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זכות רפואה שלמה

מיכאל בן שלי

מלכה בת רחל

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)

❁ **KI SISA** ❁

❁ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❁

Ahava Rabba – Ohev Yisrael

Dvar Torah

The Broken Luchos (Tablets)

“The Luchos that you broke – *asher shibarta*” (34:1): *Yasher kochacha sheshibarta* (Shabbos 87a).

Chazal say that Hashem thanked Moshe for breaking the Luchos. The Apta Rav is quoted in *Nachlas Yehoshua Zos HaBerocha* at the end of the *sefer* as explaining as follows:

When Moshe came down the mountain, he witnessed thousands of Jewish souls that had fallen into the deepest pits and descended into spiritual depths. Moshe wanted to uplift them and save them from destruction; he was afraid they might not be able to climb back out and ascend again!

Therefore, Moshe broke the Luchos, because the letters, vowels and cantillation points all allude to the Jewish souls. These letters, *taamim* and *nekudos* would also be broken and would descend and be reunited with their corresponding *neshomos*. They would safeguard the fallen souls, and when we study *Torah* and uplift those fallen letters, we would simultaneously uplift the attached souls.

This is hinted at in the acrostic that spells “Thank you for breaking them – *Yasher kochacha sheshibarta*”, which spells the holy kabbalistic name of *YudKafShin*, derived from the

Ana Beko'ach prayer stanza that reads *Yichudcha Kevoos Shomreim* - "Guard them like the apple [pupil] of Your eye", thus safeguarding the fallen souls of Bnei Yisrael till they were uplifted once again.



The Gifts of Shabbos and Two Ways to Relate to Them

Vayomer Hashem el Moshe - Shabsosai tishmoru (31:13).

The *Apta Rav*, in *Ohev Yisrael*, cites *Chazal* in *Shabbos* 10b that *Hashem* told *Moshe*, "I have a great gift in My treasury, and its name is *Shabbos*." Surely, explains the *Ohev Yisrael*, the great gift of *Shabbos* is its great and holy spiritual light that descends into the hearts of Bnei Yisrael on *Shabbos Kodesh*.

This spiritual light is like a renewed intellect that comes from a higher plane, from that world which is *Kulo Shabbos* and all delight. Any intelligent, understanding person should surely anticipate the coming of this light. Such a person is called a *Shomer Shabbos* - he who waits for *Shabbos* with longing and anticipation, as in the word *shomer* in *Bereishis* 37:11 *ve'oviv shomar es hadovor*. Such a person is aflame with excitement, waiting - when will *Shabbos* finally arrive? - hoping and waiting for this great gift, this spiritual light that every Jew receives, every person according to his level and ability to receive.

However, in order to properly receive this light, we must prepare ourselves. Such preparation includes our thoughts, speech and actions, and based on how much we prepare will be the extent we accept and receive the spiritual gifts of this light. We learn (*Shemos* 16:5) that Bnei Yisrael needed to prepare for *Shabbos*, and *Chazal* taught (*Avoda Zora* 3a) that a person must make necessary preparations on *Erev Shabbos* because if not, what will he eat on *Shabbos*? Still, a person must refrain from thinking that it is his preparation alone that brings about this spiritual greatness, because it is truly just a gift from *Hashem*.

If we prepare ourselves with all manner of preparations, we would still never be truly ready and prepared to receive the gifts of *Shabbos*, whose sanctity is so lofty. Nonetheless, what we must do by way of preparation is just the creation of a vessel - something to catch and hold the light, because without a vessel to hold it, how can we accept the gift?

Now the *Apta Rav* explains that there are two aspects to *Shabbos*: *zochor* (remember) and *shomor* (guard); remembering *Shabbos* is a male attribute of giving, whereas *shomor* is the feminine attribute of receiving.

If a person attaches himself to *Shabbos* and to all of its gifts and spiritual light, and this light renews his spiritual mind and prowess and gives wondrous insights into *Avodas Hashem*, he can then attach his soul to this gift and harness it, rechanneling this light back to infuse the entire world with the spiritual gift of *Shabbos* - and then all the upper and lower worlds delight. This is the aspect of giving - *zochor es yom haShabbos*.

The *Ohev Yisrael* explains that when a person transgresses, he is cutting off his soul and separating her from everlasting life and the Source, and blemishes the soul. But when a person prepares himself beforehand with all manner of preparations and all the days of the week he is waiting with enthusiasm and unabated anticipation - when will *Shabbos* finally arrive? - then when *Shabbos Kodesh* does finally arrive, *Hashem* infuses his soul with light and shines in it a great abundance of shefa and blessings from on high, reconnecting his soul with her source from where she was cut off from when she sinned.

A person must realize that there are two ways to relate to *mitzvos*. He can be a *shomer Shabbos*, looking to achieve forgiveness, be absolved from his sins and achieve atonement for his misdeeds. However, this is not the optimal way to relate to *mitzvos*, because even though it is a lofty ideal to receive a spiritual benefit, still he has in mind to get something and to receive, which is the feminine aspect of *shomer* – the receiver. The better, more ideal way to perform the *mitzvos* and to observe the *Shabbos* is as *zochor* – the giver, rather than the receiver. In this mode of thought, when we perform the *mitzvos*, rather than considering that we are receiving something back in return such as *selicha*, *méchila* and *kappora* (various aspects of forgiveness), we have in mind to give through our good deeds and actions, drawing down *shefa* and abundance from the higher realms to all the worlds, as in the *pasuk* “Give power to G-d” (*Tehillim* 68:35).



Shabbos Noam HaNeshomos

Fiery Coins for Fiery Souls

“Like this they should give” (30:13).

The *Noam Elimelech* cites the *Yerushalmi Shekolim* 1:4 that *Hashem* showed Moshe a fiery coin from beneath the *Kisei HaKovod* (Throne of Glory) and told Moshe give a coin like it.

The *Noam Elimelech* then cites another *Gemora*, in *Pesochim* 104a that asks, “Who is called a *benon shel kedoshim* – a descendant of holy forebears?” The *Gemora* answers, “He who does not recognize the shape and imprint of a coin [because coins were once minted with symbols of idolatry].”

Asks *Tosafos*, “How does this prove that his forebears were holy that he should be called the son of holy parents?” *Tosafos* answers that if he is holy it stands to reason that his father was holy as well.

The Rebbe Reb Melech explains that this idea hints that a true *Tzaddik* was also a *Tzaddik* in his previous *gilgul* as well. The first past life incarnation or *gilgul* is called the “forefather” or “*av*” of his present *gilgul* or life that he currently lives.

This is the deeper meaning of *Tosafos*: Since such a person does not know the shape of a coin’s imprint at all, he has not been exposed to idolatry. It therefore stands to reason that his forebears or previous reincarnations (called *gilgulim*) were also holy, and he was also a *Tzaddik* then.

The reason for this criteria is that seeing an impure image such as those on coins extinguishes the fiery flame of the soul to serve *Hashem*, as is understood. Money corrupts, and handling impure money corrupts the soul and the mind. This is why *Hashem* said in our *pasuk*, “Like this they shall give.” They should conduct themselves with their money like a fiery coin from beneath the Throne of Glory. Fire can be used negatively to burn and destroy, yet it can be used positively to warm things, like people and food. If a person abuses his money it burns him and he is scorched, but if he conducts himself in business and financial matters honestly and acts with kindness, then his *mitzva* can reach great heights, even up to the *Kisei HaKovod*, bringing him delight now and forevermore, *Amen*.

OHR HACHAIM

"The gates of heaven opened up and I saw G-dly visions, the Creator of the four corners of the earth, and I gazed and meditated upon that which I had permission to, and began to explain at the beginning of Hashem's holy words" Ohr HaChaim, Bereishis

Praises For The Holy Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh

Studying Ohr HaChaim Cleanses the Mind

A group of elite *talmidim* of the Karlin-Pinsker *Rebbe* once came together before Rav Moshe Mordechai of Lelov. Among the things they discussed with the *Tzaddik*, they related to the *Rebbe* that they had a *leil shishi* (Thursday night) session of study where they learned the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* together. The Lelover highly praised this practice and told them that he considered it an important thing. Afterward, they asked the Lelover for a *berocha* that they should merit engaging in *Torah* study with *hasmoda* (diligence). To this request the *Tzaddik* responded by saying, "*Az mi'lernt Ohr HaChaim, raynikt dos dem mo'ach un mi'mayleh ken men lernen di heilige Torah* – If we study *Ohr HaChaim*, this cleanses the mind and then you can easily study the holy *Torah!*" (*Perach Mateh Aharon, Tammuz tov-shin-samech-bais*)



Three-Day Fast

The *Chida* writes, "I saw the holy *Chassid* Rav Chaim *ben* Attar fast for three days straight, day and night before *Purim*. This is the *Taanis Hafsokas Gimmel Yomim* mentioned in the writings of the *Arizal*, which he says counts as if it is a forty-day fast. (*Kikar La'Aden*, p. 124b)



It's All in the Merit of the Ohr HaChaim

The *Tepliker Gaon*, Rav Shimshon Aharon Polanski, had a special pull toward the *Ohr HaChaim*. He knew the entire *sefer* by heart and on *leil shishi* (Thursday nights) he taught a *shiur* in *Chumash* with the *Ohr HaChaim*, in the *Bais Yaakov shul* in the *Bais Yisrael* neighborhood in *Yerushalayim* for many years. He would say over the *Ohr HaChaim* from memory while the *tzibur* followed along in the actual *sefer*! Whenever he was asked to pray on behalf of a sick person he would go up to *Har HaZeisim*. There he would prostrate himself in prayer and pour out his heart at the *tziun* of the holy *Ohr HaChaim*. When afterward they would come and report that there had been some salvation or that the patient's condition had improved, he would always reply, "See how great is his power and how mighty his ability! It's all in the *zechus* of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh!*" (*Marbitzei Torah M'eOlam HaChassidus*, Volume 7, p. 94-95)

The Holy Lights Of The Ohr Hachaim

Waiting for Shabbos

Veshomru Bnei Yisrael es haShabbos – "And Bnei Yisrael shall safeguard the *Shabbos*" (31:16).

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* has a novel interpretation of these words – “And Bnei Yisrael waited, anticipating the arrival of *Shabbos*”. He translates the *pasuk* this way based on the meaning of the word *shomar* in *Bereishis* 37:11 where it says, *ve’oviv shomar es hadovor*, which the *meforshim* explain as *mamtin umetzapeh mosai yovo* – “waiting to see when it would finally happen”. Our *pasuk* concludes with the words, *la’asos es haShabbos*, which the *Ohr HaChaim* explains (in this new context) as, “in order to observe *Shabbos* for the sake of the *mitzva* and not for physical rest and relaxation or enjoyment”.



To Create More Shabbos

Laasos es haShabbos – Another novel interpretation is based on the *Maamar Chazal* in *Yoma* 81 that we are obligated to add extra time to *Shabbos* from our weekday, by accepting *Shabbos* early, as opposed to stopping *melocha* only with the onset of *Shabbos*. Instead, we prepare beforehand and we go out and greet *Shabbos* as a *chosson* greets his *kalla* by going out before she even arrives. This is achieved by advance preparations in honor of *Shabbos* and taking care of all arrangements before the onset of *Shabbos*.

This is how we read *laasos es haShabbos* – we make or create [more] *Shabbos*, because *Hashem* agrees that whatever time we add from the weekday to the sanctified time of *Shabbos* is also properly called *Shabbos* as well. We thus see that we are actively creating more *Shabbos*, by adding hours from Friday (by accepting *Shabbos* early) and Sunday (Saturday night, when *Shabbos* departs, by lengthening *Shabbos* into Saturday night/Sunday). These hours were mundane and Bnei Yisrael transform them into *Shabbos*!



Veshomru Bnei Yisrael es haShabbos laasos es haShabbos – “And Bnei Yisrael will safeguard the *Shabbos* in order to rectify the *Shabbos*” (31:16).

The *Ohr HaChaim* offers another *peirush* to our *pasuk* based on the *Medrash* in *Bereishis Rabba* ch. 11 that *Shabbos* argued before *Hashem* that everyone had a mate except for her, to which *Hashem* answered *Shabbos* that Bnei Yisrael would be her mate and partner. Based on this *Medrash*, *Shabbos* was missing this detail; she lacked a partner and was thus incomplete. Her completion or rectification is fixed by Bnei Yisrael’s observance and safeguarding of *Shabbos* in order to partner with her as her mate. We can therefore reread our *pasuk* as, “Bnei Yisrael shall safeguard the *Shabbos laasos es haShabbos* – in order to rectify her and partner with her.



Keep Shabbos in This World to Earn the Day of Total Shabbos Forever

Another novel way that the *Ohr HaChaim* translates our *pasuk* is based on the *Gemora* in *Rosh HaShana* 31a that the coming world of *Olam HaBa* is known as a day that is *kulo Shabbos* – a total *Shabbos* day. And *Chazal* say in *Medrash Shemos Rabba* ch. 25 that *Shabbos* observance is a *mitzva* whose weight is equal to all the other *mitzvos*. We can thus read the *pasuk* as *Veshomru Bnei Yisrael es haShabbos* – “And Bnei Yisrael safeguarded *Shabbos* in order *laasos es haShabbos* in order to create for themselves *Olam HaBa* and earn that final day that is completely *Shabbos* for all generations hence. This is why the *pasuk* ends with *ledorosom* – “for all future generations”, as opposed to this world, which does not endure for all generations, as a *bris olom*, a covenant promised to those who observe *Shabbos* that they inherit the future supernal world of *Olam HaBa*.

The Soul Named Shabbos

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* also points out that on *Shabbos* we are given an extra soul known as *Neshoma Yeseira* (*Beitza* 16a). This soul is a secret gift that *Hashem* granted only to *Bnei Yisrael* and not to any of the other nations. *Chazal* also say in *Shabbos* 10b that *Hashem* told us He has a great gift waiting in His hidden treasure chambers called *Shabbos*. This treasure called *Shabbos* is the name given to that extra soul, which is hidden in the King's most secret treasure chamber. The extra soul named *Shabbos* is the gift that *Hashem* gave us on *Shabbos*. She is called *Shabbos*, explains the *Ohr HaChaim*, because she comes from the world called *Kulo Shabbos* (*Rosh HaShana* 31a). That world lacks any sadness and is filled with pleasure, happiness and delight. *Hashem* therefore commands us on *Shabbos* to distance ourselves from any form of affliction, sadness or exertion. This is why the *Torah* specifically forbids those categories of *melocha* that contain some mental aspect of the mundane and is forbidden, as is taught (*Beitza* 13a): *Melech machsheves asra Torah* – the *Torah* forbids *melochos* that have an aspect of thought to them. Even mundane forms of speech are forbidden for this reason (*Shabbos* 113b).

We can now reread our *pasuk* again as *Veshomru Bnei Yisrael es haShabbos* – “And *Bnei Yisrael* safeguarded the extra soul named *Shabbos* – *laasos es haShabbos* – In order to receive a portion in the next world, which is also named *Shabbos*. The reason for this, explains the *Ohr HaChaim*, is that it is impossible for someone to receive the gift of the next world of all *Shabbos* without having had a taste, some experience of it, previously in this world. Without having received a branch to grasp onto, without having had the *Neshoma Yeseira* named *Shabbos*, he would have no way to receive the final reward of a day that is *kulo Shabbos* in the coming world. This is the meaning of *ledorosom* – for all generations to come, because when all of *Bnei Yisrael* observe *Shabbos* and receive the extra soul named *Shabbos* and grasp and taste the *Shabbos*, then in the future all the generations will come together in that new world, the day that is completely and totally *Yom SheKulo Shabbos*, together, forever.



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 *berochah*. 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

[תְּפִילָּה הַנְּמַצָּאת בְּסִפּוּר אֶלֶף הַמִּגָּן מִבְּעַל הַפֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ עַל פְּרֶשֶׁת וַיֵּצֵא עֲמוּד כ"ד]

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִלּוּי נְשָׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק
בֶּן/בַּת _____, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים
וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטּוֹב שָׂאֵנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחְשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדִבּוּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וַיְהִי הַכֹּל
לְזָכוֹת וּלְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִלּוּי לְנִשְׁמוֹת עַמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפֶרֶט לְנַפְשׁ רּוּחַ וְנִשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי /
צַדִּיק _____ . יְהִי רְצוֹן שֶׁתְּהִינָה נְפֻשׁוֹתֵיהֶם צְרוּרוֹת בְּצְרוּר הַחַיִּים.

Translation:

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

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

4) Study some of his teaching or writings.

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



GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER



Yahrzeits Beginning Shabbos Ki Sisa

http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim_yahrtzeit/Adar

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

* 18th of Adar ~ Begins Friday Night (Feb 22nd)

- * **Rav Alexander Ziskind**, born in Brzhen, but lived most of his life in Horodna (Grodno, Belarus), Lithuania, the product of the teaching of Rav Aryeh Leib Epstein, *Rav* of Nikolsburg. He authored the mussar work *Yesod V'shoresh Ha'avoda*, which teaches how one should behave every hour of the day and *kavonos* for *tefillos* and *mitvos*, as well as *Karnei Ohr*, a commentary on the *Zohar*, (5460–5554/1700–1794 – *Adar II*);
- * **Rav Chanoch Henoah HaKohen**, (1798–1870), Alexander *Rebbe*. He was a *talmid* of Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshis'cha, Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk and the *Chiddushei HaRim*, (5630/1870 – *Adar II*);
- * **Rav Nachum Mordechai Friedman**, Tchorokover *Rebbe*, (5706/1946 – *Adar II*);
- * **Rav Yechezkel Levenstein**, *Mashgiach* of Ponevezh, (1885–1974). Born in Warsaw in 1896 to Osminer *Chassidim*, he lost his mother at age five. At thirteen, he joined the *Yeshiva* at Lomza. Early in life, he moved to Radin to learn with the *Chofetz Chaim*. There, he met the *Mashgiach*, Rav Yeruchom Levovitz, who was a *talmid* of the *Alter* of Kelm. He then learned in Kelm, where he was fortunate to enjoy the close attention of Rav Tzvi Hirsch Broide (son-in-law of the *Alter*), at whose table he ate his *Shabbos* meals. In 1919, while Rav Yeruchom was serving as *Mashgiach*, the *Mirror Yeshiva* was exiled from its hometown

of Mir, Poland, into Russia and then to Vilna. Rav Chatzkel, who was then learning in Mir, was asked by the *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Eliezer Yehuda Finkel, to supervise the *Yeshiva's* spiritual welfare until Rav Yeruchom returned. Rav Chatzkel was approached by Rav Aharon Kotler, who headed *Yeshiva Eitz Chaim* in Kletsk, to come and serve as *Mashgiach ruchani* in his *Yeshiva*. Rav Chatzkel accepted. In 1935, he moved to *Eretz Yisrael* to serve as *Mashgiach* of *Yeshivas Lomza* in Petach Tikva, which was headed by Rav Reuven Katz, but he moved back to serve as *Mashgiach* in Mir after the *petira* of Rav Yeruchom. After two years in America, he served as *Mashgiach* at the Mir in *Eretz Yisrael*, then, upon the passing of Rav Dessler, at Ponevezh, (5734/1974);

✳ **Rav Moshe Weber**, (1914–2000) would go to the Western Wall from his home in Mea She'orim nearly every day to *daven* and to help visitors lay *tefillin*. Less publicly, he distributed enormous sums of *tzedoka* to the city's poor. The Lubavitcher *Rebbe* said of him that he was one of the holiest and kindest people in the world. He published several volumes of *Torah* insights in *Yorim Moshe*. There is an ongoing periodical of his teachings distributed weekly called *Shemu Us'chi Nafshechem*, which also offers for sale his audio recordings, (5760/2000);

✳ **Rav Yitzchok Shlomo Zilberman**, (5688–5761/1928–2001).

✳ **19th of Adar ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Feb 23rd)**

✳ **Rav Dovid** of Dinov, father of Rav Tzvi Elimelech Shapira. Rav Dovid was the *mechaber* of *Tzemach Dovid* and the son of Rav Tzvi Elimelech, the *Bnei Yissoschor*, (5634/1874);

✳ **Rav Meir Yechiel Haldshtok**, founder of the court of Ostrovitze, (1851–1928), a *talmid* of Rav Elimelech of Grodzinsk, a scion of the Kozhnutzer dynasty. Ostrovitze was one of two courts in Poland known for their *Yeshivos* and high level of learning; the other was Sochatchov. Rav Meir Yechiel's intricate sermons, which drew heavily on *gematria*, came to be known as "Ostgrovtze *pshetlach*". They have been collected in *Meir Einei Chachomim*, and his teachings on *Bereishis* in *Ohr Torah*, (5688/1928);

✳ **Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld**, *Av Bais Din* and *Rav* of Yerushalayim before the State of Israel was established, (5608–5692/1848–1932 – *Adar II*);

✳ **Rav Yehuda Greenwald**, *Av Bais Din* of Satmar, *mechaber* of *Shevet MiYehuda*, (5680/1920);

✳ **Rav Shmuel Engel**, (1853–1935). Born in Tarno, Galicia, he was *Rav* of Radomishla (Radimishla) from 1888. Authored *Sheilos Uteshuvos Maharash*, (5695/1935);

✳ **Rav Yitzchok Kalisch**, *Amshinover Rebbe*, New York. Son of Rav Yosef Kalisch of Amshinov, grandson of Rav Menachem Kalisch of Amshinov, (5753/1993);

✳ **Rav Yaakov Chaim Jofen** (Yaffen), *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Bais Yosef* and the son of Rav Avrohom Jofen, the son-in-law of the *Alter* of Novardok. Following his *bar mitzva* he studied at Baranovich for one year under Rav Dovid Rapaport, and then for a year under Rav Elchonon Wasserman. During these two years he lived with his uncle, the *Mashgiach*, Rav Yisrael Yaakov Lubchansky. Later he returned to Bialystok to study under his father at *Yeshivas Bais Yosef*. In 1941, he arrived in the U.S. with his father. He began giving *shiurim* that year at *Yeshivas Bais Yosef*, and continued to do so for the next sixty years, (5677–5763/1917–2003 – *Adar II*).

✳ **20th of Adar ~ Begins Sunday Night (Feb 24th)**

✳ **Rav Yoel Sirkis** of Cracow, the *Bach*, (1561–1641), *mechaber* of *Bayis Chodosh* on the *Tur*, in which he traces each law to its source in the *Gemora*. In his youth, he studied under Rav Shlomo Leibush of Lublin and Rav Meshulom Feivush in Brisk. He had several rabbinic

appointments throughout Poland, lastly as chief *Rav* of Cracow in 1619. He was the teacher and father-in-law of Rav Dovid *HaLevi*, the *Taz*, (5401/1641);

✳ **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach**, (1910–1995), born in the *Sha'arei Chessed* neighborhood of Yerushalayim to Rav Chaim Yehuda Leib Auerbach, *mechaber* of *Chacham Lev* and *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Shaar HaShomayim*. Rav Shlomo Zalman learned at *Eitz Chaim Yeshiva*. He married Chaya Rivka Ruchamkin on *Erev Purim* 1930. During the following nineteen years he wrote *Meorei Eish* on the laws of electricity, *Ma'adanei Ha'aretz* on laws regarding agriculture in *Eretz Yisrael* and a commentary on *Shev Shma'atsa*. In 1949, he left *Eitz Chaim* to succeed Rav Yechiel Schlesinger as *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Kol Torah Yeshiva* in the Rechavia section of Yerushalayim. He was the *mechaber* of *Minchas Shlomo*. His brother-in-law was Rav Sholom Schwadron. His *Piskei Halocha* on *Shabbos* are found throughout the *sefer Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchosa*, written by his *talmid*, Rav Yehoshua Neuwirth, (5755/1995);

✳ **Rav Refoel Blum**, the *Kashau Rav*, who replanted his *Chassidic* community from Europe to Bedford Hills in Westchester County, New York, (5670–5765/1910–2005).

✳ **Rav Itzele Ponevezher**, *Rosh Yeshiva* in Slabodka and Ponevezh, (5679/1919);

✳ **21st of Adar ~ Begins Monday Night (Feb 25th)**

✳ **Rav Meir Schiff *HaKohen***, the *Maharam Schiff*. Born in Frankfurt am Main, he became *Rav* of the nearby town of Fulda at the age of seventeen. His *chiddushim* on the *Talmud* are terse, incisive and profound. Soon after being appointed *Rav* of Prague, he was *niftar* at the age of thirty-six and was buried in Frankfurt, (5401/1641);

✳ **Rav Elimelech** of Litzhensk, *mechaber* of *Noam Elimelech*, (1717–1787). Learned under the *Maggid* of Mezritch. Among his *talmidim* were Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heshel of Apta, the *Chozeh* of Lublin, the *Maggid* of Kozhnitz, and Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, (5547/1787);

✳ **Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Spector**, *Rav* of Kovno (1817–1896), lived in Kovno 1866–1896, the third son of Rav Yisrael Isser *ben* Elchonon, the *Rav* of the Lithuanian town of Roush, located in the Grodno district. After he married (Sora Raizel), he moved to Volkovisk, where his father-in-law comfortably supported him. The *Rav* in Volkovisk at that time was Rav Binyomin Diskin. A great luminary himself, he was also famous for his illustrious son, Rav Yoshua Leib Diskin, the *Rav* of Brisk, who later moved to *Eretz Yisrael*. Rav Binyomin Diskin was so impressed with Yitzchok Elchonon that he set up a special *chavrusa* to study with him *Choshen Mishpot* two hours a day. In 1837, when he was twenty years old, he accepted the offer to become *Rav* of the small village of Zebelen, and then became *Rav* in Baraze in 1839. He became *Rav* of Novardok in 1851 and *Rav* of Kovno in 1864. He held the position in Kovno for thirty-two years. He authored *Be'er Yitzchok* and *Ein Yitzchok* (both *teshuvos*) and *Nachal Yitzchok* on *Choshen Mishpot*, (5656/1896);

✳ **Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin**, editor of the Talmudical Encyclopedia, (5736/1978);

✳ **Rav Yitzchok Horowitz** of Stetchin, (1862–1940). His father was a direct descendant of Rav Naftoli Tzvi of Ropshitz, and his uncle was the *Imrei Noam* of Dzikov. Rav Yitzchok was succeeded by his son Rav Yehuda, who moved to New York before passing away in 1982, (5700/1940);

✳ **Tchaba Rav** of London, (5749/1989);

✳ **Mr. Avrohom Dov Kohn**, principal of Gateshead Seminary, (5748/1988);

✳ **Rav Doniel Schur**, a strong presence in Cleveland's Jewish community as a *Rav*, *mohel* and educator. He was appointed *Rav* of *Bais Medrash HaGodol-Heights Jewish Center*,

(5766/2006).

✳ **22nd of Adar ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Feb 26th)**

- ✳ **Rav Yaakov** of Novominsk, father of Rav Yehuda Aryeh Perlow of Vlodova (1878–1961) and Rav Alter Yisrael Shimon Perlow of Novominsk, (5662/1902);
- ✳ **Rav Yechiel Michel HaLevi Epstein** (1829–1908). Born in Bobroysk, *mechaber* of the *Aruch HaShulchon*, Rav of Novardok for thirty-four years, father of Rav Boruch HaLevi Epstein (*mechaber* of *Torah Temima*) and grandfather of Rav Meir Bar-Ilan, with whom he learned in Novardok, (5668/1908 – *Adar* II);
- ✳ **Rav Eliezer Dovid** of Radoshitz, (5687/1927);
- ✳ **Rav Avrohom Dov Ber Kahana-Shapiro**, chief Rav of Kovno before and during World War II (1870–1943). Born in Kobrin on *Yom Kippur*, his father, Shlomo Zalman, was a descendant of Rav Chaim Volozhiner. Rav Avrohom attended the Volozhin *Yeshiva*. He was president of the *Agudas HoRabbonim* of Lithuania and came to America in March 1924 with Rav Kook and Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, to collect funds for *Torah* institutions in *Eretz* Yisrael and Europe. His *piskei halocha* can be found in the *sefer D'var Avrohom*, (5703/1943);
- ✳ **Rav Reuven Grozovsky**, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Kamenitz and *Torah Voda'as*, (1896–1958), successor of Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz at Kaminetz. When Rav Reuven was a young man studying in the Slobodka *Yeshiva*, his father, the *Dayan* of Minsk, passed away. His colleagues at Slobodka included Rav Yaakov Yitzchok HaLevi Ruderman, Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky, Rav Aharon Kotler and Rav Yitzchok Hutner, (5718/1958);
- ✳ **Rav Yisrael Moshe Dushinsky**, (1921–2003). Born in Chust, Hungary, to Rav Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky, Rav of Chust (later to become Rav and *Av Bais Din* of the *Eida Chareidis* of Yerushalayim), he was his father's first son, born when his father was fifty years old. After many years and many *berochos*, Rav Yosef Tzvi received a *berocha* from Rav Yechezkel Shraga of Shinava, who also gave him his *sefer*, *Ayala Shelucha*, printed in memory of the Shinava Rav's son, Naftoli, who was *niftar* on the 21st of *Kislev*, 1864. The following year, on the exact date of Rav Naftoli's *yahrzeit*, Yisrael Moshe was born. His middle name was in honor of his great uncle, the *Maharam Shick*. The family moved to *Eretz* Yisrael in *Adar* of 1930, one month before the *petira* of Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. He was married to the daughter of Rav Dovid Yehoshua Gross, *Rosh HaKohol* of the Satmar *Kehilla*, in 1945. On *Erev Sukkos* of 1949, his father was *niftar*, and the twenty-seven-year-old Rav Yisrael Moshe was appointed *Rosh Yeshiva* of Dushinsky. In 1969, he was inducted as a member of the *Eida Chareidis*. He became *S'gan Bais Din* after the Satmar *Rebbe's petira* and the *Av Bais Din* in 1996, (5763/2003 – *Adar* II);
- ✳ **Rav Yeshaya Shimonowitz**, *Rosh Yeshiva Rav Yaakov Yosef*, (5758/1998).

✳ **23rd of Adar ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Feb 27th)**

- ✳ **Rav Chaim Cheikel** (Chaikel) of Amdur (Indura). Born to Rav Shmuel in Karlin, he was a *talmid* of the Vilna *Gaon*, and later became a *talmid* of Rav Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezritch. Rav Chaim became one of the first *Chassidic Admorim* in 1772–73. He authored *Chaim Vochesed*. Amdur is about twenty-five miles south of Grodno (Horodno). Amdur and Grodno are located in the northwest corner of what is now the independent country of Belarus, close to the Lithuanian and Polish borders. During the Cossack revolt of 1648 against Polish landowners and gentry, over 100,000 Jews, mostly in Ukraine and southern Belarus, were murdered. However, the marauders did not advance north to the Grodno region. Jews comprised 80 percent of the population in Grodno at that time. Rav Chaim's

daughter married Moshe, the brother of Aharon, founder of Karlin *Chassidus*. Rav Chaim was succeeded by his son, Rav Shmuel of Amdur, (5547/1787);

- * **Rav Yitzchok Yaakov Rabinowitz** of Biala (*Divrei Bina*), youngest son of Rebbe Nathan Dovid, son-in-law of Rebbe Yehoshua of Ostrovoh (the *Toldos Odom*), and great-grandson of Yaakov Yitzchok Rabinowitz, the *Yid HaKodosh* of Peshis'cha, (5665/1905 – *Adar II*);
- * **Rav Refoel Shapiro**, the *Toras Refoel*, *Rosh Yeshiva* Volozhin, (1837–1921). After the Volozhin *Yeshiva* was closed down in 1892 by order of the Russian government, he reopened it, on a smaller scale, in 1899. He was a son-in-law of the *Netziv* and the father-in-law of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk, (5681/1921 – *Adar II*);
- * **Rav Michel Dovid Rozovsky**, (1869–1935). Born in Svarjen, near Stoibetz, he learned in Mir and Volozhin. After his marriage, he was appointed *Rav* in Grodna, in which capacity he remained for forty years. He was the father of three sons: Rav Yehoshua Heschel, who served as *Rav* in Grodna, until he was murdered by the Nazis; Rav Yosef, who served as *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Ohr Yisrael* in Petach Tikva; and Rav Shmuel, who would become *Rosh Yeshiva* in Ponevezh in Bnei Brak, (5695/1935);
- * **Rav Yitzchok Meir Alter** of Ger (*Chiddushei HaRim*), (1799–1866). The founder of the Gerrer dynasty and the grandfather of the *Sfas Emes*, Rav Yitzchok Meir was able to trace his lineage back to Rav Meir *ben* Boruch (the *Maharam*) of Rottenberg (1215–1293). His mother, Chaya Sora, was orphaned early in life and was raised by her relative, the Kozhnutzer *Maggid*. The *Maggid* had a great influence on Yitzchok Meir during the latter's early years. As he grew, he became a *talmid* of Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshis'cha and then Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. At the insistence of the *Chassidim*, the *Chiddushei HaRim* became leader after the death of the *Kotzker*. At the first *Chassidic* gathering over which he presided, he declared, "Rav Simcha Bunem led with love, and Rav Menachem Mendel with fear. I will lead with *Torah!*" He had thirteen children and outlived them all, a tremendous personal tragedy. Yet, he accepted it all with love, (5626/1866);
- * **Rav Shlomo Zefrani**, born in Aram Soba (Aleppo). He became a close *talmid* of Rav Ezra Sha'in. Together with Rav Moshe Tawil, he founded the *Degel HaTorah Yeshiva*. His community supported him as well as the *Yeshiva*. At the age of sixty-eight, he moved to *Eretz Yisrael* and settled in Tel Aviv. He lived there for nine years, until his *petira*, (5730/1970);
- * **Rav Yehuda Moshe Danziger** (Danzcyger), Alexandria *Rebbe* of Bnei Brak (*Emunas Moshe*), (5733/1973);
- * **Rav Yisrael Grossman**, (1922–2007). Born in the old city of Yerushalayim, Rav Yisrael studied at the *Yeshiva* of Rav Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky, where he learned *Maseches Kiddushin* thirty times. He later learned at *Yeshiva Kaminetz*. After Rav Boruch Shimon Schneerson became *Rosh Yeshiva* in Tchebin, Rav Yisrael replaced him as *Rosh Yeshiva* in *Yeshiva Chabad*, where he remained for thirty years. He also served as a *Dayan* for the *Bais Din* of *Agudas Yisrael* for over forty years and later opened a *Bais Din* for monetary laws with Rav Betzalel Zolti and helped found *Mifal Hashas*. He was also very involved with *Chinuch Atzmai*, (5767/2007).

* **24th of Adar ~ Begins Thursday Night (Feb 28th)**

- * **Rav Yitzchok Eizik Margulies** of Prague, (5285/1525);
- * **Rav Chaim Algazi** of Kushta, *mechaber* of *Nesivos HaMishpot*, *talmid* of Rav Shlomo Algazi, *Rav* of Rhodes. [Dr. Fred Rosner cites Rav Chaim Yitzchok Algazi in *Responsa Derech Eitz Chaim*];

- * **Rav Betzael Yair Danziger** of Lodz, (5521/1761);
- * **Rav Binyomin Diskin** of Horodna and Vilna, (5604/1844);
- * **Rav Yitzchok Meyer** of Alesk, (1829–1904). Born in Belz to Rav Chanoch Heinech of Alesk, *mechaber* of *Lev Somei'ach*, and Rebbetzin Freide, daughter of the *Sar Sholom* of Belz. After learning with his maternal grandfather, he became a *Chassid* of Rav Yisrael of Ruzhin, and later of his son, Rav Dovid Moshe of Chortkov. With his father's *petira* in 1884, Rav Yitzchok became *Rav* in Alesk. He had one daughter, and his son-in-law succeeded him, (5664/1904);
- * **Rav Yitzchok** of Stutchin, (5700/1940);
- * **Rav Chaim Osher** of Radoshitz, (5701/1941);
- * **Rav Yehoshua Menachem Ehrenberg**, (1904–1976). Born in Kemesce, Hungary. In 1921, he moved to Tarnow to learn in the *Yeshiva* of Rav Meir Arik. Living in Cracow, Rav Ehrenberg published his first *sefer*, *Roshei Besomim* on the *Roke'ach*, in 1937. During World War II, he was interned in the Cracow ghetto. He was included in the “Kastner train”, escaping to Switzerland. In 1945, he moved to Yerushalayim. In November of 1947, he heeded the request of Rav Herzog to be the chief *Rav* of the internment camp on Cyprus; he stayed until the camp was entirely dismantled and came back to *Eretz Yisrael* on the last ship. He was then appointed *Av Bais Din* in Yaffo. When Yaffo was joined to Tel Aviv, he served as a specialist on *Gittin*, and was widely regarded as the foremost *posek* in this area. He wrote the *sefer Teshuvos Dvar Yehoshua*, (5736/1976 – Adar II);
- * **Rav Gad (God'I) Eisner**. Taught at the *Talmud Torah* of Rav Gershon Eliyohu Liz in Lodz before World War II, and for many years was *maggid shiur* and *mashgiach ruchani* at *Yeshiva Chiddushei HaRim* in Tel Aviv, (5745/1985);
- * **Rav Meir Soloveitchik**, (5776/2016 – Adar II).



❁ 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 Yechezkel Levenstein Ben Yehuda Levi, 18th of Adar

Mashgiach of Mir and Ponovezh

The *Chazon Ish* used to say that there were three giants of *mussar* who excelled in *emuna*: In Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler we see his greatness in *emuna* of mind, in Rav Eliyohu Lopian we see his greatness in *emuna* of the heart, and in Rav Chatzkel Levenstein we see that he had *emuna* in his hands – he had experiential *emuna*, the kind you can touch and feel with your very hands! (*Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel*, p. 23)



You Would Have To Be Blind

One of his *talmidim* described how during a *mussar shmuess* in *Yeshivas Ponovezh*, the *Mashgiach*, Rav Chatzkel, stood up and yelled loudly with emotion, “You can experience *emuna* and feel *emuna* with your hands! You would have to be blind not to see *emuna* in every step we take – you need to shut your eyes tight in order not to experience and see for yourselves that the entire world and everything in it runs according to Someone up above!” (*Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel*, p. 23)



Order and Insanity

Another *talmid* described how his room was situated above the lunchroom such that from his window he could see the *Mashgiach* walk on his daily route to the *Yeshiva*. The *Mashgiach's* daily routine was fixed: he walked straight past this *talmid's* window, never veering or even looking to his right or left, but walking straight to the *Yeshiva*. One day, the *talmid* noticed the *Mashgiach* stop, turn his head

toward the lunchroom as if looking at something and only then did he continue on his regular routine. The puzzled *talmid* wondered what had caught the *Mashgiach's* eye. He didn't have long to wait before he found out.

During the *mussar shmuess* he heard the *Mashgiach* ask incredulously, “When you walk past the lunchroom and observe all the cups, bowls, plates and cutlery neatly arranged all in their places in order...does anyone think this happened all by itself? Did the plates and cups fly in the air and land perfectly arranged in order?! Obviously someone set them in order and put them away. You would have to be insane to entertain the fanciful notion that they could arrange themselves this way on their own, just as you have to be insane to believe that this world was created all by itself!” (*Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel*, p. 23)



I Got Back My Bitochon!

Rav Sholom Shwadron used to tell the following story: The *Mashgiach*, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein, was known always to walk around with a serious expression on his face that reflected his awe and reverence – *Yiras HaRomemus* – that permeated his very being and all his 248 limbs and 365 sinews. Once, one of his *talmidim* was extremely surprised to walk in and find the *Mashgiach* smiling broadly – a rare sight indeed. The *talmid* queried the *Mashgiach* as to the source of his smile and Rav Chatzkel responded:

“When I used to be the *Mashgiach* in the Mir *Yeshiva* I almost never received my monthly salary on time (because of the

Yeshiva's dire financial means or lack thereof). I trusted instead in *Hashem* and had *bitochon* that He alone would see to my *parnossa* from other sources. When I took up the position as *Mashgiach* in Ponovezh I began to receive my monthly salary on time and unfortunately I lost this level of *bitochon* in *Hashem* that I had regarding my *parnossa*. But now – *Chasdei Hashem* (thank G-d) – it is some eight months that I haven't been paid (due to the *Yeshiva's* staggering debts) and I now have my *bitochon* back in *Hashem* that He will send me my *parnossa* in another way, and this is why I am so happy and overjoyed! (*Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel*, p. 54–55)



Hashgocha Protis Training

The *Mashgiach* used to relate that when his daughters were still young he would give them small change if they would think about ways to see *Hashgocha Protis* in their home and in their lives. And this *Hashgocha* was easily observed in how the *Mashgiach's* household was run, as the level of poverty was great, and yet, when they would tell him what they had seen and discovered, for each story he would pay them a coin. (*Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel*, p. 73)

One of his daughters, Zlata Malka Ginsberg, related, “My father *zt”l* used to educate me using *chinuch* in the ways of *Hashgocha* using a variety of methods. One of his methods was to give me a notebook; he promised that if I filled in one daily occurrence of *Hashgocha Protis* he would buy me a prize. And true to his word, once the notebook was full, he bought me a prize, even though this cost him dearly because of our poor financial situation and his lack of means, because to my father, the need to recognize *Hashgocha Protis* was so important that it was worth the money.” (*Mipihem*, p. 196, cited in *Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel*, p.73)



A Seventy-Year Warranty on All Maintenance and Repairs

The *Mashgiach* was once walking with one his *talmidim* when they passed by a drainpipe that was leaking. Upon observing this, the *Mashgiach* pointed it out to his *talmid* and remarked, “How old is this drainpipe? Probably not more than decade. And it is made of metal, and see how it is already cracked and leaking! The human body is made of soft flesh, not metal, and carries things worse than water! Our own “drains and pipes” are soft flesh and they carry such hazardous materials that are acidic and toxic like urine and waste, yet they last decades and decades, an entire lifetime; a span of seventy years or more can go by with no mishap. From my flesh I see the Divine!”

A different time, the *Mashgiach* asked rhetorically, “How is it that the machine we call man does not break down and need maintenance and repair as often as other machines and mechanisms do? Take a watch for example, whose mechanisms and gears are all enclosed in a metal casing shut tight. Still, every few years, it requires some maintenance to keep its timing and precision; it must be opened, dusted, cleaned and wound, and it can easily break down. Man is made not of iron, silver, or copper, but of flesh – and still sometimes he can live his whole life of some seventy years or more with nothing breaking down and no maintenance needed! (*Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel*, p.76)



Midda Kenegged Midda – Measure for Measure

In the days before the war, there were almost no private *Yeshiva* buildings; rather, the *Yeshivos* learned in local *shuls* and *Botei Medroshim* of the town or city where they were located. Once, one of the *gabbo'im* of the *shul* where the *Mashgiach's* *Yeshiva* studied was bothering and disturbing the *talmidim* of

the *Yeshiva*. He disturbed the *talmidim* so often that his interference became simply unbearable. He constantly interrupted their studies – and one day he kicked them out of the *shul* in the middle of the learning *seder*! With no choice left, the *Yeshiva* relocated itself to a different town and *shul*.

For years afterward, whenever the *Mashgiach* met anyone who hailed from that town he asked that person about the town, its *shul* and the welfare of the *gabbai* – until one day someone reported that the *gabbai* had died.

“And how did he die?” asked the *Mashgiach*.

They told Rav Chatzkel that it was on *Yom Tov* in the middle of *Birkas Kohanim* that his heart stopped and he died. In *Chutz La’Aretz, Birkas Kohanim* is a special occasion that takes place only on *Yom Tov* and the *shul* was in a quandary – what should they do? To interrupt the *Kohanim* in the middle of reciting *Birkas Kohanim* was impossible, yet there was a dead body in *shul* and the *Kohanim* were forbidden to become impure from *tumas meis*. They had no choice and decided that they had to take his body and deposit it outside the *shul*.

When the *Mashgiach* heard this, he replied, “This is the story I have been expecting to hear for some time now. I knew that something like this must happen. Just as he did, so was done to him. When he expelled the *talmidim* from *shul*, I knew that *midda kenegged midda* – measure for measure – *Hashgocha Protis* would see to it that he too would be thrown out of *shul* one day.” (Otzros Rabbeinu

Yechezkel, page 77)



Tefilla – Soul food

The *Mashgiach* Rav Chatzkel Levenstein would often repeat and review the words of the *Kuzari* that *tefilla* is like food for the soul, nourishing the soul like bread nourishes the body. *Shacharis* is breakfast and it should keep you satisfied until lunchtime – *Mincha*, he used to say. He used to give the following *moshol*: A hungry man once went to a store and purchased a variety of food and provisions to satiate his hunger that could last him some weeks. He stuffed the food into all his pockets, alas to no avail. The fool remained hungry and couldn’t understand why!

Of course the fool remained hungry – he filled his outer garments with food and never satisfied his true inner self by eating the food! So too do we run after fulfilling our lusts and desires for all manner of *gashmiyus*, yet we are never satisfied, because while the externals are stuffed, our inner being remains starving. The soul thirsts and if only the pockets of the outer garment called the body are filled, then the thirst and hunger of the inner true self – the soul – remain. But if someone were to ignore the pangs of hunger in his stomach and *daven* a good *tefilla* and learn a *geshmak seder*, he could feel satiated and satisfied, because this is what it means “to do without”. The body can go without and you can feel fine, whereas the soul must be satisfied or the cravings and unquenchable thirst remains. (Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, *Tefilla*, p. 55)



Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, 19th of Adar

Av Bais Din and *Rav* of Yerushalayim

Before the modern Zionist movement began at the end of the nineteenth century, there was already a Jewish community living in *Eretz Yisrael*,

which was committed to the *Torah* path. This spiritual community later became known as the *Yishuv HaYoshon* – the Old Settlement. Part of the *Yishuv*

HaYoshon had been living in the Land for many centuries. This ancient community was reinforced by the followers of the *Ba'al Shem Tov* and the *Vilna Gaon* who came to the Land in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The majority of the members of this community lived in cities such as Yerushalayim, Teverya and Tzefas; moreover, in Yerushalayim – during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – they began to build new Jewish neighborhoods outside the walls of the Old City. During this period, they also began to establish agricultural settlements, where people could work the Holy Land in the holistic spirit of the *Torah*. Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld became a major leader of this community, and he was very much involved in the efforts to renew and strengthen Jewish life in the Holy Land. As Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld said, *Eretz Yisrael* is “the Holy Land, to which *Hashem* affords special supervision, from which *berocha* emanates to the rest of the world, and in which *Hashem's* prophets foresaw the future happiness of all humanity.”

Rav Yosef Chaim was born on the 6th of *Kislev*, 5609 (1848), and he passed away on the 19th of *Adar II*, 5692 (1932). We will share with you three stories that reveal his deep understanding of the ethical teachings of *Halocha*:

It is written: “You shall safeguard the *matzos*” (*Shemos* 12:17). In Hebrew, the word *matzos* has the same letters as *mitzvos*; thus, the sages explain that the *pasuk* can be read as: “You shall safeguard the *mitzvos*”. In the following story, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld finds within this teaching of the sages an ethical message:

Rav Yosef Chaim took painstaking care when baking his *matzos* to ensure that everything should proceed according to the strictest standards, beyond the minimum requirements of the *Halocha*. This stricter standard is known as *mehudar*. It once happened that one of those assisting him in *matza* baking pointed out to him that one of the workers kneading the dough was not

doing such a good job in terms of the stricter standards. He suggested to Rav Yosef Chaim that the worker be admonished and told to work faster and more efficiently.

Rav Yosef Chaim declined, however, saying, “I refuse to distress a poor worker by admonishing him to work harder than he already does, just because I want my *matzos* to be a notch more *mehudar*! I, for my part, am willing to undergo the greatest effort and expense to improve the quality of my *matza*. Furthermore, I *daven* that *Hashem* grant me the merit of having *matza* that meets the strictest standard, and I trust that *Hashem* will accept my *tefilla*, for He knows how intense my desire is to fulfill this *mitzva* in the best possible manner. However, to obtain *mehudar matzos* at the expense of rebuking a poor laborer – the gain in terms of *mitzva* quality would be canceled out by the loss!”

Rav Yosef Chaim did not want to achieve a higher standard of “kosher for *Pesach*” *matza* at the expense of hurting the worker’s feelings. Consideration for someone’s feelings is also a *mitzva*, as the *Torah* states: “You shall not hurt the feelings of one another” (*Vayikra* 25:17). Rav Yosef Chaim added that perhaps this is what the sages had in mind when they said that the words “safeguard the *matzos*” can be read as “safeguard the *mitzvos*”. This is to teach us, said Rav Yosef Chaim, to take the following approach: “When baking *matzos*, one must remember that there are other *mitzvos* besides *matza* in the *Torah*, and that care should be taken to observe them scrupulously as well!”

A *chazzan* (cantor) is the person who leads the congregation in *tefilla*. Rav Nachum Bergman served for many years as the *chazzan* on the High Holidays in the Yerushalayim *shul* where Rav Yosef Chaim *davened* (prayed). He usually led the *tefillas* during *Mussaf* – the concluding section of the morning prayers. One year, Rav Nachman Bergman passed away at the end of the month of *Elul*, just over a week

before *Rosh HaShana*. It was generally assumed that Rav Nachman's son, who although was quite capable of leading the service, would not succeed him that year, as there is a custom that someone who is in a period of mourning does not lead the services on *Shabbos* or on a *Yom Tov*. The reason a mourner is not permitted to be a *chazzan* on these holy days is out of respect for the feelings of the congregation, so that the mourner's sadness not mar the joyous spirit of these days. Rav Yosef Chaim told the *gabbo'im* (shul officials) who were in charge of organizing the services, that they should not worry about who would serve as *chazzan* on *Rosh HaShana*. The *gabbo'im* therefore assumed that Rav Yosef Chaim would lead the *tefillos* that year.

On the first day of *Rosh HaShana*, Rav Yosef Chaim went over to the departed *chazzan's* son, Rav Shimon, and asked him to approach the podium and serve as *chazzan* for *Mussaf*. The *gabbo'im* – along with everyone else in the congregation – were puzzled at the *Rav's* unconventional action.

After the services, Rav Yosef Chaim explained to the wondering circle of people who gathered around him the basis for his decision not to follow the usual custom. The reason a mourner is not generally permitted to lead the services on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, he explained, is out of respect for the feelings of the congregation, so that the mourner's sadness not mar their spirit on these holy days. Imagine, however, how the unfortunate widow would feel if, at the point in the service where, in the past, she had heard her husband chant with soulful tones the introductory *tefilla* of *Mussaf, Hinneni He'Ani MiMa'as*, she now heard a new and unfamiliar voice chant this *tefilla*. The heart of this so recently bereaved woman would certainly ache terribly. What greater honor for the congregation could there be than for it to ease her sorrow by letting her hear the sweet tones of her son's voice, so

much like his father's, take up the chant he had sung for so long.

Rav Yosef Chaim also told the congregants that the need to avoid causing added grief to the widow takes precedence over the usual custom, as causing pain to a widow constitutes a *Torah* prohibition (*Shemos* 22:21).

A wealthy woman who had been married for many years without bearing children came to the *Rav* of Budapest with a large sum of money. She wanted to donate the money to the *Rav* in order that he would *daven* for her to be blessed with children.

"I'll give you an *eitza* (a piece of advice)," said the *Rav*. "Send the money to Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the *Rav* of Yerushalayim. He's a great *Tzaddik*. *Hashem* will surely listen to his *tefilla* and you'll merit *zera shel kayoma*."

The woman agreed to the *Rav's* suggestion, and she sent the money to the *Rav* of Yerushalayim. A few weeks passed and the husband of the woman came to the *Rav*, and complained bitterly to him, "Why did you send the money without my knowledge?! I demand that you send a letter immediately to the *Rav* of Yerushalayim requesting that he return the money."

The *Rav* was very upset by the husband's demand and said, "I'll give you the whole amount from my pocket, as long as you don't demand the money back from the *Rav* of Yerushalayim."

While they were still discussing the details of getting the money back, the postman arrived with an envelope from Rav Yosef Chaim. The *Rav* opened the envelope and was astounded to find a letter in it from the *Rav* of Yerushalayim accompanied by the full amount of money the man's wife had sent to him.

The *Rav* had written, "I received the letter with the money enclosed. However, since the *Rav* wrote that the woman gave him the money, I suspected that she might

have done this without the permission of her husband. Because of this, I am sending back the money, and I request from the *Rav* that he return the money to the woman as quickly as possible. It should be understood that I did not refrain from fulfilling the woman's request because of this. I *davened* fervently for her, and may my *tefillos* be accepted before *Avinu*

Shebashomayim.”

The above stories help to connect us to the loving holiness of this great sage. Through studying the lives and deeds of the great sages of previous generations, we become their spiritual children, and this connection becomes a source of *berocha* and merit for us.



Rav Dovid of Dinov, 19th of Adar I

The Tzemach Dovid

Once, the *Chassidim* sat in the *Bais Medrash* together next to the *Rebbe's* study, discussing the best way to serve *Hashem*. Would it be better to study and serve *Hashem* late into the night, or would it be better to go to sleep early and rise early for *Avodas Hashem*? As they were discussing this, the *Tzemach Dovid's* door opened and the *Rebbe* came in and said, “What are you doing here now! Go to bed!” The *Chassidim* got their answer!

Then the *Tzemach Dovid* explained the *avoda* of sleep with a *moshol* (a parable):

A person once lent money and took something as collateral for the loan. The

way of the world is that whoever holds on to collateral doesn't take care of it well, till the day he has to return it. Then he cleans it off, dusts it and polishes it so that it looks as good as new before it is to be returned to its owner. Similarly, each and every one of us has a holy soul, a *neshoma* that *Hashem* has entrusted us with as collateral from Him, so to speak. Therefore, each and every one of us must see to it that we safeguard the soul; at least every evening, therefore, when we give her back to our Maker, we should see to it that we clean and keep the *neshoma* pure from any stains that might besmirch her.



Rav Yoel Sirkis, 20th of Adar

Bayis Chodosh – Bach on the Tur

There is a well-known story that in Cracow, where the *Bach* was the chief *Rav*, there was a great, wealthy man who used to feed the poor in secret. Every week the poor of Cracow would come to the local butcher and baker and would be able to get free meat, bread and *challos*. No one in Cracow knew that the rich man was secretly funding this charity. In fact, to the outside world, the rich man appeared stingy and tight-fisted. When the charity collectors came around he ignored them (having given all his charity money to fund the poor

people's food). He continued in this way for many years; no one knew his secret. The townsfolk assumed he was just a wicked, stingy old man. The wealthy man liked it better this way, since he knew that any honor he would have received in this world detracted from his heavenly reward for charity.

One day, the old wealthy man passed away. The *chevra kaddisha*, knowing his openly wicked ways as a miser, dug his grave outside the cemetery gates, a spot reserved for the wicked. Even the

shammas of the gravediggers gave the corpse's backside a good slap and chuckled, saying, "Well, in your lifetime, you never gave any charity, so let's see you be charitable in the grave!" The townsfolk disparaged the dead man with jeering, booing and hissing, and he was buried amidst insults and dishonor. Meanwhile, in Heaven, his judgment was to go straight to *Gan Eden*, bypassing the *Soton's* accusations, for charity done in secret covers over all sins and iniquities, and further, he had shunned honor and suffered dishonor in death.

Meanwhile, the poor came in droves begging for food and sustenance from the butcher and baker. The butcher and baker turned them away empty-handed, explaining that they had been giving them charity from a secret donor who was no longer around. Then they realized who their true benefactor had been – all too late!

However, the *Soton* was given free reign to punish the townsfolk in Cracow for their dishonor of the truly righteous rich man. A great plague attacked the city and the death toll mounted daily. The city

elders dispatched a representative to Rav Yoel Sirkis, *mechaber* of the *Bach* on the *Tur*.

"Please, holy, saintly *Tzaddik*! Save us and all of Cracow before we have no choice but to demote you from the position of chief *Rav* and choose someone who can save us!" he cried.

The *Bach* asked for three days. He prayed and asked Heaven to reveal the reason for the decree. When the *Soton* revealed to him the entire story, how the rich man had charitably sustained the poor in secret and how he had been buried in shame and disgrace, he quickly summoned the elders and the city council and explained the situation to them. Then he and the elders immediately went to the *bais hachaim* (cemetery). When they arrived at the cemetery to disinter and remove the rich man's body and rebury him in honor, the *shammas* who had disparaged and ridiculed the corpse died on the spot. They buried him instead in the spot reserved for the wicked outside the cemetery gates. They then reburied the rich man in his proper place with honor befitting a *Tzaddik*.



Rav Elimelech Ben Eliezer Lipman of Lizhensk, 21st of Adar

The Noam Elimelech

Rav Eliezer Lipman and his wife Miroush, well-to-do small-town merchants, were known as pious and charitable people. Of their seven sons, two rose to great fame in the world of *Chassidus*: *Rebbe* Reb Meshulom Zusha of Anipoli and *Rebbe* Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk. Even as young boys, the two brothers immersed themselves in *Torah* study, in both its revealed and mystic forms, particularly the *kabbalistic* teachings of the *Ari HaKodosh* (Rav Yitzchok Luria, 1534–1572).

For a number of years they went into self-imposed exile, wandering from town to town, spreading *Torah* and inspiring people to mend their ways. The brothers

became attracted to the growing movement of *Chassidus*, becoming outstanding *talmidim* of the *Maggid* of Mezritch.

Rebbe Reb Elimelech became one of the leading figures of *Chassidus*. He developed the idea of making the personality of the *Tzaddik* the focal point of a *Chassid's* existence; he believed that the *Tzaddik*, the accomplished righteous man, has the mission "to give life to all the worlds by virtue of his Divine soul". This concept is expressed in his book *Noam Elimelech*, which is one of the principal works on *Chassidus*.

Among his *talmidim* were such leading figures as the *Chozeh* (Seer) of

Lublin, the *Maggid* of Kozhnitz, Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanov, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel of Apta, Rav Naftoli Tzvi of Ropshitz, Rav Moshe Leib of Sassov, and Rav Klonymos Kalman Epstein, known as the *Ma'or VaShemesh*. A man of unrivaled greatness, he was admired by his *talmidim* and has been so by *Chassidim* through the ages.

Rebbe Reb Elimelech left behind three righteous sons: Rav Elozor of Lizhensk, Rav Lipa Eliezer of Chemelnick and Rav Yaakov of Maglanitza, as well as two daughters: Esther Etil and Mirish.

Rebbe Reb Elimelech said, “One should always see the good attributes of another person and never see his shortcomings.” It stands to reason from this that good educators can identify individual qualities in each child and “fan the flames”, to evoke enthusiasm and love for *Torah*, set a strong, spiritual and developmental foundation and bring out potential.



Stale Coffee

Once, when *Rebbe* Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk and his brother, *Rebbe* Reb Zusha, visited their spiritual master, the *Maggid* of Mezritch, the *Maggid* told them that he would like to offer them some food, but all he had was some left-over coffee from *Shabbos*. They arrived on a Monday and the coffee was from *Shabbos*! So he served them the stale coffee. Much later, *Rebbe* Reb Elimelech and *Rebbe* Reb Zusha said, “That coffee kept us going for a whole year!”

(*Chassidic* custom teaches us that remnants of a meal, or even a drink, from a holy person, has a special potency and even a healing property. But perhaps the idea in this story is also that being served by their *Rebbe* transmitted to them spiritual power. That is, because the *Rebbe* was holy, he treated them as if they were holy – and that

energized them to live up to their *Rebbe's* view of them.)



Food from Gan Eden

Toward the end of his life, *Rebbe* Reb Elimelech ate very little, and even the entreaties of his friends and relatives had little effect. One time, when his son, Rav Elozor, pleaded with him to eat enough to sustain life, *Rebbe* Reb Elimelech said, “I wish I could eat, but my body rejects all things physical. Ah! One time, during my years of wandering in exile, I lodged at an inn near a certain village, and there I ate a delicious soup. If that were available, I could eat it. But the inn is so far away!”

Many years later, Rav Elozor happened to be in that village, and sought out the inn to which his father had referred. He asked the hostess whether he might have some of her special soup, and she said, “How I wish I could serve you the food that is appropriate for a great person like yourself.

But we are very poor. Very few travelers pass this way, and we just have enough flour and beans to eat for our meals. I will be glad to make a bean soup for you.

When Rav Elozor tasted the soup, he experienced a spiritual delight, as though he were eating of the offerings of the *Mizbei'ach* (Altar) in the *Bais HaMikdosh* in Yerushalayim. He asked the hostess, “Please tell me, what ingredients do you use for this soup?”

The woman began crying. “I am so sorry that it is so meager. I do not have any spices to put in. All I did was cook the beans with water, and then I *davened* to



Hashem: ‘Master of the Universe! You have provided me with the *mitzva* of preparing a meal for a special guest. If only I had meat, vegetables and spices, I would prepare a meal for him that would befit him, but I have nothing. But You, Master of the Universe, have everything. You have *Gan Eden* (Paradise), where there are all the finest scents and flavors. Please put some of these in the soup, so that my holy guest can enjoy his food.’“

Rav Elozor thought, “Now I know why my father longed for this soup. This pious woman’s sincere *tefillos* were answered, and the soup did indeed have the taste of *Gan Eden*.”



Hashem’s Will

One night, while on their wanderings, *Rebbe* Reb Elimelech and his brother, *Rebbe* Reb Zusha, were stranded in a village inn where a wedding was in progress. The drunken peasants, seeing the two

bearded brothers hiding behind the large stove, grabbed *Rebbe*



Reb Zusha and made him perform a dance, while goading him, poking and jabbing at him from all sides. Round and round poor *Rebbe* Reb Zusha danced, to the uproarious laughter of the rowdies. Between dances, *Rebbe* Reb Elimelech whispered, “Why do they always pick on you?”

“It is *Hashem’s* will,” *Rebbe* Reb Zusha sighed.

“You know what, let’s change places,” *Rebbe* Reb Elimelech suggested. “They can’t tell us apart. The next time they’ll grab me, and you will get some rest.”

So *Rebbe* Reb Zusha took his

brother’s place behind the stove. Just then one of the peasants roared, “This time, let’s get the one behind the stove! The other one danced enough!”

When it was all over, *Rebbe* Reb Zusha said, “When something is *Hashem’s* will, it will come to pass, no matter what we do.”

May the merit of the *Tzaddik Rebbe* Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk protect us all, *Amen*.

www.rabbishimon.com/tzadikim/showz.php?p=elimelech.htm



An Author Par Excellence

A *Rav* once asked the *Rebbe* Elimelech if he was engaged in writing anything or authoring a *sefer* [called a *chibur*, which also means “connection” or “attachment”]. “I have been in the process of authoring something and putting together something – a *chibur* – for some forty years now,” replied the *Noam Eliemelech*, “but it’s still not finished.”

“Please show me this *chibur*,” requested the *Rav*.

“It’s still not complete. I am working on the *chibur* of my heart to my Creator, you see,” explained the *Tzaddik*. (*Kisvei Ri Shuv* of Brisk #6)



Hallel on Parshas Beshallah

Rav Yitzchok Isaac of Kaliv was once in Lizhensk during *Parshas Beshallah*. The *Rebbe* Elimelech asked the Kaliver to be absent when he recited *Torah* at the *tisch* for some secret reason that the *Rebbe* would not divulge, but the Kaliver did not wish to miss the opportunity to hear the *Rebbe’s* *Chassidic* discourse and so he remained.

As soon as the *Noam Eliemelech* began to say *Torah*, the Kaliver jumped up away from the table and began to run to and fro in the entire house, singing *Hallel*

at the top of his voice! Everyone present was very surprised by such aberrant behavior. Afterward, the Kaliver explained himself: “When the *Rebbe* said *Torah* about the weekly *Parsha*, I was infused by such excitement and it set me aflame with such hislahavus that I imagined myself to be in the midst of offering the *Korban Pesach* – and so I sang *Hallel!*” (*Ohel Elimelech* #274)



Miraculous Hands to Aton for the Very First Sins

The *Chakal Yitzchok* of Spinka related, “The *Rebbe* Reb Melech once entered the kitchen and observed a baby being nursed by his mother. The child acted as all infants do, kicking and hitting his mother and generally striking out with his limbs with wanton abandon. The *Rebbe* chuckled and admonished the baby, “No, no, my child – don’t you know the *Torah* forbids striking and hitting a parent?!”

The *Rebbe* Elimelech’s mother was also present and she was very amused. “Don’t you realize that all babies behave this way? Why do you think you were any different?” she challenged him.



Hearing this the *Rebbe* was greatly troubled. He quickly went over to the stove where the flames were merrily crackling beneath a pot cooking something suspended above the fire. “The hand that sinned shall be burned!” declared the *Rebbe*, aflame with emotion to atone for his infantile misdeeds and childish misdemeanors, and, to the horror of all present, the *Rebbe* Elimelech burned his

hands in the fire!

Later, when a miracle occurred and his hands healed, returning to their original state, the *Rebbe* would display a hand to the *Chassidim* and say, “See this hand? I wasn’t born with it – it grew back miraculously through *Hashem*’s mercy and kindness!” (Introduction of *Chakal Yitzchok* to *Imrei Yosef Spinka* on *Shemos*. See also *Divrei Chaim Sanz, Parshas Ki Savo* p. 275)



Escape From Gan Eden

The *Tiferes Shlomo* of Radomsk once testified that if the *Rebbe* Elimelech were allowed to perform just one more *mitzva*, he would seize the opportunity to run away from *Gan Eden* to do that and fulfill *Hashem*’s will! (*Ohel Shlomo Radomsk*, Vol. II #10)



Tears of Teshuva

Rav Levi Yitzchok Bender used to say that for some six years the *Rebbe* Elimelech would dip his bread in his own tears [through doing *teshuva*]! (*Siach Sarfei Kodesh Breslov*, Vol. III #634)



A Shtickel Emes!

When the *Rebbe* Elimelech was *niftar*, two of his *talmidim*, Rav Uri Strelisker and Rav Gavriel MiTschuk, came together and sobbed unrelentingly, crying bitter tears and saying, “A *shtickel emes iz gevein oif dem oilom, hut men es oich aveckgenumen fun inz!!* – There was at least a piece of truth in this world, and now that too has been taken away from us!!” (*Devorim Areivim*, #40)



Rav Chaim Chaika Ben Shmuel of Amdur, 23rd of Adar

Mechaber of Chaim Vachessed, Talmid of the Mezritcher Maggid

Dirty Rags for the King

Once, right before bedtime, Rav Chaikel fainted. The *Chassidim* had difficulty reviving him, and when they did he explained the reason for his fainting with a parable. This is the *moshol* he told:

Once upon a time there was a king who employed a troupe of royal weavers and tailors. The craftsmen had the job of tailoring, sewing and fixing all the royal garments. Each one was given a different garment that needed tailoring, fitting, sewing and some other work. Whatever garments they finished that day were then handed over to the king's wardrobe. There was one servant, explained Rav Chaikel, who was incompetent and lazy; instead of fixing and tailoring the king's garments, he ruined them and reduced the beautiful clothes to rags! At the end of the day each tailor brought his fixed garments to the king's wardrobe for safekeeping. The king sat on his throne and as each beautifully tailored garment was presented, shining and dazzling, the king smiled, nodding his approval, until the turn came of the lazy, incompetent servant. He arrived holding a bundle of rags and deposited them before the king for his wardrobe, overcome with such shame and disgrace [that he fainted!](*Sippurei Chassidim*)

Yiras Shomayim

Rav Yitzchak Isaac of Kormana said that Rav Chaika of Amdur's *Yiras Shomayim* was so great that all his hair fell out, leaving him bald ! He also said this in the name of Rav Herschel of Zidachov, who used this concept to illustrate a *pasuk* in *Parshas Tazria* (*Vayikra* 13:40): "If the hair of a man's head falls out, he is bald and pure". If all of a man's hair falls out because he fears *Hashem*, he is surely pure, because this is indeed a lofty level, just like Rav Chaikel of Amdur!" (*Nesiv Mitzvosecha, Nesiv Emuna, Heichal HaBerocha, Ki Sisa*)



A Fiery Angel

Some relate the following saying from the *heilige* Rishiner, others from the Rebbe Reb Zisha: *Memeint az Reb Chaikel iz givein a bosor vedom, yetzt is er a malach vesorof vus brent be idem Kisei HaKovod* – "Some thought that Rav Chaikel was a flesh and blood human being, but now they all agree that he is a fiery angel standing before the Throne of Glory! (*Toldos Rav Chaim Chaikel of Amdur* p. 3)



Rav Yitzchok Meir Ben Yisrael, 23rd of Adar

The Chiddushei Harim, First Gerrer Rebbe

The *Chiddushei HaRim* said that he worked on himself for some seventeen years to acquire the trait of *ayin tova* (a good eye) that allowed him to see only the best traits and good in other people. His grandson, Rav Pintshe of Piltz, *mechaber* of *Sifsei Tzaddik* testified that he worked on himself tirelessly to be able to see only

the good in other Jews and ignore any shortcomings or evil. Once he became a *Rebbe*, however, and many *Chassidim* traveled to him seeking his *berochos* and advice and he wanted to help each and every one of them, he realized that he had no choice but to recognize their shortcomings so that he could advise them

what to correct and help them on their path to *teshuva*.

The *Chiddushei HaRim* once declared, “I have the power and ability to remove the *Yetzer Hora* completely from all the limbs of a person so that he will be ready to accept the yoke of *Malchus Shomayim*, but that is not *Hashem’s* will. He wills instead that we have a *yetzer* and that we struggle with it and overcome it.

When their financial situation was dire indeed, the *Chiddushei HaRim’s* wife complained that they lacked basic needs. The *Rebbe*, however, seemed to ignore her words and sat and learned, studying *Torah* and *davening* as if everything was fine. When his wife expressed her surprise at him and asked, “Doesn’t everyone worry about their *parnossa*, and you sit there and study and *daven* as if everything is fine? Don’t you worry at all about our financial

situation?” he countered, “How do you know I don’t worry about it?”

She answered, “I don’t see you worrying! All I see is that you *daven* and learn regularly as if nothing has changed.”

The *Rebbe* responded, “Your father took me as his son-in-law because I was a prodigy in *Torah* – an *illui*. So whatever requires much effort I can accomplish quickly because of my keen mind. The same worrying that people worry for three days straight I can worry in a minute!”

“And what have you accomplished by this feat of worrying for just a minute?” his wife demanded.

“And what does he who worries for three days straight accomplish? At least I finish with all the worry in a minute!” (*Meir Einei HaGola* p. 304–306, Vol III #10)



Rav Gershon Ashkenazi of Kitov, 23rd of Adar

The *Ba'al Shem Tov's* Brother-In-Law

Meeting the *Ohr HaChaim*

There are various traditions regarding how and when the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* brother-in-law met Rav Chaim ben Attar, *mechaber* of the *Ohr HaChaim*, in *Eretz Yisrael*:

After the printing of the *chumashim Ohr HaChaim* in Venice in the year *tov-kuf-bais*, they reached the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, who greatly rejoiced in them. He found in them an author whose heart and soul were filled with emotion and excitement for *Avodas Hashem*. He sent his brother-in-law, Rav Gershon of Kitov, to *Yerushalayim* to visit Rav Chaim ben Attar's *Yeshiva*. He told Rav Gershon that Rav Chaim ben Attar had two *Yeshivos*, one where they studied *nigle* (the revealed *Torah*) and one where they studied the hidden secrets of *Toras HaKabbola*. The *Ba'al Shem* warned Rav Gershon to try to

attend the *Yeshiva* for *nistar* and not to reveal to the *Ohr HaChaim* who he was, hiding his identity until the *Ohr HaChaim* would feel it and understand for himself.

When Rav Gershon arrived he requested permission to hear a *derosha* from the *Ohr haChaim*. Permission was granted and he studied in *Yeshivas HaNigle* for about a week. Afterward, he requested admission to the other *Yeshiva* for *Kabbola*.

“Who revealed to you that I have a *Yeshiva* for *nistar*?”

He answered that his brother-in-law, the *Ba'al Shem*, had told him. The *Ohr HaChaim* did not know him, but he scrutinized Rav Gershon from head to toe and declared him fit and ready to study *Kabbola*. After studying there for three days, the *Ohr HaChaim* gave word to prevent him from coming back and Rav

Gershon found his way blocked from entry. When Rav Gershon approached the *Rav's* house to find out why he had been banned, the *Ohr HaChaim* saw him and said, "I am angry at you. Why didn't you say your brother-in-law was the *Ba'al Shem Tov*? You just said, 'Rav Yisrael *Ba'al Shem*!' I don't know any Rav Yisrael *Ba'al Shem*, but I know who the *Ba'al Shem Tov* is! I know him from seeing him in the supernal worlds!" and he no longer allowed Rav Gershon access to the *Yeshiva*, explaining that he needed no other *Rebbe* or *Rav* if he already had the *Ba'al Shem Tov*. (*Doresh Tov Tshortkov, Acharon Shel Pesach* p. 194)

Rav Yitzchok of Neshchiz related on *Motzoei Shabbos Parshas Behaalo-secha, tov-reish-kaf-zayin*:

Rav Gershon of Kitov met the *Ohr HaChaim* in *Eretz Yisrael* and told him about his brother-in-law the *Ba'al Shem Tov*. The *Ohr HaChaim* replied that he had heard of him and that his name was Yisrael. Rav Gershon Kitover also asked the *Ohr HaChaim* why he kept a certain *talmid* in his *Yeshiva* whom Rav Gershon had seen behaving improperly, unbecoming for a *Yeshiva* student. "This is our way," answered the *Ohr HaChaim*. "We draw closer those who are distant – we are *mekarev rechokim*." (*Zichron Tov* p. 16 #8)

When Rav Gershon of Kitov traveled to *Eretz Yisrael*, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* told him to meet with the *Ohr HaChaim*. "If he doesn't know of his greatness, send him regards from me and tell him I see him in *Moshiach Heichal* – the supernal palace, where *Moshiach* sits on a throne and studies the *Ohr HaChaim*."

When Rav Gershon came to *Eretz Yisrael*, he arrived at the *Ohr HaChaim's Yeshiva* and asked why he studied with *talmidim* who behave inappropriately; others say that he asked why he studied with people with lowly souls.

The *Ohr HaChaim* asked Rav

Gershon from where he hailed. When he said that he was from Polnoy, the *Ohr HaChaim* responded that he should return the following day. The next day, the *Ohr HaChaim* told him, "I saw your *Rebbe* and he is a very great man."

Rav Gershon then related his regards from the *Ba'al Shem* and relayed the *Ba'al Shem's* message. The *Ohr HaChaim* responded, "I don't know what favor he does me by revealing my greatness. Tell him I saw the Angel of Death and that he stands with one foot on Polnoy and the other on the entire world." This was a hint at the danger facing European Jewry and that they would need mercy. He also responded that the reason he studied with people with lowly souls was because he sought to redeem holy sparks from places that they had been captured and held hostage. (*Kisvei Ri Shuv* of Brisk)

Rav Gershon once remarked: I hope my entire *Olam HaBa* will be as pleasant as the *Olam HaBa* our *Rebbe*, the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, earns when he smokes his pipe!"



Famous letter from Rav Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov to his brother-in-law, Rebbe Gershon of Kitov

On *Rosh HaShana* of the year 5507 (1746 CE) I performed, by means of an oath, an elevation of soul, as known to you, and saw wondrous things I had never seen before. What I saw and learned there is impossible to convey in words, even face to face...I ascended from level to level until I entered the chamber of the *Moshiach*, where the *Moshiach* learns *Torah* with all the *Tanno'im* and *Tzaddikim* and also with the Seven Shepherds...I asked the *Moshiach*, "When will the Master come?" And he answered, "By this you shall know: When your teachings will become public and revealed in the world, and your

wellsprings burst forth to the farthest extremes – that which I have taught you and you have comprehended – and they also shall be able to perform unifications and elevations as you, then all of the ‘shells’ will cease to exist, and there shall be a time of good will and salvation.”

I stood in wonder and great distress as to the length of time necessary for this – when could this be? But from what I learned there – three potent practices and three holy Names, easy to learn and explain – my mind settled and I thought that possibly by means of these, men of my nature will be able to achieve levels similar to mine...But I was not given permission all my life to reveal this...But this I may inform you and may *Hashem* help you, your way shall ever be in the presence of

Hashem and never leave your consciousness in the time of your *tefilla* and study. Every word of your lips intend to unite: for in every letter there are worlds, souls and divinity, and they ascend and connect and unite, and afterward the letters connect and unify to become a word, and (then) unify in true unification in divinity. Include your soul with them in each and every state. And all the worlds unify as one and ascend to produce an infinitely great joy and pleasure, as you can understand from the joy of groom and bride in miniature and physicality, how much more so in such an exalted level as this. Surely *Hashem* will be your aid and wherever you turn you will succeed and reach greater awareness. “Give to the wise and he will become ever wiser.”



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

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

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

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

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תמליץ טוב בעד משפחתה היקרה

ותקים לתחיה לקץ הימין מהרה

תניצ'ב'ה'

Zera Shimshon



Ki Sisa

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

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

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

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

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

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

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

לזכר נשמת

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

לזכות רפואה שלימה

רוני דינה בת סימי

ציפורה בת יהודית

ליווג הגון במהרה

אלישבע נעמי בת רחל

להצלחת

הג"ר נחום צבי בן רחל

בשורות טובות ישועות ונחמות

ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת (לא', כו')

And the Jewish people shall observe the Shabbos (31:16).

The Gemara (Shabbos 118a) says whoever takes pleasure in Shabbos, merits 'a reward without borders.'

The Zera Shimshon explains this puzzling statement by first asking the following questions

If the Gemara is referring to material reward, how can someone merit a reward that has no boundaries? Even if the person would receive the entire world, he would still be receiving something with boundaries. As well, there are many people that take pleasure in Shabbos. How then can each one get a reward without boundaries? If the Gemara is referring to the eventual reward in the world to come, then all the reward in the world to come, not only the reward for Shabbos, is limitless and without boundaries?

The Zera Shimshon explains this Gemara as follows:

Ideally, Hashem wants to bestow good to every person without any boundaries. However, due to a person's lack of merit and his indulgence in worldly pleasures, strict judgment holds back that good and limits it to less than Hashem would want to bestow upon that person. This is part of how Hashem created the world to run.

The power of the prosecution only gains strength when a person follows his desires and pursues worldly pleasures. On the other hand, when a person works to benefit his soul and serve Hashem, the forces that prosecute against him from receiving Hashem's goodness, cannot cause anything to be held back from him. (Obviously, even within this rule, there are many aspects that we cannot understand since only Hashem knows the secrets of how He truly runs His world.)

The Zohar (Vayakhel 93b) says, that on Shabbos the forces of evil hide – even they 'rest' on Shabbos.

This is what the aforementioned Gemara means to teach. The Gemara specifically says that one who 'takes pleasure' in Shabbos merits a borderless reward, as opposed to saying, one who 'keeps' Shabbos etc. The Gemara means to imply that even though on Shabbos, one enjoys it through eating and drinking, which regularly would be considered chasing worldly pleasures, still, this does not give the prosecutors power over him (when done properly and with the correct intention) to limit the good that Hashem wishes to bestow upon him.

Therefore, the usual forces that would try to minimize the reward that he should receive for keeping Shabbos since he also enjoyed it with physical pleasures, have no power. Thus, his reward will be without the usual borders that the accusing angels try to limit his reward to.

In other words, according to the Zera Shimshon, the Gemara doesn't mean that he will merit a limitless reward, rather, his reward will be complete and without the usual borders attached by the prosecuting forces.



The Zera Shimshon says that when a person prepares for Shabbos and awaits its coming, each and every week, he rectifies many souls that need rectification and did not attain their rectification while they were alive!

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