the book as an introduction.[23)] The Besht now had a proper genealogy, childhood and youth; indeed the story of his life is strikingly similar to that of many other stereotypical personalities, real or imaginary, that fill the hagiographical literature. This version pictures the Besht as a typical religious leader, pushing his supernatural healing abilities into the background. The Besht as viewed at the beginning of the nineteenth century is a religious leader in the ruling oligarchy; the figure of the charismatic leader is relegated to the periphery of Hasidic historiography.

23) It is generally accepted by scholars today that the original *Shivhei ha-Besht*, as edited by the shohet Dov Baer of Linitz, begins with the section which appears in the Rubinstein edition(referred to in our notes) as section 7. The earlier sections, Korzec, Israel Jaffe reflect later Haba"d traditions. These traditions are to some extent interpretations,reworkings or expansions of traditions found in the body of *Shivhei ha-Besht* (see, for example, above n. 17), some based on customary motifs in hagiographic literature and some reflecting authentic traditions about the Besht's biography, particularly regarding the earlier, unknown period of his life. So, for example, some of the places where the Besht lived before his'revelation', not mentioned in the body of the book, are mentioned in this part, which is considered less reliable and more imaginary than the *Shivhei ha-Besht* in its present version (see for example,above, n. 5).

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RABBI ISRAEL OF RUZHIN'S SETTLEMENT IN SADAGURA

David Assaf

On the 8th of June 1842, at the age of 45, the famed Hasidic Zaddik, R. Israel of Ruzhin arrived in Sadagura in Austrian Bukovina, after having fled from the Russian authorities, and remained there until his death in 1850.[1)] From this small town, which is today a suburb of Chernovtsy (Cernăuţi, now in the Ukraine), he ruled over most of the Hasidic population in the southern regions of Eastern Europe. His followers and admirerers were scattered from Volhynia and Podolia in the Russian Empire to Galicia and Bukovina in the Austrian Empire, in the principalities of Moldavia and Bessarabia, in Hungary, Poland and Lithuania. For a long period, R. Israel, and his sons after him, stood at the head of "*Kolel* Volhyn," the largest, wealthiest and most important Hasidic group in 19th century Palestine and most of the Hasidic population in Safed and Jerusalem were members.[2)] After the death of R. Israel, in October 1850, other Hasidic courts were established by his descendants: sons, grandsons, and sons-in-law. During the second half of the 19th century they erected courts in all the southern and southwestern areas of Eastern Europe. The Friedman family dynasty – and its branches, which spread across many countries, became involved in a very bitter controversy with another large Hasidic dynasty – the Sanz Hasidim in

1) For a comprehensive and detailed study on the life and activities of R. Israel of Ruzhin see my dissertation *R. Israel of Ruzhin and his Role in the History of the Hasidic Movement in the First Half of the 19th Century*, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 1992 (in Hebrew; hereafter: *Assaf*).

2) The Ashkenazic *Kolel* (Hasidic and non-Hasidic) in Eretz Israel was originally founded in order to organize the fundraising among Diaspora Jews and to allocate the money (*Halukah*) to those who were affiliated to this group, basically according to geographic origin of the residents. For general background see: I. Bartal, "The Immigration and Structure of the Ashkenazi Yishuv, 1777-1881", *Cathedra*, 16, Jerusalem 1980, pp. 3-12 (in Hebrew). On *Kolel* Volhyn see: D. Assaf, "From Volhynia to Safed: Rabbi Abraham Dov of Ovruch as a Hasidic Leader in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century", *Shalem*, 6, Jerusalem 1992, p. 242 ff. (in Hebrew).

Galicia, headed by another famous Zadik, R. Haim Halberstam. This confrontation, which stemmed from the luxurious lifestyles and exhibitionist behavior of R. Israel's children, was more severe than that between the Mitnagdim and Hasidim at the end of the 18th century. It splintered the Hasidic community of Galicia and was finally settled only with the tragic results of the First World War when most of the Sadagura courts were uprooted and resettled in Vienna.[3] For over forty years – from R. Israel's settlement in Sadagura in 1842, until 1883 the year of the death of his son and replacement, R. Avraham Yaakov of Sadagura – all the courts which were headed by the Friedman family, including Ştefăneşti, Czortków, Husyatin, Vijniţa, Leova, Boian, Buhuşi, etc., saw the court in Sadagura as the spiritual center of the renewed Ruzhin Hasidism, from which came the orders and to which all the Hasidim looked for inspiration. This situation changed, as was mentioned, in the middle of the 1880s after the death of R. Avraham Yaakov, at which time the main center moved to Czortków where another of R. Israel's sons, R. David Moshe, was active.[4]

R. Israel reached Sadagura after a long and arduous journey filled with hardship and suffering. Previously he had been the leader of a rich and powerful Hasidic court with many followers which was located in Ruzhin, a small town in the Kiev province of the Russian Empire. His special position within the Hasidic world in the first decades of the 19th century was confirmed in a very short period of time. Certain factors contributed to this:

Firstly, his important pedigree as a direct descendant of the Hasidic nobility. He was the great grandson of the Maggid R. Dov of Mezhirech, one of the central Hasidic figures after the death of the Ba'al Shem Tov; he was the grandson of R. Avraham "the Angel," one of Hasidism's most mysterious figures, and he was also a close relative of R. Nachum of Chernobyl, father of the Twersky Hasidic dynasty. Besides his family pedigree he was known also for his mythical ancestry traced back to King David, which later had many implications concerning his messianic potential and kingly claims.

Secondly, his great wealth – which gained him access to the Second Merchants Guild - and his kingly behavior which he interpreted as a Hasidic value and backed up with systematic ideologies. He was criticized for this

3) Until now there is no comprehensive study of this significant controversy, which began in conjunction with the dramatic events of R. Dov of Leova's abandomnment of his Hasidic community and his joining the Chernovtsy Maskilim (1869). See: R. Mahler, "R. Haim Halberstam and his Generation", *Sefer Sanz*, Tel Aviv 1970, pp. 291-341 (in Yiddish).

4) For a biographical survey of each of R. Israel's ten children, see: *Assaf* (above n. 1), pp. 249-259.

behavior by many circles not only from Maskilim and non-Hasidic Torah scholars, but also from Hasidic leaders.

Thirdly, his charismatic leadership which combined spirituality and natural intelligence, with administrative and leadership abilities as well as an awareness of responsibility for *Klal Yisrael* (the entire Jewish community).

Finally, to his unique status as a Hasidic leader, we must add the difficult circumstances in which he found himself, and, as a result, altered his position from a colorful, eccentric and exceptional figure to a widely acknowledged cultural hero.

How did R. Israel find himself in this predicament? In 1836, the bodies of two Jewish informers were discovered in the Novo-Ushits district in the Podolia province. Shmuel Schwartzman and Yitzhak Oxman were well-known informers in the area, who made their livings from extorting money from the surrounding communal leaders. They threatened to inform the Russian authorities of the whereabouts of Jews hiding from the army recruiters, as well as tax evaders. The informers were always considered the most contemptible and despicable factors in Jewish society. Jewish law considered the informer as a "*Rodef*" (oppressor) against whom one had permission to retaliate – even to kill – before he would fulfill his threat, because his deeds endangered the entire Jewish community. From the little we know, there were more than a few incidents of Jewish self-jurisdiction – i.e. killing informers – but for obvious reasons they were kept quiet, and the sources available to us do not report them directly. "If the Dnieper could talk" – wrote the Russian Jewish historian Saul Ginsburg – "it would tell of many informers who were drowned in its waters by communal decisions in the Shklov district".[5] However, in our case, the situation became complicated; investigative committees were established, high officials became involved, and shortly therefter more than fifty Jews from different communities in the area were arrested. During the interrogations, the suspicion arose that R. Israel, who had been staying with one of the communities at the time of the murders, indirectly aided the deed by giving his consent. For three and a-half years R. Israel was questioned and even incarcerated by the notorious "third department" – the secret police, responsible for internal security, which was established by Czar Nicholas I. This real-life drama, which became known as the "Ushits case,"[6] stirred up Jewish public opinion for a long period, since besides R. Israel, an additional eighty persons, including

5) S. Ginsburg, "Ma'aseh Ushits", *Jewish Martyrdom in Tsarist Russia*, New York 1938, pp. 178-187 (in Yiddish).

6) Novo-Ushits was the new Russian name of the former Polish town Letniowce. In some documents this case is called the "Letniowce Case".

communal elders, women and children, had been jailed and tortured. The two individuals who actually committed the murders, escaped to Galicia immediately after the crime.

R. Israel was forced to abandon his wealthy court in Ruzhin, his family and his followers, and take up residence in Kamenets-Podolski, where he was interrogated, and afterward kept in an isolated cell in a Kiev jail for two years. At the end of the trial, R. Israel was found not guilty. This acquittal, as it is stated in the verdict, was obtained for two reasons: firstly, there was no reliable evidence to convict him; and secondly, the court received testimonies from many Jews and non-Jewish noblemen, who praised R. Israel's good nature and character. "It is unacceptable", the court said, "that any of R. Israel's deeds were committed with malice aforethought".[7] However, we can assume that to these reasons can also be added the following: the willingness of other Jewish prisoners to cover up R. Israel's involvement in the case, the payment of a large bribe to the local Russian authorities (we know that large sums of money were collected from Galician Hasidic communities to help R. Israel),[8] and finally the authorities were concerned that the conviction of R. Israel would cause great agitation among the Jewish community. The military court ruled to absolve R. Israel from any responsibility and allowed him to return to his court in Ruzhin, however they kept him under surveillance by the local police.

The many tribulations that R. Israel suffered during the years of his interrogation and incarceration caused him, on the one hand, a great deal of physical pain, as well as deep emotional scars, but on the other hand, it brought him great prestige in the Jewish world, and established his image as a hero. He was accepted as the one chosen by God to struggle against Czar Nicholas I, whom the Jews considered the embodiment of evil, as well as the one who has paid the price for his messianic potential, as the Talmud states: "Zaddikim caught for their generation's sins",[9] and R. Israel's followers believed that their leader was imprisoned in order to atone for the sins of his generation.

7) The text of the verdict was published by S.M. Dubnov, "From my Archive", *Perezhitoe*, 1, St. Petersburg 1908, Documents Section, pp. 1-7 (in Russian). For Hebrew translation see: *Assaf*, pp. 260-266.

8) The memorandum about the money collection, written by Yosef Perl, as well as other related documents, was published by R. Mahler, *Hasidism and Haskalah in Galicia and Poland in the first half of the 19th Century*, Merhaviah 1961, pp. 163-168, 432-451 (in Hebrew; documents are in German). For Hebrew translation see: *Assaf*, pp. 269-274.

9) Shabbat 33:2. See also the dialogue between the two Scottish missionaries and Jews from Siret, in: A. Bonar and R. M'Cheyne, *Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839*, Edinburgh 1844, p. 430.

Upon his release, in February 1840, R. Israel returned to Ruzhin. But shortly thereafter he realized he would not be able to recreate his court's past glories. From Russian documents we know that the local Russian authorities made every effort to curtail his activities, because they still considered him to be a potential threat who could arouse disorder among the Jewish community.[10] Thus, for example, we find the following information in the September 1840 report from the Department of Foreign Religions:

The Jew, Israel son of Shalom Friedman, living in the town Ruzhin, in the Kiev province, and known among the Jews by the nickname Rebbe Srulzce, descended from the family of one Jew, Rebbe Yisrael Ba'al Shem who at the beginning of the 18th century was confirmed as Messiah...He [i.e. R. Israel] receives the same veneration among the Jews as did his famous ancestor, the Ba'al Shem mentioned above. As such, he is known to all the Jews living in Russia, the Kingdom of Poland, Moldavia, Bessarabia etc, as the greatest rabbi. As he exploits the naievety of his correligionists. Friedman exerts his great influence upon their spiritual, as well as their daily lives. His followers – rabbis, communal elders, and ordinary Jews – must appear before him a few times a year, or at least once a year, in order to receive his blessing... but not less importantly, to bring offerings, which they considered equal to the value of the sacrifices that the Israelites brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. All these people... are listed by him in a special book which he uses during his prayers or when he is performing miracles. These people stand under the supervision and protection of Friedman, so that even the slightest insult caused to one of these people will be avenged in the most ruthless way, and some times even resulting in murder.[11]

The authors of the report, who were certainly fed by Jewish informers, had the impression that R. Israel's court was none other than a miniature headquarters with branches spread far and wide. Thus the Zaddik can rule a kind of internal government not limited by political or geographical borders, handle an economic system of money collection, and protect his supporters and persecute his offenders, even to the point of bloodshed. This report, obviously reflecting R. Israel's pre- imprisonment status, contradicts another report which was sent in February, 1841 by the General Dimitri Bibikov, the General Governor of the southwestern region (the provinces of Kiev, Volhyn and Podolia) to the Russian Minister of Internal Affairs,

10) The documents are published by Iuli Gessen, "From the Life of the Zaddik of Ruzhin and his Sons", *Evreiskaia Leytopis*, 1, Moscow 1923, pp. 138-148 (in Russian). For Hebrew translation see: *Assaf*, pp. 266-269.

11) Gessen, *ibid*, pp. 140-141; *Assaf*, p. 267.

Alexander Stroganov. Bibikov made clear that R. Israel commands tremendous respect among the Jews in the area as well as those further away, "however, he conducts a very quiet and almost pious life". Since his release from prison – writes Bibikov – "we have not received any negative reports; he leads a lonely quiet life and no one visits him." His influence – according to the General Governor – seems to have waned since his two-year imprisonment.[12)]

As was mentioned, there is no doubt that the Russian authorities never made peace with R. Israel's release, and still considered him to be a potential threat whose behaviour and activities needed to be monitored. During the investigation, the authorities became aware of the wide sphere of R. Israel's influence on the Hasidic Jewish community – not only in Russia, but also beyond its borders – and of his ability, which under certain circumstances, could undermine the "old order". Bibikov's suspicions are recounted in a Hasidic source which reflects the Ruzhin tradition regarding R. Israel's escape. According to this source Bibikov wrote to the Czar as follows:

Even though the man is clean and without any blame, because this man is very important and great in the eyes of the Jews... we must worry that in the future the Jews will agree that he is the Messiah and will accept him as their king. And it was suggested [by Bibikov] that he be sent to a far off land [i.e., Siberia] and only a minyan of ten people, and no more, which he needs in order to pray, will be permitted to join him.[13)]

Bibikov's letter to the Czar has not been preserved, but documents from the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs confirm the essence of the Hasidic source. Shortly after the rendering of the verdict, Bibikov was informed that even though R. Israel was acquitted, and was allowed to return to Ruzhin, if it was deemed necessary to expel him from his residence upon new information not necessarily connected with the Ushits case - then "he [Bibikov] should discuss it with whom it is worth to discuss." The hint in this suggestion was quite obvious. R. Israel indeed was placed under surveillance and was harrassed by the authorities. He was not allowed to leave his town and was warned that irresponsible behavior would cause his deportation to Siberia.

Little information from R. Israel's life in Ruzhin at that time remains, and the Hasidic sources have kept silent as well. But we can assume that

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2) *Ibid.*

3) Reuven Zack, *Knesset Yisrael*, Warsaw 1906, p. 25 (in Hebrew). Hasidic sources emphasize that the real reason of R. Israel's imprisonment was the Russian authorities' fear of his messianic abilities, and the "Ushits case" was only a good excuse.

there was a lull in his activities as a Hasidic leader. For a year and a half – until August 1841 – R. Israel stayed in Ruzhin, isolated and cut off almost completely from his followers, who most probably were not allowed to come to his court. When R. Israel realized that the reestablishment of his court in Ruzhin was a dream never to be fulfilled – he decided to move to Kishinev, the capital of Russian Bessarabia, near the Austrian border. He applied for a passport to Kishinev in February 1841, but only at the end of July 1841 after the district court in Skvira stated that R. Israel behaved in a completely respectable manner, did he succeed in getting his passport. The Ministry of Internal Affairs' main reason for granting R. Israel's exit visa, was his claim that in fact he abandoned his rabbinic activities and, to make a living, he worked as a trader in partnership with a Jew from Kishinev. As was mentioned earlier, R. Israel was registered as a merchant in the second guild, and therefore he requested that the authorities allow him, as was befitting his position, the right to pursue his profession in a free manner, and the first step in becoming a successful merchant was obtaining the right to free travel. This claim was accepted by the authorities, who permitted him to leave on the condition that he be under police supervision in Kishinev. It is noteworthy that his passport was marked for business purposes only, not for permanent residency in Bessarabia. R. Israel did not linger and took with him his entire household. This was a clear sign that he had no intention of returning to Ruzhin and he ended that chapter of his life.

R. Israel's decision to move to Kishinev is obvious: the Russian Commissioner of Bessarabia, the Count Michail Vorontsov, who was also Governor-General of New Russia provinces, was known for his liberal attitude towards the Jews as well as towards the Hasidim and R. Israel hoped that he would not be harrassed there. We can also assume that for Bibikov, R. Israel's move which cut him off from his base of power in Volhynia and Podolia, was a little political achievement. Within the first days of his stay in Kishinev, R. Israel heard a rumor that the Czar issued a decree to expel him and his family from the Pale of Settlement. R. Israel, of course, did not see the official correspondence with the Czar's orders. He received the information through his in-law, the rich banker Yaakov Yosef Heilprin of Berdichev, who had the right to live in Kiev and handled business and social contacts with high officials in the military and government. There was no reason to doubt the validity of this rumor and so R. Israel quickly sent some of his close friends to Pavel Fedorov, the substitute Commissioner of Bessarabia who lived in Kishinev, and through bribery they succeeded in obtaining a passport for R. Israel to Moldavia.

From the Russian documents it is clear that R. Israel was indeed listed in Kishinev as a special status merchant, and after some of his followers

guaranteed to the authorities that he intended to return from his business trip to Moldavia, he received a passport. It is plausible that in the intercession to the Russian authorities on behalf of R. Israel, not only Hasidim but Maskilim were involved as well. One of them was Bezalel Stern, head of the modern Jewish School in Odessa. We know about Stern's involvement from a very reliable source, namely a hint given by Alexander Zederbaum, the editor of the Maskilic newspaper *Ha-Meliz*, which had no interest in emphasizing any positive relationships between Hasidim and Maskilim:

Only by the intercession of the Hasidim to whose was added the requests of efratai (which means in Hebrew – merchants) Odessa and the stars of the sky among the Maskilim of Israel who recommended R. Israel of Ruzhin before the great, honorable, and the generous Vorontsov, until he allowed him to leave the country.[14]

The merchants and the stars, which are printed in bold letters in the original, apparently refer to Haim Efrati, a wealthy Odessan Jew, and to Bezalel Stern whose name translates in Hebrew to star. In addition to the fact that Stern was a very close friend of Vorontsov, which could help the intercession, he was also a disciple of the famous anti- Hasidic Maskil, Yosef Perl of Tarnopol, who ironically, a few years earlier, supplied the Russian authorities, a very detailed memorandum regarding the money collection in Galicia for R. Israel's release from prison as well as information concerning the murder case itself.[15]

We have here an interesting example of cooperation in the very complicated relationship between R. Israel and the Maskilim of his generation. While we do not know the real nature of this cooperation and the motivation of the two parties is not clear, we can say this was not an isolated incident of contact between these parties. We can also mention for example, the financial aid R. Israel supplied to the Maskil Isaac Bear Levinsohn to publish some of his books[16] and there are other episodes such as this which may soften the radical image of the militant struggle between Maskilim and Hasidim at that time.[17]

R. Israel and his followers did not waste time and immediately travelled westward – to Iaşi, the capital of Moldavia, which was a principality in Ottoman rule and under Russian protection. His family, still in Kishinev,

4) *Keter Kehunah*, Odessa 1867, p. 110 (in Hebrew).
5) See above n. 8.
6) See the second edition of Levinsohn's *Te'udah be-Yisrael*, Vilna 1886, footnote in the introduction; and R. Moshe Berinblum's approbation to Levinsohn's *Effes Dammim*, Vilna 1837 (both in Hebrew).
7) See: *Assaf*, pp. 161-165.

was waiting to see what would develop. R. Israel already knew some of the leaders of the Jewish community in Iaşi, among whom was the local Rabbi Yosef Landa, and the wealthy Hasidim Michel Daniel and Abraham Naftali Kaufman. They were happy to welcome him and did their best in helping him to establish himself in his new place of residence. R. Yosef Rath, R. Israel's personal assistant, who can be considered a very reliable source, described the events of the escape and eventual resettlement in Sadagura.[18] According to Rath, a decree regarding R. Israel's expulsion was issued and sent first to Ruzhin. From there it was forwarded to Kishinev, but by that time R. Israel was already beyond its borders. Kishinev's governor, who issued R. Israel's passport, quickly informed the Russian Consul in Iaşi that every effort would be made to capture the escaped Zaddik. However, these plans were discovered by R. Israel's followers who warned him in advance of the impending danger. R. Israel, and his close circle decided that they must avoid deportation at all costs, as was diplomatically stated by his sons: "For him, as a man who does not know the Russian language, to live in a place like that (i.e., outside the Pale of Settlement), is impossible considering his spiritual position."[19] In other words: cutting the Zaddik off from his main source of strength, his Hasidim, means almost total destruction of any chance to rehabilitate his court. The obvious decision was to move R. Israel's place of residence far away from Russian influence.

As bad luck would have it, their escape was delayed for a few days because in order to leave Moldavia on the way to Galicia one needed a special passport that was not in R. Israel's possession. As was mentioned before, his passport was good just from Russia to Moldavia. During those tense days of waiting R. Israel hastily left Iaşi and probably hid in Botoşani, northwest of Iaşi, where some of his wife's relatives lived. In the mean time, his followers again showed initiative and acquired a forged passport for him under a false name. However, the passport was issued for a younger man, twenty-six years old, and R. Israel was already forty-four. This little problem was solved thanks to the involvement of a rich Jewish merchant, Nathan Shimon Horovits of Suceava, who was also a well known border smuggler. His business in the illegal smuggling of goods across the borders, combined with his ongoing relations with the Austrian customs officials, which were maintained through consistent bribery, were supposed to smooth R. Israel's escape over the border. And so they did, as R. Israel was allowed cross the border on a false passport with no questions asked.

18) See his book *Yeshuot Yisrael*, Podgorze 1904; new edition: Magdil Yeshuot, Jerusalem 1990 (both in Hebrew).
19) Gessen (above n. 10), pp. 145-146; *Assaf*, p. 268.

R. Israel and his two closest companions (his personal assistant and personal slaughterer) crossed the border on a bone-freezing night. It was one of the first nights of January 1842, and the road which had become blocked with the non-stop snowfall, forced the group to use a horse-drawn sleigh. They rode until they reached the Seret river, which was the natural border between Moldavia and Bukovina. The river was frozen and they travelled on it without fear, but suddenly the ice broke under the hoof of one of the horses and the sleigh sunk and was no longer usable. Nathan Shimon, who was muscular, did not lose his control, and carrried R. Israel on his shoulders across the frozen river. It seems that they stayed for a short time in the city Suceava, Natan Shimon's residence, the former capital of Moldavia. Here they hired a local coach and continued their journey westward toward the first stop in their new land.

R. Israel's first days were spent in Câmpulung-Moldovenesc, a small village in Bukovina, one hundred kilometers west of Iassi. After some more of his followers arrived, R. Israel asked to gather a larger group of Hasidim around him who would give him the sense of lordship over a Hasidic court, albeit a temporary and poor one. It was important for R. Israel to show that he did not stop for a moment from behaving as a Zaddik in his court. From his hiding place he sent special emissaries with invitations to selected individuals to join him. According to Yoseph Rath, R. Israel's residence was kept secret even from his close followers. All that was said to them was to reach a certain village and there, another messenger would be waiting to bring them to the Zaddik. Fifteen Hasidim who lived in neighboring villages reached R. Israel, enabling him to feel a familiar Hasidic atmosphere.

From the beginning it was clear that Câmpulung was only a provisional stop. After a short time, R. Israel accepted the invitation of his in- law, the Zaddik R. Haim of Kosov, to move north to his hometown in Galicia in order to settle there. R. Haim promised that the governor of Kolomea, to which Kosov belonged, was a supporter of Hasidim and his assistance was assured. R. Israel arrived in Kosov, but in a short time the governor who was spoken of above was to be replaced and the new governor could not be counted on to help in this matter. R. Israel was depressed, he stayed in R. Haim's house, refusing to see anybody besides R. Haim who updated him on the latest developments.

Meanwhile, messengers of the Bukovinian Baron Mustaţă reached R. Israel. He owned the city of Sadagura and suggested to R. Israel to live in his town under his protection. Obviously the Baron believed that the Zaddik's presence, and moreover, the Hasidim who would make pilgrimages to his court, would bring prosperity to the town. R. Israel sent one of his loyalists to Sadagura to check out the intentions behind the Baron's invitation, and

the impression was good. The entire entourage promptly travelled south to Sadagura and so began a new chapter in the life of R. Israel of Ruzhin. R. Israel's legal status remained uncertain for a few years more, since the Russian authorities demanded his extradition. However, the Austrian authorities who negotiated with the Russians refused to comply.[20] Only in December 1845 did R. Israel receive official confirmation, signed by the Kaiser Ferdinand I, to settle in Sadagura.[21] His new town became, in a short time, an important Hasidic center, which, it seems, became greater in wealth and power than the previous center in the Ukraine. The Baron's assessment was correct – the court brought prosperity to the town and hundreds upon hundreds of Hasidim from all across east Europe came to visit the famous Zaddik. Sadagura became so synonomous with the Zaddik and his dynasty, that in an old Jewish joke a Jew asks his friend: Do you know why Sadagura is called Sadagura? Of course, answers his friend, because the R. of Sadagura lives there.

20) Three documents concerning the negotiations on R. Israel's extradition are published by N.M. Gelber, *Aus zwei Jahrhunderten*, Wien und Leipzig 1924, pp. 118-121 (in German); for Hebrew translation, see: *Assaf*, pp. 273-274.

21) *Assaf*, p. 118.

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III

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