
BOUND THROUGH GENERATION

*The Library
of Our Rabbeim*

By: Motti Wilhelm

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לזכות
שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר בכל אתר ואתר שיצליחו בשליחותם
הק' בהצלחה מופלגה מתוך הרחבה בגשמיות וברוחניות
ולגרום נח"ר אמיתי ולבשר אך ורק בשו"ט ומשמחות

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' אהרן וזוגתו מרת רבקה שיחיו
סלונים
בינגהמטאן, נ.י.

Early Beginnings

The earliest documentation of a Chabad *nossi* possessing a collection of *seforim* dates to 5559, the year of the Alter Rebbe's first arrest.

In the government correspondence surrounding the arrest, one letter refers directly to the Alter Rebbe's library. It was written by Semyon Semyonovich Zhegulin, governor of Belorussia, to General-Prosecutor Pyotr Vasilievich Lopukhin:

"To carry out the imperial decree of the Emperor, communicated to me by Your Excellency's order of September 15 of this year, to arrest in the town of Liozno the Jewish rabbi, Zalman ben Baruch, to send him under the supervision of a reliable officer of the local regiment of the Belarussian district, Second Lieutenant Bunakov, together with two soldiers, and to dispatch him to Your Excellency.

"His papers and books were immediately collected, sealed with my seal, and forwarded in one chest and one suitcase."¹

The specific details of these *seforim* and manuscripts are unknown, and no record exists as to whether they were returned following the Alter Rebbe's liberation on Yud-Tes Kislev.

Two years later, during his second arrest, the Alter Rebbe's *seforim* and manuscripts were again confiscated. From this arrest, however, a full list of the collection survives: 103 printed volumes and 14 manuscript volumes. The list spans *Tanach*, *Shas*, *meforshim*, *halacha*, and *Kabbalah*. Some were single volumes from larger sets, suggesting that the investigators took a sample rather than the Rebbe's entire library.

It is not documented whether these volumes were returned, though it would be reasonable to assume they were. In any case, they—and any others—would have been destroyed in the fire that consumed the Alter Rebbe's home nine years later, in 5570, while he was traveling across White Russia.²

In the letter sent by the Mittlerer Rebbe to *anash* after the fire, he makes note of the many precious *seforim* that were lost:

"It is impossible to put into words the full extent of the damage, beyond the deep anguish it has caused. In general terms, however, we can say that the loss of all the precious and valuable *seforim*, along with the vessels, silver, pearls, and the garments of our mother, the Rebbetzin, *shetichye*, amounts to an immense and staggering sum..."³

Despite these losses, some volumes are known to have

survived. The Tzemach Tzedek at times cites the Alter Rebbe's handwritten notations on his *seforim*. Today, however, only a single volume is known to exist: *Sha'alos Uteshuvos Maharik*, which surfaced in the hands of a Polish non-Jew and was brought to New York in 5746. It was acquired by a Lubavitcher and presented to the Rebbe, returning it to its rightful place in the Rebbe's library. Additionally, several of the Alter Rebbe's manuscripts have survived and remain with us to this day.

A Library Begins to Grow

Following the Alter Rebbe's *histalkus* while fleeing Napoleon's advancing troops, the Mittlerer Rebbe settled in Lubavitch, where he established his *chotzer*. As with the



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD



SHA'ALOS UTESHUVOS MAHARIK (PRINTED IN 5558), ALONG WITH A STICKER WITH THE FRIEDIKER REBBE'S HANDWRITING, STATING THAT THIS IS THE ALTER REBBE'S SEFER WITH HIS HAGAHOS.



Alter Rebbe, documentation of a library collected by the Mittlerer Rebbe is found in government records related to his arrest.

The arrest occurred after Sukkos 5587, when the Mittlerer Rebbe was escorted from Lubavitch to Vitebsk for investigation. Several weeks later, the governor overseeing the case sent a private investigator to Lubavitch to verify details provided by the Mittlerer Rebbe during his second interrogation.

In his report, the investigator described Lubavitch and the Mittlerer Rebbe's *chotzer* and shul in detail, including the Rebbe's collection of *seforim*:

"By order of His Excellency, delivered to me on October 19 of this year, I set out that same day and arrived in the town of Lubavitch. There I found a Jewish synagogue, and I hereby attest to what I personally observed, the synagogue and its adornments," the investigator writes.

He goes on to describe the furniture, *sifrei Torah*, and the other items in the shul, adding:

"Within the synagogue itself, I found no books. However, in the house of Rabbi Schneuri, I discovered 611 books, arranged in four cabinets. When I questioned one of the students, he explained to me, without an oath, that it was not customary to keep these books in the synagogue. Instead, they are given to a rabbi when there is a need to consult them."⁴

In addition to the *seforim*, the Mittlerer Rebbe owned numerous manuscript volumes of the Alter Rebbe's *maamarim* and his own. These manuscripts were not necessarily part of an organized library; they were often circulated among Chassidim for copying and eventual publication. Several manuscript volumes of the Mittlerer Rebbe's *hanachos* of the Alter Rebbe's *maamarim* survive to this day, along with a few pages of the Mittlerer Rebbe's own.

The First "Real" Library

The first concentrated effort to build an extensive library was undertaken by the Tzemach Tzedek.

It began with a collection of manuscripts of the *hanachos* of the Alter Rebbe's *maamarim*. These were transcribed by the Alter Rebbe's brother, Harav Yehuda Leib (Maharil), his son, the Mittlerer Rebbe, and other Chassidim. The Tzemach Tzedek gathered these manuscripts to prepare them for publication.

In a *teshuva*, the Tzemach Tzedek himself describes how this collection came to be:

"The story unfolded as follows: The [Alter] Rebbe's discourses were written down by his brother, R. Yehuda Leib z"l. [The Alter Rebbe] would pay him for this work, so that the teachings could be disseminated among all who wished to hear them.

"After [the Alter Rebbe's] *histalkus*, none of these writings were found among the family or heirs, and their whereabouts were unknown. Only one of his descendants,"—the Tzemach Tzedek was referring to himself—"took the effort to retrieve them from students who had heard and recorded the discourses."⁵

This initiative actually began during the Alter Rebbe's lifetime. The Frierdiker Rebbe dates it to 5561, the year of the Alter Rebbe's second arrest. He further records that the Tzemach Tzedek told the Rebbe Maharash that in that year alone, he had collected over 1,100 folios of transcriptions of the Alter Rebbe's *maamarim*. By the time of the Alter Rebbe's *histalkus* eleven years later, the collection had grown to more than 10,000 folios.⁶

This collection continued growing throughout the Tzemach Tzedek's lifetime. The *sefer* Beis Rebbi describes one of the significant additions to the collection.

"The renowned chossid Harav Reb Shlomo Freides of Shklov, one of the great Chassidim of the Alter Rebbe...he would record the Alter Rebbe's teachings with exceptional care. His notes survive in the hundreds, and even thousands, spanning the content of some forty volumes.

"When he made a *shidduch* with the Tzemach Tzedek [his daughter married the Tzemach Tzedek's son, Harav Yehuda Leib (known as Maharil, just as his great-uncle), later of Kopust], he handed over all these manuscripts to the Rebbe (the Tzemach Tzedek), and that was his dowry. The Rebbe then reviewed them carefully, adding his own corrections, notes, and numerous additions."⁷

Although the project had begun as an effort to prepare the *hanachos* of the Alter Rebbe's *maamarim* for publication, the sheer scope of the collection effectively created a library. Even today, despite fires, wars, and divisions of the library among descendants of the Tzemach Tzedek and Rebbe Maharash, ten manuscript volumes from this original collection remain in the Rebbe's library.

In addition to the Alter Rebbe's *maamarim*, the Tzemach Tzedek amassed a vast body of his own

writings, including *maamarim*, *teshuvos* in halacha, *chiddushim* on Mishnayos, Gemara, and Rishonim, as well as supplements to the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*. Though much of this too was lost to fire and time, nearly eighty manuscript volumes remain, either in the Tzemach Tzedek's own hand or that of his appointed scribe, whose work he personally reviewed and corrected. In addition, there are about a thousand manuscript volumes (!) of Chassidim's transcriptions of the Tzemach Tzedek's *maamarim*.

The Tzemach Tzedek also built a large collection of printed *seforim*, collating the first collection that could truly be called a "library."

In a *sicha*,⁸ the Frieddiker Rebbe described this collection, the Tzemach Tzedek's remarkable familiarity with its contents, and an exchange between the Tzemach Tzedek and his young son, the Rebbe Maharash, regarding it.

"When my grandfather [the Rebbe Maharash] was about eight or nine years old, he would already buy *seforim*, using his weekly allowance and pocket money.

"Once, he wanted to buy some *seforim* but had no money, so he went to his father to ask for a loan. His father asked him why he needed money. He answered that he had seen that Reb Noach Baruch the *seforim* seller had some new *seforim* which he didn't yet have, and he wanted to buy them.

"His father told him: 'First master the *seforim* you already have. When you've mastered what you have, then

you'll buy new ones and master those as well.'

"At that moment, Reb Chaim Dov, the attendant, came in and reported that the newly bound *seforim* which Reb Noach Baruch had brought had been placed in the new bookcase that Yosef Dovid the carpenter had just delivered, while the unbound volumes were set aside.

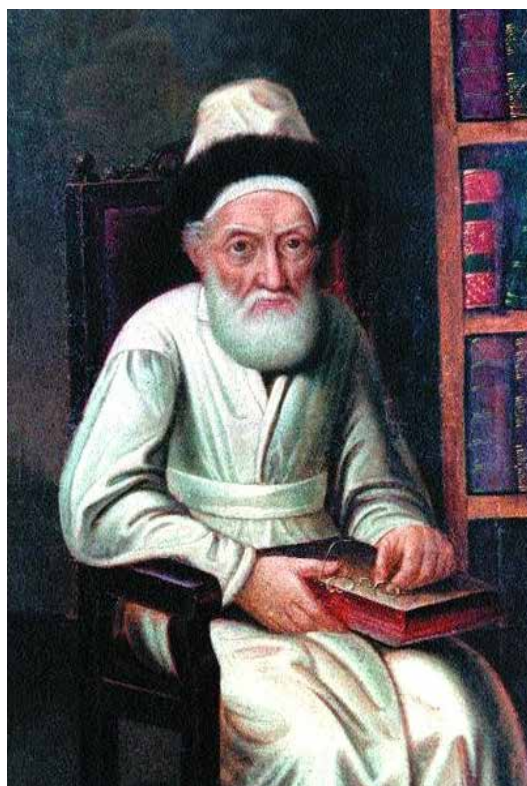
"My father's *seforim*,' my grandfather recounted, 'filled five open bookcases of printed *seforim* and two closed bookcases of manuscripts. These stood in the room where my father was. Another six open bookcases of *seforim* stood in the adjoining room, the door between the rooms always open.

"Reb Noach Baruch, the *seforim* seller, would come to Lubavitch twice a year, Shavuot and Chanukah time, and each time he would bring my father a list of new *seforim*. This time, too, he had brought a large number of books.

"When I entered the room,' my grandfather told my father, 'and saw that the new bookcase which Yosef Dovid the carpenter had just brought, the twelfth, was already



ONE OF THE KESAVIM OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK SALVAGED FROM THE FIRE, NOTE THE BURN MARKS ON THE EDGES OF THE VOLUME.



ORIGINAL OIL PAINTING OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK IN HIS STUDY, DISCOVERED IN RUSSIA ONLY IN RECENT YEARS. IT SEEMS THAT THE VARIOUS VERSIONS OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK'S PORTRAIT WERE BASED ON THIS ONE. THE PAINTING COMMANDS INCREDIBLE AUTHORITY, IN PART, DUE TO THE SEFORIM ON THE SHELF IN THE PAINTING MATCHING THE SEFORIM OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK HELD IN THE LIBRARY TODAY.

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filled with the new *seforim* from Reb Noach Baruch, and besides that there were another four bundles of unbound *seforim* waiting to be sent to Avraham Abba the bookbinder, it pained me greatly.’

“And I said to my father: ‘You told me that first one must master what he already has before buying more. Did you master all the *seforim* you own?’

“In general,’ my father answered me, ‘I am indeed well-versed in the *seforim* I have. Take out a *sefer*,’ he told me, ‘and we’ll see.’

“Without thinking much, I ran to one of the bookcases and pulled out the first *sefer* that came to hand. As soon as I took it out, my father said: ‘That’s the *sefer Maslul*. Open it and tell me the page

number, and I’ll tell you what’s written there.’ And so it was.”

Many of these printed *seforim* were also destroyed in the great fire that swept through Lubavitch about ten years before the Tzemach Tzedek’s *histalkus*.⁹ At the time of the Tzemach Tzedek’s *histalkus*, however, he still possessed a collection of *seforim*, which were divided among his sons, four of whom became Rebbees in cities across White Russia.

The *kisvei yad Kodesh*, on the other hand, remained with the Rebbe Maharash in Lubavitch.¹⁰ In a letter sent by the Rebbe Maharash and his brothers to *anash*, they explained why the manuscripts were left in Lubavitch and what was planned for them: “Regarding the *kisvei yad kodesh*... which have not yet been divided, we wish to inform you that a total of forty *bichelach* remain. Twenty of them contain teachings on *nigleh* and are being prepared for printing, so they cannot be divided at this time. The remaining twenty, which are Chassidus... when those twenty booklets are divided into eight portions, our share will amount to two and a half *bichelach*.”¹¹

Ultimately, nearly all the *kisvei yad* remained in Lubavitch with the Rebbe Maharash, who organized them and attached labels identifying, in his own handwriting, each volume and its contents. Many of these labels have survived to this day.

To this collection were added the Rebbe Maharash’s own manuscripts. First, those he had gathered during the lifetime of his father, the Tzemach Tzedek, and marked as belonging to “Shmuel, the son of the Rebbe *Shlita*.” Later, he added his handwritten records of the *maamarim* he delivered throughout his *nesius*.

In addition, the Rebbe Maharash maintained his own collection of printed *seforim*, which he began assembling as a young child, as mentioned above, and continued to expand throughout his *nesius*. Some of these *seforim*, preserved to this day, bear his identifying marks, either inscribed as “the son of the Rebbe *Shlita*” or stamped from the period of his *nesius* with the imprint: “Shmuel Schneersohn from Lubavitch.”

Organized and Catalogued

Following the *histalkus* of the Rebbe Maharash, his library was divided among his heirs, namely, the

יום ה' ניסן ס"ו

היום נשלחה בטעמאוי הקב"ל המסחר

הספרים של ה' סאטמארק כסה מצד אב"ד ה' רב' ואלו היינו י' אבן צדוק

275	149	1	1	1
10	"	"	"	"
40	31	1	1	1
1	"	"	"	"
"	23	1	1	1

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THE FRIEDIKER REBBE REPORTS TO HIS FATHER, THE REBBE RASHAB, ON HIS EFFORTS TO PURCHASE SEFORIM FOR HIS LIBRARY.



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

REPORT FROM REB SHMUEL VINER AFTER EXAMINING THE REBBE RASHAB'S LIBRARY IN 5673.

Rebbe Rashab and his siblings. This division included only the printed *seforim*. Regarding the *kisvei yad kodesh*, however, the Rebbe Rashab wrote: “I am no better than my father, the Rebbe, who took for himself most of the holy writings of my grandfather, the Rebbe... These *kisvei kodesh* and *kisvei yad kodesh* are *chayei nafshi mamash* (my very life).”¹²

The Rebbe Rashab was not content with the manuscripts he had inherited. He actively sought to acquire additional *kisvei yad kodesh* from the earlier Rabbeim. His *Igros Kodesh* contain numerous letters concerning the purchase of such manuscripts, many of them addressed to his cousin, Reb Shneur Zalman Slonim, who served as his agent in locating and acquiring them. The Rebbe Rashab repeatedly encouraged him to persist in this work, to the point that Reb Shneur Zalman began paying considerable sums for these manuscripts. The Rebbe Rashab eventually had to caution him several times¹³ not to spend inflated amounts, even for such precious treasures.

In addition to these efforts, the Rebbe Rashab also collected and purchased manuscripts of unpublished Kabbalistic works, as well as amassing an extensive collection of his own handwritten *maamarim*.

Alongside his efforts to collect manuscripts, the Rebbe Rashab devoted significant time, energy, and funds to building a collection of printed *seforim*, ranging from rare incunabula to volumes published in his own time.

The Rebbe Rashab carefully reviewed catalogs and bibliographies, noting the titles and prices of *seforim* he wished to acquire. His *Igros Kodesh* contain dozens of letters discussing the purchase of *seforim* throughout his entire *nesius*.

In one undated note to his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe, written while he was away from Lubavitch, the Rebbe Rashab wrote:

“There is an opportunity here, *IYH*, to purchase some good *seforim*. Although they won’t come cheaply, as the seller tends to ask high prices, the *seforim* are of high quality, and I will try to acquire them *IYH*. I ask that you please obtain two hundred rubles for me and send them to me.”¹⁴

In 5661, a significant collection of *seforim* and manuscripts, which had previously belonged to a famed collector, went on the market. The Rebbe Rashab wished to purchase the library, or to have it purchased by his relative Reb Yeshaya Berlin of Riga, a philanthropist who supported the Rebbe Rashab. In a letter to Reb Yeshaya, the Rebbe Rashab explains his desire to have the library purchased, which may shed light on one of the motives

for the Rebbe Rashab’s collection of his own library.

“There are some who possess very large libraries, though their intentions in doing so are not *l’shem shamayim, Rachmana l’tzlan*. So why shouldn’t a G-d-fearing Jew be willing to spend a few thousand [rubles] for this purpose: to establish a place where Jews who fear G-d can study?

“Especially now that Hashem has blessed you with a large home in Riga, set aside three or four rooms for this, two or three for the *seforim*, and one for learning. It will be of benefit to you, and of benefit to the world.”¹⁵

The Rebbe Rashab also began efforts to organize and catalog his own library and to sell any duplicate volumes he owned, except those that had belonged to the Rebbe Maharash. In the early 5670s, he invited the renowned collector and bibliographer Shmuel Viner to Lubavitch to assist in this work. This visit was later described in a letter penned by the Frierdiker Rebbe’s secretariat:

“The Lubavitch Library is truly unique. Not only does it contain exclusively *sifrei Kodesh*, with no mixture of secular works or even Orthodox literature, but its collection of *she’eilos u’teshuvos* is exceptionally large, numbering over one thousand volumes in folio format, aside from those in quarto and octavo sizes. The renowned bibliographer Reb Shmuel Viner *z”l* visited the Lubavitch library in 5673 and was astonished by the richness of its treasures.”¹⁶

During his visit, Reb Shmuel Viner attempted to arrange the *seforim* so that they would have sufficient space and not be pressed together, preserving them in better condition. The Rebbe Rashab instructed the Frierdiker Rebbe to follow these guidelines to the best of his ability: “Even if they are not as spaciouly arranged as Viner placed them, they will, at the very least, not be crowded.”¹⁷

Shortly thereafter, World War I broke out, and in 5676, the Rebbe Rashab relocated from Lubavitch to Rostov.¹⁸ He took with him the collection of manuscripts and *kisvei yad kodesh*, while the printed *seforim* were sent to Moscow for safekeeping. The letter from the Frierdiker Rebbe’s secretariat provides a sense of the library’s scope at that time:

“At the time of relocating from Lubavitch, all of the printed books were packed into crates, totaling 5,430 numbered volumes. This count included every Shas, each counted as a single number, totaling fourteen different editions. These included editions from Vienna, Basel, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Berlin, Daronfort, Slavita, Kopust, Vilna, Horodna, Zhitomir, Lemberg, and other newer printings. Likewise, large multi-part works such as the Mikraos Gedolos, Rambam, the Tur, and similar



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multi-volume works were counted as a single unit...
“To ensure the books would be preserved, *b'ezras Hashem*, from the usual dangers of war and similar disasters, the collection was sent for safekeeping to the capital, Moscow, in a special wagon. The books were placed under protective custody in a building constructed according to all rules for safeguarding against fire, water, and theft.”¹⁹

The *seforim* remained in Moscow as the world war and the subsequent Russian Revolution raged; during this period, the Rebbe Rashab was *nistalek*.

Rebuilding from Nothing

The origins of the Frierdiker Rebbe's collection of *seforim* date back to his youth, when he began assembling his own library alongside that of his father, the Rebbe Rashab. The two corresponded in several letters about their respective collections, including one in which the Rebbe Rashab declined his son's offer to supply missing volumes from his own library.²⁰

Many of the *seforim* in the Frierdiker Rebbe's collection bore his personal label: “*Sifrei Kodesh*

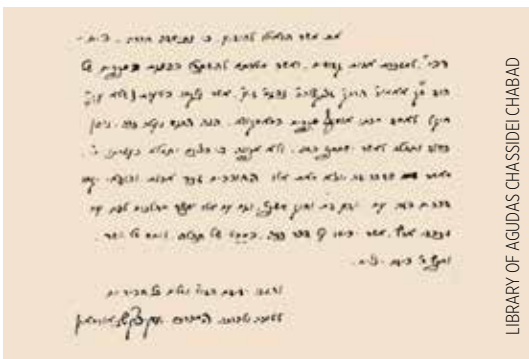
collected by Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, Lubavitch,” with a space to record the exact date of purchase. These *seforim*, as well, were packed up and sent to Russia when the Frierdiker Rebbe accompanied his father to Rostov.

The plan was that, once the war subsided, the *seforim* would be retrieved. But circumstances changed drastically. The Communists seized power and began nationalizing private property, including the warehouse in which the holy books were stored. Eventually, the *seforim* were transferred to Moscow's public library, the Rumyantsev.

Even before their confiscation, the Frierdiker Rebbe made repeated efforts to have the *seforim* returned. He wrote to government officials asserting his legal ownership, and on two occasions, once in 5681 and again some years later, he actually received official permission to reclaim them. Yet each time, new obstacles arose.

As his secretariat later recorded:

“In truth, this library was taken unlawfully, even according to their own legal system. It was only due to the actions of one Zionist, Mr. Eisenstadt, formerly a librarian at the Moscow Library and later a resident of Palestine, who, out of personal revenge, since the Rebbe's household was known to be anti-Zionist, used his influence to have the books confiscated. When he learned that a permit had been granted allowing the books to be returned to their rightful owner, he devised a scheme through which the permit was withdrawn.”²¹



A LETTER FROM THE FRIERDIKER REBBE REGARDING THE UNLAWFUL SEIZURE OF THE REBBE RASHAB'S LIBRARY.



RUSSIAN STATE LIBRARY.



THE STICKER FOUND ON SEFORIM COLLECTED BY THE FRIERDIKER REBBE IN HIS YOUTH.

After the Frierdiker Rebbe's arrest and subsequent departure from Russia, the struggle to reclaim the *seforim* continued from abroad. The newly founded Agudas Chassidei Chabad of America took up the cause, appealing to U.S. Senators and even the Secretary of State, but their efforts met with little success.

Decades later, in 5740, as the Soviet Union began to open slightly, the Rebbe appointed a delegation, comprising his *mazkir*, Rabbi Nissan Mindel, the Library's Chief Librarian, Rabbi Sholom Ber Levine, and California Head Shliach Rabbi Shlomo Cunin, to travel to Russia and renew the campaign to retrieve the collection.

A second delegation followed in 5751, composed of Rabbis Levine and Cunin, joined by Rabbi Yosef Aharonov and Rabbi Yitzchok Kogan. After persistent efforts, they located a significant portion of the Rebbe Rashab's library within the vast holdings of what was then called the Lenin Library. Although permission to remove the *seforim* was briefly granted, the long-awaited return never materialized.

Today, those *seforim* remain in the hands of the Russian State Library, the successor to the Lenin Library, still in *galus* to this very day. The effort to redeem them continues.²²

Faced with the loss of his father's library and his own, with only the priceless *kisvei yad kodesh* remaining in his possession, the Frierdiker Rebbe began rebuilding his library from virtually nothing. The first major purchase was the purchase of the library of the above-mentioned Reb Shmuel Viner, who was emigrating from Russia.

As the Frierdiker Rebbe's secretary described it:

"This book collection is entirely different from the Lubavitch Library. This is a bibliographic collection, including, for example: approximately 400 different editions of *Haggados* in various languages; around 140 *Kinnos* and a similar number of *Selichos*; about 60 *Siddurim* in different *nuschaos*; *Machzorim*; roughly 100 old *Techinos* in the Yiddish (*Zargon*) language; books of stories and legends, and, in addition to all that, numerous works of science, literature, and more."²³

The Frierdiker Rebbe continued to expand the collection, acquiring many additional *seforim*, including volumes once held by the Chief Censor's Office in Leningrad. Under Czarist law, two copies of every published book were required to be deposited there. Over time, millions of volumes accumulated, among them thousands of *seforim*. In the early years of Communist rule, these books were sold to raise funds, and many volumes for the Frierdiker Rebbe's new library were purchased from that source.

At the Frierdiker Rebbe's insistence, this collection accompanied him when he left the USSR following his arrest, despite the Soviet authorities' initial refusal to allow him to take it with him.

Upon his arrival in Riga, Latvia, the Frierdiker Rebbe immediately resumed his efforts to rebuild and expand



OFFICIAL DOCUMENT BY THE SOVIET CENSORSHIP, ALLOWING THE FRIERDIKER REBBE TO TAKE ALL OF HIS SEFORIM OUT OF RUSSIA IN 5687.



SOME OF THE HAGGADOS IN THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S COLLECTION.



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the library. He began exploring options for a proper cataloging system and even envisioned constructing a dedicated library building. He also appealed to his Chassidim in the United States and Eretz Yisroel for their assistance in building the collection.

This was at a time when the Frieddiker Rebbe was still burdened by debts from his move, had not yet established a permanent residence in Riga, and when the financial situation in *Beis Harav* was extremely strained. Yet, he felt it was of utmost importance to create a serious library where researchers could explore any subject tangentially connected to Yiddishkeit.

Letters were sent to institutions and authors, and notices were published in Jewish newspapers, asking that *seforim*, books, and documents be sent to the "Bibliothek Lyubawitch" in Riga.

Several years later, when the Frieddiker Rebbe moved from Riga to Warsaw, the library accompanied him. He gave detailed instructions for how the *seforim* were to be packed and transported. In Poland, where *seforim* were more plentiful and less expensive than in Riga, the library grew rapidly, with many new titles added to its collection.

Property of Aguch of USA

In 5698, as the situation for Jews in Poland deteriorated, the Frieddiker Rebbe instructed that all Chabad properties in Poland be registered under the name of Agudas Chassidei Chabad of America. This included the rapidly growing library.

When Germany attacked Poland, marking the beginning of World War II, the Frieddiker Rebbe and his family went to Warsaw, while the library was located in Otwock, to which it had been relocated a few years earlier. The Frieddiker Rebbe had taken with him his most precious *kesavim*, which accompanied him through his miraculous rescue from the Nazi onslaught. However, many other manuscripts, along with thousands of *seforim*, remained behind.

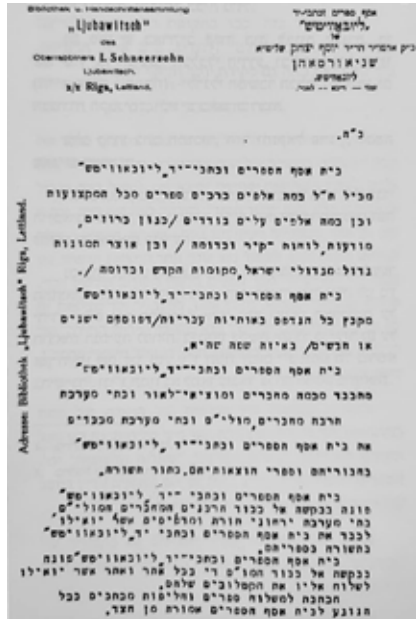
Upon reaching relative safety in Riga, the Frieddiker Rebbe wrote to Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, who headed Agudas Chassidei Chabad of America, instructing him to work toward rescuing the library. Since the United States had not yet entered the war, it was hoped that they could intervene to retrieve the collection, now legally registered as the property of the American Chabad organization. Rabbi Jacobson and others contacted American officials in Berlin, Warsaw, and the United States, requesting the retrieval of the dozens of crates of books.

These and other persistent efforts eventually bore fruit. The vast majority of the collection, nearly one hundred crates filled with *seforim*, was successfully shipped to America. However, seventeen crates of *seforim* remained in Warsaw, along with three additional crates of manuscripts that had been placed in the American Embassy for safekeeping. When the United States entered the war and the embassy was seized by the Nazis, these crates were presumed lost.

Meanwhile, the surviving *seforim* and manuscripts that reached New York were stored in the basement of 770 Eastern Parkway, or in the Frieddiker Rebbe's *yechidus* room, whose walls were lined with shelves of rare *seforim*.

After the war ended, efforts to recover the remaining crates resumed, continuing even after the Frieddiker Rebbe's *histalkus*, but with limited success. For decades, the trail went cold.

Then, in 5732, the Ottawa Public Library received a set of microfilms from the Jewish Historical



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

REQUEST SENT TO INSTITUTIONS AND AUTHORS TO SEND THEIR PUBLICATIONS AND SEFORIM TO THE 'LUBAVITCH' LIBRARY IN RIGA.



THE KESAVIM ARRIVE IN PHILADELPHIA EN ROUTE TO NEW YORK. A SPECIAL RECEPTION WAS HELD AT INDEPENDENCE HALL IN THEIR HONOR.



CONSTRUCTION TO EXPAND THE LIBRARY, 5750.

Institute in Warsaw. Among them were photographed manuscripts of *maamarim*, which were soon identified as part of the Frierdiker Rebbe's long-lost collection. Renewed efforts, led by the Rebbe's *mazkir*, Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, Rabbi Avraham Shemtov, and Rabbi Aharon Chitrik of Otzar Hachassidim, spanned several years and ultimately succeeded. After negotiations, the Polish government agreed to return the manuscripts in exchange for public acknowledgments in major U.S. newspapers thanking them for their cooperation.

These *kisvei yad kodesh* arrived at 770 toward the end of Tishrei 5738. The Rebbe's first time leaving 770 after his heart attack on Shemini Atzeres of that year was to visit the library and personally see the returned manuscripts, just one day before he returned home for the first time, on Rosh Chodesh Kislev.

The Rebbe's Own Library

Soon after the Rebbe arrived in America, he began assembling his own library, which he referred to as "the Library of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch." This library, distinct from the Frierdiker Rebbe's vast collection, remained relatively small until after the Frierdiker Rebbe's *histalkus*. At that point, access to the Frierdiker Rebbe's library was cut off, and the *seforim* that the Rebbe received or requested were added to his own growing collection.

This collection expanded rapidly, fueled by the Rebbe's ongoing requests that *shluchim* seek out rare *seforim* and manuscripts on his behalf, as well as through book exchanges between Kehos and other publishers. The Rebbe also asked that manuscripts of *Chassidus* be sent to him, and this segment of the library began to grow as well.

As the Rebbe's library continued to expand, it eventually rivaled the Frierdiker Rebbe's in size, each numbering close to 100,000 volumes. This growth necessitated a new space, and in the early 5720s, the house adjacent to 770 Eastern Parkway was purchased to serve as the library's home. The collection continued to grow steadily, though it remained completely separate from the Frierdiker Rebbe's library, which was inaccessible.

This situation continued until the famous *seforim* court case of 5745, and the subsequent victory of *Hei Teves*, after which the two libraries were formally merged.

Since then, the library has continued to grow, both in its holdings and in its physical space. Following the



SCENES FROM THE LIBRARY IN THE BASEMENT OF 770 IN RECENT YEARS.

Rebbe's encouragement, *seforim* continued to pour in from around the world. Additional expansions were made, first by excavating beneath 770's courtyard to create more space, and more recently, with the purchase of another adjoining house to accommodate the ever-growing collection.

The library also houses many sacred artifacts used by the Rebbeim, as well as thousands of gifts, photographs, flyers, and posters that were sent to the Rebbe throughout his *nesius*. Today, a large portion of the library's vast collections can be accessed online, revealing treasures that had been tightly guarded, some since the time of the Alter Rebbe. **1**

1. *HaMa'asur HaRishon* (Yerushalayim: Knizhniki Publishing Houses, 2012), p. 50.
2. See "Journey Toward Peace," *Derher Tishrei* 5786.
3. *Igros Kodesh Admur HaEmtza'i* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2012), p. 6.
4. Quoted in Rabbi Sholom Ber Levine, *Ma'asar u-Ge'ulas Admur ha-Emtsa'i* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehos, in association with Agudas Shamir, Jerusalem, 5758 [1998]), p. 43 in the online version.
5. *Sha'alos Uteshuvos Tzemach Tzedek, Choshen Mishpat, siman 70*.
6. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz* vol. 4, p. 560, letter 1130.
7. *Beis Rebbe*, section 1, p. 71a.
8. *Likkutei Dibburim* vol. 2, p. 457. The Rebbe records this story in *Sefer Hatoldos Admur Maharash*, p. 8 with minor differences.
9. Varying dates are given for the fire. See *Beis Rebbe* section 3, chapter 6; *Sefer Hasichos Toras Shalom* p. 81; *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz* vol. 3, letter 769.
10. See Rabbi Sholom Ber Levine, *Sifriyat Lubavitch* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehos, 1993), p. 36.
11. *Mibeis Hagenozim* (Brooklyn, Kehos, 2009), p. 243.
12. *Sifriyat Lubavitch*, p. 43.
13. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harashab* vol. 1, p. 102. vol. 3, p. 13.
14. *Sifriyat Lubavitch*, p. 52.
15. *Mibeis Hagenozim*, p. 206.
16. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz* vol. 1, p. 538.
17. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harashab* vol. 2, p. 752.
18. See "Relocating the Capital," *Derher Av* 5785.
19. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz* vol. 1, p. 538.
20. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harashab* vol. 2, p. 753.
21. *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 82
22. For the full story of the struggle to return the library, see Rabbi Berel Levine, *Yoman Hashlichus Hamiyuchedes* (Brooklyn: Library of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, 2001); Rabbi Shlomo Cunin, *A Library Held Hostage* (Agudas Chassidei Chabad of Russia); and "The Very Life of the Rebbeim," *Derher*, Teves 5784.
23. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz* vol. 2, p. 9.



BOUND THROUGH GENERATIONS

The
Library
of Our
Rabbeim