



Reb Yankel
Majeski Z"l

On a Shlichus of the Rebbe

In honor of the
Bar Mitzvah Celebration of

Yankel Schmukler

ב' אייר תשפ"א - תפארת שבתפארת

בית הכנסת צמח-צדק חב"ד

בנשיאות כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א מליובאוויטש
ירושלים העתיקה ח"י

הצבור הרחב מוזמן להשתתף בהגות

הכנסת ספר תורה

שהובא ע"י הרב יעקב מייסקו. בשליחות מיוחדת
של כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א -

לביית כנסת צמח-צדק חב"ד בעיר העתיקה

ספר התורה יובא ביום חמישי, ט"ז אדר, בשעה 4 אחה"צ
לרחבת הכותל המערבי, ומשם יוכל
בהלוכה חגיגית בליווי חוזרות. אל בית הכנסת, ברחוב חב"ד
שבעיר העתיקה.

מיסיבה חגיגית תתקיים במקום

בברכת "פרות תשרי ירושלים"
הנהלה

בית הכנסת וברג המזרח
צמח-צדק חב"ד
בנשיאות כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א מליובאוויטש
TZEMACH - TZEDEK
CHABAD LUBAWITZ SYNAGOGUE
REBUILT AFTER THE WAR (1945-1947)
BY THE LUBAWITZ REBE, ZATZA
REBUILT THROUGH THE GENEROSITY OF
JOEY & TORY TAMERBAUM TORONTO CANADA

(Above) The Tzemach Tzedek shul.

(Left) A poster announcing the special *hachnasas sefer Torah* that took place on 16 Adar 1969.



(Above) Dancing at the Kosel with the *sefer Torah*.

(Right) The Torah sits in the front seat of the car on its journey.

The Torah, the Shul, and the Old City

How a *sefer Torah* from America
reassured Yerushalayim

BY DOVID MARGOLIN



On a sunny February afternoon in 1969, a large crowd gathered at the Kosel Hamaaravi for a unique hachnasas sefer Torah. It was four p.m. on the day after Shushan Purim, and the joyous crowd began to dance through the recently liberated and only partially reconstructed streets of the Old City of Yerushalayim. They were escorting a special Torah sent to them by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, which had been donated by the Young Israel of Eastern Parkway in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. It had been delivered days earlier by the Rebbe's shaliach, Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Majeski, z"l. The procession wound its way to the historic Tzemach Tzedek shul on Rechov Chabad, where the Torah was placed in the aron kodesh.

Barely two years after Yerushalayim's liberation from Arab rule, many people viewed the Torah's presence in the sole surviving shul of the Old City as a sign of future security. Never again would the Holy City be ruled by foreign invaders; Klal Yisrael would remain in their eternal capital until the coming of Moshiach.

The Tzemach Tzedek Shul- Beis Menachem

Shortly after Israel declared independence in 1948, the armies of the surrounding Arab countries invaded the country with the goal of driving every Jewish man, woman, and child into the sea. On May 17, 1948, King Abdullah of

Jordan ordered his army into Yerushalayim. Heavy fighting ensued, and ten days later the Arab army forced Jewish fighters out of their stronghold in the Churvah shul in the Old City. Shortly after its capture, there was a huge explosion in the Churvah, and the shul's iconic dome came crashing down.

The demolition of the Churvah set the tone for the next nineteen years of Arab control of the Old City. When Yerushalayim was finally unified after the Six Day War in 1967, only one shul remained standing in the Old City, the Tzemach Tzedek shul — Beis Menachem.

An aerial view of the Old City. At left is the Tzemach Tzedek shul, next to the Churvah before it was rebuilt; at top right is the Kosel.





British Lt. Gen. Dill visiting the Kosel at a time of disturbances in Yerushalayim, 1936.

The shul, originally named Beis Knesses Chassidei Chabad, was founded sometime around 1840 in a rented space in Yerushalayim. In 1858, with the assistance of philanthropist David Sassoon of Bombay, India, the shul acquired the building it had been renting. The chassidim then renamed it Beis Menachem in honor of their Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek Harav Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, *zy"o* (5549/1789–5626/1866), and it became commonly known as the Tzemach Tzedek shul.

In 1879, another member of the Sassoon family, Eliyahu Sassoon, passed away, and a second floor was added to the building in his memory. The second floor housed a Sephardic shul and yeshivah named Knesses Eliyahu. In the aftermath of World War I, the Chabad shul moved to the second floor and the Sephardic shul relocated to the first.

During the War of Independence the shul found itself in the heart of the battle

zone yet miraculously remained unscathed. Through the nearly twenty years of Arab rule that followed, the shul lay deserted and was converted into a factory and storage facility by its occupants.

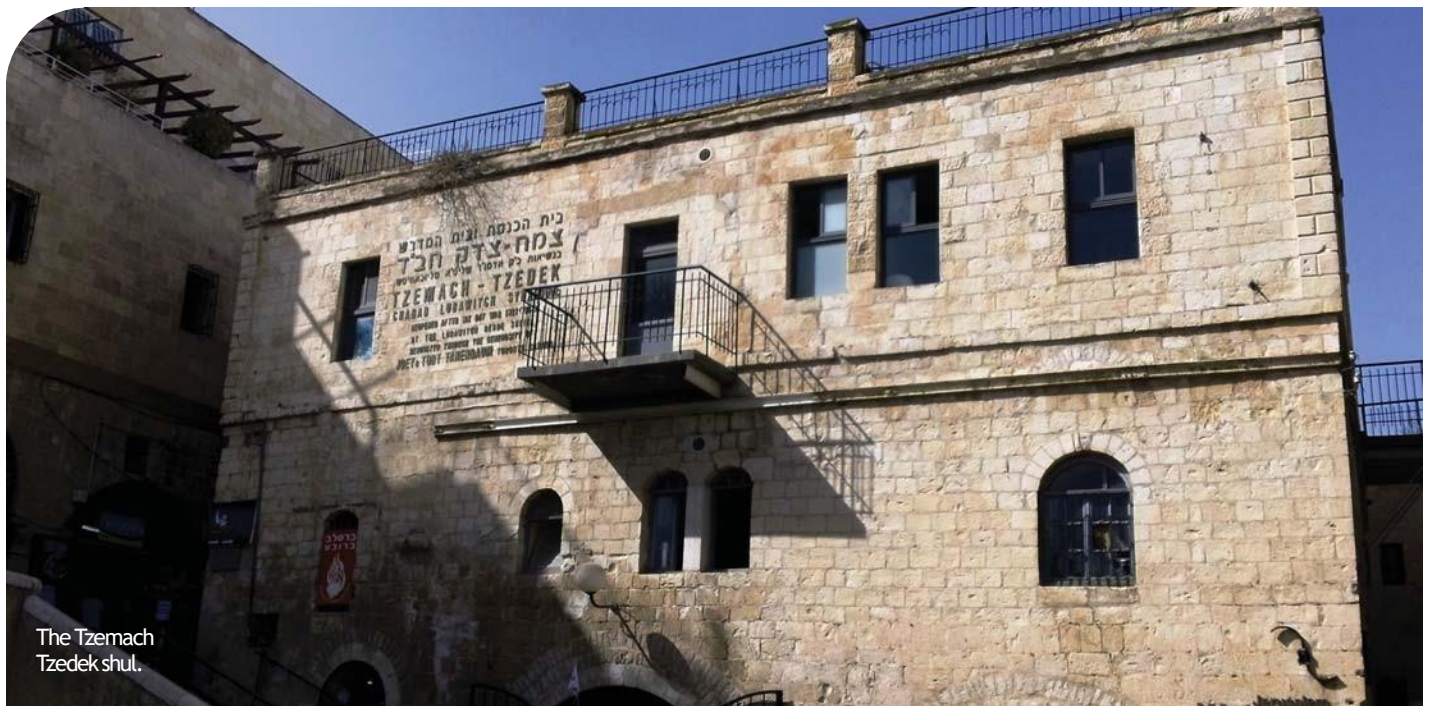
Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Halevi Segal, *z"l*

Few men played more significant roles in the major turning points of Yerushalayim's modern history than Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Segal, *z"l*. Born in 1904 to a Lubavitcher family in Poltava, Russia, Rabbi Segal studied in the Poltava branch of the famed Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim–Lubavitch. After the Bolshevik Revolution, he taught in the clandestine Lubavitcher *chadarim* that were set up throughout the newly formed Soviet Union. In the 1920s he immigrated with his family to Eretz Yisrael and was soon active in the fight to free the Holy Land from British rule.

Out of fear of provoking anger among the millions of Arabs under its rule, especially after the Arab massacres of 1929, the British government in Palestine instituted a number of laws to weaken and embarrass the Jewish population.

At the time, the area in front of the Kosel was just a narrow alley separating it from the Arab homes that stood on the other side. In addition to being harassed and having garbage thrown at them by the Arabs, Jews were banned by the British from *davening* out loud, *leining* the Torah, and blowing the *shofar* at any time. If one wished to listen to *krias haTorah*, he would have to go to one of the shuls in the Jewish Quarter.

"The British forbade us to place an *aron kodesh*, tables, or benches in the alley; even a small stool could not be brought there ... [these rules] were designed to humble the Jews at the holiest place of their faith," wrote Rabbi Segal in his Hebrew-language



The Tzemach Tzedek shul.

autobiography.

To ensure that a *shofar* was never blown at the Kosel, every year on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur the British flooded the area with hawk-eyed soldiers. On Yom Kippur 1930, Moshe Segal, still a *bachur*, decided that he had had enough.

Yom Kippur was coming to a close and the Jews *davening* at the Kosel would soon begin *Ne'ilah*, once again sadly omitting

the blowing of the *shofar*. Moshe Segal approached the Rav of his *minyán*, Harav Yitzchak Horenstein, *z"l*, and asked him in a whisper where the *shofar* was. The shocked Rav paused for a moment and then, after a quick look around, glanced at a *shtender* standing on the left side of the alley.

The young man opened the compartment of the *shtender* and slipped the *shofar* into his shirt. Borrowing a *tallis* from a stranger, he wrapped himself in it and waited.

"When the closing verses of *Ne'ilah* ... were proclaimed, I took the *shofar* and blew a long, resounding blast. Everything happened very quickly. Many hands grabbed me. I removed the *tallis* from over my head, and before me stood the



Photo Credit: Lubavitch Archives

An original plaque naming the shul Knesses Eliyahu hangs on the second floor of the Tzemach Tzedek shul in the Old City.

police commander, who ordered my arrest.”

Rabbi Segal was kept in prison without food or water until midnight, when he was released. He later found out that Chief Rabbi Harav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, *zt”l*, had contacted the office of the British High Commissioner of Palestine and threatened not to end his Yom Kippur fast until Rabbi Segal was released.

From that day on, the *shofar* was blown illegally at the Kosel every year until 1948. Specially prepared for the mission weeks before Yom Kippur, *bachurim* — some as young as thirteen years old, many of whom had lost their families in Europe and were therefore undeterred by the thought of their loved ones worrying about them — were ready to blow *shofar*.

“The British well understood the significance of this blast; they knew that it would ultimately demolish their reign over our land, as the walls of Jericho [had] crumbled before the *shofar* of Yehoshua, and they did everything in their power to prevent it,” wrote Rabbi Segal.

It would not be the only time that he blazed a brave new path.

Liberating a Captive City, Reviving a Dormant Shul

In June 1967, the Israeli army, *b’siyatta diShmaya*, miraculously won the Six Day War, liberating the Old City of Yerushalayim in the process. Almost every remnant of the Jewish community that had occupied it for more than four hundred years had been systematically destroyed.

Before the dust of battle had even had a chance to settle, Rabbi Segal was at the gates of the city demanding to be let in. The soldiers guarding the gates were at first hesitant to let the sixty-three-year-old rabbi in, but soon enough he was sitting in an armored jeep rumbling down the streets of Old Yerushalayim.

Rabbi Segal could not tolerate the fact that Yerushalayim, the gift that the Jewish people had received from



An Arab Legion soldier stands among the ruins of the Churvah shul in Yerushalayim in 1948.

Hashem, should not have even one Jewish resident. The jeep took him to the Kosel, where he once again blew the *shofar*, this time weeping. From there he ventured into the Jewish Quarter to see what had become of the Tzemach Tzedek shul.

The shul’s walls and roof were unharmed, but the floors were heavily damaged. The Arabs had used the first floor as a storage room, and the second floor had been converted into a textile workshop. Rubble lay strewn around the building; a poster for an Arabic film hung where the *aron kodesh* had once stood.

Leaving his home in Kfar Chabad, Rabbi Segal immediately moved into the shul building, becoming the first Jewish resident of the Old City. He set about cleaning and restoring the shul, making sure to establish Chabad’s rightful claim to ownership of the building, its courtyard, some adjacent apartments, and the *mikveh*.

Rabbi Segal’s wife, Rochel, waited more than a year before joining her husband in the Old City. A survivor of the

1929 Chevron massacre, she, like many others, was afraid of living in the abandoned city, whose residents were vastly outnumbered by unfriendly and possibly vengeful neighbors.

With the help of many government officials, including the president of Israel, Zalman Shazar, *z”l*, Rabbi Segal received \$30,000 in government funds toward the restoration efforts. In Elul of 1967, he wrote a letter to the Lubavitcher Rebbe describing the renewed activities in the shul, including a *minyan* that had been held every day since Rosh Chodesh Elul.

A Kol Yisrael news radio report before Yom Tov announced that there would be two *minyanim* on Rosh Hashanah in Yerushalayim — one at the Kosel and the other in the Tzemach Tzedek shul. Among the shul’s *mispallelim* that Rosh Hashanah was President Shazar, who had been born and raised in a Lubavitcher family and remained close to Chabad and the Rebbe all his life. Soon thereafter the Rebbe established a *kollel* in the shul, where it has remained to this day.

In a meeting with a delegation of

Lubavitcher chassidim held at President Shazar's home less than a week after Yerushalayim's unification, Shazar praised the chassidim for their initiative in being the first to resettle the Old City and expressed the hope that they would be followed by many more Jews, a dream that has since become a reality.

The Shaliach: Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Majeski, z"l

Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Majeski was born in Shedlitz, Poland, to a family of Aleksander chassidim, and as a young *bachur* he studied in the yeshivah of Harav Elchanan Wasserman, *Hy"d*, in Baranovich, Poland. During World War II he was evacuated to Samarkand, Uzbekistan, which was then part of the Soviet Union.

For the duration of the war

Samarkand was home to thousands of Jews, among them a sizeable number of Chabad chassidim. The war years were difficult in Samarkand, with refugee families struggling to find food and medicine just to stave off death. Anywhere one looked in Samarkand, starvation and illness were etched into the people's emaciated faces.

Once, as Rabbi Majeski walked through an alley in the city, he heard the sweet melody of a man earnestly reciting *Krias Shema*. He could not imagine who would be *davening* with such *deveikus* surrounded by the despair of Samarkand and decided to return the next day to see if he would hear it again.

Day after day Rabbi Majeski stood in that alley, listening to the *davening*. One evening he decided that he must find out

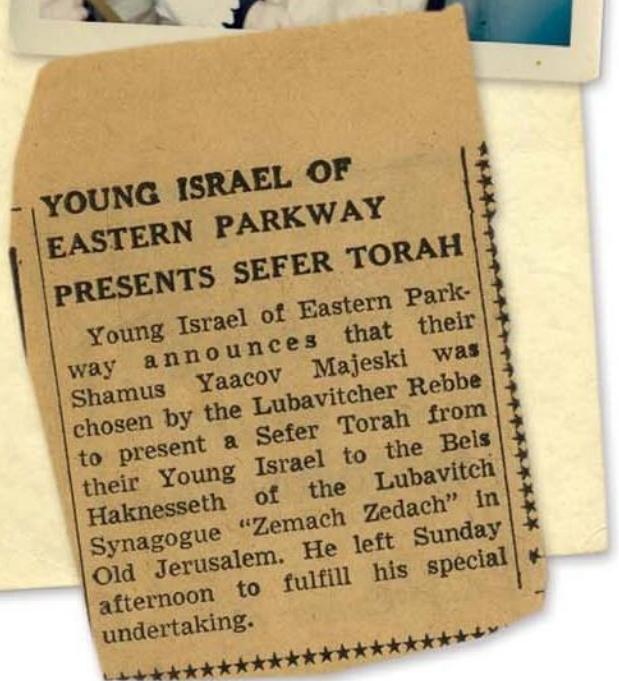
who this man was. Overcoming his hesitation, the young man entered an apartment to discover the venerable Chabad chassid Reb Yisroel Noach Blinitzky, z"l, gently swaying as he *davened*, singing a Chabad melody.

Rabbi Majeski was so affected by this encounter that he became a Chabad chassid and eventually married Reb Yisroel Noach's daughter Chaya. After the war the family fled to Poland and from there to France, ultimately settling in New York, where Rabbi Majeski became the longtime principal of Chabad's Bais Rivka Girls' School.

The Sefer Torah

It was late at night and Rabbi Majeski

(Below) An invitation to the *hachnasas sefer Torah*. (Right top) Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Majeski carries the Torah at the airport in New York. (Right bottom) A press clipping announcing the special mission.



was in *yechidus*, a private audience, with the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"Recently it has become a custom that organizations send *sifrei Torah* to Eretz Yisrael," said the Rebbe. "Try to obtain a *sefer Torah* from Young Israel and take it to Eretz Yisrael."

Seeing the bewilderment on Rabbi Majeski's face, the Rebbe responded, "I do not see any hardships here. You should call the travel agency tomorrow."

When Rabbi Majeski began to cite the practical issues involved in this plan, the Rebbe reiterated, "I do not see any difficulties here, and you should request that they also pay a portion of your expenses...."

Rabbi Majeski stumbled out of the *yechidus*, shocked. He had never been to Eretz Yisrael, so why would the Young Israel give him a *sefer Torah* just because he asked? There were so many things to arrange against such great odds; why had he been chosen?

"The following day there would be a great snowstorm, so school was expected to be closed; therefore, I would have ... time to arrange a passport for myself," Rabbi Majeski explained in a letter to his family written aboard the plane to Israel.

"I then decided that it would be impossible for me to understand this with my own *chachmah*, so why be clever? I removed myself from these deliberations and went like a soldier on a mission, knowing that all would transpire as destined."

Rabbi Majeski was a *shamash* at the Young Israel and immediately approached a Young Israel official, Mr. Al (Alexander) Yudin, *z"l*, with his request for a *sefer Torah* to take to Eretz Yisrael. Yudin responded that such a decision would have to be made by the entire board of directors and that the next meeting was set for Wednesday but was going to be postponed. "However, if this is the case," said Yudin, "the meeting will be held as scheduled."

Rabbi Majeski saw this as a first spark of encouragement.

At the meeting a few days later, the board posed many questions to Rabbi Majeski, who did his best to answer. As the meeting came to a close, a vote was taken. "Everyone voted to give the Torah, [except] for one vote," wrote Rabbi Majeski. "They also agreed to cover some of the expenses and that the trip be under the auspices of the Rebbe. All of this was accomplished without their even knowing where in Eretz Yisrael [the Torah] was going!"

Subsequently, when the Rebbe instructed



(Top) Young and old dance from the starting point at the Kosel, seen in the background.

(Middle) The renowned Chabad chassid Reb Berke Chein, *z"l*, dances with the Torah.

(Bottom) An Israeli official joins in the celebration.

Rabbi Majeski to escort the Torah to the Tzemach Tzedek shul in Yerushalayim, the Young Israel members became even more excited about their part in the project.

Of the day of his departure Rabbi

Majeski wrote, "We took a bus to the plane, and when I boarded the bus it was packed; every seat was taken. When one Jew on the bus realized that I was holding a *sefer Torah*, he jumped out of his seat. He was immediately [followed] by the rest

of the Jews on the bus, and I quickly sat down with the Torah. From here you see that it is not the Yid who carries the Torah, but the Torah that carries the Yid!" On Shushan Purim, not long after his arrival in Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Majeski

(Top right and left) Dancing at the Kosel.

(Bottom left) Dancing in the shul.

(Bottom right) Rabbi Majeski has just placed the Torah scroll in the *aron kodesh*.





(Above left) Rabbi Majeski makes a *l'chaim* in the shul, using a bottle he received from the Rebbe.

(Above right) Right before the *hachnasas sefer Torah*.

took the *sefer Torah* to the Tzemach Tzedek shul and placed it in the *aron kodesh*. The next day a large, official *hachnasas sefer Torah* was held at the Kosel, with hundreds of people participating, including many dignitaries. Dancing with music and torches, buoyed by the Rebbe's message of hope, the energetic crowd paraded to the Tzemach Tzedek shul, where they conducted *hakafos* and installed the Torah permanently in the *aron kodesh*.

Forty Years Later

More than forty years have passed since Yerushalayim's unification and the events that followed. Today, when one sees the busy alleyways and staircases of the Jewish Quarter, it is difficult to believe that this boisterous neighborhood's future was once far

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, receives a visitor in his office at 770 Eastern Parkway in the 1970s.

from certain.

The Churvah shul stands rebuilt, gleaming, looking just as it did before its destruction and serving as a shul once more. Many yeshivos and shuls, some old and some new, are scattered throughout the neighborhood, filling it with the sounds of Torah and prayer.

Had it not been for the foresight and self-sacrifice of those who re-entered the Holy City after its liberation, like Nachson ben Aminadav entering the waters of the Red Sea, the outcome might have been very different. Because of their *mesirus nefesh*, today's Old City is thriving, helping pave the



photo Credit: Kahn Family Lubavitch Archives

way for the ultimate rebuilding of Yerushalayim. ■

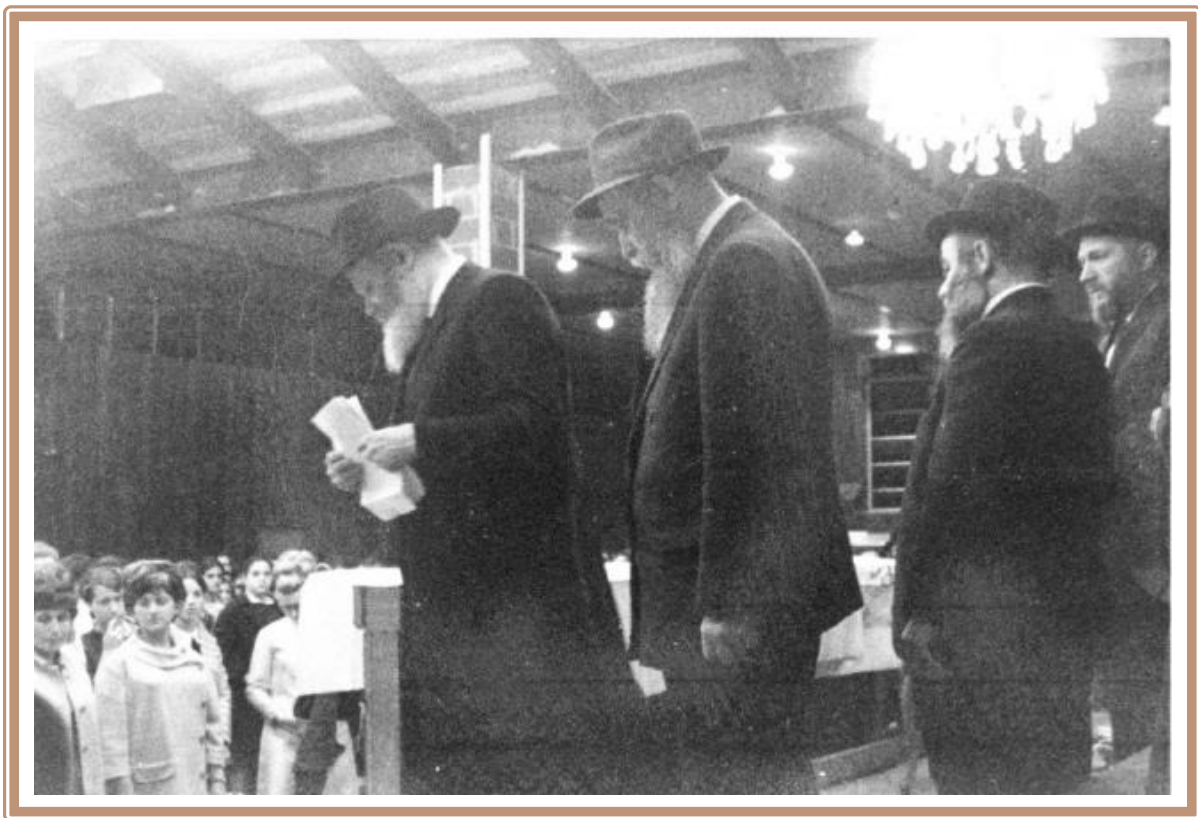
The author thanks Rabbi Dovid Zaklikowski of Lubavitch Archives for assistance with this feature.

Upon returning to New York, Rabbi Majeski wrote a report about all that transpired to the Rebbe. In it he included that he was a bit disappointed that that he wasn't able to attend the actual Siyum Sefer Torah.

At Kos Shel Bracha on Motzei Acharon Shel Pesach a month later, as he passed by the Rebbe to receive a bit of the Rebbe's wine, the Rebbe stopped him and said:

”סאיז גענוג אַז מ'ווייסט דאָ און דאָרטן!”

“It is enough that we know here [the Rebbe pointed downwards, and then pointing upward] and there!”



The Rebbe leaves 770 after saying a Sicha for the graduating students of Beis Rivka
Rabbi Majeski is on the right

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