

# ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

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## ACHREI MOS ~ KEDOSHIM

❖ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❖

### The Mitzvah of Rebuke vs. The Love of Am Yisrael

*"Hocheiyach Tochiyach es Amisecha VeLo Siva Alav Chet – You shall surely rebuke your fellow and not share liability for his sins."* (Vayikra 19:17)

These past few weeks we have been speaking about the mitzvah to love other Jews and to always judge them favorably. There are many people who are quick to try and cite the above-mentioned verse and, pointing to this pasuk, they urge us not to forget that the Torah admonishes us to rebuke the sinners and to give tochacha and mussar to those transgressors - lest we also, Heaven forbid, be liable in watching passively as they sin and create a chillul Hashem. The following teachings from the holy Ba'al Shem Tov enlighten us on how the mitzva of rebuke and admonishment is in fact in concert with the commandment to love, honor and respect other Jews. The following teachings, stories and anecdotes all illustrate this.

The Trisker Maggid (Magen Avraham Balak 22:2), said in the name of his father, the Chernobler Maggid, that the Ba'al Shem Tov once remarked: even a Jew whose entire day is spent in business and he is overburdened with buying, selling and trading in the marketplace and he might be so busy that he almost forgets that there is even a Creator, just then - when the day ends and the time for the Mincha prayers arrives, he suddenly remembers he has to daven! He moans and sighs deeply in his heart thinking, "How my day has gone by, involved

in worldly matters of no significance!?" He then runs off to some corner or side street and there, alone on the side, he davens mincha. Even if he doesn't understand the words or what he is really saying - still, the Creator finds his prayers precious and dear and his sigh pierces the Heavens above!"



## **The Sighs and Prayers of A Simple Jew**

In Shivchei HaBa'al Shem Tov (page 82) the above story is related in more detail: Once the holy Ba'al Shem spent Shabbos in the town of Alick. Around Mincha time, the Ba'al Shem Tov's host went to hear a drasha in shul from a guest maggid. The Ba'al Shem Tov waited for his host to return before proceeding with Shalosh Seudos. Meanwhile, word of the nature of the sermon reached the Ba'al Shem Tov - that the Maggid was rebuking and castigating the Jewish people. This news greatly bothered and distressed the holy Ba'al Shem Tov and he asked his gabbai to go and call his host to come back. When he left, others followed his lead and the maggid noticed that his whole audience was beginning to get up and leave.

The next day he met the Ba'al Shem Tov and when they were introduced, he asked the Ba'al Shem Tov, "Why were you so upset at me and my sermon?!" The Ba'al Shem Tov quickly stood up and as tears streamed from his eyes, he called out in pain and anguish, "How dare you speak ill of Klal Yisrael?! Don't you know that when a Jew spends all day at the trade fair or at the marketplace, and by evening time he says to himself, "Woe is me for Mincha time is passing and he goes to some corner and davens Mincha, even if he doesn't understand what he is saying, nonetheless, the holy Seraphs, Ophanim and Malachim tremble from his prayers?!"

(Ba'al Shem Tov Kedoshim 14 footnote 12)



## **The Wayward Prince and The Two Spies**

The author Toldos Yaakov Yosef of Polnoa said, "My master, the Ba'al Shem Tov, taught a lesson through the following parable:"

There was once a powerful and mighty king who exiled his beloved, yet wayward son, far away to distant lands. The king's love for his son never diminished and so, he sent two faithful servants as spies - to report back to him how his son was faring, what he did and with whom he spent his time.

When the shadows arrived they saw that while in exile, the prince mixed with the simple crass folk and learned their uncomely and wicked ways. Soon, he had completely forgotten his royal past and his demeanor and actions reflected the crude ways of the inhabitants of that land. He became a ruffian, he cheated, stole and murdered. His wicked ways were of course observed by the two royal spies who shadowed his every move. The first spy was totally and utterly disgusted by what he saw. He quickly ran back to the king to give his devastating report.

"Your majesty," he declared before the frowning magistrate, "your son, has given up his royal ways and exchanged them for a common, lowly and despicable lifestyle," he spat

with a sneer. "He cheats, murders and steals and we should leave him there to rot!" His obvious hatred and cruel loathing for the former prince were transparent enough and greatly added to the king's pain by the obvious relish he had in reporting the prince's crimes and dastardly deeds.

Soon afterwards however, came the second spy. He too came with bad tidings. However, he greatly loved the prince and he was doubly distressed to see him deteriorate and also to see how his royal highness was pained and distressed by this news. So he tried to soften the blow. Rather than repeat out right the prince's many crimes which he witnessed firsthand, instead, he focused on what could be done to rectify the situation and right the wrong.

The king was weary, despondent and had almost given up hope. Yet, the second spy kept prodding the king at what methods could be used to rescue his son and rehabilitate him. "How, your majesty, can you abandon your precious child like this at his time of need? You exiled him and you are chiefly responsible for all that he has now become. We must now save him and bring him back!" The king witnessed the love and respect that this servant had for both himself and his son. His great love for the prince and the king was evident, especially as it contrasted against the glee and joy with which the other servant caused the king pain and suffering as he delighted in the prince's crimes in his bad report. The king punished the wicked servant and had him removed. The second servant was sent to help save and deliver the prince and he was richly rewarded and promoted for his love and loyalty.

With this parable, the Ba'al Shem Tov illustrates the two forms of those who rebuke others. There are two types of preachers whose sermons are delivered to give mussar and messages of repentance, teshuva, tochacha and rebuke to admonish, teach and guide Bnai Yisrael. Some Maggidim, take the pulpit with a mission to smear, malign and bad mouth the Jewish people. They cast them in the role of wicked sinners who need to be castigated and rebuked harshly for their evil ways.

Often, such preachers' sermons are full of hatred and venom and they are actually causing terrible Heavenly decrees and prosecutions on high with their words. They pain Hashem, as well as the people. It is hard to say who they hate more, the people they are rebuking as wicked sinners or Hashem for they cause Him such pain. Some Maggidim however, truly love Hashem and the Jewish people. They do not ignore sins and wrong doing, yet they seek ways to rehabilitate and reunite Hashem and His people so that they do teshuva out of love and yearning and thus, the preacher casts them in a good light, causing Hashem to desire, love them and shower them with love, blessings and Divine light.

(Ba'al Shem Tov Kedoshim 14 & footnote 11)



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

One of the tools that *Kabbala* teaches is to connect to a *Tzaddik* (righteous person).

The method to connect to a *Tzaddik* is to adopt the following ritual:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Translation:

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

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

4) Study some of his teaching or writings.

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



## ☞ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ☞



YAHREITS BEGINNING SHABBOS ACHREI MOS - KEDOSHIM

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

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

### ☞ 8<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Friday Night (May 1<sup>st</sup>)

\* Rav Ezra Yerachmiel Rabinowitz of Peshis'cha, (5591/1831);

\* Rav Moshe Mordechai Twersky of Trisk, (5703/1943).

### ☞ 9<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (May 2<sup>nd</sup>)

\* Rav Moshe Hager, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Seret-Vizhnitz, Haifa, (5759/1999).

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## 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Sunday Night (May 3<sup>rd</sup>)

- \* **Eli HaKohen** and his sons, Chofni and Pinchas. Bnei Yisrael were defeated by the Pelishtim, thirty thousand soldiers were slaughtered, the *Aron Kodesh* was taken into captivity, and Chofni and Pinchas, the two sons of Eli, *Kohen Gadol*, killed, 864 BCE. Eli was *niftar* at age ninety-eight in shock on hearing the news;
- \* **Rav Yitzchok Alfasi** (*Rif*), codifier of the *Gemora*, *mechaber* of *Sefer HaHalochos*, (1013–1103). The period of the *Geonim* began in 589, and ended in 1038 with the *petira* of Rav Hai Gaon. Rav Chananel's father, Rav Chushiel Gaon, had set out from Bavel to collect funds for a needy bride and was seized by pirates. He was sold as a slave in Africa, but was later redeemed by the members of its Jewish communities. From Africa, he headed to Kairuan, where he became a *Rosh Yeshiva*. His son, Chananel, was born in Kairuan. A young student from the Algerian city of Kal'a asked to be admitted to Rav Chananel's *Yeshiva*. His name was Yitzchok *HaKohen*. As Rav Yitzchok advanced in his studies, he became keenly aware of the fact that many people were unable to elucidate the *halocha* from the *Gemora* due to the vast amount of material it contains. As a result, he conceived of the idea of compiling a comprehensive and extensive *halachic* work that would present all the *halochos* and the practical conclusions of the *Gemora* in a clear, definitive manner. To achieve this goal, he retreated to his father-in-law's attic, where he worked on his *sefer* for ten consecutive years. During this period, however, a Moslem tyrant gained control of Tunisia, and persecuted all those who did not accept his faith, especially the Jews of Kairuan. As a result, all the city's Jewish residents fled to places controlled by the Elmuvides, who were more tolerant of the Jews. Among the fugitives was Rav Yitzchok who, with his wife and two children, moved to the Moroccan city of Fez. Rav Yitzchok remained in Fez for forty years, during which time he completed his *Sefer HaHalochos*, which is considered the first fundamental work in *halachic* literature. Eventually, he became known as Rav Yitzchok Alfasi, or the *Rif*. Rav Yitzchok was *niftar* at the age of ninety in 1103. He was succeeded by the *Ri Migash* (some say the 11<sup>th</sup> of Iyar), (4863/1103);
- \* **Rav Meir** of Lublin (*Maharam*), (5376/1616);
- \* **Rav Yosef Teumim**, *mechaber* of *Pri Megodim* on the *Shulchon Aruch*, *Rav* of Frankfurt (1727–1792). *Pri Megodim* is actually a two-part commentary: (a) *Mishbetzos Zohov* on the *Tur*, and (b) *Aishel Avrohom* on the *Mogen Avrohom*. Rav Yosef also wrote a commentary on the *Torah* entitled *Rav Peninim*, as well as *Porat Yosef* and *Rosh Yosef*, *chiddushim* on various *mesechtas*, (5552/1792);
- \* **Rav Yitzchok Yehuda Yechiel Eizik** of Komarna, *mechaber* of *Shulchon HaTohor*, (5566–5634/1806–1874);
- \* **Rav Dovid Twersky** of Tolna (1808–1882), son of Rav Mordechai of Chernobyl. His works include *Mogen Dovid*. There is a *Tolner Shul* in Tzefas even today, (5642/1882);
- \* **Rav Hillel Lichtenstein** of Kolomaya, in the Ukraine (1814–1891). Born near Pressburg (present-day Bratislava, Slovakia), he became one of the leading students of the *Chasam Sofer*. After his marriage, Rav Lichtenstein studied in Galante, Hungary. His rabbinic career began in 1846, first as *Rav* of Margareten, Hungary, then as *Rav* of Klausenberg (today, Cluj, Romania). Eventually, he became *Rav* of Kolomaya, Galicia (today in Ukraine). He was among the fiercest opponents of the *Haskola* and a strong supporter of settlement in *Eretz Yisrael*. He helped his son-in-law, Rav Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, buy up land for what

became the city of Petach Tikva. He wrote numerous books, including *Avkas Rochel* (*mussar*), *Bais Hillel* (letters regarding strengthening observance), *Maskil El Dol* (*derashos*), *Teshuvos Bais Hillel* (responsa), and others, (5651/1891).

### 11<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Monday Night (May 4<sup>th</sup>)

- \* **Rav Naftoli Tzvi Horowitz** of Ropshitz, *mechaber* of *Ayala Shelucha* and *Zera Kodesh*, (1760–1827). When Rav Naftoli decided to join the *Chassidic* movement he chose Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk as his mentor. He subsequently became a dedicated *Chassid* of the *Chozeh* of Lublin, the *Maggid* of Kozhnitz, and Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanov. Foremost among his *talmidim* was Rav Chaim of Sanz. His son, Rav Yaakov, was the *mechaber* of the *sefer Zera Yaakov*, (5587/1827);
- \* **Rav Aharon Pfeffer**, *Rav* in South Africa, (5753/1993);
- \* **Rav Yitzchok** of Radwill, son of Rav Yechiel Michel, the Zlotchover *Maggid*, (5592/1832).

### 12<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Tuesday Night (May 5<sup>th</sup>)

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

### 13<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Wednesday Night (May 6<sup>th</sup>)

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

### 14<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Thursday Night (May 7<sup>th</sup>) – Pesach Shenii

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

(5763/2003).



## ❁ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❁

### WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

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

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

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



## ❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

### STORIES & ANECDOTES

#### Rav Dovid Ben Rav Mordechai of Tolna, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

#### Leaving With the Same Goy You Came With

Once, one of Rav Dovid Tolna's *Chassidim* came to take his leave as soon as *Shabbos* was over. “What's the rush?” asked the Tolna *Rebbe*.

“The *goy*, the *ba'al agola*, is already waiting for me outside,” rushed the *Chassid* to explain.

“*Miten zelbe goy gekimen miten zelben goy furstu a'heim*,” declared the *Rebbe* (injecting a double meaning into his words: “You came with the same *goy* and

are leaving with the same *goy*. You came here with the same un-Jewish *yetzer hora* and are leaving unchanged!” (*Otzar Yisrael*)



Rav Dovid'l Tolner was a great *ba'al middos* – he had a big heart and sterling character. The following incident serves to illustrate: Once the *Rebbe* sat surrounded by family and *Chassidim* at a *seudas mitzva*. As was his custom, he wore the sable fur *shtreimel* on such occasions and

sat near the open window. The window was much higher than the outside street level and to passersby it must have appeared that the *shtreimel* was just sitting there on the open windowsill. A passerby saw the *shtreimel*, grabbed it and ran off.

Meanwhile the house was a tumult – the *Chassidim* and family were in an uproar! What *chutzpa!* To steal the *Rebbe's shtreimel*, right off his very head, no less?! They were about to run off to catch the lowly thief but Rav Dovid'l would hear none of it. "Leave him be. I order you not to

pursue him. He is no thief; obviously he must be in a really bad situation and needs the money, so he probably went to pawn the *shtreimel* to feed his hungry family – poor souls, they must be starving. Listen, he is no thief, the *shtreimel* is ownerless, I relinquish all ownership of it – *hefker!!* I hereby declare it *hefker*, and no one should be held responsible or punished on my account! Why should you pursue him and shame him? We will simply buy a new *shtreimel!*"

(*Ner Yehoshua*)



### Rav Hillel Ben Boruch Bendit Lichtenstein of Kolomaya, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

The Bobover *Rebbe* told how once Rav Hillel was traveling by train, when he was seen by a Jew who had left the fold. Unfortunately, this Jew was known even to eat non-kosher food. When he alighted from the train and gazed upon the fine, spiritual features of the *Tzaddik*, he stood transfixed and was simply unable to take his eyes off Rav Hillel, who sat right near the door of the train. He stood in this manner transfixed for some time before he was able to move on.

When he came home, a curious change took place; his family remembered his eating habits to verge on the gluttonous, but now he had no appetite for anything at all and refused all meals! Finally, they were invited to a family affair where kosher food was served and he pounced upon the food with hunger! That was when the family realized what had happened; the vision of the saintly *Tzaddik* had so refined and purified the man, that he was simply unable from then on to eat non-kosher food! Such was the greatness of Rav Hillel of Kolomaya! (*Bais Tzaddikim Ya'amod Bobov* Vol. II page 77)



Once, during Rav Hillel's travels as a *Maggid*, a preacher who would tell tales of

inspiration and rebuke the congregation to encourage their repentance and adherence to *Torah* and *mitzvos*, came to Sanz. The holy *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz honored him greatly, saying, "Here comes a *Maggid* whose sermons are truly sincere and solely said *le'shem shomayim* – for the sake and honor of Heaven."

The Sanzer *Rav* then honored him by introducing the speaker and saying words of *Torah* followed by words of praise. However, a strange and shocking incident occurred. Rav Hillel sat listening with rapt attention to the *Divrei Chaim's* speech and, while he focused on the words of *Torah*, no sooner had the Sanzer begun to praise Rav Hillel, when Rav Hillel began to strain and gesture that he could not hear well. He cupped his hands around his ears as if to hear better and paid closest attention to each word the *Tzaddik* said in praise of him! When the *Divrei Chaim* switched to a *devar Torah* he went back to normal, but as soon as the *Divrei Chaim* said words of praise, again he listened with rapt attention.

The people were beside themselves – how could the *Divrei Chaim* praise someone who was seemingly so full of himself as to listen to his own praise, not with shy embarrassment, but with such

punctilious attention that he actually strained to hear it more than words of *Torah*!

Later, when they joked about this and asked the Sanzer *Rebbe*, the *Divrei Chaim* was taken aback and declared in shock, “Fools, you have no measure of the

*Tzaddik* Rav Hillel at all! He is so holy and has trained his limbs so much that he hears *Torah* perfectly well, yet when I praised him, he could not hear his own praise at all! That is why he strained to listen – he thought I must be whispering.”

(*Ner Yehoshua*)



## Rav Yitzchok Alfasi, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

The Rif

Rav Yitzchok Alfasi, one of the greatest of the early codifiers of Jewish Law, whose name is familiar to all students of the *Talmud*, was born in Kalat ibn Hamad, a village near Fez, in North Africa, in the Jewish year 4773, or 1013 of the Common Era. His name “Alfasi” (or Alfes) means (in Arabic) a native of Fez. He is also known as *Rif* (from the initials of Rav Yitzchok Fasi).

The *Rif* studied the *Talmud* under the famous *Rabbonim*, Rabbeinu Nissim and Rabbeinu Chananel, in Kairwan, a city not far from Fez, which, by virtue of these two great luminaries, was then one of the leading centers of Talmudic learning. Afterward, he returned to Fez, where he became the head of the Jewish community. When his two great teachers passed away (about the year 1050), Rav Yitzchok Alfasi became the greatest recognized *Talmud* authority of his day, which was the second generation after the period of the *Geonim* came to an end, with the closing down of the great *Yeshivos* in Bavel.

In 1088, at the advanced age of seventy-five, Rav Alfasi was forced to flee his native land, because two wicked men, a father and son, denounced him as a traitor to the government. What the charge was remains unknown, but since it was the time when the Moslem Moors of North Africa were fighting the Christian kingdoms of Spain and taking over the Iberian Peninsula, it may be assumed that the *Rif* was accused by the two scoundrels of some

political offense, which endangered his life. The *Rif* fled to Spain, where he was received with great honor in Cordova and Granada. A year later he went to Lucena, where he succeeded Rav Yitzchok *ibn* Ghayyat as head of the community. Here the *Rif* established a *Yeshiva* that soon became most famous, and attracted distinguished scholars. One of the youngest of his *talmidim* was Rav Yosef *ibn* Migash, who came to Lucena at the age of twelve, and fourteen years later succeeded the *Rif* as *Rosh Yeshiva*. Rav Alfasi himself appointed him as his successor, although his own son, Rav Yaakov, was also a great scholar. Among his students are believed to have been the famous poets and scholars, Rav Yehuda *HaLevi* and Rav Moshe *ibn* Ezra, who composed poems in honor of their teacher.

Rav Yitzchok Alfasi was a man of noble character, and he took a fatherly interest in his many students. Yet from the day of his arrival in Spain he met with unfriendly opposition from two prominent Jews, both of whom, like himself, were called Yitzchok: Rav Yitzchok *ibn* Ghayyat and Rav Yitzchok Albalia. The latter had a prominent position at the court of the king of Seville, but lost his position when the king was defeated by his rival. Albalia went to live in Granada but did not stop criticizing the *Rif* until the day of his (Albalia's) *petira* (about 1098). However, on his deathbed, he called his son, Boruch, then a boy about seventeen, and instructed

him to go to Rav Alfasi, after his father's *petira*, and tell him that his father had forgiven him and begged Rav Alfasi's forgiveness with all his heart, and that his last wish was that his son, Boruch, should be accepted as the *Rif's* student. When the young Boruch came to the *Rif* and delivered his father's message, the *Rif* was moved to tears. He took the young man into his home and treated him as a son, teaching him with fatherly affection.

Rav Yitzchok Alfasi's great and monumental work is his *Halocha*, better known as the *Alfes*, or *Rif*. It is a digest of the *Gemora*, following the order of the Talmudic *Masechtos* (tractates), but leaving out much of the discussion and *Aggadic* material, in order to give the precise and definite *Halocha* (practical rulings and laws). In ascertaining the final decisions, he relied on the authority of his great teachers, Rav Nissim and, especially, Rav Chananel, and on his own vast knowledge of the *Talmud*, both the *Talmud Bавли* and *Yerushalmi*, and the Talmudic literature of the *Geonim* and all other Rabbinic literature that had been written before him.

The work was at once accepted by all Jews as a work of the highest authority, and it became the basis of future codes of Jewish Law. It was said of this great work that "it could have been written only with Divine Inspiration".

*Rambam*, who was a *talmid* of the *Rif's* *talmid*, Rav Yosef *ibn* Migash, called the *Rif* "my teacher", and said that the work was almost perfect. He advised his students to study it carefully, together with his own *Yad HaChazoka*.

When Rav Yosef Caro, several

hundred years later, compiled the *Shulchon Aruch*, which became the standard Code of Jewish Law, he used the *Alfes* together with the codes of *Rambam* and Rav Osher *ben* Yechiel (the *Rosh*) as the three pillars of his work. The *Alfes* has been studied, and is still studied, to this day, by students of the *Talmud*, and is part of the curriculum in many *Yeshivos*. Many commentaries have been written on the *Alfes* by some of the greatest *Talmudists* of later generations.

The first printed edition of the *Alfes* appeared in Constantinople in 1509. Since then, it has been reprinted many times with various commentaries. The best edition of the *Alfes* was printed in Wilno (by Romm, 1881) and it appears with all regular editions of the *Talmud*.

[www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/112338/jewish/Yitzchak-Ben-Yaakov-Hacohen-Alfasi.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112338/jewish/Yitzchak-Ben-Yaakov-Hacohen-Alfasi.htm)



### **Guided by the Rif**

Once, in his youth, Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov was studying in the *Bais Medrash* under Rav Doniel Yaffe in Berlin. He studied the works of the *Rif* on the *Talmud* diligently, and his soul thirsted for self-perfection. Once, he learned so much in one sitting that his tongue stuck to his palate. He began to *daven* deep in his heart and cried to *Hashem* to enlighten him and brighten his darkness. He *davened* and *davened*, until he fell into a deep sleep and dreamed. In his dreams he saw the *Rif* himself. The *Rif* showed him an image of Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk and told him to travel to the *Rebbe*, for there he would succeed in attaining his goal.

(*Ohel Elimelech* 183)



## **Rav Meir of Lublin, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar**

The *Maharam*

Known as *Maharam Lublin*, he is | perhaps better known for his tenure in

Cracow, although he did serve as the head of Lwów's rabbinical court as well. The *Maharam's* genius and acumen in *Talmudic* studies, especially in the area of hair-splitting *Talmudic* logic, known as *pilpul*, are legendary, as is clearly demonstrated in his works on Jewish Law and his responsa. Among his more well-known students are Rav Yehoshua, the *mechaber* of *Maginei Shlomo* and responsa *Pnei Yehoshua*, as well as Rav Avrohom, the son of the *Masas Binyomin*.

(Note: Among the other works that have come down to us are: *Me'ir Einei Chachomim*, *chiddushim* on the *Talmud* and its commentaries *Rashi* and the *Tosafos*, *Manhir Einei Chachomim*, one hundred and forty responsa, *Meor HaGola*, a commentary on the *Tur* and *Bais Yosef*, *Meor HaKoton*, a commentary on *Shaarei Dura*, *Ner Mitzva*, a commentary on the *Semag*, and *Torah Ohr*, a commentary on the weekly *parsha*).

The *Maharam* was an outspoken critic of even his own contemporaries and took issue with many works of his day on Jewish Law. Surprisingly, he even took issue with the *Shulchon Aruch*, the *Rema's* glosses and even with the *Sem"á's* commentary. Such offhanded remarks in his responsa include the fact that he thought little of their weight in deciding matters of Jewish Law and that he cared little, if at all, to study them.

This attitude may have been one of the leading causes for his dismissal from his post of *Rav* in Lwów according to the following legendary episode recorded in the work *Matzvos Kodesh* and cited in *Anshei Shem* and *Ir HaTzedek*:

Once, the *mechaber* of *Eisan HaEzrachi*, Rav Avrohom Shrentzel, made a wedding and married off his son. [Note: Rav Avrohom served as head of the rabbinical court of Lwów and was a scion of

the well-known Rappaport rabbinical family, yet known as Shrentzel after his father-in-law, Rav Mordechai Shrentzel, whose father, Rav Yitzchok Shrentzel, had also served as head of the rabbinical court and built the large *shul* within the city of Lwów. He was a *talmid* of the *Sem"á*, Rav Yehoshua Wolk).

He invited many guests, among them noted personalities and *Rabbonim* including the *Maharam*. At the end of the affair, out of respect for the great *Rav*, Rav Avrohom proceeded to escort him home. The *Maharam*, however, distracted as he was with his own thoughts, took no notice of this escort until he reached his own doorstep. Once he was home, his wife, noting that the well-known Rav Avrohom Shrentzel was escorting her husband, turned to the *Maharam* and pointedly remarked, "Why don't you notice who is escorting you? Is your own honor so much greater that you ignore his? Could you not even honor him by taking notice of his escort or engaging him in conversation?" The *Maharam* answered, saying, "And what about his own *Rebbe* and teacher, the *mechaber* of the *Sem"á*? Why did he not join his student and escort me home? Was his honor so great that he did not feel the need to honor me as well?"

When Rav Avrohom Shrentzel heard his own *Rebbe's* honor insulted, he decided to avenge the *Sem"á's* honor by having the *Maharam* removed from office. After the wedding, he summoned the public leaders of the community, as well as the heads of the council of the four lands and used whatever political clout and influence he could exert against the *Maharam* until he succeeded in having him deposed. At that time, the city of Lublin sent after the *Maharam* and asked him to serve as their *Rav*. And so the *Maharam* left Lwów for Lublin to serve as their *Rav* instead.



## Rav Yitzchok Yehuda Yechiel Eizik Safrin, 10<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

Rav "Eizekel" of Komarna

### The Bris that Canceled the Funeral

Once, when Rav Eizekel of Komarna was traveling, he reached a small village near Kleinwerdayn. He was greatly surprised at the cold welcome he received, so he asked one of the villagers where everyone was. The latter explained that a tragedy had happened, and the whole village was gathered at so and so's house. There the father lay in bed, in the throes of imminent death, and in the next room cried his eight-day-old son whose *bris mila* was supposed to take place that day. Sighing sadly, the man continued, "The villagers are all waiting for the father to leave this world so that when they perform the *bris* they will name the poor orphan after his father."

Hearing this sad tale, the Komarner immediately told his coachman to hurry to the house. Sure enough, there he found the villagers mourning the coming death and delaying the *bris*. "Hurry up", said the *Tzaddik*, "get ready for the *bris* – no

delay!" So saying, he wrapped himself in his *Tallis* and sat himself down as *sandak*, himself performing the *bris*. Afterward, he sent one of the villagers with some money and instructions, "Go purchase some bread, herring and wine for the *seudas mitzva*." Soon the villagers were seated at the table, unable to refuse the *Tzaddik*, and they celebrated the *bris*, while next door the father lay on his deathbed.

Before *bensching* (the Grace After Meals), their astonishment grew. "And now," announced the *Tzaddik*, "please sing *Yom LeYabosha* (a traditional song at a *bris*) and let's dance." Unable to turn down the honorable *Tzaddik*, the astonished villagers did as they were told. Suddenly, the father himself stopped making death-rattle noises, and his eyes miraculously opened. "I am cold," he cried out. "Bring me some clothes." Soon he was dressed and dancing, celebrating at the *bris* of his son. The man was healthy all the days of his life.

(*Ner Yehoshua*).



## Rav Naftoli Tzvi Horowitz of Ropshitz, 11<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

*Mechaber of Zera Kodesh*

### **Badchan Extraordinaire**

When Rav Naftoli Ropshitzer first came before the Rebbe Reb Melech of Lizhensk, *mechaber* of *Noam Elimelech*, the *Rebbe* sent him away and said he wasn't looking for *meyuchosim*, those of illustrious lineage. Rav Naftoli was very brokenhearted and he cried as he left. Just then his ears caught notes of joy and music. He inquired after the songs and merriment and found himself at a *Yiddishe chasuna*. As was the custom, the wedding needed a *badchan* to tell jokes and make everyone happy. Rav Naftoli used his wit and clever ways to use jokes and rhyme to compose

*grammen* and to delight and enrapture the audience, bringing joy to *Chosson* and *Kalla* with words (as *Rashi* in *Berochos* 6b explains).

Meanwhile, the holy Rebbe Reb Melech was trying to recite the lamentations of *Tikkun Chatzos*, but something was holding him back. He sent his *shamash* to seek out the disturbance; perhaps somewhere in the vicinity there was a sinner and a criminal whose tainted deeds were holding his *tefillos* back? The *shamash* searched to no avail, returning empty-handed. The *Rebbe*, undeterred, sent him again to seek and search. This

time he came upon the wedding and in the midst of the celebrations he spotted the same *yungerman* whom his holy *Rebbe* had cast out. This must be the cause of the *Rebbe's* disturbance.

He went back and reported to the *Rebbe Elimelech* that surely the *yungerman's* jokes and frivolous banter was what was obstructing his *tefillos*. "No, you and I have it all wrong," explained the *Rebbe Reb Elimelech* as realization dawned on him. "This *yungerman* has caused all the heavenly hosts to delight and rejoice in the *simcha* of *Chosson* and *Kalla*. That is why my lamentations are unacceptable on high and I cannot recite *Tikkun Chatzos*; making them happy is like rebuilding one of the ruins mentioned in *Berochos* 3a; there it says that in the ruins a voice like a dove calls out and cries, "Woe to My children; because of their sins I destroyed My house, burned My sanctuary and dispersed them to be exiled among the nations! And now, when there is such joy, who can cry and lament at a time like this!" ended the *Rebbe Reb Elimelech*.

(As heard from Rav Moshe Weinbach, *Shlit"a*, *Mashpia Ruchani* of the Clevelander *Shul*, Beitar Illit).



### The Light of the *Rebbe's* Gartel

Related by the *Rav* of Madin, a grandson of the *Ropshitzer*:

*Rebbe Reb Elimelech* had a custom that after *Mincha* he would converse with his close followers. He would then proceed to a special private room to *daven Ma'ariv* in seclusion, purity and sanctity. *Rav Naftoli Ropshitzer* yearned to be in that room. He constantly wished to observe the deeds of his *Rebbe* and so wanted to see how he *davened* there. Once, he stole into the room unnoticed and hid beneath the bed. The holy *Rebbe* entered and closed the door behind him. He took out his *gartel* and proceeded to fasten it about himself.

The first time the *Rebbe* wound the

*gartel* about his waist, the entire room was filled with an awesome, unbelievable light. The second time he tied the *gartel*, the light grew in intensity until the *Ropshitzer* could no longer endure it. He grew weak and found himself feeling faint. He could not help himself and called out in a loud voice. *Rebbe Reb Elimelech* heard the cries of distress coming from his *talmid* and recognized their source. "Naftoli, my son, are you here?" the *Rebbe* asked. "Fortunately, you did not remain here for the third and final time I wound the *gartel*. If you had remained, your soul would surely have left your body from the intensity of the great light."

(*Eser Tzachtzochos* 27; *Ohel Elimelech* 248).



### The Dveikus of *Rebbe Reb Elimelech*

The son-in-law of the *Rebbe* of *Dzikov* once related that the holy master, *Rav Naftoli* of *Ropshitz*, was eating *sholosh seudos* with his teacher, the *Noam Elimelech*. He sat at the table, observing the *Rebbe*, and realized that if *Rebbe Reb Elimelech* continued in his state of rapture, his soul could, Heaven forbid, expire and leave his body. The *Ropshitzer* banged on the table and said jokingly, "The *pasuk* says that *Hashem* will turn to us from His place in mercy. One can ask, 'Are there brooms in Heaven with which to sweep (the Yiddish expression *kehern*, to turn, is the same word used for sweeping with a broom)?' The answer is that the *pasuk* simply means that He should turn from His place with mercy."

This witty remark disturbed the *Rebbe*, for it had interrupted *Rebbe Reb Elimelech's* state of rapture. *Rav Naftoli Ropshitzer*, not wanting to face the *Rebbe's* disapproval, fled, running from the table back to his lodgings.

*Rebbe Reb Elimelech* sent someone to call him back. When *Rav Naftoli*

returned, Rebbe Elimelech said to him, “How dare you interrupt my state of *dveikus* and ecstasy!”

Rav Naftoli told his holy teacher, “We still need the *Rebbe* to remain here in this world.”

Rebbe Reb Elimelech realized that his *talmid*'s intentions had been honorable and said, “*Yasher ko'ach!*” He then honored the Ropshitzer with leading the *bensching*.

(*Devorim Areivim*, page 21; *Ohel Elimelech* 300).



### **Accomplished Sermon**

Once, Rav Naftoli was giving a sermon before *mussaf* on *Rosh HaShana* to exhort his congregation to give *tzedoka* to the poor. When he arrived home, his *Rebbetzin* asked if he had accomplished anything with his speech. The Ropshitzer replied, “I definitely achieved fifty percent of my goal successfully – the poor people are ready to accept the *tzedoka*.”



### **A Distant Relation**

Rav Elimelech Biderman shared the following story:

There was once a Jew who desperately needed a *yeshua* (salvation) for some personal matter and so, as was customary, he wrote down his name and his request on a slip of paper known as a *kvittel* and approached the reknowned *Tzaddik*, the holy *Chozeh* (Seer) of Lublin. However, when he entered the *Rebbe*'s inner sanctum and placed the *kvittel* before the *Tzaddik* and petitioned him for salvation to answer his request, the *Tzaddik* remained silent. The Jew understood that his salvation must be distant and difficult to achieve, so he tried his luck another way, reminding the *Chozeh* that they were related. “*Rebbe*, please help one of your own flesh and

blood!” he pleaded.

The truth was that they were related as second and third cousins through their shared grandparents, and so the *Chozeh* answered back, “*Nu*, it's a distant relation,” and left the matter settled. The Jew turned away sadly and left. Just then the *Chozeh*'s *talmid*, the holy Rav Naftoli of Ropshitz, saw the Jew walk out despondent and with his face down. He approached the man, asking what the problem was. The Jew spilled out all his woes, concluding with the story of his failed reminder of his and the *Rebbe*'s family ties.



Smiling, Rav Naftoli said to the Jew, “Don't worry, I know just the thing. Soon, the *Rebbe* will go to *daven mincha*. While he is in the middle of the afternoon *tefillos* and recites the first blessing of the silent *amida*, he will say the words, ‘G-d of our forefathers, G-d of Avrohom, G-d of Yitzchok and G-d of Yaakov.’ Listen in and seize the moment – as soon as the *Rebbe* says that, whisper back at him his own words of retort, ‘*Nu*, it's just a distant relation!’ Surely that will work!” said the Ropshitzer.

The Jew did as he was told and as the *Tzaddik davened*, when he reached the place in the *tefillos* where we remind *Hashem* of our *zechus avos* and we mention our forefathers, the Jew whispered to the *Rebbe*, “*Nu*, it's just a distant relation!”

After the *tefillos*, the *Chozeh* approached the Jew and delighted him by saying, “You have succeeded and you have achieved the salvation. Let me just ask you

one thing: tell me if this wasn't one of Naftoli's tricks!"



Once, the Ropshitzer was *davening* for the *amud* and he was rushing through the *tefillos*. His *rebbe* - the *Chozeh* asked him, "Naftoli, *farvous hoste gechapt dous davenen?*" (Why did you catch [*gechapt* is literally translated as 'catching' – however it's *Yiddish* slang for 'rushing'] the *davening*?).

The Ropshitzer replied, "Because I love it so much – I 'catch' it."

The *Chozeh* asked him, "Don't you think I love it too (and yet I take it slow by *davening*)?"

So the Ropshitzer replied, "The *Rebbe's davening* is so boiling hot, how in the world can you 'catch' it!?"



### **How to Eat a Tefilla**

The *heilige* Ropshitzer used to *daven* quite quickly, while the *Chozeh* of Lublin, also one of the Ropshitzer's *Rebbes*, *davened* more slowly. The Ropshitzer once led the *Chozeh's minyan* and, as usual, despite his best to keep a slower pace to match his *Rebbe's*, he still finished quickly.

"Why do you *daven* so fast?" asked the *Chozeh*.

As usual, the Ropshitzer answered back with wit and jest, "If one likes the food, he gobbles it up quickly," (alluding to his love for every word of *davening*).

"Ahh, I see," replied the *Chozeh*. "I too like the fare, but I prefer to savor each morsel and draw out the flavor in each mouthful!"

The Ropshitzer, though, would not be outsmarted and his retorted jest followed. "*Rebbe*, your food is piping hot and so you need to eat it slowly, whereas my own..." (*Luach HaHillula*)

### **The Rav's Psak is the Doctor's Cure**

There was once a *shaila* (a complicated *halachic* query) about a chicken that was brought before the Ropshitzer *Rav*. The *Rav* ruled that it was kosher and his *talmidim* began to argue and dispute the ruling, trying to bring support for their decision that the chicken was *treif* and that the Ropshitzer's *psak* was mistaken. After the discussion went on for some time, the Ropshitzer halted the *talmidim* midstride, cut them off and announced, "I *pasken* that this chicken is kosher and nothing you say can change my words or sway my ruling!"

Just then, in walked a deathly ill man with a *kvittel* and asked the Ropshitzer for a *berocha*. The Ropshitzer replied aloud, "Just now a chicken with supposedly the very same ailment as this sick Jew was brought before me for a *psak*, and I ruled that the chicken was kosher. Therefore, I tell you that you can surely live even with such a condition," and he turned to the sick *Yid* and declared, "Do you hear my ruling? I say you can live and so you too shall have a *refua sheleima!*" And he did. (*Luach HaHillula*)



### **One Final Wisecrack**

The Ropshitzer was well known for his wisecracks, in which he hid his divine wisdom. But there is one other crack he is known for – the crack that stretches across his *matzeiva* in Lanczut where he is buried.

Before his *petira*, the Ropshitzer commanded his family and followers that they should inscribe on his *matzeiva* – *Yochid Bedoro Bechochmas Elokim* – "Unique in his generation in Divine Wisdom".

The *nusach* of his *matzeiva* reads: "Here lies the man of G-d, passed away with a good name on the 11<sup>th</sup> of *Iyar* 5587. For this our hearts weep and our eyes are darkened. Woe to us because the crown of

our heads has been removed. Our master and teacher, the holy *Rav*, renowned and a scion of prestigious lineage and pedigree, **unique in his generation in Divine wisdom, and other praises we are forbidden from writing, as we were commanded by him**, Rav Naftoli Tzvi, *Av Bais Din* Ropshitz, son of the renowned Rav Menachem Mendel, *Av Bais Din* of Liska, May His Soul Be Bound Up In Everlasting Life.” (*Yud Gimel Oros* Vol. II p. 165)

They fulfilled his wishes but not completely, because he also commanded them not to add any other praises at all.

Unfortunately, they did not heed his words and added to his name common praises and titles, such as “The crown of our heads”, “our master and teacher”, “the holy *Rav*”, “renowned and of prestigious lineage”, and these words were obviously against the Ropshitzer’s wishes. We assume so, anyway, because the *matzeiva* cracked, and the crack stretches straight across the *matzeiva* from one side to the other, erasing those very words, the extra words of praise and the titles that the *heilige* Ropshitzer ordered them to omit! (As seen and witnessed by me every time I have been there. See photo attached.)



## Rav Yitzchok Ben Yechiel Michel of Radwill, 11<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

*Mechaber of Ohr Yitzchok*

### Which Avoda Is Better – Mine or Yours?

When he was still a young man living in his father’s home, Rav Yitzchok used to fast and afflict himself, depriving himself of sleep and thus hoping to better serve *Hashem*. He would secretly give his daily fare to the servants and he fasted until nightfall. He did this for one entire year. That year, on *Yom Kippur* night, as he stood before his father, Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, he was so overcome with fatigue that he fell asleep standing and had a vision. In that vision he wandered the heavenly palaces from chamber to chamber and there he saw that his *avoda* and his

lack of sleep, his deprivation and fasting had an unwholesome stench, whereas when he observed his father’s beautiful chamber and his father’s *avoda*, all the sleep his father slept and the food he ate and drinks he drank, Rav Yechiel Michel smelled like fragrant flowers and glowed and shone with splendor.

When he awoke from his vision, his father, the *Tzaddik* Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, turned to him and said, “So whose way of serving *Hashem* is better – mine or yours? My eating and sleeping or your fasting and afflictions?” (*Kisvei Kodesh* Rav Moshe Midner)



## Rav Masoud Abuchatzera, 12<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

### The Stain of Sin

On the day when Rav Masoud passed on and was buried, a terrible thing occurred: the local *goyim*, jealous of the honor and respect accorded the *Rav* at the large *levaya*, opened his freshly dug grave and dishonored the body. Needless to say,

the family was greatly upset and disturbed. That night, Rav Masoud appeared to his son Rav Dovid in a dream and told him, “Know, my son, that you should not be troubled by this. The reason this occurred was because among those people who attended to me after I died was a Jew

whose name was such-and-such, and he washed my feet during the *tahara*. On that day, he had engaged in such-and-such a sin and its stain besmirched me and caused

this to happen.”

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



## Rav Yosef Neimetz, 13<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

*Mechaber of Ma'asei Choshev*

### **What's in a Name?**

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

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



## Rav Eliyohu Chaim Meisel, 14<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

*Av Bais Din Lodz*

“Be slow and cautious to judge” (Avos 1:1)

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

### **A Silver Snuffbox and a Sneaky Thief**

A merchant approached Rav Eliyohu Chaim Meisel of Lodz and complained, “I came from Lomza to conduct business here in Lodz and stayed at a local inn. When I headed to the train station, I realized that I had forgotten my wallet and watch back at my hotel room under my pillow. However, when I came back to the hotel, the proprietor claimed he did not find them. *Rav*, I know I left them under my pillow – what am I to do?”

Rav Eliyohu Chaim knew that the innkeeper was untrustworthy when it came to money matters, and that his reputation was none too good. He called him in and presented the arguments and accusations of the visiting merchant, but the innkeeper stood his ground and emphatically declared his honesty. Taking out his silver snuffbox and taking a pinch, he declared, “*Rav*, I tell you he made a mistake. I didn't find any wallet or watch in his room.”

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

“Of course,” agreed the innkeeper.

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

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

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



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

### **Whitewashed and Stolen**

There once came before Rav Eliyohu Chaim Meisel and his court two women who were neighbors and had a dispute. They had both laundered their families' respective clothing and hung out the wash to dry in the yard. Thieves passed by and stole all the laundry hanging on the line from one family and left the wash on the second laundry line untouched. It so happened that the laundry was white and basically identical, so that each neighbor claimed that hers had been spared and the other's stolen!

"Your clothes were stolen and mine have been left behind!"

"No, it's yours that were stolen and mine that were spared!"

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

"Yes, *Rebbe*, I can," answered the woman.

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

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

"This is mine, and this, and this one,

in fact they are all mine!" the second lady declared.

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



### **The Poritz and the Wallet**

Another case that came before Rav Eliyohu Chaim of Lodz was that of a man who found a wallet: "About a month ago, as I walked down the street I found a wallet and picked it up. At home I counted the money and discovered that it contained a thousand rubles," he told the *Rav*. "The next day I read in the paper that the Polish nobleman had lost his wallet and offered a reward for its return. I promptly returned the wallet but the *Poritz* grew enraged and yelled at me, 'Jewish thief! This wallet contained thousands of rubles and you give it back with only one thousand!' He began cursing and threatening me, and now he has sued me in secular court. *Rav*, what am I to do?! Please help!"

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

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

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

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

"Your Highness," the defense

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

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

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

is reasonable to assume it is not the wallet that the *Poritz* lost – but a different wallet! I ask the *Poritz* to return the wallet to my client, since his own oath proves that it is not his!”

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



Say it (especially with your children) at least once a day:

Based on *Chovos HaLevavos* - Duties of the Heart ~ *Sha'ar HaBitachon* - the Gate of Trust

There are 7 qualities that *Hashem* has that can strengthen our trust in Him:

1. *Hashem* loves me.
2. *Hashem* is with me, wherever I may be. And He is always ready to help me.
3. *Hashem* is stronger and cleverer than anyone in the world. And He can find solutions to any problem there is – even if it may seem impossible.
4. *Hashem* knows what is best for me, better even than I myself can know.
5. Just as He has helped me already numerous times on the path I travel, He shall help me again.
6. No one can do anything at all to help me or harm me, besides *Hashem* who controls everything over the entire world.
7. The Master of the World desires and searches for ways to act with *chesed* – loving kindness more than the nicest, kindest person you could ever imagine.



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

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

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

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

# Zera Shimshon



Acharay Mos

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

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

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

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

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

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

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

לזכר נשמת

רבינו שמשון חיים בן רב נחמן מביאל זצ"ל  
בעל הזרע שמשון זיע"א  
ויה"ר שיתקיימו בנו ברכותיו של אותו צדיק

לזכות כל עמו ישראל  
לכל הישועות בזכות פועל  
ישועות הגה"ק ר' ישעיה  
בן ר' משה זצ"ל זיע"א  
והגה"ק ר' אליעזר חיים  
מיאמפאלי זצ"ל זיע"א

כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם מכל חטאתיכם לפני ה' תטהרו (טז' ל')

*For on this day, Hashem will forgive you and purify you from all your sins, before Hashem you shall be purified (16:30).*

The Zera Shimshon asks that this passuk is seemingly repetitious. The passuk says how on Yom Kippur, Hashem will forgive us for our sins. Why then does the passuk have to add that we will also be purified from our sins? What is the difference between being forgiven for our sins and being purified from them?

As well, the passuk at the end seems to repeat this again by saying, 'before Hashem you shall be purified?'

Lastly, why does the passuk have to stress the word, from 'all' your sins? The passuk could have simply said, "Hashem will forgive you etc. from your sins".

The Zera Shimshon answers these questions as follows.

The Torah requires us to 'afflict' our bodies by fasting on Yom Kippur, as well as abstain from any work. The Zera Shimshon explains that the reason for this is to attain the highest level of forgiveness.

The Gemara (Yoma 86b) teaches that if a person repents out of fear of Hashem, his sins become classified as accidental sins. However, if one repents out of love of Hashem, then his sins become merits!

By fasting and afflicting one's body, the feelings of remorse and repentance felt, are ones of fear. However, by abstaining from all work and dedicating a day fully to show Hashem our remorse, this is Teshuva out of love.

The Alshich (Tehillim 32:1) says that for a sin that someone does willingly and knowingly, this sin can never become a merit even if he repents on it with love.

The Zera Shimshon says that the words of the Alshich are only true if one does Teshuva by himself, however, if the Tzibbur does Teshuva together, then even a sin the was done willingly and intentionally can become a merit through Teshuva. (See Yoma 86b that differentiates between the potency of Teshuva done by a single person versus the Tzibbur, that of a Tzibbur is greater.)

With this, the Zera Shimshon explains the above passuk.

First, the passuk says that on Yom Kippur Hashem will forgive our sins. This refers to Teshuva that is done out of fear. This kind of Teshuva grants us forgiveness for our sins. However, the passuk continues the Hashem will purify us since on Yom Kippur the Teshuva is done out of love. Thus, the Teshuva doesn't only bring forgiveness but it also brings purity to the person as well, since his sins now become merits.

This is why the passuk stresses the word 'all' your sins. This is because on Yom Kippur everyone is gathered together in repentance and the Teshuva is with the power of the Tzibbur, therefore 'all' sins can turn into merits even those originally done with intentional malice.

לעילוי נשמת דוד בן תמר



# שבת שלום



# Acharei Mot Kedoshim

May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020  
8<sup>th</sup> of Iyar 5780

## 849



### Paris • Orh 'Haïm Ve Moché

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

### Jérusalem • Pninei David

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

### Ashdod • Orh 'Haim Ve Moshe

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

### Ra'anana • Kol 'Haïm

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



## Hilula

8 – Rabbi David Chizkiya Chadad, author of 'Keren David'

9 – Rabbi Avigdor Kara, author of 'Hakaneh Hagadol'

10 – Ta'anit Tzaddikim for the death of Eli HaKohen and his two sons

11 – Rabbi Naftali Tzvi of Ropshitz, author of 'Ayala Shlucha'

12 – Rabbi Massud son of Rabbi Ya'akov Abichatzera

13 – Rabbi Ya'akov Meir Shechter, author of 'Zimrat Yesh'a'

14 – Rabbi Meir Ba'al Haness

Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

# Pachad David

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

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



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

## Sanctify Yourself with the Permissible

**"You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your G-d"** (Vayikra 19:2)

The Midrash says: We are told in Parshat Vayikra, "You shall be holy", which means 'be separated'. In Parshat Shemini it says (Vayikra 11:44) "you are to sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy". It says in Parshat Vayikra "for I am holy" – just as I am Holy so you shall be holy, just as I am separated so you shall be separated."

This Midrash requires clarification. For how can a mere mortal being, flesh and blood, pretend to achieve this supreme holiness exclusive to the King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed Be He, who is surrounded by Angels and Tarshishim who tremble and fear in His presence? After all, the Yetzer Hara is embedded in man's heart and is out to make him stumble at every step of the way, trying with all his might to incite him to follow the path of evil. Is it truly possible that despite all the challenges and difficulties that man faces, he will succeed in attaining such a lofty and elevated level of holiness? How can we make this comparison between the holiness of man and the Creator of the World?

Furthermore, Chazal say (Niddah 30b): "'And every tongue swear' this refers to the day of birth when man is made to swear, 'Be righteous and do not be wicked'. And even if the entire world tells you that you are a tzaddik, consider yourself as a rasha and know that Hashem is pure and His servants are pure and the soul that He placed within you is pure. If you safeguard it in purity all is well, if not I will take it from you." Seemingly, this oath is founded on error, for does a person know what awaits him on his arrival to this world? Does he know of the difficult challenges that the Yetzer Hara will place in his path? He is now still in the Upper Worlds which are free of any trace of evil and where the Yetzer Hara has no power. He no doubt thinks that to be a tzaddik and not a rasha is a simple feat and he is even prepared to swear on it. But once he comes down to this world and encounters difficult trials, it would seem that he immediately withdraws his declaration and regrets his oath, for he did not know in advance that he would have to battle the Yetzer Hara.

With siyata dishmaya, I would like to suggest the following thought. While man is still in the Heavens and before he swears, he is shown all the ills of this world and all its challenges and he is taught that a difficult battle awaits him on his arrival to this world. Only after this revelation is he made to swear. So in fact, he clearly knows what his oath involves and what awaits him, thereby it is not a promise based on a false premise. This could be the meaning of the following Gemarah (Nidah 30b): "A candle burns above a baby's head when it is in its mothers' womb, and he foresees and gazes from one end of the world to the other." He is shown the world, with all its inherent difficulties and challenges, so that he should know what awaits him, and he is told: If you wish to be successful in this battle, you must ensure that a lit candle should burn

above your head, meaning the light of Torah should always burn and shine on you. If this is the case, he is promised that he will be successful in his campaign against the Yetzer Hara. This shows us that even before taking his oath, he is aware of what the future holds for him, therefore his oath is a genuine one.

He is specifically made to swear while he is still in the Upper Worlds, a place that is shrouded in holiness and purity, free of any trace of impurity, so that at the time of his oath he will absorb the holiness which is present and then by inhaling immense powers of holiness from the Upper Worlds, he will have the strength to live his life with holiness and contend with the challenges that life will send his way. We see that while he is still in the Upper Worlds, before coming down to this world, Hashem endows him with the necessary strength to cope with the Yetzer Hara and charges his batteries with enough resources of holiness and purity. So when a person arrives in this world he is well-equipped with spiritual and holy nutrition, which are the weapons against the Yetzer Hara, and he possesses the strength to heed his oath, for a person is not given trials that he does not have the strength to overcome.

This is why the Torah commands a person, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your G-d" (Vayikra 19:2). In truth, the intention is not that a person should be as holy as Hashem, for this is an impossible feat. Rather it means that he should be as holy as he was before coming down to this world when he stood before the Holy Throne and absorbed holiness and purity. If he draws on this holiness, then Hashem will add to it from His holiness.

This is what Hashem requests of man with the command "You shall be holy". This is also what the holy Zohar tells us: All the mitzvot that Hashem gave us are counsel and tools that enable us to achieve the virtue of holiness. If so, a person has the power to safeguard this special holiness and it is up to him to do so for he was given all the necessary tools.

In the next verse we are told (Vayikra 19:3), "Every man: Your mother and father shall you revere". Why does the command of fearing one's parents follow the command of "You shall be holy"? I would like to suggest the following answer: Chazal tell us, 'The deeds of the parents are an indication for the children'. A person's offspring follow in the way that the parent behaves and learn from his deeds, for it is the way of a child to copy his father's ways and conduct. Therefore, the Torah commands us 'You shall be holy', implying that man should know that if he behaves with purity and holiness, this holiness will perforce pass on to his offspring, for children's chief education comes through observing their parents conduct. Since children will behave in the same way that their parents behave, the Torah commands "You shall be holy" which is immediately followed by the command "Every man: Your mother and father shall you revere" to hint to the parents that if they behave with holiness, their offspring too will merit this holiness.



## Walking in their Ways

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

### A Father's Blessing

A woman once came to me, bitterly bemoaning her lot. She asked, "Why do my friends, my neighbors, my cousins, and my sisters all have children, and only I am singled out to be childless?" I felt for her in her pain, but I couldn't help her much. Hashem alone holds the key to children.

Throughout her visit, each time I tried encouraging her, I felt that she was accusing me for her condition. She seemed to imply that it was my fault that she hadn't been blessed with offspring. I tried explaining to her that we cannot fathom Hashem's calculations. But she banged on the table in stubbornness and would not accept my words

Finally, I decided to change tactics. In a sharp change of tone, I said, "Madame, I admire you."

She fell silent, not expecting such a reaction. I continued. "With your attitude, you are acting exactly as a daughter who is obstinately demanding help from her father, not yielding until he agrees to her request. You are proving yourself a true daughter to our Heavenly Father. Take your grievances directly to Hashem, tell them to Him, and with His help, you will yet have a child."

Every Jew who finds himself in a difficult position should turn to Hashem with tenacity, staunchly clinging to his desire. When Hashem observes his closeness and pure faith in Him, He will certainly act according to the man's wishes.

## The Haftarah

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

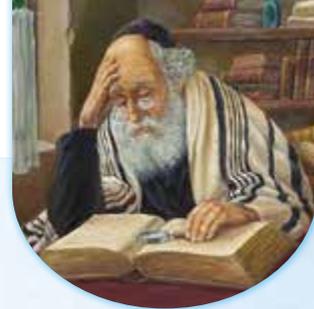
The connection to the Parsha: In the Haftarah, the Navi Yechezkel decries the sins of Am Yisrael at that time. In the Parsha, Am Yisrael are warned not to behave like the abominations of the nations.

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

## Guard Your Tongue

His Father and Mother Too

There is no distinction in the prohibition of accepting lashon hara, if one hears it from others or if one hears it from his one of his parents or other family members. Furthermore, we find in Tana D'bei Eliyahu, that if a person hears his father or mother talking in an incorrect manner, for example speaking lashon hara, besides being warned not to accept their words, he must also stop them (he should take care to do so in a respectable manner). If he remains quiet, he, as well as they, are punished greatly.



## Words of our Sages

### The Hidden Secret of the Wealthy

The story is told about two friends, one wise and the other foolish. They learned together as children and as they grew older they went their separate ways. The wise one went out to the wide world and made great strides in business, while the fool made no attempts to progress and remained as he was. One day the two friends met up and the fool asked his wise childhood friend, "Please tell me your secret, how did you become so wealthy?"

The wise one answered: "From time to time I travel to faraway places where I purchase merchandise and I then return home and sell the goods. The money that I earn in exchange for the merchandise is how I make a good living." The fool was skeptical and voiced his opinion: "You are considered a wise person, yet I don't see what you gain by travelling far away and buying merchandise in exchange for good cash, which you then bring back here and sell. You end up with exactly what you had originally – money and no merchandise." His wise friend explained: I buy a large stock at a discounted price and then sell it for a higher amount. So I am left with more money than I started out with."

The fool was still not convinced and continued to doubt his friend: "Since your 'business' involves travel expenses and you need to sleep in a hotel when you go to the fair, the money that you earn is spent on different overheads, so I am left with the same question. What do you gain at the end of the day by all your travelling around? How did you in fact become wealthy?" With no other option, the wealthy friend took out his notebook where he kept

a detailed inventory of all his expenses and income, and showed his friend: Here is the record of all my expenses, here is the record of all my income and this is the bottom line which shows a certain profit.

The fool now had a new question: If indeed it is true what you are saying and the main thing is what is written on the bottom line, why do you need to travel around, leaving your home far behind? Just take the notebook, write on the bottom line the amount that you wish to 'earn', and everything will be fine!

That this way of thinking is most absurd needs no further clarification. What will he gain by entering a higher profit than what he really earned, for the paper is nothing more than paper? The whole point of his toil is that through his actual expenses and income, he will be left with a true profit.

The Maggid, Rabbi Elimelech Biderman shlita, explains that this is exactly the idea of the Sefira:

Throughout the day we must remember where we are currently holding – these are the days of preparation for receiving the Torah. Each person, according to his level, must engage in Torah study and rectification of his middot, and then each night, he records on the 'bottom line', 'Today is ... of the Omer', I already came that bit closer to Har Sinai. It is not enough to simply count the Omer aloud after the Arvit prayer, with fear and love, while throughout the day one doesn't pay attention to man's task of self-improvement that is an intrinsic part of these days. This kind of behavior is similar to that foolish friend who due to his stupidity mistakenly thinks that he can change the results by changing the numbers on the last line, when he counts at the end of the day "Today is ... of the Omer". Even though G-d forbid, this does not take away from the requirement to perform the mitzvah as we have been commanded, the main purpose is missing.



## Pearls of the Parsha

### Young That Are Considered as Old

*"After the death of Aharon's two sons" (Vayikra 16:1)*

The holy Zohar says that since Nadav and Avihu were not yet twenty years old, they were therefore called 'Aharon's sons', meaning children who are still under the jurisdiction of their parents.

If so, the question arises, why were they punished? There is a concept that a person under twenty years of age is not punished by Heaven?

However, the 'Hadrash v'Ha'iyun' explains, from the words of the Talmud (Berachot 31b) it appears that a clever and extremely intelligent youngster is punished even before reaching twenty years of age. This is why Eli HaKohen told Shmuel that he was liable for death, when he was a young child of only two years old, because of his evident great wisdom.

This is what the above verse is implying: "After the death of Aharon's two sons", if you ask how they were punished before the age of twenty, the verse immediately answers this question, "when they approached before Hashem". Since they had reached a very lofty level and possessed great wisdom, to the extent that they became extremely close to Hashem, therefore "and they died", even though others of the same age are not yet eligible for punishment.

### Lowliness and Elevation, Vital Traits

*"With this shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary" (Vayikra 16:3)*

The word 'בזאת', with this, has the same numerical value (410) as 'שפיל', lowly, and 'קדוש', holy.

What does this imply? The 'Siach Ya'akov Yosef zt"l, writes that Hashem was hinting to Aharon HaKohen that in order to serve Hashem a person must possess these two perceptions. On the one hand, with matters concerning his own self he must feel lowly, whereas with matters concerning heaven, he must feel elevated when he acts with holiness.

### The Shechina is Compared to a Devoted Mother

*"That dwells with them amid their contamination" (Vayikra 16:16)*

Once several Admorim were sitting together with the Maggid of Trisk, and they asked him why the holy Zohar calls the holy Shechina a mother.

The Maggid replied, "you answer", but they responded, "we want to hear what you have to say".

The Maggid then told them that the way of the world is that when a child is unclean, the father hands the baby over to the mother so that she should wash him and then once he is clean he will hug and kiss him. But a mother is not like this; even when her baby is unclean she hugs and kisses him.

The Shechina too dwells with the people amid their contamination. The Shechina hugs and kisses Knesset Yisrael even while they are still dirty with wrongdoings and sins. This, then, is why the Shechina is compared to a mother.

## Treasures

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



### Sanctify Yourself with the Permissible

*"You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your G-d" (Vayikra 19:2)*

This Parsha talks about the matter of holiness, referring to it three times. At the beginning of the Parsha, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your G-d", in the middle (ibid 20:7-8) "You shall sanctify yourselves and you will be holy, for I am Hashem, your G-d. You shall observe My decrees and perform them – I am Hashem, Who sanctifies you", and at the end of the Parsha (ibid 20:26) "You shall be holy for Me, for I Hashem am holy".

There are two boundaries of holiness. Holiness can be the virtue of abstinence "Sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you", as the Ramban writes, and there is also holiness that comes from abstaining from Torah prohibitions. This is also called holiness, as Rashi writes (ibid 19:2) "'You shall be holy': Separate yourselves from immorality and from sin, for wherever there is a separation from immorality, there is holiness." (Rashi brings several examples of this). It is this abstention that separates us from the nations of the world, for they indulge in immorality, eating forbidden foods and in all kinds of abominations, whereas we are fenced off from all this, barricaded from sin.

We can explain the words "sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you" to mean that we should sanctify ourselves in that which was permitted before Matan Torah, for at that time we were not yet commanded about immorality, and as we find Ya'akov married two sisters, the Shevatim married their sisters (Bereishit 37:35, Rashi), and Amram married Yocheved, his aunt, for this did not entail any prohibition. Yet now that we received the Torah and the Heavenly decrees, we sanctify ourselves by not approaching immorality, avoiding forbidden foods and all the other Torah prohibitions.

There is an additional level in holiness: Hashem says, if you keep yourselves apart from the nations and their ways, you will be Mine. This is what Rashi points out: "Rabbi Elazar son of Azaria taught, "From where do we learn, do not say, 'I cannot stand pig meat, I do not wish to wear a garment made from mixed fibers', rather you should say, 'I would like to savor these things, but what can I do – G-d forbade it'? The answer is: The verse teaches us, 'and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine', your separation from them should be for My sake and not because you dislike their ways, abstain from sin and accept His sovereignty upon yourself."

This is the most elevated form of holiness. In the same way that we are told, "One mitzvah leads to another", so too holiness leads to holiness. The Torah demands this from a person gradually, the first requirement being (at the beginning of the Parsha) "You shall be holy", which refers to sanctifying yourself in what is permitted to you, general things like minimal talk with a woman, or minimal eating and drinking of wine. Following that, the Torah demands from man virtuousness in avodat Hashem, as it says "You shall observe My decrees" (middle of the Parsha) like the concept of "If you will follow My decrees" (Vayikra 26:3), and they are the laws and decrees which are our guiding light, and this is what brings man closer to Hashem. This is followed by the verse teaching us, "You shall be holy for Me", (end of the Parsha) that you are transformed into part of Hashem's essence, and this is what marks the clear distinction between us and the rest of the nations.

In fact, this is the greatest form of sanctifying Hashem's Name, as we say in the Shabbat prayers, "the sanctifiers of Your Name, rest on it (the Shabbat)". Shabbat is one of the most elevated levels that Am Yisrael possess and with this we sanctify Hashem. On the contrary, the more we separate ourselves from the rest of the nations, the more we merit their esteem. Yet if we try to copy their lifestyle, their hatred for us only grows.



## A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

**W**e are commanded in this Parsha: "with righteousness shall you judge your fellow". Rashi expounds on these words: "As its literal meaning. Another explanation: Judge your friend favorably".

There is a well-known explanation on the Mishna (Avot 1:6) "הוּי דין את כל האדם", "לכך זכות", "Judge everyone favorably", brought by the Sfat Emet. He explains that before judging a person, you must take "the entire person" (כל האדם) into account. You must contemplate his roots right from his childhood and ponder deeply the crevices of his soul, delving into and repeatedly examining his personal challenges, talents, financial situation and whether life is going smoothly for him. Only after contemplating 'the entire person', do you have the right to decide either way. For what do you know of what he went through today? It is better for you to exercise your brain and become accustomed to giving others the benefit of the doubt, even if this means searching 'under the ground'. Even in matters where it seems totally irrational to justify him, one should twist one's intellect and direct one's thoughts to the most improbable, to the idea that would never cross your mind and tell yourself: Maybe due to such and such, even though it seems most unfounded, he was led to behave in this way...

### He is not Neurotic!

The Yalkut 'Lekach Tov' quotes Rabbi Dov Yaffe zt"l who suggests a beautiful idea:

If a person does not give the benefit of the doubt, it is a sign that he does not like his friend. He brings the following example: If someone loses a beloved object, he will first search in all the places where it could possibly be. If he still doesn't find it, he will not give up. He will go and look even in most unlikely

places, for he thinks, maybe nevertheless it will be there. If this proves futile, he will return to the original places where he already searched, for maybe he didn't inspect well enough, maybe he didn't notice it, just maybe he will finally find his precious lost object.

Why indeed does he search so much, even returning to places where he already looked? Is he obsessive? No, the object that he lost is simply very precious to him!

Similarly, if you would really love your friend as much as you love yourself, you would search in all the holes and crevices (in your brain) to find a way to give him the benefit of the doubt, and you would manage to find a way to judge him favorably. Even if, superficially, the act seems to be incorrect, you would search everywhere to find a redeeming factor for him. If you don't search, it is because you don't love him!

Rabbi Reuven Karlenstein's zt"l was a famous Maggid and in one of his lectures he expressed his frustration that there are people who publish sefarim that serve to strengthen yirat shamayim and mitzvah performance, yet why does no one publish sefarim with stories about judging favorably? There are boundless stories about people who merited giving the benefit of the doubt and later found out that this was indeed the truth.

He told over a story that took place a few years ago. In the Lederman Beit Knesset that morning, there were two minyanim for netz, one was held in the main Beit Midrash and the second one in the adjacent room, with a smaller minyan. They finished the quiet Shemone Esrei and wished to begin the Chazan's repetition of the Shemone Esrei, but they were short of one person to complete the minyan since one of the participants had disappeared.

They looked outside and found him in the courtyard of the Beit Knesset. They asked him to come inside to complete the minyan.

"No," he replied.

"Why do you not wish to come back inside?"

"I need air."

"There is a ventilator inside."

"No, no, I need the fresh air from outside."

"Everyone is waiting for you."

"I cannot come inside."

With no alternative, they go and look for someone to take his place.

You must understand, this person looked completely healthy and strong. And suddenly he doesn't have enough air... "I regarded him with surprise," one of the participants said, but what could we do, we had to call someone else to be the tenth person.

When they finished praying this man asked someone to call his wife since he wasn't feeling well. He felt pressure and shortness of breath...

That afternoon he was no longer among the living. He had been taken to the hospital after suffering a massive heart attack.

Who could have imagined? Someone who looks completely healthy says that he doesn't have enough air, and it turns out that he had a heart attack?!

Yes! If he says that he needs air, one is obligated to judge him favorably!

There are tens and hundreds of stories like this.

Someone once came to visit Maran Rabbeinu Ovadiah Yosef zt"l at 7:30 in the morning, and the Rabbanit told the visitor that the Rav was sleeping. The man expressed his surprise: "What, at 7:30 in the morning the Rav is still sleeping?"

The Rav, who overheard the exchange, called the visitor inside and told him: Don't be so quick to judge me in a negative light. Yesterday at twelve o'clock at night, I returned from giving four lectures in four different places. I then received a fax from Argentina concerning an agunah, to which I wrote a lengthy response until five in the morning, permitting her to remarry. I then went to pray netz and returned home to sleep for a short time. This is a proof of how important it is to give every person the benefit of the doubt!

## *MeOros HaRamchal*

### *Parshas Achrei Mos*

#### THE SECRET OF AHARON'S OFFERINGS ON *YOM KIPPUR*

“With this will Aharon enter the holies” (*Achrei Mos* 16:3)

The *Ramchal* teaches us that whoever needs to affect great *tikkunim* rectifications must attach and connect himself to his root source. Then once this connection has been made, the source shines and illuminates him and strengthens him. Then he can affect the necessary *tikkunim* without being held back by any barriers.

On *Yom Kippur* Aharon HaKohen had to affect many important *tikkunim* rectifications, he therefore had to connect to his root source and draw his power from that source. . .

Then afterwards he offered a bull as a sacrificial offering. He slaughtered the par which refers to the harsh judgments alluded by the final letters of the *Alef Bais* מנצפך whose gematria equals פ. (*Mem*=40; *Nun*=50; *Tzadi*=90; *Pay*=80; *Kaf*=20 together they equal 280 and *Par* is 280 because *Reish*=200; *Pay*=80)

After that Aharon offered an *Ayal* as an elevation offering since that is the secret of the illumination that shines on *Yom Kippur*, since the *Ayal* alludes to one aspect and the elevation offering to the other.

### *Parshas Kedoshim*

#### THE SECRET OF *ORLAH*

“When you come to the land and plant any fruit-tree that can be eaten you shall keep its *orlah*,” (19:23-25)

The *Ramchal* cites the saying: “All beginnings are hard or difficult,” and explains this based on its deeper meaning as referring to the order of the Divine attributes the *sefiros*:

Regarding all the workings of the attribute of *Malchus*, at the beginning whatever we start off the *other side* – *sitra achra* is very strong in opposing us. This is due to the position of *Malchus* since it is the very last and final attribute and therefore has the closest proximity to the grasp of the *other side* – *sitra achra* more so than the other attributes which are higher up [on the ladder of the tree of life] as is known.

(Translator's explanation the chart or diagram known as the ladder of the *sefiros* sometimes called the tree of life is a hierarchy of the Divine attributes and *sefiros* and

their relative positions to each other and their station and position in the scheme of the Divine order such that the highest three known as the spiritual brains referring to *Kesser* (or *Daas*) Chochmah and Binah, the next group of six are often the emotional *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferes*, *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod* and *Malchus* is at the very bottom rung or trunk of this ladder or tree. The higher up the more spiritual the *sefiros* and the more elevated they are. Since *Malchus* is at the very lowest point its proximity to the world of evil and the powers of darkness is closest, and it comes more in contact with them and this physical world.)

This has already been explained regarding the *dor ha'mabul* generation of the flood when *the sitra achra – other side* was so strong that it overcame them and *Hashem* had to remove them from the world [through the flood]. Regarding this the *Ramchal* pronounces the saying: *kol haschalos kashos* all beginnings are difficult and hard. At the start things are hard to get them going. Later on, however once evil is overcome and departs the world is settled and Noach and Avraham come into the world and they began to announce and proclaim *Hashem* to the world.

This, explains *Ramchal* is the concept of the commandment to keep a three year period of *orlah*. The mitvza of *orlah* is one of the commandments that is connected to the land [of Israel] known as *mitzvos ha'tluyos ba'aretz* because the land [being the lowest point] is where *Malchus* is manifest most.

Therefore the *Torah* tells us “When you come to the land and plant any fruit-tree that can be eaten you shall keep its *orlah*, on its fruit,” this period lasts for three years long because the next three attributes [going up from *Malchus*] are *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod* where the power of the *other side – sitra achra* still has a stronghold (Translator’s comment – these represent the feet and reproductive organs which are the most lowly and animalistic parts of the body). As it says “*tumas beshulayha* – impurity is found in the extremities,” which is why it says “for three years they shall be *orlah* and not be eaten.”

On the fourth year “all fruits are holy *kodesh hillulim* unto *Hashem*,” which corresponds to the fourth attribute [up from *Malchus*] of *Tiferes* when the Infinite *Ayn Sof* is revealed as in the secret of the four letter Divine Name *YH"VH* as is known. Therefore, these fruits are holy and similar to *Ma'aser Sheini* may only be eaten inside the walls of Yerushalayim. This is because it depends on the deepest and most inner meaning of things - therefore they are eaten only inside the walls and we are prohibited from eating them outside the walls.

On the fifth year when the power of *kedushah* is at its strongest and they are sanctified we no longer fear the *other side – the sitra achra* anymore and therefore the *pasuk* tells us “eat their fruits and add them to your produce I am *Hashem* your G-d.”

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