

AFROYMORE¹ AND HIS PRONOUNCEMENT
(This manuscript is untitled and undated)

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Between 1992 and 1996

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It came to my memory about when the Germans drove us to bring the fence from the cemetery and to put it around the Beit Midrash to make a camp for the Russian POWs. The first thing they brought out all the Torahs and put them in a pile, and Germans doused them with gasoline and set them on fire. Next to me there was standing Efraim (Afroym) Aron (Oren) Goldberg, he was a *shoykhet* (ritual slaughterer) and a scholar. His father was also a *shoykhet* in Mikhaleshik.

And when the parchments were burning, Efraim said to me: *Uri, what you see now* (this moment) *reminds me that every Yom Kippur we say lamentations and complaints about the Ten greatest Sages (Martyrs) of Israel that were killed by Assyrians [actually, by Romans].* They say that the general of the Assyrians [actually, Emperor Hadrian] had read translation of the Torah about (ten) brothers who sold Joseph to slavery to the Turks (merchants going to Egypt) and it is said in the Torah that if one steals (kidnaps)

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someone and sells him as a slave, the seller is punished by death. The general called Ten Sages of Israel and said to them: *I want you to tell me, what should be done, according to your law, if a man who steals (kidnaps) a man and sells him as a slave--what punishment should come to the thief?* They said that the punishment for the thief is death sentence. And he said to them: *If your parents (forefathers) would be here I would sentence them to death for selling their brother Joseph as a slave, but since they are not alive, you will pay with your lives for them.* And they were killed. It is said that (one of them,) Hananiah ben Teradion was wrapped in a Torah scroll and set on fire. And his disciples, who were watching that, asked him: *Rebe, what do you see?* And he said: *I see that the parchment burns, but the letters spring from it and fly up to heaven, and with time they will come down to a new parchment to [create] the same words.* I said

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to Efraim² that we will live to see how the letters will come down back from heaven and to the new parchment.

Efraim did not survive to see this, but I indeed lived to see how the letters of the Torah returned to a new parchment. In a small town in Connecticut, Colchester, on Friday night I was on a bar mitzvah of a landsman's son. The rabbi said that we should come tomorrow as a new Torah (scroll) will be blessed that had been written. That moment there came to my mind the fence

¹ Afroymore was, according to Dovid Katz who knew and interviewed many Mikhalishkers, was commonly known as *Afroynore der sefer* (Afroymore the scribe).

² Translator Note: The logic of the narrative [as well as the later words herein] points at that it was Efraim who said to Uri, not the other way around.

around Beit Midrash put for the Russian POWs, and my talk with Efraim Goldberg, and how he said that we will live to see how the letters will come down from heaven to the new parchment.

In the morning I went right away back to the Colchester, to the dedication of the Torah. I was so spirited that I cannot forget that. We came to the Rabbi's house a couple of miles from the town, and we brought a *hupe* (wedding canopy) and

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music. And people danced all the way to the town. Police has stopped all the traffic, and when we came to the street where stands Beit Midrash, people came out with other Torahs to meet us. It was an unforgettable occasion for all and especially for me, that the prophecy of Efraim Goldberg was fulfilled that we will live to see the letters from heaven will come down to new parchment. He did not survive, but I lived to see the letters that came down from heaven to new parchment in Colchester, Connecticut.³

³ Colchester, CT is approximately 28 miles due east of Southington, CT. Located in New Haven County, Colchester was first settled in 1661 by a Jeremy Adams, on a 340-acre piece of land known as *Jerimiah's Farme*, given to him by the Mohegan tribe. It remained simply as a farming community until 1698 when the town of Colchester was formed under the jurisdiction of the New Haven colony.

Congregation Ahavath Achim was established in 1898 with a synagogue on Lebanon Ave. dedicated in 1913 which was replaced in the 1960's by a new modern synagogue still extant.

The Colchester Jewish community was established in the late 1880's as a Baron Maurice de Hirsch agricultural settlement (mainly poultry farmers). Most of the Jewish settlers (according to the 1910 U.S. census) came from Russia. At one time, the population of Colchester was half Jewish with two kosher butchers, and a kosher bakery. In addition, there were Jewish resorts and summer camps near the town, making it a country retreat for Jews from New York City. See Seymour S. Weisman, *The Jewish Community of Colchester, Ct.: A Century of Modern Shtetl Living*, West Palm Beach, Hadeira Press, 1995 online at <https://www.congregationahavathachim.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/jewishcommunitybook.pdf> and https://www.congregationahavathachim.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/jewish-rev.-b00k20120828175111_Part2.pdf (Aug 2023)

In August 2023, a copy of this manuscript was shared with members of Congregation Ahavath Achim and one of older members recalled that in his father's day (the 1970's), a new torah scroll was dedicated and people danced in the streets.