



# TO CONQUER A CONTINENT

RABBI YITZCHOK DOVID GRONER, THE MAN WHO BUILT LUBAVITCH IN AUSTRALIA, WAS FAMOUS FOR HIS MANY COLORS; A LEADER, RAV, CARING MENTOR—THE LIST GOES ON AND ON.

AS A SHLIACH OF THE FRIERDIKER REBBE AND LATER ON, AS ONE OF THE REBBE'S FIRST SHLUCHIM, HE WAS LED BY THE ENDLESS ENCOURAGEMENT AND GUIDANCE HE RECEIVED FROM THE REBBE. HE, IN TURN, SERVED AS A DEDICATED MESSENGER, FULFILLING MANY MISSIONS AND STRIVING TO BRING THE REBBE'S VISION FOR AUSTRALIAN JEWRY TO FRUITION.

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES, WE WILL TAKE A LOOK AT HIS FASCINATING STORY.



נדפס ע"י ולזכות  
משפחת שפערלין שיחיו  
להצלחה רבה ומופלגה  
בכל עניניהם בגשמיות וברוחניות



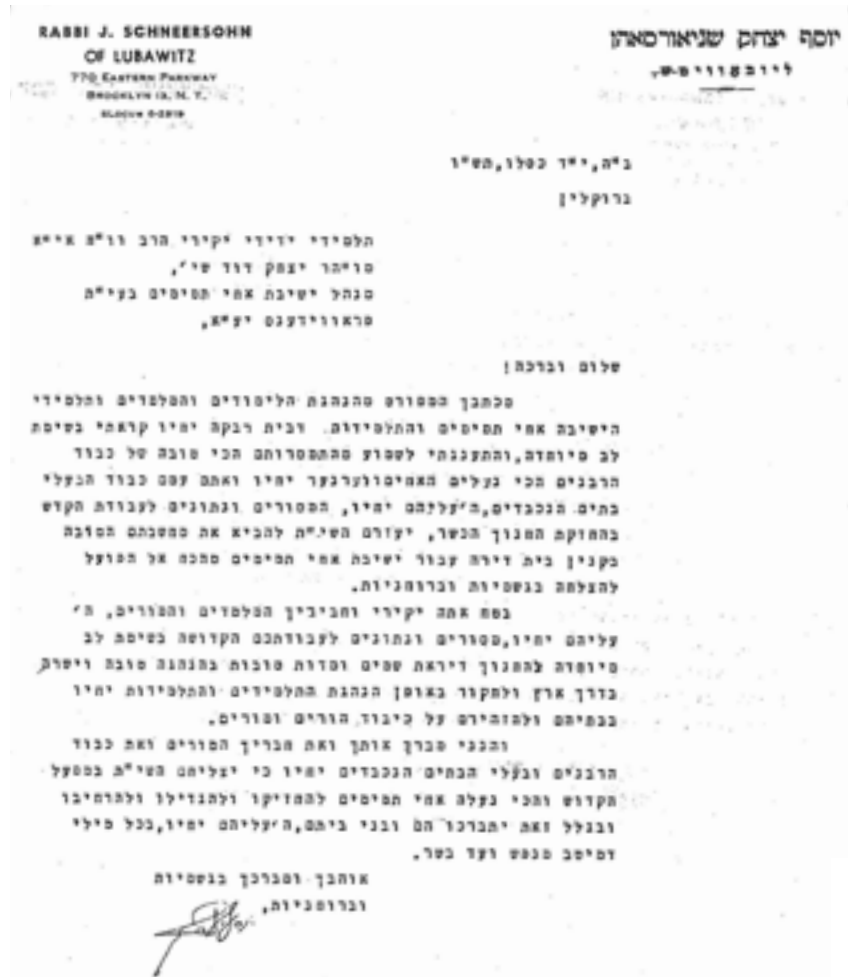
## BIRTH AND UPBRINGING

Rabbi Yitzchok Dovid Groner was born on 24 Nissan 5685 (תרפ"ה), to Reb Mordechai Avraham Yeshaya and Menucha Rochel Groner. His mother traced her lineage to Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel, the daughter of the Mittlerer Rebbe and famed matriarch of Chevron. Their family had lived in Chevron for generations, but due to financial difficulties, they relocated to the United States—to Brooklyn, New York, shortly before Yitzchok Dovid was born.

During his youth, Yitzchak Dovid was enrolled in Yeshivas Chaim Berlin. Blessed with an excellent grasp and memory, along with a natural enthusiasm and zest for life, he excelled in his studies and quickly became a budding Torah scholar.

A turning point in the life of Reb Yitzchok Dovid was the arrival of the Frierdiker Rebbe to the shores of the United States. He recalled greeting the Frierdiker Rebbe at the pier on 9 Adar II 5700 (ה'ת"ש) and participating in the Purim farbrengen held a few days later, memories which made an indelible impression on the fifteen-year-old boy.

Shortly after he turned sixteen, Yitzchok Dovid joined Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim. He entered *yechidus* together with his father the night before, and while they were waiting in the Frierdiker Rebbe's antechamber, Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson emerged with some interesting news. The Frierdiker Rebbe's son-in-law, the Rebbe, was to arrive in New York the very next morning from war-torn Europe (that night was the eve of 28 Sivan 5701–א"תש"א). Yitzchok Dovid would often relate how the Frierdiker Rebbe had requested that the entire yeshiva greet the Rebbe at the pier, remarking: "My son-in-law is fluent in Shas, complete with the commentaries of Tosfos, Rosh and Ran, as well as all the printed books of Chassidus."<sup>1</sup>



A LETTER FROM THE FRIERDIKER REBBE TO REB YITZCHOK DOVID WHEN HE WAS THE MENAHEL OF YESHIVAS ACHEI TEMIMIM IN PROVIDENCE, DATED 14 KISLEV 5706.

In yeshiva, Yitzchok Dovid studied under the tutelage of famed Chassidim like Reb Shmuel Levitin and soaked in the presence of all the *eltre Chassidim* who had studied in Lubavitch.

Rabbi Groner later recalled how one time in those early years, the Rebbe, who was called Ramash at the time, came down into the *zal* from a *seudah* in the Frierdiker Rebbe's presence. He pointed at each *bochur* and said, "The *Shver* [Frierdiker Rebbe] wants you and you and you [—pointing around the room—] to all be big *lamdanim*."

Yitzchak Dovid took an active part in the early stages of *hafatzas hama'ayanos* of those days. At the Frierdiker Rebbe's suggestion,<sup>2</sup> the *bochurim* would comb through

apartment buildings in Crown Heights looking for Jewish children to enroll in Jewish day schools. He also took an active part in Released Time, and together with Reb Moshe Kazarnovsky, organized the first parade on Eastern Parkway on Chol Hamoed Pesach 5703 (תש"ג), a forerunner to the Lag Ba'omer Parades.

When he was eighteen, he was chosen for his first shlichus. He was sent to Rochester, New York, to assist with the new Yeshivas Achei Temimim that had been founded there. Over the next few years, he was also instrumental in the opening of Achei Temimim in Philadelphia, and then, for a period of time, he headed the new Yeshivas Achei Tmimim in Providence, Rhode Island. Unabashed,



confident, and eloquent, Reb Yitzchok Dovid was very successful in his communal work, always proceeding with extreme fortitude and determination. Anyone who worked with him knew that he could be relied on entirely.

### FIRST TRIPS TO AUSTRALIA

Less than a year after his wedding to Devorah Konikov on 7 Elul 5706 (תש"ו), Reb Yitzchok Dovid was sent on a mission for a few months to Australia with the official goal to raise money for Tomchei Temimim and for the Chassidim who had left Russia.

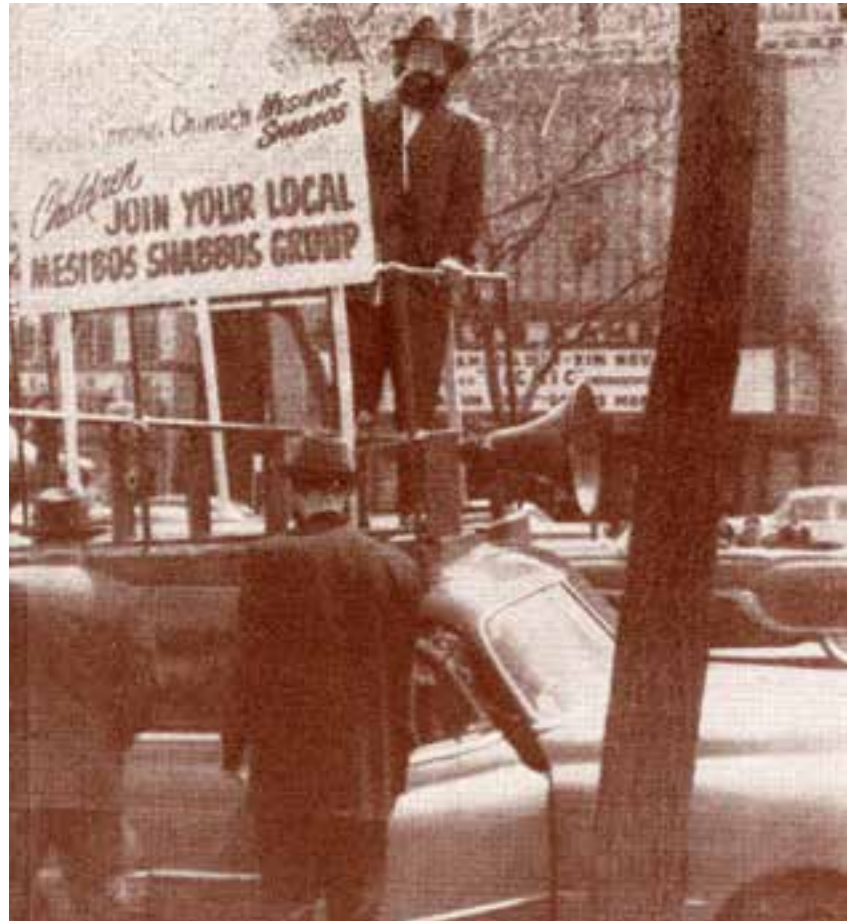
The journey was a mammoth undertaking even for a young and energetic man, and in *yechidus*, the Frierdiker Rebbe gave him amazing *brachos* for his journey.

He also received a letter of approbation from the Frierdiker Rebbe:

“My dear beloved student, the outstanding Rabbi, Chassid, pious and with fear of heaven, Rabbi Yitzchok Dovid *sheyichye* Groner, is traveling to New Zealand and Australia as a messenger of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim which is under my auspices.” The Frierdiker Rebbe detailed the needs of the yeshiva and of the Russian refugees, and asks the reader to help the cause generously.

As a *shadar* representing the Frierdiker Rebbe, Reb Yitzchok Dovid

“MY DEAR BELOVED STUDENT, THE OUTSTANDING RABBI, CHASSID, PIOUS AND WITH FEAR OF HEAVEN, RABBI YITZCHOK DOVID SHEYICHYE GRONER.



AT THE LAG B'OMER PARADE OF 5716.

JEM 110-481

### “ME WITH MY MACHSHAVOS ZAROS”

Rabbi Groner was blessed with a loud and melodious voice, and was a powerful and heartfelt *baal tefilah*. Later in life, in Australia, his *selichos* and Yomim Noraim davening would attract a large crowd, but he always refused to serve as *chazzan* in 770, in front of the Rebbe.

The reason behind his refusal was an experience he had as a young *bochur*. One Rosh Chodesh, when the Frierdiker Rebbe was saying *kaddish* after the *histalkus* of his mother Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah, a *minyán* had been assembled for the Frierdiker Rebbe upstairs in 770, but no one stepped up to lead the davening. Reb Shmuel Levitin suggested an elderly Chossid Reb Dovid Shifrin, who had spent time by the Rebbe Rashab, to be *chazzan*. He responded in shock: “I, with my *machshavos zaros*, should daven in front of the Rebbe? No!” He ran down the stairs and out the door.

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served as a vehicle for spreading Yiddishkeit and connecting the Australian Jewish community to their roots. This element of his mission was emphasized by the Frierdiker Rebbe, when, after a half a year, Reb Yitzchok Dovid wrote to the Frierdiker Rebbe asking for permission to return home. The Frierdiker Rebbe replied:

“It seems that you’ve rushed your job... Collecting money and creating committees is only a cover for an *inyan pnimi v’atzmi*, a deeper reason, to inspire our Jewish brothers, and remind them of their parents and grandparents, Chassidim and pious Jews who sacrificed their lives to keep Shabbos, *mikveh*, and all the mitzvos.”<sup>3</sup>

Rabbi Groner returned to the States and relocated to Buffalo, NY, where he headed the Yeshivas Achei Temimim that had been opened there. One time, in *yechidus* (after the Frierdiker Rebbe’s *histalkus*) he spoke to the Rebbe about the difficulties he was experiencing in the yeshiva. The Rebbe responded with a powerful *hora’ah* that every morning, whether prior or following *birchos hashachar*, anyone who saw the Frierdiker Rebbe should go to a corner and envision his holy countenance; after doing so, his work will be accomplished on an entirely new level.

In 5714, Rabbi Groner once again embarked on a fundraising mission to Australia. By this time, an existing group of pioneering Lubavitcher families was there (Serebryanski, Klugant, Althaus, Gurewicz, Wilschansky, and Pliskin). After leaving Russia, they had settled in



RABBI GRONER WITH HIS CHILDREN IN HIS EARLY YEARS IN AUSTRALIA.

Australia pursuant to the instructions of the Frierdiker Rebbe. They were greatly aided by Rabbi Moshe Zalman Feiglin, a great pioneer of Torah-true Judaism in Australia. Together, they founded the Lubavitch Boys Day School (Yeshiva College) in Melbourne, and were looking for a talented, charismatic English speaker who would be able to connect to and interact with the youth and the general community. When Rabbi Groner visited Australia in 5714, they knew that they had found their man.

At that time, the Yeshiva Boys School was headed by Rabbi Zalman Serebryanski. He wrote a letter to the Rebbe, suggesting that Rabbi Groner should remain in Australia for a period of time to facilitate the growth of the yeshiva. Rabbi Groner at that time had primary responsibility to the yeshiva in Buffalo. The Rebbe replied saying that while it was a good idea,

Rabbi Groner had to first ensure that the yeshiva in Buffalo could operate without him; only then would he be able to remain in Australia.

Rabbi Groner returned to America at the start of 5715, after spending approximately six months in Australia. Shortly thereafter, he had a *yechidus* with the Rebbe, in which he gave a report of his work in Australia. The Rebbe spoke with him about the opportunity that was “left behind” in Australia, saying that he was raising the subject because another opportunity may present itself. The Rebbe explained the value of such communal work, saying that, “the world calls it ‘imaginary’ honor. Chassidus, however, considers this ‘to use out one’s capabilities.’” The Rebbe concluded “whatever decision you will make should be with success. And it should be made only with *simcha*.” The Rebbe emphasized

that his decision to go to on shlichus should be based not only on *kabolas ol*, but with *simcha*, and a complete heart.

During the following years, as the Chassidim in Australia repeatedly asked the Rebbe for Rabbi Groner to return to Australia, the Rebbe also continued to urge Rabbi Groner to go. Rabbi Groner was working for the Central Lubavitcher Yeshiva office in New York at that time, fundraising and overseeing the work of the different Lubavitch schools in the United States. The Rebbe asserted that he wanted him to use out his capabilities and talents, and Melbourne would be the place where he could actualize his full potential.

The Rebbe illustrated to Rabbi Groner the advantages of shlichus. He explained that not only does the community that the shliach resides in benefit, but the shliach also reaps benefits in both his physical and spiritual endeavors. The Rebbe said to him, that even for the sake of learning a *daf* of Gemara, it would be more conducive if he went on shlichus rather than staying in Crown Heights.

## A PERMANENT SHLICHUS

In 5718, after urgent requests from the yeshiva in Melbourne, Rabbi Groner and his family prepared to move to Australia.

The voyage to Australia in those days was not to be taken lightly. The trip was arduous, and one did not have the liberty to return to New York often. Even short phone calls were prohibitively expensive. It was literally a world away, and moving there meant complete disconnect from family and friends left behind.

The decision for Reb Yitzchok Dovid and his family—by then he had six children—didn't come easily, so the Rebbe suggested that they go for a period of three to five years to help establish the yeshiva, and afterwards they would see regarding their future.

On Simchas Torah 5719, before he left, the Rebbe called him up during the farbrengen together with Rabbi Gershon Mendel Garelik, who moved out on shlichus to Italy the same week as Reb Yitzchak Dovid, and gave them both special *kiruvim*. The Rebbe gave Rabbi Groner a cup of *l'chaim*, and told him to “conquer Australia!”

In *yechidus* before leaving in Kislev 5719, the Rebbe showered Reb Yitzchok Dovid with blessings. “Go,” the Rebbe told him, “and I will make you a *gadol* and she (your wife) a *gedolah*.”

Referring to his “title” and “job description” in Melbourne, the Rebbe said “*shlucho shel adam kemoso!*”

Rabbi Groner departed on 21 Kislev 5719, and the Rebbe sent the entire yeshiva of 770 to the airport to see him off. His wife and six children arrived six months later, traveling by boat. Upon their arrival, the Rebbe wrote to welcome his wife, and explained the value of having her participate in the shlichus: “You have merited that your wife, the rebbetzin, has been a help, and more so: she can

even affect those opposing you, and not only in your close circles.”<sup>4</sup>

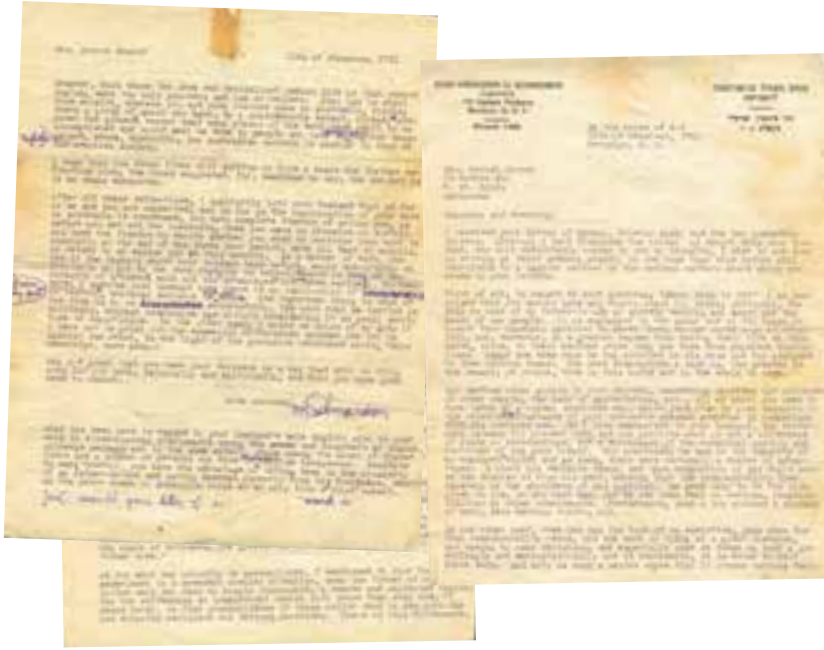
In the same letter, the Rebbe reminds Reb Yitzchak Dovid of the saying of the Rebbeim, that just as one must recognize his deficiencies, he must recognize his accomplishments as well.

## AUSTRALIA

Judaism and Jewish infrastructure “down under” was in its infancy. The majority of the Jewish population was made up of recent immigrants who arrived after World War II. The older generation of Chassidim from Russia found it difficult to relate to the young, Australian born, generation.

Reb Yitzchok Dovid was a breath of fresh air. He spoke a fluent English and could carry a conversation about the latest sports scores; he understood the *nefesh* of the Australian youth. Assertive by nature, he also earned the respect of the elders. His *lomdus* and proficiency in Torah gained him a place among the most respected rabbis of the continent, and with his natural charisma and boundless energy,





LETTER FROM THE REBBE TO MRS. DEVORAH GRONER.

he became a force in the Jewish community.

However, this all took many years to build up. At the outset, Reb Yitzchok Dovid was blessed with much success, but also with many challenges. Settling in an entirely new country and environment, far from their family and comfort zone, Rabbi and Mrs. Groner felt somewhat isolated, and sometimes questioned the true value and impact of their relocation.

### DECISION TIME

For Tishrei 5721, Reb Yitzchok Dovid traveled to New York, and in *yechidus*, asked the Rebbe about the future of his shlichus. The Rebbe spoke to him for fifty-five minutes in *yechidus*, explaining how he could achieve the most by remaining in Australia. The Rebbe told him that Australia has the potential to be a bastion of Yiddishkeit; “It can become like Bnei Brak, Williamsburg or Crown Heights.”<sup>5</sup>

The Rebbe later reiterated the main points of the *yechidus* in a long, beautiful English letter to Mrs. Groner.

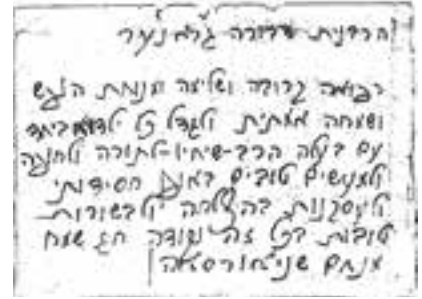
(The Rebbe wrote to her often, and following their move to Australia, the Rebbe often addressed letters to her in English.)

The Rebbe writes:

“In regard to your question, ‘Whose ship is it?’ I am surprised that you should have any doubts about it, since, obviously, the ship is that of my father-in-law of saintly memory, our *Nossi* and the *Nossi* of our people... Happy are they whom he has enrolled in his crew and has assigned to them various tasks.”

Then the Rebbe continues by pointing out the difference between Reb Yitzchok Dovid’s previous position in New York and his current responsibilities in Melbourne:

“As I have emphasized to your husband, the difference between his present work and his previous work is... a difference of essential quality... For previously he was in the capacity of an employed ‘clerk,’ and as such, there were certainly a number of advantages. A clerk has definite hours, and upon completion of his day’s work he can dismiss it from his



TEXT FOR A TELEGRAM FOR MRS. GRONER DRAFTED IN THE REBBE’S KSAV YAD KODESH, CIRCA 5727.

mind, knowing that the responsibility lies squarely on the shoulders of his superior. He need only to do the tasks given to him, in his best way, and he can then feel no worries, responsibilities or other commitments. Furthermore, such a job arouses a minimum of envy, less nervous strain, etc.

“On the other hand, when one has the task of an executive, upon him the full responsibility rests, all the more so being at a great distance, and having to make decisions, and especially when he takes up such a job willingly and enthusiastically and is successful, it is bound to call forth envy. It is also obvious that such a position entails greater personal commitment, nervous strain, etc.

“Obviously... one who has the capacity to be an executive and in charge of a responsible undertaking, if such a person should find himself within the framework of a clerk’s job, it would be a gross injustice even to himself, not to mention to the cause.

“I mentioned to your husband the experience in a somewhat similar situation, when the father of my father-in-law [the Rebbe Rashab] sent two Jews to Gruzia (Georgia), a remote and neglected region. The two emissaries so transformed Jewish life there that even now, 45 years later, we find grandchildren of those native Jews in New York who are strictly religious and devoted Chassidim.”<sup>6</sup> (During the *yechidus*, the Rebbe

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identified one of those Shluchim as  
Reb Shmuel Levitin).

The Rebbe spoke at length during  
the *yechidus*, giving the above  
explanations and invoking other  
reasons as well. The entire time, the  
Rebbe looked down towards his desk.  
After concluding all the reasoning, the  
Rebbe picked up his holy head, looked  
at Reb Yitzchok Dovid, and told him  
that nevertheless, he is free to leave  
Australia at the end of the three year  
period. The decision to stay must be  
made by him and his wife, and should  
only be decided on *b'simcha u'vtuv  
levav*.

In the letter to his Mrs. Groner, the  
Rebbe adds a postscript. Everything  
about the value of her husband's  
position and influence applies to  
herself as well, albeit not to the same  
extent for there were other American  
Lubavitcher women living in Australia  
already. However, she did have an  
important advantage:

“You have the advantage of having  
been in the proximity of my father-  
in-law and having imbibed directly  
from his fountains, whereas the  
other women in Australia can do so  
only from a second or third vessel.”  
The fact that she had lived in close  
proximity to the Rebbeim gave her  
a “competitive edge” in the field of  
*hafatzas ham'ayanos*.

Needless to say, Rabbi and Mrs.  
Groner quickly came to a decision.



READING WITH A NEW STUDENT.



בס"ר. שיחה יום א' פ' חנוכה, כ"ח שבט ה'תשל"ם -  
להשלוחים שיחיו הנוסעים לאוסטרליא.  
[כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א נמן להשלוחים שיחיו לוק"ט פ' משפטים ש.ד. ושטר  
של דולר -] לתת לצדקה.  
להשלוחות שחייבתו כ" כחבי כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א (באנגליה) מיום ש"ו סנה  
ש.ד. - להכניס דנשי ובנות הב"ר חייבה (אריסטו) (אריסטו) ושטר של דולר  
- כנ"ל להשלוחים.  
להרב י.ד. שיחיל גראנער (שלח"כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א באוסטרליא) - כנ"ל  
להשלוחים, ואשר לזו איר ויום דאך דער רוב החי' (אריסטו) (אריסטו) יס"ה 15  
דער אויבערשטער זאל העלפן איר זאלט שארן אהי"ן בשעה טובה ומוצלחה,  
און קוספן אהי"ן בשעה טובה ומוצלחה,  
און סלא זיין דעם הקיר הכי נעלם - אריינפירן אז ענין סוף X כולל  
אין אוסטרליא,

THE REBBE'S HAGAHOS ON THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE YECHIDUS WITH THE SHLUCHIM TRAVELING TO  
AUSTRALIA, 28 SHEVAT 5728. WHERE IT READS “RABBI YD” THE REBBE ADDED “AND HIS WIFE”.





RABBI GRONER DELIVERS A SHIUR.

They informed the Rebbe that they would remain in Australia.

### WITH JOY

From the day Rabbi Groner and his family moved to Australia, the Rebbe constantly guided them along every step of the way, endlessly advising and encouraging. The Rebbe never allowed Rabbi Groner to express feelings of depression or hardship. Once at a farbrengen, the Rebbe told him, “You are going to travel over the Pacific, so throw away your *marah shchorah*, your melancholy, into the Pacific.”

In letters to Rabbi Groner, the Rebbe emphasized the importance of *simcha*: “There seems to be a

contradiction between your two letters. According to the first, it seems that you are accomplishing little and everything is piled up with hardships and who knows, etc. In the second letter, as well as from letters from other *anash* and the press, the activities are growing constantly, especially if you think about where the institutions were a year or two ago. The growth has been supernatural. This all adds to my surprise; when you were here, you were an encouraging force, bringing energy to all your surroundings, but now your letter seems to express the opposite.”<sup>7</sup>

On another occasion, when Rabbi Groner asked the Rebbe to

pay special attention to the *mosdos* of Melbourne, the Rebbe replied by asking rhetorically, “You need to ask me for this?”

As noted, the Rebbe wrote letters to Mrs. Groner often, encouraging her to take pride and be joyful in her new position, and pushing her to use her standing in the community to spread Yiddishkeit.

In many letters, the Rebbe explains that joy is imperative for success in the mission. “As we heard from my father-in-law the Rebbe, when a soldier goes to war with a joyful march, his victory becomes greater and more possible. On a similar note, if all those doing [the Rebbe’s] work will do so joyfully, with the conviction that they will be victorious, it will come easier, faster, and to a greater extent.”<sup>8</sup>

### GETTING TO WORK

Reb Yitzchok Dovid was a human dynamo. He expanded the yeshiva and the Beis Rivkah schools, and added many new institutions over the following years, while covering a large part of the budget himself.

He also served as the *rav* of the Lubavitcher community, answering urgent *sha’alos* at all hours of the day

### ‘WHY SHOULDN’T THEY HAVE NACHAS?’

In 5727, Beis Rivkah of Melbourne opened a new building, and the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. John Gorton, attended the dedication ceremony. This gesture brought a lot of esteem for Lubavitch in Australia, and Judaism in general.

Reb Yitzchak Dovid called his brother Rabbi Leibel Groner and asked him to inform the Rebbe of the outstanding success of the event: “The success was so great that we could never convince ourselves that it was brought about with our own strengths,” he said. The Rebbe instructed Rabbi Groner to relate the news to his parents as well. “Tell your parents what their son achieved. Why shouldn’t they have *nachas*?”



ACCOMPANYING RABBI SHLOMO GOREN, CHIEF RABBI OF THE IDF, ON A VISIT TO AUSTRALIA.

and night, and also taught a number of classes for the community

He was also a powerful speaker, much sought out throughout the region and across the globe to address dinners, weddings, and all sorts of functions, where he would entertain the gathering with his powerful voice and commanding style, giving over the most profound messages in often humorous and engaging ways. His presence filled the entire room.

Yet, with all of his monumental responsibilities, Reb Yitzchok Dovid was best known for his personal relationship with every member of the community. Until the end of his life, he knew the name of every child in shul; he maintained a list of phone numbers of people needing emotional support and would make sure to call them on a regular basis. Even people who opposed him in his work still felt loved, and their personal relationships with him weren't affected.

As mentioned, Reb Yitzchok Dovid delivered a number of *shiurim* each week to many participants. The atmosphere he created was that of a family; if someone missed a *shiur*, he would immediately inquire as to the person's well-being. In the

IT IS HIGH TIME THAT YOU ABOLISH THE MINDSET OF 'WE WERE LIKE INSECTS IN OUR EYES' AND TO UPROOT IT ENTIRELY.

case of a someone's weakness in his observance, Reb Yitzchok Dovid would sometimes send a loving and often humorous rebuke, "reminding" the individual of the existence of the *shiur*, and encouraging his continued participation. His rebuke was legendary; he could loudly berate a person, and go on and on about the terrible deed the person did; but no matter how much he spoke, the person wouldn't feel offended. To the contrary, he was loved and accepted.

Part of his charm was in his candidness; with Rabbi Groner, there was no small talk and no concealed feelings. When he fundraised, he could pick up the phone and tell a local benefactor, "My friend, I need twenty thousand dollars for the new building." He spoke his thoughts directly from the heart, yet was always sensitive to the other person's feelings.

As the institutions expanded and the workload grew, the Rebbe told Reb Yitzchok Dovid to watch his health. The key to success in the *mosdos* in

### SHLIACH REFRESH

Rabbi Groner once arrived in 770 on the day a group of *talmidim hashluchim* were set to depart to Australia (this was the fifth such group, in 5735.) The Rebbe instructed *mazkirus* that Rabbi Groner should enter *yechidus* together with them. At the *yechidus*, the Rebbe said, "S'iz doh Harav Groner, vet men mechadesh zein shlichuso fun dos nai—Rabbi Groner is here, so we will 'renew' his shlichus to Australia."

the long run, the Rebbe said, was keeping a proper schedule even within all the mayhem, and eating and going to sleep on time. The Rebbe also instructed him to hire a secretary to do all of his technical work, and if one wasn't enough, he should hire two secretaries.

# INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

In addition to his work in Australia, the Rebbe sent Reb Yitzchok Dovid on missions throughout the world. These missions varied; in some places he was tasked with visiting rabbonim and leaders, other times to strengthen Jewish communities, and sometimes to deal with issues important to the Rebbe, such as *shleimus haAretz* and *mihu Yehudi*. When he visited New York as well, the Rebbe did not allow him to rest, and ensured that his talents were utilized constantly, in speaking engagements and various encounters.

Before one such trip, the Rebbe inquired about his health, which was not so good at the time. The Rebbe asked “*Oib ich vel mitforen mit eich, vet ir zein gezunt? B’gashmius ken ich duch nit foren, aber ich fuhr mit eich bruchniyus*—If I will travel with you, will you be healthy? Physically I cannot accompany you but I do accompany you spiritually...” [Hearing the Rebbe’s words, Reb Yitzchok Dovid burst into tears and had to leave the room from great emotion.]

It was Av 5731 and Rabbi Groner was set to return from New York to Australia. The journey back to Australia would take him weeks, and would span the entire globe, going through much of Europe, Asia and the Far East. He would visit Milan, London, Tehran, Singapore, Calcutta, Bombay (Mumbai), and several places in Eretz Yisrael, at the Rebbe’s behest. Before he left, the Rebbe called him into his room and gave him twenty six ten-dollar bills, each corresponding to a different shlichus (the last one was for his wife, to buy her a present after such a long absence). The Rebbe also asked him to visit the *kever* of his brother, Reb Yisroel Aryeh Leib during his stay in Eretz Yisroel, on Chof Av, the day of his father’s *yahrtzeit*.

In one of the extant reports which he sent the Rebbe, we read about the myriad of missions he accomplished:

“The visits to Tehran, Bombay, Calcutta, and Singapore were, *boruch Hashem*, very successful, and because I was busy the entire time, I was unable to finish the report I started to write in Eretz Yisroel, and here too, thank G-d, there was so much work.

“On the morning of Chof Av, I went with the *bochurim* from Toras Emes by taxi directly to Tzfas,

and we went to the cemetery. I immediately found the Rebbe’s brother’s resting place. We stood there for some time and said chapters of Tehillim and then also wrote a note and placed it on the *matzeivah*. I wrote a request for the Rebbe’s health, that he lead the Chabad community and the Jewish people until the coming of Moshiach, speedily.

“... The next morning, I had a meeting with Mr... and asked him to arrange a meeting for me with the prime minister. Later, his assistant called me and said that I should believe him when he says that he did all he could to arrange a meeting, but he was unsuccessful since she is very busy.

“I also met with... at the Jewish agency, and had a long conversation with him about the issue of ‘Who is a Jew.’”

Reb Yitzchok Dovid writes about his meetings with numerous influential rabbonim throughout the county. Among the names are Rabbi Shlomo Goren, Rabbi Yehudah Paldi, Rabbi She’er Yashuv Cohen, Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Zilbershtein, Rabbi Yedidya Frankel, and more.

Following his trip to Eretz Yisrael, he continued on to Tehran, Iran (this was before the Islamic Revolution of 1979), where he was received at the airport by the chief Rabbi, and visited and addressed the entire community, and inspected their *mikveh*. Then he moved on to Bombay, India, where he brought tefillin for the Jewish teenagers. In Calcutta (Kolkata, India), he arranged for the girls in the school to become pen-pals with the girls in Beis Rivkah in Australia. In Singapore, he spoke with the leaders of the Jewish community and arranged to send them publications for the Jewish children.

Throughout this trip (and many other trips as well), Reb Yitzchok Dovid also searched for old and valuable *sefarim* to send to the Rebbe’s library, as per the Rebbe’s request.

Concluding this *duch* on 20 Elul, after over a month of travel and hard work, he writes:

“May Hashem give me the merit to fulfill the Rebbe’s shlichus fully. *Hatalmid* Yitzchok Dovid ben Menucha Rochel.”



In a letter, the Rebbe writes to Reb Yitzchok Dovid that he shouldn't become a set teacher in a specific class, because he will neglect his responsibilities for the entire *mosad*; while another teacher could be found, no one will step in to take on his responsibilities in leading the institutions. (However, the Rebbe didn't discourage him from teaching from time to time; on the contrary, the Rebbe said, not only won't periodic classes be detrimental, they will be a positive thing for everyone involved).<sup>9</sup>

In his *yechidus'n*, letters and *ma'anos*, the Rebbe always encouraged Reb Yitzchok Dovid to utilize his natural *breitkeit* to accomplish more than he thought he could. The Rebbe once said that in one day, Reb Yitzchok Dovid could accomplish what would take someone else a few weeks to fulfill.

There were times when the leaders of the Chabad *mosdos* in Melbourne sometimes felt intimidated by the criticism of others, and the Rebbe constantly pushed them to grow out of that feeling. In one *maaneh*, the Rebbe writes to Reb Yitzchak Dovid:

באופן דפרצת בגשמיות וברוחניות  
- אזכיר ע"ה. אבער - איך מיין דאס טאקע -

שיעשו מצידם בן. ואין זה צחות בעלמא.  
[Your work] should be in a manner of *ufaratzta* [breaking through all boundaries], materially and spiritually. I will mention it at the Ohel [of the Frieddiker Rebbe]. However, I really mean it, you, on your part, should do exactly so. This isn't being said lightly.”

The Rebbe continues:

וכבר בא הזמן ומכבר לבטל הענין  
..כחגבים וכן היינו בעינינו ולשרשו כליל.  
ואתהלך ברחבה. It is high time that you abolish the mindset of ‘we were like insects in our eyes’<sup>10</sup> and to uproot it entirely. [Instead, you should adopt the words of the *possuk*,] ‘I will walk broadly.”

On Simchas Torah 5719, the Rebbe gave Reb Yitzchok Dovid his marching orders: Conquer Australia.

The task would be long and arduous and the challenges plentiful, but for some fifty years, Rabbi Groner persevered, and succeeded in establishing a powerful Jewish presence in the farthest corner of the earth.

The many institutions, Shluchim, *baalei teshuva*, and Jewish communities of Australia today are testament to a person who heeded the

Rebbe's call, and didn't rest until it was accomplished.

As the Rebbe told Rabbi Groner on one occasion: “*Ale inyanim in Australia tu'en zich up lima'alah miderech hatevah*—all the work in Australia is accomplished supernaturally.”

Rabbi Groner passed away on 4 Tammuz 5768, thus concluding a life of dedication to the Rebbe and his Shlichus. **T**

1. *The Early Years* film vol. 4, by Jewish Educational Media.
2. See *Derher Sivan 5778*, “The New World,” pg. 19-20. *Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz* vol. 6, pg. 42.
3. 9 Adar 1 5708. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz* vol. 9 pg. 396.
4. 25 Iyar 5719. *Teshura Telsner-Swerdlov - Shevat 29 5757*, page 16.
5. *Teshura Groner-Weingarten - Sivan 25 5771*, page 16.
6. 11 Cheshvan 5721. *Teshura Telsner-Swerdlov - Shevat 29 5757*, page 19.
7. 18 Adar 5720. *Teshura Groner-Nagel - Sivan 12, 5777*, page 30.
8. *Igros Kodesh* vol 18, p. 108
9. 29 Cheshvan 5720. *Teshura Groner-Nagel - Sivan 12, 5777*, page 29.
10. Statement borrowed from the *meraglim* upon their return from Eretz Canaan (Shelach 13:33); metaphorically alludes to needlessly feeling inferior to others.