of the most dynamic, highly renowned and venerable sages of his time, shaped the destinies of communities far and wide who looked to the Yeshiva as a vital reference point for all issues of Jewish concern, religious and political. The Yeshiva was renowned for producing consummate scholars, rabbis, and rabbinic judges whose contributions impacted significantly on day-to-day life. At the outbreak of World War II, Etz Chaim was the second largest yeshiva in Europe, with an on-site student population of over 300, as well as a cheder and girls' primary school operating under its auspices.

## Transitions

Soon after the German invasion of Poland in 1939, the Yeshiva fled to Lithuania, briefly taking root in Janova, near Vilna, until ousted in 1940 due to the shifting of Soviet borders. Rav Aaron divided the Yeshiva into three groups, relocating students to the Lithuanian villages of Salock, Dukst, and Dushat, and worked furiously to obtain escape visas for them. Unable to make effective headway in Europe, he undertook the perilous journey through Russia to Japan in February 1941, and from there proceeded to America, gaining entry via special dispensation by President Roosevelt. He then launched an indefatigable rescue effort, activating a Vaad Hatzolah (rescue organization), and rallying American Jewry in this cause. In June 1941, the Soviets arrested a large number of Etz Chaim students in Lithuania, sending them to Siberia, where many managed to survive. Those remaining were killed by the Nazis, who invaded a week after the arrest.

## Re-establishment

In 1943, with a core group of 13 surviving scholars, Rav Aaron re-established the Yeshiva in Lakewood, New Jersey--thereafter to be known as Beth Medrash Govoha. He continued his rescue efforts through the final years of the War, and in its appalling wake. With passionate fidelity to the primacy of Torah learning, and its central role in Jewish continuity, he devoted himself to rebuilding its infrastructure on new soil. Rav Aaron organized and

stood at the forefront of the Jewish day school movements in the USA and Israel, marshaling a broad range of lay activists across the Jewish communal spectrum to rebuild shattered institutions, and establish new schools in evolving communities. Upon his passing in 1962, his son, Rav Shneur Kotler assumed the mantle of leadership, continuing the mission, expanding the Yeshiva itself, and nurturing offshoots in communities nationally and internationally.

### **Continuity**

Today, Beth Medrash Govoha is the largest Yeshiva in the Diaspora--a world leading center of advanced Talmudic and cognate studies, research, and professional orientation--with a host of alumni predominantly active in rabbinics, education, and all forms of communal work. Renowned for a unique learning climate enabling the in-depth perusal of every topic in Law and Scripture, its students presently number over 2,900, with 500 new applicants seeking entry each year. A large percentage of the Yeshiva's students are the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, largely of Polish, Lithuanian, Hungarian, and Russian background. Headed by Rav Aryeh Malkiel Kotler, the grandson of Rav Aaron Kotler, and son of Rav Shneur Kotler, its academic standards and traditions reflect its direct lineage to the towering pre-War Torah centers of Slutzk and Kletzk.

Just as it stood at the center of Jewish life in the old world, the Yeshiva remains a primary institution of this post-Holocaust generation. Over the course of the last half century, it took a leading role in the development of American Jewry, and core communities worldwide whose roots go back to pre-War Europe. In addition to its main campus in Lakewood, where an effort is now underway to expand beth medrash (main study hall), library, dining, dormitory, and office facilities, Beth Medrash Govoha maintains a network of 20 branches and affiliates in major Jewish communities internationally. These include Boston, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, Melbourne, Mexico City, Montreal, Philadelphia, Toronto, and Jerusalem--the latter known popularly as "Lakewood East." Beth Medrash Govoha's leadership has wide impact and resonance in Litvische, Chasidic, and Sephardic spheres. As it has since its inception, the Yeshiva continues to address the short and long term needs of the Jewish people, to communicate Jewry's eternal heritage, and cultivate authentic Torah scholars promoting the continuity of Jewish life on a global scale.

# MIR YESHIVA

## Yesterday

Yeshivas Mir, one of the oldest institutions for higher Jewish studies in the world, was founded in 1817 in the Polish town of Mir by Rabbi Shmuel Tiktinsky, a noted Torah scholar and educator. In the Yeshiva's early years, Rabbi Tiktinsky, who was also a successful businessman, served both as its sole supporter and as its sole teacher.

Upon Rabbi Tiktinsky's passing in 1835, his son Rabbi Avrohom Tiktinsky assumed leadership of the Yeshiva. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Rabbi Chaim Leib, who led the Yeshiva until the end of the century.

Rabbi Chaim Leib was recognized by the great Torah scholars of his generation as a profound thinker. Under his leadership, the Yeshiva grew substantially and became recognized as one of the premier European yeshivos.

## In the Twentieth Century

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Rabbi E.B. Kamai, a world renowned Torah scholar, was appointed dean of the Yeshiva and Rabbi of the town. The Yeshiva flourished under his direction and that of his son-in-law, Rabbi Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, who joined the Yeshiva staff in 1909. Rabbi Finkel eventually served as dean, until his passing in 1965.

During World War I, the Yeshiva was exiled to Poltava, Russia. Conditions were extremely difficult and the students suffered from intense hunger.

## The Golden Era

After the war, Rabbi Finkel returned to Mir, where he rebuilt the Yeshiva. The period between the world wars became known as the "golden era" of Mirrer Yeshiva. A major factor in the Yeshiva's success was the arrival of Rabbi Yeruchom Levovitz, whose teachings and personality permeated the very atmosphere of Mir. Together, Rabbis Finkel and Levovitz attracted the finest Talmudic students from around the world. With a student body of 400, Mirrer Yeshiva was perhaps the largest Yeshiva in pre-World War II Europe, and was known as the "Mother of all Yeshivas".

Towards the end of the 1930s, two important figures joined the Yeshiva's faculty: the brilliant Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, master of the Talmud, and the saintly Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein. Together they would lead the Yeshiva during its exile to Shanghai, during World War II.

## **A Miraculous Escape**

When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, the entire student body and faculty of Mir found refuge in Vilna, the capital of the still independent Lithuania.

The story of how the Yeshiva received transit visas and made its way across Russia to Japan, and from there to Shanghai after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, has been told and retold. Several books document this saga of idealism, courage and scholarly achievements, under impossible circumstances. In Shanghai, the Yeshiva deans and their students lived together in a self-contained community. There, they continued their studies for the next five years. Although members of the faculty and student body lost most of their families in the Holocaust, the intensity of study in Shanghai caused that period to be remembered by all those who lived through it, as the "best years" of their lives.

## **Yeshivas Mir in Jerusalem**

Rabbi Finkel reached Palestine as a refugee during World War II, and re-established Yeshivas Mir in Jerusalem in 1944 with a small group of promising students. In 1946, Rabbi Shmulevitz and Rabbi Levenstein made their way from Shanghai to Jerusalem and rejoined Rabbi Finkel in the relocated Yeshivas Mir. Together, they concentrated their efforts on restoring the Yeshiva to its former glory.

With great difficulty, and with the help of the original staff, Rabbi Finkel slowly rebuilt the Yeshiva. Over the next three decades, the Yeshiva grew constantly, and emerged as a major institution of Talmudic study in the post-World War II era. Together with the other Yeshivos it sought to rebuild the Torah world that was destroyed in the Holocaust.

After Rabbi Eliezer Yehudah Finkel's passing in 1965, his son, Rabbi Beinish Finkel, assumed leadership of the Yeshiva. By the end of the 1970's, the Yeshiva had a student body of 700. A decade later, the Yeshiva boasted 1200 students, the largest concentration of Talmudic scholars in modern Jewish history.

In 1990, with the passing of Rabbi Beinish Finkel, the torch was passed to the next generation and Rabbi Nosson Zvi Finkel assumed the leadership of the Yeshiva. A new period of extraordinary growth commenced.

## **Student Body**

Today, as the largest Torah center in the world, with a student body of 4,300, Mir is engaged in the same activities with which it has been occupied throughout its 180 year history -- the teaching and study of the Talmud, its commentaries and coded law, and the ethical development of its students' character.



## Campus

The Yeshiva's campus, in the Beis Yisroel section of Jerusalem, consists of a large main building where most of the activities are centered, and six adjacent buildings. The main building has been expanded and renovated several times over the last decade in order to accommodate the rapidly expanding student body. When it could be expanded no further, additional buildings in the neighborhood were purchased. The Yeshiva also maintains dining and housing facilities on its premises, but these are inadequate to accommodate the current student body.

## The Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

Approximately half of the Yeshiva's student body is enrolled in its undergraduate program. These students, between the ages of 18 and 23, come to Mir for their post-high school studies from all corners of the globe, including North and South America, Europe, Russia, South Africa, Australia, and of course, Israel. Hebrew, English and Yiddish are the most frequently heard languages; French, Spanish and Russian are also heard in the study hall. The other half of the student body consists of married, post-graduate students.

## The Method of Study

There are four primary divisions in the Yeshiva, and each division studies and researches different tractates of the Talmud. Each division is further subdivided by age and level of expertise.

A variety of courses and lectures are available to students on a daily, weekly or bi-weekly basis. Students generally study in pairs or small study groups and study between ten and twelve hours a day. The daily schedule also includes approximately one and a half hours for prayer.

Many of the students take mandatory monthly written exams, while others are tested at intervals based on the material covered. These examinations have gained widespread recognition as educational tools, and a number of other Yeshivas use them. Students in other programs are expected to prepare bi-monthly theses, which, like the written exams, are reviewed and graded by the staff.

Each semester, a schedule is posted in all the study halls, outlining the material to be covered, including the dates and subject matter of all exams and papers.

## Other Programs of Study

Aside from a daily half hour period for the study of ethics, there are bi-weekly lectures on ethics, Scriptures and related subjects. Students often discuss these matters or personal issues, with faculty members or mentors they choose from within the student body.

Upon completion of their studies at Mir, students have the credentials to assume positions as rabbis, educators and lay leaders. Mir's graduates serve in prestigious positions worldwide.

### A Sense of Brotherhood

One unique aspect of Yeshivas Mir is its warm atmosphere, which is keenly felt by all. Despite the wide diversity of the student body, a feeling of brotherhood has always been one of the unique aspects of Yeshivas Mir, no matter the number of students. This ideal is constantly emphasized by the faculty. Alumni carry with them these warm feelings after they leave the Yeshiva and remain intimately involved with their *alma mater*.

### The Mother of all Yeshivos

Recently, the Yeshiva has initiated an evening program of Mishnaic studies for its more advanced students. In addition, a preparatory academy for youth between the ages of 13 and 17, with a full curriculum of Jewish studies, opened its doors this fall.

Yeshivas Mir is open 365 days a year. Even during vacation months and holidays, when there are no formal lectures or study sessions, the main study hall is filled with diligent students.

Mir has adopted a policy that allows students from other schools to apply for permission to use dining and dormitory facilities during the vacation period. Thanks to such programs, Mir continues to be known as the "Mother of all Yeshivas".

### **Yeshivas Mir in New York**

In 1945, Rav Avraham Kalmanovitz, with steadfast faith and persistence, brought the Mirrer Yeshiva to the United States. Two years later, Mirrer Yeshiva in Brooklyn opened its doors to the first group of American students. Rav Kalmanovitz and the Yeshiva faced two formidable tasks: sparking a Torah consciousness within the American Jewish community, and preparing American boys for the intellectual challenge of the intense and complex program of study of a European yeshiva.

Rav Kalmanovitz and his successors as Roshei Yeshiva, Rav Shrage Moshe Kalmanovitz and Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, rose to these tasks with dedication and self-sacrifice. They involved themselves not only with building up the Mirrer Yeshiva in America, but with spreading Torah scholarship and commitment throughout the world. Rav Avraham Kalmanovitz helped establish a network of schools for over 6,000 Jewish children in North Africa, many of whom subsequently came to the United States to study at the Sephardic Division of the Mir. In response to the urgent need for qualified personnel to staff the mushrooming network of Jewish day schools, Mir launched the Teacher's Institute. Soon thereafter the Yeshiva opened the Morris Morgenstern High School and Tanenbaum Yeshiva Ketana. The Mirrer Yeshiva in America today comprises five

divisions ranging from pre-school through to post-graduate studies, with over 1,000 students in attendance and a faculty of over 100.

Mir continues its tradition of serving a broad spectrum of the Jewish community, and Jews of European and Middle Eastern backgrounds, along with recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union and American-born students, all study together. The Yeshiva runs a special graduate division for students from Russia, whose goal is to develop leaders for the Russian immigrant community. Mir also opens its doors four mornings a week to students from five area Jewish high schools, who come to study Torah one-on-one with members of the Mir's kollel (graduate division for married students). The Yeshiva sponsors lectures by members of its faculty that are open to the public, and its study hall is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to the community at large for study and for prayer.

# PONEVEZ YESHIVA

## Before the Holocaust

The Ponevez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, which is one of the greatest Torah centers in the world today, was founded 81 years ago abroad by the spiritual giant, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman (known in the Jewish world as, "the Ponevezer Rav"), who, even before the Holocaust, was considered one of the great Torah giants and Yeshiva Deans in Eastern Europe.

Rabbi Kahaneman was the one who transferred the Yeshiva from Lithuania to Israel during and after World War II. In Israel, he broadened it greatly, until it became an international Torah center and a source for the blossoming of most of the yeshivos today -- especially in Israel, but in the Diaspora as well. Pupils throng to the Ponevez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak from all over the world. Almost 20,000 students have graduated from it. This includes thousands of Torah scholars and hundreds of rabbis, deans of yeshivos, and educators who are very influential in the lives of Jews all over the world.

Rabbi Kahaneman was born 114 years ago in Lithuania. In his youth, he studied by many great Torah scholars, but he considered himself principally a disciple of the famed Chofetz Chaim from Radin. From a very young age he was known as a genius. At age 22, he was invited to be a Torah lecturer in the Novardok Yeshiva and at that time he was also given Rabbinical ordination. In the year 5671 (1911), he married the daughter of Rabbi Aryeh Leib Rubin who was the Rabbi of Vidj. When his father-in-law moved to Vilkomeer to become the rabbi there, Rabbi Kahaneman was chosen as his replacement as the Rabbi of Vidj. Following the ruling of the Chofetz Chaim, he opened a yeshiva there. The Chofetz Chaim prophesized a shining future for him as one who would disseminate Torah in the next generation--and therefore, he ordered him not to accept any rabbinical position that did not include with it a position of a yeshiva dean--because that was to be his major purpose in life.

Rabbi Kahaneman opened the yeshiva in Vidj with only 8 students, but soon there were 170. Due to Rabbi Kahaneman's special qualities, the yeshiva grew from year to year--both in quantity and quality--until it was considered one of the most important producers of Torah scholars in those days. In addition to the yeshiva for young men, he also founded in Vidj a Talmud Torah (school for children and teenagers) as well as many religious social institutions.

In the end of 5674 (1914), World War I broke out. When the city was captured by army troops and all of its Jews had to run for their lives, the entire spiritual and physical building that Rabbi Kahaneman had established in Vidj collapsed. But his spirit was not broken. Wherever he went, within the storm of the war, his Torah went with him. The circumstances of the time forced him to devote his energies to rescue activities and support of the thousands of Jewish captives and displaced refugees. But at the same time, he didn't let up from his major skill of spreading Torah to the masses. In his temporary house in the village of Koltinan, he re-opened the yeshiva and he lectured in halacha (Jewish law).

Likewise, he went to the city of Grodna and there he renewed the local yeshiva ("Shaar HaTorah") and he gathered excellent students and taught them the ways of Torah.

In the year 5677 (1917), he tried to open a yeshiva in the city of Ponevez. This city was considered a "Place of Torah", since the time that its previous rabbi, Rabbi Yitzchok Rabinowitz--one of the famous Torah giants of the time--had founded his well-known lecture series. Many brilliant students studied there under his guidance, with the generous support of the Gavrunsky family, one of the wealthy families of Russia. With the continuation of the war, when the Russians captured the city and expelled its Jews, the voice of Torah was silenced for a short time in Ponevez.

At the end of the winter of 5679 (1919), Rabbi Yitzchok Rabinowitz passed away, and Rabbi Kahaneman, then a young man of 33, was called upon to replace him as the Rabbi of the city of Ponevez.

Immediately he set to work, and despite the ceaseless plotting of the Bolsheviks, he endangered himself and re-opened the local Talmud Torah for poor children. Thereafter, he founded on the 28th of Iyar 5679 (May 28, 1919) the first core of his great yeshiva, called "Beis Ulpana Rabata D'Kehila Kedosha Ponevez." After the Bolsheviks left and Lithuania was established as an independent country, the yeshiva developed greatly in the years that followed, until it became one of the major yeshivos of Lithuania. The authorities also recognized its special status as a learning institution for Rabbis and they exempted its students from the obligation of military service.

The fame of Rabbi Kahaneman grew from year to year, as one who was continuing the learned approach of the Torah scholars of Telz and Brisk. He had many disciples whom later became Torah luminaries of their own: yeshiva deans, rabbis, judges, community leaders, authors of Torah literature, community public workers, and the like. In the yeshiva, besides being influenced by Rabbi Kahaneman directly, the students gained much from other well-known Torah lecturers and educators.

The rapid growth of the Ponevez Yeshiva forced Rabbi Kahaneman to mobilize financial sources to sustain the staff and their families and to build large buildings for the students. For this purpose, he traveled to Western Europe, South Africa and North America, where he introduced himself to the Jews in the Diaspora and he spoke in his fiery manner about the holiness of the Torah and the Jewish nation. There he received financial help from philanthropists who heeded his cry and became partners in his "kingdom of Torah." The rabbi was known as an excellent speaker and he captured the hearts of his listeners. His shining appearances in Jewish communities became a victorious voyage for the respect of Torah and its students. Jews all over listened avidly to his wonderful sermons. His words, which emanated from the depth of his heart, in beautiful language, warmed the hearts of his listeners with a warm Jewish feeling of love of G-d and His Torah. Besides receiving the financial help that he needed, his visits caused a great spiritual awakening whose impressions were recognizable in the lives of community members for many years to come.

In his soaring vision, Rabbi Kahaneman thought of the wonderful idea of establishing in his city of Ponevez, an entire educational kingdom. Besides the yeshiva for older boys, he also founded a *kollel* for married students, a yeshiva for younger boys, a preparatory school for the younger yeshiva, an elementary school for young children (called *Cheder HaRav*), a kindergarten, a religious school and a secondary school for girls. All of these institutions included approximately a thousand people. He also helped to establish organizations of kindness and help for the Jewish population in Ponevez, such as the "Old Age Home," "Orphan Home" and "Jewish Hospital," that ran under his supervision in the traditional Jewish way. Being blessed with the ability to accomplish, he also administered all the matters of the community and of the Rabbinate in the city and its surroundings. His influence was felt far and wide, because he was recognized by all sects as the Captain of Lithuanian Jewry in all of its communities.

The Rabbi of Ponevez represented his Jewish brethren as a delegate in the Lithuanian House of Legislators with cleverness and courage; he was a central figure amongst the leaders of "Agudas HaRabanim" of Lithuania, and one of the major speakers in the "Congress of Jewish Communities." He actively participated in national congresses and in the great conventions of the *Agudath Israel* movement; he was chosen for the national "Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah;" and he merited the admiration of all the great leaders of the generation, who saw him as a true Jewish leader. Despite his relatively young age, everyone admired his personality very much and they took into consideration his opinion.

Let us note that his branched activities and his many travels did not diminish in any way from the spiritual creative productivity of Rabbi Kahaneman, which stood at the center of his life. As an extraordinary yeshiva dean, he trained many battalions of champions in the growth of Torah to great heights. His brilliant new Torah ideas passed from one mouth to the next and illuminated the eyes of the students in all of the yeshivos in Lithuania. He wrote many novellae on passages throughout the Talmud, but his generation and future generations did not merit enjoying them, for they were lost along with the destruction of European Jewry.

The rabbi devised a plan to transfer the Ponevez Torah center to the Holy Land. Even in the year 5680 (1920), when he participated in the first national convention of the European *Agudath Israel*, that met in Pressburg, Czechoslovakia, he brought up the idea and the plan to establish an international yeshiva in Israel; and he requested the help of the movement to realize this goal.

Later also, when he established new housing for the Ponevez Yeshiva with the help of philanthropists across the ocean, he made up a detailed contract. In it was written that when the day would come that the yeshiva would move to Israel, they would sell the building that that philanthropist had donated abroad and with the money received for it, they would establish a new building in Israel as its replacement that would be called in the future after the said philanthropist. However, this clause was never realized because the buildings of the yeshiva abroad were ravaged by enemies in the days of World War II.

In the year 5695 (1935), when he made his first visit to Israel, the Rabbi bought large areas of land in the Galil near Tiberias, with the intention of establishing the buildings of the yeshiva that would be transferred there. However, due to the precarious state of security that existed then in Israel, his plan was not carried out and he returned temporarily to Europe.

### **After the Holocaust**

After the War of Destruction of the Nazis against the Jews in Europe, Divine Providence rescued Rabbi Kahaneman and in the month of Nisan 5700 (April 1940), he reached the shores of Israel. There, he made hopeless efforts to rescue the students of the yeshiva and to bring them to Israel with the permission of the British Mandate, but to his great heartbreak, he was not successful. In the last message that he received from his city that was captured meanwhile by the Russians, in a disguised letter dispatched by his brother-in-law Rabbi Asher Kalman, it was written that "the factory" (a code name for the yeshiva) was working at full force (i.e., studies are continuing normally, without stop) and none of the workers (students) had left their place of work. A week later, Ponevez was captured by the Nazis and the enemy slaughtered without mercy all the Jews of Ponevez, including the students of the yeshiva and the institutions, and the wife and children of the Rabbi.

At that time, his whole world was ruined. All was destroyed to its foundation. All of the thousand souls who had been under his guidance were murdered while sanctifying G-d's name and rose in flames to the Heavens. The buildings and the inventory of the yeshiva and the rest of the institutions remained and were nationalized by the German murderers and by those who later took charge of the area. And Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman remained a lone survivor. But, he girded himself with strength, overcame his disaster and prepared to create everything from the beginning, with the deep belief that "on the Mount of Zion will be the remnant, and it will be holy". Here began the most magnificent chapter of his life.

In the dark days of the Holocaust, when Hitler was capturing most of the countries of Europe, when the German commander Rommel and his force were already standing at the gates of Israel and were planning to invade it via the Sinai Desert and El Almein, Rabbi Kahaneman placed the cornerstone of the new Ponevez Kingdom of Torah in Bnei Brak. As he did this, he stressed the continuity from the center of Torah which he had headed abroad. For example, in the first lecture in *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law) that he delivered in Bnei Brak, he began at the same chapter and clause from where he had stopped in the last lecture that he had delivered in Ponevez in Lithuania before he had left. He was then close to sixty, a time of old age, but he jumped with miraculous youthful energy into the commotion of creation and productivity, lest Torah be forgotten from Israel. Those were days of a terribly low spiritual condition in the Israeli settlement, and only very few teenagers devoted themselves to the study of Torah. But he created a great revolution that completely changed the attitude to Torah study and made it into the heritage of the masses, and he brought the best of the youth into the buildings of the yeshivos.



In the next 29 years, until his passing at the end of 5729 (1969), he succeeded in restoring and establishing the largest yeshiva in Israel. Ponevez Yeshiva extends over an enormous campus today of about 70 beautiful buildings, that stand at the top of the famous hill in Zichron Meir and in the district that lies below around it. The complete "concern" that he established includes: a yeshiva for older students and a yeshiva for younger students (high school age); a *kollel* for married students; and a "Children's Town" with dormitories for the boys and girls (which absorbed hundreds of child survivors from the Holocaust and later from "the children of Teheran"--children in distress from the new immigrants from Yemen, Morocco, Tripoli and other countries) with many branches. However, his main accomplishment was the cultivation of a new generation of scholars, Torah leaders, educators and rabbis who were designed to fill the empty void that had been created due to the destruction and murder of millions of people who sanctified G-d's name. They were educated by the Rabbi according to the same special method of learning that he had used previously in the yeshiva in Europe. This method of study was according to the tradition that he had received from his rabbis, the great educators of Lithuania of the previous generations.

Rabbi Kahaneman also surrounded himself with a staff of brilliant, righteous men who, together with him, occupied themselves with the spiritual building of the yeshiva. He excused them from the worry of the physical upkeep and he himself took the pains to enlist the grandiose funds needed for this purpose. The erection of the buildings alone demanded investments of tens of millions of dollars. In addition, there were enormous expenses necessary to fund the continuous upkeep of the yeshiva and its branches.

Besides the dynamic boom that he brought about in Ponevez Yeshiva that he started with a handful of 8 students, Rabbi Kahaneman caused an energetic momentum in the blossoming of the whole world of yeshivos in the Holy Land and he raised the honor of Torah and those who study it within all the levels of the nation. In his personal actions, he gave an example to other yeshivos that were established following Ponevez, and he was one of the first founders of the "Committee of Yeshivos in Israel." He also renewed the ancient tradition of "Yeshivos Yarchei Kallah" in Israel, wherein working people withdraw from all of their businesses for two weeks a year in the summer vacation and come to Ponevez to study Torah and to listen to lectures of the yeshiva deans. (Eventually, this idea spread and it has branches now in countries in Western Europe and other places, where the Rabbis of Ponevez Yeshiva leave Bnei Brak to deliver Torah lectures for hundreds of participants.)

Even in his days, more than a thousand souls studied under the Kingdom of Torah of the renewed Ponevez. In his eyes, they were the "memorials" of the thousand souls who were murdered in the previous lodging of his yeshiva in Lithuania. But the rich balance of his spiritual accomplishments is measured in much greater numbers, since Ponevez Yeshiva radiated and continues to radiate its influence and its educational method to all institutions of Torah in this generation. With G-d's help, it will continue further to radiate and influence future generations as well.



Rabbi Kahaneman also established 18 additional yeshivos throughout Israel, to be living memorials to the 18 yeshivos that were destroyed in the Holocaust. He placed the cornerstone of the large religious community in the port city of Ashdod in the Negev, which houses in its center a complex of Torah institutions, most importantly, Yeshivas Grodna for older students and Yeshivas Vilkomir for younger students, which are branches of the central yeshiva in Bnei Brak. Since then, Ashdod has developed into a large, thriving Jewish community.

Rabbi Kahaneman passed away at the age of 83 in Elul 5729 (1969), but his life's work continued to exist and to grow ceaselessly in the 30 years following under the leadership of his son, the president of the Yeshiva, Rabbi Avraham Kahaneman. May it continue, with G-d's help further. Every year, hundreds of graduates leave Ponevez Yeshiva and its branches, full of Torah and lofty character traits, and they spread out in the Jewish communities in Israel and abroad, bringing with them the best of the Torah of Ponevez. Today, there is almost no Jewish community in the world that is not influenced, greatly or slightly, from the spiritual richness that overflows from that great, wonderful light-tower, called "Ponevez".

"Ponevez" of 5760 (1999/2000) includes the following chain of institutions and educational centers: the yeshiva for older students (with dormitory buildings and dining facilities for the students three times a day) in Bnei Brak, *Yeshivas Grodna* in Ashdod named after the yeshivah in Grodna, Lithuania, *Yeshivas Bumdheim* for younger students in Bnei Brak, *Kollel Avreichim Perlman* for married students in Bnei Brak, elementary school and dormitory *Be'er Yaaakov* (Kroizer) in Bnei Brak, *Kiryat HaYeled* (Children's Town) with two dormitories for boys and girls in Bnei Brak, a special institution for immigrants from Russia and Bucharria in Bnei Brak, *Cheder HaRav* (an elementary school for boys named after the one in Europe) in Ashdod, *Beis Yaakov* (an elementary school and high school for girls) in Ashdod, Yeshivat Doms Vilkamir (in memory of the yeshiva in Vilkomir, Lithuania) for younger students, in Ashdod, *Ohel Kidoshim* (Tent of the Martyrs) for the commemoration of the Jews in Lithuania and *Yarchei Kallah* for working people who study Torah--an opportunity for studying under conditions of vacation and rest for men and their families.

In all of these institutions about three thousand people study today. The staff of lecturers, educators, teachers, counselors, service workers and clerks comes to three hundred people. Within the yeshiva also exists a Torah library with hundreds of thousands of volumes, which is open to all those who study Torah and to the general public; an institute for publishing books that publishes the new Torah ideas of the married students and of the rabbis; and the "Institute of the Lives of the Jews of Lithuania", to commemorate the spiritual lives of the holy communities in Lithuania that were destroyed in the Holocaust.

# THE RABBINICAL COLLEGE OF TELSHE

## I. IN THE PRE-HOLOCAUST ERA.

The Rabbinical College of Telshe was founded in 1875, in the city of Telshe, Lithuania, to cater for the religious educational needs of young Jewish men in Telshe and its surrounding towns.

In 1881 Rabbi Eliezer Gordon was appointed as both the Rabbi of Telshe and the dean of its college. Rabbi Gordon was a brilliant Talmudist and expert in Torah Law, and his renown had already spread prior to his arrival in Telshe.

Rabbi Gordon was not satisfied with a college that served only the younger students in Telshe and the vicinity, and set himself to the task of expanding the college.

In 1884 Rabbi Gordon added his son-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch to the faculty, and in 1885 he acquired the talents of Rabbi Shimon Shkop

Both Rabbi Bloch and Rabbi Shkop were innovators in the field of Jewish education, each pioneering new methods and approaches to the study of Bible, Talmud and Jewish Law. Together, their methodical formulae laid the basis for what became known in the world of Torah study as the "Telshe Approach".

In addition to a unique style of analysis, The Rabbinical College of Telshe instituted various other innovations, which were also cause for a rapid increase in the student body. Among these innovations was the institution of designated lectures for set student levels. Whereas other rabbinical colleges of the time provided one level of study for all students, Telshe provided students of a lower standing with lectures which they could relate to. When a student's standard had advanced, he would advance to the next level of lectures. The benefits of such a system are self-understood, and this system was soon integrated into the structure of almost all rabbinical colleges. To our very day, this remains the accepted structure in almost all rabbinical colleges -- the world over.

Originally, the college was housed in a building provided by the Telshe community; however, numbers increased so drastically that soon larger housing was called for. Subsequently, in 1894 the college moved into a new purpose-built building. In the same year, the college added a new subject of study: Ethics. Prior to this, the study of ethics had been a student's personal prerogative; now, it was a part and parcel of college curriculum. A new faculty position was thus called for, namely, a Professor of Ethics. Among those who served over the years in this position, was Rabbi Leib Chasman, who later achieved world renown as senior Professor of Ethics at the Hebron Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

In 1902 Rabbi Shimon Shkop left the college to fill the position of Rabbi to the community of Breinsk, Lithuania. In 1905 Rabbi Chaim Rabinowitz joined the college to

In 1902 Rabbi Shimon Shkop left the college to fill the position of Rabbi to the community of Breinsk, Lithuania. In 1905 Rabbi Chaim Rabinowitz joined the college to fill the void left by Rabbi Shkop's departure. Prior to his appointment at Telshe, Rabbi Rabinowitz had served as Rabbi to the town of Meishad, and later as a lecturer in the rabbinical college "Knesses Beis Yitzchak" in Kaunas, Lithuania. As with his predecessor, Rabbi Rabinowitz innovated a unique style of Talmudic analysis, which further added to the college's already famous reputation.

In 1910, whilst in London on a fundraising mission for the college, Rabbi Gordon suffered a heart attack and passed away. His twenty-nine years as head of the college had seen a small town institution grow into a world famous center of study. He had stamped his imprint onto the lives of hundreds of young men, many of whom were great in their own right. Among his students ranked the likes of: Rabbi Yosef Kahanaman, founder and dean of the world-famous Ponevez Yeshiva, located today in Bnei Brak, Israel; Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, one of the greatest Jewish leaders in the pre-holocaust era; Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank, Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, and countless more who in turn left their imprint on Jewish society and culture.

Following Rabbi Gordon's passing, his son-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch assumed the mantle of leadership as Rabbi to the community and dean of the college. As with every leader, Rabbi Bloch molded the institution into his own. Not only was Rabbi Bloch an innovator in the realms of Talmudic analysis, but he also possessed a unique approach to Biblical studies and philosophy. However, as long as Rabbi Gordon was dean of the college, Rabbi Bloch had left the charter of the college to the head of the institute to navigate as he deemed fit. With his elevation to dean of the college, Rabbi Bloch was free to guide the school in the direction and manner of his choice.

As an educator, Rabbi Bloch did not regard his obligation to enhance educational standards as being limited to the college itself, and in 1920, he established in Telshe primary schools for both boys and girls. In the same year, Rabbi Bloch added a preparatory school to the college. Previously, younger students who entered the college and who -- owing to their age -- were not up to the standard of the lowest lecture, were tutored privately by older students. The preparatory school was structured in the same fashion as the college itself -- i.e., four levels of lectures to cater to the different levels of student advancement. The concept of a rabbinical college of higher studies possessing its own preparatory school was at the time novel. Today, however, it has become an accepted norm, something Rabbi Bloch pioneered.

In addition to studying an easier version of the college curriculum, the preparatory school also featured secular studies, another innovation at the time. This was cause for opposition from the ranks of many hardened conservatives, who were unaccustomed to the idea of secular studies occupying a position in a rabbinical college. In 1924, however, the Lithuanian Government announced its decision to accredit only those rabbinical colleges that possessed a secular studies department. The Rabbinical College of Telshe was the only such institute. It is to be stressed, though, that secular studies did not occupy a place in the college itself, but only in its preparatory school.

In 1918, a teachers' training institute had been established in Kaunas; however, the seminary did not achieve overly much success. The faculty of the academy turned to Rabbi Bloch, renowned for his pedagogical prowess, to take it over, and, in 1925 The Yavneh School for the Training of Teachers reopened in Telshe under the auspices of The Rabbinical College of Telshe. This served as a post-graduate institute, the goal of which was to produce teachers for Jewish schooling. The curriculum at the teacher's institute included Educational Skills, Bible, Talmud, the Hebrew Language and its Literature, and Mathematics. The school succeeded in supplying qualified and trained teachers of a high caliber not only to the communities of Lithuania, but also to those of Greater Europe.

For many years the Jewish community in Lithuania had lacked a structured educational system for teenage girls. Rabbi Bloch felt that such a concept was called for, and in 1927 a high school department for girls was established in Telshe. The school found immediate praise and support from many great Rabbis and community leaders who saw the immense value that such an institute had to offer.

1929 saw the founding of another post-graduate institute -- "*Kollel HaRabbanim*" -- the aim of which was to train graduates for the Rabbinate. Admission was not easy; a student had to display great promise and the institute soon became known as an exclusive school for higher studies. The *Kollel HaRabbanim* School was headed by Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Katz, a son-in-law of Rabbi Bloch, and a towering personality in his own right.

In 1930, a sister institute to The Yavneh School for the Training of Teachers was opened, offering a two-year course to young women who wished to enter the field of education. Like its counterpart, the female division of the school succeeded in producing many high quality teachers who branched out to numerous institutes throughout Europe.

These were the schools incorporated in The Rabbinical College of Telshe. Thus, under Rabbi Bloch's leadership, the college broadened its horizons greatly. Telshe now denoted more than just excellence in higher rabbinical studies. Telshe was a complete ladder in the field of education: beginning with young primary school students through to qualified professionals, ready to embark on careers in the Rabbinate and in Education.

Yet, Rabbi Bloch spread the college's influence even further, by establishing a Hebrew newspaper - "*Hane'eman*" -- which saw circulation throughout Lithuania. In addition to the alumni already spreading the college's ideals throughout Lithuania, the college now directly conveyed its message on a weekly basis nationwide. In 1932 *Hane'eman* became the "*Yiddische Leben*", which remained in publication until the Second World War.

A committee was established for the publication of the lectures delivered in the college, and, subsequently, the lectures of Rabbi Bloch and Rabbi Rabinowitz were studied even in other institutes. The popular acceptance of their novellae today, in the world of higher Talmudic studies, is due much to their circulation in the pre-Holocaust Talmudic World.

In October of 1930, Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch passed away, and his second oldest son, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Bloch succeeded him as dean of the college. At the time, Rabbi Bloch was a mere forty years old; however, he had been lecturing in the college since 1926 and had already acquired a name as one of the greatest minds in the rabbinic world.

Rabbi Avraham Bloch was not the only child of Rabbi Yosef Bloch to serve on the college's faculty. Rabbi Zalman Bloch and Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Bloch also occupied professorial positions.

Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch's children all possessed the same approach in their running of the college: to continue in their father's methods.

In 1931, a committee was founded in the college for the furtherance of Jewish education. The *raison d'etre* of this committee was to ensure that traditional Jewish education was available to as many Jewish children as possible. The committee saw the organization of schools in small towns where there had previously been little or no structured system of schooling. Older students in the college were selected to teach for periods of time at these schools, following which, they would return to continue their studies at the college. In addition to providing many communities at large with new options in education, these schools also granted students of Telshe with yet another opportunity for self-development and growth.

A year after the passing of Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch, the college's senior lecturer, Rabbi Chaim Rabinowitz, passed away. In Telshe, educationalists do not retire. They cease to deliver their lectures only when they are either physically unable to continue, or, with their passing.

Following Rabbi Rabinowitz's decease, his son, Rabbi Ezriel Rabinowitz was appointed a professor. Rabbi Ezriel Rabinowitz was all but twenty-six years of age; however, his genius was truly outstanding, and the promise of a great future was beyond any doubt.

In 1933, the college erected a new building to house the preparatory school, and until the onset of the Second World War, the college continued on the course chartered by Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch -- i.e., an institution offering traditional Jewish education to all ages. With the further establishing of schools outside of Telshe, the horizons of this goal had been greatly broadened.

## II. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE COLLEGE

The destruction of The Rabbinical College of Telshe began with the Soviet takeover of Lithuania. Soviet Communism had no love for Judaism, and worked hard to remove it from its midst. In the summer of 1940, the college was informed that it was to vacate its main building, which was to be converted into a hospital for the Red Army. Subsequently, the college moved all students into the preparatory school building, until this building, too, was confiscated by the Communist authorities and converted into a trade school. Following that, the college again moved, this time to the town's Great Synagogue. There they remained until the end of winter, 1941, when again the Communists confiscated the building -- this time, on the grounds that it was needed for a social hall. At that point, the college dispersed its students to various smaller synagogues in the town. This, however, was of little avail. College students boarded at families, and soon the Soviet authorities announced that all boarding space was to be vacated for Russian soldiers.

Still, the college hung on, and the faculty organized the student's dispersion to four surrounding townships, with a group of students remaining in Telshe itself. Rabbi Zalman Bloch and his son-in-law Rabbi Yisroel Ordman visited each town to deliver lectures and to encourage the students. Shortly after the Communist takeover of Telshe, Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Bloch and his brother-in-law, Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Katz, head of the post graduate school *Kollel HaRabbanim*, had together embarked on a trip to the United States, with the goal of re-establishing the college on foreign soil.

The college remained in this situation until the arrival of Nazi forces in 1941. On Thursday, the 22nd of June 1941, Nazi forces in Telshe rounded up all Jews found in the streets, and moved them to Rein, a nearby village. The following afternoon, the remaining Jews were assembled while the Nazis delighted themselves in taunting and photographing them. The Nazis announced that the Jewish community had been found guilty of assisting the Communist regime, an enemy of the Reich. Rabbi Avraham Bloch strongly denied the accusation, but to no avail. Rabbi Bloch could not instantly change the deep-rooted Nazi hatred for other human beings. In another act of heartless terror, the Nazis positioned the Jewish population in rows and fired their weapons, missing the crowd, but showering those gathered with fear and dread. This was immensely amusing to the Nazis. It was soon evening, the Jewish Sabbath, and the men were forced to walk to Rein. The women and children were allowed to return home.

For the next three weeks, the men in Rein were subjected to strenuous labor. On the fourteenth of July the men were assembled and again lined up in rows. A Gestapo agent with a sword in hand gleefully announced that it would be their last day on Earth. The Nazis then proceeded to amuse themselves by ordering the men to bend over and run, all the while being whipped. Whoever fell, young or old, was beaten without mercy.

The following day, at five in the morning, the men were awakened for "work". The Nazis had brought the women and children of Telshe to witness the slaughter of their

fathers, brothers, children and husbands. On the fifteenth of July 1941, Nazi forces slaughtered the Jewish male population of Telshe, Lithuania. Rabbi Avraham Bloch was beaten with a hammer to the taunts of "Where is your God now?", and then shot together with the rest of the community. The women and children were slaughtered in the village of Gerol on the 30th of August, 1941.

A few students of the college escaped deep into Russia. Although it was not easy to observe Judaism in Soviet Russia, one did not face the torturous death that awaited with the Nazis.

### III. THE COLLEGE IN THE UNITED STATES

As previously mentioned, Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Bloch and Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Katz had left Telshe in 1940 for the United States. Shortly after their arrival, they received word of the impossible situation in Lithuania -- the Nazis had invaded and there was no way to extract the college. Immediately, Rabbi Bloch and Rabbi Katz began the task of re-establishing a branch of the college in the United States, with the same goals as the college in Europe.

Neither Rabbi Bloch, nor Rabbi Katz, wished to re-establish the college in New York. Concurrent with the college's charter, both wished to plant the school in arid soil: in a community which lacked traditional Jewish education -- something New York did not. Hence, Cleveland, Ohio, was chosen. At the time, Cleveland had a large orthodox Jewish community, and the only forms of Judaism which were making progressive inroads in the community were Reform and Conservative Judaism.

In autumn, 1941, The Rabbinical College of Telshe opened in Cleveland, Ohio. For the first six weeks of its existence, the college was housed in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Yitzchak Feigenbaum, who saw a great need for the college in Cleveland. After six weeks, the Feigenbaum family moved into a small residence and sold their large home to the college.

The college began with thirteen students: seven Europeans who had studied at the college in Lithuania, and six Americans who had come from Baltimore. It made a strong contrast. The European students were greatly advanced, whereas their American counterparts had never experienced high European standards. Rabbi Bloch and Rabbi Katz, accustomed to lecturing for advanced students, now had to teach the absolute basics in Talmud study. Nevertheless, they soon raised the American students' standard, and the college began to grow on a daily basis.

Once again, The Rabbinical College of Telshe began to spread its net. In September of 1943, the college established a Jewish primary school. Previously, the only structured Jewish education to be found in Cleveland were "afternoon schools" or "Sunday schools", which offered only part-time education. However, these schooling systems were stifled by the fact that their students spent the majority of their time in an environment which often



imbued them with a very different code of morals and ethics to those taught in a traditional Jewish education. Another problem was the lack of interest factor. Following a long day in public school, at a time when other children were enjoying themselves, the students in the afternoon schools would begin a new course of studies. Naturally, the interest factor was very low. Nevertheless, many parents were happy with the setup, and the concept of a Jewish Day School was a new and alien one to Cleveland.

Thus, the school -- like the college itself -- began with only thirteen students. However, the benefits of a full day education in an environment conducive to Jewish morals and ethics were soon clearly recognized by the community, and, within a year, The Hebrew Academy of Cleveland had grown to over one hundred students. To this very day, The Hebrew Academy of Cleveland serves as a role model for other Jewish Day Schools. Many turn to the academy for a curriculum, or in other areas for advice, and its alumni serve in Jewish communities the world over.

From the very onset, Rabbi Bloch and Rabbi Katz had firmly decided that they would not lower the standard of the college to meet lower American standards. Instead, they would raise the standards of their American pupils to as close a standard to that of the college in Europe. Various other institutions of higher Talmudic study had allowed their students to pursue degrees in external institutions, Telshe, however, did not. This, of course, was cause for many to refrain from attending Telshe, but Rabbi Bloch and Rabbi Katz refused to alter the college charter in order to gain more students. This made the college somewhat unique, with perhaps the only other such institute in the country being Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey. On account of this, many figures in the Rabbinate -- nationwide --- encouraged the youth of their communities to attend one of these exclusive colleges, and soon numbers were growing from all regions of the country.

Larger housing was soon required for the college, and a new building was purchased on the corner of St. Claire and 105th Street in Cleveland. This would serve as home to the college for the next ten years.

In September of 1944, the college opened a high school department to serve as a preparatory school for the college.

A post-graduate school, felt Rabbi Bloch, would not simply add to the college, but would be its crowning glory. Within it, the college could train Rabbis and leaders, who would further spread the college's ideals and ethics to the populace at large. In 1946, a group of Holocaust survivors -- all students of the college in Lithuania, who had fled the Nazi onslaught -- arrived in Cleveland to rejoin the college. Most of this group had in the meantime married, and all of them were older and greater qualified than the American student body. Hence, Rabbi Bloch's dream of a post-graduate institute came into fruition.

The post-graduate institute, did, and still does -- as Rabbi Bloch prophesied -- produce leaders of high caliber for the Jewish community. Countless graduates have become dedicated lay leaders the world over. Many are the leaders of communities, others



teachers, and some have even founded their own institutions, all the fruit of The Rabbinical College of Telshe.

In 1951, a teacher's training institute for men was founded as another post-graduate school.

In 1951, Rabbi Dr. Joseph Kamenetsky, head of the *Torah U'Mesorah* organization, approached the college with an urgent plea for assistance. A Jewish Day School had been established in Minneapolis; however, due to a shortage of funding was about to close. Was there anything the college could do to assist? Immediately, Rabbi Bloch re-established The Committee for the Furtherance of Jewish Education -- the college organization which had established schools in villages and towns in pre-war Lithuania. For the next three years, students of the college taught at the day school without pay, thus enabling the school to remain open. Three years later, the school's financial situation had improved enough to enable it to once more hire teachers. Without the assistance of the committee, there would likely be no structured Jewish schooling in Minneapolis today, and certainly a very small Jewish community.

Over the years since, the committee has involved itself in many an endeavor to strengthen Jewish education. Even after the founding of The Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, the college supported the afternoon and Sunday schools, with students donating of their time to teach. Today, another successful project, sees businessmen with little or no background in Talmud study, attending weekly classes at the college.

The spirit of the committee has remained with many graduates who have not ceased to work for its goals, even after they have left the college. Telshe graduates have brought Jewish education, and improved pre-existent standards, to communities the world over.<sup>1</sup>

In January 1955, the college was struck by the passing of its relatively young Dean, Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Bloch, at age sixty. Rabbi Bloch, as with his father, grandfather, and brothers, had enlightened the lives of many -- both within the college itself, and through the many communal activities on behalf of Jewish education worldwide. To this day, Rabbi Bloch serves as an inspirational figure in the minds and hearts of countless many. His brother-in-law, Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Katz, succeeded him as Dean of the college.

In 1956, the college re-established a teacher's training institute for women. Like its namesake in Europe, *The Yavneh Seminary* offered young women a two-year course in education. It was, and still is, headed by Mrs. Chaya Ausband, a daughter of Rabbi Avraham Bloch, and a survivor of the holocaust. Mrs. Ausband was herself a student of the school in Europe. *Yavneh Seminary*, too, has produced over the years many capable young women who have added much to Jewish education worldwide.

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<sup>1</sup> For example: Rabbi Gavriel Ginsburg, Dean of Yeshiva Ner Yisroel, Toronto, Canada; Rabbi Eziel Goldfein, Dean of Yeshiva College, Johannesburg, South Africa; Rabbi Shaul Dolinger, Dean of Yeshiva Pri Eitz Chaim, Ashdod, Israel; and many others.

In 1954, the college purchased a fifty-seven acre plot of land in Wickliffe, an outer suburb of Cleveland. The land had originally been part of a large estate and there were already a number of usable buildings on the site. Renovations and adjustments were called for, and upon their completion, the college moved to its current home in 1956.

In September of 1960, Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Katz decided to broaden the college's boundaries even further, with the establishing of a branch of the college in Chicago, Illinois. A group of older students led by members of the post-graduate school traveled to Chicago, and today, The Telshe Yeshiva of Chicago is a thriving institute. Over the years, both a high school department and a post-graduate school were added, and the Chicago branch has also produced many capable teachers, rabbis, and community leaders.

On New Year's Eve, 1963, the college was struck by a calamity. A fire broke out in one of the three dormitory buildings, burning it to the ground, and claiming the lives of two young high school students. Subsequently, another dormitory building which was also primarily of wooden construction was closed. The residents of these two dormitories were temporarily housed in the gymnasium, while others were billeted to families. In October 1964, the new dormitory building was completed. At its opening, Rabbi Katz announced plans to build a new main study hall. Unfortunately, Rabbi Katz never saw the finished building, as he passed away in November of that year. As with his brother-in-law, Rabbi Katz left an indelible impression upon multitudes of students and many more.

For the first time in the history of the college, the position of Dean was carried by two individuals: Rabbi Boruch Sorotzkin and Rabbi Mordechai Gifter.

Both Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Bloch and Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Katz, had wanted to open a branch of the college in Israel. In 1951 the college opened a preparatory school; however, owing to various factors it did not meet with much success. Rabbi Bloch's passing put the project on hold and not until the middle of the following decade was the issue re-addressed. In 1965, Mr. Irving Stone, a fond supporter of the college, acquired a large tract of land about twenty minutes from Jerusalem, and donated it for this purpose to the college.

Work began to develop the land and in September 1977, Rabbi Mordechai Gifter with a group of select students, traveled to Israel to open the Israeli branch of The Rabbinical College of Telshe.

In 1978, a group of graduate students at the college founded another Jewish Day School in Cleveland: *Mosdos Ohr HaTorah*. With much growth in the Cleveland community, a second school was called for, to cater to the different needs that had arisen in the community. Today, *Mosdos Ohr HaTorah*, is a thriving institute, which, like The Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, serves as a role model and source of curriculum for other similar institutions.

In February 1979, Rabbi Boruch Sorotzkin passed away at the age of 63. Rabbi Sorotzkin had been a leader in the world Jewish community, playing large roles in the *Chinuch Atzmai* education system in Israel, and in *Agudath Israel of America*. Upon Rabbi Sorotzkin's passing, Rabbi Gifter returned from Israel to lead the college in Cleveland. Unfortunately, Rabbi Gifter's return saw the closure of the branch in Israel; however, it did return to the college and to the Jewish community at large in the United States, a leader of much color and charisma.

In 1982, an alumnus of the college, Rabbi Avraham Ausband, established The Yeshiva of Telshe Alumni in Riverdale, New York. The college has since grown and earned for itself a name befitting the Telshe reputation.

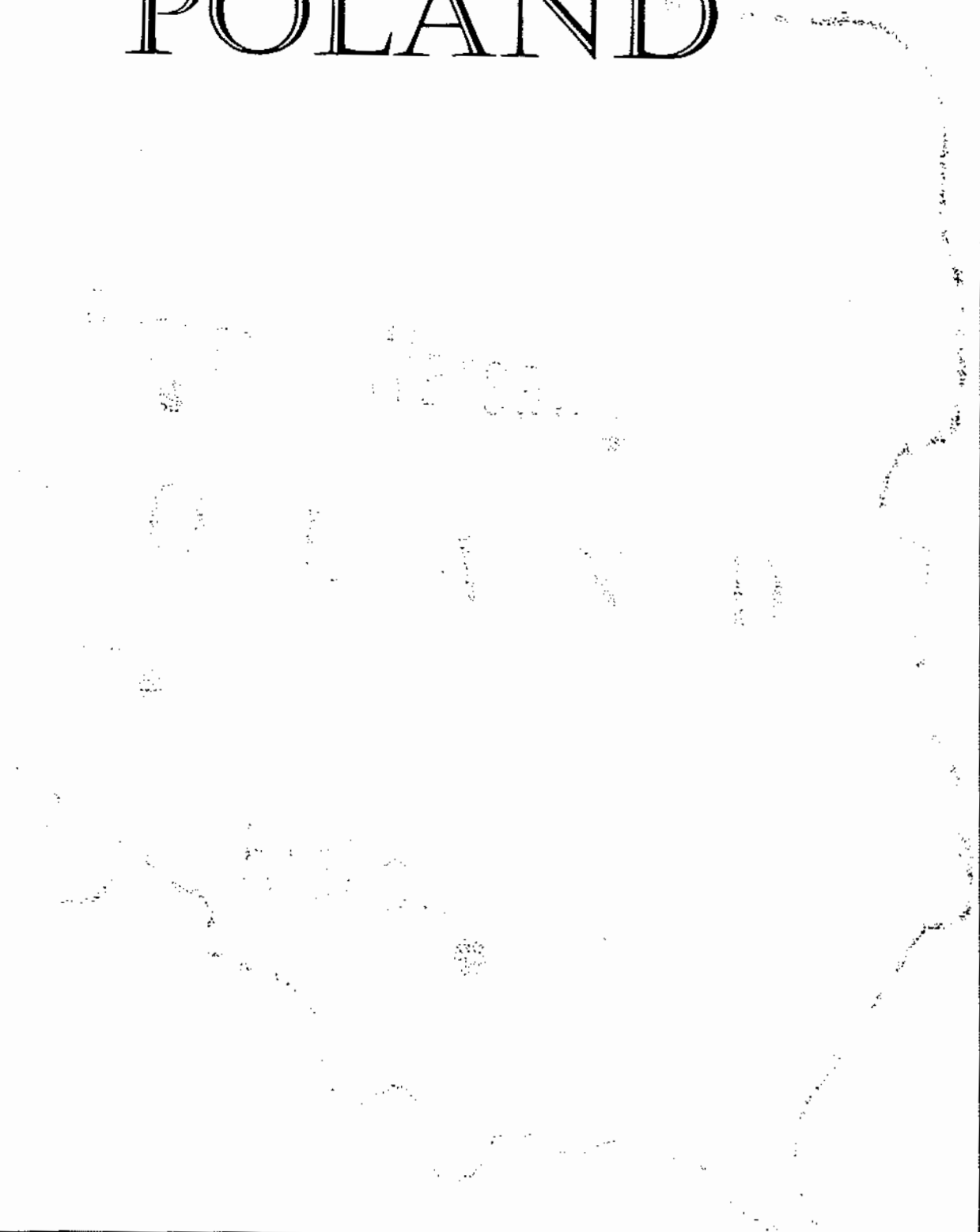
In addition to the college in New York, a group of alumni also founded a Telshe Alumni Synagogue and study hall in Brooklyn, New York.

In 1995, the Jewish community in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, requested the college to establish a branch in their neighborhood, to enable the many alumni to further their studies. A group of students from the post-graduate school were chosen and the L.I.F.E Institute was founded. L.I.F.E. is a non-degree conferring institute, which offers classes on all levels to the working professionals in the Cleveland Heights Jewish community. From its very onset, it has proven to be a great success.

Today in Israel, there is a network of educational institutions called Telz-Stone institutions in Kiryat Telshe Stone. These include boys and girls elementary schools, a yeshiva high school, and several yeshivos, comprising well over 1,000 students.

In summary: in both pre-war Europe and in the United States today, The Rabbinical College of Telshe has striven to remain firm in the fulfillment of its charter: the furtherance of Jewish education to all members of the Jewish faith.

# POLAND



## GERRER CHASSIDUS

Polish Jewry and the Gerrer dynasty overlapped to the extent that it is impossible to speak of the one without the other. For the last eighty years of Polish Jewry's existence, from 5619/1859 until the outbreak of the Second World War in 5699/1939, the name "Ger" described one of the largest, most dominant, and most dynamic communities among Polish Jewry. This was the case demographically, in the number of its members, and even more so intellectually, in its involvement in every facet of public and economic life in Poland.

Ger, or as it is called in Hebrew, "Gur," or as it is officially called in Polish, "Gura Kalvaria," is not just a name but an idea. Until this very day, sixty years after the disappearance of Polish Jewry, there are few Jews of Polish origin anywhere in the world to whom the name "Ger" does not arouse sentimental feelings. In Poland today, most older gentiles who remember life in Poland before the war can clearly explain what the town Gura Kalvaria was.

*Karol Zhidovska*, King of the Jews, was the name given to the Gerrer Rebbe by the gentile Poles. On any ordinary day, with no special event in the life of the Polish people, you could find the streets in the vicinity of the Vienna Train Station on Marshalkovska St. in Warsaw, the capital, thronging with Jews, estimated by the police in the tens of thousands, all headed for the plaza in front of the station. And there would be no need to explain to a Polish farmer in town for the day what the great fuss was about. He would understand himself that surely *Karol Zhidovska* was traveling somewhere and thousands of his chassidim and admirers were coming to see him off.

There were few Polish personalities who drew the attention of so many thousands of people as did the Gerrer Rebbe. Even the circles of the Polish government knew that Ger was an extremely powerful and important movement among Polish Jewry. Ger also aroused the interest of Polish writers and intellectuals. They could not help but notice the unique influence that the Gerrer spirit had even on secular life.

What, after all, was Ger? Physically it was nothing but a small town that hardly appeared as a small dot on the large map of Poland. The number of its inhabitants in the years before the war was relatively small, about 8,000, and only half of the population was Jewish. The means of transportation to Ger was similarly small in scale. The trip from Warsaw was made in a small train that acquired the famous Polish-Yiddish name of "*Kolaikeh*." But the truth of the matter was that Ger was famous throughout Jewry as a spiritual factory. Ger, led by the Rebbe, was a thriving Chassidic Torah center. In that same small town of Ger, reached by that same small *Kolaikeh*, the last great chapter of Chassidism in Polish history was played out. In depicting Ger, one gets a view of the twilight of Polish Jewry.

### The Chassidic Dynasties Through the Generations

Gerrer Chassidism is considered to be directly descended from the founder of the Chassidic Movement, Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, who passed away in Mezhibuzh, Podolia, in

5520/1760. After his death, the Baal Shem Tov's flock of chassidim was led by his disciple, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritch. After Rabbi Dov Ber's death, the leadership of the greater part of his followers was passed to Rabbi Elimelech of Litzhensk, author of *Noam Elimelech*, who held sway until his passing in 5549/1789. After Rabbi Elimelech's death, most of his chassidim became followers of the famed Chozeh (Seer) of Lublin, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Horwitz, who led the chassidim until his own death in 5675/1815.

During the Chozeh of Lublin's lifetime, the number of chassidim grew substantially; it was then that Chassidism became a mass movement. Almost all the Chassidic leaders of Poland flocked to the Chozeh and were considered his pupils. Among them were many who already led groups of chassidim of their own in their hometowns; nevertheless, they themselves came at certain times and special occasions to their Rebbe in Lublin.

The greatest and most outstanding of the Chozeh's disciples was Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Rabinowitz, known as the "Holy Jew" of Peshischa. In his own town, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak had gathered a select group of students who submitted to his authority and became his chassidim, but when he would travel to Lublin to the Chozeh, his students would join him. Rabbi Rabinowitz died in 5574/1813, a year before the passing of his Rebbe. After the Chozeh's death, that select group in Peshischa accepted the leadership of the greatest of Rabbi Rabinowitz's disciples, Rabbi Simcha Bunim (Bernhard) of Peshischa.

Rabbi Bunim led his flock for thirteen years, during which time he attracted some of the best minds in Poland, and many of the Chassidic leaders of the following years were counted among his chassidim. Among them were Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, later the Rebbe of Kotzk, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, later the Gerrer Rebbe, and Rabbi Chanoch Levin, later the Rebbe of Alexander. With the death of Rabbi Bunim in 5588/1827, his chassidim divided, with some accepting the leadership of Rabbi Avraham Moshe of Peshischa, son of Rabbi Bunim. The greater part of the students in Peshischa, however, looked to their greatest colleagues to lead them, namely Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern of Kotzk and Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter. In a private conversation held while the rest of the chassidim waited anxiously outside, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir decided that the leadership of the flock would pass on to his good friend Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk. That day marked the beginning of the glorious era of Kotzker Chassidism, which lasted for thirty years. During that period, Kotzker Chassidism grew to immense proportions and strength, and Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter remained the first among the chassidim. He submitted himself to Rabbi Mendel's authority throughout those years and traveled to him regularly. Rabbi Yitzchak Meir himself lived in Warsaw at the time and ran a yeshiva for highly talented students, the greatest of whom he took with him to Kotzk.

### **The First Rebbe of Ger**

Upon the death of the Kotzker Rebbe in 5619/1859, the Kotzker community numbered thousands of chassidim, the vast majority of whom accepted the leadership of Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, author of *Chiddushei Harim*, the first Rebbe of the Gerrer dynasty.

During the era of his leadership, many traveled to his court and were counted among his chassidim. Many of the most outstanding Torah students, the sharpest minds and the greatest Torah scholars of Poland, who until then had not been members of any Chassidic circle, began to travel to his court and become his firm devotees. Rabbi Yitzchak Meir moved his court from Warsaw to the small town of Gura Kalvaria, about 30 kilometers from Warsaw, where his father, Rabbi Yisrael, had previously served as rabbi. In its new role, the town became known in Yiddish as Ger, or in Hebrew, Gur.

Thus was founded Gerrer Chassidism, which had a major impact on Polish Jewry's spiritual life for the next eighty years. During those years, the town of Ger was a major Chassidic center, for three generations beginning with the leadership of Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, author of *Chiddushei Harim*, followed by his grandson, Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Alter, author of *S'fas Emess*, and concluding with the last Rebbe of the Gerrer dynasty on Polish soil, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, author of *Imrei Emess*. These three Rebbes were the spiritual leaders of thousands of Jews in Poland and around the world until the tragic end of Polish Jewry in the Holocaust.

While the official history of Gerrer Chassidism begins with the onset of the leadership of the first Gerrer Rebbe, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, after the passing of the elder Rebbe of Kotzk, nevertheless, during the lifetime of the Kotzker Rebbe, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir already served as one of the major leaders of Polish Jewry. The "Chiddushei Harim" (so called after the title of his major scholarly work) was very active even then in public matters. Well-known chapters in the Jewish history of the time deal with his famous efforts to intervene with the government on the Jews' behalf and his success in having many anti-Semitic decrees rescinded, as is told in detail in *Meir Einei Hagola*.

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir led his large flock of chassidim for seven years, and his followers grew in number and strength from day to day. In 5626/1868, when the time came for him to depart this world, tens of thousands counted themselves among his chassidim. The newspaper *Halevanon*, published in Jerusalem, printed a short article in his memory seven months after his death, in which was written, in part:

*It is now seven months that the city of Warsaw and all of Jewry have sustained a great loss. A precious gem of the sun's disk lost its light, a rare man who accomplished great, difficult things and who worked throughout the provinces of our country, a prominent person of the holy hosts who was mourned after his passing by the entire house of Israel and whose memory will not be lost from their hearts . . .*

*He was a giant among giants, the famed, righteous genius, our teacher, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir, may the memory of the holy tzaddik be a blessing.*

*About thirty thousand chassidim shook in fear before him, and greater legions of chassidim accorded him honor and respect. . . . Everyone who came to him became attached to him with both love and reverence. . . .*

*After masses of chassidim began to knock on his door, he moved from Warsaw and settled in Gur, a small town that he chose for his dwelling-place for it was the place of his fathers, and there he led his flock, and from this small place he spread his fortress over all of our provinces . . . .*

After the death of Rabbi Yitzchak Meir, his grandson Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh (Leib) was crowned Rav of the town of Ger, but he adamantly refused to assume the leadership of his father's large congregation of chassidim, despite their entreaties, since he was a youth of only 19 at the time. The chassidim, for their part, considered him fit to take on the crown of leadership, for despite his youth he had filled himself with Torah knowledge, besides having acquired refined character traits.

And so the congregation of chassidim accepted as their Rebbe and leader the elder Chassid, Rabbi Chanoch Henich Hakohen Levin of Alexander. Rabbi Chanoch Henich was one of the remaining disciples of the "Holy Jew" of Peshischa, of Rabbi Bunim and of the Kotzker, and after the Kotzker Rebbe's passing had made himself into one of the foremost chassidim of the Chiddushei Harim. The chassidim now began to travel to him, with the Chiddushei Harim's grandson, Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Alter, at their head. However, Rabbi Chanoch passed from this world in 5630/1870. At that point, the young Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Alter, grandson of the Chiddushei Harim, was forced to accept the role as leader of the Gerer chassidim.

### **All Roads Lead to Ger**

The roads to Ger were once again filled with chassidim. During the holiday and festival seasons, the town of Ger again bubbled and bustled with life. From then until the outbreak of the Second World War, during every holiday period, the streets, courtyards and alleys of the town were all filled with throngs of chassidim who had come to spend the holiday close to their Rebbe.

For thirty-five years, the Rebbe, Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Alter, author of *S'fas Emess*, led the chassidim of Ger, until 5665-1905, when he passed on to the next world. With his death, his eldest son, the third Gerrer Rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, took up the reins of leadership and expanded the following. He was the one who brought Gerrer Chassidism to its greatest flowering, and also the one who saw it in its greatest poverty, as its world collapsed around it in the Holocaust that fell upon all of Jewry during the Second World War. More than one hundred thousand of his chassidim and their families were tortured, shot, gassed, and burnt by the cursed Nazis during that terrible time. The cry of their blood can never be forgiven.

In the years just before the war, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter continued the Gerrer tradition with renewed force, and with boundless energy strengthened it beyond anything that had been seen in its earlier days. His activities extended to all areas of Jewish life. Ger established yeshivas and raised scholars--dozens of youths who made Ger their permanent home where they became great in both scholarship and piety. However, Ger also raised men



of action--people who worked in the hustle of business and labor in their daily lives. Ger Chassidism was also active in the fields of public policy, in social initiatives and in the building of the land of Israel.

### **Redemption Will Come For the Land**

In the world of Chassidism, the Gerrer Rebbe was one of the foremost who expressed his love for the land of Israel by working on a daily basis towards having the land settled by Jews. The Rebbe and his chassidim traveled to the land of Israel, established settlements there, built houses and factories, bought land and thus made Jewish again the beloved land of their fathers. More than anything else, the Gerrer Rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai, set a strong spiritual foundation for establishing a Gerrer community there. Thanks to this, Ger today has become again a dynamic, thriving movement in Israel, where it strives uncompromisingly to continue its unbroken traditions. Looking at Gerrer Chassidim in Israel today, with its yeshivas, institutions, schools for boys and girls of all ages, cultural and social service activities, and active involvement in every facet of public and private life, one sees a continuation of the Polish-Jewish community of the last hundred years.

During the era that Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter served as the last Rebbe of the Gerrer dynasty on Polish soil, the group of chassidim who followed him grew enormously. Gerrer chassidim on the eve of the Holocaust numbered over 100,000. Many hundreds of Gerrer *shtieblech* (Chassidic synagogues) existed in Poland on the eve of the Holocaust.

### **European Jewry's Troubled Times**

Besides his powerful influence on his immense following, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai rose to a position of general Jewish national leadership during a time when European Jewry in general, and Polish Jewry in particular, were undergoing the most turbulent and difficult times that had ever befallen them in their history. The year 5665-1905, when he assumed the position of Rebbe, coincided with the Russian revolution.

Poland was under Russian governorship at that time, and it also tasted the spirit of liberalism that began to rule in those days. This liberalism brought with it a radical spiritual revolution. On the street and in every corner of the Jewish home, the fire of heresy burned and the latest cries rang out. Enlightenment, Haskala, Socialism, Zionism! Meanwhile, the study halls were losing their scholars, multitudes of the youth were swept away by the foul stream of heresy, and religious Jewry stood in mortal threat of its future. Into that breach, the Gerrer Rebbe stood up valiantly and worked to protect and save Judaism and its values from all the evil winds that threatened to tear it from its traditional roots.

The Gerrer Rebbe went to every length. He raised the cry to Polish Jewry to fight heroically for Heaven's cause, while he himself fought at the head of the ranks, heroically instituting reforms and social revolutions in every facet of the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews in order to save future generations from being lost to assimilation, and to ensure the continuation of Jewry.

During Rabbi Avraham Mordechai's era, Gerrer Chassidism ceased to be an insular movement concerned primarily with its own members. The Rebbe instituted a new approach and instilled new methods, with the spiritual future of the Jewish people at large as the chief concern. He concerned himself with the entire Jewish community of Poland, and established life-rafts for every level of Jewish society, as will be described below.

Among his own chassidim, the Rebbe took a new approach of attracting the youth. If during the times of the previous Rebbes and Chassidic leaders, the youth did not merit any special treatment, the Gerrer Rebbe gave them the bulk of his attention. In Ger itself, the Rebbe established a yeshiva, Darkei Noam for older teens and young adults, where hundreds of them studied Torah.

The yeshiva took responsibility for all of its students' needs. At first, they studied in the Rebbe's spacious study hall and were housed and fed in rented apartments around town. However this arrangement was not allowed to last long. On 19 Sivan, 5671 (15/06/1911), the cornerstone was laid for a large building for the yeshiva in Ger and within a short time, the construction was completed and the building stood in all its glory. This was one of the first yeshivos to be built in Poland. It continued to operate until the outbreak of World War I, when the students were dispersed to their homes. In a letter by the Gerrer Rebbe written in 5682-1922 (printed in *Osef Michtavim Udevarim*, Warsaw: 5697/1937), the Rebbe mentions the yeshiva, saying, "Ten years ago, there was a yeshiva here in Ger, also... and five hundred students studied there. The rabbis of our country also taught there by turns."

### **The Gerrer Yeshivos in Poland**

Besides the central yeshiva in Ger itself, the Rebbe established Torah centers and yeshivos within the many Gerrer *shtieblech* throughout Poland. The cost of maintaining the central yeshiva was no small burden, and financial resources were unavailable to support the thousands of young students who wanted to enroll. To fill the gap, mini-yeshivas were set up in dozens of Gerrer *shtieblech* around Poland, without housing arrangements, but with regular classes taught by outstanding young Torah scholars.

With the outbreak of World War I, the yeshiva in Ger was disbanded, as was mentioned, as life changed during the war for the entire Polish population. The Rebbe left Gura Kalvaria--his home and his study hall were badly damaged by German shelling--and throughout the war the Rebbe and his family lived in Warsaw, and for a few years also in Otovotzk.

Even when he was without a permanent home, living away from Ger, the Rebbe was very active, primarily in the social sphere, where he organized large drives to raise money for the war refugees who flooded the large cities and were starving for bread. With the establishment of the independent state of Poland, the Rebbe returned to his home and study hall in Ger, and the town came back to life.

Among the Rebbe's activities during the First World War was his taking the helm, immediately upon Poland's complete conquest by the Germans, when communal life began

to reorganize, of religious Jewry's public administration. With his active daily participation, the Agudas HaOrthodoxim organization was formed, later to adopt the name Agudas Yisrael. This is the organization of the same name that exists to this very day, and whose righteous works are felt in all corners of the world.

### **The Agudas Yisrael Movement and its Institutions**

The Gerrer Rebbe was one of the foremost founders of Agudas Yisrael. He took part in all of its meetings, committees and assemblies, as a member of the supreme body of the Agudah, the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah*, the Council of Torah Sages. As long as the Agudah existed in Poland, it comprised half a million registered members, and many hundreds of thousands more supported it without paying dues. Many hundreds of Agudah branches were established in Poland, in remote towns as well as central cities. Many of its activists were loyal chassidim of the Gerrer Rebbe, who worked as his agents to promote the public works that the Agudah movement had organized.

The Gerrer Rebbe stood at the forefront of the Agudas Yisrael movement from the day it was founded, and did not leave it for a moment until his dying day. Most of the works that the Agudah accomplished were in part the result of his guiding spirit; he initiated, encouraged, goaded, and offered financial and spiritual support to the Agudah throughout his life.

The activities of Agudas Yisrael before the Second World War were many and various, and included:

- 1) Establishing a network of boy's Talmud Torah elementary schools, by the name of Yesodel HaTorah.
- 2) Establishing a network of girls' schools called Bais Yaakov.
- 3) Establishing the Bais Yaakov seminary in Cracow.
- 4) Establishing the Poalei Agudas Yisrael religious workers movement.
- 5) Establishing the Zeirei Agudas Yisrael boys' youth movement.
- 6) Establishing the Bnos Agudas Yisrael's girls' youth movement.
- 7) Establishing the Mosad Lemechanchim teachers institution in Warsaw.
- 8) Founding cooperative banks for the members of Agudas Yisrael.
- 9) Founding the Kupos Gemilus Chassadim free-loan fund.

- 10) Founding religious daily newspapers, including *Hakol*, *Dos Yiddishe Vort*, *Der Yid*, and *Dos Yiddishe Tagblatt*, which appeared for a considerable time before the outbreak of the Second World War.
- 11) Founding weekly papers under Agudah auspices in the remote towns of Poland, including *Dos Yiddishe Vochenblatt*, *Dos Yiddishe Leiben*, and *Der Yiddishe Arbeiter*.
- 12) Publishing monthly journals, including *Digleimu*, *Darkeimu*, *Bais Yaakov*, and *Degel HaTorah*.

### **Gerrer Chassidim Led Many Public Causes**

Gerrer chassidim helped lead, found, establish and run the hundreds of Yesodei HaTorah boys' elementary schools throughout Poland, with their thousands of pupils. They helped lead, found, establish and run the hundreds of Bais Yaakov girls' schools throughout Poland, with their thousands of students. They were involved with all of the Agudah educational institutions.

Agudas Yisrael was an active, energetic movement, and one of the largest of the Jewish movements in Poland. The Agudah took part in all of the elections for the Jewish community, the municipality, the Parliament and the Senate.

So far we have described the activities of the Gerrer Rebbe in the broad public realm, on behalf of the Jewish people as a whole. In his own realm, on behalf of Gerrer chassidim, he accomplished even more. In his lifetime, Gerrer Chassidism reached unprecedented heights in every imaginable aspect of Chassidic life.

The masses of the Rebbe's supporters and chassidim grew by leaps and bounds. There was not a single festival that did not see hundreds of new chassidim, primarily young people, crowding into Ger to spend the holiday with the Rebbe, who drew them like a magnet. His large study hall in Ger, with its two courtyards, one in front and the other in back, virtually burst with people, particularly on the holidays of Shavuot and Rosh Hashana. On those occasions, the number of visitors to Ger reached 10,000.

Chassidim made their way from all parts of Poland, in trains, buses, and even wagons, to Warsaw, where the famous *Kolaikeh*, which originated in Munkatov, a suburb of Warsaw, took them to the little town of Ger. In the Jewish papers of that era, one finds advertisements from the operators of the *Kolaikeh* announcing the addition of several trains per day to the Warsaw-Ger route, on the days prior to the Jewish holidays, and on the days after the holidays, additional trains for the return trip. One of the major sources of profit for the *Kolaikeh* company was from the travels of the chassidim, just as the permanent residents of Ger earned much of their primary income for the year from those times when the chassidim came to Ger. The local residents would rent their homes to the chassidim and

local farmers would bring their wares wholesale to Ger, selling chickens, fish, eggs, fruit and everything else imaginable.

### **Thousands of Youth Flock to Ger**

As was mentioned, representatives of the younger generation made up the majority of those who came to Ger for the festivals, and some of them used to remain in Ger throughout the year. They would study Torah and ways of worship in the Rebbe's study hall, while he looked out for their physical needs. However, because of the great cost of supporting so many thousands of youth, the majority of them had to return home after the holidays to their own towns.

Still, the Rebbe did not neglect their education for a moment. The difficult economic situation in which Polish Jewry found itself in the years between the two world wars did not allow the establishment of yeshivas with full dormitory facilities. The funds collected for the boys' and girls' elementary schools barely covered the costs of those thousands of institutions.

So what would be the fate of all those youth of high-school age? In Warsaw, the Rebbe founded a yeshiva, called Mesivta, on 18 Swenta Yerska Street. Its president was the Gerrer Rebbe's son-in-law, Rabbi Shlomo Yoskowitz, who headed the school and took responsibility for its financial stability at his father-in-law's behest. For as long as it lasted, until the outbreak of the Second World War, many hundreds of high school and older students went through the Mesivta. Many of them were ordained as rabbis and teachers and found rabbinical positions afterwards in towns throughout Poland.

What Mesivta accomplished, however, was just a drop in the bucket compared to the need; it couldn't accommodate the tens of thousands of youths in need of schooling. Therefore, the Rebbe initiated the concept of mini-yeshivas. These were set up in the many Gerrer *shtieblech* all through Poland.

### **The Gerrer *Shtieblech* in Poland**

The Gerrer *shtieblech*, or synagogues, in Poland were unique institutions that had no likeness anywhere else, nor have they their like today. Each *shtiebel* was the meeting place for all the chassidim of the region. There were large *shtieblech*, with as many as 800 or even 1,000 members, and small *shtieblech*, with only a few dozen. But the common denominator among them was that they were invariably hives of activity around the clock.

During the hours when services were held, all of the congregation would attend, but at other times too, the *shtiebel* was never empty. Men who struggled for their living would dedicate some of their time to Torah study there, either before or after work, or between jobs. Some would come to the *shtiebel* in the wee hours of the morning; others would stay until very late at night. There was hardly an hour of the day when the *shtiebel* stood empty.

As Hagaon Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, son of the Brisker Rav, once described from his personal experience: "I used to stay in Warsaw with Father for extended periods. Occasionally, Father would send me to peek through the windows of the many Gerrer *shtieblech* there, and what did I see? Torah study non-stop, at every hour of the day. In all of the *shtieblech* that I peeked into, there was no room to squeeze in another pin. All of the tables were taken by Torah students. There were elderly men, middle-aged men, and mainly young men and youths who did not stop learning day and night."

### **The Sweeping Atmosphere of Spiritual Elevation**

It was inside those *shtieblech*, inside that sweeping atmosphere of spiritual elevation, that the Rebbe established his many yeshivas. As it was once put by Rabbi Mannis Zitnitzky, a Holocaust survivor who established one of the Gerrer yeshivas in Bnei Brak, Israel: "In Poland there were enormous numbers of Gerrer yeshivas. There was a yeshiva in every *shtiebel!*"

These were mini-yeshivas, it is true, from the point of view of student numbers. Each *shtiebel's* yeshiva comprised only a few dozen high-school and post-high school students. But together, they combined into a gigantic institution that has had no equal to this very day anywhere in the Jewish world. Moreover, from the vantage point of quality of education, each one of those mini-yeshivas was the *creme de la creme*--the elite of the elite. Many of the parents of these students were not Gerrer chassidim themselves, but they sent their sons to the *shtieblech*, saying, "In Ger, there is hope that my son will grow to become a leading Torah scholar."

It is noteworthy that in each one of those Gerrer *shtieblech* there were Judaica libraries open to the public, as well as several thousand Torah scrolls, with their valuable pure silver Torah crowns. All this was left behind in Poland when it was crushed under the Nazi regime that plundered all Jewish property.

The Gerrer Rebbe had long-ranging foresight. Despite his great success in sustaining and furthering religious life in Poland, he knew all too well that there was no future for Polish Jewry. All of their great spiritual riches stood on the brink of complete destruction. For that reason, the Rebbe began to work toward having Jews immigrate to the land of Israel.

The Rebbe traveled to the Holy Land from Ger five times during Polish Jewry's last twenty years. His trips were in 5681/1921, 5684/1924, 5687/1927, 5692/1932, and 5695/1935. The Rebbe's many trips to Israel made a great impression upon the entire Jewish community of Poland.

### **The Rebbe's Travels to the Land of Israel**

The Gerrer Rebbe did not only travel to the land of Israel. He also bought land there, promoted the creation of investment companies, pressured people of means to invest their money in the land of Israel, and wrote, advised and persuaded thousands of people to

immigrate to Israel and settle there. Within the framework of Agudas Yisrael, which he helped run, a special division was opened to deal with issues related to the Holy Land.

Between his visits there, the Rebbe's eyes and heart were always turned to the land. In 5685/1925 his representatives in Jerusalem established the S'fas Emess advanced yeshiva, the first Chassidic yeshiva in Israel and the mother of the dozens of Ger yeshivas now operating there. The religious city of Bnei Brak was founded through his unswerving support and encouragement, and dozens of his chassidim settled there through his advice and with his blessing. Many others of his chassidim immigrated to the land and settled in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Kfar Ata, Kiryat Motzkin and other towns, and established businesses which became sources of livelihood for other Jews as well.

Many Jews who were not Gerrer chassidim also immigrated to Israel thanks to the Rebbe's encouragement of the idea, which received widespread publicity. And again, it was Gerrer chassidim who, like their fellows in Poland, helped establish Bais Yaakov girls' schools in Israel, in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. Thus, the infrastructure for a future Gerrer community was already on the map.

During his fifth visit, in 5695/1935, the Rebbe stayed in Israel more than half a year. During this period, he founded Yeshivas Chiddushei Harim, the second Gerrer yeshiva in Israel. The Rebbe expressed his desire then to settle in the land of Israel permanently, but the pressure put upon him by his chassidim in Poland not to leave them shepherdless led him to postpone his decision.

The Rebbe returned to Poland with a firm determination to return and settle in the Holy Land permanently, but circumstances brought him to delay implementing that decision time after time, until World War II had broken out.

### **The Most-Wanted Person by the Nazis**

With the outbreak of the war, the Rebbe left the town of Ger and moved to Warsaw, where he was forced to go into hiding. During the siege of Warsaw, when the city was bombed incessantly by the Nazi forces, a shell landed in his hideout and killed one of his beloved sons-in-law before his eyes. Miraculously, he himself was saved, but he fell sick with worry and sorrow for his oppressed brethren.

It was not long before his friends and family began to work towards smuggling the Rebbe out of Poland. Despite his unwillingness to leave his chassidim in their time of trouble, the Rebbe was persuaded by his doctor, who insisted that his remaining in that place of tragedy would in itself bring about his death. Besides, reliable sources informed him that the Nazis were looking for him personally, as he was at the top of their most-wanted list for being one of Jewry's leaders. As a result, the Rebbe was forced to leave Poland through roundabout routes in Nisan 5700/April 1940.



It was a daring operation involving miraculous rescues and heavy bribes that allowed the Rebbe and a small portion of his family to escape and arrive, broken and dejected, in the land of Israel that he so loved and dreamed of attaining. The entire story of the Rebbe's escape is written in the book *Nes Hahatzala shel HaRabbi MiGur*, published in Israel by Rabbi Moshe Prager, a Holocaust survivor and well-known author and researcher of the Holocaust.

The Rebbe lived in Israel for eight years until his passing, but he was a broken, depressed man. He never recovered from the loss of most of his family, more than 100 immediate descendants, who had been left behind in the bitter Diaspora, nor from the destruction of 100,000 of his many chassidim and their families, nor from the annihilation of half a million staunch Agudah members, who had drawn much of their inspiration from him; nor from the cold-blooded murder of tens of thousands of Talmud Torah and Bais Yaakov school children who had received their education largely through his efforts.

Another loss that pained him incessantly was the loss of his manuscripts over which he had worked for decades recording his Torah novellae in every facet of Torah thought. His personal library, famed throughout the Jewish world as one of the largest and most important libraries in existence, was also left behind in the Diaspora. The "King of the Jews" had become a king with almost no subjects. The Gerrer Rebbe had lost everything, and his suffering was greater than any human being can imagine.

### **The Gerrer Rebbe Lost Hundreds of Thousands of Chassidim and Supporters**

With justice it was said about the Gerrer Rebbe that he lost more than anyone else in the Nazi Holocaust. For it is likely that in the thousand years of Polish Jewry's distinguished history, there had never before been an individual whose authority had been so completely accepted, or whose word was considered so absolutely holy, by so many hundreds of thousands of followers.

He found his sole, meager consolation in the relatively little he had wisely managed to prepare in the land of Israel before it was too late. He reaped the fruits he had planted--his worthy endeavors encouraging his chassidim to immigrate to the land of Israel and his great support of every religious Jew's economic initiative there arranged it so that when he arrived, there was a nucleus of religious Jews, and Gerrer chassidim in particular, waiting for him. About 1,000 Gerrer chassidim already lived in the land of Israel at the time; the two yeshivas he had founded were already doing well; the germ of a renaissance of Gerrer Chassidism in the Holy Land had already been planted years before and had already sprouted and begun to bear fruit.

On the festival of Shavuos, 5708/1948, he passed on to the next world.

Divine Providence chose to save the Rebbe's saintly sons from the tragedy in Europe together with their father. These brothers became the Rebbes who led the Gerrer community for close to fifty years afterwards, one after the other. The first was Rabbi



Yisrael Alter, author of *Beis Yisroel*; the second, Rabbi Simcha Bunim Alter, author of *Lev Simcha*; and third, Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Alter, author of *Pnei Menachem*.

Over the years, they continued their father's blessed work and continuously expanded the ranks of Gerrer Chassidism until it became, in Israel as it had been in Poland, one of the largest and most dominant Chassidic groups, and active in every aspect of public life.

Branches of Gerrer Chassidism are strongly visible in Europe and the United States, as well, as will be shown below. And again, the Rebbes of the Gerrer dynasty stood in the forefront of the Agudas Yisrael religious people's movement, where they worked, as their father always had, to increase piety and Jewish tradition among Jews in general and Gerrer chassidim in particular.

This activity, which has been continued in an unbroken chain by the present Gerrer Rebbe, will be surveyed in the chapters below.

### **The Process of Rehabilitation from the Destruction of Jewry**

The despondent atmosphere that took hold of the Jewish community in the land of Israel the first years after the War expressed better than anything else the feeling of loss and national helplessness. There was no need for sharpened senses to smell the ashes of the crematoria and the ovens, the ashes of the millions of holy martyrs who had been burnt during those terrible years and who had given up their souls in a thousand and one obscenely violent forms of murder. Tortured and downtrodden, the refugees were brought to Israel, while their depressed spirits and fallen faces told everything: the destruction of the richly lived, richly meaningful, Jewish world that was no more, and the loss of the Chassidic way of life that had been the source of life for the spirits of hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Jews. Many of these Jews had warmed their souls by the light of Chassidism at the Gerrer Rebbe's court, but now that way of life had fallen into the abyss.

The more time passed, the more the cold facts became chillingly clear: the vast majority of European Jewry in all its glory had been wiped out, and among them, tens of thousands of Gerrer chassidim. From 5705-6 (1945-6) onward, refugees who were the sole survivors of their families or even their whole towns began to arrive in the land of Israel. It was shocking to see youths whom had drunk the cup of bitterness to its dregs arriving barefoot, with nothing to their names. The difficult days before the establishment of the State of Israel, with their regular fare of military confrontations, did not add to the already low spirits, though compared to the traumatic experiences that the refugees had undergone at the hands of the bestial Nazis, the situation in the land seemed like a virtual Garden of Eden.

### **The Gerrer Kernel Puts Out Roots**

The Chassidic kernel that the "Old Rebbe," Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, had planted in Jerusalem just a few years before the angry swarm rose against European Jewry, warmly and benevolently absorbed those unfortunate youths. These refugees' worlds had collapsed

around them. They had, in most cases, been left the sole survivors of their entire extended families, and had been robbed, to boot, of their entire families' property and varied businesses.

To raise a smile on those wan, emaciated, grieving faces, with their glassy eyes and sealed expressions, was an impossible task. The few Holocaust survivors who had somehow succeeded in reaching safe shores felt their impossibly heavy losses and grief too keenly, and almost lost any will to renew their lives.

It was the new, revered leader of Gerrer Chassidism, Rabbi Yisrael Alter, president of the Council of Torah Sages and son of the "Old Rebbe" of Ger, who took courage and gathered the survivors around himself one by one, like gathering sheaves, and gave them warmth, love and encouragement with which to rebuild their lives. Many saw the flowering of the young generation of Gerrer chassidim as a miracle from Heaven. They could find no other description for it besides the Divine promise: *Netzach Yisrael lo yishaker*--The Eternity of Israel will not fail [them].

Since then, a new spirit began to blow in the world of Ger. From hundreds of individual Gerrer families who had lived in the land of Israel, a new generation began to sprout and establish Torah-true homes based on the glorious roots of generations of Gerrer traditions.

This process of rehabilitation was long, and difficult. A great part of the survivors were weak in body and soul from the personal tragedies that they had undergone. With endless patience, their faithful shepherd went from one survivor to the next, sympathizing and comforting, listening and encouraging. Slowly, with Divinely-granted abilities, he succeeded in warming their broken hearts and rehabilitating the congregation of Israel.

### **50 Years of Growth and Return to Past Tradition**

During the past fifty years, Gerrer Chassidism in Israel and around the world has come a long way. Under the leadership of the Gerrer Rebbes, Rabbi Yisrael Alter, and his two brothers, Rabbi Simcha Bunim Alter, and Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Alter, and--to distinguish the living from the dead--Rabbi Yaakov Aryeh Alter, the present Rebbe, the Gerrer community has grown and developed into one of the greatest and best known Chassidic movements in the Jewish world.

Around the world today, there are about 22,000 Gerrer families (about 85,000 people).

The largest Gerrer population centers are in Israel, in Jerusalem, Bnei Brak, Ashdod, Tel Aviv, Bet Shemesh, Kiryat Gat, Arad, Chazor Gilit, Haifa, and Petach Tikva. Second are the centers in the United States, in the Boro Park and Flatbush neighborhoods of New York City, and in the town of Monsey, NY. Further centers can be found in England, Belgium, Canada, Switzerland and Australia.

Under the leadership of the Gerrer Rebbes, Chassidic communities were established in outlying areas of Israel, far from the major religious centers of Jerusalem and Bnei Brak. These neighborhoods have become magnets for thousands of young couples who have established their homes there and who are running model Gerrer communities centered on educational and social service institutions.

In the center of Jerusalem, on Yirmiyahu St., a world center for Gerrer Chassidism is being built and is rapidly nearing completion. This will be a massive synagogue comprising thousands of seats, and will be one of the largest synagogues in the world. Today, the partially completed structure already serves as a gathering place for the chassidim when thousands come to the Rebbe from all parts of the country and the world on festivals and special occasions.

In Israel and around the world today, there are about 110 Gerrer synagogues which function as active community centers where the spiritual experience and the varied social activities embrace the inner worlds of all whom attend them.

There are also approximately 140 Torah educational institutions. The boys' system includes pre-schools, Talmud Torah elementary schools, yeshiva high schools, post-high school yeshivas, and Talmudical institutes, called *kollels*, for married men. In most Gerrer communities, there is also a parallel girls' system providing elementary and high schools belonging to the Bais Yaakov movement originally founded in Cracow, Poland.

It should be noted that every yeshiva in the list below includes a *kollel* and other additional services and institutions. The *kollels* included in the following list are only those which are independent institutions.

## Torah and Educational Institutions

The following is a list of all the Gerrer institutions world over, both in Israel and in other countries.

### Jerusalem

**S'fas Emess Advanced Yeshiva, 5 S'fas Emess St.**  
Dean – Rabbi Shaul Alter

Founded in 5686-1926, S'fas Emess was the first Chassidic yeshiva in Israel. In its 72 years of existence, Yeshivas S'fas Emess has produced thousands of Torah educators, Rebbes, rabbis and rabbinical judges. After World War II, the yeshiva became the physical and spiritual home for many survivors. Today, the yeshiva continues to flourish and produce intensely dedicated Torah scholars. The yeshiva also houses a kollel for advanced students.

**Talmud Torah and Yeshiva D'Chassidei Gur, 7 Yirmeyahu St.**  
Rabbi Tzvi Kuperberg

Founded in 5716-1956, this was the first Gerrer Talmud Torah boys' elementary school in Israel. The school became famous for its unique student care. It opened in a small building on David Yellin Street, and in time, grew and moved into its current beautiful location on Yirmeyahu Street. The Talmud Torah has an exceptional staff of teachers who invest much effort into their students' education.

**Ner Yisrael Yeshiva High School 8 Evyatar HaCohen St.**  
Rabbi Yehuda Mendelson

Founded in 5727-1967, the yeshiva operated for many years in crowded conditions. Today, the yeshiva is located in a large renovated building designed to absorb hundreds of students and provide them with a place where they can study diligently with peace of mind. Alongside the yeshiva is a kollel for exceptional young men who help the yeshiva students advance in their studies.

**Rabbinical and Talmudical Seminary, 2 Raibach St.**  
Rabbi Nachum Rothstein

Founded in 5731-1971, this kollel has earned its name as one of Israel's leading Torah institutions. It is known for the high achievements and level of learning of its fellows. The Torah journals published by the kollel include questions and comments sent by Torah leaders to be clarified by its members.

**Yeshivas Tiferes Moshe Betzalel, 6 Chezkeya Shabtai St.  
Rabbi Nechemya Shreibman**

Founded in 5749-1989, it was named after Reb Moshe Betzalel Alter, son of the S'fas Emess, of blessed memory. The yeshiva is well-known and respected, and is characterized by its individual attention the deans and lecturers give every student. Recently, when the building became too small to hold the large number of its pupils, the yeshiva moved to a spacious new building in the Ramot neighborhood.

**Kollel Choshen Mishpat, 2 Ralbach St.  
Rabbi Elazar Goldman**

Founded in 5745-1985, the kollel's goal is to train rabbis and rabbinical judges in Jewish monetary laws. The kollel insists on extremely high standards of clarity and grounding from its students. Their study focuses on and analyzes the methods of the early Sages (11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> cent.).

**Kollel for Advanced Students, 2 Ralbach St.  
Rabbi Simcha Kroizer**

Founded in 5741-1981, the kollel began with a select group of young men famous for their piety and studiousness. Since its founding, its students have completed the entire Talmud, and it aims to have its long-time students acquire a complete proficiency and knowledge in all the tractates of the Talmud.

**Kollel Shearis Yaakov, 8 Evyatar HaCohen St.  
Rabbi Chaim Shmerler**

Founded in 5728-1968, this exclusive kollel comprises men who are well known as distinguished scholars. Most of its students also serve as yeshiva high-school teachers, guiding their pupils in acquiring proper study methods with which to gain a true understanding of Torah and Talmud.

**Kollel Bais Elchanan Dov, 40 Strauss St.  
Rabbi Yosef Sheinberg**

The kollel was founded in 5723-1963 with the encouragement and blessings of Jewish leaders. At its head stood Rabbi Elchanan Dov Sheinberg, of blessed memory, who served as its mentor. Here, distinguished young men immerse themselves in the civil laws codified in *Choshen Mishpat*, and train to serve as rabbis and rabbinical judges in the future.

**Kollel Tiferes Eliezer, 12 Yochanan Hasandlar St.  
Rabbi Yitzchak Weinberg**

Founded in 5750-1990, this excellent kollel allows the young men learning there to study and clarify the Tosefaos and Rishonim

commentaries as well as the main point of every tractate, concentrating more on quality than quantity. This kollel is attended by dozens of young men whose diligence in Torah is well known.

**Kollel Taharas Bais Yisrael, 10 David Chazan St.**  
Rabbi Yochanan Hendeles

Founded in 5741-1981, it was originally structured as a kollel where students would be tested on 50 pages of Gemara and the accompanying commentary of Tosefos each month. It has since added a branch called the Kerem Avraham kollel, where a group of married men with large families studies Torah full-time, oblivious of worldly concerns.

**Kollel Sifsei Tzaddik, 36 Eli HaCohen St.**  
Rabbi Menachem Rotblatt

Founded in 5748-1988, the kollel was named after the Rebbe of Piltz, of blessed memory. The kollel is attended by select young men who toil tirelessly in their studies of Talmud Yerushalmi and Halacha.

**Talmud Torah Tiferes Bais Yisrael; branches: 1 Mirski St., 32 Hakablan St., 2 Shaulson St..**  
Rabbi Yitzchak Kaminer

Founded in 5749-1989 to meet the growing needs of the expanding Gerre community in Ramot, the Talmud Torah boys' elementary school is characterized by its high level of learning and its unique educational methods. In time, parental demands led to the opening of two branches in the Har Nof neighborhood of Jerusalem.

**Kollel Pnei Menachem, 10 Yosef Shwartz St.**  
Rabbi Shaul Alter

Founded in 5756-1996, it boasts dozens of distinguished young scholars in its student body who share their talents with the younger students and help them progress in their studies.

**Kollel Shiras David, 14 Torah Mitzion St.**  
Rabbi Moshe Betzael Alter

Founded in 5759-1999, this kollel provides a unique framework for young men during the first two years of their marriage. Though a Gerrer institution, it is located in the Kolbosov Chassidic group's study hall. It is famous for its advanced level of study.

**Bais Yaakov Elementary School for girls, 39 Ezras Torah St.**  
Rabbi Tzvi Skolski

Founded in 5750-1990, the hosts a student body of over 1,800 students and is the largest elementary school in Jerusalem. It maintains a staff of about 140 exceptional teachers.

**Bais Yaakov High School and Teachers' Seminary, 22 Ohalei Yosef St.**  
Rabbi Pesachya Litzman

Founded in 5758-1998, hundreds of girls from Gerrer families learn a full program of subjects in this school, which is known for its high academic level.

### **Bnei Brak**

**Bais Talmud Lehora'a Rabbinical Seminary, 15 Harav Meltzer St.**  
Rabbi Mattisyahu Greenbaum

The seminary was founded in 5711-1951 under the direction of the Gerrer Rebbe known as "the Bais Yisrael." It was the first Gerrer kollel in Israel, and one of the first four such institutions established in the country. As it developed, it became the largest kollel in Israel. Until today, the kollel continues to enroll young married men and turn them into scholars excelling in their Torah knowledge. The kollel has produced a series of Torah journals known as *Ohelah shel Torah*, which are in much demand in the Torah world.

**Yeshivas Imrei Emess, 22 Rabbi Tarfon St.**  
Rabbi Tzvi Golomb

The yeshiva was founded in 5719-1959 by Reb Manis Zitnitzki, of blessed memory, who became its first principal. A wellspring for the education of future generations, it is unique in its learning style and in the efforts of its staff who invest all their energies into the students' education. Alongside the yeshiva is a kollel for exceptional young men who guide the yeshiva students in their learning and help them grow in Torah knowledge.

**Talmud Torah Pnei Menachem; branches: 25 Abuchatzzeira St., 131 Kahaneman St., 15 Harav Meltzer St.**  
Rabbi Shmuel Levinger

Founded in 5725-1965 (under the original name Mesores Avos), its excellent reputation has created a demand that has forced the administration to split the Talmud Torah into three large branches divided by age. The Talmud Torah provides its students with a strong educational foundation that is evidenced years later when they continue in yeshivas.

**Kollel Zichron Gedalya, 19 Or Hachaim St.**  
Rabbi Meir Gurt

Founded in 5738-1978, this noteworthy kollel was founded on the personal initiative of the former Gerrer Rebbe known as "the Lev

Simcha." His goal was to enable outstanding Torah scholars who wished to continue learning realize their goal. The fellows of this kollel are counted among the elite of the community. Those who are admitted are granted a considerable stipend as an acknowledgement of their superior abilities and scholarship.

**Kollel Choshen Mishpat, 8 Dessler St.**  
Rabbi Leibish Weiss

This kollel is designed to train rabbis and rabbinical judges and is attended by young men who have dedicated their lives to learning Torah. The kollel, which is located in the *shtiebel* on Dessler Street, does not only run during the official learning semesters, but also provides a continual learning center for its students at any time.

**Meor Yisrael Institutions, 32-34 Harav Meltzer St.**  
Rabbi Yaakov Cohen

The great success of this yeshiva high school and the kollel operating on its premises is based on a new method where, during the first hours of the day, the kollel fellows each tutor two high-school students, giving them a well-founded understanding of the tractates being learned. The yeshiva's success has led to its opening a post-high-school yeshiva using this method. For lack of space, the advanced yeshiva is housed in a separate building.

**Yeshiva Campus in Kiryat Herzog, 37 Emek Yizrael St.**  
Rabbi Nachum Rothstein

A modern, spacious campus covering 2.5 *dunam* is being completed in the Kiryat Herzog neighborhood in Bnei Brak. Upon its completion in the coming year, the complex will house hundreds of boys from Gerrer families who are now crowded into the old buildings. At present, hundreds of young boys attend the school.

**Bais Yaakov High School and Seminary, 28 Herzog St.**  
Rabbi Pinchas Levin

This school was founded in 5741-1981. In light of the large number of Gerrer students in Bnei Brak, it was decided to establish an independent Gerrer high school to educate the girls in the spirit of their heritage. There are 120 teachers and over 1000 students attending the institution, which is considered one of the top establishments of its kind in Israel.

**Bais Yaakov Elementary School, 15 Ben Zoma St., Shikun Heh**  
Rabbi Pinchas Levin

Founded in 5739-1979, this school comprises about 1,250 students who receive a superior education. Its advanced academic level attracts pupils from outside the community.



## Tel Aviv

**Chiddushei Harim Yeshiva Campus, 24 Nemerov St., Ramat Hachayal**  
Rabbi Nachum Karnbisser

Founded in 5696-1936 during the visit by the Gerrer Rebbe known as "the Imrei Emes" to Palestine, its first president and principal was his son and later successor, "the Lev Simcha." At first it was located on Peretz Street, but it since moved to its current stately complex in North Tel Aviv. This institution includes a yeshiva high school as well as a post-high-school yeshiva and a kollel for distinguished young men. The yeshiva has a reputation as one of the most prominent institutions of Torah and Chassidism.

**Rabbinical Torah Seminary, 10 Yavne St.**  
Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Sheinfeld

Founded in 5624-1964, this institution has continuously produced outstanding Torah scholars; many rabbis and Torah teachers have graduated from here. The sound of Torah can be heard from the kollel, which is located on Yavne Street in the heart of Tel Aviv, rising and penetrating the spiritual darkness of the first secular Hebrew city to be founded, despite the spiritual breakdown that the city is experiencing.

**Kollel for Advanced Students, 89 K"m St.**  
Rabbi Moshe Leib Lock

Founded in 5736-1976, this kollel is located in North Tel Aviv, diffusing its rays of light to its secular surroundings. Here, distinguished young men learn diligently and are tested every month, as well as upon the completion of each topic learned. Many of them have already received their rabbinical ordination by Torah leaders who were amazed by the breadth of their knowledge.

**Talmud Torah Simchas Torah, 18 Hatzanchanim St., Kiryat Harim**  
Levin  
Rabbi Nachum Margalit

This school was founded in 5751-1991. The excellent staff of the Talmud Torah works day and night in its effort to devise original ideas for educating the children, while paying careful attention to every detail and every pupil individually.

## Haifa

**Rabbinical Torah Seminary, 3 Chermon St.**  
Rabbi Miriam David Post

Founded in 5733-1973, the seminary has been a home for Torah and Chassidism since its establishment. The many Gerrer married men who live in this city, are warmed by the light that they absorb between its walls. The sweet flavor of the learning program in this kollel remains with the young men even after they complete a period of study, whether it is to continue in the world of Torah elsewhere or to earn a living

**Yeshivas Or Simcha, 43 Ibn Gabirol St.**  
Rabbi Mendel Shafran

Founded in 5742-1982, the yeshiva is known for its program emphasizing in-depth study along with proficiency in Talmud, comprehensive, well-grounded study of halacha and striving toward exemplary character traits and fear of Heaven refined by Chassidism. All these goals comprise the challenge of this yeshiva that accepts no compromises. Here, Torah and Chassidism are one.

**Talmud Torah Mesores Yisrael, corner of Bar Giora and Hapoel**  
Rabbi Baruch Goldknopf

Founded in 5750-1990, its teachers were carefully selected for their positions. They invest the studies with great meaning. The Talmud Torah makes great use of special projects to encourage its students, and these along with comprehensive testing make this institution one of the best of its kind in Israel.

**Mesivta Emek Halacha, 20 Michael St.**  
Rabbi Abish Eilenberg

Founded in 5753-1993, this yeshiva high school has become an important link connecting to the advanced yeshiva Or Simcha. The yeshiva is noteworthy for its personal attention to every student. The staff encourages the boys, helping them progress in Torah and fear of G-d, while emphasizing character building.

### **Chatzor Haglilit**

**Yeshivas Sifsei Tzaddik, Kiryah Chassidit**  
Rabbi Asher Newhouse

Founded in 5737-1977, its unique educational methods allows the yeshiva's students to develop their personalities, while the staff provides them with the tools they need to do so. They teach them all the foundations necessary to fulfill the demands of a Jew by his Creator. The tranquil country atmosphere also imbues the students with peace of mind and assists them in developing their spirituality. The yeshiva also houses a kollel for outstanding Torah scholars.

**Kollel Avreichim, Kiryah Chassidit**  
Rabbi Yosef Binenfeld

Founded in 5738-1978, it is one of the shining pearls in the crown of the Chassidic settlement in Chatzor. Those studying here are trained in a most unique learning method, during which they print summaries of the material learned. There is also a course of halachic study in the kollel, which also applies the method of written summaries; these are examined by the head of the kollel.

**Talmud Torah Kol Menachem, Kiryah Chassidit**  
Rabbi Eliezer Slomianski

Founded in 5738-1978, the relatively small population of the settlement allows for small classes. This significant educational advantage allows each student to receive a great deal of attention from his teacher. The Talmud Torah is especially famous for its tutorial sessions that allow the weaker students to receive the highest quality assistance at their own level and pace.

**Bais Yaakov Elementary School, Kiryah Chassidit**  
Rabbi Yisrael Yitzchak Fingerhut

Founded in 5737-1977, 160 students are educated in this institute whose good name is known in all the northern settlements and cities. Eighteen teachers direct the girls in their studies.

**Be'er Miriam High School, Kirya Chassidit**  
Rabbi Yisrael Yitzchak Fingerhut

Founded in 5744-1984, it educates 202 students, most of them residents of the local Chassidic community, but some imports from Safed, Tiberias and the surrounding area. Its students successfully complete a course of study in a variety of subjects.

## Ashdod

**Bais Yisrael Institutions, 11 Chativat Hanegev St.**  
Rabbi Yosef Kapiloshnik

This post-graduate yeshiva and kollel was founded towards the end of 5738-1978. Here, hundreds of students turn nights into days in order to complete their in-depth learning and acquire a proficiency in the Talmud. Hundreds of high-school age boys flock to this yeshiva from all over in order to acquire their spiritual training in this institution that is famous for its advanced academic level.

**Yeshiva High School of Chassidei Gur, 5 Yochanan ben Zakkai St.**  
Rabbi Nechemya Alter

Founded in 5756-1996, it has an exemplary staff and administration which have turned the yeshiva, with its impressive building in Rova Zayin, into an attractive establishment where teenagers learn Torah with peace of mind.

**Advanced Rabbinical and Rabbinic-Judicial Seminary, 28 Harotem St.  
Rabbi Yitzchak Stein**

Founded in 5754-1994 to meet the growing needs of the Chassidic community in Ashdod, the seminary serves talented young men who devote themselves completely to Torah. Because of its unique atmosphere, it has acquired a reputation as a top establishment where the voice of Torah resounds between its walls at all hours of the day.

**Kollel Ohel Moshe, 17 Haetzel St.  
Rabbi Yehuda Lev**

Founded in 5752-1992, this kollel is based on a five-year program. During the first five years after marriage, each young man is tested weekly on 14 pages of Gemara. At the end of this time, he has acquired a vast, comprehensive knowledge of the Talmud. This institution practices individual testing, suited to each student's abilities.

**Kollel Zechusa D'Moshe, 13 Chativat Hanegev St.  
Rabbi Yitzchak Moshe Guterman**

Founded in 5748-1988, this kollel serves as a training institute for high school and yeshiva educators. The studies in the kollel are based on in-depth study of the Talmud. Many of the young kollel fellows have risen to leadership positions in the various yeshivas. Recently, the kollel opened a second branch in Ashdod for those outstanding young men who reside in the newly-developed neighborhoods there.

**Talmud Torah Lev Simcha; branches: Chativat Hanegev St., Shimon ben Shetach St., Reb Meir Baal Hanes St.  
Rabbi Shmuel Goldberg**

Founded toward the end of 5739-1979, this Talmud Torah has graduated hundreds of young children educated in the Torah way. The institution is blessed with a top-notch educational staff who are extremely devoted, investing everything in their students, and the fruits of their labor are evident on the children's faces.

**Bais Yaakov Elementary School, Rova Gimmel  
Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Olewski**

Founded 5749-1989 by a group of residents from Ashdod's Gerrer community, there are 730 student being educated in the school today.

**Bais Yaakov High School and Seminary, Rova Zayin**  
Rabbi Chanoch Zeibert

Founded in 5755-1995, this high school was established for the hundreds of pupils in Ashdod from Gerrer families. Those who successfully complete their high-school studies continue on to vocational training in various teaching subjects as well as others.

**Arad**

**Yeshivas Lev Simcha, 64 Ben Yair St.**  
Rabbi Mordechai Wolkowitz

Founded in 5741-1981, the yeshiva boasts a high level of learning. Its exceptional staff of teachers and experienced Torah scholars spend most of their time in the yeshiva. The yeshiva is like a beacon of light spreading its radiance on the streets of the secular city, while its students sanctify the name of Heaven with their behavior.

**Kollel Nachlas Yitzchak, 64 Ben Yair St.**  
Rabbi Chanoch Eidelman

Founded in 5742-1982, the fellows of this kollel specialize in courses of halacha. Special stipends are given to the young scholars of the city to assist them in providing a livelihood for their growing families, and many have succeeded in their studies and have advanced in their Torah learning.

**Talmud Torah, 62 Ben Yair St.**  
Rabbi Yitzchak Feller

Founded in 5744-1984, its teaching staff is devoted to the Talmud Torah, investing its strength in the education of its students and encouraging them to learn. Thanks to a special prize fund, the students are tested on thousands of pages of Gemara and Mishna and awarded prizes. Recently, the Talmud Torah moved to a new and spacious building.

**Kollel for Advanced Students, 7 Charuv St.**  
Rabbi Tzvi Blech

Founded in 5747-1987 to meet the growing needs of the Gerrer community in Arad, it was designed to provide additional options for young men in their studies. Dozens of its students are training to receive rabbinical ordination and some of its graduates are already serving as rabbinical judges and rabbis in Jewish communities.

**Kollel, 60 Chen St.**  
Rabbi Avraham Kaminer

Founded in 5750-1990, this kollel allows young men to study and become proficient in Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi. The kollel focuses on a comprehensive study of the Talmud. Its outstanding fellows complete a learning cycle about every four years, by which time they have completed the two Talmuds, taking monthly written examinations on the material learned.

**Bais Yaakov Elementary School, Shimon St.**  
Rabbi Avraham Kaufman

Founded 5746-1986, with the beginning of the development of the Gerrer community in Arad, it has a student population of 125 girls, with a superior teaching staff of 17 teachers.

**Bais Yaakov High School and Seminary, Kanaim St.**  
Rabbi Arye Rottenberg

Founded in 5754-1994, today there are about 32 girls learning in this school, graduates of the elementary school in Arad. They are completing advanced courses of study in various subjects, mainly education, hi-tech, accounting and more.

### Kiryat Gat

**Kollel Yad Rema, 5 Anatot St.**  
Rabbi Baruch Widislawski

Founded in 5755-1995, the kollel serves as a Torah center for the young men of the new settlement in Kiryat Gat, who devote their time to learning diligently. The kollel comprises various courses of study in Torah subjects, and the administration of the kollel encourages the students with monetary incentives that lighten their financial burden.

**Talmud Torah, 43 Adulam St.**  
Rabbi Tzvi Feller

Founded in 5757-1997, with the establishment of the Chassidic community there, the school now has classes for preschoolers. In time, the heads of the school hope to expand the functions of the Talmud Torah.

### Beit Shemesh

**Kollel Shas, 10b Or Hachaim St.**  
Rabbi Yehuda Kornbisser

Founded in 5754-1994, this kollel was the first Gerrer institution in the new settlement of Beit Shemesh. Selecting ideas from various successful

kollels, the founders chose the good points of each one, combining them into a unique framework of study for the young men who live there.

**Kollel Choshen Mishpat, 10 Kehillos Yaakov St.**  
Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Lazenga

Founded in 5795-1995, the kollel comprises dozens of young men completing a course of study in the laws of Chosen Mishpat. They intend to train as rabbis.

**Kollel Yoreh Deah, 6 Lev Simcha St.**  
Rabbi Mendel Panet

Founded in 5756-1996, the kollel comprises dozens of residents of Beit Shemesh who are studying the laws of Yoreh Deah. They take tests on the material in order to earn rabbinical ordination.

**Kollel Gemara and Tosefos, 7 Or Sameach St.**  
Rabbi A. Braun

Founded in 5756-1996, young men here study Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi, amidst in-depth study of the methods of the early sages known as the Rishonim.

**Talmud Torah, 37/1 Chazon Ish St.**  
Rabbi Yehoshua Ashlag

Founded in 5756-1996 with the arrival of the first Gerrer families, the Talmud Torah already has two classes. In the future, it intends to produce generations of boys raised in the Torah way.

**Post High School Yeshiva – in building stages, 6 Lev Simcha St.**

The acting committee made up of the best of the community's activists is working as fast as it can to complete the yeshiva complex in the ultra-orthodox settlement developing in Beit Shemesh. The complex covers approximately 4 *dunam* and it is intended to house hundreds of students upon its completion in the coming months.

## Ramat Gan

**Kollel Shem Mishimon, 18 Shilo St.**  
Rabbi Avraham Atlas

Founded in 5744-1984, its purpose is to encourage outstanding Torah scholars to serve as yeshiva educators in the future. The kollel includes a special multi-year program that allows its fellows to acquire a basic comprehensive knowledge in the tractates of the Talmud, *Nashim* and

*Nezikin*, for a period of six years. The kollel runs continually throughout all hours of the day.

### Emanuel

**Kollel D'Chassidei Gur**, 30 HaGra St.  
Rabbi Avraham Eichental

This kollel was founded in 5744-1984. It is located in the heart of the Shomron area, and provides a Torah center for the young men in the Gerrer community in Emanuel, where they learn with peace of mind.

### Rishon Letzion

**Yeshivas Nezer Yisrael**, 25 Haoranim St.  
Rabbi Daniel Lieberman

Founded in 5743-1983, it began in Tel Aviv, situated like an island in the midst of a secular sea. As it expanded, the yeshiva moved to the Bais Asher community of Poalei Agudath Israel in Rishon Letzion. The yeshiva has a good name, among other things for its superior staff that invests much effort in educating its students. There is also a kollel on premises.

### Petach Tikva

**Kollel**, Menachem Begin St., Kiryat Baal Shem Tov  
Rabbi Yisrael Fishbein

Founded in 5759-1999 with the establishment of the Chassidic community in Petach Tikva, this kollel serves as a Torah institution for the young men living there.

### United States

**Kollel**, 1573 51<sup>st</sup> Street  
Rabbi Eliyahu Fisher

Founded in 5735-1975, this is one of the oldest Chassidic kollelim in Boro Park, where dozens of younger and older married men learn diligently, making Torah their occupation.

**Mesivta Bais Yisrael**, 5407 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Rabbi Dovid Olewski



Founded in 5758-1978, it serves as a Torah institute for high school boys from Gerrer families who learn Torah and are educated according to the spiritual heritage of Ger.

**Yeshivas Yagdil Torah, 5110 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue**  
Rabbi Tzvi Garfinkel

Founded in 5731-1971 by a group of dedicated activists of the Gerrer community who wished to educate their children according to their heritage, this educational institution for children, turned into the largest Talmud Torah in Boro Park only a few years later.

**Yeshiva Gedola of Chassidei Gur, 5108 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue**  
Rabbi Dovid Goldberg

Founded in 5760-1999, Gerrer chassidim in the U.S. dedicated the new yeshiva building about a month ago. The yeshiva serves as an extension of the mesivta, educating hundreds of boys.

**Bais Yaakov D'Chassidei Gur, 1975 51<sup>st</sup> Street**  
Rabbi Yaakov Enden

Founded in 5740-1980, hundreds of students from Gerrer homes learn in this school, which has become famous throughout the United States as an exemplary institution that invests much effort in the education of its girls in Torah and secular knowledge.

### England

**Yeshivas Lev Simcha, 17 Margaret Rd. N16 6UX**  
Rabbi Yaakov Meir Rosenbaum

Founded in 5739-1979, this outstanding institution educates young boys of Gerrer families in London and throughout Britain.

**Kollel, 17 Margaret Rd. N16 6UX**  
Rabbi Akiva Shreiber

Founded in 5742-1982, the kollel comprises dozens of young men of the Ger community in London, who learn here and assist the yeshiva students in their studies.

### Belgium

**Kollel, 41 Anton Van Dijck Str., Antwerpen 2018**  
Rabbi Dovid Kuperberg

Founded in 5736-1976, this kollel provides a learning center for the young men of the Gerrer community in Antwerp. The kollel is a respected Torah center in the Jewish community in Belgium.

### Gerrer *Shtieblech* (Synagogues) the World Over

The following is a list of Gerrer *shtieblech* in Israel:

#### World Center of Chassidei Gur – Yirmeyahu Street

Shtiebel	Gabai
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#### Ashdod – 08

##### Rova Gimmel

Abuchatzeira 18	A. Slomianski
Rabbi Akiva (Carmeli)	Mordechai Tzvi Shreiber
Bais Dovid, Chativas Hanegev 23	Avraham Weinstein
Ohel Rachel, Hanna Senetzch	Gedalya Friedman

##### Rova Zayin

Ohel Yitzchak, Elazar ben Horkenos 8	Yizchak Bergman
Bais Pinchas, A. ben Mehallel	Yehoshua M. Goldberg
Chenshinski, Elazar ben Horkenos 20	Avraham Y. Groveis
Ateres Shlomo, Elazar ben Horkenos 20	Nesanel Friedman
Shaarei Tefila, Reb Meir Baal Hanes 16	Menachem M. Dreiman
Shimon ben Shetach	Yehuda Rosenwasser
Chanina ben Dosa	M. Y. Kapilushnik
Yehuda Hanasi	Yitzchak M. Kryschek
Adas Yeshurun, Yochanan ben Zakai	Yisrael Grunbaum

##### Rova Chet

Hachartzit 14	Efraim Wachstok
Oholei Yissachar, Hakalanit 19	Shmuel Klapman
Harotem 31 (Haprachim)	Yeshayahu Dov Rosen
Harotem 9, Industrial Center	Yitzchak M. Rottenberg
Siach Yitzchak, Hatzivoni 2	Y. Finkelstein
Named after Ruta, Harotem 33	Efraim Levi
Heichal M. Tzvi, Hatzivoni 17	Yisrael Wolkowitz

#### Beit Shemesh – 02

Or Hachaim 10 B	Nuta Teitelbaum
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**Bnei Brak – 03**

Or Hachaim	Arye Kaminer
Blau 5	Avraham Nachum Lev
Baal Shem Tov	Shmuel M. Albert
Dessler 8	S. Borzikowski
Chiddushei Harim	Dovid Yeret
Chafetz Chaim 4	Elimelech Braunfeld, Yaakov Traube
Yona Hanavi 3	M. Dovid Abramowitz
Maharshal 10	Avraham M. Lapa
Moshe Yosef	Shlomo Shreiber
Neve Achiezer	Tzvi Yehoshua Rosental
Kiryat Hertzog	Avraham Moshe Levin
Rabbi Yehoshua 2	Rabbi Shmuel Heine
Rabbi Akiva 56	Akiva Meir
Rabbi Akiva 68	Yosef Tzvi Boda, A. M. Rubinstein
Rabbeinu Tam 7	Yitzchak Pshigurski
Ramat Aharon	Mordechai Dreiman
Rashi 13	Shmuel Shvitz
Shadal 2	Yitzchak M. Brickman
Strasser 5	Yisrael Margalis
Shikun 5	Yaakov Jakobowitz

**Haifa – 04**

Chermon 3	Elazar Goldschmidt
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**Chatzor Haglilit – 06**

Kiryat Chassidit central	Chanoch Berkowitz
Shlav 3, younger members	Avraham M. Dreiman

**Jerusalem – 02**

Bais Hamedrash, Ralbach 2	Rabbi Chanina Schiff
Har Nof, Hakablan 32	Baruch Widislawski
Ramot	Yisrael Y. Hochberg
Ramat Shlomo, Sadigura	Chaim Yitzchak Cohen
Kineret 10	Avraham M. Weitz
Kineret 19	Yitzchak M. Lichtsheim
Menachem 7	Moshe Olewski

**Netanya – 09**

Stamper 7	Avraham C. Berliner
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**Emanuel – 09**

Haara 30	Aharon Dovid Seletzki
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**Arad – 07**

Chen 60	Avraham M. Cohen, Yona Manela
Charov 7	Yaakov T. Sevorski

**Petach Tikva – 03**

Ichilov 23	Yosef Altman
Kiryat Baal Shem Tov	Yechezkel Milstein

**Kiryat Ata – 04**

Katzenelson 9	Yosef Tzvi Frankel
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**Kiryat Gat – 07**

Perat 17	Avraham N. Lefkowitz Eliyahu Markowitz
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**Ramat Gan – 03**

Shilo 18	Reuven Winderbaum
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**Tel Aviv – 03**

Bar Ilan 4	Shlomo Medlow
Ben Yehuda 155	Chaim S. Goldberg
Gush Chalav 23	Arye Wachs
Hamaggid 4	Arye Pshigorski
Yavne 10	Chaim Feller
Nordau 65	Avraham Rosental
Nachmani 58	A. Zev Yoskowitz
Fierberg 17	Chaim Yitzchak Shvartz

Kiryat Harim Levin

Bais Yosef	Mordechai Rogozinski
Hagolan	Yaakov Berliner
Marcus 18	Avraham S. Berliner
Komemiyut	Yehuda A. Berkowitz

List of Gerrer *shnieblech* in the U.S.

Shtiebel	Gabbai
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Boro Park (718)

1843 48 <sup>th</sup> Street	Betzalel Teitelbaum
5110 18 <sup>th</sup> avenue	Yaakov Goldberg
4533 18 <sup>th</sup> avenue	Chanoch Kurnik
1573 51 <sup>st</sup> Street	Yehuda Olewski
5316 16 <sup>th</sup> avenue	Shmuel Tondowski
4910 16 <sup>th</sup> avenue	Avigdor Rubinstein
4623 16 <sup>th</sup> avenue	Moshe Yosef Enden
1317 49 <sup>th</sup> Street	Dovid Wasserteil
1654 53 <sup>rd</sup> Street	Noach Abramowitz
1337 42 <sup>nd</sup> Street	Yeshaya Seidenfeld

Flatbush (718)

1937 Ocean avenue	Elimelech Fastag
1409 Ocean parkway	Ezriel Dovid Fastag

Lakewood (732)

325 10 <sup>th</sup> avenue	Eli Bliman
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Monsey (914)

38 Saddle River Rd	Shlomo Radzik
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List of Gerrer *shnieblech* in Europe

**England - 44**

Stamford Hill (181)

2 Lampard Grove N16	Akiva Shreiber
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Golders Green (181)

8 Bridge Lane London N.W.11	A. M. Gefilhouse
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Manchester (161)

1 Legh Road Salford M7 4Rt.	Yitzchak A. Goldberg
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**Belgium - 32**

41 Anton Van Dijck Stratt	Chaim Mandel
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**Australia - 61**

Melbourne (3)

36 Carrington E. St. Kilda VIC 3183	Yirmeyahu Goldschmidt
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**Switzerland - 41**

Zurich (1)

Verein Chasidei Ger 274 Badener Str. Zurich 8004	Y. M. Borenstein
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**Canada - 1**

Toronto (416)

3389 Bathurst Street N6A 2E8	Avraham Weissbrod
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**United Ger Institutions - The World-wide Umbrella Organization of  
Ger Chassidim**

Since United Ger Institutions was founded in Israel 36 years ago, this  
institution has become the main address for every issue

pertaining to the activities of Gerrer chassidim, and particularly for their Torah and educational institutions.

There was a two-fold purpose for the establishment of the *Ichud*, as it is called. Firstly, it was to represent a united network for all of Ger's Torah and educational institutions in Israel, providing the financial resources demanded for these institutions. Secondly, it was also founded to create a permanent central fund through which supporters of Torah and Chassidism in general, as well as loyal followers of Ger, could extend their help in maintaining these institutions.

The impressively quick development of Ger's Torah and educational institutions in Israel drove their supporters to establish this umbrella organization. They viewed it as a historic step rebuilding the grand heritage of Ger that had been founded in the center of Jewish Poland and had been decimated in the Holocaust.

### Charity and Social Service Organizations

Ger also abounds with various charity and social service organizations which stand at the disposal of needy families, the sick, Holocaust survivors and their families. Among these services, the community is famous for its cooperative supermarkets throughout Israel, which allow large families to purchase basic necessities at wholesale prices.

#### The following is a list of Gerrer co-op supermarkets in Israel:

Ashdod – 30 Chativas Hanegev St  
Beit Shemesh – 8 Lev Simcha St.  
Bnei Brak – food – 3 Avnei Nezer St.; clothing – 8 Rabbeinu Tam St.  
Haifa – 6 Barzilai St.  
Chatzor – Kirya Chassidit.  
Jerusalem – 6 Geshet Hachaim St.  
Arad – Hamakabim.  
Tel Aviv – 55 Derech Petach Tikva St.

Ger also operates the Refuah Veyeshua health organization that assists the sick by lending expensive equipment, donating blood, locating appropriate care in Israel and all over the world, and more.

#### Branches of the Gerrer Refuah Veveshua Organization:

Bnei Brak and center of the country – 8 Dessler St.  
Ashdod – center, Shikun Zayin  
Beit Shemesh – 8 Or Hachaim St.  
Haifa – 21 Hashiloach St.  
Arad – 4 Netiv Hateana St.  
Kiryat Gat – 7 Ziklog St.  
Tel Aviv – 6 Hadaf Havomi St.

This organization also provides telephone hotlines offering psychological help for adolescent boys and girls and Holocaust survivors and their families.

There are also free-loan societies for parents marrying off their children, operating under the name Ezer Nisuin Bais Yisrael. These funds allow for many loans of especially large amounts, without interest and with easy payments.

In addition every Gerrer *shiteh* in Israel and all over the world has a charity fund serves its own members.



# ROMANIA

# SATMAR CHASSIDUS

## Overview

The Hasidic community of Satmar, under the charismatic, dynamic leadership of Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, experienced a most remarkable post-War Phoenix-like rejuvenation which is almost unparalleled in the annals of post-Holocaust history.

From a medium-sized town in Hungary whose sphere of influence barely crossed the borders of that country, Satmar is now an international, almost global organization with branches and institutions spanning continents.

The tiny core community which was re-established in 1946 in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn has burgeoned and grown spectacularly. In addition to the major branch in Kiryat Yoel in upstate N.Y., the Chasidim of Satmar maintain institutions and strong groups of followers in such diverse cities such as London, Antwerp, Montevideo, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Montreal, as well as their network of important organizations and schools in major cities in Israel.

## History and Antecedents

The Rebbe of Satmar, Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, was a scion of one of the most illustrious Rabbinic, Chasidic dynasties which fostered the growth and development of the Chasidic movement throughout the Austro-Hungarian empire.

He was born in the Transylvanian town of Sighet in 1887. His father Rabbi Chanania Yom Tov Lipa (author of "Kedushas Yom Tov") served in the dual capacity as the Rabbi of the town as well as a Chasidic Rebbe for followers in the entire province. His grandfather, author of the classical "Yetev Lev", was the grandson of the world famous founder of the dynasty -- Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum of Usehly, author of the multi-volume scholarly work known as the "Yismach Moshe".

At a young age, Rabbi Joel acquired a sterling reputation for his diligence, scholarship, piety and radiant charismatic personality.

In 1925 he was selected to serve as Rabbi of Krula (Nagykaroly) after having previously served as Rabbi of Orshova. In 1934, after a protracted struggle between various factions of the community, he was appointed as Rabbi of Satmar with its mix of various factions of Ashkenazic and Chassidic communities.

## Pre-War Satmar – Synagogues, Schools and Institutions

Rabbi Teitelbaum established Yeshivos in all the towns where he served as Rabbi (e.g. in Krula the yeshiva numbered approximately 100-140 students). In Satmar the yeshiva attracted many new students and more than doubled in size. The aura and glamour

surrounding the Rabbi's scholarship and piety was an important factor in the success of the yeshiva.

A report on the yeshiva's budget in 1937 (sent to the Central Relief Committee) shows a total of 365 students with an age range of 12-24, and a budget of 78,000 Romanian Lei (with a deficit of 230,000 Lei).

The school had a kitchen and dining facilities which fed approximately 260 students (others ate at home or at houses of members of the community).

It should be noted that three other smaller yeshivos for teenagers functioned in Satmar. Each had a student body of approximately 50. Exact figures for the number of younger children attending cheder are not presently available.

The Rebbe reorganized and revitalized all aspects of religious life in the city and surrounding areas. He rebuilt the *mikva* (ritual bath) and was active in all spheres of religious activity. He was renowned as the leader of the Transylvanian Rabbinate and wielded enormous influence in all major appointments of Rabbis, Dayanim (Rabbinical judges and advocates), Kosher slaughterers, chazanim, etc. No Rabbinical assembly issued resolutions without his participation and ultimate consent.

### **Post War Growth – International “Empire”**

The Rebbe settled in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn in 1946 with a handful of followers. The Congregation Yetev Lev was officially founded in 1948 with a few dozen members.

By 1961 membership rose to 860 families. The Rebbe's personality and strong leadership qualities attracted not only former residents of Satmar and its environs, but also new followers, mostly of Hungarian/Romanian extraction who were hitherto uncommitted, gravitated to join the congregation. In 1961, the student body numbered over 3,000.

The combination of factors of the old Rebbe's dominant personality, the leadership of the new Rebbe, and a high birth rate culminated in the tremendous growth of the yeshivas Torah Ve'yirah, Vayoel Moshe and Ateres Yoel for boys and Beis Rochel schools for girls.

In 1998 the combined student body (boys and girls) numbered 8,000. The yearly budget rose to \$24 million dollars. The budget for the schools in Boro Park alone was \$9 million. The student body numbers 3,150, with an educational and administrative staff of 630 employees.

## **Partial Figures – Institutions Outside the USA**

Antwerp, Belgium – Boys School, Girls School and Seminary  
Student body - 548  
Educational and Administrative staff – 84

### Manchester, England

The Satmar Community in Manchester consists of a synagogue, boys school, girls school, and post graduate kollel which provides stipends for married scholars.

Student body – 215  
Budget – 415,000 British pounds sterling

## **Synagogues – Ritual Baths**

Because of the increase of members, the number of synagogues burgeoned dramatically from the central one located in Williamsburg to the following:

Williamsburg – 8 Synagogues - 5 Mikvas (ritual baths)  
Boro Park – 5 Synagogues – 2 Mikvas  
Kiryas Yoel – Monroe – 5 Synagogues – 4 Mikvas

## **Summer Camps**

A large network of summer camps for both boys and girls were established in Kerhonkson, N.Y. and other locations. The camps serve not only as vacation centers, but also as a continuation for Jewish studies throughout the summer in a congenial atmosphere.

## **Communal Help, Social Welfare, Chesed Organizations**

One of the basic tenets of Judaism is the concept of “chesed” – care and concern for the well being of others. Under the influence of the Rebbe, many different types of organizations were developed. Many individuals projects also later developed into massive networks of charity and chesed.

One of the areas in which the spirit of the Satmar community is almost unparalleled is the large network of service organizations, programs and individual projects dedicated to “Bikkur Cholim”(visiting the sick), and catering to their physical and spiritual needs.

Fleets of buses and vans bring dozens of volunteers who provide encouragement and emotional support to patients and their families in hospitals throughout the city. Some of these volunteers have become experts in navigating the various bureaucracies associated with medical care. Others prepare high quality kosher meals for patients and their families.

Bikkur Cholim also maintains apartments near hospitals to enable families to visit patients on Sabbath or holidays.

Other organizations (e.g. "Yeled Shaashuim") provide assistance to mothers before and after they give birth.

### **Rescue Organizations – Rav Tov**

This organization was established in 1973 to provide economic, social and spiritual assistance to Jewish refugees. Rav Tov became one of the most respected rescue organizations recognized by the State Department and Red Cross for its excellent, resourceful and sometimes clandestine work.

It helps unfortunate victims of persecution whose lives may be in danger in Communist countries and other dictatorships such as Iran. They help them escape via underground routes, provide shelter, and facilitate their immigration to the USA or Israel.

They have built shelters, schools and training centers in Austria, Italy and Israel. They provide food, clothes, job contacts, plus educational and religious instruction.

# VIZNITZ CHASSIDUS

## In the beginning

The Viznitz Chassidus began with Rav Yaakov Koppel Chossid. He was a student of the Baal Shem Tov, who so appreciated his special personality and harmonious but heart-stirring voice that he appointed him to the post of *shaliach tzibbur* - to be the person who led the congregation in prayer - in his shul. Rav Yaakov Koppel was unique among the Baal Shem Tov's students in being called "Chossid" - a name that implies a kind, pious nature. He was given this name because he was righteous in his behavior and modest in his demeanor. It was not he, but the Baal Shem Tov, who decided that he would set up a chassidic dynasty. Before he died, on the second day of Shevuos 5520 (1760), the Baal Shem Tov bequeathed him the task of serving as the Jewish spiritual leader of the entire Marmarosh region. He told him "you have a beautiful garden, please take care of it."

Rabbi Yaakov Koppel passed away in Ellul 5547 (1787) and generations of descendants continued to "take care of the garden". They guided the thousands of Jews who lived in Marmarosh, in Bukovina, and even those who lived in the wider Transylvania and Galicia regions. The dynasty also had a number of sub-branches. These included Zavlato, Strochnik, Radovitz, Horodnaka, Zalishtik, Shatz, Bursha, and Antenya. However the largest and most important sub-group were the Kosov-Viznitz Chassidim, and the Kosov-Viznitz rabbinical dynasty became the region's main rabbinical dynasty. Large numbers of Jews joined the ranks of the Kosov Viznitz Chassidim - and in our day too this large Chassidus continues to be a major entity within the Jewish people.

## The First Generation

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kosov, the son of Rav Yaakov Koppel, was known as the "Ahavas Sholom", in keeping with the widespread custom of calling a person by the name of one of his books. As a young man Rabbi Menachem Mendel studied under a number of Chassidic leaders, including Rabbi Ze'ev Wolff of Tcherni-Ostraha. Rabbi Wolff went to live in Eretz Yisroel in 5559 (1799) and before going there he placed his hand on Rav Menachem Mendel's head and appointed him his deputy.

The Ahavas Sholom's then began his leadership. Thousands of people soon came to shelter under his protection. Residents of the area noticed this particularly in connection with *shochtim* - ritual slaughterers. He made himself personally responsible for appointing and supervising the *shochtim*. He also built *mikvas*, set up shuls and appointed teachers. In addition he visited Marmarosh from time to time, to see the situation there firsthand. This way he was able to ensure that the Jews living in the various Marmarosh towns were familiar with the principles of their faith.

The Ahavas Sholom also achieved a reputation as being extremely knowledgeable in Torah-learning. This was to the extent that Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Daash, called the

"Maagalei Tzedek", said that all his achievements came to him in the merit of his deep study of the Choshen Mishpot section of the Shulchon Oruch - of Jewish civil law - and his expertise in Jewish monetary law - the study of which sharpens the mind.

"Ahavas Sholom", the work for which he is most remembered, was actually written by his students on the basis of his teachings. Although his students recorded more of his teachings than appeared in this publication, many of their writings remained in manuscript form and were never printed. All these teachings comprised words of guidance and Mussar (ethics), counsel and admonition, and were based on public talks he gave during Shabbos. He talked mainly about mutual regard, about the importance of welcoming visitors, and about the sanctity of Shabbos. Shabbos, especially Friday evening, was the occasion for Chassidic gatherings, and the residents of all the Marmarosh's towns and Chassidic centers met together each week, in all wind and weather, even when the snow was heavy underfoot. The main aim was to gather together, to provide themselves with an inner glow from the songs of praise that they sang and the words of Torah that they heard. The inspiration provided by the Shabbos meetings added a spiritual note to their workday activities, and the meetings resulted in many people being drawn to Judaism and Chassidus.

### **The Second Generation**

In Cheshvan 5586 (1825), the Ahavas Sholom was succeeded by his oldest son, Rav Chaim of Kosov, the "Toras Chaim". Shortly after he entered adulthood he was already viewed as being one of the greatest of the chassidic leaders of his time. His following extended well beyond the ranks of the Kosov chassidim, and the spiritual leaders of his time held him in very high esteem and recognized his greatness. He followed his father's example in supervising the ritual slaughterers and in ensuring that *kashrus* and other matters of Jewish importance were properly observed throughout the district.

He was extremely tireless, diligent and devoted in his Torah studies. Twice each year he held a *siyum*, a celebration marking the completion of an area of study, on all works of Maimonides and the Rif. And he did this in addition to giving lectures and lessons on revealed and cryptic messages of the Torah. He served as a guide to his chassidim in the areas of personality development and to good *middos* - desirable characteristics and correct behavior. He laid great stress on the importance of integrity and uprightness, which characteristics he considered a basic value. His "Toras Chaim" was written by him personally, not by his students.

### **The Third Generation**

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Viznitz, the author of the Tzemach Tzaddik, was the youngest of the Toras Chaim's sons. When the Rabbi of the town of Viznitz, Rabbi Yitzchok Landman, died, Menachem Mendel was appointed its rabbinical court head and chief rabbi, although he was still young at the time. When the Tzemach Tzaddik traveled to visit his rabbi, he carried with him the chair that had belonged to his grandfather, the Ahavas Shalom, for whom he was named.

After the passing of the Toras Chaim, in the spring of 5614 (1854), each of his three sons headed a group of chassidim. The oldest son took over his father's place in Kosov. The second son, Rav Alter Yosef, headed the Radovitz community. And the youngest of the three remained in the town of his rabbi, in Viznitz, and founded the Viznitz dynasty. It is interesting that although he was the youngest son, most of his father's chassidim chose specifically to follow him.

During the time of the Tzemach Tzaddik, the Viznitz chassidus grew at a fast rate. It was joined by thousands of people from Marmarosh, Siebenburgen, Bukovina and Galicia. They flocked to his protection and they set up a large number of shuls and *shtiebels* in their various towns and villages. The chassidim called this period "the years of plenty" because they were years of tremendous spiritual growth. The growth was both in quantity and in quality. People were interested in growing and developing through the chassidus, and they were deeply affected by the inspiring prayers, by the sweet words of Torah and the interpretation of its deeper meanings.

The chassidus' version of the prayers was very moving. It was based on Rav Yaakov Koppel Chossid's rendition of the prayers, except that the Tzemach Tzaddik added his own personal touch. This touching rendition of the prayers is the one used still today by thousands of Viznitz chassidim.

He distributed huge sums to poor families and to people who had lost their riches. He also supported many Torah scholars.

Viznitz was just a small point on the map, but the Tzemach Tzaddik's influence spread out from there over lands and seas, and he was involved in global matters of Jewish communal importance. He headed the Marmarosh-Viznitz Kollel that was situated in the Land of Israel - a position that he inherited from his father and grandfather. This kollel was founded by Rabbi Ze'ev Wolff of Tcharni-Ostraher, when he went to live in the Land of Israel in 5659 (1899). The kollel was under the patronage of his rabbi, the Ahavas Shalom, and his son, the Toras Chaim, and was then transferred to the grandson, the Tzemach Tzaddik of Viznitz, who was its president and administrator. He would send money to support the Jews of the Land of Israel who lived in Safed, Tiberias and Jerusalem. He remained in close personal contact with the people living in the Land of Israel, and kept himself informed about everything that was happening there.

The Viznitz chassidus had a loud, clear message, formulated by its leaders. It stated: "Love of G-d, love of the Torah, and love of the Jewish people." Viznitz chassidus has always been seen as a warm, caring chassidus that believes in integrity, in education towards refinement of character, and consideration for others.



## **The Fourth Generation**

The oldest son of the Tzemach Tzaddik, the son who succeeded him, was Rabbi Boruch of Viznitz, the author of the Imrei Boruch. He inherited his father's position in 5645 (1885). From the time he was a child Rabbi Boruch was diligent in his application to Torah learning. In spite of this Rabbi Boruch was extremely modest in his demeanor and very skilled at concealing his good deeds.

However, since he had been given leadership responsibilities and large numbers of people flocked to him, he followed the example of his forebears in traveling to chassidic centers, so as to guide the people there in the correct direction. He served as head of the kollel in the Land of Israel. In addition, he was fearless in matters that concerned the public. He supervised religious matters in the wider district - and was afraid of nothing and no one when a question of religious observance was at stake.

## **The Fifth Generation**

The Imrei Boruch led his chassidim for a relatively short time, as he died at the early age of 48. His oldest son, the first of his twelve children, Rabbi Yisroel, the author of the "Ahavas Yisroel", took over his position in the town of Viznitz.

In 5645 (1885) he was appointed Rabbi of the town of Bidvalia, and was subsequently appointed rabbinical court head of Viznitz. There he made decisions on laws relating to transactions between man and his fellow. He set up a Torah day school, was personally involved in its learning program, and ensured that the school had able teachers and the wherewithal to pay them. He also supervised the kashrus of the butcher shops.

It is possible to realize his brilliance from the few of his innovative rulings that have survived and which were included in a new edition of the Shulchan Aruch and commentaries that was put out recently by the "Machon Yerushalaim" publishing house. When he was still young, at the time when he was serving as rabbi of Bidvalia, he wrote a wide-ranging treatise on the commentaries of the Turei Zahav, the Shach and the Pri Megodim on the Shulchan Aruch.

He became a rebbe in 5653 (1893) after the passing of his father, the Imrei Boruch. He became very much appreciated in his own right and large numbers of people flocked to his side. He named his publication Ahavas Yisroel, meaning the love of Israel, and he indeed loved every Jew deeply, including the simplest of them all, with all his heart and strength.

## **Viznitz's First Yeshiva**

There were times when not every Jewish center had a yeshiva of its own. This was because a spirit of Torah learning permeated the towns and many of their residents spent their time in the shuls and houses of learning, and studied Torah. However, once the

*Haskala* (the so-called "Enlightenment") began, there was a need for the population to fortify itself and to start yeshivas.

In 5663 (1903) the Ahavas Yisroel founded a full-time yeshiva in Viznitz that was directed by two oldest sons. The older of the two was Rabbi Menachem Mendel, who later served as rabbi of Visva, and founded a large yeshiva there, as detailed below. The second son was Rabbi Chaim Meir, who later served as rabbi of Vilchovitz, and founded a yeshiva at Grossvardein, as detailed below. During the yeshiva's early years the Ahavas Sholom himself used to test the students each week.

The Viznitz spiritual leaders made a special point of stressing the importance of educating the new generation to Torah and chassidus. As a result these educational institutions produced thousands of students adorned with the special Viznitz grace, who burned with zeal for all that was holy, and who made their mark on the district and on the generation.

When the yeshiva first opened it had a student body of about a hundred dedicated young men. It closed in 5674 (1914) when the First World War broke out. The Ahavas Yisroel then moved to Grossvardein, in Transylvania. When the war was over his son, the author of the *Damesek Eliezer*, returned to Viznitz and reestablished the yeshiva. He saw this as the best way to repair the spiritual damage caused by the war and to create a better spiritual level in Bukovina, that had suffered from its being cut off from Galicia and from being exposed to secular nationalism. The *Damesek Eliezer* arrived there and worked vigorously to save the coming generation, and do his best to ensure the Jewish people's spiritual future.

The yeshiva reopened during winter 5683 (1922) and was called the Beis Yisroel and *Damesek Eliezer* Yeshiva. The number of students at the yeshiva grew from year to year, and it became one of the Torah world's leading yeshivas. Its students were not only drawn from Bukovina itself, but also from Marmarosh and Transylvania.

Yeshivas in that vicinity did not have dormitories. The students instead accepted the hospitality given them in private homes. It was not easy for the boys to get to the yeshiva from all parts of the town in freezing winter weather when there was deep snow underfoot. After the particularly cold winter of 5689 (1929), the *Damesek Eliezer* decided that going to and from the yeshiva was a waste of potential learning time for the students, and he tried to purchase a three-story building that could serve as a dormitory. He made strenuous efforts to raise the necessary funds, knocking on the doors of potential donors, and in Cheshvan 5691, in the fall of 1930, the yeshiva building was dedicated. The occasion was well attended and one of sanctification of G-d's name. The building was regarded as the spiritual center of Bukovina Jewry.

The *Damesek Eliezer's* educational methods comprised a number of basic principles. Firstly, he instilled in the students a feeling of self worth in that they were dedicated to all that was holy, so that they should not feel themselves inferior in any way to the secular high

school students who were to be seen everywhere on Bukovina's streets. Secondly, fortified their realization that Torah, and only Torah, is the basis on which the Jewish people can exist. Thirdly, he implanted into his students a feeling of responsibility for all Jewry. He encouraged them not to remain "within their own four cubits" but to go out to the people, and ensure that the light of Torah permeates into every distant corner. It was as a result of this message that the students elevated their environments and brought many people nearer to Judaism and chassidus. Fourthly, he insisted that his students always behave well and politely, such that their conduct would add to the honor of Heaven. As a result of this the public's appreciation of Torah and chassidus changed for the better.

He also set up a unique organization, aimed at counteracting the Haskala influences, which were penetrating into the Jewish community. He arranged that at a certain time each week one of the yeshiva students would speak about the weekly Torah reading and also about various topics of current interest. This broadened the horizons of the students, and also taught them how to speak in public without suffering stage fright. However the main object of the exercise was to strengthen the students in their own beliefs, so that they should be able to withstand any situation and not be swept away by the winds of the times. The yeshiva continued along this path until 5699 (1939).

### **The Yeshiva in Ober and Vishiva**

The oldest son of the Ahavas Yisroel was the chassidic leader Rav Menachem Mendel of Vishiva, author of the She'airis Menachem. When he was young his level and depth of learning were so outstanding that his father used to refer to him as "my bookshelf". When his father was still alive he served as a young rabbi in Viznitz and as a lecturer in the yeshiva his father founded.

Early in 5684, during the fall of 1924, he was appointed rabbi of Ober and Vishva. He spoke for three continuous hours, holding his listeners spellbound with his deep analysis of the Talmud. This was his way each time; he would stand with his eyes closed and give a deep, brilliant speech that continued for several hours.

He took an interest in the Vishiva yeshiva. When he first arrived in the town the yeshiva had only twenty students. Under his guidance the yeshiva grew to become one of the largest in the country, and there were years when its student body reached 500. He took the major step of opening a beautiful dormitory of the type that Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin built. His reason for building the dormitory was to save the students from going from one private home to another to be hosted there, as was customary at the time. He himself traveled regularly to different places to raise funds for the yeshiva. The countries he visited for this purpose included Germany, France, Belgium and the United States. He was in contact with people in many different countries in connection with yeshiva matters. This yeshiva was recognized by the Rumanian government and had a registration number of its own at the Rumanian Education Ministry.

This yeshiva, which was called the Beis Yisroel Yeshiva, served students from Marmarosh as well as students from more distant places. They came from towns and villages throughout Rumania and Hungary and from other countries that the She'airis Menachem visited. Whenever he traveled to other countries he would bring new students to the yeshiva.

His devotion to Torah study was a byword and an example to his students. At 5 AM he would already be seated in the yeshiva study hall and learning with deep concentration. He would stand for several hours while giving his daily lecture. His yeshiva lectures were attended by hundreds of students and his purpose in giving the lectures was to create a generation of rabbis, and people who could rule on Jewish law. He encouraged the best students to be present at rabbinical court hearings, so that they would become equipped to make decisions on practical issues. A large number of students, gained *semicha* (rabbinic ordination) from him, and were subsequently appointed as rabbis in the towns of their origin.

His method was to divide the yeshiva students into four groups, and the program of learning accorded with the students' standard of knowledge, in Talmud and in Shulchan Aruch with various commentaries including the Pri Megodim. His students related that after returning from a long journey their teacher would go directly to the yeshiva building and give his lecture in his usual lively fashion. The afternoon lesson on *bekius* - on wide ranging knowledge of the Talmud - was given by the rabbinical court judge, Rabbi Dovid Weiss. If Rabbi Weiss was away for some reason, this afternoon lesson was given by the son of the She'airis Menachem, Rabbi Boruch Hager.

The She'airis Menachem published a Torah journal with the help of his students. The publication, which was called *Degel HaTorah*, was a collection that presented new insights into Jewish law, articles of deep analysis of the Talmud and stories about rabbis and learned men. It was first published in 5682 (1922) and was issued regularly for some years. The journal enhanced the yeshiva's reputation throughout the world.

The chassidic leader's hard work, his frequent long journeys, and the rumors about the terrible things the Germans, supported by the Hungarians, were doing to the Jews, took their toll on his health, and on 13 Teves 5701 (winter 1941) he passed away.

His son Rav Boruch inherited his father's position, but he did not hold it for long. He directed the yeshiva until the Hungarian authorities arrested him, and he then died a martyr. The second son, Rabbi Chaim Yehuda Meir, then took over the leadership of the yeshiva, whose numbers had dwindled. This was because many left the town in those hard times. Rabbi Chaim Yehuda Meir was taken to Auschwitz in 5704 (1944), but was saved from there and went to the Land of Israel.

## **The Viznitz Yeshiva in Grossvardein**

The Ahavas Yisroel's second son was Rabbi Chaim Meir Hager, the author of the *Imrei Chaim*. He was known for his wisdom, for his righteousness, and his many wonderful deeds. In 5670 (1910) he was appointed rabbi of Vilchovitz in the Czechoslovakian section of Marmarosh, and when his father moved from Viznitz to Grossvardein after the First World War the *Imrei Chaim* went with him. He helped his father in every way, and after his father's death in 5696 (1936) he took over his father's position in Grossvardein, while each of his brothers held the position of Rebbe, of chassidic leader, in the town where he lived.

By winter of 5700 (1940) Viznitz had been conquered by the Soviets and the yeshiva that his brother (the *Damesek Eliezer*) directed had been closed. They then opened a new yeshiva in Grossvardein. About 200 students studied at this yeshiva, which was directed mainly by the Rebbe's son, who lectured there daily. Rabbi Avrohom Dovid Hurwitz, later rabbinical court head in Strasbourg, and currently a member of Jerusalem's Eida Charedis, also taught there. The Grossvardein yeshiva remained in existence for only a short time. It closed when the hostilities reached that district.

The learning method there was similar to that of the two other yeshivas that were led by his brothers, in Viznitz and Vishiva. Lectures were given on the Talmud, and on Jewish law according to the *Shulchan Aruch* and commentaries. This spiritual fortress saved many Jewish youngsters from the spiritual decline that was so prevalent during that difficult period. Many yeshivas were forced to close at that time, but this yeshiva's directors bravely kept it going until the very last possible moment.

## **Viznitz Reemerges in the Land of Israel**

It is possible to see the realization of the Ahavas Yisroel's promise that the yeshiva founded in Viznitz would continue to exist until the coming of the Messiah. In 5699 (1939), at the time of the Russian invasion, when the yeshiva in Viznitz closed, the Ahavas Yisroel Yeshiva was opened in Grossvardein by his son, the *Imrei Chaim*. This yeshiva continued to function for a number of years, until just before the War, and during this time the *Imrei Chaim*'s son, the present Viznitz Rebbe, served as yeshiva head and lectured there. By 5701 (1941) the number of students had grown to over 150. Then, when the Germans invaded the district, the yeshiva disbanded, and the present Rebbe embarked upon the journey that eventually took him to the Holy Land.

When the first rumors reached the Land of Israel about the terrible destruction of European Jewry and about the closure of the yeshivas in Viznitz and Vishiva, a number of former Viznitz students who were then living in Jerusalem decided to meet in Tel Aviv. This meeting, which was held in Tel Aviv on 2 Sivan 5702 (1942), was attended by over 200 people who had been chassidim of the Ahavas Yisroel. They decided to reopen the Viznitz Yeshiva in the Land of Israel. They called this yeshiva the *Toras Beis Yisroel Yeshiva*, in memory of the Ahavas Yisroel. Rabbi Mordechai Appel headed the yeshiva.

During early summer 5704 (1944) the Damesek Eliezer came to the Land of Israel, after his rescue work in Transylvania was over. The responsibility for guiding the yeshiva was transferred to him, and he carried out this task courageously and successfully. Then a few months later, at the end of 5704, when his nephew, the present Rebbe, came to live in the Land of Israel, he was appointed head of the yeshiva. A few years after that, at the end of 4707, (1947), the Rebbe moved to the neighborhood that he had built in Bnei Brak, at great self-sacrifice. Then the yeshiva too moved to Bnei Brak, under his presidency.

### **Viznitz Institutions in Jerusalem**

#### **The Imrei Chaim Talmud Torah**

When the Damesek Eliezer reached the Land of Israel and the leadership of the Viznitz Yeshiva was transferred to him, he said: "If you would have asked me, I would have suggested you start with the nursery school." That reply showed that he wanted to see generations grow up in the spirit of Viznitz, starting from the cradle.

His wish was fulfilled in 5719 (1959) with the establishment of the Imrei Chaim Talmud Torah in Jerusalem. At first it occupied the premises of the old Beis Hamidrash in Yechezkel Street. It then grew at a rapid pace, taking in more and more pupils, and opening further classes. The school was run by a team of chassidic educators who provided their pupils with a personal example of how to conduct themselves. The premises soon became too small and on Lag Be'Omer 5731 (1981) the Talmud Torah was able to dedicate its new "Ahavas Yisroel" building on Nechemia Street. The Imrei Chaim was present at this occasion although, as it turned out, he had less than a year to live. His already weakened state did not deter him from addressing the gathering.

The Talmud Torah now had a more suitable building of its own and the shul inside the building served the entire neighborhood. The sound of prayer and Torah learning could be heard emanating from the building 24 hours a day. Before twenty years had passed, this building too was too small, and in Sivan 5751 (1991), the school was able to dedicate a yet newer building.

A skilled team of teachers devote themselves to the children's education. They provide each and every one of them with individual attention. In the higher classes the pupils review the material they learned in earlier years, as well as learning new material. This way they acquire a broad knowledge of all the tractates of the Talmud that they ever learned.

In the evenings the boys attend a "Masmidim" study group. The children put in more hours of study, over and above the long hours they put in during the day. Children who attend the evening study group are given prizes and other incentives to study. These depend on their efforts and their achievements. Another way of improving their learning standards is through a publishing arrangement associated with the Talmud Torah. This institute publishes books and pamphlets rich in content that give information pertinent to each Jewish

festival, tell stories of historical interest, and so forth. The purpose of all this is to give the children a wide knowledge of history, of Jewish law and custom, and of the lives and experiences of great Jewish leaders.

The Talmud Torah has the special quality that it provides for its students and concerns itself with their well-being throughout the day, not just during normal school hours. It directs them how to behave in a manner that is pleasing to G-d and man. It imbues them with a love of Heaven. And it teaches them to conduct themselves in a way that enhances the glory of Heaven.

### **The Damesek Eliezer Yeshiva Ketana**

The Viznitz Yeshiva Ketana, for young boys aged approximately 13 to 16, was set up in Jerusalem in 5723 (1963), under the leadership of Rabbi Chaim Meir Kahana. It has grown considerably during the years since then. In 5736 (1976) Rav Meir Osher Kaufman and Rav Ephraim Tessler took over its leadership. The yeshiva had some hard years, moving from place to place, learning in overcrowded conditions in different apartments in various parts of Jerusalem. However in the summer of 5752 (1992) the yeshiva finally moved into its own well-appointed new building in Kiryat Viznitz, which is situated in Jerusalem's Har Nof neighborhood. Many new students joined the yeshiva at that stage, and their spiritual level grew and developed.

The learning day at the yeshiva ketana is divided into five parts. Early in the morning, at daybreak, the youngsters spend about two hours reviewing tractates they learned in the past. They then say the *Shacharis* morning prayer with true Viznitz zeal. Their second learning session is preparation for their *iyun*—in-depth--lesson on the Talmud, and they delve deep into the commentaries. Then, after the lesson they have their third study session, which is spent reviewing the material they heard during the lesson, and paying particular attention to ensuring that they understand the various interpretations of the material. During the afternoons they have a *bekius* lesson that aims to cover more ground than the *iyun* lesson and provides the youngsters with a broad knowledge of the Talmud. This is followed by the fourth session, which is again review, and which continues for several hours. The fifth self-study session, during the evenings, is spent studying Jewish law in the Tur and Shulchan Aruch.

A special stress is laid on character training. Mussar (ethics) and chassidus talks are given by the *mashgichim* (teachers of ethics) twice weekly. Most weeks the youngsters spend Shabbos at the yeshiva, under the dedicated, warm care of their teachers. All this produces wonderful results.

### **The Viznitz Yeshiva Gedola in Jerusalem**

As the number of chassidim in the Holy Land grew, the need for an additional *yeshiva gedola* (yeshiva for young men) became more and more apparent. Hundreds of young men were knocking at the door of the yeshiva in Bnei Brak, and there was no space



to accept them all. The idea of opening a new yeshiva came up again and again, but did not materialize for a long time. Then, in the winter of 5758 (1998), fifty years after the Bnei Brak yeshiva was founded by the Imrei Chaim, a new branch of the yeshiva opened in temporary premises in a rented building in Har Nof, near the Kiryat Viznitz section. A new building that will house the yeshiva is now under construction in Har Nof, within Kiryat Viznitz.

The sound of Torah learning reverberates from the yeshiva from early in the morning until late at night. The yeshiva has developed an excellent name during the few years since it was founded, and many students are attracted to it.

The special attributes of the yeshiva include:

- a) Instilling into the students the wish to study each tractate in great depth. This is done with the help of the lecturers, who guide the students and give them a list of the sources they must consult so as to be prepared for the lecture.
- b) Having a *kollel* (yeshiva for married students) attached to the yeshiva, and on the same premises, so the young married men can help the yeshiva students by studying with them. They also serve as an example to the yeshiva students.
- c) The students' power of analysis is developed by weekly sessions where a student analyzes the topic they studied, as the other students in his class listen. This way the students learn how to give a lesson.
- d) The students' spiritual level is enhanced by regular weekly talks on Mussar and chassidus. These talks are in addition to their regular learning schedules.
- e) There is ongoing, individual, personal contact between the totally dedicated *mashgichim* and each student. The results of these are clearly apparent.

### The Viznitz Kollel in Jerusalem

The concept of Viznitz *kollels* in the Land of Israel really goes back to the beginning of the Kosov-Viznitz dynasty, when *kollels* were set up in Jerusalem, Safed and Tiberias. Over the course of time, when Viznitz chassidim moved from Jerusalem's Old City to the New City, they usually settled in the "Botei Milner" neighborhood, the place where, according to tradition, the fertilizer was poured during Temple times. It was here that the Yeshuas Yisroel shul and study hall was founded at the time of the Ahavas Yisroel.

After some years a center for rabbinical study was set up there under the direction of Rav Menachem Mendel Fuchs. He developed a learning program that involved acquiring a deep understanding of all laws studied. In 5746 (1986), after Rav Fuchs took up a position as rabbi of Ramot, the directorship of the *kollel* was transferred to Rabbi Mordechai Shlomo Steinmatz, who had vast experience in helping young men acquire knowledge in all



aspects of rabbinics. Dozens of rabbis have graduated from this *kollel*, and a number of them are already serving as the rabbis of various communities in the Holy Land.

Shortly after the first residents moved to the Viznitz neighborhood in Jerusalem's Har Nof neighborhood, a new branch of the Viznitz rabbinics *kollel* was opened there. It was led by Rabbi Mordechai Shlomo Steinmatz, while the *kollel* in the center of town was led by Rabbi Yosef Arye Deutsch. Rabbi Deutsch has written a large number of learned books, and has served in the past as lecturer at the Jerusalem's Viznitz *yeshiva ketana*, (yeshiva for younger students). There are already about a hundred young married men learning at the *kollel* in the center of the city.

The *kollel's* special qualities are the depth with which each tractate is studied with the clarifications of all Rishonim (earlier commentators), the purpose being to create people who are authorities on Jewish law. The head of the *kollel* works towards its members having both a deep and a wide-ranging knowledge of the Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch.

There is also a Friday and vacation-period *kollel*, set up at the initiative of Rabbi Deutsch. The Mishna is studied in depth with all commentaries at these *kollel* sessions, and during the final hour of each learning session one of the *kollel* members gives an analytical talk on the Mishna studied. Two volumes of "Me'oros Chaim", comprising innovative insights of the members of the Friday *kollel*, have already been published. These manifestations of their learning accomplishments serve to greater glorify the Torah.

### **The Bnos Leah Esther School and Seminary**

A girls school was established in 5741 (1981) so that girls could receive a chassidic education that followed strict Jewish tradition, preparing them to become G-d-fearing Jewesses, with fine, Jewish behavior and inner attributes.

### **Viznitz Nursery Schools for Girls**

There are a number of Viznitz nursery schools in the center of the city that educate girls from the time they are small in the traditions of chassidus.

### **Nursery Schools and Day Centers in Har Nof**

A branch of the Viznitz nursery schools was set up in 5752 (1992) in the Har Nof neighborhood. It follows the same principles as the other Viznitz nursery schools, but it also has day care centers for small children aged six months and above. Thus children can be cared for during the afternoons too, until quite late in the day.

## **Bnei Brak Institutions**

### **The Beis Yisroel and Damesek Eliezer Yeshiva**

The "jewel in the crown" of the educational institutions in Bnei Brak's Viznitz neighborhood is its *yeshiva gedola*. It has 400 students, who grow and develop in their Torah learning and spirituality. The yeshiva is headed by Rabbi Menachem Ernster, who is a son-in-law of the Rebbe. He is assisted by a team of *mashgichim* and lecturers who see it as their duty and privilege to help the students grow and develop and make the most of their abilities and talents.

### **The Yeshiva Ketana**

The boys start at the *yeshiva ketana* at about the time they become *bar mitzva*. The students study Talmud in *iyun* and *bekius*, (in depth and in breadth), study Jewish law, and learn the weekly portion of the Torah with Rashi's commentary. They are, in addition, expected to learn some 300 double-sided pages of Talmud each year with the commentaries of Rashi and Tosfos, and to be tested on them. Some of Israel's greatest rabbis have tested the boys and have expressed their amazement at the depth and scope of the youngsters' knowledge.

### **The Talmud Torah in Kiryat Viznitz**

The Talmud Torah was opened in 5722 (1951), and the number of its pupils has increased several-fold over the years. Great stress is laid on being in ongoing contact with parents. There is regular revision of material studied and there is also a *yeshiva ketana* preparatory class, where the level is higher than in the other classes, so as to ready the youngsters for their entry into yeshiva.

### **The Rabbinics Kollel**

This was the first Viznitz post-war *kollel*. It was established in 5714 (1954) and its purpose was to create rabbis who could lead decide matters of Jewish law. It has created many dozens of rabbis and *poskim* (decisors of Jewish law), many whom are now serving as the rabbis of various Israeli communities.

### **The Shas Kollel**

The Shas *Kollel* was founded so as to increase the number of scholars with a wide and deep knowledge of the whole of the Talmud. Dozens of young men are now very familiar and well versed with most of the Talmud.

### **The Rabbinics Kollel for Young Men**

A new kollel was recently established for young men who are involved in a thorough study of the laws of Shabbos. It has about eighty members.

### **The Be'er Chaim Mordechai Talmud Torah**

Bnei Brak has a second Viznitz Talmud Torah, in the center of town, in addition to the Talmud Torah in Kiryat Viznitz. It has an excellent reputation and educates its hundreds of pupils, all from chassidic homes, in the Viznitz tradition, to Torah, to chassidus, to good *middos*, and to proper behavior. The two Talmud Torahs are very similar to each other.

### **School, Seminary and Nursery Schools**

The girls school and seminary were established about twenty years ago to enable the chassidic world to educate its daughters. The school and seminary have achieved great success in educating their pupils in the chassidic manner.

### **Viznitz Ahavas Yisroel Institutions in Rechovot**

A Viznitz neighborhood was established in the town of Rechovot in 5740 (1980) so as to enable parents to help their children purchase homes in a location that was less costly than the existing Viznitz centers. This neighborhood proved very successful and a new generation is growing up there.

Residents of the neighborhood organize Torah lectures throughout the town, and spread the message of Torah and chassidus. Activities for the youth include studying and reviewing Jewish law, and reciting Psalms together.

### **Rechovot's Viznitz Kollel**

A Viznitz *kollel* opened in Rechovot when the first Viznitz families moved to the town. The young men of the neighborhood study in this *kollel*, and the neighborhood has become one of the town's leading Torah centers. The young men have been tested by some of Israel's leading rabbis, who have commented on the breadth and depth of their knowledge.

Its unique approach to learning involves researching a topic from its first principles as brought by the earlier and later commentators. The *kollel* has set itself the task of equipping its members to be *magidei shiur* (yeshiva lecturers).

## Viznitz Reemerges in America

A son of Rabbi Chaim Meir, Rabbi Mordechai Hager (son-in-law of the Skverer Rebbe, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef) continued the Viznitz legacy in the United States. At first Reb Mottele, as he is affectionately called by his followers, moved into an existing shul in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. He then moved to the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, and opened a Viznitz shul on Lee Avenue. Another Viznitz shul, with a capacity for hundreds, was started in Boro Park.

For education, Reb Mordechai first opened a Viznitz cheder with 25 children in Williamsburg, and went on to found Yeshiva Toras Chaim. A girls school, Bais Margolis, continues to educate hundreds of girls today in the Viznitz tradition.

The Rebbe saw that life in Brooklyn was not conducive to the growth of his community, and so he moved to Monsey, New York. At that time Monsey was a rural area that contained only a handful of Jews. Today, Kiryas Viznitz--Keser Village is a self-sufficient and thriving community in the Monsey area. The Viznitz community in Monsey contains a cheder, a yeshiva (Yeshiva Toras Chaim), a girls school (Bais Margolis), and a kollel (a rabbinical school for married students). Viznitz also owns and operates Camp Ahavas Yisroel for boys (in Liberty, New York), and Camp Bnos Yisroel for girls (in South Fallsburg, New York). Another crown in the jewel of Viznitz Monsey is the colossal shul, Beis Midrash Levush Mordechai, which seats 5,000 and is a tribute to the generosity of Reb Pinchas Klein, a devoted follower of the Viznitz Rebbe. Viznitz also maintains a large yeshiva in Kiamesha, New York.

**East European Localities**  
**where Viznitz Chassidim Had a Shul of their Own**

From the book "Marmorosh" by Yosef Cohen, published by Rav Sblomo Yaakov Gross

**Sigat District**

Barbashat  
Ober - Rina  
Dapalia

**Vishiva District**

Ober Vishiva  
Mital Vishiva  
Unter Vishiva  
Bursha  
Masif  
Palian - Riskva  
Patreva  
Lardina  
Bistra

**Dragmirsh District**

Rizvalia  
Sitshal  
Salitch  
Strimtra  
Shif  
Yude  
Glod

**Chost District**

Chost  
Unter - Bistra  
Harintch  
Salish

**Tatch District**

Tatch  
Bidvalia  
Bitshkopf  
Brister  
Ganitch  
Dibva  
Vilchovitz  
Tarnva  
Narsnitza  
Krossnitza

**Rachov District**

Bugdan  
Salafina  
Kvasi

**Number of Students Studying at Viznitz Institutions in Israel**

**Bnei Brak**

Talmud Torah in Kiryat Viznitz	800
Talmud Torah in center of town	250
Yeshiva ketana	168
Kollels (combined)	240
Day care centers	109
Nursery schools	340
Primary school	1050
Seminary/high school	612

**Jerusalem**

Talmud Torah	274
Yeshiva ketana	84
Yeshiva Gedola	104
Kollels (combined)	100
Day centers	116
Har Nof nursery schools	102
Girls (nursery schools, primary school, high school)	829

**Ashdod**

Talmud Torah	390
Yeshiva ketana	74
Kollel	140
Nursery schools	250
Primary school	99

**Rechovot**

Kollel	34
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BAIS YAAKOV  
MOVEMENT

# THE BAIS YAAKOV EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENT

In less than one hundred years, formal education for religious Jewish girls, which began as a result of the tireless work of one woman, has flourished with a power so intense that even the dark forces of the Holocaust could not destroy it. The Bais Yaakov (also referred to as Beth Jacob) educational network, which took root in Poland at the start of the century, revolutionized both the education of women and the mosaic of Jewish life.

Before the turn of the 20th century, Jewish girls in Eastern Europe were traditionally educated in the home by their mothers, who passed down to them Bible stories and the laws and statutes of the Torah. Boys' education, on the other hand, was more formal and took place in a wide network of "heders," "shteiblach", yeshivas and synagogues. Thus, when the winds of change--enlightenment and socialism—reached the once-isolated Jewish community around the time of the first World War, Jewish girls who thirsted for knowledge beyond their homes found a total absence of Jewish schools or even literature to read. Many enrolled in Polish public schools where anti-Semitic references abounded in schoolbooks, curriculum and attitudes.

In 1903 in Cracow, Poland, a rabbinical gathering was convened to address the issue. Yet, the first actual school was created as a private venture by Sarah Schenirer, a seamstress by profession. Thanks to her vision and yeoman efforts, "Bais Yaakov," the first institution of learning for religious Jewish girls, opened its doors in 1918 in Cracow. Twenty-five young women made up the first student body, and the number soon grew to 80. Mrs. Schenirer began travelling throughout the country to set up additional branches of the school. She handpicked students who excelled to become teachers for the new institutions. By 1921, new Bais Yaakov schools opened in Tarnow and Ostrowitz. Within five years of the opening of the first school, Mrs. Schenirer's unflagging, one-woman effort led to the establishment of 54 schools throughout Europe, serving thousands of young Jewish women.

In 1924, the Agudas Yisrael (Agudath Israel) movement became the sponsor of the Bais Yaakov institutions. As a result, the well-developed Agudath Yisrael newspapers and publications became vehicles for publicizing Bais Yaakov's activities. Agudath Yisrael officials established contact with the Polish educational system in order to take advantage of benefits offered to public schools. Tremendous momentum ensued, and within a short time Bais Yaakov schools and teacher-training centers were established in cities and towns throughout Poland, Lithuania, Rumania, Hungary and Austria. The impact on families and Jewish community life at large was intense and widespread.

The Bais Yaakov network in Poland was composed of three types of schools:

A. Schools with a full academic program, including Jewish and secular studies, and recognized by the Polish government as having equal rights and standing to Polish public



schools (secular studies were adapted by Bais Yaakov to conform to the spirit of religious Jewish thinking).

B. Schools with a Jewish studies program only, operating at specific hours of the day, usually after school or on Sundays. These schools served girls who attended Polish schools for secular studies.

C. High school and vocational schools named "Ohel Sarah" in memory of their founder, Sarah Schenirer, which offered a distinctive curriculum of high-level Jewish studies, Hebrew, and Yiddish.

A Bais Yaakov report from the year 1935 indicates the following statistics:

Poland:	225 schools, 27,119 students
Czechoslovakia:	18 schools, 1569 students
Rumania:	18 schools, 1292 students
Lithuania:	16 schools, 2000 students

Documentation with details of the exact number of Bais Yaakov schools operating at the outbreak of WWII has been lost or destroyed, but testimony from survivors and correspondence indicate that the total number of young women studying in Bais Yaakov schools in Europe at that time reached around 38,000. From the founding of the first school until the outbreak of WWII, a total of 80,000 women studied at Bais Yaakov institutions.

According to the testimony of survivors, Bais Yaakov institutions existed in large Polish cities such as Cracow, Warsaw, Lodz, Brisk, and Lublin. In Lithuania, schools were located in Kovna and Vilna and in Rumania, in Chernovitz. The influence of these large institutions reverberated to outlying towns--Bais Yaakov schools are known to have existed in such places as Bendin, Tamov, Khashnov, Uzrikov, Mazovitzia, Katowitz, Billetz, Baronowitz, Cicszin, Sofnovitz, Szcmmeszye, Lomsa, Sakranowitz, and Minsk-Mazovitzk.

#### **The Bais Yaakov Seminary in Cracow:**

This teacher's seminary, the flagship institute of the Bais Yaakov network in Poland, was established in 1929. The building still stands today on the banks of the Visla, at #10 Stanislava Street. Renowned as one of the finest teachers' seminaries, the Cracow school served as the spiritual resource and inspiration for students and institutions affiliated with the Bais Yaakov network. Similar teachers' seminaries were opened in Vilna and Chernovitz.

Young women from all parts of Poland, as well as from other countries in Europe and even the U.S. and Canada, came to Bais Yaakov in Cracow to pursue special teacher-training courses. Afterwards, they served as teachers throughout the Jewish world. Many young, dedicated teachers from the Bais Yaakov system were attracted to the Cracow

seminar for special summer sessions held in the Tatra mountains. Sarah Schenirer headed the professional staff of the seminary until her death in 1937.

During the terrible years of Nazi rule, Bais Yaakov teachers played a special role in preserving Jewish study for their pupils wherever possible, and their pure devotion to their work and to the Jewish People served as an inspiration to the entire community. From the writings of headmaster Rabbi Eliezer Gershon Friedenзон:

*"The Bais Yaakov schools continued to function during the first days of the Nazi conquest at a time when the mere appearance of teachers in the street constituted a huge risk to their lives. These schools persevered even when operating a school to teach Torah was totally forbidden by the authorities. Bais Yaakov teachers ran the schools in secret in cities, towns, and private homes."*

The Cracow Seminary, which became a refugee camp during the War, nevertheless continued to operate. Teachers and students drew courage from the seminary's director, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Orlean, who helped them continue to instruct Jewish children, wherever possible, under extreme hardship. At great risk, young women continued to study in secret in such places as Lodz, Bendin, Tarnov, and other locales.

In the ghettos of Vilna and Kovna in Lithuania, Bais Yaakov teachers such as Ella Shmuelovitz, Mrs. R. Stenbach-Tsort, "Faige the Rabbi's Daughter" and others were well-known for strengthening and encouraging young Jewish women in adhering to observing *mitzvot*, the Sabbath and modesty even in the face of "kiddush ha-Shem," dying in the name of the Almighty.

Stories abound of Bais Yaakov students who risked their lives to bring food from smaller towns to those in need in the city, to prison camps, and to hospitals. Tales of bravery are told of Bais Yaakov students and teachers who perished in Auschwitz, Birkenau, Majdanik and Bergen Belsen by Jews and Christians who survived.

At the close of the war, while mourning the 11,000 Bais Yaakov students who had perished, the surviving, weakened remnants of the movement -- a group of teachers and principals -- valiantly carried on with their holy mission in the face of terrible hardship, setting up schools for the children who were now in refugee camps. Bais Yaakov schools were established in Germany, Austria, Sweden and France and Italy. These institutions played a crucial role in the physical and spiritual rehabilitation of the young Jewish women who had survived the horrors of the war. Bais Yaakov schools were also set up in Siberia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Rumania, where they continued to function until the Soviet takeover. Branches of the institution even operated as far away as Shanghai and the displaced persons camps in Cyprus.

### **Bais Yaakov in Israel**

In 1924, the year of the large Polish religious aliyah, many of those who had educated their daughters in Bais Yaakov schools worked to establish similar schools in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Pinchas Hacohen Lewin, a leading Polish religious educator, was brought from Warsaw to serve as headmaster of a new teachers' institute in Jerusalem, assuring the continuity of both the curriculum of study and the spirit of the Polish Bais Yaakov institutions. A policy decision was taken in Jerusalem, however, to conduct all classes in Hebrew rather than Yiddish in order to enable the students to play active roles in the developing Jewish state. Throughout the years, numbers of teachers who had graduated from the Polish Bais Yaakov joined the faculty of the Jerusalem Bais Yaakov Teachers' Seminary. In the wake of the Holocaust, special dormitories and study programs were set up for young survivors.

From the day the teachers' institute first opened its doors in Jerusalem, the school was received with great enthusiasm by the many religious communities of the city. As a result, problems of overcrowding plagued the schools for decades. When a high school and teachers' seminary were later established, their classes were held during the evening hours in the premises of the already over-full elementary school. Throughout the years, Bais Yaakov moved several times to rented locations until at last major efforts were made to acquire the present large educational complex in the northern part of Jerusalem.

The horrific devastation of Eastern Europe by the Nazis left six million of our people martyred, and reduced glorious Jewish communities to ruin. Only ashes remained of nearly every one of the numerous Bais Yaakov school buildings throughout Poland and surrounding countries. World Jewry now looked to the Bais Yaakov movement in Jerusalem to carry the beacon of religious education for women which had been lit and nearly extinguished in Eastern Europe. The Israeli Bais Yaakov movement thus assumed the daunting task of rebuilding the Jewish world by providing the finest education for its daughters and for generations to come.

### **The Bais Yaakov Teachers' Institute in Jerusalem**

Today, the Bais Yaakov Teachers' Institute in Jerusalem is the largest institution of its kind in the world, with a total of over 20,000 graduates since its inception. Like the original Bais Yaakov Teachers' Seminar of Cracow, the institute has served as a primary source for training teachers from communities around the entire Jewish world. Graduates have gone on to teach and even establish new schools in their own cities and towns across the globe. The present student body of the Bais Yaakov Institute in Jerusalem numbers around 3000 women from 65 locations in Israel and over 35 cities internationally. Today's Bais Yaakov students are given the finest Jewish education as well as pedagogic specialization in computers, mathematics, graphics, art, English, music and the sciences. Young women from abroad receive quality training to become teachers of Jewish studies in their local communities.

### **Bais Yaakov Schools Around the World**

Today, there are many hundreds of Bais Yaakov schools in Israel and in the United States, and there are schools bearing the name of Bais Yaakov in virtually every major Jewish community in the world. Tens of thousands of students, from pre-kindergarten

through post-secondary, currently attend these institutions, all of which are heirs to the original schools founded by Sarah Schenirer in 1918.

Through radical political change, even in the face of the darkest times for Jews around the world, the Bais Yaakov movement has remained true to its goals and ideals. From its bold, yet humble beginnings in pre-War Poland, Bais Yaakov has profoundly changed the face of education for religious Jewish women - with profound, positive ramifications for the future of Judaism around the world.

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We appreciate the assistance of the following people:

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Mrs. Adina Mendelson, Director of the Agudath Yisrael Archives at the Bais Yaakov Institute in Jerusalem.



# PART III

LIST OF YESHIVOS AND  
KEHILLOS THAT HAVE  
SUBMITTED INFORMATION  
AS OF FEBRUARY 2000

**LIST OF YESHIVOS AND KEHILLOS THAT HAVE SUBMITTED  
INFORMATION AS OF FEBRUARY 2000**

1.	Agudath Israel World Organization, New York, NY
2.	Aish HaTorah College, Minsk
3.	Aish HaTorah, Kiev
4.	Alexander Chassidus, Bnei Brak
5.	Amshinov Chassidus, Brooklyn, Monsey, Jerusalem, and Bnei Brak
6.	Associated Beth Rivkah Schools-Lubavitch, Brooklyn, NY
7.	Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, Cleveland, Ohio
8.	Bais Dovid Kishinov, Kiryat Gat
9.	Bais Hamussar and Kollel Michtav Melyiyohu, Bait Vegan, Israel
10.	Bais Medrosh Elyon, Monsey, NY
11.	Bais Midrash Halacha Le'Moshe, Jerusalem
12.	Bais Midrash Kehal Kedoshim and Kollel Avreichim Kehilas Yitzchak, Bnei Brak
13.	Bais Midrash Pachad Yitzchok, Jerusalem
14.	Bais Midrash She'eris Yoseph Asher, Jerusalem
15.	Bais Reuven Kamenitz, Lakewood, NJ
16.	Bais Yaakov Chofetz Chaim of Pomona, Pomona, NY
17.	Bais Yaakov Elementary School, Toronto, Canada
18.	Bais Yaakov High School of Chicago, Chicago, IL
19.	Be'er Avrohom Institutions, Jerusalem
20.	Beatrice Stone Yavne High School, Division of the Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Ohio
21.	Beer Yosef Tzvi, Jerusalem
22.	Beis Hamidrash Avir Yaakov, Tel Aviv
23.	Beis Midrash Trisk, Jerusalem
24.	Beit Midrash Gavoha for Halacha in Agricultural Settlements, Jerusalem
25.	Beit Midrash Gavoha LeTorah, Jerusalem
26.	Belz institutions, Israel, Brooklyn and Monsey, NY, Montreal, Antwerp, London and Manchester, Vienna, Zurich, Melbourne
27.	Berliner Congregation Kahal Kneseth Israel, Brooklyn, NY
28.	Beth David Institutions, Bnei Brak
29.	Beth Hatalmud (Kollel Mir), Brooklyn, NY
30.	Beth Jacob High School of Denver, Denver, CO
31.	Beth Medrash Govoha, Lakewood, NJ
32.	Beth Midrash "Torah Chesed", Bnei Brak
33.	Beth Midrash for High Talmud Studies, in memory of the communities of Cracow/ Podgorze, Bnei Brak
34.	Biala Institutions, Israel
35.	Birchat Naftali Shmuel Kollel for Rabbinic Studies, Jerusalem

36.	Bnos Yisroel School for Girls, Brooklyn, NY
37.	Bobov Institutions of Toronto, Toronto, Canada
38.	Bobover Yeshiva Bnei Zion, Brooklyn, NY
39.	Breslov Center for Spirituality and Inner Growth, Brooklyn, NY
40.	Buhush Institutions, Bnei Brak
41.	Camp Ahavas/Bnos Israel, Ferndale and South Fallsburg, NY
42.	Center of Chasidei Nadvorne, Bnei Brak
43.	Central Institutions of Karlin Stolín, Jerusalem
44.	Central Institutions of Zwehil, Jerusalem
45.	Central Organization for Jewish Education (Chabad Lubavitch of Pacific Northwest), Seattle, Washington
46.	Central Yeshiva Beth Joseph Rabbinical Seminary, Brooklyn, NY
47.	Chabad Center/Shabbos House, Albany, NY
48.	Chasidei Dorog Institutions, Bnei Brak
49.	Chasidei Lublin Institutions, Bnei Brak
50.	Chasidic Center Piasecne, Tel Aviv
51.	Cheder Mishkenos Yaakov, Bnei Brak
52.	Chesed L'Avraham, Brooklyn, NY
53.	Chesed L'Avraham Institutions, Israel
54.	Chinuch Atzmai, Israel
55.	Chug Chasam Sofer, Bnei Brak
56.	Congregation Ahavas Dovid, Brooklyn, NY
57.	Congregation and Yeshiva Chaishek Shlomo, Brooklyn, NY
58.	Congregation Bais Malka of Monsey, Monsey, NY
59.	Congregation Bais Yitzchok-Turka, Brooklyn, NY
60.	Congregation Beth Aaron of Flatbush, Brooklyn, NY
61.	Congregation Beth Aron V'Israel D'chasidei Karlin Stolín, Brooklyn, NY
62.	Congregation Beth Jehudah, Yeshiva Elementary School, and the Milwaukee Kollel, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
63.	Congregation Boyaner Kloiz Tiferes Mordechai Shlomo and other Boyan congregations in New York and Israel
64.	Congregation Chasam Sofer, Los Angeles, CA
65.	Congregation Chemdath Torah V'Chesed, Brooklyn, NY
66.	Congregation Chessed V'Emes D'Avrohom Benevolent Fund, Brooklyn
67.	Congregation Divrei Chaim of Zmigrod, Brooklyn, NY
68.	Congregation Ezra Bessaroth, Seattle, Washington
69.	Congregation Hisachdus Yir'eim Veretzky, Brooklyn, NY
70.	Congregation Kahal Adas Krasne of Boro Park, Congregation Kahal Adas Krasne of Williamsburg, Yeshiva Bais Hillel D'Krasne, Yeshiva Toldos Hillel D'Krasne, and other institutions, Brooklyn, NY
71.	Congregation Kahal Minchas Chinuch of Tarnopol-Tartikov, Kolel Beth Yechiel Mechil, Kolel Beth Alexander Usher, Rabbinical Court of Kolel Tartikov, and other institutions of Tartikov-Tarnipol, Brooklyn, NY and other New York locations



72.	Congregation Khal Torah Chaim and other Viznitz congregations, Monsey and Brooklyn, NY, and Montreal, Quebec
73.	Congregation Machzikei Torah Bnei Aaron of the Beitcher Rabbi, Brooklyn, NY
74.	Congregation Mareh Yecheskel D'Shomkut, Brooklyn, NY
75.	Congregation Minyan Mir, Brooklyn, NY
76.	Congregation Naroler Beth Hamedrash of Flatbush, Brooklyn, NY
77.	Congregation of Gorlice, Brooklyn, NY
78.	Congregation of New Square, Mosdos Chasidei Square, Shekel Hakodesh, and Bais Pinchos of Square, New Square, NY; Toldos Yakov Yosef of Monsey, Brooklyn, Jerusalem, London, and Antwerp; and Chernobil Kolel Square of Zefat, Israel
79.	Congregation Radziner Beth Hamedrash, Brooklyn, NY
80.	Congregation Torah Veyirah D'Satmar of Lakewood, Lakewood, NJ
81.	Congregation Yeshiva Avir Yakov, Spring Valley, NY
82.	Congregation Zera Kodesh D'Shendishov, Brooklyn, NY
83.	Congregation Zvi Lezadik--Blazow, Brooklyn, NY
84.	Czernobil Institutions, Bnei Brak
85.	Derech Ayson Rabbinical Seminary/Yeshiva of Far Rockaway, NY
86.	Educational Center for Girls, Bais Leah-Banya, Jerusalem
87.	Eitz Chaim-Toras Shraga Yeshiva, Jerusalem
88.	Endowment for Democracy in Eastern Europe
89.	Erste Lutowisker Chevra Machzikei Hadas, New York, NY
90.	Esh-Dat Rabbinical Seminary, Tel Aviv
91.	Federated Council of Beth Jacob Schools, Brooklyn, NY
92.	Friends of Lubavitch of Florida, Miami Beach, FL
93.	Gerer Yeshiva and Mesivta Bais Yisroel, Brooklyn, NY
94.	Givurat Yaakov Organization, Bnei Brak
95.	Gorlitz-Sanz Institutions, Bnei Brak
96.	Hechal Abraham Elimelech Yeshiva, Bnei Brak
97.	Heichal Hatorah-Pressburg Yeshiva, Jerusalem
98.	Heichal Menachem Institutions, Jerusalem
99.	Heichal Yehoshua—Jeruslav, Jerusalem
100.	High College for Rabbis "EtzJoseph", Pinsk, Jerusalem
101.	Hisachdus Talmiday and Yotsey Seakelihid, Bnei Brak and Jerusalem
102.	Imrei Noam Yeshiva, Jerusalem
103.	Institutions of the Mako Jeshivot, Kiryat Ata, Israel
104.	K'hal Adath Jeshurun, New York, NY
105.	K'hal Kedushas Levi D'Berditchev, Monsey, NY
106.	K'hal Sgulos Yisroel Anshei Sfard D'Monsey, Monsey, NY
107.	K'hal Shem M'Shmu'el D'Matersdorf, Brooklyn, NY
108.	Kamenitz Yeshiva, Jerusalem
109.	K'hal Ungvar, Brooklyn, NY
110.	Kehillos Yaakov Yeshiva, Chazon Yechezkel, Israel
111.	Kiryat Ata Yeshiva Ketana, Kiryat Ata

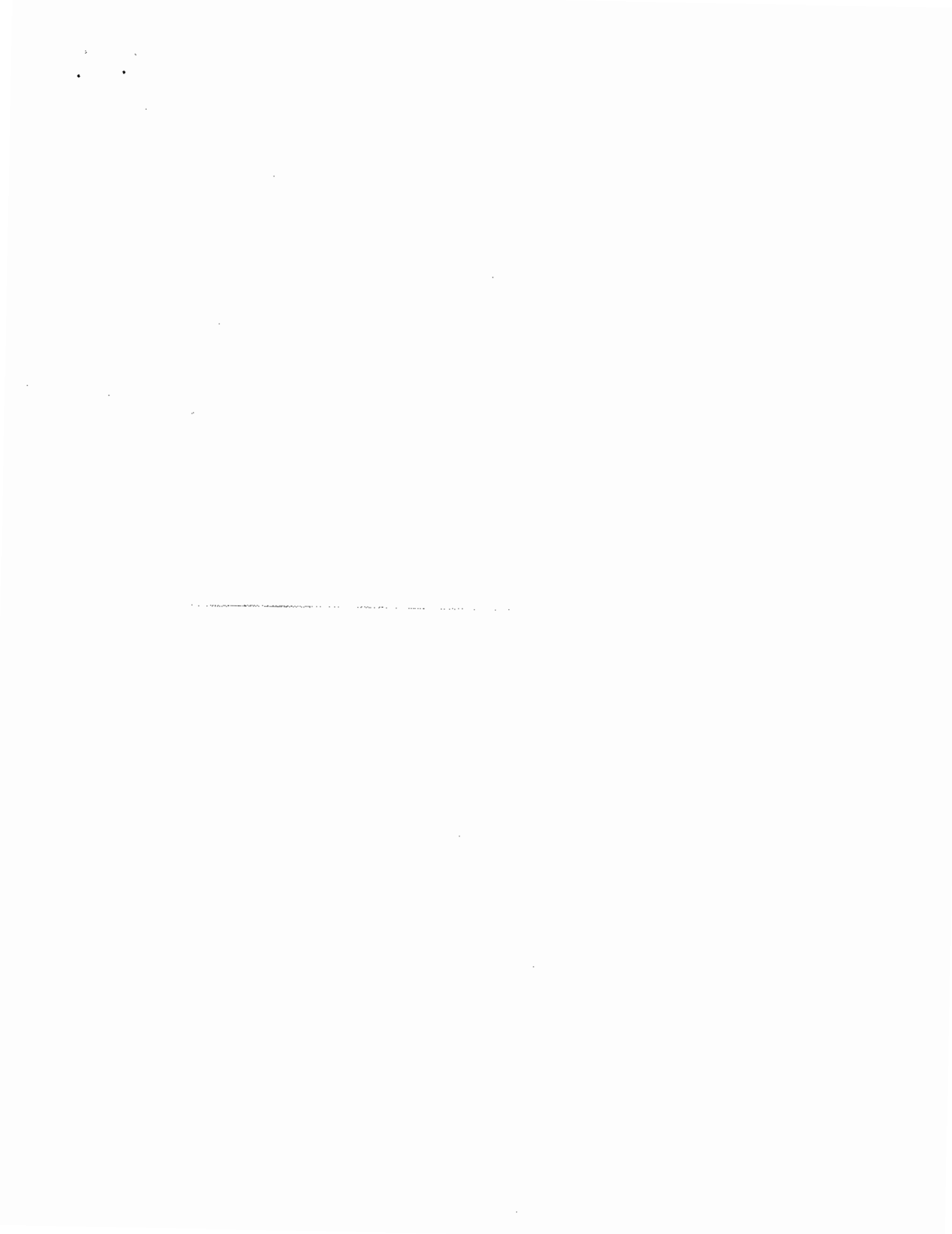
112.	Kiryat Knesset Yehuda – Brisk, Rabbi Meir Malin, Yehud, Israel
113.	Kiryat Mattersdorf and Kiryat Sheva, Jerusalem, Israel
114.	Kiryat Sanz Institutions, Netanya
115.	Kiryat Telshe-Stone, Jerusalem
116.	Kiryat Ungvar, Jerusalem
117.	Koidinov Torah Center, Bnei Brak
118.	Kol Torah Rabbinical College, Jerusalem
119.	Kollel Arugath Habosem, Jerusalem
120.	Kollel Avreichim Yad Rama, Kiryat Gat
121.	Kollel Avriechim Meztuyonim—Ohel Israel, Kiryat Sefer
122.	Kollel Chibas, Jerusalem
123.	Kollel Daas Yoseph, Ashdod
124.	Kollel Divrei Shir, Bnei Brak
125.	Kollel Hod, Jerusalem
126.	Kollel Kodashim Lev Aryeh, Jerusalem
127.	Kollel Lackenbach and Mesivta Panim Meiros, Bnei Brak
128.	Kollel Meimei Chaim, Jerusalem
129.	Kollel Nachlath Yechiel, Bnei Brak
130.	Kollel Ohr Yitzchok Bikovsk, congregation, Camp Horim, and Bais Din, Brooklyn, NY
131.	Kollel Polin, Jerusalem
132.	Kollel Shomrei Hachomos, Jerusalem
133.	Kollel Toras Zeraim, Jerusalem
134.	Kollel U'Mesivta Maharam Shick, Jerusalem
135.	Kosov Centre for Torah and Prayer, Jerusalem and Sfas, Israel
136.	Kosuw Institutions in Jerusalem
137.	Kretshenef Institutions, Rehovot
138.	Liska Institutions, Bnei Brak
139.	Machon Bais Yaakov, Brooklyn, NY
140.	Machon Bais Yaakov Seminary, Brooklyn, NY
141.	Machon Meharam Brisk, Monsey, NY
142.	Megaleh Amukot Kraka High Beith Midrash for Halacha and Dayanut, Jerusalem
143.	Mercaz HaChinuch, Jerusalem
144.	Mercaz Hatorah of Belle Harbor, NY
145.	Merkaz Mosdot Miskolc, Petach Tikva
146.	Mesivta Keser Torah of Central Jersey, Belmar, New Jersey
147.	Mesivta Tifereth Israel of Rizhin, New York, NY
148.	Mesivta Tifereth Israel of Rizhin, Jerusalem; Yeshivas Boyan, Brooklyn
149.	Montreal Community Kollel, Montreal, Quebec
150.	Mosdos Boston, Jerusalem
151.	Mosdos Breslov, Bnei Brak; Yeshiva Chasidei Brelov, Jerusalem; Mosdos Ohr Zoreyach of Emanuel
152.	Mosdos Cleveland, Rannana, Israel
153.	Mosdos Klausenburg, Brooklyn, NY

154.	Mosdos Lelov, Jerusalem and Bnei Brak
155.	Mosdos Naroler, Bnei Brak, Israel
156.	Mosdos Niametz, Kiryat Gat
157.	Mosdos Ostrowce, Jerusalem
158.	Mosdos Seret-Viznitz, Haifa
159.	Mosdos Spinka, Bnei Brak
160.	Mosdos Vishvi-Viznitz, Jerusalem and Bnei Brak
161.	Mosdos Chavos Da'as, Jerusalem
162.	Mosdos Shaarei Yosher, Jerusalem
163.	Narol Institutions, Bnei Brak
164.	Neshchiz Institutions, Bnei Brak
165.	Netivot Olam Yeshiva, Bnei Brak
166.	Network of Institutions of the Kiryah, Kiryat Sefer, Israel
167.	Neve Yerushalayim College, Jerusalem, Israel
168.	Nitra Yeshiva, Mount Kisco, NY
169.	Noam Elimelech Institutions, Jerusalem
170.	Ohel Miriam Yeshiva, Jerusalem
171.	Ohel Yosef Institute, Tel Aviv
172.	Ohev Israel Institutions, Jerusalem
173.	Ohr Somayach Institutions, Jerusalem
174.	Or L'Yesharim Yeshiva and Kollel, Beit Shemesh
175.	Or Neshama, Jerusalem, Israel
176.	Or Yisrael Yeshiva, Petach Tikva
177.	Orthodox Congregation of Kanizsa, Brooklyn, NY
178.	Orthodox Israelite Congregation of Zenta, Brooklyn, NY
179.	Paksh Memorial Institutions, Bnei Brak
180.	Phoenix Preparatory High School, Phoenix, Arizona
181.	Project Tifereth Bahourim – Kollel Yesodot HaTorah, Yasodot, Israel
182.	Rabbinical College of Telshe, Wickliffe, OH
183.	Radzin Institutions, Bnei Brak
184.	Scranton Hebrew Day School, Scranton, PA
185.	Seminar Bais Yaakov of Monsey, NY
186.	Shaarei Daat Talmud Torah and Kollel Knesset Yerucham, Jerusalem
187.	Shearit Israel Social and Educational Institutions, Korosten, Ukraine
188.	Shomrei Emunim Institutions, Bnei Brak and Jerusalem
189.	Sifsei Chachamim—Institute for the Dissimination of Torah and Mussar Bnei Brak, Israel
190.	Strikov Institutions, Bnei Brak
191.	Stropkov Yeshivos in Israel
192.	Sulitza Kehilla, Jerusalem
193.	Talmud Torah Rabbi Akiva Zichron Meir, Bnei Brak
194.	Tarnowzag-Dzikov Institutions, Jerusalem
195.	Telshe Yeshiva, Chicago, IL
196.	Temima High School for Girls, Atlanta, GA
197.	The Bialystocker Yeshiva, Jerusalem

198.	The Chakover Yeshiva – Divrei Chaim – Zanz, Jerusalem
199.	The Chassidic Torah Center, Jerusalem
200.	The Great Yeshivah Ohel Shimon of Erlau, Jerusalem
201.	The International Committee for the Rehabilitation and Upkeep of Jewish Cemeteries, Jerusalem, Israel
202.	The Menachem Mendel Seattle Cheder and Girls' High School, Seattle, Washington
203.	The Rabbi Chaim Ozer Institute for Talmudic Studies, Bnei Brak
204.	The Radin Yeshiva – Modiin Elite
205.	The Wurzburger Rav Torah Academy Meleches Shomayim, Bnei Brak
206.	Tiferes Hatorah Kollel, Jerusalem
207.	Tomchei Temimim Yeshivos in Israel
208.	Torah Ore Institutions, Jerusalem
209.	Torah Prep School, St. Louis, Missouri
210.	Toras Emes Bais Hatalmud and Mesivta, Bnei Brak
211.	Torat Chayim Educational Center, Ashkelon
212.	Tsechenov Institutions, Jerusalem
213.	Union of Jewish Communities in Eastern Europe, Kiev, Ukraine
214.	United Talmudical Academy of Kiryas Joel, Monroe, NY
215.	Universal Shtefanisht Center, Bnei Brak
216.	World Center of Ruzhin-Sadigura Institutions, Bnei Brak
217.	Yedisha Kultus Gemeimde, Pawling, NY
218.	Yeshiva Ahavas Torah – Baranovich, Jerusalem
219.	Yeshiva Ahavas/Bnos Israel, Brooklyn, NY
220.	Yeshiva and Mesifta Be'er Shmuel, Brooklyn, NY and Bnei Brak, Israel
221.	Yeshiva Atenia, Bnei Brak
222.	Yeshiva Bais Yosef Novardok, Jerusalem; Yeshiva Bais Hillel-Bais Yosef, Bnei Brak; Yeshiva Bais Mattisyahu-Beis Yosef, Bnei Brak; Knesset Yitzchak-Bais Yosef Institutions, Hadera
223.	Yeshiva Baranowitz, Gedera
224.	Yeshiva Beth David, Monsey, NY
225.	Yeshiva Beth Shearim, Brooklyn, NY and Jerusalem, Israel
226.	Yeshiva Darchei Limud, Jerusalem
227.	Yeshiva Gedolah Zichron Yosef Aryeh, Jerusalem
228.	Yeshiva Gevoha of Ger in America, Brooklyn, NY
229.	Yeshiva Karlin Stolin of Monsey, NY
230.	Yeshiva Kehilath Yakov of Pupa, New York
231.	Yeshiva Keser Torah Radomsk, Brooklyn, NY
232.	Yeshiva Ketana of Manhattan, New York, NY
233.	Yeshiva Kneses Hatorah, Bnei Brak
234.	Yeshiva Knesset Yisrael, Hebron
235.	Yeshiva Neveh Zion, Harei Yehuda, Israel
236.	Yeshiva of New Haven, New Haven, Connecticut
237.	Yeshiva of Nitra Rabbinical College, Brooklyn, NY
238.	Yeshiva of the Telshe Alumni, Riverdale, NY

239.	Yeshiva Ohr Elchanan – Mesifteh Ohel Torah Baranowitch Institutions, Jerusalem
240.	Yeshiva Ohr Elchonon Chabad, Los Angeles, CA
241.	Yeshiva Ohr Shraga D'Veletzky, Brooklyn, NY
242.	Yeshiva Shaar Ephraim, Monsey, NY
243.	Yeshiva Sharei Hayosher, Brooklyn, NY
244.	Yeshiva Shearis Yisroel—The Veitzener Cheder, Chicago, IL
245.	Yeshiva Toras Chaim, Denver, CO
246.	Yeshiva Tzemach Tzadik Viznitz, Congregation Khal Tzemach Tzadik Wiznitz, and Congregation Tzemach Tzadik Viznitz, Brooklyn and Monsey, NY
247.	Yeshiva Yagdil Torah, Brooklyn, NY
248.	Yeshiva Zichron Meilech, Brooklyn, NY
249.	Yeshivah Ch'san Sofer Rabbinical Seminary, Brooklyn, NY
250.	Yeshivas Ateret Israel and Bnei Torah Movement, Jerusalem
251.	Yeshivas Bais Avraham of Slonim, Israel; Mosdos Chasidei Slonim, Bnei Brak
252.	Yeshivas Be'er Yaakov, Be'er Yaakov, Israel
253.	Yeshivas Boyan Tiferes Mordechai Shlomo, Brooklyn, NY
254.	Yeshivas Brisk, Chicago, IL
255.	Yeshivas Chug Chasam Sofer Machne Avraham, Bnei Brak
256.	Yeshivas HaGaon M'Tshebin, Jerusalem
257.	Yeshivas Hamasmidim community, Jerusalem
258.	Yeshivas Knesses Yehuda Institutions, Jerusalem
259.	Yeshivas Knesset Hezekiah, Kfar Chasidim
260.	Yeshivas Meor Enaim of Tchernoble, Jerusalem
261.	Yeshivas Mishkan Yaakov, Haifa
262.	Yeshivas Novominsk-Kol Yehuda, Brooklyn, NY
263.	Yeshivas Ramailes Netzach Yisrael, Jerusalem
264.	Yeshivas Slabodka, Bnei Brak
265.	Yeshivas Slonim, Ramat Gan
266.	Yeshivas Tifereth Bachurim D'Vilna, Ashdod
267.	Yeshivas Toldos Yaakov, Jerusalem
268.	Yeshivas Toras Moshe, Jerusalem
269.	Yeshivas Vyelipol, Brooklyn, NY
270.	Yeshivat Amudei Olam, Haifa; Talmud Torah Avnei Shlomo, Jerusalem
271.	Yeshivat Chachmai Lublin, Bnei Brak
272.	Yeshivat Chevron Geula, Jerusalem
273.	Yeshivat Dvar Yerushalayim, Frankfurt Haus and Jewish Frankfurt Heritage Center, Jerusalem, Israel
274.	Yeshivat Dvar Yerushalayim, Jerusalem
275.	Yeshivat Iyun Hatalmud, Kiryat Sefer
276.	Yeshivat Lomza, Petach Tikvah
277.	Yeshivat Meharam Umeharatz Brisk, Natanya, Israel
278.	Yeshivat Meor Hatalmud—The Torah Center of Rehovot

279.	Yeshivat Ofakim
280.	Yeshivat Sochatshow, Jerusalem
281.	Yeshivath HaRambam, Seattle, Washington
282.	Yeshivath Spinka, Brooklyn, NY
283.	Zichron Nahum Institutions, Bnei Brak
284.	Zichron Zvi Talmud Torah, Jerusalem
285.	Zion Orphanage, Jerusalem



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

IN RE  
HOLOCAUST VICTIM ASSETS LITIGATION

Master Docket No. CV-96-4849  
(ERK) (MDG)  
(Consolidated with CV 96-5161  
and CV-97-461)

AGUDATH ISRAEL WORLD ORGANIZATION  
SUBMISSION TO THE HONORABLE EDWARD R. KORMAN  
RE: SPECIAL MASTER JUDAH GRIBETZ'S PROPOSED PLAN OF  
ALLOCATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE SETTLEMENT PROCEEDS

GENERAL PROPOSITIONS

- (1) The principal considerations underlying the position of Agudath Israel World Organization (AIWO), concerning the settlement amount of \$1.25 billion, and the manner in which it ought to be allocated, may be summarized as follows:
- (2) Discussions regarding the allocation and distribution of proceeds of the Swiss Bank Settlement case have centered on the entitlements and needs of individual survivors of the Holocaust. And of course this is entirely as it should be. Those who had their possessions taken, their surroundings destroyed and their lives uprooted, and were forced to rebuild from the ashes, surely stand on the firmest moral ground in laying claim to restitution. Apart from those who actually perished at the hands of the Nazis, they were unquestionably the worst-affected victims or targets of Nazi persecution. Those of us born after World War II, and raised in a benevolent and affluent Western democratic milieu, can only stand with humility in their presence, and marvel at the heroism of spirit that enabled so many of them to rebuild their lives after what they suffered and witnessed.
- (3) The Swiss Bank Settlement Agreement recognizes this in a number of ways, perhaps most centrally in its definition of "Victim or Target of Nazi persecution", which begins by referring to "any individual... persecuted or targeted for persecution by the Nazi Regime because they were or were believed to be Jewish..."
- (4) At the same time, though, it is important to bear in mind that the definition of "Victim or Target of Nazi persecution" goes on to include any "community, congregation, group, organization or other entity which was persecuted or targeted for persecution by the Nazi Regime because they were or were believed to be Jewish..."
- (5) That the definition in the Agreement extends to a range of entities other than individuals - including, among others, yeshivos (schools and institutes of Torah studies) and



kehilos (religious congregations or communities defining themselves by reference to some common geographic, social or religious bond) that were destroyed or targeted for destruction – is really no more than the recognition of an important historical fact: Just as the Nazis sought to exterminate all individual Jews (and tragically succeeded to the extent of 6,000,000), so too did they seek to destroy a whole culture, or way of life, as embodied in the educational and communal institutions that promoted that uniquely Jewish way of life. And it is this fact that underpins, in a moral and historical sense, the inclusion of yeshivos and kehilos (among others) in the legal definition of Victims or Targets of Nazi persecution.

- (6) The detailed AIWO position is contained in the Submission to Special Master Judah Gribetz, dated February 22, 2000, a copy of which is enclosed herewith. The position taken in that submission is hereby preserved in the event there are any further proceedings in this matter.

RECOMMENDATIONS THAT FOLLOW FROM THE GENERAL PROPOSITIONS

- (7) Residual Funds: We welcome Special Master Gribetz's recognition of the role and significance of institutions such as yeshivos and kehilos, when he proposes that, in the event of residual funds remaining, following what he refers to as "Stage 1" payments:

"[I]t also may [then] be possible to allocate a portion of the remaining Settlement Fund to some of the proposed cultural, memorial or educational projects that have been submitted to the Special Master. To that end, the Special Master recommends that the Court review institutional proposals once an evaluation of the bank account claims, as well as the claims submitted by the other four classes, is completed." (pp19-20)

However, AIWO would respectfully submit that, in light of the clear recognition by the Settlement Agreement of the role of institutions such as yeshivos and kehilos as victims or targets of Nazi persecution, specific provision ought to be made in the court's order for allocations to be made to them in the event of a residual indeed remaining.

- (8) Looted Assets Class: (a) Given that the Settlement Agreement itself defines "Victim or Target of Nazi Persecution" to include institutions such as yeshivos and kehilos, it follows that they, too, fall within the "Looted Assets Class". Once again, this

Agudath Israel World Organization  
Submission To The Honorable Edward R. Korman  
November 6, 2000  
Page Three

constitutes the recognition of an historical fact that yeshivos and kehilos, no less than individuals, owned tangible assets that were looted by the Nazis.

We therefore welcome the Special Master's inclusion of institutions such as yeshivos and kehilos in the looted assets class:

“Nor does the Special Master overlook the immeasurable losses sustained by educational, religious and other communal institutions at the hands of the Nazis.”  
(p19)

We find it somewhat anomalous, however, that despite such explicit recognition, the Special Master's recommended allocation for the looted assets class includes no allocation whatsoever for yeshivos and kehilos that were sought to be destroyed in the Holocaust, and that have since been re-established in various parts of the world.

AIWO therefore respectfully submits that specific provision ought to be made in the Court's order for yeshivos and kehilos to participate in the funds allocated to compensate the looted assets class.

(b) To the extent that emphasis in the looted assets fund is placed on compensating victims or targets of Nazi persecution in the former Soviet Union, we would submit that this should be broadened to encompass the former Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe, whose Holocaust survivors are also in the same category of “double victims”, as they, too, have not received the compensation and restitution payments that their counterparts in the West have received.

(c) Finally, we submit that a share of any allocation made for the benefit of Holocaust survivors in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe should be applied for the purpose of rebuilding yeshivos and kehilos in those countries. The general basis for this is set out above. Specifically, though, it is appropriate and fitting – indeed, only just – that the spiritual needs of victims be catered to as well as their physical needs. After all, both dimensions to their lives were attacked and shattered.

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GENERAL

- (9) AIWO is, of course, not in a position to assess, or comment upon, the Special Master's estimates of the amounts that may be required to meet the claims of persons falling within the various specified classes. However, we would respectfully reserve the right to make further submissions once the numbers of victims in each class, and the likely amounts required to meet their claims, are clarified.

Dated: New York, N.Y.  
November 6, 2000

Respectfully submitted,

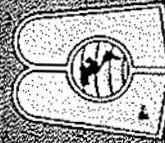
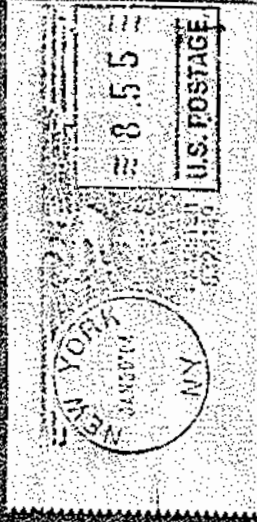
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**Agudath Israel of America**  
42 Broadway • New York, NY 10004

**To:**

Holocaust Victims Assets Litigation  
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San Francisco  
California 94128-8300



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