

# ME'OROS HA'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)**

## חג כשר ושמה

🕎 **PESACH** 🕎

It is a great *segula* to recite the *Ma'amar Sod Etzba Elokim* from Rav Shimshon of Ostropoli (1599–1648). This revelation came along with the assurance of tremendous blessings to all those who learn this *Ma'amar* at least once a year, especially on the eve of *Pesach*. Due to the *shaimos* involved, we have included it in the e-mail as a separate pdf and we request that you treat it with due respect.

### Divrei Torah

*Pesach* is the name we give to the festival we celebrate in the month of *Nissan*, but nowhere in the *Torah* is it mentioned by that name. Rather, it is always called *Chag HaMatzos*, the Festival of the *Matzos*. Why then do we call it *Pesach*?

Shlomo HaMelech writes (*Shir HaShirim* 6:3): *Ani ledodi vedodi li* - "I am for my Beloved, and my Beloved is for me". This means that it is for us to sing the praises of *Hashem* and for Him to sing our praises. For instance, in the *tefillin* we wear, the scrolls speak the praises of *Hashem*, and in the *tefillin* that He wears, according to the *Gemora* (*Berochos* 6a), the selections praise the Jewish people.

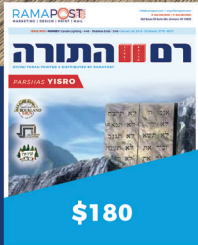
The *Torah* calls the festival *Chag HaMatzos* in praise of the Jewish people who did not hesitate to leave Egypt instantly, even before their bread had a chance to rise (see *Rashi*,

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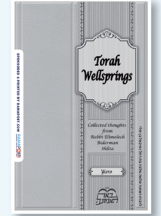
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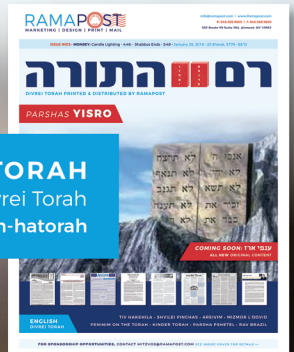
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*Shemos* 12:39). But we call it *Pesach* to recall that *Hashem* skipped over the Jewish homes when he unleashed the final plague on the land of Egypt.



## Two Forms of Delight

**“Just as in the days of your Exodus from Egypt I shall show you wonders”** (*Micha* 7:15).

And we shall elucidate the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 3:14): “I shall be what I shall be”, based on the following parable:

A pauper once earned ten thousand coins all at once. He was delighted and greatly overjoyed. When afterward he earned an additional twenty thousand, he was also happy, but compared to the original delight and joy that he had felt [when he earned the first ten thousand] this current happiness was seemingly nothing. In order to reach a level of delight and joy that would be comparable to the way he first felt, he would have to earn tens and hundreds of thousands.

The meaning of this parable is: The Holy One redeemed us from Egypt from the house of bondage and slavery and performed many wonders and miracles for us; this was our initial delight, and speedily He will once again do wonders and miracles for us. However, at first glance, compared to the first initial delight, this delight will not stand up to it at all. However then *HaKodosh Boruch Hu* will work such wondrous unlimited miracles for us all – to such a degree that even if we were to compare them to our initial delight, it will surpass it.

This is the meaning of “just as in the days of your Exodus from Egypt”: even compared to that initial delight, this too will be delightful, and again “I shall show you wonders”. This is the meaning of “I shall be what I shall be”.

### **Another interpretation of “I shall be what I shall be”.**

And this will elucidate why this *Yom Tov* is called *Pesach*. *HaKodosh Boruch Hu* took us out of Egypt in order to serve Him and in order to accept the holy *Torah*, as it says (*Shemos* 3:12): “You shall serve *Hashem* on this mountain”, and it would have been more proper to have accepted the *Torah* before [having been redeemed from Egypt]. But *HaKodosh Boruch Hu* skipped over the acceptance of the *Torah*, and this is why He is called *Ekeyeh* – implying the future tense – “I will be”.

It says (*Shemos* 20:2): “I am *Hashem* your G-d, Who took you out of Egypt”, and this is difficult. Why does it not say “Who Created heaven and earth”? (This question was posed by the *Ibn Ezra*, *Rabbeinu Bachaya*, *Chizkuni* and others.)

The answer is that at that time they grasped the Creator, understanding Him because of His having taken them out of Egypt. The *Torah* and the Holy One are unified (*Zohar* III 73a) and just like they grasped the Creator as the G-d of the Exodus, similarly on that same level of understanding did they grasp the *Torah*, and no more.

However, speedily in the future the Holy One will work unlimited wonders and miracles for us. Then we will all be able to grasp the Creator more and then they will understand the *Torah* better as well. This is the meaning of “a (new) *Torah* will come out from me” (*Yeshaya* 51:4; *Vayikra Rabba* 13:3). And in the future it will be like this as well: initially the



Holy One will redeem us with wonders and miracles, and afterward they will grasp the *Torah* anew, as we just explained, and then the future delight they feel will be an aspect of *Ekeyeh*, as we explained above. This is the meaning of *Ekeyeh* – “I will be as I shall be”.



### Shir HaShirim

Rav Levi Yitzchok explained the *pasuk* in *Shir HaShirim*: “Watching from the windows”. When a person watches his fellow through the window, he can see his friend but his friend does not always see him, since there is a wall between them. Similarly, *Hashem*, who sends us *shefa*, abundant blessings and sustenance, is hidden; we cannot see Him watching us. Nonetheless, we must *daven* that we merit to see the kindness of *Hashem*. (*Ma'ayan HaChassidus* Vol. 12, No. 25–26 5735 p. 22)



### The Tefillin Of The Master Of The World

**You shall say it is a *pesach* offering to *Hashem*, who passed over the houses of the children of *Yisrael*... (*Shemos* 12:27)**

Why is it that we call the *Yom Tov* that the *Torah* designated as *Chag HaMatzos*, the Festival of Unleavened Bread, by the name *Pesach*? Where does the *Torah* indicate that we might call this *Yom Tov* by the name *Pesach*? Any time the *Torah* mentions this *Yom Tov*, it is called *Chag HaMatzos*.

And it is written elsewhere, *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li* – “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine” (*Shir HaShirim* 6:3). This teaches that we relate the praises of *HaKodosh Boruch Hu*, and He in turn praises us. So, too, we don *tefillin*, which contain the praises of *HaKodosh Boruch Hu*, and *HaKodosh Boruch Hu* dons His “*tefillin*”, in which the praise of *Klal Yisrael* is written.

This will help us understand what is written in the *Tanna D’Vei Eliyohu* [regarding the praises of *Klal Yisrael*]. The *Medrash* there says: “It is a *mitzva* to speak the praises of *Yisrael*, and *Hashem Yisborach* gets great *nachas* and pleasure from this praise”. It seems to me that for this reason it says that it is forbidden to break one’s concentration on one’s *tefillin* while wearing them, that it is a *mitzva* for a man to be continuously occupied with the *mitzva* of *tefillin*. This tells us that it is a *mitzva* to constantly praise *Klal Yisrael* and to praise *HaKodosh Boruch Hu*. The “praise of *Klal Yisrael*” is symbolized by the *tefillin* of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, since the praises of the Jewish people are written in them, as the *Gemora* teaches: “What is written in the *tefillin* of the Master of the World? ‘Who is like Your nation, *Yisrael*?’” (*Berochos* 6a). And the “praise of *HaKodosh Boruch Hu*” hints at our *tefillin*, which contain praises of *Hashem Yisborach* – that is, the *parshiyos* of *Shema*, *Kadeish* and *V’hoya Ki Yeviacha*. Therefore, we find that we are constantly praising *Hashem Yisborach*, and *Hashem* is constantly praising us.

We find that the name *Chag HaMatzos* was given to praise *Bnei Yisrael*. *Rashi* comments on the *pasuk*: “They baked the dough that they brought out of Egypt into matza cakes” (*Shemos* 12:39) that “this *pasuk* praises *Yisrael*, that they did not complain, ‘How will we go out into the desert without preparing provisions?’ Rather, they had faith and they went, as it

says: 'I remember for you the kindness of your youth, the love when you were a bride, your following Me into the desert in a land not sown' (*Yirmiyohu* 2:2)." Therefore, the name *Chag HaMatzos* is considered a praise of *Klal Yisrael*, that they baked their dough into *matza* cakes [since they hastened their departure, and did not take time to prepare provisions, because they had faith that *Hashem* would provide for them in the desert].

This is why the *Torah* names this holiday *Chag HaMatzos*. In this way, *Hashem* is relating the praise of the Jewish people. We, on the other hand, call this *Yom Tov* by the name *Pesach*, in praise of *Hashem*, as it says [in our *pasuk*], "You shall say it is a *pesach* offering to *Hashem*, Who passed over the houses of the children of *Yisrael*..." This is His praise, just as in the *pasuk* we mentioned above: "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine".



## Pesach Stories

### Two Legal Disputes

Two men were shouting at each other in the street, impervious to their surroundings. A curious crowd gathered around them. A few of the onlookers begged the two angry men to stop but to no avail. Finally, an older man came forward and stepped between them.

"Enough is enough," he said. "What is going on here?"

"He owes me a thousand rubles," said the lankier of the two, "and he refuses to pay."

"Not true!" shouted the heavier of the two. "I owe him nothing."

"He's a thief!" said the lanky man. "I want the whole city to know that he is no better than a robber who climbs into houses at night."

"How dare you! You are the thief here, trying to rob me of money that's not coming to you."

The older man held up his hand. "All right, everyone calm down. Fighting and accusations will not resolve anything. Let's go to the new *Rav* of the city. Let him sort it out."

The two men reluctantly agreed, and a half hour later, they were standing before *Rav Levi Yitzchok*, once again shouting at each other, their faces red as fire. *Rav Levi Yitzchok* fixed them with a stern glance, and they fell silent.

"Why don't we begin," he said, "by having both sides present their arguments calmly and without interruption?"

It took an effort for the two litigants to control themselves, but each one managed to remain silent while the other spoke. When they were finished, *Rav Levi Yitzchok* said he would consider the matter and give them a ruling the following day. It would require a great deal of thought, because the dispute was not only about obligations and responsibilities but also about the facts of the case.

*Rav Levi Yitzchok* considered the evidence and the arguments, and finally, reached what he considered a reasonable conclusion. The next day, he ruled in favor of the lanky man and ordered the heavysset man to pay him a thousand rubles. The loser bowed his head and nodded. Two hours later, he returned with the money. He paid the lanky man in front of *Rav Levi Yitzchok* and asked for a receipt endorsed by the *Bais Din*.



"I don't trust that man," he said. "In another place, he might come after me again and claim I never paid him."

Rav Levi Yitzchok wrote out a receipt for him, and the man left without another word.

The following morning, he returned and asked to speak with Rav Levi Yitzchok.

"I couldn't sleep last night, *Rebbe*," he said. "I understand that the *Rebbe's* ruling is true and just, that it is based on the guidelines of *halocha*. And I accept it. But I also know that I am innocent and that I did not owe him even a measly *groshen*. He presented his lies as the truth, and it was impossible for me to prove he was lying. So how can I accept, in my own mind, that his was the true judgment when I know that he has stolen my money?"

Rav Levi Yitzchok saw the sincerity of the man and suspected that he was telling the truth. But he had to base his ruling on *halocha*, not his personal feelings. The man was, therefore, raising a valid point. How could he accept that following the *halocha* could result in a miscarriage of justice?

He stroked his chin and mulled over the question. "You're making an excellent point," he said at last. "I need to think about it. Come back in three days."

During those three days, Rav Levi Yitzchok fasted and *davened* for enlightenment. Then the answer came to him in a dream.

Three days later, the heavyset man once again stood before Rav Levi Yitzchok.

"It was revealed to me in a dream," said Rav Levi Yitzchok, "that your grandfather borrowed one thousand rubles from your friend's grandfather and never paid him. The one thousand rubles that he should have paid back went instead to his children and now to his grandson - you. The Heavenly Court has decreed, however, that the money should be returned to your grandfather's lender, and since he is no longer alive, it should be returned to his grandson."

"That is amazing," said the heavyset man. Then he gathered up his courage and pressed on. "Please forgive my question, but how do we know this is true? Maybe it was just a dream."

Rav Levi Yitzchok nodded. "Tell me, did you inherit a *Shulchon Aruch* from your grandfather?"

"Yes, I did."

"Go home and looked through its pages. You will find a document that proves he took a loan of one thousand rubles from your friend's grandfather."

The heavyset man went home and riffled through his *Shulchon Aruch*. A document fell out, and just as Rav Levi Yitzchok had predicted, it contained a record of the old loan. He immediately ran back to Rav Levi Yitzchok and showed him the document.

The next day, Rav Levi Yitzchok called a meeting of the leaders of the congregation.

"I want to offer my resignation," he said.

They were aghast. "But why?" they cried out.

Rav Levi Yitzchok told them the story of the dispute and the dream. "I think I should seek a position in another city. Apparently, disputes brought before me in this city will require three days of fasting before justice is delivered, something that has never happened to

me before. I think it would be better if I sought a position in a different place.”

“Please don’t make such a hasty decision, *Rebbe*,” said one of the men. “We understand your concerns, but please give it some more time and think it over. *Pesach* is coming. Let us talk about this again after *Pesach*.”

Rav Levi Yitzchok agreed, and the city leaders departed.

On *Pesach* night, the beggars and the homeless gathered in the back of the *shul*, waiting for the householders to invite them to their homes, as was the custom every year in Berditchev.

One of the householders approached a bedraggled pauper and said, “Would you like to be my guest for the *Seder* tonight?”

“Yes, I would. Thank you kindly.”

“It is my pleasure and honor,” said the householder. “Would you mind waiting for me for a minute or two? I have to have a word with a friend of mine.”

“Take as much time as you need. I’ll be right here.”

The householder went to his friend, and soon they were deeply engrossed in conversation. Together, the householder and his friend left the *shul* and continued their conversation as they walked through the streets. They stopped at the householder’s door, bid each other a *gut Yom Tov* and parted ways.

The householder walked into his house and looked about him with delight. The table was covered with a white tablecloth trimmed with lace. The candles glowed, the silverware gleamed, and faces of his family beamed. He sighed with content.

“What happened?” asked his wife. “Where is our guest?”

The householder smacked himself on his forehead. “*Oy*, I forgot him,” he groaned. “He’s probably still standing there in the *shul*. I must run back there.”

The householder hurried through the streets, impervious to the chill of the night. When he arrived at the *shul*, he found it deserted. There was no sign of the poor man he had invited. Despondent, he walked home. That year, to the chagrin of his wife and children, there was no guest at their *Seder* table.

The householder spotted his prospective guest in *shul* the following morning. He immediately ran over to him.

“A thousand apologies, my good man,” he said. “Please forgive me. I became so absorbed in my conversation that I forgot about you. It is inexcusable. Forgive me please.”

The poor man waved it aside. “Think nothing of it. I admit that I was nervous at first when I couldn’t find you.”

“So why didn’t you stay where you were and wait for me? I came back to find you, but you were already gone. What happened?”

“Everything was fine. Believe me, I did not go hungry last night. That man over there” – he pointed – “came by and invited me.”

“I see. Did he ask you if you had been invited?”

“He did. I told him that you had invited me but that I didn’t see you anywhere. So he



took me home with him. The *Seder* was really wonderful, and the food was excellent. I mean, excellent.”

Angry and upset, the householder sought out and confronted the man who had invited the poor man.

“How could you take my guest?” he said. “You knew I had invited him.”

“True. And I also knew you had abandoned him.”

“I did not abandon him! I was just speaking to someone else about an important matter, but as soon as I finished, I came to get him. But he wasn’t there. Why? Because you took him with you.”

The men were soon shouting at each other and had to be pulled apart before they came to blows. Peace finally reigned when it was decided they would bring their case to Rav Levi Yitzchok after *Pesach*.

Rav Levi Yitzchok listened carefully to their arguments, and then he ruled that the second man should pay a penalty to the first for appropriating his guest. When the two left, Rav Levi Yitzchok called a meeting with the leaders of the community.

“I have reconsidered,” Rav Levi Yitzchok announced. “I’ve decided to remain here as the *Rav* of Berditchev. If the men in this city fight over the privilege of inviting a poor man to their table, this is the kind of city that I want to serve.”



When Rav Levi Yitzchok would sit at the *Sedorim* on the two nights of *Pesach* and recite the *Haggoda*, an unusual thing would happen when he reached the statement *Matza zu*, which means “this *matza*”. He would get so excited that he would fall under the table, the table itself usually toppled over and all the dishes and *matzos* would fall and turn over. While he was in this unconscious state of ecstasy and rapture, they would reset a new table complete with a new set of dishes, cups of wine and *matzos*, as well as a new, unstained *Kittel* for him to wear. He would redress himself and sit back at the table, where he would continue by saying *Matza zu*, in a tone which sounding like he was reviving and awakening himself, saying, “Ah, ah, *matza zu* – ah, ah, this *matza!*”

Once, when he went to draw water from the well for baking *matzos*, he was so excited and enraptured by the *mitzva* that he fell into the well! Fortunately, the water was not too deep!

When he made the *berochos* over the *Megilla* on *Purim*, he danced out of *simcha* on the *amud* (lectern) and almost on the *Megilla* itself! (Eser Oros 3:6-8)



## The Appointment

Berditchev was a large city and it was a great honor to serve as its *Rav*. The committee demanded no less than a great *Torah* scholar and *Tzaddik* to fill this post. Here is the account of how Rav Levi Yitzchok – indeed, a great *Torah* scholar and *Tzaddik* – came to be appointed as the Berditchever *Rav*.

The previous *Rav* of Berditchev had passed away. A committee was formed to search for a new *Rav*. They had heard that the *Rav* of Zelichov, Rav Levi Yitzchok, was a man of

great piety and righteousness. Two young men were sent forthwith to meet with Rav Levi Yitzchok and interview him as a potential candidate. They were to speak to him and test his knowledge to see if he was a fitting replacement for their venerable *Rav*.

The two arrived just before *Pesach*. They went to Rav Levi Yitzchok and asked if he would host them as his guests. They knew that they were sure to find the highest standards of *kashrus* in the home of the *Rav*, and it was an opportunity to observe Rav Levi Yitzchok and so arrive at a decision.

Rav Levi Yitzchok was honored to have them as his guests. On the first night of *Pesach*, during the *Seder*, the two delegates were astonished when Rav Levi Yitzchok did a most unusual thing. They reached the point in the *Haggoda* when we recites the ten plagues, when they heard Rav Levi Yitzchok "honor" the local enemies of the Jewish people with the plagues, distributing them and handed them out to each one. When they named the plague of blood, the *Rav* said, "*Dom* – blood! To the evil *poritz*! Frogs – to the immoral duke! Lice – to the wicked prince!" The *Rav* handed out each one of the ten plagues to a different enemy of *Klal Yisrael*, cursing each one with a different affliction. The two guests laughed and made light of Rav Levi Yitzchok's odd behavior. They didn't know what else to think.

When *Yom Tov* ended, they left Zelichov to return home. On the way, they stopped for refreshments and heard the odd rumor that the place had recently been plagued by frogs! As they traveled on, they heard more rumors. Nobles from other provinces had been plagued by cattle disease, lice and boils.

In Berditchev, they related what they had discovered – that Rav Levi Yitzchok was not only a great *Torah* scholar and genius, but he was truly a holy man whose decrees were miraculously fulfilled. The decision was obvious: the city decided to appoint him as their *Rav*.

They wrote up a letter of appointment, and two honorable personages traveled to him with the letter. When they returned in the coach together with the *Rav*, the streets were filled with men, women and children, eager to greet him and get a glimpse of the *Tzaddik*. And the city of Berditchev celebrated the arrival of their new *Rav*.



### The Glory of Yisrael: Rav Levi Yitzchok and the Tefillin of Klal Yisrael

Rav Nachman of Breslov warned his *talmidim* that whenever Rav Levi Yitzchok passed through their towns, they must have their *tefillin* examined. The Rebbe himself had his own *tefillin* checked whenever the *Kedushas Levi* passed through.

"It is because the holy *Rav* of Berditchev represents *Pe'er Yisrael*, the Glory of Yisrael," explained Rav Nachman, "which is the attribute of *tefillin*."

The *Avodas Levi* explained that if they did not honor Rav Levi Yitzchok properly in one of the towns he passed through, this not only represented a blemish on their own honor, but it would also blemish their *tefillin*, because the Berditchever represented *Pe'er Yisrael* – the Glory of Yisrael.



### Shevi'i Shel Pesach – Kerias Yam Suf

### Walking on Dry Land Even in the Sea



*“And Bnei Yisrael walked on dry land in the sea” (Shemos 14:29)*

How can you walk on dry land in the sea? The *Noam Elimelech*, in *Likkutei Shoshana*, explains this contradictory-sounding *pasuk* as follows:

When Bnei Yisrael experienced the Exodus and the splitting of the sea, they witnessed tremendous miracles and unbelievable wonders. There are *Tzaddikim* among us whose hearts are always attuned to *Hashem's* wonders and miracles even on a daily basis; they see not common, ordinary occurrences – they see miracles and wonders. As opposed to Bnei Yisrael, who witnessed the miraculous only when they walked on dry land in the split sea, these *Tzaddikim* see a miracle as great as the “splitting of the sea” even when walking on so-called ordinary, everyday dry land! Everything they experience and witness in the world is a miracle to them. This is the meaning of our *pasuk*: there are some among Bnei Yisrael who, even while walking on dry land, experience *Hashem's* greatness and awesome miracles just like in the sea! This is what we mean when we say that *Hashem* transformed the sea into dry land. *Hashem* causes the *Tzaddik* to witness and experience miracles as wondrous as the splitting of the sea, even on dry land, because the *Tzaddik* constantly walks attuned to *Hashem's* greatness and exaltedness.

In *Likkutei Shoshana* at the back of the *Noam Elimelech*, we find that the Rebbe Reb Melech cites a *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (66:6) “[He] transformed the sea into dry land, they shall cross the river on foot”.

The Rebbe Reb Melech is puzzled why this *pasuk* begins with a singular form (He) and concludes in plural (they). In addition, why does it begin in past tense (transformed) and conclude in future tense (shall cross)? The Rebbe Reb Melech interprets the *pasuk* and at the same time explains why the *pasuk* opens with a sea and concludes with a river.

The *pasuk*, explains the Rebbe Reb Melech, refers to two different distinct events in the history of Klal Yisrael. The beginning of the *pasuk* refers to *Keriyas Yam Suf* by Moshe *Rabbeinu* after *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, whereas the conclusion of the *pasuk* refers to a later event described by the *Gemora* in *Chullin 7a* where Rav Pinchas *ben Yair* crossed the River *Ginai* by splitting it.

[The *Gemora* there tells the story of how Rav Pinchas *ben Yair* was on his way to perform the *mitzva* of redeeming captives – *pidyon shevuyim* – when he reached the riverbank of the *Ginai* river and needed to cross. He commanded the river to split and allow him to cross to the other side. The river answered him, “You are on your way to fulfill the will of your Creator and so am I. However, there is some doubt and uncertainty whether or not you will fulfill the Creator’s will, whereas I shall certainly do so.”

With this logical argument, the river seemed to have defeated Rav Pinchas *ben Yair*, but he retorted, “If you do not split I will decree upon you that water shall never flow through here again!” The river split for him.

A man carrying wheat for *Pesach* then appeared. Those grains could not get wet or they would become *chometz*. Rav Pinchas *ben Yair* ordered the river to split for him as well, since he was occupied in performing a *mitzva* – and it split again. An Arab accompanied them and Rav Pinchas *ben Yair* ordered the river to split for him too, since he did not want people to say that whoever accompanies others and sees them off does not deserve this miracle – and the river split a third time!

Rav Yosef commented about this, “See how much greater this man [Pinchas *ben Yair*]

was than Moshe and the 600,000 Jewish people, because for them the sea split but once, and here the river split three times, and if it had split here only once, Rav Yosef would have said that he was just as great and not greater.]

Asks the Rebbe Reb Melech: How did Rav Yosef demonstrate from the story of Rav Pinchas *ben* Yair that he was greater than Moshe? Perhaps the reason why the sea split just once was simply because it was unnecessary to split another time; maybe it just wasn't needed!

He answers that we have a well-known principle that the actions of our forefathers are a sign for us, their descendants. We call this *Maasei Avos Siman Labonim* (see *Ramban Bereishis* 12:6). This means that whatever our forefathers achieved the first time opens up an easier opportunity for us to achieve the same thing or something similar. Every miracle they wrought, as difficult as it was, is now much easier for us to do as well. Therefore, even something that was very hard to do just once can now be done many times by later *Tzaddikim* with much greater ease since the gate has been opened.

The new explanation of the above *Gemora* is as follows: How great is that person Rav Pinchas *ben* Yair, meaning: From where did he have the ability to do such a great miracle? And the answer is "from Moshe and the 600,000 people" [not that he was greater than them; rather, he was great from - i.e., because of - them, reading the prefix *mem* as "from" rather than "than"]. Moshe opened the gate and Rav Pinchas *ben* Yair was able to bring about the same miraculous event. Although in the past Moshe did it just once, "here it happened three times" - Rav Pinchas *ben* Yair was able to achieve this miraculous split even three times.

Now we can understand the *pasuk* as well: "He transformed the sea into dry land". These words refer to Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who transformed the sea into dry land just one time. However, through his holy actions he achieved an opening of spiritual gates and gave access to this miraculous power, bringing about that "they shall cross the river on foot"; Rav Pinchas *ben* Yair crossed the river three times with others, which explains why the *pasuk* begins in singular and concludes in plural, and why it begins in past tense and concludes in future [and also why it begins with a sea and concludes with a river]!



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

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

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

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

Others say that it is the custom within *Klal* Yisrael to light a *yahrzeit* candle on the day that a relative or a *Tzaddik* has passed away. The lighting has no accompanying blessing, and people would

like to express themselves in a *tefilla* when lighting the candle. This is not only true on a *yahrzeit* but on every *Yom Tov* as well.

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

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

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמְנוּחַת וְלַעֲלוּי נִשְׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק \_\_\_\_\_ בֶּן/בַּת  
תְּפִילָה הַנִּמְצָאת בְּסֵפֶר אֶלֶף הַמְּגוֹן מִבְּעַל הַפֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ עַל פְּרִשְׁת וַיֵּצֵא עֲמוּד כְּבוֹד  
יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטוֹב  
שָׁאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחְשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדִבּוּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וַיְהִי הַכֹּל לְזָכוֹת וְלְמְנוּחַת וְלַעֲלוּי  
לְנַשְׁמוֹת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפָרֵט לְנַפְשׁ רֹחַ וְנִשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי / צַדִּיק \_\_\_\_\_. יְהִי  
רְצוֹן שֶׁתְּהִינָה נַפְשׁוֹתֵיהֶם צְרוּרוֹת בְּצִרוּר 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



YAHREZITS BEGINNING SHABBOS CHOL HAMO'ED

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

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

### \* 17<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, 1<sup>st</sup> day of Chol HaMo'ed ~ Begins Friday Night (Apr 10<sup>th</sup>)

- \* **Rav Yisrael Noach** of Niezhin (the *Maharin*) *ben* Rav Menachem Mendel (the *Tzemach Tzedek*) of Lubavitch, (5643/1883);
- \* **Rav Avrohom Reuven HaKohen Katz** of Prague, *mechaber* of *Yalkut Reuveni*, a collection of kabbalistic material, arranged according to the *pesukim* in the *Torah*, (5433/1673);
- \* **Rav Yitzchok** of Skver, (5645/1885);
- \* **Rav Yirmiyohu Lev**, the *Divrei Yirmiyohu* (1811–1874). Born to Rav Binyomin Zev Lev (the *Shaarei Torah*), he received *semicha* from Rav Mordechai Banet, the *Rav* of Nicholsburg, at the age of seventeen. He served as *Rav* of Magendorf from 1844 to 1851, then succeeded his father in Verbau. Finally, he took a position in Ujhel (Hungary), (5634/1874);
- \* **Rav Moshe Mordechai Heschel**, successor of his father, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel, the Kapischnitzer (Kopycznitzer) *Rebbe*, until his sudden *petira* in 1975, (5735/1975);
- \* **Rav Meir ben** Rav Yisrael Abuchatzaira of Ashdod, son of *Baba Sali*. His sons are all great *Tzaddikim* who are sought after by people around the world for their blessings, (5743/1983);
- \* **Rav Shlomo Wolbe**, *Mashgiach* of *Yeshiva Givat Shaul* in Yerushalayim's Sanhedria



neighborhood (1916–2005). Born in Berlin, Rav Wolbe's early education was in the *Yeshiva* of Frankfurt and in Rav Botchko's *Yeshiva* in Montreux, Switzerland. In the 1930s, he spent several years in Mir, where he became a close *talmid* of Rav Yerucham Levovitz and Rav Chatzkel Levenstein. Rav Wolbe spent the war years in Sweden. After the war, Rav Wolbe moved to Petach Tikva, where he married the daughter of Rav Avrohom Grodzinsky, *hy"d*, the last *Mashgiach* of Slobodka. Through her, he became a nephew of Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, and a brother-in-law of Rav Chaim Kreisworth. In 1948, Rav Wolbe became *Mashgiach* at *Yeshiva Gedola* of Be'er Yaakov, a position he held for over thirty-five years. Later, he served as *Mashgiach* in the Lakewood *Yeshiva* in *Eretz Yisrael* and he opened *Yeshiva Givat Shaul*. Rav Wolbe published his first Hebrew work, *Alei Shur*, to provide today's *Yeshiva talmid* with a basic guide to assist him to become a *ben Torah*, (5765/2005).

✧ **18<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Chol HaMo'ed ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Apr 11<sup>th</sup>)**

✧ **Rav Meir HaLevi Abulafia**, the *Yad Rama*, (5004/1244);

✧ **Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik** (1903–1993). Son of Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, and older brother of Rav Aharon Soloveitchik., great-grandson of Rav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik, the *Bais HaLevi* (1820–1892), and nephew of the Brisker *Rav*, Rav Velvel. Born in Pruzhan, Poland, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat*, he was awarded a PhD from the University of Berlin, and then settled in Boston in the early 1930s. He became *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshiva University, and gave weekly *shiurim* to senior *talmidim*, while delivering philosophy lectures to graduate *talmidim*, (5753/1993);

✧ **Rav Moshe Ellinson**, *Rav Ohel Torah* Manchester (after January 2001);

✧ **19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Chol HaMo'ed ~ Begins Sunday Night (Apr 12<sup>th</sup>)**

✧ **Rav Yehoshua Falk Katz**, *mechaber* of *Me'iras Einayim*, the *Derisha* and *Perisha* on the *Tur* and the *Sema* on *Shulchon Aruch Choshen Mishpot*. As a youth, he learned under the *Rema* (to whom he was related) and the *Maharshal*. He later served as *Rosh Yeshiva* in Lemberg. He was the grandfather of the *Pnei Yehoshua*, (5374/1614);

✧ **Rav Aharon HaGodol** of Karlin (1736–1772). Student of the *Maggid* of Mezritch, founder of *Chassidus* in Belarus and the Karlin-Stolin dynasty. Rav Aharon left behind a son, Rav Osher of Stolin, who was the father of Rav Aharon Karlin II, (1808–1872). His father was known as the *Nistar*, which means “the hidden one”, (5532/1772);

✧ **Rav Menachem Ziemba** (also known as Rav Menachem Prager) (1883–1943). Born in Praga, a small neighborhood of Warsaw along the right bank of the Wisla River, Rav Menachem was only nine years old when his father, Rav Elozor Ziemba, passed away. He then lived and learned with his grandfather, Rav Avrohom Ziemba. He married Mindel, the daughter of a wealthy businessman, Rav Chaim Yeshaya Tzederboim, when he was eighteen. When his father-in-law passed away, he wrote a treatise on carrying on *Shabbos* and entitled it *Totza'as Chaim* in his honor. He became a *Chassid* of the *Imrei Emes* of Gur. He was appointed Chief *Rav* of Warsaw in 1935. He became close to Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, and through him, his son-in-law, Rav Avrame'le Luftbir of Warsaw. When the latter was *niftar*, childless, in 1919, Rav Menachem published his *sefer*, *Zera Avrohom*, based on their many correspondences. He was *niftar* in the Warsaw ghetto, (5703/1943);

✧ **Rav Shlomo Leib** of Lentche, (5603/1843);

✧ **Rav Yaakov Yosef Weiss** of Spinka, (5748/1988);

✧ **Rav Shmuel Alexander Undorfer** of Montreal and Petach Tikva, (5762/2002).

✧ **20<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, 4<sup>th</sup> day of Chol HaMo'ed ~ Begins Monday Night (Apr 13<sup>th</sup>)**

✧ **Rav Yaakov** of Moglonitza *ben* Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk, called *Tzaddik Nistar*;

- \* **Rav Hai** *bar* Sherira Gaon, *Rosh Yeshiva* Pumpedisa, last of the *Geonim* of Pumpedisa, (4798/1038);
- \* **Rav Yitzchok Chori**, *Dayan* in Djerba, (5628/1868);
- \* **Rav Yechezkel Panet** of Karlsburg, *mechaber* of *Mareh Yechezkel*, (5605/1845);
- \* **Rav Yitzchok Dov Ber** of Liadi, grandson of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, *mechaber* of *Siddur MaHaRiD*, (5670/1910).
- \* **21<sup>st</sup> of Nissan, Shevi'i Shel Pesach** ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Apr 14<sup>th</sup>)
  - \* **Rav Shmuel Shapiro**, elder Breslov *Chassid*, (5749/1989);
  - \* **Rav Shimon Yisrael Posen**, the Shoproner *Rav*, *mechaber* of *Toras Aleph*, (5729/1969).
- \* **22<sup>nd</sup> of Nissan, Achron Shel Pesach** ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Apr 15<sup>th</sup>)
  - \* **Rav Moshe ben Yosef Mitrani**, *Mabit* (some say the 23<sup>rd</sup>), (1585/5345);
  - \* **Rav Shimon “Caftan” Shlisgal**, *Gabbai Tzedoka*, who the *Chofetz Chaim* said was a hidden *Tzaddik*, (5625/1865);
  - \* **Rav Yehuda Rosanes** of Constantinople, *mechaber* of *Mishne LaMelech*, (1658–1727). He also wrote *Parshas Derochim*, (5487/1727);
  - \* **Rav Yitzchok Kalisch** (1779–1848), founder of the Vorki dynasty, father of Rav Yaakov Dovid (founder of the Amshinov dynasty) and Rav Menachem Mendel, who continued the Vorki dynasty. Through his travels with his teacher, Rav Dovid of Lelov, he became a *talmid* of Rav Yaakov Yitzchok (the *Chozeh*) of Lublin and of Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshis'cha. Some of his teachings and stories involving him appear in *Ohel Yitzchok* and *Hutzak Chein*, others in *Shemu'as Yitzchok*, (5608/1848);
  - \* **Dr. Nathan Birnbaum**, 1864–1937. A leader in the early Zionist movement, he is credited for coining the word “Zionism” in 1890. He played a prominent part in the First Zionist Congress (1897) and was elected Secretary General of the Zionist Organization. However, ideological differences with Theodore Herzl led to his leaving the movement. In the years preceding World War I he gradually abandoned his materialistic and secular outlook, eventually embracing full traditional Judaism. He may be seen as the forerunner of the modern *Ba'al Teshuva* movement. His most famous book of this period was *Gottesvolk* (“G-d’s People”), first published in German and Yiddish in 1917 (translated into English in a shortened form by J. Elias in 1947, titled *Confession*). In 1919, he became the first Secretary General of the new *Agudas Yisrael* organization. He lived in Berlin between 1921 and 1933. After the rise of Nazism, he left Germany for Scheveningen, Netherlands, until his passing, (5697/1937).
- \* **23<sup>rd</sup> of Nissan, Isru Chag** ~ Begins Thursday Night (Apr 16<sup>th</sup>)
  - \* **Rav Moshe ben Yosef MiTrani**, the *Mabit* (1505–1585). Son of the famous Rav Yosef MiTrani (*Maharit*), Rav Moshe was born in Salonika, Greece. He was sent to Adrianople (Italy) as a boy to pursue his studies under the supervision of his uncle, Aharon. At the age of sixteen, he went to Tzefas and completed his studies under Yaakov Beirav. He was one of four people to receive the special *semicha* from him in 1538 in Tzefas, along with Rav Yosef Karo, Rav Moshe Cordovero, and Rav Yosef Sagis. In 1525, he was appointed *Rav* of Tzefas; he held this office until 1535, when he moved to Yerushalayim, where he lived until 1585. His main work was *Kiryat Sefer*, a commentary on *Rambam’s Yad Chazoka*. *HaMabit* was a *halachic* responsa with 841 answers. He also wrote *Bais Elokim*, a thematic discussion of the elements of *tefilla*. [*Hamodia* 2005: 25<sup>th</sup> of Nissan; according to introduction to *Bais Elokim* – the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Nissan], (5345/1585);
  - \* **Rav Yisrael Sholom Yosef ben Rav Yitzchok** of Bohush, 1923 (some say 1926), *mechaber* of

Pe'er Yisrael, (5683/1923).



## ❁ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❁

### WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

The holy *Arizal* taught:

On the *Hilula (Yahrzeit)* of a *Tzaddik*, he alone teaches in the heavenly academy known as the *Mesivta DeRokiya*, and on that day they only study his novel *Torah* thoughts called *chiddushim* as well as review his good deeds and acts of *chessed* (loving-kindness).

The *Bais Yisrael* of Gur said that the *Shabbos* preceding a *yahrzeit*, we have the ability to latch onto and grasp that *Tzaddik's* force and tap into his power.



## ❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

### STORIES & ANECDOTES

#### Rav Meir Abuchatzzeira of Ashdod, 17<sup>th</sup> of Nissan

##### Supernatural Housechores

Rav Dovid Chai of Nahariya related how in his younger years his father Rav Meir would sometimes ask him to come into his room and set up his bed or pillows. One time he did so and as he punched the pillow into shape, his father asked him to turn it over. When Rav Dovid did so, he saw a huge scorpion, 20–30 cm in length, crouched with its stinger quivering. His father did not seem scared or troubled.

“Take the pillow to your mother,” he

said.

“My mother,” explained Rav Dovid, “was not in the least bit frightened or worried either. No one asked where the scorpion had come from or seemed in the least bit disturbed, or even wondered if there were more like it. We were used to a supernatural existence in my home,” continued Rav Dovid, “and so she simply knocked the scorpion outside, proceeded to change the pillowcase and handed me the pillow!” (*Boruch Hashem Yom Yom* p. 237)



#### Rav Yehoshua Falk (Wolk), 19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan

Mechaber of the *Sem*”a, *Perisha* and *Derisha*

Rav Yehoshua authored the well-known work *Sefer Meiras Eynaim* or *Sem*”a, a commentary on the *Shulchon Aruch* as well as the commentaries named *Derisha* and *Perisha* on the *Tur*.

As he himself writes in the introduction to his work the *Sem*”a, he studied under the famed Rav Moshe Isserles (the *Rema*) and under Rav Shlomo

Luria (the *Maharshal*). Among his *talmidim* was the *mechaber* of *Meginei Shlomo*, the *mechaber* of *Be'er Sheva* and the *mechaber* of *Eison HaEzrachi*.

His wife, Baila, the daughter of Rav Yisrael Aidels, authored a few novel rulings in Jewish law cited by her son in his introduction to his father's work the *Derisha on Yoreh Deah* Volume II. The two



novel laws cited regard the manner in which women light the candles on *Yom Tov* and how it differs from *Shabbos* candle lighting. Although some authorities such as the commentary *Mogen Avrohom* ruled against her, most of the later authorities concurred with her rulings and praised her insight.

(Footnote: It seems that in her time

women had two customs which she took issue with. First, they recited the blessing after lighting the candles both on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, and second, they lit the *Yom Tov* candles only when their husbands returned from the *tefilla* service in the evening as opposed to at the onset of the holiday).



## Rav Aharon HaGodol of Karlin, 19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan

### The Power of Emuna

Rav Mordechai of Slonim used to tell that Karlin was in Lithuania, whereas when Rav Aharon became part of the *Maggid* of Mezritch's circle, he became well known as a miracle worker in Volhynia. "Why does the *Rebbe* work miracles only in Volhyn and not in your own hometown?" they complained. "What should I do, there they have more *emuna* (faith) and that draws down the *shefa* (bounty)!"

(*Maamar Mordechai*).



### A Different Kind of Ba'al Aveira Becomes a Different Kind of Ba'al Teshuva

When Rav Avrohom Elimelech of Karlin visited *Yerushalayim*, Rav Mordechai of Slonim went to see him and he teasingly asked the *Tzaddik*, "They say that your *Zeide*, Rav Aharon the Great of Karlin, made some eighty thousand *ba'alei teshuva* (returnees); *nu*, so where are yours?!"

Rav Avrohom Elimelech answered him thus, "The sinners in my great-grandfather's day had passions and desires, so my *Zeide* showed them a way to taste the delight and vitality in *Avodas Hashem*. He channeled their energy into holiness, each way corresponding to its opposite pole. Thus he turned them around to the path of

true goodness. In our generation, however, these sinners are apostates and faithless; they stray after *kefira* and *apikorsus*. I doubt my *Zeide* would have made from them *ba'alei teshuva*!"

(*Maamar Mordechai*).

### Dressed in Dazzling Diamonds

Rav Mottele Rachmastrivker told the following story when he lived in *Yerushalayim*:

It was *Marcheshvan*, and Rav Nachum of Czernobyl, the *Meor Einayim*, had passed away. The entire township of Czernobyl sat in *aveilus* – even the non-Jews mourned the passing of the *Tzaddik*. Into this melancholy town, sad and despondent, came the news that the *Tzaddik*, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *mechaber* of the *Tanya* and *Shulchon Aruch HaRav*, famed *talmid* of the *Mezritcher Maggid* and a colleague of the deceased *Rebbe*, was on his way to pay a *shiva* call to the bereaved family.

The entire township and all its citizens lined the boulevards to wait and catch even a glimpse of the holy *Tzaddik's* visage. Thus they stood in awe as he passed through the throngs, no one even daring to shake his hand or give him a *Sholom Aleichem*, due to the glint of fire in his holy eyes.

When the *Ba'al HaTanya* entered the *shiva* house, he came before Rav Mordechai, sitting *shiva* for his father, and

the *Ba'al haTanya* told him:

“My master, the *Maggid* of Mezritch, once remarked that he had the ability to grant a lofty soul to one of his *talmidim*, but he did not know who would merit such a gift.

“When Rav Aharon *HaGodol* of Karlin left this world, the *Maggid* commanded your father Rav Nachum of Czernobyl to go to his *tziun* in the *bais hachaim* and tell him in the name of the *Maggid* of Mezritch that Rav Aharon Karliner’s daughter, the orphaned Chaya Sora, must be wed, and since Rav Nachum himself was destined to soon have a son, Rav Mordechai [to whom the *Ba'al HaTanya* was telling this tale] they were to be betrothed and wed. Rav Nachum went and fulfilled the word of his *Rebbe*, the *Maggid*. He traveled to Karlin to Rav Aharon *HaGodol*’s *tziun* and afterward returned to the *Maggid* and to his home.

“The next year, Rav Nachum had a son and named him Mordechai. He married Rav Aharon Karliner’s daughter, Chaya Sora, and they had three sons: Rav Aharon of Czernobyl, Rav Moshe of Karistshuv and Rav Yaakov Yisrael of Tsherkas, as well as one daughter, Malka, who later married into the dynasties of Rav Boruch of Mezhibuzh and Rav Yosef of Yampola.

“Now the *teno'im* and wedding

contract between this orphan girl, Rav Aharon *HaGodol*’s young daughter, and Rav Mordechai were drawn up between the families in the home of the Mezritcher *Maggid*, and all the *talmidim* and *chevraya kadisha* participated with their presence. The *Maggid* honored Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, *mechaber* of *Pri HaAretz*, with reading aloud the *teno'im*. When Rav Menachem Mendel reached the name of the *kalla* and read, ‘Chaya Sora *bas* HaRav Rav Aharon who stands by the side of the *kalla*,’ he fainted away! No one could revive him, until the *Maggid* of Mezritch came and placed his hand on Rav Menachem Mendel Vitebsker’s shoulder and said, ‘Why are you seized with such fright? Did you never before meet or see Rav Aharon?!’

“Rav Menachem Mendel Vitebsker recovered and said, ‘*Rebbe*, Master – *Mori veRabi!* I was awed and terrified because I saw Rav Aharon dressed in dazzling white garments that glowed and sparkled as if they were made of pure white diamonds and gemstones! The tradition I received tells me that only one or two single individuals in each generation can merit such garments – and in all my life I had not realized that Rav Aharon had reached such staggering heights!’” (*MeOrei Aish* p. 81-82)



## Rav Menachem Ben Avrohom Ziemba Hy”d, 19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan

Most of Rav Menachem’s *seforim* were lost, consumed in the flames of the Warsaw Ghetto, including *Machze Lamelech* on the *Rambam*, *Shu”t HaRamaz* and *Bais Menachem* on the four volumes of *Shulchon Aruch*, *Menachem Yerushalayim* on the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, and on the *Halochos* of *Eretz Yisrael*. He even wrote an entire *sefer* on the topic of *Kiddush Hashem* while he sat in the office of the Warsaw archives. As he worked long

hours in that office, he composed a *sefer* which he dedicated to his wife:

These are the *chiddushim* which *Hashem* helped me originate during the days of terror under the enemy’s fury regarding the laws of *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying the name of G-d, according to the *Rambam* and *Raavad*, on the day my precious wife was taken from me. She sacrificed herself to raise

and educate our children to *Torah* and *yira* and allowed me and them to study the holy *Torah*.

Sadly, he too was murdered by the Nazis, *yimach shemom*, and was buried in the ghetto. Years later, he was reinterred on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim.

Thousands attended his *levaya*, including the Gerrer *Rebbe*, the *Bais Yisrael*, and the Brisker *Rav*, Rav Soloveitchik, as well as the Tchebiner *Gaon* who eulogized him. May *Hashem* avenge his blood among the martyrs of Klal Yisrael.



## Rav Hai bar Sherira Gaon, 20<sup>th</sup> of Nissan

Last of the Greats in the Geonim Period

### The Lion's Temptation

The *Geonim* were the heads of the Jewish academies of Sura and Pumbedisa in Babylonia following the period of the *Savoraim* until the middle of the eleventh century. Rav Hai Gaon (939–1083), leader of the *Yeshiva* of Pumbedisa, was the last and one of the greatest of the *Geonim*. He was an illustrious sage and a revered *halachic* authority. Countless questions in *Torah* law were sent to him from Jews in various countries, eagerly awaiting his opinions and rulings. Many of his responsa are gathered in an important work, *Teshuvos L'Rav Hai Gaon*. While most of the matters he deals with in his writings are of a legal nature, in the following letter he discusses an issue of *Aggada*, *Torah* lore.

In *Maseches Sanhedrin* (38b) we are taught that Rav Meir had three hundred fox parables, but, as Rav Yochanon said, we only know three of them. The *Talmud* doesn't tell us the actual parables but instead quotes three *pesukim*. The first *pasuk* is from *Yechezkel* (18:2), which states: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge". Rav Hai Gaon was asked to clarify the cryptic *Talmudic* passage regarding the parable of the fox. This was his explanation:

In a fable, a fox encountered a lion that was about to devour him. The fox said to the lion, "I am not substantial enough to fill you up. Come, I will show you a heavy man, whom you can eat and thereby satisfy

your appetite!" There was a covered pit, beyond which stood the marked man. Once the lion saw him, he told the fox, "I fear that this pious man's *tefillos* will cause me to be trapped." The fox replied, "The concern you have will not affect you or your children; perhaps it will affect your grandchildren. Regardless, you are famished now, and it will be a long time until your grandchildren are born!"

The lion was convinced. As he advanced toward his prey, he fell into the camouflaged pit. The fox came to the edge of the pit and peered down inside. The lion looked up and asked, "Didn't you assure me that, as a result of my offense, neither I nor my children, but only my grandchildren, would suffer this fate?" To which the clever fox responded, "Yes, and what I said was true. This misfortune occurred to you not because of your misdeed, but rather as a result of a misdeed committed by your grandfather!" The lion protested, "That is not fair! The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?" The fox smiled and said, "Why did you not make that consideration earlier?"

Rav Hai concludes, "There is a profound lesson to be learned from this parable."

Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler suggests that this parable conveys a crucial message: Lustful desires drive even wise men, men who should know better, to abandon their faith. Rather than utilize their common sense to travel down the right path in life,



they use their intellect to justify to themselves, as well as to convince others, that their heretical approach is correct. The reason they fall into this trap of blasphemy is that their craving for hedonistic pursuits blinds their judgment. This is the lesson drawn from the parable. The lion was captured because he was seduced by the fox's promise of a little more flesh. The

lion, being an intelligent being, could have logically reasoned that if his grandchildren would suffer for his crime, he, too, might suffer for a crime of his grandfather. Nonetheless, his hunger clouded his judgment. Only after he fell into the pit was he able to realize how his desires had lured him toward his tragic fate.



## Rav Dovid ben Yisrael Leakeh'es, 21<sup>st</sup> of Nissan

*Av Bais Din, Talmid of the Ba'al Shem Tov*

*The following stories were told by Rav Mordechai of Slonim:*

### Lack of Faith

Rav Dovid once requested some money from one of the *Chassidim* and the latter replied that he had none. Rav Dovid grew upset and retorted that he lacked faith, explaining what he meant with the following story:

"We once sat together with the holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* and we drank *l'chaim*. We were drinking honey mead, which at the time was an expensive drink that cost some two gold coins a bottle. The *Ba'al Shem* turned to me and said, "Reb Dovid, go and buy a bottle of mead for us!" I immediately stuck my hand in my pockets and pulled out two golden coins, even though I was so poor at the time that I knew clearly and logically that there had been no money in my pocket for some two weeks! Nonetheless, I had no doubts and I believed with *emuna* that if my *Rebbe* asked me for money I must be able to give it to him and therefore I found in my pockets what he asked for... but now you say you don't have – and that is a lack of

*emuna.*"



### Yeshuos for Sale

Once, Rav Dovid sorely needed money and he had none. He calculated that his needs amounted to some five gulden. First, he *davened* to *Hashem* that whatever he did would be accepted on high and he then went about and declared so that the word got out that he was selling his *berochos*: two gulden bought a male baby and one gulden a bouncing baby girl! Hearing this amazing opportunity, a Jew who had not yet been blessed with children approached Rav Dovid. "For such a price and at such an opportunity I'd best grab what I can!" he declared as he paid up five gulden on the spot for *berochos* for two boys and a girl.

Word spread quickly, but when more people came, Rav Dovid turned them all away explaining, "Sorry, it's over. I already have what I needed." And that was that. (*Maamar Mordechai Slonim* p. 21–22)



## Rav Yisrael Yitzchok Kalisch ben Shimon Alter, 22<sup>nd</sup> of Nissan

### **The Miraculous *Medrash Shiur***

As is well known, when the Peshis'cher became blind and could no longer see to study and learn, the *Sabba Kadisha*, Rav Yitzchok of Vorka, used to read the daily *Medrash shiur* for the Rebbe Reb Bunim.

Afterward, when he himself was a *Rebbe*, he taught a *Medrash shiur* to the *Chassidim* that *Tzaddikim* said that angels and *serofim* also came down to listen to. When the Kotzker *Rebbe's* wife grew ill, his colleague, the Vorker *Rebbe*, advised the Kotzker to travel to Reb Berel Doctor in Vorka for her treatment. The two *Tzaddikim* left Kotzk in one carriage and the Kotzker *Rebbetzin* came in another, following them.

Unfortunately, the doctor couldn't heal the *Rebbetzin* and after sixteen weeks of treatment she passed away. During the Kotzker *Rebbe's* stay in Vorka he too attended the Vorka *Rebbe's* special *Medrash shiur* and he stood listening by the doorway of the *Bais Medrash*. Twice he actually came in and the Vorka *Rebbe* literally spoke the *shiur* into the Kotzker *Rebbe* himself! Afterward, he asked the Kotzker if he understood and he replied that he did. When this scenario repeated itself, the Kotzker replied that he understood well.

One of the merchants from Premishlan once passed through Vorka and came to hear the famous *Medrash shiur*. When he returned home, Rav Meir Premishlaner asked the merchant where he had been. When the merchant began enumerating the names of the towns and

villages he passed through, Rav Meir stopped him when the merchant reached the name Vorka.

“What did you see there?” asked Rav Meir of the merchant.

“I went to hear the Vorka *Rebbe's* *Medrash shiur* and a strange thing occurred. In the middle of the *shiur* the *Rebbe* fell asleep! (This happened often and when the *Rebbe* awoke, he would say, “*Boruch shem kevod malchuso le'olam vo'ed.*”) When he awoke, he said the *pasuk*, ‘*vegam mikneinu yelech imonu* – also our cattle shall go with us,’ and then continued the *shiur* as usual.”

“Let me explain to you what happened then,” said Rav Meir to the puzzled merchant. “Meir'l had a craving to go up to Heaven and when I was up there I heard that a terrible decree of destruction had been pronounced over the *Yidden*. I did not succeed in canceling it. Suddenly, I heard them declaring, ‘Make way! Make way!’ And the Vorker *Rebbe* showed up, acting like a boss who was in charge, and he adamantly opposed any decrees. Finally, they gave in and said that only the cattle would be affected. With this, the Vorker *Rebbe* also disagreed, and he stood his ground opposing the decree, asking, ‘And from where will a *Yid* get a glass of milk? No – also our cattle will go with us!’ He then said that *pasuk* and the decree was rescinded. This is what you witnessed and heard at the *Medrash shiur* that day in Vorka, when the *Rebbe* fell asleep and awoke saying that *pasuk*,” explained Rav Meir Premishlan to the astonished merchant.



## **Pesach Story**

### **The Mauthausen *Matza* Bakery**

Mr. Abraham Krakowski was in the concentration camp in Mauthausen, Germany.

The food situation was impossible, with one loaf of bread rationed for eight men. The daily soup was inedible. He had always managed to eat everything, even in Birkenau, but in spite of gnawing hunger he could not tolerate the Mauthausen soup and vomited from it.

On the journey to Mauthausen, their train had lurched to a halt. The door slid open slightly and they saw an open car loaded with wheat kernels standing nearby. Within easy reach were hundreds of kernels. They scooped up several handfuls before the train began to move again. "It's exactly thirty days to *Pesach*," he told his fellow Jewish prisoners. "We ought to save these kernels – who knows? Maybe we'll be liberated by *Pesach*, and we will use these for *matzos mitzva!*"

Now, it was two weeks before *Pesach* and they were still prisoners, and the hunger was getting worse with each passing day.

Mr. Krakowski was approached by three of his friends, Mendel Markus and the Rubenstein brothers. They wanted him to ask the *Block Altester* (Senior) and the *Stuben Altester* (Room Senior) for permission to bake *matzos*, since he was on good terms with them. His friends would take care of the time and place, using the washroom late at night so the SS would not find out. The only problem would be to heat the stove sufficiently so the baking could proceed quickly.

Mr. Krakowski could not share in their excitement. They were in a prison camp, surrounded by the SS on all sides. He could not see risking their lives further just to bake *matzos*. And then, what about the prisoners who slept near the stove? Some were only "half-Jews" and "quarter-Jews". They were so crowded that they practically slept in a heap. They would never tolerate the overheated stove. What would they do if an SS officer made a sudden appearance? And how would they beat the kernels into flour? The plan was simply too fraught with doubt and danger.

They consulted with Rav Avigdor Glanzer, a scholar whose words they all respected, and he agreed with Mr. Krakowski fully. The others, however, were not convinced.

"But still..." one of his friends began. "Maybe they could still manage..." another one suggested. "After all, the grain – isn't it a sign from Heaven that *Hashem* wants us to go ahead and bake *matzos*?"

"Look here," Mr. Krakowski insisted, "no one ever thought of baking *matzos* until I said it – in that boxcar from Sachsenhausen. It was my idea, and now I say forget about it. As for *Hashem* wanting us to eat *matzos*, His help can come in a flash, anyway. Let's just leave things to Him."

His retort quieted them, but it did not put his mind at ease. That night he slept fitfully. In his dream, his deceased father and he were visiting the *Rebbe* of Radomsk, the *Shivchei Kohen*.

*They were standing at the Rebbe's table. Next to him stood his son-in-law, Rav Moshe. (He had already known that the Rebbe and his son-in-law had been killed by the SS in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942, together with their wives.) The Rebbe asked him, "What are you going to do about davening with a minyan (quorum)? It is written: Davar v'lo chatzi davar – 'A whole thing, and not halfway'."*

*He answered: "If it is at all possible, when someone has to say Kaddish on a Yahrzeit (the anniversary of the death of a parent) they get ten people together. They also manage an occasional abbreviated tefilla service."*

*Suddenly, his father was not there any more. He realized while dreaming that his father was no longer in this world and he began begging the Rebbe to look into their*



situation, and that he should daven to Hashem to help them. Then he told him the entire story of the grain. He told him about their discussion and his closing retort. He asked him what he thought about the matter. He answered, "I shall tell you. As a matter of principle you are right, but you should remember how your dear father labored to bake matzos. And it is written: *V'chen ta'asu l'doros!* 'And thus you shall do for all your generations'."

The dream was over.

The next morning Mr. Abe Krakowski awoke full of hope that they would be freed. The words were echoing in his ears: *V'chen ta'asu l'doros!* "Thus you shall do for all your generations..." All your generations! There would be more generations!

He quickly ran to Rav Avigdor Glanzer and all but shouted, "Rav Glanzer, we'll bake *matzos!*"

He stared at him and asked, "What happened all of a sudden?" He told him the entire dream and the impression it had made on him. "If that is the case, I have no counsel to offer you and I am in agreement," he said, "...and very happy at that."

He went to Markus and the Rubensteins, and also told them the story, and that they would indeed bake *matzos*. He was so convinced that liberation was at hand that no guns could scare him.

Rav Glanzer, one of the Rubensteins, and he approached Atze, the Block Senior, for permission to bake the *matzos* in the evening after lights out. He asked, "Where do you expect to do all that?"

They told him that the preparation would be done in the washroom, but they would like to have the stove in the room well-heated so the baking could be handled with speed. They assured him that the whole operation, from beginning to end, would take only a half hour. He went with them to Ernst Gottlieb, the Room Senior. Both realized that they were serious. They agreed, and added, "Please think of us, too."

They quickly began the detailed planning on how to accomplish the task. They washed four towels and hung them to dry on the wall. After they had dried, they wrapped the grain kernels in the towels and took four hammers they had access to and beat the grain until late in the afternoon. They did this out in the yard. The guards were puzzled by these actions, but they were not permitted to talk to them nor they to them. But they could hear them asking each other, "What are they doing there?" As the grain became pulverized, they poured it into a piece of paper. After several hours of arm-aching work, they had collected about two hundred grams of flour, less than half a pound.

During the course of the day they found a tin can which they heated through to make it kosher for *Pesach* use. By bedtime the stove was piping hot. When the light was turned off, some of those near the stove started to complain that it was too hot for them. Gottlieb raised his voice, "Mr. Krakowski is not to be disturbed in his work. Everyone quiet!" That was sufficient to silence the complaints.

They quickly went into the washroom. They prepared the dough in a bowl they had previously heated and cleaned, and whispering, with tears they sang snatches from *Hallel*. The kneading and rolling took some ten minutes. They had a board for rolling out the dough, but they had to use an empty bottle as a rolling pin. Mr. Abe Krakowski stationed himself at the stove and every minute or so one of his co-workers brought him a *matza* from the washroom. The stove was so hot that it took barely two minutes for six *matzos* to be done. He would slide one *matza* on and take off another.

They stuck to their schedule and the entire work was finished in less than eighteen

minutes! They had baked sixteen *matzos*, each about the size of the palm of a hand. For the first time in years they went to bed happy.

The next morning they began writing down the *Haggoda* and its recounting of the Exodus from Egypt, piecing it together from whatever anyone could remember by heart.

In the evening, the *Seder* began. Again, they slipped into the washroom. The previous evening they were six in the washroom; that night, they were fifteen! There were more who wanted to join, but there was not enough room and they were afraid that the SS might hear them. They started reciting the *Haggoda* very quietly. Some could not contain themselves and broke into sobs. As for Mr. Abe Krakowski, he could not utter a single word!

When he quieted down a little from his sobbing, he reminded the others not to forget where they really were and to try to be quick so as not to get caught and killed. After they recounted the Exodus from Egypt, they washed their hands and each one ate a piece of *matza*. Mr. Krakowski permitted himself to save a piece the size of a fingernail, as a *segula* (auspicious omen)."

At the conclusion of the *Seder*, after the traditional "Next year in *Yerushalayim*", they said in one voice, as if it were part of the text, "If *Hashem* will only free us now, then we will have to make an even greater *Haggoda*."



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 טערקלטיוב זי"ע מבריד  
אשת הרה"ח מו"ה אברהם חיים ע"ה גאלדענבערג

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

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

She loved her family deeply and immensely. May *Hashem* console her family and may she be a constant *melitza yeshura*, אמן.

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

EREV PESACH CHECK - LIST

<input type="checkbox"/>	Alos עלות		AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Krias Shema קריאת שמע		AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Siyum Bechorim סיום בכורים		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Pockets / Cuffs / Hats		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Talis & Tfillin bags		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Were Clothing picked up from cleaners (Kittel)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Empty, & Discard Vacuum Cleaner Bags		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Children's Carriages		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sell Chometz by: מכירת חמץ		AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Brush Teeth (from chometz)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	End of eating Chometz by: סוף אכילת חמץ		AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pack away and seal all Chometz items to be sold		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Empty out all trash cans (wash down)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Burning of Chometz by: סוף שריפת חמץ		AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hair Cut / Nail Clipping (before Chazos)		PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Baking of Mitzvah Matzos (after Chatzos)		PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pay for all Matzos (shelachem)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take Challah from Matzos (without bracha)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Put children to sleep		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tevillah		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check & Clean Lettuce (Marror)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Roast the Zeroa & Beitzah		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grate the Chrein (horseraddish)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make Charoses / prepare Salt Water		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Open all Bottles / Containers & Packages		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set the Ovens & Ranges / Lights (needed for Yom Tov)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set Time Clocks		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Place Food in Fridge / Oven as necessary		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare Haggadas / Pillows / Kittel / Afikomen bag		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare Items for the Kearah		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cut; Paper / Foil / Towels		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare Machzorim (check for stuck pages)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eruv Tavshilin עירוב תבשילין		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shekiah / Sunset שקיעה		PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Candle lighting (seder candles)		PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Afikomon (before Chatzos)		AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Candle lighting (Thursday nite, not before)		PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Candle lighting (Friday nite, not Later than)		PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cook Items needed for Shabbos		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take Machzorim to Shul (for Shabbos)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Motzei Shabbos (chol hamoed)		PM
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# חג כשר ושמח

## Schlissel Challa

There is a *minbag* to bake *schlissel challa* (*schlissel* means “key” in *Yiddish*) for the *Shabbos* after *Pesach*. *Schlissel challo*s are best known as a *segula* for *parnossa*, though there are other reasons for it, as we will soon see. Some bake the *challa* with an actual key inside, some make the *challa* in the shape of a key and some put sesame seeds on top in the form of a key. There are those who make the *challa* flat to look like *matzot*s. We will discuss this later on. The *Ohev Yisrael* says about *schlissel challa* that “the *minhogim* of our fathers are most definitely *Torah*”. There are many reasons given for this *minbag* of baking *schlissel challa*; we will go through some of them. (Some of the items written below can also be found in *Ta’amei Minhogim*, *Nitei Gavriel*, *Sefer HaTodo’a* and *Minbag Yisrael Torah*).

First, the second *mishna* in *Rosh HaShana* says that on *Pesach* we are judged on the grains, *parnossa*. Rabbeinu Nissim asks: if we are judged on *Rosh HaShana*, then how are we judged on *Pesach*? He answers that on *Pesach* it is determined how much grain there will be in the coming year for the world, but on *Rosh HaShana* it is decided how much of that grain each individual receives. The *Meiri*, however, says that on *Rosh HaShana* it is decided if one will live or die, suffer or not and other such things, but *Pesach* is when we are judged on the grains. Based on this, there are customs in *Sephardi* communities to do things *Motzo’ei Pesach* as a sign that we want *Hashem* to give us livelihood. In Aram Soba (Syria) and Turkey, they put wheat kernels in all four corners of the house on *Motzo’ei Pesach* as a sign of prosperity for the coming year. (*Moed L’Kol Chai* - Rav Chaim Palagi, *Bais HaBechira*). From a *mishna* we already see that there is a connection between *Pesach* and *parnossa*.

### Reasons for Schlissel Challa

1) In *Shir HaShirim* (which we read on *Pesach*) it says פתחי לי אחתי רעיתי – “Open for Me, My sister, My beloved”. *Chazal* say that *Hashem* asks us to open up for Him a small hole like the tip of a needle and He will open up a huge hole for us. Also, *Klal Yisrael* is called a bride and they are called the *bechina* (aspect) of bread. During *Pesach*, all the upper gates and minds are open and after *Pesach* they close and we need to open them. Therefore, we put a key in the *challa* after *Pesach* to hint at us opening a small “hole”, through the *mitzva* of *Shabbos* (and, if I might add, the *mitzva* of *challa*), and now *Hashem* should open up all His goods from his storehouses and the heavens, like He gave the *mon* to our forefathers in the month of *Iyar*, and this *Shabbos* we bless the month of *Iyar*.

2) After *Pesach* is when the *mon* stopped falling and we brought the *Omer*. From then on we needed to eat from the produce of the ground; we needed *parnossa*, since until now we had the *mon*. It is known that everything has a gate. Therefore, just as we *daven* to *Hashem* to open up the gates of *parnossa*, we have a *minbag* to put the form of a key on the *challo*s to allude that *Hashem* should open up the gates of *parnossa* for us.

3) During *Sefira* we count forty-nine days till *Shavuot*, the fiftieth day, which is the *sha’arei bina*. We go from gate to gate, and each gate has a key. That is why we make an image of a key on the *challa*.



4) It says in *Shir HaShirim* 1:11 תִּזְכֹּרֵנוּ עִשָּׂה לָךְ עִם נִקְדוֹת הַכֶּסֶף – “We will make for you circlets of gold with spots of silver”. Regarding the *Mishkon* it says וְהָבָה וְכֶסֶף וְנַחֲשֵׁת, putting *zobov* (gold) before *kessef* (silver). In *Bereishis*, regarding the creation of the world, the first day it says *yehi obr*, which is *chessed* (represented by silver) and the second day represents *gevura*, which in turn represents gold. The reason is that regarding the creation of the world it was pure *chessed*, as is written: “The world was built on *chessed*” (*Tehillim* 89:3), and therefore *chessed*, which is representative of *kessef*, precedes *gevura*, which is representative of *zobov*. Regarding the *Mishkon*, however, *Hashem* had to, so-to-speak, contract (*tzimtzum*) the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) to dwell in it, and *tzimtzum* is from the aspect of *gevura*. Thus, *zobov* precedes *kessef* with regard to the *Mishkon*. However, the *zobov* written there has the *nekuda* (vowel sound) of a פתח (it has a *pasach* instead of the usual *komatz*). It says וְהָבָה הַתְּנוּפָה (*Shemos* 38:24), and that is the *nekuda* of *chessed* – the *nekuda* of *chochma*. And פתח (the vowel) also means “opening” like פתח ושער - from there comes all the kindness. Putting it all together, this that we say in *Shir HaShirim* תִּזְכֹּרֵנוּ עִשָּׂה לָךְ עִם נִקְדוֹת הַכֶּסֶף means that the *Mishkon* was made with *zobov*, the aspect of *tzimtzum*, but with the *nekuda* of *kessef*, meaning the word *zobov*, instead of having the usual vowel, *komatz* is written with the *nekuda* of *pasach*, which is *chessed*. And the *Shabbos* after *Pesach* is always in the second week of the *Sefira*, which is *gevura*, the aspect of *zobov*, except that it is *menukod* with *kessef*, *nekudas pasach*. Through this we say that we will open up all the gates of blessings, and since every gate has a מפתח (key), we make the image of a key on the *challa*.

5) The previous four reasons are all brought by the *Ohev Yisrael* in *Shabbos Achar Pesach* and *Likutim Parshas Shemini*. There is a fifth reason brought by the *Ohev Yisrael*, also based on the *pasuk* וְהָבָה וְכֶסֶף וְנַחֲשֵׁת לָךְ עִם נִקְדוֹת הַכֶּסֶף, connecting the Written and Oral *Torah* to *challa*. (See *Ohev Yisrael, Shabbos Achar Pesach*)

6) The *matza* we eat on *Pesach* is supposed to instill in us *Yiras Hashem*. And *yira* is compared to a key as we see from the following *Gemora* in *Maseches Shabbos* 31a–b: “*Rabba bar Rav Huna* said: Any person who has *Torah* but does not have *Yiras Shomayim* is comparable to a treasurer who has the keys to the inner parts (of the treasure house) but the keys to the outer area were not handed to him. How can he get to the inner parts (if he can’t first get into the outer parts)?” Therefore, we put a key in the *challa* the *Shabbos* after *Pesach* to show we want the *yira* obtained from the *matzos* to stay with us, because if one has *yira* then the *Torah* will stay attached to him. (*Yismach Yisrael*)

7) The *Rambam* lists at the beginning of *Hilchos Chometz U’matza* that there are eight *mitzvos* (three positive and five negative) involved there. The key we put in the *challa* alludes to this *Rambam*: the letters of מפתח (key) spell פִּיתָן פִּיתָן פִּיתָן חֵי מִצְוֹת and מִי is for *matza*; these allude to *Hilchos Chometz U’matza*, and the חֵי is the eight *mitzvos* involved]. (*Tzvi LaTzaddik*)

8) The *Shabbos* after *Pesach* we make *challo*s that look like *matzos*, as an allusion to the *matzos* that were eaten on *Pesach Sheini*. And we put a key in it to allude to the “gates” being open until *Pesach Sheini*. (*Imrei Pinchas*)

9) The *minbag* is to put keys in the *challa* and make them in the form of *matzos*. The reason is that in these seven weeks of *Sefira* we are supposed to work on our *Avodas Hashem* until we reach the level of the first night of *Pesach*. The way to do this is to put the “left into the right”, meaning mix the trait of *abava* (right side) with *yira* (left side). In this second week of *Sefira* we have these two traits in our hands, since the first week of *Sefira* is *chessed* – *abava*, and the second week is *gevura* – *yira*. That is why we make the *challa* look like *matza*. *Matza* is representative of the *yetzer tov*, the right, and *chometz*

is representative of the *yetzer hora*, the left. Now, we have *challo*s which are true *chometz*, in the form of *matza*; “the left is in the right”, *chometz* in *matza*. (*She'eiris L'Pinchas*)

10) There are many reasons given for the *schlissel challa*, and I say that the *schlissel challo*s are the keys to *parnossa*. (*Segulas HaBeShT V'talmidov*, quoting *Nachlas Yaakov*)

11) The *Yismach Yisrael* cites the holy *Kozhnutzer Maggid* that the *Shabbos* after *Pesach* is called *Geleh* or *Gilui Matzos*! This is the *Shabbos* that reveals what the *matzos* have done. Eating *matza* which the *Zohar* calls *Michla DeAsvasa* or *Michla DiMehaymenusa*, the bread of healing and the bread of *emuna* and faith is supposed to ingrain something deep within us. You are what you eat; your body is made up of the building blocks of the nutrients from the food we ingest, digest and build from. Eating *matza* – unleavened bread of healing and faith – is supposed to change our biological, chemical and spiritual makeup and inject us with a dose of health and faith – truly a bread of *asvasa* – healing and *mehaymenusa* – faith. Thus after eating and living off *matza* for a week, the first *Shabbos* afterward the *matzos* are revealed and all the potential work they have instilled in us is actualized and we can observe the results.

The *Yismach Yisrael* also uses this to explain our custom of using keys to knead *challo*s also known as *Schlissel Challa*. Keys allude to *Yiras Shomayim*, fear and awe of Heaven, as in the teaching of *Chazal* (*Gemora Shabbos* 31) that whoever has acquired *Torah* learning, yet lacks *Yiras Shomayim* – fear and awe of Heaven – is compared by the Sages to someone who seeks to enter the king's treasury. He has been given the keys of *Torah* to unlock the inner gates, but he is lacking the keys to the outer gates that he must unlock first (since he lacks *Yiras Shomayim*). How is he to enter without the outer keys?! Thus we see that awe, *Yiras Shomayim*, is compared to keys. Thus we can say that he who lacks these keys cannot enter the storehouses and treasuries of the *Torah* and the *Torah* cannot enter him either! Thus, when we knead our *challo*s with the keys we are symbolically saying we are instilling *Yiras Shomayim* in our bread, and when we eat and partake of this bread, *Yiras Shomayim* will permeate us and our beings and essence as the *matzos* did. This *Shabbos*, the actualized potential of *Yiras Shomayim* from our *matzos* will be instilled and revealed in us.

May *Hashem* help that it permeate ourselves and the lives of our families and loved ones, instilling in us all *ahavas veyiras* – love and awe of *Hashem* and *Torah*. *Amen!*

## **Different ways of making *Schlissel Challa***

As mentioned above (reasons 8, 9 and 11) there are those who make the *challa* round and flattish for this *Shabbos*, in the image of *matza*.

Some make the *challa* in the shape of a key. Some attach a piece of dough in the shape of a key. *Breslov Customs for Pesach* (p. 57) says this is the *minbag* of the family of Rav Elozor Kenig and of Manistritch.

*Sefer HaTodo'a* mentions making the image of a key with sesame seeds on top of the *challa*. These first three customs can, perhaps, be seen from the wording of the *Ohev Yisrael* in one place where he says we put the image of a key on the *challa*.

Some place an actual key in the *challa*. Perhaps this is done because of the wording in many places implying that one should indent the *challa* with a key.

Either way it is done, the key or image of the key is usually on top. An interesting observation about this: the *Gemora* quoted by the *Yismach Yisrael* (reason 6), about the key, is at the top of *daf* 31b. At the bottom of the *daf* is the *mishna* mentioning the women's *mitzva* of *challa*. Here the key is on top and the *challa* on the bottom.

## Conclusion

The *Gemora* in *Ta'anis* says that there are three keys that *Hashem* controls directly, without the assistance of *malochim*. They are: rain, which the *Gemora* explains is *parnossa*; childbirth (or conception); and *Techias HaMeisim* (Resurrection of the Dead). If I may humbly add, when we are making the *challa* we should have in mind the *parnossa* of others as well, those who don't have children and most importantly *daven* for *Techias HaMeisim*.

Either way one performs this *minbag*, they are all correct and all have holy sources. When I started writing this I did not realize how much information there was on this *minbag* which is done only once a year. I learned a valuable lesson. Every *minbag* and of course every *mitzva* has many holy reasons behind it and it is not done just because someone decided that it was a nice thing to do, as some say. The more I looked into *schlissel challa*, the more I found in *seforim* written by *Rabbonim* who were *geonim* in every part of *Torah*, *nistar* and *nigleh*, and *Tzaddikim* in every respect, "between *Hashem* and man" and "between man and man". They were able to understand reasons for every little action we do as a way of serving *Hashem*. May we all be blessed with *parnossa berevach* together with all of *Klal Yisrael*.

Note: It is said in the name of Rav Dovid of Tolna that one should make sure the dough separated as *challa* is burnt completely until no part of it is edible. In addition to being the ideal way to burn the *challa*, he says that if a *dovor tomei* eats the unburned *challa*, it can cause one's children to go off the *derech, chas v'sholom*.

The *segula* that I received from my *Rebbe*, the Clevelander *Rebbe, Sblit"u*, of Ra'anana, is that on the first *Shabbos* after *Pesach* you "knead the *challa* dough" with a key. In fact, that is the custom recorded and found in the *sefer Ohev Yisrael* of the Apta *Rebbe*. Our custom is (I wash the key first in soap and hot water) to knead the *challa* dough and poke the key into the dough while reciting the "open the *she'orim*" *tefillos* found in most *zemiros benschers* at the end of the *zemiros* for *Melave Malka*, where we ask *Hashem* to open many gates for us. Other people I have seen also bake a key shape on the *challa*, but I didn't receive any such tradition.

The *Ohev Yisrael* says:

לשבת שאחר הפסח המנהג הוא מימים קדמונים לנקוב את החלות בשבת שלאחר פסח במפתחות, ונעשה על החלה צורת מפתח.

In at least three other places the *Ohev Yisrael* uses similar wording to *ונעשה על החלה צורת מפתח*. This is probably where the *minbag* of some to bake a key shape image on the *challa* comes from.

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