

The
Bohushita

*The Story of the
Town of
Lubavitch*



לעילוי נשמת
שיינא גאלדא ע"ה
בת יבלחט"א ר' מיכאל הלוי שיחי'
גוטלייזער
גלב"ע כ"ח אלול ה'תשע"ו
ת"נ צ'ב"ה

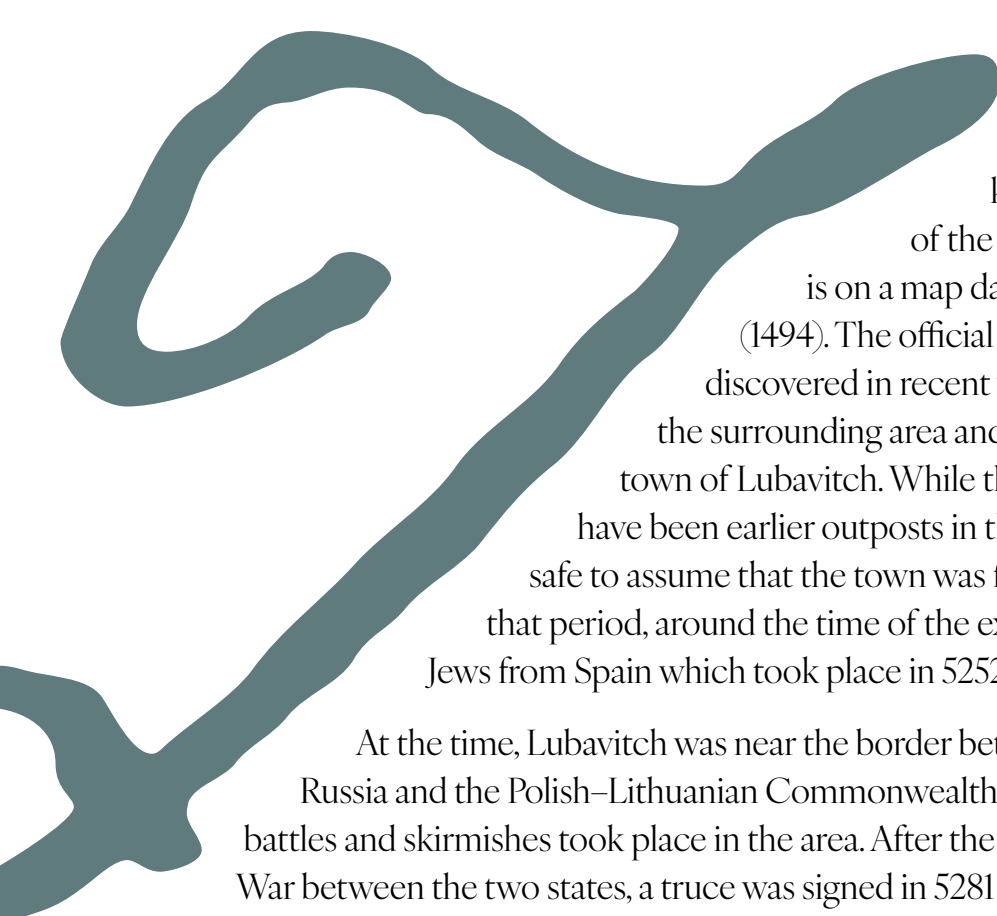
נדפס ע"י זקניה
הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר וזוגתו מרת לאה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
שפאלטר

By: Motti Wilhelm

“There were good reasons that Lubavitch was destined to play such an important role, first of all in the lives of the secret tzaddikim and mystics, and later in the lives of the Chabad Rebbes and Chassidim,” the Friediker Rebbe writes in Sefer Hazichronos.¹

Geographically, the town of Lubavitch is far from remarkable, covering less than one square mile. In the annals of Jewish history, however, the small town holds a most prominent place, having served as the seat of Chabad Chassidus for more than a century and as home to five of the seven Rabbeim.

In the following lines, we will attempt to give a brief overview of the town’s illustrious history, and to take an ink-and-paper pilgrimage to Lubavitch, through the *zichronos* of Chassidim and others who experienced it firsthand.



he earliest known mention of the name ‘Lubavitch’ is on a map dated circa 5254 (1494). The official document, discovered in recent years², shows the surrounding area and marks the town of Lubavitch. While there may have been earlier outposts in the area, it is safe to assume that the town was founded in that period, around the time of the expulsion of Jews from Spain which took place in 5252 (1492).

At the time, Lubavitch was near the border between Russia and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth; frequent battles and skirmishes took place in the area. After the Ten Years’ War between the two states, a truce was signed in 5281 (1521) that assigned the town to the Commonwealth. Over the following years, in addition to the Spanish Expulsion, Jews were expelled from Austria, Hungary, and Germany. Poland, which was becoming more tolerant of Jews, was increasingly chosen by Yidden as a haven. Some of those refugees were among the early residents of Lubavitch.

In *Sefer Hazichronos*, the Frierdiker Rebbe writes that the earliest settlers of the town, when it was still a colony, were a group of *tzadikim nistarim*. He tells the story of a Reb Binyomin who saved the town from bandits, and then built a shul, called “Binyomin’s Shtibel,” that survived as the oldest shul in the town.³

More Than Just a Name

In a *teshuva* by the Maharil⁴, brother of the Alter Rebbe, to the Tzemach Tzedek, he writes that the town was built by a minister named “Lubiyetski,” who named it for himself. In the *teshuva*, which discusses the proper way to spell “Lubavitch” in a *get*, the Maharil writes that the minister’s name, and thus the town’s, comes from the Russian word for “love.”

In the Frierdiker Rebbe’s account of the town’s early history, he describes the small Jewish colony built by a *tzadik nistar* named Reb Meir. This hidden *tzadik* was known for his “boundless” *ahavas Yisroel*, as well as his love for non-Jews and even animals and fowl. It was no wonder, the Frierdiker Rebbe writes, that the town was given the name “Luba,” which means “love” in both Russian and Polish, with the suffix “vitch” added later. “The name “Lubavitch” which this colony that Meir founded was later given, very well describes and characterizes its founder,” he writes.⁵

The Alter Rebbe in Lubavitch

While Lubavitch would become the seat of Chabad Chassidus only in the second generation, during the *nesius* of the Mittlerer Rebbe, it played a vital role in the life of the Alter Rebbe as well.

When the Alter Rebbe was a young boy⁶, his father, Harav Boruch, brought him from their home in Liozna to Lubavitch. Already recognized as an *iluy*, the boy would now be able to study under Harav Yissochor Ber, the *magid* of Lubavitch.

For two years, the Alter Rebbe studied with Harav Yissochor Ber, and would learn Torah in the *cheder sheni* of the *beis midrash* 'Poalei Tzedek – Mashkimei Kum'. Locals spoke in wonder about the young *iluy* and even the *gedolei haTorah* honored him after finding a handwritten booklet of his *chiddushei Torah*.⁷

"In Lubavitch, I learned *Ahavas Yisroel*, and especially how to honor another Yid in an exemplary way," the Alter Rebbe later recalled, as related by the Frierdiker Rebbe. "I saw the respect accorded by the *gaon* Rebbi Yosef *mochiach* ("the rebuker") to Reb Yitzchok the cobbler, Reb Shlomo the tailor and Reb Avraham the baker, who were *amei ha'aretz* and didn't even understand the words of Torah and davening, but were genuine *yirei shomayim*."⁸

The Alter Rebbe visited Lubavitch on at least two other occasions. The first was in 5525 (1765) when the Mezeritcher Maggid instructed him to stop in Lubavitch on his journey home from Mezeritch. During this visit, he was to visit his former teacher, Harav Yissochor Ber, whom the Alter Rebbe had since learned was a *mekushar* of the Mezeritcher Maggid.

"During my visit to Lubavitch... I took pleasure in the change and transformation that had taken place over the years since I was there. I found several outstanding young Torah scholars engaged in *Toras Hachassidus* according to the instruction of my teachers, the *gaon* Rebbi Yissachar Dov and the *gaon* Rebbi Ze'ev, and I delighted in discussing words of Torah with them. I stayed in Lubavitch for a week. I reviewed several ideas of our teacher, the Maggid, and we gathered several times in affectionate assemblies."⁹

This visit turned out to be pivotal. A number of *yungeleit* followed the Alter Rebbe to Liozna, and upon their return spread the *shita* of Chassidus Chabad. This led to the elderly chassidim, including Harav Yissocher Ber himself, becoming *mekusharim* of the Alter Rebbe.

Another visit took place after the Alter Rebbe's second arrest in 5561 (1800). Following his exoneration, he decided to move his residence from Liozna to Liadi, and on his way, he stopped in Lubavitch for three days. At the time, the town boasted four shuls, all of which davened in the Alter Rebbe's *nusach hatefillah*, as the town residents were now Chabad Chassidim.

"There was great joy in the city for all three days that the Alter Rebbe and his family stayed in Lubavitch. They declared that *tachanun* should not be recited and to light the lamps in the shuls. Whoever could should refrain from working. Shabbos clothing should be worn, and guests who came in honor of the Alter Rebbe should be welcomed and fed at no cost," the Frierdiker Rebbe records in his *Reshimos*.¹⁰

During these years, the number of Yidden in the town grew slowly but steadily. A government census from 5544 (1784) records fifty families¹¹, and at the time of the Alter Rebbe's *histalkus* in 5573 (1813), there were approximately double that number.¹²

Chabad - Lubavitch

Following the passing of the Alter Rebbe and the destruction of Liadi at the hands of Napoleon's troops, a new location had to be found for the remaining family members, including the Mittlerer Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, and their families, numbering nearly 200 individuals.

A RECENTLY DISCOVERED PAINTING OF THE VILLAGE OF LUBAVITCH IN THE YEAR 5572, DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE ALTER REBBE. THE IMAGE SHOWS NAPOLEONIC TROOPS STANDING NEAR THE AREA LATER TO BECOME THE 'CHOTZER' WHEN THE MITTELER REBBE SETTLED THERE TWO YEARS LATER.



The family members were then divided between Haditch, where the Alter Rebbe was buried, Romny, and Kremenchug. Jewish communities across Little Russia (today's Ukraine) sent messengers to the Mittlerer Rebbe, each requesting that he choose their city as his new home. The Mittlerer Rebbe refused their requests, saying that he would return to White Russia. He did not yet know which town he would choose, but he desired to settle in Lubavitch, where the Alter Rebbe had studied. First, however, he wanted to travel and view other potential locations to establish his *chotzer*.¹³

After traveling from Adar to Elul in 5573 (1813), a decision was reached. On Monday of Parshas Nitzovim, Chai Elul, 5573, the family arrived in Lubavitch.

The arrival of the Mittlerer Rebbe and his family generated much excitement among the local Yidden and even the *poritzim* (non-Jewish landowners) of Lubavitch and nearby areas. The local *poritz* gifted the Mittlerer Rebbe a plot of land at no cost, and exempted the land from all future taxes. Nearby *poritzim* who owned forests sent wooden beams as gifts for the construction of homes and a shul.

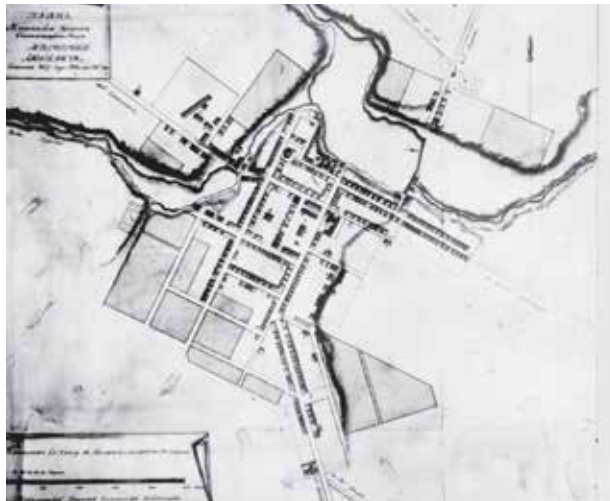
"The area given by the *poritz* Shankovsky to the Rebbe with all the families was divided into several locations in the town of Lubavitch. The Rebbe's area was on a street that had no name. Legally, presumably, in the books it did have a name, but now they called it "The *Chotzer*." This was a large area with large wooden homes," the Frierdiker Rebbe writes.¹⁴

After purchasing a wooden house for his family, the Mittlerer Rebbe built a large wooden *shul*. Construction began in 5574 (1814), and continued for a year or two. The shul and homes were built on the very plot of land where, decades earlier, the Alter Rebbe had studied Torah with Harav Yissocher Ber.¹⁵

In a report filed by an officer in 5586 (1825), following the arrest of the Mittlerer Rebbe, the shul is described in detail. "[The shul] is built in the form of a residential building. It consists of one small room that has an entrance from both sides, and is built in such a way that you can see all of it, and that it should be spacious.¹⁶" The report goes on to describe the *Sifrei Torah*, the bronze lanterns, tin candlesticks, tablecloths, curtains, the *bima* and other details of the shul.

In the Frierdiker Rebbe's *Reshimos*,¹⁷ the size of the shul is recorded as approximately 138 feet by 92 feet, which would make the floor space about 15% longer and over 50% wider than 770's main shul. Chassidim would remark that "In the Rebbe's *zal*, one can begin *Hodu* on one side, and by the time he reaches the second side, be at *Aleinu*."¹⁸

Around the same time, a *mikvah* was built in Lubavitch, based on the directives of the Alter Rebbe in his *Shulchan Aruch*. The Tzemach Tzedek describes this *mikvah* and the exact way it was built, in a *teshuva* printed in *Sha'alos Uteshuvos Tzemach Tzedek*.¹⁹



AN OFFICIAL MAP OF LUBAVITCH FROM THE YEAR 5577, SHOWING THE BLOCKS AND THE NEARBY RIVER.

Immediately after the Mittlerer Rebbe settled in Lubavitch, Chassidim from across the region began arriving in droves to hear *maamarim* and to ask the Rebbe for blessings and advice in *yechidus*.

As the influx of visitors intensified, the Mittlerer Rebbe established *takanos Lubavitch*, a set of criteria for Chassidim who wished to visit Lubavitch, specifying and limiting when and for how long they could do so.

The Mittlerer Rebbe did not remain only in Lubavitch, however; he would travel to cities and villages where Chassidim lived to recite *maamarim* and accept them for *yechidus*. During his final days in this world, he was likewise not in Lubavitch, having traveled to visit the Alter Rebbe's *tziyun* in Haditch. On the return journey, on Tes Kislev, 5588 (1827), the Mittlerer Rebbe was *nistalek* in the city of Niezhin, and was laid to rest there.

The First Yeshiva in Lubavitch

Following the *histalkus* of the Mittlerer Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek accepted the *nesius* of Chassidus Chabad. For nearly 40 years, the Tzemach Tzedek led the Chassidim from Lubavitch, which became the focal point to which tens of thousands of Chassidim and Yidden turned to.

At first, the Tzemach Tzedek continued living in the home he had lived in since the move to Lubavitch some 14 years earlier. Then, in approximately 5592 (1832), a fire destroyed the Mittlerer Rebbe's home and the homes of *Beis Harav*. The Tzemach Tzedek – not wanting to take a gift from the *poritz* – purchased a plot of land to construct a new home and shul.²⁰ Additional space would serve as a garden to grow

various vegetables, as was customary at the time.²¹ The plot was located where the large *zal* of Tomchei Tmimim would later be built.

The house was finished circa 5594, and shortly afterward, the Tzemach Tzedek and his family moved in. The home was situated at the northwestern corner of the *chotzer*, and to the east of it was a small shul.

In 5601, the Tzemach Tzedek established a yeshiva in Lubavitch, appointing his son Harav Yisroel Noach as *rosh yeshiva*. For twenty-six years, “the holy yeshiva produced students of great talent, with extensive and broad knowledge in the revealed Torah. Along with this, they were also firmly grounded in the teachings of Chassidus and in *avoda shebilev*, and they spread throughout all regions of the country to radiate light.”²²

Over the coming years, a number of fires broke out in Lubavitch, several of which destroyed parts of, or the entire, *chotzer*. The Tzemach Tzedek rebuilt his homes and shul after each fire, and also purchased additional land near the *chotzer* to allow it to expand. In 5609 (1849), after yet another fire in the previous year, the Tzemach Tzedek rebuilt the *chotzer* once again, and at that time also purchased plots around Lubavitch for five of his sons and two of his sons-in-law. For the Rebbe Maharash, however, he did not purchase a plot, as he wished for him to live near him, in the *chotzer*.²³

“This time they built the house in a more beautiful manner than in previous times; it was done under the guidance of [my] grandfather, the Rebbe Maharash. The size of the area was the same, but instead of the vegetable garden, Grandfather arranged a garden for strolling,” the Friediker Rebbe writes.²⁴

Sometime between the years 5616-5618 (1856-1858), another fire broke out. The cause of the fire was the carelessness of a visiting wagon driver, who lit a pipe and threw the match into a pile of hay.²⁵ The fire spread rapidly due to strong winds, and destroyed almost the entire city. The entire *chotzer*, along with many *seforim* and priceless *kisvei yad* were destroyed in what became known among Chassidim as “the great fire.”

Over the next eighteen months, as construction was ongoing to rebuild the *chotzer*, the Tzemach Tzedek lived in the *poritz's* courtyard, which was a short distance outside

Lubavitch.

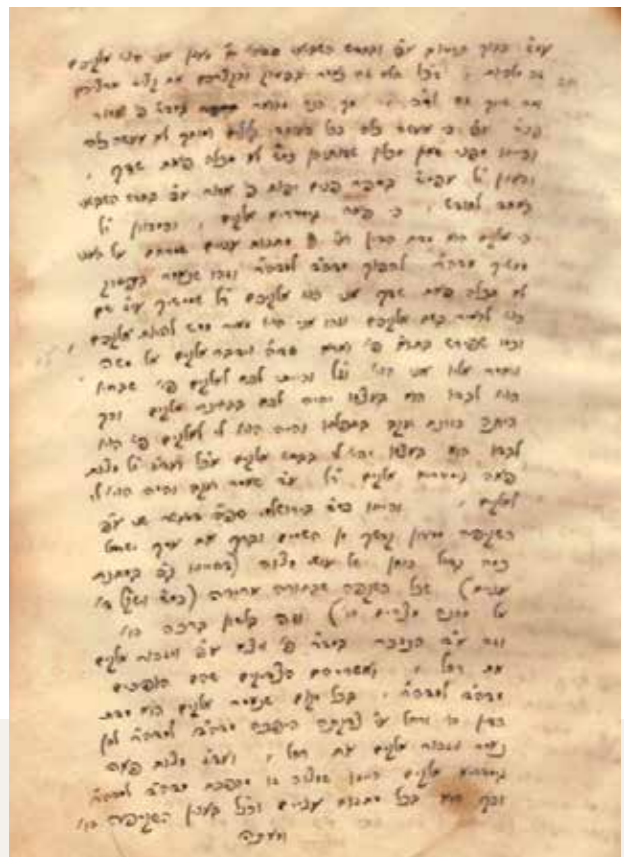
The Tzemach Tzedek’s new home was much larger than the previous ones, and covered the space where the previous house and shul had been situated. Two rooms, built on the site of the previous shul, were set aside for davening, and it was there that the *minyán* davened during the year. A separate, much larger, shul was also built in the *chotzer*, for use when there were large numbers of visitors.

The Tzemach Tzedek’s sons sent letters to *anash* asking them to participate in the costs of the constructions, writing that “everything needed to be rebuilt anew,” and that the situation was “very pressing.”²⁶

The *chotzer* also had sheds for firewood and hay for the animals. Later, a well was dug, and on one of the Rebbe Maharash’s trips abroad, he brought back a small pump to fight fires – a huge innovation at the time. The pump generated much excitement in Lubavitch, and the locals dubbed it “the iron witch.”²⁷

A non-Jewish (and antisemitic) Russian writer who visited Lubavitch in 5622 (1862) and even met the Tzemach Tzedek described the *chotzer* in an article published in a Russian newspaper in 1905²⁸:

“The house of the *tzaddik* stood in the town’s market square. It was a large two-story house. His married sons and even grandchildren lived with him, and the entire extended



ONE OF THE BOOKLETS OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK'S KISVEI YAD THAT WERE RESCUED FROM A FIRE IN LUBAVITCH.

family gathered around him, and he – the head of the family – supported them. At times it seemed that the entire town was the private property of the *tzadik*, and its residents were his royal guards, his court staff. The local policeman was also at his disposal to a certain extent. The Jews had great influence with the district authorities, and it was worthwhile for the policeman to live in peace with them.”

Another description of Lubavitch at the time, written by a *chossid* who visited in 5625 (1865), was published in his autobiography several decades later.²⁹

He describes how locals would rush after davening on Shabbos from the shuls across the town to go and listen to the Tzemach Tzedek’s *maamar*, which was delivered in a “large, empty hall, with no furniture besides a *bima* surrounded by benches.”

“The Rebbe’s five sons, who were *gedolei hador*, who lived [in Lubavitch], each had his own *beis medrash* where Chasidim would daven. After davening they also came to the Rebbe’s *zal*.”

He describes how Lubavitch locals helped visiting Chasidim by giving those who needed it a daily allowance to purchase food and lodgings. Locals also hosted the guests, some of whom ate at the homes of the Tzemach Tzedek’s sons.

The Tzemach Tzedek was the first of the Chabad Rabbeim who was *nistalek* in Lubavitch – on Yud Gimmel Nissan, 5626 (1866), and was the first Rebbe laid to rest there. In his will, he wrote that no *Ohel* or structure should be built on his *kever*. However, concerns arose that non-Jews might dig up the grave searching for gold, leading to the construction of walls around the *kever*. These walls were later expanded, creating an *Ohel*. A shul was also built adjacent to the *Ohel* by some locals.³⁰

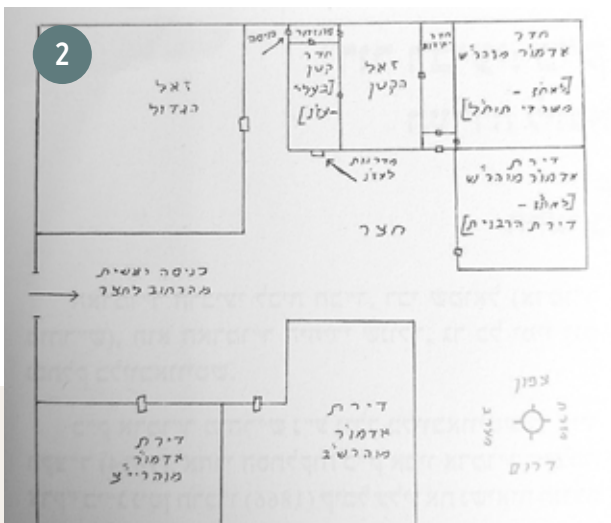
The “Chotzer” Rebuilt

Over the next few years, Lubavitch underwent a series of radical changes. Four of the Tzemach Tzedek’s holy sons established *chateziros* of their own, in Kopust, Liadi, Niezhin, and Ovruch, and the majority of the Chasidim followed them to those places.

In addition, in 5628 (1868), another fire reduced the *chotzer* and all its structures to ashes. Aside from the challenge of rebuilding the *chotzer*, the Rebbe Maharash was faced with another question: The Tzemach Tzedek had written in his will that none of his sons should live in his house; it should be used only as a shul or a place for children to learn. But, now that the house has burned down, could the Rebbe Maharash live in a new house built on the same site, or did the prohibition still apply?

The Rebbe Maharash discussed the issue in a *teshuva*³¹, and ultimately built the large *zal* on that spot. The *zal*, which was used as a shul whenever there was a large crowd, is described by a number of Chasidim of the next generation in their memoirs.

“[The *zal*] was a large building in length, width and height. There were large, tall, windows on three sides. We passed through almost the entire Lubavitch until we reached the



1. A MODEL OF THE CHOTZER IN LUBAVITCH AFTER IT WAS REBUILT BY THE REBBE MAHARASH. THE LARGE ZAL IS TOP LEFT.
2. DIAGRAM OF THE CHOTZER CREATED BY RABBI SHOLOM BER LEVINE.

Rebbe's *chotzer*, and we did not see any building as big and beautiful,³² wrote Rabbi Nochum Shmaryahu Sassonkin, known as 'Reb Shmerel Batumer.'

Now, with the large *zal* built in the location of the Tzemach Tzedek's home, the Rebbe Maharash was faced with another dilemma: Could he build a home where a shul had once stood?

The Rebbe Maharash wrote a *teshuva* regarding this as well, detailing the question³³: The Tzemach Tzedek had built a large shul for times when there were large crowds. In practice, it was only used on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It was also used as a *beis medrash* – but not for davening – during the summer. Now, after the shul had been destroyed by fire *r"l*, and rebuilt in another location, could a home be built in this location, given that there was no other place to build it?

In the end, the Rebbe Maharash was *machmir* in this regard as well, and purchased additional land to build his home. On the former location of the Tzemach Tzedek's large shul, he built a small *zal*. The *zal* and the home were connected by the Rebbe Maharash's *yechidus* room.

This small *zal* was built with a '*chabadnitzé*' - a *cheder sheni* for those who davened *ba'arichus*, a necessity in a Chabad shul. It also had an *Ezras Noshim* on the second floor, accessed by a staircase in the *chotzer*.

In the following years, the Rebbe Maharash built several additional buildings in the *chotzer*: Homes for his children the Raza, Mrs. Devorah Leah Ginsburg (this later became the Frierdiker Rebbe's house), and the Rebbe Rashab.

On Yud-Gimmel Tishrei, 5643 (1882), the Rebbe Maharash was *nistalek*; he was laid to rest in the Ohel of his father, the Tzemach Tzedek. The Rebbe Maharash was the only Rebbe who was born, lived his entire life, and was *nistalek* in Lubavitch.

Tomchei Tmimim – Lubavitch!

Arguably the most notable event in the Rebbe Rashab's generation of Chabad Chassidus was the establishment of Yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim in Lubavitch. The yeshiva was founded by the Rebbe Rashab in 5657

(1897), fourteen years after the *histalkus* of the Rebbe Maharash, and four years after he formally accepted the *nesius* in 5654 (1893).

Up to this point, descriptions of Lubavitch rely on a limited number of sources, many hard to access. But from then on, detailed and fascinating descriptions were authored and published by some of the hundreds of *temimim* who studied in Lubavitch as bochurim.

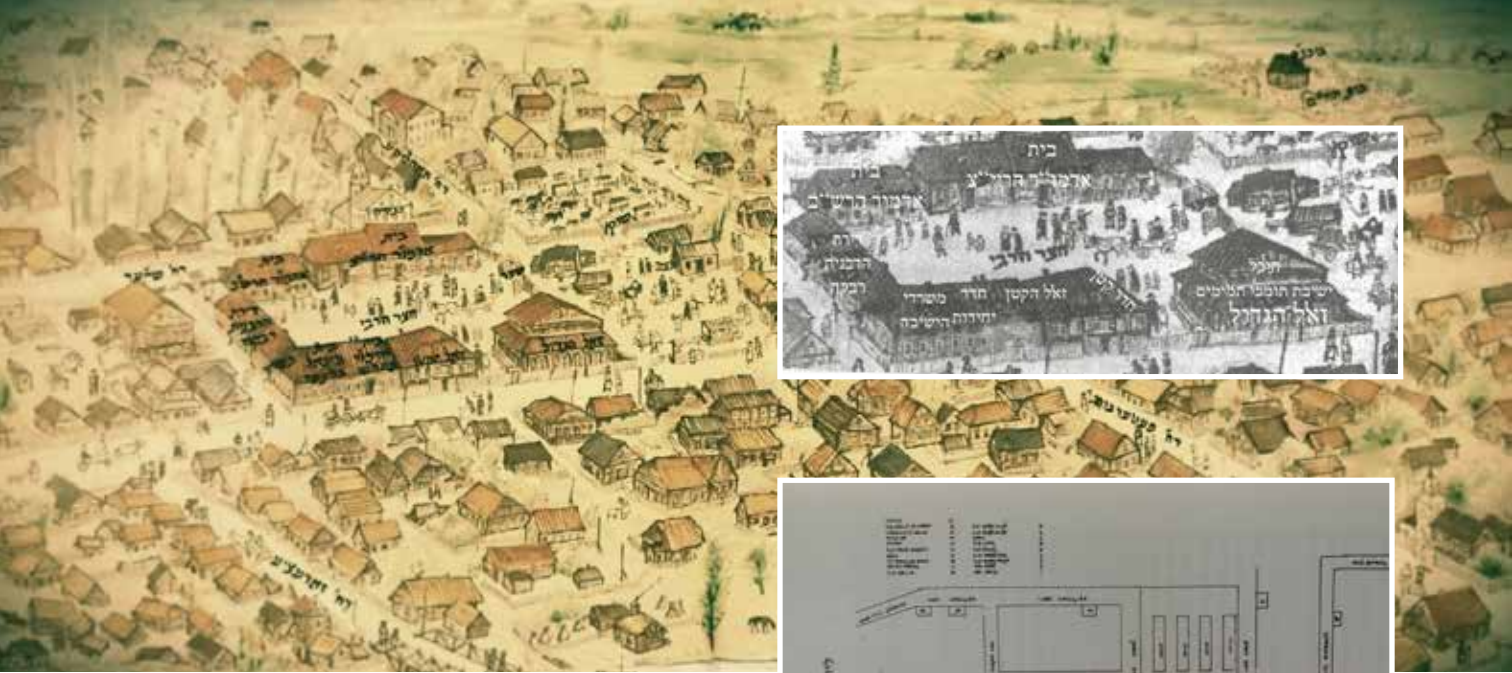
Among them was Reb Refoel Nachman 'Foleh' Kahn, who wrote a book titled *Lubavitch V'Chayoleha* – an album and autobiographical-historical work which contains a description of the town of Lubavitch, Yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim, and short biographies of many of the *temimim* who studied there.

Reb Foleh describes not only the *chotzer* in Lubavitch, but also general Jewish life in the town. He briefly describes the streets, the marketplace, the post office and other notable features.

"On every Sunday, there was a market for the non-Jews from the hamlets around Lubavitch. They would bring their produce to sell, and buy what they needed in the shops. There was a post office with a telegraph on Chachluka Street. The shuls were Binyomin's Shtibel, Golda's Minyan, Tomsker Minyan, the shul in the Rebbe's *chotzer*, the shul near the Ohel, and the Chachluka Minyan. The Rav was Harav Dovid Yakuvson – 'Dovid der *moreh tzedek*' – son-in-law of the previous *moreh tzedek* of Lubavitch, Reb Avrohom Seligson, who served during the time of the Tzemach Tzedek and the Rebbe Maharash. The shochet was Reb Shlomo Chaim Kutain, who was also the *mohel*. There were a number of *melamdin* for the local children, teaching young children until they were old enough to learn Gemara. The locals were mostly simple

EFFORTS ARE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY TO RECONSTRUCT ALL THE BUILDINGS OF THE CHOTZER ON THEIR FORMER SITES. HERE IS THE COMPLETED ZAL OF TOMCHEI TMIMIM.





A MAP AND PAINTING OF LUBAVITCH AS IT APPEARED DURING THE YESHIVAS TOMCHEI TEMIMIM YEARS, CREATED BY REB HENDEL LIEBERMAN WITH THE HELP OF REB ZALMAN SHIMON DVORKIN WHO HAD STUDIED IN LUBAVITCH. THE MAP IS PRINTED IN THE SEFER "LUBAVITCH V'CHAYOLEHA".

folk. The city also had a doctor and a pharmacy. There was a *chevra kadisha* and the Rebbe Rashab was their *gabbai*.”³⁴

He then offers a detailed description of the *chotzer*:

“The Rebbe’s *chotzer* was at the corner of Shilevo Street and the market street. The *chotzer* had three entrances: One was on Shilevo Street – one would ascend several steps to the northern part of the *chotzer*. The second was on the western side of the *chotzer* through the large entrance. The third was on the *chotzer*’s southern end, behind the Rebbe Rashab’s home, from the alley that separated between the *chotzer* and, *l’havdil*, the nonsense...”

He goes on to describe the placement of the homes of the Rebbe Rashab, the Frierdiker Rebbe, and Rebbetzin Rivkah, the *groiseh* (large) *zal* where the bochorim learned, the *kleineh* (small) *zal*, the yeshiva offices, a well and a garden. (See attached illustration). He also describes two brick buildings – the rest were wood – that had been built by a philanthropist from Moscow, and were named “Batei Avraham v’Rochele” after them. One of these houses was where the Rebbe Rashab baked *matzos* for Pesach, and the second was a tea house, which always had hot water for the bochorim to drink. There were also horse stables and outhouses in the *chotzer*.

The bochorim began studying in the *groiseh zal* in 5661 (1901), four years after the establishment of Tomchei Temimim, when the increasing number of bochorim required it. But before it could be used, it had to be renovated, as it had been built without heating and with simple wooden walls that were already in disrepair. For two years, the *zal* was under renovation; new heating stoves were added, the foundations

and floor were redone, new windows were installed, and other necessary changes were made.

Eighteen tables stood in the *zal* for the bochorim, with up to ten bochorim per table. In middle of the *zal* stood a wide *bima* with two tables for the *meshgichim*.

The Rebbe Rashab began building a *mikvah* in the *chotzer*, but after a host of challenges, the project was stopped, and the previous *mikvah* was renovated.

In his memoirs, Reb Yisroel Jacobson describes how on the second night of Rosh Hashanah, 5670 (1909), after the Rebbe Rashab delivered a *ma’amar* in the *groiseh zal*, the chassidim began dancing, and the roof of the *zal* became unstable. The *zal* was then closed until after Sukkos, and all *tefilos* were held in the small *zal*.³⁵

In 5674 (1914), World War I broke out, and a year and a half later, in 5676 (1915), the German army neared Lubavitch. The Rebbe Rashab decided to leave Lubavitch, saying that he did not want to live under German rule for even one day.

Preparations for the move began after Sukkos. On Shabbos Parshas Vayera, the Rebbe Rashab said the last *ma’amar* in Lubavitch, and on Sunday, 16 Cheshvan, the Rebbe and his family left Lubavitch on their way to Rostov.

When he was leaving, the chossid Reb Moshe Rosenblum said to him, “Rebbe, we should be *zoche* to see you [back in

Lubavitch] speedily!” The Rebbe Rashab responded, “I hope [I will return] for Pesach, *im yirtzeh Hashem*.” Ultimately, the Rebbe Rashab remained in Rostov, where he was *nistalek* four years later. Thus ended 102 years of Lubavitch as the capital of Chassidus Chabad...

In 5678 (1917), two years after the Rebbe Rashab left, the Russian Revolution erupted, causing even more turmoil in a country already embroiled in a world war. The rising prices and diminishing donations caused food shortages and a host of other issues for the Yeshiva, which had remained in Lubavitch. With no other choice, the Yeshiva relocated to Kremenchug, where it continued functioning for a short time, before the Communist persecution forced it underground.

Before the final group left Lubavitch, they gathered all the items that had remained – cutlery, glassware, tableware, and other items – and buried them in the cellar. They also held a *farbrengen* on Shabbos Mevorchim Elul, their last Shabbos there.

“There are no words to describe the feeling at the *farbrengen* and that entire period of time. We comforted ourselves that it was only temporary, and we would soon return to Lubavitch, because we couldn’t even imagine differently³⁶.”

After all the *temimim* had departed, the village took over the *chotzer*. The *groiseh zal* was turned into a theater, the Rebbe Rashab’s house into a courthouse, and the homes of the Rebbe Maharash and Frierdiker Rebbe into other municipal offices.

This sad state of affairs continued until Nissan of 5681 (1921), when “Hashem sent a fire from above, and within a

half hour, all the homes were destroyed.”³⁷ There were still a number of Chassidim living there, and they began davening in another location. At some point, the mikvah of Lubavitch was damaged, and in 5682 (1921) the Frierdiker Rebbe sent money for it to be repaired.

On Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul of that year, the Frierdiker Rebbe traveled to Lubavitch to visit the holy Ohel. He later wrote that he was “shocked at the desolation *rachmana l’tzlan*.” Even the Ohel had been destroyed, as the non-Jews had stolen the walls. During his visit, the only one during his *nesius*, the Frierdiker Rebbe recited a *maamar, dibur hamashchil Ani El Elokim Ekra*.³⁸

Nineteen years later, in the summer of 5701 (1941) the Nazis *yemach shemom* entered Lubavitch. On 3 Cheshvan 5702 (1941), they murdered the 483 Yidden who lived there, *Hashem Yikom Damam*.

Over the coming decades, efforts were made to restore the Ohel in Lubavitch, an effort that started during the Frierdiker Rebbe’s 5682 visit, continued in New York in 5709 (1949) and during the years of the Communist regime. It wasn’t until 5749 (1989), however, that the Ohel was rebuilt. That same year, a group of bochorim bought a house for the Rebbe in Lubavitch, with the Rebbe’s approval, with the Rebbe even including the house in his *mechiras chometz*. In more recent years, the *chotzer* was repurchased, the shul at the Ohel and the *groiseh zal* rebuilt, and the *beis hachaim* was restored, discovering *kevorim* of members of *beis harav* and *gedolei hachassidim*.

1. *Lubavitcher Rebbe’s Zichronos*, vol. 1, p. 16.

2. Printed in “Любавичи. История, тайны, реальность” (*Lyubavichi: History, Secrets, Reality*), Smolensk, 2012.

3. *Zichronos*, ch. 1.

4. *Sheeiris Yehuda, Even Ha’ezer* 52.

5. *Zichronos* vol 1, p. 16.

6. In *Beis Rabbi*, the author writes that the Alter Rebbe was 12 years old when he traveled to Lubavitch, and the Frierdiker Rebbe writes similarly in *Sefer Hasichos 5691*. In other *sichos* and *reshimos*, the Frierdiker Rebbe records other traditions regarding the Alter Rebbe’s age, ranging from six years old to ten years old.

7. *Reshimas Ofen HaHishtalshelus BeHisyasdas Chasidus Chabad Dor Rishon, Dor Sheini* (Kehos, 5769), 11. Hereafter *Reshimas Hisyasdas Chabad*.

8. *Reshimas Hisyasdas Chabad*, 11.

9. *Ibid*, 14.

10. *Ibid*, 16.

11. Rabbi Berel Levine, *Lubavitch*, (Agudas Chassidei Chabad of the CIS, 5771).

Subsequently published in *Toldos Chabad BeRusia HaTzaaris* (Kehos, 5770).

12. In *Zichronos*, the number of families in Lubavitch during the years of 5516-5517 (1756-1757) is given as “between 75 and 80.”

13. *Reshimas Lubavitch*, authored by the Frierdiker Rebbe in the 5690s (1930s), and first published in 5759 (1999) by Rabbi Shmuel Kraus.

14. *Reshimas Lubavitch*.

15. *Sefer Hasichos Kayitz Tof Shin*, 95.

16. *Maasar Ugeulas Admur Ha’emtzo*, 63.

17. *Reshimas Lubavitch*.

18. *Reshima* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, titled ‘*Divrei Yimei Harabanis Rivkah*’ by the Rebbe (Kehos, 5774). Hereafter *Reshimas Harabanis Rivkah*.

19. *Shaalos Uteshuvos Tzemach Tzedek, Yoreh Deah, Siman 102*.

20. *Reshimas Harabanis Rivkah*.

21. *Reshimas Lubavitch*.

22. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz*, vol. 2, 107.

23. *Reshimas Lubavitch*.

24. *Ibid*.

25. *Reshimas Harabanis Rivkah*.

26. *Toldos Chabad BeRusia HaTzaaris*, 108.

27. *Reshimas Lubavitch*.

28. Translated into Hebrew and published in *Kerem Chabad* vol 2, 80.

29. *Goldenshteyn, Pinchos Dov, Mein Lebens Geschichte* (Petach Tikvah, 5688). Translated into English and published as *The Shochet* (2024).

30. *Igros Kodesh Admur Maharash*, 38.

31. *Ibid*, 39.

32. *Zichronosai* (New edition - Kfar Chabad), 36.

33. *Igros Kodesh Admur Maharash*, 40.

34. *Lubavitch V’chayoleha*, 11.

35. *Zikaron L’bnei Yisroel*, 21.

36. *Ibid*, 73.

37. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz*, vol 1, 326.

38. Printed in *Sefer Hamaamarim 5682*, 447.