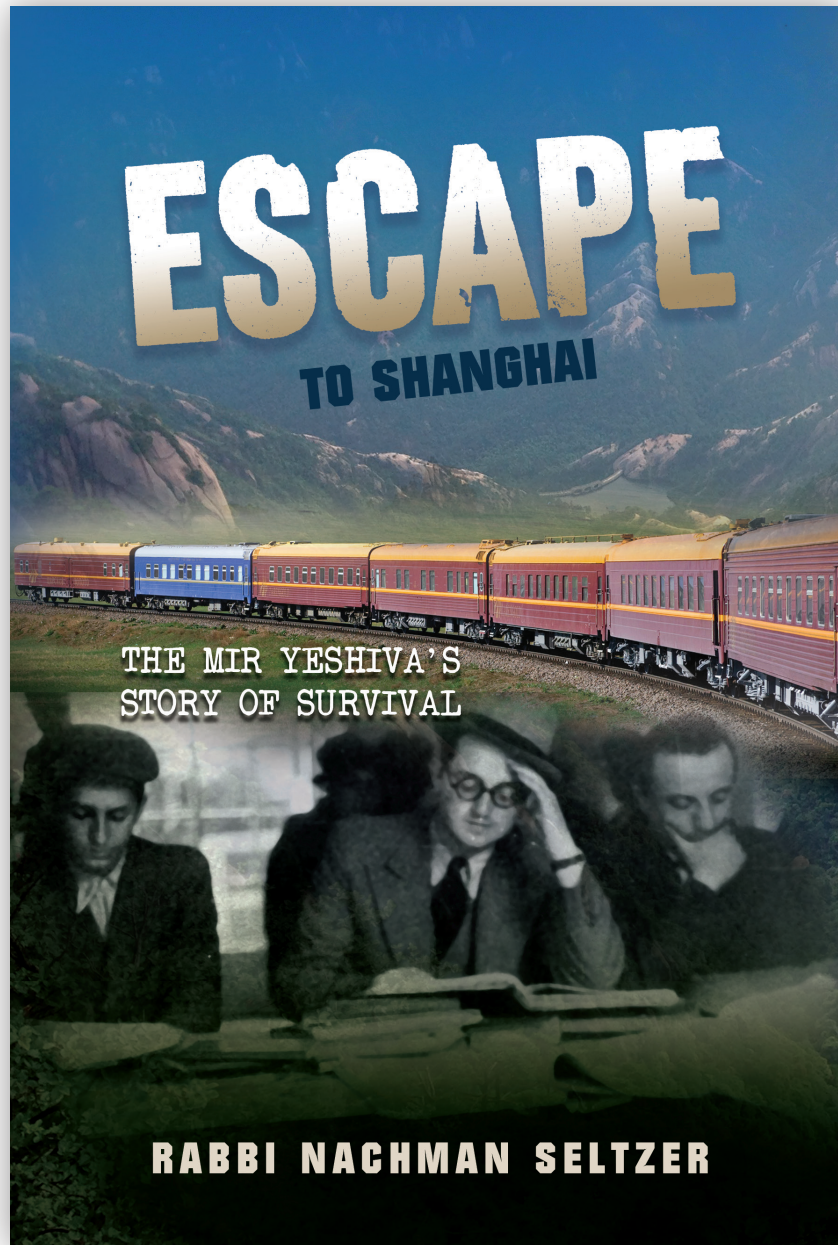


Educator's Guide



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CONTENTS

For the Teacher	3
Pre-Reading Activities	4
Prologue	4
Chapter 1: The Student from Kaminetz	5
Chapter 2: A New Start	6
Chapter 3: War Breaks Out	7
Chapter 4: To Vilna!	8
Chapter 5: A Wartime Engagement	9
Chapter 6: The Nightmare Comes Closer	10
Chapter 7: Next Stop — Japan?	11
Chapter 8: Tickets — at What Price?	12
Chapter 9: A Trip to Freedom	13
Chapter 10: Welcome to Japan	14
Chapter 11: A Yeshiva in Shanghai	15
Chapter 12: In the Shanghai Ghetto	16
Chapter 13: To Palestine!	17
Chapter 14: Under Arrest!	18
Chapter 15: Help Needed	19
Chapter 16: Moving On	20
Supplementary Activities	21

FOR THE TEACHER

This guide consists of lessons to assist you in using *Escape to Shanghai: The Mir Yeshiva's Story of Survival* in your classroom. The guide is written in a chapter-by-chapter format and includes a synopsis, pre-reading activities, and comprehension questions, as well as supplementary activities to be used at the end of the book.

The book and its accompanying guide can be used in a number of ways. Students reading at the same level might participate in a small-group guided reading of the book, returning to it over several weeks as they read and discuss it with the teacher. The entire class might read the book and discuss it in small groups using literature circles or reciprocal teaching. The teacher can then use the suggested questions to guide students in their discussions. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. Students should be encouraged to support their answers with evidence from the text. Students might keep a notebook of their responses throughout the year, which can then be used for progress monitoring and assessment purposes.

This teacher's guide includes many document-based questions. These questions focus on utilizing critical-thinking skills. Students are also asked to make comparisons, draw analogies, and apply historic analysis using primary and secondary sources from this time period. Source material for questions include photographs, maps, and documents. The questions can be used to teach students how to analyze source documents and deepen their understanding of the life and times of the people featured in this book.

Using this guide can help you as a teacher create more active readers. Students who are encouraged to think about their reading, make inferences, compare and contrast events and characters, and notice author's language will read more closely and carefully. They will become more thoughtful readers, and their reading comprehension will improve. Working on this in the context of authentic literature helps to inspire a motivation and love for reading.

SYNOPSIS Students of the Mir Yeshiva, including Isaac Tzvi Zlates and his friends, traveled across Siberia into Japan and China to escape war-torn Europe. Their escape to Shanghai was a very difficult experience, involving many trials and ordeals and much assistance along the way.

Pre-Reading Activities

Use one or more of the following activities to introduce the book.

1. **Predictions:** Have students preview the book by reading the title, the author, and looking at the picture on the cover. Ask them what they think this book will be about. Have they read any other books in this series? What clues can they gather about the book from the phrase "Story of Survival"?
2. **Building Background:** This book tells the story of the escape of the Mir Yeshiva to Shanghai. Discuss with students their personal connection to the Mir Yeshiva today — do they have brothers, fathers, cousins who learn(ed) there? Talk about the growth of the Mir Yeshiva from World War II until today.
3. **Social Studies:** Students of the Mir Yeshiva required visas to travel across the Asian continent. For this, they required the assistance of the Japanese consulate. Talk about the meaning and importance of transit visas, landing visas, entry visas, passports, consulates, and consuls.
4. **Genre Focus:** *Escape to Shanghai: The Mir Yeshiva's Story of Survival* is a true story. Students can read the disclaimer on the copyright page and discuss: Why are some conversations and minor details added to the book?
5. **Geography:** Have students study the map on the inside front spread of the book to acquaint themselves with the route the Mir Yeshiva traveled on its escape journey. Have them refer to it while they read the book, and let them trace Isaac Tzvi's route as it develops.
6. **Geography/Math:** Have students locate Poland on a current map and trace the route from Poland to Shanghai, China. Note the great distance across Russia as well as the bodies of water that must be crossed to reach Shanghai. Have them calculate the distance in kilometers and miles.



PROLOGUE


1. What are some questions you now have about the escape of the Mir Yeshiva? Note these questions and leave space to record their answers as you read the rest of the book.
2. What can you infer about Sugihara's personality from the story told in the prologue?

CHAPTER 1 — THE STUDENT FROM KAMINETZ

SYNOPSIS Isaac Tzvi Zlates grows up in Kaminetz and learns by Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz. At age sixteen, when Isaac Tzvi is finding it hard to concentrate on his learning in Kaminetz, Rav Baruch Ber advises him to travel to Mir and join the yeshiva there.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Isaac Tzvi Zlates, a boy from Kaminetz, ends up in the Mir Yeshiva.

Guided Questions


1. When Isaac Tzvi's brother, Fishel, began to bring home money from his job, "For the first time, Isaac Tzvi noticed the worn-out furniture in his home." Why do you think he now noticed the family's poverty if he never paid attention to it before?
2. Explain why Isaac Tzvi's success in learning began to decline when his brother started working in a bakery.
3. Why did Rav Baruch Ber advise Isaac Tzvi to leave home for a new yeshiva? Why did he think that would help him concentrate on his learning?
4. Isaac Tzvi left home to study in yeshiva, just as many boys do today. How was his leaving home different from the experience of today's yeshiva boys?
-  5. **Creative writing:** Write a diary entry that Isaac Tzvi might have written on the last night before he left home for Mir. Be sure to include his thoughts and feelings. What does he wish for? What is he worried about?

CHAPTER 2 — A NEW START

SYNOPSIS Issac Tzvi arrives at the Mir Yeshiva and begins to settle in, rediscovering his love for learning.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how Isaac Tzvi settles in to his new yeshiva.

Guided Questions

1. When Isaac Tzvi first met Reb Leizer Yudel, the rosh yeshiva "...looked at the young man for what felt like a long time. Then he said, 'Welcome to our yeshiva.'" Why do you think he may have first looked at Isaac Tzvi for a long time before inviting him to join the yeshiva?
2. Describe the daily learning schedule in the Mir. Compare and contrast this to the learning schedule in yeshivos today.
3. Contrast Isaac Tzvi's feelings about learning Torah in Kaminetz to learning Torah in the Mir. Why do you think his feelings changed?
-  4. **Creative writing:** Write a Rosh Hashanah card from Isaac Tzvi to his parents back at home describing his learning in the Mir Yeshiva and his feelings as he approaches the new year. Be sure to include his hopes, fears, and dreams.

CHAPTER 3 — WAR BREAKS OUT

SYNOPSIS Germany invades Poland in September 1939, and the town of Mir falls under Soviet control. Yeshiva students wonder what this will mean for their future.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how quiet life in the Mir changes with the Russian occupation.

Guided Questions


1. Why were Isaac Tzvi and his friends in the Mir more concerned about the possibility of a Russian occupation than a German one?
2. Explain how Poland was divided between the two opposing forces of Germany and Russia.
3. Describe how life in Poland changed after the Russian occupation.
4. After the Russian occupation, "it was as if a thick black cloud was covering the earth." Explain what this means.

CHAPTER 4 — TO VILNA!

SYNOPSIS Together with fellow yeshiva students, Isaac Tzvi leaves the town of Mir for Vilna.

➔ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Isaac Tzvi and the Mir Yeshiva leave Mir for Vilna.

Guided Questions


1. Why was it so crucial for the yeshiva students to escape from the town of Mir?
2. Explain why Vilna was a safe city to which the Mir Yeshiva could escape.
3. What evidence shows that the yeshiva students wanted to avoid Russian discovery on their way out of Mir?
-  4. **Creative writing:** Write a survival guide with tips and instructions for the Mir Yeshiva students on their escape from Mir to Vilna.

CHAPTER 5 — A WARTIME ENGAGEMENT

SYNOPSIS After his engagement to Sara Rochel, Isaac Tzvi is forced to leave Vilna. He escapes with the entire yeshiva to the city of Keidan.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how Isaac Tzvi's life changes even more.

Guided Questions

1. When Isaac Tzvi and his study partner sat down to learn together, "...the fear and tension of the past few weeks were forgotten." Explain why you think that happened.
2. Describe Isaac Tzvi's hesitations about the suggested *shidduch*. Why was he so unsure of what to do?
3. Explain why the yeshiva was forced to flee once again, this time to nearby Keidan.
-  4. **Creative writing:** After Isaac Tzvi's engagement to Sara Rochel, he wrote his parents a letter sharing the news. Compose your own version of this letter. Be sure to include your hopes and plans for your parents to join you for the wedding.

CHAPTER 6 — THE NIGHTMARE COMES CLOSER

SYNOPSIS Mir Yeshiva students and their teachers receive passports stamped with the words “No visa to Curaçao necessary,” enabling them to show authorities that they had a final destination.

➔ Prompt: Read to find out how the possibility of leaving Europe is set into motion.

Guided Questions

1. What were some of the reasons the students of the Mir could not escape to America? Why couldn't they escape to Israel?
2. Explain how Rabbi Kalmanowitz helped enable the escape of the Mir Yeshiva students.
3. Explain how a landing permit for the island of Curaçao could help the students of the Mir.
4. What did Jan Zwartendijk do for the Mir students, and why was this so important?
5. Differentiate between passports, exit visas, and entry visas. What is the role of each of these government documents?

CHAPTER 7 — NEXT STOP — JAPAN?

SYNOPSIS Japanese consul in Kovno, Chiune Sugihara, stamps thousands of transit visas, enabling the students of the Mir Yeshiva to escape via Japan.

➔ **Prompt:** Read to find out how the students acquire transit visas to allow them to leave Europe via Japan.

Guided Questions


1. Study a map to understand the importance of Japan as a means of escape from war-torn Europe. How would transit visas through Japan help the students of the Mir Yeshiva escape?
2. Why did Sugihara need the boys' help to stamp all their visas?
3. What kind of person was Chiune Sugihara? Bring evidence from the chapter to support your ideas.
4. Describe Isaac Tzvi's conflicting feelings when he heard that passports were ready and the yeshiva students could leave Lithuania.

CHAPTER 8 — TICKETS — AT WHAT PRICE?

SYNOPSIS Through the efforts of Rabbi Avraham Kalmanowitz in America, money is sent for train tickets to Vladivostok.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how the students of the Mir acquire the money necessary to pay for the train tickets.

Guided Questions


1. Why did the Russian government suddenly raise the price of train tickets to Vladivostok?
2. What kind of person was Rabbi Avraham Kalmanowitz? Bring evidence from the chapter to support your ideas.
3. Explain how Mr. Irving Bunim in New York helped Rabbi Avraham Kalmanowitz raise the money necessary for train tickets across Russia.
-  4. **Creative writing:** Design an advertisement that Mr. Irving Bunim may have placed in American newspapers to raise money for the Mir Yeshiva in Lithuania.

CHAPTER 9 — A TRIP TO FREEDOM

SYNOPSIS Isaac Tzvi Zlates and the students of the Mir Yeshiva travel by bus from Kovno to Moscow and then by train from Moscow to Vladivostok. After that, they travel by boat to Kobe, Japan.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how the students of the Mir finally leave Russia.

Guided Questions

1. Describe how the students' living conditions changed from their days in Kovno to the hotel in Moscow, and then on the train ride through Russia.
2. Although the hotel conditions were lavish, the students couldn't relax in Moscow. Explain why.
3. Why were the students of the Mir Yeshiva so scared on their train ride through Russia?
4.  **Creative writing:** How might Isaac Tzvi have felt when he finally boarded the boat to Kobe, Japan? Write a diary entry from his perspective describing his thoughts and feelings.

CHAPTER 10 — WELCOME TO JAPAN

SYNOPSIS The Mir Yeshiva students settle in Kobe, Japan, and continue learning Torah.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how the students of the Mir settle in to life in Kobe, Japan.

Guided Questions

1. Explain why the students were initially allowed to remain in Kobe for only ten days.
2. Compare and contrast the living conditions in Kobe with what the students left behind in Russia. Consider the weather, the food, and the languages spoken.
3. Although the language was different in Kobe and no one could understand the Mir students, they still “found it hard to relax.” Why?
4. Explain why the Japanese government was kind to the Jewish refugees and continued to extend their visas past the original ten days.
5. How did Professor Kotsuji help the Jewish refugees in Japan?
6. What were some of the ways Rabbi Kalmanowitz continued to help the Mir students, even when they were far away in Japan?

CHAPTER 11 — A YESHIVA IN SHANGHAI

SYNOPSIS The Mir Yeshiva is forced to relocate to Shanghai, where conditions become more difficult after the United States enters World War II.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how the yeshiva is forced to relocate to Shanghai, China.

Guided Questions


1. Explain why the Mir Yeshiva was sent from Kobe, Japan, to Shanghai, China.
2. Compare and contrast life for the Mir Yeshiva in Kobe with life in Shanghai. In what ways was Shanghai life easier? In what ways was it more difficult?
3. Why did the students of the Mir originally feel safer in Shanghai than they had felt in Kobe? When did those feelings of safety change?
4. Explain how the United States' bombing of Pearl Harbor affected the students of the Mir Yeshiva.
5. How did Rabbi Kalmanowitz continue to support the Mir Yeshiva even when sending money directly was no longer possible?
6. When questioned by the FBI, Rabbi Kalmanowitz responded that "...the lives of my students are far more important to me than my personal comfort." Support this statement with evidence from the text. What did Rabbi Kalmanowitz do that demonstrated his belief?
7. Describe some of the worries of the yeshiva students in Shanghai.

CHAPTER 12 — IN THE SHANGHAI GHETTO

SYNOPSIS The Mir Yeshiva is forced to resettle in Hongkou, a ghetto, until the end of the war.

→ Prompt: Read to find out about life for the Mir students until the war is over.

Guided Questions


1. Explain what a ghetto is and why life would be so difficult in a ghetto.
2. Compare the ghetto life of Hongkou to the ghetto life faced by the Jews in Europe.
3. Even as their location changed, how did life for the Mir Yeshiva students remain the same?
4. When the first Gemara was printed in Shanghai, students of the Mir sang and danced. "It was like Simchas Torah, even far from home." Explain why.
5. Explain why the Americans began to bomb Shanghai in April 1945, even after World War II had ended in Europe.
6. Explain what caused the Japanese to finally surrender.
-  7. **Document-based question:** Refer to the photo of the Hongkou neighborhood in Shanghai on page 76 and the photo of a street in Kobe on page 62. Compare and contrast those two places, and explain how life may have changed for the students of the Mir when they were forced to move to Hongkou.

CHAPTER 13 — TO PALESTINE!

SYNOPSIS Together with two other students, Isaac Tzvi sails from Shanghai to Port Said, Egypt.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how Isaac Tzvi and two other boys leave Asia for the Land of Israel.

Guided Questions


1. Explain why Isaac Tzvi chose to settle in Palestine, unlike many other students who chose to go to America.
2. Why would Isaac Tzvi and Yisrael Margolis be entering Palestine illegally? Why couldn't they obtain the necessary paperwork to enter the country legally?
3. Explain why the boys chose to disembark at Port Said, Egypt, instead of remaining on board until the boat reached the port of Haifa.
4. Explain why the Jewish shopkeeper in Port Said ordered the three boys to leave his store immediately. What was he so afraid of?
5.  **Creative writing:** Compose a telegram from Isaac Tzvi to his kallah in Bnei Brak informing her that he's on his way to Palestine. Remember to keep it brief!

CHAPTER 14 — UNDER ARREST!

SYNOPSIS In Port Said, Isaac Tzvi and his friends are arrested as suspects for the bombing of the King David Hotel.

→ Prompt: Read to find out what happens as the boys are ready to leave Port Said.

Guided Questions

1. Describe how the boys planned to leave Port Said and reach the Land of Israel.
2. Explain why the Egyptian police arrested Isaac Tzvi and his friends.
-  3. **Creative writing:** Assume you are a British soldier interrogating Isaac Tzvi and his friends. Write a set of five questions you might ask the boys, and their answers.

CHAPTER 15 — HELP NEEDED

SYNOPSIS Rabbi Herzog succeeds in arranging for the release of the boys, and they continue by boat to Palestine.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how the boys finally reach Palestine.

Guided Questions



1. Explain how Reb Chatzkel back in Shanghai realized the boys were probably in trouble.
2. Describe how Rabbi Herzog helped save the Jewish refugees. How was he able to convince the police to let them go free?
3. Explain why the three students were handcuffed to police officers on the train ride to Palestine.
4. Describe how Isaac Tzvi may have felt when he saw Reb Leizer Yudel waiting at the station for him in Lydda.
5. Compare and contrast Isaac Tzvi's feelings on the Rosh Hashanah in Palestine described at the end of this chapter with his last Rosh Hashanah in Mir in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 16 — MOVING ON

SYNOPSIS In Israel, Isaac Tzvi marries Sara Rochel and builds a new life in Bnei Brak.

→ Prompt: Read to find out what happens to Isaac Tzvi after the war.

Guided Questions

1. Describe how Rabbi Kalmanowitz continued to help the Mir Yeshiva from New York even after the war was over.
2. Why do you think Isaac Tzvi didn't share with his family what had happened to him during the war? Why do you think he began to talk about it later in life?
-  3. **Creative writing:** Write a thank-you letter from Isaac Tzvi to Rabbi Kalmanowitz. Be sure to include several examples of the ways Rabbi Kalmanowitz helped Isaac Tzvi throughout the war years.
-  4. **Document-based question:** Study the photograph of Bnei Brak on page 101. Compare this to the photo of the Shanghai Port on page 83 from the same time period. Based on what Bnei Brak looked like, how might Isaac Tzvi have felt when he first arrived there?

SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

Use one or more of the following activities to conclude the book.

Creative Writing

- Interview a Holocaust survivor or the child of a survivor. Ask them to tell you their escape story.
- Write a speech that Isaac Tzvi may have delivered at his eightieth birthday party. Reflect on the lessons he learned from his escape story and the message he would want his grandchildren to take from that.

Divine Providence

Throughout the story of the Mir Yeshiva's escape, there were many instances of Divine Providence. Find at least three instances where events were set into motion just perfectly, or where the right person was in the right place at just the right time. Describe each of these cases and how they helped save the Mir.

Righteous Gentiles

There were several righteous gentiles who helped the Mir Yeshiva along its escape through Shanghai. Choose two of these people and explain how their actions helped the students and staff of the Mir escape.

Geography

Refer to the map inside the front cover as well as the maps throughout the book. Can you create another escape route from Mir to Shanghai? Would your alternative route be shorter? Would it be more dangerous? Why did the yeshiva specifically choose the route through Russia?