

# ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

LIGHTS OF OUR RIGHTEOUS TZADDIKIM



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זכות רפואה שלמה

מיכאל בן שלי

מלכה בת רחל

*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)

🕎 **KEDOSHIM** 🕎

⌘ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ⌘

Sowing the Seeds of the Zera Kodesh

## Dvar Torah

The Ropshitzer notes in the name of *Rashi*, "This *Parsha* was written *behakhel* when Bnei Yisrael were gathered together, as it says, 'Speak to the entire congregation of Adas Yisrael.'"

*Adas*, "congregation", has the same letters as *da'as*, "attachment" (as in "Odom knew Chava" in *Bereishis* 4:1). The reason *da'as* means to attach two things together is because it serves as a bridge between thought and action; first we think and then we consider our actions. This is *chochma* and *bina*. Afterward, we make up our minds how to act - this is *da'as*. Later, we actually act on what we were thinking about. We see illustrated how *da'as* acts as a bridge, connecting and attaching thought and action.

Any connection joins two opposing poles or extremes, bridging them and closing the gap between them. This is the force of our forefather Yaakov, who was the bridge between Avrohom and Yitzchok. (Yaakov represents *Tiferes*, the attribute that bridges the opposing extremes of Avrohom's *Chessed* and Yitzchok's *Gevura* - translator's note.)

Yaakov also spells *yud akev* - the heel and the letter *yud* - because he can connect (even the lowliest point in the body (the heel) to the rest of the body and mind represented by *yud*). Therefore, Rav Akiva is quoted as teaching us, *Ve'ahavta lerai'acha komocha ze klal godol*

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*baTorah*, that loving your fellow like yourself is a great principle in the *Torah* (*Yerushalmi Nedorim* 30:2).

The Ropshitzer connects the story of Rav Akiva's *talmidim* to Yaakov in a most wondrous way. We know that Yaakov desired peace and therefore opposed Shimon and Levi's slaughter of the people of Shechem after they had circumcised themselves (see *Bereishis* 34:30) This slaughter of the people of Shechem ended up coming back as the deaths of the *talmidim* of Rav Akiva, as *Chazal* teach us (*Yevomos* 62b) that they died because they failed to honor each other and they lacked togetherness, friendship and a connection to each other.

[The *Megaleh Amukos* and the *Rama MiFano* explain that there were three *gilgulim* or reincarnations of the slain people of Shechem who numbered 24,000, and the corresponding number of dead from the tribe of Shimon in Shittim and the same number of students of Rav Akiva who died between *Pesach* and *Shavuos*. This is why Rav Akiva championed the concept of loving each other - *ve'ahavta lerai'acha komocha* - because he saw the destruction brought about when these words were not heeded.]

The Ropshitzer explains that Rav Akiva's students died between *Pesach* and *Shavuos* because it is the time of *Sefiras HaOmer*, days designated for us to work on ourselves, perfecting and correcting our *middos* (character traits) to refine them and the *talmidim* should therefore have attached themselves to each other.

This is why the *mitzva* to count the *Omer* begins after *Pesach*, which the *pasuk* calls *Shabbos* (*Vayikra* 23:15): "You shall count for yourselves from the day after the *Shabbos*", because *Shabbos* encompasses all seven days of the week. *Sefiras HaOmer* is seen to symbolize a gathering together of disparate *middos*, a connection between opposing traits, a way to attach, connect and build bridges between opposing elements. This idea is hinted at in the *gematria* of *lerai'acha* (your friend) whose *gematria* (320) is equal to *Omer* (316 plus the four letters of the word), hinting that the *Omer* is a time for friendship, fraternity and attachment. In addition, *ve'ahavta lerai'acha komocha* is called a *klal godol baTorah*, and the word *klal*, which means "gather together" or "include", also alludes to friendship and attachment, because we are rectifying our *middos* and bridging gaps between them; this is the primary *avoda* in a person's life - to refine, fix and rectify his *middos*.

The Ropshitzer comments in the name of *Chazal* (*Yevomos* 61a) that only we, the Jews, are called by the name *Odom* (as opposed to *Enosh* or other terms for humanity). *Odom* has the same *gematria* as *midda* - forty-nine - like the forty-nine days counted during the *Omer*, when we count the seven traits times seven, which equal forty-nine combinations of these traits. Seven times the value of *Odom* equals *Omer*, teaching us once again that to rectify all our seven traits during the *Omer* is what makes us *Odom*.

The Ropshitzer concludes that Rav Akiva's *talmidim*, who failed to honor and respect each other, lacked this connection and therefore died during the time of *Sefiras HaOmer* between *Pesach* and *Shavuos*, a time that should be one of unity. This unity is Yaakov's attribute, as Rav Akiva said, "*Ve'ahavta lerai'acha komocha is a klal godol baTorah*," connecting and attaching all the holy branches of *Torah* to each other. May we all merit this unity!



## ***OHR HACHAIM***

*"The gates of heaven opened up and I saw G-dly visions, the Creator of the four corners of the earth, and I gazed and meditated upon that which I had permission to, and began to explain at the beginning of Hashem's holy words" Ohr HaChaim, Bereishis*

### **Praises For The Holy Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh**

#### **Only One Who has Ruach HaKodesh Can Truly Understand**

The *mechaber* of *Arvei Nachal*, Rav Dovid Shlomo Eibshitz, writes that the words of the *Ohr HaChaim* in this *Parsha* (about *Haskolas HaMuskal*) can only be truly and fully understood by those who possess the faculty of Divine Inspiration known as *Ruach HaKodesh*. However, one who studies them in depth can understand and grasp just a little. (*Arvei Nachal Acharei Mos*)



#### **Segula for Teshuva**

Rav Chaim Halberstam, a grandson of the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz, related that he had a tradition from *Tzaddikim* that there is a *segula* to study the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* on the *Parshios* of *Acharei Mos* and *Kedoshim*, and that whoever studies those *Parshios* with the commentary of the *Ohr HaChaim* is guaranteed not to die before having succeeded in doing *teshuva*. (*Kimu VeKiblu* II p. 256)



### **The Holy Lights Of The Ohr Hachaim**

#### **Support Bnei Torah and Do Not Cheat Them or Steal their Parnossa**

*"Do not oppress your fellow and do not steal from him" (19:13).*

The *Ohr HaChaim* sees in this *pasuk* a hint at the unfortunate practice of some people, who cheat *Torah* scholars and *Talmidei Chachomim* of their rightful *parnossa* by denying support for them and not sustaining them and their *limud Torah*.

The *Ohr HaChaim* asks why it is that we see that *Bnei Torah* lack *parnossa* in this world. Why is it that it seems like *Hashem*, Heaven forbid, does not provide for them? The *Medrash* (*Yalkut Mishlei* #904) personifies the *Torah* and depicts her as asking, "Why are my children poor?" The *Ohr HaChaim* answers based on a teaching of the holy *Arizal*: This material, lowly, physical world is simply incapable of holding and containing the bounty of greatness and goodness that the *Tzaddikim* deserve to receive. *Hashem* therefore sustains the average people and gives them *parnossa*; they, in turn, are supposed to support the *Bnei Torah*. Says the *Ohr HaChaim* that this teaching from the *Arizal* tells us that the wealthy and those who have a livelihood are a channel through which the blessing and support of the *Torah* scholars must pass through; they serve as a conduit from *Hashem* to give the *Bnei Torah* their rightfully deserved earnings that this world cannot otherwise withstand. If so, concludes the *Ohr HaChaim*, if they withhold their support for *Bnei Torah*, they are denying the *Torah* scholars

their rightful *parnossa* and are little better than cheats and thieves. This is why our *pasuk* admonishes us not to cheat or steal from our fellow, called in our *pasuk rei'acha*, meaning the *Tzaddikim* and *Bnei Torah*, as in (*Tehillim 122*) where we are asked to act *lemaan achai verei'ai* – “for the benefit of our brethren and friends”.



## 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

[תְּפִילָה הַנִּמְצָאת בַּסֵּפֶר אֶלֶף הַמִּגֵּן מִבַּעַל הַפֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ עַל פְּרֻשֵׁת וַיֵּצֵא עֲמוּד כ"ד]

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמִנוּחַת וְלַעֲלֹוֵי נַשְׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק \_\_\_\_\_  
בְּ/בַת \_\_\_\_\_, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים  
וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטוֹב שֶׁאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדִבּוּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וַיְהִי הַכֹּל  
לְזָכוֹת וְלְמִנוּחַת וְלַעֲלֹוֵי לְנַשְׁמוֹת עַמְדֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפָרֵט לְנַפְשׁ רֹחַ וְנַשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי /  
צַדִּיק \_\_\_\_\_. יְהִי רְצוֹן שֶׁתְּהִינָה נַפְשׁוֹתֵיהֶם צְרוּרוֹת בְּצְרוּר הַחַיִּים.

### Translation:

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

3) Learn about the person including history, culture, writings and teachings.

4) Study some of his teaching or writings.

See more at: [www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm](http://www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm)



## ❁ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ❁



Yahrzeits Beginning Shabbos Kedoshim

[http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim\\_yahrtzeit/Iyar](http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim_yahrtzeit/Iyar)

Biographical information and yahrzeits compiled by Reb Manny Saltiel and [www.anshe.org](http://www.anshe.org)

### \* 6<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Friday Night (May 10<sup>th</sup>)

- \* **Rav Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag)**, philosopher and commentator on *Chumash*. Though a distinguished *Talmudist*, Rav Levi never held a rabbinical office. He earned a livelihood most probably by the practice of medicine, (5048–5104/1288–1344);
- \* **Rav Yosef Meir Weiss**, *Admor* of Spinka, *talmid* of Rav Yitzchok Eizik of Ziditchov and of Rav Chaim of Sanz, *mechaber* of *Imrei Yosef*, (5598–5669/1838–1909);
- \* **Rav Dov Berish Zeitlyn** of Vilna, (5680/1920);
- \* **Rav Yaakov Chaim Perlow** of Stolin, buried in Detroit, (5706/1946);
- \* **Rav Menachem Mendel Halberstam** of Stropkov, *mechaber* of *Divrei Menachem*, uncle of Rav Yechezkel Shraga Lifshitz. During the Holocaust, the *Rebbe* initially hid in Budapest, then, with the Nazi occupation of Hungary, was taken to Bratislava, Slovakia, along with his wife, a granddaughter, and one son. He lived in New York after the war, teaching at the Stropkover *Yeshiva* in Williamsburg. He authored the *sefer Divrei Menachem*, (5714/1954);
- \* **Rav Refoel Binyomin Levine**, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Bais Arye*-Yerushalayim, son of Rav Arye Levine. Rav Refoel studied in the *Eitz Chaim Talmud Torah*, and was very close to its *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer. He continued his studies in the *Chevron Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim and the *Lomza Yeshiva* in Petach Tikva, where he studied *bechavrusa* with Rav Reuven Katz, the *Rav* of Petach Tikva. He married Chana Liba, daughter of Rav Chaim Shraga Feivel Frank, the *Rav* of the Yemin Moshe neighborhood in Yerushalayim. After his marriage, he continued his studies in the *Mirrer Yeshiva* under Rav Eliezer Yehuda Finkel. When the *Bais Arye Yeshiva* opened, Rav Refoel's father, Rav Arye Levine, asked him to serve as its *Menahel Ruchani*, a position he occupied until his final day. He was also a *Dayan* in the *Bais Din Tzedek* of the *Ashkenaz-Perushim* community founded by Rav Shmuel Salant, (5762/2002);
- \* **Rav Tzvi (Hirsch) Tevel**, (1916–2006). Born in Dinov, Galicia, he began learning at *Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin* when he was seventeen, where his *chavrusa* was Rav Chaim Kreiswirth. At the age of twenty-two, he became *Rosh Yeshiva* in *Yeshiva Divrei Chaim* in Cracow. After his father was murdered by the Nazis, Rav Tevel escaped to Russia with his mother and six siblings. After his marriage, he moved to Boro Park in 1951, establishing a *shul*, *Siach HaSadeh*, in 1966. For two years, he also ran a *Yeshiva*, *Zichron Yaakov*. He authored several volumes of *Tzion L'nefesh* and another *sefer* called *Gilyonei Tzvi*, (5766/2006).

### \* 7<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (May 11<sup>th</sup>)

- \* **Rav Shlomo Ephraim** of Luntchitz, *mechaber* of *Kli Yokor* and *Olelos Ephraim*. Rav Shlomo Ephraim was born in Luntchitz in Poland. He was a *talmid* of Rav Shlomo Luria (*Maharshal*), the famous *Talmudist* and *mechaber* of *Yam Shel Shlomo*. After leading the *Yeshiva* in Lvov, Rav Shlomo Ephraim was appointed *Rav* of Prague. He sat on the *Bais Din* of that city with Rav Yeshaya Horowitz (the *Shela HaKodosh*). Among Rav Shlomo Ephraim's prominent students was Rav Yom Tov Lipman Heller, *mechaber* of the *Mishna* commentary *Tosfos Yom Tov*. The *Kli Yokor* was *niftar* in Prague, Bohemia, (5310–5379/1550–1619);
- \* **Rav Chaim Moshe Reuven Elazary**, was a student of the *Slobodka Yeshiva*, first in Europe and then in Chevron. He began his rabbinic career in the Bronx, and also taught at a *Yeshiva* in

Brooklyn. After 1929, he succeeded his father-in-law, Rav Ephraim Pelcovitz, as *Rav* of Congregation *Agudas Achim* in Canton, Ohio. (His father had been in Canton since 1914, and in 1929 moved to Bridgeport, Connecticut.) In 1972, Rav Elazary settled in Petach Tikva. He left numerous published and unpublished works and articles, many of them exhibiting the influence of Rav Nosson Zvi Finkel, the *Alter* of Slobodka. Rav Elazary's brothers, Rav Betzalel and Rav Yisrael, were among those murdered by Palestinian Arabs in the 1929 Chevron massacre, (5744/1984).

✳ **8<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Sunday Night (May 13<sup>th</sup>)**

✳ **Rav Ezra Yerachmiel Rabinowitz** of Peshis'cha, (5591/1831);

✳ **Rav Moshe Mordechai Twersky** of Trisk, (5703/1943).

✳ **9<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Monday Night (May 14<sup>th</sup>)**

✳ **Rav Moshe Hager**, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Seret-Vizhnitz, Haifa, (5759/1999).

✳ **10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Tuesday Night (May 15<sup>th</sup>)**

✳ **Eli HaKohen** and his sons, Chofni and Pinchas. Bnei Yisrael were defeated by the Pelishtim, thirty thousand soldiers were slaughtered, the *Aron Kodesh* was taken into captivity, and Chofni and Pinchas, the two sons of Eli, *Kohen Gadol*, killed, 864 BCE. Eli was *niftar* at age ninety-eight in shock on hearing the news;

✳ **Rav Yitzchok Alfasi** (*Rif*), codifier of the *Gemora*, *mechaber* of *Sefer HaHalochos*, (1013–1103). The period of the *Geonim* began in 589, and ended in 1038 with the *petira* of Rav Hai Gaon. Rav Chananel's father, Rav Chushiel Gaon, had set out from Bavel to collect funds for a needy bride and was seized by pirates. He was sold as a slave in Africa, but was later redeemed by the members of its Jewish communities. From Africa, he headed to Kairuan, where he became a *Rosh Yeshiva*. His son, Chananel, was born in Kairuan. A young student from the Algerian city of Kal'a asked to be admitted to Rav Chananel's *Yeshiva*. His name was Yitzchok HaKohen. As Rav Yitzchok advanced in his studies, he became keenly aware of the fact that many people were unable to elucidate the *halocha* from the *Gemora* due to the vast amount of material it contains. As a result, he conceived of the idea of compiling a comprehensive and extensive *halachic* work that would present all the *halochos* and the practical conclusions of the *Gemora* in a clear, definitive manner. To achieve this goal, he retreated to his father-in-law's attic, where he worked on his *sefer* for ten consecutive years. During this period, however, a Moslem tyrant gained control of Tunisia, and persecuted all those who did not accept his faith, especially the Jews of Kairuan. As a result, all the city's Jewish residents fled to places controlled by the Elmuhides, who were more tolerant of the Jews. Among the fugitives was Rav Yitzchok who, with his wife and two children, moved to the Moroccan city of Fez. Rav Yitzchok remained in Fez for forty years, during which time he completed his *Sefer HaHalochos*, which is considered the first fundamental work in *halachic* literature. Eventually, he became known as Rav Yitzchok Alfasi, or the *Rif*. Rav Yitzchok was *niftar* at the age of ninety in 1103. He was succeeded by the *Ri Migash* (some say the 11<sup>th</sup> of *Iyar*), (4863/1103);

✳ **Rav Meir** of Lublin (*Maharam*), (5376/1616);

✳ **Rav Yosef Teumim**, *mechaber* of *Pri Megodim* on the *Shulchon Aruch*, *Rav* of Frankfurt (1727–1792). *Pri Megodim* is actually a two-part commentary: (a) *Mishbetzos Zohov* on the *Tur*, and (b) *Aishel Avrohom* on the *Mogen Avrohom*. Rav Yosef also wrote a commentary on the *Torah* entitled *Rav Peninim*, as well as *Porat Yosef* and *Rosh Yosef*, *chiddushim* on various *mesechtas*, (5552/1792);

✳ **Rav Yitzchok Yehuda Yechiel Eizik** of Komarna, *mechaber* of *Shulchon HaTohor*, (5566–

5634/1806–1874);

- \* **Rav Dovid Twersky** of Tolna (1808–1882), son of Rav Mordechai of Chernobyl. His works include *Mogen Dovid*. There is a Tolner *Shul* in Tzefas even today, (5642/1882);
- \* **Rav Hillel Lichtenstein** of Kolomaya, in the Ukraine (1814–1891). Born near Pressburg (present-day Bratislava, Slovakia), he became one of the leading students of the *Chasam Sofer*. After his marriage, Rav Lichtenstein studied in Galante, Hungary. His rabbinic career began in 1846, first as *Rav* of Margareten, Hungary, then as *Rav* of Klausenberg (today, Cluj, Romania). Eventually, he became *Rav* of Kolomaya, Galicia (today in Ukraine). He was among the fiercest opponents of the *Haskola* and a strong supporter of settlement in *Eretz Yisrael*. He helped his son-in-law, Rav Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, buy up land for what became the city of Petach Tikva. He wrote numerous books, including *Avkas Rochel (mussar)*, *Bais Hillel* (letters regarding strengthening observance), *Maskil El Dol (derashos)*, *Teshuvos Bais Hillel* (respona), and others, (5651/1891).
- \* **11<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Wednesday Night (May 16<sup>th</sup>)**
- \* **Rav Naftoli Tzvi Horowitz** of Ropshitz, *mechaber* of *Ayala Shelucha* and *Zera Kodesh*, (1760–1827). When Rav Naftoli decided to join the *Chassidic* movement he chose Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizensk as his mentor. He subsequently became a dedicated *Chassid* of the *Chozeh* of Lublin, the *Maggid* of Kozhnitz, and Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanov. Foremost among his *talmidim* was Rav Chaim of Sanz. His son, Rav Yaakov, was the *mechaber* of the *sefer Zera Yaakov*, (5587/1827);
- \* **Rav Aharon Pfeffer**, *Rav* in South Africa, (5753/1993);
- \* **Rav Yitzchok** of Radwill, son of Rav Yechiel Michel, the *Zlotchover Maggid*, (5592/1832).
- \* **12<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Thursday Night (May 17<sup>th</sup>)**
- \* **Rav Yehuda Tzvi Eichenstein** of Dolima, (5669/1909).



## ❁ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❁

### WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

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

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

The *Zohar* in *VaYeira* page 71 teaches us that if we suffer any calamity or tragedy we have the custom to go and daven at the *kevorim* of *Tzaddikim*. The reason for this is that we approach them with fasting, remorse and repentance, and we have in mind that the departed souls ask and *daven* for us before *Hashem* on High, as opposed to the prohibition against speaking to the dead which is an idolatrous practice where the idol worshippers sought out the impure dead souls and

bodies using sorcery and witchcraft. Instead, beseech our *Tzaddikim* who, in *gan eden*, are truly alive, and ask through *tefilla* and fasting and *teshuva* alone.



## ❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

STORIES & ANECDOTES

### Rav Yitzchok Alfasi, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

The Rif

Rav Yitzchok Alfasi, one of the greatest of the early codifiers of Jewish Law, whose name is familiar to all students of the *Talmud*, was born in Kalat ibn Hamad, a village near Fez, in North Africa, in the Jewish year 4773, or 1013 of the Common Era. His name "Alfasi" (or Alfes) means (in Arabic) a native of Fez. He is also known as *Rif* (from the initials of Rav Yitzchok Fasi).

The *Rif* studied the *Talmud* under the famous *Rabbonim*, Rabbeinu Nissim and Rabbeinu Chananel, in Kairwan, a city not far from Fez, which, by virtue of these two great luminaries, was then one of the leading centers of Talmudic learning. Afterward, he returned to Fez, where he became the head of the Jewish community. When his two great teachers passed away (about the year 1050), Rav Yitzchok Alfasi became the greatest recognized *Talmud* authority of his day, which was the second generation after the period of the *Geonim* came to an end, with the closing down of the great *Yeshivos* in Bavel.

In 1088, at the advanced age of seventy-five, Rav Alfasi was forced to flee his native land, because two wicked men, a father and son, denounced him as a traitor to the government. What the charge was remains unknown, but since it was the time when the Moslem Moors of North Africa were fighting the Christian kingdoms of Spain and taking over the Iberian Peninsula, it may be assumed that the *Rif*

was accused by the two scoundrels of some political offense, which endangered his life. The *Rif* fled to Spain, where he was received with great honor in Cordova and Granada. A year later he went to Lucena, where he succeeded Rav Yitzchok *ibn* Ghayyat as head of the community. Here the *Rif* established a *Yeshiva* that soon became most famous, and attracted distinguished scholars. One of the youngest of his *talmidim* was Rav Yosef *ibn* Migash, who came to Lucena at the age of twelve, and fourteen years later succeeded the *Rif* as *Rosh Yeshiva*. Rav Alfasi himself appointed him as his successor, although his own son, Rav Yaakov, was also a great scholar. Among his students are believed to have been the famous poets and scholars, Rav Yehuda *HaLevi* and Rav Moshe *ibn* Ezra, who composed poems in honor of their teacher.

Rav Yitzchok Alfasi was a man of noble character, and he took a fatherly interest in his many students. Yet from the day of his arrival in Spain he met with unfriendly opposition from two prominent Jews, both of whom, like himself, were called Yitzchok: Rav Yitzchok *ibn* Ghayyat and Rav Yitzchok Albalia. The latter had a prominent position at the court of the king of Seville, but lost his position when the king was defeated by his rival. Albalia went to live in Granada but did not stop criticizing the *Rif* until the day of his (*Albalia's*) *petira* (about 1098). However,

on his deathbed, he called his son, Boruch, then a boy about seventeen, and instructed him to go to Rav Alfasi, after his father's *petira*, and tell him that his father had forgiven him and begged Rav Alfasi's forgiveness with all his heart, and that his last wish was that his son, Boruch, should be accepted as the *Rif's* student. When the young Boruch came to the *Rif* and delivered his father's message, the *Rif* was moved to tears. He took the young man into his home and treated him as a son, teaching him with fatherly affection.

Rav Yitzchok Alfasi's great and monumental work is his *Halocha*, better known as the *Alfes*, or *Rif*. It is a digest of the *Gemora*, following the order of the Talmudic *Masechtos* (tractates), but leaving out much of the discussion and *Aggadic* material, in order to give the precise and definite *Halocha* (practical rulings and laws). In ascertaining the final decisions, he relied on the authority of his great teachers, Rav Nissim and, especially, Rav Chananel, and on his own vast knowledge of the *Talmud*, both the *Talmud Bovli* and *Yerushalmi*, and the Talmudic literature of the *Geonim* and all other Rabbinic literature that had been written before him.

The work was at once accepted by all Jews as a work of the highest authority, and it became the basis of future codes of Jewish Law. It was said of this great work that "it could have been written only with Divine Inspiration".

*Rambam*, who was a *talmid* of the *Rif's talmid*, Rav Yosef *ibn* Migash, called the *Rif* "my teacher", and said that the work was almost perfect. He advised his students to study it carefully, together with his own *Yad HaChazoka*.

When Rav Yosef Caro, several

hundred years later, compiled the *Shulchon Aruch*, which became the standard Code of Jewish Law, he used the *Alfes* together with the codes of *Rambam* and Rav Osher *ben* Yechiel (the *Rosh*) as the three pillars of his work. The *Alfes* has been studied, and is still studied, to this day, by students of the *Talmud*, and is part of the curriculum in many *Yeshivos*. Many commentaries have been written on the *Alfes* by some of the greatest *Talmudists* of later generations.

The first printed edition of the *Alfes* appeared in Constantinople in 1509. Since then, it has been reprinted many times with various commentaries. The best edition of the *Alfes* was printed in Wilno (by Romm, 1881) and it appears with all regular editions of the *Talmud*.

[www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/112338/jewish/Yitzchak-Ben-Yaakov-Hacohen-Alfasi.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112338/jewish/Yitzchak-Ben-Yaakov-Hacohen-Alfasi.htm)



### **Guided by the Rif**

Once, in his youth, Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov was studying in the *Bais Medrash* under Rav Doniel Yaffe in Berlin. He studied the works of the *Rif* on the *Talmud* diligently, and his soul thirsted for self-perfection. Once, he learned so much in one sitting that his tongue stuck to his palate. He began to *daven* deep in his heart and cried to *Hashem* to enlighten him and brighten his darkness. He *davened* and *davened*, until he fell into a deep sleep and dreamed. In his dreams he saw the *Rif* himself. The *Rif* showed him an image of Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk and told him to travel to the *Rebbe*, for there he would succeed in attaining his goal.

(*Ohel Elimelech* 183)



## Rav Meir of Lublin, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

Maharam

Known as *Maharam Lublin*, he is perhaps better known for his tenure in Cracow, although he did serve as the head of Lwów's rabbinical court as well. The *Maharam's* genius and acumen in *Talmudic* studies, especially in the area of hair-splitting *Talmudic* logic, known as *pilpul*, are legendary, as is clearly demonstrated in his works on Jewish Law and his responsa. Among his more well-known students are Rav Yehoshua, the *mechaber* of *Maginei Shlomo* and responsa *Pnei Yehoshua*, as well as Rav Avrohom, the son of the *Masas Binyomin*.

(Note: Among the other works that have come down to us are: *Me'ir Einei Chachomim*, *chiddushim* on the *Talmud* and its commentaries *Rashi* and the *Tosafos*, *Manhir Einei Chachomim*, one hundred and forty responsa, *Meor HaGola*, a commentary on the *Tur* and *Bais Yosef*, *Meor HaKoton*, a commentary on *Shaarei Dura*, *Ner Mitzva*, a commentary on the *Semag*, and *Torah Ohr*, a commentary on the weekly *parsha*).

The *Maharam* was an outspoken critic of even his own contemporaries and took issue with many works of his day on Jewish Law. Surprisingly, he even took issue with the *Shulchon Aruch*, the *Rema's* glosses and even with the *Sem"á's* commentary. Such offhanded remarks in his responsa include the fact that he thought little of their weight in deciding matters of Jewish Law and that he cared little, if at all, to study them.

This attitude may have been one of the leading causes for his dismissal from his post of *Rav* in Lwów according to the following legendary episode recorded in the work *Matzvos Kodesh* and cited in *Anshei Shem* and *Ir HaTzedek*:

Once, the *mechaber* of *Eisan HaEzrachi*, Rav Avrohom Shrentzel, made

a wedding and married off his son. [Note: Rav Avrohom served as head of the rabbinical court of Lwów and was a scion of the well-known Rappaport rabbinical family, yet known as Shrentzel after his father-in-law, Rav Mordechai Shrentzel, whose father, Rav Yitzchok Shrentzel, had also served as head of the rabbinical court and built the large *shul* within the city of Lwów. He was a *talmid* of the *Sem"á*, Rav Yehoshua Wolk).

He invited many guests, among them noted personalities and *Rabbonim* including the *Maharam*. At the end of the affair, out of respect for the great *Rav*, Rav Avrohom proceeded to escort him home. The *Maharam*, however, distracted as he was with his own thoughts, took no notice of this escort until he reached his own doorstep. Once he was home, his wife, noting that the well-known Rav Avrohom Shrentzel was escorting her husband, turned to the *Maharam* and pointedly remarked, "Why don't you notice who is escorting you? Is your own honor so much greater that you ignore his? Could you not even honor him by taking notice of his escort or engaging him in conversation?" The *Maharam* answered, saying, "And what about his own *Rebbe* and teacher, the *mechaber* of the *Sem"á*? Why did he not join his student and escort me home? Was his honor so great that he did not feel the need to honor me as well?"

When Rav Avrohom Shrentzel heard his own *Rebbe's* honor insulted, he decided to avenge the *Sem"á's* honor by having the *Maharam* removed from office. After the wedding, he summoned the public leaders of the community, as well as the heads of the council of the four lands and used whatever political clout and influence he could exert against the *Maharam* until he succeeded in having him deposed. At that time, the city of Lublin sent after the

*Maharam* and asked him to serve as their *Rav*. And so the *Maharam* left Lwów for

Lublin to serve as their *Rav* instead.



## Rav Yitzchok Yehuda Yechiel Eizik Safrin, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

Rav "Eizekel" of Komarna

### The Bris that Canceled the Funeral

Once, when Rav Eizekel of Komarna was traveling, he reached a small village near Kleinwerdayn. He was greatly surprised at the cold welcome he received, so he asked one of the villagers where everyone was. The latter explained that a tragedy had happened, and the whole village was gathered at so and so's house. There the father lay in bed, in the throes of imminent death, and in the next room cried his eight-day-old son whose *bris mila* was supposed to take place that day. Sighing sadly, the man continued, "The villagers are all waiting for the father to leave this world so that when they perform the *bris* they will name the poor orphan after his father."

Hearing this sad tale, the Komarner immediately told his coachman to hurry to the house. Sure enough, there he found the villagers mourning the coming death and delaying the *bris*. "Hurry up", said the *Tzaddik*, "get ready for the *bris* – no

delay!" So saying, he wrapped himself in his *Tallis* and sat himself down as *sandak*, himself performing the *bris*. Afterward, he sent one of the villagers with some money and instructions, "Go purchase some bread, herring and wine for the *seudas mitzva*." Soon the villagers were seated at the table, unable to refuse the *Tzaddik*, and they celebrated the *bris*, while next door the father lay on his deathbed.

Before *bensching* (the Grace After Meals), their astonishment grew. "And now," announced the *Tzaddik*, "please sing *Yom LeYabosha* (a traditional song at a *bris*) and let's dance." Unable to turn down the honorable *Tzaddik*, the astonished villagers did as they were told. Suddenly, the father himself stopped making death-rattle noises, and his eyes miraculously opened. "I am cold," he cried out. "Bring me some clothes." Soon he was dressed and dancing, celebrating at the *bris* of his son. The man was healthy all the days of his life.

(*Ner Yehoshua*).



## Rav Dovid Twersky of Tolna, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

Rav Dovid'l Tolner was a great *ba'al middos* – he had a big heart and sterling character. The following incident serves to illustrate: Once the *Rebbe* sat surrounded by family and *Chassidim* at a *seudas mitzva*. As was his custom, he wore the sable fur *shtreimel* on such occasions and sat near the open window. The window was much higher than the outside street level and to passersby it must have appeared that the *shtreimel* was just sitting there on the open windowsill. A passerby saw the *shtreimel*, grabbed it and ran off.

Meanwhile the house was a tumult – the *Chassidim* and family were in an uproar! What *chutzpa*! To steal the *Rebbe's shtreimel*, right off his very head, no less?! They were about to run off to catch the lowly thief but Rav Dovid'l would hear none of it. "Leave him be. I order you not to pursue him. He is no thief; obviously he must be in a really bad situation and needs the money, so he probably went to pawn the *shtreimel* to feed his hungry family – poor souls, they must be starving. Listen, he is no thief, the *shtreimel* is ownerless, I

relinquish all ownership of it – *hefker*!! I hereby declare it *hefker*, and no one should be held responsible or punished on my account! Why should you pursue him and

shame him? We will simply buy a new *shtreimel*!”

(*Ner Yehoshua*)



## Rav Hillel Lichtenstein of Kolomaya, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

Once, during Rav Hillel’s travels as a *Maggid*, a preacher who would tell tales of inspiration and rebuke the congregation to encourage their repentance and adherence to *Torah* and *mitzvos*, came to Sanz. The holy *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz honored him greatly, saying, “Here comes a *Maggid* whose sermons are truly sincere and solely said *le’shem shomayim* – for the sake and honor of Heaven.”

The Sanzer *Rav* then honored him by introducing the speaker and saying words of *Torah* followed by words of praise. However, a strange and shocking incident occurred. Rav Hillel sat listening with rapt attention to the *Divrei Chaim*’s speech and, while he focused on the words of *Torah*, no sooner had the Sanzer begun to praise Rav Hillel, when Rav Hillel began to strain and gesture that he could not hear well. He cupped his hands around his ears as if to hear better and paid closest attention to each word the *Tzaddik* said in praise of him! When the *Divrei Chaim*

switched to a *devar Torah* he went back to normal, but as soon as the *Divrei Chaim* said words of praise, again he listened with rapt attention.

The people were beside themselves – how could the *Divrei Chaim* praise someone who was seemingly so full of himself as to listen to his own praise, not with shy embarrassment, but with such punctilious attention that he actually strained to hear it more than words of *Torah*!

Later, when they joked about this and asked the Sanzer *Rebbe*, the *Divrei Chaim* was taken aback and declared in shock, “Fools, you have no measure of the *Tzaddik* Rav Hillel at all! He is so holy and has trained his limbs so much that he hears *Torah* perfectly well, yet when I praised him, he could not hear his own praise at all! That is why he strained to listen – he thought I must be whispering.”

(*Ner Yehoshua*)



## Rav Naftoli Tzvi Horowitz of Ropshitz, 11<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

Mechaber of Zera Kodesh

### **Badchan Extraordinaire**

When Rav Naftoli Ropshitzer first came before the Rebbe Reb Melech of Lizhensk, *mechaber* of *Noam Elimelech*, the *Rebbe* sent him away and said he wasn’t looking for *meyuchosim*, those of illustrious lineage. Rav Naftoli was very brokenhearted and he cried as he left. Just then his ears caught notes of joy and music. He inquired after the songs and merriment and found himself at a *Yiddishe chasuna*.

As was the custom, the wedding needed a *badchan* to tell jokes and make everyone happy. Rav Naftoli used his wit and clever ways to use jokes and rhyme to compose *grammen* and to delight and enrapture the audience, bringing joy to *Chosson* and *Kalla* with words (as *Rashi* in *Berochos* 6b explains).

Meanwhile, the holy Rebbe Reb Melech was trying to recite the lamentations of *Tikkun Chatzos*, but

something was holding him back. He sent his *shamash* to seek out the disturbance; perhaps somewhere in the vicinity there was a sinner and a criminal whose tainted deeds were holding his *tefillos* back? The *shamash* searched to no avail, returning empty-handed. The *Rebbe*, undeterred, sent him again to seek and search. This time he came upon the wedding and in the midst of the celebrations he spotted the same *yungerman* whom his holy *Rebbe* had cast out. This must be the cause of the *Rebbe's* disturbance.

He went back and reported to the *Rebbe Elimelech* that surely the *yungerman's* jokes and frivolous banter was what was obstructing his *tefillos*. "No, you and I have it all wrong," explained the *Rebbe Reb Elimelech* as realization dawned on him. "This *yungerman* has caused all the heavenly hosts to delight and rejoice in the *simcha* of *Chosson* and *Kalla*. That is why my lamentations are unacceptable on high and I cannot recite *Tikkun Chatzos*; making them happy is like rebuilding one of the ruins mentioned in *Berochos* 3a; there it says that in the ruins a voice like a dove calls out and cries, "Woe to My children; because of their sins I destroyed My house, burned My sanctuary and dispersed them to be exiled among the nations! And now, when there is such joy, who can cry and lament at a time like this!" ended the *Rebbe Reb Elimelech*.

(As heard from Rav Moshe Weinbach, *Shlit"a*, *Mashpia Ruchani* of the *Cleveland Shul*, Beitar Illit).



### **The Light of the Rebbe's Gartel**

Related by the *Rav* of *Madin*, a grandson of the *Ropshitzer*:

*Rebbe Reb Elimelech* had a custom that after *Mincha* he would converse with his close followers. He would then proceed to a special private room to *daven Ma'ariv* in seclusion, purity and sanctity. *Rav Naftoli Ropshitzer* yearned to be in that

room. He constantly wished to observe the deeds of his *Rebbe* and so wanted to see how he *davened* there. Once, he stole into the room unnoticed and hid beneath the bed. The holy *Rebbe* entered and closed the door behind him. He took out his *gartel* and proceeded to fasten it about himself.

The first time the *Rebbe* wound the *gartel* about his waist, the entire room was filled with an awesome, unbelievable light. The second time he tied the *gartel*, the light grew in intensity until the *Ropshitzer* could no longer endure it. He grew weak and found himself feeling faint. He could not help himself and called out in a loud voice. *Rebbe Reb Elimelech* heard the cries of distress coming from his *talmid* and recognized their source. "Naftoli, my son, are you here?" the *Rebbe* asked. "Fortunately, you did not remain here for the third and final time I wound the *gartel*. If you had remained, your soul would surely have left your body from the intensity of the great light."

(*Eser Tzachtzochos* 27; *Ohel Elimelech* 248).



### **The Dveikus of Rebbe Reb Elimelech**

The son-in-law of the *Rebbe* of *Dzikov* once related that the holy master, *Rav Naftoli* of *Ropshitz*, was eating *sholosh seudos* with his teacher, the *Noam Elimelech*. He sat at the table, observing the *Rebbe*, and realized that if *Rebbe Reb Elimelech* continued in his state of rapture, his soul could, Heaven forbid, expire and leave his body. The *Ropshitzer* banged on the table and said jokingly, "The *pasuk* says that *Hashem* will turn to us from His place in mercy. One can ask, 'Are there brooms in Heaven with which to sweep (the Yiddish expression *kehern*, to turn, is the same word used for sweeping with a broom)?' The answer is that the *pasuk* simply means that He should turn from His place with mercy."

This witty remark disturbed the

Rebbe, for it had interrupted Rebbe Reb Elimelech's state of rapture. Rav Naftoli Ropshitzer, not wanting to face the Rebbe's disapproval, fled, running from the table back to his lodgings.

Rebbe Reb Elimelech sent someone to call him back. When Rav Naftoli returned, Rebbe Elimelech said to him, "How dare you interrupt my state of *dveikus* and ecstasy!"

Rav Naftoli told his holy teacher, "We still need the Rebbe to remain here in this world."

Rebbe Reb Elimelech realized that his *talmid's* intentions had been honorable and said, "Yasher ko'ach!" He then honored the Ropshitzer with leading the *bensching*.

(*Devorim Areivim*, page 21; *Ohel Elimelech* 300).



### Accomplished Sermon

Once, Rav Naftoli was giving a sermon before *mussaf* on *Rosh HaShana* to exhort his congregation to give *tzedoka* to the poor. When he arrived home, his *Rebbetzin* asked if he had accomplished anything with his speech. The Ropshitzer replied, "I definitely achieved fifty percent of my goal successfully – the poor people are ready to accept the *tzedoka*."



### A Distant Relation

Rav Elimelech Biderman shared the following story:

There was once a Jew who desperately needed a *yeshua* (salvation) for some personal matter and so, as was customary, he wrote down his name and his request on a slip of paper known as a *kvittel* and approached the reknowned *Tzaddik*, the holy *Chozeh* (Seer) of Lublin. However, when he entered the Rebbe's inner sanctum and placed the *kvittel* before the *Tzaddik* and petitioned him for

salvation to answer his request, the *Tzaddik* remained silent. The Jew understood that his salvation must be distant and difficult to achieve, so he tried his luck another way, reminding the *Chozeh* that they were related. "Rebbe, please help one of your own flesh and blood!" he pleaded.

The truth was that they were related as second and third cousins through their shared grandparents, and so the *Chozeh* answered back, "Nu, it's a distant relation," and left the matter settled. The Jew turned away sadly and left. Just then the *Chozeh's talmid*, the holy Rav Naftoli of Ropshitz, saw the Jew walk out despondent and with his face down. He approached the man, asking what the problem was. The Jew spilled out all his woes, concluding with the story of his failed reminder of his and the Rebbe's family ties.

Smiling, Rav Naftoli said to the Jew, "Don't worry, I know just the thing. Soon, the Rebbe will go to *daven mincha*. While he is in the middle of the afternoon *tefillos* and recites the first blessing of the silent *amida*, he will say the words, 'G-d of our forefathers, G-d of Avrohom, G-d of Yitzchok and G-d of Yaakov.' Listen in and seize the moment – as soon as the Rebbe says that, whisper back at him his own words of retort, 'Nu, it's just a distant relation!'

Surely that will work!" said the Ropshitzer.

The Jew did as he was told and as the *Tzaddik davened*, when he reached the place in the *tefillos* where we remind *Hashem* of our *zechus avos* and



we mention our forefathers, the Jew whispered to the *Rebbe*, “Nu, it’s just a distant relation!”

After the *tefillos*, the *Chozeh* approached the Jew and delighted him by

saying, “You have succeeded and you have achieved the salvation. Let me just ask you one thing: tell me if this wasn’t one of Naftoli’s tricks!”



## Rav Yitzchok Ben Yechiel Michel of Radwill, 11<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

*Mechaber of Ohr Yitzchok*

### Which Avoda Is Better – Mine or Yours?

When he was still a young man living in his father’s home, Rav Yitzchok used to fast and afflict himself, depriving himself of sleep and thus hoping to better serve *Hashem*. He would secretly give his daily fare to the servants and he fasted until nightfall. He did this for one entire year. That year, on *Yom Kippur* night, as he stood before his father, Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, he was so overcome with fatigue that he fell asleep standing and had a vision. In that vision he wandered the heavenly palaces from chamber to chamber and there he saw that his *avoda* and his

lack of sleep, his deprivation and fasting had an unwholesome stench, whereas when he observed his father’s beautiful chamber and his father’s *avoda*, all the sleep his father slept and the food he ate and drinks he drank, Rav Yechiel Michel smelled like fragrant flowers and glowed and shone with splendor.

When he awoke from his vision, his father, the *Tzaddik* Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, turned to him and said, “So whose way of serving *Hashem* is better – mine or yours? My eating and sleeping or your fasting and afflictions?” (*Kisvei Kodesh* Rav Moshe Midner)



## Rav Masoud Abuchatzera, 12<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

### The Stain of Sin

On the day when Rav Masoud passed on and was buried, a terrible thing occurred: the local *goyim*, jealous of the honor and respect accorded the *Rav* at the large *levaya*, opened his freshly dug grave and dishonored the body. Needless to say, the family was greatly upset and disturbed. That night, Rav Masoud appeared to his son Rav Dovid in a dream and told him, “Know, my son, that you should not be

troubled by this. The reason this occurred was because among those people who attended to me after I died was a Jew whose name was such-and-such, and he washed my feet during the *tahara*. On that day, he had engaged in such-and-such a sin and its stain besmirched me and caused this to happen.”

After the dream, Rav Dovid researched the matter and the dream was revealed to be true. (*Malchei Rabbonon*)



# שבת שלום ומבורך

# Zera

# Shimshon



# Kedoshim

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 6<sup>th</sup> 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

ואבדיל אתכם מן העמים להיות לי (כ' כו')

*And I will separate you from the nations to be Mine (20:26)*

On this passuk, the Toras Kohanim says: Hashem declares (regarding the Jewish people), "If you separate yourselves from the nations of the world (from their ways of conduct) then you will be mine. However, if you do not do so, you will belong to Nevuchadnetzar and his friends.

The Zera Shimshon explains this Medrash in the following manner:

The passuk (Eicha 1:5) says, "Her persecutors (of the Jewish people) rose to the top (became leaders)".

The Mekubalim explain that naturally, a Jewish person is rooted in the side of holiness. However, when he sins, the forces of Kedusha separate themselves from him and he is overtaken by the forces of impurity. Nevertheless, since a Jewish person always has some merits and good deeds, regardless how much of a sinner he is, there always remains within him some degree of Kedusha. This angers this particular part of the Kedusha that is essentially trapped in the sinner whom is now impure due to his many sins.

The gentile rulers as well, have some sort of spark that originates from the side of holiness. This is how they can become the powerful rulers that they are, since impurity itself have no real existence. It is only through the fact that they possess a degree of holiness, albeit in a small measure.

This is why we are obligated to make the blessing, '...Who granted from His honor to flesh and blood', upon seeing a gentile ruler, since indeed they possess a small measure of holiness that was granted to them.

As well, this is why Yaakov Avinu loved Esav since he possessed Kedusha and Yaakov Avinu always tried awakening that spark of Kedusha in him. This is also the reason that Esav's head was buried in the Me'aras Hamachpela since that was where he possessed the sparks of Kedusha.

When the Jewish person/people sin, the Kedusha that remains inside of him desires to take revenge on him/them for having separating them from the rest of the side of holiness. To do so, it unites with the sparks of holiness that exist in the gentile rulers, giving them more power over the Jewish people and they now can persecute the Jewish people.

This is the meaning of the Medrash that says that Hashem declares, "If you separate yourselves from the nations of the world (from their ways of conduct) then you will be mine. However, if you do not do so, you will belong to Nevuchadnetzar and his friends.

Indeed, if we keep the Torah we belong to Hashem. However, if we do not, we empower the gentile rulers - Nevuchadnetzar and his friends - to rule over us.

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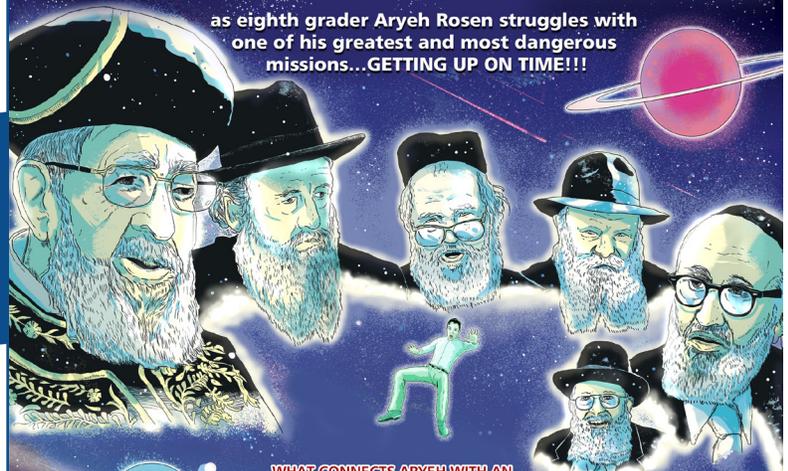
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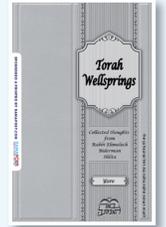
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