

returned to his strength... But in all the days of his life, he was careful that when he spent time with us absorbed in the depth and profundity of halakhah, he would stop after three or four hours and say, 'I mustn't tax my brain excessively at one time.'")

In the Salanter Interview^e, my father added, "Koidanover *hasidim*, whose *rebbe*, a scion of the Zhelikhover *rebbe*s, R' Yisrael Salanter must have strongly opposed, attributed R' Yisrael's stroke to a curse their *rebbe* had imprecated upon him." Our protagonist was unaware of any particular run-in between the Salanter and the *rebbe*, but could otherwise not comprehend why the *hasidim* would come up with such an explanation. "They said the curse was laid on R' Yisrael when, during the cholera epidemic in Vilna in 5608-5609 [end of 1848], he announced in the synagogue on Yom Kippur morning [*Shabbath*, October 7, 1848] that everyone had to break his fast," my father said. "He proceeded to set a personal example by making *Kiddush* on the *bimah*." In BIS Talk my father described this Yom Kippur act somewhat differently and pinpointed where it happened, when he said, "Before the reading of the Torah, a *goy* brought a samovar of hot tea with glasses into the Zarrecher Kloiz^f, where R' Yisrael *davent*. R' Yisrael took a glass of tea and summoned the congregation to follow suit." In order to reconcile the seeming contradiction between my father's two depictions of what R' Yisrael did on that Yom Kippur morning, we should understand the use of the word "*Kiddush*" as figurative^g. By saying the Salanter made *Kiddush*, our protagonist was simply conveying that R' Yisrael did not make any restrictions as to *what quantity* of food the congregants were permitted to eat, nor as to *who* was permitted, but nullified the fast fully. Furthermore, although my father described the congregation and R' Yisrael explicitly as only drinking wine/tea, saying they made *Kiddush* intimates that they partook of a snack as well. In fact, *Jacob Mark*^h quoted below, mentions pieces of cake having been prepared in the synagogues before the sacred day by R' Yisrael's order, and *Etkes*

1, Exc. B – p. 5 ^e Ch. 3, Exc. S. Also see fn. a, below. / Cf. Ch. 4, n. 69. ^g ועיין במשנה 9 ברורה סי' תרי"ח ס"ק כ"ט שהאוכל ביה"כ אינו עושה קידוש, ועיין בהג' רע"א שם שקשה לחל בשבת כדורה ^h *Op. cit.*, Ch. 1, n. 13

*Book*ⁱ brings a source/ which has the Salanter eating cake (and mentions no other food) when it states, "After *Shaharith*, R' Yisrael took some baked goods, went up on the *bimah*, recited the *brakhah*... and ate in front of everyone, so that everyone should see and do the same." *Katz* ^k also relates, "R' Yisrael brought out wine and cakes, and made *Kiddush* and ate in front of the entire congregation." It is likely that in BIS Talk, when he described the *goy* bringing in the hot tea, my father was also not intent on describing exactly how R' Yisrael broke his fast, but was speaking metaphorically. Our protagonist was pointing out that, besides completely abrogating the fast by inviting everyone to drink tea, the Salanter also had a *goy do a melakhah forbidden on Yom Kippur* in *preparing* food for consumption – boiling up the tea – something unmentioned in *Katz*. As to what R' Yisrael actually did to break the fast, my father may have agreed with *Katz*: he ate cake and drank wine – and had some hot tea, too. It should be noted, however, that the tradition *Jacob Mark*^l records disagrees principally with my father's depiction of the events. *Jacob Mark* states: "R' Yisrael arranged for announcements to appear throughout the city that prayers would be shortened and worshipers should go out for fresh air; he prepared in the *shul* vestibules *skimpy pieces of cake* for contingencies; and, after *Shaharith*, he proclaimed that anyone feeling faint was allowed to *taste* of the prepared cakes without asking a doctor (emphasis added)." According to *Jacob Mark*, the Yom Kippur fast was not nullified at all, because only special people were given the dispensation to eat and there was a limit to the amount of food they were allowed to ingest – those feeling faint could only have a taste of a skimpy piece of cake. (According to *Jacob Mark*, the first two items on R' Yisrael's agenda – the announcements throughout the city and the preparation of food – were executed before the holiday with the approval of the Vilna *beth din*; the third, his proclamation on Yom Kippur, he did on his own and it met with the official Dayyan's objection^m.)

ⁱ P. 183 / עיר וילנא (authored by שטיינשניידער and published in תר"ס, p. 130. *Etkes Book* considers the story told there a legend (see the sixth paragraph, below), while this author supports his father's tradition (see the fifth paragraph, below). ^k *Op. cit.*, Ch. 1, the last paragraph of Exc. D: cf. pp. 159-161 and footnotes *ad loc.* as to the sources. ^l P. 76 ^m See

Besides the details about this remarkable event set down in *Katz I*, my father disclosed some interesting data in the Salanter Interview that were later incorporated into R' Geldwerth's articleⁿ (and attributed to our protagonist in note 19 of the article). The reports as to what transpired on that Yom Kippur and in its wake were transmitted to my father by R' David Leibowitz^o, who heard the details from his granduncle, his maternal grandfather's brother, the Chafetz-Chaim, who was present in Vilna at the time of the events; the Chafetz-Chaim's father was one of the victims of the epidemic, dying two weeks after that Yom Kippur, on Simhath Torah. (According to the common assumption that the Chafetz-Chaim died at the age of 94, he was less than 10 years old at the time of the epidemic. But according to R' Hayyim Kaniyevsky, who personally heard from R' Avraham-Yesha'yahu Karelitz, the Hazon-Ish, [as transmitted to this author by the Chafetz-Chaim's grandson R' Hillel Zaks^p] that the Chafetz-Chaim was 104 when he died^q, he was already 19 during the epidemic. The language of a good wish expressed within the approbation of the *Adereth* to the Chafetz-Chaim's *sepher* *ליקוטי הלכות*, given in 5656 (1896), also implies that he was much older at the time than death at 94 would have made him then. It reads, "ה' יארך ימיו ושנותיו" [May G-d extend his days and years]" – an expression fitting for a man already old. If he died at the age of 104, he was 67 at the time [while the *Adereth* was 51], whereas otherwise he was only 58 years old in 5656 [1896]. Also cf. *Shoshkes*^r, which describes the author's ride together with the Chafetz-Chaim, "already a אלטיטשקער [little old man]"^s, as he was being escorted by the important community members and the *lomdim* of Bialystok to the railroad station sometime in the latter part of the 5650's [1890's] – not at all an apt description of someone only between the ages of 58 and 62; according to the Hazon-Ish's computation, he was between 68 and 72. [*Shoshkes* relates that the Chafetz-Chaim remained standing in the buggy, and when the retinue did not cease begging him to sit

fn. d on pp. 1109-1110. ⁿ Cf. Ch. 3, Exc. S. ^o See Vol. 2. ^p Interview September 25, 1992 ^q This is close to the age reported by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency at the time of his demise (as per *The CC*, p. 793), i.e., 105. Also see footnote *ad loc.* ^r *Op. cit.*, Ch. 1, n. 7 – pp.

down, he replied that he couldn't because he didn't feel well. "But later," *Shoshkes* writes, "[my] uncle discovered the secret. The Chafetz-Chaim did not want to sit on the cloth because of a suspicion of *sha'atnez*, but he did not want to tell it to his companions so as not to embarrass them." The Chafetz-Chaim's evasive response that he didn't feel well is reminiscent of a story^t about R' Zvi-Hirsh, Maggid of Semyatich, who replied when he visited the home of his master, the Gaon of Vilna, and found the disciples eating and was invited by them to join in the meal, "The doctor does not permit me to eat." The Gaon immediately commented, "It is true: the *Rambam* was a doctor too." He understood that R' Zvi-Hirsh had in mind the ruling of the *Rambam* that one is not permitted to partake of a meal insufficient for its owners (סעודה שאינה מספקת לבעליה^u). However, according to *ההליכות והלכות בר מצוה*^v, R' Yoseph-Shlomo Kahanneman, the Ponivezher Rav, reported that he was present when the Chafetz-Chaim celebrated his 70th birthday – and that the celebrant put on a new garment in order to make the *sheheḥe'yanu brakhah*^w: the Ponivezher Rav was in Radin in 5669 [1909], not 5659 [1899]. The Chafetz-Chaim was therefore born in 5599 [1839], and less than 10 years old at the time of the epidemic. Also cf. *ספר מאיר עיני ישראל*^x, which reports in the name of R' Sholom Gallai that the Chafetz-Chaim described his experience of being present at his father's passing when he was a "young child [ילד צעיר]" – a definition befitting a 10-year-old, not a 19-year-old *already married* since the age of 17^y. Based on his error in *נכחח* that "it seems" the epidemic occurred in 5613 [end of 1852] rather than four years earlier when it actually took place, the Chafetz-Chaim's son, R' Aryeh-Laib, miscalculates and writes that his father was "close to 14 years of age" at the

265-266. ^t "from his הרב דב אליאך p. 51, article by זמן לחג הפסח תשנ"ח ^u *הגאון – חייו ומשנתו* forthcoming book ^v "פ"ד ה"ד מהלכות תשובה ^w *הגאון – חייו ומשנתו* Authored by אדלר and published by השל"ח, ירושלים, הוצאת פלדהיים, n. 90 ^x רג. p. – הוצאת פלדהיים, ירושלים, תשל"ח ^y יש ספק בפמ"ג אם לברך ^z "בשורת חות יאר סימן ע על מה נקראת סעודת מצוה, כותב, 'סעודת שהחינו על הגעה לגיל שבעים. (בשורת חות יאר סימן ע על מה נקראת סעודת מצוה, כותב, 'סעודת בן-שבעים יש להסתפק [אם היא סעודת מצוה] אפי' זה הבן-שבעים מברך שהחינו כי כך נ"ל [שצריך]." ^z "Op. cit., Ch. 2, Exc. B – p. 282 ^z According to *The CC*, p. 54, "he was fond of quoting the verse *יוסף בן שבע עשרה שנה היה רועה את אחיו בצאן* (At 17, Joseph was *shepherding with his brethren* [בראשית לז:ב])," in the sense that he married at the age of 17 and left his parental home to fend for himself. His widowed mother had remarried earlier. ^z P. 2

time. Once we correct the date of the epidemic, the Chafetz-Chaim's son, too, would agree that his father was only close to 10 then. Thus we have a corroboration from the Chafetz-Chaim's own son of his father's age, and it conforms with the Ponivezher Rav's reminiscing. Also see the recently published volume, *שנות דור ודור*,^z which reproduces a letter the Chafetz-Chaim wrote in 5686 [1926] asking an acquaintance residing in Tel Aviv to acquire for him "without publicity" papers for immigrating to *Eretz Yisrael*. Therein, he gives the exact ages of himself and the five close family members planning to move with him – his wife; his youngest son, Aaron; his son-in-law R' Mendel Zaks; his daughter Rebbitzen Faigel Zaks; and their baby, Hirsh – declaring that he is 86 years old. It may of course be argued that 86 was the age listed on his official Russian-Polish documents, though he was older. But in view of the other corroborating sources listed above, we should assume that 86 was his actual age at the time; thus the Hazon-Ish's opinion is overridden.)

We are left with a problem which my father did not address: on what halakhic basis was R' Yisrael able to waive the entire Yom Kippur fast? The fast of Yom Kippur is not considered to have been violated – with its violator punishable by extirpation (כרת) (or, if a *beth din* is available, by flogging [מלקות]) in case of wanton transgression, and by having to bring a sin offering (קרבן חטאת) in case of accidental transgression – unless a minimum quantity of food or drink has been consumed. With regard to food, this minimum quantity is slightly less than the volume of an average egg; with regard to drink, it is a mouthful. Either quantity must be consumed within four minutes' time for a violation of the fast to have been committed^a. This quantity is known in halakhic terminology as a "שיעור (measure)". Eating or drinking less than a "measure" is also prohibited but is not punishable as above, nor is the fast considered broken. In the case of an individual faced with mortal threat due to ill health, the rule is that if his life will not be more endangered by restricting his food consumption to *less* than a

^z *Op. cit.*, Ch. 3, the first paragraph of Exc. A – pp. רצב-רצג. ^a Regarding these measures of both volume and time, see שו"ע אר"ח ריש סי' תרי"ב סי' וס"ט.

measure (פחות מכשיעור), he is *not permitted* to eat a full measure^b. The problem therefore is why R' Yisrael permitted the total abrogation of the fast when the nourishment needed to maintain the public's health could have been provided just as well through the consumption of small snacks, each less than a measure and at more than four-minute intervals, throughout the day. However, my father's action in Toronto exactly 90 years later, in 5638 (1938), described below, will shed light on how our protagonist understood R' Yisrael Salanter's ruling at the time of the epidemic in Vilna.

For the record, this author will set down a transcription of part of the Salanter Interview (not included in the Geldwerth Article^c) which will reveal to the reader some repercussions of what our protagonist described as a "world-shaking (מרעיש עולמות) deed": "R' Yisrael was a young *rav* [39 years of age] at the time amongst other great *rabbanim* in Vilna. After Yom Kippur, he was called in to the rabbinical court of the city and told, 'We shall not enter into a debate with you as to whether what you did was correct halakhically or not. But you know that there is a *beth din* here; you should have brought the question to us for discussion. Either you would have convinced us that you were right and all of Vilna would have eaten, or we would have convinced you that you were not right. You acted improperly by not coming to us.'^d (My

^b See שו"ע אר"ח סי' תרי"ח סי"ד. There is a tradition that R' Hayyim Soloveichik held that someone already sick was permitted to eat a full forbidden measure, while someone merely liable to contract a fatal illness by fasting was restricted to eating only *less* than a measure (פחות מכשיעור). In the case of the cholera epidemic, even R' Hayyim would have agreed that only *פחות מכשיעור* was permitted because the health concern was that the general public would become more susceptible to catching cholera if people's resistance to disease was weakened by fasting. Only those who had cholera already – and would not have come to *shul* to get instructions on what to do – were permitted to eat a full measure according to R' Hayyim's opinion. With modern medical knowledge that a disease has an incubation period, R' Hayyim might have permitted everyone to eat a full forbidden measure during an epidemic because every person may be sick already and unaware of it. But this information about disease was unknown at the beginning of the 5600's (middle of the 19th century C.E.) and everyone in the Zarrecher Kloiz was considered still healthy and only *in danger* of becoming ill. ^c The narrative of what some *hasidim* believed about the cause of R' Yisrael's stroke, mentioned on p. 1104, above, was not published in the Geldwerth Article either. ^d *Jacob Mark* also claims that the Salanter was taken to task *on Yom Kippur itself* by R' Betzalel haKohen, the chief *matz* of Vilna (who was 10 years younger than R' Yisrael and had been appointed to the post five years earlier at the age of 23), for proclaiming that faint individuals were permitted to eat without consulting a doctor. As soon as the Salanter

father excused R' Yisrael for failing to raise the question with the official rabbinical court by quoting the *Tur*^ε, to wit, ואין צריך ליטול, ([Anyone desecrating the Sabbath to save a life] is not required to get permission from the *beth din*) – although that source seems to be referring to a problem that arises on *Shabbath* itself. But it may well be that R' Yisrael decided only on Yom Kippur day that the situation was indeed grave, as per the italicized part of the memoir of R' Yitzhaq Lipkin quoted below, p. 1136.) “The *rabbanim* concluded their admonishment by saying, ‘Actually, you deserve to be penalized. But rather than ruling on

descended from the *bimah*, R' Betzalel went up and voiced his objection – not to R' Yisrael's impropriety but to his halakhic ruling. *Jacob Mark's* mistake may have stemmed from R' Betzalel's responsum addendum on pp. 64-65 of his *ראשית בכורים*, a volume published in Vilna 20 years after these events, in 5629 (1869), in which he writes, “Behold, because I am writing this [responsum]” – it stretches from p. 44 to p. 92 – “close to Yom Kippur, I have therefore deemed it proper to note here a matter of importance to every dangerously ill individual.” R' haKohen goes on to discuss the exact measure of food and drink (שיעור) of which the sick may partake, and at what intervals. He then writes: “I see fit to mention what the Hatham-Sopher writes in his responsum [ליקוטים סי' כ"ג] about relying on the [סי' תקע"ו סק"ב] *מגן אברהם* even on Yom Kippur.” The cited *מגן אברהם* writes – regarding fast days that are decreed by the *beth din* for public catastrophes, such as enemy attack, pestilence, earthquake, wild animal attack, *et al.* – that nowadays, a fast is not decreed on account of a pestilence “because we know from experience that when one does not eat and drink, one absorbs a change of air (and endangers his life).” *שו"ת חת"ס*, responding on 16 Elul 5596 (August 29, 1836) to a query as to what to do about fasting on the upcoming Yom Kippur if the current cholera epidemic continued, states, “If the experts agree that fasting may be harmful, as the cited *מגן אברהם* rules, one should eat less than a measure.” About this point, R' Betzalel writes: “With the help of G-d, we must disclose to everlasting generations [דורות עולם] this great phenomenon which happened three times – which makes it an assumption [חזקה]: that to the thousands and myriads of men and women who all fasted on Yom Kippur of the years 5592, 5609 and 5627 [1831, 1848, 1866] in all our country, no harm, forfend, was done, and this was known almost in the whole world then, and we have nothing more truly empirically proven than this [especially to all the people, who were busy caring for those who were sick then, that on the fast day of Yom Kippur, no one became ill, forfend, because of the fast (except those who did not take care then in their eating and drinking and filled their stomachs with things harmful to their bodies on *Erev* Yom Kippur then, and certainly on *Motzoei* Yom Kippur, when as is known, extra care is required)]. Therefore, regarding the four [general] fast days, then one may, forfend, rely on *מגן אברהם* as in this [though the *מגן אברהם* speaks (only) about *occasional* fasts which are not as stringent as the four fixed fast days: *Tzom Gedaliah*, ‘*Asarah beTeveh*, *Shiv'ah 'Asar beTammuz* and *Tish'ah beAv*], but on Yom Kippur, forfend [חלילה] that we should combine and rely then, forfend, on this *מגן אברהם* at all; and may G-d have compassion on us.” Since R' Betzalel haKohen was of the “empirically proven” opinion that fasting was not dangerous even in times of epidemics, it is little wonder that he was reported, many years later, by *Jacob Mark* to have totally disagreed with R' Yisrael's ruling. (This author is indebted to R' Avrohm-Abish Schor for this source – see Ch. 4, the end of the second paragraph of Exc. T, above.) אר"ח סי' שכ"ח^ε

how to punish you, we will let *you* choose the punishment you deem fitting.’” My father understood them to mean that R' Yisrael was respectfully invited to undertake “תשובה המשקל” (Balanced Penance, self-imposed suffering commensurate with the severity of one's sin). “And R' Yisrael replied,” my father continued, “If you are considering penalizing me, let me warn you that I will nullify all the divorces the Vilna *beth din* has executed.’ The Salanter went on to explain, ‘The Vilna *beth din* follows the *get* procedure promulgated in *בית שמואל*, against which I have an argument that you will be unable to refute.’ R' Yisrael posed his argument, which left the Vilna rabbinical court stumped – and he was acquitted.” (His interviewer asked my father whether he knew what question the Salanter had posed, and received a negative reply.) By his argument, R' Yisrael was certainly not questioning the ancestral purity of all the offspring of the women who, for two centuries, had received their *gittin* in Vilna by the procedure expounded in *בית שמואל*. Either R' Yisrael knew the answer to his question, which his interlocutors did not – or he trusted that the author of *בית שמואל* was right despite whatever challenge there was. The question was R' Yisrael's way of showing them that they were not worthy of sitting as a tribunal to judge him; the Vilna *beth din* understood this, and acquitted him. My father added that R' Baruch-Ber once delivered a *shai'ur* – presumably, during our protagonist's years in Slabodka^g – on the two sides of the question of totally revoking the fast in the face of preservation of life (פיקוח נפש). R' Baruch-Ber's exposition concluded that the Vilna *beth din* had been right and R' Yisrael, wrong.

An action – or better said, inaction – by my father when he assumed his rabbinical post in Toronto in 5698 (1938) will reveal his attitude toward a revocation of the fast in an analogous situation. He was asked prior to his first Yom Kippur as a major *rav* in the city to publish an announcement in the daily Yiddish

^f The author of this commentary on שולחן ערוך אבן העזר was Rav of Furth (פיוורדא), Germany. He died in 5458 (1698), almost a century and a half prior to the described events. He was a leading *talmid* of the greatest Torah teacher of his time, “the *Rebbi*” R' Hesheil of Cracow.

^g Cf. the penultimate paragraph of Ch. 3.2.

the entire story of the events in Vilna, as above, also did not fault R' Yisrael Salanter for his actions. This is further indicated by the Chafetz-Chaim's high valuation of R' Yisrael's piety in later years, as evidenced in *נ"ככח"ח*: The Chafetz-Chaim suffered from a severe stomach ailment for many months in 5637 (1877). He was in Vilna for medical care when R' Yisrael happened to be in the city visiting with his son-in-law R' Elya-Laizer Grodnensky, R' Chaim-Ozer Grodzensky's father-in-law-to-be, and the Salanter was told about the Chafetz-Chaim's condition. The Chafetz-Chaim subsequently attributed his lifelong cure to the Salanter's prayers on his behalf^o. (Incidentally, the purity of the Vilna *beth din's* motives in rebuking R' Yisrael Salanter may be proven – if proof is needed – by virtue of the appointment of his son-in-law R' Grodnensky^p to that body only eight years after these contentious events.)

נ"ש"א has a version different from my father's – and the Chafetz-Chaim's – of what transpired in the wake of R' Yisrael's daring act, to wit: “When R' Yisrael found out that many of the older *rabbanim* were angry with him, he announced that he would deliver a *pilpul* in the Great Synagogue. The *lomdim* assumed that his exposition would propound a halakhic justification for his unusual deed, and they all gathered to hear him. Instead, he delivered a profound *shai'ur* on another subject altogether, which surpassed in acuity and virtuosity all the other *pilpulim* that he had presented in Vilna until then. With this, all his opponents were silenced.” It may be conjectured that R' Yisrael deliberately chose *not* to discuss the halakhic aspect of what he had done on Yom Kippur be-

יעקב מינאה לרב יהודה הני ששה דיה"כ כנגד מי א"ל כנגד ששה שעמדו וכו' ופירושו שעזרא גילה את דבר יוה"כ רק לתלמידיו אלה שעמדו בצדיו ברה"ה שבהם היה בטוח שלא יצומו אם יסתכנו ע"י כך, וליוה"כ סודי זה בתקופה שבה הותקנה חובת קריאת התורה בכללה עשו זכר במספר הקרואים, ועיי"ש שאם רק בצד אחד של עזרא עמדו ששה כבר אין תזכורת ודוק, ואולי לפי גירסת "מינאה" עיקר הקושי היתה על ספר עזרא כנ"ל וכדי לבטל יוה"כ משום כפרה מדומה אחרת, להבדיל (שכידוע חיקו הנוצרים את חגיגו כולם חוץ מיום כיפור), והגמ' ציטטה את השאלה כאילו היתה על מס' הקרואים כי בתשובתו של רב יהודה נכלל תירוץ על כך, ודוק. (וראה גם *שכט מהורה* מאת הרב וכו' איסור יהודה אונטרמן [מוסד הרב קוק, ירושלים, תשמ"ד], עמ' עג"ע, שמבאר את מחלוקת ר' ישראל ז"ל והדיינים בדרך משלו *נ"ככח"ח*, p. 22^o Also cf. "שחבל שלא נתפרשו הדברים כראוי בשעתם".) p. 16, on how highly R' Yisrael thought of the Chafetz-Chaim, as quoted above in Ch. 3, Exc. A (p. 346). ^p See *Katz II* (op. cit., Ch. 2, n. 17), p. 424-426 ^q Op. cit., Ch. 3, Exc. B – p. רפט

cause he did not want people who had eaten because of his announcement to feel that what they had done needed justification. R' Yisrael's rebuttal of the Vilna *beth din*, both according to author of *נ"ש"א* R' Weinberg's version and my father's, is a fine demonstration of the Salanter's legendary greatness in Torah. Also cf. *The CC*^r for the Chafetz-Chaim's estimation of R' Yisrael's greatness. On many occasions, including during the Salanter Interview, my father repeated R' Yoseph-Ber Soloveitchik's testimony^s that his grandfather R' Hayyim considered “four scholars of (his) day to be quasi-(מעין-)Rishonim”^t. The four greats were: R' Yehoshua'-Laib Diskin^u (5577-5658 [end of 1816-1898]); R' Meir-Laibush Weiser (the *Malbim*, 5569-5640 [1809-end of 1879]); R' Hayyim's father, R' Yosheh-Ber Soloveichik^v; and R' Yisrael Salanter^w. Also cf. *מורי האומה*, Vol. III^x, which also quotes R' Yoseph-Ber in regard to R' Hayyim's esteem of the four, but switches the relative places of the *Malbim* and R' Yisrael, as does *HagMaly* – which elevates the Salanter even higher^z.

^r Pp. 419ff. ^s Cf. Vol. 3. ^t In BIS Talk, my father used the weaker expression, viz., “who were higher than the generation”. This phrase is also used by הרב משה מאיר ישר on the first page of the introduction to his *התשל"ו* (ירושלים, הוצאת הוד, *הגאון מלביים* (further: *HagMal*), where he recounts hearing about R' Hayyim's assessment of these four scholars “when studying in Brisk under R' Elchonon Wasserman”. “Ch. 3, n. 16^v Ch. 3, Exc. H^w Ch. 3, Exc. A^x Authored by הרב ישראל שורין (no publication year stated) – p. 167^y Fn. t, above, *ibid.* ^z *מורי האומה* also claims, in R' Yoseph-Ber's name, that another great scholar, R' El'azar-Moshe Horwitz of Pinsk (Ch. 3, Exc. F) (5578-5650 [1818-1890]), was added by R' Hayyim to the four “as an optional fifth”, and, in my father's name, that R' Hayyim stated that R' El'azar-Moshe is the only one whom he entitles “doyen of the *geonim* (הגאונים)”. My father's report on this is problematic because a question arises: how could R' El'azar-Moshe, being only an *optional* quasi-Rishon at most, be the *doyen* of the *geonim*? Insofar as R' Yisrael Salanter and the *Malbim*, we have no problem because they died before R' El'azar-Moshe, and the *הגאונים* title may have been bestowed on the Pinsker Rav by R' Hayyim after they had left the world. Insofar as R' Diskin there is also no problem because he was so superior to the other *geonim* of the generation that the title *הגאונים* was too slight for him. R' Diskin, the *first* of the four greats, was described by R' Hayyim, according to *עמוד אש* (op. cit., Ch. 3, n. 16), p. קצה, as one “whose titles begin where the appellations of all the other great scholars peak”, and according to the footnote on p. רפז of *נורת חיים*, as one who “would have been considered a 'gaon in Israel' even if he had lived in the time of R' Moshe Isserlis, the *Rama* (b. 5280 or 5290 [1520 or 1530], d. 5332 [1572])”. We are left, however, with the question in regard to R' Yosheh-Ber, R' Hayyim Soloveichik's father, who outlived R' El'azar-Moshe. At the interview with R' Zelig Epstein cited at the beginning of this paragraph, on p. 1098, the interviewee said he had “gathered from many sources that R' Hayyim considered the *Malbim* the greatest mind of the generation”. This is consistent with the great expectations his generation had for the *Malbim*, as R' Yisrael

Incidentally, according to an eyewitness, when relating to our protagonist what R' Hayyim's estimation of the Salanter was, R' Yoseph-Ber remarked that he did not understand why his grandfather had included R' Yisrael among such giants. My father brushed this comment aside with the retort, "It seems that R' Hayyim knew R' Yisrael [ישראלין]."^a R' Meshulam-David Soloveichik^b stated that he had heard "yet in Brisk" that R' Hayyim had described the Salanter in superlative terms, saying, "R' Yisrael Salanter's mind had the sanctity of *tephillin* [קדושת] [תפילין]." R' Hayyim was likely referring to the *Rambam's* definition of the sanctity of *tephillin*^c and inferring that R' Yisrael automatically exuded "ענוה, יראת שמים ודברי אמת וצדק" (humility, Fear of G-d, and words of truth and justice)" and dissipated "שחוק, שיחה" (frivolity, idle talk and evil thoughts)" in his surroundings, i.e., in everyone who had contact with him. Also cf. *EdSt*^d where R' Baruch-Ber is quoted as saying, "The *rebbe* [R' Hayyim] trembled when he mentioned R' Yisrael." Obviously, R' Yoseph-Ber was unaware of these traditions. For our protagonist's own evaluation of the Salanter, cf. Ch. 3, the end of n. 51. (Also

Salanter himself expressed – see below. In order to bring out the greatness of the *Malbim's* mind, my father told R' David Cymet – see the beginning of this excursus – that R' Yisrael Salanter eulogized Reb Nahumkeh Horodner (see Ch. 4, n. 7) and said, "A *Malbim* – not everyone can be a *gaon* like him; but a R' Nahumkeh, every Jew has the capabilities to become." This indicated to our protagonist that in R' Yisrael's view, the *Malbim's* mind was at the peak of cerebral brilliance. Also cf. *haRishon* (*op. cit.*, Ch. 1, Exc. F), p. 26, which claims "it is told" that R' Hayyim listed the *three* greatest "תְּרֵיפֵי הַמּוֹדֵר" (keen minds)" of the generation – R' Yisrael Salanter, R' Yehoshua'-Laib Diskin, and his father – omitting the *Malbim* altogether and in an order that elevates R' Yisrael to *first* place. (In view of the sources in *אש עמוד חיים* and *תורת חיים* about R' Diskin, *haRishon* must have been careless about the order, but it makes R' Epstein's statement about the *Malbim* moot.) Also cf. *Brisk Anecdotes*, א"ח, p. ק"י, which, in the name of R' Meshulam-David Soloveichik, also has his grandfather R' Hayyim omitting the *Malbim* in listing "the only true greats" in the preceding generation. Likewise does the report in *Meltzer Book*, p. 576, omit the *Malbim* when quoting R' Velvalleh Soloveichik as saying, "When R' Yisrael Salanter, R' Yehoshua'-Laib Diskin, my grandfather R' Yosheh-Ber, and my father, R' Hayyim, died, a darkness descended on the world but some light still remained. Now that R' Isser-Zalman Meltzer has passed away, nothing of the light is left." R' Velvalleh may have omitted the *Malbim* because he was speaking about "the light" of halakic study – which the *Malbim*, despite his superior mind, consigned to second place in his scholarly research, as R' Eyzil Shapira, R' Ruvallah Denneburger and R' Lipalleh Mirrer (quoted just below) pointed out. (The high regard for R' Isser-Zalman evinced by R' Velvalleh was reciprocal – see the top of p. 1207. ^a Our protagonist intimated that the speaker did *not* know the Salanter! ^b Interview January 13, 1997 ^c The following citations are from *רמב"ם הלכות תפילין פ"ד הכ"ה* ^d *Op. cit.*,

cf. *אבי הישיבות* about a mystical story concerning R' Hayyim Volozhiner which was related by R' Elya Lopian, "who had heard it from R' Hirsh Broida, who had heard it from his father-in-law, R' Simhah-Zissel Ziv, who had heard it from R' Yisrael Salanter, who had heard it from his master R' Zundel, who had heard it directly from R' Hayyim". When it was repeated with its sources to R' Velvalleh Soloveichik, he stopped the narrator as soon as the tradition went back to R' Yisrael Salanter and said, "Enough! It is sufficient: 'One does not check the purity of *yikhus* beyond [an ancestor who was allowed to serve on] the altar [מזבח]';" meaning that once a statement had been made by R' Yisrael there was no need to check its veracity any further.)

It is also noteworthy that two of the four listed greats dedicated the major part of their effort/intellect to fighting the *Haskalah*/Reform: R' Yisrael Salanter and the *Malbim*. In regard to the *Malbim's* magnum opus on *Tnakh*, authored as a weapon in the war against the German-conceived science of Bible criticism (בקורת), R' Eyzil Shapira (Slonimer) said wittily^g, "It is our good fortune that the *Malbim* chose to occupy himself with his commentary on *Tnakh*, because now we are still able to hold up our heads in his presence [in the area of *Shas* and *posqim*]." It is also said^h that when R' Yisrael Salanter met his coeval the *Malbim* after a long absence, the former cried out, "Our dear R' Meir-Laibush, what happened to you? You had been our hope that our generation would have a *gadol* like the *Gra*ⁱ in his time!" R' Yisrael seems to have meant that the *Malbim's* putting aside the *Talmud* and dedicating himself to *Tnakh* was a major disappointment for *Klal Yisrael* – and even the Salanter, for whom concern with the *Haskalah* was paramount, as above, was disillusioned. Also cf. *אשמושה של תורה* that when the *Malbim* began his commentary on *Tnakh*, he was visited by R' Ruvallah Denneburger^k and R'

Ch. 2, Exc. F – p. קכד ^e *Op. cit.*, Ch. 1, n. 7 – p. 372 / *Per* קידושין ע"ז ע"א ^g *HagMal*, p. קט ^h *Ibid.*, p. רמר, in the name of R' Yehiel-Mordkhai Gordon, who heard it from his father-in-law, R' Laizer Shullevitz – see Ch. 3, the third paragraph of Exc. D, that R' Laizer had the unique opportunity to converse with R' Yisrael. ⁱ Cf. the second paragraph of Exc. J, above, that in his youth R' Yisrael expected himself to become a second *Gra*. ^j *Op. cit.*, Ch. 2, n. 10 – pp. עא-עב ^k See the fourth paragraph of Exc. F, below.

Lipalleh Mirrer, who tried to persuade him to continue instead with his ingenious commentary on the *Shulhan 'Arukh* – the first volume of which, *אוצות החיים*, he had authored at the age of 18 and published 10 years later. He told them, “[My] work [on the Written Law (תורה שבכתב)] is the need of the hour due to the condition of the generation – so as to draw the general public to the way of the traditions of Torah and to assure that they not be caught in the nets of the infectious *Haskalah*. Only if you two do my work on תורה שבכתב will I return to writing *אוצות החיים*.” There is a legend, however, that “explains” why the *Malbim* was unable to write on matters of halakhah, and only on *Tnakh*. At the age of 26, when he intended to publish his *אוצות החיים*, he visited many *gedolim* to get their *haskamoth*, among them R’ ‘Aqiva Eiger in Posen and R’ Moshe Sopher, the Hatham-Sopher, in Pressburg. In his meetings with these two great scholars, he committed two actions which, according to lore, affected his entire life negatively. During his visit with R’ Eiger, the *Malbim* asked his host for *smikhah*. After lengthy Torah discussions with the brilliant *Malbim*, and after reviewing his awesome manuscript, the old and humble sage declared that his guest already had enough knowledge to replace him as the *rav* in Posen and told the young man to sit down in the rabbinical seat^l. The latter did not hesitate and sat down in R’ ‘Aqiva Eiger’s seat! Legend has it that due to this *faux pas* the *Malbim* suffered persecution throughout his lifetime^m and had to wander

^l It is possible that R’ Eiger wanted to prove the sincerity of his declaration by actuating it demonstratively. But it is more likely that the *Malbim*, having spent his childhood and youth in his native Vlochisk and Warsaw, where Polish Yiddish was spoken, simply misunderstood R’ ‘Aqiva Eiger’s German Yiddish and thought the old *gaon* was ordering him to take his seat. Three years later, when R’ ‘Aqiva Eiger passed away, the *Malbim*, so young and without any rabbinical experience, applied for the position honored by the world-famous *gaon* – “almost a *Rishon*” according to R’ Hayyim Soloveichik (see Ch. 4, Exc. P). נח ח. רדובלרם, *המלבים*, (מסד הרב קוק, ירושלים, תשמ”ח) (elsewhere: *haMalbim*), to which this author is indebted for much of the information about the *Malbim*, indicates surprise at his “pretentiousness (ימורנות)” in submitting his candidacy (p. 27). The declaration by R’ ‘Aqiva Eiger that he was capable of occupying the rabbinic seat of Posen might have encouraged the young scholar to make the attempt. His candidacy was turned down, however, and the city chose R’ ‘Aqiva Eiger’s son, R’ Shlomo, 24 years older (almost double the *Malbim*’s age at the time of R’ ‘Aqiva’s demise) and serving as Rav of Kalish, to succeed his father. ^m This story with its sad result was reported in my father’s name by R’ Daniel Levy on July 19, 2001.

from country to country and from one post to another – from Rav of Wreschen, in Prussia (45 kilometers east of Posen), to Rav of Kempen (where he began his in-depth study of *Tnakh*), to Rav of Bucharest, to a hiatus in Parisⁿ, to Rav of Kherson, in the Ukraine, to Rav of Lenchitz, in Poland, to Rav of Mohilov, in Belorussia, to *rav* for the Lithuanian and Polish immigrant community in Königsberg, Prussia. He died in Kiev while on the way to yet a new post, Rav of Kremenchug, in the Ukraine. R’ Eiger, who refrained generally from issuing *haskamoth*, gave his guest a letter in which he discussed some halakhic matters the young author had written about. The *Malbim*’s other thoughtless action occurred on a late Sabbath afternoon when he sat down, inadvertently this time, in the Hatham-Sopher’s seat, whereupon his host told him to “remain in (his) place”. From then on he felt that he could not advance in halakhic studies: he *remained in his place* scholastically^o.

ⁿ There he contributed articles to the Orthodox mouthpiece, *הלבונון* (see Ch. 2, the end of the twelfth paragraph of Exc. A), and, surprisingly, also won the admiration of the *maskil* Senior Sachs (see Ch. 4, Exc. H). ^o The story as my father told it – according to “*Florida*” (Ch. 1, n. 71) – appears in *Reb Yaakov* (*op. cit.*, Foreword), p. 196, and in *רבי יעקב* (*op. cit.*, *ibidem*), pp. 260-261. A version slightly different from both published ones was reported by R’ Osher Katzman in “*Florida*”, and this author also recalls hearing the story from his father with yet another slight alteration. Besides these four versions originating with my father, another two versions appear in two publications in the name of R’ Yoseph-Ber Soloveitchik, one in *נפש הרב* (*op. cit.*, Ch. 3, Exc. I), pp. רנא-רנב, and the other in *HagMal*, pp. רמד-רמה. (Like R’ Moshe-Meir Yoshor, the author of *HagMal*, my father might also have heard this story from R’ Soloveitchik [as he did about the four quasi-*Rishonim*, the *Malbim* among them] but because of the differences, enumerated below, between all four of the versions attributed to my father and the two attributed to R’ Yoseph-Ber, and especially because of my father’s additional and related tale of the *Malbim*’s meeting with R’ ‘Aqiva Eiger, it is quite obvious that my father heard the story of the *Malbim*-Hatham-Sopher blunder elsewhere.) Numbering the six versions in order of their mention above, this author will point out the differences among them in three aspects of the story: #1 – when it occurred; #2 – what caused the *Malbim*’s error; #3 – to whom the Hatham-Sopher said his fateful words. Item #1: according to versions 1, 2 and 3, the mishap occurred before *Minhah* in the wake of the *Malbim*’s delivery of a three-hour *drashah* in the main synagogue; according to version 4, it happened after the delivery of the long *drashah*, but before *Arvith*; according to versions 5 and 6, it happened before *Arvith*, but there was no *drashah* – only a long day of Torah discussions between the two Torah giants at the Hatham-Sopher’s home. Item #2: according to versions 1 and 3, the *Malbim* was still so preoccupied with his *pilpul* after coming down from the *bimah* that he failed to take note of where he sat down; according to version 2, he was so weak from his long discourse that he did not have the strength to pay attention to where he found a seat, and once he was seated, he floated away in thought; according to version 4, since the *drashah* had been delivered after *Minhah* and ended when it was dusk already, the darkness caused the *Malbim*’s mistake (and lasted until a *goy*

The *Malbim*'s disengagement from the halakhic parts of Torah went so far that, despite his having to rule on questions of Jewish

came to kindle the *shul*'s lamps); according to version 5, the Torah discussions concluded as the dark was setting in, and (like version 4) darkness was the cause of the *Malbim*'s error "as he sat down in the *rav*'s seat next to the one he had occupied throughout the Sabbath"; according to version 6, the *Malbim* was wont to spend the dusk of the Sabbath in seclusive introspection, and after "walking alone to the synagogue with all his threads of thoughts focused on the Upper Spheres", he failed to notice that he was not in his own seat but in the one next to it, the *rav*'s. Item #3: according to version 1, when the *Malbim* did not notice that the *rav* had come and was standing at his side, the Hatham-Sopher spoke up and told him directly, "Young man, remain in your place"; according to versions 2 and 4, when the *Malbim* finally noticed the *rav* standing over him – either because he had by now focused his thoughts on his surroundings, or because the *shul* had become light – and jumped up to move to his own seat, the Hatham-Sopher spoke up as he did; according to version 3, the *shamosh* who had escorted the *rav* to *shul* asked the Hatham-Sopher whether he should tell the young man to move over, and the Hatham-Sopher replied (in third person), "Let him remain in his place"; according to version 5, one of the *ba'allebatim* told the *Malbim* that he was sitting in the wrong seat, but the latter did not grasp that he was being spoken to, and only when the Hatham-Sopher told the *ba'allebos*, "Let him remain in his place," did the *Malbim* realize what was happening; according to version 6, the *ba'allebatim* wanted to arouse the *Malbim* from his reverie and tell him to move over, but the Hatham-Sopher did not let them and made his fateful declaration to them, and when the *Malbim* came to and apologized for taking the *rav*'s place, the Hatham-Sopher told him exactly what had transpired between himself and his *ba'allebatim*, including that he had told them "to let him remain in his place". (None of the versions say if the *Malbim* actually remained sitting in the Hatham-Sopher's place after being told to do so. After what had happened in his encounter with R' 'Aqiva Eiger, one is left to wonder about this.) As is recorded in *Reb Yaakov* and *רבי יעקב*, my father added that "for the rest of his life, the *Malbim* isolated himself at *Minhah* time on *Shabbos* and became soaked with sweat brought on by the terror of the Hatham-Sopher's words"; according to *HagMal*, the *Malbim* had adopted the habit of isolating himself at Sabbath *Minhah* time before his encounter with the Hatham-Sopher, and that was what had brought on the debacle. Perhaps this time of the week had been only a time of introspection for the *Malbim*, and after the Pressburg incident it turned into a time of terror, too. There would seem to be a problem with my father's version that the *Malbim* delivered a *pilpul* in the main *shul* in Pressburg: Since the Hatham-Sopher's approbation is dated 12 Tishri 5595 (Wednesday, October 15, 1834) and the *Malbim* had spent Rosh Hashanah in Nicholsburg and received the *haskamah* of its *rav*, R' Nahum Travish, on the day after the holiday, the Sabbath he spent in Pressburg was necessarily *Shabbath Shuvah* – surely the Rav addressed the community then, not his guest. The resolution is that the *Malbim* remained in Pressburg after the date of his host's approbation and the incident took place after he had received the *haskamah* already, either a *Yom Tov* Sabbath, the first day of Sukkoth or *Shmini 'Atzereth*, or on *Shabbath Braishith*, 29 Tishri 5595 (November 1, 1834). This is supported by the text of the Hatham-Sopher's *haskamah* *ארצות* (November 1, 1834). This is supported by the text of the Hatham-Sopher's *haskamah* *ארצות* *הקייט*, in which he apologizes for giving it before spending more time with the petitioner. He writes, "The city's needs are many in these holy days. If I had not seen the testimony of the greats of Israel [who have already given their approbations, I would not have been able to give mine]... and I had intended to spend some more entertaining days with him [לשעשע עמו]. [But] then the days of the Holy *Yom Tov* Sukkoth will arrive and afterwards [come] the autumn days [when] the road is distant. Therefore I said, Let the part [which I have gone over] testify on the whole [sepher]." (He goes on to laud the special method *הקייט* applies in reaching

law in connection with his rabbinical posts and in responsa to queries directed to him by mail, he avoided "speaking in learning". *HagMal^p* relates that the *Malbim* happened to come to Petersburg and a "great Polish Torah individual" came there "from a great distance" to "speak in learning" and help him to "resolve several difficult halakhic questions he had". The *Malbim* turned him down, saying, that "personal preoccupations prevented (him) from delving into halakhic matters, but since (he was) heavily involved in the study of *Tnakh*, (he was) ready to speak to (him) on any Biblical subject of (his) choice – but not in Talmudic discourse". The visitor's insistence on "speaking in learning" was to no avail until he pulled out of his pocket a letter written by R' 'Aqiva Eiger to his father, and said, "My father was acquainted with R' Eiger after having met him when the latter came to Lomzha for his son's wedding" – see Ch. 3, n. 10. "Before R' 'Aqiva Eiger left, my father asked him to pray that he be blessed with a son, and when the *gaon* returned home, he wrote this letter to my father: the *rav*'s blessing was intended for my birth. Only if you will consent to 'speak in learning' with me will I show you this letter." Now the *Malbim*'s pleadings to see the letter were to no avail – and he submitted to having a Talmudic discussion with his visitor. When the *Malbim* was shown the letter, he said, "This is indeed R' 'Aqiva Eiger's handwriting," and kissed it.

My father told R' David Cymet^q that R' Yisrael's hurried departure from Vilna not long after the Yom Kippur episode was a direct result of the acrimony with the *beth din*. My father disagreed with the generally accepted version put forth in *Katz I^r* and quoted from early sources in *Etkes Book^s* that R' Yisrael left Vilna because of the attempt of the *maskilim* to compel him through Russian government officialdom to teach at the Rabbinical Seminary established relatively not long prior to the epidemic^t. It is

conclusions "close to the Truth of Torah".) The wording indicates that the *Malbim* intended to remain in the city at least till after Sukkoth – but not too much later, when the autumn weather would make traveling on the roads difficult ("distant"). ^p Pp. רע"ר"ע, in the name of Chief Rabbi Yitzhaq-Isaac Herzog ^q See the beginning of this excursus. ^r Pp. 162-169 ^s Pp. 158 and 192 ^t Confusion reigns as to the exact date of the opening of the rabbinical seminary (בית מדרש לרבנים). *Etkes Book^s* (p. 161) gives 5608 as the year; *Jacob Mark* (pp. 81-82) sets the

Salanter, R' Shmuel Shtrashun, and others turned down the offer because they knew what kind of seeds the government wanted to plant in the field of these [seminaries] and what crop it intended to harvest^y – yet the other candidates did not flee^z.

(*מקור ברוך* reveals that R' Ya'aqov Barrit – who was the *rebbe* of the two brothers who later held rabbinical posts in Vilna, R' Betzalel haKohen and R' Shlomo haKohen, and of the Chafetz-Chaim as a youth^a – was invited to take the post at the rabbinical seminary and turned it down because he suspected, as did the other leading scholars who were offered the position, that the basic purpose for which the government had established the seminaries in Vilna and Zhitomir was to undermine the Jewish faith^b. This reading of R' Barrit's attitude toward the institution is in conflict with the testimony of one of its students, R' Barrit's nephew מרגליות ח.ה., that “not only was he not an enemy of the rabbinical seminaries, but he even advised youths who asked his opinion to attend them”^c. A biographical booklet on R' Barrit, *תולדות יעקב*^d, by his son, משה יהודא באריט, also reports that the *rav* tested the seminarians “for ordination as *רב מטעם* [government rabbi], as well as on other subjects at other times of the year” – which indicates close cooperation with the seminary administration. But the autobiography of Elyaquim Tzunzer^e seemingly proves that *מקור ברוך* was right. It maintains that it was a retort to General Popatov, the governor of the Vilna Gubernia, by R' Ya'aqov Barrit – or, as he was also known, R' Yankalleh Kovner – that led to the *shutting down* of the Vilna institution. After the police swooped down on 40 young Jews and arrested them as Nihilists in 5632 [1872], the general called in several prominent Jews, R' Ya'aqov among them, to castigate them for educating their young people to be unfaithful to the czar. R' Barrit replied that only as a result of the Russian govern-

^y See the end of this paragraph for specifics about the government's intentions. ^z *מקור ברוך*, p. 1108, attempts to rationalize the difference in how the various candidates reacted by describing the Salanter unconvincingly as “a man with a frightened heart (לב רגז)” and more susceptible to pressure. ^a *Per בכח"ח*, p. 2. ^b See the end of this paragraph that when secret government papers were released in 5626 (1866) it came to light that this was precisely the government's intention. ^c P. 257 of *איייר תשכ"ח* (חוברת ט"ו *לעבר*, חוברת ט"ו) in an article entitled “רשימה אוטוביוגרפית” *אליקים צונזנערס ווערק*, באנד צוויי. ^d *ילנא, חרמ"ג*. ^e *של ח.ה. מרגליות (op. cit., Ch. 2, n. 4)*

ment's getting involved in Jewish education did such a thing happen. Transmission of this reply to St. Petersburg resulted in the summary closure of the two Russian rabbinical seminaries, in Vilna and in Zhitomir, in the same year, 5632 [1872]. It is of course possible that R' Ya'aqov became disenchanted with the seminary – and possibly figured out why the government had established such schools – sometime *later* than when his nephew was in attendance. Furthermore, perhaps R' Barrit's observation of how adversely the school had affected his nephew was what brought the *rav* around to this realization! But this still does not account for R' Ya'akov's son writing *after his father's death* of his positive relationship with the seminary without the caveat that he later changed his mind. *מקור ברוך's* alleged reason for his turning down the Seminary post – which was offered *as soon as the facility was established* – also remains contradicted by R' Barrit's nephew's testimony about his uncle's support of the institution, *at least initially*.)

If the purpose of R' Yisrael's move to Kovno was to escape the heavy hand of the government, he gained nothing by moving from one city to another under the same regime. If, however, as claimed by our protagonist, the Yom Kippur events were the cause of the Salanter's relocation, both the move itself and its time frame make good sense – especially in view of another detail which my father related^f. He was introduced to a fifth-generation descendant^g of R' Laiballeh Shapiro^h and exclaimed, “This warms the cockles of my heart! I learned with your father in Slabodka; and what a *'iluy* he was! Your progenitor R' Laiballeh was an opponent of Musarⁱ – and I shall tell you how opponents of Musar acted at that time. When R' Yisrael Salanter wanted to move to Kovno, he asked permission from the newly appointed R' Laiballeh. The latter responded that if R' Yisrael was willing to take on a rabbinic appointment he could come – but he could not stay in Kovno unemployed^j. R' Laiballeh then married off a son, and R' Yisrael

^f During his last visit to Israel, in Sivan 5742 (June 1982) ^g R' Moshe Karlinsky, interviewed December 26, 1986. ^h *Cf. Ch. 3, nn. 15 and 35.* ⁱ *Cf. Katz I*, p. 181, that R' Shapiro would send R' Yehoshua'-Heshil of Yaneveh, a brilliant orator, to preach in the *batei midrash* where R' Yisrael had spoken, in order to refute his words. ^j *Cf. ibid.*, pp. 179-180, on why R' Laiballeh made such a condition. During the eight years R' Yisrael remained in Kovno, he served

did not receive an invitation. The latter was in a dilemma: if he were to stay away from the wedding, he would be disgracing the Rav; but were he to attend, he might be perpetrating an act of thievery. He concluded that inasmuch as ordinary Jews, including the poor of the city, were given some delicacies from the wedding – these were distributed to everyone – he would attend and partake only of what was set out for the general public. At the wedding, R' Laiballeh noticed that R' Yisrael was restrained in partaking of the repast. R' Shapiro immediately suspected what was amiss and asked his *shamosh* whether he had invited R' Yisrael. Receiving a negative reply [‘Why have the *musarnik* here?!’], the *rav* objected, ‘But I had told you to invite him!’ This,” concluded my father, “is a portrait of [the gentle spirit of] the Musar opponents of yore.” According to our protagonist, it was in consequence of his show-down with the Vilna *beth din* that R' Yisrael decided it was indecorous for him to remain in that city – and perhaps the *beth din* expressed displeasure with him at some occasion sometime after the Yom Kippur event – and he wrote to R' Laiballeh asking for permission to move to Kovno. The correspondence and the technical arrangements took up a number of weeks and the move to Kovno took place in Heshvan (November) or Kislev (December)^k.

Regarding the relationship between the Rav of Kovno and the new arrival in the city, R' Yisrael Shurin said^l that at a family *brith*, R' Laiballeh told the participants not to begin the ceremony until R' Yisrael Salanter came. Although the audience believed that R' Yisrael would not attend his opponent's affair, R' Laiballeh was proven right when the Salanter showed up a few minutes later. Also cf. Ch. 1, the end of the second paragraph of Exc. B, about a time when R' Laiballeh did not want to be visited by R' Yisrael. (An interesting comment possibly ascribed to R' Laiballeh sheds light on how he viewed another religious movement. In the *Broda Correspondence*^m the author reminisces, “I recall from the time I was a boy when I was privileged to serve the

as city public speaker (an undefined posting – see below from *Etkes Book*) for two years and as *rosh yeshiva* in Nevyazzer Kloiz for six. ^k See p. 1121, above. ^l Interview July 27, 1996. R' Shurin heard this from R' Nota Bialik(-Bilitzky). ^m Ch. 3, the third paragraph of Exc. N

gaon, the faultless *tzaddiq* [צדיק ותמים] R' Avraham-Shmuel of Rassein, זי"ע [may his merit protect us]ⁿ, for about two and a half years, and more than a few times I heard his holy mouth complaining about the Musar movement, which had only started in his days. I do not remember clearly whether he said this on his own, or, it seems, in the name of the *gaon* R' Laiballeh Shapiro of Kovno, זצלה"ה [may his memory be blessed for life in the future world], זי"ע, in these words: The *hasidim* of Zhamut [the Musarites] will do more harm and be more destructive to us in days to come than the *hasidim* of Galicia [the *Hasidic* movement], and we will have to suffer and be afflicted by them.”) Also cf. *Etkes Book*^o as to the nature of the Salanter's initial appointment in Kovno, and the reason he left the post after a short while. At first, he was put “in charge of matters that pertain to Fear of G-d”^p, delivering learned and rousing speeches week by week throughout the city, but at the beginning of the following decade, when R' Laiballeh realized that this approach to Fear of G-d was unconventional, i.e., the Musar *derekh*, he forced R' Yisrael to resign. R' Laiballeh's opposition to Musar then became a matter of public record and reached such an intensity that it prompted his *shamosh* to highhandedly not invite “the *musarnik*” to R' Laiballeh's son's wedding in contravention of the *rav*'s express orders. Accordingly, the story of this undelivered invitation must have occurred in 5612 (1852), the last year of R' Laiballeh's life and five-year tenure in Kovno^q.

We may conjecture that the plebeian tendency – like *Jacob Mark*'s, as mentioned above – to revise the shocking story of R'

ⁿ He was a *talmid* of R' Elinkeh Ragoler (cf. Ch. 3, n. 10), as was R' Laiballeh Shapiro. ^o Pp. 192-193 and 213-214 ^p Quoted from p. xii of the biographical introduction to *שכיל דודק* (*op. cit.*, Ch. 2, the twenty-fourth paragraph of Exc. A) ^q Also cf. the biographical introduction to *שכיל דודק*, p. xiii, which states, “After a long time [ברכות דימים] a tremendous dichotomy developed between the *gaon* R' Laiballeh Shapiro and the *gaon* R' Yisrael Salanter because of the differences in their nature and their methods of study.” Emphasis has been added to three points in this statement which are incorrect: the two opponents were together in Kovno for only five years; the difference in nature, whatever it was, was not relevant to their dispute about what was correct Jewish religiosity – see the statement of R' Avraham-Shmuel of Rassein quoted above; and different methods of study (of the Talmud) were not, and have never been, grounds for disputes among Torah leaders.

Yisrael's eating on Yom Kippur necessitated the invention in *non-rabbinic circles* of an alternative cause for the Salanter's move to Kovno. The Salanter's vehement opposition to the concept of rabbinical seminaries (demonstrated categorically in the last half-year of his life when the establishment of a *new* one was considered³) provided the plausible alibi. It is also to be conjectured that if in regard to R' Ya'aqov Barrit, who was a sedate Vilna scholar, there are conflicting testimonies about his relationship to the rabbinical seminary, as above, there surely might have been moot opinions on how the institution was viewed by the Salanter, the man with such unconventional ideas as sending *talmidim* to universities⁴. To assure that the Salanter's opposition to the rabbinical seminary be unequivocally clear, word had to be spread in *rabbinic circles* that he went to extremes to avoid any identification with it. Thus both rabbinic and non-rabbinic circles joined in spreading the false reason for R' Yisrael's "escape" to Kovno. This reason, despite its logical shortcomings, may have already been put forth by R' Yisrael's adherents at the time of his move to Kovno. He himself had no interest in denying the fictitious cause, because flaunting the true reason, i.e., that he was at odds with the Vilna rabbinical establishment, could only make him look suspicious in his newly chosen domicile, where he needed to engage some public post, as stipulated by R' Laiballeh's residency permission. This explains why R' Yehonathan Eliasberg also erred in writing⁵ – some 40 years later⁶ – that R' Yisrael *told* his father when making the arrangements for the move to Kovno that the rabbinical seminary was the cause. It is suggested that R' Eliasberg, son of the man responsible for arranging the Salanter's salary in Kovno, innocently embellished the conversation between the two in which, if the seminary *was* indeed mentioned, R' Yisrael did not *say* he had left Vilna because of the seminary, but did not correct the Kovno leader's (wrong) assumption.

³ Cf. *Katz 1*, pp. 238-241; *Etkes Book*, pp. 295-305; Ch. 3, the end of the first paragraph of Exc. P; and Ch. 4, the second paragraph of Exc. H. ⁴ Cf. Ch. 3, Exc. S. ⁵ P. xii in the biographical introduction to his father's *שכיל הוהב* " *שכיל הוהב* " was published in 5657 (1897), but was written at least six years earlier.

Another, albeit weak proof that the seminary offer was not the cause of his departure from Vilna may be seen in the fact that R' Yisrael was secretive about why he left. This is indicated in *זכרון יעקב*⁷ where the author reports, "In one of my conversations with R' Yisrael⁸, I asked him... if he had additional, more hidden reasons and rationalizations for which he did not want to accept this post – besides the basic reason that the foundation of the institution was based only on the power of the non-Jewish director. He replied *with serious mien* (emphasis added), 'If it were worthwhile for the G-d-fearers [חרדים] to take these houses under their supervision and leadership, then R' David⁹ of Bikhov would be more proper and capable than I.' I saw that it was his holy wish not to talk about this anymore, so I desisted." Significantly, R' Yisrael did not reply that he had turned down the post because there was a more fitting individual to take it on. He only offered his opinion about his eligibility for the post in a hypothetical situation in which the G-d-fearing community would be running the seminary. With the emphasized words, R' Ya'aqov Halevi Lipschitz seems to want to bring out that despite the hypothetical nature of R' Yisrael's response – R' Lipschitz realized that the Salanter was not answering his question but merely theorizing – the Salanter maintained a "serious mien". R' Yisrael responded evasively to the (false) assumption that his exit from Vilna was connected with the offer at the seminary, similarly to the way he reacted when R' Eliasberg's father made the same mistake¹⁰.

The hypothesis that the Salanter left Vilna because of the seminary offer became firmly rooted when the *maskilim*, looking for a scapegoat on which to blame the failure of the original rabbinical facility, claimed that had he taken on the position, the institution would have succeeded. Cf. *זכרון-תרומ"ח* where a writer (who had studied in Volozhin for a year and was generally favorably dis-

⁷ *Op. cit.*, Ch. 1, n. 1 – Vol. I, p. 176 ⁸ It took place in the summer of 5642 (1882), a half-year before the Salanter's demise, per *זכרון יעקב*, Vol. III, pp. 125-127. This is over three decades after R' Salanter left Vilna. ⁹ Luria, known by the acronym *Radal* ¹⁰ Also cf. *ibid.*, p. 177, that R. Yisrael gave another questioner, Doctor of Philosophy Zvi-Hirsh Aptheker-Shaphir of Kovno, a different evasive answer to the same essential query. Cf. Ch. 4, the second paragraph of Exc. H, for details. ² P. 65

posed to the Yeshiva), (מיכה יוסף ברדיצבסקי יב"ם), makes this claim in response to the *Netziv's* argument that the failure of the rabbinical seminaries militated *against* the introduction of secular studies in the Yeshiva. Also cf. *השחר*^a, which states^b in an article by ישראל בערנשטיין entitled "Speeding Redemption) (למהר גאולה)", "The wise men of the generation [חכמי הדור, *maskilim*] considered [the rejection of the post] a criminal transgression [עון פלילי] by R' Yisrael." The *maskilim* conveniently overlooked the Russian government's objective in founding the rabbinical seminaries, as spelled out in Minister of Religions and Culture Uvarov's memorandum to Czar Nikolai I – which became public^c in 5626 (1866), 14 years before *בערנשטיין's* article was published. The memorandum reads, "Via the rabbis graduating from the rabbinical seminaries the Jews will disdain the Talmud, which is the obstacle standing in the way of their converting to Christianity.^d" The *maskilim* were angrier with R' Yisrael than with the others who turned down the post – "R' Ya'akov Barrit... R' Shmuel Shtrashun, and others," as cited from *מקור ברוך* on p. 1123, above – because after considering him one of their kind, as in Ch. 3, the second paragraph of Exc. S (p. 555), their disappointment with him was channeled into hostility.

§ the third paragraph

a possible reason why the Koidanover *hasidim* opposed R' Yisrael Salanter – R' Shlomo of Karlin refuses treatment of his Cossack-inflicted wound on *Shabbos* – Zhelikhov is a refuge for persecuted *hasidim* – our protagonist's grandson marries the Koidanover Rebbe's great-grandson's granddaughter

To shed light on the terms my father used in the Salanter Interview regarding the Belorussian *hasidic rebbes*, as quoted on p. 1104, above, the Koidanover Rebbe at the time of Vilna's cholera epidemic was the first of the Koidanover line, R' Shlomo-Hayyim Perlov (5557-5622 (1797-1862)), son of R' Aharon, son of R' Mordkhai of Lekhovich (5502-5570 [1742-1810]). R' Shlomo-

^a P. 233 ^b Among ministry papers covering the years 1814-1864 – see Ch. 2, the twentieth paragraph of Exc. A. ^c See *מקור ברוך*, pp. 1072-1073.

Hayyim was only nine when his father died and was raised by the father of his mother, Pearl^e, R' Asher (the First) of Stolín (5520-5586 [1760-1826]), son of R' Aaron (the Great) of Karlin (5496-5532 [1736-1772]). R' Asher, having also been orphaned as a youngster, was raised by a prime *talmid* of his father (and just two years younger), R' Shlomo of Karlin (5498-5552 [1738-1792]), whose disciple was R' Mordkhai of Lekhovich. It is to be conjectured that since, according to criticism by R' Shnayor-Zalman of Liadi (5507-5573 [1747-1813]), R' Shlomo was "denigrating the *lomdim* (משפיל את הלומדים)" or, at least, "not honoring the *lomdim* (לא מכבד את הלומדים)"^f, he may have passed on this tradition to his ward R' Asher, who handed it down to his ward and grandson, the Koidanover Rebbe. The tradition may likewise have been reinforced by the Koidanover Rebbe's *paternal* grandfather, who was a disciple of R' Shlomo, as mentioned.^g This attitude toward Torah scholars may have aroused R' Yisrael's "great opposition" to R' Shlomo-Hayyim, which my father guessed was at the root of the Rebbe's alleged curse.

It may be, however, that R' Yisrael had done nothing to provoke the ire of these *hasidim* other than to eat on Yom Kippur. It stands to reason that they would be particularly incensed by the Salanter's "desecration" of Yom Kippur because 56 years earlier, R' Shlomo had not permitted anyone to desecrate the Sabbath on his behalf when he was shot by a Cossack, and as a result died five days later^h. The real reason for his refusal to be medically treated on *Shabbath* may have been simply because he misjudged the seriousness of his wound – a fallibility which *hasidim* disdained to ascribe to their *rebbe*. They saw him insteadⁱ as *waiting* to be martyred, like the Tanna Rabbi 'Aqiva^j, or^k destined to be

^e Hence the family name Perlov ^f The two versions are recorded, respectively, in *דור דעה*, by בית קרלין סטולין (published by בני-יורק, תשי"ב) pp. קע-קעא, and in *קובץ בית אהרן וישראל*, שנה ת, גליון ד, p. צ. ^g Also cf. *קובץ בית אהרן וישראל*, שנה ת, גליון ד, p. צ. ^h Cf. *קובץ בית אהרן וישראל*, שנה ת, גליון ז, p. ק. ⁱ Cf. *קובץ בית אהרן וישראל*, שנה ת, גליון ז, p. ק. ^j Cf. *קובץ בית אהרן וישראל*, שנה ת, גליון ז, p. ק. ^k Cf. *קובץ בית אהרן וישראל*, שנה ת, גליון ז, p. ק. ^l Cf. *קובץ בית אהרן וישראל*, שנה ת, גליון ז, p. ק. ^m Cf. *קובץ בית אהרן וישראל*, שנה ת, גליון ז, p. ק.