

---

# RESOLUTION IN A TIME OF REVOLUTION

---

THE REBBE RASHAB'S  
BATTLES FOR  
YIDDISHKEIT IN THE  
LAST YEARS OF THE  
TSARIST REGIME

---

*Three Essays by Eli Rubin*

*Marking 100 Years Since  
the Russian Revolution of 1917*



## Introduction

*The early decades of the twentieth century mark a period of tremendous upheaval in the Russian Empire, socially, culturally, and politically. Ultimately they would climax in the successful overthrow of the Tsarist regime in February 1917, followed by the Bolshevik revolution in October of the same year.*

*It was precisely during this time that Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, the Rebbe Rashab of Lubavitch, built the famous yeshiva, Tomchei Temimim, and composed his masterly serializations of Chassidic discourses (maamarim), including Samach Vov and Ayin Beis.*

*At the very same time the Rebbe Rashab was deeply invested in the fight for Torah true yiddishkeit on a national level. He was an activist par excellence, and whenever he saw a need would mobilize rabbis and philanthropists across the Empire to lobby the government and / or to raise necessary funds.*

*His battles on behalf of Yiddishkeit took him right into the heart of the struggle for Russia's future. He was not a spectator to history but a participant in the making of history, and in the making of the Jewish future.*

*The three essays collected here were first published on Chabad.org as unconnected articles under different titles. They are collected and published here in honor of the marriage of my sister, **Zeldy Rubin**, to **Mendy Schwei**. May they build an everlasting edifice on the foundation of Torah and Mitzvot as illuminated by the teachings and examples of the successive rebbes of Chabad.*

בברכת מזל טוב, מזל טוב!

אליעזר ליב בן אאמו"ר ר' ירחמיאל אהרן הכהן שיחי' רובין

## Contents

|                                                                                      |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>The Chinese Matzah Campaign</b>                                                   | <b>1</b>  |
| <i>Patriotism and Faith During the Russo-Japanese War (1903-1905)</i>                |           |
| <b>The Blood Libel</b>                                                               | <b>10</b> |
| <i>The Accusation and Defense of Beilis and the Schneersohns (1913)</i>              |           |
| <b>World War One and the Russian Revolution</b>                                      | <b>22</b> |
| <i>Hope and Activism in the Face of Upheaval, Uncertainty and Danger (1914-1920)</i> |           |
| <b>Endnotes</b>                                                                      | <b>34</b> |

RESOLUTION IN A TIME OF REVOLUTION

BY ELI RUBIN

THE ESSAYS PUBLISHED HERE WERE FIRST PUBLISHED BY CHABAD.ORG AND ARE HERE REPRODUCED  
IN PRINT WITH PERMISSION.

© COPYRIGHT CHABAD.ORG AND THE AUTHOR, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

NO PART OF THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE REPRODUCED, DISTRIBUTED, OR TRANSMITTED IN ANY FORM  
OR BY ANY MEANS, INCLUDING PHOTOCOPYING, RECORDING, OR OTHER ELECTRONIC OR  
MECHANICAL METHODS, WITHOUT THE PRIOR WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER, EXCEPT IN  
THE CASE OF BRIEF QUOTATIONS EMBODIED IN CRITICAL REVIEWS AND CERTAIN OTHER  
NONCOMMERCIAL USES PERMITTED BY COPYRIGHT LAW.

FOR PERMISSION REQUESTS, PLEASE EMAIL [PERMISSIONS@CHABAD.ORG](mailto:PERMISSIONS@CHABAD.ORG).

TO CONTACT THE AUTHOR, PLEASE EMAIL [ERUBIN@CHABAD.ORG](mailto:ERUBIN@CHABAD.ORG).



## **The Chinese Matzah Campaign**

*Patriotism and Faith During the Russo-Japanese War (1903-1905)*

### **How it Began**

Over the course of the last few decades, the mass Seders organized in such exotic places as Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam have become a familiar symbol of Chabad's international appeal and success. The "Seder at the top of the world," held annually in Kathmandu for thousands of Israeli backpackers, is widely seen as the trendsetter in this arena. In truth, the first Chabad campaign to bring Passover to Jews in the Far East occurred more than eight decades before the 1988 debut of the Kathmandu event.

Some 4,000 kilometers to the northeast of Kathmandu lies the city of Harbin, China. Today home to more than ten million, Harbin would likely never have been more than a small village lost in the vastness of Heilongjiang province. In 1898, however, it was chosen as an administrative and operational base for the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway, an extension of the Trans-Siberian Railway sponsored by the Russian government. With the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904, Harbin suddenly became a strategic linchpin for the transportation of men, equipment and supplies to the Russian naval bases at Vladivostok and Port Arthur. Amongst those men—who were ferried across Asia to meet the Japanese threat— were thousands of Jewish soldiers.

### **No Barons at the Front**

In late 1903 the crisis was already coming to a head; Russia already had nearly 200,000 troops in the area, and more were heading east. At the same time Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, the fifth rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch (known as the Rebbe Rashab), was heading west to Paris.<sup>1</sup> While the train carried him in the opposite direction, the Jewish soldiers in the east were not at all far from his mind. He was extremely worried that come Passover, the festival of freedom, their difficult situation would be made only more desperate. Without matzah they would be deprived of basic nourishment, both physically and spiritually. In Paris, the rebbe hoped to enlist the help of the

most influential Russian Jew of the era—Baron Horace Günzburg—in the effort to coordinate a Passover relief campaign with the imperial Russian authorities.

Amongst his many other distinctions, Günzburg was a founding member of the Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment Among the Jews of Russia. Ideologically, he and the rebbe almost always found themselves at odds with one another. Yet the latter apparently believed that the baron's efforts to advance the cause of emancipation did derive from a genuine concern for the welfare of his Jewish brethren. It was Rabbi Shalom DovBer's hope that while Günzburg might not sympathize with his religious sensibilities, he would yet be sensitive to the plight of the thousands of Jewish soldiers who had been sent to the front. On arriving in Paris, however, his suggestions were received with indifference.

Baron Günzburg—whose Jewish name was Naftali Tzvi—dismissed the rebbe's concerns with a wry twist of Talmudic irony. "For Jews," he said, "there is a resolution, there is yet a Second Passover (yidden hoben an eitze, s'iz doch faran a pesach sheni)." The learned baron was referring to the day, a month following Passover, when anyone who had missed the opportunity to offer the Passover sacrifice in the Temple was given a "second chance."

Rabbi Shalom DovBer was not impressed with this show of erudition. "At the front," he replied, "there are no barons. The soldiers are peasant Jews; they know nothing of such clever excuses (di soldaten The production, transportation and distribution of matzah on such a scale would require a special permit that could be obtained only from the highest levels of the imperial government in S. Petersburg. zeinen proste yidden, zei veisen nit fun kein chochmes). They need to have matzah on Passover."<sup>2</sup>

### **Sharing Responsibility**

Unfortunately, Rabbi Shalom Dovber's effort to provide matzah during the first year of the war met with limited success. While some private individuals did support him, and the imperial government did aid in the distribution of matzah to soldiers at the front, he was unable to provide matzah on the huge scale that the situation demanded. These setbacks did not deter him from redoubling his efforts the next year, but he realized that he could not rely on the influence of any one individual; a far wider collaborative campaign would

have to be orchestrated. In the middle of Kislev 5665 (November 1904) he decided that he must himself travel to S. Petersburg in order to get the campaign underway.<sup>3</sup>

Once there, he wrote to Rabbi Yeshayahu Berlin—a wealthy and philanthropic chassid who was married to the rebbe’s first cousin—asking him to establish a centralized office to coordinate the public effort. In a letter addressed to R. Berlin on the sixth day of Chanukah 5665 (1904), he explained the pressing importance of establishing a broad and authoritative platform: “We must worry about [the provision of] matzah for our brothers on the war front while there is still time. As there are now many of our brothers there—perhaps up to forty thousand—it is impossible to achieve this through the donations of individuals alone; rather we must gather funds from all the townlets, so that even small contributions will add up and amount to a fitting sum . . .”<sup>4</sup>

For his part, Rabbi Shalom DovBer proposed to mobilize the support of the townlets and individuals under his influence, and write to other important rabbinic leaders encouraging them to do the same. Amongst those leaders he listed his cousins, “the rabbis of Liadi, Babroisk, and Retzitze.” Respectively these were Rabbi Yitzchak DovBer Schneersohn, Rabbi Shmaryahu Noach Schneersohn and Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn. Together, the rebbes of the extended Schneersohn family could muster the vast support. In addition, he would seek the support of the non-chassidic rabbinic leadership, including “the rabbis of Brisk, Kovno, Vilna and Lodz.” Respectively: Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Rabinowitz, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky and Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Meisel.

From this point and on, Rabbi Shalom DovBer indicated his intention to direct operations from behind the scenes. He was adamant that the effort should not be characterized as a Chabad-Lubavitch campaign, but should rather be seen as joint undertaking for which all Jews must bear responsibility. When his son (and later successor) Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, who was then director of the yeshivah Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch, suggested that the yeshivah office should issue letters of appeal for the matzah campaign, Rabbi Shalom DovBer wrote in reply, “Your proposal . . . doesn’t resonate with me, and I don’t advise it all . . . It is in the best interest of the matzah campaign that letters of appeal should be issued in each community by the rabbis who are most influential there . . .”

The yeshivah, Tomchei Temimim, he argued, was established not to cater to all the specific ritual concerns facing the Jewish community at large, but specifically to educate Jewish youth, “to draw them to Torah and to try and plant fear of heaven in their hearts.” Rabbi Shalom DovBer drew a clear distinction between this educational project, which was distinctly Chabad in character, and the broader effort to strengthen Jewish observances such as Shabbat, kosher and matzah. “It is self-understood,” he wrote, “that each and every Jew, being that he is a Jew, must worry about this, and actively invest effort in this as much as he is able.” He insisted however, that in this matter, Tomchei Temimim “is like each and every private individual of our Jewish brethren,” no more and no less.<sup>5</sup>

### **In the Halls of Power**

Far from attempting to delegate responsibility to others, the extant correspondence shows that Rabbi Shalom DovBer continued to work tirelessly to coordinate the communal effort. It soon became clear that the production, transportation and distribution of matzah on such a scale would require a special permit that could be obtained only from the highest levels of the imperial government in S. Petersburg. While Rabbi Shalom DovBer himself spent nearly a month in that city, he also had a very able proxy in the chassid R. Shmuel Michel (Samuil Aronovitch) Trainin, a wealthy and well-connected industrialist who lived in a large house on the prestigious Rizhsky Prospekt (Riga Avenue).<sup>6</sup> Another individual whose efforts would prove invaluable in this regard was a certain Yitzchak Margolin. The latter may not have been especially religious, but Rabbi Shalom DovBer describes him as being passionately involved in negotiations on behalf of the committee. The previous year, Margolin had personally donated five hundred rubles to the cause. Now he promised to put his influence in government circles—and particularly his connection with the minister of transport and communication, Prince Mikhail Ivanovich Khilkov—to good use.<sup>7</sup>

The odds, however, did not look good. As R. Shmuel Michel pointed out, the government itself needed to raise as much money as it could for the war effort, and was unlikely to sanction a competing campaign to raise money for



Passover matzah. Rabbi Shalom DovBer was unmoved by such arguments. “The Jewish people,” he said, “can achieve anything. It is G-d who bestowed the Torah and its commandments upon us. It was us that He chose to serve Him. He will help us. All that is required of us is action.”<sup>8</sup>

Eventually, a committee was convened, Rabbi Shalom DovBer himself oversaw the preparation of all the necessary documentation, and a meeting with the Minister of the Interior—then Prince Pyotr Dmitrievich Sviatopolk-Mirskii—was scheduled for Friday, Tevet 15, 5665 (Dec. 11, 1904). But Margolin showed up late, and the meeting had to be rescheduled for the following Monday.<sup>9</sup> Incidentally, it was on the day after the missed appointment, on Shabbat, Tevet 16 (Dec. 12), that the czar issued the Decree Concerning Plans for Improvement of the Social Order. Amongst other things, the decree offered a vague promise that some “unnecessary” discriminatory laws and restrictions aimed at ethnic and religious minorities would be removed. There was much political and social unrest in Russia during this time, and it seems that the authorities were inclined to make a show of progressive tolerance.

On Monday morning, the rebbe himself telephoned the house of R. Shmuel Michel at seven o’clock to make sure that he was awake and on schedule. At eight he telephoned again, and sent a messenger to visit Margolin and the third member of the delegation, the wealthy chassid R. Menachem Monish (Monyeh) Moneszohn. Their meeting was called for ten, and within twenty minutes of their arrival they found themselves in the minister’s presence. On reading the petition they presented, and hearing their presentation, he proclaimed the project to be both “fitting and necessary.” R. Menachem Monish went directly from the meeting to report back to the rebbe, while the others went to their places of business. Arriving at the rebbe’s lodgings, he found that he had finished the morning prayers, but was still wearing his tallit and tefillin. His eyes were red from crying. The good news that R. Menachem brought set his heart at rest, but he remained as impatient as ever to bring the project to fruition.<sup>10</sup>

The inefficient arms of the imperial bureaucracy, however, took longer than they should have to process the necessary permit. Having spent nearly a month in the capital, Rabbi Shalom DovBer returned to Lubavitch. He may have been emptyhanded, but he had reason to be confident. Two weeks later he

received a telegram from R. Shmuel Michel informing him that his efforts had not been in vain; the official permit had been issued. In his reply, Rabbi Shalom DovBer hardly paused to celebrate: “Thank G-d,” he wrote, “that the permit was issued. Now you will surely hasten to convene the committee, propose a final course, and begin the holy work.” He continued to enumerate various practical and logistical considerations that must be taken into account, and advised the committee to spread the word via correspondence and the popular press, not only in Russia but also in Amsterdam, London and Berlin.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Rebbe’s Letter**

Now that the committee had received official sanction, the campaign to raise sufficient funds and the logistical arrangements for the production and distribution of the matzah could begin in earnest. As promised, Rabbi Shalom DovBer penned a public letter calling upon the Jewish population to rally in support of their brethren at the front.<sup>12</sup> Much of the information provided in the opening paragraph of the letter has already been described above. But the greater part of the letter is an impassioned appeal to the sensitivities of the Jewish public:

Brothers! We must feel the hearts of our brethren at the war front, who are committed to difficulty and great danger, may G-d save them. They are forfeiting their lives on behalf of our king and the land of our birth. It is as though they have been separated from life (may G-d in His great kindness guard them from all sorrow and hardship, and bring them peacefully to their homes), especially those of the reserves, who have left their homes, their children and their possessions, and only to G-d can they lift their eyes. We know how precious and how beloved the mitzvah of eating matzah is to each one of our brethren, and conversely, if one of our brothers is forced to eat chametz, how much his heart will be pained within him if even under the greatest duress he is forced to eat chametz on Passover. There are indeed many of our soldierly brethren who will not eat chametz on Passover so long as their soul is yet within them, but one cannot survive eight days without eating . . .

The letter continues in a similar vein for several pages, appealing not only to the religious sensibilities of the reader but also to his patriotic spirit, and to the ubiquitous sense of Jewish kinship:

The main thing in war is fortitude and strength of heart . . . and on the other hand, weakness of heart and low spirits bring to great danger, for they cannot stand in the close combat of war . . . And what can cause our brethren lowness of spirit more than eating chametz on Passover, G-d forbid, for the hearts of each one of our brethren utterly recoils from this. From this he may be more endangered than the extant danger alone that already threatens him. The observance of the mitzvah of eating matzah on Passover will strengthen the hearts of our brethren, and give them strength and fortitude to stand firm in war and to overcome the enemy with might...

If, due to G-d's kindness, we are quiet and at peace in our homes, it is incumbent upon us to participate in the pain of our soldier brethren . . . Certainly, each one of us has relatives who are soldiers in the war zone. We are obligated to save them and give them the strength and ability to stand in combat, and bestow upon them this lofty and exalted commandment, which will guard them and strengthen them. The sensitivity of hearts towards them [expressed] via this help will also strengthen their spirits and souls, by consolidating and uniting the feeling of our souls with them . . .

Finally, he appeals to the active role and the unique contribution that each individual can and must make, placing the onus of responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the reader:

I am sustained by the hope that every one of our Jewish brethren will be inspired, and desire with every ounce of their souls to take part in this great endeavor. Whether a rabbi, a communal leader, a householder, or a simple laborer, each must act within their sphere of influence to achieve all that can possibly be achieved within the shortest possible time. Small donations as well as large ones will be willingly received, but no one should withhold themselves from giving as much as they are able . . .

Our brethren always receive the festival with extra love and affection . . . they will beautify the Passover of this year with the charity and great kindness done for our brethren who have departed from them to a place of bleak desolation (may G-d guard over them). While sitting at the Seder on the eve of the forthcoming festival, they will decorate and crown their table with this splendor, that at least their unfortunate brethren are able to fulfill the commandment of matzah on this night . . .

In the closing line of this letter he reminds the reader that time is extremely short; the rail journey to the war zone itself takes no less than six weeks, and money must be raised before production can even begin:

Speed is as vital as the very matter itself.

### **Implementation, Setbacks & Success**

Over the next few months, the committee certainly had their work cut out for them. The main problem was logistical; freight along the Trans-Siberian Railway to Harbin was reserved almost exclusively for military equipment and supplies. But baking the matzah in Harbin itself would cost more than three times the price that it would to bake it in the established bakeries in the west.<sup>13</sup> The members of the committee successfully petitioned the minister of transportation and the minister for war, Viktor Sakharov, and it was agreed that ten freight cars would be provided for the shipment and transportation of Passover supplies.<sup>14</sup> Another problem was the distribution of the matzah amongst the Jewish troops once it arrived in the war zone. To this purpose the committee sent a special emissary, Reb Leib Hurowitz, to Harbin to oversee the eastern end of the operation, and the production of more matzah to supplement that which was being shipped in from the west.<sup>15</sup> In addition, huge quantities of salted kosher meat were also prepared for shipment.<sup>16</sup>

Rabbi Shalom DovBer refused to officially chair the committee, suggesting instead that Baron David Günzburg (son of the aforementioned Horace Günzburg) be invited to fill that role. The chief work of the committee was executed by R. Shmuel Michel Trainin, who was appointed deputy chairman.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the extant correspondence testifies to the depth of the rebbe's continued involvement in every detail of the operation. It was he who conceived and instigated the campaign, and it was he who planned and saw through its successful implementation.

Four days before Passover (11 Nissan) Rabbi Shalom DovBer received a telegram from Harbin notifying him that the freight cars had arrived. On the following day he received a telegram from the committee in S. Petersburg confirming that all the arrangements had been brought to timely fruition.<sup>18</sup> This could not have been an easy task; there were several tens of thousands of Jewish troops spread over several thousand square miles. In addition, all elements of production and distribution had to be coordinated with the Russian

military and transportation authorities. Along the Trans-Siberian Railroad alone, seven stations were stocked with Passover supplies for the provision of Jewish troops passing to and from the war zone.<sup>19</sup>

On receiving this news from the committee, Rabbi Shalom DovBer telegraphed the following reply:

Great is my joy that the will of G-d has been done, and there will be matzah for our soldier brethren this Passover. I am very grateful to the members of the committee, and especially to the chairman and his deputy, for the toil of their souls and their good work for the desired intention. In G-d's name, I bless you with the joy of the coming festival. May you always see your brethren's good. May our brothers in the war zone be mighty warriors and victors for the glory of our king and the land of our birth, and may they come home in peace.<sup>20</sup>

On the same day he penned a letter to R. Shmuel Michel Trainin thanking him personally for all his efforts, and requesting that he be notified once a detailed report from Harbin regarding the distribution of the matzah amongst the troops had been received. He also suggested that notices be placed in the newspapers on behalf of the soldiers, thanking their brethren at home for providing them with Passover necessities.<sup>21</sup>

According to an account by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the very next day a telegram from R. Leib Hurowitz notified Rabbi Shalom DovBer that not all the wagons had arrived as planned. Consequently there was a shortage of matzah, not at the front, but in Harbin itself. At the last minute 10,000 rubles were wired by the committee to Harbin, so that additional matzahs could be baked regardless of expense.<sup>22</sup>

While conducting his own Seder, Rabbi Shalom DovBer received another telegram —forwarded from Harbin by way of S. Petersburg—bearing the news that the matzah had been correctly distributed amongst the troops in the war zone. Upon reading it, he rose from his chair in gratitude and declared, “Thank G-d!”<sup>23</sup>

## **The Blood Libel**

*The Accusation and Defense of Beilis and the Schneersohns (1913)*

### **Introduction**

In the autumn of 1913, the blood libel trial of Menachem Mendel Beilis—the 39-year-old manager of a Jewish-owned brick factory—began at the Superior Court of Kiev, Ukraine. Falsely accused of the ritual murder of 13-year-old Andrei Yushchinsky, Beilis was internationally recognized as a stand-in for the entire Jewish nation by both his defenders and his detractors.

The acquittal of Beilis, however, was a bittersweet victory. Even before his arrest, the representatives of tsarist anti-semitism claimed that Yushchinsky had been murdered by what they described as a barbarous Jewish sect—the chassidim. At the trial too, far more time was devoted to the issue of Jewish ritual murder than to the question of Beilis's personal guilt. The verdict was engineered so that the broader question was not entirely laid to rest, even as Beilis himself was freed.

How the accusation was contrived, and how Beilis was vindicated, is the story of an empire in its death throes. The highest tsarist authorities colluded with petty criminals to frame a scapegoat for Russia's woes. But some monarchist elements yet aligned themselves with liberals, Jews, and the principles of justice. A conspiracy of power and hate was frustrated by unity, humanity and truth.

### **Seeds of Evil**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Russia was beset by political and social crises, culminating in the Russian Revolution of 1917. In the preceding decades liberal agitation and rebellious activity rose steeply, countered by an equal measure of monarchist repression. Unwilling to see their privileges usurped by progressive demands, the supporters of tsarist autocracy blamed all forms of liberalism and anti-government agitation on the Jews. The ills plaguing the Russian people, they claimed, were the result of Jewish-led

efforts to erode Russian nationalism, never the results of governmental corruption or incompetence.<sup>1</sup>

Anti-semitic prejudice was given popular voice by a network of ultranationalistic organizations, known collectively as the Black Hundreds. Populated by petty bureaucrats, street thugs, nationalist intelligentsia, peasants, landowners and clergy, the Black Hundreds could be mobilized on demand to orchestrate riots and pogroms. Through their political umbrella, the Union of the Russian People, these groups were well connected at the Imperial Ministries in St. Petersburg. In the Beilis case, these connections were used to pull local authorities into step “In his attitude toward the Jews,” Witte wrote, “the Emperor’s ideals are at bottom those of the Black Hundreds.” with the machinations of a Black Hundreds plot.<sup>2</sup>

The memoirs of Count Sergei Witte provide intimate testimony to the “unstatesmanlike, vindictive and non-humanitarian” turn in Russian politics, and describe just how deeply the atmosphere was colored by anti-semitism.<sup>3</sup> Witte had served as the prime minister of Russia before the appointment of Pyotr Stolypin, but by Tsarist standards he was overly inclined to moderation and emancipation, and was forced to resign in 1906.<sup>4</sup>

“In his attitude toward the Jews,” Witte wrote, “the Emperor’s ideals are at bottom those of the Black Hundreds. The strength of that party lies precisely in the fact that their Majesties have conceived the notion that those anarchists of the Right are their salvation . . . Did not the Emperor himself call on all of us to rally under the banners of the Union of Russians, which openly advocates the annihilation of the Jews?”<sup>5</sup>

## **The Conspiracy**

According to the findings of police investigators, Andrei Yushchinsky was lured to the apartment of Vera Cheberiak on the morning of March 12th, 1911,<sup>6</sup> and there murdered by members of her criminal gang. A spate of robberies in Kiev had earlier led police to take note of her criminal activities, and the unwanted attention had sent Vera and her accomplices into a state of vindictive alarm. Suspicious that Andrei—a friend of Vera’s son Zhenya—had informed police of their culpability, they silenced him forever. They dumped the mutilated body in a cave nearby.<sup>7</sup>

Under usual circumstances, a minister of justice should be the first to prosecute murderers and defend the innocent. But hatred bends the norm. The murderers of Andrei Yushchinsky were discovered by the police, but they were not prosecuted.<sup>8</sup> Instead, the minister of justice— Ivan Shcheglovitov— conspired with Black Hundreds representatives and government prosecutors to place an innocent Jew in the dock, and have the real murderers testify against him<sup>9</sup>

The conspiracy was led by Georgy Zamyslovsky, a right-wing member of the Imperial State Duma, and Valadamir Golubev, a student at the University of Kiev and a local Black Hundreds leader.<sup>10</sup> Zamyslovsky began his career in the Ministry of Justice, and had a good relationship with Justice Minister Shcheglovitov. A self-proclaimed expert on Jewish murder ritual, he had perfected the art of libel in the composition of a book, *Victims of Israel: The Saratov Affair*.<sup>11</sup>

In Golubev, Zamyslovsky found a willing pupil. In Zamyslovsky, Golubev found a willing accomplice. The student carried out his own investigation in Kiev, and was the first to “discover” the guilt of Mendel Beilis.<sup>12</sup> The legislator used his influence in St. Petersburg to ensure that the representatives of imperial justice would do all they could do bring injustice to fruition. He also wielded his pen in the monarchist press to inspire anti-semitic indignation on a national scale.<sup>13</sup>

From the conspirators’ perspective, it is clear that Mendel Beilis was simply a hook on which they intended to hang the entire Jewish nation. Whether or not this particular Jew had murdered a Christian child was of secondary importance; the crucial thing was to establish the ritual murder of Christian children as a routine component of Jewish religious practice.<sup>14</sup> This purpose was served by another Jew, a small-time hay and straw dealer who sometimes took meals in the Beilis home. His name was Faivel Shneerson.<sup>15</sup>

Beilis was targeted on account of his place of residence. The factory where he worked and lived adjoined the Cheberiak apartment, and he was one of the only Jews permitted to live in the locality.<sup>16</sup> Shneerson was targeted on account of his name.<sup>17</sup> In *The Saratov Affair*, Zamyslovsky alleged, sixty years earlier blood had been sent from Saratov to Lubavitch to be used in religious rituals by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (the Tzemach Tzedek), the third rebbe of the Chabad stream of Chassidism.<sup>18</sup> Zamyslovsky



subsequently claimed that every case of Jewish ritual murder in the Russian empire could be traced to the Schneersohn family of Lubavitch.<sup>19</sup>

## **Hatred and Lies**

The fact that there was no verifiable evidence whatsoever<sup>20</sup> connecting either Beilis or Shneerson to the murder did not deter Georgy Chaplinsky, Kiev's chief prosecutor. Following the intervention of Zamyslovsky, a special envoy was dispatched from the Ministry of Justice in St. Petersburg to ensure that Chief Prosecutor Chaplinsky would aid student Golubev in every possible way.<sup>21</sup> The tsar himself expressed special interest in the case, and Chaplinsky took advantage of the sovereign's September 1911 visit to Kiev to personally inform him that the "zhid" murderer of Yushchinsky had been found.<sup>22</sup>

Having made such commitments to the great autocrat himself, the conspirators would stop at nothing to bring Beilis to trial. Two police investigators who steadfastly pursued the real culprits were successively framed for petty crimes and removed from their posts.<sup>23</sup> Okhrana operatives and officers of the Kiev gendarmerie worked with state prosecutors and members of the Black Hundreds to fabricate evidence, cultivate witnesses and keep Vera Cheberiak and her accomplices out of jail.<sup>24</sup>

Vera Cheberiak's son Zhenya—the last person seen with Andrei before he was murdered<sup>25</sup>—died under mysterious circumstances, as did his sister Valentina. Their mother successfully prevented them from giving clear statements to police before they died, but subsequently was only too eager to put numerous testimonies in their mouths.<sup>26</sup> It wasn't until her fifth deposition on the topic—delivered eleven months after Zhenya's death—that Vera claimed to recall a crucial piece of information: Zhenya, she testified, had told her that on the morning of Andrei's disappearance the two boys had gone to the brick factory and that Beilis had dragged Andrei away.<sup>27</sup>

The ministerial authorities in St. Petersburg directed these local intrigues, and were kept fully informed. Accordingly, Shcheglovitov and his accomplices ensured that the jury would be composed of people who could be expected to find Beilis guilty on the basis of racial hatred alone.<sup>28</sup> They also arranged for the testimony of experts who would attempt to reinforce the prejudices of the jurors with a false show of science and scholarship.<sup>29</sup>

Professor Dmitry Kosorotov, a forensic specialist at the Imperial Military Medical Academy in St Petersburg, testified that the condition of Yushchinsky's corpse proved that he was the victim of a Jewish ritual killing. The minister of the interior, Nikolai Maklakov,<sup>30</sup> paid Kosorotov 4,000 rubles for this service.<sup>31</sup> (Three years later, the same Kosorotov carried out Rasputin's autopsy.) Professor Ivan Sikorsky, a psychiatrist at the University of Kiev, provided similar testimony, welcoming the opportunity to attack the Jews, and demanding no compensation for the privilege. Finally, Justin Pranaitis—an obscure Catholic priest and self-proclaimed Talmudic expert—was brought all the way from Tashkent to demonstrate that Judaism mandated the ritual murder of gentiles.

### **Unity and Truth**

Just days before Shcheglovitov's representative first arrived in Kiev to consult with Chaplinsky and Golubev, local Jewish leaders were already mobilizing to turn the tide of hate. A group headed by the city's chief rabbi, R. Shlomo Ahronson, and a prominent Jewish attorney named Arnold Margolin met with leading representatives of the rightwing nationalist intelligentsia—including Professor Vasily Chernov of the University of Kiev and the editors of the influential Kievlianin newspaper—to discuss the situation.<sup>32</sup>

In the ensuing discussion, Chernov proposed that the Jewish leadership admit to the existence of “a barbarous fringe sect that engages in ritual murder.” This was an appeal that would be repeated many times by the prosecutors of Beilis. By pretending to target a specific sect of Jews—the chassidim—rather than all Jews collectively, Jews who widely disagreed with each other . . . worked in the representatives of tsarist anti-semitism attempted to preserve a facade of impartial respectability. After the target sect had been proven guilty, such trivial distinctions would no doubt be forgotten by the vengeful mob.<sup>33</sup>

“Among us Jews,” Rabbi Ahronson told Chernov, “there are no sects or parties. There are groups of people who have different opinions from one another, but all of them turn on a single axis, the axis of Judaism. The Torah is one for all of us; belief and practice are the obligation of us all. The chassidim are not sectarian at all, but a stream within Judaism: a very important stream indeed.”

Presented with a united front, Chernov and his associates could not sustain the delusion that theirs was a civilized, non-pejorative antisemitism. They were not of the same cloth as the unwashed Black Hundreds mob, nor were they bureaucratic agents of the imperial will. They were the intelligentsia, the moral voice of right-wing politics, and they could not condone the wholesale subversion of Russian justice. In the face of unity, they agreed to stand by the truth. The Kievlianin maintained its strong monarchist slant, but condemned government support of the blood libel as a shameful travesty.<sup>34</sup>

This was only the beginning. About two months after this tandem for the defense of Beilis. A relic of the dark middle ages . . . has now been meeting Beilis was arrested, and it would be more than two years before the trial began. But the precedent had already been set. The Jewish community and their supporters subsequently saw the Beilis case for what it was: not the persecution of one man or of one group, but an attack on the entire nation.<sup>35</sup> Jews who widely disagreed with each other on a variety of religious, political and social issues worked in tandem for the defense of Beilis. Caught between anti-semitic conformance and vile perfidy, some of the more moderate monarchists abandoned the party line to protest the perversion of Russian justice.

In November 1912 a public protest appeared in the government mouthpiece Russia, decrying the blood libel as “a relic of the dark middle ages . . . which has now been adjusted . . . to be placed upon the chassidim.” The statement—signed by eight hundred and thirty rabbis from all over the Russian empire—protests “with utmost bitterness against this accusation” and refutes the claim that the chassidim are in any way to be distinguished from the rest of the Jewish nation: “chassidim and mitnagdim are not distinct sects . . . each are equal guardians of our commandments and religious practices, and the same books are holy to each.”<sup>36</sup>

The Jewish press reported that this protest was organized by the chief rabbi of St. Petersburg, Rabbi David Katzenellenbogen, along with other leading activists who coordinated the defense of Beilis: Rabbi Ahronson of Kiev; the prominent St. Petersburg lawyers Henrich Sliozberg and Oscar Gruzenberg; and Rabbi Mendel Chein of Nezhin—a Chabad chassid who often represented the communal interests of Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn of Lubavitch, the fifth rebbe of ChabadLubavitch.<sup>37</sup> Another rabbi who played a prominent

role in the case was Rabbi Yaakov Mazeh, the official government rabbi of Moscow.<sup>38</sup>

Back in 1910, several of these personalities had represented opposing positions at the rabbinic conference held to discuss Jewish communal representation and law with officials from the Ministry of the Interior. Chein, Mazeh and Sliozberg were among the most vocal participants, widely disagreeing on some deeply divisive issues. But they had never ceased to love one another as Jews, or respect each other as human beings; with the integrity of the Jewish people at stake, such differences were of no consequence.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Trial Looms**

No case could be built against Beilis unless the allegation of ritual murder could be upheld, The trial was set to begin two days before Yom Kippur 1913, on the 25th of September according to the Julian calendar. As the day came closer, Beilis's advocates collaborated with local journalists and investigators to identify the real murderers, and also recruited their own panel of expert scientists to unmask the perjury of Professors Kosorotov and Sikorsky.<sup>40</sup>

Five of the most famous liberal attorneys in Russia rallied to the defense, nominally led by Oscar Gruzenberg, the only Jew on the team. Strangely enough, one of Beilis's representatives was Vasily Maklakov, a brother of the interior minister who had conspired with Shcheglovitov and bribed Kosorotov to testify against Beilis. Gruzenberg later wrote that the defense of Beilis was not simply a Jewish affair, but one that concerned all Russia.<sup>41</sup>

But it was not enough to defend Beilis: the accusations had been leveled against the entire corpus of Torah teaching, the Jewish people generally, and the chassidic movement specifically. No case could be built against Beilis unless the allegation of ritual murder could be upheld, and both the prosecution and the defense knew it.<sup>42</sup>

It fell to Rabbi Mazeh of Moscow —known for his eloquent Russian oratory as well as his knowledge of Jewish law and tradition—to prove that the very notion of human murder was absolutely antithetical to everything that Judaism stood for, and that the chassidic movement had never perverted Jewish tradition or its precepts. In this endeavor Rabbi Chein of Nezhin worked

closely with Mazeh, carrying out extensive research, gathering proof texts, and helping him understand the ethos and history of the chassidic movement.<sup>43</sup>

Two others are known to have helped Mazeh prepare his defense. The first was Rabbi Avraham Chein of Novozybkov—a brother of Mendel Chein—who also penned his own Russian-language response to the blood libel and published it in St. Petersburg.<sup>44</sup> The second was Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson of Ekaterinoslav, a city five hundred kilometers southeast of Kiev. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's son, Menachem Mendel, who was about ten years old at the time, would later become the seventh rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch.<sup>45</sup>

Just three weeks before the trial was due to begin, Sliozberg told Rabbi Avraham Chein that he intended to ask the rebbe himself, Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneerson, to make the requisite journey and personally participate in these deliberations. For the rebbe, however, Rosh Hashanah was a time of intense spiritual activity, and thousands of his followers would come to spend the festivals together with him in Lubavitch. His absence during such a time would be extremely difficult for him personally, and would be cause for much public speculation.<sup>46</sup>

But there was another reason that the rebbe considered it inadvisable to take such a step. In a letter to the influential St. Petersburg chassid R. Shmuel Michel Trainin, the rebbe's son Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak explained that this could potentially strengthen the hand of the antisemites. It would certainly become known that the rebbe was traveling in connection with the trial, and the prosecutors might use this information as evidence that “could drag him personally into the affair.” There was real concern that the rebbe himself might be accused of commissioning the murder.<sup>47</sup>

## **Court Intrigues**

The trial lasted longer than a month, and tens of witnesses were cross-examined by both the prosecution and the defense. One of the most visible participants in the proceedings was Vera Cheberiak. Since the case against her was substantive, and the case against Beilis was nonexistent, prosecutors spent far more time trying to prove her innocence than they spent trying to prove his guilt.<sup>48</sup>

When Vera felt that her defenders were not sufficiently persuasive, she took to intimidating young children into repeating her lies from the witness stand. When Vera felt that her defenders were not sufficiently persuasive, she took to intimidating young children into repeating her lies from the witness stand.<sup>49</sup>

In an attempt to exonerate Vera's accomplices, prosecutor Zamyslovsky and his colleagues laboriously attempted to prove that they had been busy committing a robbery on the night after Yushchinsky's disappearance. The defense pointed out that it is quite possible for a criminal to commit a robbery in the evening after having committed murder in the morning.<sup>50</sup>

The twelve jurors consisted of seven peasants, three townsmen and two government clerks, and more than half of them were members of the Union of the Russian People.<sup>51</sup> Despite this handicap, they had some difficulty perceiving that Beilis was guilty. In a secret communication sent to the Interior and Justice Ministries, police reported that "the jurymen say among themselves, 'How can we convict Beilis if nothing is said about him at the trial.'"<sup>52</sup>

Another government report held out a grain of hope that "the ignorant nature of the jury" combined with "the element of ethnic enmity" would On the comparatively rare occasions when Beilis's name was mentioned, it was usually in an attempt to link him to the chassidim, or to suggest that he was actually a tzaddik himself. "make it impossible for them to resolve the complex question regarding the existence of ritual murder."<sup>53</sup>

It was to this end that the prosecution and their supporting experts—Sikorsky, Kosorotov and Pranaitis—devoted considerable effort to the vile defamation of the Jewish ethical tradition. Although he claimed knowledge of Talmudic, halachic and Kabbalistic texts, Pranaitis couldn't even read the language in which these works are written. This by no means prevented him from disclosing the sinister blood rituals that they purportedly prescribed. These rites, he said, were practiced by the cult of chassidim, who were led by their priests, the tzaddikim.<sup>54</sup>

On the comparatively rare occasions when Beilis's name was mentioned, it was usually in an attempt to link him to the chassidim, or to suggest that he was actually a tzaddik himself.<sup>55</sup> In his memoir Beilis recalls with some bewilderment that while in prison he was repeatedly quizzed about the

difference between chassidim and mitnagdim, and asked if he was connected with Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidism, or Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad.<sup>56</sup> During the trial, similar questions were invariably put to every Jew who took the witness stand, and much was made of the fact that Faivel Shneerson had been born in Lubavitch.<sup>57</sup>

It was the habit of Rabbi Shalom DovBer to have the daily newspapers read aloud to him each afternoon.<sup>58</sup> Understandably, he paid special attention to reports of the trial, and was appalled to hear of the accusations leveled against his grandfather, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (the Tzemach Tzedek), the third rebbe of Chabad.<sup>59</sup> As the trial drew to a close, he wrote to Gruzenberg voicing his distress and enclosing two documents attesting that his grandfather and his descendents had been declared members of Russia's hereditary nobility (потомственное дворянство). "I hope that your honor will find this useful to demonstrate his righteousness, honest conduct, honor and worth in the eyes of the late tsar."<sup>60</sup>

Rabbi Shalom DovBer warmly commended Gruzenberg and his fellow advocates for defending the Jewish people against "our haters and accusers . . . who indict our religion and our Torah . . . which has illuminated the world and all that fills it; and who contrive false libels and lies that the ear can't bear to hear, making us out to be cannibals, G-d forbid." He held out the hope that G-d would help them "reveal the truth from amongst the dark lies . . . and roll the stone of disgraceful and false accusation from upon our brethren . . . so that our innocence shall be apparent to all."

### **Closing Statements**

On the very day that this letter was penned, Rabbi Mazeh delivered a resounding defense of Jewish moral values, displaying an encyclopedic knowledge of the Jewish literary corpus. He dealt extensively with the Jewish attitude to non-Jews, the halachic obligation to obey the law of the land, and the fundamental Talmudic exhortation, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your friend." As the Talmud itself declares, "This is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary."<sup>61</sup>

Speaking for about eight hours, Mazeh concluded his presentation with a detailed description of the birth and development of the chassidic movement

as a source of renewed vitality within the wider stream of Judaism. The opposition of the mitnagdim, he said, was rooted in the fear that the chassidic conception of divine immanence and accessibility to all would weaken the prestige of Torah study and scholarship.<sup>62</sup>

Mazeh went on to describe Chabad as a more intellectually oriented stream of Chassidism. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, he asserted, continues to enjoy renown among all sectors of the Jewish community as an authoritative scholar of the Talmud and Jewish law, as well as for his innovative path of divine service. Mazeh also argued that the publication of Rabbi Schneur Zalman's legal opus, *Shulchan Aruch haRav*, was instrumental in bringing the last vestiges of mitnagdic opposition to an end.<sup>63</sup>

Although Rabbi Shalom DovBer's letter could not possibly have reached Gruzenberg in time for him to pass on the relevant documents, Mazeh did make mention of Rabbi Menachem Mendel's appointment as a hereditary nobleman. He also offered to describe the excellent impression that Rabbi Shalom DovBer himself had made upon him in his personal encounters. But the judge cut him short, saying that his role was to offer expert opinion, not personal testimony.<sup>64</sup>

Ultimately, the hopes expressed in Rabbi Shalom DovBer's letter were only partially fulfilled. Gruzenberg and his fellow advocates successfully appealed to the conscience of the jury, convincing them that they could not in good faith condemn an innocent man. But the larger question of ritual murder and Jewish guilt returned a more ambivalent verdict.

Guided by his higher-ups in the Ministry of Justice, the presiding judge carefully divided the issues, posing two distinct questions to the jury:

The first question asked if the murder had taken place "in the brick factory belonging to the Jewish surgical hospital," and further asked if it had taken place in a manner calculated to draw "five glasses of blood." Ritual murder was strongly implied rather than explicitly mentioned. The second question asked if Mendel Beilis, personally, had "entered into collusion with others . . . prompted by religious fanaticism, to murder the boy Andrei Yushchinsky."<sup>65</sup>

To the first question the jury replied in the affirmative, "Yes, it has been proved." But the terrible import of this statement was overshadowed by the jubilation with which the second answer was met. "No," the foreman



announced, “Mendel Beilis is not guilty”; the courtroom erupted in celebration, and Beilis burst into tears.<sup>66</sup>

The Jewish press claimed victory, pointing out that the verdict regarding the first question did not clearly specify that a Jewish sect practiced ritual murder. But the ambiguity was not lost on the antisemitic engineers of the conspiracy. A week after the trial, Union of the Russian People leaders hosted Minister of Justice Shcheglovitov and For all the show of unity, for all the show of good faith and humanity, the central problem had not been laid to rest. Beilis’s state prosecutor, Vipper, as guests of honor at a dinner held to celebrate their success. Congratulatory telegrams were sent on behalf of all present to Zamyslovsky, Chaplinsky, Sikorsky, Kosorotov and others, proclaiming them “incorruptible and independent Russian men.”<sup>67</sup>

Neither was this ambiguity lost on Rabbi Shalom DovBer. When news reached him of the double-edged verdict, the implicit conviction of the chassidic movement and the entire Jewish people caused him severe distress.<sup>68</sup> During this period, Rabbi Shalom DovBer was deeply engaged in composing the epic series of chassidic discourses that came to be known as Ayin-Beit. This demanded considerable intellectual effort, and was constantly at the forefront of his thoughts; he later remarked that the reception of this news was one of only two occasions when his thoughts had been entirely distracted from the chassidic project.<sup>69</sup>

For all the show of unity, for all the show of good faith and humanity, the central problem had not been laid to rest. One hundred years later, the blood libel continues to fuel anti-semitic agitation in the former Russian empire, the Middle East and beyond. Now as then, our only weapons against prejudice, lies, and hate are unity, truth, and justice.

## World War One and the Russian Revolution

*Hope and Activism in the Face of Upheaval, Uncertainty and Danger  
(1914-1920)*

### **Introduction: Resolution in a Time of Revolution**

Over the course of eight months in 1917 Russia underwent rapid change, moving from a Tsarist autocracy to a republic ruled by a Provisional Government, then rushing headlong into full scale communist revolution and crippling civil war. For the Jewish population of Russia these upheavals were especially disruptive. At first it seemed that a new era of civil and religious liberty might emerge. But ultimately the revolution would drive Jewish religious life and culture entirely underground.

Throughout the revolutionary period, its leadup and its aftermath, Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn—known in Chabad as the Rebbe Rashab—worked tirelessly to mobilize the Jewish community, strengthen its Purim in Petrograd, 1917 infrastructure, and ensure that its most basic religious needs were provided for. A wealth of documentary evidence reveals his keen awareness of the significance of the unfolding events, and of the opportunities and pitfalls that the end of the autocracy might bring. The decisive days of February and October 1917 found him in Petrograd and Moscow respectively. Even as the revolution unfolded in the streets around him he remained undistracted and resolute, always asking himself: what can I do today for the perpetuation of Jewish life, learning and practice?

Back in 1910 the Rebbe Rashab had stood up to the Tsarist regime when they sought to secularize Jewish education. In a meeting with Pyotr Stolypin at the time, the soon to be assassinated Minister of the Interior dubbed the Rebbe “Schneersohn the revolutionary.”<sup>1</sup> The communists, in contrast, would later brand all associated with the Schneersohn name (the “Schneersohnovschina”) as counterrevolutionaries.<sup>2</sup> As we shall see, the Rebbe was constantly alive to the changing political conditions. But in the face of tyranny and upheaval alike, the future of Judaism always remained his foremost concern.

## **The Spirit of Revolution: World War One and the End of an Era**

By the summer of 1914, political and social unrest had been brewing in the Russian Empire for decades. Now Europe, and indeed the entire world, was on the brink of war, and the situation seemed more unstable than ever. Austria-Hungary, backed by the assurance of German support, declared war on Serbia at the end of July. The Tsar responded by mobilizing the Russian army in defense of Serbia, and when the Tsar refused to stand down Germany declared war on Russia.

The Rebbe Rashab often traveled to Vienna, Berlin, Würzburg and Wiesbaden, and had formed a strong dislike for the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II. The Rebbe's son, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak later recalled an occasion when they had gone to hear Wilhelm deliver a speech in Berlin. The Kaiser was a notorious anti-Semite and he apparently noticed the two Jews in the audience: "We saw from afar that the Kaiser was staring at us with a sharp look. He tilted his head to the crown prince beside him, whispered something in his ear, and the prince smirked slightly. A few moments later police detectives approached us and ordered us to leave. When World War One began my father said to me: 'Do you remember when we were in Berlin and saw Wilhelm speak with a face as white as plaster? Already then all the plans of this war were arrayed in his mind and thoughts.'"<sup>3</sup>

On August 3rd Germany invaded neutral Belgium, and the British government issued an ultimatum requiring Germany to withdraw or face the full might of Britain's army and navy. The newspapers carrying reports of this ultimatum arrived a few days later, and were read before the Rebbe Rashab during the meal on the eve of Shabbat. In his diary Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak noted that his father was pleased by the British ultimatum to Germany, saying that this would weaken the Kaiser's aloof egotism: "Though he is by nature not one to be intimidated, this may cause in him a small degree of diffidence. But, without doubt, he will not easily be detached from actions that he has planned in advance."<sup>4</sup> He also expressed wonder at the reckless presumption of a monarch who seemed to be deliberately waging war on all the great powers at once.<sup>5</sup>

On the following Tuesday, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak accompanied his father on one of their customary walks. By now all of Europe was at war, and the Rebbe Rashab mused on how the rapid pace of world events would touch the lives of

so many individuals in ways both terrible and miraculous. He also mused on the nature of the strong nationalist spirit that seemed to transcend the material resources or military capabilities of each nation, and which seemed to be most powerfully felt not by the populace, but by the leaders and monarchs.<sup>6</sup> Above all he mused about the future, expressing a sense that Russia was facing an existential threat akin to the one faced just over a century before with Napoleon's invasion of 1812.

In this context, the Rebbe Rashab recalled that at every moment the famed Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev anticipated the onset of the messianic age, the ultimate redemption that Jews have awaited for two thousand years. But at the time of Napoleon's invasion, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad, "knew with clarity that the time had not yet come," and argued instead that Russia's success would ensure the spiritual welfare of the Jewish people.

While the Rebbe Rashab's comments—as recorded by his son—are rather cryptic, it seems that he hoped that this time the war would indeed anticipate a messianic upheaval, bringing spiritual and physical emancipation for the Jewish people and the entire world. Echoing the hopes of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak a century before, the Rebbe concluded: "Now is the general era of the footsteps of the Messiah. Therefore we must hope for light that is good, and that the forecasts transmitted to us by the prophets of G-d will be fulfilled, that they shall not continue to make war, and that peace will be upon the nations for eternity."<sup>7</sup>

Over the course of the next eighteen months it became clear that the war would neither end swiftly nor leave the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe untroubled. As the Germans advanced, hundreds of thousands of Jews were expelled from areas close to the front or fled voluntarily. Hundreds of thousands more would be drafted into military service before the war was over.<sup>8</sup>

Early in the winter of 1914 the Rebbe Rashab instituted a new practice. Each day he would pen a note of supplication (*pidyan nefesh*) and send it with ten yeshiva students to be read at the burial place of his father and grandfather, the Rebbe Maharash and the Tzemach Tzedek, in Lubavitch. Rephael Nachman Kahn was a student in the Tomchei Temimim yeshiva and on one occasion received permission to copy the note, later publishing the text in his memoirs.

In part it reads: “It is several months now that war has broken out between our country [Russia], and Germany, Austria and Turkey, and the war is extremely heavy and mighty. Many of our Jewish brethren are at the front (including many heads of families) ... may G-d place it in the hearts of kings to make peace between themselves, and the land will become tranquil after the great and fearsome turmoil ...”<sup>9</sup>

The Rebbe did not make do with prayers alone. It was during this period that his previous efforts to abolish the restriction of Jews to the Pale of Settlement finally met with success.<sup>10</sup> He likewise partnered with other influential rabbis, lawyers (such as Oscar Gruzenberg, who had led the defense of Mendel Beilis in 1913) and lay leaders (chief among them Baron Alexander Günzburg), working to secure the exemption of the religious rabbinate, rather than only the stateappointed clergy, from military conscription. This was of fundamental importance; without competent leadership, the basic infrastructure of Jewish religious life would be in danger of unravelling completely.<sup>11</sup> He also revived the campaign to send matzah to soldiers at the front, which he had pioneered during the Russo-Japanese war a decade before.<sup>12</sup> Finally, he began sending emissaries (most notably Rabbi Yaakov Landau) to provide for the needs of Jewish refugees who often found themselves in places without synagogues, mikvaot, kosher meat or Jewish schools.<sup>13</sup>

During the summer of 1915 the Germans advanced eastward, taking all of Poland, large swathes of Lithuania, and part of Belarus. As the Russians retreated they often committed atrocities against the locals, and especially against the Jews, who in addition to being regular targets of casual violence were often perceived as pro-German. The supreme commander of the Russian army at the time was a first cousin of the Tsar, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich, who shared the monarch’s anti-Semitic views. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, who as a young man invested in the logging trade, later recalled that he once had a personal business encounter with Nicholas Nikolaevich. The Grand Duke, he testified, “took pleasure in the spilling of Jewish blood.”<sup>14</sup>

In the face of the double threat of the German advance and the Russian retreat, the Rebbe Rashab resolved to leave Lubavitch. His grandfather and great-grandfather had first settled in the town following the war of 1812, and for just over a century it had been the home of four successive Chabad rebbes. This was not just a physical home for the Rebbe, but a place steeped in the holy

spirit of Chasidism. It was here that his ancestors were buried and it was here that he had built the great Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah. Initially it was hoped that the move from Lubavitch would only be a temporary one. But in truth the tumult of war and unrest was only just beginning, and the spirit of revolution was already in the air.

Yehudah Chitrik was a student in Lubavitch at the time. In his memoirs he recalls that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneersohn of Ekaterinoslav spent the Sukkot festival in Lubavitch together with the Rebbe Rashab in the fall of 1914 or 1915. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was one of the Rebbe's foremost lieutenants in all manner of communal affairs, and was also renowned as a kabbalistic authority in his own right. At one of the festive meals in the Rebbe's home, Chitrik writes, a discussion about the kabbalistic significance of revolution ensued. "They searched in Kabbalistic books to find a source for this, but I did not hear what resulted from that search."<sup>15</sup>

A long diary entry by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak makes it very clear that no one took the Rebbe's departure from Lubavitch lightly. Not his family, nor the Chassidim, nor even the local non-Jews. In the course of the deliberations the Rebbe spoke again of the national spirit vested in the person of the Tsar and his hope that the Tsar would somehow marshal that power to rally the army and the people and push the Germans back. "May G-d help that in this town the Germans will never set foot, not even for a short while! ... It is my hope that the hated [enemy] will not come here, and nor our marauding army."<sup>16</sup>

The Rebbe Rashab was then in the midst of delivering the great series of discourses known as Hemshekh Besha'ah Shehekdimu 5672. He would continue working on the manuscript for the rest of his life, but now that he was leaving Lubavitch a significant portion would never be orally transmitted. 17 From this point until the end of the Russian Civil War, the temporary center of Chabad-Lubavitch would be far to the south, in the Caucasian city of Rostov on the River Don, at the northeastern tip of the Black Sea. Though the Rebbe would continue to deliver Chassidic discourses, and though the Yeshiva would be partly reestablished in Rostov, the golden era of "Lubavitch in Lubavitch" had come to an end.<sup>18</sup>

## **Purim in Petrograd: The February Revolution**

The Rebbe continued with his efforts on behalf of Jewish soldiers and refugees from Rostov. During the winter and summer of 1916 he was particularly concerned with constructing new mikvaot in the towns and cities seeing great intakes of Jewish refugees, and also with securing the exemption of the religious rabbinate from military conscription. These efforts were hampered by the increasing incompetence and disorder of Russia's central institutions.<sup>19</sup> The people, the Duma and even the army were rapidly losing confidence in the Tsar, and as 1916 drew to a close the vast apparatus of the Russian state was bereft of effective leadership and authority.<sup>20</sup>

For several months the Rebbe had resisted the suggestion that he travel to Petrograd (the Russified name given to St. Petersburg during World War One) and intercede with the authorities in person. But that winter he wrote to Shmuel Michel Trainin—a wealthy Chassid and wellconnected industrialist who had served as his main representative in the capital for decades. He expressed his frustration at the lack of news and progress, and concluded: “I’m thinking of traveling to Petrograd in another two weeks.”<sup>21</sup>

The documentary record on the Rebbe's activities over the next two months is scant. No letters from this crucial period are extant. His internal passport, however, shows that he arrived in Petrograd on Tuesday, January 10th according to the old style calendar, corresponding to January 23rd, new style.<sup>22</sup> He would remain there for seven full weeks before returning to Rostov. In the course of those seven weeks the Tsar's government would disintegrate before his very eyes.<sup>23</sup>

Corresponding to the gap in extant correspondence is a gap in transcribed Chassidic discourses. The last discourse before he traveled to Petrograd was delivered on Shabbat Parshat Va'airah. These discourses, as a rule, do not explicitly address current affairs, restricting themselves to explaining kabbalistic concepts and their application in the service of G-d. But in this case the allusions are hard to overlook. Commenting on the verse “See! I have made you a lord over Pharaoh,” he discussed the power given by G-d to Moses to bring about Pharaoh's downfall.

The souls of the righteous, he explained, are from the realm of tikkun (order and repair). The souls of the evil, on the other hand, are from the realm tohu

(unchecked chaos), which resulted from the cosmic shattering of divine singularity. Paradoxically, tohu carries greater divine potency than tikkun, but without order and repair it is tragically perverted. It is generally the role of the righteous person to help the evil person through a process of repair, identifying their good points, or finding a way to extract some good results from their chaotic activity. Only once the good that tohu harbors has been extracted can the downfall of evil be brought about. Without this process of repair the evil person remains at the height of their unconstrained power, and the righteous cannot bring about their downfall. Pharaoh remained impervious to all attempts at repair, and so Moses was powerless against him. Only the transcendent power inherent in G-d's essential infinitude could bring about emancipation and exodus for the enslaved people of Israel.

“This is the meaning of ‘See! I have made you a lord over Pharaoh,’ ... this is only in the power of the essence of the infinite, and G-d gave this power to Moses, which is a wondrous thing...” The Rebbe Rashab further argues that this power is also given to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and others, “for righteous people of this station have the power to topple the wicked” even if they remain at the height of their powers and are impervious to any process of repair.<sup>24</sup>

While resentment against the Tsar was building few imagined that he would soon be forced to abdicate. The practical change that most envisaged was more along the lines of constitutional monarchy. Considering the events that would unfold over the next few weeks, this teaching on the downfall of a despotic monarch at the height of his powers seems presciently significant.

That year, International Women's Day serendipitously coincided with the festival of Purim, which marks the salvation of the Jewish people, in part through the audacious bravery of Queen Esther. Tens of thousands of men and women joined the workers of the Putilov factory who had already been striking for several days. Marching in the streets of Petrograd they demanded an end to the continuous food shortages, an end to the war, and an end to the Tsarist autocracy. Michael Dworkin, a graduate of the Tomchei Temimim yeshiva, was in the city at the time and recalled that the Rebbe delivered a discourse marking the festival. It began with the passage from the megillah in which Haman, the arch-foe of the Jews is advised to “build a gallows fifty cubits high” (Esther, 5:14). Though originally intended for Mordechai, the



righteous Jew, Haman himself was ultimately hung upon it instead. Unfortunately, no transcript of the discourse is extant.<sup>25</sup>

By the end of the week most of the armed forces in the city had mutinied and joined the revolution, the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies had been convened, and the Provisional Committee of the State Duma declared itself the governing body of Russia.<sup>26</sup>

Many years later Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak recalled that he too had been together with his father in Petrograd during the revolution, and that they traveled back to Rostov accompanied by Eliyahu Chaim Althaus. “At one of the stations Reb Eliyahu Chaim bought a newspaper with the latest reports. When my father read that the Tsar had been overthrown and that the country had become a free land he said, ‘now we must establish branches of the Tomchei Temimim yeshiva in all towns and villages. Now that secularism is spreading we must make many schools and yeshivot. In all times and in all matters victory is determined by the power of mesirut nefesh alone.’”<sup>27</sup> Mesirut nefesh translates literally as “soul dedication” but signifies the willingness to offer your very life for the perpetuation of Judaism. This term is traditionally associated with oppression, anti-Semitism and martyrdom. But the Rebbe understood that the civil freedoms of a new secular state would pose just as great a challenge to the Torah way of life, which could only be overcome with even deeper levels of selflessness and commitment. Under such circumstances a rigorous foundation of Torah education would be the only guarantor of a Jewish future.

In several public letters issued in the next few months, the Rebbe Rashab rejoiced at “the event that has illuminated the entire earth” and at “the emancipation given to all the peoples of the land.” He even compared the end of the autocracy to the exodus from Egypt. He hoped that the ascendant forces of the liberal revolution sought to reshape Russia into a free nation, enlightened and democratic. In this spirit he called on the Jewish community to rally behind the new government, subscribing to the liberty loan program and supporting the new military effort to turn back the German army. “In one word, it is incumbent on us to dedicate our hearts and souls to the good of the land of our birth, and to save it from the mouths of the predatory lions. When all citizens of our land will together apply themselves to the one cause, G-d will be at our aid ... and eternal peace will reign in our land.”<sup>28</sup>

But the Rebbe was also very alive to the profound consequences of the liberal revolution for the place of the Jewish people within Russian society. Despite his enthusiasm for the newfound freedoms, the Rebbe also expressed deep concern that the spirit of emancipation would lead to a new degree of religious laxity and irreverence within the Jewish community. Rather than throw off the yoke of heaven, he argued, the Jews of Russia should exercise their civil rights to advance the cause of Torah. In a second public letter he called for individuals in each city and town to organize themselves on the local level, acting strategically to reinforce the fundamental institutions of Jewish life. “You, my brethren in each city and town who are in awe of G-d and tremble at His word, if you stand from afar and do nothing, all of Judaism is in great danger. Our land, which till now was the nest of the Torah, made splendid by its scholars and writers, will in not much time be emptied of everything ... Awaken yourselves, inspire yourselves ... each man must strengthen his fellow. Each person must make his Judaism more visible than before, both in personal affairs and in public affairs.”<sup>29</sup>

Corresponding personally with leading rabbis across Russia, and especially with Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski of Vilna, the Rebbe Rashab began developing a vision for a united religious front that could gain a majority in the National Jewish Congress. The congress would be a democratically elected body, empowered by the new government of Russia with a degree of autonomy over Jewish affairs. The Rebbe understood that with religious freedom came the civic responsibility of political organization and engagement. To sit with arms folded would be to allow Zionists and Secularists to displace the traditional Torah way of life, learning and practice, and to reshape the Jewish community and its public institutions in their own image.

After much deliberation, a rabbinic conference was held in Moscow in the Summer of 1917, where many questions of public policy were discussed and a united religious front was established. In the end, however, all of these efforts would prove to be futile: Following the February Revolution the Provisional Government faced crisis after crisis. The fragile dream of a free Russia was slowly disintegrating, and would soon be entirely swept away. No democratic government would ever be elected, nor would the Jewish Congress ever convene.<sup>30</sup>

## **Shabbat in Moscow: The October Revolution**

In the fall of 1917 the Rebbe Rashab received a series of letters and telegrams urging him to travel to Petrograd where the Ministry of Religion was convening a commission that would help shape some of the public policy issues surrounding the establishment of the Jewish Congress.<sup>31</sup> By this time the Provisional Government's continuous state of crisis was reaching new heights. The country was rapidly descending into anarchy and bankruptcy. Revolts by peasants and workers against land and factory owners were rife, and large divisions of the army and navy had formed Soviets, declaring that they would no longer take orders from the government. Travel was becoming less reliable and more dangerous due to strikes and increasing lawlessness.<sup>32</sup>

The Bolshevik party had until now been one of the smallest of the revolutionary parties competing for power. But now their radical call for immediate peace, immediate land redistribution, and a complete restructuring of government - "all power to the Soviets" - was swiftly gaining support. On October 10th (old style) Lenin returned to Petrograd from Finland and the Central Committee of the party passed a resolution declaring that recent developments place "armed uprising on the order of the day." An armed revolution was now only a matter of time.<sup>33</sup>

Considering these circumstances the Rebbe was understandably reluctant to travel to the capital. On October 24th he wrote to one of his associates in the city: "Due to the tremendous gravity of being in Petrograd now, apart from the gravity of traveling, I nearly decided not to travel. But due to the importance of the matter, that there may be public policy questions... I found it to be an obligation that I must travel... salvation is in G-d's hand... we will travel tomorrow."<sup>34</sup>

Soon after his return from Petrograd he wrote to Rabbi Shmarya Yehuda Leib Medalia—a senior member of the Russian rabbinate who would later be murdered by the NKVD—and recounted the details of his trip: "The rumors about opposition to the Provisional Government inspired dread, and my household protested greatly against me traveling, and with great emotion. In my mind the thoughts were racing ... In the end I decided to travel alone and achieved the consent of my family ... When I was in Oryol I first received news via telegram of what was happening in Petrograd, and in Tula I got hold of a Petrograd newspaper with specific reports, and I saw that it was

impossible to travel to Petrograd. Being that it was Thursday evening I decided to halt my journey in Moscow, spend Shabbat there, and return home on Sunday.”<sup>35</sup>

In the early hours of that morning, Thursday October 26th, revolutionary Red Guards had entered the Winter Palace, meeting little resistance. At about 2 am they found the ministers of the Provisional Government sitting around a table and placed them under arrest. At 5 am the Second Congress of Soviets, which was then in session, adopted a decree drafted by Lenin transferring power to the Soviet Government and giving all local power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. The revolution in Petrograd had been achieved with minimum disturbance. In Moscow, however, the streets were about to turn into a battleground between pro-government forces and Red Guards, with upward of 10,000 armed men on each side.<sup>36</sup>

In his letter to Rabbi Medalia, the Rebbe reported:

“I arrived in Moscow about one or two hours after midnight, and between then and Shabbat morning the maelstrom in Moscow began. On Shabbat morning there was gunfire in the locality of my hotel and one corner of the building was disfigured by [cannon] shot. On Sunday the gunfire increased greatly in some sections of the city, though not in the immediate vicinity of my hotel ... and our friends would not allow me to travel on that day. On Monday morning I decided to travel and walked to the train on foot. Some of our friends accompanied me ... and thank G-d we arrived safely at the Kurskaya Station and departed on the Kislovodsk train.”

Rephael Nachman Kahn was in Moscow at the time and recalled that his parents prepared kosher food for the Rebbe which they carried through the streets “while the cannon shot flew over our heads.” He also recalled that the Rebbe stayed in the Varvarinskoe Hotel, better known as the National, which still stands today in Manezhnaya Square in the center of the city, facing the Kremlin. In March 1918 the National would become the home of the first Soviet government as the Kremlin was still under repair from the damage done in October.<sup>37</sup>

Kahn also reported that at one point “the Rebbe walked back and forth from one corner of his room to the other with a look of dissatisfaction upon his face ... saying, as if to himself, ‘I set out to Petrograd and now remain in Moscow,

certainly there must be a reason for this.” Despite the danger, the Rebbe then decided to gather a group of wealthy Chassidim. Kahn’s father began calling them by phone, but soon the lines were cut, and he walked to call on the rest in person. Once they had all gathered, the Rebbe began to speak about the religious needs of the many refugees who had been displaced to cities and towns that did not have even the most basic resources necessary for daily Jewish life. He proposed a new initiative to print and distribute prayer books so that they could pray and seek spiritual solace despite the difficulties that they would continue to face. All of those gathered pledged substantial sums of money, and the Rebbe listed their names and commitments. A copy of that document remains extant to this day.<sup>38</sup>

On returning to Rostov the Rebbe acquired a printing press and published prayer books according to both the regular Ashkenazi liturgy and the Arizal liturgy favored by Chassidim. The press imprint was Defus Ezra and the prayer book was titled Siddur Tehillat Hashem.<sup>39</sup> These prayer books were reprinted several times during the early years of the Soviet regime and the standard Chabad prayer books in use today continue to bear that title.

Over the course of the next few months the Rebbe continued to hope for a free Russia with a unified front of religious leadership in the Jewish National Congress. But the situation went from bad to worse. Soon the entire country was wracked by civil war, with famine and disease not far behind. Lines of communication were often cut and always unreliable, so it became nearly impossible to organize on a national scale. Slowly but steadily the Bolshevik Red Guards strengthened their grip and ultimately gained complete control of Russia. They consolidated their hold on Rostov at the beginning of 1920 and imposed strict curfews, forbidding any gathering of three people or more.<sup>40</sup>

To begin with the Rebbe kept a low profile. But when the festival of Purim arrived he allowed the Chassidim to gather and encouraged them to sing and celebrate without constraint. The illegal gathering soon attracted the attention of Soviet officers who entered the room but didn’t intervene. Many of those present were understandably afraid, but the Rebbe announced “I am not impressed by them ... Perhaps at another time I would be afraid, but as I stand now I am not impressed at all ...” Turning to his son he proclaimed loudly: “Yosef Yitzchak! We will remain whole, and I don’t mean whole but hidden, I

mean that we will be whole with full openness and expression, for unholiness in the presence of holiness is truthfully nothing.”<sup>41</sup>

## Endnotes

### 1

#### The Chinese Matzah Campaign

1. *Chanoch Lenaar*, p. 14.
2. *Sefer Hasichot 5702*, p. 89.
3. The account offered here is based primarily on the extant correspondence, datelined S. Petersburg from 22 Kislev through the end of Tevet. By 10 Shevat, Rabbi Shalom DovBer was back in Lubavitch. An important corroboratory source is an account penned by Rabbi Shalom DovBer's son and successor, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, which can be found in the appendices (*hosafot*) to *Sefer Hamaamarim 5665* (3rd ed.), pp. 367–373 (hereafter: *Hosafot*).
4. *Igrot Kodesh Admor Moharashab* (hereafter: *Igrot*) 4:75–6. (All references to this source are to the volume and page number(s).)
5. *Igrot* 1:318–9.
6. See *The Jews of St. Petersburg: Excursions Through a Noble Past*, p. 271. Regarding R. Shmuel Michel's involvement in the matzah campaign, see below.
7. See *Igrot* 1:319 and 4:81. Aside from his involvement in this episode, I have not been able to find out

anything else about this individual. In Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn's account of the matzah campaign he is referred to as Eliyahu Yitzchak, and the implication is that he was an inhabitant of St. Petersburg. He may have been connected to the family of David Margolin, a wealthy and influential industrialist in Kiev (and the father of Arnold Davidovitch Margolin), but I have not been able to find any evidence of this.

8. *Hosafot*, pp. 368–9.
9. *Igrot* 4:84; *Hosafot*, p. 370.
10. *Hosafot*, p. 370.
11. *Igrot* 4:97.
12. *Igrot* 1:321–4. Regarding this letter Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak would later write, “Anyone who sees this letter will surely understand that a man of exalted spirit and sensitive soul, crowned with all the wondrous qualities and lofty abilities, wrote it.” (*Hosafot*, p. 371)
13. *Igrot* 4:81.
14. *Igrot* 4:98; *Hosafot*, pp. 371–2.
15. *Igrot* 4:99, 101, 109–110.
16. *Igrot* 4:99.
17. *Hosafot*, p. 371.
18. *Igrot* 4:100.
19. *Hosafot*, p. 372.

20. *Igrot* 4:100–1.

21. *Igrot* 4:102–3.

22. *Hosafot*, pp. 372–3. In Rabbi Shalom DovBer's letter to R. Shmuel Michel Trainin of 12 Nissan he notes that according to the telegram received the previous day, five cars had reached Harbin, and one was therefore unaccounted for. In the extant correspondence, however, this does not seem to be cause for alarm.

23. *Sefer Hasichot 5702*, p. 89.

### 2

#### The Blood Libel

1. For more on the political context of the Beilis trial, see Alexander Tager, *The Decay of Czarism: The Beiliss Trial* (The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1935), 1–34, 110–132; Maurice Samuel, *Blood Accusation: The Strange History of the Beiliss Case* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 97–136.

2. Regarding the role of the Black Hundreds and the Union of the Russian People in Tsarist anti-semitic policy, see Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (University of California Press, 1986).

3. *The Memoirs of Count Witte*, trans. Abraham

Yarmolinsky (Doubleday, Page and Company, 1921), 379 (henceforth: Witte).

4. Ivan Goremykin held the position for less than three months between the removal of Witte and the appointment of Stolypin. For more about Witte, see Sidney Harcave, *Count Sergei Witte and the Twilight of Imperial Russia: A Biography* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004).

5. Harcave, 191 and 327.

6. For the most part the dates are given according to the Julian calendar in use in Russia at the time, but the dates of newspaper articles are given according to the Gregorian calendar.

7. For details of the murder, as uncovered by subsequent police investigations, see Tager, 24–27, and Samuel, 15–30.

8. Regarding the arrest of Vera Cheberiak and other aspects of the police investigation, see Tager, 65–71. See also Samuel, 21–23, 25 and 52–54.

9. Tager, 34, 44 and 60–64; Samuel, 28–29, 33 and 53.

10. Tager, 44.

11. See Tager, 61. For more biographical details see A.A. Ivanov, *Last Defenders of the Monarchy* (Dmitry Bulavin, 2006). *The Saratov Affair* was published in Kharkov in 1911, and gave a virulently anti-semitic account of a purported murder ritual that was said to have been perpetrated by Jews in the 1850s.

12. Tager, 61–62; Samuel, 53 and 65.

13. Tager, 32, 44, 61, 63 and 72; Samuel, 19.

14. Tager, 22 and 213–214; Samuel, 47 and 80.

15. Regarding Faivel Shneerson, and the allegations made about him, see Samuel, 38, 59 and 156; Leikin, 81–84 and 211–212. A brief reference is made to him in Mendel Beilis (edited by Jay Beilis, Jeremy Simcha Barbar and Mark S. Stein), *Blood Libel: The Life and Memory of Mendel Beilis* (Beilis Publishing, 2011), 76. See also [the account in the trial in \*The Jewish Year Book 5675\*](#) (1915), 41–42, 50 and 52–53.

16. Beilis, 15.

17. See sources cited above, note 15.

18. *The Saratov Affair*, ch. 6.

19. [Ha-Tzefirah, 16 September 1913](#), page 3, “*Be’olamenu.*”

20. See the testimony of prominent government jurists who refused to be bullied by Shcheglovitov in Arnold Margolin, *The Jews of Eastern Europe* (Thomas Seltzer, 1926), 210.

21. Tager, 45–48 and 60–63; Samuel, 28–29.

22. Beilis, 54–55; Samuel, 89.

23. Tager, 133 and 190; Samuel, 28–31, 140–141 and 197–198. See also *The New York Times*, 23 April 1914, “[Will Exonerate Beilis: Ex-Russian Police Official Says](#)

[He Will Clear Up Ritual Murder Myth.](#)”

24. Tager, 72–82, 101–107, 116–120 and 181–2; Samuel, 22–23, 68 and 76–88.

25. Tager, 83.

26. Tager, 83–86; Samuel, 53–54, 64–67 and 73–75. Regarding the testimony of Vera’s husband, Vasily, in the name of Zhenya, see Tager, 103; Samuel, 79.

27. Tager, 191; Samuel, 155.

28. Tager, 174–177; Samuel, 168–171.

29. Tager, 48–49, 56–59, 199 and 203; Samuel, 82–88.

30. Not to be confused with his brother, Vasily Maklakov, a liberal attorney who actually represented Beilis at the trial. According to Margolin (214), the two brothers lived on neighboring estates but never visited one another.

31. Tager, 55–59; Samuel, 82–84 and 171–172.

32. The following episode was reported in the Jewish daily [Ha-Tzefirah, 21 July 1911](#), page 2, “Behind the Curtain of the Kiev Libel.”

33. See Tager, 179; Samuel, 220–221; Leikin, 222; *The Jewish Year Book*, 52.

34. This stance led to some strange consequences: following the Beilis trial, members of the editorial staff were tried for libel by Vera Cheberiak. See Tager, 81–82 and 106; Samuel, 163–167; Margolin, 190, 200–201 and 233. See also *The New York Times*, 11 October 1913,



[“Ritual Murder Case Going to Pieces: Anti-Semitic Journal Denounces the Prosecution of Beiliss as Unjust.”](#)

35. In his summation for the defense at the trial, Oscar Gruzenberg expressed this point eloquently, declaring that in the eyes of the prosecution, “if Beiliss is not guilty, the Jews are.” Samuel, 226.

36. Details of this protest were reported in [Ha-Tzefirah, 26 November 1911](#), page 3.

37. Regarding Chein, his role in Jewish communal affairs, and his relationship with Rabbi Shalom DovBer, see the testimony of Yitzchak Schneersohn (a distant cousin of the rebbe, who should not be confused with the latter’s son and successor, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn of Lubavitch), as recorded in his memoirs and subsequently annotated and published by Yehoshua Mondshine, [“Asifat ha-Rabanim be-Russia bi-Shenat 1910”](#), *Kfar Chabad Magazine*, no. 898 et seq.

38. See Tager, 245; Samuel, 216–217; *The Jewish Year Book*, 52–53.

39. Regarding the deliberations at the conference in 1910, see Mondshine, *ibid.*; Shalom DovBer Levin, *Toldot Chabad be-Russia ha-Tzarit* (Kehot Publication Society, 2010), 296–301; Ilia Lurie, *Lubavitch and its Wars: Chabad Hasidism and the Fight for the Image of the Jewish Society in Czarist Russia* (Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University, 2009), chapter 5.4.

40. Tager 147–148, 208 and 245. See also Margolin, 165–166, 201, 211 and 214.

41. Gruzenberg’s own memoir—*Yesterday: Memoirs of a Russian-Jewish Lawyer* (University of California Press, 1981), 104–124—is an ode to the nobility of the many non-Jews who participated in the defense of Beiliss. These sentiments are confirmed by a survey of the national press: see Tager, 149 and 154.

42. Tager, 22 and 213–214; Samuel, 47 and 80.

43. Rabbi Zev Aryeh Rabiner, *Sefer Rav Yaakov Mazeh Rabah Shel Moskovo* (Moreshet, 1958), 54–55; Yehudah Leib Groibort, *Sefer Zikaron* (Mesorah, 1926), page 31.

44. Groibort, *ibid.* A Hebrew translation of this work appeared in Rabbi Avraham Chein, *Be-Malchut ha-Yahadut* (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1959), 13–48.

45. See *Kovetz Lubavitch*, issue 4 (Kehot Publication Society, 1944), 62.

46. Letter by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch dated 16 Elul 5673 (1913), published in *Igrot Kodesh Admor Maharayatz* vol. 16 (Kehot Publication Society, 2010), 30–31.

47. *Ibid.* See also Marcin Wodzinski, “Blood and the Hasidim,” *Polin* 22 (2009): 285.

48. Beiliss, 124–126 and 147–148; Tager, 90 and 182–

185; Samuel, 186 and 194–210.

49. Beiliss, 123; Samuel, 193–194.

50. Samuel, 198–202; *The Jewish Year Book*, 49.

51. Samuel, 169 and 172.

52. Tager, 178. See also the complaint in *Ha-Tzefirah*, 13 October 1913, page 2, “*Mi-Beit ha-Mishpat*,” that Beiliss’s name is conspicuously absent from the proceedings.

53. Samuel, 174.

54. See Beiliss, 151–153; Tager, 199–209 and 212; Samuel, 212–218.

55. Leikin, 54 and 84.

56. Beiliss, 32, 74–76 and 80.

57. Beiliss, 136–138; Leikin, 211–212; *Ha-Tzefirah*, 19 October 1913, pages 1 and 4; *ibid.*, 21 October 1913, page 3; *ibid.*, 22 October 1913, page 2; *Der Moment*, 15 October 1913, page 6.

58. See *Reshimot Devarim* (2009 edition), 178; *Reshimot ha-Rabash* (Kehot Publication Society, 2001), 115.

59. See Leikin, 167; *Ha-Tzefirah*, 7 November 1913, page 5.

60. Letter dated 4 Cheshvan 5674 (1913), *Igrot Kodesh Admor Maharashab*, vol. 6 (Kehot Publication Society, 2012), 171–172.

61. A complete transcript of Mazeh’s speech was subsequently serialized in *Ha-Tzefirah*, 7–20 November 1913. See also *The Jewish Year Book*, 52–53.



62. *Ha-Tzefirah*, [18 November 1913](#), pages 2–3; *ibid.*, [19 November 1913](#), page 2.

63. *Ha-Tzefirah*, [20 November 1913](#), page 3. Regarding *Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav*, see Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin (translation by the present writer), “[Systematization, Explanation and Arbitration: Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi’s Unique Legislative Style.](#)”

64. *Ibid.*

65. *The Jewish Year Book*, 55–57; Beilis, 163; Tager, 213–214; Samuel, 229.

66. *The Jewish Year Book*, 57; Beilis, 164–167; Tager, 214; Samuel, 248–249.

67. Tager, 216–218; Samuel, 250–254.

68. He voiced his distress, and argued for the need to find ways to protect Jews from possible acts of aggression, in several letters written in the wake of the trial; see *Igrot Kodesh Admor Maharashab*, vol. 2 (Kehot Publication Society, 1986), 772–778; *ibid.*, vol. 5 (Kehot Publication Society, 1987), 49–50.

69. See *Reshimot Devarim* (2009 edition), 179.

### 3

#### **World War One and the Russian Revolution**

1. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Reshimot Ha-yoman*, 421. Regarding the deliberations at the conference in 1910 and the Rebbe’s

meeting with Stolypin, see Yehoshua Mondshine, “[Asifat ha-Rabanim be-Russia bi-Shenat 1910](#)”, *Kfar Chabad Magazine*, no. 898 et seq.; Shalom DovBer Levin, *Toldot Chabad be-Russia ha-Tzarit* (Kehot Publication Society, 2010), 296–301; Ilia Lurie, *Lubavitch and its Wars: Chabad Hasidism and the Fight for the Image of the Jewish Society in Czarist Russia* (Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University, 2009), chapter 5.4.

2. The term “Schneersohnovschina” was used by Anatol Lunatcharsky, Soviet Commissar of Education, as quoted in a JTA report from 1928, [Soviet Education Commissar Advises Jews to Fuse in Russian Melting Pot](#). On Chabad activities during the early years of the Soviet regime see David Fishman, “Preserving Tradition in the Land of Revolution: The Religious Leadership of Soviet Jewry, 1917-1930,” in Jack Wertheimer (Ed.), *The Uses of Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 85-118.

3. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, *Sefer Ha-sichot 5680*, 1. See further sources cited there. In several private letters written during the course of the war the Rebbe Rashab wrote of the need to “vanquish, throw to the dust and expel”. . . “our enemies, the cursed Germans” with particular vehemence. See, for example, Rabbi Shalom

DovBer Schneersohn, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 2*, 809 (#454).

4. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Sefer Ha-sichot - Torat Shalom*, 202.

5. Shalom DovBer Levine, *Me-beis ha-genazim*, 24-26.

6. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Sefer Ha-sichot - Torat Shalom*, 202. For more musings on the national and spiritual power vested in the monarch, and in the Tsar in particular, see Levine, *Me-beis ha-genazim*, 29.

7. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Sefer Ha-sichot - Torat Shalom*, 203.

8. See David Engel “[World War I](#),” in *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*.

9. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 2*, 796 (#439).

10. On the Pale of Settlement and its history, see John Klier, “[Pale of Settlement](#)” in *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. On the Rebbe Rashab’s involvement in efforts to relieve the restrictions, see Shalom DovBer Levine, *Toldot Chabad Berussia Ha-tsarit*, 277-284.

11. Levine, *Ibid.*, 307-313.

12. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 2*, 802 and 806 (#445 and #450). See also Eli Rubin, [The Chinese Matzah Campaign of 1905](#).

13. See Shalom DovBer Levine, *Toldot Chabad Berussia Ha-tsarit*, 304-305;

Andrew Koss, “War Within, War Without: Russian Refugee Rabbis during World War I,” in *AJS Review* 34:2 (November 2010), 231-263.

14. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, *Sefer Ha-sichot 5702*, 16.

15. Yehudah Chitrik, *Reshimot Devarim* (2009 Edition), 179.

16. See the personal journal of Rabbi Yosef yitzchak Schneersohn, published in Levine, *Me-beis ha-genazim*, 29-31.

17. For more about *Hemshekh Beshah’ah Shehekdimu 5672*, also known simply as “Ayin Bet,” see Eli Rubin, [The Ayin Bet Discourses One Hundred Years On](#). See also Elliot R. Wolfson, “Nequddat ha-Reshimu—The Trace of Transcendence and the Transcendence of the Trace: The Paradox of Šimšum in the RaShab’s Hemshekh Ayin-Beit,” *Kabbalah* 30 (2013), 75–112.

18. See Shalom DovBer Levine (Ed.), [Lubavitch](#) (Agudat Chassidei Chabad Be-medinat Chever Ha-amim, 2001).

19. See Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 5*, 99 (#1’61) and 103 (#1’64).

20. For an overview of how the First World War exacerbated existing tensions and brought Russia over the precipice of revolution, see

Rex A. Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 17-28.

21. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 5*, 106 (#1’65).

22. Levine, *Me-beis Ha-genazim*, 23.

23. Regarding the Tsar’s abdication and the Rebbe’s return to Rostov see below, n. 27.

24. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Sefer Ha-mamarim 5677*, 133-134.

25. *Ibid.*, VI.

26. For an overview of the unfolding of the February Revolution in Petrograd, see Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 29-52.

27. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, *Sefer Ha-sichot 5703*, 94-95.

28. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 2*, 829-831 (#466) and 834-837 (#469).

29. *Ibid.*

30. For an overview of the Rebbe Rashab’s efforts in this arena, as reflected in the extant correspondence, see Shalom DovBer Levine, “Introduction” in Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 5*, 17-20.

31. See Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 2*, 875-877 (#495 and #496).

32. On the breakdown of government control during this period, see Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 215-223.

33. *Ibid.*, 223-230.

34. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 2*, 877 (#496).

35. *Idem.*, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 5*, 128 (#1’77). See also the letter to Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, *Idem.*, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 2*, 885 (#500).

36. Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 241, 244 (events in Petrograd), and 253-254 (events in Moscow).

37. Rephael Nachman Kahn, *Shemuot Ve-sipurim Vol. 1* (First Edition, Kfar Chabad, 1964), 103. Some details, including the name of the hotel, do not appear in later editions.

38. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 2*, 878 (#497).

39. See *Idem.*, *Igrot Kodesh Vol. 5*, 126 (#1’75), 144 (#1’87) and other relevant sources cited by the editor there.

40. For an example of the devastating impact of revolution and civil war on Jewish communities in Russia, see Eli Rubin, [Strength in the Soviet Shadow: The Life and Writings of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson—Part Two](#).

41. DovBer Rivkin, *Ashkavta De-rebbi* (New York: Balshon Printing Co., 1976), 8.





---

מזכרת משמחת הנישואין של

**מנחם מנדל** שיחי

**וזלדה רחל** תחי

שוויי

כ"ח תשרי ה'תשע"ח

---

A MEMENTO FROM THE WEDDING  
CELEBRATION OF

**MENACHEM MENDEL** AND  
**ZELDY**

SCHWEI

28<sup>TH</sup> TISHREI 5778  
18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2017

---