

those lines, other people might be able to give you a discount. I could too, probably. But let's take one thing at a time. You are asking me to give you the merchandise for 5% cheaper. Believe me, many a time I myself would have been happy with a 5% profit. In particular, this type of merchandise, boards and beams, is easy to sell. Therefore, it's too much to ask for on your part. As you yourself must certainly understand, I can't agree to this under any circumstances. I am filling your order and ask you, as an honorable man, not to have such an opinion of me, because I have, G-d be thanked, been a dealer for many years now and have never, God forbid, dealt with anyone dishonestly. The maximum discount I can give you is 2% on the prices you are paying now, and I expect that you will be very pleased with the merchandise. Enclosed, I am sending you the bill and the merchandise and hopefully you will receive them without a hitch. All I ask is that regarding the money, do as you wrote me in your letter.

Your friend forever,  
Efroym Oksman

<sup>i</sup> Exod. 13:17-17:16.

### 10: I Am a Wanderer in a Strange Land<sup>i</sup>

Lodz, August 18, 1888

To my dear wife Mrs. Rokhl, may she live

Dear Rokhl,

This Rosh Hashanah I wept a great deal. My heart broke, and my tears flowed constantly like a river. I couldn't restrain myself because every second I was thinking about you and my dear children and what has happened to us in the space of a year. A year ago we were together even though things weren't so cheery. But our little bit of blood wasn't scattered to the winds. But what has happened to us this year? I am a wanderer in a strange land,<sup>ii</sup> among people I don't know at all and don't understand. And they don't understand me. To them, I seem like a wild man, like a beast of prey, but out of pity, they let me make a few groschen,<sup>iii</sup> and from these couple of groschen I must support myself and also send you something to live on. And so you can understand what kind of life I could possibly manage to lead here. An entire year where you do nothing but work like a beast of burden, and at night, when you come to the station, you fall down like a stone on the bare floor. There is no time

to dwell on your troubles. But on this holy day, on Rosh Hashanah, when everyone tosses aside worries about livelihood and starts coming to terms with where he stands; on this day you understand how unfortunate you are. But I won't lose hope, I am deeply convinced that God will have mercy on me so that I can soon return and once again lead a happy life with my children. Be well and may God inscribe and seal you for a good year. Best wishes from your husband who longs to see you again.

Avrom Dov Kuperman

<sup>i</sup> Fridman, *Der nayer praktisher briefshteler*, 28-29.

<sup>ii</sup> The allusion is to Exod. 2:22.

<sup>iii</sup> A groschen was a coin in circulation in many European countries beginning in the Middle Ages. The name remained even after the coin disappeared. A reasonable equivalent for the time of this letter would be "penny."

### 11: Times Are Bad in Courland<sup>i</sup>

Mitau, October 9, 1903

Dearest Brother!

Forgive me for not writing for so long. Unfortunately, I couldn't write. The reason is that I didn't have any good news to write you and I simply didn't want to write to tell you about my vile life, about my poverty and troubles. I know you wouldn't get any pleasure from hearing about that . . .

A couple of years ago, when I got permission to reside<sup>ii</sup> in Courland,<sup>iii</sup> I thought that I was more than lucky. But this was an empty fantasy. Everywhere now, shops have opened which are competing with Jewish businesses. Jews are completely barred from many businesses, and expenses are high . . .

And this is the only reason I didn't write to you until you wrote me about how worried you were.

Your brother,  
Leon Finkelshteyn

<sup>i</sup> Bloshteyn, *Nayer Bloshteyn's briefshteler*, 45-46. This letter also appears in *Briefshteler in shraybshrif*, 40-41.

<sup>ii</sup> The Russian word *pravozhitel'stvo* (residency permit) follows in parentheses.

<sup>iii</sup> A province of Latvia, then part of the Russian Empire.