

By: **Rabbi Mendy Greenberg** (Twinsburg, OH)

Self-Sacrific Continuum

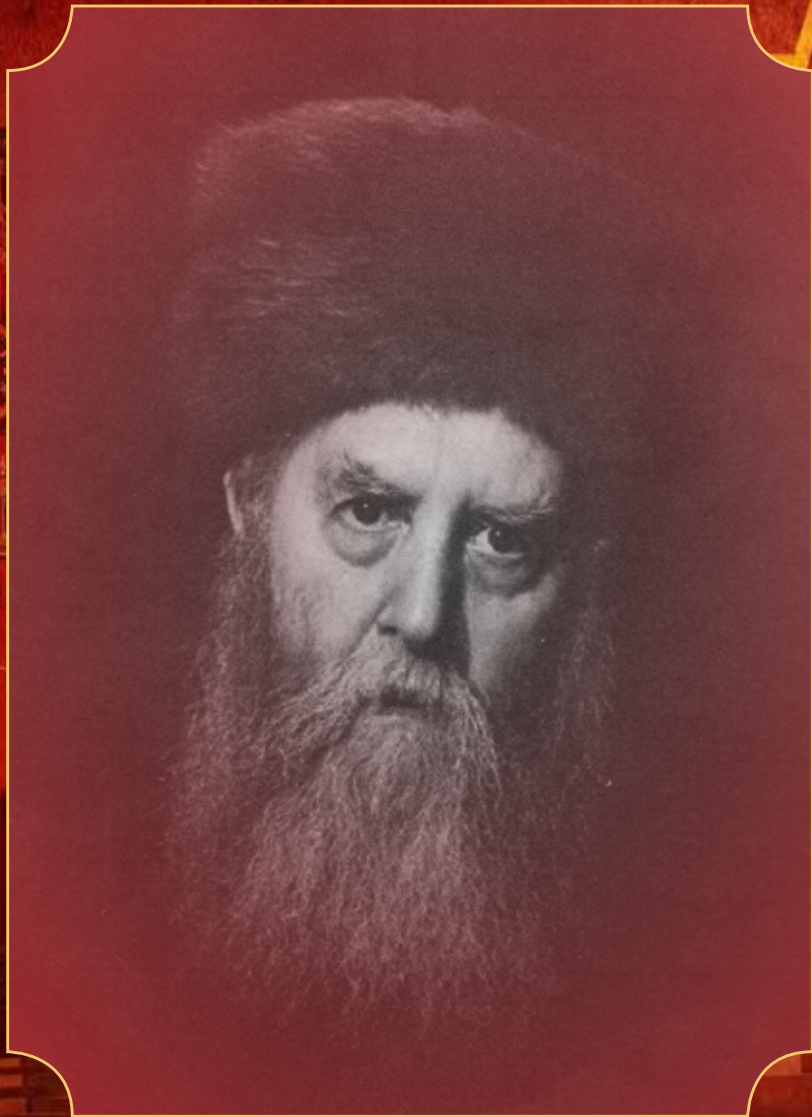
The Nesius of the Frierdiker Rebbe

לע"נ
הילדה התמימה אלטא מינא ע"ה
בת יבלחט"א הרה"ח הרה"ת
ר' ישכר שלמה ומרת שיינא שיחיו
טייכטל

תלמידת בית רבקה חברה בצבאות ה' זכתה
לקירוב מיוחד מכ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו
נקטפה בדמי ימיה ביום ש"ק, פרשת
ואלה שמות כ"ג טבת ה'תש"נ
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

נדפס ע"י
משפחתה שיחיו

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Russia—The War for Survival

The Difficult Beginning

It was Lag B'omer, just one year after the *histalkus* of the Rebbe Rashab. Russian police officers were rampaging through the home of the Frierdiker Rebbe in Rostov, collecting everything of value—furniture, clothing, and even precious inheritances from the Rabbeim—loading them onto waiting trucks. And it wasn't only material possessions they were after; a group of bochorim had been arrested as well, including Rashag, due to marry the Frierdiker Rebbe's daughter just one month later.

The bochor Yudel Chitrik stood there, horrified, taking in the scene.

"They took whatever they fancied," he later wrote. "Three large trucks were brought to cart away all the Rebbe's belongings."

The official ruse was the existence of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim. The Yevsektzia, in their enthusiasm to close the yeshiva, had reported to the secret police that the Frierdiker Rebbe opposed the new regime, and the secret police were only too happy to act.

This was the climate in which the Frierdiker Rebbe began his *nesius*.

The Communists wasted no time in enforcing their ideology with an iron fist. In the emerging communist "paradise," low-wage workers were esteemed citizens. At the

same time, the *bourgeoisie*—a vaguely defined class—were branded enemies of the state.

The new officials could enter any home at will, confiscating possessions or "redistributing" the house itself to other families. There was no concept of civil rights. Everything was up for grabs.

Thankfully, the bochorim were released after ten days, and the wedding proceedings commenced.

"Rashag's *ufruf* took place on Shavuot," writes Reb Folleh Kahan. "After davening, everyone went to the home of the *mechutan*, Reb Mendel Gurary, who rented a room on Moskovsky Street. The poverty was striking—both in the home of the *chassan's* parents and that of the *kallah's* [i.e., the home of the Frierdiker Rebbe]. Just a short time before the wedding, the Bolsheviks had confiscated everything they owned, including the *kallah's* clothing, etc. Kiddush was made on coffee, as there was no money to buy *mashke*."

"The wedding took place on Friday, 15 Sivan. The atmosphere was very depressing. When the Alter Rebbe's *niggun*, *Arba Bavos*, was sung, the Frierdiker Rebbe wept, striking the table forcefully with his hand.

"The chair of the Rebbe Rashab remained at the head of the table, exactly as it had been in his lifetime—no one touched it. The mood was so heavy that there was no dancing at all. Only Reb Avraham Fradkin danced a *kazatzke* with his son to the tune of *Hop Cossak*..."¹

Soviet Style Equality

The Bolsheviks were the party of "equality" and "freedom." Every person, they claimed, was free to live according to their conscience; there would be no anti-religious coercion. To help "ensure" this "equality," several key laws were passed, among them the following:

All property of religious institutions—such as shuls—was now deemed the property of "the people," in other words, the state. If a certain number of locals submitted a request, the shul could remain open—but the required number of signatories was conveniently determined by the local Soviet officials.



THE CHOTZER OF THE REBBE RASHAB AND THE FRIERDIKER REBBE IN ROSTOV.

All children were required to attend public school; private education was banned.

All private enterprise was outlawed; everyone was to work equally—for the state. The new six-day work week included Shabbos.

The Jewish section of the Communist Party, the Yevsektzia, set out to ensure that these laws were observed *‘lifnim mishuras hadin.’* Across the country, shuls were turned into youth clubs, children were indoctrinated with *kefira*, and Shabbos observance was made virtually impossible.

The Frierdiker Rebbe immediately began organizing the opposition. In letters and *sichos* to Chassidim, he made it clear in no uncertain terms that it was incumbent upon every chossid to hold the torch of Yiddishkeit.

“It is true,” the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote in one *nichtav kloli*, “we are hungry and thirsty, exiled and broken, crushed and downtrodden—as though the *hashgacha* has been withdrawn *chas v’shalom*, leaving wild beasts to rule over us and wreak havoc on our homes and children.

“Yet even so... Let us rise and follow in the footsteps of our forefathers... Let us hold aloft the sacred banner whose shining letters declare: *Yisrael, Oraisa, and Kudsha Brich Hu are one.* Our ancestors carried this banner; we shall hold it too, and our children after us, until the very foundations of evil are destroyed.

“Let each of us know: deliverance will not come through sighs alone. My father, the Rebbe, demands action: to establish houses of learning and to establish public Torah classes, in both *nigleh* and Chassidus. This is the work we must do, with Hashem’s help.”²

The results quickly became visible.

In a letter to a chossid in America in 5682, the Frierdiker Rebbe tells him that one of his friends had established new Torah classes in Ratzov; another had opened a network of *chadarim* in Zhlobin; a third had opened a branch of Tomchei Temimim in Gomel. “Without regard for the difficult situation, they are all occupied with *harbatzas haTorah.*”³

As word spread about the powerful new force sustaining *Yiddishkeit* throughout the Soviet Union—the new Lubavitcher Rebbe—the secret police in Rostov also took notice. In 5684, as the Rebbe traveled back home from a trip to Moscow, they prepared to arrest him.

Miraculously, the plan was leaked to the Frierdiker Rebbe’s secretary, Reb Chonye Marosov, who rushed to intercept him before he reached Rostov. After tense negotiations, the GPU agreed to leave the Rebbe alone, provided that he leave the city immediately.



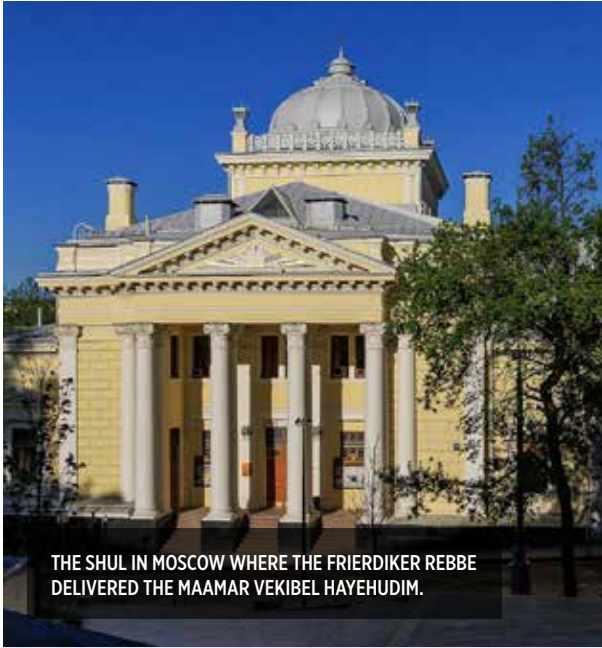
DEPICTIONS OF THE BOLSHEVIK TAKEOVER OF RUSSIA AND SEIZURE OF PROPERTY.

Before Shavuot that year, the Frierdiker Rebbe relocated to Leningrad.

The Leningrad Years

Leningrad was much closer to the major Jewish population centers of Russia. It had been more difficult for Chassidim to visit Rostov, but now the Frierdiker Rebbe’s large apartment in Leningrad saw a never-ending stream of visitors. People came for *yechidus*; crowds arrived for *maamarim* and farbrengens, and hundreds would converge for Rosh Hashanah. In the heart of Soviet Russia, a full-blown chassidic court had taken shape.

As the underground *chadarim* and yeshivos expanded, so did the need for funding. To sustain the network, the Frierdiker Rebbe began corresponding with the Joint Distribution Committee, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and other major philanthropic organizations abroad. Soon, significant aid began to flow into Russia.



THE SHUL IN MOSCOW WHERE THE FRIERDIKER REBBE DELIVERED THE MAAMAR VEKIBEL HAYEHUDIM.

THE BIG EVENTS

Many of the major events in the life of the Frierdiker Rebbe have been covered at length in *A Chassidisher Derher*. The following is a selection of articles:

A Rebbe's Chinuch: The Story of the Frierdiker Rebbe's Childhood (Tammuz 5782)

Without Any Fear: The Frierdiker Rebbe's *mesirus nefesh* that led to his arrest in 5687 (Adar I 5776)

In The Lion's Den: The Frierdiker Rebbe's Arrest and Liberation (Tammuz 5784). **Not**

Just My Liberation: The Rebbe's Account of 12-13 Tammuz (Tammuz 5785)

The Rebbe & Rebbetzin's Chasuna (Kislev 5779)

A Royal Visit: The Frierdiker Rebbe's Trip to the Holy Land (Av 5784)

America Awakened: The Frierdiker Rebbe's Visit to the United States (Cheshvan 5786)

The Miraculous Rescue: The Frierdiker Rebbe's Escape From Nazi Occupied Poland (Adar II 5779)

Shake the Jewish World: The Frierdiker Rebbe's Call for *L'Alter L'Teshuva*, *L'Alter L'Geulah* (Adar 5775)

The New World: The Three Institutions of Machne, Merkos, and Kehos (Sivan 5778)

The general financial situation had also improved somewhat. The government began to permit small private businesses to operate for profit, and the Frierdiker Rebbe encouraged home-based work, allowing Jews to maintain their livelihoods while keeping Shabbos.

But the Yevsektzia continued to grow stronger, and the war against Yiddishkeit showed no signs of slowing. Letters from the Frierdiker Rebbe reveal that by 5685, he was already contemplating leaving the Soviet Union and continuing the struggle from abroad. In one letter—written partially in code—he described “a relative” suffering under relentless persecution, his “business destroyed” and his “factory shrinking.”⁴ The message was clear.

Nonetheless, the fight continued unabated.

“*Chapt arein mesirus nefesh*,” the Frierdiker Rebbe exhorted two hundred Chassidim gathered for Yud-Tes Kislev in 5686. “A day will come when there will be freedom of religion—and you will search for the opportunity of *mesirus nefesh* and you won't find it...”⁵

But the Frierdiker Rebbe's inner circle knew that all was not well. Spies were always present. The Frierdiker Rebbe would speak in guarded language; the Rebbe once related that *yechidus* concerning underground work was moved to a side room, as the main *yechidus* room was known to be bugged.⁶ By the winter of 5687, things seemed to reach a tipping point.

In Adar I, Reb Elya Chaim Althaus accompanied the Frierdiker Rebbe to the train station as he headed for Moscow, where he would deliver the famous *maamar Vekibel Hayehudim*. As he boarded the train, the Frierdiker Rebbe turned to Reb Elya Chaim Althaus and said in a heavy tone, ‘A perek Tehillim doesn't hurt. Say a perek Tehillim for me...’⁷

On Purim that year, as hundreds gathered in the large *zal* for the *farbrenge*n, the Frierdiker Rebbe spoke with unusual sharpness. He addressed the Yevsektzia openly, despite the fact that their agents stood in the room, right across from him. Each time he mentioned them, he added “*yimach shemom*,” cursing them without restraint.

Reb Elya Chaim and the Chassidim watched the spies' faces the entire time. “We saw them flush with shame, and then turn white with anger and murderous hatred. In that moment, we could sense their thoughts and knew they were plotting revenge.”⁸

The revenge wasn't long in coming. On 15 Sivan that year, came the dreaded knock on the door.

Riga—The Temporary Station

Shortly after leaving Russia, the Frierdiker Rebbe summed up his experiences in a letter:

I cannot yet properly write about everything that transpired over the past six months; my weak health—may Hashem grant me a full recovery—demands some rest, and, at least somewhat, to forget the painful experiences I endured both in body and in spirit.

I was imprisoned under the harshest conditions—behind iron doors, guarded by armed soldiers, in terrifying conditions. Hearing the cries of the murdered, the moans of the tormented. It's hard to believe such cruelty could exist. Even now, when I recall it, my hair stands on end. Hodu LaHashem ki tov—for saving me from destruction and allowing me to emerge with my body intact.

Altogether, I spent eighteen and a half days in prison, followed by ten days of exile in Kostroma, and six weeks in exile in Malakhovka, a small village near Moscow—the only place I was able to stay, for reasons I'll explain in the future.⁹

Before Rosh Hashanah, I was in Rostov, at the Ohel of my father, the Rebbe. A few days before Rosh Hashanah, I arrived in Peterburg, and remained there throughout the Yomim Tovim. After tremendous effort and expense by our devoted friend Reb Mordechai Dubin—who traveled three times over two months on my behalf—I was finally compelled to leave the country on Thursday, Isru Chag Sukkos.

May Hashem grant that the good intentions I have to strengthen Torah in our country be fulfilled in the best way.¹⁰

Shortly after arriving in Riga, the Frierdiker Rebbe traveled to Berlin on communal matters. Knowing how unwell he was, Reb Yitzchak Dubov asked the Frierdiker Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah, whether the Frierdiker Rebbe would see a doctor during the trip. "Yes, yes," she replied, "I asked him as well—but he told me, 'Mame, please don't ask me to. I don't have time.'"

The Frierdiker Rebbe had left Russia on *Isru Chag* of Sukkos 5688, and Riga, Latvia, would become the capital of Lubavitch for the next six years.

It was very much a continuation of the years in Russia. Concerns of Russian Jewry remained at the forefront. Now free to travel and communicate openly, the Frierdiker Rebbe launched a coordinated campaign to pressure the Soviet government to abolish the Yevsektzia. Jewish leaders across Europe were urged to meet with their local Soviet ambassadors and convey that the Yevsektzia's anti-religious persecution was damaging Russia's reputation abroad, and it



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S LATVIAN PASSPORT.



REB YECHZEKEL ('CHATCHE') FEIGIN.

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simply wasn't in Russia's best interest.

However, for the first time in Chabad history, the Frierdiker Rebbe was separated from the majority of Chassidim, who were left behind in Russia.

Finances were a constant challenge. The Frierdiker Rebbe's household had always been supported through *maamad*, but most Chassidim were now cut off, and the few abroad were mostly poor immigrants struggling to survive. A small amount of support came from America, but it barely covered the basics.

The Frierdiker Rebbe himself never mentioned the financial strain; in his letters, he wrote only of the debts incurred from supporting Yiddishkeit in Russia. When a planned trip to Eretz Yisroel for Tishrei 5695 was cancelled, the Frierdiker Rebbe gave no explanation—but Reb Chatche Feigin, the Frierdiker Rebbe's secretary, later revealed that there simply hadn't been enough money to make it happen.

Despite suffering from various ailments, the Frierdiker Rebbe refused to rest. As Reb Chatche Feigin later wrote to America, "There is simply no way to logically explain the Rebbe's workload."¹¹

Chassidus Renewed: Poland

Crossing to Poland

Riga was often viewed as a temporary stop.

The Frierdiker Rebbe wanted to reconstitute Lubavitch as it was in Lubavitch, where Tomchei Temimim was in close proximity to the Rebbe, and where Chassidim could easily come to congregate. Riga, however, was a modern European city with very few Chassidim; it wasn't the long-term solution the Frierdiker Rebbe was looking for.

After two years in Riga, the Frierdiker Rebbe embarked on a year-long journey to Eretz Yisroel and the United States. The trip to America was mainly to raise funds for

the Jews of Russia, yet an unspoken question was whether the Frierdiker Rebbe would ultimately settle there.

America, too, was ultimately ruled out. While he recognized its potential, the Frierdiker Rebbe did not yet see it as a home for Lubavitch.

Enter Warsaw, Poland.

Warsaw was a vibrant Jewish metropolis—filled with *yeshivos*, *rabbanim*, *rebbe*s, and a flourishing Jewish life. In earlier generations, Chabad Chassidim were virtually unknown there; Russian Chassidim often viewed the Polish Jews as foreign and different in temperament and culture. However, since the Bolshevik Revolution, many Chassidim had migrated to Poland, and the Chabad presence there had been steadily growing.

Already on the first *Yom Hilula* of the Rebbe Rashab, on Beis Nissan 5681, a *Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim* had been founded in Warsaw—the first independent branch of the yeshiva—and it was thriving.

From the very start, this yeshiva was especially dear to the Frierdiker Rebbe. Because of the wartime disruptions, it had taken a special messenger to bring him the news across the border to Rostov. The Frierdiker Rebbe had been overjoyed. Reb Berel Rivkin later wrote that the Frierdiker Rebbe spoke about it for days—expressing his hope that the institution would grow and spread its light throughout the world.¹²

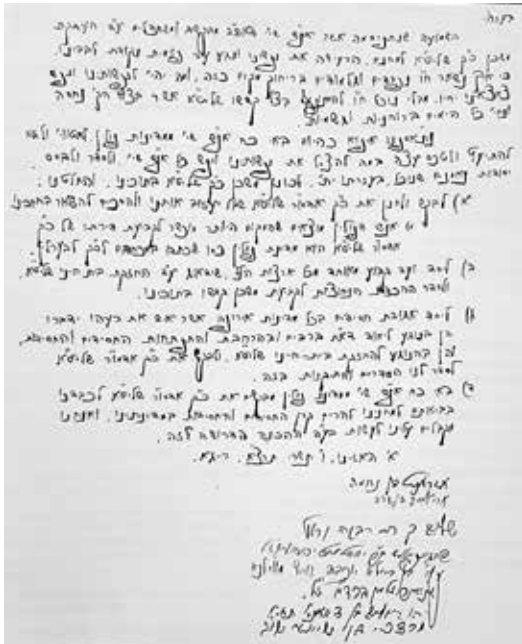
When the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived for his first visit to Poland, the yeshiva had grown to 250 students. He was very pleased. “If I had presented such a yeshiva to my father,” the Frierdiker Rebbe remarked, “I would have received an award.”¹³ A year later, the Frierdiker Rebbe held the Rebbe and Rebbetzin’s wedding in Warsaw, specifically to be in proximity to the yeshiva.

The Chassidim in Poland were well aware of their unique position and hoped that the Frierdiker Rebbe would ultimately settle among them. Just two days after his arrival in Riga from Russia, Warsaw’s Chassidim had sent a formal letter to the Frierdiker Rebbe, requesting that he make Poland his new home.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe later returned from the United States, word spread that American Chassidim were asking him to settle there permanently—and the Polish Chassidim quickly renewed their campaign. They reiterated



LETTERHEAD OF YESHIVAS TOMCHEI TEMIMIM IN WARSAW, SHOWING THE YESHIVA BUILDING OF WHICH NO PHOTOGRAPH SURVIVES, AS IT WAS DESTROYED IN THE WAR.



CHASSIDIM OF POLAND, LATVIA, AND LITHUANIA PETITION THE FRIERDIKER REBBE TO STAY IN THEIR MIDST.

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their earlier request, arguing passionately that Poland was the natural and ideal location for the new Lubavitch center.

Over the course of the ensuing year, the Frierdiker Rebbe considered bringing *Tomchei Temimim* to Riga, with the hope of reestablishing the yeshiva near him. But when that plan failed to materialize, he decided instead to move closer to the yeshiva.

That Tishrei (5692) was already spent in Otwock [during this Tishrei, the Rebbe held a historic Simchas Beis Hasho'evah farbrengen at the Frierdiker Rebbe's behest, when many Chassidim heard him speak for the first time]. The final move was delayed for a variety of reasons, but by the end of 5693, the Frierdiker Rebbe had permanently settled in Poland.¹⁴

Renewing Days of Old

In Warsaw, Reb Chatche Feigin reported, everything seemed different.

Being near the yeshiva, he wrote, the Frierdiker Rebbe seemed more at peace. "The Rebbe *shlita* delivers *maamarim* nearly every Shabbos—deep and long *maamarim* [referring to the famous *hemshech* of Rosh Hashanah 5694]. The *bochurim* join the *chazara*, and then they enter the Rebbe's room for *chazara* as well [on Shabbos morning, just as in Lubavitch]. At times, we forget about the current situation—it feels as though we've been transported back twenty years, when the *Heichal* [in Lubavitch] stood in its full glory—may Hashem renew those days once more."¹⁵

Reb Avraham Yitzchak Garfinkel, one of the *bochurim*

at the time, wrote that the year 5694 was a "golden age" for the *bochurim*.

"Those were the shining days in the history of Tomchei Temimim in Warsaw. The Rebbe took a deep interest in every detail, and would often visit the yeshiva to daven, to farbreng on special occasions, and to deliver *maamarim*.

"The *Temimim* became deeply attached to the Rebbe. The *hemshechim* of *maamarim* were extraordinary and profoundly deep. We would copy them on carbon paper, review them repeatedly, and immerse ourselves in them—we truly '*koched zich*' in them.

"It was a beautiful sight to see the Rebbe walking from his home to the yeshiva on Shabbos, surrounded by elderly *anash* and distinguished Chassidim, with the *bochurim* following. His face radiated holiness and *pnimius'diker simcha*, lighting up everyone who was fortunate enough to see him."¹⁶

The years in Poland were golden years, but they introduced unique difficulties of their own.

Tomchei Temimim was incredibly successful in drawing in the youth; seven branches were opened throughout Poland, and it eventually came to a point where Tomchei Temimim was forced to put ads in the newspaper asking young *bochurim* to stop enrolling—there simply wasn't space or funds to handle the demand.

Not everyone was amenable to the idea of the *poilisher* youth suddenly following Chabad Chassidus. In a *sicha* (referenced at the end of this article), the Rebbe once described it with the *possuk* about Yosef, *vaykan'u bo echav, v'aviv*



RESIDENCE OF THE FRIERDIKER REBBE IN RIGA ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THIS CENTER BUILDING.



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE IN HIS STUDY IN RIGA.

shamar es hadavar. A special divine role and mission had been reserved for the Frierdiker Rebbe from above, and that engendered a sense of competition.

But there was something that concerned the Chassidim even more: the Frierdiker Rebbe's illness.

The Rebbe's Kochos Atzmiyim

When the Frierdiker Rebbe returned from his trip to America, some noticed that the pace of his speech had changed slightly. Not much attention was paid to it, but by the time of the move to Poland, it had become impossible to ignore.

The Frierdiker Rebbe visited various physicians and clinics in search of a diagnosis, to no avail. Finally, after two years, a certain Jewish doctor determined a course of treatment.

From then on, the Rebbe was often away from home. For the final four years in Poland (5695–5699), he would usually visit a sanatorium twice a year, each winter and summer—often for many months at a time, and spend additional time visiting physicians in Vienna or Paris [the Rebbe and Rebbetzin spent much of their time with the Frierdiker Rebbe during those journeys (in addition to generally spending Yom Tov with the Frierdiker Rebbe)].

There were times that the Frierdiker Rebbe was under strict orders to rest as much as possible and to speak as little as possible. During those periods—like the entire winter of 5695 in Purkesdorf—the Frierdiker Rebbe utilized the time to write long letters and *reshimos*, such as the *lange briv* (“long letter”) to the Rebbetzin.

At the end of 5695, the Frierdiker Rebbe and Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim also moved to Otwock, a quiet resort town near Warsaw. It would be easier to maintain the yeshiva financially, and the fresh air was better for the Rebbe's health.

Unfortunately, the situation didn't improve.

“When he arrived [after three months at a sanatorium], we were brokenhearted,” wrote Reb Chatche Feigin after Tishrei 5697. “We didn't see any improvement in his health, neither in his speech nor in his ability to walk.

“During Rosh Hashanah, everything went exactly as in previous years without change, with one exception: usually, he received *panim* on Erev Rosh Hashanah at the doorway of his room, but now he wasn't able to stand and remained seated at his desk as people came in following the usual order—he would always come out three times, and this time three groups entered.

“The davening on Leil Rosh Hashanah lasted as always—from nightfall until close to midnight. On Rosh Hashanah day, he recited the *haftarah*, the *lamnatzeiach*, the *brachos*, and the *pesukim* before shofar as usual—with cries from the depths of his heart. Amazingly, his speech was noticeably



A KUNTRES OF MAAMARIM OF THE FRIEDIKER REBBE PUBLISHED IN WARSAW, 5694.



PHOTOS OF THE OLDER STUDENTS IN TOMCHEI TEMIMIM, WARSAW.

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RECENTLY DISCOVERED PHOTO OF THE FRIEDIKER REBBE PUBLISHED IN A POLISH NEWSPAPER, SHOWING HIS ARRIVAL IN OTWOCK FOR TISHREI 5692.

RABBI SHMUEL SUPER



KEHOT PUBLICATION SOCIETY

THE FRIEDIKER REBBE CONVALESCING IN AUSTRIA DURING THE YEARS 5695–5697.

stronger and clearer. To me, this was an example of the explanation in Chassidus that the revelation of the *kochos atzmiyim* can affect the *kochos hagluyim*.¹⁷

The next year (5698), he wrote a similar report:

“There seems to be a slight improvement, but from the days of Selichos through Sukkos, he ignored his physical state with regard to his *avoda*—such as davening on *leil Rosh Hashanah*, the *tekios*, *maamarim*... on Simchas Torah, he sat for several hours and farbrenged... It was obviously beyond his physical capacity, and it seems that this winter he will need to travel for health-purposes once again.”¹⁸

That same letter included another aspect of Tishrei, which was slightly ominous.

During the Simchas Torah farbrengen, the Frieddiker Rebbe declared that this was a year that needed *rachamim rabim*. “Obviously, this made a very strong impression on everyone. He saw the effect of his words, and he said, ‘But not with fear and sobbing, rather a *chassidisher hisorerus rachamim*, with *simcha!*’”

Later that year, the winds of war began blowing

throughout Europe. Hitler annexed Austria and began to dismember Czechoslovakia. As time passed, people became increasingly anxious that a world war would break out once again.

The next year, at the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen, the Frieddiker Rebbe spoke about the state of affairs.

“He said,” Reb Chatche writes, “that one can see clearly that we are in the time of the coming of Moshiach. He said, ‘Moshiach is already here, just behind the wall—and one who has a good sense of hearing can already hear his voice, and one with a good sense of vision can already see him....’”¹⁹

These were themes that would recur in the *sichos* for the entire duration of World War II, which broke out at the end of the year. In America, this would become known under the banner of *L’Alter L’Teshuva*, *L’Alter L’Geulah*.

We are at the end of the night, the Frieddiker Rebbe explained at that Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen—and at that point, it becomes all the more difficult to stay awake. We mustn’t fall asleep.²⁰

PART III

No Different: The United States of America

To Transform the World

On Tuesday, Tes Adar II 5700, an enormous crowd waited on the pier at New York Harbor to welcome the

Frieddiker Rebbe. The Chassidim were able to emit a sigh of relief—the Rebbe was finally out of danger.

Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson was part of a special delegation that was taken on a tugboat and allowed to board the

Friediker Rebbe's ship. The Friediker Rebbe summed up his recent experiences and immediately shared his vision for the future:

"The sufferings I endured in prison in Russia do not compare to the torments of the 12 weeks I spent under their [i.e. the Nazi's] rule.

"Now we will quickly take care of the formalities and get to work immediately. Our work is Torah and Yiddishkeit. As for the contention that we are weak physically, that we have no strength—Hashem is after all '*hanosen layo'ef koach*.'"²¹

When the Friediker Rebbe disembarked onto America's shores, his *gashmius'dike* image had changed drastically since his last visit. Last time, he had walked off the boat in good health; now he was brought on a wheelchair. In earlier years, he had spoken with a strong, clear voice, but now the *sichos* were in a soft tone, and increasingly difficult to understand.

But those who thought the Friediker Rebbe came to rest were sorely mistaken. That same day, the Friediker Rebbe declared the opening of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim on American shores. "America *iz nisht andersh*, America is no different," the Rebbe maintained.

The small Tomchei Temimim yeshiva stationed in 770 was the first Chassidische yeshiva in America, where *bochurim* learned Chassidus regularly, wore beards, and behaved in every way like *chassidische bochurim*.

Agudas Chassidei Chabad quickly became alive with activity. The network of Tomchei Temimim opened branch after branch of day schools, often sending 18-year-old *bochurim* to distant cities to establish them. A large network of afternoon Talmud Torahs opened in New York.



NEWSPAPER CLIPPING FEATURING A PHOTO OF THE FRIEDIKER REBBE AND THE REBBE GREETED AT THE TRAIN STATION UPON THEIR RETURN TO POLAND.

The Friediker Rebbe appointed the Rebbe to head three new institutions, Kehos, Machne Yisroel, and Merkos L'Yonei Chinuch. Merkos oversaw the opening of many girls' schools, and Mesibos Shabbos became one of the Rebbe's earliest campaigns.

"We were brought to America," the Friediker Rebbe said at the Greystone Hotel on the first Shavuot in America, "to have *mesirus nefesh* to make America a *makom Torah*. I know very well what type of *mesirus nefesh* it will take—but I am confident that in the merit of my holy ancestors, we will succeed."²²

In fact, the logo of Merkos was the 'light' of the '*luchos*' spreading over an entire globe. From the very first moment, the vision was global.

"I remember," related Rabbi Hirshel Fogelman, "how the Rebbe once said at a farbrengen, 'My *shver* began with Mesibos Shabbos. The end will be that we'll transform the entire world!' These words had a tremendous impact on us. We started to feel like it was really happening. Lubavitch would eventually conquer the whole world!"²³

A World of Gan Eden

At a time when much of traditional Judaism in America seemed to be dying or dead, 770 was very much alive. Other shuls or 'chassidic courts' were filled with elderly Jews, but Lubavitch was alive with youth, something which attracted many other young *bochurim*.

"Our lives were intertwined with the Friediker Rebbe," related Reb Yosef Goldstein. "His farbrengens, his image, his *spodik*, his beard, and his holy face that always appeared aflame. We were as attached to the Rebbe as bees to honey."²⁴

The *sichos* and *maamarim* from those early days, especially those from *Kayitz Tof Shin*, cover many of the basic fundamentals of Chassidus and Chassidische *hanhaga*, as the crowd listening was really a crowd of beginners. With the Russian Chassidim mostly still in Russia, and the Polish Yeshivah *bochurim* still stranded in Europe, the Friediker Rebbe began from scratch with a third group of disciples.

The Friediker Rebbe himself came to the main floor of 770 only in the first few years in America. Soon, it became too difficult, and all *tefillos* and farbrengens were held on the second floor. Access was tightly restricted, and young *bochurim* were often left waiting in the hallway.

In an interview with Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, he described how once, after he managed to gain access, he had the privilege of attending a farbrengen:

"I walked into the farbrengen room. The Friediker Rebbe was seated in his chair at the head of the table, his

shtreimel on his holy head. The Rebbe was sitting to his left, Rashag to his right. He was already speaking. I couldn't understand much of what he was saying, but the image—his presence, the aura, the way everyone was listening intently. It felt like I was in another world, in Gan Eden. Nothing else existed in those moments.”²⁵

I Have Come To My Garden...

In the final years, as delivering *maamarim* became too difficult, the Frierdiker Rebbe began releasing *maamarim* regularly to be published and learned by Chassidim on special dates. With the approach of Shabbos Yud Shevat 5710, the Frierdiker Rebbe released the *maamar* ‘*Basi Legani*’ in honor of the *yahrtzeit* of Rebbetzin Rivkah.

In a footnote to this *maamar* in the *Maftaiach* of the Frierdiker Rebbe's Torah, the Rebbe wrote about the moments he brought the published *maamar*—the Frierdiker Rebbe's final *maamar*—to the Frierdiker Rebbe. Every detail of that moment was carefully noted by the Rebbe. Perhaps this was the final time the Rebbe saw the Frierdiker Rebbe *b'chaim chayuso b'alma dein...*

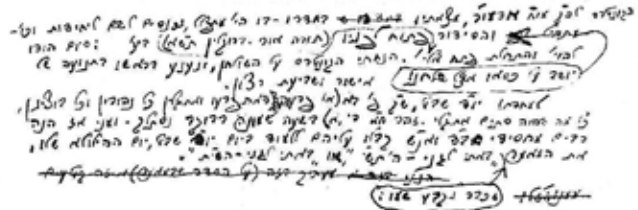
“The *maamar* (the *kuntres*) was brought from the binder on Friday, 9 Shevat,” the Rebbe wrote. “When I brought the *kuntres* to my father-in-law, the Rebbe, I found him in his room—where he would daven, receive *yechidus* etc.,—sitting in his chair at his desk, with the Siddur *Torah Ohr* (Brooklyn edition 5701) open before him on page 45, where *Hodu laHashem* ends and *Pasach Eliyahu* begins. I placed the *kuntres* on the table. He nodded his head in a gesture of approval and satisfaction.

“The next day, Yud Shevat—Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Bo (‘*El Paro, da'ispar'u ve'isgalya kol nehorin u'butsinin...*’ Zohar I, 210a)—at eight o'clock in the morning, he was *nistalek*.”²⁶

The Three Stages— and Their Lesson

At a Yud Shevat farbrengen,²⁷ the Rebbe once pointed out that the Frierdiker Rebbe's *nesius* was characterized by three periods of *mesirus nefesh*, each of a different kind.

The first ten years were characterized by *mesirus nefesh* in the most physical sense, in the battle against the Soviets. The second ten years were characterized by a spiritual *mesirus nefesh*, to persevere in the face of criticism (and worse) from our own fellow Jews. And the third period was a *mesirus nefesh* of spirit—instead of building up his own *daled amos* and shielding them from the rest of the



THE REBBE RECORDS IN HIS HOLY HANDWRITING HOW HE BROUGHT THE KUNTRES OF ‘BASI LEGANI—5710’ TO THE FRIERDIKER REBBE.

country, he declared that the entire America would be his own *daled amos*.

With each form of *mesirus nefesh*, the Rebbe concluded, the Frierdiker Rebbe paved the path for us. When a Yid decides to embark on any form of *mesirus nefesh*—or even two or three—the way is open for us to do so, and to do so with tremendous success. **T**

1. The events are described in Reshimas Zichronos p. 406 and Shmuos V'Sippurim vol. 1, p. 200–01. See also Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayyatz vol. 1, p. 327.
2. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayyatz vol. 1, p. 177 (shortened for brevity).
3. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayyatz vol. 1, p. 221.
4. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayyatz vol. 1, p. 443.
5. Sefer Hasichos 5680–87 p. 121.
6. 12 Tammuz 5733. Toras Menachem vol. 73, p. 45.
7. Sefer Hatoldos vol. 3, p. 52.
8. Sefer Hatoldos vol. 3, p. 84.
9. The Frierdiker Rebbe moved to Malakhovka due to threats from the Leningrad GPU to rearrest him.
10. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayyatz vol. 1, p. 613.
11. Igros Kodesh vol. 2 pg. 9.
12. Toldos Chabad B'Polin p. 85.
13. Toldos Chabad B'Polin p. 117.
14. See Toldos Chabad B'Polin p. 73.
15. Toldos Chabad B'Polin p. 153.
16. Toldos Chabad B'Polin p. 154.
17. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayyatz vol. 4, p. 7.
18. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayyatz vol. 4, p. 13.
19. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayyatz vol. 4, p. 18.
20. See Sefer Hasichos 5699 p. 315.
21. Di Yiddische Heim, Issue 33–34.
22. Sefer Hasichos Kayitz 5700 p. 126.
23. Derher Sivan 5778 p. 19.
24. Derher Kislev 5785 p. 31.
25. Derher Shevat 5777 p. 43.
26. Maftaiach Sifrei Maamarei U'Drushei Admur M'HoRayatz p. 39, fn. 4
27. 10 Shevat 5734. Likkutei Sichos vol. 18, p. 303. Toras Menachem 5734 vol. 75, p. 168.