

# THE VISIT OF HARAV HAGAON<sup>1</sup> FROM KUTNO IN JERUSALEM

translated from the Hebrew by Sara Mages

We have great affection for those rabbis, *Hovevei Zion*<sup>2</sup> – the immigrants, who conceived the idea of *Hibbat Zion* not only in words, but in action, and one of them is *Rosh Golat Ariel*<sup>3</sup>, the head of the geniuses of Poland and the leader of his people, Rabbi Israel Yehoshua ztz"l, author of *Yeshuot Israel*, who immigrated to the Holy Land fifty years ago, in the year 5645<sup>4</sup>, together with his son-in-law, HaRav HaGaon Rabbi Chaim Elozor Waks zk"l, president of the court of the community of Piotrków.



Cover page of "Yeshuot Israel" by the Gaon of Kutno

<sup>1</sup> TN: HaRav HaGaon – the genius rabbi.

<sup>2</sup> TN: *Hovevei Zion*, also known as *Hibbat Zion* (lit. Lovers of Zion) organizations were established in 1881-1882 with the aim of furthering Jewish settlements, particularly agricultural settlements, in *Eretz Israel*.

<sup>3</sup> TN: *Rosh Golat Ariel* – the supreme authority in matters of *Halacha*.

<sup>4</sup> TN: 1884-1885.

Their immigration to the Holy Land was not just to prostrate on the graves of the *tzadikim*, weep over the suffering of our people and our country, and the destruction of our Holy Temple, but rather to do and act for the benefit of the population in general, and for the benefit of the community (Kollel Warsaw<sup>5</sup>) in particular. To take care of their existence in both matter and spirit. Their first work was the founding of "*Beit Talmud Torah* and *Yeshivat Chayei Olam*," which, to this day, is seen in the distance, in glory and majesty, in and out of the city, in magnificent buildings, and a large *Beit Tavshil*<sup>6</sup> for orphans.

They also bought, from the money donated by one of the wealthy men, the amount of 13,000 ruble, houses and courtyards in "Bab Huta" quarter (in Givat Betzata) for the poor of Kollel Warsaw. Unfortunately, the Jewish settlement was destroyed there and gentiles live in it.

They brought beautiful arrangements in the affairs of the Warsaw community and got as far as "Kfar Hittim." There, a large orchard, for the benefit of the community of Kollel Warsaw, was bought earlier by the aforementioned, HaRav HaGaon R' Chaim Elozor Waks, and the "fruits of the citrus tree" were sent from it to the cities of Poland. We will talk again about this abandoned orchard. There is enough to talk about it.

Already in his youth, R' Israel became known to glory as one of the great geniuses. All the excellent virtues that Our Sages, may their memory be blessed, counted in a scholar were united in him, and over the years he became the head of the geniuses and the leader of his people. "In all the Talmudic literature he was unparalleled faithful. His mind is clear and sharp, diligent and fast, and there is no limit to his understanding." He was approached with question from all the Jewish Diaspora, and answered every person's question. Indeed, in all these, he did not want to print his innovations and his very many answers. But one book of his manuscript, *Yeshuot Yisrael*, was published by his grandson, HaRav R' Yitzhak Yehuda Trunk ztz"l.

He served in the rabbinate in several communities in Poland, and most recently, in the city of Kutno for about thirty years. As was his greatness in the Torah, so were the qualities of his soul, honesty and humility, the love of man, justice and peace met in him, moderation, desire and tolerance for every opinion."<sup>7</sup>

He passed away on 25 Tamuz 5653<sup>8</sup> in the city of his residence. In the affectionate name, "Rabbi Yehoshe'le of Kutno," he remains in admiration to this day.

Pinchas ben Zvi GRAJEWSKI  
(*Doar HaYom*, Friday 7 Tishri 5696)

<sup>5</sup> TN: Kupath Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess Kollel Polyn Warsaw is a charity organization founded in 1796 in Poland by the Torah leaders of European Jewry. The organization built *Batei Warsaw* (Warsaw Houses) quarter in Mea She'arim, Jerusalem for Polish Torah scholars.

<sup>6</sup> TN: Hebrew – soup kitchen.

<sup>7</sup> He was in complete agreement with the genius, Rabbi Shmuel Salant, on the question of HaRav Yechiel Michael Pines z"l. His words, which he published at the time, made a great impression on the opposite side, and the anger of the zealots subsided!

<sup>8</sup> TN: July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1893.