

ISH YEHUDI

The Life and The Legacy
of a Torah Great

RAV JOSEPH TZVI CARLEBACH

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kitchens on its overseas steamships. During his later years, Dr. Rosenak endeavored to bring about greater coordination between the German and American emigrant aid associations. He traveled to America early in 1923, and negotiated successfully with the responsible authorities. This labor of love and charity overtaxed his strength, however, and he died suddenly, aboard ship, on August 15, 1923, the first night of his return voyage to Germany. Contrary to the prevailing custom on North German Lloyd ships, the captain brought the rabbi's body back to Germany for a proper funeral, instead of arranging for a burial at sea. Out of respect for the deceased, the passengers and crew canceled all concerts and entertainment for three days. More recently, the city of Bremen named one of its streets after Dr. Rosenak.

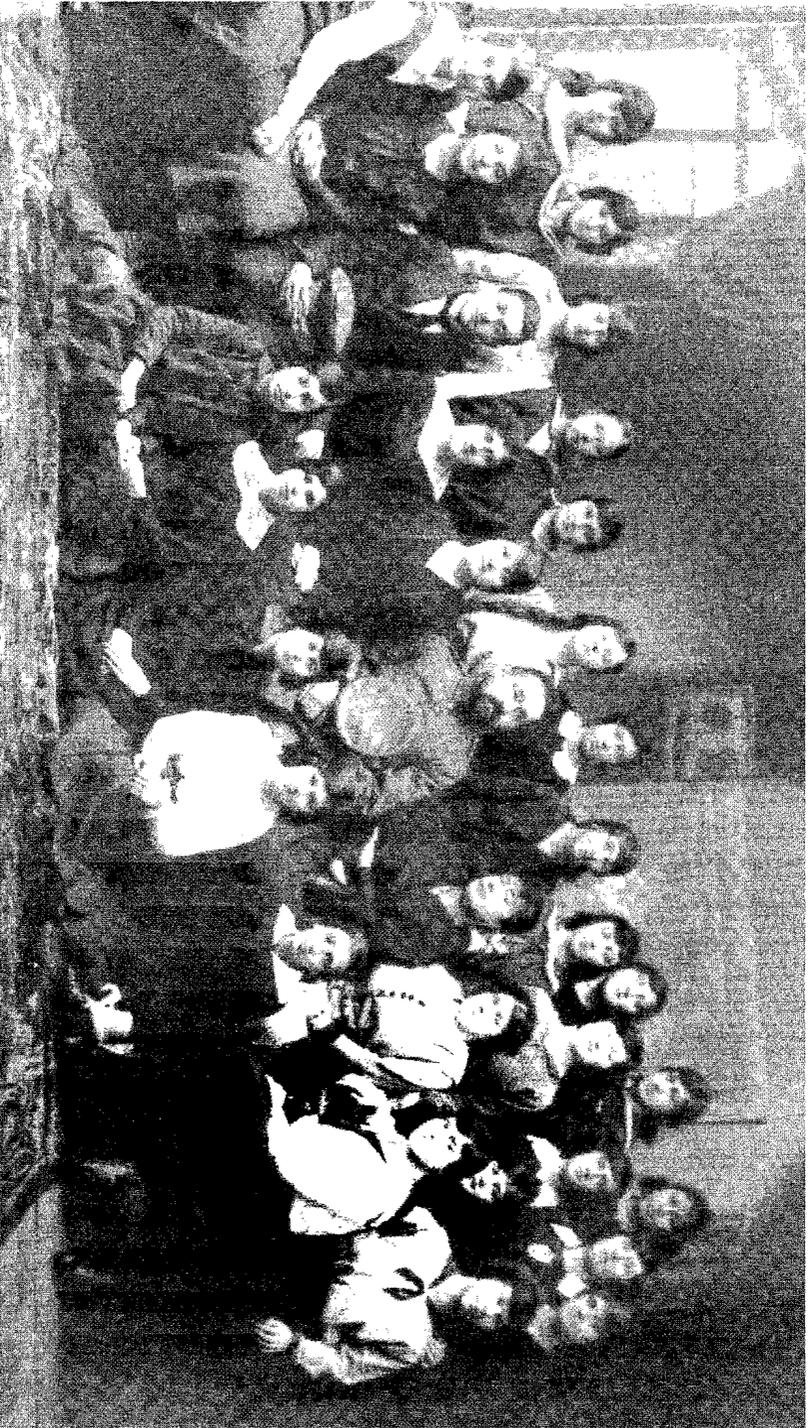
Chapter 14

BRINGING TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ TO LITHUANIA

The lack of proper schooling for Jewish youngsters was a matter of great concern to the Occupation authorities. The traditional *cheder* provided schooling only at the elementary level; there was no organized educational system for high school and beyond. To address that need, Dr. Rosenak was asked to recommend an experienced educator who combined Jewish and secular scholarship, to establish and direct a school in Lithuania's capital city of Kovno.

Dr. Rosenak could not think of anyone better qualified for such an assignment than his brother-in-law, the Rav. The educational experience of his years in Jerusalem and at the Margareten Lyceum in Berlin, had the Rav's status as a first rate educator firmly established. With doctorates in mathematics and philosophy included in his resumé, he received the call. Reporting to the High Command - North East, he was promoted to captain with the title of advisor on educational matters, and invested with full authority to proceed with the schooling plan.

Following extensive consultations with the local rabbinical authorities, including some of Lithuania's foremost Torah scholars, the Rav laid the foundations for a gymnasium-type school, based upon the principles of *Torah im Derech Eretz*, combining Torah lessons with secular subjects. Since the German authorities limited the number of weekly hours of instruction for religious subjects, the Rav introduced Hebrew as a foreign language, thus doubling the hours available for



Koeno Gymnasium, the Rae with Faculty and Students

limuday kodesh, including Talmud for the boys and *Tenach* (Bible and Prophets) for the girls. The Rav was able to persuade a number of highly qualified teachers from Germany to join him, in his pioneering effort on behalf of the *chinuch*-deprived Jewish youth in the occupied territories. Notable among them was Dr. Leo Deutschlaender, whose name became famous, some years later, for his enormous contribution to the Beth Jacob school system.

Known locally as the Carlebach Gymnasium, the school began with fewer than a hundred students, as many parents were reluctant to entrust their children to the new educators who wore German army uniforms. The more religious-leaning among them were afraid that the new school might secularize their children, while the more secular minded were afraid of religious indoctrination. The Rav went from house to house to introduce himself and his program, winning over the parents of potential candidates. The enthusiastic reaction of the initial student body further dispelled any doubts about the quality of the education and the spirit in which it was guided. Ultimately, the whole-hearted endorsement of the community leadership, both religious and communal, soon made enrollment in the gymnasium a sought-after prize.



Kovno Gymnasium, the Rav with Faculty and Student Body

With separate schools for boys and girls, enrollment in the second year grew to more than five hundred, soaring during the third year to almost one thousand. The Rav invited heads of *yeshivah* seminaries and local rabbis to test the students. The verdict was unanimously

favorable, with expressions of amazement regarding the scholastic achievements and pervasive spirit of *Yirat Shamayim* (true religiosity) in the schools. He conducted Friday night *oneg shabbat* gatherings in his home, and debating sessions for older students during after school hours. In time, he was adored by his students, and respected by colleagues and parents alike. A prominent lawyer and author who served in Kovno at the time, as part of the German Orthodox contingent, wrote a summary, several years later, of his impressions of those years, singling out the Rav in a short paragraph: "Dr. Carlebach, a brilliant educator, was, to his pupils, not a strict rule-maker, but rather like an old friend and comrade, loving his duties and his young friends. The educational program allowed for consideration of the students' individual backgrounds. The result was a labor of love and joy. Before long the educational authorities of Oberost (the military high command) admitted that 'the achievements of this school were greater than those of similar schools in Germany'."

Years later, the Rav described his wartime experiences at the Kovno schools in a number of articles. He marveled at the amazing speed with which his students absorbed the secular knowledge denied them under the Czar. With freedoms granted by the new regime, students completed eight years of high school in five years. The remarkable progress made by the Jewish youth astounded their non-Jewish instructors and supervisors. They had to admit that this was proof of the effectiveness of the Cheder, for, despite its old-fashioned methods of instruction and primitive facilities, it had done much to sharpen the wits of its pupils. When at last they had the opportunity for an academic education, they were able to learn with incredible speed.

The Kovno Gymnasium left a deep impression upon the Lithuanian Torah leaders, who could not help but notice the enthusiastic response to the *Torah im Derech Eretz* educational approach, on the part of students and parents. They realized that this approach caused no compromise in *Yirat Shamayim*. The enormous upheaval in the political and social structure of Jewish society throughout the land, in the aftermath of war, threatened the stability and loyalty of Jewish youth. Under those circumstances, these Torah leaders felt an urgent need to introduce a similar educational program, on a broad scale, by reorganizing existing schools and establishing new ones, where subjects in *Derech Eretz* would be taught alongside *Limuday Kodesh*.

At the behest of the Telzer Rav, Rav Joseph Leib Bloch, a world-renowned *gaon* and Rosh Yeshivah of the equally renowned Telzer



*Reb Yosef Leib Bloch (left) Rosh Yeshiva
Reb Avrohom Yitzchok Bloch, Rosh Yeshiva
Faculty and Student Body of Telzer Yeshiva (bottom)*

Yeshivah, Dr. Deutschlaender, director and guiding spirit of the Keren Hatorah Central Office in Vienna, was summoned to Kovno to organize, in consultation with the Rav such an educational system, to be called "Yavneh." Deutschlaender succeeded beyond all expectations. Ten years into its existence, in 1930, under the leadership of this brilliant and totally dedicated Torah educator, a teachers' training course was conducted in Polangen, a sea resort town in Lithuania. The Rav headed the distinguished faculty of the course, which was established to "teach the teachers" of the Yavneh schools. The Rav devoted a full month of intense work to this summer program. At its conclusion, he published a summary of the "Yavneh educational project" in the "Israelit." He reported that separate teachers' seminaries for men and women had been established in Kovno, in addition to "gymnasium-style high schools in Tels, Kovno and Ponevesh, and approximately 100 elementary schools spread throughout the land."

"The teachers at these many schools, serving a widely diverse parent and student population, felt inadequately prepared for their mission. Theirs was a pioneering calling, to introduce their charges to a whole range of secular subjects based on governmental guidelines,

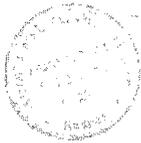


"Yaavne" School in Kovno

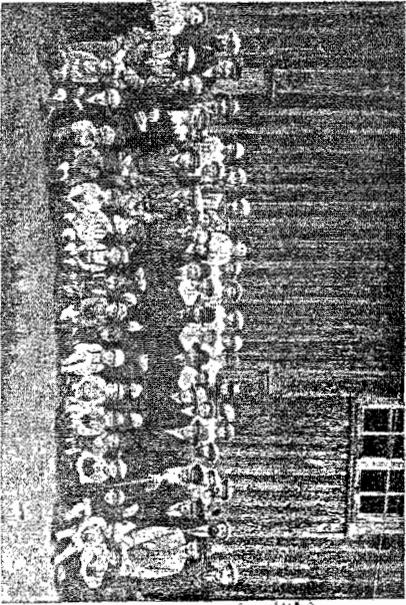
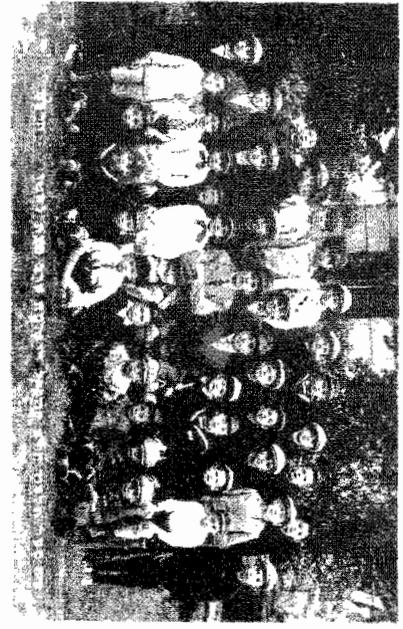
while maintaining the intense level of Jewish scholarship and Talmudic proficiency which was a time-tested hallmark of Lithuanian Jewry. In response to their urgent request, the central office in Kovno devised a plan for a summer refresher course, which would offer a comprehensive program to address these concerns. As part of the course, the Rav lectured on a wide variety of subjects in the field of Torah-chinuch, and delivered *shiurim* on Torah topics relevant to the program. Other members of the faculty, rabbanim and mechanchim, lectured on their specific areas of competence.

The final days of the summer program were devoted to a general conference on Torah education, with the additional participation of several Lithuanian Torah giants, like the Ponevesher Rav, Rav Kahane-man, and the Suvalker Rav, Rav Bakst. The conference was graced by many *rabbanim*, as well as guests of the sea-side resort. Its culmination was a banquet honoring the visiting faculty members, for their extraordinary effort on behalf of Torah education, with the organizers and participants resolving to repeat a similar summer program in Hamburg, under the Rav's aegis. It was further resolved to establish a mobile library, which would bring Torah literature to small Jewish

אשר יצא זקוקה את רבני אנשי זקנת
 ורבי (חכם גדול) זקנת
 זכר ל' ו' קולק
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Laudatory inscription by principal of Yavne School



Ein Städtchen Rhelowa erhebt sich ummei her
 großen Synagoge ein stolzer Bau. Ein bei Dorfalle
 fällt eine Mahnungswacht in die Augen, aus der gete
 vorzueht, daß die Schule von Herrn Leo Krustaf in
 Straßburg a. M. zum Ehren Andenken an seine frau
 men Eltern gegründet wurde und ergründet wurde. Die
 Schule, dem Direktorin wurde und mehreren bewährten
 Lehrern geleitet, gilt als Musterhule in der Gegend.

Ein Mißglück an die Beherrschung und die Abwe
 harte die unter Leitung von Direktorin Dr. G. a. l. e
 fand aus. Mittra und Dr. G. D. a. l. f. d. i. n. b. e. r. in
 Absichten gegen Sommerende faulstehen, begaben sich
 diese Herren nach Rhelowa, um die genannte Schulbe
 hörden zu besichtigen. Ein einziger Bericht über diese
 Anspitzer sprachen daß die Herren in vollster Bereitse
 nung über den Unterrichtsstand und den Geist der
 Schule aus.

Nach Besichtigung durch den Oberschüler und den
 alleinigen Lehrer fand unter hiesiger Beistellung der
 Gesellschaft eine öffentliche Prüfung im Lande vor
 im Toland. Fast die Rettung der Kinder mit der
 Sprache mit erkannt. Sie beehrten garten aus
 Toland Land. Man und konnten bei der Durchnahme
 einziger Kapitel aus Sternschn über die Gedächtnisse des
 Unterrichtes des ersten jüdischen Kindes besichtigt geben.
 Die profanen Bücher werden ebenfalls in beachtlicher
 Sprache unterrichtet. Der Erfolg ist in allen Stücken
 von den Lehrgangern bis zu den Kleinsten, gleich an

*A model school in Rhelowa
 The Raas in center of picture*

Lotte Preuss, daughter of the legendary physician, Dr. Julius Preuss, whom he greatly admired and in whose house he was a frequent visitor. He stood under the *chupah* in his army uniform, with his father, the family patriarch, officiating. The Rav then returned to Kovno with his new wife. With redoubled energy, he strengthened and expanded the school which he had founded and nurtured against difficult odds. Not long afterward, circumstances beyond his control persuaded the Rav to leave Kovno, handing over his beloved school to well qualified educators. The school continued to function as a highly regarded institution of *chinuch*, proudly displaying the name of its founder as the "Carlebach Gymnasium," until the Nazi invasion, which destroyed Lithuanian Jewry together with that of the entire European continent.

In addition to his educational work, the Rav was deeply involved in securing the economic survival of struggling Torah institutions in Lithuania. Dislocated in the course of shifting military and political fortunes, the great Torah schools were faced with disruption and dissolution. The Rav interceded with the German authorities on behalf of the Yeshivot. With the advantage his high military rank and position as advisor on educational matters, he was able to secure continuity for these most important institutions. He also arranged for financial support from sympathetic sources in Germany and other Western European countries, which was a greater feat, because of the wartime economic turmoil in Europe.

This additional aspect of the Rav's blessed activities during World War I remained unreported for decades, until a number of years after World War II. At that time, the *gaon and tzaddik*, Rabbi Eliezer Y. Finkel, dean of the world famous Yeshivat Mir of Jerusalem, came to New York to raise funds for the rebuilding of his Torah institution. He visited the *gaon*, Rabbi Reuvein Grozovsky, a former talmid of Slobodka Yeshiva and eminent Lithuanian Torah leader, who had already established himself as one of the outstanding Torah personalities in the U.S. Among Rabbi Finkel's entourage was the Rav's younger son. Upon being introduced, Rabbi Grozovsky became very excited. Turning to Rabbi Finkel, he exclaimed, "I can bear witness that if not for the intervention of this young man's father, the *gaon* Rav Joseph Tzvi Carlebach, may *HASHEM* avenge his blood, Slobodka Yeshiva would have ceased to exist. And not only Slobodka, but all the great Torah institutions in Lithuania, were saved through his intervention, and his strenuous efforts to provide for their sustenance."