

# ME'OROS NATZADDIKIM

LIGHTS OF OUR RIGHTEOUS TZADDIKIM



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זכות רפואה שלמה

מיכאל בן שלי

מלכה בת רחל

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

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)

❧ **EMOR** ❧

❧ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❧

Ahava Rabba – Ohev Yisroel

## Dvar Torah

### Everything From Hashem Except Yiras Shomayim

The Apta Rav, in *Ohev Yisrael*, says that really everything is from Hashem. He notes that even when we perform the *mitzvos* everything is from Hashem; the fact that we merit to study Torah or give *tzedoka* - all that is really a gift from Hashem. He quotes the *pesukim* to testify to this fact: "because everything is from You and from Your hand we have given it all to You" (*Divrei HaYomim I 29:14*).

Therefore, concludes the Apta Rav, the primary *Avodas Hashem* is to focus on the one and only thing we can truly give Hashem from us and from us alone: *Yiras Shomayim* - to fear Hashem. The need for *Yiras Shomayim* and what its purpose serves are illustrated by the following *moshol* that the Apta Rav gives us in *Ohev Yisrael* here:

If a person were to own a vast array of rich oils, a fine selection of expensive, exquisite wines and mounds of finely sifted white flour, it would all go to waste if there were nowhere to store it all. Without a cellar, storehouse, winery, granary and silo, all these precious commodities would be lost and ruined. Similarly, a man can have wisdom, insight, knowledge and all manner of fine traits and good attributes, but without the *Yiras Shomayim*

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to act as a holding vessel all these would go to waste and be discounted and lost forever!

When we accept *Hashem's* yoke with *Mesiras Nefesh* and *Yiras Shomayim*, we are creating a *kli* to accept, hold onto and safeguard all the aforementioned *middos*. The *Apta Rav* ties this all into *Sefiras HaOmer* with *gematrias* and kabbalistic hints, but the main point is that we need *Yiras Shomayim*; without it we can lose everything we work so hard to hone, refine and achieve.



## Sowing the Seeds of the Zera Kodesh

### Even If We Fail To Understand

The *heilige Ropshitzer* tells us that when we count the *Omer*, we draw down *shefa* and *berocha*. Even though we do not understand all the many *kavonos* of the *Sefira* and the various *tikkunim* and *sefiros*, still everything is rectified by the help of *Hashem*.

The *Ropshitzer* explains that this is similar to the *nusach* of *Birkas HaMitzva* that we all recite before performing any *mitzva*: *Boruch ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech ho'olom asher kideshonu bemitzvosov* – “Who has sanctified us through the commandments”. The *Ropshitzer* notes that the *Nusach HaBerocha* is not “Who sanctified us through the act of fulfilling the *mitzvos*”; that would have been *asher kideshonu ba'asiyas hamitzva*. The fact that we do not say that *Hashem* sanctified us through the act of fulfilling the *mitzva* proves that He sanctifies us through the very commandment, even if we do not merit to perform and fulfill the *mitzvos* as we described, with all the various *kavonos*, even if we do not know the *kavonos* and do not understand the lofty and sublime depth of what we are doing – still *Hashem* has sanctified us with His *mitzvos*, not with *how* we do them but with their very essence! We don't need to understand it; they will still work and draw down the *shefa* of blessings for us as *Hashem* intended.



## OHR HACHAIM

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

### Praises For The Holy Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh

#### In Meron

In a letter written to his parents in Leghorn, Italy, the youngest *talmid* of the *Ohr HaChaim*, *Avrohom Yishmo'el Sangeviniti*, described their journey to the Holy Land in detail. Here is his description of their time spent in Meron at the *kever* of *Rav Shimon bar Yochai*:

We made our way toward Meron, where the burial cave of *Rav Shimon bar*

Yochai and his son, Rav Elozor, and other holy *Tzaddikim* are. After reading the *Megilla* on the 15<sup>th</sup> of *Adar* we left and arrived near Meron. From afar we could already see the dome of the *Ner Yisrael*, the *Rashbi*. Meron itself is a large, non-Jewish village and no Jews live there. Below the village is a large courtyard and there is found the dome of the *Rashbi*. Along the entranceway Rav Yitzchok is buried, and on the left is a mound marking the *kever* of Rav Yeva Saba of Mishpotim. Inside the courtyard is a great dome and inside it a small room on the right and one on the left. On the left is the entrance to *Rashbi* and there is a *matzeiva* there, as I shall draw for you in my letter.



### **The Daily Bonfires**

Above the *matzeiva* is a deep hole in which they light a bonfire every night in the following manner: They take fine, white linen clothes, each according to what he can afford to donate, and they rip them to shreds, dip them in olive oil and fill the hole with more oil, then set them ablaze. Its light shines all the way to Tzefas and this is a great honor for *Rashbi*. A wealthy woman from Constantinia once sent a fine garment interwoven with silver, worth one hundred *pesos*, and they lit it and burned it in honor of *Rashbi*; each one does according to his means. The *Rav* [the *Ohr HaChaim*] lit and burned several articles of clothing. (Translator's note: the incident below, described in *Elef Kesav* by Rav Weiss, probably took place then.) I also lit and burned a few for my mother's *neshoma*, may her soul rest in Eden. On the right is the dome of Rav Elozor and above there is a hole for lighting a bonfire, just like his father's, and also above Rav Yitzchok. When all three bonfires are set ablaze we can understand the depiction of the *Mishna* that it appears as if the entire Diaspora is one blazing fire all across. Happy and praised be the eye that witnessed all this!



### **Their Study and the Miraculous Fragrance**

We entered Meron on a Wednesday and remained there some twenty hours, during which time we sat and studied in the *Rashbi's* dome with great desire, passion, love and joy. We studied the *Zohar* into the night and then we ate. Afterward, we continued to study and we learned *Zohar* for some six hours straight. At this time, the entire place filled with a sweet fragrance, the likes of which none of us had ever smelled before in our whole lives. Everyone smelled this amazing, miraculous scent; all present testified as to the fragrance: men and women and a rich guest who was present there at the time as well. We rejoiced and studied for eight more hours into the night and went to sleep. Before daybreak, we resumed our studies, our entire sleep lasting little more than two hours. When the east grew light, we prayed at *Vosikin* and resumed study for eighteen hours straight with no interruptions. After we ate, we resumed our studies till Thursday, eight hours into the night.



### **Shabbos in Meron**

On Friday morning we visited the *kevorim* of other *Geonim* and *Tzaddikim*...We



made our way back *Erev Shabbos* to Meron and spent *Shabbos* there in the house of *Rashbi*. All *Shabbos* long we studied the *Zohar*, and on *Motzo'ei Shabbos* we studied *Mishmar* all night long in the *Idros* of the *Zohar*, and we all felt a great enlightenment in our souls. The *Rav* and Master [the *Ohr HaChaim*] told all his students that each should rectify one *tikkun* and we were afraid. We concluded the *Idros* before dawn and we studied *Bar Yochai* in joy and *simcha*, and we prostrated ourselves there and cried and beseeched, asking and *davening*, praying for mercy, and we sang songs in great joy. We *davened* in the morning and came back a third and final time and asked for mercy for the *Shechina* and for all of you – none were left out – and then we made our departure and left in peace. We went back to Tzefas and stayed in Ein Zeisim on the way by the *kever* of *Rav Yehuda Bar Illai*.”



### The Ohr HaChaim in Meron

This was the one and only time *Rav Chaim ben Attar* was in Meron and so the two well-known descriptions of this visit, although they seem to say it was on *Lag BaOmer*, are mistaken as to the date – but their testimony of what transpired is still moving.

*Rav Shmuel Heller*, chief *Rav* of Tzefas, wrote:

In my youth, I heard from the elder *Sefardim* of Tzefas, whose forefathers told them how when the holy *Rav Chaim ben Attar* ascended the mountain toward Meron, when he reached the point from where you climb up the mountain toward *Rashbi*, he dismounted from the donkey and proceeded to climb the mountain hand and foot, and the entire way up he cried and called out, “Where am I ascending? To what a holy place such a lowly, despicable creature as myself do I climb to enter such a holy place, aflame with holy fire! The Holy One and all His heavenly Hosts are all here, as well as the souls of the righteous *Tzaddikim!*” (*Kuntres Kevod Melochim*)



*Rav Yitzchok Weiss*, *Rav* of Verboy, writes:

*Reb Mendel Litman* of Tzefas testified that “He [*Rav Chaim ben Atar*] cried during the bonfire lit in honor of *Rashbi* and stood afar, and the *Ohr HaChaim* said: ‘How can I approach the mist where the souls of the *Avos* are present – *Avrohom*, *Yitzchok* and *Yaakov* – and all the other holy souls stand there together with them?’” (*Elef Kesav* #684)



### The Holy Lights Of The Ohr Hachaim

In *Meor HaChaim*, *Rav Moshe Franco* cites several teachings from the *Ohr HaChaim's* *deroshos* in Italy regarding the *pesukim* about *Sefiras HaOmer* in our *Parsha*. Here are some of those teachings:

***Usefartem lochem mimochoras haShabbos* – “And you shall count for yourselves from the day after *Pesach*” (23:15).**

In *Shemos* (24:10) the *pasuk* says, “And they saw the G-d of Yisrael and beneath His feet

was like the work of a sapphire stone". The *Ohr HaChaim* asks why the *pasuk* says *kema'aseh* – "the work of"? What is the significance of this description?

He answers that there is a difference between the souls of Bnei Yisrael and those of the other nations. The souls of the nations are like glass, whose shine, luster and brilliance do not compare to that of jewels and gemstones, especially the sapphire. The souls of Bnei Yisrael, however, are in fact compared to the brilliance and lustrous shine of the sapphire, as is known that the souls of Bnei Yisrael were hewn from the Throne of Glory – the *Kisei HaKovod* – which is compared to the sapphire. This is what our *pasuk* in *Shemos* is referring to: the throne beneath the feet of *Hashem*, which is likened to sapphire.

Any gemstone quarried in its natural state requires work. After it is mined and removed in its raw state it does not have the shine and brilliance we are used to seeing. It requires the work of a skilled craftsman and gemologist to use tools to hone, cut, polish and create those shining facets that a cut gemstone has, which then shine with a brilliant, lustrous light. This work is the *kema'aseh* referred to in our *pasuk* in *Shemos*: the shining, brilliant light beneath the feet of the *Shechina* is like the light of a brilliant sapphire after it has been skillfully worked, cut and polished.

This is the hint in our *pasuk* in *Emor* as well. *Usefartem lochem – sefartem* has the same linguistic meaning as sapphire: make yourselves shine like a sapphire by counting fifty days. Then you must have in mind that you are working your soul like a craftsman cuts and polishes a gemstone from a rough, raw uncut stone into a brilliant jewel, whose lustrous shine is as brilliant as a sapphire!



## הילולא

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

One of the tools that *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

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

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

### Translation:

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

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

4) Study some of his teaching or writings.

See more at: [www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm](http://www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm)



## ☞ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ☞



### YAHREZITS BEGINNING SHABBOS EMOR

[http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim\\_yahrtzeit/Iyar](http://www.chinuch.org/gedolim_yahrtzeit/Iyar)

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

#### \* **13<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Friday Night (May 20<sup>th</sup>)**

\* **Rav Masoud** bar Yaakov Abuchatzera, the father of the *Baba Sali*, (12<sup>th</sup> of *Iyar* according to *Hamodia* 2006 and *Yated* 2007), (5668/1908);

#### \* **14<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (May 21<sup>st</sup>) – Pesach Sheini**

\* **Rav Meir Ba'al HaNes**, (121 CE). A descendant of proselytes, Rav Meir was a *talmid* of Rav Akiva, Rav Yishmo'el, and Elisha *ben* Avuya. There are 335 *halochos* mentioned in the *Mishna* with Rav Meir's explanations. His wife was the famous wise woman, Beruria. She advised him wisely when neighboring wicked people disturbed him (*Berochos* 10a), and when their two sons died she broke the news gently and comforted him. He was one of the five scholars ordained by Rav Yehuda *ben* Bava during the persecutions following the Bar Kochva Revolt (*Sanhedrin* 14). Rav Meir was buried in Teveria. His main teacher was *Acher* ("the Other") who entered the *Pardes* ("orchard") with Rav Akiva and came out a heretic due to his misunderstanding of what he saw there;

\* **Rav Shmuel** of Karov. Born in Neustadt, he became a close *Chassid* of Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk and later the *Chozeh* of Lublin. From the year 1815, he became *Rebbe* in Karov and Wangrob, (5580/1820);

\* **Rav Leib** of Zelikov, *talmid* of the *Chozeh* of Lublin and *mechaber* of *Lekutei Maharil*, (5586/1826);

\* **Rav Yehuda Tzvi** of Stretin, (5667/1907);

\* **Rav Eliyohu Chaim Meisel**, *Av Bais Din* of Lodz (1821–1912). Born in Horodok, he became the *Rav* of the city from 1840 to 1843, and later was *Rav* of Drazin (1843–1861), Prozan (1861–1867), where he showed heroic dedication during a deadly epidemic and Lomza (1867–



1879), where he was able to reduce by five hundred a year the number of people called for army service. He was chief *Rav* of Lodz from 1873 until his *petira*, (5672/1912);

\* **Rav Tuvia Goldstein**, *Rav* and *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshiva Emek Halacha* in Boro Park, (5763/2003).

\* **15<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Sunday Night (May 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

**Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapira** of Moglenitz (or Moglonitza), “the *Saraph* of Moglenitz”. He was raised and taught by his maternal grandfather, the *Kozhnitzer Maggid*. He married the granddaughter of the *Rebbe* Reb Elimelech of Litzhensk. He was also the *talmid* of four leading figures of his generation: the *Rebbes* of Lublin, Peshis’cha, Apta and Ruzhin (5<sup>th</sup> of *Iyar*, according to others), (5609/1849).

\* **16<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Monday Night (May 23<sup>rd</sup>)**

\* **Rav Meir ben Gedalia** of Lublin, *mechaber* of *Maharam on Shas*, also known as *Meir Einei Chachomim*. He was invited to the rabbinate of Cracow in 1587, before the age of thirty. In 1591, he became *Rav* in Lemberg. In 1613, he became *Rav* in Lublin and established a *Yeshiva*, (5318–5376/1558–1616);

\* **Rav Yechiel Michel Feinstein** (1906–2003), born to Rav Avrohom Yitzchok in Uzda, Lithuania. At the age of seven, Yechiel Michel lost his father and went to live with his grandfather, Rav Dovid Feinstein, the *Rav* of Stravin, Byelorussia. There he learned with his grandfather and uncles, Rav Moshe and Rav Mordechai. After his *bar mitzva* he traveled to Slutsk to learn under Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer. When the Bolsheviks arrived, the *Yeshiva* was forced to flee Lithuania, to Kletzk, Poland. There, he continued his studies with Rav Meltzer and Rav Aharon Kotler. After three years, he moved to Mir to learn with Rav Yeruchom Leibovitz. He also learned in Brisk, Grodno and Vilna. He escaped Europe for America in 1941, traveling together with Rav Aharon Kotler. Upon his arrival he opened a *Yeshiva* in Boston for the *talmidim* of *Yeshivas Mir*. Six months later his uncle, Rav Moshe Feinstein, summoned Rav Yechiel Michel to serve at his side as head of *Yeshiva Tiferes Yerushalayim* in New York. During a brief trip to *Eretz Yisrael* in 1946, he married a daughter of the *Brisker Rav*, Lifsha (17<sup>th</sup> of *Iyar*, according to *Yated* 2004), (5763/2003).

\* **17<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Tuesday Night (May 24<sup>th</sup>)**

\* **Rav Yechezkel Landau**, the *Noda B’Yehuda* (1713–1793). Born in Apta, Poland, he learned and served in Brody, then Prague. He also wrote *Dogul Meirevova* on the *Shulchon Aruch* and *Tzelach* on *Shas*, as well as *Doresh Tziyon* and *Ahavas Tziyon*. He was able to trace his family lineage back to *Rashi*, (5553/1793);

\* **Rav Moshe Chaim Efraim** of Sudilkov, grandson of the *Ba’al Shem Tov*, *mechaber* of *Degel Machaneh Efraim* (1748–1800). He was born and died in Medzibuzh, and his grave is next to that of the *Ba’al Shem Tov*. His brother was the famous Rav Boruch of Mezhibuzh. After the *Ba’al Shem Tov*’s passing, Moshe Chaim studied under the *Maggid* of Mezritch and Rav Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye, the *mechaber* of *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, (5560/1800);

\* **Rav Mordechai (“Mottele”) Twersky** of Rachmistrivka (~1830–1921). Rav Mottele moved to Yerushalayim from Europe in 1908 (or 1906). His father, Rav Yochanon Twersky, son of the famous *Rebbe* Mottele of Chernobyl, was the first *Rebbe* of the Rachmistrivka dynasty. When his father was *niftar* in 1895, Rav Menachem and his two brothers shared the Rachmistrivka court for eleven years. On the first day of *Chol Hamoed Pesach* in 1921, Rav Mordechai was attacked by a mob of Arabs while on his way to the *Kosel*. He passed away a month later, due to complications caused by injuries sustained during that attack, (5681/1921);

- \* **Rav Pinchas Twersky** of Ostilla. The son of Rav Mordechai of Rachmistrivka, both of Rav Pinchas's parents were descendants of the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* greatest *talmidim*, Rav Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl (on his father's side) and Rav Pinchas of Koritz (on his mother's side). After marrying Chana Rochel, the daughter of Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz, Rav Pinchas settled and learned in Belz for twenty-three years. In 1923, he became the *Rav* of Ostilla, and after a few years he moved to P'shemish. Rav Pinchas was deported to the Belzec Extermination Camp on the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Iyar* in 1943. Close to one million Jews were murdered at Belzec; it is lesser known than other camps since almost no one survived to tell of it. No one knows exactly when Rav Pinchas was *niftar*, so his *Yahrzeit* was established on the same day as that of his father. The only member of his family to survive the war was his daughter, who married Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver. Together, they built Kiryas Skver and the Skverer *Torah* institutions, (5640–5703/1880–1943);
- \* **Rav Tavi Hirsch Rosenbaum**, the Kretchnif-Sighet *Rebbe*, (5681–5765/1921–2005).
- \* **18<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Wednesday Night (May 25<sup>th</sup>) – Lag Ba'Omer**

There is a high energy on *Lag Ba'Omer*. This is due to the actual counting of the *Omer* for this day and represents the spiritual potential of the *Torah* without the physical limitations of this world.
- \* **Rav Shimon bar Yochai**, *mechaber* of the sacred *Zohar* (“Brilliance”), was a *Tanna* (sage of the *Mishna*) in ancient *Eretz Yisrael*, and one of the most eminent *talmidim* of Rav Akiva. He was active after the destruction of the second *Bais HaMikdosh* in 70 CE. During the persecution by the Roman Emperor Hadrian, when the Talmudic Academies were shut down and the study of the *Talmud* was forbidden on penalty of death, Rav Akiva continued to teach the *Talmud* publicly, and his devoted *talmid*, Rav Shimon, stayed at his side. Even after the arrest of Rav Akiva, Rav Shimon continued to visit his master in prison to receive instruction there. After Rav Akiva died a martyr's death at the hands of the Romans, Rav Shimon *bar Yochai*, together with his son, Rav Elozor, went into hiding in a cave in the mountains near Peki'in in the Galil, where they stayed for thirteen years. There, he wrote the *Zohar*. This body of mystical knowledge was given orally by *Hashem* to the Jewish people on Har Sinai. With the passage of *Am Yisrael's* history, these teachings were lost to most people, until Rav Shimon, fearing a permanent loss of this knowledge, recorded them in the *Zohar*. After leaving the cave, Rav Shimon settled in the town of Tekoa, where he founded a great academy, and where the greatest scholars of the time gathered to receive instruction from him. Among them was Rav Yehuda, the son of Rav Shimon *ben Gamliel*, the *Nosi*, later the compiler of the *Mishna*. Rav Shimon was *niftar* on the thirty-third day of the *Omer*, known as *Lag Ba'Omer*. On that evening, the daylight was miraculously extended until he had completed his final teaching and passed away. As his passing left such a “light” behind, many candles and/or bonfires are lit at his burial place in Meron, as well as in locales throughout *Eretz Yisrael* and the Diaspora. Some teach that this is not the *Hilula* for Rav Shimon but it is the night that Rav Akiva began to teach Rav Shimon *Kabbala*. After being hidden for a thousand years, the *Zohar* was rediscovered by Rav Moshe de Leon in Spain, in the thirteenth century. There are some people who teach that the *Zohar* was taken by the Knights Templar from Yerushalayim to Spain where it came into the hands of Rav Moshe De Leon;
- \* **Rav Moshe Isserles** (the *Rema*), *mechaber* of the *Shulchon Aruch* (1520–1572), born and died in Cracow, Poland. He composed glosses on those paragraphs of the *Shulchon Aruch* in which he differs from the *Mechaber*, stating the *Halocha* as it has been decided by the *Ashkenazi* authorities, which is binding on *Ashkenazi* Jews. The *Rema* named his glosses *Mappa*

(“Tablecloth”), as a “cover” for the *Shulchon Aruch* (“the Set Table”). These glosses have been incorporated into the text and are distinguishable in that they are printed in *Rashi* script. This consolidation of the two works symbolizes the underlying unity of the *Sefardi* and *Ashkenazi* communities. It is through this unification that the *Shulchon Aruch* became the universally accepted Code of Law for the entire Jewish people. The *Rema* also wrote *Darkei Moshe*, a commentary on the *Arba’a Turim*. He became a son-in-law of Rav Sholom Shachna, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Lublin. He was also related to Rav Meir Katzenelenbogen – the *Maharam Padua*, and to Rav Shlomo Luria – the *Maharshal*, (5332/1572);

✳ **Reb Moshe Kohen Narol**, *Rav* of Metz and *mechaber* of *Sefer Kel Molei Rachamim*, (5419/1659);

✳ **Rav Moshe Eiseman**, *Rosh Yeshiva* in *Bais Meir-Vineland*. He was sent by Rav Yechiel Schlesinger in the Frankfurt *Yeshiva* to *Ponevezh*. He is a cousin to the *Baltimore Mashgiach* by the same name;

✳ **Rav Dovid Hecksher**, *Rosh Yeshiva* in *Yeshiva Kol Torah*, (5757/1997);

✳ **Rav Alter Eliyohu Rubinstein** (1947–2005). Born in Sighet, Hungary, to his father, Rav Fishel *HaLevi* Rubinstein. A few years later, his parents moved to *Eretz Yisrael* and settled in the village *Bais Gamliel* near *Yavneh*. After his *bar mitzva*, Rav Alter Eliyohu studied under the *Sanz-Klausenberger Rav* in *Netanya*. He married the daughter of Rav Yehoshua Deutsch, the *Av Bais Din* of *Katamon*, *Yerushalayim*. After studying for a few years in *Rehovot*, the *Rav* appointed him head of *Kollel Sanz* in *Yerushalayim*, where he served for twenty-two years, from 1970 until 1993. He also headed *Kollel Shomrei HaChomos* and was a member of the *Vaad Rabbanei Sanz*. In 1993 he was appointed as *Rav* of the *Shomrei HaChomos kehilla* in *Ramat Shlomo*, *Yerushalayim*. In 2004, Rav Alter Eliyohu was appointed *Av Bais Din* of the 1,300 families of *Kehillas Antwerp*, to replace Rav Chaim Kreiswirth, (5765/2005).

✳ **19<sup>th</sup> of Iyar ~ Begins Thursday Night (May 26<sup>th</sup>)**

✳ **Rav Meir ben Boruch**, the *Maharam MiRottenberg*, teacher of the *Rosh* (1215–1293). In 1286, Rudolf of Germany wanted to institute a new tax on the Jews of Germany. The Jews objected to this tax. The *Maharam* decided to leave Germany, but on the 4<sup>th</sup> of *Tammuz*, he was kidnapped by the bishop of *Bazil* and handed over to the emperor, who held Rav Meir captive in the *Tower of Enzheim* in *Alsace*. Rav Meir composed *Sha’ali Serufa Bo’eish*, which is included in the *kinnos* of *Tisha B’Av*. He was *niftar* in the prison and was not properly buried until the 4<sup>th</sup> of *Adar* in 1307, (5053/1293);

✳ **Rav Menachem Mendel** of *Rimanov* (1755–1815). He was introduced to *Chassidus* at the age of eleven when he met the *Maggid* of *Mezritch*. He studied *Torah* and *Chassidus* under Reb *Shmelke* of *Nikolsburg*, together with two of his friends, the *Chozeh* of *Lublin* and the *Maggid* of *Kozhnitz*. His main teacher, however, was Reb *Elimelech* of *Lizhensk*. Among his *talmidim* were such outstanding *Chassidic* leaders as Rav *Naftoli* of *Ropshitz* and Rav *Tzvi Elimelech* of *Dinov*. His teachings are collected in *Menachem Zion*, *Divrei Menachem*, and *Be’eros HaMayim*, (5575/1815);

✳ **Rav Yaakov Moshe Mordechai Soloveitchik** of *Lucerne* (1915–1995). His father was Rav *Yisrael Gershon Soloveitchik*, son of Rav *Chaim Soloveitchik* of *Brisk*. Soon after his *bar mitzva*, he traveled to *Kamenitz* to study under Rav *Boruch Ber Leibowitz*. He fled *Poland* to evade the draft, along with Rav *Aharon Leib Shteinman*, and the two stayed in *Switzerland* until the end of *World War II*. After the war, they traveled to *Eretz Yisrael* and studied at the *Lomza Yeshiva* in *Petach Tikva*, where he shared a room with Rav *Chaim Kanievsky*. He moved to *Lugano* and then to *Lucerne* to head a *Yeshiva*, and married *Rivka Ruchama*, daughter



of Rav Shmuel Zanvil Neuman, (5755/1995);

- \* **Rav Ezra Attia** of Syria, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Poras Yosef*, Yerushalayim, from 1925 to 1970 (1885–1970). He was born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1887, and was named after the *novi* Ezra because his mother, Leah, had had several miscarriages before his birth and gave birth to him after *davening* at Ezra's grave in Tedef, Syria. Rav Attia began his studies in Aleppo under Rav Yehuda Aslan Attia (possibly a distant relative), but he soon moved with his family to Yerushalayim. After his father passed away when Rav Attia was twenty, three leading *Sefardi* sages took upon themselves to support him so he could continue his studies. In 1907, Rav Attia began studying in the new *Yeshiva Ohel Moed* (which later became *Poras Yosef*) under Rav Refoel Shlomo Laniado and Rav Yosef Yedid. His studies were interrupted by World War I, and he fled to Egypt to avoid being drafted into the Ottoman Army. While there, he established *Yeshivas Keser Torah* in Cairo, which continued to exist until 1948. Returning to *Eretz Yisrael*, Rav Attia was appointed to head *Yeshiva Poras Yosef* and also to serve on the *Sefardi Bais Din*. He continued to head *Poras Yosef* until his *petira*, and among his *talmidim* were Rav Ovadia Yosef, Rav Ben Zion Abba Shaul, and leading *Rabbonim* of the Syrian communities in the United States and Panama, (5730/1970);
- \* **Rav Moshe Kopshitz** (1941–2004), great-grandson of Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Kol Yaakov* and *Rav* of Yerushalayim's Romema neighborhood, (5764/2004).



## ❧ 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 Meir Ba'al HaNes, 14<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

Tanna

### Tefilla attached

Rav Meir *Ba'al HaNes*, of the fourth generation of *Tanno'im*, belonged to that group of men who developed *Torah* instruction after Bar Kochva's revolt.

His teachers were Rav Akiva, Rav Yishmo'el and Rav Elisha *ben Avuya*. His manner of



instruction consisted of one-third *Halocha*, one-third *Aggoda*, and one-third proverbs. All classes of people appreciated his lessons.

His lineage was not well known. According to the *Aggoda*, Rav Meir *Ba'al HaNes* stemmed from a family of converts to Judaism, descendants even of Emperor Nero himself.

They say that when Emperor Nero came to conquer Yerushalayim, he shot divining arrows into the air and they all landed pointing in the direction of Yerushalayim. Sensing that the event had been sealed and that he would only be an instrument of grief, he repented. From his descendants was born Rav Meir *Ba'al HaNes*.

Rav Meir would say, "One should always teach his son a simple trade and *daven* to *Hashem*, Who is the source of all wealth. For wealth does not come by one's trade, since each trade has its rich and its poor."

He would also say, "There exist two

types of friends: those who rebuke you and those who do not. Love the first type above all."

And again, he would say, "Where do we learn that the resurrection of the dead is explicitly mentioned in the *Torah*? It is written, 'And Moshe will sing'. The verb is in the future."



Rav Meir was married to Beruria, one of the few women cited in the *Talmud* and famous for her great brilliance and wisdom. She was the daughter of Rav Chananya *ben Teradyon*, one of the ten Jewish leaders martyred by the Roman government. The Roman government ordered that Rav Chananya and his wife be executed for teaching *Torah* publicly. They also decreed that their younger daughter (Beruria's sister) be placed in a house of ill repute. Beruria asked Rav Meir to save her sister.

Rav Meir took a bag of gold coins and went to the brothel disguised as a Roman horseman and asked to meet her.

"Get away from me," she told him, "I don't feel well." With this, Rav Meir understood that she was innocent. He presented himself to the guardian of the brothel and offered a bribe and said, "Give me this one."

The guard replied, "When my supervisor comes, he will notice the prisoner missing and kill me."

Rav Meir told him, "When you are in danger, say the words, 'G-d of Meir – answer me!' and you will be saved."

The guard wondered, "How can I be

guaranteed that this will save me?”

Rav Meir replied, “Look! There are man-eating dogs over there. I will go over to them and you will see for yourself.”

Rav Meir walked toward the dogs. They ran over to tear him apart. He cried out, “G-d of Meir – answer me!” and the dogs retreated. The guard was thus convinced and handed over the girl to Rav Meir. When the brothel prison supervisor came, the guard bribed them with the money. Eventually, the money was exhausted, and the guard’s deed was publicized. The government arrested the guard and sentenced him to death by hanging. When they tied the rope around his neck he cried out, “G-d of Meir – answer me!” The rope tore and the guard escaped.

Amazed at what happened to him, the guard told people of his encounter with Rav Meir. Drawings of Rav Meir’s likeness were affixed everywhere in the market, and one day someone eventually recognized him. When he saw Rav Meir, the man ran toward him. Rav Meir then spotted some non-kosher food and dipped one finger in it and put another finger in his mouth. The man who had recognized Rav Meir then assumed that this could not be him.

Rav Meir suffered great personal tragedy. He had two sons and a daughter. When his two dear sons suddenly passed away one *Shabbos*, his wife Beruria covered them and hid the news from him so as not to sadden him on this holy day. After the *Shabbos* she asked him, “What if someone

gave me a great treasure to hold for him and he now demands that I return it – must I give it back?”



“Of course,” he replied, not realizing what she was leading up to. She led him into the room where the two dead children lay. When she removed the cover and he realized the great tragedy, he began to cry. She confronted him, “Didn’t you just say that we must return the treasure to its owner? *Hashem* gave them to us and now *Hashem* took them back. May His name be blessed. In fact, you, my dear husband, taught that ‘one is required to bless *Hashem* for the bad just like for the good’.” (*Talmud Berochos* 48).

[www.hevratpinto.org/tzadikim\\_eng/031\\_rabbi\\_meir\\_baal\\_haness.html](http://www.hevratpinto.org/tzadikim_eng/031_rabbi_meir_baal_haness.html)

Rav Meir *Ba’al HaNes* passed away on the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Iyar*. He is buried on the shores of Lake Kinneret, only a short distance from the city of Teverya. The grave of Rav Meir *Ba’al HaNes* is one of the holiest sites in the Jewish world and thousands of people flock there to daven for a salvation.

Before his *petira*, Rav Meir *Ba’al HaNes* promised, as his legacy to all generations, that he will personally intercede in Heaven, on behalf of anyone in distress, who will give charity to the poor in *Eretz Yisrael* in his memory.

To this very day it is a sacred and hallowed tradition for Jews, in crisis or need, to recite the words “G-d of Meir – answer me!” while giving *tzedoka* to the Rav Meir *Ba’al HaNes* charity. Countless stories abound of men and women who, during a personal crisis, experienced miraculous help when they gave charity to this holy fund in memory of Rav Meir *Ba’al HaNes*.



Rav Meir was a *talmid* of Rav Akiva. He was called Rav Meir because he enlightened the Sages with his great scholarship (*Meir* comes from the word *Ohr* – “light”). He lived at the time of the second Rav Shimon *ben* Rav Gamliel, and



his son Rav Yehuda *HaNosi* (“the Prince”), who gathered the teachings of all the Sages and arranged them in six volumes, known as the *Mishna*.

Rav Meir lived in troubled times, at the time of the destruction of Beitar. Scholars were severely persecuted in his time. Before his very eyes, the cruel Romans murdered his illustrious teacher, Rav Akiva, whose flesh they combed with iron combs until he delivered up his soul to his Creator for the sanctification of His Name.

When the persecution against the Sages was being carried out, Rav Meir fled to Bovel. Later, however, when Anthony Pius ascended the Roman throne and put a stop to the oppression, Rav Meir returned to *Eretz Yisrael*. He amazed his colleagues with his learning. It was said of Rav Meir that “whoever saw him studying the holy *Torah*, got the impression that he was tearing up mountains and grinding them to dust upon each other.” His colleague, Rav Yose, said about him, “He is a great personage, a holy and humble man.”

Rav Meir had a beautiful handwriting. He earned three ducats a week. One ducat he used to sustain himself and his family, another he used for clothes, and with the third he supported poor *Torah* scholars. Rav Meir’s wife was called Beruria and she was famous for her knowledge of the *Torah*, her great piety and wisdom.

At one time, some disorderly people moved in as Rav Meir’s neighbors, and caused him much trouble – to such a degree, that Rav Meir was ready to *daven* that *Hashem* should make them die. Beruria said to him, “One should despise the sins of the wicked people, but not the people themselves, as Dovid *HaMelech*

said. It would be more correct to *daven* that they should improve their ways.” Rav Meir took her advice and *Hashem* accepted his *tefilla*. Rav Meir’s neighbors became pious, kind-hearted people.

Rav Meir introduced many laws. Wherever we find a *Mishna* where a law is stated with no name mentioned, we know that it is Rav Meir’s *Mishna*. Rav Meir used to make parables to help explain his ideas. Many people found his wise sayings an aid in their daily lives.

“Great is the power of repentance!” exclaimed Rav Meir. “It not only saves the person himself, but it can also be instrumental in saving the whole world.”

Rav Meir used to travel a lot, both in *Eretz Yisrael* and outside *Eretz Yisrael*. When the *Sanhedrin* (Supreme Court) was once again set up in Usha under the leadership of Rav Shimon *ben Gamliel HaNosi*, Rav Nosson was appointed head of the court and Rav Meir was appointed *Chochom* (Sage). Later on he lived in Teverya and visited many other towns. In one town, which he visited before *Purim*, he found that they had no *Megilla*, so, being a scribe, Rav Meir wrote the complete *Megilla* by heart and read it for the Jews of that town.

Rav Meir was *niftar* at a ripe old age. He even attended the wedding of the son of Rav Yehuda *HaNosi*.

Rav Meir lived about 1,800 years ago, but he is still very much alive among the many *Yeshiva talmidim* and *Torah* scholars, who mention his name many times a day in their study of the holy *Torah*.

[www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/112312/jewish/Rabbi-Meir.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112312/jewish/Rabbi-Meir.htm)



## Rav Yechezkel Landau, 17<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

Mechaber of the Noda B'Yehuda

Rav Yechezkel Landau, the *Rav* of Prague, was known by the name of his *sefer* – *Noda B'Yehuda*. He was the source to whom people turned for practical advice, and even until today his name shines like a star in the firmament of Judaism.



The son of Rav Yehuda Levi, Rav Yechezkel Landau was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of *Cheshvan*, 5474 (1713) in Opatow, Poland. Up to the age of thirteen, he studied *Torah* with Rav Yitzchok *HaLevi* of Ludmir, as well as with the *Rav* of the city, Rav Moshe Yaakov of Cracow, who greatly liked this young boy with a sharp mind. Together they discussed difficult problems posed by the *Gemora*.

At the age of fourteen, he went to the town of Brody and there he studied with very devoted young men. At eighteen, he married a girl by the name of Liebe, the daughter of Rav Yaakovka of Dubno, and went to live with his father-in-law there. Yet after a short time, he persuaded his father-in-law to come to live in Brody, which was then a town filled with sages and scholars. There he was welcomed as one of the “Sages of Kloiz”, a famous *Bais Medrash* that included great *Torah* scholars.

In 5506 (1745), Rav Yechezkel became the *Rav* of Yampol. He stayed there for six years, when he was called upon to be the *Rav* of Prague. There he directed a great *Yeshiva* that attracted so many

*talmidim* that he was forced to study with them in the yard of the main *shul*. He gave discourses in *Gemora* each day, and on Friday he taught the *Parsha* of the week along with *Rashi*'s commentary. He loved his *talmidim* like a father loves his children, and he was very happy to see them succeed. Among his *talmidim* were such great *Rabbonim* as Rav Avrohom Danzig (*mechaber* of *Chayei Odom*) and others.

Rav Yechezkel had a fixed rule that, be it in *Torah* study or in his approach to *Mussar*, the main thing was not abstract study but action. It was not the discussion that counted, but the final conclusion. This is why he often returns, in his responsa and lectures, to the point that the essential thing is not to deny oneself or to fast, but to perform good deeds. On the other hand he wrote, “The main thing is diligence in study. One must study *Torah* works that have true meaning, *Mishnayos* with *Tosafos Yom Tov*, the *Gemora*, the *Poskim*, the *Chumash*, *Nevi'im* (the Prophets), and *Kesuvim* (the Writings), as well as books on *Mussar*.”

All this, however, applied to others. With his own person, he was very strict and denied himself. His *talmid*, Rav Eliezer Fleckless, testifies that until his old age, he did not sleep in a bed, but rather with his head on a bed and his body on some chairs. He also wore a coarse haircloth on his body, and he taught while standing. From the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Tammuz* until the beginning of *Av*, he ate no animal products, and from *Rosh Chodesh Av* to *Tisha B'Av*, he only ate dry bread.

Like a shepherd faithful to his flock, Rav Yechezkel also devoted himself to the needs of the community. He enacted decrees, dealt with government ministers and emperors, and built up institutions

that promoted *tzedoka* and *chessed*. All aspects of Jewish life progressed in accord with his decisions.

Rav Yechezkel was *niftar* on the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Iyar*, 5553 (1793) in Prague. He ordered that neither praises nor orations be multiplied at his funeral, that a large headstone not be placed on his grave, and that no glorious titles be inscribed on it. He left numerous works behind, including *Noda B'Yehuda*, *Hatzlocha (Tzion L'Nefesh Chaya)* on the *Talmud*, *Ahavas Tzion*, and *Dogul Meirevova*.

Many legends surround Rav Yechezkel's brilliant character, and these illustrate both his intelligence and sharpness of mind. What follows are some examples:

One day, a merchant carrying wine barrels was traveling from Hungary to his home in Prague. While en route, he encountered a poor Jew from his hometown and gave him a ride in his carriage. The poor man had a sack filled with money, and since he was afraid of thieves, he hid it among the barrels. Upon arriving in Prague, however, he could not find his money. He therefore accused the merchant of having stolen it, then ran in tears to see Rav Yechezkel, crying out to him, "Save me, *Rebbe!*"

Rav Yechezkel had the merchant brought to him, but he denied everything that the poor man had said, and furthermore he complained that the poor man had paid him back evil for good, since he had helped him out by giving him a ride home. Rav Yechezkel resorted to a ruse and said to the merchant, "I believe you – you did not steal the money. Surely it was your driver who stole it. However, if that is the case, your wine has become forbidden to drink, for the hand of your non-Jewish driver has touched it." When the merchant heard this decision, he acknowledged his sin and admitted that he had stolen the poor man's money. However, the *Rav* was not satisfied with this, and he said to him,

"Since you began by denying this with all your might, I will not believe you until you swear in *shul*, before the entire community, that you stole this poor man's money." The merchant as Rav Yechezkel had said, and only then did he allow the merchant's wine to be sold.

Two *Torah* greats of *Eretz Yisrael* came to see the *Rav* of Prague concerning the *mitzva* of redeeming prisoners. "How much money do you need?" Rav Yechezkel asked them.

They replied, "One thousand gold coins."

The *Rav* went into his room and brought them 990 gold coins. Looking at the amount, they said in astonishment, "Why did the *Rav* not add ten gold coins in order for the *mitzva* to belong to him?"

Rav Yechezkel replied, "I'm surprised that two great *Rabbonim* such as yourselves would ask such a question! Have you forgotten the explicit words of the *Mishna*: 'One who wishes to give but that others should not – he looks grudgingly toward others' (*Pirkei Avos* 5:13). I too must allow others to participate in this *mitzva*."

Rav Yechezkel was also marvelously clever in matters of everyday life, and he knew how to act with the most diverse types of people.

Two rich men once came to see him for an unusual *Din Torah*. What happened was that these two men lived in the same building and were good neighbors. One day, a poor musician came and stood at the door of the building and began to play some music. The two rich men began to argue, each one saying: "He's playing for me!"

That's when they decided to go to see the *Rav*. First of all, each of them deposited twenty gold coins to cover the costs of the proceedings. At that point the *Rav* began to hear their strange arguments, and then he smiled and said to them, "It

was not for any of you that the musician played, but for me – so that I could merit forty gold coins.”

A man came to see Rav Yechezkel to recount his troubles to him. “What can I do for you?” he asked.

The man replied, “In my house, people are constantly coming and going, and this bothers me and prevents me from studying.”

Rav Yechezkel said to him, “Let me give you some good advice. If those who come to you are rich, ask them to lend you some money – you won’t see them again. And if they are poor, lend them some money – you won’t see them again either.”

[http://www.hevratpinto.org/tzadikim\\_eng/100\\_rabbi\\_yechezkel\\_landau.html](http://www.hevratpinto.org/tzadikim_eng/100_rabbi_yechezkel_landau.html)



### **The Noda B’Yehuda’s Unique Test**

The *Noda B’Yehuda* was known for his *tzidkus* (righteousness) and

overwhelming genius in *Torah*, and also as a *Rav* who feared no one, and was not intimidated by anyone under any circumstances.

A *sofer* (scribe) in Prague was once suspected of having committed a severe transgression. The *Noda B’Yehuda* summoned the *sofer*, and asked him to confess, but the *sofer* refused. The *Noda B’Yehuda* instructed him to bring a parchment and quill and to write some words on the parchment. After he did so, the *Noda B’Yehuda* instructed him to write the *pasuk* in the *Torah* which prohibits the particular transgression which he was suspected of committing. The *sofer* tried with all his effort several times, but it was as if his hand was paralyzed, and he was unable to write the *pasuk*. The *Noda B’Yehuda* said, “*Rosha!* A *rosha* like you is forbidden from writing *divrei kedusha* ever again!” (*Toldos Noda B’Yehuda*).

<http://revach.net/stories/story-corner/The-Noda-BYehudas-Unique-Test/2115>



## **Rav Moshe Chaim Efraim of Sudilkov, 17<sup>th</sup> of Iyar**

Mechaber of *Degel Machaneh Efraim*

### **Study of the Evolution of a Chassidic Tale**

The story as I always knew it, and as I have it printed in my translation of *Noam Elimelech – MiPeninei Noam Elimelech*, page 75:

Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov once related to Rav Moshe Chaim Efraim of Sudilkov, the *mechaber* of *Degel Machaneh Efraim* and grandson of the *Ba’al Shem Tov*:

“My holy master and teacher, Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk, used to meditate on the awe and fear of *Hashem* every day. Each day when he would do this, his whole body would shake and tremble, and fear and trepidation would seize him. Everyone present could see him trembling

violently from the sheer awe of *Hashem* and the majesty of *Hashem*. All his tendons and ligaments could be seen, thick and taut as ropes; his face would change colors and a certain vein below his ear would begin bulging.

“I received a tradition from my *Rebbe* that there is a vein located below the ear that only trembles from fear of the day of death. With my *Rebbe*, this vein trembled daily from his great fear of *Hashem*.”

(Source: *Eser Tzachtzachs* 2; *Seder Doros HeChodosh*, part 4).

See also *Ohel Elimelech* #2 same as above and in *Ateres Menachem* #8 it ends by saying that the *Degel* praised him, saying, “This *Chassid* knows how to look well.”



### Alternative versions:

Once, Rav Mendele of Rimanov was visiting the *Degel Machaneh Efraim* of Sudilkov, who asked him who his *Rebbe* was. Rav Mendele answered him that his *Rebbe* was Rebbe Reb Elimelech. And he [the *Degel*] asked him [Rav Mendele] to relate a story about him [Rebbe Reb Elimelech]. And he told, “It is known that every person has a certain vein beneath his ear, which does not shake or tremble during his entire life except at the moment of death, Heaven save us! This very vein would tremble on a daily basis with my *Rebbe*, Rebbe Reb Elimelech, due to the awe and fear of *Hashem*.” To which the *Degel* replied, “From such a *Chassid* I derive satisfaction and pleasure, since he knows what to tell.”

(Introduction to *Imrei Yosef Spinka, Shemos*).



In the *seforim Yehi Ohr* 130 and *Gedulas Yehoshua*, the version of the story is similar, except that Rav Mendele meets and tells it to Rav Boruch of Mezhibuzh (the *Degel*'s brother), who answers, “A fine *Rebbe* and a fine *talmid*.”

The *mechaber* of *Kedushas Noam Elimelech*, in his footnotes to page 111, attempts to resolve this contradiction by saying that perhaps Rav Mendele visited both brothers and told them the same story when queried regarding his *Rebbe*. While this is indeed possible, in all likelihood this is an example of a story that, in its being retold has much garbled factual information. For example, the attribution of the tale to Rav Mendel of Rimanov and Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk is consistent in both traditions, whereas Rav Boruch and his holy brother, the *Degel*, are the ones who are interchanged.

This happens often when two *Tzaddikim* are either brothers or similarly disposed. For example, we find several stories about Rebbe Reb Elimelech and his

brother, Rebbe Reb Zusha of Hanipoli, where they are exchanged, and between Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev and Rav Moshe Leib Sassover, who, although not related by blood, were known to be almost inseparable in their quest to redeem Jewish captives and have therefore many tales recording their friendship and interactions.



### The Real Story?

“The holy Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk, *mechaber* of the *Noam Elimelech* told his *talmidim* when they asked him who they should accept as *Rebbe* [after his passing]:



He told them to go to Rav Moshe Chaim Efraim, the *Ba'al Shem Tov*'s grandson, *mechaber* of the *Degel Machaneh Efraim*. His *talmid*, Rav Mendele Pristiker (as the Rimanover was known before he was in Rimanov), traveled to Sudilkov on Friday *Erev Shabbos Kodesh*. He went straight to the *Rav*'s home and asked the attendant to announce his arrival to get permission to say *Sholom Aleichem*, and the Sudilkover *Rav* asked him to enter.

The holy *Degel* could not stand the *Rebbes* who came from Poland (Galicia), since people said that they fasted often and that they did not really understand how to serve *Hashem* out of love and awe. He always said, “Whoever fasts and afflicts his body is diminishing his soul, since man was created in the *Tzelem Elokim* – in the image of *Hashem*, with a duality of both body and soul. And the true path, serving *Hashem* with both, was foreign to them [the Polish *Rebbes*].”

And he considered it [fasting] a grave sin, as our Sages said: “One who is fasting is called a sinner, since the primary service is to complete one’s body’s physical limbs and the soul’s spiritual limbs so that they should correspond in sanctity, solely devoted to serving *Hashem*. This is known from the ways of the *Ba’al Shem Tov*.”

When Rav Mendele of Pristik entered, he was not warmly greeted and he was therefore downcast. When the *Degel* saw his despondence, he drew him close and said, “My brother, till now, were you a *talmid* of a different *Tzaddik*, a great *Rav* who served *Hashem* properly?”

He answered, “I have been faithfully attending to and serving my master and teacher, the Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk, may his memory be a blessing.”

When the Sudilkover *Rav* heard the name of the holy Rebbe Reb Elimelech, he grew very excited and his soul was aflame. The *Degel* said to Rav Mendele, “What amazing thing can you tell me that you saw there?”

The *Degel* thought to himself, “Now I will truly discern who Rav Mendele is, since every person’s inner being can be recognized by what they praise and hold dear. Now he would see and hear what Rav Mendele would tell; would it be miracles and wonders, some salvation that his *Rebbe* did or similar things? Or would it be true awe of Heaven and *dveikus*, cleaving in rapture to *Hashem*?”



The *Tzaddik* from Pristik (Rav Mendele) said, “On a daily basis I saw that when my master meditated on the fear and awe of *Hashem*, all his bones would tremble and shake. A great fear and trepidation would seize him, and all present could clearly see his entire form violently trembling from the fear and awe

of *Hashem*’s majesty and greatness!

“All his veins and sinews became thick like pipes and his face changed [colors?]. Beneath his ear there is one sinew, which I received from my master’s tradition that this sinew only fears the day of death, and this vein too – I saw it shake with the fear and awe of *Hashem*!”

The *Rav* of Sudilkov said, “Your grasp is so great! And if the spiritual level of the *Chassidim* of Poland is so, I did not realize this was true.” Afterward he drew Rav Mendele even closer.

(*Kehal Chassidim* p. 49).



### **Editor’s comments:**

This story’s end matches those we have traditionally from other great *Rabbonim*. However, it fills in a few missing pieces that make this story sound more complete and believable. First, for the first time we have a reason given for why Rav Mendele – a known *talmid* of Rebbe Reb Melech – was traveling to the *Degel* at all – his *Rebbe* had passed away and beforehand had told him to go there.

Second, we are told here for the first time why the *Degel* would have asked Rav Mendele about Rebbe Reb Melech and why Rav Mendele answered him thus. In other words, we are told why the *Degel* would have given a “Polish *Rebbe’le*” a cold reception: it was not due to some petty argument; it was due to a great *machlokes* concerning the true *derech* of the *Ba’al Shem Tov* in serving *Hashem*.

As Rav Mendele realized what the *Degel* asked him, he answered with an example of *Yiras Shomayim*, genuine fear and awe of Heaven – something the *Degel* valued as authentic *avoda*, as opposed to the miracle-working that he despised of the “Polish *Rebbes*”.

Without all these details, it remains a mystery as to why Rav Mendele visited the *Degel* and why, of all things that he

witnessed by the great Rebbe Reb Melech, he chose this example to relate to the

*Degel*, and why the *Degel* was pleased with it.



## Rashbi, 18<sup>th</sup> of Iyar – Lag BaOmer

### The Power of Rashbi

Rav Aharon of Karlin wrote in *Bais Aharon* that “Just as *HaKodosh Boruch Hu* is for everyone, so too is *Rashbi* for everyone, even for the lowliest.”

The *Nesivos Sholom* explains this to mean that a great *Tzaddik* is so great that he not only loves the righteous Jews but he finds something beloved and precious even in the lowliest, wicked Jew as well. This is the level of *Moshiach*, who will be able to love even the most wicked as much as the greatest *Tzaddik*! He uses this idea to explain the story of *Rashbi* in *Gemora Shabbos*. When *Rashbi* exited his cave of exile, he observed people working in the fields and exclaimed in wonder, “How can they leave behind the eternal reward of *Torah* study for this world and its temporary business?!”

His eyes burned whatever he gazed upon, and a heavenly voice proclaimed, “I didn’t let you out of the cave to destroy my world!”

He and his son went back in for a year, saying, “The judgment of the wicked in *Gehinnom* is a twelve-month sentence.”



Asks the Slonimer *Rebbe* in *Nesivos Sholom*, “Why did they judge themselves as wicked and sentence themselves to twelve months again in the cave?” He answers that their lack of ability to love those people who were simple, lowly and worked the fields in this temporal world as opposed to being occupied in *Torah* study was their lack, and

this is why they judged themselves as wicked and reentered the cave to rectify this failing. When he emerged, *Rashbi* was the epitome of the *Tzaddik yesod olom* (“a righteous foundation of the world”) and that is why his great, awesome light was revealed and shines on *Lag BaOmer*, which falls out on the *Sefira* of *Hod ShebeHod*, the *Sefira* which is the lowest and deepest form of harsh judgment. For his light and love shines down below to even the lowest and deepest depths, to love every Jew, even the wicked, and to find within even the lowest place light and love.

Regarding such a love and such ability, my *Rebbe*, the Clevelander *Rebbe Shlit”a* once told me the following tale: There was once an informant, whose terrible ways constantly plagued the Jews. The *Tzaddikim* and *Chassidim* gathered to put an end to him once and for all and to excommunicate him and sentence him to death for being a *rodef*! They approached the *talmid* of the *Ba’al Shem Tov*, Rav Zeev Wolf Kitzes, to complete their quorum and join their *minyán*, but to their astonishment he refused! He explained himself and said, “One day in the future, the righteous *Moshiach* will finally arrive! He will conquer the lands and the hearts of many. All the nations will rush to greet him and subjugate themselves before his reign and his might, and all the exiles will return. As word of his dominion spreads, Jews will flock to him from far and wide – all kinds of Jews, all...except one! There will be one black-hearted, dark, obstinate fellow, who will remain in the exile, scoffing to the final day. Then the nations will send emissaries and dignitaries, bearing gifts and offerings. Gold, silver, precious stones and treasures, yet *Moshiach* will scoff at them all. Then



the Jews will also wish to bestow upon him a gift, but seeing how he despises ordinary wealth, they will search far and wide to bring *Moshiach* the most precious gift...that of a *Yiddishe Neshoma* – a Jewish soul! They will search and scour the entire exile and find none; everyone has come, everyone except for...one miserable soul. They will locate him and bind and gag him and carry him kicking, screaming and flailing all the way to Yerushalayim! There, they will bring the king *Moshiach* the most precious gift: a Jewish soul, unblemished and untarnished, and he will forge him anew into a *ba'al teshuva*. Be it known that it is revealed to me from on high that that precious soul resides in your informant and *moser*!

Now I ask you – tell me the truth – are you really willing to annihilate this most precious soul, the gift of the *Moshiach*, of whom it says *yovilu shai lamora* – “they will bring a gift to the master”?



### **Studying Zohar**

When the *Rebbe* Reb Boruch of Mezhibuzh would study the holy *Zohar*, he would begin with the *Shaar Blatt* (the title page) and would explain it as follows:

*Ze hasefer haZohar shechiber haTanna Rav Shimon bar Yochai* – “This is the *Sefer HaZohar* authored by the *Tanna Rav Shimon bar Yochai*.” Rav Boruch explained this:

*Ze hasefer – Dos iz a sapir* – this is a brilliant sapphire! *HaZohar – vos er laycht in alle olomos* – whose splendor illuminates all of the worlds! *Asher chiber – vos iz mechaber idishe hertzer tzum Tatten in Himmel* – which attaches and binds Jewish hearts to their Father in Heaven! *Tanna – er lernt iz az se'iz du a Bashefer oif der vellt* – he teaches us that there is a Creator in the world! *Mihu Zeh?* He asked himself rhetorically, Who is this? and answered *Zehu* – this is Rav Shimon

*bar Yochai*, may his merit shield us! (*Otzar Yisrael* 118)



### **A Different Way to Look At It**

The holy Rizhiner was plagued by an informant, a *rodef* and a *moser*, who constantly chased after the *Tzaddik*. He used to mock him and jest, “Why doesn’t the holy *Rebbe* just punish me and condemn me to die?!”

The holy Rizhiner heard this and said to his *Chassidim*, “When *Rashbi* left the cave to which he was exiled and he saw the informant Yehuda *ben Gerim*, he said, ‘Is he still around?’ He gazed upon him and turned him into a heap of bones! Isn’t it a wonder that *Rashbi* was so angry and upset at him that he would do that?! Rather, when *Rashbi* said, ‘Is this man still around?’ he was asking himself a question: ‘Perhaps he is still around because I have not yet succeeded in rectifying all that I need to in myself.’ So the *Talmud* says he gazed upon him – this means *Rashbi* gazed intently upon himself and began to make a reckoning, a *cheshbon hanefesh* regarding his own spiritual standing. As he did this, Yehuda *ben Gerim* was transformed into a pile of bones [proving that *Rashbi* had now sufficiently rectified himself and this wicked informant had no longer any reason to be here alive]. Thus,” concluded the Rizhiner, “as long as this wicked informant was still around it meant that he had not rectified himself completely yet. How would it help to punish him and cause him to leave this world? Another person will come to take his place! Only when he rectified himself would the informant have no place here either! (*Be’eros HaMayim Be’er Sheva* p. 60)



### **Inside, It’s Yom Kippur; Outside, Simchas Torah**

Once the holy Rizhiner asked a visitor who had been in Meron on *Lag*



*BaOmer* to describe the event. The *Chassid* described how *Lag BaOmer* is observed in Meron at the *kever* of *Rashbi* and explained the way it felt, using the comparison that the great emotions inside were similar to *Yom Kippur*, whereas outside it felt like *Simchas Torah*!

This is no contradiction, for the awakening is the same awakening, both coming from Rav Shimon *bar* Yochai! Inside, it is felt and experienced one way and outside a different way. The *simcha* in Meron is also *nisht kein poshuta simcha* – “not a simple, mundane joy”; rather, it is a supernal, holy joy – a *hecher simcha*! (*Imros Tehoros* 49)



### **Emuna Peshuta**

Rav Dovid Biderman of Lelov once told how on one of his visits to Meron on *Lag BaOmer* he stayed in Tzefas and walked on foot to Meron. As he traveled, he passed an older woman also on her way to Meron. She was very old and frail, and accompanied by a Jew dressed in the manner of the *Sefardim*. They went very, very slowly, as the path to Meron is uphill and rises higher and higher. When she finally reached the entrance to the burial cave, she sat down and began to weep, and cried out in Hebrew with a *Sefardic* accent, “Rav Shimon, *Shechinta BeGaluta!* – the Divine Presence, the *Shechina* is in exile!” Afterward, she made a petition and requested some prayer in Arabic that *Hashem* should have mercy and gather in all the exiles. She then kissed the *tziun*, and made her way slowly back to Tzefas! Rav Dovid Lelover was so moved by her simple, pure faith that he declared, “*Epes mit aza temimus tzigegangen* – She came all this long way with such faith and she prayed her prayer!” (*Imros Tehoros* 49)

Rav Mottel Avritcher (a descendant of the *Bas Ayin*) once told how one *Lag BaOmer* in Meron he watched a *Sefardi* Jew who was present at the *hadloka* – the

bonfire lit in honor of the holy *Tanna* Rav Shimon *bar* Yochai. This Jew was so moved and excited that his pure heart was aflame and he shouted out, “*Och yah, Rav Shimon!*” And so saying he tossed his cloak into the flames to be consumed in honor of the *Tanna*. This did not calm him and he called out again louder, “*Och yah, Rav Shimon!*” And proceeded to toss into the bonfire another article of clothing! He continued to do so, until he was left standing in his *tallis kotton* and his breeches. At this point he began ecstatically dancing, aflame with delight and awe. Moved to emotive expression, he danced and sang with such passion and fire that it seemed that if he could have, he would have thrown himself into the bonfire in honor of *Rashbi!* (*MiZekenim Esbonon* I 102)



### **Stories of Rashbi From the Zohar and Medrash**

One day, as *Rashbi* left his home, he observed that the world appeared dark and menacing, as if a great cloud had covered the land and blocked the light of day. *Rashbi* turned to his son Rav Elozor and said, “This is no chance occurrence. Obviously *Hashem* wishes to do something. Let us see what He has planned to do in the world! *Rashbi* and his son exited the city limits and before them stood a terrible angel, as tall as a mountain, and from his mouth poured forth thirty tongues of flame!

*Rashbi* asked the angel, “What are you planning to do?”

“I am about to destroy the world because there aren’t thirty *Tzaddikim* to be found to safeguard it,” answered the angel.

“Go and tell my Creator that Bar Yochai is here in the world and that he is comparable to thirty *Tzaddikim!*”

The angel went before the Throne of Glory and delivered *Rashbi*’s message.

*Hashem* answered the angel, “Go and destroy the world and do not pay any attention to Bar Yochai!”

The angel returned to destroy the world again. Once more *Rashbi* saw him and commanded him, “If you do not return to deliver a message, I will send you to the depths from which you shall not arise, to the place of the fallen angels who were cast down from *Hashem*!” *Rashbi* continued his message and said, “Tell *Hashem* that if there aren’t thirty *Tzaddikim*, twenty are enough, as it says in the story of Avrohom and Sodom and Amora, and if twenty are not enough, then let ten suffice, as it says there. And if there aren’t ten *Tzaddikim* found, then two should be enough, as it says that two witnesses can give testimony. And if you cannot find two then there is at least one and I am that one, as it says *Tzaddik yesod olom* – ‘a *Tzaddik* is the foundation of the world!’”

At that moment, a heavenly voice rang out and proclaimed, “Happy and praiseworthy is your portion, Rav Shimon, for *Hashem* decrees and you cancel and abolish it. Regarding you it is said, *Retzon yerei’ov yaaseh* – ‘*Hashem* fulfills the will of those who fear Him.’” (*Zohar Bereishis* 33a)

Once, *Rashbi* arrived in Lod and there was a plague there. He witnessed many stricken dying and remarked, “All this is happening now while I am present in town?! I command this decree be abolished!”

A heavenly voice rang out and proclaimed, “*Mazikim* – evil and damaging forces – depart from this city immediately, because Rav Shimon *bar* Yochai is in town! Even though *Hashem* has decreed, *Rashbi* has abolished it.”

Immediately, the plague ceased. Rav Chanina was impressed at the greatness and stature of *Rashbi* and told Rav Meir of this. Rav Meir replied, “Who can praise and compare to *Rashbi*? Even Moshe

*Rabbeinu*, who sent Aharon with the incense to stop the plague during Korach’s rebellion, still had to have Aharon act, yet *Rashbi* abolished the decree and stopped the plague by the power of speech alone!” (*Zohar Chodosh Rus* 103a)

In Tzidon there was a couple who lived together for over ten years. They loved one another dearly but they had no children. They came before Rav Shimon *bar* Yochai and asked him to help them divorce through a *get*.

“I have just one request – please do not refuse me,” said the *Tzaddik*. “Just as when you were united in marriage there was a feast, please eat, drink and make a banquet now that you wish to go your separate ways.”

The couple fulfilled the *Tzaddik*’s request and they held a large, festive banquet and invited friends and scholars. As the tables lay laden with food and drink, in the midst of the merriment, when the husband’s heart was glad with wine, he turned to his wife and remarked, “See, all my goodness and wealth is here before you – please choose any precious object here and take it with you back to your father’s house!”

She was greatly moved by his words, and when she observed that he had been plied with much wine and had grown drowsy and fallen asleep, she asked the servants to carry him and place him in a bed at her father’s home. When the husband awoke from his deep slumber, he gazed about and discovered that he was in a strange bed and not at home. He turned and saw his wife sitting beside him and asked her where he was. When she replied that he was in her father’s home, he asked why she had done this.

“I was told that I could take any precious object home with me. I found nothing more precious than you, and so I took you home!”

The couple came back and stood

before *Rashbi* and told him the entire tale. When he heard this and saw their love for one another, he stood up and prayed on

their behalf for mercy and they were blessed with children. (*Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabba*)



## Rav Moshe Isserles, 18<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

*Av Bais Din Cracow – the Rema*

### **A Tzaddik Decrees and Hashem Does Not Allow Him to Err**

The *Ben Ish Chai*, in his sefer of commentaries on *Aggodos HaShas*, cites Rav Avrohom Palagi, who told:

There was a dispute between *Moron* the *Bais Yosef*, Rav Yosef Karo, *mechaber* of the *Shulchon Aruch* and the *Rema*, Rav Moshe Isserles, regarding permission for an *aguna* to remarry. The *Rema* permitted her to remarry, whereas the *Bais Yosef* had forbidden it. The angelic *Maggid* that taught the *Bais Yosef* revealed to him that actually the *Bais Yosef* was initially correct and that her husband was still alive and, of course, she was forbidden to remarry. However, explained the angelic *Maggid*, as soon as the holy *Rema* ruled she was permitted, the husband passed away and this released her. Because *Hashem* does not allow *Tzaddikim* to err, he saved the *Rema* from error; as soon as he wrote his *psak*, the husband died and she was permitted to remarry! (*Ben Yehoyoda* to *Maseches Yevomos* p.121, citing the sefer *Vayaan Avrohom* p. 62)



### **Tzedoka**

The *Pshervorsker Rebbe* told:

When the *Rema* was chief *Rav* of Cracow, there was a Jewish resident named Yankel whom everyone nicknamed *Yankel Treiger* – *Yankel Shikir* – *Yankele Shabbos!* In trade, he was a *vasser treiger* – a water carrier and a porter for heavy loads – and this explained that nickname. His other nicknames were given for his other well-known practice – his drinking. Every *Erev Shabbos*, a familiar scenario

played itself out: *Yankel Treiger* became *Yankel Shikir*, as he gathered his savings from his earnings that week and headed off to the local tavern to buy honey mead and drink himself into a stupor. As he drank, with each sip he would say, “Ahh, *Shabbos, Shabbos! Shabbos* is coming!” And this explained his final nickname, *Yankele Shabbos*.

This *Erev Shabbos* began as usual. Yankel Treiger was seen heading to the tavern. As the coins jingled merrily in his pocket waiting to be spent, he heard a voice of despair above him from the window open to the street. “There he goes to spend his money on booze and get *shikir* while my children and I starve this *Shabbos!*”

Yankel froze. He had a good heart and it had just broken when he heard that sad sigh. He turned and saw the face of a mournful Jewish mother staring at him from the window. Without a second thought or moment’s hesitation, he gave his hard-earned coins to the overjoyed mother, who did not starve that *Shabbos*. That *Shabbos*, *Yankele Shabbos* earned his name and that poor family had food to eat.

On that *Shabbos*, *Yankele Shabbos* came home and passed away. On *Motzo’ei Shabbos* his spirit came back and visited the holy *Rema* and told him the entire tale. “In *Shomayim* I heard that that woman was a *gilgul* of *Esther HaMalka*. She came back as a poor woman because when the *Bais Din Shel Maala* heard her case, the prosecution insisted that she was a wealthy queen and she needed to prove her loyalty to *Torah* as a pauper. Now, as for me, a sinner I wasn’t and a not a *Tzaddik* either. I was bereft of merits and *mitzvos* except

this *tzedoka* that I gave on *Erev Shabbos*, and so they gave me the job to be the *Shliach Bais Din*. And so I come now to you, honorable *Rav*, in my capacity as messenger of the heavenly Court, to warn you to collect *tzedoka* from the poor! You always give *tzedoka* and collect from the wealthy, but I am here to teach you to

collect from the poor as well!” At first the *Rema* thought Yaakov was jesting until he realized that he had passed away – and then he took the warning seriously. From then on, when the *Rema* collected *tzedoka*, he collected from the poor as well as the wealthy. (*BeOholei Tzaddikim* Cracow #20)



## Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, 19<sup>th</sup> of Iyar

### Do It for His Sake

“Rav Elozor Ish Bartosa says: Give Him what is His, because you and yours are His” (*Avos* 3:8).

Rav Ovadia Yosef used to illustrate our *Mishna* with the following story:

Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov once sat studying and teaching *Torah* with his *talmidim* when a pauper entered the *Bais Medrash*. Some people naturally awaken sympathy and our pauper was an especially bedraggled and sad sight that tugged at the *Tzaddik*'s heartstrings. The *Rebbe* sent his *gabbai* to fetch a golden *dinar* from his wallet in the next room and the *Rebbe* handed the surprised and grateful pauper one gold coin. The poor beggar was dumbstruck and overjoyed at his good fortune. A gold *dinar* was a handsome, large donation, and he effusively thanked the Rimanover and went on his way.

Afterward, the *Rebbe* had second thoughts. He began to feel troubled that he had given the pauper *tzedoka* out of feelings of mercy, compassion and sympathy, rather than to fulfill the *mitzva* of *tzedoka* for the sake of *Hashem*, as *Rashi* comments on *Teruma* – “Take *teruma* and give it *lishmi* – for the sake of My Name,’ says *Hashem*.” The *Rebbe* decided that he would call his attendant again and send him after the pauper.

The pauper was meanwhile happily on his way, smiling at his good fortune. The

poor man had gone some distance when behind him he heard the *Rebbe*'s attendant calling after him, running to catch his breath. The pauper froze and his eyes darkened. “Oh no! Surely the *Rebbe* made a mistake when he gave me a gold *dinar* and he has sent his *gabbai* after me to exchange it for a silver one!”

Still, having no choice, he turned sadly around and headed back to the *Rebbe*'s *hoif*, following the *gabbai*'s lead.

When they returned, the *Rebbe* had the *gabbai* bring the wallet and to the pauper's total astonishment, not only did the *Rebbe* not take his gold *dinar* away, but he proceeded to hand him another gold coin! This was too much! The pauper smiled, turned to the *Rebbe* and taking courage from the *Tzaddik*'s kindness, asked boldly, “*Rebbe*, I am sorry, I don't understand. If Your Honor wished to give me two gold coins, why couldn't the *Rebbe* have done so at once rather than call me back? The *gabbai* gave me quite a turn and I suffered a fright and was very downcast and disappointed until just now,” he concluded, confused.

The *Tzaddik* smiled and explained, “In *Parshas Re'eh* the *pasuk* tells us *noson titein* – ‘you shall surely give *tzedoka*’. Why does the *pasuk* use a double expression? It tells us that if you give out of feelings of sympathy, give once more for the sake of the *mitzva*. This is what I did. The *pasuk* also says, ‘Your heart shall not be evil when you give him’. I interpret this *pasuk* to



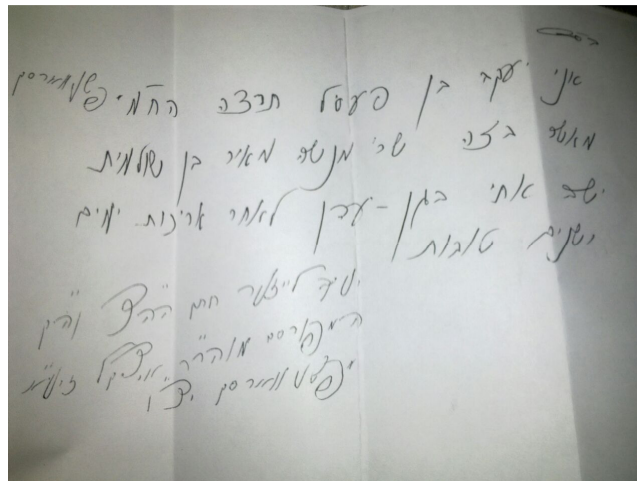
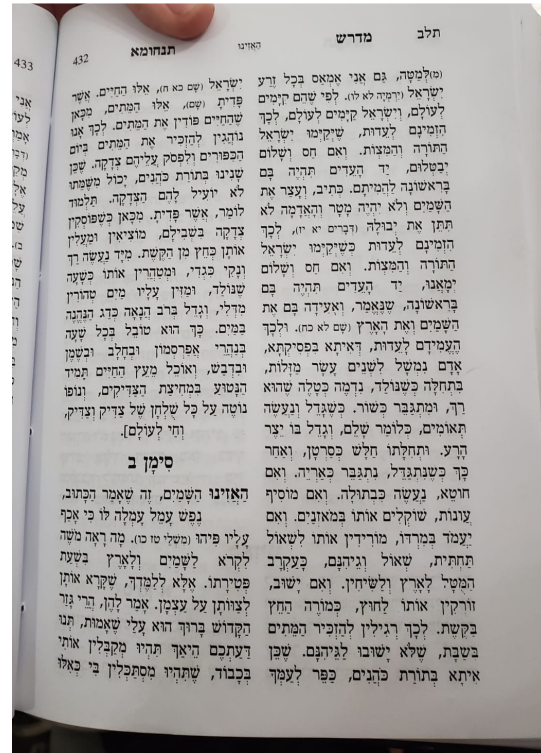
mean that the first time you give *tzedoka* do not do so because of the feelings in your heart, that you feel bad for the pauper;

therefore give again, and do so for the sake of *mitzvas tzedoka*. (*Anaf Etz Avos* p. 183)



The Medrash Tanchuma brings the following teaching from the Toras Kohanim. The Toras Kohanim is from Rebbe Akiva – the Rebbe of both Rebbe Meir Ba'al HaNess and Rebbe Shimshon Bar Yochai who's Yorzteits fall out this week.

The Medrash says that that the living redeem the dead. How so? By giving Tzedaka on their behalf. The Passuk (Devarim 21:8) implies that even after a person's death, Tzedaka helps on his behalf. The Medrash continues that after Tzedaka is given on behalf of the deceased, they are let out (of Gehinom) as an arrow leaves a bow and become pure as the day they were born and benefit from the wondrous things in Heaven, including eating from the Eitz HaChaim that is found in the portion of the Tzaddikim and they merit living forever!



Unbelievable letter from Rav Yankel'e of Peshevorsk where he signs that he allows a certain R' Menashe Meir ben Shulamis to sit next to him in Gan Eden!



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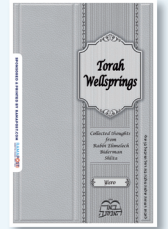
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