

ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

LIGHTS OF OUR RIGHTEOUS TZADDIKIM



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משה בן דבורה שירה
ואברהם יהודה בן שרה רבקה

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)

BAMIDBAR

❧ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❧

Why was the Torah given in a Desert Wasteland? To teach us that the Torah uplifts every Jew.

The Holy Ropshitzer points out in *Zera Kodesh, Parshas Bamidbar*, on the *passuk* "*Bamidbar Sinai BeOhel Moed*, - in the Sinai desert in the tent of meeting," that this verse teaches us the holiness of the Torah, how it can travel from the greatest of heights and descend into the lowest places. From this we see that even the lowest, most humble person can become a servant of the King through fulfilling the commandments of the Torah.

This verse teaches us, that *Hashem's* spoken word was present even in the desert wastelands, a place devoid of life. The desert is empty space, among the lowest points on earth; a place where the husks and shells of impurity known as the *klippos* abound. The desert is described as - (*Devarim* 8:15) "a place of venomous serpents, snakes and scorpions and an unquenchable thirst; for there is no water!" and also as (*Bamidbar* 20:5) "not a place for planting seeds, there are no figs or grapevines." Nonetheless, in this desolate, far flung location, *Hashem* chose that His Holy Spoken Word be known, and in that place the *Shechina's* presence dwelt in the tent of meeting, the *Ohel Moed*.

This is demonstrative of the *Torah's* perfection; that the holy *Torah* can spread out to all manner of people and places. Even the lowliest and darkest reaches can all be uplifted and illuminated.

Thus even the most despairing person can be uplifted through the holy *Torah*!

הילולא

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

One of the tools that *Kabbola* 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

[תפילה הנמצאת בספר אלה המגן מבעל הפלא יועץ על פרשת ויצא עמוד כ"ד]
הריני מדליק נר זה למנוחת ולעילוי נשמת אבי / אמי מורתי / הצדיק _____
בן/בת _____, יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו, שתקבל ברחמים
וברצון כל מעשה הטוב שאני עושה, בין במחשבה, בין בדיבור, בין במעשה ויהיה הכל
לזכות ולמנוחת ולעילוי לנשמות עמך ישראל, ובפרט לנפש רוח ונשמה של אבי / אמי /
צדיק _____. יהי רצון שתהינה נפשותיהם צרורות בצרור החיים.

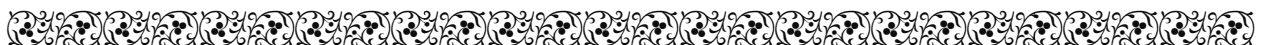
Translation:

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 Bamidbar

http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim_yahrtzeit/Sivan

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

29th of Iyar ~ Begins Friday Night (May 22nd)

- * **Rav Shmuel Heide**, *mechaber* of *Zikukin D’Nura on Tonna D’vei Eliyohu*, (5445/1685);
- * **Rav Meir** of Premishlan, a *talmid* of the *Ba’al Shem Tov* (1850). He lived in abject but patient poverty, yet exerted himself tirelessly for the needy and the suffering. His *Ruach HaKodesh* and his ready wit have become legendary. He wrote no works, but some of his teachings were collected and published by his *Chassidim* after his *petira*, (5533/1773).

1st of Sivan ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (May 23rd)

- * **Rav Meir HaLevi Horowitz**, the *Maharam Tiktin*. Tiktin was founded in 1437. In 1522, ten Jews from Grodno, Lithuania, became the first Jews to settle there. At that time, Lithuania was three times the size of Poland, stretching from the Baltic almost to the Black Sea, including areas known today as White Russia and Ukraine. Tiktin’s first *Rav* was Rav Mordechai, (1538), (5503/1743);
- * **Rav Avrohom Menachem Mendel HaLevi Steinberg**, *Rav* of Brody, the *Machazeh Avrohom*, (5688/1928);
- * **Rav Eliezer Dovid Greenwald** of Satmar, *mechaber* of *Keren LeDovid* (1867–1928). Born in Tcharna, Hungary, to Rav Amram Greenwald, the son of Rav Yosef, *Rav* of Tchechowitz, the family traced its roots to the *Ponim Meiros*, the *Chacham Tzvi*, and the *Maharal*. As a youth, Eliezer Dovid was a *talmid* of his brother, Rav Moshe, the *Rav* of Chust and *mechaber* of *Arugas HaBosem*. He founded a large *Yeshiva* in Satmar, Romania, in 1921, (5688/1928);
- * **Rav Mordechai Shapiro** of Kaminka-Koritz, (5707/1947);
- * **Rav Alexander Sender Linchner**, son-in-law of Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz and founder of Kiryat Noar (Boystown), Bayit Vegan, in 1953 for for children who had escaped the Holocaust and other destitute Jewish immigrant children. Previously, he had started a trade school for fourteen boys from Yemen in 1949. He was succeeded by his son, Rav Moshe Linchner, (5756/1996);
- * **Rav Aharon Yechiel Leifer**, the *Nadvorna Rebbe* of Tzefas, (5760/2000);
- * **Rav Mordechai Don Waldman** of *Yeshiva Bais Dovid* Monsey, (5760/2000).

2nd of Sivan ~ Begins Sunday Night (May 24th)

- * **Rav Yisrael Hager** of Vizhnitz, the *Ahavas Yisrael* (1860–1936). The grandson of Rav Menachem Mendel of Vizhnitz (the *Tzemach Tzaddik*), he succeeded his father, Rav Boruch (the *Imrei Boruch*), as *Admor* of Vizhnitz after the latter’s *petira* in 1893. He was *Admor* for over forty years, during which time Vizhnitz grew to several tens of thousands of *Chassidim*. Rav Yisrael had four sons, Rav Menachem Mendel of Vishav, Rav Chaim Meir (the *Imrei Chaim*), Rav Eliezer and Rav Boruch. Rav Yisrael’s remains were moved to Bnei Brak in 1950, (5696/1936);
- * **Rav Chaim Elozor Shapira** of Munkacz, the *Minchas Elozor* (1871–1937), a fifth-generation descendant of the founder of the Dinov dynasty, Rav Tzvi Elimelech (the *Bnei Yissos’chor*). He learned under his father, Rav Tzvi Hirsch, *mechaber* of *Darchei Teshuva* on *Yoreh De’a*. He succeeded his father as *Rav* of Munkacz in 1914. Munkacz, for centuries the capital of Carpathian Russia, belonged to Hungary before World War I and to Czechoslovakia when that country was created after World War I. He had no children with

his first wife, and they decided to divorce. His second wife bore him one daughter, Frimet. From his youth and on, he completed the entire *Talmud Bavli* and *Yerushalmi* every two years. He was a prolific author. In addition to *Minchas Elozor*, he wrote *Nimukei Orach Chaim*, *Os VeSholom* on the laws of *tefillin* and *mila*, and many other *seforim*. In 1930, he fulfilled a lifelong desire and visited *Eretz Yisrael*. Sadly, the Munkaczer died only three years after his daughter's wedding. Soon after his *petira*, most of the fifteen thousand Munkacz Jews perished in the Holocaust. The son-in-law of the *Minchas Elozor*, Rav Boruch Yehoshua Yerachmiel Rabinowitz, was the son of the Partzever *Rebbe*. He immigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* with his first wife, who fell ill and passed away there. In 1947, he remarried, moved to the United States, and then established a *kehilla* in Sao Paulo, Brazil, remaining for fifteen years. He then returned to *Eretz Yisrael*, where he became the *Rav* of Cholon. The Munkacz dynasty was reestablished in Brooklyn and is presently led by two grandsons of the *Minchas Elozor*, the Munkaczer *Rebbe*, Rav Moshe Leib Rabinowitz of Boro Park, and his brother, the Dinover *Rebbe*, Rav Yitzchok Yaakov Rabinowitz of Flatbush, (5697/1937);

3rd of Sivan ~ Begins Monday Night (May 25th)

- ✳ **Rav Ovadia Bartenura**, (1440–1516). He lived in Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century and eventually moved to Yerushalayim. He was well known for his role as a *Rav* in Bartenura, Italy, and for his illuminating *peirush* on the *Mishna*. He also wrote *Omer Nekeh*, a supercommentary on *Rashi's peirush* on *Chumash*. Considered one of the wealthiest men in all of Italy, he settled in Yerushalayim in 1488, (5276/1516);
- ✳ **Rav Yosef Irgas**, Italian *Mekubol*, *mechaber* of *Divrei Yosef* and *Shomer Emunim*. He was born in 1684, and wound up becoming the preeminent *talmid* of Rav Benyomin Marjiv, who learned from Rav Moshe Zacut, who learned from Rav Binyomin *HaLevi*, who was a *talmid* of the *Ari* and then Rav Chaim Vital. As the Jewish world was still reeling from the disaster that was Shabbesai Tzvi, *Kabbola* was coming under considerable rabbinic attack. Rav Irgas not only encouraged the study of *Kabbola*, but wrote its definitive defense, which is his *Shomer Emunim*. The book is written as a dialogue between two individuals: She'altiel, who constantly questions the validity of *Kabbola* and raises numerous, seemingly valid, objections to its teachings, and Yehoyoda, who in turn answers those objections and expounds upon how *Kabbola* does not deviate so much as a hairbreadth from the foundations of the Jewish faith, (5490/1730);
- ✳ **Rav Yaakov Shimshon** of Shepetovka. He was a *talmid* of the *Maggid* of Mezritch and a close friend of Rav Boruch of Mezhibuzh. He succeeded his father as *Rav* in Shepetovka, but in 1799 settled in Teverya, where he met Rav Nachman of Breslov. He passed away in Teverya, (5561/1801);
- ✳ **Rav Yisrael Tzvi** of Koson, the *Ohr Moleh*, (5704/1944);
- ✳ **Rav Eliyohu Munk** of Paris, *mechaber* of *The Call of the Torah*, *The World of Prayer* and *The Seven Days of the Beginning*. In the latter book, he cites Rav Dovid Zvi Hoffmann, and explains Creation as taking longer than six literal days. He also wrote *The Just Lives By His Faith*, a collection of essays written to explain difficult concepts in *Yiddishkeit*. One of his daughters, Amelie, married Rav Immanuel Jakobovits in 1949. Another married Rav Chaim



Fasman, *Rosh Kollel* in Los Angeles, (5709/1949);

- ✳ **Rav Chaim Yitzchok Korb** (1870–1957). Born in the small Latvian town of Piltin, Courland, he entered the Telshe *Yeshiva* at the young age of sixteen. He married Lea Miriam, daughter of Rav Moshe Yitzchok Rabin (*mechaber* of *Miluim l'Moshe* on *Shulchon Aruch Yoreh Dea* and *Rosh Yeshiva* and *Dayan* in Ponovezh). After his *chasuna*, he remained in Ponovezh near his father-in-law. In 1909, Rav Chaim Yitzchok assumed his father-in-law's position as *Dayan* in the community. Eventually he left Ponovezh and became *Rav* in the city of Palangin, Lithuania. From there he became *Rav* and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Pavlograd, Ukraine, and then in Zager. In 1926, Rav Chaim Yitzchok immigrated to the United States, assuming the position of *Rav* at the *Bais Medrash HaGodol* of Harlem. His *sefer*, *Nesivos Chaim*, was published at this period in his life. Two years later, he accepted the position of *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Bais Medrash L'Torah* of Chicago. For over twenty years, Rav Korb delivered intensive *shiurim* in *Talmud* and *Halocha*. Every day he would arrive at 3:00 a.m. to learn. He would remain in the *Yeshiva* the entire day until 10:00 p.m., when he would return home. In 1947, Rav Chaim Yitzchok sustained a difficult blow with the passing of his wife of fifty-one years, Rebbetzin Lea Miriam. Two years later, Rav Chaim Yitzchok moved to *Eretz Yisrael*, where he lived until his *petira*, (5717/1957).

✧ 4th of Sivan ~ Begins Tuesday Night (May 26th)

- ✳ **Rav Yeshaya Naftoli Hertz** of Dinov, *mechaber* of *HaNosen Imrei Shefer*, born in approximately 1838 to Rav Dovid Dinov (the *Tzemach Dovid*), who was the son of Rav Tzvi Elimelech, the *Bnei Yissos'chor*. After his father's *petira* in 1874, he succeeded him as *Rav* of Dinov and *Rebbe* of the *Chassidim*, (5648/1888);
- ✳ **Rav Avrohom Wolf** of Wolf's Seminary in Bnei Brak, (5739/1979).

✧ 5th of Sivan ~ Begins Wednesday Night (May 27th)

- ✳ **Rav Ze'ev Wolf** of Zhitomir, the *Ohr HaMeir*, (5557/1797);
- ✳ **Rav Chaim Yaakov Safran**, *Admor* of Komarna, (5729/1969);
- ✳ **Rav Eliyohu** of Ziditchov, (5635/1875);
- ✳ **Rav Uri Shraga Kellerman**, *Ram* in *Knesses Chizkiyohu*, Kfar Chassidim, (5753/1993).

✧ 6th of Sivan ~ Begins Thursday Night (May 28th) – 1st day of Shavu'os

- ✳ **Dovid HaMelech**, 837 BCE, (*Shabbos* 30a, *Yerushalmi*, Chagiga 2:3). Dovid *HaMelech* was born in 907 BCE in *Eretz Yisrael*, and was *niftar* in 837 BCE on *Shavu'os*. His seventy years of life were transferred to him from Odom's original thousand years. In his lifetime, Dovid, shepherd, musician, warrior and king, earned his place as one of the seven *Merkovos* (Chariots). He is our *Merkova* for the *Sefira* of *Malchus* (kingship). When Shmuel *HaNovi* realized that Shaul and his descendants would not continue to rule over *Eretz Yisrael*, he went looking for another candidate, and found red-headed Dovid, a shepherd, the youngest son of Yishai. Shmuel then took a flask of oil and poured it onto Dovid's head. This is called "anointing" – in Hebrew *moshach*, which is where the word *Moshiach* or Messiah comes from. Shaul *HaMelech* was still in power, but the moment that Dovid was anointed, "the spirit of *Hashem* left Shaul" and he fell into a black depression. To help relieve his pain, Shaul's advisors decided to bring in a harpist, reasoning that listening to music would make

the king feel better. Dovid the shepherd was the one chosen. He had a sweet voice and played the harp beautifully and his playing relieved Shaul *HaMelech*, who did not know that this youth would soon replace him. During this time, *Eretz Yisrael* was constantly at war with the *Pelishtim*, who brought forward their massive champion, Golias, a seasoned and powerful warrior who taunted *Bnei Yisrael*. Shaul had no such champion to send forth against him, but Dovid the shepherd, through unwavering faith, killed Golias with a stone from his catapult. When Dovid was praised, however, Shaul became jealous, especially after a song was composed about Dovid and became very popular: “Shaul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.”

One day, Dovid was playing the harp when Shaul, in a rage, threw a spear at him. Dovid eluded him twice, but Shaul hunted him all over the country, and Dovid had to go into hiding. Shaul and his sons were killed in battle against the *Pelishtim*, however, and Dovid became king, ruling for forty years. The hereditary bloodline of Dovid *HaMelech* will become the only legitimate royal bloodline in Jewish history. From Dovid will come all the future kings of *Yehuda* and ultimately, at the end of history, the *Moshiach*. Dovid *HaMelech* was the father of several sons. During his reign, he erred in his relationship with Bas-sheva, the wife of one of his generals, and sending her husband (or divorced husband) to die in battle (although *Rashi* states emphatically “that those who say Dovid sinned are mistaken”). He did *teshuvah* but was punished nonetheless for these actions when one of his sons died in infancy, and some of his other sons revolted and tried to kill him. His marriage with Bas-sheva produced Shlomo *HaMelech*, however, who became the next king of *Eretz Yisrael* (thus proving that his relationship was not sinful). Dovid’s first and foremost drive was to have a relationship with *Hashem*. We get a glimpse of the beauty of his soul when we read *Tehillim*, most of which he wrote. Dovid *HaMelech* is exemplified by his total faith in *Hashem*, and his book, *Tehillim* (Psalms), is a testimony to his awesome wisdom;



A mosaic of David playing the harp and singing for King Saul.

- ✧ **Rav Chaim** ben Betzalel, an older brother of the *Maharal* and a *talmid* of the *Rema* in Cracow, (5348/1588);
- ✧ **Rav Yisrael** ben Eliezer, *Ba'al Shem Tov* (Master of the Good Name) or *Besh't* in short (1698–1760), mystical *Rebbe*, considered to be the founder of *Chassidus*. He was born on the 6th of *Sivan* 5520 (1698) in West Ukraine or Poland, and also passed away on the 6th of *Sivan* (May 22, 1760). It appears that his parents were poor, upright and pious. He was born miraculously when his parents were very old and childless. His mother passed away during childbirth. At the age of three, the *Besh't's* father gave his son his last words before passing on: “Fear absolutely no one or no thing but *Hashem*, and love every single Jew no matter who he/she is and no matter what he/she is doing.”

After Rav Yisrael became an orphan, the Jewish community of Tluste (near Zalischyky) adopted him, providing him with his basic needs. Often, after the conclusion of his studies at the local *cheder* (Jewish elementary school), he would wander into the fields and forests that surrounded the village to meditate and recognize the wonders of *Hashem's*

creation. In 1710, he finished *cheder* and became an assistant to a *melamed* (instructor in *cheder*). According to *Chassidic* legend, Eliyohu *HaNovi* appeared to him on his sixteenth birthday, and described to him the great effects the *tefillos* of simple folk had in Heaven. Sometime in 1712, Rav Yisrael became the *shamash* (sexton) of the local *shul*. The *Besh't* was introduced to the secrets of *Kabbola* by Rav Odom *Ba'al Shem* of Ropczyce, who was a *talmid* of Rav Yoel *Ba'al Shem* of Zamość, the successor of Rav Eliyohu *Ba'al Shem* of Worms. The *Besh't* became a leader at the age of eighteen, caring for the Jewish poor, and encouraging Jews to move to agrarian lifestyles as alternatives to the chronic poverty that was the lot of city Jews. When he was thirty-six years old in 1734, Rav Yisrael revealed himself to the world. Due to his recognized honesty and his knowledge of human nature, he was chosen to act as arbitrator and mediator for people conducting suits against each other; and his services were brought into frequent requisition because the Jews had their own civil courts in Poland at that time. Many of his *talmidim* believed that he came from the Davidic line, tracing his lineage to the royal house of Dovid *HaMelech*, and by extension to the institution of the *Moshiach*. He wrote no books, although many claim to contain his teachings. One available in English is the annotated translation of *Tzavo'as HoRivash*, published by *Kehos*. Some say his *Yahrzeit* is on the 7th of *Sivan*. Others say that his *Yahrzeit* is on the same day as Dovid *HaMelech*, to indicate he is his spark and reincarnation, (5520/1760);

- ✳ **Rav Avrohom Sholom Halberstam** of Stropkov (1856–1940). The son of Rav Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam, he became *Rav* and *Av Bais Din* of Stropkov in 1897. He was called the “miracle *Rav* of Stropkov”. His *sefer*, *Divrei Sholom*, contains *Torah* wisdom, and relates the miracles that he wrought, (5700/1940);
- ✳ **Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter**, the *Imrei Emes* of Ger (1866–1948). The son of Rav Yehuda Leib (*Sefas Emes*) and a great-grandson of the *Chiddushei HaRim*, he was the third *Rebbe* in the Gur dynasty, the leader of over 250,000 *Chassidim* in pre-World War II Poland. In 1940, he managed to escape with three of his sons to *Eretz Yisrael*. He began to rebuild the Gerrer community in *Eretz Yisrael*, but he was *niftar* during the siege of *Yerushalayim* on *Shavuos*, 1948, (5708/1948);
- ✳ **Rav Yehuda Rosner**, the *Imrei Yehuda* (1879–1944). Rav Rosner opened a *Yeshiva* in *Szekelheid*, which he headed throughout his years there. Although he was offered rabbinical positions in larger towns, he refused them on account of his *Yeshiva*. *Szekelheid* had only 120 Jewish families, and that allowed the *Rav* to dedicate most of his time and attention to the *Yeshiva*, which ultimately grew until, in the 1930s, it housed over three hundred *bochurim*, (5704/1944);
- ✳ **Rebbetzin Devora Margulies**, wife of of Rav Lipa Margulies, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshiva Torah Temima* in Brooklyn (1924–2005). Born in the town of *Marashvarshehl*, Hungary, Rebbetzin Margulies was the daughter of Rav Binyomin Alter and Chaya Rochel Ruttner. Her mother was a direct descendant of the *Mareh Yechezkel*, (5765/2005).



❁ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❁

WHAT'S BEHIND YAHARZEIT 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 *teshuvah* alone.



❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

STORIES & ANECDOTES

Rav Meir Ben Aharon Leib of Premishlan, 29th of Iyar

We Both Serve the Same G-d

Not everyone was happy with Rav Meir Premishlan's open *Ruach HaKodesh*. Some of the other *Rebbes* and *Tzaddikim* believed that things like that needed to be kept secret and *Kevod Elokim Hester Dovor* – some things were better left unsaid and unrevealed, for the sake of *Hashem's* honor and glory.

Among the Premishlaner's detractors was Rav Uri Strelisker and his *talmid*, Rav Yehuda Tzvi of Stretin. Both Rav Meir and Rav Yehuda Tzvi were once in Levov and there was a grocer there who tried to make peace between them. He had a baby and invited them both to the *bris*. How did he do so? He invited the Stretiner as the *mohel* and the Premishlaner as *sandak*. He just didn't tell the *mohel* who the *sandak* was and he didn't mention to the *sandak* who would be the *mohel*. As neither of them asked, this worked out

great, until the day of the *bris*. The father of the baby picked up the *mohel*, the Stretiner, from his lodgings in a fine carriage and explained that they would make a stop on the way to pick up the *sandak*. When the carriage stopped at the Premishlaner's lodgings and the Stretiner saw who the *sandak* was going to be, he was surprised, to say the least! When Rav Meir Premishlaner saw the Stretiner sitting in the carriage, he said: “Meir has a *minhag* to tell stories. Now Meir will also tell a story, and whoever wishes to listen will listen.” And this is the story Rav Meir of Premishlan told:

During the times of the Spanish Inquisition there were many wealthy Jews who, rather than flee at the threat of conversion, disguised themselves and hid their Jewish observance. This act of being a Christian in public and a Jew in secret was against the *Halacha*, yet they mistakenly

believed that the whole thing would soon blow over and be forgotten. They underestimated the Church and the Inquisition. Secret Jews would clandestinely observe *mitzvos*, such as lighting candles in basements, assembling disguised for *tefillos* and doing their best to appear as good Christians toward their neighbors and friends, while trying to keep and remember whatever Jewish customs and traditions they could.

Once, a wealthy converso became deathly ill and they summoned the priest for his last rites and confessions, as good Christians did. No one guessed that the high-ranking government figure was really a secret Jew! When the priest arrived, everyone left out of respect for the high-ranking bishop, who came out of respect for the high-ranking government minister. Now the dying man turned his head away. The bishop called in the doctor, and the physician confirmed that the dying man was not so sick and could still speak. When the doctor left, the bishop realized why the minister had turned away. Slowly he removed the cross he had been wearing and with an expression of compassion he whispered into the ears of the dying

minister the shocking words of revelation revealing that he too was a secret Jew, a converso. “*Shema Yisrael! Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echod* – Our G-d is One!” The minister’s eyes opened in shock and astonishment. He turned his head and found compassion and love, with no cross around the bishop’s neck! He fell on the false bishop and wept, and together they recited the Jewish *Vidui*!

“Please, we are brothers! We serve the same G-d!” he begged. “See that I receive a proper Jewish burial!”

Concluding the story, Rav Meir Premishlaner turned to the Stretiner and repeated the line, “We are brothers. We serve the same G-d. My ways that I received from my ancestors may differ somewhat, but why should we have *machlokes*? Why should there be anger and strife between us? We can serve *Hashem* out in the open and not in secret!”

Rav Yehuda Tzvi Stretiner agreed, as Rav Meir held out his hand and together they said *Sholom Aleichem* and sat side by side in the carriage on the way to the *simcha*. (*Ponim Meirim*, page 330–331)



Rav Yisrael Ben Boruch Hager of Vizhnitz, 2nd of Sivan

Mechaber of Ahavas Yisrael

The Rebbe Ascends the Throne of Leadership

There was great friendship and love between the two brothers, Rav Yisrael of Vizhnitz and Rav Pinchas of Borsha. When the *Imrei Boruch* passed away, the *Ahavas Yisrael* declined all offers of taking over the *Chassidus*. Initially, the pressure from the *Chassidim* had no effect, until Rav Pinchas revealed what he had dreamed: Rav Pinchas was undecided where to live. One night, his father the *Imrei Boruch* appeared to him in a dream and said, “What are you so worried about? Go and ask the *Rebbe*!”

To Rav Pinchas’s question as to which *Rebbe* his father meant, the *Imrei Boruch* replied, “*Rebbe* stands for the *roshei teivos Rosh Bnei Yisrael*! My son, Yisrael, will be the leader and *Rebbe*.”

Upon hearing his brother’s words, the *Ahavas Yisrael* finally relented and agreed to take upon himself the mantle of leadership. (*Kedosh Yisrael* Vol. I and *Noam Megodim Vizhnitz Pekudei* 5763 p. 3)



The Rebbe's Advice

When Rav Leibush Ber Halpert, *Rav* of Vasloi, was a *yungerman*, he tried his hand at business, buying and selling grain, but was unsuccessful. Toward the end of *Chodesh Iyar*, his uncle went to Grossvardein and took a *kvittel* to ask the *Ahavas Yisrael's* advice. The *Rebbe* was lying sick in bed, toward the last days of his life, and the *gabbo'im* would not let his uncle see the *Rebbe*. They did, however, give the *Ahavas Yisrael* the *kvittel* and the *Rebbe* answered, "Let him try something else."

After the *Ahavas Yisrael* was *niftar*, Rav Halpert tried his hand at other business ventures but met again and again with failure. One night he had a dream; in his dream he saw the *Ahavas Yisrael* and told him about his difficulty with *parnossa*. The *Rebbe* replied, "I think you should go

back to study *Torah*. I will have you appointed to serve as the *Rav* of one of the towns."

This idea was not one of the possibilities that Rav Halpert had even entertained and so when he awoke he was surprised. And he was totally unprepared for what happened next. A few days passed and before *Shabbos*, a telegram arrived from one of the towns in Romania, inviting him to apply for the open post of *Rav*! As the trip would take more than twenty-four hours and *Shabbos* was approaching, he let the mysterious matter rest. After a few days, however, another telegram from the former *Rav* arrived, asking why he hadn't come. He packed his bags, made the trip and was appointed the *Rav* despite the competition! Eventually, he served in the *Rabbonus* the rest of his life! (*Kedosh Yisrael* Vol. II p. 386)



Rav Chaim Elozor Shapira Ben Tzvi Hirsch of Munkacz, 2nd of Sivan

Mechaber of Shu"t Minchas Elozor

The Kvittel for the Kosel

During his well-known travels in *Eretz Yisrael* in the year 5690, Rav Chaim Elozor of Munkacz, the *Minchas Elozor*, made a trip one day to Har HaZeisim in Yerushalayim. There he went to *daven* at the *kever* of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* and after *davening* told his *Chassidim* the following story:

When the *Ohr HaChaim* lived in Yerushalayim, he was once visited by one of his *talmidim*, who cried bitterly at his lowly, pitiful state and lack of means, and how his level of poverty and destitution had reached the point of starvation!

"I can't even feed my own family!" he cried bitterly. "Please, *Rebbe*, help me! *Daven* for me and beseech on my behalf!"

The *Ohr HaChaim* was filled with compassion and so he took a slip of paper and wrote a few words, a short note. He

handed the folded note of paper to his *talmid* and told him to approach the *Kosel HaMaaravi* – the Western Wall, the last standing remnant from the *Bais HaMikdosh*, and to place it into one of the cracks of the large stones.

The *talmid* left, taking the folded paper note, and headed toward the *Kosel*. Just then, a strong gust of wind blew off his head covering and as he struggled to keep his head covered, the note too slipped and flew out of his hand far away! The sad *talmid* headed back and told the *Ohr HaChaim* what had happened. He sighed and remarked, "What can I do? It didn't work out!"

Afterward, someone in Yerushalayim found the note signed by the *Ohr HaChaim*. It was a petition and request directed to the *Shechina* in the language of *Shir HaShirim*: "*Achosi raayosi yonosi samosi* (my sister, my

friend, my dove, my perfect one) – I ask and request of You in mercy and compassion to send bountiful blessings of

shefa to Ploni ben Ploni.” (*Masa’os Yerushalayim* by Rav Moshe Goldstein – Munkacz)



Rav Yosef Ben Immanuel Irgas, 3rd of Sivan

Mechaber of Shomer Emunim HaKadmon, Mavo Pesochim and Shu”t Divrei Yosef

One of the greatest Italian *Mekubolim*, Rav Yosef Irgas, is perhaps most well known for his *sefer Shomer Emunim HaKadmon*, which, written in the form of an argument, explains *Kabbola’s* ideas and defends them against their detractors.

He was a *talmid* of Rav Binyomin Kohen of Regio, who in turn received the tradition from Rav Moshe Zechut, who in turn studied under Rav Yisrael Saruk, a *talmid* of the *Arizal*. He was noted for his scholarly greatness in the revealed *Torah* as demonstrated in his responsa *Shu”t Divrei Yosef*, although his erudition and scholarliness were eclipsed by his saintliness and piety, through which he grew and gained in the esoteric secrets of *Kabbola* under his *Rebbes*, himself becoming an authority back in his hometown of Livorno (Leghorn).

He is also well known for his war against the Sabbateans, especially the false kabbalist, the despicable Nechemia Chiya Chayun, who paraded himself as an elder kabbalist and master of *Rabbonim* from the Holy Land. Chayun, may his name be blotted out, was a sly serpent who dressed in white, sported a long, white beard and distributed amulets and his *sefer Mehemenuša DeKola*, a disguise for his true intentions to spread the false messiah Shabbesai Tzvi’s nefarious teachings under a new name.

Though young in years (Rav Yosef Irgas was half Chayun’s age), he recognized the trickery and deceit of Chayun and

exposed his shame; Rav Irgas’ reputation was solid enough that Chayun was run out of town in dishonor. Afterward, Chayun traveled from town to town tricking whomever he could until finally he even fooled the *Semichas Chachomim* Rav Naftoli *HaKohen* Katz of Prague. When the *Chacham Tzvi* discovered this ruse, he wrote letters to Rav Naftoli, who realized he had been taken in, and revoked all his previous support for Chayun, who by then had gone on, eventually reaching Amsterdam, where he invoked *machlokes* against the *Chacham Tzvi* himself. Chayun fought his detractors and wrote many vile letters and treatises against them. Rav Irgas again went to defend the honor of *Torah* and the true *Kabbola* and denounced Chayun in a series of *seforim* such as *Tochachas Megula* (“An Open Rebuke”) and *Tzad Nochosh* (“Hunting the Serpent”), where he exposed all his false treachery and lies. Eventually, Chayun was kicked out of Amsterdam as well, and was exposed as a liar and *rosha*. Chayun threatened the Jewish communities that if they withdrew financial support he would publicly convert to Christianity and denounce them. His end has been lost and forgotten, but we do know that his son did indeed convert and became an informer and denouncer against Jews and *Torah*, may their names be blotted out. Rav Irgas’ *talmid*, Rav Malachi, collected his writings, edited them and helped produce the great works we have today.



Rav Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, 5th of Sivan

Rav Ze'ev Wolf HaLevi, Maggid in Zhitomir, was one of the closest talmidim of the Maggid of Mezritch.

Like many other Gedolim of his era, early biographical details are sketchy. He was drawn to the ways of Chassidus in his younger years and traveled to the court of the Maggid in Mezritch. From then on, he was totally devoted to the ways and Avodas Hashem he learned from his Rebbe. Among the Chassidim of the Maggid who were close with Rav Ze'ev Wolf were Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk and Rav Aharon of Karlin.

Initially, Rav Ze'ev Wolf did not wish to support himself through Torah, so he opened a wine business.

The Mezritcher Maggid, seeing the greatness of his talmid, Rav Ze'ev Wolf, and noting how he spoke to the other Chassidim, instilling in them middos tovos, Avodas Hashem and Chassidus, appointed Rav Ze'ev Wolf as a Maggid in his hometown of Zhitomir to expound on Torah and teach the public.

Besides serving as Maggid, Rav Ze'ev Wolf was noted for his exalted ways, and many talmidim and Chassidim gathered to hear his pearls of wisdom. He founded a Bais Medrash in Zhitomir.

Rav Ze'ev Wolf was close to Rav Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy, the Toldos Yaakov Yosef, from the time they were both in the court of the Maggid of Mezritch; and to the Rebbe Reb Zusha of Anipoli, who became his mechutan when his son, Rav Yosef, married the Rebbe Reb Zusha's granddaughter.

The many Divrei Torah and derashos of Rav Ze'ev Wolf were written down by his talmid, Rav Eliezer, the shochet of Zhitomir.

Rav Zev Wolf's sefer, Ohr HaMeir, has been accepted as one of the fundamental Chassidic works, and it was one of the earliest to be printed. Many of the Divrei Torah are from the Mezritcher

Maggid.

Rav Ze'ev Wolf was niftar on the 5th of Sivan, Erev Shavuos, 5557/1797.

His sons from his first zivug were Rav Yisrael Dov Ber, the son-in-law of Rav Chaim of Krasna, who succeeded his father in Zhitomir; Rav Menachem Mendel; Rav Tzvi Hirsh; and Rav Yosef.

From his second zivug, Rav Ze'ev Wolf had three young children at his petira: Rav Dovid, Rav Yechiel Michel and Rav Pinchas.

Zechuso yogen aleinu.

www.hamodia.com/features/day-history-5-



Master of the House

There was once a Chassid who visited the great Maggid of Mezritch, the second-generation successor to the holy Ba'al Shem Tov and at that time the leader of all Chassidus. This Chassid had a complaint; he was constantly being plagued by bad thoughts:

"Rebbe, no matter what I do, I cannot make them stop! Constantly, again and again, I have all sorts of foreign thoughts that plague me! When I try to daven they interfere with my devotions, and when I try to study Torah they disrupt my learning. Rebbe, please help me overcome these negative thoughts – what should I do?"

"Please travel to my talmid, Rav Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir," was the holy Maggid's advice.

And so the Chassid traveled to Zhitomir. When he finally arrived night had already fallen and the streets were dark, empty and deserted. Without too much trouble, the Chassid located Rav Ze'ev Wolf's home, approached the locked door and knocked...After waiting a while in the cold night he knocked again, this time a bit louder. When this too had no effect, he began knocking louder...and louder. His frozen breath swirled like eddies in the

bitterly cold night as his chest heaved up and down from the exertion of knocking so many times. When that did not work, he began to yell:

“He-e-e-llo!! He-e-e-ll o o o! Anyone home?” When there was no answer and no one approached to open the door, the half-frozen Chassid started pleading and begging:

“Please, please open up and let me in! It’s so cold outside – I’m freezing!” Still no one answered.

Enraged by the cold and being ignored the Chassid began to shout, berating the Rav and his family. Still, no one answered, and the door remained shut.

Finally, morning came, and with it, someone to open the door and let the weary Chassid in. The Chassid spent several days as the guest of Rav Ze’ev Wolf in Zhitomir. Day after day went by, and the curious Chassid searched in vain for a clue as to why the great Maggid had sent him here. He watched Rav Ze’ev Wolf daven and learn and although he observed that he was clearly a holy man, he remained puzzled as to why the holy Maggid had sent him to Zhitomir as an answer to his plea to stop the foreign negative thoughts that were constantly on his mind.

Eventually, having had enough, the Chassid got ready to go home. When he approached to take his leave of his host, he thanked Rav Ze’ev for having him as his guest and, turning to leave, he asked one parting query:

“Please, Rav, can I ask you one question?”

“Yes, of course,” responded Rav Ze’ev Wolf.

“Our master and teacher, the holy Maggid, sent me here to visit you, Rebbe, and the truth is, I don’t exactly know why...”

“Ahh...” responded Rav Ze’ev Wolf, with a glint of mischief and a knowing look in his eyes. “Let me tell you exactly why the

Maggid sent you here to me. The Maggid sent you to me so that I should teach you a lesson. A man’s mind and a man’s body are like his home. Every man is master of his home.”

So saying he pierced the wary Chassid with a penetrating glare and finished, “and whomever he does not want to let in...he does not!”

How Rav Levi Yitzchok Broke the Wicked

When Rav Levi Yitzchok first arrived in Berditchev to take on the mantle of Rav, some opposed him and fought against him. There was one, a Boruch Weinshenker, who caused him a great deal of trouble. This Boruch was well connected with the local poritz, the wealthy gentile landowner in the area.

Once, on Erev Shabbos, when Rav Levi Yitzchok was out of town, Boruch Weinshenker went too far. He had the Rebbetzin and the Rav’s children loaded onto a wagon used for transporting garbage and ran them out of town in disgrace!

The Chassidim were livid. On Motzo’ei Shabbos they ordered a coach and traveled to see Rav Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir. When they entered the Rebbe’s inner sanctum the next morning, they related the entire episode.

“Come see me after davening, and we’ll see what we can do,” was the response.

The Chassidim were delighted. Now they would get him! “Surely,” they said, “the Tzaddik Rav Ze’ev will curse and punish Boruch Weinshenker and give him just what he deserves!”

But the Chassidim were in for a shock.

“What could I do?” said Rav Ze’ev, “I wanted to punish the miscreant, but before I even took my own siddur in hand, the Berditchever was already standing up with his Tehillim pleading with Hashem not to harm him!”

I Was Relying On You

The *talmidim* knew that their *Rebbe* always *davened* for a very long time. They were part of his *minyan*, true, but while he was *davening* the silent *Amida*, the *shtile Shemone Esrei*, what need was there for them just to sit around? Each one of them had errands and things to take care of. They timed their return to coincide with the time that the holy *Ba'al Shem* ended his devotions and figured that they had at least a good hour or so before he would be ready to hear the *Chazzan's* repetition of *Chazoras HaShatz*. And so each one went his separate way and they left the *Rebbe* alone to *daven*.

How surprised they were, when they returned well within the time that they had assumed to find the *Tzaddik* still deeply immersed in his prayers that their *Rebbe* the *Ba'al Shem* stood sadly waiting for them all to come back. "Why did you all leave me? Don't you understand that I was relying on each of you? Let me explain," and the *Ba'al Shem Tov* told them this story as a *moshol*:

In the winter, the birds fly away to warmer climates. One season, as a great many birds came from afar, the king noticed one beautiful bird whose plumage was so special that he decided he simply must capture that bird for the royal collection.

The bird, however, had settled herself atop one of the tallest trees, whose branches rose high above the reach of the king's men. Not even the ladders they had were of any use. The king had an idea. He had his men stacked atop one another. Each one was to stand on his fellow's shoulders and together they formed a tall human ladder whose peak was the royal guards, and at the top the king's most trusted advisor, whose mission was to

capture the bird for the king! Well, each subject began the climb; this one climbed up onto that one's shoulders and so on, until indeed the trusted advisor stood high in the clouds, his arms among the branches, about to snatch the bird, when...something went dreadfully wrong!!!

Instead of securely grabbing the bird, the advisors, the guards and all the king's men came tumbling down, bruised and beaten, in a jumbled heap of broken limbs, torn clothes and pain! What had gone wrong?!

"FOOLS!" thundered the king, who had been watching as he approached! The king was yelling at the few stragglers who were coming back. They had been the original column, the foundation of this human ladder. "Why did you leave? Where did you go? Didn't you realize that everything depended on you?"

It turned out that the foolish people on the bottom got tired, bored and sore and so some of them left, not realizing that they were the very foundation that everyone else depended on; they had been holding everyone else up!

"So too, my precious *talmidim*," explained the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, "when I ascend on high, I am relying on all of you. It is only when we are all connected that I can climb up so high, only when there is a *hiskashrus* tying and binding us all as one rope, linking us as one chain, a ladder whose rungs I can ascend. When you left me, I came tumbling down!"



Get Your Wings

The *Ba'al Shem Tov* once came to a *Bais Medrash* together with the townspeople, as well as his followers and *Chassidim*. "This *Bais Medrash* is full of *Torah* and *tefilla*!" he declared. The

townsfolk were glad and proud. They thought that the holy *Ba'al Shem* was praising their *Bais Medrash*, that it was so full of *Torah* study and sincere, devout *davening*!

However, their pleased expressions did not seem to match the sorrowful and pensive look of the *Tzaddik*. The *Ba'al Shem* stood on the threshold and did not enter the *Bais Medrash*. Instead, he turned to the *kehal* assembled and explained, "I cannot enter, for there is no room! I cannot go in because this *Bais Medrash* is simply too full of all the *Torah* studied and *tefillos* recited here! The *Zohar* explains that any *Torah* and *tefilla* that lacks *dechilu urechimu* (fear, awe and love), any study and prayers that are insincere, or lacking in fire, emotion and devotion simply sink and rest. For love and awe, *ahava* and *yira*, are like two wings. Our *Torah* and *tefilla* use these wings to soar heavenward! The *Torah* and *tefilla* here," explained the *Ba'al Shem* to the shamed and disgraced congregants, "lack warmth, fire and devotion. They have no wings to fly and so remain grounded. The *Bais Medrash* is so full of *Torah* and *tefilla* that I cannot go in!"



Cold As Ice

The *Ba'al Shem* once asked his *talmidim* to join him on a journey. They all entered the carriage and soon they left for some unknown destination. These journeys were commonplace; the *Tzaddik* knew where they had to go and why, and they set off often without batting an eyelid or asking why and where they were headed.

This time, however, when they arrived, some of the *talmidim* suspected that their *Rebbe* had taken a wrong turn. Even though they knew it wasn't possible, what other reason could there be for them to have arrived here at a frozen pond? It was the height of the gentile holiday season and the common practice was that the *goyim* went ice skating on the surface of

the frozen lake and as they skated they carved the pattern of what *Chassidim* called the *shesi ve'erev*, the *tzelem* (cross) of the Christian faith.

"*Rebbe*, please let us go away from here," the *talmidim* begged, but the *Ba'al Shem* mysteriously bade them come. Mystified, they stood in wonder as he had them watch for a few moments and then just as strangely asked them to leave.

What profound lesson did they just witness? the *talmidim* wondered. They did not have to wonder for too long. The *Ba'al Shem* answered them, "The *Torah* is compared to water. Water is vitality, water gives life, without water we all die and without water there is no life! *Mayim Chaim*! However, when water freezes, when the water turns into ice, then even on those life-giving waters of *Mayim Chaim*, someone can come and carve a graven image of idolatry!!! The *Torah* is life and *Avodas Hashem* must be filled with fire, with devotion, with a *bren*, because if that *Torah* freezes, if it turns to ice, *chas vesholom*..."



A Story Connecting the *Ba'al Shem Tov* to Dovid HaMelech's *Tehillim*

Saying *Tehillim*, selected from letters by the late Lubavitcher *Rebbe*, Rav Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson, on the subject of reciting *Tehillim*. Translation by Zalman Posner.

It is clear that the simple people who excel in their pure faith, in their sincerity in reciting *Tehillim*, in their participation in attending *Torah* study, in their attending brotherly gatherings, and fulfilling the *mitzva* of *Ahavas Yisrael* with affection and joy – they are the delights of *Gan Eden* and the pride of the *Rebbes*.

The *Ba'al Shem Tov* displayed a remarkable affection for simple, pious folk. This approach was widely known and was a major reason for the tremendous number of simple Jews who became his devotees in

a short while, as many accounts attest.

However, his greatest *talmidim*, *Tzaddikim-Geonim*, could not accept this approach. True, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* frequently sent them to learn traits like sincerity, trust, simple faith, faith in sages, faith in *Tzaddikim*, love of Yisrael and the like from simple Jews – but still they could not appreciate the *Ba'al Shem Tov*'s regard for ordinary people, and certainly could not emulate him in this.

It was the practice that guests ate two of the *Shabbos* meals at the *Ba'al Shem Tov*'s table, but one meal was reserved for the *talmidim*, the Sacred Fellowship, while guests were not admitted, even to observe from a distance.

One summer *Shabbos*, between 1753 and 1755 when the circle of *talmidim* included brilliant and renowned men like the Mezritcher *Maggid* and the *Rav* of Polnoy, an incident occurred that thoroughly perplexed and confused the *talmidim*.

A large number of guests came for that *Shabbos*, including many undistinguished people like farmers, artisans, cobblers, tailors, vintners, gardeners, stockmen, poultry men and small merchants. At the Friday evening meal the *Ba'al Shem Tov* showed extraordinary affection for these people. He poured the remains of his *Kiddush* into the cup of one, to another he gave his own *Kiddush* cup to recite *Kiddush*, he gave pieces of the loaves of his *HaMotzi* to several and to others he gave of the meat and fish of his portion. He showed other gestures of friendship and regard for these guests, leaving his *talmidim* no little perplexed.

The guests knew that they could not attend the second *Shabbos* meal that was reserved for the inner group of *talmidim*, so after their repast they assembled in the *Ba'al Shem Tov*'s *shul*, and being totally uneducated, barely able to go beyond simply reading *Chumash* and *Tehillim*,

they all started chanting *Tehillim*.

When the *Ba'al Shem Tov* sat at the table for the second meal, he arranged the *talmidim* in a deliberate order, characteristic of the meticulous system governing everything he did. In a short while he started to hold forth, "saying *Torah*", and all the *talmidim* felt a tremendous G-dly delight in their *Rebbe*'s teaching.

It was customary that they sang at the table, and when they saw the obvious cheery mood of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, they were even more pleased, filled with a sense of gratitude and happiness for *Hashem*'s favor to them, granting them the privilege of being among the *talmidim* of the saintly *Ba'al Shem Tov*.

It occurred to several of them that now it was so delightful, without the crowd of simple people who had no idea what the *Rebbe* was saying. Why, they thought, does he display such affection for these people, pouring from his cup into theirs, even giving his cup to one of them?

These thoughts still flitted through their minds and the *Ba'al Shem Tov*'s expression changed. He became serious, immersed in his thoughts, *dveikus*, and without a shift in this mood he began: "Peace, peace, to the far and the near." Our Sages observe that "where the penitent stand the perfect *Tzaddikim* cannot," stressing perfect *Tzaddikim*. He explained that there are two paths in *Hashem*'s service: the *Tzaddik*'s and the penitent's. The service of simple people is similar to the penitent's, the simple person's humility of an order with the penitent's remorse and resolve.

When the *Ba'al Shem Tov* concluded, they resumed singing. Those *talmidim* who had been questioning the *Rebbe*'s open affection for simple people, realized that he was aware of their thoughts. His exposition of the qualities of the simple, equating them with the superiority of the penitent over the saint,

was obviously addressed to them.

During the songs he was still in his deep *dveikus*, and when they finished singing he opened his eyes, intently examining each *talmid*. Then he told them to place their right hands on the shoulders of their neighbors, so that the *talmidim* sitting around the table would be joined.

The *Ba'al Shem Tov*, naturally, sat at the head. He told them to sing certain melodies while in this position of union, and after the songs he told them to shut their eyes and not open them until he told them to. Then he placed his right hand on the shoulder of the *talmid* to his right, and his left on the *talmid* sitting there. The circle was closed.

Suddenly the *talmidim* heard songs, melodies, interlaced with moving pleas, touching the very soul. One voice sang, "Oh, *Ribbono Shel Olam*," and launched into a *pasuk* of *Tehillim*, "The sayings of *Hashem* are pure sayings..."

Another sang, "*Ai, Ribbono Shel Olam*," and another *pasuk*, "Test me, *Hashem*, prove me, purify my heart." A third introduced his *pasuk* with a spontaneous cry in Yiddish, "*Tatte hartziger*, be gracious to me; I trust in You and I shelter in the shadow of Your wings." A fourth voice: "*Ai gevald, zisser Foter in Himmel*, let *Hashem* arise; His foes will scatter; His enemies will flee." Another voice was anguished: "*Teie're Tatte*, a bird has a home; a swallow a nest." Still another pleaded, "*Lieber Foter, derbarmdiger Tatte*, bring us back, *Hashem* who helps, erase your anger against us." The *talmidim* hearing these songs of *Tehillim* trembled.

Their eyes were still shut but tears coursed down their cheeks. Their hearts were shattered by the songs. Each of the *talmidim* fervently wished that *Hashem* help him to serve Him in this manner.

The *Ba'al Shem Tov* removed his hands from the shoulders of the two *talmidim*, and the group no longer heard the songs and *Tehillim*. Then he told them

to open their eyes and to sing a number of designated songs.

"When I heard the song of *Tehillim*," the *Maggid* later told the *Alter Rebbe*, "my soul just spilled forth. I felt such a longing, such *ahava b'taanugim* that I had never before been privileged to feel. My boots were soaked with the perspiration and tears of *teshuva* from the inwardness and depths of the heart."

When the *Ba'al Shem Tov* stopped singing, an instantaneous hush fell over the group. He sat in deep *dveikus* for a prolonged time, then looked up and said, "The songs you heard were the songs of the simple Jews saying *Tehillim* with sincerity, from the recesses of the heart and with simple faith.

"Now, my *talmidim*, think carefully on this. We are only the 'edge of truth', for the body is not truth and only the soul is truth, and it is only part of the essence, and so is called the 'edge of truth'. Still we do recognize truth, and feel truth and are affected by truth, affected deeply. Consider then how *Hashem*, Who is perfect Truth, regards the *Tehillim* of these simple people."

In honor of *Shavuot* please enjoy stories and parables from the holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* from our upcoming *sefer* on *Simcha*:



The Simcha that Canceled the Decree

It was on *Rosh HaShana* before the blowing of the *shofar* and the holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* was made aware of a terrible judgment on high. No matter what the holy *Tzaddik* tried, still, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* was unable to cancel the decree or sweeten the harsh judgment. All his efforts were in vain; the prosecution's case was too strong and the decree remained.

While the *Ba'al Shem* was closed in his room battling the verdict, the *Ba'al Shem Tov*'s holy brethren of *Chassidim*, known as the *Chevraya Kadisha*, waited

outside, wondering as to the delay for blowing the *shofar*. They could sense that something was wrong and felt some kind of fear in the air.

One of the assembled congregants was a little off. His lack of sense and judgment caused him to wonder at the somber, tense air surrounding the *Chassidim*. He decided to act and to do something to dispel the air of fear. He went and dressed up in an animal costume and began to prance about. His silly antics caused great mirth and soon the *Chassidim* were laughing at his jokes and the air of fear was replaced with laughter and joy. No sooner had this happened when the *Tzaddik's* door opened and the holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* entered for *tekios*, and he motioned to begin blowing the *shofar*.

Later, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* explained that it was possible to cancel the decree only through *simcha*. However, his own fear and the air of suspense and foreboding of the *Chassidim* together prevented the *Ba'al Shem Tov* from the needed *simcha*. Finally, that act of silliness and mirth did what he had been unable to do and it caused them all to forget the fear and suspense; the *simcha* canceled the decree and sweetened the judgment. "This," explained the *Tzaddik*, "is the meaning of the *pasuk* in *Koheles* 2:2: "For what kind of *simcha* is this?" The words *ma zo*, which usually translate as "what kind" and "what is this", can also mean insignificant or trivial. Even a *simcha* which is trivial or insignificant, with no true inner depth can make an impression on high." (*Nesivos Sholom* I *Maamar* 15:5 page 288)



How Simcha Sweetens Harsh Judgments

The holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* taught the following parable: There were once many ministers and servants who all assembled together before the king to praise and sing the royal anthem before him. Each one had

his own appointed time to personally sing and praise the king, each according to his station of importance. This was all set to take place so long as the king was pleased and in a good mood. However, if the king were to become angry, heaven forbid, and his face would fill with fury, then they would fear to praise him at all as it says in the *Kinnos* (9 *Av* #7): "How can you praise the king at a time of anger?" Due to this fear, the servants and ministers each approached and quickly said their praise and quickly departed, before the king should get angry or his fury be kindled by some matter.

Now, when the king's beloved son, the prince, entered to praise his father the king, then the king was filled with joy and his heart was filled with love and delight; his anger abated and there was no doubt at all that he would not be angered again, so long as his son the prince was in his presence. The prince therefore had nothing to worry about, so he could stay and praise as long as he liked, because he knew his presence only augmented his father's joy.

The *Ba'al Shem Tov* then asked, "Where did the anger go?" If previously the king was angered and his son's presence caused the anger to depart, where did it go to? Even if you answer that it is only natural that if the father delights in his son, his anger departs, nonetheless the question remains: where did it depart to? The answer is that when love and joy overcome anger, then this causes the anger and fury to rise until it reaches its root source and is sweetened above, as it is known that all judgments are sweetened at their root source.

Now returning to our parable, when we say that the prince can praise his father the king for as long as he likes, we can say he is so obligated for two reasons: First, he is obliged to praise him for he is both his father and his king; second, he must praise him for being allowed to stand there and praise uninterrupted for as long as he likes with no imposed limits, since this unique

opportunity is solely his, unlike the other ministers and servants who have not been granted such an opportunity. (*Tzavo'as HaRivash* 132; same also in *Ohr Torah* #202 in the name of the *Maggid*)



The Simcha That Saved the New Year

There was once a *Chassid* who came to the Chortkover *Rebbe* seeking his blessing and a salvation. He had an upcoming trial with a life and death outcome and the verdict looked grim. The *Chassid* was greatly strained and his somber mood radiated defeat and sadness.

It was *Motzo'ei Sukkos* and the *Yom Tov* had just ended. The *Chassidim* in the Chortkover's court were celebrating the spiritual heights and the great lights that the festival had left them with; they were on a great spiritual high and were dancing joyfully.

The *Rebbe* advised the hapless *Chassid*, "Join them, join the *Chassidim* and dance with them and you shall see your salvation."

"*Rebbe*, how can I dance at a time like this?" asked the despondent *Chassid*.

"Let me tell you a story," said the Chortkover, and this is the tale he told:

From on high it was made known to the holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* that if they were unable to sanctify and bless the new moon on *Motzo'ei Yom Kippur* it was to be taken as a sign that the coming year would be a difficult one, with harsh sentences and decrees against the Jews. Now it was *Motzo'ei Yom Kippur* and the new moon was nowhere to be seen. As torrential rains poured down, a thick layer of clouds covered the skys and even darker clouds clouded the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* mind, as he wondered how it would be possible to sanctify and bless the new moon in such weather. What chance was there that the new moon would appear?"

Whatever spiritual methods the

Ba'al Shem Tov tried, whatever *yichudim* and kabbalistic unifications and meditations the *Tzaddik* did were to no avail. Nothing helped. The skies continued their dark, cloudy raining and the tears flowed from the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* eyes as he tried and failed to gain favor and reveal the reluctant moon.

Meanwhile the *talmidim* and *Chassidim* were oblivious to their master's sorrow. As was their custom on *Motzo'ei Yom Kippur*, the *Chassidim* danced and danced, singing, praising, whirling, twirling in joy, celebrating the holy day and the atonement and forgiveness it granted.

Their joy broke all bounds! Their dancing was infectious and as it began in the outer courtyard despite the heavy rain, it continued to sweep up all the *Chassidim* indoors, in the house of study and *tefillos*, until every room was full of *Chassidim* dancing with boundless joy! Then the *Chassidim* burst into song and danced into the *Rebbe's* inner sanctum. The doors flew open as the *Chassidim* in their excitement asked their *Rebbe* and master to join in their dance. The *Ba'al Shem Tov* acquiesced and soon he too was swept up in the rhythm of the dance and the song of the happy souls of the joyous *Chassidim*. As soon as the *Tzaddik* danced with them, his clouds parted – and then the message began to be relayed from outdoors inward that an amazing thing had happened. The rain had ceased, the clouds had parted and the moon was shining in all its resplendent glory. Said the holy *Tzaddik*, the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, to his *talmidim*, "What I was unable to succeed with my *yichudim*, you, my *talmidim*, have succeeded in doing with your *simcha*, dancing and joy!"

The Chortkover concluded his tale, the *Chassid* understood the lesson, joined the dance and saw his salvation. (*Nesivos Sholom* I 15:5 p288)



ובני ישראל יוצאים ביד רמה ~ תרגום "בריש גלי"

The *Degel Machane Efraim* explains that the word בריש is an acronym for the four pillars of the world who will hasten the *Geula* and have establish a new path in *Avodas Hashem*. Rav Shimon **bar** Yochai; Rav Shlomo **ben** Yitzchok (*Rashi*); Rav Yitzchok **ben** Shlomo (*Arizal*); Rav Yisrael **Ba'al Shem** Tov.

תהילים ע"ח: - ויתן לשבני עזו ותפארתו ביד צר

Similarly, *Tzaddikim* have related a wondrous anecdote on this *pasuk* in *Tehillim*. The word שבי translates to "captives". *Tzaddikim* have asked which captives we are talking about. That section of the chapter deals with the aftermath of our escape from Egypt and *Matan Torah*.



Rav Chaim Ben Betzalel, 6th of Sivan

Av Bais Din Freidberg, Elder Brother of *Maharal* of Prague, and *Mechaber* of *Sefer HaChaim* and *Igeres HaTiyul*

Rav Chaim's Yichus

Rav Chaim was born into a family of *Tzaddikim* and *Rabbonim*, who traced their illustrious lineage back to *Rashi*, who traced back to Rav Yochanon *HaSandlar*, fourth generation descendants of Rabbon Gamliel *HaZokein*, descendants of Dovid *HaMelech*.

It was through the *berocha* of his grandfather, Rav Chaim, *Av Bais Din* of Worms. Rav Chaim of Worms sent his two sons, Rav Yaakov and Rav Hilman, to study under the *Maharshal* while their brother Betzalel remained at home serving their father. When the two brothers came home glowing from their experience and sharing their spiritual growth and words of *Torah*, Betzalel grew jealous and complained to his father why he too had not been sent to study in the *Yeshiva* of the *Maharshal*. Then Rav Chaim of Worms blessed his son Rav Betzalel that in the *zechus* of the *shimush* and *Mitzvas Kibbud Av* he had performed by remaining behind, he would merit four illustrious sons, whose light would illuminate the entire world. Rav Chaim was the eldest and the *bechor*, the

The *Medrash* states that when *Hashem* gave us the *Torah*, all the *Malochim* brought gifts to Moshe *Rabbeinu*.

The *Soton* also felt compelled to give Moshe a gift. So he approached Moshe *Rabbeinu* and gave him four souls that *Hashem* had given to the *Soton* for safekeeping when He created the world, because the *Soton* had complained that if these four souls were to come down to earth there would be no more free will – only goodness would reign. However, at that time he gave over possession of those souls to Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Again, those four souls' names are in the acronym of the word שבי.

other brothers were: Rav Sinai, *Rosh Yeshiva* in Prague, later *Av Bais Din* of Nikolsberg and Meheren, Rav Shimshon of Kremenitz, an ancestor of the famous Rav Shimshon Ostropoler and the youngest brother, Rav Yehuda, known as the *Maharal* of Prague.



Rav Chaim and the Rema

Rav Chaim studied under the *Maharshal* and Rav Sholom Shachna of Lublin, together with the *Rema*.

In *Adas Tzaddikim* there is a legend told how when the *Rema* became *Av Bais Din* of Cracow he took Rav Chaim as his *seган* (assistant) *Rav* and how when the *Rema* traveled, Rav Chaim acted as chief *Rav* in the *Rema's* place. One day, Rav Chaim's wife passed away. The *Rema* was so dependent on Rav Chaim and the communal responsibilities were so great that all *shidduch* suggestions were discounted and everyone waited for the *Rema* to approve a match. Rav Chaim, seeing how things went, took matters into his own hands. Legend has it that he made

a secret match with a local baker through a *shadchan*. The simple but pious baker supplied his illustrious son-in-law to-be with all the *seforim* he would need and a hidden room to study undisturbed. The *Rema* returned and found Rav Chaim melancholy. He surmised that it was for lack of a suitable match and proposed that he would indeed find Rav Chaim a new wife. Rav Chaim staged that he wished to visit his family and left with fanfare, pomp and ceremony. He was escorted by the *Rema* and the townspeople out of the city limits, where he secretly dressed up in simple clothes, gathered a *minyan* and married the baker's daughter in a clandestine *chuppa*. After the *seuda* he sat himself down to study, happily undisturbed in his new father-in-law's home for some two years until he was discovered.

There was a plague in Cracow and someone assumed that the secretive son-in-law of the baker, whom no one knew, was the culprit behind some crime that made Cracow guilty. Rav Chaim was summoned before the *Rema*, and was discovered to have been hiding all this time! Of course he was released and cleared

of all charges.

"Why are you laughing? What is your sin and why did you hide?" asked the *Rema* when he saw Rav Chaim laugh.

"I hid because the communal responsibilities were too much for me and disturbed my *Torah* study. I laughed because these simple people were so quick to judge me and I can see they were just all too happy to whip me as soon as you gave them the word, and my sin was that my *Torah* study was so good I almost grew arrogant, but then *Hashem* shamed me and belittled me."

When the *Rema* went to visit him to see what he meant he heard him studying with someone. When he came in though, Rav Chaim was alone. "I command you to reveal who was here!" said the *Rema*, and Rav Chaim admitted he had been studying with Eliyohu *HaNovi*, and he was still there in the room. Eliyohu then told the *Rema* that he studied with Rav Chaim not because he was greater than the *Rema* but that the *Rema's* greatness and rabbinical strength was too much for him!



Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter, 6th of Sivan

The *Imrei Emes* of Ger

Pitum HaKetores: Imrei Emes of Ger – Some Things Smell Better Than a Good Smell

When the *Imrei Emes* was crowned the new *Rebbe* of Ger he took a stand against the tendency for the *Chassidim* to *daven* very late – even past *zeman tefilla*. He made a *takona* (ruling) that *davening* must only be done during *zeman tefilla* in all the *Gerrer Shteiblach*.

One of the sincere *Chassidim* cried to the *Rebbe* that he could not perform his extensive, pre-*davening* preparations with this new *takona* and his *davening* was now lacking its true flavor.

The *Rebbe* answered that in *Pitum HaKetores* it says that as they added even a tiny amount of honey to the mixture of *Ketores* the smell would be too great for a human. If so, asks the *beraisa*, then why don't we mix it in? It answers because the *Torah* forbids honey to be offered to *Hashem*.

The lesson is that it is not in our jurisdiction to figure out the best way to serve *Hashem* outside the boundaries of the *Torah*. *Hashem* runs the world and He knows what He wants and what is best for us. Elevating our service against the dictates of the *Torah* always smells foul, no matter how fragrant it appears to be.



The Imrei Emes - Kibbud Av Wins Over the Ma Nishtana

In days gone by the *Ma Nishtana* was a much more innocent affair. Children were not taught the *Ma Nishtana* in school, but rather it was up to the child to notice strange things going on at the *Seder* and ask of his own volition.

On *Seder* night when the *Imrei Emes* was a little boy, his father, the *Sefas Emes* of Gur, started his *Seder* and waited expectantly for his young son to start inquiring about odd happenings. The *Imrei Emes* sat quietly without the slightest hint of a puzzled look on his face. The *Sefas Emes* started to do more strange things in

order to get the boy to ask, but to no avail. He even started to move things on and off the table, turn the table over, and other wild antics just to break the boy's calm demeanor, but nothing would make the *Imrei Emes* flinch.

Finally, the *Sefas Emes* asked his son if he had noticed anything different about that night's meal. The *Imrei Emes* said that of course he had. Then why, asked the *Sefas Emes*, did you not seem alarmed and ask any questions?

The little boy answered with pure innocence, "Because I know my father is a smart man, and whatever he does, he has a very good reason for doing. That is why I am not the slightest bit disturbed."

www.revach.net/article.php?id=5038



Rav Avrohom Sholom Halberstam, 6th of Sivan

Stropkover *Rav* and *Av Bais Din*, *Mechaber* of *Divrei Sholom* ~ the "Miracle Rav"

[Editor's note: The following is a story that was witnessed personally by my mother and her other family members].

In 1935, my grandfather, Rav Meir Zev Katz, *hy"d*, had a young non-Jewish tenant who was upset at Rav Meir Zev and wanted to do him harm. So she went to the Hungarian government and told them that Rav Meir Zev and his family spoke against the Hungarian government – a deed which, at that time, was punishable by death. Rav Meir Zev and his wife were arrested, released on bail and a court date was set.

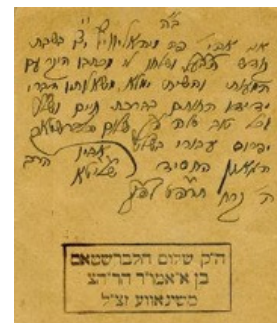


At that time, the Stropkover *Rebbe* was visiting Rav Meir Zev's brother and stayed there as a guest for a few days. Rav Meir Zev went to visit the Stropkover *Rebbe* and asked for a *yeshua*. The *Rebbe* told Rav Meir Zev to go home and find out the exact name of the tenant and the name of the tenant's mother.

With information in hand, Rav Meir Zev came back to the Stropkover *Rebbe* on *Motzo'ei Shabbos*. Rav Avrohom Sholom asked

my young cousin to bring the candles that were lit *L'Koved Motzo'ei Shabbos*. He then burned the paper that had her name on it. The following day the news spread that the tenant had died in her sleep, and since there was no witness anymore – the case was promptly dropped.

Letter handwritten and signed by Rav Sholom Halberstam, with his stamp, Michalovce, 1929. In the letter Rav Halberstam informs that he will remain in Michalovce for *Shabbos*, blesses that "Hashem should fulfill his wishes" and concludes: "Signed with blessings of life and peace and all good, Sholom Halberstam". A beloved son of Rav Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam of Shinova-Sanz, *mechaber* of *Divrei Yechezkel*, who used to say about his son, "His soul is very holy and very lofty". It is rare to find a letter written entirely in his handwriting.



Zera

Shimshon



Bamidbar

The Zera Shimshon, Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachmon Michael Nachmani, was born in 5467 (1706/1707) into an illustrious family with great Rabbinical lineage. He studied the revealed and concealed parts of the Torah by the Torah greats of his day.

He served as Rav of Modena, Pisa, Sayna and Reggio, Italy, and was recognized as a holy and pious individual, as well as a tremendous Torah scholar in all areas of Torah. He passed away on the 6th of Elul 5539 (1779).

His Seforim were named, Toldos Shimshon (The 'Offspring' of Shimshon) on Pirkei Avos and Zera Shimshon (The 'Seed' of Shimshon) on the Parshi'os of the Torah. In his introduction, he explains that since his only son had died during his lifetime, he wrote his Seforim to perpetuate his own memory after his passing.

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

"I implore of you with ten terms of supplication to choose from my Chiddushim (novella) the piece that finds favor in your eyes, for your learning will sooth my soul etc..."

"This righteousness will stand by you forever – to 'eat' in this world, and be satiated in the next. In this merit, Hashem will repay you with children, health and sustenance.

"...and now my brothers and friends etc. do a true kindness, and with your eyes you will see children and grandchildren surrounding your table, houses filled with all that is good, wealth and honor will not cease from your children..."

לזכר נשמת

רבינו שמשון חיים בן רב נחמן מייכאל זצ"ל

בעל הזרע שמשון זיע"א

ויה"ר שיתקיימו בנו ברכותיו של אותו צדיק

לזכות כל ישראל

איש על דגלו (במדבר ב' ב')

Each man by his banner (2:2)

The Medrash (Bamidbar Rabba 2:2), teaches that at the giving of the Torah on Har Sinai, the Jewish people were able to see into the Heavens which had opened. They saw how the angles were set up in groups, each group with its own flag. Upon seeing this they said, "If only we could also merit being set up in such a formation with each tribe assigned to its own flag." When Hashem heard this He said, "I promise that I will fulfill their desire and Hashem immediately commanded Moshe Rabbeinu to make flags for the Jewish people.

The Zera Shimshon explains what the greatness of the flags was and what it was that the Jewish people so desired when they saw the angels set up with flags.

The Degalim represent the fact that each person has his own designated place and purpose. The Jewish people wanted these flags because they knew that if they would have them and internalize the lesson they stood for, there would be no strife and they would remain in a constant state of Achdus. This is because the flags would serve as a steady reminder that each person has his own role and each group also has their indented mission. When each person and his tribe realize that their role is not paled or diminished by the role of another tribe there can only be peace.

The Jews understood that this is why there is no strife between the angles, because of the flags. The (Heavenly) flags served as reminders of each of the angel's unique role. Seeing this, the Jews wanted flags so that they should also have this enabler that could help live in peace with each other by recognizing that each tribe/person has their/his own role which doesn't encroach on the others role and vice versa.

As well, the Satan only has power when there is confusion and no clear boundaries – the exact opposite situation created by the flags. This is seen at the sin the Egel where the Gemara (Shabbos 89a) says that the Satan came and 'mixed up' the world – only then did the Jewish people sin. Only when they did not have a clear indication of their proper standing and their role, was the Satan able to make them sin.

This is also seen when Bilam tried to make the Jewish people sin. When Bilam was informed that the Jewish people where encamped with the system of the flags he said, "No one can overpower them". This is because Bilam understood the greatness of the flags and the fact that in helps the Jews reach Achdus and stay away from the Satan. When the Jews are in such a state, indeed, no one can overpower them.



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Hilula

29 - Rabbi Meir of Parmishlan

1 - Rabbi Meir HaLevi Horowitz

2 - Rabbi Yisrael of Vizhnitz

3 - Rabbeinu Ovadiah of Bartenura

4 - Rabbi Mantzur Marzok

5 - Rabbi Yosef Ezra Zalicha

6 - David Hamelech a"h, the sweet singer of Israel



The Banners Were a Sign of Unity

"The Children of Israel shall encamp, each man by his banner according to the insignias of their fathers' household, at a distance surrounding the Tent of Meeting shall they encamp"

(Bamidbar 2:2)

Only one year had passed from when Bnei Yisrael were enslaved and tormented under Pharaoh's command in Mitzrayim, and in this short period of time they grew into a structured and orderly nation, organized into formations of three tribes each, known as 'banners', with each 'banner' led by a designated tribe.

Chazal tell us (Midrash Rabba 2:3), "When Yisrael saw the angels arranged according to banners, they too desired banners. They said, if only we too could be arranged according to banners like them. Hashem said to them, 'You desired banners, by your lives, I will fulfill your request'. Immediately Hashem announced the banners to Yisrael by telling Moshe, go and arrange them according to banners as they desired."

The Midrash continues, "Moshe became distressed. He said, now dissension might erupt between the tribes. If I tell the tribe of Yehuda to dwell in the East and they say, we can only dwell in the South, and similarly with Reuven and Ephraim and all the other tribes, what should I do? Hashem said to him, Moshe, it is of no concern to you, they do not need you, they are familiar with their dwelling places by themselves since they possess a tradition and testament of how to encamp from their father Ya'akov. I am not introducing anything new for them, they already have an established order from Ya'akov Avinu, in the same way that they carried him and surrounded his coffin when he passed away, in that order will they surround the Mishkan."

How, though, did this answer placate Moshe Rabbeinu? At that time of Ya'akov's passing, his children numbered a total of twelve tribes (sons), but now after multiplying greatly in Mitzrayim, we are talking about myriads of thousands of Jewish people. When they left Mitzrayim they numbered 600,000 men besides the women and children. So if now they approach Moshe with claims and arguments, how in fact will Moshe Rabbeinu handle them?

I remember once an argument erupted during the Shacharit prayer in the Beit Knesset, concern-

ing the tune of the 'Az Yashir Moshe' prayer. Some of the congregants wanted a certain tune, while others demanded a different tune. The commotion grew until it was impossible to restore the peace. If this is the way of disputes, how could Moshe Rabbeinu prevail over the arguments that the delegation of banners and encampments might engender, G-d forbid?

Furthermore, the holy Arizal zya"a says that there are twelve gates in Heaven for receiving prayers, corresponding to the twelve tribes. Each tribe has his fixed version of text which he may not depart from, due to the dictum "Do not forsake the teaching of your mother". Here too, it is difficult to understand this concept for if peace and unity are so important, why should there not be one universal text for all?

The verse "The Children of Israel shall encamp, each man by his banner according to the insignias of their fathers' household, at a distance surrounding the Tent of Meeting shall they encamp", answers these questions. Although Am Yisrael are indeed divided into different camps, but when they all encamp around the Ohel Mo'ed (Tent of Meeting), when they all dwell around the holy Torah, the concern of separation and dispute disappears. If all share one goal – fulfilling the will of their Father in Heaven - disagreement will never erupt between them.

Rabbeinu Nissim Ravivo zya"a, the Av Beit Din of Paris, France, was of Moroccan descent yet all his teachers were Ashkenazic Sages. Similarly, the Rif and the Rambam zya"a were Spanish Sages yet all the Ashkenazic Sages follow their rulings.

My father zt"l too, as was his holy custom, would tell us stories about the Ba'al Shem Tov a"h (a Chasidic Master), to impart the lesson that when one encamps "surrounding the Ohel Moe'd", meaning around the holy Torah, then there are no rifts and no controversies, for a wonderful sense of unity reigns among all. This unity does not differentiate between land of origin or different cultural groups, for all of us are sons of one nation. We are all descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov and our joint goal is to fulfill the will of our Father in Heaven. On the contrary, each one assists the other with his Avodat Hashem, as in the concept "Each man would help his fellow and to his brother, he would say 'Be strong!'"



Walking in their Ways

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

Torah Saps a Person's Strength

One day a wealthy Jew approached me for a blessing for several concerns.

As a merit for the blessing to come to fruition, I asked him to donate from his abundant assets in support of Yeshiva students who study and toil in Torah, and in this way, he will be using his wealth to support Torah.

The rich man refused my request with the following justification, "Honorable Rav, I am a hard-working fellow. My wealth is a result of the considerable time and effort that I invest in my business, so I will not donate even one cent for Yeshiva bachurim who do not work for their living and squander their time on nothing but Torah study. From my point of view, they are lazy time-wasters and I am not in the habit of distributing my hard-earned cash to such people!"

These scornful words that he allowed himself to utter, out of complete ignorance and misunderstanding of the elevated status that Torah learning holds for Am Yisrael, were directed towards the most treasured sector of Am Yisrael, those who invest their entire beings in the holy Torah. On hearing his position, I suggested that he try and study Torah for one day only, and if he succeeds I will bless him with whatever he desires.

The wealthy individual laughed at my suggestion and replied: "No problem, I am even prepared to sit and study Torah for an entire week!"

Just as I thought, he sat on his place for quite some time and tried to concentrate on what was being studied, just like the Yeshiva students. But when his attempts were unsuccessful, he quickly gave up and came to the clear conclusion that Torah study is something essentially difficult which demands toil and great effort, and there is no place to belittle those who tirelessly toil in study Torah. After all, it is in their merit that the entire world exists.

From then on, he held Yeshiva students in great esteem and merited donating considerable sums to our distinguished Yeshiva and other Torah institutions. He merited becoming a 'Zevulun', one who supports those who study the holy Torah and thereby merits a share in their learning.

The Haftarah

"Yonatan said to him, "Tomorrow is the New Moon"

(Shmuel I, 20)

The connection to the Parsha: The day following this Shabbat (Sunday) will be Rosh Chodesh Iyar. This is the connection to the Haftarah in which the verse says, "Tomorrow is the New Moon".

Guard Your Tongue

Praising One's Friend

There are various forms of speech that are forbidden because they are considered as 'avak lashon hara' (suggestion of lashon hara), for example saying, "Who would have believed that so and so would turn out in this way". Or: "Let's not talk about so and so, I don't want to go into details about what happened and what will be", and other similar references where although nothing derogatory has been said, they have a negative connotation.

Praising someone in front of his enemy is also considered as 'avak lashon hara' because this will cause the enemy to begin speaking negatively about him.



In Our Father's Path

Forgetting About the Sandwich and the Coffee

On the verse in this Parsha, "Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai", the Midrash expounds: "From here our Sages learnt, the Torah was given through three things, with fire, with water and in the desert. Why was it given with these three things? To teach us that just as these are free for all human beings, so too the words of Torah are free." The Midrash continues to explain the implication of desert: "One who does not make himself ownerless like a desert, cannot acquire spiritual wisdom and the Torah".

Rabbi Yitzchak David Grossman shlita, in astonishment, points out that this concept seems to oppose rational thinking. In every profession that someone wishes to train and qualify in, he is first assessed for suitability, meaning one verifies that he is mentally stable and is capable of handling the project, for if not, one would be concerned about allowing him to specialize in this area. If an unkempt individual shows up for a job interview, it is likely that tomorrow he will find himself at yet another interview. No employer seeks to hire a disorderly disheveled worker.

However, concerning the Torah we are told, "For you can have no freer man than one who engages in the study of the Torah". When a person makes himself ownerless and unattached then he is able to acquire Torah and wisdom. A desert is a place that is neither owned nor cultivated. Only if a person makes himself ownerless and has no preconceived 'cultivated' ideas or demands, is he able to acquire Torah and wisdom. For the Torah is a G-dly wisdom, and if man would approach it with his own superficial opinions, he will not be able to grasp the Torah.

The great Gaon Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer's zt"l was sitting and delving into the holy words of the Torah, together with a young bachur who had come to study with him. At midday, the righteous Rabbanit, Baila Hinda a"h, returned from the Machaneh Yehuda market loaded with baskets of provisions in honor of the approaching festival of Pesach. She had bought horseradish for the Maror and radishes for Karpas. As she entered her home, she noticed the coffee, bread and vegetables that she had prepared for her husband, lying abandoned on the dining room table. She approached her husband and enquired, "Why did you not yet eat?"

The Rosh Yeshiva as if shook himself out of a trance and answered innocently, "Do you not see, Rabbanit, the distinguished guest that is sitting here with me? He is a young Torah scholar who wished to discuss Torah matters. How could I interrupt our learning for something so mundane?"

But the Rabbanit persisted: "My dear husband, what would have happened if you would have told the young bachur to wait a few moments while you tasted something?" Rabbi Isser Zalman did not understand and explained with the utmost modesty: "Am I some kind of professor that can keep people waiting?"

This is a wonderful demonstration of Chazal's explanation of "One who does not make himself ownerless, in the sense of unattached, like a desert cannot acquire spiritual wisdom and the Torah"...



Pearls of the Parsha

To Avert Embarrassment

"Moshe and Aharon took these men who had been designated by [their] names" (Bamidbar 1:17)

Moshe Rabbeinu could have chosen the men himself since their greatness was clearly recognizable, these were the leaders of the tribes who were the ones summoned when important matters were discussed by the assembly. However, so as not to offend those who were not chosen, Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem to name them.

Furthermore, Harav Tzvi Polias shlita points out, when taking these men, first it says "Moshe and Aharon took these men", and only after that, "They gathered together the entire assembly" so that no one should be embarrassed when his friend was called upon, while he himself was not chosen.

There is a fascinating story told on this topic. After Rabbi Akiva Eiger's engagement, his father-in-law invited him to his home town, eager to introduce his gifted son-in-law to the townsfolk. The Talmidei Chachamim gathered in the Beit Midrash and the father-in-law looked forward to his son-in-law the Gaon addressing the audience with words of wisdom.

To his dismay, the son-in-law stood there in silence. The astounded father-in-law wished to break off the engagement. His son-in-law asked for a reprieve of two days and then agreed to enlighten the participants with his Torah thoughts.

When he was asked why he had endangered his engagement, he answered that there was another chatan present in the Beit Midrash, whose father-in-law was also very proud of him, and had he agreed to speak, this would have diminished the other chatan's value in his father-in-law's eyes. This is why he kept quiet.

Counting the People Without Reason

"As Hashem commanded Moshe, he counted them in the Wilderness of Sinai" (Bamidbar 1:19)

Why did the Torah see fit to point out that the counting of Yisrael was "as Hashem commanded Moshe"? Is this not obvious?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains: Normally, there is benefit in a country knowing the exact number of its citizens.

This knowledge can be used to estimate

the different needs of the citizens, for example the amount of food required and so forth. However, when Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, they ate and drank as much as they desired. They ate Manna that fell from the heavens, they drank water from the Well and they were surrounded by Clouds of Glory which washed and ironed their clothes. Even the young, growing children did not require new clothing since their clothing grew with them. Therefore, they did not need food, drink or clothing, nor protection from enemies. This being the case, there was no practical benefit of knowing the exact number of Bnei Yisrael while they were in the desert.

This is the implication of the verse: "As Hashem commanded Moshe, he counted them in the Wilderness of Sinai". Had this not been a G-dly command, it would not have seemed necessary to count them. But once Hashem gave over this command, it must be obeyed completely without doubting it, even if one does not see the reason for it.

Why Did Gad Merit Moshe being Buried in His Lot?

"And the leader of the children of Gad is Eliasaph son of Reuel" (Bamidbar 2:14)

Rabbeinu the Chida zt"l, in his sefer 'Chomat Anoch', quotes the 'Imrei Noam' who writes that Gad merited Moshe Rabbeinu being buried in his lot because when Moshe appointed Dan as the leader of the banner, Gad could have claimed: I am the firstborn of Zilpah and Dan is the firstborn of Bilhah, why was I not chosen?

Since he remained quiet and did not speak up, the leader of Gad's tribe is referred to here as "Eliasaph son of Reuel", even though his name was in fact "son of Deuel". This alludes to the fact that since he elevated himself, he merited 'Reu-el', literally "friend of Hashem" referring to Moshe Rabbeinu, being buried in his lot!

He adds how appropriate it is that particularly now when talking about the banners, he is referred to as 'son of Reuel', written with the letter 'reish', while at the beginning of the Parsha, when talking about the leaders and their offerings, he is called 'son of Deuel', the first letter being a 'daled'. This implies that in the merit of his sacrifice concerning the banners he was awarded this honor!

Treasures

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



The Creator Waits for Man to Repent

"And as for the redemptions of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the Children of Israel who are in excess of the Levites" (Bamidbar 3:46)

Why did Hashem did not make the total number of Leviim correspond to the exact number of firstborns? What lies behind the excess 'firstborns' who then needed to be redeemed?

It seems that the Torah wishes to teach us a fundamental principle. Even if a person sins and does not act in accordance with Hashem's will, he should not despair by saying, I have fallen to such a low level that I can no longer rectify my ways. For just like the excess 'firstborns' had no corresponding Leviim since they were greater in number, nevertheless, Hashem found a remedy for them through the redemption procedure. So too the sinner should know that for him too there is a way to rectify, for the Creator, blessed be His Name forever, does not take His creations to account severely and knows that "the imagery of man's heart is evil from his youth", and if he repents fully he can rectify his wrongdoings and return to his previous virtuous state.

Someone approached me, most distraught. For the last ten years, he had been laying tefillin every day and he just found out that there were no parshiot in them... He was utterly distressed and wished to know how he could rectify all these years of not fulfilling the mitzvah.

I explained to him that nothing stands in the way of repentance. The Creator is forbearing and forgiving and if he accepts upon himself from now on to lay a quality pair of tefillin, and when wearing them undertakes not to talk about any worldly matters which will add to their holiness, I guarantee that the mitzvah will be considered for him as if he laid quality tefillin all those years. For the Creator waits for man's repentance which removes and atones for the sin.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Sefer Bamidbar begins by saying that Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness. The telling question is, why was the Torah given specifically in a desert?

Desert is an ownerless and uncultivated place, lacking all basic living conditions. No water, no electricity, no air conditioning. How can one survive in the desert? There is only one way: By lifting one's eyes to Hashem and trusting that He will provide man with all his needs and protect him from the dangers of the desert.

So it was with the generation who lived in the Wilderness. They merited the Pillar of Cloud that straightened the path for them, the Manna, Heavenly food, and a Well of water that travelled with them wherever they went.

The reason why the Torah was given in the desert is to teach us how to live a life of Torah. A person who studies Torah needs to ignore all that is happening around him and not pay attention to the surrounding conditions. He must place his trust in Hashem and cast his burden on Him.

Concerning this David Hamelech writes (Tehillim 55:23) "Cast upon Hashem your burden and He will sustain you; He will never allow the faltering of the righteous". If you trust in Hashem, you will not lack anything!

"One who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him"

Morning arrives, the father wakes his son for another day of Torah study in his Talmud Torah. Today too, as always, his mother prepared a fresh, nutritious sandwich for him and placed it in his lunch bag. The hour is getting late, the child leaves the house in a rush and makes his way to the Talmud Torah. On arrival, he enters his classroom, sits down in his place and then suddenly remembers that he forgot to take the bag with his sandwich...

"What will be?" he worries, "for so many hours I will go hungry until I get home?"

For a moment he is filled with concern, but this feeling immediately makes way for a genuine feeling of tranquility and trust. "I know my parents, they will do anything to make sure I won't remain hungry."

Sure enough, at the very moment when the child is sunk in thought, the father finds the lunch bag lying on the kitchen table. He thinks

to himself, "Oh no! What will be? There's no way that my dear son can go without food an entire morning, how will he have the strength to learn?"

What will be? It is clear what will be. Despite being pressed for time, the father grabs the bag, stops a taxi and hurries to the Talmud Torah to bring his child the nutritious sandwich so that he should have a productive morning of Torah learning.

What is the conclusion? The child was right! He had nothing to worry about! He was certain that his father would do anything for him and this is indeed what happened.

Returning home from the Talmud Torah, the father reasons: "It is true that the trip took away my precious time and even involved a considerable expense. But what doesn't a father do for his child! And what doesn't a father do that his son should be able to study diligently without any hindrance!"

We all understand that this story is nothing out of the ordinary. This is how every devoted father will react and this is the feeling of every son who relies on his father and trusts in him.

All this is only an illustration to demonstrate clearly the relationship of our merciful Father in Heaven to His beloved children, who studiously devote themselves to Torah and service of Him. The Creator of the World will not leave us to survive on our own. He will worry for us and fill every lack. How? Don't worry! Hashem has many ways. All that is required of us is faith and trust in Him. "One who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him."

Not always were parents able to send their child to the Talmud Torah with a fresh, appetizing sandwich. What happens when poverty is the norm and there isn't even a plain piece of bread for the child?

About this, the Torah says: "Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai". Those who travel through the desert do not present any preconceived conditions. They know that in order to arrive at their destination they must cross the desert, come what may. They have no stipulations and no expectations.

So too with the holy Torah! Torah study is not dependent on any external factor. Our Torah is a Torah of life, it is the elixir of life. Whatever the conditions – one studies Torah, without setting up conditions and without expecting anything.

Activating the Inner Voice

The sefer 'Pri Amalenu' offers a different reason for why the Torah was given in the desert.

One year, at the end of the semester in the Lomzha yeshiva, twenty-six students went to

take leave of their master and teacher, the Gaon Rabbi Yechiel Michel Gordon zt"l. Each student would now set off on his own path, wherever life would lead him.

The Rosh Yeshiva wished to provide them with 'provisions' for their journey, something that would be suitable for each and every one of them. And indeed he inspired them with the following insight.

My sons, he turned to his beloved students, many of you will no doubt merit receiving Rabbinical positions, while others may not. Let me tell you a story that will serve as a guide to you for life.

The Russian Czar, Nikolai the first, once went on a tour of all the countries under his reign. When he arrived at the first country, he was warmly welcomed by the local governor. The Czar turned to him and asked: "How do you administer the country's affairs?"

"Exactly according to the law!" was his reply.

The Czar treated him to a menacing look and declared: "You are dismissed from your position as governor!"

The thousands of citizens were in shock. They could not understand what had happened. Where did the governor go wrong?! But not one person dared protest the Czar's decision, especially since this was Nikolai the first ym"sh, known as a cruel tyrant and nicknamed "The Iron Czar".

That evening at the festive dinner, after the Czar had downed several cups of vodka and was in a good mood, one of the royal entourage plucked up the courage and asked the Czar the meaning of the strange riddle. Why was the governor fired from his position only because he was particular to keep to the laws?

This was the Czar's answer: To govern a country according to the letter of the law, exactly as is recorded in the books, there is no need for a ruler. For this a police sergeant is good enough...

The message of this story is clear: To live as a Jew, the Torah must become the 'Living Torah'. The 'fifth section' of Shulchan Aruch was never printed but nevertheless must be applied. (There are only four sections in the Shulchan Aruch, that which is referred to as the fifth section is the volume of 'common sense'.) To understand the correct conduct for every step of the way, it is impossible to behave like a small-minded police sergeant and just go by the book, excusing oneself with the fact that one is behaving 'according to the rules'. Rather, in addition to keeping to the laws, a person must also activate his inner, personal voice to guide him as to the correct way to behave in each situation.

MEOROS RAMCHAL BAMIDBAR

PREPARING THE PLACE SETTING TO CONQUER THE LAND OF ISRAEL AND DEFEAT THE FORCES OF DARKNESS

“From age twenty,” (*Bamidbar* 1:3-4)

The *Ramchal* teaches us that the secret of the minimum age requirement for military service was a preparation for war to conquer *Eretz Yisroel*.

Each individual soldier that was counted among the eligible warriors was granted the power to defeat his enemies and conquer the land of Israel.

The place of preparation was in the dessert wasteland – the *midbar* a symbolic place where the forces of darkness rule – the *klippos* – the husks and empty shells of impurity. The preparation for battle had to be done in that place where darkness rules to subjugate and defeat them on their own turf and that is the proper defeat.

This is the secret why our *chumash* begins *Bamdibar* Sinai – in the Sinai desert the specifically designated place setting where this must take place.

The secret why the minimum age requirement for the army was twenty is based on the *pasuk* that *Hashem* is called Man of War = *Hashem Ish Milchamah*.

For *Hashem* Himself does battle with the other side – the *sitra achra*. When is this power and strength at its peak? At age twenty when a person comes of age as a man and all his maturity and manhood expresses itself and is finished and complete. Just as the Heavenly symbol of maturity is age twenty so too down here below the soldiers only went to war from age twenty and up when their spiritual lights were matured and they were the same as their Heavenly spiritual counterparts on High.

This was all done through the agency of Moshe and Aharon, whose souls were the greatest among *Klal Yisroel* and the greatest repairs and

rectifications were done by them. Here the twelve chieftains of the twelve tribes of Israel joined them as leaders alongside because the twelve *nassi'im* allude to the twelve ways that the four-letter Divine name of *Hashem YUD-HAY* and *VAV-HAY* can be spelled and rearranged.

It is known that *Hashem's* Name is like a sword (see *Sefer Charedim* that the *Yud* is like the pommel the two *Hays* like the guards and the *Vav* like the blade) this is the sword that can be wielded to kill the forces of darkness known as the other side – the *sitra achra*. And as we said that Hashem is called Man of War = *Hashem Ish Milchamah*.

Therefore, to harness the power latent in the four letter Divine name of *Hashem YUD-HAY* and *VAV-HAY* and its twelve spellings we needed all twelve *nassi'im* chieftains of the tribes. When you add Moshe and Aharon and count them among the twelve chieftains you get 14 the *gematria* of *Yad* or hand in Hebrew. This is also the secret why when we battle the forces of darkness known as the other side – the *sitra achra* we wield our sword in the left hand – *Yad*.

These were all the preparations for war done in the the dessert wasteland – the *midbar* in order to take vengeance against our enemies and afterwards conquer the land of *Eretz Yisroel*.

חרב שם הוי"ה

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