

מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות לכ"ק אדמו"ר

נדפס ע"י

הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר זוזגתו מרת

לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו

שפאלטר

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The information in this article was mostly culled from the Sefer

Admurei Chabad V'Yahadus Romania by Rabbi Zushe Wolff.

P I N P O I N T S

STORIES OF THE RABBEIM'S
REACH AND IMPACT AROUND THE GLOBE

ROMANIA



ROLLING IN THE ROMANIAN STREETS

The dramatic news of the Alter Rebbe's arrest spread far and wide—and slowly. In those days, it took time for information to get around. The small but devoted community of the Alter Rebbe's Chassidim in Yasi, Romania, almost 1000 miles away from Liozna, received word of his arrest only two weeks after the fact. Then, on the second night of Chanukah, the exciting news of the Alter Rebbe's release was finally received—a whole week after Yud-Tes Kislev.

“There was barely a *minyan* of Chassidim in Yasi,” the Friediker Rebbe related,¹ “yet when news of the *geulah* was received, their joy was so contagious that the entire city *hot zich gekulet* (was somersaulting) in the streets celebrating!”²

The Friediker Rebbe personally heard the story on a visit to Yasi in 5667 from the Chossid Reb Berel, whose father, Reb Yitzchak Moshe, had been a Chossid of the first three Chabad Rabbeim.³

The Rabbeim's connection to the Romanian region runs deep—the Friediker Rebbe also records⁴ a visit by the Rebbe Maharash to Bucharest and Yasi, during which he discreetly observed the state of local Jewish life. And in nearby Piatra Neamt, a long-held tradition tells that “the old wooden shul” was visited by the Baal Shem Tov himself, before he revealed himself.⁵

THE SOVIET REPUBLIC WITH RELIGIOUS “FREEDOM”

The Rebbe's concern for the well-being of Jews behind the Iron Curtain is well documented. Yet Romania, a satellite state of the USSR, has its own unique story. That story is best told through the Rebbe's relationship with the country's longtime Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Dovid Moshe Rosen—a fascinating individual with equally fascinating *kiruvim* from the Rebbe.

Rabbi Rosen led Romanian Jewry through decades of Communist rule, faithfully guiding the community until his final day. The Rebbe stood behind his many efforts to improve both the spiritual and material lives of the Jews in



EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR OF THE 'OLD WOODEN SHUL' IN PIATRA NEAMT, SAID TO HAVE BEEN VISITED BY THE BAAL SHEM TOV.



his care. In fact, Rabbi Rosen's very presence in the country during those difficult years was thanks to the Rebbe, who repeatedly encouraged him to remain at his post.

Overcoming strong opposition from the Yevseksiya, Rabbi Rosen successfully negotiated with the Romanian government to allow religious practice. He opened schools, shuls, and welfare organizations for the community and held a rare "free pass" to enter and leave the country as he pleased.

MEZUZOS AND SHECHITA IN ROMANIA

Each time he visited New York, from 5721 through 5752—long after the practice of *yechidus* officially ended—Rabbi Rosen merited a lengthy private audience with the Rebbe, during which they discussed the well-being of his community.

While traveling outside his Communist homeland, Rabbi Rosen generally remained tight-lipped about the full extent of his efforts to strengthen Yiddishkeit. Only the Rebbe knew the whole picture.

One example is found between the lines of a letter in Igros Kodesh⁶ addressed to Rabbi Rosen, where we learn of the Rebbe's efforts to secure Mezuzos for Romanian

Jews, which Rabbi Rosen would distribute. From the letter, it seems that this was part of an ongoing arrangement, among other efforts to bolster Jewish life that the Rebbe encouraged and closely followed.

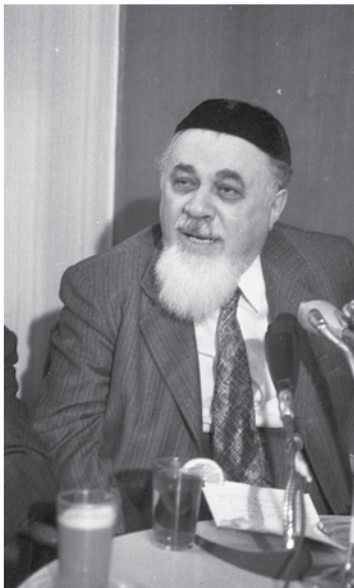
"His spiritual influence extends over us, and it's truly unbelievable how every instruction and piece of advice the Rebbe gave me over the years hit the mark in an incredible way," Rabbi Rosen told the Kfar Chabad Magazine in a 5744 interview. "For example, he recently sent us two yeshiva students who joined our six regular *shochtim*, and together they travel from city to city and village to village, making it possible to uphold Kashrus."

"ENOUGH TIME FOR SIXTY THOUSAND JEWS!"

Rabbi Rosen's *yechidusen* would routinely last for hours. Once, noticing many people waiting in Gan Eden Hatachton for their turn to enter the Rebbe's room, he asked how much more time the Rebbe had for him.

"You told me there are sixty thousand Jews in your country," the Rebbe replied. "I have as much time as it takes to assist sixty thousand Yidden!"

Perhaps the final person to merit a private *yechidus* was Rabbi Rosen, who spent over an hour and a half in conversation with the Rebbe in Kislev 5752. At that *yechidus*, as he had many times over the years, he again asked whether the time had come for him to fulfill his lifelong dream of moving to Eretz Yisroel. Once again, the Rebbe encouraged him to continue his shlichus, which he did until his passing in 5754.



RABBI ROSEN SPEAKS ON THE STATE OF ROMANIAN JEWRY IN 5739, MORE THAN THREE DECADES AFTER BECOMING THE CHIEF RABBI.





RABBI YISROEL TZVI HEBER RECEIVES KOS SHEL BRACHA FROM THE REBBE IN 5740, DURING THE YEARS HE SPENT IN ROMANIA.

“DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THE REBBE LOVES YOU?”

A summer day in 5738 found two *bochurim* at 770 summoned to Rabbi Hodakov’s office. Yosef Baruch Friedman and Aharon Chitrik were to travel to Romania as Merkos Shluchim, the first to the Communist country.

In addition to the classic Merkos Shlichus activities of spreading Yiddishkeit, part of their mission was to visit Rabbi Rosen and convey birthday wishes on the occasion of his 66th birthday, marked that summer by the Romanian Jewish community. “Rabbi Hodakov added a surprising note,” the *bochurim* later recalled. “We were to tell Rabbi Rosen: ‘Do you know how much the Rebbe loves you?’”

Rabbi Rosen warmly received the Rebbe’s regards and shared a reciprocal message of love for the Rebbe. The *bochurim* traveled across the country for three weeks, following Rabbi Rosen’s guidance on which cities to visit. Under the guise of American tourists, they visited numerous Jewish communities, distributing *tashmishhei kedusha*, teaching Torah, and sharing encouraging words to uplift the community.

Upon returning to New York, they presented the Rebbe with a full report of their activities. “It seems,” they later reflected, “that part of our mission was to assess the situation on the ground in Romania, to help pave the way for a future full-time shliach.”

EXTRACURRICULAR HAFATZA

Another individual who received remarkable attention from the Rebbe for his efforts in Romania was Rabbi Yisrael Tzvi Heber, a *Tomim* who spent several years there serving as an official shochet.

Trained as a shochet and seeking employment outside of Eretz Yisroel, Rabbi Heber consulted the Rebbe in *yechidus*. The Rebbe told him he would need permission from a *rav* to leave Eretz Yisroel, adding that active involvement in spreading Yiddishkeit might serve as grounds for such a *heter*. When Rabbi Heber consulted a *rav* about moving to Romania, the *heter* he received reflected exactly what the Rebbe had suggested: he could leave Eretz Yisroel on the condition that he also engage in *Hafatzas Hayahadus* in Romania, in addition to *shechita*.

Rabbi Heber took this responsibility seriously, despite the significant risks. The laws of the land, while not officially banning Judaism, allowed one to act only in line with their official position. In his case, *shechita* was allowed, but anything else—certainly teaching or any form of outreach—was strictly prohibited. Especially as a foreigner, he had to walk a very careful line. The Rebbe’s strict instructions to carefully follow Romanian law allowed him to continue operating in the country, despite years of being followed by the Secret Police. All correspondence with the Rebbe, as well as phone conversations with *Mazkirus*, were carefully censored to

avoid any government criticism or mention of his “extracurricular” activities.

With the Rebbe’s encouragement, Rabbi Heber succeeded in doing far more than just *shecht*. He found legal loopholes that allowed him to print the Rebbe’s *sichos* in the local Jewish newspaper, which counted government censors amongst its readership. He also innovatively arranged *Siyumei HaRambam* and *farbrengens* for Yud Shevat and Yud-Aleph Nissan, but his role as organizer was never made public. Traveling to remote villages to *shecht*, he would carefully meet with local Jews, sharing words of encouragement and Torah.

THIRTY THOUSAND LETTERS, ONE BUYER

With the launch of *Mivtza Ois B’Sefer Torah*, the Rebbe’s initiative to unite all Jews by purchasing individual letters in a *sefer Torah*,⁷ Rabbi Heber faced a new challenge. Gathering the names and mothers’ names, along with the symbolic payment for each letter from all of Romanian Jewry, seemed impossible. Always seeking innovative solutions to fulfill the Rebbe’s *hora’os*, Rabbi Heber received special permission from the Rebbe to purchase the letters collectively, an exception from the general *hora’ah* that letters be bought individually for each person. Rabbi Rosen made a special trip to Nachalas Har Chabad to make the purchase and later participate in the *siyum*.

A Tziyur of a Tomim

Rabbi Heber’s contract with the community was on an annual basis, and each year’s renewal came with the Rebbe’s approval. After his first term, he hoped to return to his family in Eretz Yisroel, but the Rebbe told him in *yechidus*: “You and your *tziyur* need to be in Romania for another year.” After that, he made a point of walking openly on the capital’s main streets, displaying the rare *tziyur* of a *Tomim* with pride. He was eventually joined by his wife and served as the Rebbe’s direct Shliach for several more years.



A COLLAGE OF ROMANIAN YIDDISH NEWSPAPERS CONTAINING SICHOES OF THE REBBE PUBLISHED UNDER COMMUNIST RULE BY RABBI HEBER.

THE NINETEENTH TANYA

In the mid-5740s, Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu himself granted permission for a Jewish book to be printed in Romania—the first such approval ever given under Communist rule. The *sefer* in question? None other than the Tanya. Here’s how it happened.

At the end of 5738, the Rebbe launched a campaign to have Tanyas printed in every country.⁸ On Chai Elul of that year, the Rebbe wrote to Rabbi Rosen asking that he arrange for its printing in Romania,⁹ but the idea did not materialize at the time. Following the Rebbe’s renewed call in 5744 to print a Tanya in every community, the Rebbe explicitly instructed Rabbi Heber to facilitate its printing in Romania. Rabbi Rosen believed that the only way such rare permission could be obtained was by informing the local authorities that the Lubavitcher Rebbe had requested that the Tanya be printed everywhere Jews reside.

At that time, Rabbi Rosen was engaged in a public relations battle against libels targeting the Jewish community. When the Rebbe gave his direct *bracha* for the Tanya to be printed, the Romanian government miraculously chose to appease the Chief Rabbi by approving his request to print a *sefer*. Thus, on the auspicious day of Yud-Aleph Nissan 5744, permission was granted by Ceausescu himself.

The printing brought great excitement to the entire community, and public *shiurim* were held using the newly printed Tanya, including one well-attended class delivered by Rabbi Rosen in the main shul on the night of Yom Kippur(!). Shortly afterward, at the *lekach* distribution on Hoshana Rabbah 5745, the Rebbe told Rabbi Heber, “A *groisen yasher koach*; the Tanya was printed in Yasi!”

This was not the first Tanya to be printed in Romania, however. In fact, of thousands of editions, the 19th Tanya

Silence is Golden

The long line of guests entering *yechidus* at the conclusion of Tishrei 5725 included Rabbi Avraham Michael Halperin, a *rav* in Yerushalayim, who asked the Rebbe if he should travel to Romania for a *pidyon shvuyim* mission.

After giving his consent and blessing his trip, the Rebbe spoke passionately about Romanian Jewry, encouraging him to use the opportunity to—cautiously—spread Yiddishkeit. “A word is worth a *sela*, and silence is worth two,” the Rebbe quoted from the Gemara.¹¹ “Be very careful what you say, and try to speak in as many shuls as possible.”

ever published was printed in Yasi, Romania, in 5603. At that time, the aforementioned Chossid Reb Yitzchak Moshe of Yasi was leading efforts to spread Yiddishkeit and Chassidus throughout the Bessarabia region. Operating under the leadership of the Rabbeim throughout his long life, he held chief responsibility for the region during the Tzemach Tzedek’s *nesius*.



THE FIRST TANYA PUBLISHED IN YASI, 5603.

Reb Yitzchak Moshe lived for over 100 years, from the times of the Alter Rebbe until 5621, and devoted many decades to bringing the life of Chassidus Chabad to Yasi and its surroundings. The Tzemach Tzedek also placed him in charge of the Kolel in Yasi, one of approximately twenty Kolelim he established in various towns. He was also responsible for the printing of the Mitteler Rebbe’s *Derech Chayim* in 5619. His son, too, lived a long life, meriting to meet the Frieddiker Rebbe, as mentioned above. These two Chassidim, who acted under the leadership of the Rabbeim to bring Chassidus to Yasi and the region, are buried in the Jewish cemetery in the city.

“THE TIME WILL YET COME”

“Regarding [your request] to send a *yungerman* to visit your community in the near future, this presents some difficulties at the moment,” the Rebbe wrote to Rabbi Rosen in 5736.¹⁰ “Nevertheless, it is understood that I will not, *chas v’shalom*, forget about it, and the time will yet come.”

Today, that time has arrived, with several families of the Rebbe’s shluchim serving Romanian Jewry, revitalizing Yiddishkeit in the post-Communist era. **T**

1. Sefer Hasichos 5697, p. 226.
2. See also Motzei Shabbos 20 Kislev, 5717—Toras Menachem vol. 18, p. 301–2, for the Rebbe’s explanation on this story.
3. For more on Reb Yitzchak Moshe, see “Life of a Chossid”—Derher Shevat 5780.
4. In his Igros Kodesh vol. 4, p. 42.
5. Introduction to *Admurei Chabad V’Yahadus Romania*.
6. Vol. 31, p. 95.
7. For an overview of this *mitvza*, see “600,000 Souls”—Derher Iyar 5780.
8. See at length in “Tanya to the World”—Derher Adar II 5776.
9. Igros Kodesh vol. 33, p. 390–1.
10. Igros Kodesh vol. 31, p. 95.
11. Megillah 18a.

