

# ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

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

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)

✿ **TAZRIA-METZORA** ✿

✿ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ✿

## Dvar Torah - TAZRIA

The *Torah* states (*Vayikra* 12:2-3): "If a woman shall conceive and give birth to a son...on the eighth day, he shall be circumcised". Numerous commentators wonder why the mitzva of *mila* (circumcision) reappears here in the context of the laws of postnatal purification.

Rav Levi Yitzchok explains that *Hashem* always wants to be merciful with the Jewish people and to send down emanations of blessings. But what initiates these emanations? There are two possibilities. They can be initiated from above, *isarusa dile'eila*, by *Hashem's* own desire to be merciful. In fact, according to the *Zohar* (3:257), He created the entire world as an expression of His attribute of mercy. Similarly, He may decide on His own to shower benevolence on the world. Alternatively, the emanations can be initiated from below, *isarusa dilesata*, by the *tefillos* and entreaties of people in this world.

Which does *Hashem* prefer? He prefers to express His mercy in response to *tefilla*. As the *Talmud* states (*Yevomos* 64b): "The Holy Blessed One desires the *tefillos* of Tzaddikim".

In Kabbalistic terms, the masculine aspect, *dichra*, is considered a *mashpia* (a benefactor) and the feminine aspect, *nukva*, is considered a *mekabel* (a beneficiary). Therefore, divine references are almost always in the masculine form, because *Hashem* is the ultimate Benefactor. Consequently, since the world in relation to *Hashem* is a beneficiary, a woman is an appropriate metaphor for it.

This then is what the *Torah*, on a deeper level, is saying. "If a woman shall conceive and give birth to a son..." If the Jewish people cry out to *Hashem* as a supplicant woman yearning to receive His blessings, "she will give birth to a son". In other words, the blessings they will elicit will be strong and powerful, as indicated by the word *zochor*, stronger than they would have been had they been initiated only from above.

The proof of *Hashem's* preference for *isarusa dilesata* lies in the *mitzva* of *mila*. The *Medrash* relates (*Tanchuma Tazria* 5) that a heretic asked a provocative question: whose handiwork is more beautiful, that of *Hashem* or that of mortals? One would think that *Hashem's* handiwork would be the most beautiful. Why then did He create males uncircumcised, leaving it to people to finish and perfect His work? And this heretic was told that the Holy Blessed One wanted to give the Jewish people the merit of performing the *mitzva*.

This shows us clearly that *Hashem* prefers results that are initiated from below. Although He certainly could have created people in a state of physical perfection, He prefers that the Jewish people create the perfection achieved through the *mitzva* of *mila*. And the parallel of *mila* supports the original concept that emanations of mercy initiated from below are stronger than those initiated from above.



## Story

### Yearning for Children

There was once a *Chassid* of the *Ba'al HaTanya* who had never been blessed with children. He periodically approached his *Rebbe* for a blessing that would bring him children, but he was always turned aside. After a number of years, an event occurred that gave him an idea.

It happened that the granddaughter of the *Ba'al HaTanya* was engaged to the grandson of Rav Levi Yitzchok. The question arose of where to make the wedding. Liadi, where the *Ba'al HaTanya* lived, and Berditchev were very far from each other. If the wedding were made in Liadi, it would mean a very long journey for Rav Levi Yitzchok, and if it were made in Berditchev, it would be a long journey for the *Ba'al HaTanya*. Ultimately, it was decided that the wedding would take place in Zhlobin, which was approximately midway between the two cities.

It occurred to the childless *Chassid* that if he traveled to Zhlobin and asked his *Rebbe* for a blessing during the period of the wedding, he might be helped. Perhaps during this exalted celebration, his *Rebbe*, full of joy because of the wedding, would storm the heavens on behalf of his *Chassid* and countermand the harsh decree.

With a glimmer of hope in his heart, the *Chassid* traveled to Zhlobin along with thousands of other dignitaries, *Rebbs*, *Rabbonim* and *Chassidim*. After the *chupa*, separate tables were set up for all the great *Rebbs* who had come to participate in the gala celebration. Each *Rebbe* sat at his own table and greeted the *Chassidim*, his own and those of other *Rebbs*, who came to offer their best wishes and request blessings for their various needs. The *Ba'al HaTanya* and Rav Levi Yitzchok also had tables of their own, and being among the most

illustrious *Rebbes* of their time, the throngs of *Chassidim* in front of their tables were exceedingly large.

The childless *Chassid* took his place on the long line leading up to the *Ba'al HaTanya's* table and settled down to await his turn patiently. After a very long time, he finally reached the *Ba'al HaTanya's* table.

"*Mazel tov!*" he called out as he stepped forward.

The *Ba'al HaTanya* smiled at him. "So you've come all this way to wish me *mazel tov?*"

The *Chassid* nodded. "And to ask for a blessing for children."

The *Ba'al HaTanya* shook his head. "I cannot help you," he said.

The *Chassid's* heart fell like a stone inside his chest, and the tears began to flow freely from his eyes. If he could not elicit a blessing from his *Rebbe* in this situation, then all hope was lost. He would never have children.

The *Ba'al HaTanya* took note of his crestfallen face. "Listen," he said. "I cannot help you, but why don't you step over to Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, my *mechutan*. I think that he may be able to help you."

The *Chassid* nodded and wiped away his tears. He sought out Rav Levi Yitzchok's table and took his place in the line of *Chassidim* waiting to speak with him. Once again, he had to wait a long time for his turn, but he didn't mind. His *Rebbe* had suggested that he ask a blessing from Rav Levi Yitzchok, and he was convinced that this meant it would be effective.

As he waited, he watched Rav Levi Yitzchok's face, which was aflame with devotion to *Hashem* and love for every Jewish person who came before him. His hope that he would finally be helped grew with every passing minute. He wondered what Rav Levi Yitzchok would demand of him, but it didn't really matter. He would do anything.

As his turn came close, he began to choose the words that he would speak to the holy *Rebbe*. He would describe the pain and suffering that he and his wife endured, and he would plead and plead until the *Rebbe* gave him the blessing.

And then it was his turn. Rav Levi Yitzchok smiled at him, and the *Chassid* forgot his prepared speech.

"What do you need, my son?" asked Rav Levi Yitzchok.

"I have no children."

"Go home," said Rav Levi Yitzchok. "In a year, you will have a child."

The *Chassid* was stunned. Was it to be so simple? Would there be no pleading, no conditions, no promises? Could a blessing so easily given be effective?

Rav Levi Yitzchok sensed the thought passing through the mind of the *Chassid*.

"Dispel those thoughts, young man," he admonished the *Chassid*. "If you think too much you may still ruin it for yourself. Thank *Hashem* for your good fortune and go home."



## Dvar Torah – METZORA

### Hidden Sparks

Moshe told the Jewish people that after they conquered the land of Canaan *Hashem* would afflict their houses with *tzoraas*. *Rashi* discerns a connection between the conquest of the land and the subsequent affliction of *tzoraas*. “This is good news,” *Rashi* tells us. “The Amorites had hidden treasure in the walls of their houses,” and when these walls would be torn down in the course of treating the *tzoraas*, the treasures would be discovered.

There may also be a deeper, Kabbalistic meaning, says Rav Levi Yitzchok, to *Rashi*’s words. It is well known that the world is full of *nitzotzos*, holy sparks, which are trapped in the *klippos*, the unclean husks. The work of *Tzaddikim* in this world is to smash the *klippos* and liberate the *nitzotzos*, the sparks of holiness trapped in them. This was a big part of the mission of the Jewish people coming out of Egypt. They were commanded to conquer the land of Canaan, which was full of *klippos*, smash them and thereby release the sparks of holiness.

When the Jewish people conquered the land of Canaan and killed the evil people who lived there, they accomplished part of this purpose. These people represented the *klippos*, and when they perished the sparks of holiness trapped within them were released and allowed to return to their Source. But the homes of these people were also part of the Amorite *klippos*. They also had *nitzotzos* trapped within them. Therefore, *Hashem* afflicted these homes with *tzoraas*, so that they would be demolished and the power of the *klippos* would be broken.

This was the good news to which *Rashi* was referring. There was treasure hidden inside the walls of the Amorite houses, these treasures being the sparks of holiness trapped there. The *tzoraas* would necessitate the demolition of the homes, and it would release the sparks from the grip of the *klippos*.



### Story

The Slonimer *Rebbe*, *mechaber* of *Divrei Shmuel*, his *gabbai*, Rav Yisrael Zalman, and a group of *Chassidim* were traveling by train from Lemberg to Warsaw. The Slonimer *Rebbe* sat on a bench by himself, surrounded by his adoring *Chassidim*. Rav Yisrael Zalman sat vigilantly on a facing bench, ready to see to any of the *Rebbe*’s needs that might arise.

The train made stops in many towns and villages along the way, and at each station, passengers got off and others got on. In one particular town, a tall passenger of exceedingly distinguished appearance stepped onto the train and entered the car in which the *Rebbe* was sitting with his *Chassidim*. He was dressed in aristocratic finery, and bore himself with a princely air. His beard was neatly trimmed in the manner of the czar and the nobles who emulated him. The *Chassidim* instantly identified him as a *poritz*, a nobleman who owned a large estate.

The newcomer was accompanied by a young page, a Polish boy who carried his bags and sought out a seat for his master. The page found an empty seat right next to Rav Yisrael Zalman, the *Rebbe*’s *gabbai*, and hovered over his master until he had settled in.

The newcomer gazed curiously at the elderly *Rebbe* and his *Chassidim*. He turned to Rav Yisrael Zalman and said, "Who is that man sitting there, and what are those other men doing?"

"That man," said Rav Yisrael Zalman, "is an important *Rav*."

"Really? And those men are his followers?"

"Yes. They hang on his every word."

"Very interesting. You know, I am also descended from an important *Rav*."

Rav Yisrael Zalman gave the man an astonished look. "What are you saying?"

"Yes, it's true. I'm descended from an important *Rav*."

The Slonimer *Rebbe* heard the man's words and gave him an intense look.

"Come and sit next to me," he called out to the man. "You are the descendant of an important *Rav*, and I am the descendant of an important *Rav*. We should sit together."

Pleased with the invitation, the newcomer took the proffered seat next to the *Rebbe*.

"So tell me," said the *Rebbe*, "who are you and from which important *Rav* are you descended?"

"My name is Leib," said the man. "I'm a descendant of Rav Meir the son of Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev. I am a physician, and for many years, I've served as personal physician to His Imperial Majesty Czar Nicholas."

"Hmm, and what is your relationship to your Jewishness?"

"I'm afraid it's not very strong," he replied. "In fact, it has been over forty years since I put on *tefillin*."

"I see," said the *Rebbe*. "Would you like me to tell you a story about your ancestor Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev?"

"I would love it."

"Fine. Listen to the story. In Berditchev, there lived a drunkard called Yankel the Gambler. Yankel was an innkeeper who neglected his inn and whiled away most of his time playing cards. His observance was practically non-existent. Rav Levi Yitzchok never despaired of bringing Yankel back to the heritage of his forefathers. He always spoke to him warmly and with encouragement.

"One day, Rav Levi Yitzchok passed Yankel playing cards in the street with a few men of similar inclination.

"Yankel, I envy you," said Rav Levi Yitzchok.

"Yankel was surprised. 'You envy me? Why?'

"Our Sages say," said Rav Levi Yitzchok, "that when a person does *teshuva* and repents, all his sins are transformed into merits. You have such a large accumulation of sins, Yankel, that when you finally decide to do *teshuva*, you will have a vast storehouse of merit."

"Yankel smiled at Rav Levi Yitzchok. 'I have a secret for you,' he said. 'Next year you are going to envy me even more than you envy me now, because by then I will have a much larger accumulation of potential merits.'

"Rav Levi Yitzchok chuckled and continued on his way. And from that day on, for a

number of years, Rav Levi Yitzchok would make similar remarks to Yankel almost every time they encountered one another.

“One day, Yankel’s wife came knocking on Rav Levi Yitzchok’s door. ‘*Rebbe,*’ she wailed, ‘my husband is deathly ill. The doctors think he is going to die. Please come help him.’

“Rav Levi Yitzchok hurried to Yankel’s bedside at the inn and found him indeed close to death. ‘So Yankel,’ he said, ‘we’ve been having this conversation for years. You always said I would envy you more and more with each passing day. Should I envy you now?’

“Yankel coughed and managed a sickly smile. ‘I’ll answer your question,’ he said. ‘When I rented this inn from the local squire, it was a fine building in excellent shape. But I neglected it. I was too busy drinking and playing cards. And so the building fell into ruin. The paint peeled. The roof leaked. The walls cracked. Rats and vermin infested the cellar. One day, the squire came to visit me during a torrential downpour. “What have you done, Yankel?” he said. “I entrusted you with a fine inn, and look what a ruin you’ve made of it.” That’s my answer to you, *Rebbe.*’

“Yankel burst into tears, and his soul departed his body.

“Rav Levi Yitzchok nodded and said, ‘Yankel has repented and returned his soul to its Maker in purity. He has repaired the inn entrusted to him.’”

The Slonimer *Rebbe* looked at the physician. “That was Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, your illustrious grandfather.”

“Very interesting,” said the physician, “and inspiring.”

The *Rebbe* reached into his bag and withdrew his *tefillin*. “You said that you haven’t put on *tefillin* in over forty years,” he said. “Would you put these on now?”

The physician was visibly touched. “I would be honored,” he said.

The *Rebbe* handed the *tefillin* to the physician. “Take them. They are my gift to you.”

Years later, Rav Yisrael Zalman was walking down the street in Lemberg when an elderly man approached him.

“Aren’t you the Slonimer *Rebbe’s* *gabbai*?” said the old man.

“Yes, I am.”

“You don’t recognize me,” said the old man. “I am Leib. We met on a train a long time ago.”

“Oh, yes,” said Rav Yisrael Zalman. “Of course, I remember you. How have you been?”

“Excellent. I began to put on the *tefillin* the *Rebbe* gave me, and then I repented and became a complete *ba’al teshuva*. The story about my grandfather opened my heart and set my soul free to seek its Maker.”



# 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 *berochah*. 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 מורתִי / 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](http://www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm)





## ☞ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ☞



Yahrzeits Beginning Motzai Shabbos Tazria-Metzora

[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)

### ☞ 5<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Friday Night (Apr 16<sup>th</sup>)

- \* **Rav Moshe Zorach Eidelitz** of Prague, *mechaber* of *Ohr LaYeshorim*, *Berurei HaMiddos* and *Melech Machsheves* (1780 or 1755). Orphaned as a youth and raised by Rav Yonoson Eibeshutz, Rav Zorach grew to become a *Dayan* and *Darshan* in Prague. His great-great-grandson, Rav Eliezer Eidlitz of Los Angeles, is one of the leading authorities on *kashrus* in the world. [According to some, 12<sup>th</sup> of Iyar], (5540/1780 or 5515/1755);
- \* **Rav Yeshaya Pick**, *mechaber* of *Haga'os* to *Mesores HaShas* and *She'eilas Sholom*, (5559/1799);
- \* **Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapira** of Mogelnitz. Raised and taught by his maternal grandfather, the Koznitzer *Maggid*, he was the *talmid* of the *Rebbes* of Lublin, Peshis'cha, Apta and Ruzhin. He married the granddaughter of Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk, (5609/1849);
- \* **Rav Meir Auerbach** (1815–1878). Born in Dobri, he became the *Rav* of Kalisch, then immigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* in 1860, replacing Rav Shmuel Salant (who was traveling) as *Rav* of Yerushalayim. Upon the latter's return, they shared the position. Rav Meir played a central role in the establishment of the neighborhood of Me'a She'orim. He is the *mechaber* of *Imrei Bina* on *Shulchon Aruch*;
- \* **Rav Eliezer Chaim Rabinowitz** of Yompoli, (5676/1916).

### ☞ 6<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Apr 17<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 Yitzchok HaLevi Horowitz**, *Av Bais Din A"HU* (Altuna-Hamburg-Wandsbek) – Rav Itzikel Hamburger, (5527/1767);
- \* **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 Sunday Night (Apr 18<sup>th</sup>)

- \* **Rav Shlomo Efraim** 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 Monday Night (Apr 19<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 Tuesday Night (Apr 20<sup>th</sup>)

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

## 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Apr 21<sup>st</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 Elmuvides, 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* (responsa), and others, (5651/1891).

## ➤ **11<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Thursday Night (Apr 22<sup>nd</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).



## ❁ 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 Yosef Meir Ben Shmuel Tzvi Weiss, 6<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

The *Imrei Yosef* of Spinka

#### Dreams of Tzaddikim

The *Chakal Yitzchok* of Spinka wrote

about his father the *Imrei Yosef*:

Once, the Berditchever *Rav*,

*mechaber* of *Kedushas Levi*, appeared to my father in a dream holding a *sefer* and asked my father if he knew the kabbalistic *kavonos* for the *Shabbos Amida* for Friday night. My father answered that he did and he indicated a *kavona* from the *siddur* of the *Arizal*.

The Berditchever answered him that this was not correct and he told him that the *Arizal* had changed his mind and written instead other *kavonos*. The Berditchever opened the *sefer* he was holding and showed my father the *Imrei Yosef* that the *Arizal* had written other *kavonos* instead. Afterward, my father awoke and remembered these *kavonos*.

Several years later, my father acquired the *siddur* of the *Rashash* from a handwritten manuscript and there he discovered the same *kavonos* that the *Kedushas Levi* had shown him in his dream!

The *Chakal Yitzchok* of Spinka continued: My father once related how he also saw the *Bnei Yissoschor*, Rav Tzvi Elimelech of Dynow, and that the *Bnei Yissoschor* asked him, “Do you want to see me and know me? If so, just look at my face.” (My father greatly desired to see the *Bnei Yissoschor* because his first awakening and passion for *Chassidus* and *Avodas Hashem* was ignited by studying from the *Bnei Yissoschor’s sefer, Derech Pekudecha*.) The *Bnei Yissoschor* then made a sign for him that he should now recognize him.

Afterward, my father met some *Chassidim* who had known and seen the *Bnei Yissoschor*. When he described the features and the face of the *Tzaddik* in his dream, they testified and agreed that he had indeed seen the *Bnei Yissoschor*.



### **His Compassion Toward the Wicked**

The *Chakal Yitzchok* of Spinka wrote about his father the *Imrei Yosef*:

I once heard him tell and I think he said outright that he could hear the cries of the wicked calling out from Gehinnom and from *kaf hakela*, and that the angel who rules Purgatory, called the *Sar Gehinnom*, warns the *Tzaddikim* not to *daven* on behalf of the *resho'im*. However, a true *Tzaddik* pays him no heed and *davens* for them. He also once told how the reason why he sits and conducts *Sholosh Seudos* for so long into the night past the time *Shabbos* ends (as his custom was to say *Torah* and tell stories for a long time) was because he had mercy and compassion for the *reshoim*, that they should not be returned to *Gehinnom* right after *Shabbos* (and I understood from him that as long as he sat and conducted his *Sholosh Seudos tisch* they refrained from sending the *reshoim* back into *Gehinnom*). He once told us a story about the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz, who said that the *Rif*, Rav Alfasi, had the power to prevent the wicked from being returned to *Gehinnom* as long as he kept *Shabbos Sholosh Seudos*, and this was his custom as well – to lengthen and stretch it out as long as he could. (Introduction to *Imrei Yosef* Vol. I *Bereishis, Eser Maamoros* 9:6, 9:8)



### **The Sales, Gifts and Loans of Rebbe**

The *Imrei Yosef* of Spinka once came to serve as *sandek* at a *bris*. There was a great gathering from all the environs to see the *Tzaddik*. After the *seuda*, the *Imrei Yosef* was honored with leading the *bensching*. As the *Tzaddik* recited *Birkas HaMozon* from the *Siddur Arizal* as was his custom, one of the *Chassidim* stood listening behind the *Rebbe’s* chair.

As the *Rebbe* reached the words, “Please [*Hashem*] do not require us to benefit from the gifts of flesh and blood nor need their loans,” the *Rebbe* became very excited. The *Chassid* who was listening, however, was troubled by the following thought: How could the *Rebbe* become so

excited and *daven* to *Hashem* not to need the gifts of others, when the *Chassid* knew full well that at the conclusion of the *Birkas HaMozon*, the *Rebbe* would sit down and begin to accept *pidyonos* and *kvitlach*, monetary gifts traditionally given along with the notes of supplication that the *Chassidim* presented to the *Rebbe*, asking him to *daven* for them, effect a salvation and bless them? Wasn't it hypocritical of the *Rebbe* to *daven* for *parnossa* from *Hashem* alone and not to benefit from the gifts of flesh and blood, when everyone knew that in just a few minutes he would be given monetary gifts from the *Chassidim*?

But the *Chassid* checked himself; he knew that *Chazal* say anyone who thinks thoughts against their *Rebbe* is as if he thinks against Heaven, and so he tried to push these negative thoughts out of his head.

The *Rebbe*, however, seemed to somehow know exactly what his *Chassid* was thinking. As he concluded *bensching*, he turned around to the *Chassid* and asked aloud, "It seems almost contradictory for me to ask *Hashem* not to benefit from people's gifts. However, *Chazal* composed the same *nusach* of *Birkas HaMozon* for everyone to recite, whether they benefit from their own handiwork and toil or whether they benefit from others.

Those *Rebbes* of whom the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* says, 'And he gave him from the gold of Sheba and he prayed on his behalf,' they accept *pidyonos* and monetary gifts to pray for their *Chassidim* who are devoted

and connected to them. Their entire *parnossa* is made up of gifts from people! How can they recite this *nusach* in *Birkas HaMozon*?" The Spinka *Rebbe*, the *Imrei Yosef*, answered his own question. "When a *Rebbe* accepts a *pidyon* for *davening* on behalf of his *Chassid* and the *Chassid* experiences a salvation and is delivered through that *yeshua*, this is not a gift; it is, in fact, a financial business transaction, the payment given for goods just like any other business deal where there is buying and selling involved. The *Rebbe* who prays has not received a free gift, since in exchange for his *tefillos* he granted the *Chassid* a *yeshua*. But if the *Rebbe's* *tefillos* were not immediately answered, then the money given is like a loan, which is repaid once the prayers are answered and the *yeshua* granted. If the prayers remain, Heaven forbid, unanswered, then the money remains a true free gift, since nothing was given to the *Chassid* in exchange. This is what the *Rebbes* *daven* for when they recite *Birkas HaMozon* and ask of *Hashem*, 'Please let us not benefit from the gifts of flesh and blood and not need their loans.' They are asking that the *tefillos* and *berochos* they give their *Chassidim* in exchange for the *pidyonos* and *kvitlach* they receive should be answered, granted and fulfilled so that the monetary transaction is not considered a loan or a gift but rather a fair exchange of goods and services rendered for payment!" (Rav Yaakov Yosef Weiss, Introduction to *Imrei Yosef Moadim* Vol. 1)



## Rav Yitzchok HaLevi Horowitz, 6<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

*Av Bais Din A"HU* (Altuna-Hamburg-Wandsbek) – Rav Itzikel Hamburger

Although Rav Itzikel was a *Misnagged*, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* held Rav Itzikel in great esteem for his *emes*, and would even send *Chassidim* to Brodie to

visit Rav Itzikel and speak against *Chassidus* to give him *nachas ruach* (satisfaction)! The *Ba'al Shem Tov* testified that Rav Itzikel had *Ruach HaKodesh*,

which rested upon him from *Rosh Chodesh Elul* until the great fair at Krasna when he was disturbed by the litigations and *Dinei Torah* he had to arbitrate between merchants and customers from the business at the trade fair. Others say the *Ba'al Shem* said that not only was Rav Itzikel the *Godol HaDor*, he was holy, calling him a *kodosh*, and said that from *Elul* until *Cheshvan* he was simply out of this world! (*Kuntres Zichron Yitzchok*, printed in *Ohel Naftoli* # 212)

On his way to the great fair in Leipzig was a Jew from Lithuania. He had in his possession a monetary loan to conduct business and buy and sell at the fair.

It was *Erev Shabbos* and he stopped at a Jewish inn, whose proprietor was well known for his piety and hospitality. As it was *Erev Shabbos* and the *Shabbos* approached, our traveler handed over his money to the innkeeper, known for his *Yiras Shomayim*, to guard until after *Shabbos*. Unfortunately, that *Shabbos*, the innkeeper was attacked by a debilitating illness. All *Shabbos* he lay in bed burning with fever and sadly on *Motzoei Shabbos*, he passed away!

A day or so after the funeral, our traveler approached the *almona* and *yesomim*, expressed his sorrow and regret at their loss and asked them to return his money that he had given her husband and their father for safekeeping. The widow and the orphans, however, answered, bewildered, that they knew nothing of any money. The parties approached the Rav, Rav Itzikel of Hamburg, to render a *pesak halocha* on the matter and judge the case. "If the *almona* and *yesomim* swear that they know nothing, then they are clear," and they were willing to swear on the spot.

"No, that is unnecessary," said the traveler. "Obviously they must be telling the truth. I don't want them to swear in *Hashem's* name needlessly," and so the matter seemed to end.

However, our traveler was now in a serious quandary. What should he do? He couldn't travel on to the fair, for he had no money with which to conduct any business and how could he turn around and head home – wouldn't they assume he had stolen the money? He turned bitterly to Rav Itzikel day after day and asked for his advice and help in recovering the money, but strangely Rav Itzikel's answer did not seem serious: "I told you already several times," Rav Itzikel insisted. "If you really want to know where your lost money is, I can summon the *niftar* before us and he will testify where he put it!"

Having heard this answer already more than once, our traveler lost his patience and spat out, "Fine, if that's what the *Rav* says (he thought the *Rav* must be speaking sarcastically), summon the *niftar* already!"

Rav Itzikel, however, grew solemn and serious. He turned to the *shammass* and said, "Take my staff, go to the *Bais HaChaim*, to the newly dug grave of the innkeeper, and summon him in my name to a *Din Torah*!"

The *shammass* obeyed the *Rav* and soon returned from the *Bais HaChaim*.

"The *niftar* is present. If you wish, please repeat your story in front of him and he will answer."

Our traveler stood there bewildered, seeing no one, but if the *Rav* said...and he launched into his tale about how he had arrived *Erev Shabbos* "and I gave the money to the innkeeper for safekeeping and he got sick and died and no one knows where the money is now," he concluded, feeling a bit silly. Rav Itzikel paused as if listening. The traveler saw and heard nothing.

Then Rav Itzikel said, "The *niftar* says that if we examine the volume of *Tur Orach Chaim Hilchos Shabbos* in this and that *siman* we will find the money there, because this is the volume he was studying

at the time you gave him the money for safekeeping and this is where he hurriedly placed it.”

So saying, the *Rav* urged our traveler to do so, and when the *almona* opened the *sefer*, there was his money, just as Rav Itzikel had told him! (*Kuntres*

*Zichron Yitzchok*, printed in *Ohel Naftoli* # 216 as told by Rav Avrohom Segal Ettinger, heard from Avrohom Binyomin Kluger, who heard it from Rav Shlomo Kluger when he lived in Brodie, from elders who still remembered Rav Itzikel of Hamburg)



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

### Leaving With the Same Goy You Came With

Once, one of Rav Dovid Tolna's *Chassidim* came to take his leave as soon as *Shabbos* was over. “What's the rush?” asked the Tolna *Rebbe*.

“The *goy*, the *ba'al agola*, is already waiting for me outside,” rushed the *Chassid* to explain.

“*Miten zelbe goy gekimen miten zelben goy furstu a'heim*,” declared the *Rebbe* (injecting a double meaning into his words: “You came with the same *goy* and are leaving with the same *goy*. You came here with the same un-Jewish *yetzer hora* and are leaving unchanged!”) (*Otzar Yisrael*)



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 Ben Boruch Bendit Lichtenstein of Kolomaya, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

The Bobover *Rebbe* told how once Rav Hillel was traveling by train, when he was seen by a Jew who had left the fold. Unfortunately, this Jew was known even to eat non-kosher food. When he alighted from the train and gazed upon the fine,

spiritual features of the *Tzaddik*, he stood transfixed and was simply unable to take his eyes off Rav Hillel, who sat right near the door of the train. He stood in this manner transfixed for some time before he was able to move on.

When he came home, a curious change took place; his family remembered his eating habits to verge on the gluttonous, but now he had no appetite for anything at all and refused all meals! Finally, they were invited to a family affair where kosher food was served and he pounced upon the food with hunger! That was when the family realized what had happened; the vision of the saintly *Tzaddik* had so refined and purified the man, that he was simply unable from then on to eat non-kosher food! Such was the greatness of Rav Hillel of Kolomaya! (*Bais Tzaddikim Ya'amod Bobov* Vol. II page 77)



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 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 Bавли* 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)



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

The *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

## 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)

*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"ra'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 Naftoli Tzvi Horowitz of Ropshitz, 10<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"z*, *Mashpia Ruchani* of the Clevelander *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!”



Once, the Ropshitzer was *davening* for the *amud* and he was rushing through the *tefillos*. His *rebbe* - the *Chozeh* asked him, “Naftoli, *farvous hoste gechapt dous davenen?*” (Why did you catch [*gechapt* is literally translated as ‘catching’ – however it’s *Yiddish* slang for ‘rushing’] the *davening*?).

The Ropshitzer replied, “Because I love it so much – I ‘catch’ it.”

The *Chozeh* asked him, “Don’t you think I love it too (and yet I take it slow by *davening*)?”

So the Ropshitzer replied, “The *Rebbe’s davening* is so boiling hot, how in the world can you ‘catch’ it!?”



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

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## 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)



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

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

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

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

כל ימי אשר הנגע בו וגו' בדרך ישיב מחוץ למחנה (יג' מו')

All the days that the disease is upon him etc. he shall dwell in isolation etc. outside the camp (13:46)

The Gemara says (Erchin 16b), that the reason the Metzora must sit alone is because the affliction of Tzar'as is due to his speaking of Lashon Hara. When a person speaks Lashon Hara he creates divisions between people. Therefore, his punishment is that he must sit alone to feel the same pain he caused others.

Regarding Shalom, peace between people, which is the rectification and flipside of Lashon Hara, the Zera Shimshon writes the following.

The Mishna says (Avos 1:12), Be from the students of Aharon. Love peace and run after it (literally: persecute it). Love mankind and bring them closer to Torah.

The Zera Shimshon asks - why does the Mishna use the word רודף to express how one should pursue Shalom. The word רודף literally means to 'persecute' peace? If the Mishna wishes to impart the lesson that one should run after peace there are many words with a more positive connotation that could have been used instead of the word רודף?

The Zera Shimshon answers with the following Medrash. The Medrash says (Bereishis Rabba 88:5) that when Hashem decided to create man the angels were divided about creating this being. The trait of Kindness said that man should be created since he will do acts of kindness. Truth said he should not be created since he is full of falsehood etc. The trait of Shalom said that man should not be created since he is all about quarreling. Hashem threw Truth to the ground (dismissed his opinion).

The Zera Shimshon asks - why was Truth dismissed and not Shalom, they both said that man should not be created?

The Zera Shimshon answers that when there is a lack of Truth, there still can be Shalom. However, if there is no Shalom, there is no Truth, since when there is no Shalom, Hashem removes His presence from amongst us and there can be no Truth in such a situation.

Even so, Shalom was against the creation of man. Therefore, when people love peace and try to increase it, they are essentially disproving Shalom's claim that man is nothing but quarrel and should not be created. This is why, when the Mishna says that one should love Shalom, the Mishna uses the term רודף שלום, which means to 'persecute peace' because by loving peace and running after it, we are in fact persecuting Shalom by proving it wrong.

This is why the Mishna continues to say that one should love all of mankind. The Mishna could have said that one should love his friends or his neighbors or his fellow Jews. Instead, the Mishna chooses another interesting term which seems to include all of mankind, even non-Jews.

The Zera Shimshon explains that by perusing Shalom, one shows his belief that all of mankind is worthy of being created since mankind is not all about quarrel. The original question was about the creation of all of mankind, which was in danger of not being created due to its nature to fight. Thus, when one works to increase Shalom, it shows that all of mankind is worthy of being created and given the chance to prove its worth.

זכות רבינו יעמוד לר' חיים דוד בן טויבא חוה וכל משפחתו להצלחה ברכה שפע רב וסייעתא דשמיא מרובה בכל מעשה ידיו ובכל הענינים

# Zera Shimshon

## Tazria Metzora

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, Sienna 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 מיכאל זצ"ל

בעל הזרע שמשון זע"א

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ולזכות רפואה שלימה משה בן  
לאה

לזכות כל עם ישראל  
בכל מקום שהם

Tazria Metzora

April 17<sup>th</sup> 2021  
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Hilula

5 - Rabbi Bechor Binyamin Melamed

6 - Rabbi Yehoshua HaKohen Perachia,  
a Saloniki Sage

7 - Rabbi Refael Oved Ibn Tzur,  
Dayan of Fez

8 - Rabbi Elazar Mor Yosef,  
Rosh Yeshiva of 'Neve Shalom',  
Casablanca

9 - Rabbi Avigdor Kara, author of  
'Hakaneh Hagadol'

10 - Rabbi Ya'akov Toledano, MaHaRit,  
Av Beit Din of Meknes

11 - Rabbi Avraham Shaharbani, Rav  
of Rechovot

Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

# Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, z"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"l



MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

## Educating One's Children is Comparable to Cultivating Plants

**"When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male"** (Vayikra 12:2)

The Parshiot of Tazria and Metzora are often combined and read on the same week for the Shabbat morning Torah reading. Since we have a tradition from our Sages that there is no such thing as coincidence, it is obvious that combining these two Parshiot that seemingly have no connection, is not happenstance. Rather, there is some inherent lesson to be derived from it.

While Parshat Tazria begins with the laws of a woman who gives birth and thereby becomes contaminated, most of the Parsha does not discuss this topic. Rather, it describes the matter of the tzara'at affliction that is found on the body and clothing. Since it would seem more fitting for these laws to be found in Parshat Metzora and not Parshat Tazria, there obviously must be some connection between the matter of a woman who gives birth and the subject of tzara'at. We will try to identify this connection.

One can say that a person is afflicted with tzara'at, either on his body or clothes, for speaking lashon hara about his fellow Jew, just as the word 'מצורט', metzora, implies, for it hints to 'מוציא רט', giving a negative report. The punishment of the metzora is measure for measure. Since he spoke derogatorily about his friend and caused others to distance themselves from him, he too is punished by being distanced from others.

The Torah wishes to teach us that just as the metzora is punished measure for measure, his offspring too will grow up 'measure for measure', for a child witnesses his father's conduct and behaves in the same way. In the same way, as she grows up, a girl imitates her mother's behavior. Therefore, the Torah put the Parshiot of Tazria and Metzora together to impart the lesson that we should not expect our children to be better than us. If we wish to have well-behaved children who follow in the path of the Torah, we must serve as a positive example for this is the only way to produce good fruit.

A person's children are called his 'seed' because 'offspring' have the same nature as 'seeds'. It never happened that a person planted apple seeds in the ground and an orange tree sprouted because an apple seed will always produce apples. It is the same with one's children. If a person is forgiving and modest, his offspring too will be like him. But if one is conceited and possesses corrupt middot, his children will learn from his ways and follow in this corrupt way.

Parents often come to me crying bitterly that their son or daughter do not behave appropriately, do not obey them, and sometimes even overstep the limit and wish to marry gentiles, r"l. They want me to talk to their children and persuade them not to take this drastic step. Of course, I try to encourage and help as much as I can but at the same time, I reprove those parents for it is not happenstance that their children turned out in this way. For if a child did not observe his parents following in the

path of the Torah and mitzvot, never saw his father going to participate in a Torah shiur or his mother lighting Shabbat candles, what is Judaism for him? He therefore has no second thoughts about crossing the limits and marrying out of his faith. Because that which a person sows is exactly that which he will reap in the future.

A father once came to me and told me that his son wishes to commit suicide. I advised him that a child of that age must have a reason for wanting to do so since the responsibility of providing for a family does not weigh on his shoulders and neither does he suffer from medical problems that are common to older people. Rather, he enjoys an easy and secure life. This being the case, why should he want to commit suicide? The father rolled his eyes as if to say, "I don't know what has come over him". However, I knew from experience what caused the child to entertain these kinds of thoughts. I asked the father if his son watches violent films, r"l. When he answered that his son enjoys these types of films, I told him that this is the answer to his question. Since he spends his day watching scenes of slaughter and murder, and his impressionable soul cannot differentiate between the truth and fiction, it has become ruined to the extent that he has no appreciation for human life. He therefore has no problem with ending his own life, even without a reason.

The punishment of the metzora is different from other Torah penalties because it involves two aspects of retribution. The fact that his body is afflicted with tzara'at is one punishment, while the Torah adds another punishment that he has to leave the camp and stay far away from other people.

It appears that the reason for this is due to Hashem's great kindness. Hashem wanted to present a strong deterrent for people to stay far away from this sin even though it is so easy to transgress since there is nothing easier than opening one's mouth and speaking about someone else.

The Chovat Halevavot tells us: "Many people will arrive at the day of reckoning and when they are shown their deeds they will find recorded in their book of merits, merits that they did not perform. They will say, 'We did not do them'. So they will be told that these are the merits of those who spoke derogatorily about them. Similarly, when they see that certain merits have not been inscribed, they will ask about them and will be told they lost them when they spoke about so and so".

How great will be one's distress on that day, for even when a person is punished for a sin that he did commit, it is not something simple, especially when talking about the Heavenly retribution of Gehinom. But when a person will be punished for sins that he did not even do, and only because he spoke derogatively about his friend did he 'merit' all those sins, it will be sevenfold harder. Therefore, Hashem wanted the metzora to receive a difficult punishment already in This World so that man will refrain from transgressing this sin and will distance himself considerably from forbidden speech.



## Walking in their Ways

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



## In Our Father's Path

### Non-kosher Food – Teeming with Prohibitions

I heard a dreadful story from the person to whom this happened. He told me that he was once traveling by plane and was ravenously hungry but, of course, he would not eat from the standard airline meals since they were not kosher. When his hunger began disturbing him greatly, he entered the kitchenette and asked for a regular portion. He planned to eat only the vegetables, which ostensibly do not pose a problem of kashrut. This is actually a fallacy, and as we will see, he stumbled with eating forbidden foods.

The salad was under-seasoned so the man added some pre-packaged vinegar which came along with the meal. However, this vinegar which was not made from alcohol but from wine, was prohibited by the Torah. Although he made sure not to eat the non-kosher seafood that was part of the salad, it, however, lent flavor to it and therefore rendered the whole thing unkosher. So, although he ate only vegetables, he in fact stumbled by eating treif food!

At times, one might think one can find kosher food amidst a non-kosher dish. But this is a very complex issue and almost impossible. Therefore, one must be careful to eat only food with a kashrut symbol certified by a trusted kashrut supervisor.

## The Haftarah

**"There were four men who were lepers"** (Mela-chim II, 7)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah tells about the four lepers who sat at the city gate, while the Parsha too speaks about the matter of the metzora who must sit outside the camp.

## Guard Your Tongue

According to the ruling that it is preferable for a person to suffer social or financial loss rather than speak lashon hara, it seems that there is no justification to speak lashon hara even if one means well. If so, why does the law permit derogatory speech in cases where it will be beneficial?

Sometimes it is clear that relating someone's faults can be beneficial and in such a case, it is advisable to do so. This is correct in the following situations: If one is trying to help the person in question, or if one is trying to protect others from that person. In these situations, despite having to mention the person's faults or negative behavior, this is not considered as lashon hara. Only harmful speech is considered as lashon hara. Speech that is related for a beneficial purpose is not considered as lashon hara.

Being able to differentiate between beneficial speech and speech that is lashon hara, requires great sensitivity and a thorough knowledge of the laws. The Chafetz Chaim brings down several conditions that must be in place to define this kind of speech as beneficial and not lashon hara.

### Does Lashon Hara Really Not Speak to Me?

The Opposite is True! Lashon Hara is so Pleasurable!

The name given to the 'מצורע', metzora, Chazal tell us, reflects his deeds - 'מוציא רע', he articulates derogatory words. It is no surprise that the holy sefarim explain that by opening one's mouth and relating derogatory words, one thereby causes the accuser to open his mouth and he too begins to speak negatively about us, accusing and causing terrible suffering.

There is a great difference between the sins of negative speech and other sins, points out HaGaon HaTzadik Rabbi Reuven Karlenstein zt"l. With all other sins, it is necessary to perform some act, even the slightest, to transgress the prohibition. For example, to transgress the prohibition of 'borer', 'selection or sorting' on Shabbat, one must remove a small bone from the fish. But with the sin of lashon hara, it is not necessary to do any act! A person can sit, do nothing and just talk...

On the other hand, the sins of negative speech are so severe, to the extent that the Gemara says (Arachin 15b), "Anyone who speaks lashon hara (malicious speech), his sin is considered as great as the three cardinal sins of idolatry, immorality and murder". On the other hand, these sins are so 'accessible' and easy to commit. As we mentioned, it is unnecessary to do anything. In all, it is just a matter of a few words, but what terrible destruction can they cause! Especially at a time of anger, when stormy feelings and tumult abound, words are released without any thought!

Sometimes the concept of 'for the sake of heaven' also manages to work its way in and then the words are even transformed into a 'mitzvah', with every word another 'mitzvah'...

What is the suggested counsel?

The darshanim quote the words of the verse (Vayikra 13:9): "He shall be brought to the Kohen", and explain that this must be the approach: We must approach the 'Kohen', "the Kohen who is exalted above his brethren", i.e. the 'Chafetz

Chaim', and study his sefer, 'Shmirat Halashon'. This is the way to strengthen oneself so that one will not stumble with forbidden speech. As the Admor of Gur declared: "Heaven and earth can testify about me that I experienced a favorable change after studying the Chafetz Chaim's sefer".

One of the Slabodka talmidim approached the Rosh Yeshiva, the Gaon Rabbi Izsak Sher, with the following dilemma: "I have a big problem! I have an unconquerable temptation to speak lashon hara! Especially when it comes to stories that no one else is aware of! It is a feeling as sweet as sugar and this temptation burns inside me like fire. Can the Rosh Yeshiva give me some advice on how to overcome this and not stumble?"

The Rosh Yeshiva answered: "Your father came to me two weeks ago and wanted to know how you are doing. He made a favorable impression on me. I want to know if also about him, your father, you are tempted to speak lashon hara?"

"No," replied the talmid, "I have no desire to speak lashon hara about my father".

"And do you feel that you have withstood a challenge when you don't speak about him? Do you feel that you are overcoming a temptation when you keep your mouth closed?"

"No. I have absolutely no temptation to speak about my father. It is not even a challenge for me".

"Why? Does your father not have any faults?"

"There is no person without faults. My father too has weaknesses. Nevertheless, I have no desire to speak about him. Not only this but if I hear someone else speaking lashon hara about him, it will give me no rest and I won't be able to fall asleep at night."

"Try to explain this to me. Why is this? How is he different to anyone else?"

"I do not want to speak about my father! I love him! And when one doesn't want to speak, one doesn't speak."

"If so, you yourself have just given a wonderful piece of advice on how to overcome the temptation and not speak lashon hara about someone. Love him! If you love him, you won't want to speak about him! And when one doesn't want to speak, one doesn't speak."

This, then, is the principle: So and so has shortcomings? So what? Your father also has faults, your son also has faults! More than this, you too have faults! Nevertheless, there is no temptation to speak lashon hara about someone you love!



## Pearls of the Parsha

### The Mitzvah of Milah Overrides Shabbat

*"On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised" (Vayikra 12:3)*

The mitzvah of Brit Milah has already been delineated in Parshat Lech Lecha, as it says (Bereishit 17:12), "At the age of eight days every male among you shall be circumcised". If so, asks Rabbi Avraham HaLevi zt"l, (who lived in Tz'ala, Teiman), in his sefer 'Pardes Rimonim', why does the Torah once again mention this mitzvah here?

He quotes the Gemara (Shabbat 132a) where it explains that from the wording of the verse in this Parsha, "on the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised", we derive that the mitzvah of Milah overrides the mitzvah of Shabbat.

The question is, why in Parshat Lech Lecha does the Torah not use the expression "on the eighth day"? Why does the Torah wait until Parshat Tazria to teach us this?

The reason could be that this aspect of the command was written specifically here since had the Torah written this lesson in Lech Lecha, there would be a place for the mistaken perception that the mitzvah of Milah overrides Shabbat only for our Holy forefathers who had not yet received the Torah and had not been commanded about Shabbat observance. But Am Yisrael who were commanded about the severity of Shabbat, as we are told "its desecrators shall be put to death" (Shemot 31:14), might push off Milah if the eighth day falls on Shabbat. This is why we are commanded here using the wording "On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised", to teach us that even now, after the Giving of the Torah where we were commanded about Shabbat, Milah overrides Shabbat.

### Revenge Through Abundant Mercy

*"If a person will have on the skin of his flesh" (Vayikra 13:2)*

The Midrash writes: "When Yisrael heard the section of afflictions, they became afraid. Hashem said to them, these are intended for the nations of the world but you should eat, drink and be happy."

We will try to clarify the intention of this Midrash. HaRav HaKadosh, the 'Yitav Lev' zt"l, explains the Midrash according to an explanation from the Maggid of Mezritch on the words of the poet, "Extend Your kindness to those who know You, O jealous and vengeful G-d". The question is, the name 'ל-נ', G-d, is a Name of Mercy, so why is this Name used when saying "O jealous and vengeful G-d"?

The answer is that sometimes when a king wants to punish a simple person, he elevates him in status until he himself understands the great blemish that he committed against the king. This itself is the king's revenge.

This is our prayer, that even if we have sinned before Hashem, G-d forbid, the revenge should be through abundant kindness and mercy.

This is how he explains the Midrash "these are intended for the nations of the world". They are the ones who need to be punished with afflictions, for otherwise they will never recognize Hashem's greatness and will not regret their deed. But Am Yisrael can eat, drink and be happy because this abundance will lead them to repentance and regret.

### The Gates of Heaven Are Closed for the Metzora

*"He is to call out, 'Contaminated, contaminated!'" (Vayikra 13:45)*

The double term "contaminated, contaminated" is explained by the Gemara (Shabbat 67a) to mean that the metzora must publicly announce his affliction, and as Rashi explains, "he himself" must do so.

But why must the metzora publicly announce his affliction, something we do not find with other sicknesses?

The answer, explains the Divrei Yonatan, can be found in the Rashi on Parshat Va'eira concerning Yishmael, where it says, "G-d heard the cry of the youth". Rashi explains, "From here we learn that the prayer of the sick person is preferable to others who pray for him".

The Holy Zohar writes that he is called an "isolated metzora (excluded)" because his prayers are excluded and rejected in heaven.

Now we understand why the metzora needs to publicly announce his distress - so that others should pray for mercy for him. Because while with other sicknesses, the patient's own prayers are preferable, however, since a metzora's prayers are not accepted, he must announce his distress to others so that they should pray for him and arouse Heavenly mercy.

## Treasures

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



### Before All – Judge Favorably

When a person does not see the truth in the way that Hashem does, he doesn't judge others favorably which leads to speaking lashon hara about them.

This is the connection between the three Parshiot of Tazria, Metzora and Acharei Mot. Taking the first letter of each Parsha spells 'אמת', truth. This implies that after a person dies (Acharei Mot) he will see how mistaken he was when he saw falsehood and not the truth and that even though he thought he was speaking the truth about his friend, it was only in This World that it appeared to be the truth. Up there in the Next World he will be faced with the bitter truth: How much destruction his words caused and how much damage his words brought to his friend, causing the Holy Shechina to depart from him.

Rav Yosef son of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi (Pesachim 50a) told his father after returning from the World of Truth, "I saw an upside-down world". Meaning, in the Next World, those who in This World were not considered as distinguished, are honored, and the opposite is also true. For there, in the World of Truth, the exactness is extremely fine and a person is judged for every act that he committed in This World.

In any case, when a person does not judge his friend favorably, he does not try to think about what brought him to commit that negative act. Chazal have told us (Avot 2:4), "Do not judge your fellow until you have reached his place". And if you would reach his place, you too would commit that negative act. If so, it follows that he has retroactively spoken lashon hara, for what he sees in his friend is a reflection of his own shortcomings.

This is the essence of the connection between these Parshiot. When a person sows, 'Tazria', and speaks lashon hara about his friend, he will become a 'Metzora', for he will be punished with tzara'at for inevitably spreading false reports (motzi shem ra) about him. His rectification will only be 'Acharei Mot', that G-d forbid, he will die. For every person was created in G-d's image and by speaking lashon hara about someone he causes others to lose their regard for him as if he is not part of G-d's image. In this way, he has G-d forbid made him appear as 'dead' in the eyes of others, as in the famous words of Chazal (Erchin 15b), "Lashon hara kills three: The one who speaks, the one who listens, and the one about whom one speaks".



## A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

### Words Are Free but are Worth Their Weight in Gold

The Torah commentaries discuss the inevitable question of why the Parsha of Tazria, that discusses the laws of the different types of skin afflictions, follows Parshat Shemini that primarily discusses the subject of forbidden foods?

The Gaon Rabbi Yisrael Slanter zt"l explains that the afflictions are a result of the sin of lashon hara and while most people are extra careful not to consume forbidden foods and meticulously examine their food to make sure they do not swallow the tiniest worm, they are not particular enough when it comes to the honor of others and sometimes chew them with their mouths and tongues and swallow them alive. This is why the Torah put these Parshiot together; to teach us that just as you are careful with forbidden foods, so must you be as careful, if not more, with forbidden forms of speech, for we see that the purification process of a metzora is stricter than for one who consumes forbidden foods. This demonstrates the severity of the matter and the great value of being cautious with our words.

It is related that once Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen zt"l, the Chafetz Chaim, travelled together with another Rav on behalf of a certain mitzvah matter. Along the way, they stopped off at an inn to eat something. The woman who owned the inn immediately recognized both distinguished personalities, sat them by a special table and made sure they would be served appropriately. When they finished their meal, she approached them and asked: "How did you like my food?"

"Very good," replied the Chafetz

Chaim. "And what do you say?" she said, turning to the other Rav. His answer was not long in coming: "Quite good, but it was a bit too salty". As soon as the woman heard this, she made her way to the kitchen. The Chafetz Chaim turned pale and became very agitated. "I can't believe it! My entire life I have refrained from speaking and hearing lashon hara. Why then did this happen now that I heard lashon hara? Had I known this in advance, I would not have set out on this journey."

When the Rav saw the Chafetz Chaim's reaction, he grew frightened: "What at all did I say? What was so bad about my words? I said that the food was good and only added that it would have been better to use a bit less salt!"

"You do not know how to sufficiently value the power of words", replied the Chafetz Chaim with distress. "It could be that the cook is a poor widow who needs her job. Because of your words, the owner will blame her that the food was salty. In her defense, the poor widow will deny her words and say that she did not put salt in the food and even tasted the dishes before she served them."

"And then", the Chafetz Chaim continued, "the owner will claim that she is lying and say, 'Do you think that the Rabbanim are liars? You are the one who is lying!' They will argue and the owner will grow so angry that she will dismiss the unfortunate cook who will be left without a job."

"Consider how many sins you caused," added the Chafetz Chaim: "You spoke lashon hara, you caused the owner and I to hear lashon hara, you caused the owner to repeat the lashon hara to the cook, which is already rechilut, you caused the cook to lie, because of you the owner distressed a widow, and you caused dissension between two people."

When the Chafetz Chaim finished his words the Rav said quietly, "I think you are greatly exaggerating! It cannot be that the words I said caused all of this!"

"Let's go to the kitchen and see," suggested the Chafetz Chaim.

They stood by the entrance to the kitchen and noticed the cook wiping tears from her eyes. The Rav grew pale, hurried over to the cook and apologized for the harm and pain that he caused her, begging her to forgive him. After that, he turned to the owner and pleadingly asked her to forgive the cook and allow her to continue working for her. He even offered a sum of money, as long as she would not dismiss the cook.

The owner was a kindhearted and generous woman: "Of course, of course," she said. "The cook will continue working for me. Her job is not in jeopardy at all. I only wanted her to realize that she must be careful. She is an excellent cook and will keep her job."

There is a clever saying that is often quoted, says the Gaon Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein (Pri Amaleinu): "Words do not cost money but are worth their weight in gold". They can raise a person's spirits even if he has fallen into depression and heartbreak. About this, the Holy Zohar declares (Tazria 46:2) that just as a person will be judged after his passing for distasteful words and obscene language (if he did not repent), so too will he be judged for all the warm and encouraging words, words of praise and approval that he could have said but refrained from saying.

You could be in Kollel or at work and you see a friend who was successful and did something good, but you don't mention a word. You will be judged for it! You could have invigorated him and made him happy! Why did you not do this? Or you may notice that a good friend bought a nice outfit or new utensil. Praise, offer a good word! It doesn't cost money but is worth more than gold.

Speech can revive a person but, on the other hand, can destroy and kill. If only we will decide, from today on, to offer a good word when necessary, to show happiness for someone else, encourage or express appreciation when needed, we will merit great happiness.



# MEOROS HATZADDIKIM

— Lights Of Our Righteous —



## Parshas Metzora

This shall be the manner that the *metzora* purifies himself on the day that he is purified he shall be brought before the *Kohen*:

Rav Mordechai cites the holy *Zohar*, that teaches us that if even just one person in the whole entire world would properly study *Torah* with true *Yiras Shomayim* - fear of Heaven, then the redemption would immediately take place. Perhaps that is what is hinted at by our *pasuk* when it says that on the day that the *metzora* purifies himself he will be brought before the *Kohen*, that by studying *Torah* properly - in purity, then even just on that day of purification itself, just on that one single day he merits to be brought before the *Kohen* - then we merit an ingathering of all the exiles and we shall merit to see the shining countenance of our Master three times a year.

May *Hashem* help us merit this especially now during the month of *Nissan* which is opportune time for *geulah*, as *Chazal* said (*Rosh haShana* 11) that we were redeemed in the past during *Nissan* and our future redemption will also occur during *Nissan*, may we merit this speedily in our days, *Amen*.

סגולה



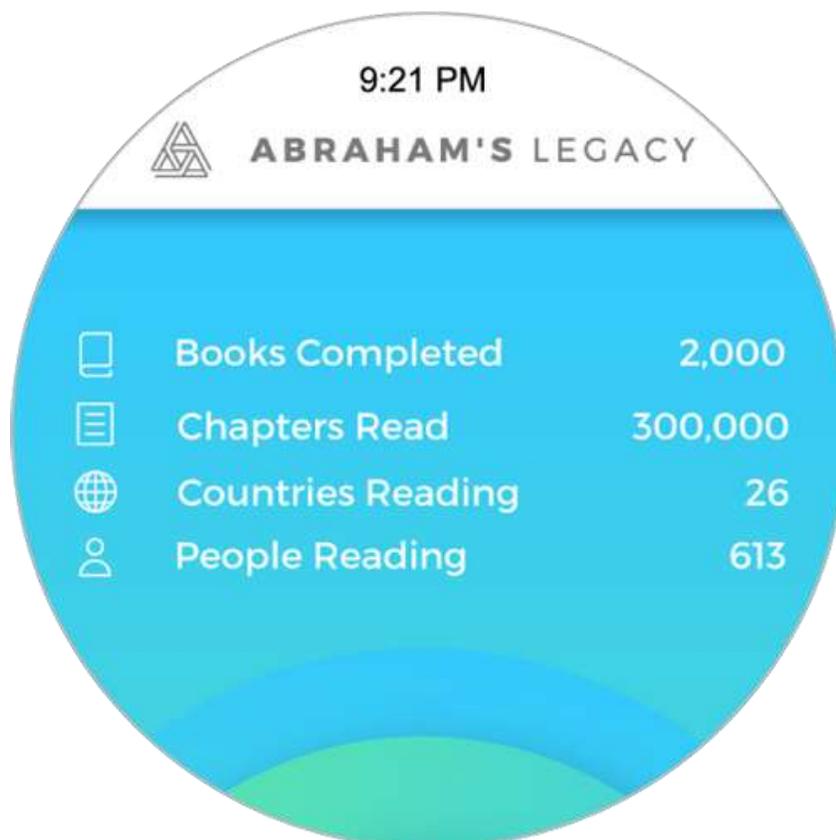
נתפרסם לעיני רבינו רבי ישעי'לע ביר משה זי"ע  
לכות הר"ר חנני יי"ט ל"פא בן זלדא להלצחה ולברכה.  
זכותו הגדול יגן עלינו ובני ביתנו עד עולם אמן

It is said in the name of Reb Shaya'la, that if a person needs a *yeshua*, he should undertake from today and onwards to be very meticulous in keeping the *Malava Malka seuda* - every *Motzei Shabbos* and the person will merit to see *yeshuos* from *Hashem* in the blink of an eye - in the *zechus* of Dovid *HaMelech*, z'l.



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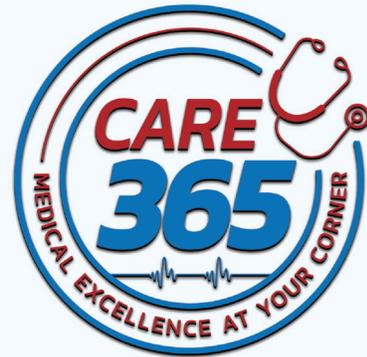


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