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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)

❧ **CHAYEI SORA** ❧

❧ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❧

Yafeh Sichasam Shel Avdei Avos Lifnei HaMakom Yoser MiTorasam Shel Banim.

Rabbi Acha said, "The ordinary conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs is more pleasing before the Omnipresent, than the Torah of their sons. It is for this reason that the section dealing with Eliezer is repeated in the Torah, while many mitzvos and fundamentals of the Torah are mere sentences and hints, and some were only given through allusions. — (Gen. Rabbah 60:8, Rashi Bereishis 24:42 cited from the Midrash)

For years, this meaning in this statement of Chazal puzzled me. The Nesivos Shalom offers a Peshat that I found compelling. The rule is Kol HaMechubar LeTahor, Tahor, whoever is attached to purity is himself pure. Therefore, the servant Eliezer is not just carrying out a mission on behalf of Avraham his master, but rather, by being a true servant and attaching himself to his master he was able to reach such levels of spirituality that he otherwise could have never reached on his own. This is due to the fact that he became one with his master; an extension of him. Thus, his actions become Avraham's actions, and his words Avraham's words, for he is his agent and acting fully and solely in his place. Consequently, the sichas Avdei Avos, is truly higher than torah shel Banim, because their speech and action is on par with that of the Avos themselves. They are the embodiment of the patriarchs.

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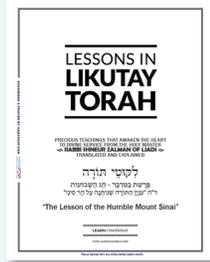
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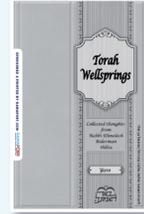
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He cites the Pri HaAretz (VaYeitze) who says an enlightening Peshat in passuk in Tehillim (116:16). We recite it in Hallel and proclaim, "Ani Avdecha ben Amasecha," I am your servant the son of your maidservant, Pitachta LeMosayray, you have opened my bonds. Rashi there writes,

'Your servant the son of Your maidservant:' There is no comparison between the training of a slave who was bought in the market and one who was born to a maidservant in the house.

'You loosed my bonds:' You untied from my neck the bars and the bonds.

Here is how the Pri HaAretz explains these words of Dovid HaMelech:

A servant born outside the house of his master, who the master purchased and acquired, must always be chained and fettered when he first begins his servitude, lest he flee and run away. Only once he is broken in and gets used to the environment, can he be trusted. However, a slave or servant that was born to the master's maidservant and grows up in his master's household, he calls that very same household - Home. He does not need to be chained or tied up even in his youth, for his own mother grew up in the master's home. To where and to whom will he run away to?

This is what we mean when we say these words, "Hashem! I am your servant the son of your maidservant you can untie me and open my chains!"

This is the type of servant that Eliezer was and this is why Chazal say that his words are carry so much weight in the Torah, so much so, that they are above the Torah of the children of the Avos. Since attachment and bitul as a servant of Avraham made Eliezer as one with his master, and this too is our goal - to say to Hashem, "Hashem I am your servant the son of your maidservant, untie me, Hashem have no fear! I have nowhere to run to and no one else to turn to but You! You are my entire world!"



The anniversary of the *petira* of a *Tzaddik* is known as a *Hilula*, which means "A Day of Joy".

One of the tools that *Kabbala* teaches is to connect to a *Tzaddik* (righteous person). The method to connect to a *Tzaddik* is to adopt the following ritual:

1) Learn the anniversary of his *petira* or, if this information is not available, the days of *Erev Rosh Chodesh*, *Rosh Chodesh* and the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month can be utilized for a connection.

2) Light a twenty-five-hour candle in his or her honor. There is no specific *berocha*. Some say the following: This candle is being lit in the merit of _____.

Others say that it is the custom within *Klal Yisrael* to light a *yahrzeit* candle on the day

that a relative or a *Tzaddik* has passed away. The lighting has no accompanying blessing, and people would like to express themselves in a *tefilla* when lighting the candle. This is not only true on a *yahrzeit* but on every *Yom Tov* as well.

The author of the *Pele Yo'etz*, Rav Eliezer Papo (1785–1828), did in fact compose such a *tefilla*. Rav Papo was the *Rav* of the city of Selestria in Bulgaria. Bulgaria was a part of the Ottoman Empire at the time. The *tefilla* of the *Pele Yo'etz* is reproduced and translated below, as a public service.

Hebrew Tefilla for Lighting a Yahrzeit or Hilula Candle

[תְּפִילָּה הַנִּמְצָאת בַּסֵּפֶר אֶלֶף הַמִּגּוֹן מִבְּעַל הַפֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ עַל פְּרֻשַׁת וַיֵּצֵא עֲמוּד כ"ד]

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמְנוּחַת וּלְעִילוּי נַשְׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק _____
 בֶּן/בַּת _____, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׁתִּקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים
 וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטּוֹב שְׁאֵנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדִבּוּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וַיְהִי הַכֹּל
 לְזָכוֹת וּלְמְנוּחַת וּלְעִילוּי לְנַשְׁמוֹת עַמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפָרֵט לְנַפְשׁ רוּחַ וְנַשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי /
 צַדִּיק _____ . יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׁתִּהְיֶנָּה נַפְשׁוֹתֵיהֶם צְרוּרוֹת בְּצֵרוּר הַחַיִּים.

Translation:

Behold I am lighting this lamp for the resting and uplifting of the soul of my father/my mother/the *Tzaddik* _____ the son/daughter of _____. May it be Your will before you, *Hashem*, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers, that all my good deeds whether in thought, speech or action be done for a merit and a resting and an elevation of the souls of your nation Yisrael. It should be especially for the soul of my father/mother/the *Tzaddik* _____. May it be Your will that their souls be bound in the bond of life.

- 3) Learn about the person including history, culture, writings and teachings.
- 4) Study some of his teaching or writings. See more at: www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm



GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER

YAHRZEITS BEGINNING SHABBOS CHAYEI SORA

http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim_yahrzeits/Cheshvan

Biographical information and yahrzeits compiled by Reb Manny Saltiel and www.anshe.org

- * **25th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Friday Night (Nov 22nd)**
 - * **Rav Avrohom**, brother of the Vilna *Gaon*, *mechaber* of *Maalos HaTorah*, (5568/1807);
 - * **Rav Mordechai Roke'ach**, *Rav* of Bilgoria (Bilgoraya). The son of the third *Admor* of Belz, Rav Yissochor Ber Roke'ach, and father of the fifth and current *Rebbe*, Rav Yissochor Ber Roke'ach, (5710/1949);
 - * **Rav Elya Yurkanski** (1908–2005). Born in Minsk, he and two brothers were smuggled over the border to Poland, on a recommendation by the *Chofetz Chaim*; Rav Elya was not yet a *bar mitzva* and would never again see his parents. He spent almost ten years in Baranovich with Rav Elchonon Wasserman before leaving for Mir in 1929. He traveled with the *Yeshiva* to Shanghai and eventually joined the *Yeshiva* in New York, where he remained his entire life. He was a *Rosh Yeshiva* with Mir for over fifty-five years, (5766/2005).
- * **26th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Nov 23rd)**

- * **Rav Shlomo Segal**, *Av Bais Din* Polna'ah and Lvov, *mechaber* of *Mibais Levi*, [*Hamodia* 2007 lists Rav Shlomo Charif, *Rav* of Lvov, 1637], (5399/1638);
- * **Rav Refoel HaKohen Katz** of Hamburg (1723–1803). Born in Liphland to Rav Yekusiel Ziskind, the *Rav* of the town, Rav Refoel was taken to learn with the *Shaagas Arye*, a relative, in Minsk, at the age of twelve. At the age of nineteen, Rav Refoel replaced his *Rebbe* as *Rosh Yeshiva* in Minsk. Four years later, he was chosen as *Rav* of Rakow, and later of Smilowitz. In 1763, he became *Rav* in Pinsk. There he wrote *Toras Yekusiel* on *Yoreh De'ah*, with an appendix of *Halochos* pertaining to *agunos*. Later he became *Rav* in Posen, and in 1776 of the three *kehillos* of Atuna, Hamburg and Wandsbeck (AH"U). He also authored *Sheilos HaKohanim Torah* on the *avoda* of the *Kohanim*, *Shu"t Veshav HaKohen*, *Mapei Lahon* on the *issur* of *loshon hora*, and *Daas Kedoshim*, (5564/1803);
- * **Rav Simcha Soloveitchik**, son of the *Bais HaLevi*, (5702/1941);
- * **Rav Aryeh Mordechai Halberstam** of Shinova, (5691/1930);
- * **Rav Mordechai Zimmerman**, renowned *mohel* (1913–2005). Born in New York to Rav Yosef Yehoshua and Shaina Rochel Zimmerman, he attended *Torah Vodaas*, which his father helped found. He and his two brothers were sent to Mir and Grodna in Europe. While in Europe, he met with the *Chofetz Chaim*. He received his *ksav semicha* (Rabbinical ordination) from Rav Shimon Shkop. After his marriage, he lived in Dubuque, Iowa, for five years, and then settled in the Bronx. In the mid-1980s, he moved to Boro Park, where he became a prominent member of the *Mirrer minyan*. He was survived by two sons, a daughter and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, (5766/2005).

* **27th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Sunday Night (Nov 24th)**

- * **Rav Yaakov Leizer**, the *Pshevorsker Rebbe*, also known as *Reb Yankele* of Antwerp (1907–1999). Born in Galicia, he became a follower of the *Koloshitzer Rebbe*, Rav Chuna Halberstam, in 1926. He and his family were shipped to Siberia until the end of World War II. After the war, he traveled to America, Paris and Antwerp, (5760/1999).

* **28th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Monday Night (Nov 25th)**

- * **Rabbeinu Yona ben Avrohom** of Gerondi, France (1200 [1180]–1263). The *Ramban's* mother and Rabbeinu Yona's father were siblings. Many years later, the *Ramban's* son, Rav Shlomo, married the daughter of Rabbeinu Yona. Thus, the two great *Rishonim* were *mechutonim* as well as first cousins. He was a *talmid* of Rav Shlomo ben Avrohom Min Ha'Har. When King Louis XIV of France, "Saint Louis", burned all the copies of the *Talmud* in Paris in the Square of the Louvre, Rabbeinu Yona, one of the *Ramban's* main detractors, felt that the events in Paris were a sign that he and the other opponents of the *Ramban* were seriously wrong. He then composed his work *Shaarei Teshuva*, in which he outlined the methods of doing *teshuva*, and he traveled from place to place preaching about the need to back away from matters that cause division among the Jewish people. Among his *talmidim* are the *Rashba* and *Ra'ah*. [Others cite his *Yahrzeit* as 1st, 8th, or 11th of *Cheshvan*], (5024/1263);
- * **Rav Zev Wold**, *Rav* of Salik, *mechaber* of *Nachlas Binyomin*, (5447/1686);
- * **Rav Eliezer Lieber** of Berditchev, (5531/1770);
- * **Rav Sholom Eisen**. *Moreh Tzedek* in the *Bais Din* of the *Eida HaChareidis* in Yerushalayim for over fifty years, he was a *talmid* of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, (5749/1988).

* **29th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Nov 26th)**

- * **Rav Yitzchok Eizik Chover**, *mechaber* of *Shu"t Binyan Olam* and *Si'ach Yitzchok*. One of his *talmidim*, Rav Yitzchok Kahane, wrote *Toldos Yitzchok*, (5613/1852);
- * **Rav Avrohom Abish Kanner**, the Tchechover *Rebbe* of Chaifa, (5744/1983).
- * **30th of Cheshvan / (1st of Kisleiv) ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Nov 27th)**
- * **Rav Tzvi Hirsch HaKohen** of Rimanov (1778–1846). From the age of fifteen, Tzvi Hirsch began traveling to the court of Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov. He became one of the *Rebbe's* closest *Chassidim* and his personal attendant; he thus became known as Rav Tzvi Hirsch *Meshores* (attendant). After the *petira* of Rav Naftoli of Ropshitz (another of the closest *Chassidim* of Rav Menachem Mendel), Rav Tzvi Hirsch returned to Rimanov to accept the mantle of leadership of the *Chassidim*. His *divrei Torah* were compiled and published by his son, Rav Yosef, under the name *Be'eiros HaMayim*. It is comprised of several *seforim*, all beginning with the word *Be'er*. For example, the *sefer Be'er Lachai Ro'i* contains his *drushim* on *Chumash* and the *Yomim Tovim*. Other teachings of his can be found in the *sefer Mevasser Tov*. His *Yahrzeit* falls on the 30th of *Cheshvan*, but since *Cheshvan* more often has only twenty-nine days, it is generally commemorated on the twenty-ninth, (5607/1846);
- * **Rav Yaakov Betzalel Zolty**, *Rav* of Yerushalayim, (5743/1982);
- * **Rav Osher (Oscar) Fasman** (1908–2003). Born in Chicago, he served as *Rav* in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Ottawa, Canada, before returning to Chicago. He developed Hebrew Theological College from an afternoon-only school to a full-time *Yeshiva*, bringing *Gedolei Torah* as *Roshei Yeshiva*. He was president of the *Yeshiva* from 1946 to 1964, and also served as president of the Chicago Rabbinical Council and *Rav* of Congregation Yehuda Moshe in Lincolnwood, Illinois. His son, Rav Chaim Fasman, is *Rosh Kollel* in Los Angeles, (5764/2003);
- * **Rav Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg** (1914–2006). He was born in Yerushalayim to Rav Yaakov Gedalyohu who came to *Eretz Yisrael* from Kovno in the early 1900s. He learned in the *Eitz Chaim Yeshiva* and developed a very warm bond with Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer. Rav Waldenberg wrote his first *sefer*, *Dvar Eliezer*, when he was only nineteen. Upon the passing of his mother and later his father, both in the 1960s, he published two separate *seforim* on the *halochos* of mourning. Rav Waldenberg got involved with medical ethics during the period that he served as *Rav* of a *shul* adjacent to the old location of *Sha'arei Tzedek* Hospital in downtown Yerushalayim. Among those who attended was Professor Avrohom Steinberg, a pediatric neurologist and head of the Medical Ethics Center at *Sha'arei Tzedek*, as well as the editor of the Talmudic Encyclopedia. "Doctors who *davened* at the *shul*, myself included, started asking him questions. Eventually, he began teaching a weekly medical ethics class for doctors and nurses." His *teshuvos* were compiled in his magnum opus, a twenty-one-volume set of *responso* entitled *Tzitz Eliezer*. The first volume of *Tzitz Eliezer* was published in 1945, when he was not yet thirty. In addition, he authored a book on the laws of sea travel on *Shabbos* called *Shvisa B'yam*, a book on the laws of mourning called *Ein Ya'akov* and a book on legal issues in the modern State called *Hilchos Medina*. He was also a member of the *Bais Din HaGodol* where he sat together for many years with Rav Yosef Sholom Elyoshev. Rav and Rebbetzin Waldenberg merited to have one child, a son, Rav Simcha Bunim Waldenberg. Rav Simcha Bunim became a *Dayan* in the *Eida HaChareidis* and served as its appointed *Rav* of the neighborhood of *Ezras Torah*. He himself was known as a *posek muvhok*, (5767/2006).

✧ **1st of Kisleiv ~ Begins Thursday Night (Nov 28th)**

- ✧ **Rav Ephraim Alankava**, *Rav* of Telmisan, Algeria (on the border with Morocco), and *mechaber* of *Shaar Kevod Shomayim*, (5202/1441);
- ✧ **Rav Trivash** of Mantova, Italy, (5312/1551);
- ✧ **Rav Sholom Shachna** of Lublin (1490–1558), teacher and father-in-law of the *Rema*. His grandfather and namesake was the *Rav* of Neustadt and the *Godol HaDor* (spiritual leader of that generation) in Austria, who, along with the *Maharil*, founded the *minhagei Ashkenaz* that are still prevalent until today. He established the Lublin *Yeshiva* in 1515 and was succeeded by Rav Shlomo Luria, the *Maharshal*, (5319/1558);
- ✧ **Rav Yosef Shmuel** of Cracow, *mechaber* of *Mesoras HaShas*. The *Chida*, in his biography of Rav Yosef Shmuel, wrote that he learned all of *Shas* forty-two times, fulfilling the *mitzva* of *Vedibarta 'bom'*, (the numerical value of '*bom*' being forty-two). He also added that for twenty-five years he learned standing on his feet and all his learning was *Torah lishmah* (for the sake of Heaven), (5464/1703);
- ✧ **Rav Moshe Chaifetz**, *mechaber* of *Melechtes Shabbos* and *Melechtes Machsheves*, (5472/1711);
- ✧ **Rav Avrohom Eiger** of Posen (1846–1914), son of Rav Yehuda Leib Eiger, the first Lubliner *Rebbe*, grandson of Rav Shlomo Eiger and great-grandson of Rav Akiva Eiger. He succeeded his father as leader of his *Chassidim* from 1882 to 1914. He was the *mechaber* of a work on *Chassidus*, *Shevet Mi'Yehuda*. He was also a member of the *Vaad HaRuchani* of the *Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin*, (5675/1914);
- ✧ **Rav Chaim Nosson Dembitzer** (1820–1892). Born in Cracow, he did historical research and critical work in the field of *Talmudic* and Rabbinic literature, and wrote about its leading personalities. His *sefer*, *Klilas Yofi*, included biographies of *Rabbonim* of Lvov, Cracow, and other cities in Poland and Lithuania. His student, Feivel Hirsch Wettstein, wrote his biography, *Toldos Maharchan*, (5653/1892);
- ✧ **Rav Moshe Hager** of Radovitz, *mechaber* of *Vayikach Moshe*, (5665/1904);
- ✧ **Rav Yitzchok Levitan** from Aram Tzova (Aleppo), (5672/1911);
- ✧ **Rav Naftoli Hertz (Hertzel) Krezmer**. He was born in Bialystok to Rav Avrohom, a textile merchant, and was a grandson of Rav Osher *ben Tzvi HaKohen*, who wrote the *Birkas Rosh* on *Berachos* and *Nozir*. He married in Ponevezh and remained there, serving as the *Rav* of Yanova and other places. He wrote *Noam HaMitzvos*, (5673/1912);
- ✧ **Rav Yisrael Ungar** of Zavna, (5697/1936);
- ✧ **Rav Tzodok Shaingarten** (1912–2005), *Rav* of *Ohr Torah* in Boro Park. Born in Warsaw to staunch Gerrer *Chassidim*, he learned for two *zmanim* at Baranovitch before attending Kletzk under Aharon Kotler. Later, he learned at Mir under Rav Yeruchom Levovitz from 1932 to 1938, following which he returned to Warsaw. When the Nazis conquered Poland, he fled to Vilna. He traveled with the Mir *Yeshiva* to Japan and Shanghai. After the war, he moved to New York and married Rebbetzin Ruth, (5766/2005);
- ✧ **Rav Yaakov Kasirer**, founder and long-time president of *Bais Yaakov* of Los Angeles. Born in Bistra, Hungary, he lost his parents and many siblings during World War II. In 1946, he married Reizi, a childhood friend of the family, and moved to Bregenz, Austria, on the Swiss border. Two of their three children, Robert and Gabi, were born there. In 1954, they moved to Los Angeles, where their youngest child, Hindy, was born. They were involved in the creation of *Yeshiva Rav Isacsohn (Toras Emes)*, and founded *Bais Yaakov* in 1968, in order to assure that their daughters received a local *Torah* education. Even after both

daughters graduated, however, Rav Kasirer and his wife assured the ongoing growth and success of *Bais Yaakov*, (5766/2005).



❁ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❁

WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

The *Maharil*, in *Hilchos Taanis*, teaches us that the reason why there is a custom to visit the *Bais hachaim* on a fast is because “this place is the resting place of the *Tzaddikim* and is therefore sanctified, pure and holy and our tefillos are more readily heard, accepted and answered when *davened* on holy ground. When you *daven* there, do not make requests of the dead who are buried there; rather ask *Hashem* to answer you mercifully in their merit. Then circle around the graves and donate charity before reciting tefillos.”

בית הקברות הוא מקום מנוחת הצדיקים ומתוך כך הוא מקום קדוש וטהור התפילה נתקבלה שם יותר, אך אל ישים מגמתו נגד המתים, אך יבקש מהשי"ת שיתן עליו רחמים בזכות הצדיקים שוכני עפר, ויקיף הקברות, ויתן צדקה קודם שיאמר התחינות.

The *Zohar* in *VaYeira* page 71 teaches us that if we suffer any calamity or tragedy we have the custom to go and daven at the kevorim of *Tzaddikim*. The reason for this is that we approach them with fasting, remorse and repentance, and we have in mind that the departed souls ask and *daven* for us before *Hashem* on High, as opposed to the prohibition against speaking to the dead which is an idolatrous practice where the idol worshippers sought out the impure dead souls and bodies using sorcery and witchcraft. Instead, beseech our *Tzaddikim* who, in *gan eden*, are truly alive, and ask through *tefilla* and fasting and *teshuva* alone.



❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

STORIES & ANECDOTES

Rav Yaakov ben Dovid Yitzchok Leiser of Antwerp, 27th of Cheshvan

Pshevorsker Rebbe

Reading Kvittels Even While Asleep

Rav Pomerantz, Rav Yaakov's *gabbai*, related how a friend once asked him to relay a *kvittel* with a petition for help to the *Rebbe*, and the *gabbai* somehow forgot. This scenario repeated itself over and over, till the *gabbai* was very much embarrassed when his friend questioned him as to why he had not yet delivered the requested *kvittel*. Finally, the *gabbai* remembered, but this was at night

when he was alone in the *Rebbe's* room and the *Rebbe* had already lain himself down to sleep. What should he do now? To wake the *Tzaddik* was out of the question. Just then he had an idea. Quietly, he slipped the *kvittel* beneath the *Rebbe's* pillow, and whispered the request in the sleeping *Rebbe's* ear.

The next day the *gabbai* received a phone call from his overjoyed friend. “Thank you for delivering the *kvittel* to the

Rebbe!”

Astounded, he asked, “How did you know?”

“*Boruch Hashem*, my wife has healed completely and she is well!”
(*Sichoson Shel Avdei Avos* page 291)



Once, when Rav Yaakov Leizer was seated at a *simcha*, he was approached by a *Chassid* asking that the *Tzaddik* daven for his wife, that she should have an easy birth since she was having a difficult labor. However, the Pshevorsker did something wondrous; he

glanced at his watch and stated, “*Mazal Tov!* She has already given birth to a baby boy!” When Rav Reich asked the *Rebbe* if he was not afraid of *ayin hora* in displaying such



overt *Ruach HaKodesh*, Rav Yaakov Leizer answered him, “We need to demonstrate the power of *Torah* in this world to others.”

Rav Shlomo Yeshaya Yaakovovitch related that he was once busy *Erev Shabbos* heating up the water for the men’s *mikve* so the *Chassidim* could purify themselves on *Shabbos* morning. Rav Yaakov Leizer was adamant that the *mikve* be hot so that the *Chassidim* would use it and *toivel* themselves. Unfortunately, somehow he lost his balance and fell into the hot water and badly scalded himself. Rav Yaakov Leizer of Pshevorsk laid him down in bed and treated him with a miraculous ointment for burns – none other than the *shirayim*, the leftover wine from his *kos shel beracha*, the cup used for *bensching* (the Grace after meals). He rubbed this wine over his entire body and he was healed completely on the spot!



Background to a dynasty

In the years before the Second World War, dozens of great Chassidic dynasties flourished in Europe. Each dynasty established its own *Bais Medrash* and *Chassidic* court to which *Chassidim* would flock en masse to see their *Rebbe* and to unload their problems and sorrows.

With the outbreak of the war, all these once-famous and glorious courts were destroyed and the sounds of *Torah* and *tefilla* that used to emanate from their walls were to be heard no more. The few *Rebbes* who survived re-established themselves in *Eretz Yisrael* and America, far away from the blood-soaked continent of Europe.

One solitary dynasty however, remained in Europe – the Pshevorsker dynasty, headed by Rav Yitzchok Gvirzman who was fondly known to all as ‘Reb Itzikel’.



His Task in the World

Reb Itzikel opened his *Bais Medrash* in Mercatorstraat, Antwerp, and in a short time he became a magnet for the many downtrodden *Yidden* scattered across Europe who had lost everything during the war.

When Reb Itzikel was asked why he did not attempt to found *Yeshivos* or other *mosdos* (institutions), he answered, “Everyone comes down to this world for a different purpose. Some *Tzaddikim* are sent to improve the *ruchniyus* (spirituality), others are sent for *gashmiyus* (physicality). My job is to see to *gashmiyus*.”

Reb Itzikel remained true to his word and, due to his advice and *berochos*, many people were helped to set up new homes and to marry off their children in a fitting way. Many are the stories told of the

miracles that people witnessed as a direct result of the *Rebbe's berochos*.

On *Yom Kippur* 5636 (1976), when Reb Itzikel was in his ninety-fifth year, his holy *neshoma* ascended to the *Yeshiva Shel Maa'la*. Reb Itzikel left behind no sons, and his one and only son-in-law, Reb Yankele, was crowned as the new Pshevorsker *Rebbe*.

Like his *shver* (father-in-law) before him, Reb Yankele did not seek to enlarge or to open a network of Pshevorsker *mosdos*. Even so, Reb Yankele's fame spread across Europe and later on across the globe, until he became a legend during his own lifetime. The steady trickle of *Chassidim* who made their way to the *Rebbe* turned into a flood.

Specially chartered planes would bring hundreds of *Chassidim* who converged on Antwerp for every *Yom Tov* and occasion. Amongst the visitors were often those who had come seeking a *yeshua* (salvation) of one type or another, and Reb Yankele did not let them down. Hundreds of stories abound about his *Ruach HaKodesh* and the miracles that he performed.

Reb Yankele would often relate stories of miracles wrought by *Tzaddikim* from a bygone era in order to invoke their merit. Later on, he would dismiss the things he did and say that they were not his *mofes* (miracle) but that of the *Tzaddik* in the story.

It once happened that a *kalla* (bride) suddenly collapsed and went into a deep coma a few days before her *chasuna* (wedding). All attempts to wake the girl were of no avail. In a panic, the family rushed to Reb Yankele and begged him to help them. Reb Yankele thought for a minute and then he said, "Last night after *davening*, I related a story about the Chortkover *Rebbe*, Rav Dovid Moshe. The Chortkover *Rebbe* told a *Yid* whose children all died in infancy that he should

name his next child after a person who is mentioned in the *haftora* of the week in which the child is born.

"Some time later the man's wife gave birth to a baby girl. The man looked in the *haftora* of that particular week, *Parshas Noso*, but couldn't find any mention of a woman's name. The *haftora*, however, which speaks about Shimshon, does mention Shimshon's mother, even though it doesn't refer to her by name. The *Gemora*, in *Bova Basra*, informs us that her name was Sallfonis, and the *Maharshal*, in his commentary, writes that this name is a *segula* to prevent the evil eye from harming a person! Needless to say, the girl lived to a ripe old age."

Reb Yankele turned to the family of the *kalla* and said to them, "After I related this story I suddenly wondered to myself what was my reason for saying it. It is not *Parshas Noso* this week, nor is it the *Yahrzeit* of the Chortkover *Rebbe*. It appears that it is a message that we should add the name Sallfonis to the *kalla*."

No sooner had the *Rebbe* added the new name than the *kalla* suddenly awoke and the *chasuna* went ahead as planned!



Early Years

Reb Yankele was born on the 6th of *Teves* 5667 (1907), in the small village of Roig near Riminov in Galicia. As a child, he was educated by his father, Rav Dovid Yitzchok, who was one of the prominent Shiniver *Chassidim* of the area.

In a dedication to his parents in one of his *seforim*, Reb Yankele wrote, "A person is duty-bound to honor his father and mother. I am especially duty-bound to honor my parents, who served as my teachers as well. My mother taught me until I started to learn *Chumash* and then I learnt from my father *Chumash* and several hundred blatt *gemora* until I was twelve."

Even after their *petiros*, Reb Yankele

continued to honor their memory and was *makpid* to give *tzedoka* every day *le'ilui nishmosom* (in their memory).

After his *bar mitzva*, Reb Yankele joined the *Yeshiva* in the town of Dukla. This *Yeshiva* was intended only for geniuses and among those who learned there were Rav Yekusiel Halberstam, who later became famed as the Klausenberger *Rebbe*, and Rav Pinchos Hirshprung, who later became *Rav* of Montreal.

The *Yeshiva* was run by the great *Gaon*, Rav Dovid Tevli Dukla who was one of the *choshuva* Chortkover *Chassidim* and *mechaber* of a number of classic *seforim*. Reb Yankele once confessed that by the time he left Dukla, he was fluent in every *Pri Megodim* in *Hilchos Treifos*, and indeed on his departure the *Rosh Yeshiva* awarded him with *semicha*.



His Rebbe

From Dukla, Reb Yankele moved on to *Yeshivas Zera Kodesh*, which was situated in the town of Koloshitz. That *Yeshiva* was headed by the *Rav* of the town, Rav Chuna Halberstam, who was a descendant of the *Rebbes* of Shinive and Sanz. In Koloshitz, Reb Yankele found his home and his *Rebbe*, and until the end of his life, Reb Yankele regarded the Koloshitzer *Rav* as his *Rebbe* and mentor, as Reb Yankele wrote himself:

“In the year 5684 (1924) I was *zoche* to be *mekabel* my master and teacher, the *Rebbe* of all *Klal Yisrael*, Rav Chuna of Koloshitz, the grandson of the *Rebbe* of Shinive. I was *zoche* to benefit a little bit from his light, from his *Torah*, *avoda* and *gemilus chassodim*, all of which were on an extremely lofty level. I remained under his guidance until *Shavuos* 5699 (1939).

“Those who were *zoche* to see his face when he learned with his *talmidim* or by himself, how his facial features changed from bright red to a ghostly white, can

understand and appreciate what *Chazal* tell us that ‘*Hashem, Klal Yisrael* and the *Torah* are all one.’ “

Reb Yankele’s devotion to his *Rebbe* knew no bounds. One day, Reb Chuna asked his faithful *talmid* if he had any spare money to give him to distribute to *tzedoka*. The only money Reb Yankele had at that time was the *nadan* (dowry) that he had received at his *chasuna*. Without hesitation, Reb Yankele withdrew the entire sum from the bank and presented it to his *Rebbe*.

Rav Chuna was rather overwhelmed by the large amount and confided to Reb Yankele, “You should know that your money is safer with me than in the bank.”

A short time later the bank declared bankruptcy and all those who had accounts there lost their money.

In his *tzavo’a* (will), Reb Yankele asked that no praises or titles be written on his *matzeiva* (headstone), except for the following words: “He was a beloved *talmid* of his *Rebbe*, the *Tzaddik* of Koloshitz”.



First Position

Reb Yankele’s years of *hasmoda* (diligent study) paid off and in 1931, when he was still a *bochur*, he was appointed *Rav* of the town Yashlisk in Galicia. The previous *Rav* of the town, Rav Ephraim Halberstam, left Yashlisk to take up another position. When the townspeople asked Rav Halberstam with whom he was leaving them, he pointed to Reb Yankele and said, “You see that *bochur* – he already knows more than I . . .”

Reb Yankele also traveled to seek the consent of the Sadigerer *Rebbe*, Rav Mordechai Sholom Yosef Friedman, who had many *Chassidim* in the town. The Sadigerer *Rebbe* gave him his enthusiastic *berocha* and thus, at the age of twenty-four, Reb Yankele assumed his first position.

Although Reb Yankele was very demanding on himself and constantly strived to climb higher and higher, he was careful not to demand from others to act in a way that was not in line with their true *madreiga* (spiritual level). In one of his letters he wrote: “The *Gemora* tells us that the *Amora* Mar Ukva once said that in comparison to his father, he is like vinegar, the son of wine. His father would wait twenty-four hours between meat and dairy products while Mar Ukva only waited six hours.

“This particular *Gemora* is difficult to understand. If Mar Ukva praised his father for waiting twenty-four hours, then why did he not act likewise and follow the steps of his father? From here we see that for a *chumra* (stringency) to have true meaning, it must be compatible with the overall behavior of the person. Mar Ukva did not feel that he was on the same level as his father and as such, it would have been incorrect for him to mimic his father and adopt this *chumra*.”

Throughout his life Reb Yankele ran away from *machlokes* (controversy) and he would often say, “If a person sees *machlokes*, there is only one *eitza*. Pick up the ends of your coat and flee as fast as you can.”

He would add that in his youth in Yashlisk, he saw *Yidden* who became embroiled in a *machlokes* and they all met a bitter end.

Reb Yankele once wrote in a letter: “I heard in the name of the *Rebbe*, Rav Sholom of Belz, that it is better for a person to act falsely in order to come to *emes* (truth), than to act truthfully and to end up with *sheker* (falsehood). I, the lowly one, bow my head in front of every *Yid* in *Klal Yisrael* and I speak to everyone in a friendly tone, although sometimes in my heart I am upset with them . . . “

To those who felt unable to keep silent in the face of attacks and slander, he

would repeat the following *vort* in the name of the Chortkover *Rebbe*, Rav Dovid Moshe. “The *Mishna* says, ‘*Seyog lachochma shesika* – keeping silent is an aid to *chochma* (wisdom).’ If keeping silent is only an aid to *chochma*, what is the actual *chochma* itself?” And the Chortkover *Rebbe* answered, “True *chochma* is when you don’t take to heart the taunts of others and you remain immune to their baits. That is true *chochma*!”

Five years before the Second World War, Reb Yankele married his lifelong helpmate, the *Rebbetzin* Alta Bina, the daughter of Reb Itzikel, the *Rebbe* of Pshevorsk. For the next forty years, Reb Yankele lived in the shadow of his great *shver* and rarely left his side. So subservient was he to Reb Itzikel, that although Reb Yankele was already in his seventies by the time his *shver* was *niftar*, until then he never made his own *kiddush* on Friday night or led his own *Shabbos* meal, preferring always to sit at his *shver*’s table and hear his *kiddush*.



Best in the Long Run

With the outbreak of the war in 1939, Poland was invaded by the Germans, *yimach shemom*. The day after their arrival in Pshevorsk they burnt all the *shuls* in the area and started to restrict the *Yidden* with their many sadistic decrees. Reb Itzikel and Reb Yankele fled to the relative safety of Lemberg, which was under the control of Russia.

Once in Lemberg, the Polish refugees were offered Russian citizenship by their new hosts. No one knew whether to take up the offer or not. Who could possibly know what lay in store for them either way? Most people were inclined to take up the offer and not risk upsetting the Russians. Reb Itzikel, however, disagreed, and he advised people to refuse the offer.

On the 23rd of *Sivan* 5600 (1940),

the KGB swooped down on Lemberg and arrested all those who had refused Russian citizenship. Those *Yidden* were taken to the train station and put on trains to Siberia. Some of those on board were visibly upset with Reb Itzikel. It was due to his advice that they now found themselves being exiled to the frozen wastelands of Siberia.

Reb Itzikel consoled them and told them he had not misled them, adding, "Today is the 23rd of *Sivan*, the day Achashverosh repealed the letters that he had sent ordering the destruction of the Jews. Just as the 23rd of *Sivan* was then a day of salvation for the *Yidden*, so it will be for us as well."

Reb Itzikel's words proved prophetic when the Germans entered Lemberg a short while later and brutally murdered almost the whole Jewish population. Those who had been exiled to Siberia were the lucky ones. Their refusal to accept Russian citizenship also enabled them to leave Russia at the war's end, a privilege that was not granted to those who had sworn allegiance to Mother Russia.

Reb Yankele would say, concerning their exile to Siberia, that it was a prime example of a situation in which a person thinks that he is doomed, while in reality it is an act of *rachamei shomayim* (Heavenly mercy).

To this, Reb Yankele would add the following *vort*: We say in *Krias Shema*, "*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echod.*" The use of *Elokim* denotes *middas hadin* (the attribute of strict justice), while the use of *Hashem* denotes mercy. This is to show us that even when we think that we are seeing an act of *Elokim*, we should know that *Hashem Echod*, everything is in reality only mercy, and it is up to us to realize it!

During the war, Reb Yankele lost almost his entire family. His parents and all his brothers and sisters with all their children were brutally murdered. Similarly,

he lost all his family on his wife's side, except for his parents-in-law who were miraculously saved. Reb Yankele, however, never questioned *Hashem's* ways and he accepted the terrible afflictions with love.

In a letter written many decades later, Reb Yankele wrote, "This *Shabbos* is the *Yahrzeit* of my father and mother who were murdered by the German *resho'im*, *yimach shemom*, in a forest between Yashlisk and Dukla. In *Gan Eden* and also when *Moshiach* will come, we will thank *Hashem* with all our hearts for all the sorrows we have endured. Even so, we still ask *Hashem* that He should show us kindness that we are also able to appreciate, and that we should see only goodness."



The Suffering in Siberia

In Siberia, Reb Yankele was assigned to a forced labor camp where he survived on a diet of bread and raw vegetables. He refused to eat the rest of the camp food for fear that it was not kosher. It was under these conditions that Reb Yankele was forced to steal a piece of bread to ensure his survival. Years later, he once admitted that this was the only time in his life that he had taken something dishonestly.

Even in the terrible Siberian conditions, Reb Yankele did not diminish his *avoda*. Daily, he smashed a hole in the ice and *toiveled* himself in the freezing waters. It once happened that while he was under the water, he couldn't find the hole again and almost drowned. From then on he gave up this practice.

Reb Yankele also risked his life to teach *Torah* to those he came in contact with. Although he possessed no *seforim*, he delivered regular *shiurim* in *Gemora* and *Halocha*.

In Siberia, he came into contact with a descendant of Rav Yisrael Salanter. Never one to miss an opportunity, Reb Yankele

asked his newfound acquaintance to teach him the *derech* and the teachings of the founder of *mussar* movement. Although Reb Yankele viewed himself as a Sanzer *Chassid* and his whole conduct echoed the *derech* of *Sanz*, this in no way prevented him from learning and treasuring the teachings of other *Gedolim*.

In a letter written as an answer to someone who wanted to know the way of *Chassidus*, Reb Yankele wrote: "I don't know how to answer a clear ruling, for not all times and places are the same. The *Gemora* in *Bava Kama* quotes Rav Yehuda that someone who wants to be a *Chassid* should keep the laws of *Nezikim*, so as not to cause monetary loss to others. Rova, however, says he should be careful to keep what is written in *Maseches Ovos* and to recite his *berochos* with *kavona* (concentration). The *Maharal* and the *Maharsha* both explain that in order for a person to achieve true *shleimus* (perfection), he must fulfill all three points which encompass *bein odom laMokom* (man-G-d relationships), *bein odom lachavero* (interpersonal relationships) and the person's own *aliya* which is achieved through davening with *kavona* and becoming close to *Hashem*.

"I, the young one, explained that although all these three qualities are needed to achieve *shleimus*, each *Amora* only listed one of the three. Rav Yehuda lived in Pumpedisa, which was overrun with *ganovim* (thieves) (as we see elsewhere in *Shas*); therefore he stressed the quality which was lacking in his town. Rova, however, lived in Mechoza which was a prosperous town and there were few robberies there. What they were lacking was *bein odom laMokom* (see *Rosh HaShana* 17a), and therefore Rova needed to stress the part they lacked.

"Similarly, we find different *derochim* (paths) concerning *mussar* and rebuke. The *Gaon* and *Tzaddik* Rav Yisrael

Salanter stressed mainly the *mitzvos bein odom lachavero* while other *Gedolim* stressed the *mitzvos bein odom laMokom*.

"We find also another *machlokes* concerning learning *Kabbola*. The *Mekubolim* held that everyone is obliged to learn *Kabbola* while other *Gedolim* opposed them and forbade the learning of *Kabbola*, only permitting it to be learned in private."



Breslov

After the war's end, Reb Yankele took up the position of *Dayan* in the town of Breslov. For close to two years he administered to the difficult *sha'alos* that had to be solved. *Sha'alos* regarding *agunos*, *chalitza* and *heter me'a Rabbonim* were almost daily occurrences.

An appreciation of Reb Yankele's greatness can be gleaned from what he himself once answered when he was asked how many times he had finished *Shulchon Aruch Yoreh De'a*. "Forty times for sure," he admitted. "After that I didn't keep count any longer!"

From Breslov, Reb Yankele moved to Paris, where his *shver* was living and then finally they both moved to Antwerp.

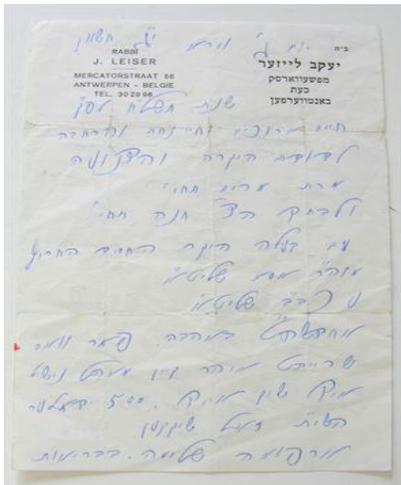
With Reb Itzikel's *petira* on *Yom Kippur* 1976, Reb Yankele was chosen as his *shver*'s successor. In his last weeks before his *petira*, Reb Itzikel weakened greatly. He called Reb Yankele and instructed him, "Yankele, from now on you shall sit in my place and take *kvitlech*, for I no longer have strength."



The Pshevorsker Rebbe

Even so, the new appointment came as a shock to Reb Yankele, and he once innocently commented, "I had thought that the *Chassidim* would look elsewhere for an *ehrlicher Yid* and make him their *Rebbe*..."

Indeed, even once Reb Yankele had assumed the position of *Rebbe*, he refused to disregard many of his practices that he had kept for decades. He had a practice (one of many such tasks) of tearing toilet paper in the bathrooms in the *Bais Medrash* every *Erev Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. When he noticed that the toilets needed cleaning, he didn't hesitate to clean them either.



He was once “caught” by one of his *Chassidim* while he was busy standing on a table, cleaning the *Bais Medrash*. Noticing the look of surprise on the *Yid's* face, Reb Yankele apologized, “Oh! I'm sorry, I forgot that I am a *Rebbe* . . .”

Despite his simple ways – or perhaps due to them – Reb Yankele would often innocently repeat what he had been thinking, not realizing the impression these amazing comments left on all who heard them. Once, on *Erev Yom Kippur*, Reb Yankele was asked by his *shver* why he wasn't busy doing *teshuva* as befits such a day. “Only if one sins, does one need to do *teshuva*,” Reb Yankele answered. “And I never sinned.”

When he was once told of a newly married couple who had just divorced, he remarked, “I had wondered why I didn't see the *neshomos* of their *zeides* at the *chupa*. Now I understand!” (In the *Zohar*, it is written that the *neshomos* of the deceased come down to this world to be present at the *simchos* of their offspring.)

On another occasion, when someone asked him for a *berocha* for children, he sighed and said, “It's a pity you didn't come

earlier. There was a whole bag of *neshomos* but I already gave them all away.”

After a moment's thought, Reb Yankele added, “There is actually one *neshoma* left. It has a small blemish, but if you want, you can have it.”

Left without much choice, the *Yid* accepted the offer. Not long after, his wife gave birth to a baby with a defect in its legs!

Three times a week, Reb Yankele delivered a *shiur* in his *Bais Medrash*. He would spice his *shiurim* with beautiful stories about *Tzaddikim* of bygone eras. Reb Yankele laid great importance on these stories and he would say, “*Chazal* tell us, `If you want to recognize the Creator of the World, learn *Aggoda*; thereby you will know *Hashem* and go in His ways.”

Reb Yankele would say that these words of *Chazal* refer not just to the *Aggoda* mentioned in the *Gemora* but also to the *seforim* and the stories of *Tzaddikim* that give us an appreciation of *Hashem* and how we should serve Him.

In his humility, Reb Yankele once said that perhaps the reason he was saved from the war was so that he could relate his stories that strengthen *emuna*. Indeed, Reb Yankele did not regard stories about *Tzaddikim* as mere incidents, but as lessons in *Avodas Hashem*.

In his later years, Reb Yankele grew increasingly weaker. Seven years before his *petira*, he fell ill and until the end of his life he knew only pain and suffering. Nonetheless, he continued his *avodas hakodesh* and when his strength allowed, would give a short *tisch* and grant his *berochos* to the crowds that continued to knock on his door.

On the last *Shabbos* of his life his condition suddenly deteriorated. Two days later, on the 27th of *Cheshvan* 5759, he was *niftar*.

He was succeeded by his only son, Rav Leibish Leizer.

Zechuso yogein oleinu.

www.shemayisrael.co.il/gedolim/rleizer.htm ~ by Rav F. Avrohom

Personal Story

Once, a Yid came to Reb Yankele with his son before *Rosh HaShana* with a *kvittel*. After reading the *kvittel*, Reb Yankele remarked strangely that he wouldn't want to be in this Yid's shoes. He then proceeded to give special attention to the boy. He asked the boy to sit next to him and stroked his face and cried.

After the Yid became alarmed and the *gabbo'im* heard the remark, they insisted that the *Rebbe bensch* this Yid and his child with a special *berocha*. After a while, Reb Yankele said that *Hashem* will help and all will eventually be good. Then, inexplicably, the *Rebbe* lightly slapped the boy's right thigh and added, "The leg too."

After *Rosh HaShana*, tests revealed that the child had leukemia *r"l*. After

extensive chemotherapy and numerous miracles along the way, the child recovered. Once, while in the middle of a chemotherapy cycle, the doctors determined that the marrow in the boy's right leg was not healing properly and they advised an aggressive form of treatment that might lead to amputation. However, this Yid remembered the *Rebbe's* extra *berocha* of "the leg too" – and asked the doctors to take the lesser form of treatment, even though the doctors did not hold out too much hope for that course.

*Tzaddik gozer...*After a short while, the leg healed completely without the aggressive form of treatment. The doctors were truly amazed and pronounced that this came directly through a miracle.



Rav Eliezer Lieber of Berditchev, 28th of Cheshvan (some say Tishrei)

The Founder of Berditchev

The Founder of Berditchev

Rav Lieber *HaGodol* had a unique way of combining his *Avodas Hashem* with an incalculable love of every Jew. At night, when he roamed the giant forests surrounding Berditchev in order to learn, *daven* and contemplate *Hashem's* wonders, he simultaneously kept a sharp lookout for any sheep and cattle that may have strayed from their owners during the day. At the end of the night, he would drive the animals before him back to Berditchev, pausing beneath people's windows to call out, "Here is your goat!" or "Here is your cow!"

Although he had never been a *talmid* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, Rav Lieber, the founder of the Berditchev *kehilla*, sowed seeds of *Chassidus* in his town that exploded into full bloom during the years of Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev.



The Beginnings Of Berditchev

It is not surprising that Rav Lieber became one of the greatest Ukrainian *Gedolim* of his time as he was the great-great-grandson of two renowned giants, Rav Shimshon of Ostropol and Rav Nosson Shapiro, *mechaber* of the *Megalleh Amukos*. This is why Rav Lieber instructed in his will that no descendants of his should ever marry *Kohanim*. He had received this warning from his ancestor, Rav Shimshon of Ostropol, who explained that because his family was descended from Dovid *HaMelech*, combining *Kehuna* (Priesthood) with *Malchus* (kingship) could lead to the family's destruction.

Rav Lieber's father, Rav Avrohom, had fled from Cracow to Bistritch in the Ukraine, probably during the Swedish invasion of Poland (5415–5418/1655–1658), when thousands of Jews from Cracow, Kalisch, Piotrkov, Poznan and Lublin were slaughtered by Swedes, Poles

and many died from the Plague. Some historians estimate that about half a million Polish Jews died during these few years. Although most of the Polish Jews returned home afterward to patch up their lives, many others, including Rav Avrohom, fled to other countries to make a new start. After all, do not *Chazal* (see *Rosh HaShana* 16b) state, “*Shinui makom shinui mazal – Changing one’s place can improve one’s mazal?*”

Sadly, Rav Avrohom’s *mazal* apparently did not improve, since he passed away while still a young man, but he left his young son, Rav Lieber, ten thousand gold coins.

Rav Lieber immersed himself so deeply in *Torah*, it is said, that every night, his famous ancestors descended from the heavens to teach him the secrets of *Kabbala*.

In those days, Berditchev barely existed. Although first founded in about 5190/1430, reputedly by someone named Berditch, it had been destroyed by the Tartars and then only a handful of Jews lived in its vicinity. Most of Berditchev was still thick, untouched forest.

Something about the wild, unpopulated area attracted Rav Lieber like a magnet and he felt certain that there was something unique about the place. After his father’s passing, he would cross the river every morning and evening and stroll among its ancient trees, reveling in the opportunity to be alone with *Hashem* without disturbances. He maintained this custom for years.

One morning, the ducal owner of Bistrich and its environs was traveling in the forest in his coach when his horses suddenly halted and reared upward, almost throwing the duke out of his carriage. They had been startled by Rav Lieber, who was standing in the forest track in his *tallis* and *tefillin*, totally unaware of the coach that had almost run him down. Using every

ounce of his strength, the duke’s Ukrainian coachman somehow got the horses under control.

The infuriated duke ordered his tough coachman to give the insolent Jew a whipping he would not forget. The coachman did not need to be told twice; his whip sang through the air biting into Rav Lieber’s clothes and flesh. However, Rav Lieber was so engrossed in his *davening* that he did not notice a thing.

“What’s going on?” the coachman asked his master. “What should I do? No matter how much I beat this person, it makes no impression. He isn’t a human being!”

“Leave him alone!” the duke said in disgust. “Let’s go.”

Back home, the duke leaped from the carriage and strode confidently into his luxurious mansion; suddenly his legs and arms went limp and he collapsed onto the floor.

“Help, help!” he cried out.

The servants who ran in from every direction could not do anything except carry him to his room and put him in bed. There he lay, powerless as a newborn, and his doctor declared that his condition was hopeless. Help came from an unexpected quarter. Like most Ukrainian landowners, the duke had a Jewish *rendar* (estate manager). When he heard what had happened, his face turned white.

“Do you know who the person must have been whom the duke attacked?” he asked the servants. “Obviously, our great *Maggid* who crosses the river to pray every day! I am certain the duke will never recover from his paralysis until he begs him for forgiveness!”

The duke immediately sent his doctor to help Rav Lieber recover from his beating and to bear a message begging his forgiveness. This was a golden opportunity for Rav Lieber to fulfill a long-time dream.

“I will forgive the duke if he builds a

large *shul* at the place I was praying and a house next door in which to live,” Rav Lieber told the doctor.

The duke hurriedly built the *shul* and the house and, after his recovery, he visited Rav Lieber and asked if there was anything else he wanted.

“Yes,” he replied. “I would like you to build a town next to the *shul*.”

This is how the Berditchev *kehilla* was founded in about 5451/1691.



A Special Place

It is not surprising that the mere mention of Berditchev’s name evokes spiritual longings in Jewish hearts, as Rav Lieber used to say that the *shul* he built was sited opposite the gateway to Heaven from where the *tefillos* of *Klal Yisrael* stream skyward. This is one reason Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev established his *kloiz* and home right next door to the old, original *shul* of Berditchev when he moved there after Rav Lieber’s passing.

In addition, Rav Lieber built a *Bais Medrash* next to his *shul* where he taught both the revealed and hidden *Torah* to his *talmidim*. Once the Berditchev *kehilla* began thriving, Rav Lieber served as its *Maggid*. Despite his deep *Torah* knowledge, he always bowed to the authority of the Berditchev *Av Bais Din*, Rav Yosef Halperin, known as Rav Yosef *Charif* because of his sharp mind; the only time he *paskened sha’alos* was when Rav Yosef was unavailable.

On one such occasion, a butcher came to Rav Lieber with an animal’s problematic lung.

“This lung seems to have a *sircha* (lesion),” the butcher told him. “Does this make it *treif*?”

“Certainly!” replied Rav Lieber who was generally *machmir* (stringent) when it came to *sirchos*. “This animal is absolutely forbidden!”

At that very moment, Rav Yosef entered and Rav Lieber asked his opinion about the *sircha*.

“I say that is kosher!” the Rav replied.

“*Oy vey!*” cried out Rav Lieber. “My apologies to you, *Reb Yid* (the butcher), for almost causing you a great loss, and my apologies to you, *lung*, for ruling that you are *treif!*”

If Rav Lieber had such love and consideration even for an inanimate lung, imagine the feeling he had for *Klal Yisrael!* The depth of his love for every Jew was indescribable. In his home, he always had a special room ready with twelve beds for any tired and hungry wayfarers who might pass by, and he treated his simplest guests like honored personages.

There is a story told that this great hospitality almost led to tragedy when Rav Lieber once remarked to his sons, “In the Next World, I will not be embarrassed by my *hachnossas orchim* (hospitality) even before Avrohom *Ovinu!*”

As this tiny shred of pride was unfitting for his lofty level, it was decreed on high that he should not live out the year. When Eliyohu *HaNovi* heard of this impending tragedy, he rushed before the Heavenly *Bais Din* and fervently pleaded in Rav Lieber’s defense. How could such a tremendous *Tzaddik* be condemned to perish for making a miniscule error?

The court ordered that Eliyohu *HaNovi* should come down in the form of a ragged, filthy pauper and test Rav Lieber. If Rav Lieber received him pleasantly and gave him every honor, the decree would be revoked. Of course, Eliyohu *HaNovi*’s duty was to make this trial as difficult as possible.

Eliyohu *HaNovi* arrived at Rav Lieber’s home moments before *Shabbos*, just as Rav Lieber was about to set off to *shul*. Physically, he seemed the most repulsive-looking person Rav Lieber had

met in his life.

“I’m hungry!” the stranger slurred. “Give me something to eat!”

“But it is time to go to *shul*,” advised Rav Lieber.

“I need food now!” retorted the pauper.

Rav Lieber immediately brought him a generous plateful of food. However, the poor man’s stomach was a bottomless pit and as fast as Rav Lieber rushed in food from the kitchen, the stranger gluttonously gobbled it down. In one sitting, down went the *challa*, fish, soup and chicken of *Shabbos* night, down went the *cholent* and *kugel* of *Shabbos* morning, and down went the fish of *sholosh seudos*.

“Let us go and *daven*,” suggested Rav Lieber when the stranger was temporarily sated.

“You go yourself,” said the visitor. “I want to sleep now – in your bed.”

Clambering into Rav Lieber’s bed with filthy clothes and muddy boots, the stranger fell into a stupor but not for long. By the time Rav Lieber returned from *shul*, he was already up like a new man with a new appetite, ready once more to eat his host out of house and home. The same thing happened on *Shabbos* morning. With no food left in his house, Rav Lieber brought in food from relatives and neighbors.

The guest’s coarse behavior all this while was beyond description.

After *havdola*, Eliyohu *HaNovi* revealed his true identity to Rav Lieber and told him, “Because of your momentary pride, the Heavenly court condemned you to death. I came down to save your life, and because you did not get angry once this *Shabbos*, your sentence has been transmuted to a year of *golus* (exile). You may not spend two nights in the same town except on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. Set out now!”

The following morning, Rav Lieber instructed a tailor to sew him a suit of coarse traveling garments and took a wagon to Brod, intending to go from there to Austria where no one knew him. He arrived in Brod on *Erev Shabbos*, made his way to the local Jew in charge of giving people a place to stay and was assigned to spend *Shabbos* with the uncouth Jew in charge of the *bais kevoros* (cemetery).

After enduring a terrible *Shabbos* night, Rav Lieber went to the local *shul* that was headed by Rav Efraim, a son of Rav Tzvi Hirsh Ashkenazi (the *Chacham Tzvi*) and a brother of Rav Yaakov Emden. During *davening*, Rav Ephraim noticed Rav Lieber crouching near the oven and recognized him immediately.

“With my authority as *Rav* of this town,” he commanded him, “I hereby order you to sit in the *mizrach* (the most honorable location).”

After calling him up for *shlishi* during *Krias HaTorah* (*Torah* reading), Rav Efraim took Rav Lieber home and honored him like a king. However, Rav Lieber felt as if he were sitting on *shpilkes* (pins and needles). Is this how he was supposed to be spending his *golus*?

“Please hurry and *bensch*,” he implored his host at *sholosh seudos*. “I have to leave Brod immediately.

“What is the hurry?” inquired Rav Efraim.

“I am in *golus* and cannot stay in one place for more than one night!” he replied. Suddenly Eliyohu *HaNovi* appeared with good tidings.

“*Yom leshona* (one day for one year!)” he told Rav Lieber. “Your one day of *golus* has been counted as a full year and you are free to go home whenever you wish.”

Rav Efraim was overjoyed to have the privilege of hiring an elegant coach and sending his distinguished guest back to Berditchev.

With the Ba'al Shem Tov

Whenever the *Ba'al Shem Tov* visited Berditchev during his travels throughout Poland and the Ukraine, he always insisted on staying at Rav Lieber's.

"Rav Lieber is unique!" he used to say. "While there are a number of *Tzaddikim* who merit *gilui* Eliyohu (seeing Eliyohu *HaNovi*), with Rav Lieber it is the opposite – Eliyohu merits the *gilui* of Rav Lieber!"

Rav Lieber's wife passed away in his old age, and one of his young nieces agreed to marry him on condition that she be blessed with righteous offspring; they named their son Yaakov.

None of Rav Lieber's descendants achieved his fame and renown. This is because Rav Lieber was once asked by Heaven what he preferred – to have sons and grandsons whose fame would spread far and wide, or to contribute a portion of his merit to speed the *Moshiach's* arrival. Rav Lieber chose the second option. Thus, even though this son, Rav Yankele, became the son-in-law of Rav Yechiel of Mikolaiiv, one of the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* great *talmidim*, he never achieved his father's immortal fame.

Although Rav Lieber always revered the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, he never became his *talmid* or followed his path of *Chassidus*. His awe of the *Ba'al Shem Tov* increased dramatically after the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* passing when the *Megalleh Amukos*, who appeared every night to study with Rav Lieber, suddenly stopped coming. Concerned, Rav Lieber sent his older son, Rav Yechiel, to the *Megalleh Amukos's* grave in Cracow to inquire what had happened.

"Since the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* passing, the *Yeshiva Shel Ma'ala* has closed down

for thirty days," the *Megalleh Amukos* told him. "It is from there that I get the *Torah* I study with your father."

Rav Lieber then drew closer to *Chassidus*, mentioning its wisdom in his *Shabbos derashos*. Through these teachings, the Jews of Berditchev became receptive to its ideas when *talmidim* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, including Rav Leib Sara's and Rav Yaakov Yosef of Polonoye, began passing through, and, by the time Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev arrived in 5545/1785, it was easy for him to create a major Chassidic metropolis. By then, Berditchev had a thriving *kehilla* of about two thousand Jews, comprising 75 percent of the town's population.

The *kehilla* reached its highpoint in 5621/1861 when its 46,683 strong community was the second largest in the Russian Empire and the only major town of the empire with a Jewish majority.

Rav Lieber enjoyed an extremely long life, passing away in 5531/1770, aged 104, during a violent plague that was killing so many that survivors were afraid to bury them according to *Halocha* and interred them in mass graves.

"Great destruction has been decreed on the community," declared Rav Lieber. "I hereby accept death upon myself instead!"

Calling four people to him, he promised them a place in *Olam HaBa* if they would perform all the customs of interment on him and bury him properly instead of throwing him into a mass grave. He then passed away and the plague abruptly ceased.

May Rav Lieber's memory be a blessing.

www.berdichev.org/rav_lieber_hagadol-1.html



Rav Tzvi Hirsch ben Yehuda Leib HaKohen of Rymanov, 30th of Cheshvan

This year 1st of Kisleiv

Hashem's Lien on Us

The Shinover *Rav* related how he had once visited Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Rymanov when someone came with his son who was turning thirteen. The father asked the *Tzaddik*, Rav Hirsch, to teach the *bar mitzva* boy to wrap *tefillin* for the first time, following the custom that a sage or *Tzaddik* wraps the *tefillin* on a *bar mitzva* boy for the first time.

Before doing so, Rav Hirschel asked the boy to recite the *Leshem Yichud tefilla* that precedes the *mitzva* of *tefillin*. When they reached the words explaining why we wrap *tefillin* on our arms opposite the heart *lesha'abed* – “to subjugate our desires and the thoughts of our hearts to serve *Hashem*”, the *Tzaddik* paused and asked the *bar mitzva bochur* if he understood these words and then the *Tzaddik* explained them:

We find in the *Gemora* in *Bava Metzia* 12b that if someone borrows money he can give his property as collateral for the loan. This places a lien on the property. (The Hebrew word for “subjugate” and “lien” is the same – *shiabud* – and the *Tzaddik* translated the word in this *tefilla* to mean a lien.) Once this property has a lien on it from the lender, no one else can come and take it away since it is *meshuabad* – subjugated or has a lien on it to the lender. Similarly here [regarding the *tefillin* and what wrapping them does to our hearts] – when we subjugate ourselves – *meshabdim atzmeinu* – to serving *Hashem* totally, we are placing a “lien” on ourselves to *Hashem*. Then no one, not even, Heaven forbid, the evil one, can grab anything away from us, as we are already subject to *Hashem's* lien and we are His!” (*Divrei Yechezkel*)



Singing and Dancing Each Day

Rav Tzvi Hirsch once told Rav Elozor, the son of the *Bnei Yissoschor* of Dynov, “When a person gets up in the morning from his bed and sees how *Hashem* has returned his soul and recreated him, it is proper and fitting that he should sing to *Hashem* and thank Him for this.

“I once knew a G-d-fearing *Chassid*,” continued Rav Hirsch, “who traveled to my *Rebbe*, Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanov. This *Chassid* used to dance and sing whenever he recited *Elokai Neshama!*” (*Be'eros HaMayim II Likutim*)



The Handicapped Angels of Sin

Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Rymanov once remarked, “I wish I could see those angels and *klippos* that were created from the sin of a Jew!” He explained further: “I believe that it would be a wounded and pathetic being full of blemishes. The *klippos* that the truly wicked create through their sins are whole, healthy and strong. However when a *Yid*, a *Yisrael*, creates one, it is weak and sickly.

This is because even when a Jew does sin, he does not do so wholeheartedly. He does not put his whole heart into it. The evil wicked inclination forces him to sin, and so the action is only halfheartedly done, through coercion. This creates a weak angel. Then afterward surely he repents his misdeed, crying and doing *teshuva* over what he did. This blinds the wicked angel. Then he does further *teshuva* and has *charota* (regret). He claps his hands together in despair and smacks his forehead in consternation and remorse! He *klops al chet* – he beats his chest with his fist as he recites the *viduy* confession; he slaps his thigh in a gesture of despair!

These gestures and actions in turn smash the body of the angel, breaking his hands and feet and decapitating him! Such an angel must be totally maimed and abused; all his body and limbs must be broken. From head to toe, this handicapped *klippa* must be totally injured!" (*Imrei Yehuda* pgs. 86a, 115a)

Rav Avrohom Horowitz of Shendishov related that he once visited Rav Tzvi Hirsch *HaKohen* of Rymanov on the *Yahrzeit* of Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanov, his *Rebbe*, on the thirty-sixth day of the *Omer*. Many *Chassidim* came in to sit at Rav Hirsch's *tisch*, during which he asked them to collect money in order that they purchase some whiskey or brandy on which to make a *berocha* and wish one another *l'chaim* as a *tikkun* for the soul of Rav Menachem Mendel.

The *Rebbe* then asked them if they had studied the customary *Mishnayos* that are learned to elevate the soul of the departed and they replied, "Why would the

holy *Tzaddik* need our learning? Surely his elevated and refined soul is already soaring the uppermost chambers and palaces flying on the wings of the *Shechina* and resting in the protection of *Hashem*!"

Rav Hirsch Rymanover answered them with a *moshol*: "We see that when it rains the fish in the water all rise to the top and open their mouths to drink the drops of rain. Why do they do so? Don't they have plenty of water? They live in entire bodies of water! The answer is that they know the true value of water and so they appreciate and value each and every precious drop! So too regarding the holy *Tzaddikim*, who dwell on high in the land of the living called *Artzos HaChaim*; they perfected and refined their middos and character through all manner of *Torah* study, good deeds and *mitzvos*. Nonetheless, they know that the value of *Avodas Hashem* is priceless. Therefore, they prize each and every good deed and *mitzva* done in their merit, to elevate their souls!"



לזכר נשמת אמנו החשובה, נפש יקרה ועדינה, אשה יראת ה' ובעלת מדות טובות
מרת יוסל ז"ל בת הרה"ה מו"ה מאיר זאב הכהן כ"ץ ע"ה הי"ד
מעיר נירעדהאז יע"א ונכדת הרה"ק רבי אהרן צבי טערקלטויב זי"ע מבריד
אשת הרה"ח מו"ה אברהם חיים ע"ה גאלדענבערג

She was a Holocaust survivor who never let that period of time define her life. Although she lost most of her family - she claimed that *Hashem* gave her an amazing life. She had a unique knack of making everyone who encountered her feel like they were the most important loved person. Her inimitable smile never left her face.

She transmitted a strong value system stressing *Emunas Hashem* and *Tzaddikim*. Her love for stories of *tzaddikim* gave her *chiyus* and she conveyed that *chizuk* to anyone who met her. In her eighty-nine years of life, there wasn't one person who had an untoward word or adverse feelings about her. She loved her family deeply and immensely. May *Hashem* console her family and may she be a constant *melitza yeshura*, אמן.

(מתוך אמונה טהורה) בדרך המסורה (והתנהגה כאשה כשרה) לכל משפחתה,
היא הודה היא הדרה - נקיה וטהורה היוצר וצר צורה (וקיבלה הגזירה)
נפטרה בש"ט בת תשעים שנה ביום כ"ד לחודש כסלו (ערב חנוכה)
שנת תשע"ח לפ"ק תמליץ טוב בעד משפחתה היקרה ותקים לתחיה לקץ הימין מהרה תנצ"ב'ה'



Appreciating the Value of Time

"Then the servant took ten camels of his master's camels and set out with all the bounty of his master in his hand and made his way to Aram Naharaim to the city of Nachor" (Bereishit 24:10)

Avraham Avinu commanded his servant Eliezer to go to Charan and choose a righteous wife for his son Yitzchak, from among the local girls. Chazal explain (Bereishit Rabba 59:11) that Hashem miraculously shortened the journey for Eliezer and he arrived within one day, although it was a journey that normally takes a few days. The question is, Avraham Avinu, famous throughout the world for his exceptional righteousness, did not merit having his journey shortened when Hashem commanded him to leave Charan and go to the land of Canaan. Why was this so? If his servant Eliezer merited this miracle, all the more it seems that the master should be deserving?

I would like to suggest the following answer: Hashem never places a person in a challenging situation that he is unable to endure. If a person is faced with any kind of challenge, this itself is a clear sign that he is capable of overcoming it. If, chalila, a person does not merit passing the test, he apparently did not invest enough effort and strength in overcoming the challenge. Eliezer possessed a deep desire that his own daughter should become Yitzchak's wife. Since Hashem knew that Eliezer was not capable of completing this mission as his master wished, travelling the long distance from Canaan to Charan without giving in to this desire, Hashem therefore shortened the distance for him so that he would be capable of fulfilling his task in the way that Avraham requested.

On the other hand, Avraham Avinu was on a much higher spiritual level and in this lofty position he could travel the entire way from Charan to Canaan without deliberating Hashem's command or asking questions. Avraham followed Hashem's command without knowing where he would end up, which means that every step of the way was a test. And since Hashem wishes to give great reward to those who follow His wish without doubting Him, Hashem did not shorten the journey so that Avraham could receive reward for every step that he took in accordance with Hashem's command.

Now we understand why Hashem shortened the way for Eliezer while he left it as it was for his master Avraham. This explanation also teaches us the great value of time. Every moment in this world which is utilized appropriately in the service of Hashem, merits a person with invaluable reward. Another lesson that we can derive is that Hashem does not test a person with a trial that he cannot overcome, to the extent that He performed a miracle for Eliezer and shortened the way for him so that he should not come to stumble during the long journey.

When Eliezer saw Lavan from afar and realized that he was armed with weaponry, he immediately pronounced the Name of Hashem and then he and his ten camels flew into the air. The difficulty is, why did Eliezer not approach Lavan and fight against him. We know that Eliezer was blessed with great strength from the fact that Eliezer and Avraham went together to fight against the five kings by themselves and emerged victorious. So why was Eliezer hesitant to fight Lavan and tried to escape war with him through uttering the Holy Name?

We can answer that since Eliezer knew that going to find a wife for Yitzchak entailed a great trial for him, he did not wish to waste his time fighting against Lavan. His sole desire was to perform his master's mission as quickly as possible so that he shouldn't come to stumble because of his personal considerations in the matter. This is why Eliezer uttered the Holy Name.

When Eliezer returned with Rivka to his master's house, the length of the journey remained as it was since he had already fulfilled his master's wish and the suspicion that the long way will leave him with the opportunity to go against Avraham's command was no longer relevant. Since Eliezer had found a suitable wife for Yitzchak, he relinquished the idea of taking Yitzchak for his own daughter. Especially after seeing how Hashem was with him and had helped him to succeed in his task, he immediately understood that this was Hashem's wish and that "There is neither wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Hashem".

On his way home, Eliezer wished to travel in the normal manner without the way being shortened for him. Since now his travelling no longer involved any challenge, he wished to enjoy reward for his every step. Indeed, Hashem did not hold back his reward and he was rewarded for every step of his long journey back to his master.

The Sifrei Kabbalah tell us that Hashem created the entire world on the first day and on each subsequent day He set in place and perfected the creation of that day.

The division of the year into days, weeks and months was fashioned for the sake of man who is the crown of creation. This division affords him times where he can examine himself and search his ways to see if he utilized the lengthy time that he was given in an appropriate manner, or chalilah, if he squandered his time on the futilities of this world. There is a story told about Harav Shach zt"l, whose talmidim once found him crying bitterly. He explained to his talmidim that on that day he had not recited kriyat shema at the most halachically virtuous time as he was his daily custom. Since the time had passed and would never return, he cried due to his deep distress.

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Hilula

25 - Rabbi David Cohen Lamjerbi

26 - Rabbi Shalom Aharon Lopus,
Rav of Acco

27 - Rabbi Moshe Natan Neta
Tzinvirt

28 - Rabbeinu Yona Hachasid
of Girondi

29 - Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Riminov

1 - Rabbi Ephraim Anakaveh

2 - Rabbi Nosson Meir Wachtfogel



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

An Eye Sees and an Ear Hears

Throughout the course of a flight abroad, a fellow Jewish passenger watched my every move. When mealtime came, I removed a sandwich from my bag, washed my hands, and began eating, whereas my seatmate accepted the non-kosher meal that he was served. As he finished his meal, he felt uncomfortable and tried to justify his act. "What can I do?" he asked, in self-defense, "A man has to eat. There's no other choice."

"Why do I have another choice, but you don't?" I asked in wonder. "If I were to offer you some of my kosher food, would you eat it instead of the non-kosher plane food?"

"I'll think about it," he replied.

We continued talking amiably, until the man heard I was from France.

"Do you by any chance know Rav Pinto? My mother told me a lot about him and I would love to meet him."

"I certainly do! And as far as I know, he is meant to arrive at the same city where we are headed."

The man became extremely excited and proclaimed that as soon as he came to that city, he would look up Rav Pinto.

We finally landed. The heads of the community were at the airport to welcome me on account of my holy ancestors, zy"a. When my seat-mate discovered that the white-bearded man who had talked to him throughout the flight was none other than Rav Pinto himself, he was in a state of shock. He shamefully apologized for eating treif food in front of me.

I replied that he had no reason to feel ashamed before me. The next day he would forget about me already as we would part ways. But he had every reason to be ashamed before Hashem, Whose Shechinah fills the world. He sees each and every deed of ours, for better or for worse.

The time will come when we will be given a bill for all we ate in this establishment called Olam Hazeh, and we will have to pay the price for every bite.

The Haftarah

"King David was old, advanced in years" (Melachim I, 1)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah says, "King David was old, advanced in years", while we are told in the Parsha, "Now Avraham was old, well on in years". The Haftarah also speaks about David handing over the kingship to his son Shlomo before his death, similar to the topic in the Parsha which tells us that Avraham gave all that he had to his son Yitzchak.



Guard Your Tongue

It is a Mitzvah to Give the Benefit of the Doubt

Even if it unfolds that what so and so said about someone or did to someone is true, one is obligated to give him the benefit of the doubt and believe that he did not intend to degrade or aggravate him.

It is a Torah obligation to judge the person favorably. If one does not do this, this matter turns into a wrongdoing, since if one holds it against him in one's heart for speaking against him or doing something to him, he is considered as having transgressed the prohibition of accepting rechilus.



Words of our Sages

A collection of insights on the topic of shidduchim, from Maran Hagaon Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky shlita:

"Take a wife for my son Yitzchak" (Bereishit 24:4)

Rabbeinu reiterates how numerous times in his life he was witness to the fact that when a match is not destined to take place, the person involved will hear fabricated information and stories that never transpired, so that it shouldn't come to be. On the other hand, when it is destined, Hashem hides even information that is important to know. Everything is directed by Heaven! He tells an example of someone who came to the Chazon Ish and cried to him that his neighbor who lives beneath him constantly besmirches his name. How will he be able to find shidduchim like this for his children? The Chazon Ish replied, "When the right shidduch comes they will inquire from the neighbor who lives above you and not from this neighbor underneath you"... and so it was!

Appropriate age for marriage: Rabbeinu encourages marriage at a young age, according to the Mishna and the ruling of the Rambam: "An eighteen-year-old goes to the marriage canopy". He cites the opinion of the Chazon Ish who said that one should get married already at seventeen years old. To those who claim that they are apprehensive about marriage disturbing their learning, he renounces this reason by saying that this was correct in Chutz La'aretz at the time when organized Kollelim were not the norm, but today, on the contrary, marriage enhances one's learning. He brings a story about the great-grandson of the Chafetz Chaim who wished to get married at a young age but his mother did not agree and he ended up remaining single.

Prayers for a shidduch: Rabbeinu was asked from which age parents should start to pray for their children that they should merit good shidduchim and that it should go easily. He answered, "From when they are born".

A segulah for a shidduch: To someone who asked for a segulah to find his marriage partner quickly, Rabbeinu replied that he should learn the tractate Kiddushin.

Doubt concerning a shidduch: A respected avreich was hesitant about a certain shidduch that was suggested for his exceptional son. He went to Rabbeinu and poured out his dilemma: "I have a son in shidduchim, an excellent bachur b"H and different suggestions have come up. Right now a girl from a family that doesn't have much money was suggested and I am concerned that maybe for the sake of the success of my son's learning, we should not consider this suggestion since after their marriage he will have to shoulder a financial burden. Maybe I should wait for a different suggestion, a girl from a family who are offering more support?" Rabbeinu ruled: "If the girl is virtuous, he will be able to learn well after their marriage no matter the situation." (Divrei Siach)



Pearls of the Parsha

Exact Reckoning of Our Forefathers Lives

"The years of Sara's life" (Bereishit 23:1)

Rashi expounds on these words: "All were equal in goodness", meaning that she was saintly throughout her life. The Gaon Rabbi Akiva Eiger zt"l explains that this Rashi answers the question of why Avraham lived longer than Sara, until the age of one hundred and seventy-five. This was because Avraham was already forty-eight years old (according to one of the reckonings of Chazal) when he recognized his Creator. This being the case, it transpires that he too 'lived' for one hundred and twenty-seven years, (one hundred and seventy-five minus forty-eight), the same number of years as Sara Immeinu a"h who recognized her Creator already from birth (as Rashi explains that Sara was also named 'Yiska' since she could perceive the future (suka) with Divine inspiration). Rashi writes that all of Sara's years were equal in goodness, meaning that she was religious right from when she was born and this is why it is considered that Avraham and Sara lived for the same amount of time.

This World is a Corridor

"I am an alien and a resident among you" (Bereishit 23:4)

The holy Ohr Hachaim zy"l explains that Avraham Avinu a"h was hesitant to say about himself that he was a resident in this world. This statement is the opposite of a tzaddik's attribute. He knows that this world is only a lobby on the way to the banquet hall, as David Hamelech a"h said, "I am a sojourner in the world".

Due to this Avraham preceded by saying that he is 'an alien', implying that he is foremost a foreigner in this world and only after that did he add that he is a resident among them.

A Shidduch is Not a Business Deal

"That you not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites" (Bereishit 24:3)

The word 'Cana'ani' is derived from the term 'dealer'. We find in many places in the Torah that 'Can'anim' refers to merchants.

Using this idea, the sefer 'Likutim v'Sippurim' explains allegorically that Avraham Avinu a"h was commanding his servant Eliezer not to take a wife for Yitzchak from those who make a trade out of shidduchim, from those for whom the dowry is of top priority. He should rather pay attention to the girl's inner qualities and good middot which are of foremost importance in a marriage partner.

When Do You Stoop Before an Animal?

"So Avraham bowed down before the members of the council" (Bereishit 23:12)

It is told that once the Noda B'Yehuda zt"l, while collecting funds for an important matter, arrived at the house of a stingy and vulgar person.

His escort turned to him and said, "Rabbeinu, it is beneath your dignity to approach this person."

The Noda B'Yehuda replied: "When a person requires milk, he crouches down even in front of an animal, just so that he can milk him..."

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



Yishmael in Light of Yitzchak

"These were the years of Yishmael's life: a hundred and thirty-seven years, when he expired and died, and was gathered to his people"

(Bereishit 25:17)

The Mefarshim explain that mentioning the number of years that Yishmael lived infers that he repented before his death. Rashi too writes that the term 'expired' is only used concerning tzaddikim, therefore one must conclude that Yishmael repented completely before his death and died as a righteous being.

The Torah tells us that Yishmael merited giving birth to twelve chieftains. What was his merit? The mitzvah of brit milah that he performed. The holy Zohar (Vol II, 32:1) adds that if Yishmael merited such a great reward for fulfilling one mitzvah, this teaches us how much Hashem does not withhold a person's reward and pays each person in an exact way for each deed. We can derive from this that all the more so an upright Jew who is meticulous to fulfil all the Torah commandments, will merit enormous reward.

This Parsha concludes with the words, "over all his brothers he dwelt". This implies that the reward for this mitzvah will not flow over to Yishmael's descendants and they will not receive reward for it. As Chazal tell us, (Yalkut Shimoni Bamidbar, remez 684) in the future Hashem will announce, "Whoever possesses a book of lineage should come and take his reward". The descendants of Yishmael too will come to receive their reward by saying they are the descendants of Yishmael who was the son of Avraham, but they will not have a clear lineage since throughout the generations they corrupted their ways, integrated with the nations of the world and entered into illegitimate marriages thereby giving birth to mamzerim (children born from illegitimate marriages). Due to this they did not preserve their lineage.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



"Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Please tip over your jug so I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels,' her will You have designated for Your servant, for Yitzchak; and may I know through her that You have done kindness with my master." (Bereishit 24:14)

Rashi: "She is befitting for him if she is one who performs acts of kindness. She will be worthy of entering Avraham's house." Due to this, Eliezer composed a test to confirm who would be a fitting wife for Yitzchak and worthy of entering Avraham's home: The girl should be one who performs acts of kindness- only this kind of person is fitting to marry Yitzchak.

Eliezer was satisfied with discerning whether she possessed the attribute of chessed. However, this is something that requires contemplation. Avraham Avinu a"h possessed many other qualities besides chessed, for example fear of G-d, trust and in particular emunah. If so, why did Eliezer not find it necessary to investigate whether she possessed these other traits? It could very well be that even if her attribute of kindness was faultless, she could still lack other important traits. How could she become part of Avraham Avinu's household if she doesn't possess his other traits?! However, from the verses, it seems that Eliezer was satisfied with checking for the trait of kindness alone?

The ba'alei mussar ask another question: Assuming that she indeed possessed extensive sterling qualities, however, since she grew up in a home that served idolatry how could she be considered as a wife for Yitzchak? Even if she herself never served idols, she nevertheless certainly absorbed the atmosphere while growing up in such an environment. What good are her positive qualities if she comes from a house that practiced idolatry?

Rabbi Rubman zt"l, in the sefer 'Zichron Meir', points out that Eliezer the elder of Avraham's household was very clever and knew well what his mission entailed. He

understood that he was being asked to find a wife who would be fitting to take the holy place of Sara Immeinu. One who would merit the Shechina resting in their home, with a cloud resting permanently over their tent and the candles remaining alight from Erev Shabbat to Erev Shabbat (the miracles that were present while Sara Immeinu was alive). Her total devotion to Hashem would be demonstrated through her love of kindness and performing great acts of benevolence, exactly as Hashem acts to us.

Eliezer was certain that Hashem had delegated this elevated neshama to some worthy person, therefore he prayed to Hashem that He should perform kindness with Avraham his master and send him success in his lofty goal, in a miraculous way.

With great wisdom Eliezer thought of a sign that was unlike the normal manner of behavior. It concerned a kind of generosity that was fitting only for the holy Imahot to possess, whom out of the strength of their devotion to Hashem possess a thirst to perform kindness even with rich people who are not lacking in any way. This is what Eliezer said in his prayer, "may I know through her that You have done kindness with my master". If he will be presented with a noble girl who will perform this kind of kindness wholeheartedly, then he will be certain that he has reached his goal, for there is no one else in the world who would act in this way.

But we still need to understand why Eliezer did not attach importance to the girl's other qualities?

The following Mishna (Avot 2:9) answers this question: "He said to them: Go out and discern which is the proper way to which a man should cling. Rabbi Eliezer says: A good eye. Rabbi Yehoshua says: A good friend. Rabbi Yose says: A good neighbor. Rabbi Shimon says: One who considers the outcome of a deed. Rabbi Elazar says: A good heart. He [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai] said to them: I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arach to your words, for your words are included in his words."

Rabbi Ovadiah M'bartenurah explains: The heart is the drive for all other powers. It is the source from which all other acts flow. This is why Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai said "I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arach

to your words, for your words are included in his words".

The Tiferet Yisrael adds a beautiful description to this explanation: "A peaceful and joyful heart sees the good in every person and he will have many loved ones, good friends and good neighbors. With his tranquility, he will be able to perceive the future and will also love Hashem with all his heart and soul."

Performing a positive act, for example, an act of charity or kindness, is not proof enough of a person's good heart. Doing someone a favor could stem from a weakness of being unable to see pain and performing this act of 'kindness' relieves him of this pain. Or he could be acting out of different reasons.

But since here it says "and the feet of the men who were with him", this stresses that Eliezer was accompanied by his men and they did not really require help in giving their camels to drink. Eliezer prayed, "Behold, I am standing here by the spring of water and the daughters of the townsmen come out to draw water. Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Please tip over your jug so that I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels,'". As is known, a camel is capable of holding a week's supply of water since they travel in the desert and drink large amounts of water. Giving a camel to drink involves great trouble since an average camel drinks about seventy liters. If a regular pail contains about ten liters, this means that for every camel she had to fill up the pail seven times and since there were ten camels, she refilled the pail seventy times!

Although Eliezer and his men were standing and watching and did not offer any assistance, Rivka went about this task with joy and alacrity, as if she was coming to the aid of a helpless person. This was a sign of her sincere good heart. One who truly possess a good heart desires and longs to help others. This is not due to any personal weakness, distress or feelings of mercy, but simply because he rejoices at the opportunity to assist others.

We will do well to take a look at the behavior of our Matriarchs and learn from their lofty deeds how to be good to others with desire, joy and true devotion.

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