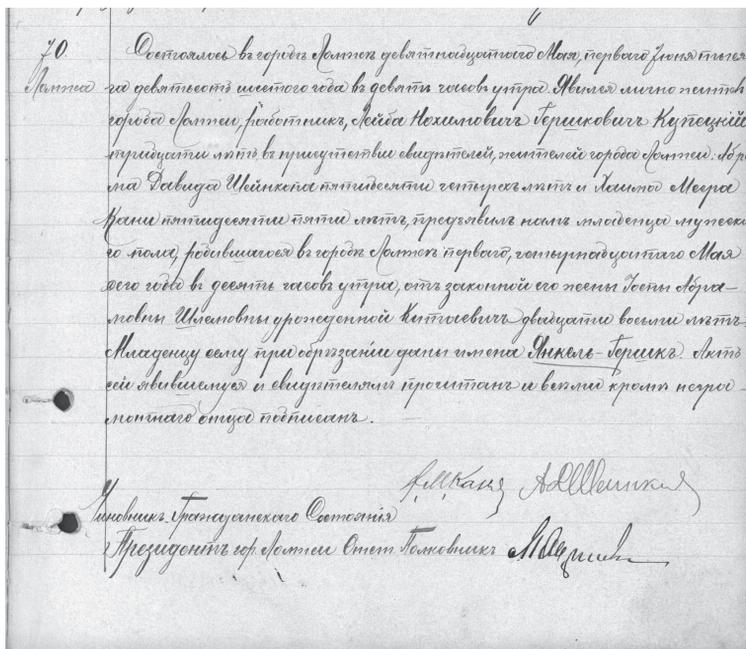


## 🕊️ A Biography of Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Kupietzky

The present volume of Torah essays by Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Kupietzky is largely due to the efforts of his grandchildren to preserve his writings and pass on his legacy. And that is appropriate, because the inheritance he vouchsafed to them was entirely determined by his love and devotion to the Torah. It behooves us, then, to try to come to know him better, and in so doing we help fulfill the commandment to maintain the chain of transmission that leads back to Sinai. For those who never knew him, his name appears as one link in that chain. But it is a living chain, and therefore we must invest ourselves in drawing as complete a picture possible of the man.

Yaakov Tzvi Kupietzky was born in 1906 to R. Aryeh Leib and Yospa (Kitajewicz) Kupietzky of Rybaki Street in Lomza, Poland.



Birth record (in Russian) of Yaakov Tzvi (Jankiel Gerszk) Kupietcki

Although his passport later gave his date of birth as May 5, he did not regard this as his true date of birth; the family celebrated his birthday on “Shabbat Bereishit,” in early autumn.

At the time of Yaakov Tzvi’s birth, the Kupietzky family had been in Lomza for over a century and had attained prominence there. His great-grandfather, Wolf Kupietzky, lived in Lomza until his death in 1845. His grandfather Nochum Hersh, was born there in 1838.\* Tzvi (Hersh) Kupietzky, a great-great uncle, was the head of Lomza’s Jewish community in 1858 when the young Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin (the Maharil Diskin) was appointed head of its rabbinical court.

\* In addition to family recollections, much of this information comes from Jewish Records Indexing – Poland (<http://jri-poland.org/jriplweb.htm>).

הרב ר' יהושע יהודה ליב דיסקין

ר' יהושע יהודה ליב דיסקין, בן הרב ר' בנימין, נולד  
 י' בכסלו, 1818 (תקע"ט) בעיר הורדונו, מקום שם שימש  
 אביו ברבנות. כאשר מלאו לילד י"ג שנה התארש עם בת  
 עשיר ותלמיד-חכם מוולקוביסק.  
 בשנת 1844 נפטר אביו הרב ובעלי הבתים בלומזה  
 נתנו עיניהם בו שירש את כסא אביו. אולם בהיותו רק בן



עשרים וחמש, לא מלאם לבם למסור לו את הרבנות הראשית,  
 ומינהו אב בית דין ולא ראש אב בית דין. ב"המגיד" משנת  
 תרי"ח (1858), מס. 35, פרסמה קהילת לומזה מודעה חתומה  
 בידי ראשי הקהל ר' צבי קופיצקי, היים'צבי גרודוין ויואל  
 מאיר לאוסקי, כי מחפשים בלומזה, ראש אב ב"ד שיעזר  
 לאב"ד במשרתו. ראשי הקהל קבעו את משכורת הרב הראשי  
 משה עד שמונה רובל לשבוע בחוספת דירה ועציים.

*Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin is appointed av  
 beit din of Lomza, but does not inherit his  
 father's position of chief rabbi (p. 104 of Sefer  
 Zikaron Le-kehilat Lomza)*

Aryeh Leib's brother Shlomo was one of Lomza's volunteer Jewish firefighters, a society set up after a conflagration destroyed much of the city in 1881.\*

Yaakov Tzvi was the fourth of seven children born to his parents, as far as can be ascertained. Two sisters, Chaya Tzipa and Sheyna Feyga, perished in infancy, before Yaakov Tzvi's birth. In addition to his surviving older sister, Chana (who died in Australia in 1945), he had two younger brothers, Shlomo and Yissachar, and a younger sister, Esther Malka. Much of the extended family perished in the Holocaust, and their memories are lost to us.

Young Yaakov Tzvi soon emerged as a child prodigy – an

\* *Sefer Zikaron Le-kehillat Lomza*, pp. 200–1.

NACHALAT YAAKOV

*illuy* – rendering him eligible for enrollment at the Lomza Yeshiva, Poland’s first Lithuanian-style yeshiva, then headed by Rabbi Pesach Golezynski. The Kupietzky family was not wealthy; according to data from the 1897 census, Leyb was a laborer (the manifest from the ship that brought him and Yospa to the United States in 1938 lists “butcher” as his occupation).

KUPIECKA	Feiga	Chiel	F	55	head of household	widow	Lomza	Lomza	nie		handliarka
KUPIECKI	Lejba	Nochim	M	20	son		Lomza	Lomza	tak	szkolia	robotnik
Surname	Given Name	Father	Sex	Age	Relation	Civil Status	Town Born	Living	Read / Write	School End	Occupation
KUPIECKA	Sora	Nochim	F	15	daughter	maiden	Lomza	Lomza	tak	w domu	przy malce
KUPIECKA	Jospa	Sziama	F	20	daughter-in-law	married woman	Śniadowo	Lomza			przy malce męża
KUPIECKA	Chana	Lejba	F	0.2	granddaughter	maiden	Lomza	Lomza	nie		przy babce
LEWONSKA	Maika	Nochim	F	25	daughter	married woman	Lomza	Lomza			na utrzymaniu męża
LEWONSKI	Josel	Abram	M	4	grandson	bachelor	Lomza	Lomza	nie		przy babce
LEWONSKA	Chana	Abram	F	0.4	granddaughter	maiden	Lomza	Lomza	nie		przy babce

*This record from the 1897 census of Lomza shows the family of Leyb (Lejba) and Yospa Kupiecki; the young couple lived with Leyb’s mother and sister. Leyb’s occupation is listed as “robotnik” (laborer).*

Though it was not an easy decision, sending Yaakov Tzvi to board at the tender age of five eased the family’s burden a bit and provided him with a solid Jewish education. In those days, Lomza had a Jewish population of about 9,000, which was just under half of the town’s overall population. For a long time, its Jewish community maintained a strong traditional character long after most others had weakened in this respect, but by the end of the 1800s, Socialism and Zionism had begun to attract significant numbers of adherents there. In Yaakov Tzvi’s case, the old and new coexisted harmoniously: as he cultivated a lifelong love of Torah learning, he also formed his first attachments to religious Zionism, participating the Torah VaAvodah movement, which promoted love for and settlement of Eretz Yisrael among religious youths.

A BIOGRAPHY OF RABBI YAAKOV TZVI KUPIETZKY



*A young Yaakov Tzvi Kupietzky and his local religious Zionist youth club. Its name, "Torah VaAvodah," is visible on the wall.*

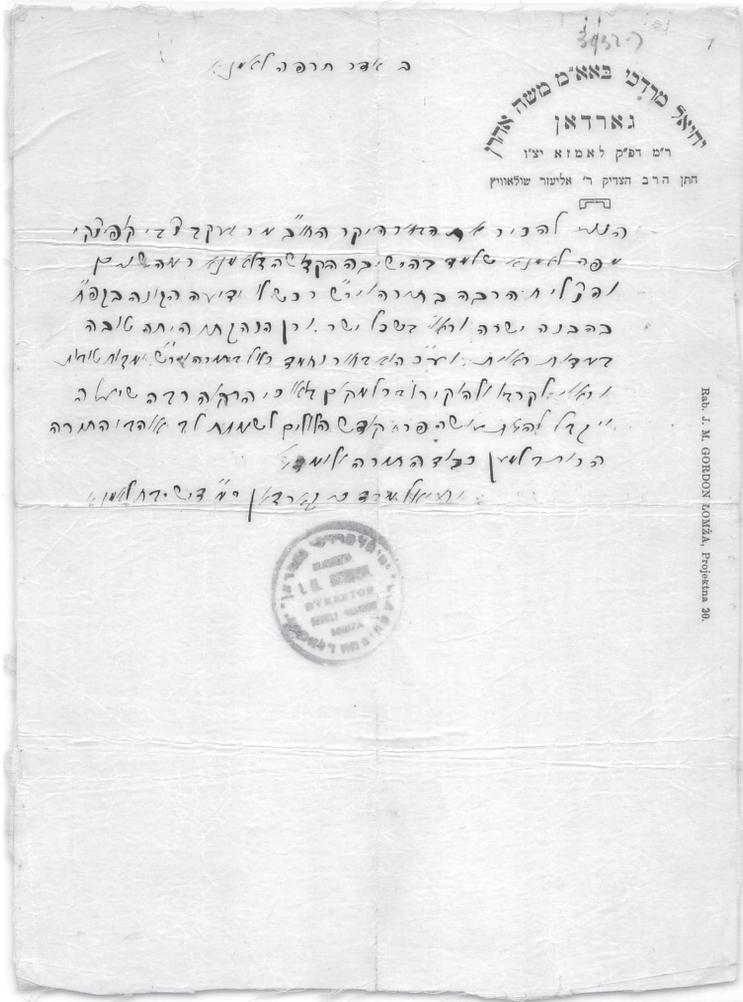
Later in life, Yaakov Tzvi was to be the secretary of the Lomza Yeshiva's alumni association in the United States.

הרב יעקב צבי קופיצקי, ברוקלין, מוכיר  
ההסתדרות סקר את עבודת ההסתדרות ופעור  
לוחיה במשך עשר שנות קיומה. ביזמת ההס  
תדרות ובעזרתה התמידית הוקמה ישיבת  
לומזה בניו יורק. על ידה נערכו שיעורי תורה  
ושיחות מוסריות שנאמרו ע"י ראש הישיבה.

*Rabbi Kupietzky served as secretary of the  
Lomza Yeshiva alumni association in the  
United States (Hapardes 25:10).*

After years of studying in Lomza, Yaakov Tzvi moved on to Radin (today Radun, Belarus), to the yeshiva founded by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan – the saintly Chafetz Chaim – and headed by Rabbi Moshe Landynski and the noted *lamdan* Rabbi Naftali Trop. It was during this period, from the yeshiva's return to Radin after World War I in 1921 until Rabbi Trop's death in 1928, that the Radin Yeshiva enjoyed its greatest prominence. Although the Chafetz Chaim had no official position at the yeshiva at this time, he was its driving force, and his renown as the author of *Mishna Berurah*, as the rabbinic head of Agudat Yisrael, and as a man of legendary piety enhanced the yeshiva's reputation. Yaakov Tzvi did not develop much of a personal relationship with the Chafetz Chaim, but he did have a memorable discussion with the eminent sage.

In 1924, Yaakov Tzvi made the decision to leave Radin in order to fulfill his dream of going to Eretz Yisrael. Upon hearing of this decision, the Chafetz Chaim called him into his office, and said to him that he is taking part in the process of ultimate redemption, that the *mashiach* is on his way, and that the Beit Hamikdash would soon be rebuilt. He then charged Yaakov Tzvi to study *Kodashim*, those parts of the *Talmud* that relate to the Temple service and offerings, as the relevant laws had been neglected and forgotten over time.



Letter of approbation from Rabbi Yechiel Mordechai Gordon, head of the yeshiva in Lomza, Poland, February 26, 1925, attesting that Rabbi Kupietzky of Lomza studied in its local yeshiva and has mastered Gemara with Rashi and Tosafot ("GeFeT").

It is of interest that in 1929, when Yaakov Tzvi was preparing to leave Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, who, like the Chafetz Chaim, was a *Kohen*, a member of the priestly caste that served in the Temple, called Yaakov Tzvi into his office and

similarly charged him to study *Kodashim*. Although the imprecations of his teachers clearly never left him, upon reaching America, Rabbi Kupietzky had to devote his energies to more pressing needs. It was only toward the end of his life, when the heart problems that plagued his late adulthood had reached a critical stage, did he return to *Kodashim* by supporting its study at Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav and later at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in New York (RIETS, an affiliate of Yeshiva University).

Upon his arrival in Eretz Yisrael, young Yaakov Tzvi joined the first group of students at Rav Kook's new yeshiva, HaYeshiva HaMerkazit HaOlamit – the Central Universal Yeshiva, (better known as “Merkaz HaRav”). Rav Kook envisioned a yeshiva that would synthesize body and spirit, the fundamental ideas of the Torah with the best use of contemporary scientific knowledge, depth and breadth.\* His goal was for the yeshiva to be a beacon of light in Eretz Yisrael and for the entire world.



\* *Igrot Ha-Re'ayah* #44.

A BIOGRAPHY OF RABBI YAAKOV TZVI KUPIETZKY



*Pictures from the early years of Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav*

Given his religious Zionist leanings, Yaakov Tzvi was no doubt

excited by the opportunity this yeshiva offered. He became one of the yeshiva's leading pupils and took full advantage of the resources it offered. The four years he studied at Merkaz HaRav were truly formative in his life. One of the key lessons that Rav Kook imparted to his young pupil from Lomza was transmitted when a handful of students remained in the *beit midrash* while the others went out to play ball, thinking that their Torah study at the expense of a break would truly be *lishmah*, for its own sake. Rav Kook threw them out of the *beit midrash*, saying: "There's a time for learning and there's a time for the physical, and it's very, very important [not to neglect one at the expense of the other]." Yaakov Tzvi forged close ties with other *rebbeim* at the yeshiva as well. One of them, Rabbi David Cohen, the "Nazir," was one of the chief disciples of Rav Kook and a seminal figure in his own right. Rabbi Shalom Natan Raanan, Rav Kook's son-in-law, became young Yaakov Tzvi's *chavruta*, a bond that would last the rest of their lives.

In later years, when Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi was established in the United States, the elder Rav Raanan would stay at the Kupietzky home on his fundraising trips to America for Merkaz HaRav. He officiated the wedding of Yaakov Tzvi's oldest son, Jonah, to Fran Kupietzky.

Young Yaakov Tzvi also availed himself of other Torah study opportunities in Eretz Yisrael. He spent some time in the famed Chevron Yeshiva when it was still in Chevron – the massacre that took 69 Jewish lives on August 24, 1929 took place as Yaakov Tzvi was on his way to the United States.



*A young Yaakov Tzvi Kupietzky with students on a hike near Chevron.*

He also obtained *semichah* from Rabbi Shlomo Aronsohn, the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, in addition to his *semichah* from Rav Kook (which appears in the front matter of this volume).

S. ARONSOHN  
Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community  
of Jaffa and Tel-Aviv

TELEPH. 315

שלמה הכהן אהרונסון  
רב ראשי לקהלת יפו ותל-אביב

תלשן 315

הצ"ב

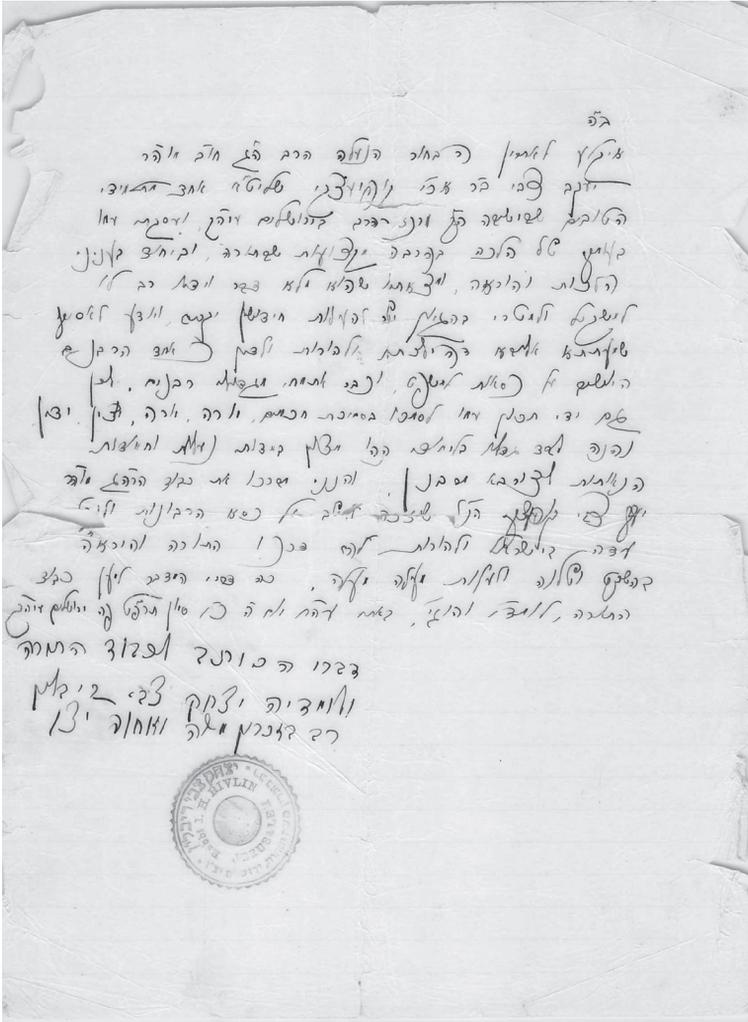
תל-אביב, יום... כ"ו אלול תרפ"ח

אנישך זאתו הכחור הנזירי הודו רב אהרן יצחק לבי ב"ר אריה  
 נחמיהו אבד הבחורים הצלונים של ארבעת רבנים יצאנו הודו  
 בירושלים ציר קדשו מן ושאט ונתנו ציון בחיבתו באותוהו ביהוד  
 אקצוזה שבתורה אביחוד הצעיר הלילת אהרן אהרן אהרן  
 ונודע זאסני שגממא אלו קמא צדוקתא ואמרי טנומתו לצדק  
 התקנות שבידו אב רבנותו השרה והרצויה ושלמא ילל אהל נבות  
 תרומות הנאותות זצורבא אהרן הנני בזה זסוק יבין סלו, וורה  
 ורה יבין יבין אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן  
 בארץ כהנא קדש ארץ אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן אהרן  
 כי אהרן  
 הכ"ה אהרן  
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Approbation from Rabbi Shlomo Aronsohn, Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, August 12, 1928, who tested Rabbi Kupietzky and found him capable of rendering halakhic judgment in addition to being God-fearing and of refined character; he therefore ordains Rabbi Kupietzky (Yoreh Yoreh, Yadin Yadin) and wishes him success in finding a community to serve as rabbi.

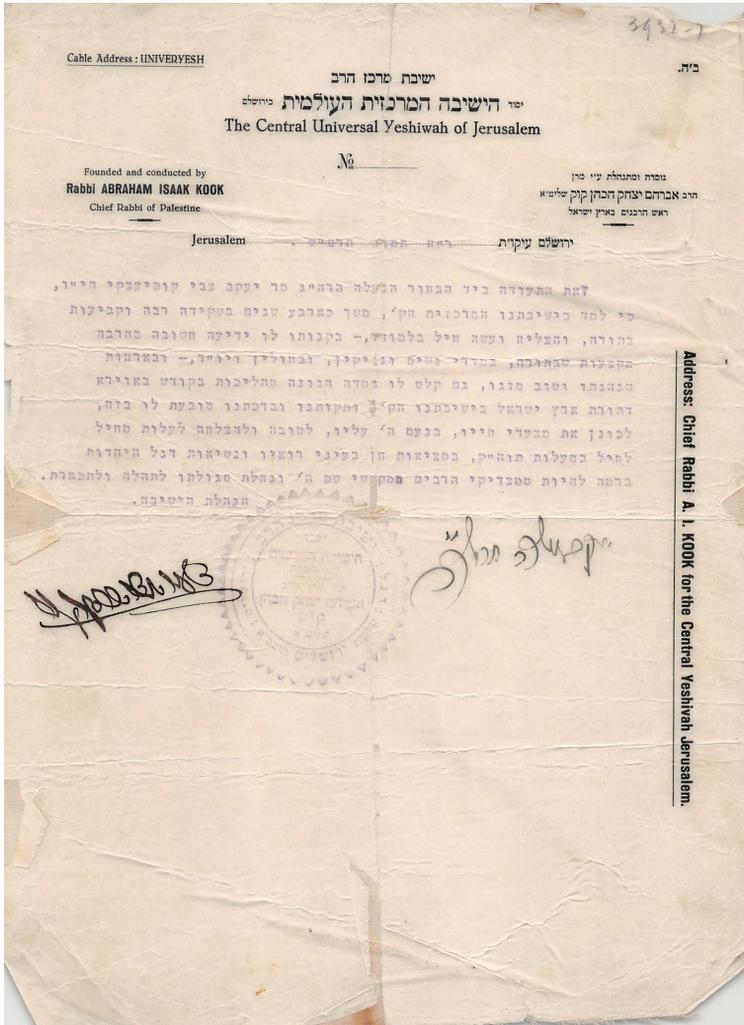
A BIOGRAPHY OF RABBI YAAKOV TZVI KUPIETZKY



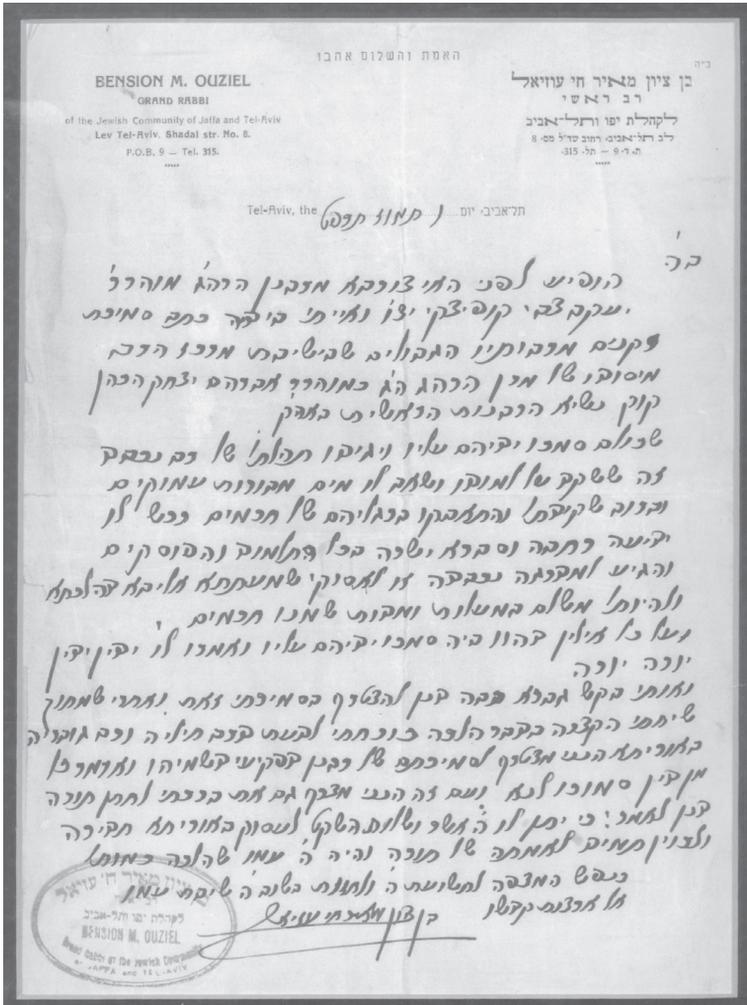
Letter of approbation from Rabbi Yitzchak Tzvi Rivlin, rabbi of the Zichron Moshe (Ge'ulah) neighborhood, Jerusalem, July 4, 1929, attesting that he discussed halakha with Rabbi Kupietzky, a student at Merkaz HaRav, and found him worthy of rendering halakhic decisions (Yoreh Yoreh, Yadin Yadin)



A BIOGRAPHY OF RABBI YAAKOV TZVI KUPIETZKY



Letter of approbation from Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlap and Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook, July 9, 1929, attesting that he studied for four years at Merkaz HaRav and mastered vast amounts of Torah, and wishing him success in future endeavors.



Semicha document from Rabbi Meir Ben Zion Chai Ouziel, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael.

Yaakov Tzvi somehow managed to obtain a British passport, issued by the Government of Palestine under the British Mandate. The date of issuance was May 29, 1929, and named the holder as "Jacob Harry Kupietzky, formerly Jacob Zvi."

A BIOGRAPHY OF RABBI YAAKOV TZVI KUPIETZKY

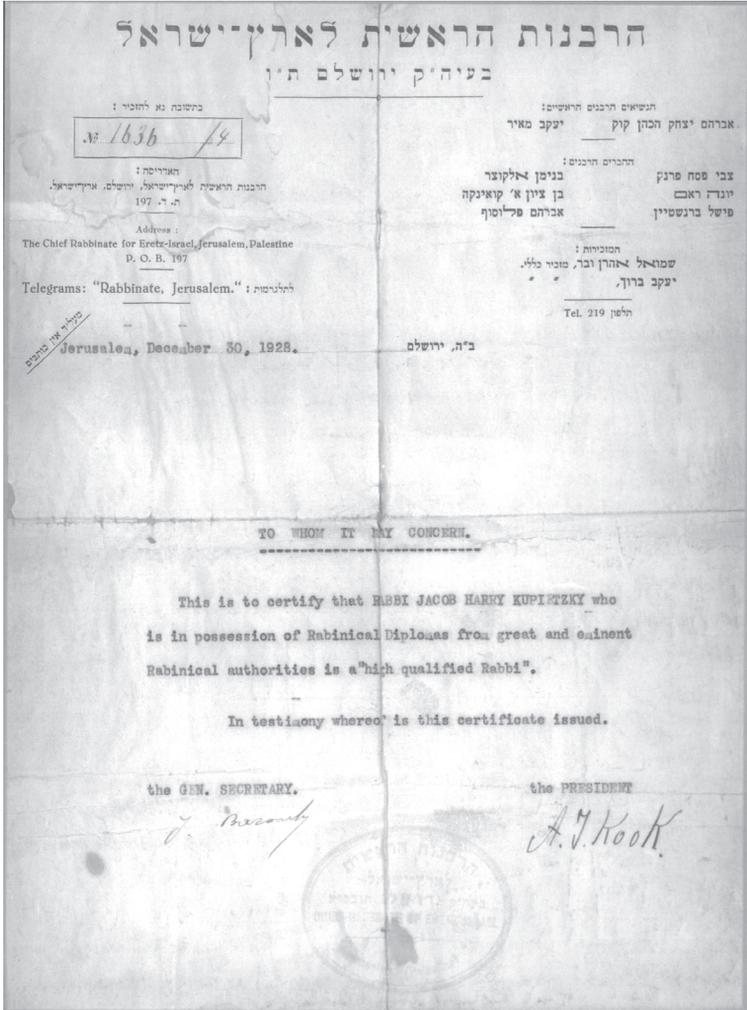
1st August, 1929.

OFFICIAL GAZETTE.

883

Old Name	Address	New Name
Polachik, Zeev, "Welwel"	Givat Ada	Efrati, Zeev
Polachik, Devora	Givat Ada	Efrati, Devora
Polachik, Sara	Givat Ada	Efrati, Sara
Polachik, Etha	Givat Ada	Efrati, Etha
Urdang, Lazar	Jerusalem	Elimeer, Eliezer
Reznikov, Eliezer	Tel-Aviv	Erez, Eliezer
Reznikov, Batia	Tel-Aviv	Erez, Batia
Freund, Rosa (Riska Brandke)	Tel-Aviv	Freund, Rachel
Zchori, formerly Fainer, Moshe	Jise	Fainer, Moshe
Shendelberg, Shmuel	Gan-Hasharon	Fishman, Shmuel
Guzman, Jacob	Jerusalem	Guzman, Baruch Jacob
Kacovic, Jacob	Herzlia	Gur-Arie, Jacob
Kacovic, Rivka	Herzlia	Gur-Arie, Rivka
Wanocshky, Berko	Haifa	Gufni, Dov
Shafer, Leon	Haifa	Grossfeld, Yossef
Gordonoff, Moshe	Tel-Aviv	Gordon, Moshe
Kaczka, Soucher Berish	Tiberias	Gelen, Isaac Berish
Kaczka, Sima Debora	Tiberias	Gelen, Sima Debora
Kaczka, Sara Rivka	Tiberias	Gelen, Sara Rivka
Kaczka, Izhak David	Tiberias	Gelen, Izhak David
Ginzburg, Isaac	Ain-Harod	Gedozvinski, David
Googuel, Isaac	Tel-Aviv	Googuel, Leon Israel
Garuber, Ruxen	Haifa	Garanoher, Reuven
Kolman, Rubin	Tel-Aviv	Gadi, Shmuel
Gurji, Izhak	Haifa	Harari, Izhak
Gurji, Miriam	Haifa	Harari, Miriam
Itzkovitch, Aron Mendl	Tel-Aviv	Halevi, Menachem
Itzkovitch, Genia	Tel-Aviv	Halevi, Genia
Itzkovitch, Emanuel	Tel-Aviv	Halevi, Emanuel
Itzkovitch, Adin	Tel-Aviv	Halevi, Adin
Itzkovitch, Masada	Tel-Aviv	Halevi, Masada
Maiberg, Baruch	Haifa	Halperin, Zvi
Perlmutter, Izhak	Nahalal	Koshier, Izhak
Perlmutter, Mina	Nahalal	Koshier, Mina
Perlmutter, Zipora	Nahalal	Koshier, Zipora
Srebnovic, Wolf	Haifa	Kaspiy, Zeev
Teherani, Eliahu Mordechai	Jerusalem	Kohen, Eliahu Mordechai
Teherani, Sarah	Jerusalem	Kohen, Sarah
Teherani, Esther	Jerusalem	Kohen, Esther
Teherani, Rachel	Jerusalem	Kohen, Rachel
Teherani, Mordechai	Jerusalem	Kohen, Mordechai
Teherani, Isaac	Jerusalem	Kohen, Isaac
Teherani, Hanna	Jerusalem	Kohen, Hanna
Kobrzanska, Zelda	Haifa	Kobrinski, Ziva
Eisenfeld, Michael	Tel-Aviv	Kreps, Eliezer Klemens
Eisenfeld, Chana	Tel-Aviv	Kreps, Chana
Eisenfeld, Ila	Tel-Aviv	Kreps, Ila
Katz, Jacob-Leon	Tel-Aviv	Kotz, Moshe
Moroz, Aaron	Ain-Harod	Karpowski, Nabum
Moroz, Sara	Ain-Harod	Karpowski, Rachel
Moroz, Naftali	Ain-Harod	Karpowski, Naftali
Moroz, Naomi	Ain-Harod	Karpowski, Naomi
Moroz, Ruth	Ain-Harod	Karpowski, Ruth
Kalman, Grizela	Haifa	Kalman, Judith
Kupietzky, Jacob Zvi	Jerusalem	Kupietzky, Jacob Harry
Kolomiezev, Mendel	Tel-Aviv	Kolen, Emanuel
Berison, Meir	Haifa	Kirilovsky Meir
Berison, Hudel	Haifa	Kirilovsky, Hudel
Berison, Shmuel	Haifa	Kirilovsky, Shmuel
Kroll, Hanna	Tel-Aviv	Lishitz, Chana
Doul, Isaac Meyer	Haifa	Lvavi, Moshe
Starobinski, Yehuda	Petah-Tikvah	Lederman, Yehuda
Marshak, Beila	Tel-Aviv	Lokshanova, Bluma

Name change record, from "Jacob Zvi" to "Jacob Harry" Kupietzky, from the official Palestine Gazette of August 1, 1929.

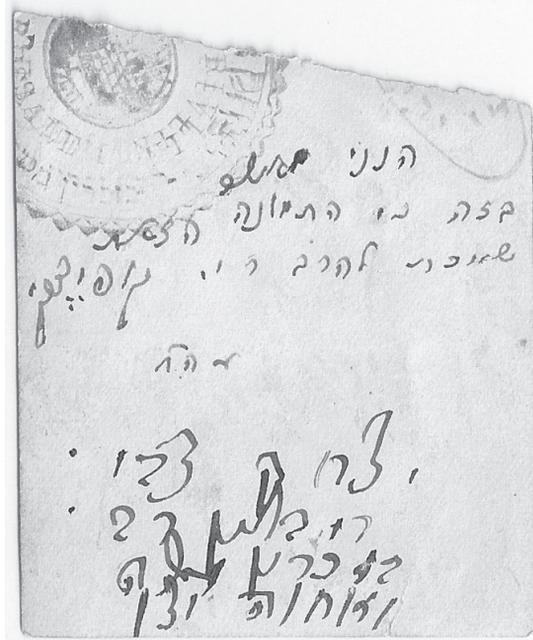


Rav Kook, in his capacity as Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi, confirms that "Jacob Harry" Kupietzky is a "high qualified rabbi."

He obtained an immigration visa from the American consulate, just, two days later. His departure from Eretz Yisrael is marked by an exit stamp dated June 15, 1929. The photo depicts an ambitious young man with a short, dark beard, his eyes clearly animated by a confidence and inner drive.

A BIOGRAPHY OF RABBI YAAKOV TZVI KUPIETZKY





Passport photo of "Jacob Harry Kupietzki"

At this point, the details of Yaakov Tzvi's biography are somewhat vague. His passport indicates that he left Eretz Yisrael for the United States, yet family lore, based on conversations with Fanny Kupietzky (Yaakov Tzvi's wife of 38 years), has it that he first traveled to South Africa, where he spent some time – less than a year, by all accounts – working as a *shochet* in Cape Town.



Letter confirming that Rabbi Kupietzky is a qualified shochet.

He arrived in America in 1930 and moved to Brooklyn, New York. As a young single man educated in top *yeshivot* in Europe and Eretz Yisrael, he sought a job that played to his strengths: his first position was as a Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshiva D'Brooklyn, which was then in Williamsburg. He taught there for several years.

During this time, he lived in Borough Park, and on Shabbat

he could often be found at the table of Rabbi Wertheimer, whose home was known as the place where Zionists gathered for Shabbat meals. One such Shabbat in 1932 proved to be fateful for the young man and for a young woman named Faige Tzipporah (Fanny) Dresner, who was visiting from Montreal. Her family had moved to Canada in 1920 from Rozhniv, a town in Bukovina near Czernowitz, which had become part of Romania after World War I (this area had been annexed by the Habsburg Empire in the 18th century and is presently in Ukraine).

Fanny had come to Canada with her family, to join her older sister, who had immigrated earlier with her husband. The larger Dresner family arrived in Montreal in 1920, where her father, Shalom Dresner, gave *shiurim*. Faige Tzipporah remained close with her family in Montreal, but ultimately she came to Borough Park to find a proper *shidduch*. Rabbi Wertheimer made the match, and after a somewhat lengthy engagement, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi and Fanny Kupietzky were wed on August 6, 1933.



*Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi and Fanny Kupietzky as newlyweds*

The newlyweds rented an apartment in Crown Heights, and he was appointed to his first rabbinical position, as rabbi of the Young Israel of Crown Heights. It was a large synagogue, and

the post carried high visibility. It was an odd pairing, given that Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi was a recent immigrant and the Young Israel movement favored American-born and -trained rabbis who could better communicate with American Jews. The congregation hired him nevertheless, clearly seeing the potential in the young rabbi.

After a year, for whatever reason, the synagogue and Rabbi Kupietzky came to a parting of the ways. But the separation was amicable, and instead of the rabbi leaving, the congregation left – moving to a larger space on Eastern Parkway, and leaving their old building at the corner of Kingston Avenue and Lincoln Place to the young rabbi. He founded a new synagogue there and named it Bnai Jacob, and it almost immediately began to draw recently-arrived Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe looking to find a comfortable place in a strange new homeland.

It was a challenge for the rabbi to create a community out of people who came from a vast geographical territory with diverse customs and local practices. To that end, the synagogue did not have a *chazzan*, as employing a single *chazzan* would have meant instituting a standard *nusach* for the prayer services, a step that Rabbi Kupietzky was apparently not willing to take. This approach was apparently successful, as the shul grew by leaps and bounds to eventually include hundreds of families.

As the shul grew, so did the Kupietzky family. First came Jonah (Yochanan), born on November 22, 1934. A few years later came Nachman Shlomo, on August 3, 1938, followed by Moshe Yosef on May 17, 1944, then Chana Esther on December 11, 1945. While the family was growing, the opportunity arose for Rabbi Kupietzky to bring his parents to America. He had managed to stay in touch with them by mail through the years after he left Poland. As the situation there grew more perilous, he arranged for their safe passage to the United States. They arrived on the ss *Batory* on April 6, 1938, just before Nachman was born, and just over a year before the Nazis invaded Poland, starting World War II.

# A BIOGRAPHY OF RABBI YAAKOV TZVI KUPIETZKY

S. S. "Batavia" Passengers sailing from SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, APRIL 1938.																
No. on list	Name in full	Age	Sex	Religion	Place of birth	Date of birth	Nationality	Profession	Remarks	Passage		Landed		Remarks		
										Class	Rate	Port	Date	Agency	Remarks	
1	ZDOL, Maritana	28	F	J	Poland	1870	Polish	Teacher		1st	29	29	29	29	29	29
2	ZDOL, Fanny	26	F	J	Poland	1872	Polish	Teacher		1st	29	29	29	29	29	29
3	ZDOL, Joseph	24	M	J	Poland	1874	Polish	Teacher		1st	29	29	29	29	29	29
4	ZDOL, Joseph	22	M	J	Poland	1876	Polish	Teacher		1st	29	29	29	29	29	29
5	ZDOL, Maria	20	F	J	Poland	1878	Polish	Teacher		1st	29	29	29	29	29	29

Arriving at Port of NEW YORK, N.Y., APR 16 1938															
No. on list	Name in full	Age	Sex	Religion	Place of birth	Date of birth	Nationality	Profession	Remarks	Passage		Landed		Remarks	
										Class	Rate	Port	Date	Agency	Remarks
1	ZDOL, Maritana	28	F	J	Poland	1870	Polish	Teacher		1st	29	29	29	29	29
2	ZDOL, Fanny	26	F	J	Poland	1872	Polish	Teacher		1st	29	29	29	29	29
3	ZDOL, Joseph	24	M	J	Poland	1874	Polish	Teacher		1st	29	29	29	29	29
4	ZDOL, Joseph	22	M	J	Poland	1876	Polish	Teacher		1st	29	29	29	29	29
5	ZDOL, Maria	20	F	J	Poland	1878	Polish	Teacher		1st	29	29	29	29	29

From the manifest of the ss Batory, which brought Rabbi Kupietzky's parents to the United States.

Rabbi Kupietzky had left his parents' home at the age of five, and he had not seen them at all for many years. He had barely any memories to help him find familiar faces amid the throngs lining up to present their passports. Yaakov Tzvi and Fanny waited patiently until everyone else had left except for an older couple from Poland. Alone in the vast hall, he realized who they must be, and he strode over to introduce himself. After so many years, the parents were finally reunited with their oldest son.



*Aryeh Leib and Yospa Kupietzky, Yaakov Tzvi's parents, celebrate their grandson, Jonah, becoming a bar mitzvah.*

Yaakov Tzvi moved his parents into an apartment he leased for them in Crown Heights, near his home, and he supported them with an allowance of \$10 or \$15 a week. However, when Aryeh Leib passed away, the family found every \$5 and \$10 bill he ever got stuffed in his mattress. They generally ate their meals at their son's home. Yospa Kupietzky was pious but illiterate. There was a shul nearby called Chovevei Torah that had about fifteen daily *minyanim*, and she attended every one.

To support his growing family and his elderly parents, Rabbi Kupietzky relied on his income from the congregation. He presided over a growing shul of several hundred families, and the institution had expanded to include a Talmud Torah for the children, of which he was the principal. Although these jobs did not pay astronomical salaries, they at least afforded the family a means of self-sufficiency.

Toward the end of 1941, Rabbi Kupietzky was suddenly and inexplicably confronted with a challenge that jeopardized his hard-won stability: he lost his voice. For a pulpit rabbi and school principal, this was completely debilitating, especially in an era when paid sick leave was not yet standard. Rabbi Kupietzky's doctor recommended that he go to Los Angeles, where the dry, warm climate, might cure his condition. Rabbi Kupietzky temporarily relocated to the West Adams section of Los Angeles and joined a synagogue led by a young Rabbi Simon Dolgin – coincidentally, the same synagogue (by then relocated to Beverly Hills) that Yaakov Tzvi's youngest son, Moshe, joined when he moved to Los Angeles almost three decades later.

This was right around the same time that the United States entered World War II – the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. It was Fanny who recognized the seeds of opportunity within these personal and national challenges. She managed to leverage existing family resources into a business opportunity that met the needs that suddenly arose for the many

Jewish enlistees in the US Army. Many of the young men in Brooklyn preparing to set off for Europe wanted to get married before departing. Through Fanny's ingenuity, the family soon engineered a one-stop shop for these young soldiers. They fashioned a wedding hall out of the Talmud Torah facilities and devised a system that allowed for quick turnover to meet the steady demand. The arrangement gave rise to what would become the family catering business. For \$1.50 per guest, there would be a *chuppah*, and a plate of food at each place setting. The meal lasted for only half an hour after the *chuppah*. The Kupietzky children played a key role in the business, making the open-faced sandwiches and pouring the celery soda that was the standard fare for the weddings.

After close to a year in Los Angeles, Rabbi Kupietzky regained the use of his voice, and returned to his family in Brooklyn. From that point forward he officiated at all of the weddings. The income from the catering and officiating, in addition to the rabbinic salary, added up. The family bought the building next door and made a common front across three buildings – two catering halls and the synagogue – with a spacious apartment on the top floor of the three combined buildings (though the children recall growing up amidst the cacophony of multiple simultaneous wedding bands). Thus, the Kupietzky family catering business started because of the unexplained temporary loss of Rabbi Kupietzky's voice.

At that particular moment in American history, after the Second World War and before the wave of demographic change irrevocably altered the neighborhood, Crown Heights had a particular charm. It is a neighborhood of narrow side streets hugged by two- and three-story rowhomes, brownstones, and low-slung buildings under a canopy of Brooklyn's ubiquitous maples and plane trees, opening onto broad avenues lined with stores and shops, fronted by wide sidewalks. In the 1930s and '40s, those sidewalks were crowded with Jewish families of all stripes on

Shabbat and Yom Tov, their voices melding into a mix of Brooklynese and various Yiddish dialects.

Congregation Bnai Jacob was part of the fabric of the neighborhood and played a central role in the festivities of at least one holiday: Simchat Torah. People would gather at Bnai Jacob on the afternoon of *Shemini Atzeret*, where Mrs. Kupietzky would make a big Simchat Torah party. From there, a caravan of celebrants wound its way to the Modzhitzer *shul* and then the Bobover *shul*, ultimately ending up at Lubavitch [at 770 Eastern Parkway] at one o'clock in the morning.

Their proximity to the world headquarters of Chabad/Lubavitch meant that the Kupietzkys developed relationships with the last two Lubavitcher Rebbes. The last Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, would occasionally stop by the Kupietzkys on his way to visit his mother, who lived on the same street as them, boarding with Mrs. Kupietzky's friend, Mrs. Turner. Mrs. Kupietzky and the Rebbe's mother would see each other daily. The Chabad community in Crown Heights would use the Kupietzky family's catering services, with its *heimishe* food and reasonable prices, for their own celebrations. When the Chabad yeshiva began to expand, some of the overflow students studied at Bnai Jacob.

By the early 1950s, the neighborhood had begun the process of demographic transition as many Jewish families who had populated Crown Heights for decades began to move out of the cities into the suburbs. Fanny began lobbying for a move in the early 1950s, and in 1956, the family moved into the brand new neighborhood of Kew Gardens Hills in Queens. Rabbi Kupietzky would occasionally spend a Shabbat at Bnai Jacob, but the congregation's days were numbered, and it finally closed down in the early 1960s. The move to Queens, however, injected new life into the catering business, and the family attained a certain degree of prosperity. The business eventually became multigenerational,

growing and developing to ultimately become the exclusive caterer of the Young Israel of Forest Hills in Queens and Lincoln Square Synagogue in Manhattan.

The ever-present generation gap between European-born parents and their American children was exacerbated by the fact that Rabbi Kupietzky had left his parents' home at a tender age, leaving him with no role models to equip and prepare him for fatherhood. Fanny ran the catering business, and though Rabbi Kupietzky helped where he could, the new rhythm of his life centered on his first love: Torah.

In addition to his daily studies, he began to give a weekly *shiur* in Yiddish to laymen in Queens. The language of instruction meant that the Kupietzky children, who had been raised on Yiddish-inflected English (the parents conversed in Yiddish, and Rabbi Kupietzky spoke Hebrew on Shabbat), were precluded from participating in the *shiur*, which was as much a social group as a study group.

The newfound prosperity allowed Rabbi Kupietzky to rekindle another longtime love: Eretz Yisrael. In 1958, Yaakov Tzvi and Fanny Kupietzky traveled to what was now the State of Israel. For Rabbi Kupietzky, it was something of a homecoming after almost 30 years.

## צאתכם לשלום לכבודו של הרב ר' יעקב קופיצקי

מסיבת צאתכם לשלום, בהשתתפות גדולי הרבנים ואישי הציבור, התקיימה ביום ד' פ' צו לכבודו של הרב ר' יעקב קופיצקי ליום עלותו יחד את הרבנית תחי' לביקור קצר בא"י.

כמה מאות אורחים ובתוכם רבנים מפורי-סמים, אישי הציבור וראשי מוסדות התורה באו להביע את הוקרתם ורגשי ידידות להרב קופיצקי, אחד הרבנים הצעירים הפעילים בעולם הרבנות כמו בעולם התורה.

[1234567]

פתח המסיבה הרב ר' שמעון מורדכוביץ שקידם בברכה את אורח הנשף ואת כל המשתתפים שבאו להביע אישית את הוקרתם לאחד המצטיינים בערנות רבה לכל המתרחש בעולם התורה והרבנות. הרב מורדכוביץ מע-לה זכרונות מפגישתו עם הרב קופיצקי עוד בעיר מגורו לומזה, עת למדו יחד שמה בישיבת לומזה.

יו"ר המסיבה הרב ר' יהודא גרשוני בנאום מלהיב מתאר את דמותו של הרב קופיצקי. מקום מגורו של הרב קופיצקי — אומר הנואם — בארצות הברית ואילו כל מעייניו, כל הגיגיו ודפיקת לבו מכוונים לא"י, לתורת א"י, לבנינה והפרכתה.

דברי ברכה והערכה על אישיותו ועסקי-נותו למען התורה באמריקה ולמען התורה בא"י, נשאו הרבנים הרב ר' יהודא אלטוסקי, הרב ר' מאיר הכהן, הרב ר' שמחה עלברג, הרב ר' שמעון איסקולסקי והרב ר' מרדכי אלפרין. בדברי תודה של חתן הנשף ננעלה המסיבה.

הנשף אורגן ע"י הסתדרות ישיבת לומזה, ישיבת מרכז הרב וישיבת תורת ירושלים.

*Description of a banquet in honor of Rabbi and Rebbetzin Kupietzky prior to their trip to Israel in 1958; Rabbi Yehuda Gershuni remarked that even though Rabbi Kupietzky resides in the United States, his heart beat and soul yearns for Eretz Yisrael." (Hapardes 32:8)*

Another reason for the Kupietzkys' visit to Israel was to visit

Yaakov Tzvi's mother. His father had passed away in 1952, and his mother remarried a Satmar Chassid. The marriage and their subsequent relocation to Jerusalem's Meah Shearim neighborhood were quite sudden, occurring in January 1956, just weeks before Jonah Kupietzky's wedding.

In the early 1960s, once air travel had become the norm, the Kupietzkys decided to spend more time in Israel and even purchased a summer apartment on Jerusalem's Keren Hayesod Street. On several of these trips, Rabbi Kupietzky served as the eyes and ears of the American rabbinate (he served as treasurer of the Agudath Harabbanim in the mid-1960s), reporting to his colleagues on the development of Torah life in the Jewish state.

הרב ר' יעקב צבי קופיצקי ז"ל

הרב ר' יעקב צבי קופיצקי, גביר של  
אגודת הרבנים ואחד מראשי העומד על  
משמר היהדות הנאמנה נסע לביקור ממושך  
לא"י, שם ישהה עד אחר החגים.  
הרב קופיצקי העומד בראש מפעלים תורניים  
שונים ורוח החי' בהסתדרות ישיבת לומזה,  
מבקר מפעם לפעם בא"י, והוא בא שם במגע  
עם כל גדולי הרבנים וראשי ישיבה.  
הרב קופיצקי הנודע באדיבותו וישרותו  
יבקר בא"י את כל מוסדות התורה ועמור  
על טיבם ואח"כ בבואו חזרה יעורר את דעת  
הקהל האמריקאי על צרכיהם החיוניים.  
בישיבת וועד ההנהלה של אגודת הרבנים  
שהתקיים ביום ד' פ' נצו"י ניתנה לו  
ברכת צאתכם לשלום המה, וגדולי הרבנים  
בראשות הגר"א סילוור, נפרדו ממנו בלבביות  
רבה.

*A farewell to Rabbi Kupietzky as he leaves  
for a visit and 'fact finding mission' to  
Israel (Hapardes 36:1)*

Rabbi Kupietzky also made sure to take every opportunity to raise money for his old yeshiva, Mercaz HaRav. His fundraising skills earned him a special place in the institutional pantheon, and his picture still hangs in the lobby.

A momentous visit to Israel for the holiday of Sukkot in 1967 serves to highlight several of his key personality traits: his resourcefulness, his involvement in numerous rabbinic and charitable organizations (often as secretary or treasurer – roles that demand much time and skill but offer little glory), his attachment to Eretz Yisrael and its *yeshivot*, and his fearless, outspoken defense of the Jewish people and its tradition.

After the dissolution of Bnai Jacob, Rabbi Kupietzky decided to donate one of its Torah scrolls to a kibbutz in Israel. He brought it with him on this trip, which occurred soon after the Six Day War; Jewish pride and interest in Israel was swelling to unprecedented heights. The reunified city of Jerusalem was making plans to build new neighborhoods in what had previously been a battle-scarred no-man's land. Jewish pioneers were returning to areas that had Jewish communities in Mandatory Palestine – most notably Chevron and the Etzion Bloc. An old friend, Zerach Warhaftig, Israel's Minister of Religion, suggested that he donate it to Kibbutz Kfar Etzion, which had fallen in the 1948 War of Independence and was just then being reconstituted.

ספר תורה שהובא

מניו־זרק

ימסר לאחד הקיבוצים

ספר תורה של קהילה אור-  
 תודוסקית בניו יורק יינתן בי-  
 מים הקרובים במתנה לאחד ה-  
 קיבוצים בישראל. הספר הובא  
 לישראל ביום ב' אחר הצהריים  
 על ידי הרב יעקב קופיץ, ש-  
 הגיע במטוס, אל על לביקור  
 של חודש ימים. הרב סיפר ב-  
 לוח שוחן ספר תורה עתיק ש-  
 היה שייך לקהילה אורתודוקסית  
 שהוא עמד בראשה, והתפרקה.  
 ספר התורה נשאר בניו יורק  
 עתה הוא ממנין למסור אותו  
 כמתנה לפי שיקול דעתו, לאחר  
 מיבוצי הספר בישראל.  
 בתשובה לשאלה, כיצד יקבע  
 לאיזה קיבוץ יתן את ספר זה?  
 זורה, אמר הרב קופיץ, כי  
 חליט על כך לאחר שיתיעץ  
 עם ידידו, שר הדתות ד"ר זרח  
 ורדפטיג.

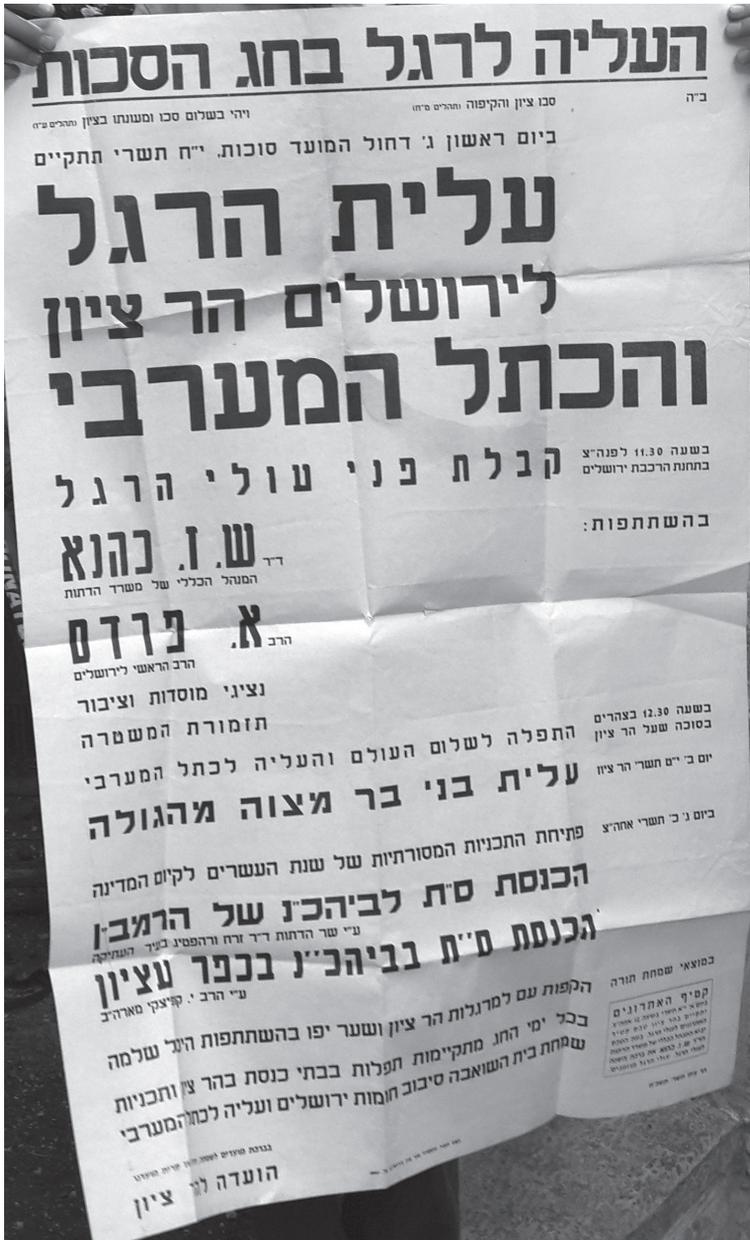
*Rabbi Kupietzky's  
 arrival in Israel  
 with a Torah scroll  
 to donate to a  
 kibbutz made the  
 news (Hatzofeh,  
 September 26, 1967).*

On *Chol Hamo'ed*, the Torah scroll was brought by Rabbi Kupietzky to Kfar Etzion in a procession that began on Mount Zion. The celebration was attended by Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman; Rabbi Shmuel Zanvel Kahana, director-general of the Ministry of Religion; Rabbi Yitzchak Abuhatzeira of Ramle; Rabbi Shalom Natan Raanan, Rabbi Kupietzky's old *chavruta*, who was by now one of the heads of Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav; and Israel's State Comptroller, Mr. Ernst Nebenzahl (father of Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl, the rabbi of Jerusalem's Old City).





*The Torah scroll dedicated by Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi and Tzipporah Kupietzky, whose names are visible on the mantle, in honor of the new settlers of Kfar Etzion and those who fell in its defense.*



A pashkevil (broadside) announcing the hachnasat sefer Torah in Gush Etzion, led by Rabbi Kupietzky.



*Rabbi Kupietzky with the newly donated Torah scroll in its new home.*

Rabbi Kupietzky saw this as an opportunity to offer clarity and simple truth with the donation of this Torah scroll. He gave

a stirring speech in Hebrew, which appears in this book, in the original and in translation (p. 285). Rabbi Kupietzky's speech also demonstrates his ardent belief in the connection between all Jews and Eretz Yisrael and in the importance of Jewish sovereignty over Eretz Yisrael – a fervor that surprised even those who knew him for a long time.

During that same trip, Rabbi Kupietzky participated in the founding of a new neighborhood in Jerusalem. The Ezras Torah Fund, an American charitable organization for the support of yeshiva students around the world, decided to invest millions of dollars in apartments for yeshiva-centered communities. This was announced by Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz of Yeshiva University at a press conference in Jerusalem. Rabbi Kupietzky, as the treasurer of Ezras Torah, took part as well. The resulting neighborhood, near Sanhedriya, is called Ezrat Torah to this day.



Hatzofeh, October 9, 1967  
p. 4

Hatzofeh (October 9, 1967) report on the Ezras Torah press conference announcing the new neighborhood.



*The picture was likely taken at the press conference. Seated, left to right: Chief Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman, Unidentified, Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Kupietzky.*

His love and devotion for Eretz Yisrael and the Zionist cause drove him to move to the Holy Land for an entire year late in life, during which he celebrated the bar *mitzva* of his oldest grandson, Steven.

Nevertheless, it was to a different favored locale that Rabbi and Rebbetzin Kupietzky moved in their twilight years: Florida. They had been taking winters there for more than a decade, frequenting the Caribbean Hotel, when they decided that it was time to retire and move there permanently. Although Rabbi Kupietzky had long retired from the catering business, he never retired from teaching Torah. In his final years, he gave a *daf yomi shiur* at one of the larger Miami hotels, and his *shiurim* proved to be as popular in Florida as they had been in New York.



*Rabbi Kupietzky with his da'f yomi students in Miami.*

Unfortunately, although his mind was still sharp, his heart was beginning to give out. He suffered a series of heart attacks and had to be hospitalized repeatedly. Although he had recovered from a major heart attack in 1964, his doctors gave him an ultimatum: get more exercise and reduce stress! They advised him to take up golf.

Tragically, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Kupietzky died of a massive heart attack that he sustained on the golf course on 30 Nissan, 5735, a few days after spending Pesach with the entire family in Florida. He was 68 years old at the time of his passing. He was brought to Israel for burial.

**נפלה עטרת ראשנו**

בלכות מלאי צער ויגון קודר הננו מודיעים על האבירה הגדולה בהילקח ממנו בעלי זאבינו היקר, מגדולי הרבנים אשר יצאו לו מוניטין בעולם התורה פה ובארץ ישראל, מוותיקי תלמידי לומזה, ראדין ו„מרכז הרב“ בירושלים עיה”ק וממחזיקי ותומכי בתי אלפנא אלו וגם אחרים, מרכיץ תורה כשיעוריו הרבים ומקרב לבן<sup>ל</sup> של ישראל לאביהם שבשמים

**הרב הגאון**

**ר' יעקב צבי ברי' ארי' סופיעצקי ז"ל**

ששחל"ח ביום עש"ק פ' תז"מ, במיאמי, והספידוהו גדולי הרבנים בניו יארק

ביום א' העבר ובא למנוחות על הר המנוחות בירושלים עיה"ק

גדולה האברה וגדול הכאב, זכרו ישאר בלבנו לנצח

אשתו — הרבנית צפורה

בניו — יוחנן, נחמן, משה

בתו — תנה גרינבערג

*A full-page notice on the death of Rabbi Kupietzky, Hapardes 49:9.*

Eulogies at Rabbi Kupietzky's were delivered by Rabbi Pinchas Teitz, Rabbi Shraga Schonfeld, Rabbi Yaakov Yerucham Schroit (Nachman Kupietzky's father-in-law), and Rabbi Dov Rosenzweig. The funeral in Jerusalem was attended by the entire Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav. Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook gave a moving final eulogy, and Rabbi Kupietzky was laid to rest in the Har Hamenuhot cemetery, on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Almost immediately after his passing, during the *shiva*, it became clear that Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Kupietzky kept a few things hidden from the world. Whereas others might have taken personal

glorification in the types of acts Rabbi Kupietzky kept concealed, it seems he wanted these deeds to be known only to Hashem. His wallet was full of IOUs from various people he had loaned money. Visitor after visitor came to tell how they had been beneficiaries of Rabbi Kupietzky's kindnesses, and how his honesty and integrity shone through in all of his dealings.

Besides his ethical testament, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi also clearly bequeathed another important legacy to his descendants. Two of his children now reside full time in Israel, as do nine of his eleven grandchildren. Recently, nearly all of his descendants – numbering close to 100 – gathered for Sukkot in Jerusalem. The story of Rabbi Kupietzky's life ended in 1975, but his spirit lives on in his descendants and their integrity, their love for Torah, and their connection to Eretz Yisrael.

From humble beginnings in the grinding poverty of Poland to a prosperous end in Israel and Florida, he was among the stalwarts who helped reestablish Torah scholarship and community life in North America and Israel after seeing it destroyed in Europe. He himself never really knew his parents, but he was able to set his children's lives in appropriate directions with a strong moral framework. The arc traced by his life followed the trajectory of Judaism as a whole during the twentieth century. If his descendants can be taken as a measure of promise, then the future is hopeful indeed.

NACHALAT YAAKOV



*Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Kupietzky*