

ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

LIGHTS OF OUR RIGHTEOUS TZADDIKIM



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משה בן דבורה שירה
ואברהם יהודה בן שרה רבקה

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

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)

CHAYEI SORA

❖ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❖

Hanging on a Hair

One year, as the holy days of *Rosh HaShana* drew near, Rav Levi Yitzchok sensed that a terrible decree against the people of Berditchev was about to be issued in Heaven. Perhaps it was because the insidious spirit of reform and modernity was seeping into the city, threatening to undermine the devotion of the people to *Hashem* and the ancient traditions. Perhaps it was for some other reason. Be that as it may, an ominous cloud was gathering over the city of Berditchev while the people continued as before, oblivious to the danger.

Rav Levi Yitzchok, the perennial advocate for the Jewish people before the Heavenly Court, took it upon himself not to rest until the decree was annulled. He assembled the people of the city and exhorted them to reaffirm their commitment to the ways of the *Torah*. His fiery words inspired the people, and they dedicated themselves with renewed fervor to the *Torah*, each according to his or her level, devoting more time and effort to learning, giving more and larger donations to charity, doing more acts of kindness or concentrating more in the performance of the *mitzvos*.

On the first night of *Selichos*, just days before *Rosh HaShana*, the people gathered in the *shul* at midnight. Rav Levi Yitzchok stood before holy *Aron* (ark), ready to begin, but he was overcome with a feeling of unease. He sensed that despite all his efforts, despite all his protestations to *Hashem* that the people had earned a reprieve, he had not been successful in

rescinding the harsh decree. The sword still hung over the heads of the people. Something had to be done.

Rav Levi Yitzchok asked his *gabbai* (his personal attendant) to fetch his coat. They were going for a walk.

Together, they walked through the deserted streets of Berditchev under a moonless sky made even murkier by a thick cloud cover. Silent houses loomed in the darkness, the windows shuttered against the autumn chill.

"Where are we going?" asked the *gabbai*.

"I don't know," said Rav Levi Yitzchok. "We will know when we get there."

They continued in silence, crisscrossing the city of Berditchev until the illuminated windows of the *shul* were nothing more than a glow in the distance. From time to time, Rav Levi Yitzchok would pause near a house for a moment –and then he would shake his head and continue walking.

Finally, they came to a small hut at the very edge of the city. The hut was silent and dark with no sign of habitation.

"This is the place," said Rav Levi Yitzchok. "I feel a warm glow from within. Knock on the door."

The *gabbai* put his hand on the door. Despite the *Rebbe's* detection of a warm glow, it was cold to the touch. The *gabbai* rapped on the door with his knuckles, and after a few long moments, they heard shuffling from within. The door opened, and a wizened old woman stared up at them in puzzlement.

"Is that you, *Rebbe*?" she asked, clutching at her throat.

"May we come in?" said Rav Levi Yitzchok.

"Please ... I'm sorry that I have nothing to offer you."

"Don't trouble yourself. We just want to talk."

The interior of the hut was bathed in long shadows cast by the tiny flame of a candle. A *Tehillim* lay open right near the candle with minuscule droplets of wax hardening on the worn pages. The old woman offered her guests two stools, while she sat down on a rough bench beside the oven.

She took one look at Rav Levi Yitzchok and burst into tears.

"Why are you crying?" he asked.

"Because I am so ashamed."

"Ashamed? Why should you be ashamed?"

"Because I am a sinner," she said. "I have concealed my sin all these years, but now you have discovered it and came to my door. My secret has been revealed, and so has my shame. I am ready to receive your rebuke, because I deserve it. But I beg of you, please help me. Tell me, *Rebbe*, what do I have to do to atone for my sin?"

"What is your sin?" asked Rav Levi Yitzchok. "Tell me, and I will try to help you."

"My story begins," she began, "when I was six years old. Both my parents passed away that year, and I was left an orphan, all alone. My mother's sister took me into her home. My uncle and aunt were kind to me. They leased a *kretchma*, a tavern, from the local *poritz*, the nobleman who owned the land. My uncle would serve whiskey and beer to the peasants who came into the tavern, while my aunt cleaned and cooked. My job was to help my aunt with the household chores. I was forbidden to step foot into the tavern, which was usually filled with drunkards and rogues. This went on for a number of years. This is how I grew up. Life was fine, I suppose.

"When I was fourteen, however, my aunt broke the rule for the first time. I don't remember exactly why she needed money so desperately, but she did – and she sent me to the tavern to get some from my uncle. I had never been in a tavern before, and the sight shocked me. Some men were sitting at tables drinking and singing nasty songs, while others were staggering back and forth among the tables, hoisting tankards of ale to each other.

"I saw my uncle on the far side of the tavern and I made my way across the room to him. As I passed one of the tables, a drunkard reached out and touched my hair. I screamed and ran away, but he grabbed a lock of my hair and yanked it loose. I was beside myself with shock and shame."

The old woman wept as she recalled that day in the tavern.

"My hair was my pride and joy," she continued, "as it is for any girl of fourteen. I took a pair of scissors and cut off all my hair, and I pleaded with *Hashem* to forgive me and wipe away my sin. I knew I couldn't look my aunt and uncle in the face anymore, so I left them a note that I was going away, and in the middle of the night, I stole away and went to the next town. I worked for a while as a maid in the homes of wealthy families, and then I met and married my husband, a simple Jew and a good man. He passed away a few months ago for no apparent reason. He wasn't sick. He didn't have an accident. He simply died one day, just like that, and I think it is because of my sin. *Hashem* is punishing me."

The old woman looked at Rav Levi Yitzchok with abject pleading in her eyes.

"And now you've found me out, *Rebbe*," she said. "So help me. Please help me wipe away this sin once and for all. *Rosh HaShana* is coming. Everyone is repenting and being forgiven. Maybe you can slip me in among them so that I too can be forgiven."

"Tell me," said Rav Levi Yitzchok, "what did you do with the hair you cut off on that day? Did you keep it?"

"Not all of it," she said. "But I did keep one lock of it to remind me of my sin at all times."

"Please give it to me," he said.

The old woman stood up and shuffled over to a cupboard in the shadowy corner of the room. She opened the bottom drawer and took out a small cardboard box, which she handed to Rav Levi Yitzchok.

"You have no need to cry anymore," he said. "You bear no guilt, and you have no responsibility for the death of your husband. It was not your fault. *Hashem* has accepted your tears and your *tefillos*. You will be blessed with a sweet new year."

He stood and turned to his *gabbai*.

"Come, let us return to the *shul*," he said. "We have what we need."

When they returned, they found the *shul* packed with restless and curious people. It was very late, and they had still not begun the *Selichos*. And Rav Levi Yitzchok was nowhere to be found. His sudden entrance caused quite a stir as all eyes followed him to the front, seeking a clue to his mysterious departure and reappearance.

Rav Levi Yitzchok put on his *tallis* and stepped up to the holy *Aron*. He threw open the doors and placed the old woman's cardboard box inside.

"Master of the Universe," he cried out, "is there another nation as holy as Your own Jewish people? I came here straight from the simple home of a simple Jewish widow. When she was fourteen years old, an orphan living with her uncle and aunt, she had to go into a tavern to see her uncle, and the vile hands of a drunkard touched her hair. A fleeting touch, for she immediately fled. It was not her fault. She was completely innocent. Yet she has suffered feelings of guilt for all these years, because she was afraid that somehow she had allowed herself to be defiled. She has cried rivers of tears and poured out her heart to You with innumerable supplications. She even blamed her husband's untimely *petira* on her supposed sin. And what does she want? Only that You, her Father in heaven, should accept her repentance and forgive her."

He took the box containing the lock of the old woman's hair and held it aloft. "Master of the Universe," he cried out, "who else is like Your people Yisrael? Don't they deserve Your compassion and forgiveness?"

Then holding the box in his hand, confident that the harsh decree had been averted, he started to say the *Selichos*.



Dvar Torah

The *Torah* tells us (*Bereishis* 24:1) that "Avrohom was old (*zokein*), advanced in years ..." The *Gemora* tells us (*Bava Metzia* 87a) that "before Avrohom there was no old age (*zikna*)."

The words *zokein* and *zikna*, however, can also be read as referring to hair and the beard, which are a form of garment to a person. The *Arizal* writes that just as a person's clothes are the garments of his body so are the hairs that cover his body and head the garments of his spirit. Therefore, just as a person feels no pain when his garments are removed, he also feels no pain when his hair is cut. His hairs are not really parts of his body. They are the garments of his spirit.

Hashem also has garments, as it were, in this world. They are the *mitzvos* that people do and the *Torah* they learn. They clothe the Divine Spirit, so to speak. The metaphor for these garments, therefore, is the hair and the beard, which are the garments of the human spirit.

In this sense, then, the *Torah* is telling us that Avrohom was a *zokein*. He brought *zikna* into the world. In other words, by his devotion to spreading *Torah* and *mitzvos* in this world, he provided holy garments for the Divine Spirit, garments symbolized by hair, the garments of the human spirit.

הילולא

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrew Tefilla for Lighting a Yahrzeit or Hilula Candle

[תפילה הנמצאת בספר אלה המגן מבעל הפלא יועץ על פרשת ויצא עמוד כ"ד]

הריני מדליק נר זה למנוחת ולעילוי נשמת אבי / אמי מורתי / הצדיק
בן/בת _____, יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו, שתקבל ברחמים
וברצון כל מעשה הטוב שאני עושה, בין במחשבה, בין בדיבור, בין במעשה ויהיה הכל
לזכות ולמנוחת ולעילוי לנשמות עמך ישראל, ובפרט לנפש רוח ונשמה של אבי / אמי /
צדיק _____. יהי רצון שתהינה נפשותיהם צורות בצרור החיים.

Translation:

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

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

4) Study some of his teaching or writings.

See more at: www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm





❁ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ❁



YAHREZITS BEGINNING SHABBOS CHAYEI SORA

http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim_yahrtzeits/Cheshvan/Kisleiv

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

* **27th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Friday Night (Nov 13th)**

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

* **28th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Nov 14th)**

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

* **29th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Sunday Night (Nov 15th)**

- * **Rav Yitzchok Eizik Chover**, *mechaber* of *Shu"t Binyan Olam* and *Si'ach Yitzchok*. One of his *talmidim*, Rav Yitzchok Kahane, wrote *Toldos Yitzchok*, (5613/1852);
- * **Rav Avrohom Abish Kanner**, the Tchechover *Rebbe* of Chaifa, (5744/1983).

* **1st of Kislev ~ Begins Monday Night (Nov 16th)**

- * **Rav Ephraim Alankava**, *Rav* of Telmisan, Algeria (on the border with Morocco), and author of *Shaar Kevod Shomayim*, (5202/1441);
- * **Rav Trivash** of Mantova, Italy, (5312/1551);
- * **Rav Sholom Shachna** of Lublin (1490–1558), teacher and father-in-law of the Rema. His grandfather and namesake was the *Rav* of Neustadt and the Godol HaDor (spiritual leader of that generation) in Austria, who, along with the Maharil, founded the minhagei Ashkenaz that are still prevalent until today. He established the Lublin Yeshiva in 1515 and was succeeded by Rav Shlomo Luria, the Maharshal, (5319/1558);
- * **Rav Yosef Shmuel** of Cracow, author of *Mesoras HaShas*. The Chida, in his biography of Rav Yosef Shmuel, wrote that he learned all of *Shas* forty-two times, fulfilling the mitzva of *Vedibarta 'bom'*, (the numerical value of 'bom' being forty-two). He also added that for twenty-five years he learned standing on his feet and all his learning was Torah lishmah (for the sake of

Heaven), (5464/1703);

- * **Rav Moshe Chaifetz**, author of Meleches Shabbos and Meleches Machsheves, (5472/1711);
- * **Rav Avrohom Eiger** of Posen (1846–1914), son of Rav Yehuda Leib Eiger, the first Lubliner Rebbe, grandson of Rav Shlomo Eiger and great-grandson of Rav Akiva Eiger. He succeeded his father as leader of his Chassidim from 1882 to 1914. He was the author of a work on Chassidus, Shevet Mi'Yehuda. He was also a member of the Vaad HaRuchani of the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, (5675/1914);
- * **Rav Chaim Nosson Dembitzer** (1820–1892). Born in Cracow, he did historical research and critical work in the field of Talmudic and Rabbinic literature, and wrote about its leading personalities. His sefer, Klilas Yofi, included biographies of Rabbonim of Lvov, Cracow, and other cities in Poland and Lithuania. His student, Feivel Hirsch Wettstein, wrote his biography, Toldos Maharchan, (5653/1892);
- * **Rav Moshe Hager** of Radovitz, author of Vayikach Moshe, (5665/1904);
- * **Rav Yitzchok Levitan** from Aram Tzova (Aleppo), (5672/1911);
- * **Rav Naftoli Hertz (Hertzel) Krezmer**. He was born in Bialystok to Rav Avrohom, a textile merchant, and was a grandson of Rav Osher ben Tzvi HaKohen, who wrote the Birkas Rosh on Berachos and Nozir. He married in Ponevezh and remained there, serving as the Rav of Yanova and other places. He wrote Noam HaMitzvos, (5673/1912);
- * **Rav Yisrael Ungar** of Zavna, (5697/1936);
- * **Rav Tzodok Shaingarten** (1912–2005), Rav of Ohr Torah in Boro Park. Born in Warsaw to staunch Gerrer Chassidim, he learned for two zmanim at Baranovitch before attending Kletzk under Aharon Kotler. Later, he learned at Mir under Rav Yeruchom Levovitz from 1932 to 1938, following which he returned to Warsaw. When the Nazis conquered Poland, he fled to Vilna. He traveled with the Mir Yeshiva to Japan and Shanghai. After the war, he moved to New York and married Rebbetzin Ruth, (5766/2005);
- * **Rav Yaakov Kasirer**, founder and long-time president of Bais Yaakov of Los Angeles. Born in Bistra, Hungary, he lost his parents and many siblings during World War II. In 1946, he married Reizi, a childhood friend of the family, and moved to Bregenz, Austria, on the Swiss border. Two of their three children, Robert and Gabi, were born there. In 1954, they moved to Los Angeles, where their youngest child, Hindy, was born. They were involved in the creation of Yeshiva Rav Isacsohn (Toras Emes), and founded Bais Yaakov in 1968, in order to assure that their daughters received a local Torah education. Even after both daughters graduated, however, Rav Kasirer and his wife assured the ongoing growth and success of Bais Yaakov, (5766/2005).

* **2nd of Kislev ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Nov 17th)**

- * **Rav Akiva Sofer** of Pressburg, author of Daas Sofer. Son of Rav Simcha Bunim Sofer (the Shevet Sofer), grandson of the Kesav Sofer (Rav Avrohom Shmuel Binyomin Sofer) and the great-grandson of the Chasam Sofer (Rav Moshe Sofer). Interestingly, three continuous generations – the Chasam Sofer, the Kesav Sofer, and the Shevet Sofer – all served as Rav of Pressburg for thirty-three years. When Rav Akiva Sofer neared his thirty-third year as Rav, he asked his uncle, the Erlauer Rav, what to do. Upon his uncle's advice, the Daas Sofer moved to Eretz Yisrael in 1940, thus saving himself from the horrors of World War II, (5721/1960);
- * **Rav Aharon Kotler** (1892–1962), Rosh Yeshiva Bais Medrash Govoha, Lakewood. The son of Rav Shneur Zalman Pines, Rav Aharon was known as the "Shislovitzer Iluy". At fourteen, he entered the Slobodka Yeshiva, where he learned under the Alter and Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein. He also heard shiurim from Rav Boruch Ber, who had his own Yeshiva in one of the

suburbs of Slobodka. He married the daughter of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, head of the Yeshiva Etz Chaim in Slutsk, and became his assistant in 1914. Even before he was twenty-five years old, he became one of its Roshei Yeshiva. After the Yeshiva's forced transfer in 1921 to Kletsk, Poland, due to the Bolshevik takeover and religious persecution, Rav Isser Zalman immigrated to Eretz Yisrael, and Rav Kotler directed the Etz Chaim for twenty years, (5723/1962);

✳ **Rav Nosson Meir Wachtfogel**, the Lakewood Mashgiach. Rav Nosson was born in Kuhl, Lithuania. His father, Rav Moshe Yom Tov, was one of the fourteen original students of the Yeshiva in Slutsk. (Another of these students was Rav Aharon Kotler.) Rav Nosson himself began his education in the Yeshiva in Kelm. When he was fifteen, he came to the United States –his father had accepted a Rabbinic post in Montreal –and enrolled in Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon (forerunner of the Talmudic division of Yeshiva University). After two years there, he returned to Lithuania to study at the Mir Yeshiva. He also studied under Rav Shimon Shkop, and in Kamenetz, under Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz. Beginning in 1941, Rav Nosson joined with Rav Aharon Kotler to develop the Lakewood Yeshiva. He left several children, including Rav Elya Ber Wachtfogel, Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshiva Zichron Moshe in South Fallsburg, New York, (5671–5759/1910–1998);

✳ **Rav Dr. Dov Revel**, president and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon in New York, (5701/1940);

✳ **3rd of Kislev ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Nov 18th)**

✳ **Rav Meshulom Yissochor Ashkenazi** of Stamford Hill, London, the Stanislaver *Rebbe*, (5756/1995);

✳ **Rav Shilo Rephael**, *Av Bais Din* of Yerushalayim, (5755/1994);

✳ **Rav Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky** (1921–2000). Born in Saint Louis, he learned at *Torah Vodaas* in his early twenties, while serving in the army. He married Sara Gartenhaus in 1950 and joined *Yeshiva Ner Israel* in 1954. He became *Rosh Yeshiva* and replaced Rav Yaakov Weinberg after the latter's *petira*. Rav Kulefsky left two sons: Tzvi Hirsch and Nosson and three daughters: Esther Chana (Abraham), Ettie (Rosenbaum), and Faigi Gruman, forty grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren, (5761/2000).

✳ **4th of Kislev ~ Begins Thursday Night (Nov 19th)**

✳ **Rav Eliyohu Kubo**, *Av Bais Din* of Saloniki, *mechaber* of *Aderes Eliyohu* and *Shnei HaMe'oros HaGedolim* (1628–1688). The Kubo family had immigrated to Greece from Spain during the Spanish expulsion. Rav Eliyohu became chief *Rav* in Salonika, (5449/1688);

✳ **Rav Tzvi Hirsch Margulies** of Lublin, (5566/1805);

✳ **Rav Yaakov Dovid Kalish** (1803-1878), founder of the Amshinov dynasty. Rav Yaakov Dovid's father was Rav Yitzchok of Vorka, a leading *talmid* of Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshis'cha and a peer of Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. When Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshis'cha passed away in 1827, his followers split into two streams, some of them following Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk whose emphasis was on fiery self-discipline, and the remainder adhering to Rav Yitzchok of Vorka whose approach was one of warmth and love. In 1848, when Rav Yitzchok of Vorka passed away, many of his followers wished to follow Rav Yaakov Dovid of Amshinov. He, too, followed the Vorka tradition of kindness and *kiruv rechokim*. Rav Yaakov Dovid set up court in the town of Mszczonow, Poland, which became known to Jews as Amshinov. There, he became known as the *Rebbe* of Amshinov. Meanwhile, Rav Yaakov Dovid's brother, Rav Menachem Mendel, continued the Vorki dynasty from their

father in Vorki itself (1779-1848). Rav Menachem, the eldest of Rav Yaakov Dovid's three sons, inherited the mantle of Amshinov from his father for forty years, (5639/1878);

✳ **Rav Yaakov Mordechai** of Stretin, (5715/1954);

✳ **Rav Avrohom Shmuel Stern**, *Rosh Yeshiva Toras Chessed* in London (1949-2005). Born in Miskolcz, Hungary, to Rav Pinchas Zelig Stern, the *Serentcher Rav*, he arrived in London with his parents in 1956. Seeing the need for a new *Chassidish Yeshiva* in London, Rav Stern founded *Toras Chessed*. During his entire life, he was close to the *Rebbes* of Satmar and Pshevorsk, (5766/2005).



❁ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❁

WHAT'S BEHIND YAHREIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

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

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

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



❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

STORIES & ANECDOTES

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

Pshevorsker Rebbe

Reading Kvittels Even While Asleep

Rav Pomerantz, Rav Yaakov's *gabbai*, related how a friend once asked him to relay a *kvittel* with a petition for help to the *Rebbe*, and the *gabbai* somehow forgot. This scenario repeated

itself over and over, till the *gabbai* was very much embarrassed when his friend questioned him as to why he had not yet delivered the requested *kvittel*. Finally, the *gabbai* remembered, but this was at night when he was alone in the *Rebbe's* room and

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

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

Astounded, he asked, "How did you know?"

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



Once, when Rav Yaakov Leizer was seated at a *simcha*, he was approached by a *Chassid* asking that the *Tzaddik* daven for his wife, that she should have an easy birth since she was having a difficult labor. However, the Pshevorsker did something wondrous; he glanced at his watch and stated, "*Mazal Tov!* She has already given birth to a baby boy!" When Rav Reich asked the *Rebbe* if he was not afraid of *ayin hora* in displaying such overt *Ruach HaKodesh*, Rav Yaakov Leizer answered him, "We need to demonstrate the power of *Torah* in this world to others."

Rav Shlomo Yeshaya Yaakovovitch related that he was once busy *Erev Shabbos* heating up the water for the men's *mikve* so the *Chassidim* could purify themselves on *Shabbos* morning. Rav Yaakov Leizer was adamant that the *mikve* be hot so that the *Chassidim* would use it and *toivel* themselves. Unfortunately, somehow he lost his balance and fell into

the hot water and badly scalded himself. Rav Yaakov Leizer of Pshevorsk laid him down in bed and treated him with a miraculous ointment for burns – none other than the *shirayim*, the leftover wine from his *kos shel beracha*, the cup used for *bensching* (the Grace after meals). He rubbed this wine over his entire body and he was healed completely on the spot!



Background to a dynasty

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

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

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



His Task in the World

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

When Reb Itzikel was asked why he did not attempt to found *Yeshivos* or other *mosdos* (institutions), he answered, "Everyone comes down to this world for a different purpose. Some *Tzaddikim* are

sent to improve the *ruchniyus* (spirituality), others are sent for *gashmiyus* (physicality). My job is to see to *gashmiyus*.”

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

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

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

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

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

It once happened that a *kalla* (bride) suddenly collapsed and went into a deep coma a few days before her *chasuna*

(wedding). All attempts to wake the girl were of no avail. In a panic, the family rushed to Reb Yankele and begged him to help them. Reb Yankele thought for a minute and then he said, “Last night after *davening*, I related a story about the Chortkover *Rebbe*, Rav Dovid Moshe. The Chortkover *Rebbe* told a *Yid* whose children all died in infancy that he should name his next child after a person who is mentioned in the *haftora* of the week in which the child is born.

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

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

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



Early Years

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

In a dedication to his parents in one

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

Even after their *petiros*, Reb Yankele continued to honor their memory and was *makpid* to give *tzedoka* every day *le'ilui nishmosom* (in their memory).

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

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



His Rebbe

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

“In the year 5684 (1924) I was *zoche* to be *mekabel* my master and teacher, the *Rebbe* of all *Klal Yisrael*, Rav Chuna of Koloshitz, the grandson of the *Rebbe* of

Shinive. I was *zoche* to benefit a little bit from his light, from his *Torah*, *avoda* and *gemilus chassodim*, all of which were on an extremely lofty level. I remained under his guidance until *Shavuot* 5699 (1939).

“Those who were *zoche* to see his face when he learned with his *talmidim* or by himself, how his facial features changed from bright red to a ghostly white, can understand and appreciate what *Chazal* tell us that ‘*Hashem, Klal Yisrael* and the *Torah* are all one.’ “

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

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

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

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



First Position

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

knows more than I . . .”

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

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

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

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

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

Reb Yankele once wrote in a letter: “I heard in the name of the *Rebbe*, Rav Sholom of Belz, that it is better for a person

to act falsely in order to come to *emes* (truth), than to act truthfully and to end up with *sheker* (falsehood). I, the lowly one, bow my head in front of every *Yid* in *Klal Yisrael* and I speak to everyone in a friendly tone, although sometimes in my heart I am upset with them . . . “

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

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



Best in the Long Run

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

Once in Lemberg, the Polish

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

On the 23rd of *Sivan* 5600 (1940), the KGB swooped down on Lemberg and arrested all those who had refused Russian citizenship. Those *Yidden* were taken to the train station and put on trains to Siberia. Some of those on board were visibly upset with Reb Itzikel. It was due to his advice that they now found themselves being exiled to the frozen wastelands of Siberia.

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

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

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

To this, Reb Yankele would add the following *vort*: We say in *Krias Shema*, "*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echod*." The use of *Elokim* denotes *middas hadin* (the attribute of strict justice), while the use of *Hashem* denotes mercy. This is

to show us that even when we think that we are seeing an act of *Elokim*, we should know that *Hashem Echod*, everything is in reality only mercy, and it is up to us to realize it!

During the war, Reb Yankele lost almost his entire family. His parents and all his brothers and sisters with all their children were brutally murdered. Similarly, he lost all his family on his wife's side, except for his parents-in-law who were miraculously saved. Reb Yankele, however, never questioned *Hashem's* ways and he accepted the terrible afflictions with love.

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



The Suffering in Siberia

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

Even in the terrible Siberian conditions, Reb Yankele did not diminish his *avoda*. Daily, he smashed a hole in the ice and *toiveled* himself in the freezing waters. It once happened that while he was under the water, he couldn't find the hole

again and almost drowned. From then on he gave up this practice.

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

In Siberia, he came into contact with a descendant of Rav Yisrael Salanter. Never one to miss an opportunity, Reb Yankele asked his newfound acquaintance to teach him the *derech* and the teachings of the founder of *mussar* movement. Although Reb Yankele viewed himself as a Sanzer *Chassid* and his whole conduct echoed the *derech* of *Sanz*, this in no way prevented him from learning and treasuring the teachings of other *Gedolim*.

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

"I, the young one, explained that although all these three qualities are needed to achieve *shleimus*, each *Amora* only listed one of the three. Rav Yehuda lived in Pumpedisa, which was overrun with *ganovim* (thieves) (as we see elsewhere in *Shas*); therefore he stressed the quality which was lacking in his town.

Rova, however, lived in Mechoza which was a prosperous town and there were few robberies there. What they were lacking was *bein odom laMokom* (see *Rosh HaShana* 17a), and therefore Rova needed to stress the part they lacked.

"Similarly, we find different *derochim* (paths) concerning *mussar* and rebuke. The *Gaon* and *Tzaddik* Rav Yisrael Salanter stressed mainly the *mitzvos bein odom lachavero* while other *Gedolim* stressed the *mitzvos bein odom laMokom*.

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



Breslov

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

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

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

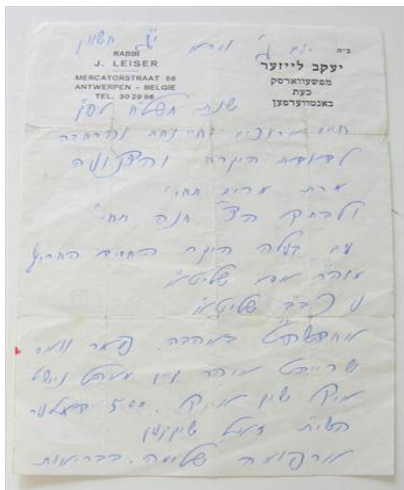
With Reb Itzikel's *petira* on *Yom Kippur* 1976, Reb Yankele was chosen as his *shver*'s successor. In his last weeks before his *petira*, Reb Itzikel weakened greatly. He called Reb Yankele and instructed him, "Yankele, from now on you shall sit in my place and take *kvitlech*, for I no longer have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

The Pshevorsker Rebbe

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

Indeed, even once Reb Yankele had assumed the position of *Rebbe*, he refused to disregard many of his practices that he had kept for decades. He had a practice

(one of many such tasks) of tearing toilet paper in the bathrooms in the *Bais Medrash* every *Erev Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. When he noticed that the toilets needed cleaning, he didn't hesitate to clean them either.



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

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

When he was once told of a newly married couple who had just divorced, he remarked, “I had wondered why I didn't see the *neshomos* of their *zeides* at the

chupa. Now I understand!” (In the *Zohar*, it is written that the *neshomos* of the deceased come down to this world to be present at the *simchos* of their offspring.)

On another occasion, when someone asked him for a *berocha* for children, he sighed and said, “It's a pity you didn't come earlier. There was a whole bag of *neshomos* but I already gave them all away.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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אני מודה לך מאוד על כל
העזרה והחסות שאתה נותן לי
ועל כל המאמץ שאתה מנסה
לעשות כדי שיהיה לי טוב
ועל כל המאמץ שאתה מנסה
לעשות כדי שיהיה לי טוב
ועל כל המאמץ שאתה מנסה
לעשות כדי שיהיה לי טוב

Letter Reb Yankel zt"l wrote to someone that he wishes to be with him in Gan Eden

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

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

Zechuso yogein oleinu.

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



Personal Story

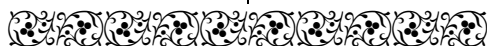
Once, a *Yid* came to Reb Yankele with his son before *Rosh HaShana* with a *kvittel*. After reading the *kvittel*, Reb Yankele remarked strangely that he wouldn't want to be in this *Yid's* shoes. He then proceeded to give special attention to the boy. He asked the boy to sit next to him and stroked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

After the *Yid* became alarmed and the *gabbo'im* heard the remark, they insisted that the *Rebbe bensch* this *Yid* and his child with a special *berocha*. After a

while, Reb Yankele said that *Hashem* will help and all will eventually be good. Then, inexplicably, the *Rebbe* lightly slapped the boy's right thigh and added, "The leg too."

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

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



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

The Founder of Berditchev

The Founder of Berditchev

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

Although he had never been a *talmid* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, Rav Lieber, the founder of the Berditchev *kehilla*,

sowed seeds of *Chassidus* in his town that exploded into full bloom during the years of Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev.



The Beginnings Of Berditchev

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

HaMelech, combining *Kehuna* (Priesthood) with *Malchus* (kingship) could lead to the family's destruction.

Rav Lieber's father, Rav Avrohom, had fled from Cracow to Bistritch in the Ukraine, probably during the Swedish invasion of Poland (5415–5418/1655–1658), when thousands of Jews from Cracow, Kalisch, Piotrkov, Poznan and Lublin were slaughtered by Swedes, Poles and many died from the Plague. Some historians estimate that about half a million Polish Jews died during these few years. Although most of the Polish Jews returned home afterward to patch up their lives, many others, including Rav Avrohom, fled to other countries to make a new start. After all, do not *Chazal* (see *Rosh HaShana* 16b) state, "*Shinui makom shinui mazal* – Changing one's place can improve one's *mazal*?"

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

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

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

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

custom for years.

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

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

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

"Leave him alone!" the duke said in disgust. "Let's go."

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

"Help, help!" he cried out.

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

"Do you know who the person must have been whom the duke attacked?" he asked the servants. "Obviously, our great

Maggid who crosses the river to pray every day! I am certain the duke will never recover from his paralysis until he begs him for forgiveness!"

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

"I will forgive the duke if he builds a large *shul* at the place I was praying and a house next door in which to live," Rav Lieber told the doctor.

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

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

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



A Special Place

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I say that is kosher!" the Rav replied.

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

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

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

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

The court ordered that Eliyohu *HaNovi* should come down in the form of a ragged, filthy pauper and test Rav Lieber. If

Rav Lieber received him pleasantly and gave him every honor, the decree would be revoked. Of course, Eliyohu HaNovi's duty was to make this trial as difficult as possible.

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

"I'm hungry!" the stranger slurred. "Give me something to eat!"

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

"I need food now!" retorted the pauper.

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

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

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

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

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

After *havdola*, Eliyohu HaNovi

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What is the hurry?" inquired Rav Efraim.

"I am in *golus* and cannot stay in one place for more than one night!" he replied.

Suddenly Eliyohu *HaNovi* appeared with good tidings.

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

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



With the Ba'al Shem Tov

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

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

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

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

Although Rav Lieber always revered the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, he never became his *talmid* or followed his path of *Chassidus*. His awe of the *Ba'al Shem Tov* increased dramatically after the *Ba'al Shem Tov's*

passing when the *Megalleh Amukos*, who appeared every night to study with Rav Lieber, suddenly stopped coming. Concerned, Rav Lieber sent his older son, Rav Yechiel, to the *Megalleh Amukos's* grave in Cracow to inquire what had happened.

“Since the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* passing, the *Yeshiva Shel Ma'ala* has closed down for thirty days,” the *Megalleh Amukos* told him. “It is from there that I get the *Torah* I study with your father.”

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

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

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

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

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

May Rav Lieber's memory be a blessing.

www.berdichev.org/rav_lieber_hagadol-1.html



Rav Aharon Kotler 2nd of Kislev

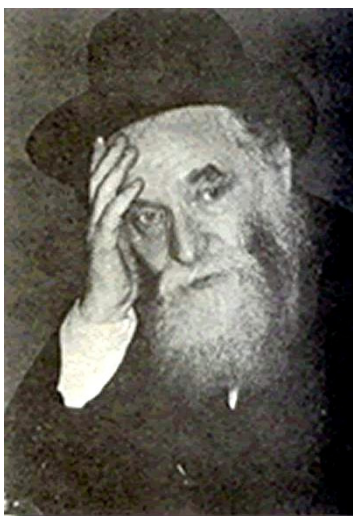
This seemingly too-incredible-to-be-true story actually took place. It was during World War II when twenty-four *Rabbonim* were being held in Italy and faced being returned to Nazi-occupied Europe and certain death.

Rav Aharon Kotler, founder and *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Lakewood Yeshiva, turned to the well-known *askan* and subsequent author of *Ethics From Sinai*, Mr. Irving Bunim, and asked him who could intercede on behalf of these twenty-four *Rabbonim*. Mr. Irving Bunim suggested the Italian Mafia. Rav Kotler urged Mr. Bunim to contact them immediately.

After contacting them, he asked Rav Aharon, "Who are we sending to the meeting?"

Rav Aharon replied, "You and I are going."

Off they went to meet the godfather of the Mafia, Joe Bonnano. Rav Aharon did not speak English, so it was Mr. Bunim who explained the problem of the twenty-four *Rabbonim* trapped in Italy.



The Mafia chief asked Mr. Bunim, "Who is the elderly man sitting next to you?"

He told him, "He is the godfather of the Jewish people."

"Really?" asked the Mafia chief.

"Yes!" replied Mr. Bunim emphatically.

"Tell him I want a blessing."

So Mr. Irving Bunim turned to Rav Aharon and in *Yiddish* told him, "*Ehr vill a bracha fun de Rav*. (He wants a blessing from the Rav)."

"Zog eim ehr zol leiben lang un shtarben in bet."

Mr. Irving Bunim turned back to the mafia chief Joe Bonnano and told him, "The *Rav* blesses you with long life and you should die in bed."

Upon hearing this, the Mafia chief replied, "I like that," and promised to arrange the freedom of the twenty-four *Rabbonim* stuck in Italy within two weeks, which he did indeed accomplish.

Twenty-something years later, in 1964, a shiny black stretch limo pulls up in front of Lakewood Yeshiva in Lakewood, New Jersey. Two fancily dressed men get out and walk up to the office. They say are looking for Rav Kotler. Out comes a man who introduces himself.

"No, not you," say the two Italian guys. "We are looking for an older man."

"That was my father," says the Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Shneur Kotler, "but he passed away a number of years ago."

The Italian men explain that they are the Bonnano brothers, and that their father always "attributed his long life to your saintly father's blessing. Now that he has just retired, we are taking over the business and we came here for the same blessing."

"I'm sorry," says Rav Shneur, "my father could do that, but I am not on that high level."

Disappointed, but clearly understanding the concept of *yeridas hadoros* (spiritual descent of the generations), the new Mafia chiefs bid farewell to Rav Shneur.

For saving twenty-four *Rabbonim* from the Nazis, and with Rav Aharon Kotler's *berocha*, Joe Bonnano – the Mafia godfather – lived to ninety-seven years old.

{Emunah Magazine/Noam Amdurski-Matzav.com Newscenter} ~
www.matzav.com/rav-aharon-kotler-ztl-and-the-mafia-godfather/



Background

With the Soviet occupation of Poland in 1939, Rav Kotler escaped first to Kobe, Japan, then to the United States in April of 1941. Rav Aharon assumed a leading role in the rescue operations of the *Va'ad Hatzola*. Under his leadership, *Bais Medrash Govoha* opened in a converted house in Lakewood, New Jersey, in April

1943, and the *Yeshiva* and *kollel* student body increased from the original fourteen to 140 in 1962, the year of his *petira*. Rav Aharon also headed *Chinuch Atzmai*, the network of *Torah* day schools in *Eretz Yisrael*, founded in 1953, and he took over the leadership of *Torah U'Mesorah*, the American day school movement, after the *petira* of its founder, Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz. He also headed *Agudas Yisrael's Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah*.



How He Decided To Come To America

The two great *Torah* giants, Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Aharon Kotler, both learned in the *Slutzk Yeshiva*. Rav Feinstein later became the *Rav* of Luban in Russia, but when the Communists rose to power, his life was in danger because the Communists tried to uproot any vestige of Jewish life. Finally, when life in Russia became too precarious, Rav Feinstein and his family immigrated to the United States, arriving there in 1936.



Rav Kotler, though, remained in Europe until World War II broke out. Eventually, after many trials and tribulations, he managed to escape from Europe, and arrived in Japan. Now that he was in a country that allowed Jews to travel, he had two choices. On the one hand, he could travel to *Eretz Yisrael*, where his father-in-law, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, had already established himself. Or he could travel to the United States and join Rav Moshe Feinstein.

Faced with this major decision, Rav Kotler decided to follow the system of lots used by the *Gaon* of Vilna. This consisted of a certain method of turning the pages of a specific edition of the *Torah*, and following the direction of the verse to where this system pointed.

After casting the lot, Rav Kotler found that the verse he had opened to read (*Shemos*4:27): "*Hashem* said to Aharon, 'Go to meet Moshe in the desert.'" Rav

Aharon Kotler understood this to mean that he was to join Rav Moshe Feinstein in what was the "desert" of Jewish learning in America.

It was in the United States that Rav Kotler established the Lakewood *Yeshiva*, one of the premier *Yeshivos* in the world.

www.heichalhanegina.blogspot.com/2006/11/special-shalach-manos-for-rosh-yeshiva.html



לזכר נשמת אמנו החשובה, נפש יקרה ועדינה
אשה יראת ה' ובעלת מדות טובות מרת זיסל ז"ל
בת הרה"ח 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.

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

גוט שבת

Rabbi Dovid Feinstein: Torah Greatness and Humility

Nov 11, 2020 | by [Dassy Litchman](#)

The world has lost a Torah giant.

The Talmud (Taanit 7a) compares Torah to water: just as water leaves a high place and flows to a lower place, similarly the Torah only establishes itself in one who is humble. The Jewish nation just lost a paragon of humility in the late Torah genius, Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, who died last Friday at age 91.

Rabbi Feinstein was one of the leading authorities on Jewish law in the world and a member of the Council of Torah Scholars of Agudath Israel of America. When questions arose regarding end of life issues, few were willing to apply the halacha, Jewish law, and rule on such sensitive cases. Who knew enough to determine what was appropriate? Rav Dovid knew what he knew. While he was an introvert by nature, he would confidently rule on halachic queries from all ends of the earth.

Rabbi Feinstein took his responsibility to rule on Jewish law very seriously. An incredibly self-disciplined person, he was constantly studying. At the many weddings he was invited to, the Rabbi would sit and learn. In his study, he would sit and learn. In his office, he would sit and learn. He became who he was through decades of toil in the understanding of the intricacies of the Talmud. It was this dedication to study that made his accessibility so meaningful.

A Kind Neighbor

The Lower East Side was home to Rav Dovid for the last 83 years. It is here that his loss is palpably felt.

Rav Dovid patronized the local establishments. Every week, he used to shop for groceries at the local Kosher market, and he would eat breakfast in the Kosher pizza shop every morning. While he was there, anyone and everyone was welcome to come sit at his table to join him. Many took advantage of the opportunity to ask questions about the application of Jewish law, or for advice in a personal matter. He was available and accessible to anyone who sought his opinion, and he didn't force his opinion on anyone who didn't care to ask for it.

On Simchat Torah, the Rosh HaYeshiva used to sit in the center of the lively dancing, holding a Sefer Torah. One year, when we were about four years old, one of his granddaughters and I thought of playing "don't get trampled," and we joined the circle of men dancing, running in and out of the circle. Suffice it to say that it was dangerous for us, as well as for the adults trying not to trip over us.

The Rosh HaYeshiva noticed our game, smiled warmly, and invited us to come sit with him in the center of the circle.

Rabbi Shlomo Fishelis, a grandson of the late Rabbi, mentioned in his eulogy that his grandfather was "a good sport." He shared that the Rosh HaYeshiva would pose for photographs with anyone who asked for them, and he would retake the photograph as many times as necessary until the petitioner was happy.

Not Interested in Honor

Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem (MTJ), where Rav Dovid served as Rosh Yeshiva, remained an unassuming stop on the F train in Lower Manhattan, despite being the home of such towering Talmudic scholars. Jews from all walks of life, including those with limited background in Jewish learning, made their way to MTJ. No one at MTJ batted an eyelash. Many of the towering Talmudic scholars offered to study together with them. The Rosh HaYeshiva created an environment where people came to study Torah, and any external trappings were irrelevant.

Rav Shach once said about Rav Dovid's illustrious father, Rav Moshe Feinstein, "His greatness was in his simplicity." Rav Dovid lived up to his noble heritage.

The world has lost a Torah giant. We will miss his great leadership and insightful wisdom, as well as his warmth and accessibility.

"Meaningful photo of Rabbi David Feinstein Zt"l in Reserve Cut (a fine dining expensive restaurant).

He took out a person on their birthday that had no one else to celebrate with.

Unbelievable humility, an unbelievable loss."



Inspiring Quotes by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z'l



A small selection of meaningful quotes from Rabbi Sacks, of blessed memory.

“For Judaism, the criterion of the good society is not wealth, power or prowess but the simple question: does it respect the individual as the image of God?”

◦ *Radical Then, Radical Now* (2004)

“Non-Jews respect Jews who respect Judaism, and they are embarrassed by Jews who are embarrassed by Judaism.”

◦ *Radical Then, Radical Now* (2004)

“There is no life without a task; no person without a talent; no place without a fragment of God’s light waiting to be discovered and redeemed; no situation without its possibility of sanctification; no moment without its call.”

◦ *To Heal a Fractured World* (2007)

“You achieve immortality not by building pyramids or statues – but by engraving your values on the hearts of your children, and they on their theirs, so that our ancestors live on in us and we in our children, and so on until the end of time.”

◦ *The Chief Rabbis’ Haggadah* (2003)

“Making a blessing over life is the best way of turning life into a blessing.”

◦ *Celebrating Life: Finding Happiness in Unexpected Places* (2004)

“The very existence of Israel is as near to a miracle as we will find in the sober pages of empirical history.”

◦ *Future Tense: Jews, Judaism and Israel in the Twenty First Century* (2012)

“The supreme religious challenge is to see God’s image in one who is not in our image.”

◦ *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (2003)

“Love is what redeems us from the prison cell of the self and all the sickness to which the narcissist self is prone – from empty pride to deep depression to a sense of nihilism and the abyss.”

◦ *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion and the Search for Meaning* (2012)

“The more friendship I share, the more I have. The more love I give, the more I possess. The best way to learn something is to teach it to others.”

◦ *Celebrating Life: Finding Happiness in Unexpected Places* (2004)

Zera Shimshon

Chayei Sara

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

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

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

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

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

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

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

לזכר נשמת

רבינו שמשון חיים בן רב נחמן מיכאל זצ"ל

בעל הזרע שמשון זיע"א

ויה"ר שיתקיימו בנו ברכותיו של אותו צדיק

לזכות רבקה נכון בת חנה ואברהם
יוסף בן חנה לרפואה שלימה ולזיווג
הגון בקרוב ממש ולשנה מבורכת
עם כל הברכות הכתובות בתורה
לעילוי נשמת הרב חיים שאול בן
בנציון זצ"ל

לזכות זיווג הגון בקרוב ממש
לשושנה נחמה בת חנה פעסא
ורקבה רויזא בת פייגא
יוכבד בת דבורה לרפואה שלימה

ואברהם זקן בא בימים (כד' א')

And Avraham was old, well on in years (21:17)

The Medrash relates (Bereishis Rabba 59:1), that R' Meir went to the town called Mamla and he only saw black-haired people (young people); there were no seniors who lived there. He asked the inhabitants of the town if perhaps they were from the descendants of Eli Hakohen who were cursed to die at a young age, which they confirmed. They begged R' Meir to pray on their behalf, for although there was a decree that they should die young, nevertheless, the power of prayer of such a righteous person could help nullify the decree partially. R' Meir responded that if they wanted to reach זקנה, old age, they should engage in tzedaka. This R' Meir based on a passuk in Mishlei (16:31) which says, the crown of ripe old age can be attained through tzedaka. This is also learned from Avraham Avinu about whom the passuk says taught his children to guard the way of Hashem to do tzedaka (Bereishis 18:19) and Avraham Avinu merited longevity as the passuk says, And Avraham was old etc.

The Zera Shimshon asks - how is Avraham Avinu a proof that tzedaka would bring the inhabitants of Mamla to live to old age? Perhaps tzedaka only helps when there is no decree? But since the residents of Mamla were descendants of Eli Hakohen, it was decreed on them to die while in their youth?

As well, the passuk in Mishlei mentions שיבה, ripe old age, which is even older than זקנה as the mishna in Avos says (5:26), sixty is the age of זקנה and seventy is the age of שיבה. Why then did R' Meir tell the people of Mamla that through tzedaka they will merit זקנה, old age, if the very passuk he used spoke about living to שיבה, ripe old age?

The Zera Shimshon explains that the reason why a person merits to live to ripe old age by doing tzedaka is because the passuk says (Mishlei 10:2), tzedaka saves from death. This automatically means a person who is involved in tzedaka must live until sixty since dying before that age is classified as Kares. However, even living until sixty does not really show that tzedaka added length to a person's life since many people live until sixty. Therefore, the passuk says that tzedaka is the way to live until 'ripe old age' - שיבה.

However, the descendants of Eli Hakohen died in their twenties, thus, for them living until sixty - זקנה, is a clear indication that tzedaka lengthened their lives. This is why although the passuk says that tzedaka brings שיבה, ripe old age, R' Meir told the residents of Mamla that it would bring them זקנה, old age.

Although the Zera Shimshon doesn't speak this out, it would seem that the decree would not allow them to live to שיבה in any case. Tzedaka would push their lifespan to זקנה.

The Zera Shimshon ends off that the main mitzva of tzedaka is giving it without knowing who it is going to.

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

MeOros Ramchal Chayei Sarah

The Secret of *Klippas Nogah* Refinement of Good from Within the *Klippah* itself

“And Abraham took another wife and her name was Keturah.”
(Bereishis 25:1)

Chazal teach us (*Bereishis Rabbah* 61:4 cited by *Rashi* ad loc sv Keturah) This is Hagar. She was called Keturah because her deeds were as beautiful as incense *ketores*.

The *Ramchal* explains that this is the secret of the *klippah* known as *klippas Nogah* – The shining or glowing husk or shell. This *klippah* can be repaired when it is used towards purposes of *kedushah*. This is why the *pasuk* says that Avraham took another wife using the Hebrew word *vaYosef* – which alludes to the concept of *tosefes kedusha* – a form of *tikkun* such as *tosefes Shabbos* when we add on time from the mundane workweek to the *kedusha* of *Shabbos*, by sanctifying this time it is transformed into *Shabbos*, when we accept *Shabbos* early and end *Shabbos* later. This is known as *tosefes me'chol al ha'kodesh* – adding from the mundane or profane unto the holy.

Also, she was named Keturah since her deeds were as beautiful as incense. The secret of the *ketores* is the secret of *birur nitzotzos* – the *Ramchal* explains that the incense refines the holy sparks that is the good among the *klippas* since any *kedusha* within them is what sustains them and gives them life. So too Hagar is the secret of refinement, a *birur* – of a different kind, to refine even the good that is found within the *klippah* itself.

Chayei Sarah

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Hilula

27 - Rabbi Moshe Natan Neta Tzinvirt

28 - Rabbeinu Yona Hachasid of Girondi

29 - Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Riminov

1 - Rabbi Ephraim Anakaveh

2 - Rabbi Nossan Meir Wachtfogel

3 - Rabbi Yechezkel Cohen, Av Beit Din
of Rechovot

4 - Rabbi Yehuda Shitrit, Av Beit Din
of Agadir

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, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"a



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

The Transient Nature of This World

"Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years; the years of Sarah's life" (Bereishit 23:1)

It is interesting to note why this Parsha is called after Sarah's name and not after someone else's name, for example, Eliezer who showed self-sacrifice in fulfilling Avraham's command when going to search for a wife for Yitzchak.

Chazal say on the verse (Bereishit 12:5), "and the souls they made in Charan", that "the souls" refers to those whom they had converted to faith in Hashem, for Avraham converted the men and Sarah the women. With siyata dishmaya I would like to suggest that the word 'גר', alien, which also means convert, contains great significance. It suggests a wanderer who does not have a permanent place of residence. He is a temporary dweller and not a permanent resident. As the verse says (Shemot 18:3), "I was a sojourner (גר) in a strange land". The implication is that the unlearned person assumes that This World is the purpose and believes that he will live here forever, as a permanent resident. Therefore, he tries to set himself up comfortably, with wealth and honor so that he should enjoy a happy and good life. All because of the mistaken perception that This World has permanence. So he invests his maximum efforts in this permanence, to live it out in the best possible way. Avraham Avinu and his wife Sarah stand in direct contrast to this outlook and explain to all mankind that they are mistaken, for This World is not permanent but temporary, as it says (Tehillim 90:10), "The days of our years among them are seventy years, and if with might, eighty years". Since this is so, man's days are like a fleeting shadow, so why invest great effort in this passing world in which we are compared to sojourners and are not permanent residents.

This is how Avraham and Sarah a"h opened the eyes of their generation and enhanced their intelligence so that they should arrive at the correct outlook towards life in This World. They showed them the correct path and explained that This World is not the desired goal, but serves as a means for achieving the true goal which is Torah and mitzvot. This is the way to merit a true acquisition in The World to Come, which is the World of Truth and Eternity.

This is why the verse refers to the deeds of Avraham and Sarah as "the souls they made in Charan". How can one make souls? Avraham and Sarah made and created new people. They caused a revolution inside the person, in their inner being. Chazal express this idea by saying (Yevamot 22a), "One who converts is likened to a newborn baby", for he becomes a new person with different perceptions and values.

In fact, Avraham was perfectly capable of living in a beautiful home and leading a wealthy lifestyle, for we are told (Bereishit 13:2), "Now Avraham was very laden

with livestock, silver, and gold". However, he wished to impart to his offspring that This World is a temporary world and it is a pity for a person to invest all his energy and efforts in something transient. That is why he chose a temporary tent for his dwelling place.

This is also how many of our Gedolim lived their lives. They achieved their Torah and greatness only in the merit of leaving their houses behind and exiling themselves to a place of Torah. Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto Hagadol zya"a, Rabbeinu Shlomo Pinto zya"a together with his brother-in-law, Rabbi Khalifa Malka zya"a, author of 'Kav V'Naki', were examples of this ideal. All these great personalities merited enormous greatness and holiness, and achieved lofty levels above regular human insight, in the merit of a clear understanding that This World is temporary. They felt that it was worthwhile to go into exile and suffer for the sake of attaining the Holy Torah.

This is the meaning of the verse, "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years". Throughout her life, Sarah 'made Torah souls' and brought them under the wings of the Shechina by explaining to them that they are only temporary residents in this transitory world. This is how Sarah Imeinu a"h influenced her generation. The verse talks about 'חיי שרה', Sarah's lifetime. The word '8+10+10' (חיי), lifetime, has the same numerical value as '20+8' (כח), strength, for Sarah invested all her strength and energy throughout her life in instilling the truth in mankind, so that all should understand and know that they are aliens in this land. She would ignite them with a holy flame to serve Hashem, the G-d of Israel.

Now we understand why this Parsha is called specifically after Sarah, 'Chayei Sarah', for this teaches us that although Sarah passed away, her way of life has been passed on to us and is studied from generation to generation, with her offspring continuing in her ways and holding on to her good deeds and mitzvot. That is how she lives on and exists deep inside us.

The fact that Avraham converted the men and Sarah the women was a great accomplishment, for many times marital harmony is shaken when one partner decides to become more religious. Sometimes, with Hashem's kindness, the husband merits discovering the truth, but his wife has still not merited this revelation. This gives rise to differences of opinion between them, which necessitates large doses of caution and patience. And conversely, the wife might have merited Heavenly illumination in discovering religion, but her husband is still far from ready for change. The holy Avraham and Sarah a"h were aware of this problem, therefore while Avraham would convert the husband and sons, at the same time Sarah would influence the wife and daughters and instill in them pure Yirat Shamayim so that the entire family recognized the Creator and served Him wholeheartedly.



Walking in their Ways

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

Faith is Infectious

I once had occasion to speak with a top doctor who is a well-known specialist in his field. During the course of our conversation, I touched upon the Torah's opinion of various scientific matters. Out of habit, I punctuated my words with phrases like "Baruch Hashem" and "B'ezrat Hashem".

The doctor was extremely impressed with what I said, some of which he was hearing for the very first time. He was obviously moved by the proofs I provided, which are all quoted in our holy sefarim.

Moreover, my mentioning Hashem's Name time and again brought him to a keener awareness of my unequivocal belief in Him. He averred that although he has Jewish roots, he has no faith in a Creator.

This was his affirmation. But his face showed a different picture. In all innocence, I truly believed that the doctor would change his mind. But his Yetzer Hara got the better of him. Although he clearly saw the truth of Torah in opposition to the emptiness of science, he stood his ground and did not admit his mistakes.

I did not succeed in returning him to the correct path, but the very fact that he conceded to having Jewish roots, which he had originally denied, demonstrated the spark of Judaism which had been ignited in his soul.

Baruch Hashem, from time to time, I observe changes for the positive in his behavior, although the road to complete repentance is still long.

Today, the good doctor is proud of his Jewish roots. He shows interest in the Jewish holidays and is making strides in recognizing his Creator. I do not doubt that Hashem will implant wisdom in his heart and open his eyes so that he will one day return completely to his Maker.

The Haftarah

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

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

Guard Your Tongue

Another's Attributes

A common example of a comment that has a negative connotation is saying that so and so has bad middot. For example, it is forbidden to say about someone that he is easily angered, stingy, or arrogant etc.

In prevalent situations where the expression 'average' has a negative connotation, this comment will also be considered as lashon hara.

According to the halacha mentioned last week, explaining that everything is relative to the level of the person being spoken about, to say about someone who is known for his generosity that in truth he does not give more than the average person, is definitely considered as lashon hara.



In Our Father's Path

Even for a Consideration of a Million Shekel, I will not Intervene

In the initial meeting between the deceitful Lavan and Eliezer servant of Avraham, the verse describes what drew Lavan towards him, "And Lavan ran to the man... For upon seeing the nose ring, and the bracelets" (Bereishit 24:29-30). Rashi explains, "Why and for what did he run? For upon seeing the nose ring, he said, this person is rich, and he desired the money".

This is the behavior of those who follow their lusts. All their dealings and desires are saturated with lust and a craving for money that is earned in a dishonest way. This stands in direct contrast to the Chosen People who study Torah, for they have no desire to benefit from money that is not acquired honestly and which does not bring happiness to man.

"All the ways of Hashem are kindness and truth" (Tehillim 25:10). The Alter of Slabodka zt"l, who was the grandfather of Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, would often quote this verse which demonstrates that the attributes of kindness and truth are not separate attributes, but are rather one and the same. This is also expressed in the verse, "Grant truth to Ya'akov, kindness to Avraham", for the two attributes are one. Only chesed that stems from the attribute of truth is fitting to be called chesed. Chesed that contradicts the truth is not kindness, but the opposite.

Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l was a personality who was entirely chesed, giving and imparting to others. He recoiled from anything that even smelt of lacking truth. He cleaved so strongly to the truth that when he heard something untrue, he did not have to say that it wasn't the truth, one could see it clearly written on his face.

The following story is recorded in the sefer 'Bechol Nafshecha', that describes the lifetime of Rabbi Nosson Tzvi: He was once asked to sign a document that could have greatly assisted the Yeshiva in obtaining funds. The document was G-d forbid not false, but was also not the entire truth. Upholding his attribute of truth, R' Nosson Tzvi was determined not to sign this document on any account. Once, the Yeshiva received a budget of a million shekel from one of the government offices, a budget that was arranged by one of the askanim who toiled for an entire year to obtain it. But when it became clear to R' Nosson Tzvi that there was some small sophistry in one of the declarations, he firmly refused to take the money.

The Gaon Rabbi Tzvi Partzovitch related that once the father of one of the talmidim donated the large sum of half a million shekels to the Yeshiva, conditional on a modest stipulation concerning his son, a student in the Yeshiva. One of the Roshei Yeshiva, who was accountable for this bachur, was given the responsibility of adhering to this request. R' Nosson Tzvi was approached and asked to encourage that particular Rosh Yeshiva to agree and fulfil the parents' request, for the benefit of the Yeshiva. However, the Rosh Yeshiva responded decidedly: "I gave him this role and I will not intervene in his decision in the slightest, even if it involves a consideration of half a million shekels. Even for a million shekels I will not get involved".

By nature, R' Nosson Tzvi enjoyed hearing different opinions concerning matters with which he was involved, in line with, "Salvation lies in much counsel" (Mishlei 11:14). However, at the end of the day, after a precise reckoning of all the different opinions, he then decided what and how to act in line with the truth, and then he would abide by his opinion like a firm rock. Opposing opinions and irate individuals he accepted with understanding and a smile, even trying to appease them, but he would not budge from the truth.



Pearls of the Chag

Timing Death for Involvement in a Mitzvah

"Sarah died in Kiryat-arba which is Chevron in the land of Canaan" (Bereishit 23:2)

Rashi writes, "The section of Sarah's death is adjacent to the section of the Akeidah to indicate that due to the news of the Akeidah that her son was about to be slaughtered, her soul flew out of her and she died."

The Gaon Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky shlita, in his sefer 'Taama Dikra' asks, how is it possible that Sarah died because of the Akeidah since we are told, "Those on the way to perform a mitzvah are not harmed"? The question grows stronger in light of the Gemarah (Shabbat 118b) that quotes Rabbi Yosi who said, "May my lot be with those who die while on the way to a mitzvah". The obvious question is, how is it possible to die on the way to performing a mitzvah if a different Chazal tells us that those on the way to perform a mitzvah are not harmed?

These questions can be reconciled with an important foundation. By saying "Those on the way to perform a mitzvah are not harmed", Chazal mean to say that they will not come to any harm as a result of performing this mitzvah. However, if it has already been decreed by Heaven that on a certain day so and so will end his life in This World, then on the contrary, it is considered a merit to die while engaged in a mitzvah. This is considered as dying 'Al Kiddush Hashem', in sanctification of G-d's Name. This is the meaning of the Tana's words, "May my lot be with those who die while on the way to a mitzvah". He wished that Hashem should bring it about that on the day he is supposed to die he should be in the midst of performing a mitzvah or even on the way to perform it so that he will merit passing away while engaged in a mitzvah matter.

Here too, it was predetermined that Sarah would live for one hundred and twenty-seven years. Now that her time had come, she merited dying on hearing the news of the mitzvah.

Exerting Effort in a Mitzvah Gives Hashem Spiritual Pleasure

"The servant ran towards her" (Bereishit 24:17)

Rashi: "Because he saw that the waters rose towards her". The Ramban expounds that this is learnt from the fact that later on, it says "and she drew for all his camels" (ibid 20), whereas in the previous verse (ibid 16), the expression of 'drawing' is not used, rather it says "She filled her jug and ascended". Since the waters rose towards

her, she had no need to draw.

In truth, this itself is puzzling. Why did the waters not rise towards her the second time?

The sefer 'Kedushat Levi' answers that the first time she required water for her own needs, therefore the waters rose towards her so that she wouldn't have to bother herself. But the second time she wished to perform an act of kindness by drawing water for Eliezer's camels, and this time the waters did not rise up towards her.

Why was this? Because when a person performs a mitzvah, Hashem prefers that the person should carry out the act and not that the mitzvah should come about through a miracle, for from every small amount of effort expended in doing a mitzvah, Hashem has great spiritual pleasure. This is the reason why a miracle was not performed for her the second time she drew water.

With You or Before You?

"He will send His angel before you" (Bereishit 24:7)

When Eliezer related to Betu'el and Lavan the events of the story, he changed Avraham's assurance that "He will send His angel before you" to "He will send His angel with you" (ibid 40).

What is the reason for this?

The sefer 'Machshava Techila' explains that when the angel walks ahead, in front of someone, he takes care to straighten the path and remove any stumbling blocks or hindrances. But when the angel walks together with the person, even if the angel intercepts any mishap in a miraculous fashion, the person will still need to wait until the angel accomplishes this.

Avraham prayed for Eliezer that his way should be successful. He did not suffice with the angel walking together with Eliezer, but that the angel should walk ahead of him and remove any stumbling block, so that Eliezer could arrive with 'kefitzat haderech', without any problems.

Avraham teaches us that when we pray for Hashem's salvation, we should ask for the highest level. For example, rather than praying that an operation be successful, we should ask that Heaven send a complete recovery without requiring the intervention of doctors and medication.

Eliezer, on the other hand, teaches us a chapter in humility. He relates that Avraham prayed that Hashem should send an angel to walk with him. It does not enter his mind to relate that the angel, in reality, went before him, the higher level.

Treasures

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



The Legacy Lives On for Eternity

The verse says about Rivkah (Bereishit 24:67), "And Yitzchak brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother...and thus Yitzchak was consoled after his mother". Rashi writes, "For as long as Sarah was alive, three miracles were present in her tent. A lamp burned from one Erev Shabbat to the next, her dough was blessed, and a cloud hung over her tent. These miracles ceased with Sarah's death but when Rivkah entered the tent they resumed".

This means that when Yitzchak saw that Sarah's good deeds were being continued in this world, by Rivkah following the same path that Sarah Imeinu had outlined, immediately "Yitzchak was consoled after his mother". Seeing that Sarah's legacy was still alive meant that his mother had not really passed away, for although her body was buried in the ground, her middot and good deeds were being maintained by his wife Rivkah, and this is in fact what comforted him.

This is why it says (Bereishit 23:2), "Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her". A careful look shows us that the word 'לבכותה', to bewail her, is written in the Torah with a small 'כ'. Chazal explain that the reason is that Avraham did not cry excessively over Sarah's death. In light of the above explanation, this could be because he did not feel that she had truly passed away.

The relationship that he had with Sarah while she was alive still lived on. He felt that Sarah's power that assisted him in bringing people closer to our Father in Heaven, continued to beat inside him and have an effect. Since her good deeds and lofty conduct were enduring, it was unnecessary to cry excessively over her death. It is still possible to call her 'Chayei Sarah', 'Sara's lifetime' for she is alive and enduring through her good deeds.

This strength continues to pulsate from generation to generation and is buried inside every Jew. Succeeding in overcoming life's challenges and sanctifying G-d's Name in the world despite the inherent difficulties, shows that these powers are deeply ingrained inside us. It therefore follows that Avraham and Sarah are still alive today, for their pure way of life is implanted in their descendants for all generations. As it says (Avot 2:2), "the merit of their forefathers aids them and their righteousness endures forever". Although the Avot have passed away, their Torah and legacy remain for eternity.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

When Eliezer servant of Avraham Avinu a"h expresses praise and thanks to Hashem for not withholding His kindness and for guiding him on the correct path, he uses the expression that is so prevalent among us, "baruch Hashem". "He said, 'Blessed is Hashem, G-d of my master Avraham, Who has not withheld His kindness and truth from my master'" (Bereishit 24:27). In order to focus on this inner recognition and highlight the way we must praise and laud Hashem Yitbarach at every step of our way in life, we will relate a story told by Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi Aryeh Shechter zt"l, in his sefer 'Aryeh Sha'ag':

"Two weeks before the passing of Maran the Chazon Ish zt"l, he sent me to the Mir yeshiva in Yerushalayim, to study under one of his exceptional talmidim, an outstanding Talmid Chacham called Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua Landau zt"l, who was exceedingly great and modest.

Several years later Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua became sick and I accompanied him to America for medical treatment. As a result of his illness, he had a tendency to become dehydrated quickly, which made it necessary for him to frequently drink large amounts. Wherever we went, I took along two bottles of orange juice, so that he could drink whenever necessary.

On Wednesday night Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua completed the serious of treatments. He strongly desired to return to Eretz Yisrael before Shabbat, but there were no vacancies on the next few flights. Our names were put on the waiting list and we made our way to the airport in the hope that something would come available.

Ahead of us on the waiting list were another twenty-seven people. On the face of it, it did not seem likely that there was a chance of us returning to Eretz Yisrael before Shabbat, but Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua did not give up and continued waiting in the airport.

In those days, sick people and their attendant were given a discount by El Al, so we received tickets at a ninety percent reduction of the price. I showed the clerk our special tickets and asked her to try and get

us a place in the next flight, explaining "If we were given such a considerable discount, it is easy to understand our situation." Indeed, she understood but was unable to help. "If two people from the flight do not arrive, you will get their places" she encouragingly offered.

Suddenly I noticed a different clerk who looked authoritative and decided to approach him. I explained our situation and asked for his help. But he showed himself to be a heartless and tough individual. When he saw the reduction on our tickets he immediately declared, "You paid only ten percent of the price, so even if people come after you they deserve to travel before you, for they have paid full price and you haven't!"

I tried to play on his emotions and explained that I was asking on behalf of someone who was extremely sick and that is why he should give us preference. But my words achieved the opposite effect.

"Sick?" He shouted, "Before you procure a letter of authorization from the hospital permitting him to fly, we will not allow him on the flight even if there is room!"

I immediately realized who we were up against and walked away. Suddenly I heard an announcement on the loudspeaker: "Rabbi Landau and Rabbi Shechter, proceed to check-in."

At the last minute, we had been given places. I sighed with relief but to my dismay, suddenly this unsympathetic clerk decided to intervene. "These are the people you are allowing on the flight?" he said to the clerk. He grabbed hold of our tickets and started walking away.

Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua began following him to beg him to allow us to fly, but I told him, "This person totally lacks compassion, there is nothing to talk about with him. Instead, let us stand for a moment and use the well-known segulah of concentrating on the thought, "There is none other than Him", and then with Hashem's help he will leave us alone.

He smiled, went over to a corner and focused his thoughts. After just a minute and a half, the clerk with whom I had originally spoken, came over and grabbed the tickets from the other clerk, shouting at him for mixing into a matter that does not concern him. And so we were ushered onto the plane.

After hours of running around, expending effort and nerve-racking uncertainty, I finally allowed myself to sprawl out on the seat. My mouth felt dry and parched. Wishing to wet my throat, I thought to myself, "If I am

so thirsty, who knows how Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua feels?!"

I had the bottles of juice with me but no cups. I wanted to ask the stewardesses but they were busy with a fault concerning the plane doors. Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua felt that disturbing them would cause a chilul Hashem. I thought about maybe drinking straight from the bottle, but the Rav was against this idea too, for this could also be a chilul Hashem.

Some time passed until the fault was rectified and the stewards were available to bring us cups. With dry lips and a hoarse throat, I poured a cup of juice for each of us from the refreshing drink. I was about to recite a blessing, when the Rav stopped me and said, "Wait a moment, let me teach you how one recites a blessing!"

When you are about to bless, you must contemplate how much kindness Hashem did so as to bring you this cup of juice with which you can quench your thirst. First of all, he created people and gave them the strength to work the ground, plant the orange trees, water them and help them grow for several years until they bear fruit. Once the tree produces fruit, the work has not yet finished. It is now necessary to bring people to pick the fruit. After the picking, one needs drivers and lorries to bring the fruit to the packing plant, where the factory requires workers to squeeze the oranges and produce the juice.

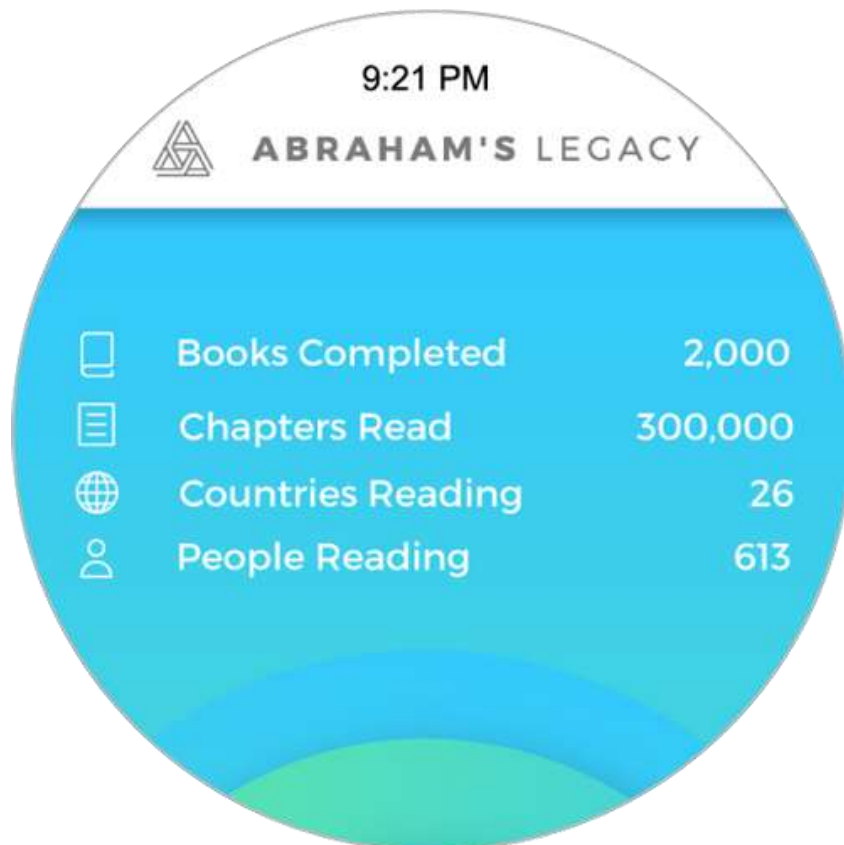
Additional workers and another factory is required for making the bottles in which to store the juice. And yet another factory to produce the cartons in which the bottles will be packed, and another factory to produce the cups with which we can drink the juice. This entire chain is carried out by people whom Hashem created and instilled in them the wisdom to produce all these wonderful things, just so that we can drink a cup of refreshing juice and quench our thirst...

Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua had not finished yet. For several long minutes, he continued pointing out several more details of Hashem's kindness. Only then did he finish and proclaim with excitement:

"And now I will show you how to make a blessing! When we recite "through Whose word everything came to be" we must think and thank for all these things that were performed with Hashem's kindness! How much appreciation must we feel towards Hashem for the enormous kindness that He does with us at each moment! Blessed is He Who has provided me with my every need".

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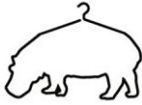
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