

# ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

LIGHTS OF OUR RIGHTEOUS TZADDIKIM



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

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)

 **TOLDOS** 

❖ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❖

## ESAV'S HANDS

*The voice is the voice of Yaakov, and the hands are the hands of Esav (27:22).*

In his Sefer Birkas Avrohom, the Slonimer Rebbe draws chizuk and encouragement from this pasuk. He points out, that although Chazal say that 'the voice of Yaakov' overcomes 'the hands of Esav', the plain reading of the verse however, seems to imply the opposite. It sounds like - when 'the voice is Yaakov's' at the same time - 'the hands are Esav's'.

He explains, that 'Kol Yaakov' symbolizes the Kol Torah and Tefillah, the power of our voices united in Torah study and prayer, and 'the hands of Esav' represent *our own* evil actions and misdeeds.

If a person examines himself and finds that he has the hands of Esav. If he discovers - to his horror - that his actions are failing, that he has done wrong, acted immorally and that his actions are lacking, what should he do? Here, the Evil One, his Yetzer Hara, steps in and tries to cause him to feel terrible about himself. He makes him feel like a failure, a bad person and a criminal. This in turn leads the person to feelings of hopeless and depression - on the brinks of despair. The Evil One says, "Give up! There is no hope, your hands are bloody with the sins you have done. How can you do Teshuva when you have transformed your hands into Esav's hands?!"

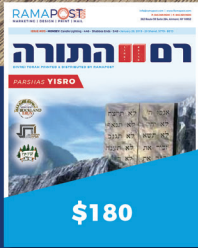
However, the pasuk tells us - 'The Kol Kol Yaakov'. Even *at the same time* that the hands are those of Esav's, never give up, there is hope! If you use the 'Kol Yaakov' and daven

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and beseech Hashem by asking Him to help you repent and do teshuva, then you can surely be saved.

Chazal's message goes a step further. They are teaching us that when the Kol is that of Yaakov, then the hands are no longer the hands of Esav. They lose their power. This means that through sincere prayer and teshuva, one can transform his hands until they are no longer the hands of Esav at all.



## HOLY EYES

*And Yitzchok's eyes grew dim and he could no longer see. (27:1)*

The Midrash Rabbah (65:10) comments that Yitzchok could no longer see Esav's evil actions.

The Modzitzer Rebbe tells the following story. One Shabbos the light was extinguished in one of the rooms in the house of the Chernobyler Rebbe, Rav Menachem Nuchem, author of Ma'or Eynaim (light of the eyes). Contrary to the Halacha of Amira leAkum, someone asked a gentile to light a candle in a way that was not permissible.

This desecration of Shabbos caused the light of the candle to be forbidden to benefit from. Amazingly, when the Tzaddik, the Chernobyler Rebbe entered the candlelit room, he could not see a thing! He stumbled about as if in the dark and actually knocked his head against the wall by accident! He had so sanctified his eyes, that the forbidden light produced through a desecration of Shabbos did not illuminate for him and he simply could not see it nor benefit from it!

In Yeshaya (33:15), the pasuk says, *"He shuts his eyes from seeing evil."* The Modzitzer tells us, that when a forbidden sight, something evil, passes before us, we should flee or at least shut our eyes tight as the Gemara Bava Basra 57b tells us. However, a person that has sanctified his eyes, his own eyes shut themselves instinctively on their own accord. An even higher level one can attain is that even if they remain open - he simply cannot see the evil at all. His eyes have dimmed to the point where he can no longer see evil.

May we merit to sanctify our eyes to the point where we see only the good in each and every Jew and see no evil, as the tefillah of the Noam Elimelech concludes, *'May we see only the good virtues of our friends and fellow Jews and never their shortcomings.'*



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִלּוּי נַשְׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק  
בֶּן/בֵּת \_\_\_\_\_, יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתְּקַבֵּל בְּרַחֲמִים  
וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטּוֹב שֶׁאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחְשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדַבָּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וְיִהְיֶה הַכֹּל  
לְזָכוֹת וּלְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִלּוּי לְנַשְׁמוֹת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפֶרֶט לְנַפְשׁ רּוּחַ וְנַשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי /  
צַדִּיק \_\_\_\_\_ . יְהִי רָצוֹן שְׁתִּהְיֶנָּה נַפְשׁוֹתֵיהֶם צְרוּרוֹת בְּצֵרוּר 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](http://www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm)



## ❁ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ❁



### YAHREITS BEGINNING SHABBOS TOLDOS

[http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim\\_yahrtzeits/Kisleiv](http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim_yahrtzeits/Kisleiv)

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

### \* 2<sup>nd</sup> of Kisleiv ~ Begins Friday Night (Nov 30<sup>th</sup>)

\* **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).

\* **3<sup>rd</sup> of Kisleiv ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Dec 1<sup>st</sup>)**

- \* **Rav Meshulom Yissochor Ashkenazi** of Stamford Hill, London, the Stanislaver *Rebbe*,

(5756/1995);

✳ **Rav Shilo Refoel**, *Av Bais Din* of Yerushalayim, (5755/1994);

✳ **Rav Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky** (1921–2000). Born in Saint Louis, he learned at *Torah Vodaas* in his early twenties, while serving in the army. He married Sora Gartenhaus in 1950 and joined *Yeshiva Ner Israel* in 1954. He became *Rosh Yeshiva* and replaced Rav Yaakov Weinberg after the latter's *petira*. Rav Kulefsky left two sons: Tzvi Hirsch and Nosson and three daughters: Esther Chana (Abraham), Ettie (Rosenbaum), and Faigi Gruman, forty grandchildren

✳ **4<sup>th</sup> of Kislev ~ Begins Sunday Night (Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>)**

✳ **Rav Eliyohu Kubo**, *Av Bais Din* of Saloniki, *mechaber* of *Aderes Eliyohu* and *Shnei HaMe'oros HaGedolim* (1628–1688). The Kubo family had immigrated to Greece from Spain during the Spanish expulsion. Rav Eliyohu became chief *Rav* in Salonika, (5449/1688);

✳ **Rav Tzvi Hirsch Margulies** of Lublin, (5566/1805);

✳ **Rav Yaakov Dovid Kalish** (1803-1878), founder of the Amshinov dynasty. Rav Yaakov Dovid's father was Rav Yitzchok of Vorka, a leading *talmid* of Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshis'cha and a peer of Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. When Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshis'cha passed away in 1827, his followers split into two streams, some of them following Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, whose emphasis was on fiery self-discipline, and the remainder adhering to Rav Yitzchok of Vorka, whose approach was one of warmth and love. In 1848, when Rav Yitzchok of Vorka passed away, many of his followers wished to follow Rav Yaakov Dovid of Amshinov. He, too, followed the Vorka tradition of kindness and *kiruv rechokim*. Rav Yaakov Dovid set up court in the town of Mszczonow, Poland, which became known to Jews as Amshinov. There, he became known as the *Rebbe* of Amshinov. Meanwhile, Rav Yaakov Dovid's brother, Rav Menachem Mendel, continued the Vorki dynasty from their father in Vorki itself (1779-1848). Rav Menachem, the eldest of Rav Yaakov Dovid's three sons, inherited the mantle of Amshinov from his father for forty years, (5639/1878);

✳ **Rav Yaakov Mordechai** of Stretin, (5715/1954);

✳ **Rav Avrohom Shmuel Stern**, *Rosh Yeshiva Toras Chessed* in London (1949-2005). Born in Miskolcz, Hungary, to Rav Pinchas Zelig Stern, the *Serentcher Rav*, he arrived in London with his parents in 1956. Seeing the need for a new *Chassidish Yeshiva* in London, Rav Stern founded *Toras Chessed*. During his entire life, he was close to the *Rebbes* of Satmar and Pshevorsk, (5766/2005).

✳ **5<sup>th</sup> of Kislev ~ Begins Monday Night (Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

✳ **Rav Shmuel Eliezer HaLevi Eidels**, the *Maharsha*, born in Cracow in 1555. His father, Rav Yehuda, was an eminent *Talmid Chochom* who descended from Rav Yehuda *HeChassid*, as well as from Rav Akiva *HaKohen* Katz, the father-in-law of the *Shela HaKodosh*. His mother was the granddaughter of Rav Yehuda Loewe, the *Maharal* of Prague. Rebbetzin Eidel Lifschitz of Pozna, the wealthy widow of Rav Moshe Lifschitz, the *Rav* of Brisk, made a match between her daughter and the *Maharsha*. She also supported her other son-in-law, Rav Moshe Ashkenazi, *mechaber* of *Zichron Moshe*, with whom the *Maharsha* studied. In appreciation of his mother-in-law's efforts, the *Maharsha* added the name Eidels to his own name, and from then on called himself Shmuel Eliezer Eidels. Rebbetzin Eidel passed away in 5368 at the age of one hundred. During his years as *Rosh*

*Yeshiva* in Austroha, the *Maharsha* compiled his monumental *Chiddushei Halochos* and *Chiddushei Aggodos on Shas*, (5392/1631);

- \* **Rav Dovid Luria** (1798-1855), the *Radal*, was a *talmid* of the *Rav* of Vilna, *Rav Shaul Katzenellenbogen*. He wrote an important commentary on *Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer*. He is also known as a commentator on *Gemora* and *Medrash*. In addition, he composed *Halachic responsa* and a commentary on *Rambam's Mishneh Torah*. *Radal's* dedication to learning was legendary. It is said that he did not sleep more than one hour during the short summer nights and three hours in the winter, in addition to an afternoon nap of precisely twelve minutes. In 1854, he was offered the *Rabbinat* of Warsaw. He refused this position despite the encouragement of the *Gerrer Rebbe* that he take it. However, *Rav Dovid* did involve himself in communal needs, including a meeting in 1846 (together with *Rav Yitzchok* of *Volozhin*) with *Sir Moses Montefiore* to address the needs of *Russian Jewry*, (5616/1855);
- \* **Rav Osher Anshel Yungreiss** (*Jungreis*; *Jungreisiz*), *Czenger* (*Chenger*) *Rav*, the *Menuchas Asher* (1806-1873). [according to *Hamodia* 2005, 27<sup>th</sup> of *Elul* 1889], (5634/1873);
- \* **Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz**, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Kamenitz* (1867-1940). He was born in *Slutzk* to *Rav Shmuel Dovid Leibowitz*, who was a close follower of the *Rav* of *Slutzk*, *Rav Yosef Ber Soleveitchik*. At the age of sixteen, he went to *Volozhin* and became the *talmid muvhok* of *Rav Chaim Brisker*. In 1903, he was invited to be *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Knesses Bais Yitzchok* in *Slobodka*. During *World War I*, the *Yeshiva* moved to *Minsk*, and in 1921, to *Vilna*. Finally, in 1926, it moved to *Kamenitz*. He was the father-in-law of *Rav Reuven Grozovsky*, who became his successor. He authored *Birkas Shmuel on Shas*, (5701/1940);
- \* **Rav Mordechai Rimer** (1928-1999), *Mashgiach Ruchoni* of *Yeshiva Kochav M'Yaakov*. Born in *Munkacz* to *Rav Binyomin*, one of the most prominent *Kalushitz Chassidim* who was the *Rosh HaKohol* of the *Sanz Bais Medrash* in the city. Young *Mordechai* grew up in the home of his grandfather, *Rav Arye Leib Rimer*, one of the most prominent *Sanzer Chassidim* in *Kashow*. In the winter of 1944, he was taken from the *Yeshiva* of *Munkacz*, along with his entire family, to the ghetto, and on *Rosh Chodesh Sivan* of that year they were all deported to *Auschwitz*. Although his entire family was murdered, he lived there until its liberation. After the war, he learned at the *Chevron Yeshiva* under *Rav Meir Chodosh*. After his marriage in 1950, he learned in the *Chevron kollel* for another twelve years. At that time, he began to deliver a *shiur* for *ba'alei batim bnei Torah* in the *Achva shul*, a *shiur* that he continued to deliver for forty-five years. In 1962, the *Gaon* of *Tchebin* invited him to be a *Maggid Shiur* and *Mashgiach* in his *Yeshiva*, and for thirty-eight years *Rav Mordechai* assumed responsibility for the *chinuch* of the *Yeshiva's* students. During the *Yomim Noro'im* he regularly served as a *ba'al tefilla* at the *Tchebin Yeshiva*, (5760/1999).

## \* **6<sup>th</sup> of Kislev ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Dec 4<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* **Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlap** (1883-1951). *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshivas Merkaz HaRav* and *Rav* of *Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed* neighborhood. He was a close disciple of *Rav Avrohom Yitzchok HaKohen Kook*. *Mechaber* of *Mei Morom* and *Michtevei Morom*, (5712/1951);
- \* **Rav Chaim Michoel Dov (Ber) Weissmandl**, *Rosh Yeshiva Nitro* (*Mount Kisco, N.Y.*) *Yeshiva*, *Holocaust rescue activist*. *Mechaber* of *Min HaMeitzar*, (5718/1957);
- \* **Rav Shlomo Abu Maaravi**, founder of *Otzar HaTorah* network, (5750/1989);
- \* **Rav Chaim Shmuel Lopian**, *mechaber* of *Ravcha Shmaatsa*. The son of *Rav Eliyohu Lopian*, he was among the first students in the *Gateshead Kollel* under *Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler* in 1942, (5759/1998);

\* **Rav Yechezkel Shraga Lipshitz-Halberstam**, the Stropkover *Rebbe* (1908-1994). Born in Stropkov, Czechoslovakia, to Rav Yissochor Dov Lifshitz of Ungvar. His paternal grandfather was Rav Aryeh Leibush from Apta, the *Yismach Tzaddik*, and his maternal grandfather was the *Rebbe* of Stropkov, the *Divrei Sholom*, who was the son of the *Divrei Yechezkel* of Shinava, the eldest son of the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz. Rav Yechezkel Shraga's first public position was as *Rav* of Yablodka. After a few years there, he became *Dayan* of Bergsas. During World War II, he was sent to Auschwitz, where his wife and five children perished. After the war, he moved to *Eretz Yisrael*. In 1954, upon the *petira* of his uncle, Rav Menachem of Stropkov, Rav Yechezkel was appointed *Admor* by the Sanz elders of Shinava and Stropkov. He authored *Divrei Yechezkel Shraga*, (5755/1994).

\* **7<sup>th</sup> of Kislev ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Dec 5<sup>th</sup>)**

\* **Rav Dovid Sinzheim** of Strasbourg, France (1745-1812). He served as president of the "Sanhedrin" established by Napoleon, the first meeting of which occurred on February 9, 1807. He was *mechaber* of *Yad Dovid*, (5573/1812);

\* **Rav Shlomo Binyomin HaLevi Ashlag**, *mechaber* of the *Peirush HaSulom*, [According to some, 10<sup>th</sup> of *Tishrei*], (5744/1983).

\* **Rav Aharon ben Kalonymus Kalman HaLevi Epstein** of Cracow, son of the Maor VaShemesh, (5642/1881).

\* **8<sup>th</sup> of Kislev ~ Begins Thursday Night (Dec 6<sup>th</sup>)**

\* **Rav Moshe**, *mechaber* of *Mahadura Basra*, printed at the back of the *Gemora*, (5429/1668);

\* **Rav Eliyohu ben Yehuda Kovo** (1630-1688). The son-in-law of Rav Moshe Chaim, who was the son of Rav Chaim Shabsai and the chief *Rav* of Salonica. After the *petira* of his father-in-law in 1685, he was appointed to be chief *Rav*. He died at a young age due to a plague, which also took the lives of his two sons. He compiled *Tana D'vei Eliyohu*, a collection of 451 responsa, but most of it was lost. His grandsons managed to collect twenty-six of them and printed them as *Shaalos Uteshuvos Aderes Eliyohu*, (5449/1688);

\* **Rav Yitzchok Navon** (1733-1786). Born in Constantinople, he was the son of Rav Yehuda Navon, *mechaber* of *Kiryas Melech Rav* on the *Rambam's Mishne Torah*, and the grandson of Rav Ephraim Navon, *mechaber* of *Machaneh Ephraim*. Rav Yitzchok himself wrote *Din Emes* on the *Tur* and the *Bais Yosef*; the *sefer* was published in Salonika in 1803, (5547/1786);

\* **Rav Moshe Shapira** of Slavita, son of Rav Pinchas of Koretz, (5599/1838);

\* **Rav Avrohom Yitzchok** of Tunis, *mechaber* of *Mishmeros Kehuna*, (5625/1864);

\* **Rav Aharon Twersky**, the third *Rebbe* of Chernobyl (1786-1871). Rav Aharon was the eldest of the eight sons of Rav Mordechai of Chernobyl, and the grandson of Rav Menachum Nachum, the *Me'or Einayim* of Chernobyl, his childhood teacher. Rav Aharon succeeded his father after the latter's *petira* in 1837. He also served as the *nosi* of the *Rabi Meir Ba'al Haness Ma'os* of *Eretz Yisrael* fund in the Ukraine, (5632/1871);

\* **Rav Nachum Dov Schneerson** of Ovritch (Ovruch). Uncle of Rav Yosef Yitzchok, son of the *Rebbe Rashab*. Ovruch is a historic town in the Zhytomyr province of western Ukraine. It is the administrative center of the Ovrutsky district, (5656/1895);

\* **Rav Avrohom Mordechai** of Kamarna, a grandson of Rav Yitzchok Isaac Yehuda Yechiel of Kamarna (1806- 1874), whose uncle was Rav Tzvi of Zhiditchov. He authored many important *Chassidic* works, such as *Heichal HaBerocha*, *Derech Emuna*, *Otzar*



*Mitzvosecha, Zohar Chai, and Megillas Sesorim, among others, (5702/1941);*

- ✳ **Rav Pinchas Dovid Horowitz**, the Bostoner *Rebbe* (1876-1941). Born in Yerushalayim to Rav Shmuel Shmelke and Sheyna Elka Horowitz, he was very close to his grandfather, Rav Elozor Mendel of Lelov until the latter's passing in 1883. He then became a devoted *talmid* of his uncle, Rav Dovid Tzvi Shlomo of Lelov. He also became part of a small group of boys who studied *mishnayos* in depth with Rav Shneur Zalman of Lublin. After his marriage to Rivka, he lived in Tzfas with her parents. When his father died tragically at age thirty-six, he was forced to move to Yerushalayim to care for his mother and younger siblings. His wife, Rivka, died in 1904. Her father, eager to keep his son-in-law in the family, suggested that he marry his granddaughter, Sora Sasha Brandwein, who was still a child. In 1909, at the age of sixteen, she gave birth to a son, Moshe. During World War I, he escaped to the United States as a refugee in 1915, with the help of Rav Yaakov Meir of Salonika, the *Rav* of Greece. In gratitude to the Jews of Boston, who helped him procure residential rights in America, he settled in Boston, (5702/1941);
- ✳ **Rav Dovid Borenstein** of Sochatchov, the *Chasdei Dovid* (1876-1942), born to Rav Shmuel (the *Shem MiShmuel*), who was the son of the *Avnei Nezer*. His primary teacher was his grandfather. In 1906, he became the *Rav* of Vishogrod, Poland. He moved to Lodz in the late 1920s. He was very active in *Agudas Yisrael* and encouraged many to settle in *Eretz Yisrael*. He died of heart failure in the Warsaw Ghetto. The Sochatchov heritage continued under his brother, Rav Chanoch Henoch, who had established a *Bais Medrash* in Bayit Vegan, (5703/1942);
- ✳ **Rav Eliezer Geldzahler** (1958-2004), born to Rav Eliyohu Yehoshua Geldzahler, founder of *Mosdos Ohr Yisrael* of Queens and a *talmid* of Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz, Rav Reuven Grozovsky and Rav Gedalia Schorr. Rav Eliezer's mother, Henna Freidel, was the daughter of Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler. As a child, he learned in his father's *Yeshiva*, where he made a *siyum* for *Gemora Bova Basra* before his *bar mitzva*. As a *bochur*, he learned in *Yeshiva Zichron Yaakov* in South Fallsburg under Rav Elya Ber Wachtfogel. From there, he went to Yerushalayim to learn in the *Yeshiva* of Rav Dovid Soloveitchik. He spent several years in the Lakewood *kollel*. In 1980, he married Baila, the daughter of Rav Michel and Rebbetzin Feige Twerski of Milwaukee. He opened *Yeshiva Ohr Yisrael* in Brooklyn and served as its *Rosh Yeshiva*, developing a *mesivta* and a *Yeshiva Gedola*. In January of 2004, the bus he was on in *Eretz Yisrael* was involved in a crash, and he was critically injured. He never recovered from his injuries and passed away ten months later, (5765/2004).



## ❁ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❁

### WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

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

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

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



## ❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

### STORIES & ANECDOTES

#### Rav Aharon Kotler, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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/](http://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

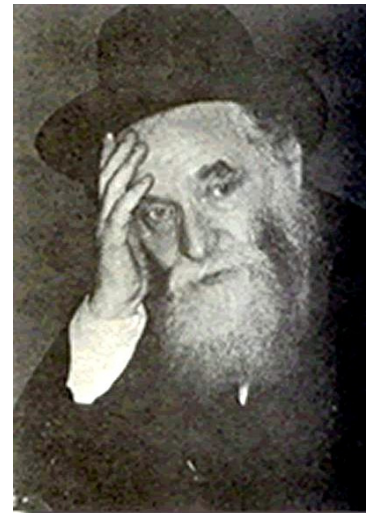
1943, and the *Yeshiva* and *kollel* student body increased from the original fourteen to 140 in 1962, the year of his *petira*. Rav Aharon also headed *Chinuch Atzmai*, the network of *Torah* day schools in *Eretz Yisrael*, founded in 1953, and he took over the leadership of *Torah U’Mesorah*, the American 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](http://www.heichalhanegina.blogspot.com/2006/11/special-shalach-manos-for-rosh-yeshiva.html)



## Rabbeinu Shmuel Eliezer HaLevi, 5<sup>th</sup> of Kislev

The Maharsha

### The Peshat

The *Chazon Ish* writes: The last generation did something incorrect when they stopped studying the *sefer* of the *Maharsha*. He left *Klal Yisrael* a great gift to give *zechus* (merit) to the generations that followed him, to accustom those who study to toil in *Torah*. The *Gaon*, Rav Akiva Eiger, studied this entire *sefer* and left nothing out. From the day that the generation stopped studying the *Maharsha* they lost true understanding of *peshat* of the entire simple, straightforward meaning of the text; instead they have accustomed themselves to *kalus ha'iyun* – in-depth analysis that is light-headed and a façade. (*Kovetz Igros*, Letter#1)



*Tzaddikim* said that the reason the *Maharsha* was *zocha* to such spiritual heights was because when he was younger, he used to grow his hair and would nail the hair to the back wall. Whenever he learnt late at night and felt drowsy and his head would fall forward, he would be jolted back and would be able to continue his studies.



Rav Nachman of Breslov told the following three tales:

### The Gilgul

The *Maharsha* was the *Rav* of the local congregation and above his station was the *Rav* of the entire locale. The *Maharsha* sat and taught in his *Yeshiva*. While others may have paid the local *Rav* his respects, the *Maharsha* ignored him completely, simply sitting and teaching. The local *Rav* was gracious and judged the *Maharsha* favorably, saying that perhaps he was so engrossed in teaching and studying that he did not wish to cause *bittul Torah* (taking time away from *Torah* learning). Then the local *Rav* came to visit the town where the *Maharsha* was *Rav*. Still, the *Maharsha* failed to pay his respects and the *Rav* further judged him favorably. Then he came to the *Maharsha's shul* and witnessed as he sat and taught *Torah* in the *Yeshiva*, not even deigning to rise and greet him. Still, the *Rav* judged him favorably until a good-looking young man entered.

Immediately, the *Maharsha* stood up and gave honor to this young man and

spoke with him at length. Now the local *Rav* was furious and in his anger confronted the *Maharsha*, saying, “I judged you favorably three times; you never paid your respects to me! It cannot be due to *bittul Torah* for I see you spoke at length in the middle of your studies with this young man!”

“This young man will die two hours hence,” pronounced the *Maharsha*. The local *Rav* did not believe it. He followed the young man around and kept close to him all the while until, as they wandered around outside, a squire who was practicing hunting birds accidentally shot and killed the young man!

When the local *Rav* came back to the *Maharsha*, the *Maharsha* then revealed that soon another dead man would also be brought in. When that too occurred, the *Maharsha* explained to the perplexed local *Rav*, “That young man was a reincarnation of Achav the King of Yisrael, which is why I paid him honor and respect and spoke with him at length. Just as Achav was killed, so too was this young man destined to die. You held him up and the attribute of judgment that lay in wait to take his soul was prevented from doing so. From on high the young man was killed another way and now this other dead man was killed by the attribute’s angels of destruction through your actions. You are responsible for this man’s death.”

The local *Rav* was horrified and begged the *Maharsha* to teach him a way to do *teshuva*. The *Maharsha* ordered him to leave his post as *Rav* and become a coachman – and so he did.



### **For Whom the Bell Tolls**

In Ostrog, where the *Maharsha* presided as *Rav*, the local cathedral and its bells were directly in the path of the *chevra kadisha* (burial society) as they went to conduct burials. There was no other way to

go – and the church bells caused passersby to be seized by a madness to renounce their faith and convert!

The *Maharsha* ordered them to place his *sefer* that he wrote on the body of the next *niftar* who had to pass there. All the priests gathered and began to toll the bells. As the *chevra kadisha* paused and the *Maharsha* began to leaf through the pages of his *sefer*, the entire cathedral and all the priests began to sink into the ground until they were swallowed up into the earth! Till this day there remains a sign where they sank in.

(Aidel, the daughter of the *Ba’al Shem Tov*, used to recite this story to people who were sick and they were miraculously healed.)

[Editor: Some say the matter happened with the *Maharsha* himself when his own bier was on the way to the cemetery. That route was avoided in the past due to the church phenomenon, even though it was the shortest route to the cemetery. The *Maharsha* insisted that they use that route and put his *sefer* on top of his bier and he promised that no harm will befall his carriers. As usual, while passing the church, all the priests gathered and the church bells started ringing. Miraculously, the *Maharsha* lifted his head from the bier and leafed through the pages of his *sefer* and after every page, the church sunk a little more until only the top of the cross was visible in the ground. I have visited Ostrog and the spot is still visible till this day.]



### **The Maharsha’s Successor**

When the *shul* in Ostrog was built, they needed to raise a substantial amount of money to cover the costs. Therefore the groundbreaking ceremony took place among much fanfare and the cornerstone was laid amid pomp and circumstance. The honor of laying the cornerstone was sold to

a wealthy Jew for a bag of gold coins. The latter honored the *Maharsha* with the laying of the cornerstone. When the *Maharsha* turned to him and asked what he could grant him in return, the rich man asked for a son like the *Maharsha*.

“This is very difficult; ask for something else,” said the *Rav*, but the rich man would not change his mind and stubbornly insisted on this and nothing else.

“If so, I can grant your wish but you will die when your wife conceives and she will die in childbirth. I will raise the child for you; only in this way can it come to pass.”

The couple agreed – and so it was.

The *Maharsha* raised the orphan and he seemed ordinary in every respect; his greatness was hidden. Before the *Maharsha* passed away he ordered this orphan to be his successor. The new *Rav* never participated in the funeral of any of the important personages in town, which caused others to attack him for his strange behavior.

As a result, the next time there was such a funeral, the *Rav* did attend. He approached the body and lifted the shrouds – and the horrified crowd saw how the body was taken away by angels of destruction before their very eyes.

“See – these are your important citizens! How do you expect me to honor them?” said the *Rav*.

From that day on the people recognized his greatness as the *Maharsha*’s successor.

(*Koch’vei Ohr*)



## **From Shnorrer To Philanthropist**

*Rodef tzedoka vochessed yimtza chaim tzedoka vechovod* – “He who chases *tzedoka* and *chessed* will find life, *tzedoka* and honor.”

The *Gemora* (*Bava Basra* 9b) explains that if a person chases after *tzedoka Hashem* will provide him with money to give to *tzedoka*.

The *meforshim* ask: how can he chase *tzedoka* if he does not have money? In addition, the word *rodef* implies that the *tzedoka* is running away from him. Why is it running? Lastly, why will he find honor if he chases *tzedoka*?

We can answer all these questions with the *pshat* of the *Maharsha*. The *Maharsha* says that the person chasing *tzedoka* has no money. He is chasing others to persuade them to give *tzedoka*. He is the local collector. *Chazal* tell us that collecting *tzedoka* from others is a great *mitzva*. People with money to give cross the street when they see him or pull down the shades when he rings the bell. He may be chasing, but they are running fast. *Tzedoka* is running away from him. The collector’s heart breaks at his inability to raise money, while watching the poor and sick wither away.

His reward is that *Hashem* lavishes riches upon him. Not only can he now revive the unfortunate among us, but instead of receiving *bizyonos* (shame) from constant rejection, in his new role he now finds the triple crown of life for the poor, money for *tzedoka* and honor as a *ba’al chessed*.

[www.revach.net/tzedaka/lessons-in-tzedoka/From-Shnorrer-To-Philanthropist/4345](http://www.revach.net/tzedaka/lessons-in-tzedoka/From-Shnorrer-To-Philanthropist/4345)



## Rav Chaim Michael Dov (Ber) Weissmandl, 6<sup>th</sup> of Kislev

Known as Reb Michael Ber

Rav Chaim Michael Dov Weissmandl, known as Reb Michael Ber, was born in Debrecen, Hungary, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of *Cheshvan* 5664 (1903). When he was still a child his family moved to Tyrnau (in Slovakian, Trnava); there, his father, Rav Yosef, served as a *shochet*.

Although Tyrnau was a Christian town that contained many churches and a seminary for the priesthood (it was even popularly known as “Little Rome”), it nevertheless had a Jewish history. In the fourteenth century, it had been the home of Rav Yitzchok Tirna, who wrote *Minhogim*, an important book of customs (published in Venice, 1591). Before World War II there were approximately four hundred Jewish families in Tyrnau of whom more than half were Orthodox.

At first, Rav Weissmandl studied in a local *cheder* but when he was older, he commuted daily to the nearby town of Sered, where he studied under Rav Dovid Wesseley, who headed a small *Yeshiva* there.

Rav Yosef Weissmandl had three sons and two daughters. Rav Weissmandl was the eldest and in the late years he always spoke of his father with deep affection and great respect. Once, he revealed that his father was exceedingly meticulous in reciting the special midnight prayers (*Tikkun Chatzos*) and



when he saw that his sons were asleep, he would weep and pray only that he merit devout and scholarly sons.

Rav Weissmandl suffered a great shock when his father died in 1941. At that time he was living in Nitra. On a Friday, just before the onset of *Shabbos*, a stranger approached him in the street and asked him, “What was the name of Avrohom Avinu’s mother?” Rav Weissmandl did not understand the point of the question, so the stranger repeated it several times, adding, “If you do not answer, you will be sorry.”

That *Motzo’ei Shabbos*, he received the news that his father had died. Rav Weissmandl believed that there was a connection between his father’s *petira* and the stranger’s question. Late the same night when he opened a book about the laws of mourning called *Mishmeres Sholom* he found the following sentence: “ ‘Amaslai the daughter of Karnavo the mother of the patriarch Avrohom’ is a remedy in a time of danger.” He then understood that his father must have been ill at the time he was asked the question. Rav Weissmandl frequently told this story to his colleagues and pupils.

After his father’s *petira*, Rav Weissmandl used to travel frequently to his mother’s home to comfort and encourage her. He was brokenhearted and became very introspective. He let his hair grow long as a manifestation of his mourning and only had it cut just before the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat*, when he traveled to the *Sheva Berochos* (marriage celebrations) of his brother-in-law, Rav Sholom Moshe Ungar. For the rest of his life, Rav Weissmandl remembered his father in love and pain.

At the age of twelve, Rav Weissmandl wrote an original lecture (*p’shetel*) to deliver at his *bar mitzva*. However, when his grandfather, Rav

Menachem Meir Berthauer of Pressburg, arrived to take part in the celebrations, he offered to give the *bar mitzva* boy ten gold crowns if he would forgo delivering the lecture in public. His grandfather was a humble man who was fully aware of his grandson's brilliance; he was therefore apprehensive that the acclaim that the boy would receive might turn his head and make him proud. Rav Weissmandl acceded to his grandfather's request and used part of the money to buy Rabbeinu Bachya's commentary on the *Torah*. The circle of Rav Weissmandl's life closed when he died while studying that same book.

The lecture he had prepared for his *bar mitzva* did not go to waste. Thirty-six years later he delivered it to the *talmidim* at his *Yeshiva*. He lectured for an hour and the audience was deeply impressed by his brilliance and erudition. At the end, he made an off-hand remark that it had been his *bar mitzva* speech that he had not delivered at his grandfather's request.

For some time, Rav Weissmandl studied at the *Yeshiva* of Rav Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky in Galanta but he gained the bulk of his education from Rav Shmuel Dovid Ungar, the *Rav* of Tyrnau and later of Nitra. Since Rav Weissmandl was deeply attached to his first teacher, Rav Dovid Wesseley, the transfer to Rav Ungar was very difficult for him. For two years he studied alone without attending the *Yeshiva* in Tyrnau. Only after he realized Rav Ungar's great humility and after he had heard the fervor with which he recited the *Ahava Rabba* ("Great Love") *tefilla*, did Rav Weissmandl become attached to him. From then on, he remained Rav Ungar's faithful and devoted *talmid* until they were separated in the final expulsion of the Jews from Slovakia in 1944.

While he was still a *Yeshiva* student, Rav Weissmandl had an outstanding knowledge of the very complicated laws of *mikva'os* (ritual baths which must be constructed according to exceedingly

complex and rigorous rules) and of mathematical formulas required in order to build a *mikve*. In fact, he helped in planning the *mikve* that was part of the Tyrnau public baths complex.

In 1931, Rav Ungar was invited to become *Rav* in Nitra and the young Rav Weissmandl tried to dissuade him from accepting the invitation on the grounds that Tyrnau was an ancient famous Jewish community. Rav Ungar, however, insisted on going to Nitra and articulated a strange feeling he had. "My heart tells me," he said, "that there will come a time when there will not be a *Yeshiva* in any other place but Nitra and I want to be there." When Rav Ungar moved to Nitra, his faithful student went with him.

As a seventeen-year-old *Yeshiva* student, Rav Weissmandl published three short volumes of *chiddushim* (novellae) he had heard from his teacher. He did this on his own without obtaining Rav Ungar's permission. When he realized that his teacher did not approve he canceled his plans to publish further volumes that he had prepared.

For a number of years, Rav Weissmandl served as the *Chazor Bochur* in the *Yeshiva* and as the *Gabbai decharifus* (the student in charge of assigning students to lecture in-depth on *Gemora* every *Shabbos*) and in 1931 published a volume of his research called *Hilchos HaChodesh* (the Laws of Fixing the New Moon). At times he worked on various inventions and intended to support himself from his inventions and be independent.

Rav Weissmandl made several journeys to visit the great *Torah* sages in Poland and Lithuania. Among others, he visited the Lubavitcher *Rebbe*, Rav Elchonon Wasserman, the Gerrer *Rebbe*, the *Chofetz Chaim* and Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky. In Vilna, Rav Grodzinsky asked him, "Tell me, you come from a town near Pressburg, the city of the *Chasam Sofer* – do they still study *Torah* there as



intensively as they did in the past?"

Since Rav Weissmandl did not have sufficient money for a prolonged stay in one place, he bought a railway tourist ticket that allowed him to travel all through Poland. When the train arrived at a town, he would get off and visit the Jewish cemetery there or the *Rabbonim* and *Rebbs* in that town. At night he would continue his journey.

Rav Weissmandl was an expert at deciphering ancient manuscripts and frequently compared them to printed versions. He traveled to Oxford, England, three times to continue his research at the famed Bodleian library collection of Hebrew manuscripts. On one occasion an ancient manuscript was brought to the library while he was there and the resident scholars identified its author mistakenly. Rav Weissmandl revealed the true author to the chief librarian and from then on he was treated with great regard. He was given the rare privilege of using the library's facilities even when they were closed to the public. During his visits to Oxford, he recorded variant readings from the manuscripts as well as hundreds of unpublished Rabbinic responsa which he intended to publish.

In Oxford, Rav Weissmandl became acquainted with a non-Jewish scholar who had a phenomenal knowledge of *Talmud*; he quoted entire tractates from memory. Rav Weissmandl was very impressed with his knowledge and memory but whenever he mentioned that scholar he used to say that his knowledge, although phenomenal, was artificial because one must sense the spirituality and inner meaning of *Torah*.

As a youth, Rav Weissmandl was an extremely diligent student and spent days and nights in study when he was preparing a new edition of *Sefer Kikoyon DeYona*, a *Talmudic* commentary which the Nitra students were accustomed to study. In those days he slept very little, and for months at a time he never undressed to go

to bed. In less than a year he reviewed the fifteen *masechtos* (tractates) of the *Talmud* included in the above-mentioned *sefer*, which was ultimately printed by the governors of the Nitra *Yeshiva* with Rav Weissmandl's notes and emendations. At the end of the volume, he added notes to *Shulchon Aruch Even Ho'Ezer* on the basis of a manuscript he had discovered in Oxford. Rav Weissmandl also wrote an introduction to the book, giving the biography of its author and directing some pointed remarks in elegant style to those who were likely to criticize the book. In free translation, this is what he wrote:

It is a clear and indisputable truth that all possible excuses for mistakes – whether unintentional or deliberate – will be in vain. The supporter has no question while no answers will satisfy the critics. When a man wants to judge his fellow generously, he needs no aids and all the excuses in the world will not stop one who wants to do the opposite. Therefore, it is only logical and sensible not to vindicate oneself with pleas and supplications at the beginning of a book like a beggar, hat in hand ...

Many glosses...were overlooked, sometimes unwittingly and sometimes by forgetfulness or because of lack of time or space. Clearly, if the book had been printed without notes or glosses at all, as it was in previous editions, nobody would have objected. However, now that it has been printed with corrections – to whatever degree we have succeeded – some readers will defend our efforts while others will take offense. This is no novelty; it has always been so ...

This is what a publisher must tell every honest reader and he who thinks it in his heart must articulate it with his lips. Now, let all those who object rest easy, and let the critic not be consumed by bitterness. May he be blessed who

accepts an honest answer and as for him who refuses to accept – let him be blessed too.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat*, 5697 (1937), Rav Weissmandl married Berocha Rochel, the daughter of his teacher, Rav Shmuel Dovid Ungar. For the *teno'im* (engagement) party, which was held some time earlier, the *chosson* (bridegroom) had returned from England, where he had been pursuing his research in Oxford. At the celebration, he gave a brilliant lecture that lasted for two and a half hours. In his discourse, he discussed the legal aspects of *sivlonos* (gifts that a man gives his future bride). At the beginning of his talk, he recounted that in Oxford he had found manuscripts containing several problems on the subject raised by an ancient *Torah* sage, Rav Shimon Sharabi. Rav Weissmandl intended to resolve these questions. He proceeded to explain, on the basis of the manuscript sources he had discovered, the custom of the Jews of Oberland (Upper Hungary) not to commit the engagement conditions to writing.

Rav Dovid Meisels of Satoraljuajhely, who was present at the celebration, was so impressed that he told the *Yeshiva* students who were there that if one of them could repeat the lecture, he would ordain him as a *Rav* on the spot. As a wedding gift, he granted the *chosson* Rabbinical ordination and enthusiastically praised his *Torah* knowledge. Rav Ungar, the father-in-law, said that he had nothing to add and limited himself to saying, “The *chosson* is pious through and through!”

Both before and after his marriage, Rav Weissmandl was very active on behalf of the Nitra *Yeshiva*, and in fact, he was Rav Ungar’s right-hand man. There were periods when he taught one of the classes in the *Yeshiva*. In 1936 he gave the “simple lessons” which at that time studied *Maseches Shevi’is*. This class was intended for rapid surface rather than in-depth study to give the students a wider knowledge of

*Gemora*. Rav Weissmandl, however, taught it in great depth, citing dozens of external sources, including manuscripts he had found in Oxford. When he would finish a subject, he used to say, “Everything I have said is ancillary to the subject and I have not yet touched on the actual subject!”

Even in his youth, Rav Weissmandl exhibited two clear character traits. On the one hand he was a serious, settled man and on the other he was capable of humor and gaiety. When he recited the *kinos* (dirges said on *Tisha B’Av*), or when he described the tortures of Gehinnom in his sermons, he would weep bitterly and his audience would join him in weeping. But on happy occasions and particularly on *Purim* he would climb on the table and entertain the company with barbed witticisms and jokes.

He was a magnificent and persuasive orator. In the Nitra *Yeshiva* it was customary to hold a meeting of all Rav Ungar’s former and current students every five years. In one such gathering in the 1930s, men who had studied with Rav Ungar when he was a *Dayan* (a Rabbinical judge) in Krompachy participated together with students from his days in Tyrnau and Nitra. This was a meeting of fathers and sons who had studied *Torah* at the same source. At these gatherings, Rav Ungar would address his students on matters of ethics and piety; the job of discussing the practical and financial situation of the *Yeshiva* was left to Rav Weissmandl. On this occasion too he did his job. He had been in Vienna prior to the meeting, so the governors of the *Yeshiva* sent him a message requesting him to return for the meeting and to prepare himself to tell the gathered students about the serious financial difficulties the *Yeshiva* was facing. When he began his presentation, he told his audience about the governors’ message to talk about the needs of the *Yeshiva* and added, “To what can this be compared? To a man with a toothache who people tell how to cry when the dentist hurts him!

Does he need to prepare himself to cry? When it hurts, you cry! The *Yeshiva* has no funds. That hurts and that is why we are crying! There is no need to prepare yourself to cry – it comes naturally!”

Rav Weissmandl often accompanied his father-in-law on his journeys, and in 1935 they traveled to *Eretz Yisrael*. When he visited the Western Wall, he was overcome with religious fervor at the sanctity of the site and in a postcard to Rav Menachem Moshe Felsenburg he wrote: “Be blessed with a blessing from Tzion the Magnificent; from Tzion out of which goes forth the *Torah* and whose holy stones are better than all the innovations of the Jews in our sacred land.”

When he returned from *Eretz Yisrael*, he gave a *derasha* in the *shul* of *Zeirei Agudas Yisrael* in Vienna, recounting what he had seen. With great emotion, he described Har HaZeisim (Mount of Olives) where the dead are buried facing east, because *Moshiach* will come from that direction. Rav Weissmandl also accompanied his father-in-law to the *Knessia Gedola*, the main convocation of the *Agudas Yisrael* world organization.

Rav Weissmandl’s activities during the war constitute one of the most striking examples in Jewish history of total dedication and sacrifice in order to save Jews.

In 1938, when Austria was conquered by Nazi Germany, the first victims were the Jews of Burgenland. They were stripped of everything they owned and expelled to Vienna, where they stayed without any means of support. Rav Weissmandl risked his life to travel to Vienna to consult there with the community leaders to see what could be done to help the deportees. The Nazis then gathered approximately sixty *Rabbonim*, mostly from Burgenland, and put them on a ship that sailed toward Czechoslovakia. The ship was harried from port to port, because the Czechoslovakians refused them

entry and the Austrians would not take them back. Rav Weissmandl flew to England, where he succeeded in being received by the Archbishop of Canterbury (the head of the Anglican Church) and by the Foreign Office. He explained the tragic situation, and as a result of his endeavors the *Rabbonim* were granted entry visas to England.

After the Munich Agreement (September 30, 1938) and the Vienna Award (November 2, 1938), parts of Slovakia were annexed by Hungary and a considerable number of Jews there were ruled to be “stateless” and expelled by the Hungarians into the no-man’s-land between Slovakia and Hungary. In a telegram dated November 23, Rav Weissmandl turned to Samuel Hoare, the British foreign minister, and to the Archbishop of Canterbury and begged them to intervene on behalf of the refugees. In the telegram which was sent from Nitra, he said:

“In the last five days Hungarian authorities have expelled thousands of Jews with great cruelty, in rain and darkness, to the no-man’s-land along the Slovakian border. In our great trouble I beseech Your Excellency to intervene.”

The Archbishop of Canterbury passed the telegram on to the Foreign Office on the same day and added a note saying that he had met Rav Weissmandl and respected him – “He is worthy of credence.” On the following day, however, the Foreign Office rejected the plea. It advised that the telegram be ignored and not answered, since the subject was not included in the Munich agreements.

At the beginning of the persecutions of the Jews in Slovakia, Rav Weissmandl planned the immigration of several hundred Jewish families to Canada, among them families from Nitra and Tyrnau, but the plan was never realized. Later, Jews from Nitra and Tyrnau were among the first to be sent to Auschwitz, where they

were forced to work in the construction of the crematoria and deal with the bodies of the victims. Ultimately, they too were killed. When they arrived in Auschwitz, instead of Canada, the people of Nitra and Tyrnau made a gruesome joke, "Well, we've arrived in Canada."

In 1942–1944, Rav Weissmandl was active in the *Hatzola* (Rescue) Committee in Pressburg (Bratislava). The leadership of that committee included Rav Armin Frieder, Mrs. Gisi Fleischmann, Dr. Tibor Kov`acs, Ondrej Steiner, Dr. Oskar Neumann and others.

In February 1942, a notice was issued calling on all Jews born between 1897 and 1926 to register with the police in order to establish their "work capacity". Recognizing this as a Nazi ruse, Rav Weissmandl advised the *Yeshiva* students not to register since it would then be easier for them to escape if necessary. He also called on all the Jews to prepare bunkers and hiding places to use, should the situation deteriorate.

In March 1942, deportations started from Slovakia to the Lublin area in Poland; from there the deportees were later transferred to Auschwitz. After some 58,000 Jews had been expelled, Rav Weissmandl succeeded, through a man named Karol Hochberg, in bribing the S.S. officer, Dieter Wisliceny, who was in charge of the expulsion of Slovakian Jews. For \$50,000, the expulsions were halted for two years and in the meanwhile negotiations were underway to save European Jewry as a whole. This program was called the "Europe Plan".

In the course of his activities in the *Hatzola* Committee from 1942 to 1944, Rav Weissmandl continuously traveled back and forth between Nitra and Pressburg.

Most of his week was spent in Pressburg doing committee work and only toward *Shabbos* did he return to his family in Nitra. When he came home, he would

give Rav Ungar a detailed report of his week's activities and consult with him as to his future rescue efforts.

During one of his journeys in a railway train, a copy of the newspaper "The Neue Zurichische Zeitung" containing an account of the murder of tens of thousands of Jews in the Nazi gas chambers fell from his pocket. He was arrested and charged with propagating hostile literature against the Germans, but managed to gain his release through bribery.

Rav Weissmandl's arrest did not deter him from devoting himself to his stressful and dangerous rescue work. One day, because of the intensive tempo of his life, he suffered severe chest pains. The physician who examined him diagnosed a heart attack and ordered immediate hospitalization. He would have to rest for a prolonged period and cease all activities. However, two days later when he heard that a Jewish old-age home in one of the towns was in danger of liquidation, he immediately left his sickbed and traveled to the town to save those Jews from expulsion.

Gradually, heart-breaking letters from the Jews who had been expelled to the Lublin area in Poland began to reach their relatives in Slovakia. In their letters, the deportees described the executions, sickness, cold and hunger which they suffered in their place of exile. They informed their relatives that for jewelry, clothing, and similar articles they could buy basic foodstuffs such as bread and potatoes from the native Polish population. Rav Weissmandl, together with other leaders of the *Hatzola* Committee, purchased various items of jewelry and transferred them by messengers – often German officers and soldiers – to the Lublin area. The deportees acknowledged receipt of the shipments and sent letters back to their relatives by the same messengers. This aid and the contacts they made gave the deportees the physical and psychological strength to bear – at

least temporarily – the terrible suffering imposed on them, thereby saving them from immediate destruction.

In 1943, one of the German messengers was arrested while he was in possession of a list which Rav Weissmandl had sent to the Lublin camp detailing how the shipment of jewelry should be distributed. As a result, Rav Weissmandl too was arrested and held for a lengthy interrogation by Kukula, an official of the Ministry of Finance. During that interrogation Rav Weissmandl told his interrogators everything that was happening to the deportees in the Lublin area; how old men, women and children were suffering and dying of cold and hunger. Rav Weissmandl explained that he had only wanted to aid these helpless deportees, and he argued that he had merely broken a minor law in order to help innocent people. When Kukula heard the description of the Jews' suffering, even his stony heart melted and, with tears in his eyes, he sighed, "After all, I too have children." In the meantime, Rav Weissmandl was still imprisoned, and he tried to find a way to let his colleagues on the *Hatzola* Committee know what he had admitted and revealed to his interrogators. He was afraid lest somebody else be arrested and wanted to avoid contradictions and discrepancies that might result from other interrogations.

On *Hoshana Rabba* (the last of the intermediate days of *Sukkos*) he told his guards that he would not eat unless they allowed him to go to a *sukka* to recite *kiddush* on wine. This was a ruse, since *kiddush* is not recited on that day. His wish was granted, and two guards took him to the *sukka* of one of Pressburg's Jews. When it became known, many people came to the *sukka* and Rav Weissmandl, while pretending to recite the *kiddush*, gave his audience an account in Hebrew of what he had told his interrogators. After he was returned to prison, he had further

conversations with Kukula who later permitted the Jews to send parcels to their coreligionists who had been deported to the Lublin area. Unfortunately, the arrangement did not last long, because the deportees were soon transferred to the death camps.

In the fall of 1944 the Partisans' Revolt erupted in Slovakia; as a result, the Germans decided to put an end to Slovakia's Jews and the deportations were resumed. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of *Elul* 5704 (September 7, 1944), a few days before the recitation of *selichos* (penitential prayers) in preparation for the *Yomim Noro'im* (High Holy Days), Rav Weissmandl, his wife and five children (four daughters and a son) were arrested in Nitra. Together with the rest of the Jews, the Weissmandl family was taken to a camp in Sered, Slovakia. From this camp, transports were sent to Auschwitz. In command of the expulsion of Slovakian Jewry was a cruel SS officer named Alois Brunner. Eichmann had prevented Dieter Wisliceny, who had previously been in command, from returning to Slovakia.

The *Hatzola* Committee people were trying to find a way to return Rav Weissmandl to Pressburg, since they urgently needed his aid and advice in their work. The leaders of the Committee therefore informed the authorities at the Sered camp that they were required by the security services in Bratislava to prepare a special list of Jews and that without Weissmandl they could not do it. They requested that he be allowed to visit the capital if only for a short time and Rav Weissmandl received a "holiday" to go to Pressburg for one day. Because he did not return on time, Brunner called Rav Weissmandl's brother-in-law, Rav Benzion Ungar, the Rav of Piest'any. He was interrogated about Rav Weissmandl's activities and how he had disappeared. Later he was taken out and executed while wrapped in his *tallis* and reciting *Shema*

*Yisrael.*

At the end of September, Brunner demanded that a number of Jewish leaders from Pressburg be brought to Sered "in order to organize social work there". For this purpose, he also demanded the immediate return of Rav Weissmandl. Actually Brunner wanted to get Rav Weissmandl out of Pressburg so that he would not be able to warn Pressburg Jewry that Brunner was planning their imminent expulsion and mass arrests. After Rav Weissmandl and several other leaders were transferred to Sered, some 1,800 Jews in Pressburg were arrested and sent to Sered.

On his return to Sered, Rav Weissmandl took his life in his hands and opened negotiations with Brunner. He tried to persuade him that the war was nearly over and that Germany's defeat was a foregone conclusion; he suggested that Brunner should start preparing his alibi by preventing the expulsion of Slovakia's Jews. He also promised him that a great deal of money would be deposited in his name in a Swiss bank. The discussion often became heated and in his excitement Rav Weissmandl even pounded on the table. Finally, Brunner decided to send Rav Weissmandl and his family to Auschwitz. Before Rav Weissmandl was put on the train, Brunner had him photographed in twenty-two (!) different poses to ensure that should he escape he could be easily identified and recaptured. Brunner also sent special instructions how to treat him in Auschwitz.

Before he got on the train to Auschwitz, Rav Weissmandl advised a number of people to saw through the doors of the carriages and jump out; he even distributed small handsaws for this purpose. He himself took a saw with him, concealed in a loaf of bread. He was convinced that if he could only reach Pressburg, he would be able to alert world Jewry to the renewed danger in which Slovakian Jewry was now placed. His heart

was torn between his love for his family and his responsibility to the Jewish people.

After the train started its journey, Rav Weissmandl sawed through the lock of the carriage door in the middle of the night and jumped from the train with a troubled conscience. With great efforts, he succeeded in reaching a bunker in Pressburg where a number of Jews were hiding. When Brunner found out that Rav Weissmandl had not reached Auschwitz, he put a price on his head and began an intensive search for him. It did not take long for the news of his escape to reach the Jews in Sered and they were revitalized by the hope that he would do something for them. It was said that Rav Weissmandl wept day and night because he had not succeeded in saving the Jews and because his wife and children had stayed on the train to Auschwitz.

Within a short time, Rav Weissmandl made contact with Jews in other bunkers in Bratislava, who were suffering from a chronic lack of money. Rav Yaakov Ungar, Rav Weissmandl's brother-in-law, was hiding in a bunker in Nitra together with other Jews and was making great efforts to contact Rav Weissmandl. They published a classified ad in a Slovakian newspaper in Pressburg that "the Rabinger family was seeking Michael Medved (Rabinger - "the *Rav*" and Medved means "bear" - *Dov* - in Slovakian); a post office box number was given. The response was not long in coming. Rav Weissmandl made contact with the group, and by a special messenger, he sent them money, wine, *matzos* and raisins for *Pesach*.

A Jew named Funk, who had been an officer in World War I, came to Rav Weissmandl's aid while he was in the bunker. Funk disguised himself as a non-Jew and, with forged identity papers, roamed the streets of Pressburg freely. He dealt in foreign currency and had good contacts with various Germans and foreign

diplomats. Funk used to visit the bunker and served as its contact with the outside world. As a result of Dr. Rudolph Kastner's negotiations with the Germans, they agreed that the occupants of the bunker be transferred to Switzerland in a truck. The vehicle traveled from Slovakia to Austria and collected a number of Jews from various camps and also the wife and family of Rav Yitzchok Ze'ev Meir from a camp near Vienna. Four days before Pressburg was liberated by the Russians, the truck left for Switzerland and arrived safely.

After his arrival in Switzerland, Rav Weissmandl suffered a massive heart attack and spent considerable time in the hospital. The terrors of the war and his deep despondency sapped both his physical and spiritual strength.

In the meantime, a few members of his family and some friends and students had returned to Nitra. They included his brother-in-law, Rav Sholom Moshe Ungar, Rav Yitzchok Ze'ev Meir and Rav Yona Forst. These three made contact with Rav Weissmandl and asked his advice regarding their own future and that of the *Yeshiva*. His advice was to renew studies in the *Yeshiva* and he promised to find the funds for its maintenance.

Among the many friends who visited Rav Weissmandl in Switzerland was a former Nitra *Yeshiva* student, Rav Reuven Monheit, who was an officer in the French army. Rav Weissmandl asked him to use his position and authority to seek out Nitra students who had survived and to help as many Jewish survivors as he could. Monheit applied to the French War Ministry for permission to undertake this mission and was granted his request. He then devoted his energies to the rehabilitation of the survivors.

In 1946, Rav Weissmandl left Switzerland for America. With the help of his friends and former students, he succeeded in renting a building in the vacation town of Somerville, New Jersey,

with the intention of starting a *Yeshiva* there. After completing the transaction, he returned to Carlsbad in Slovakia to meet the *Yeshiva* students. He stayed with them during the *selichos* period and *Rosh HaShana*. Rav Weissmandl had been accustomed to fast during the *selichos* period and the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* (Ten Days of Penitence between *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur*) but, because of his weakened physical condition as a result of his heart attack, he had to forego that act of piety and ask that the vow implied in his fasting in previous years be absolved.

After *Rosh HaShana* the *Yeshiva*, led by Rav Weissmandl, left for Paris by way of Germany. As they passed through Nuremberg, the news that several Nazi war criminals had been hanged reached the travelers and for the rest of the journey, which took seven or eight hours, Rav Weissmandl talked about the war to his traveling companions. Just before *Yom Kippur*, the party reached Versailles, on the outskirts of Paris, and lodged in one of the local hotels. Immediately after that holy day, Rav Weissmandl returned to America to continue preparations for the reception of the *Yeshiva* students. In December 1946 the students left Cherbourg by sea; when they arrived in America they went to Somerville immediately.

The young men began their studies at once. Rav Weissmandl was in very low spirits; he used to roam through the rooms of the *Yeshiva* as though in mourning with tears in his eyes. Fearful sighs would frequently escape him. In a letter he wrote to a student in 1950 he related: "There were days and years when in the suffering of my soul I prayed to *Hashem*, as Yona the prophet had done in Nineveh, saying, 'And now, O L-rd, take my soul, for it is better for me to die than to live.'" At the end of every Talmudic lecture Rav Weissmandl spoke to his students about ethics and piety and made reference to the terrible calamity that had befallen the Jewish people. Rav

Weissmandl relived the Holocaust in his heart continuously, wherever he was.

On *Purim* 1947, he tried to fulfill the Rabbinic dictum that “a man must drink (wine in order to be happy) on Purim”. He stayed with the students six hours. At first he talked to them about the laws and significance of *Purim* and then turned to each one of them individually and reminded him of his parents and family who had not survived. He made personal references to each of the young men and begged them to continue the traditions of their fathers and thus perpetuate their memory.

Rav Weissmandl spent the *Seder* night of *Pesach* alone; he was too troubled and pained to be able to sit with the rest of the *Yeshiva*. He sat alone in an upper room while the *Yeshiva* students celebrated the *Pesach Seder* below. Occasionally, they could hear him weeping.

After *Pesach*, the *Rebbe* of Satmar was invited to the *Yeshiva* to give regular classes for seven weeks until after *Shavuos*. Rav Weissmandl spent a great deal of time with the *Rebbe*, discussing scholarly subjects and talking about the war and its terrible suffering. These conversations had a calming effect on Rav Weissmandl; his pain became more internalized and he showed it less outwardly.

In the course of time, Rav Weissmandl remarried. His second wife was Leah Teitelbaum of Beregszasz (Berehovo) who was the sister-in-law of Rav Sholom Ungar. Only some ten persons, of whom most were *Rebbs* or *Rabbonim*, were invited to the wedding.

Rav Weissmandl realized that in Somerville the *Yeshiva* had little opportunity to expand, so he began to look for a new location. A suitable site was found in Mount Kisco, but the huge sum of money needed for the purchase was not available. After great efforts, Rav Weissmandl succeeded in raising the

necessary funds, and the new campus was acquired. A new rural Jewish township was created around the *Yeshiva* and then, after all the intensive activity invested in the project, the local authorities wanted to confiscate the entire property because the taxes on it had not been paid on time. It was only after a prolonged legal struggle that this threat was removed.

In addition to managing the *Yeshiva*, which he did for the rest of his life, Rav Weissmandl worked tirelessly at gathering documentation on the Holocaust. He accused the Jewish Agency, the Joint Distribution Committee and the World Jewish Congress of ignoring the appeals he had made during the Holocaust for the financial help with which he could have saved a great number of Jews.

When the State of Israel was established in 1948, he traveled to Washington frequently to express his opposition to it. He even published a pamphlet setting out his views on the subject.

For the latter part of his life, Rav Weissmandl suffered from chronic heart disease and spent long periods in the hospital. As soon as he recovered from a bout of illness, he returned to work immediately. He was incapable of resting.

In the winter of 1957, he was stricken by an extremely severe heart attack and was hospitalized for several weeks. After his release, he found it very difficult to travel to the *Yeshiva*'s New York office because of his physical weakness; nevertheless, he did attend the *Melave Malka* banquet held to raise funds for the *Yeshiva*. The first sentence of his speech on that occasion electrified the assembled guests, for he opened his remarks with a citation, “The Rock Whose work is perfect” – the first verse of the funeral service!

A few days after the banquet, he was back in the hospital and his condition deteriorated steadily. Even in the hospital,



however, he did not desert his responsibilities to the *Yeshiva* and on the very day he died he sent a congratulatory telegram to one of his students who was marrying that day. In the telegram he wrote: "From the straits I call out *Mazel Tov!*"

On Friday, the 6<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev*, 5717 (1957), he asked his visitors to leave his hospital room because he felt weak. One of his pupils noticed that he had reached out and taken hold of a book, *Rabbeinu Bachya's* commentary on the *Torah*. He

spent his last moments on earth reading the book he had bought with the money his grandfather had given him for his *bar mitzva*. Holding the book he loved so much, he returned his soul to his Maker.

[www.weissmandl.org/TheUnheededCry/UnheededCryText.htm](http://www.weissmandl.org/TheUnheededCry/UnheededCryText.htm)



[It was well known that Rav Weissmandl was a superb genius. He composed numerous Bible codes without the use of computers.]



## Rav Yechezkel Shraga Lipshitz–Halberstam, 6<sup>th</sup> of Kislev

Stropkover Rebbe, *mechaber* of *Divrei Yechezkel Shraga*

Rav Yechezkel Shraga was the son of Rav Yissochor Dov Lipshitz of Ungvar, a direct descendant of the *Aryeh D'bei Ilayi*. He was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan* 5668/1908 in Stropkov, Czechoslovakia.

While still a child he lost his mother, and was raised by her father, Rav Avrohom Sholom Halberstam of Stropkov. Later, Rav Yechezkel Shraga would adopt his grandfather's surname.

During World War II, Rav Yechezkel Shraga and his family were sent to Auschwitz.

Despite his indescribable suffering and anguish during those tragic years, including the loss of his wife and children, *Hy"d*, his dedication to *Hashem* and His *Torah* was prodigious.

A miracle that occurred on the first day that he arrived at Auschwitz prompted his self-imposed obligation to build a *mikve* in the future. He was standing in line, waiting to be examined by the ruthless butcher Dr. Mengele. An SS officer appeared and asked the new arrivals if any of them had any expertise in construction, plumbing or electrical work. Obviously, whoever could convince the Nazis that he was a skilled craftsman would buy time for

his life.

Determined to stay alive as long as possible, Rav Yechezkel Shraga decided to claim that he had achieved proficiency in construction. He convinced a young man standing next to him, who was actually a skilled construction worker, to teach him any simple concept concerning construction. The man was happy to oblige, teaching Rav Yechezkel Shraga the basics of constructing a 90-degree angle.

In a clear sign of *hashgocha protis* (Divine Providence), the SS officer posed that very question to Rav Yechezkel Shraga. The ruse worked, and the officer assigned him to a work brigade. He believed Rav Yechezkel Shraga to the extent that he rebuked the other members of the group, saying, "This Jew is the only honest member of the group. He is an experienced craftsman."

At that very moment Rav Yechezkel Shraga made a promise that if he were to survive, he would employ his "professional construction skills" to construct a *mikve*.

In 5709/1949, Rav Yechezkel Shraga arrived in *Eretz Yisrael*, settling temporarily in Ramleh, a city not known for a large observant population. Rav

Yechezkel Shraga's warm personality and keen mind served as a magnet for those who were alienated from *Torah*. There he fulfilled his promise to build a *mikve*.

In 5713/1953, Rav Yechezkel Shraga moved to Yerushalayim, where he founded a *Bais Medrash* and also served as a *Dayan*.

Following the *petira* of his uncle, Rav Menachem Mendel of Stropkov, on the

6<sup>th</sup> of *Iyar* 5704/1954, Rav Yechezkel Shraga became Stropkover *Rebbe*.

He wrote many *seforim* on a wide array of topics, all under the title *Divrei Yechezkel Shraga*.

Rav Yechezkel Shraga was *niftar* on the 6<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* 5755/1994, at age eighty-six.

*Zechuso yogein oleinu.*



## Rav Aharon ben Kalanymous Kalman Epstein of Cracow, 7<sup>th</sup> of Kislev

Son of the Maor VaShemesh

### False Rebbes

Rav Aharon was known as a man of truth, an *ish emes* who could not stand lies, falsehood and false pride or arrogance of any kind. He was known not to hold back his opinion, and when confronted with *sheker*, he would not save face for anyone.

Once a supposed *Rebbe* bragged to Rav Aharon about how his *Chassidim* relied on him. "What shall I do?" his tongue dripped false modesty. "One *Chassid* asks me to bless him with rain for his crops, while another asks me to *daven* for hot sun to dry his wares for sale at the market. Since these requests are at odds with each other, I don't know what to do," he concluded, placing his quandary before Rav Aharon.

Rav Aharon, who could not stand such false modesty, answered back with his barbed tongue, "You have nothing at all to worry about, since your blessings do not matter and won't make any difference at all! Just bless them both with what they ask for and *Hashem* will do what He wishes anyway!" (In the name of Rav Bentzion of

Bobow *Hy*"d, *Yad Maor VaShemesh* p. 386)

### Reviving the Dead or Killing the Living

Rav Aharon of Cracow was once present together with several other *Tzaddikim*. One of the *Rebbes* was handing out snuff and the *Rebbes* were passing the snuffbox around, each taking a pinch of snuff. Just then, an ordinary Jew, not known as a *Tzaddik* or *Rebbe*, also took a pinch. The owner of the snuffbox turned to this Jew and said with disdain and unmasked contempt, "What – you also took?"

Immediately, the Jew fell stricken to the ground. Rav Aharon got very upset, and said in scorn and mockery, "Fartzeitische *Rebbes* huben mechaya meisim gevayn, *uhn heint vil men harginen?! – The Rebbes* of yesteryear would revive the dead and today's want to kill them instead?!" The *Rebbe* in question responded, "No, no *chalila*," and as soon as he said this, the other Jew got up, revived and unharmed. (*Siach Zekeinim* III p. 268)



## Rav Aharon of Czernobyl, 8<sup>th</sup> of Kislev

### The Holiness

Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver used to

relate how, when Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz would speak about the *Tzaddik*, Rav

Aharon of Czernobyl, he was seized with such awe that he would shake and tremble. He would become covered in goosebumps and they had to dress him in a warm fur coat because his teeth rattled and his limbs shook!

Rav Yissochor Dov would then relate how Rav Aharon would awaken early and recite the *Birkas HaShachar* with such intensity that all present could see the *Shechina* descend upon him! He also told how, as *Shabbos Kodesh* approached, Rav Aharon's eyes would shine and glow with the *kedusha* of *Shabbos*! (*Admorei Belz* volume III p. 27–28)

### Hiskashrus

Once, a yungerman approached Rav

Aharon of Czernobyl and expressed his wish to become *miskasher* – to attach himself in the bonds of *Chassid* and *Rebbe* with the *Tzaddik*. When Rav Aharon heard this he turned to the *Chassid* and said, “You want to be tied to me? Let me explain to you what *hiskashrus* means. When *Moshiach* comes the *Rebbe* needs to tie a big, fat *gartel* around his waist (*Chassidim* wear the *gartel* during *tefilla* and appearing before someone as a sign of respect). The *Rebbe* will be first in line in the procession to greet *Moshiach* and whoever is *mekushar* – tied or bound to the *Rebbe* – will have to hold on tight to the *gartel* and approach, walking together with him!” (*Otzar Yisrael* p. 80:7)



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 צלח – then you turn the pressure into הצלחה, Hatzlacha (Success)

לזכר נשמת אמנו החשובה, נפש יקרה ועדינה  
אשה יראת ה' ובעלת מדות טובות  
מרת זיסל ז"ל

בת הרה"ה מו"ה מאיר זאב הכהן כ"ץ ע"ה הי"ד  
מעיר נירעדהאז יע"א

ונכדת הרה"ק רבי אהרן צבי טערקלטויב ז"ע מבריד  
אשת הרה"ח מו"ה אברהם חיים ע"ה גאלדענבערג

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

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

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

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

נפטרה בש"ט בת תשעים שנה

ביום כ"ד לחודש כסלו (ערב חנוכה) שנת תשע"ח לפ"ק

תמליץ טוב בעד משפחתה היקרה

ותקים לתחיה לקץ הימין מהרה ת'נצ'ב'ה'

Toldot

November 30<sup>th</sup> 2019  
2<sup>nd</sup> of Kislev 5780

828



Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

# Pachad David

Published by Mosdot "Orot Chaim U'Moshe" in Israel

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

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



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

## The Idea Behind Taking the Blessings

**"Now Rivka was listening as Yitzchak spoke to Esav his son; and Esav went to the field to hunt game to bring"** (Bereishit 27:5)

Esav went to the field with the intention 'to bring', whatever happens he will return with something. Chazal clarify the words 'to bring': "If he won't find immediately, he will bring from stolen animals." And indeed when Esav returned to Yitzchak his father, he presented him with dog's meat since he was unable to find a kosher animal. He behaved with foolishness since it was clear that bringing his father non-kosher food was against his wish. Had he told his father that he was unable to find a kosher animal, he would have still blessed him for his efforts and also for abstaining from taking either a non-kosher animal or from stolen property. But when Esav entered with the food, Yitzchak Avinu saw gehinom and even if Ya'akov had not entered deceitfully and taken the blessings, Yitzchak would not have blessed Esav anyway.

This requires clarification: Rivka Imeinu was aware of all this, so why was it important to her that Ya'akov rush to bring delicacies for his father? Since anyway Esav would not have received the blessings, we can assume that Yitzchak would have then called Ya'akov to bless him in place of Esav?

The answer seems to be that Rivka Imeinu, with her great righteousness and ingenuity, wished to separate Ya'akov and Esav and even create hatred between them. In a similar situation, Sara Imeinu wished to send Yishmael away in order to prevent him from having a bad influence on Yitzchak, and Hashem told Avraham Avinu "heed her voice".

Similarly, here, Yitzchak Avinu heeded Rivka's request to bless Ya'akov and instruct him to leave home to find a suitable wife, since she was one of the holy Matriarchs who were able to discern the future. She understood that a tzaddik like Ya'akov cannot live in the same house as a person who is prepared to bring forbidden foods to his father. Therefore, she specifically sent Ya'akov to take Esav's place in order to create hatred between them. It is clear that her counsel was fulfilled since Chazal tell us: "It is a principle that Esav hates Ya'akov". How and when was this principle established? It appears that it was established by Rivka Imeinu, when Esav began to hate Ya'akov for taking the blessings that he felt were rightfully his.

Since Ya'akov Avinu's entire essence was truth, it was very difficult for him to bring delicacies to his father and involve himself with untruth and deception. But Rivka was determined and told him, "Your curse be on me". The Sages explain that with these words Rivka was implying, if you do not agree to go and receive the blessings, I will curse you. So Ya'akov was left with no way out- if he goes to his father and he realizes that he is Ya'akov, he will curse him. But if he doesn't go, his mother will curse him.

We still have to understand why Rivka chose a course of action that involved taking Ya'akov Avinu away from his learning and in a way that was so difficult for Ya'akov Avinu

to carry out? Why did she wish to hinder the natural course of events where Esav would arrive with the forbidden food and then anyway Yitzchak will not bless him? Could she not have found a different way to break them up and build hatred between them?

With siyata dishmaya I would like to suggest the following answer: While the Holy Torah commands us to abstain from eating certain forbidden foods, the Rambam explains that one is forbidden to say for example that pig is not tasty. Rather one should say that it is tasty but the Torah forbids us from eating it. Similarly, one sometimes gets a whiff of a pleasant smell that emanates from the non-kosher food of non-Jews and obviously in this case a person is rewarded for abstaining even from smelling these foods in order to distance himself from the sin of eating forbidden foods.

Rivka Immeinu saw with prophecy that Esav intended to offer his father food from stolen property and from non-kosher animals. She knew that her holy husband had asked for delicacies, allowing himself to grow hungry so that the food that his son prepares for him will bring him joy and then he would be able to bless him wholeheartedly. With her great wisdom, Rivka wanted to prevent a situation where the tzaddik will smell the non-kosher food at a time when he is hungry. This was so that this tzaddik who was called an 'oleh temima', an unblemished sacrifice, (due to his having been offered on the Mizbeach by his father Avraham) should not derive any pleasure, not even for one moment, just from the smell of these foods, before reminding himself that they are forbidden and only then sensing the scent of gehinom that emanates from them.

Now we can understand why Rivka commanded Ya'akov to leave his learning and approach his father. Rivka did not wish to transgress the command "You shall not stand aside while your fellow's blood is shed" (Vayikra 19:16). Ya'akov's delicacies would cause his father to smell the scent of Gan Eden and be satiated only through scents of holiness. Once Esav arrives with his non-kosher food, Yitzchak will already be satiated from Ya'akov's offering and a satiated person is not enticed by the smell of food. And in fact, Ya'akov Avinu did remain faithful to the truth of the Torah since his actions were carried out with the goal of saving his father from deriving pleasure from non-kosher food.

Why did Rivka herself not prepare the food for her husband? Yitzchak desired to receive the food from his son since in gratitude for the food he would bless him with more joy. One can say that certainly the food that Ya'akov prepared for his father Yitzchak contained a genuine and delicate spice – the spice of Torah. This would add to his nachat when partaking of Ya'akov's food.

May Hashem cause all the sinners to truly repent. As the holy Ohr Hachaim writes (Bamidbar 25:14), the Torah calls Zimri an 'Ish Yisrael', an Israelite man. Despite his wickedness, he is still considered a Jewish person. Furthermore, if he repents he will merit the Eternal World since every Jew contains a G-dly essence and can never be banished from Hashem.

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## Hilula

2 – Rabbi Ahron Kotler, Rosh Yeshiva of Lakewood

3 – Rabbi Yosef David

4 – Rabbi Rafael Kadir Tzeban

5 – Rabbi Shmuel HaLevi Idells, the Maharsha

6 – Rabbi Shmuel Pinto, son of Rabbi Daniel Pinto

7 – Rabbi Rafael David Sebban, Rav of Turkey

8 – Rabbi Avraham HaKohen, author of 'Mishmerot Kehunah'



## Walking in their Ways

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



## Words of our Sages

### Casualties Should Not Be Taken Casually

I remember that when the news reached us in France about yet another terrorist attack that had taken place in Israel, I prayed tearfully that there would be no casualties. But, sadly, the media reported six deaths, may Hashem avenge their blood.

Upon hearing this, I felt a stab of pain and pleaded with Hashem to end the suffering there. However, the numbers escalated to a total of eleven killed. Besides, there were tens of injured, many in critical condition and when I thought of them, I wondered what type of life awaited them. Although they were spared death, the quality of their lives had taken a drastic turn. Who could know if they would ever return to normal living?

Many of my countrymen clucked their tongues at the news filtering in from Israel. "How sad for our fellow Jews in the Holy Land," they sympathized. But only a few hours later, they completely forgot about these fellow Jews and went about their forbidden pleasures without even thinking about making changes in their lives.

Of course, when one hears sad news, one is not meant to fall into a black hole of depression and one must continue going about one's regular routine. But some change is called for on everyone's part. The Jews of Israel suffer on behalf of their fellow Jews worldwide. It is therefore incumbent upon us to heed this wake-up call and reinforce our avodat Hashem. Maybe then we won't need additional painful reminders.

### The Haftarah

"The prophecy of the word of Hashem" (Malachi 1,2)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah speaks about Ya'akov and Esav, as it says: "Was not Esav the brother of Ya'akov", while the Parsha tells of the birth of the twins, Ya'akov Avinu a"h and Esav the rasha and their offspring.



### Guard Your Tongue

#### Regret and Commitment for the Future

If a person transgresses and accepts rechilut, he can rectify this sin by working on himself to no longer believe the rechilut and remove the matter from his heart.

If it is hard for him to imagine that the one who told over the rechilut invented the story, he should think that maybe he exaggerated or left out a certain detail, or it could be that the original words were said in a completely different tone. These details can change the impact of something that was really positive to something negative. He should also accept upon himself not to believe lashon hara and rechilut about any Jewish person, and admit his sin. This is how he rectifies his sin if he did not pass on the information to anyone else.

#### Torah Delivers

"Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren. Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him, and his wife Rivka conceived" (Bereishit 25:21)

The Maggid Rabbi Shlomo Levenstein shlita often tells over this wonderful story: There was a couple who were married for twenty years yet were still not blessed with children. Since they lived in Chutz La'aretz they decided to make Aliya, in line with the Rashi that says that dwelling in the Land is a segulah for having children. However, after three years of living in Eretz Yisrael, their situation had not changed.

Meanwhile, a friend from Chutz La'aretz who was visiting Eretz Yisrael, met the couple and inquired how they were doing. When he heard that after all these years they were still waiting, praying and hoping for salvation, he exclaimed: "It is time for you to put your suffering behind you! If after twenty-three years you did not merit giving birth to a child, it is a sign that you will not have any children... There are many couples who were not blessed with children yet they live meaningful lives... There are other mitzvot in the Torah that you can fulfill!" This friend, chalila, did not mean to hurt them. He felt their sadness and despair and it was his way of comforting and encouraging them. He wished to instill new strength in them for the next stage of their lives.

However, when this friend returned home and told his wife about the conversation, she admonished him: "Why interfere with other people's lives?"

"Had you witnessed their pitiful state, you would have said the same thing!" he justified himself.

"But how can you be certain that they won't be blessed with children?" his wife asked.

"They won't have children! Period! If twenty-three years have passed without seeing salvation, they will never have children!"

"But if they are blessed?" She asked.

"Do you know what? If they will have a child, I will close my business here in Chutz La'aretz and go and live in Eretz Yisrael and become an avreich. Okay?"

"Yes", she replied, "That would be great! I am okay with that!"

After another two years of waiting and praying, Hashem blessed this couple with twins! They merited giving birth to a baby girl and boy!

"The entire city was tumultuous". How everybody rejoiced on hearing the wonderful news! Only one person was anxious...

Our friend took the first plane to Eretz Yisrael. Straight from the airport he took a taxi to Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky shlita and explained the situation: "Honorable Rav! This is the story, this is what I said, what am I supposed to do now?"

"What's the question? Keep your word!"

"Honorable Rav! Can I not annul my vow?"

"No! The vow that you made is considered as a vow to perform a mitzvah which one should not annul."

"Can I make a shaliach, can I elect someone as my representative that he should study in a Kollel instead of me and I will support his every need?"

"It is actually a good idea to make a shaliach, but we will do it in the other way round: You learn in Kollel and let him run your business..."

Rabbi Chaim shlita continued: "Who knows if they were blessed with children in the merit of you promising to learn in Kollel!"

What a powerful statement! This person had not yet started learning, he had only accepted it upon himself under certain terms. And already in the merit of this Torah, the childless woman was blessed!

This is exactly what we always emphasize: Learning Torah is oxygen; it gives life to the entire world! It is Torah that brings deliverance to barren women and it is Torah that heals sickness! There is nothing more significant than the Torah!



## Pearls of the Parsha

### Who is the Tzaddik, the Son of the Rasha?

*"Hashem allowed himself to be entreated by him" (Bereishit 25:21)*

Rashi points out that the very exact wording of the verse, "Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him", rather than 'by her', shows us that "the prayer of a tzaddik who is the son of a tzaddik cannot be compared to the prayer of a tzaddik who is the son of a rasha. Therefore, he (Yitzchak) was answered and not her (Rivka)."

This gives rise to an interesting question: Since Rivka was a female, should Rashi have not said 'tzaddekhet daughter of a rasha', rather than 'tzaddik son of a rasha'? It is also surprising why Rashi finishes off with the words, "therefore he was answered and not her". These words seem redundant.

The sefer 'Gan Raveh' explains that Rashi is in fact answering the following difficulty: Why did Avraham have to leave his country of origin in order to merit the blessing of children, as we are told, 'changing one's dwelling place changes one's mazal', while for Yitzchak it was enough just to pray?!

To this Rashi answers: "Since the prayer of a tzaddik the son of a tzaddik"- this refers to Yitzchak, "cannot be compared to the prayer of a tzaddik the son of a rasha"- this refers to Avraham (and not to Rivka). Rashi's finishing words are not redundant. He first explains the difference between Avraham and Yitzchak and then goes on to explain that due to this reason, "Therefore," also here with the prayers of Yitzchak and Rivka, "he (was answered) and not her".

### A Two-Faced Person

*"Esav became a man who knows hunting, a man of the field" (Bereishit 25:27)*

The 'Minchat Eliezer' explains why the word 'ish' (man) is written twice. This is because Esav was a two-faced person. On the one hand, to his father Yitzchak, he showed the face of a G-d fearing person, one who was meticulous with mitzvah performance. However, while out in the fields he showed a different face.

This is in contrast to Ya'akov Avinu a"h who remained the same person throughout: "a wholesome man, abiding in tents".

### Praised for the Murder

*"Esav thought, "May the days of mourning for my father draw near, then I will kill my brother Ya'akov" (Bereishit 27:41)*

In a figurative way, the 'Siach Ya'akov Yosef' explains Esav's intent when saying, "May the days of mourning for my father draw near, then I will kill my brother Ya'akov".

If he intended to kill Ya'akov, why did he wish to wait until the days of mourning for his father?

Esav reckoned that if he kills his brother Ya'akov now, then the people will disparage him and say, how can it be that a man decides to kill his brother for no reason, like the story with Cain who remained disgraced forever?! Therefore, he thought of a plan: He will wait until his father dies and then on the Shabbat preceding the Azkarah he will come to the Beit HaKnesset together with his brother Ya'akov. No doubt Ya'akov will be honored with leading the prayers and reciting Kaddish and he will also be given the Aliya of Maftir. This will cause a dispute between them since each of them will want to be the one to lead the prayers and receive the Aliya of Maftir (as is the custom on the Shabbat preceding an Azkarah). An argument will erupt and during this chaos, he will kill Ya'akov. Witnessing his devotion in wanting to honor his father will cause the congregation to take his side.

This is the meaning of "May the days of mourning for my father draw near". At this opportunity, he will kill his brother Ya'akov so that he will even be commended for this act of deception.

## Treasures

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



### The Tent of Ya'akov Versus the Field of Esav

***"The lads grew up and Esav became one who knows hunting, a man of the field; but Ya'akov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents"***

(Bereishit 25:27)

Ya'akov and Esav - two brothers, two lifestyles. Esav was known as a man of the 'field', while Ya'akov was a man of 'tents'.

A tent is generally pitched in a field with the help of pegs so that it should remain steady and even a sudden strong wind will not blow it over. The size of the pegs must be in proportion to the size of the tent- a large tent requires large, strong pegs so that it should not collapse no matter the weather conditions.

Ya'akov sat in 'tents' and Esav was a man of the 'field'. This alludes to the fact that Ya'akov, in order not to be influenced by the work of the field which refers to the concept of materialism, had to pitch his tent firmly with strong pegs. This tent refers to the tent of Torah. There inside the tent, he sacrificed everything for Torah so that he shouldn't be influenced by the wicked Esav who was a man of the field.

This is a lesson for all times. If a person wishes to be saved from the 'field', from the futilities of this world, he must pitch his tent firmly. This is the only way that affords us protection.

Ya'akov Avinu pitched his tent in the field, where he was secluded and separated from the rest of the world. Inside the tent, he could grow spiritually and devote his entire being to the Torah. In the merit of the Torah that Ya'akov learned, he merited inspiring his environment with the spirit of Torah, all from within his tent. He transformed the field into "a field which Hashem had blessed".

Therefore, when Ya'akov left Be'er Sheva the inhabitants sensed that a tzaddik had left. They felt the lack of blessing which they merited from having the presence of Ya'akov among them. Chazal say, "A righteous person's departure from a place leaves a void. As long as he lives in a city, he constitutes its glory, its splendor, and its beauty; when he departs, its glory, splendor, and beauty depart with him". Ya'akov Avinu, by secluding himself in the tent and through his toil in Torah was the glory, splendor and beauty of the place and in his merit, the entire town was blessed.

# A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



Rashi explains the meaning of the verse (Bereishit 25:22), **"The children agitated within her"**: they agitated each other and fought over the inheritance of both worlds.

This is most perplexing:

Chazal tell us, "The yetzer hara rules over wicked people" (Berachot 61b) and the Vilna Gaon explains that the yetzer hara leads and guides wicked people and they are held under the influence of their hearts.

Maran Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer zt"l discusses the following difficulty, quoting Maran Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer of Petersburg zt"l (one of the great talmidim of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter), in the sefer "Otzrot HaTorah": According to the above Chazal, the yetzer hara should ensure that the wicked person holds on to his wicked ways with all his might and not regret his deeds. So why do Chazal tell us (Nedarim 9b) that wicked people are full of regret? How can it be that the same yetzer hara that persuades a person to sin later allows him to feel regret and then once again persuades him to sin which is again followed by regret?

Our Sages teach us that one of the names of the yetzer hara is 'Soneh' (hater). The Chovat Halevavot writes that the yetzer hara is a person's biggest enemy. It is a mistake to think that the only goal of the yetzer hara is to make a person sin. His goal is to make a person sin and also cause him damage and destroy him completely, just like an enemy. Since this is his objective, he persuades a person to sin so that he will lose his Olam Haba and after that generates feelings of regret so that he should also lose any enjoyment in this world that he gained by performing the sin. In this way he causes a person to lose both worlds.

This concept holds an essential message for every single person!

The yetzer hara persuades a person to commit a certain sin and he is tempted by imagining the great 'pleasure' that awaits

him through indulging. But he must know that the yetzer hara will not allow him to feel a morsel of this pleasure! He will get him to sin and then fill him with feelings of regret which will not allow him to enjoy the results of his wrongdoing. He will be so full of regret that all he desires is to vomit the sin. Not only will a person not feel any gratification but he will also suffer from feelings of remorse! This is the meaning of the yetzer hara being a person's biggest enemy. Besides, a person must realize that all worldly pleasures are only imaginary and fleeting.

The following incident, told over by Harav Yitzchak Gold shlita, is a demonstration of understanding the total absence of substance in a life full of sin, a life devoid of any spirituality: Several years ago, an irreligious broadcasting media celebrated the birthday of the tzaddik Harav Uri Zohar shlita, who merited reaching his eightieth birthday.

The reporters began the interview by extending their congratulations to Harav Zohar on reaching his eightieth birthday, to which he replied: "I am in fact now celebrating my fortieth birthday!"

Noting their surprise, he explained that when he was forty years old he merited recognizing his Creator and from that stage only does he considers himself 'alive'. He feels that the first forty years of his life where he lived without Torah and mitzvot, without emunah and religion, were not a life!

As can be expected, among other assertions, the interviewers argued with him that in the early years of his life he had built himself up into a professional performer and that is what enabled him to achieve whatever he achieved. How can he discredit that stage of his life? Realizing that they were unable to fathom his reasoning, he answered them with characteristic wit: "Ok, you know what? Take it that today I am celebrating forty years plus another forty years!"

On Friday night, Harav Gold tells over, I approached Harav Zohar to wish him mazal tov for his fortieth plus fortieth birthday and told him that I have a proof for his statement that life without spirituality is not a life! It simply does not have the implication of life! Since the yetzer hara entices a person yet doesn't allow

him to enjoy any gratification from his sins, this is a life devoid of any worth! The following is a quotation of his wonderful words:

The Gaon Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein shlita quotes Maran Hagaon Harav Elyashiv zt"l, who used to describe the difference between Ya'akov and Esav in the following way: "Esav became one who knows hunting, a man of the field". He went around dressed in the height of fashion, complete with a bulletproof vest and appropriate weaponry; in short he looked superior and attractive. He enjoyed all the pleasures of this world, nothing stood in his way and he could indulge in his every lust. On the other hand, "Ya'akov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents". Ya'akov was refined, he dressed in simple clothing and did not look impressive. He sat in the Beit Midrash learning throughout the day, knowing no worldly pleasures, no expensive restaurants, no round-the-world excursions; in short, he was 'stuck' in the Beit Midrash...

Now any person who harnesses the power of his imagination and dulls the strength of his intellect, will immediately be attracted to the rich personage of Esav who lived a life full of pleasures and lust. But what does the Torah tell us later on? "Esav came in from the field, and he was exhausted"! After indulging in every possible kind of gratification, what was he left with in the end? Fatigue! At the end of the day, there is nothing left from all his pleasures! He returns tired, falls into bed without any taste in life and without any enjoyment. What reason does he have to get up tomorrow?

On the other hand, at the end of his day, Ya'akov Avinu returns home with more vitality than he experienced at the beginning of his day. His soul is satiated, he is gratified and full of happiness and waits for tomorrow with the anticipation of another day of satisfying his soul's delight.

This foundation has enormous ramifications. We must remember that the yetzer hara hates a person to such a great extent that he doesn't allow him to derive any pleasure from his sins...

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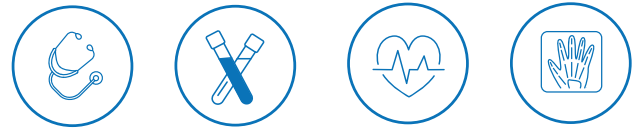
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