

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 Vayikra

CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA

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The Medium Through Which Moshe Came Close To Hashem

Rav Chaim Ibn Attar, the Ohr HaChaim

Odom ki yakriv mikem korban Lashem - "If a person should offer a sacrifice from among you to Hashem" (1:2).

The Medium Through Which Moshe Came Close to Hashem

The *Ohr HaChaim* explains that when *Bnei Yisrael* saw how Moshe was chosen

from among them all to be the one who was selected as spokesman, and they observed the great honor and glory bestowed upon *Moshe* to draw him close to the *Shechina*, they realized that the reason for this was because of *Bnei Yisrael* - in their merit and on their behalf was Moshe chosen [rather than on his own merit]. This is how the *Ohr HaChaim* reads our *pasuk*: *Odom ki yakriv* - "If a person is chosen to be drawn close to the *Shechina*" - *mikem* - "because of you and your merit is the reason that he is selected to be drawn close". This can be proven, says the *Ohr HaChaim*, because for some thirty-eight years that *Bnei Yisrael* were distanced from Hashem because of the sins of the *Eigel* (Golden Calf) and the *Meraglim* (Spies), for that duration, Hashem did not speak with Moshe either. (Only afterward, when *Bnei Yisrael* and Hashem were reconciled, did Hashem speak with Moshe, proving that the reason for speaking to Moshe at all was because of *Bnei Yisrael*.)

Kiruv Rechokim - the Deeper Korban Lashem

Our *pasuk* also hints at the idea that all great leaders should draw the hearts of *Bnei Yisrael* close to Hashem and to His *avoda*. This closeness is called a *Korban Lashem* [the word *Korban* is derived from the word *korov* - meaning "close" or "near"].

The *Ohr HaChaim* explains that when a person sins, this separates him from *dveikus* and cuts off the attachment between a *Yid* and his Father in Heaven. *Devorim* 4:4 teaches that we should be *dveikim* (attached) to *Hashem*, yet sin detaches and separates us, cutting us off from Hashem. Sin distances us from Hashem.

Hashem is upset about this and desires our closeness to Him. He therefore commanded that those who are distant should be drawn back close to Him, and rebuked and chastised for their misdeeds in order that they should return and reattach themselves to Hashem.

Hashem even punishes whoever looks away and attempts to ignore his children who have gone astray. The proof of this, says the *Ohr HaChaim*, is the reward promised to those who work in *kiruv* and actively work to draw Hashem's children

back, as the *Tanna in Avos* Chapter 5 says: “Whoever gives merit to the masses – no sin shall come to him”. Hashem guards him from mistakes; the *Ohr HaChaim* says that this is a faithful proof.

Thus, the *Ohr HaChaim* says, *Odom ki yakriv mikem* – If an *Odom*, an important person, will draw close those who are the most lowly from among you, and bring back those who sinned, those who made mistakes and strayed, and distancing themselves and cutting themselves off from Hashem and *dveikus*, this drawing them close and bringing them back is called a *Korban* – an offering to Hashem, an offering of closeness, a sacrifice of nearness, of bringing wayward, distanced children back to their Father, of bringing the wild saplings back to their holy roots. Such a person who is engaged in *kiruv rechokim* need never offer any other offerings – neither vows nor gifts (*neder* or *nedova*), neither sin nor guilt offerings (*chatos* or *oshom*), because, as *Pirkei Avos* teaches, whoever works in *kiruv* and brings merit to the masses – no sin befalls him. For if there are no mistakes there is no need for *korbonos*. Furthermore, the *Ohr HaChaim* emphasizes that any person can do this and draw the masses back to Hashem, not just great *Tzaddikim*. This is our *Korban* to Hashem, offering His children back to Him.

Praises for the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh*

Just Like the *Ba'al Shem*

The *Arye D'vei Illai* of Vizhnitz once remarked, “Although the *Ohr HaChaim* did not follow in the ways of the *Chassidim* and *Tzaddikim* among us here, he nonetheless reached all the same spiritual heights that the *Ba'al Shem Tov* reached, and when necessary he was also able to work wonders and perform miracles. (Gevuras Ari)

Worthy of the *Berocha Shecholak Meichochmoso L'yerei'ov*

Rav Yehuda Ayash, the chief Rav of Algiers and *mechaber* of *Vezos L'Yehuda*, praises Rav Chaim ben Attar very highly. When the *Ohr HaChaim* passed through Algiers, Rav Yehuda wrote a *haskoma* (approbation) to his work. In the *haskoma*

to *Ohr HaChaim* he writes:

We met the perfect sage, the wondrous Rav Chaim ben Attar, who is like an angel, this G-dly man whose scholarship is like Sinai and who can uproot mountains. His Torah is sincere and *lishma*; our own eyes did see and our own ears did hear and bear witness to this and so I wish to make known that he is an example of someone over whom you should recite the *berocha* (recited over a great Torah scholar and *Talmid Chochom*) *Boruch shecholak meichochmoso l'yerei'ov*.

Gedolim Be'misasm Yoser



**Yahrzeits for the 3rd of Nissan ~ Begins Friday Night
(03-21-2026)**



Rav Aryeh Leib Grossnass - Lev Aryeh



Rav Shmuel Yehuda Katzenellenbogen (5357 / 1597 - 429th Yahrzeit)



Rav Efraim Ashkenazi (5532 / 1772 - 254th Yahrzeit)



Rav Binyomin Zev Tzvi Wolf of Zbariz - Razin D'Oraysa (5582 / 1822 - 204th Yahrzeit)



Rav Eliyahu Meir Finkel - Nasi Yeshivas Mir, Yerushalayim (5757 / 1997 - 29th Yahrzeit)



Rav Dovid Stavsky (5764 / 2004 - 22nd Yahrzeit)

Rav Dovid Stavsky (1930-2004), served in the Columbus (Ohio) Jewish community for the last past 47 years of his life, including as Rabbi of Beth Jacob Congregation.

**Yahrzeits for the 4th of Nissan ~ Begins Saturday Night
(03-22-2026)**



Rav Dovid of Kaminka (5487 / 1727 - 299th Yahrzeit)



Rav Aharon Shmuel of Stefin - Vetzivoh Hakohen (5574 / 1814 - 212th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg - Hakesav Vehakabalah (5625 / 1865 - 161st Yahrzeit)

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi was born in 5545 (1785) in Lissa, in the province of Posen, Germany. This city was renowned as a center of Torah scholarship, as well as for its great rabbanim. The father of Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg, Rabbi Gamliel, was a nurse. It seems that Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi began his education in the city of his birth by studying Torah with the local Rav. At that time the Rav of Lissa was the Gaon Rabbi Zechariah Mendel, the son of the Gaon Rabbi David Tebla (the previous Rav of Lissa). Rabbi Zechariah Mendel was a friend of Rabbi Akiva Eiger, whom he corresponded with.



Rav Eliezer Yerucham Baron of Radoshitz (5652 / 1892 - 134th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yochanon Twersky of Rachmastrivka (5655 / 1895 - 131st Yahrzeit)

Rabbi Yochanon Twersky, (4 Nissan 1895) the first Rachmastrivka Rebbe was known for his humility. He was the last to pass away of the eight sons of Rabbi Mordechai of Chernobyl and was highly respected among the righteous of the generation.



Rav Pinchos Chaim Klein - Av Beis Din of Selish (5683 / 1923 - 103rd Yahrzeit)

**Yahrzeits for the 5th of Nissan ~ Begins Sunday Night
(03-23-2026)**



Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel of Apta, Mezhibuzh - Ohev Yisroel, Apta Rav (5585 / 1825 - 201st Yahrzeit)

The *Apta Rav* author of *Ohev Yisroel* was born in Żmigród, Poland in 1748, he passed away on 5th of *Nissan* 1825, he was laid to rest in Mezibuz and his *matzeiva* is in the same Ohel as the *Baal Shem Tov*.



Rav Osher Zolky - Rav & Av Beis Din of Sanz (5590 / 1830 - 196th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yehoshua Freund of Kraly (5608 / 1848 - 178th Yahrzeit)



Rav Shneur Zalman Fradkin of Lublin - Toras Chessed (5662 / 1902 - 124th Yahrzeit)

Rabbi Shneur Zalman Fradkin of Lublin [5 Nissan 5662], A chasid of the Tzemech Tzedek and Maharash of Lubavitch, was chief rabbi in Polotsk and then Lublin. When he made aliyah to the Holy Land, he became a major rabbinical figure in the Jerusalem community. He is best remembered for his important scholarly book, *Toras Chessed*.



Rav Malkiel Tzvi HaLevi Tenenbaum of Lomza - Divrei Malkiel (5670 / 1910 - 116th Yahrzeit)

Rav Malkiel Tzvi HaLevi Tennenbaum (1847-1910), a prominent rabbi and *posek* of his generation, was renowned for his great Torah genius and wrote many responsa, which were printed in the seven-volume Responsa *Divrei Malkiel*. He was known as a holy person and many approached him for blessing and deliverance. Rav Herzog wrote about him that "in addition to his halachic brilliance, he was well-versed in kabbalah and studied Torah secrets well into the night".



Rav Tzvi Elimelech Spira of Bluzhov - Tzvi Latzaddik (5684 / 1924 - 102nd Yahrzeit)



Rav Reuven Yosef Gershonowitz - Tzaddik of Ofakim, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Ha'Negev (5755 / 1995 - 31st Yahrzeit)

Rav Reuven Yosef was born in Lapitsh in the Minsk area of the Ukraine, he was taken by his father to the *yeshiva katana* in Lida at the age of 10. He continued his learning at Kamenitz in 1931, under Rav Baruch Ber. In 1936, Rav Reuven joined his family in Eretz Yisrael; he became a *talmid* of the *Lomza Yeshiva* in Petach Tikva. In 1946, he began giving *chaburos* in the *yeshiva*. In 1965, he became *rosh yeshiva* of *Chemdas Shmuel* in a *moshav* called Chemed. In 1976, Rav Reuven was called upon to serve as *rosh yeshiva* of *Yeshivas Hanegev* in Netivot.

**Yahrzeits for the 6th of Nissan ~ Begins Monday Night
(03-24-2026)**



Rav Yaakov Temerlis (5428 / 1668 - 358th Yahrzeit)



Rav Chaim Abulafia of Teveria - Chacham Chaim Abulafia of Teveria (5504 / 1744 - 282nd Yahrzeit)

(Some say the Yahrzeit is on the 7th of Nissan the 16th of Nissan)

Rav Chaim was born in Chevron in 5420 (1660). When he returned to Eretz Yisrael from Turkey, Rav Chaim was asked to serve as Rav of Tzefat. In the year 5485 (1725), Rav Yisrael Benveniste passed away and Rav Chaim was chosen to succeed him as the Chief Rabbi of Izmir. After serving as Rav of Teveria for four years and rebuilding the *kehillah*, Rav Chaim passed away on 6 (some say 7) *Nissan*.

 **Rav Yerucham of Tarnow (5659 / 1899 - 127th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Meir Dan Platzky - Klei Chemdah (5688 / 1928 - 98th Yahrzeit)**
The Prodigy of Kutno. "Rabbi Meir Dan", as he was called and known among the Jews of Poland, was a giant among rabbis. He served as the rabbi of the community of Dvart [Warta], the rabbi of the community of Ostrow Mazowiecka, and in his last days as head of the *Mesivta yeshiva* in Warsaw, the capital of Poland. He was one of the devoted and sharpest Chassidim of Ger.

 **Rav Aharon Roth - Shomer Emunim (5707 / 1947 - 79th Yahrzeit)**
Rav Ahrele Roth, founder of *Chassidus Shomrei Emunim*, came to Yerushalayim in 1925. He was known for his fervent and emotional style of *tefilla*.

Yahrzeits for the 7th of Nissan ~ Begins Tuesday Night (03-25-2026)

 **Rav Pinchos Zelig - Rav of Lask, Ateres Paz (5430 / 1670 - 356th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Chaim Abulafia of Teveria - Chacham Chaim Abulafia of Teveria (5504 / 1744 - 282nd Yahrzeit)**

(Some say the Yahrzeit is on the 6th of Nissan the 16th of Nissan)
Rav Chaim was born in Chevron in 5420 (1660). When he returned to Eretz Yisrael from Turkey, Rav Chaim was asked to serve as Rav of Tzefat. In the year 5485 (1725), Rav Yisrael Benveniste passed away and Rav Chaim was chosen to succeed him as the Chief Rabbi of Izmir. After serving as Rav of Teveria for four years and rebuilding the *kehillah*, Rav Chaim passed away on 6 (some say 7) *Nissan*.

 **Rav Yitzchok of Drohobitch - Derhobitsh, Derhovitsher (5504 / 1744 - 282nd Yahrzeit)**

Rav Yitzchok was the son of Rav Yosef Sprawiedliwy (Polish for ישר - Righteous or Just) and *Yenta Di Nevia* (the Prophetess). When he lived in Ostrog, he was one of the ten Jews who studied in Rav Yuzpa's *Bais Medrash*, among the greatest lamdonim in town. He was also the Maggid and mochiach in Brod in the *Bais Medrash* of Rav Yitzchok of Hamburg during his tenure as Rav of Brod. Although he knew of and approved of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, according to some, he was a colleague rather than a *talmid*.

 **Rav Avrohom Ragoler (5567 / 1807 - 219th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Yissocher Dov of Ziditchov (5592 / 1832 - 194th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Aryeh Leib Yelin of Bialystock - Yefeh Einayim (5644 / 1884 - 142nd Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Aryeh Yehuda Leib Epstein of Oztrov (5688 / 1928 - 98th Yahrzeit)**



Dr. Moshe Wallach - Founder of Shaarei Tzedek Hospital (5717 / 1957 - 69th Yahrzeit)

**Yahrzeits for the 8th of Nissan ~ Begins Wednesday Night
(03-26-2026)**



Rav Eliyahu Hakadosh of York - Baal HaTosfos (4950 / 1190 - 836th Yahrzeit)

In 4950 (secular year of 1190), the Jews of York, England, were killed by the Crusaders at Clifford's Tower, after they refused to be baptized. Among the *kedoshim* were at least two *Ba'alei ha'Tosafos*, Rav Eliyahu Hakadosh and *Rabbeinu Yom Tov, Hy"d*. This tragedy occurred on a Friday night, leading to the "*Cherem of York*," an English tradition forbidding Jews to sleep in the city of York overnight.



Rav Yom Tov Hakadosh of Yoani (4950 / 1190 - 836th Yahrzeit)



Rav Eliyahu Spira of Prague - Eliyahu Rabba (5472 / 1712 - 314th Yahrzeit)



Rav Mordechai of Neshchiz - Rishfei Aish (5560 / 1800 - 226th Yahrzeit)

R. Mordechai of Neshchiz [8 Nissan 1800] was descended from the Maharal of Prague and Don Yitzchak Abarbanel. He was a disciple of R. Yechezkel Michel of Zlotchov. The ill and the unfortunate came to visit him from long distances. It is recorded that he never uttered a negative word about another person. He actively supported settlement in Eretz Yisrael. He was succeeded by his son, R. Yitzchak of Neshchiz. His sayings were collected in *Rishfei Eish*.



Rav Yaakov Shimon of Zoslov (5591 / 1831 - 195th Yahrzeit)



Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Levov (5648 / 1888 - 138th Yahrzeit)



Rav Moshe Perl of Zborov (5685 / 1925 - 101st Yahrzeit)



Rav Yechezkel Michel Tikochinsky - Gesher HaChaim (5715 / 1955 - 71st Yahrzeit)

**Yahrzeits for the 9th of Nissan ~ Begins Thursday Night
(03-27-2026)**



Rav Yosef Yuzpa Hahn Neurelingen - Yosef Ometz (5397 / 1637 - 389th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yaakov Tzvi Yalish of Dinov - Molei Haroim (5585 / 1825 - 201st Yahrzeit)

Rav Yaakov Tzvi was born in Reisha in 5538/1778, the son of Rav Naftoli. He received the Chassidic tradition from his Rebbe and mentor, the *Apta Rav, mechaber of Ohev Yisrael*, as well as the *Kozhnitzer Maggid*, the *Chozeh of Lublin* and Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanow. Rav Yaakov Tzvi served as Rav in Dynow, Glogov, Huskav and Premisla.



Rav Nosson Feitel Reinitz (5622 / 1862 - 164th Yahrzeit)

Rav Nosson Feitel, the ancestor of the famed Reinitz family, was the son of Rav Dov Berel, and the *mechaber of Divrei Ranaf*. He served as Rav of Tete Vegsing and afterward as Rav of Diandias. Later, he was Rav of Mad, Hungary, for nineteen years, from 5603/1842 until 5622/1861.



Rav Aryeh Levine - Tzaddik from Yerushalayim, Mashgiach Yeshivas Eitz Chaim (5729 / 1969 - 57th Yahrzeit)

Rav Aryeh Levine was born on the 6th of *Nissan* 5645, and passed away on the 9th of *Nissan* 5729 (March 22, 1885 - March 28, 1969). He was known by one and all as "The Father of the Prisoners". Rav Levine was born in Urla, near Bialistock, Poland, to his father R' Binyamin Beinush and his mother Ettl. In *Adar* 5765 (March 1095), he came to live in Eretz Yisrael, where he learned at the *Yeshivas Toras Chaim*. For many decades he served as *Mashgiach* at the *Yeshivas Etz Chaim* in Yerushalayim. After the State of Israel was established, Rav Levine founded the *Yeshiva* that is named after him - Beis Aryeh. He was known as "The Father of the Prisoners", having regularly visited Prisoners of Zion imprisoned during the time of the British Mandate.



Rav Chaim Meir Hager - Imrei Chaim (5732 / 1972 - 54th Yahrzeit)

Rav Chaim Meir was born on 15 *Kislev* 5648/1888, the son of Rav Yisrael Hager of Vizhnitz, also known as *Ahavas Yisrael*. Rav Chaim Meir was his father's right-hand man from a young age and they were inseparable. He was appointed Rav of Vilchovitch in Marmorosh. He decided to move to Eretz Yisrael and traveled from Czechoslovakia to Belgium and England. He arrived in 5708 and established Vizhnitz on the soil of the Holy Land. Rav Chaim Meir opened his *Bais Medrash* in Tel Aviv. Eventually, he established the first Chassidic enclave in Bnei Brak, reopened the *Vizhnitzer Yeshiva* and began to reestablish Vizhnitz and Chassidic life in post-war Eretz Yisrael.

Biographies of the Tzaddikim



Rav Dovid Stavsky (*Nissan 3, 5764 / 2004 - 22nd Yahrzeit*)

Rav Dovid Stavsky (1930-2004), served in the Columbus (Ohio) Jewish community for the last past 47 years of his life, including as Rabbi of Beth Jacob Congregation. He graduated from Yeshiva University with a B.A. in Psychology in 1952, ordained at the RIETS in 1955, and earned a Masters degree in Psychology from The Ohio State University in 1966. Served as Chaplain in the United States Army as a First Lieutenant at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital and was the Post-Chaplain at Fort Carson in Denver, Colorado from 1955-1957. He helped found Columbus Torah Academy in 1958, led the effort to build a *mikvah* (ritual bath) in Columbus in 1970, helped found the Columbus Community *Kollel* (learning center) in 1994.



Rav Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg Hakesav Vehakabalah (*Nissan 4, 5625 / 1865 - 161st Yahrzeit*)

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi was born in 5545 (1785) in Lissa, in the province of Posen, Germany. This city was renowned as a center of Torah scholarship, as well as for its great rabbanim.

The father of Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg, Rabbi Gamliel, was a nurse.

It seems that Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi began his education in the city of his birth by studying Torah with the local Rav. At that time the Rav of Lissa was the Gaon Rabbi Zechariah Mendel, the son of the Gaon Rabbi David Tebla (the previous Rav of Lissa). Rabbi

Zechariah Mendel was a friend of Rabbi Akiva Eiger, whom he corresponded with.

We know little about the childhood of the young Yaakov Tzvi. There is one thing, however, that we do know, which is that he was extremely diligent and almost never stopped studying Torah.

Even though Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi was great in Torah and very learned in Hebrew, he did not want to become a Rabbi. He went into business and did quite well in it, yet even then he did not neglect his Torah study, which he practiced assiduously. As it turned out, the wheel of fortune changed and his business deteriorated. It was at that time that he was offered the rabbinical position in the city of Koenigsburg, at which point he realized that Heaven desired that he should become a Rav. Thus he accepted the position, which he assumed in 1831 at the age of 46.

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi believed that he could find peace and quiet in the tent of Torah, but as it turned out he plunged himself into the fight against the Enlightenment movement and various currents of the Reform movement. All of a sudden he was thrown into a new world, one different from the one he had lived in all his life. In his hometown, Jews studied Torah and the spirit of tradition reigned supreme. However in Koenigsburg, strange winds had already begun to blow, and the Enlightenment movement desired to take the place of traditional Jewish life.

Far from enclosing himself in the tent of Torah, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi placed himself in the first wave of those fighting the assimilationists and Reformers, calling upon people with fiery words to be vigilant and defend the holiness of Israel. He was very determined, and since all Jewish tradition was sacred in his eyes, he defended it with all his strength.

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi would normally not attend a wedding unless he knew that the young couple would conduct themselves in accordance with Torah laws. One day, an important man who had become distant from Judaism invited the Rav to officiate at the marriage of his daughter. Knowing that the young couple did not observe Halachah, the Rav refused. However the man, who was very influential, went to the authorities and obtained an order that obliged the Rav to marry his daughter.

Constrained and forced to comply, the Rav officiated at the wedding. Yet instead of

saying, "According to the law of Moshe and Yisrael," he said in a loud voice, "According to the law of Frederic the Great."

During those difficult times, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi wrote a commentary on the Torah. True, there had been several Bible commentators in Germany before him, but their analyses had not been accepted by faithful, orthodox Jews, for the spirit of the Enlightenment movement hovered over them. That is what drove Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi to write his own commentary on the Torah, which he entitled Hakesav Vehakabbalah. The goal of this work was to show how Scripture (Hakesav) and the Oral Law (Vehakabbalah) formed a whole, and that both were given by one single shepherd, Moshe our teacher. Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi's explanations connected the direct meaning (pshat) to the hidden meaning (drash).

In his commentary, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi followed the steps of the Vilna Gaon. One day, Rabbi Yisrael of Shklov, a disciple of the Gra, was asked wherein lay his teacher's power. In response, he took a Bible out of the library and said, "This is the power of my teacher and Rav the Gra. He was in full possession of this book to a degree that is unimaginable, knowing its every letter." Rabbi Israel continued and said, "My teacher the Gra believed that 'There is nothing which is not alluded to in the Torah,' and he knew how to discover and show how all the Oral Law was hidden within the written Torah."

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg walked in the paths of the Gra, and he strived with all his might to meld the written text with oral tradition. His commentary is a tremendous work in which we can see his eminence in Torah. It also demonstrates his tremendous scholarship, knowledge of the Hebrew language, and his sharp, clear, and irrefutable logic.

Haketav Vehakabbalah was well received throughout the Diaspora, and that alone makes it worth transcribing the following letter. It is an excerpt from a reply that Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi gave to the Gaon and Tzaddik Rabbi Eliyahu Guttmacher, the Rav of Greiditz. In it he states: "The Rav's great desire to see my work on the Torah is in my opinion inappropriate, for it is not intended for a Gaon such as himself, but for people of lesser stature, for it seeks to repair the breach of ungodliness that has the audacity to ascribe falsehood to our teachers, the Sages of the Oral Law. I thank G-d that this explanation [given by my commentary] pleased our brothers in Poland and Russia. I have heard that in certain communities, instructors now teach it to young boys, and that in certain places a

person has been placed in the Beit Midrash to explain the parsha of the week with this commentary every Shabbat. May the study of Torah return to all its initial glory! However for the Gaon, this commentary is useless” (Sinai, vol. 65, bk. 5-6).

This letter shows the modesty of the author of Hakesav Vehakabbalah, a man who believed that he was writing not for the great of his generation, but for “people of lesser stature.” He was a man who rejoiced in the fact that teachers in Poland and Russia were using his book. This letter also shows that groups were being formed each Shabbat to study the parsha of the week alongside his commentary. It is therefore not surprising that over the years, there have been five editions of the abridged version published.

Other than Hakesav Vehakabbalah, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg wrote a commentary on the Siddur called Iyun Tefillah. This book was printed with his commentary Derech HaChaim, which also enjoyed great success and was republished four times.

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg was the Rav of Koenigsburg for 34 years. Following a short illness, he died at two o’clock in the morning on Thursday, Nissan 10, 5625 (April 6, 1865). He was 80 years old.

Before his death, he ordered that no eulogies be given at his funeral. In his will, he expressed his desire that his commentary be read in public three times a week, after the Torah reading, during the first 30 days of mourning that followed his funeral.

https://www.hevratpinto.org/tzadikim_eng/109_rabbi_yaakov_tzvi_mecklenburg.html



Rav Yochonon Twersky (*Nissan 4, 5655 / 1895 - 131st Yahrzeit*)

Rabbi Yochonon Twersky, (4 Nissan 1895) the first Rachmastrivka Rebbe was known for his humility. He was the last to pass away of the eight sons of Rabbi Mordechai of Chernobyl and was highly respected among the righteous of the generation.

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Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel Ohev Yisroel, Apta Rav (Nissan 5, 5585 / 1825 - 201st Yahrzeit)



Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel [of blessed memory: 5515 - 5 Nissan 5585 (1755-March 1825 C.E.)] the Apter Rebbe, was born in Żmigród, Poland in 1748. He was a main disciple of the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhinsk. He is also often referred to as "the *Ohev Yisrael*," both after the title of the famous book of his teachings, and also because its meaning ("Lover of Jews") fits him so aptly. He was laid to rest in Mezibuz. His *matzeiva* is in the same ohel as the *Baal Shem Tov*. The Kapishnitzer Chasidic dynasty descends from him.

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



Rav Shneur Zalman Fradkin Toras Chessed (Nissan 5, 5662 / 1902 - 124th Yahrzeit)

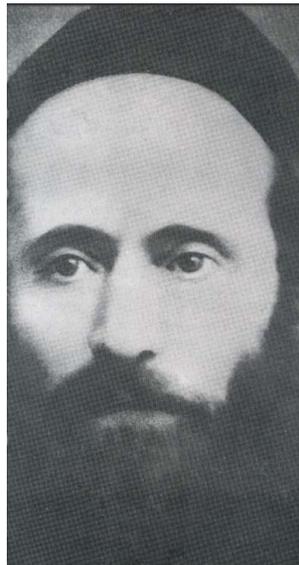


Rabbi Shneur Zalman Fradkin of Lublin [5 *Nissan* 5662], A chasid of the Tzemech Tzedek and Maharash of Lubavitch, was chief rabbi in Polotsk and then Lublin. When he made aliyah to the Holy Land, he became a major rabbinical figure in the Jerusalem community. He is best remembered for his important scholarly book, *Toras Chesed*.

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Rav Malkiel Tzvi Tenenbaum Divrei Malkiel (*Nissan 5, 5670 / 1910 - 116th Yahrzeit*)



Rav Malkiel Tzvi HaLevi Tennenbaum (1847-1910), a prominent rabbi and *posek* of his generation, was renowned for his great Torah genius and wrote many responsa, which were printed in the seven-volume Responsa *Divrei Malkiel*. He was known as a holy person and many approached him for blessing and deliverance. Rav Herzog wrote about him that "in addition to his halachic brilliance, he was well-versed in kabbalah and studied Torah secrets well into the night".

<https://www.kedem-auctions.com/en/content/letter-author-divrei-malkiel-lomza-1907>



**Rav Reuven Yosef Gershonowitz Tzaddik of Ofakim, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Ha'Negev
(*Nissan 5, 5755 / 1995 - 31st Yahrzeit*)**

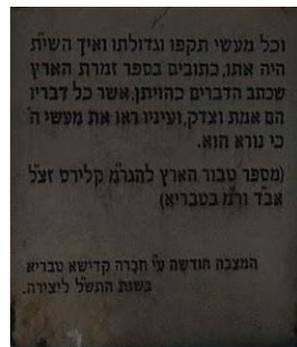
Born in Lapitsh in the Minsk area of the Ukraine, he was taken by his father to the *yeshiva katana* in Lida at the age of 10. He continued his learning at Kamenitz in 1931, under Rav Baruch Ber. In 1936, Rav Reuven joined his family in Eretz Yisrael; he became a *talmid* of the Lomza Yeshiva in *Petach Tikva*. In 1946, he began giving *chaburos* in the *yeshiva*. In 1965, he became *rosh yeshiva* of *Chemdas Shmuel* in a *moshav* called Chemed. At first he kept his position at Lomza *yeshiva*, giving two *shiurim be'iyun* on two different *masechtos* every Monday, but the Lomza *yeshiva* closed a short while thereafter. In 1976, Rav Reuven was called upon to serve as *rosh yeshiva* of *Yeshivas Hanegev* in Netivot.

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Rav Chaim Abulafia Chacham Chaim Abulafia of Teveria (Nissan 6, 5504 / 1744 - 282nd Yahrzeit)

(Some say the Yahrzeit is on the 7th of Nissan the 16th of Nissan)



Rav Chaim was born in Chevron in 5420 (1660).

His *yichus* traces back to Rav Chaim Abulafia, "*Hamusmach HaZaken*" of Chevron. The *Chida* writes in *Shem Hagedolim* that their *yichus* traces back to *Shevet Yehudah* and *Malchus*.

As a young boy, his family moved to Yerushalayim where he studied in the *Bais Yaakov-Viga yeshivah*, (founded by Rav Yaakov Chagiz) under the auspices of the *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Moshe Galanti. He also studied under Rav Shlomo Algazi HaZaken and along with Rav Chizkiyahu de Silva, known as the *Pri Chadash*, who was a colleague. There he earned his *semichah* ordination and was sent to Tzefat to teach and serve as the rav of the city.

He gave *derashos* every Shabbos and Yom Tov, and published them as *Etz Chaim* in Izmir and *Mikra'ei Kodesh Chiddushei Halachos*, as well as three volumes of *Yosef Lekach*, *derushim* on the Torah. He also authored *Yashresh Yaakov* on the *Ein Yaakov aggados* of the *Talmud*, and *Shevus Yaakov* on the same subject. He also authored *Chanan Elokim*, *derashos* and *pilpulim* (where he included *chiddushim* from *Be'er LeChai* and *Chaim V'Chessed* by his maternal grandfather, Rav Yitzchak ibn Jamil of Hebron).

He left on *shlichus* as a fundraiser to help his poor brethren in Hebron, *travelling* to Turkey at age 29 in 5459 (1699), then to Saloniki and eventually to Izmir. There he met Rav Yisrael Benveniste, the successor to his father Rav Chaim Benveniste, who authored *Shiurei Knesset HaGedolah* on *Shulchan Aruch*. Rav Chaim Abulafia and Rav Yisrael sparred and jostled in *halachah*. One day, the young *shadar* (acronym for *shaliach d'rabbanan*, messenger of the *rabbanim*) would return to Izmir, not as a fundraiser but as its rav.

When he returned to Eretz Yisrael, Rav Chaim was asked to serve as Rav of Tzefat. In the year 5485 (1725), Rav Yisrael Benveniste passed away and Rav Chaim was chosen to succeed him as the Chief Rabbi of Izmir. Amsterdam also sent letters of appointment, but drawn by its peace and quiet, Rav Chaim chose Izmir, and it was there that he published his *sefarim* during his tenure.

He had a profound influence on the *kehillah*, and even the Christian and Muslim populace revered him. As Rav, he looked out not only for their spiritual welfare but for their material welfare as well. Their economic status was very depressed at that time, and he used his many talents to change the face of the *kehillah*.

He had long harbored a wish to rebuild Teveria (which sat desolate with no *shul* or *bais medrash* for some seventy years) and some say that Eliyahu Hanavi appeared to him in a dream and urged him to do so.

After serving as Rav of Teveria for four years and rebuilding the *kehillah*, Rav Chaim passed away on 6 (some say 7) or (Encyclopedia says 16) *Nissan* 5504 (1744) at the age of 84.



Rav Meir Dan Platzky Klei Chemdah (Nissan 6, 5688 / 1928 - 98th Yahrzeit)



The Prodigy of Kutno

“Rabbi Meir Dan”, as he was called and known among the Jews of Poland, was a giant among rabbis. He served as the rabbi of the community of Dvart [Warta], the rabbi of the community of Ostrow Mazowiecka, and in his last days as head of the *Mesivta* yeshiva in Warsaw, the capital of Poland. But holding these positions per se did not add luster to his name; rather it was because of his great personality that these communities themselves became renowned. This personality sprouted and grew in the very heart of Chassidic Poland. He was educated in the lap of pure Chassidism to become a pillar of Torah and education.

Rabbi Meir Dan was born in Kutno in the year 5627 [1866–1867] to his father Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak Plotzky, a scholar and ardent Chassid, one of the followers of the Chassidic rebbe Rabbi Chanoch Henich of Alexander. After the latter's death he became one of the important followers of the *rebbe of Ger*, the author of *S'fas Emes*, and was among his inner circle. His mother, Mrs. Gela, was a distinguished woman and one of the most righteous and well known women of Kutno, who implanted in her beloved son the love of Torah and *yiras Shomayim* from the moment he could understand, even before he went to *cheder*.

When he was only eleven months old Rabbi Meir Dan came down with a mortal disease. The doctors in Kutno refused to treat him any further, as they saw no possibility of saving his life. His father Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak rushed to the house of his teacher, Rabbi

Chanoch Henich Hacoheh of Alexander, and bitterly poured out his heart about his terrible trouble. The rebbe gave him a blessing for a complete recovery, but Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak remained there, immersed in pain. He knew what the doctors of Kutno had said before he left his house. He had left his baby son at the very edge of death.

“Why are you worried? You will yet derive much pleasure from him. He will be a great rabbi in Israel,” the great rebbe said. Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak pulled himself together at that moment, and no longer hurried to get back to the bed of his sick child. He stayed for a while in Alexander in the presence of his teacher and rabbi. Then the little Rabbi Meir Dan gradually regained his strength. When he grew up and gained understanding, he was found to have exceptional abilities, an unusual acuity of mind. He was already thought of as a prodigy even before he was brought to the cheder.

His father Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak was never a wealthy man. He barely made a living as a clerk and trusted employee, a bureaucrat for wealthy Jews who owned great woodlands in western Poland. Generally his work, whether in the forest or in a village, was located close to where they felled trees. Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak wandered from place to place along with his family and his brilliant son. But his mother was concerned about his studies. So she went out and sold her jewelry and engaged exceptional teachers, who stayed in the villages with her family and taught the little Rabbi Meir Dan. He rapidly progressed in the levels of Torah study to the point where he was considered a great prodigy. When Rabbi Meir Dan eulogized his mother after her death he highlighted the greatness of her spirit, her rare moral qualities and the extraordinary deeds of a young woman who would sell her jewelry in order to have higher caliber teachers, who shared their high level of knowledge.

When Rabbi Meir Dan was nine years old he was no longer in the hands of wandering teachers. Even the best of them had nothing more to teach the young prodigy. So despite his young age his parents sent him to Kalish, to the yeshiva of the *Gaon* Rabbi Chaim Eliezer Wachs, the rabbi of the city and author of *Nefesh Chaya*. At first visitors to the rabbi's house had doubts about what such a young child was doing there and attending the rabbi's lectures, even if he were gifted. But once Rabbi Wachs examined Rabbi Meir Dan he immediately included him in the group of his best students. From that time on he never stopped loving him and caring for his needs. After a few years Rabbi Meir Dan moved to Sochachow [Sochaczew], to the yeshiva of the Chassidic *rebbe* Rabbi Avraham,

author of *Avnei Nezer*, a place where exceptional scholars and giants of the Torah tended to concentrate. The lectures of the *gaon* of Sochachow were replete with such sharpness and depth that even adult students with great abilities at times found them difficult to comprehend. Nevertheless, the young Rabbi Meir Dan quickly succeeded in becoming part of this elite group. When he was thirteen years old his father arranged a Bar Mitzvah celebration in Kutno and invited all the leaders of the city to the event. Rabbi Meir Dan himself composed a discourse, which overwhelmed all those who heard it with its acuity and profundity. Word of the talk reached his teacher and rabbi, the *rebbe* of Sochachow. When Rabbi Meir Dan returned to his yeshiva he was asked to reprise his discourse that had become known. This veteran prince of the Torah listened to his young student and said, "One can debate what he said, but he built a beautiful structure and it would be a shame to bring it down when it is just as likely that it will stand...."

Head of the Yeshiva of Dvart

In Dvart, located in this district, a city full of wise men and sofrim [scribes; authors], great Chassidim and excellent scholars, there lived at that time Rabbi Mordechai, a Chassid and a learned man, a wealthy man and a man of good deeds. His wife was Mrs. Sheina Reizel, a righteous woman who grew up in the house of her uncle, the *Gaon* Rabbi Chaim Auerbach, chief of the rabbinical court of Linschitz [Leczyca].

Rabbi Mordechai had three daughters. The two older of them were married to great scholars who eventually served as rabbis. The first was Rabbi Yosef, chief of the rabbinical court of Kletcheva [Kleczew], and the second the *Gaon* Rabbi Menachem, chief of the rabbinical court of Kozminka [Kozminek]. For the youngest of his daughters, the talented and outstanding Tziril, Rabbi Mordechai sought an exceptional young man who was known as an outstanding *gaon* of note. In Sochachew at the *yeshiva* of the *rebbe* Rabbi Avraham he found the young Rabbi Meir Dan and took him as the groom for his daughter.

Rabbi Mordechai spent much money on the dowry and gifts. In the year 5642 [1882] Rabbi Meir Dan married his bride when he was just fifteen years old. His father-in-law Rabbi Mordechai spent a great deal of money so that Rabbi Meir Dan could acquire a large library and also took care of all his needs. For ten years Rabbi Meir Dan worked at studying Torah and became a great scholar, having no worries about his subsistence or that of his family, being reliant on the support of his father-in-law. In his sefer, *Chemdas*

Yisrael, Rabbi Meir Dan says, "I am morally obligated to mention for good and blessing at the beginning of my book the name of my dear rabbinical, righteous and just father-in-law, who walked a straight path and loved Torah and its students, Rabbi Mordechai, may his memory be a blessing, and my dear and righteous mother-in-law, Mrs. Sheina Reizel, may she rest in peace, who supported me for ten years, when all my needs were dependent upon them in all matters, and I was able to study and teach worthy students."

The grandfather of Rabbi Meir Dan, his father's father, was an outstanding *gaon* and Chassid and multi-talented man, named Rabbi Yisrael. He died in the year 5643 [1882-1883] when Rabbi Meir Dan was seventeen. On the day of his death the grandfather called for his grandson, asked him to put his hand on his heart and to swear that he would study with all his heart and soul and that he would cultivate innovative and profound ideas about the Torah. His grandfather's request never left the memory of Rabbi Meir Dan up until his final day. (This information is found in the introduction to his book, *Chemdas Yisrael*, Volume I, where he adds that he named his book after his esteemed grandfather.)

For a short time Rabbi Meir Dan studied in Dvart by himself. But soon a number of young men came to him, and he began to deliver his lectures to them. From that time on there was never an absence of a *yeshiva* around him. In the house of his rich father-in-law, surrounded by love and devotion, Rabbi Meir Dan dedicated himself to learning and teaching, day and night. He was always found in the midst of his studies. His *yeshiva* grew, and it became famous in the surrounding area and beyond. Its students were deeply attached to their teacher, the young *gaon*, whose name became well known in the entire world of Torah as one of the sharpest minds of his generation, a genius in Halacha and a genius in understanding. He diligently and rapidly went through both of the two Talmuds and the early and later commentators. He was a *gaon* whose sharpness of mind did not detract from the breadth of his knowledge and whose breadth of knowledge did not diminish his acuity.

Rabbi Meir Dan was a Chassid in every fiber of his being. He adhered to pure Chassidism with all his heart and soul and to his studies with enthusiasm and awe, with holiness and purity. He related to every iota of the Torah with fear and trembling, but also with love and soulful devotion. Study was never for him a matter of pleasure, but rather a holy

undertaking. The Torah obligates every part of one's body, not just the mind and intelligence. Therefore he worked in the field of Torah with literally with all his strength. He approached the study of the Torah with a real hunger, as if he had never studied it before. Every day he would set aside time to infuse into his heart the love of Torah. Thus, there was no limit or parallel to his love of the Torah.

Gaon and Chassid

He was one of the devoted and sharpest Chassidim of Ger. He had a permanent place at the house of prayer of the Chassidim of Ger in Dvart, which was full of extraordinary men of learning and Chassidim, both old and young, enthusiastic in their service to God. His limitless devotion to Chassidism was planted in his heart by his father, Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak, and by his grandfather, Rabbi Yisrael. And so he maintained this precious heritage in every aspect. From a very young age he would frequently visit the holy ambience to be found at the court of the Chassidic *rebbe* Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Ger, author of the *S'fat Emet* [The Language of Truth]. After the latter's death he accepted the authority of the Chassidic *rebbe* Rabbi Avraham Mordechai of Ger.

The *rebbe*s of Ger had a deep love for this young and exceptional *gaon*. There were very few like him in his generation. At the same time, every word that came out of the mouth of the *rebbe* was like a law for him, and every demand or request an obligation for which he was prepared to go through fire and water to fulfill. Rabbi Meir Dan viewed Chassidism as an integral part of the obligations incumbent upon every Jew of recent generations. Only Chassidism would prevent deviations in thought and action in our bereft generations, assuming that Chassidism was directed by a true *tzadik*, a saint of Israel.

Every person needs some real submission, and not only of the heart. Just as prayer needs to be expressed with your mouth, so, too, every submission needs to be expressed in actions. A person who has no teacher, no rabbi, and does not submit to anyone only diminishes his own stature. No matter who he may be there is a higher power above him and God helps him, Rabbi Meir Dan posited. Thus, he viewed in Chassidism an activity which supplemented his study of Torah and good work, and without which everything is deficient. Later in his life, when he was on a mission in America, he was asked by one of the Mitnagdic rabbis, "A *gaon* like you, who has mastered every aspect of the Torah, why do you need to travel so much and why do you need to submit to the *rebbe* so much?"

Rabbi Meir Dan replied, "We learn that 'thunder was created in order to straighten out the crookedness of the heart'. This teaching seems surprising and incomprehensible. For a person who infuses into his heart much Torah, his work consists of prayer, fear and love of God, the fear of sin and adherence to the blessed Creator. Is he not yet able to rid the crookedness from his heart with the strength of his Torah and fear of God? Must he wait until a day of rain, thunder and lightning storms in order to be able to expel the crookedness?"

"From this analogy we understand," Rabbi Meir Dan went on, "that this crookedness, which is the fertile source of all poison and bitterness, cannot be cured by the person himself. Rather he needs help. The Chassid does not wait until a stormy day. He travels to the *rebbe*, who guides and directs him and prunes the wild growths that envelop the heart and soul of a person. He learns to know submission, its nature and substance. He absorbs his *rebbe's* Torah and teachings like a pupil before his master. He learns from his manner, his conversation and his conduct of affairs. His *Torah* knowledge is not diminished thereby, but rather his stature is only straightened."

In the year 5663 [1902-1903] Rabbi Meir Dan published his *sefer*, *Chemdas Yisrael*, to which some of the greatest rabbis of the generation gave their enthusiastic endorsements. Among them were his teacher, Rabbi Avraham of Sochachew, the *Gaon* Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik, chief of the rabbinical court in Brisk [Brest-Litovsk], the *Gaon* Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Meisel, the rabbi of Lodz, and others. They adorned the rabbi-author with the greatest of titles, they crowned him as being an awesome *gaon*, a prince of the Torah. But Rabbi Meir Dan, in printing their endorsements, edited out all the compliments that were directed at him, but made do only with references to "the rabbi."

Most of the hours of the day he devoted to his holy work. He delivered several lectures to the students in his yeshiva per day. But in addition to this he was aware of everything that was going on in his community, Dvart. He served as the address for every bitter soul and every trouble that afflicted the people of the city or its environs, and never stinted in any effort to assist anyone who asked for help. He saw himself as responsible for the well being and health of all the poor and suffering, the widows and orphans in his community and the surrounding area. He never ceased in his devotion to the downtrodden.

Before the last world war ended the position of the rabbinate in Ostrow Mazowiecka

became vacant. The rabbi of the community, Rabbi Yosef Kalish of Amshinov, was chosen as the Chassidic rebbe and chief of the rabbinical court of Amshinov in place of his father, the Chassidic *rebbe* Rabbi Menachem, who had just died. The people of the community of Ostrow Mazowiecka chose the *Gaon* Rabbi Meir Dan as their rabbi and teacher. As usual, Rabbi Meir Dan took no final step until he had consulted with his teacher and rabbi, the Chassidic *rebbe* Rabbi Avraham Mordechai of Ger. When the rabbi came to ask his question, the *rebbe* replied, "For a few years, why not?"

Rabbi Meir Dan no longer hesitated. He left Dvart and went to Ostrow Mazowiecka, where his reputation was as a great *gaon*, a prince of the Torah, a devoted rabbi and courageous fighter, one of the greatest rabbis of his generation, and a paver of the paths to Torah Judaism. In Ostrow Mazowiecka, as in Dvart, he immediately took the lead in all communal activities. He stood at the gates as a father and patron, responsible for everything that occurred within. He did not flinch before anyone, nor did he put up with anyone. He saw in the rabbinate a holy mission whose responsibilities must be fulfilled with devotion.

As the situation in Poland calmed down, the question of the organization of traditional Judaism once again rose to the fore. Rabbi Meir Dan was co-opted to this service, and was appointed as one of the leaders of *Agudas Yisrael*. The founders of this new movement were faced with a difficult problem, that of establishing a budget for the organization's activities. Without adequate financial resources it was clear that it would be impossible to establish a mass movement, with centers, hundreds of branches, and thousands of educational and other institutions.

Therefore it was by decided by the organizers of the Organization of the Faithful of Israel (a/k/a *Agudat Yisrael*) to send a high level delegation to England and the United States to encourage orthodox Jews to organize and offer their full support to the new movement. Chosen as head of the delegation was Rabbi Meir Dan Plotzky. Its members consisted of the Gaon Rabbi Asher Lemel Spitzer, chief of the rabbinical court of Kirchendorf [Kirchdorf], Rabbi Dr. Meir Hildesheimer of Berlin, Germany, Dr. Nathan Birnbaum, Rabbi Yosef Lev, who later served as rabbi in London, and Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Levin, may he live and be well, who headed the delegation only in England.

Rabbi Meir Dan was everywhere received royally. Rabbis and those knowledgeable about

the Torah trembled before this great *gaon*, who was rightfully thought of as a prince of the Torah and a pillar of education. But the delegation did not succeed in raising the needed sums. Rabbi Meir Dan, who had a kind and gentle soul, did not succeed, as he was not adept at the games of honorifics by which fundraising was accomplished in America in those days. He did know how to flatter people, especially the nouveau riche, who were ignorant of Torah, did not have the fear of Heaven, and did not have the same charitable impulses to which Rabbi Meir Dan was accustomed.

Rabbi Meir Dan then returned to Poland. But a great shock now befell the state that had just attained its new political independence, after more than a hundred years of subjugation to Russia, Germany and Austria. The Bolshevik Red Army invaded Poland and attempted to conquer her anew. The Polish Army quickly retreated westward. In a relatively short time the soldiers of communist Russia had arrived at the gates of Warsaw.

He published his *sefer*, *Klei Chemdah*, on the Torah, which quickly captured the hearts of the Torah community in Poland and beyond. Major endorsements were given to this book by leading contemporary Torah scholars. Among them were the *Gaon* Rabbi Yosef Rosen, the *Gaon* Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, the *Gaon* Rabbi Yosef Engel and others. The book was quickly sold out and made the name of its author famous as one of the sharpest *geonim* [pl. of *gaon*]. He also published the second volume of his *sefer*, *Chemdas Yisrael*, which included rabbinic responsa, lectures and moral discourses that Rabbi Meir Dan had delivered since he was appointed as rabbi and chief of the rabbinical court. These were only a few of the thousands of responses that the rabbi had sent to communities near and far, to hundreds of rabbis and *dayanim* [pl. of *dayan*] who had turned to him with all manner of serious issues and complicated questions. He responded quickly, precisely and clearly to every inquirer. He did not avoid deciding difficult matters of Jewish law, although he occasionally surrounded his replies with other topics, meandering through the Talmud and the early and later decisors in the course of clarifying the law.

At its first convention in 5682 [1921-1922], at which hundreds of rabbis took part, Rabbi Meir Dan was elected as chairman of the executive committee of the Association of Rabbis of Poland. He functioned in this framework principally in matters revolving around issues of *Halacha*. He refused to get involved in any activity that involved improving the economic status of rabbis. He left this matter to other rabbis.

In Agudas Yisrael

The *Gaon* Rabbi Meir Dan was active and involved in the organization of the *Agudas Yisrael* movement in Poland. Its firm establishment was important to him, and he did much on its behalf. The rabbi saw *Agudas Yisrael*, then known as The Organization of the Faithful of Israel, as very serious force for the strengthening of the ramparts of religion, for saving future generations for Judaism, for the prevention of the domination of anti-religious movements in the Jewish community, and for the rule of Torah in the life of the nation. Therefore he sharply opposed and totally rejected the wish of certain rabbis to appear politically unaffiliated. "At a time when full loyalty to the Torah has become a political party matter, how can a rabbi who fulfills his Torah mission see himself as unaffiliated? What rabbi can remain indifferent to the question of whether the Torah is that which determines all the ways and means of the life of the nation, or whether other factors, national or class ones, do?" he asked.

Even within the orthodox *Agudas Yisrael* movement Rabbi Meir Dan had his own distinct ideas and approach. A fundamental debate was then being undertaken in the new movement on the following question: who has the right to join *Agudas Yisrael*? The debate originated in Germany, Slovakia and Hungary, where separate orthodox communities existed [independent of the general Jewish community]. There were those who argued that only members of such separate communities could join *Agudas Yisrael*, since following the rulings of the giants of the Torah of the previous generation separate orthodox communities had been established. This would oblige every orthodox Jew to join these separate entities. There were even those who forbade joining the general communities, which included the non-religious and even the anti-religious, and whose provisions did not comply at all with the explicit Halacha. As opposed to them there were those who argued that it would be inappropriate to limit the world organization to the framework of the separate communities, and that it was incumbent upon *Agudas Yisrael* to include all Jews who observed the word of God, and not to prevent any Jew who indentified with its principles to join. Rabbi Meir Dan joined in this debate. As soon as he returned from the *Agudas Yisrael* mission to England and the United States he ceaselessly demanded that the gates of *Agudas Yisrael* should be opened to the maximum extent

in order to attract the masses to its ranks. Everything should be done so that the masses would join the movement in every locale, without being overly concerned with the

minutiae of their observance. The very fact of their joining and being active within the framework of *Agudas Yisrael* under the authority of the leaders of the Torah would bring about a turning point in their lives and in all their actions. He voiced this opinion on every occasion, whether in the conferences of *Agudas Yisrael* or in the meetings of the *Moetzet G'dolei Hatorah* [The Council of Torah Greats], to which body he was elected on the very day of its founding.

Alongside the establishment of *Agudas Yisrael* in Poland was also founded the *Tz'irei Agudat Yisrael* [Young Agudat Yisrael]. Clubs were set up for young orthodox [men], along with libraries for its members and other religious youth. Many of the leading Chassidic rebbes and other rabbis in Poland were strongly opposed to the very idea of setting up of religious libraries. A religious youth should study Torah. So, too, should the working youth devote every free hour to Torah and its works, and not waste time reading books of literature, meaningless stories, which may contain poison dangerous to the soul.

But the young orthodox activists, who worked to establish clubs and libraries for the religious working youth, found a champion in Rabbi Meir Dan Plotzky, who saw this as an imperative of the times. "The libraries for youth will prevent the reading of forbidden and dangerous books that corrupt the soul, and do not, Heaven forefend, prevent the study of the Torah," he ruled.

When in 5682 [1922] the national convention of *Agudas Yisrael* in Poland convened in Warsaw, Rabbi Meir Dan delivered an enthusiastic and fiery speech. He demanded of the masses to sanctify the name of Heaven by committing themselves to this undertaking. He energized the thousands who attended the convention who applauded enthusiastically. At the conclusion of his words a resounding sound blasted forth from the mouths of thousands, *Sh'ma Yisrael Adoshem Elokeinu Adoshem Echad* [Hear O Israel, the Lord Our God the Lord Is One]. This scene uplifted Rabbi Meir Dan. This lecture found particular favor in his eyes, to the point where it was printed in his book, *Klei Chemdah* (in the section dealing with the weekly biblical portion of *Nitzavim*).

During his decades at his *yeshiva* in Dvart, to which many young men streamed, and during his service as rabbi of Ostrow Mazowiecka, he nurtured thousands of students. As he approached sixty he began to pine for the days of his youth, before he had burdened himself with the onus of the rabbinate and when his time was completely free for

spreading the *Torah*, for learning and teaching. When he was approached to accept the post as head of the *Mesivta* yeshiva in Warsaw, at which hundreds of young men studied, he responded positively. He even agreed to travel once again to the United States to raise the money needed to expand the yeshiva, to absorb hundreds of additional students, and to secure its existence. Thus, in the year 5686 [1926] the *Gaon* Rabbi Meir Dan left on this mission to the United States and remained there for many months.

Upon his return from the United States Rabbi Meir Dan resigned his position as rabbi of Ostrow Mazowiecka, to the distress of many of its residents who were tied to the rabbi with strong bonds of love and friendship. A spacious apartment was rented for him at 7 Marianska Street in Warsaw. The rabbi began his new job as head of the *Mesivta* yeshiva and began to give his opening lectures on the Laws of the Sanctification of G-d's Name of the Rambam. The rabbi hoped that in Warsaw, the capital of Poland and the largest Jewish community in those days, he could contribute to the Jewish and religious community, whether in the framework of Agudas Yisrael or the Association of Rabbis, etc.

Rabbi Meir Dan refused at first to have a synagogue in his home. He would attend one of the many Chassidic shuls of Ger in Warsaw, as just one Chassid among many. "From now on I am no longer a rabbi and am free from any of the requirements of praying at any one particular place," he said gratefully. He was fortunate in his new position, and planned to expand the framework of the yeshiva, to raise its status, and to transform it into a center of Torah learning in Poland. Thus, many young men began to stream to Warsaw, applying to the *Mesivta*, the reputation of whose head was widely spoken of. Hundreds of young men, sharp and excellent, from all over Poland wanted to study Torah directly from the mouth of the leading *gaon* of the generation.

But the happiness of Rabbi Meir Dan did not last long. Just a few months after his arrival in Warsaw he fell ill with a disease from which he never recovered. The disease got worse day by day, to the distress of his many admirers, students and friends.

Even as he lay in his sick bed the *gaon* did not stop learning with enthusiasm, innovating ideas about the Torah. In the Compendium of Sermons that was published by the Association of Rabbis in Poland, Volume IX, in the year 5690 [1929-1930], page 16, the Chassidic rebbe Rabbi Yitzchak Zelig of Sokolow wrote, "Our colleague, the Chassid and *Gaon* Rabbi Meir Dan, chief of the rabbinical court of Ostroveh, just a few days before his

death wrote me a letter reminding me to pray with him that he would be cured of his illness. He also wrote a note to clarify the text of the *Mechilta* on the weekly Bible portion of *Vayakhel*. I replied to him briefly to gladden him with words of Torah, knowing that words of Torah would make him feel better and that the light of the Torah will make him live. My reply did not reach him before he went up to heaven, to our great regret. I greatly loved his words of Torah that he innovated when he was beset with pain (may we not know of such), and this was Torah that he taught despite all this and remains to his credit.”

It is told that shortly before his death an expert physician, one of the great doctors of Poland, stood at his bedside. The doctor said to him that if you invest all your desires in a particular matter, and you derive maximal unlimited pleasure from it, it will stimulate strength within you that will help fight the disease and you might be able to overcome it.

When the doctor left, the *Gaon* Rabbi Meir Dan said, “In fact I have been fortunate to be counted among the type of rabbis who are sufficiently knowledgeable to deal with very serious and complex questions. So if I invest all my strength in this, it is clear that I will derive great pleasure from it, that I will be strengthened. But this will not be strength but rather pride, conceit, egoism. It is better to die than to fall into the morass of pride....”

In his last days he even wrote a will, saying that it might even help to lengthen his days. In his will he asked his sons, the *Gaon* Rabbi Yisrael Natan and the *Gaon* Rabbi Chanoch Henich, to publish the lectures that he gave on the observance of the Shabbos and to print his many Torah novellae. His pain grew from day to day, but it did not detract from his great concentration until the last moment of his life.

On the sixth day of *Nissan* 5688 [March 27, 1928], the *Gaon* Rabbi Meir Dan departed for on high, not quite attaining the age of sixty-two. There was much mourning after the death of this *gaon* and honored one of his generation. Many eulogies were given about him all across the Jewish world.

Appendix I - Rabbi Plotzky's Visits to the United States

U.S. passenger ship list records confirm that Rabbi Plotzky made two trips to the United States:

He arrived in New York City on the S.S. Adriatic from Southampton on May 27, 1921 (under the name Majer Don Plocki, age 54, Rabbi [written over "Priest"], from Ostrowo, Lomza Gubernia, Poland), traveling with Rabbi Josef Srul Lew, another member of the *Agudas Yisrael* delegation (see below). They were both marked as non-immigrants on three-month visits, with their trips being financed by the "Israel World Organisation" [sic]. Their destination was 194 Henry Street, New York.

He arrived on the S.S. Mauretania from Cherbourg on May 14, 1926 (under the name Majer-Don Plocki, age 58, Rabbi [written over "Rev'd."], from Ostrow, Poland, Warszawska 22). He was marked as planning to remain permanently, with his destination being Congregation Beth-Chasidim of Poland. He was also listed as having a medical condition, a hernia.

The 1921 visit is described in several sources, including the book, "The Struggle and the Splendor," by the late Rabbi Moshe Sherer (published by *Agudath Israel* of America, 1982), which is a history of that organization. Rabbi Sherer writes that in 1921 "a distinguished European Agudath Israel delegation came to the United States seeking to strengthen *Torah* allegiance and organize an *Agudah* movement here. Led by one of the outstanding *gaonim* of Poland, the *Ostrover Rav*, Rabbi Meir Don Plotzky, the group included Rabbi Asher Spitzer of Kurdorf [Kirchdorf], Slovakia, Rabbi Dr. Meir Hildesheimer of Berlin, Dr. Nathan Birnbaum, and Rabbi Joseph Lev."

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Rav Aharon Roth Shomer Emunim (Nissan 6, 5707 / 1947 - 79th Yahrzeit)

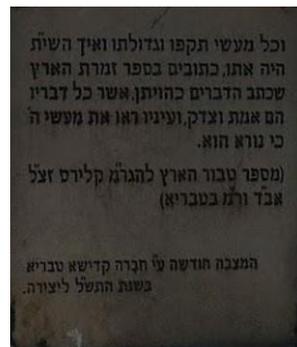


Rav Ahrele Roth, founder of *Chassidus Shomrei Emunim*, came to Yerushalayim in 1925.

He was known for his fervent and emotional style of *tefilla*. In Satmar, Hungary, at the time, he was viewed as being inordinately intense, and became somewhat of a curiosity. Such was his manner of conducting himself that the *talmidim* from the *Satmar Yeshiva* were banned from visiting or even laying eyes on him. It is said that he often had to change his shirt up to three times during Shabbos-morning *tefillos*. He often stretched out the davening to four or five hours, such was his intensity. [I have read that he instituted the practice that all the *shuls* in Europe in which his Chassidim davened were forbidden to light the fires in the warming ovens during the cold winter days. He instructed that his *Chassidim's tefillos* should be sufficient to warm them up and keep them from freezing. They say that the windows of such shuls glistened with condensation due to the intense heat generated inside them despite the lack of ovens to heat them!] When he moved to Yerushalayim in 1925 he had decided to become a *sofer* (a scribe), but his teacher quickly realized that this was no ordinary human being and, soon after, Rav Ahrele Roth founded *Shomrei Emunim*.



Rav Chaim Abulafia Chacham Chaim Abulafia of Teveria (Nissan 7, 5504 / 1744 - 282nd Yahrzeit)
(Some say the Yahrzeit is on the 6th of Nissan the 16th of Nissan)



Rav Chaim was born in Chevron in 5420 (1660).

His *yichus* traces back to Rav Chaim Abulafia, "*Hamusmach HaZaken*" of Chevron. The *Chida* writes in *Shem Hagedolim* that their *yichus* traces back to *Shevet Yehudah* and *Malchus*.

As a young boy, his family moved to Yerushalayim where he studied in the *Bais Yaakov-Viga yeshivah*, (founded by Rav Yaakov Chagiz) under the auspices of the *Rosh Yeshiva*,

Rav Moshe Galanti. He also studied under Rav Shlomo Algazi HaZaken and along with Rav Chizkiyahu de Silva, known as the *Pri Chadash*, who was a colleague. There he earned his *semichah* ordination and was sent to Tzefat to teach and serve as the rav of the city.

He gave *derashos* every Shabbos and Yom Tov, and published them as *Etz Chaim* in Izmir and *Mikra'ei Kodesh Chiddushei Halachos*, as well as three volumes of *Yosef Lekach*, *derushim* on the Torah. He also authored *Yashresh Yaakov* on the *Ein Yaakov aggados* of the *Talmud*, and *Shevus Yaakov* on the same subject. He also authored *Chanan Elokim*, *derashos* and *pilpulim* (where he included *chiddushim* from *Be'er LeChai* and *Chaim V'Chessed* by his maternal grandfather, Rav Yitzchak ibn Jamil of Hebron).

He left on *shlichus* as a fundraiser to help his poor brethren in Hebron, *travelling* to Turkey at age 29 in 5459 (1699), then to Saloniki and eventually to Izmir. There he met Rav Yisrael Benveniste, the successor to his father Rav Chaim Benveniste, who authored *Shiurei Knesset HaGedolah* on *Shulchan Aruch*. Rav Chaim Abulafia and Rav Yisrael sparred and jostled in *halachah*. One day, the young *shadar* (acronym for *shaliach d'rabbanan*, messenger of the *rabbanim*) would return to Izmir, not as a fundraiser but as its rav.

When he returned to Eretz Yisrael, Rav Chaim was asked to serve as Rav of Tzefat. In the year 5485 (1725), Rav Yisrael Benveniste passed away and Rav Chaim was chosen to succeed him as the Chief Rabbi of Izmir. Amsterdam also sent letters of appointment, but drawn by its peace and quiet, Rav Chaim chose Izmir, and it was there that he published his *sefarim* during his tenure.

He had a profound influence on the *kehillah*, and even the Christian and Muslim populace revered him. As Rav, he looked out not only for their spiritual welfare but for their material welfare as well. Their economic status was very depressed at that time, and he used his many talents to change the face of the *kehillah*.

He had long harbored a wish to rebuild Teveria (which sat desolate with no *shul* or *bais medrash* for some seventy years) and some say that Eliyahu Hanavi appeared to him in a dream and urged him to do so.

After serving as Rav of Teveria for four years and rebuilding the *kehillah*, Rav Chaim passed away on 6 (some say 7) or (Encyclopedia says 16) *Nissan* 5504 (1744) at the age of 84.



Rav Yitzchok Derhobitsh, Derhovitsher (*Nissan 7, 5504 / 1744 - 282nd Yahrzeit*)

Rav Yitzchok was the son of Rav Yosef Sprawiedliwy (Polish for ישר - Righteous or Just) and Yenta *Di Nevia* (the Prophetess).

His mother was a great *Tzadekes*; she would immerse herself several times a day and *davened* wearing a *tallis*.

According to tradition, she would interrupt such mundane household activities as sweeping the house to answer *Kodosh, Kodosh, Kodosh*, to the heavenly hosts' *kedusha*, which she could hear.

She earned the moniker "Prophetess" after her husband complained of her behavior to the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, only to receive the response that she has open eyes and can see and hear things that others do not, and so she became known as *Di Nevia*.

The *Chassidim* treated her like a *Rebbe*, asking for her *berochos*. In return, she asked for gifts of food, which she would distribute to the poor.

Rav Yitzchok was descended from Rav Yitzchok Chaijes, *Av Bais Din* of Prague, *mechaber* of *Api Ravravi*.

When he lived in Ostrog, he was one of the ten Jews who studied in Rav Yuzpa's *Bais Medrash*, among the greatest *lamdonim* in town. He was also the *Maggid* and *mochiach* in Brod in the *Bais Medrash* of Rav Yitzchok of Hamburg during his tenure as Rav of Brode.

Although he knew of and approved of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, according to some, he was a colleague rather than a *talmid*.

The *Ba'al Shem* testified before Rav Yitzchok's son, Rav Michel of Zlotshuv, regarding his

father, that Rav Yitzchok “was given such a lowly soul that almost none have ever been given one so low, yet he elevated it to the heights of the Tanna Rav Shimon Bar Yochai!” (*Agra Depirka*)

He passed away on 7 *Nissan* 5510/1750 (or 5504/1744)

Some of his *Divrei Torah* appeared alongside those of his sons in *Mayim Rabim*.

His son was the famed Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotshuv.

His sons-in-law were Rav Avner Kasvan and Rav Yochanon Litvak of Radvil.



Rav Eliyahu Hakadosh Baal HaTosfos (*Nissan 8, 4950 / 1190 - 836th Yahrzeit*)



In addition to the notable Rabbi Yom Tov bar Yitzchak of Joigny, several other *Baalei Tosafos* are thought to have been among those Jews who were martyred in London in 1189 and in York in 1190.

One of these was Rabbi Eliyahu HaKadosh, a *talmid* of Rabbi Yitzchak HaZaken, who died at York, while Rabbi Yaakov of Orleans was said to have died a martyr's death in the anti-Jewish London riots of 1189.

Rabbeinu Yom Tov himself was a former *talmid* of Rashi's grandson, *Rabbeinu Tam*, and the epithet "*HaKodesh*" was frequently added to his name. He also was a *darshan mikra* and a liturgical poet, his best-known work being *Omnam Kein*, a *piyut* sung on *Yom Kippur*.

In one of the few contemporary accounts of the York tragedy, Ephraim of Bonn described *Rabbeinu Yom Tov* as a "person of no ordinary qualifications" and recorded the words of his final speech to the York *bais din*, which began: "Men of Israel! The G-d of our ancestors is Omniscient, and there is no one who can say 'Why do You do this?' This day He commands us to die for His Torah; for that law which we have cherished from the first hour it was given, which we have preserved pure throughout our exile among the nations, and which, for the many consolations it has given us and the eternal hope it communicates, can we do less than die? ..."

It has been said that it was mainly because of the cruel death of these notables that the *cherem* of York, the tradition in England of forbidding Jews to sleep in the City of York overnight, was proclaimed.

In 1978, as a healing gesture, a plaque was laid a short way down the slope in front of the tower in the presence of the chief rabbi of England, Lord (then Dr.) Immanuel Jakobovits; the Archbishop of York; and a descendent of Richard Malebisse, the leader of the mob that carried out the massacre. It bears this short, sad reminder of York's blackest hour:

"On the night of Friday 16 March 1190, some 150 Jews and Jewesses of York, having sought protection in the Royal Castle on this site from the mob incited by Richard Malebisse and others, chose to die at each other's hands rather than renounce their faith."

This statement is followed by a quote in Hebrew from Isaiah 42:12: "Let them honor G-d and declare His praise in the isles."

The Castle Area Campaign has also been active in maintaining the site and plaque. A field of daffodils (considered an appropriate flower because the petals take the form of a six-pointed star) was planted in 1993 as a memorial to what they describe as a "potent reminder of religious and racial intolerance — an educative force in an unstable world." Despite conciliatory gestures such as the one recorded above, York remains a city that most Jews avoid. It is said that devout Jews who happen to travel by train through the city even desist from eating their sandwiches. It is therefore somewhat ironic and perhaps even significant to note that the world's largest concentration of Jews in a single city today exists in the city of New York.



Rav Mordechai Rishfei Aish (Nissan 8, 5560 / 1800 - 226th Yahrzeit)

R. Mordechai of Neshchiz [8 Nissan 1800] was descended from the Maharal of Prague and Don Yitzchak Abarbanel. He was a disciple of R. Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov. The ill and the unfortunate came to visit him from long distances. It is recorded that he never uttered a negative word about another person. He actively supported settlement in Eretz Yisrael. He was succeeded by his son, R. Yitzchak of Neshchiz. His sayings were collected in *Rishfei Eish*.

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



Rav Yaakov Tzvi Yalish Molei Haroim (Nissan 9, 5585 / 1825 - 201st Yahrzeit)

Rav Yaakov Tzvi was born in Reisha in 5538/1778, the son of Rav Naftoli.

He was orphaned at a young age and was raised by his grandfather, Rav Yehuda ben Tzvi.

He became renowned for his many gifts and talents, and studied together with Rav Yaakov Orenstein, *mechaber* of *Yeshuos Yaakov*.

He received the Chassidic tradition from his *Rebbe* and mentor, the *Apta Rav*, *mechaber* of *Ohev Yisrael*, as well as the *Kozhnutzer Maggid*, the *Chozeh* of Lublin and Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanow.

He authored the *sefer Kehillas Yaakov*, where he cites the *Apta Rav* under the headings for *Yeshua* and *Shiluach*.

Rav Yaakov Tzvi served as Rav in Dynow, Glogov, Huskav and Premisla.

He authored many *seforim*, including *Molei HoRoim* and *Kehillas Yaakov* on *Toras Rashbi* and the *Zohar*; *Emes LeYaakov* on *Chumash*; glosses and chiddushim on *Shas* and *Mishnayos*, printed in all the Vilna Editions; *Bais Vaad LaChachomim*, biographies of

Tano'aim and *Amoro'im*; and *Chinuch Bais Yehuda* on *Chanuka*.

His son Rav Avrohom Eliezer Yehuda Leibush published many of his father's seforim. He also had a son named Rav Mordechai of Nizanov. His son-in-law was Rav Avrohom Leib haKohen Troiget, who published *Bais Vaad LaChachomim*.



Rav Nosson Feitel Reinitz (Nissan 9, 5622 / 1862 - 164th Yahrzeit)



Rav Nosson Feitel, the ancestor of the famed Reinitz family, was the son of Rav Dov Berel, and the *mechaber* of *Divrei Ranaf*.

Rav Nosson Feitel studied in the *Yeshiva* of Rav Tzvi Yehoshua HaLevi Horowitz, *Av Bais Din* of Yemnitz, Treibitsh, Prustitz and Turna, and *mechaber* of *Chiddushei HaRibash* and *Semichas Moshe*. (Rav Tzvi Yehoshua was the son of the *Rebbe* Reb Shmelka of Nikolsberg and son-in-law of his uncle, Reb Shmelka's brother, Rav Pinchas of Frankfurt, *mechaber* of the *Haflo'a*.) He was also a *talmid* of Rav Boruch Frankel Teomim of Leipnik, *mechaber* of *Boruch Taam*.

He married the daughter of Rav Yitzchok Dov. He served as Rav of Tete Vegsing and afterward as Rav of Diandias.

Later, he was Rav of Mad, Hungary, for nineteen years, from 5603/1842 until 5622/1861.

He became a *mechuton* of Rav Asher of Tshenger.

Rav Nosson Feitel used to immerse in the *mikveh* at least twice a day, once before *Tikkun Chatzos* and once before *Shacharis*. Sometimes he *toiveled* before delivering his *shiur* to the *talmidim* in *Yeshiva* and sometimes before *davening Mincha* as well. He once said, "I wish I could cast myself into the fire [for the sake of Hashem's honor and glory], like I cast myself into the freezing cold waters of the *mikveh*!"

He often gave *tzedoka* in a hidden manner so no one would know he was the source.

Rav Nosson Feitel was laid to rest in Mad, Hungary.

After his *petira*, the *Liska Rav* eulogized him at the *levaya*, saying that he was shown a vision that he must arise early deliver a *hesped* at the *levaya* of one of the *lamed vov Tzaddikim* of the generation, who had been *niftar* that night. As soon as he awoke, a carriage arrived, waiting to take him to deliver the *hesped* at Mad for the *levaya* of Rav Nosson Feitel. (*Toldos Geonei Hagar* p. 30)

His sons were: Rav Kalonymous Kalman of Lelem; Rav Yehoshua Boruch of Tzetzovitz (Chetchavitz) and Balkan, *mechaber* of *Sefer Hamichtovim* and *Teshuva Mei'ahava*; Rav Yosef Shlomo of Mishkoltz; and Rav Avrohom Yaakov of Balkan and Kapish.



Rav Aryeh Levine Tzaddik from Yerushalayim, Mashgiach Yeshivas Eitz Chaim (Nissan 9, 5729 / 1969 - 57th Yahrzeit)



Rav Aryeh Levine was born on the 6th of *Nissan* 5645, and passed away on the 9th of *Nissan* 5729 (March 22, 1885 - March 28, 1969). He was known by one and all as “The Father of the Prisoners”.

Rav Levine was born in Urla, near Bialistock, Poland, to his father R' Binyamin Beinush and his mother Ettel. He learned at the Sutzk & Slonim Yeshivoh, and was considered an outstanding, diligent *talmid* and an *illuy* (a genius). In spite of his youth, he was accepted at the *Volozhin Yeshiva*, where he became very close to his rebbe, Rav Chaim Berlin, who was later nominated as *Av Beis Din* (Rabbinical Court Chief Judge) of Moscow and Yerushalayim. In *Adar* 5765 (March 1095), he came to live in *Eretz Yisrael*, where he learned at the Yeshivas Toras Chaim. He was ordained by Rav Chaim Berlin, Rav Shmuel Selant and Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook. Rav Aryeh married the daughter of Rav David Shapira; his brother-in-law was Rav Zvi Pesach Frank, the Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim. Rav Aryeh Levine's daughter married Rav Shlomo Eliyashiv's grandson, Rav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv *ztz'l*.

For many decades he served as *Mashgiach* at the Yeshivas Eitz Chaim in Yerushalayim, where thousands of boys were nurtured and educated by him like a loving father. His modest ways and magnificent personality are etched in their minds and in their hearts for life. Rav Aryeh was renowned for his wondrous acts of *chessed*; all his actions were done purely for the sake of Heaven, with extreme humility and great respect for his fellowman.

He was known as “The Father of the Prisoners”, having regularly visited Prisoners of Zion imprisoned during the time of the British Mandate. In his visits, he would encourage them, bringing them letters and greetings from home. He was especially renowned for visiting the underground movement prisoners, and those who were condemned to hanging. Rav Aryeh also made regular visits to the unfortunate patients at the Lepers’ Hospital.

After the War of Independence, the bodies of members of the “convoy of 35” were returned to Eretz Yisrael, 18 months after being killed in action. The Military Rabbinate was unable to identify for certain 12 of the bodies, and after consulting with Rav Zvi Pesach Frank, the Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim, Rav Levine was given the task of drawing “*The Gra’s Lot*” in order to identify them. This lot is done using a special *Tanach*, ascribed to the *Vilna Gaon*. The fascinating results were received as conclusive evidence by the bereaved families, the IDF, and the Ministry of Defense.

After the State of Israel was established, Rav Levine founded the *Yeshiva* that is named after him - Beis Aryeh - and designated his son-in-law, Rabbi Eliezer Platinsky, Rav Noson Zvi Finkel - *the Alter of Slabodka’s* grandson - as *Rosh Yeshiva*. Today, the *Yeshiva* numbers a few dozen *talmidim*, among them renowned *rabbanim* and *poskim*.

Rav Levine passed away on the eve of *Shabbos Hagadol* 5729 (1969), at the Hadassah Ein Karem Medical Center, Yerushalayim, and was buried after *chatzos* (noon). Thus, his last will and testament, that he should not be eulogized at the funeral, was fulfilled (both due to the sanctity of the approaching *Shabbos*, and since no *hespedim* are said during the month of *Nissan*).

For many years, Rav Levine lived on Har G’rizzim Street in the neighborhood of Mishkanot, Yerushalayim. Following his death, the street was re-named after him. The *Yeshiva* that he founded - *Yeshivas Beis Aryeh* - still stands there, at the courtyard of his home, drawing both scholars and tourists, as a fascinating site among Yerushalayim's narrow alleyways.



Rav Chaim Meir Hager Imrei Chaim (Nissan 9, 5732 / 1972 - 54th Yahrzeit)



Rav Chaim Meir was born on 15 *Kislev* 5648/1888, the son of Rav Yisrael Hager of Vizhnitz, also known as *Ahavas Yisrael*.

He became the son-in-law of Rav Zev Twerski of Rachumstrivka, descended from the Czernobyl dynasty.

Rav Chaim Meir was his father's right-hand man from a young age and they were inseparable. Even after his marriage, when he lived in Rachumstrivka, he often visited his father and eventually the *Rebbetzin* followed him and they returned to live near the *Ahavas Yisrael*. His father greatly loved and admired him, calling him a *Ba'al Shem Tov's Yid*.

He received *semicha* from Rav Sholom Mordechai Shwadron, the *Maharsham* of Brezhan.

He was appointed Rav of Vilchovitch in Marmorosh. Even during this tenure he spent more time with his father than he did in his own city. Nonetheless, he was a successful, bright and smart Rav, whose intelligence led him to establish many successful *takonos*.

In 5695 he visited Eretz Yisrael along with his brothers, Rav Eliezer of Vizhnitz and Rav Boruch of Seret. They visited many places and he returned with a positive feeling. After

his father's *petira* in 5696 he became his chief successor. He settled in Grossvardein, where his father had lived and had run his Chassidic court and *Bais Medrash*. In 5700 his *Bais Medrash* became a center for refugees fleeing Poland, and all were welcomed, despite the dangers.

Eventually, he went underground and when Grossvardein became too dangerous he fled to Rumania, eventually reaching Arad and Bucharest, where he remained until Grossvardein was liberated and the war ended.

He spent the post-war period reviving, rejuvenating and strengthening his downtrodden brethren and the refugees and survivors, warming their hearts and encouraging them to return to *Chassidus* and to spread *Yiddishkeit* from town to town and from city to city.

He decided to move to Eretz Yisrael and traveled from Czechoslovakia to Belgium and England. He arrived in 5708 and established Vizhnitz on the soil of the Holy Land. His brother Rav Eliezer was *niftar* in Elul 5706. Rav Chaim Meir opened his *Bais Medrash* in Tel Aviv. Eventually, he established the first Chassidic enclave in Bnei Brak, reopened the *Vizhnitzer Yeshiva* and began to reestablish Vizhnitz and Chassidic life in post-war Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Chaim Meir was succeeded by his son Rav Moshe Yehoshua, the *Yeshuos Moshe*. His other son, Rav Mordechai, moved to Monsey and established the Vizhnitz Monsey court.

His daughters were: Hinda, wife of Rav Naftoli Adler, the Rav of Vizhnitz, Netania; *Sheva Berocha*, the wife of Rav Moshe Ernster, the Rav of Vizhnitz, Tzefas and Bnei Brak; and Tzipora, wife of Rav Yisrael Friedman.

His eldest daughter was married first to Rav Yehuda Horowitz of Dzhikov and then to Rav Yehoshua Greenwald of Chust. After his *petira*, she married Rav Yitzchok Yaakov Weiss of the *Eida Chareidis*.

His *seforim* include: *Imrei Chaim* on the *Parsha* and *Moadim*, as well as *Mayim Chaim* on *Tanach*.

Gedolim Be'Masayhem



Stories & Anecdotes

Rav Yochonon Twersky (Nissan 4)

THE SOUL OF YOCHONON BEN ZAKKAI

Rav Mordechai of Czernobyl was once enumerating the praises of his holy sons. As he did so he designated whose soul stemmed from which source and which soul he drew down to each child. When he reached Rav Yochonon he said that he had the soul of Rav Yochonon ben Zakkai. When these words were repeated before Rav Yochonon of Rachmistrivka himself, he said, "Surely this is true. My name is Yochonon and my holy father is surely meritorious and therefore Zakkai, which means that I am Yochonon ben Zakkai!" (*Sefer HaYachas Czernoble* 15:1)

Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel Ohev Yisroel, Apta Rav (Nissan 5)

SEFER TORAH

When the holy *Rizhiner* was still young he attended a wedding where many great *tzaddikim* and *Chassidic Rebbes* were present. During the *chasuna*, his *gartel*, the sash worn around the waist, fell off. The holy *Apta Rav*, recognized as one of the elders and leaders of *Chassidus* at the time, himself bent down to gird and retie the *gartel* of the *Rizhiner*. When many of the crowd expressed shock that such an elder *Rebbe* had bent down and humbled himself before such a young *tzaddik*, the *Apta Rav* remarked: What do they want? I just fulfilled a *mitzva*, I was doing *gelila* and retying a *Sefer Torah*!" (*Tiferes Yisrael*)

THE WRITINGS THAT WERE LEFT OVER FROM THE TZADDIK

Rav Meshulam Zisha of Zinkov, grandson of the *Apta Rav*, related a story he had heard from his father Rav Yitzchak Meir of Zinkov regarding Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. Once the *Berditchever* was visiting the *Apta Rav* in Kolbosov, and he asked to see some of the *Apta Rav's* writings on the *parashah*. The *Apta Rav* happily lent them to Rav Levi Yitzchak. Rav Levi Yitzchak was so immersed in his *avodas Hashem* that he completely forgot to return the writings to the *Apta Rav*. After Rav Levi Yitzchak passed on, these writings were found among his own writings, and the publishers thought that these belonged to Rav Levi Yitzchak as well, and they published them mistakenly in his name.

AHAVAS YISRAEL

The *Apta Rav* once said that he can testify before all the Heavenly Hosts - the *Pamalia Shel Maala* - that he is a true *Ohev Yisrael*.

"This is because," he said, "whenever I do a *mitzva* and recite the formula *LeShem Yichud Kudsha Berich Hu uShechintei Beshem Kol Yisrael* - "to unify Hashem and the *Shechina* and I declare in the name of all *Klal Yisrael*" - I have in mind that every member of *Bnei Yisrael*, even the lowliest of them, should have an equal merit and portion in this *mitzva* as I myself do. This is true *Ahavas Yisrael*. (*Kav Venoki - Vezos Berocha* 37b)

The *Apta Rav's* intense *Ahavas Yisrael* was so well known that his *einikel*, the *Ramaz* of Zhinkov, wrote in the introduction to *Ohev Yisrael* that the reason he named his *Zeide's* *sefer Ohev Yisrael* was: "because he had a treasured saying, which was that he could be proud of this attribute, of his love for *Bnei Yisrael*, that he could testify to it even before the Heavenly Court, the *Beis Din Shel Maala*, that this *Ahavas Yisrael* was bound to his heart. Before he passed away he commanded his children that nothing else should be written on his *matzeiva* except the words *Ohev Yisrael* - and so it was."

HASHEM ALONE SHALL REDEEM US

The Rav of Zavanshtick related that once he was serving Rav Yaakov Shimon the son of Rav Pinchas Koretzer, when they were visited by the holy *Apta Rav*, *mechaber* of *Ohev Yisrael*, who stayed with them.

During the visit they sat together and the *Apta Rav's* face shone like a fiery flame. He

asked, "My good friend and beloved of Hashem, Rav Yaakov Shimon, do you know the reason why in times past there were many *Tzaddikim* in each generation, whereas now Hashem has removed them from our midst and has left us with but a few specks and grains?"

Rav Yaakov Shimon did not utter a sound. After repeating his question several times, with Rav Yaakov Shimon sitting silently without responding, the *Apta Rav* said, as his face shone with an otherworldly flame, "If Your Honor, Master of Torah, refuses to answer, I will. It says (*Yeshaya* 3:1), 'The L-rd Hashem, Master of Legions, is removing from Yerushalayim and from Yehuda support of men and support of women.' *Loshon HaKodesh* has ten expressions to explain the meaning of the word *mishon* - "support" - as those expert in languages understand."

And then the spirit rested upon him and he spoke and explained the ten ways to translate *mishon*. Afterward, he continued his remarks by saying (*Yeshaya* 2:11), "'And Hashem alone will be exalted on that day.' Rav Shimon bar Yochai's generation should have been redeemed in his merit, but all his generation relied on him - and so they were not redeemed. The holy *Arizal's* generation should have been redeemed in his merit, but all his generation relied on him, thinking he would redeem them - and so they were not redeemed. Similarly, the holy *Ba'al Shem Tov's* generation should have been redeemed in his merit, but all his generation relied on him and so they were not redeemed. In each generation there were single great individuals who stood out and whose souls were so elevated that *Klal Yisrael* trusted they would be the redeemers, relying upon them to be their saviors. Thus, the redemption failed to come and they were not redeemed. Before *Moshiach's* coming Hashem will remove from Yehuda and Yerushalayim all support - both male and female; all those lofty souls that *Klal Yisrael* relied upon for support will be taken away, leaving *Klal Yisrael* with no one to rely on except Hashem - and then the *Geula* will come!"

He concluded by saying, "This is why the *pasuk* tells us that on that day Hashem alone shall be exalted: *Klal Yisrael* will have no one else left to lean on or rely upon for support except Hashem - then the redemption will come." The *Zavanshticker Rav* concluded the story by saying that when the *Apta* said the *pasuk* "*Venigov Hashem levado bayom hahu*" - he roared the words so loudly that the walls shook!

BRIBERY EVEN BLINDS THE EYES OF THE TZADDIKIM

“Because bribery blinds the wise and distorts the words of the Tzaddikim” (23:8).

Rav Yitzchok Isaac of Komarna writes (*Heichal HaBerocha Mishpotim 2:4*) that according to our Sages in *Kesubos 105a*, even a complete *Tzaddik* who takes a bribe will be blinded. However, this statement is wondrous and strange indeed, says the *Komarna*. How can someone who takes bribes be called a complete *Tzaddik*?! The answer to this, explains the *Komarner*, can be understood based on the following true story about the *Apta Rav*, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel, *mechaber of Ohev Yisrael*:

In his younger days, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel was Rav in Kolbasof and served as a *Dayan* in the rabbinical court of that city and its environs. He once sat with two other judges to rule on a matter of some importance, when the other two had accepted a bribe to rule in favor of one of the litigants in the case. They tried to rule on this matter in favor of the man who had bribed them but the *Ohev Yisrael* kept insisting that their judgment was incorrect and inconsistent with the *Halocha*. The other *Dayanim* advised this man to bribe the *Ohev Yisrael* as well. The litigant, however, realized that it would not work because the *Ohev Yisrael* was a *Tzaddik* and would never accept a bribe from him directly.

They gave the litigant an idea - to place the bribe money secretly into the pockets of his *Rosh Chodesh bekeshe*, the long fine satin coat he wore in honor of *Rosh Chodesh*. The man filled the Rav's pockets with gold and no one knew. When the Rav sat in judgment, he was amazed that all of a sudden he began to hear the “truth” in their arguments and that their previously false and skewed judgments now sounded correct to him. However, he knew it was wrong and so he kept pushing off ruling on the matter. The *Ohev Yisrael* was confused how his judgments could be so perverted and clouded as to agree to something he knew in his heart to be wrong and against the *Halocha*.

Then came *Rosh Chodesh*. When he went to put on his garments, he felt them to be unusually heavy. The *Ohev Yisrael* was dumbfounded when he placed his hands in his pockets and discovered them to be full of gold coins. He questioned his household and found out that the litigant had been spotted visiting his rooms. He realized that he must have been secretly bribed! Now he understood why his previous judgments were being perverted and how his mind was being distorted by the bribe that he had unknowingly received! He summoned the litigant and the latter admitted to his attempt to bribe the

Rav. Immediately, the Rav handed him back the bribe money and removed himself from the case.

Now, said the *Ohev Yisrael*, I understand the *pasuk* that says bribes “distort the words of *Tzaddikim*”. Even a complete *Tzaddik* who accepts a bribe unknowingly will have his words and judgments distorted!

HOW THE OHEV YISRAEL BECAME A TALMID OF THE NOAM ELIMELECH

In the city of Zavanitz there were smugglers who would smuggle goods without paying the levied taxes and there was rampant desecration of the Shabbos. The *Apta Rav*, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel, was greatly upset by their behavior and sharply rebuked them. Rav Shmelka, the son of Rav Moshe Leib of Sassov, wished to travel and visit the *Apter*, but since he hailed from Zavanitz he was worried that the *Apter* would ask him from where he was and, upon hearing that he was from Zavanitz, he would not let him even cross his threshold!

His friends advised him to completely ignore any questions about where he was from and simply to introduce himself as Rav Moshe Leib Sassover’s son. And so it was that when the *shamash* asked him who he was, he told him the son of the *Sassover*. When the *Apter* heard this he ran over to Reb Shmelka and greeted him warmly shaking his hand with both hands. He lit candles in his honor, donned finer clothes in his honor and seated him in a special chair reserved for honored guests shrugging off all protests, saying, “Why, but you are my *Rebbe’s* son!”

While Rav Shmelka was thus seated the *Apter Rav* told him, “Let me tell you a story about when I was the Rav of Kolbesov. I was back then a young man, an *avreich*, and I lived in the house set aside for the Rav. Now this house was vey large and my small family occupied only one wing. The winters were freezing and my salary was barely enough to feed us and certainly not enough to squander on heating such a large home. So, although it was furnished, we lived in only one wing.

I sat and learned *lishma*, sincerely for the sake of Heaven, and I had plenty of free time since it was a small city with few affairs that needed my attention or intervention. I often studied together with my son and as we were immersed in our studies *lishma*, nothing disturbed us. We were not *Chassidim*, and since our primary *avoda* was Torah study, we

even looked upon their ways with disdain and counted ourselves as *Misnagdim* (opponents to Chassidus).

One day two anonymous travelers passed by and knocked at my window, asking if I had room for guests. "Why, yes," I answered, "the entire second wing is at your disposal."

They unloaded their luggage and made themselves at home. I noticed that they seemed like holy individuals and whatever conversations they had among themselves always sounded lofty and that they spoke about things pertaining to *Avodas Hashem*, yet I was too busy with my studies to take their "idle chatter" seriously. I thought that my *derech* (path) was correct and shrugged them off.

They were my guests for some three days and on the third day as they prepared to continue on their way they came to take their customary leave of me. One of them began to engage me in conversation and to tell me a story. I was greatly troubled since they were detracting from my learning and from my sincere Torah study, yet it would have been rude of me just to interrupt him and so I listened as politely as I could. When he finished the first story he began to tell me another one! At this point my hair stood on end. I was so disturbed at this waste of my precious time. When he finished, the other guest began to tell me a tale as well and the pain I felt was death itself! Finally, they finished the third story and left on their way.

Some three months passed and I found that I understood the meaning of the first story and that I had needed it. Some three more months passed and I found that I understood my need for the second story and three months later for the third story. I was shocked to see how they were able to understand what I would need and what would befall me over the course of this entire year.

I understood that this must be through *Ruach HaKodesh* and I hoped that Hashem would grant me another opportunity to reunite with these two holy individuals. Two years later I looked up out of the window and saw them both traveling past in their carriage. I could not miss such an opportunity! I ran outside to catch them and draw their attention. I was in such a rush I did not dress myself in my coat or my *spodik* (the fur hat worn by important personages such as the town *Rav*) and I ran in my shirt after their coach, chasing it across town. When I finally caught up with them near the inn I asked them in

between catching my breath as to their destination. "We are *headed* to Lizhensk, to the *Rebbe* Reb Elimelech," they explained.

"Can I join you?" I asked.

They agreed on the condition that I go to the market while they davened and get some provisions for the journey such as some rolls, bagels and butter. I completely forgot myself, town Rav or not, and in just my shirt I went and bought the bread and butter. When I returned, they had finished their *tefillos* and told me to hurry and get ready. I quickly ran home, got dressed, grabbed my *tallis* and *tefillin* and jumped into their carriage.

"We are taking you to the Rebbe Elimelech," they explained, "since we can tell that your soul's root is bound to his."

And so they did. The Rebbe Elimelech became my mentor and I became a *talmid*. Those two holy *Tzaddikim* were your father, Rav Moshe Leib Sassover, and Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev.

Afterward, Rav Moshe Leib would often say that he should get *shidduch* gelt, a broker's fee for making the match between the *Apter* and the Rebbe Elimelech. To this the *Berditchever* responded, "And I should get double your fee since I also brought the Rebbe Reb Elimelech and the Rebbe Reb Zusha to the *Maggid* of *Mezritch!*"

(*Kisvei Rav Yoshe* #11 p116; *Devorim Areivim* II #2 p. 53-54)

HOW HASHEM GIVES TZEDAKAH

The holy *Tzaddik*, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel, the *Apta Rav*, once told how Rebbe Reb Melech of Lizhensk was once his guest and spent the night. The *Apta Rav* said, "During his stay, I gave him his own room. I once entered his room and observed and overheard how the Rebbe Elimelech sat and began to recite and review his actions. He was tallying his deeds and misdeeds and trying to calculate whether he deserved a portion in *Olam HaBa*, and this is what he said to himself:

"*Nafshi, nafshi!* O woe is me, my soul, my soul! You are unworthy of *Olam HaBa!*' He

proceeded to list all his shortcomings and then attempted to comfort himself:

“Even if you are truly unworthy, never fear - still Hashem, in His infinite mercy and kindness, will grant you a portion in *Olam HaBa*, because our sages taught (*Sota* 14a) that Hashem Himself fulfills the entire Torah: He comforts mourners, marries off brides and grooms and does acts of kindness and charity. Now *Olam HaBa* is not physical, so there is no food or drink there, so how can Hashem fulfill acts of charity there? Rather, He acts charitably by granting even such unworthy people as ourselves a portion in *Olam HaBa*; He gives them this portion as a gift and a charitable act.”

THE APTA RAV'S APPROVAL

There was once a dispute between Rav Yitzchok of Radvil and the *Ahavas Sholom* of Kosov regarding one of the *shochtim* in Nadworna. When the *Kosov Chassidim* heard that the *Apta Rav* seemed to side with the *Radviller*, they decided to get the *Apter* to meet with their *Rebbe*, the *Ahavas Sholom*, instead.

One day, they heard that the *Apta Rav* was on his way to meet Rav Yitzchok of Radvil and they set out to put their plan into action. It was well known that when the *Apta Rav* traveled he used no passport to cross borders; instead, he always carried a *mezuzah* with him and showed this at the crossing to the gentile guards, who would examine his pass and then wave him on.

This time, however, there was a problem. When the *Apta Rav* presented his *mezuzah*-passport, the border guards arrested him and took him for questioning to Kosov. This was because the border guards were none other than the *Ahavas Sholom's Chassidim*, disguised as border guards manning an imaginary border crossing.

In Kosov, a lavish welcome had been prepared at the *Ahavas Sholom's* home to welcome the guest from Apt. When the *Apta Rav* realized that he had been fooled, he was very angry and upset. He took two cups of *mashke* and asked the *Chassidim* who were dressed as guards to drink them. The *Toras Chaim*, the *Ahavas Sholom's* son, realized that if the *Chassidim* drank the cups of wine, the *Apta Rav* would send them away from this world as a punishment.

“Don't drink the wine!” he warned them, and he blocked the *Chassidim* and covered the

cups, preventing them from drinking.

“Who is this young man who thinks he can interfere in matters not his own?” asked the *Apta Rav*.

“*Chaim’nyu!*” chastised the *Ahavas Sholom*, “stand up so the Rebbe can see you properly!”

When the *Apta Rav*’s gaze fell on the *Toras Chaim*, he was greatly impressed and he left the matter as settled. (*Sarfei Kodesh* 429-431)

HIS DEPARTURE FROM THIS WORLD

It was in Mezhibuzh, on the night of the fifth of *Nissan*, ten days before *Pesach*, 1829, that Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel, the *Ohev Yisrael of Apt*, departed this world. On the very same night, in the holy city of Teverya, on the shore of the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee, Eretz Yisrael), people heard a knocking on the windows of *Kollel Vohlin*, one of the organizations responsible for the fair distribution of funds in support of the struggling religious Jews from Europe in Eretz Yisrael. Inside was the caretaker, alone, the one who held the keys to the gates of the cemetery. The voice from outside said, “Go outside and follow the bier of the Rav of Apt!”

He ventured outside and was chilled by terror, for the bier was being followed by a grim retinue of myriad human forms from the Other World. One of these followers intimated to him that this was the funeral procession of the *Tzaddik of Apt*; he had passed away in Mezhibuzh, and *malochim* had borne his coffin for entombment in the soil of the Holy Land.

The beadle repeated his story in the morning. People refused to believe him, until on the suggestion of an elderly sage they went together to the cemetery, and there they found a newly-covered grave.

Letters from Apt later confirmed that the *Tzaddik* had indeed passed away on that very day. Before his passing, he had cried out to Heaven in bitter protest over the length of the exile. Why was the *Moshiach* tarrying so long? And in his heartache he had wept and said, “Before Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev left this world he promised that he would not

rest, nor allow the *Tzaddikim* in the World of Truth to rest, until their insistent pleas would bring about the Messianic Redemption. But when he arrived there, the saintly souls in the Garden of Eden found spiritual delight in his company, and ascended with him to the palaces of supernal bliss - until he forgot his own promise. But I will not forget!"

When Rav Chaim Elozor of Munkatsch visited the holy sites in the Land in 1930, he asked about among the oldest citizens of Teverya as to whether any of them knew where the *Apter Rav* was buried. They led him to a certain stone slab in the old cemetery that their hoary elders, who were now in the World of Truth, had shown them - the place where the *Ohev Yisrael* had been brought to rest.

[Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition in A Treasury of Chassidic Tales (ArtScroll), as translated by our esteemed colleague, Uri Kaploun, from Sipurei Chassidim by Rav S. Y. Zevin.]

A TRUE STORY REGARDING RAV ELIJAHU BAAL SHEM OF CHELM

Rav Moshe Duvid Shtrum of Tarnov once told how Rav Shimeleh Zelichover *HY"D* the famed mashgiach of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin once entered the beis medrash of Rav Aryeh Leibush of Sanz and he asked the yungeleit that were gathered there a question: He asked them "why is that Rav Aryeh Leib does not recite *LeDovid Hashem Ori*, whereas in Shinuva (the son of tthe Divrei Chaim) they do recite it?! (the Divrei Chaim also did not recite it) they had no answer and he so told them "I will tell you a true story regarding Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem of Chelm:

"There was a decree of expulsion from the local squire, he was childless and he ordered all the Jews there to pray for him to have children and if they failed he would expel them all from his environs. Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem promised him a son within 12 months." The holy Rav Yisrael Baal Shem Tov retold this tale to his disciples and he told them "don't think that this came easily to Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem. At first Rav Eliyahu turned to the forces of holiness and when this failed he turned to the forces of darkness from the other side when this too failed, he laid his own life down on the line and turned to the leader of all the forces of evil himself," the Baal Shem Tov concluded "and as a punishment for forcing the hand of Heaven as it were, so to speak, don't assume that he was punished by sixty flames, instead he was told that he would lose all his *nefesh*, *ruach* and *neshama*, however since he laid his life down and self sacrificed himself to save the Jews, instead the heavenly decree was that two of the enacted prayers that he had instituted and they

were: the recitation of *LeDovid Hashem Ori* and the second was the recitation of *KeGavna*."

Rav Shimeleh Zelichover concluded: "it is known for example the Rebbe Reb Meilech of Lizensk did not recite *KeGavna* whereas the Apta Rav the Ohev Yisroel did not recite *leDovid Hashem Ori* (in this manner the talmidei HaBaal Shem kept up the tradition of reciting these tefilos enacted by Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem while still the decree was fulfilled)."

(cited from Nezer HaKodesh Minhagei Ropshitz pg147)

Rav Chaim Abulafia Chacham Chaim Abulafia of Teveria (Nissan 6)

Please note that this story is repeated another date due to a discrepancy in the Yartzeit Date

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)

Rav Aharon Roth Shomer Emunim (Nissan 6)

A TZADDIK A KANNO'I AND AN OHEV YISROEL

On one occasion at a simcha, the *Rebbe* was dancing fervently in the middle of a circle. Amidst his ecstasy he opened his eyes, and noticed a man with a disturbed face, perhaps a *Misnagged* (opponent of Chassidim), looking on with contempt. Rav Ahrele broke the circle, took the man by the hand, and began to dance. A circle, once again, formed around, and *Rav Ahrele* looked up into the man's eyes. The man was shaken by this look, and almost lost his equilibrium. But just then he began to feel the *niggun* resonate. As the dancing became more intense, this seemingly unhappy fellow was visibly transformed, and by now he had lost his self-consciousness. Still dancing with Rav Ahrele, hand in hand, he felt as if he were soaring. Never before had he conceived of such ecstasy. Rav Ahrele knew well that the view from inside the circle is much different from the view on the outside. The man never looked back. He became a devoted *Chassid* of the *Rebbe*. Such was Rav Ahrele's intensity and influence.

Rav Avrohom Meir Ziswein was a *Chassid* and follower of Rav Tzvi Elimelech Spira of Bluzhov. When the *Bluzhover* moved to Pest, Rav Avrohom Meir heard of a certain special *bochur*, a young man who outshone all his peers in the Yeshiva in Weitzin; this young man's true *Yiras Shomayim* (fear of Heaven), sterling character and fiery avoda drew Rav Avrohom Meir to seek to bring him under the wings and guidance of the *Bluzhover* who was to become his *Rebbe*. The young man was none other than Rav Aharon Roth.

Once, Rav Avrohom Meir recounted his initial impressions of the young, budding *Tzaddik*:

Believe me, when I first met Rav Ahrele in Weitzin, I was sure that in no time he would grow to be a leader of no less than a thousand *Chassidim* and that one day I would have to wait in line by the door to gain an audience with him and speak my mind. However, this was not to be, for this sterling *Tzaddik* had no wish whatsoever to become a well-known and famed Rebbe; instead, he loathed and hated the *Rabbonus* and the limelight. He shirked from fame and renown and pushed away the masses. Instead he sought to light a flame in the hearts of Yidden, to ignite the spark of the *pintele yid*, fill them with awe and fear of Heaven, true faith and strong, pure emuna and a desire and passion for serving the Almighty Creator! His primary work was to gather around coarse, simple Jews with broken hearts, and to uplift them and aid them to grow and expand till they became precious vessels serving Hashem with no ulterior motives. He did not want any *sheine yidden*, accomplished Jews, scholars and good characters who had already reached any level of devotion and did not need him to raise and uplift them. For such *Chassidim* he had no desire at all.

Once, one of the fine, sheine Yidden of Yerushalayim approached Rav Ahrele in my presence and said to him, "Rav Ahrele, begin your *tefillos* on *Shabbos* just one hour earlier, at seven thirty in the morning and I will bring you two hundred accomplished *yungeleit* to *daven* with you!"

"Listen," explained Rav Ahrele, "I cannot possibly fulfill your request. We finish our *tisch* late - after *chatzos* - and we must wake on *Shabbos* later than during the week so that we have properly rested for our devotions. Then there are hachonos, spiritual preparations and the mikve and it all takes time; I cannot possibly begin one hour earlier."

When the latter had departed, Rav Ahrele turned to us and said, "I didn't really tell him the entire truth. All the excuses I made are true indeed; however, the real emes is that I do not wish to begin my *davening* one hour earlier precisely because it would attract them. I start *davening* one hour later so that those two hundred *yungeleit* should not come to me! I don't look for finished, accomplished *sheine yidden*, especially those who have a hard time listening to what I say. They cannot humble and subjugate themselves - I have nothing to do with such Jews! I search specifically for a *golem* - a shapeless mass that I can fashion with my own hands into a form that can serve Hashem - these I can transform

into shining *yungeleit* who accept my words with truth and humility." That was the way of the *Shomer Emunim*.

There is no question that Rav Ahrele Roth was a *kanno'i*, an extreme anti-Zionist who fought against the influences of Zionism and who felt that its ideology was false and foreign. Some examples of his *kano'us* are described by one of his close *talmidim*, Rav Eliyohu HaKohen Shteinberger:

Rav Ahrele would have nothing to do with the Zionist Rabbonim, especially with the chief Rav. When he heard that one of his *talmidim* was commissioned to write a *Sefer Torah* by a shul in Tel Aviv for the *illuei neshoma* of the first chief Rav, he forbade his *talmid* from completing the *Sefer Torah*. The *sofer* had already completed *Sefer Bereishis* and the *gabboim* of the shul in Tel Aviv were so upset that they refused to pay for any of the work. And so Rav Ahrele compensated the *sofer* the entire sum from his own pocket.

Another time after the terrible news of the Holocaust reached Israel, an assembly was called together in the *Churva shul* of Rav Yehuda HeChassid to declare the upcoming Wednesday as a public fast. The invitation came in the name of the second chief Rav, and Rav Ahrele refused to allow any of his *talmidim* or *Chassidim* to participate. When Rav Dushinsky similarly forbade it, they both designated Monday as a fast instead. The organizers tried to change Rav Ahrele's mind, going so far as to send the *Gerrer Rebbe's* son to plead with Rav Ahrele, but he refused flat out to have anything to do with any assembly that the Zionist chief Rav would participate in.

Another example was his abhorrence of the new Ivrit language, which the Zionists had established. Rav Ahrele forbade his followers to speak and use this language, claiming that it would defile them. When one *talmid* once wrote out a *teno'im* between *chosson* and *kalla* and wrote the Hebrew word for furniture as *rehitim*, Rav Ahrele tore up the contract when he reached that word and said that he would not allow any Modern Hebrew words to be used!

In contrast, however, to other extremists and *kano'im*, Rav Ahrele was a *Tzaddik* and an *Ohev Yisrael*. His *kano'us* was based on *emes* and on his unceasing search for truth and his unyielding *Ahavas Hashem*, *Ahavas HaTorah* and *Ahavas Yisrael*. Here are a few examples stories from the same witness and author, who wrote the above examples of

kano'us:

When Rav Amram Bloi, whom Rav Ahrele greatly admired for his staunch opposition to the Zionist ways, assembled protests on Shabbos against the *Chillul Shabbos* that the soccer games in Yerushalayim were causing to thousands of Jews, Rav Ahrele and his *Chassidim* joined in the protests. He sent all his *Chassidim*, adults and *bochurim*, to the protest for two *Shabbosos* in a row. Afterward, Rav Ahrele saw that the *bochurim* might be negatively influenced by seeing things that were inappropriate and he forbade them from taking part in further protests. Rav Amram Bloi was upset by this and he sent Eliyohu Shteinberger to Rav Ahrele to try to persuade him to change his mind and send the *bochurim* to protest. Rav Ahrele was adamant in his refusal and sent Rav Shteinberger back to Rav Amram Bloi with the following message: "Go tell Rav Amram in my name that if he takes upon himself the complete and total responsibility for the sin that if the *bochurim* should see unsightly forbidden things and blemish their holy vision and eyes, then I will send them on that condition." Eliyohu Shteinberger went back and gave Rav Amram Bloi Rav Ahrele's message and of course Rav Amram was afraid to accept such a responsibility and the *bochurim* did not participate.

Another example of Rav Ahrele's understanding of when *kano'us* was inappropriate was when the former secretary to the chief Rav (then retired) showed up in Rav Ahrele's *shul* one Shabbos. This *Chassid* was a scion from holy families yet still his former position as secretary to the Zionist chief *Rav* did not endear him to Rav Ahrele's *Chassidim* - so much so that they did not even let him sit down. When Rav Ahrele saw this, he called the man over and gave him a seat. Several of the *Chassidim* came up to and whispered to him this person's identity and former position, but Rav Ahrele shrugged them off and ignored them. When *Krias HaTorah* commenced, Rav Ahrele told them to give him an *aliya* like all guests and after *davening* he asked him to sit down for the *Kiddush*. Again, some of the *Chassidim* approached Rav Ahrele and whispered in his ear this person's identity and past position, but their whispered protests fell on deaf ears. Rav Ahrele shooed them off and retorted angrily to them, "Do you want to be the one to teach me to be a *kano'i*!?" After *davening* the guest asked the *gabbai* permission to speak with Rav Ahrele privately and he was in there for an hour. After he came out, Rav Ahrele told the *gabbai*, "You have to know when to be a *kanno'i* and when it's better not to be a *kanno'i*. You see, he was crying and begging me to help him do teshuva and crying over how low he had sunk from his former lofty stature after he came from such a good family. I had to give him *chizuk*. I am

sure that his illustrious forebears will all thank me very much for helping him.” (*Uvda DeAharon* Ch. 28)

Rav Chaim Abulafia Chacham Chaim Abulafia of Teveria (Nissan 7)

Please note that this story is repeated another date due to a discrepancy in the Yartzeit Date

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)

Rav Yitzchok Derhobitsh, Derhovitsher (Nissan 7)

TRUE FORGIVENESS

Once, the holy Rebbe Reb Zisha of Anipoli heard a wedding procession passing outside his window. Immediately, he rushed plained his behavior to them with outside and began to dance in wild abandon in front of the new couple to fulfill the mitzvah of *simchas chasan* and *kallah*. When his family members later remarked that this public display did not befit his station as a *chassidic rebbe*, he explained his behavior to them with the following tale:

In my youth I was a disciple of the holy Reb Yechiel Michel, the *Zlotchover Maggid*. Once, he was angry at me and he rebuked me. Later, he appeased me and I offered him my forgiveness. “*Zisha*, please forgive my angry rebuke and please forgive that I embarrassed you,” he said. “*Rebbe*, I forgive you,” I answered. Before I retired for the night, he visited me once more and asked again for my forgiveness, “*Zisha*, please forgive me!” “*Rebbe*, I forgive you,” I answered.

As I lay down to go to sleep, my *Rebbe’s* holy father, Reb Yitzchak of Drohovitch revealed himself to me. I was still awake when his soul visited me, coming down from the supernal world above. He declared, “I left just one son in This World below, one precious son! And just because he embarrassed you, you wish to destroy him!” “But *Rebbe*,” I protested, “I have already forgiven him with all my heart and soul! What else should I do?”

“You call that forgiveness?” he demanded. “I will teach you the proper way to forgive. Follow me.”

I got up and followed Reb Yitzchak until we reached the mikveh. “Now, go immerse yourself,” he said, “and with each immersion declare that you have forgiven my son!” I did as he asked, and when I finished and came out of the *mikveh*, I saw his face shining with a great luminescence, a light so bright I was unable to gaze at his face. I asked him the

cause of so brilliant a light, and he explained that he merited such shining rays of light because he was always careful to fulfill the three dictums of Rav Nechunya ben Hakanah who said his longevity was due to three things: "I never took honor in my fellow man's disgrace, I never went to bed having cursed my fellow that day, and I was easygoing with my money and possessions" (Megillah 28b). "You should know," he added, "that what I was able to achieve following these three dictums you can also achieve through joy and simchah."

Therefore, concluded Reb Zisha, when I saw an opportunity to rejoice together with the *chasan* and *kallah* in their *simchah*, right here on my own street, I hastened to join them in the *simchah* of a *mitzvah*!

WHAT SIMCHA CAN ACCOMPLISH

A wedding procession once passed by the home of the Rebbe Reb Zusha. Upon hearing the music and seeing the procession, the Rebbe Reb Zusha went outside and began to dance and make merry before the groom and bride. When he had finished and come home, the members of his household berated the *Tzaddik* that it was dishonorable for an elderly Rebbe such as himself to go out and dance in the streets.

"Let me tell you a story," answered the Rebbe Reb Zusha, (and he spoke of himself humbly, in the third person as was his custom): "In Zusha's youth, Zusha was a *talmid* of the *Zlotschover Maggid*. Once, during our studies together, the *Maggid* grew impatient with Zusha and he yelled at Zusha. Afterward, he regretted this and asked Zusha to forgive him. 'Of course *Rebbe*, I forgive you,' was Zusha's reply. Then again before Zusha lay down to sleep, again the *Maggid* showed up and asked forgiveness. 'Yes, yes, *Rebbe* - I forgive you!' was Zusha's reply again.

"Then, as I lay down in bed before sleep had overcome me, his saintly father, Rav Yitzchok of Drovitch, may his memory be a blessing, appeared to me. Rav Yitzchok turned to me and said, 'I left one son, just one precious son in this world before I died, and you wish to destroy him all because he insulted and yelled at you?!' he accused.

"*Rebbe*,' I entreated him, 'Zusha has already forgiven him twice with all my heart and soul!'

“‘Humph, you call that forgiveness?’ Rav Yitzchok challenged me back. ‘Come with me and I will teach how to truly forgive someone completely.’

“And so I got out of bed, dressed and followed Rav Yitzchok as he led me toward the bathhouse. When we got there, Rav Yitzchok commanded Zusha to disrobe and enter the waters of the mikve and submerge and immerse myself completely three times under the waters, and with each submersion to recite wholeheartedly that I forgave his son, the *Zlotschover Maggid*. Zusha did so.

“When I finished, I saw that Rav Yitzchok’s faced glowed and shone brightly with a blinding other-worldly light. I asked him what the source of such a shining countenance was, and he taught Zusha that he merited such a shining light because he was careful and diligent in fulfilling the three rules of Rav Nechunia ben HaKaneh (mentioned in *Megilla* 28a):

1. I never honored myself through my fellow’s shame.
2. I never went to bed before having forgiven anyone who had caused me any pain.
3. I was easy-going with my money for charitable causes.

“‘Furthermore,’ added Rav Yitzchok, ‘you should know that whatever I achieved through diligence in fulfilling these three rules, can also be achieved through *Simcha* - joy.’

“Therefore,” concluded the Rebbe Reb Zusha, “when I saw the wedding procession and the opportunity to rejoice, I ran outside to dance and grasp the opportunity to rejoice in *Simcha shel mitzva!*” (*Sippurei Chassidim*).

SUCH A LOWLY SOUL UPLIFTED TO SUCH GREAT DIZZYING HEIGHTS

Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotschov related that when he first came before the holy *Ba’al Shem Tov*, the *Ba’al Shem* asked that he be honored and then told those present, “You should know that he is the son of Yitzchok of Drovitch. Now, let me tell you that his father was given by Heaven such a small soul of such lowly stature, that there is almost no one in this generation who has such a small and lowly, insignificant soul. However, he uplifted this soul to staggering, dizzying heights - to the level of the holy Tanna Rav Shimon bar

Yochai!" (*Agra Depirka* by Rav Tzvi Elimelech of Dynow, *Mechaber of Bnei Yissoschor* #29)

Rav Eliyahu Hakadosh Baal HaTosfos (Nissan 8)

FIERY RETRIBUTION OR COINCIDENCE?

The Mysterious York Minster Fire On July 9, 1984, around 2 a.m., just hours after the bones of medieval Jews of York had finally been laid to rest, a massive fire destroyed the only part of the historic York Minster Cathedral which dates back to the time of the infamous 1190 York pogrom.

July 8, 1984, was described at the time as having been a warm summer's day and the spectacular lightning storms that lit up the night sky over York came as something of a surprise. The BBC, North Yorkshire, reported that the cathedral's superintendent of works believed that a freak lightning strike started the fire. The fire alarm was not activated, probably due to electrical damage to the system, and by the time an on-duty policeman discovered the fire, York's famous old cathedral was well and truly ablaze. The dry oak tinder in the roof of the South Transept burned quickly, much stonework was seriously damaged, and the famous sixteenth-century Rose Window was shattered into thousands of fragments. It took four years to complete the repairs at a cost of £1 million. More than a few observers have viewed this incident, not as a coincidence, but as a possible demonstration of some kind of Divine retribution relating to the sad events of eight-hundred years before visited upon one of the biggest Gothic cathedrals in all of Europe.

LAYING THE YORK BONES TO REST

The chain of events which led to the eventual laying to rest of the bones of Jews from medieval York reads something like a bestselling thriller. A full account was published in the chareidi online magazine *Dei'ah VeDibur* on October 8, 2003 (12 Tishrei 5764). The writer, Rabbi Dov Eliach, obtained his story from the Gateshead *avreich*, Rabbi Yisroel Chaim Levine.

In brief, the story goes that in 1984, Rabbi Levine, on his way back to Manchester, was forced to change trains at York. Recalling the York massacre and the fact that certain

Tosafists were involved, and with several hours on his hands, he sought out the tourist information booth to ask if there was a Jewish cemetery in the city. He was surprised to be told by the information clerk that several months earlier an ancient Jewish graveyard had indeed been discovered and that “hundreds of skeletons” had been carted off to the archaeology department at the University of York. He went first to the site of the dig, near an intended parking garage development, and found nothing. Proceeding to the university, he presented himself to the archaeologists there as “a researcher of Jewish law” (as he was a notable *avreich* studying *Gemara*, this was certainly not beyond the bounds of credibility). Rabbi Levine was assured that permission, necessary by British law, had been obtained from the chief rabbi of London to perform the dig at the site, adjacent to “Jewbury” Street.

The cemetery was apparently first used around 1177 and remained in use until the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290. The remains of nearly five-hundred individuals were recovered. On his return to Gateshead, Rabbi Levine immediately began to work on the matter of having the bones suitably re-interred. He called Rabbi Chanoch Ehrentrau, who was later to become *av beis din* of London, and also enlisted the aid of other well-known rabbanim, including Rabbi Eliyahu Falk. Lord Immanuel Jacobovits, then Chief Rabbi of England, eventually arranged with the British Ministry of the Interior to have all digging stopped and to bring all the bones to a proper Jewish burial, with the construction company involved at the original site funding the operation. According to Professor O’Connor: “The bones from Jewbury were removed temporarily to a Jewish mortuary in Manchester (apparently it was the closest appropriate facility).

There they stayed while building work continued on the former cemetery site, a period of around 5 to 6 months.”

In the final report on the excavation in the journal *Antiquity* (March 1, 1995), the noted York University archaeologist Philip Rahtz gives the date of reburial as July 8, 1984 (8 *Tamuz* 5744). A stone plaque was placed at the entrance to the site, now a Sainsbury’s supermarket, with Hebrew and English inscriptions recording the location of the Jewish cemetery and that the human remains were re-interred on the site of the present parking lot in the presence of the chief rabbi and representatives of the Jewish community.

Supervised by the rabbanim present, the hundreds of skeletons were buried in several dozen coffins arranged in three layers in a “crypt” constructed within the new building as

close as was practicable to their original burial place. In addition to the memorial stone, a sign was set up to warn *Kohanim* not to enter the building. It remains conjecture as to whether any of the remains re-entombed in 1984 were actually from the victims of the 1190 tragedy.

The next purportedly connected event, a mysterious lightning strike on York Minster Cathedral, took place in the early hours of the following day.

Rav Mordechai Rishfei Aish (Nissan 8)

DOCTOR MAIMONIDIES HELPS HEAL FOR RAV MOTTELE NESHCHIZER

Rav Yitzchok of Neshchiz related about his father Rav Mordechai: One time, the *Rambam* himself appeared before my father and complained why my father did not study his sefer, the *Yad HaChazoka* (also known as the *Mishne Torah*). My father responded that he was very busy and preoccupied with communal matters and inundated with requests from congregants and other Jews requesting all manner of blessings and salvation. The *Rambam* then told my father that at least he should keep his *sefer* on the table at all times and he promised that if any sick person came before my father or if someone would request his *berocha* to heal the sick, then if my father would open the *Rambam's sefer* and study it, he, the *Rambam*, would send a *refua* and heal him. And so it was that the *Rambam's sefer* was always on my father's table." (*Layeshorim Tehilla* p. 78)

Rav Nosson Feitel Reinitz (Nissan 9)

SAVED FROM HEAVEN

Rav Nosson never ate any food cooked on *Pesach*, only that which had been cooked before *Yom Tov* in his own special *keilim* (This was because before *Pesach* any infinitesimal amount of *chametz* which might have inadvertently entered the food is *batel* - nullified. But in food cooked on *Pesach* itself, not even a *mashehu* of *chametz* is *batel*, even one part in 1000!).

One year, after his *Pesach* food was prepared and heated, someone unwittingly stirred it with a spoon that was not one of his special *keilim*. The entire dish subsequently fell and

shattered and all the food was ruined. The mistake with the spoon was later discovered and people saw how from Heaven had saved him from transgressing his own stringencies. Similarly, someone once brought him wine to make *Kiddush* on Shabbos morning and the bottle fell and broke and all the wine was spilled. They later discovered that the wine had not conformed to his strictures of *kashrus*.

MERITING TO SEE THE HOLY LAND

Once, when Rav Nosson was serving as Rav of Tet-Vigging, he was called to Belgrade on some matter. There was a mountain so high there that it was rumored to be possible to see Eretz Yisrael from its summit. Rav Nosson greatly desired to see the Holy Land and so he climbed for hours to reach the mountain's peak. After a long, arduous journey, he finally reached the top only to discover that the rumors were untrue; he could not see Eretz Yisrael at all. At most, he could perhaps gaze in the general direction that would eventually lead to the land. In his exhaustion and disappointment, Rav Nosson fell asleep. He had a vision in a dream in which he was shown the entire stretch of Eretz Yisrael, from border to border. He was also shown every holy place - the *Mekomos Hakedoshim*. When he awoke he was full of joy, content that he had indeed merited to see the Holy Land after all (*Toldos Geonei Hagar* pgs. 27-28).

Rav Chaim Meir Hager Imrei Chaim (Nissan 9)

NO BED FOR TWO YEARS

In his younger years, Rav Eliezer sat and studied together with his older brother, the *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz, and their exertion in Torah study was legendary. For two years, the brothers were so engrossed in their studies that they didn't sleep in a bed. Except for Shabbos, they didn't even change their clothes from week to week. When they needed a short rest from learning, they simply lay their heads down where they were, while fully dressed - and thus they could use the entire night for *Toras Hashem*!

ANGER CONTROL

Whenever an opportunity presented itself, the *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz would retell this story about Rav Raphael of Bershad's amazing control over his *middos*. Once after his *tisch* (the chassidic Shabbos banquet over which the rebbe presides), he shared song, stories, and words of Torah with his devoted *chassidim* for a remarkable seven hours. The

Imrei Chaim, exhausted and weak after the long *tisch*, walked home in the cold and rain. He arrived at home only to discover that his attendant who had the keys, was nowhere to be found! While waiting a wearisome stretch of time for his *gabbai* to show up, the *Imrei Chaim* related this story:

For many years, Rav Raphael of Bershad had a burning desire to acquire pure white wool from the Holy Land to fashion a resplendent, *mehadrin tallis katan* and *tzitzis* that would be, befitting such a precious *mitzvah*.

After great effort, he finally obtained the exclusive wool from Eretz Yisroel! Elated, he passed the wool on to one of his *chassidim* urging him to take extra special care of the wool and to make with it a *tallis katan* and *tzitzis*. The *chassid*, who realized the great lengths the *Rebbe* had gone to procure the wool and the importance of his mission, approached the task with great care. All his good intentions and caution notwithstanding, he accidentally folded the *tallis katan* over twice, so that when he cut the hole in the middle to create the opening for the head, he ended up with two holes instead of one! When he unfolded the garment and held open the *tallis katan*, instead of one opening for the head, there were now two!

With trepidation he brought the ruined garment before his *Rebbe*. Rav Raphael had been waiting with great anticipation to see the culmination of his efforts and to fulfill this *mitzvah b'hiddur*. When the *chassid* entered the room, the *rebbe* noticed how crestfallen he looked.

“What is it? What is wrong?” the *rebbe* asked, beckoning the *chassid* to come near.

The *chassid* held out ruined garment ashamedly. He couldn't lift his eyes to meet the *rebbe's* as he waited for the *rebbe's* anger and disappointment to cascade over him.

What he heard instead was Rav Raphael's delighted voice:

“Why off course this garment needed two holes! Yes, yes, exactly-- one hole just as any *tallis katan* has for the head; and another hole to teach Raphael to suppress and contain his emotions and not be angry.”

When he concluded the tale, the *Imrei Chaim* said with great emotion, “*Kodesh kadashim!* Holy of Holies! From where can we learn such lofty behavior?! This story shakes me up and excites me much, much more than any miraculous tales you could tell me about the *tzadik!*”

THE CHAZZAN WHO LOST HIS VOICE AND THE CHAZZAN WHO FOUND IT

The *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz once heard a beautiful *niggun* from a chazzan, which prompted his telling the following story:

“Rav Mordechai once passed by a *shul* and out of the windows, wafted the most delightful and soulful melody. He remarked, ‘Master of the World - *Ribono Shel Olam!* If only I had such a voice--I would sing and praise You unceasingly with sweet melodies!’”

His prayers were accepted on High and from then on, that chazzan lost his voice and Rav Mordechai became the famed Zaslover Chazzan with a remarkable voice, full of power and strength.”

The *Imrei Chaim* concluded: “If you can use such a sweet voice for *avodas Hashem* - isn’t that wonderful?”

OL MALCHUS SHOMAYIM

The *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz once participated in a *vacht nacht* (a *seudah* conducted in order to provide protection a baby boy the night before the *bris milah*, during which, *divrei Torah* and *keriyas Shema* are recited). After all those who were present recited *keriyas Shema* as is customary, the *rebbe* told over the following:

Rav Pinchos of Koretz once approached Rav Mordechai, the chazzan of Zaslov, and asked him, “You perform at many *simchas* and recite *Shema* at many *vacht nachts*. Tell me, why do we recite *keriyas Shema* on the night before the *bris?*”

The *chazzan* said to Rav Pinchos as follows: “*Chazal* ask (*Berachos* 13a) ‘Why does the *parsha* of *Shema* precede the *parsha* of *V’haya im shmoa?*’

And they answer: ‘Because first, we accept upon ourselves the yoke of the Kingship of Heaven - and only afterwards the yoke of the *mitzvos.*’

Based on this, we can explain the custom just fine. Since this baby will enter into the yoke of the covenant of *mitzvos* tomorrow, we need to first accept upon ourselves the yoke of G-d's Kingship; so, we accept *Ol Malchus Shomayim* first by reciting *Shema* on the night before the *bris*."

FUR COATS LINED WITH ARROGANCE

Rav Chaim Meir, the *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz, was very close with his uncle, the *Ateres Yeshua* of Dzikov, and would often recount stories and teachings from his uncle:

One time, the *Imrei Chaim* noticed a very arrogant person whose self-satisfied smirk attested to his vanity.

"You think too much of yourself and regard yourself too highly!" the *Imrei Chaim* berated him. "If you were in the *beis medrash* of my uncle, the *Ateres Yeshua*, he wouldn't even be able to look at you. He so hated *ba'alei gaava* (arrogant people) that he simply couldn't spare them a glance without shivering from repulsion. My uncle used to say, "I am waiting and wishing that the winter would pass already, because during the winter all the *ba'alei batim* are bundled up in fancy coats with fur-lined and velvet collars turned up against the frost. But when they enter the *shul* and *beis medrash*, they leave them on so as to feel important- their arrogance knows no bounds!"

PAST LIVES

Rav Chaim Meir, the *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz, was very close with his uncle, the *Ateres Yeshua* of Dzikov, and would often recount stories and teachings from his uncle:

The *Ateres Yeshua* once observed two people having the following conversation. One said to the other, "Why do you allow your son to play with such unwholesome friends?"

"Ah, it's not so bad!" said the other. "Why are you making such a fuss and a big deal over nothing? He is just a little boy!"

The holy *Dzikover* turned to the astonished man and remarked, "How do you know that he is just a little boy? Maybe he is an eighty-year-old man who has come back to this world to rectify through *tikkun* whatever he ruined in a previous *gilgul*?"

The holy *Dzikover* turned to the astonished man and remarked, "How do you know that he is just a little boy? Maybe he is an eighty-year-old man who has come back to this world to rectify through *tikkun* whatever he ruined in a previous *gilgul*?"

KOL NIDREI

Rav Chaim Meir, the *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz, was very close with his uncle, the *Ateres Yeshua* of Dzikov, and would often recount stories and teachings from his uncle:

Rav Chaim Meir of Vizhnitz once told the following tale before *Kol Nidrei*:

"I heard from my holy uncle, the *Ateres Yeshua* of Dzikov, in the name of the advocate of the Jewish people, the holy Berditchever Rav, *Sanegoran Shel Yisroel*, who said. "Master of the World! -- *Ribbono Shel Olam*," You have a Jewish parliament made up of the sages of *Klal Yisroel* of that generation. You are required by Your own laws of Torah to ask their permission before You decide to decree anything harsh. If You wish to give them *shefa* and *beracha*--bounty and blessings, then You need not seek their approval beforehand. However, if You wish to act, heaven forbid, in a harsh manner with harsh judgments then You cannot do so without their agreement!

This is how the Berditchever explained the verses, *Devarim* 4:35, "*Ata haresa l'daas ki Hashem Hu haElokim, ayn od milvado.*" The particular name for Hashem, "*Elokim*," alludes to harsh judgements. Therefore, it reads: If You wish to act harshly (with *midas hadin* hinted at by *Elokim*) - then "*ayn od milvado* (You are acting alone) and the parliament does not agree; You cannot decree so without asking them first!"

"For example," said The *Imrei Chaim* interrupting his own tale, "You would have to ask the holy Berditchever who always sought the best and advocated on behalf of *Klal Yisroel*, or my holy father the *Ahavas Yisroel* of Vizhnitz--You need to ask their advice and have them agree."

The *Imrei Chaim* then continued the Berditsheve's *peirush*: "However (*Tehillim* 136:4) '*L'oseh niflaos gedolos l'vado ki l'olam chasdo*,' - If Hashem, You wish to do great wonders for us and send us *shefa* and *chassadim* (bounty of blessings and kindness) - '*l'vado*,' - You can do so all on Your own."

TIKKUN CHATZOS

Rav Chaim Meir Hagar author of *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz once told his *chassidim* on the occasion of the Czernobler's *Yahrzeit*, that the *Meor Eynaim, SeMacht Lichtig Der Oigen* - It enlightens the eyes! He once told the following story:

During one of the *Meor Eynaim's* many travels he stayed at a Jewish inn and spent the night. The innkeeper and his wife were simple Jews and when the Czernobler began to recite the *Tikkun Chatzos* prayers and when the sounds of his loud sighs, moans and crying reached the ears of his hosts they were startled.

"Surely our guest is not feeling well," declared the innkeeper's wife. "Please go and see to him."

The innkeeper went downstairs with a candle in hand, and as it cast its light in the darkness he was startled to hear the moaning, groaning, sighing and crying continue to come from the guest room. He knocked and opened the door apologizing, "I am sorry to disturb you, but I overheard your pain, are you not feeling well, how can we help you?"

The *Rebbe* turned to his host and explained, "Thank G-d I am *Baruch Hashem* feeling fine, however I was just reciting *Tikkun Chatzos*." "Hmmm. . .*Tikkun Chatzos*?" asked the puzzled innkeeper scratching his head and pulling at his beard, "what's that?" "It is the prayer recited over the destruction of our holy temple, the *Beis Hamikdash*," explained the *Rebbe* patiently. "What is the *Beis Hamikdash*?" asked the innkeeper. The Czernobler proceeded to explain how all the Jews once dwelled in the holy land, and how Hashem had commanded them to build a temple, and how they had worshipped there before it was destroyed due to our many sins and we were dispersed in the exile. "And soon," explained the *Rebbe* with a note of yearning and longing, "*Moshiach* will come and gather us all in from the exile, bring us back up to Eretz Yisroel, surely you anticipate his coming any day as we all do?"

At this query the simple innkeeper grew even more perplexed, "Hmmm. . .I am not sure. Let me go and ask my wife." He went back upstairs, told his wife about their guest's special prayers of the temple, explained to her what he had said and asked her opinion on the matter. "Go and tell our guest," said the innkeeper's wife, "that we have *Baruch Hashem* saved some money, here we own a flock of geese, some property and we have a

way of life, why should we give all that up and move to Eretz Yisroel when *Moshiach* arrives?" The innkeeper turned and relayed his wife's words to the *Rebbe*. "Go and tell your wife that here in *galus*," explained the *Rebbe*, "while we are in exile among the nations, the *goyim* torture and hurt us making our lives difficult and miserable, in Eretz Yisroel that will all end."

Nodding his head in understanding the innkeeper went back to his wife and related to her what the *Rebbe* said adding "Don't you remember what happened last week when Ivan, our neighbor got drunk and smashed all our windows? In Eretz Yisroel the *Rebbe* promises we will not have these problems!" he stated. The innkeeper's wife thought a bit and then her eyes filled with a light of understanding and her expression filled with comprehension.

"Aha, I've got it! Go and tell the *Rebbe*, I have a solution. Here we are comfortable and settled. We own property and the only problem is the *goyim*. Tell the *Rebbe* that when *Moshiach* comes he will solve all our problems by taking the *goyim* with him to Eretz Yisroel!"

When the holy Czernobler heard the innkeeper's answer, he said "Now I understand the meaning of the verse in *Parshas VaEra Shemos* 6:6 Hashem says "I will take you out from the sufferings of *Mitzrayim*," I will cause you to no longer be able to suffer and endure the exile and then you will want to go out. That is our sin," exclaimed the *Rebbe*, "we have become so settled to living in the exile in our complacency we are happy and believe there can be nothing better - how wrong we are!"

I WOULD RECOGNIZE ELIYOHU HANOVI

The *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz told the following stories about his illustrious forebear, the *Toras Chaim* of Kosov:

The *Toras Chaim* once said about the *zemer Eliyohu HaNovi* recited as part of the *Motzo'ei Shabbos Melava Malka zemiros*, "We sing *ashrei mi shero'a ponov bachalom* - happy is he who saw Eliyohu HaNovi's face in a dream - but who knows what Eliyohu HaNovi looks like? If no one knows what he looks like, how would he be able to recognize him in a dream? I, however, concluded the *Toras Chaim*, would be able to recognize him if I saw him in a dream because I once saw him when I was awake, with my father the

Ahavas Sholom, and this is how it happened:

“When I was a young child,” told the *Toras Chaim*, “I often used to sleep in my father’s bed. One night, I was awakened from my sleep to the sound of a conversation taking place between my father and someone else in the room. I looked up and was amazed to see an elderly man with a shining countenance sitting on my father’s chair and my father sat at his side. I was upset by this - who dared take my father’s seat at the head of the table? My father said to the guest: ‘Eliyohu, here in bed lies my *Chaim’nyu* - I would like you to give him a *berocha!*’

“When I heard that this was none other than Eliyohu HaNovi, I was seized with fear and trembling and hid beneath the covers. Eliyohu HaNovi reached in below the covers, placed his holy hands on my head and gave me a *berocha*. I took a peek from underneath the covers and saw his holy face!”

“And so therefore I tell you,” concluded the *Toras Chaim*, “that if I saw him in a dream, I could recognize him because I saw him when I was awake!” (*Sarfei Kodesh* 429-430)

GRABBING AND SAVING NESHAMOS

On the *Toras Chaim’s Yahrzeit*, the *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz once remarked, “*Chai* (18th *Iyar* is *Lag BaOmer*, the *Yahrzeit/Hillula* of Rav Shimon bar Yochai. On one side of that calendar date, a week before, is the *Yahrzeit* of my *Zeide*, the *heilige Ropshitzer* (11th of *Iyar*) and on the other side is the *Yahrzeit* of my *Zeide*, the *Toras Chaim* (25th of *Iyar*) - they all grab *neshomos* and pull them out of *Gehinnom!* (*Sarfei Kodesh* p. 451)

IT'S ALWAYS YOM TOV OR CHOL HAMOED HERE

It is well known that all year long Rav Chaim Meir, the *Vizhnitzer Rebbe*, lived in a *Yom Tov* atmosphere. We know that the *Parsha* read awakens the times and the feelings, and so it was that each *Parsha* the *Rebbe* lived the *Yomim Tovim* mentioned therein. There was no *Parsha*, *Haftora* or some connection to the upcoming *Yom Tov* that he ever missed. Whether it was explicit, hinted at in some *gematria* or *roshei teivos* or *notrikon*, he would always connect his *Divrei Torah* to *Yom Tov*, and this would create a holiday atmosphere.

The space in between the *Yomim Tovim* was for the *Rebbe* like *Chol HaMoed* and as soon as one *Yom Tov* ended, the next *Yom Tov* commenced with almost no break between them.

As winter began he was already preparing for *Pesach* and at the end of summer the upcoming high holidays of the *Yomim Noro'im* were already beckoning him and found their way into his every nuance and being. *Nissan* and *Tishrei* held hands and embraced as their sanctity permeated one another and spread their ethereal *kedusha* over all and this poured down and descended upon all who basked in the *Rebbe's* light and glory.

When his son printed the third volume of *Imrei Chaim* and gave it to the *Gerrer Rebbe*, the *Bais Yisrael*, telling him that it was Volume 3 on the *Moadim*, the *Gerrer Rebbe* remarked, "And do you mean to tell me that the other two volumes are not about the *Moadim*?" (*Meir HaChaim* II p. 154)

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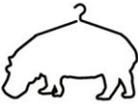
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