

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ת ר' אברהם ברוך
בן הרה"ת ר' דובער ע"ה
יוניק

מקושר לכ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורינו
וזכה לשמשו

גלב"ע ביום ועש"ק בעלות המנחה
י"ט אדר ה'תשע"ז

נדפס ע"י משפחתו שיחיו



ט' אדר שני ה'ש"ת

The Friediker
Rebbe's escape
from Nazi
occupied Poland¹

The MIRACULOUS Rescue



THE FRIEDIKER REBBE TRAVELING IN A SNOW-SLED, CIRCA 5690S.

When we think of the world of Chassidim and Chassidus of old, we invariably conjure up images of Eastern Europe. It was only there, where Jews had been living for centuries, that the true spirit and passion of Chassidus could flourish.

America, the “new world,” was the opposite. The land of limitless opportunity was a spiritual wasteland.

When young people moved to America to seek a better life, it was taken for granted that Yiddishkeit had to be compromised. If by chance an older Chossid moved to America, it could be expected that he would retain the flavor of the past, like a living relic in a museum, but it was assumed that his children and grandchildren would not continue in his ways.

Throughout the generations though, there was a tradition that before Moshiach came, Chassidus would be transported across the ocean in its full glory, and the Western Hemisphere would one day have native-born generations of Chassidim.

After the Frierdiker Rebbe visited America in 5689*, a committee was organized to arrange for him to settle there, but he sent word that it was not yet time.

In Elul of 5698*, the Frierdiker Rebbe sent Reb Shmuel Levitin to visit America as a *shadar*. It was unclear at the time how long he was expected to stay. A few months later, in answer to Reb Shmuel's question whether he should return to his family, the Frierdiker Rebbe responded: "For your own good, for the good of your family, and for the good of Chassidus and Chassidim, stay in America."

In the same letter, the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote that anti-Semitism was rampant in Poland and if G-d forbid, war should break out, there would be no place at all for Jews in Europe. Therefore he was seriously considering settling in America.



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE STANDS IN FRONT OF HIS HOME IN OTVOTZK, POLAND, CIRCA 5790S*.

That summer, 5699*, Reb Yisroel Jacobson journeyed to Poland to accompany six American *bochurim* who were going to learn in Tomchei Temimim in Otwock.

On his last day there, he had a *yechidus*. Two years prior, on his last trip to Poland, the Frierdiker Rebbe had discussed with him the possibility of buying a bigger house in Otwock.

Now he asked: "What about a house?" The Frierdiker Rebbe asked, "Where?" He answered, "In America." "That's what I wanted to discuss with you," the Frierdiker Rebbe said, "What do you think about my moving to America?"

After discussing the logistics and financials of moving, the Frierdiker



REB YISROEL JACOBSON.

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Rebbe said, "I think that we will be able to have the means to cover all these expenses in America. So, when you arrive, arrange everything systematically and appropriately, on a solid basis, and in about half a year, please G-d, we will come to America.

"In my letter to Reb Shmuel, around Pesach time, I asked whether I would be able to establish a yeshiva if I came to America. From the students that you brought, I see that there is no problem with that. We can have a fine Yeshiva Tomchei Tmimim.

"Those who were active in the movement to arrange my relocation to America after my first visit there, considered it as a community undertaking, that I come as leader of world Jewry, but that is not my exclusive work, although I have been successful at it. A special concern of mine is Chassidim and Chassidus, and if it develops that I do journey

You take care of hechsheirim, making sure kosher food is available, and I will concern myself with finding you customers, by making sure that there will be Yidden keeping kosher.

to America, I wish to activate to a maximum the Chassidim and Chassidus, especially now that I am approaching my Shabbos years [the years between 60 and 70 are called the Shabbos years].”

WAR BREAKS OUT

A few short weeks after Rabbi Jacobson's *yechidus*, on Friday, 17 Elul, the village of Otwock was suddenly rocked by explosions. People were sure that it was the Polish air force conducting drills, but when buildings started blowing up, there was no mistaking it; the war had begun.

German planes on the way to Warsaw were bombing the nearby villages, including Otwock.

The Frierdiker Rebbe, being a Latvian citizen, could easily have left Poland for Riga, but he said “*Imo anochi betzara*,” I am with him (i.e. the Jewish people) in misfortune. He wanted to stay with the Yidden in Poland.

It was thought that the Polish army would probably focus their efforts on defending Warsaw, leaving Otwock defenseless. So that Tuesday, the Frierdiker Rebbe and his family left Otwock for Warsaw.

The Frierdiker Rebbe cried profusely as he blessed a large crowd that had gathered for farewell greetings. With a bitter expression on his face, he said, “Be well, everyone, and accept upon yourselves the yoke of Heaven. A king guards his subjects, and may Hashem guard you, Jewish children, wherever you will be, and us, wherever we will be.”

A private car was sent by the Latvian consulate in Warsaw, its foreign plates providing a measure of security for the dangerous trip. As the Frierdiker Rebbe entered the car, he gave Reb Dov Ber Garfinkel a handful of coins to distribute to the assembled.

As they traveled, German planes continued to hail bombs on the road to Warsaw. The passengers of other cars ran to escape and hide, but the Frierdiker Rebbe commented to his family that there is no need to run and hide because “father (the Rebbe Rashab) is interceding now on our behalf.”

In the city, nobody knew how serious the situation was. Only on Wednesday night did they learn that the Germans were rapidly advancing towards Warsaw and had already captured large parts of the country. The Polish government was retreating and the city streets were being blocked by barricades.

By Friday, large crowds were running through the streets of Warsaw, crying and wailing. Many people took advantage of the fact that the Frierdiker Rebbe was in Warsaw and came to ask his opinion whether they should stay in Warsaw or leave. He advised some to escape while instructing others to remain.

RESCUE EFFORTS

Chassidim in America immediately swung into action. The first step was to locate the Frierdiker Rebbe, as no one knew exactly where he was.

After failing to make contact through the Latvian and American consulates, Agudas Chassidei Chabad



LOUIS BRANDEIS, JUSTICE OF THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT.

in New York, lead by Rabbi Jacobson, sent a lawyer, Mr. Asher Rabinovitz, to Washington, instructing him not to rest until the Frierdiker Rebbe had been saved.

During the Frierdiker Rebbe's visit to America in 5689-5690*, it was this Asher Rabinovitz who had arranged a meeting between the Frierdiker Rebbe and President Herbert Hoover, as well as with the Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis.

Mr. Rabinovitz was the son of a great Lubavitcher Chossid, who served as the *chassidische rav* of Boston for many years. As soon as he arrived in Washington on his urgent mission, he sent a telegram to Justice Brandeis, reminding him of his meeting with the Frierdiker Rebbe. He begged the justice to use his influence and do all he could to save the Frierdiker Rebbe from Europe.

Justice Brandeis, who remembered his meeting with the Rebbe 10 years earlier, forwarded the telegram along with a handwritten note to Mr. Ben Cohen, the General Counsel for the National Power Policy Committee, who was a leading figure in President Roosevelt's famous "brain-trust"



MR. ASHER (ARTHUR) RABINOVITZ.

(a group of close advisors to the president).

Mr. Cohen, in turn, personally visited Mr. Robert Pell, the Assistant Chief of the Division of European Affairs at the State Department.

Mr. Pell had previously worked with Helmuth Wohlthat, a prominent German economist and an officer in the Wehrmacht, the Nazi armed forces.

In 1938, Wohlthat and Pell worked on a deal to allow German Jews to emigrate in exchange for foreign currency. The deal never materialized because they couldn't find a country willing to accept the refugees, but they developed a good relationship and Wohlthat agreed to help rescue any Jews that the State Department was particularly interested in.

The Friediker Rebbe was not an American citizen, so the State Department could not ask Wohlthat for help directly. Instead, Mr. Pell cabled Raymond Geist, the US Consul General in Berlin. He instructed him to bring up the matter in his next conversation with Wohlthat, not as an official request from the State Department, but as something they



PREPARING OFFICE WILL INDICATE WHETHER	TELEGRAM SENT	TO BE TRANSMITTED CONFIDENTIAL CODE
Collect	Department of State	MANUFACTURING CODE
Charge Department 2		MAIL
Charge to	Washington	
5	October 2, 1938	
AMERICAN EMBASSY		
ROSLIN		
670 For Geist from Pell.		
Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, known as Lubavitcher Rebbe, one of the leading Jewish scholars of the world and a Latvian citizen, has been trapped in Warsaw. The most influential Jewish leaders and others in this country, including The Postmaster General, Justice Brandeis and Mr. Benjamin Cohen, have asked our assistance in obtaining permission from the German Military Government of Warsaw for the safe passage of the Rabbi to Riga via Stockholm. While the Department does not wish to intervene in the case of a citizen of a foreign country you might in the course of a conversation with Wohlthat inform him as from me and in view of our previous relationship of the interest in this country in this particular case. Wohlthat, who evidently wishes to maintain the contact with the Intergovernmental Committee, might wish to intervene with the military authorities.		
RECEIVED OCT 3 1938 DEPT. OF STATE Enclosed by Sent by messenger		
HULL G. P. S.		
7700. G. P. S. 15/3		

TELEGRAM FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO THE AMERICAN CONSUL IN BERLIN REQUESTING HELP FOR THE FRIEDIKER REBBE.



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE AT THE TRAIN STATION IN PODBRODZIE, CIRCA 1932*.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe left Otwock, he took with him only some personal belongings, a small suitcase with his tallis, tefillin, and the Baal Shem Tov's *siddur*, and the boxes of *kesavim*.

These *kisvei yad kodesh* were from all the Rebbeim, going back to the Alter Rebbe. They were the "crown jewels" of Lubavitch, and the Frierdiker Rebbe took them with him wherever he traveled.

But now, for the first time, he was forced to part from them. It was simply too dangerous. Since the *kesavim* belonged to Agudas Chassidei Chabad, they were deposited at the American embassy in Warsaw, registered as belonging to Agudas Chassidei Chabad of America.

The plan was to retrieve the *kesavim* from the embassy after the war ended, but with the entry of the United States into the war in 5701*, the embassy was invaded, and all communication broke down.

From the moment the war ended, the Frierdiker Rebbe spared no effort to learn the fate of the *kesavim*. He involved lawyers and politicians in Washington, but to no avail. In 5707*, the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote to the *mazkir* Reb Moshe Leib Rodshtein: "Please speak with my son-in-law, Ramash. Maybe he can write to [Reb Yitzchok Goldin, who was then in Poland, asking] him to search the cellars in Warsaw near the embassy, and other places where archives are stored."

It was not until 5738* that the *kesavim* were finally located in a Polish museum and brought to 770. For the complete story of how the Polish library was found and returned to its rightful place, see *Rescued from Poland*, Derher Adar II 5774, Issue 17 (94).

were interested in, and Wohlthat would understand the hint.

As a Latvian citizen, the Frierdiker Rebbe was technically entitled to free

passage from Poland to Latvia. At this point, the problem was not that he was missing any visas or affidavits. It was simply impossible to travel straight

from Poland to Latvia due to the battles and destroyed railroads. The only way out was with the help of the German army, travelling first to Berlin, and from there to Riga.

Wohlthat, eager to help the Jewish community and to stay on good terms with the American Consul, went to Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, chief of the German Military Intelligence, who agreed to help.

He sent two officers to Warsaw, with orders to bring the whole Schneerson family safely to Berlin.

The primary danger was being stopped by the Gestapo, which had already begun deportations from Poland to the Death Camps.

Indeed, every day Warsaw was becoming increasingly dangerous. Bands of SS officers would roam the streets looking for opportunities to humiliate Jews. One of their pastimes was snatching Rabbis and cutting off the beard from half their face, knowing that they wouldn't shave the other half. In fact, this is what happened to the son-in-law of the Frierdiker Rebbe, Rashag.

The two German officers came to collect the Frierdiker Rebbe and his family, but whoever opened the door was afraid that they were SS officers coming to round up prominent Rabbis for deportation, so they said it was the wrong house.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe heard, he said that his whole life he never hid, and this time is no different. Next time the Germans come, they should be told the truth.

After confirming with the American consul that this was indeed the Frierdiker Rebbe's address, the German officers came back.

It seems they decided that the safest way to remove so many clearly Jewish people from Warsaw was to act as though they were deporting them. So this time they burst into the house with guns drawn, and lined



THE LATVIAN PASSPORT ISSUED TO THE FRIERDIKER REBBE IN RIGA.



THE BUILDING WHERE THE FRIERDIKER REBBE LIVED DURING HIS STAY IN RIGA, LATVIA.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe heard, he said that his whole life he never hid, and this time is no different.

everyone up against the wall. Everyone thought that this is surely the end, but the officers said that they were taking them to Riga via Berlin.

IN THE LION'S DEN

Travelling to Berlin was especially perilous. There was a genuine fear that at any moment German soldiers would board the train and do whatever they want. They were sure to be provoked at the sight of a dignified rabbi with a long beard travelling freely into Germany.

Indeed they were harassed multiple times on the train by groups of German soldiers, but the officers managed to protect them, saying they were on an urgent mission from German Intelligence to bring these people safely to Berlin.

Arriving in Berlin, they were brought to the local "Gemeinde," a home managed by the Jewish community.

This had once been an imposing building, beautifully maintained by the wealthy Berlin Jewish community. But since the Nazis had come to power and the community was decimated, it had turned into more of a homeless shelter.

The walls were crumbling and there were people sleeping all over the floors. The stench was unbearable. For the Frierdiker Rebbe and his family, someone was kind enough to at least bring mattresses.

Thankfully, the next day they found a hotel to stay for Shabbos.

On Sunday, 5 Teves, the Frierdiker Rebbe and his family arrived in Riga.

Unfortunately, their stay in Riga lasted almost two months because shortly after their arrival, the Frierdiker Rebbe slipped and broke his right hand. It had to be in a cast for three weeks, and they couldn't travel until it was healed.

In addition, Rebbetzin Shterna Sara suffered from a terrible stomach ailment, and was forced to undergo a 12 hour operation. Of course this postponed the trip as well.

Finally, on 24 Adar I, the Frierdiker Rebbe flew to Stockholm, Sweden, and from there he boarded the SS Drottningholm to sail to New York.

AMERICAN VISAS

Even while the Frierdiker Rebbe was still in Warsaw, the Chabad lawyers in America were hard at work arranging American visas for the family. While Riga was safe for the moment, it was understood that the main goal was to come to America.

There were strict immigration quotas, allowing only a certain amount of immigrants from each country. To

Paris le 11. 1939

Mon cher Rabbim

J'ai reçu aujourd'hui vos lettres de Mr Liberman et je me réjouis de vous dire ce que il nous écrit

L'immeuble de Scimion a l'adresse on avait habité mon père avec la famille a été complètement détruit par une bombe. Il n'en reste rien, qu'ils sont tous sans et saufs.

Dans l'immeuble ils ont perdu tous leurs effets de façon que comme il fallait, ils sont rien a se soucier

Ils ont eu le courage de sauver les manuscrits la bibliothèque est restée a Gensbourg, quelques heures ils habitent chez Mr. Henry Gourary

Je suis sûr, mon cher Rabbim, que vous ferez tout ce que est en vos moyens pour leur venir a l'aide et surtout pour les faire sortir le plus possible, en leur situation

Acceptez, mon cher Rabbim, mes amitiés
les vôtres distinguées M. Scimion

THE GROUP OF AMERICAN BOCHURIM ON THE BOAT TO POLAND, ABOUT TO EMBARK, AV 5699*.

IN THE FOREGROUND IS REB SHMUEL LEVITIN AND REB YISROEL JACOBSON.



HECHT FAMILY

Frierdiker Rebbe had said that he wanted to come to America as the Rebbe of Chassidus Chabad, not as a Jewish leader.

This Judah Gourary was the son of Reb Shmuel, the oldest of the famous Gourary brothers who were devoted Chassidim of the Rebbe Rashab. Shmuel Gourary had the unique *zechus* of being laid to rest inside the *ohel* of the Rebbe Rashab.

The lawyers for Agudas Chassidei Chabad sent an official demand to the American consulate in Riga to allow the Frierdiker Rebbe to emigrate to the United States. In reply, the Immigration Department

A LETTER WRITTEN BY THE REBBE IN FRENCH TO REB YISROEL JACOBSON, WITH AN UPDATE ABOUT THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S CONDITION IN POLAND.

get a quota visa was almost impossible, so they first tried getting a non quota religious visa, which was special for Rabbis and their families.

This proved too difficult and time consuming, as they would need to have a detailed list of all the activities of everyone in the party for the last two years, as well as financial guarantees and contracts from American synagogues proving that they had jobs waiting for them.

At one meeting of Chabad activists, Mr. Judah Gourary had an idea.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe was the world leader of Chabad Chassidim and Chassidus, which had first been headquartered in Russia, and then later in Poland. Now that these centers were destroyed, the Chabad Chassidim of America wanted their leader together with all those who helped him, to come and establish the headquarters of Lubavitch in America.

This was actually in keeping with the Frierdiker Rebbe's own sentiments as expressed in the *yechidus* with Rabbi Jacobson back in Poland. The



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE IN HIS CABIN ON THE BOAT, RIGHT BEFORE DISEMBARKING, TES ADAR II 5700*.



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was instructed to investigate the facts presented in the affidavit.

The investigation took place in Mr. Sam Kramer's office with about 10 Chassidim present, together with Mr. Kramer, and the State Department investigator. Mr. Kramer launched into a long exposition of what the Chabad movement is, who the Lubavitcher Rebbes at the head of this movement are, their position in the Jewish world, the important work they accomplish for the Jewish community, and so forth.

He also showed the agent a mountain of cancelled checks from American synagogues, societies, and individuals, sent in the past to the

Frierdiker Rebbe, in Russia and in Poland, as well as to the Lubavitcher *yeshivos* there. It added up to a considerable sum.

ARRIVAL

On Tuesday, Tes Adar II 5700*, a tremendous crowd waited on the pier at New York Harbor to welcome the Frierdiker Rebbe. Every incoming passenger ship is met a few miles from shore by a special boat carrying various immigration officials, customs officers, etc., representing Federal, State, and City governments. The boat that met the Drottningholm also had on board a committee from Agudas Chasidei Chabad.

The captain respectfully asked the Frierdiker Rebbe which he preferred, to be the first to disembark, or the last. He held everything up until the Rebbe gave his answer: the latter.

The Frierdiker Rebbe also sent word through the Chazan Shmuel Kantaroff, who announced it over the microphone, that those who were waiting at the pier should recite, when they caught sight of the Rebbe, the *bracha* of “*Baruch mechayeh hameisim.*”

While still on the ship, the Frierdiker Rebbe said to Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson: The sufferings I endured in prison in Russia do not compare to the torments of the 12 weeks [I.e. from 17 Elul till 5 Teves] I spent

under their rule. Now we will quickly take care of the formalities and get to work immediately. Our work is Torah and *yiddishkeit* overseas. As for the contention that we are weak physically, that we have no strength, Hashem is after all “*hanosen layo’ef koach.*”

A NEW ERA

That day, the battle for *Yiddishkeit* moved from the old country to the new world.

It was a different type of battle, not of physical *mesiras nefesh*, but of tremendous steadfastness and emotional strength.

As the Frierdiker Rebbe said to Reb Shlomo Zalman Hecht, one of the first American-born *bochurim* to grow a

beard: “Shlomo Zalman, you should know that when you walk on the street they will laugh and make fun of you from both sides of the street, but don’t be *nispael*, go with your strength and determination until the very end.”

On some level, the fight for “*America iz nit andersh*” was even more difficult than the *mesiras nefesh* of previous generations.

A few weeks after arriving in America, at a Shabbos farbrengen in the Greystone Hotel, the Frierdiker Rebbe said:

“There is an army that is very famous during times of peace, but when war breaks out it falls apart and surrenders immediately. Then there is

an army that in peacetime you never hear about, but in war it holds strong.”

[This was referring to the French army, which was very technologically advanced, yet surrendered almost immediately to the Nazis, and the army of Finland, which while being unknown and low profile, managed to retain its independence.]

“The Chassidim of previous generations were glorified and respected soldiers, but they never fought a war. Today’s Chassidim are not as famous, but they are on the front lines.”

With this the Frierdiker Rebbe paused, looked at every person in the room, and concluded: “*Un der front halt zich*—and the front is holding.” **T**

The sufferings I endured in prison in Russia do not compare to the torments of the twelve weeks I spent under their rule.

1. This article is based on an article by Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, printed in ‘*Di Yiddishe Heim*’ issue 33-34, and *Toldos Chabad b’Polin, Lita v’Latvia*, chapter 63.

2. Kfar Chabad Magazine Issue 897, page 34.



NEWSPAPERS REPORT THE FRIERDIKER REBBE’S ARRIVAL IN AMERICA.

The BOMBING

Rabbi Yosef Wineberg, who was a bochur in Otwock at the time and accompanied the Frierdiker Rebbe to Warsaw, described Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur under Nazi bombardment:



REB YOSEF WINEBERG
AS A BOCHUR.

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residence until the day preceding Rosh Hashanah.

A room was set aside for the Rosh Hashanah davening, but only a small group was allowed to enter, since people were constantly being dragged away to build barricades, and it was dangerous for a large crowd to gather in one place.

Erev Rosh Hashanah, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, the bomb siren went off. German planes were right overhead, dropping bombs. A few bombs fell on the Shmotkin house and it burst into flames. Everyone started running out of the building towards the gateway of the yard that faced Marinovska Street.

I ran towards the Shmotkin house and noticed the Rebbe and his family were already outside. The Rebbe and his family stood under the archway of the gates. I ran past them, and into the Rebbe's chamber, where I spotted the Rebbe's shofars and his *gartel*. I grabbed them and ran towards the archway. When the Rebbe saw me, he handed me a small briefcase which contained his tallis, tefillin and the Baal Shem Tov's Siddur, to safeguard.

We stood around the Rebbe to guard him from being crushed as the large crowd tried to squeeze under

the archway. We brought a chair, and the Rebbe sat down. His face was awesomely grave. He sat whispering prayers in a undertone the entire time. A Chossid began reciting *Mishnayot* from memory, in a loud voice, and whenever he erred, the Rebbe corrected him.

Then the Rebbe asked me, "Where are the yeshiva students?" They were in a nearby shul, but the Rebbe requested that they come stand at his side. "They should be here with us."

The house across the street was hit by a bomb and as it came crashing down the air filled with dust-filled smoke, which caused everyone under the archway to choke. Thinking the worst, they began screaming hysterically, "Gas! Gas!"

The Rebbe's daughter applied a wet cloth across her father's mouth as a relief from the gas. But they quickly discovered that it was a false alarm; only dust.

The bombing did not let up. Someone telephoned to inform the Rebbe's family that all was calm in another neighborhood and the Rebbe should relocate there. But the Rebbe wouldn't hear of it, as he replied to his daughter's request with a smile, "It's soon time to light the candles for Rosh

Hashanah. They will soon disappear, but we will remain.”

As the raging fires neared the Rebbe's yard, once again the Rebbe was begged to leave for a different vicinity. This time, the Rebbe nodded his head in agreement, although reluctantly. A wagon was somehow obtained and the Rebbe began the perilous trip, as sparks and loose flames landed on the wagon. Meanwhile, the Rebbetzin and the Rebbe's mother waited at the Shmotkin residence.

A group of yeshiva students then risked going to where the Rebbe had been taken, Dr. Metskewitz's clinic at 8 Granitchna Street. The Rebbe told me to return to the Shmotkins. Wishing to be sure that it would be calm and safe from fire, I asked the Rebbe whether we could already begin Maariv, to which he replied in the affirmative.

As we approached the house, we met Reb Chatche Feigin and the Shmotkin brothers, who were very concerned about the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Shterna Sara. The flames were spreading closer to the house and there was no way she could possibly run to safety with the youngsters in case of danger. The Rebbetzin was repeatedly requesting to be taken only to her son's room, where she was certain of her safety.

We were at loss for what to do. We couldn't contact the Rebbe to ask his advice, but when we realized how close the fires were, we decided to carry her on a stretcher to the home of a wealthy Chossid, which was located outside the area of the inferno.

I was one of the three who carried the stretcher along streets glowing with fire, trying to avoid stepping on the many corpses lying on the ground, victims of gruesome explosions.

A short while later, the Rebbe's mother asked for the *machzor* and eyeglasses she had left at the Shmotkins' home, since she wished to daven. When I returned with them, she asked what was taking place over there. I told her they had begun. She responded, “What a pity I left; I missed *barchu!*”

The Rebbe was also unhappy with his surroundings and asked why he had been brought to the clinic. “At least over there, I would have been among other Jews.”

On the first night of Yom Tov, the Rebbe davened alone, for it was impossible to arrange a *minyan*; but by the next morning, things were slightly calmer, and the Rebbe moved to a private house on the same street and a *minyan* was arranged.

During the next week, *aseres yemei teshuva*, the cannon-fire was greatly increased by German artillery, in



NAZI PLANES FLY OVER WARSAW.

addition to the steady hail of bombs that rained down from the skies. The cannons wrought destruction and havoc all across Warsaw. It was advised to hide behind as many walls as possible for maximum protection, which the Rebbe's family did, sitting in the corridor of the house. However, the Rebbe himself would only sit in the corridor for a short while, about 15 minutes, and he would then return to his room even during the shooting, motioning with his hand as if to say, "Okay, that's enough."

Regardless of what was taking place, the Rebbe remained completely calm and controlled, never once expressing any fear. Once, when a bomb exploded really close by, the Rebbe's hand trembled. The Rebbe remarked, "I am not frightened, but the blast causes the flesh to tremble."

During those few days, the Rebbe constantly expressed his desire to return to the Shmotkin home where he would be amongst Jews, and before Yom Kippur, it was decided to do so.

On the night before Yom Kippur, I went to the Shmotkins to bring meat for the Rebbe's household. That night, there were horrendous explosions primarily in our district. The Shmotkin home was damaged too, but thank G-d, none of us were harmed. At any rate, the thought of returning with the Rebbe to their house was dismissed.

Due to the endless deathly hail from the bombers and ground artillery, a very small group of close neighbors gathered at the Rebbe's dwelling for the Yom Kippur davening, both at night and the following day. The Rebbe was very distressed because there was no suitable *chazzan*. I therefore left to call Rabbi Zalmanov

from a different district, and he arrived and led the entire daytime davening.

As the Rebbe said Maftir Yonah and everyone's heart overflowed, there were thunderous explosions, only the Rebbe's voice kept everyone from dreadful hysteria and flight. All the other shuls were actually emptied as everyone ran into the shelters.

Neilah was said hurriedly on the Rebbe's instructions, and the shofar was sounded before nightfall. This was to ensure that everyone could leave before further bombing. However, the Rebbe asked me to stay with him, and continued, "Are you concerned about food after the fast? Whatever we will eat, you will eat too."

The Rebbe broke his fast with a piece of bread. Truthfully, a pot of meat had been cooking at Reb Mendel Shmotkin's house, but shards of shrapnel had fallen into the pot during the bombing, rendering it unfit to eat.

As I stood on line to receive a bowl of soup, the explosions started. Everyone ran to the corridor for shelter, but the Rebbe commanded me to finish eating in the dining room. They sat there for 45 minutes wearing overcoats and clutching bundles, ready for a chance to escape to safety. The Rebbe's briefcase stood nearby, packed with his tallis, tefillin and the Baal Shem Tov's *siddur*.

In contrast to his mood on Erev Yom Kippur, the Rebbe was now quite relaxed, which raised our spirit. Soon we were singing a *niggun* which the Rebbe strongly encouraged with hand motions. The deafening sounds of the explosions mingled with our singing.

The Rebbe sat a little while longer and then returned to his room, blessing us, "Good night, and may

you always have happy occasions." We hadn't expected such a blessing, and the Rebbe, who sensed our concern, turned to us and repeated his sacred blessing. "Good night, and may you always have happy occasions."

On the day after Yom Kippur, the bombing worsened. Telephone lines were cut off, and in many places, the water supplies were as well. When the bombings began on the following day, the Rebbe and his family descended once again to the basement, and this time the Rebbe instructed his students to recite certain *kapitlach* of Tehillim. But when they discovered that there would soon be no way of getting out of the basement, the Rebbe decided to emerge immediately.

They ran from one place to another, and in one of the yards they passed through a gate which almost fell upon the Rebbe's household. Someone had to hold it up alone. As they ran, the Rebbe's tallis and tefillin were lost. The yeshiva student who had been carrying them forgot at which gateway he put them down. A search proved fruitless, causing the Rebbe much anguish.

At that time, Rebbetzin Shterna Sara was in the house of Reb Berel Nissan Bepalov. All her companions wanted to escape elsewhere, but she was adamant about staying, because there was a *sefer Torah* in the house. Later, they realized that because they had stayed, they were spared, unlike others who had chosen to run, unsuccessfully.

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