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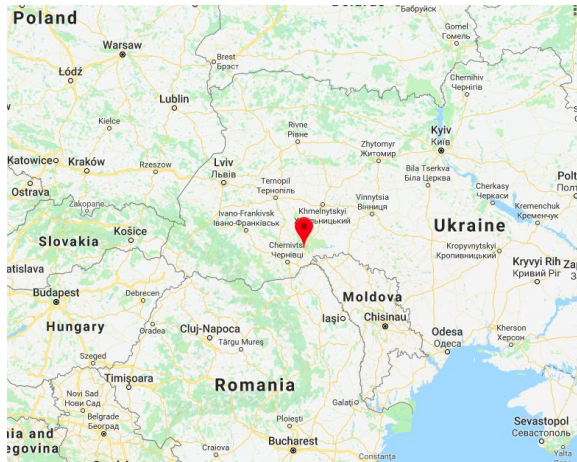
Besht: The Light From the Forest



הגאון מליובאוויטש

No. 1 - Timeline of the Besht's Life

- 1648 | Chmielnicki Uprising & Pogroms (*Gezerot Tac"h ve-Ta"t*) [Dubnow]
1666 | Shabbetai Zevi converts to Islam [Dinur]
1698 | Yisrael is born to Eliezer & Sarah on 18 Elul in Okopy/Tloste, Ukraine



- 1703 | Bereaved of both parents, Yisrael is left an orphan

One morning, I heard in the forest the sound of a human voice. I followed the direction of the voice and came upon the figure of a Jew enveloped in tallit and tefillin, praying with a fervor such as I had never before witnessed... I hid myself behind the trees and derived great pleasure listening to the man's praying... When the man saw me he asked: "What is a small child doing all alone in the forest? Are you not afraid to be in the forest all by yourself?" I answered him: "I like the field and the forest, because there are no people—the great majority of whom are arrogant and dishonest. I am not afraid of anything. I am an orphan without father or mother. My father, peace be to him, said to me before his passing: 'Yisrolik, fear nothing but G-d alone.' So I'm not afraid of anything."

- 1708 | Meets R. Meir, begins initiation into circle of R. Adam Ba'al Shem
1714 | Revelation of Elijah the Prophet

You are toiling mightily, investing great effort and concentration to meditate upon the unifications of the Holy Names in the verses of the Psalms compiled by David King of Israel. On the other hand, Aaron Shlomo the innkeeper and Zlateh Rivkah his wife are completely unaware of the unifications that emerge from the utterances, 'Blessed be He for ever and ever,' expressed by the innkeeper, and 'Praised be His holy name' uttered by Zlateh Rivkah. Yet these words resonate through all the worlds, causing a greater stir than the unifications configured by the greatest tzaddikim.

- 1716 | Marries first wife, who dies shortly after. Hired as *melamed* in Tloste.
1718 | Moves to Brody, hired as *melamed*; Meets R. Gershon of Kitov, eventually marrying his sister, Chana; Two children, Odl & Tzvi Hirsch (some 15 years later) are born to them.

They move to the Carpathian Mountains, where they remain secluded for seven years.



1724 | Revelation of Achiya ha-Shiloni (prophet and teacher of Elijah), who teaches the Besht secrets of Torah for a decade.

1730 | Appointed as *shochet* in Kshilowice, then manages a tavern. Begins to develop a reputation as a spiritual and physical healer, a *ba'al shem*.

{Siddur of the Besht, found in Central Lubavitch Library
of Agudas Chassidei Chabad}

1734 | At the encouragement of his masters,
begins to publicly preach and teach
Torah, revealing full extent of his
greatness and knowledge.

1740 | Moves to Medzhibozh, establishes center of Chassidut.

{Image: Part of the 1758 Medzhibozh tax roll, at the time in Poland. House #95 is listed having the Baal Shem as an occupant. Discovered by Prof. Moshe Rosman of Bar Ilan University}

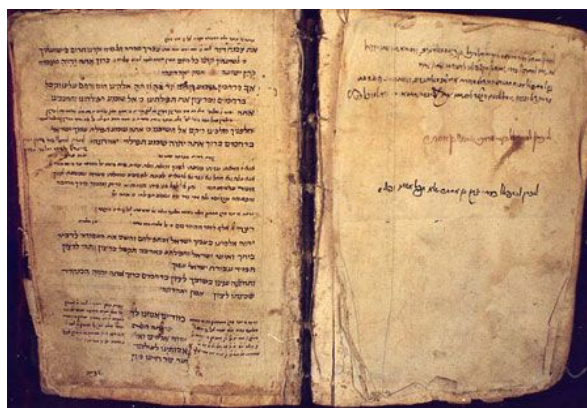
1746 | Vision of entering the chamber of the
Messiah, Rosh Hashanah 5507. (*Iggeret ha-Besht*)

On Rosh Hashanah of the year 5507 I performed, by means of oath, an elevation of soul [to the higher spiritual realms], as known to you, and saw wondrous things I had never seen before. That which I saw and learned there is impossible to convey in words, even face to face...

1759 | Debates Frankists in Lemberg

1760 | On first day of Shavuot 5520, R. Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov passes away, surrounded by disciples.

1772 | Passing of R. Dov Ber, *Maggid* of
Mezeritch (b. 1700)

[illegible]

1780 | Publication of R. Ya'akov

Yosef of Polnoye's *Toledot*

Ya'akov Yosef, the first

Chassidic work. His *Ben Porat*

Yosef (1781) contains first

printing of Besht's *Iggeret*

Aliyat ha-Neshama.

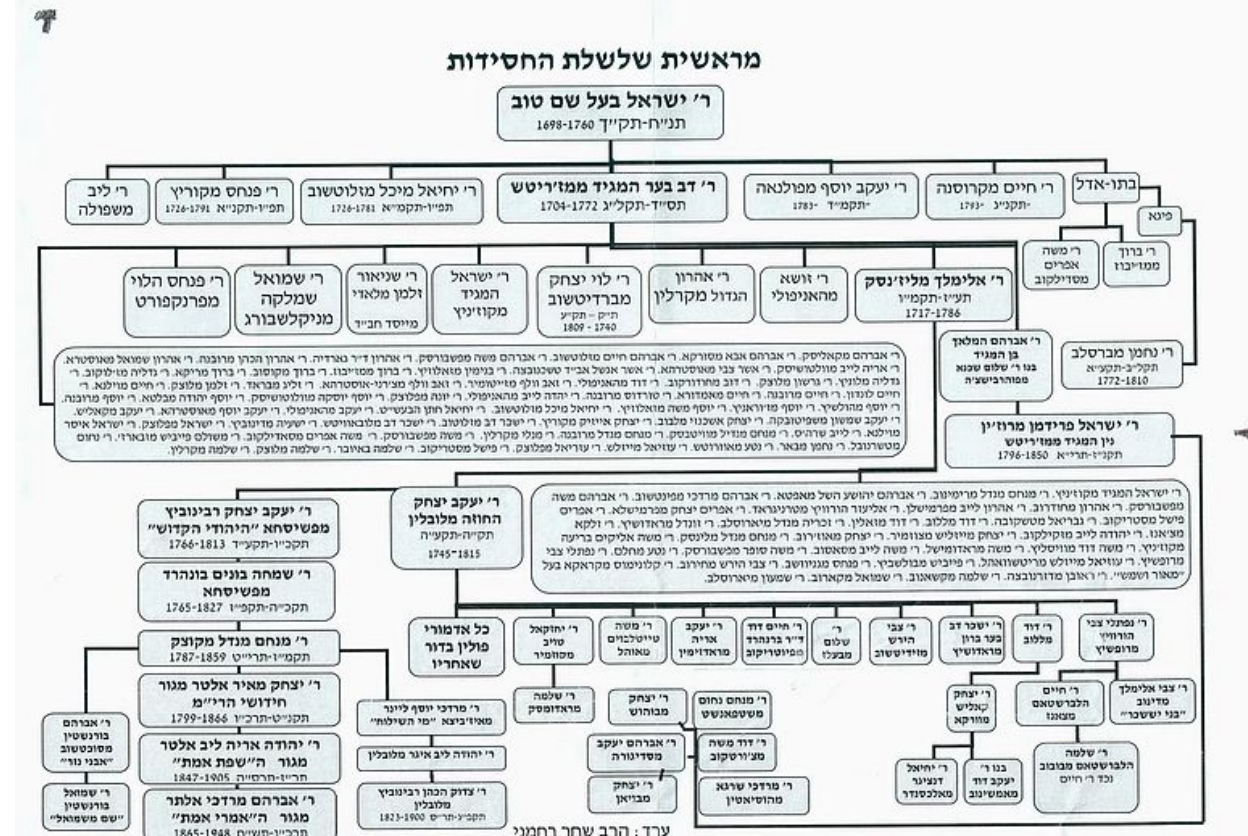
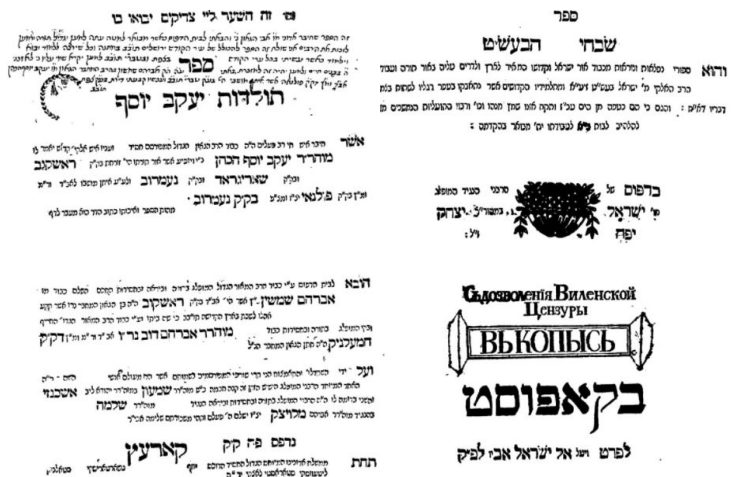
1794 | Publication of *Keter Shem Tov*,

first collection of Besht's

teachings, in Zalkevo.

1814 | Publication of *Shivchei ha-Besht*

by R. Israel Yoffe in Kapust.



(The first generations of Chassidut, prepared by R. Shachar Rachmani, Hasidut.org)

I asked the Mashiach: "When will the Master come?"; and he answered: "By this you shall know: In the time when your teaching will become public and revealed in the world, and your wellsprings will burst forth to the farthest extremes... and they also shall be able to perform unifications and elevations as you, and then all of the kelipot will cease to exist, and there shall be a time of goodwill and salvation."