



PIONEERS OF BORO PARK by Yitzchok Shteierman

"To understand the present you must study the past."
When one looks around at the burgeoning community — humming with Jewish life — that is Boro Park, it is hard to imagine that it wasn't always like this. Hamodia gives you a glimpse into Boro Park of yesteryear, and the personalities, institutions, and regular folk who comprised this "shtetl" in years gone by.

Harav Yoizef of Liska, זצ"ל Continuing a chain of Chassidus in Boro Park

Throughout Jewish Hungary, the name of Harav Tzvi Hirsh Friedman, Reb Hershele of Liska, זצ"ל, author of the *Ach Pri Tevuah* and *Hayosher V'hatov*, was widely revered. He was one of the prized *talmidim* of the Yismach Moshe, and one of the earliest *chassidische* Rebbes in Hungary.

His son-in-law was the Tal Chaim, Harav Chaim Friedlander, who assumed the position of his father-in-law after his passing. His son was Harav Tzvi Hirsh Friedlander, author of *Shaarrei Hayosher*, and his son was Rav Yoizef, the previous Liska Rebbe, who arrived in America in the immediate aftermath of WW II — an *ud mutzkal me'eish*. He established his *beis medrash* in Boro Park on 50th Street very early on, when Boro Park was barren of *Chassidus*.

In honor of his 45th *yahrtzeit* (28 Shevat), we feature the arrival of this leader who inspired the families and community of Boro Park of yesteryear.

A family member relates that Rav Yoizef's eventual greatness was foreseen in his youth, and he was known for being an exceptional *masmid*. Once, while a young child in Liska, his father, the *Sha'arei Hayosher*, observed the way his son climbed up a tall tree. His illustrious father remarked, "Yoizef *kricht yetzt hoich in gashmiyus, s'vet nisht neman lang biz er vet krichen ma'alah ma'alah b'ruchniyus* — now he is crawling high in *gashmiyus*, it will not be long before he will go very high in *ruchniyus*." He also said of his son that man is likened to the tree in the field; "Yoizef will make from a bare tree one filled with sweet fruit."

In his youth, his *hasmadah*, diligence and brilliance in Torah garnered him *horaah* from some of the foremost *Geonim* in Hungary, such as the Binyan Dovid



A legal document for the Hungarian government with a photo of Harav Yoizef as a *bachur*.

of Ihel, and the Mashmia Shalom of Niderhaus, and others — all of who lauded his Torah scholarship and his brilliance.

He met his father-in-law, Harav Avraham Yehoshua Heshel Frankel of Hivnov-Lublin, a very close descendant of the holy Chozeh of Lublin, only once before he was murdered *al kiddush Hashem*. He became engaged to, *ybl"c*, his eventual Rebbetzin Nechamah during the war, when she was separated from her family. His Rebbetzin is descended from the greatest luminaries in *Chassidus* and was exceptionally close to the Belzer Rebbe during the war years.

Rav Yoizef suffered the war years in forced labor camps and hiding in Budapest while his extended family was deported to Auschwitz — along with so much of Hungarian Jewry — in 1944. This is where his father, brothers and their families perished *al kiddush Hashem*.

Then he made his way to America, and brought with him the old brand of *Yiddishkeit*. He was welcomed here with much anticipation as is evident from many of the *Yiddish* papers of the time who heralded the arrival of this *benan shel kedoshim*, a remnant of the prewar world. Many prominent *Rabbanim* of New York came out in his



Harav Yoizef at the wedding of his son, *ybl"c*, the current Liska Rebbe, Harav Tzvi Hersh Friedlander.



Announcing a *kabbalas panim* for the Liska Rebbe at the Lower East Side's Galicianer shul.

honor.

One *kabbalas panim* was announced by Chevrah Nachlas Tzvi on the Lower East Side. This shul was founded in the name of Rav Hershele of Liska by immigrants who hailed from the Liska region, and knew the holy *tzaddikim* of that court.

There were also receptions in the Galicianer shul, and elsewhere, where people were invited to hear him lecture in Torah, and to relate his terrible experiences in the labor camps.

Harav Yisroel Lebovitch, the Rav of the Shul Levushei Mordechai at 636 East 6th Street, married into the Liska family and he too asked the *Yidden* of New York to come and meet his illustrious cousin.

In 1947 — relatively early for a *chassidische* Rebbe — he made the move to Boro Park. He established one of



Rabbo Aaron feder/Moreshes

A historic photograph of many of the post-war American Rebbes. L-R: Harav Naftoli Gross of Berbesht, the Liska Rebbe, unsure if the Skohler Rav or the Kosonier Rebbe, Harav Aharon Moshe of Chust, the Bluzhever Rebbe (obscured), the Skolya Rebbe (wearing a *kolpik*), unknown, Harav Yaakov Yosef of Chernobyl—Boro Park, Harav Yissochor Ber Rosenbaum of Stroznitz, Harav Isamar of Nadvorna.



The Tzieshinover Rebbe and the Liska Rebbe at the bar mitzvah of his son Harav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel Friedlander, the Hivnover Rav.

the first *chassidische* shuls in Boro Park at 1449 50th Street, where it is still located more than 70 years later, and he infused those *Yidden* with Torah and *Chassidus*.

The second part of this feature on the Liska Rebbe, who inhabited Boro Park 70 years ago, will focus on the Boro Park years. But any article on Rav Yoizef is not complete without writing of the attribute for which he was famous: his overflowing love for his fellow Jew — to an extreme.

To this end, an anecdote is related by the current Liska Rebbe, Harav Tzvi Hersh Friedlander, *shlita*. "One of the first *Shabbosos* after my father moved into Boro Park, he was returning from the *mikveh* on *Shabbos* morning, attired in his *shtreimel* and *bekeshe*. Unbeknownst to him, at the time no one ventured outdoors with a

shtreimel. He encountered a *Yid*, broken by the war experience, who was puffing on his pipe — on *Shabbos* morning. The *Yid*, out of pure pain, was enraged by the sight of this *Yid* who dared to go on with his *Yiddishkeit*. He verbally accosted him and yelled, "I see you are the new Rebbe who moved into the neighborhood, do you want to bring Hitler here?!"

With love and patience, the Rebbe understood what pain the man was living through... and with that love he succeeded in eliminating his antagonistic feelings to *Yiddishkeit* and bringing back a semblance of observance to that broken *Yid* in Boro Park of yesteryear.

To be continued...

Hamodia encourages ideas and submissions to this column. Please email boropark@hamodia.com.