

THIS ISSUE INCLUDE SHEIMOS, AND SHOULD BE TREATED ACCORDINGLY. THANK YOU, AND GUT SHABBOS.

MEOROS HATZADDIKIM

— Lights Of Our Righteous —

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)

Parshas Bamidbar & Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan & Pirkei Avos & Sefiras Haomer & Shavuos

CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA

לזכר נשמת

ר' זכרי' שמעון הכהן בן יצחק

The Leviim Are Mine Forever

Rav Chaim Ibn Attar, the Ohr HaChaim

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“Take the Leviim in place of every firstborn from Bnei Yisrael...and the Leviim shall be Mine, I am Hashem” (3:45).

The *Ohr HaChaim* explains why the *pasuk* concludes by telling us, “I am Hashem.” The purpose of this statement is to declare Hashem’s never-ending love and eternal pact with *Shevet Levi*. In the *Ohr HaChaim’s* words, Hashem is telling us, “Just as I and My Name are eternal, so too shall the Leviim be Mine forevermore!” Why did Hashem have to make this declaration? The *Ohr HaChaim* answers that this is because one day the *Avoda* will be reclaimed by the bechoros, at which time the status of *Shevet Levi* might come into question. Hashem therefore declares that they are His forever!

Avos Chapter 6 Mishna 6

Rav Ovadiah Yosef

The Torah is acquired in 48 ways:

[One of these is] Love of Rebuke

When Rav Ovadia Yosef used to teach Pirkei Avos he would illustrate the above Mishna with the following story:

Rav Bunim of Peshischa once came before his master and rebbe, the holy *Chozeh of Lublin*, with a tearstained face and eyes red and puffy from crying. “What happened?” asked the *Chozeh*.

“Someone insulted me and rebuked me,” Rav Bunim said.

“And what did you do?” asked the *Chozeh*.

“I kissed him,” answered Rav Bunim to the surprised *Chozeh*.

“Who was this?” asked the *Chozeh*. It was the *Shevet Mussar* by Rav Elijah

HaKohen. His words of *mussar* and rebuke moved me and touched my heart so much so that I cried. When I finished, I closed the *sefer*, kissed it, and replaced it on the shelf. (Anaf Etz Avos p. 410)

Stories on the Parsha & Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan & Pirkei Avos & Sefiras HaOmer & Shavuos



Repaying A Debt

Avos 2:14 Which is the bad road, the wrong path that you shouldn't travel on? Rebbe Shimon said: He who borrows and fails to repay. For he who borrows from man is likened to he who borrows from Hashem.

Rav Ovadia Yosef used to illustrate our Mishna with the following story:

Rav Eliyahu Lopian told the following amazing story in the name of Rav Yisroel Salanter and Rav Chaim of Volozhin:

A star prize pupil in Yeshivas Etz Chaim of Volozhin once got sick and required medical attention. Rav Chaim asked another bachur to accompany the sick talmid while they travelled together to the sick talmid's home.

By nightfall they reached a village and decided to spend the night there in a local inn. In the morning, the proprietor of the inn named a price for their room and board. The melave who accompanied the sick talmid paid for his lodgings whereas the sick talmid had no money. "Don't worry you will pay me back a different time," reassured him the innkeeper, "you are a yeshiva bochur so I can tell that I can trust you," he concluded.

When they arrived at their final destination, the sick talmid handed over the money to his friend and asked him to repay the debt. The friend took the money, but on the way back he simply forgot about it and went straight back to the yeshiva without repaying the debt. Meanwhile, unfortunately the sick talmid's condition worsened and eventually his health deteriorated and he passed away and died. Word of his passing reached the yeshiva where his fellow talmidim cried, mourned him and eulogized the sick bachur.

Some days later Rav Chaim Volozhiner was walking down the corridor when he was astounded to see with his own eyes the very same bachur who had died walking down the corridor of the yeshiva towards him!

Rav Chaim recovered himself and approached the deceased bachur and asked him what had been ruled regarding his standing in the heavenly court of beis din shel ma'alah. The deceased responded that in shomayim they began counting his merits in Torah study and mitzvah observance and weighing them against his sins and demerits and misdeeds and they ruled that he was to go to Gan Eden. However, when he arrived one dark angel of destruction barred his way and claimed that he was a thief who had never repaid his debt to the innkeeper for his room and board at the inn. Now although he was blameless, he had asked his friend to repay the debt, still his friend forgot, and since the innkeeper never forgave the debt and expected him to pay and had never received the money the debt was still outstanding and remained unpaid. His way to Gan Eden was barred! Since the beis din shel ma'alah saw he was blameless they gave him dispensation to come back down and ask his rebbe and rosh yeshiva to pay back his debt. As the bachur concluded his other worldly request he vanished and was gone!

Rav Chaim summoned the bachur who had travelled and accompanied the sick

deceased talmid and the latter admitted sadly that he had simply forgotten about repaying the debt. "Go quickly and travel to the inn and pay back the debt immediately," Rav Chaim ordered him. He did so and repaid the debt and the neshama of that deceased bachur was never seen again, his soul moved on to its rest as all its outstanding accounts had now been settled. This story was handed down to Rav Yitzchok Zev Soloveitzchik of Brisk who used to tell it in the name of Rav Yisroel Salanter and testified as to its veracity as true story. (Anaf Etz Avos, page 125)

Gedolim Be'misasm Yoser



**Yahrzeits for the 29th of Iyar ~ Begins Friday Night
(05-16-2026)**



Rav Meir Leifer of Premishlan - Divrei Meir (5610 / 1850 - 176th Yahrzeit)

Son of Rav Aharon Leib - Aharon Aryeh of Premishlan. Also Known as Rav Meir'el. A grandson of Rav Meir HaGadol of Premishlan the *talmid chaver* and colleague of the Ba'al Shem Tov. Uncle of Rav Mordechai'leh, founder of Nadvorna dynasty. His mentor and rebbe in Chassidus was Rav Mordechai of Kremnitz. He also studied under and the Chozeh of Lublin.



Rav Shraga Feish Fishman of Pressburg - Ohr Shraga (5641 / 1881 - 145th Yahrzeit)

Grand Rabbi Shmuel Shlomo Leiner of Radzin, son of *Tiferes Yosef*. Established the Radziner Yeshiva Sod Yesharim in Radzin, Poland, which was lead by and under the auspices of his brother-in-law Grand Rabbi Avrohom Yissochor Englard of Radzin, who later established a network of 7 yeshivos Sod Yesharim Radzin in various cities throughout Poland. The Rebbe was greatly respected for his greatness in learning, by many Litvisheh Gedolim, even being at such a young age.



Rav Yisroel Chaim Weiss - Av Beis Din of Salish Spinka (5704 / 1944 - 82nd Yahrzeit)

**Yahrzeits for the 1st of Sivan ~ Begins Saturday Night
(05-17-2026)**



Rav Meir HaLevi Horowitz - Maharam of Tiktin (4856 / 1096 - 930th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yehuda Tzvi of Rozla (5646 / 1886 - 140th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yosef Aharon Marilus of Butchatch - Yad Yosef (5673 / 1913 - 113th Yahrzeit)



Rav Avrohom Menachem HaLevi Steinberg of Brod - Machaze Avrohom (5688 / 1928 - 98th Yahrzeit)



Rav Eliezer Dovid Greenwald - Rav of Satmar, Keren L'Dovid (5688 / 1928 - 98th Yahrzeit)



Rav Eliezer Lipa HaLevi Zilberman - Av Beis Din of Ratzfurt (5704 / 1944 - 82nd Yahrzeit)



Rav Mordechai Shapiro of Kaminka - Koritz (5707 / 1947 - 79th Yahrzeit)



Rav Alexander Sender Linchner (5756 / 1996 - 30th Yahrzeit)

Rav Alexander Sender Linchner (1996), son-in-law of Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz and founder of Kiryat Noar (Boystown), Bayit Vegan, in 1953 for for children who had escaped the Holocaust and other destitute Jewish immigrant children. Previously, he started a trade school for 14 boys from Yemen in 1949. He was succeeded by his son, Rav Moshe Linchner.




Rav Aharon Yechiel Leifer - Nadvorna Rebbe of Tzfas (5760 / 2000 - 26th Yahrzeit)

Rav Aharon Yechiel Leifer, the *Nadvorna Rebbe* of Tzefas (1912-2000). After losing his wife in children during World War II, Rav Aharon Yechiel moved to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Tzefas, setting up the *Nezer Hakodesh shul*. In Yisrael, he became a chassid of the *Sanz-Klausenberger Rebbe*.




Rav Mordechai Don Waldman - Yeshivas Beis Dovid - Monsey (5760 / 2000 - 26th Yahrzeit)

**Yahrzeits for the 2nd of Sivan ~ Begins Sunday Night
(05-18-2026)**

 **Rav Chaim Yitzchok Isaac Halberstam - Av Beis Din of Slatfina, Oros Chaim**
Rav Chaim Yitzchok was the *Av Beis Din* of Slatfina. Author of *Oros Chaim* (on Chanukah). Son of Rav Yehoshua of Dalina *Hy'd*. Grandson of Rav Moshe A'B'D Bardiyyov, son of Rav Baruch of Gorlitz, son of Rav Chaim of Sanz (the *Divrei Chaim*).

 **Rav Yitzchok Rachlitz - Av Beis Din of Tosh & Bergsaz (5619 / 1859 - 167th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Yisroel Hager of Vizhnitz - Ahavas Yisrael (5696 / 1936 - 90th Yahrzeit)**
Rav Yisroel was the son of Rav Baruch Hagar of Vizhnitz. He was known for his genius that was only matched by his love for every Jew. He was among the greatest gedolim and leaders of his generation and his thousands of followers and chassidim hailed from Eastern Galicia, Romania and Hungary. He served as Rav in Devlia and the Máramaros region, and afterwards he was AvBeisDin in Vishnitz. When his father, the *Imrei Baruch*, passed away on 20 *Kislev* 5653/1893 he succeeded him as Vishnitzer Rebbe. He had many thousands of followers and served in Vishnitz as rebbe for over 43 years. In 1905 he founded the famous Vishnitz Yeshiva, Bais Yisroel.

 **Rav Chaim Elozor Shapira of Munkatch - Minchas Elozor, Munkaczer Rebbe (5697 / 1937 - 89th Yahrzeit)**

Rav Chaim Elozor Shapira was born on Thursday 5 *Teves* 5632/1872 in Stryzov to Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Munkacs, author of the *Darkei Teshuvah*. He was the son of Rav Shlomo founder of the Munkacszer Dynasty who were descendants of Rav Tzvi Elimelech of Dynow the author of *Bnei Yissascher*. From his mother's side, he was a descendant of the Ropshitzer. On 16 *Tishrei* 5674/1914, when his father, the *Darkei Teshuva*, passed away, his son Rav Chaim Elozor succeeded him as Munkacszer Rebbe.

 **Rav Mordechai Yechezkiah ben Shimon (5754 / 1994 - 32nd Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Yaakov Wehl (5767 / 2007 - 19th Yahrzeit)**

**YAHREZITS FOR THE 3RD OF SIVAN ~ BEGINS MONDAY NIGHT
(05-19-2026)**

 **Rabbeinu Ovadia Bartenuira**

 **The Jewish Community of Mainz (4856 / 1096 - 930th Yahrzeit)**



Rav Yosef Irgas of Levarno - Italian Mekubel, Divrei Yosef, Shomer Emunim, Mavo Pesachim (5490 / 1730 - 296th Yahrzeit)

One of the greatest Italian Kabbalists, Rav Yosef Irgas is perhaps most well-known for his *sefer*, *Shomer Emunim HaKadmon*. This great work was written in the form of an argument in which he explains concepts from Kabbalah and defends them against detractors.



Rav Yaakov Shimshon Shapira of Shepetovka (5561 / 1801 - 225th Yahrzeit)

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Shepetovka [3 *Sivan* 5561], a descendant of Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropole, was a student of the Maggid of Mezritch and Rabbi Pinchus of Karitz and a close friend of Rabbi Boruch of Mezibuz. As a great authority in Jewish Law, he earned considerable respect also in rabbinic circles. In 1794 (according to charedi.org), he moved to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Teveria, where he is buried.



Rav Shraga Yair Rabinowitz of Bialobrzegi - Aron Eidus (5672 / 1912 - 114th Yahrzeit)

Born in 5600 (1840), Rav Shraga Yair Rabinowitz was the son of Rav Nosson Dovid of Shidlovtza, who was the son of Rav Yerachmiel of Peshis'cha. From his earliest years he demonstrated special qualities. No one was surprised when Rav Shraga later became *Rebbe*. Rav Shraga Yair married the daughter of Rav Yekusiel Shmelke, the son of Rav Moshe Leib of Sassov. Following the *petira* of his father on the 7th of *Marcheshvan* 5626/1865, Rav Shraga Yair was appointed *Rebbe* in Shidlovtza and then in Biala'varzig. Rav Shraga Yair was *niftar* on the 13th of *Sivan* 5672/1912 at the age of seventy-two.



Rav Shmuel Donath - Av Beis Din of Pressburg, Chidushei Shmuel (5691 / 1931 - 95th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yisroel Tzvi HaLevi Rottenberg of Kassin - Ohr Moleh (5704 / 1944 - 82nd Yahrzeit)



Rav Moshe Eichenstein of Ziditchov - Zichron Moshe (5704 / 1944 - 82nd Yahrzeit)



Rav Pinchas Shapiro of Kechnia - Tzofnas Paneach (5704 / 1944 - 82nd Yahrzeit)



Rav Eliyahu Munk of Paris (5709 / 1949 - 77th Yahrzeit)

Rav Eliyahu Munk of Paris (1949). Author of *The Call of the Torah*, *The World of Prayer*, and *Ascent to Harmony*. One of his daughters, Amalie, married Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits in 1949. Another married Rav Chaim Fasman, *Rosh Kollel* in Los Angeles.



Rav Chaim Yitzchok Korb (5717 / 1957 - 69th Yahrzeit)

**Yahrzeits for the 4th of Sivan ~ Begins Tuesday Night
(05-20-2026)**



Rav Yoav Rosenbaum - Imrei Noam, Av Beis Din of Unsdorf Tzehlim (5570 / 1810 - 216th Yahrzeit)



Rav Yeshaya Naftali Hertz of Dinov - Hanosen Imrei Shefer (5645 / 1885 - 141st Yahrzeit)



Rav Moshe Yungreiss - Av Beis Din of Kashau (5666 / 1906 - 120th Yahrzeit)



Rav Avrohom Wolf - Dean of Wolf's Seminary in Bnei Brak (5740 / 1980 - 46th Yahrzeit)

Harav Yosef Avrohom Wolf was born in 1911/5671 to Rav Pinchos Wolf and Helena (Hinda) Auerbach, daughter of Harav Aviezri Zelig Auerbach, Rav of Halberstadt. Rav Wolf studied in Germany. He married Liesl Klein, daughter of Rabbi Avrohom Yitzchok Klein, the Rav of Nuremberg. In 1939/5699 they immigrated to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Tel Aviv. After Rav Wolf's *petirah* on 4 Sivan 1979/5740, his son, Rav Zev Wolf, took over leadership of the seminary.



Rav Tzvi Tornheim of Velbruz (5761 / 2001 - 25th Yahrzeit)

**Yahrzeits for the 5th of Sivan ~ Begins Wednesday Night
(05-21-2026)**



Rav Yitzchok Chaim HaKohen of Padua (5483 / 1723 - 303rd Yahrzeit)

A master of grammar and logic. One of the teachers who taught Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto in Padua, Italy. He passed away on *erev Chag HaShavous* תפ"ג.



Rav Eliyohu Eichenstein of Ziditchov - Zichron Eliyohu (5639 / 1879 - 147th Yahrzeit)



Rav Meir Menachem of Pietrokov (5672 / 1912 - 114th Yahrzeit)

Son of Rav Hillel of Radoshitz. His father, Rav Hillel was a grandson of the *Sabba Kadisha* of Radoshitz; Hillel's father Rav Yitzchok served as *Av Beis Din* in Radoshitz succeeding his father-in-law Rav Yissacher Dov the *Sabba Kadisha*. He passed away on 5 Sivan תער"ב and was laid to rest in an *ohel* in Pietrokov.



Rav Eliezer of Kiltz (5679 / 1919 - 107th Yahrzeit)



Rav Bentzion Fisch - Divrei Chachomim (5704 / 1944 - 82nd Yahrzeit)



Rav Chaim Yaakov Safrin of Komarna - Pri Chaim (5729 / 1969 - 57th Yahrzeit)

R. Chaim Yaakov Safrin (1892-1967), son of Rebbe Avraham Mordechai Safrin of Boryslav-Komarno. He served as Rebbe in the city of Ungvar, (Uzhhorod) until 1937, when he immigrated to the United States. He was known as one of the leading Chassidic rebbes in New York until he moved to Yerushalayim in 1962. He was an outstanding Torah scholar, Kabbalist and holy man.



Rav Uri Shraga Kellerman - Ram in Knesses Chizkiyahu - Kfar Chassidim (5753 / 1993 - 33rd Yahrzeit)

Yahrzeits for the 6th of Sivan ~ Begins Thursday Night (05-22-2026)



Dovid Hamelech- Dovid Melech Yisroel (2924 / -837 - 2,862nd Yahrzeit)

King Dovid: (907-837 BCE) A Bethlehem native, youngest son of Yishai and Nitzevet. A shepherd boy, he rose to fame after slaying the Philistine hero Goliath. This earned him the hand of King Shaul's daughter Michal in marriage. Anointed by Shmuel to succeed Shaul after the latter failed to annihilate Amalek. This aroused Shaul's jealousy, who then pursued him relentlessly. Dovid became king after Shaul's death. During his monarchy, Dovid successfully secured and expanded Israel's borders, but was beset by a series of revolts and personal tribulations. King Dovid compiled the Book of Tehillim. Succeeded by his son Shlomo.



Rav Chaim ben Betzalel - Sefer Hachaim, Igeres Hatiyul, Av Beis Din Freidberg (5348 / 1588 - 438th Yahrzeit)

Author of *Sefer Hachaim* and *Igeres Hatiyul*. Elder brother of the *Maharal* of Prague. Rav Chaim was born 1730) ץ"ר) in Posen, into a family of *tzaddikim* and *rabbanim* who traced their illustrious lineage back to Rashi, who traced back to Rav Yochanan haSandlar, fourth generation descendants of Raban Gamliel HaZaken, descendants of Dovid HaMelech.



Rav Yisrael Isserles of Mezhibuzh - Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh, Besh"t (5520 / 1760 - 266th Yahrzeit)


Rabbi Yisrael the son of Eliezer (1700-1760), popularly known as the *Baal Shem Tov* (Besht), was born in Okopy, Ukraine. His father, an honest and God fearing man, died when he was very young. The community considered itself obligated to provide him with an education and entrusted him to a teacher. With time, he became the *shamash* (sexton) of the synagogue where he spent the nighttime hours studying Kabbalah. Only when he won the heart of R. Dov Ber (the family later used the surname Friedman), the Magid of Miedzyrzec [Mezritsh] (1704-1773), did his movement, Chasidism, begin to succeed and Medzhibozh became its center.

 **Rav Aharon Rubin of Riminov - Ropshitz - Likutei Mahara (5617 / 1857 - 169th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Aharon Aryeh of Rozniatuv (5643 / 1883 - 143rd Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Avrohom Sholom Halberstam of Stropkov - Divrei Sholom (5700 / 1940 - 86th Yahrzeit)**

Rabbi Avrohom Sholom of Stropkov [1857-1940], the first Admor of Stropkov and son of the holy rabbi of Shinova, was a great wonder-worker. Thousands of people, especially the childless, flocked to him from across Hungary and Galicia to experience salvation through his words of salvation and mercy.

 **Rav Chaim of Tetch (5704 / 1944 - 82nd Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Yehuda Rosner of Sekelhid - Imrei Yehuda (5704 / 1944 - 82nd Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter - Gerrer Rebbe, Imrei Emes (5708 / 1948 - 78th Yahrzeit)**

Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter (1866 - 6 Sivan 1948), the son of the *Sfas Emes*, was the third Rebbe in the Gur dynasty. A position he held from 1905 until his death in 1948. He was the spiritual leader of over 250,000 Chassidim in pre-WW II Poland. In 1940, he managed to escape with three of his sons to Eretz Yisrael. He began to rebuild the Gerrer community in Yerushalayim, but he died there during the siege of Yerushalayim on Shavuos, 1948. He was known as the *Imrei Emes*, after the title of his major book.

 **Rebbetzin Devorah Margulies (5765 / 2005 - 21st Yahrzeit)**

Rebbetzin Devorah Margulies, wife of Rav Lipa Margulies, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshiva Torah Temimah in Brooklyn (1924-2005). Born in the town of Marashvarshehl, Hungary, Rebbetzin Margulies was the daughter of Rav Binyomin Alter and Chaya Rochel Ruttner. Her mother was a direct descendant of the *Mareh Yechezkel*.

Biographies of the Tzaddikim





Rav Meir Leifer Divrei Meir (Iyar 29, 5610 / 1850 - 176th Yahrzeit)

Son of Rav Aharon Leib - Aharon Aryeh of Premishlan

Also Known as Rav Meir'el

A grandson of Rav Meir HaGadol of Premishlan the *talmid chaver* and colleague of the Ba'al Shem Tov

Uncle of Rav Mordechai'leh, founder of Nadvorna dynasty

His mentor and rebbe in Chassidus was Rav Mordechai of Kremnitz. He also studied under and the Chozeh of Lublin.

He was renowned for his wondrous *ruach hakodesh* as well as his boundless giving of tzedakah.

Due to opposition he encountered over his open displays of *ruach hakodesh*, he left Premishlan for Lipkani and Mikolayev

He passed away on 29 Iyar תר"י in Mikolayev and was laid to rest in Premishlan



Rav Shmuel Shlomo Leiner (Iyar 29, 5702 / 1942 - 84th Yahrzeit)

Grand Rabbi Shmuel Shlomo Leiner of Radzin, son of *Tiferes Yosef*. Established the Radziner Yeshiva Sod Yesharim in Radzin, Poland, which was lead by and under the auspices of his brother-in-law Grand Rabbi Avrohom Yissochor Englard of Radzin, who later established a network of 7 yeshivos Sod Yesharim Radzin in various cities throughout Poland. The Rebbe was greatly respected for his greatness in learning, by many Litvisheh Gedolim, even being at such a young age. The Rebbe was known for encouraging resistance to the orders of the Nazis and the Judenrat and for urging people to break out of the ghettos, flee to the forests and take up arms. (Although he never made

it to the woods himself, his brother-in-law, Grand Rabbi Avraham Yissachor Englard of Radzin, fled to the woods and joined the partisans with a group of Radziner Chasidim.) The story goes that in his last moments, the Rebbe was wrapped in his father's tallis as a Nazi soldier took him into the Wladawa cemetery at gunpoint. At one point, the Nazi pushed him. The Rebbe turned around, slapped him across the face, and kicked him. This obviously degraded the Nazi greatly, thus stunning him by showing the inner power of the Jewish people. The Rebbe was immediately shot to death on that day, 29 Iyar 5702 (1942). Buried in Wladawa.

geni.com



Rav Alexander Sender Linchner (Sivan 1, 5756 / 1996 - 30th Yahrzeit)

Rav Alexander Sender Linchner (1996), son-in-law of Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz and founder of Kiryat Noar (Boystown), Bayit Vegan, in 1953 for for children who had escaped the Holocaust and other destitute Jewish immigrant children. Previously, he started a trade school for 14 boys from Yemen in 1949. He was succeeded by his son, Rav Moshe Linchner.



Rav Aharon Yechiel Leifer Nadvorna Rebbe of Tzfas (Sivan 1, 5760 / 2000 - 26th Yahrzeit)

Rav Aharon Yechiel Leifer, the *Nadvorna Rebbe* of Tzefas (1912-2000). Rav Aharon Yechiel was born in Bania, Rumania, where his father, Dovid, served as Rebbe, a descendent of the famous Galitzean dynasty of Nodvorna rebbes. As a young man he served as the Rabbi of Shatz, his wife's birthplace, also in Rumania. He arrived in Israel shortly after the war of Liberation in 5708 (1948 C.E.). Previously he had lost an entire family in the Holocaust, but had married his deceased wife's sister and started a whole new family. Legendary in Tzefat for his hospitality and kindness to those in need, his home and Nezer Hakodesh shul were a center for Jews of all stripes for fifty-two years. In Yisrael, he became a chassid of the *Sanz-Klausenberger Rebbe*. Beloved equally by Chasidim, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, by Europeans, Israelis and Americans, his death a little before (or after!) the age of ninety marked the end of an era in Tzefat.



Rav Chaim Yitzchok Isaac Halberstam Av Beis Din of Slatfina, Oros Chaim (Sivan 2,)

Av Beis Din Slatfina

Author of *Oros Chaim* (on Chanukah)

Son of Rav Yehoshua of Dalina *Hy'd*.

Grandson of Rav Moshe A'B'D Bardiyov, son of Rav Baruch of Gorlitz, son of Rav Chaim of Sanz (the *Divrei Chaim*).



Rav Yisroel Hager Ahavas Yisrael (Sivan 2, 5696 / 1936 - 90th Yahrzeit)



Right: Ahavat Israel of Viznitz (Father)
Left: Yitzchak Meir of Kapishnitz (שוה"ק)



Rav Yisroel was the son of Rav Baruch Hager of Vizhnitz.

He was known for his genius that was only matched by his love for every Jew - even the simplest and lowliest of them all—towards whom he demonstrated the utmost honor and respect.

He was among the greatest gedolim and leaders of his generation and his thousands of followers and chassidim hailed from Eastern Galicia, Romania and Hungary.

He was also the leader of Kollel Vishnitz. The auspices of the tzedaka for Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes were under his authority, and he distributed charity from the fund to the poor in Eretz Yisroel.

He served as Rav in Devlia and the Máramaros region, and afterwards he was AvBeisDin in Vishnitz.

At age sixteen he married Hinda the daughter of Rav Meir Horowitz of Dzhikov, author of *Imrei Noam*, the grandson of Rav Naphtali Horowitz who was the founder of the Ropshitzer Dynasty.

When his father, the *Imrei Baruch*, passed away on 20 Kislev 5653/1893 he succeeded him as Vishnitzer Rebbe. He had many thousands of followers and served in Vishnitz as rebbe for over 43 years. In 1905 he founded the famous Vishnitz Yeshiva, Bais Yisroel.

Because of the affection that he felt and demonstrated towards every Jew, he became known as "the Ahavas Yisrael," which is also the name of his *seforim* that were published posthumously.

When Rav Yechezkel Pannet of Desz once observed the Ahavas Yisroel as a youngerman he remarked: Here goes a youngerman whose feet are planted firmly on the ground, but whose head reaches to the very Heavens!

Rav Aharon Roth of Shomer Emunim said of him that he merited an *ayin tova* when it came to spiritual matters-- he bestowed a good eye on all he gazed upon.

The Ahavas Yisroel once said about himself: "How do I know that I am not a goner? Because when I see a good Jew, I love him, even if he is not one of my own followers!"

During the first World War he fled to Grossvardein where he lived out the remainder of his days.

He passed away on 2 Sivan 5696/1936

He was laid to rest in Grossvarden, and later in 5710/1950, he was reinterred in the Vizhnitzer Ohel in Bnei Brak, Eretz Yisroel.

He left behind his sons: Rav Menachem Mendel of Vishiva; Rav Chaim Meir the Imrei Chaim; Rav Eliezer Hager, the Damesek Eliezer; Rav Baruch of Seret, founder of the Sereter Dynasty; and Rav Shmuel Abba Hager.

HIS SEGULOS:

Segulas For Learning Sefer Degel Machane Ephraim

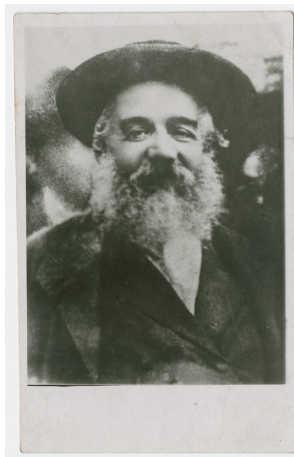
The *Berditchever Rav* author of *Kedushas Levi* wrote that "I am assured that this *sefer* will enliven and inspire the hearts of our brethren *Bnei Yisroel* and set them aflame to serve Hashem with *avodas haBoreh Baruch Hu.*" (*Haskamah to Degel*)

The *Chozeh of Lublin* said that "Surely the author (who was a *gaon* and G-dly man)'s merit shall aid and help all who study these words that came out from his holy mouth and when they recite them in the name of the author his lips will move in the grave and who will act as an advocate on our behalf because *tzadikim* are even greater in death than in life." (*Haskamah to Degel*)

The *Ahavas Yisroel* of Vizshnitz once told his son the *Damesek Eliezer* that the *heilige Rishiner* testified to his followers and Chassidim that just to study the holy *Sefer Degel Macheneh Ephraim* is a *segulah* for good children - *Lernen in Degel iz mesegual tzi gitte kinder!* (*Siach Zekenim* 5 p.42)



Rav Chaim Elozor Shapira Minchas Elozor, Munkaczer Rebbe (Sivan 2, 5697 / 1937 - 89th Yahrzeit)



(1872-1937/5632-5697)

Rav Chaim Elozor Shapira was born on Thursday 5 *Teves* 5632/1872 in Stryzov to Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Munkacsz, author of the *Darkei Teshuvah*. He was the son of Rav Shlomo founder of the Munkacszer Dynasty who were descendants of Rav Tzvi Elimelech of Dynow the author of *Bnei Yissascher*. From his mother's side, he was a descendant of the Ropshitzer.

He was named Elozor after his grandfather Rav Elazar of Lanczut, and when at age three he took ill, the Divrei Chaim of Sanz instructed that the name Chaim be added to aid his recovery.

By age nine his prowess and genius in Torah was evident and he already knew all three tractates of Bava Kama, Metzia and Basra by heart! He was a staunch opponent who fought valiantly against any breaches in the walls of Yiddishkeit especially against the Zionists whom he fought with zeal and self-sacrifice. He was also known as a miracle worker whose *tefillos* and *berachos* bore fruit. He established the Munkacszer Yeshivah, *Darkei Teshuvah*, named after his father Rav Tzvi Hirsch.

At age sixteen, he married the daughter of Rav Shraga Yair of Bialibrazik, who was the son of Reb Noson Duvid Shidloutzer, a descendant of the Yid Hakadosh -- the holy Jew of Peshischa.

On 16 *Tishrei* 5674/1914, when his father, the *Darkei Teshuva*, passed away, his son Rav Chaim Elozor succeeded him as Munkacszer Rebbe.

Each year on 7 *Adar*, he would make the trip to Kaliv to Rav Aizikel Kalover's *tziyun*, and to visit the Rav Menachem Brody, author of *Be'er Menachem* at his yeshivah.

In 5695/1935 he travelled to Eretz Yisroel for a short thirteen-day visit to the *mekomos hekedoshim*, the holy sites, and to meet Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri.

His final days were marked with ill health and suffering in Budapest.

On the day 2 *Sivan* 5697/1937, *Netzach sh'b'Malchus*, the 46th day of the *Omer*, he passed away and was laid to rest in Munkacsz in the same *ohel* as his father the *Darkei Teshuva* and his grandfather the *Shem Shlomo*.



Rav Yosef Irgas Italian Mekubel, Divrei Yosef, Shomer Emunim, Mavo Pesachim (Sivan 3, 5490 / 1730 - 296th Yahrzeit)



Mechaber of *Shomer Emunim Hakadmon*, *Mavo Pesachim* & *Shu"t Divrei Yosef*.

One of the greatest Italian Kabbalists, Rav Yosef Irgas is perhaps most well-known for his *sefer*, *Shomer Emunim HaKadmon*. This great work was written in the form of an argument in which he explains concepts from Kabbalah and defends them against detractors.

He was a disciple of Rav Binyamin Kohen of Regio who received the tradition from Rav Moshe Zechut who studied under Rav Yisroel Saruk, a *talmid* of the *Arizal*. Rav Yosef Irgas was noted for his scholarly greatness in the revealed Torah as demonstrated in his responsa, *Shu"t Divrei Yosef*. His erudition was only surpassed by his piety. Through growing in saintliness, he acquired the tradition of esoteric secrets of Kabbalah under his *rebbe*s. He eventually became an authority in Kabbalistic teachings in his hometown of Livorno (Leghorn).

Rav Yosef Iragas is also known for his war against the Sabbateans, especially the false Kabbalist, the despicable Nehemia Chiya Chayun. Chayun (may his name be blotted) paraded himself --dressed in white and sporting a long white beard-- as an elder Kabbalist and master of rabbis from the Holy Land. He distributed amulets along with his *sefer*, *Mehemenusa D'Kola* which was a disguise for his true intentions which was to spread the nefarious teachings of the false messiah, Shabtai Tzvi under a new name.

Though Rav Irgas was young in years—he was half Chayun's age—he recognized the deceptiveness of Chayun and exposed him as the sly snake he was. Rav Irgas' reputation was solid enough that Chayun was chased from Livorno in shame and dishonor. Afterwards, Chayun traveled from town to town managing to deceive a great many Jews. He even fooled the *Semichas Chachamim*, Rav Naftali HaKohen Katz of Prague. When the Chacham Tzvi discovered Chayun's ruse, he wrote letters to Rav Naftali, who then realized he had been tricked. Rav Naftali revoked all his previous support for Chayun who, by then, had moved on, eventually reaching Amsterdam where he invoked machlokes against the Chacham Tzvi himself. Chayun fought against his detractors and wrote many vile letters and treatises against the rabbis who opposed him.

Rav Irgas again challenged Chayun's chicanery in defense of the honor of *Torah* and the true Kabbalah. He denounced Chayun in a series of *seforim* such as *Tochachas Megula - An Open and Revealed Rebuke*, and *Tzad Nachash - Hunting the Serpent*, where he exposed all his fraudulent claims and lies. Eventually, Chayun was ousted from Amsterdam as well and news spread that he was a liar and a *rasha*. Finally, he threatened the Jewish communities that if they withdrew financial support he would publicly convert to Christianity and denounce them. Chayun's final end is unknown; but we do know that his son did indeed convert and became an informer against Jews and a denouncer of Torah.

Rav Irgas' disciple, Rav Malachi, collected his writings, edited them, and helped produce the great works of his rebbe that we have today.



Rav Yaakov Shimshon Shapira (Sivan 3, 5561 / 1801 - 225th Yahrzeit)

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Shepetovka [3 Sivan 5561], a descendant of Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropole, was a student of the Maggid of Mezritch and Rabbi Pinchus of Karitz and a close friend of Rabbi Boruch of Mezibuz. As a great authority in Jewish Law, he earned considerable respect also in rabbinic circles. In 1794 (according to charedi.org), he moved to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Teveria, where he is buried.

<http://www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=rebbeBios>



Rav Shraga Yair Rabinowitz Aron Eidus (Sivan 3, 5672 / 1912 - 114th Yahrzeit)

Born in 5600 (1840), Rav Shraga Yair Rabinowitz was the son of Rav Nosson Dovid of Shidlovtza, who was the son of Rav Yerachmiel of Peshis'cha. From his earliest years he demonstrated special qualities. No one was surprised when Rav Shraga later became *Rebbe*. Rav Shraga Yair married the daughter of Rav Yekusiel Shmelke, the son of Rav Moshe Leib of Sassov. Following the *petira* of his father on the 7th of *Marcheshvan* 5626/1865, Rav Shraga Yair was appointed Rebbe in Shidlovtza and then in Biala'varzig. After a fire broke out in Biala'varzig destroying most of the city, Rav Shraga Yair moved to Radom and then back to Shidlovtza.

Rav Shraga Yair was *niftar* on the 13th of *Sivan* 5672/1912 at the age of seventy-two. He was succeeded by his only son, Rav Nosson Dovid. His daughter originally married Rav Chaim Elozor Schapira of Munkacs, but they divorced because they did not have children. She remarried Rav Chaim Hager of Antiniya. Rav Shraga Yair had another son-in-law, his nephew, Rav Yosef Eliezer of Radom.

Rav Shraga Yair's *Divrei Torah* were published under the name *Aron Eidus*.

Zechuso yogen aleinu.

www.hamodia.com/features/day-history-13-sivanjune-11/ for more information



Rav Eliyahu Munk (Sivan 3, 5709 / 1949 - 77th Yahrzeit)

Rav Eliyahu Munk of Paris (1949). Author of *The Call of the Torah*, *The World of Prayer*, and *Ascent to Harmony*. One of his daughters, Amalie, married Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits in 1949. Another married Rav Chaim Fasman, *Rosh Kollel* in Los Angeles.



Rav Avrohom Wolf Dean of Wolf's Seminary in Bnei Brak (Sivan 4, 5740 / 1980 - 46th Yahrzeit)

Harav Yosef Avrohom Wolf was born in 1911/5671 to Rav Pinchos Wolf and Helena (Hinda) Auerbach, daughter of Harav Aviezri Zelig Auerbach, Rav of Halberstadt. Rav Wolf studied in Germany. He married Liesl Klein, daughter of Rabbi Avrohom Yitzchok Klein, the Rav of Nuremberg. In 1939/5699 they immigrated to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Tel Aviv.

Rav Wolf first taught in the Bais Yaakov Seminaries in Yerushalayim and Tel Aviv. Later, the *Chazon Ish, zt"l*, invited him to oversee the Bais Yaakov Seminary in Bnei Brak. Besides expanding the seminary, he planned and implemented the curriculum. He did not allow the secular education system to influence the religious content of the seminary. He believed that material written by secular writers lacking *yiras Shamayim* usually includes false assumptions.

Rav Wolf was respected by all Orthodox Jewish circles in Bnei Brak. When opponents lashed out against his approach, the *Vizhnitzer Rebbe*, Harav Chaim Meir Hager, *zt"l*, defended him.

After Rav Wolf's *petirah* on 4 Sivan 1979/5740, his son, Rav Zev Wolf, took over

leadership of the seminary.

Rav Yosef Avrohom Wolf wrote several *sefarim* and *kuntresim*, such as *Torah Umada*, *Hachinuch L'or Hatekufah*, *Neviei Emes*, *Toras Hanefesh* and *Hatekufah U'baayoseha* (4 parts).

hamodia.com



Rav Yitzchok Chaim (Sivan 5, 5483 / 1723 - 303rd Yahrzeit)

A master of grammar and logic

One of the teachers who taught Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto in Padua, Italy.

He passed away on *erev Chag HaShavous* תפ"ג.



Rav Meir Menachem (Sivan 5, 5672 / 1912 - 114th Yahrzeit)

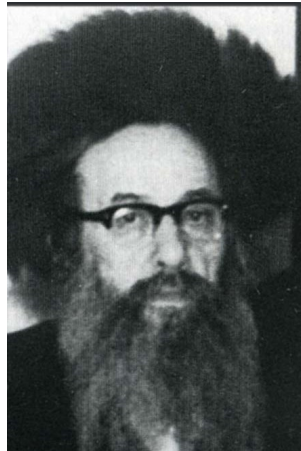
Son of Rav Hillel of Radoshitz

His father, Rav Hillel was a grandson of the *Sabba Kadisha* of Radoshitz; Hillel's father Rav Yitzchok served as *Av Beis Din* in Radoshitz succeeding his father-in-law Rav Yissacher Dov the *Sabba Kadisha*.

He passed away on 5 *Sivan* תער"ב and was laid to rest in an *ohel* in Pietrokov.



Rav Chaim Yaakov Safrin Pri Chaim (Sivan 5, 5729 / 1969 - 57th Yahrzeit)



R. Chaim Yaakov Safrin (1892-1967), son of Rebbe Avraham Mordechai Safrin of Boryslav-Komarno. He served as Rebbe in the city of Ungvar, (Uzhhorod) until 1937, when he immigrated to the United States. He was known as one of the leading Chassidic rebbes in New York until he moved to Yerushalayim in 1962. He was an outstanding Torah scholar, Kabbalist and holy man. He wrote some 40 manuscripts, of which only four were printed: *Beis Ya'akov*, *Beis Avos*, *Ma Zos* and *Shabbos Shalom U'Mevorach*.

<https://www.kedem-auctions.com/en/content/responsa-tov-ayin-husiatyn-1904-signed-copy-rebbe-chaim-yaakov-safrin-komarno>



Dovid Hamelech Dovid Melech Yisroel (Sivan 6, 2924 / -837 - 2,862nd Yahrzeit)



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

King Dovid: (907-837 BCE) A Bethlehem native, youngest son of Yishai and Nitzevet. A shepherd boy, he rose to fame after slaying the Philistine hero Goliath. This earned him the hand of King Shaul's daughter Michal in marriage. Anointed by Shmuel to succeed Shaul

after the latter failed to annihilate Amalek. This aroused Shaul's jealousy, who then pursued him relentlessly. Dovid became king after Shaul's death. During his monarchy, Dovid successfully secured and expanded Israel's borders, but was beset by a series of revolts and personal tribulations. King Dovid compiled the Book of Tehillim. Succeeded by his son Shlomo.

https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/2417/jewish/King-David.htm



Rav Chaim ben Betzalel Sefer Hachaim, Igeres Hatiyul, Av Beis Din Freidberg (*Sivan 6, 5348 / 1588 - 438th Yahrzeit*)

Author of *Sefer Hachaim* and *Igeres Hatiyul*.

Elder brother of the *Maharal* of Prague.

Rav Chaim's *Yichus* And Family

Rav Chaim was born in 1730 א"ר in Posen, into a family of *tzaddikim* and *rabbanim* who traced their illustrious lineage back to *Rashi*, who traced back to Rav Yochanan haSandlar, fourth generation descendants of Raban Gamliel HaZaken, descendants of Dovid HaMelech.

The *Berachah* of His Grandfather, Rav Chaim Av Beis Din Worms

Rav Chaim of Worms sent his two sons Rav Yaakov and Rav Hilman to study under the *Maharshal* while their brother Betzalel remained at home serving their father. When the two brothers came home all aglow from their experience, sharing their spiritual growth and words of Torah, Betzalel grew jealous and complained to his father; he too wanted to go study in the *yeshiva* of the *Maharshal*.

Then Rav Chaim of Worms blessed his son Rav Betzalel that in the *zechus* of the *shimush* and *mitzvas* *kibud av* he had performed by remaining behind, he would merit four illustrious sons whose light would illuminate the entire world.

Rav Chaim was the *bechor* (the eldest), and the other brothers were: Rav Sinai, Rosh Yeshiva in Prague who was later *Av Beis Din* Nikolsberg and Meheren (Moravia); Rav Shimshon of Kremenitz, who was an ancestor of the famous Rav Shimshon Ostropoler; and the youngest brother, Rav Yehuda, known as the *Maharal* of Prague.

Rav Chaim and the *Rema*

Rav Chaim studied under Rav Shlomo Luria the famed *Maharshal*, under Rav Sholom Shachna of Lublin, and with Rav Moshe Isserles, the *Rema*.

Rav Chaim also mentions Rav Yitzchok Sefardi, in his introduction to *Igeres Tiyul*, as his *rebbe* and mentor who taught him *mikrah*, *dikduk*, and *Rashi*. He further mentions that Rav Sefardi was buried in Jerusalem after his passing.

In the year ט"ו, Rav Chaim established a *yeshivah* in Worms where his uncle Rav Yaakov ben Rav Chaim Ashkenazi served as Rav. After Rav Yaakov passed away in ג'כ"ט, Rav Chaim succeeded him. Afterwards, he moved to Friedberg and served as the *Av Beis Din* until his passing on *Shavous* 1588 ח"מ.

His published works include: *Sefer HeChaim*, *Igeres Tiyul* and *Vikuach Mayim Chaim*. There is a *sefer* called *HaTzachos* attributed to him as well.

His unpublished manuscripts include: *Issur v'Heter*, a *likkut* from the *poskim*; *Beer Mayim Chaim* on Rashi's commentary on *Chumash*, cited by the author of *Devek Tov*; *Biurim* and *Chiddushim* on *Tur Orach Chaim*; *Eitz Chaim* on the laws of *dikduk* (grammar) of *Lashon Kodesh*. The introductions from *Beer Mayim Chaim* and *Eitz Chaim* were published in *HaMaggid* year 13, *gilyon* 37, 1869.



Rav Yisrael Isserles Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh, Besh't (Sivan 6, 5520 / 1760 - 266th Yahrzeit)



Rabbi Yisrael the son of Eliezer (1700-1760), popularly known as the *Baal Shem Tov* (*Besht*), was born in Okopy, Ukraine. His father, an honest and God fearing man, died when he was very young. The community considered itself obligated to provide him with an education and entrusted him to a teacher. With time, he became the *shamash* (sexton) of the synagogue where he spent the nighttime hours studying Kabbalah. He married when he was eighteen years old, but his wife died a short time after their marriage. He wandered from place to place and settled in the area of Brody where he became the teacher of young children. With his honesty and wisdom, he also attracted the Jews of the region who utilized him to arbitrate their disputes. His personality impressed one of the local people, Efraim of Kutty. He became close to him and he even promised his daughter Channah's hand in marriage. R. Efraim died a short time later and his son, R. Avraham Gershon tried to convince Channah not to marry him but she chose to marry him despite her brother's objection. Yisrael wanted to spare his brother-in-law R. Avraham Gershon (1761), who was a noted scholar, any embarrassment, so he left Kutty with his wife and settled in the Carpathian Mountains. There, the couple lived in isolation and earned a meager living. Yisrael spent his time in prayer and meditation. While learning the healing powers of the various wild herbs, he tried his hand in assorted activities. He was a *shochet*, an innkeeper, wrote prescriptions and amulets, and spoke to the masses of people about the fear of God and the love of Torah. The family eventually moved to Medzhibozh. He not only attracted the simple people, but also over time both the educated and scholars drew towards him. However, only when he won the heart of R. Dov Ber (the family later used the surname Friedman), the Magid of Miedzyrzec [Mezritsh]

(1704-1773), did his movement, Chasidism, begin to succeed and Medzhibozh became its center. The *Baal Shem Tov* brought to the Chasidic movement his experience of many years in the knowledge of nature in the wild and especially human nature.

It should be stated that with the development of a new movement, before it adopts standards of behavior and norms of practice, its fringes invariably attract those who toss aside any restraint, a mixed bag of people hitching a ride on the movement's wagon. We learn of this through a letter sent by R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady to R. Avraham of Kalisk in 1805 (Gross 1984) in which he reviews the poor rapport between them that began in 1772 when they went to meet with the Magid of Miedzyrzec. Among others he states:

"I went with him [R. Avraham, Y.K.] together to the room of our esteemed rabbi, may he rest in peace, and my eyes saw and my ears heard that he [the Magid of Miedzyrzec, Y.K.] spoke harshly about his poor leadership of our followers in Russia...where their conversation of the entire day was characterized by foolishness and clowning, mocking and scornful of all those who learn and making fun of them in all kinds of unrestrained ways. They are constantly leaping with their heads down and their feet up in the city markets and streets, and the name of Heaven is profaned in the eyes of the gentiles. They also engage in all other kinds of inanities in the streets of Kalisk. In the winter of 5532/1772, after the debate that took place in Shklov, he found no solution to this. The sages of the holy community of Shklov wrote to inform the late Gaon of Vilna, influencing him to, God forbid, consider them as rebellious [against God] applying the law of heresy for contemptuousness to scholars [B.T. Sanhedrin 99b, Y.K.], and concerning the tumbling with the feet in the air, he said that it was like Pe'or [B.T. Sanhedrin 70b, meaning the ritual of idolatry at Baal Pe'or, Y. K.]. They then wrote from Vilna to Brody and published there a vicious pamphlet that summer. This caused incredible distress for all the Chasidic leaders in Volhyn who could then no longer return to their homes. They all gathered in the holy community of Rovno at that time to consult with our holy rabbi of blessed memory..."

<https://www.jewishgen.org/rabbinic/journal/hasidic1.htm>

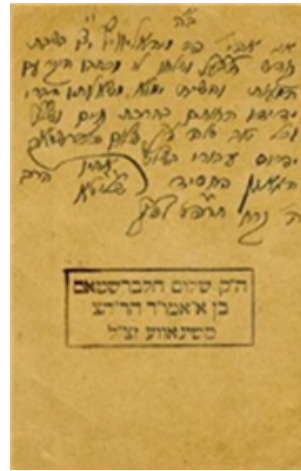
HIS SEGULOS:

Segula For Hatzlacha

The Apta Rav used to say: when you speak and tell stories about the Ba'al Shem Tov, it is a *segula* for *hatzlocha*; about the Rebbe Rav Boruch, it is a *segula* for *Yiras Shomayim!* (*Margenisa Dvei Rabbonon*, page 131)



Rav Avrohom Sholom Halberstam Divrei Sholom (Sivan 6, 5700 / 1940 - 86th Yahrzeit)



Rabbi Avrohom Sholom of Stropkov [1857-1940], the first Admor of Stropkov and son of the holy rabbi of Shinova, was a great wonder-worker. Thousands of people, especially the childless, flocked to him from across Hungary and Galicia to experience salvation through his words of salvation and mercy. It is known that his holy father of Shinova would say of him, "I took his mother for the sake of Heav-n, and it is brought in *Tanna D'Bei Eliyahu* that one who marries for the sake of Heav-n will be brought children who save Israel." He was a wondrous person in all his ways, and all the leaders of his generation called after him "מקודש מקודש".

<https://winners-auctions.com/en/items/leaf-with-the-signature-of-rabbi-avraham-shalom-halberstam-of-stropkov/>



Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter Gerrer Rebbe, Imrei Emes (Sivan 6, 5708 / 1948 - 78th Yahrzeit)



Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter (1866 - 6 Sivan 1948), the son of the *Sfas Emes*, was the third Rebbe in the Gur dynasty. A position he held from 1905 until his death in 1948. He was the spiritual leader of over 250,000 Chassidim in pre-WW II Poland. In 1940, he managed to escape with three of his sons to Eretz Yisrael (then Palestine), although the vast majority of his followers did not survive. He was one of the founders of the Agudas Yisroel in Poland. He began to rebuild the Gerrer community in Yerushalayim, but he died there during the siege of Yerushalayim on Shavuot, 1948. He was known as the *Imrei Emes*, after the title of his major book.

<http://www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=rebbeBios>

HIS SEGULOS:

Segula For Parnassah

A Letter which is a *segula* for *parnassa* and all matters as a promise from the *Gerrer Rebbe*, the *Imrei Emes*:

"I have a request to ask of you all, that, to me, is equal to many requests. And I have a promise to make to you, *be'ezras Hashem*, that if you fulfill my request, I will owe you a tremendous favor and debt of gratitude as much as Hashem grants me the ability to fulfill here now, and in the future, and similarly to all those who help in fulfilling this request and in actualizing it.

"I am distressed if I need to embarrass anyone or shame them publicly, but there is great need for me to reveal the following shortcoming, because you are found wanting. You are lacking in love, peace, brotherhood, and fraternity among yourselves. There is strife over divergences of opinion, and this *machlokes* is a bad thing. Rather, there should be peace and truth among you. Help each other, whether in physical or spiritual matters, and you will thereby have the strength to stand at the breach, concerning all matters of *Yiddishkeit*. Everything depends on *achdus* - togetherness! I have no doubt that in this merit, Hashem will help you generally in all matters, and specifically in *parnassa*.

This is my request to all of you, young and old, great and small.

Your friend who asks you all to fully fulfill his request. (*Osef Michtavim Michtav* 7)



Rebbetzin Devorah Margulies (*Sivan* 6, 5765 / 2005 - 21st *Yahrzeit*)

Rebbetzin Devorah Margulies, wife of of Rav Lipa Margulies, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshiva Torah Temimah in Brooklyn (1924-2005). Born in the town of Marashvarshehl, Hungary, Rebbetzin Margulies was the daughter of Rav Binyomin Alter and Chaya Rochel Ruttner. Her mother was a direct descendant of the *Mareh Yechezkel*.

Gedolim Be'Masayhem



Stories & Anecdotes

Rav Meir Leifer Divrei Meir (Iyar 29)

WE BOTH SERVE THE SAME G-D

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

Among the Premishlaner's detractors was Rav Uri Strelisker and his *talmid*, Rav Yehuda Tzvi of Stretin. Both Rav Meir and Rav Yehuda Tzvi were once in Levov and there was a grocer there who tried to make peace between them. He had a baby and invited them both to the *bris*. How did he do so? He invited the Stretiner as the *mohel* and the Premishlaner as *sandak*. He just didn't tell the *mohel* who the *sandak* was and he didn't mention to the *sandak* who would be the *mohel*. As neither of them asked, this worked out great, until the day of the *bris*. The father of the baby picked up the *mohel*, the Stretiner, from his lodgings in a fine carriage and explained that they would make a stop on the way to pick up the *sandak*. When the carriage stopped at the Premishlaner's lodgings and the Stretiner saw who the *sandak* was going to be, he was surprised, to say the least! When Rav Meir Premishlaner saw the Stretiner sitting in the carriage, he said: "Meir has a *minhag* to tell stories. Now Meir will also tell a story, and whoever wishes to listen will listen." And this is the story Rav Meir of Premishlan told:

During the times of the Spanish Inquisition there were many wealthy Jews who, rather

than flee at the threat of conversion, disguised themselves and hid their Jewish observance. This act of being a Christian in public and a Jew in secret was against the *Halocha*, yet they mistakenly believed that the whole thing would soon blow over and be forgotten. They underestimated the Church and the Inquisition. Secret Jews would clandestinely observe *mitzvos*, such as lighting candles in basements, assembling disguised for *tefillos* and doing their best to appear as good Christians toward their neighbors and friends, while trying to keep and remember whatever Jewish customs and traditions they could.

Once, a wealthy converso became deathly ill and they summoned the priest for his last rites and confessions, as good Christians did. No one guessed that the high-ranking government figure was really a secret Jew! When the priest arrived, everyone left out of respect for the high-ranking bishop, who came out of respect for the high-ranking government minister. Now the dying man turned his head away. The bishop called in the doctor, and the physician confirmed that the dying man was not so sick and could still speak. When the doctor left, the bishop realized why the minister had turned away. Slowly he removed the cross he had been wearing and with an expression of compassion he whispered into the ears of the dying minister the shocking words of revelation revealing that he too was a secret Jew, a converso. "*Shema Yisrael! Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echod* - Our G-d is One!" The minister's eyes opened in shock and astonishment. He turned his head and found compassion and love, with no cross around the bishop's neck! He fell on the false bishop and wept, and together they recited the Jewish *Vidui*!

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

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

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

Rav Yisroel Hager Ahavas Yisrael (Sivan 2)

THE REBBE'S ADVICE

When Rav Leibush Ber Halpert, Rav of Vasloi was a *yungerman*, he tried his hand at business buying and selling grain, but was unsuccessful. Towards the end of *chodesh Iyar*, his uncle went to Grossvardayan and took a *kvitel* to ask the Ahavas Yisroel of Vizhnitz advice on the matter. This was in last days of the *rebbe's* life and he was lying sick in bed. The *gabbaim* would not let his uncle see the *rebbe*; they did however give the *Ahavas Yisroel* the *kvitel* and the *rebbe* answered, "Let him try something else."

After the *Ahavas Yisroel* passed away, Rav Halpert tried his hand at other business ventures but was met again and again with failure. One night he had a dream. In his dream, he saw the *Vizhnitzer Rebbe*, the *Ahavas Yisroel*, and Rav Halpert told him about his difficulty with *parnassa*. The *rebbe* replied, "I think you should go back to study Torah; I will have you appointed as the Rabbi of one of the towns." When he awoke, he felt taken by surprise because this idea was not even one of the possibilities that Rav Halpert had even entertained. He was totally unprepared for what happened next.

A few days later, before Shabbos, a telegram arrived from one of the towns in Romania inviting him to apply for the open post of rabbi! As the trip would take more than twenty-four hours and Shabbos was approaching, he let the mysterious matter rest. However, after a few days, another telegram from the former rabbi arrived asking why he hadn't come? He packed his bags and made his way to Romania. Once there, was chosen from among the other candidates and was appointed rabbi. Eventually he served in the *rabbanus* the rest of his life! (*Kadosh Yisroel* Vol. II p. 386)

ANECDOTES REGARDING THE AHAVAS YISROEL

Rav Eliezer Dovid Friedman, *ztz'l*, of London told the following illustrative stories and anecdotes regarding the *Ahavas Yisrael*:

The *Tiferes Shlomo* teaches that the *rebbe*, Reb Zisha of Anipoli would have a daily morning ritual. After reciting the blessing of *birkas haTorah*, he would go outside into the marketplace searching for Jews to bless with the bounty of the *shefa* which he had just found and harnessed from saying his own *birkas haTorah*. He would bless the first Jew he

could find, no matter who he was!

Similarly, Rav Friedman relates, "I was on the bus in Givas Shmuel and I sat next to a Jew I knew from Grossvardein who unfortunately was not counted among the most religious. However, he had come from a Chassidic family and he was not ignorant of the value of a rebbe's *berachah*. He told me how once he was passing by the holy *tzaddik*, the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz, when he was in Grossvardein and he went in for a *berochah*. After he left, the Ahavas Yisrael sent his *shamosh* after him. Surprised, he came back in. He was even more taken aback when the Ahavas Yisrael said to him, '*Tit mir a toyva, un zayt matzliach* - Do me a favor and you should succeed!'

"'You should know,' he said to me, 'that year, I had tremendous success in all my endeavors - whatever I did was successful.'"

Rav Friedman concluded, "The *Ahavas Yisrael* obviously sensed that it was an *eis rotzon*, an auspicious moment when his *berochos* could do and achieve - and he sought out the first Jew to bestow them upon, whoever that Jew was!"

THE REBBE ASCENDS THE THRONE OF LEADERSHIP

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

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

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

DEFENDING ADAM

The *Munkaczer Rav*, in *Divrei Torah* (II:35), relates a tradition he received from his holy forebears that once the *Apta Rav* delayed significantly in the middle of *davening*. Afterward, he explained how he had previously taught an explanation of *Odom HoRishon's* sin, which expunged his guilt and explained why his error was much less severe because his crime had been committed without any previous experience or knowledge of commandments or divine punishment. Since he was the first man, he had never seen or heard of the observance of any commandment and did not realize that a *mitzva* must be observed literally; he had his reasons for disobeying and rationalized that therefore the command did not apply to him. He did not understand that a commandment had to be obeyed literally by an action if it was a positive command, or by abstention from action, as in his own case, where he was commanded not to eat. Having never seen or experienced *mitzvos*, he did not realize that a true action or abstention was tied into the obedience of a command.

After having offered this explanation, said the *Apta Rav*, *Odom HoRishon* himself appeared to him during *davening* to thank him for interceding on his behalf, causing such a lengthy delay.

A TRUE CHEAT AND SWINDLER AGREES TO THE ALSHICH'S DEROSHA

The *Minchas Elozor* of *Munkacs* told the following story:

The *Arizal* testified that he witnessed the entire heavenly host - the *pamalya shel maala* - all go together to hear the *deroshos* of *Rav Moshe Alshich* and therefore he also went to hear his holy words when he sat and sermonized in public.

One time, the *Arizal* was present when *Rav Moshe Alshich* was giving a *derosha* about *Lovon HaArami* and how he swindled, tricked and hoodwinked *Yaakov*. The *pasuk* says he cheated *Yaakov aseres monim* (*Bereishis* 31:8 & 31:41) and this, explained the *Alshich*, meant ten times ten, or a hundred times over! He then proceeded to explain and detail each of the hundred ways in which *Lovon* cheated *Yaakov* this way and that. The audience sat mesmerized and transfixed, enjoying the *derosha* and how the *Alshich* enumerated

again and again the tricks that Lovon had employed against Yaakov one hundred different ways. During this *derosha*, the *Arizal* laughed and left.

Afterward, they asked the *Arizal* why he had laughed. The *Arizal* explained that he actually saw Lovon HoArami standing beside the *Alshich* as he spoke and gave his *derosha*.

“With each explanation of the hundred deceptions, Lovon nodded his head, agreeing with the *Alshich* saying, ‘Yes, that’s it...that’s true...that’s exactly how I did it and tricked Yaakov and cheated him that time. Yes, and that’s the other way I cheated him again...uh huh...’ That’s what made me laugh,” explained the *Arizal*. (*Maso’os Yerushalayim* Day 9 Footnote 17 p. 190)

THE KVITTEL FOR THE KOSEL

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

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

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

The *Ohr HaChaim* was filled with compassion and so he took a slip of paper and wrote a few words, a short note. He handed the folded note of paper to his *talmid* and told him to approach the *Kosel HaMaaravi* - the Western Wall, the last standing remnant from the *Bais HaMikdosh*, and to place it into one of the cracks of the large stones.

The *talmid* left, taking the folded paper note, and headed toward the *Kosel*. Just then, a strong gust of wind blew off his head covering and as he struggled to keep his head covered, the note too slipped and flew out of his hand far away! The sad *talmid* headed back and told the *Ohr HaChaim* what had happened. He sighed and remarked, “What can

I do? It didn't work out!"

Afterward, someone in Yerushalayim found the note signed by the *Ohr HaChaim*. It was a petition and request directed to the *Shechina* in the language of *Shir HaShirim*: "Achosi raayosi yonosi samosi (my sister, my friend, my dove, my perfect one) - I ask and request of You in mercy and compassion to send bountiful blessings of *shefa* to Ploni ben Ploni." (*Masa'os Yerushalayim* by Rav Moshe Goldstein - Munkacz)

PLEASE DECREE THAT MOSHIACH MUST COME

When the *Munkaczer Rav*, Rav Chaim Elozor Shapira, came to Eretz Yisrael, he traveled to Yerushalayim especially to meet with the *Saba Kadisha*, Rav Alfandri, who had now exceeded one hundred and ten years and who, after leaving the chief rabbinate of Tzefas, was living in the holy city.

During the visit, the Munkaczer conversed in *Loshon Kodesh* with a *Sefardi* accent so that the *Saba Kadisha* could understand him; the Rav had been practicing and he made of the elder *Tzaddik* and holy Rav a unique and wondrous request. He revealed that he had brought a holy, secret letter, an epistle, an *igeres sesorim* that he had inherited from the holy Komarna *Tzaddik*, Rav Yaakov Moshe Safrin, foretelling that the way to bring the *Geula* closer depended on the decree of the *Tzaddik HaDor*. If the *Tzaddik HaDor* would decree that *Moshiach* must come, then this would hasten the *Geula*. The *Munkaczer Rav* held that Rav Alfandri was worthy and on the level of someone who could make this decree! He then asked the *Saba Kadisha* to do so. However, Rav Alfandri refused, stating in his humility, "I am not a *Tzaddik*." This conversation took place eight days before the *Saba Kadisha* left this world on the 22nd of *Iyar*. (*Oros Mimizrach*, page 153)

**Rav Chaim ben Betzalel Sefer Hachaim, Igeres Hatiyul, Av Beis Din Freidberg
(Sivan 6)**

STUDYING WITH ELIYOHU HANOVI

In *Adas Tzaddikim* it relates that when the *Rema* became *Av Beis Din* Cracow, he took Rav Chaim as his *segan* (assistant rav) and that when the *Rema* traveled, Rav Chaim acted as chief rabbi in the *Rema's* place as *Av Beis Din*.

It happened, that Rav Chaim's wife passed away. The *Rema* was so dependent on Rav Chaim and the communal responsibilities so great that all *shidduch* suggestions for Rav Chaim were discounted. Everyone anticipated the *Rema's* approval of some match. Rav Chaim, seeing how things were going, took matters into his own hands. Tradition has it that he made a secret match through a *shadchan* with a local baker. The simple, but pious, baker supplied his illustrious son-in-law to be, with all the *seforim* he would need along with a hidden room to study undisturbed. The *Rema* returned one day to find Rav Chaim melancholy. He surmised that it was for lack of a suitable match and proposed that he would indeed find Rav Chaim a new wife. Rav Chaim staged that he wished to visit his family and left with intentional fanfare. He was escorted by the *Rema* and the townspeople out of the city limits where he dressed in simple clothes, gathered a *minyan* at the baker's residence and married his daughter in a clandestine *chuppah*. After the wedding, he set himself up in the room provided by his father-in-law and studied happily and undisturbed for some two years until he was discovered.

There was a plague in Cracow and someone assumed that the secretive baker's son-in-law whom no one knew must be the culprit behind some crime that made Cracow guilty. Such was the desperate calculation of people trying to find some reason why the plague had struck their city. Rav Chaim was summoned before the *Rema*, and was found to have been hiding all this time! Consequently, Rav Chaim was released and cleared of all charges.

"Why did you hide; what was your sin? And why are you laughing?" asked the *Rema* when he saw Rav Chaim laugh.

"I hid because the communal responsibilities were too much for me and it disturbed my Torah study," Rav Chaim explained. "I laughed because these simple people were so quick to judge me and I can see they were just all too happy to whip me soon as you gave them the word. Apparently, my sin was that my Torah study was so good that I almost grew arrogant. But then, Hashem put me in a situation where I would be shamed!"

When the *Rema* went to visit him to see what he meant, he overheard Rav Chaim studying with someone else. But when he came inside, Rav Chaim was alone.

"I command *you* to reveal who was here!" said the *Rema*.

Rav Chaim admitted he had been studying with *Eliyahu HaNavi*.

“And he is still here with us,” said Rav Chaim.

Eliyahu then told the *Rema* that he studied with Rav Chaim, not because Rav Chaim was greater than the *Rema*, but because the *Rema's* greatness and strength in Torah was too much for him [Eliyahu Hanavi]!

Rav Yisrael Isserles Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh, Besh"t (Sivan 6)

ON ROUTE TO ERETZ YISROEL

The *Ba'al Shem Tov* desired very much to go to Eretz Yisrael, saying that if he would meet the holy Rav Chaim Ben Attar, author of the famed *sefer*, the *Ohr HaChaim*, that together they could bring *Moshiach*. Unfortunately, in *Shomayim* they had other plans and the journey did not succeed. There are many stories regarding the journey that the *Ba'al Shem Tov* undertook together with his daughter Adel; here is one example:

On *Chol HaMoed*, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* hired a boat to take them to Eretz Yisrael from Istanbul, Turkey. The *Toldos Yaakov Yosef* relates how the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* *Rebbe* and spiritual mentor, Achiya HaShiloni, appeared to him and demonstrated to the *Ba'al Shem* where his journey corresponded to the forty-two journeys and encampments of *Bnei Yisrael* in the *Midbar*.

While they were at sea, a great storm struck the ship, the tempest waves tossing it to and fro. According to some versions of the story, his daughter Adel was cast overboard and the ship itself was almost lost; according to other versions of the story, it was shipwrecked and smashed to smithereens, leaving only planks. Throughout all this chaos, the sailors turned to the *Ba'al Shem Tov* to save them.

Heaven decreed, however, that all of the *Ba'al Shem's* powers would be taken away and his spiritual capabilities were reduced to naught! He could remember no *tefillos*, no Torah- not even the *Alef-Bais*! The *Ba'al Shem* was sorely distressed, until his *Rebbe*, Achiya HaShiloni, reappeared to him and showed him through which supernal worlds he was now traveling and which Divine names corresponded to his current place and

journey. The *Ba'al Shem Tov* was comforted and Heaven began to sweeten the harsh decree.

Just then his son Rav Tzvi (others say it was Adel) turned and cried in distress that he too could remember nothing but the *Alef-Bais*. "Quick!" responded the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, "say them with me now!" Attaching his soul to the power of the Hebrew letters of the holy *Alef-Bais*, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* repeated them after his son, "*Alef, Bais, Gimmel, Daled*," until slowly his powers and knowledge returned and he was able to save the travelers. The *Ba'al Shem Tov* never did make it to Eretz Yisrael; rather, he returned safely to Europe.

THE HOLY AMULET OF THE SEMICHAS CHACHAMIM

Rav Dovid Moshe of Tshortkov related that when the holy *Baal Shem Tov* passed through Istanbul on his way to Eretz Yisroel, he heard rumors regarding certain amulets that Rav Naphtali Katz, the *Semichas Chachamim* had written.

"How could he dare use Divine Names in amulets?" they challenged. The *Baal Shem Tov* asked to see one. When he opened the amulet, he saw that it was simply the handwritten name of the *Semichas Chachamim*.

Rav Dovid Moshe used to say that this story explains the statement of *Chazal Sanhedrin 100a* that whoever calls his *rebbe* by name is liable to the death penalty. We could wonder, asked Rav Dovid Moshe, why so harsh a sentence should be pronounced for seemingly so light a crime as calling your *rebbe* by his name? The answer is because just as when someone pronounces Hashem's Divine Name, he is punished harshly (ibid 90a), we see--as illustrated by our story-- that one's *rebbe's* name is also considered like one of the holy Divine Names. This is true to such degree that we see that it can even be used as an amulet! (*Eser Oros 10:16*)

THE DIVISION OF ERETZ YISROEL

Many *tzaddikim* attended the wedding of Rav Avrohom Shimshon. The *Baal Shem Tov* himself was the guest of honor, and Rav Pinchos Koretzer was among the many notables in attendance. As was customary, the *chuppah* was held outdoors in the courtyard of the shul. On the windowsill, a bird stood merrily chirping. The *Baal Shem Tov* turned to Rav Pinchos Koretzer and asked him, "Do you hear what that bird is saying?" He continued, "The bird is saying the *pasuk*, "*Le'eleh techalek ha'arets*" ("Among these shall the land be

divided"). Hearing this, many of the guests rejoiced, as they imagined that, during this couple's lifetime, the great Division of Eretz Yisroel would begin - a sign of the imminent redemption!

However, years later, when Rav Avrohom Shimshon decided to move to Eretz Yisroel, his wife protested and refused to go. The couple appeared before Rav Pinchos of Koretz seeking a resolution to their marital strife. "What can I do?" Rav Pinchos exclaimed. "This case has already been decided by the holy Baal Shem Tov! At your wedding, he heard a bird saying "*Le'eleh techalek ha'aretz*" - and now I understand that you shall be divided because of the Land of Israel that lies between you." The *halacha* states that, if a husband wishes to move to Eretz Yisroel and his wife refuses to accompany him, she may accept a *get* (legally divorce him) so he will be free to go. And so it was that Rav Avrohom Shimshon left for Eretz Yisroel alone. (*Zechuyos Yosef*)

SHABBOS IN LIZENSK WITH THE BAAL SHEM TOV'S CHAZZAN

The *Yeshuos Moshe of Vizhnitz* related how the *Zaslover Chazzan* who served as the *chazzan* for the holy *Baal Shem Tov*, arrived one *erev Shabbos* in Lizensk to spend Shabbos with the author of the *Noam Elimelech*.

Reb Melech's *talmidim* were unsure of what to do: Should they honor the *chazzan* with the *amud*, allowing him to *daven kabbalas Shabbos*, or would this upset the holy rebbe's *kavannos* and disrupt his devotions? Their hesitation was soon to become irrelevant when the rebbe, Reb Melech himself, honored the *chazzan* to lead the *tefillos* and begin *kabbalos Shabbos*.

"Please for the sake of the *Baal Shem's* honor, would you be our *chazzan*?" asked the Rebbe Elimelech.

Rav Mordechai agreed.

The *chazzan* stepped up to the *amud* flanked by a choir that would accompany his melodious *tefillos*. As soon as the *tefillah* commenced, however, Rebbe Elimelech could not hold back. With great reluctance, the rebbe interrupted the *chazzan* and choir, "Please, I am sorry—it's just too much!" complained Rebbe Elimelech. "I cannot contain the *dveykus* this brings on!"

The *Yeshuos Moshe of Vizhnitz* paused in telling of the tale to explain that the rebbe, Reb Melech couldn't withstand it because "it opened up for him new vistas in the supernal realms, so much so, that the great light that came from it was too strong to absorb!"

"After *kabbalos Shabbos*," continued the *Yeshuos Moshe*, "Rebbe Elimelech drew the *Zaslover chazzan* close but asked him to please not *daven* for the *amud* in *Lizensk* anymore.

"On *Motzaei Shabbos* as the *Zaslover chazzan* took his leave, the rebbe, Reb Melech asked him to relate some story about the holy *Baal Shem Tov*. The *chazzan* spoke of the *Baal Shem's* love and awe in serving Hashem and specifically how his soul would experience an *aliyas neshama* - a state in which he would wander around supernal realms just we move around here below!"

"The *Zaslover* continued, 'Another aspect of the *Baal Shem Tov's* purity in *avodas Hashem* is his recitation of *Hallel*. We know that ordinarily, when we recite the *Hallel HaGadol*, each verse is recited by a specific angel. When the Holy *Baal Shem Tov* recited *Hallel HaGadol*, he waited first to hear how each *malach* recited each *pasuk*; only then would he himself repeat each *pasuk* after the angels had said them! '"

MESIRUS NEFESH: A LESSON IN AVODAS HASHEM

The *Tosher Rebbe* related how once after the the holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* had already passed away, he had revealed himself in a vision to his son, Rav Tzvi, . Rav Tzvi asked his departed father, the *Ba'al Shem*, "Please teach me how to serve Hashem properly."

The holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* depicted for his son a tall mountain with a steep cliff; at the edge of the cliff, peering down, one could see a raging, roaring, deep body of water. "My son," said the *Ba'al Shem*, "you should imagine that you are always standing at the top of this mountain at the edge of the cliff and then cast yourself from the mountain and plunge yourself deep into the river's waters down below! That is how you must serve Hashem, always be prepared to be *moser nefesh* - be ready to give yourself and to sacrifice for Hashem in order to sanctify His Name!" (*Avodas Avoda Sichos Kodosh* I p. 87)

CHILLUL SHABBOS

Rav Friedman cites the *Bnei Yissoschor* (*Tishrei* 4:2:6) who recounts the well-known story

of the *Baal Shem Tov* who once observed a Jew desecrating Shabbos in public. The *Baal Shem Tov* was shocked; he realized that if he had seen this *chillul Shabbos*, it must mean that he was guilty of the same *aveiroh* in some way. Upon introspection, he remembered that he had once observed someone defaming a Torah scholar in public. Since the *Zohar* (III 29a) calls *Torah* scholars by the appellation “Shabbos,” the *Baal Shem Tov* realized that by failing to defend the scholar he too was guilty of some form of *chillul Shabbos*.

MEETING THE OHR HACHAIM

There are various traditions regarding how and when the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* brother-in-law met Rav Chaim ben Attar, *mechaber* of the *Ohr HaChaim*, in Eretz Yisrael:

After the printing of the *chumashim Ohr HaChaim* in Venice in the year *tov-kuf-bais*, they reached the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, who greatly rejoiced in them. He found in them an author whose heart and soul were filled with emotion and excitement for *Avodas Hashem*. He sent his brother-in-law, Rav Gershon of Kitov, to Yerushalayim to visit Rav Chaim ben Attar's *Yeshiva*. He told Rav Gershon that Rav Chaim ben Attar had two *Yeshivos*, one where they studied *nigle* (the revealed Torah) and one where they studied the hidden secrets of *Toras HaKabbola*. The *Ba'al Shem* warned Rav Gershon to try to attend the *Yeshiva* for *nistar* and not to reveal to the *Ohr HaChaim* who he was, hiding his identity until the *Ohr HaChaim* would feel it and understand for himself.

When Rav Gershon arrived he requested permission to hear a *derosha* from the *Ohr haChaim*. Permission was granted and he studied in *Yeshivas HaNigle* for about a week. Afterward, he requested admission to the other *Yeshiva* for *Kabbola*.

“Who revealed to you that I have a *Yeshiva* for *nistar*?”

He answered that his brother-in-law, the *Ba'al Shem*, had told him. The *Ohr HaChaim* did not know him, but he scrutinized Rav Gershon from head to toe and declared him fit and ready to study *Kabbola*. After studying there for three days, the *Ohr HaChaim* gave word to prevent him from coming back and Rav Gershon found his way blocked from entry. When Rav Gershon approached the Rav's house to find out why he had been banned, the *Ohr HaChaim* saw him and said, “I am angry at you. Why didn't you say your brother-in-law was the *Ba'al Shem Tov*? You just said, ‘Rav Yisrael Ba'al Shem!’ I don't know any Rav Yisrael Ba'al Shem, but I know who the *Ba'al Shem Tov* is! I know him from seeing him in

the supernal worlds!” and he no longer allowed Rav Gershon access to the Yeshiva, explaining that he needed no other Rebbe or Rav if he already had the *Ba'al Shem Tov*. (*Doresh Tov Tshortkov, Acharon Shel Pesach* p. 194)

KIRUV RECHOKIM

Rav Yitzchok of Neshchiz related on *Motzoei Shabbos Parshas Behaalosecha, tov-reish-kaf-zayin*:

Rav Gershon of Kitov met the *Ohr HaChaim* in *Eretz Yisrael* and told him about his brother-in-law the *Ba'al Shem Tov*. The *Ohr HaChaim* replied that he had heard of him and that his name was Yisrael. Rav Gershon Kitover also asked the *Ohr HaChaim* why he kept a certain *talmid* in his *Yeshiva* whom Rav Gershon had seen behaving improperly, unbecoming for a *Yeshiva* student. “This is our way,” answered the *Ohr HaChaim*. “We draw closer those who are distant - we are *mekarev rechokim*.” (*Zichron Tov* p. 16 #8)

When Rav Gershon of Kitov traveled to *Eretz Yisrael*, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* told him to meet with the *Ohr HaChaim*. “If he doesn’t know of his greatness, send him regards from me and tell him I see him in *Moshiach Heichal* - the supernal palace, where *Moshiach* sits on a throne and studies the *Ohr HaChaim*.”

When Rav Gershon came to *Eretz Yisrael*, he arrived at the *Ohr HaChaim’s* *Yeshiva* and asked why he studied with *talmidim* who behave inappropriately; others say that he asked why he studied with people with lowly souls.

The *Ohr HaChaim* asked Rav Gershon from where he hailed. When he said that he was from Polnoy, the *Ohr HaChaim* responded that he should return the following day. The next day, the *Ohr HaChaim* told him, “I saw your Rebbe and he is a very great man.”

Rav Gershon then related his regards from the *Ba'al Shem* and relayed the *Ba'al Shem’s* message. The *Ohr HaChaim* responded, “I don’t know what favor he does me by revealing my greatness. Tell him I saw the Angel of Death and that he stands with one foot on Polnoy and the other on the entire world.” This was a hint at the danger facing European Jewry and that they would need mercy. He also responded that the reason he studied with people with lowly souls was because he sought to redeem holy sparks from places that they had been captured and held hostage. (*Kisvei Ri Shuv of Brisk*)

I WAS RELYING ON YOU

The *talmidim* knew that their rebbe always *davened* for a very long time. True, they were part of his *minyán*, but while he was *davening* the silent *amidah*, the *Shemone Esrei*, what need was there for them to just sit around? Each one of them had things to take care of. They figured that they had at least a good hour or so before he would be ready to hear *chazaras ha'shatz*, the *chazan's* repetition. And so, each one went his separate way leaving the rebbe alone in his devotions. According to the time they estimated that the holy *Baal Shem* had ended his prayers they were all back in *shul*.

How surprised they were, when they returned well within the hour, and found the *Baal Shem*, not, as assumed deeply immersed in prayer, but instead, standing forlorn facing the door, awaiting their return.

"Why did you all leave me?" the rebbe asked. "Don't you understand that I was relying on each of you? Let me explain," The *Baal Shem Tov* then told them this story as a *mashal*:

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

However, the bird landed atop a high branch on one of the tallest trees. It remained above the reach of the king's men even with the use of ladders. The king had an idea. Each one of them was to stand on another's shoulders, and together, they would form a human ladder that could reach to the top of the tree. At the peak, was the royal guard, only to be topped by the king's most trusted advisor whose mission was to lay his hands on the prize bird and capture it for the king!

They began the climb--this one climbed up onto that one's shoulders and so on until, indeed, the trusted advisor stood high in the clouds. He reached among the branches and was about to snatch the bird when . . . something went dreadfully wrong!

All those who made up the human ladder, came crashing down. The advisors, guards, and the rest of the king's men ended up in one jumbled heap with bruised and broken limbs and torn clothing!

“FOOLS!” Thundered the king as he approached! The king was addressing the few stragglers who had wandered away and now returned to the site of the accident. These were the ones who made up the foundation of this human ladder. “Why did you leave? Where did you go? Didn’t you realize that everything depended on you?!”

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

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

GET YOUR WINGS

The *Baal Shem Tov* once came to a *beis midrash* together with the townspeople as well as his followers and *chassidim*. “This *beis midrash* is full of Torah and *tefillah*!” he declared. The townsfolk were glad and proud upon hearing these words. They thought that the holy *Baal Shem* was lauding the fact that their *beis midrash* was so full of Torah study and davening!

However, their pleased expressions were in noticeable contrast to the *tzaddik*’s countenance which seemed sorrowful and pensive. The *Baal Shem* stood on the threshold and did not enter the *beis midrash*. He turned to the assembled and explained, “I cannot enter, for there is no room! This *beis midrash* is simply too full of all the Torah studied and *tefillas* recited here! The *Zohar* explains that Torah and *tefillah* that lack *dechilu u’rechimu* - fear, awe, and love, lack the means to rise heavenward. Any study and prayers that are insincere, that are lacking in fire, in emotion and devotion, simply sink and linger in place. For love and awe, *ahava* and *yira*, are like two wings. Our Torah and *tefillah* require these wings to fly and soar heavenwards! The Torah and *tefillah* of this *kahal*,” explained the *Baal Shem* to the disgraced congregants, lacks warmth, lacks fire and devotion. They have no wings to fly and so, remain grounded. That is what’s causing the lack of space in this *beis midrash*; it is so full of Torah and *tefillah* that I cannot get in!”

COLD AS ICE

The *Baal Shem* once asked his disciples to join him on a journey. They all entered the carriage and soon were off towards some unknown destination. Journeys such as these were commonplace. The *tzaddik* knew where they had to go and why the journey was necessary, and his chassidim joined him without questioning the details of the outings.

This time, however, when they arrived, some of the *talmidim* suspected that their *rebbe* had taken a wrong turn. What other reason could there be for ending up at the frozen pond before them? It was the height of the gentile holiday season and the common practice was that the goyim went ice skating on the surface of the frozen lake. As they skated, they would often carve the pattern of what chassidim called the *shesi ve'erev*, the *tzelem*, or cross of the Christian faith. "Rebbe, please let us go away from here, the *talmidim* urged. But mysteriously, the *Baal Shem* told them to come closer. They stood watching this for a few moments, and then, just as mysteriously, the *Baal Shem* asked them to leave.

"What profound lesson did they just witness?" the *talmidim* sat in stunned silence and wondered. They didn't have to wait long for an answer.

"For far too long, I wanted you to witness this scene," explained their *rebbe*, "because it contains a lesson you need to understand. The Torah is compared to water. Water is vitality; water gives life. Without water, we all die. Without water there is no life; it's *mayim chaim!* However, when water freezes, when it turns to ice, then, even those life-giving waters can turn into something that someone can come and carve a graven image of idolatry onto!!! The Torah is life; yet, *avodas Hashem* must be filled with fire, with devotion, with a *bren*, because if that Torah freezes, if it turns to ice, *chas veshalom...*

FINE WINE REVIVES THE SOUL

There was once a *yungerman* who was an ardent follower of the *Baal Shem Tov*. His father-in-law however was just as passionate a *misnaged* (counted among the opponents) of the *Baal Shem's* *derech*. He lost no opportunity to mock and disparage the chassidim and their ways.

One day his daughter grew ill, and her sickness worsened daily. No treatment was effective, and the situation became precarious. Doctor after doctor was consulted in the

search for an ever-elusive cure. With her life hanging by a thread, her brother-in-law desperately tried to convince his stubborn father-in-law to seek the holy *Baal Shem's* help in finding a cure.

"Why do you pester me with your nonsense; don't you know I am utterly opposed to such things?"

This was his father-in-law's refrain until one fateful day when it became clear she was deathly ill. Once again, his son-in-law urged, "Oh, why do you persist in leaving your daughter in such a pathetic state? Why don't you seek the *Baal Shem's* aid and save her life?"

The father-in-law finally relented. "Fine--whatever you want. I'll try anything to see my daughter survive! Send a telegram and bid the *Baal Shem* come to us!"

The son-in-law left immediately and sent the telegram. When he returned shortly afterwards, the house was a flurry of erev *Shabbos* activity while the sick girl's condition took a further turn for the worse.

Just then, a piteous howl was heard from the sick room. Her relatives came out wringing their hands in hysterical disbelief. "Woe to us! She is no longer alive! She has succumbed to her illness!" Suddenly shunted into mourning, the whole household was in turmoil that *Shabbos*.

It was *motzaei Shabbos* when the *tzaddik* arrived. Loud knocks interrupted the dismal silence. A messenger stood at the door and announced, "From the holy *Baal Shem Tov*; he has arrived and wishes to enter." The father-in-law, head hung in low in sorrow, bade the *tzaddik* to come inside. But it was too late. What was left to do? The *Baal Shem Tov* seated himself in an adjacent room. "Please lower the body of the deceased and tend to her, as is customary and proper." As they did so, smoke swept over the girl, emitting a fragrance like *ketoros*. "And now," said the *Baal Shem*, "bring me some good wine--because fine wine, snuff, and spirits revive the soul!"

"What is this-- a tavern?" yelled the father-in-law. But his son-in-law insisted. The father-in-law relented and brought the *Baal Shem* a bottle of wine. After slowly savoring each

glassful, the bottle was empty.

“Please bring more,” requested the *tzaddik*.

“What did I do, invite drunkards?” thundered the father-in-law. Still, he resigned himself to the circumstances and brought more liquor. And so, the scenario repeated itself three times.

The third time, the *Baal Shem* drank just one glass and then commanded the son-in-law, “Raise the girl’s body, give the rest of the wine to her to drink, and then lay her back in bed. Let her drink and be revived!”

In a state of disbelief, the family followed the *Baal Shem’s* instructions. Awestruck, they watched as the girl’s pale cheeks grew ruddy. Her lips parted as she somehow managed to swallow and then drink the wine! Her formerly lifeless body grew warm and she began to breathe. A collective gasp was heard as the girl’s eyes fluttered open.

“Now,” commanded the *Baal Shem Tov*, “ask her to get out of bed and cook us all a feast for *Melave Malka!*” Amazingly she did so. She was healed. It was a miracle, a *nes techiyas haMeisim!* (*Devarim Arevim*) Original Source: *Kuntres Chai V’Kayam* p. 117

THE BAAL SHEM TOV'S SHIRYAIM

“Who could be knocking on the door now?” thought the priest. “An annoying interruption!”

Just a few minutes ago he had welcomed guests--important officials who had come to discuss various matters of local politics. He turned to his seated visitors, excused himself, and hurried to see who could be knocking so early on a Saturday. When the priest opened the door, he was stunned to see the new local rabbi, dressed in his Shabbos clothes.

“What do you want?” asked the surprised priest curtly, thinking only of his waiting guests.

The rabbi smiled, and in voice full of sincerity declared, “I have seen the light! I have come to realize the truth in your religion!” The priest was doubtful of the rabbi’s intentions until the rabbi pronounced steadily and with conviction: “I have come to

convert to Christianity!”

This was the sentence which every priest is yearned to hear; yet, the priest couldn't believe his own ears. “What. . .what did you say?!”

“I have come to convert!” repeated the rabbi in a way that left no room for doubt as to his intentions. The priest's attitude changed quickly from hostility, to growing delight at this amazing turn of events.

“Yes, off course; come right in!” smiled the priest clasping the rabbi's hands. He shook them warmly and opened the doors wide and welcomed him inside.

“Salvatore, come quickly!” the priest summoned one of his attendants who led the rabbi to another room, “Salvatore, as you know I have a meeting with important messengers from the royal crown whom I cannot possibly leave. But our guest here needs attending to. He intends to convert, but I cannot officiate just now or conduct the ceremony while I have such guests to entertain. Please ply him with good food and drink until I can come back to him late tonight or early tomorrow morning!”

“Please rabbi follow me,” said Salvatore, as the priest hurried back with a new spring in his step.

“Just wait until the church fathers hear about my exploits! The local rabbi--my new convert; I just might make bishop!” He went back to the meeting where he boasted to the king's men about who he had in the next room. Meanwhile, the local rabbi was led unsteadily to the next room.

“This rabbi already smells like he has had a few drinks,” smiled Salvatore to himself, “let's keep him happily inebriated until the priest can come back and *convert* him.”

“Here rabbi, have a seat, help yourself to some of our best whiskey and some food while you wait for the priest to return.”

Salvatore quickly made his exit. The rabbi quaffed glass after glass and soon he was so drunk he could barely think straight. The strange turn of events of the *previous* Shabbos

began to slosh through his mind...

He had awoken early as he had done every Shabbos since he became the rabbi of the town a few weeks ago. He went to the mikvah as usual and donned his Shabbos clothes and shtreimel. Then, as he was about to wrap himself in his *tallis*, he suddenly faltered. That was the first sign that foreign thoughts had possessed him.

He stared at the carefully set Shabbos table, but instead of contentedly appreciating its beauty, a strange compulsion swept through him. He thirsted for the contents of the wine and liquor bottles that were set out at the head of the table for *kiddush* and *l'chaims*.

"What is wrong with me?" he thought.

And then a new inconceivable thought began to form in his mind. "Why not leave all this behind? Why not convert?"

"What!" a counter voice screamed back. "What is this? Convert? Never!" But as strong as the protests began, they grew weaker and fainter against the onslaught of his sudden burning desire to convert. Conceding defeat in the battle that had just been waged within him, he cast off his tallis, grabbed the bottle of wine and began to drink. He then reached for the whisky, downing glass after glass.

Unaccustomed to such a deluge of alcohol on an empty stomach, and so early in the morning, inebriation came quickly. His compulsion to convert intensified by the overwhelming effect of the liquor coursing through his veins, propelled the rabbi to run all the way to the priest's home.

And here he was, drunker than ever before. "What a strange day," he thought just before he he vomited all over himself and then blacked out.

While this was going on, the congregants were shocked to discover that not only had their rabbi not come to *shul* that morning for *davening*, he was absent from his home as well. When they came in, they found his *tallis* cast off, and several empty bottles of wine and whisky lying on the floor. Just then one of the town's gossipers ran in and declared, "A terrible thing has happened, I just saw the rabbi running to the priest's house. When I

drew near, I heard him say that he wanted to convert!”

“What? Liar! How can this be! Woe is to us! It cannot be true! There must be some other reason for his behavior! It’s unbelievable! It’s a lie--just nasty rumor! What will we do?” The congregants looked at each other with a mix of shock and outrage.

Meanwhile, in Mezibuz, as the sun made its way down towards the horizon, the *talmidim* of the holy *Tzadik, Rav Yisroel Ba’al Shem* clasped hands together and sang the *zemiros* of *shalosh seudos*. At the head, sat the holy *Baal Shem Tov* with his eyes closed in concentration.

Each Shabbos after *mincha*, the *Baal Shem* and the *chevrah* sat to eat *shalosh seudos* together like this. At such times, a wondrous thing happened. His soul soared upwards to the supernal chambers of Heavenly palaces. He would divest himself of his earthly form and visit all of his *talmidim--wherever* they were. Each *talmid* would be visited, regarded and appraised: What had he accomplished? What were his spiritual struggles? How could his rebbe, teacher and mentor help? And this Shabbos as the *Baal Shem* moved on to the local rabbi in our story, in faraway Lithuania, the *Baal Shem* was dismayed at what he discovered. His beloved disciple was shrouded in darkness and lying at the bottom of a deep pit. The *Ba’al Shem* saw that he was lost in despair and oblivion.

“How did this happen?” asked the *Ba’al Shem*. The answer came to him in the vision. First, what appeared, was the moment the *talmid* had been appointed to his new position as the town rabbi, and how he had set up a new charity fund. When the new rabbi reviewed the accounts, he noticed that one particular *talmid chacham* was receiving far more money than others. “This is unfair,” he concluded, and he had the gabbai stop his collection for the earmarked fund.

Meanwhile, from *shomayim*, the *Baal Shem* was shown the consequence of the new rabbi’s policy. The *talmid chacham*, who was already impoverished, was now destitute. His home was dark and cold; no food was cooking on the stove; the children were hungry. The vision continued. The mother wrapped herself in a torn shawl, trying to ward off the cold as she headed to the *beis medrash*.

“My husband, where is the money for this week’s expenses?”

"I am so sorry," he said hanging his head low in shame, "I have nothing to give you."

"What will we eat for Shabbos?" she cried. Seeing his wife's suffering, he too, cried. And the heavens cried along with them.

Another vision appeared to the *Ba'al Shem*: Two litigants came before the new rabbis' *beis din* to judge a case. "Rabbi, I have rented the flour mill for many years from the local poritz. Now Shimon here came and offered him more money, and the poritz cancelled my contract! I have no *parnassa* and no way of feeding my family!"

"I am sorry," ruled the rabbi incorrectly, "but he seems to have outbid you." The poor miller and his family cried that night in hunger--and the heavens cried along with them.

Now the *Baal Shem* saw the *Satan* prosecute the rabbi in *beis din shel maalah* and the sentence handed down was this: The Evil One has been given possession of the new rabbi. But the *Satan* decided that he didn't want his body; he wanted his soul! And so, he injected poisonous thoughts of conversion into the rabbi's mind, twisting his beliefs. And this is how the *Ba'al Shem's talmid* reached this sorry state.

As the *Ba'al Shem Tov* and his circle of followers sang the words to the *Arizal's zemiros*, and reached the stanza "*Levatata bechol klifin* - annul all the forces of darkness--the husks and shells of impurity," the *Baal Shem* repeated these words over and over emphatically. His efforts, however, were to no avail. Nothing he did seemed to help.

After the *zemer's* conclusion, the *Ba'al Shem* summoned a different student. He told him, "Here, take this slice of *challah* over which I said *hamotzi*, along with this loaf from the twelve loaves, and go!" He then took his own leftover *shirayim* from his *challah*, and the loaf from the twelve breads representing the show bread (the *lechem hapanim* from the *Beis Hamikdash*) and handed them to the *talmid*. The devoted *talmid* requested no details or explanations. He simply went!

As he continued walking along, the shadows grew longer as the sun's last rays disappeared beneath the horizon. Soon dusk was followed by nightfall; stars began to peak their way out from among the clouds and the sounds of night creatures filled the forest. Crickets chirped, owls hooted, and animals darted about in the underbrush.

As the *talmid* crossed from woods to glade, and from one valley to another, he found himself surrounded by steep cliffs and impassable mountains. He plodded on relentlessly as he reminded himself over and over that he was on a mission sent from his rebbe, the holy *Ba'al Shem*; he must overcome all obstacles. Surely these mountains were simply an illusion--a trial from *Satan* himself, sent to obstruct his path and to prevent him from carrying out his sacred mission.

Straining every muscle and with sweat pouring down his brow, the *talmid* continued to climb. "Just like Avraham Avinu persevered against you and overcame your *nisyonos!*" he yelled, "so too shall I overcome and you!"

As soon as he reached the impossibly high peak, he saw that indeed, there were no mountains at all. It was all a test, an illusion to stop him. In fact, he saw before him a large stone compound with a cathedral at its center. He surmised that his destination lay straight ahead at the open door.

He stepped inside and found his colleague, the rabbi, lying on the floor in his Shabbos clothes, in a drunken stupor, covered in his own filth.

He sat his friend upright and tried to wash him off and wake him. Using some cold water, he revived the befuddled rabbi. However, as soon as he was awake, he headed straight for the drinks on the table!

"Oh no!" thought his friend, "this is even worse than I thought." Then he had an idea.

"Look here my good friend," he told the rabbi, "too much drink on an empty stomach will make you sick. Wouldn't that whisky go down better after a nice meal? You will feel better and be able to hold down the drink if you eat something. Here, I happen to have some delicious bread here with me for you!" He removed the *challah* loaf and the slice from his rebbe from his sack, and showed it to the drunken rabbi.

Through his stupor, the rabbi's foggy brain tried to make sense of all he had heard, yet only one thing demanded his attention: the question of whether to drink more. Off course he wanted to drink more! And in order to drink more this nice friend was offering to help him with some bread. How nice of him to help him to continue drinking!

“Now come and wash your hands for bread; I have brought with me *challah* from the Master, the holy *Ba'al Shem*. Make a *beracha* and fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Melave Malka!*” No sooner had the rabbi washed and pronounced the *berachah*, and tasted a morsel of the *challah*, had he snapped out of the strange trance. The evil one’s grip over his heart was released and he was back to normal.

When he realized what he had done, he was overcome with shame. Heaving sobs of remorse, the rabbi’s friend tried to console him.

“The rebbe sent me to you to help; there is no despair, and no reason to give up hope--ever! Nothing can stand in the way of *teshuva* and you can always return to our Heavenly Father. “Now come, take hold of my gartel and let us escape this place!” No sooner had they stepped out of the door when, by way of *kefitzas haderech*, they journeyed to Mezibuz within moments.

The two of them appeared before the *Baal Shem* who still sat at *shalosh seudos* with the *talmidim*. The *Baal Shem’s shaliach* was exhausted from his ordeal, and he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The remorseful rabbi resumed sobbing until the holy *Baal Shem* calmed him, giving him a *tikkun* and path back to *teshuva*. And so, he became a righteous *baal teshuva* (*Sippurei Tzaddikim* #10; *Kuntres Chai V’Kayam* pp. 110-115 large edition pp. 101-106)

THE SIMCHA THAT CANCELLED THE DECREE

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

While the *Ba'al Shem* was closed in his room battling the verdict, the *Ba'al Shem Tov’s* holy brethren of *Chassidim*, known as the *Chevraya Kadisha*, waited outside, wondering as to the delay for blowing the *shofar*. They could sense that something was wrong and felt some kind of fear in the air.

One of the assembled congregants was a little off. His lack of sense and judgment caused

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

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

HOW SIMCHA SWEETENS HARSH JUDGEMENTS

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

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

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

Now returning to our parable, when we say that the prince can praise his father the king for as long as he likes, we can say he is so obligated for two reasons: First, he is obliged to praise him for he is both his father and his king; second, he must praise him for being allowed to stand there and praise uninterrupted for as long as he likes with no imposed limits, since this unique opportunity is solely his, unlike the other ministers and servants who have not been granted such an opportunity. (*Tzavo'as HaRivash* 132; same also in *Ohr Torah* #202 in the name of the *Maggid*)

THE SIMCHA THAT SAVED THE NEW YEAR

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

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

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

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

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

From on high it was made known to the holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* that if they were unable to sanctify and bless the new moon on *Motzo'ei Yom Kippur* it was to be taken as a sign that the coming year would be a difficult one, with harsh sentences and decrees against the

Jews. Now it was *Motzo'ei Yom Kippur* and the new moon was nowhere to be seen. As torrential rains poured down, a thick layer of clouds covered the skys and even darker clouds clouded the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* mind, as he wondered how it would be possible to sanctify and bless the new moon in such weather. What chance was there that the new moon would appear?"

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

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

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

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

THE NER HAMAARUVI HAS GONE OUT

In the year 5503 on Parshas Balak during Sholosh Seudos, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* suddenly

told the talmidim, "I believe that the Ner HaMaarovi, the Western Candle, has been extinguished." After Havdola the talmidim asked the Ba'al Shem what he meant. He explained to them, "The holy Tzaddik, the mechaber of the Ohr HaChaim, has left this world. The way I know this is because there is one secret regarding Netilas Yodayim (when we wash our hands before HaMotzi), and this secret is only revealed to one Tzaddik in each generation. Until today, this secret was given to the Ohr HaChaim - and now that secret has been revealed to me. I realized that if I have been given this secret I must be the only one who knows - and this must mean that the Ohr HaChaim is no longer with us in this world." (Gloss Menachem Tzion to Shem HaGedolim Seforim Alef Siman 54)

BITOCHON TO QUENCH THIRST

Rav Pinchas of Koritz told: Once, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* was traveling together with Rav Menachem Mendel of Bar, when Rav Menachem Mendel grew very thirsty and the *Ba'al Shem* promised him that if he had true *bitochon* and trusted in Hashem, then Hashem would send him water to drink.

No sooner said than done, and a non-Jew appeared suddenly before them, searching for his lost horses. "I have been searching for my horses now for some three days. Have you seen any trace of them?" The *Ba'al Shem* and Rav Menachem Mendel replied that they had not and asked for some water, which the non-Jew supplied.

Afterward, Rav Menachem Mendel asked the *Ba'al Shem* that if Hashem had arranged this wandering non-Jew solely for his benefit, to quench his thirst, why did he wander for three days?

"If you had had *bitochon* and trusted in Hashem immediately before, then your water would have been ready three days ago," explained the *Ba'al Shem*. (*Imrei Pinchas* p. 9 #45)

THE BA'AL SHEM TOV'S IMPLANTS

Rav Noach of Lechovitch taught that the Ba'al Shem Tov came down to this world to replace depression, sadness and frivolous cheer by implanting the roots of sincere humility and true *simchah* into the hearts of *Bnei Yisrael*.

(Toras Avos #11)

A TRUE STORY REGARDING RAV ELIYAHU BAAL SHEM OF CHELM

Rav Moshe Duvid Shtrum of Tarnov once told how Rav Shimeleh Zelichover *HY"D* the famed mashgiach of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin once entered the beis medrash of Rav Aryeh Leibush of Sanz and he asked the yungeleit that were gathered there a question: He asked them "why is that Rav Aryeh Leib does not recite *LeDovid Hashem Ori*, whereas in Shinuva (the son of tthe Divrei Chaim) they do recite it?! (the Divrei Chaim also did not recite it) they had no answer and he so told them "I will tell you a true story regarding Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem of Chelm:

"There was a decree of expulsion from the local squire, he was childless and he ordered all the Jews there to pray for him to have children and if they failed he would expel them all from his environs. Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem promised him a son within 12 months." The holy Rav Yisrael Baal Shem Tov retold this tale to his disciples and he told them "don't think that this came easily to Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem. At first Rav Eliyahu turned to the forces of holiness and when this failed he turned to the forces of darkness from the other side when this too failed, he laid his own life down on the line and turned to the leader of all the forces of evil himself," the Baal Shem Tov concluded "and as a punishment for forcing the hand of Heaven as it were, so to speak, don't assume that he was punished by sixty flames, instead he was told that he would lose all his *nefesh, ruach* and *neshama*, however since he laid his life down and self sacrificed himself to save the Jews, instead the heavenly decree was that two of the enacted prayers that he had instituted and they were: the recitation of *LeDovid Hashem Ori* and the second was the recitation of *KeGavna*."

Rav Shimeleh Zelichover concluded: "it is known for example the Rebbe Reb Meilech of Lizensk did not recite *KeGavna* whereas the Apta Rav the Ohev Yisroel did not recite *leDovid Hashem Ori* (in this manner the talmidei HaBaal Shem kept up the tradition of reciting these tefilos enacted by Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem while still the decree was fulfilled)."

(cited from Nezer HaKodesh Minhagei Ropshitz pg147)

THE NIGGUN, THE HAVDALLAH CUP AND THE EVIL SPIRIT

During the time that the two Shapiro brothers of Slovita were imprisoned they were cast into a jail cell with many other prisoners. Due to the dirty, filthy state of the cell, they were halachically forbidden to daven. One of them said to the other: Let us sing a niggun! The niggun they sang roused the spirits of all the inmates and before long they all broke out in a dance. When the warden and guards saw this they ordered the Shapiro brothers

separated from the other prisoners and as soon as they were in their own cell they breathed a sigh of relief! Here, they would now be able to serve Hashem properly. One brother said to the other: I now understand the meaning of a kameo amulet that the Baal Shem Tov once gave to a wealthy man that invited him as his guest.

The *Baal Shem* stayed with him, and all Shabbos he did not utter a word. on Motzaei Shabbos the wealthy man's wife requested that the Baal Shem *daven* that they achieve salvation and have children. The *Baal Shem Tov* made *havdalah* and called the wealthy man to look into the cup, where he saw in the reflection an evil harmful spirit seeking to harm and injure him! On the spirit were written letters *Yud Shin Bais, Shin Bais*. Until now I had no idea what this meant. However, now I think that perhaps it stood for the acronym *Yehi Shalom BeCheilach Shalva BeArmonosayich* (Tehillim 122:7). (Sippurei Maran HaRamach Baal Shem #15, Shemous veSippurim Volume I pg 244 as cited by Likkutei Imrei Pinchos Sha'ar Sippurim 122)

Rav Avrohom Sholom Halberstam Divrei Sholom (Sivan 6)

THE YESHUA

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

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

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

With information in hand, Rav Meir Zev came back to the Stropkover *Rebbe* on *Motzo'ei Shabbos*. Rav Avrohom Sholom asked my young cousin to bring the candles that were lit

L'Koved Motzo'ei Shabbos. He then burned the paper that had her name on it. The following day the news spread that the tenant had died in her sleep, and since there was no witness anymore - the case was promptly dropped.

THE HANDWRITTEN LETTER (SEE ABOVE PICTURE)

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

Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter Gerrer Rebbe, Imrei Emes (Sivan 6)

WITH R' AVRAHAM MORDECHAI ALTER ZT

In 1923, the *Chofetz Chaim* *zt"l* traveled to Vienna to participate in the *Agudas Yisroel* convention, and he spent some time together with R' Avraham Mordechai Alter *zt"l*, the *Gerrer Rebbe*. In the course of their discussion, the *Chofetz Chaim* cited the verse from that week's *parsha* (*Devorim* 13:5): ואת מצותיו תשמרו ובקלו: אחרי ה' אלקיכם תלכו ואתו תיראו ואת מצותיו תשמרו ואתו תעבדו ובו תדבקון

"*Acharei* [literally, 'after'] Hashem, your God, shall you follow and Him shall you fear; His commandments shall you observe and to His voice shall you hearken; Him shall you serve and to Him shall you cleave." The *Chofetz Chaim* commented:

"Our Sages observe that the Torah uses two words for 'after' - '*Acharei*,' which means 'long after' (or 'far away') and '*achar*,' which means 'soon after' (or 'close'). Why does our verse use '*acharei*,' implying that one should follow Hashem from a distance? In fact, one should become as close to God as possible!" He explained: Sometimes a person becomes depressed, and he feels that he is standing on the brink of a cliff as far from God as can be. He is confident that *Hashem* will not help him at this moment. One should know that such feelings are the work of the *yetzer hora*. Hashem is a Jew's "Father" at all times, and He accepts His children when they return to Him and saves them from all troubles. Even

when one is "*acharei*," "far away," he should not despair of following Hashem. This is the meaning of the words in the High Holiday prayers, "Fortunate is the man who will not forget You, and the human being who will find strength in You."

The *Gerrer Rebbe* responded: "Now I will try to interpret this verse in the manner of the Chassidim. Specifically when a person feels distant from Hashem, that is when he can best follow Hashem, as it is written in *Tehilim*: 'God is close to the broken-hearted'."

Otzrosaihem

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<https://www.shemayisrael.com/parsha/parkoff/archives/lagbaomer76.htm>

A TZADDIK IS BORN

Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter of Warsaw was the *Chiddushei HaRim's* eldest child, and, like all the other children of Rav Yitzchok Meir of Ger, he was unwell. The *Chiddushei HaRim* had lost all his other children and now Rav Avrohom Mordechai, just thirty years old, was sick again; death was calling at his door and it looked like he would succumb and leave the world with no son as his heir. The doctors had given up hope, and it seemed like Rav Avrohom Mordechai was already in the final throes of death, when his childhood friend, Rav Yaakov Arye of Radzimin, leaned over and whispered in his ear, "I have one piece of advice left for you, my dear friend: ask Hashem to grant you life, long enough to merit having a son you don't yet have!"

The *Chiddushei HaRim* also approached the sickbed and told his dying son, "You must know that it is a *mitzva* to desire to live, as it says, 'Choose life - *uvocharta vachaim!*' Please, my son, strengthen yourself - choose life and get well!"

Rav Avrohom Mordechai strengthened himself and with Herculean effort and his last strength, he sat up and cried out, "*Ribbono Shel Olam*, please grant me the gift of life so that I can have a son - I shall name him Yehuda, as it says, "This time - *odeh es Hashem* - I shall thank G-d!"

A miracle occurred and Rav Avrohom Mordechai recovered! The next year, he did indeed have a son, and with Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel, the *Seraph* of Mogolintza, as his *sandak*, the baby was brought into the bris of Avrohom Avinu and named "Yehudah Leib" as promised! Rav Avrohom Mordechai told his wife, Esther, "I named him Yehuda and he will cause all the hearts of *Klal Yisrael* to praise and give thanks - *lehodos LaShem!*" The *Sefas*

Emes used to say about himself, “My father named me Yehuda, which means “thanksgiving”, because he was healed from his sickness in my merit, and I feel this within me as well; each day and night I never tire of ceaselessly giving thanks - *lehodos LaShem!*” (*Marbitzei Torah BeOlam HaChassidus*, Vol, II p. 83-84)

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