

ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

LIGHTS OF OUR RIGHTEOUS TZADDIKIM



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

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)

ACHREI MOS ~ KEDOSHIM

❧ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❧

Dvar Torah (Achrei Mos)

Divine Emanations

Why did Aharon's sons die when (16:1) "they drew close to Hashem"? According to one opinion, it was because they issued *halachic* rulings in the presence of their teachers. Our Sages tell us (*Berochos* 31b) that this is a very serious offense punishable by death. This identifies the cause of their death, but we still need an explanation for the statement that connects their deaths with their having "drawn close to Hashem". Furthermore, if their sin was not consulting with Moshe beforehand, there is no inkling of this in the *pasuk*.

Before we explain this *pasuk*, says Rav Levi Yitzchok, we must consider why indeed the offense of issued *halachic* rulings in the presence of their teachers is punishable by death even if the ruling is entirely correct.

We find a hierarchy of functions for the *Malochim* (angels) in the Upper Worlds. Each *Maloch* is given specific parameters within which he is commanded to perform his service, and if he should overstep those boundaries, he would immediately be consumed. Why is this so?

The answer lies in the concept of *tzimtzum*. In order for the created worlds to tolerate the spiritual emanations of Hashem without disintegrating, Hashem had to contain and restrict His emanations, so to speak, and bring them down to a level that the created worlds could

tolerate. In essence, He created constricted conduits through which the holy emanations are channeled from one level to the next one below it. With each shift in level, the conduit serving it becomes narrower and narrower, because the progressive lower levels are less capable of absorbing the emanations in their more potent forms.

In the Upper Worlds, the emanations are channeled first into the fiery *Malochim* called *Serophim*. Then they are further constricted as they descend into the *Malochim* called *Chayos*, and then the *Malochim* called *Ophanim*. The *tzimtzum* becomes progressively narrower until it enters the material world in which we live. Should one of the *Ophanim* rise up to a higher level of the Upper World where a less constricted form of *tzimtzum* is active, he would immediately be consumed by the excessive emanations to which he is exposed and which he cannot tolerate.

When the *Shechina* enters the material world, it undergoes a process of *tzimtzum* by which it is channeled into a conduit that can contain the constricted emanations. From this holy setting, the emanations of the *Shechina* can then reach out to the rest of the world. The first conduit for the *Shechina* in this world was Moshe. When *Hashem* implanted the *Torah* in Moshe's mind, He designated him as the conduit for the divine emanations in the form of the teaching of the *Torah*. From Moshe's mind, the divine emanations passed through to Aharon's mind, then to the minds of his sons, then to the minds of the rest of the people, as our Sages explain (*Eruvin* 54b). And so in every generation, the *Shechina* constricts the divine emanations and channels them through the conduit that is the *Godol HaDor*, the greatest of the generation.

The transgression of Aharon's sons when they decided to issue a *halachic* ruling in the presence of their superiors was that they tried to "draw close to *Hashem*". They tried to circumvent the established hierarchy by which the divine emanations enter this world and impact all its inhabitants. They tried to receive these divine emanations directly from *Hashem* without the benefit of the additional *tzimtzum* that would have resulted from the emanations first entering the minds of Moshe and Aharon. But they were not capable of receiving such an intense infusion of divine emanations, and therefore, they were immediately consumed, just as angels who overstep their boundaries are consumed.



Story

On the third day of *Chol HaMoed Succos*, the Vilna Gaon passed away. In distant Berditchev, on that very day, Rav Levi Yitzchok informed his *Chassidim* that the Vilna Gaon was no longer among the living.

"Let me tell you what just transpired in the Upper Worlds," he said. "The Vilna Gaon came before the Heavenly Court. The record of his life was examined, and he was immediately awarded entry into *Gan Eden Ho'Elyon*, the highest sphere of Heaven. But just then, the souls of the *talmidim* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov* came forward and objected.

"True, the Vilna Gaon was great in *Torah*," they said, 'but through his opposition to the *Chassidim*, he made life extremely difficult for us.'

"My intentions were entirely for the sake of Heaven," said the Vilna Gaon.

"That is undoubtedly true," they said. 'But because of him, we could not serve *Hashem*

in the manner we should have. This cannot be ignored.'

"At that moment, the thousands of pages of *Talmud* that the Vilna Gaon had studied so assiduously during his lifetime surged into the Heavenly Court and surrounded him with a protective shield. 'Someone who devoted his whole life to studying me,' said the *Talmud*, 'cannot be treated this way. Someone who never violated the slightest minutiae of the *Torah* cannot be treated this way. The *Shechina* lives in the Vilna Gaon!'

"The Heavenly Court accepted the plea of the *Talmud* and sent the Vilna Gaon directly to the *Gan Eden Ho'Elyon*."

After Succos, word reached Berditchev that the Vilna Gaon had indeed passed away on the third day of *Chol HaMoed*.

This story was related by the Munkacser Rav, *mechaber* of *Minchas Elozor*, on the third day of *Chol HaMoed Succos*, the *Yahrzeit* of the Vilna Gaon.



Dvar Torah (Kedoshim)

Shabbos Is Higher

When two different subjects appear in the same *pasuk*, there must be a connection between them. When the *Torah* tells us (*Vayikra* 19:3): "Fear your mother and father, and observe My *Shabbos*", we wonder what these two phrases have to do with each other. Our Sages offer a number of explanations.

We can also discern in this *pasuk*, says Rav Levi Yitzchok, an allusion to an important kabbalistic concept. In order for us to have fear, we have to have a certain understanding of the object of our fear. For instance, if we fear a lion, it is because we know that a lion is not docile like a cow. We know that it is strong and ferocious. We understand how vulnerable we are in the presence of a lion, and we fear it. The same is true of awe, the higher form of fear. When we are in the presence of great rulers or great artists, we understand and recognize the qualities that bring these people to such exalted levels of accomplishment. We are full of admiration for those who are so much more gifted and accomplished than we are, and we feel a stab of fear as we shrink into ourselves in the presence of such greatness.

It follows, therefore, that a person can only fear *Hashem* to the extent that he has some understanding of His greatness and powers. We know that He wields absolute power over the world and all of us in it. We know our vulnerability, and we are afraid. We also recognize the greatness of His divine attributes. We realize that we are insignificant in His presence, and we are awed. This kind of knowledge is known as *av va'eim*, the father and mother.

But these are no more than the merest tip of the infinite vastness and complexity of His essence. The knowledge of these divine aspects is ordinarily beyond the grasp of the human mind. Only when it reaches the ultimate level of fear of *Hashem*, which corresponds to the ultimate conception of *Hashem*, can the human mind arrive at higher knowledge. This higher knowledge is called *Shabbos*, because even when the body rests the mind continues to be active.

This is what the *pasuk* is saying: "Fear your mother and father, and observe My *Shabbos*". A person achieves fear of *Hashem* through his mother and father. In other words, by

contemplating the power of *Hashem* and His attributes as we understand them – the concepts we call *av va'eim* – father and mother – he can achieve the highest levels of fear. And this will then lead him to observe *Shabbos*. He will be able to rise to the next level of knowledge of the divine that is called *Shabbos*.



Story

Berditchev was a bustling market town that often hosted trade fairs. But the most successful merchants would also make it their business to undertake the annual journey to the fair in Leipzig. One of the Berditchev merchants who went to Leipzig every year always crossed the border at the town of Zhitomir. After a number of years, he became quite friendly with the captain of the border guards in Zhitomir.

One year, on his way to Leipzig, the merchant saw that the captain was very excited.

"I have good news for you, my friend," said the captain. "Would you like to hear it?"

"Of course," said the merchant.

"You'll be interested, because it's about the Jews."

"You have good news for the Jews?" said the merchant.

"Excellent news," said the captain. "His Imperial Majesty, the czar, has decided to put an end to the restrictions against the Jewish citizens of the Russian Empire. From now on, they will be treated as equals. What do you think?"

The merchant wasn't sure exactly what to make of this development. "Sounds very promising," he said.

"What's more, the czar will announce that conscription into the armed forces would now extend to Jewish citizens as well. They will become the comrades-in-arms of all their Russian brothers fighting for Mother Russia."

The merchant's blood ran cold. "When are these announcements going to be made?"

"I'm not sure," said the captain. "A week maybe? Anyway, I thought you'd be pleased to hear the good news."

The merchant nodded noncommittally and ran out into the street. He hired a wagon and driver and immediately returned to Berditchev. He went directly to Rav Levi Yitzchok and told him what he had heard.

Rav Levi Yitzchok listened and nodded.

"It's good that you've told me this," he said to the merchant.

"Is there anything else I can do?" said the merchant.

"No. You've done yours, now I must do mine. Go back to your business, and do not worry anymore."

For the next few weeks, the merchant listened for news from the capital but heard nothing. The weeks passed and turned into months, and still there was no news from the capital regarding the conscription of Jews.

At the end of the year, he made the journey to Leipzig again, and as usual met up with the captain of the border guard.

"Remember what I told you last year?" the captain said. "You know, about the new rules for conscription of Jews?"

"I remember, but nothing came of it as far as I've heard."

"Isn't that the strangest thing?" said the captain. "Just like that, the whole program was dropped. No explanation. Nothing. It's just about to happen. The announcement is imminent. And then it is swept aside as if it had never been considered. It doesn't make any sense."

"Go figure," said the merchant, but in his mind there was no doubt about what had happened. Rav Levi Yitzchok had interceded and rescinded the harsh decree. He clearly lived on a higher level, and had access to realms of Heaven that others did not even know existed.



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

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrew Tefilla for Lighting a Yahrzeit or Hilula Candle

[תְּפִילָּה הַנִּמְצָאת בְּסֵפֶר אֶלֶף הַמִּגֵּן מִבְּעַל הַפֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ עַל פְּרֶשֶׁת וַיֵּצֵא עֲמוּד כ"ד]

הָרִינִי מִדָּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמִנוּחַת וְלַעֲלֹוִי נִשְׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצָּדִיק _____
בְּ/בֵּת _____, יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֵּקִי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּקְבֵּל בְּרַחֲמִים
וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטוֹב שֶׁאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדִבּוּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וַיְהִי הַכֹּל
לְזָכוֹת וְלִמְנוּחַת וְלַעֲלֹוִי לְנִשְׁמוֹת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפֶרֶט לְנֶפֶשׁ רוּחַ וְנִשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי /
צָדִיק _____. יְהִי רָצוֹן שְׁתִּהְיֶנָּה נְפֻשׁוֹתֵיהֶם צְרוּרוֹת בְּצִרוּר הַחַיִּים.

Translation:

Behold I am lighting this lamp for the resting and uplifting of the soul of my father/my mother/the *Tzaddik* _____ the son/daughter of _____. May it be Your will before you, *Hashem*, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers, that all my good deeds whether

in thought, speech or action be done for a merit and a resting and an elevation of the souls of your nation Yisrael. It should be especially for the soul of my father/mother/the *Tzaddik* _____. May it be Your will that their souls be bound in the bond of life.

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

4) Study some of his teaching or writings.

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



❧ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ❧



Yahrzeits Beginning Shabbos Achrei Mos - Kedoshim

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

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

❧ 12th of Iyar ~ Begins Friday Night (Apr 23rd)

- * **Rav Yehuda Tzvi Eichenstein** of Dolima, (5669/1909).
- * **Rav Masoud** bar Yaakov Abuchatzera, the father of the *Baba Sali*, (5668/1908);

❧ 13th of Iyar ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Apr 24th)

- * **Rav Yosef Neimetz**, Av Bais Din Piltz, *mechaber* of *Ma'asei Choshev*.

❧ 14th of Iyar ~ Begins Sunday Night (Apr 25th)

- * **Rav Meir Ba'al HaNes**, (121 CE). A descendant of proselytes, Rav Meir was a *talmid* of Rav Akiva, Rav Yishmo'el, and Elisha *ben* Avuya. There are 335 *halochos* mentioned in the *Mishna* with Rav Meir's explanations. His wife was the famous wise woman, Beruria. She advised him wisely when neighboring wicked people disturbed him (*Berochos* 10a), and when their two sons died she broke the news gently and comforted him. He was one of the five scholars ordained by Rav Yehuda *ben* Bava during the persecutions following the Bar Kochva Revolt (*Sanhedrin* 14). Rav Meir was buried in Teveria. His main teacher was *Acher* ("the Other") who entered the *Pardes* ("orchard") with Rav Akiva and came out a heretic due to his misunderstanding of what he saw there;
- * **Rav Shmuel** of Karov. Born in Neustadt, he became a close *Chassid* of Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk and later the *Chozeh* of Lublin. From the year 1815, he became *Rebbe* in Karov and Wangrob, (5580/1820);
- * **Rav Leib** of Zelikov, *talmid* of the *Chozeh* of Lublin and *mechaber* of *Lekutei Maharil*, (5586/1826);
- * **Rav Yehuda Tzvi** of Stretin, (5667/1907);
- * **Rav Eliyohu Chaim Meisel**, Av Bais Din of Lodz (1821–1912). Born in Horodok, he became the *Rav* of the city from 1840 to 1843, and later was *Rav* of Drazin (1843–1861), Prozan (1861–1867), where he showed heroic dedication during a deadly epidemic and Lomza (1867–1879), where he was able to reduce by five hundred a year the number of people called for army service. He was chief *Rav* of Lodz from 1873 until his *petira*, (5672/1912);
- * **Rav Tuvia Goldstein**, *Rav* and *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshiva Emek Halacha* in Boro Park, (5763/2003).

❖ 15th of Iyar ~ Begins Monday Night (Apr 26th)

- ✳ **Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapira** of Moglenitz (or Moglonitza), “the *Saraph* of Moglenitz”. He was raised and taught by his maternal grandfather, the Kozhnitzer *Maggid*. He married the granddaughter of the Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk. He was also the *talmid* of four leading figures of his generation: the *Rebbes* of Lublin, Peshis’cha, Apta and Ruzhin (5th of Iyar, according to others), (5609/1849).

❖ 16th of Iyar ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Apr 27th)

- ✳ **Rav Meir** ben Gedalia of Lublin, *mechaber* of *Maharam* on *Shas*, also known as *Meir Einei Chachomim*. He was invited to the rabbinate of Cracow in 1587, before the age of thirty. In 1591, he became *Rav* in Lemberg. In 1613, he became *Rav* in Lublin and established a *Yeshiva*, (5318–5376/1558–1616);
- ✳ **Rav Yechiel Michel Feinstein** (1906–2003), born to Rav Avrohom Yitzchok in Uzda, Lithuania. At the age of seven, Yechiel Michel lost his father and went to live with his grandfather, Rav Dovid Feinstein, the *Rav* of Stravin, Byelorussia. There he learned with his grandfather and uncles, Rav Moshe and Rav Mordechai. After his *bar mitzva* he traveled to Slutsk to learn under Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer. When the Bolsheviks arrived, the *Yeshiva* was forced to flee Lithuania, to Kletzk, Poland. There, he continued his studies with Rav Meltzer and Rav Aharon Kotler. After three years, he moved to Mir to learn with Rav Yeruchom Leibovitz. He also learned in Brisk, Grodno and Vilna. He escaped Europe for America in 1941, traveling together with Rav Aharon Kotler. Upon his arrival he opened a *Yeshiva* in Boston for the *talmidim* of *Yeshivas* Mir. Six months later his uncle, Rav Moshe Feinstein, summoned Rav Yechiel Michel to serve at his side as head of *Yeshiva Tiferes Yerushalayim* in New York. During a brief trip to *Eretz Yisrael* in 1946, he married a daughter of the Brisker *Rav*, Lifsha (17th of Iyar, according to *Yated* 2004), (5763/2003).

❖ 17th of Iyar ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Apr 28th)

- ✳ **Rav Yechezkel Landau**, the *Noda B’Yehuda* (1713–1793). Born in Apta, Poland, he learned and served in Brody, then Prague. He also wrote *Dogul Meirevova* on the *Shulchon Aruch* and *Tzelach* on *Shas*, as well as *Doresh Tziyon* and *Ahavas Tziyon*. He was able to trace his family lineage back to *Rashi*, (5553/1793);
- ✳ **Rav Moshe Chaim Efraim** of Sudilkov, grandson of the *Ba’al Shem Tov*, *mechaber* of *Degel Machaneh Efraim* (1748–1800). He was born and died in Medzibuzh, and his grave is next to that of the *Ba’al Shem Tov*. His brother was the famous Rav Boruch of Mezhibuzh. After the *Ba’al Shem Tov*’s passing, Moshe Chaim studied under the *Maggid* of Mezritch and Rav Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye, the *mechaber* of *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, (5560/1800);
- ✳ **Rav Mordechai (“Mottele”) Twersky** of Rachmistrivka (~1830–1921). Rav Mottele moved to Yerushalayim from Europe in 1908 (or 1906). His father, Rav Yochanon Twersky, son of the famous Rebbe Mottele of Chernobyl, was the first *Rebbe* of the Rachmistrivka dynasty. When his father was *niftar* in 1895, Rav Menachem and his two brothers shared the Rachmistrivka court for eleven years. On the first day of *Chol Hamoed Pesach* in 1921, Rav Mordechai was attacked by a mob of Arabs while on his way to the *Kosel*. He passed away a month later, due to complications caused by injuries sustained during that attack,

(5681/1921);

- ✳ **Rav Pinchas Twersky** of Ostilla. The son of Rav Mordechai of Rachmistrivka, both of Rav Pinchas's parents were descendants of the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* greatest *talmidim*, Rav Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl (on his father's side) and Rav Pinchas of Koritz (on his mother's side). After marrying Chana Rochel, the daughter of Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz, Rav Pinchas settled and learned in Belz for twenty-three years. In 1923, he became the *Rav* of Ostilla, and after a few years he moved to P'shemish. Rav Pinchas was deported to the Belzec Extermination Camp on the 17th of *Iyar* in 1943. Close to one million Jews were murdered at Belzec; it is less well known than other camps since almost no one survived to tell of it. No one knows exactly when Rav Pinchas was *niftar*, so his *Yahrzeit* was established on the same day as that of his father. The only member of his family to survive the war was his daughter, who married Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver. Together, they built Kiryas Skver and the Skverer *Torah* institutions, (5640–5703/1880–1943);
- ✳ **Rav Tavi Hirsch Rosenbaum**, the Kretchnif-Sighet *Rebbe*, (5681–5765/1921–2005).

❖ 18th of *Iyar* ~ Begins Thursday (Apr 29th) ~ Lag BaOmer

- ✳ **Rav Shimon bar Yochai**, *mechaber* of the sacred *Zohar* ("Brilliance"), was a *Tanna* (sage of the *Mishna*) in ancient *Eretz Yisrael*, and one of the most eminent *talmidim* of Rav Akiva. He was active after the destruction of the second *Bais HaMikdosh* in 70 CE. During the persecution by the Roman Emperor Hadrian, when the Talmudic Academies were shut down and the study of the *Talmud* was forbidden on penalty of death, Rav Akiva continued to teach the *Talmud* publicly, and his devoted *talmid*, Rav Shimon, stayed at his side. Even after the arrest of Rav Akiva, Rav Shimon continued to visit his master in prison to receive instruction there. After Rav Akiva died a martyr's death at the hands of the Romans, Rav Shimon *bar Yochai*, together with his son, Rav Elozor, went into hiding in a cave in the mountains near Peki'in in the Galil, where they stayed for thirteen years. There, he wrote the *Zohar*. This body of mystical knowledge was given orally by *Hashem* to the Jewish people on Har Sinai. With the passage of *Am Yisrael's* history, these teachings were lost to most people, until Rav Shimon, fearing a permanent loss of this knowledge, recorded them in the *Zohar*. After leaving the cave, Rav Shimon settled in the town of Tekoa, where he founded a great academy, and where the greatest scholars of the time gathered to receive instruction from him. Among them was Rav Yehuda, the son of Rav Shimon *ben Gamliel*, the *Nosi*, later the compiler of the *Mishna*. Rav Shimon was *niftar* on the thirty-third day of the *Omer*, known as *Lag BaOmer*. On that evening, the daylight was miraculously extended until he had completed his final teaching and passed away. As his passing left such a "light" behind, many candles and/or bonfires are lit at his burial place in Meron, as well as in locales throughout *Eretz Yisrael* and the Diaspora. Some teach that this is not the *Hilula* for Rav Shimon but it is the night that Rav Akiva began to teach Rav Shimon *Kabbala*. After being hidden for a thousand years, the *Zohar* was rediscovered by Rav Moshe de Leon in Spain, in the thirteenth century. There are some people who teach that the *Zohar* was taken by the Knights Templar from Yerushalayim to Spain where it came into the hands of Rav Moshe de Leon;
- ✳ **Rav Moshe Isserles** (the *Rema*), *mechaber* of the *Shulchon Aruch* (1520–1572), born and died in Cracow, Poland. He composed glosses on those paragraphs of the *Shulchon Aruch* in which he differs from the *Mechaber*, stating the *Halocha* as it has been decided by the *Ashkenazi* authorities, which is binding on *Ashkenazi* Jews. The *Rema* named his glosses

Mappa (“Tablecloth”), as a “cover” for the *Shulchon Aruch* (“the Set Table”). These glosses have been incorporated into the text and are distinguishable in that they are printed in *Rashi* script. This consolidation of the two works symbolizes the underlying unity of the *Sefardi* and *Ashkenazi* communities. It is through this unification that the *Shulchon Aruch* became the universally accepted Code of Law for the entire Jewish people. The *Rema* also wrote *Darkei Moshe*, a commentary on the *Arba’a Turim*. He became a son-in-law of Rav Sholom Shachna, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Lublin. He was also related to Rav Meir Katzenelenbogen – the *Maharam Padua*, and to Rav Shlomo Luria – the *Maharshal*, (5332/1572);

- ✳ **Rav Moshe Kohen Narol**, *Rav* of Metz and *mechaber* of *Sefer Kel Molei Rachamim*, (5419/1659);
- ✳ **Rav Moshe Eisemann**, *Rosh Yeshiva* in *Bais Meir-Vineland*. He was sent by Rav Yechiel Schlesinger in the Frankfurt *Yeshiva* to *Ponevezh*. He is a cousin to the Baltimore *Mashgiach* by the same name;
- ✳ **Rav Dovid Hecksher**, *Rosh Yeshiva* in *Yeshiva Kol Torah*, (5757/1997);
- ✳ **Rav Alter Eliyohu Rubinstein** (1947–2005). Born in *Sighet*, Hungary, to his father, Rav Fishel *HaLevi* Rubinstein. A few years later, his parents moved to *Eretz Yisrael* and settled in the village *Bais Gamliel* near *Yavneh*. After his *bar mitzva*, Rav Alter Eliyohu studied under the *Sanz-Klausenberger Rav* in *Netanya*. He married the daughter of Rav Yehoshua Deutsch, the *Av Bais Din* of *Katamon*, *Yerushalayim*. After studying for a few years in *Rehovot*, the *Rav* appointed him head of *Kollel Sanz* in *Yerushalayim*, where he served for twenty-two years, from 1970 until 1993. He also headed *Kollel Shomrei HaChomos* and was a member of the *Vaad Rabbanei Sanz*. In 1993 he was appointed as *Rav* of the *Shomrei HaChomos kehilla* in *Ramat Shlomo*, *Yerushalayim*. In 2004, Rav Alter Eliyohu was appointed *Av Bais Din* of the 1,300 families of *Kehillas Antwerp*, to replace Rav Chaim Kreiswirth, (5765/2005).



❧ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❧

WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

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

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

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

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



❧ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❧

STORIES & ANECDOTES

Rav Masoud Abuchatzera, 12th of Iyar

The Stain of Sin

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

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

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



Rav Yosef Neimetz, 13th of Iyar

Mechaber of Ma'asei Choshev

What's in a Name?

"I named this *sefer Ma'asei Choshev* in order to purify and refine my thoughts and in order that none shall be left behind

and continue on to the next eternal world." (Intro to *Ma'asei Choshev* on *Gemora Maseches Shavuot*)



Rav Eliyohu Chaim Meisel, 14th of Iyar

Av Bais Din Lodz

"Be slow and cautious to judge" (Avos 1:1)

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

A Silver Snuffbox and a Sneaky Thief

A merchant approached Rav Eliyohu Chaim Meisel of Lodz and complained, "I came from Lomza to conduct business here in Lodz and stayed at a local inn. When I

headed to the train station, I realized that I had forgotten my wallet and watch back at my hotel room under my pillow. However, when I came back to the hotel, the proprietor claimed he did not find them. Rav, I know I left them under my pillow – what am I to do?"

Rav Eliyohu Chaim knew that the innkeeper was untrustworthy when it came to money matters, and that his reputation

was none too good. He called him in and presented the arguments and accusations of the visiting merchant, but the innkeeper stood his ground and emphatically declared his honesty. Taking out his silver snuffbox and taking a pinch, he declared, “*Rav*, I tell you he made a mistake. I didn’t find any wallet or watch in his room.”

“May I have a pinch of snuff?” asked the *Rav*.

“Of course,” agreed the innkeeper.

As the *Rav* took the silver snuffbox and began to take snuff, he asked the two litigants to wait outside while he deliberated, and he called in his attendant. “Quick, hurry down to the inn, give the innkeeper’s wife this silver snuffbox and say, “Your husband asked me to pick up the watch and the wallet he found in the room. Here is his silver snuffbox as proof that he sent me.”

The attendant ran off to fulfill his errand and soon came back with the watch and the wallet. Rav Eliyohu Chaim called in the merchant and asked for identifying *simonim* on the watch, how much money was in the wallet and in what denominations. He then returned them to their rightful owner, called in the innkeeper, returned his snuffbox and sent him home. (*Anaf Etz Avos* p. 4)

“Rav Shimon *ben* Gamliel said: The world stand on three things – on judgment, truth and peace” (*Avos* 1:18).



Rav Ovadia Yosef used to illustrate the judgment and justice in our *Mishna* using the following stories:

Whitewashed and Stolen

There once came before Rav Eliyohu Chaim Meisel and his court two women who were neighbors and had a dispute. They had both laundered their families’ respective clothing and hung out the wash to dry in the yard. Thieves passed by and

stole all the laundry hanging on the line from one family and left the wash on the second laundry line untouched. It so happened that the laundry was white and basically identical, so that each neighbor claimed that hers had been spared and the other’s stolen!

“Your clothes were stolen and mine have been left behind!”

“No, it’s yours that were stolen and mine that were spared!”

Rav Eliyohu Chaim asked that the clothes be brought before him. When the laundry was brought in, he asked the ladies to leave the room. Once the neighbors had departed, he called in his own wife and asked her to add some of their own white laundry identical to the clothes laid out. He then called in one of the ladies and asked her, “Can you recognize which articles of clothing are yours among this pile of whites?”

“Yes, *Rebbe*, I can,” answered the woman.

“Be careful to select only your clothing and not to make a mistake,” he warned her.

She began to select from the laundry. “This one is mine, and this, this other one, no, that’s not mine.” And so she selected all her laundry and left the *Rav*’s on the other pile. The *Rav* thanked her, asked her to step out again, called the other neighbor and asked her to do the same.

“This is mine, and this, and this one, in fact they are all mine!” the second lady declared.

The *Rav* rebuked her sharply. “You are not telling the truth – this laundry belongs to your neighbor!”



The Poritz and the Wallet

Another case that came before Rav Eliyohu Chaim of Lodz was that of a man who found a wallet: “About a month ago, as

I walked down the street I found a wallet and picked it up. At home I counted the money and discovered that it contained a thousand rubles,” he told the *Rav*. “The next day I read in the paper that the Polish nobleman had lost his wallet and offered a reward for its return. I promptly returned the wallet but the *Poritz* grew enraged and yelled at me, ‘Jewish thief! This wallet contained thousands of rubles and you give it back with only one thousand!’ He began cursing and threatening me, and now he has sued me in secular court. Rav, what am I to do?! Please help!”

The *Rav* calmed him down and asked if he had a lawyer to represent his case. “Yes, I do,” answered the finder.

“Please ask him to meet with me,” requested the *Rav*.

The day of the trial arrived and in the court stood the nobleman, who stated his case before the judge. “I lost my wallet containing thousands of rubles and this Jew found it and returned it with only one thousand rubles!”

The Jew tried to defend himself and declared that the wallet he had found contained only one thousand rubles. The defense attorney tried to defend his client by presenting a logical argument: “Your Honor, if someone finds a lost object and returns it, why would he proceed to steal some of the money? He could just as easily have kept the entire wallet and no one

would have been any the wiser!”

“Your Highness,” the defense attorney turned to the *Poritz*, “can you swear that you lost a wallet containing thousands of rubles?”

“Of course!” declared the nobleman and at once he swore to the effect before the judges and took an oath.

“Your Honors, surely the *Poritz*’s oath must stand and be accepted as truth. Well, then, this surely proves that the wallet my client found must be in fact a different wallet and not the one belonging to the *Poritz* at all. It is logical and sound to assume that he who returns a lost object is a truthful, honest man. Thieves and cheats wouldn’t return the money at all, and if this wallet only contained a thousand rubles it is reasonable to assume it is not the wallet that the *Poritz* lost – but a different wallet! I ask the *Poritz* to return the wallet to my client, since his own oath proves that it is not his!”

The *Poritz*’s face flushed. The judges concluded that he must have lied under oath and, not daring or wishing to accuse him of having sworn falsely, they accepted the attorney’s line of defense and ruled in favor of the Jew. The wallet containing one thousand rubles was returned to the Jew, he was released, the case closed. Rav Eliyohu Chaim Meisel’s advice had brought about justice once again. (*Anaf Etz Avos* p. 65–66)



Rav Yechezkel Landau, 17th of Iyar

Mechaber of Noda B'Yehuda

“He who increases charity increases peace (*Avos* 2:8).

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

One cold, stormy winter night, as a great storm raged outside, Rav Yechezkel Landau of Prague, *mechaber* of the *Noda B'Yehuda* sat and studied in his room,

when he was startled by the sounds of loud weeping outside. When he hurried to see what had happened, he found a small, non-Jewish boy sitting on a rock, shivering and crying in the rain.

“What is the matter?” asked the *Rav*.

The boy explained, “I am orphaned

from my mother, and my father, the baker, remarried a wicked, cruel woman. My stepmother forces me to sell bread all day and to collect the money and hand over the profits each night before I am allowed home to eat, drink and rest. I sold all my bread and on the way home I realized that somehow I lost all the money! What shall I do? If I go home, she will beat me mercilessly, and so I stayed here – but it is cold and I am hungry,” he ended miserably.

The *Rav* asked how much money he had lost and gave him the amount as a gift, including a few coins to satiate his hunger and buy bread.

About thirty years later, on *Shevi'i Shel Pesach*, there was a knock on the door of Rav Landau, the *Noda B'Yehuda*. He opened the door and a gentile man asked to tell him a secret, claiming that the matter was one of life and death. “I remember your kindness from many years ago. Never will I forget how you saved me from my wicked stepmother's wrath, and fed me and cared for me. I am here to repay you by saving your life and the lives of all of the Jews of Prague! There is a wicked priest who called all us bakers to a meeting and hatched an evil plot. He urged us all to poison the breads we bake after the holiday when the Jews come and purchase our bread. He promised us eternal heavenly reward and to absolve and forgive all of our sins. *Rav*, I am here to warn you and save you and the innocent Jews of Prague from his evil, nefarious plot!”

The *Noda B'Yehuda* thanked him and proclaimed a warning in all the *shuls* of Prague. The *Rav* had ruled and forbidden any Jew in the city to buy bread from the gentile bakers. Everyone heeded the ruling and was saved! (*Anaf Etz Avos* page 108)



Following is a remarkable story told by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer. One day, a man who was friendly with Reb Shlomo

Carlebach saw him on the street, and Reb Shlomo invited him to a wedding that was taking place in his *shul* that night. He said that it would be a big *mitzva* to attend this wedding, as there was a special story behind it. The man happily agreed and stayed to the very end. At that point, Reb Carlebach sat him down and told him the following story.

A while back, he was on a flight and got up to ask one of the flight attendants for a drink. To his amazement, he saw the stewardess standing in the back, praying intensely with a *siddur* in her hand. After she finished the Amidah, he said, “I guess you were praying. I never met a religious stewardess before.” She said, “Actually, I converted to Judaism,” and she proceeded to tell Reb Shlomo her story. She was very sincere and had a real passion for religion.

A short while later, she approached Reb Shlomo's seat and asked him if he could possibly help her. After she had been Jewish for some time, her friend set her up with a nice religious man. After a few dates, it was obvious that they were perfect for each other. However, when his parents found out that she was a convert, they forbade their son from seeing her anymore.

Reb Shlomo said, “I feel very bad. What could I do to help?” She replied, “Maybe if you give his father a call, you could change his mind.” When he called, the father heard the suggestion and immediately responded, “It is not subject to discussion. I have only one son, and being that I went through the war, I have a responsibility to my family who perished to carry on the tradition in the best way. This does not include my son marrying a girl who just became Jewish a few months ago. I don't know her intentions. I just want my son to marry a Jewish girl from a regular Jewish family like us.” Reb Shlomo tried his best to convince the father, offering to verify that she was truly sincere. Nonetheless, he was not successful. It seemed that the case was closed.

Several months later, Reb Shlomo received a phone call from the stewardess, explaining that there were some new developments. Two days before, she received a phone call informing her that her mother was on her deathbed. They had not been in touch since she made the decision to change her life, and she did not even know that her mother was sick. When she arrived, her mother made a strange request. "Please promise to bury me in Jewish cemetery." It did not make any sense. She asked her mother, "Why? And why are you asking me? Ask Dad to do it." The mother replied, "I can't trust him to do it. You see, we never told you, but really, we are Jewish. After we survived the Holocaust and made it to America, we made a firm commitment never to reveal that we were Jewish. Your father was always worried that there would come a time when it would happen again here. We raised you the way we did, because we thought it would be for your benefit. However, it ended up being a mistake. Please, bury me like a Jew."

Now, she asked Reb Shlomo to please call back that father and explain to him that she was, in fact, Jewish from

birth. Reb Shlomo called, but the father was very skeptical. "She's making this whole thing up just to marry my son. I'm not falling for this." "Please," said Reb Shlomo, "Let's be reasonable. What if I come to your house with her and her father? This way you will be able to meet them and I am sure you will be convinced." The father agreed and the three of them arrived at the house.

When the door opened, the two fathers looked at each other in shock. "Yaakov is that really you?" the stewardess's father whispered. "Moshe?" whispered the boy's father. Suddenly, they were in each other's arms, laughing and crying, hardly daring to believe what had just transpired. These two men had been childhood friends who grew up together in the same shtetl. "Yaakov," said Moshe, "Do you remember our pact?" "Remind me." "We promised one another that when we get married and have children of our own..." Reb Shlomo concluded, "That is how we ended up dancing at this wedding tonight."

Hashem brings people together in wondrous ways. Never give up!!



Rashbi, 18th of Iyar – Lag BaOmer

The Power of Rashbi

Rav Aharon of Karlin wrote in *Bais Aharon* that "Just as *HaKodosh Boruch Hu* is for everyone, so too is *Rashbi* for everyone, even for the lowliest."

The *Nesivos Sholom* explains this to mean that a great *Tzaddik* is so great that he not only loves the righteous Jews but he finds something beloved and precious even in the lowliest, wicked Jew as well. This is the level of *Moshiach*, who will be able to love even the most wicked as much as the greatest *Tzaddik*! He uses this idea to explain the story of *Rashbi* in *Gemora Shabbos*. When *Rashbi* exited his cave of

exile, he observed people working in the fields and exclaimed in wonder, "How can they leave behind the eternal reward of *Torah* study for this world and its temporary business?!"

His eyes burned whatever he gazed upon, and a heavenly voice proclaimed, "I didn't let you out of the cave to destroy my world!"

He and his son went back in for a year, saying, "The judgment of the wicked in *Gehinnom* is a twelve-month sentence."

Asks the Slonimer *Rebbe* in *Nesivos Sholom*, "Why did they judge themselves as wicked and sentence themselves to twelve

months again in the cave?” He answers that their lack of ability to love those people who were simple, lowly and worked the fields in this temporal world as opposed to being occupied in *Torah* study was their lack, and this is why they judged themselves as wicked and reentered the cave to rectify this failing. When he emerged, *Rashbi* was the epitome of the *Tzaddik yesod olom* (“a righteous foundation of the world”) and that is why his great, awesome light was revealed and shines on *Lag BaOmer*, which falls out on the *Sefira* of *Hod ShebeHod*, the *Sefira* which is the lowest and deepest form of harsh judgment. For his light and love shines down below to even the lowest and deepest depths, to love every Jew, even the wicked, and to find within even the lowest place light and love.

Regarding such a love and such ability, my *Rebbe*, the *Cleveland Rebbe Shlit”a* once told me the following tale: There was once an informant, whose terrible ways constantly plagued the Jews. The *Tzaddikim* and *Chassidim* gathered to put an end to him once and for all and to excommunicate him and sentence him to death for being a *rodef*! They approached the *talmid* of the *Ba’al Shem Tov*, *Rav Zeev Wolf Kitzes*, to complete their quorum and join their *minyan*, but to their astonishment he refused! He explained himself and said, “One day in the future, the righteous *Moshiach* will finally arrive! He will conquer the lands and the hearts of many. All the nations will rush to greet him and subjugate themselves before his reign and his might, and all the exiles will return. As word of his dominion spreads, Jews will flock to him from far and wide – all kinds of Jews, all...except one! There will be one black-hearted, dark, obstinate fellow, who will remain in the exile, scoffing to the final day. Then the nations will send emissaries and dignitaries, bearing gifts and offerings. Gold, silver, precious stones and treasures, yet *Moshiach* will scoff at them all. Then

the Jews will also wish to bestow upon him a gift, but seeing how he despises ordinary wealth, they will search far and wide to bring *Moshiach* the most precious gift...that of a *Yiddishe Neshoma* – a Jewish soul! They will search and scour the entire exile and find none; everyone has come, everyone except for...one miserable soul. They will locate him and bind and gag him and carry him kicking, screaming and flailing all the way to *Yerushalayim*! There, they will bring the king *Moshiach* the most precious gift: a Jewish soul, unblemished and untarnished, and he will forge him anew into a *ba’al teshuva*. Be it known that it is revealed to me from on high that that precious soul resides in your informant and *moser*!

Now I ask you – tell me the truth – are you really willing to annihilate this most precious soul, the gift of the *Moshiach*, of whom it says *yovilu shai lamora* – “they will bring a gift to the master”?



Studying Zohar

When the *Rebbe* *Reb Boruch* of *Mezhibuzh* would study the holy *Zohar*, he would begin with the *Shaar Blatt* (the title page) and would explain it as follows:

Ze hasefer haZohar shechiber haTanna Rav Shimon bar Yochai – “This is the *Sefer HaZohar* authored by the *Tanna Rav Shimon bar Yochai*.” *Rav Boruch* explained this:

Ze hasefer – Dos iz a sapir – this is a brilliant sapphire! *HaZohar – vos er laycht in alle olomos* – whose splendor illuminates all of the worlds! *Asher chiber – vos iz mechaber idishe hertzer tzum Tatten in Himmel* – which attaches and binds Jewish hearts to their Father in Heaven! *Tanna – er lernt iz az se’iz du a Bashefer oif der vellt* – he teaches us that there is a Creator in the world! *Mihu Zeh?* He asked himself rhetorically, Who is this? and answered *Zehu* – this is *Rav Shimon*

bar Yochai, may his merit shield us! (Otzar Yisrael 118)



A Different Way to Look At It

The holy Rizhiner was plagued by an informant, a *rodef* and a *moser*, who constantly chased after the *Tzaddik*. He used to mock him and jest, “Why doesn’t the holy *Rebbe* just punish me and condemn me to die?!”

The holy Rizhiner heard this and said to his *Chassidim*, “When *Rashbi* left the cave to which he was exiled and he saw the informant Yehuda *ben Gerim*, he said, ‘Is he still around?’ He gazed upon him and turned him into a heap of bones! Isn’t it a wonder that *Rashbi* was so angry and upset at him that he would do that?! Rather, when *Rashbi* said, ‘Is this man still around?’ he was asking himself a question: ‘Perhaps he is still around because I have not yet succeeded in rectifying all that I need to in myself.’ So the *Talmud* says he gazed upon him – this means *Rashbi* gazed intently upon himself and began to make a reckoning, a *cheshbon hanefesh* regarding his own spiritual standing. As he did this, Yehuda *ben Gerim* was transformed into a pile of bones [proving that *Rashbi* had now sufficiently rectified himself and this wicked informant had no longer any reason to be here alive]. Thus,” concluded the Rizhiner, “as long as this wicked informant was still around it meant that he had not rectified himself completely yet. How would it help to punish him and cause him to leave this world? Another person will come to take his place! Only when he rectified himself would the informant have no place here either! (*Be’eros HaMayim Be’er Sheva* p. 60)



Inside, It’s Yom Kippur; Outside, Simchas Torah

Once the holy Rizhiner asked a visitor who had been in Meron on *Lag*

BaOmer to describe the event. The *Chassid* described how *Lag BaOmer* is observed in Meron at the *kever* of *Rashbi* and explained the way it felt, using the comparison that the great emotions inside were similar to *Yom Kippur*, whereas outside it felt like *Simchas Torah*!

This is no contradiction, for the awakening is the same awakening, both coming from Rav Shimon *bar Yochai*! Inside, it is felt and experienced one way and outside a different way. The *simcha* in Meron is also *nisht kein poshuta simcha* – “not a simple, mundane joy”; rather, it is a supernal, holy joy – a *hecher simcha*! (*Imros Tehoros* 49)



Emuna Peshuta

Rav Dovid Biderman of Lelov once told how on one of his visits to Meron on *Lag BaOmer* he stayed in Tzefas and walked on foot to Meron. As he traveled, he passed an older woman also on her way to Meron. She was very old and frail, and accompanied by a Jew dressed in the manner of the *Sefardim*. They went very, very slowly, as the path to Meron is uphill and rises higher and higher. When she finally reached the entrance to the burial cave, she sat down and began to weep, and cried out in Hebrew with a *Sefardic* accent, “Rav Shimon, *Shechinta BeGaluta*! – the Divine Presence, the *Shechina* is in exile!” Afterward, she made a petition and requested some prayer in Arabic that *Hashem* should have mercy and gather in all the exiles. She then kissed the *tziun*, and made her way slowly back to Tzefas! Rav Dovid Lelover was so moved by her simple, pure faith that he declared, “*Epes mit aza temimus tzigegangen* – She came all this long way with such faith and she prayed her prayer!” (*Imros Tehoros* 49)

Rav Mottel Avritcher (a descendant of the *Bas Ayin*) once told how one *Lag BaOmer* in Meron he watched a *Sefardi* Jew who was present at the *hadloka* – the

bonfire lit in honor of the holy *Tanna* Rav Shimon *bar* Yochai. This Jew was so moved and excited that his pure heart was aflame and he shouted out, “*Och yah, Rav Shimon!*” And so saying he tossed his cloak into the flames to be consumed in honor of the *Tanna*. This did not calm him and he called out again louder, “*Och yah, Rav Shimon!*” And proceeded to toss into the bonfire another article of clothing! He continued to do so, until he was left standing in his *tallis kotton* and his breeches. At this point he began ecstatically dancing, aflame with delight and awe. Moved to emotive expression, he danced and sang with such passion and fire that it seemed that if he could have, he would have thrown himself into the bonfire in honor of *Rashbi*! (*MiZekenim Esbonon* I 102)



Stories of *Rashbi* From the *Zohar* and *Medrash*

One day, as *Rashbi* left his home, he observed that the world appeared dark and menacing, as if a great cloud had covered the land and blocked the light of day. *Rashbi* turned to his son Rav Elozor and said, “This is no chance occurrence. Obviously *Hashem* wishes to do something. Let us see what He has planned to do in the world! *Rashbi* and his son exited the city limits and before them stood a terrible angel, as tall as a mountain, and from his mouth poured forth thirty tongues of flame!

Rashbi asked the angel, “What are you planning to do?”

“I am about to destroy the world because there aren’t thirty *Tzaddikim* to be found to safeguard it,” answered the angel.

“Go and tell my Creator that Bar Yochai is here in the world and that he is comparable to thirty *Tzaddikim*!”

The angel went before the Throne of Glory and delivered *Rashbi*’s message.

Hashem answered the angel, “Go and destroy the world and do not pay any attention to Bar Yochai!”

The angel returned to destroy the world again. Once more *Rashbi* saw him and commanded him, “If you do not return to deliver a message, I will send you to the depths from which you shall not arise, to the place of the fallen angels who were cast down from *Hashem*!” *Rashbi* continued his message and said, “Tell *Hashem* that if there aren’t thirty *Tzaddikim*, twenty are enough, as it says in the story of Avrohom and Sodom and Amora, and if twenty are not enough, then let ten suffice, as it says there. And if there aren’t ten *Tzaddikim* found, then two should be enough, as it says that two witnesses can give testimony. And if you cannot find two then there is at least one and I am that one, as it says *Tzaddik yesod olom* – ‘a *Tzaddik* is the foundation of the world!’”

At that moment, a heavenly voice rang out and proclaimed, “Happy and praiseworthy is your portion, Rav Shimon, for *Hashem* decrees and you cancel and abolish it. Regarding you it is said, *Retzon yerei’ov yaaseh* – ‘*Hashem* fulfills the will of those who fear Him.’” (*Zohar Bereishis* 33a)

Once, *Rashbi* arrived in Lod and there was a plague there. He witnessed many stricken dying and remarked, “All this is happening now while I am present in town?! I command this decree be abolished!”

A heavenly voice rang out and proclaimed, “*Mazikim* – evil and damaging forces – depart from this city immediately, because Rav Shimon *bar* Yochai is in town! Even though *Hashem* has decreed, *Rashbi* has abolished it.”

Immediately, the plague ceased. Rav Chanina was impressed at the greatness and stature of *Rashbi* and told Rav Meir of this. Rav Meir replied, “Who can praise and compare to *Rashbi*? Even Moshe

Rabbeinu, who sent Aharon with the incense to stop the plague during Korach's rebellion, still had to have Aharon act, yet *Rashbi* abolished the decree and stopped the plague by the power of speech alone!" (*Zohar Chodosh Rus* 103a)

In Tzidon there was a couple who lived together for over ten years. They loved one another dearly but they had no children. They came before Rav Shimon bar Yochai and asked him to help them divorce through a *get*.

"I have just one request – please do not refuse me," said the *Tzaddik*. "Just as when you were united in marriage there was a feast, please eat, drink and make a banquet now that you wish to go your separate ways."

The couple fulfilled the *Tzaddik's* request and they held a large, festive banquet and invited friends and scholars. As the tables lay laden with food and drink, in the midst of the merriment, when the husband's heart was glad with wine, he turned to his wife and remarked, "See, all my goodness and wealth is here before you – please choose any precious object here

and take it with you back to your father's house!"

She was greatly moved by his words, and when she observed that he had been plied with much wine and had grown drowsy and fallen asleep, she asked the servants to carry him and place him in a bed at her father's home. When the husband awoke from his deep slumber, he gazed about and discovered that he was in a strange bed and not at home. He turned and saw his wife sitting beside him and asked her where he was. When she replied that he was in her father's home, he asked why she had done this.

"I was told that I could take any precious object home with me. I found nothing more precious than you, and so I took you home!"

The couple came back and stood before *Rashbi* and told him the entire tale. When he heard this and saw their love for one another, he stood up and prayed on their behalf for mercy and they were blessed with children. (*Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabba*)



Rav Moshe Isserles, 18th of Iyar

Av Bais Din Cracow – the Rema

A Tzaddik Decrees and Hashem Does Not Allow Him to Err

The *Ben Ish Chai*, in his sefer of commentaries on *Aggodos HaShas*, cites Rav Avrohom Palagi, who told:

There was a dispute between *Moron* the *Bais Yosef*, Rav Yosef Karo, *mechaber* of the *Shulchon Aruch* and the *Rema*, Rav Moshe Isserles, regarding permission for an *aguna* to remarry. The *Rema* permitted her to remarry, whereas the *Bais Yosef* had forbidden it. The angelic *Maggid* that taught the *Bais Yosef* revealed to him that actually the *Bais Yosef* was initially correct and that her husband was still alive and, of course, she was forbidden to remarry.

However, explained the angelic *Maggid*, as soon as the holy *Rema* ruled she was permitted, the husband passed away and this released her. Because *Hashem* does not allow *Tzaddikim* to err, he saved the *Rema* from error; as soon as he wrote his *psak*, the husband died and she was permitted to remarry! (*Ben Yehoyoda* to *Maseches Yevomos* p.121, citing the *sefer Vayaan Avrohom* p. 62)



Tzedoka

The Pshervorsker *Rebbe* told:

When the *Rema* was chief *Rav* of

Cracow, there was a Jewish resident named Yankel whom everyone nicknamed *Yankel Treiger* – *Yankel Shikir* – *Yankele Shabbos*! In trade, he was a *vasser treiger* – a water carrier and a porter for heavy loads – and this explained that nickname. His other nicknames were given for his other well-known practice – his drinking. Every *Erev Shabbos*, a familiar scenario played itself out: *Yankel Treiger* became *Yankel Shikir*, as he gathered his savings from his earnings that week and headed off to the local tavern to buy honey mead and drink himself into a stupor. As he drank, with each sip he would say, “Ahh, *Shabbos*, *Shabbos*! *Shabbos* is coming!” And this explained his final nickname, *Yankele Shabbos*.

This *Erev Shabbos* began as usual. Yankel Treiger was seen heading to the tavern. As the coins jingled merrily in his pocket waiting to be spent, he heard a voice of despair above him from the window open to the street. “There he goes to spend his money on booze and get *shikir* while my children and I starve this *Shabbos*!”

Yankel froze. He had a good heart and it had just broken when he heard that sad sigh. He turned and saw the face of a mournful Jewish mother staring at him from the window. Without a second thought or moment’s hesitation, he gave his hard-earned coins to the overjoyed

mother, who did not starve that *Shabbos*. That *Shabbos*, Yankele *Shabbos* earned his name and that poor family had food to eat.

On that *Shabbos*, Yankele *Shabbos* came home and passed away. On *Motzo’ei Shabbos* his spirit came back and visited the holy *Rema* and told him the entire tale. “In *Shomayim* I heard that that woman was a *gilgul* of *Esther HaMalka*. She came back as a poor woman because when the *Bais Din Shel Maala* heard her case, the prosecution insisted that she was a wealthy queen and she needed to prove her loyalty to *Torah* as a pauper. Now, as for me, a sinner I wasn’t and a not a *Tzaddik* either. I was bereft of merits and *mitzvos* except this *tzedoka* that I gave on *Erev Shabbos*, and so they gave me the job to be the *Shliach Bais Din*. And so I come now to you, honorable *Rav*, in my capacity as messenger of the heavenly Court, to warn you to collect *tzedoka* from the poor! You always give *tzedoka* and collect from the wealthy, but I am here to teach you to collect from the poor as well!” At first the *Rema* thought Yaakov was jesting until he realized that he had passed away – and then he took the warning seriously. From then on, when the *Rema* collected *tzedoka*, he collected from the poor as well as the wealthy. (*BeOholei Tzaddikim* Cracow #20)



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

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

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

She loved her family deeply and immensely. May *Hashem* console her family and may she be a constant *melitza yeshura*, אמן.

(מתוך אמונה מהורה) בדרך המסורה
(והתנהגה כאשה כשרה) לכל משפחתה,
היא הודה היא הורה - נקיה וטהורה היוצר וצר צורה (וקיבלה הגויה)
נפטרה בש"ט בת תשעים שנה
ביום כ"ד לחודש כסלו (ערב חנוכה) שנת תשע"ח לפ"ק
ותקים לתחייה לקץ הימין במהרה תמליץ טוב בעד משפחתה היקרה ת"צ/ב"ה



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 Achrei Mos & Parshas Kedoshim & Lag B'omer & Pesach Sheni

CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA

The Connection Between Rabbi Akiva's Talmidim And Yaakov Avinu

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

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

Any connection joins two opposing poles or extremes, bridging them and closing the gap between them. This is the force of our

forefather Yaakov, who was the bridge between Avrohom and Yitzchok. (Yaakov represents Tiferes, the attribute that bridges the opposing extremes of Avrohom's Chesed and Yitzchok's Gevura – translator's note.)

Yaakov also spells yud akev – the heel and the letter yud – because he can connect (even the lowliest point in the body (the heel) to the rest of the body and mind represented by yud). Therefore, Rav Akiva is quoted as teaching us, Ve'ahavta lera'i'acha komocha ze klal gadol baTorah, that loving your fellow like yourself is a great principle in the Torah (Yerushalmi Nedorim 30:2).

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

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

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

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

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

The Ropshitzer concludes that Rav Akiva's talmidim, who failed to honor and respect each other, lacked this connection and therefore died during the time of Sefiras HaOmer between Pesach and Shavuot, a time that should be one of unity. This unity is Yaakov's attribute, as Rav Akiva said, "Ve'ahavta lera'i'acha komocha is a klal gadol baTorah," connecting and attaching all

the holy branches of Torah to each other. May we all merit this unity!

Support Bnei Torah And Do Not Cheat Them Or Steal Their Parnassah

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

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

The Ohr HaChaim asks why it is that we see that Bnei Torah lack parnassa in this world. Why is it that it seems like Hashem, Heaven forbid, does not provide for them? The Medrash (Yalkut Mishlei #904) personifies the Torah and depicts her as asking, “Why are my children poor?” The Ohr HaChaim answers based on a teaching of the holy Arizal: This material, lowly, physical world is simply incapable of holding and containing the bounty of greatness and goodness that the Tzaddikim deserve to receive. Hashem therefore sustains the average people and gives them parnassa; they, in turn, are supposed to support the Bnei Torah. Says the Ohr HaChaim that this teaching from the Arizal tells us that the wealthy and those who have a livelihood are a channel through which the blessing and support of the Torah scholars must pass through; they serve as a conduit from Hashem to give the Bnei Torah their rightfully deserved earnings that this world cannot otherwise withstand. If so, concludes the Ohr HaChaim, if they withhold their support for Bnei Torah, they are denying the Torah scholars their rightful parnassa and are little better than cheats and thieves. This is why our pasuk admonishes us not to cheat or steal from our fellow, called in our pasuk rei’acha, meaning the Tzaddikim and Bnei Torah, as in (Tehillim 122) where we are asked to act lemaan achai verei’ai – “for the benefit of our brethren and friends”.

Praises for the Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh

In Meron

In a letter written to his parents in Leghorn, Italy, the youngest talmid of the Ohr HaChaim, Avrohom Yishmo’el Sangeviniti, described their journey to the Holy Land in detail. Here is his description of their time spent in Meron at the kever of Rav Shimon bar Yochai:

We made our way toward Meron, where the burial cave of Rav Shimon bar Yochai and his son, Rav Elozor, and other holy Tzaddikim are. After reading the Megilla on the 15th of Adar we left and arrived near Meron. From afar we could already see the dome of the Ner Yisrael, the Rashbi. Meron itself is a large, non-Jewish village and no Jews live there. Below the village is a large courtyard and there is found the dome of the Rashbi. Along the entranceway Rav Yitzchok is buried, and on the left is a mound marking the kever of Rav Yeva Saba of Mishpotim. Inside the courtyard is a great dome and inside it a small room on the right and one on the left. On the left is the entrance to Rashbi and there is a matzeiva there, as I shall draw for you in my letter.

The Daily Bonfires

Above the matzeiva is a deep hole in which they light a bonfire every night in the following manner: They take fine, white linen clothes, each according to what he can afford to donate, and they rip them to shreds, dip them in olive oil and fill the hole with

more oil, then set them ablaze. Its light shines all the way to Tzefas and this is a great honor for Rashbi. A wealthy woman from Constantinia once sent a fine garment interwoven with silver, worth one hundred pesos, and they lit it and burned it in honor of Rashbi; each one does according to his means. The Rav [the Ohr HaChaim] lit and burned several articles of clothing. (Translator’s note: the incident below, described in Elef Kesav by Rav Weiss, probably took place then.) I also lit and burned a few for my mother’s neshoma, may her soul rest in Eden. On the right is the dome of Rav Elozor and above there is a hole for lighting a bonfire, just like his father’s, and also above Rav Yitzchok. When all three bonfires are set ablaze we can understand the depiction of the Mishna that it appears as if the entire Diaspora is one blazing fire all across. Happy and praised be the eye that witnessed all this!

Their Study and the Miraculous Fragrance

We entered Meron on a Wednesday and remained there some twenty hours, during which time we sat and studied in the Rashbi’s dome with great desire, passion, love and joy. We studied the Zohar into the night and then we ate. Afterward, we continued to study and we learned Zohar for some six hours straight. At this time, the entire place filled with a sweet fragrance, the likes of which none of us had ever smelled before in our whole lives. Everyone smelled this amazing, miraculous scent; all present testified as to the fragrance: men and women and a rich guest who was present there at the time as well. We rejoiced and studied for eight more hours into the night and went to sleep. Before daybreak, we resumed our studies, our entire sleep lasting little more than two hours. When the east grew light, we prayed at Vosikin and resumed study for eighteen hours straight with no interruptions. After we ate, we resumed our studies till Thursday, eight hours into the night.

Shabbos in Meron

On Friday morning we visited the kevorim of other Geonim and Tzaddikim...We made our way back Erev Shabbos to Meron and spent Shabbos there in the house of Rashbi. All Shabbos long we studied the Zohar, and on Motzo’ei Shabbos we studied Mishmar all night long in the Idros of the Zohar, and we all felt a great enlightenment in our souls. The Rav and Master [the Ohr HaChaim] told all his students that each should rectify one tikun and we were afraid. We concluded the Idros before dawn and we studied Bar Yochai in joy and simcha, and we prostrated ourselves there and cried and beseeched, asking and davening, praying for mercy, and we sang songs in great joy. We davened in the morning and came back a third and final time and asked for mercy for the Shechina and for all of you – none were left out – and then we made our departure and left in peace. We went back to Tzefas and stayed in Ein Zeisim on the way by the kever of Rav Yehuda Bar Illai.”

The Ohr HaChaim in Meron

This was the one and only time Rav Chaim ben Attar was in Meron and so the two well-known descriptions of this visit, although they seem to say it was on Lag BaOmer, are mistaken as to the date – but their testimony of what transpired is still moving.

Rav Shmuel Heller, chief Rav of Tzefas, wrote:

In my youth, I heard from the elder Sefardim of Tzefas, whose forefathers told them how when the holy Rav Chaim ben Attar ascended the mountain toward Meron, when he reached the point from where you climb up the mountain toward Rashbi, he dismounted from the donkey and proceeded to climb the mountain hand and foot, and the entire way up he cried and called

out, "Where am I ascending? To what a holy place such a lowly, despicable creature as myself do I climb to enter such a holy place, aflame with holy fire! The Holy One and all His heavenly Hosts are all here, as well as the souls of the righteous Tzaddikim!" (Kuntres Kevod Melochim)

Rav Yitzchok Weiss, Rav of Verboy, writes:

Reb Mendel Litman of Tzefas testified that "He [Rav Chaim ben Atar] cried during the bonfire lit in honor of Rashbi and stood afar, and the Ohr HaChaim said: 'How can I approach the mist where the souls of the Avos are present – Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov – and all the other holy souls stand there together with them?'" (Elef Kesav #684)

Lag B'omer Bows And Arrows And Rainbows

There is a well-known *minhag Yisrael*, a custom that young students have, to shoot with a bow and arrow in displays of archery on *Lag BaOmer*.

Rav Tzvi Elimelech of Dynow, *mechaber* of *Bnei Yissoschor*, says he heard that Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanow explained the reason behind this *minhag* as follows:

It is known (*Yerushalmi Berochos* 9:2) that in the days of Rav Shimon bar Yochai the rainbow was not seen. On the day of his ascension we mark this occasion and commemorate the absence of the rainbow with the bow and arrow. (*Bnei Yissoschor Iyar* 3:4)

Rav Chatzkel of Shinowa said in the name of Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanow that by studying *Ha'azinu*, each of us can know where we are holding in our *Derech Avoda*.

Archery On Lag Baomer

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Love Your Neighbor As Yourself' – This Is A Fundamental Principle Of The Torah

Rabbi Akiva said, "'Love your neighbor as yourself' – this is a fundamental principle of the Torah." (*Kedoshim* 19:18, *Toras*

Kohanim, *ibid*. See also *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Nedarim* 9:4)

Rav Avrohom of Radomsk explains that this is also a fundamental principle in learning Torah. For some people, the Torah they learn becomes a source of personal pride. The more they know, the more haughty and arrogant they become. They swell with pride at the level of knowledge they have amassed, and they view with contempt those who know less. For others, Torah study becomes a path to personal humility. The more Torah they learn, the more they realize how little they know and how much they can learn from others.

It is this second form of Torah study that connects to the mitzvah of loving others as yourself. Rabbi Akiva's words, "'Love your neighbor as yourself' – this is a fundamental principle of the Torah" refer only to the mode of learning where Torah study leads to humility and the desire to love and learn from your fellow Jews. (Chessed L'Avrohom, *Lag B'Omer*)

Stories on the Parsha & Lag B'omer & Pesach Sheni



A Kippah In Meron

Rav Elimelech Biderman tells the following story in Be'er HaParsha:

Some tzaddikim have the custom to cast items of clothing – even including their yarmulkes – into the flames of the Lag B'Omer bonfire. Once, a Yerushalmi Jew approached Rav Dovid Tzvi Shlomo to get help for his sick son. The boy had long ago ceased communicating normally; in fact, he no longer spoke at all and he seemed to have lost his mind. He had formed the troubling habit of constantly throwing off his kippah and walking around bareheaded, to the shame and embarrassment of his family. The Rebbe was about to depart for Meron and he asked them to join him.

The poor father suffered continual shame along the way from the troubled boy, who frequently ran off and had to be chased after and brought back. Finally, the group arrived in Meron. When the traditional bonfire was lit on the roof of the tzion of Shimon Bar Yochai, the Rebbe approached the young child, grabbed the yarmulke off the boy's head, and tossed it into the flames. No sooner had he done so than the child covered his bare head with his hands and began to yell in Yiddish: "A kappel, a kappel!" ("Give me a kippah [to cover my head]!")

Everyone present was astounded. This child, who had long ago ceased speaking and acting in any normal fashion, was suddenly talking! Furthermore, he was asking for a kippah to cover his head – after years of habitually throwing his kippah off! From then on, he was cured.

A Rebbe Who Responds

After he grew up, he decided to travel to Europe in search of a rebbe and mentor. His father wondered, "Why am I not good enough to be your rebbe?" "A father cannot also be his son's rebbe," replied Rav Dovid Tzvi Shlomo. "So why don't you take the Kosel as your rebbe?" asked his father. "I need a rebbe who can respond to me and give me answers," insisted the son.

"The Kosel does give responses and answers," his father protested. "Tatty," said Rav Dovid Tzvi, "when you say 'Good Shabbos' after Maariv, you do indeed hear a response – but I don't." He left for Europe as he had planned. Once there, he became attached to Rav Aharon of Karlin (author of Beis Aharon) and when he returned to Eretz Yisroel, he established his place of davening in the Karliner beis medrash.

He travelled often to Meron, especially for Lag B'Omer, and each time he would take along a list of names of his family members, friends and followers in order to daven for them. After the large traditional bonfire was lit, he would recite all the names, and then carefully fold up the list and throw it into the fire. After the paper would go up in flames, he would say that it was like Chazal's statement (Avoda Zara 17) that the parchment is burned while the letters ascend on High. He once remarked that, when the fire is lit, the souls of the tzaddikim descend, and then rise back up again through the flames of the bonfire.

There was once a Yerushalmi who came crying to him about the dire situation of his sick son. "Go to the holy site of Meron and achieve your salvation at the tzion of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai," ordered Rav Dovid Tzvi. "But I have already been to Meron!" protested the Yerushalmi. "Go back!" he replied. "Do you mean to tell me that if someone visited a doctor once, and isn't yet healed, that he shouldn't go back to the doctor again?" The Yerushalmi returned to Meron, and his son was healed.

The Earthquake In Meron

In the year 5670 on ע"ת"ר Lag B'Omer, there was a strong earthquake in Meron that killed many people. At the time, the Rebbe was on the roof of the tzion, dressed in his striped kaftan and fur shtreimel, meditating and davening with his eyes closed as if it was Yom Kippur. When the earthquake started, he told all his close followers and anyone else in his vicinity to draw near and stand beside him – and all those who heeded his words remained miraculously unharmed!

Gedolim Be'misasm Yoser



Yahrzeits For Parshas Achrei Mos & Parshas Kedoshim & Lag B'omer & Pesach Shen

Rav Moshe Zerach Eidlitz Or L'Yeshorim (Iyar 12)

Rav Yeshaya of Yanov Tzavoas Haribash (Iyar 12)

Rav Yehuda Tzvi Eichenstein (Iyar 12)

Rav Binyomin Zev Wolf Hirschler Tiferes Shabbos (Iyar 12)

Rav Mas'oud Abuchatzzeira (Iyar 12)

Rav Pinchos Shapira - Katzellenbogen (Iyar 13)

Rav Yosef Naimintz Av Beis Din of Piltz, Maaseh Choshev (Iyar 13)

Rav Meir baal Haness (Iyar 14)

Rav Shmuel of Karov Shir L'Chassidim (Iyar 14)

Rav Yehuda Leib of Zokilkov Likutei Maharil (Iyar 14)

Rav Eliyahu Chaim Meisel (Iyar 14)

Rav Yehuda Tzvi of Stretin (Iyar 14)

Rav Tuvia Goldstein Rav & Rosh Yeshivas Emek Halacha - Boro Park, Ish Halacha (Iyar 14)



Harav Tuvia Goldstein was born in 5677/1917 in the Polish town of Vlodova. His father, Reb Chaim Meir, z"l, was the town's shochet. When Reb Tuvia was only two years old, both his parents succumbed to typhoid. The young orphan was raised by his grandfather, the Rav of Vlodova, and his older sister.

In the early 1930s, he was admitted to Yeshiva Ohel Torah of Baranovitch, headed by Harav Elchanan Wasserman, zt"l. From Baranovitch, he went to learn in Yeshivas Kamenitz under Harav

Baruch Ber Leibowitz, zt"l. He was in Kamenitz when World War II broke out, forcing him and his peers to flee.

Eventually Reb Tuvia, together with several other bachurim, found themselves in Russia, where they were sent to perform forced labor in Siberia. Reb Tuvia later related how the bachurim would help each other and how they would sit and think of innovative ways to work without transgressing Shabbos.

After the war, Reb Tuvia returned to his hometown, where he found that of his entire extended family, only one aunt had survived.

Reb Tuvia left Poland and made his way to Paris, where he met his Rebbetzin, who had spent the war in the Slabodka ghetto. Harav Mordechai Pogromansky, zt"l, enthusiastically advised her to marry Reb Tuvia.

The Goldsteins immigrated to the United States and settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Reb Tuvia joined the staff of Yeshiva Rabbeinu Yaakov Yosef (RJJ) and also served as a Dayan on the beis din of Harav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin, zt"l.

Reb Tuvia lived in the same building as Hagaon Harav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, and they became lifelong friends.

Reb Moshe and Reb Tuvia could be found discussing halachic matters at all hours of the day and night.

Reb Tuvia was so attuned to Reb Moshe's way of thinking that he was able to tell whether what was said or written in Reb Moshe's name was genuine or fabricated.

Reb Tuvia was particular about not wasting time. He had a strong sense of responsibility to the tzibbur, always making himself available for she'eilos. His humility was legendary.

A prominent posek of his time, Rav Goldstein established Yeshivas Emek Halachah, where yungeleit would focus on learning halachah l'maaseh. Under his guidance, they would be trained to serve as poskim, according to his particular derech of psak halachah. Rav Goldstein led the yeshiva

for around 30 years.

Over the last few months of his life, Reb Tuvia's health deteriorated. On Friday night, 15 Iyar, Reb Tuvia's pure neshamah rose to the Heavenly spheres accompanied by the thousands of blatt Gemara, piskei halachah, maasei chessed and mitzvos that characterized his life. He was buried on Har Hamenuchos in chelkas haRabbanim.

Zechuso yagen aleinu.

hamodia.com

Rav Nesanel Weill Korban Nesanel (Iyar 15)

Rav Zecharia Mendel Loeb Be'er Heitev (Iyar 15)

Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapira Tiferes Chaim (Iyar 15)

Rav Sholom Teomim Ohr Hatorah (Iyar 15)

Rav Aryeh Leib Shapira of Vilna Me'on Arayos (Iyar 15)

Rav Meir Lublin Rav of Lublin, Maharam Lublin (Iyar 16)

Rav Tzvi Hirsch Rosenbaum (Iyar 16)



He was a great great grandson of Rav Mordechai of Nadvorno. Born in Sighet in Romania's Marmorosh region, he went to study at Yeshivas Ohr Torah in Stanislav after his Bar Mitzvah. There he became close to Rav Dovid Halevi Ish Horowitz, author of Imrei

Dovid. The day after Purim 1944, the Germans entered Sighet, quickly setting up a ghetto. On 3 Iyar, the Germans took away Rav Tzvi Hirsh's grandfather, the Kretchinefer Rebbe, and the entire family, sending them to Auschwitz. After six weeks there, Rav Tzvi Hirsch was transferred to a forced labor camp in Shuterberg where he worked in the kitchen. On Tisha B'Av 1945, he arrived in Eretz Yisrael. And opened his first Beis Midrash in Batei Ungarin. In 1975, he opened a Beis Midrash in Bnei Brak and in 1980, another one in Yerushalayim. Rav Tzvi Hirsch was a true talmid chochom in both nigla and nistar, and many miracles are ascribed to him. He was succeeded by his son Rav Zeidel Rosenbaum (Kretshniff Rebbe in New York) and his son Rav Nissan Chaim Rosenbaum (Kretshnif-Sighet Rebbe in Yerushalayim) He also left many dedicated talmidim.

matzav.com

Rav Moshe Shmuel Halevi Rottenberg (Iyar 16)

Rav Menachem Mendel Hager (Iyar 16)

Rav Yechiel Michel Feinstein Ches-Yud Davar (Iyar 16)

Rav Yechezkel Halevi Landau Noda B'Yehuda (Iyar 17)

Rav Moshe Chaim Ephraim of Sudilkov Degel Machane Ephraim (Iyar 17)

Rav Isomor of Konsovalle Mishmeres Isomor (Iyar 17)

Rav Yehoshua Heschel Babad (Iyar 17)

Rav Mordechai Twersky (Iyar 17)

Rav Pinchos of Ostila Sh'eris Le'Pinchos (Iyar 17)

Rav Tzvi Hirsch Weill Zera Gad (Iyar 17)

Rav Boruch Mendel Baum Noda B'Shearim (Iyar 17)

Rav Nissan Lipa Alpert Rabbi of Agudas Yisroel, Far Rockaway (Iyar 17)



Rabbi Alpert, one of the most prominent and celebrated students of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l, was counted among the most distinguished rabbonim in this country. He was the son of Rabbi Shabbtai Alpert zt"l, the rabbi of Plonk in Lithuania, who was the nephew of the Chofetz Chaim zt"l.

Upon his arrival in America, Rabbi Alpert immediately entered Yeshivat Tiferet Yerushalayim. He had the privilege of developing a close relationship with Rabbi Moshe Feinstein. After receiving semikhah from Rabbi Feinstein, Rabbi Alpert accepted a position as rebbe at Yeshivat Tiferet Yerushalayim and then, in 1967, was appointed a rosh yeshiva at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. He was the first rosh kollel of the Kollel L'Horaah Yadin-Yadin established by RIETS to prepare poskim.

In his later years, Rabbi Alpert also served as the spiritual leader of Agudath Yisroel of Far Rockaway. He was previously rabbi of Kehillat Chevrat Bochorim on the East Side for many years.

abbi Alpert was a renowned talmudic scholar and left behind many distinct novellae in Torah and halakhah. He published the Beit Habechirah of the Meiri on Bava Metzia, along with his own scholarly notes. In addition, he compiled a commentary of the Raavad on Bava Metzia. Other published writings of his include Limmudei Nissan on the Torah, as well as on Tractate Beitzah.

Rabbi Alpert was also known as an extraordinary darshan—a preacher who was able to excite his audience. Only a short while before his own passing, he delivered an emotional eulogy at the funeral of his rebbe, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt”l, and his audience was able to sense that this premier talmid would soon, tragically, join his great teacher. Rabbi Alpert passed away at the age of 58 and was laid to rest on Har Hazaitim in Jerusalem.

yu.edu

Rav Shimon bar Yochai Rashbi (Iyar 18)

Rav Moshe Isserles Rav of Cracow, Rema (Iyar 18)

Rav Shlomo of Krasnov (Iyar 18)

Rav Uri of Rohtin (Iyar 18)

Rav David Hecksher Rosh Yeshiva Kol Torah - Yerushalayim (Iyar 18)

Rav Alter Eliyahu Rubinstein (Iyar 18)

Harav Alter Eliyahu was born on 17 Kislev 5707/1946, in Sighet, Romania. As a young child, he moved with his father, Harav Efraim Fishel Halevi Rubinstein, z”l, and his mother, a”h, to Eretz Yisrael, where they settled in Beit Gamliel.

Before his bar mitzvah he was a talmid of the Kretchenifer Rebbe, zy”a, in Rechovot, later continuing his studies in Kiryat Sanz, Netanya, under the Klausenburger Rebbe, zy”a, who recognized his talents and taught him personally. Indeed, he was considered a talmid muvhak of the Rebbe.

Rav Rubinstein married the daughter of Harav Yeshoshua Deutsch, zt”l, Rav of the Katamon section of Yerushalayim. The Klausenburger Rebbe was the shadchan. After his wedding, Rav Rubinstein, together with a select group of yungeleit, learned daily horaah shiurim with the Rebbe, who granted him semichah.

Rav Rubinstein was later appointed by the Klausenburger Rebbe to head the Sanzer Kollel in Yerushalayim, and afterwards installed as Rav of the Heichal Tzvi beis medrash of Sanz-Klausenburg in Batei Varsha in Yerushalayim, a post he filled from

5730/1970 until 5753/1993. During this period Harav Rubinstein published his sefer Migdanos Eliyahu.

The Rav left many manuscripts of his chiddushim, including hundreds of halachic responsa.

In 5753/1993 he was appointed Rav of the Shomrei Hachomos kehillah in Ramat Shlomo, Yerushalayim, a position he filled until less than a year before his petirah, when he left to lead the Antwerp community.

In Sivan of 5764/2004, he was installed as Rav of Antwerp, succeeding Harav Chaim Kreiswirth, zt”l. During the short period he served that kehillah, he won their hearts. He took part in their joys and sorrows, his door was open to all who sought advice, and he expended great effort to attend community functions.

Rav Rubinstein was also known for steering clear of machlokes and preventing strife among Yidden.

On Shabbos Hagadol he addressed the kehillah in Antwerp regarding the difficulties local Yidden were having with parnassah, and exhorted the wealthy members of the community to help their less fortunate brethren.

During his last week, he gave a shiur on Sefiras Ha’omer to Antwerp yeshivah bachurim before their departure to Eretz Yisrael for the summer zman.

Significantly, during his final days, Rav Rubinstein mentioned a number of times that he wanted to be in Eretz Yisrael on Lag BaOmer. At 2 a.m., the night of Lag BaOmer, the Rav’s neshamah returned to Hashem.

He was buried on Har Hamenuchos.

Zechuso yagen aleinu.

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Gedolim Be'Masayhem



STORIES & ANECDOTES

Rav Moshe Isserles Rav of Cracow, Rema (Iyar 18)

In Adas Tzadikim 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]!

These past few pages were a beta version of the MeOros that we hope to migrate to soon.

As always, we would appreciate our readers input and comments.

Once we go live, this will be automatically generated and sent via email. There will also be an option to get daily / weekly reminders of every or individual yartzeits.

We thank you for letting us into your home every week and we appreciate the chizuk letters and emails.

All the best.

On Lag B'Omer, it is an auspicious time to light oil lamps in honor of the Tanna Elok-ai Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai.

Following is a prayer to be said when one light those candles.

בעזהשי"ת

הריני מתנדב שמן למאור לעילוי נשמת רבי שמעון בר יוחאי זכר צדיק לברכה, כדי שהקב"ה בזכות רבי שמעון בר יוחאי יצילנו, לי ולאשתי ולבני, מכל חולי ומכאוב, ונהיה בריאים דשנים ורעננים, ויצילנו מכל צרה וצוקה, ומכל מיני פורעניות המתרגשות לבוא לעולם, ונהיה שקטים ושאננים.

ויהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו, שעל ידי הדלקה זו תזכנו לבני, חיי אריכי, ולמזוני רויחי, ותתן לנו חיים ארוכים, ואזכה לעלות ולראות את האור הגנוז, אשר צפון לצדיקים, ולהיות בקובץ העדרים עם הקודש וליהנות מזיו אור שכינתך, אמן.

Zera Shimshon

Acharay Mos Kedoshim

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

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

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

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

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

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

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

לזכר נשמת

רבינו שמשון חיים בן רב נחמן מיכאל זצ"ל

בעל הזרע שמשון זיע"א

ויה"ר שיתקיימו בנו ברכותיו של אותו צדיק

לזכות רחמים בן יוכבד שיזכה
לשוב בתשובה שלימה בקרוב
לזכות רפואה שלימה משה
שניאור זלמן בן רחל
ולזכות רפואה שלימה משה בן
לאה

לזכות כל עם ישראל
בכל מקום שהם

ומקדשי תיראו (יט' ל')

My sanctuary you shall revere (19:30)

The Mishna teaches (Avos 6:3), that if someone learns Torah, even a small amount, from his friend, he must accord him with honor. This is learned from Dovid Hamelech. Although Dovid Hamelech only learned two things from Achitofel, still, he referred to him with many titles of respect. All the more so an ordinary person who learn a perek, a halacha, a passuk, a word or even a letter from his friend - he should accord him with honor.

The Meforshim explain that the reason why the Mishna says a halacha, a passuk, a word or a even a letter, is because Achitofel in fact taught Dovid Hamelech a halacha, a passuk, a word and a letter (see Toldos Shimshon inside for elaboration).

To explain what 'the word' that Achitofel taught Dovid Hamelech was, the Meforshim say the following. Achitofel once saw Dovid Hamelech entering the Beis Hamedrash with an erect bearing. Achitofel admonished him and said that the passuk says, '*My sanctuary you shall revere*'. From here we learn that one must enter the Beis Hamedrash with awe of Hashem. Entering with an erect bearing is not a humbled way of entering. This is the 'one word' that Dovid Hamelech learned from Achitofel

The Zera Shimshon asks why is this referred to as 'one word'?

The Zera Shimshon explains that in truth, the words in the passuk, '*My sanctuary you shall revere*', do not come to teach this. The passuk is really a commandment to enter and treat the Beis Hamikdash with holy fear. Treating a Beis Hamedrash in a similar manner is only hinted to in the passuk since the Beis Hamedrash is also referred to as the sanctuary of Hashem. This is why the Mishna refers to this as one word as opposed to a halacha. Achitofel taught Dovid Hamelech that the word sanctuary in the passuk can also mean a Beis Medrash.

To further show how much one is obligated to treat and show respect to someone who taught him even a small amount of Torah, the Zera Shimshon contrasts Dovid Hamelech to Yehoshafat Hamelech. The Gemara relates (Kesubos 103b), how when Rabbi became ill, Rabban Gamliel came into him and Rabbi taught him how to lead the Yeshiva and the people. He told him to instill fear even in the Gedolim when he sits with them (being that he is the leader and they have to revere him). The Gemara asks don't we find that Yehoshafat, the king of Yehuda, would stand up from his seat and hug and kiss a Talmid Chacham when he would see one? How then can Rabbi tell Rabban Gamliel to behave in a seemingly authoritarian manner when amongst Gedolim? The Gemara answers that in public a leader has to act the way Rabbi told Rabban Gamliel and in private he can act like Yehoshafat acted towards Talmidei Chachamim (meaning, Yehoshafat only did so in private).

Nevertheless, we see that Dovid Hamelech accorded honor to Achitofel in public, even though he was a king, since he wrote it in Tehillim (55:14). From the fact that as a king, Dovid Hamelech was obligated to act publicly in a way that made everyone fear him, and still he publicly honored Achitofel for teaching him a small amount of Torah, we learn that acting so is not considered lessened the king's honor for the simple reason that he is required to treat that person with honor. If this is the case by a king who must be extremely careful with how he acts in public, all the more so an ordinary person must accord honor to someone he learned Torah from.

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



MEOROS HATZADDIKIM

— Lights Of Our Righteous —



Lag B'Omer

It is well known that the holy *seforim* teach us, that every year during the *Hillula deRashbi* - on the *yahrzeit* of the holy *Tanna* Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai, the very same wondrous revelations that occurred during his passing - re-awaken and are revealed once more. All the *Tannaim* and all the angels descend and come to hear Rabi Shimon and his *Torah*.

The holy *Zohar* says, that when the *pasuk* said: "Let there be light - *VaYehi Ohr*" this refers to *Rashbi*! The meaning of this is that Rabi Shimon illuminated for us with a strong shining light that he will stand fast and remain for all generations until the end of time, so that through him and his *Torah* teachings we can be strengthened in *avodas Hashem*, and that is why he authored the book of splendor and light - the holy *Zohar* that shines and illuminates all the generations. Rabi Shimon said, that me and my son Rabbi Elazar - we can together exempt the whole entire generation from all liabilities until the coming of the *Moshiach*, therefore on this day we can achieve much.

It is well known that the Bais Aharon of Karlin said that just as *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is for everyone so too *Rashbi* is for everyone, even for lowly people!

And I heard, said Rav Mordechai Steiner, that there was once a story where in a certain village the local ruler enacted that in three days all the Jews would be expelled and banished from that village and would need to go settle in town. Those hapless citizens went to the holy *tzaddik* - the *Ateres Tzvi* of Zidatshuv, however he believed that the decree would be to their benefit - since in town they would have access to a *minyan* and *daven* and study *Torah* together.

However, one of the villagers responded that when the townsfolk travelled from one town or city to another and wish to rest in the village in between and they will need to rest but if this decree is fulfilled, they will have nowhere to rest, therefore you must cancel the decree! That night the *Ateres Tzvi*'s soul ascended on High, and he saw how all the various *tzaddikim* and angels all agreed to the decree, however Rabi Shimon cancelled it because of the argument of that single villager. We see that Rabi Shimon intercedes on behalf of each and every individual. May *Hashem* help us that He advocate on our behalf always and that we merit the final redemption speedily in our days, *Amen*!

קִשְׁתַּיִשְׁבֵּר וְקִצְצֵי חֲנִית עֲלֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֵשׁ:

[He puts a stop to wars throughout the earth,] breaking the bow, snapping the spear, consigning wagons to the flames. *Tebillim* (46:10)

Rav Mordechai explained that this *pasuk* based on the holy *Zohar's* teaching that *Rashbi* protected the generation with his great sanctity and *kedusha* - so much so, that no rainbow was seen in his days. Furthermore, we know that Rabi Shimon said that he and his son could even cancel the stain of the sin of the golden calf - so that it would be completely atoned for, and perhaps that is what we can see hinted at in our *pasuk* - in *Tebillim* here that says *Keshes Yeshaber* - the bow is broken - alluding to the rainbow that was not seen in his lifetime and the letters for the word *Yeshaber* stand for *Rabbeinu* Shimon Ben Yochai - *Reish*, *Shin*, *Ben* & *Yud*. He cancelled the *keshes* of the rainbow and *agalos* hints at *chet ba'egel yisaref ba'aish*; burned in fire stands for Rabbi Elazar ben Shimon, since together father and son cut down, burned and removed the sin of the golden calf. May *Hashem* help that their merits stand by us as is cited in *Sha'ar Yissocher* (*Mishnah Rosh HaShanna* 1:2) that on *Rosh HaShanna* everyone passes before *Hashem* for judgment like *Bnei Meron* - a flock of sheep. This alludes to the fact that when *Hashem* judge's mankind, He remembers the merits of the residents of Meron, Rabi Shimon and his son Rabbi Elazar who advocate on our behalf and seek our benefit. May *Hashem* grant that the merit of the holy *Tanna* Rabi Shimon draw down an influx of *shefa* and a bounty of blessings for success in all matters and the final redemption speedily in our days, *Amen*!!

Acharei Mot
Kedoshim

April 24th 2021
12th of Iyar 5781

900



Paris • Orh 'Haïm Ve Moché

32, rue du Plateau • 75019 Paris • France
Tel: 01 42 08 25 40 • Fax: 01 42 06 00 33
hevratpinto@aol.com

Jérusalem • Pninei David

Rehov Bayit Va Gan 8 • Jérusalem • Israël
Tel: +972 2643 3605 • Fax: +972 2643 3570
p@hpinto.org.il

Ashdod • Orh 'Haim Ve Moshe

Rehov Ha-Admour Mi-Belz 43 • Ashdod • Israël
Tel: +972 88 566 233 • Fax: +972 88 521 527
oroatham@gmail.com

Ra'anana • Kol 'Haïm

Rehov Ha'ahouza 98 • Ra'anana • Israël
Tel: +972 98 828 078 • +972 58 792 9003
kolhaim@hpinto.org.il



Hilula

12 - Rabbi Susu Yosef HaKohen, Rav
of Guavas

13 - Rabbi Ya'akov Abulapia, Av Beit
Din of Teveria

14 - Rabbi Tzedaka Harari HaKohen

15 - Rabbi David Yehudayof

16 - Rabbi Rafael Eliyahu Abu, founder
of 'Otzar HaTorah', Morocco

17 - Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Moreh, Rav
of Taharan

18 - Rabbi Shalom Buzgalo, author of
'Mikdash Melech'

Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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

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



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

The Reason for Naming the Parsha in Memory of Aharon's Sons

"Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon's two sons, when they approached before Hashem and they died" (Vayikra 16:1)

Let us consider why this Parsha is called 'Acharei Mot', 'after the death' (of Aharon's two sons), since their death is only mentioned in the first verse of the Parsha, while the rest of the Parsha speaks about matters concerning the Mikdash. It would seem more appropriate to call this Parsha 'Mishkan' or something similar, why does the name refer to a subject that is actually described in greater detail in Parshat Shemini?

To answer this question, we will start by explaining that Chazal bring different opinions as to why the sons of Aharon were punished. One opinion holds that they were punished for serving in the Mikdash without being married. Another opinion says that they entered the Mikdash intoxicated, while others say that it was because they offered an alien fire. Some Sages maintain that they were punished for offering a halachic ruling in their master's presence. There is even an opinion that says it was a punishment for their insolence in declaring about Moshe and Aharon, "When will these two old people die and we will lead the people in their place?"

Apparently, each of the above acts on its own was not enough of a reason to punish Aharon's sons with death, but all of them added up together was considered as going too far and that is why Hashem deemed them liable.

Aharon's sons offered incense before Hashem even though they were not asked to do so to make a powerful point. They were afraid that Bnei Yisrael would grow accustomed to Hashem's presence resting among them and in the Mikdash, which would lead to a lack of respect for the Mishkan and the Shechina, resulting in punishment. For just as Bnei Yisrael grew accustomed to Moshe and Aharon's presence, to the extent that they were not afraid of being insolent and coming to them with complaints and requests, Aharon's sons were afraid that the same would happen with the Mishkan and Bnei Yisrael could grow accustomed to Hashem's Presence and G-d forbid, treat it lightly. Therefore, the sons of Aharon, with enormous self-sacrifice, wanted to do something that would cost them their lives, thereby publicly proving the extent to which one must be vigilant for the honor of the Mishkan and the Shechina, in strict accordance with the law.

From thought to deed, the sons of Aharon entered the Mikdash and offered an alien fire, as a result of which they were consumed. As soon as Bnei Yisrael became aware of what happened, they were filled with fear and awe and became more meticulous with the honor of the Mishkan.

Because the sons of Aharon performed this act with enormous self-sacrifice and concern for Am Yisrael, the verse tells us (Vayikra 10:6), "the entire House of Israel shall bewail the conflagration that Hashem ignited." Similarly, Hashem instructed that the name of the Parsha that speaks about the Mikdash should recall their deaths, so as to put them on a pedestal and stress that all the honor that Bnei Yisrael display for the Mishkan and later for the Mikdash is credited

to Aharon's sons who aroused them concerning this matter.

I saw that Chazal say, "The passing of tzadikim is as difficult as the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash" and also "The death of tzadikim atones". It could be that since Nadav and Avihu gave their lives for the honor of the Mishkan so that Bnei Yisrael should not come to show disregard for it, one can therefore say that they were considered equal to the Mishkan. For just as the Mishkan atones, so the death of Nadav and Avihu atones. This is why we read the Parsha of Acharei Mot on Yom Kippur; just as the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash served as an atonement for Am Yisrael, so was death of Aharon's sons an atonement for Am Yisrael.

Concerning the idea mentioned previously that the sons of Aharon died because they went too far, one can say that Hashem never takes a person's soul immediately, but only if he goes too far and sins increasingly before Hashem. There is no way we can grasp what it means that Aharon's sons sinned, especially since the verse says about them (Vayikra 10:3), "I will be sanctified through those who are nearest to Me" which shows how righteous and close to Hashem they were. But nevertheless this idea can arouse us to contemplate the fact that a person must repent for any small act that he commits so that G-d forbid his sins should not join up with each other, resulting in Hashem having to punish him in a difficult and painful way.

We must know that Hashem never punishes a person harshly immediately but rather first sends him signals and signs that can arouse him to repent. At first his suit may tear, after that the motor of his car may die in the middle of a journey and following that he may become sick with some slight disorder. If all this does not serve to bring him back from his evil ways, Hashem then strikes him with a difficult and painful tragedy, with the hope that maybe this time he will awaken from his slumber and return to Hashem (see Kidushin 20a).

In a similar way, we find that one who speaks lashon hara is not punished straight away with tzara'at on his body. Rather at first the walls of his home and his possessions are covered with tzara'at afflictions, after that are his clothes affected and if he still does not repent for his derogatory speech, Hashem sends afflictions on his flesh (Rambam, Tumat tzara'at 16:10).

As we mentioned, the main deterrent in Avodat Hashem is routine and habit. Many times we become blind to all the good things that surround us, since we have grown accustomed to them to the extent that we feel that it is natural for them to be part of our lives. It is only the sight of someone walking around with crutches or with a blind man's stick that has the power to arouse us to thank Hashem that we are walking on our feet while feeling healthy and well, and can see with our eyes all that is occurring around us.

Hashem approved of the way Aharon's sons acted, therefore He dedicated a Parsha to their name, that very Parsha that deals with the matter of the holiness of the Mikdash that they honored and elevated. Through them the honor of Hashem was sanctified, as it says "I will be sanctified through those who are nearest to Me."



Walking in their Ways

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

A Mussar Lesson

A yeshiva bachur once turned to me in consternation. "Rabbi David," he began, "for some reason I feel something is missing in my faith in Hashem, despite the fact that I spend my entire day studying Torah. I cannot learn with peace of mind when my mind is constantly occupied with this thought."

I turned the tables, asking him what he felt was the reason for this strange phenomenon. He thought for a few moments and then replied with the following: He thought his lack of emunah stemmed from the fact that the Rabbanim of the Yeshiva do not give their students enough mussar.

His sincere words struck home. I now understood the words of our Sages in a new light. The Mishnah (Avot 3:17) states, "If there is no worldly occupation, there is no Torah." The term "worldly occupation," or derech eretz, refers to the study of mussar, whereas "Torah" refers to faith and mitzvah observance.

Through mussar, which precedes faith and mitzvah observance, one learns how to approach mitzvot with the proper attitude – with fear and love of Hashem.

One day, a fine, orthodox Jew approached me and with a smile and a handshake, asked if I recognized him. I apologized that I did not and added that he was not the only one whose face I forgot, as I meet many people throughout the day and cannot possibly remember everyone.

He accepted my apology and introduced himself with the following tale. Twelve years earlier, when he had been light-years away from a Torah lifestyle, he had heard a mussar lecture which I delivered at the time. Recently, he remembered my words and they finally penetrated his heart. He decided to make a turnabout in his life, until he eventually returned completely to his Maker.

His story gave me great chizuk. The impact of one mussar lecture can never be underestimated! Even if the impression is not immediate, many years later it can still have an effect and cause people to return to their Creator.

The Haftarah

"The word of Hashem came to me, saying, **"Now you, 'Son of Man'"** (Yechezkel 22)

The connection to the Parsha: In the Haftarah, the Navi Yechezkel decries the sins of Am Yisrael, the types of which Am Yisrael is specifically warned about in the Parsha: not to behave like the abominations of the nations.

Ashkenazim read **"Behold, you are like the children of the Cushites"** (Amos 9) where it tells of the Kingdom of Yisrael, exiled because of the sins of the generation, as the Parsha says, **"Let not the land disgorge you for having contaminated it."**

Guard Your Tongue

What is Considered Beneficial Speech?

There are four main areas of beneficial speech where one is permitted to relate something derogatory:

1. To help the person in question, for example to discuss his shortcomings with someone so as to help him improve his ways.
2. To assist those who were negatively influenced by this person's conduct.
3. To offer help to someone who was harmed by him, physically, emotionally or financially. Or to protect others from future harm, which includes warning an unsuspecting individual who is about to enter into a partnership with him.
4. To help others learn from his mistakes.



In Our Father's Path

To Whom Did the Package of Wafers Belong?

The Torah opens a window for us into an original and unique way of thinking through the command, "with righteousness shall you judge your fellow". Chazal have explained that we come face to face with the practical application of this mitzvah when we see someone behaving inappropriately and his conduct seems questionable in our eyes. It is then that we must search for a way to defend him in our innermost thoughts; to set the wheels of our brain into motion so that we can retain our positive impression of him despite his behavior. He must remain exonerated in our eyes despite the fact that his conduct rouses our reservations.

This noble attribute has unique characteristics: First of all, in contrast to the conventional mindset, it is not considered a good middah or even a commendable quality. Rather it is one of the positive Torah commandments in every way, just as it is a mitzvah to recite the Shema every morning. Moreover, even if in the past we did not act this way and have already established in our minds that due to his conduct so and so is not a commendable individual, still, right this minute, we are commanded to change our opinion, modify our view of him and search for points of merit!

The following scenario unfolded in one of the hospitals. A Jewish patient entered a waiting room of one of the departments, placing at his side a bag containing several medical documents, plus a package of wafers that he had taken with him for a snack.

This person left the room for a moment, leaving the bag behind, while on the adjacent chair sat another Jewish patient. When he returned, he couldn't believe his eyes: the person sitting next to his place was holding the package of wafers in his hand, eating from it with obvious pleasure... The blatant injustice filled him with a feeling of great resentment; it was nothing less than daylight robbery! This person couldn't overcome the temptation and was polishing off his package of wafers that he had left in his bag?!

He hurried to sit down next to him and he too stuck his hand into the package of wafers. The other patient showed no sign of surprise and eagerly continued eating. The sight was both strange and comical at the same time; two strangers eating together from an as if 'shared' package of wafers, in hidden competition – who would manage to consume the most wafers.

When it came to the last wafer in the package, the owner was certain that the stranger would finally show some restraint and allow him to eat the last one. But that did not happen. With inexplicable impudence, he stuck his hand deep into the package and took out the last wafer. All that was left for our unfortunate friend to do was to throw the empty package in the garbage...

The behavior of this ill-mannered stranger caused his anger to rise. It was the doctor who saved the situation when he called out his name; fortunately, it was his turn to enter.

At the end of his appointment, he picked up his bag to insert the papers he had received and was struck with horror. His body began trembling uncontrollably and he turned extremely pale. There, lying serenely at the bottom of his bag, was his package of wafers! No one had touched it without permission. It seemed that he was the one who had taken wafer after wafer from his friend's package, with a blatant lack of manners. And he had even considered him a thief...

The story, brought in the kuntrus 'Vavei Ha'amudim', reverberates loud and clear: We can never know what caused someone to behave in a certain way. We can never assume where justice lies. All we can do is "with righteousness shall you judge your fellow", judge him favorably and consider as if his deeds were carried out with righteousness and integrity. This is our obligation!



Pearls of the Parsha

Filth will be Transformed into Shine

"For on this day He shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you; from all your sins before Hashem shall you be cleansed" (Vayikra 16:30)

Why does one need further 'cleansing' after atonement?

The 'Ketav Vehakabalah' explains it in the following way:

Chazal say (Yoma 86b) that repentance has the power of transforming willful sins into merits. However, the term טהרה – cleansing- has two meanings. One is the removal of filth and waste, similar to זהב טהור – pure gold- gold that is refined and free of any base metal and waste. The second meaning is brightness and purity, as in the verse (Shemot 24:10), "like the essence of the heaven in purity".

Our verse is referring to both interpretations: "From all your sins before Hashem shall you be cleansed": If you try to cleanse yourselves and remove from yourselves any refuse and filth of sins and crimes, then "on this day He shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you". Hashem will remove and cleanse all your sins, and not only this but the actual dirt will become transformed into something polished and shining, for the sin itself will change into a merit.

Never Despair, No Matter the Situation

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not complete the corner of your field to reap" (Vayikra 19:9)

The Holy Or HaChaim explains the juxtaposition of the previous verse which ends "and that soul will be cut off from its people" to the mitzvah of pe'ah- leaving a corner of the field unharvested- and leket- gleanings that must be left for the poor. The Torah is alluding to the fact that a willful sinner who is punished with the death penalty should not say that he no longer needs to abstain from doing bad since anyway he has already been sentenced to death.

Therefore, the Torah continues and says: "When you reap the harvest of your land". Even if a person caused "that we should reap the harvest of his land", meaning that he has been punished with karet-cutting off, nevertheless, "you shall not complete the corner of your field to reap" do not be tempted with additional bad deeds. This is because the punishment of karet does not affect the entire soul, rather only the part that is directly connected to this commandment. There are still other branches of the soul that will remain connected to their source. Since every Jewish soul has roots above, corresponding to all the mitzvot of the Torah, therefore even if one branch is cut off, he must still protect the other branches of his soul and take care that they should not be cut off.

Due to this the Torah commands, "the gleanings of your harvest you shall not take" with many different sins, for Hashem desires that through these remaining gleanings, the remaining good deeds, the person will be aroused to repent before Hashem and He will then have mercy on him. As Chazal say (Yoma 86a), even if a person transgresses sins that are deserving of kraitot and death by Beit Din, he can still atone for them, and "Great is repentance for it reaches right to the Throne of Glory".

This is How One Judges a Thief Favorably

"With righteousness shall you judge your fellow" (Vayikra 19:15)

It is related that once when Rabbi Zelmele of Volozhin was in the mikveh he noticed that his shirt had disappeared. What did he do? He put on his jacket without his shirt and returned home.

As soon as he entered his home his wife noticed his shirt was missing and asked: "Rabbi Zalman, where is your shirt?"

He replied, "Some pauper in the mikveh evidently exchanged it with his shirt by mistake."

"So why did you not take his shirt?"

"Because he forgot to leave it behind"...

Treasures

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



The Power of Influence

"Do not perform the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled; and do not perform the practice of the land of Canaan to which I bring you, and do not follow their traditions" (Vayikra 18:3)

Would it occur to anyone that Am Yisrael, the Chosen Nation who had already received the Torah, would want to follow the practices of the nations? Furthermore, the Torah mentions following the practices of Egypt and Canaan, harsh and abominable nations. As we know, Am Yisrael only merited being redeemed from Egypt because they did not change their names, dress and language and did not intermingle with the Egyptians. If so, why did Hashem rush to command the Jewish people not to follow the traditions of the nations, when they themselves had already proved their great caution in guarding their Jewish identity?

This command seems comparable to commanding a wealthy person not to behave like a pauper. Just as that would seem superfluous, why did the Torah find it necessary to command the Chosen Nation not to behave like the most immodest and abominable nations of the world?

This can be explained according to the Chazal (see Rashi Bamidbar 15:39), "The eye sees and the heart desires". The way of the world is that the eye is drawn after material temptations, and while a person does not wish to behave like the lowlifes he sees on the street, against his will his heart is quickly drawn after his eyes and he suddenly finds himself transgressing the most severe sins. This being the case, it is clear to all that Bnei Yisrael themselves do not wish to follow the practices of the nations, but Hashem who examines thoughts and emotions is aware of man's nature and therefore found it necessary to command Am Yisrael about this matter. Bnei Yisrael themselves do not wish to resemble the nations, however, by seeing their deeds and contemplating their practices, they could slowly be drawn after them and actually commit these acts themselves.

When Bnei Yisrael were in Egypt, Hashem awarded them with special protection so that they should not assimilate with the Egyptians. Hashem knew that if Bnei Yisrael would take just one more small step and enter the fiftieth gate of impurity, their fall will be irreversible and they would no longer merit redemption from Egypt. Hashem therefore gave them special protection, for they had already fallen to the forty-ninth gate of impurity and as we mentioned, had they not abstained from intermarriage, there would have been no revival for them.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Hashem is Interested in Being Your Friend! - Good Friends? Here is Another Friend!

There is a close connection between this week's Parsha and the holy and sublime days of this period, the days of Sefirat Ha'Omer where we are required to rectify our middot and the way we relate to our fellow man.

The attribute of love and brotherhood between man and his fellow is extremely desirable, as the Admor of Rozhin expounds beautifully on the verse in this week's Parsha "You shall love your fellow as yourself, I am Hashem" (Vayikra 19:18). For when two Jews love each other with all their heart and are prepared to do anything for each other, in line with the concept of "you shall love your fellow as yourself", Hashem says to them: "I am Hashem"; I am interested in dwelling among you and joining, as if, your relationship.

The Gaon and tzadik Rabbi Aryeh Shechter zt"l relates a story (Aryeh Sha'ag) about two friends who were extremely devoted and faithful to one another, bound with heart and soul. It happened that some unscrupulous people falsely accused one of them and as a result he was brought to court and sentenced to death.

His faithful friend spared no effort, toil or trouble to do all he could to save his friend. But to his great sorrow, it was all to no avail.

When the appointed hour arrived and the condemned was about to be taken to the gallows, they turned to him as was the custom, allowing him to state his final request before being executed.

The man asked to be allowed to return home to his family, to his wife and children who were in a different country, so that he could take leave of them before his death. But his request was rejected out of fear that he would exploit the opportunity to escape and disappear.

This is where his good friend intervened and declared: "I am prepared to sit in prison as a hostage until my friend returns from his hometown. And if he doesn't return, I am prepared to be executed instead of him!"

Many tried to prevent this faithful friend from carrying out this dangerous plan, but out of his great love for his friend he refused to listen to them. He was happy to sit in jail, if it meant that his good friend could take one last look at his dear and beloved family and part from them before his death.

Time passed and the final day arrived; the condemned was supposed to return to the gallows but there was no sign of him! All the various advisors and sages mocked the friend who was still in jail, "We told you so! We warned you!" But the faithful friend claimed passionately, "Seemingly, for some compelling reason my friend was held back from returning, for if not he would certainly have come back on time! And even if he does not manage to return, I am prepared to die instead of him."

When the appointed hour came and the condemned had not yet returned to serve his sentence, they took his friend to the gallows and prepared to execute him.

At the last second, when the noose had already been tied around his neck, a horse came galloping up. It fell to the ground, thick lather flowing from its mouth, and the condemned jumped off it, crying out in alarm: "Did I manage to get here on time, or G-d forbid have I come too late? Is my good friend still alive?! I was delayed on the way through no fault of my own. I did all I could to get here on time so that my good friend should not die instead of me, G-d forbid!"

The two friends fell on each other's necks in tears, but a stormy argument quickly broke out between them. The friend who was already prepared for the gallows claimed: "They were about to execute me. I already made peace with the fact that I am about to depart from this world, therefore I am the one who should be killed, while you should return home in peace to your dear wife and children".

But the one condemned to death claimed to the contrary: "I was the one sentenced to death, there's no way that you are going to die in my place!" He begged the executioners, "Please, release my friend and let him live the remainder of his life in peace. Hang me as I was sentenced in the court case!"

A great tumult broke out at the site. Rather than carry out the sentence, it was pushed off for further clarification. The matter quickly came to the attention of the king who ordered the two friends to appear before him. They showed up at his palace and the king asked them to relate what had occurred.

The friends told the king the entire truth: "We are friends who are bound to each other with heart and soul. Each one of us prefers to give up his life so as to save his friend's life, even though in truth, each of us is innocent."

The king was deeply touched by these words and enthusiastically declared: "I am prepared to have compassion on both your lives on one condition: Allow me join your friendship; I strongly desire to be a third partner in this beautiful relationship!"

This is the meaning of the verse, "You shall love your fellow as yourself". If you love your friend just as you love yourself, then "I am Hashem". Hashem, as if, joins the relationship as a Holy partner.

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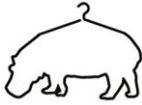
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