

GRAMPA GILDEN'S

DIARY

August 1903

Translated from the Yiddish
March 2001

The Diary of my trip to the United States

Monday, the 10th of Av, after midnight [August 3, 1903]

I departed together with my father, who accompanied me to the Sirotina Station. We arrived at the station just in time for the train, but because I had to decide whether to wait for the evening connecting train or leave now, I decided to wait for the evening one. That day wasn't a happy one, and my head was spinning. I was worried, and even worse, I glanced at Father and when our eyes met, we understood each other. We didn't speak to each other very much, and it was sufficient just to look at each other for us to understand each other. The fact that I had to depart in the evening made it very difficult to separate

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from each other. Our hearts melted and we tried to hold back the tears. It was extremely difficult for us to speak, to utter the words "Stay well" and "Have a safe trip." The train pulled out, and I got further and further away from my family, friends and others.

On the evening of the 13th of Av, we arrived in Danzig but didn't stop for long; we were led to the connecting train. We got on, and then got off again, waiting 7 hours until early morning. At 9 AM we got to Razvilshka. This was Wednesday.

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Wednesday evening, 12th of Av

Wednesday evening at 11:06 PM we arrived at Libau. The entire day on Wednesday didn't turn out very well. I couldn't get out of my head my separation from home. Mendel Yosef was waiting for me at the station with Avraham and one of his daughters. I got off the train to look for a luggage handler and noticed them. We got my luggage and got a driver who took us to Mendel Yosef's, where I drank tea, had a meal and went to sleep. Avraham told me that the next day, Thursday at 11, we would have to

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Thursday, 13th of Av

to go to the office to get a ticket. We had breakfast after prayer services at 10 AM, and left for the office. I, and others like me, tried to bargain, but it didn't help, and I paid 76 rubles and gave in my passport. We then went over to Avraham's place and drank a little whisky, had lunch, and spent the entire day. The office had told me that the ship was leaving on the Sabbath, so I was in no hurry. That's how the day went. In the evening we went to greet Reuven Leib and his family at the station because Avraham couldn't go there since he had to spend the whole night baking for the Sabbath until 1 AM. We came

back to the house, ate supper and went to bed.

Friday, 14th of Av

The morning went by as usual. After services I ate breakfast and then went to visit Avraham, who was busy with his work. So I went for a walk through the market and then went to get something warm to eat. I then went back to Avraham at his work and we went together to the office area to see Reuven Leib. When we got there we didn't find them; they had gone out shopping and to look at the city. In the meantime someone told us that there was a ship that was going to leave for Liverpool, where I was supposed to go too.

Friday, 14th of Av

In order to get on it we went to the office to find out if the story was true, which it was. A ship left from a second office, and had available places. A few people from our office went onto that ship. We went back home to get my things together and take them to the office's warehouse so I could go together with everyone else. In the meantime I hadn't found anything to buy, i.e. a few bread rolls, a little whiskey or lemons. So we were taken to the office, and given tickets. Our luggage was placed on a wagon, and the small children were also placed in a wagon, while the adults had to walk by foot. The walk was

Friday, 14th of Av

quite difficult but there were things to see. When you observed things with a clear eye, you could see the Exile, this homeless People, how we were treated. It was true. They treated us like a flock of sheep, pushing us along that way. When we got to the ship they wouldn't let us on board. We stood in the blowing wind next to the water for a good 2 hours, and had to put up with the cold and wind, though it wasn't so bad. Afterwards, the "ceremony" began as the police arrived and started calling out everybody and each member of their family. Then they gave each person his passport and tore out a piece of

Friday, 14th of Av

the ship ticket, letting each person on board. I tried to get someone to bring me a few bread rolls and a half bottle of vodka. Reuven Leib's children and I went with Esther's grandchild. They brought them to me. I forgot to write that I saw Reuven Leib with [illegible – Kaila?] during the day. They were wearing hats and said that it was loathsome to leave the ship and go to a hotel, especially mine. I bought a used one that was smooth, though it was better than their new ones. It was very new and I only paid 85 kopeks for it in a store. I really enjoyed it; it really looked good on me. I looked like a different person.

Now let's go back to the day when we were standing next to the ship until the time the whole ceremony ended and the police were looking things over and letting people board. The ship wasn't very big though it was bigger than our steam ship. Everybody went to find a place, and we were uncomfortable. However, from the day we departed we were happy to relax. It didn't take long for us to pass through the canal and down onto the open sea. Then we started to get dizzy and feeling depressed.

Friday, the 14th

People started moaning and groaning and complaining. The screams of the women and children were horrific, and the smell of the vomit was everywhere. I also was about to start vomiting, but I somehow controlled myself and went to lie down until I fell asleep. I woke up around 12:00, and couldn't even recognize the whole ship. It was like a river, and the screaming was awful. Everybody was constantly nauseated and shrieking.

I finished my prayers and made Kiddush. I hardly had a chance to take a couple of bites when I realized I couldn't stay up and had to lie down again. I then fell back asleep again.

Sabbath, the 15th, Torah Portion *Ve'etchanan*

I woke up at 8:00 and went up on deck to get oriented, but when the ship was rocking in the water, there was no one who didn't cry. You had to stay very strong because since the ship was large, the front end would rise up in the middle of the water, and then the back would rise up. This was so frightening to behold that anyone would

Sabbath

start crying. You had to be holding on very strongly as you walked along. Suddenly when it happened, I was saying [illegible]. I ordered some tea and barely was able to get over to my bed because the [illegible] were taken, people were lying on them, and there was [illegible] everywhere. I drank a few glasses of tea, but I didn't feel well and couldn't hold my head up. I said my prayers lying down and started to review the Torah portion of the week as I lay there until 12:00. The sea continued rocking us around and didn't calm down. It was like a cemetery on the ship.

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You could hear moaning and groaning from people who still had the strength to do it. On the entire ship there weren't more than 2 people besides me who were somehow able to hang on. The situation eased a bit in the afternoon and I went upstairs to have something to eat. The air was fresher, and other sick people were taken upstairs where they were lying around like corpses. I stayed upstairs all day, prayed the afternoon and evening services, and then went downstairs late at night. I had something to eat and then went to sleep. However, I couldn't fall asleep and was thinking all the time. I fell asleep around

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Sunday, the 16th

3:00. Then I made some tea, said my prayers and went up on deck, where the weather was very nice and the sea was calm. We were given herring and potatoes in the solarium [?]. The herring was also from a barrel. Anyone who wanted some also got bread rolls and butter. Everybody was upstairs and we had a nice day, and in the evening we arrived in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, where the ship had to unload horses and merchandise. We spent the night there, and the next morning we went out to look at

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the town and to find something to buy. Some people bought sugar, tea, lemons and whisky. I bought some whisky for 35 kopeks in our currency and was tasty. It was actually a liqueur called "Kamen," and is similar to our caraway and *ziman*es. I bought it. At 11:00 we left the port. This isn't the place to describe the beauty of the city, but in brief I never saw a city in Russia like that port city. It was all so new to me.

Monday, the 17th of Av

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We left Copenhagen and sailed through the "German Sea". The weather changed, and the sea became very rough, rocking the ship around like a little spindle. We couldn't walk around without holding on very tightly, moving from one spot to the other. The passengers started vomiting again, though not everyone. Even those who didn't vomit were lying down like dead men. Thank G-d nothing happened to me, but my head ached, though not so badly. I was able to eat and drink.

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Tuesday, 18th of Av

This situation lasted for an entire 24 hours until Tuesday morning.

Tuesday, 18th of Av

I continued to do what I was doing during the previous days, and the storm calmed down and changed. People came back to life and ate and drank upstairs and watched time pass. We still had one day left before our arrival in England, and we spent our time eating, drinking and sleeping. It was our last night on the ship.

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Wednesday, the 19th of Av

At 10:00 AM we arrived at the English port of Hull. The ships stop there, and from there, you travel by train for 4 hours to Liverpool, where you board the large ship bound for New York. At the pier there were agents of the Office waiting, and we had to process our luggage through British customs. They came around to check whether we were carrying any tobacco and whisky. They looked me over too, and they asked me whether I had any. I answered that I only have some for myself, and they didn't check my luggage.

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From there we went by electric train [must be a trolley] to a courtyard and a garden where [a couple of words illegible], and we were offered coffee and butter cabbage. We then traveled on with the trolley to the train, which was apparently ready. They took our ship tickets and we were given receipts and train tickets. The cars were the same as fourth-class cars back home. However, one thing wasn't good in this country. There was no way to go out, the doors opened out to the street, and each compartment was for 10 people.

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It had two doors on either side of the street. There was no corridor. The train departed, and we couldn't figure out how fast it was going, but we couldn't have been going less than 70-80 verst an hour [approximately 75-85 kilometers an hour], and there wasn't really anything to look at. You just went blind looking at every turn through the window. Every half hour a train passed by, and we went through a few tunnels, i.e. underground. It wasn't easy to get used to it, and it was rather frightening inside the tunnels, where the train sped up. We were inside the last tunnel for 15 minutes, and the speed even burned the [illegible] in the car, but it was very frightening.

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The train stopped around 3 times, each for several minutes, during the entire trip. We arrived in Liverpool at 4:00 PM. They took us through the [illegible], and wrote down that each person was to get his luggage and pick up the tickets. They didn't give us any more receipts for the baggage, and we sat down to wait for their lodging.

What should I tell you? There were immigrants there from everywhere in the world, from the entire world, especially Jews. Some were from Poland, Volhyn, Podolia, Bessarabia, Romania, but no one from our districts. In that place there were 20 residences with immigrants.

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Each structure had 20 or more rooms, and each room contained 3 small berths. Each berth was for three people to sleep on, with good mattresses, a kettle for each person and a warm cover and pillow. There was nothing else, and in one room there was a sink and water, and a bowl, mirror and soap, enough for one person to wash.

Food was served in a separate building. Jews and Christians didn't stay together or eat together. Vis- a- vis the Christians, the Jews were no more than 10 percent. There were people there from every country: Swedes, Germans, Poles, British, though not many Russian gentiles. When we were brought to those dormitories and got settled with our things, we were sent down to eat. It was in a completely different building on a different

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street, and there were classroom chairs. In front there were water basins, mirrors and hand towels for washing. The system was as follows: At 8 AM there was breakfast, which included a roll, coffee, butter and orange jam. There were two areas – one for men and one for women. At 12:00 there was lunch - rice soup or hot cereal, and potatoes. Afterwards, each person got a portion of meat. It wasn't fat, but was still tasty. At 6:00

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PM we got tea, a roll and a watery jam. That was all we got until the next morning. I didn't want to eat it because I was afraid the food wasn't kosher. However, I saw that everyone, both young and old, were eating, and people said it was kosher, and the cook was a Jew. The next morning, when we went to drink tea, I noticed a Jewish child brought some meat, so I left and went over to talk to him. He said that he was a recent arrival, and worked for a Jewish butcher. He got meat every day and the meat had a

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kosher tag [plomba] on it. I already saw people salting the meat and noticed that the milk and meat courses were different. So I did eat the food twice, but not again after that because it didn't taste good or had no taste. This is the way it was the whole time until we left there.

Thursday, 20th of Av

The day went by as usual, but we had enough problems from the fact that the doctor rejected many people. In addition, it was frightening to see 100 people having been sent back from the New York port of Castle Garden every day.

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Friday

We were told that the doctor would examine us, and therefore the whole day was an unhappy one.

Friday, 21st of Av

The weather was just as cloudy as our mood. We got up early, said our prayers and went to the location where the doctor was examining the immigrants. Everyone was let inside the large building, and we spent a lot of time standing on our tired feet waiting for places to sit, which weren't available. There were many people there, perhaps 1,000 people, and we anticipated the arrival of the doctor, thinking about what would happen. There were

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Friday

two men dressed in uniforms standing next to the door who let people into the area where the doctor was standing - a courtyard with a glass roof. You had to take off your hat, and then he would whisper, raise his eyebrows and look. I had a fever but hoped there wouldn't be anything else wrong with me by the time I got to Castle Garden. I then went out to eat breakfast. I was then told to get my things ready to be disinfected. Besides the food that everyone had obtained, we got all our things together for the next day, the Sabbath, to depart on the ship. Some people went to the public bath where there was a bathtub.

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A steam bath cost one ruble, and others like me paid 10 kopeks for a bathtub. However, no one asked for that type of bathtub again, and apologized to those coming from the bathhouse. I then went outside and bought what I needed. They baked *kutkas* there for the Sabbath, which cost me 3 pennies, the equivalent of 13 of our kopeks.

[End of narrative part]

Adrinolin) Drafts
Kolodony)

Aristel Folder

[I have no idea what this means]

Yahrzeit List

[Some dates include the day of the week of a particular Torah reading portion, and are difficult to identify. I left those out]

- 1904 Son of Yisrael Chaifetz, his name is Shneur Zalman
- 1905 Son of Shmuel Rayak
- 1905 Son of Chatzkel Eisenberg – Nasanel
- 1905 Son of Avraham Shmuel Zilbersohn – Matisyahu
- 1906 Son of Mendel Halperin
- 1906 Son of Yisrael Friedman – Yekusiel
- 1906 Son of Rosen – Mannis
- 1906 Son of Yosef Goldman, 2nd day Rosh Hashanah, 1906 – Yekusiel
- 1906 *A Metsikago* [?]
- 1906 Son of Ze'ev Morrison, Oct. 17 – Moshe
- 1906 *Memidano* Finkelstein – Shimon
- 1906 Friedman, son-in-law of Shia, First day of Iyar – Zalman
- 1906 Fluss Govande – Nov. 20/2 Cheshvan – Dov-Ber
- 1906 Slussman son of Morris, Nov. 19/2 Kislev – Zvi-David
- 1906 Bellman, son of Isser – Sabbath, Dec. 8 – Moshe

1906	Son of Leluk Tsadok – Noach –	Dec. 17
"	Shmaryahu son of Eliezer Yitzchak, Sabbath,	Dec. 23
1907	Son of Sender Rothenstein,	Jan 4
	Zalman Simcha Son of Yehoshua Levin, 29 Tevet	Jan. 15
"	Yaakov Ze'ev son of Yehuda Tolbkin, born 4 Feb.	Feb. 19
"	Yitzchak Yosef Samuel,	May 17.
"	Zalman son of Menachem Mendel Blichkov 4 Sivan	May 24
"	Peretz Goldman, 9 Tammuz	July 21
"	Yehoshua Isaac son of Yechiel Michel Russak – 29 Tammuz	July 9
"	Hershel Sutland, 25 Tammuz	July 24
"	Shlomo son of Levik Drigend – 3 Av	July 14
"	Menachem Dan son of Ze'ev Laufer, 8 Elul	Aug. 18
"	Yitzchak son of Binyamin the Kohen – 24 Elul	Sept. 21
"	Yitzchak son of [illegible] Feldman, 26 Elul	Sept. 23
"	Zvi son of Chaim Bentztovitch	Sept.

1907

"	Aharon Shaul grandson of Edwin,	Dec. 6
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1908

"	Motel son of David Fox, born 1 Shvat, - 4 January –	Jan. 9
"	Shaul son of Eliyahu Freidman born on 9 Shvat –	Feb. 11
"	Yechiel son of Zechariah Gross, circumcised 12 of Adar II –	March 15
"	David son of Zusman Nissensohn, 15 Nisan -	April 16
"	Menashe son of David Golobchik, 9 Nisan –	April 10
"	Son of Leibush Shamesh 5 Sivan	June 4
"	Dan son of Avraham Kraut, 10 Sivan	June 14
"	Yisrael son of Levik Drigend, died a baby –20 Tammuz	July 19
"	Aviyahu son of Herzel Maimon, buried 2 Tammuz	July 21
"	Yitzchak Isaac son of Mordechai Heiman, 22 Av	Aug. 19
"	Peretz son of Moshe Chazan, 24 Av	Aug. 21
"	Yehuda Leib son of Yisrael Swedlov – 3 Av	Aug. 24
"	David son of Yehuda Leib Rusakov- 10 Elul	Sept. 6
"	Dov Ber son of Menashe Gordon - 10 Elul	Sept. 6

Sept. 1908

[first one crossed out, same as previous]

"	Reuven son of Yehoshua Leib Sheft	12 Elul	Sept. 8
"	Elazar Zvi son of Moshe Semel	17 Elul	Sept. 13
"	Reuven son of Yaakov Presser	24 Elul	Sept. 20
"	Menachem Mendel	26 Elul	Sept. 22
	Yerucham son of Yisrael Segal		
"	Mordechai son of Avraham Weber	15 Tishrei	Oct. 10
"	Yehuda Leib son of Mosher Sternberg	16 Tishre	Oct. 11
"	Yaakov ben Pinchas Goldman	2 Kislev	Nov. 26
	Menachem son of Zvi Cohen	12 Kislev	Dec. 6
	Yaakov son of Avraham Gorelick	19 Kislev	Dec. 13

1909

	Naftali son of Shlomo Eliezer Berenstein son of Shmuel Sultenick	11 Adar	March 4
	Levik son of Herman Greenberg		
	Gershon Chaim son of Leib Taubkin	12 Nisan	April 11

April 1909

	Shmuel son of Meir Balatin	21 Nisan	April 11
	Levi son of Menachem Mendel Feigin		May 2
	Shabtai son of Menachem Mendel Feigin		May 2
	Zvi Eliezer son of Chaim Hillel Goldman		June 20
	Zvi Hershel son of Neitin		July 6
	Moshe Lieber son of Zvi Shenberg		Aug 2
	Yitzchak son of Leib Sheiman		Aug 9
	David son of Levik Drigent		Aug 22
	Zelig son of Yeshayahu Goldman		Aug 29
	Yekusiel son of Chaim Bendetovich		Sept 14
	Dov Moshe son of Yisrael Swerdlov		Oct [blank]
	Yosef son of Dov Ber Bregger		Nov. 3

1910

	David son of Ze'ev Karbman		Jan 1
	Shmuel son of Avraham Leib Rusakov		Jan 2
	Yisrael Elchanan son of Zusya Swerdlov		March 30

[Translator: sometimes the Hebrew date does not correspond to the English one, possibly indicating the individual's birth date in Hebrew, but then English death date]

1910

Zilberstein Tanawanda		March 1
son of Yehoshua Levine	"	
son of Hazan, Strauss Street twins	"	
Yosef son of Eliyahu Malin	8 Av 1910 "	
son of Agronov	15 Av	
son of Mendel -	17 th of Tammuz	
Shmuel son of Avraham Kirshner -	20 Tishrei	Oct 23
Ezriel son of Mendel Shiffman [illegible]		Nov 6
Yekusiel son of Yaakov Rabinowitz	8 Cheshvan	Nov 10
Yisrael Noach son of Benzion Goldstein -		Nov 12
Yisrael Yaakov son of Avraham, grandson of [illegible]		Dec 4
Yosef son of Menachem Mendel Blinkov		Dec 5
Shneur Zalman son of Yechiel Mendel Rusakov		Dec 11

1911

Avraham son of Shimon Eliezer Bronstein
Yosef son of Hillel

Pinchas son of Dov Ber Rosenblatt	
Pesach son of Meir Gordon	March 2
Notta Lieb son of Chatzkel Silberberg	March 4
Chaim Zalman son of Meir Balatin	May 14
Meir son of David Meth	May 21
Zvi Avi son of Leib Deutch	May 30
Grandson of Bolber	July 4

Son of Karl	July 5
Shmuel son of Max Eidelson	July 24
Son of Menshekov	Aug 7
Zalman Dov son of Leib Rusakov	Sept 5
Son of Morris Kantor	Sept 23
Son of Moshe Hazan	Oct 1
Avraham Yehuda son of Aryeh Leib	Oct 7

Grandson of Shayra Harris	Oct 31, 1911
Zalman Hoshea son of Elchanan	Nov 12
Avraham Eliyahu son of Yitzchak the Cohen	Nov 19
Kalman Meir son of Louis Rovison	Dec 30
Yechiel Michel son of Avigdor	Dec 9
Son of Reuven Schneider	Dec 19
Shmuel Uziel son of Moshe	Dec 22
Ze'ev son of Shalom Avi Yachelson	Dec 30

1912

Gershon son of Yosef Weinberg	Jan 11
Eliezer son of Nachum Spitzer	Jan 21
Shmuel Uziel son of David	Jan 27
Son of Adel	Jan 27
Zalman son of Haber	March 5
Son of Hillel Poliakov	March 3
Senda Feitels	May 5
Son of Avraham Yaakov, Dov Mordechai	May 9
Leibush son of Chaim Bendetovich	May 12
Son of Moshe Jacobson	May 24
Son of Sokolovker	May 26
Chaim Zussman son of Avraham Zussman	
Zvi Mordechai son of Benzion Klar	
David son of Yaakov	May 19
Bert son of Bendetovich	
Moshe son of Menachem Blinkov	