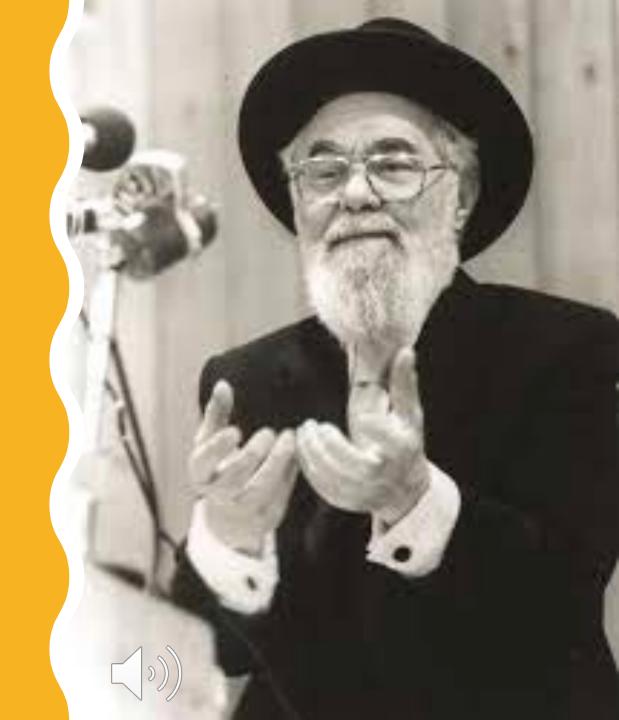
RAV MORDECHAI PINCHAS TEITZ

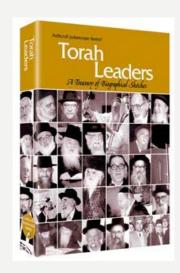
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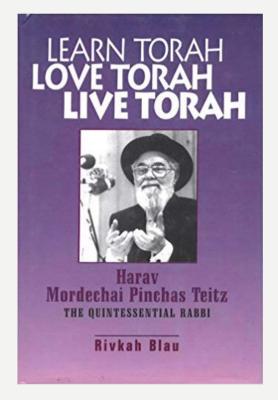
RABBI EFREM GOLDBERG BOCA RATON SYNAGOGUE



INTRODUCTION

- Recognize many here knew Rabbi Teitz. This presentation is geared to those who didn't.
- Not comprehensive, an overview of Rabbi Teitz and his contribution to American Orthodoxy.
- Feel very connected because of my close family relationship.
- Much of this presentation gleaned from Dr. Blau's wonderful book.





ORIGINS

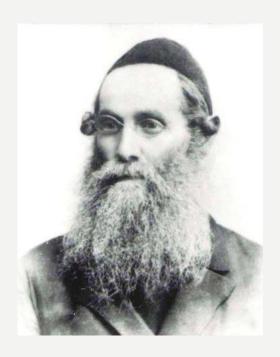
- Born: July 7, 1908 (8 Tammuz) in Subat, Latvia
- Mother Rebbetzin Shaina Sira Shapiro Teitz (1873-1955)
- Father R' Binyamin Avraham Teitz (1872-1956) Led a Shul that had Misnagdim at one end, Chassidim at the other and the home for the rabbi and his family in between.
 - R' Binyamin Avraham was really a Rabinovich but to avoid being drafted, they used papers of a boy named Teitz who had passed away but whose parents never informed the government.
- Named for his great-grandfather, R' Mordechai Rabinovich who was a big talmid chacham with semicha from the Netziv, the Beis HaLevi and Rav Yitzchak Elchanan.
- His middle name, Pinchas, came from the parsha in which he was born.





ORIGINS

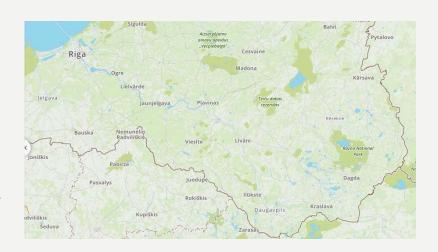
- He had an illustrious yichus including the Levush, the Maharshal and others
- R' Teitz's great uncle was the Aderet, Rav Eliyahu Dovid Rabinowitz who was a twin. The name te'omim was added to the last name so he was Rabinovitch-Teomim or known by acronym Aderet.
- The Aderet was rav in Ponevez and Mir before going in 1901 to assist R' Shmuel Salant who was the chief rabbi in Yerushalayim.
- When Rav Binyamin was younger he lived with his uncle the Aderet and was a chavrusa of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha'Kohen Kook.
- Rav Kook married the Aderet's daughter, Batsheva Alte, who tragically died only a few years later.





EARLY YEARS

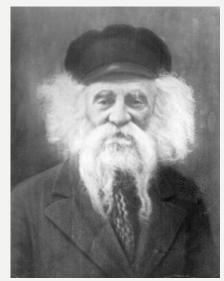
- During WWI, the Teitz family were refugees in Russia, but they soon realized that with the Communists were making laws against being an observant Jew and that it was time to leave.
- They decided to return to Latvia.
- R' Pinchas celebrated his bar mitzvah on the train. There were no Torahs so he read from a printed Chumash.
- The family settled in Ribinizik but soon after, the community of Livenhof asked R' Teitz to lead their community. Although it was a Chassidishe community with four chassidishe shuls and R' Teitz was a misnaged, they nevertheless invited him to come lead them because of his outstanding reputation.
- He accepted and served there until WWII.



EARLY YEARS

- Livinhoff was only 40 kilometers from Dvinsk, home of two of the greatest rabbis of the generation, Rav Meir Simcha Hakohein and Rabbi Yoseif Rosen, the Rogatchover Gaon.
- R' Pinchas's father had a close relationship with the Rogatchover who, in turn, had tremendous respect for him. When people came to the Rogatchover for his beracha he would often refer them to the Rav of Livenoff, saying, "Go to Binyamin HaTzaddik."
- Before Pesach of 1923, when he was only 14, at his father's suggestion, he went to visit them.
- He eventually became extremely close with and frequent guest of the Rogatchover, and learned with him for four years.





MESHECH CHACHMA

- Rav Meir Simcha wrote the Meshech Chachma at the age of 17. His father feared that if he were to publish it, he would be thought of as a darshan, an expert in homiletics, rather than a lamdan, an analytical scholar. So he instructed his son not to publish his work until he produced a sefer with lomdus.
- Rav Meir Simcha left the Meshech Chachma aside even after he published the Ohr Some'ach on the Rambam's Mishneh Torah. He confided to the young Rabbi Teitz that to his regret, he lacked the strength to edit Meshech Chachma.
- R' Teitz printed R' Meir Simchas teshuvos in 1981
- R' Teitz suggested a young man in Slabodka, Rabbi Avraham David Yoffe, who did edit the work, now recognized as one of the great commentaries on Chumash.
- R'Yoffe was murdered by the Nazis.



ROGATCHOVER GAON

- R' Teitz would later say that only because of the invention of the computer can we even have the words to describe the Rogatchover's memory. It wasn't that he had a great memory, it was that he didn't have the ability to forget.
- His works were saved by his daughter, Rachel Citron, who gave her life to go back to Latvia to rescue his writings b microfilming them and sending to a relative in America.
- R' Teitz was later instrumental in getting them published by raising money from many including the Rebbe.



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EARLY YEARS

- R' Pinchas enrolled in yeshiva in Ponevez, Lithuania where his chavrusa was Shmuel Volk who later became a Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan.
- After two years at Ponevez, R' Pinchas spent a year in Riga, Latvia.
- In Ponovezh, young R' Pinchas was very disturbed by the impact of the Budists, Communists, secularists and others on the Torah community
- At only I4 years old, he decided he had to do something about it and started a yeshiva in Livinhoff, as a project of Zeirei Agudath Israel.
- He named this institution Yavneh, after the city of Yavneh, seat of the Sanhedrin in the days of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.





Letter from Lubavitcher Rebbe, R'YosefYitzchak Schneersohn, June 5, 1931

SLOBODKA

- Kenesses Yisroel in Slobodka, Lithuania was one of the most prominent yeshivas of its time.
- R' Pinchas's older brothers had studied there and in 1924, he enrolled to learn from the Alter, R' Nassan Tzvi Finkel (1847-1927).
- His emphasis was on the greatness of man and therefore the uniqueness of each individual.
- He was in the yeshiva with R'Yaakov Kaminetzky, R' Yaakov Ruderman, R'Yitzchak Hutner, R'Yechiel Ya'akov Weinberg (Sridei Eish) who remained life long friends.
- His time in Slobodka had an enormous impact on shaping him.





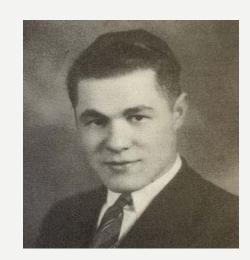
Identification picture and registration card for R' Teitz at the rabbinical semiary Kneses Israel.



ACTIVISM

- R' Mordechai Dubin (1889-1956) member of Latvian parliament and founder of Agudas Yisroel of Latvia.
- Worked with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R'Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn and helped get him out of prison.
- Zeev Jabotinsky (1880-1940) heard about R' Teitz and tried to recruit him to be a spokesperson of Zionism to the Torah community.
- In 1932, at the request of Dubin, R' Teitz met R' Yechezkel Abramsky (1886-1976) at the train station when he was released from two years in Siberia. He became head of the London Beis Din and in 1951 moved to Israel. They maintained a relationship.





TRIP TO AMERICA

- In 1933, R' Eliyahu Meir Bloch was scheduled to go to America to speak and raise funds.
- He asked Rabbi Teitz who was editor of "unzer Shtimme, Our Voice," head of a religious youth movement, founder of a yeshiva in Livenhof and rabbi of Pivonia to come. R' Teitz was adventurous and wanted to see America for himself so he accepted.
- They agreed they would learn together a minimum of one hour a day.
- The traveled to Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Montreal, Toronto and other cities. Despite the depressed economy people still supported a yeshiva in Lithuania.



TRIP TO AMERICA

- At a convention of Agudas Ha'Rabbonim two years later, he would reflect on his trip and say, rabbis must teach the laws of Jewish marriage, found day schools and learn English or they would lose the next generation.
- He was sent a letter returning his membership dues and berating him for giving advice to older rabbis. He saved that letter.
- Though he didn't have a degree, he recommended rabbis to go to college to both be educated and have a fall back position so he would have independence to say what needs to be said.
- He printed business cards for his time in America that said:
 - Rabbi Pinchos M. Teitz
 - Representing a movement to organize a militant Jewish Youth Organization throughout the world.
 - European Address
 - Livani, POB 62, Latvia

R' ELAZAR MEIR PREIL

- R' Elazar Meir Preil was married more than ten years and did not have children.
- His wife finally conceived only to die with the baby at childbirth.
- He decided to start a new life in another country and so he moved to London to raise money for the Telz yeshiva. He went to Manchester to serve as a rabbi and then moved to the United States.
- There, he married Frieda Mann who had come from Lithuania to visit her married sister.
- Together they had Basya, Chana, Sarah and Yehoshua Yosef. They spoke Yiddish in the home and had litvishe customs, just like the Teitzes in Europe.
- He was rabbi in Trenton until 1919, then in Elizabeth, NJ all while teaching Talmud from 1912-1924 at Yeshivas Etz Chaim which became Yeshiva University.

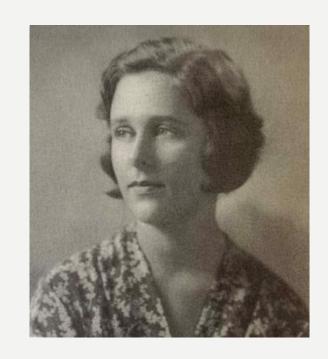
TEITZ - ABOFF

- My great-grandfather, Reverend Yonah Gedalya Aboff learned in Kishinev and became a schochet. He had relatives in America and emigrated to Elizabeth to be the schochet under R' Preil.
- Great-grandfather was the schochet under R' Teitz and was the ba'al koreh as well. One of very few homes they were allowed to eat in was my grandparents.
- Grandfather Sam married Ruth Nulman from Newark and they lived in Elizabeth their whole lives.



R' ELAZAR MEIR PREIL

- Zemiros story & daled minim story
- R' Preil started a Jewish day school but it was ahead of its time and didn't last. His children went to public school and had a Jewish tutor.
- Basya/Bessie had a classmate and friend named Sam E. Aboff, my grandfather.
- One of Basya's teachers told her once, "A rabbi's daughter will not get into the honor society: I'll make sure of it." That same teacher who had graduated Barnard would comment to the class that her alma matter rarely accepted Jewish applicants.
- Almost fifty years later, Mrs. Teitz ran into another teacher from her childhood who mentioned she was going to see that anti-Semitic teacher. Rebbetzin Teitz said, please tell her that Bess Preil has five daughters and that they all graduated from Barnard. She considered that her victory over anti-Semitism.



MARRIAGE OF R'PINCHAS & BESSIE

- People were vying for the Rabbinical position, but R' Preil had written in his will that it should got to the man Basya would marry. R' Eliezer Silver would not let the funeral begin until everyone agreed to that condition.
- My grandfather remembered that while the community was waiting for a new rabbi, people consulted Bessie on halachic questions and what she remembered from her father.
- On November 3, the sheloshim of R' Preil, R' Eliyahu Meir Bloch and R' Pinchas Teitz arrived in New York for their fundraising trip.
- In June of 1934 the young rabbi from Latvia and the daughter of the rabbi of Elizabeth overlapped at a diner and found they enjoyed each other's company.



MARRIAGE OF R'PINCHAS & BESSIE

- They had much in common love of Torah, they spoke a pure, aristocratic Yiddish and great aspirations.
- When they decided to marry, R' Teitz wrote to his parents having promised if he married in the United States, he would bring his bride to Livenhof to meet them and to decide if they would live in Europe or the US.
- He wrote: She is נחמדה, יפה, וחכמה delightful, beautiful and smart and said that her father was one of the most esteemed rabbis in America.
- They got married on Sunday, January, 1935. The headline in the Elizabeth Daily Journal was –"1,500 See Miss Bessie Preil Wed Rabbi, Fulfilling Last Wish of Her Father."



TRIP TO EUROPE

- They left the next week to Europe.
- R' Avraham Kahana-Shapiro, the Dvar Avraham hosted a wedding party in their honor.
- In Kovno, R' Teitz gave a shiur for Agudas Yisroel.
- They traveled to Dvinsk to meet the Rogatchover and his wife.



ELIZABETH, NJ

- They returned to Elizabeth before Pesach and would live with his mother in law, two aunts and an uncle.
- On the Teitzes first Shabbos in Elizabeth, on his way to shul, a Jewish man rolled down the window to ask the rabbi if he needed a ride. This vignette reflects the city at the time. Very kind and very ignorant.
- On the first simchas Torah, there was only one person who joined him to dance as everyone else ran to work.
- R' Teitz knew Yiddish, Hebrew, Aramaic, German, Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian but now it was time to learn English.
- Towards that end, he would read the New York Times together with his wife. They studied Shakespeare and Milton because "If I'm going to learn a language, I want to read the masterpieces in it."
- R' Teitz would tell his wife his derasha in Yiddish and then she would write it in English transliterating it using Hebrew script.



ELIZABETH, NJ

- R'Teitz was invited to many prominent positions in New York, but he felt a responsibility to the community of his late father in law, and he wanted to build a kehillah, a true community.
- Rabbi Teitz felt he would make a greater contribution by accepting full responsibility for the needs of an entire small community than as one Rav among many, or as one participant in a larger organization.
- Rabbi Teitz explained further that the principle is recognized in halacha, as well. If one has before him a complete small loaf of bread and a broken larger one, the beracha is pronounced on the whole loaf.

HATZALAH WORK

- Before he turned his attention to building a kehillah in Elizabeth, his first concern was to urge Jews of Europe to leave. He wrote to family and friends and arranged tickets and visas for anyone he could.
- R' Teitz went to a senator from NJ in 1940 with an idea of paying \$100 for each Jewish person allowed to emigrate but the senator replied, "Rabbi we can't talk about Jewish concerns in an election year."
- R' Teitz was a member of the delegation of Rabbis who tried to meet with President Roosevelt but were turned away.
- He worked with R' Eliezer Silver to rescue Jews through the Vaad Hatzalah.



FAMILY

- Their first child, Elazar Meir, named for his maternal grandfather, was born. He was brilliant, learning to read both hebrew and English at 3 years old.
- They compromised on family traditions. R'Teitz stood for kiddush while his wife sat. They alternated tunes for zemiros. R'Teitz adopted the custom of his father in law to use bananas for karpas as a way of teaching the proper beracha on bananas. Washing for Pizza.
- Children:
 - Elazar Meir
 - Hadassah
 - Rivkah
 - Shulamis
 - Abbie
 - Elisheva

- In April, 1935, at a meeting for R' Teitz to reveal his plans and goals, he stood up and said he must leave Elizabeth. He explained there was no mikvah and it is forbidden to live in a community with no mikvah.
- The people said you can go to Newark or to New York but R' Teitz insisted that the first thing they needed to build was a mikvah. He raised the \$3,000 and the mikvah was built.
- When R' Preil died, a very wealthy, influential person had begun to build a mausoleum for his brother in the Jewish cemetery. R' Teitz had to diplomatically tell him it was not allowed.
- A concert was scheduled with a prominent Chazzan with an organ. R' Teitz felt that even on a weekday, an organ cannot be used since other denominations had begun using organs in Shul on Shabbos. He told the chazzan to either use another instrument or bring in a second chazzan. The chazzan refused and so R' Teitz cancelled the concert.
- Nobody had a sukkah or daled minim at the time but the Teitz's taught them and invited the community over.

- They were a team, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Teitz working together. Later, Joel Glazer would recall a time he was sitting close to the bima and as R' Teitz approached to speak he heard a voice from above. He thought Hashem was calling out but when he looked up, he saw it was the Rebbetzin, whispering to Rabbi Teitz who he should welcome and acknowledge.
- In September of 1935, R' Teitz incorporated the Rabbi E. M. Preil Central Talmud Torah. Teachers had to be observant, knowledgeable and have an engaging personality.
- When it was up and running it was time to open a full day school. People objected arguing the public school meets their needs and they can't support or sustain a day school. Others accused the rabbis of trying to make all their children into Rabbis. Rabbit Teitz responded, I know what rabbis go through, would I wish that on a child?
- In 1940 when R' Teitz announced that in September he would open a yeshiva, an officer of the Shul opened his hand, pointed at his palm and said, hair will grow here before there will be a yeshiva in Elizabeth.

RABBI E. M. PREIL CENTRAL TALMUD TORAH

- Twelve parents took a chance on R' Teitz and enrolled their children. Tuition was \$100 per student and the school met in rooms above the mikvah.
- The school was called Yavneh, a continuation of R' Teitz's efforts in Europe. He didn't have a board of education. He told the teachers, "I am the board of education." Among the early teachers at the school was R' Shlomo Freifeld.
- R' Teitz saw the teachers in the first three years of school as the most important in a child's life. They teach joy of learning, a healthy sense of self and skills a person needs.
- Had the greatest primer teacher for years who taught generations of Elizabeth students Ruth Aboff (my grandmother).



Ruth and Sarah Aboff, who were married to brothers, taught primer and first grade in the early years. Ruth was a perfect recruiter for the new school since she was American-born and college-educated (answering the contention that a yeshivah is for Europeans), the wife of Sam Aboff, an administrator in the public school system who later became Superintendent of Schools in Elizabeth (taking away the argument that a child in America must go to public school), personable (she convinced mothers while they watched their children in the playground to try the yeshivah), and, most important, a parent and a teacher in the school. Sarah and her husband Jack were multitalented; he built the sports program and she wrote and directed musical performances by the students and their parents.

- They grew out of the Mikvah building and wanted to rent space from the YMHA but was told they couldn't.
- He produced a brochure called: "What is Your Answer to the Problem?" and in it he defined the problem –
 - "While we are deeply concerned with the physical fate of the Jewish children of Europe who are being barbarously annihilated, we are absolutely indifferent to the spiritual future of the Jewish children in this community who are drifting away from our ranks as a result of neglect of their Jewish education. Alone, we are unable to fight the arch-enemy of Jewry, but it is within our power to overcome ignorance and indifference, the arch enemies of Judaism."
- He collected accurate data to be able to analyze the situation and make the most compelling argument.

- In May of 1944 the Yavneh Yeshiva bought a mansion and transformed it into a school.
- In September of that year, the Yavneh Yeshiva and Rabbi E.
 M. Preil Central Talmud Torah united under a new name, the Jewish Educational Center.
- R' Teitz wanted a campus that would have Torah at the center of Jewish life for all ages, toddlers until 120.
- Every envelope that went out of the JEC said learning, living, loving Torah.
- At the time, Orthodox synagogues were being converted into Conservative Temples. This was a welcome anomaly.



- Rabbi Teitz was invited to rejoin the Agudas Ha'Rabbonim and in 1945 was asked to chair the Va'ad Hanhalah which he did until he became President.
- Agudas Yisroel also recruited him. He worked on their Keren Aliyah promoting moving to Israel and in rescue work through Vaad Hatzalah.
- In the ten years he had been in Elizabeth he had learned English, built a mikvah founded a yeshiva, moved the shul uptown, and now he proposed building a new Shul in the beautiful neighborhood near the yeshiva.
- Rabbi Teitz's credo was "Be modern, be Orthodox."



NEW BUILDING

- The new shul had three steps, then a plaza, five steps and another plaza, then seven steps, and a plaza leading to the front doors. It was modeled after the 15 steps leading to the Beis Ha'Mikdash where a shir hamaalos matched each step.
- The first adult education courses were in Hebrew reading and geography of the siddur.
- In March of 1950, the community had a groundbreaking for another building for the elementary school and a junior high school.
- R' Teitz traveled the country trying to convince other communities to follow his lead and build Jewish education.



ISRAEL

- R' Teitz left his radio on over Shabbos on November 28/29, 1947 to hear the vote of the United Nations regarding the founding of the State of Israel. He taped the knobs so he wouldn't change them and wrote Shabbos on index cards next to the radio.
- In 1948 he wrote an essay, "A Key To Redemption and later that year wrote, "The State of Israel and the Torah Jew," calling for a generation of redemption, of builders who will establish the Jewish future.
- He thought the founding of the State of Israel would allow the Agudah and Mizrachi to unite and tried to create a united religious group but they chose to remain separate.
- In 1949, R' Teitz hosted R' Yitzchak Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Israel in Elizabeth.
- In 1953, the Teitzes took their first trip to Israel. They stopped in Montreux to visit the Sridei Eish, R' Yechiel Ya'akov Weinberg a former student of Slobodka. In Israel they visited with all the gedolei Yisroel including the Chazon Ish months before he died.



DAF HA'SHAVUA

- January 17, 1953 Rabbi Teitz began the first broadcast of Daf Ha'Shavua, a weekly broadcast of gemara over the radio on WEVD. He was a pioneer and innovator who wanted to use modern media and mediums to reach Jews wherever they were.
- Letters and post cards came in the first weeks after the program was introduced thanking him.
- Seforim stores sold out of whatever mesechta he was teaching.
- The radio shiur was on Motzei Shabbos.
- He had opposition who thought it was inappropriate to teach Torah in this way. He wrote a halachic argument defending it and also got support from R' Moshe, R' Herzon, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Eliezer Silver and the Sridei Eish.
- At the completion of the first year, 1,000 people gathered for a celebration and heard from R' Moshe, R' Yosef Kahaneman, R' Aharon Kotler and others.



DAF HA'SHAVUA

- Requests came from other cities and the Daf Ha'Shavua was soon broadcast in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, LA, Miami, Montreal and Philadelphia.
- In the 1950's, the American government monitored foreign language programs and they estimated the size of the audience in that decade was 200,000 a week.
- There were people who were attracted to move to Elizabeth because of Daf Ha'Shavua and how it showed Elizabeth was a Torah community.





MORE BUILDING...

- In 1955, the time had come for a yeshiva high school.
- First he built for the boys and a year later, opened Bruriah for the girls.
- In 1950 he became president of Vaad Hatzalah and in 1956 treasurer of Ezras Torah. In that capacity he worked closely with R'Yosef Eliyahu Henkin and R' Moshe Feinstein.
- In the late 1950's, orthodox students were going to University campuses and struggling with their Judaism. Student groups began to form and in February of 1960, eighty students from different groups gathered to form a national organization. R' Teitz suggested it be called Yavneh and he, R' Ralph Pelcovitz and R' Emanuel Rackman became the Board of Overseers.
- Rav Solovietchik was supportive and when the Lubavitcher Rebbe wanted to start Chabad houses on campus, he invited officers from Yavneh to come tell him how they got started.





USSR

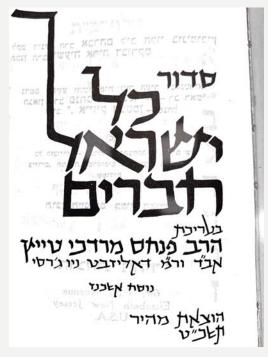
- As soon as WWII ended, R' Teitz urged Jews in the US to establish ties with those caught in Stalin's grip. When Stalin died in 1953, he decided to travel to the USSR despite the risks he would be detained in the country of his birth.
- In Russia their hotel room was bugged, they were followed but they were able to get a sense of what was happening for Jews stuck behind the iron curtain.
- When they returned, they urged everyone to travel to Russia and asked all Jewish organizations to put Soviet Jewry at the top of their agenda.
- Was opposed to rallies and protests, thought would be counterproductive.



USSR

- He decided himself to supply educational materials, religious items and other support.
- Over the next decade and a half he made 19 trips to Russia with his Rebbetzin, one trip in 1967 with his daughter and one in 1973 with his wife and daughter.
- He created an entity called Mohir which means quickly and is an acronym for Mifal Hatzolas Yahadus Russia.
- He printed calendars, almanacs, booklets and seforim. He created a religious manual and siddur for Americans to bring to Russia to give out.
- He fought for Refusniks and had a close relationship with R' Essas among others, though he opposed the rallies and protests.
- For those who made it to the US, he helped with finding apartments, jobs, schools and medical care.





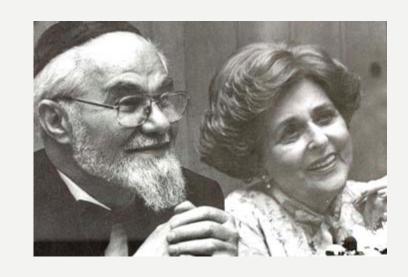
ACTIVISM

- Elizabeth continued to grow with new buildings and expansions.
- An eruv was built but out of concern that children wouldn't know there is a prohibition to carry, they would announce it was down for one Shabbos a year.
- After the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the Teitzes flew to Israel to visit with soldiers in Ramat Ha'Golan. R' Teitz told members of Tzahal he had come to be a partner in the suffering of fellow Jews.
- In 1980-81, he grew tired of the Agudas Ha'Rabbonim negative and hyper critical approach and together with R'Yaakov Kamenetsky opened a new rabbinic organization called Merkaz HaRabbanim that would focus on helping young rabbis find employment and bridge relationships between yeshiva and shuls. It had the support of R' Shach, the Steipler, R' Shneur Kotler, R' Ruderman and others but ultimately he did not have the energy to lead alone and others didn't step up.



END OF AN ERA

- Rebbetzin Teitz passed away on April 25, 1993 and more than a thousand men and women attended the funeral.
- October of 1995, R' Teitz in his nineties was too weak to be in shul for extended period came in time for Yizkor. It took 10 minutes for him to get to his seat and the entire shul stood silently with davening paused until he got there.
- Two months later, December 26, 1995, 4 Teveis, he passed away.





CONCLUSION

Rooted in Slabodka, Telz and Europe but adapted to modern world

- Talmud Chacham
 - Helped publish seforim of gedolim
- Activist
 - Russia
 - Agudas Rabbanim
 - Va'ad Hatzalah
- Pioneer
 - Daf Ha'Shayua
- Rav and Community Builder
 - Proved you can build Torah community outside NY Mikvah, Day school, yeshiva, Eruv, etc.
- R' Wein said he was in Chicago and R' Teitz came and everyone else bemoaned what was lost and R' Teitz spoke about what they were going to build. Deeply rooted in Slobodka, in Europe, but thought like American.

