

MEOROS HATZADDIKIM

— Lights Of Our Righteous —

A Tzaddik, or righteous person, makes everyone else appear righteous before Hashem by advocating for them and finding their merits. -

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)

Parshas Chukas & Parshas Balak & The Three Weeks & Shiva Asar B'tamuz

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לזכר נשמת

ר' זכרי' שמעון הכהן בן יצחק

Understand How Lofty And Holy Our Words Can Be

Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apta Mezibuz

Take the staff and gather the people, you and Aharon your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes and it will give forth its waters. Take out water for

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them from the rock and give them and their flock to drink...And Moshe and Aharon gathered the people toward the rockface and said to them, "Hear now, you rebels, shall we draw forth water for you from this rock?" (20:8-10)

The *Apta Rav* points out something fascinating regarding our *pasuk*. He begins by asking some questions, such as: What difference did it make when drawing forth water from a cold, hard stone whether the water was drawn through speaking to it or through striking it with a staff? Wasn't there a *Kiddush Hashem* through the miracle of a stone giving water even when it was struck blows by the staff, so why did Hashem say they failed to sanctify the Divine Name? What does the *pasuk* mean by saying that the rock will give forth "its waters"? It sounds as if somehow the rock had water already naturally within it. Finally, in *pasuk* 10, what does the term *el pnei hasela* - "rockface" - describe?

In order to answer these questions the *Apta Rav* points out that *sela* is written with the letters *samech*, *lamed* and *ayin*, which in turn are all written out into three letters: *samech* is written *samech*, *mem*, *chaf*. *Lamed* is spelled *lamed*, *mem*, *dalet* and *ayin* is spelled *ayin*, *yud*, *nun*. The middle letters of all the names of the three letters that spell *sela* spell *mayim* - "water". You take a *mem* from *samech*, a *mem* from *lamed* and a *yud* from *ayin*. Thus, we see that within the rock there was indeed water hidden - in the form of the letters that spell *mayim*! The rock is a hard, cold, physical object but the letters that spell its name have their root source in refined, spiritual lights. This is how Moshe drew out *mayim* from *sela*, water from the rock.

The *pnei hasela* is the inside of the rockface; it refers to the letters that spell *sela* rather than latent energy and power found within it, which is the *mayim*.

Moshe was angered by the fact that the people were unable to connect to the level of *ayin*, the lofty level where all things come together and each individual becomes *botel* to the greater group. Moshe misunderstood Hashem's command to gather the people together. He thought this meant that once together they could reach this lofty level of *ayin* and *bitul*. This is why he was angered when they failed to do so and he called them *morim*, asking them, "Will we draw out the *mayim* [the latent energy] from this rock?"

Because Moshe was angered, he erred and then struck the rock twice. The first time knocked off the first three letters from *sela*: *samech*, *lamed* and *ayin*. The second blow struck off the final letters *kaf*, *dalet* and *nun*, leaving only the *mem*, *mem* and *yud*, which spells *mayim* – water.

The *Apta Rav* cites the *Medrash* in the *Yalkut* (*Chukas* #763), where *Chazal* tell us that the very staff that Moshe used was the same one that Yaakov held as he crossed the Yarden. What is the significance of this comment?

When Hashem told Moshe to take the staff he thought it meant to strike the stone. Had Moshe done what Hashem said and spoken to the *sela*, then something greater would have happened.

The *Apta Rav* explains that when a great *Tzaddik* is attached to Hashem, the *Tzaddik's* speech has the power to draw forth abundant blessings from nature and from sources where it is latent. However, Moshe erred and struck the rock, because the staff was Yaakov's and he had crossed the Yarden with it [*Chazal* say it had *Hashem's* Name inscribed on it]. The staff had special powers and Moshe assumed that the *Shem Hashem* on the staff was what was to draw out the latent waters from the rock rather than his refined, holy speech.

This was Moshe's sin. Because he was angered and struck the rock, Klal Yisrael failed to see the power of speech and failed to learn this lesson. Had they learned the secret of refined, elevated speech, they too would sanctify their mouths. We can all reach this lofty level if we guard our tongues and lips and do not blemish them with sin and forbidden speech, rather attaching them to the source of truth.

Instead, they said to themselves, "Moshe could bring water from a dry stone because he used a magical staff. We do not have access to such powers and so only he can do that. But really even any one who sanctifies his speech could draw forth water and latent energy even from a dry stone with holy words spoken in purity and sanctity. There was a failure to teach them this lesson and so their *emuna* was lowered and their understanding of speech blemished.

May Hashem grant us the insight to understand just how lofty and holy our words

can be!

The Moshol Of Displaying The Suit Of Holiday Clothes

Rav Hillel Paritscher

In Chabad circles, the name of this Shabbos, *Shabbos Chazon*, is often explained based on the following citation by Rav Hillel Paritscher: There is a *moshol* quoted in the name of the famous Tzaddik Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, which underscores the meaning of *Shabbos Chazon*. A father had a beloved son for whom he bought a beautiful garment. The son, however, was careless, soiling the garment. The father bought another beautiful garment - which once again the son soiled. A third garment was made but it was not given to the son. It was locked in a closet. From time to time, the father opened the closet and permitted his son to view the garment from a distance. And the father told the son, "If you are good, I will, some day, give you the suit to wear." On *Shabbos Chazon*, said the *Berditchever*, we are given a *Chazon*, a prophetic vision of the future of how things will be when we merit the *Geula, Im Yirtzeh Hashem, Amen*.

This is further elaborated in the *sefer Imrei Tzaddikim* 13:1 cited in *Yalkut Kedushas Levi* p. 121-122.

Kara Alay Mo'ed - "He announced a *Mo'ed* over me " (Eicha 1:15)

The *Berditchever* attempts to understand this idea, based on a parable:

A king had an only son, who chose a negative direction to pursue in his life. What did the king do? He sent his son far away and removed his royal holiday garments from him, dressing him instead in black sackcloth. On the day that the king sent him off, and removed from him his suit of clothes, the king marked the date in his calendar, so that on that same date in the future, he could remind his son of his actions. The king decided that if his son was clearly remorseful, then he would return him with great honor and fanfare. However, if - Heaven forbid - his son did not regret his behaviour, he would nonetheless take out his suit of clothes on that

day and air them out, so that no moths would eat them. And then maybe - when his son passed by in the marketplace - he would see his old suit of holiday clothes and decide to do teshuva.

And when his beloved son saw that suit of clothes, it would awaken within him a great longing - even though those clothes no longer belonged to him - because of the pain and anguish he had endured when he was sent into exile. Seeing that suit of clothes that was once his would stir up feelings of sorrow, making his flesh crawl in anguish, now that he had been exiled. Then the king would take to heart his son's genuine regret and would surely feel mercy for him. No doubt the prince could then even have a better suit of clothes tailored for him than the first one!

This is the meaning of *Kara Alay Mo'ed* - "He announced a *Mo'ed* over me": a *Mo'ed* is a timely event or a date. The Holy One set aside a specific time, and on this date He is awakened over those past events from the time of the *Bais HaMikdosh*. And when *Bnei Yisrael* see this (that the time and date have arrived), and they cry and weep over the destruction - then Hashem's mercy is aroused over *Bnei Yisrael*.

When we see our "holiday suit of clothes", and our hearts break when we remember Tzion as she once was, and what greatness we once had, then Hashem, in His great mercy and kindness, has mercy on us because we are reminded of all this and mourn over it in remorse. Then we will lift up our hands in supplication to Hashem in Heaven to return us to our beloved home as before.

Stories on the Parsha & The Three Weeks & Shiva Asar B'Tamuz



The Rebbe Who Didn't Believe

The Tiferes Shlomo relates that the G-dly tzaddik, Rav Fischel of Strikov adamantly refused to believe that any Jew ever sinned. In fact, even if someone would report to him that a Jew had, Heaven forbid, transgressed a prohibition, he would deny their report. He countered: "No Jew could do an aveira (sin)!" This belief was due to his immense sanctity; he was so attached to Hashem and his ahavas Yisroel was so strong that he never saw anything negative in any Jew, as it says in parshas Balak, "*Lo hibit aven beYaakov v'lo roah amal b'Yisroel.*" (Tiferes Shlomo Avos)

The Chozeh's Bed

Rav Pinchos of Ostila told how his father Rav Yosef of Ostila once learned that the *Chozeh of Lublin* would be passing through Ostila.

Rav Yosef greatly wished that the *Chozeh* would choose his home to visit during this rest stop and so he began advance preparations in order to host this important guest. He knew that the *Chozeh's* custom was that as soon as he arrived, he would lie down to recover from his journey. So, Rav Yosef hired a G-d fearing carpenter to build a new bed expressly for this purpose. He explained his intentions to the carpenter: "When the holy *Chozeh* lies down on another's bed, his holy senses are attuned to the spiritual vibrations of the bed. If he finds fault with the impression left by the bed's previous occupants, he will complain that the bed is painfully pricking him as if with spikes. Therefore, I ask you, please immerse yourself daily in the *mikvah* before you begin your work and as you work think clean pure thoughts." At first, the carpenter was afraid to undertake such a delicate task and concerned that he was not up to par. Eventually, Rav Yosef convinced him to carry through with the job and the carpenter began work on the *Chozeh of Lublin's* new bed.

Still feeling unworthy, the carpenter nevertheless carried out the task. But as he

worked, he was constantly disturbed by thinking, "What a holy *tzaddik* will be resting on this bed!"

Finally, the new bed was completed and the carpenter brought it before Rav Yosef. Rav Yosef was ecstatic. He made up the bed with brand new linens, pillows, and blankets and locked the room so that no one should enter to touch the bed or lie upon it even by accident.

After a few days, the long-awaited moment of the *Chozeh of Lublin's* visit arrived. The *tzaddik* was invited to rest in Rav Yosef of Ostila's home. "Please *rebbe*, come; I have prepared a room and bed for you to rest up from the long tiresome trip." To the delight of his host, the Rebbe of Lublin accepted and Rav Yosef led the *Chozeh* to the room where the new bed was.

However, no sooner did the holy *tzaddik* lie himself down when he jumped up and cried out, "*Gevald! Es shtecht mich! - Oy the bed is stabbing me.*"

Rav Yosef was greatly astonished. How could this be? Still, attempting to find a solution, he said, "Please *rebbe*, rest in my own bed." The *Chozeh of Lublin* laid down on Rav Yosef Ostila's bed with a sigh of satisfaction. "Ahhh! Now that's better. This bed is massaging all of my tired limbs; I can feel the purity and sanctity seeping through me."

The *Chozeh* was soon fast asleep resting peacefully in Rav Yosef's own bed.

Rav Yosef was puzzled with all of this and so, when the *Chozeh* woke up, he posed the question to the *tzaddik*: "*Rebbe* I assure you that I have had this bed made brand new especially just for you and I have this room locked, and no one has entered and no one has ever used this bed before! In fact, I hired a Jewish carpenter, a G-d fearing man to build the bed with the best of intentions. What could have gone wrong?"

"No no. Heaven forbid," answered the *Chozeh*, "It's not that the bed is not kosher; it most assuredly is. However, every time I lied down, I could feel sadness overtake me, and it pained me as if I was being poked. This bed was made by a G-

d fearing Jewish carpenter indeed, but he was working on it all during the nine days between *Rosh Chodesh Av* and *Tisha B'Av* and as he mourned the destruction, his dark thoughts made an impression on the bed. That is what I cannot stand; I sense pain and suffering on that bed!" explained the *Chozeh*.
(*Niflaos Harebbi* p. 7 #5)

Gedolim Be'misasm Yoser



**Yahrzeits for the 12th of Tammuz ~ Begins Friday Night
(06-27-2026)**



Rabbeinu Yaakov - Baal Haturim (5103 / 1343 - 683rd Yahrzeit)

Rabbi Yaakov was the son of Rav Asher ben Yechiel (the 'ROSH') under whom he studied. He was born in Germany and followed his father to Toledo, where he lived in great poverty and devoted his life to Torah. Rabbi Yaakov's enduring fame rests on his encyclopedic Halachic codification *Arbaah Turim* which is the forerunner of our *Shulchan Aruch* today. As a result, he is referred to as the "Baal HaTurim".



Rav Aharon Ibn Chaim (5448 / 1688 - 338th Yahrzeit)

A grandson of the Aruch. Born in Chevron 1630 ש"צ. He served as a dayan in Chevron and afterwards in Izmir, Turkey where he passed away in an earthquake on 12 Tammuz 1688 תמ"ח.



Rav Chaim HaKohen - Rabbeinu Chaim Hakohen (5531 / 1771 - 255th Yahrzeit)



Rav Eliyohu Yosef of Dribin - Oholei Yosef (5625 / 1865 - 161st Yahrzeit)

Rabbi Eliyohu Yosef of Dribin [12 Tammuz 5607] was one of the elder disciples of Rabbi Dov Ber, the second Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty, and subsequently of his successor, the *Tzemach Tzedek*, both of whom used to send students to learn Chasidic philosophy from him. He was also a prodigious scholar of Talmud and Jewish Law. Before moving to Jerusalem in 1847, he served as chief rabbi of Polotzk, a major Jewish community.



Rav Eliyohu Boruch Kamai - Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva (5677 / 1917 - 109th Yahrzeit)

Rav Eliyohu Boruch Kamai was born in 5600/1840. His father, Rav Avrohom, was a grandson of Rav Avrohom, the brother of the *Vilna Gaon*. At two years of age, he lost his father, and his mother married Rav Chaim Zev Yaffe, a descendant of Rav Mordechai Yaffe, the *Levush*. Rav Chaim Zev raised the boy as his own child. In 5628/1868, Rav Chaim Zev was *niftar*, and Rav Eliyohu Boruch was named his successor as Rav. He was Rav in Karlin for seven years. Later, Rav Eliyohu Boruch served as Rav in Weckshna for three years, and then in Tchnovtzi until 5659/1899, when he was appointed *Ra"m* in Mir, alongside Rav Eliyohu Dovid Rabinowitz Te'umim, the *Aderes*, who was Rav in the city. In 5661/1901, the *Aderes* moved to Eretz Yisrael and Rav Eliyohu Boruch then became Rav of Mir, where he stayed for the rest of his life. Rav Eliyohu Boruch was *niftar* on the 12th of *Tammuz* 5677/1917, at the age of seventy-seven.



Rav Menachem Mendel Schick - Av Beis Din of Siksa, Yishrash Yaakov (5688 / 1928 - 98th Yahrzeit)



Rav Elchonon Bunim Wasserman - Baranovitch Rosh Yeshiva (5701 / 1941 - 85th Yahrzeit)

[Rav Elchonon's yahrzeit is either on the 12th or 13th of Tammuz]

Rav Elchonon Wasserman (1874-1941) was born in the village of Biržai, in present-day Lithuania, and studied in the *Telshe Yeshiva* under Rav Eliezer Gordon and Rav Shimon Shkop. In 1897 he relocated to Brest-Litovsk (Brisk) in present-day Belarus, where he learned under Rav Chaim Soloveitchik for two years and thereafter considered him his primary *rebbe*. From 1907 to 1910, he studied in the *Kollel Kodshim* in the Raduń Yeshiva, headed by The *Chofetz Chaim*. In 1910, with the endorsement of the *Chofetz Chaim*, Rav Wasserman was appointed *Rosh Yeshiva* of the *Mesivta* in Brest-Litovsk. After World War One, Wasserman moved to Baranovichi, where he became head of the *Novardok Yeshiva*. He was one of the leaders of the Agudath Israel movement and was regarded as the spiritual successor of the *Chofetz Chaim*. In the late 1930s, Rav Wasserman traveled to America to raise money for the *yeshiva*. He returned to Poland although he knew his life would be in danger, because he did not want to abandon his students. In 1941, Rav Wasserman was murdered by Lithuanian collaborators in the Kaunas Fortress.

**YAHREZITS FOR THE 13TH OF TAMMUZ ~ BEGINS SATURDAY NIGHT
(06-28-2026)**



Rav Chaim HaKohen Rapaport - Av Beis Din of Lvov (5531 / 1771 - 255th Yahrzeit)

He served as *rav* in various *kehillos* such as Zital and later in Slutzk. Twenty-two years after his father was appointed the *rav* of Lwow, his father passed away during travels on 7 *Menachem* Av in Shebreshin. Rav Chaim Rappaport was appointed to serve as *Av Beis Din* Lwow from תק"א to replace Rav Aryeh Leib ben Shaul who left Lwow for rabbanus in Amsterdam. He was greeted with honors and led the *kehilla* there. Rav Chaim served as the *rav* in Lwow for 30 years until his passing on Tuesday, 13 *Tammuz*, 1771 תקל"א. He was laid to rest in Lwow.



Rav Aryeh Leib HaLevi - Baal Hapardes, Or Hashonim (5535 / 1775 - 251st Yahrzeit)



Rav Mordechai of Koritz (5577 / 1817 - 209th Yahrzeit)



Rav Mordechai of Kremnitz (5580 / 1820 - 206th Yahrzeit)



Rav Mordechai Rosenberg - Av Beis Din of Tertzel, Ateres Mordechai (5635 / 1875 - 151st Yahrzeit)



Rav Yehuda (Leib) Sofer - Kesav Sofer (5667 / 1907 - 119th Yahrzeit)

Rav Yitzchok Leib Sofer, born on the 24th of *Elul* 5608/1848, was the son of Rav Avrohom Shmuel Binyamin Sofer, the *Ksav Sofer*, son of the *Chasam Sofer*. He learned in the famed *Yeshiva* of his father. In 5647/1887, following the *petirah* of his uncle Rav Shimon Sofer, Rav of Cracow, Rav Yitzchok Leib was appointed *Rav* in his place. In 5651/1891, when Rav Yitzchok Aharon Ittinger, Rav of Lvov, was *niftar*, Rav Yitzchok Leib was appointed to the prestigious post of *Nasi* of Eretz Yisrael in Poland. Rav Yitzchok Leib was *niftar* on the 13th of *Tammuz* 5667/1907 at the age of fifty-eight.



Rav Chanoch Henich Dov Rubin (5680 / 1920 - 106th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yoel Segal Pelner of Újhely - Av Beis Din of Ujhel (5685 / 1925 - 101st Yahrzeit)



Rav Dovid Twersky - Rachmastrivka Rebbe (5710 / 1950 - 76th Yahrzeit)



Rav Raphael Edri - Tzadik from Raanana (5782 / 2022 - 4th Yahrzeit)

**Yahrzeits for the 14th of Tammuz ~ Begins Sunday Night
(06-29-2026)**



Yosef di Trani - Maharit (5399 / 1639 - 387th Yahrzeit)



Rav Shlomo Giterman - of Savran (5608 / 1848 - 178th Yahrzeit)

He succeeded his father Rav Moshe Tzvi Giterman as *Savraner Rebbe* in Chechnik where he passed away 14 *Tammuz* 5608 (1848) תר"ח and was laid to rest in the same *Ohel* as his father.



Rav Chaim Avrohom Erenstein of Tisavo Bartfeld - Divrei Avrohom (5631 / 1871 - 155th Yahrzeit)



Rav Pinchos Shapira of Slovia (5632 / 1872 - 154th Yahrzeit)



Rav Mordechai Atiya - Rosh Yeshivas haChaim veHaShalom (5738 / 1978 - 48th Yahrzeit)

Born 20 Cheshvan ה'תרנ"ו others say 1898 תרנ"ח in Chaleb Syria. He moved with his parents to Yerushalayim, and was orphaned at a young age. During the Israeli war for independence he returned to Syria where he married his wife Simchah (Allegra) in 1920 and in 1922 he moved to Mexico City where he headed the Syrian *kehilah Rodfei Tzedek*. In 1936 he returned to Jerusalem. In 1967 he established *Yeshivas haChaim veHaShalom* for the study of *Kabbalah*. His *yeshiva* published the most authoritative texts in *Kitvei haArizal* during its time. Rav Mordechai passed away on 14 *Tammuz*, ה'תשל"ח, and was laid to rest on Har haZeisim.



Rav Yaakov HaLevi Ruderman - Rosh Yeshiva Ner Yisroel Baltimore, Avodas Levi (5747 / 1987 - 39th Yahrzeit)

Rav Yaakov Halevi Ruderman, (1901-1987) *Rosh Yeshiva* of Ner Israel, Baltimore. Born on *Shushan Purim* in 1901 in Dolhinov, Russia; studied in *Yeshivas Knesset Yisrael* in Slobodka, then headed by Rav Nosson Zvi Finkel (the *Alter*) and Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein. In 1930, Rav Ruderman joined his father-in-law, Rav Sheftel Kramer, at the latter's *yeshiva* in Cleveland. In 1933, Rav Ruderman moved to Baltimore and founded the Ner Israel *yeshiva*, leading that *yeshiva* for 54 years until his passing.



Rav Yitzchok Isaac Rosenbaum - Zutshka Rebbe or Zutchke Rebbe, Nachlas Yitzchok (5760 / 2000 - 26th Yahrzeit)

Son of Rav Isaamar and Malka Rosenbaum of Nadworna. Rav Yitzchok Isaac was born on 21 Teves תרס"ו in Czernowitz Bukowina. Rav Yitzchok Isaac was not born with extraordinary talents or intellectual gifts. On the contrary, when it came to learning, Torah study came with difficulty and there were many hurdles to overcome in his effort to succeed. After his marriage he served as Rav in Voshkovitz for two years before moving to Zutchka. After World War II, in 5707/1947, he published his first *sefer*, *Hameoros Hagedolim*. Soon afterwards he settled in Boro Park, where he lived until 1973. After the *petirah* of his father, who had settled in Tel Aviv after the war, Reb Yitzchak Isaac moved to Eretz Yisrael to take over his father's *beis medrash*. In 5741/1981, he opened his own *beis medrash* in Bnei Brak and eventually launched a project called Shoneh Halachos to encourage the study of *hilchos Shabbos*. On Sunday evening, 14 Tammuz, he felt ill and was taken to Laniado Hospital in Netanya, where he was *niftar* early Monday morning.

**Yahrzeits for the 15th of Tammuz ~ Begins Monday Night
(06-30-2026)**



Rav Chaim Ibn Attar - Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh (5503 / 1743 - 283rd Yahrzeit)



Rav Dovid of Ostroh - Darkei Tzion (5525 / 1765 - 261st Yahrzeit)



Rav Aryeh Leibush Halberstam - Father of the Divrei Chaim (5591 / 1831 - 195th Yahrzeit)

Son of Rav Simchah of Brode. He married Miriam, the daughter of Rav Dovid of Brode. He was the father of Rav Chaim, the famed *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz. He passed away 15 Tammuz תקצ"א.



Rav Elozor Weissblum of Reisha - Mishne Lemelech (5670 / 1910 - 116th Yahrzeit)

Rabbi Elozor of Reisha (1839-15 Tamuz 1910), a city in Galicia, Poland, was a great-grandson of the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk. He was best known for miraculous healings, and for his book, *Mishna Lemelech*, on the weekly Torah readings.



Rav Yitzchok Tuvia Rubin of Sanz (5687 / 1927 - 99th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yaakov Moshe Safrin of Komarna - Zichron Kodesh (5689 / 1929 - 97th Yahrzeit)



Rav Menashe Eichenstein of Veretzky - Alfei Menashe (5695 / 1935 - 91st Yahrzeit)



Rav Dovid Moshe Rosenbaum of Kretchnif (5729 / 1969 - 57th Yahrzeit)
 Rav Dovid Moshe Rosenbaum of Kretshnif (1969), son of Rav Eliezer Zev Rosenbaum and son-in-law of Rabbi Chaim Mordechai of Nadvorna. Lived in Rechovot.



Rav Amrom Blau (5734 / 1974 - 52nd Yahrzeit)



Rav Mordechai Weinberg - Rosh Yeshiva of Montreal (5757 / 1997 - 29th Yahrzeit)

Yahrzeits for the 16th of Tammuz ~ Begins Tuesday Night (07-01-2026)



Chur ben Kalev (2449 / -1312 - 3,337th Yahrzeit)



Rav Dovid Heilpern (5525 / 1765 - 261st Yahrzeit)



Rav Menashe Eichenstein of Ziditchov - Alfei Menashe (5695 / 1935 - 91st Yahrzeit)



Rav Aharon Yosef Bakst - Rav of Shavel (5701 / 1941 - 85th Yahrzeit)



Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel - Kopycznitzer Rebbe (5727 / 1967 - 59th Yahrzeit)

The Rebbe was born in the town of Husyatin (pronounced 'Shatin'), where his maternal grandfather was the *Husyatiner Rebbe*. His father was Rav Yitzchok Meir Heschel, who would later become the *Kopycznitzer Rebbe*. He was named for the *Oheiv Yisroel* of Apta, of whom he was a direct descendent. When WWI broke out, like many Jews of that region, the family fled to Vienna. In 1936, when his father passed away, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua was crowned as his successor. For three years, he served as the Rebbe in Vienna. Upon arrival in New York in 1939, he settled on the Lower East Side. Almost immediately, the Rebbe's home began to serve as a place where every Jew could turn for help.



Rav Shimon Moshe Diskin - Rav of Periaslov & Pardes Chana, Rosh Yeshivas Kol Torah (5759 / 1999 - 27th Yahrzeit)

Yahrzeits for the 17th of Tammuz ~ Begins Wednesday Night (07-02-2026)



Rav Yehuda ben Asher (5109 / 1349 - 677th Yahrzeit)

Son of Rav Asher. Born in Cologne, Germany 1270 ה"ל. He studied under his father Rav Asher ben Yechiel, the *Rosh*. In the year מ"ג he left for France, and in מ"ה he settled in Toledo, Spain. In 1321 פ"ב he was appointed his father's assistant and after his father's passing in 1327 פ"ח he succeeded him after *Rosh Bais Din* and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Toledo. He passed away on 17 Tammuz 1349 ק"ט.



Rav Yitzchok Rappaport - Batei Kehunah (5515 / 1755 - 271st Yahrzeit)



Rav Chaim Tzvi Monheimer - Av Beis Din of Ungar, Ein Habedolach (5646 / 1886 - 140th Yahrzeit)



Rav Mordechai Leib Winkler of Mad (5692 / 1932 - 94th Yahrzeit)

Rav Mordechai Leib Winkler, the son of Rav Naftali Hertz and Leah Winkler, was born in 5604 (1844) in Lepantavitsh, near Nitra. His youth was characterized by an intense, burning *cheshek* for *Torah*. He was always found in the *beis medrash* and his *hasmadah* knew no bounds. In 5640 (1880), Rav Mordechai was appointed Rav of Brezava to succeed Rav Uri Miller, author of Ben Uri, where he served the community and taught *talmidim* for twenty-one years. In 5661 (1901), an important delegation headed by Reb Chaim Teitelbaum arrived from Mad to ask him to serve as their *rav*. He arrived in Mad during Chanukah of that year and served there as spiritual leader, *rav* and *rosh yeshivah* for 32 years until he passed away on the same day the *luchos* were broken, the 17th of Tammuz 5692 (1932).



Rav Mordechai Leib Hertz - Levush Mordechai (5692 / 1932 - 94th Yahrzeit)



Rav Avrohom Tzvi Ungar - Machane Avrohom (5704 / 1944 - 82nd Yahrzeit)



Rav Yaakov Yosef Herman - All for the Boss (5727 / 1967 - 59th Yahrzeit)

Excelled in *Hachnosas Orchim*.



Rav Shmuel Yaakov Weinberg - Rosh Yeshiva Ner Yisroel Baltimore (5759 / 1999 - 27th Yahrzeit)

Rav Shmuel Yaakov Weinberg (1923-1999). The Weinberg family is from the Slonimer chasidic dynasty, a Lithuanian chassidus. Rav Shmuel Yaakov Weinberg (1923-1999). The Weinberg family is from the Slonimer chasidic dynasty, a Lithuanian chassidus. In 1964, Rav Ruderman sent him to Toronto, to preside as the *rosh yeshiva* of a branch that Ner Yisrael had established there several years earlier. Eight years later, when the yeshiva in Toronto decided to become independent, he returned to Baltimore. Shortly before the *petirah* of his father-in-law in 1987, Rav Weinberg was asked to preside as the *rosh yeshiva* of Ner Yisrael in Baltimore. He was a member of the *Moetzes Roshei Hayeshivos* of *Torah Umesorah* for many years, and was very active in expanding the projects of this important organization.



Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Spiegel (5761 / 2001 - 25th Yahrzeit)

Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Spiegel (1937-2001), Rav of the Romanian shul Khal Shaarei Shomayim, son of Rav Moshe Menachem Spiegel, the *Admor* of Ostrov-Kalushin (formerly of Brownsville, later of the Lower East Side), and the grandson of Rav Naftali Aryeh Spiegel, the former Rav of Ostrov-Kalushin in Poland; a *talmid muvhak* of Rav Ahron Kotler.

**Yahrzeits for the 18th of Tammuz ~ Begins Thursday Night
(07-03-2026)**



Shmuel Shatin HaKohen Katz - Kos Yeshuos (5477 / 1717 - 309th Yahrzeit)

Son of Rav Yosef Yuzpa Katz. He was a disciple of Rav Yeshaya Segal Ish Horowitz Av Beis Din Frankfurt and Pozna. He served as Av Beis Din Dormstadt and after תמ"ח he served as Av Beis Din and rosh yeshiva in the *bais medrash ha'gadol* of Frankfurt.



Rav Yehuda HaLevi Eidel of Slonim - Afikei Yehuda (5565 / 1805 - 221st Yahrzeit)



Rav Avrohom Eitan - Maskil L'Eitan, Av Beis Din of Hardack (5608 / 1848 - 178th Yahrzeit)



Rav Moshe Dovid Ashkenazi of Toltchov - Toldos Odom (5616 / 1856 - 170th Yahrzeit)

Born in 5534/1774, Rav Moshe Dovid Ashkenazi was a descendant of the Chochom Tzvi, the Maginei Shlomo, the Taz and many other Gedolei Yisrael. In 5573/1813, at the age of twenty-nine, Rav Moshe Dovid was appointed Rav of Toltshova, Hungary, a position he held for forty years. In 5603/1843, at the age of seventy, Rav Moshe Dovid decided to fulfill his life's dream of settling in Eretz Yisrael. Rav Moshe Dovid stayed first in Yerushalayim. Later on he moved to Tzefas, where he was appointed Rav of the Ashkenazi *Kehilla*. He was *niftar* on the 18th of *Tammuz* 5615/1855, at the age of eighty-two, and was buried in the old cemetery of Tzefas.



Rav Yaakov Aryeh Gutterman of Radzimin - Bikurei Aviv (5637 / 1877 - 149th Yahrzeit)

Author of *Divrei Aviv Bikurei Aviv*. Son of Rav Shlomo Gutterman. Son-in-law of Rav Beirish Rav of Ritschival. Born 1792 תקנ"ב in Vurka. Rav Yaakov Aryeh became a *talmid* of the Chozeh of Lublin from a young age, as well as a *talmid* of as the *Kozhnitzer Maggid* and also a chassid of the *Yid HaKadosh*. After the *Kotzker* passed away in תרי"ט, and after him, the *Chiddushei HaRim* of Ger in תרכ"ו, many new followers and chassidim joined Radzimin. He passed away on *erev Shabbos kodesh, Chai Tammuz* תרל"ד laid to rest in Gensha Warsaw.



Rav Yehoshua of Tomoshev (5664 / 1904 - 122nd Yahrzeit)



Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel of Lieve (5674 / 1914 - 112th Yahrzeit)



Rav Aharon Pressburger - Av Beis Din of Banihad, Pe'er Aharon (5704 / 1944 - 82nd Yahrzeit)



Chacham Bentzion Abba Shaul (5758 / 1998 - 28th Yahrzeit)

Hacham Ben Zion Abba Shaul was born in Yerushalayim on 29 Tammuz 5684 (1924), the eldest of fifteen children – ten girls and five boys – born to Rabbanit Banya and Rabbi Eliyahu Abba Shaul, who immigrated from Persia. Hacham Ben Zion Abba Shaul was raised in the Shmuel HaNavi neighborhood and educated in the Bnei Zion Talmud Torah. At the age of 11 he went on to the Porat Yosef yeshiva, and studied with great rabbis – Hacham Yaakov 'Adas, Hacham Tzadka Hotzin and the Head of the yeshiva, Hacham Ezra Attiah. His study colleague was Hacham Ovadia Yosef. Hacham Ben Zion Abba Shaul gave classes in many places, teaching Torah scholars, adults, youths and the general populace – at the levels appropriate to each type of public. He was a mohel until the last 15 years of his life.



Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapiro - Naroler Rebbe (5767 / 2007 - 19th Yahrzeit)

Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapiro (*Naroler Rebbe*) (1907-2007). He was a grandson of the Rav of Narol, and a descendant of the *Sar Sholom*, the first *Belzer Rav*. After his grandfather's *petirah*, in a decision made by *Gedolei Yisrael*, Rav Chaim Meir was appointed *Rav* and *Dayan* in Narol despite his young age. He received *heter horaah* from the *Beis Din* in Lvov, and became a *posek* for Belzer chassidim. In 1945, the Rav was permitted to leave Russia and go to the west. In 1946, he arrived in Antwerp, and began to give *shiurim* to the Belzer chassidim who had arrived there. In 1948, the *Naroler Rav* moved to Brooklyn. A *Belzer beis medrash* was founded, and the *Naroler Rav* was appointed at its head. On *Rosh Chodesh Tammuz* 1972, the *Naroler Rebbe* left America and settled in Bnei Brak, where he founded the *Naroler beis medrash*.

Biographies of the Tzaddikim





Rabbeinu Yaakov Baal Haturim (Tammuz 12, 5103 / 1343 - 683rd Yahrzeit)



Rabbi Yaakov was the son of Rav Asher ben Yechiel (the 'ROSH') under whom he studied. He was born in Germany and followed his father to Toledo, where he lived in great poverty and devoted his life to Torah. Rabbi Yaakov's enduring fame rests on his encyclopedic Halachic codification Arbaah Turim which is the forerunner of our Shulchan Aruch today. As a result, he is referred to as the "Baal HaTurim".

The Tur followed Rambam's precedent in arranging his work in a topical order. However, unlike Rambam's Mishneh Torah, the Arbaah Turim covers only those areas of Jewish religious law that were enforced in the author's time. Rabbi Yaakov did not deal with criminal law, let alone with the sacrifices or the Zera'im (agricultural precepts that could be observed only in the Holy Land.) The code is divided into four main topics, each of which is divided into a sequence of numbered paragraphs. The four "rows" are:

1. Orah Chaim - "The Path of Life". This section deals with worship and ritual observance in the home and synagogue, through the course of the day, the weekly shabbat and the festival cycle.
2. Yoreh De'ah - "Teach Knowledge". This section deals with assorted ritual prohibitions, especially dietary laws and regulations concerning menstrual impurity.
3. Even Ha'Ezer - "The Rock of the Helpmate". This section deals with marriage, divorce and other issues in family law.

4. Choshen Mishpat - "The Breastplate of Judgment". This section deals with the administration and adjudication of civil law.

Another departure from Rambams' precedent was the fact that the Tur did not limit itself to recording the normative positions, but compared the various opinions on any disputed point. The influence of the Arbaah Turim is thus perceptible in its integration of the Franco-German and Spanish legal traditions. The arrangement and wealth of content made it a basic work in halacha and it was disseminated widely through the Jewish world. It became so widely accepted that when Rabbi Yosef Caro wrote his major work, Beis Yosef, he decided to base it upon the Turim "because it contains most of the views of the Poskim."

Rabbi Yaakov also wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Chumash anthologizing the literal explanations (p'shat) by earlier Bible commentators. To the beginning of each section he added "as a little appetizers, gematrios and explanations of the Masorah, in order to attract the mind." It was just these "appetizers" that were popularly published alongside most editions of the Bible under the title Baal HaTurim.

Among his students was Rabbi David Abudraham. Rabbi Yaakov died en route to Eretz Yisrael.

<https://breslev.com/260257/>



Rav Aharon Ibn Chaim (*Tammuz 12, 5448 / 1688 - 338th Yahrzeit*)

A grandson of the *Aruch*.

Born in Chevron 1630 ש"צ.

He served as a *dayan* in Chevron and afterwards in Izmir, Turkey where he passed away in an earthquake on 12 *Tammuz* 1688 תמ"ח.



Rav Eliyohu Yosef Oholei Yosef (*Tammuz 12, 5625 / 1865 - 161st Yahrzeit*)

Rabbi Eliyohu Yosef of Dribin [12 *Tammuz* 5607] was one of the elder disciples of Rabbi Dov Ber, the second Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty, and subsequently of his successor, the *Tzemach Tzedek*, both of whom used to send students to learn Chasidic philosophy from him. He was also a prodigious scholar of Talmud and Jewish Law. Before moving to Jerusalem in 1847, he served as chief rabbi of Polotzk, a major Jewish community.

<http://www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=rebbeBios>



Rav Eliyohu Boruch Kamai Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva (*Tammuz 12, 5677 / 1917 - 109th Yahrzeit*)



Rav Eliyohu Boruch Kamai was born in 5600/1840. His father, Rav Avrohom, was a grandson of Rav Avrohom, the brother of the *Vilna Gaon*.

At two years of age, he lost his father, and his mother married Rav Chaim Zev Yaffe, a descendant of Rav Mordechai Yaffe, the *Levush*. Rav Chaim Zev raised the boy as his own child.

When Rav Eliyohu Boruch was ten years old, his step-grandfather Rav Tzvi, Rav in Shkod, was *niftar*. Rav Chaim Zev was named Rav in his stead, and the family moved to Shkod.

At the age of seventeen, Rav Eliyohu Boruch married and settled in Shkod.

In 5628/1868, Rav Chaim Zev was *niftar*, and Rav Eliyohu Boruch was named his successor as Rav.

In 5638/1878, Rav Eliyohu Boruch visited Brisk, where he met Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, who, after talking with him in learning, attested that Rav Eliyohu Boruch was one of the Torah giants of the generation.

At that time, the *kehilla* of Karlin asked Rav Yosef Dov to suggest a suitable Rav for them, and he suggested Rav Eliyohu Boruch. He was Rav in *Karlin* for seven years.

Later, Rav Eliyohu Boruch served as Rav in Weckshna for three years, and then in Tchnovtzi until 5659/1899, when he was appointed *Ra"m* in Mir, alongside Rav Eliyohu Dovid Rabinowitz Te'umim, the *Aderes*, who was Rav in the city.

In 5661/1901, the *Aderes* moved to Eretz Yisrael and Rav Eliyohu Boruch then became Rav of Mir, where he stayed for the rest of his life.

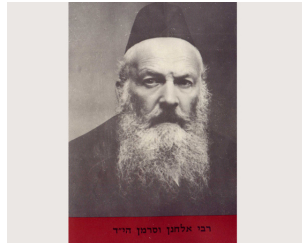
Rav Eliyohu Boruch was *niftar* on the 12th of *Tammuz* 5677/1917, at the age of seventy-seven. He was then in Minsk, where he had gone for the summer, and he was buried in Minsk. Many thousands participated in the *levaya*, among them the *Gedolei HaDor*.

Zecher tzaddik livrachah.

www.hamodia.com/features/day-history-12-tammuzjuly-10/



Rav Elchonon Bunim Wasserman Baranovitch Rosh Yeshiva (Tammuz 12, 5701 / 1941 - 85th Yahrzeit)



[Rav Elchonon's yahrzeit is either on the 12th or 13th of Tammuz]

The *Chazon Ish* once testified that Reb Elchanan totally fulfilled the principle “I placed G-d before me at all times.” In a generation renowned for its many great *Roshei Yeshivot*, he was distinguished not only for his great learning but for the impact his personality made on his students.

Reb Elchanan was born in Birz, Lithuania. He studied in the *Telshe Yeshiva* under R. Shimon Shkop. In 1897, he met R. Chaim Brisker and became his disciple. Whereas R. Shimon was concerned with the “why” R. Chaim said “One has to know what is stated, not why”. Reb Elchanan was deeply influenced by both but eventually developed his own approach.

In 1899 he married Michla, the daughter of Rav Meir Atlas, rabbi of Salantai (Salant).

A new era began for Reb Elchanan when he met the *Chofetz Chaim* in 1907. Though he had already served with noted success as *Yeshiva* head of Amtchislav and was now a mature man of 32, he joined the *Kodoshim Kollel* of the *Chofetz Chaim*. Reb Elchanan viewed the *Chofetz Chaim* as a living *Torah* and trembled in his presence. The *Chofetz Chaim* became Reb Elchanan's lifetime role model. In 1910, he became a *Rosh Yeshiva* in Brisk until the outbreak of the war in 1914. In 1921, he became head of the *Yeshiva Ohel*

Torah in Baranovitch, where he remained for the rest of his life. Because of his great influence the *Yeshiva* grew and, in spite of its abysmal poverty, attracted many hundreds of disciples.

Besides his role as *yeshiva* head, Reb Elchanan was deeply involved in communal matters, and was active in Agudas Israel. In addition to his lectures and Talmudic writings, he was also a thinker and interpreter of contemporary events and his ideas were published in a book of essays (*Kovetz Maamorim*). He maintained that just as the *Torah* provides guidance in strictly halachic matters, it also provides illumination of the era in which we live. Thus, for example, his essay, *The Footprints of the Messiah*, presented a sweeping view of modern life. Two of his main points are the rapid pace with which the world is developing in contrast to previous generations and the idol of nationalism which he saw as striving to replace *Torah* as the central factor of Jewish life.

He visited America in 1939 and though he could have remained and avoided the imminent catastrophe, he never considered it as a possibility. He felt that he must return to his *Yeshiva* and be with his students.

While on a visit to Kovno the Germans declared war on Russia and Reb Elchanan was unable to return to the *yeshiva*. On July 6, 1941, Reb Elchanan was studying in the house of R. Avrohom Grodzensky, in the company of a group of scholars, when four armed Lithuanians came in shouting and taunting. It was obvious that the end was near and Reb Elchanan spoke his last words:

"Heaven apparently considers us righteous people, for it wants us to atone with our bodies for Jewry as a whole. So we must repent now...if we repent, we will thereby save the remaining Jews, our brothers and sisters, so that they will be able to carry on as the remnant of Jewry." <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/rabbi-elchanan-wasserman>.

R' Elchanan spoke quietly with his usual composure. His voice was no different than always. He looked very serious but altogether normal... He did not attempt to part specifically from his son, R' Naftali, but spoke to one and all, to *Klal Yisrael*. In the heavens we are apparently regarded as righteous people, for we have been chosen to atone, through our physical selves, for the Jewish nation. Therefore, we must engage in complete repentance, and immediately ... time is short. The way to the Ninth Fort is near,

and we must keep in mind that through our repentance, our sacrifice will be held in greater favor. No improper thought should enter our mind, heaven forefend, for it would be like a blemish, invalidating our sacrifice. We are now fulfilling the greatest *mitzva*. "You set fire to it, and through fire You are destined to rebuild it" (from the *Tisha Be-Av* prayers). The fire that burns our bodies will be the fire that will return and revive the house of Israel." Final moments...12 Tammuz, 1941.

His seforim include:

- *Kovetz Heoros*
- *Kovetz Shiurim*
- *Kovetz Biyurim*
- *Kovetz Shemuos*
- *Kovetz Inyanim*
- *Kovetz Maamarim*
- *Ikvasa Demeshicha*



Rav Chaim Rapaport Av Beis Din of Lvov (*Tammuz 13, 5531 / 1771 - 255th Yahrzeit*)

Son of Rav Simcha HaKohen Rappaport

Thanks to Rav Chaim HaKohen's great oratory skills and wisdom, he was able to successfully debate the Frankists, who at the time, were attacking Torah Jewry and institutions in Lwow. When the Frankists forced the Jews of Lwow to a debate in תק"ט, Rav Chaim appeared with three other rabbis of Poland. It was during this confrontation that he used his power of persuasion and dialogue to overcome the Frankists's efforts to

have the Talmud burned.

He served as *rav* in various *kehillos* such as Zital and later in Slutzk.

Twenty-two years after his father was appointed the *rav* of Lwow, his father passed away during travels on 7 *Menachem* Av in Shebreshin. Rav Chaim Rappaport was appointed to serve as *Av Beis Din* Lwow from תק"א to replace Rav Aryeh Leib ben Shaul who left Lwow for rabbanus in Amsterdam.

He was greeted with honors and led the *kehilla* there. He was a staunch opponent of the Sabbateans--those accursed followers of Shabbtai Tzvi-- engaging them in debates held at the Lwow academy. He also came to the aid of Rav Yehonasan Eibschitz during the bitter *machlokes* with Rav Yaakov Emden over the amulets and cameos. Rav Eibschitz recorded the fact that Rav Rappaport defended him in a letter. This document is printed in the *sefer, Luchos HaEidus*.

Rav Chaim served as the *rav* in Lwow for 30 years until his passing on Tuesday, 13 *Tammuz*, 1771 תקל"א. He was laid to rest in Lwow.

HIS SEFORIM

He authored *Shu"t Rav Chaim HaKohen* and *Zecher HaChaim* (*derashos*).

HIS DESCENDANTS

We know of two sons and two daughters:

Rav Aryeh Leib HaKohen Rappaport, *rosh Yeshiva* Lwow, and Nachman HaKohen Rappaport, *Av Beis Din*, Gluga.

One daughter was the wife of Rav Aharon Segal Etinga, *Av Beis Din* Yabrov, and Reisha. His other daughter married Yoel Katzenelboigen, *Av Beis Din*, Yaritshuv.

His descendant and namesake, Rav Chaim HaKohen Rappaport, was *rav* in Ostrog and cites many *chiddushim* from his forebear in his own *sefer, Shu"t Mayim Chaim*.

MAKING AMENDS

In *Tzemach Duvid*, Vol 3, it is written that initially, Rav Chaim wanted his eldest son, Rav Aryeh Leib HaKohen Rappaport, to become *rosh Yeshiva*. But after some disagreement, the *kehillah* appointed Rav Moshe Mizis instead.

After Rav Moshe delivered his first *derasha* that *Shabbos*, he grew ill and passed away at a young age. Afterwards, they did, in fact, elect Rav Aryeh Leib to take Rav Moshe Mizis' place. But, he too passed away at a young age in his father's lifetime.

Rav Chaim HaKohen Rappaport worried that perhaps his desire to push his son's appointment to act as *rosh Yeshiva* contributed to his untimely demise. To make amends, he married Rav Moshe's widow and gave his granddaughter to Rav Moshe's son in marriage. (Although Rav Chaim Nasan Dembitzer of Cracow in the *sefer, Kelilas Yofi*, cites this version of events and disputes the dates, he does not dispute the other details and so we have included them here.)



Rav Mordechai (Tammuz 13, 5580 / 1820 - 206th Yahrzeit)

Third son of Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlatshuv and his wife Miriam the daughter of Rav Meir Poperish (the famed redactor and organizer of the writings of the Arizal such as the Etz Chaim), son-in-law of Rav Ekiezer Melamed of Kolbasov. Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, the Apta Rav author of Ohev Yisroel said that his soul came from the supernal heavenly palace of song - the Heichal heNagina and that his *niggunim* had the power to make others return and repent and do teshuvah. Until today the dynasties of Premishlan, Nadvorna and Kretshnif that hail as descendants of his disciples (Rav Mordechai of Nadvorna was named after him) sing his *niggunim* and continue his custom of reciting *LeDovid Hashem Ori VeYishi* on Yomim Noraim responsively *chazan* and *kahal* during the opening of the ark - *pesichas ha'aron*.

Together with the Apta Rav he was in charge of collecting the *tzedaka* funds for the poor *aniyei Eretz Yisroel*, an important communal position. He himself was poor and destitute. It is told that when he visited his father greatest disciple, Rav Mottele Neshchizer the latter who often gifted handsome sums sent him off after the visit with no funds barely covering the cost of his journey. "Not to worry," said Rav Mottele Neshchizer, "I see that

he is destined for greatness and as a rebbe and leader he will have to be a transmitter - a cosmic mashpia and such a person cannot be on the receiving end. I have such a tradition from the Great Mezritcher Maggid himself, who once sent a former wealthy *baal habayis* away destitute without any support saying that his wheel of fortune was about to take a turn for the better and a *mashpia* cannot be a *mekabel*."

Rav Meir Premishlaner was his most well known disciple and a talmid muvhak. When Rav Meir wanted to achieve some heavenly cosmic salvation he often donned his rebbe Rav Mordechai's *shtreimel* that he inherited and so doing he would achieve salvation and be *poel yeshuos*.

His sons Rav Yitzchok Yaakov of Magrov, Rav Yosef Yuska of Valtshisk, Rav yechiel Michel of Vishnowitz, and Rav Yisroel and Rav Binyamin. His son in law was Rav Aharon of Karlin author of Bais Aharon. He was eulogized by Rav Moshe Elyakim Beriya of Kozhnitz in his sefer Be'er Moshe.



Rav Mordechai Rosenberg Av Beis Din of Tertzel, Ateres Mordechai (Tammuz 13, 5635 / 1875 - 151st Yahrzeit)



Rav Mordechai married Tzivia the daughter of Rav Yisroel Tzvi Weiss of Nirbater (known as Hirsch Bater who was son-in-law of Rav Shaul of Kalov the Rosh Chevra Kadisha of Oshevar.

Regarding Rav Shaul of Kalov, someone once related how one of the members of the Oshevar Chevra Kadisha was in Lublin by Rav Yaakov Yitzchok the Chozeh and he handed him a kvitel, that included the names of the entire chevra society, when the Chozeh read the kvittel and he read the name Shaul ben Sheva the tzadik told the shaliach: when you

get back home please send this Shaul to me. When the shaliach returned he relayed the Chozeh's message, Rav Shaul grabbed his tallis and tefillin and made his way on foot to Lublin. When he came before the Chozeh the tzadik asked him if he knew who to learn? His response was negative, no. The Chozeh remarked that it was very strange since the husband of Liba Rachel should be a ben Torah! Afterwards during davening when they reached Kerias Shema Rav Shaul could no longer hold back or contain himself or hold back and the Chozeh felt something, the Chozeh drew him near during the davening. And there he stayed spending time by the Chozeh. (Chemdas Shaul)

Regarding his shidduch and marriage, Rav Mordechai's son Rav Shaul related how his maternal grandfather Reb Hirsch Bator travelled to Balkan in order to search for a suitable chosson for his daughter Tzivia. There he entered the Bais Medrash of the Tzror haChaim, Rav Shmelka Selisher who told him that he found him two excellent bachurim: Rav Mordechai Rosenberg and Rav Naphtali Hertzka Zilberman, but he cannot make up his mind as to which bachur is most suitable. In the end they drew lots and Rav Mordechai was the winner, however after he passed away, his wife Rebitzen Tzivia ended up marrying Rav Naphtali Hertzka as her second husband. (Intro to Ateres Mordechai)

Rav Mordechai was a talmid muvhak of Rav Shmuel Shmelka Klein author of Tzror haChaim of Selish and also of Rav Avraham Shaag author Ohel Avraham.

Rav Mordechai also travelled to bask in the glow of such tzadikim like Rav Chaim Halberstam, the Divrei Chaim of Sanz and Rav Hirschele Lisker author of Ach Pri Tevuah. Rav Mordechai Rosenberg passed away in the prime of his life at age forty three on Erev Shabbos kodesh in Neipest, on Tammuz 13 , 5635. His Levaya took place on Sunday of Parshas Pinchos in Budapest where he was eulogized with hespedim by Rav Ahaon Dovid Deutsch AvBeisDin Yarmut, author of Goren Dovid. One of the reforms he fought against was carrying the body of the niftar by a pushcart instead of the traditional manner of carrying the niftar's body by hand on a stretcher or bed. When Rav Deutsch noticed that Rav Rosenberg was also being carted he cried out how the Rav had fought against this reform for which he was jailed and suffered dying young all for the sake of kiddush Hashem and they then carried him by hand and shoulder for a long far distance to the bais haChaim. He lay there in Neipest until the authorities wanted to destroy it to build a road and he was reinterred in Jerusalem on 7 Nissan 5731 (1971) on Har HaMenuchos, even though 96 years passed from the time of his death his bones were all intact. He was eulogized by Rav Dovid Moskowitz of Boniyad.



Rav Yehuda (Leib) Sofer Kesav Sofer (*Tammuz 13, 5667 / 1907 - 119th Yahrzeit*)

Rav Yitzchok Leib Sofer, born on the 24th of *Elul* 5608/1848, was the son of Rav Avrohom Shmuel Binyamin Sofer, the *Ksav Sofer*, son of the *Chasam Sofer*. He learned in the famed *Yeshiva* of his father.

In 5628/1868, he married the daughter of the *naggid* Rav Dovid Lindenbaum from Drohovitch. For a few years after his marriage he continued to learn in his father's *Yeshiva*, where he was one of the leading *talmidei chachamim*. Later he moved to Drohovitch, the city of his father-in-law.

Rav Yitzchok Leib was wealthy, a fact which he utilized for the good of his brethren.

In 5647/1887, following the *petirah* of his uncle Rav Shimon Sofer, Rav of Cracow, Rav Yitzchok Leib was appointed *Rav* in his place.

All his life he worked to raise the honor and prestige of the *Torah* and those who learn it, at the same time waging a war against those who sought to uproot traditional *Yiddishkeit*.

In 5651/1891, when Rav Yitzchok Aharon Ittinger, Rav of Lvov, was *niftar*, Rav Yitzchok Leib was appointed to the prestigious post of *Nasi* of Eretz Yisrael in Poland.

Rav Yitzchok Leib was known for his open house. He was always available to help his brethren, most notably those who were most in need, orphans and widows.

His son Rav Avrohom Chaim Dovid succeeded him as *Rav*. He also left two sons-in-law: Rav Akiva Sofer, Rav of Pressburg (son of Rav Simcha Bunim Sofer, the *Shevet Sofer*), and Rav Avrohom Freidiger, *Rosh Hakahal* in Budapest.

He wrote two *sefarim*: *Shem MiShimon*, his *hesped* for his uncle Rav Shimon Sofer, and *Sofer Mahir*, a collection of his *chiddushim* on *Shas*.

Rav Yitzchok Leib was *niftar* on the 13th of *Tammuz* 5667/1907 at the age of fifty-eight.

Zecher tzaddik livrachah.

www.hamodia.com/features/day-history-13-tammuzjuly-11/



Rav Yoel Segal Pelner Av Beis Din of Ujhel (*Tammuz 13, 5685 / 1925 - 101st Yahrzeit*)



Rav Yoel Segal Pelner was born in Tzelem on Tu B'Shvat, he was an only son to his father the AvBeisDin Rav Shimon Chaim who was also AvBeisDin Beled. He was named Yoel after his grandfather Rav Yoel the Dayan and Moreh Tzedek of Mattersdorf.

His education began with his studies under his maternal grandfather Rav Menachem Katz Frotiz AvBeisDin Tzelem, afterwards he went on to Rav Shmuel Ehrenfeld, The Mattersdorfer Rav's yeshivah, author of Chasan Sofer and he also studied under Rav Simchah Bunim Sofer of Pressburg the Shevet Sofer.

He married the daughter of Rav Akiva Sofer of Pupa, author of Tzuf Devash, the son of Rav Shimon Sofer of Cracow author Michtav Sofer.

He studied some years in the home of his new father in law and afterwards served as the Rav in the Bais Medrash of Rav Gershon Shtendler BeShteinmanger for some fifteen years and after his father passed away on 27 Iyar he succeeded him in Beled as AvBeisDin.

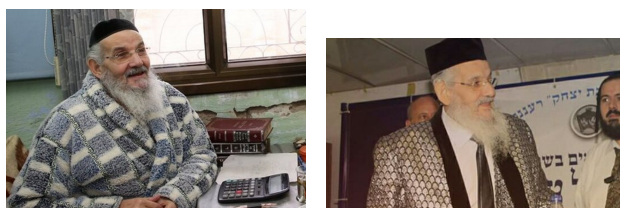
There he studied with his own disciple Rav Avraham Unger Ravad Kapavar author of Machene Avrohom.

There he opened a yeshiva with many excellent disciples and star students. Among his talmidim were R' Yaakov Sneiders AvBeisDin Basel, Rav Yitzchok Zev Wolf Meir author Maharsha HaAruch, Rav Yisroel Toisig of Mattersdorf, Rav Avrohom Daskal of Tshenger and his brother Rav Yitzchok Dov and Rav Leibush Schwartz.

He was Rav in Újhely (Satoraljaujhely) for three years before he passed away on 13 Tammuz 5685.



Rav Raphael Edri Tzadik from Raanana (Tammuz 13, 5782 / 2022 - 4th Yahrzeit)



Rav Refoel was the stepson of the Tzaddik from Raanana, Rav Yitzchok Hoberman.

His wife, Rebbetzin Chasida Edri, who passed away after having a stroke about 9 years ago, was a daughter of the mekubal Rav Elazar Edri.

His leadership in Raanana was well known, and people would flock to Yeshiva Birkas Yitzchak in Raanana to receive brachos and advice from the noted tzaddik and mekubal.

He leaves behind four sons and five daughters and dozens of grandchildren. The levayah was held at his yeshiva in Raanana. Kevurah was on Har Hamenuchos in Yerushalayim.



Rav Shlomo Giterman of Savran (Tammuz 14, 5608 / 1848 - 178th Yahrzeit)



He succeeded his father Rav Moshe Tzvi Giterman as *Savraner Rebbe* in Chechelnik where he passed away 14 *Tammuz* 5608 (1848) תר"ח and was laid to rest in the same *Ohel* as his father.



Rav Chaim Avrohom Erenstein Divrei Avrohom (Tammuz 14, 5631 / 1871 - 155th Yahrzeit)



Born in Pressburg as a young bachur he studied under Rav Moshe the Chasam Sofer. He was orphaned from both parents at age fifteen, he traveled to Alte Oven, to Rav Tzvi Hirsch Charif Heller, author of *Tiv Gittin*, together with his good friend Rav Yaakov Shalom Sofer, later *AvBeisDin Toplshon*. There they studied for three years all day long and each night past one in the morning. Later he returned to Pressburg to study under Rav Moshe the Chasam Sofer until he was filled to the brim with Torah. He was counted

among the Chasam Sofer's household. The wealthy gvir Rav Yechiel Michel Kitze also set aside a room for him with a bed, a chair and a lamp so that he would have a nice place to stay. When he reached the appropriate age he married Sarah Rachel the daughter of Rav Nosson Eliyahu Ehrman author of Kesav Ani and Otzar Chaim DayanMoreTzedek of Orsha. In Orsha he invested together with his father-in-law, they tried to live off the profits and allow him to attend to his studies without the yoke of the Rabbinate. After visiting his rebbe the Chasam Sofer for Shabbos, the Chasam Sofer promised to send him his semichah certificate, "why rebbe do I need it? I have invested my money wisely and imyh I shall sit and study peacefully?" yet his rebbe's ruach hakodesh was the better and when he returned he found that all the money invested had been stolen. He had no choice but to take upon himself the yoke of the rabbinate as a source of income. He travelled to see if somehow he could recover the stolen funds, as he rested from his journey. He met a talmid chacham along the way and they conversed in learning. They stopped in Tisova for Shabbos and honored the guest with the Shabbos derashah. As he was very learned and found favor in their eyes, and their Rav had recently passed away, and so they asked him to be their Rav and appointed him the new AvBeisDin, he served there under TavReishYudChes and afterwards as Rav in Bardiyov (the name was later changed as Bartfeld).

He authored the *sefer Divrei Avraham* <https://hebrewbooks.org/38474>

He passed away 14 Tammuz and was laid to rest in Bardiyov (Bartfeld).



Rav Pinchos Shapira (Tammuz 14, 5632 / 1872 - 154th Yahrzeit)



Son in law of Rav Yehoshua Heschel ben Yaakov Shamshon of Shpитеvka

Named after his illustrious ancestor, his grandfather Rav Pinchos Koretzer, he was born soon after his grandfather's passing.

He continued his father's publishing house and printed many important seforim. Together with his brother Rav Shmuel Abba they were both imprisoned during the infamous libel of the year 5699. He was sentenced to flogging and exiled to Siberia although he remained in Moscow.

"They were punished and sentenced to run the gauntlet between rows of soldiers who flogged them with cruel blows and due to Hashem's kindness and *chessed* they survived the ordeal. The efforts of their friends and relatives bore some fruit and the Siberian exile was delayed to Moscow. There for seventeen years the brothers remained until the death of the wicked Czar Nikolai the first. When his benevolent second Czar Nikolai II emancipated and liberated many he also granted the brothers some clemency and they were finally allowed home.

On the 11th of Adar 5601 (1840) a fire broke out that consumed the Vilna press, all the seforim and machines went up in flames and two workers lost their lives in the deadly fatal blaze, the partners were left impoverished and the Vilna Romm Press's fate was seen by some as the hand of Divine Punishment." (MeOran Shel Yisroel)

His sons were Rav Yehoshua Heschel the printer in Zhitomyr who married Gittel the daughter of Rav Michel of Vishnovitz, who was son of Rav Mordechai Kremnitzer the son of Rav Yechiel Michel Zlotshuver.

Rav Pinchos passed away on 14 Tammuz (1872) 5632.

Chabad tradition has it that as the two Shapiro brothers, Rav Shmuel Abba and Rav Pinchos of Slovia ran the gauntlet between the blows of the soliders who carried out the Czar's decree to flog them over the false libel as is known, in the midst of the ringing blows as they were flogged, they sang a niggun, a song of the soul's lofty ascent, the power of Yaakov's pride with trust in Hashem! This Niggun's notes have been recorded in Chabad's Sefer Niggunim Niggun 41 and can be heard sung by Chabad chassidim to this very day, known as the Niggun Slovia. (cited by Likkutei Imrei Pinchos Sha'ar Sippurim 125)



Rav Mordechai Atiya Rosh Yeshivas haChaim veHaShalom (Tammuz 14, 5738 / 1978 - 48th Yahrzeit)



Born 20 *Cheshvan* ה'תרנ"ו others say 1898 תרנ"ח in Chaleb Syria. He moved with his parents to Yerushalayim, and was orphaned at a young age. During the Israeli war for independence he returned to Syria where he married his wife Simchah (Allegra) in 1920 and in 1922 he moved to Mexico City where he headed the Syrian *kehilah Rodfei Tzedek*. In 1936 he returned to Jerusalem citing his children's *chinuch* as his main reason for the move. In 1967 he established *Yeshivas haChaim veHaShlom* for the study of *Kabbalah*. His *yeshivah* published the most authoritative texts in *Kitvei haArizal* during its time. Rav Mordechai passed away on 14 *Tammuz*, ה'תשל"ח, and was laid to rest on Har haZeisim. His son and successor Eliyahu served as *Rosh Yeshivah* and after his passing the grandson and namesake Rav Mordechai Atiya Shlita succeeded his father and he currently serves as the *Rosh Yeshivah*.



Rav Yaakov Ruderman Rosh Yeshiva Ner Yisroel Baltimore, Avodas Levi (Tammuz 14, 5747 / 1987 - 39th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yaakov Halevi Ruderman, (1901-1987) *Rosh Yeshiva* of Ner Israel, Baltimore. Born on *Shushan Purim* in 1901 in Dolhinov, Russia; studied in *Yeshivas Knesset Yisrael* in Slobodka, then headed by Rav Nosson Zvi Finkel (the *Alter*) and Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein. Among his colleagues in Slobodka were Rav Reuven Grozovsky; Rav Ruderman's first cousin, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky; Rav Aharon Kotler; Rav Yitzchak Hutner; In 1926, Rav Ruderman published his only written work, *Avodas Halevi*. In 1930, Rav Ruderman joined his father-in-law, Rav Sheftel Kramer, at the latter's *yeshiva* in Cleveland. In 1933, Rav Ruderman moved to Baltimore and founded the Ner Israel *yeshiva*, leading that *yeshiva* for 54 years until his passing. His death in 1987 followed less than one-and-a-half years after the passing of Rav Kaminetzky and Rav Moshe Feinstein. Posthumously, Rav Ruderman's students have published two volumes of his teachings: *Sichos Levi* contains *mussar/ethical* insights based on the weekly *parashah*, while *Mas'as Levi* contains lectures on the 19th century work *Minchas Chinuch* and other Tamudic and halachic insights.



Rav Yitzchok Isaac Rosenbaum Zutshka Rebbe or Zutchke Rebbe, Nachlas Yitzchok
(Tammuz 14, 5760 / 2000 - 26th Yahrzeit)



Son of Rav Isaamar and Malka Rosenbaum of Nadvorna

Rav Yitzchok Isaac was born on 21 Teves תרס"ו in Czernowitz Bukowina. Rav Isaamar was visiting his father Rav Meir in Kreshtnif a telegram arrived announcing the birth of a baby boy. As Rav Issamar packed up and turned to leave for home, his father accompanied him to the train. On the way, they passed an entourage of Jews escorting a *hachnasas Sefer Torah*. Rav Meir turned to Rav Issamar and declared: "See that? You just had a living *sefer Torah* born unto you!"

Rav Yitzchok Issac was just two years old when his grandfather Rav Meir Kretshnifer passed away. Nevertheless, he used to tell his family that the image of his holy grandfather's face was forever engraved in his mind. Despite his young age, he clearly remembered him.

Rav Yitzchok Isaac was named after his holy ancestor, Rav Yitzchok Isaac of Komarno.

Rav Yitzchok Isaac was not born with extraordinary talents or intellectual gifts. On the contrary, when it came to learning, Torah study came with difficulty and there were many hurdles to overcome in his effort to succeed. Nonetheless, nothing stands in the way of desire. Enlisting his iron clad will he constantly beseeched his Father-in-Heaven to grant him a strong memory. "I don't need to remember mundane details about worldly matters--but please grant me the ability to retain all that is in Your Torah!"

These words poured out from his pure heart accompanied by many tears. Eventually, his perseverance bore fruit and he experienced an opening of his heart and mind.

When it came to *avodas Hashem*, it was abundantly clear that young Yitzchok Isaac was already a spiritual giant. When he learned *alef-bais*, he reviewed the letters over and over throughout the day until he was able to read and *daven*. He then reviewed the *siddur* until he knew all the *davening* by heart.

He applied the same determination to his early childhood learning. Any paragraph of *Chumash* (and later any chapter of *Mishnayos*) that was introduced to him, was reviewed and worked on until he memorized them in their entirety. He would go from person to person in the *bais medrash* asking them if perhaps they could teach him just one *Mishnah*. Once he understood what he had learned, the reviews began in earnest until he knew the material by heart. He never played childish games; he just sat and reviewed and studied. Some adults tried to dissuade him, commenting that all his efforts would never amount to anything significant, yet this failed to change his mind.. While understanding anything new remained a difficult task, once he succeeded to grasp what he was learning, the impression it made was so strong that he never forget it again.

He later described those younger years recalling that after *Bar Mitzvah* he accepted upon himself to complete no less than forty blatt *Gemara* each week! It became a common sight

that after studying for hours on end with no interruption, when he eventually did get up , the chassidim or other visitors in his fathers *bais medrash* would take turns sitting in his chair, attempting to soak up the young masmid's *kedusha*. The space that he vacated was now certainly saturated with lingering *kedusha* resulting from his extraordinary *hasmada*.. Following one such long stretch of learning, he stepped out onto the porch to reinvigorate himself with some fresh air and sunlight.

His mother saw him and declared: "Issac'il have you nothing better to do with your precious time?"

Without mentioning the uninterrupted hours-long *seder* he just completed, he turned around and went back inside for another lengthy stretch of uninterrupted study!

By the time he was a *yungerman* and ready to marry he had completed the entire *Shas* and all four volumes of the *Shulchan Aruch*. His rebbe, the *Czernowitzer Rav* Rav Ben Tzion Katz tested him and was delighted to confer upon him *semichah*.

He married Chana, the daughter of Rav David HaKohen Hollander, *zt"l*, the Rav of Amsana, Galicia. After his marriage he served as Rav in Voshkovitz for two years before moving to Zutchka.

He experienced many miracles during the Holocaust, often marvelling at how he was able to save all his children, some of whom had been captured by the Nazis.

After World War II, in 5707/1947, he published his first *sefer*, *Hameoros Hagedolim*. Soon afterwards he settled in Boro Park, where he lived until 1973.

The *Zutchker Rebbe* took it upon himself to fight Shabbos desecration in the neighborhood. Each Friday he would approach Jewish storeowners and beg them to close their stores on Shabbos. For 10 years he battled for *kedushas Shabbos*, until finally he succeeded in getting all the local shops to close.

After the *petirah* of his father, who had settled in Tel Aviv after the war, Reb Yitzchak Isaac moved to Eretz Yisrael to take over his father's *beis medrash*.

In 5741/1981, he opened his own *beis medrash* in Bnei Brak and eventually launched a project called *Shoneh Halachos* to encourage the study of *hilchos Shabbos*.

The *Zutchker Rebbe's* door was always open. He refused to restrict his reception hours, saying he had to be available whenever a Jew needed him. Unless the *Zutchker Rebbe* was speaking to someone, he would be totally immersed in learning.

On Sunday evening, 14 *Tammuz*, he felt ill and was taken to Laniado Hospital in Netanya, where he was *niftar* early Monday morning.

HIS SEGULOS:

Hot Drinks And Washing With Warm Water On Motzaei Shabbos

On *motzai* Shabbos the *Zutshka Rebbe* sat and drank the customary hot drink. As he sipped his hot tea, the *tzadik* recited the salient words of Chazal and Rashi: "*chamin b'motzai Shabbos melugma*," and Rashi's explanation that hot liquids are a remedy or cure.

Then he added: "*Refuas hanefesh verefuas haguf* - they heal both the body and the soul."

One of the *Alter Zutshka Rebbe's segulos* that is, tried and tested as true, according to his grandson Rav Shlomo the *Zutshka Rebbe* of Yerushalayim was to prescribe that any sick person should drink a hot drink such as coffee or tea and wash in warm water. Taking a warm bath, he explained in the name of the Rebbe Reb Heschel gets the blood circulation going and the blood flows to the *luz* bone.

The *Tur* and *Beis Yosef* cite the *Shibolei Leket*: "There is a limb found in man named the *niskoy*, which remains intact until the resurrection. Even after all the bones have decomposed, this limb remains. This limb derives its sole nourishment from the *seudah* of *Melava Malka*. Therefore, we eat on *motzaei Shabbos* to nourish this limb.

Since this limb did not participate in the sin, it wasn't punished and doesn't decompose. (This is cited by the *Pri Megadim*.)

The luz bone (or *niskoy*) did not benefit from the sin of *etz hadaas*, and so it was not included when Chava was cursed that she should bear children in pain. The *luz* bone is only nourished from the *Seudas Melaveh Malka*.

The *Alter Zutshka* concluded, "if the *luz* can reconstruct the entire body and heal it for the resurrection of *techiyas hameisim*, surely it can heal just one limb or organ of that body as well!"



Rav Chaim Ibn Attar Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh (Tammuz 15, 5503 / 1743 - 283rd Yahrzeit)



Born in 1696 in Salé, Morocco. His father Rav Moshe ben Attar named him after his grandfather, from whom he first learned Torah. In 1705, the family fled Salé for Meknès, where they lived in Chacham Moshe De Avila's home.

At age 11 he married Patsonia, his first wife, who was such a tzadekes she even wore a *Tallis & Tefillin*. He travelled across Morocco and upon reaching Fez, he was appointed as Rosh Yeshiva by Rav Shmuel Elbaz. Since he had had no children, he married Esther, the daughter of Rabbi Meir of Fez, according to some accounts the couple had several daughters, other traditions say he never had any children from either of his wives.

After the Moroccan famine in 1738 he left for Algiers and then Livorno - Leghron, Italy. In Livorno he began preparing to move to Eretz Yisrael. In 1741 along with 30 of his talmidim he embarked for the Holy Land, arriving at the port of Acco, where they settled. He visited Kivrei Tzadikim and Rashbi in the Galilee and in 1742, they arrived in

Yerusalayim, where he founded two *yeshivot*, one for niglah the “revealed” Torah and one for nistar the secrets and mysteries of Kabbalah.

His seforim include *Chafetz Hashem*, commentaries on Gemara, *Pri Toar* - on the *Shulchan Aruch Yore Deah* and his famed magnum opus *Ohr HaChaim* - his commentary on the Chumash. He also authored *Rishon LeZion*, a commentary on the Tanach.

Rabbeinu Chaim Ben Attar passed away at the age of 47, on 15 Tammuz, 5503 (1743) and was laid to rest on Har HaZeisim.

HIS SEGULOS:

Segula To Receive Noam Kedushas Shabbos - The Pleasure And Delight Of The Sanctity Of Shabbos

When Rav Avrohom Elimelech of Karlin was in America visiting his *Chassidim*, he told them to form groups and study together the holy sefer, the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh*, each *leil shishi* (Thursday night). He explained that this is a segula to receive *noam kedushas Shabbos* - the pleasure and delight of the sanctity of Shabbos.

Afterward, when he returned to Eretz Yisrael, he confirmed that his *Chassidim* did indeed experience a greater, more pronounced delight and sweetness of *kedushas Shabbos* by learning the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* as he had instructed them.

Another *Tzaddik* also used to say that one of the *ikorim* - the primary principles of *Avodas Ho'Odom*, serving Hashem on *Shabbos Kodesh*, is to study the sefer *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh*. The reason he gave was that many *Tzaddikim* taught that the study of the *Ohr HaChaim* is beneficial to the soul, just like the study of the holy *Zohar*, and since Shabbos is called *Yoma DeNishmosa* - a day of the soul, studying the *Ohr HaChaim* is intimately bound up with the sanctity of *Shabbos Kodesh*. (Shivchei Ohr HaChaim)

Three Segulos - Refua, Shemira And Zera Shel Kayoma

Three Segulos - *refua*, * *shemira* * and *zera shel kayoma*

The *Gedolei Yisrael* recommended studying the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* not only as a way to be spiritually uplifted and for success in material matters, but also for its many wondrous *segulos*:

Once, when Rav Pinchas Koritzer's son was sick, he ordered him to study a page of *Ohr HaChaim* each day as a *segula* for a *refua sheleima*. (*Imrei Pinchos Shaar HaTorah* #133)

Rav Avrohom Elimelech of Karlin-Stolin remarked, "*Dem lernen Ohr HaChaim das iz a segula zu heintige machlos* - that studying the *sefer Ohr HaChaim* is a *segula* against today's diseases." (*Pri Yesha Aharon*)

Rav Pinchas of Koritz said that keeping a copy of the *sefer Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* in one's home was a *segula* for *shemira* - safeguarding the home. (*Imrei Pinchas, Shaar HaTorah* #53)

On different occasions, *Tzaddikim* remarked that the *sefer Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* is a *segula* for *zera shel kayoma* - healthy children. The *segula* is to study the *sefer* on an ongoing basis on every *Erev Shabbos*, and this *segula* has been reported to be tried and true. There is also a *segula* to study on *Leil HaSeder* the portion of *Ohr HaChaim* on the *pasuk* in *Shemos* 13:8 *Vehigad'ta levincha* - "and you shall tell your son", to merit having sons. (*Shivchei Ohr HaChaim*)

Some connect this *segula* with the *mesora* that *Tzaddikim* said the reason the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* never had children was that he channeled all his creative efforts into his holy *sefer* to give birth to novel concepts, insights and *chiddushim*. Since all his power to produce offspring was instead channeled into his *sefer*, it would make sense that it contains the *segula* for having children. (Rav Binyomin Mendelson, *GAV"D Komemiyus*, in the name of Rav Simcha Bunim of Ger - *Libom Shel Yisrael*)

Last week, after the *Ohr HaChaim* shiur here in Beit Shemesh, the *Maggid Shiur*, the son of Rav Nosson Nota Biderman of Lelov-Yerushalayim, told me how recently, two *yungeleit* here in Beit Shemesh, whom he knows personally, both married for several years with no children, decided to try out this *segula*. They accepted upon themselves to study together

bechavrusa the *sefer Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* every day after *davening* for ten minutes. After having done this for about a year, both of them were *B"H* blessed with healthy children - *zera shel kayoma*!

A Holy Mouth

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* in *Parshas Pinchas* cites an amazing *Alshich HaKodosh* (*Tetzaveh* 28:31). Since there is no greater sanctity than that of *Torah*, the mouth of a *Torah* scholar is sanctified as a *keli shoreis* - a vessel used in the service of the *Bais HaMikdosh*! This teaches us that the *segula* of sanctifying our mouths with *Torah* and avoiding forbidden speech as well as even mundane, idle chatter, sanctifies the mouth, transforming it into a vessel for Divine Service - a *keli shoreis* for the *Bais HaMikdosh*!

Segula For Teshuva

It is a *segulah* that you will not leave this world without having repented and done *teshuva* to study the *Ohr HaChaim's* commentary to *parshas Achrei Mos - Kedoshim*.

(*Kiyumu veKiblua* II, page 256 in the name of Rav Chaim Halberstam).

Segula For Yiras Shamayim

Rav Yissachar Dov of Belz would tell all the young *chassanim*, the newly engaged young men, to study the comments of the *Ohr HaChaim* on *VaYikra* (18:3) *Kemaasay Eretz Mitzroyim*. "*Az di vest das lernen yeden tog, vesti haben a hadracha vi azoy tzu firen nuch der chasuna* — if you study this," he explained to them, "than you will know how to conduct yourselves once you are married."

It is a tradition among the *tzaddikim* that studying the *Ohr HaChaim* is a *segulah* for *yiras shomayim*. (Rav Yosef Greenwald of Pupa).

The commentary of the *Ohr HaChaim* on *parshas Achrei Mos* especially *VaYikra* (8:13) *Kemaasay Eretz Mitzroyim*, is a source and fountain for drawing good character traits and *yiras shomayaim*.

(Rav Eliezer Zisha of Skulen) - (*Ner Maarvi*, page 213).

Segula For Zera Shel Kayama

The Amshinover Rebbe *Shlit'a* said that it is a well-known tradition from tzaddikim that studying the commentary of the *Ohr HaChaim* on the *pasuk VeHigadat LeVinch BaYom HaHu*, on the Seder Night is a *segulah* for having *zera shel kayama*, children that will live and be healthy.

Rav Yosef Meir of Spinka once showed Rav Dovid Sparber of Broshov a section in the *Ohr HaChaim* and pointed out that it was a *segulah* for children. When this was told to Rav Simcha Bunim of Ger, the Rebbe said, "The entire *Sefer Ohr HaChaim* is a *segulah* for having children, it is well-known that he himself had no children and so he put that power and energy investing it into the entire *sefer*."

(*Ner Maarvi*, page 215).

Segula As Preparation For Shabbos

Many Rebbes and Tzaddikim studied and taught a *shiur* in *Ohr HaChaim* on *Leil Shishi*, Thursday night, as a *hachana*, a preparation, for Shabbos *Kodesh*, including: Rav Moshe Yehoshua and Rav Yisrael of Vizhnitz; Rav Menachem Mendel of Deeshz; Rav Avrohom Elimelech of Karlin *HY"D*; Rav Yochanan of Karlin who said, "besides the fact that it uplifts all who study it, it is a preparation for *Shabbos* and it is a *segulah* to uplift the spiritual levels for all who engage in learning the *Ohr HaChaim*, each according to their respective level," and that "*Az MiLernt Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh Donerstog BeiNacht Hat Der Yedid Nefesh an underen ta'am!* — If you study the holy *Ohr HaChaim* Thursday Night then your song *Yedid Nefesh* on *Shabbos* will have a different feel and flavor!"

(Rav Avrohom of Slonim, Rav Sholom Noach of Slonim, Rav Shamshon Aharon of Teplick, Rav Aharon Yehudah Leib Vilner of *Sheeris haPleita* & Kloizenberg) (*Ner Maarvi*, page 214).

Segula To Purify The Soul On Shabbos

Because Shabbos is the *Yoma DiNishmasa*, day of the soul and the study of *Ohr HaChaim* purifies the soul and refines it, it is therefore a *segulah* to study it on *Shabbos*.

(Rav Dovid Moshe of Tshortkov) (*Ner Maarvi*, page 215).

Segula For Emunah

Rav Mordechai of Lechovitch and Rav Moshe Kobriner both told their *talmidim* to study the *Ohr HaChaim* on *Bereishis* during the month of *Elul* because it contained pure refined *emunah* and faith.

Rav Yochanan of Karlin said that the *Ohr HaChaim* is a *segulah* for *emunah*, faith.

(*Ner Maarvi*, page 215).



Rav Aryeh Leibush Halberstam Father of the Divrei Chaim (*Tammuz 15, 5591 / 1831 - 195th Yahrzeit*)

Son of Rav Simchah of Brode

He married Miriam, the daughter of Rav Dovid of Brode.

He was the father of Rav Chaim, the famed *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz.

He passed away 15 *Tammuz* תקצ"א



Rav Elozor Weissblum Mishne Lemelech (*Tammuz 15, 5670 / 1910 - 116th Yahrzeit*)

Rabbi Elozor of Reishe (1839-15 Tamuz 1910), a city in Galicia, Poland, was a great-grandson of the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk. He was best known for miraculous healings, and for his book, Mishna Lemelech, on the weekly Torah readings.

<http://www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=rebbeBios>



Rav Dovid Moshe Rosenbaum (*Tammuz 15, 5729 / 1969 - 57th Yahrzeit*)



Rav Dovid Moshe Rosenbaum of Kretshnif (1969), son of Rav Eliezer Zev Rosenbaum and son-in-law of Rabbi Chaim Mordechai of Nadvorna. Lived in Rechovot.



Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel Kopycznitzer Rebbe (Tammuz 16, 5727 / 1967 - 59th Yahrzeit)



L.R. Rav Moshe Mordechai, the Rebbe and Lazer Kaufman



The Rebbe and his sons, Reb Yisroel and Rav Moshe Mordechai (on left)



The Rebbe with Rav Aharon Kotler

One of the great Chasidic Rebbes that I was privileged to know was the *Kopycznitzer Rebbe*, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel, *zy'a*. He embodied the royalty for which the House of Ruzhin is known. His presence was princely and regal, and he dedicated himself to illuminating the darkness of America's spiritual desert, carrying American Jewry on his shoulders until his last days.

The Rebbe was born in the town of Husyatin (pronounced 'Shatin'), where his maternal grandfather was the *Husyatiner Rebbe*. His father was Rav Yitzchok Meir Heschel, who would later become the *Kopycznitzer Rebbe*. He was named for the *Oheiv Yisroel* of Apta, of whom he was a direct descendent. Like his illustrious namesake, the Rebbe's very essence was composed of love for his fellow Jews. His kind-heartedness was seen from an early age.

When WWI broke out, like many Jews of that region, the family fled to Vienna. At that time, the Austrian capital was teeming with refugees, and Rav Avrohom Yehoshua worked tirelessly to provide them aid and comfort. Every day he would go to the train station to greet the tired refugees who were arriving. He would personally help them with their baggage and in getting settled. From the moment they arrived, the Rebbe shouldered their burden, secretly leaving money under their doors.

In 1936, when his father passed away, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua was crowned as his successor. For three years, he served as the Rebbe in Vienna. Like his father before him, Rav Avraham Yehoshua was venerated by Chasidic and non-religious Jews alike, his home was a center for constant charitable activities, and as he personally attested some years later, he never slept a night with money in his possession, having always distributed every

last Groschen to the destitute.

Rav Shlomo Lorincz relates: "Rav Yoel Pollack and Rav Eliezer Breuer were present when an S.S. officer approached the Rebbe with the intention of cutting off his beard. The Rebbe held his beard with one hand, extended the other toward the S.S. hooligan, and said, "You can cut off these two fingers, but not my beard." The S.S. man was so frightened that he left the Rebbe alone. At one point, the Nazis threw the Rebbe in jail. His Chassidim did everything they could to secure his release, and eventually, their efforts bore fruit. After the Rebbe was freed, he said that he prayed throughout his entire incarceration that he not be released on Shabbos in order to avoid desecrating the Shabbos by signing his name. And indeed, he was freed on Motzei Shabbos.

As the winds of war began blowing, and the authorities put a ban on *Tefillah B'Tzibbur* he listened to the directive of his uncle, the *Husyatiner Rebbe*, and made plans for passage to America. The Rebbe had a sum of money that was just enough to cover the travel costs to America. The night before his departure, an urgent matter of relief came to his attention, and in his tremendous faith in Hashem, he donated the entire sum to *tzedakah*, leaving himself without a penny to his name. The next day, the local Chassidim heard about what he had done, and a couple came before the Rebbe, and the wife set her jewelry down on the Rebbe's table so that the Rebbe could pawn it.

Upon arrival in New York in 1939, he settled on the Lower East Side. Almost immediately, the Rebbe's home began to serve as a place where every Jew could turn for help. The constant stream of young and old, the children, the teens, the newlyweds, and the senior citizens came to visit the Rebbe for *Chizuk* and advice.

Yisroel Safrin author. As featured in the Monsey Mevasser, 'Klal Personalities' series



Rav Yehuda ben Asher (*Tammuz 17, 5109 / 1349 - 677th Yahrzeit*)

Son of Rav Asher

Born in Cologne, Germany 1270 ה'כ"ז.

He studied under his father Rav Asher ben Yechiel, the *Rosh*.

In the year מ"ג he left for France, and in מ"ה he settled in Toledo, Spain.

When his father arrived in Spain and became *Rav* of Castilia Toledo, he continued his studies under his father's tutelage.

In 1321 ה' פ"ב he was appointed his father's assistant and after his father's passing in 1327 ה' פ"ח he succeeded him after *Rosh Bais Din* and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Toledo. The secular authorities likewise recognized and ratified his appointment as chief Rabbi of Castille.

Like his father, the *Rosh*, before him, Rav Yehudah was also given the power to judge capital offenses and mete out the death penalty. He carried this out, like his father, even though it was not the halachic capital punishment and he writes his reasons for accepting the matter:

Since the Sanhedrin was disbanded, the laws of capital punishment ceased and the reason we do judge capital crimes in our courts is because we do so to set clear boundaries and prevent lawlessness and anarchy. and G-d gave this matter into the hearts of our rulers of this land to grant us this power to preserve us and weed out the wicked from our midst.

This also saves many Jews from being tried for capital offenses against our *Torah* laws in gentile courts who would surely be put to death contrary to halachah and also allows us to put to death those criminals such as *mosrim* (informers) who that would otherwise go free, but our *Torah* does indicate that even nowadays they deserve the death penalty even nowadays and in gentile courts they would go free.

However he also admonished the judges to use such punishment as warnings and exile before resorting to the death penalty.

When the Jews in Cordova complained about a brazen criminal who slapped one of the dayanim and tore at his beard, Rav Yehudah wrote to them that had such a thing occurred in Toledo they would have cut off his two hands for the offense, one for each slap he delivered!

When the leaders in Toledo considered asking him to change his ways in *pesak halachah* and to follow only the *Rambam* and imitate other *kehilos* in Spain who had done this, all in

the name of less disputes and ending *machlokes* he responded that his *kehillah* in Toledo was far superior and that other *kehillas* should imitate their rule of law if anyone should change it should be they that imitated him. Following this voiced detraction, Rav Yehuda He threatened to resign and leave to Seville, but and so they relented, and doubled his salary, and fulfilled his wishes-- so eager were they for him to remain and not depart and leave them.

His *teshuvos* and responsa came from all over the world., They were published under the title, *Zikaron Yehudah* and Rav Yosef Karo cites them in his sefer, *Bais Yosef* on the *Tur*.

Among his disciples are the famed Rav Menachem ben Zerach, author of *Tzeida LaDerech* and Rav Machir, author of *Avkas Rochel*.

He passed away on 17 *Tammuz* 1349 ו"ק.



Rav Mordechai Leib Winkler (*Tammuz 17, 5692 / 1932 - 94th Yahrzeit*)

AUTHOR OF LEVUSHEI MORDECHAI

Rav Mordechai Leib Winkler, the son of Rav Naftali Hertz and Leah Winkler, was born in 5604 (1844) in Lepantavitsh, near Nitra. His youth was characterized by an intense, burning *cheshek* for Torah. He was always found in the *beis medrash* and his *hasmadah* knew no bounds.

His vast breadth and scope of Torah knowledge, which he acquired as a result of both his natural abilities and his intense efforts in study, was deemed exceptional for his day.

Although his parents were poor, they stretched themselves to augment the salary of his *melamdin* in order to optimize his education. Rav Mordechai Leib testified: "I remember that when I was a child in Lepanavitsh, although we were poor, when it came to my education my parents paid the *melamed* his wage as if they were among the wealthiest people in town. Not a single Rosh Chodesh passed without my parents presenting the full monthly payment. The custom to give *rebbe gelt* was to them as if a *mitzvah d'Oraisa*, and they paid that fully as well. Added to their monetary efforts, was their physical investment

in my education as well. Because I was a weak and sickly lad, in the cold winter they carried me on their shoulders to cheder and prepared the best foods to nourish me properly," (Introduction to *Levushei Mordechai*).

Their efforts paid off. By the age of twelve he knew the two "gates" of *Nezikin*, *Bava Kama* and *Bava Metziya*, by heart and had already authored many insights and *chiddushim*.

At this same age, his mother sent him off to meet and study under exceptional *gedolim*. His first stop was the yeshiva of Tapaltshan, where he studied under his first *rebbe*, Rav Binyamin Ze'ev Wolf Tirtzas, the Tapaltshaner Rav, a disciple of the Chasam Sofer and author of *Tiferes Shabbos*.

His second stop was the Yahane Yeshiva near Shtampen, where he studied under Rav Mordechai Yehudah Glick (who was also a disciple of the Chasam Sofer) for fifteen years. He also learned in Grossvarden at the *yeshivah* of Rav Yisrael Yitzchak Aharon Landesberg, a *talmid muvhak* of the Chasam Sofer.

Regarding these years of material deprivation, studying *Torah* far from home, Rav Mordechai reminisced, while delivering a *hesped* for his former bench-mate and fellow student, the *gaon* Rav Elazar Loewe, *Av Beis Din* of Ungvar, how they "shared a dry crust of bread and studied *Torah* together amidst poverty and deprivation - *Torah mitoch ha'dchak mamash!*"

Rav Mordechai considered Rav Landesberg his *rav muvhak* from whom he gained most of his wisdom and received *semichah* as well. The image of this *rebbe* would follow and guide him for the rest of his life. (According to some sources, he studied under the *K'sav Sofer* as well.)

As all three of his *rebbes* were disciples of the *Chasam Sofer*, Rav Mordechai received his customs and modes of conduct from this line as well. As he wrote in the introduction to his magnum opus, *Levushei Mordechai*: "I merited to serve great *gedolim*, all of whom were disciples of the *Chasam Sofer*, and learned under them (their *rebbe's* approach) to reach straightforward logical conclusions, insights and detailed investigations into the straightforward meaning of the Gemara and Rashi's commentary, Tosefos and their super commentaries, all of which made a great impression upon me (and lead me) to teach my

students from the very well from which I drank.”

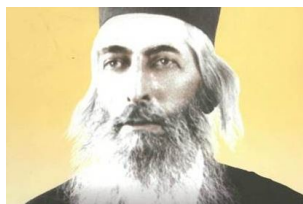
In 5629 (1869), he married Rivka, the daughter of Rav Menachem Mendel Kroiz of Honiyad, who stood by his side as wife and helpmate for sixty-three years.

In 5640 (1880), Rav Mordechai was appointed Rav of Brezava to succeed Rav Uri Miller, author of *Ben Uri*, where he served the community and taught *talmidim* for twenty-one years.

In 5661 (1901), an important delegation headed by Reb Chaim Teitelbaum arrived from Mad to ask him to serve as their *rav*. Besides providing his salary, they promised to support Rav Mordechai's *yeshivah*, and after considering their offer, he accepted. He arrived in Mad during Chanukah of that year and served there as spiritual leader, *rav* and *rosh yeshivah* for 32 years until he passed away on the same day the *luchos* were broken, the 17th of *Tammuz* 5692 (1932).



Rav Yaakov Yosef Herman All for the Boss (*Tammuz 17, 5727 / 1967 - 59th Yahrzeit*)



Excelled in *Hachnosas Orchim*.



Rav Shmuel Yaakov Weinberg Rosh Yeshiva Ner Yisroel Baltimore (*Tammuz 17, 5759 / 1999 - 27th Yahrzeit*)

Rav Shmuel Yaakov Weinberg (1923-1999). The Weinberg family is from the Slonimer chasidic dynasty, a Lithuanian chassidus. The approach and relationship of the Slonim chasidim to Torah has been similar to the classical Litvishe approach. The founder of the

dynasty was Rav Avraham ben Yitzchak Mattisyohu Weinberg, the author of *Chessed L'Avraham*. As a youth, Rav Weinberg studied in the *Rabbenu Chaim Berlin yeshiva* in New York City under Rav Yitzchak Hutner, a *talmid* of the Alter of Slobodke. Rav Weinberg married the only daughter of Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, the *rosh yeshiva* of Ner Yisrael of Baltimore and another *talmid* of the Alter. In 1964, Rav Ruderman sent him to Toronto, to preside as the *rosh yeshiva* of a branch that Ner Yisrael had established there several years earlier. Eight years later, when the *yeshiva* in Toronto decided to become independent, he returned to Baltimore. Shortly before the *petirah* of his father-in-law in 1987, Rav Weinberg was asked to preside as the *rosh yeshiva* of Ner Yisrael in Baltimore. He was a member of the *Moetzes Roshei Hayeshivos* of *Torah Umesorah* for many years, and was very active in expanding the projects of this important organization.



Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Spiegel (Tammuz 17, 5761 / 2001 - 25th Yahrzeit)

Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Spiegel (1937-2001), Rav of the Romanian *shul Khal Shaarei Shomayim*, son of Rav Moshe Menachem Spiegel, the *Admor* of Ostrov-Kalushin (formerly of Brownsville, later of the Lower East Side), and the grandson of Rav Naftali Aryeh Spiegel, the former *Rav* of Ostrov-Kalushin in Poland; a *talmid muvhak* of Rav Ahron Kotler.



Shmuel Shatin Katz Kos Yeshuos (Tammuz 18, 5477 / 1717 - 309th Yahrzeit)

Son of Rav Yosef Yuzpa Katz

He was a disciple of Rav Yeshaya Segal Ish Horowitz *Av Beis Din* Frankfurt and Pozna.

He served as *Av Beis Din* Dormstadt and after תמ"ח he served as *Av Beis Din* and *rosh yeshiva* in the *bais medrash ha'gadol* of Frankfurt.

After his father-in-law, Rav Shmuel Chaim Yeshayas, passed away on תס"ז, he served as Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt in all matters until the year תס"ו when this position was then assumed by Rav Naphtali HaKohen, the author of *Semichas Chachamim* (who held the

position until תע"א).

He was also author of the *sefer Kos Yeshuos* which was miraculously saved from fire that same year. On the 24th of *Teves* tragedy struck and a great fire raged through Frankfurt consuming over five hundred homes along with all their possessions and countless *seforim*. The fire lasted 24 hours and amazingly, the *Maharshashach's sefer, Kos Yeshuos*, was recovered unharmed from the blaze. This, he describes in that *sefer's* introduction.

The 24th of *Teves* was established in Frankfurt as a fast day to mourn the tragedy of the great fire, and the *Maharshashach* authored *Selichos* to commemorate the conflagration.

(Some people fabricated a story accusing Rav Naphtali Kohen, of being responsible for the fire. Their claim was that he did this to prove his mastery over the angels, but then, mistakenly summoned the angelic Prince of Fire instead of the angelic Minister of Water to put it out. The homeless masses believed the tall tale and even though his name was cleared, he left for Prague in order to distance himself from the episode. Interestingly, Rav Naftali Kohen passed away on the same date as the fire: the 24th *Teves* around eight years later in Constantinople en route to Eretz Yisroel.)

The next *rav* was Rav Avraham Broda, author of *Aishel Avraham*, and after he passed away in תע"ב, he was succeeded by the author of *Shu"t Shev Yaakov*, Rav Yaakov Kohen. In between each *rav's* appointment, the *Maharshashach* faithfully served as interim Chief Rabbi, paskening, answering all halachic queries and faithfully leading Frankfurt's people.

(See Chut HaMeshulash pp. 18-19)

The *Maharshashach* passed away on the night of Shabbos Kodesh Chai Tammuz תע"ט laid to rest in Frankfurt.



Rav Moshe Dovid Ashkenazi Toldos Odom (*Tammuz 18, 5616 / 1856 - 170th Yahrzeit*)

Born in 5534/1774, Rav Moshe Dovid Ashkenazi was a descendant of the Chochom Tzvi, the Maginei Shlomo, the Taz and many other *Gedolei Yisrael*. His father, Rav Osher

Anshel, was Rav in Razdil, but later moved to Lvov (Lemberg) where he succeeded his own father, Rav Moshe, as Rav. Rav Osher Anshel was one of the leading Rabbonim of the Va'ad Arba Aratzos.

In 5573/1813, at the age of twenty-nine, Rav Moshe Dovid was appointed Rav of Toltshova, Hungary, a position he held for forty years. During his tenure as Rav, he decreed many *takanos* for the benefit of the community. He also taught *bochurim*. He was loved by the entire community.

A *gaon* and *Talmid Chochom*, Rav Osher Anshel was respected by the generation's Tzaddikim and Rebbes.

In 5603/1843, at the age of seventy, Rav Moshe Dovid decided to fulfill his life's dream of settling in Eretz Yisrael.

In advance of his trip, he sought the *berachos* of the Toras Chaim of Kossov, Rav Yisrael of Ruzhin and Rav Meir of Premishlan. When Rav Moshe Dovid came to Rav Meir Premishlaner, Rav Meir asked him to stay for Shabbos. Although he had planned to leave on Tuesday of that week, he acquiesced to the wish of Rav Meir and remained with him over Shabbos. Setting out for the port to board the next ship, he heard the news that the ship he had planned to travel on sank.

Rav Moshe Dovid stayed first in Yerushalayim. Later on he moved to Tzefas, where he was appointed Rav of the Ashkenazi *Kehilla*.

Active to the end, Rav Moshe Dovid served as *sandak* at a *bris* on the day of his passing.

He was *niftar* on the 18th of *Tammuz* 5615/1855, at the age of eighty-two, and was buried in the old cemetery of Tzefas.

Rav Moshe Dovid wrote *Be'er Sheva* on the Torah and *Toldos Menachem* on *Shas*.

His sons were Rav Shlomo, Rav of Bakshvitz; Rav Mordechai, Rav of Pistick; Rav Yoel, Rav of Zlotchov, and Rav Avrohom, who was *niftar* young. His sons-in-law were Rav Yekusiel Yehuda Teitelbaum, the *Yetev Lev*, and Rav Yosef Yoel Deutsch.

Zecher tzaddik livrachah.

www.hamodia.com/features/day-history-18-tammuzjuly-16/



Rav Yaakov Aryeh Gutterman Bikurei Aviv (*Tammuz 18, 5637 / 1877 - 149th Yahrzeit*)

Author of *Divrei Aviv Bikurei Aviv*

Son of Rav Shlomo Gutterman

Son-in-law of Rav Beirish Rav of Ritschival

Born 1792 תקנ"ב in Vurka

Rav Yaakov Aryeh became a *talmid* of the Chozeh of Lublin from a young age, as well as a *talmid* of as the *Kozhnitzer Maggid* who participated in his chasuna, and also a chassid of the *Yid HaKadosh*.

Even back then, the *Chozeh* received him with great *hislahavus* (enthusiasm) and declared that he was possessed of a very lofty soul. The *Chozeh* predicted that as Rav Yaakov Aryeh would continue to grow in stature and actualize himself, he would amaze the entire world.

After the passing of these rebbes, he continued on to Rav Bunim of Peshischah who was among those who crowned Rav Yaakov Areyeh with the mantle of leadership.

The Radziminer once said about his rebbes and mentors:

The *Chozeh* hid himself under the guise of *ruach hakodesh*; the *Yid HaKadosh* hid himself under the guise of genius and *gaonus*; however, when it came to Rav Bunim, chassidim saw Chassidus in its original authentic form. He called him the *heilige rebbe*. When the *rebbe* lost his eye sight, the Radziminer used to read him *Midrashim*.

After Rav Bunim's passing, the Chassidus split; some went to the *Kotzker* and others

travelled to Rav Bunim's son, Rav Avraham Moshe. Rav Yaakov Aryeh of Radzimin cosigned the letter to preserve *achdus* and remained with Rav Bunim's son, and after his passing, went on to Rav Yitzchok of Skver. After the *Skver Rebbe* passed away, many looked to him and saw him as the next leader, and so he began to lead his own followers as rebbe.

He was known as a miracle worker. Word of the wonders he performed spread quickly and even other *tzaddikim* and disciples of the Peshischa *derech* sent chassidim to him who were looking for guidance and were in need of miracles.

He served as Rav in Ritshival, assuming his father-in-law's position, and afterwards when he became rebbe, he moved to Radzimin.

After the *Kotzker* passed away in תרי"ט, and after him, the *Chiddushei HaRim* of Ger in תרכ"ו, many new followers and chassidim joined Radzimin. He was considered one of the eldest *rebbe*s, and during this period, he prescribed kameo amulets and *refuos* to heal the sick. Stories of his wonders and miracles were collected and published as *Maasim Noraim* in Pietrokov תרע"ד.

His divrei Torah was collected and published in *Bikurei Aviv* and *Divrei Aviv*.

He passed away on *erev Shabbos kodesh, Chai Tammuz* תרל"ד laid to rest in Gensha Warsaw.

Among his disciples were: Rav Yaakov Yitzchok of Biala, Rav Yerachmiel Yisroel Yitzchok of Alexander, Rav Hillel Moshe Meshel Gelbstein of Bialostock.

His son, Rav Shlomo Gutterman of Radzimin, succeeded him.



Chacham Bentzion Abba Shaul (Tammuz 18, 5758 / 1998 - 28th Yahrzeit)



Hacham Ben Zion Abba Shaul was born in Yerushalayim on 29 *Tammuz* 5684 (1924), the eldest of fifteen children – ten girls and five boys – born to Rabbanit Banya and Rabbi Eliyahu Abba Shaul, who immigrated from Persia. Hacham Ben Zion Abba Shaul was raised in the Shmuel HaNavi neighborhood and educated in the Bnei Zion Talmud Torah. At the age of 11 he went on to the Porat Yosef yeshiva, and studied with great rabbis – Hacham Yaakov 'Adas, Hacham Tzadka Hotzin and the Head of the yeshiva, Hacham Ezra Attiah. His study colleague was Hacham Ovadia Yosef.

When he came of age, he married Mas'ouda Shahrabani, daughter of Sol and Rabbi Yosef Shahrabani, the head of the Emet veShalom kabbalist yeshiva, and lived in Jerusalem's Beit Israel quarter. The couple had a daughter, who died as a child, and a son named Eliyahu Abba Shaul who is currently head of the Or LeZion yeshiva.

Hacham Ben Zion Abba Shaul gave classes in many places, teaching Torah scholars, adults, youths and the general populace – at the levels appropriate to each type of public. He taught halakha every Sabbath before the Mincha [afternoon] prayer at the Ohel Rachel synagogue in Jerusalem for many years while he was in good health. He and Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka were jointly appointed heads of the Porat Yosef yeshiva, where he taught many students, several of whom are the leading Torah and Talmud scholars of our day. He was a mohel until the last 15 years of his life, during which when his right arm was paralyzed, and had the privilege of bringing thousands of boys into the Covenant of Avraham.

His works include a series of different books bearing the same title, Or LeZion: Responsa and Rulings, in three parts; innovations on Tractates Yevamot, Ketubot and Shevi'it, and Zichron Hadassah - a book on ethics and Hashkafa [worldview] which he named after his deceased wife, Mas'ouda Hadassah Abba Shaul, may her memory be eternal.

Hacham Ben Zion Abba Shaul fell ill in 1983 and subsequently suffered greatly, even losing his sight. He passed away on 19 Tammuz, 1998, and was buried in Jerusalem's Sanhedria cemetery.

<https://hyomi.org.il/eng/mobile/page.asp?id=202>



Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapiro Naroler Rebbe (Tammuz 18, 5767 / 2007 - 19th Yahrzeit)

Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapiro (*Naroler Rebbe*) (1907-2007). He was a grandson of the Rav of Narol, and a descendant of the *Sar Sholom*, the first *Belzer Rav*. When he was a young child, his family fled to Kashuai in Hungary, where his grandfather re-established his court. The family returned to Narol in 1924.

After his grandfather's *petirah*, in a decision made by *Gedolei Yisrael*, Rav Chaim Meir was appointed *Rav* and *Dayan* in Narol despite his young age. He received *heter horaah* from the *Beis Din* in Lvov, and became a *posek* for Belzer chassidim. After the Nazi invasion in 1939, he fled with his family to Taprov, where his father-in-law lived, and stayed until the summer. In June, all Jews who didn't have passports were seized by police and shipped to Siberia. The Naroler Rav's family managed to leave Siberia and reach Samarkand where survival was easier. In 1945, the Rav was permitted to leave Russia and go to the west. In 1946, he arrived in Antwerp, and began to give *shiurim* to the Belzer chassidim who had arrived there. He was active among the refugees here too, helping marry off orphans and setting up their homes.

In 1948, the Naroler Rav moved to Brooklyn. A *Belzer beis medrash* was founded, and the Naroler Rav was appointed at its head. He gave many *shiurim* among them, a *shiur* on *Minchas Chinuch* which he consistently gave for over 70 years. On *Rosh Chodesh Tammuz* 1972, the Naroler Rebbe left America and settled in Bnei Brak, where he founded the *Naroler beis medrash*. The Rebbe leaves behind his son Rav Berish, Rav of Narol.

Gedolim Be'Masayhem



Stories & Anecdotes

Rav Elchonon Bunim Wasserman Baranovitch Rosh Yeshiva (Tammuz 12)

THE FINAL MOMENTS OF THE LIFE OF RAV ELCHONON WASSERMAN HY"D: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

by Tzvi Yaakovson

"Rav Elchonon." These two words contain a world of meaning. Rav Elchonon Wasserman was a *gadol baTorah*, leader of his generation, the *rabbon shel kol bnei hagolah*. Today, when we read the words he wrote over seventy years ago, it seems that he possessed the gift of prophecy.

Rav Elchonon was a *talmid* of the greatest luminaries of that generation, the pride and joy of Telz and Brisk, the *rosh yeshiva* of *Yeshivas Ohel Torah* in Baranovitch, and one of the foremost *Torah* leaders in the Jewish world. He was a man who waged the battles of *Hashem* and of the *Torah*, and whose teachings were collected in such classic works as *Kovetz Shiurim* and *Kovetz Maamarim*. The story of his martyrdom has long been recorded in works of history and is read with reverence and awe.

It was the month of *Tammuz*, after the Shabbos of *Parshas Chukas*, in the year 5701 (1941). That is what we know, but some details are unclear: Was he taken to his death on Sunday, the 11th of *Tammuz*, or on Monday, the 12th? And was he murdered on the day he was captured or on the next day? Furthermore, did his death take place before or after *shkiah*? All of this affects the question of when his *yahrtzeit* is. In several places, I saw that historians determined that the date of his death was the 11th of *Tammuz*, 5701, but

that is clearly a mistake. Other sources place it on the 13th of *Tammuz* based on the assumption that he was taken away on Monday and was murdered at night. That may be correct, but some dispute that version of the story.

Rav Elchonon viewed the *Chofetz Chaim* as his *rebbe*. In many of his writings, he refers to him as “*hakadosh baal haChofetz Chaim zt”l*.” He once remarked, “It is impossible for us to perceive the full scope of the *Chofetz Chaim*’s greatness, since he used his brilliant mind to determine how to conceal his special qualities. How can we, with our puny intellects, hope to outsmart him?”

Rav Mordechai Zuckerman zt”l, another *talmid* of Radin, knew Rav Elchonon well. To this, he added, “Rav Elchonon’s face was always aflame with his burning *yiras Shomayim*, but the *Chofetz Chaim* showed no external signs of his greatness.” In a similar vein, he once remarked, “Rav Elchonon was visibly a *talmid* of the *Chofetz Chaim*, but the *Chofetz Chaim*, whose greatness was hidden, gave no sign of being the *rebbe*.”

The *talmidim* of the *yeshiva* in Radin grew accustomed to seeing Rav Elchonon attend the *Chofetz Chaim*’s *drashos*. Rav Elchonon would drink in his *rebbe*’s words, reviewing them over and over. Once, on the *Yomim Noraim*, a *talmid* commented that the *Chofetz Chaim* had repeated verbatim a *drashah* he had delivered the year before. Rav Elchonon disagreed. “This year,” he said, “there were eight new words.”

Rav Mordechai once met Rav Elchonon on a street in Vilna and introduced himself as a *talmid* from the *yeshiva* in Radin. Upon hearing this, Rav Elchonon asked Rav Mordechai to accompany him to the home of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky. Rav Chaim Ozer immediately recognized Rav Mordechai, and said to Rav Elchonon in a somewhat reproachful tone, “Why are you bringing me a *bochur* who is immersed in learning?” It soon became clear that Rav Chaim Ozer had asked Rav Elchonon to find a *yeshiva bochur* who could assist him; nevertheless, despite the passage of years, he had not forgotten Rav Mordechai’s stellar *hasmadah* during his years in Radin.

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Everyone agrees on where and how it happened: Rav Elchonon was taken by bloodthirsty Lithuanian soldiers from the home of Rav Avrohom Grodzensky Hy”d. In her book,

Ve'emunascha Baleilos, Rebbetzin Wolbe, Rav Avrohom's daughter, relates, "On one of the days after the pogrom, when we were still holed up in our house behind locked doors, and while *rabbonim*, *yungeleit* and *bochurim* slept and learned in pairs in every room of the house, three Lithuanian partisans with their guns drawn suddenly burst into the house. They opened the front door abruptly, and they were inside the house before we could react. In the entranceway, Rav Elchonon Wasserman Hy"d was standing (not sitting) and learning with a *chavrusah*. The Lithuanians were enraged by this sight of Jewish men, especially *rabbonim*, who were still learning. Aiming their weapons at him, they began screaming, 'Don't move!'

"They ran wildly from room to room, even to the second story, and they gathered all the men they found. Some of the men managed to hide and were not discovered. Roaring like wild beasts, the soldiers gathered thirteen men, including my beloved brother Zev, who was only 21 years old; my uncle, Reb Shabsi Vernikovsky, who was a *rebbe* at the *yeshiva* of Lomza, along with his son Mordechai; and, of course, Rav Elchonon Wasserman. We, the women and girls, begged the cruel Lithuanians not to take them away. I was the oldest among the girls and I tried to explain to them that *rabbonim* were not Communists."

Rebbetzin Wolbe describes how she pleaded with the murderous soldiers to spare Rav Elchonon's life. The soldiers replied that they would accept her claims if she showed them documents to prove them. The young Rivka Grodzensky raced up the stairs to find some sort of evidence that they were not Communist agents. As she looked through the window into the inner courtyard of the house, though, she saw all the men being taken at gunpoint to their deaths.

At the end of that chapter, Rebbetzin Wolbe relates, "We found out only later that on that very day, those 13 *rabbonim* and *bnei Torah* met their deaths *al kiddush Hashem*. It was the 12th of *Tammuz*, 5701, and we were told that the place where they were murdered was the Seventh Fort." According to her memories and the accounts they received at the time, the men were taken into captivity on Monday and were murdered that very day, before nightfall. To this day, the *rebbetzin* observes her brother's *yahrtzeit* on the 12th of *Tammuz*.

Rav Zuckerman was also in Kovna at the time, and his own memoirs describe the tragic

spring season of the year 5701, when Lithuania was conquered by the Germans. Rav Zuckerman describes the thunderous explosions that were heard as the German fighter jets bombed the area. He recalled how the Jews of Slabodka and Kovna fled to the nearby towns, fearing both the German bombs and the pogroms. He himself, though, did not escape. "I had nowhere to go," he explained.

Rav Zuckerman's memoirs also contain a chilling description of the sudden cruelty displayed by the Lithuanians: "For hundreds of years, the Jews of Lithuania maintained good relations with their non-Jewish neighbors. But when the Germans conquered Lithuania, the non-Jews suddenly changed their attitudes. All of a sudden, the endless depths of hatred that had been hidden in their hearts were exposed. Their brutality toward their former neighbors was even greater than the cruelty of the Germans!"

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The month of *Tammuz* was one of the times when the anti-Semitism in Kovna reached its peak. Rav Mordechai relates, "Just a few days later, the Lithuanian rioters had reached the pinnacle of their cruelty. On the night between Wednesday and Thursday, the evening of the first of *Tammuz*, 5701, the partisans crossed the bridge leading from Kovna to Slabodka and began attacking the Jews.

"The rabble that arrived in Slabodka included members of the cream of Lithuanian society: students of universities and gymnasiums who were suddenly transformed from educated, advanced human beings into wild predatory beasts. Armed with rifles, knives and axes, they made their way from house to house, mercilessly slaughtering the young and the elderly, mothers and small children alike. Over one thousand Jews were murdered in cold blood on that awful night. One of the dead was the rov of Slabodka, Rav Zalman Osovsky, who was murdered by a Lithuanian marauder who broke into his home while he was sitting and learning Torah. The glorious sight of the *rov* sitting before an open *Gemara*, immersed in his learning, infuriated the beastly murderer...

"Another victim of those riots was Rav Yonah Karpilov, the *illuy* who was known in the *yeshiva* world by his nickname, 'Yonah Minsker.' He was a *talmid* of *Yeshivas Mir*, who had remained in Kovna after the *yeshiva* departed for faraway Shanghai. He was murdered at the entrance to the *yeshiva* building. When our master and *rebbe*, Rav Eliezer

Yehuda Finkel, was informed of his death, he wept bitterly and exclaimed, 'Woe to the land, for a great man is gone. We have lost a piece of the *Torah!*'"

Over the following nights, there were more acts of violence committed by Lithuanian rioters in other parts of the city. The murders were accompanied by unspeakable acts of barbarity. Homes were torched with their residents still inside. People were drowned in the Viliya River. Over 2,000 people lost their lives in these riots in all sorts of barbaric ways. The men of the *chevrah kadishah* worked with great *mesirus nefesh*, literally taking their lives into their own hands as they went from home to home to collect the dead and bury them in the old cemetery in Slabodka.

In her book, Rebbetzin Wolbe describes how the family fled from Slabodka and wandered from town to town. The fleeing Jews hid in barns, until her father decided that it was time to return home. "The sounds of explosions had stopped, and *Abba* and the other *rabbonim* decided that there was no reason to continue wandering. It was time to go home. They hired wagons and made their way to Ponyero Street via a convoluted route.

"The wagons traveling on the road attracted the gentiles' attention. We received some very strange looks. Some stared at us hatefully, while others looked at us with pity. We didn't understand the meaning of their expressions. But then a goy came to us and said quietly, 'Don't go to the city; you will all be slaughtered.' We didn't believe him and we kept going. But we were frightened by the cruel glares that we received, and we decided to travel through the back roads rather than taking the ordinary route to the city. Finally, we reached the backyard of our home. It was good to be back in our own house again. Night fell and we lay down in our beds and fell asleep immediately."

Rav Mordechai, too, recalled the return of Rav Avrohom Grodzensky and his companions. "Rav Avrohom and his family returned to their home about two days after they set out to look for a place of refuge in the surrounding towns, after they did not find a place of lodging that offered them even the most minimal accommodations. The Lithuanian farmers were afraid to bring them into their homes, and only reluctantly agreed to give them a place to sleep in a grain silo. The German bombing of Kovna also ceased, and it seemed that the immediate danger had passed. But the dreadful pogrom began just a few hours after Rav Avrohom returned home, and bloodshed swept through the streets of Slabodka. Miraculously, the rioters did not break into Rav Avrohom's home. A *yeshiva*

bochur who was hiding in the attic at that time heard the Lithuanians passing by the house and saying to each other, 'The *rov* lives here. We won't go inside.'

"That pogrom was only a sign of what was yet to come. It was a dreadful time, and the Jews suffered terribly at the hands of the Lithuanians. Under the pretense of looking for Jewish Communists, the Lithuanian rioters set out on a vicious hunt for all the Jews of Kovna. Over a period of about two weeks, the first half of *Tammuz* 5701, close to 6,000 Jewish men, women and children were captured and imprisoned in the Seventh Fort.

"The men were locked up throughout those days in the courtyard of the fort, under the open sky and the blazing summer sun. As a show of 'mercy,' the women and children were permitted to enter the building itself. The Lithuanian rioters were not content with rounding up masses of Jews. They also looted and plundered their homes, desecrating the *shuls* and destroying *Sifrei Torah*.

"At the end of those two dreadful weeks, on the 12th of *Tammuz*, 5701, the women and children were released from the Seventh Fort, and the 3,000 or so remaining men were mercilessly gunned down in the courtyard by the German Gestapo and their Lithuanian cohorts."

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With that, Rav Mordechai comes to his account of how Rav Elchonon was taken away to meet his death. "Rav Elchonon's *yeshiva* had left Vilna for Smilishoki," he relates. "When he found out that the Bolsheviks were looking for him and planning to torment him, he fled to Kovna and stayed at the home of Rav Aryeh Malkiel Friedman [father-in-law of Rav Shneur Kotler, Rav Chaim Sarna, and Rav Yaakov Volpe], who lived in the apartment above Rav Avrohom Grodzensky.

"Rav Elchonon made tremendous efforts to leave the blood-soaked continent of Europe, but when he finally managed to obtain a visa, his son, Rav Naftoli, broke his leg, which delayed his departure. Meanwhile, the Germans conquered Lithuania and it became impossible to leave the country.

"During the daytime, Rav Elchonon learned at the home of Rav Avrohom Grodzensky

which served as a makeshift *bais medrash*, while the *bnei yeshivos* who lived in the area would gather there from time to time and take solace in the company of the *gedolei Torah* who had gathered there." Those *bnei yeshivos* included Rav Mordechai himself.

One of Rav Mordechai's recollections of those days is an incident when Rav Avrohom asked Rav Elchonon to deliver a *shiur* in *halachah*. "A *shiur*?" Rav Elchonon exclaimed. "In these turbulent times?"

But Rav Avrohom was insistent. "I am not asking for just any *shiur*. I am asking for you to deliver a *shiur* on the topic of the hour – the *sugya* of *kiddush Hashem*!"

Rav Elchonon acquiesced to the request and asked for time to prepare the *shiur*. He closeted himself in his room for a long time, and when he finally emerged, his face was aflame with passion. He delivered his *shiur*, a profound lecture on the subject of *kiddush Hashem*, with great reverence. "A few days later," Rav Mordechai adds, "on Sunday, the 11th of *Tammuz*, three Lithuanian murderers burst into Rav Avrohom's home. Rav Elchonon was standing in the vestibule and learning with Rav Avrohom Yitzchok Zaks. Rav Elchonon and another 12 *talmidei chachomim* and *tzaddikim* who were in the house at the time, and who did not have an opportunity to escape and hide, were taken away to the Seventh Fort.

"Throughout this time, Rav Avrohom was lying on the sofa in the room, consumed by sorrow and immersed in his thoughts. The intruders thought that he was ill, and since they didn't have a car with them, they did not take him away. So it was that he was saved, *bechasdei shomayim*, for just a few more years, to light up those dark days for the *bnei aliyah* who gathered around him."

The group of 13 *kedoshim* who were seized that day included the bochur Zev (Velvel) Grodzensky, who was 21 years old; Rav Moshe Chaim Zaks and his son; Rav Moshe Reiss, Rav Dovid Goder, Rav Shabsai Vernikovsky and his son, Mordechai; Rav Yitzchok Gefen, and others. They were part of a group of about 3,000 Jews from Kovna and the surrounding areas who were rounded up and herded into the Seventh Fort. The prisoners were held in the courtyard of the fort for about a day and a half, kept in the heat of the blazing sun and lacking any food or drink. They were packed so densely into the courtyard that they were unable to even sit. Only the women and children were allowed inside the

building.

Rav Mordechai's account concludes: "The next day, on the night leading into Tuesday, the 13th of *Tammuz*, 5701, those holy *tzaddikim* were murdered in the Seventh Fort, along with 3,000 other Jews who were seized by the Lithuanians. May Hashem avenge their blood."

Rebbetzin Wolbe is certain that the date of the murders was the 12th of *Tammuz*, the day when she observes her brother's *yahrtzeit*, while Rav Mordechai was confident that the deaths occurred that night. According to his account, the *yahrtzeit* is the 13th of *Tammuz*.

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I received a firsthand account from Rebbetzin Wolbe of those awful days. Over seventy years have passed, yet the events are still seared into her memory. "Rav Elchonon had come to Kovna in order arrange his papers," she relates. "Everyone had fled from Mir to Vilna when it was annexed to Lithuania. Rav Elchonon came to the immigration offices in Kovna and had to stay for an extra day. I don't remember if this was because they told him to come back again the next day or because his son broke his leg. In any event, he had to stay in Kovna for another day, so he came to us.

"He stayed in Rav Aryeh Malkiel Friedman's apartment, which was above my parents' home. I am certain that you have heard of him. He had three daughters. One was the wife of Rav Shneur Kotler, another - Rochel - was married to Rav Chaim Sarna, and the third is Rebbetzin Shulamis Volpe, may she live and be well. There was also another sister, who was very small at the time."

The Friedman family initially lived in Memel, a town that was home to many businessmen, and Rav Elchonon stayed in their home whenever he visited the town to raise funds for his *yeshiva*. Now, when he found himself stuck in Kovna, he asked to spend a single night in their home. His stay ultimately became far longer than he had anticipated. "The next day," the *rebbetzin* relates, "the war suddenly erupted, and he stayed in our building for several weeks."

The Friedman family lived in a small rented apartment on the top floor of the building

where the Grodzensky family resided. The family patriarch had opted to live in Kovna during their exile, near the *yeshiva* and its *mashgiach*. "We stayed in our apartment and he stayed in the Friedmans' apartment, but since their apartment was very small, he spent most of the day learning in the vestibule."

That vestibule opened into all the apartments, with the result that all the children in the building encountered Rav Elchonon on a daily basis throughout those weeks. Rav Elchonon generally learned with Avrohom Yitzchok Zaks, son of Rav Moshe Chaim Zaks, who was the *rosh yeshiva* of the *yeshiva ketanah* and lived in the building as well.

When the Lithuanians took Rav Elchonon away to his death, they took his *chavrusah* as well?

"Yes. They took him, and they took his father. They took all the men they found on every one of the four floors of the building."

They searched the building?

"Yes. My brother and some other *bochurim* hid in an attic. We had a slanted roof, and there was a triangular space that was closed off. There were suitcases there, and there was a sofa behind the door. They hid there, but the Lithuanians found them."

Rav Elchonon wasn't hiding?

"No. They came suddenly, and he was learning in the entranceway, so there was no way that he could hide. They saw him right away. Only the *bochurim* who were upstairs were able to see the Lithuanians from the window, and they hid."

The rebbetzin will never forget that horrible day and the burning hatred in the Lithuanians' eyes. "The Germans gave the Lithuanians free reign to slaughter the Jews as they pleased," she related. "They were like wild beasts."

Your book says that they were killed on the 12th of *Tammuz*, but others say that it happened on the 13th of *Tammuz*.

"If that is what I wrote at the time, then I must have known it to be true. Today, I can no longer remember."

When do you observe the *yahrtzeit* of your brother Velvel?

"On the twelfth of *Tammuz*."

Were you the last person to see Rav Elchonon alive?

"I saw him then, along with Rebbetzin Rochel Sarna [daughter of Rav Aryeh Malkiel Friedman]. Then there were some people who saw him in the fort. One of them is a relative of yours, the brother of your Aunt Chiena [Yaakovson], who saw him just before he was murdered. I remember that Rochel went to bring him his shoes, since he wore slippers while he learned."

Did he say anything when they took him away?

"No. He was silent."

I see that you will remember those moments forever.

"Yes. I shudder whenever I remember them. I remember their wickedness, and how they stormed into the house with such vicious hostility. I can never forget that."

<https://yated.com/final-moments-life-rav-elchonon-wasserman-hyd-eyewitness-accounts/>

I'M A SOLDIER, I MUST TO GO TO THE FRONT THE ETERNAL FLAME: THE LIFE, TRAVELS, AND MARTYRDOM OF RAV ELCHONON WASSERMAN

Rav Elchonon on the deck of the ship returning to Europe in March 1939

By Dovi Safier

It was a bright fall Day in 1938 when Rav Elchonon Wasserman alighted from the overnight Pullman train in Denver's Union Station. If any crowd awaited him at all, it was negligible. This suited him fine, for neither fanfare nor the healing Rocky Mountain air

was what had brought him out to the great American west. The *Torah* leader was more than a year into a whirlwind journey across America to lift his *yeshivah* out of crushing debt. Though exhausted, he stood erect, refusing to allow his depleted state to affect his regal posture.

While the greater, primarily secular Denver Jewish community had little interest in “old world rabbis,” the local press had been alerted and a reporter from the Denver Post arranged a sit-down with Rav Elchonon. His traveling companion, Rav Shmuel Greineman, the menahel at *Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim* on New York’s Lower East Side, served as translator.

Most of America’s Jews did not quite recognize the epochal changes that their guest had wrought across Europe’s *yeshivah* world. Years earlier, Rav Elchonon had acted on the instructions of his lifelong mentor, the *Chofetz Chaim*, and revolutionized the concept of the modern *yeshivah*. In Baranovich Rav Elchonon built upon the foundations laid by Rav Chaim Volozhiner, father of the modern-day *yeshivah*, and brilliantly implemented the adjustments necessary for a world decimated by turmoil and increasing secularization. In Rav Elchonon’s view, *lomdus* — the complex analysis of textual minutiae — was important, but mastery and breadth — the consumption of vast tracts of knowledge — was to be paramount. He focused on younger bochurim, opening his *yeshivah ketanah* to students roughly equivalent to today’s high school boys, and the products of his *yeshivah* entered the great *Torah* centers armed with the proper learning skills and character traits to become enduring *Torah* scholars.

The reporter assigned to interview Rav Elchonon on that autumn day in Denver knew little about the educational revolution his subject had spearheaded. But he quickly realized that this interview was to be like none other he’d conducted. With the rabbi refusing to sit for a photo, the writer used words instead to capture him: he termed Rav Elchonon “The Jewish Einstein,” describing him as “clear-complexioned and bearded.... a remarkable prototype of the artistic conception of the Jewish patriarch.”

Rav Elchonon was uninterested in small talk. “The ‘Holy Books’ speak of these times,” he said. “It speaks of the coming of the Messiah, of the birth of a new good world, and it says that there shall be suffering and pain in that birth.”

“It is impossible to predict what will happen to the world in a given space of years; history now is concentrated,” Rav Elchonon continued. “Events move rapidly. In an incredibly short time, upheaval can come, reversing conditions that seemed as permanent as a man could make them. A year today is a century of yesterday. Time is no more than an idea of man, and he must not place too much reliance on it. There is a higher conception of time.”

Just a few days later, Rav Elchonon arrived at his next stop — Dallas, Texas — and the shocking reports filtered in. November 9 and 10, 1938, are forever branded in the calendar as Kristallnacht, the night shuls, homes, and businesses across Germany and Austria were burned and destroyed, Jews beaten and even killed, as the true face of Nazi evil was unmasked for the world to see. Events were about to spin rapidly beyond anyone’s predictions. For some the news was shocking, but for Rav Elchonon it was far from a surprise.

What few would realize, however, was that the juxtaposition of events — and Rav Elchonon’s presence in America during the first rumblings of European Jewry’s impending destruction — had been orchestrated by a heavenly Hand. During the 17 months he spent traversing America, Rav Elchonon didn’t only advocate for his students back in Baranovich. He also planted seeds for the eventual flourishing of a new yeshivah world, nurtured a select group of future activists and leaders, and helped American Jewry set priorities so the coming generations would remain firmly linked to their heritage.

Two of Rav Elchonon’s primary rebbeim, Rav Shimon Shkop and Rav Lazer Gordon

The Chofetz Chaim’s Trustee

Elchonon Bunim Wasserman was born in Birzh (Lithuania) in 1875. His father, Nafali Beinisch, was a shopkeeper with no particularly prestigious lineage, but young Elchonon quickly excelled in his *Torah* learning. The family moved to Boisk, and he studied at the nearby Telshe Yeshiva under Rav Eliezer Gordon and Rav Shimon Shkop. On trips back home, he studied with Rav Avraham Yitzchok Hakohen Kook, the Rav in Boisk. He later spent time studying under Rav Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk, where he also taught in the years preceding the first World War. Rav Elchonon became deeply attached to Rav Chaim and his way of learning.

In 1898 he married Michla Atlas, the daughter of the famed scholar (and founder of the

Telshe Yeshivah) Rav Meir Atlas, Av *Beis Din* of Salant and Shavil and father-in-law of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski.

After a short tenure as a *rosh yeshivah* in Amtchislav, Belarus together with Rav Yoel Baranchik of Riga, Rav Elchonon decided to leave after the townspeople asked him to make certain compromises that he felt betrayed his principles. Leaving his wife and family behind, Rav Elchonon traveled to Radin as a *porush* where he joined the *Chofetz Chaim's Kollel Kodshim*. There his *chavrusa* was another product of Telshe, the eventual *Ponevezher Rav*, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman. The two joined a group of Europe's greatest *Torah* scholars to learn *Seder Kodshim*, a priority of the *Chofetz Chaim* as he prepared for what he felt was *Mashiach's* imminent arrival.

This move would greatly alter the trajectory of his life. So intensely was Rav Elchonon influenced by the *Chofetz Chaim* that he felt as if he had been transformed into a new person, his *rebbe's* character and conduct indelibly etched into every fiber of his being.

Even after he departed Radin, Rav Elchonon made it his tradition to return each year for *Elul* and the *Yamim Noraim*, thirsting for any contact possible with his *rebbe*. He absorbed every word and sought his advice on countless matters. Following one of the *Chofetz Chaim's Rosh Hashanah shmuessen*, someone remarked to Rav Elchonon that the elderly *Chofetz Chaim* had said the exact same thing the year before. "Not quite," replied Rav Elchonon. "This year he included eight additional words."

Rav Elchonon's regard for the *Chofetz Chaim* was hardly one-sided, for when the *Chofetz Chaim* prepared to leave Poland for Eretz Yisrael, a committee of *gedolim* came to plead with him to stay on. One asked, "*Rebbi*, in whose hands do you leave us?" The *Chofetz Chaim* replied, "I leave you with Rav Elchonon!"

Perhaps nowhere was that trust more evident than in the *Ohel Torah yeshivah* of Baranovich. The *Alter of Novardok*, Rav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, opened the *Ohel Torah Yeshivah*, a branch of the Novardok *yeshivah* network, in Baranovich in 1907-8. This relatively new town had developed over the previous few decades due to its position as a central railway junction. The first *rav* of the town was Rav Chaim Leib Lubchansky, whose son Rav Yisroel Yaakov married the *Alter's* daughter. Rav Lubchansky assumed control of the new Novardok branch in town, together with the assistance of a local individual

named Rav Chaikel Sofer. Another son-in-law of the Alter, Rav Avraham Yafen, served as a *maggid shiur* and would later lead the entire Novardok *yeshivah* network.

During the First World War, with Baranovich on the front lines and later under German occupation, the *yeshivah* struggled financially, and its student body shrank significantly. Then the *yeshivah* received a new lease on life.

In June 1921 the *Radin Yeshivah* returned to Poland after a wartime exile across the Russian border, and its first stop was a ten-day respite in Baranovich. Eager to assist Rav Chaikel Sofer and Rav Lubchansky in their efforts to rebuild the *yeshivah*, the *Chofetz Chaim* prevailed upon his close student Rav Elchonon to assume its helm.

By 1924 the *yeshivah* had built a wooden structure of its own. But more importantly, under Rav Elchonon's direction, it grew in both numbers and stature, emerging as one of the outstanding *yeshivos* of interwar Poland.

Members of the elite *kibbutz* (oldest *Shiur*) in Baranovich

A Yeshivah Like No Other

Rav Elchonon utilized a very calculated and forward-thinking vision as he transformed *Ohel Torah* from a struggling *yeshivah* on the edge of Poland — and the edge of the *Torah* world's consciousness — into a pulsing center of *Torah* life and learning.

The staff in Baranovich included Rav Shlomo Heiman (until his departure to the Rameiles *yeshivah* in 1928), Rav Dovid Rappaport, the famed author of the *Mikdash Dovid*, and the great *tzaddik*, Rav Yisroel Yaakov Lubchansky, who served as *mashgiach*.

Primarily a *yeshivah ketanah* for teenage students, *Ohel Torah* consisted of six grades and an elite "*kibbutz*." The first four *shiurim* were devoted to younger students, while the last two and the *kibbutz* were dedicated to older, more advanced students. No matter what a *bochur's* level upon entry, the highest *shiur* he started at was the fifth *shiur*. After two *zemanim* (spanning one year) in the fifth *shiur*, the *bochurim* could proceed to the sixth *shiur*, where they would remain for a year and a half before moving up to the *kibbutz*. Rav Elchonon used to say that "even if Mar Bar Rav Ashi came to *yeshivah* he would start in the fifth *shiur*."

Unlike other European *yeshivos*, where *shiur* was said once or twice a week, Rav Elchonon delivered a *shiur* twice daily (for grades five and six). The *kibbutz* would hear *shiurim* from him every *Shabbos*, and the *Mikdash Dovid* would give *shiur* to them twice a week. The twice-daily *shiurim* were so taxing that occasionally Rav Elchonon would collapse out of sheer exhaustion and put his head down to rest for five minutes.

While they may have depleted his physical resources, Rav Elchonon's *shiurim* also distinguished his *yeshivah* across the European *Torah* landscape. They were clear, precise, and rarely went beyond their allotted 45 minutes. There were no diversions and only relevant materials were included. Students followed his initial presentation with questions. Most of the time Rav Elchonon covered an *amud* (page) of *Gemara* in his *shiur*, but the students were required to finish the *daf* (full folio, comprising two pages) with the sources that he assigned them. Utilizing this methodology, the students were able to master the foundations of the learning process and quickly advance so that they were able to study independently.

Due to Rav Elchonon's stature and *shiurim*, Baranovich gained a reputation as the premier *yeshivah ketanah* in the country. Graduates would continue their studies in Radin, Kaminitz, Mir, and other elite *yeshivos* (see inset).

Several other practices set Baranovich apart. In tribute to Rav Elchonon's prime mentor, the *Chofetz Chaim*, Baranovich was the only *yeshivah* that studied *Mishnah Berurah* as part of its curriculum. The daily *seder*, held immediately following *Shacharis*, was usually led by Rav Elchonon himself.

While his *maamarim* on *hashkafah* were legendary, and his many *seforim*, including *Kovetz Maamarim*, *Ikvesa D'Meshicha*, *Kovetz He'aros*, and others are still revered today, countless memoirs from *talmidim* make it clear that the traditional *mussar shmuess* had little place within the walls of the *yeshivah*, which he saw as a place for pure, unfiltered *Torah*. When it came to inculcating proper behavior, Rav Elchonon preferred to lead by example. Watching him was enough. Every action, every word, was measured and methodical, driven by a quest for *emes* — another legacy of the *Chofetz Chaim*.

Once while Rav Elchonon was visiting *Telshe*, a young Rav Mordechai Gifter entered his room as he was eating breakfast. He was surprised to see a Yiddish newspaper spread out

on the table before the eminent *rosh yeshivah*. Noting the surprised expression on his face, Rav Elchonon elaborated, "A Jew must find time to read the newspaper, and to write to the newspaper... and to review all of *Shas* once a year," and with that he resumed his eating and reading. (Rav Elchonon did in fact correspond with newspapers regularly.)

There was something else that distinguished the *yeshivah* from its counterparts: its student body contained a rare mix. The new *Slonimer Rebbe*, Rav Avraham Weinberg, established his court in Baranovich and enjoyed an amicable personal relationship with Rav Elchonon. Rav Elchonon's appreciation for chassidim was noticed and soon his *yeshivah* became popular among Poland's chassidic bochurim. Rav Elchonon would encourage them to carry their *mesorah* proudly and not cut their *peyos* or beard in order to "fit in" with the Litvish students.

While some Polish chassidim considered the Lithuanian *bochurim's* modern dress and appearance suspect, when a chassid asked the *Imrei Emes* of Gur whether he should send his son to study in Baranovich, the Rebbe answered emphatically, "To Rav Elchonon, what question could there be?"

Noted author (and Baranovich *student*) Chaim Shapiro described the coexistence of these demographics in the town. Late at night, when he'd walk to his lodgings after night *seder*, he would hear the voices of the *ba'alei mussar* wailing from the nearby Jewish cemetery: "What is man's obligation in this world? *Ai, ai, ai ...*" and from the other side of the dark cemetery he'd hear the distinct voices of the local Breslover chassidim (several of whom studied at the *yeshivah*) screaming with all their might, "For such is the sum of man; no man dies with even half of his desires in his grasp!"

Nine Measures of Poverty

But while the *yeshivah* flourished in the spiritual realm, it struggled mightily to provide its students with even the basics of physical sustenance.

During the early years after its inception, the *yeshivah* received ample funding from the American Central Relief Committee. By 1923 that source had mostly dried up. Rav Elchonon would often remark sardonically, "Of the ten measures of poverty that descended to the *yeshivah* world, Baranovich took nine and the rest of the *yeshivos* one."

The *yeshivah* was constantly strained by debt. Meals were regularly skipped. Rav Elchonon once said, "We have three *machers* (producers) in the *yeshivah*: Rav Dovid Rapapport *macht seforim*, Rav Yisrael Yaakov *macht ba'alei teshuvah* (repenters), *und ich macht choivos* (debts)."

When the *yeshivah* struggled to complete its new stone building in the early 1930s, the *Chofetz Chaim* tried to assist, writing a rare letter of recommendation addressed directly to the Jews of Baranovich. He encouraged each of them to donate generously "since whoever helps now in the construction of this sanctuary is [regarded] as if he had indeed participated in the building of the *Beis Hamikdash*."

While planning his famous *Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin*, Rav Meir Shapiro embarked upon a tour of the great Lithuanian yeshivos to observe which elements he could incorporate in his visionary institution. Upon his arrival in Baranovich during *Minchah*, a thunderous "*Amein yehei Shmei rabba*" emanated from the mouths of the hundreds of *talmidim*. Rav Meir stood stunned in the doorway. He then embraced a shocked Rav Elchonon, stating emphatically, "This is *Hashem's* army!" Rav Elchonon nodded proudly in agreement.

Rav Meir's mood changed when he saw the abject poverty of the *yeshivah*. He offered Rav Elchonon an appointment in his soon-to-be-built *Chachmei Lublin*, where he would enjoy much better conditions. Rav Elchonon's reply was not slow in coming. "But what will I do with all my children?" he asked, pointing to the hundreds of students in the *beis medrash*.

Rav Elchonon traveled to England, Belgium and Germany in his attempts to procure funding for the *yeshivah*, but the struggle remained. Once when his son Naftali Beinisch asked him for a new coat, he refused. "You are not an only son," he said. "I have hundreds of sons in the *yeshivah*, and not all of them have coats."

Following the passing of his wife in the early summer of 1935, Rav Elchonon's health began to deteriorate rapidly. Doctors recommended that he travel to the spas in Marienbad to recuperate. Upon his arrival, an urgent telegram arrived: The *yeshivah's* suppliers had stopped deliveries because they hadn't been paid in months.

In his distress, Rav Elchonon approached the great *Imrei Emes*, Rav Avraham Mordechai Alter of Gur, who was also in Marienbad at the time, and described the dire financial state

of the *yeshivah*.

“How can I help you?” the *Rebbe* asked, to which Rav Elchonon replied, “It would be helpful if the *Rebbe* summoned ten of his wealthy chassidim and asked each to donate 250 zlotys, for which the *Rebbe* would *bentsh* them.”

Nodding, the *Rebbe* summoned a well-off chassid. “This is Rav Elchonon, the leading disciple of the *Chofetz Chaim*,” he told the chassid. “The students of his *yeshivah* are starving. It would be proper to contribute 250 zlotys.” Without a word, the chassid pulled out 250 zlotys and handed them to the *Rebbe*.

“But what about the blessing?” Rav Elchonon said. “Was it not agreed that each donor should receive a blessing?” The *Rebbe* acceded to this request as well. The *Rebbe* called one chassid after another, each of whom immediately acquiesced until the full amount was raised.

His mission accomplished, Rav Elchonon raised another matter. “I have been struggling with a particular *Tosafos* in *Menachos*. Perhaps we could discuss it...” In stark contrast to his characteristic brevity, the *Rebbe* delved into the *sugya* with Rav Elchonon for nearly 30 minutes.

But that was a rare respite from the constant fundraising burden. Clearly, new avenues had to be explored in order to support the *yeshivah*. It was time for Rav Elchonon to turn to his last resort: a trip to America.

My Bochorim Need Bread

While great *roshei yeshivah* like Rav Meir Shapiro, Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz, Rav Eliezer Yehuda Finkel, Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein and the Ponovezher Rav had traveled to the United States in the 1920’s, such visits greatly diminished with the onset of the Great Depression. When Rav Elchonon advanced plans to visit in the late 1930’s, the Torah-faithful Jews of the *goldene medinah* were excited: they saw his visit as a golden opportunity. The respect Rav Elchonon commanded could help raise the prestige of America’s fledgling *Torah* institutions, and his clear vision could guide them as they expanded the groundwork for a proper *Torah* infrastructure in the new world.

But not everyone shared their excitement. When Rav Elchonon's *talmidim* in Baranovich learned of the planned trip, they offered to forgo a meal a day rather than have their *Rebbi* leave them. While touched by his students' *mesiras nefesh*, Rav Elchonon felt that the trip was absolutely necessary to save the *yeshivah*, and would not be swayed.

Rabbi Avraham David Niznik *ztz"l*, *av beis din* of Montreal, could never forget the firsthand testimony that he heard from an older man who recalled Rav Elchonon's arrival in America on October 18, 1937:

"I remember the excitement that preceded Rav Elchonon's arrival in America. All the *talmidei chachamim* and all the *yeshivah* students were anxiously awaiting his speech. He was a legend, and we were sure that, true to his reputation, he would deliver a brilliant, incisive speech. Instead, Rav Elchonon ascended the podium and said, '*Rabbosai*, the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 75a) says that it is improper to request meat. But I am not asking for meat. I only ask for bread, and that is proper. Please help me give bread to my *bochurim*,' and with that, he sat down. The simplicity and sincerity of his words tore through people's hearts, and he was very successful (with his appeal)."

Upon his arrival, a reporter from the *Morgen Journal* asked Rav Elchonon, "How much money are you hoping to collect for the *Yeshivah*?" Rav Elchonon answered, "How much I will be able to raise was already determined by *hashgachah* (Divine Providence) and I will not collect more or less. How much *hashgachah* has been allotted? This I do not know."

During the ensuing months, Rav Elchonon traveled across the country, visiting dozens of communities in an effort to attain financial solvency as well as to create a base of future donors who would provide funds for the *yeshivah* on a yearly basis. He refused to kowtow to the American style of fundraising, and eschewed all gimmicks, empty promises or unworthy endorsements.

At the time, the Religious Zionist Mizrachi party dominated religious life in the United States. This didn't bode well for the fundraising prospects of the *yeshivah* world's most outspoken opponent of Zionism. Still, Rav Elchonon refused to deviate from his "un-American" platform. Counterintuitively, many leading Mizrachi figures advocated his cause, despite his public criticism of the movement's *hashkafic* foundations.

All in all, he saw mild success, raising approximately \$10,000 (\$182,000 today). His greater achievement was entirely different: During those 17 months, he helped pave the way for uncompromised *Torah* life and learning in America.

By the time Rav Aharon Kotler arrived in 1941, there was already a small cadre of *Torah* leaders with ambitious plans for the construction of *Torah* institutions, a testament to the success of Rav Elchonon's mission. Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, Mike Tress, Irving Bunim, Rav Shimon Schwab, and Rabbi Moshe Sherer were just a few of the changemakers whose missions were shaped and fueled by Rav Elchonon during his stay on American soil. He left them — and ultimately This World — two years later, but he also left them the tools and convictions to transplant his legacy to a new generation.

(Left) When Rav Elchonon visited Camp Mesivta in Ferndale, NY in August 1938, Louis Glick (posing) was one of the *Torah Vodaath bochurim* who attended to him.

(Right) "I'm a soldier, I have to go to the front." Rav Elchonon on the deck of the ship returning to Europe in March 1939

Quality Merchandise

Rav Elchonon was famously repulsed by the "odor of *Gehinnom*" emanating from Times Square and spent some of his time in Baltimore organizing a letter of protest against immodest customs being practiced in local *shuls*. Yet he was largely upbeat about the prospects for *Yiddishkeit* in America. All that was lacking, he insisted, was proper education:

"Everyone told me that America is not fit for *Torah*. But that is not true. On my travels I have seen many pure *Yiddishe kinder* (Jewish children), *temimusdike kinder*. In some respects, they are purer than the children in Europe. All that is needed is someone to teach them *Torah*. If people undertake to spread *Torah*, they will accept it."

Years earlier, when Rav Shlomo Heiman first accepted the position of *rosh yeshivah* in *Torah Vodaath*, Rav Elchonon had been upset; he believed that Rav Shlomo would be better off devoting his energy to the *bnei yeshivah* of Europe. But when he arrived in America and visited *Torah Vodaath*, he observed a group of Rav Shlomo's *talmidim* huddling around their beloved *rebbe* after *shiur*, discussing the *sugya* with great zest. The discussion continued afterward, with the students escorting Rav Shlomo home, immersed

in deep conversation and oblivious to the cars and trolleys chugging alongside them. “Ahh,” said Rav Elchonon with pride, “*Rav Shlomo hut yeh ibergekert America* — Rav Shlomo has overturned America.”

Rav Elchonon also spent several weeks in upstate New York at Torah Vodaath’s Camp Mesivta, where he was joined for some time by Rav Moshe Feinstein. One day the Baranovich Rosh Yeshivah was asked to honor the students by giving a *shiur*, which resulted in an impressive Talmudic exchange. “I can see that the American bochurim are also capable of analytical Talmudic study,” Rav Elchonon commented. “You have some *gutteh schoirah*, some quality merchandise.”

One *Shabbos* morning, he was invited to speak at Young Israel of Williamsburg, where Yeshivah Torah Vodaath student Irving Silber was celebrating his *bar mitzvah*. Decades later, the Cleveland resident would recall Rav Elchonon’s resounding message: “An effort must be made to establish Jewish schools where youngsters will study *Torah* with Rashi’s commentary. This will saturate our children with faith in all of the cardinal principles of Judaism, in both our written and oral *Torah*.”

On the sidelines of the 1938 Agudath HaRabanim convention, Elimelech Steier interviewed Rav Elchonon for the *Yiddishe Tageblatt*.

He dominated the conference, surrounded by groups of *rabbanim* and *roshei yeshivah* and just plain delegates, all of whom praised his words. A tall, bent figure with a grey beard, he conveys massive inner resoluteness. A fierce zealot, a rebuker, a zero-compromise leader, who has one answer to any question he is asked — look what the *Torah* says. The *Rebbe* from Lithuania does not say a thing without mentioning the *Chofetz Chaim ztz”l*, whom he considers his *Rebbe*. In the Lithuanian Yeshivahs he is considered the successor of the *Chofetz Chaim* in both *tzidkus* and in *mussar*.

When he speaks everyone around listens with undivided attention. He makes authoritative statements, cites parables from the *Chofetz Chaim*, and his words hover in the air long afterward, implanting themselves in people’s hearts.

He has traversed America for an extended period of late, to collect necessary funding for his *yeshivah*, which was in bad financial condition, sunken in debt. Despite his age and

health condition, he set out on a distant overseas journey, for the sake of the *Torah*. For the *Torah* he wholeheartedly sacrifices himself, and he demands the same from others — from all of *Klal Yisrael*.

The Youth is the Future

Throughout his stay, Rav Elchonon did not focus solely on the needs of his own *yeshivah*; he spent significant amounts of time with the impressionable youth of Zeirei Agudath Yisroel, and left his mark on the coming generation of American Torah leaders. He urged them not to make compromises in their observance, even as they watched so many around them capitulate to the lures of American opportunity.

He would host Friday night forums for the Zeirei boys at their makeshift headquarters at the Williamsburg home of the *Stoliner Rebbe*, where he treated the dozen high schoolers with the same reverence as the 1,000-strong crowd that greeted him at the Clymer Street Synagogue on his first Shabbos in the country.

Rav Elchonon would stand at the front of the room, *Chumash* in hand, and tell the boys that everything is found in the *Torah*. “*Fregt ah kashe*,” he would encourage the nervous youngsters. They would pepper him with questions about everything that bothered them — even Hitler’s meteoric rise to power in Germany — and he would respond by quoting various verses and explaining their relevance to current events.

Reuven Soloff, in whose parents’ home Rav Elchonon stayed for a period of time, described how he’d bring the *Torah* to life in an unprecedented way. “Whenever he was asked a question, he would jump up and say, ‘It’s an explicit verse or saying of *Chazal*!’ We saw that *Torah* is alive, and we are part of it, not that we are one thing and *Torah* is something else.”

Agudath Yisroel leader Mike Tress, who as a young man moved worlds to rescue European Jews from the Holocaust, was one of the youngsters transfixed and eventually transformed by Rav Elchonon. He recalled two lessons ingrained in him by Rav Elchonon. The first: never be disappointed by others’ lack of appreciation if you know your cause is just. The second was the importance of *mesirus nefesh*, a lesson that became embedded in his psyche and transmitted to the many he influenced.

Similarly, when addressing the women involved in founding the first Bais Yaakov in Williamsburg, Rav Elchonon emphasized that anything begun with *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) will come to fruition. He addressed the ladies' auxiliary of the Baranovich Yeshivah (under the leadership of one of his venerable hosts, Mrs. Necha Golding) and extolled their hard work on the *yeshivah's* behalf. When addressing women, he always highlighted the importance of encouraging their husbands and sons to study *Torah*, reminding them that by doing so they would acquire a portion of the reward.

Shraga Block was one of those who greatly assisted Rav Elchonon. Calling himself "Der Rebben's Baal Agalah," he volunteered to serve as Rav Elchonon's personal driver during his stay in New York. Once he brought Rav Elchonon to meet the residents of his remote Brooklyn neighborhood of Brighton Beach, which lacked the resources to build schools for both boys and girls simultaneously. The question was which had priority.

Rav Elchonon replied that had he been asked the same question in Baranovich, he would have answered without hesitation that a *yeshivah* comes first. But in America, he said, a girls' school must take priority. This decision, Rav Elchonon explained, is based on the halachic priority when it comes to ransoming Jewish captives: women must be redeemed before men. The same principle held true in this case.

Rebbetzin Vichna Kaplan, legendary founder of Bais Yaakov in the United States, was raised in Baranovich at the home of her uncle, Rav Yisroel Yaakov Lubchansky. When Sarah Schenirer opened the first Bais Yaakov in Cracow, she begged her uncle to allow her to attend. Wary of the new concept, Rav Yisroel Yaakov hesitated to grant his approval. Undeterred, young Vichna bravely walked over to the nearby Wasserman home and asked Rav Elchonon to intercede on her behalf, which he did. The rest, of course, is history.

Why I'm Here

Rabbi Moshe Sherer was among a group of Torah Vodaath students who attended to Rav Elchonon, later describing the experience as a "turning point in my life in a very big way." He added that "Rav Elchonon was the type of person who left a searing impact on the *neshamah* of any young person who met him."

The first morning that the young *yeshivah* student showed up to accompany Rav Elchonon

from his accommodations, the *gadol* asked Moshe to teach him how to say “*Gut morgen* (good morning)” in English. Rav Elchonon practiced saying “Good morning,” until he was satisfied that he’d gotten it right.

“Why?” Rabbi Sherer would later explain. “Because he wanted to be able to greet the gentile elevator operator in a pleasant fashion, in accordance with the *Gemara* that describes Rabi Yochanan ben Zakkai as having been the first to offer greetings to every person in the marketplace — even a gentile.” It was a lesson not lost on the young *yeshivah* student who would eventually become one of the *Torah* world’s foremost representatives in the halls of power.

Rav Elchonon once made an appointment with “Philip Goldstein” (name changed), with whom he’d attended *cheder* as a boy. Mr. Goldstein was now the wealthy owner of a coat factory, but had long since abandoned Judaism, and rarely donated to *Torah* institutions. The old friends shared memories of their childhood, and spoke about what each had been doing since. After being brought up to date, Rav Elchonon turned to leave. Mr. Goldstein was confused.

“But... didn’t you come here for something?” he asked.

“As a matter of fact, I did come for something,” Rav Elchonon said. “I have a problem. There’s a loose button on my coat, and I know that you have a coat factory. Could one of your employees come and tighten up this button?”

Confused, Mr. Goldstein summoned an employee by telephone to come repair Rav Elchonon’s coat. The employee tightened all the buttons. “Now come on,” said Mr. Goldstein. “You must have come here for something more important than fixing a loose button.”

“No, that really was my reason,” said Rav Elchonon, as he thanked his friend once again and left.

The following day, Mr. Goldstein called Rav Elchonon and asked that he return to his office. Rav Elchonon arrived and found Mr. Goldstein in an agitated state. “It just doesn’t make sense. No one travels all the way from Europe to America just to fix a loose button.

You could have had this done for you right there in Baranovich. Why did you come to me?"

"I already told you. I really came to you just for the buttons," replied Rav Elchonon.

"That's ridiculous!" Goldstein countered. "Tell me the truth; didn't you come to ask for a donation to your *yeshivah*?"

"Let me explain what I meant," began Rav Elchonon. "You refuse to accept that I would come such a long way just to tighten a few buttons. So I ask you: Why do you think that *Hashem* sent you all the way down to This World? Just to sew a few buttons? This is the reason why you're here? All I did was travel a few thousand miles, whereas you came all the way from under *Hashem's* throne of glory, and for what? To sew a few buttons?"

Final Prophecy

Compromise was not a word that existed in Rav Elchonon's lexicon. He took the utmost precautions with regard to kashrus, and abstained from eating meat during his entire stay in America. An apocryphal tale is shared regarding his first night in the United States. Rav Elchonon was careful to drink only *chalav Yisrael* milk, which was a challenge to obtain back then. On the night of his arrival, he was served a cup of coffee with milk that he refused to drink. Yet in the morning a cup of coffee with milk was again brought to him. "Didn't I tell you last night that I don't drink milk?" he asked in astonishment. His host answered most seriously, "I thought that after spending a whole night in America you would have already changed your attitude somewhat."

Rabbi Leo Jung, the longtime rabbi at The Jewish Center on Manhattan's Upper West Side, was among those who assisted Rav Elchonon's fundraising efforts in New York. Rabbi Jung, who was among the founders of Agudath Yisroel in America, had first met Rav Elchonon and the *Chofetz Chaim* at the 1923 Knessiah Gedolah in Vienna. From then on he used his influence as a member of the Cultural Committee of the Joint Distribution Committee to champion the cause of European *yeshivos*.

In his memoirs, Rabbi Jung recalled how a "stubborn" Rav Elchonon refused to waive his principles, even at a potential cost to the *yeshivah*. When spending Shabbos at Rabbi Jung's Jewish Center, Rav Elchonon did not hold back from criticizing the *shul* for having a (gentile operated) elevator running on Shabbos, even though that was considered the

norm in American Orthodoxy at the time.

Toward the end of 1938, Rav Elchonon's son Rav Simcha Wasserman joined him in America, where he would stay to follow up on the multitude of pledges Rav Elchonon had received. That move would save his life.

In March of 1939, Rav Elchonon declared that he was returning to Europe. His American confidants begged him to stay, but he refused. "I don't have only three sons," he said, "I have hundreds — the *yeshivah bochurim*. How can I leave them?" When asked how he could justify returning to a potential powder keg, Rav Elchonon answered unequivocally, "I am a soldier; I have to go to the front."

The last people to speak to Rav Elchonon before he boarded the ship back to Europe were Mike Tress and the young leaders of Zeirei. At their parting, Rav Elchonon told Mike that nothing less than the fate of *Torah* Jewry rested in his hands. Rav Elchonon recognized that whatever hope remained for the salvation of European Jewry lay with Mike and his band of dedicated activists.

Six months after Rav Elchonon's return, Germany invaded Poland, launching the Second World War. With Baranovich under siege, the *yeshivah* fled to Vilna, where it thrived under difficult circumstances. In June 1940, when the Red Army occupied Lithuania, Rav Elchonon relocated the *yeshivah* to Semeliškės, a small village outside Vilna and away from the prying eyes of the Communists. Even there, they were oppressed for keeping the *yeshivah* open. Eventually Rav Elchonon disbanded the *yeshivah* and advised the students to head for safer locales.

In early June 1941, Rav Elchonon and his family attempted to flee north to Sweden, from where they would travel by boat to the United States. Their bags were packed, and a wagon arrived. As his son Rav Naftali was loading his bag, it fell and broke his leg. The escape was rescheduled for a few days later. In the interim, the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, ending Rav Elchonon's plans.

Rav Elchonon spent his final days at the Kovno home of Reb Aryeh Malkiel Friedman, which adjoined the Grodzinski home. As the roundups and brutal massacres unfolded around them, Rav Elchonon struggled to answer the question that was on everyone's lips:

Why? When he was approached and asked, “Why my mother and father?” “Why my wife and children?” he had nothing to reply. “I still don’t know the answer to that question,” Rav Elchonon told his students, “but at least I understand why the question cannot be answered.” He then proceeded to relate the following parable:

Once a man who knew nothing at all about agriculture asked a farmer to teach him about farming. The farmer took him to his field and asked him what he saw. “I see a beautiful piece of land, lush with grass,” he said — then stood aghast while the farmer plowed up the grass and turned the beautiful green field into a mass of shallow brown ditches.

“Why did you ruin the field?” he demanded.

“Be patient. You will see,” said the farmer.

Then the farmer showed his guest a sack full of plump kernels of wheat and said, “Tell me what you see.” The visitor described the nutritious, inviting grain — and then, once more watched in shock as the farmer ruined something beautiful. This time he walked up and down the furrows, dropped kernels into the open ground, and covered them with clods of soil.

“Are you insane?” the man demanded. “First you destroyed the field, and then you ruined the grain!”

“Be patient. You will see.”

This continued with every subsequent stage of the process of cultivating, harvesting and grinding the wheat, with the visitor questioning the farmer’s every move.

Finally, the farmer opened the oven and took out a freshly baked bread — crisp and golden, with an aroma that made the visitor’s mouth water.

“Come,” the farmer said. He led his guest to the kitchen table where he cut the bread and offered his now-pleased visitor a liberally buttered slice.

“Now,” the farmer said, “now, you understand.”

"*Hashem* is the Farmer and we are the fools who do not begin to understand His ways or the outcome of His plan," Rav Elchonon told his students as the footfalls of destruction grew louder. "Only when the process is complete will the Jewish people know why all this happened. Then, when *Mashiach* has finally come, we will know why everything — even when it seems destructive and painful — is part of the process that will produce goodness and beauty."

"We Were Chosen"

Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, one of the few survivors of the Kovno ghetto, remembered how Rav Elchonon spent his final days in the Friedman attic, learning *hilchos Kiddush Hashem* with his son Naftali Beinisch.

In the beginning of July 1941, a wave of mass arrests hit the Jewish population of Kovno. Rav Elchonon was eventually arrested by local Lithuanian youths who eagerly assisted the Nazis in their evil work. Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Gibraltar witnessed Rav Elchonon being led away together with a large group. He recalls how Rav Elchonon walked in his usual dignified style, lost in his holy thoughts. "It was hard to tell who was leading who," Rav Yitzchok Elchonon described the scene.

Rav Elchonon was taken to the Seventh Fort outside Kovno, where thousands of his fellow Jews were being held. The weather was unusually hot, and the Jews were kept for days in the open yard of the fort, under the burning sun, without a drop of water. They were not allowed to make a move; the patrolling Lithuanians opened fire on anyone caught raising his head or speaking to his neighbor. During this time, the Germans held a basketball match with the Lithuanians. The Lithuanians, who'd had a championship team before the war, handily defeated the Germans. As a "reward," each of the Lithuanian players was allowed to come to the Seventh Fort and shoot a dozen Jews.

For 24 hours, Kovno's Jews desperately tried to secure Rav Elchonon's release by persuasion and bribery. They failed. On Monday Night, 13 *Tammuz*, 5701 (July 8, 1941) under the command of SS Commander Karl Jager, thousands of Jews were machine-gunned to death at the Seventh Fort, Rav Elchonon among them.

It is told that when he anticipated the end was near, Rav Elchonon spoke to those around him in the same calm and collected tone he always did, with no indication of panic: "In

Heaven it seems that they consider us to be *tzaddikim*, because we have been chosen to be *korbanos* (martyrs) for *Klal Yisrael*. Therefore, we must repent now. We don't have much time. We must keep in mind that we will be better *korbanos* if we repent. In this way we will save the Yidden in America. Let no foreign thought enter our minds, *chas v'shalom*, as that will make us *pigul*, an unfit *korban*. We are now fulfilling the greatest *mitzvah*. Yerushalayim was destroyed with fire and will be rebuilt with fire. The same fire that will consume our bodies will one day rebuild *Klal Yisrael*."

Indeed, the bodies of Rav Elchonon Wasserman, most of his family, the *yeshivah's rebbeim* and most of its students were consumed in the flames of the Holocaust. But a far greater fire had been ignited prior to the blaze of destruction. Rav Elchonon had kindled a fire in the hearts and souls of all who knew him, a force that would ultimately rebuild the *Torah* world in the postwar era. Rav Elchonon's fire would not only prevail; its warmth, light and uncompromising pursuit of truth would shine for decades to come.

This article is dedicated to the memory of my great uncle and aunt, Rav Nachman Dovid Kop and Rebbetzin Bella Kop and their family. Rav Nachman studied in the Mir and the *Kollel Kodshim* in Radin before moving to Hajnowka, where he served as the Rav as well as the regional representative of the *Vaad Hayeshivos*. Rav Nachman was martyred by the Nazis 80 years ago on 30 *Sivan*. His wife and seven children were murdered a short time later in Auschwitz. *Hashem Yikom Damam*.

Note: The comprehensive works and vast knowledge of the following esteemed authors, lecturers, researchers and dear friends were utilized in the preparation of this article: Yehuda Geberer, Aaron Sorasky, Yonoson Rosenblum, Moshe Benoliel, Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, Dr. Lester Eckman z"l, Rabbi Dr. Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, Professor Ben-Tsion Klibansky, Rabbi Dr. Hillel Goldberg, Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Gibraltar z"l, Solly Ganor z"l, Rav Aaron Lopiansky, Mrs. Devora Glicksman, Professor Marc Shapiro, Chaim Shapiro z"l, Dr. Zev Eleff, Rabbi Joseph Kirsch, Baruch Wenger, Yehuda Zirkind, and Nachum S. Zajac.

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RUACH HAKODESH

"Whenever he spoke of *yeshivaleit* he would say, 'When will we receive true *gedolim*? When? Rabbonim we have plenty of, but who will bring us the genuine *gedolim*?"

"He wanted and demanded that *bnei Torah* be true *gedolei Torah*. Even from the older students he constantly demanded more and more.

"HaGaon HaRav Aharon Kotler *zt'l* was once speaking to HaGaon HaRav Elchonon Wassermann *Hy'd* and told him that once he spoke to the *Chofetz Chaim* when all of a sudden, in the middle of the conversation the *Chofetz Chaim* said, 'When you begin a *maseches* you must always finish it. Don't leave it in the middle.' Rav Aharon later thought about what the *Chofetz Chaim* had said and realized that he was actually guilty of doing just that. On many occasions he had begun a *masechta*, learned a little, and then left it there. 'How did he know that?' Rav Aharon asked Reb Elchonon. Reb Elchonon answered, 'The same thing happened to me! I was discussing something with the *Chofetz Chaim* when suddenly he interrupted me and said that after beginning a *maseches* one must finish it. 'Genuine *ruach hakodesh*!' both Rav Aharon and Reb Elchonon agreed."
<http://www.chareidi.org/>

Rav Yoel Segal Pelner Av Beis Din of Ujhel (Tammuz 13)

A DERASHAH DURING THE THREE WEEKS THAT MADE A LASTING IMPRESSION

Rav Moshe Katz the AvBeisDin of Nitra related how on the year that Rav Yoel was appointed the Rav of Újhel during the month of Tammuz he delivered his first *derasha* - opening sermon during which he told his new congregants the following with fiery enthusiasm:

My brothers do not believe the rumors that I am only strict and that I never rule leniently, in fact I do not only have stringencies and *chumros* regarding our holy laws of the Torah, in fact this year I am also *meikel* to rule leniently and I will now permit for you three things that our sages, Chazal expressly forbade.

These are the three *kulos* and leniencies:

From Rosh Chodesh Av through Tisha B'Av Chazal forbade three things: they forbade the

consumption of meat, they forbade the wearing of new clothes and they forbade us to get haircuts. I am now permitting these under the following circumstances:

For those of my brethren who cannot afford or are unable to purchase *Cholov Yisroel* products I hereby permit you to eat kosher meat instead, for it is certainly preferable to eat kosher meat even during the three weeks as opposed to *Cholov akum* and butter or cheese made by gentiles that are completely forbidden *issur gamur*!

Second, regarding the wearing of new clothes that our sages forbade, I hereby permit all the women who own immodest clothes and short skirts to go shopping and purchase a new wardrobe of long skirts and modest clothes. It is better that they wear these new clothes during the three weeks as opposed to transgressing against the Torah by wearing forbidden immodest, short or tight fitting clothes!

Finally, my third *kulah* and leniency to permit shaving and haircuts, I hereby permit all those women who leave their hair uncovered to get proper haircuts and shave, even during the three weeks, so that they can cover their hair properly according to *Das Moshe veYisroel*! Needless to say his powerful words made a lasting impression. (Melitzei Aish)

RAV SHAYALEH'S SAGE ADVICE

Rav Yoel was very close and on very friendly terms with Rav Shayaleh of Kerestir and from time to time they would visit one another and send regards and greetings. Rav Yoel used to say that Rav Shayalah was a world class genius a *velts Chacham*!

It so happens that there was a well known problem in Uhjel, a serious breach in the fence erected by Chazal and the Torah. There were many simple uneducated Jews whose work among the goyim forced them to have to wear leather shoes even on Tisha B'Av and therefore they made the error that they mistakenly believed that since they were forced to wear leather shoes while working for the gentiles they therefore believed that they could continue to wear these shoes all day long, even coming to shul on Tisha B'Av morning itself while wearing leather shoes for Shacharis and to recite *kinnos* and from there they each went to their jobs to work for the *goyim*.

This was the first year that Rav Yoel was serving as the Rav of Uhjel, and the leaders of the community were worried that when he would witness this breach of the halachah and

the acts of the unlettered uneducated Jews he would publicly humiliate and rebuke the offenders and cause a new rift in the community!

Therefore, in order to prevent communal strife they sought out the new Rav to placate him and explain the erroneous beliefs and mistake of these ignorant congregants.

The heads and leaders of the *kehillah* sought an audience with the Rav and told him that when he would witness this foolish custom and see how the ignorant Jews come to shul on Tisha B'Av wearing leather shoes and that they have already become accustomed to this foolish incorrect custom for so many years he should forgive them and not rebuke them since better that they remain shogeg and sin unintentionally than mezidim willful and rebellious transgressors! no?

When the Rav Yoel heard this he was completely taken by surprise and he asked them: "Do you mean to tell me that on the day that our holy bais hamikdash was destroyed and went up in flames these Jews will come to shul in leather shoes?!"

"What should we do?" exclaimed the leaders of the community, "I hereby declare," said the Rav, "that I cannot remain heading the rabbinate in such a place where some members of the community so brazenly go against the halachah in a public display of disregard for Jewish law and something so clearly stated black and white in Shulchan Aruch!"

The communal leaders did not know what to do and so they departed the house of the Rav downcast. Meanwhile, Rav Yoel did not know what to do. . .after a few days it so happened that Rav Yoel was in Kerestir for a din Torah and as was his custom he went to visit Rav Shayaleh and inquire as to his welfare and well being.

During their conversation Rav Yoel presented his problem to Rav Shayaleh, asking for his sage advice, how could Rav Yoel possibly extricate himself from this predicament?! "Regarding this matter your best bet is to discuss the matter with rabbiner Roth!" was Rav Shayaleh's terse response. Needless to say such a response astonished Rav Yoel, who could not understand how the rabbi of the status quo congregation could possibly advise or aid him in this matter?!

Rav Shayaleh did as was his custom and he closed his eyes and laid back in a trance like manner and appeared almost as if he was asleep. Rav Yoel posed his question, "what connection does rabbiner Roth have to the matter and what possible answer could he have for me?" Rav Shayaleh again responded: "Discuss this matter with rabbiner Roth and your honor shall see success!" was his blessing and reply.

The strange and bizarre advice seemed out of place, and Rav Yoel had misgivings and said to himself: "Although Rav Shayaleh is a world renowned sage but I think this time he has missed his mark. . ."

However, when he arrived back in Uhjel he decided to give Rav Shayaleh's advice a shot, what did he have to lose already?!

Rav Yoel asked that someone go visit rabbiner Roth and request him to visit, explaining that Rav Yoel had an urgent matter to discuss with him.

Rabbiner Roth was extremely surprised that the Rabbi of the Orthodox congregation wanted to seek a meeting and speak with him, out of respect he hurried over to Rav Yoel's home to see what was the matter. "Please rabbiner Roth I have an urgent request of you, during your Shabbos sermon please mention to your congregants about the upcoming day of Tisha B'Av and how it commemorates our national tragedy, teach them the history of the destruction of Jerusalem and our holy temple that was set aflame twice on this fateful tragic date and how throughout the generations Jews world over have fasted and mourned over the destruction and that one of the customs was to refrain from wearing leather shoes."

When rabbiner Roth heard the modest request it seemed odd but he agreed and so his sermon did indeed contain the content as requested. When Rav Yoel heard the news that rabbiner Roth had indeed kept his word he had the solution, he himself spoke before his congregants and chastised and rebuked them: "What shame and how will you face the fact that even the status quo congregation has heard the strict stringency of mourning on Tisha B'Av and refraining from wearing leather shuls and how will it look when even they all know this and yet the Orthodox congregants blatantly flagrantly ignore the law and publicly walk around in leather shoes on Tisha B'Av?! What shame and disgrace!?"

The sage advice of Rav Shayaleh did the trick and it worked, all the members of the

kehillah that year showed up in shul on Tisha B'Av and not one was wearing the shameful leather shoes on their feet! (Mofes HaDor)

Rav Pinchos Shapira (Tammuz 14)

A KIDDUSH HASHEM

The brothers accepted their fate with *bitachon* and equanimity. The night before their beating, they were visited by two *chassidim*, Rav David of Vaslikov and Rav Nota of Chaslivitch. After speaking enthusiastically in Torah, as if nothing unusual was about to happen, Rav Shmuel Abba quietly told them, "Tomorrow, we will be beaten and it should be arranged that there is a *minyan*, a doctor, ice, and lemon juice [as an antiseptic]. Also, any blood or fragments should be collected."

The two visitors recorded the impact upon them: "We stood there astounded. Holy fear overwhelmed us and we could not say a word. The impression was so powerful that it will never be erased from our memory all our lives. Before our eyes, we saw, as it were, Avraham Avinu before the *Akeidah*, totally devoted to do the will of his Creator, and Rabbi Akiva before they combed his flesh, without saying anything and without ruffling their tranquility a hairsbreadth."

In those days, military beatings were administered by *spiessruten* (knouts), a punishment introduced to Russia by Prussian army officers. A more sophisticated method of administering this punishment was "driving one through the *stroy* (line-up)." This meant running (or rather, being slowly led through) a gauntlet of two rows of 250 soldiers armed with knouts. Resultant death from heart failure or blood poisoning was not uncommon. To receive 1,500 blows, the brothers would pass between the rows three times.

As the two brothers approached the place of their sentence, they sang a special *niggun*, which is preserved until this day.

During the beating, Rav Pinchas Shapiro immortalized his memory by refusing to move on after his *yarmulke* fell off. Unable to go back and pick it up because he was being led along by two long ropes tied to his hands, he simply stood stock still as blows rained on his back until someone replaced the *yarmulke* on his head.

The two brothers regained consciousness on Shabbos and their first words were, "We must recite *Kiddush*!" After saying *Kiddush*, Rav Shmuel Abba washed and said *Hamotzi*, but was too weak to eat a morsel of bread. Whenever he recalled this incident in later years, he said that he was still sorry about this *beracha levatalah*.

It took them months to recuperate enough to begin walking in chains to Siberia and, by the time they arrived in Moscow, at the end of 5600/1840, they were too ill to proceed. After months of recuperation, officials petitioned that the brothers be permitted to return to Slovia, but Czar Nicholas I insisted that "if they are ill, they should be left in Moscow in a *bogadelnia* (old age home), but they must not be returned home."

Even after fifteen years, the brothers were still not allowed to return to a normal Jewish community.

As Bibikov, now Minister of Internal Affairs, explained, "They can exert a harmful influence upon those Jews among whom they will settle and, in addition to this, it can also inspire in other criminals a hope for such types of ameliorations."

The brothers' only consolation was that, in 5607/1847, their sons won the tender to open the Russian Empire's second authorized Jewish printing house, in Zhitomir. The first was the Romm Printing House in Vilna. All other Jewish printing establishments had been closed down.

The brothers were only released in June 5616/1856 by Czar Nicholas I's more liberal son, Czar Alexander II, who is famous for his emancipation of the Russian serfs.

Surprisingly, Rav Shmuel Abba did not greet the news joyfully.

"I fear that I am now losing my freedom," he moaned. "There, at home, when they greet us as martyrs, will my strength be sufficient to weather the test? When will they demand of us that we become *guten Yidden* (*rebbe*)? I implore Hashem to protect me from that path ..."

His fears materialized after Rav Aharon the Second of Karlin handed him a *kvittel*. Admirers insisted that he become a *rebbe* in Shepetovka and both brothers were revered

as *rebbe*s for the rest of their lives.

Nowadays, their memory is immortalized not only by their martyrdom, but also by their holy *sefarim*. As Rav Aharon Roth, the Shomrei Emunim Rebbe writes in his *sefer*, Taharas HaKodesh: "Therefore every G-d-fearing person should strive to acquire *sefarim* of old prints ... especially from the print of Slovia and Zhitomir, [of the Shapiro brothers,] the grandsons of the holy Rav of Koretz, who were exaltedly holy men."

(Chief source: *The Drama of Slovia*, by Saul Moiseyevich Ginsburg, University Press of America, Inc. 1991. Translated from the Yiddish by Ephraim H. Prombaum)
<http://strangeside.com/printing-press-the-slovia-controversy/>

THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

When the grandsons of Rav Pinchos Koretzer, who ran the Slovia Press, were libeled and falsely accused, many tried to prove their innocence, that all the accusations against them were false, to no avail.

Finally the authorities agreed that if three prominent Jewish leaders and rabbis would testify as to the innocence of the Shapira brothers of Slovia then they would be exonerated and cleared.

One of the selected leaders was none other than Rav Pinchos Koretzer's prominent disciple, Rav Raphael of Bershad, who inherited his rebbe's penchant for truth and *emes* at all costs. So much so that they nicknamed Reb Raphael der Emesser! They used to say that he was so truthful and so careful not to utter even a doubtful truth or a possible falsehood that if for example it was raining outside, and you asked him once he came in doors if it's raining out there? He would reply: "When I was outside it was raining." Since perhaps in the interim when he came in doors it had maybe ceased to rain, therefore he could not answer in the present tense to something he could not directly see right now! This was the very same elder chassid who had been bentshed by none other than the holy Baal Shem Tov's blessing for *arichas yomim* - a long life. (Kovetz HaTamim VIII Letter 284). When he was asked to come testify on behalf of Rav Pinchos Shapira he did not know what to do. On the one hand it was a matter of life and death and therefore fell under the *heter* for *pikuach nefesh*. On the other hand, although he was sure that Rav Pinchos was innocent and that the libel was a fabricated falsehood, he could not bring himself to say with certainty an out right lie, that he had personally witnessed this innocence when the truth was that he was sure of it but had never seen so himself.

Initially he agreed to testify, yet as the date approached he began to *daven* to Hashem: Master of the World! I have never let a false word cross my lips, and I have never uttered a lie my entire life! I have never testified to a certainty that I cannot verify, nor have I ever resolved a doubt that I myself did not know its veracity! *Ribono Shel Olam*! I ask of You please, with every expression of pleasing I plead, please take away the blessing for long life so that I not be forced to say something that I myself did not witness!" His prayers were answered, the very next day he passed away, and when they needed his testimony he was no longer among the living. . .and since Rav Raphael's testimony was one of the three, the entire matter was null and void and the judgment of the Shapira brothers of Slovitza was a sentence of torture and exile. (Shmuos VeSippurim Volume I pg 243)

HURRAY WE ARE JEWS REJOICE!

The chabad chassid Rav Raphael Kohen heard this from his father Rav Baruch Sholom Kohen:

During the time that the two Shapiro brothers of Slovitza were imprisoned they did their best to daven and recite *Tehillim*. There was among the prisoners, an apostate and heretic who knew enough Jewish law and halachah to try to harm the brothers. His hatred of all Jewish matters led him to act, and so he filled the chamber pot and befouled the cell to prevent them from reciting any holy words. Rav Pinchos Koretzer's grandson were momentarily dismayed and downcast, what would they do now? How could they *daven*? Suddenly, one of the two was struck with inspiration: It's true we cannot say *Tehillim* but is that a reason for our spirits to fail or falter?! We must rejoice and be happy that as Jews that alone is an *avodah*! The very fact that we refrain also fulfills the Divine Will of our Creator! And if so we need to be *beSimchah* and thus they began to dance in jail over their very Jewishness! (Shmuos VeSippurim Volume I pg 244)

NOT EVEN ONE STEP WITH HIS HEAD UNCOVERED

When the Shapiro brothers of the Slovitza Press were about to run the gauntlet through rows of soldiers to carry out their sentence and flog them for the false libel, the authorities feared that the first troop had been bribed to only deliver soft perfunctory blows and so at the last minute they switched the troops, and they stripped the two brothers down bare so that the deadly blows were dealt harshly and cruelly indeed! In the midst of all this, the *yarmulke* - the *kippa* or head covering fell off one of the brother's

heads, he retrieved it despite the blows that continued to rain on him, as obviously anyone who ran quickly fared better, yet despite all this he suffered it, rather than take even one step with his head uncovered. (Rav Raphael Kohen as heard from Rav Shmuel Gronem) (Shmuos VeSippurim Volume I pgs 243-244)

Another tradition is that it was the younger brother whose head covering fell off, despite being tied and bound by ropes that led him to run the gauntlet, and therefore being unable to retrieve the fallen cap, he stood still as the blows rained down upon him, he accepted the Heavenly decree upon him with love and paid no heed to the pain and suffering of the bludgeoning as the soldiers struck his immobile form, eventually someone replaced his head covering and only then did he consent to move on and miraculously he survived the ordeal with the grace of Heaven. (Seder HaDoros MiTalmidei Baal Shem Tov as cited in Likkutei Imrei Pinchos Sippurim 124)

WHEN THEY STOPPED PUBLISHING THE OHR HACHAIM HAKADOSH

I once heard from a Bershader chassid that Rav Pinchos Koretzer used to say that studying the sefer Ohr haChaim haKadosh is a *segulah* for the *neshamah*, similar to studying the Zohar haKadosh.

This is because Rashbi had the *neshama* of Moshiach of his generation, and also Rav Chaim ben Attar author of the Ohr haChaim haKadosh also had the *neshama* of Moshiach of his generation. He ordered his descendants, the Shapiro grandchildren of the Slovita Press to publish the Sefer Ohr haChaim HaKadosh and that that would save them from evil and harm. They fulfilled his command until there were so many published editions of the Ohr haChaim, that the seforim greatly outnumbered the demand and there were no buyers left to purchase copies. Therefore, they stopped publishing copies of the *sefer*, that very year that they ceased publishing the Ohr haChaim the infamous libel occurred and they were falsely accused. (Migdal Oz pg 268 cited by Likkutei Imrei Pinchos Sha'ar haTorah 15)

THE NIGGUN, THE HAVDALLAH CUP AND THE EVIL SPIRIT

During the time that the two Shapiro brothers of Slovita were imprisoned they were cast into a jail cell with many other prisoners. Due to the dirty, filthy state of the cell, they were halachically forbidden to daven. One of them said to the other: Let us sing a niggun! The niggun they sang roused the spirits of all the inmates and before long they all broke out in a dance. When the warden and guards saw this they ordered the Shapiro brothers

separated from the other prisoners and as soon as they were in their own cell they breathed a sigh of relief! Here, they would now be able to serve Hashem properly. One brother said to the other: I now understand the meaning of a kameo amulet that the Baal Shem Tov once gave to a wealthy man that invited him as his guest.

The *Baal Shem* stayed with him, and all Shabbos he did not utter a word. on Motzaei Shabbos the wealthy man's wife requested that the Baal Shem *daven* that they achieve salvation and have children. The *Baal Shem Tov* made *havdalah* and called the wealthy man to look into the cup, where he saw in the reflection an evil harmful spirit seeking to harm and injure him! On the spirit were written letters *Yud Shin Bais, Shin Bais*. Until now I had no idea what this meant. However, now I think that perhaps it stood for the acronym *Yehi Shalom BeCheilach Shalva BeArmonosayich* (Tehillim 122:7). (Sippurei Maran HaRamach Baal Shem #15, Shemous veSippurim Volume I pg 244 as cited by Likkutei Imrei Pinchos Sha'ar Sippurim 122)

WHO PUT THE YETZER IN JAIL WITH US?

During the time that the two Shapiro brothers of Slovitza, Rav Shmuel Avraham Abba and Rav Pinchos, were jailed the warden came and explained that the rule was that such a terrible crime that they were imprisoned for called for a harsh sentence; the cell that they would be held in was forbidden to have a window. They were forbidden from having any light whatsoever! Upon hearing such a harsh pronouncement, that they would be held in a dank dark gloomy cell, with no light or air, Rav Shmuel Abba was thoroughly downcast. Seeing this, his brother Rav Pinchos turned to him and said: Why is the evil one - the *yetzer hara* called a king and an old fool? (Koheles 4:13 Rashi). Is he not wise? Does he not make fools out of others?! Rather, the truth is that he is in fact a fool! See here, look at us, we are jailed and imprisoned by decree of the Czar! However, the evil one, the *yetzer hara*, what is he doing here together with us in this prison, who put him in jail?! Rav Shmuel Abba understood the rapport, this despondency and sadness was none other than the evil *yetzer hara*'s doing, he caused Rav Shmuel Abba's feelings of depression and not the jail warden's words. No sooner did he realize this then his calm and good mood were restored! (Shemuos Tivos 44:2 cited by Likkutei Imrei Pinchos Sha'ar Sippurim 123)

ANGELS TOOK THE BLOWS

The Holy tzadik Rav Pinchos Koretzer was able to achieve that when his grandson, the Shapiro brothers of Slavita were being flogged, angels stood at their backs to receive the

blows. (Sippurei Maran HaRamach cited by Likkutei Imrei Pinchos Sippurim 126)

Rav Yaakov Ruderman Rosh Yeshiva Ner Yisroel Baltimore, Avodas Levi (Tammuz 14)

HALLOWED BEGINNINGS

This article originally appeared in *Yated Neeman*. We abbreviated it because of its length.

As we enter the *Yahrzeit* of the revered *Rosh Yeshiva* and founder of *Yeshiva Ner Yisrael* of Baltimore, the *Yated* presents highlights of his life as told by his *talmidim*. We thank the *talmidim* who shared with us their oral and written memories of the *Rosh Yeshiva*.

Rav Ruderman was born on *Shushan Purim* in 5660 (1900) in Dolhinov, a small shtetl near Vilna. He was born late in life to his parents, Rav Yehuda Leib and Sheina, the first son after six daughters. Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky, Rav Ruderman's illustrious cousin who is named after the same person, related a fascinating story about how Rav Ruderman got his name. A year before his birth, an elderly, childless Jew named Reb Yitzchok assured Rav Yehuda Leib that he would have a son and made him promise to name the child Yitzchok. Thinking that it was unlikely that he would have a son, Rav Yehuda Leib half-jokingly agreed. A year later, when his son was born, his mother wanted to name him Yaakov after her father. A *shaila* was asked and the *psak* was that he be given both names: Yaakov Yitzchok.

Rav Yehuda Leib was a *melamed*. Rav Ruderman often stated that his father knew *Shas* with *Tosafos* well, but even though he may have eclipsed his father in learning, he did not even approach his level of *avoda* and *Yiras Shomayim*. Rav Yehuda Leib recognized his young son's prodigious talents and encouraged him to learn. The child was awakened early to learn a *blatt* before *davening* and was rewarded for every *daf* memorized. As a result, he mastered *Seder Noshim* and *Nezikin* before his *bar mitzva*.

Shortly before his *bar mitzva*, Rav Yehuda Leib took him for a *berocha* to the Lubavitcher *Rebbe*, Rav Sholom Ber. The *Rebbe* was so impressed that he blessed the boy that he should grow to be an *odom godol*. The *Rebbe* wanted the youth to learn in Lubavitch, but Rav Yehuda Leib chose instead to send him to Slonim.

The young *illui* from Dolhinov soon developed a remarkable reputation. At that time it was customary for Slabodka *talmidim* to seek exceptional *bochurim* to join Slabodka. The future Chevron *Rosh Yeshiva* Rav Yechezkel Sarna, who was already one of the *Alter* of Slabodka's closest *talmidim*, convinced the young genius to join Slabodka. That decision was undoubtedly a watershed in his life.

It was in the middle of World War I when Rav Ruderman joined Slabodka when it was in the city of Minsk after it had fled eastward, away from the approaching German Army. In Minsk, he merited meeting the revered *Godol HaDor*, Rav Chaim Brisker. It seems that Rav Chaim discerned tremendous potential in the young *illui* and realized that he would need special care to withstand wartime difficulties. Toward that end, unbeknown to Rav Ruderman, Rav Chaim arranged for a certain wealthy *Yid* to provide him with extra money so that his learning would not be adversely affected by hunger. Only after Rav Chaim's passing in 1918, when the support ceased, did Rav Ruderman become aware of Rav Chaim's role in caring for him.

The *Alter* also displayed an enormous amount of affection toward the youngster. He assigned Rav Yechezkel Sarna to serve as his *eltere bochur*.

Rav Ruderman learned with tremendous *hasmoda*, but he was completely unable to keep to *seforim* of the *Yeshiva*. The *Alter* gave him latitude to learn in his own way as long as he achieved the pre-set goals. It was decided that he would attempt to complete *Shas* that winter. Rav Ruderman would take long walks during which he would review *Gemoros* and *Sedorim* by heart. He was well on the way to reaching his goal when the *Alter* received a telegram shortly after *Sukkos* advising of the *petira* of Rav Yehuda Leib. Not wishing to interfere with his *talmid's* learning regimen, the *Alter* chose not to tell him the terrible news. Only after *Pesach*, when he had achieved his goal, was he informed of his father's passing. The *Alter* remarked that the completion of *Shas* would be a far greater *zechus* for his father's *neshoma* than all the recitations of *Kaddish* that he missed.

His *talmidim* in Baltimore understand their great *zechus* to have had a *Rebbe* whose every action was a reflection of the *Alter*. On the *Alter's* fiftieth *Yahrzeit*, Rav Ruderman and Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky were invited to Lakewood to speak. Rav Schneur Kotler related that when Rav Yaakov was unable to attend he stated, "The Baltimore *Rosh Yeshiva* is the most reflective personality of the *Alter* in our generation."

One thing in which Rav Ruderman particularly took pride was the fact that he merited receiving *semicha* from Rav Meir Atlas, the revered father-in-law of Rav Elchonon Wasserman. This *semicha* traced back to the Vilna *Gaon*, as Rav Meir Atlas had received *semicha* from Rav Eizele Charif, who was in turn a *musmach* of Rav Abbale Peslover, who had received *semicha* directly from the *Gaon*; thus Rav Ruderman was a direct link in this chain of the *mesora* back to the Vilna *Gaon*.

BUILDING TORAH IN AMERICA

In 5684 (1924), Rav Ruderman married the daughter of Rav Sheftel Kramer, a son-in-law of Rav Shraga Feivel Frank and brother-in-law of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein and Rav Boruch Horowitz.

The *Rebbetzin* was his partner and helpmate in all his undertakings on behalf of *Yiddishkeit*. Not only did she free him from the yoke of responsibility in the material aspects of the house, but she was also instrumental in helping him achieve lofty spiritual pursuits. Later, when they moved to America and Rav Ruderman sought to build a *Yeshiva* in a country that had no understanding of the concept, it was the *Rebbetzin* who constantly encouraged him to persevere rather than be deterred by the numerous stumbling blocks placed in his way. It was the *Rebbetzin* who organized fundraisers and donations of staples for the *Yeshiva*. The *Rosh Yeshiva* was eternally grateful for all that she had done and, many decades later, upon her passing several years before his *petira*, the *Rosh Yeshiva* was simply inconsolable.

During the first years after their marriage, the *Rosh Yeshiva* devoted himself to complete immersion in learning. In 1931, the *Rosh Yeshiva*, *Rebbetzin* and their baby daughter immigrated to the United States. Rav Ruderman joined his father-in-law, Rav Sheftel Kramer, in the *Yeshiva* of New Haven that had relocated to Cleveland, where the latter served as *Menahel Ruchani*.

In 1933, Rav Ruderman decided to accept a position as *Rav* of the *Tiferes Yisrael Shul* in Baltimore with the understanding that he could use the facilities for a *Yeshiva*.

The *Yeshiva's* early growth intensified through the recognition and support of prominent *Rabbonim*. Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, *Menahel* of *Mesivta Torah Vodaas* and unquestionably one of the most important figures in the development of *Torah* in America,

sent *bochurim* from New York whom he thought would benefit. Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky sent his children from Toronto, which in those days was considered a major distance away. Rav Yehoshua Klavan, one of the foremost *talmidim* of Rav Boruch Ber and the *Rav* of Washington, D.C., was among the staunchest supporters of the *Yeshiva*. He not only sent a son to learn in the *Yeshiva*, he even raised funds for the upkeep and growth of the *Yeshiva*. Furthermore, during the winter months, when Rav Ruderman would occasionally suffer from laryngitis, Rav Klavan would come from Washington to deliver the daily *shiur*. Rav Naftoli Zvi Yehuda Riff, a grandson of the *Netziv* and the *Rav* of Camden, New Jersey, was also extremely helpful.

TOTAL IMMERSION IN TORAH

Without a doubt, it was the power of the *Rosh Yeshiva's* total immersion in *Torah*; his contagious *Ahavas Torah* and his complete belief in the eternity of *Torah* that enabled him to become the quintessential *Rosh Yeshiva* and *Torah* builder. His love of *Torah* was such that it overcame even the most natural human limitations. Once, during the early years of the *Yeshiva* at its current campus, a fire broke out in the building where the *Rosh Yeshiva* lived. Everyone immediately evacuated the building. Suddenly Rav Ruderman ran back into the burning building, exclaiming, "I forgot an absolutely irreplaceable item!" What was the item for which he risked his life? His very rare copy of the *sefer Nesivos HaMishpot* on Rabbeinu Yeruchem.

His dedication to learning knew no bounds. His encyclopedic knowledge of *Talmud Bavli*, *Yerushalmi*, *Rishonim*, *Poskim*, *Acharonim* and *teshuvos* set a lofty standard for which to strive. The *Rosh Yeshiva* stimulated lively discussions, thereby deepening interest and broadening horizons, by challenging his students to bring proof from one *Gemora* to a seemingly unrelated issue.

He constantly focused the attention of his *talmidim* and their awareness to the breadth and inter-relationship of all of *Torah*. He was always involved in a *kushya*. In fact, he would say that he used questions as memory keys with which to remember the *Gemora*. Therefore, he was always ready with a penetrating query or comment that would lend insight to whatever *Gemora* one mentioned. He lived with his questions and was constantly seen with his lips moving, as he was totally and consistently absorbed in learning.

Rarely was his sleep at night not disturbed by the *kushya* with which he went to bed. This total involvement was transmitted to his *talmidim*.

On par with his love for *Torah*, was the *Rosh Yeshiva*'s love for his students. If ever a *talmid* asked him a good question or related a nice *sevara*, his face would radiate delight. When one of the *talmidim* had the good fortune to ask or say something that was new to him, he would be ecstatic. Many *talmidim* had the fortune to be embarrassed by the *Rosh Yeshiva* when they would be reminded years later of an insightful *Torah* thought that they themselves had long since forgotten.

A revealing incident occurred when he was learning in Slabodka and a visitor arrived bearing a copy of the newly published *sefer Ohr Somei'ach*. The young *bochur* asked to borrow the *sefer* but was refused permission as the man planned to continue his journey the following day. Rav Ruderman was undaunted. He borrowed the *sefer* for one night promising to return it in the morning. Overnight he went through and mastered the *sefer* in its entirety!

On another occasion, the *Rosh Yeshiva* was once undergoing a lengthy medical procedure. The doctor, wishing to distract the *Rosh Yeshiva* from the pain and unpleasantness, engaged him in small talk. Throughout the procedure the *Rosh Yeshiva* continuously nodded his head in agreement. After leaving the clinic, he explained to the *talmid* accompanying him a wonderful approach to the *sugya* that had occurred to him in the midst of the procedure. He then suddenly interrupted himself, "By the way, perhaps you heard what the doctor was saying to me? I nodded to him out of respect, but what did he want?"

The *Rosh Yeshiva* once complained to his *talmid*, Rav Yisrael Dov Kaplan, today *Rosh Kollel* in Bayit Vegan, "Nowadays, people do not learn. When I was fifteen, learning in Slabodka we would get up at five in the morning and go to sleep after midnight. We learned fifty *blatt* a day, every day!"

Once on a long trip, the *Rosh Yeshiva* was accompanied by two *bochurim* from the *Yeshiva*, who decided to utilize the duration of the journey to go over several pages of *Maseches Berochos* that they had committed to memory. The *Rosh Yeshiva* was seated right in front of them and they noticed that he was shifting about in his seat

uncomfortably. From time to time he walked around and fixed them with a piercing look. "What kind of *Gemora* are you using over there - is it a different *girsas*?" he asked. Scarcely concealing their pride, the *bochurim* replied, "We don't have a *Gemora*, we're going over what we learned by heart!" The *Rosh Yeshiva*, with a smile on his face, proceeded to quote the exact language of the *Gemora*.

When he was already in his eighties, a *talmid* relates, "I went to *daven Mincha* with the *Rosh Yeshiva* and he complained that the strong medicines he was taking for his numerous ailments caused him to forget. The *talmid* asked, "Has the *Rosh Yeshiva* forgotten any *Tosafos* in *Shas*?" Immediately, the *Rosh Yeshiva* banged his cane and forcefully said, 'No! No! No *Tosafos*. I mean a *chiddush* in a difficult *Rambam* that I once said - I have trouble remembering in its entirety." The *talmid* related that the way in which he could not even contemplate the horror of forgetting a *Tosafos* was an indication of *Ahavas Torah* and devotion to *Torah* that remained with him forever.

TRANSMITTING TORAH

Rav Ruderman would show *talmidim* a letter that he received from the Steipler *Gaon* in 5719 (1959). The Steipler sent him a letter requesting financial assistance for printing the first volume of his magnum opus *Kehillas Yaakov*. In the letter, the Steipler wrote that he had seen and learned Rav Ruderman's *sefer Avodas HaLevi* that he had written in his youth and it features "wonderful *chiddushim* on the most difficult areas of the order of *Kodshim*". In the letter, the Steipler encourages Rav Ruderman to write more such *seforim*. After showing the letter to the *talmid*, Rav Ruderman said, "I have enough *chiddushim* to write ten more volumes of *Avodas HaLevi*, but I am now writing *leibidige seforim*, living *seforim*, my *talmidim*."

The *Rosh Yeshiva* continued, "Teaching takes full concentration, as the *Gemora* teaches that only if a *Rebbe* is similar to a *Maloch* should one seek to learn *Torah* from him. We know that a *Maloch* cannot do more than one *shelichus*, one job at a time. Teaching *talmidim* preoccupies me so completely that I cannot sit and write *seforim*." Indeed, the *Rosh Yeshiva* invested tremendous effort into teaching and shaping each *talmid*.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* established thousands of *talmidim*. Among them, hundreds became *Gedolei Torah* and *Marbitzei Torah* who continue his legacy and illuminate the *Torah* world with their *shiurim* and *chiddushei Torah*. Although of course, there was a special

focus on establishing *talmidim* who would become Torah giants in their own right, the *Rosh Yeshiva* understood the individual character of each *talmid* and encouraged them, each in his own way, to make Torah a central part of their lives.

INDIVIDUALIZED CHINUCH

Talmidim of *Ner Yisrael* felt that the *Rosh Yeshiva* loved them as a father loves his son. He took an active interest in their needs, listened to their problems and shared their burdens. They, in turn, became greatly attached to him. His relationship with his *talmidim* was very much predicated on an explanation of *Chazal* on the *pasuk* “and you shall teach them to your sons”. *Chazal* say that sons are referring to *talmidim*. “Why, then,” the *Rosh Yeshiva* asked, “did the *pasuk* not write, “and you shall teach them to your pupils?”

“In order to teach us,” he explained, “that *talmidim* are akin to sons. Just as a son never stops being a son, neither does a *talmid* stop being a *talmid*. A *Rebbe* must never imagine that his *talmid* is beloved to him only when he is under his tutelage, receiving his guidance and instruction and that when this period comes to an end, so does the special relationship. The truth goes far beyond this, for upon becoming a *talmid* he becomes a son of his *Rebbe*. Even when he embarks on his own path, he should remain a son; the bond should not weaken.” This is the way in which the *Rosh Yeshiva* interacted with his *talmidim*. *Talmidim* who visited him after intervals of ten years or more still felt the same warm relationship they remembered from their years in *Yeshiva*.

His emulation of the *Alter* was not simply in treating his students as children; rather, it was in all facets of *chinuch*. He would try to handle each of his *talmidim* in a manner suited to that individual. When it came to delivering rebuke, Rav Ruderman would explain that if he would dare speak to his students in the way the *Alter* rebuked even the greatest *Baalei Mussar* publicly, they would have fled the *Yeshiva* instantaneously. In fact, when the *Rosh Yeshiva* found it necessary to rebuke the whole *Yeshiva*, he would speak very positively even while calling the *talmidim* to task.

Rav Ruderman often cautioned that dealing with *bochurim* is *dinei nefoshos*, a matter of spiritual life and death, and cannot be taken lightly. There were instances when members of the *Yeshiva's Hanhola* thought that a specific *bochur* should be expelled. The *Rosh Yeshiva* consistently held firm to his convictions, explaining that one never knows what the future holds for such a *talmid*; perhaps with a bit more patience he would develop

properly. By and large, he lived to see his position vindicated.

From the manner in which the Alter cared for Rav Ruderman's every need, he learned that it is every *Rosh Yeshiva's* obligation to deal with every aspect of his *talmid's* life, spiritual and material. The *talmidim* of *Ner Yisrael* all attest to their *Rebbe's* exceptional care and concern for them. He served as a source of strength, inspiration and advice when they were beset with problems. Regardless of the difficulty or complexity of a situation, the *Rosh Yeshiva* could always be relied on for the requisite counsel and comfort. Throughout the years there were many *bochurim* who came to the *Yeshiva* as refugees or from homeless and troubled backgrounds. They found a home in the *Yeshiva* and a father in the *Rosh Yeshiva*.

In addition, Rav Ruderman loved his *talmidim* and took great pride in those *talmidim* who entered the great profession of *Melamdei Torah*. The clearest proof of this love and pride was his almost regular referral to the verse in *Doniel* (12:3): *V'hamaskilim yazhiru k'zohar horokia, umatzdikey horabim kekochovim l'olom vo'ed*. Rav Ruderman would cite the comment of the *Maharsha* that says, "Just as the stars and moon are in the sky throughout the day, even though they are not seen, so too the teacher remembers and ponders his students even years later."

THE BEAUTY OF MIDDOS

Rav Ruderman's *middos*, his sensitivity to others and feelings of another's pain, were legendary. These *middos* were the product of a lifetime of *Avodas Hashem*. A *talmid* relates how in 1982 he came to the *Rosh Yeshiva's* house to walk him to *Mincha*. When he greeted the *Rosh Yeshiva*, he noticed a broken-hearted expression on his face. The *Rosh Yeshiva* said, "I just heard that Rav Schneur Kotler is very sick. The *Gemora* says," continued Rav Ruderman, "that if a *Talmid Chochom* is sick, one must beg *Hashem* for his recovery to the extent that one must *become sick over his plight*." Right then and there, the *Rosh Yeshiva* burst into bitter tears. Only after somewhat composing himself did he go to *Mincha*.

For the next two days, the *Rosh Yeshiva* was unwell and unable to emerge from bed. Dr. Jakobovitz, the resident *Yeshiva Lane* physician, came to check him and could not find anything wrong. "I, however," explained the *talmid*, "knew what had happened. The *Rosh Yeshiva* had *davened* with such effort - he became sick over Rav Schneur's plight just as

the *Gemora* dictates.”

Rav Ruderman was a treasure trove of stories, many of which provided his *talmidim* with insight and understanding of his own behavior. The special care and deference that he exhibited toward his *Rebbetzin* had its source in a story he had heard from the *Chofetz Chaim*. The *Chofetz Chaim* once happened to be with Rav Nochum of Horodna on *Chanuka* evening. It was several hours into the night and still, Rav Nochum had not lit the candles. Finally, very late at night, long after the streets had emptied of people, Rav Nochum’s wife returned home. Only then did Rav Nochum light the *Menora*, long after the time prescribed by *Halocha*. Unable to contain his curiosity, the *Chofetz Chaim* asked Rav Nochum for an explanation. Rav Nochum answered, “The *Halocha* dictates that if one only has enough money for *ner Shabbos* or *ner Chanuka*, *ner Shabbos* takes precedence because of its *sholom bayis* component. My wife,” continued Rav Nochum, “is *moser nefesh* to ensure that I devote my life to *Torah* and *Avodas Hashem*. She enjoys being present for lighting the *Chanuka Menora* and that makes it my responsibility to wait for her and forgo lighting at the proper time.”

The *talmidim* witnessed many occasions when the *Rosh Yeshiva* patterned his actions on the lessons of this story. A case in point was at the Agudah convention. One of the highlights of the convention was Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky’s address after *Sholosh Seudos*. The audience would sit in rapt attention listening until long after *Shabbos* was over. Invariably, Rav Ruderman would leave in the middle to call his *Rebbetzin*. He would always apologize to Rav Yaakov and they would remind one another of the story of Rav Nochum.

One poignant incident made a tremendous impact on the *Rosh Yeshiva* and was a clear depiction of how a *Rebbe*’s actions influence his *talmidim*. A group of women, wives of *talmidim* of the *Rosh Yeshiva* who live in *Eretz Yisrael*, asked for an audience with the *Rosh Yeshiva* when he attended the last *Knessia Gedola* in 5740/1980. After inquiring after their families, the *Rosh Yeshiva* questioned why they had requested this meeting. They replied that they wished to express their *hakoras hatov*; they felt that their husbands treated them with greater respect and deference because they had seen how the *Rebbe* treated his *Rebbetzin*.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* taught many lessons in consideration for others by personal example. A

talmid recounts that before joining the *Yeshiva*, he came to the *Rosh Yeshiva's* house to be tested. In mid-conversation, he suddenly pushed over an inkwell, leaving what would become a permanent stain on the sofa. The *talmid* was in a quandary, but the *Rosh Yeshiva* continued speaking as though nothing had happened while simultaneously attempting to cover the stain to ease the *bochur's* anguish. When he saw that his attempts were not helping, he began to reassure the *talmid* that nothing happened!

True, words alone are often somewhat of a cliché and the expression on a host's face usually reveal a true picture of his feelings. "In this case," the *talmid* related, "the *Rosh Yeshiva* was able to genuinely persuade me with his great wisdom that nothing had happened." Any damage to the sofa paled into insignificance compared to the suffering of a human being.

The same *talmid* paid the *Rosh Yeshiva* a visit more than three decades later. Drinks were served and another accident occurred. This time, a cup of cream spilled, not on the sofa but on the *Rosh Yeshiva's* pants. The reaction was identical. The conversation continued as if nothing had happened. The *Rosh Yeshiva* shifted his legs under the table and once again managed to convince the *talmid* that nothing happened!

The *Rosh Yeshiva* and *Rebbetzin* had one child, *Rebbetzin Chana Weinberg*. His son-in-law, *Rav Yaakov Weinberg*, succeeded him as *Rosh Yeshiva* until his passing twelve years later. They were blessed with six grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren, who were privileged to surround the *Rosh Yeshiva* during his last days. After the *petira* of the *Rebbetzin*, their grandchildren, the *Yeshiva's Menahel Ruchani*, *Rav Beryl* and *Mrs. Aviva Weisbord*, moved with their children into the *Rosh Yeshiva's* home to care for him. The beauty and grace with which they discharged their obligation helped the *Rosh Yeshiva* cope with the loss of his *Rebbetzin* and added immeasurably to the quality of his later years. The *Rosh Yeshiva* was constantly grateful and continuously expressed his tremendous *hakoras hatov* to the *Weisbords*.

The *Rosh Yeshiva's* entire eighty-seven years comprised one long song of *Torah*, *limud haTorah*, teaching *Torah*, living with the *middos* dictated by the *Torah* and giving *kevod haTorah*. On the 14th of *Tammuz*, 5747 (1987), the *Rosh Yeshiva* passed on to join his exalted *Rebbeim*, the *Alter* of *Slabodka* and the giants of the era who pre-deceased him. His *levaya* in *Baltimore* was one last manifestation of *kevod haTorah*, as thousands flocked

to *Ner Yisrael* to bid farewell to the last link to the greatness of Slabodka in our times.

**Rav Yitzchok Isaac Rosenbaum Zutshka Rebbe or Zutshke Rebbe, Nachlas
Yitzchok (Tammuz 14)**

EMUNAH PESHUTAH

The rebbe often attributed a *yeshuah* (salvation) to the power of *emunah*. This concept, rooted in the holy words of our prophets, is that he who believes with *emunah* has the power to create a *keli* (a vessel) that enables him to receive *beracha*. Faith draws down *shefa* (abundant blessing from on high as Yehoshaphat Hamelech said, and thereby succeed "Believe in His prophets, and you will prosper." (Divrei haYamim II 20:20)

"What do you mean you don't have to do anything about it? Leibel said. This is the army; you can't just ignore a letter ordering you to report for active service! At the very least you need to apply for a deferral so they might push off the date, don't you think?"

But the *Zutshka Rebbe's sefardi* neighbor, Meir, just shrugged the whole thing off, "I already told you" he explained to the *rebbe's* chassid something seemingly so simple "the *rebbe* gave me the usual *berachah* that I get from him every day: that I should have only good tidings - *besoros tovos*. That's what he said today as he says each day, even though the official letter was on his table."

Meir stared at the chossid, incredulous: How can someone who calls himself a chossid not accept the *rebbe's berachah* with full faith? What would make him not take the *rebbe's* holy words at face value? .

The matter soon became the gossip in the *rebbe's shteibel*..

The *Zutshka rebbe* had always told his family and *gabbaim*, that should they wish to serve him, he would let them lovingly do so with one condition: That his door always remain open. Helping him would mean that they never prevent anyone--any Jew--from accessing the rebbe. They needed to agree never to bar entry to anyone seeking an audience with him--no matter the circumstances. "Even if you have to wake me at night," the *rebbe* pleaded, "what is my life for if not to bless and help Yiddin?"

Among those visitors was a kind *sefardi* neighbor who visited the *rebbe* every other day—a fact that displeased his family members and *gabbaim*. This was exacerbated by the fact that he came with a peculiar *minhag* of his own making. Each day, he would empty his mailbox, take the bundle of letters and place them in front of the *rebbe's* on the table . Then he asked that the *tzaddik* bless him that the mail should contain only good news.

Day after day, the *rebbe* would give him a *berachah* that he should have only *besoros tovos* (good news) and today was no different. Having received the day's *beracha* from the *rebbe*, Meir was unmoved that on this particular day, an official army missive had arrived that directed him to appear for duty--on *erev Chag Pesach*, no less. The order included that he was to serve for one full week, far away from his family.

“Do they think that I would leave my family to go spend the *Seder* night among tanks on some base?” Meir said laughing. “No sir, I am planning on spending the *chagim* with my family right here at home. I placed the letter on the *tzaddik's* desk along with the rest of the mail and he gave me his *beracaha* as he does every day. He said, ‘*besoros tovos*’ and that is what will be!”

The *Zutshka rebbe's* family's heard about this conversation and told of it to the *rebbe*.. The *rebbe's* smile widened with every added detail of the account which was told to him in slightly panicky tones. He learned who they were speaking about his confidence that the *rebbe's berachah* would keep him home. The *Rebbe* nodded his head and declared, “*Peshita* (obviously), this is exactly what shall be! ”

Another day or so passed and Meir arrived once again with a bundle of letters which he placed on the *rebbe's* table. The *tzaddik* lifted his head from the *sefer* he was studying and blessed him with the *berachah* that everything will go as it should, with good news and glad tidings. Little did Meir know that this bundle also contained an official letter from the army—this time with a dispensation.

In the same non-nonchalant manner that he described the contents of the first letter, he mentioned that he had received another official letter which contained an apology from the army that due to technical difficulties they had no choice but to postpone his active service until further notice. They were sorry, but he was deferred.

When the *rebbe* was told how the story concluded, he said, "That is why it is often so much easier to and be *poel a yeshuah* (achieve salvation) for those who have *emunah peshuta* (simple faith), since their *emunah* is *tehorah* (pure and refined). They don't impede the process by making calculations and in that way, its so much easier to help them!"

AKEIDAS YITZCHOK

Several visitors and important guests arrived in Rav Issamar of Nadworna's home in Czernowitz. The guests congregated impatiently as they waited for the *bris* to start. Rav Issamar had been honored to serve as *sandak* and he had gone to immerse in the *mikveh* and was now performing *hachanos* (preparations) to ready himself for this most sublime *mitzvah*!

A few guests couldn't disguise their impatience and began to murmur. "The *pasuk* says Avrohom woke up early in the morning-- teaching us to hurry and perform *mitzvos* with *zerizus* (alacrity) and without delay" someone said. What's taking so long already?"

Ordinarily modest and reticent, Yitzchok Issac-- later known as the *Zutshka Rebbe* --was unable to restrain himself upon hearing the comment when his holy father's honor was at stake. He came forward and censured them with the following retort: "Does it say that Avrohom woke early, saddled his donkey, and took the knife to slaughter his son? Rather it says Avrohom woke early, saddled his donkey, chopped wood, prepared the firewood, and stacked them into a pyre--as all these preparations were necessary for readying himself to perform the *mitzvah*. In fact, the *hachanos* Avrohom did to prepare for the *mitzvah* were counted like the *mitzvah* itself. Similarly, we too need to prepare the house, arrange the chairs and tables, and the *rebbe* needs to immerse in the *mikveh* and do whatever is needed to properly arrange and prepare for the *mitzvah* of *bris milah*!"

Rav Chaim Ibn Attar Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh (Tammuz 15)

PERSERVERANCE WITH THE OHR HACHAIM

Once, when some of his Chassidim came from the *kloiz* in Haifa, they told the Rebbe, Reb Avrohom Yaakov Friedman that every Shabbos night they study the *sefer Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* together. However, when they reached Parshas Vayikra and tried to study his

holy words and commentary, they ran into problems – they had difficulty understanding it. They wanted to know if instead they could switch to studying the commentary of the Ramban. The Rebbe's answer was harsh. "Do you mean to tell me if you study Gemora and reach a difficult point or *sugya* that you cease learning?!" Under the Rebbe's guidance the *kloiz* persisted in its custom and the weekly Shabbos night shiur in *Ohr HaChaim* continued, as well as in the *sefer Toldos Yaakov Yosef*.

A NEW YESHIVA AND A NEW TALMID OF THE OHR HACHAIM

When the *Tzaddik* Rav Chaim ben Attar came to live in Eretz Yisrael, his main focus was to establish a holy lofty *Yeshiva* and *Bais Medrash*, whose purpose was to study *Torah lishma* on the highest level. Its students would sit all day immersed in their studies, never uttering any mundane words, wrapped in *tallis*, crowned in *tefillin* and unifying the *Shechina* as they studied *Gemora* and *Rambam*, delving into the depths of the *Talmud*, swimming in its seas and immersing in the words of *dvar Hashem zu Halocha*. As he himself testified in a letter written on the 22nd of *Shevat tov-kuf-bais* to the financial supporters of the *Yeshiva* in Mantuba, Italy, he named the *Bais Medrash* "*Heichal Ahava - Medrash Kenesses Yisrael* – the Chamber of Love", to awaken *Hashem's* love for *Kenesses Yisrael* (*Kenesses Yisrael* alludes to the *Shechina*). From the Diaspora, Rav Chaim ben Attar brought with him *talmidim*, and gained new ones in Yerushalayim – among whom was the great Rav Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai – *the Chida*. (*Ner HaMaaravi*, ch. 24 p. 227)

THE CHIDA'S TESTIMONY ON THE OHR HACHAIMS PREPARATION FOR KIDDUSH

Once, when the *Chida* was on one of his travels in the lands of *Ashkenaz*, one of the *Admorim* asked him to relate a story that described his *Rebbe's* holy *avoda* in *nigla* and in *nistar*, and here is one of the tales he told:

The *Ohr HaChaim* had a special *minhag* to prepare himself to make *Kiddush* on Shabbos. Every *Erev Shabbos* he would sit and study and review with his *talmidim* the laws of testimony and witnesses – *Hilchos Eidus* in the *Rambam*. They would especially review the laws dealing with what things disqualified a witness and rendered him *posul* – unfit to give testimony. They studied this in order to do full *teshuva* [over any of these disqualifications.] Not only did the *Ohr HaChaim* do this as a preparation before making *Kiddush*, but when he picked up the *Kiddush* cup to recite the *berocha* over it, he would be aflame with such excitement and thoughts of *teshuva* and *kedusha* that all those present were also seized with pangs of regret and remorse so great that they would beg

and plead that they too should merit to be *eidim kesherim* (proper witnesses) to testify to the Creation of the world in six days! (By Rav Yitzchok Alfaya in *Kuntres HaYachieli* Section *Bais Hashem* Chapter *Middos Tovos* #18)

THE OHR HACHAIM'S BROCHA THAT HE SHOULD BE LIKE AHARON HAKOHEN

Rav Yekusiel Yehuda of Sanz-Klausenberg told the following story one *Sholosh Seudos* [see *Shefa Chaim* on *Parshas Naso tov-shin-mem-daled*] (also found in the *kuntres Tav Chaim* as a prelude to certain editions of the *Chida's sefer Shem HaGedolim*):

Although the *Chida* was counted among the younger of the *Ohr HaChaim's talmidim*, still Rav Chaim ben Attar greatly admired him, drew him close and bestowed upon the *Chida* a special and unique *berocha* that from Heaven the *Chida* should be sanctified with the *kedusha* of Aharon HaKohen!

At first the *Chida* misconstrued his *Rebbe's* meaning and thought he had been blessed with the ability to give *berochos* to *Am Yisrael be'ahava* just as Aharon and the *Kohanim* bless the Jewish people. However, decades later, the true meaning of this special *berocha* was revealed in the following amazing manner:

In his old age, the *Chida* ended up in Leghorn, Italy, which the Jews know as Livorno. He had refused the position of *Rav* again and again, although the various communities' elders and leaders tried to have him take up the post. Instead, the *Chida* preferred to sit and learn Torah uninterrupted except for a four-year stint when he took up the post of *Rav* while he was in Egypt. Nonetheless, although he held no official title or position, all the Jews knew of his greatness and accorded him the honor and respect due to a sage and *Talmid Chochom*, one of the *Gedolim* of the generation.

One day, a community leader came before the *Chida* and complained to him that his wife had been seen alone in the company of another man. "If this is so," said the *Chida*, "you must divorce her, give her a *get* and she loses any rights to collect her *kesuba*."

The *Dayonim* heard his decision and were baffled; how could he decide such a matter without any testimony or evidence? But they dared not contradict his ruling. The *Chida* asked that the wife be summoned to the place in the *Bais Medrash* where he sat and studied, immersed in Torah. The *Chida* tried to persuade her gently and kindly to accept a

get of divorce from her husband, but the woman was brazen and arrogant. She answered the Rav back with *chutzpa* and as she spat back her arguments to the Rav, the *Chida* remembered the *berocha* he had received from the *Ohr HaChaim*, his *Rebbe*, all those years ago.

Turning to the insulting woman, the *Chida* asked, "Please, I have just one request. Listen as I read aloud to you a portion from the *Parsha* in the Torah."

The arrogant woman acquiesced to this one request and stood still as the *Chida* took out a Torah and began to recite the *Parsha* of *Naso* where the Torah describes the *sota*. As the *Chida* read the *pesukim* the woman began to leave in the middle – but she did not escape in time, for just as she reached the stairs, the *Chida* concluded reading the *Parsha* of the *sota*, and no sooner did he finish the last words than she stopped with her foot resting on the step, while her face contorted and her eyes bulged out of their sockets. With a shriek she collapsed and dropped dead. Hearing her outcry, many people rushed to the scene as she breathed her last, and witnessed this miraculous event.

WHAT DELAYED THE OHR HACHAIM FROM HIS SHIUR IN YESHIVA

Rav Chaim Yosef Arye Prager of Brisk writes how the *Chida* once met the *Gaon* Rav Dovid Ashkenazi of Bichov, who lived in Teverya and was sent by Rav Avrohom Kalisker to collect funds for the nascent and struggling *Chassidishe yishuv* there. Rav Dovid traveled in the west for some seven years collecting, and on one of his travels he met the *Chida* in Livorno. During their discussion about how greatly esteemed his *Rebbe*, the *Ohr HaChaim*, was among the *Chassidim*, the *Chida* replied humbly that he did not consider himself worthy of being called a true *talmid* who knew the *Ohr HaChaim*, claiming that he was just someone who had studied there in his *Yeshiva*. He then related to Rav Dovid the following amazing story about his *Rebbe*, Rav Chaim ben Attar, the *Ohr HaChaim*:

Once, the *Ohr HaChaim* was late to arrive at the *Yeshiva*. This was uncharacteristic of him and all the *talmidim* who had gathered at the appointed time for his *shiur* wondered at this departure from custom. When the hour grew late and the delay continued, the *Chida* gathered his courage and himself went to his *Rebbe's* home to see what the delay was about and to call on the *Ohr HaChaim*. When he got there, he engaged Rav Chaim in conversation and the *Ohr HaChaim* told the *Chida* in a totally nonchalant and dismissive manner as part of the conversation, "I was late because I was stuck on a difficult *Tosafos*

which I simply couldn't unravel or understand at all until...*Rabbeinu Yitzchok*, one of the *Ba'alei Tosafos*, came and explained to me what he meant."

IT WAS ONLY L'SHEM SHAMAYIM

The *Ohr HaChaim* used to make frequent trips with his *talmidim* to *daven* at *kivrei Tzaddikim* in *Yerushalayim*. The *Chida* described one such trip that he himself went on and accompanied the *Ohr HaChaim* and what he saw the *Ohr HaChaim* do on that occasion:

"In my youth I merited to travel together with the wondrous holy *Chassid*, our Master, Rav Chaim ben Attar and the students of his *Yeshiva*, to travel to *daven* at the *kivrei Tzaddikim* in *Yerushalayim*. When we reached the *matzeiva* of the Rav, author of the *sefer Pri Chodosh*, we watch as the Rav [the *Ohr HaChaim*] remained there alone for some fifteen minutes or more, *davening* at the *kever*, and his lips moved as he was talking and we understood that he was asking *mechila* from the *Pri Chodosh* that he be forgiven [for Rav Chaim ben Attar, in his *sefer Pri To'ar*, would rule against him and argue on some of his points] and that all that he did was purely *L'shem Shomayim* (for the sake of Heaven)." (*Shem HaGedolim*, Section on *Seforim*, Entry for *Pri To'ar*)

MEETING THE OHR HACHAIM

There are various traditions regarding how and when the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* brother-in-law met Rav Chaim ben Attar, *mechaber* of the *Ohr HaChaim*, in *Eretz Yisrael*:

After the printing of the *chumashim Ohr HaChaim* in Venice in the year *tov-kuf-bais*, they reached the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, who greatly rejoiced in them. He found in them an author whose heart and soul were filled with emotion and excitement for *Avodas Hashem*. He sent his brother-in-law, Rav Gershon of Kitov, to *Yerushalayim* to visit Rav Chaim ben Attar's *Yeshiva*. He told Rav Gershon that Rav Chaim ben Attar had two *Yeshivos*, one where they studied *nigle* (the revealed Torah) and one where they studied the hidden secrets of *Toras HaKabbola*. The *Ba'al Shem* warned Rav Gershon to try to attend the *Yeshiva* for *nistar* and not to reveal to the *Ohr HaChaim* who he was, hiding his identity until the *Ohr HaChaim* would feel it and understand for himself.

When Rav Gershon arrived he requested permission to hear a *derosha* from the *Ohr haChaim*. Permission was granted and he studied in *Yeshivas HaNigle* for about a week.

Afterward, he requested admission to the other Yeshiva for *Kabbola*.

“Who revealed to you that I have a Yeshiva for *nistar*?”

He answered that his brother-in-law, the *Ba'al Shem*, had told him. The *Ohr HaChaim* did not know him, but he scrutinized Rav Gershon from head to toe and declared him fit and ready to study *Kabbola*. After studying there for three days, the *Ohr HaChaim* gave word to prevent him from coming back and Rav Gershon found his way blocked from entry. When Rav Gershon approached the Rav's house to find out why he had been banned, the *Ohr HaChaim* saw him and said, “I am angry at you. Why didn't you say your brother-in-law was the *Ba'al Shem Tov*? You just said, ‘Rav Yisrael Ba'al Shem!’ I don't know any Rav Yisrael Ba'al Shem, but I know who the *Ba'al Shem Tov* is! I know him from seeing him in the supernal worlds!” and he no longer allowed Rav Gershon access to the Yeshiva, explaining that he needed no other Rebbe or Rav if he already had the *Ba'al Shem Tov*. (*Doresh Tov Tshortkov, Acharon Shel Pesach* p. 194)

KIRUV RECHOKIM

Rav Yitzchok of Neshchiz related on *Motzoei Shabbos Parshas Behaalosecha, tov-reish-kaf-zayin*:

Rav Gershon of Kitov met the *Ohr HaChaim* in *Eretz Yisrael* and told him about his brother-in-law the *Ba'al Shem Tov*. The *Ohr HaChaim* replied that he had heard of him and that his name was Yisrael. Rav Gershon Kitover also asked the *Ohr HaChaim* why he kept a certain *talmid* in his Yeshiva whom Rav Gershon had seen behaving improperly, unbecoming for a Yeshiva student. “This is our way,” answered the *Ohr HaChaim*. “We draw closer those who are distant – we are *mekarev rechokim*.” (*Zichron Tov* p. 16 #8)

When Rav Gershon of Kitov traveled to *Eretz Yisrael*, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* told him to meet with the *Ohr HaChaim*. “If he doesn't know of his greatness, send him regards from me and tell him I see him in *Moshiach Heichal* – the supernal palace, where *Moshiach* sits on a throne and studies the *Ohr HaChaim*.”

When Rav Gershon came to *Eretz Yisrael*, he arrived at the *Ohr HaChaim's* Yeshiva and asked why he studied with *talmidim* who behave inappropriately; others say that he asked why he studied with people with lowly souls.

The *Ohr HaChaim* asked Rav Gershon from where he hailed. When he said that he was from Polnoy, the *Ohr HaChaim* responded that he should return the following day. The next day, the *Ohr HaChaim* told him, "I saw your Rebbe and he is a very great man."

Rav Gershon then related his regards from the *Ba'al Shem* and relayed the *Ba'al Shem's* message. The *Ohr HaChaim* responded, "I don't know what favor he does me by revealing my greatness. Tell him I saw the Angel of Death and that he stands with one foot on Polnoy and the other on the entire world." This was a hint at the danger facing European Jewry and that they would need mercy. He also responded that the reason he studied with people with lowly souls was because he sought to redeem holy sparks from places that they had been captured and held hostage. (*Kisvei Ri Shuv of Brisk*)

YOUTHFUL PAST TRANSFORMED INTO MERIT THROUGH THE OHR HACHAIM

When Rav Chaim Dovid, the doctor of Pietrokow, lay on his sickbed, he was visited by the *Tiferes Shlomo*. The *Rebbe* found the good doctor crying and he thought that he was crying over the misdeeds of his youth, since he was a *ba'al teshuva*. The *Tiferes Shlomo* asked him, "Why are you crying? Don't worry your past. Those days will fall away and be forgiven and forgotten."

Rav Chaim Dovid answered the *Tiferes Shlomo*, "I do not wish them to fall away and be forgotten. Rather, I wish to do *teshuva* out of love! Then all my intentional transgressions will be transformed into merits! And in the merit of studying the *sefer Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* on a weekly basis and memorizing it, surely they will all become *zechuyos* (merits)!" (*Kodesh Hillulim* p. 75)

THREE CUSTOMS

The *Rebbe Rashab* of Lubavitch taught and commanded his son, the *Rebbe Rayatz*, to fulfill three practices, one of which was that he should study *Chumash* with *Rashi* and the commentary of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh*. (*Shivchei Ohr HaChaim*)

HIS APPRECIATION OF THE OHR HACHAIM

From when he was just six years old Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver studied the entire commentary of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* on the weekly *Parsha*, all by himself. He would constantly speak about how important the study of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* is and once remarked: "*Ich veis nisht viazoy ich valt gekent a'durech di letzteh fiftzig yohr*

ohn Ohr HaChaim – I don't know how I would have survived the last fifty years of my life without the *Ohr HaChaim!*" (*Toldos Yaakov Yosef Skver* p. 22)

Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver used to say, "The first *Chassidishe sefer* is the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh*." (*Be'or HaChaim* p. 241)

Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver used to say that every word in the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* is an entire body of *Yiddishkeit* and that there is almost no *Chassidus* of which the *Ohr HaChaim* is not the bread and butter of its basis to the extent that one can fully and truly say that the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* is the one *sefer* that has been most widely accepted by the most Chassidim (*Nachlas Tzvi Kovetz* 7 p. 52)

WITHOUT THE OHR HACHAIM HOW CAN YOU BE A JEW?

Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver used to say that every word of the *Ohr HaChaim* is like a whole Torah in and of itself. He even said, "One cannot be a full-fledged Jew without studying this holy *sefer!*"

If ever a *bochur* suffered a downturn in his *Yiras Shomayim*, the *Rebbe* ordered him to study the *Ohr HaChaim* even on non-mussar topics, because he said that studying his holy words was a *segula* to work on the soul.

SIMCHAS TORAH IN SKVER

Rav Neta Freund once told how every year on *Simchas Torah*, Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver would complete the *Ohr HaChaim* and then begin studying it anew from *Bereishis*. He then danced with the *sefer Ohr HaChaim* in hand like we dance with a *Sefer Torah*. Whoever witnessed this event can begin to understand the profound connection that Skverer Chassidus has with the *Ohr HaChaim*.

(Sources: *Hillula Kadisha* p. 317-318)

JUST A SLIGHT TOUCH TO AWAKEN HIM

Once, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi told his *mechutan*, Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, the following story regarding the *dveikus* of the *Ohr HaChaim*:

There was once a terrible decree enacted against *Bnei Yisrael* by the *goyim* and the

leaders of the *kehilla* decided that they must *daven* and bribe the authorities to attempt to rescind the harsh judgment. They voted and unanimously agreed that they must take emergency measures and ask the Ohr HaChaim to *daven* on their behalf.

Quickly they rushed in alarm to the Ohr HaChaim's *Bais Medrash*, where they found him sunk deep in holy thoughts. They could see with their own eyes that the Tzaddik was in a world of his own and they feared to approach him. They waited, patiently hoping that any minute he would awaken from this state, but were disappointed to see that as time passed the Tzaddik's condition remained the same; he was in a state of such intense *dveikus* that he neither responded nor even acknowledged their presence.

They knew that if anyone should touch him even just slightly, or brush against his clothes, he would immediately awaken, and they were sure that he would gladly come to their aid in such a time of distress and need. Still, they were afraid to disturb the Tzaddik, because they knew just how careful he was and how upset he became when anyone touched him or disturbed his immediate surroundings, interrupting his state of intense *tahara*. They therefore finally decided to bring a young, pure child, who had never sinned or thought negative thoughts. They immersed the child in the *mikve* and dressed him in brand new clothing; only then did they allow the child to touch the cloak of the Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh gently, just for a second. As soon as the child's fingers brushed the Tzaddik's cloak, he awakened from his *dveikus* and returned to normal.

Concluded Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi to Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, "See just how great a level of *dveikus* the Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh had; his love and awe of Hashem were also amazingly lofty as well. (*Lemaan Yeidu Bonim Yivoldu* #91)

THE TWO MOSHIACHS

This story was heard from the chief Rav of Teverya, Rav Yaakov Chai Zerihan:

When Rav Chaim ben Attar, *mechaber* of the *Ohr HaChaim*, arrived in Teverya, he went to the *Bais Medrash* and found a group of *talmidim* sitting together and studying under their master and teacher Rav Chaim Abulafia, who sat teaching them Torah and studying with them, supported by many cushions and pillows propped on either side for his comfort. When the *Ohr HaChaim* saw all the cushions and pillows, he said quietly to himself in wonder, "Does the Torah deserve this? [How can he relax and disrespect the *Torah* like

that?]"

Rav Chaim Abulafia saw the *Ohr HaChaim* and immediately called out in a loud voice, "The *Chacham Chaim* has come to us!" When the *Ohr HaChaim* approached, Rav Chaim Abulafia rose to his feet and stood to greet him, reciting the *pasuk*, "Arise before your elders - *mipnei seiva sokum*," and they sat and studied together *sugyas* of *Shas*. Rav Chaim ben Attar was amazed at Rav Chaim Abulafia's great scholarship, erudition and breadth of knowledge in Torah. Then Rav Chaim Abulafia told the *Ohr HaChaim*, "The Torah does deserve this and requires it, due to my advanced age and weakness!" The *Ohr HaChaim* then asked his forgiveness.

Afterward, they left together to the *kever* of the Tanna Rav Akiva and, not to waste time, they rented an animal to take Rav Chaim Abulafia, who was some ninety-three years old at the time. When they arrived at the cave of the Tanna, Rav Abulafia dismounted from the donkey and they honored one another to enter first. Rav Chaim ben Attar sat and wept, "Woe are we that both *Moshiachs* have arrived here together at the right time!"

A great fog and mist crept over them and hid them from view. Whisperings and low conversation between them were heard as they both wept quietly. Those present later surmised that it was revealed to both Rav Chaims that they would pass away, one a year after the other. And so it was, that due to our sins Rav Chaim ben Attar passed away on the fifteenth of *Tammuz* 5503 and Rav Chaim Abulafia in *Nissan* of that following year 5504. (*Hillula Kadisha* p. 308 cited from *Yalkut Yosef* p. 42)

RISHON LETZION - RAV YEHUDA HECHASSID'S STORY

Rav Yosef Karo rules based on *Sanhedrin* 7a that a person's judgment commences with *Divrei Torah*. The *Ohr HaChaim*, in his *sefer Rishon LeTzion* on *Yoreh De'a* (*siman* 245), comments on the *Pesak Halocha* of the *Shulchon Aruch* that the reason for this is that the verdict of the judgment varies according to whether or not the guilty party knew that the transgression he was committing was forbidden by the Torah or not. They therefore cross-examine the accused, asking him if he studied Torah or not, to see what he knew to be forbidden or not. If he was a *Talmid Chochom*, his verdict and judgment is different from one who was unlearned.

I have seen proof for my position, says the *Ohr HaChaim*, in a story about Rav Yehuda

HeChassid regarding a wealthy man who used to shave his beard in a forbidden manner using a razor, and who was warned by Rav Yehuda HeChassid against this practice. When he was *niftar*, Rav Yehuda HeChassid recalled his soul. The dead man stood up and recounted his judgment, describing how he was asked if he had studied Torah. When he affirmed that he was literate in *Chumash*, they brought before him a *sefer*, opened it and asked him to read what was written there. He read the *pesukim* regarding the prohibition against shaving the *peyos* and the beard. We see, concludes the *Ohr HaChaim*, that before he was judged for his transgression they checked to see whether he had studied it before and this is as we explained.

The entire story as cited by the *Ohr HaChaim* in *Rishon LeTzion* is found in the *Sefer HaGan* (in the chapter for the fourth day) from a handwritten manuscript by Rav Zalman the son of Rav Yehuda HeChassid, who relates:

My father and master the Chassid told me that there was once a wealthy man in Speyer who used to shave off his beard using razors. My father admonished him and he did not pay any attention to my father's rebuke, because he would retort that he was a dainty *istenis* and that the beard bothered him. My father warned him that his end would be bitter, that after his death demonic beings like cows and oxen would run over him, beard and *peyos*, and that this is the punishment for those who shave off their beards and *peyos*, because the *pasuk* says, "Do not shave the corners of your facial hair" - *lo sakifu pe'as rosh'chem velo sas'chisu*, whose *roishei teivos* (initial letters) form the acrostic spelling *poros* - "oxen" or "cows" [*pe'as rosh'chem velo sash'chisu* = *poros*].

When the wealthy man passed away and all the important people from Speyer sat by his body, my father wrote a Divine Name on parchment and placed it upon the dead man's body. My father asked him what happened to his soul after death and he told my father, "After my soul left my body a great demon, like an ox or a cow, came and filled a vessel with tar and pitch and trapped my soul therein, and I was unable to escape. Then the attribute of judgment came and took this vessel from the demonic ox with my soul trapped inside, unable to flee, and they brought me before the stronghold of all souls. There, a heavenly voice rang out, asking me if I had ever studied *Torah* and was learned in knowing how to read. I affirmed that I had and could and they immediately brought me a *Chumash* and opened it and I found that it opened up straight to the *pasuk* about the *mitzva* forbidding the cutting of the beard and shaving of the *peyos* and I had no answer

for them in my defense. Immediately, I heard them declare the verdict that my soul was to be placed in the lowest of all levels.”

THE NER HAMAARUVI HAS GONE OUT

In the year 5503 on Parshas Balak during Sholosh Seudos, the Ba'al Shem Tov suddenly told the talmidim, “I believe that the Ner HaMaarovi, the Western Candle, has been extinguished.” After Havdola the talmidim asked the Ba'al Shem what he meant. He explained to them, “The holy Tzaddik, the mechaber of the Ohr HaChaim, has left this world. The way I know this is because there is one secret regarding Netilas Yodayim (when we wash our hands before HaMotzi), and this secret is only revealed to one Tzaddik in each generation. Until today, this secret was given to the Ohr HaChaim – and now that secret has been revealed to me. I realized that if I have been given this secret I must be the only one who knows – and this must mean that the Ohr HaChaim is no longer with us in this world.” (Gloss Menachem Tzion to Shem HaGedolim Seforim Alef Siman 54)

AFTER THREE TIMES THEY GAVE UP

Rav Chaim Uri Lipshitz used to tell this story about the Ohr HaChaim that he heard from the Arabs:

After the Six-Day War, when Yerushalayim was under Jordanian rule, the Jordanians decided to renovate and destroy the Jewish cemetery at the Mount of Olives. They began using a tractor to demolish kevorim but when the tractor reached the kever of the Ohr HaChaim the tractor overturned, killing the Arab driver. That did not deter them, however, and they sent a second tractor, which for some reason broke down just as it reached the Ohr HaChaim's kever. They fixed the tractor and had the engine repaired, and then the second tractor also turned itself over and the driver was seriously injured. Finally, they decided to use a metal sledgehammer to demolish the kever by hand, but this time somehow the hammer flew out of the worker's hands and struck the foreman in the head. Finally, they admitted that the Divine Hand must be involved and they gave up! From then on their nefarious plot was over; never again did the Jordanians try to demolish the tziun of the Ohr HaChaim, and eventually control of the Bais HaChaim returned to Jewish hands. (Hillula Kadisha, 15th of Tammuz, page 612)

WHEN THEY STOPPED PUBLISHING THE OHR HACHAIM HAKADOSH

I once heard from a Bershader chassid that Rav Pinchos Koretzer used to say that

studying the sefer Ohr haChaim haKadosh is a *segulah* for the *neshamah*, similar to studying the Zohar haKadosh.

This is because Rashbi had the *neshama* of Moshiach of his generation, and also Rav Chaim ben Attar author of the Ohr haChaim haKadosh also had the *neshama* of Moshiach of his generation. He ordered his descendants, the Shapiro grandchildren of the Slovisa Press to publish the Sefer Ohr haChaim HaKadosh and that that would save them from evil and harm. They fulfilled his command until there were so many published editions of the Ohr haChaim, that the seforim greatly outnumbered the demand and there were no buyers left to purchase copies. Therefore, they stopped publishing copies of the *sefer*, that very year that they ceased publishing the Ohr haChaim the infamous libel occurred and they were falsely accused. (Migdal Oz pg 268 cited by Likkutei Imrei Pinchos Sha'ar haTorah 15)

Rav Aryeh Leibush Halberstam Father of the Divrei Chaim (Tammuz 15)

THE REWARD THAT WAS ESCHEWED

Rav Aryeh Leibush Halberstam studied in the *kloiz* of *Chachmei Brode*. He was known as a *tzaddik* who performed all the *mitzvos* with as many *hiddurim* as possible. There was once a stormy Sukkos and it was almost impossible to sleep in the *sukkah* as it had become flooded with water. Despite the inclement weather, Rav Aryeh Leibush's desire to fulfill the *mitzvah* to sleep in the *sukkah* left him no peace.

However, he did not wish to sleep there alone so he tried to convince the [son of] the tailor to join him. The tailor refused based on the weather and Rav Aryeh Leibush proceeded to offer him money and gifts, but to no avail. Finally, Rav Aryeh Leibush offered to share with the tailor half of his own *olam haba* for sleeping with him in the *sukkah*-- so strong was his desire to fulfill the *mitzvah* of Sukkos *b'shleimus*. The tailor agreed, and so it was.

Many years later, after Rav Aryeh Leibush passed on, the tailor was lying on his sickbed. His life began to ebb away and he had a vision in which he saw Rav Aryeh Leibush coming towards him: "Do you remember my promise to you all those years ago in the *sukkah* when you slept there together with me?" Rav Aryeh Leibush asked the dying tailor. The tailor had indeed, forgotten the incident. Rav Aryeh Leibush jogged his memory until the

promise of that long ago Sukkos came back to him.

“Here I have come now to take you back with me to sit beside me in my supernal chamber. You will receive half my reward. Unless you wish to exchange it for more life here in this world.”

The tailor was a simple person and he readily agreed to live longer in exchange for the spiritual reward. The moment he made the decision, his fever broke, and he was healed. Afterwards, he regretted his hasty decision to forgo the spiritual reward. He decided to travel to Sanz to the *Divrei Chaim*, Rav Aryeh Leibush's son and successor. He handed the *tzaddik* a *kvitel* and complained about the grave mistake he made. The *Divrei Chaim* could only smile compassionately. It was too late to go back and change things now. (Sources: *Tzvi Tifara Maasay Rav* p. 163, *Shefa Chaim Yerach Eysanim* Vol 2 p. 193, *Mekor Chaim* 324).

Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel Kopycznitzer Rebbe (Tammuz 16)

AN OLD HAT

Two *askonim* once visited the *Rebbe*. They told him that among the recently arrived Holocaust survivors was an important rabbi who was dressed in tatters, and that they were trying to collect for respectable clothing for him. They then asked the *Rebbe* if he could donate his old hat. The *Rebbe* went to the closet, took out his new hat and gave it to them. The *askonim* were embarrassed. “We meant that the *Rebbe* should give us his old hat, the one he doesn't use any more,” they explained. Replied the *Rebbe*, “In the World to Come, a person's clothing will be made up of the *mitzvos* and good deeds that he did in this world. Do you want me to sit in *Olam Haba* with an old hat?”

Yisroel Safrin author. As featured in the Monsey Mevasser 'Klal Personalities' series

HE'S A JEW AND I WILL LOVE HIM

A friend of mine from out of town attended Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and befriended the *Rebbe's* son, Zisha. He became a *Ben Bayis* in the home of the *Rebbe* on Henry Street on the East Side. To witness the constant flow of *Yidden* with all kinds of *Tzoris*, my friend was moved to ask the *Rebbe* - “How can the *Rebbe* love every *Yid*?” To which the *Rebbe*

replied: "I will answer you in two ways:" "Number One is "To love Rav Aharon Kotler, you don't need *Ahavas Yisroel*. The second thing is: When you look at the face of a person entering the door, you can see either the joy on his face or the troubles and burdens he carries. When I see the door open and the foot come through the door, I do not wait to see the face- I say '*Ehr Iz A Yid, Un Ich Gay Ehm Leib Huben*'-He's a Jew and I will love him."

Yisroel Safrin author. As featured in the Monsey Mevasser 'Klal Personalities' series

PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME INTO A LIAR

My friend further related a story: "A Jew came to the *Rebbe* begging him to assure him his daughter, suffering from a kidney ailment 'will' have a *refuah sheleima*. The *Rebbe* replied, "She 'should' have a *Refuah Sheleima*." The *Yid* started crying and said: "I am not leaving until the *Rebbe* promises me that she 'will' have a *refuah sheleima*." The *Rebbe* said, "Who am I that I can promise such a thing." The man sat and cried bitterly for a long time. Finally the *Rebbe* stood up and said: "Go home - She 'will' have a *refuah sheleima*." This young boy heard the exchange, and after the man had left, he approached the *Rebbe*, asking "How could the *Rebbe* have such '*koichois*' that he could promise such a thing?" The *Rebbe* replied: "I don't have any special '*koichois*.' I saw that this man would have passed out if I did not promise him. Afterward, I lift my hands to *Hashem* in *Tefillah* and I cry: '*Ribbono Shel HaOlam*- I am begging you Please do not make me into a liar."

When a similar incident occurred with the *Rebbe* giving a *havtacha*, the *Rebbe* later said: "Apparently, *Hashem* had mercy on me. He didn't want the Kopycznitzer *Rebbe* to become known to one and all as a liar who makes promises that he can't keep, so He heard my *Tefillos*."

Yisroel Safrin author. As featured in the Monsey Mevasser 'Klal Personalities' series

TZEDEK LEFANAV YEHALECH

A grandson, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel writing in Hamodia's Inyan Magazine, related the following: "The *Potiker Rav* was walking home from the *mikveh* with the *Rebbe* on Henry Street on the Lower East Side when the *Rebbe* said: "What's going on there?" pointing across the street. A woman was sitting with shopping bags and other things on the stoop. "Let's go over there and see what's going on," said the *Rebbe*. The *Rebbe* said to the woman, "What are you doing here outside so early in the morning?" She

said, "The landlord put me out. I didn't pay the rent." "Where does he live?" She said, "here on the first floor." So they knocked on the door. The landlord seemed a bit astounded to find the *Kopycznitzer Rebbe* and the *Potiker Rav* standing at his door so early in the morning. "*Rebbe*, this is a business. She hasn't paid the rent in six months," he told the *Rebbe*. "How much does she owe?" "Sixty dollars- that's for six months." The *Rebbe* took out the money from his pocket and gave it to the landlord. He then walked to his *Bais Medrash* and walked back to bring another \$60 to the landlord. He said, "I am paying six months in advance. Now can she move back in?" "Yes, yes, she can move back in." "Now let's go *daven*," he told the *Rav*. Now I understand the *pshat* in the *pasuk* '*Tzedek Lefanav Yehalech*' - Righteousness goes before him." The *Rav* commented when he told the story. The *Rebbe* was so careful in regard to *shmiras einayim* that he didn't actually see the woman. His heart felt that this woman was sitting outside at 6 am in the morning. *Chessed* was so intrinsic in the *Rebbe* that his heart 'saw' her across the street.

ICH BIN A PASHUTER ZELNER

Rav Shlomo Lorincz once asked the *Rebbe* why he was not a member of the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah*. "In order to be a member of the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah*," he replied, "one must be a *Talmid Chacham*." On a different occasion, he answered the question thus: "*Ich bin a pashuter zelner* (I am a simple soldier). I am willing to do whatever is asked of me, but I leave the *daas Torah* to others. Whatever they decide, I'll do."

THE REBBES BROCHA

Rav Shneur Kotler related that when his father, *Rav Aharon Kotler*, was hospitalized for medical treatment, *Rav Aharon* asked if anyone had mentioned his situation to 'the *Rebbe*.' "To which *rebbe* is the *Rosh Hayeshiva* referring?" asked one of his relatives. When I say 'the *Rebbe*' *Rav Aharon* retorted, I mean the *Kopycznitzer Rebbe*." *Rav Shneur* added that his father sent every *chassan* in the *yeshiva* to the *Rebbe* for a *bracha* before the wedding. (By *Yisroel Safrin* . As featured in *The Monsey Mevasser 'Klal Personalities' series*)

DEDICATION TO CHINUCH ATZMAI

Among the countless stories about the boundless *Ahavas Yisrael*, incredible acts of *cheded*, and the miracles witnessed in the *zechus* of the *brachos* of the *Kopycznitzer Rebbe*, *zy'a* are many that could easily fill entire volumes. We share a few of those stories that contain pertinent lessons. At a certain gathering of *gedolei Torah* at which both *Rav*

Aharon Kotler *zt"l* and the *Kopycznitzer Rebbe* were present, Rav Aharon turned to the *Rebbe* and asked his opinion on the issue under discussion. When Rav Aharon was later asked why the *Rebbe's* opinion was so important to him, he replied: "The *Torah* was given to the Jewish people in order to purify them - and the *Kopycznitzer Rebbe* has purified himself." The *Kopycznitzer Rebbe* was the first one to volunteer for any holy undertaking, and he was one of those who shouldered the burden of fund raising for Chinuch Atzmai. Together with Rav Aharon Kotler, Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky and the Novominsker Rebbe, he knocked on people's doors for hours each night to appeal for donations. Each month, ten thousand dollars had to be collected. Before *Yom Kippur*, Rav Aharon Kotler called the *Rebbe* and said the money must be sent immediately to Eretz Yisroel for the teachers to be paid before *Yom Tov*, but he did not yet have the entire sum. Rav Aharon asked the *Rebbe* to please lend five thousand dollars to the cause, and he himself would make up the difference. The *Rebbe* answered that there was no way he could take a loan since he had not paid back the loan from the previous month, but he agreed to raise the requisite sum. On *Erev Yom Kippur*, as everyone was getting ready for the *seudah hamafsekes*, the *Rebbe* called Reb Henschel Cohen, the director of the Chinuch Atzmai American office and requested that he come at once. When Reb Henschel arrived, the *Rebbe* said to him, "Go to my table and gather up all the money that's there." Many Jews had come to the *Rebbe* on *Erev Yom Kippur*, in order to receive a *brocha* and give a *pidyon*. Reb Henschel knew that the money on the table was the *Rebbe's* means of supporting himself for the next half a year and he hesitated to take it. But the *Rebbe* insisted, saying, "Don't worry about me." So Reb Henschel took the money and indeed, it added up to the requisite sum needed for Chinuch Atzmai.

Yisroel Safran author. As featured in the Monsey Mevasser 'Klal Personalities' series.

TAXI RIDES

Whenever the *Rebbe* rode in a taxi, he always sat next to the driver, despite the fact that doing so might be unfitting for a *Rebbe*. Most of the drivers were Jews, and his purpose in sitting next to them was to engage them in conversation with the hope of having some influence on their religious observance. There were many cab drivers upon whom he prevailed to start putting on *tefillin*, and he himself purchased pairs of *tefillin* for drivers who promised that they would put them on daily, even if just for a few moments.

Yisroel Safran author. As featured in the Monsey Mevasser 'Klal Personalities' series.

A man once came to pour out his troubles to the *Rebbe*. His daughter had unfortunately strayed so far from Judaism that she wanted to marry a non-Jew. Her father begged her not to inflict such pain on him, but to no avail. He therefore decided to tell her that if she went through with the marriage, he would cut off all contact with her. The *Rebbe* heard the man out and empathized with his pain. After thinking the matter through, he said: "My opinion is that you should stop discussing the issue with your daughter. Don't try to force her hand by threatening to cut off contact with her. I will advise you to do one thing," continued the *Rebbe*. "Tell her that you want the engagement party to be held in your home, and that you want the non-Jewish man's entire family to participate, with no exceptions. The party will not take place until everyone can come. Prepare a lavish meal with abundant food and plenty of liquor. With G-d's help, everything will work out fine. Just keep trusting Him." On the day of the party, the gentile fiance's entire family arrived at the Jew's house. They sat down to the extravagant meal, all the while joking boisterously. Those present stuffed themselves with food and drink as though they were in a saloon, until they were completely inebriated. In their drunkenness, they began to swear and curse the Jews. The father stood at the side and wiped the tears that streamed down his face. His daughter sat at the head of the table, and there seemed to be no difference between her and the rest of the guests. Eventually, everyone got up and went home. The turning point came a few hours later. The daughter turned to her father. "I regret everything," she said. "I want to call off my engagement. I was born a Jewess, and so I will remain for the rest of my life." Needless to say, her father was ecstatic, and tears of joy replaced the tears of pain he had shed earlier. He asked no questions, but ran to the *Rebbe's* home in order to thank him for the miracle that he had performed. The *Rebbe* was thrilled at the good news. "Please," he said, "sit down and let me explain why your daughter had a complete change of heart. Know that a Jewish *neshama* is always on a higher level, no matter how far a person has strayed. Your daughter's soul cannot stand lowliness and lack of values. I knew from the start that even if she married him, she would find him insufferable once she became familiar with his way of life. What a shame it would have been for the wool to be lifted from her eyes only after her intermarriage was a fait accompli. "Liquor is one of the things that brings out a person's true colors. That is the reason that I advised you to make the party for the entire family - in order to give your daughter the opportunity to see their true ways within a short period of time. And that is exactly what happened."

Yisroel Safrin author. As featured in the Monsey Mevasser 'Klal Personalities' series.

On *Purim* Day of 1967, the author stopped at the *Kopycznitzer Bais Medrash* during the seuda and the eldest son of the *Rebbe*, Reb Yisroel (for whom I did 'toivois' on a regular basis in business) saw me and singled me out. He rushed me up to his father saying: "The *Rebbe* should please give this man a special *brocha*." The holy *Rebbe* took my right hand in between his two hands and said emphatically: "*Di zolst zoche zein tzu gitte zachen bimheira bekurev*" - "May you merit good things speedily." That night was the "clincher" between my wife and I, as we spent many hours talking. My late wife and I were married on *Tu B'Av* (15 Av) just after the *Kopycznitzer Rebbe* was *niftar*. We resided on the outskirts of Boro Park and on Shabbos I would walk to the *Kopycznitzer Bais Medrash* on 55th Street to *daven*. For the first year there was no *Rebbe*, until the *Rebbe's* son, Rav Moshe Mordechai accepted the leadership role. In the interim, in 1971 we moved to Monsey but returned for the "*upsheren*" of our eldest son in a meaningful ceremony. In the *Rebbe's* final years, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua became weak, yet he still soldiered on with his many activities. He would say that he davened that he should remain active until his final day, and this would come true. On 16 *Tammuz*, 1967, the *Rebbe* was by the Weissmandel family in Monsey for some respite, when he asked for the *sefer Sha'ar Haggmul* of the *Ramban* which speaks of the reward for *Tzaddikim*. In the midst of learning the *sefer*, his holy soul ascended to *shomayim*. His sudden *petira* was a shock to all. An enormous *levaya* took place at the *Kopycznitzer Bais Medrash* in Boro Park. The *Rebbe* is interred in Tiveria, in the Husyatiner/Ruzhin Chelka, among many *Gedolei Yisrael*, alongside his son, Rav Moshe Mordechai Heschel, who succeeded him. The author and his family were *zoche* many times to be mispallel at both *Rebbe's Kvorim* when visiting Tiveria. *Tehei Nishmasam Baruch!*

Yisroel Safrin author. As featured in Monsey Mevasser 'Klal Personalities' series.

Rav Mordechai Leib Winkler (Tammuz 17)

THE GREATNESS OF RAV MORDECHAI

Rav Mordechai's first rabbinical position was in Meza-Telegd near Grossvarden, with the help of his *rebbe*, who gifted him the position in 5632 (1872) at the young age of twenty-eight. Rav Yitzchak Aharon entered the gates of Meza-Telegd together with Rav

Mordechai, telling the townspeople (who were under his jurisdiction as Rav of Grossvarden): "I come to you twice a year to deliver a *derashah*; this time my *derashah* to you is: 'A young rabbi stands before you, who is fit to serve as the head of your community. I ask that you hire him, placing the crown of the rabbinate on his head!'" The community wholeheartedly accepted the Rav's words and appointed Rav Mordechai. His rebbe eventually bestowed several other small towns from within his jurisdiction to this favored young *talmid chacham*.

[This is a tribute not only to Rav Mordechai's abilities, but to Rav Yitzchak Aharon's sterling *middos*. The custom in those times was for a rav to reserve such coveted appointments for his sons and sons-in-law, yet Rav Yitzchak Aharon gifted them to his *talmid*! He didn't merely grant Rav Mordechai a letter of recommendation to be used as he set out on his own search for a position; he gave away to him a portion of his own salary-paying constituents! (*Temunas HeGedolim* - Rav Katzburg)

Before he assumed his first position, Rav Mordechai, in his humility, turned to his *rebbe* and protested, "They want me to move there and assume the rabbinate in two weeks, but how can I be worthy of doing so when I have not yet even received *semicha* ordination for *hora'ah*?" Rav Yitzchak Aharon replied to his student that his having learned all of *Chullin*, *Niddah* and *Mikvaos* together with all their commentaries by heart was enough, and that he would write up the *semicha* and have his fellow *dayanim* sign it without delay!

Rav Meir Perels, *Av Beis Din* of Kruli, once visited Rav Yitzchak Aharon, who boasted how he'd given Rav Mordechai the position as Rav of Meza-Telegd. Rav Perels tested Rav Mordechai, and the two spoke about many *shailos* and intricate *sugyos* of *Shas*. The Rav was so impressed that he granted Rav Mordechai *semicha* on the spot. Similarly, Rav Avraham Yissaschar Leichtag also granted him *semicha* when Rav Mordechai studied in his father-in-law's town of Honiyad.

As was customary with other disciples of the Chasam Sofer, Rav Mordechai established a yeshivah, raising *talmidim* in Torah study and spiritual growth. He also gave well-received *derashos* on *Yamim Tovim* and special occasions.

Rav Mordechai began to study with other *gedolim*. He travelled to study with Rav Avraham Shaag of Kobelsdorf when he learned that the latter was leaving for Eretz

Yisrael. He exchanged letters and responsa with Rav Yehoshua Aharon Weinberger of Margareten. He even wrote to Rav Simcha Bunim Sofer, the Shevet Sofer of Pressburg, regarding the practice he found among the *shochtim* in his province of Telegd, who claimed that it was perfectly acceptable to *kasher* the meat above the thirteenth rib. This did not sit well with the young Rav, and when he wrote to the Shevet Sofer, despite how busy he was with his own communal affairs, promptly responded, backing him up and encouraging and supporting him to veto this flawed practice. He asked *shailos* in *STA" M* to Rav Shmuel Ehrenfeld of Mattersdorf, who responded with respect and admiration, as did others who admired, supported and respected the new Rav and budding *talmid chacham*

Chacham Bentzion Abba Shaul (Tammuz 18)

AHAVAS YISROEL

The following stories originally appeared in *Yated Ne'eman* - Matzav.com Newscenter

Ambulances speeding down Geula's Malchei Yisrael Street with their sirens wailing are, sadly, not an uncommon sight. Nonetheless, each time the wail of an ambulance was heard in the Geula-based *Porat Yosef Yeshiva*, its *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, would bless the passing patient with a speedy recovery. Then he would quietly resume his *shiur* or studies. While it's impossible to know what effect these particular blessings had, it is well known that Rav Ben Tzion's blessings worked miracles.

"Why are your blessings so effective?" a student once asked him.

"Because I really love people," was his unassuming reply.

This love for his fellow Jew (*Ahavas Yisrael*) was an inherent part of Rav Ben Tzion's every action. His love for others was so great that when he would see young children walking to *cheder*, their innocence and sweetness would cause his heart to swell with a love for all of *Klal Yisrael*.

Before going to bed each night, he would forgive all those who had wronged him during the day. He recited the nighttime prayer "I hereby forgive all who angered me" not by

rote, but with great sincerity.

Once, someone greatly offended Rav Ben Tzion. "Did you recite the prayer that night?" a friend asked him. "To tell you the truth," replied Rav Ben Tzion, "I found it very hard to forgive him. Twisting and turning in bed, I said, 'Hashem, my anger is justified. But what should I do? Skip the prayer?' Then I sat up in bed and for a long time struggled to judge that person favorably. When I was certain that I no longer bore a grudge against him, I placed my head on the pillow and recited the prayer."

Rav Ben Tzion's formula for developing and maintaining strong interpersonal relationships was based on simple arithmetic: Instead of calculating what others owed him, he would ask, "What do I owe others?" Then, enumerating all of the *mitzvos* between man and his fellow, such as "Love your neighbor as yourself"; "Don't despise your brother in your heart"; "Don't bear slander"; "Don't harbor vengeance", he would say, "How can I be at odds with people to whom I owe so much?"

MIRACULOUS BEGINNINGS

As was the case with many *Gedolei Yisrael*, prior to Rav Ben Tzion's birth, miraculous events occurred to his parents. These events seemed to foreshadow the greatness of the child they were destined to usher into the world.

Rav Ben Tzion's father, Rav Eliyohu, grew up in a small village in Iran. One day, one of the Moslem rulers gave the Jews there an ultimatum: convert or leave the country. Rav Ben Tzion's grandfather fled Iran with his family and boarded the first available boat to *Eretz Yisrael*. But instead of reaching Chaifa's port, the boat crashed on the shore opposite Eliyohu's Cave on Har Carmel.

Rescue squads arrived on the scene and tossed the passengers into rowboats. Rav Eliyohu was also tossed into a rowboat, but he landed in the sea. A non-Jewish sailor noticed the drowning child and dragged him out of the water, saving his life.

After much wandering, the family settled in Yerushalayim, and became followers of Rav Tzadka Chutzin.

Rav Eliyohu later married Banya, a woman who was very devoted to Torah. When her

children returned home from *Talmud Torah*, she would hug them and say, “May you become *Talmidei Chachomim*.” Her prayers were answered, and all of her children become *Talmidei Chachomim*. The fact that the entire family remained *Torah*-observant during a period when many families of Oriental and *Sefardi* backgrounds were lured into sending their children to Zionist schools was highly unusual. The fact that they became *Talmidei Chachomim* was even more so. Rav Ben Tzion was born in the year 5684, on the 29th of *Tammuz*, the *Yahrzeit* of *Rashi*. He studied in the *Bnei Tzion* School founded by Rav Moshe Porush. When Rav Ben Tzion grew older, he helped Rav Porush recruit students for the school, saving many children from spiritual destruction.

As a youngster, he also studied under Rav Yaakov Adas and Rav Tzadka Chutzin. But he reached the height of his spiritual growth in the *Porat Yosef Yeshiva*, where he studied under its *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Ezra Attia, his primary mentor. The two were very close, and Rav Attia came to regard Rav Ben Tzion as his successor.

Whenever Rav Attia came up with a *chiddush*, he would discuss it with Rav Ben Tzion and anticipate his reaction. Rav Ben Tzion, meanwhile, would tremble in awe when he spoke with the *Rosh Yeshiva*.

ADVICE THAT WORKS

During Rav Ben Tzion’s tenure as *Rosh Yeshiva*, people came to him not just to learn *Torah*, but also to receive his blessings and advice.

Once, a father whose son was critically ill came to Rav Ben Tzion. The doctors had recommended a treatment for his son that was very risky, and he was unsure whether to give them the go-ahead to do it.

“Take him out of the hospital,” Rav Ben Tzion advised him.

The father followed Rav Ben Tzion’s advice, but it proved to be rather complicated. Taking a seriously ill patient out of the hospital is no simple affair, since in such cases hospitals refuse to release medical records to the patient’s relatives. In this case, the hospital staff went so far as to call in the police, and it was only due to the intervention of a community leader that charges weren’t pressed against the family.

In the end, the child recovered without the treatment, the consequences of which may have been dire.

Rav Ben Tzion disagreed with doctors on many different occasions, and his diagnosis would invariably prove to be correct. How was this possible? He never studied medicine, nor did he have access to X-ray machines or ultrasound devices. As the *Chovos HaLevovos* says, “One who lives a life of faith merits seeing without an eye, to hear without an ear. His soul sees” (*Sha’ar Cheshbon HaNefesh*, Chapter 3).

Rav Ben Tzion also gave advice on family matters. His approach was innovative and invigorating.

A father whose son had left *Yeshiva* told Rav Ben Tzion, “My son’s a good-for-nothing. He not only roams the streets, but he has even asked me to buy him a motorcycle.”

“Then buy him one!” replied Rav Ben Tzion.

Though surprised by Rav Ben Tzion’s reaction, the father decided to heed his advice and bought his son a motorcycle. When the young man saw that his father was reaching out to him, he reacted in kind and eventually returned to *Yeshiva*.

'BUT I'M NOT A TALMID CHOCHOM'

Rav Ben Tzion’s ability to freely give advice and blessings was a natural outgrowth of his great *Ahavas Yisrael*. That *Ahavas Yisrael* was coupled with an equally great sense of humility.

Rav Ben Tzion Mutzafi, *Rosh Yeshiva* of the *Bnei Tzion Yeshiva* and the son of the *Mekubol* Rav Suleiman Mutzafi, told the following stories to illustrate Rav Ben Tzion’s humility:

“In 5723, the *Porat Yosef Yeshiva* decided that all of its *Rabbonim* and teachers had to wear long rabbinical coats. Rav Ben Tzion was very upset by this decision.

“‘You’ll get used to it. Everyone will wear them,’ his colleagues consoled him.

“‘That’s not the point,’ he replied. ‘How can I wear a rabbinical coat when I am not a *Talmid Chochom*?’

“His humility,” Rav Mutzafi continued, “was even more apparent one *Purim* when, with every sip of wine, secrets seep out. What was the secret he revealed as he fulfilled the *mitzva* of the day? In front of his guests, he said, ‘Pray for me, my friends. Pray that I merit knowing at least one *Halocha* perfectly.’

“The same unassuming, self-effacing manner was evident one evening when someone accidentally locked the doors to the *Yeshiva*’s kitchen,” Rav Mutzafi added. “A hundred and twenty students were destined to go hungry that night, and the *bitul Torah* would have been great.

“‘What do you suggest we do?’ I asked him.

“Taking some money out of his pocket, Rav Ben Tzion said, ‘Send a student to the bakery for pitas, and another one to buy falafel balls and some tomatoes.’ A short while later, Rav Ben Tzion could be seen in one of the rooms, rapidly cutting the pitas and filling them with falafel balls and tomato slices. How stunned the students were when he personally served each a portion, along with wishes to ‘enjoy it’. With breakneck speed, he finished his work and returned to his studies. That evening, the students studied with added enthusiasm.

“When he recovered from a serious stroke,” Rav Mutzafi concluded, “he nonetheless came to the weddings of his students. At one wedding, his arrival aroused much excitement. Forming circles, the students began to sing *Yomim al yemai melech tosif* – ‘Add days to the lifespan of the king.’

“Rav Ben Tzion felt uncomfortable being honored in that manner. Pointing to the groom, he said, ‘*Chosson domeh l’melech* – A groom is like a king. They are singing in his honor.’”

LOVE OF HASHEM

When Rav Ben Tzion spoke about love of Hashem, his eyes would glisten and his face would glow.

In his talks, he would advise his students how to strengthen their fear of Hashem. "Sometimes, a person searches for *mitzvos*, but doesn't know that there are hundreds at his fingertips," he once said. "If he avoids forbidden sights, he can earn hundreds of *mitzvos* at one time."

After he recovered from a serious stroke, he told his brother-in-law Rav Reuven Sharbani, "When I was ill, what worried me wasn't how long I will live, but whether I would be able to stand before the Heavenly Court and account for my deeds."

HONORING HIS PARENTS AND WIFE

Rav Ben Tzion went to great lengths to honor his parents. During the War of Independence he lived in the Katamon neighborhood. Yet every Friday afternoon he would visit his parents in order to kiss their hands. His parents lived on the other side of town, near the Jordanian border. Later on in the evening, he would walk home in the dark, when it was extremely dangerous to be outside.

This practice was in line with the *Arizal's* teaching in *Shaar HaKavonos* (71b) that a person should kiss his parents' hands every Shabbos.

In addition, on Shabbos mornings, he would walk back to his parents' neighborhood and pray in the *Ohel Rochel shul* founded by his father.

The honor he showed his wife, Rebbetzin Hadassa, was also legendary.

He would tell his students, "If a man and woman deserve it, the *Shechina* rests between them. When the *Shechina* rests in your home, the *Soton* can't enter it, nor can poverty or illness. Honor your wife with your deeds, your thoughts and your speech. Buy her jewelry and items she likes, speak pleasantly and don't upset her, think well of her and judge her favorably."

Rav Ben Tzion practiced what he preached.

SERVING HASHEM WITH JOY

Rav Ben Zion served Hashem with a joy and enthusiasm that was infectious, and that penetrated his *halachic* rulings and his advice to others.

He once explained the *Halocha* that states that it is forbidden to ask a non-Jew to put out a fire on Shabbos, even if all of one's possessions are likely to be burned. A student was so enthused by the discussion that he actually envisioned himself in such a situation.

"*Kevod HaRav*," he called out. "I don't understand. Am I supposed to sit back and watch while everything I own goes up in smoke?"

"That's not what I said," Rav Ben Tzion replied. "I meant that one should dance, sing and rejoice at having merited to fulfill the *pasuk*, 'You should love Hashem your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might (*me'odecha*)'. According to our sages, *me'odecha* means one's possessions."

A newcomer to Torah once feared that the *mitzvos* would be too burdensome for him. Rav Ben Tzion encouraged him, saying, "There's no reason to feel pressured. Every morning, volunteer to serve Hashem. Don't obligate yourself, but volunteer. Volunteer to put on *tefillin*. It's not so hard. Here, let me show you how. Volunteer to pray, adding on more and more *tefillos* each day. It's a privilege to serve as a volunteer in Hashem's corps."

HIS APPROACH TO TORAH STUDY

Rav Ben Tzion Mutzafi describes his experiences as Rav Ben Tzion's student:

"Every day, a different student would be called upon to explain the *sugya* being studied. He had to explain the entire *peshat*, from its beginning in a very precise and comprehensive manner, paying attention to each *Talmudic shakla* and *tarya*. He also had to explain the reasoning of the one who asked the question and that of the one who provided the solution, as well as why it was impossible to resolve it otherwise.

"He also had to know the *Rashi*, and not to skip a word, because there are no extra words in *Rashi*. He had to understand *Tosafos*, as well as why *Tosafos* differed from *Rashi*, and how *Rashi* would stand up to *Tosafos'* challenges. 'Every question has an answer,' he would say. 'You must find it.'

"Studying *Maharsha* was a central and important part of the lesson. Sometimes, Rav Ben Tzion wouldn't state his opinion on the *sugya* until we had studied the *Maharsha*.

“He taught us to probe the *peshat* and its many ramifications. During one lesson, he asked an explosive question. We sat there, our mouths agape. Suddenly, he stated two brilliant answers, and then a straightforward one. He remained silent for a few moments and then said, ‘Know that the third answer is the only true one. The two others have external luster. I told them to you only in order to teach you not to be dazzled by glitter, but only by the *peshat*. It must be absolutely true.’”

Although Rav Ben Tzion was well known for his brilliance and clarity of thought, he tried to remain unobtrusive and did not rush forward to issue *halachic* rulings. Until the passing of Rav Ezra Attia, he refused to issue *halachic* rulings even to his students or close acquaintances, out of respect for his mentor.

After Rav Attia’s passing, he would discuss his *halachic* opinions with his students, but only on a private basis. One day, Rav Yehuda Tzadka, the *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Porat Yosef*, decided to put an end to all that, and began to refer people to Rav Ben Tzion, telling them that he was a great *halachic* authority whose rulings they should heed. He would say, “Rav Ben Tzion will refuse to issue a ruling. But don’t give in.”

Rav Ben Tzion, who was a bit stymied by all this, asked Rav Tzadka how he should relate to people who asked him *halachic* questions. Rav Tzadka urged him, “You are well-versed in *Halacha*. Why shouldn’t you issue rulings?”

It was in this way that Rav Ben Tzion’s ability to become a great *halachic* authority was brought to light.

s.o.s!

Rav Ben Tzion was careful not to waste a moment of precious Torah study time. One morning on his way to *Yeshiva*, he saw a student examining a billboard poster. Suddenly, Rav Ben Tzion cried out: “S.O.S.! S.O.S.!” and continued on his way. The student ran after him and breathlessly asked, “What happened? Who needs help?”

“The entire world,” Rav Ben Tzion replied. “If you don’t study Torah the world will be destroyed. If you were an ambulance driver or a paramedic, and were summoned to save a life, would you stop to read the latest announcements? As a *ben Torah* your job is far more vital, because the world is maintained only in the merit of Torah study.”

COMMUNAL INVOLVEMENT

Even though Rav Ben Tzion was humble and preferred spending his time within the four cubits of the *Halocha*, he did not hesitate to involve himself in communal affairs, especially in battles over religious matters.

He was one of the leaders in the battle over the preservation of the sanctity of Shabbos, and he bravely protested mixed swimming pools and post-mortem operations.

In 5732, he was at the forefront of the battle against mandatory army service for girls. Along with Rav Yehuda Tzadka, he drafted a halachic ruling declaring that mandatory army service for girls was in the category of “be killed and do not transgress”. The text of his ruling was sent to all of the *Torah* sages in the country, and was signed by four hundred *Gedolei Yisrael*.

Rav Ben Tzion was also a leader of *Sefardi* Jewry not just in *Eretz Yisrael*, but also in countries around the world. He traveled to Iran, England, Italy, France, South America, Mexico, Panama, Columbia and the United States, strengthening the *Sefardi* Jews of those countries. He founded rabbinical courts for them and provided them with *Shochtim*, *Mohalim* and *Rabbonim*, thwarting assimilation and the influence of heretical streams.

In 5743, while delivering a eulogy at the funeral of Rav Yaakov Mutzafi, he suddenly felt ill. A short while later he suffered a stroke. (He had suffered a heart attack previously.) Although he recovered, part of his body remained non-functional. But this situation did not prevent him from spreading Torah and from being involved in public affairs.

Above all, Rav Ben Tzion devoted his energies to the education of Jewish children, personally founding scores of *Talmud Torahs* throughout *Eretz Yisrael*. He regarded strengthening the education of the younger generation as his primary goal.

Rav Ben Tzion, together with Rav Yehuda Tzadka and Rav Ovadia Yosef, founded the *Maayan HaChinuch HaTorani*, a federation for hundreds of *Sefardi Talmud Torahs* throughout *Eretz Yisrael*. He considered this enterprise his life’s work, and in its early stages, subsidized it himself.

One time, he saw a school bus stopping beside a *Talmud Torah*. As the children gleefully

poured out of the bus, he said to the person accompanying him, "Did you see how the doors of that bus opened? It reminds me of the opening of the *Aron Kodesh*, upon the removal of a *Sefer Torah*. I'm jealous of that driver. Those children are heading toward *Har Sinai* now, where they will receive the Torah."

HOW CAN I STAY HOME?

After he had suffered his stroke and was confined to his home, the *Hanhola* of *Lev L'Achim* paid him a visit before their annual *Asifa* in Bnei Brak. They explained to the Rav that they realized that he would be unable to come and speak, since he could barely get around and speech was also very difficult for him. The *Rabbonim* suggested that he send his son in his stead to say a few words of greeting in his name.

He refused. Slowly, and with great difficulty, he said to them, "If the organization that does so much for *hatzolas Yaldei Yisrael* is holding an *Asifa*, I cannot stay home. I must be there." And with extreme *mesiras nefesh*, he came. He was carried into a car, and from the car, entered the large hall in a wheelchair.

Rav Aron Leib Steinman had already left the dais of the gathering to return home when he was told that Rav Abba Shaul was on his way from Yerushalayim. He returned to the dais, saying, "How can I leave if Rav Ben Tzion is coming? I must stay and wait for him to be *mechabed* him."

'LINKED TO KLAL YISROEL'

On the last night of Rav Ben Tzion's life, one of the great *Roshei Yeshiva* of our times phoned and asked him a very important question. The following day, the *Rosh Yeshiva* called back for a reply. From the weeping of Rav Eliyohu, Rav Ben Tzion's only son, the *Rosh Yeshiva* understood what had occurred.

The funeral of Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, which took place on the 19th of *Tammuz*, 5758, was attended by masses of Jews from all circles and sects. A brief glance at the list of *Rabbonim* who delivered *hespedim* at the funeral and during the *shiva* week indicates that they represented the entire spectrum of *Chareidi* Jewry. At the funeral, everyone bemoaned the great loss to *Klal Yisrael*.

Rav Eliyohu, his son, was one of those who delivered a eulogy.

"My father," said Rav Eliyohu, "did not belong to a particular circle. He was linked to *Klal Yisrael*. He drew everyone closer and loved all. He shared the suffering of the community, grieved over its pain, participated in its sorrow and rejoiced on its happy occasions. Everyone who encountered him felt a close kinship with him, and *Klal Yisrael's* love for him was complete and genuine. Everyone loved him and Jews from all circles came to pay him final respects."

On the last day of *shiva*, a miracle occurred. A car loaded with explosives was placed in the center of Yerushalayim. Suddenly, the car went up in flames. People rushed over to save the driver, not realizing that the car had been full of explosives - or that the driver had been a terrorist.

Had the bomb exploded in the town's center as the terrorist had intended, an enormous disaster would have occurred.

We don't know what happened to all those patients in the ambulances that sped past the *Porat Yosef Yeshiva* and received Rav Ben Tzion's blessings. We also don't know what went on in Heaven at the end of the *shiva* after his passing. But we can surmise.

{This article originally appeared in *Yated Ne'eman* - Matzav.com Newscenter}

Segulos Yisroel



SEGULOS FOR PARSHAS CHUKAS & PARSHAS BALAK &
THE THREE WEEKS & SHIVA ASAR B'TAMUZ

Because Of Parshas Balak - Where Curses Are Transformed Into Blessings, Here Are Some Segulahs For Blessings And Curses:

Berachos

The *Segulos Yisrael* cites the Arizal that it is a *segulah* to recite all the blessings over food, drinks and fragrances with proper *kavana* and intention. He cites the *sefer Negid uMetzaveh* that this is because a reincarnated soul or *gilgul* may be found in the food and a proper *beracha* with *kavana* will uplift that *neshama* and give it a *tikkun*. (A lot of tzaddikim made all their *berachos* with a *bencher* - never by heart - i.e. Manchester Rosh Yeshiva).

Birchas HaMazon - Bentshing

It is a well-known *segulah* for *Parnasah* to recite the *Birchas HaMazon* blessing with *kavana*. (In the name of Rav Kanievski) [Again, using printed matter while reciting the *beracha*].

Beracha in the Home

The *Segulos Yisrael* also says that a *segulah* to have blessing found in one's home is to honor his wife. As it says "*uLeAvraham Heitiv beAvurah*," that Avraham was blessed through Sarah. (See also *Bava Metziah* 59).

Curses

The *Segulos Yisrael* teaches that there is an angel who stood by the altar and would swallow its ashes. This was the angel responsible for placing the curses into Bilaam's mouth and for taking lost souls around the world. If a person should heaven forbid curse you, recite his name three times "*Kariel*" (*Yalkut Reuveni Tzav*). However, the Kaf HaChaim forbids this and says you should have the name in mind and not recite it, and it only helps if you heard the curse with your own ears.

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