

# "Memories of Rakhiv"

as related by Reb Menachem Scheiner, Brooklyn, NY

Courtesy of: Chaim MEIERSDORF, Israel

My Father-In-Law, Reb Menachem Scheiner

On May 25, 1920, Menachem Mendel Scheiner was born to Yitzchok Dov Scheiner, z"l Hy"d (1895-1944) and Brantzy Scheiner (nee Hager), a"h Hy"d (1897-1944).

Yitzchok Dov was the vice (or second) rosh hakhal and maggid shiur of Beis Medrash Chevrah Mishnayos of the city of Rachov (Raho), then Czechoslovakia and now Ukraine. He was the son of Rabbi Zvi Hersh Scheiner, zt"l (1850-1935), Rachover dayan.

Rabbi Zvi Hersh was an exceptional Torah scholar who achieved financial independence. In 1888, when the city of Rachov grew and required its own rav, he declined the invitation to serve and instead promoted Rabbi Yisroel Chaim Friedman, zt"l (1852-1922), author of Lekutei Maharyach.

Rabbi Zvi and Rabbi Yisroel Chaim had both studied under Rabbi Yekusiel Yehuda Teitelbaum, zt"l (1818-1883), Sigeter Rebbe and author of Yetev Lev. Rabbi Zvi Hersh had served as the hauz bochor of the Yetev Lev for two full years and during that time ate only from the plate of his rebbe.

Rabbi Zvi Hersh was the son-in-law of Chaim Abish, z"l, a man of considerable means. Reb Chaim had a tall, beautiful daughter named Malchy. He had gone to the Yetev Lev and asked for his best student to marry her. The Yetev Lev presented his hauz bochor, Zvi Hersh. At that time, Zvi Hersh had the title of rosh yeshiva, which meant the best student in the yeshiva.

Malchy wanted to see her chassan before she consented. A bashow (viewing) was arranged. Malchy stood outside the family retail shop while an open-top horse-drawn carriage passed by. Zvi Hersh stood up just as the carriage passed the shop. They saw each other. Malchy protested. She told her father the chassan was too short and she would not marry him. The father advised her that the shidduch had been made by the holy Yetev Lev and that it was final.

The marriage went ahead on time.

With funds from the dowry, Rabbi Zvi Hersh sought a suitable investment. He purchased a large abandoned castle rumored to be "haunted." After carefully investigating the building, he realized the strange noises heard throughout its corridors came from birds and other animals that had found refuge in it. He removed all the birds and animals and the castle again became stately. It was purchased by a member family of the nobility and Rabbi Zvi Hersh earned a sizable fortune.

Rabbi Zvi Hersh bought a home on the main street of Rachov, then a budding community. He developed many successful businesses that were run by his daughters - he had nine -

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and his wealth continued to grow as he devoted himself to the study of Torah. In 1899, a son was finally born to Rabbi Zvi Hersh. The newborn was named Yitzchok Dov.

Both Malchy, a"h (1850-1935), and Rabbi Zvi Hersh passed away in the same year. When Malchy was seriously ill and bedridden, Rabbi Zvi Hersh went to her bedside and whispered into her ear that she was a full partner in all of his Torah learning and that she had an honored place in Gan Eden reserved for her. She passed away gently moments later. Within six months, on Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan Rabbi Zvi Hersh joined her in Olam Haba.

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Yitzchok Dov, the tenth and youngest child of Rabbi Zvi Hersh and Malchy Scheiner, was a student of Rabbi Chanania Yom Tov Lipa Teitelbaum, zt"l (1836-1904), Sigeter Rav and author of Kedushas Yom Tov, and of his son Rabbi Chaim Zvi Teitelbaum, zt"l (1880-1926), Sigeter Rav and author of Atzei Chaim.

In 1910, in addition to great rabbis, Rachov had an outstanding shadchan. His name was Alter Wieder and he owned one of Rachov's three gas stations. He had three daughters and a son and was a highly respected member of the kehilla. Alter earned his reputation, however, as a shadchan.

In search of a suitable match for his only son, Rabbi Zvi Hersh sent Yitzchok Dov - Itzik - with Rachov's premier shadchan to Vishavis, another Marmarosh city in the Carpathian Mountain range, for a bashow, to meet with a distinguished family there. The day they arrived, Vishavis was having its annual market day and the family was attending to its thriving business. The guests waited impatiently and messages kept coming from the marketplace that the family would return soon. After the better part of the day had passed, the eligible bachelor and the shadchan decided to wait no longer.

As they were returning to the railroad station, the shadchan stopped in front of an office building and asked Itzik if he might wish to meet with a girl that came from a most distinguished family, descending from the Vishnitzer Rebbes. She was very pretty and refined but she was an orphan and no dowry was possible. Itzik, without blinking an eyelash, immediately agreed to meet with her.

Brantzy Hager, the prospective kallah, ran a concession selling cigarettes and other sundries in the office building. The shadchan directed Itzik to go in and make a purchase of cigarettes, which he did. When Itzik returned, the shadchan asked if he had any further interest. He answered emphatically in the affirmative. The shadchan then approached Brantzy and asked if she noticed the boy who had just bought cigarettes and if she might be interested.

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Brantzy modestly told the shadchan the young man could not be smoker because he made the purchase ineptly. And, yes, she was definitely interested. Mazel Tov! That very same day the shadchan, Brantzy, and Itzik, together with members of Brantzy's family, assembled at the home of her elderly grandmother (Baba Tova) to break a plate and formalize the shidduch.

The grandmother owned a large library of sefarim that had belonged to her late, learned husband, Reb Avrohom Chaim Hager, z"l, and told the chassan to pick one sefer as an engagement gift. Avrohom Chaim Hager was the son of Rabbi Zvi Hersh Hager, zt"l (d. 1886), Pitchanizin Rebbe.

Itzik studied the bookshelves and found a Yaavetz siddur that had the signature and stamp of Rabbi Naftali Zvi Horowitz, zt"l (1760-1827), renowned Ropshitzer Rebbe and an ancestor of the family. The grandmother, pleasantly surprised at his selection, said the sefer was very precious to her, literally her prized possession, and that he could take any sefer except that one.

The shadchan of Rachov, Alter Wieder, along with nearly his entire family, was murdered in the Holocaust. His youngest daughter and son survived. The daughter married and immigrated to America and had a daughter. Today, Alter Wieder's granddaughter is known throughout the world as Mrs. Hadassah Lieberman, wife of U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, the vice presidential candidate of the Democratic Party in 2000.

Yitzchok Dov and Brantzy Scheiner were murdered in the Holocaust in 1944.

Menachem Mendel Scheiner was conscripted into the Monko Tabor, the Hungarian Jewish slave labor battalion. When the battalion was ordered onto the front, armed with only shovels and brooms, to face an attack of the Russian army, Menachem's older brother Chaim, z"l Hy"d (1918-1944), declared that he was older and took his place.

The Russians were advised that the battalion consisted of Jews and that they were unarmed. Mercilessly they attacked and murdered as many Jews as they could. Wounded and lying on the battlefield, Chaim told his fellows he was shot and that they should use his body to protect themselves.

Chaim is buried in the Jewish section of the cemetery, part of a military park commemorating the battle.

Menachem Mendel was a young man in his early 20's in 1941. At that time undocumented Jews (Jews without Hungarian passports) were being deported to Poland they were murdered there. Menach Mendel's aunt Bluma and Uncle Mordeci Shlomo were sent there though Bluma had a Hungarian passport through her mother. He risked his life to clandestinely reach the place where they were detained. Attempting to bribe the

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official in charge, he was advised that they were all probably dead. At the cost of a small fortune, he convinced the official to accompany him to see if any could still be saved. Miraculously, he managed to save the lives of half the entire group. He never told Bluma's immediate family any of this, though he shared this with some of Bluma's grandchildren.

1944. Again visiting Rachov for a Shabbos, he found out that all Jews there were to be deported. He shaved off his father's beard and accompanied his father and mother to the train station from where they were able to reach Mishklotz, where they found a farm to live on temporarily. Sadly, after the Holocaust, Menachem Mendel learned his parents had been caught and sent to Auschwitz.

Menachem Mendel masqueraded as a Nazi officer and he and other Jewish young men marched with rifles through the countryside conscripting Jews into their army. Eventually their luck ran out and they were sent to Auschwitz. Menachem Mendel was shot point blank by a Nazi officer who aimed his pistol at him. The bullet ripped out his teeth on his right side, but otherwise he was unharmed. Miraculously, Menachem Mendel survived. Every day was a miracle. He was liberated on April 13, 1944, when German soldiers guarding the train he was on buried their uniforms and rifles and ran away.

In 1949 he married his soulmate, Tova Scheiner (nee Schwartz) in Nirbator, Hungary. Escaping the Iron Curtain during their sheva berachos, the newly married couple went to Israel where the Agudath Israel, valuing his deep religious convictions, assigned him to a relatively non-religious community. In 1962, he immigrated to Williamsburg where he found warmth and comfort in its chassidishe community.