

ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

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זכות רפואה שלמה
מלכה בת רחל

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

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)

❁ **VAYECHI** ❁

❁ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❁

Shabbos Noam Haneshomos – Noam Elimelech

Dvar Torah

Yissochor Chamor Gorem (49:14)

The holy *Tzaddik*, the Rebbe Reb Melech, teaches us in *Noam Elimelech* that with respect to reward it cannot possibly be that we are rewarded purely for the observance of the *mitzvos*. When we fulfill a divine commandment we are fulfilling our obligation; it is for this very reason that we were created. Since by doing *mitzvos* we are merely fulfilling our entire purpose in life, we are not liable for any great or special reward for doing what we are supposed to. Logically, this argument is sound.

But if this is the case, we must therefore seek the reason for our reward. He explains that the reward is given for our struggle against the *yetzer hora*! *Hashem* created an evil inclination that tempts and tests us at every moment and turn. It causes us to lust after and desire evil and to think impure thoughts of sin, Heaven forbid. It is our struggle against obeying its wishes that is cause for our reward. When we guard ourselves against lies, slander, licentiousness, debauchery, desires, passions and sinful thoughts, we are rewarded. It is a difficult and constant battle to break and subjugate the powerful forces of evil passion and desire for evil that is the *yetzer hora*. This is in fact a great self-affliction akin to fasting. *Hashem* uses this struggle to purify and refine us, in the same way that a *mitzva* sanctifies us,

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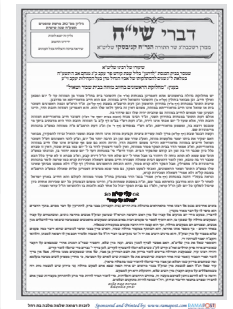
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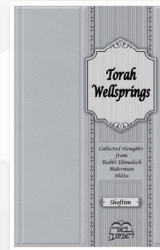
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**לזכות רפואה שלמה
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as we say when we recite the *berocha* “*asher kidshonu bemitzvosov*”.

This is what our *pasuk* hints at, teaches the *Noam Elimelech*: *yesh sochor shehachomer gorem* – this is reward caused by the gross physical *chomriyus* of the evil *yetzer*’s desires! A person gains his reward because the *chomer* – the gross physicality of the body – desires and lusts after forbidden pursuits, and when we break and overcome these desires – this is *gorem* – the cause of our *sechar* (reward)!



Story

What a Great Gehinnom!

Once, after the Rebbe Reb Melech had left this world, the *Kozhnitzer Maggid* was seen smiling. When asked why he was smiling, the *Maggid* told the following:

When the holy Rebbe Reb Melech reached the next world and they questioned him, he answered them truthfully.

“Did you *daven*? Did you study *Torah*?”

“No, not enough, not really *lishma*.”

He honestly believed that it was true. And in response to his testimony, the *Bais Din* ruled that if he had not studied *Torah* or *davened* he deserved *Gehinnom*. And so they prepared to take him there after pronouncing the verdict. Of course, in the world of truth it was known that he was humble and that he had *davened* and studied *Torah* and so they actually took him to Gan Eden. When he arrived the *Tzaddik* exclaimed, “See how great and loving is *Hashem*! If *Gehinnom* is this good just imagine how great Gan Eden must be!!!”

In his humility he did not immediately grasp where he was and where they had taken him; he thought they had actually brought him to *Gehinnom*. (*Yag Oros Pshevorsk* p. 59)



Ahava Rabba – Ohev Yisrael

Segulos Yisrael and Preparation for *Shovavim*

Gather Together

“*Hei’osfu* – gather together and I shall tell you what will occur...at the end of days” (49:1)

The *Apta Rav* teaches in *Ohev Yisrael* on this *pasuk* in *Vayechi* that often a blemish on the *bris kodesh* comes from a similar blemish of the *bris haloshon*, when a person does not properly guard his speech from things like *loshon hora*, lies, slander, curses, oaths, and other forms of negative forbidden speech, leading to a *pegam* (blemish) on the *bris kodesh*.

Our earlier sages instituted fasting and *teshuva* during the weeks of *Shovavim* (an acronym formed from the initials of *Shemos, Va’eira, Bo, Beshalach, Yisro* and *Mishpotim*) as is known from the *seforim hakedoshim*. In our days, when we are on a lower spiritual level and can no longer undergo fasts and self-mortification, whoever’s heart is touched by fear of

Hashem should nevertheless try to do his best to strengthen himself and do *teshuva* because these sins are grave.



Segula for Shovavim

These *Parshiyos* of *Shovavim* are an auspicious time for repenting over these sins and rectifying them. It is therefore proper to focus in the silent *Shemone Esrei* on the *berocha* of *Teka Beshofar Godol*, concentrating on the *kavonos* found in the *Siddur Arizal*, and to recite the *Yehi Rotzon tefilla* before the conclusion of this *berocha*. All this should be done with *Yiras Shomayim* and an awakening of desire from the heart.



Teshuva Through Torah

The primary form of *teshuva*, however, is through *Torah* study, *davening* and *tzedoka*, each person according to his own abilities, especially *Torah* study that includes *Torah Shebe'al Peh* (such as *Mishnayos* and *Gemora*) and especially in the format where you study to understand how the conclusions of practical *Halocha* are reached. This is the preferred study for such a *tikkun*, because it is a refinement process of studying and analyzing divergent opinions and reaching a final conclusion, like a refinement that cleans out impurities leaving a solid and pure compound at the conclusion of the process. So too here, by studying *Torah Shebe'al Peh* focused on *Halocha*, we gather the good and cast aside the *klipos* (husks of impurity). We rescue what the *klipe* has swallowed and redeem it, leading the way for *tikkun pegam habris* - to rectify the blemish of the *bris kodesh*.



Unifying Heart and Mouth

Whoever studies in this way and all the more so whoever studies truly *lishma* - purely for its sake, with no ulterior motives - this *teshuva* gathers the fallen sparks and brings them back to their root source, to the fallen final letter *hei* of *Hashem's* name, reuniting her with her master. Since all things follow the intent of the heart, this also unifies our mouths and our hearts, which in turn is a unification between the final letter *hei* in *Hashem's* name (signifying *Malchus* and the mouth) to the first letter *hei* in *Hashem's* name (which is *Bina*, the heart).

This is how we can read our *pasuk* - *Hei'osfu* - as two words. *Hei* - the letter *hei*; *osfu* - shall you gather together. Gather the letter *hei* and make one bundle. Then - *agida lochem* - instead of reading this as "I shall tell you", *agida* can be understood as *aguda lochem* - "I shall bind you together" - then you will be unified and this will protect you all from any form of harsh decrees or judgments.



OHR HACHAIM

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

Praises For The Holy *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh*

The Holiest Place

It is said in the name of Rav Meir Abuchatzera of Ashdod that the holiest place where *tefillos* are answered is the *tziun* of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh*. Some even say that the main reason Rav Yaakov Abuchatzera traveled to Eretz Yisrael was to *daven* at the *tziun* of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh*. (*Toldos Ohr HaChaim* introduction)



Specializing in Peshat

I should point out that the commentary of the *Ohr HaChaim* is one of those specific commentaries that through *Hashgocha Protis* (Divine Providence) was printed together with the *Chumash* like the commentary of *Rashi*. It is therefore more connected to the simple, plain meaning (*peshat*) of the text more than other commentaries that were printed on their own. (*Toras Menachem* by Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch)



Every Time a New Taste

Rav Moshe Weiss was a *Chassid* affectionately known as Reb Moshe *Batlan* (because he was always learning and *botel* from work). He was an expert in the *Ohr HaChaim* and was always studying it. He was so attached to the *Ohr HaChaim* that he knew it by heart and would often quote it verbatim. He would also teach from it, often adding his own comments and novel insights. When asked why he did not gather his comments and print them as a commentary to the *Ohr HaChaim*, he answered, “What can I do? Every time I learn the *sefer Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh* I find a new flavor; the explanations are fresh and different each time as well! The *sefer Ohr HaChaim* can be studied in the manner of *Pardes – Peshat, Remez, Derush* and *Sod*, simple straightforward meaning, hints and allusions, sermons and exegesis and the secrets of *Kabbala*. So why should I write a *sefer* when next time I study the *sefer* I will understand it in a whole new and different manner, and taste in it a brand new *ta’am*?!” (*Ner HaMaaravi* 429)



The Holy Lights Of The *Ohr Hachaim*

Yehuda, the Redeemer of Captive Souls, to Establish the Monarchy of *Bais Dovid*

Gur Aryeh Yehuda – “Yehuda is like a lion cub” (49:9).

The *Ohr HaChaim* gives the following introduction in which he explains this *pasuk*:

The first man, Odom *HoRishon*, was like a tree whose many branches extended in many directions. All holy souls that once came and will one day come from the side of *kedusha* are all branches from Odom’s tree. When Odom sinned, the side of evil captured

some of these holy souls. *Tzaddikim* and *Anshei Emes* (men of truth) in each generation seek out these captive souls to redeem them and save them from the clutches of evil. The holy nation of Yisrael, *Am Hashem* (G-d's people), are constantly refining the world and daily trying to save these captives and redeem them. They do this using the holy source that *Hashem* planted within our nation, the *Torah* and *mitzvos*. Sometimes when a holy soul becomes attached to an impure soul by force against her will, the holy soul can redeem the captive spark found in that impure soul as well; this is secret of why Shechem *ben* Chamor's soul cleaved in *dveikus* to Dina *bas* Yaakov's soul (*Vayishlach* ch. 34), because Dina's holy soul drew forth and pulled out the captive holy soul which was found in Shechem. Our Sages say (*Arizal* in the three sources: *Likkutei Torah Vayishlach*, *Shaar HaGilgulim* 36, *Shaar HaPesukim Vayeitze*) that this was the soul of Rav Chanina *ben* Tradyon as hinted at by the acrostic his name spells - *Rechavas* - as the pasuk tells us that the land was *rachavas yodayim* (34:21) - the land was bountiful and expansive.

Sometimes such a holy soul is born into the world in a foreign body, because the *klippas* and impure souls spawn so many numerous offspring and it is easy for such a holy soul to slip in there as well. The holy soul desires to walk on the path of good and righteousness, and this is the secret of the souls of *geirim* (converts), who convert of their own volition, desiring to attach themselves to the side of holiness. Sometimes the master who holds such holy souls captive only allows them to go free if they are born into the world through sinful abhorrent unions, such as the holy soul of Rus, who was from Moav (Moav was born through an incestuous relationship). Notice how from Rus are descended the kings of *Malchus Bais Dovid* - and this royalty comes from Moav about whom *Chazal* declare (*Bava Kama* 38b) that their sins were worse than Amon's! Yet, despite this, greater sanctity comes from Moav. Because Lot had greatness, his descendants were great, because even among evil and *klipos*, there are levels of greatness. We can see clearly that among the nations there are royal families and pedigree of kings, some greater than others and some of lesser stature such as lords, dukes and barons, demonstrating that there is a hierarchy even among the *klipos*.

Our Sages call these final days *Ikvesa DiMeshicha* - "the heels of *Moshiach*" - (*Sota* 49b). The secret here is that we are constantly refining the gross material and releasing captive holy sparks. When the last refinements have all been made, we will have reached the end - the heel. *Chazal* called this the *okeiv* (heel) because it is the end or extremity of a man's limbs. In the past great souls were refined, freed and redeemed, such as our great patriarch and forefather Avrohom *Avinu*, the first righteous convert, and Sora *Imeinu*, Rus the Moabite, and in later generations, the souls of Shemaya, Avtalyon and Onkelos the *Ger*. Although today we also have righteous converts, today's *geirim* are of a smaller stature than those great *Tzaddikim*, because we have reached the end, the final extremity - the heel. All the refinements are coming to an end.

Based on this introduction we can understand why *Hashem* sent an angel who forced Yehuda to be with Tamar (*Bereishis Rabba* 84): through such an improper union which was against the *Torah*, and because Yehuda was forced, and he did not recognize Tamar as his daughter-in-law, he was able to redeem the holy souls of Peretz and Zerach, held captive by the forces of evil. And how many *Tzaddikim* and the entire *Malchus Bais Dovid* were their descendants! Only Yehuda, whose lineage was royal and whose destiny was to father kings, could redeem such lofty souls in such a manner. Through this negative act (performed

unconsciously and by force), he was able to enter the realm of evil and redeem its captives.

This is what the *pasuk* means, says the *Ohr HaChaim*: Before he lived with Tamar, Yehuda was a *gur*, a cub; afterward, he was uplifted to be an *arye*, a lion, because the souls he redeemed would rule as kings (the lion, king of the beasts, represents royalty). How did he merit this level? asks the *Ohr HaChaim*. He answers that the continuation of the *pasuk* holds the secret: *miteref beni olisa* – from that *teref* – from the prey that was captured and held captive, which Yehuda redeemed, *olisa* – he was uplifted to be the forefather of the dynasty of *Malchus Bais Dovid*. These lofty souls were preyed upon and captured from Odom *HoRishon's* tree branches by the forces of evil after he sinned. Now, through his actions with Tamar, he redeemed them, and thus he too became uplifted, because his descendants would rule as kings.



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

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

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

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

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

Hebrew Tefilla for Lighting a Yahrzeit or Hilula Candle

[תְּפִילָּה הַנִּמְצָאת בַּסֵּפֶר אֶלֶף הַמִּגֵּן מִבְּעַל הַפֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ עַל פְּרִשְׁת וַיֵּצֵא עֲמוּד כ"ד]

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמִנוּחַת וְלַעֲלִיּוֹת נִשְׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק _____
בֶּן/בַּת _____, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים
וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטּוֹב שֶׁאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדִיבּוּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וַיְהִי הַכֹּל
לְזָכוֹת וְלְמִנוּחַת וְלַעֲלִיּוֹת לְנִשְׁמוֹת עַמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפֶרֶט לְנַפְשׁ רּוּחַ וְנִשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי /
צַדִּיק _____ . יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׁתֵּהֵינָה 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.

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✻ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ✻



YAHRTZEITS BEGINNING SHABBOS VAYECHI

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

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

✻ 14th of Teves ~ Begins Friday Night (Dec 21st)

✻ **Reuven** *ben* Yaakov *Avinu*;

✻ **Rav Refoel Meir Penijel** (1804–1894). Born in Bulgaria, he moved with his family to *Eretz Yisrael* when his son was three years old. When Refoel Meir was fifteen, his father died. When he was seventeen, he married the daughter of Rav Osher *HaLevi*. In the early 1840s, he was chosen as one of the *shadarim* (*sheluchei de'rabbanan*) and sent to Northern Africa to collect funds for the *yishuv*. Following stints in Morocco and Tunisia, he traveled to Italy. While there, he befriended the Pope, who offered to show him the Vatican's archives. There, he saw some of the sacred vessels that Titus had stolen from the *Bais HaMikdosh*. The visit is described in his *sefer*, *Lev HaMarpei*. When he returned to *Eretz Yisrael*, he founded the *Doresh Tzion Yeshiva* in 1868 and was instrumental in helping to found the *Tiferes Yerushalayim* institutions. In 1881, he succeeded Rav Avrohom Ashkenazi as *Yerushalayim's* chief *Sefardic Rav*, the *Rishon LeTzion*. In addition to the *sefer* noted above, he also authored *Sheilos U'Teshuvos Leshon Marpei*, (5655/1894);

✻ **Rav Reuven Dov Dessler** (1863–1935), father of Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler, the *Michtav Me'Eliyohu*, born in Libau, Lithuania, to Rav Yisrael Dovid and Chinke Hinde, who, along with Rav Yisrael Dovid's brother, Rav Eliezer, were great philanthropists and who helped Rav Simcha Zissel move his *Yeshiva* from Kelm to Grubin, a small town near Libau. When he was twelve, Rav Reuven Dov was sent to Rav Simcha Zissel's *Yeshiva* and stayed there for eleven years. When it closed, he moved to Kelm to continue learning with the *Alter*. In 1891, he married Henne Freidel Grodnensky, daughter of Rav Eliyohu Grodnensky, a leading *Dayan* in Vilna. Her maternal grandfather was Rav Yisrael Salanter. She gave birth to Rav Reuven Dov's only son, Rav Eliyohu Eliezer. Sadly, she was *niftar* four years after they married, and Rav Reuven Dov married Fruma Rochel Rabinowitz of Telz. A few years later, he moved to Homel, on the Ukraine-White Russia border. Although he was very successful in business, he maintained a rigid learning schedule, and took off every *Elul* and *Tishrei* to travel to Kelm to learn. In 1923, the Communists gained control of the area, and Rav Reuven Dov lost all of his assets. His final years were trying. In 1931, he moved into his son's home in London and immersed himself in *Torah* study, (5696/1935);

✻ **Rav Alter Elozor Menachem** of Lelov (1935–2001). Born to the Admor of Lelov, Rav Moshe Mordechai, he learned with the *Chazon Ish* in Bnei Brak as a youth. In 1958, he married the daughter of Rav Shimon Aharon HersHKowitz, the *Ga'avad* of Slavita. In 1965,

he founded his *Bais Medrash* on Rabbi Akiva Street in Bnei Brak. After the *petira* of his mother in 1978, he established the *Or Menachem* network of *kollelim*. He also founded *Kehal Ateres Moshe* of the *Lelover Chassidim* of the United States, now headed by Rav Alter Elozor Menachem's son, Rav Dovid Tzvi Shlomo, (5762/2001);

✳ **Rav Leib Bakst**, studied in Mir from the age of thirteen under Rav Eliezer Finkel and Rav Yeruchom Levovitz; he also studied with the Brisker *Rav* and Rav Baruch Ber Leibovitz in Kaminetz. He was involved in the miraculous escape of the Mir *Yeshiva* to Kobe, Japan, and Shanghai, China, and eventually came to Detroit. There, he became the dean of the *Yeshiva Bais Yehuda* Rabbinical College. In 1985, he founded the *Yeshiva Gedola Ateres Mordechai* as an independent high school, (5676–5765/1915–2004).

✳ **15th of Teves ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Dec 22nd)**

✳ The *Amora*, **Mashrisha bar Pekud**, of Bovel;

✳ **Rav Refoel** of Bershad, a *talmid* of Rav Pinchas of Koritz, (5588/1827);

✳ **Rav Chaim Mordechai Rosenbaum** of Nadvorna (1904–1977). Born to Rav Issomor of Nadvorna, he learned with his father in his youth, and married a first cousin at the age of nineteen, then learned full-time, supported by his father-in-law. He took a position as *Rav* of Seret in 1928. In 1941, Romania allied itself with Germany. Of the 420,000 Jews of Romania, 160,000 were murdered by German and Romanian soldiers, and another 150,000 were shipped by cattle cars to Transnistria in the Ukraine; ten thousand died on the trip and another eighty thousand died in the camps there. In 1942, Rav Chaim Mordechai and his family arrived in the Djurin camp in Transnistria. They survived and arrived in Yerushalayim on *Sukkos* in 1948, but moved to Tel Aviv because of the war. He established *Yeshivas Ma'amar Moredechai* in Yaffo and moved his *Yeshiva* to Bnei Brak in 1961. He was succeeded by his only son, (5738/1977).

✳ **16th of Teves ~ Begins Sunday Night (Dec 23rd)**

✳ **Rav Chaim Kreiswirth**, *Rav* and *Av Bais Din* of Antwerp and son-in-law of Rav Avrohom Grodzinski. Rav Chaim was well known to have memorized *Talmud Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, as well as *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*, (5681–5762/1920–2001).

✳ **17th of Teves ~ Begins Monday Night (Dec 24th)**

✳ **Rav Yaakov Krantz**, *Dubno Maggid* (1741–1804). Born in a province of Vilna, Yaakov *ben Ze'ev* (Wolf) Krantz showed exceptional homiletical and kabbalistic talents at an early age, and by the age of twenty had become the *darshan* of his city. From there he began preaching throughout the cities around Lublin in Poland, finally settling in Dubnow. His reputation as a *Maggid* spread, bringing him in contact with the great *Rabbonim* of the period, including the Vilna *Gaon*. The majority of his works were in homiletics, using stories and parables to transmit deeper ethical and moral teachings, (5565/1804);

✳ **Rav Ephraim Fishel Shapira** of Strikov (1743–1822). A *talmid* of the *Maggid* of Mezritch, the Rebbe Elimelech and the *Chozeh* of Lublin, he was called the *Ola Temima*, (5583/1822);

✳ **Rav Aryeh Leibush Lipschitz** of Vishnitsa, the *Aryeh d'Bei Ilai*, (5610/1849);

✳ **Rav Pinchas Epstein**, *Av Bais Din* of Yerushalayim (1887–1969). Born in Griva, Lithuania, his primary teacher was Rav Zalman Sender Kahana Shapiro in Bialystok. In 1904, he settled in *Eretz Yisrael* with his father and began studying at *Yeshiva Toras Chaim* in the Old City of Yerushalayim. Rav Epstein was one of the founders and early leaders of the *Eida HaChareidis*, a group that split from the established Yerushalayim community in 1919 in response to the growing influence of the Zionists on the existing religious council. In 1949, he was appointed to head the *Eida HaChareidis*, (5730/1969);

- * **Rav Suleiman (Salman) Mutzafi** of Yerushalayim (1900–1974). Born in Baghdad, his father, Rav Tzion Meir, descended from an illustrious family of *Torah* scholars who first arrived in Baghdad during the Spanish expulsion, (5735/1974).

* 18th of Teves ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Dec 25th)

- * **Rav Huna** *bar* Mar Zutra, *Reish Galusa* killed *al kiddush Hashem*, (4231/470);
- * **Rav Tzvi Elimelech Shapira** of Dinow (1783–1841), born to Rav Pesach and his wife, the niece of Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk. A *talmid* of the Chozeh of Lublin, Tzvi Elimelech was told by the *Chozeh* that he was from *Shevet Yissochor*, which explained the *talmid*'s special feelings toward *Chanuka*, as it is known that the *Sanhedrin* of the *Chashmono'im* had many members from *Shevet Yissochor*. This is the source of the name of his *sefer*, *Bnei Yissoschor* [*Hamodia* 2005 says 1850], (5602/1841);
- * **Rav Moshe** of Korestchov. Born to the Chernobyler *Maggid*, Rav Mordechai, Rav Moshe was the grandson of the *Me'or Einayim* of Chernobyl on his father's side and Rav Aharon *HaGodol* of Karlin on his mother's side. His brother was Rav Yochonon of Rachmastrivka. A few years after his father's *petira*, he acceded to the urging of the *Chassidim* and set up his court in Korestchov. He was succeeded by his son, Rav Mordechai, (5627/1866);
- * **Rav Chaim Shmuel Horowitz** of Chentchin, (5676/1915);
- * **Rav Moshe Chalfon** of Djerba, Tunisia, *mechaber* of *Sho'el Venishal* and *Bris Kehuna*, (5635–5711/1874– 1950);
- * **Rav Mendel Geffner**, initiator of mass *Chol Hamo'ed Bircas Kohanim*, (5749/1988);
- * **Rav Moshe Heller** of Yerushalayim, only son of Rav Refoel Tzvi Mechel Heller, (5763/2002);
- * **Rav Aryeh Leibish Halberstam**, the Zhmigrader *Rebbe* (1912–2007). Two of his sons succeeded him: the Sanz-Zhmigrader *Rebbe* of Boro Park and the Sanz-Zhmigrader *Rebbe* of Europe, (5768/2007).

* 19th of Teves ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Dec 26th)

- * **Rav Arye Leib HaKohen Heller**, *mechaber* of *Ketzos HaChoshen*, *Avnei Miluim* and *Shev Shmaatsa*, (5574/1813);
- * **Rav Avrohom Shmuel Binyomin Sofer**, the *Kesav Sofer* (1815–1872). Born and died in Pressburg, Hungary, oldest son of the *Chasam Sofer* and grandson of Rav Akiva Eiger through his mother, Rebbetzin Sorel. After his father's *petira* in 1839, the *Ksav Sofer* succeeded him as *Rav* and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Pressburg, at the unusually young age of twenty-four. He served Pressburg for thirty-three years, the exact number of years his father had served before him, (5633/1872);
- * **Rav Menachem Mendel Zaks**, son-in-law of the *Chofetz Chaim*, (5735/1974).

* 20th of Teves ~ Begins Thursday Night (Dec 27th)

- * **Rav Moshe ben Maimon**, the *Rambam* (1135–1204). Born at Cordova, Spain, the *Rambam* received his rabbinical instruction from his father, Maimon. Moshe was only thirteen years old when Cordova fell into the hands of the fanatical Almohades, and Rav Maimon and the other Jews were compelled to choose between Islam and exile. Rav Maimon and his family chose the latter course, and for twelve years led a nomadic life, wandering throughout Spain. In 1160 they settled in Fez, Morocco. In 1165 they went to Acco, to Yerushalayim, and then to Fostat (Cairo), where they settled. After the *petira* of Maimon, Moshe's brother Dovid supported the family by trading in precious stones. Dovid perished at sea, and with him was lost not only his own fortune, but large sums that had been entrusted to him by other traders. These events affected *Rambam*'s health, and he went through a long sickness.

After several years of practice, the *Rambam's* authority in medical matters was firmly established, and he was appointed private physician to Saladin's vizier, who recommended him to the royal family. Between the years 1158 and 1190 *Rambam* produced a commentary on the *Mishna*, the *Mishne Torah* and the philosophical work *Moreh Nevuchim*, (4965/1204);

- * **Rav Yaakov Abuchatzeira**, grandson of the founder of the Abuchatzeira family, Rav Shmuel (Elbaz), and son of Rav Masoud, who was *Rav* of Tafelaletch (Tafilalt), Morocco. He took his father's position upon the latter's *petira* and built the *Yeshiva* there, which produced thousands of students. He wrote many *seforim* on all aspects of *Torah*, including *Abir Yaakov*. His grandson is Rav Yisrael, the *Baba Sali*, and his great-grandson is Rav Meir Abuchatzeira. In 1880, he attempted to move to *Eretz Yisrael*, but was *niftar* in Damanhur, Egypt, where he is buried, (5641/1880);
- * **Rav Simcha Yissochor Dov** of Chechenov, (5675/1914);
- * **Rav Yisrael Reich** of Budapest, (5694/1933);
- * **Rav Refoel Eliyohu Eliezer Mishkovski** (1917–1981), *Rav* of the town of Rechasim and *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshiva Knesses Chizkiyohu* in *Kfar Chassidim*, both in northern *Eretz Yisrael*. *Mechaber* of *Mishnas Eliyohu*, (5742/1981);
- * **Rav Elimelech (Meilich) Izak** (1943–2006). He was named after his mother's ancestor, the *Noam Elimelech*. He was born in Yerushalayim, learned at the *Chayei Olam Yeshiva*, and became a leading *Chassid* of Karlin-Stolin. In his later years, he was appointed director of the Karlin *Talmud Torah* and *Yeshiva* and *gabbai* of the *Bais Medrash*, (5767/2006).



❁ 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 שתן 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 Alter Elozor Menachem ben Moshe Mordechai Biderman of Lelov, 14th of Teves

100 Percent Character

The *Rebbe* used to tell over that people have a saying regarding *shidduchim* – that finding the right match means to seek three things: *keren tov* (a good person), *kesev rav* (wealth) and *yichus* (good family pedigree). He explained that actually the percentage of how much importance to attach to each of these three is hinted at by the first letter of each one:

keren tov begins with *kuf*, whose *gematria* is 100, implying that your search for a *chosson* with a good character is 100 percent important! *Kesev*, on the other hand, only requires 20 percent, since it is spelled with a *kaf*, which has a *gematria* of twenty. *Yichus*, which begins with a *yud*, is only 10 percent important! (*Ne'imos HaChaim* p. 77)



Rav Refoel of Bershad, 15th of Teves

Talmid of Rav Pinchas Koritzer

Too Much Kovod

Once, Rav Refoel visited Berditchev, where he was received with great honor and much fanfare. Afterward, he vanished. A search party looked for him and found him in the marketplace, encircled by a throng of lowly simpletons and merchants who were all laughing at the “*batlan*”, the good-for-nothing weirdo dressed oddly with a handkerchief over his head.

When they questioned his disappearance and odd behavior, Rav Refoel explained that he was distressed by the outpouring of honor; they had simply inflated his ego with too much *kovod*, and so he had tied his handkerchief over his head and entered a fabric store, asking to buy some snuff. The owner saw a simpleton and a stranger who was certainly acting oddly, and he poked fun at him, taking him from store to store in search of the fictitious snuff, while they all had a hearty laugh. “In this way, they belittled and mocked me,” explained Rav Refoel, “and I was spared all the honor!”

(*Imrei Pinchas* II p199)

Anger Control

Whenever an opportunity presented itself, the *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz would retell this story about Rav Refoel of Bershad’s amazing control over his *middos* and character. For example, once after his *tisch* – conducting the *Chassidic Shabbos* banquet where the *Rebbe* presides over his table, sharing songs, stories and words of *Torah* at his meal with his devoted *Chassidim*, which lasted some seven hours, the *Imrei Chaim*, exhausted and weak, walked home in the cold and rain only to discover that the *gabbai* – who had the keys – was nowhere to be found! While waiting an infuriatingly long while for him to show up, the *Imrei Chaim* related this story:

Rav Refoel of Bershad had a burning desire for many years to acquire pure wool from the Holy Land to fashion a *tallis kotton* and *tzitzis* to wear in a *mehadrin*, resplendent and glorified manner befitting such a precious *mitzva*.

After great effort he finally succeeded, and one day he acquired pure, white wool from *Eretz Yisrael*! His joy

knew no bounds. Elated, he passed the wool on to one of his *Chassidim* and asked him to take extra special care of the wool and to fashion with it a *tallis kotton* and *tzitzis*. The *Chassid*, who realized the importance of this task and the great lengths the *Rebbe* had gone to in order to procure this wool, approached the task with awe and love. However, his attempt failed and in his haste to tailor the garment he accidentally folded it over twice, so that when he cut the hole in the middle of the *tallis kotton* to create the opening where the head is placed through, he ended up with two holes instead of one! When he unfolded the garment and held the *tallis kotton* open, instead of one opening for the head, there were now two!

With great fear and trepidation he brought the ruined garment before his expectant *Rebbe*. Rav Refoel was waiting on tenterhooks with excitement, but when he noticed the sad *Chassid* and his downfallen countenance he beckoned him near.

“What is it? What is wrong?”

The *Chassid* was so ashamed that he became dumbstruck and silently, with his head down, he presented the ruined garment before the *Rebbe*, waiting for the *Rebbe’s* anger and disappointment to break over him.

What he heard instead was the smiling Rav Refoel’s delighted voice proclaiming, “Why, of course this garment needed two holes! Yes, yes, exactly, one hole just as any *tallis kotton* has for the head, and another hole to teach Refoel to suppress and contain his emotions and not be angry.”

When he concluded the tale, the *Imrei Chaim* said with great emotion, “*Kodesh Kodoshim!* Holy of Holies! From where can we learn such lofty holy ways and manners of behavior? This story shakes me up and excites me much, much more than any miraculous tales you could tell me about the *Tzaddik!*”



Rav Chaim Kreiswirth, 16th of Teves

Av Bais Din, Antwerp

Bending and Stretching Ourselves for Torah

Rav Chaim Kreiswirth was well known to dance on *Simchas Torah* with great *hislahavus*, aflame with excitement and joy! He was careful not to lose time from learning and often danced with an open *Gemora*, a sight that left its impressions on many.

He once observed a father holding the *Sefer Torah* and lowering it to allow his little boy to kiss the holy scroll. Rav Kreiswirth was not in favor of this practice, and lovingly admonished the father,

explaining his reasons for opposing the father’s well-intentioned, but in his opinion, misguided actions. “When you bend down and lower the *Torah* to your son, you’re teaching him that the *Torah* can be lowered or bent down to suit his needs, Heaven forbid. Instead, he needs to stretch himself or be lifted to kiss the holy scroll, so that he learns to accommodate and adjust himself to the *Torah* and not the other way around,” a profound lesson that became forever inscribed on the father’s heart. (*Mayim Chaim* p. 148)



Rav Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dynow, 18th of Teves

Mechaber of Bnei Yissoschor

Once, when Rav Tzvi Elimelech was traveling to visit his Rebbe, the *Chozeh* of Lublin, he was pondering the following question in his mind on the way: I wonder why my soul is so inspired and aflame every *Chanuka*. I myself do not descend from a family of *Kohanim*, so it cannot be that I am descended from the *Chashmono'im*. Perhaps I should ask my *Rebbe* when I arrive in Lublin.”

In fact, when Rav Tzvi Elimelech arrived in Lublin, even before he opened his mouth to ask, the *Chozeh* said, “You are descended from *Shevet Yissochor* and the reason you feel such sanctity that excites you on *Chanuka* is that you were previously a member of the *Bais Din* of Chashmonai.” This is the reason why Rav Tzvi Elimelech named his *sefer* on the *Moadim* “*Bnei Yissoschor*.” (*Bais Shlomo*, p. 1 footnote 1)



Rav Arye Leib Heller, 19th of Teves

Mechaber of Ketzos HaChoshen

It is said in the name of the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz that the *Ketzos HaChoshen's* popularity needs explaining, since many other *Geonim* who were greater in *lomdus* and *Torah* did not enjoy such acclaim. The *Divrei Chaim* explained that Rav Heller studied *Torah* with great *Yiras*

Shomayim; he would closet himself in a special private room and do *teshuva*, crying and asking that he not be counted among those about whom *Hashem* says, “What have you to do with My laws?” (*Avodas HaLeviim* on *Masechta Shavuos*, Introduction)



Rav Yaakov Abuchatzzeira, 20th of Teves

The Abir Yaakov

Rav Dovid Chai Abuchatzzeira of Nahariya told the following story about his illustrious forebear, the *Abir Yaakov*:

There was once a group of *gabbo'im* who were the *tzedoka* collectors in Tefilalat, Morocco. They passed by the house of a certain *ba'al habayis* and heard him counting his money. The sound of the coins as they jingled when counted was well known; it was even well known how to differentiate between gold coins and silver ones. The gold coins were heavier and made almost no sound when counted whereas the silver ones were much louder when they clanged. This gave birth to the well-known saying: speech is silver and

silence golden!

This group decided to wait patiently outside and count in tandem with the householder, hoping to find out exactly how much money he had. Then he would be unable to deny his wealth; even if he was stingy and tightfisted they would be able to demand a just donation for charity. The *tzedoka* collectors “heard the coins” and determined by their sound that they were golden. Furthermore, they counted out five thousand gold coins jingle one after the other – altogether a princely sum. And so they entered smiling smugly and demanded a donation of no less than five thousand gold coins!

The poor householder was baffled and embarrassed, and earnestly denied that he had so much money. The *gabbo'im* did not accept his words and refused to back down. The matter came before the *Rav*, the *Abir Yaakov*, for judgment. The poor householder cried and pleaded with *Rav Abuchatzaira* that he did not own so much money and there was some kind of error.

The *Rav* listened and said, "Your words ring true, that you do not have five thousand gold coins – and if so, I give my *berocha* that you will!!!"

That day the poor blacksmith, for that was our *baal habayis's* job, took the five thousand horseshoes that he had been

counting (that was the clanging sound the *gabbo'im* had mistaken for gold coins!) to sell to the authorities of the French military, who had commissioned them. Except that a miracle occurred: the official inspector stamped the work order and told the astonished blacksmith to go to the cashier to use the document to collect his pay – one gold coin per horseshoe. On the work order, instead of five thousand horseshoes for five thousand gold coins, was written fifty thousand! Immediately, the blacksmith collected his moneybags, hung them on his horse and made his way to the *Tzaddik*, the *Abir Yaakov*, to give the *tzedoka!!!*

Zechuso yogen oleinu.



לזכר נשמת אמנו החשובה, נפש יקרה ועדינה
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מרת זיסל ז"ל
בת הרה"ה מו"ה מאיר זאב הכהן כ"ץ ע"ה הי"ד מ
עיר נירעדהאז יע"א
ונכדת הרה"ק רבי אהרן צבי טערקלטיוב זי"ע מבריד
אשת הרה"ח מו"ה אברהם חיים ע"ה גאלדענבערג

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

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

(מתוך אמונה מהורה) בדרך המסורה
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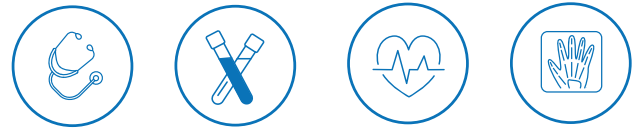
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