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PARSHAS TOLDOS



❖ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❖

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)

The Importance of Names

Rav Levi Yitzchok always insisted that a *bris* be made as early in the morning as possible, sometimes even before *Shacharis*. Rav Yosef Bunim, the son-in-law of Rav Levi Yitzchok, did not expect that his child would be any different.

On the eighth day after the baby was born, Rav Yosef Bunim brought him to the *shul* at the first light, fully expecting his father-in-law, the great Berditchever *Rav*, to be there already, eagerly waiting to bring his new grandson into the covenant of the Jewish people. To his surprise, however, Rav Levi Yitzchok was nowhere to be seen. He knocked on the door several times. There was no response.

The morning dragged on. The parents waited anxiously for the *Rebbe* to make his appearance so that the *bris* could take place, but the door remained closed. A short while before noon, the door finally opened, and Rav Levi Yitzchok emerged. He ordered that the *bris* begin immediately, and it did. Rav Levi Yitzchok performed the *bris* himself, and when it came time to name the child, he directed that he be named Moshe Leib.

During the *seuda*, Rav Levi Yitzchok said a few words in honor of the occasion.

"You must be wondering," he said, "why I allowed the *bris* to be delayed for so long when I always insist that it be done first thing in the morning. This morning, the holy *tzaddik* Rav Moshe Leib Sassover passed away in a small town near the city of Brody. A problem

immediately arose. You see, Rav Moshe Leib devoted himself to redeeming captives. He considered this *mitzva* one of his missions in life. So as soon as he passed away and entered the next world, he ran to *Gehinnom* right away to redeem the Jewish souls incarcerated there. The *malochim* (angels) implored him to go to his rightful place in *Gan Eden* and leave the affairs of *Gehinnom* to those appointed to that task, but Rav Moshe Leib would not listen. He demanded a hearing.

“A hearing was granted, and the case came before the Heavenly Court with *Hashem* Himself presiding. Rav Moshe Leib argued that he had always done everything in his power to redeem captives and he intended to continue this campaign now that he had arrived in the next world. There were innumerable captives languishing in *Gehinnom*, and he could not turn a blind eye to them and go off to *Gan Eden*. He asked the Court to allow him to extract these captives from *Gehinnom*. If the Court refused, he would remain in *Gehinnom* with the captives until they were released.

“*Hashem* conceded that there was some validity to his argument. He ruled that a count be taken of all the captives Rav Moshe Leib had redeemed during his lifetime and that the equivalent number be released from *Gehinnom*. The *malochim* reported that Rav Moshe Leib had redeemed sixty thousand captives and would be allowed to extract sixty thousand souls from *Gehinnom*. Rav Moshe Leib selected sixty thousand souls and a few hundred additional souls for good measure. These were also granted to him. And so he left *Gehinnom* and brought many thousands of souls with him to *Gan Eden*.

“While all this was going on, I was afraid that the *bris* of this holy child would disrupt the proceedings and jeopardize Rav Moshe Leib’s chances of success. So I waited until he continued on to *Gan Eden*, and only then did I call for the *bris* to begin. I also named the child Moshe Leib after the holy Sassover *Rebbe*, because a person’s name defines what he will be.”

Traditionally among *Chassidim*, a great deal of importance is also attached to the name of the Berditchever *Rav*. There is a well-known tradition that a person in distress should mention the name Levi Yitzchok *ben Sara Sosh*a and he will be helped. The Ruzhiner *Rebbe* advised his *Chassidim* to keep a *Sefer Kedushas Levi* in their homes as a protection against harsh decrees, and barring that, to utter the Berditchever’s holy name. The Sadigerer *Rebbe*, the Ruzhiner *Rebbe*’s son, added that just the mention of the city of Berditchev arouses mercy in the upper worlds and provides some protection against harsh decrees, just as the mention of the city of Chevron elicits the merits of the *Avos* (Patriarchs) and *Imohos* (Matriarchs).



Dvar Torah

When we first meet Avrohom and Sara they are already married; we are not told of their actual marriage. The marriage of Yitzchok and Rivka, however, is described in the *Torah*, as are the marriages of Yaakov and his wives. Why doesn’t the *Torah* mention the marriage of Avrohom and Sara?

Everything we are told about the *Avos* and the *Imohos*, explains Rav Levi Yitzchok, plays a significant role in the future of the Jewish people. The marriage of Avrohom and Sara, however, played no such role. It was doomed to be childless because of the names they bore at the time.

The name of a person is intimately connected with the root of his soul. It defines him and empowers or restricts him, as the case may be. The name Avrom implies *av rom*, the supreme father. Referring to *Hashem*, it refers to His attributes in His supreme state. The divine emanations in this state are too strong for the material world to absorb. Therefore, when Avrohom's name was still Avrom, it was impossible for him to have children.

The situation changed, however, when his name was changed to Avrohom, which implies *av hamon goyim*, ancestor of many nations. This name, when applied to *Hashem*, indicates a state of *tzimtzum*, of divine constriction, in which He allows only a constrained stream of divine emanation to enter the world, a stream that can be tolerated and absorbed by material beings. With this kind of divine emanation, it is possible to father children.

It follows, therefore, that when Avrohom's name was changed from Avrom to Avrohom, there was a fundamental change in his very being. The place in which it was rooted changed, and it was as if he were reborn. Sara too was reborn by the change of her name from a form whose esoteric properties precluded motherhood. And for all practical purposes, their marriage, now capable of producing offspring, was also reconstituted at this same point. Their original marriage ceased to exist, having played no role in the future of the Jewish people. Therefore, there was no need to mention it in the *Torah*.



☞ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ☞



YAHRTZEITS FOR BEGINNING PARSHAS TOLDOS

http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim_yahrzeits/Kislev

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

☞ **5th of Kislev** ~ Begins Friday Night (Nov 20th)

- * **Rav Shmuel Eliezer HaLevi Eidels**, the *Maharsha*, born in Cracow in 1555. His father, Rav Yehuda, was an eminent *Talmid Chochom* who descended from Rav Yehuda *HeChassid*, as well as from Rav Akiva *HaKohen* Katz, the father-in-law of the *Shela HaKodosh*. His mother was the granddaughter of Rav Yehuda Loewe, the *Maharal* of Prague. Rebbetzin Eidel Lifschitz of Pozna, the wealthy widow of Rav Moshe Lifschitz, the *Rav* of Brisk, made a match between her daughter and the *Maharsha*. She also supported her other son-in-law, Rav Moshe Ashkenazi, author of *Zichron Moshe*, with whom the *Maharsha* studied. In appreciation of his mother-in-law's efforts, the *Maharsha* added the name Eidels to his own name, and from then on called himself Shmuel Eliezer Eidels. Rebbetzin Eidel passed away in 5368 at the age of one hundred. During his years as *Rosh Yeshiva* in Austroha, the *Maharsha* compiled his monumental *Chiddushei Halochos* and *Chiddushei Aggodos on Shas*, (5392/1631);
- * **Rav Dovid Luria** (1798-1855), the *Radal*, was a student of the *Rav* of Vilna, Rav Shaul Katzenellenbogen. He wrote an important commentary on *Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer*. He is also known as a commentator on *Gemora* and *Medrash*. In addition, he composed halachic responsa and a commentary on *Rambam's Mishneh Torah*. *Radal's* dedication to learning was legendary. It is said that he did not sleep more than one hour during the short summer nights and three hours in the winter, in addition to an afternoon nap of precisely twelve minutes. In 1854, he was offered the Rabbinate of Warsaw. He refused this position despite the encouragement of the *Gerrer Rebbe* that he take it. However, Rav Dovid did involve himself in communal needs,

including a meeting in 1846 (together with Rav Yitzchok of Volozhin) with Sir Moses Montefiore to address the needs of Russian Jewry, (5616/1855);

- * **Rav Asher Anshel Yungreiss** (Jungreis; Jungreis), Czenger (Chenger) *Rav*, the *Menuchas Asher* (1806-1873). [according to *Hamodia* 2005, 27th of *Elul* 1889], (5634/1873);
- * **Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz**, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Kamenitz (1867-1940). He was born in Slutzk to Rav Shmuel Dovid Leibowitz, who was a close follower of the *Rav* of Slutzk, Rav Yosef Ber Soleveitchik. At the age of sixteen, he went to Volozhin and became the *talmid muvhok* of Rav Chaim Brisker. In 1903, he was invited to be *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Knesses Bais Yitzchok* in Slobodka. During World War I, the *Yeshiva* moved to Minsk, and in 1921, to Vilna. Finally, in 1926, it moved to Kamenitz. He was the father-in-law of Rav Reuven Grozovsky, who became his successor. He authored *Birkas Shmuel on Shas*, (5701/1940);
- * **Rav Mordechai Rimer** (1928-1999), *Mashgiach Ruchni* of *Yeshiva Kochav M'Yaakov*. Born in Munkacz to Rav Binyomin, one of the most prominent Kalushitz *Chassidim* who was the *Rosh HaKohol* of the *Sanz Bais Medrash* in the city. Young Mordechai grew up in the home of his grandfather, Rav Arye Leib Rimer, one of the most prominent *Sanzer Chassidim* in Kashow. In the winter of 1944, he was taken from the *Yeshiva* of Munkacz, along with his entire family, to the ghetto, and on *Rosh Chodesh Sivan* of that year they were all deported to Auschwitz. Although his entire family was murdered, he lived there until its liberation. After the war, he learned at the *Chevron Yeshiva* under Rav Meir Chodosh. After his marriage in 1950, he learned in the *Chevron kollel* for another twelve years. At that time, he began to deliver a *shiur* for *ba'alei batim bnei Torah* in the *Achvashul*, a *shiur* that he continued to deliver for forty-five years. In 1962, the *Gaon* of Tchebin invited him to be a *Maggid Shiur* and *Mashgiach* in his *Yeshiva*, and for thirty-eight years Rav Mordechai assumed responsibility for the *chinuch* of the *Yeshiva's* students. During the *Yomim Noro'im* he regularly served as a *ba'al tefilla* at the *Tchebin Yeshiva*, (5760/1999).

→ 6th of Kislev ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Nov 21st)

- * **Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlap** (1883-1951). *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshivas Merkaz HaRav* and *Rav* of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood. He was a close disciple of Rav Avrohom Yitzchok *HaKohen* Kook. Author of *Mei Morom* and *Michtevei Morom*, (5712/1951);
- * **Rav Chaim Michael Dov (Ber) Weissmandl**, *Rosh Yeshiva* Nitro (Mount Kisco, N.Y.) *Yeshiva*, Holocaust rescue activist. Author of *Min HaMeitzar*, (5718/1957);
- * **Rav Shlomo Abu Maaravi**, founder of *Otzar HaTorah* network, (5750/1989);
- * **Rav Chaim Shmuel Lopian**, author of *Ravcha Shmaatsa*. The son of Rav Eliyohu Lopian, he was among the first students in the *Gateshead Kollel* under Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler in 1942, (5759/1998);
- * **Rav Yechezkel Shraga Lipshitz-Halberstam**, the *Stropkover Rebbe* (1908-1994). Born in Stropkov, Czechoslovakia, to Rav Yissochor Dov Lifshitz of Ungvar. His paternal grandfather was Rav Aryeh Leibush from Apta, the *Yismach Tzaddik*, and his maternal grandfather was the *Rebbe* of Stropkov, the *Divrei Sholom*, who was the son of the *Divrei Yechezkel* of Shinava, the eldest son of the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz. Rav Yechezkel Shraga's first public position was as *Rav* of Yablodka. After a few years there, he became *Dayan* of Bergsas. During World War II, he was sent to Auschwitz, where his wife and five children perished. After the war, he moved to *Eretz Yisrael*. In 1954, upon the *petira* of his uncle, Rav Menachem of Stropkov, Rav Yechezkel was appointed *Admor* by the Sanz elders of Shinava and Stropkov. He authored *Divrei Yechezkel Shraga*, (5755/1994).

* **7th of Kislev ~ Begins Sunday Night (Nov 22nd)**

- * **Rav Dovid Sinzheim** of Strasbourg, France (1745-1812). He served as president of the “*Sanhedrin*” established by Napoleon, the first meeting of which occurred on February 9, 1807. He was author of *Yad Dovid*, (5573/1812);
- * **Rav Shlomo Binyomin HaLevi Ashlag**, author of the *Peirush HaSulom*, [According to some, 10th of *Tishrei*], (5744/1983).

* **8th of Kislev ~ Begins Monday Night (Nov 23rd)**

- * **Rav Moshe**, *mechaber* of *Mahadura Basra*, printed at the back of the *Gemora*, (5429/1668);
- * **Rav Eliyohu ben Yehuda Kovo** (1630-1688). The son-in-law of Rav Moshe Chaim, who was the son of Rav Chaim Shabsai and the chief *Rav* of Salonica. After the *petira* of his father-in-law in 1685, he was appointed to be chief *Rav*. He died at a young age due to a plague, which also took the lives of his two sons. He compiled *Tana D'vei Eliyohu*, a collection of 451 responsa, but most of it was lost. His grandsons managed to collect twenty-six of them and printed them as *Shaalos Uteshuvos Aderes Eliyohu*, (5449/1688);
- * **Rav Yitzchok Navon** (1733-1786). Born in Constantinople, he was the son of Rav Yehuda Navon, *mechaber* of *Kiryas Melech Rav* on the *Rambam's Mishne Torah*, and the grandson of Rav Ephraim Navon, *mechaber* of *Machaneh Ephraim*. Rav Yitzchok himself wrote *Din Emes* on the *Tur* and the *Bais Yosef*; the *sefer* was published in Salonika in 1803, (5547/1786);
- * **Rav Moshe Shapira** of Slavita, son of Rav Pinchas of Koretz, (5599/1838);
- * **Rav Avrohom Yitzchok** of Tunis, *mechaber* of *Mishmeros Kehuna*, (5625/1864);
- * **Rav Aharon Twersky**, the third *Rebbe* of Chernobyl (1786-1871). Rav Aharon was the eldest of the eight sons of Rav Mordechai of Chernobyl, and the grandson of Rav Menachum Nachum, the *Me'or Einayim* of Chernobyl, his childhood teacher. Rav Aharon succeeded his father after the latter's *petira* in 1837. He also served as the *nosi* of the *Rabi Meir Ba'al Haness Ma'os* of *Eretz Yisrael* fund in the Ukraine, (5632/1871);
- * **Rav Nachum Dov Schneerson** of Ovritch (Ovruch). Uncle of Rav Yosef Yitzchok, son of the *Rebbe Rashab*. Ovruch is a historic town in the Zhytomyr province of western Ukraine. It is the administrative center of the Ovrutsky district, (5656/1895);
- * **Rav Avrohom Mordechai** of Kamarna, a grandson of Rav Yitzchok Isaac Yehuda Yechiel of Kamarna (1806- 1874), whose uncle was Rav Tzvi of Zhiditchov. He authored many important *Chassidic* works, such as *Heichal HaBerocha*, *Derech Emuna*, *Otzar Mitzvosecha*, *Zohar Chai*, and *Megillas Sesorim*, among others, (5702/1941);
- * **Rav Pinchas Dovid Horowitz**, the Bostoner *Rebbe* (1876-1941). Born in Yerushalayim to Rav Shmuel Shmelke and Sheyna Elka Horowitz, he was very close to his grandfather, Rav Elozor Mendel of Lelov until the latter's passing in 1883. He then became a devoted *talmid* of his uncle, Rav Dovid Tzvi Shlomo of Lelov. He also became part of a small group of boys who studied *mishnayos* in depth with Rav Shneur Zalman of Lublin. After his marriage to Rivka, he lived in Tzfas with her parents. When his father died tragically at age thirty-six, he was forced to move to Yerushalayim to care for his mother and younger siblings. His wife, Rivka, died in 1904. Her father, eager to keep his son-in-law in the family, suggested that he marry his granddaughter, Sora Sasha Brandwein, who was still a child. In 1909, at the age of sixteen, she gave birth to a son, Moshe. During World War I, he escaped to the United States as a refugee in 1915, with the help of Rav Yaakov Meir of Salonika, the *Rav* of Greece. In gratitude to the Jews of Boston, who helped him procure residential rights in America, he settled in Boston, (5702/1941);

- * **Rav Dovid Borenstein** of Sochatchov, the *Chasdei Dovid* (1876-1942), born to Rav Shmuel (the *Shem MiShmuel*), who was the son of the *Avnei Nezer*. His primary teacher was his grandfather. In 1906, he became the *Rav* of Vishogrod, Poland. He moved to Lodz in the late 1920s. He was very active in *Agudas Yisrael* and encouraged many to settle in *Eretz Yisrael*. He died of heart failure in the Warsaw Ghetto. The Sochatchov heritage continued under his brother, Rav Chanoch Henoch, who had established a *Bais Medrash* in Bayit Vegan, (5703/1942);
- * **Rav Eliezer Geldzahler** (1958-2004), born to Rav Eliyohu Yehoshua Geldzahler, founder of *Mosdos Ohr Yisrael* of Queens and a *talmid* of Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz, Rav Reuven Grozovsky and Rav Gedalia Schorr. Rav Eliezer's mother, Henna Freidel, was the daughter of Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler. As a child, he learned in his father's *Yeshiva*, where he made a *siyum* for *Gemora Bova Basra* before his *bar mitzva*. As a *bochur*, he learned in *Yeshiva Zichron Yaakov* in South Fallsburg under Rav Elya Ber Wachtfogel. From there, he went to Yerushalayim to learn in the *Yeshiva* of Rav Dovid Soloveitchik. He spent several years in the Lakewood *kollel*. In 1980, he married Baila, the daughter of Rav Michel and Rebbetzin Feige Twerski of Milwaukee. He opened *Yeshiva Ohr Yisrael* in Brooklyn and served as its *Rosh Yeshiva*, developing a *mesivta* and a *Yeshiva Gedola*. In January of 2004, the bus he was on in *Eretz Yisrael* was involved in a crash, and he was critically injured. He never recovered from his injuries and passed away ten months later, (5765/2004).
- * **9th of Kislev ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Nov 24th)**
 - * **Rav Dov Ber Schneerson** of Lubavitch (1773-1827), second Lubavitcher *Rebbe*, known as the *Mitteler Rebbe*. He was the son and successor of his father, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the *Ba'al HaTanya* (the *Alter Rebbe*), and uncle and father-in-law of the *Tzemach Tzedek*. Rav Dov Ber assumed the leadership of *Chabad* upon his father's passing in 1812. In 1813 he settled in the town of Lubavitch, which was to serve as the movement's headquarters for the next 102 years. In 1826, Rav Dov Ber was arrested by the Czarist government on slanderous charges. His day of release, the 10th of *Kislev*, is celebrated to this day as a "festival of liberation" among Lubavitch *Chassidim*, (5588/1827).
- * **10th of Kislev ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Nov 25th)**
 - * **Rav Moshe Mordechai Margulios**, *Rav* and *Av Bais Din*, Cracow, *mechaber* of *Chasdei Hashem*, (5377/1616);
 - * **Rav Pinchas Menachem Elozor Justman** (Yustman) of Piltz, the *Sifsei Tzaddik*, a grandson of the *Chiddushei HaRim*, (5681/1920);
 - * **Rav Refoel Dabosh** of Libya, son of the famous *Mekubol* from Lybia, Rav Frija Dabush. He was *Av Bais Din* in Tripoli, (5687/1926);
 - * **Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein** (1866–1934), *Rosh Yeshiva* of Slabodka and Chevron *Yeshivos*. Born in the town of Bakst in the Vilna district, he learned at Volozhin while still quite young. After his marriage in 1889, he moved to Kovno. Three years later, one of his sisters married Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, one of the greatest of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik's *talmidim*. The two developed a close relationship. In 1894, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel offered both of them positions at *Yeshiva Kenesses Yisrael* of Slobodka. He authored *Levush Mordechai*. Both Rav Isser Zalman and Rav Moshe Mordechai married daughters of Rav Shraga Frank, one of the wealthiest men in Kovno, and in whose attic Rav Yisrael Salanter began teaching *mussar* to Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel and Rav Yitzchok Blazer, (5695/1934);
 - * **Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer** (1870–1954), *mechaber* of *Even Ho'Ezel*, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Slutzk

and *Eitz Chaim*, Yerushalayim, *talmid* of the *Netziv*, Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, and the *Chofetz Chaim*. Father-in-law of Rav Aharon Kotler, and uncle of Rav Shach. His wife was descended from Rav Meir Eisenstadt, *mechaber* of *Ponim Meiros*. Both Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer and Rav Moshe Mordechai married daughters of Rav Shraga Frank, one of the wealthiest men in Kovno, and in whose attic Rav Yisrael Salanter began teaching *mussar* to Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel and Rav Yitzchok Blazer, (5715/1954);

- * The Fourth Lateran Council marked the zenith of papal power. During the papacy of Pope Innocent III (1161–1215), old anti-Jewish decrees were expanded and Jews were compelled to wear a yellow “Badge of Shame” to distinguish them from Christians. It was enforced in France, England, and Germany, and later in Hungary, (4976/1215);
- * All Jewish wine was dumped by Arabs and heavy fines imposed on the Jewish community of Yerushalayim. The Arabs blamed the Jewish use of wine for a severe water shortage, (5282/1521);
- * King Maximilian II attempted to expel the Jews of Pressburg, stating that his edict would be recalled only if they accepted Christianity. The Jews remained in the city without abandoning their religion, (5333/1572);
- * 27,000 Jews of the Riga ghetto taken for execution, (5702/1941);
- * Himmler ordered the destruction of Auschwitz’s crematoria to hide all evidence of the mass murders, (5705/1944).

* **11th of Kislev ~ Begins Sunday Night (Nov 26th)**

- * **Rav Yehoshua Katz**, Rav in Cracow, (5495/1734);
- * **Rav Yaakov Yitzchok HaLevi** of Pressburg, author of *Imrei Ravrevei*, (5523/1762);
- * **Rav Simcha Ashkenazi** of Dessau (Dasseau), (5546/1785);
- * **Rav Yechiel Heller**, Rav of Sovalk (Suvalk). Among his *seforim* are *Shailos U’Teshuvos Amudei Ohr*, *Ohr Yeshorim* on the *Haggoda*, *Oteh Ohr* on *Shir HaShirim* and *Kina L’Dovid*, a *hesped* (eulogy) for Rav Dovid Luria. He was *niftar* at the age of forty-seven, (5622/1861; according to some, 5628/1867);
- * **Rav Yitzchok Friedman**. Born in Sadigura, both of his parents were grandchildren of the Ruzhiner *Rebbe*. In 1903, he married, and, with the passing of his father, he set up his court in Rimanov. He was *niftar* during a fund-raising expedition in the United States. A close friend and relative collected *hespedim* for the *Rebbe* in a *sefer* called *Akeidas Yitzchok*, (5685/1924);
- * A Jewish community that had existed since Roman times was expelled from Naples, fifteen years after the Spanish conquest of the island, (5271/1510);
- * Hans Frank, the Nazi governor of Poland, required Jews to wear a blue star, (5700/1939);
- * Seven thousand Jews of Minsk executed, (5703/1942).



❁ GEDOLIM BE’MASAYHEM ❁

STORIES & ANECDOTES

Rav Shmuel Eliezer HaLevi Eidels, 5th Kislev

The Maharsha

Rav Nachman of Breslov told the following | three tales:

The Gilgul

The *Maharsha* was the *Rav* of the local congregation and above his station was the *Rav* of the entire locale. The *Maharsha* sat and taught in his *Yeshiva*. While others may have paid the local *Rav* his respects, the *Maharsha* ignored him completely, simply sitting and teaching. The local *Rav* was gracious and judged the *Maharsha* favorably, saying that perhaps he was so engrossed in teaching and studying that he did not wish to cause *bitul Torah* (taking time away from *Torah* learning). Then the local *Rav* came to visit the town where the *Maharsha* was *Rav*. Still, the *Maharsha* failed to pay his respects and the *Rav* further judged him favorably. Then he came to the *Maharsha's shul* and witnessed as he sat and taught *Torah* in the *Yeshiva*, not even deigning to rise and greet him. Still, the *Rav* judged him favorably until a good-looking young man entered.

Immediately, the *Maharsha* stood up and gave honor to this young man and spoke with him at length. Now the local *Rav* was furious and in his anger confronted the *Maharsha*, saying, "I judged you favorably three times; you never paid your respects to me! It cannot be due to *bitul Torah* for I see you spoke at length in the middle of your studies with this young man!"

"This young man will die two hours hence," pronounced the *Maharsha*. The local *Rav* did not believe it. He followed the young man around and kept close to him all the while until, as they wandered around outside, a squire who was practicing hunting birds accidentally shot and killed the young man!

When the local *Rav* came back to the *Maharsha*, the *Maharsha* then revealed that soon another dead man would also be brought in. When that too occurred the *Maharsha* explained to the perplexed local *Rav*, "That young man was

a reincarnation of Achav the King of Yisrael, which is why I paid him honor and respect and spoke with him at length. Just as Achav was killed, so too was this young man destined to die. You held him up and the attribute of judgment that lay in wait to take his soul was prevented from doing so. From On High the young man was killed another way and now this other dead man was killed by the attribute's angels of destruction through your actions. You are responsible for this man's death."

The local *Rav* was horrified and begged the *Maharsha* to teach him a way to do *teshuva*. The *Maharsha* ordered him to leave his post as *Rav* and become a coachman – and so he did.



For Whom the Bell Tolls

In Ostrog, where the *Maharsha* presided as *Rav*, the local cathedral and its bells were directly in the path of the *chevra kadisha* (burial society) as they went to conduct burials. There was no other way to go – and the church bells caused passersby to be seized by a madness to renounce their faith and convert!

The *Maharsha* ordered them to place his *sefer* that he wrote on the body of the next *niftar* who had to pass there. All the priests gathered and began to toll the bells. As the *chevra kadisha* paused and the *Maharsha* began to leaf through the pages of his *sefer*, the entire cathedral and all the priests began to sink into the ground until they were swallowed up into the earth! Till this day there remains a sign where they sank in.

(Aidel, the daughter of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, used to recite this story to people who were sick and they were miraculously healed.)



The Maharsha's Successor

When the *shul* in Ostrog was built, they needed to raise a substantial amount of money to cover the costs. Therefore the groundbreaking ceremony took place among much fanfare and the cornerstone was laid among pomp and circumstance. The honor of laying the cornerstone was sold to a wealthy Jew for a bag of gold coins. The latter honored the *Maharsha* with the laying of the cornerstone. When the *Maharsha* turned to him and asked what he could grant him in return, the rich man asked for a son like the *Maharsha*.

“This is very difficult; ask for something else,” said the *Rav*, but the rich man would not change his mind and stubbornly insisted on this and nothing else.

“If so, I can grant your wish but you will die when your wife conceives and she will die in childbirth. I will raise the child for you; only in this way can it come to pass.”

The couple agreed – and so it was.

The *Maharsha* raised the orphan and he seemed ordinary in every respect; his greatness was hidden. Before the *Maharsha* passed away he ordered this orphan to be his successor. The new *Rav* never participated in the funeral of any of the important personages in town, which caused others to attack him for his strange behavior.

As a result, the next time there was such a funeral, the *Rav* did attend. He approached the body and lifted the shrouds – and the horrified crowd saw how the body was taken away by angels of destruction before their very eyes.

“See – these are your important citizens! How do you expect me to honor them?” said the *Rav*.

From that day on the people recognized his greatness as the *Maharsha's*

successor.

(*Koch'vei Ohr*)



From Shnorrer To Philanthropist

“*Rode ftzedoka vochessed yimtza chaim tzedoka vechovod* – he who chases *tzedoka* and *chessed* will find life, *tzedoka* and honor.”

The *Gemora* (*Bava Basra* 9b) explains that if a person chases after *tzedoka Hashem* will provide him with money to give to *tzedoka*.

The *meforshim* ask: how can he chase *tzedoka* if he does not have money? In addition, the word *rodef* implies that the *tzedoka* is running away from him. Why is it running? Lastly, why will he find honor if he chases *tzedoka*?

We can answer all these questions with the *pshat* of the *Maharsha*. The *Maharsha* says that the person chasing *tzedoka* has no money. He is chasing others to persuade them to give *tzedoka*. He is the local collector. *Chazal* tell us that collecting *tzedoka* from others is a great *mitzva*. People with money to give cross the street when they see him or pull down the shades when he rings the bell. He may be chasing, but they are running fast. *Tzedoka* is running away from him. The collector's heart breaks at his inability to raise money, while watching the poor and sick wither away.

His reward is that *Hashem* lavishes riches upon him. Not only can he now revive the unfortunate among us, but instead of receiving *bizyonos* (shame) from constant rejection, in his new role he now finds the triple crown of life for the poor, money for *tzedaka* and honor as a *ba'al chessed*.

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Rav Chaim Michael Dov (Ber) Weissmandl, 6th of Kislev

Known as Reb Michael Ber

Rav Chaim Michael Dov Weissmandl, known as Reb Michael Ber, was born in Debrecen, Hungary, on the 4th of *Cheshvan* 5664 (1903). When he was still a child his family moved to Tyrnau (in Slovakian, Trnava); there, his father, Rav Yosef, served as a *shochet*.



Although Tyrnau was a Christian town which contained many churches and a seminary for the priesthood (it was even popularly known as "Little Rome"), it nevertheless had a Jewish history. In the fourteenth century, it had been the home of Rav Yitzchok Tirna, who wrote *Minhogim*, an important book of customs (published in Venice, 1591). Before World War II there were approximately four hundred Jewish families in Tyrnau of whom more than half was Orthodox.

At first, Rav Weissmandl studied in a local *cheder* but when he was older, he commuted daily to the nearby town of Sered, where he studied under Rav Dovid Wesseley, who headed a small *Yeshiva* there.

Rav Yosef Weissmandl had three sons and two daughters. Rav Weissmandl was the eldest and in the late years he always spoke of his father with deep affection and great respect. Once, he revealed that his father was exceedingly meticulous in reciting the special midnight prayers (*Tikkun Chatzos*) and when he saw that his sons were asleep, he would weep and pray only that he merit devout and scholarly sons.

Rav Weissmandl suffered a great shock when his father died in 1941. At that time he was living in Nitra. On a Friday, just before the onset of *Shabbos*, a stranger approached him in the street and asked him, "What was the name of Avrohom Avinu's mother?" Rav Weissmandl did not understand the point of the question, so the stranger repeated it several times, adding, "If you do not answer, you will be sorry."

That *Motzo'ei Shabbos*, he received the news that his father had died. Rav Weissmandl believed that there was a connection between his father's *petira* and the stranger's question. Late the same night when he opened a book about the laws of mourning called *Mishmeres Sholom* he found the following sentence: " 'Amaslai the daughter of Karnavo the mother of the patriarch Avrohom' is a remedy in a time of danger." He then understood that his father must have been ill at the time he was asked the question. Rav Weissmandl frequently told this story to his colleagues and pupils.

After his father's *petira*, Rav Weissmandl used to travel frequently to his mother's home to comfort and encourage her. He was brokenhearted and became very introspective. He let his hair grow long as a manifestation of his mourning and only had it cut just before the 14th of *Shevat*, when he traveled to the *Sheva Berochos* (marriage celebrations) of his brother-in-law, Rav Sholom Moshe Ungar. For the rest of his life, Rav Weissmandl remembered his father in love and pain.

At the age of twelve, Rav Weissmandl wrote an original lecture (*p'shetel*) to deliver at his *ba mitzva*. However, when his grandfather, Rav Menachem Meir Berthauer of Pressburg, arrived to take part in the celebrations, he offered to give the *bar mitzva* boy ten gold

crowns if he would forgo delivering the lecture in public. His grandfather was a humble man who was fully aware of his grandson's brilliance; he was therefore apprehensive that the acclaim that the boy would receive might turn his head and make him proud. Rav Weissmandl acceded to his grandfather's request and used part of the money to buy *Rabbeinu Bachya's* commentary on the *Torah*. The circle of Rav Weissmandl's life closed when he died while studying that same book.

The lecture he had prepared for his *bar mitzva* did not go to waste. Thirty-six years later he delivered it to the *talmidim* at his *Yeshiva*. He lectured for an hour and the audience was deeply impressed by his brilliance and erudition. At the end, he made an off-hand remark that it had been his *bar mitzva* speech that he had not delivered at his grandfather's request.

For some time, Rav Weissmandl studied at the *Yeshiva* of Rav Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky in Galanta but he gained the bulk of his education from Rav Shmuel Dovid Ungar, the *Rav* of Tyrnau and later of Nitra. Since Rav Weissmandl was deeply attached to his first teacher, Rav Dovid Wesseley, the transfer to Rav Ungar was very difficult for him. For two years he studied alone without attending the *Yeshiva* in Tyrnau. Only after he realized Rav Ungar's great humility and after he had heard the fervor with which he recited the *Ahava Rabba* ("Great Love") *tefilla*, did Rav Weissmandl become attached to him. From then on, he remained Rav Ungar's faithful and devoted *talmid* until they were separated in the final expulsion of the Jews from Slovakia in 1944.

While he was still a *Yeshiva* student, Rav Weissmandl had an outstanding knowledge of the very complicated laws of *mikva'os* (ritual baths which must be constructed according to exceedingly complex and rigorous rules) and of mathematical formulas required in order to

build a *mikve*. In fact, he helped in planning the *mikve* that was part of the Tyrnau public baths complex.

In 1931, Rav Ungar was invited to become *Rav* in Nitra and the young Rav Weissmandl tried to dissuade him from accepting the invitation on the grounds that Tyrnau was an ancient famous Jewish community. Rav Ungar, however, insisted on going to Nitra and articulated a strange feeling he had. "My heart tells me," he said, "that there will come a time when there will not be a *Yeshiva* in any other place but Nitra and I want to be there." When Rav Ungar moved to Nitra, his faithful student went with him.

As a seventeen-year-old *Yeshiva* student, Rav Weissmandl published three short volumes of *chiddushim* (novellae) he had heard from his teacher. He did this on his own without obtaining Rav Ungar's permission. When he realized that his teacher did not approve he canceled his plans to publish further volumes that he had prepared.

For a number of years, Rav Weissmandl served as the "*Chazor Bochor*" in the *Yeshiva* and as the "*Gabbai decharifus*" (the student in charge of assigning students to lecture in-depth on *Gemora* every *Shabbos*) and in 1931 published a volume of his research called *Hilchos HaChodesh* (the Laws of Fixing the New Moon). At times he worked on various inventions and intended to support himself from his inventions and be independent.

Rav Weissmandl made several journeys to visit the great *Torah* sages in Poland and Lithuania. Among others, he visited the Lubavitcher *Rebbe*, Rav Elchonon Wasserman, the Gerrer *Rebbe*, the *Chofetz Chaim* and Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky. In Vilna, Rav Grodzinsky asked him, "Tell me, you come from a town near Pressburg, the city of the *Chasam Sofer* – do they still study *Torah* there as intensively as they did in the past?"

Since Rav Weissmandl did not have sufficient money for a prolonged stay in one place, he bought a railway tourist ticket that allowed him to travel all through Poland. When the train arrived at a town, he would get off and visit the Jewish cemetery there or the *Rabbonim* and *Rebbes* in that town. At night he would continue his journey.

Rav Weissmandl was an expert at deciphering ancient manuscripts and frequently compared them to printed versions. He traveled to Oxford, England, three times to continue his research at the famed Bodleian library collection of Hebrew manuscripts. On one occasion an ancient manuscript was brought to the library while he was there and the resident scholars identified its author mistakenly. Rav Weissmandl revealed the true author to the chief librarian and from then on he was treated with great regard. He was given the rare privilege of using the library's facilities even when they were closed to the public. During his visits to Oxford, he recorded variant readings from the manuscripts as well as hundreds of unpublished Rabbinic responsa which he intended to publish.

In Oxford, Rav Weissmandl became acquainted with a non-Jewish scholar who had a phenomenal knowledge of *Talmud*; he quoted entire tractates from memory. Rav Weissmandl was very impressed with his knowledge and memory but whenever he mentioned that scholar he used to say that his knowledge, although phenomenal, was artificial because one must sense the spirituality and inner meaning of Torah.

As a youth, Rav Weissmandl was an extremely diligent student and spent days and nights in study when he was preparing a new edition of *Sefer Kikoyon DeYona*, a Talmudic commentary which the Nitra students were accustomed to study. In those days he slept very little, and for months at a time he never undressed to go

to bed. In less than a year he reviewed the fifteen *masechtos* (tractates) of the *Talmud* included in the above-mentioned *sefer*, which was ultimately printed by the governors of the Nitra *Yeshiva* with Rav Weissmandl's notes and emendations. At the end of the volume, he added notes to *Shulchon Aruch Even Ho'Ezer* on the basis of a manuscript he had discovered in Oxford. Rav Weissmandl also wrote an introduction to the book, giving the biography of its author and directing some pointed remarks in elegant style to those who were likely to criticize the book. In free translation, this is what he wrote:

It is a clear and indisputable truth that all possible excuses for mistakes – whether unintentional or deliberate – will be in vain. The supporter has no question while no answers will satisfy the critics. When a man wants to judge his fellow generously, he needs no aids and all the excuses in the world will not stop one who wants to do the opposite. Therefore, it is only logical and sensible not to vindicate oneself with pleas and supplications at the beginning of a book like a beggar, hat in hand ...

Many glosses ... were overlooked, sometimes unwittingly and sometimes by forgetfulness or because of lack of time or space. Clearly, if the book had been printed without notes or glosses at all, as it was in previous editions, nobody would have objected. However, now that it has been printed with corrections – to whatever degree we have succeeded – some readers will defend our efforts while others will take offense. This is no novelty; it has always been so ...

This is what a publisher must tell every honest reader and he who thinks it in his heart must articulate it with his lips. Now, let all those who object rest easy, and let the critic not be consumed

by bitterness. May he be blessed who accepts an honest answer and as for him who refuses to accept – let him be blessed too.

On the 14th of *Shevat*, 5697 (1937), Rav Weissmandl married Berocha Rochel, the daughter of his teacher Rav Shmuel Dovid Ungar. For the *teno'im* (engagement) party, which was held some time earlier, the *chosson* (bridegroom) had returned from England, where he had been pursuing his research in Oxford. At the celebration, he gave a brilliant lecture that lasted for two and a half hours. In his discourse, he discussed the legal aspects of *sivlonos* (gifts that a man gives his future bride). At the beginning of his talk, he recounted that in Oxford he had found manuscripts containing several problems on the subject raised by an ancient *Torah* sage, Rav Shimon Sharabi. Rav Weissmandl intended to resolve these questions. He proceeded to explain, on the basis of the manuscript sources he had discovered, the custom of the Jews of Oberland (Upper Hungary) not to commit the engagement conditions to writing.

Rav Dovid Meisels of Satoraljuajhely, who was present at the celebration, was so impressed that he told the *Yeshiva* students who were there that if one of them could repeat the lecture, he would ordain him as a *Rav* on the spot. As a wedding gift, he granted the *chosson* Rabbinical ordination and enthusiastically praised his *Torah* knowledge. Rav Ungar, the father-in-law, said that he had nothing to add and limited himself to saying, "The *chosson* is pious through and through!"

Both before and after his marriage, Rav Weissmandl was very active on behalf of the Nitra *Yeshiva*, and in fact, he was Rav Ungar's right-hand man. There were periods when he taught one of the classes in the *Yeshiva*. In 1936 he gave the "simple lessons" which at that time studied *Maseches Shevi'is*. This class was intended

for rapid surface rather than in-depth study to give the students a wider knowledge of *Gemora*. Rav Weissmandl, however, taught it in great depth, citing dozens of external sources, including manuscripts he had found in Oxford. When he would finish a subject, he used to say, "Everything I have said is ancillary to the subject and I have not yet touched on the actual subject!"

Even in his youth, Rav Weissmandl exhibited two clear character traits. On the one hand he was a serious, settled man and on the other he was capable of humor and gaiety. When he recited the *kinos* (dirges said on *Tisha B'Av*), or when he described the tortures of Gehinnom in his sermons, he would weep bitterly and his audience would join him in weeping. But on happy occasions and particularly on *Purim* he would climb on the table and entertain the company with barbed witticisms and jokes.

He was a magnificent and persuasive orator. In the Nitra *Yeshiva* it was customary to hold a meeting of all Rav Ungar's former and current students every five years. In one such gathering in the 1930s, men who had studied with Rav Ungar when he was a *Dayan* (a Rabbinical judge) in Krompachy participated together with students from his days in Tyrnau and Nitra. This was a meeting of fathers and sons who had studied *Torah* at the same source. At these gatherings, Rav Ungar would address his students on matters of ethics and piety; the job of discussing the practical and financial situation of the *Yeshiva* was left to Rav Weissmandl. On this occasion too he did his job. He had been in Vienna prior to the meeting, so the governors of the *Yeshiva* sent him a message requesting him to return for the meeting and to prepare himself to tell the gathered students about the serious financial difficulties the *Yeshiva* was facing. When he began his presentation, he told his audience about the governors' message to talk about the needs of the *Yeshiva* and added, "To what can this be compared? To

a man with a toothache who people tell how to cry when the dentist hurts him! Does he need to prepare himself to cry? When it hurts, you cry! The *Yeshiva* has no funds. That hurts and that is why we are crying! There is no need to prepare yourself to cry – it comes naturally!"

Rav Weissmandl often accompanied his father-in-law on his journeys, and in 1935 they traveled to *Eretz Yisrael*. When he visited the Western Wall, he was overcome with religious fervor at the sanctity of the site and in a postcard to Rav Menachem Moshe Felsenburg he wrote: "Be blessed with a blessing from Tzion the Magnificent; from Tzion out of which goes forth the *Torah* and whose holy stones are better than all the innovations of the Jews in our sacred land."

When he returned from *Eretz Yisrael*, he gave a *derasha* in the *shul* of *Zeirei Agudas Yisrael* in Vienna, recounting what he had seen. With great emotion, he described Har HaZeisim (Mount of Olives) where the dead are buried facing east, because *Moshiach* will come from that direction. Rav Weissmandl also accompanied his father-in-law to the *Knessia Gedola*, the main convocation of the *Agudas Yisrael* world organization.

Rav Weissmandl's activities during the war constitute one of the most striking examples in Jewish history of total dedication and sacrifice in order to save Jews.

In 1938, when Austria was conquered by Nazi Germany, the first victims were the Jews of Burgenland. They were stripped of everything they owned and expelled to Vienna, where they stayed without any means of support. Rav Weissmandl risked his life to travel to Vienna to consult there with the community leaders to see what could be done to help the deportees. The Nazis then gathered approximately sixty *Rabbonim*, mostly from Burgenland, and put them on

a ship that sailed toward Czechoslovakia. The ship was harried from port to port, because the Czechoslovakians refused them entry and the Austrians would not take them back. Rav Weissmandl flew to England, where he succeeded in being received by the Archbishop of Canterbury (the head of the Anglican Church) and by the Foreign Office. He explained the tragic situation, and as a result of his endeavors the *Rabbonim* were granted entry visas to England.

After the Munich Agreement (September 30, 1938) and the Vienna Award (November 2, 1938), parts of Slovakia were annexed by Hungary and a considerable number of Jews there were ruled to be "stateless" and expelled by the Hungarians into the no-man's-land between Slovakia and Hungary. In a telegram dated November 23, Rav Weissmandl turned to Samuel Hoare, the British foreign minister, and to the Archbishop of Canterbury and begged them to intervene on behalf of the refugees. In the telegram which was sent from Nitra, he said:

"In the last five days Hungarian authorities have expelled thousands of Jews with great cruelty, in rain and darkness, to the no-man's-land along the Slovakian border. In our great trouble I beseech Your Excellency to intervene."

The Archbishop of Canterbury passed the telegram on to the Foreign Office on the same day and added a note saying that he had met Rav Weissmandl and respected him – "He is worthy of credence." On the following day, however, the Foreign Office rejected the plea. It advised that the telegram be ignored and not answered, since the subject was not included in the Munich agreements.

At the beginning of the persecutions of the Jews in Slovakia, Rav Weissmandl planned the immigration of several hundred Jewish families to Canada, among

them families from Nitra and Tyrnau, but the plan was never realized. Later, Jews from Nitra and Tyrnau were among the first to be sent to Auschwitz, where they were forced to work in the construction of the crematoria and deal with the bodies of the victims. Ultimately, they too were killed. When they arrived in Auschwitz, instead of Canada, the people of Nitra and Tyrnau made a gruesome joke, "Well, we've arrived in Canada."

In 1942-1944, Rav Weissmandl was active in the *Hatzola* (Rescue) Committee in Pressburg (Bratislava). The leadership of that committee included Rav Armin Frieder, Mrs. Gisi Fleischmann, Dr. Tibor Kovacs, Ondrej Steiner, Dr. Oskar Neumann and others.

In February 1942, a notice was issued calling on all Jews born between 1897 and 1926 to register with the police in order to establish their "work capacity". Recognizing this as a Nazi ruse, Rav Weissmandl advised the *Yeshiva* students not to register since it would then be easier for them to escape if necessary. He also called on all the Jews to prepare bunkers and hiding places to use, should the situation deteriorate.

In March 1942, deportations started from Slovakia to the Lublin area in Poland; from there the deportees were later transferred to Auschwitz. After some 58,000 Jews had been expelled, Rav Weissmandl succeeded, through a man named Karol Hochberg, in bribing the S.S. officer, Dieter Wisliceny, who was in charge of the expulsion of Slovakian Jews. For \$50,000, the expulsions were halted for two years and in the meanwhile negotiations were underway to save European Jewry as a whole. This program was called the "Europe Plan".

In the course of his activities in the *Hatzola* Committee from 1942 to 1944, Rav Weissmandl continuously traveled back and forth between Nitra and Pressburg.

Most of his week was spent in Pressburg doing committee work and only toward *Shabbos* did he return to his family in Nitra. When he came home, he would give Rav Ungar a detailed report of his week's activities and consult with him as to his future rescue efforts.

During one of his journeys in a railway train, a copy of the newspaper "The Neue Zurichische Zeitung" containing an account of the murder of tens of thousands of Jews in the Nazi gas chambers fell from his pocket. He was arrested and charged with propagating hostile literature against the Germans, but managed to gain his release through bribery.

Rav Weissmandl's arrest did not deter him from devoting himself to his stressful and dangerous rescue work. One day, because of the intensive tempo of his life, he suffered severe chest pains. The physician who examined him diagnosed a heart attack and ordered immediate hospitalization. He would have to rest for a prolonged period and cease all activities. However, two days later when he heard that a Jewish old-age home in one of the towns was in danger of liquidation, he immediately left his sickbed and traveled to the town to save those Jews from expulsion.

Gradually, heart-breaking letters from the Jews who had been expelled to the Lublin area in Poland began to reach their relatives in Slovakia. In their letters, the deportees described the executions, sickness, cold and hunger which they suffered in their place of exile. They informed their relatives that for jewelry, clothing, and similar articles they could buy basic foodstuffs such as bread and potatoes from the native Polish population. Rav Weissmandl, together with other leaders of the *Hatzola* Committee, purchased various items of jewelry and transferred them by messengers – often German officers and soldiers – to the Lublin area. The deportees

acknowledged receipt of the shipments and sent letters back to their relatives by the same messengers. This aid and the contacts they made gave the deportees the physical and psychological strength to bear – at least temporarily – the terrible suffering imposed on them, thereby saving them from immediate destruction.

In 1943, one of the German messengers was arrested while he was in possession of a list which Rav Weissmandl had sent to the Lublin camp detailing how the shipment of jewelry should be distributed. As a result, Rav Weissmandl too was arrested and held for a lengthy interrogation by Kukula, an official of the Ministry of Finance. During that interrogation Rav Weissmandl told his interrogators everything that was happening to the deportees in the Lublin area; how old men, women and children were suffering and dying of cold and hunger. Rav Weissmandl explained that he had only wanted to aid these helpless deportees, and he argued that he had merely broken a minor law in order to help innocent people. When Kukula heard the description of the Jews' suffering, even his stony heart melted and, with tears in his eyes, he sighed, "After all, I too have children." In the meantime, Rav Weissmandl was still imprisoned, and he tried to find a way to let his colleagues on the *Hatzola* Committee know what he had admitted and revealed to his interrogators. He was afraid lest somebody else be arrested and wanted to avoid contradictions and discrepancies which might result from other interrogations.

On *Hoshana Rabba* (the last of the intermediate days of *Sukkos*) he told his guards that he would not eat unless they allowed him to go to a *sukka* to recite *kiddush* on wine. This was a ruse, since *kiddush* is not recited on that day. His wish was granted, and two guards took him to the *sukka* of one of Pressburg's Jews. When it became known, many people came to the

sukka and Rav Weissmandl, while pretending to recite the *kiddush*, gave his audience an account in Hebrew of what he had told his interrogators. After he was returned to prison, he had further conversations with Kukula who later permitted the Jews to send parcels to their coreligionists who had been deported to the Lublin area. Unfortunately, the arrangement did not last long, because the deportees were soon transferred to the death camps.

In the fall of 1944 the Partisans' Revolt erupted in Slovakia; as a result, the Germans decided to put an end to Slovakia's Jews and the deportations were resumed. On the 19th of *Elul* 5704 (September 7, 1944), a few days before the recitation of *selichos* (penitential prayers) in preparation for the *Yomim Noro'im* (High Holy Days), Rav Weissmandl, his wife and five children (four daughters and a son) were arrested in Nitra. Together with the rest of the Jews, the Weissmandl family was taken to a camp in Sered, Slovakia. From this camp, transports were sent to Auschwitz. In command of the expulsion of Slovakian Jewry was a cruel SS officer named Alois Brunner. Eichmann had prevented Dieter Wisliceny, who had previously been in command, from returning to Slovakia.

The *Hatzola* Committee people were trying to find a way to return Rav Weissmandl to Pressburg, since they urgently needed his aid and advice in their work. The leaders of the Committee therefore informed the authorities at the Sered camp that they were required by the security services in Bratislava to prepare a special list of Jews and that without Weissmandl they could not do it. They requested that he be allowed to visit the capital if only for a short time and Rav Weissmandl received a "holiday" to go to Pressburg for one day. Because he did not return on time, Brunner called Rav Weissmandl's brother-in-law, Rav Benzion

Ungar, the Rav of Piest'any. He was interrogated about Rav Weissmandl's activities and how he had disappeared. Later he was taken out and executed while wrapped in his *tallis* and reciting *Shema Yisrael*.

At the end of September, Brunner demanded that a number of Jewish leaders from Pressburg be brought to Sered "in order to organize social work there". For this purpose, he also demanded the immediate return of Rav Weissmandl. Actually Brunner wanted to get Rav Weissmandl out of Pressburg so that he would not be able to warn Pressburg Jewry that Brunner was planning their imminent expulsion and mass arrests. After Rav Weissmandl and several other leaders were transferred to Sered, some 1,800 Jews in Pressburg were arrested and sent to Sered.

On his return to Sered, Rav Weissmandl took his life in his hands and opened negotiations with Brunner. He tried to persuade him that the war was nearly over and that Germany's defeat was a foregone conclusion; he suggested that Brunner should start preparing his alibi by preventing the expulsion of Slovakia's Jews. He also promised him that a great deal of money would be deposited in his name in a Swiss bank. The discussion often became heated and in his excitement Rav Weissmandl even pounded on the table. Finally, Brunner decided to send Rav Weissmandl and his family to Auschwitz. Before Rav Weissmandl was put on the train, Brunner had him photographed in twenty-two (!) different poses to ensure that should he escape he could be easily identified and recaptured. Brunner also sent special instructions how to treat him in Auschwitz.

Before he got on the train to Auschwitz, Rav Weissmandl advised a number of people to saw through the doors of the carriages and jump out; he even distributed small hand-saws for this

purpose. He himself took a saw with him, concealed in a loaf of bread. He was convinced that if he could only reach Pressburg, he would be able to alert world Jewry to the renewed danger in which Slovakian Jewry was now placed. His heart was torn between his love for his family and his responsibility to the Jewish people.

After the train started its journey, Rav Weissmandl sawed through the lock of the carriage door in the middle of the night and jumped from the train with a troubled conscience. With great efforts, he succeeded in reaching a bunker in Pressburg where a number of Jews were hiding. When Brunner found out that Rav Weissmandl had not reached Auschwitz, he put a price on his head and began an intensive search for him. It did not take long for the news of his escape to reach the Jews in Sered and they were revitalized by the hope that he would do something for them. It was said that Rav Weissmandl wept day and night because he had not succeeded in saving the Jews and because his wife and children had stayed on the train to Auschwitz.

Within a short time, Rav Weissmandl made contact with Jews in other bunkers in Bratislava, who were suffering from a chronic lack of money. Rav Yaakov Ungar, Rav Weissmandl's brother-in-law, was hiding in a bunker in Nitra together with other Jews and was making great efforts to contact Rav Weissmandl. They published a classified ad in a Slovakian newspaper in Pressburg that "the Rabinger family was seeking Michoel Medved (Rabinger – "the Rav" and Medved means "bear" – *Dov* – in Slovakian); a post office box number was given. The response was not long in coming. Rav Weissmandl made contact with the group, and by a special messenger, he sent them money, wine, *matzos* and raisins for *Pesach*.

A Jew named Funk, who had been an officer in World War I, came to Rav

Weissmandl's aid while he was in the bunker. Funk disguised himself as a non-Jew and, with forged identity papers, roamed the streets of Pressburg freely. He dealt in foreign currency and had good contacts with various Germans and foreign diplomats. Funk used to visit the bunker and served as its contact with the outside world. As a result of Dr. Rudolph Kastner's negotiations with the Germans, they agreed that the occupants of the bunker be transferred to Switzerland in a truck. The vehicle traveled from Slovakia to Austria and collected a number of Jews from various camps and also the wife and family of Rav Yitzchok Ze'ev Meir from a camp near Vienna. Four days before Pressburg was liberated by the Russians, the truck left for Switzerland and arrived safely.

After his arrival in Switzerland, Rav Weissmandl suffered a massive heart attack and spent considerable time in the hospital. The terrors of the war and his deep despondency sapped both his physical and spiritual strength.

In the meantime, a few members of his family and some friends and students had returned to Nitra. They included his brother-in-law, Rav Sholom Moshe Ungar, Rav Yitzchok Ze'ev Meir and Rav Yona Forst. These three made contact with Rav Weissmandl and asked his advice regarding their own future and that of the *Yeshiva*. His advice was to renew studies in the *Yeshiva* and he promised to find the funds for its maintenance.

Among the many friends who visited Rav Weissmandl in Switzerland was a former Nitra *Yeshiva* student, Rav Reuven Monheit, who was an officer in the French army. Rav Weissmandl asked him to use his position and authority to seek out Nitra students who had survived and to help as many Jewish survivors as he could. Monheit applied to the French War Ministry for permission to undertake this mission and was granted his request. He

then devoted his energies to the rehabilitation of the survivors.

In 1946, Rav Weissmandl left Switzerland for America. With the help of his friends and former students, he succeeded in renting a building in the vacation town of Somerville, New Jersey, with the intention of starting a *Yeshiva* there. After completing the transaction, he returned to Carlsbad in Slovakia to meet the *Yeshiva* students. He stayed with them during the *selichos* period and *Rosh HaShana*. Rav Weissmandl had been accustomed to fast during the *selichos* period and the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* (Ten Days of Penitence between *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur*) but, because of his weakened physical condition as a result of his heart attack, he had to forego that act of piety and ask that the vow implied in his fasting in previous years be absolved.

After *Rosh HaShana* the *Yeshiva*, led by Rav Weissmandl, left for Paris by way of Germany. As they passed through Nuremberg, the news that several Nazi war criminals had been hanged reached the travelers and for the rest of the journey, which took seven or eight hours, Rav Weissmandl talked about the war to his traveling companions. Just before *Yom Kippur*, the party reached Versailles, on the outskirts of Paris, and lodged in one of the local hotels. Immediately after that holy day, Rav Weissmandl returned to America to continue preparations for the reception of the *Yeshiva* students. In December 1946 the students left Cherbourg by sea; when they arrived in America they went to Somerville immediately.

The young men began their studies at once. Rav Weissmandl was in very low spirits; he used to roam through the rooms of the *Yeshiva* as though in mourning with tears in his eyes. Fearful sighs would frequently escape him. In a letter he wrote to a student in 1950 he related: "There were days and years when in the suffering of my

soul I prayed to *Hashem*, as Yona the prophet had done in Nineveh, saying, ‘And now, O L-rd, take my soul, for it is better for me to die than to live.’” At the end of every Talmudic lecture Rav Weissmandl spoke to his students about ethics and piety and made reference to the terrible calamity that had befallen the Jewish people Rav Weissmandl relived the Holocaust in his heart continuously, wherever he was.

On *Purim* 1947, he tried to fulfill the Rabbinic dictum that “a man must drink (wine in order to be happy) on *Purim*”. He stayed with the students six hours. At first he talked to them about the laws and significance of *Purim* and then turned to each one of them individually and reminded him of his parents and family who had not survived. He made personal references to each of the young men and begged them to continue the traditions of their fathers and thus perpetuate their memory.

Rav Weissmandl spent the *Seder* night of *Pesach* alone; he was too troubled and pained to be able to sit with the rest of the *Yeshiva*. He sat alone in an upper room while the *Yeshiva* students celebrated the *Pesach Seder* below. Occasionally, they could hear him weeping.

After *Pesach*, the *Rebbe* of Satmar was invited to the *Yeshiva* to give regular classes for seven weeks until after *Shavuos*. Rav Weissmandl spent a great deal of time with the *Rebbe*, discussing scholarly subjects and talking about the war and its terrible suffering. These conversations had a calming effect on Rav Weissmandl; his pain became more internalized and he showed it less outwardly.

In the course of time, Rav Weissmandl remarried. His second wife was Leah Teitelbaum of Beregszasz (Berehovo) who was the sister-in-law of Rav Sholom Ungar. Only some ten persons, of whom most were *Rebbs* or *Rabbonim*, were invited to the wedding.

Rav Weissmandl realized that in Somerville the *Yeshiva* had little opportunity to expand, so he began to look for a new location. A suitable site was found in Mount Kisco, but the huge sum of money needed for the purchase was not available. After great efforts, Rav Weissmandl succeeded in raising the necessary funds, and the new campus was acquired. A new rural Jewish township was created around the *Yeshiva* and then, after all the intensive activity invested in the project, the local authorities wanted to confiscate the entire property because the taxes on it had not been paid on time. It was only after a prolonged legal struggle that this threat was removed.

In addition to managing the *Yeshiva*, which he did for the rest of his life, Rav Weissmandl worked tirelessly at gathering documentation on the Holocaust. He accused the Jewish Agency, the Joint Distribution Committee and the World Jewish Congress of ignoring the appeals he had made during the Holocaust for the financial help with which he could have saved a great number of Jews.

When the State of Israel was established in 1948, he traveled to Washington frequently to express his opposition to it. He even published a pamphlet setting out his views on the subject.

For the latter part of his life, Rav Weissmandl suffered from chronic heart disease and spent long periods in the hospital. As soon as he recovered from a bout of illness, he returned to work immediately. He was incapable of resting.

In the winter of 1957, he was stricken by an extremely severe heart attack and was hospitalized for several weeks. After his release, he found it very difficult to travel to the *Yeshiva*'s New York office because of his physical weakness; nevertheless, he did attend the *Melaveh Malka* banquet held to raise funds for the

Yeshiva. The first sentence of his speech on that occasion electrified the assembled guests, for he opened his remarks with a citation, "The Rock Whose work is perfect" – the first verse of the funeral service!

A few days after the banquet, he was back in the hospital and his condition deteriorated steadily. Even in the hospital, however, he did not desert his responsibilities to the *Yeshiva* and on the very day he died he sent a congratulatory telegram to one of his students who was marrying that day. In the telegram he wrote: "From the straits I call out *Mazel Tov!*"

On Friday, the 6th of *Kislev*, 5717



Rav Yechezkel Shraga Lipshitz–Halberstam, 6th of Kislev

Stropkover Rebbe, mechaber of *Divrei Yechezkel Shraga*

Rav Yechezkel Shraga was the son of Rav Yissochor Dov Lipshitz of Ungvar, a direct descendant of the *Aryeh D'bei Ilayi*. He was born on the 4th of *Nissan* 5668/1908 in Stropkov, Czechoslovakia.

While still a child he lost his mother, and was raised by her father, Rav Avrohom Sholom Halberstam of Stropkov. Later, Rav Yechezkel Shraga would adopt his grandfather's surname.

During World War II, Rav Yechezkel Shraga and his family were sent to Auschwitz.

Despite his indescribable suffering and anguish during those tragic years, including the loss of his wife and children, *Hy"d*, his dedication to *Hashem* and His *Torah* was prodigious.

A miracle that occurred on the first day that he arrived at Auschwitz prompted his self-imposed obligation to build a *mikve* in the future. He was standing in line, waiting to be examined by the ruthless butcher Dr. Mengele. An SS officer

(1957), he asked his visitors to leave his hospital room because he felt weak. One of his pupils noticed that he had reached out and taken hold of a book, *Rabbeinu Bachya's* commentary on the *Torah*. He spent his last moments on earth reading the book he had bought with the money his grandfather had given him for his *bar mitzva*. Holding the book he loved so much, he returned his soul to his Maker.

www.weissmandl.org/TheUnheededCry/UnheededCryText.htm

[It was well known that Rav Weissmandl was a superb genius. He composed numerous Bible codes without the use of computers.]

appeared and asked the new arrivals if any of them had any expertise in construction, plumbing or electrical work. Obviously, whoever could convince the Nazis that he was a skilled craftsman would buy time for his life.

Determined to stay alive as long as possible, Rav Yechezkel Shraga decided to claim that he had achieved proficiency in construction. He convinced a young man standing next to him, who was actually a skilled construction worker, to teach him any simple concept concerning construction. The man was happy to oblige, teaching Rav Yechezkel Shraga the basics of constructing a 90-degree angle.

In a clear sign of *hashgocho protis* (Divine providence), the SS officer posed that very question to Rav Yechezkel Shraga. The ruse worked, and the officer assigned him to a work brigade. He believed Rav Yechezkel Shraga to the extent that he rebuked the other members of the group, saying, "This Jew is the only honest member of the group. He is an experienced

craftsman.”

At that very moment Rav Yechezkel Shraga made a promise that if he were to survive, he would employ his “professional construction skills” to construct a *mikve*.

In 5709/1949, Rav Yechezkel Shraga arrived in *Eretz Yisrael*, settling temporarily in Ramleh, a city not known for a large observant population. Rav Yechezkel Shraga’s warm personality and keen mind served as a magnet for those who were alienated from *Torah*. There he fulfilled his promise to build a *mikve*.

In 5713/1953, Rav Yechezkel Shraga

moved to Yerushalayim, where he founded a *Bais Medrash* and also served as a *Dayan*.

Following the *petira* of his uncle, Rav Menachem Mendel of Stropkov, on the 6th of *Iyar* 5704/1954, Rav Yechezkel Shraga became Stropkover *Rebbe*.

He wrote many *seforim* on a wide array of topics, all under the title *Divrei Yechezkel Shraga*.

Rav Yechezkel Shraga was *niftar* on the 6th of *Kislev* 5755/1994, at age eighty-six.

Zechuso yogein oleinu.



Rav Aharon ben Kalanymous Kalman Epstein of Cracow, 7th of Kisleiv

Son of the Maor VaShemesh

False Rebbes

Rav Aharon was known as a man of truth, an *ish emes* who could not stand lies, falsehood and false pride or arrogance of any kind. He was known not to hold back his opinion, and when confronted with *sheker*, he would not save face for anyone.

Once a supposed *Rebbe* bragged to Rav Aharon about how his *Chassidim* relied on him. “What shall I do?” his tongue dripped false modesty. “One *Chassid* asks me to bless him with rain for his crops, while another asks me to *daven* for hot sun to dry his wares for sale at the market. Since these requests are at odds with each other, I don’t know what to do,” he concluded, placing his quandary before Rav Aharon.

Rav Aharon, who could not stand such false modesty, answered back with his barbed tongue, “You have nothing at all to worry about, since your blessings do not matter and won’t make any difference at all! Just bless them both with what they ask for and *Hashem* will do what He wishes anyway!” (In the name of Rav Bentzion of

Bobow *Hy”d*, *Yad Maor VaShemesh* p. 386)



Reviving the Dead or Killing the Living

Rav Aharon of Cracow was once present together with several other *Tzaddikim*. One of the *Rebbes* was handing out snuff and the *Rebbes* were passing the snuffbox around, each taking a pinch of snuff. Just then, an ordinary Jew, not known as a *Tzaddik* or *Rebbe*, also took a pinch. The owner of the snuffbox turned to this Jew and said with disdain and unmasked contempt, “What – you also took?”

Immediately, the Jew fell stricken to the ground. Rav Aharon got very upset, and said in scorn and mockery, “*Fartzeitishe Rebbes huben mechaya meisim gevayn, uhn heint vil men harginen?! – The Rebbes of yesteryear would revive the dead and today’s want to kill them instead?! The Rebbe in question responded, “No, no*

chalila,” and as soon as he said this, the other Jew got up, revived and unharmed.

(*Siach Zekeinim* III p. 268)



Rav Aharon of Czernobyl, 8th of Kislev

The Holiness

Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver used to relate how, when Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz would speak about the *Tzaddik*, Rav Aharon of Czernobyl, he was seized with such awe that he would shake and tremble. He would become covered in goosebumps and they had to dress him in a warm fur coat because his teeth rattled and his limbs shook!

Rav Yissochor Dov would then relate how Rav Aharon would awaken early and recite the *Birkas HaShachar* with such intensity that all present could see the *Shechina* descend upon him! He also told how, as *Shabbos Kodesh* approached, Rav Aharon's eyes would shine and glow with the *kedusha* of *Shabbos*! (*Admorei Belz* volume III p. 27–28)

Hiskashrus

Once, a youngerman approached Rav Aharon of Czernobyl and expressed his wish to become *miskasher* – to attach himself in the bonds of *Chassid* and *Rebbe* with the *Tzaddik*. When Rav Aharon heard this he turned to the *Chassid* and said, “You want to be tied to me? Let me explain to you what *hiskashrus* means. When *Moshiach* comes the *Rebbe* needs to tie a big, fat *gartel* around his waist (*Chassidim* wear the *gartel* during *tefilla* and appearing before someone as a sign of respect). The *Rebbe* will be first in line in the procession to greet *Moshiach* and whoever is *mekushar* – tied or bound to the *Rebbe* – will have to hold on tight to the *gartel* and approach, walking together with him!” (*Otzar Yisrael* p. 80:7)



Rav Dov Ber Schneerson of Lubavitch, 9th of Kislev

The Mittler Rebbe

Reincarnated: The Soul of Hamnuna Saba

When the daughter of the *Mittler Rebbe*, the granddaughter of the *Alter Rebbe* of *Chabad*, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, married the grandson of Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev in Zlovin, the *Mittler Rebbe* wanted to deliver a *Chassidic* discourse in public, which he knew would raise objections from Rav Levi Yitzchok (who felt that the *Chabad Rebbe's* way of expounding on the deepest secrets of the *Torah* should be done only in private and for select students). He went into a private room with his followers and stationed one of them to guard the door and warn them of Rav Levi Yitzchok's approach should he come.

The “guard” was also listening to the *Mittler Rebbe's* discourse and became so deeply engrossed in it that he didn't notice that Rav Levi Yitzchok had entered the room. The Berditchever *Rebbe* sat himself down next to the *Mittler Rebbe* and asked him with whose permission he was delivering such a profound *Chassidic* discourse in public.

The *Mittler* sent for his father, the *Alter Rebbe* of *Chabad*. When Rav Shneur Zalman arrived, he himself answered Rav Levi Yitzchok.

“When my son was born, I wished to name him *Hamnuna Saba* (after one of the mystical Sages mentioned in the *Zohar*). His soul was one of those called “the fish of

the sea that live on the land” whose mission is to reveal the hidden, inner meaning of *Torah* in public. However, our master, the holy *Maggid* of Mezritch, asked me to name my son after him, so I called him Dov Ber.”



Who Deserves to Walk Through the Door First?

During the famous wedding that took place in Zlovin — when the daughter of the *Mittler Rebbe*, the son of the *Alter Rebbe* of *Chabad*, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, married Rav Levi Yitzchok’s grandson — the *Berditchever*, the *Alter Rebbe*, and the *Mittler Rebbe* all left the reception hall together. This was just after the *Mittler Rebbe* had completed delivering a lengthy *Chassidic* discourse, which Rav Levi Yitzchok had interrupted with his usual rapture and fervor. When they reached the doorway to leave, Rav Levi Yitzchok refused to go before the *Mittler Rebbe*. He had just heard his *Chassidic* discourse, and now, in his humility, the *Berditchever* considered himself the *Mittler Rebbe’s talmid*. The *Mittler Rebbe* did not dare go before his own father, and Rav Shneur Zalman would not go before Rav Levi Yitzchok! And so they found themselves facing a dilemma: who deserved to walk through the door first?

As they stood arguing, their *Chassidim* solved the question for them: they broke off the doorposts and widened the doorway, allowing the three *Rebbes* to leave simultaneously, side by side.



One of the followers of Rav Dov Ber of Lubavitch was known for studying and praying with great devotion, and displaying a kind and gentle manner to others. Yet he still had a serious character flaw. He greatly admired his own virtues. Afraid that he was growing arrogant, the *Chassid* decided to approach his *Rebbe* for guidance.

After hearing the *Chassid* describe his predicament, Rav Dov Ber was silent for a moment, and then responded, “When *Hashem* created the world, He created both good and evil. After these two elements came into being, they came before *Hashem* and asked for their respective missions. ‘Spread the light of goodness and kindness in the world,’ *Hashem* instructed the Good Side. ‘This is achieved by making people aware of their Creator.’

“Evil asked, ‘But will I be able to do my job? Will people really listen to me?’

“*Hashem* then instructed the Evil Side to combat the good, thereby giving people the choice and opportunity to overcome adversity. The Evil Side again asked, ‘But will I be able to do my job? Will people really listen to me?’ When the Creator responded in the affirmative, the Evil Side asked to be told its name.

“‘You will be called the Serpent,’ said the Creator.

“Upon hearing this, the Serpent became worried. He was afraid that his name alone would frighten people away and doom his mission. ‘Have no fear,’ reassured *Hashem*, ‘you will succeed.’

“Indeed, the Serpent was successful in misleading Chava to sin, convincing her to eat from the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden and to share her sin with Odom. After Odom had eaten from the same fruit, *Hashem* banished the pair from Eden, and thus began all of life’s challenges.

“However, when Odom and Chava realized their sin, they repented completely and managed to atone for their folly. Seeing the holiness that now permeated their lives, the Serpent came before the Creator again. ‘Destroy me,’ he implored. ‘I will never be able to succeed now!’

“‘Have no fear,’ responded the Creator. ‘I will change your name to the Angel of Death. No one will recognize you.’

“The Evil Side, disguised as the

Angel of Death, did his sinister work for generations, until our grandparents Avrohom and Sora began spreading the knowledge of *Hashem* in their surroundings. Forlorn, the Angel of Death complained again that his job was too difficult, well-nigh impossible. 'Fear not,' said the Creator, 'I will change your name again. From now on, you will be known as *Soton*. No one will recognize you.'

"So, *Soton* began his career. His work went well, until Moshe made his appearance. When he began teaching *Torah*, *Soton* was ready to throw in the towel for good. He appeared before the Creator asking for a merciful end; now he truly felt useless. Again, his name was changed. This time, he was renamed Arrogance.

"Arrogance now began his career. This time, his disguise was so good that he even penetrated houses of *Torah* learning. The more a true scholar studies, the more he realizes how little he really knows. However, under the influence of Arrogance, people would study and not be humbled by their knowledge. Instead, they assumed airs of superiority and looked down with disdain at the unlearned. Of course, they

sugarcoated these feelings by claiming to defend the dignity of their knowledge, not their own person.

"This continued until the *Ba'al Shem Tov* arrived in this world. He revealed the true unity of *Hashem*, before whom all are equal, no matter their level of scholarship.

"Again the Evil Side came before the Creator, disguised as Arrogance, asking for a merciful end. Again his name was changed. This time, instead of plain Arrogance, it would be known as Fear of Arrogance. Being less bold than plain old Arrogance, Fear of Arrogance could do its work in peace.

"Now, listen here," concluded the *Mitteler Rebbe*. "You should know that Fear of Arrogance is Arrogance, who is *Soton*, who is the Angel of Death, who is the Serpent himself! Quickly, throw him out of your house, because your life is at risk!"

By: Yossy Gordon

Sources: *Shmuos V'Sippurim*, Volume 2, pages 169–170; *Reshimos Devarim*, Volume 4, pages 187–189. See also *Otzar Sippurei Chabad*, Volume 16, pages 48–50.

www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/610415/jewish/Sly-Arrogance.htm



Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, 10th of Kislev

Mechaber of Even Ho'Ezel, Rosh Yeshiva of Slutzk and Eitz Chaim, Yerushalayim

Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer's Spilled Milk

One day, in Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer's house, the milk boiling on the stove was left unattended and boiled over. When Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer found out, he said to his *Rebbetzin*, "I know why this happened. This morning, when the poor man who visits every day came, I gave him one coin instead of the usual two coins. The milk that boiled over was surely worth the exact amount of the coin which I held back from the poor man!"

Rav Isser Zalman continued, "Do

you wonder how I know this? I'll tell you a story about Rav Chaim of Volozhin. Once he was told that the pail of water had sunk in the well and they were unable to retrieve it. Rav Chaim made a *cheshbon* of the exact amount of money involved in the loss. Rav Chaim had the custom of separating a fifth of his money for *tzedoka* rather than a tenth, according to the *din* of the *Gra*. That day, a question had come up whether he had separated a fifth, and he had ruled leniently. He now realized that the value of the bucket was the same amount of money that had been under dispute. Rav Chaim

immediately separated the rest of the money and transferred it to the *tzedoka* box; immediately afterward he was told that they had managed to extricate the

bucket from the well.

www.revach.net/stories/story-corner/Rav-Isser-Zalman-Meltzers-Spilled-Milk/3203



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

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

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

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

Zera Shimshon



Toldos

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

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

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

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

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

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

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

לזכר נשמת

רבינו שמשון חיים בן רב נחמן מיכאל זצ"ל

בעל הזרע שמשון זיע"א

ויה"ר שיתקיימו בנו ברכותיו של אותו צדיק

זרע של קיימא

שרה חנה בת לאה

שרה בת מרים

פעצלא בת יפה

לרפואה שלימה

תינוקת מרים בת אפרת

רוני דינה בת סימי

דוד בן שרה

לזווג הגון במהרה

אלישבע נעמי בת רחל

לאה בת שרה חנה

לאה בת מרים

כי הקרה ה' אלקיך לפני (כו' כ')

For Hashem your G-d caused it to happen before me (27:20)

This, Yaakov Avinu responded to his father's question how he had been able to hunt and prepare the animals into a meal so quickly. The Zera Shimshon asks - why did Yaakov Avinu say 'your G-d' to his father Yitzchak? He could have simply said "For Hashem, G-d, caused it to happen etc." without specifying that Hashem is Yitzchak Avinu's G-d?

The Zera Shimshon explains that Yaakov Avinu used this terminology to explain to Yitzchak Avinu why he was allowed to eat from this meal. According to Yaakov Avinu, the animals practically appeared before him. This would be classified as a miracle and Yaakov Avinu was afraid that perhaps Yitzchak Avinu would not want to benefit from the outcome of miracles. (See Ta'anis 24a where Elazar Ish Birta's storehouse miraculously turned and small quantity of wheat into a tremendous amount and he refrained from benefitting from them. Rashi explains that he did not want to profit from miracles.) If Yitzchak Avinu would refrain from eating from what Yaakov Avinu served him due to not wanting to benefit from miracles, Yaakov Avinu would lose his opportunity to receive the blessings.

For this reason he said, "For Hashem, your G-d, caused it to happen etc.". This changes things because Yitzchak Avinu had a special status. This we find when Hashem appeared to Yaakov Avinu and said (28:13), "I am Hashem the G-d of your father Yitzchak". Rashi explains that although we do not find that Hashem associates His name with the living lest they stray away from Him later on in life, Yitzchak Avinu was different. This is because he was blind and confined to his house. He was therefore like one who is dead that is free of the Yetzer Hara. As a result there was no concern of him sinning and Hashem was already able to associate His name with Yitzchak while he was still alive.

This being the case, he should be able to benefit from miracles since he is not like a regular person living defined by Olam Haze. For this reason, Yaakov Avinu stressed the words 'your G-d' to emphasize this that you, Yitzchak, can benefit from this meal, even though it is the result of a miracle, being that Hashem doesn't consider you bound to the physical rules of Olam Haze, proven by the fact that Hashem has already associated His name with you.



Based on the simple interpretation of this passuk, the Zera Shimshon points out a lesson in Mussar from the way Yaakov Avinu spoke. Although Yaakov Avinu had to tell his father that Hashem caused these animals to happen before him to explain why he had been able to be back so fast, why was this not considered a lie? Yaakov Avinu had simply taken two animals from his mother's pen, Hashem hadn't made anything 'happen before him'?

The Zera Shimshon says that we learn from here that even when something is as simple as taking something that is already in the pen and seems to be yours, one has to realize that this too, Hashem caused to happen.

לזכות חיים דוד בן טויבא חוה להצלחה וסייעתא דשמיא בכל מעשה ידיו ובכל הענינים

זכות רבינו זיע"א יעמוד לזיווג הגון בקרוב עבור שושנה נחמה בת חנה פעסא ולרפואה שלימה ליוכבד בת דבורה ולכל משפחתה

שימלא הקב"ה משאלות לבם לטובה במהרה

ולזכות רבקה רויוא בת פייגא לזיווג הגון בקרוב בתוך שאר ישראל

לזכות החפץ בעילום שמו לזווג בניו ובנותיו בקרוב בזכות רבינו זיע"א



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7 - Rabbi Rafael David Sebban, Rav of Turkey

8 - Rabbi Avraham HaKohen, author of 'Mishmeret Kehunah'

9 - Rabbi Natan Salem, of the Chachmei Yeshivat 'Porat Yosef'

10 - Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, Rosh Yeshiva of 'Eitz Chaim'

11 - The Dayan, Rabbi Moshe Harrari, a Gadol from Aram Tzova



The Power of Sarah Imeinu's Complete Faith

"Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren. Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him, and his wife Rivkah conceived"*

(Bereishit 25:21)

On the words "Yitzchak entreated" Rashi writes, "He prayed abundantly... He stood in one corner and prayed and she stood in another corner and prayed". It is necessary to understand why we do not find that Avraham and Sarah prayed to merit children. Rather, as soon as Sarah saw that she was unable to bear children, she gave Avraham her maidservant Hagar, as it says (Bereishit 16:2), "And Sarai said to Avram, 'See, now, Hashem has restrained me from bearing; consort, now, with my maidservant, perhaps I will be built up through her'. And Avram heeded the voice of Sarai".

Why did Sarah not pray and beg the Master of the World to bless her with offspring, just as Rivkah Imeinu did? This question can also be asked of Avraham Avinu who prayed on behalf of all mankind, even for the wicked people of Sodom. He prayed abundantly and begged Hashem to have mercy on them. If so, why did he not pray for Sarah his wife that she should merit giving birth?

There is a further question. Why, when Hashem wished to announce to Sarah about Yitzchak's birth, did He send an angel to announce the news as it says (Bereishit 18:10), "And he said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year, and behold Sarah your wife will have a son". while Rivkah and also Rachel did not merit being told by an angel?

With siyata dishmaya I would like to suggest the following answer. There are different levels in the attribute of bitachon (trust) in the Creator. A man may declare that he trusts in Hashem, but his heart is not convinced. His words are insincere and the proof is that he expends much effort in trying to achieve his desire, toiling and worrying for its fulfillment. If his words are sincere and he truly has complete trust in the Creator, why is he not at peace?! He is consumed with thoughts on how to achieve his desire and spends the entire day pursuing the options. This is a proof that his trust is dubious and unstable.

On the other hand, there are those who genuinely trust in Hashem with all their heart. They believe that Hashem has the power to save them from their troubles, and their utterances and feelings are one and the same. Deep inside they believe that only the Creator has the power to come to their aid, but they expend the smallest amount of effort which certainly does not contradict their complete trust. For this is how Hashem runs the world, man is expected to expend some slight effort (hishtadlut) but at the same time must know that it is the Creator alone who affects the outcome.

However, there is an even higher level of bitachon, which is bitachon in its most complete form. This is demonstrated by one who trusts in Hashem that He will

fulfil his desires and is not prepared to put forth even the smallest amount of effort to achieve his goal because he knows and believes with all his heart that Hashem will give him that which he desires. Even if much time has passed and still he has not merited salvation, he does not despair and is not afraid because he has complete bitachon in the Creator that the day will come when Hashem will carry out his wish and fulfill his request.

The extent of Sarah's greatness was also reflected in the immensity of her faith and trust in Hashem. Sarah Imeinu said to herself that if Hashem promised Avraham that he will have children from her, why should she be concerned? She is absolutely certain that Hashem will fulfil her desire. That is why she was not prepared to do even the smallest amount of hishtadlut for this because if she would pray and beg abundantly it would be a proof that her faith and trust in Hashem are lacking and she is afraid that He might not fulfil her wish. Therefore, she did not even ask Avraham her husband to pray for her and she was prepared for him to marry Hagar. This did not bother her, on the contrary, she said, "perhaps I will be built up through her", for she knew that if she has a promise from Hashem that He will give them children, why does she need to be concerned about it. Sooner or later Hashem will fulfil His word. This was the greatness of Sarah Imeinu's level.

This is why she merited giving birth to Yitzchak Avinu who fathered the dynasty of Ya'akov Avinu and the G-dly tribes, just as Hashem promised (Bereishit 21:13), "since through Yitzchak will offspring be considered yours". He too cleaved to the holy path that his mother specified for him. When Hashem commanded that he be brought on the Mizbeach as an offering and stretched out his neck to be slaughtered, he had no doubts and questions about how the dynasty of Am Yisrael will continue through him. Rather, he went with complete faith and innocence to fulfil Hashem's will just as He commanded, for he followed in the path of his righteous parents, Avraham and Sarah.

Certainly, Rivkah and Rachel, our holy Imahot, also had enormous trust in Hashem and relied on Him with all their heart, but on a different level to that of Sarah Imeinu. That is why Rivkah felt that she was obligated to do some hishtadlut so as to merit offspring. She therefore stood in prayer and supplication to the Master of the World, and Rachel Imeinu too asked Ya'akov, "Give me children" (Bereishit 30:1), implying that he should pray for her to merit children. They thought that they had not yet merited rising to a level of such immense bitachon that precludes any hishtadlut, like Sarah Imeinu. Sarah's great level of bitachon was why a heavenly angel appeared to her to announce the news of Yitzchak's birth, something that our holy Imahot, Rivkah and Rachel, did not merit.

May it be His will that we merit following in the path of our holy Avot and implant complete faith and trust in Hashem in our hearts, Amen v'Amen.



Walking in their Ways

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



In Our Father's Path

Salvation in the Merit of Charity

In a city near New York lives a family who was hit by tragedy. An expectant mother slipped and fell, and she and her unborn child sadly passed away. This calamity shook the entire community. In its wake, the community members asked various Rabbanim to deliver words of inspiration.

I, too, was asked to provide words of encouragement. After my speech, an appeal would be made for tzedakah for the poor. I asked my host in New York to drive me to the Beit Hakneset where I was scheduled to deliver my talk. As we were traveling, the man turned to me and asked if I minded if he made a detour. He very much wanted to show me the yeshiva where his son learned. At first, I hesitated. But as he promised that it would take no longer than a minute, I acquiesced.

After showing me the yeshiva, we continued on our way to the Beit Hakneset. We were suddenly met by a ghastly sight. Exactly at the spot where we would have driven a moment earlier, a terrible accident had occurred. A mammoth truck had smashed into a private car that was coming in the opposite direction. The two occupants had been flung into the street and were lying by the roadside. No one knew if they were still alive.

I trembled at this sight. Had we not changed our route, we would most likely have been a part of that horrific scene.

I have no doubt that the upcoming appeal for tzedakah was what saved us from this accident since the mitzvah of tzedakah has the power to save a person from all harm.

The Haftarah

"The prophecy of the word of Hashem" (Malachi 1,2)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah speaks about Ya'akov and Esav, as it says: "Was not Esav the brother of Ya'akov", while the Parsha tells of the birth of the twins, Ya'akov Avinu a"h and Esav the rasha, and their offspring.

Guard Your Tongue

Speaking About Outward Appearance

We previously mentioned that it is forbidden to say negative words even if the speaker does not consider it as something negative, just as it is also forbidden to say something that is not essentially negative, if the speaker or the listener consider it as negative.

This can be demonstrated with the example of speaking about someone's external appearance and way of dress. Even though there may be nothing wrong with this way of dress, it is nevertheless forbidden to say that he dresses in this way if the speaker or listener do not consider this way of dress in a positive light.

Why did Maran Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef Remain Awake?

On the verse in our Parsha, "The children agitated within her" (Bereishit 25:22), Chazal expound: "When she would pass the Torah academy of Shem and Ever, Ya'akov 'was running' and struggling to come forth; and when she passed a temple of idol worship, Esav 'was running' and struggling to come forth".

The Torah commentaries ask the famous question: While we can understand that when Rivkah passed a temple of idol worship Esav was struggling to come forth since he had no idolatry in his mother's womb, but why when she passed the Beit Midrash was Ya'akov struggling to come forth, for the Gemarah (Niddah 30b) explains the verse "when his lamp would shine over my head" (Iyov 29:3) as implying that there is an angel who teaches the entire Torah to a baby when in its mother's womb?

Several answers have been offered to reconcile this difficulty. The central idea focuses on the lofty value of Torah when it is studied with toil and effort, and not when it comes easily. The verse tells us (Iyov 5:7), "For man is born to toil" and Chazal (Sanhedrin 99b) explain that it refers to toiling in Torah.

It follows then that when Rivkah passed by the entrance to the Beit Midrash, Ya'akov was struggling to come forth since he felt that the Torah that was studied there involved great effort and toil. More than the Torah that was given to him as a heavenly gift and came easily through an angel, he desired this other kind of Torah. This is in line with the Chazal, "A person prefers one kav of his own produce to nine kav of another's produce." His own produce refers to that which he has toiled over (Baba Metzia 38a).

This is the kind of Torah that Ya'akov Avinu wished to study. And indeed for fourteen years he studied and toiled in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever without ever lying down to sleep on a bed, as Chazal tell us. Rashi quotes this Chazal on the verse (Bereishit 28:11), "he lay down in that place": "That place is an expression of exclusion, in only that place he lay down, but during the fourteen years that he studied in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, he did not sleep at night because he was engaged in Torah."

This concept corresponds wonderfully with the words of the verse (Bamidbar 19:14), "This is the teaching (Torah) regarding a man who would die in a tent". Chazal expound on this (Berachot 63b), "Torah only endures in one who kills himself for it", only for one who kills himself in the tent of Torah, immersing and devoting himself in the Torah day and night and studying it with toil and effort.

Maran Rabbeinu Ovadiah Yosef zt"l would study Torah every night until two or three in the morning. This was also the time when he would write down his chiddushim. This was a custom that he continued even when he was ninety years old!

There was an avreich, forty years younger than Maran, who was entrusted with the publishing of his many manuscripts. Rabbeinu Ovadia would tell him, "That's it, it's enough. Go to sleep now", while he himself would continue studying...

One morning, Rabbi Eliyahu Shitrit, who would write down Maran's chiddushim, saw a large stack of papers with Maran's chiddushim that had piled up during the night. He turned to Maran and asked him, "Did Rabbeinu not sleep the entire night?" Maran answered, "No. I was not overcome with sleep."

How remarkable and compelling! Maran would never go to sleep. He studied and studied until he was overcome by sleep. Right there, in the place where he learnt, he fell asleep. Just as it says about Ya'akov Avinu, "He spent the night there because the sun had set" (Bereishit 28:11).



Pearls of the Parsha

Healthy Children Enable the Father to Devote Himself to Prayer and Torah

"Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren" (Bereishit 25:21)

The holy Tiferet Shlomo explains this verse according to the Gemarah (Yevamot 64a) where Rabbi Yitzchak asks: "Why were our forefathers' barren? Because Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous".

The way of the world is that children naturally take their fathers away from Torah study and prayer, through the need to care for them and continuously provide for their needs.

This is why we ask that Hashem should give us "living and surviving offspring, offspring who will neither interrupt nor cease from words of the Torah". We are asking to merit living children who will not interrupt us from studying Torah, meaning that we should be able to immerse ourselves in Torah and mitzvot and still they should always be healthy and well and not make us cease from words of Torah out of our concerns for them.

This is a possible interpretation of the above Gemarah. Our forefathers were barren so that they could pray with serenity without the disturbances that are a natural result of having children, for Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous...

Not Mentioning the Name of a Rasha When Praying

"Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren" (Bereishit 25:21)

The Gemarah (Berachot 34b) writes that when one prays for recovery in the presence of the sick person, it is not necessary to mention his name, just as we find with Moshe Rabbeinu who prayed the following prayer for Miriam, "Please G-d, heal her now", without mentioning her name.

Here too, the 'Nefesh Chaya' points out, Yitzchak was afraid that if he has to mention his wife's name, he will also have to mention the name of her parents who were wicked (Rivkah daughter of...), and he did not wish to refer to their memory when praying for her. That is why he cleverly prayed "opposite his wife" so that he should not have to mention her name.

A Valid Sale on a Full stomach

"Esav said to Ya'akov, 'Pour into me, now, some of that very red stuff for I am exhausted'" (Bereishit 25:30)

Esav asked Ya'akov for food using the expression "pour into me", meaning that Ya'akov should pour the stew into his mouth. However, Ya'akov presented him with the food in the normal manner, as it says, "Ya'akov gave Esav bread and lentil stew, and he ate".

Rabbi Avraham HaKohen of Djerba zt"l in his sefer 'Keneh Avraham', asks two questions:

First of all, why did Ya'akov not do as Esav asked? Besides, Esav asked to eat "that very red stuff", referring to the lentil stew, so why did Ya'akov also give Esav bread? Also, the order of the verse is that he first gave bread and after that the lentil stew. Why was this?

He explains that since Esav was overcome with ravenous hunger and was in a situation of danger, as it says, "Look, I am going to die", Ya'akov was afraid that later on Esav might come and claim that the entire sale of the birthright was carried out under compulsion and therefore carries no weight.

Therefore, Ya'akov first gave Esav bread, and once he had eaten to satisfaction and was no longer in danger, he can no longer claim that he was forced to sell the birthright for the lentil stew, rather he sold the birthright willingly in complete accordance with the law.

Treasures

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



Showing Love Diminishes the Evil

Rivkah went to the academy of Shem, a prophet, who could inquire of Hashem on her behalf, and she was told (Bereishit 25:23) "Two nations are in your womb; two regimes from your insides shall be separated". So already before they were born, they knew that one was a tzaddik and the other a complete rasha. Since Yitzchak Avinu was certainly aware of this prophecy, why did he nevertheless show love for Esav and even wished to give him the blessings? He was wicked already in his mother's womb.

I would like to suggest that Yitzchak Avinu was certainly aware of his son's wicked ways, but despite this, he wished to draw him close to him so that this would diminish his wickedness in some way. This is why he showed him feelings of love and affection and did not push him away. If he realizes that his father respects and appreciates him, he will be embarrassed by his evil ways and give them up. Yitzchak even wished to give him the blessings so that they should have a positive effect on him and through them, he will return to the good and the correct path.

Just as Yitzchak was concerned for his son, so too Ya'akov was concerned for his brother. This is the reason why Ya'akov took the birthright from Esav because he was concerned for his soul and wished to prevent him from receiving harsh punishments for his bad deeds. For on that day that Esav returned home exhausted from the fields, Ya'akov heard that he had transgressed five of the most serious sins. He thought to himself that if Esav retains the birthright, the claim on him will certainly be much greater and accordingly, the punishment will be more severe. So out of compassion for his soul, he bought the birthright from him so as to diminish the consequence of the Heavenly judgement.

It follows that Yitzchak Avinu a"h certainly recognized the great wickedness of his son Esav, nevertheless he treated him well, loved him and tried to bring him close and encourage him so that he should not kick at everything that is precious and holy, and thereby he will retain some spark of holiness.

"G-d has made the one as well as the other" (Kohelet 7:14). About Ya'akov Avinu it says (Bereishit 25:27), "a wholesome man, abiding in tents". The word 'יָסוּם', wholesome, can be rearranged to spell 'מֵת', dead. Throughout his life, Ya'akov killed himself in the tent of Torah and showed self-sacrifice in studying Torah and performing mitzvot. But the goal of the wicked Esav was to seek a solution in how to fight against Ya'akov and weaken the power of his Torah. For Esav knew that if "the voice is Ya'akov's voice", then "the hands are Esav's hands" have no power. Esav's main goal is to remove the letter 'vav' from the word 'voice' 'קוֹל יַעֲקֹב', and change it to 'קָל יַעֲקֹב', creating in its place the word 'light, easy' so that G-d forbid he should be light-minded (קָל דַּעַת) in his learning. He should become lax and weak in his Torah study and then he too will crave the pleasures and lusts of This World. In this way, he will lose the Torah that he possesses and then automatically Esav will be able to overcome him.

Ya'akov Avinu who was aware of this battle, guarded himself closely and strengthened himself with the sound of Torah. His holy voice was always heard loudly. As long as the voice of Ya'akov can be heard in the Batei Knessiot and Batei Midrashot, we are promised that "the hands are Esav's hands" will have no power. Hashem will save us from Esav's hands in the merit of the power of the holy Torah.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



When Rabbi Aryeh Leib Birnbaum passed away, his father Rabbi Shmuel, the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir in America, gave a hesped for him. It was a heartrending sight, a bereaved father giving a hesped for his dear son. But his sincere words calmed the grieving participants and greatly reduced the intensity of the questions that preyed on the minds of all those present. These were his words:

"On the words in this week's Parsha, "And it came to pass, when Yitzchak had become old, and his eyes dimmed from seeing" (Bereishit 27:1), Rashi explains that when Yitzchak lay bound on the altar and his father was about to slaughter him, at that moment the heavens opened. The ministering angels saw and wept and their tears fell into Yitzchak's eyes, and that is why his eyes dimmed from seeing.

The question arises, why did Hashem open the heavens so that the angels should see the Akeidah? Was it not possible for them to see the Akeidah without opening the heavens?"

"But," Rav Birnbaum explained, "Hashem opened the heavens for the angels at the time of the Akeidah because had He not done so, they would not have been moved at all by the Akeidah, for in heaven there are no questions. That is why Hashem opened the heavens and showed them how it appears down in This World, and when they saw the Akeidah from the perspective of This World, with all the questions and doubts and feelings that the matter aroused, they immediately began to weep.

Had they observed the sight from Above, through the revelation of the Heavens, it would not have aroused either questions or pain or tears. There they would have understood that this

is the ultimate good. In This World too, there are some matters that mortals only understand after a long time has passed and some matters that are understood only in the World of Truth."

Rabbi Birnbaum's words are so accurate and so stirring. These are questions that we face daily, and we hardly have the answers. We simply do not understand anything. But we must know, that Up There, there are no questions. To enable the angels to grasp our position down in This World it was necessary to open up all the heavens for them so that they should understand us and so that they too, should be able to weep. On occasion, Hashem reveals the secret of His conduct also to us down here and then all our questions disappear; everything is clear and our complaints and difficult questions merely melt away.

On this subject, we present a remarkable story which the famous writer, Rabbi Chanoch Teller, recounts in one of his books: By the end of the Second World War, the Nazis ym"sh had killed the majority of European Jewry. The Allied Forces carried out a relentless war against the Nazis and with Hashem's help, succeeded in driving them into Germany. The Nazis retreated on all fronts but did not leave the Jews alone. They took the imprisoned Jews with them in their retreat to Germany, in some cases a journey of hundreds of miles, some on foot and others by train.

In the Bergen-Belsen camp in Germany, the situation was unbearable. Hunger, thirst and sicknesses were only part of the tribulations that surrounded the inmates. The camp was divided into different wings, one of which also housed Russian prisoners of war.

A survivor from that division relates that one morning the Nazis announced: We know that in another few days the British will arrive and we want you to tell them how well we treated you... so we have brought you fresh rolls.

The hunger that prevailed in the camp was indescribable. For five years that particular Jewish survivor had barely eaten and all his thoughts were centered

around the question of how to acquire food.

After receiving his roll, he suddenly noticed that there were more baskets full of rolls lying next to the Nazi. It immediately sprung to his mind: If there is such an abundance of rolls, why not stand in line for another one? The Nazi will certainly not recognize him among so many other Jews.

So when the Nazi asked, "Who is next in line?" he replied, "I am" and duly received another roll. He was now the happiest man; he had two fresh rolls in his hand.

Suddenly he felt a hand grasping his neck and a threatening voice whispered in his ear:

"I saw what you did, Jew!" He turned around to see who was talking. It was not a Nazi but one of the Russian prisoner-of-war soldiers. The Russian gripped him tightly and demanded, "Give me the second roll!" The Jew made a calculation: He is a prisoner just like me, why should I give it to him? "I will not give it to you," he answered firmly.

The Russian then dragged him inside the bunkhouse and began beating him cruelly. When he was certain that his soul had departed, he took the rolls and left.

The Jew felt the shadow of the Angel of Death spreading its wings over him. He raised his eyes heavenward and called out: "Master of the World, now I should die, a moment before liberation?! If you wished to take my life, You had hundreds of opportunities to do so during the last five years!"

And in this state, full of grievances against Heaven, he lost consciousness.

When he awoke he looked around and saw that all the inmates were dead. The rolls had been poisoned! But it was decreed that he would live, so Hashem made sure that his rolls would be taken from him. Even when he refused to hand them over, he was beaten up so that he would survive!

MeOros Ramchal VaYera

When Avraham Left So did his protection of Sodom depart with him.

“And the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom, and Lot saw and arose toward them, and he prostrated himself on his face to the ground.” (Bereishis 19:1-2)

The *Ramchal* explains why Avrohom *Avinu* tried so hard on behalf of the citizens and residents of Sodom, because he was from the attribute of *Chessed* and Loving Kindness and someone who is the epitome of *Chessed* wants to rectify and repair everything via *tikkun* – even evil he tries to repair.

This is the secret behind the statement that “the right hand draws near.” (*Sanhedrin* 107b) This is also the reason why Avraham was pained when Yishmael was sent away since he desired to repair and rectify him and bring him into the fold of *kedushah*. However, Sarah was from the left side of *Gevurah* and this is why she cast Yishmael out and pushed him away. This is the secret of the “the left hand pushes away.” (*Sanhedrin* 107b)

When Avraham passed away and his attribute was no longer there to protect the people of Sodom the attribute of harsh judgment struck them as it says (*Bereishis* 18:33) “and Abraham returned to his place.” Hinting at the departure of *middas haChessed* from protecting them, this event is immediately followed by our *pasuk* “And two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening,” specifically in the evening which is a time when the attribute of *Din* and judgments rules strongest.

The Secret of *Hachnasas Orchim*

“and Lot saw and arose toward them, and he prostrated himself on his face to the ground.” (Bereishis 19:1-2)

Chazal say (see *Rashi* adloc 19:1) that Lot learned how to treat guests from Avraham *Avinu*, who taught him *hachnasas orchim*. *Lot* represents the backside of *Z”A* and Avraham represents the front face of *Z”A*.

The *Ramchal* teaches us the secret of the *Mitzvah* of *hachnasas orchim* as follows: the guest - is the attribute of *Yesod* – Foundation, the house itself represents the attribute of *Malchus*. So when a person brings guests into his home this creates a unification that unites *Yesod* with *Malchus* together.

Ramchal now uses this to explain the mystery of why immediately following Avraham's *Avinu's* self-circumcision *Hashem* sent him guests. Once Avraham removed the foreskin off the *Yesod* and revealed it then it was ready to unite with *Malchus* and so immediately *Hashem* sent him guests so he could perform the *mitzvah* of *hachnasas orchim*.

MeOros Ramchal Toldos

The ReDigging and ReNaming of the Wells of Avraham by Yitzchok

**“And Yitzchok again dug the wells of water which they had dug in the days of his father, Avraham, and the Philistines had stopped them up after Avraham's death; and he gave them names like the names that his father had given them.”
(Bereishis 26:18)**

The *Ramchal* explains the secret behind the wells that were dug in the times of Avraham. Avraham was from the side of *chessed* and loving kindness therefore it was only proper that he was the one who spread *chessed* over the entire world.

In order to demonstrate this outspread of *chessed*, he and his people dug wellsprings since the waters represent *chessed* and loving kindness. The digging of these wells demonstrated the outspread of *chessed* which was properly done by he who was the epitome of the attribute of *chessed* in the world.

Afterwards, the Plishtim (Phillistines) came and stopped up and plugged the wells, since that is the way that the *sitra achra* – the evil forces of darkness from the other side, act. They do their best to stop the flow of *chessed*, preventing it from spreading.

The reason why they waited until after Avraham's death to plug and stop up the wells was because so long as he was alive he was able to keep up the *tikkunim* and rectifications so they would not be canceled.

When Yitzchok came and re-dug and re-opened the very same wells as his father had, before him, this was an act that represented the attribute of *gevurah* (strength & might) as embodied in Yitzchok, agreeing with, the *tikkunim* of *chessed* – as was embodied in Avraham.

If *gevurah* remains unrectified she blocks up the light and prevents the *tikkunim* of *chessed*, however now that she is rectified, she not only does not prevent, she aids and agrees to the *tikkunim* of *chessed* with greater strength and might.

In order to demonstrate how Yitzchok embodies these attributes of rectified and repaired *gevurah*, *Hashem* orchestrated historical events so that Yitzchok would now reopen and re-dig his father's wells that had been stopped up. This demonstrated rectified and repaired *gevurah* that agrees with the spread of light and *chessed*.

This is why Yitzchok renamed the wells with the very same exact names that his father had - since as the *Ramchal* explains, the secret behind these names was to uphold and strengthen the *tikkunim* that each well represents and accomplishes. Therefore, in order to demonstrate that he is upholding his father's *tikkunim*, he named them their same original and essential names once more.

And Yitzchok's servants dug in the valley, and they found there a well of living waters. And the shepherds of Gerar quarreled with Yitzchok's shepherds, saying, "The water is ours"; so he named the well Esek, because they had contended with him. And they dug another well, and they quarreled about it also; so he named it Sitnah.

He dug two wells and they were fought over and quarreled over, since these two wells corresponded respectively to Avraham and Yitzchok, the two patriarchs that the powers of the *sitra achra* had a hold and grasped on to, as is known based on the secret why Avraham had a son Yishmael and Yitzchok a son Esav.

"And he moved away from there, and he dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehovos, and he said, "For now the Lord has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land."

However, there was no quarrel over the third well, since this demonstrates the aspect of a rectified and repaired *gevurah*, [corresponding to Yaakov who balances between *chessed* and *gevurah* and had twelve sons perfect tribes] therefore it says:

"And he went up from there to Beer sheba." - This corresponds to the supernal Mother – *Ima* since a repaired and rectified *gevurah* ascends to Binah which is her root source. Therefore, he had a prophetic revelation in that place as it says: **"And the Lord appeared to him on that night."**

And *Ramchal* concludes that prophecy comes from the attribute of *Binah*, as is known. And it says in the same *pasuk* that *Hashem* said, **"I am the G-d of Avraham, your father."** Using the word *Anochi*, for I which also corresponds to the supernal Mother *Ima* and saying at the end of that same *pasuk*: **"[Fear not, for I am with you, and] I will bless you and multiply your seed for the sake of Avraham, My servant."** Because you held onto the same *tikkunim* as your father and upheld them, you too are worthy of the same blessings that he was, in his merit.

Yaakov's strategy for total and complete defeat of the Sitra Achra

"And he said, "Is it for this reason that he was named Jacob? For he has deceived me twice; he took my birthright, and behold, now he has taken my blessing." And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" (Bereishis 27:36)

The *Ramchal* explains Yaakov's strategy as follows: First he had in mind to take the birthright and afterwards to take the blessings – in this way Yaakov meant to completely conquer and utterly defeat the forces of darkness and evil from the other side – known as the *sitra achra*.

We know, explains the *Ramchal*, that *Hashem* created equal and opposing sides of conflict from the *pasuk* "*Hashem* has made one corresponding to the other," (*Koheles* 7:14) so that just as there are ten *sefiros* – Divine attributes on the side of holiness, there are correspondingly ten *sefiros* of *klippah* – the husks and shells of impurity also have ten attributes on the opposite side.

By taking away Esav's birthright as his own, Yaakov meant to defeat the beginning or

head of the *klippah* and by taking away the *berachos* and blessings Yaakov had in mind to conquer the final extremity, the end or feet of the *klippah*. By doing so he would automatically defeat the middle.

The explanation of this strategy is given by *Ramchal* as follows: The birthright is the secret of the head or beginning of all *kedushah*. Once Yaakov acquired the birthright as his own, he had power over the *sefiros* that represent the beginnings or head start of *kedusha* and so he could defeat the head of the *klippah*. By taking the *berachos*, Yaakov conquered the end and final extremities. The attribute of *Malchus* is synonymous with *berachah* since she is the source of all blessings, once Yaakov received all of Yitzchok's *berachos* – those blessings gave him the power and strength of *Malchus* from which all blessings are drawn down, and so he was automatically able to defeat the feminine side of *nukvas klippah* and subjugate her under the *Malchus* of *kedusha* – a maidservant who is subjugated beneath her mistress (the opposite of the scenario in *Mishlei* 30:23 “a maidservant who inherits her mistress”).

This explains how Yaakov defeated and conquered both the head and feet – the top and bottom of the *klippah*. Therefore, he automatically conquered the middle as well. Then the *klippah* remained beneath and under the forces of *kedusha* and holiness.

Afterwards Yitzchok did bless Esav with some *berachos*, since at the end, the *klippah* needs some sustenance to give it vitality and life until the day will come when we shall say: “And all false gods and idols shall completely pass away.” (*Yeshaya* 2:18) and then *kedushah* shall ascend with a total and complete *tikkun*.

The Two Loves – *Ahavas Olam* and *Ahavah Rabbah*

“I loved you, said *Hashem*, and you said, "How have You loved us?" Was not Esav a brother to Yaakov? says *Hashem*. And I loved Yaakov And I hated Esav, and I made his mountains desolate and his heritage into [a habitat for] the jackals of the desert.” (*HaftTorah Parshas Toldos – Malachi* 1:2-3)

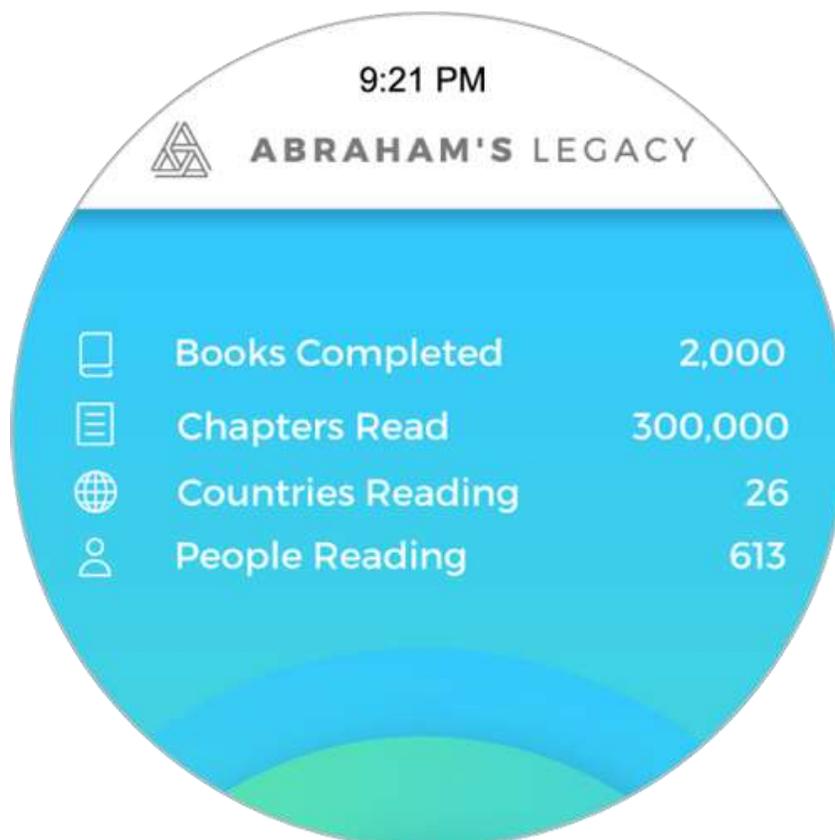
The *Ramchal* here asks what the difference is between the recitation of the *nusach berachah Ahava Rabbah* is versus the *nusach* for *Ahavas Olam*?

He explains that the secret behind this matter is that *Ahavah* – Love relates to *Zeir Anpin*, and therefore those who say *Ahavas Olam* hold that we need to discuss *Ahavah* as to from where this love originates and comes from. Since the world or *Olam* also corresponds to *Z”A* and its secret is *Ahavah* they say the *nusach Ahavas Olam*.



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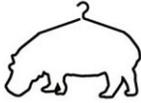
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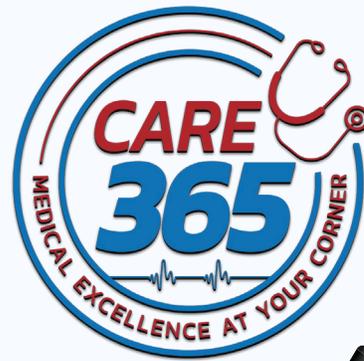
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