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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)

❧ **MATTOS ~ MASSEI** ❧

❧ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❧

Ahavas Yisrael – Ohev Yisrael

Dvar Torah

Nedorim, Berochos and Greetings - Why is Hashem's Name at the End?

The *sefer Rozin DeOraisa* cites the following teaching from the Apta Rav:

Ish ki yidor neder (30:3)

The *Medrash Pelia* has a wondrous and puzzling comment, saying that our *pasuk* is illustrated by the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* 144:4: "The days of his life are like a passing shadow".

The Apta Rav explains the connection between these *pesukim* by pointing out that when we make a *neder* (vow) we always say the *neder* first and *Hashem's* name after. Why do we do it in that order? In addition, why do we also use this order when we recite a *berochah*? When we make a *berochah* we say *Boruch ata Hashem*; why do we not say *Hashem, ata boruch*? In other words, why is *Hashem's* name at the end and not at the beginning?

The reason given is that we worry that, Heaven forbid, a person might pass away after having said *Hashem's* name, before completing the vow or the blessing. If *Hashem's* name were first and then the completion of the *neder* or *berochah* and a person then *chas vesholom* died, he would have taken *Hashem's* name in vain because he would not have completed the

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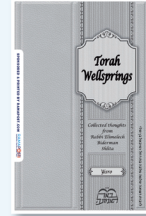
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neder or *berocha*.

This is what is meant by the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* that the days of our lives are as short a passing shadow. We recite a *neder* in this manner with *Hashem's* name at the end of the vow because our days of life pass as a shadow and we worry that a person might die before completing the vow.

This also explains the *minhag* we have when answering a greeting. Traditionally, we greet each other with "*Sholom Aleichem*," so why do we change the order and reply, "*Aleichem Sholom*"? Why not just answer, "*Sholom Aleichem*"?

For the same reason, explains the *Apta Rav*. *Sholom* is considered *Hashem's* name (*Shabbos* 10b). The *Gemora Berochos* 6b tells us that the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 34:15) advising one who seeks long life to pursue peace refers to whoever greets his friend first using *Sholom*. This acts as a guarantee for the one who begins the greeting and says *Sholom Aleichem* to use *Hashem's* name first. However, the responder doesn't have this great *mitzva* as his guarantee and must therefore worry just as he who vows or makes a *berocha* does that he might leave this world. This is why he changes the order and replies, "*Aleichem Sholom*", just like *neder laShem* or *boruch ata Hashem*, placing *Hashem's* name *Sholom* at the end – just in case. (*Yalkut Ohev Yisrael*)



MASSEI

Take Refuge to Atone for Striking Down Your Soul

"*And the cities which you give the Levi'im are the six cities of refuge...along with forty cities*" (35:6)

The *Apta Rav*, in *Ohev Yisrael*, writes that since our *Torah* is eternal we must know that this *pasuk* hints at a concept that atones for anyone who kills a person accidentally even in our times.

How do we find a relevant hint in this *pasuk*? Whoever mistakenly sins, hurting his very own soul, must rectify his soul by accepting upon himself the yoke of *Hashem's* kingship called *Ol Malchus Shomayim*.

This must be done with full love and self-sacrifice with his entire heart when reciting the six words of the *pasuk Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echod*.

These six words are the six cities in which we take refuge in our day and age.

In addition to these six words of *Keriyas Shema*, which correspond to the six refuge cities, the *pasuk* tells us to add forty-two cities. The *Apta Rav* explains that these correspond to the first *Parsha* of the *Shema* that contains forty-two words.

By accepting *Hashem's* love upon ourselves and loving Him and His *Torah* with all our hearts with *mesirus nefesh*, and accepting upon ourselves the yoke of His kingship called *Ol Malchus Shomayim*, we take refuge in *Keriyas Shema's* words and in its six and forty-two cities. This atones for our sin of having struck down our own souls in error through our accidental transgressions.



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 Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh

Mora De'Ara De'Yisrael

From the time that the Belzer Rebbe, Rav Aharon of Belz, moved to Eretz Yisrael, he never recited *tachanun* on the *Yahrzeit* of the *Ohr HaChaim* on the fifteenth of *Tammuz*. The reason for this was that the *Ohr HaChaim* was *Mora De'Ara De'Yisrael*, the Master and chief *Rav* of Eretz Yisrael.



The Holy Lights Of The Ohr Hachaim

Why Heter Nedorim Is Not Textually Rooted and Instead Flies in the Air

"And Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of Bnei Yisrael" (30:2).

The *Ohr HaChaim* asks why Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes regarding the *mitzva* of *nedorim*; why is it different from others in this respect?

Furthermore, the *Ohr HaChaim* is bothered by the seemingly superfluous prefix of a *lamed* before the words *Bnei Yisrael*. Why does the *pasuk* say *vayedaber Moshe el Roshei HaMattos livnei Yisrael* and not just *Roshei Mattos Yisrael*? He answers that the *lamed* signifies that there is a separate *mitzva* and message for the heads of the tribes, the *Roshei HaMattos*, and a separate one *livnei Yisrael*.

The *Ohr HaChaim* quotes *Chazal* in *Chagiga* 10a that the laws of *heter nedorim* - (annulment of vows) *porchim ba'avir*, which literally means that they fly in the air. This term is used to express the fact that there is little textual basis in the words of the *Chumash* itself for the *heter* of annulling vows. There are oral traditions and *mesora* but textually there is little basis for these traditions. In effect, therefore, they are flying in the air with nothing to ground them or to tie them down to figuratively.

Asks the *Ohr HaChaim*, why did Hashem do such a thing here regarding *nedorim*, differing from the rest of the *Torah*, where things have a textual basis and are either written explicitly or hinted at in some way? Why is *heter nedorim* different?

He answers that if the *Torah* had written in an explicit manner that there is a way to annul vows and oaths, people would not take them as seriously as they should. They would be flippant about them and treat the *nedorim* and *shevuos* lightly and carelessly.

In His divine wisdom, therefore, Hashem saw fit to leave this *mesora* as an oral tradition and give it over to the *Gedolei Yisrael*, the *Roshei HaMattos*, who would learn and understand the various nuances needed to legally annul a vow or an oath when it is proper to do so. However, the masses cannot be trusted and therefore they locked the legal doors before them,

preventing them from illegally and wrongly canceling and annulling vows and oaths, as the *pasuk* warns us, *Lo yachel devaro* – “Do not profane your words” – *kechol hayotzei mipiv yaase* – “You must fulfill whatever comes out of your mouth.”

Thus, the *pasuk* as reinterpreted by the *Ohr HaChaim* is: And Moshe spoke to *Roshei HaMattos* – to the *Gedolei Yisrael* and leaders of the Jewish people – and explained the *mitzva* of *heter nedorim* to them in its entirety, whereas *livnei Yisrael* – separately to the masses – he said, *Ze hadovor* – he only taught them generally; Moshe did not teach them the details and nuances of the laws of *heter nedorim*, but rather left them “flying in the air”, instead sharing them only with the *Roshei HaMattos* as an oral tradition. This, says the *Ohr HaChaim*, answers all my questions and points of grammar.



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

[תְּפִילָה הַנִּמְצָאת בְּסֵפֶר אֶלֶף הַמִּגֵּן מִבְּעַל הַפֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ עַל פְּרֻשֵׁת וַיֵּצֵא עֲמוּד כ"ד]

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִילוּי נִשְׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק _____
בֶּן/בַּת _____, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֵּקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים
וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטוֹב שְׁאֵנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדִבּוּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וַיְהִי הַכֹּל
לְזָכוֹת וּלְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִילוּי לְנִשְׁמוֹת עַמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפֶרֶט לְנַפְשׁ רוּחַ וְנִשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי /
צַדִּיק _____ . יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׁתִּהְיֶנָּה 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



❁ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ❁



YAHRZEITS BEGINNING SHABBOS MATTOS MASSEI

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

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

❁ 2nd of Menachem Av ~ Begins Friday Night (Aug 2nd)

- * **Rav Aharon** *ben* Rav Moshe Tumim (b. 1630). A *Rav* in Prague from 1659 to 1672, Rav Aharon became *Rosh Yeshiva* in Worms in 1672. He wrote *Mateh Aharon* on the *Haggoda*. In 1687, he accepted a position as *Rav* of Cracow, but because of political circumstances, he delayed his departure until 1690. Shortly after he left Worms, the city was destroyed by the troops of King Louis XIV. He served in Cracow for four months before a Polish nobleman, while visiting another region, had him arrested for no reason, and placed on a horse to bring him to jail. On the way, he fell off many times. They put him right back on until, as a result of the torture, he died from his wounds, (5450/1690);
- * **Rav Aharon Yosef Baksht**, known in *mussar* circles as Reb Archik (b. 1863). Born in Iyola, Lithuania (near Vilna), an only child to Rav Yeshayohu Baksht, he left home to study in Volozhin when he was fourteen. After studying under Rav Yitzchok Blazer at *Halvoyas HaMeis Yeshiva* in Slabodka for three years, he transferred to the *Bais HaTalmud* in Kelm and became one of Rav Simcha Zissel's most outstanding *talmidim*. After his marriage, he took his first rabbinical post in Bisgola, near Shavli. Thereafter, he served at Simiatitz (1896–1901), Volgograd (later known as Stalingrad), Shadova, Suvalk, and eventually, in 1926, in Lomza, where he also founded a *Kollel*. In 1937, he moved to Shavli to replace Rav Meir Atlas and founded a *Yeshiva*. He was shot and murdered by the Nazis. Sadly, his many *chiddushim* and commentary on the *Yerushalmi* were also destroyed, (5701/1941);
- * **Rav Gedalia Silverstone**. Born in Eastern Europe in 1871, he studied in the *Yeshiva* of Telshe under Rav Eliezer Gordon. In 1901, Rav Silverstone became chief *Rav* of Belfast, Ireland. In approximately 1906, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he served several congregations, including *Tifereth Yisrael* (which was then Orthodox) and *Ohev Sholom*. During the 1930s he settled in *Eretz Yisrael*. His works include *Bais Meir*; *Yeshua Gedola*; *Pirchei Aviv*; *Sukkas Sholom* and a *Haggoda* commentary entitled *Korban Pesach*, (5704/1944);
- * **Rav Moshe** *ben* Rav Avrohom Stern, the Debrecziner *Rav*, *mechaber* of *Be'er Moshe*. Born in 1914 in Neuhaizal, Slovakia, on *Hoshana Rabba*, his father, Rav Avrohom, was the *Rav* of Neuhaizal, a historian and *mechaber* of the *seforim Gapei Eish* on the *Shas*; *Shulchan Eish* and *Melitzei Eish*. After learning with his father and grandfather, Rav Moshe left Neuhaizal to study in *Yeshivas Pressburg*, headed by the *Chasam Sofer's* great-grandson, Rav Akiva Sofer, the *Daas Sofer*. Rav Moshe married a daughter of Rav Mordechai Nissan

HaKohen Strasser, a grandson of the *Chasam Sofer*. After his marriage, he moved to Debrecen, Hungary's second largest city, where Jews had been barred from living until 1840. Debrecen had served as the capital of Hungary twice, once in 1849, and a second time, in 1944. In Debrecen, he was appointed a *Posek* and *Dayan*. By 1941, 9,142 Jews lived in Debrecen and comprised about 7 percent of its population. After the war, about 4,640 Jews returned to Debrecen, making it the largest Jewish community in the area. Rav Moshe restructured the *kehilla*. Together with the *Admor* of Erlau, he even founded a *Yeshiva* in Budapest. In about 1950, Rav Moshe was invited to be the *Rav* of Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he stayed for a year. Soon afterward, Rav Moshe moved to New York and established his *Kahal Yesodei HaTorah*, whose congregants were mostly immigrants from Hungary. In 1969, Rav Moshe began publishing his *sefer* of responsa *Be'er Moshe*. Another of Rav Moshe's *seforim* is his *Kuntrus Ha'Electric* where he discusses the dozens of *shailos* involved with electricity, such as accepting testimony over the phone and setting up alarms to work on *Shabbos*, (5757/1997).

❖ 3rd of Menachem Av ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Aug 3rd)

- * **Rav Shimshon** ben Rav Pesach of Ostropoli *Hy"d*, respected by both *Ashkenazi* and *Sefardi Rabbonim* for his explanation of the *Ari HaKodosh* commentary on *Pesach* and the Ten Plagues in Egypt. There is a famous promise in his commentary on *Pesach* that anybody who reads the commentary even once each year and on *Erev Pesach* will be saved from any accident or strange death for the whole year. Rav Shimshon, along with ten thousand Jews of Polana, died *al kiddush Hashem*, in the Chmielnicki massacres, (5408/1648);
- * **Rav Shimshon Bachrach** of Nicholsburg, son of the *Chavos Yair*, (5481/1721);
- * **Rav Gedalia Aharon** ben Rav Yehoshua Rabinowitz of Monastrich *Hy"d*, killed in a pogrom in Uman with seven hundred others, (5679/1919).;
- * **Rav Dovid Shapira** ben Rav Pinchas Leib, (5694/1934);
- * **Rav Chaim Yechezkel Taub** of Ozorov ben Rav Yisrael of Modzitz, (5698/1938);
- * **Rav Yehoshua Heschel HaLevi** ben Rav Chaim Shmuel Horowitz *Hy"d*, a descendant of the *Chozeh* (Seer) of Lublin, (5703/1943);
- * **Rav Moshe Sitrin**, a known *Sefardi* sage. He wrote the *Sefer Be'er Moshe*. He lived in the city of Medabartzin, (5757/1997);
- * **Rav Yaakov Landau**, son of the *Noda BiYehuda*, (5582/1822);
- * **Rav Shmuel Bornstein** (also known as Rav Shmuel Salir), *mechaber* of *Shem Mishmuel* and *Rebbe* of Sochaczew (Sochochow) (b. 1855), son of the *Avnei Nezer*, (5687/1927);
- * **Rav Yitzchok** ben Rav Mordechai Twersky, the first Skverer-Kishinev *Rebbe* in America. Known as Reb Itzikel Skverer, he left Ukraine and came to America, arriving in 1923. Eventually he settled in the Boro Park section of Brooklyn, (5701/1941);
- * **Rav Eliyohu Moshe Shisgal** [Schisgal]. Learned with Rav Shlomo Heiman at *Yeshiva Torah Vodaas*. He married Faye Gittel Feinstein, daughter of Rav Moshe Feinstein, (5633/1973).

❖ 4th of Menachem Av ~ Begins Sunday Night (Aug 4th)

- * **Rav Menachem Azaria** ben Rav Yitzchok Brechya deFano (from Pano) (b. 1548), Italian *Mekubol*, known as the *Rema MiPano*, (5380/1620);
- * **Rav Tzvi Meir HaKohen Rabinowitz**, *Av Bais Din* of Radomsk. His father was the *Tiferes*

Shlomo, Rav Shlomo *HaKohen* of Radomsk, (5662/1902);

- * **Rav Efraim** *ben* Rav Yechezkel Taub of Kuzmir, (5664/1904);
- * **Rav Refoel** *ben* Rav Mordechai Ankawa (also spelled Ankavah or Encouau) of Morocco, (1848–1935) was the chief *Rav* of Morocco and a noted commentator, *Talmudist*, *Posek*, and *mechaber*. Born in Sale, Morocco, in 1848, he was known to the Jews of North Africa as *Malach Refoel* (the Angel Refoel). In 1880, he became president of the *Bais Din* in Sale and founded a *Yeshiva* there. In 1918, he was appointed the first president of the high rabbinical court of Rabat, Morocco. He published numerous works on jurisprudence, including *Karne Re'em* (Yerushalayim, 1910); *Hadad Vetema* (Yerushalayim, 1978); *Paamonei Zohov* (Yerushalayim, 1912) and *Paamon Verimon* (Yerushalayim, 1967); some of them continue to be regarded as authoritative. His funeral, on August 2, 1935, was attended by over fifty thousand followers. His grave became a place of Jewish pilgrimage. Rav Ankawa is survived by hundreds of descendants today, mostly in *Eretz Yisrael*, France and the United States. Leading *Rabbonim* refer to his books as sources for contemporary Jewish legal works, (5695/1935);
- * **Rav Refoel** *ben* Rav Mordechai Ankawa
- * **Rav Benzion Halberstam** of Bobov, *Hy"d*, *mechaber* of *Kedushas Tzion*, a commentary on the *Torah*. He was born in the year 1874/5634 in Bokovosk, Galicia, to Rav Shlomo Halberstam, a grandson of Rav Chaim of Sanz. In 1893, Rav Shlomo moved to Bobov and appointed his son, Rav Benzion, *Rav* of the town. His father's work with youth was sadly cut short when he passed away suddenly in 1905, at the age of fifty-eight. On the following *Shabbos*, Rav Shlomo's brothers appointed Rav Benzion the Bobover *Rebbe* at the age of thirty-one. He followed in his father's footsteps by focusing on the youth. He was murdered with twenty thousand Jews after being forced to dig a mass grave in a forest outside Lvov (Lemberg). Rav Benzion was survived by two sons – Rav Shlomo Halberstam, the Bobover *Rebbe* (*niftar* 2000) [who rebuilt Bobover *Chassidus* in the United States], and Rav Yechezkel Dovid (*niftar* 1978), as well as seven daughters, the oldest of whom was Devora Lea Twerski of Milwaukee, (5701/1941);
- * **Rav Eliyohu Glucksman** (b. 1921), *Dayan* of the Washington Heights (New York) community, teacher at *Bais Yaakov* and Rika Breuers Teachers Seminary. Born in Berlin, he escaped to England in 1938, where he studied under Rav Eliyohu Dessler. He later immigrated to *Eretz Yisrael*, where he learned at *Bais Yosef*, Petach Tikva, and then ten years in Bnei Brak at *Kollel Chazon Ish* (5764/2004).



✧ 5th of Menachem Av ~ Begins Monday Night (Aug 5th)

- * **Rav Yitzchok Luria Ashkenazi** from Tzefas, the *Arizal* (b. 1534), born in Yerushalayim, son of Rav Shlomo Luria Ashkenazi, who is believed to be descended from Rav Yechiel Luria, *Av Bais Din* of Brisk and *mechaber* of *Chochmas Shlomo* on *Shas* and *Yad Shel Shlomo*. His father passed away shortly after his birth, and Rav Klominus taught him. He and his family moved to Egypt when Rav Klominus passed away. There he learned with Rav Dovid *ben Zimra*, the *Radvaz*, from age fourteen. Among the other *talmidim* was Rav Betzalel Ashkenazi, *mechaber* of *Shita Mekubetzes*. He moved to Tzefas at age thirty-six, in the same year that the *Ramak*, Rav Moshe Cordovero, was *niftar*. He was *niftar* two years later, (5332/1572);

- * **Rav Gedalya Chiyun.** Born in Turkey, he founded *Yeshivas Bais Kel* (in 1732), whose *talmidim* studied *Kabbola* according to the approach of the *Arizal*. His teacher was the great *Mekubol* Rav Chaim Alfandari. His greatest student was Rav Sholom Sharabi (*Rashash*) of Yemen (5th of Av, according to *Yated* 2007), (5510/1750);
- * **Rav Meir Berabi,** Rav of Pressburg and *mechaber* of *Chiddushei Maharam Berabi*, (5549/1789);
- * **Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky** of Vilna. Born in Ivye in 1863, a small town near Vilna where his father (a *talmid* of Rav Yisrael Salanter) was *Rav* for forty years, preceded by his grandfather who had also served as *Rav* there for forty years, Rav Chaim Ozer was gifted with an infallible memory, never experiencing “forgetting”, as he himself remarked, until his old age. At fifteen years of age, he went to the *Yeshiva* of Volozhin and was immediately accepted into Rav Chaim Brisker's select group. He married the daughter of the Vilna *Dayan*, Rav Lazer, son-in-law of Rav Yisrael Salanter, at the age of twenty. Two years later, his father-in-law passed away, and he then took the position of *Dayan* in Vilna, and over the next fifty-five years, became the unofficial *Rav* of Vilna. His only child, a girl of seventeen, became ill, was bedridden for three years, and passed away at twenty. Rav Chaim Ozer was one of the founders of Agudas Yisrael and was the pillar of the movement throughout his life. One of the *Gedolei HaDor* of his time, he was very close with the *Chofetz Chaim*. He was a great *Tzaddik* and an absolute genius, with a reputation for, among other things, being able to write two separate things at a time using his right and left hands simultaneously. He authored *Sheilos Utshuvos Achiezer*. With his *petira*, the Jewish people lost three giants in ten months, the others being Rav Shimon Shkop, *Rosh Yeshiva* in Telshe for twenty-five years and in Grodno (9th of *Cheshvan*) and Rav Boruch Ber Levovitz of Kamenitz (5th of *Kislev*), (5700/1940);
- * **Rav Ezriel Hildesheimer,** Rav of *Adas Yisrael* of Berlin (b. 1820), the first *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary, and formerly *Rav* of Eisenstadt, Hungary. The Berlin Seminary, which was created in response to the growth of Reform in Germany, continued in existence until the late 1930s under the leadership of such figures as Rav Dovid Zvi Hoffman (until 1921), Rav Avrohom Eliyohu Kaplan (until 1924) and Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg [another source claims 4th of *Tammuz*], (5659/1899);
- * **Rav Chaim** of Krasna, a *talmid* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, (5553/1793);
- * **Rav Binyomin Paler** (b. 1908), a *talmid muvhok* of the Brisker *Rav*, Rav Yitzchok Zev *HaLevi* Soloveitchik. His mother was a direct descendant of the *Rema*. Born in Brisk, Rav Binyomin studied in *Toras Chessed* of Rav Moshe Sokolovski, *mechaber* of the *Imrei Moshe*. In 1931, he transferred to the *Yeshiva* of Rav Velvel Soloveitchik, the *Rav* of Brisk. He traveled with the *Mir Yeshiva* to Shanghai, where he drew close to the *mashiach*, Rav Yechezkel Levenstein. After the war, he arrived in the United States and founded the *Bais HaTalmud Yeshiva* in Brooklyn. Soon afterward, he married the daughter of Rav Shmuel Ehrenfeld of Mattersdorf. In 1967, he founded the *Mekor Chaim Yeshiva*, where he taught for over thirty years, (5760/2000);
- * **Rav Shimon Nosson Nota Biderman.** Born in Teverya in 1930 to Rav Yaakov Yitzchok, the *Admor* of Lelov, a descendant of the first Lelover *Rebbe*, Rav Dovid, who himself was a *talmid* of the *Chozeh* of Lublin. When his father was *niftar* in 1981, Rav Shimon Nosson Nota became *Admor* and opened *Mosdos Ohr Yaakov* in his father's memory; these included *kollelim* and *chessed* organizations, (5764/2004);
- * **Rav Yechiel Michel Dorfman.** One of the leaders of Breslov, he married the granddaughter

of Rav Avrohom Sternhartz. He used to risk his life to take people to Rav Nachman's *tziun* in Uman. He spent time in Russian prisons and Siberia, and was the guardian of Rav Nachman's *kever* during the post-World War II Communist regime. He was instrumental in building the new *kloiz* (shul) in Uman. He had a rigorous schedule of Torah and *Avoda* until the end of his life, (5766/2006);

- * **Rav Aharon Shakovitzky**. Born in 1911 to Rav Binyomin Shakovitzky, the *Maggid* of Minsk, Rav Aharon traveled alone to *Eretz Yisrael* at the age of twelve to study under Rav Leib Chasman at *Yeshivas Chevron*. He survived the Chevron Massacre of 1929 and later lived in the home of Rav Yechezkel Sarna. After marrying, he and his wife lived in Tel Aviv and later in Bnei Brak. He studied with *hasmoda* and *yegia* his entire life, never wanting to take on the burden of the rabbinate, (5765/2005).

❖ 6th of Menachem Av ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Aug 6th)

- * **Rav Yaakov Cohen Yonoson**, a *Sefardi* sage. He wrote the *sefer Seed of the Peace*, (5696/1936);
- * **Rav Yehoshua Greenwald**, *Av Bais Din of Chust*. After suffering the horrors of World War II, he followed the *Rambam's* advice and wrote that "strolling in beautiful gardens, looking at pleasing works of architecture, and being surrounded by beautiful objects alleviate depression and expand one's mind, (5729/1969);
- * **Rav Arye Finkel**, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mir-Brachfeld, (5776/2016);
- * Rav Shlomo Zalman *HaKohen* (Hanau) Katz of Frankfurt-on-Main, *mechaber* of *Binyan Shlomo*, a work on Hebrew grammar, (5506/1746).

❖ 7th of Av ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Aug 7th)

- * **Rav Moshe** ben Amram Greenwald (or Grunwald) of Chust, the Arugas Habosem (1915). A disciple of Rebbe Yehoshua Rokeach of Belz. His son, Rav Yaakov Yechezkiya, became the Pupa Rebbe;
- * **Rav Pinchos** of Sokolivka *Hy"d* (1919 / 5679) ben Rav Gedalia Aharon of Linitz. Rav Pinchos'l was both uncle and father-in-law to the Maonstrishter Rav Yehosua Heshil Rabinowitz. Along with other Jews, he was killed by the Ukrainians during the Russian Revolution in a pogrom in the streets of Uman;
- * **Rav Simcha Bunim Ehrenfeld** of Mattersdorf, son of Rav Shmuel Ehrenfeld. Rosh Yeshiva of the Chasan Sofer yeshiva. *Mechaber* of *Ma'aneh Simcha*, (1926);
- * **Don Yosef Hanasi**;
- * **Rav Shmuel**, son of Rav Yitzchok Isaac Yankowitz, Rishon LeZion Rebbe, (1999);
- * **Rav Shalom Noach Brazovsky**, the Slonimer Rebbe (1911-2000/5760). Born in Baranovich (today in Belarus), where his father, Rav Moshe Avraham, was the *Rosh Hakahal*. Baranovich was the home of the Slonimer Rebbe, Rav Avraham Weinberg, and his yeshiva, Toras Chessed. (Rav Weinberg, known as the Bais Avraham, was a great-grandson and namesake of the first Slonimer Rebbe, known as the Yesod Ha'avodah. Rav Brazovsky's mother was a granddaughter of Rav Hillel, a brother of the Yesod Ha'avodah.) The future Rav Brazovsky studied in Yeshivas Toras Chessed under its rosh yeshiva, Rav Avraham Shmuel Hirshovitz (a grandson of Rav Eliezer Gordon of Telz), and its *mashgiach*, Rav Moshe Midner (a grandson of the Yesod Ha'avodah and a student of Rav Chaim 'Brisker'



Soloveitchik). He thus absorbed Talmudic studies in the Lithuanian style with traditional chassidic teachings. Shortly before his own passing in 1933, the Bais Avraham recommended to his cousin, Rav Avraham Weinberg of Teveryah that he take Rav Brazovsky as a son-in-law. (Rav Avraham's brother was the father of Rav Yaakov Weinberg, the late rosh yeshiva of Ner Yisrael, and Rav Noach Weinberg, founder of Aish HaTorah.) His father-in-law was the Birchas Avraham. On Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 1941, Rav Brazovsky opened the Slonimer yeshiva in Yerushalayim. With the exception of the Yesod Ha'avodah, none of the Slonimer Rebbes or their predecessors, the rebbes of Lechovitch and Kobrin, committed their teachings to writing. As part of his effort to rejuvenate Slonimer chassidus, Rav Brazovsky was responsible for collecting the oral traditions ascribed to these leaders in works such as *Divrei Shmuel* and *Toras Avos*. Rav Brazovsky also authored many volumes of his own teachings, including the seven-volume *Nesivos Shalom* – one of the more popular *chassidische seforim* of our time. Rav Brazovsky served as the Slonimer Rebbe from his father-in-law's petira in 1981.

✧ 8th of Av ~ Begins Thursday Night (Aug 8th)

- * **Rav Shmuel Shmelke Toibish**, Rav of Yas (Jassi), *mechaber* of *Chayei Olam*; *Milchamos Hashem*; and *Mitzvas Chalitzah*, (1865);
- * **Rav Yehuda HaLevy** of Ragoza, founder of the Jewish *yishuv* in Yafo, (1878);
- * **Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv**, the Alter from Kelm (1824-1898/5658). After his marriage, he moved from Kelm to Kovno where he became a *talmid muvhak* of Rav Yisrael Salanter. In 1862, he opened the Talmud Torah of Kelm, in order to combat the growing influence of *haskala*. About fifteen years later, he and his yeshiva were denounced as anti-government, and Rav Simcha Zissel had to change his last name from Broide to Ziv. His *talmidim* included Rav Nossan Tzvi Finkel (the Alter of Slobodka), Rav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz (the Alter of Novardok), Rav Aharon Bakst, Rav Reuven Dessler, and his son Rav Nachum Ziv. The yeshiva was always highly restricted and at most it held thirty to thirty-five *talmidim*;
- * **Rav Shmuel Luvtzar**, *mechaber* of *Olas Shmuel*, (1898);
- * **Rav Shimon Agasi** was born in Baghdad (1852-1914). His family originated in Persia. In Persian, his name Agasi, means commissioner, a position some of his forebears, who were very wealthy and influential, had occupied in their native land. Rav Shimon's father, Rav Aharon, had been a very successful businessman who imported paint from India. At the age of eleven, Shimon began to study in Baghdad's Medrash Talmud Torah, founded by Rav Abdallah Somech. It developed rapidly to become the top Torah institution in the city, where over three thousand students studied free-of-charge. Among those who learned there were Rav Eliyahu Mani (the chief rav of Chevron), the Ben Ish Chai and Rav Salman Mutzafi. In 1865, a man, named Yitzchok Luria, came to Baghdad and attempted to open an Alliance school, which offered secular studies and tried to modernize the lifestyle of its students. However, Baghdad's sages placed a *cheirem* on the school and thwarted his efforts. From Medrash Talmud Torah, Rav Shimon proceeded to its adult division, Beit Zilcha, where he became one of its finest students. His main mentors in Beit Zilcha were Rav Abdallah Somech's two best students, Rav Shmuel Majled and Rav Nissim HaLevi. At the age of seventeen, Rav Shimon began to study Kabbalah from Rav Chaim Vital's *Eitz Chaim*. A number of years later, he joined the Chacham Yitzchok yeshivah, founded by Rav Yitzchok Berabi Mordechai Sasson, another of Baghdad's great sages. Among its illustrious students were Rav Yehuda Petaya; Rav Dovid Sofer Rav Rafael Shlomo Laniado Rav

Nissim Kadouri and Rav Yitzchok Nissim. In 1898, his oldest son, Aharon, passed away on Purim of that year. Rav Agasi was the *mechaber* of *Shem MiShimon*;

- * **Rav Meilech Silber**, *menahel* of the Yeshiva of Eastern Parkway (1970). Born in Nuremberg, Germany, his lifetime of serving his fellow Jews began at the age of seven. Rav Avrohom Yitzchok Klein, leader of the Adas Yisroel community in Nuremberg, would send him on secret missions in the early morning hours, going to the houses of poor families, leaving an envelope full of money on the step, knocking on the door, and then running away as fast as he could. With the advent of World War II, the Silber family moved to America, settling in the Bronx. He learned at different periods in RJJ, Torah VoDa'as and Yeshiva Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin. He also served as National Director of Pirchei Agudas Yisroel, as well as Head Counselor of Camp Agudah. In 1946, Rav Meilech was sent by Rav Hutner to a new yeshiva in the Crown Heights neighborhood which was searching for a principal. At the time, the yeshiva consisted of ten kindergartners, two teachers and, now, a principal. From this humble beginning grew the renowned Yeshiva of Eastern Parkway. Throughout the next twenty-five years, Rav Meilech built the yeshiva into a dynamic force in Torah education. Today, Yeshiva Zichron Meilech, under the leadership of Rav Chaim Leib Epstein, takes its name from Rav Meilech and strives to continue in his path;
- * **Rav Menucham Mekaalov**, Sephardic sage. He is the *mechaber* of *Be'er Menucham*, (5698 / 5698);
- * **Rav Yom Tov Daynun**, Sephardic sage. He is the *mechaber* of the *Sefer Kvod Yod Tov*, (5583 / 1823);
- * **Rav Shlomo Zalman Levi**, Rav of Zlotchov;
- * **Rav Chanoch Henich Dov Zilberfarb**, the Koidenover Rebbe (1978).



❁ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❁

WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

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

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

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

❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

STORIES & ANECDOTES

Rav Aharon Tumim of Cracow, 2nd of Menachem Av

Rav Aharon Tumim of Cracow was born in 5390/1630. His father, Rav Moshe Tumim, was Rav in Mehrin. His paternal grandfather was Rav Shimon Tumim Lemil, one of the *Gedolim* of Vienna.

Rav Aharon married the sister of Rav Eliezer HaLevi Ettinger, of Holleschau, Austria.

From 5419/1659 to 5432/1672, Rav Aharon was *Darshan* and *Maggid Shiur* in Prague. Later, he became *Rav* and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Worms, Germany. He was an acknowledged *Talmid Chochom* with a phenomenal memory.

After the *petira* of Rav Mordechai Deitcher, *Rav* of Cracow, Rav Aharon was chosen to take his place. He was to move there in 5447/1687, but because of political circumstances, he delayed his departure

from Worms by a few years, leaving in 5450/1690. Shortly thereafter, the city was destroyed by the troops of King Louis XIV of France.

Rav Aharon was *Rav* in Cracow for barely four months when a Polish nobleman had him arrested. He was killed on *Shabbos Parshas Mattos Masei*, second of *Av*, 5450/1690, in Chmielnik, and buried in Pintchov, where the local *Rav* was his brother-in-law (his sister's husband), Rav Yehudah Leib Tzintz of Holleschau.

Rav Aharon wrote two *seforim*: *Matteh Aharon* on *Haggada shel Pesach*, and *Bigdei Aharon* on *Torah*.

Hashem yinkom damo.

www.hamodia.com/features/day-history-2-avjuly-29/



Rav Shimshon of Ostropoli, 3rd of Menachem Av

On the bitter day of the 3rd of *Av* in the year 5408/1648, the Cossacks and Tartar forces conquered the fortified city of Polnoa with the help of the Ukrainian guards who were supposed to be guarding the cities from the invaders. According to the testimony of Rav Nosson Nota Hanover, Rav Shimshon was in the city of Polnoa at the time, since many Jews had fled there seeking protection within its fortified walls. The murderous hordes headed straight for the *shul*. Rav Shimshon was in the *shul* with three hundred followers, all of whom are said to have been *Chachomim Gedolim*. They were all dressed in burial shrouds and wrapped in *talleisim*; they were butchered *Al Kiddush*

Hashem in the midst of *davening*.

There is a *Matzeiva* for Rav Shimshon in the center of Ostropoli and it seems that his coffin was transferred to Ostropoli once calm returned to the area.

About the murder of Rav Shimshon, the *Chozeh* of Lublin writes that Rav Shimshon was Moshiach *ben Yosef* and was therefore killed, as we know will happen to Moshiach *ben Yosef*. (The *neshoma* of Moshiach is found in every generation.) The *Chozeh* even writes that since Moshiach *ben Yosef* (Rav Shimshon) was killed, this misfortune will not repeat itself when Moshiach finally comes. His words are quoted by Rav Tzodok *HaKohen* of Lublin and the *Damesek Eliezer* of

Komarna. The truth is, that even while Rav Shimshon was alive, it was known that he possessed the *neshoma* of Moshiach *ben* Yosef. Had his generation only merited...

Many of Rav Shimshon's descendants were great *Rabbonim* in their own rights. Some of the more well-known ones include: Rav Yoel *Ba'al Shem* of Zamotch; Rav Leiber *HaGodol* of Berditchev; Rav Yaakov Yosef of Polnoa, one of the greatest *talmidim* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*; Rav Yaakov Shimshon of Shpotivka; and Rav Shlomo Eliyashiv known as the *Leshem* (Rav Eliyashiv's grandfather), to name just a few.

Rav Shimshon of Ostropoli, born in approximately the year 1599, was one of the greatest Torah giants and Mekubolim of his time. He was named after his grandfather, Rav Shimshon of Kremnitz, one of the four brothers who were all Gedolei HaDor, the most well known of whom was the Maharal of Prague.

During the forty-eight short years that Rav Shimshon lived, he reached levels in Torah and Kedusha that were nothing short of legendary. As a youngster, he began studying Torah under his father's tutelage. He is also assumed to have learned under Rav Nosson Nota of Austra, the author of the Tzon Kodoshim on Seder Kodshim.

Rav Shimshon's entry into the study of the hidden parts of Torah began when he was relatively young, as he himself writes (Don Yodin): "I began learning Kabbola at a young age and toiled immensely to master the 'Chochma'. Eventually, he became one of the foremost Mekubolim of his time.

Ostropoli, a town situated in the plains of Eastern Ukraine, became Rav Shimshon's home when he was appointed as the town's Maggid. He was fondly known by all as "Rav Shimshon Maggid" (the preacher). Rav Shimshon also headed a Yeshiva in Ostropoli in which he taught his Talmidim both the revealed and hidden parts of Torah. A few of his Divrei Torah

that are printed today are thanks to the notes of his Talmidim.

Rav Shimshon's greatness in both the revealed and hidden parts of Torah, coupled with his exalted levels of Kedusha and his brilliant mind, caused his fame to spread across Europe. We can catch a glimpse of his greatness by seeing some of the unparalleled praises the Gedolim of his time wrote about him. They testified that he learned with, and merited many revelations in the secrets of Torah from, Eliyohu HaNovi. He also learned with Malochim and Maggidim, who taught him many secrets. Some Gedolim even wrote: "All of his words are prophecy". He also merited many revelations of the secrets of the Torah in dreams. In one place, Rav Shimshon writes how the Megaleh Amukos, Rav Nosson Nota of Krakow, appeared to him in a dream and explained to him a difficult piece of liturgy.



His Torah

Rav Shimshon's ability to explain the most cryptic passages of Gemora and Zohar gained him unique recognition worldwide, and many Talmidei Chachomim sent him letters asking him to enlighten them on difficult passages they had come across. The majority of Rav Shimshon's writings that exist today are derived from the many letters Rav Shimshon wrote to those who entreated him to explain difficult passages in the Torah. The most famous of all Rav Shimshon's writings is his letter called "Ma'amar Sod Etzba Elokim" that many study on Erev Pesach. (This letter will be discussed shortly.)

Aside from his many letters, Rav Shimshon authored many works, which include: Don Yodin, Machaneh Don, Ben Mano'ach, Nezer Elokim, Shemesh U'Mogen, Shemesh Nogah, VaYizrach HaShemesh, Mincha Shelucha, and Ateres Paz. Sadly, only the small work Don Yodin survived the pogroms of 1648-49. Rav

Shimshon's magnum opus was his commentary on the Zohar, Machaneh Don. While this sefer is reported to have been printed once, the Shomer Emunim writes that there is a tradition that it mysteriously vanished off the face of the earth, and all those people searching for it have all turned up empty-handed. The B'nei Yissoschor writes that the reason Rav Shimshon's Torah was lost was due to the generation's inadequate worth to receive such revelations. The Ba'al Shem Tov (1698-1760) said that the mere study of the Machaneh Don has the power to bring the Final Redemption closer; many Gedolim went to great lengths to try to find it, but were unsuccessful.

It is worthwhile to quote one excerpt that does exist from Sefer Machaneh Don. Rav Shimshon writes, almost prophetically (Machaneh Don 295b), based on an Arizal and a series of gematrios, that in the seventh century of the fifth millennium (sometime in the 5600s/1840-1940) a certain Rav will claim to have rediscovered the long-lost techeiles but his claims will not be so quickly or unanimously accepted. This find will ultimately hasten the Final Redemption. Rav Shimshon ends off by writing: May Hashem forgive me for revealing this. These almost-prophetic words were written some time before the year 1648! Amazingly, during the year 1888 (5648), after extensive research, the Radziner Rebbe claimed to have found techeiles resulting in many people wearing the newly found techeiles. But, as Rav Shimshon wrote many years earlier, most of the Torah luminaries of that time acted passively toward his find.

Many seforim use Rav Shimshon's Torah as an example of the wondrous secrets hinted to in every word of Torah (as can be seen from the Ma'amar Sod Etzba Elokim). Wherever there is a vort from Rav Shimshon, all the Torah greats after him expound on them and use his words to explain many other concepts, as his words

always open new worlds. These Gedolim include the Chida, the Vilna Gaon, the Chasam Sofer, the Bnei Yissoschor and many others. Today, the majority of Rav Shimshon's Divrei Torah on the parshi'os have been collected into one volume called Nitzotzei Shimshon by a descendant of Rav Shimshon, Rav Avrohom Yaakov Bumbach of Yerushalayim.



Tach VeTat

As the years tragically referred to as Tach VeTat (5408-09/1648-49) approached, Rav Shimshon repeatedly preached that the year 5408 (1648) was very apropos for the Final Redemption. In fact, the Zohar (Toldos 139b) clearly speaks about this year as the year of the Geula. However, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 97a) teaches that the Final Redemption will only come with teshuva and therefore, regardless of how appropriate a given year may be for redemption – if the Jews do not repent, the Geula will not come. Moreover, the seforim write that if a year is fitting for Moshiach to come and the opportunity is missed, that year becomes one of catastrophe for the Jewish people. This is what Rav Shimshon preached during the years preceding 1648, begging the Jews to do teshuva. Rav Shimshon found sources for this year in the Torah (see Nitzotzei Shimshon, Vayikra 16:3) and even said that Haman's plot to annihilate the Jews was pushed off to the year 5408 (1648) – and should the Jews not do teshuva, the year would be catastrophic. This too Rav Shimshon found hinted at in the Megilla (see Nitzotzei Shimshon, Beshalach 17:16). Unfortunately, even with the awakening that Rav Shimshon's impassioned preaching brought about, the years 1648-49 became known in the annals of history as one of the bloodiest times for the Jews since the destruction of the Bais HaMikdosh.

The Ramchal writes (Derech Eitz Chaim) that Rav Shimshon asked the Soton why the Jewish nation is more persecuted than any other nation. The Soton answered that if the Jews would give up the Mitzvos of Shabbos, Mila, and the study of Torah, he would leave them alone. Rav Shimshon's response was that thousands upon thousands of Jews would die and not one word of the Torah would be nullified.

Although it seems that Rav Shimshon's sermons did not arouse the people enough, or perhaps the decree had already been approved by the Heavenly Court (there seems to be an agreement about this in the seforim), Rav Shimshon was informed in a dream that if four of the Torah giants of that generation would allow themselves to die, each one would atone for one fourth of the number of Jews who were supposed to be killed. The story goes that one of the Gedolim refused, saying that he still had a major contribution in Halacha to give to the Jews. Some of the names of the four Gedolim mentioned have been proven by historians to be highly improbable for many reasons (Shach); others, deemed simply impossible (Rav Lieber HaGodol of Berditchev). Thus, although the legend is believed to be true, it remains unknown as to who these Gedolim were and who actually refused.



The 3rd of Av

On the bitter day of the 3rd of Av in the year 1648 / 5408, the Cossacks and Tartar forces conquered the fortified city of Polnoa with the help of the Ukrainian guards who were supposed to be guarding the cities from the invaders. According to the testimony of Rav Nosson Nota Hanover, Rav Shimshon was in the city of Polnoa at the time, since many Jews had fled there seeking protection within its fortified walls. The murderous hordes headed straight for the shul. Rav Shimshon was in the shul with three hundred followers, all of whom are said to have been

“Chachomim Gedolim”. They were all dressed in burial shrouds and wrapped in talleisim; they were butchered Al Kiddush Hashem in the midst of davening.

There is a Matzeiva for Rav Shimshon in the center of Ostropoli and it seems that his coffin was transferred to Ostropoli once calm returned to the area.



About the murder of Rav Shimshon, the Chozeh of Lublin writes that Rav Shimshon was Moshiach ben Yosef and was therefore killed, as we know will happen to Moshiach ben Yosef. (The Neshoma of

Moshiach is found in every generation.) The Chozeh even writes that since Moshiach ben Yosef (Rav Shimshon) was killed, this misfortune will not repeat itself when Moshiach finally comes. His words are quoted by Rav Tzoddok HaKohen of Lublin and the Damesek Eliezer of Komarna. The truth is, that even while Rav Shimshon was alive, it was known that he possessed the Neshoma of Moshiach ben Yosef. Had his generation only merited...

Many of Rav Shimshon's desendants were great Rabbonim in their own rights. Some of the more well-known ones include: Rav Yoel Ba'al Shem of Zamotch; Rav Leiber HaGodol of Berditchev; Rav Yaakov Yosef of Polnoa, one of the greatest disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov; Rav Yaakov Shimshon of Shpotivka; and Rav Shlomo Eliyashiv known as the Leshem

(Rav Eliyashiv's grandfather), to name just a few.



Ma'amar Sod Etzba Elokim – The Erev Pesach Letter

Among the letters that survived from Rav Shimshon's correspondence is the well-known "Ma'amar Sod Etzba Elokim". This lengthy and complex, yet enlightening, Ma'amar (exposition) was written to explain a cryptic passage written by the Arizal concerning the Ten Plagues.

The Ma'amar was revealed to Rav Shimshon in a dream. At the end of the Ma'amar, Rav Shimshon writes: "After this (the revelation of the Ma'amar), I was informed of the following secret: anyone who studies this Ma'amar properly at least once a year and especially on Erev Pesach, will merit great things. He will be saved from all misfortunes and will not die a strange death. No man will dominate him, all his enemies will fall before him, and he will tread in all of their high places. In every direction he turns, he will be successful and will prosper in all of his endeavors, until the coming of Moshiach."

Learning through this letter on the Erev Pesach has become a custom of many, as Rav Shimshon prescribes, and many attest to having merited blessings and salvation owing to its study.

In an astonishing testimony, the individual who reprinted this Ma'amar after the Second World War testifies as follows: "I, the one printing this, witnessed with my own eyes, how in the year 1944 in Hungary, the times were very dark because of the Nazis. However, all those who said this Ma'amar were saved."

In fact, the Ga'avad of Erloi, Rav Yochonon Sofer, attributes his salvation from the concentration camps to the merit of learning the Ma'amar. He tells how, on Erev Pesach in the year 1944, due to the panic and confusion that reigned, he and his grandfather, Rav Shimon Sofer, then the chief Rav of Erloi, forgot to adhere to

their yearly practice of reciting the Ma'amar. Rav Yochonon remembered on Erev Rosh HaShana and immediately recited the Ma'amar. His grandfather did not remember – and was murdered by the Nazis.

In the year 1891, Rav Choviv Chaim Dovid Sutton, the Av Bais Din of Teveria and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Eliyohu HaNovi, published a sefer called Shemesh U'Mogen on this wondrous letter of Rav Shimshon, written solely to explain the deep concepts discussed by Rav Shimshon. These explanations are necessary to fully understand the depths of Rav Shimshon's words in his Ma'amar. This work has recently been translated into English.

It is available upon request to:
meoroshatzaddikim@gmail.com



Stories

The Shivchei HaBa'al Shem Tov relates how the Ba'al Shem Tov one passed through Ostropoli and kept on looking intently at a certain garbage heap. He later explained that that site was the place where Rav Shimshon's Bais Medrash once stood and he was able to see the pillar of Rav Shimshon's Torah, which he said rose from the ground to the very heavens.

Rav Yosef Shaul Natanzon (the Sho'el U'Meishiv) of Levov would tell the following story: It was revealed to Rav Shimshon that in the World to Come, he would be next to the not-yet-famous Rav Hershele of Krakow. Rav Shimshon wanted to see exactly what Rav Hershele was like, so he disguised himself as a simpleton and made his way to Krakow. When he arrived at Rav Hershele's house, he told Rav Hershele that he was not well and proceeded to throw himself on Rav Hershele's bed with his dirty and mud-splattered clothes. Without showing any signs of being upset, Rav Hershele tended to all the "sick" man's various needs. At

midnight, Rav Hershele began to recite Tikkun Chatzos with such devotion and amid such tears that Rav Shimshon realized what a worthy individual Rav Hershele was; Rav Shimshon then revealed his true identity.

The Brisker Rav would tell the following story: Rav Shimshon of Ostropoli decided to write a commentary on Chumash (some say Shas) based on Kabbola. After modifying the first few pieces a number of times, he realized that what was staring back at him was none other than Rashi's commentary on the Torah. In fact, there are a few instances where Rav Shimshon explains Rashi's words based on Kabbalistic ideas.

There was a rich man from the city of Ostropoli who had an only daughter. When the time came to marry her off, her wealthy father searched for a worthy Torah scholar whom he would enable to continue his Torah studies, undisturbed by financial worries. Soon enough, such a young man came along; the couple married and settled in Ostropoli. The young Talmid Chochom, who was blessed with a sharp mind, studied Torah diligently day and night. His proud father-in-law wanted to show him off to Rav Shimshon and asked his son-in-law to strike up a conversation in learning with Rav Shimshon to show him the extent of his Torah knowledge and his deep grasp of everything he learned. The son-in-law, however, was not willing to do so, since he held that Rav Shimshon was not a Lamdon (learned person), and the conversation would not bring his proud father-in-law any honor. The father-in-law, though, did not relent, and eventually this young man agreed, making his way to Rav Shimshon, to show him what a Talmid Chochom he was.

When he came to Rav Shimshon's house, Rav Shimshon asked him who he was. He answered that he was the son-in-

law of so-and-so, the town's gevir, and he wanted to speak to Rav Shimshon in learning. Rav Shimshon understood what the man's real intention was and excused himself for a minute, saying he would be back shortly.

The young man waited and waited for Rav Shimshon to return – but Rav Shimshon simply did not come back. The young man decided to go for a walk in front of Rav Shimshon's house. Lost in thought, he walked until he entered a forest. Before he knew it, he was lost. He tried retracing his steps but every turn he made just took him deeper and deeper into the forest. As night fell, he reached the edge of the woods and entered a large town that seemed to host a large Jewish population. A Jewish man approached him and asked where he was from. He answered that he was from the nearby town of Ostropoli. The man had never heard of Ostropoli and invited him to eat something and sleep in his house for the night. Having nowhere to go, and not remembering that he was married, the young man accepted the offer of this generous individual. The next morning, he woke up and went to learn in the local Bais Medrash. At night, his host invited him again to eat and sleep in his house. This continued for close to a month until his benefactor, who had taken a strong liking to this young man, offered him his daughter in marriage. Having forgotten his past, our young friend readily agreed and married his benefactor's daughter. He lived happily near his in-laws and soon his wife gave birth to a son. A few years later, another son was born to him. Time passed and this young family once went on an outing near a river. The two boys were playing near the water and before their parents could do anything, they were suddenly swept away by the current. Their father jumped in to try to save them but could not find them! After much fruitless searching, he found himself on the other side of the river, standing in front of a familiar-looking house.

Looking up at the window, he saw none other than Rav Shimshon knocking on the glass and calling him inside to discuss the topic he had come to talk about. Glancing at his watch he realized that no more than a few minutes had passed, and this whole vision that seemed to span a few years was, in reality, the doing of Rav Shimshon. Embarrassed, the young man realized that he should not have tried belittling Rav Shimshon, and left without saying anything. The Ba'al Shem Tov is said to have commented that he was able to accomplish such a feat while someone was asleep but to cause someone to envision something while he was awake – that, he was unable to do.

Rav Shimshon once met the Soton during the month of Elul and the Soton was not wearing a happy expression. Rav Shimshon asked him what the matter was and he responded that business was at a standstill, with all the Jews repenting for all the bad things he had made them do throughout the year. All his hard work was going up in smoke.

Rav Shimshon met the Soton again during the Asseres Yemei Teshuva, but this time the Soton seemed excited. Confused, Rav Shimshon inquired about the change of the Soton's mood; if anything, the teshuva of the Jewish people only intensifies during these days! The Soton explained that not being one to sit back and

let his endeavors go to waste, he filed a complaint in the Heavenly Court that it wasn't fair that the Jews could get away so easily; he was thus given permission to cause the ship that was carrying their Esrogim to sink, not allowing any of the Jews to fulfill the precious Mitzva of the Arba Minim. Needless to say, the Soton was very pleased with himself.

During Sukkos, Rav Shimshon met the Soton a third time – this time, the Soton looked gloomy again. When Rav Shimshon asked the Soton what the matter was this time, the Soton explained to him that his plan had backfired. Now that there were almost no Esrogim in the whole country, the Jews had paid astronomical amounts of money to buy the few Esrogim that were available. Not only that, but people were standing on line waiting for hours every day to get a turn to shake the Arba Minim for a few seconds. The Soton ended by saying that each shake “broke his bones”.

Rav Shimshon was once asked via a heavenly agent if he would prefer meriting children who would be world-famous in their greatness, or that his merit be divided throughout the generations to protect the Jewish people until the coming of Moshiach. He chose the latter. May his merit indeed serve as a shield over all of Klal Yisrael until the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.



Rav Ephraim Taub of Kuzmir, 4th of Menachem Av

Rav Ephraim Taub was the son of Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir and the son-in-law of Rav Nosson Dovid Rabinowitz of Shidlovtza.

After the *petira* of his father on the 15th of *Shevat* 5616/1856, Rav Ephraim was appointed *Rav*.

Rav Ephraim lived in Shenenah, then later in Kuzmir. Later, he moved on to other cities. He lived in Bloina, Nadrazin,

Yablona and Prague.

Some of the *Divrei Torah* of Rav Ephraim were published in the *seforim* of his father.

Rav Ephraim was *niftar* on the 4th of *Av* 5664/1904.

His sons were Rav Menachem Dovid, *Rav* in Prague; Rav Eliezer Shlomo, *Rav* in Walmin; and Rav Yerachmiel Tzvi, *Rav* in Shenenah.

Rav Meir Berabi, 5th of Menachem Av

Rav of Pressburg

Rav Meir was born in 5485/1725 in Berabi, near Halberstadt in Germany. His parents were Rav Shaul and Rebbetzin Yentlichi.

At a young age, his father sent him to learn under Rav Tzvi Hirsh Charif, Rav of Halberstadt, who put immense efforts into this talmid.

From there, Rav Meir continued on to the Yeshiva of Rav Yaakov Paprish, Rav of Frankfurt-am-Main. He stayed in this Yeshiva for two years, advancing in Torah. After a two-year stay in Frankfurt, he returned to Halberstadt.

At the age of thirteen, in 5498/1738, Rav Meir married Rebbetzin Elkeli, the daughter of Rav Michel of Halberstadt. He dedicated himself solely to learning Torah, thanks to the support of his brother-in-law, Rav Nosson.

Even at this young age, Rav Meir was already known as an outstanding Talmid Chochom. Eventually, he was appointed Dayan in the city, and in 5517/1757, when Rav Moshe Brisk, the local Rav, was niftar, Rav Meir was asked to fill his place, which he did for the next six years, until 5523/1763.

In 5523/1763, Rav Meir was accepted as Rav in Hali, Germany, but this

was for one year. Afterward, Rav Meir became Rav of Pressburg, Hungary, a position he held for the next twenty-five years, until his passing in 5549/1789.

Rav Meir was zocheh to teach many talmidim in all the communities where he was Rav. Many of them went on to become leading Rabbonim and Gedolim.

Rav Meir was close with many of the generation's Gedolim and frequently discussed with them she'eilos, most notably with the Noda B'Yehuda.

Rav Meir was known as a Rav who always sought peace and harmony in all the communities where he officiated. It is related that one year, on Yom Kippur night, the inhabitants of the city were waiting for Rav Meir to arrive in shul for davening. In the meantime, he was standing outside, trying to make peace between two long-time enemies, telling them that davening wouldn't begin until they made peace; they heeded his words and Kol Nidrei commenced.

In 5549/1789, Rav Meir took ill. He was niftar on the 5th of Av 5549/1789, at the age of sixty-four.

Zechuso yagen aleinu.

www.hamodia.com/features/day-history-5-avaugust-1/

Rav Yitzchok Ben Shlomo Luria, 5th of Menachem Av

Ari HaKodosh - AriZal

“Rav Elozor of Bartosa used to say: Give Him what is His, for you and whatever is yours are His” (*Avos* 3:8).

When Rav Ovadia Yosef used to teach *Pirkei Avos* he would illustrate the above *Mishna* with the following story:

Once, when the *Arizal* was studying the secrets of *Torah* together with his *talmidim*, all of a sudden he paused and recited the blessing over bad news, “*Boruch*

Dayan HaEmes – Blessed is the True Judge.”

“I hear a heavenly voice that a decree has been proclaimed in the Heavens above,” he said, quoting *Doniel* 4:14. “By the decree of the wakeful ones is the matter and by the word of the holy ones is the edict.’ It has been decreed that a swarm of innumerable locusts will overrun the city of Tzefas and devour all vegetation and all

fruits and trees, as well as all the plants growing in the fields. The residents will starve and be left without sustenance! This will all come to pass because of one poor *Tzaddik*, a *Talmid Chochom* named Yaakov Altretz, who is fasting and



wallowing on the ground with complaints against *Hashem* that he is left bereft of all livelihood and means of support and no one has any mercy on him. *Hashem* cannot bear to remain silent because of this pauper's prayers and sufferings, and His anger has been kindled against the residents of Tzefas, his neighbors, since no one is doing anything to help the pauper and no one pays attention to him or his plight. This is the decree, and now, my brothers and friends, I ask you to make a collection for *tzedoka* and send one of us to purchase food and provisions; the rest of the money, give to this poor man immediately to ease his pain and suffering and end his hunger."

Rav Yitzchok Kohen quickly got up, gathered money from the *chevraya* and headed to the local grocery, where he purchased food and provisions. He took these and the rest of the money and went off to find Rav Yaakov Altretz lying on the floor in misery and hunger. Rav Yaakov was a water carrier by trade and that morning his clay pails with which he would draw water from the well had fallen and broken. He was left with no means to purchase new ones and no means of support. He had no money and no food, and had not eaten that day.

Rav Yitzchok grasped Rav Yaakov by the hand, helped him get up and sat him at the table. He revived him with food and drink and presented him with provisions to

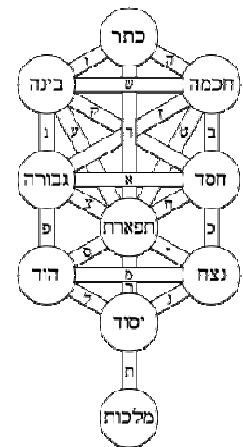
sate his hunger and slake his thirst. He also gave him the rest of the money so that he could now purchase new pails to draw water from the well and continue to earn a living. Finally, he asked him to *daven* to *Hashem* for forgiveness for Tzefas that the decree should be canceled. "Because of you a terrible decree has been cast against Tzefas that a plague of swarming locusts devour our food. Now ask *Hashem* to have mercy. Please, from now on, be careful how you complain and what you say against *Hashem's* ways," Rav Yitzchok said to Rav Yaakov. He accepted the rebuke and promised to never do it again. He got up and tearfully *davened*, asking *Hashem* to annul the decree and remove His anger from the people of Tzefas.

Afterward, Rav Yitzchok Kohen returned to the *Arizal* and related what he had done and what had happened and the *Arizal* said, "Know now that your *tzedoka* for the poor man has canceled the decree of the locust plague. Thank goodness for *Hashem's* mercy and kindness!" They resumed their study once more, when all of a sudden the sky darkened. All the *talmidim* became worried and terrified at the sight of clouds of innumerable locust swarms flying over the city, darkening the skies of Tzefas.

"Do not be alarmed, and don't worry," the *Arizal* reassured them. "As I

said, the decree has been annulled. The locusts just haven't yet received the message." As soon as he had said this, a great gust of wind came from the sea and cast the entire swarm of locusts into the depths of the ocean, where they all drowned; not one of them set foot in Tzefas.

Hashem saved the residents of Tzefas in the merit of the *tzedoka* and *chessed* that



they did for Yaakov Altretz. Rav Shlomo Shlumiel was an eyewitness who testified as to the veracity of these events and was personally acquainted with the pauper, who was a *Tzaddik* and *Chassid* and well versed in the *Torah* by heart.



Afterward, he was appointed *Av Bais Din* in Tripoli. Thus was fulfilled the dictum of *Chazal* in *Avos*: "Whoever fulfills the *Torah* in poverty shall in the end fulfill it in wealth". (*Anaf Etz Avos* p. 181–182)



Rav Yitzchak Luria (1534-1572), renowned as the greatest *Mekubol* of modern times, is commonly known as the **ARI**, an acronym standing for *Elohi Rav Yitzchok* - the G-dly Rav Yitzchok. No other master or sage ever had this extra letter, standing for *Elohi*, prefaced to his name. This is a sign of what his contemporaries thought of him. Later generations, fearsome that this appellation might be misunderstood, said that this *alef* stood for *Ashkenazi*, indicating that his family had originated in Germany, as indeed it had. But the original meaning is the correct one, and to this day Rav Yitzchok Luria is universally referred to as the "Holy Ari".



The *Ari* was born in Yerushalayim in 1534. By the time he was eight, he was recognized as a wonder-child, a prodigy who already outshone the greatest minds of Yerushalayim. At this tender age, he had already mastered the intricacies of the *Talmud* and committed dozens of volumes to memory.

The *Ari's* father passed away while he was still a child. Under the pressure of poverty, his mother went to Egypt, where they lived with her brother, Mordecai

Frances, a wealthy tax agent. The *Ari's* brilliance continued to shine. The young prodigy was placed under the tutelage of Rav Betzalel Ashkenazi (1520-1592), best known for his important Talmudic commentary, the *Shita Mekubetzes* (Embracing System). There is also evidence that the young lad also studied under the great *Radbaz*, Rav Dovid ben Zimri (1480-1573), who was then the chief *Rav* of Cairo. By the time he was fifteen, his expertise in *Talmud* had overwhelmed all the sages in Egypt. According to a reliable account, the *Ari* himself also wrote a large Talmudic commentary around this time. Had he remained nothing more than a Talmudic scholar, he would have joined the ranks of the greatest of all times.

The *Chida* said on him that the way he reached such a high level was that Eliyahu HaNavi purified him with ashes of a Parah Adumah. The *Arizal* is respected and accepted by all the great Rabbonim of the *Ashkenazim* (*chassidim* and non-*chassidim*), *Sefardim* and *Teimanim*. Besides Kabbalistic *Seforim*, the *Arizal* is very often quoted in halachic works, such as the *Magen Avrohom*, *Be'er Heitiv* and *Mishna Berura*. He is the foremost Kabbalist of the last five-hundred years and was a *Gilgul* (reincarnated spark) of *Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai*.

At this time he married his uncle's daughter. At age seventeen, he discovered the *Zohar*, obtaining his own manuscript copy. Later, he spent fifteen years meditating, at first with his master, Rav Betzalel Ashkenazi, and then alone, reaching the highest levels of *kedusha*. Eventually, he spent two years meditating in a hut near the Nile, utterly isolated, not speaking to any human being. The only time he would return home would be on *Erev Shabbos*, just before dark. But even at home, he would not speak. When it was absolutely



necessary for him to say something, he would say it in the fewest possible words, and only in *Loshon HaKodesh*.

It is accepted that the *Ari* became worthy of *Ruach HaKodesh*. At times, *Eliyohu HaNovi* revealed himself to him and taught him the mysteries of the *Torah*. Every night his soul ascended to heaven. Angels would escort him, asking which academy he chose to visit. Sometimes it would be that of Rav Shimon *bar* Yochai. He also visited the academies of Rav Akiva and Rav Eliezer *HaGodol*, and on occasion the academies of the *Nevi'im*.

At the end of this period, he received a command from *Eliyohu HaNovi* to go to *Eretz Yisrael*. He arrived in Tzefas during the summer of 1570, and began by concealing his gifts completely. He was only there a short time when the *Ramak* (Rav Moshe Cordovero, 1522-1570), head of the Tzefas *Mekubolim*, died on June 26, 1570 (23rd of *Tammuz*, 5330). By identifying the heavenly pillar of fire that followed the great *Mekubol's* funeral procession, the *Ari* established himself as the new leader.

The *Ari* passed away on July 15, 1572 (5th of *Av*, 5332), barely two years after he had arrived in Tzefas. During his brief stay there, he had assembled a group of approximately a dozen disciples, with Rav Chaim Vital at their head, and they continued to review his teachings. For the most part, it was Rav Chaim who put them into writing. The main works are: *Etz Chaim* (Tree of Life) and *Pri Etz Chaim* (Fruit of the Tree of Life), as well as the *Eight Gates*, which deal with everything from Bible commentary to divine inspiration and reincarnation.

The *Ari* also authored the liturgical poems "*Azamer Bishvachin*", "*Assader Lis'udossa*" and "*Benei Heichola*", sung at the three *Shabbos* meals respectively and included in nearly every *Chassidic* and *Sephardi Siddur*.

The teachings of the *Ari* have been afforded status as a primary authority, on the same level as the *Zohar* itself. Every custom of the *Ari* was scrutinized, and many were accepted, even against previous practice. The great Polish codifier, Rav Avrohom Gombiner (1635-1683), author of the *Mogen Avrohom* (Shield of Avrohom), takes the *Ari's* personal customs as legally binding precedents. In deciding disputes that had remained unresolved for centuries, he often cites the *Ari's* custom as the final authority. The fact that the *Ari* had acted in a certain manner was enough to convince this tough-minded legalist that this was the correct opinion.

There are a select number of individuals who live on a plane so high above the rest of humanity that it seems that they are a completely different, higher species of being. They teach, yet we grasp but little, and from the few crumbs that we catch, we can build mountains. Such a person was Rav Yitzchok Luria, the holy *ARI*, the Lion of Tzefas.

(Compiled from *Meditation and Kabbalah* by Rav Aryeh Kaplan and from other sources)



There is a famous story about his birth. The Arizal was born in Yerushalayim to Rav Shlomo Luria who was a very pious individual. It is said that Eliyahu HaNavi used to reveal himself to him. His mother was also extremely pious. When the Arizal was born, Eliyahu HaNavi appeared to his father and instructed him not to perform the *Milah* (circumcision) till he sees him in



the shul. On the eighth day, the father did not see Eliyahu HaNavi in the shul and would not proceed.

The congregation

did not understand why there was a delay, but he would not be rushed. Eliyahu HaNavi deliberately delayed coming, in order to see if the father would follow his instructions. When he finally arrived he instructed the father to sit on the chair with the child in his hands. Eliyahu HaNavi sat on the father and took the baby into his own hands. No one, not even the Mohel could see Eliyahu HaNavi, except the father. When the Milah was completed, he returned the baby to the father and told him that a great light would shine forth from this child which would illuminate the whole world.



Rav Chaim Vital writes in the Introduction to Sha'ar HaHakdomos:

The *Ari* overflowed with *Torah*. He was thoroughly expert in Scripture, *Mishna*, *Talmud*, *Pilpul*, *Medrash*, *Aggada*, *Ma'aseh Bereishis* and *Ma'aseh Merkova*. He was expert in the language of trees, the language of birds, and the speech of angels. He could read faces in the manner outlined in the *Zohar* (vol. II, p. 74b). He could discern all that any individual had done, and could see what they would do in the future. He could read people's thoughts, often before the thought even entered their minds. He knew future events, was aware of everything happening here on earth, and what was decreed in Heaven.

He knew the mysteries of *gilgul* (reincarnation), who had been born previously, and who was here for the first time. He could look at a person and tell him how he was connected to higher spiritual levels, and his original root in Adam. The *Ari* could read wondrous things [about people] in the light of a candle or in the flame of a fire. With his eyes he gazed and was able to see the souls of the righteous, both those who had died recently and those who had lived in ancient times. With these departed souls, he studied the true

mysteries.

From a person's scent, he was able to know all that he had done (see *Zohar*, *Yenuka* volume III page 188a). It was as if the answers to all these mysteries lay dormant within him, waiting to be activated whenever he desired. He did not have to seclude himself to seek them out.

All this we saw with our own eyes. These are not things that we heard from others. They were wondrous things that had not been seen on earth since the time of Rav Shimon *bar* Yochai. None of this was attained through magic, Heaven forbid. There is a strong prohibition against these arts. Instead, it came automatically, as a result of his saintliness and asceticism, after many years of study in both the ancient and the newer *Kabbalistic* texts. He then increased his piety, asceticism, purity and holiness until he reached a level where Eliyohu would constantly reveal himself to him, speaking to him "mouth to mouth", teaching him these mysteries and secrets.

(Translated by Rav Moshe Miller) - www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=Ari



The Arizal To Rav Chaim Vital - Stop Looking At Me

Rav Shmuel Hominer in *Olas HaTamid* brings the following story about the *Arizal's kavanos HaTeffila*. One *Shabbos*, Rav Chaim Vital had a terrible pain in his eyes. He went to ask his *Rebbe* the *Arizal* why this was happening.

The *Arizal* told him that one of the reasons is because *Rav Chaim davened* in the same *Shul* as the *Arizal* and always sat on to the *Arizal's* right side. He would stare at the *Arizal* to learn all his *hanhagos* in great detail. The *Arizal* would have Holy *kavanos* during his *teffila* which brought down on him a great light from above, which Rav Chaim Vital should not have looked at.

The *Arizal* told Rav Chaim Vital that

he should not look at him during *Shema*, when he bows by *Modim*, and when he answers *Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh* by *Kedusha*. These were the three most awesome *kavanos*. Rav Chaim Vital followed his *Rebbe's* instructions and his eyes became better.

www.revach.net/tefilah/tefila/The-Arizal-To-Rav-Chaim-Vital-Stop-Looking-At-Me/4161

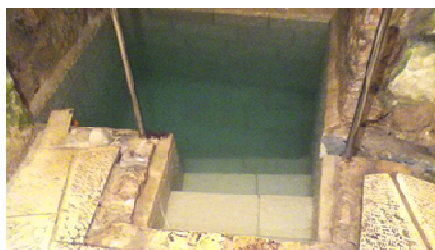


True Chessed

It happened once that Rav Shmuel Ozeida entered before the holy *Arizal*. The *Rav* (the *Arizal*) stood up in front of him and then seated him to his right. He spoke with him about all his needs, to such a degree that the events happening were rather astounding in front of all those present. When he left, Rav Chaim Vital (the student par excellence of the *Arizal*) asked him what was special about the day, that the *Arizal* had given so much honour towards Rav Shmuel, something that he had never done on previous occasions when he would come and go.

The *Arizal* replied that he had not stood up for him (i.e. Rav Shmuel) but rather that he had stood for Rav Pinchas *ben Yair* (the father-in-law of *Rabi Shimon bar Yochai*, the author of the *Zohar* who had lived some 1,500 years before!) The *Arizal* explained that Rav Pinchas *ben Yair* had entered together with Rav Shmuel because

of a *Mitzvah* that he had done. It was a *Mitzvah* that Rav Pinchas *ben Yair* was accustomed to do.



THE ARIZAL'S MIKVAH

When Rav Chaim Vital heard this, he ran to greet him (*Rav Shmuel*) and

created a friendly atmosphere and repaire with him. Said Rav Chaim Vital, "By my life, my master, tell me what *Mitzvah* did you do today, that which the *Rav* spoke about?" *Rav Shmuel* responded, "I arose early in the morning to go to *shul* (the synagogue) as is my custom - to be counted as one of the first of the first ten to arrive. I heard a voice crying greatly coming from one of the houses. And so I turned towards there to know what was happening. I entered and saw that everyone was crying, since it had happened that thieves had come that past evening, and they stole all their clothes and everything that they had owned, and my mercy was aroused. And so I removed my very own garments and I gave them to them - and the proof of this is that I am currently wearing my festive *Shabbos* clothing."

When Rav Chaim Vital heard this, he kissed him upon his hand and blessed him!

www.dwellingplacebelow.blogspot.co.il/2008/05/story-of-holy-arizal-true-compassion.html



The students of the Arizal discover a unique household

When the *Maharshal* heard of the wonders that the *Arizal* was performing in Tzfas, he feared these miracles were black magic and seriously considered excommunicating the *Arizal* and his disciples. The *Arizal* became aware of this development and decided to send his two most important students to Lublin to present his teachings to the *Maharshal* and prevent such a terrible mistake. The disciples were great righteous men in their own right, none other than Rav Chaim Vital (who was later to become the chief disseminator of the *Arizal's* teachings in North Africa and the Mideast) and Rav Yisrael Srug (who would be the major exponent in Europe).

[The "*Maharshal*", Rav Shlomo

Luria, was one of the leading *Torah* scholars of the sixteenth century. His writings are studied and venerated still today. He served as *rav* and head of the rabbinical court in Lublin, one of the most important centers of Jewish life at that time. He was a relative of Rav Yitzchak Luria, probably his great uncle.]



As a reward for your efforts, you may visit the *Moshiach* of our time...

As "payment" for the trip, the *Arizal* revealed to them a deep secret: the name and whereabouts of the *Moshiach ben Dovid* of their generation. In every generation, the *Arizal* explained, a *Moshiach* descended from Dovid and a *Moshiach* descended from Yosef is born. If the generation is undeserving, they pass from the world without revealing themselves. "The current candidate to be *Moshiach ben Dovid* is called Rav Eliyakim *ben Shmuel* and lives in the village of Tisavitch which was not far from Lublin. After finishing your mission, as a reward for your efforts, you may visit the *Moshiach* of our time," said the *Arizal* to his students as he blessed them on their departure.

Rav Chaim and *Rav Yisrael* set out, taking with them special delicacies of Tzfas, hot from the oven. Shortly thereafter they were picked up by a passing cloud that took them all the way to Lublin and deposited them - not surprisingly - at the entrance to the synagogue where the *Maharshal* prayed. They arrived exactly on time for the afternoon *mincha* prayer.

The sudden appearance of these two Jews of holy countenance dressed in the impressive garments of 16th century Tzfas caused quite a stir. As a result of a certain incident which then took place in the *shul* (a long story in itself), the *Maharshal* understood that these were very special and holy visitors indeed.

The two men introduced themselves

and their mission. They told the *Maharshal* that only that morning had they left Tzfas and, as proof, their Israeli food was still warm. The *Maharshal* asked them to reveal the teachings of their master, the *Arizal*, so that he could judge for himself. "So secret and holy are the teachings," explained the visitors, "that we can reveal them only in an isolated location, away from over-sensitive ears."

They went down to the *Maharshal's* dark basement. As soon as the *tzaddikim* began to relate the teachings of their master, the whole room lit up. Afterwards, the *Maharshal* declared that his attitude had changed. He promised them that not only had he given up any idea of declaring a ban, but from then on he would consider himself to be one of the *Arizal's* great admirers. In desperation, they revealed to the *rav* the true nature of their mission...

The *Arizal's* two disciples went on to Tisavitch to claim their reward. Upon arriving, however, they found Rav Eliyakim's whereabouts to be unknown. Indeed, his very existence was seriously doubted by even the most informed elders of the town. The Tzfas *Kabbalists* proceeded to the house of the local *rav* and asked him about Rav Eliyakim, the son of Shmuel, but to no avail. In desperation, they revealed to the *rav* the true nature of their mission.

After much effort on the part of many different people, they finally succeeded in tracking down the elusive Rav Eliyakim. Needless to say, the two visitors wasted no time making their way to his home, along with the *Rav* of Tisavitch who insisted on accompanying them.

Once at the house of the acclaimed *Moshiach ben Dovid* of the generation, to their surprise they found only one small room, two broken down beds, and one table ready to fall apart and a chair. Rav Eliyakim himself lay in bed, and his wife was at the stove which stood in the middle of the house.

After being greeted by the hosts, who were surprised but excited to have visitors, especially the *rav* and such holy looking travelers, the guests introduced themselves: "We are the students of the holy *Ari*, from the holy city of Tzfas, in the holy land of *Eretz Yisrael*, and we have been told that you are our generation's candidate for the task of *Moshiach ben Dovid*."



As a result of this secret becoming uncovered ...I must depart from the world...

"Oh! The *Ari* and his revelations! He has done me and himself great damage," Rav Elyakim exclaimed. "As a result of this secret becoming uncovered," he continued, "I must depart from the world. My last request is that you personally take charge of the funeral and all involved. On the gravestone please write: Here lies a truthful and honest man. 12 *Elul* 5332."

With these words, Rav Elyakim *ben Shmuel* passed away, leaving behind him a world unworthy of *Moshiach*. (There are some who say that this revelation had such a tragic end because of the presence of the *rav* of the town; had the *Arizal's* pupils come by themselves, the result would have been different.)

After the funeral, Rav Chaim and Rav Yisrael went to visit the widow in her mourning. They questioned her about the deeds of her husband.

"I married very young," his wife replied. "All those years my husband was very ill. I myself provided whatever living we had. Most of the time he lay in bed. However, right before *Shabbos* there would always be a drastic change - the house would become wider and longer, and a fully set table with the best of *Shabbos* dishes would appear. Then a group of very holy looking visitors would arrive, always bringing with them a *Torah* scroll. My

husband would become strong and healthy and together with the guests, would spend the entire *Shabbos* in prayer, study and eating the three traditional meals. After the *Motza'ei Shabbos* prayer ...the house would shrink back to its weekday size...

"After the *Motza'ei Shabbos* prayer and *Havdala*, the house would shrink back to its weekday size, the guests would disappear and my husband would return to his bed. This was the schedule every week since our marriage."

"Why didn't you ever tell anyone about this wondrous miracle?" she was asked. Seeing how amazed everyone was by what she had so innocently told, she explained, "I know that a bride is like a queen and the groom is like a king. Therefore, I assumed that this happens in every Jewish household, on every *Shabbos* after the wedding!"

The author notes that as of the time of his writing, a gravestone with the above inscription could still be found in the Jewish cemetery of Tisavitch!

Translated by Yehuda Rubin of Elon Moreh, rewritten by Rav Yerachmiel Tilles

www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article__cdo/aid/379599/jewish/Visit-to-the-Hidden-Mashiach.htm



An Accompanying Soul

It happened on the 29th of the Jewish month of *Menachem Av*, *Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul*, 5331 (1571). "I want you to go to Kfar Avnis," said Rav Yitzchak Luria, the holy *Ari*, to his main disciple, Rav Chaim Vital, "to pray at the graves of Abaye and Rava," He taught him the special *yichudim* ('Unities') which were necessary, what he had to learn and the prayers he was to say, so that his soul would become bound up with two of the greatest Talmudic sages, thus enabling him to understand the secrets of *Torah* which they were then discussing in the Heavenly *yeshiva*.

Rav Chaim went to Kfar Avnis. The

sun beat down upon his head and he stopped to rest on a mound of stones just outside the village of Biriya. While sitting there, he reviewed all the things his master had taught him so that they would flow smoothly when the time would come to prostrate himself on the grave.

When he arrived, he fulfilled his master's instructions. He prayed, prostrated himself and concentrated upon all the esoteric words which the *Ari* had prepared for him. Suddenly, he felt his heart open up within him and deep secrets became clear which he would never have understood by his own efforts.

Rav Chaim returned to Tzfas in excellent spirits and went at once to tell his master what he had succeeded in learning since last seeing him. When he knocked upon the *Ari's* door and entered, he found him surrounded by the group of people who always attended his lectures. The *Ari* looked up at Rav Chaim standing in the doorway and rose in his honor, exclaiming aloud, "*Baruch haba!* Blessed is he who has come. Welcome!" He made a place for Rav Chaim right next to his own seat. Rav Chaim realized that this betokened something, for his master had never shown him such deference before.

When the listeners had gone, he could no longer contain himself and asked, "What have I done to deserve this unusual show of respect and welcome?"

"My dear disciple," Rav Yitzchak replied, "The deference I showed you was in respect for Benayahu *ben* Yehoyada who accompanied you when you entered."

Rav Chaim was surprised and asked, "But I only visited the tombs of Abaye and Rava. Their spirits should have escorted me. How did Benayahu's spirit become entwined with mine?"

The *Ari* explained, "The souls of these two *Talmudic* greats are sparks of the soul of Benayahu, the chief sage and general at the time of Dovid *HaMelech*, and the order of study and prayer which I told you to go through at their grave is fitting for his soul also. Tell me, did you, somewhere on your way to Kfar Avnis, stop to review what I had taught you?"

Rav Chaim nodded his head. "Then," said the *Ari*, "surely the spot where you stopped off must be the precise location of the tomb of Benayahu ben Yohoyada. That is how his soul came to be bound up with yours!"

Some time later, the *Ari* and his disciples visited many tombs. Along the way, between Kfar Biriya and Kfar Avnis, Rav Chaim saw the mound of stones where he had rested on his previous trip. As the group passed this spot, the *Ari* stopped and said to his followers, "See, this is the grave of Benayahu ben Yehoyada. Let us pray here, for we will then merit the revelation of profound things from him."

Only then, did Rav Chaim fully understand what his master had told him on that *Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul*.

[Adapted by Rav Yerachmiel Tilles from: "The *Arizal* - The Life and Times of Rav Yitzchak Luria" (*Mesorah*).]

www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=407-50

One of the *Ari's* prescribed *Teffilos* is called "Tikkun Mem Ches". He writes that whoever recites this portion on the *Zohar* (*Tikkunay Ha Zohar*, *Tikkun 48*) it will merit numerous things. It is worthy to recite it on his *yahrzeit*. Again, due to *shaimos* concerns – we couldn't include it in this *gilyon*.

However, it is available upon request to: meoroshatzaddikim@gmail.com





Original cover page and some notations of *Sha'ar Ha'Kavanot* written by Rabbi Shmuel Vital (mid seventeenth century)

The Kabbalah of the Arizal

A.K.A. LURIANIC KABBALAH

After the passing of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero in 1570, the Arizal, Rabbi Isaac Luria, headed the circle of Kabbalists in Safed.

During the last two years of his life, he revealed his comprehensive system of mystical Jewish thought, which was later accepted as the pre-eminent school of Kabbalah.

After his passing, his disciples agreed to accept as authoritative only the transcripts of his leading disciple, Rabbi Chaim Vital (1543-1620).

But his transcripts covered a wide range of mystical concepts and were in no systematic order. The themes were so exalted and voluminous that Rabbi Chaim was reluctant to let them be copied until he organized the material properly. He devoted many years to this task, and then reworked the material in a second edition, accompanied by his explanatory comments and elaborations where necessary.

Eventually, in stages before and after his passing, most of both editions were copied. Part was

organized into works originally disseminated in manuscript and published only in the 1700s as *Eitz Chaim* and *Pri Eitz Chaim*.

In the decades after Rabbi Chaim's passing, his son Rabbi Shmuel, a judge of the Rabbinic court of Damascus, Syria, rearranged his father's first edition into a compilation divided into eight sections, known as *Shemona She'arim* (literally "Eight Gates").

Of Rabbi Shmuel Vital's original manuscripts of these eight sections, six are now in the Chabad Library.

Reproduced here in this inaugural column are the cover page of *Sha'ar Ha'Kavanot* (one of the eight sections) and some notations written by Rabbi Shmuel from the mid seventeenth century (1649-1653).

Also in the Library are numerous copies of each of the eight sections, made from the original, before they were published in the nineteenth century. ♦

Rav Shalom Noach Brazovsky, 7th of Av

Slonimer Rebbe – Author of Nesivos Shalom

Through his voluminous writings, Rav Brazovsky was among the most influential of contemporary Chassidic Rebbes, and his impact was felt among Chassidim and non-Chassidim alike. A leading Lithuanian (i.e. non-Chassidic) Rosh Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael reportedly referred to Rav Brazovsky's work *Nesivos Shalom* as the *Mesillas Yeshorim* of our times. (*Mesillas Yeshorim* is a classic *mussar* work written in the eighteenth century.)

Rav Brazovsky was born on the 14th of Av, 5671 (August 8, 1911) in Baranovichi (today in Belarus), where his father, Rav Moshe Avrohom, was the Rosh HaKohol (president of the Jewish community). Baranovichi is best-known to many as the home of Rav Elchonon Wasserman and his Yeshiva, but it was also the home of the Slonimer Rebbe, Rav Avrohom Weinberg, and his famed Yeshiva, Toras Chessed. (Rav Weinberg, known as the *Bais Avrohom*, was a great-grandson and namesake of the first Slonimer Rebbe, known as the Yesod Ha'Avoda. Rav Brazovsky's mother was a granddaughter of Rav Hillel, a brother of the Yesod Ha'Avoda.)

The future Rav Brazovsky studied in Yeshivas Toras Chessed under its Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Avrohom Shmuel Hirshovitz (a grandson of Rav Eliezer Gordon of Telz) and its *mashgiach*, Rav Moshe Midner (a grandson of the Yesod Ha'Avoda and a student of Rav Chaim Brisker Soloveitchik). With such leaders, the Slonimer Yeshiva was virtually unique in combining *Talmudic* studies in the Lithuanian style with traditional Chassidic teachings.

In approximately 1930, the Bais Avrohom appointed Rav Brazovsky to commit to writing (after Shabbos, of

course) the Torah lessons that he (the Rebbe) delivered every Shabbos. These notes later became the book *Bais Avrohom*. Shortly before his own passing in 1933, the Bais Avrohom recommended to his cousin, Rav Avrohom Weinberg of Teveryah to take Rav Brazovsky as a son-in-law. (Teveryah was home to many Slonimer Chassidim, including Rav Avrohom's brother, the father of Rav Yaakov Weinberg, the late Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Yisrael, and Rav Noach Weinberg, the late founder of Aish HaTorah.)

In 1940, Rav Brazovsky was appointed Rosh Yeshiva of the Lubavitcher Yeshiva Achai Temimim in Tel Aviv. On *Rosh Chodesh* Cheshvan 5702 (October 21, 1941), he opened the Slonimer Yeshiva in Yerushalayim with five students. As had been the case in Baranovich, the Yeshiva offered traditional Chassidic teachings alongside Talmudic lectures, using the Lithuanian style of analysis. Rav Brazovsky also could be found sitting with the students for hours on end, especially on Friday night, teaching them the traditional Slonimer melodies.

Rav Brazovsky's Yeshiva served as the kernel for the rebirth of Slonimer Chassidus after the group's near-destruction in the Holocaust. The last pre-war Slonimer Rebbe, Rav Shlomo Dovid Yehoshua Weinberg, was killed in 1944, and for ten years, no successor was named. In 1954, Rav Brazovsky's father-in-law agreed to assume the mantle of Rebbe. (His teachings are collected – again, by Rav Brazovsky – in the work *Birkas Avrohom*, and he is known by that name.)

With the exception of the Yesod Ha'Avoda, none of the Slonimer Rebbes or their predecessors, the Rebbes of Lechovitch (Lyakhovichi) and Kobrin, committed their teachings to writing. As

part of his effort to rejuvenate Slonimer Chassidus, Rav Brazovsky was responsible for collecting the oral traditions ascribed to these leaders in works such as *Divrei Shmuel* and *Toras Avos* (in addition to the works already mentioned). Rav Brazovsky also authored many volumes of his own teachings, including the seven-volume *Nesivos Sholom* and many smaller works on educational topics, marital harmony and other issues. One distinguishing feature of those works is Rav Brazovsky's practice of deriving practical, moral and ethical teachings from *pesukim*, using traditional Chassidic methods of interpretation.

Rav Brazovsky served as the Slonimer Rebbe after his father-in-law's *petira* on the 12th of Sivan 5741 (1981). He was succeeded by his son, Rav Shmuel.

(Sources: Hamodia, August 18, 2000, page 24; *Marbitzei Torah Me'olam Ha'Chassidus* Volume I, page 177; *ibid*, Volume III, page 167)

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www.torah.org/learning/hamaayan/5760/kiseitzei.html



Rav Shlomo Zalman Levi, 8th of Av

Rav of Zlotchov

Rav Shlomo Zalman Levi was the oldest son of Rav Avrohom Levi. He was named for his paternal grandfather, Rav Shlomo Zalman, who was *niftar* when Rav Avrohom was still young. His brothers were Rav Nachum of Shadik (Shadika), who later lived in Yerushalayim; Rav Asher Lemel of Galin; Rav Yaakov Yehuda of Sleshin; and Rav Yisrael.

Rav Shlomo Zalman was born in Warsaw during the time that his father learned there with Rav Shlomo Zalman Lifshitz, the Chemdas Shlomo. Later, Rav Avrohom returned to his native Posen.

Rav Shlomo Zalman married the daughter of Rav Chaim Nachum Margulies, the son-in-law of Rav Ephraim Segal, Rav of Kviel. His *zivug sheini* was the daughter of Rav Binyomin Wolf Traube, Rav of Kalish.

Rav Shlomo Zalman was appointed Rav in Zlotchov, near Kalish.

An outstanding *masmid*, he also secretly did many acts of *tzedoka* and *chessed*.

Rav Shlomo Zalman was considered

to have *Ruach HaKodesh*. It is related that one time, during his *shiur* in his Yeshiva in Zlotchov, a group of six doves landed on the window of the Beis Medrash; one flew away. Rav Shlomo Zalman instructed the *talmidim* to continue to learn on their own, while he himself set out to gather his brothers and travel to the home of their sister in Kletshev who had passed away. They arrived just in time for the *kevura*. When asked how he had known, Rav Shlomo Zalman replied that the six doves on the window corresponded to his family — five brothers and one sister — and when one bird flew away, he understood that his sister had passed on.

Another time, after a *shiur*, Rav Shlomo Zalman instructed one of the *bochurim* to recite Kaddish. Then he told the *bochur* to return home, and the *bochur* found that his mother had passed away. When asked how he knew, Rav Shlomo Zalman replied that his eyes saw further than the eyes of other people.

Rav Shlomo Zalman was *niftar* on the 8th of Av 5591/1831, during a cholera outbreak.

Rav Shlomo Zalman left manuscripts of *chiddushim* on many *masechtos*, but they were not printed. Some of his *chiddushim* are quoted in other *seforim*.

Rav Shlomo Zalman had one son-in-

law, Rav Michael Dov Weingott, Rav in Loivitch and *mechaber* of *Agudas Ezov Midbari*.

Zecher tzaddik livrachah.

www.hamodia.com/features/day-history-8-avaugust-4/



Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv, 8th of Av

The Alter of Kelm

Of the three leading students of Rav Yisrael Salanter, founder of the *mussar* movement, Rav Simcha Zissel was the one who Rav Yisrael expected to carry on the movement. Rav Simcha Zissel devoted his entire adult life to Rav Yisrael's teachings. Though he never held any official position, when he was offered the rabbinate of St. Petersburg, he recommended his friend Rav Yitzchak Blazer instead. His students included many of the *mussar* greats of the next generation: Rav Nosson Zvi Finkel of Slobodka, Rav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz of Novardok, Rav Aharon Bakst, Rav Reuven Dessler (whose son authored the classic *Michtav M'Eliyohu*), Rav Nachum Ziv, and Rav Hirsch Broida.

The historian, Rav Dov Katz, summarized Rav Simcha Zissel's approach to *mussar* (character improvement) as consisting of three guiding principles: (1) One should become emotionally involved in his studies, whether joyful or sad; (2) One should ask himself after everything he learns, what did I think before, and what do I know differently now?; and (3) One's study should always include stripping away the veneer and getting to the essence of the topic.

Rav Simcha Zissel taught that the whole world is a classroom where one can learn to improve his character and increase his belief in *Hashem*. Such study was not limited to books or to Torah sources. Of course, worthwhile lessons do not come merely from observation. Rather, intense

reflection is required. Also, one must realize that this study never ends. This is why Torah scholars are called *Talmidei Chachomim* (students of wise men). Rav Simcha Zissel used to quote Socrates, who said that true wisdom is knowing that one doesn't know.

Rav Simcha Zissel was very sickly his whole life. Therefore, much of his teaching was through letters that he wrote to his students, rather than in person. (He also encouraged his followers to establish groups to strengthen each other and review his teachings.) Only a small portion of his written legacy has been published (based on *T'nuat HaMussar*).

www.breslev.co.il/articles/breslevpedia/rabbi_simcha_zissel_ziv.aspx?id=1289&language=english



No Movement Without Reason

Wondrous stories circulated in Kelm about the amazing degree of control that the *Alter* had over his every limb and over each of his senses. Rav Yeruchom would extol this ability, describing how every movement that the *Alter* made was the result of forethought. Even the movements of his eyes were carefully controlled.

For example, the *Alter* never let his gaze wander sideways. When he needed to look at something that was to one side of him, he turned his whole body in that direction and looked at it straight on. Generally in Kelm, turning one's head to

the side, unless it was for a very good reason, was considered something to be ashamed of.

Rav Nosson Wachtfogel, who was *mashgiach* in Lakewood, related the following:

“My teacher, Rav Doniel Movshovitz, who was one of the leaders of the Kelm Talmud Torah, never refrained from discussing any topic that cropped up, even when there was a widely held preconceived view on the matter . . . Whatever the subject, Rav Doniel would examine and argue and would try to establish the truth. Yet, when the discussion turned to some aspect of the *Alter*’s conduct or outlook, he would annul his own opinion and would stake his very soul in order to fathom the *Alter*’s thinking. He toiled in order to comprehend the *Alter*, whom he considered to be someone that it was imperative to understand.

“When asked to explain his special approach to the *Alter*’s conduct, Rav Doniel said that his great admiration for him arose after he had monitored his movements and actions and had discovered that he never made even the slightest movement without first having thought about it. The *Alter* did nothing without forethought. He didn’t open an eye or move his little finger without a reason or without preparation. Everything was calculated, befitting the level of an earlier generation.

“So,” Rav Doniel concluded, “how can we imagine that we are capable of fathoming someone who didn’t move his little finger without thinking about it first?”

Among Rav Yeruchom’s discourses, we find the following comments on this subject:

“The *Alter* of Kelm explained the meaning of the terms *kallus rosh* (irreverence) and *koved rosh* (decorum) as being simple translations. *Kallus rosh*, he said, is exactly that: having a light head,

while *koved rosh* is also just that: having a heavy head. A person whose head is full of wisdom doesn’t turn it sideways and he doesn’t laugh readily. When looking at a layabout, however, one sees what he’s like in a moment. From the way he moves it’s clear that he isn’t weighed down with any kind of content. His head is quite simply light. At every rumor and every slight noise, his head wags” (*Da’as Torah, cheilek III, 117*).



The Alter: A Brief Biography

Despite the fact that there is scarcely a Yeshiva *bochur* or seminary graduate who has not heard of the *Alter* of Kelm, relatively few know much about him, for example, what his family name was.

Rav Simcha Zissel was born in 5584 (1824) in Kelm. His father, Rav Yisrael, belonged to the well-known Lithuanian Broide family. His mother, Chaya, was descended from Rav Tzvi Ashkenazi, author of *Shu”t Chacham Tzvi*.

Rav Simcha Zissel married Chaya Leah, daughter of Rav Mordechai of Vidzh, a small town adjacent to Kelm. Following his marriage, he traveled to Kovno, where he studied Torah and *mussar* under his foremost mentor, Rav Yisrael Salanter, in Rav Tzvi Neviezer’s Beis Medrash. Rav Yisrael later sent him to Zagor, to reinforce the Beis HaMussar that had been opened there. For a time, he delivered *shiurim* in the town of Kretinga.

After he had spent almost a year in St. Petersburg, then the largest city in Czarist Russia, the communal leaders brought Rav Simcha Zissel a signed document of appointment as their Rav. He was unwilling to accept a rabbinical position, however, and he proposed his friend, with whom he had learned in Kovno, Rav Yitzchok Blaser, for the position.

When he was almost forty years old,

Rav Simcha Zissel resolved to open the Talmud Torah of Kelm. The *Haskola* was gaining ground everywhere and there was a real danger of mass defection from religious life in Lithuania where, just fifty years earlier, the Gaon of Vilna and his immediate disciples had lived and worked.

The Talmud Torah opened in approximately 5622 (1862) and it attracted young students, thirteen and fourteen years old. The *Alter* wanted to shape the personalities of his students and develop both their Torah knowledge and their progress in *mussar* so that they would be able to resist the harsh spiritual winds that were then blowing.

Some ten years later, in 5632 (1872), he purchased a plot of land upon which he erected a building for the Talmud Torah. However, just a few short years later, in 5636 (1876), trouble began when the institution was denounced to the authorities, which began to watch it closely and to hound it. The *Alter* decided to open elsewhere, in Grobin, in the Kurland province. He arranged for the purchase of a fine building, situated in a spacious yard. There was a main study hall, smaller rooms for *shiurim*, a dining room and dormitories.

Five years later, the *Alter* had to return to Kelm. This time, the move was dictated by his failing health, which began to deteriorate in 5641 (1881), and which necessitated his spending long periods in his home, which was in Kelm. *Bochurim* from the town and the surrounding areas gathered around him and the town once again became a *mussar* center.

From his home in Kelm, the *Alter* continued operating the Talmud Torah in Grobin, where he put his distinguished son, Rav Nochum Zev Ziv, in charge. However, running the institution from a distance proved too difficult and Rav Simcha Zissel decided to close the Yeshiva. He sent a member of his family to consult Rav Yisrael Salanter who was then in Germany.

Rav Yisrael dismissed the idea out of hand and the Talmud Torah remained open in Grobin until 5646 (1886). In that year, the state of the *Alter's* health almost collapsed and his doctors warned him that there was real danger to his life if he continued making the supreme effort that the continued running of the institution in Grobin demanded. The *Alter* was instructed to rest a lot and to go for walks. At this point, he was forced to close the Talmud Torah in Grobin.

With the closure of Grobin, the focus of his work shifted back to Kelm, which now reassumed its former prominence. The *Alter* established a group that was known as *Devek Tov*, comprised of his foremost *talmidim*. He shared a special relationship with the group's members, and he worked on writing out his discourses for them, which demanded more strength than he had.

A number of his *talmidim* settled in Eretz Yisrael in 5652 (1892), opening the Beis HaMussar in Yerushalayim, under the *Alter's* aegis and with his support. Several years later, in 5657 (1897), the famous Yeshivas Or Chodosh was opened in Chotzer Strauss in the Old City. The Yeshiva was headed by the Rav of Yerushalayim, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld.

The *Alter* passed away on *Erev Tisha B'Av* 5758 (1898), shortly after having recited the morning *Krias Shema*. He was *niftar* while in the middle of *Ezras Avoseinu*, bringing the first glorious chapter of the history of Kelm *mussar* to a close.



Why Was He Called "The Alter"?

The source of the title *Der Alter*, by which most people refer to Rav Simcha Zissel, is not generally known. One of the Talmud Torah's best-known *talmidim*, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein, once explained the name's significance:

The *Alter* of Kelm didn't feel worthy of being considered a *talmid* of Rav Yisrael Salanter, despite the fact that the latter was universally regarded as having been his main Rebbe. Rav Simcha Zissel was of the opinion that only someone who has acquired Torah from his Rebbe can be counted as a *talmid*. Although he esteemed Rav Yisrael highly, he felt that so long as he did not adopt his Rebbe's conduct as his own and try to follow in his path in at least some small degree, he should not regard himself as his *talmid*. Out of respect, Rav Simcha Zissel would refer to Rav Yisrael as *Der Alter*, meaning "the Elder".

Eventually, Rav Simcha Zissel's own *talmidim* started referring to him by this name. Far from Kelm, the town's name was added.

The *Alter* himself writes: "Not everyone who listens to a great man can be called his *talmid*, as I heard about Rav Chaim [of Volozhin], who said that he could not be called a *talmid* of the Gaon. This is because a *talmid* is one who receives wisdom from him in the proportion that a *talmid* receives from his teacher, as opposed to one who receives only a little. It is impossible to call the one the Rebbe and the other his *talmid*, for there is a great gap between them."

{By Tzvi Munk-Shema YYisrael Network - Matzav.com Newscenter}



Alter Of Kelm - The Torah Is Yekkish And The Hadas Is A Shoteh

The *Alter* of Kelm, Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv (Broide) was zealous about punctuality and order. This is one of the things that clearly marked a *talmid* from Kelm. Rav Chaim Zaitchek says (*HaMeoros HaGedolim*) that we see this over and over in the Torah. A moment in time marks the difference between Shabbos and *Chol* (weekday), between *Skila* (the death penalty of stoning) and life. The width of a hair makes all the difference in

rendering an animal kosher or *treif*. One step separated between the *Machaneh Levia* and *Machaneh Shechina*, which had life-threatening implications. A *Kohen* could not do a *Levi's* job and a *Levi* could not do a *Kohen's*. Order and exactness is a pattern that is seen throughout the Torah.

The *Alter* of Kelm once commented that a *Hadas* must have each row of three leaves coming out from the same exact place on the branch. If two leaves come out from the same place but the third comes out just above the other two, it is not called a *Hadas Posul* but rather a *Hadas Shoteh*. Step out of line and you are not *posul*, you are an absolute fool!

www.revach.net/daas-torah/pearls-of-wisdom/Alter-Of-Kelm-The-Torah-Is-Yekkish-And-The-Hadas-Is-A-Shoteh/4658



The Alter Of Kelm Pays A Heavy Price With A Smile

Rav Simcha Zissel and another famous Rav were traveling together when they came across an inn. The proprietor of the inn came running out excitedly, screaming, "The great Rabbonim are here!"

She led them into the inn and prepared for them a hearty meal. During the meal she sat with them and recounted to them in great detail about how her fruits were blossoming and the calves were growing, as well as the welfare of her ducks and chickens and her onion and potato harvest.

The other Rav did not pay much attention to her idle chatter and looked into a *sefer* as she spoke. The *Alter* of Kelm on the other hand paid careful attention and interjected from time to time with questions and comments.

When they were about to leave and offered to pay, the hostess refused their payment, saying that it was a great honor for her to serve them. After they left, the *Alter* asked his companion, "Are you not worried about stealing, since you ate and

did not pay?" Surprised, he reminded the *Alter* that she refused to let them pay and that the honor was her payment.

"True" said the *Alter*, "but if you noticed, she was flattered by all the attention she received while telling her stories. This was her payment. You, by not listening, did not pay anything!" (*Holchei Nesivos - Rav Yitzchok Ovadia*)

Surely the *Alter* of Kelm who was

Kulo Torah would have gladly paid the price of the meal in order to learn, as did his companion. What he did not trade for the opportunity to learn a *blatt Gemara*, was the chance to make another Jew feel important. For him, that was worth the precious time that he spent listening to farm life from another Jew.

www.revach.net/avodah/ahavas-yisroel/The-Alter-Of-Kelm-Pays-A-Heavy-Price-With-A-Smile/3858



Say it (especially with your children) at least once a day:

Based on *Chovos HaLevavos - Duties of the Heart ~ Sha 'ar HaBitachon - the Gate of Trust*

There are 7 qualities that *Hashem* has that can strengthen our trust in Him:

1. *Hashem* loves me.
2. *Hashem* is with me, wherever I may be. And He is always ready to help me.
3. *Hashem* is stronger and cleverer than anyone in the world. And He can find solutions to any problem there is – even if it may seem impossible.
4. *Hashem* knows what is best for me, better even than I myself can know.
5. Just as He has helped me already numerous times on the path I travel, He shall help me again.
6. No one can do anything at all to help me or harm me, besides *Hashem* who controls everything over the entire world.
7. The Master of the World desires and searches for ways to act with *chesed* – loving kindness more than the nicest, kindest person you could ever imagine.



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

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

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

(מתוך אמונה טהורה) בדרך המסורה (והתנהגה כאשה כשרה) לכל משפחתה,
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"ה לפ"ק
תמליץ טוב בעד משפחתה היקרה
ותקים לתחיה לקץ הימין מהרה ת'נ'צ'ב'ה'

Zera Shimshon



Mattos Massei

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

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

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

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

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

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

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

לזכר נשמת

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

לזכר נשמת

יעקב יצחק בן שושנה אסתר

לרפואה שלימה

רוני דינה בת סימי

דוד בן שרה

לזווג הגון במהרה

אלישבע נעמי בת רחל

להצלחת

הג"ר נחום צבי בן רחל ומשפחתו

איש כי ידור נדר (ל' ג')

A man who make a vow to Hashem (30:3).

The Shulchan Aruch (YD 203:4) rules that one should be careful not to make a vow, even with regards to the fulfillment of Mitzvos, such as giving Tzedaka. Two Halachos later, the Shulchan Aruch seems to openly contradict this ruling when he writes that if one accepted upon himself to study a section of Torah and is afraid that he may be negligent – he may make a vow to learn that particular subject in order to urge himself to complete it?

The Taz (ibid 5) reconciles these two rulings by differentiating between giving Tzedaka and learning Torah. He explains that the Yetzer Hara is stronger when it comes to giving away money than when it comes to 'simply' fulfilling a Mitzva with one's body with no monetary obligation. Therefore, one should not make a vow to give Tzedaka since the Yetzer Hara is very strong in this scenario and one may come to transgress his vow. However, regarding the vow to learn Torah – the Yetzer Hara is not as strong and there is much less of a concern that the person will transgress his vow. Therefore, he may make a vow to learn Torah.

Some of the commentaries ask on the Taz's explanation from the Gemara (Brachos 32b) that says that fasting is greater than giving Tzedaka since fasting is done with one's body and giving Tzedaka is with one's money. Seemingly, it is harder to do a Mitzva with one's body as opposed to with one's money?

Therefore, the commentaries explain the contradiction in the Shulchan Aruch as follows.

The Gemara (Ta'anis 8b) says that when the Jewish people merely accepted on themselves to fast to nullify a certain decree, the decree was nullified. From here we learn that when one accepts to do a Mitzva, it is considered as though he did it already (obviously on condition that he actually ends up doing it. However, the merit is already attributed to him from when he accepts the Mitzva upon himself.)

This is where Torah is different from all other Mitzvos. The Gemara (Sota 21a) says that the merit of a Mitzva does not save one from the Yetzer Hara whereas the merit of Torah study does save one from the Yetzer Hara. Therefore, when one makes a vow to give Tzedaka, even though he may have the merit of the Mitzva, it still does not save him from the Yetzer Hara. This is why we are concerned that he may still not end up fulfilling his vow. However, when one vows to study Torah and the merit of Torah study is already attributed to him, that merit will protect him from the Yetzer Hara's influence and he will end up fulfilling his vow.

To answer the commentaries' question on the Taz, the Zera Shimshon says that the Gemara regarding fasting is not a good proof. This is because in Baba Kama (92a) we learn that a person is more comfortable losing money than having his body pained. That is why fasting is greater than giving Tzedaka. It is not a proof that any Mitzva that is done with one's body is harder, it is only a proof to a case where there is bodily pain involved, that one would rather give up money than be pained.

In the case where one made a vow to learn, there is no pain involved, in fact when one learns Torah, he derives enjoyment! This is why we are not concerned that he will not fulfill his vow. On the other hand, when one vows to give Tzedaka, we are concerned that he may justify not fulfilling his vow by saying that he doesn't know if the person he wants to give Tzedaka to is indeed worthy of receiving Tzedaka. Perhaps he is a charlatan or the likes and because of this, he will refrain from fulfilling his vow.

לעילוי נשמת דוד בן תמר



Pachad David

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

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



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

A Weighty Responsibility

"These are the journeys of the Children of Israel, who went forth from the land of Egypt according to their legions, under the hand of Moshe and Aharon" (Bamidbar 33:1)

Man travels many journeys during his lifetime; their common denominator must be that they are all "under the hand of Moshe and Aharon", meaning in accordance with the da'at Torah that our Chachamim are empowered with. Before every step that a person wishes to take, he must first weigh it up and consider if it is Hashem's will, or question if this deed is perhaps against the spirit of the Torah? Upon reflection he will then decide whether to proceed or abstain.

I would like to suggest, with siy'ata dishmaya, an interesting hint for this idea. The verse tells us, "...the journeys of the Children of Israel...under the hand of Moshe and Aharon". The word 'בִּיד' (under the hand of) has the same numerical value, (adding one for the actual word which is accepted in gematriot) as the word 'טוב' (good). This implies that all of a person's journeys should be according to Moshe and Aharon, in whose hands the Torah, which is called 'טוב', is found.

Parents bring children into the world and they too set off on their journey. It is the parents' holy obligation to pay great attention to the path that they take, and to verify at all times what they are doing, where they are, where they are going to, who their friends are and what kinds of pursuits they are involved in. They should pay heed that their journey is one that will advance them to the desired goal and must educate them in the wellsprings of Torah and yirah, so that they follow the correct path and continually ascend higher. In this way they will then derive much nachat from them.

However, the parents' primary obligation is to educate themselves in the way of Torah and mitzvot, so that they should be a fitting example to their offspring, and then they too will wish to follow in this path. But if the parents are sometimes lax with a certain mitzvah, or "dance between two opinions" (Melachim I, 18:21) and do not show the utmost reverence for the Holy Torah and give it precedence over the fleeting pleasures of this world, then since their avodat Hashem does not follow a clear and decisive direction, their children too will undoubtedly follow in their footsteps and will not remain firm in observing Torah and mitzvot, eventually leaving the straight path falling to the lowest depths r"l. It is those parents, with their halfhearted approach, who are held accountable for their children's behavior.

This Parsha is read in the middle of the 'bein ha-maitzarim', the days of mourning for the destruction

of the Beit Hamikdash. The destruction of the Beit Hamikdash was a direct result of the deterioration of the state of affairs in Yerushalayim, which became a city filled with sin and serious iniquities. This is the reason why we cry bitterly about the city, for had the oppressors not been given permission to breach the city walls, they would not have been able to destroy the Beit Hamikdash. Yirmiyahu bemoans this accusation by specifically grieving, "when I left Yerushalayim", and not "when I left the Beit Hamikdash", for he lamented and cried bitterly about the commencement of the churban, which had its roots entirely in the condition of the city Yerushalayim.

We can take this idea as a mashal to convey the direct connection between the behavior of parents and their children. Our precious offspring can be likened to the Beit Hamikdash, while the parents can be compared to the City of Yerushalayim, which surrounded and enveloped the holy Mikdash. Parents must stand firm like a fortified wall to guard and protect the pure Beit Hamikdash. However, if chalilah there is a breach in the ruchaniyut of the parents, and the walls of holiness are unsteady, this grants permission to the destroyer- the yetzer hara- to come and breach the walls and fences of the Mikdash - the children, and then they too chalilah will be drawn to harmful ways. This demonstrates that the destruction of the Mikdash- the children- begins with the deterioration of Yerushalayim- the parents. Instead of crying about their children's downfall, they should cry about their own personal failure, for this is what brought about the devastation r"l.

We should apply this lesson to the way we educate our children. Just as the holiness of Yerushalayim offers us some small perception of the holiness of the actual Beit Hamikdash and all those who witnessed the spiritual beauty of Yerushalayim deduced from this the great splendor of the Beit Hamikdash, so too, one who comes across children who radiate a spiritual beauty and purity of neshama, immediately understands that this demonstrates the spiritual beauty of the parents, for the holiness of the children reflects the holiness of the parents. This is why it is incumbent upon the parents to improve their ways and always walk in the path of holiness and purity, fortifying the walls of purity in their hearts. In this way, they will merit siyata dishmaya to educate their children with the same values. It is of paramount importance that all their deeds should be "under the hand of Moshe and Aharon", in the spirit of the holy Torah.

Paris • Orh 'Haïm Ve Moché

32, rue du Plateau • 75019 Paris • France
Tel: 01 42 08 25 40 • Fax: 01 42 06 00 33
hevratpinto@aol.com

Jérusalem • Prineï David

Rehov Bayit Va Gan 8 • Jérusalem • Israël
Tel: +972 2643 3605 • Fax: +972 2643 3570
p@hpinto.org.il

Ashdod • Orh 'Haïm Ve Moshe

Rehov Ha-Admour Mi-Belz 43 • Ashod • Israël
Tel: +972 88 566 233 • Fax: +972 88 521 527
orothaim@gmail.com

Ra'anana • Kol 'Haïm

Rehov Ha'ahouza 98 • Ra'anana • Israël
Tel: +972 98 828 078 • +972 58 792 9003
kolhaim@hpinto.org.il



Hilula

2 - Rabbi Aharon Te'umim

3 - Rabbi Shimshon of Ostrropoli

4 - Rabbi Shimon Biderman

4 - Rabbi Raphael Enkaua

5 - Rabbi Yitzchak Luria Ashkenazi

6 - Rabbi Moshe Ezra Mizrachi

7 - Rabbi Shalom Noach of Slonim

8 - The Mekubal Rabbi Shimon Agassi



Walking in their Ways

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

Miraculous Mitzvah Money

A woman came to me, bemoaning her plight of childlessness. She related the difficulties of her situation and the endless tests and treatments she had undergone, which were not proving productive.

The couple's pain was tremendous. Her husband found these circumstances terribly challenging and was extremely unhappy with his wife, whom the doctors diagnosed as infertile.

I had just returned from a trip abroad, and I had a small sum of money, given to me to distribute to charity. I removed the bill from my pocket. Handing it to the poor woman, I told her, "This money is for a mitzvah. Keep it with you and reinforce your Torah and mitzvah observance. Be stringent especially in the mitzvah of taharat hamishpachah. Give tzedakah generously and increase your good deeds. B'ezrat Hashem, after you fortify your level of faith and truly believe that Hashem can work wonders, you will merit having children."

The woman was very touched by my words and, with trembling fingers, took the money.

"After you give birth, B'ezrat Hashem, come to inform me of the good news and return the money."

Years passed. The woman continued praying and hoping that she would merit having children, with pure faith in Hashem's limitless power.

The incredible then occurred. After eight years of waiting, the woman gave birth to a girl. When she came to return my money, she related her personal miracle. The doctors could not believe that she had conceived, and instructed her to be careful throughout her pregnancy.

She added, "Every day, I prayed to Hashem that I should merit returning the money to the Rav after I gave birth. Baruch Hashem, I have merited doing so."

The Haftarah

"Hear the word of Hashem" (Yirmiyahu 2)

The connection to the Parsha: This Haftarah is the second Haftarah of the three special haftarot that Chazal established to be read during the three weeks leading up to Tisha B'Av. They talk about the prophecy of punishment that Yirmiyahu the Navi prophesized about the destruction of the city Yerushalayim and our glorious Beit Hamikdash.



Guard Your Tongue

Rechilut Related by One's Wife

One who accepts rechilut from his wife, for example she relates that Ploni said such and such about him, besides the sin of accepting rechilut, he brings about much personal suffering, for when the wife sees that her husband accepts her words without reproach, she will continue relating these incidents which will inevitably lead to him becoming angry and involved in arguments and unnecessary sorrow.

Therefore, it is correct that the husband request that his wife not tell him any lashon hara at all.



Words of our Sages

One Cup of Milk

The Navi Yirmiyahu, who is identified more than anyone else with the destruction of Yerushalayim, bemoans the spiritual situation of the people in the period that preceded and caused the terrible destruction, with the following protest: "...and pursued futility, and became futile" (Yirmiyahu 2:5). The people followed futility and vanity and did not concern themselves with the precious treasure that Hashem deposited in our hands – the holy Torah.

It is the way of the world, the Chida points out, that when a person is beset by a certain health ailment, the first notable change will be that he stops attending his shiurei Torah. When the participants ask him, "Why did you not come to the shiur today?" he has a ready answer: "I felt unwell." But on the contrary, had he come to the shiur and occupied himself with Torah, his strength and health would have returned, for one who learns Torah forgets his troubles and pains.

Indeed, proclaims Harav Hagaon Rabbi Ben Tzion Mutzefi shlita, this is exactly what the verse is saying: "Hear the word of Hashem, O House of Ya'akov...Thus said Hashem: What wrong did your forefathers find in Me...and pursued futility, and became futile?". Why, whenever you are faced with suffering, instead of drawing closer to Hashem and cleaving to His mitzvot, do you instead increase your involvement in worldly matters? Do you not understand that your entire salvation is contingent on Torah and prayer and in occupying yourself with eternal affairs?!

Harav Mutzefi says that Hagaon Rabbi Shalom Mashash zt"l, testified that he tried this concept on his own flesh, and indeed every time he sat and delved into the Holy Torah, he no longer felt any pain or distress!

A month before he passed away, when he was already ninety-eight years old, Rabbi Shalom diligently researched all the laws of ishut (marital laws), in order to find a leniency for twenty-nine agunot (women who are 'tied up' – unable to remarry due to the husband being unwilling to give a get or his whereabouts is unknown). Rabbi Shalom, aware of the tremendous pain of these woman whose husbands had left them alone without the possibility of remarrying, toiled for long hours and exerted himself over many days, writing halachic response on the matter, without any thoughts of compensation.

"One day," Harav Mutzefi tells over, "I came to him at three in the afternoon. Rabbi Shalom extended his holy hand with the following words: "I can swear that from the morning until now, the only thing I put in my mouth was one cup of milk and nothing else!"

Let us imagine an elderly man, close to a hundred years old, troubling himself in the matter of agunot without abating, with the strength that pushed him on coming from the power of Torah and his strong desire to end the pain and great distress of these unfortunate woman, whose husbands left them agunot through no fault of their own. All this toil, from the morning until late afternoon, while not eating or drinking anything besides a single cup of milk! How great is the power of Torah that it can sustain a person and bestow physical strength!



Pearls of the Parshah

Kibrot-hattaavah - Symbol of Distance

"They journeyed from the Wilderness of Sinai and encamped in Kibrot-hattaavah (lit. the graves of cravings)" (Bamidbar 33:16)

Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank zt"l brings a wonderful remez relating to those who distance themselves from learning and observing the Torah:

"I thought that the verse, "They journeyed from the Wilderness of Sinai and encamped in Kibrot-hattaavah", hints to someone who distances himself from the Torah that was received on Har Sinai. Where will you find such a person? In 'Kibrot-hattaavah', in the graves of cravings!"

Grasping hold of the power of Torah is the only way to curb desires. Without Torah, a person is held captive by the force of his cravings and passions!

He also brings the Gemara (Baba Metziah 85a) which expounds on the verse, "For what reason did the land perish..?" (Yirmiya 9:11). "For what reason did the land perish..?" (Why was the first Beit Hamikdash destroyed?) The Sages were asked and did not have an answer, the Prophets were asked and did not have an answer, until Hashem Himself explained it, as it says, 'But Hashem has said: Because of their forsaking My Torah that I put before them'."

The clarification of the question, "For what reason did the land perish..?", is that the verse is in fact asking how did they come to the point of ruining themselves with such wicked deeds as theft, immorality and murder? Hashem's reply was: "Because of their forsaking My Torah" – this is the main reason, for if one forsakes the Torah, immediately "sin rests at the door" and one can fall to the lowest depths. This is the reason why one must strengthen oneself continually with Torah study!

The Hilula of Aharon Should be a Day of Introspection

"Then Aharon the Kohen...died there, in the fortieth year after the Children of Israel went forth from the land of Egypt, in the fifth month on the first of the month" (Bamidbar 33:38)

Why does the verse mention the date of Aharon's passing – we do not find any precedent for this in the Torah?

The sefer 'Shmi V'shem Avotai' offers two explanations for this difficulty, one of which we quote below: Aharon was famous for his trait of "loving peace and pursuing peace" and as Rashi explains (Sanhedrin 6b), "When he would hear arguments between two people, even before they would come to him to judge their case, he would pursue them and restore the peace between them".

When Aharon passed away, this pillar of peace was concealed. The verse mentions the date of his passing- Rosh Chodesh Av- so that this time should be kept as a remembrance and for a personal accounting, to stir our hearts and remind us that if only we would embrace this trait, maybe we could annul the decree of destruction that took place in this month, the root of which was baseless hatred.

This is one of the reasons that lie behind mentioning the date of Aharon's passing on Rosh Chodesh Av. It should be a time for reflection for every generation, to rectify this trait among themselves, since it says in the Yerushalmi, "Every generation in which (the Beit Hamikdash) is not rebuilt, it is considered as if that generation destroyed it". This is because the very fact that the Beit Hamikdash has not been rebuilt, shows that the reason for its destruction still exists, and had it been in existence, it would have been destroyed for this reason. This is why it is considered as if "that generation destroyed it".

Annulling an Oath for the Sake of Marital Harmony

"But if she vowed in her husband's home, or she established a prohibition upon herself through an oath" (Bamidbar 30:11)

The 'Meshech Chochma' poses the following question: Why, concerning all the woman who are mentioned in this section of vows, the Torah writes "her prohibition that she established upon herself" and only in reference to the married woman it adds "through an oath"?

He answers that the law is that one may never revoke an oath, for an oath is undertaken using Hashem's Name. However, there is one situation when one is permitted to revoke an oath, namely an oath that was made concerning marital harmony. Just as the Torah permits erasing Hashem's Name in water (a procedure performed for a woman suspected as being unfaithful to her husband) for the sake of marital harmony, so it also permits annulling an oath that was made using Hashem's Name.

Therefore, concerning a widow, divorcee, engaged girl and young girl still living in her father's home, the Torah does not mention the expression of oath, for the leniency of martial harmony is not relevant to these categories of women. Marital harmony is only relevant to a married woman, so when talking about a married woman the Torah writes 'through an oath', to teach us that one is permitted to annul the vow for the sake of marital harmony.

Treasures

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



The Head of the Family is Considered Like the 'Head of the Tribes'

Pinchas son of Elazar was one of the heads of the Jewish people and he demonstrated the approach of being zealous in avodat Hashem. When he witnessed the act committed by Zimri and Cozbi, his heart was stirred and he fearlessly killed them in front of everyone.

It is interesting to contemplate how Pinchas worked up the strength to endanger himself and kill them. From where did he draw the inner strength? We also need to understand if he was indeed allowed to put his life in danger? Since he did not know that a miracle would be performed for him, is this not considered as committing suicide, G-d forbid?

The answer is that when Pinchas saw this despicable act, his anger raged and at that moment he lost his presence of mind and did not stop to think whether he was endangering his life or not. When he saw this terrible desecration of Hashem's Name, he did not weigh up his decision nor think at all; he was prepared to give up his life, for Hashem's sake, with love. He witnessed this act and the only thing that he remembered was the halachah that "one who has relations with a non-Jewess, the zealot takes the law into his hands" (Sanhedrin 81b). Although this is the halacha, one does not go to the Beit Din to ask how to proceed. One is supposed to act according to one's own understanding at the time of the incident.

It is important to point out that the father of a household is considered like the 'head of the tribe', since the responsibility for his sons' and daughters' education rests on his shoulders. He serves as an example to them and they learn from his ways. We are told (Bamidbar 8:2): "...toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps", and I explain this verse, according to drush, as hinting to the idea that the father is compared to the Menorah while the children are compared to the lamps. The father stands opposite the lights – his children, and it is his obligation to light up the way for them and guide them in the way of Torah, mitzvot and fear of G-d. His avodat Hashem and meticulousness in the performance of mitzvot must serve as an example for them, for just like the heads of the tribes were responsible for their congregation and their role was to guide them on the correct path, so too the father is considered as the 'head of his tribe' and is responsible for directing his household in the way of Torah, mitzvot and good deeds.



"LET HER BE PRAISED"

Portrayal of the True 'Eshet Chayil'
In memory of Rabbanit Mazal Madeleine Pinto

נודע בשערים בעלה, בשבתו עם זקני ארץ

"Distinctive in the councils is her husband, when he sits with the elders of the land"

The esteemed Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlita, in the hesped that he gave for his distinguished mother a"h, mentioned something that he heard from Maran Rabbeinu Ovadiah Yosef zt"l:

"Sometimes a simple Jew passes away and when he arrives in the Upper World, thousands of dafim of Gemarah joyously come to greet him and lofty angels sing before him and say "Light is sown for the righteous" and praise him "Fortunate are you that you merited establishing the yoke of Torah". The Jew is astounded and says, "I didn't do any of this, I am a simple Jew, maybe there is some mistake here and you have mixed me up with someone else." Yet the Heavenly Court replies, "Rest assured, there is no mistake here. During your lifetime you supported Torah, you gave of your own money to sustain those who toil in Torah and through this you became a partner with all those thousands of dafei Gemarah which they learnt. It is considered as if you yourself learnt all this Torah, this is why all these dafei Gemarah have come to greet you and this is why you can hear the angels singing in your ears "Light is sown for the righteous".

Since today we have widespread institutions of Torah where many hundreds of precious avreichim and bachurim toil in Torah day and night and satiate themselves up with Shas and Poskim, imagine to yourselves how all those millions of dafei Gemarah are welcoming Ima a"h, dancing before her and inviting her to take her honored place in Gan Eden, for everything that we have here is from her strength and all our efforts of zikuy harabim (bringing merit to the masses) is hers. This is besides the immeasurable assistance that we regularly offer other Torah institutions in Israel and throughout the world, assistance which amounts to enormous sums. All the Torah that is learnt in those institutions is also accredited to her, for if not for her mesirat nefesh

for Torah, all this would not be. She is the one who established the yoke of Torah in the world."

There is no doubt that the Rabbanit was a most loyal partner to her husband, the tzaddik and Admor, Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto zya"a. With exemplary mesirat nefesh she walked by his side and remained faithful to her righteous husband until her passing. During the long period of her widowhood, she continued to carry his name and the names of his holy ancestors and refused to hear marriage suggestions that could have brought her much honor, for she understood and appreciated the tremendous holiness of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aharon zya"a, and he was her everlasting glory.

Her husband was both "Distinctive in the councils is her husband" and "when he sits with the elders of the land". Everyone knew that the Rabbanit a"h was his holy companion, being eternally devoted to his legacy. After his passing, she continued with even more intensity, preserving his good deeds and transmitting the Holy Torah to the vineyard of Yisrael. She continually stood at her husband's side and merited serving talmidei chachamim and tzaddikim. She established a blessed generation of upright children; how great are her good deeds and the merits that are attributed to her forever.

The Maharit Algazi compiled a special commentary on the song 'Eishet Chayil'. On the verse "Distinctive in the councils is her husband, when he sits with the elders of the land", he points out that this seems like an acclaim for the husband, not for the wife? In addition, where is the praise in sitting with the elders?

He answers that as we know, after her marriage a young woman wishes to spend time with her husband, whereas as they advance in age, this is no longer of paramount concern. She does not object if her husband spends most of his time in the Beit Midrash, as is the way of the elderly. Shlomo Hamelech was indeed praising the woman: If we wish to identify the true 'eishet chayil', it is the one who "Distinctive in the councils is her husband" - her husband grows to such heights because she does not prevent him from going to sit with the elders. Already at the start of their marriage, she behaves like an older woman and is content with her husband spending long hours in the Beit Midrash among the elders. This insight aptly expresses the essence of the Rabbanit a"h.

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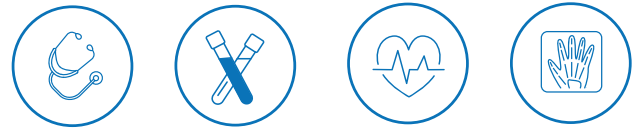
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