

CHAPTER TWO

RAV CHAIM OZER OF VILNA

The first large scale project which Rav Chaim Ozer attempted was the creation of a great Yeshiva for exceptionally gifted talmidim. Known as the 'Hakibbutz Shel Rav Chaim Ozer', this outstanding place of Torah produced many of the greatest and finest Lomdim and Rabbonim throughout the world. Among the Gedolim who were nurtured in Rav Chaim Ozer's yeshiva are Rav Eliezer Silver, president of Agudas Yisroel and Agudas HaRabbonim of America, and Rav Yechezkiel Abramsky of Slutsk and London.

Rav Eliyohu Eleazer z.t.l. passed away Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5647 (1887) and Rav Chaim Ozer, although but 24 years old at the time, was chosen to succeed him. The most respected community leaders and members of Vaad HaRabbonim warmly welcomed the young Rav Grodzensky into their midst, although he was in the company of much older and long revered Gedolim and Rabbonim of Vilna.

The great Torah city of Vilna, the 'Yerushalaim of Lita' had lost much of its former glory. The mid-1880's had seen the corrupting onslaught of the 'Maskilim', even in this stronghold of orthodox European Jewry. Many had been the vile and, unfortunately, successful attacks upon traditional orthodoxy. The gloom of Jewish reform movements