

The RYS Daily 5/17/07 Last Days X

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R. Meir Leibush Malbim had relinquished his position as rabbi of Koenigsberg just before,<sup>19</sup> and R. Israel was invited to take over the leadership of the community. He remained there for a short while and then set out on a visit to Russia <sup>2°</sup> He spent time in several Russian cities : Kovno, Vilna, Minsk, etc., and visited with his sons, daughters and other relatives in their respective localities. In Vilna, he examined manuscripts in the Vilna Gaon's handwriting which were kept in the Bet Kneset "HaGRA" (HaGaon, R. Alijahu) He loved to slip away and travel about incognito, but in most places he was unable to hide his identity, and the local inhabitants streamed out to meet and welcome him with open arms and all due honor. Nor was there any lack of interesting episodes: When the train stopped at one railroad station, a passenger in the same compartment had to step out to attend to some matter or other. Not recognizing R. Israel, the passenger asked that R. Israel watch his belongings. In the meantime, news spread that R. Israel was on board train, and a large crowd poured into the station to meet him. He refused to leave the train, however, since he had been entrusted with guarding the belongings, and could not leave them unattended. By law, he was forbidden to transfer their care to anyone else. In other localities, he was called upon to deliver speeches and the local synagogues were too small to contain the throngs that tried to pass through the doors.

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