Grand Forks Gets a Rav

A new article about Rabbi Binyamin Papermaster (1880-1934) discussed how he was sent to North Dakota by the Greenberg family, about 75 miles north of Fargo, where he arrived on a Friday. Not only did he organize the wedding and put up the family for the wedding meal.

"Frequently, the Rabbi would have to travel to many communities around the state, such as Dickinson, Minot, Bismarck, and Devils Lake, and to other communities outside North Dakota, such as Sioux Falls and Winnipeg. These towns and cities all had Jewish merchants and would need the services of the Rabbi as the schochet (ritual slaughterer) or to perform weddings, bris milot (circumcisions), and funerals. She would prepare extensively for these trips, ensuring that he carried enough food and clothing.

"She also kept very discrete everything that happened in the household, (cautioning) the children never to divulge anything concerning the community that happened in their house or was done by the Rabbi. She always respected the Rabbi's privacy and reputation and [to observe] the mitzvah of avoiding likon hahav (literally, evil speech but using good gossip). The Rabbi had great respect for his Rebbe.

"Many of the towns that the Rabbi visited (as part of his) minhagim duties, wanted him to stay and take a post with the community. He always consulted Chaya [at these times]. She... had a reasonable and levelheaded perspective on the idea and would say: 'You know what you have here, (or you have) what will be. You have a family and you have already established here.'

In our next article, we will detail the Rabbi's background and the Legacy of Rebbeztein Chaya Levantin Papermaster, by BJ Kremen Goldman, Jews in the Heartland Reflect on American Jewish History. The Journal of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest, 4, Summer 2005, pages 34 – 47. All quotes are from this source.

Dr. Yitzchak Levine retired in 2008 from a 40-year career as a professor of mathematics at Northern Michigan University in Hoboken, New Jersey. He can be contacted at levine@nmu.edu.