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זכות רפואה שלמה
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)

🌀 **CHAYEI SORA** 🌀

⌘ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ⌘

Ahava Rabba – Ohev Yisrael on the Parsha

Dvar Torah

VeYitzchok ba mibo Be'er LaChai Ro'i – “And Yitzchok came from the entrance to *Be'er LaChai Ro'i* – the well of the living watcher” (24:62).

The *Apta Rav*, in his *sefer Ohev Yisrael*, gives a unique interpretation of this *pasuk*. He explains how the *pasuk* teaches us that laughter and simcha in this world are caused by a *Tzaddik* drawing *Klal Yisrael* closer to *Hashem* with love. When *Ahavas Hashem* emanating from us causes *Hashem* to reciprocate with *Ahavas Yisrael*, this creates laughter and joy.

Here is how he explains this idea:

The *Tzaddik's* entire purpose in serving *Hashem* is to cause *Hashem*, the Creator, *ta'anug* – delight and satisfaction – so that He should rejoice in His world. Then He delights in all His creatures and in Creation itself. The *Tzaddik* wishes thereby to fulfill his mission and draw down abundant blessings and all manner of goodness to *Bnei Yisrael*, the Jewish people. Then *Knesses Yisrael* will no longer suffer and no one individual will lack or want for anything.

Why does the *Tzaddik* do this? First, there is a *mitzva* to love all Jews. Second, the love of *Ahavas Yisrael* is inexorably bound to *Ahavas Hashem*. Whoever loves *Hashem* loves the Jewish people, *Hashem's* nation. This is taught by the *Torah's* two *pesukim*: “Love your fellow

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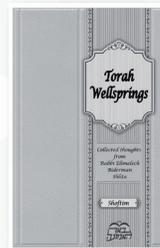
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as yourself" (*Vayikra* 19:18) and "Love Hashem, your G-d" (*Devorim* 6:5).

With the divine spirit and insight known as *Ruach HaKodesh*, the *Anshei Knesses HeGedola* ("Men of the Great Assembly") tied these two loves together when they composed the *tefillos* and determined that the *berocha* of *Keriyas Shema* should conclude with the words *Habocheh be'amo Yisrael be'ahava* - "Who chooses His people Yisrael with love". *Shema Yisrael* concludes with *echod* - Hashem is one. The *gematria* (numerical value) of *ahava* and *echod* are both thirteen.

[*Ahava*, spelled *alef*=1, *heh*=5, *bais*=2, *heh*=5 together equals 13 and *echod* spelled *alef*=1, *ches*=8, *daled*=4 also equals 13.]

We are hinting here that the declaration of unifying the Creator as one unique G-d (*Shema*) is at one with the love for Him and for *Bnei Yisrael*.

The *Tzaddik's* mission is to unite these two loves: the love of *Klal Yisrael* for Hashem and the love of Hashem for *Klal Yisrael*.

This is because the *Tzaddik's* purpose is, as we explained, to give Hashem satisfaction, *nachas*, joy and *simcha*. Now, the *Tzaddik* understands that Hashem suffers, so to speak, when we suffer (*Yeshaya* 63:9), and so he also draws down abundant blessings for *Bnei Yisrael*, which in turn open up the supernal realm of *simcha*. Then Hashem rejoices with His world and with His creations. This unifies *Ahavas Hashem* with *Ahavas Yisrael*.

The *Zohar* teaches in *Pinchas* (230b) that when the letters *alef* and *ches* of *echod* unify with the *shin* and *mem* of *Shema* they form the word *esmach* - "I shall rejoice". [The *ahava* of *Bnei Yisrael* known as *Ahavas Hashem* is *echod* - one - with the *Ahavas Yisrael* that Hashem has for us. When we express this idea as the *Apta Rav* taught by concluding the *berocha be'ahava*, and launching into *Shema*, we are expressing how *echod* and *Shema* connect; the letters of one word merge with the other and give us *esmach* - "I shall rejoice" - when Hashem rejoices over this unity.] This comes about as we explained by unifying the two loves and by opening up the supernal realm of *simcha* and drawing down delight to Hashem. The *Tzaddik* is thus bound to the world of *simcha* because his whole desire and purpose at all times is to draw down *shefa* and all manner of good to *Klal Yisrael*.

The *Apta Rav* now explains how this idea is illustrated by our *pasuk*. *Klal Yisrael* is known as a *be'er* - a flowing wellspring, because the Jewish soul flows with a ceaseless abundance of blessings that pour down from on high, drawing *chessed* (kindness) down into the world, acting as pipelines of blessing. *Chai Ro'i* refers to Hashem, for He is the Living Watcher. He watches over the world, infusing creation with life and vitality. *Yitzchok* means laughter and joy. The *Tzaddik* acts as a *shadchan*, a bridge connecting the wellspring of *Knesses Yisrael* to the holy life force that is the *hashgocha* of Hashem, "the Living Watcher", over His Creation, and he, the *Tzaddik*, unites them completely.

This causes *simcha* in the world, because the source of all *simcha* is opened and spreads down over all the worlds, and goodness and bountiful blessings rain down upon *Knesses Yisrael*, delighting Hashem greatly. Therefore, *Yitzchok ba* - laughter and joy come about from - *Mibo Be'er* - from drawing the wellsprings of *Knesses Yisrael* close - *LaChai Ro'i* - close to the Living Watcher - unified with Hashem, the Creator, Who infuses life and vitality into His world by watching over it with His *Hashgocha*.

Ahavas Yisrael – a Story

The Apta Rav once said that he can testify before all the Heavenly Hosts – the *Pamalia Shel Maala* – that he is a true *Ohev Yisrael*.

“This is because,” he said, “whenever I do a *mitzva* and recite the formula *LeShem Yichud Kudsha Berich Hu uShechintei Beshem Kol Yisrael* – “to unify Hashem and the Shechina and I declare in the name of all *Klal Yisrael*” – I have in mind that every member of *Bnei Yisrael*, even the lowliest of them, should have an equal merit and portion in this *mitzva* as I myself do. This is true *Ahavas Yisrael*. (*Kav Venoki – Vezos Berocha* 37b)

The Apta Rav’s intense *Ahavas Yisrael* was so well known that his *einikel*, the Ramaz of Zhinkov, wrote in the introduction to *Ohev Yisrael* that the reason he named his Zeide’s *sefer Ohev Yisrael* was: “because he had a treasured saying, which was that he could be proud of this attribute, of his love for *Bnei Yisrael*, that he could testify to it even before the Heavenly Court, the *Beis Din Shel Maala*, that this *Ahavas Yisrael* was bound to his heart. Before he passed away he commanded his children that nothing else should be written on his *matzeiva* except the words *Ohev Yisrael* – and so it was.”



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*

When the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* was *niftar*, the chief Rav of Teverya, Rav Chaim Abulafia, was in the midst of *davening* and fainted. He lay prostrate for some half hour. When he revived, he stood up and testified, “I have just accompanied Rav Chaim *ben Attar* to the gates of Gan Eden.”



The *Chida* writes in *Shem HaGedolim*: “In my youth, I merited being in his lofty *Yeshiva* and my own eyes witnessed his greatness in *Torah*, how his intellect was capable of uprooting the tallest mountains in sanctity – wonder of wonders! For our generation his heart poured forth *Talmud* like a wellspring. Although his great wisdom is readily discernible from his *seforim*, this is but a tenth of his true wisdom, and his breadth of knowledge and sharp intellect was wondrous as well, and above all his separation from all worldly matters and his holy ways of life were his greatest amazing strengths and awesome stature.”



Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver commented on this quote from the *Chida*, that the *Chida* writes that he “merited being in his *Yeshiva*”. From these words one can see just how much the *Chida* cherished and valued the holy *Ohr HaChaim*, for he considered himself unworthy of being known as his *talmid*, writing instead that he just merited being in his *Yeshiva*.

The Holy Lights Of The Ohr Hachaim

“The years of Sora’s life” (23:1)

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* points out in the name of *Chazal* that Sora died as a result of hearing the distressing account of *Akeidas Yitzchok (Medrash Tanchuma)*; when she heard how Yitzchok was almost slaughtered, her soul departed. The *Ohr HaChaim* comments that this seems to be a premature death, that had she not heard such news she would have lived longer. This is why the *pasuk* tells us: “the years of Sora’s life”; these were the years – they could have been longer, but due to the distressing news, only these were the years of her life and no more.

Further, the years of her life in Hebrew are called *Chayei Sora* and this, teaches the *Ohr HaChaim*, alludes to the fact that *Tzaddikim* such as Sora are the ones who give meaning to their lives, whereas the wicked only live because of their allotted time on earth, their numbered days being their only reason for living.

Based on the *Ohr HaChaim’s* explanation, it sounds like Sora’s life was cut short. The *Ohr HaChaim* explains further on that every *Tzaddik* who, for some reason or other, is unable to complete his allotted time on this earth, whose lifetime is cut short, is nonetheless rewarded by *Hashem* fully. The shortened life does not cut off his reward and does not prevent him from fulfilling his life goal. *Hashem* ensures that he receives his allotted *sechar* and earns a reward even for those days that were taken from him. Thus, Sora’s years of life are called *Sh’nei Chayei Sora*, implying that Sora gave life to all her years. Her years drew their life and meaning from her actions and were illuminated honorably.



“And Sora died” (23:2)

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* points out that according to *Chazal*, *Tzaddikim* are called alive even in death, and thus, even in death their bodies are alive!

He explains the reason for this: When alive on this earth, *Tzaddikim* are busy transforming their material, physical selves into spiritual matter that lives on. This transformation from physical matter to spiritual holiness is carried out through constant good deeds, *Torah* study and *mitzvos* that they perform while alive.

By attaching oneself in *dveikus* to *Hashem*, explains the *Ohr HaChaim*, all base elements of matter transform, as is explained by the *Rambam*. The *Ohr HaChaim* cites the *Rambam (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 4:5)* that all elements may be transmuted from one form to the next closest elemental form, such as from earth to water and to fire. By attaching in *dveikus* to *Hashem*, the lowest elemental matter of our body is transmuted into the element of fire, and this is the fire of the soul! Thus the *Tzaddik* – even in death – is alive; his body is still burning with the fiery soul from *Hashem*.



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

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

- 1) Learn the anniversary of his *petira* or, if this information is not available, the days of

Erev Rosh Chodesh, Rosh Chodesh and the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month can be utilized for a connection.

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

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

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

Hebrew Tefilla for Lighting a Yahrzeit or Hilula Candle

[תְּפִילָּה הַנִּמְצָאת בְּסֵפֶר אֶלֶף הַמִּגֵּן מִבְּעַל הַפֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ עַל פְּרֻשַׁת וַיֵּצֵא עֲמוּד כ"ד]

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמְנוּחַת וְלַעֲלוּי נְשָׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק
בֶּן/בַּת _____, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים
וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטּוֹב שְׁאַנִּי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחְשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדִבּוּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וְיִהְיֶה הַכֹּל
לְזָכוֹת וְלְמְנוּחַת וְלַעֲלוּי לְנַשְׁמוֹת עַמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפֶרֶט לְנַפְשׁ רּוּחַ וְנַשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי /
צַדִּיק _____ . יְהִי רְצוֹן שֶׁתְּהִינָה נַפְשׁוֹתֵיהֶם 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



YAHRTZEITS BEGINNING SHABBOS CHAYEI SORA

http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim_yahrtzeits/Cheshvan/Kisleiv

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

* 25th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Friday Night (Nov 2nd)

- * **Rav Avrohom**, brother of the Vilna *Gaon*, *mechaber* of *Maalos HaTorah*, (5568/1807);
- * **Rav Mordechai Roke'ach**, *Rav* of Bilgoria (Bilgoraya). The son of the third *Admor* of Belz, Rav Yissochor Ber Roke'ach, and father of the fifth and current *Rebbe*, Rav Yissochor Ber Roke'ach, (5710/1949);
- * **Rav Elya Yurkanski** (1908–2005). Born in Minsk, he and two brothers were smuggled over the border to Poland, on a recommendation by the *Chofetz Chaim*; Rav Elya was not

yet a *bar mitzva* and would never again see his parents. He spent almost ten years in Baranovich with Rav Elchonon Wasserman before leaving for Mir in 1929. He traveled with the *Yeshiva* to Shanghai and eventually joined the *Yeshiva* in New York, where he remained his entire life. He was a *Rosh Yeshiva* with Mir for over fifty-five years, (5766/2005).

✳ **26th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Nov 3rd)**

- ✳ **Rav Shlomo Segal**, *Av Bais Din* Polna'ah and Lvov, *mechaber* of *Mibais Levi*, [*Hamodia* 2007 lists Rav Shlomo Charif, *Rav* of Lvov, 1637], (5399/1638);
- ✳ **Rav Refoel HaKohen Katz** of Hamburg (1723–1803). Born in Liphland to Rav Yekusiel Ziskind, the *Rav* of the town, Rav Refoel was taken to learn with the *Shaagas Arye*, a relative, in Minsk, at the age of twelve. At the age of nineteen, Rav Refoel replaced his *Rebbe* as *Rosh Yeshiva* in Minsk. Four years later, he was chosen as *Rav* of Rakow, and later of Smilowitz. In 1763, he became *Rav* in Pinsk. There he wrote *Toras Yekusiel* on *Yoreh De'ah*, with an appendix of *Halochos* pertaining to *agunos*. Later he became *Rav* in Posen, and in 1776 of the three *kehillos* of Atuna, Hamburg and Wandsbeck (AH"U). He also authored *Sheilos HaKohanim Torah* on the *avoda* of the *Kohanim*, *Shu"t Veshav HaKohen*, *Mapei Lahon* on the *issur* of *loshon hora*, and *Daas Kedoshim*, (5564/1803);
- ✳ **Rav Simcha Soloveitchik**, son of the *Bais HaLevi*, (5702/1941);
- ✳ **Rav Aryeh Mordechai Halberstam** of Shinova, (5691/1930);
- ✳ **Rav Mordechai Zimmerman**, renowned *mohel* (1913–2005). Born in New York to Rav Yosef Yehoshua and Shaina Rochel Zimmerman, he attended *Torah Vodaas*, which his father helped found. He and his two brothers were sent to Mir and Grodna in Europe. While in Europe, he met with the *Chofetz Chaim*. He received his *ksav semicha* (Rabbinical ordination) from Rav Shimon Shkop. After his marriage, he lived in Dubuque, Iowa, for five years, and then settled in the Bronx. In the mid-1980s, he moved to Boro Park, where he became a prominent member of the *Mirrer minyan*. He was survived by two sons, a daughter and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, (5766/2005).

✳ **27th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Sunday Night (Nov 4th)**

- ✳ **Rav Yaakov Leizer**, the *Pshevorsker Rebbe*, also known as Reb Yankele of Antwerp (1907–1999). Born in Galicia, he became a follower of the *Koloshitzer Rebbe*, Rav Chuna Halberstam, in 1926. He and his family were shipped to Siberia until the end of World War II. After the war, he traveled to America, Paris and Antwerp, (5760/1999).

✳ **28th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Monday Night (Nov 5th)**

- ✳ **Rabbeinu Yona ben Avrohom** of Gerondi, France (1200 [1180]–1263). The *Ramban's* mother and Rabbeinu Yona's father were siblings. Many years later, the *Ramban's* son, Rav Shlomo, married the daughter of Rabbeinu Yona. Thus, the two great *Rishonim* were *mechutonim* as well as first cousins. He was a *talmid* of Rav Shlomo ben Avrohom Min Ha'Har. When King Louis XIV of France, "Saint Louis", burned all the copies of the *Talmud* in Paris in the Square of the Louvre, Rabbeinu Yona, one of the *Ramban's* main detractors, felt that the events in Paris were a sign that he and the other opponents of the *Ramban* were seriously wrong. He then composed his work *Shaarei Teshuva*, in which he outlined the methods of doing *teshuva*, and he traveled from place to place preaching about the need to back away from matters that cause division among the Jewish people. Among his *talmidim* are the *Rashba* and *Ra'ah*. [Others cite his *Yahrzeit* as 1st, 8th, or 11th of *Cheshvan*], (5024/1263);
- ✳ **Rav Zev Wold**, *Rav* of Salik, *mechaber* of *Nachlas Binyomin*, (5447/1686);

- * **Rav Eliezer Lieber** of Berditchev, (5531/1770);
- * **Rav Sholom Eisen**. *Moreh Tzedek* in the *Bais Din* of the *Eida HaChareidis* in Yerushalayim for over fifty years, he was a *talmid* of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, (5749/1988).

* **29th of Cheshvan ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Nov 6th)**

- * **Rav Yitzchok Eizik Chover**, *mechaber* of *Shu"t Binyan Olam* and *Si'ach Yitzchok*. One of his *talmidim*, Rav Yitzchok Kahane, wrote *Toldos Yitzchok*, (5613/1852);
- * **Rav Avrohom Abish Kanner**, the Tchechover *Rebbe* of Chaifa, (5744/1983).

* **30th of Cheshvan / 1st of Kisleiv ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Nov 7th)**

- * **Rav Tzvi Hirsch HaKohen** of Rimanov (1778–1846). From the age of fifteen, Tzvi Hirsch began traveling to the court of Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov. He became one of the *Rebbe's* closest *Chassidim* and his personal attendant; he thus became known as Rav Tzvi Hirsch *Meshores* (attendant). After the *petira* of Rav Naftoli of Ropshitz (another of the closest *Chassidim* of Rav Menachem Mendel), Rav Tzvi Hirsch returned to Rimanov to accept the mantle of leadership of the *Chassidim*. His *divrei Torah* were compiled and published by his son, Rav Yosef, under the name *Be'eiros HaMayim*. It is comprised of several *seforim*, all beginning with the word *Be'er*. For example, the *sefer Be'er Lachai Ro'i* contains his *drushim* on *Chumash* and the *Yomim Tovim*. Other teachings of his can be found in the *sefer Mevasser Tov*. His *Yahrzeit* falls on the 30th of *Cheshvan*, but since *Cheshvan* more often has only twenty-nine days, it is generally commemorated on the twenty-ninth, (5607/1846);

- * **Rav Yaakov Betzalel Zolty**, *Rav* of Yerushalayim, (5743/1982);

- * **Rav Osher (Oscar) Fasman** (1908–2003). Born in Chicago, he served as *Rav* in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Ottawa, Canada, before returning to Chicago. He developed Hebrew Theological College from an afternoon-only school to a full-time *Yeshiva*, bringing *Gedolei Torah* as *Roshei Yeshiva*. He was president of the *Yeshiva* from 1946 to 1964, and also served as president of the Chicago Rabbinical Council and *Rav* of Congregation Yehuda Moshe in Lincolnwood, Illinois. His son, Rav Chaim Fasman, is *Rosh Kollel* in Los Angeles, (5764/2003);

- * **Rav Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg** (1914–2006). He was born in Yerushalayim to Rav Yaakov Gedalyohu who came to *Eretz Yisrael* from Kovno in the early 1900s. He learned in the *Eitz Chaim Yeshiva* and developed a very warm bond with Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer. Rav Waldenberg wrote his first *sefer*, *Dvar Eliezer*, when he was only nineteen. Upon the passing of his mother and later his father, both in the 1960s, he published two separate *seforim* on the *halochos* of mourning. Rav Waldenberg got involved with medical ethics during the period that he served as *Rav* of a *shul* adjacent to the old location of *Sha'arei Tzedek* Hospital in downtown Yerushalayim. Among those who attended was Professor Avrohom Steinberg, a pediatric neurologist and head of the Medical Ethics Center at *Sha'arei Tzedek*, as well as the editor of the Talmudic Encyclopedia. "Doctors who *davened* at the *shul*, myself included, started asking him questions. Eventually, he began teaching a weekly medical ethics class for doctors and nurses." His *teshuvos* were compiled in his magnum opus, a twenty-one-volume set of *responsa* entitled *Tzitz Eliezer*. The first volume of *Tzitz Eliezer* was published in 1945, when he was not yet thirty. In addition, he authored a book on the laws of sea travel on *Shabbos* called *Shvisa B'yam*, a book on the laws of mourning called *Ein Ya'akov* and a book on legal issues in the modern State called *Hilchos*

Medina. He was also a member of the *Bais Din HaGodol* where he sat together for many years with Rav Yosef Sholom Elyoshev. Rav and Rebbetzin Waldenberg merited to have one child, a son, Rav Simcha Bunim Waldenberg. Rav Simcha Bunim became a *Dayan* in the *Eida HaChareidis* and served as its appointed Rav of the neighborhood of *Ezras Torah*. He himself was known as a *posek muvhok*, (5767/2006).

* **1st of Kisleiv ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Nov 8th)**

- * **Rav Ephraim Alankava**, Rav of Telmisan, Algeria (on the border with Morocco), and *mechaber* of *Shaar Kevod Shomayim*, (5202/1441);
- * **Rav Trivash** of Mantova, Italy, (5312/1551);
- * **Rav Sholom Shachna** of Lublin (1490–1558), teacher and father-in-law of the *Rema*. His grandfather and namesake was the Rav of Neustadt and the *Godol HaDor* (spiritual leader of that generation) in Austria, who, along with the *Maharil*, founded the *minhagei Ashkenaz* that are still prevalent until today. He established the Lublin *Yeshiva* in 1515 and was succeeded by Rav Shlomo Luria, the *Maharshal*, (5319/1558);
- * **Rav Yosef Shmuel** of Cracow, *mechaber* of *Mesoras HaShas*. The *Chida*, in his biography of Rav Yosef Shmuel, wrote that he learned all of *Shas* forty-two times, fulfilling the *mitzva* of *Vedibarta 'bom'*, (the numerical value of 'bom' being forty-two). He also added that for twenty-five years he learned standing on his feet and all his learning was *Torah lishmah* (for the sake of Heaven), (5464/1703);
- * **Rav Moshe Chaifetz**, *mechaber* of *Melech Shabbos* and *Melech Mochsheves*, (5472/1711);
- * **Rav Avrohom Eiger** of Posen (1846–1914), son of Rav Yehuda Leib Eiger, the first Lubliner *Rebbe*, grandson of Rav Shlomo Eiger and great-grandson of Rav Akiva Eiger. He succeeded his father as leader of his *Chassidim* from 1882 to 1914. He was the *mechaber* of a work on *Chassidus*, *Shevet Mi'Yehuda*. He was also a member of the *Vaad HaRuchani* of the *Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin*, (5675/1914);
- * **Rav Chaim Nosson Dembitzer** (1820–1892). Born in Cracow, he did historical research and critical work in the field of *Talmudic* and Rabbinic literature, and wrote about its leading personalities. His *sefer*, *Klilas Yofi*, included biographies of *Rabbonim* of Lvov, Cracow, and other cities in Poland and Lithuania. His student, Feivel Hirsch Wettstein, wrote his biography, *Toldos Maharchan*, (5653/1892);
- * **Rav Moshe Hager** of Radovitz, *mechaber* of *Vayikach Moshe*, (5665/1904);
- * **Rav Yitzchok Levitan** from Aram Tzova (Aleppo), (5672/1911);
- * **Rav Naftoli Hertz (Hertzel) Krezmer**. He was born in Bialystok to Rav Avrohom, a textile merchant, and was a grandson of Rav Osher *ben Tzvi HaKohen*, who wrote the *Birkas Rosh* on *Berachos* and *Nozir*. He married in Ponevezh and remained there, serving as the Rav of Yanova and other places. He wrote *Noam HaMitzvos*, (5673/1912);
- * **Rav Yisrael Ungar** of Zavna, (5697/1936);
- * **Rav Tzodok Shaingarten** (1912–2005), Rav of *Ohr Torah* in Boro Park. Born in Warsaw to staunch Gerrer *Chassidim*, he learned for two *zmanim* at Baranovitch before attending Kletzk under Aharon Kotler. Later, he learned at Mir under Rav Yeruchom Levovitz from 1932 to 1938, following which he returned to Warsaw. When the Nazis conquered Poland, he fled to Vilna. He traveled with the Mir *Yeshiva* to Japan and Shanghai. After the war, he moved to New York and married Rebbetzin Ruth, (5766/2005);
- * **Rav Yaakov Kasirer**, founder and long-time president of *Bais Yaakov* of Los Angeles. Born in Bistra, Hungary, he lost his parents and many siblings during World War II. In 1946, he

married Reizi, a childhood friend of the family, and moved to Bregenz, Austria, on the Swiss border. Two of their three children, Robert and Gabi, were born there. In 1954, they moved to Los Angeles, where their youngest child, Hindy, was born. They were involved in the creation of *Yeshiva Rav Isacsohn (Toras Emes)*, and founded *Bais Yaakov* in 1968, in order to assure that their daughters received a local *Torah* education. Even after both daughters graduated, however, Rav Kasirer and his wife assured the ongoing growth and success of *Bais Yaakov*, (5766/2005).

* 2nd of Kisleiv ~ Begins Thursday Night (Nov 9th)

- * **Rav Akiva Sofer** of Pressburg, *mechaber* of *Daas Sofer*. Son of Rav Simcha Bunim Sofer (the *Shevet Sofer*), grandson of the *Kesav Sofer* (Rav Avrohom Shmuel Binyomin Sofer) and the great-grandson of the *Chasam Sofer* (Rav Moshe Sofer). Interestingly, three continuous generations – the *Chasam Sofer*, the *Kesav Sofer*, and the *Shevet Sofer* – all served as *Rav* of Pressburg for thirty-three years. When Rav Akiva Sofer neared his thirty-third year as *Rav*, he asked his uncle, the Erlauer *Rav*, what to do. Upon his uncle's advice, the *Daas Sofer* moved to *Eretz Yisrael* in 1940, thus saving himself from the horrors of World War II, (5721/1960);
- * **Rav Aharon Kotler** (1892–1962), *Rosh Yeshiva Bais Medrash Govoha*, Lakewood. The son of Rav Shneur Zalman Pines, Rav Aharon was known as the “*Shislovitzer Iluy*”. At fourteen, he entered the Slobodka *Yeshiva*, where he learned under the *Alter* and Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein. He also heard *shiurim* from Rav Boruch Ber, who had his own *Yeshiva* in one of the suburbs of Slobodka. He married the daughter of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, head of the *Yeshiva Etz Chaim* in Slutsk, and became his assistant in 1914. Even before he was twenty-five years old, he became one of its *Roshei Yeshiva*. After the *Yeshiva's* forced transfer in 1921 to Kletsk, Poland, due to the Bolshevik takeover and religious persecution, Rav Isser Zalman immigrated to *Eretz Yisrael*, and Rav Kotler directed the *Etz Chaim* for twenty years, (5723/1962);
- * **Rav Nosson Meir Wachtfogel**, the Lakewood *Mashgiach*. Rav Nosson was born in Kuhl, Lithuania. His father, Rav Moshe Yom Tov, was one of the fourteen original *talmidim* of the *Yeshiva* in Slutsk. (Another of these *talmidim* was Rav Aharon Kotler.) Rav Nosson himself began his education in the *Yeshiva* in Kelm. When he was fifteen, he came to the United States – his father had accepted a Rabbinic post in Montreal – and enrolled in *Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon* (forerunner of the Talmudic division of Yeshiva University). After two years there, he returned to Lithuania to study at the Mir *Yeshiva*. He also studied under Rav Shimon Shkop, and in Kamenetz, under Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz. Beginning in 1941, Rav Nosson joined with Rav Aharon Kotler to develop the Lakewood *Yeshiva*. He left several children, including Rav Elya Ber Wachtfogel, *Rosh Yeshiva* of the *Yeshiva Zichron Moshe* in South Fallsburg, New York, (5671–5759/1910–1998);
- * **Rav Dr. Dov Revel**, president and *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshiva Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon* in New York, (5701/1940);
- * **Rav Nachum Weidenfeld** of Dombrova, the *Chazon Nachum* (1875–1939). Born in Hormilov, Galicia, to Rav Yaakov (the *Kochav MiYaakov*) and Rebbetzin Rochel, a direct descendant of the *Shach*. One of his brothers, Rav Dov Berish, became famous as the Tchebiner *Rav*. After the *Kochav MiYaakov* passed away in 1894, Rav Nachum and his elder brother, Rav Yitzchok, supervised the studies of their younger brother, Rav Dov Berish, who had just celebrated his *bar mitzva*. After marrying his wife, Taibah, he went to live with his in-laws in Yassi, Romania. A year later, he replaced his maternal grandfather, Rav Shabsi

HaKohen Rappaport, as the *Rav* of Dombrowa, Galicia. Although Dombrowa was relatively small, it was intensely Jewish, having a population of about 2,400 Jews and only six hundred gentiles. Jews had lived there since the end of the sixteenth century. Nazi troops seized Dombrowa on the September 8, 1939, only eight days after the war started. At the last possible moment, *Rav* Nachum fled the town with nothing but his stick and a knapsack. He had sent dozens of manuscripts to his son-in-law in Kolbasov, but not one member of that family survived and all his writings were lost, (5700/1939);

- * **Rav Dayan Eliezer Posen**, born in Frankfurt to *Rav* Gershon, who was appointed *Dayan* of the IRG (Jewish Religious Society) by *Rav* Shimshon Refoel Hirsch. As a *bochur*, he learned in Pupa, Hungary, then returned to Frankfurt and married Chulda Falk in 1923. After his marriage, he became *Maggid Shiur* in the Breuer *Yeshiva* and succeeded his father as *Rav* of the *kehilla* in 1932. In 1938, he escaped the growing Nazi menace by fleeing to England. He was appointed *Dayan* of the *Adas Yisrael shul* in 1945. His brother was *Rav* Shimon Yisrael Posner, the Shoproner *Rav* of New York, (5653–5730/1892–1969).



❁ 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.



I heard this wonderful word from **Reb Yisroel Meir Zaks** from Eretz Yisroel

When we encounter pressure in our lives we have to remember the following:

Pressure in Hebrew is לחץ – (צלח)

If we remember to surround ourselves with *Hashem* – ה' and we truly believe in *Hashem's* salvation, then when you add ה' (*Hashem* – ה') in front and in the end of לחץ – then you turn the pressure into הצלחה, *Hatzlacha* (Success)

❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

STORIES & ANECDOTES

Rav Yaakov ben Dovid Yitzchok Leiser of Antwerp, 27th of Cheshvan

Pshevorsker Rebbe

Reading Kvittels Even While Asleep

Rav Pomerantz, Rav Yaakov's *gabbai*, related how a friend once asked him to relay a *kvittel* with a petition for help to the *Rebbe*, and the *gabbai* somehow forgot. This scenario repeated

itself over and over, till the *gabbai* was very much embarrassed when his friend questioned him as to why he had not yet delivered the requested *kvittel*. Finally, the *gabbai* remembered,



but this was at night when he was alone in the *Rebbe's* room and the *Rebbe* had already lain himself down to sleep. What should he do now? To wake the *Tzaddik* was out of the question. Just then he had an idea. Quietly, he slipped the *kvittel* beneath the *Rebbe's* pillow, and whispered the request in the sleeping *Rebbe's* ear.

The next day the *gabbai* received a phone call from his overjoyed friend. "Thank you for delivering the *kvittel* to the *Rebbe!*"

Astounded, he asked, "How did you know?"

"*Boruch Hashem*, my wife has healed completely and she is well!" (*Sichoson Shel Avdei Avos* page 291)



Once, when Rav Yaakov Leiser was seated at a *simcha*, he was approached by a

Chassid asking that the *Tzaddik daven* for his wife, that she should have an easy birth since she was having a difficult labor. However, the Pshevorsker did something wondrous; he glanced at his watch and stated, "*Mazal Tov!* She has already given birth to a baby boy!" When Rav Reich asked the *Rebbe* if he was not afraid of *ayin hora* in displaying such overt *Ruach HaKodesh*, Rav Yaakov Leiser answered him, "We need to demonstrate the power of *Torah* in this world to others."

Rav Shlomo Yeshaya Yaakovovitch related that he was once busy *Erev Shabbos* heating up the water for the men's *mikve* so the *Chassidim* could purify themselves on *Shabbos* morning. Rav Yaakov Leiser was adamant that the *mikve* be hot so that the *Chassidim* would use it and *toivel* themselves. Unfortunately, somehow he lost his balance and fell into the hot water and badly scalded himself. Rav Yaakov Leiser of Pshevorsk laid him down in bed and treated him with a miraculous ointment for burns – none other than the *shirayim*, the leftover wine from his *kos shel beracha*, the cup used for *bensching* (the Grace after meals). He rubbed this wine over his entire body and he was healed completely on the spot!



Background to a dynasty

In the years before the Second World War, dozens of great Chassidic dynasties flourished in Europe. Each dynasty established its own *Bais Medrash* and *Chassidic* court to which *Chassidim* would flock en masse to see their *Rebbe* and to unload their problems and sorrows.

With the outbreak of the war, all these once-famous and glorious courts were destroyed and the sounds of *Torah* and *tefilla* that used to emanate from their walls were to be heard no more. The few *Rebbes* who survived re-established themselves in *Eretz Yisrael* and America, far away from the blood-soaked continent of Europe.

One solitary dynasty however, remained in Europe – the Pshevorsker dynasty, headed by Rav Yitzchok Gvirzman who was fondly known to all as ‘Reb Itzikel’.



His Task in the World

Reb Itzikel opened his *Bais Medrash* in Mercatorstraat, Antwerp, and in a short time he became a magnet for the many downtrodden *Yidden* scattered across Europe who had lost everything during the war.

When Reb Itzikel was asked why he did not attempt to found *Yeshivos* or other *mosdos* (institutions), he answered, “Everyone comes down to this world for a different purpose. Some *Tzaddikim* are sent to improve the *ruchniyus* (spirituality), others are sent for *gashmiyus* (physicality). My job is to see to *gashmiyus*.”

Reb Itzikel remained true to his word and, due to his advice and *berochos*, many people were helped to set up new homes and to marry off their children in a fitting way. Many are the stories told of the miracles that people witnessed as a direct result of the *Rebbe’s berochos*.

On *Yom Kippur* 5636 (1976), when Reb Itzikel was in his ninety-fifth year, his holy *neshoma* ascended to the *Yeshiva Shel Maa’la*. Reb Itzikel left behind no sons, and his one and only son-in-law, Reb Yankele, was crowned as the new Pshevorsker *Rebbe*.

Like his *shver* (father-in-law) before

him, Reb Yankele did not seek to enlarge or to open a network of Pshevorsker *mosdos*. Even so, Reb Yankele’s fame spread across Europe and later on across the globe, until he became a legend during his own lifetime. The steady trickle of *Chassidim* who made their way to the *Rebbe* turned into a flood.

Specially chartered planes would bring hundreds of *Chassidim* who converged on Antwerp for every *Yom Tov* and occasion. Amongst the visitors were often those who had come seeking a *yeshua* (salvation) of one type or another, and Reb Yankele did not let them down. Hundreds of stories abound about his *Ruach HaKodesh* and the miracles that he performed.

Reb Yankele would often relate stories of miracles wrought by *Tzaddikim* from a bygone era in order to invoke their merit. Later on, he would dismiss the things he did and say that they were not his *mofes* (miracle) but that of the *Tzaddik* in the story.

It once happened that a *kalla* (bride) suddenly collapsed and went into a deep coma a few days before her *chasuna* (wedding). All attempts to wake the girl were of no avail. In a panic, the family rushed to Reb Yankele and begged him to help them. Reb Yankele thought for a minute and then he said, “Last night after *davening*, I related a story about the Chortkover *Rebbe*, Rav Dovid Moshe. The Chortkover *Rebbe* told a *Yid* whose children all died in infancy that he should name his next child after a person who is mentioned in the *haftora* of the week in which the child is born.

“Some time later the man’s wife gave birth to a baby girl. The man looked in the *haftora* of that particular week, *Parshas Noso*, but couldn’t find any mention of a woman’s name. The *haftora*, however, which speaks about Shimshon, does mention Shimshon’s mother, even though it doesn’t refer to her by name. The

Gemora, in *Bova Basra*, informs us that her name was Sallfonis, and the *Maharshal*, in his commentary, writes that this name is a *segula* to prevent the evil eye from harming a person! Needless to say, the girl lived to a ripe old age.”

Reb Yankele turned to the family of the *kalla* and said to them, “After I related this story I suddenly wondered to myself what was my reason for saying it. It is not *Parshas Noso* this week, nor is it the *Yahrzeit* of the Chortkover *Rebbe*. It appears that it is a message that we should add the name Sallfonis to the *kalla*.”

No sooner had the *Rebbe* added the new name than the *kalla* suddenly awoke and the *chasuna* went ahead as planned!



Early Years

Reb Yankele was born on the 6th of *Teves* 5667 (1907), in the small village of Roig near Riminov in Galicia. As a child, he was educated by his father, Rav Dovid Yitzchok, who was one of the prominent *Shiniver Chassidim* of the area.

In a dedication to his parents in one of his *seforim*, Reb Yankele wrote, “A person is duty-bound to honor his father and mother. I am especially duty-bound to honor my parents, who served as my teachers as well. My mother taught me until I started to learn *Chumash* and then I learnt from my father *Chumash* and several hundred blatt *gemora* until I was twelve.”

Even after their *petiros*, Reb Yankele continued to honor their memory and was *makpid* to give *tzedoka* every day *le'ilui nishmosom* (in their memory).

After his *bar mitzva*, Reb Yankele joined the *Yeshiva* in the town of Dukla. This *Yeshiva* was intended only for geniuses and among those who learned there were Rav Yekusiel Halberstam, who later became famed as the Klausenberger *Rebbe*, and Rav Pinchos Hirshprung, who later became *Rav* of Montreal.

The *Yeshiva* was run by the great *Gaon*, Rav Dovid Tevli Dukla who was one of the *choshuva* Chortkover *Chassidim* and *mechaber* of a number of classic *seforim*. Reb Yankele once confessed that by the time he left Dukla, he was fluent in every *Pri Megodim* in *Hilchos Treifos*, and indeed on his departure the *Rosh Yeshiva* awarded him with *semicha*.



His Rebbe

From Dukla, Reb Yankele moved on to *Yeshivas Zera Kodesh*, which was situated in the town of Koloshitz. That *Yeshiva* was headed by the *Rav* of the town, Rav Chuna Halberstam, who was a descendant of the *Rebbes* of Shinive and Sanz. In Koloshitz, Reb Yankele found his home and his *Rebbe*, and until the end of his life, Reb Yankele regarded the Koloshitzer *Rav* as his *Rebbe* and mentor, as Reb Yankele wrote himself:

“In the year 5684 (1924) I was *zoche* to be *mekabel* my master and teacher, the *Rebbe* of all *Klal Yisrael*, Rav Chuna of Koloshitz, the grandson of the *Rebbe* of Shinive. I was *zoche* to benefit a little bit from his light, from his *Torah*, *avoda* and *gemilus chassodim*, all of which were on an extremely lofty level. I remained under his guidance until *Shavuos* 5699 (1939).

“Those who were *zoche* to see his face when he learned with his *talmidim* or by himself, how his facial features changed from bright red to a ghostly white, can understand and appreciate what *Chazal* tell us that ‘*Hashem*, *Klal Yisrael* and the *Torah* are all one.’“

Reb Yankele’s devotion to his *Rebbe* knew no bounds. One day, Reb Chuna asked his faithful *talmid* if he had any spare money to give him to distribute to *tzedoka*. The only money Reb Yankele had at that time was the *nadan* (dowry) that he had received at his *chasuna*. Without hesitation, Reb Yankele withdrew the

entire sum from the bank and presented it to his *Rebbe*.

Rav Chuna was rather overwhelmed by the large amount and confided to Reb Yankele, "You should know that your money is safer with me than in the bank."

A short time later the bank declared bankruptcy and all those who had accounts there lost their money.

In his *tzavo'a* (will), Reb Yankele asked that no praises or titles be written on his *matzeiva* (headstone), except for the following words: "He was a beloved *talmid* of his *Rebbe*, the *Tzaddik* of Koloshitz".



First Position

Reb Yankele's years of *hasmoda* (diligent study) paid off and in 1931, when he was still a *bochur*, he was appointed *Rav* of the town Yashlisk in Galicia. The previous *Rav* of the town, Rav Ephraim Halberstam, left Yashlisk to take up another position. When the townspeople asked Rav Halberstam with whom he was leaving them, he pointed to Reb Yankele and said, "You see that *bochur* – he already knows more than I . . ."

Reb Yankele also traveled to seek the consent of the Sadigerer *Rebbe*, Rav Mordechai Sholom Yosef Friedman, who had many *Chassidim* in the town. The Sadigerer *Rebbe* gave him his enthusiastic *berocha* and thus, at the age of twenty-four, Reb Yankele assumed his first position.

Although Reb Yankele was very demanding on himself and constantly strived to climb higher and higher, he was careful not to demand from others to act in a way that was not in line with their true *madreiga* (spiritual level). In one of his letters he wrote: "The *Gemora* tells us that the *Amora* Mar Ukva once said that in comparison to his father, he is like vinegar, the son of wine. His father would wait twenty-four hours between meat and dairy

products while Mar Ukva only waited six hours.

"This particular *Gemora* is difficult to understand. If Mar Ukva praised his father for waiting twenty-four hours, then why did he not act likewise and follow the steps of his father? From here we see that for a *chumra* (stringency) to have true meaning, it must be compatible with the overall behavior of the person. Mar Ukva did not feel that he was on the same level as his father and as such, it would have been incorrect for him to mimic his father and adopt this *chumra*."

Throughout his life Reb Yankele ran away from *machlokes* (controversy) and he would often say, "If a person sees *machlokes*, there is only one *eitza*. Pick up the ends of your coat and flee as fast as you can."

He would add that in his youth in Yashlisk, he saw *Yidden* who became embroiled in a *machlokes* and they all met a bitter end.

Reb Yankele once wrote in a letter: "I heard in the name of the *Rebbe*, Rav Sholom of Belz, that it is better for a person to act falsely in order to come to *emes* (truth), than to act truthfully and to end up with *sheker* (falsehood). I, the lowly one, bow my head in front of every *Yid* in *Klal Yisrael* and I speak to everyone in a friendly tone, although sometimes in my heart I am upset with them . . ."

To those who felt unable to keep silent in the face of attacks and slander, he would repeat the following *vort* in the name of the Chortkover *Rebbe*, Rav Dovid Moshe. "The *Mishna* says, '*Seyog lachochma shesika* – keeping silent is an aid to *chochma* (wisdom).' If keeping silent is only an aid to *chochma*, what is the actual *chochma* itself?" And the Chortkover *Rebbe* answered, "True *chochma* is when you don't take to heart the taunts of others and you remain immune to their baits. That is true *chochma*!"

Five years before the Second World War, Reb Yankele married his lifelong helpmate, the Rebbetzin Alta Bina, the daughter of Reb Itzikel, the *Rebbe* of Pshevorsk. For the next forty years, Reb Yankele lived in the shadow of his great *shver* and rarely left his side. So subservient was he to Reb Itzikel, that although Reb Yankele was already in his seventies by the time his *shver* was *niftar*, until then he never made his own *kiddush* on Friday night or led his own *Shabbos* meal, preferring always to sit at his *shver's* table and hear his *kiddush*.



Best in the Long Run

With the outbreak of the war in 1939, Poland was invaded by the Germans, *yimach shemom*. The day after their arrival in Pshevorsk they burnt all the *shuls* in the area and started to restrict the *Yidden* with their many sadistic decrees. Reb Itzikel and Reb Yankele fled to the relative safety of Lemberg, which was under the control of Russia.

Once in Lemberg, the Polish refugees were offered Russian citizenship by their new hosts. No one knew whether to take up the offer or not. Who could possibly know what lay in store for them either way? Most people were inclined to take up the offer and not risk upsetting the Russians. Reb Itzikel, however, disagreed, and he advised people to refuse the offer.

On the 23rd of *Sivan* 5600 (1940), the KGB swooped down on Lemberg and arrested all those who had refused Russian citizenship. Those *Yidden* were taken to the train station and put on trains to Siberia. Some of those on board were visibly upset with Reb Itzikel. It was due to his advice that they now found themselves being exiled to the frozen wastelands of Siberia.

Reb Itzikel consoled them and told them he had not misled them, adding, "Today is the 23rd of *Sivan*, the day

Achashverosh repealed the letters that he had sent ordering the destruction of the Jews. Just as the 23rd of *Sivan* was then a day of salvation for the *Yidden*, so it will be for us as well."

Reb Itzikel's words proved prophetic when the Germans entered Lemberg a short while later and brutally murdered almost the whole Jewish population. Those who had been exiled to Siberia were the lucky ones. Their refusal to accept Russian citizenship also enabled them to leave Russia at the war's end, a privilege that was not granted to those who had sworn allegiance to Mother Russia.

Reb Yankele would say, concerning their exile to Siberia, that it was a prime example of a situation in which a person thinks that he is doomed, while in reality it is an act of *rachamei shomayim* (Heavenly mercy).

To this, Reb Yankele would add the following *vort*: We say in *Krias Shema*, "*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echod*." The use of *Elokim* denotes *middas hadin* (the attribute of strict justice), while the use of *Hashem* denotes mercy. This is to show us that even when we think that we are seeing an act of *Elokim*, we should know that *Hashem Echod*, everything is in reality only mercy, and it is up to us to realize it!

During the war, Reb Yankele lost almost his entire family. His parents and all his brothers and sisters with all their children were brutally murdered. Similarly, he lost all his family on his wife's side, except for his parents-in-law who were miraculously saved. Reb Yankele, however, never questioned *Hashem's* ways and he accepted the terrible afflictions with love.

In a letter written many decades later, Reb Yankele wrote, "This *Shabbos* is the *Yahrzeit* of my father and mother who were murdered by the German *resho'im*, *yimach shemom*, in a forest between *Yashlisk* and *Dukla*. In *Gan Eden* and also

when *Moshiach* will come, we will thank *Hashem* with all our hearts for all the sorrows we have endured. Even so, we still ask *Hashem* that He should show us kindness that we are also able to appreciate, and that we should see only goodness.”



The Suffering in Siberia

In Siberia, Reb Yankele was assigned to a forced labor camp where he survived on a diet of bread and raw vegetables. He refused to eat the rest of the camp food for fear that it was not kosher. It was under these conditions that Reb Yankele was forced to steal a piece of bread to ensure his survival. Years later, he once admitted that this was the only time in his life that he had taken something dishonestly.

Even in the terrible Siberian conditions, Reb Yankele did not diminish his *avoda*. Daily, he smashed a hole in the ice and *toiveled* himself in the freezing waters. It once happened that while he was under the water, he couldn't find the hole again and almost drowned. From then on he gave up this practice.

Reb Yankele also risked his life to teach *Torah* to those he came in contact with. Although he possessed no *seforim*, he delivered regular *shiurim* in *Gemora* and *Halocha*.

In Siberia, he came into contact with a descendant of Rav Yisrael Salanter. Never one to miss an opportunity, Reb Yankele asked his newfound acquaintance to teach him the *derech* and the teachings of the founder of *mussar* movement. Although Reb Yankele viewed himself as a Sanzer *Chassid* and his whole conduct echoed the *derech* of *Sanz*, this in no way prevented him from learning and treasuring the teachings of other *Gedolim*.

In a letter written as an answer to someone who wanted to know the way of

Chassidus, Reb Yankele wrote: “I don't know how to answer a clear ruling, for not all times and places are the same. The *Gemora* in *Bava Kama* quotes Rav Yehuda that someone who wants to be a *Chassid* should keep the laws of *Nezikim*, so as not to cause monetary loss to others. Rova, however, says he should be careful to keep what is written in *Maseches Ovot* and to recite his *berochos* with *kavona* (concentration). The *Maharal* and the *Maharsha* both explain that in order for a person to achieve true *shleimus* (perfection), he must fulfill all three points which encompass *bein odom laMokom* (man-G-d relationships), *bein odom lachavero* (interpersonal relationships) and the person's own *aliya* which is achieved through davening with *kavona* and becoming close to *Hashem*.

“I, the young one, explained that although all these three qualities are needed to achieve *shleimus*, each *Amora* only listed one of the three. Rav Yehuda lived in Pumpedisa, which was overrun with *ganovim* (thieves) (as we see elsewhere in *Shas*); therefore he stressed the quality which was lacking in his town. Rova, however, lived in Mechoza which was a prosperous town and there were few robberies there. What they were lacking was *bein odom laMokom* (see *Rosh HaShana* 17a), and therefore Rova needed to stress the part they lacked.

“Similarly, we find different *derochim* (paths) concerning *mussar* and rebuke. The *Gaon* and *Tzaddik* Rav Yisrael Salanter stressed mainly the *mitzvos bein odom lachavero* while other *Gedolim* stressed the *mitzvos bein odom laMokom*.

“We find also another *machlokes* concerning learning *Kabbola*. The *Mekubolim* held that everyone is obliged to learn *Kabbola* while other *Gedolim* opposed them and forbade the learning of *Kabbola*, only permitting it to be learned in private.”

Breslov

After the war's end, Reb Yankele took up the position of *Dayan* in the town of Breslov. For close to two years he administered to the difficult *sha'alos* that had to be solved. *Sha'alos* regarding *agunos*, *chalitza* and *heter me'a Rabbonim* were almost daily occurrences.

An appreciation of Reb Yankele's greatness can be gleaned from what he himself once answered when he was asked how many times he had finished *Shulchon Aruch Yoreh De'a*. "Forty times for sure," he admitted. "After that I didn't keep count any longer!"

From Breslov, Reb Yankele moved to Paris, where his *shver* was living and then finally they both moved to Antwerp.

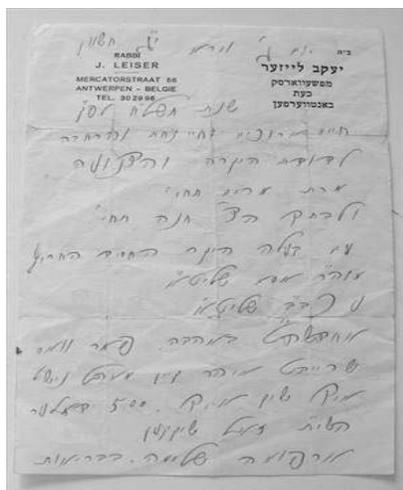
With Reb Itzikel's *petira* on *Yom Kippur* 1976, Reb Yankele was chosen as his *shver's* successor. In his last weeks before his *petira*, Reb Itzikel weakened greatly. He called Reb Yankele and instructed him, "Yankele, from now on you shall sit in my place and take *kvitlech*, for I no longer have strength."



The Pshevorsker Rebbe

Even so, the new appointment came as a shock to Reb Yankele, and he once innocently commented, "I had thought that the *Chassidim* would look elsewhere for an *ehrlicher Yid* and make him their *Rebbe...*"

Indeed, even once Reb Yankele had assumed the position of *Rebbe*, he refused to disregard many of his practices



that he had kept for decades. He had a practice (one of many such tasks) of tearing toilet paper in the bathrooms in the *Bais Medrash* every *Erev Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. When he noticed that the toilets needed cleaning, he didn't hesitate to clean them either.

He was once "caught" by one of his *Chassidim* while he was busy standing on a table, cleaning the *Bais Medrash*. Noticing the look of surprise on the *Yid's* face, Reb Yankele apologized, "Oh! I'm sorry, I forgot that I am a *Rebbe* . . ."

Despite his simple ways – or perhaps due to them – Reb Yankele would often innocently repeat what he had been thinking, not realizing the impression these amazing comments left on all who heard them. Once, on *Erev Yom Kippur*, Reb Yankele was asked by his *shver* why he wasn't busy doing *teshuva* as befits such a day. "Only if one sins, does one need to do *teshuva*," Reb Yankele answered. "And I never sinned."

When he was once told of a newly married couple who had just divorced, he remarked, "I had wondered why I didn't see the *neshomos* of their *zeides* at the *chupa*. Now I understand!" (In the *Zohar*, it is written that the *neshomos* of the deceased come down to this world to be present at the *simchos* of their offspring.)

On another occasion, when someone asked him for a *berocha* for children, he sighed and said, "It's a pity you didn't come earlier. There was a whole bag of *neshomos* but I already gave them all away."

After a moment's thought, Reb Yankele added, "There is actually one *neshoma* left. It has a small blemish, but if you want, you can have it."

Left without much choice, the *Yid* accepted the offer. Not long after, his wife gave birth to a baby with a defect in its legs!

Three times a week, Reb Yankele delivered a *shiur* in his *Bais Medrash*. He would spice his *shiurim* with beautiful

stories about *Tzaddikim* of bygone eras. Reb Yankele laid great importance on these stories and he would say, “*Chazal* tell us, ‘If you want to recognize the Creator of the World, learn *Aggoda*; thereby you will know *Hashem* and go in His ways.’”

Reb Yankele would say that these words of *Chazal* refer not just to the *Aggoda* mentioned in the *Gemora* but also to the *seforim* and the stories of *Tzaddikim* that give us an appreciation of *Hashem* and how we should serve Him.

In his humility, Reb Yankele once said that perhaps the reason he was saved from the war was so that he could relate his stories that strengthen *emuna*. Indeed, Reb Yankele did not regard stories about *Tzaddikim* as mere incidents, but as lessons in *Avodas Hashem*.

In his later years, Reb Yankele grew increasingly weaker. Seven years before his *petira*, he fell ill and until the end of his life he knew only pain and suffering. Nonetheless, he continued his *avodas hakodesh* and when his strength allowed, would give a short *tisch* and grant his *berochos* to the crowds that continued to knock on his door.

On the last *Shabbos* of his life his condition suddenly deteriorated. Two days later, on the 27th of *Cheshvan* 5759, he was *niftar*.

He was succeeded by his only son, Rav Leibish Leizer.

Zechuso yogein oleinu.

www.shemayisrael.co.il/gedolim/rleizer.htm ~ by Rav F. Avrohom



Rav Eliezer Lieber of Berditchev, 28th of Cheshvan (some say Tishrei)

The Founder of Berditchev

The Founder of Berditchev

Rav Lieber *HaGodol* had a unique way of combining his *Avodas Hashem* with

Personal Story

Once, a *Yid* came to Reb Yankele with his son before *Rosh HaShana* with a *kvittel*. After reading the *kvittel*, Reb Yankele remarked strangely that he wouldn't want to be in this *Yid's* shoes. He then proceeded to give special attention to the boy. He asked the boy to sit next to him and stroked his face and cried.

After the *Yid* became alarmed and the *gabbo'im* heard the remark, they insisted that the *Rebbe bensch* this *Yid* and his child with a special *berocha*. After a while, Reb Yankele said that *Hashem* will help and all will eventually be good. Then, inexplicably, the *Rebbe* lightly slapped the boy's right thigh and added, “The leg too.”

After *Rosh HaShana*, tests revealed that the child had leukemia *r"l*. After extensive chemotherapy and numerous miracles along the way, the child recovered. Once, while in the middle of a chemotherapy cycle, the doctors determined that the marrow in the boy's right leg was not healing properly and they advised an aggressive form of treatment that might lead to amputation. However, this *Yid* remembered the *Rebbe's* extra *berocha* of “the leg too” – and asked the doctors to take the lesser form of treatment, even though the doctors did not hold out too much hope for that course.

*Tzaddik gozer...*After a short while, the leg healed completely without the aggressive form of treatment. The doctors were truly amazed and pronounced that this came directly through a miracle.

an incalculable love of every Jew. At night, when he roamed the giant forests surrounding Berditchev in order to learn,

daven and contemplate *Hashem's* wonders, he simultaneously kept a sharp lookout for any sheep and cattle that may have strayed from their owners during the day. At the end of the night, he would drive the animals before him back to Berditchev, pausing beneath people's windows to call out, "Here is your goat!" or "Here is your cow!"

Although he had never been a *talmid* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, Rav Lieber, the founder of the Berditchev *kehilla*, sowed seeds of *Chassidus* in his town that exploded into full bloom during the years of Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev.



The Beginnings Of Berditchev

It is not surprising that Rav Lieber became one of the greatest Ukrainian *Gedolim* of his time as he was the great-great-grandson of two renowned giants, Rav Shimshon of Ostropol and Rav Nosson Shapiro, *mechaber* of the *Megalleh Amukos*. This is why Rav Lieber instructed in his will that no descendants of his should ever marry *Kohanim*. He had received this warning from his ancestor, Rav Shimshon of Ostropol, who explained that because his family was descended from Dovid *HaMelech*, combining *Kehuna* (Priesthood) with *Malchus* (kingship) could lead to the family's destruction.

Rav Lieber's father, Rav Avrohom, had fled from Cracow to Bistrich in the Ukraine, probably during the Swedish invasion of Poland (5415-5418/1655-1658), when thousands of Jews from Cracow, Kalisch, Piotrkov, Poznan and Lublin were slaughtered by Swedes, Poles and many died from the Plague. Some historians estimate that about half a million Polish Jews died during these few years. Although most of the Polish Jews returned home afterward to patch up their lives, many others, including Rav Avrohom, fled to other countries to make a new start. After all, do not *Chazal* (see *Rosh HaShana*

16b) state, "*Shinui makom shinui mazal* – Changing one's place can improve one's *mazal*?"

Sadly, Rav Avrohom's *mazal* apparently did not improve, since he passed away while still a young man, but he left his young son, Rav Lieber, ten thousand gold coins.

Rav Lieber immersed himself so deeply in *Torah*, it is said, that every night, his famous ancestors descended from the heavens to teach him the secrets of *Kabbola*.

In those days, Berditchev barely existed. Although first founded in about 5190/1430, reputedly by someone named Berditch, it had been destroyed by the Tartars and then only a handful of Jews lived in its vicinity. Most of Berditchev was still thick, untouched forest.

Something about the wild, unpopulated area attracted Rav Lieber like a magnet and he felt certain that there was something unique about the place. After his father's passing, he would cross the river every morning and evening and stroll among its ancient trees, reveling in the opportunity to be alone with *Hashem* without disturbances. He maintained this custom for years.

One morning, the ducal owner of Bistrich and its environs was traveling in the forest in his coach when his horses suddenly halted and reared upward, almost throwing the duke out of his carriage. They had been startled by Rav Lieber, who was standing in the forest track in his *tallis* and *tefillin*, totally unaware of the coach that had almost run him down. Using every ounce of his strength, the duke's Ukrainian coachman somehow got the horses under control.

The infuriated duke ordered his tough coachman to give the insolent Jew a whipping he would not forget. The coachman did not need to be told twice; his whip sang through the air biting into Rav

Lieber's clothes and flesh. However, Rav Lieber was so engrossed in his *davening* that he did not notice a thing.

"What's going on?" the coachman asked his master. "What should I do? No matter how much I beat this person, it makes no impression. He isn't a human being!"

"Leave him alone!" the duke said in disgust. "Let's go."

Back home, the duke leaped from the carriage and strode confidently into his luxurious mansion; suddenly his legs and arms went limp and he collapsed onto the floor.

"Help, help!" he cried out.

The servants who ran in from every direction could not do anything except carry him to his room and put him in bed. There he lay, powerless as a newborn, and his doctor declared that his condition was hopeless. Help came from an unexpected quarter. Like most Ukrainian landowners, the duke had a Jewish *rendar* (estate manager). When he heard what had happened, his face turned white.

"Do you know who the person must have been whom the duke attacked?" he asked the servants. "Obviously, our great *Maggid* who crosses the river to pray every day! I am certain the duke will never recover from his paralysis until he begs him for forgiveness!"

The duke immediately sent his doctor to help Rav Lieber recover from his beating and to bear a message begging his forgiveness. This was a golden opportunity for Rav Lieber to fulfill a long-time dream.

"I will forgive the duke if he builds a large *shul* at the place I was praying and a house next door in which to live," Rav Lieber told the doctor.

The duke hurriedly built the *shul* and the house and, after his recovery, he visited Rav Lieber and asked if there was anything else he wanted.

"Yes," he replied. "I would like you to build a town next to the *shul*."

This is how the Berditchev *kehilla* was founded in about 5451/1691.



A Special Place

It is not surprising that the mere mention of Berditchev's name evokes spiritual longings in Jewish hearts, as Rav Lieber used to say that the *shul* he built was sited opposite the gateway to Heaven from where the *tefillos* of *Klal Yisrael* stream skyward. This is one reason Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev established his *kloiz* and home right next door to the old, original *shul* of Berditchev when he moved there after Rav Lieber's passing.

In addition, Rav Lieber built a *Bais Medrash* next to his *shul* where he taught both the revealed and hidden *Torah* to his *talmidim*. Once the Berditchev *kehilla* began thriving, Rav Lieber served as its *Maggid*. Despite his deep *Torah* knowledge, he always bowed to the authority of the Berditchev *Av Bais Din*, Rav Yosef Halperin, known as Rav Yosef *Charif* because of his sharp mind; the only time he *paskened sha'alos* was when Rav Yosef was unavailable.

On one such occasion, a butcher came to Rav Lieber with an animal's problematic lung.

"This lung seems to have a *sircha* (lesion)," the butcher told him. "Does this make it *treif*?"

"Certainly!" replied Rav Lieber who was generally *machmir* (stringent) when it came to *sirchos*. "This animal is absolutely forbidden!"

At that very moment, Rav Yosef entered and Rav Lieber asked his opinion about the *sircha*.

"I say that is kosher!" the Rav replied.

"*Oy vey!*" cried out Rav Lieber. "My

apologies to you, *Reb Yid* (the butcher), for almost causing you a great loss, and my apologies to you, lung, for ruling that you are *treif!*”

If Rav Lieber had such love and consideration even for an inanimate lung, imagine the feeling he had for *Klal Yisrael!* The depth of his love for every Jew was indescribable. In his home, he always had a special room ready with twelve beds for any tired and hungry wayfarers who might pass by, and he treated his simplest guests like honored personages.

There is a story told that this great hospitality almost led to tragedy when Rav Lieber once remarked to his sons, “In the Next World, I will not be embarrassed by my *hachnossas orchim* (hospitality) even before Avrohom *Ovinu!*”

As this tiny shred of pride was unfitting for his lofty level, it was decreed on high that he should not live out the year. When Eliyohu *HaNovi* heard of this impending tragedy, he rushed before the Heavenly *Bais Din* and fervently pleaded in Rav Lieber’s defense. How could such a tremendous *Tzaddik* be condemned to perish for making a miniscule error?

The court ordered that Eliyohu *HaNovi* should come down in the form of a ragged, filthy pauper and test Rav Lieber. If Rav Lieber received him pleasantly and gave him every honor, the decree would be revoked. Of course, Eliyohu *HaNovi*’s duty was to make this trial as difficult as possible.

Eliyohu *HaNovi* arrived at Rav Lieber’s home moments before *Shabbos*, just as Rav Lieber was about to set off to *shul*. Physically, he seemed the most repulsive-looking person Rav Lieber had met in his life.

“I’m hungry!” the stranger slurred. “Give me something to eat!”

“But it is time to go to *shul*,” advised Rav Lieber.

“I need food now!” retorted the

pauper.

Rav Lieber immediately brought him a generous plateful of food. However, the poor man’s stomach was a bottomless pit and as fast as Rav Lieber rushed in food from the kitchen, the stranger gluttonously gobbled it down. In one sitting, down went the *challa*, fish, soup and chicken of *Shabbos* night, down went the *cholent* and *kugel* of *Shabbos* morning, and down went the fish of *sholosh seudos*.

“Let us go and *daven*,” suggested Rav Lieber when the stranger was temporarily sated.

“You go yourself,” said the visitor. “I want to sleep now – in your bed.”

Clambering into Rav Lieber’s bed with filthy clothes and muddy boots, the stranger fell into a stupor but not for long. By the time Rav Lieber returned from *shul*, he was already up like a new man with a new appetite, ready once more to eat his host out of house and home. The same thing happened on *Shabbos* morning. With no food left in his house, Rav Lieber brought in food from relatives and neighbors.

The guest’s coarse behavior all this while was beyond description.

After *havdola*, Eliyohu *HaNovi* revealed his true identity to Rav Lieber and told him, “Because of your momentary pride, the Heavenly court condemned you to death. I came down to save your life, and because you did not get angry once this *Shabbos*, your sentence has been transmuted to a year of *gulus* (exile). You may not spend two nights in the same town except on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. Set out now!”

The following morning, Rav Lieber instructed a tailor to sew him a suit of coarse traveling garments and took a wagon to Brod, intending to go from there to Austria where no one knew him. He arrived in Brod on *Erev Shabbos*, made his way to the local Jew in charge of giving

people a place to stay and was assigned to spend *Shabbos* with the uncouth Jew in charge of the *bais kevoros* (cemetery).

After enduring a terrible *Shabbos* night, Rav Lieber went to the local *shul* that was headed by Rav Efraim, a son of Rav Tzvi Hirsh Ashkenazi (the *Chacham Tzvi*) and a brother of Rav Yaakov Emden. During *davening*, Rav Ephraim noticed Rav Lieber crouching near the oven and recognized him immediately.

“With my authority as *Rav* of this town,” he commanded him, “I hereby order you to sit in the *mizrach* (the most honorable location).”

After calling him up for *shlishi* during *Krias HaTorah* (*Torah* reading), Rav Efraim took Rav Lieber home and honored him like a king. However, Rav Lieber felt as if he were sitting on *shpilkes* (pins and needles). Is this how he was supposed to be spending his *golus*?

“Please hurry and *bensch*,” he implored his host at *sholosh seudos*. “I have to leave Brod immediately.

“What is the hurry?” inquired Rav Efraim.

“I am in *golus* and cannot stay in one place for more than one night!” he replied.

Suddenly Eliyohu *HaNovi* appeared with good tidings.

“*Yom leshona* (one day for one year)!” he told Rav Lieber. “Your one day of *golus* has been counted as a full year and you are free to go home whenever you wish.”

Rav Efraim was overjoyed to have the privilege of hiring an elegant coach and sending his distinguished guest back to Berditchev.



With the Ba'al Shem Tov

Whenever the *Ba'al Shem Tov* visited Berditchev during his travels

throughout Poland and the Ukraine, he always insisted on staying at Rav Lieber's.

“Rav Lieber is unique!” he used to say. “While there are a number of *Tzaddikim* who merit *gilui* Eliyohu (seeing Eliyohu *HaNovi*), with Rav Lieber it is the opposite – Eliyohu merits the *gilui* of Rav Lieber!”

Rav Lieber's wife passed away in his old age, and one of his young nieces agreed to marry him on condition that she be blessed with righteous offspring; they named their son Yaakov.

None of Rav Lieber's descendants achieved his fame and renown. This is because Rav Lieber was once asked by Heaven what he preferred – to have sons and grandsons whose fame would spread far and wide, or to contribute a portion of his merit to speed the *Moshiach's* arrival. Rav Lieber chose the second option. Thus, even though this son, Rav Yankele, became the son-in-law of Rav Yechiel of Mikolaiv, one of the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* great *talmidim*, he never achieved his father's immortal fame.

Although Rav Lieber always revered the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, he never became his *talmid* or followed his path of *Chassidus*. His awe of the *Ba'al Shem Tov* increased dramatically after the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* passing when the *Megalleh Amukos*, who appeared every night to study with Rav Lieber, suddenly stopped coming. Concerned, Rav Lieber sent his older son, Rav Yechiel, to the *Megalleh Amukos' grave* in Cracow to inquire what had happened.

“Since the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* passing, the *Yeshiva Shel Ma'ala* has closed down for thirty days,” the *Megalleh Amukos* told him. “It is from there that I get the *Torah* I study with your father.”

Rav Lieber then drew closer to *Chassidus*, mentioning its wisdom in his *Shabbos derashos*. Through these teachings, the Jews of Berditchev became

receptive to its ideas when *talmidim* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, including Rav Leib Sara's and Rav Yaakov Yosef of Polonoye, began passing through, and, by the time Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev arrived in 5545/1785, it was easy for him to create a major Chassidic metropolis. By then, Berdichev had a thriving *kehilla* of about two thousand Jews, comprising 75 percent of the town's population.

The *kehilla* reached its highpoint in 5621/1861 when its 46,683 strong community was the second largest in the Russian Empire and the only major town of the empire with a Jewish majority.

Rav Lieber enjoyed an extremely long life, passing away in 5531/1770, aged 104, during a violent plague that was killing

so many that survivors were afraid to bury them according to *Halocha* and interred them in mass graves.

"Great destruction has been decreed on the community," declared Rav Lieber. "I hereby accept death upon myself instead!"

Calling four people to him, he promised them a place in *Olam HaBa* if they would perform all the customs of interment on him and bury him properly instead of throwing him into a mass grave. He then passed away and the plague abruptly ceased.

May Rav Lieber's memory be a blessing.

www.berdichev.org/rav_lieber_hagadol-1.html



Rav Tzvi Hirsch ben Yehuda Leib HaKohen of Rymanov, 30th of Cheshvan

This year 1st of Kisleiv

Hashem's Lien on Us

The Shinover *Rav* related how he had once visited Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Rymanov when someone came with his son who was turning thirteen. The father asked the *Tzaddik*, Rav Hirsch, to teach the *bar mitzva* boy to wrap *tefillin* for the first time, following the custom that a sage or *Tzaddik* wraps the *tefillin* on a *bar mitzva* boy for the first time.

Before doing so, Rav Hirschel asked the boy to recite the *Leshem Yichud tefilla* that precedes the *mitzva* of *tefillin*. When they reached the words explaining why we wrap *tefillin* on our arms opposite the heart *lesha'abed* – "to subjugate our desires and the thoughts of our hearts to serve Hashem", the *Tzaddik* paused and asked the *bar mitzva bochur* if he understood these words and then the *Tzaddik* explained them:

We find in the *Gemora* in *Bava Metzia* 12b that if someone borrows money he can give his property as collateral for the

loan. This places a lien on the property. (The Hebrew word for "subjugate" and "lien" is the same – *shiabud* – and the *Tzaddik* translated the word in this *tefilla* to mean a lien.) Once this property has a lien on it from the lender, no one else can come and take it away since it is *meshuabad* – subjugated or has a lien on it to the lender. Similarly here [regarding the *tefillin* and what wrapping them does to our hearts] – when we subjugate ourselves – *meshabdim atzmeinu* – to serving Hashem totally, we are placing a "lien" on ourselves to Hashem. Then no one, not even, Heaven forbid, the evil one, can grab anything away from us, as we are already subject to Hashem's lien and we are His!" (*Divrei Yechezkel*)



Singing and Dancing Each Day

Rav Tzvi Hirsch once told Rav Elozor, the son of the *Bnei Yissoschor* of Dynov, "When a person gets up in the

morning from his bed and sees how *Hashem* has returned his soul and recreated him, it is proper and fitting that he should sing to *Hashem* and thank Him for this.

“I once knew a G-d-fearing *Chassid*,” continued Rav Hirsch, “who traveled to my *Rebbe*, Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanov. This *Chassid* used to dance and sing whenever he recited *Elokai Neshama!*” (*Be’eros HaMayim II Likutim*)



The Handicapped Angels of Sin

Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Rymanov once remarked, “I wish I could see those angels and *klippas* that were created from the sin of a Jew!” He explained further: “I believe that it would be a wounded and pathetic being full of blemishes. The *klippas* that the truly wicked create through their sins are whole, healthy and strong. However when a *Yid*, a *Yisrael*, creates one, it is weak and sickly.

This is because even when a Jew does sin, he does not do so wholeheartedly. He does not put his whole heart into it. The evil wicked inclination forces him to sin, and so the action is only halfheartedly done, through coercion. This creates a weak angel. Then afterward surely he repents his misdeed, crying and doing *teshuva* over what he did. This blinds the wicked angel. Then he does further *teshuva* and has *charota* (regret). He claps his hands together in despair and smacks his forehead in consternation and remorse! He *klops al chet* – he beats his chest with his fist as he recites the *viduy* confession; he slaps his thigh in a gesture of despair! These gestures and actions in turn smash the body of the angel, breaking his hands and feet and decapitating him! Such an angel must be totally maimed and abused;

all his body and limbs must be broken. From head to toe, this handicapped *klippa* must be totally injured!” (*Imrei Yehuda* pgs. 86a, 115a)

Rav Avrohom Horowitz of Shendishov related that he once visited Rav Tzvi Hirsch *HaKohen* of Rymanov on the *Yahrzeit* of Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanov, his *Rebbe*, on the thirty-sixth day of the *Omer*. Many *Chassidim* came in to sit at Rav Hirsch’s *tisch*, during which he asked them to collect money in order that they purchase some whiskey or brandy on which to make a *berocha* and wish one another *l’chaim* as a *tikkun* for the soul of Rav Menachem Mendel.

The *Rebbe* then asked them if they had studied the customary *Mishnayos* that are learned to elevate the soul of the departed and they replied, “Why would the holy *Tzaddik* need our learning? Surely his elevated and refined soul is already soaring the uppermost chambers and palaces flying on the wings of the *Shechina* and resting in the protection of *Hashem!*”

Rav Hirsch Rymanover answered them with a *moshol*: “We see that when it rains the fish in the water all rise to the top and open their mouths to drink the drops of rain. Why do they do so? Don’t they have plenty of water? They live in entire bodies of water! The answer is that they know the true value of water and so they appreciate and value each and every precious drop! So too regarding the holy *Tzaddikim*, who dwell on high in the land of the living called *Artzos HaChaim*; they perfected and refined their middos and character through all manner of *Torah* study, good deeds and *mitzvos*. Nonetheless, they know that the value of *Avodas Hashem* is priceless. Therefore, they prize each and every good deed and *mitzva* done in their merit, to elevate their souls!”



Rav Aharon Kotler, 2nd of Kisleiv

This seemingly too-incredible-to-be-true story actually took place. It was during World War II when twenty-four *Rabbonim* were being held in Italy and faced being returned to Nazi-occupied Europe and certain death.

Rav Aharon Kotler, founder and *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Lakewood *Yeshiva*, turned to the well-known *askan* and subsequent mechaber of *Ethics From Sinai*, Mr. Irving Bunim, and asked him who could intercede on behalf of these twenty-four *Rabbonim*. Mr. Irving Bunim suggested the Italian Mafia. Rav Kotler urged Mr. Bunim to contact them immediately.

After contacting them, he asked Rav Aharon, "Who are we sending to the meeting?"

Rav Aharon replied, "You and I are going."

Off they went to meet the godfather of the Mafia, Joe Bonnano. Rav Aharon did not speak English, so it was Mr. Bunim who explained the problem of the twenty-four *Rabbonim* trapped in Italy.

The Mafia chief asked Mr. Bunim, "Who is the elderly man sitting next to you?"

He told him, "He is the godfather of the Jewish people."

"Really?" asked the Mafia chief.

"Yes!" replied Mr. Bunim emphatically.

"Tell him I want a blessing."

So Mr. Irving Bunim turned to Rav Aharon and in *Yiddish* told him, "*Ehr vill a bracha fun de Rav*. (He wants a blessing from the *Rav*)."

"*Zog eim ehr zol leiben lang un*

shtarben in bet."

Mr. Irving Bunim turned back to the mafia chief Joe Bonnano and told him, "The *Rav* blesses you with long life and you should die in bed."

Upon hearing this, the Mafia chief replied, "I like that," and promised to arrange the freedom of the twenty-four *Rabbonim* stuck in Italy within two weeks, which he did indeed accomplish.

Twenty-something years later, in 1964, a shiny black stretch limo pulls up in front of Lakewood Yeshiva in Lakewood, New Jersey. Two fancily dressed men get out and walk up to the office. They say are looking for Rav Kotler. Out comes a man who introduces himself.

"No, not you," say the two Italian guys. "We are looking for an older man."

"That was my father," says the *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Shneur Kotler, "but he passed away a number of years ago."

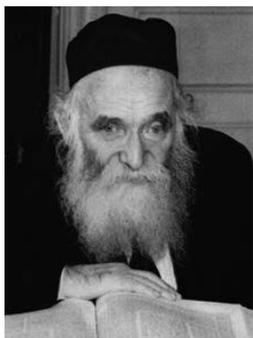
The Italian men explain that they are the Bonnano brothers, and that their father always "attributed his long life to your saintly father's blessing. Now that he has just retired, we are taking over the business and we came here for the same blessing."

"I'm sorry," says Rav Shneur, "my father could do that, but I am not on that high level."

Disappointed, but clearly understanding the concept of *yeridas hadoros* (spiritual descent of the generations), the new Mafia chiefs bid farewell to Rav Shneur.

For saving twenty-four *Rabbonim* from the Nazis, and with Rav Aharon Kotler's *berocha*, Joe Bonnano – the Mafia godfather – lived to ninety-seven years old. {*Emunah Magazine/Noam Amdurski-Matzav.com Newscenter*} ~

www.matzav.com/rav-aharon-kotler-ztl-and-the-mafia-godfather/



Background

With the Soviet occupation of Poland in 1939, Rav Kotler escaped first to Kobe, Japan, then to the United States in April of 1941. Rav Aharon assumed a leading role in the rescue operations of the *Va'ad Hatzola*. Under his leadership, *Bais Medrash Govoha* opened in a converted house in Lakewood, New Jersey, in April 1943, and the *Yeshiva* and *kollel* student body increased from the original fourteen to 140 in 1962, the year of his *petira*. Rav Aharon also headed *Chinuch Atzmai*, the network of *Torah* day schools in *Eretz Yisrael*, founded in 1953, and he took over the leadership of *Torah U'Mesorah*, the American day school movement, after the *petira* of its founder, Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz. He also headed *Agudas Yisrael's Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah*.



How He Decided To Come To America

The two great *Torah* giants, Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Aharon Kotler, both learned in the *Slutzk Yeshiva*. Rav Feinstein later became the *Rav* of Luban in Russia, but when the Communists rose to power, his life was in danger because the Communists tried to uproot any vestige of Jewish life. Finally, when life in Russia became too precarious, Rav Feinstein and his family immigrated to the United States, arriving there in 1936.

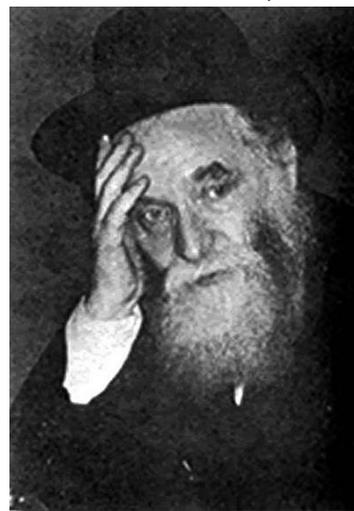
Rav Kotler, though, remained in Europe until World War II broke out. Eventually, after many trials and tribulations, he managed to escape from Europe, and arrived in Japan. Now that he was in a country that allowed Jews to travel, he had two choices. On the one hand, he could travel to *Eretz Yisrael*, where his father-in-law, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, had already established himself. Or he could travel to the United States and join Rav Moshe Feinstein.

Faced with this major decision, Rav Kotler decided to follow the system of lots used by the *Gaon* of Vilna. This consisted of a certain method of turning the pages of a specific edition of the *Torah*, and following the direction of the verse to where this system pointed.

After casting the lot, Rav Kotler found that the verse he had opened to read (*Shemos* 4:27): “*Hashem* said to Aharon, ‘Go to meet Moshe in the desert.’” Rav Aharon Kotler understood this to mean that he was to join Rav Moshe Feinstein in what was the “desert” of Jewish learning in America.

It was in the United States that Rav Kotler established the Lakewood *Yeshiva*, one of the premier *Yeshivos* in the world.

www.heichalhanegina.blogspot.com/2006/11/special-shalach-manos-for-rosh-yeshiva.html



A Song of Thanks

On my way to Beit Shemesh from Yerushalayim, my friend gave me a hitch to the exit of the town. From there, I intended to take the bus to Beit Shemesh. At the bus stop there were three Bachurim that made me realize that a bus would not be coming any time soon. When I asked the boys what they planned to do, they responded that they had already said Mizmor LeToda and they are relying on Hashem to send them a hitch all the way to Beit Shemesh.

I was surprised and I asked them how they were so sure they would get a hitch. They answered that they always do this - whenever they need something – they say Mizmor LeToda and when they get what they need (after the hitch) they then repeat Mizmor LeToda.

They again said Mizmor LeToda and I stood on the side eyeing them with interest, waiting to see what would happen.

No more than five minutes passed and an empty Taxi stopped and offered to take us to Beit Shemesh for a very cheap rate due to the late hour and also due to the fact that he had no passengers. I was very happy at the offer however, the boys were adamant that they would get their ride free of charge. **SO THEY DECLINED.**

I was so curious I decided to stay and wait to see what would happen. As the cab left, the boys again said Mizmor LeToda and sure enough, four minutes later, a large vehicle stopped and offered us a ride to the exact area we needed in Beit Shemesh – **FOR FREE!**

Out of curiosity I asked the driver where he was coming from. He told me that he was coming from a simcha in the Zviller Hall. I asked him why he came this way since taking highway 9 would have been much quicker for him? He smiled and said that indeed he was heading to that highway however a thought entered his head that perhaps there are people waiting for a hitch at the hitching spot and being that the hour is late he decided to come and check just in case.

When I asked him how long ago he left the Zviller Hall, he replied with a time that exactly matched the first time I heard the boys saying Mizmor LeToda!

Had I not witnessed this with my eyes I would have never believed the power of simply saying THANK YOU HASHEM. Now however, I know the power and I decided to publicize this amazing piece of advice.

מזמור לתודה

בדרכי מירושלים לבית שמש לקח אותי חבר טרמפ עד ליציאה מהעיר, משם תכננתי להמשיך בנסיעה בקו מהדרין לבית שמש, אלא שקבוצה של שלושה בחורים עמדו בתחנה והסבו את תשומת ליבי כי אין בזמן הקרוב נסיעת מהדרין, לשאלתי מה הם יעשו, השיבו כי אמרו מזמור לתודה וסמוכים ובטוחים כי ה' יזמן עבורם טרמפ עד הבית...

הרמתי גבה ושאלתי מניין הביטחון הזה? הם השיבו ברוע כי כך דרכם להגיד מזמור לתודה לפני שזקוקים הם לישועה ואח"כ כאשר זוכים לישועה ושוב כאשר יורדים מהטרמפ ולא היה פעם אחת שלא זכו לישועה...

הם פתחו במזמור לתודה, ואני הסתכלתי מהצד נראה מעט מוזר אבל חיכיתי לראות מה יעלה בגורלם... לא חלפו חמש דקות ומונית שירות ריק עצר והציע לנו לעלות במחיר מוזל מאוד מחמת השעה ומכיוון שלא היו לו נוסעים גם כך...

שמחתי על ההצעה והודעתי לקבוצה שיש כאן נסיעה מוזלת... אך הם סרבו ואמרו כי תגיע ישועה מושלמת ללא כל הוצאות ממון...

הסקרנות התגברה ונשארתי לראות מה יעלה בידם. כעבור ארבע דקות עצר רכב גדול ונוח ושאל אם משהו צריך לבית שמש בדיוק לאזור שאני והבחורים מתגוררים, עלינו כלנו לטרמפ שפתח בנסיעה.

הבחורים כבר מלמלו מזמור לתודה פעם נוספת אך אני שיצר הסקרנות בער בי להבין את המהלכים שאלתי את הנהג מהיכן הגיע, הנהג השיב כי הגיע מארוע באולמי זווייז, תיכף תמהתי ושאלתי מדוע לא נסע דרך כביש 9 שממיר הרבה יותר ועשה את דרכו ליציאה מהעיר...

הנהג חיך ואמר כי באמת היה בדרכו לכביש תשע אך לפתע נכנסה בו מחשבה כי אולי בשעה מאוחרת כזו ישנם אנשים בכניסה לעיר שממתינים לטרמפ ובשבילי זה תוספת של כמה דקות בלבד והנה אכן אתם חיכיתם לטרמפ...

לשאלתי לפני כמה דקות יצא מזווייזל נמצאו דבריו מכוונים בדיוק לאותו רגע שהבחורים פצחו במזמור לתודה...

אילו ראיית את הנעשה הייתי מתקשה להאמין אך עתה שנוכחתי לראות את כוחה של תודה גמרת בלבי לפרסמו כרבים למען ישמעו וילמדו וישמחו בעיצה מופלאה זו!!
בעל המעשה: ע. ס. ה.

לזכר נשמת אמנו החשובה, נפש יקרה ועדינה, אשה יראת ה' ובעלת מדות טובות

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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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Zera Shimshon



Chayei Sara

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

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

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

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

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

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

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

לזכר נשמת

רבינו שמשון חיים בן רב נחמן מיכאל זצ"ל

בעל הזרע שמשון זיע"א

ויה"ר שיתקיימו בנו ברכותיו של אותו צדיק

Eishes Chayil was said by Avraham Avinu about Sarah, the Zera Shimshon explains the entire Eishes Chayil depicting the role of a Jewish wife.



גמלתהו טוב ולא רע כל ימי חייה

She bestows upon him good and not bad, all the days of her life

The Zera Shimshon asks that if she does good, why does the passuk need reiterate that she does not do him bad.

The Zera Shimshon answers based on the Gemara (Baba Metzia 59a) that says that blessing is only found in a home on account of the wife. The reason for this is based on the concept found in Mishlei. The passuk says (28:20) that says, (through) *a trusted person - many blessings*. On this passuk the Midrash (Shemos Rabba 51:1) says - whomever people put their trust into, Hashem sends blessings through him. Being that a good wife trusts in her husband and is trustworthy to him, for this reason Hashem sends bracha on behalf of the trusting wife through her husband in whom she places her trust.

With this, the Zera Shimshon explains the aforementioned passuk. *She bestows upon him good* - the blessing (good) that comes to a person on behalf of his wife is due to the fact that the end of the passuk mentions - *and not bad* - that the wife is the starting point for the cycle of this blessing, she trusts and is entirely trustworthy to her husband.

In other words, the first part of the passuk is not referring to the good actions of the wife as originally thought which lead to the question of the double wording in the passuk. Rather, it refers to the good that comes to the house on behalf of the wife, and the second part of the passuk is actually the part that describe in what merit the blessing comes.

The passuk ends off, *all the days of her life*. The Zera Shimshon explains this based on that what Rashi (Bereishis 24:67), says that when Sara Imeinu passed away, certain blessings left as well. The Zera Shimshon says this is true by every woman. If she is the source of blessing in the house then when she passes away, the blessing will leave too, hence, *She bestows upon him good and not bad - all the days of her life*.



פיה פתחה בחכמה ותורת חסד על לשונה

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and a lesson of kindness is on her tongue.

This passuk praises the woman who does not speak a lot. This is because naturally, women speak a lot (Berachos 48b). And inevitability, speaking a lot will always include many unwise remarks. Therefore, the passuk praises the woman who only speaks when she has something intelligent to say and otherwise keeps her mouth closed.

The Zera Shimshon continues to explain the end of the passuk along these lines as well. The Gemara (53b) recounts how a Tana once came to a fork in the road and asked Beruria (R' Meir's wife), "*Which road leads to Lod?*". She answered him sharply and said, "*Fool! Didn't the sages say not to talk too much with a woman?! You should have simply said, 'Which to Lod?'*" Not only does a wise woman not speak too much but she teaches others to be careful in all areas of speech as well. Hence - *a lesson of kindness is on her tongue*.

(Seemingly, according to the Zera Shimshon, sometimes a sharp lesson is deemed a kindness!)

ליבות חיים דוד בן טוביא חוה להצלחה וסייעתא דשמיא בכל מעשה ידיו ובכל הענינים

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רוני דינה בת סימי
דוד בן שרה
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