

PARSHAS BO

CHASSIDIC INSIGHTS, HIGHLIGHTS AND HAPPENINGS

פרשת בא
January 18, 2024 / ה' שבט תשפ"ד



What's happening in Belz

Tonight, ט' שבט commemorates 80 years since Maran Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt"l and his brother the Bilgorai Rav zt"l arrived to Eretz Yisroel, escaping war-torn Europe.

Many miraculous events occurred during the holy brothers' turbulent exile and over four- years of wanderings. The journey from their hometown Belz spanned towns and villages, as well as ghettos in several different countries, numerous hiding places, daring and dangerous journeys under a variety of disguises, and many miraculous escapes, often just avoiding falling into the Nazi's y's bloody clutches, until their final arrival in Eretz Yisroel on 1944 ט' שבט.

This unforgettable day is celebrated by Belzer Chassidim each year, thanking Hashem for the miracle of sustaining the Belz dynasty, as the First Belzer Rebbe, Reb Sholom Rokeach zt"l promised:
"בעלזא וועט זיין א ווינקל פאר תורה און יראת שמים ביז משיח וועט קומען - Belz will be an epicenter for Torah and Yiras Shamayim until the coming of Moshiach and on."

A special event will take place tonight, ט' שבט, in the court of Belz for benevolent supporters of Belz Institutions in Eretz Yisroel. Graced by the Belzer Rebbe shlita, a rich and captivating program with historic presentations, Divrei Chizuk - words of inspiration from the Rebbe shlita, and a token of appreciation to the generous individuals who contribute to the growth and future of Belz.

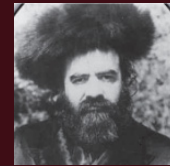
THE HOLY BROTHERS' Miraculous Escape

LEARN ABOUT THEIR PLIGHT FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

(Read historic timeline below)



Maran Rebbe Aharon Rokeach zt"l
Known as: The Ruv Zichrono Livracha



Rebbe Mordechai Rokeach zt"l
Known as: The Bilgorai Rav



Everyone loves a good story, especially a Chassidishe story...

וגם מקננו ילך עמנו...כי ממנו נקח לעבוד את ה' (בא יכז)
And our livestock will also go with us...for from it shall we take to serve Hashem.

One of the holy chassidim that used to travel to Belz to spend Rosh Hashanah with Maran The Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l, was Rebbe Elimelech of Tulist z'l. After Rosh Hashanah, Reb Elimelech would travel to the Rebbe Reb Mier'l of Premislan zt"l.

The Sar Shalom used to say Divrei Torah

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**EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD STORY,
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before blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. One year, The Sar Shalom spoke about the miracles of יציאת מצרים – Egypt’s redemption, repeating the p’sukim in Parshas Bo when Hashem sent Moshe to redeem the Yidden from Mitzrayim. Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked, “מי ומי ההולכים” – who are the ones that are going?” And Moshe Rabbeinu answered, “...Our youngsters, elders, sons, daughters, sheep will go,” And Moshe continued, ‘וגם ממנו נקה’ – and our livestock will go with us too.”

Right after the Divrei Torah, The Sar Shalom blew the shofar.

After Rosh Hashanah, Reb Elimelech traveled to Premislan. When he came into the Rebbe, Reb Meir’l asked, “Elimelech, please repeat the Vort that the Belzer Rebbe said before blowing the shofar.” Reb Elimelech repeated the Vort, and the Rebbe Reb Meir’l was awed by the words. He couldn’t get over how the Belzer Rebbe, with his holy wisdom, could break through the heavens and annul the evil decree hovering over the Yidden.

Reb Meir’l explained that the מקטריגים – heavenly accusers placed an evil decree on the little children, so The Sar Shalom said בנינו ובבנותינו נלך, and the decree was annulled.

So the Mekatrigim tried to put an evil decree on the Yidden’s livestock, but the Belzer Rav vetoed it by saying “וגם מקננו ילך עמנו...כי ממנו נקה לעבוד את ה’”

Reb Meir’l concluded, “Since the Belzer Rebbe didn’t talk about the birds, the decree was placed on the birds.” And that is what happened. A plague raged upon the birds but didn’t harm the people or animals.

והיה לך לאות על ידיך ולזכרון בין עיניך (בא יג:ט)
And it should be for you a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes.

R’ Yehoshua Jacobowitz zt”l (from Boro Park) related an incident that occurred when he was in Budapest with Maran Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt”l. R’ Yehoshua was preoccupied with dealing with a situation that was Pikuach Nefesh (life-threatening), and it delayed him from putting on tefillin in the morning. He finished dealing with the crisis late afternoon but still needed to discuss it with Maran Rebbe Aharon of Belz.

When R’ Yehoshua entered Maran’s home, The Bilgorai Rav zt”l and Maran’s gabbai R’ Duvid Spira a”h warmly thanked him for his dedication towards Maran and helping others. However, when he entered Maran’s room and wanted to give “Shalom” to Maran, Maran wrapped his hand in a towel and gave his hand to R’ Yehoshua to accept the greeting.

Everyone in the room was perplexed by Maran’s gesture since it was customary for Maran to wrap his hand in a towel when shaking the children’s hands. One of the chassidim mentioned to Maran, “This is R’ Yehoshua Jacobowitz.” But Maran didn’t react.

When R’ Yehoshua left the room, the Bilgorai Rav and R’ Duvid Spira wanted to assuage what had occurred, but R’ Yehoshua stopped them, saying: “Don’t worry. I know why Maran didn’t offer his hand to me and wrapped it with a towel. Because I hadn’t yet put on tefillin today, and Maran saw this with his holy eyes!”

והיה לך לאות על ידיך ולזכרון בין עיניך (בא יג:ט)
And it should be for you a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes.

Maran The Sar Shalom of Belz zt”l, saved the pocket money that his mother used to give him

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so that he could purchase tefillin from the Sofer (scribe) Rebbe Moshe from Peshevorsk zt"l. Before his bar mitzvah, Maran went to Reb Moshe with a friend who also wanted to purchase tefillin.

Rebbe Moshe told Maran when they arrived, "I already wrote tefillin for you, and here is your tefillin." Rebbe Moshe told the Sar Shalom's friend, "I'm too old and can't write anymore. There are other G-d-fearing Sofers. Go buy it from them."

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And it should be for you a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes.

Reb Nachman Daks z"l was stringent about not speaking while wearing tefillin. When he was bar mitzvah, Maran Rebbe Yissocher Dov of Belz told him, "If you want to merit a long life, then don't talk while wearing tefillin."

Reb Nachman merited to live long years. And when he heard other bochurim say they put on tefillin by Maran, he would say that it couldn't be because they spoke while wearing tefillin.



THIS WEEK'S VORT
פרשת בא

כי אני הכבדתי את לבו (בא י"א)
For I have made his heart stubborn.

Moshe Rabbeinu was very upset that Pharaoh was so stubborn. Hashem told him that Pharaoh's

stubbornness was not from Pharaoh himself; it was – כי אני הכבדתי את לבו – Because I toughened his heart.

ויפן ויצא מעם פרעה... (בא י"ו)
And he turned and left Pharaoh's presence.

When you depart from a king, you leave with honor. You don't turn around; you walk out backward, facing the king. Here, in this pasuk, it says ויפן – Moshe and Aharon turned around and ויצא – they went out from Pharaoh like ordinary people. They turned away from him, not like you leave from a king.

ויסר מעלי רק את המות הזה (בא י"ז)
He removed from me only this death.

Why did Pharaoh refer to מכות ארבה (the plague of locust) with the term "מות" – death, " not by the other plagues? The Gemara (נדרים סד) says: "Four things are considered as if one is dead, a poor person, a Metzora – an inflicted person, a blind person, and someone who doesn't have children." During the plague of Arba "ויכס את עין כל הארץ ותחשך" – the locust covered the earth and became dark. " The Egyptians sat in the dark like blind people. Therefore, Pharaoh said ויסר מעלי רק את המות הזה

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FROM ESCAPE TO SURVIVAL
FROM ASHES TO RENEWAL

Belz will always persevere

בעלזא וועט זיין א ווינקל פאר תורה און
יראת שמים ביז משיח וועט קומען

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS THAT LED TO THE ESCAPE

September 1, 1939

World War II broke out, and the Nazi regime started conquering nearby countries and claiming to make the world 'Yudenrein.'

Rosh Hashanah September 14, 1939

Thousands of refugees arrived in Belz from nearby occupied German territories to spend Rosh Hashanah there. Maran Rebbe Aharon of Belz assembled a group of community activists and commanded them to ensure the refugees had places to stay and food to eat. They gave them a place to daven and eat their Yom Tov meals comfortably.

Yom Kippur - September 23, 1939.

That year, Yom Kippur fell on Shabbos. Polish soldiers swamped the city, including many Jewish soldiers who joined the Rebbe in shul. Many soldiers were wounded, and the Rebbe requested that everyone open their homes for the Jewish and non-Jewish soldiers and offer assistance.

Erev Sukkos 1939

Russian troops sieged the city, despite the approaching Nazis. One of the Russian commanders was Jewish and claimed to be a relative of the Belzer Rebbes. In his merit, the Belzer Chassidim were able to celebrate Sukkos calmly.

Chol Hamoed Sukkos 1939

Belz residents learned that according to a Polish agreement, the Russians must leave Belz since it belongs to the Germans.

Hoshana Raba - October 4, 1939

As fast as the Russians evaded Belz, that's how quickly they fled. The Germans announced that they would occupy Belz tomorrow.

Rebbe Aharon sent 150 Torah scrolls and other worthy Judaica to the nearby city of Rava for safekeeping.

A group of Belz activists presented the Rebbe with a map and some escape routes.

Rebbe Aharon asked the dayanim if it was necessary to flee and if he was allowed to travel on Yom Tov. They answered it's 'pikuach nefesh,' and they forewarned everyone that they're also allowed to take along necessities because no one knows what the future will bring.

Shmini Atzeres - October 5, 1939

The shul was quiet as Maran Rebbe Aharon entered for the last tefillah in Belz. They davened Maariv calmly, as if the terror outside didn't exist, and then broke into fiery hakafos –dancing, completing all required seven hakafos. Maran

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Rebbe Aharon wished each individual 'Gut Yom Tov,' made kiddush, and inquired about the situation. When he was told that the Nazis y"ts occupied the nearby towns and were approaching, Rebbr Aharon commanded everyone to don their weekday clothes and flee. Watching Rebbe Aharon and his family walking towards the train station was a pitiful sight. Some offered car rides, but there wasn't enough place for all his family members, so Rebbe Aharon insisted on walking.

The train station that used to witness thousands escorting their Rebbe on his trips now stood forlorn from escorts. The last train left Belz on Shmini Atzeres night to Sokohl under the Russian regime.

Maran Rebbe Aharon and his entourage remained in Sokhol from Simchas Torah until after Shavous. During their stay, they could daven and conduct all activities as usual. The Russians gave 24-hour notice for all refugees to flee the city.

June 20, 1940

From Sokohl, they traveled to Radichov, where they needed to stay low to avoid suspicion. Rebbe Aharon stayed in Radichov for less than a week since the Russians didn't allow refugees to reside within 100 kilometers of the border.

June 25, 1940

They left Radichov and moved to Busk, but the Busk government didn't welcome them there, and the Jewish activists worked on finding a place for the Rebbe and his family to live in peace. Three days after arriving in Busk, on Erev Shabbos, they traveled to Przemyslany.

Their plans were diverted, and they spent Shabbos in the city of Gailna. What happened was that Rebbe Aharon's gabbaim (attendants) wanted

to leave the city, and when they summoned Rebbe Aharon, he was deep in thought. Shabbos was approaching, and the gabbaim told Rebbe Aharon, 'We need to leave.' However, Rebbe Aharon still sat engrossed in his holy thoughts, and suddenly, he got up and said let's go.

They realized they wouldn't arrive at Przemyslany before Shabbos, so they stopped in Gailna for Shabbos. They remembered that the daughter of the Santzer Rav zt"l, Rebbetzin Gitche a"n, lived there and were sure she would welcome the Belzer Rebbe for Shabbos.

Their wagon arrived as chassidim were already heading to shul for Shabbos. R' Shea Heshel Hertzberg a"n and his son Yonah a"n, Belzer Chassidim, were ecstatic when they noticed the wagon containing such revered guests. They quickly escorted them to Rebbetzin Gitche's home, where her family members graciously welcomed them in. (Her family said that the Rebbetzin went to Przemyslany for Shabbos because "If the Belzer Rebbe is in a nearby town for Shabbos, how can I not be under his holy shadow!")

Rebbe Aharon davened in the Gailna Shul, where everyone was excited to greet and receive his brachos.

The Friday night tish was conducted in Rebbetzin Gitche's home, where R' Shea Hershel and his two sons were present. During the tish, Russian troops went from house to house and deported all Polish Jews. They came to R' Shea Heshel's home and took his family. When R' Shea Heshel heard the news, he fainted. After reviving him, Rebbe Aharon gave him a piece of challah and said: "Please, go, go, Hashem will protect you from harm!" Thus, R' Shea Hershel survived the war years.

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within 100 kilometers of the border.

July 1940

A Przemyslany Chassid, Reb Yehoshua Schwartz a"h, brought the Rebbe and his family from Gailna to Przemyslany and gave over his apartment for them to reside in. Rebbe Aharon spent a pretty calm year in Przemyslany, keeping a low profile not to arouse the suspicion of the N.K.V.D.

July 8, 1941:

Despite Hungary and Russia's deal to split Poland, Hitler y"s wanted to occupy all of Poland, including the city of Przemyslany. By July, the Germans occupied Preslan and commanded the Ukrainians to burn the Przemyslany Shul. They also sought out the Belzer Rebbe, who lived on the same street as the shul. When Reb Moshe hy"d, Rebbe Aharon's eldest son, heard them calling out for his father, he ran outside screaming: "Where is my father? Where is my father?" The accursed soldiers grabbed Reb Moshe, with three close friends, plus another 40 Yidden, and threw them into the shul's inferno. When Rebbe Aharon was told of the tragedy, he accepted the news, saying, "A chessed from Hashem, that I gave him a korban (a sacrifice!)"

Rebbe Aharon's life was in danger. After many different escape tactics, they paid a hefty sum to a Polish prince who served in the Nazi police, who agreed to escort Rebbe Aharon to Wiznitza in his police car. But first, Rebbe Aharon asked his brother, the Bilgorai Rav, to come along. And from there on, the two brothers never separated.

December 21, 1941

Neither had any official documents or travel permit, and the prince planned to leave after

dark - after lecht-bentching on the seventh night of Chanukah. Two young chassidim, R' Nachman Hirsch Tzinger, and R' Dovid Gezel Erdman, joined them as gabbaim, disguising themselves as non-Jews. After miraculously crossing the borders and traveling days and nights, the driver lost control of the car one night, causing a severe accident where the vehicle turned over, hurling its passengers together into a confused heap. The crushing weight of the wreckage upon them. The car doors had jammed shut, trapping them among shards of glass.

With superhuman effort, the Bilgorai Rav pushes out of the wrecked car and successfully pulls the Rebbe, gabbaim, and the prince free before the car's engine catches fire and explodes. A passing wagon driver took them to a nearby inn whose innkeeper summoned Dr. Shea Hendler from Tarnow to treat them.

Note: Dr. Hendler risked his life to tend to the Belzer Rebbe; after treating the Rebbe's and his brother's wounds, he refused to take pay. Rebbe Aharon blessed that Hashem should protect him with his close family and presented him with a 20-zloty coin, which he blessed as a segulah warning him to guard it carefully. Dr. Hendler experienced many miracles and survived in this merit. Although he buried the coin with unpublished medical manuscripts for safekeeping in Plaszow, he found them both intact after the war."

December 23, 1941

Wiznitza was a small town away from main roads or train stations. Therefore, the Nazis y"s didn't set up any ghettos or labor camps there. Rebbe Aharon stayed in Wiznitza for a few months.

In the nearby Bochnia Ghetto lived a wealthy activist, R' Eliezer Landau, who saved many Jews by paying the Nazis to allow Jews to work in his

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factories. He bribed the head Nazi officer to protect the two holy Rabbins in the neighboring town. The righteous commander obeyed and, in time, revealed to R' Eliezer that the Wiznitsa residents would soon be deported to the Bochnia Ghetto and advised the Rabbins to escape.

August 27, 1942

R' Eliezer arranged for the two brothers to come to the Bochnia Ghetto, where they only stayed overnight because of an upcoming 'aktzia.' The next day, R' Eliezer arranged for the Rebbe and his family to escape in a truck laden with fabric, where they all lay flat, amongst fellow refugees, under a pile of materials until they reached the Krakow Ghetto erev Shabbos before sunset.

December 11, 1942:

After a few months, they learned that deportation would take place in the Krakow Ghetto, and R' Eliezer Landau arranged for them to come back to the Bochnia Ghetto. They arrived in Bochnia late at night, and Rebbe Aharon lit Chanukah candles in the home of R' Shimon Kempler's a"h.

May 18, 1943:

The Bochnia Ghetto was gated and surrounded by SS patrol. In the middle of the night, the Rebbe and his brother escaped through a narrow opening where a few wood panels were removed in advance. They ran to a house across the street on the outskirts of the Ghetto, and in the morning, a Yid arrived with his horse and wagon and took them to the nearby town of Bitchkov. There, they dressed up as Hungarian soldiers and, with their gabbai, R' Duvid Spira, traveled to Hungary.

May 19, 1943:

They traveled through a roundabout, a longer way

to avoid being caught. Traveling through Turka and Jasina. In Jasina, they rested in the home of R' Alter Gershon Knoll a"h. They ate and washed up, and before they left, Rebbe Aharon thanked and blessed R' Alter Gershon, saying that Hashem should spare his family. (They all survived the war.) After 20 minutes, their driver knocked on the door, informing them they must travel to Ungvar.

May 20, 1943:

They arrived in Ungvar at the home of R' Zindel Berger, a Belzer Chassid. The Rebbe first asked for a "leib tzidek" - (a wool tzitzis) since they traveled dressed as non-Jews. They spent Shabbos there and arranged for a Red Cross ambulance to take them further.

May 23, 1943 - ל"ג בעומר

The two holy brothers arrived in Budapest, Hungary, where, after visiting the home of R' Yosef Shlaga, they were escorted to the Jewish hospital, where they separated the two brothers to avoid suspicion. Their driver bid them farewell and promised not to repeat such a dangerous task. Rebbe Aharon stayed in the hospital for six days and then went to the home of R' Moshe Weingarten a"h, and the Bilgorai Rav remained in the hospital for a few weeks.

The two brothers stayed in Budapest for a few months, celebrating the Yomim Tovim amongst many Yidden. On Motzei Rosh Hashanah, Rebbe Aharon disclosed to R' Moshe Aharon Kronstein that they plan to travel to Eretz Yisroel.

October 10, 1943:

The Hungarian authorities knew that the two holy brothers were in Budapest and were on 'The most wanted' list. A day after Yom Kippur, the Budapest



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police chief, Dr. Ferdinand Batizfalvy, summoned Rebbe Aharon to his headquarters. The chassidim were worried since the Rebbes weren't legally registered. However, Rebbe Aharon wasn't worried and went with his brother, the Bilgorai Rav, escorted by R' Yosef Shlaga and Mr. M. Kraus, a community activist with connections to the police.

However, Dr. Batizfalvy said he wants to talk to the Rabbiner 'between four eyes.' Only after arriving at Eretz Yisroel did Rebbe Aharon share what occurred. The Nazis y's commanded the Hungarian police to deport Rebbe Aharon and the Bilgorai Rav, together with 500 ghetto escapees. Dr. Batizfalvy showed the letter to Rebbe Aharon, which had a picture attached (the Nazis made a mistake and sent a picture of Reb Yissocher Dov of Belz zt"l.)

Dr. Batizfalvy stipulated two conditions. 1. The Rav must make arrangements as soon as possible to flee Hungary. 2. He should keep the conversation confidential.

Meanwhile, Belzer Chassidim from England and Switzerland were working to obtain entry visas to Eretz Yisroel for the two holy brothers.

January 13, 1944:

Before leaving Budapest, Rebbe Aharon visited the homes of a few community activists to thank them for dedicating themselves to bringing Rebbe Aharon to Hungary from the Bochnia Ghetto. When visiting the home of R' Pinchas Frierdiga, the phone rang, and R' Moshe Gross a"h from Genf, Switzerland, was on the line. R' Moshe spoke to the Bilgorai Rav, giving discreet instructions for their escape.

January 14, 1944:

Thousands stood outside the home of R' Yosef

Yida Reiner, where Rebbe Aharon stayed, to bid farewell to the two holy brothers. Rebbe Aharon stood on the porch and wished them well. The two brothers went to a different home a day before leaving the country since the police were worried about the farewell gathering and wanted to avoid arousing suspicion.

Rebbe Aharon went to the home of R' Avigdor Shlaga, where they stayed a few hours. Rebbe Aharon bid farewell to R' Shmiel Porges z"l, who was active in the Rebbe's escapades. Rebbe Aharon handed R' Shmiel a 'matbaya' (coin) and told him: "You should be saved from the rasha y's, and whatever you do should be with hatzlacha..."

Note: R' Shmiel Porges related that he saved hundreds of Jews from the Nazi clutches, all on the merit of the 'matbaya' from Rebbe Aharon. To his amazement, the 'matbaya' disappeared on the day the Russians freed Budepast. After the war, Reb Shmiel visited Eretz Yisroel, and Rebbe Aharon inquired about his miraculous escapades. When Reb Shmiel said his 'matbaya' had vanished, Rebbe Aharon smiled.

January 17, 1944:

After Shachris, Reb Aharon heeded a hard task once again and had his holy beard removed. He sighed deeply, saying, "What is my mission? What will be the end? Oy vey, Oy vey! I didn't think I'd need to remove my beard! I thought this was my last galus, and I won't need to go into exile again! Oy vey! Oy vey!"

The Rebbe's close people packed his suitcase, but he couldn't take his tallis and tefillin. Yet, they were able to hide the special writings of Belz. The Bilgorai Rav insisted on taking notebooks filled with holy works and Belz memoirs.

Though they tried to keep the Rebbe's abode secretive, many people came to bid farewell

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and receive his brochos. Among them were eight young children who snuck into the Rebbe's house and asked for a brachah. Though no one was allowed in, the Rebbe pitied them. (All eight children survived the war.)

Rebbe Aharon and his brother were escorted to the car by two secret agents. His gabbai R' Duvid Spira a"h, the activist R' Yosef Shalgo, and the driver accompanied them. Rebbe Aharon told the Bilgorai Rav in the car: "I have rachmanus (pity) on the Hungarian Yidden. But what can I do? I did what I could; I davened, but it didn't help!"

It was mid-afternoon with a sunshine when they entered the car. Suddenly, a heavy fog came down, and you couldn't see anything around. All cars were parked on the side for lack of visibility, and the police cars who wanted to escorted Rebbe Aharon's car couldn't locate the car. They kept on losing directions. Even the chassidim who wanted to follow the car to the Kellenfeld Train Station couldn't pursue it since the police created block-offs along the way.

Chassidim later recounted this miracle, saying that the 'Ananei Hakovad - the Heavenly clouds' protected Rebbe Aharon on his journey to Eretz Yisroel.

When Rebbe Aharon and his entourage arrived at the train station, a few Chassidim reached the station to catch a final glimpse of their holy Rebbe's face and bid farewell.

The police chief, Dr. Batizfalvy, made sure that there shouldn't be a commotion at the train station, for he was afraid of the Nazis. Some chassidim managed to get onto the train, traveled to the Austrian border, and then returned to Budapest.

Before leaving, Rebbe Aharon raised his hands, blessed the city, and entered the Orient Express train. Among the car's passengers were 50 Yidden,

who also obtained 'visa entries' to Turkey and Eretz Yisroel.

Dr. Batizfalvy wasn't pleased, for as long as the train didn't leave Hungary, he wasn't calm that they were sitting near Rebbe Aharon and told everyone to spread out among a few cars – the Bilgorai Rav also went to a different car. Rebbe Aharon remained sitting with the two police who were sent to escort him. When finally the whistle blew for the train to leave, Dr. Batizfalvy quickly entered the Rebbe's car, kissed the end of the Rebbe's coat, and, with tears in his eyes, asked the Rebbe (in Hungarian) to bless him for all the deeds he did on behalf of the Rebbe's escape.

Rebbe Aharon blessed Dr. Batizfalvy, and it was translated into Hungarian for him. "It should be the will of G-d that you should survive the coming days happily, and you should successfully save as many Jews as possible!"

Note: Reb Aharon foresaw what was coming, and when he said, 'you should pass the coming days happily' since within a few months, the Nazis invaded Hungary and sent thousands of Yidden to the gas chambers. Dr. Batizfalvy remembered the Rebbe's blessing and extolled tremendous effort to save as many Jews as possible, placing them in "shelter homes" under the auspices of the Red Cross from Switzerland. He was arrested a few times for his activities, and after the war, the Russians summoned him to court for espionage, but the Swiss Government handed him citizenship, and he escaped there. A few years later, he moved to North America and was nationally awarded in Hungary for his wondrous activities.

The train's final whistle was heard, and Rebbe Aharon's train left the station, leaving thousands of Hungarian Yidden with tears.

Note: Before leaving Hungary, people wondered who would escort the two holy brothers since their gabbaim didn't have certificates. Not to worry. It

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was heavenly orchestrated. A 26-year-old bochur R' Moshe Silber, lived in Budapest and once came to Rebbe Aharon with a kvittel and asked for a brachah. After he left, Rebbe Aharon asked to call R' Moshe back and told him, "Bochur'l, go to Eretz Yisroel!" R' Mosh didn't hesitate, feared the situation in Europe, and hurriedly applied for a visa. When he arrived at the Orient Express, he was surprised to see the two holy brothers among its passengers. Rebbe Aharon winked at him and said: "You see! We're traveling together!" And Rebbe Aharon asked R' Moshe if he could be his shamash during their journey. Rebbe Aharon instructed him to sit next to him throughout their travels and not budge from his seat, for Rebbe Aharon was afraid to arouse suspicion by having other Yidden approach him. From that moment on, R' Moshe Silber served as shamesh to Rebbe Aharon for a year and a half until he got engaged to the daughter of R' Chaim Noe zt"l. Together, they raised a beautiful family.

The train passed many cities with stops on the way. When it arrived in Beketch Choba in Hungary, many chassidim wanted to get onto the train to see the Rebbe, but the police didn't allow them. Rebbe Aharon, who, before the war, used to greet and meet people throughout his travel stopovers, remained in his seat. A young girl dressed as a non-Jew snuck onto the train and handed the Rebbe some bread and milk, saying quietly in Yiddish, "It's Kosher, made in our house, and my father sent it for the Rebbe." Reb Aharon thanked her and blessed her with a long life. (She later married R' Yaakov Heiman in Canada and lived nearly a hundred years.)

The Hungarian police and the rest of the chassidim who escorted Rebbe Aharon needed to get off the train by the Romanian border, for they didn't have visas to travel further. Before leaving, they each entered Rebbe Aharon's car and hastily bid farewell. R' Shlomo Engal hy"d and his son R' Yaakov hy"d, who were kohanim, were also on the train, and Rebbe Aharon asked them to bench him

with Birkas Kohanim – that the rest of their travels should pass safely. R' Shlome lifted his hands above Reb Aharon's head and, with heavy tears, said the brachah of "יברכך ה' וישמרך...וישם לך שלום" and bid farewell.

Then, R' Avigdor Shalgo bid farewell, and Rebbe Aharon thanked him for all his efforts on his behalf. Rebbe Aharon then revealed what occurred at his meeting with Dr. Batizfalvy. Dr. Batizfalvy asked to be notified when Rebbe Aharon left the border so he could tell the Germans that Rebbe Aharon was no longer in Hungary.

When the Hungarian Yidden learned that Rebbe Aharon and his brother passed the border safely, they celebrated with a 'Seudas Hodah – a meal to thank Hashem." Reb Shmiel Porges recounted years later, "We danced with tears of joy! A foreigner wouldn't understand those tears. We cried for joy of our Rebbe's escape and of fear for our future!" Though Reb Shmiel used to conclude, "Today, after Belz rebuilt anew, I realize that those tears were the seeds that planted a new Belz in Eretz Yisroel which will remain until the coming of Moshiach"

When they arrived in Romania, they waited in the train station until another train arrived to take them to the city of Arad-Temishvar. The Yidden in Arad awaited the two holy brothers' arrival, and Rebbe Aharon took their kvittels on the train and davened Shachris together. From there, they traveled further to Bucharest.

January 18, 1944 – From Arad-Temishvar to Bucharest

In Bucharest, the two brothers stayed for the day in the Foltishaner Rebbe's zt"l home since there wasn't a direct train to Sofia, Belgrade. The Bilgorai Rav told the Faltishaner Rebbe about all the calamities that befell the Polish Yidden and that the town of Belz was destroyed. The Foltishaner

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Rebbe, who was a descendant and a chassid of Belz, sighed. "Oy, nebach! All this was and will never be again!"

Sitting immersed in holy thought in a corner, Rebbe Aharon got up and loudly proclaimed: "What did I hear? Chalila, chalila! No! Our Zeida, the first Belzer Rebbe zt"l said, 'Belz will be a cornerstone where the name of Hashem will be known until the coming of Moshiach!' Years later, when the Foltishaner Rebbe used to recount the story with tears as he remembered those fearful times.

January 19, 1944 – From Bucharest to Bulgaria

The two holy brothers continued their journey from Bucharest to Bulgaria. At the Bucharest border, it took a while to review their documents, and they missed the express train and needed to take the local train. The next day, they realized what a great miracle occurred. The express train that they missed was bombed midway by the English military.

January 20, 1944 – From Bulgaria to Greece

They arrived at the Greece border and from there switched to a different train. This train wasn't a passenger train. It was an open train and was dangerous to travel in since the wagons were open from all sides, and it was bitterly cold outside. Rebbe Aharon trembled from cold and weakness the whole way.

When the train approached the Turkish border, the Gestapo y"s checked everyone's documents (since Turkey wasn't officially involved in the war, the Gestapo took this opportunity to catch refugees before entering Turkey.) They questioned everyone, and when they approached Rebbe Aharon and saw him wrapped in a wool blanket (due to the extreme cold), an officer exclaimed, "I

don't want to bother with this old fellow. Leave him alone...!" They left the wagon without checking his documents or suitcases. When the train passed the border and arrived in Turkey, they could finally sigh in relief – they were saved from the 'lion's den!'

January 21, 1944 – Shabbos in Istanbul

It was Erev Shabbos, and the train continued. A group of Yidden formed a minyan mincha, and Rebbe Aharon told them to repeat the pasuk "יאמרו גאולי ה' אשר גאלם מיד צר" (they will say Hashem redeemed them from a narrow hand) three times. They conducted a Friday night seudah, and Rebbe Aharon led a tish with singing and Divrei Torah. The train arrived in Istanbul on Shabbos morning. They were greeted by excited Yidden, who made the brothers rest before davening Shacharis, followed by a morning seudah and Shalosh Seudos, which Rebbe Aharon prevailed over until late into the night.

The two holy brothers stayed in Istanbul for approximately ten days to rest before continuing to Eretz Yisroel.

February 1, 1944 – Istanbul to Damascus.

From Istanbul, they traveled to Damascus, Syria. Hundreds came to greet the Rebbes, and by each station, many more came to see the holy Rebbes. In Damascus, the English patrol looked through everyone's documents except for the two brothers, as they were ordered not to question those two travelers. However, the English patrol did question the Bilgorai Rav about the situation in Europe and gathered a lot of information from him.

They continued by car from Damascus to Chalev, Syria, where R' Berish Ortner z"l came to greet them. (R' Berish already lived in Eretz Yisroel and played the leading role in the two Rebbes' rescue.)



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From Chalev, they headed to Beirut, Lebanon, and their final destination, Eretz Yisroel. Their driver, Mr. Yaakov Tzorfati, drove them through the Lebanese border. Rebbe Aharon asked R' Berish Ortner for a few coins and warmly bentedched them. He then handed them to Mr. Tzorfati as a token of appreciation for bringing them to their final destination.

February 3, 1944 - ט' שבט - Arrival to Eretz Yisroel

The two holy brothers merited to step upon the sacred soil of Eretz Yisroel!

It's impossible to describe the immense joy of the Yidden in Eretz Yisroel when they heard that the holy tzaddik and his brother arrived safely.

From that day on, Rebbe Aharon of Belz and his brother, Rebbe Mordechai of Bilgorai, started rebuilding Belz anew. On ט' שבט, the First Belzer Rebbe's proclamation came to fruition. "בעלזא וועט זיין א ווינקל פאר תורה און יראת שמים ביז משיח וועט קומען במהרה בימינו אמן"

Today, Belz thrives under the Belzer Rebbe's shlita guidance and with the request of his uncle, Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt"l: "אז מיר דארפן אויפשטעלן א דור מיט וואס – מיר זאלן זיך נישט שעהמען אקעגן צו גיין משיח צדקנו to raise a generation that won't be embarrassed to greet Moshiach!"



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