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LIGHTS OF OUR RIGHTEOUS TZADDIKIM



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

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)

❧ **VAYISHLACH** ❧

❧ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❧

Yaakov's Battle; the Battle against Darkness, Depression and Despair

"And Yaakov was left alone and a man fought with him etc. and he struck Yaakov's thigh and injured his foot and the sun rose and Yaakov was limping."

The Avodas Yissachar asks, how can the Torah tell us that Yaakov was left alone. A Jew is never left alone?! Hashem is always with us, as the pasuk says, *"The whole entire world is full of His glory – Melo kol ha'aretz kevodo."* Furthermore, Hashem promised Yaakov, *"I shall be with you - Anochi ehiyeh imach."* If so, how can the pasuk say that Yaakov was alone?!

Another point that needs explanation in this conflict between Yaakov Avinu and Esav's Angel, is why did the Angel of Esav choose to specifically injure Yaakov's foot? Furthermore, why wasn't he afraid to attack the 'Bechir HaAvos,' the elite patriarch Yaakov? What made the angel feel that he might win such a battle?!

Lastly, the Torah does not give reasons for the mitzvot we are commanded to do. If so, why does the Torah single out the mitzvah of Gid haNasheh and explain that the reason the Jewish people refrain from eating it is because Yaakov was injured there?

The Avodas Yissachar explains that Yaakov 'misused' the trait of humility. Humility is positive so long as it prevents a person from arrogance and is used as a tool for gratitude. A truly humble person never feels he 'deserves' anything from Hashem. Therefore, he is happy with whatever he is granted. Thus, healthy humility is a positive tool to temper arrogance, pride and vanity and to help us rejoice in our lot and be happy with what Hashem gives us.

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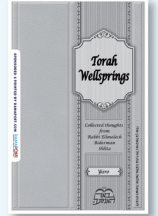
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However, when we are so humble that we feel small, insignificant, worthless, dejected, unwanted, un-needed and alone - such small-mindedness and such humility is detrimental to serving Hashem because it causes us to lose hope, to be sad and to fall into despair and depression.

The pasuk (Bereishis 32:11), tells us that Yaakov said, "*Katonti mikol hachassadim.*" Yaakov was small in his own eyes because of all the kindness Hashem had bestowed upon him. Yaakov lived with Lavan for 20 years and Hashem had granted him a family, children and much wealth. When Yaakov measured himself against his father and grandfather's achievements, he saw how they towered far above his own measly attempts to serve Hashem. Avraham had thrown himself into a fiery furnace and overcame the ten trials. Yitzchak had readily stretched his own neck with self-sacrifice as an offering. "Who am I?" thought Yaakov, compared to them? He therefore calculated that Hashem's kindness was far beyond what he truly deserved and he was afraid that Hashem had repaid whatever was owed to him. Would Hashem no longer want to have anything to do with him? Such, were the thoughts and doubts that gnawed at Yaakov's emunah. These dark thoughts made Yaakov feel as though he was alone! It was only when Yaakov felt abandoned that Esav's Archangel was able to strike! When Yaakov's thoughts cause him to feel alone, he was then vulnerable to the evil one's attack.

That is why the Angel dared to attack Yaakov, because he thought Yaakov had truly given up hope. In truth however, Yaakov did not lose faith. Instead, he battled these negative thoughts and with his strength he overcame and defeated the battle against the darkness - against the Angel of Esav. The angel chose to strike Yaakov's foot because he wanted to prevent Yaakov from moving on.

It was then, as the pasuk says, that the sun of salvation shined for Yaakov and he realized that he was limping because that small doubt was a blemish on his faith and emunah. This is why we do not eat the Gid haNasheh. When we are stationary and dwell on past sins and misdeeds, we are prey to the depression and grief of the sorrows of the past. When a soldier is injured on the battlefield, he has no time to stop and tend to his wounds or the enemy will finish him off. He must escape the battlefield and then he can get medical aid. We too, must not look back, we must keep moving forward, flee and work on being better.

After we have left the battlefield, we can do teshuva and rectify the past, but in the time of despair, we need to keep moving on. Esav's Archangel tried to immobilize Yaakov because he knew that is how he could defeat him, yet he failed. Yaakov's inner strength and emunah overcame the angel and Yaakov emerged victorious in the dawn of a new day of hope.

May we always see the light and shine of the sun of hope and banish the darkness of sadness and depression and transform any past misdeeds into merits through Teshuva out of Love!



From the Lowest to the Highest

Katonti mikol hachassadim (Bereishis 32:11).

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz was exceedingly humble. He would often repeat in front of

his followers that, "I am the worst, most terrible person in the world!" Once, he was asked to pray for the speedy salvation and recovery of a certain woman who was in the midst of giving birth and her life was in danger. The minute before this person entered, the Divrei Chaim had been calling himself names, debasing and humiliating himself. However, as soon as he was informed of this woman's plight, a transformation took place. The Sanzer got up off the floor and declared, "I hereby decree on Heaven itself and command that an immediate salvation take place for this woman! Right Now!" The chassidim were bewildered. "Tatte," one of the Sanzer's sons asked, "How can it be that just a moment ago you belittled yourself and said you are worthless and a moment later you have the audacity to decree and command Heaven as only a Tzaddik can?!" Rav Chaim answered, "A Jew must have the power to rise up, in one moment, from lowest depths and to reach the highest Heavens."



הילולא

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrew Tefilla for Lighting a Yahrzeit or Hilula Candle

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

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



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❁ **16th of Kislev ~ Begins Friday Night (Dec 13th)**

- ❁ **Rav Yaakov** of Lublin, father of Rav Hirschel of Cracow, (5405/1644);
- ❁ **Rav Shaul Yedidya Elozor Taub** (the *Imrei Shaul*), the second Modzhitzer *Rebbe*. Born in Osherov in 1886, he assumed the leadership of Modzhitz upon the passing of his father Rav Yisrael, the *Divrei Yisrael*, in 1920. From 1940 until 1947 the *Rebbe* lived in Brooklyn, New York. Rav Shaul was probably the most prolific *Chassidic* composer of all time, with the total output numbering close to a thousand compositions, (5708/1947);
- ❁ **Rav Dovid Leib Schwartz** of Bnei Brak, “*Der Heiliger Tzaddik*”, (5760/1999);
- ❁ **Rav Menachem Kalish** of Amshinov (1860–1917). Succeeded his father, Rav Yaakov Dovid Kalish in 1878, at the young age of eighteen. One of Rav Menachem’s sons, Rav Yosef, became *Rebbe* in Amshinov, while his second son, Rav Shimon Sholom, became a *Rebbe* in Otvotsk. When Rav Yosef passed away in 1935, his son, Rav Yaakov Dovid (1906–1942), was immediately appointed as his successor. His uncle, Rav Shimon Sholom, had fled to Shanghai, where he helped the Mir *Yeshiva* in its escape and, after the war, he went to America. Upon his passing in 1954, he was succeeded by his son, Rav Yerachmiel Yehuda Meir, who set up court in the Yerushalayim neighborhood of Bayit Vegan. Rav Yerachmiel Yehuda Meir’s grandson, Rav Yaakov Aryeh Milikowski, succeeded him in 1976. Rav Yitzchok Kalish, the son of Rav Yosef, became the *Rebbe* of Amshinover *Chassidim* in America. Of Amshinov itself, nothing remained, (5678/1917).

❁ **17th of Kislev ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Dec 14th)**

- ❁ **Rav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz**, the *Alter* of Novardok (1849[1858]–1919). Born in the Lithuanian town of Plongian to Rav Shlomo Zalman, *Rav* and *Dayan* of the town, Rav Yosef Yoizel joined Kovno’s *Kollel Perushim* where he studied under Rav Itzele Blazer, Rav Naftoli Amsterdam and Rav Avrohom Shenker, spending at least eighteen hours a day – most of the time standing– studying. He also spent two lengthy periods learning in solitude: first, he secluded himself in a small room for a year and a half after tragically losing his first wife during childbirth; later, learning in a room in a forest for twelve years, leaving only to visit his family for *Shabbosos*. In 1894, Rav Yosef Yoizel began to visit the *Alter* of Kelm, Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv. Later, he established a large *Yeshiva* in Novardok and was responsible for creating a whole network of *Yeshivos*. During the First World War, in 1914, he moved the *Yeshiva* – with its *bochurim* – to Hommel in the Ukraine, as the Germans

advanced on Novardok. In 1918, he moved it to Kiev, (5680/1919);

- ✳ **Rav Chai Taib** of Tunisia, author of *HaLev Hitin*, (5596/1835);
- ✳ **Rav Shlomo Heiman**, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Bais Medrash Elyon, Torah Vodaas* (1893–1944). Born in Parenz, near Minsk, Reb Shlomo entered the *Yeshiva* in Halusk at the age of twelve, where he learned under Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz. He remained there until 1917, when he married Chaya Feiga Rudensky of Volozhin. That year, he was appointed by Rav Boruch Ber to serve as *Rosh Yeshiva* in *Knesses Bais Yitzchok*. When anti-Semitic harassment forced him to leave the area, the *Chofetz Chaim* asked Rav Shlomo to teach in his *Yeshiva*. When World War I ended, Rav Elchonon Wasserman asked Rav Shlomo to be a *Rosh Yeshiva* in Baranovitch. In 1927 Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski invited Rav Shlomo to be *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Ramailles *Yeshiva* in Vilna, a position he held for almost eight years. In 1935, with Rav Chaim Ozer's approval, Rav Shlomo accepted an invitation to head *Yeshiva Torah Vodaas*. Thus he was spared, through *hashgocha protis*, the horrors of World War II. Since he arrived in America a few years before the onset of the Holocaust, he was able to aid in the rescue of *Bnei Torah* and *Rabbonim*, (5705/1944);
- ✳ **Rav Avrohom Yochonon Blumenthal** (1877–1966). Born to his parents one year after they immigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* from Hungary, he married in 1895, and – despite the *petiros* of three of his children and his wife's hearing loss– he began an orphanage for the destitute of Yerushalayim during World War I. *Bais Tzion Blumenthal* has been continued by his grandson, Rav Eliezer Rakovsky (*niftar* 1996) and his great-grandson, Rav Boruch Rakovsky, (5727/1966).

✳ **18th of Kislev ~ Begins Sunday Night (Dec 15th)**

- ✳ **Rav Avrohom ben HaRambam**, the only son of the *Rambam*, born to him by his second wife. Born in Fostat, Egypt (1186–1238). *Mechaber* of *HaMaspik L'avdei Hashem*, (4999/1238);
- ✳ **Rav Aryeh Leib Darshan** of Posen, (5497/1736);
- ✳ **Rav Boruch** of Mezhibuzh (1756 [or 1753] –1811), son of Rav Yechiel Ashkenazi and Adel, the only daughter of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*. Educated by Rav Pinchas of Koritz and the *Maggid* of Mezritch, he began serving as *Rebbe* in Tulchin. After the passing of his older brother, the *Degel Machane Ephraim*, in 1798, Rav Boruch settled in Mezhibuzh, (5572/1811);
- ✳ **Rav Yekusiel Shmelke** of Sassov, (5618/1857);
- ✳ **Rav Yosef Yitzchok** of Ovritch, son of the *Tzemach Tzedek* of Lubavitch, and father of Rebbetzin Shterna Sara who was the wife of the *Rebbe RaShaB*, (5638/1877);
- ✳ **Rav Mordechai Alishberg** of Boisk, (5650/1889);
- ✳ **Rav Chaim Tzvi Ehrenreich**, author of *ShU"t Kav Chaim* (1875–1936). Born in Savrantz, his grandfather was Rav Avrohom Yehuda Schwartz, the *Kol Aryeh*. His primary teacher was his brother, Rav Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich, *Rav* of Shamlau and *mechaber* of *Lechem Shlomo*. Rav Chaim Tzvi became *Rav* of the Mahd community when he was fifty-seven, succeeding his father-in-law. He was also *Av Bais Din* of Mahd for over thirty years. In 1923, he published *Ketzei HaMateh* on the *Mateh Ephraim* (by Rav Ephraim Zalman Margulies of Brodt) on the *halochos* of *Chodesh Elul* and *Chodesh Tishrei*. In 1932, he published *Shaarei Chaim* on *Shaarei Ephraim*, dealing with *halochos* of *Krias HaTorah*. His *magnus opus*, *Kav Chaim*, comprised 102 (*gematria* of *Kav*) *teshuvos* in practical *halocha*, (5697/1936);
- ✳ **Rav Eliezer Zev Rosenbaum** of Rakov, (5759/1998);

- * **Rav Tzvi Menachem Teller**, *Rosh Yeshiva* at the *Bais Medrash L'Torah* (Skokie Yeshiva) (1951–2007). His parents were Gerrer *Chassidim* from distinguished lineage, descended from Rav Yitzchok of Vorki. Upon advice of the Gerrer *Rebbe*, the *Bais Yisrael*, young Tzvi Teller went to a Lithuanian-style *Yeshiva*. He learned at the Ponovezh *Yeshiva* for seven years as a *talmid* of Rav Dovid Povarsky and Rav Shmuel Rozovsky. After marrying, the couple moved to Seattle where Rav Tzvi became a principal for three years. In 1975, they then moved to Skokie, (5768/2007).

* **19th of Kislev ~ Begins Monday Night (Dec 16th)**

- * **Rav Dov Ber**, the *Maggid* of Mezritch (1704–1772). Born in Lukatch to Rav Avrohom, he was descended from Rav Hai *Gaon* and Rav Yochanon *HaSandlar*, a descendant of Dovid *HaMelech*. Rav Dov Ber learned with the *Pnei Yehoshua* in Lemberg early in his life. In 1752, he became the *Ba'al Shem Tov*'s closest *talmid*. Among his students were the *Rebbe* Reb Shmuel Shmelke *HaLevi* Horowitz and his brother, Rav Pinchas *HaLevi* Horowitz, the *Baal Hafla'a*, the *Rebbe* Reb Zusha and his brother, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk, Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, Rav Nachum of Chernobyl, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi. His son was Rav Avrohom *HaMalach* (1740–1776). The classic anthologies of his teachings are *Likutei Amarim*, *Torah Ohr*, and *Ohr Ho'Emes*, (5533/1772);
- * **Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriyyeh**, *Bais Medrash Lamed Daas*, (5756/1995);
- * **Rav Menachem Nachum** of Tolna, (5676/1915);
- * **Rav Shaul Mekiketz Shelai**, born in Djerba, one of the two main cities in Tunisia, son of Rav Matuk Sali, and grandson of Emmanuel Shelai. At an early age, he leaned under Rav Dovid *HaKohen*, and at the age of twenty, he began to teach in the *Yeshiva* of Rav Yosef Bereibi, the *Ben Porat Yosef*. With the latter's passing, Rav Shaul became the *Rosh Yeshiva*. Rav Shaul edited and annotated many *seforim* by previous *Gedolim* of Djerba, including *Kisei Rachamim* by Rav Rachamim Mazuz and *Ben Porat Yosef* by Rav Yosef Bereibi. Later in life, he and his wife moved to *Eretz Yisrael* and settled in Shlomi, near Nahariya. In *Eretz Yisrael*, he wrote *Midrasho Shel Shlomo* in 1948 and *Karmi Sheli* (on *Kiddushin*) and *Medrash Avos* (on *Avos*) in 1963, as well as other writings. His final work, *Bayit Va'Shem*, was published posthumously in 1975. Appended to it is *Va'Yatek Mi'Shom*, offering guidelines and insights on raising children, (5730/1969).

* **20th of Kislev ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Dec 17th)**

- * **Rav Boruch Hager** of Seret-Vizhnitz, the *Imrei Boruch*. The son of Rav Menachem Mendel Hager, Rav Boruch was *Rebbe* for only eight years, and was *niftar* at a young age. His son, Rav Yisrael Hager (the *Ahavas Yisrael*), was born when Rav Boruch was only fifteen years old. (2nd of *Kislev* according to *Yated* 2005), (5653/1892);
- * **Rav Yitzchok Hutner**, *Rosh Yeshiva Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin*, *mechaber* of *Pachad Yitzchok* (1907–1981). His uncle, Rav Benzion Ostrover, had been a *talmid* of Rav Mendel of Kotzk, and was instrumental in providing his young nephew with a direct link to the world of *Chassidus*. At the age of fifteen, he went to Slobodka and was directed by the *Alter*, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel. In 1925, he entered the new Slobodka branch in Chevron, where he also met and learned from Rav Avrohom Yitzchok Kook. He remained until 1929, after which he returned to his parents in Warsaw. He became a personal tutor for Rav Moshe Solevetchik's son, Aharon. In 1932, he published his *Toras HaNozir*, a commentary on the *Rambam's Hilchos Nozir*. In 1933, he married Masha Lipshitz and moved to *Eretz Yisrael*. Despite his great attachment to the Land, they left for America one year later, not to return

for thirty years. He built *Yeshiva Chaim Berlin* to his specifications with his famous blend of *Torah* philosophies. One of his *talmidim* was Rav Yitzchok Shurin, grandson of Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky. Among his colleagues at Slobodka were Rav Yitzchok *HaLevi* Ruderman, Rav Reuven Grozovsky, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, and Rav Aharon Kotler. In 1949 he began publishing his discourses on morals and ethics which he subtitled *Divrei Torah B'inyonei Hilchos Dei'os V'Chovos HaLevovos*. As a young man he wrote *Toras HaNozir* on the *Rambam's Hilchos Nezirus*. He wrote a profound commentary (*Kovetz He'oros*) on Rabbeinu Hillel on the *Safra*. His discourses on *Yomim Tovim* and *Shabbos* (*Pachad Yitzchok*) are collected in seven volumes, (5742/1981);

- ✳ **Rav Yochanon Twersky**, the *Rachmastrivka Rebbe*. He was also the cousin of the Belzer *Rebbe*. He was shot by the Nazis during Friday night prayers. His daughter, Malka, married the first Boyaner *Rebbe*, Rav Yitzchok Friedman, the *Pachad Yitzchok*, (5742/1981);
- ✳ **Rav Meshulom Feivish HaLevi** of Zbarazh, author of *Yosher Divrei Emes*, a basic work on *Chassidic* thought. He studied under Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov and Rav Dov Ber of Mezritch. His teachings appear in *Likutim Yekarim*. His *talmidim* included Rav Menachem Mendel of Kosov, (5555/1794);
- ✳ **Rav Feivish** of Kremenitz, the *Mishnas Chachomim*, (5535/1774);
- ✳ **Rav Hirsch Paley** (1911–2005). Born in Shklov, Lithuania, to Rav Avrohom Noach Paley, a close *talmid* of Rav Boruch Ber Leibovitz. The family immigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* when Rav Hirsch was fourteen. His father became the *Mashgiach* in *Yeshiva Chevron*. Rav Hirsch would travel with his lifelong friend, Rav Sholom Schwadron, to hear Rav Elya Lopian in Yerushalayim, whom he considered his *Rebbe Muvhok* and *Moreh Derech*. Rav Hirsch was the last surviving member of the Chevron community following the 1929 riots. In 1965, he married Menucha, the daughter of Rav Shlomo Zalman Pines. She had been one of the first *talmidos* of Sara Schenirer and served as a *mechaneches* in *Bais Yaakov* schools for over six decades, both in Tel Aviv and in Yerushalayim. They moved to Tel Aviv, where Rav Hirsch studied in *Kollel Heichal HaTalmud*, founded by his father. He later became *Mashgiach* at Chevron *Yeshiva*, (5756/2005).

✳ **21st of Kislev ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Dec 18th)**

- ✳ **Shimon ben Yaakov Ovinu** (1566–1446 B.C.E.) [24th of *Kislev* according to *Yated* 2007];
- ✳ **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank**, *Rav* of Yerushalayim (1873–1961). Born in Lithuania, he was a student of Rav Eliezer Gordon and Rav Shmuel Salant. His main work is a set of responsa known as *Har Tzvi*. He also authored *Mikro'ei Kodesh*. He was the father-in-law of Rav Menachem Ben-Tzion Sacks, the *Menachem Tzion*, (5722/1961);
- ✳ **Rav Yaakov Meir Padwa** of Brisk, *mechaber* of *Mekor Mayim Chaim*, a commentary on *Shulchon Aruch*, (5617/1856);
- ✳ **Rav Yochanon Perlow**, the seventh *Rebbe* (sixth, according to *Yated* 2006) of the Stolin-Karlin dynasty (1900–1956). Born in Stolin, a suburb of Pinsk, White Russia, to Rav Yisrael, the “*Yanuka*” of Stolin. After his father was *niftar* in 1921, his six sons split the succession: Rav Moshe became *Rebbe* in Stolin; Rav Avrohom Elimelech took over in Karlin; Rav Yaakov moved to the U.S. in 1923 to lead the Karlin community that already had four *shuls* in New York and one *shtiebel* in Detroit. He became known as the *Detroiter Rebbe*. Rav Yochanon moved to Poland where he became a *Rebbe* in Lutsk, capital of the Volhynia district. Among the 41,000 people in Lutsk were eighteen thousand Jews. After the Nazis entered Lutsk on June 25, 1941, they herded the Jews into a ghetto in December, and the following August, they dragged 17,500 of them outside the town and murderously

gunned them down. The last survivors, Jewish workers in the local labor camp, mounted a heroic but hopeless revolt on December 11, after learning that they, too, were about to be liquidated. Only about 150 Lutsk Jews survived the war. Rav Yochonon, his wife, and two daughters fled into the surrounding forests and made their way deep into Russia with groups of partisans. After being deported to Siberia and personally burying his wife and elder daughter there on the same day, Rav Yochonon somehow survived the war. He lost almost his entire family; only one daughter, Faige, survived. He moved to Haifa in 1946, then to America two years later. While in New York, he founded the Karlin-Stolin *Torah* Institutions and published the new *Siddur Bais Aharon v'Yisrael*, comprising Karlin-Stolin *minhogim*. Rav Yochonon's grandson, Rav Boruch Yaakov Meir Shochet, became the next Stolin-Karlin *Rebbe*. He composed the poem "*Kah Echsof Noam Shabbos*" that is printed in most editions of *Shabbos Zemiros*, (5717/1956).

✧ **22nd of Kislev ~ Begins Thursday Night (Dec 19th)**

- ✧ **Rav Eliezer (or Elozor) Ashkenazi**, *mechaber* of *Ma'asei Hashem* (1512–1585). Born in Turkey, he studied with Rav Yosef Taitatzak (1465–1546) in Salonica. He served as a *Rav* in Egypt from 1538 to 1561. For unknown reasons, he was compelled to leave, served in Famagusta, Cyprus, then in Venice, Italy. Due to a disagreement with Rav Shmuel Yehuda Katzenellenbogen, he moved to Prague, where he helped develop the *chevra kadisha*, on which others are based. After a year, he moved back to Italy and lived in Cremona. In 1578, he moved to Posen, Poland, and took his final post. He retired to Cracow, where he lived out his last few years, (5346/1585);
- ✧ **Rav Meshulem Mirels**, father-in-law of the *Chacham Tzvi*, (5447/1686);
- ✧ **Rav Pinchas** of Ostroha, (5566/1805);
- ✧ **Rav Yechezkel Panet**, *Av Bais Din* of De'esh (Dezh), chief *Rav* of Transylvania and *mechaber* of *Mar'eh Yechezkel* and *Kenesses Yechezkel*, (5544–5606/1783–1845) (1929, according to *Hamodia* 2006);
- ✧ **Rav Yoel Ashkenazi** of Zlotchov, brother-in-law of Rav Yosef Yoel Deutsch of Kretschinef, Hungary, *mechaber* of *Yad Yosef* (1859), (5667/1906);
- ✧ **Rav Chaim Kesar** (Chassar), *Rav* in the Yemenite community in *Eretz Yisrael*, (5758/1997);
- ✧ **Rav Sholom Mordechai Schwadron**, Yerushalmi *Maggid* (1913–1997), brother-in-law of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. He was named for his grandfather, the *Maharsham*, the leading *posek* in Galicia before World War I. He lost his father at the age of seven, and for a time lived in an orphanage. After his *bar mitzva* he studied in the Lomza *Yeshiva* in Petach Tikva, and later in the Chevron *Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim under Rav Yehuda Leib Chasman. After his marriage, he continued his studies in *Kollel Ohel Torah*. The *kollel*'s members included Rav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv and Rav Shmuel Vosner. In addition to his renown as a *Maggid*, he published approximately twenty-five of his grandfather's works, as well as *Lev Eliyohu* (of Rav Elya Lopian), and the writings of Rav Chasman, *Ohr Yahal*, (5758/1997);
- ✧ **Rav Yosef Chaim Klein**. Born in New York, he learned at *Torah VoDa'as*. His *Rebbe Muvhok* was Rav Shlomo Heiman. He subsequently learned under Rav Reuven Grozovsky at *Bais Medrash Elyon* in Monsey. His last forty years were spent as *menahel* of the *Mesivta* of the Mirrer *Yeshiva* in Brooklyn, (5683–5765/1922–2004).



❧ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❧

WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

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

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

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



❧ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❧

STORIES & ANECDOTES

Rav Boruch of Mezhibuzh, 18th of Kislev

Grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov

The *Apta Rav* used to say: when you speak and tell stories about the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, it is a *segula* for *hatzlocha*; about the *Rebbe Rav Boruch*, it is a *segula* for *Yiras Shomayim*! (*Margenisa Dvei Rabbonon*, page 131)



The Big Fish

One *Shabbos*, when *Rav Boruch* spent *Shabbos* in a certain town, they brought a very large fish before him on *Erev Shabbos*. *Rav Boruch* asked them to prepare it in honor of *Shabbos* and at his *tisch* he divided its portions among the

Chassidim.

As he distributed the fish he told the *Chassidim* the following story:

There was once an upstanding *yungerman* who spent his days studying *Torah* while his wife ran a small convenience store to earn them a modest living. The *Soton* was jealous of his success and so he decided to test the *yungerman* and his wife by sending them an abundance of customers. This left his wife overworked and overwhelmed, and so she complained to her husband, asking him to help her run the store. He began to shave

off some hours from his learning, here an hour and there an hour, until he had completely left his studies and devoted his entire day to running the business. This is the way of the evil one: today he tells him to commit one type of sin and tomorrow another; slowly but surely our pure, innocent *yungerman* shook off the yoke of *Torah* and *mitzvos* until he was transformed into a totally irreligious rebel.

He was once traveling when he reached a crossroad. At that point, he was contemplating a certain transgression when there came to his ears the sound of distant weeping. When he enquired as to the source of this misery, the townsfolk explained that the cries were from one of the prisoners of the *poritz*, the wealthy Polish landowner. Upon approaching the *poritz*, the *poritz* told the *yungerman*, "This wretched Jew is late paying his rent, so I have jailed him until someone ransoms him or till he dies and rots!"

The small spark that is never extinguished in any *Yid* was rekindled as the *yungerman* heard the poor Jew's distressful predicament. "I shall redeem him!" he declared and on the spot he pulled out his money pouch and ransomed the captive. *Nu*, as *Chazal* say, *mitzva goreres mitzva* – one *mitzva* leads to another, and the *pintele yid* within was now truly awake and aflame. Feelings of remorse and bitterness about his current empty state and vacant lifestyle stirred within him warm memories of yesteryear, when with purity and innocence he sat and studied *Torah*. He was overcome with his new resolve to be better and do *teshuva*, when a new and frightening fear gripped his heart: what if...? What if *chas vesholom* (heaven forbid) he wasn't strong enough to withstand temptation once more? What if his newfound resolve waned and he went

back to his errant ways? Who was to say he wouldn't simply go back to a life of lawlessness and disdain for all he once again held dear? As he passed by a river his resolve grew until his decision was final: he took a leap of faith and drowned himself in the torrential waters of the raging river, sure that only such a drastic action could help him to remain pure of heart!

Now his soul ascended heavenward as his waterlogged body descended, plunging into the depths. On high, the heavenly tribunal convened to try his case and the arguments back and forth between the prosecution and defence flew fast and furious. On the one hand, he had previously led a holy life full of *Torah* and *mitzvos*; on the other, he had turned toward a life bereft of any religious observance. On the one hand, he had just performed the important *mitzva* of *pidyon shevuyim* (redeeming captives) and *pikuach nefesh* (saving another Jew's life), using up all his money; on the other hand, he had just committed a grave sin by jumping into the river and taking his own life – yet he had done so for the purpose of escaping temptation and preserving his newfound faith and *Emunas Hashem*! Finally, the *Bais Din Shel Maala* concluded that he must return to this world; their *psak din* was handed down that his soul must come back as a *gilgul* in a fish; if a Jew ate it, that would be a *tikkun* for his *neshoma*.

And so, concluded the *Rebbe Rav Boruch*, his soul had come back in the fish that they were eating, and he hired a *minyán* to recite *Kaddish* and study *Torah* as a *tikkun* for his *neshoma*, till she could return to her source. And so it was. (*Mizekeinim Esbonon* II p. 112:7)



The Stolen Spoon: The Tale of a True Penitent

Rav Boruch of Mezhibuzh was well known as an outspoken critic of Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev. One Friday night, during the *Rebbe's tisch*, when his *Chassidim* were gathered around his table, Rav Boruch declared, "If anyone here will speak evil of the Berditchever *Rav*, I promise that he will be rewarded with a portion in the World to Come."

Immediately a young man stepped forward, prepared to offer Rav Boruch an evil report about the Berditchever. Here was the perfect opportunity to acquire his portion in just one moment! Eager to secure his claim, the *Chassid* did not even stop to think for a second that perhaps Rav Boruch might have ulterior motives behind his request. The elder *Chassidim* standing near him were horrified and dissuaded him from coming forward. "Heaven forbid that you should do such a thing!" they said.

The next day, during the *Shabbos* day meal, Rav Boruch repeated his offer. "My proposal stands. Whoever can bring me an evil word about the Berditchever is guaranteed a portion in the next world!" he announced. Just like the previous night, silence prevailed. None dared open his mouth to utter a word against Rav Levi Yitzchok — none, that is, except for the same young man, who, without any compunctions, seemed intent on speaking ill of the Berditchever and claim his reward. The opportunity had presented itself — how could he hold back what he knew about Rav Levi Yitzchok? Why, it was a veritable sin to hold out on his *Rebbe*, was it not?

Again, his fellow *Chassidim* appealed to his common sense and convinced him to stay silent. He agreed, certain that he

would be given one more opportunity to finally do what he wanted, later during *sholosh seudos*, the third meal of *Shabbos*.

The time indeed came. Rav Boruch repeated his request, and this time the young *Chassid* paid no attention to his friends imploring him to refrain from speaking out. He ran forward, eager to unburden himself. Seeing the young man pushing his way through the crowd, Rav Boruch beckoned to him. "Come close, son, and tell me all that you know about the Berditchever!"

The young man told his tale. "I once traveled to Berditchev on business during the trade fair, and I decided that this would be a good opportunity to visit the *Bais Medrash* where the Berditchever *davens* and observe him in prayer. I had been told that it is a spectacle to behold his devotions, which are so wonderful that they can only be described as supernatural. I felt that it would be of great benefit to me to observe such pure and holy worship. So I set aside some time during my working hours to visit the *Bais Medrash*.

"As I neared the entrance to the study hall, I heard the sound of the Berditchever's ecstatic prayers. I did not dare venture inside. I *could* not enter. I just stood rooted to the spot in wonder and awe. Then the Berditchever reached the passage: "*Yotzer meshorsim va'asher meshorsov kulom omdim b'rum olom* — He fashions the ministering *malachim*, His servants who stand at the heights of the universe" (found in the morning *berochos* preceding the *Shema*). Suddenly he jumped up and ran toward me, and he yelled in a fit of hot anger, '*Vus vet der malach Michoel zogen?! Vus vet der malach Gavriel zogen?!* What will the *malach* Michoel say? What will the *malach* Gavriel say?' He raised his hand and slapped me soundly on the

cheek! Then he ran back to his place and resumed his *tefillos*.

"Now I ask you," said the indignant young man, "how was the Berditchever allowed to speak in the middle of the *berochos*? And to strike a fellow Jew in anger? What did those strange words about the *malochim* mean? And why did he do all this in the midst of his *tefillos*? The whole thing sounds crazy!"

Rav Boruch listened patiently to the young man's story till the very end. When the *Chassid* finished, Rav Boruch addressed everyone present.

"You should know that Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev is an advocate on behalf of all of *Klal Yisrael* before the heavenly court. He speaks out in defense of all Jews and searches for merits to defend them and quell the forces of judgment against them. He even searches for merits to defend them when they have sinned, Heaven forbid! At the time when this young *Chassid* came to the Berditchever's *Bais Medrash*, they were *davening* the *Yotzer* blessing that precedes *Shema*. At that time in the morning, when Jews all over the world reach the verse that speaks of the ministering *malochim*, who, as servants, stand at the heights of the universe, that is the very moment when the archangels such as Michael and Gavriel and all their hosts gather together to defend *Klal Yisrael* and seek their merits, as it says, 'If there will be even one defending *malach* out of a thousand to declare a man's uprightness on his behalf' (*Iyov* 33:23). They try their best to seek out a defense for each Jewish soul, to protect it from the rod of judgment hovering over him and to send down an abundance of blessings upon him to cleanse him of the stains of guilt and iniquity.

"When the Berditchever *Rav* reaches

that point in his prayers, he enters the fray and joins the supernal ministering *malochim*, seeking to find merits for Jewish souls. While you were standing there and observed that he had reached this point in the *davening*, proclaiming that the ministering *malochim* stand at the height of the universe, his soul ascended on High. He was spiritually elevated to the highest heights to seek out merits and advocate on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*. Then he saw you standing there before him, besmirched with the sin that you had committed that very day at the inn — when you stole that silver spoon during the meal — and he was enraged, because he could find no merit on your behalf to bolster his argument in your defense before the heavenly court.

"You see, sometimes a thief steals in desperation, out of poverty and hunger. Then Rav Levi Yitzchok can argue that the thief did not steal in order to purposefully transgress the commandment prohibiting theft, nor did he steal because he yearns for luxuries or because he desires that which is not his own. He only stole to satiate the pangs of hunger that assail his wretched existence and to quiet the rumblings of his empty stomach. He steals knowing that he might get caught, but what can he do? What other choice does he have?"

Rav Boruch's temper rose, and his anger reached its boiling point as he turned to the trembling young man who stood dumbstruck, like a thief caught in the act. Rav Boruch pointed an accusing finger and thundered, "But you are a prosperous and wealthy merchant who lacks nothing! Why did you yield to the temptation of the evil inclination? Why did you steal that silver spoon? The *Tzaddik* of Berditchev could find no defense on your behalf, and that is why he shouted at you, 'What will the *malach* Michael say? What will the *malach*

Gavriel say?' What will they say to defend you against the crime you committed?"

The young man began to cry and begged forgiveness for his repugnant conduct. But Rav Boruch could not comply. "Only by approaching the *Tzaddik*

of Berditchev can you repent and receive atonement for your crime. Ask him to prescribe for you a path for *teshuva* and that he should forgive you!"

The young man did so and became a true *ba'al teshuva*.



Rav Dov Ber, 19th of Kislev

The Maggid of Mezritch

There was once a Jewish mother who came to the great *Maggid* on *Erev Shabbos*, bitterly crying over her son who had decided to forsake his people and his faith and to convert to Christianity. "He was always such a good student, so smart and learned," she sobbed. Too smart for his own good it seems. At that point the priests, having decided to ensure their young charge had no chance to have a change of heart, had already taken the necessary precautions to keep the lad away from anyone such as meddling relatives who might try to rescue him from their clutches. In order to further their nefarious goals, they simply locked him up in one of their church complexes, and held him captive until his actual conversion ceremony, which they were planning for the very next Sunday.

The *Maggid* gathered his *talmidim* and sent the grieving mother home to rest and await the happy reunion with her son. When the *talmidim* arrived, the *Maggid* surprised them by beginning to expound before them a *derosha* (discourse) explaining the *pasuk*, *nefesh ki sechta* – "if a soul shall sin". The *talmidim* wondered as to the reason for this sudden *derush*, but no explanation was forthcoming from their *Rebbe*. In fact, the *Tzaddik* reconvened their gathering four times that *Erev Shabbos*, each time offering new insights on the same

pasuk. Finally, on *Shabbos* itself, the *Maggid* offered yet another *derush* on this *pasuk* before his *talmidim*, again and again, a total of three more times. When the *Maggid* concluded his seventh *derosha*, his *Diorei Torah* were followed by a strong gust of wind. The wind grew to hurricane- and tornado-like proportions, strong enough to break mountains and smash rocks and boulders. Following the aftermath of the wind came the young lad, who, until just recently, had been a prisoner under lock and key awaiting conversion.

The confused lad began his story to explain how he had escaped:

"For some reason, all of a sudden I was seized with doubts about my resolve to leave *Yiddishkeit*. My conscience began to bother me until my doubts grew and my decision to convert out of the Jewish faith was shaken to its very core! I came to my senses and decided to remain a Jew, but how to escape? The priests had locked me up to ensure against just such a possibility. I tried the door but it was locked. I tried to pick the lock with no success. I attempted to break the door down but it was too solid, and so I simply resigned myself to sit and wait until morning; when they opened my door I planned to run away and escape. However, my thoughts constantly tortured me – what had I done? What had I been thinking? How could I ever have wanted to

convert and desert my faith? These thoughts gave me no respite and I began to despise myself and my life. I tried desperately to break down the door but it was simply impossible, and I wept and sobbed in misery at my predicament and at my wretched life.

"I made up my mind to end it all and so I climbed up onto the window ledge and squeezed myself out between the iron bars – and jumped. As I fell, a strong gust of wind blew and miraculously saved me and brought me here."

When the young boy concluded his tale, the *talmidim* understood just how far-seeing and far-reaching their *Rebbe* was, and how, with his *Torah*, the *Maggid* had saved this boy. (*Eser Oros* 1:9)

One day a visitor arrived at the home of Rav Dov Ber, the famed *Maggid* of Mezeritch. The visitor was an old friend of Rav Dov Ber's, who had studied with him back in their youth. With great interest he observed the behavior of his former study partner, who had since become a follower of the *Ba'al Shem Tov* and had assumed the leadership of the Chassidic community upon the latter's passing.

The visitor was particularly struck by the amount of time that the *Maggid* devoted to prayer. He himself was no stranger to reflective prayer: when he and Rav Dov Ber had studied together, they had mastered the mystical teachings of the *mekubolim* and they would pray with the prescribed meditations, or *kavonos*, outlined in the writings of *kabbala*. But never in his experience had prayer warranted such long hours.

"I don't understand," he said to Rav Dov Ber, "I, too, pray with all the *kavonos* of the Holy *Ari*. But still, my prayers do not take nearly as much time as yours do."

Rav Dov Ber's visitor was a dedicated scholar. His wife ran the family business so that he could devote all his time to *Torah* study. Only once a year was he forced to break from his studies for a few weeks: his wife would give him a list of the merchandise she needed, and he would travel to the fair in Leipzig to wheel and deal.

"Listen," said Rav Dov Ber to his visitor, "I have an idea for you. Why must you waste precious weeks of study every year? This year, sit at home. Envision the journey to Leipzig in your mind's eye: picture every station along the way, every crossroads, every wayside inn. Then, imagine that you are at the fair, making your rounds at the booths. Call to mind the merchants that you deal with, reinvent the usual haggling and bargaining that follows. Now, load your new purchases upon your imaginary cart and make the return journey. The entire operation should not take more than a couple of hours – and then you can return to your beloved books!"

"That is all fine and well," replied Rav Dov Ber's friend, "however, there remains one slight problem: I need the merchandise!"

"The same is true with *tefilla* and its *kavonos*," said Rav Dov Ber. "To envision this or that sublime attribute of *Hashem* in its prescribed section of the prayers, or to refer to a certain nuance of emotion in your heart at a particular passage, is all fine and well. But you see, I need the merchandise..."

www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/113629/jewish/Wheres-the-Beef.htm



Beggars at the Wedding

The poverty of Rav Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezritch, was legendary. Meals, when they were served, were a crust of bread; the “furniture” in his hovel was an assortment of wooden planks and stumps. Once he was asked by his *talmidim*: “*Rebbe*, why is it that you must endure such abject conditions, while others, much less deserving than yourself, enjoy the blessings of *Hashem*’s world?” Rav Dov Ber replied with a story:

A wealthy man once married off his daughter. The father of the bride was a most generous and charitable man, and desired to share his joy with the less fortunate. So he put up notices in all the *shuls* and poorhouses in the vicinity, inviting every beggar and vagabond to partake of the wedding feast.

The day of the wedding arrived. Hundreds of beggars took their places around tables laden with the best and the tastiest food money could buy. But then tragedy struck. The bride suddenly fell ill. The greatest doctors were rushed to her side, but to no avail. The bride was *niftar*, and the wedding was transformed into mourning.

The beggars were divided into two camps. One group said: “The food is on the table. Who knows when, if ever, another such opportunity to fill our stomachs will present itself? Surely, our host would not want all this delicious food to be wasted. If we remain hungry, would this alleviate his grief?”

The second group of beggars, however, would not touch the food that lay before them. “How can we eat and drink,” they cried, “when the one who provided all this mourns? How can we enjoy a feast whose purpose and cause has been

transformed into calamity?”

“The world is a wedding feast,” concluded Rav Dov Ber, “created for the sake of *Hashem*’s union with His bride, Yisrael. But then the wedding was disrupted, the nuptial home – the Holy Temple – destroyed. Yes, the feast is there for the taking, but its soul is devastated, its provider in mourning.

“There are those who have no difficulty enjoying what they can of the feast. I, however, belong to the second group of beggars. I cannot bring myself to partake of the leavings of this aborted wedding . . .”

www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/53104/jewish/Beggars-at-a-Wedding.htm



The Passing of the Maggid

The meeting in Rovno was stormy and eventful. The disciples of Rav Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezritch, the successor to the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, were greatly agitated. They felt strongly that the *Misnagdim*, those Jews opposed to the Chassidic movement, had overreached all bounds of legitimacy.

The *Maggid* himself kept silent. Though filled with empathy for his followers, he thought that it was nevertheless better not to answer or react to the events. “Truth stands, falsehood does not stand”; thus, surely time itself would contribute to the vindication of the truth and authenticity of *Chassidus*. He counseled patience and forbearance. Already in the days of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, he had joined with his master in a declaration “to forgive fully and absolutely, as Scripture (*Tehillim* 104:35) states, ‘Let sins be annihilated’, not the sinners.”

He taught his followers “an important rule: When people shame you

concerning your form of worship or other good things, do not answer them anything, lest you become involved in an argument and are led to pride, which will cause you to forget the blessed Creator. Our sages taught that man's silence leads to humility."

In the midst of the proceedings, Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev received a report vividly describing the personal harassments and sufferings his family was compelled to endure. His colleagues decided that Rav Levi Yitzchok should read out this letter in the presence of the *Maggid*, but even as he did so, Rav Dov Ber remained silent. The *talmidim* interpreted their master's silence as an indication that the matter was up to their discretion, and thus decided to act on their own.

They met secretly, and resolved that it was their legal duty to defend and guard the honor of their holy master and to combat the unjustified denunciations. It seemed there was but one thing they could do: to abide by the stipulation in Jewish law to meet an illegitimately proclaimed *cherem* (ban) with a counter-ban. Their meeting concluded with a quorum of ten men rising to proclaim a counter-ban against the denunciators of *Chassidus*.

When the *Maggid* heard of this action, he was dismayed and admonished his *talmidim* most severely. Upon their retort that they were no longer able to endure the persecutions and saw no alternative, Rav Dov Ber replied:

"Know that by the action you have taken, you have forfeited your head. However, at the same time, you have gained that henceforth, whenever there will be a conflict between the *Chassidim*

and their opponents, the *Chassidim* will prevail."

The *Maggid's talmidim* had achieved a victory – but at a price. Within half a year they would lose their head, the crown of *Chassidus*, Rav Dov Ber, the great *Maggid* of Mezritch.

Some two months later, the *Maggid* lay gravely ill. Many of his *talmidim* hurried to Annopol to be at their master's bedside. On the last *Shabbos* of his life, the 16th of *Kislev*, he explained the first *pasuk* of that day's *Torah* reading (*Bereishis* 32:4), "And Yaakov sent *malochim*", to the *talmidim* standing around his bed: "*Rashi* interprets (that *malochim* means) 'angels *mamash*' (real angels). That is, Yaakov sent the *mamash* (the concrete reality) of the *malochim*, but the spirituality of the *malochim* remained with Yaakov."

The next day, Sunday, the 17th of *Kislev*, the *Maggid* said to his *talmid*, Rav Schneur Zalman, that in the last three days before one returns the "deposit" (i.e., the soul entrusted into man's charge), one sees nothing other than the creative word of *Hashem* inherent in every physical thing; that is, one sees that the word of the Creator is the very essence and reality of matter.

That night he instructed Rav Schneur Zalman in the procedure for the celebration to be conducted on the *Shabbos* eve preceding a *bris mila*, and the procedures for the ceremony the night preceding a *bris mila*, as well as for the day of the *bris* itself. He added: "*Chazon Ovadya* – the servant of *Hashem* sees. A son shall be born to you, and you shall call him by my name; and on the night preceding the *bris*, remember what I told you this night."

The following day, the *Maggid* told Rav Schneur Zalman privately, "Zalman,

see to do whatever you can that my Avromenyu remain in my seat. If, Heaven forfend, he should refuse, then let it be Mendele the *Litvak*."

His son, Rav Avrohom, recalled other things the *Maggid* said that day in the presence of himself, Rav Yehuda Leib *HaKohen* and Rav Schneur Zalman: "My children, hold together, and then you will overcome everything; you will then progress even further and not regress, Heaven forfend."

Afterward, Rav Zusha also came, and the *Maggid* asked who had entered. Rav Zalman answered, "Rav Zusha came," and the *Maggid* motioned with his finger that he should approach. He grasped him with his right hand and said to him, "You, Zusha, you are mine in this world, and over there you will also be next to me, just as the body and soul [are joined]."

He then asked whether Rav Mendele of Vitebsk was present, to which Rav Schneur Zalman answered that he was not. He sighed deeply and asked whether Rav Yehuda Leib *HaKohen* was there, and Rav Zalman answered in the affirmative. The *Maggid* looked at him and said, "You, too, will be in my compartment, 'for the lips of the *Kohen* (priest) are to keep *da'as* – knowledge' (*Malachi* 2:4), and I am of the realm of *da'as*."

Thereupon he called out, "Zalmina, Zalmina," and said, "You will stand alone. However, I will see to drag you out of all your troubles, because for you I will truly long."

Then he said to his son, "And you, Avromenyu, you just keep silent and

continue to conduct yourself as you have done until now. Listen to Zalminyu, and it will be well with you. Above all, do not afflict yourself, for a small defect in the body causes a large defect in the soul – and your soul is something altogether unique."

He then wished his *talmidim* a good night and went to sleep.

On Tuesday, the third day in the week of the *Torah* section *Vayeshev Yaakov*, on the 19th day of *Kislev* 5533 (1772), Rav Dov Ber, *Maggid* of Mezritch, Koretz and Rovno, successor to the *Ba'al Shem Tov* and leader of the *Chassidic* movement, returned his soul to his Maker, and his earthly remains were interred in Annopol.

Shortly before his *petira*, the *Maggid* had said to Rav Schneur Zalman of Liadi, "*Yud-Tes Kislev* (the nineteenth of *Kislev*) is our *Yom Tov* (festival)." (The *Maggid* seems to have alluded to the future liberation of Rav Schneur Zalman on the 19th of *Kislev* 5559 (1798), which symbolized the vindication of the *Chassidic* movement, and as such relates implicitly to the *Maggid* as well.)

For the righteous, the day they are able to restore their soul to *Hashem* in purity and sanctity is not a sad departure from one world, but a joyously anticipated homecoming to another. Like Rav Shimon bar Yochai, Rav Dov Ber regarded the day of his passing as a *Yom Tov* for himself, and wished that his *talmidim* and followers rejoice with him.

www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/335636/jewish/The-Passing-of-the-Maggid.htm



Rav Yitzchok Hutner, 20th of Kislev

Rav Hutner, the Shadchan

Yaakov was the top *bochur* in his *Yeshiva*. He was known not only for his intellectual capabilities, but for his *yiras Shomayim* and refined *middos* as well. Therefore, it was quite a surprise to everybody that Yaakov was having problems with *shidduchim*. It wasn't for lack of opportunities, since he had gone out on countless dates, but nothing ever seemed to materialize. Yaakov was already in his late twenties, and he was beginning to despair. A veil of sadness could be discerned over his normally happy disposition.

Despite his personal problems, Yaakov continued to learn with *hasmoda* (diligence) and was *mapkid* on his *sedorim*. However, one day he made an exception to his normally tight schedule to attend the *bris* of his *chavrusa's* son in the *Bais Medrash* of the *Gaon*, Rav Yitzchok Hutner. It was the first time since he had arrived at the *Yeshiva* that he didn't go directly to the *Yeshiva's Bais Medrash* after davening.

After the *bris*, the attendants crowded around Rav Hutner to greet him and receive a *berocha*. Rav Hutner nodded to each person in greeting. When Rav Hutner spotted Yaakov, he stared at him with his piercing gaze and whispered to him that Yaakov should meet him in his private office as he wished to speak with him. Apparently, Rav Hutner was able to discern Yaakov's unspoken distress.

Yaakov stood by the door of Rav Hutner's office, wondering what Rav Hutner could possibly wish to speak to

him about. A few minutes passed and Rav Hutner appeared, and ushered Yaakov inside his office. The door closed, and Yaakov suddenly broke down. His emotions from years of internalizing his sorrow and loneliness were released. There was no need to explain – Rav Hutner understood everything.

Rav Hutner spoke, "I have a *segula*, a *mesora* from our *Rabbonim*; answering *Amen, Yehei Shemei Rabba* with all one's *koach* (strength). Answering *Amen, Yehei Shemei Rabba* is a *tefilla* for the magnification of *kevod Shomayim*, and through it, one fulfills the *mitzva* of *kevod Hashem*. It's possible that once in your life you were *mechallel* the *shem Shomayim* and due to this, the gates of *Shomayim* have been closed to you. When you answer *Amen, Yehei Shemei Rabba* loudly and with *kavona*, you are *mekadesh* the *shem Shomayim*. This is a tested *segula* – if you persist in following it, you'll soon merit to stand at the *chuppa*, and if you continue afterward, you will also merit a *bris*."

Yaakov thanked Rav Hutner, left the office and returned to *Yeshiva*. On the way, he thought to himself that the *eitza* of a *Godol HaDor* is not only a *segula*, but also a *horo'a*, and a *horo'a* one must fulfill forever. When *Mincha* arrived, Yaakov already began to say *Amen, Yehei Shemei Rabba* loudly and with *kavona*. A few short weeks later, Yaakov became a *chosson* and a year later, he was *zocheh* to a son. Rav Hutner was honored with *sandokus*. (*Shiru LaMelech*)

www.revach.net/article.php?id=2317



Rav Yochonon ben Yisrael Perlow of Karlin-Stolin, 21st of Kislev

Sage Advice Saves Lives

In the year *tov-shin-ches*, Rav Yochonon of Karlin-Stolin was in Teverya for *Yom Kippur*. A certain *bochur*, not a *Stoliner Chassid*, arrived from Kiryat Ata to spend the holy day with the *Rebbe*. To his astonishment, after *Shacharis*, the *Rebbe* Rav Yochonon approached him and ordered the *bochur* to go and make *Kiddush* and eat! Needless to say, the *bochur* did not do so on *Yom Kippur*! However, a short while later, again the *Stoliner Rebbe*, Rav Yochonon, came by and seeing as how his previous words had fallen on deaf ears, raised his voice and said, "Didn't I tell you to go make *Kiddush* and eat?!" The *bochur* was frightened and taken quite aback at this outburst, and dared not disobey the *Rebbe's* clear command.

The next day the *bochur* took to bed ill. He was so sick that he was rushed for emergency medical attention. When the doctors in the hospital concluded their examination, one of them asked the sick *bochur*, "I know that yesterday was *Yom Kippur*. Tell me the truth - did you fast yesterday?"

When the *bochur* admitted that he had in fact eaten as per the *Rebbe's* orders, the doctor seemed surprised and relieved.

"What good fortune! You are one lucky young man! It's a good thing you ate when you did. In fact, had you fasted you probably wouldn't be alive today!" (*Me'orei Aish*, chapter 8 - page 515)



The Spelling of the Decree

Once, during a certain *Rosh HaShana* that the *Rebbe*, Rav Yochonon of Stolin, spent in Yerushalayim, a *yungerman* fainted in his home and no one was able to revive him. His family rushed to the *Rebbe* and begged him to rouse heavenly mercy on his behalf. The *Rebbe* ordered them to drip several drops of wine into his mouth, and this they did. To the amazement of all present, as soon as several drops of wine entered the unconscious man's mouth he immediately woke up. By the next day he had completely recovered and he himself arrived in the *Bais Medrash* for *davening*.

Afterward, the *Rebbe* was overheard remarking, "I simply switched the letters of his heavenly decree from spelling *negef*, which means "struck down", to *gefen* which means "fruit of the vine" - and I succeeded in saving his life through the wine. (*Me'orei Aish*, chapter 8 - page 515)

לזכר נשמות 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 יע"א
ונכדת הרה"ק רבי אהרן צבי טערקלטיוב זי"ע מבריד
אשת הרה"ח מו"ה אברהם חיים ע"ה גאלדענבערג

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

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

(מתוך אמונה טהורה) בדרך המסורה (והתנהגה כאשה כשרה) לכל משפחתה,

היא הודה היא הדרה - נקיה וטהורה היוצר וצר צורה (וקיבלה הגזירה)

נפטרה בש"ט בת תשעים שנה ביום כ"ד לחודש כסלו (ערב חנוכה) שנת תשע"ח לפ"ק
תמליץ טוב בעד משפחתה היקרה ותקים לתחייה לקץ הימין מהרה תי'צ'בה'



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Hilula

- 16 - Rabbi Shaul Yedidya Taub, Admor of Moditz
- 17 - Rabbi Yosef Yozel Horowitz
- 18 - Rabbi Baruch of Mezibozh
- 19 - Rabbi Dov Ber, Maggid of Mezritch
- 20 - Rabbi Zvi Pesach Frank
- 21 - Rabbi Rafael Bardugo
- 22 - Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi, author of 'Ma'asei Hashem'



Immersing Oneself in Torah Removes Worry and Fear

"Then Ya'akov sent angels ahead of him to Esav his brother to the land of Seir, the field of Edom"
(Bereishit 32:4)

Ya'akov Avinu left Be'er Sheva according to his mother's instruction: "Behold, your brother Esav is consoling himself regarding you to kill you. So now, my son, heed my voice and arise; flee to my brother Lavan, to Charan" (ibid 27:42-43)

Rivka instructed Ya'akov to flee to Charan since she was concerned for his fate out of fear of his brother Esav's plans to kill him. However, Ya'akov himself was not afraid of Esav and he left town with confidence. This is why the verse does not say "Ya'akov fled from Be'er Sheva", rather, "Ya'akov departed from Be'er Sheva" (ibid 28:10). How was Ya'akov Avinu able to remain calm and assured? He knew that as long as the voice of Ya'akov can be heard studying Torah, the hands of Esav have no power and he cannot overcome him or harm him since the merit of Torah will protect him. This is what enabled Ya'akov to leave with confidence and without fear.

We can ask the following question: Why did Ya'akov stop off for fourteen years to study Torah in Yeshivat Shem v'Ever and not go straight to the home of Lavan, his mother's brother? The answer is that Ya'akov wished to prove to Esav that he is not afraid of him. He specially remained in Eretz Yisrael for another fourteen years studying Torah with tranquility, since one who possesses the power of Torah is protected from the hands of Esav. If so, what reason did he have to run away?

Through this conduct, Ya'akov wished to instill his descendants with the message that as long as the Jewish people hold on to the holy Torah, there is no room for fear and no reason to flee from the enemies that surround them, for Torah is the most sophisticated and effective weapon against the enemy. When the voice of Ya'akov rings out from the Batei Knessiot and Batei Midrashim, the hands of Esav have no power. Ya'akov therefore secluded himself in the study halls of Shem v'Ever and specifically for fourteen years. The number fourteen (יד) is the gematria for the Hebrew word hand (יד), implying the hands of Esav. As long as Ya'akov is studying Torah, Esav's hands have no power over him and cannot harm him since the Torah protects and saves from our enemies.

Another difficulty is why Ya'akov told the emissaries to tell Esav (ibid 32:5), "I have sojourned with Lavan". Chazal expound on these words that Ya'akov was implying, "Though I have sojourned (גרתי) with Lavan, I have observed the six-hundred and thirteen (תר"ג) – same letters as (גרתי) mitzvot and did not learn from his evil ways". Why was this message of interest to Esav?

In addition, it seems that Ya'akov was contradicting himself. On the one hand, he informs Esav that he has not become an important prince or achieved status (implied by the wording of the verse "I sojourned (גרתי) with Lavan", I remained a stranger [from גר = alien]). On the other hand, he arouses his jealousy and sends a message that he is

wealthy and has acquired much oxen and donkeys, flocks, servants and maidservants. Since a rich person is generally a respected individual, why did Ya'akov tell this to Esav?

The answer is that throughout the time he was away from home, Ya'akov wished to impart the message to Esav that since he possesses the power of Torah and mitzvot, he has no reason to be afraid of Esav at all. Just as when he left his father's home, he did not flee in a panic but remained in Eretz Yisrael in the study halls of Shem v'Ever where he studied Torah for fourteen years and only then did he continue on to Lavan's house, so too now on his way home he is not arriving secretly and out of fear, but openly and with an upraised arm, and even sent messengers to announce his arrival, since the power of Torah is as much part of him now on his return, just as when he left.

Ya'akov tells Esav: You were aware all these years that I was in Lavan's house in Charan. You were certainly capable of turning up there and harming me. Who prevented you from doing this? It was due to the power of the taryag (613) mitzvot that I observed even while in Lavan's home. The merit of the holy Torah stood in my stead and prevented you from coming to harm me. In the same way, now too I am returning without fear since I possess the merit of Torah.

Ya'akov also added that Esav should not imagine that chalila, devoting oneself entirely to Torah study and expending all one's energy in Torah alone, precludes having a respectable income. Even though Ya'akov merited studying Torah, he nevertheless possessed many oxen, donkeys, flock, servants and maidservants. This is a powerful foundation that is important for every Ben Torah to understand. Unfortunately, today the difficulties and concerns that people face regarding their parnassah are widespread. There are some people who mistakenly think that if they take off a bit of time from Torah study and invest that time in some type of business venture, their financial situation will improve and they will become rich. Ya'akov Avinu comes to teach us that this is not the correct path. On the contrary, to the degree that a person invests himself in Torah study, to that extent will he merit being blessed with wealth. because Yaakov Avinu a"h observed all the taryag mitvot, did he merit all this wealth. This is the message that Ya'akov wished to teach Esav the rasha who represents the yetzer hara. Applying oneself to Torah study with diligence is what brings a person blessings and he will enjoy abundant parnassah.

It sometimes happens that when a person merits becoming wealthy, his outlook changes and he now epitomizes "Yeshurun became fat and kicked". He forgets Hashem and kicks at everything holy. Ya'akov told Esav that he shouldn't think that chalila his wealth will cause him to change his approach and discard the yoke of Heaven. On the contrary, through his wealth he will find even more favor in the eyes of his 'master', referring to the Creator Yitbarach, for he will use his assets to increase his mitzvot and good deeds.



Walking in their Ways

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

He Should Occupy Himself with Torah Study

Once, on an overseas flight, I was beset by foreign thoughts. No matter how hard I tried, I could not rid my mind of them. I began wondering how this trip was different from countless others that I should be plagued by such negative thoughts.

Suddenly, I remembered Chazal's advice in such a situation (Eliyahu Zuta, Ish Shalom, Parashah 16): "Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: Whoever involves himself in words of Torah removes negative thoughts from his mind. He is spared thoughts of sin, of the sword, of subjection to the government, of nonsense, of the Yetzer Hara, of immorality, of wicked women, of idolatry, of subservience to others, of inanities... as it says (Devarim 28:47-48), 'Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant. So you will serve your enemies whom Hashem will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and without anything.'"

Meaning, whoever is overcome by foreign thoughts should occupy himself with words of Torah since they have the power to chase away unwanted thoughts. I immediately put this advice into action and the negative thoughts finally left me. After a while, I stood up. I finally discovered the cause of my problems. The man who was sitting directly behind me was behaving most inappropriately.

I immediately decided to change my seat, as our Sages exhort us in Avot (1:7), "Distance yourself from a bad neighbor." I did not want his negative behavior to rub off on me any longer.

The Haftarah

"The vision of Ovadiah" (Ovadiah 1)

Some Ashkenazim have the custom to read from **"And yet My people waver"** (Hoshea 1)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftara speaks about Esav's constant hatred of Ya'akov. This hatred is described at length in the Parsha, when Esav headed towards Ya'akov with four hundred men, intending to harm him.

Guard Your Tongue

Taking Precautions So that One is Not Harmed

Although it is a Torah prohibition to accept lashon hara (meaning accepting what one hears as the truth), nevertheless Chazal say that one is permitted to be wary.

This means that one may be wary, in order to protect oneself from suffering any harm from this person. Although this is the case, one may not even regard the matter as a doubt since every person is considered righteous (until proven guilty).



Words of our Sages

Financial Advice for Torah Observers

"So he divided the people with him, and the flocks, cattle, and camels, into two camps" (Bereishit 32:7)

Ya'akov Avinu a"h prepares himself for a meeting with Esav with a three-pronged strategy - gifts, prayer and battle.

In preparation for the battle that awaits him, he divides his wives and children, livestock and all his possessions, into two camps. In this way, if Esav smites one camp, then the remaining camp will survive.

The sefer 'Eved Hamelech' points out an important foundation: The Torah uses this incident to teach us a strategy for life. A person should not invest all his money in one place. From whom do we learn this? From Ya'akov Avinu as it says, "So he divided the people with him".

This guidance on protecting one's assets also appears in Chazal (Baba Metzia 42a): "A person should always divide his money into three, a third in property, a third in business and a third he should keep in his possession."

Ya'akov Avinu's approach imparts a practical lesson on how to protect one's possessions. If one divides one's belongings, with each part being guarded in a different way and different place, then if he loses one half, or it disappears or is stolen, he will still be left with the remaining half.

In connection to this idea, Harav Munk shlita, in his sefer 'Darkei Noam', quotes a wonderful story that is brought in Chazal, about the shrewdness and wisdom employed by one who was exploited, in order to retrieve his money:

A certain merchant traveled to a distant place and took with him a considerable amount of money. He debated what to do with this sum. On one hand, he was afraid to walk around with such a large amount,

but on the other hand, he was afraid to entrust in the hands of someone he hardly knew.

In the end, he decided to dig a pit in the ground and he hid his money in that pit. But what he didn't realize was that a pair of envious eyes was watching his every move from the house next door...

As soon as he left, the neighbor discreetly dug up the money.

Sometime later, the merchant returned to the place where he had hidden his money yet to his dismay – the money was no longer there!

He looked all around and noticed that there was a hole in the wall of the neighboring house, from which one could observe the entire area, including this part of the ground where he had hidden his money... He hurried over to the house and poured out his 'predicament' to the owner:

"My dear acquaintance, I recently came to stay in this area and I am still not familiar with the local people. I possess two wallets, one contains five hundred zehuvim and the second one contains one thousand zehuvim. I hid the first wallet in a secret place, and now I am debating what to do with the other wallet. Is it worth hiding it in the same place as the first wallet, or is it better that I give it over to one of the locals for safekeeping?"

"The best thing to do," advised the owner, who was already picturing one thousand zehuvim falling into his hands, "is to hide it in the same place as the first wallet."

As soon as the merchant left his house, the neighbor realized that his advice would not serve him at all. In just another moment, the merchant will uncover the hole and discover that all his money has disappeared! Then he will certainly not hide his second wallet in the same place!

He came up with a grand idea...

He took out the wallet which was still full of money and quickly replaced it in its original hiding place. The merchant, who was waiting for this to happen, then approached the pit, took the wallet that had been returned and hurried home...



Pearls of the Parsha

Esav's Son is Called "Achi"

"Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav" (Bereishit 32:12)

This double description, "from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav", appears redundant since it is clear to all that Esav was Ya'akov's brother.

There are several explanations offered. We will quote the Rokeach who brings the Midrash that when Ya'akov fled to Charan because of Esav, a son was born to Esav whom he named 'Achi'. He gave him this name so that he shouldn't forget what Ya'akov did to him.

When this child grew up, his father Esav commanded him that if he ever comes across his uncle Ya'akov, he should kill him. Therefore, Ya'akov Avinu a"h prayed, save me from the hand of 'Achi', the son of Esav, and also from Esav himself.

Constantly Thank and Feel that Everything is Good

"And You had said, 'I will surely do good with you'" (Bereishit 32:13)

Rabbi Yechezkel of Kuzhmir takes the wording of this verse and explains it in the following fashion:

If a person is full of appreciation to Hashem, he feels that Hashem is constantly showering him with abundant goodness and he always looks at the positive in his situation, then Hashem says in return, I will show you what is really considered good, and He bestows great goodness on him.

This idea is hinted at in the words of the above verse, "ואתה אמרת היטב". This implies that if you say that Hashem does only good with you, then "איטיב עמך", "I will do good with you" in a double measure. But if G-d forbid, a person says that his situation is bad, then Hashem, as if, says to him, I will show you what true bad is until you realize that your original circumstances were not that terrible.

The Comparison to the Sand of the Sea Which Never Diminishes

"And You had said, 'I will surely do good with you and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea which is too numerous to count'" (Bereishit 32:13)

We find that the angel blessed Avraham Avinu in a similar fashion, "That I shall surely bless you and greatly increase your offspring like the stars of the heavens and like the sand on the seashore" (Bereishit 22:17).

Why are Bnei Yisrael compared to the sand?

The holy Ohr Hachaim zya"a explains the idea behind this comparison: It was a blessing given to Bnei Yisrael that if their possessions or money diminish, the lack will replace itself on its own, through a special holiness that is present in their possessions.

Just as when you dig into the sand on the seashore or remove part of it, it caves in and fills up on its own, so too if the Jewish people's possessions decrease, they will be replaced with abundant good from Heaven and no lack will be noticeable.

Treasures

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



The Tzaddik Protects Himself and Remains "Alone"

"Ya'akov was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn" (Bereishit 32:25)

The fact that the guardian angel of Esav fought specifically against Ya'akov Avinu a"h, and not against Avraham or Yitzchak, is most puzzling.

The explanation is because Avraham was an 'Ish chessed', he performed many acts of kindness, while Yitzchak was considered as 'The pillar of prayer'. The yetzer hara is prepared to come to terms with these qualities, out of a lack of choice. But when he saw Ya'akov toiling and exerting himself in the Holy Torah, and that in the future this will afford him the merit of being the one to rule over the lower worlds, just as Hashem alone rules over the Upper Worlds, he wasn't prepared to agree to this under any circumstances. This is why he came to fight against him with all his might.

In order to merit the high level of Torah that Ya'akov Avinu a"h achieved, a person is obligated to relinquish all worldly concerns and partake of worldly pleasures as little as possible, without pursuing them. As the Gemara says (Sanhedrin 111a): "Torah is not found in one who studies it through indulgence, but in one who studies with discomfort and exertion". This was the attribute of Ya'akov Avinu.

This idea is hinted to by the words of the verse, "And Ya'akov was left alone". This implies that Ya'akov Avinu a"h relinquished all worldly matters and despised all physical pleasures, which are only imaginary. He distanced himself from them in an extreme manner and instead chose to occupy himself with Torah study, remaining "alone", without any attachment to anything else. The foremost attribute of Am Yisrael is when they distance themselves from the nations of the world and do not follow their corrupt culture and evil customs. As the verse tells us (Bamidbar 23:9) "Behold! It is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations". This is the way that Ya'akov Avinu behaved throughout his life. Even during the time that he was growing up in his parents' home together with his wicked brother Esav, he tried very hard not to be associated with him. Instead, he secluded himself in his tent and occupied himself solely with Torah study. Even on the way to Charan, he stopped off in the Beit Midrash of Shem v'Ever where he was secluded from his surroundings and absorbed himself in Torah with diligence and exertion.

And when Ya'akov arrived at Lavan's house, there too he was careful not to become friendly with him since Ya'akov wished to remain "alone", so as not to learn from his evil ways and not be influenced by his corrupt manner.

Measure for measure, in the future too Ya'akov Avinu will be the one who rules, on his own, over the lower worlds, just as Hashem is the only Ruler of the Upper Worlds.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

"Ya'akov arrived intact"

(Bereishit 33:18)

Rashi: "Intact physically... intact financially... intact in his learning- having forgotten nothing in Lavan's house".

Achieving perfection in life is not measured by a person's inherent qualities but is dependent on what he achieved with his actions. The meaning of this perfection is known as "beyond the letter of the law" as we shall elucidate.

The Gemara (Baba Metzia 30b) explains: "That they should do- this refers to behaving *למעלה מן המצוה*, beyond the letter of the law".

The Gaon Rabbi Reuven Elbaz shlita explains that the obligation to behave beyond the call of duty is a profound matter. It is not only an enhancement of a mitzva, but a mitzva in itself. Therefore, it is not correct to say, "If the matter is not a strict law, I am exempt".

There are many areas in life where a person is required to go beyond the call of duty. It is often advisable to forgo for the sake of another even if this is not required behavior according to the strict law. Hashem desires that we should be prepared to forgo and judge other people favorably.

A person cannot live for himself alone. He must always calculate his steps according to those in his environment, starting with his family, his friends, and including even wider circles. He must always take others into consideration and assist others.

This is the way in which Hashem wishes the world to function, as the Michtav M'Eliyahu writes, Hashem intended that a person should constantly be surrounded with opportunities to practice kindness, in his home, with his wife, with his children, and with all those with whom he comes into contact, as David Hamelech tells us (Tehillim 23:6) "May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life".

The world cannot exist if every person only does what he is obligated to do; behaving beyond the letter of the law is included within the parameters of doing good.

Man has a unique soul and Hashem created him in a way that he is constantly surrounded by opportunities to give. From the moment a baby is born, he receives and also learns to give, and as the years go by his circle of those with whom he comes into contact grows, until he reaches the stage for which he was created, marrying a wife and establishing a home.

The Michtav M'Eliyahu writes: "Hashem wished to give a person merits, so He created man in a way that he is surrounded by opportunities to do kindness, day and night. He gives and gives continually. How many opportunities does a yeshiva student have to do chessed? Not so many.

Since Hashem wanted man to be constantly involved with chessed, He therefore commanded that he set up a home. When they are blessed with children, he has additional opportunities to do good... all this in order to give a person merits from his giving, for family life is essentially one long chapter of giving!

The male was assigned the role of being the giver. His role is to constantly shower his wife with abundance. If he merits, he fulfills the purpose of creation and this is the greatest virtue he can have.

The Wife Does More Than What She is Required

In the past, I merited hearing shiurim from Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Rabbi Ben Zion Abba Shaul zt"l. When we learned masechet Ketubot and came to the words of the Mishna (59:2): "And these are the acts that a woman does for her husband: She grinds, bakes, launders and cooks". The Gaon Rabbi Ben Zion said:

"Apparently, what is a woman obligated to do? To take a potato, put it in a pot with a bit of salt and water and put the pot on the fire...

Ah, you wish to add some spices? Put it in yourself, she is not obligated to do this... and if she does flavor the dish, it is already considered as behavior beyond the call of duty. And if she chops onions and adds turmeric or cinnamon, it is al-

ready way beyond the letter of the law... she is not obligated to do this!

But in fact, a righteous wife certainly doesn't serve her husband plain boiled potatoes, but she invests time in food preparation and adjusts the taste so that it should be pleasing for her husband.

If so, is it not fitting that the husband too should do things that he is not obligated to do and shouldn't say "I will only do what I am obligated to do according to the law"? For if he contemplates he will realize that she also does things for him that she is not obligated to do at all...

She works hard to prepare tasty food, frying onions so as to add a richer flavor to the dish. She doesn't just throw a whole onion into the soup, she expends effort and does more than her obligation and for this, you must repay her accordingly. In which way? By doing things for her that also go beyond your basic obligations.

This outlook must constantly remain before our eyes. We must make a point of noticing all the effort that the wife puts into everything, instead of always noticing where she falls short...

Preparing the Fish – to Please His Wife

We find many examples of Gedolei Yisrael who behaved in this manner.

I heard from several trustworthy people that they personally witnessed the Gaon Rabbi Ben Zion zt"l going into the kitchen on Erev Shabbat, putting on an apron, descaling the fish, cutting it up and cooking it.

He didn't do this because he wanted to enjoy tasty fish. His sole intention was to bring pleasure to his wife, to add to her joy, so that she could welcome the Shabbat happy and calm, and that both of them together should enjoy a pleasant Shabbat. In order to achieve an atmosphere of peace, one must be prepared to bestow and give. This is the reason why Rabbi Ben Zion would prepare the fish for Shabbat.

A person who lives as a giver, lives in a different world. He enjoys a life which is 'a taste of the World to Come'. ('Mishkani Acharecha')

Zera Shimshon

Vayishlach

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

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

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

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

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

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

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

לזכר נשמת

רבינו שמשון חיים בן רב נחמן מיכאל זצ"ל

בעל הזרע שמשון זיע"א

ויה"ר שיתקיימו בנו ברכותיו של אותו צדיק

לזכות רבקה נבון בת חנה ואברהם
יוסף בן חנה לרפואה שלימה ולזיווג
הגון בקרוב ממש ולשנה מבורכת
עם כל הברכות הכתובות בתורה

לעילוי נשמת הרב חיים שאול בן
בנציון זצ"ל

לזכות זיווג הגון בקרוב ממש
לשושנה נחמה בת חנה פעסא
ורקבה רוזא בת פייגא
יוכבד בת דבורה לרפואה שלימה

ויותר יעקב לבדו (לב' כה')

And Yaakov was left alone (32:25)

Rashi explains that Yaakov Avinu went back to retrieve small jugs that he had accidentally left behind. Rashi elaborates that being that tzaddikim do not profit from theft, their money is extremely valuable to them, even more that their wellbeing since their money is holy, as it is not derived from theft.

The Mishna (Avos 6:5) enumerates forty eight requirements that a person must have in order to properly acquire the Torah. One of the qualities is serving the Chachamim, שימוש חכמים.

The Zera Shimshon writes that each one of the forty eight requirements teaches a person something important in to properly be able to study Torah. The requirement of serving the Chachamim is necessary to learn how to properly deal with money. The Zera Shimshon brings the following Gemara to illustrate.

The Gemara relates (Gittin 61a), that R' Kahana was on his way to Hutzal and he passed an individual who was cutting branches from a palm tree and throwing them down to the ground. As the branches hit the ground, dates would detach from them and R' Kahana picked up a few dates and ate them.

The commentaries give a few explanations why R' Kahana did so. Initially it appeared to R' Kahana as though the individual only wanted the branches and did not want the fruit. The halacha is that if one is knocking off fruit from a tree with the intention to collect those fruits, and the fruit fall under the tree, although he did not halachically acquire the fruits, the Chachamim instituted that it is considered theft to take them. The reason for this is to keep public peace since the person knocking the fruits off the tree fells as though the fruits are already his from when he knock them off the tree. Therefore, although these fruits were not halachically acquired yet by the person knocking them off the tree, the Chachamim instituted, for public peace, that it is forbidden for anyone else to collect these fruits. Here however, this individual seemed to only desire the branches and therefore the fruit that fell off were not even considered his for peaceful purposes. This was R' Kahana's reasoning.

The Gemara continues: The individual called out to R' Kahana and said, "Master! Take note that I intentionally picked the fruit with my hands and only then threw them to the ground. Thus, I fully acquired the fruit". This added piece of information now made it forbidden for R' Kahana to eat the fruit.

When R' Kahana heard this he proclaimed, "You must be from the town of R' Yoshia, the tzaddik who is the foundation of the world". Rashi explains that R' Yoshia would teach the masses halachos and that is why this individual knew what R' Kahana's reasoning was and was able to address why R' Kahana was wrong, instead of reacting like the average person who doesn't know the halacha and start screaming, "Thief!".

The Zera Shimshon learns from here that the benefit one has from being around Torah scholars, which the Mishna enumerates as a requirement to properly acquire Torah - is because they learn how to deal properly with money. Included in this is the fact that they also learn how to stay away from any trace of theft in their monetary dealings, from the influence of the Chachamim they are around.

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

The (English) Sefer, 'Zera Shimshon on the Torah' with an unprecedented biography on the Zera Shimshon is available at Lulu.com or by calling 1844.212.0689 and ask for 'Zera Shimshon on the Torah', ISBN 978-0-359-85606-0.

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