

ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

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

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)



BEHAR ~ BECHUKOSAI



❧ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❧

LACK OF TRUST CAUSES PLUMBING PROBLEMS IN THE PIPELINES OF BLESSING ABOVE

*And if you shall ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year? Behold! We will not sow and not gather in our crops!" I then I shall command My blessings for you in the sixth year, and it will yield a crop sufficient for three years." * (Vayikra 25:20-21)*

The rebbe reb Melech writes in Noam Elimelech in the name of his brother, the tzadik the Rebbe Reb Zisha of Hanipoli that we should pay attention to the uncharacteristic way that this verse is written in the Torah. Usually, there might be an extra word or a subtle grammatical nuance or even a single extra letter which, by a process of deduction and analysis, answers many questions or difficulties. But the question or difficulty itself is never written explicitly in the text of the Torah. * Here, however, the question is written straight out. "What will we eat in the seventh year?" Furthermore, it would suffice if the Torah had said, "And I commanded My blessings to you." That would be enough in and of itself since then no one would ask, "What shall we eat?" *

Perhaps the answer is, says Reb Zisha, that when Hashem Yisbarach created the world, in His goodness He created pipelines that carry *shefa*, an abundance of blessings, to fulfill our needs. The blessings of *shefa* are ceaseless, but when man fails and falls from his spiritual level and lacks trust in his Creator, such a person causes a blemish in the higher worlds with his

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impure thoughts — that is, his lack of faith and trust in Hashem. This weakens the power of the heavenly hosts above — it disrupts the pipelines of *shefa*. Hashem then has to recommand or reconnect the *shefa* of blessings anew so that it can flow again as it did previously since the time of Creation. *

This is the meaning of “And if you were to ask...” — the Torah is teaching us the ways of Hashem. Man must have full trust in G-d and not ask, “What shall I eat?” If, Heaven forbid, he falls, lacking trust and wondering what he will eat, he damages and blemishes the pipelines of *shefa* and blessing. This places a burden on Heaven, so to speak, to reconnect the pipelines. * Thus, by this question, “And if you ask, ‘What will we eat in the seventh year?’ ” the Torah is teaching that a person needs to trust in Hashem completely and he should not ask, “What will we eat?” This lack of trust creates a stopper in the flow of *shefa*. Then you will burden Me (says Hashem) and I will have to “command” — or reconnect — My blessings. [The words for “command” and “connect” are both written with the same root, [צו]. Rather, don’t act this way, but trust in Hashem with all your heart, and the abundance of blessings called *shefa* will run uninterrupted always. Then you shall never lack for anything. *



SIMCHA IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

The Rebbe Reb Zisha was always happy and exceedingly joyful despite his great poverty, he was once visited by a family member who, to his great distress, noted the sad state of Reb Zisha’s immediate family. The household was a poor hovel even by pauper’s standards and Reb Zisha’s children and wife cried out of dire poverty and need. “Where is your husband?” asked the relative, “In the beis medrash,” was Reb Zisha’s wife’s reply. He went and found Reb Zisha sitting immersed in Torah with a tranquil smile on his face. “Here you sit happily,” berated the relative, “while your children cry and have nothing to eat!” he complained to Reb Zisha. “Ahh,” sighed the tzadik, “off course they have reason to cry!” he explained, “they cry because they all rely on poor Zisha the good for nothing pauper who has naught. But Zisha is tranquil and beSimcha,” he continued, “Zisha is happy because he relies on Hashem, my eyes are turned towards my Father in Heaven Who has everything and can do anything! Why shouldn’t I be happy, peaceful and tranquil!” (Leket Yosher – cited by Zahav HaMenorah)



LIKE AN ANGELIC OPHAN

In Dinowitz, Podolia, sat the tzadik the holy Rizhiner as he told a story about the tzadik Meshulem Zisha of Anipoli. Once from Heaven Reb Zisha received a message to go to the nearby village of Daishik to visit the local Jewish tax collector who was a grievous sinner and needed to do teshuva and repent of his evil ways.

When he arrived he found the man standing amidst a bunch of gentile customers as he

poured out a measure of whisky and sold them drinks. He was very deeply immersed in his work and paid the Rebbe Reb Zisha no notice. As the afternoon passed and evening drew in the time for Mincha arrived and Reb Zisha approached the tax collector and reminded him of his duty as Jew to stop and daven mincha. The tax collector paid no heed and ignored this comment. Some time passed and Reb Zisha again approached him and lay his hand gently upon his and again in a louder voice urged him to get up and daven mincha. Still the collector ignored him and did not move nor stop selling liquor to the gentile customers. Some more time passed and again Reb Zisha approached the collector and chided him, to get up and daven Mincha, so saying he gave him a little push. At this the collector stood up seized Reb Zisha and summarily pushed him out into the frozen yard and locked him out in the snow. Reb Zisha stood there freezing, limbs shaking with cold. Then he spotted an old discarded wagon wheel lying in the corner. This he seized and he lay beneath the wheel and was no longer cold but warm.

Now, explained the heilige Rizhiner, what the Rebbe Reb Zisha did was this, he clothed himself in angelic awe and supernal fear of the ophanim (angels called wheels) and that is why he felt warm and the cold had no effect on him. Afterwards he approached the sinful collector once more and instilled in him regret and remorse and caused him to repent and do teshuva and be healed of his wicked ways and he returned his heart back to his Maker.

(Kehal Chassidim HaChadash p70 – cited in Zehav HaMenorah)



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

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrew Tefilla for Lighting a Yahrzeit or Hilula Candle

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

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

Translation:

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

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

4) Study some of his teaching or writings.

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



❁ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ❁



YAHREITS BEGINNING SHABBOS BEHAR BECHUKOSAI

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

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

❧ 22nd of Iyar ~ Begins Friday Night (May 15th)

- * **Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri**, the *Maharsha Alfandri* (1820–1930). Born in Istanbul, Rav Shlomo Eliezer served as the chief *Rav* in Istanbul, Damascus, and subsequently in Tzefas for twenty years. He passed away at age 110 in Yerushalayim. Many of his responsa are included in his book, *Saba Kadisha*, (5690/1930);
- * **Rav Mordechai Shraga Feivish Friedman** of Husyatyn (Gusyatyn) (1835–1894). The sixth and youngest son of Rav Yisrael of Ruzhin, he married in 1850 (just four months before the *petira* of his father) and established a *Chassidic* court in Husyatyn in 1861. As a result, the city became one of the most important *Chassidic* centers in Galicia, Jews comprising 4197 of the town's 6060 residents in 1890. Sadly, the golden age did not last for long. Husyatyn was heavily damaged during World War I, and then destroyed during World War II, (5654/1894).

❧ 23rd of Iyar ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (May 16th)

- * **Rav Sholom Bashari**, *Dayan* in Yemen, (5533/1773).

❧ 24th of Iyar ~ Begins Sunday Night (May 17th)

- * **Rav Simcha HaKohen** of Worms, slain by Crusaders in a church for stabbing the bishop's nephew after he had pretended to submit to baptism, (4856/1096);
- * **Rav Yitzchok Feigenbaum**, *Rav* in Warsaw, (5671/1911);
- * **Rav Binyomin Mendelsohn**, *Rav* of Komemiyus, one of the most prominent fighters for

Kedushas Sheviis. Born in Plotzk at the end of the nineteenth century, his father was Rav Menachem Mendel Mendelsohn, a close *Chassid* of the Alexander *Rebbe*, who served there as *Rosh Yeshiva*. After World War I, Rav Binyomin married and opened a *Yeshiva* in Bodzanov. During his years there, he became a *Chassid* of the Gerrer *Rebbe*, the *Imrei Emes*. In fact, his notes were used to publish the *seforim* of the *Imrei Emes* decades after the War, as tens of thousands of pages of the *Imrei Emes*'s written *chiddushei Torah* were lost. With the *berocha* of the Gerrer *Rebbe*, Rav Binyomin moved to *Eretz Yisrael* in 1933, and was offered a position as *Rav* of Kfar Ata, not far from Chaifa, and served in that capacity for seventeen years. In 1951, Rav Binyomin left Kfar Ata and its *kehilla* of twenty thousand families and accepted the offer to become the *Rav* of a small, religious settlement in the Negev called Komemius, serving the community for the next twenty-seven years. One of the most defining aspects of his *Rabbonus* in Komemius was the fact that all the *mitzvos hateluyos ba'aretz* (land-based *mitzvos*), were kept fully. *Shemitta* was adhered to according to the opinion of the *Chazon Ish* with no reliance on the *heter mechira* that was almost unanimously accepted in those years. Rav Binyomin felt that keeping *Shemitta* was a key to bringing about the *Geula*. He was *moser nefesh* for *Shemitta* observance, not only in Komemius, but in other places as well. His letters, masterpieces of *hashkafa* and *emuna*, were published posthumously in the *sefer Igros HaGrab*, (5739/1979);

- ✳ **Rav Akiva Moshe Gottlieb** (1923–2005). Born to Rav Shlomo Gottlieb, *Rav* of the *Ohr HaChaim shul* in Philadelphia, the family moved to Yerushalayim in 1929. After learning at the Chevron *Yeshiva*, his family moved back to the United States, where he learned at *Torah Vodaas*. He married in 1946. In 1963, he moved back to *Eretz Yisrael* and was appointed general manager of the Chief Rabbinate, a position he held for fourteen years. He also assisted his father in *Yeshiva Rabbeinu Chaim Yosef*, founded in 1942. After his father's *petira*, Rav Akiva Moshe became responsible for it. He wrote *Bais Shlomo*, a biography of his father, and *Kerem Shlomo*, six volumes on *Chumash* and the *Mo'adim*, (5765/2005).

✧ 25th of Iyar ~ Begins Monday Night (May 18th)

- ✳ **Rav Yaakov Loeberbaum** of Lisa, *mechaber* of *Chavas Daas* and *Nesivos HaMishpot*, (5592/1832);
- ✳ **Rav Ozer** of Klementov, *mechaber* of *Even Ha'Ozer* on *Shulchon Aruch*, (5470/1710);
- ✳ **Rav Chaim Hager** of Kosov, *mechaber* of *Toras Chaim* (1795–1854), son of Rav Menachem Mendel Hager of Kosov, *mechaber* of *Ahavas Sholom*, grandson of Rav Yaakov Kopel, and father of the first Vizhnitzer *Rebbe*, Rav Menachem Mendel Hager, the *Tzemach Tzaddik*, (5614/1854);
- ✳ **Rav Chaim Chori**, *Rosh Bais Din* in Tunis, *mechaber* of *Motza Chaim*, (5717/1957);
- ✳ **Rav Shaul HaLevi**, *Rav* of The Hague and *mechaber* of *Binyan Shaul*, (5545/1785).

✧ 26th of Iyar ~ Begins Tuesday Night (May 19th)

- ✳ **Rav Sa'adia ben Yosef Gaon** (882–942). Born in Egypt, he led an all-out war against the Karaites when he was just twenty-three, criticizing their theories with articulately advanced arguments. In 915, he moved from Egypt to Teverya to further his studies. However, the *Yeshiva* of Sura in Babylonia invited him to join them. Six years later, in 928, he was appointed *Gaon* of the *Yeshiva*. Two years later, a rift between him and the *Reish Golusa*, Rav Dovid ben Zakai, over a *Bais Din* decision, prompted Rav Sa'adia's move to Baghdad. He returned seven years later, having mended the relationship. His most famous written

work is *Ha'Emunos VehaDeyos*, the first Jewish philosophy book, originally written in Arabic and translated into Hebrew by Rav Yehuda *ibn* Tibbon. His translation of the *Chumash* into Arabic is used by Yemenite Jews to this day, (4702/942);

- ✳ **Rav Aharon Lapapa** (1590–1667). Born in Magnesia (Manisa), Turkey, he was a *talmid* of Rav Avrohom Motal and Rav Yosef Trani in the *Yeshivos* of Salonika and Constantinople. Late in life, on *Rosh Chodesh Iyar* in 1665, he was appointed *Dayan* of Smyrna (Izmir), effectively splitting rabbinical functions with Rav Chaim Benveniste. On the 6th of *Teves* that year, Shabbesai Tzvi proclaimed Rav Benveniste “supreme *Rav*” of Smyrna, no doubt having learned of Rav Aharon’s disbelief of Messianic claims. As such, he was forced to remain homebound. Some of his responsa and *chiddushim* to *Tur Choshen Mishpot* were published in *Bnei Aharon*, (5427/1667);
- ✳ **Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto**, the *Ramchal* (1707–1747), *mechaber* of *Mesilas Yeshorim*, *Derech Hashem*, *Pis’chei Chochma* (138 chapters on the entire scope of the *Kabbola* in what many authorities consider the most systematic manner ever achieved), and *Daas Tevunos*. Born in Padua, Italy, the *Ramchal* was a *talmid* of Rav Yitzchok Lampronti, *mechaber* of the *Pachad Yitzchok*, the first major Talmudic encyclopedia ever assembled. The novelty of his approach drew opposition from a number of his contemporaries. Partially as a result of this opposition, the *Ramchal* left his native Italy in 1735 and settled in Amsterdam. In 1743, he traveled to *Eretz Yisrael* and settled in Acco. He died in a plague a few short years later, along with his wife and his son. The *Vilna Gaon* declared that the *Ramchal* had the most profound understanding of *Yiddishkeit* that any mortal could attain. He furthermore stated that if the *Ramchal* had been alive in his generation, he would go by foot from Vilna to Italy to sit at his feet and learn from him. According to a *mesora*, the *Gaon* was going to *Eretz Yisrael* to be a *talmid* of the *Ramchal* but then found out that the *Ramchal* was *niftar* and so returned to Vilna. There is also a *mesora* that the *Ramchal* was a *gilgul* of Rav Akiva; the two are buried right next to each other. The *Ramchal* was *niftar* when he was forty, the number of years said to make up for the first forty years of Rav Akiva’s life, prior to his *teshuva*, (5507/1747);
- ✳ **Rav Yitzchok ben Chaim** of Volozhin (1779–1849 or 1851), the son of, and successor to, Rav Chaim of Volozhin. Rav Yitzchok’s works include *Mili D’Avos* on *Pirkei Avos* and a *Torah* commentary entitled *Peh Kodosh*. Father-in-law of Rav Naftoli Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (the *Netziv*), (5609/1849 or 5611/1851);
- ✳ **Rav Shmuel Eliyohu** of Zhvill, (5648/1888);
- ✳ **Rav Shlomo (“Shlomke”) Goldman**, the *Zhviller Rebbe* (1870–1945), the younger of the two sons of Rav Mordechai of Zhvill, and a descendant of Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov. When a pogrom in Zhvill targeted his brother’s compound and killed the *Rebbetzin* along with many Jews in the area, his brother, Rav Yaakov Yisrael, moved to Boston, and Rav Shlomo moved to Yerushalayim in 1926. He was succeeded by his son, Rav Gedalia Moshe, (5705/1945).

27th of Iyar ~ Begins Wednesday Night (May 20th)

- ✳ **Rav Eliezer Ze’ev** of Kretchenif, (5704/1944);
- ✳ **Rav Shlomo Zalman Schneerson** (1830–1900), *Rebbe* of Kapust (Kopys) and *mechaber* of *Mogen Avos*, (5660/1900);
- ✳ **Rebbetzin Yocheved “Jackie” Wein** (1934–2006), born in Vaskai, Lithuania, the youngest child of Rav Lazer and Rebbetzin Sora Menucha Levin. (Rav Lazer was a *talmid* of Kelm

and learned with the *Chofetz Chaim* for five years.) In the mid 1950s, Jackie, a young woman trained as a teacher (at the urging of the legendary Rav Simcha Wasserman), married Rav Berel Wein, son of Rav Zev and Esther Wein, who was the daughter of Rav Chaim Tzvi Rubenstein, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Bais Medrash L'Torah*. The young couple set up their new home in Chicago. In the early sixties, after several productive years in Chicago, Rav Wein's *Rav*, Rav Chaim Kreiswirth, advised the brilliant young scholar to go into *Rabbonus*, where he could contribute so much to *Klal Yisrael*. When a position became available in Miami, the Weins packed up and moved south. But before they left, Rav Wein was instrumental in founding the *Telshe Yeshiva* in Chicago. The family remained in Miami for about a decade, until the early seventies, when Rav Wein became the Rabbinic Administrator of the OU, and then founded the *kehilla* of *Bais Torah* in Monsey, New York. In addition to raising her young family, Jackie accepted a fourth-grade teaching job at Yeshiva Spring Valley, a position she held until they moved to *Eretz Yisrael*. In 1994, when the Weins moved to *Eretz Yisrael*, she once again accepted the role of *Rebbetzin* with grace, reaching out from their new home in Rechavia, near the *Shaarei Chessed* neighborhood, where Rav Berel serves as *Rav*, (5766/2006).

❖ 28th of Iyar ~ Begins Thursday Night (May 21st)

- ✳ **Shmuel HaNovi**, (930–878 BCE);
- ✳ **Rav Yosef Yehuda Reiner**, *Rosh Yeshiva* in *Yeshiva Kol Torah*;
- ✳ **Rav Yitzchok** of Corbeil (or Kurweil), the *Ba'al HaChotem*. A *talmid* and son-in-law of Rav Yechiel of Paris, he authored a *halachic* compendium called *Amudei HaGola*. Because it is briefer than the *Semag* of Rav Moshe of Coucy, his work is referred to as the *Sefer Mitzvos Koton*, or *Semak*. It lists all post-*Bais HaMikdosh mitzvos* with pertinent *halachic* details. He also authored some of the writings of the *Tosefos*, (5040/1280);
- ✳ **Rav Yerachmiel Yehuda Meir Kalish**, the Amshinover *Rebbe* (1901–1976), born in Peshis'cha. He learned with his grandfather, Rav Menachem, who was the grandson of the first Amshinover *Rebbe*, Rav Yaakov Dovid. When Rav Menachem passed away in 1918, one of his sons, Rav Yosef, became the *Rebbe* of Amshinov, and the other son, Rav Shimon Sholom, Rav Meir's father, became *Rebbe* in Otvotzk. Rav Shimon was a major driving force behind the exodus of thousands of *bochurim* in Mir, Kletzk, Radin, Novardok and other *Yeshivos* to Japan and Shanghai at the outbreak of World War II. By the time Shanghai came under Japanese control, it held 26,000 Jews. After the war, Rav Shimon immigrated to America. Upon his *petira* in 1954, Rav Meir accompanied the *aron* to Teverya in *Eretz Yisrael*. He later moved to Tel Aviv, and then to the Bayit Vegan section of Yerushalayim. Rav Meir was noted for his genius in *Torah*, as well as his warmth and sensitivity to all Jews. His grandson, Rav Yaakov Arye Milikowski, succeeded him as the Amshinover *Rebbe*, (27 Iyar, according to *Yated* 2007), (5736/1976);
- ✳ **Rav Yaakov Leib Twersky** of Trisk, (5678/1918);
- ✳ **Rav Shlomo Avrohom Eliyohu Green** of Bnei Brak, the tailor *Mekubol*, (5760/2000).



❖ 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 *teshuvah* alone.



❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

STORIES & ANECDOTES

Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri, 22nd of Iyar

The *Saba Kadisha*, Chief Rav of Constantinople, Damascus and Tzefas

I Stand for the Honor of Hashem

“Warm yourself by the fire of the Sages but beware lest you be burned by their coals; their bite is like a fox, their sting like a scorpion and their words are fiery coals” (*Avos* 2:15).

Rav Ovadia Yosef used to illustrate our *Mishna* with the following story about the chief Rav of Constantinople, the *Saba Kadisha*, Rav Shlomo Alfandri:

After the Spanish Expulsion, Turkey was once of the countries that welcomed Jews in the hopes that their commerce would enrich her coffers. Among the relaxed laws enacted to welcome them was an exemption from army service so that Jewish young men would not be caused to desecrate *Shabbos* and be exposed to *treif* food and influences.

However, as time went on and the

new sultan, Abid Al Hamid, emerged, he acted to conscript Jews into compulsory army service of the Ottoman Empire. Those Jews close to the ruler and his underlings sought to find favor in their eyes and they urged their Jewish brethren to comply with the sultan's wishes. The body governing the Jews' spiritual wellbeing was also in favor of army enlistment, and in the end the only obstacle was the *Firman*, a document that had been granted by the previous king to the *Chacham Bashi*, Rav Moshe HaLevi. Using the previous exemption, Rav Moshe HaLevi could prevent the enlistment of the Jews, and the pressure mounting against him was enormous. The Jews wanted to appease the new sultan and garner his favor and the favor of other government ministers, and chief among them was one of the wealthiest Jews in Constantinople, who was very close to the sultan. They all

began to pressure the *Chacham Bashi* to relinquish the previous Firman of exemption and hand it back to the sultan.

One of the lone opposing voices that stood staunchly against enlistment was that of the chief *Rav* of Constantinople, Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri. He argued that enlistment would cause mass *chillul Shabbos* and exposure to eating *treif* and foreign influences. When the sultan heard this he was enraged and he summoned Rav Alfandri. When the *Rav* came before Abed Al Hamid, the sultan was struck dumb by his holy appearance and dared not harm the *Rav*. However, the wealthy merchant from Constantinople continued to disagree with the *Rav* and sought all ways and means to ensure that army enlistment would become a reality. Finally, Rav Alfandri told him that if he would not give up and change his ways, his end would be bitter indeed. When the latter refused, the *Rav* turned away sadly and threatened him with one final stroke, declaring that *Hashem* would not forgive him for his actions.

The wealthy merchant left his home that day to head out to the sultan and find a way to achieve his goal, but he never made it there! As he crossed his own threshold he suffered heart failure and died on his own doorstep!

During the *levaya*, Rav Alfandri forbade anyone to eulogize the *niftar*. Even though the wealthy merchant's son and other dignitaries and government officials begged the *Rav* to allow a *hesped* for the sake of the honor of the sultan and the man's high rank and position, the *Rav* stood his ground and refused. "You talk of his honor and the sultan's but I am an *Eved Hashem*; I stand for the honor of *Hashem*, Master and King of the World. It is His honor I seek and I will not change my mind or bend my will to you." Even the hefty bribe of a purse full of money would not sway the *Rav*, and the man was buried in dishonor and disgrace.

Afterward, Rav Alfrandri was awarded by the sultan the title of *Chacham Bashi*, when he was appointed chief *Rav* of Damascus. There he ruled as *Rav* and *Dayan* with the legal backing of the authority of the sultan as well as the *Torah* and was thus able to run the Jewish community as he saw fit and punish any transgressors who would oppose him. (*Anaf Etz Avos* p. 136-7)



Aish Kodesh

There is a well-known story related by the elders of Tzefas that one of the women who lived in close proximity to Rav Alfandri's home was once on her roof porch on a hot summer day to cool off, as many did in the summer, when she became terrified at the sight of a fire blazing on Rav Alfandri's roof and in his home! She ran quickly to seek help, and as she approached the *Saba Kadisha's* home, Rav Alfandri's *talmid*, Rav Aharon Ben Shimon, with whom he was engaged in *Torah* study, heard the commotion and came out. Rav Ben Shimon assured the distraught woman that there was no danger and the blazing fire she had witnessed was the *Aish Kodesh*, the fiery flames of the intense *Torah* study they were engaged in at that time and what a *zechus* she had that she was *zoche* to witness it. He asked her to keep the matter a secret and she did so, not revealing this amazing fact until the *Saba Kadisha* had left this world. (*Toras Aharon* p. 17)



The Berochos of the Saba Kadisha

A Turkish Pasha once visited Tzefas and Rav Alfrandri's reknown as a holy *Rav* from Constantinople drew him to seek the chief *Rav's* blessing. "Please bless me," requested the Pasha of the *Chacham*.

"My *berochos* require humility in order to be received," answered the *Saba Kadisha*. "You must dismount from your

horse and bow your head before me so that I may bless you.”

The Pasha agreed; he dismounted and bowed his head before Rav Alfandri and the *Saba Kadisha* blessed him that *Hashem* should grant the Pasha success on condition that he would work to benefit and safeguard his Jewish subjects. (*Oros Mimizrach* p. 147)



The Kiddush Levona that Foretold War

The elders of Tzefas used to tell how one of the nights during *Chodesh Nissan*, after Chacham Alfandri had concluded reciting the *berocha* of *Kiddush Levona*, they noticed that his gaze was drawn heavenward and his eyes gazed at some distant object. Then he clapped his hands in despair and sorrow and sighed a great heavy sigh of anguish. When asked what he saw that troubled him so, the *Saba Kadisha* responded, “I see drawing near a great war; soon an outbreak of war will strike the world harshly,” and not long afterward the First World War broke out. (*Oros Mimizrach* p. 147)



Please Decree that Moshiach Must Come

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

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



Rav Yaakov Ben Yaakov Moshe Loeberbaum, 25th of Iyar

Rav of Lisa, Mechaber of Chavas Da'as and Nesivos HaMishpot on Shulchon Aruch,

Siddur Derech HaChaim and Haggoda Ma'asei Nissim

“Be cautious in judgment” (Avos 1:1).

Rav Ovadia Yosef used to illustrate our *Mishna* with the following story about Rav Yaakov of Lisa, *mechaber* of *Nesivos HaMishpot*:

There once came before Rav Yaakov Loeberbaum of Lisa two litigants arguing over a golden *dinar*. “Rav, I was walking in

the *shuk* and I found a golden *dinar* on the floor and picked it up,” said one.

“It’s mine! It had just fallen out of my pocket!” interrupted the other. “It’s mine, since I never gave up hope of recovering it!”

Something about the oily, greasy manner of the second litigant and the way he acted and his tone gave it away that he

was surely a thief and a scoundrel. Rav Yaakov didn't believe him; his intuition was that he was dishonest.

In order to judge the case properly and arrive at the truth, he sent out the second litigant and called the finder of the gold coin closer to him. Rav Yaakov took the coin and called out in a voice so loud that anyone outside listening could surely hear, "See here, see this notch on the coin, it's like a scratch just below the first letter of the coin. It's a true *siman* (*Gittin* 27b) and if anyone were to use that *siman* as proof, this coin would surely be given back to him." Rav Yaakov then called back the second litigant who had been eavesdropping the entire time.

Rav Yaakov turned toward him and

asked, "Can you offer any *siman* as proof that this *dinar* is yours?"

"Yes, *Rav*!" he answered happily. "Just look at the notch below the first letter. That scratch is as good a *siman* as any that this is my coin!" he concluded with a satisfied smirk that quickly became a frown as the *Rav* retorted, "Well, I guess this isn't your coin, then!" The *Rav* opened his hand and showed the coin to the ashamed would-be thief, his head now bowed in defeat. "Because this coin is clean as a whistle – no scratches on it at all! I guess you should go and look for your lost coin that you dropped, because this coin belongs to the one who found it!" (*Anaf Etz Avos* p. 4)



Rav Chaim Ben Menachem Mendel of Kosov, 25th of Iyar

Mechaber of Toras Chaim and Father of the First Vizhnitzer Rebbe

The *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz told the following stories about his illustrious forebear, the *Toras Chaim* of Kosov:

I Would Recognize Eliyohu HaNovi

The *Toras Chaim* once said about the *zemer Eliyohu HaNovi* recited as part of the *Motzo'ei Shabbos Melava Malka zemiros*, "We sing *ashrei mi shero'a ponov bachalom* – happy is he who saw Eliyohu HaNovi's face in a dream – but who knows what Eliyohu HaNovi looks like? If no one knows what he looks like, how would he be able to recognize him in a dream? I, however, concluded the *Toras Chaim*, would be able to recognize him if I saw him in a dream because I once saw him when I was awake, with my father the *Ahavas Sholom*, and this is how it happened:

"When I was a young child," told the *Toras Chaim*, "I often used to sleep in my father's bed. One night, I was awakened from my sleep to the sound of a conversation taking place between my father and someone else in the room. I

looked up and was amazed to see an elderly man with a shining countenance sitting on my father's chair and my father sat at his side. I was upset by this – who dared take my father's seat at the head of the table? My father said to the guest: 'Eliyohu, here in bed lies my Chaim'nyu – I would like you to give him a *berocha*!'

"When I heard that this was none other than Eliyohu HaNovi, I was seized with fear and trembling and hid beneath the covers. Eliyohu HaNovi reached in below the covers, placed his holy hands on my head and gave me a *berocha*. I took a peek from underneath the covers and saw his holy face!"

"And so therefore I tell you," concluded the *Toras Chaim*, "that if I saw him in a dream, I could recognize him because I saw him when I was awake!" (*Sarfei Kodesh* 429–430)



The Apta Rav's Approval

There was once a dispute between Rav Yitzchok of Radvil and the *Ahavas Sholom* of Kosov regarding one of the *shochtim* in Nadworna. When the *Kosov Chassidim* heard that the Apta Rav seemed to side with the Radviller, they decided to get the Apter to meet with their *Rebbe*, the *Ahavas Sholom*, instead.

One day, they heard that the Apta Rav was on his way to meet Rav Yitzchok of Radvil and they set out to put their plan into action. It was well known that when the Apta Rav traveled he used no passport to cross borders; instead, he always carried a *mezuzah* with him and showed this at the crossing to the gentile guards, who would examine his pass and then wave him on.

This time, however, there was a problem. When the Apta Rav presented his *mezuzah*-passport, the border guards arrested him and took him for questioning to Kosov. This was because the border guards were none other than the *Ahavas Sholom's Chassidim*, disguised as border guards manning an imaginary border crossing.

In Kosov, a lavish welcome had been prepared at the *Ahavas Sholom's* home to welcome the guest from Apt. When the Apta Rav realized that he had been fooled, he was very angry and upset. He took two cups of *mashke* and asked the *Chassidim* who were dressed as guards to drink them. The *Toras Chaim*, the *Ahavas Sholom's* son, realized that if the *Chassidim* drank the cups of wine, the Apta Rav would send them away from this world as a punishment.

"Don't drink the wine!" he warned them, and he blocked the *Chassidim* and covered the cups, preventing them from drinking.

"Who is this young man who thinks he can interfere in matters not his own?" asked the Apta Rav.

"Chaim'nyu!" chastised the *Ahavas Sholom*, "stand up so the *Rebbe* can see you

properly!"

When the Apta Rav's gaze fell on the *Toras Chaim*, he was greatly impressed and he left the matter as settled. (*Sarfei Kodesh* 429-431)



The Cossack Has Plenty of Money

The *Ahavas Sholom* had a *Chassid* who was an innkeeper. His small inn and tavern were leased from the local Polish nobleman and after the Jew had paid the *poritz*, his *parnossa* was meager indeed. He was always late on his payments and was always coming to the Kosover *Rebbe* and asking for help. The *Ahavas Sholom* would, on these occasions, open his desk drawer and hand the *Chassid* whatever money he needed to pay off his debts. When the *Ahavas Sholom* passed on, and his son the *Toras Chaim* took over as *Rebbe*, the *Chassid* continued to come and visit the new Kosover, yet now, when he described his financial woes and his need for funds, the *Toras Chaim* did not give him any money, only a *berocha*.

"*Rebbe*, what will I do with your *berocha*?" said the bewildered *Chassid*. "I need cash now! Your father used to give me the money I needed, not just a *berocha*!" said the exasperated *Chassid*.

"My father," replied the *Toras Chaim*, "had a special *berocha* from *Shomayim* that his desk and his drawers should always help the needy and never lack funds. He could always open his desk drawer and find whatever he needed. I have not inherited this *berocha* and thus cannot do so, but don't worry, the Cossack has plenty of money to spare – much more than I – and he will give you!"

And on that enigmatic note the *Rebbe* bid his *Chassid* farewell.

The *Chassid* did not understand the *Rebbe's* strange references to imaginary Cossacks. He only understood too well that without the money he needed to pay the

poritz, he was now in serious trouble. He went home sad and distressed. When his wife asked if the *Rebbe* had given him the money, the *Chassid* answered bitterly, "He is no *Rebbe*."

He went sadly to sleep and was awakened suddenly in the middle of the night to the sound of loud knocking and banging on his front door. When he opened it, he saw standing before him a stranger, a tall Cossack who immediately told him, "I am in a rush to join the war and I had to leave in haste. I have no one trustworthy to guard my money until I return...if I ever come back, that is. When I asked around these parts for someone I could trust with my life they all said that you were the most trustworthy person. Here, take this money," and he handed the bewildered Jew thousands of gold coins. "Safeguard it for me until I come back. If I ever come back, give it to me!" So saying, he left into the night without another word.

The Jew hid the money and the next day set out for Kosov. When he told the *Rebbe* the strange tale, the *Rebbe* smiled and said, "There is no longer any Cossack, and no longer any war. He is never coming back – the money is yours!"

Needless to say, the *Chassid's* faith in his *Rebbe* was restored and he had plenty to pay the *poritz*. (*Sarfei Kodesh* 433-434)



The Kohen Godol Who Atones for You

The *Toras Chaim* was one of a kind when it came to hiding his true nature and concealing his greatness.

He would often dress very simply in a *shpentzer*, a short leather coat worn by peasants, tied with a coarse rope as a belt! He also had a large bird coop full of chickens, geese and ducks, and would often be seen feeding them or checking that others were handling them and feeding

them on time. Needless to say, such simple behavior did not appear very *Rebbish* or refined and caused some to wonder.

There once arrived a *Chassid* who found the *Toras Chaim* dressed as described, standing, ordering the farm hands to feed the hens and geese and acting in a very non-*Rebbish* manner. Seeing the *Chassid's* obvious astonishment and dismay, the *Toras Chaim* told him a story:

"Many years ago, when the *Bais HaMikdosh* stood, there was an elderly Jew who lived far from Yerushalayim and had never yet been there and thus had never seen the *Bais HaMikdosh*. He once inadvertently sinned and this accident caused him to be liable to bring a *Korban Chatos*. And so this elderly Jew set off to offer his sin offering, not knowing the way to Yerushalayim.

"As he traveled, he had no choice but to ask for directions. All the passersby and travelers laughed and wondered, 'How can such an old Jew not know the way to Yerushalayim, to the *Bais HaMikdosh*? Haven't you ever been there, and why are you going now?!'

"He had no choice but to explain his reason for travel by admitting his sin and suffering their stares and jeers.

"When he finally arrived, he experienced the same torment again and again. First, when he was laughed at, gawked at and jeered at for his lack of knowledge as to where to purchase an animal for a *korban*, then by others when he asked for directions to Har HaBayis. 'An elderly man such as yourself still sins? What, don't you know where they sell *Korbonos*? Didn't you realize you need to buy two – one for a *Chatos* and one for a *Shelomim*? Don't you know the way to Har HaBayis? What do you mean you were never there before?' And so on...

"Finally, after the long journey, suffering the distance, time, effort, money,

jeers and insults of folk who could not believe his ignorance, the elderly Jew reached the *Bais HaMikdash* and approached the *Kohen Godol* who was busy and in the middle of the *Avoda*. Our elderly Jew looked up and gazed at the *Kohen* and saw a man dressed in short pants standing barefoot, with bloodstains covering his clothes and body. The elder stood bemused and wondered to himself, 'For this barefooted butcher did I have to travel and suffer such a long, arduous journey full of insults?'

"However," concluded the *Toras Chaim* to the *Chassid*, "*Davka* through the *Kohen* did he achieve his atonement!" The *Chassid* got the hint. (*Sarfei Kodesh* p.

435)



Grabbing and Saving Neshomos

On the *Toras Chaim's Yahrzeit*, the *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz once remarked, "*Chai* (18th) *Iyar* is *Lag BaOmer*, the *Yahrzeit/Hillula* of Rav Shimon bar Yochai. On one side of that calendar date, a week before, is the *Yahrzeit* of my *Zeide*, the *heilige* Ropshitzer (11th of *Iyar*) and on the other side is the *Yahrzeit* of my *Zeide*, the *Toras Chaim* (25th of *Iyar*) – they all grab *neshomos* and pull them out of Gehinnom! (*Sarfei Kodesh* p. 451)



Rav Shlomo Ben Mordechai Goldman of Zhvill, 26th of Iyar

The *Rebbe's kevod habriyos* – his compassion and caring for his fellow Jews – was on such a level that it astonished others. Here is a well-known anecdote:

The Erev Yom Kippur Ganav's Feelings

It was *Erev Yom Kippur* in Zhvill. The *Rebbe* had four *gabbo'im* sitting outside, simultaneously writings *kvittlach* and refereeing the throngs queued outside the *Rebbe's* door, the multitude of *Chassidim* and non-*Chassidim*, all the Jews of Zhvill, waiting patiently for the opportunity to receive the *Rebbe's berocha Erev Yom HaKodosh!* Just then, the door to the *Rebbe's* inner sanctum opened and he quickly departed for his short visit to the old *Bais HaChaim*, where his forebears, Rav Moshele and Rav Michele, were buried, to *daven* in their *zechus* for a *kappora* for Am Yisrael. When the *Rebbe* returned, the audiences and *berochos* continued well into the *seuda* itself.

At some point, when there was a lull in the tides of people and the tense rush quieted down and finally the house was empty, the *Rebbe* and his son went back toward the *Rebbe's* room – but the holy aura of the approaching *Yom Kippur* was broken by the sounds of someone searching around in the *Rebbe's* desk drawers in his room! A *ganav* – a thief! On *Erev Yom Kippur*, in the *Rebbe's* room, obviously tempted by the large sums from the *pidyonos* of the *Chassidim*!

The *Rebbe's* son felt an arm on his shoulder restraining him. The *Rebbe* shrank back against the wall and allowed the thief who, panic-stricken at his discovery, fled. The entire time, rather than to confront the brazen thief, the *Rebbe* did his best to ease the *ganav's* discomfort and shame. He pretended not to notice and avoided him, averting his gaze. Such was the *Rebbe's* compassion toward the *ganav* stealing from him on *Erev Yom Kippur*. (*Tzaddik Yesod Olom* p. 193–194)



Zera Shimshon



Bechukosai

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

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

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

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

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

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

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

לזכר נשמת

רבינו שמשון חיים בן רב נחמן מייכאל זצ"ל

בעל הזרע שמשון זיע"א

ויה"ר שיתקיימו בנו ברכותיו של אותו צדיק

לזכר נשמת

רבי מאיר בעל הנס

ורבי שמעון בר יוחאי

זכותם יגן עלינו ועל כל

ישראל לכל מילי דמיטב

אם בחוקותי תלכו (כו', ג')

If you shall follow My decrees (26:3).

The Medrash (Rabbah 35:1) says that this passuk sheds light on that which Dovid HaMelech said (Tehillim 119:59), *"I considered my ways and returned my feet to your testimonies"*. Dovid HaMelech said to Hashem, "Every day I would plan my day - to go to visit someone or to go to a certain house and my legs would carry me to the Beis Medrash".

The Meforshim ask the obvious questions - what was Dovid HaMelech's original plan? It seems as though he didn't an important enough destination to go to and somehow he wound up in the Beis Medrash? The Zera Shimshon adds that why didn't Dovid HaMelech indeed plan to go the Beis Medrash? From the Medrash it seems that he wanted to go elsewhere and landed in the Beis Medrash accidentally?

The Zera Shimshon explains that the Gemara (Brachos 4a) teaches that Dovid HaMelech asked Hashem, "Am I not a righteous individual? All the other kings of the world get up late and enjoy themselves etc. and I get up and eat a very small amount of bread and water etc." The Meforshim ask - what was Dovid HaMelech asking from Hashem, did he want his reward in this world? They explain that kings usually pamper themselves, not necessarily to enjoy life, but rather they do so in order not to breakdown from all the pressure they are under.

Dovid HaMelech, although he was a king and was also under tremendous pressure, he davened to Hashem that his lack of pampering himself should not affect his health. This is why, when he would start his day, he would plan to go visit someone so as to relax, since the Torah commands a person to take care of his health (Devarim 4:15).

However, Dovid HaMelech would then think about the verse that says (Shemos 15:26), *"If you keep all the commandments that Hashem has commanded you – any of the illness that I brought upon Egypt, I will not place on you"*. The passuk seems to be saying more than just promising that if one adheres to the mitzvos that Hashem will watch over him since there shouldn't be a need for the passuk to promise such a thing. Rather, Dovid HaMelech understood this passuk to be saying that if one keeps the mitzvos as he should – even if he is naturally inclined to becoming sick, Hashem will protect him and certainly from illnesses that are unusual.

After this realization, Dovid HaMelech would switch directions from where he intended to go to relax and make his way to the Beis Hamedrash.

This is why the Medrash brings this passuk to explain the first passuk in our parsha. The passuk says, *"If you shall follow My decrees and you will do My mitzvos"*. The passuk sounds as though it is saying that through Torah study, (which is how Rashi explains the words *"If you shall follow My decrees"*), one will be enabled to keep all the mitzvos.

The Zera Shimshon explains that the mitzva of watching ones health is equivalent to all the mitzvos since Piku'ach Nefesh comes before all the mitzvos (except the three cardinal sins). Here, the passuk is telling us that if we toil in Torah, then Hashem will enable us physically to keep all the mitzvos and especially the mitzva of being healthy and it will be as though we kept all the mitzvos, hence - *"If you shall follow My decrees (study Torah) and you will (be enabled to) do My mitzvos"*.

Behar Bechukotai

May 16th 2020
22nd of Iyar 5780

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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

Shemittah is one of the Most Severe Mitzvot

**"Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai, saying...
the land shall observe a Shabbat rest for Hashem"**
(Vayikra 25:1-2)

Rashi writes, "Why is Har Sinai mentioned when commanding about the mitzvah of Shemittah, were not all the mitzvot said at Har Sinai? This reference teaches us that just as Shemittah, with all its details and particulars, was said at Sinai, so too the minute details of all the mitzvot, not only the broad outlines were given at Sinai, and so it is taught in the Midrash Vayikra".

However, the question remains. Why did the Torah specifically choose the mitzvah of Shemittah as an example for the other mitzvot? Could not a different mitzvah have been chosen as a reference to Har Sinai? What is special about this mitzvah that it was chosen to represent the giving of all the mitzvot at Sinai?

We can ask a similar question on the previous Parsha, Parshat Emor, where the verse says (ibid 21:1), "Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and tell them: Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a [dead] person among his people". The Gemara states (Yevamot 114a), "'Say... and tell them', this apparent redundancy teaches that adult Kohanim were cautioned regarding the children". Why especially here does the Torah stress that the adults have an obligation of educating their children in this command? The mitzvah of educating one's children in mitzvah observance applies to all the Torah commandments?

I would like to suggest, with siyata dishmaya, that the description of כהנים, Kohanim, in the above verse is not used as an expression of כהונה, 'priesthood', but rather as an expression of authority and greatness. As the verse says (Shemot 19:6), "You shall be to Me a kingdom of ministers (כהנים) and a holy nation". Rashi explains the word 'Kohanim' as meaning "Ministers", as we find (Shmuel II, 8:18), "And David's sons were כהנים, senior ministers". It is possible that Hashem needed to address Aharon's remaining sons, Elazar and Itamar, using an expression of affection and honor, so as to elevate their self-regard and lift their spirits. This was because they felt that they were on a lower level of holiness and purity than their holy brothers, Nadav and Avihu, who were burned alive in the Mikdash. They did not feel fitting to take their place and serve in the Mikdash, for they thought that surely compared to them they were poorer in deeds and empty of Torah and mitzvot, for their holy and pure brothers were on an even higher level than Moshe and Aharon. As Rashi tells us on the verse, "I will be sanctified through those who are nearest to Me" (Vayikra 10:3), Moshe said to Aharon, "I knew that the Tabernacle would be sanctified through someone in whom G-d's glory reposes, but I thought it would be one of us. Now I know that they were greater than either of us".

Therefore, Elazar and Itamar did not have the courage to assume a position of greatness and take part in the holy and exalted service of their father Aharon the Kohen Gadol. They wondered and were fearful, saying

to themselves that it cannot be that they are fitting to stand together with him and serve in the Mikdash since their hearts were filled with great modesty and they were not capable of considering themselves as Kohanim, holy servants of G-d.

In order to raise their esteem and inspire them with feelings of elevation, Hashem referred to them with an expression of importance "the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon", Kohanim being an expression of authority, greatness and importance, implying that they were certainly fitting to stand and serve before Hashem in the Mikdash exactly as their brothers were fitting for this. For even the attribute of modesty must sometimes vacate its place for a slight feeling of importance and greatness, since a person must be aware of his greatness and thereby fulfill "His heart was elevated in the ways of Hashem". Although it is true that Nadav and Avihu were greater than Moshe and Aharon, now Elazar and Itamar became extremely important in Hashem's eyes and He considered them as Kohanim, elevated above the rest of the nation.

A faithful servant is one who is prepared to fulfill his master's directives with joy, no matter what is imposed on him, and even if he is required to sacrifice his soul to fulfill his will, he does not consider it difficult. Rather he willingly obeys due to his love of his master and his desire to please him.

Now we can understand why especially the mitzvah of Shemittah was said in conjunction with Har Sinai. The reason is that Shemittah is one of the most serious mitzvot in the Torah, for it is no simple matter to command a person to stop all work on his ground and completely abstain from working on his land for an entire year. Not only this, but he is also commanded to hand over his produce to any passers-by. This is something that requires enormous self-sacrifice. Even the angels expressed their amazement at Yisrael for observing this command, by describing them as "the strong warriors who do His bidding" (Tehillim 103:20). The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 1:1) clarifies this: "What is the verse referring to? Rabbi Yitzchak says the verse is referring to those who observe the Shemittah. The normal way of the world is that a mitzvah is performed for one day or one week or one month. But the mitzvah of Shemittah applies for an entire year. Is there any greater warrior than this?!"

Since this mitzvah is most difficult to observe and it is possible that maybe, G-d forbid, a person might be negligent in its fulfillment, the Torah specially put this mitzvah adjacent to Har Sinai, to caution man that he should know that the mitzvah of Shemittah, with all its details, particulars and laws was given on Sinai and he is obligated to fulfill it in its entirety despite the inherent difficulty, for it is a decree from Hashem and one does not have permission to ponder it. And just as this mitzvah was given on Sinai, so too the rest of the mitzvot in their entirety were given on Sinai, and it is incumbent upon us to fulfill them.



Walking in their Ways

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

Spiritual Rectification

A man came to me, all shaken up. His wife had awoken in the night in a fright. In her sleep, she had felt a woman press her eyes very hard. She was extremely traumatized by this experience and asked what she was supposed to do.

I thought long and hard about how to advise this man and his wife especially as I intuitively felt that they were telling the truth. Suddenly, I remembered reading about a similar incident the past Shabbat. A certain tzaddik was approached by people who complained that unfamiliar people had disturbed their sleep. The tzaddik asked whether these Jews had recently uprooted a tree, to which they answered in the affirmative. He then explained that the tree may have contained a gilgul of a previous neshamah and by destroying the tree, the neshamah was prevented from receiving its tikkun. It had now come to scare those responsible.

I told this story to the man who stood before me. I asked whether he or his wife had recently uprooted a tree. He answered yes, and added that recently, a few family members had met their demise.

I sank into thought, and then said, "Listen, I can't be sure, but it may be that the neshamah of one of your family members found refuge in that tree in order to find a tikkun. By chopping down the tree, you caused that neshamah untold pain. This is why it came to disturb your wife's sleep."

I advised the man and his wife to make a tikkun for this neshamah according to a method prescribed in a holy sefer and I hoped that this would lay the matter to rest.

I have no idea whether or not he did as I said. But sadly, I heard that a few days later, one of his family members fell asleep with a lit cigarette in his hand. The cigarette fell upon the blanket next to him, causing a terrible fire and from the smoke, he suffocated and died.

The Haftarah

"Hashem, my Strength, my Stronghold" (Yirmiyahu 16)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah talks about the punishments that Hashem will bring on the Jewish people if they do not follow His decrees and do not observe His mitzvot. This is the message of the rebuke which is mentioned in the Parsha – it is a prophecy of the evil that will befall the Bnei Yisrael if, G-d forbid, they do not observe the Torah laws.

Guard Your Tongue

A Great Failure

A person should be most careful that his household should never hear him talking negatively about others. For if he himself transgresses this prohibition, besides the inherent sin, it also causes immense damage for he will no longer be able to rebuke his household in this matter. On the whole, his family's behavior depends to a great extent on the way he personally conducts himself. Therefore, he himself must be extremely cautious in this matter and will thus be rewarded in this world and the Next.



In Our Father's Path

The Baba Sali Complimented the Tasty Dishes

A significant allusion is brought by Rabbeinu Ya'akov Ba'al HaTurim, on the opening verse in Parshat Behukotai, "If you will follow My decrees". The first letter of each Hebrew word spells 'תבא', fathers, teaching us the important lesson of "following in our father's footsteps".

Rabbi Ezriel Tauber related that when he went to visit the Baba Sali zt"l, the tzaddik said to him: "I want you to join me for lunch tomorrow".

"I did not understand why, but of course I rejoiced at the invitation. The following afternoon I returned to his house in Netivot.

The Rabbanit opened the door and said, 'My husband is waiting for you. You can enter his room.' I went inside and the Baba Sali immediately rose to wash his hands, inviting me to do the same.

The Rabbanit served the first course, spiced with the delicious taste of Moroccan dishes, and her husband the tzaddik, famous for his devout, spiritual conduct, started discussing the food with his wife. He talked about each and every dish, praising its delicate taste, chuckling in Arabic, with his wife joining him, smiling and laughing...

Several minutes passed and the Baba Sali did not stop showing an interest in the different dishes, without uttering even one word of Torah. The most perplexing thing was that he did not talk to me at all; he did not even glance my way.

Taking this in from the side, I could see how delighted the Rabbanit was and how much pleasure she derived from this conversation with her husband the tzaddik.

The second course followed the same pattern as did the rest of the meal. The Rabbanit served each course, the Baba Sali showed his enjoyment and the Rabbanit laughed with delight. I was sitting with them at the table yet the tzaddik did not even look at me.

I did not understand even half a word of the Baba Sali's conversation with his wife since it was all in Arabic, but even more than that, I could not understand why he had invited me to join him.

A whole hour passed and during the entire sixty minutes, all talk around the table revolved around the food. The beautiful presentation, the tasty dishes, the fruit that the Rabbanit served as refreshments at the end of the meal. No other topic was discussed. Although, as I said, I did not understand the conversation, it was obvious that it revolved around the food.

The Baba Sali finished eating, recited the appropriate blessings and bid me goodbye. Only once I left this great and holy house," said Rabbi Tauber, "did I understand why this tzaddik had invited me and what lesson he wished to impart to me during this meal that I spent with him.

The Baba Sali knew that I am involved with spreading marital harmony in Jewish homes throughout the world, therefore he wished to instill in me this important fact, that one of the essential foundations for maintaining marital harmony is to talk to one's wife about things that interest her, namely the subject of food. And not just to talk about it courteously, but to praise one's wife for the tasty food and compliment her for all that she does for him. It is of such importance that the Baba Sali 'wasted' a whole hour on this, and no doubt he did this every day. This is what he wished to demonstrate to me so that I can give over this message to those who seek my advice" finished Rabbi Tauber.



Pearls of the Parsha

Hashem Repays in Place of the Poor

"Do not give him your money for interest, and do not give your food for increase" (Vayikra 25:37)

Shlomo Hamelech said in Mishlei "One who is gracious to the poor has lent to Hashem, and He will pay him his reward" (19:17). This implies that if one is gracious to the poor by giving him charity, it is considered as if he has 'lent' to Hashem and He will repay the loan, and will also reward him for his goodwill, as it says "Test Me, if you will, with this (in this matter of giving charity), says Hashem, Master of Legions, [see] if I do not open up for you the windows of the heavens and pour out upon you blessing without end" (Malachi 3:10).

The question is, since Hashem fulfills the entire Torah, by repaying this act of charity with endless blessing seems to be 'transgressing' the prohibition of paying back with interest.

Rabbi Baruch Yerushalmi zt"l answers this question in his sefer 'Baruch Mibanim'. The verse itself reconciles this question. We are told "Do not give him your money for interest, and do not give your food for increase" rather you should lend to the poor without interest and then this act will be considered a charitable act for which Hashem promises, "I will pour out upon you blessing without end".

If you question this and ask how Hashem can 'transgress' this prohibition of interest, the verse answers that the intention of "one who is gracious to the poor has lent to Hashem" is not that one who lends to the poor is considered as if he lent to Hashem, Hashem is not the 'borrower' who may not return the loan with interest, rather only in terms of Hashem being the One who will repay, is it considered as if one has lent to Hashem. And since the Torah only forbids interest that is paid by the borrower to the lender, and in this case the poor person remains the borrower, if so Hashem can reward the lender with no hesitations of interest.

The end of the verse alludes to this explanation, as it says, "I am Hashem your G-d". I am Hashem, faithful to pay reward and since I pay in place of the poor man, this is not considered interest as is a transaction that involves the borrower and the lender.

Mentioning the Avot Rescinds the Claim

"I will remember My covenant with Ya'akov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham will I remember" (Vayikra 26:42)

The reason why the Avot are mentioned in this section that talks about the curses, is explained in the sefer 'Matza Chaim', by Rabbi Chaim Churi zt"l. Chazal tell us (Sanhedrin 38a) that the reason why Adam Harishon was created on his own is that had two people been created, the righteous would say: We are righteous, the sons of a righteous one, and we do not have to distance ourselves from sin for we will not stumble, while the wicked would say: We are wicked ones, son of a wicked one, and we cannot repent since it will not help us for we are descendants of a wicked person. Therefore, Hashem created Adam as a single person so as to reject these claims.

This means to say that had Hashem created two human beings, then the wicked one, son of a wicked one, could claim that repentance will be of no benefit to him since he descends from a wicked person. However, the wicked son of a tzaddik will not have any claim, since if his father was righteous, he too could have chosen to be righteous.

Therefore, mentioning the Avot is a way of intensifying the rebuke. Had your forefathers been wicked, then the Yetzer Hara could have come with a false claim that your repentance has no purpose but since the verse mentions the Avot who were righteous, it invalidates this false claim.

Calculate Household Expenses

"Do not give him your money for interest, and do not give your food for increase" (Vayikra 25:37)

As an allusion, the 'Pardes Yosef' explains: When you give charity or perform acts of kindness, you should do so with a pleasant countenance, and not 'bite' him (the Hebrew word רשע, meaning 'interest' can also be translated as 'to bite') with sharp or harsh words which will stab him like a sword.

He added that some people excuse themselves for lending with interest by saying that their livelihood requires it, therefore the Torah writes "do not give your food for increase", do not spend great sums of money on your food and other household

Treasures

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



The Correct Path to Spiritual Growth

The mitzvah of Shemittah was chosen to represent the other mitzvot since it is a mitzvah that is difficult to fulfill and demands great self-sacrifice. Fulfilling this mitzvah is a way of paving a path for oneself to fulfill the other mitzvot since it is so great and powerful that it can be used as the foundation for all the other mitzvot. This is because inherent in the mitzvah of Shemittah is self-negation, whoever wishes may enter one's field undeterred and partake of one's produce. Until now this field was the owner's source of income but now his entire yield is free for all. Through this mitzvah, he also merits doing good to others and giving away his assets to whoever wishes to take. With this, he earns the merit of the mitzvah "you shall love your fellow as yourself" which is a great principle for the entire Torah.

That is why this mitzvah is the foundation and path for all the other mitzvot, and if a person seizes this mitzvah and performs it properly, he fulfills the words of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai who said, "Go out and discern which is the proper way to which a man should cling", through which he merits elevating himself greatly and so paves a path for himself to fulfill the other mitzvot.

But if man does not establish a proper path for himself and instead lives his life without thought and calculation, his descent and deterioration from the correct way of life is not far off.

When a person sits and studies Torah without interruption and keeps going even though his phone is vibrating in his pocket or other matters compete with his attention, he is demonstrating self-sacrifice, which is the way a Kohen Gadol conducts himself. This is also the case when a person gets up in the morning with alacrity to serve Hashem and does not listen to his Evil Inclination who tempts him to continue sleeping in bed. This too is a form of self-sacrifice and is comparable to the behavior of a Kohen Gadol, since he overcame his personal desires for Hashem's sake. With this one merits establishing the correct path for spiritual growth and the service of Hashem.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

There is a famous Rashi on the verse in this Parsha "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them", on which Rashi writes: "If you will follow My decrees" refers to "Engage in intensive Torah study".

Chazal tell us that while Rabbi Akiva was still ignorant of Torah law, he passed by a fountain and noticed a stone in which a hole had been carved out by the water. Rabbi Akiva asked, what is this? How can water create a hole in stone? They replied, Akiva, do you not know that water can erode stone, that water that flows over stone erodes it?

The question is asked, did Akiva not know that water can make a hole in stone? And what did their answer "stones are worn away by water" clarify?

Let us take careful note of the wonderful words of the Maggid, Rabbi Shalom Schwadron zt"l, who sheds light on the matter:

Rabbi Akiva pondered deeply and contemplated, how does water create a hole? For after all, the first drop that falls on the stone certainly does not drill a hole and seemingly makes no impression at all. If the first drop does nothing, then the following second drop is considered like the first and also does not make any impression. If the second drop has no effect, then the third drop is the first, and even the hundredth or thousandth drop can be considered like the first. This being the case, how come we eventually see a hole? They said to him, this is not the case. The resulting hole makes it necessary to say that the first drop also makes some impression in the stone, it is hidden from the eye but something it does! The imprint may be as small as a billionth but it is there.

When they built the Beit Knesset in Sha'arei Chesed, Harav Schwadron relates, the Gabbai asked the architect to construct the floor of the women's section without pillars underneath, so that they would be able to use the underground level for praying. The architect agreed.

In those days it was most uncommon to erect such a large building without pillars. Therefore, when the work was finished, the Gabbai was apprehensive and asked the contractor, "How can you guarantee that the ceiling will not collapse over the years? Maybe in another thirty years it will cave in?"

The architect answered: "You don't have to worry. You see this device?" He took out a special, small device and showed it to him. "I will attach it to the ceiling, the underside of the floor of the women's section, and if over the next hundred years, the floor that we constructed will sink even a tiny bit, this machine can detect it now. Do you understand what this means? Now, today, the machine shows the reaction. It may be only the slightest of the slightest impression, but this change is detectable".

A person goes to study Torah and at the end of the shiur thinks to himself, "The Torah made no impression on me, I studied yet remained the same". The truth is that this is not so. You are not the same, some impression has been made on you!

This is the great exclamation at the beginning of Parshat Behukotai. "If you will follow My decrees – engage in intensive Torah study!". One is obligated to toil in Torah, for this is the gift that was bestowed on us, with which we merit both the Next World and this world.

The Power of Torah Can Change Nature

The Gemara (Baba Basra 16a) says that lyov wished to exempt the entire world from judgement. What did he say? "Master of the world, you created the ox with split hooves, you created the donkey with closed hooves, You created the righteous, You created the wicked, You created Gan Eden for the righteous, Gehinom for the wicked, who can do anything different than what You want."

In this Chazal lies a great foundation for life. What was lyov trying to say and what is the implication of his words?

lyov the tzaddik was a great philosopher. He looked around the entire world and noticed that most people die as they were born, meaning, if for example, a person was born hot-tempered, from the day of his birth until the day he dies he treads on the same path. He was born as a young, hot-tempered baby and dies as an aged, hot-tempered elderly man.

With a sharp, discerning eye one can notice the implication of certain hand and leg movements made by a baby while still in the cradle. This little one is a hot-tempered baby. The child grows up and goes to kindergarten. The teacher hands him a doll, he holds the doll or ball in his hand, and whoever dares approach him is awarded with a kick, everything belongs to him! Nu, he grows a little older, goes to school, whoever touches his pen, woe to him!

"He got up on the left side"... onlookers say to themselves, as if to say, we don't know why, but that's how he is. And as he was born, in that fashion he lives and in that fashion he passes away from the world: angry, angry, angry, until the very last minute. Even as he lies on his death bed he is angry... with the Angel of Death...

If so, says lyov, if man cannot change his nature, he is no different to an animal. Can an ox, for example, one clear day decide to become a donkey? No! Can a donkey become an ox? No. "You created an ox with split hooves", this is a sign of purity. "You created a donkey with closed hooves", this is a sign of impurity. In the same way, "You created the righteous, You created the wicked". You created people who by nature are good, and conversely, those who by nature are evil, they cannot change.

What did lyov's friends answer him?

They said, "So too, you have undermined awe" meaning if it is as you say, why did Hashem command man to have fear of G-d if it does not help? The Gemara continues, "Hashem said, I created the Evil Inclination but I created the Torah as an antidote" – for if a person studies Torah it will change his nature.

Rabbi Simcha Zissel, a talmid of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, stresses and explains: Their answer is correct and occurs only with the acquisition of Torah, but without Torah, lyov is indeed correct, for in the absence of Torah it is impossible to change one's nature, and indeed the majority of people do not study Torah and so they cannot change their nature. A person can study bibliography and typography, zoology and psychology, morphology and synecology, any profession that you wish, yet he will remain as he is- as he was born so he will die. Torah is the only 'vocation' that indeed changes man.

MEOROS RAMCHAL BEHAR

THE SNAKEBITE OF INTEREST ON LOANS

You shall not lend him your money with interest, nor shall you give your food with increase. (*VaYikra* 25:37)

The *Ramchal* teaches us that the secret of *ribbis* – lending money with interest is based on the statement of *Chazal* that whoever transgresses the prohibition against loaning money to be paid back with interest will not rise up to live again at the resurrection of the dead known as *techiyas ha'meisim*.

The reason for this is connected to the serpent. A serpent lives underground and his food is found in the dirt and the earth. While underground the serpent is beneath the power of *kedushah* and *kedushah* is above him. However, the transgression of loans with interest causes the snake to raise his head above ground and he can bite into and grasp hold of the heels of *kedushah*!

Therefore, another name for *ribbis* is *nesech* – which literally means to bite, alluding to a snakebite! When the snake lifts up his head and bites into the heel. As the snake emerges from underground and grabs hold he doesn't let go, he lifts himself up, rising up higher and higher and this rise is a form of growth hence the name *ribbis* which means to grow or enlarge.

This is a very great sin because just as lending money for interest causes a person to bring death into the place of life, he is repaid in kind, and therefore when life returns to the dead, during *techiyas ha'meisim* – death will rule over the lender at interest, and he will not rise again to life.

Gut Shabbos.

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