

# ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

LIGHTS OF OUR RIGHTEOUS TZADDIKIM



בָּעֵזֶרֶת הָיְתָה בָּרָךְ

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

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)

VAERA

❖ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❖

## ABOVE TIME – THE MASTERS OF FREE WILL

In this week's parsha, as well as in a Maamar on Chodesh Shevat, Rav Gedaliah Schorr, author of Ohr Gedalyahu, cites a fascinating teaching from the Kozhnitzer Maggid. The Kozhnitzer Maggid explains that there are two ways that Hashem runs the world: Hanhaga Tivis - based on the laws of nature and Hanhaga Torasis - based on the laws of Torah. Hanhaga Tivis means that the world is set in a natural order where set laws with boundaries of space and time govern the happenings of the world. The overall history of the world is written and flows through time and space, which based on those laws, has their cause and effect. Above this natural way of managing the world, there is a hanhaga or way of running the world by the Torah. Hanhaga Torasis is a supernatural governing of the world. When the Jewish people received the Torah at Har Sinai, they became a supernatural people - free from the evil inclination and death! However, when they sinned, they too returned to being bound by the natural laws of the universe. Nonetheless, the free will was still given to them to choose a Hanhaga Torasis.

On a simple level, if, heaven forbid, there is a bad event that is supposed to occur in a certain place and one is aware of it, he possess the free will to choose to avoid that place and take an alternate route and subsequently be saved from calamity. Similarly, in the dimension of time, although most people are bound by time as there is a natural order to the universe

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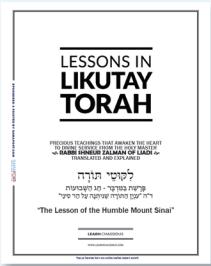
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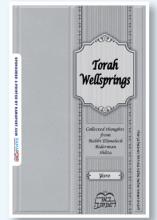
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and by law, time moves forward so that a second follows a second, a minute follows a minute, thus turning into hours, days, weeks, months and years, yet even so - we Am Yisrael can escape! We can move above and beyond of the element of natural law using the power of Torah. We have the free will to choose to change the flow of time and redirect the course of history!

This amazing phenomenon is attainable by one who engages himself in a life attached to Torah and mitzvos. Such an individual is above time. He enters a realm of Hanhaga Torasis where he is free to extricate himself from time. Based on this concept, the Kozhnitzer Maggid quotes his Rebbe, the great Maggid of Mezritch, who explains the well-known term for the question we will all be asked after 120 - "Kavata Itim leTorah?" Did you set aside time for Torah study? Simply, the word Kavata in translated as, set aside. However, it also implies that one can establish and fixate time through Torah since through Torah we establish and set the times!



There was once a wealthy and wicked anti-semitic who hated Jews with a burning hatred. His malice knew no bounds and he always sought new ways to make hapless Jews suffer.

Once day, while he was traveling, he entered a tavern that was full of the non-Jewish locals. Scanning the room, he noticed a Jew, distinctively dressed in Jewish attire with a beard and payos, sitting alone in one of the corners.

"Now is my chance!" thought the wicked anti-semitic to himself. "I will make this Jew miserable!" he snickered. "Hey bartender!" he called to the man serving the drinks and fare, "Cook up your best fish and give everyone but that Jew a portion. It's all on me!" he laughed. The bartender prepared fancy gourmet fish and served everyone except the Jew. After the hearty meal, the patrons all lined up and thanked the generous stranger one after the other. At the end of the line he was surprised and dismayed to see the Jew smiling and thanking him as well!

"What nerve!" he muttered to himself in anger and disappointment. I will teach him what it means to play games with me. "Hey bartender," he bellowed once more, taking out his purse and putting some gold on the counter, "Feed everyone but this Jew a nice meal of your best meat!" And so he did. Everyone got a sizable portion of prime rib steak, everyone, except the Jew in the corner. Yet everyone, including the Jew, lined up to thank him with smiles on their faces.

"What is this!" he banged his fist and gnashed his teeth. He was furious. Why was the Jew thanking him too? Why was he unfazed, not hurt or embarrassed by being ignored and singled out. "I will show him. Hey Bartender!" he cried yet again, "Your best wine for everyone, everyone except that wretched Jew!" Again, everyone was given a bottle of the finest wine, everyone, except the Jew. The anti-Semitic's purse grew much lighter but he was sure that it was worth the money just to finally embarrass and distress the poor wretched Jew who had now been ignored three times - no fish, no meat and no wine! Everyone lined up again and heartily thanked the generous stranger for his generosity, everyone... including the happy, smiling Jew!!!

This was simply too much for him. Steam began to pour out of his ears and nostrils as he grew redder and redder with rage. Finally, he burst his top and exclaimed in a fit of madness, "Why! Why do you smile and laugh, Jew? What are you so happy about?!" The Jew turned to him, smiled broadly, laughed and said, "Of course I am happy and very grateful to you, even more so than the other patrons, for I am the owner and proprietor of this inn. It is my tavern and my food and wine you that have been buying with your gold and you have made me a very profitable day and so, I thank you!"

This, explained Rav Biderman, illustrates how no human machinations, plots and plans can hurt anyone. If from on High there is no will for you to be harmed, then no harm will befall you. Rather, just as they seek to injure you, they will, in the end, be the very ones who send you shefa, beracha and abundant blessings.



## הילולה

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Hebrew Tefilla for Lighting a Yahrzeit or Hilula Candle

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

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Translation:

Behold I am lighting this lamp for the resting and uplifting of the soul of my father/my mother/the *Tzaddik* \_\_\_\_\_ the son/daughter of \_\_\_\_\_. May it be Your will

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

- 3) Learn about the person including history, culture, writings and teachings.
- 4) Study some of his teaching or writings.

See more at: [www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm](http://www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm)



## ❖ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ❖



YAHRZEITS BEGINNING SHABBOS VAERA

[http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim\\_yahrtzeit/Teves/Shevat](http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim_yahrtzeit/Teves/Shevat)

Biographical information and yahrzeits compiled by Reb Manny Saltiel and [www.anshe.org](http://www.anshe.org)

### \* **28<sup>th</sup> of Teves ~ Begins Friday Night (Jan 24<sup>th</sup>)**

\* **Rav Eliyahu Meir Bloch** (1894–1955). Born on *Simchas Torah* in the small Lithuanian city of Telshe to Rav Yosef Leib, *Rav* and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Telshe, having assumed the helm of the *Yeshiva* from his father-in-law, Rav Eliezer Gordon, the founder of the *Yeshiva*. After his marriage, he spent twelve years as a *Rosh Yeshiva* at Telshe. When it became clear that the *Yeshiva* could not continue under the Soviets, the administration sent Rav Elya Meir and his brother-in-law, the late *Rosh Yeshiva* Rav Chaim Mordechai Katz, on a mission to the United States, to raise funds to move the *Yeshiva* to either America or *Eretz Yisrael*. When they arrived, they learned of the Nazi invasion. They decided to restart the *Yeshiva* in Cleveland, (5716/1955);

\* **Rav Shmuel Berenbaum**, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mir in Brooklyn (1920–January 6, 2008). Born in the small Polish-Lithuanian town of Kinishen, Rav Shmuel began his formal learning at *Yeshiva Ohel Torah* of Baranovitch in 1935 under the leadership of Rav Elchonon Wasserman. During his years in the Mirrer *Yeshiva*, he became very close with the famed *Mashgiach* of the Mir, Rav Yechezkel Levenstein. As the Nazis rolled across Eastern Europe at the onset of World War II, he traveled with the rest of the Mir *Yeshiva* to Vilna, Poland, where they remained for three weeks awaiting visas to travel abroad. After receiving destination visas to Curaçao, a Dutch protectorate in the Caribbean, they were given travel visas by the Japanese Consul in Kovno, Chiune Sugihara. The *Yeshiva* traveled across the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok, Russia, in a trip that took over two months. From there they traveled to Kobe, Japan, where they remained for seven months before being settled by the Japanese Government in Shanghai, China, where they spent six years in exile. In the early 1950s, Rav Avrohom Kalmanowitz, who had sustained and saved the *Yeshiva* in Shanghai and rebuilt it in America, took Rav Shmuel as a son-in-law. After his marriage, Rav Shmuel joined the *kollel* of the Mirrer *Yeshiva*. In 1964, after the passing of his father-in-law, he became the *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Mirrer *Yeshiva* together with his brother-in-law Rav Shraga Moshe Kalmanowitz (Rav Avrohom's eldest son). His diligence in *Torah* study was legendary and he was known to spend the entire day in the *Yeshiva*'s study hall discussing *Torah* topics with the



students. He was the *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Mir *Yeshiva* in Brooklyn for more than fifty years. His *levaya*, held on January 7 at the Mir *Yeshiva* in Brooklyn, was attended by tens of thousands of mourners, and his body was flown to *Eretz Yisrael* for burial in the Sanhedria Cemetery in Yerushalayim, (5768/2008).

## \* **29<sup>th</sup> of Teves ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Jan 25<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* This date is *Erev Rosh Chodesh Shevat*. Many people choose to do a daylight fast as a *tikkun* for *Shovavim*.
- \* **Rav Yisrael Charif** from Stanov, *mechaber* of *Tiferes Yisrael*, *talmid* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, (5541/1781);
- \* **Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin**, (1818–1898), the *Rav* of Brisk, Yerushalayim, son of Rav Binyomin Diskin, *Rav* of Volkovisk. He was born in Horodno. Rav Yehoshua Leib was engaged before his *bar mitzva* and at the age of fourteen married the daughter of Rav Brode and lived with his father-in-law in Wolkowitz. He became *Rav* in various cities such as Lomza, Mezritch, Kovno, Shklov and finally in Brisk. Moved to *Eretz Yisrael* after *Yom Kippur* in 1876, (5658/1898);
- \* **Rav Yerachmiel Yisrael Yitzchok** of Alexander, the *Yismach Yisrael* (1853–1910). At an early age, his father, Rav Yechiel of Alexander, took him to Rav Menachem Mendel of Vorka, then Rav Beirush of Biala. After the latter's passing, he became of a *Chassid* of his father. After his father's passing in 1894, he became the Alexander *Rebbe*, (5670/1910);
- \* **Rav Marcus (Nosson) Adler**, author of *Nesina L'ger* (1803–1890). He was *Rav* of Oldenburg, 1829–1830, and Hanover, 1830–1844, and Chief *Rav* of the British Empire, 1844–1890, (5650/1890);
- \* **Rav Meir Chodosh**, *Mashgiach* of *Yeshiva Chevron*, *Ateres Yisrael* and *Ohr Elchonon* (1898–1989). Born in Patrich, Lithuania, he was a *talmid muvhok* of the *Alter* of Slabodka, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel. He lived through the Arab massacre of Chevron's Jews on *Shabbos* morning, 16<sup>th</sup> of Av, 1929, (5749/1989);
- \* **Rav Daniel Levy** (1935–2004). Born the youngest of nine children in Petersfield, England, he learned at Gateshead *Yeshiva* and *Kollel* before his marriage and for twelve years after. Following a trip to America, where he learned from Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, he was chosen as *Rav* of the *K'hal Adas Yeshurun* of Zurich, (5764/2004);
- \* **Rav Chaim Shamshon Swiatycki** (1914–2004), nephew of the *Chazon Ish* and scion of the Karelitz dynasty, whose patriarch and matriarch – Rav Shemaryahu Yosef and Rasha Leah, had fifteen children. Her third child, Henya Chaya, married Rav Abba Swiatycki, who became *Rav* of Kosova, after the *petira* of Rav Shemaryahu Yosef during World War I. Their only child was Rav Chaim. Rav Chaim's mentor was his uncle, Rav Yitzchok Zundel Karelitz, brother of the *Chazon Ish*. At the age of fourteen, he left for Mir, then learned with Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz in Kaminetz, where he stayed for six years. In 1934, he followed his uncle to *Eretz Yisrael* to escape conscription. He learned at *Yeshiva Chevron* in Yerushalayim and *Yeshiva Volozhin* in Tel Aviv. He then moved to America in 1938, where he joined the faculty at *Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim*, (5764/2004);
- \* **Rav Yitzchok Kaduri**, (1901–2006). Born to Rav Ze'ev Diva in Baghdad, at the time under Ottoman Turkish rule, he was a renowned *Mizrachi Chareidi Rav* and *mekubol*, who devoted his life to *Torah* study and prayer on behalf of the Jewish people. He lived a life of poverty and simplicity. He ate little, spoke little and davened each month at the gravesites of *Tzaddikim*. As a youngster, Rav Kaduri excelled in his studies and began learning *Kabbola* while still in his teens, a study that would last his entire life. Graced with a phenomenal

memory, he was said to have memorized the entire *Talmud Bovli*, and he knew all the writings of Rav Yitzchok Luria – the *ARI HaKodosh*, the founder of modern *Kabbola*, by heart. He was a student of the *Ben Ish Chai* (Rav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad) and studied at the Zilka *Yeshiva* in Baghdad. Rav Kaduri moved to the British Mandate of Palestine (*Eretz Yisrael*) in 1923 upon the advice of the elders of Baghdad, who hoped that his scholarship and piety would stop the incursion of Zionism in the post-World War I state. It was here that he changed his name from Diba to Kaduri, and fixed his place of study at *Yeshiva Poras Yosef* in the Old City, where he studied *Kabbola* under the tutelage of Rav Efraim *HaKohen* and Rav Salman Eliyahu (father of former *Sefardi* Chief *Rav* Mordechai Eliyahu). He studied at the *Shoshanim LeDovid Yeshiva* for *mekubolim* from Iraq, where he learned from the leading *mekubolim* of the time, including Rav Yehuda Fatya, author of *Bais Lechem Yehuda*, and Rav Yaakov Chaim Sofer, author of *Kaf HaChaim*. After marrying his first wife, Sarah, Rav Kaduri lived in *Shechunas HaBucharim*, one of Yerushalayim's first neighborhoods built outside the Old City walls. He would stay at the *Yeshiva* all week, coming home shortly before *Shabbos*. The *Rav* later immersed himself in regular *talmudic* study and rabbinic law, and became responsible for binding the *Yeshiva*'s books and copying over rare manuscripts. When the Jewish quarter of the Old City in Yerushalayim fell to the invading Jordanian Army in 1948, the Jordanians set fire to the *Yeshiva* and all surrounding houses, destroying all the books and manuscripts that Rav Kaduri could not smuggle to *Bais El Yeshiva* (*Yeshiva HaMekubolim*) in Yerushalayim. After the *petira* of the leading *mekubol*, Rav Efraim *HaKohen*, in 1949, the remaining *mekubolim* appointed Rav Kaduri as their head, and he founded a new institution called *Yeshiva Nachalas Yitzchok*. Rav Kaduri did not publish any of the works that he authored on *Kabbola*; he allowed only students of *Kabbola* to study them, and believed that *Kabbola* should not be taught to non-Jews. He was *niftar* in Yerushalayim in January, 2006, and an estimated 300,000 people took part in his funeral procession. He is buried in the Givat Shaul cemetery near the entrance to the city of Yerushalayim. At the time of his passing, estimates of his age ranged from 103 to 118. His closer *talmidim* say that the blessing of the *Ben Ish Chai* and that of the Lubavitcher *Rebbe* – both of whom blessed him that he might live to see the Final Redeemer – came true. The students say that Rav Kaduri told them he met *Moshiach* on the 9<sup>th</sup> of *Cheshvan* 5764 (November 4, 2003). He reportedly said that *Moshiach* is not promoting himself, and that a study of his [Rav Kaduri's] words in recent months would provide hints of his identity, (5766/2006).

\* **1st of Shevat ~ Begins Sunday Night (Jan 26<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* **Shaul HaMelech**, (2883, or circa 1082 BCE–1010 BCE), the first king of a united Kingdom of Yisrael and Yehuda. He was anointed by Shmuel *HaNovi* (the Prophet Samuel) and reigned from Giv'a. Shaul began as a humble and pious *Torah* scholar and became a successful warrior-king. Wars raged throughout his entire reign, and Shaul merited great victories in his battles against the *Pelishitim* (Philistines) and other enemies. When it came to the great war against *Amoleik*, however, Shaul did not obey *Hashem*'s command to annihilate the entire nation of *Amoleik*. When he became aware of *Hashem*'s displeasure, Shaul fell into a deep depression, which could be relieved only by the music of Dovid, the man who would ultimately replace him as king. Shaul died by falling on his sword in order to avoid capture in the battle against the *Pelishitim* at *Har Gilboa*, during which three of his sons were also killed. He was buried in Yoveish, in the region of Binyomin within modern-day *Eretz Yisrael*;

- \* **Yehonoson ben Shaul HaMelech**, a great soul-brother to Dovid HaMelech, (2883);
- \* Shaul's other sons, **Avinodov** and **Malki-shua**, who died in battle against the *Pelishtim*, (2883);
- \* **Rav Nossen Nota ben Rav Avrohom** of Chelm, *talmid* of the *Rebbe Reb Elimelech* of Lzhensk and Rav Mordechai of Neshchiz. *Mechaber* of the *Neta Sha'ashuim*, (5572/1812);
- \* **Rav Moshe Schick**, the *Maharam Shick* (1807–1879). His “last name” was created by his family in response to a demand by government agencies; it is an acrostic for *Shem Yehudi Kodesh*. Born in Brezheva, a small town in Hungary, he was sent at the age of eleven to learn with his uncle, Rav Yitzchok Frankel, *Av Bais Din* in Regendorf. When he was fourteen, he was sent to learn under the *Chasam Sofer* in Pressburg, where he stayed for six years. At twenty, he married his cousin, Gittel Frankel. He was appointed *Rav* in Yargen in 1838, the year of the *Chasam Sofer's petira*, then became *Rav* in Chust, (5639/1879);
- \* **Rav Moshe Yechiel HaLevi Epstein** from Ozerov (1890–1971), great-grandson of Rav Leibish, the first Ozerover *Rebbe*. In 1912, he became *Rav* of Ozerov and in 1918, he replaced his father as *Rebbe*. During World War I, Ozerov burned down, with only twenty-two houses left standing (just eleven of Jewish inhabitants). In 1920, he traveled to America to publicize the importance of *Agudas Yisrael*, and in 1927, moved his family to the Bronx. He immigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* in 1949, settling in Tel Aviv. Rav Moshe Yechiel wrote two monumental works, *Aish Da'as*, comprising eleven volumes, and *Be'er Moshe*, twelve volumes on *Chumash* and *Tanach*. Each volume contained at least five hundred pages, over ten thousand pages in all. Two biographies have been written about him, *Balabas Aish* and *The Aish Da'as of Ozerov*. Rav Moshe Yechiel was succeeded by his son-in-law, Rav Tanchum Binyomin Becker, (5731/1971);
- \* **Rav Avrohom Yehuda Farbstein** (1917–1997), *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshiva Chevron*. Rav Farbstein's father was one of the founders of Bnei Brak and was head of its first city council. As a youth, Rav Avrohom Yehuda studied in the *Chevron Yeshiva* and the *Mir Yeshiva* in Europe. Rav Farbstein's wife was a daughter of Rav Yechezkel Sarna. He taught in the *Chevron Yeshiva* for fifty years, (5757/1997);
- \* **Rav Binyomin ben Rav Aryeh Mordechai Leib Rabinowitz**. A scion of the Peshis'cha dynasty, he was a great *Tzaddik* and *Admor* of *Mishkenos HaRoiim* in Meah Shearim and *Chaver Bais Din* of the *Eida Chareidis*. One of his sons succeeded him, and another is the Porisover *Rebbe*, both highly regarded *Tzaddikim*, (5762/2002);
- \* **Rebbetzin Menucha Ettel Nekritz** (1914–2006), granddaughter of the *Alter* of Novardok, and the daughter of Rav Avrohom Yaffen, the *Rosh Yeshiva* of Novardok in Poland. Born in 1914 in Bialystock, Poland, she was named after Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz's mother Ettel – her mother's sister – with the name Menucha added because her aunt had died young. The *Alter* was *niftar* when she was six years old, and her father, Rav Yaffen, ran the large network of Novardok *Yeshivos* that were spread out all over Poland. Its nerve center was in Bialystock. She married Rav Yehuda Leib Nekritz in 1935, (5766/2006).

\* **2nd of Shevat ~ Begins Monday Night (Jan 27<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* **Rav Menachem Mendel Krochmahl** of Nikolsburg, the *Tzemach Tzedek* (1600–1661). He learned in Cracow, in the *Yeshiva* of the *Bach*, his *Rebbe Muvhok*, and had a close relationship with the *Taz*. In 1631, he fled Cracow because of the Cossack uprisings, and settled in Moravia, becoming *Rav* in Krezmir. He later became *Rav* in Prosnitz, then of Nikolsburg in 1648. There is a sefer called *Pi Tzaddik* that has been attributed to him, but research has determined that the author is his son, Rav Arye Yehuda Leib, (5421/1661);

- \* **Rav Meshulom Zisha ben Rav Elozor Lipman** (Rebbe Reb Zisha) from Anipoli (Hanipoli) (1718–1800). The Rebbe Reb Zisha was attracted to *Chassidus* in his youth, becoming a *talmid* of Rav Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezritch, and encouraging his younger brother, the Rebbe Reb Elimelech, *mechaber* of the *Noam Elimelech*, to join him. There are many stories told about him and his brother. Although Rebbe Reb Zisha wrote *Menoras Zohov* (Candelabra of Gold), he was not noted for his learning, unlike his brother who became the famous *Tzaddik* of Lzhensk. The Rebbe Reb Zisha's fame rests on his humility, his generous disposition and his charismatic personality. His flock knew him as the *Rebbe* who recognized only goodness. In his final years, he suffered from a protracted illness, but he never complained. "Whatever comes from *Hashem* is good," he would say. The final resting place of this beloved *Chassidic Rebbe* is beside the grave of his mentor, the *Maggid* of Mezritch, (5560/1800);
- \* **Rav Simcha Bunim Kalish** of Otvotzk and Teveria, son of Rav Menachem Mendel of Vorka, (5667/1907);
- \* **Rav Tzvi Hirsch Rabinowitz**, (5670/1910);
- \* **Rav Yisrael Chaim Kaplan**, *talmid* at Mir, son-in-law of Rav Yeruchom Levovitz, *mashgiach* at *Bais Medrash Elyon* in Monsey from mid-1940s until his *petira*, (5730/1970);
- \* **Rav Mansour Ben-Shimon**, *mechaber* of *Shemen HaMaor*, (5758/1998).

\* **3rd of Shevat ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Jan 28<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* **Rav Yosef ben Rav Avrohom Gershon Katz** of Cracow, brother-in-law of the *Rema* and *mechaber* of *She'eiris Yosef*. [Note: the *Admor* of *Desh*, Rav Tzvi Meir Panet (1923–2003) also authored a *sefer* called *She'eiris Yosef*], (5351/1591);
- \* **Rav Yosef Rakover**, *Rav* of Eibeshetz and *mechaber* of *Mirkeves HaMishna*, (5463/1703);
- \* **Rav Pinchas** of Plutzk, *talmid* of the Vilna *Gaon*, and *mechaber* of *Maggid Tzedek*. [Note: Rav Yitzchok Maltzen (Maltzan), best known as the *mechaber* of *Siddur HaGra* and *Ishei Yisrael*, also wrote a commentary on the *Haggoda* called *Maggid Tzedek*. Elsewhere, however, we read that the same Rav Yitzchok Maltzen wrote in *Siach Yitzchok* "in the name of the *sefer Maggid Tzedek*, suggesting a different person.], (5583/1823);
- \* **Rav Simcha Bunim** of Peshis'cha (1767–1828), one of the key leaders of *Chassidus* in Poland. After learning at Mattersdorf and Nikolsburg, Rav Simcha Bunim was introduced to *Chassidus* by his father-in-law, and became a *Chassid* of Rav Yisrael Hopsztajn (*Maggid* of Kozhnitz), and then Rav Yaakov Yitzchok of Lublin (*Chozeh* of Lublin). After the *petira* of Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Rabinowicz (the *Yid HaKodosh*), most of the *Chassidim* followed Rav Simcha Bunim as their *Rebbe* and leader of Peshis'cha, emphasizing *Torah* study. Not wanting to take up a rabbinical position, he supported himself by practicing pharmacy. At a later stage, he became an agent for Temerl Bergson, a wealthy businesswoman who supported many of the *Chassidic* leaders during her time. He wrote no works of his own, but many of his teachings were transmitted orally, some of which have been collected in *Kol Simcha*. Others are cited in later works. One of the more famous oral teachings attributed to Rav Simcha Bunim of Peschis'cha goes as follows: "Everyone must have two pockets, with a note in each pocket, so that he or she can reach into the one or the other, depending on the need. When feeling lowly and depressed, discouraged or disconsolate, one should reach into the right pocket, and, there, find the words: 'For my sake was the world created'. But when feeling high and mighty, one should reach into the left pocket, and find the words: 'I am but dust and ashes'." Among the followers of his methods were the Kotzker *Rebbe*, the Vorker *Rebbe*, the *Chiddushei HaRim* of Ger and Rav Chanoch of Alexander, (5588/1828);

- \* **Rav Moshe Yehuda Leib Zilberberg**, *Rav* of Kutna and Yerushalayim, *mechaber* of *Zayis Raanan* and *Tiferes Yerushalayim*, (5625/1865);
  - \* **Rav Yosef Yerachmiel Aharon Kalish**, *Rebbe* of Amshinov (1878–1935 or 1937). [The name Yerachmiel Aharon was added on in his final illness]. The son of Rav Menachem of Amshinov, grandson of Rav Yaakov Dovid of Amshinov, and great-grandson of Rav Yitzchok of Vorka. Rav Yosef was appointed *Rav* of Ostrova at the age of twenty-seven. He then succeeded his father in 1918. His son, Rav Yaakov Dovid (1906–1942), became *Rebbe* of Amshinov, upon Rav Yosef's *petira*, (5695/1935 or 5697/1937);
  - \* **Rav Shmuel Dovid HaKohen Munk**, *mechaber* of *Pe'as HaSodeh*, (5741/1981).
- \* **4<sup>th</sup> of Shevat ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Jan 29<sup>th</sup>)**
- \* **Osher**, son of Yaakov Avinu (1562–1439 B.C.E.);
  - \* **Rav Moshe Leib** of Sassov (1745–1807). Rav Moshe Leib was a student of Rav Shmuel Shmelke of Nikolsburg, Rav Dov Ber (the *Maggid* of Mezritch) and Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk. His teachings are contained in the *seforim*: *Likutei RaMal*, *Toras ReMal HaSholem*, and *Chiddushei RaMal*. He excelled at the *mitzva* of redeeming captives, (5567/1807);
  - \* **Rav Avrohom Katz** of Kalisk. Originally a *talmid* of the Vilna *Gaon*, he was advised to visit the *Maggid* of Mezritch, and subsequently became his follower. His prayers were noted for their fervor. In *Adar* of 1777, he joined his close friend, Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, in leading three hundred *Chassidim* to *Eretz Yisrael*. They settled in Teverya. After the *petira* of Rav Menachem Mendel, Rav Avrohom became the leader of the *Chassidic* community in *Eretz Yisrael*. Rav Nachman of Breslov said that he was the only person that he ever saw in which there was *shleimus* (perfection), (5570/1810);
  - \* **Rav Avrohom Aharon Yudelevitch** (1850–1930). Born in Novardok, White Russia, his mother was a sister of Rav Meir Marim Saphit (*niftar* 1873), *Rav* of Kobrin, White Russia, and *mechaber* of *Nir*, a famous commentary on the *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Beginning in 1874, he served as *Rav* in several Russian towns before moving to Manchester, England, and from there to Boston and finally New York. He was a prolific author. His works include the multi-volume *Dorash Av*, on *Chumash* and the festivals, and the multi-volume *halachic* responsa, *Bais Av*. In *Av Be'chochma*, he defends what was probably his best-known and most controversial ruling, that *chalitza* could be performed *al yedei shali'ach* (through a third party). Among those who opposed his ruling were Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer and the Rogatchover, (5690/1930);
  - \* **Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg**, author of *Seridei Aish*, (1885–1966), a *talmid* of the Mir and Slabodka *Yeshivos*. When World War I broke out, he went to Germany and studied at the university of Giessen, receiving a Ph.D. for a thesis on the masoretic text. He subsequently taught and eventually became head of the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary, founded by Rav Ezriel Hildesheimer, (5726/1966);
  - \* **Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira**, the *Baba Sali* (1890–1984). Born in Tefillalat, Morocco, he moved to *Eretz Yisrael* in 1964, eventually settling in Netivot in southern *Eretz Yisrael* in 1970, (5744/1984);
  - \* **Rav Yaakov Elozor ben Rav Shlomo Zalman Friedman**, *Rav* of Rakoshegy, Hungary. He was a descendant of the *Sha'arei Torah*, *Shemen Roke'ach*, *Yerias Shlomo*, *Ponim Me'iros*, *Chacham Tzvi*, *Bach*, *Tosfos Yom Tov*, *Maharshal* and *Levush*, (5762/2002).
- \* **5<sup>th</sup> of Shevat ~ Begins Thursday Night (Jan 30<sup>th</sup>)**
- \* **Rav Chaim Dovid Chazan**, the *Rishon L'Tzion*, (5629/1869);

- \* **Rav Sholom Shachna Yelin**, *Rav* of Bielsk and author of *Yefeh Einayim*. Bielsk is a town fifty-two km south of Bialystok, in northeastern Poland, which had a substantial Jewish presence before World War II. Bielsk became part of the Russian Empire in 1807 after the partitioning of Poland. In the 1840s, the town was absorbed into Grodno Gubernia, a province of the Russian Pale of Settlement allowing Jewish residency. In 1898, a large wooden shul was built and called *Yefeh Einayim* in honor of Rav Yelin, (5634/1874);
- \* **Rav Yehuda Arye Leib Alter** of Ger, the *Sfas Emes* (1847–1905). Since his father, Rav Avrohom Mordechai, passed away when he was eight years old, Rav Yehuda Arye Leib was raised by his grandfather, the *Chiddushei HaRim*. He became *Admor* of Ger at the age of twenty-three in 1870. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of *Elul* 1901, his wife, Yocheved Rivka, passed away. He then married Raizel, daughter of Rav Boruch of Gorlitz, the son of the Sanzer *Rav*. He fathered a total of ten children. Four passed away in childhood and the surviving children were: his eldest son, *mechaber* of the *Imrei Emes*; Rav Moshe Betzalel; Rav Nechemia of Lodz; and Rav Menachem Mendel of Pavinezh. His two sons-in-law were Rav Yaakov Meir Biderman, *Dayan* in Warsaw, and Rav Tzvi Chanoch *HaKohen* Levine, *Rav* of Bandin, (5665/1905);
- \* **Rav Avrohom Eliezer Alperstein**, (1853–1913). Born in Kobrin, White Russia, he studied under Rav Yaakov Dovid Willowsky (the *Ridvaz*) and in *Yeshivos* in Kovno and Vilna. Rav Alperstein moved to New York in 1881, then Chicago in 1884, where he was *Rav* of the Kovner and Suvalker congregations. In 1899, he relocated to Saint Paul, Minnesota. In 1901, Rav Alperstein returned to New York. There, he was an early leader of *Yeshiva Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon* (RIETS), which later evolved into Yeshiva University. The following year, he participated in the organizing convention of the *Agudas HaRabbonim*/United Orthodox Rabbis of America, and signed its constitution as one of its fifty-nine charter members. Rav Alperstein published a commentary on *Maseches Bikkurim* with a *haskoma* from Rav Yosef Dov *HaLevi* Soloveitchik (the *Bais HaLevi*), (5673/1913);
- \* **Rav Shlomo Zalman Friedman**, Rachover *Rav*, *mechaber* of *Kedushas Yom Tov* and a follower of the *Rebbe* of Sighet. After his father, Rav Yisrael Chaim Friedman, passed away suddenly in 5682 (1922) in a flash flood, Rav Shlomo Zalman took his place. The *Rav* was known as a great scholar, a wonderful teacher and a kind person. He was much loved by the Jews of Rachov. Between the two world wars he ran a large *Yeshiva* in Rachov, with as many as 150 *talmidim*. Most of the *talmidim* were from Marmarosh, but some also came from other areas in Carpatho-Rus. This was, of course, a *Yeshiva* in the *Chassidic* style, following the tradition of the Sighet *Chassidim*, but its *talmidim* included those from other *Chassidic* groups. He survived the Holocaust after experiencing the horrors of Auschwitz. After the war he settled in Satmar, where he was head of the rabbinic court and watched over the Jewish life of the survivors that settled in Satmar. He made strenuous efforts on behalf of *agunos* and *agunim* (women and men whose spouses were missing) from the Holocaust. In 1947, he escaped from Romania and settled in Lugano in Switzerland, where he served as Chief *Rav* and *Av Bais Din*. He was warmly welcomed by the Jews of the community and in all of Switzerland he was sought out and considered as one of the great *halachic* decisors. His last years were spent in the home of his son-in-law, Rav Menachem Mendel Horowitz, in Bnei Brak. He was *niftar* on the 5<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat*, 5740, and his coffin was carried to Yerushalayim and interred on *Har HaZeisim* (Mount of Olives), (5740/1980).



## ❖ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❖

### WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

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

**בית הקברות הוא מקום מנוחת הצדיקים ומתוך כך הוא מקום קדוש וטהור התפילה נתקבלת שם יותר, אך אל ישם מגמותו נגד המתים, אך יבקש מהש"ת שיתן עליו רחמים בזוכת הצדיקים שוכני עפר, ויקיף הקברות, ויתן צדקה קודמת שיאמר התהינota.**

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



## ❖ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❖

### STORIES & ANECDOTES

#### Rav Moshe Yehoshua Yehuda Leib, 29<sup>th</sup> of Teves

*Maharil Diskin*, the *Seraf* of Brisk

##### Torah Worth More Than Gold and Pearls

In the *Maharil's Yeshiva*, *Ohel Moshe*, there was a joint *siyum*. Four *talmidim* had completed four *masechtos* and they conducted a festive meal in honor of their joint *simcha*. Two *talmidim* had completed shorter tractates like *Taanis* and *Shekulin*, whereas the other two had completed *Shabbos* and *Bava Basra*, which were longer *masechtos*. The *Maharil* spoke at the *siyum* and taught, “We say that the *Torah* is *mipaz umipeninim yekora* – the *Torah* is more precious than gold and pearls. Why do we use this comparison? Each of these precious metals and stones has its pros and cons. Let me explain: A *paz*

is a gold nugget. Its value is based on weight. The heavier it is, the more valuable; the lighter, the less valuable. Its sole value is based on its weight. It has an advantage, though: if you break it, even a small sliver of gold has value. A pearl, on the other hand, is valued by size. Whereas gold that weighs double is worth just double, a pearl double the size can be worth many times more! But there is a great disadvantage when compared to gold, for if you break a pearl, it can lose all its value. *Torah* surpasses them both. It is more precious than gold and pearls, for it has all the advantages and none of the disadvantages. A smaller-sized *masechta* is also worth *Olam HaBa!* A larger *masechta* can be

worth myriad *Olmos*, many, many more times than how many *blatt* it contains, just like a pearl! Unlike the pearl, however, you cannot break it to lose its value, for even just one *blatt* or *daf Gemora* is priceless, and if you study just that you get *sechar* (reward) and you don't break the *masecheta!*" (*Teshuas Tzaddikim*, p. 514, in the name of *BaYeshishim Chochma*)



### **A Holy Hat**

The *Maharil Diskin* was once in Lomza when he passed by a sick Jew in the street. This Jew was mentally disabled, *nebech*, so that he walked around without a head covering. When the *Maharil* noticed this, he asked the sick Jew, "Where is your *yarmulke*?"

"I don't have one," answered the sick man.

Without hesitation, the *Maharil* removed his own *yarmulke* and placed it on the sick man's head. Immediately, his sickness departed and his mind began to operate normally – he was miraculously healed on the spot! From then on, he



## **Rav Yitzchok ben Ze'ev Kaduri, 29<sup>th</sup> of Teves**

Zaken HaMekubolim

### **The Secret of his Long Life**

Best known for his amazing wisdom in *Kabbola*, here are some anecdotes from his life:



### **His Ahavas Yisrael**

Rav Kaduri lived to a great old age of over one hundred and ten years old! He used to testify that his secret to long life was in the merit of never becoming angry or upset with any other Jew! His family testified as well that they never saw him get angry at another Jew, never heard him raise his voice and was always smiling. (*Oros MiMizrach*, ch. 23)

always wore the *Maharil's yarmulke*; he never took it off, and even wore it when he went to the *mikve*! (*Maasei Tzaddikim*, p. 215)



### **A Shabbos Segula**

Rav Diskin once used a *Shabbos* food as a *segula* to heal a sick child. When Rav Yisrael Dovid Braverman was a young child, he was sick with an ailment that attacked his throat. His situation was so grave that his mother feared for his life. It was *Erev Shabbos*, right before *shkiya* (sunset).

At her wits' end, she grabbed the sick child and ran to her neighbor, the *Maharil Diskin*, begging the *Tzaddik* to save her sick son. Quickly, the *Maharil* took the child, and rushed over to a pot of hot *Shabbos* soup that was simmering on the stove. The *Tzaddik* took one spoonful of *Shabbos* soup and fed the child. Immediately the child calmed down and his situation improved until miraculously he recovered and his health was restored! (*Hechal HaShabbos* I, p. 72)



### **His Meticulous Honesty**

Rav Yaakov Adas told how he heard from Rav Yitzchok's son, Rav Dovid Kaduri, that when Rav Kaduri left *Yeshivas Shoshanim LeDovid* for *Beit E'l* he took a princely sum of money, handed it to Rav Dovid, and asked him to pass this money on to the *hanhola* of *Shoshanim LeDovid*. He explained the reason for this to his son as follows: "When they paid me my salary, it was for my study and teaching. However, how am I to be sure I earned my full wage? Surely, there were times I was late or absent and missed some of my allotted hours of learning. If so, I owe them this money to cover any doubts!"

## **His Modest Income**

For many years, Rav Kaduri earned his living as a bookbinder. He explained that he chose this work for several reasons: it allowed an honest wage, gave him time to devote to studying the *seforim* which he bound and allowed him access to rare volumes, which he would lovingly rebind, study from and often copy. It also kept him home, away from any *nisyonus* that many workplaces put on a person, where they are forced to work with and in close proximity to people, places and things a *yerei shomayim* should avoid. Rav Yosef Ades used to joke that the *Haggoda Shel Pesach*'s saying that "Hillel HaZoken used to bind them and consume them at the same time" (referring to the *korech* sandwich made of *matza* and *moror*) applied to Rav Kaduri – that *zoken* also used to



bind them and consume them at the same time; he would bind the *seforim* and repair them, while studying them cover to cover! (*HaRav Yitzchok Kaduri*, p. 274–275)



## **His Hasmoda**

Rav Adas testifies that Rav Kaduri's *hasmoda* knew no bounds, no matter how much he was needed by Klal Yisrael. "In the years we knew the *Rav*, he was already busy and very involved in public needs, such as the many visitors who sought his advice and blessings, and later on when he was called to strengthen the many public gatherings for *teshuva* and *chizuk*, nonetheless he was always *masmid*, learning and studying *Torah* with diligence and unceasing, unwavering devotion. This nonstop *hasmoda* day and night was achieved by sitting in the *Bais Medrash* with no interruptions. He would also sit quietly and mutely for hours on end. He refrained from any idle, unnecessary speech, and only spoke when the public needed his words of blessing or advice." (*HaRav Yitzchok Kaduri*, p. 274)



## **Rav Moshe, 1<sup>st</sup> of Shevat**

Maharam Schick

Rav Shmuel Brach writes: There is no need to elaborate on the greatness of the *mechaber* or his work, but I wish to make this point well known to others which was once only well known to his *talmidim*, namely, that for many years Rav Moshe worked on a *sefer* that would explain the 613 *mitzvos* and when it was completed, but before it was published, the *sefer Minchas Chinuch* was published on the *Taryag Mitzvos*. Rav Moshe then said that the *mechaber* of the *Minchas Chinuch* covered much of the same topics as half his own work and preceded him. He then decided to edit his own language, style and wording and to make it more concise and

brief.

In those days, his eyesight had already begun to fail him and so he was no longer able to write down or edit his notes properly. And so this work was done by others; his *talmidim* would come for just one hour a day to devote time to this job. I myself remember how during that special hour, some three or four *talmidim* sat before him, simultaneously writing, editing and recording his work. They sat around him in a circle and he recited by heart to each of them a different topic. One would record his *halachic* response. Another worked on editing the aforementioned work on the *Taryag Mitzvos*. A third was

writing his *chiddushim* on *sugyos* of the *Talmud* and yet a fourth recorded his insights into the *Aggadeta* of *Chazal*. This

simultaneous, four-branched work was indeed a wonder to behold! (Introduction to *Maharam Schick on Taryag Mitzvos*)



## Rav Meshulom Zisha of Hanipoli, 2<sup>nd</sup> of Shevat

### **The Day the Yetzer Hora Retired**

When the two holy brothers, the Rebbe Reb Melech and the Rebbe Reb Zisha wandered together in self-imposed exile to rectify the world and bring *Yiddishe kinder* to *teshuva*, they once entered an inn and found a group of elderly, idle Jews who sat around drinking and playing cards. Seeking to rouse their hearts and awaken them to *teshuva*, Rav Elimelech turned to Reb Zisha and said to him, “Zisha, zog! Say something!” Reb Zisha knocked on the table to get their attention and told them:

“Rabbosai, you should know that the *yetzer hora* quit his job and retired!”

“Why did he quit?” they asked.

Reb Zisha explained, “Once, the *yetzer hora* went to Gan Eden, and there he saw all kinds of *neshomos* of sinners and wicked people. In life, all these people were the *yetzer*’s gang, always living a *krum* lifestyle. When he saw them in Gan Eden, he wondered how they got there! He was told that they had done *teshuva* and mended their ways, and so they no longer belonged to him. Now their place was in Gan Eden.

“If so, all my hard work is for nothing,” he complained. “I spend all my time tricking people to sin, causing them to stumble and transgress, and here they just

go and do *teshuva* and become upstanding, reputable citizens of Gan Eden! That’s it! I quit!” And he retired. In his place a different angel was given the job of testing and trying to tempt others to sin.

Later, the former *yetzer hora* met the new one and asked the angel how his job was going. “Oh, my job is just fine,” answered the new *yetzer hora* smugly.

“How come you are so satisfied?” wondered the old *yetzer hora* aloud. “If you expend all your efforts and hard work to get people to sin and transgress, and then they just go and *teshuva* and escape off to Gan Eden, what’s the point, eh?”

“Oh, that’s easy,” answered the new *yetzer*. “You see, I am smarter than you and I learned from your failures. Your mistake was that you went after the



the younger generation.

Those youngsters have their whole lives ahead of them and



so they have plenty of years left to do *teshuva* and go to Gan Eden. I go after the elderly people with no time left. Idle, sinful old geezers like these...” and so saying, Reb Zisha pointed at the throng of card players, having got his message across. “They,” concluded the new *yetzer*, “have no time left to do *teshuva* and you’ll never find



Cover of Rabbi Zusha's book "Mesilat Zissil" (Candlelight of Gold)

them in Gan Eden. They will die wicked! (Needless to say, they internalized the message, did *teshuva* and escaped the

yetzer's clutches as well!) (*Otzar HaSippurim*, Volume III - Chapter 10)

## Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshis'cha, 3<sup>rd</sup> of Shevat

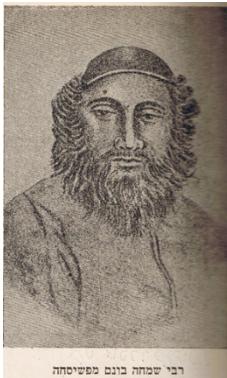
Please enjoy selected stories and teachings of Rav Simcha Bunim from Rav Tal Zwecker's *sefer Returnity, The Way Back to Eternity – Selected Teachings from the Chassidic Masters on Teshuvah*.



### The Farmer's Message

Before he became a *Rebbe*, Rav Simcha Bunim was a merchant. He was once in the marketplace buying grain. He haggled and bargained with a Polish farmer over the price of the grain, but the farmer stood his ground and only raised the price. "Poprowice," he told Rav Simcha Bunim – "Do better" in Polish. Although the farmer only meant that he wanted Rav Simcha Bunim to pay him more money, the farmer's words rang in Rav Simcha Bunim's ears even after he had returned home that night. *Poprowice!* Improve! Do better!

The *Tzaddik* took these words to heart. See, even the farmer is telling you to improve, he said to himself, and he resolved then and there to better himself. "Surely now is the time to do *teshuva*!" he declared.



רבי שמחה בונימ מפשיסחה

### A Game of Chess

When Rav Simcha Bunim was a merchant, before he became a *Rebbe*, he often engaged some of his fellow Jewish merchants, who had strayed from *Yiddishkeit*, in a game of chess. He would

use this opportunity to sneak in some remark that would help them mend their ways.

Once, he was playing chess when he made an illegal move. His opponent complained that the move was against the rules of the game.

Rav Simcha Bunim apologized profusely and begged his opponent's forgiveness. "I am sorry I made a mistake. Please forgive me this one time and allow me to redo my move."

His opponent conceded and agreed to allow Rav Simcha Bunim to make a different move, since this was the first time he had made such a mistake.

They continued playing until once again Rav Simcha Bunim made an illegal move. Again his opponent caught him and berated him, castigating Rav Simcha Bunim for the illegal move. Once again Rav Simcha Bunim apologized and asked his opponent to forgive his mistake and allow him to redo his move.

This time, however, his opponent refused. The first time he was willing to overlook the mistake, but he would not give Rav Simcha Bunim a second chance.

Rav Simcha Bunim now spoke up and said, "See how a person can make such a bad mistake and go so far down the wrong path that now nothing can help him return? If things go too far, he can never go back to correct his mistake and do it right!"

The words penetrated the merchant's heart. He repented while he still had a chance to "redo his moves" and became a complete *ba'al teshuva*.



## **Lost in the Forest**

The *Ba'al Shem Tov* taught that our thoughts of repentance and feelings of remorse actually originate from a *bas kol*, a heavenly voice, that calls to us daily to repent (see *Avos* 6:2).

Rav Simcha Bunim illustrated this idea with a parable:

A father and son were traveling together in a coach laden with wares that they planned to sell at the annual spring fair. They passed through a forest, and the young boy, seeing the beautiful spring blossoms around, declared, “Father, please allow me to stop here and pick some of these beautiful flowers!”

The father shook his head and said, “No, my son. If you stop to pick the flowers while I continue onward, you may not be able to catch up and you will get lost.”

“Please, Father, I will pick flowers slowly, and as you travel on I will call out to you. As long as you answer me and I hear your voice, I will know your location. Then all I need to do is to travel in the direction of your voice, and I will not lose my way.

Once I have picked enough flowers, I can catch up to you and we will travel on together.”

The father agreed, and the son alighted from the wagon to pick flowers while his father continued onward. Soon the father called out to his son, “My son, my son!” But there was no answer. The father covered his face with his hands in despair and said, “Had you heard my voice, you could follow it and find your way! But if you don’t even hear my voice, you have likely lost your way!”



## **True Teshuva**

Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshis’cha once observed a certain merchant loading his wares onto a raft to float them on the river’s currents to their destination. Something went wrong, and the entire load sank. The man’s distress at the loss of his merchandise was so great that he broke down and died on the spot! Rav Simcha Bunim declared, “Now that is how *teshuva* is done!”



## **Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira, 4<sup>th</sup> of Shevat**

*The Baba Sali*

### **Who Needs a Driver When the Baba Sali is Behind the Wheel?**

Rav Dovid Chai Abuchatzeira of Nahariyah used to relate how his father-in-law was often the designated driver for the *Baba Sali* in Morocco. Once, the *Baba Sali* traveled to Casablanca to officiate at a *seudas mitzva* and, as was his custom, he distributed *lechaim* from a stiff drink called Machiyah. When the *seuda* concluded, he asked my father-in-law to drive him back that day to Tefillalat. When they asked the *Baba Sali* what the hurry was that he could not wait to travel the next day, he explained that he had to get back, since he was having guests. “How do you know you are having

guests?” his relatives asked, to which he smiled and responded, “I know.”

Finally, they explained that his driver had had one too many *lechaims* (he couldn’t refuse a *lechaim* given to him by the *Tzaddik*) and he was in an inebriated state of “*Gilufin* and Joy!” and not in any fit condition to drive him back. To this he replied, “No need to worry – sit him in the driver seat, turn on the engine and I will do the rest.” Accustomed to the *Baba Sali*’s miraculous ways and seeing that the *Tzaddik* was adamant and that he somehow thought he could get back in such a way, they did as he bade them.

They sat my father-in-law down,

started the car's engine and watched in wonder as it drove itself home! When they arrived in Tefillalat by sunrise, they had to take my father-in-law and put him in bed, since he had no idea where he was – and the *Baba Sali* arrived safe and sound! (*Shemuos Tovos*)

### **Chochom Adif Minovi – a Talmid Chochom is Better Than a Prophet (Bava Basra 12a)**

When a certain *Rav* in *Eretz Yisrael* sought a higher position, he approached the *Baba Sali* for his blessings. He explained that he did not seek more honor or glory but he thought (mistakenly) that his higher position would give him greater respect and authority among the *chiloni* (secular) authorities, leaders, politicians and *Knesset* members and that they would listen more readily to his ideas and he might be able to influence them to greater *mitzva* observance and *Torah* study.

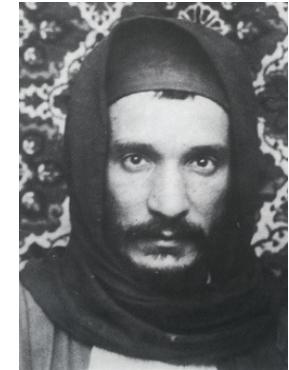
Though his aspirations were pure and his motives were good, the *Baba Sali* tried to dissuade him from this mistaken path. He explained that back in Morocco, the *Rabbonim* had real power and authority, they had the police force backing them, and they had the power to fine, jail and punish offenders and even whip criminals and rebels who disregarded their rulings. “But here in *Eretz Yisrael*, no one will listen to you. Even a child can disregard any *pesak* you issue,” explained the *Tzaddik*, to no avail.

“*Admor*, my mind is made up. I did not come to ask if I should do this, just for your blessings.”

The *Baba Sali* sadly murmured a blessing for *hatzlocha* and the *Rav* was overjoyed! Later, the *Baba Sali* turned to his son and explained, “Tonight is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of *Cheshvan*, the *Yahrzeit* of the holy Rizhiner, whose lineage goes back to *Malchus Bais Dovid*, and therefore the workings of power and authority are revealed to me. I see that this *Rav* will indeed achieve his heart’s desire; he will be

elected to the higher post, but not only will his rulings be ignored, the head judge and chief justice of the Supreme Court will rescind and overrule his *pesak* – he will be ridiculed, suffer embarrassment and pain, and eventually be disgraced. Now, however, let us conduct the *Yahrzeit seudas hillula* for the *Tzaddik* with joy.”

And so it was that the *Baba Sali* was right. The *Rav* did indeed achieve his dream, which within several short months turned into a nightmare. The chief judge of the Supreme Court overturned his *pesak*, the newspapers and radio all publicized his disgrace and he suffered shame, pain and humiliation, because as the *Baba Sali* had warned him, the position of the *Rabbanut* in *Eretz Yisrael* was not to be sought after, for it would not give him the authority he had imagined. (*Sabba Kadisha, Sidna Baba Sali*, Vol. 2 p. 39)



### **Waging the War of *Shabbos***

Once, when the *Baba Sali* heard the sound of a car engine being revved up to start on *Shabbos*, he looked out his window and saw a Jew trying to start his car! He called out to him, “Don’t you know that today is *Shabbos*?”

“I know,” he answered.

“So why are you trying to start your car?” asked the *Baba Sali*.

“Because I want to – what’s the problem with that?!” he answered back with *chutzpa*.

“Well, the problem is,” answered the *Baba Sali*, “that if that is what you want, you won’t be able to, because while you are stuck in your car all *Shabbos*, it won’t start!”

His curse was not an empty threat.

The man got locked in and stuck in his car all *Shabbos*, yet was unable to start it at all. On *Motzo'ei Shabbos*, when he finally got out, he came to beg the *Baba Sali*'s forgiveness.

In those days, when Rav Amrom Bloi was fighting against *Chillul Shabbos* and beaten and arrested for the sake of *Shabbos*, the wicked police detained and jailed him. They would not release him, not even after his elderly mother pleaded that his own son's wedding was coming up. When the *Baba Sali* heard about this, he was greatly pained. In his anguish he turned to the chief of police Sheetrit, himself a Moroccan Jew who greatly respected the *Baba Sali*, and secretly arranged for Rav Bloi's release. (*Sabba Kadisha, Sidna Baba Sali*, Vol. 2 p. 39)

*Baba Sali* ("our praying father") was one of the greatest *mekubolim* of recent times. He possessed clairvoyant, supernatural powers and it was said of him that the keys to nature were in his hands. The following are some of the many thousands of accounts of the great miracles brought about by his prayers.

A young Israeli soldier who was injured in battle arrived at Rav Yisrael's home in Netivot in a wheelchair. He told Rav Yisrael his story: "I was injured by a bullet in my back during the *Yom Kippur* War. Although I underwent a series of operations, I am still a cripple and can't stand up. One of my legs is so bad that the doctors want to amputate it. A friend suggested that I visit the *Rav*, who is supposed to work wonders with his *tefillos*. At first I refused. But in my despair, I decided to give it a try."

"Do you put on *tefillin* every day?" Rav Yisrael asked.

"No."

"Do you keep *Shabbos*?"

"No."

"If such is the case," Rav Yisrael replied, "you should be thankful that only one leg is in such a serious condition. We

believe that *Hashem* gives us healthy limbs so that we may serve Him. Those who don't keep the *mitzvos* should regard their healthy limbs as gifts."

At that, the young man burst into tears.

Rav Yisrael looked him in the eye and asked, "If I bless you that you will be able to stand, will you begin to observe the *mitzvos*?"

"Yes," the young man eagerly replied.

"Then give me your hand, and may you have a *refua sheleima* (full recovery)."

After the young man kissed Rav Yisrael's hand, Rebbetzin Abuchatzira told him to try to stand up. To his surprise, he was able to stand up immediately, and even take a number of steps without assistance.

Startled by the remarkable change in his situation, the young man ran out of the house in search of a telephone. The nearest telephone was in *Yeshiva HaNegev*, a few feet away from Rav Yisrael's home.

The young man raced over to the *Yeshiva*, and called his family to tell them about the miracle. The *Yeshiva* students, who overheard the conversation, were stunned. Taking him by the hand, they broke out into a fervent dance.

A short while later, the young man returned to Rav Yisrael's house with many of the *Yeshiva* students, and a special *seuda* (party) was held in honor of the miracle.



## The Power of Prayer

A story of the *Baba Sali* as heard from Rav Moshe Aharon Stern, of Yerushalayim.

There was once a simple Israeli worker from Yerushalayim, who, though he had been married a long time, had never been blessed with children. He had been to all the specialists, but to no avail. “Hair will grow on the palm of your hand before you see a child,” the doctors had told him. After years of hope and despair, he had almost given up. Then he heard about the great miracles wrought by the prayers of Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira, the great *Sefardi Tzaddik* known as the *Baba Sali*, of blessed memory.

With a hopeful heart, the man traveled several hours from Yerushalayim to Netivos, to the home of the *Baba Sali*. When he arrived, he found a long line of petitioners already ahead of him, and had to wait hours before entering to receive a blessing. Finally, his turn arrived. He entered the *Tzaddik*’s room, nervous, eyes downcast, clutching a small piece of paper on which he had written his only request: Children! He sat down and placed the paper on the table before the *Baba Sali*. The *Tzaddik* opened it, then put it down.

“*Matzav avud*,” was all he said. “A lost case.”

Before he could open his mouth, the man had been whisked out of the chamber by the attendants to make room for the next petitioner. Shocked, brokenhearted, he returned to his home.

The next day, however, when the people began lining up for blessings, there he was again. Again he waited several hours. Again he entered, put his slip of paper on the table, and again he heard the same terrible answer – “a lost case”. Yet, when the next day arrived, there he was again, and the next day again! Every single day, as long as the *Baba Sali* was receiving people for blessings, the man would be there in line, at times waiting hours. And always he would hear the same sad answer:

“a lost case”.

Finally, after almost a year, the family of the *Baba Sali* took pity on this man and approached the great saint with their request. “*Rabbeinu Baba Sali*,” they said, “this poor man has been coming to you for a year straight now, and every time you give him the same answer. Can’t you tell him to stop coming already? It’s much too heartbreaking to continue.”

“How long has it been?” Rav Abuchatzeira inquired.

“We’ve counted, today is his two hundredth visit.” The *Baba Sali* agreed to talk with him.

That afternoon, the man entered the room as usual and placed his slip of paper on the table before the *Baba Sali*. This time, the *Tzaddik* did not even pick it up.

“Listen, my friend,” he said gently. “You have been coming to me every day for a very long time. Haven’t I already told you that it is a lost case? Go home – why do you insist on coming to me?”

The man lifted his eyes. “I come to you every day, and I will keep coming to you every day, because I believe in the power of *tefila*, and I believe that *Hashem* listens to your *tefilos*, and that you are the only one in the world who can help me.”

“Do you really believe that?” the *Baba Sali* responded. “If so...” he rose from his chair, “go out right now and buy a baby carriage!” (i.e. he blessed him in the merit of his great faith in *Torah* sages).

The man gave a start. He jumped up and ran out of the room. “I got a blessing! I got a blessing!” he cried. That night he presented his wife with a beautiful new baby carriage. Nine months later, they had a child.

[www.sephardiccouncil.org](http://www.sephardiccouncil.org)



From the webmaster:

An Israeli friend of mine who lived in Netivos, told me he witnessed first-hand

how the *Baba Sali* blessed a bottle of wine, and the bottle was poured all day to the hundreds of visitors without becoming empty.

He also said that the *Baba Sali* did not speak on *Shabbos* (except for words of *mitzvos* such as *Torah*, *tefila* and *Shabbos* songs). The reason is that it says in the *Torah* that *Hashem* “rested” on *Shabbos* from creating the world. What does it mean that He rested? Did He have trucks and tractors? No. It means He rested from speaking. For this reason *Baba Sali* did not speak (to emulate *Hashem*, which is the purpose of life).

[www.dafyomireview.com/article.php?docid=217&style=print](http://www.dafyomireview.com/article.php?docid=217&style=print)



### **Rain in Morocco in the Summer?**

The *mikve*, dug deep into the ground, received its water supply from a natural spring beneath it. Once during the beginning of summer, in *Tammuz*, the spring dried up and the water disappeared from the *mikve*. How could the town be without a *mikve* through the summer? There would be no rain until autumn!

In their despair, the heads of the community enlisted the aid of Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira. The *Baba Sali* (as he was popularly known) told them to dig a new *mikve* according to the superior specifications that he outlined for them.

The village workmen prepared the new *mikve* according to *Baba Sali's* instructions and soon it stood, all ready for use. But without water, no one would be able to immerse in it.

Pure rainwater was needed to fill the *mikve*. But in Morocco, rain only fell in the autumn and winter. Where would they find rainwater in *Tammuz*?

Again, the townspeople came to *Baba Sali*. “We have completed the construction of the new *mikve*,” they reported, “but we still have no water to fill it. What shall we do now?”

*Baba Sali* went to inspect the new *mikve*. He looked thoughtfully at the bright blue sky and said, “Master of the world, You commanded us to be pure and holy and we wish to follow Your teachings. We have done everything in our power. We built this *mikve* as best we could. It is now up to You, *Hashem*, to help us, for Your sake.”

This short *tefila* was hardly out of his mouth before the skies clouded over and rain poured out of the sky. Enough rain fell to fill up the *mikve* with the required amount of water so that it could be used!

*Baba Sali* returned to his room to continue learning. In the process, he discovered that the drainpipe leading to the *mikve* had not been built according to the standards of the strictest opinions in the matter. *Baba Sali*, who always tried to do things to the maximum and in the strictest possible manner, was displeased that it did not meet the specifications of all of the sages. Although the *mikve* was kosher, he felt it lacked perfection.

He went back to the *mikve* and told the workmen to drain out all the water and to rebuild the drainpipe so that it would meet the most stringent requirements, according to all the authorities.

When they heard that the *Baba Sali* had gone to visit the *mikve* again, the *Rabbonim* of the town came to see what was amiss. They were surprised to hear that he had demanded that all the precious, miraculous rainwater be drained.

His cousin, Rav Yichye Dehaan, turned to *Baba Sali* saying, “Wasn’t the *mikve* kosher according to most of the authorities? Why, then, did you order that all the water be drained? Where will we obtain fresh rainwater to fill it again, once the fault is corrected? Miracles don’t happen every day, after all!”

But the *Baba Sali* was adamant. He insisted that all the water be let out. The workers, of course, did as he said.

After the necessary corrections had

been completed and the work had gained the *Baba Sali*'s approval, he went outside, spread his hands heavenward and prayed, "Master of the world, it is perfectly clear to You that I did not do anything for my own glory, nor for the glory of my father's house. I only did what I did in order to increase purity among Your people."

And again, the sky clouded over and blessed rains fell. The *mikve* filled and the town maintained its high standard of purity

from that time on.

All those present were overawed by what they saw. They thanked Heaven for having been blessed with a leader who possessed such saintliness and power that even *Hashem* saw fit to fulfill his requests.

Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *Rabbeinu Yisrael Abuchatzeira* by A. Y. Harel, a son-in-law of *Baba Sali* (English Rendition: Sheindel Weinbach)

[www.ascentofsafed.com/Stories/Stories/5768/554-44.html](http://www.ascentofsafed.com/Stories/Stories/5768/554-44.html)



## Rav Moshe Leib of Sassov, 4<sup>th</sup> of Shevat

### A Precious Soul Is Saved

The *mechaber* of *Darchei Chaim V'Sholom*, Yechiel Michel Gold, relates the following story, which was told by the Munkaczer *Rebbe*, Rav Chaim Elozor Shapiro, *mechaber* of *Minchas Elozor*, who heard it from his holy forebears:

Rav Moshe Leib Sassover went traveling with the Berditchever *Rav*. They took along another companion as a *shamash* (and this way he could also serve with them as a tribunal of three rabbinical judges on a *Bais Din*, a necessary arrangement for this particular journey). They also took along a circumcision knife, some wine and other items that are used for a *bris*.

Soon they entered a forest and came across a baby wrapped in sheets and blankets. It was obvious that the infant's mother had abandoned him there. The two *Tzaddikim* decided to perform a circumcision on the child with the intention of converting him as a *ger*. They handed the infant over to an orphanage in nearby Brode and wrote up a ruling that he was *ger tzedeck* — a righteous convert who should be immersed in the *mikve* when he came of age.

The child grew up and became a great *Torah* scholar. He found his *zivug* and the wedding was arranged. At the *chuppa*, Rav Moshe Leib revealed the

young man's past and they all rejoiced. (They were no longer afraid to reveal the truth since his gentile mother had long forgotten him.)

Surely these holy *Tzaddikim* knew what they were doing and saw in him a holy spark and a precious soul, so they placed themselves in danger to travel to that place and redeem him by converting him without asking his gentile parents' permission. I, too (writes the author of the *Darchei Chaim V'Sholom*), heard this story at a *melaveh malka* meal on the *Yahrzeit* of Rav Moshe Leib Sassover. They related further that great *klezmer* musicians were at the wedding of this righteous convert and *Torah* scholar, and their *niggun* pleased Rav Moshe Leib immensely. The Sassover announced that on the day of his passing, this song, this melody of such sweetness, should be sung and this *niggun* played.

Time passed and years went by. One day, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat*, the *klezmer* musicians were traveling to a wedding at which they had been hired to play. A great downpour obscured the way, and their wagon took a wrong turn and began to drive in an unknown direction. They came to an inn and decided to stop for a drink. "How can you ask for a drink at a time like this?" exclaimed the innkeeper. "Don't you know that today is a day of grief and mourning? A great minister of the Jewish

people has fallen, the holy Rav Moshe Leib Sassover!"

They realized then that they had arrived somehow in Sassov and that Divine Providence had caused them to stray from their path and guided them here. And they remembered the *Tzaddik*'s request at that wedding long ago, that he wished the sweet melody from that long-ago wedding to be sung and played on the day of his passing.

And so it was that they escorted the funeral procession to honor the *Tzaddik*'s last wishes with music and song. Indeed, it was a day of rejoicing in Heaven, for the great *Tzaddik* Rav Moshe Leib Sassover was coming!



### **How to fly high and reach Heaven**

One of the more famous *Chassidic* stories is told about Rav Moshe Leib Sassover and Yankel the *Misnagged*, an opponent of the *Chassidim*, who was visiting Sassov during the *Yomim Noro'im* period when Jews rise before dawn to recite the *selichos*. When Yankel came to the *shtiebel* to daven and noticed that the *Rebbe*, Rav Moshe Leib, arrived in *shul* after the *selichos* service had concluded, he confronted the *Rebbe*'s followers and asked how a *Rebbe* can come to *shul* when the *selichos* are already over. In unison, the *Chassidim* responded, "You don't understand, the *Rebbe* is late because he ascends high into the heavens to pray on behalf of the Jewish people."

Dissatisfied, Yankel decided to investigate on his own to prove all the *Chassidim* wrong. Early the next morning, Yankel heard the *Rebbe* rise and leave the house with a package of food and an axe. Yankel followed. Dressed like a peasant, the *Rebbe* walked into the woods, took out his axe and chopped a tree into firewood. The *Rebbe* then took the bundle of wood and walked to an old, run-down house. An elderly woman let the *Rebbe* into her home. Pretending to be a peasant, the *Rebbe*

explained that he had brought the woman wood and food. When the woman stated that she had no money to pay for these things, Rav Moshe Leib responded: "That's not a problem. We'll put it on account and you can pay me when you have the money."

Yankel watched all of this transpire from the darkness of the night. And when the elderly woman told the *Rebbe* that she was not strong enough to light the fire, Rav Moshe Leib placed the wood in the furnace and recited the thirteen middos: "*Hashem, Hashem, Keil, Rachum V'Chanun*, G-d of Mercy and Compassion..."

All the while, the elderly woman did not want to cause a *kitrug* (accusation) in Heaven against the Jewish nation – that here was a non-Jewish peasant helping her in her time of need, and kept saying in Yiddish that the *mitzva* should not be counted against the Jewish nation. Rav Moshe Leib inwardly smiled and continued with his 'holy' work.

Yankel ran back to the *shtiebel*, and when asked whether he had seen the *Rebbe* ascend high into the heavens, without pause he responded, "Yes, yes, high into the heavens, if not higher."



### **Redeeming Souls**

When Rav Moshe Leib passed away, the Heavenly Court decided that he should proceed directly to Heaven. However, Rav Moshe Leib broke free and jumped into *Gehinnom* (Purgatory), vowing to not leave unless he was able to redeem all the Jewish souls that were there at that time. It caused a big commotion in Heaven – so they cooled *Gehinnom* until the Heavenly Court could decide the case.

Ultimately, the Heavenly Court decided that since Rav Moshe Leib always redeemed captives while he was alive, he should be able to redeem those souls in Heaven too. There are two versions to this story: One is that the Court told Rav Moshe Leib that he could redeem the same

number of people that he had redeemed while he was alive, and – amazingly – it was exactly the same number. The second version is that the Heavenly Court decided



## Rav Yehuda Arye Leib ben Avrohom Mordechai Alter, 5<sup>th</sup> of Shevat

The Gerrer Rebbe – *Sefas Emes*

### **A Tzaddik is Born**

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

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

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

A miracle occurred and Rav Avrohom Mordechai recovered! The next year, he did indeed have a son, and with Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel, the *Seraph* of Mogolintza, as his *sandak*, the baby was

that due to his hard work in redeeming captives while he was alive, he could redeem all the souls of *Gehinnom* this one time.



brought into the *bris* of Avrohom *Avinu* and named "Yehudah Leib" as promised! Rav Avrohom Mordechai told his wife, Esther, "I named him *Yehuda* and he will cause all the hearts of Klal Yisrael to praise and give thanks – *lehodos LaShem!*" The *Sefas Emes* used to say about himself, "My father named me *Yehuda*, which means "thanksgiving", because he was healed from his sickness in my merit, and I feel this within me as well; each day and night I never tire of ceaselessly giving thanks – *lehodos LaShem!*" (*Marbitzei Torah BeOlam HaChassidus*, Vol, II p. 83–84)



### **Some of His Wise Sayings and Anecdotes**

In honor of his *Yahrzeit*, here are some of his sayings and anecdotes:

#### **Force Them Open and Learn**

When one of the *Chassidim*, Reb Mendek Ostover, once complained that he simply could not stay awake and kept falling asleep when he tried to learn *Torah*, the *Sefas Emes* did not accept this excuse and told him, "Rip upon your eyelids! Force your eyes open and learn!" This powerful statement made such an impression on the *Chassid* that through its influence, that year Reb Mendel completed all four parts of the entire *Shulchon Aruch!*"



#### **You Can Still Be a Jew**

On another occasion the *Sefas Emes* told the same *Chassid*, Reb Mendel, "You can still be a Jew..." meaning, "You still have the opportunity to make something of

yourself one day!" His sharp words of rebuke entered the *Chassid* like an elixir and in that year he completely left all worldly pursuits and desires behind, immersing himself in *Torah* and *tefila*!



### **The Key to a Jewish Heart**

On one *Shavuos* night at the *tisch* he conducted, the *Sefas Emes* told the *Chassidim*, "It says in *davening* (*Shacharis* in *Uva LeTzion Goel*) 'Hu yiftach libenu besoroso – He, Hashem shall open our hearts through His *Torah*.' You hear?! It says the key to open our hearts is the *Torah* itself! Only through *Torah* can a Jew open his heart up for *Torah*. In the *Torah* itself is hidden the key to opening up a Jewish heart!!"

These words caused such a storm that that night, every *sefer* was grabbed off

the shelf, every bench and *shtender* was occupied, all the *Gemoras*, volumes of *Shulchon Aruch* and *sifrei Chassidus* were snatched off the shelves till they were bare, and the *Chassidim* studied all night, trembling and in awe like at Har Sinai!



### **Never Alone**

Once, Rav Arye Leib Kotshitzky, the chief *Rav* of Vlachlovik, came before the *Sefas Emes*, complaining how he suffered in that he presided over a *kehilla* with no *Chassidim*. "I feel lonely!" was his complaint. The *Sefas Emes* answered him, "Avrohom Avinu was also alone in his time! And besides, whoever holds himself up and steadies himself with a *blatt Gemora* is never alone!"

(*Marbitzei Torah BeOlam HaChassidus*, Vol. II p. 103)



לזכר נשמות אמוני החשובה, נפש יקירה ועדינה  
אשה יראת ה' ובעלת מודות טובות מרתה זיסל ז"ל  
בת הרה"ח מו"ה מאיר זאב הכהן כ"ז ע"ה הי"ד מעיר נירעדה אז יע"א  
ונכדת הרה"ק רבי אהרן צבי טערקלטובי ז"ע מבריך  
אשת הרה"ח מו"ה אברם חיים ע"ה גאלדענגביג

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*.

(מotton אמונה תורה) בדרך המסורה  
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**29 - Rabbi Yitzchak Kaduri**

**1 - Rabbi Moshe Shik, the Maharam Shik**

**2 - Rabbi Meshulam Zusha of Anapoli**

**3 - Rabbi Yosef of Amshinov**

**4 - Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov**

**5 - Rabbi Chaim Yeshaya HaCohen, author of 'Misgeret HaShulchan'**

## The Reason Behind Hardening Pharaoh's Heart

**"Go to Pharaoh in the morning – behold! he goes out to the water – and you shall stand opposite him at the River's bank, and the staff that was turned into a snake you shall take in your hand"**

(Shemot 7:15)

Rashi clarifies the words, "behold! he goes out to the water": "For his bodily functions, since he made himself out to be a god and said that he does not have human needs and he would arise early and go to the Nile and there he would relieve himself." Hashem commanded Moshe to meet Pharaoh by the river to show him that he knows that he does have human needs and he is deceiving people by declaring that he is a god. Really this should have caused Pharaoh embarrassment and been a catalyst for him to give up his stubborn stance of refusing to allow the Jewish people to leave Egypt. Even though Moshe Rabbeinu had clearly seen that he was lying, Pharaoh nevertheless hardened his heart and without any mortification, continued declaring that he was a god.

We can use this idea to explain another concept. I was asked by one of my friends why Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart during the last five plagues. Hashem only punishes if a person has the free will to choose between good or bad. So if Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart and he no longer had free choice, it seems that he shouldn't have been punished?

In the verse that talks about the Plague of Pestilence, we are told, "Hashem strengthened the heart of Pharaoh and he did not heed them" (ibid 9:12), and the Ramban writes explicitly that until the Plague of Pestilence, the Torah uses expressions of, "so Pharaoh's heart was strong", "yet Pharaoh's heart became stubborn". But from the Plague of Pestilence onwards, the Torah writes "Hashem strengthened the heart of Pharaoh". He explains that with the first plagues Pharaoh hardened his heart on his own initiative. But beginning with the Plague of Pestilence, Pharaoh already considered repenting and did not harden his heart. Instead, it was Hashem who hardened his heart at the end of each plague, until the Plague of the Firstborn. So, if indeed Hashem was the One who hardened his heart, why did he deserve to be punished?

According to what we explained above, we can answer as follows: Pharaoh during the first plagues hardened his heart time after time and brazenly pretended to be a god, even in front of Moshe Rabbeinu who caught him in his lies when he saw him from the banks of the Nile relieving himself. So when Hashem saw that Pharaoh was constantly choosing evil, with no thought of choosing good since evil was his only pleasure, Hashem punished him by taking away his power of free will. Then Pharaoh continued behaving according to the evil forces that were part of him, for

he had already set this way in his heart. The way that a person determines for himself a fixed way, heaven establishes that he continues in this path. His free will is taken from him and the path that he fixed for himself is the one on which he must continue.

Concerning the Plague of Hail, it says, "Whoever among the servants of Pharaoh feared the word of Hashem chased his servants and his livestock to the houses. And whoever did not take the word of G-d to heart – he left his servants and livestock in the field" (Shemot 9:20-21). Moshe warned Pharaoh and his servants that whoever wishes to save himself and his possessions, should bring everything inside. Whoever believed in Hashem, brought inside and was not harmed, while those who did not believe, did not bring inside and were harmed. It is hard to understand how they could not believe in Hashem, had the sorcerers not already said to Pharaoh, in the Plague of Lice, "It is a finger of G-d!" (ibid 8:15)?

The Gaon Rabbi Yeshayahu Pinto zya"a, in his sefer 'Kesef Mezukak' explains that indeed during the first plagues, Pharaoh and his servants were aroused to repent, but their repentance was only lip service. It was not accompanied by any inner feelings. This is why they did not bring their animals into their homes despite Moshe's warning. This means that when repentance is only an external expression the person retains his wickedness; he only imagines that he has repented and in truth, his repentance is not acceptable.

This is how the Rif zya"a explains the verse, "Come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart and the heart of his servants stubborn so that I can put these signs of Mine in his midst" (ibid 10:1). Since Hashem saw that Pharaoh's repentance was only an external expression and did not come from his heart, Hashem hardened his heart so that he will receive the rest of the plagues, Locusts, Darkness and the Plague of the Firstborn, until he will be aroused to repent inwardly too.

However, Hashem once again hardened Pharaoh's heart after the Plague of the Firstborn, so that he would chase after Bnei Yisrael to the Yam Suf. The reason for this was because Pharaoh repented during the Plague of the Firstborn only out of fear of punishment and not because he chose to submit himself to Hashem. This teaches us the extent to which a person is indicted for his deeds.

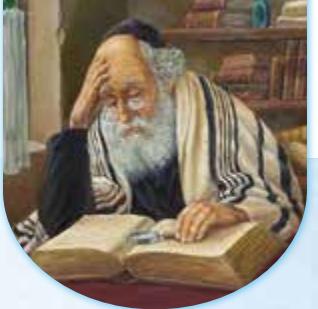
The lesson we can derive from the above is that it is not enough to repent superficially but repentance must be felt deep in one's heart. This requires a penetrating searching of the soul to examine whether ones' repentance is heartfelt or not. If a person's repentance does not stem from a broken heart, his bad ways remain part of him. Since his repentance is not considered as true repentance, he will never show true fear of G-d.





## Walking in their Ways

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



### What Did I Learn from Following an Ant?

From an incident that happened in our home, I merited witnessing a live demonstration of Hashem Yitbarach's Divine intervention over all His creations, even the very smallest of them.

It was Erev Shabbat and in the early hours of the afternoon I set aside my involvement in public affairs and turned to help my household with the Shabbat preparations.

During these preparations, I suddenly noticed a small ant making its way towards the lower floor of our home.

I stood still and observed it and when our assistant noticed my preoccupation with this small ant, he wanted to kill it and remove it from our premises. But I stopped him and continued observing the ant's path.

Since it was Friday and I was in the middle of the Shabbat preparations, I asked our assistant to continue tracking its steps.

Two hours later, the assistant called out to me from the basement. He told me that the ant had slowly made its way down to the basement, where a spider was waiting for it. When the spider noticed the ant coming towards it, it hurried across, caught it and ate it with great gusto.

I was astounded at this display of Hashem's mighty wisdom with which He runs the world.

Hashem knew that during the winter this spider will find shelter in our basement, and on one Friday he will be hungry with nothing to eat. Therefore, Hashem summoned this ant that was possibly created a few months before in the summer and brought it over a great distance until the exact location of the spider, all so that it should serve as food for the spider, at the exact moment when it would need it.

David Hamelech sings the praises of the One who conducts the world in this fashion, "All of them look to You with hope, to provide their food in its proper time. You give to them, they gather it in; You open Your hand, they are sated with good" (Tehillim 104:27-28).

Hashem prepares the sustenance for each and every creature and takes care of the nourishment of all His creations in a remarkable way. Therefore, we must place our trust only in Him, and ask only from Him that He nourish and support us, with favor, kindness and mercy, with abundance and with honor.

### The Haftarah

"Thus said the Lord Hashem/Elokim"

(Yechezkel 28)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah speaks about the prophecies of the expulsion of the Egyptians and desolation of the land, and in the Parsha we read about the punishments that the Egyptians received from Hashem, in the form of the ten Plagues.

### Guard Your Tongue

#### Even the Truth

Just as it is forbidden to accept lashon hara if one hears the information from one person, so too if one hears this lashon hara from two people or more, he is still not allowed to believe them. If they tell you that so and so did something inappropriate, they have transgressed the prohibition of "You shall not be a gossipmonger", for this also includes true statements.

### Words of our Sages

#### The Trait of Mercy Demands its Right

**"And as for you and your servants, I know that you are not afraid of Hashem, G-d"**

(Shemot 9:30)

Rabbi Shmuel di Modena, in his responsa (Maharshdam, Orach Chaim 3), tells us that he has a precious explanation:

We only find the name 'Hashem, G-d' at the beginning of Parshat Bereishit, where it says, "These are the products of the heaven and the earth when they were created on the day that Hashem G-d made earth and heaven" (Bereishit 2:4). Following this, we do not find these two holy names written together, until this Parsha. What is the reason for this?

The Maharshdam answers that when Hashem judged Mitzrayim with the attribute of strict justice (signified by the name 'Elokim', G-d), He nevertheless preceded the attribute of justice with the attribute of mercy (signified by the name 'Hashem'), which we can see from the fact that "the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they ripen later".

Why did Hashem perform this miracle, saving these foods from being destroyed by the Hail? Because these foods are basic sustenance, and in His abundant mercy and kindness, the Creator had pity even on the lives of these wicked people, despite their evil ways.

The Gaon Rabbi Massoud ben Shimon shlita asks: Water is also a basic human requirement. If so, why with the Plague of Blood, did Hashem not show mercy? And with the other plagues too, the Egyptians came close to a situation of life and death, yet the verse does not hint to us about Hashem combining justice with mercy. Why was this unique to the Plague of Hail?

Rabbi Massoud answers with a beautiful explanation:

In this plague, the Egyptians proved that they have some small measure of fear of G-d, for those who feared the word of Hashem chased their servants and possessions inside. Since this was the case, Hashem combined His abundant mercy together with the harsh judgement.

In my humble opinion, I would like to suggest another reason why Hashem showed His specifically with this plague. In this Plague of Hail, fire and water made peace with each other, to the extent that the water became flammable and formed a flame of fire.

Since they made peace in order to fulfill the wish of Hashem and sanctify His Name in the world, the attribute of mercy came and demanded its rights too...

Wherever there is sanctification of Hashem's Name, the attribute of mercy flourishes.



## Pearls of the Parsha

### For Heaven's Sake

*"Moshe was eighty years old and Ahron was eighty-three years old" (Shemot 7:7)*

The Ktav Sofer wonders why it is important for us to be told their age?

He explains that the Torah is testifying that Moshe and Ahron fulfilled their mission only because Hashem commanded them to, and not because chalila they wished to feel important and superior in being Hashem's messengers.

We know that Moshe Rabbeinu did not do it for his own honor since he tried to refuse the mission several times and finally agreed against his wish. But we could think that maybe Ahron did do it for his honor, therefore the Torah tells us, "Moshe was eighty years old and Ahron was eighty-three years old". This being the case, the mission diminished Ahron's honor, for he acted as a 'mouth' and translator for his younger brother. Were his intentions not for the sake of Heaven, he would not have agreed to go. The fact that he accompanied his younger brother shows that his sole desire was to fulfill Hashem's will.

### Ask Clearly for Your Needs

*"Moshe cried out to Hashem concerning the frogs that he had inflicted upon Pharaoh" (Shemot 8:8)*

The holy Ohr Hachaim zya"a adds a short note to this verse: "From here we learn that one's prayer must be specific".

The Ohr Hachaim wishes to explain why Moshe Rabbeinu mentioned Pharaoh's name as part of his prayer. Certainly, Hashem knows he is praying for the frogs that he had inflicted on Pharaoh? The addition of the obvious teaches us that one's prayer must be explicit.

The Ohr Hachaim brings a more detailed explanation in Parshat Va'etchanan. The Midrash tells us that a person was going on his way carrying heavy burdens, and he prayed to Hashem "Send along a donkey". Immediately a non-Jew appeared with a young donkey and commanded him to carry his donkey in addition to his other packages. This Jew came to the Sages and asked them why his prayer wasn't answered?

They explained that he should have been more explicit and asked Hashem to send him a donkey to help him carry his load. Since he did not detail his request, the accusers interpret his prayer as they wish. Indeed, his prayer was answered and a donkey appeared, but it was not to his benefit since he now had to carry the donkey too.

This idea is derived from the verse, "I implored Hashem at that time, saying" (Devarim 3:23), which shows us that one's prayer must be explicit and clear.

### Grant Honor to Every Person

*"He commanded them regarding the Children of Israel and regarding Pharaoh, king of Egypt" (Shemot 6:13)*

Rashi tells us that these words contain a special ruling: "To accord him honor with their words". Rabbi Ahron ben Shimon zt"l, in his sefer 'Nehar Mitzryaim', points out: "There was a basic practice in Egypt to accompany the nations' dead, if they were invited, no matter which nation they came from. This was in order to keep the peace. And most certainly for the royalty, which is also diplomatic etiquette."

"And especially concerning the royalty of Egypt which contains all the religions and languages, their honor is equal, and it is our honor to honor each person."

## Treasures

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



### But the Kindness of Regimes is a Sin

The following question is brought in one of the sefarim: Why did Moshe Rabbeinu show gratitude to the water and sand but did not show gratitude to Pharaoh who brought him up in his palace and made him into a prince? If he showed appreciation to an inanimate object, all the more so must he show gratitude to a human being! Yet we find that not only did Moshe not show gratitude to Pharaoh for all that he did for him, but he was the one responsible for smiting him with the Ten Plagues.

This difficulty can be answered with a personal anecdote: Somebody once approached me and said that we should be grateful to Hitler ym"sh since in his merit the Land of Israel was established. If not for Hitler ym"sh trying to annihilate the Jewish people, nobody would have felt the need to establish a Jewish land. I was shocked by his words! How can one feel grateful to someone who murdered six million Jews?? This is like the absurd joke that we must be grateful to Haman, for if not for his evil intentions of destroying the Jews, we would have missed out on the celebration of Purim! A person's intellect cannot tolerate these types of thoughts.

With can use this to answer why Moshe did not show gratitude to Pharaoh. Pharaoh was a hater of the Jewish people and considered completely wicked, and even though he behaved kindly towards the young Moshe, this mercy was an expression of, "the kindness of regimes is a sin" (Mishlei 14:34). This is why there was no need to feel gratitude towards him. On the contrary, he must be punished in double measure for all the suffering that he caused the Jewish people, under the yoke of his bondage. Besides, showing gratitude to a wicked person, is an expression of agreement with his evil ways and he becomes a partner with this impurity. Had Moshe expressed gratitude to Pharaoh, it would have been considered chalila as if he agreed with him and his wicked deeds and showing support for one who sins.

I testify that I try very hard not to benefit from the money of people who do not observe Shabbat, since by using this money I would be supporting their ways and as if offering my approval for them to continue profaning the Shabbat.

It happens many times that a person profanes the Shabbat by keeping his business open on this holy day. How does he quiet his conscience? By donating money to charities. But one must strengthen oneself and realize that using money that was acquired in a forbidden way, does not bring any blessing. Besides, accepting this money can be taken as approval for the business owner to continue in his bad ways.



## A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSCHA

**T**he talmidim of the Chozeh of Lublin zt"l posed the following question to their Rebbe: How can it be that Moshe and Ahron were considered equal, as Rashi tells us, (Shemot 6:26) "There are verses where the Torah puts Ahron before Moshe and verses where Moshe is put before Ahron, to tell us that they were equal." There is a well-known Chazal, that just as no two faces are alike, so too their opinions are not the same.

This is how the Chozeh answered them:

"This Chazal is said concerning people who attach importance to themselves and their opinions. In these cases, they will certainly not agree with someone else's view. However, Moshe and Ahron said about themselves, "for what are we". They did not consider themselves as honorable, admirable people, therefore it was possible for them to agree with each other and have the same opinions."

Is there a connection between the above and the following?

One of the most important attributes is that of gratitude. When a person recognizes the good in something that he receives, he can achieve perfection of his conduct between himself and Hashem for he appreciates the many good things that Hashem does for him. Similarly, he can achieve perfection of conduct between himself and his fellow man, for if someone does a favor for him, he understands that he must repay them to the same degree.

The greatness of one who appreciates a kindness performed for him can be seen clearly from the following story, brought in the sefer 'Bedidi Havei Uvdah'.

There was once a young bachur of about thirteen years old, who learned in

one of the best yeshivot in Europe. The bachurim used to learn in the Beit Knesset and ate lunch with the local ba'alei batim who used to invite them to eat in their homes, each day at a different home. Sometimes, when the bachurim did not receive an invitation, they simply went hungry. They slept in the Beit Knesset too. The older bachurim had the privilege of sleeping on the benches, while the younger boys had to sleep on the floor for lack of space.

In the summer it was somewhat bearable, but in the freezing winter nights, when snowstorms raged outside and the bitter cold penetrated their bones, the situation was unbearable. With no means of warming himself, this bachur was unable to fall asleep at night. During the day too, he suffered, since his lack of sleep made staying awake during the hours set aside for learning almost unachievable.

One day this bachur received a letter from his uncle, his mother's brother, who was a blacksmith and a locksmith. His uncle was inviting him to come to stay with him and study his trade. Since this uncle had no children, he promised his nephew that if he enters his business, he will bequeath all his possessions to him after his death. A difficult inner battle raged in the boy's heart. In the end, he decided to accept his uncle's offer and leave the yeshiva but decided to do so only the following day. "This is the last night that I will have to sleep on this icy floor," he consoled himself.

Suddenly in the middle of the night, a woman appeared at the entrance to the Beit Knesset. The only bachur that was still awake this night was this young boy who always found it hard to fall asleep. The woman approached the bachur and told him: "I just now got up from sitting shiva for my husband. I have no children and have been left on my own. My husband owned a factory that produced blankets and since there are a few blankets left, I would like to donate them to a yeshiva bachur."

"From then on", that bachur told over, "the nights were no longer a hindrance to my learning". He stayed in yeshiva

where he continued to learn and strive, all in the merit of those blankets...

Years later, this bachur became the Gadol Hador, Maran Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach zt"l, who benefitted the world over with his Torah.

This is not the end of the story. In the year 5736, on an especially wintery, bitterly cold and rainy day, Harav Shach zt"l turned to his grandson and asked him to call a car to take him to a levaya in the Haifa cemetery. All attempts at persuading him not to leave the house due to the weather conditions were to no avail. The Rav's grandson assumed that if the Rav was going to so much trouble, it must be a levaya of a great person where there would be many people. To his surprise, the levaya was of a solitary lonely widow, with barely a minyan of people accompanying her to her final resting place.

Harav Shach stood in the pouring rain throughout the levaya, after which he recited kaddish. On their return to the car, the Rav stopped and stood still for a few moments, while the rain continued pouring down and the cold wind penetrated their very bones. His grandson's efforts to persuade him to enter the car were of no avail. After some long minutes, the Rav continued towards the car, entering it drenched and dripping with water.

All the way back to Bnei Brak, the Rav was quiet and did not answer his grandson's questions. Once home, after changing his wet clothes and warming himself up, he answered his grandson's request and explained himself: "This woman saved my life with her blankets. In her merit, I remained in yeshiva... For years I followed up on her, and when I was informed of her passing, I felt a great obligation to take part in her levaya."

When his grandson asked him why after the levaya he had stood still for a few moments in the pouring rain, the Rav replied: "I wanted to feel and remember the bitter cold and the terrible suffering which was my lot during those difficult days, so that I will fully appreciate the recognition of good that I owe to this woman"...

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