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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)

❧ **VAYEISHEV** ❧

❧ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❧

The Jewel, Lost in the Sand

Rashi (Bereishis 37:1), explains why it is that when recounting the families and progeny of Esav and of the less savory characters, the Torah is quick and short, whereas the Tzaddikim and the Avos have many fine details and long descriptive stories about their lives detailed in the Torah. Rashi uses the following parable to explain this. There was an individual who had lost a beautiful gemstone in the sand. In order to find it, he sat in the sand and sifted through the countless grains of sand with a sieve until he was successful in recovering his gem. Once the gemstone was found, he cast aside the remaining sand and clods of dirt.

Similarly, the lives of Tzaddikim are comparable to precious gems, lost among the vast amount of those who lead wicked and mundane lives. The narrative goes at length when discussing the Tzaddik for it has discovered the gem, but short elsewhere as it is casting aside the dirt.

The Modzitzer Rebbe, in Divrei Yisrael says, that since the Torah is eternal and relevant for all generations, this parable must have something to teach each and every one of us as well. Here are the lessons one can learn from this parable:

The gemstone - is the holy Torah, studied Lishmah, purely for the sincere sake of Hashem. It came down into this world and was lost in the 'sand' of ulterior motives and insincere desires. Sifting through the sand is in reality sifting through our motives and

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emotions to reach pure sincere Torah study and mitzvos - done for the right reasons. Finding Torah Lishmah is comparable to finding the gemstone in the sand. The Torah that is not Lishmah is then cast aside like the sand, leaving only the true and pure motives of Lishmah.

Another explanation that the Divrei Yisrael offers is that the gemstone represents Keviyus Itim LeTorah, the undisturbed period of time, set aside each day for Torah study, prayer and Avodas Hashem. This gem is unfortunately often lost in the 'sands' of the turbulence that we face in our daily lives - the rigors of making a living, interacting with people and our environment and everything else life presents. If we fail to set aside undisturbed time for learning and working to become better Yidden, the gem will disappear in the endless sand. We sift through the 'sands' of the daily grind, its tempest and turmoil, to find the island of peace and quiet where we can reconnect to Hashem through Torah and Tefillah. We grasp the gemstone and cast the sand away.

The Modzitzer explains the mashal in yet another manner. The gemstone represents the feelings of regret and remorse that seem to seize us on a daily basis. When we have a hirhur teshuva, thoughts of repentance, they are sent to us from on High. The Mishna (Avos) tells us, that a heavenly voice called a Bas Kol, rings out daily, asking us to return to Hashem. The Holy Baal Shem Tov asks what good is the Bas Kol if no one hears it? He answers that whenever a Jew feels bad for something he did wrong, whenever he regrets a past misdeed and resolves to rectify it and whenever he is seized by remorse and a hirhur teshuva - that is his soul hearing the Bas Kol. What is really transpiring is that he is hearing Hashem call him - his soul is hearing Hashem's voice. This is the precious gemstone, but tragically, it gets swallowed up in the quicksand of life's activities, jobs and daily occupations. Sifting through the sands of time, stopping the hourglass before the last grain runs out and seizing the moment to repent and do teshuva is finding and recovering the lost gemstone and discarding the sand.

Finally, the precious gemstone lost in the sand can also represent the holy and precious Neshamah of a Yid. The Jewish soul came down into this world, a place of turbulence and evil desires and it gets lost in a sandstorm. The Modzitzer cites his Holy Zeida, Rav Yechezkel Kuzmirer, who taught, that each and every Jewish soul has a unique mission and tafkid in this world that only he or she can accomplish and no one else can! The nature of one's mission in this world can be discerned by self-introspection. When he or she contemplates and looks deep into themselves and realizes what the hardest thing is for them to overcome, which mitzvah or good deed is the most difficult for them and where the yetzer hara gives them the hardest time - with the discovery of one's most challenging test, they have also discovered their greatest potential and the secret as to why they are here!

This is another lesson gleaned from Rashi's parable. The holy soul is a precious gem; its mission is lost in the 'sand' of the world. Sifting through the sand and rediscovering the gem, is the triumph of overcoming the Yetzer and fulfilling your unique role on this earth and your soul's mission.



The Hardest, Most Difficult Thing

One of my best friends is very close with a Tzaddik in Monsey, Rav Mordechai Steiner. He knew someone who needed a beracha for a shidduch. Upon his referral, she went to Rav Steiner for a beracha. Later, Rav Steiner he told my friend, "You know that I guard my eyes and I never gaze at women, but when this lady entered my room, I noticed that she was not wearing stockings¹. Please convey to her the following message in my name: If she takes this act of tzniyus upon herself, it will serve as a great merit for her, and will also guarantee that she will be married within the year" When my friend relayed Rav Steiner's words to her, she burst out crying and said, "How did the Rebbe know?! This is my most difficult nisayon! It's the hardest thing for me in the entire world!" Eventually, she succeeded in overcoming this test and the Rebbe's blessing was fulfilled!



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 פְּרֻשֵׁת וַיֵּצֵא עֲמוּד כ"ד]

¹ Rav Steiner said that when Rashi tried to understand the concept of the Efod (Apron), he writes that it resembles what the women horse riders wear. According to tradition, what happened was that Rashi once glanced at such a rider and was bothered by what he had beheld. Since he was exceedingly careful with his eyes, he understood from there that Hashem wanted to show him what an Efod looked like and therefore caused this woman rider to pass in front of him at the exact time he happened to glance in that direction. Rav Steiner commented, "If Hashem allowed me to glance even though I am very meticulous in this matter, it must have been to let me know that she is lax in this area."

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִילוּי נְשָׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק
 בֶּן/בַּת _____, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים
 וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטּוֹב שֶׁאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדִבּוּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וְיִהְיֶה הַכֹּל
 לְזָכוֹת וּלְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִילוּי לְנַשְׁמוֹת עַמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפָרֵט לְנַפְשׁ רֹחַ וְנַשְׁמָה 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.

See more at: www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm



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

* **23rd of Kislev ~ Begins Friday Night (Dec 20th)**

- * **Rav Dovid** of Novardok, *mechaber* of *Galya Maseches*, (5598/1837);
- * **Rav Dovid Tevele Schiff**, *mechaber* of *Loshon Zohov*, and the son of Shlomo Zalman *HaKohen* Schiff, (5552/1791);
- * **Rav Elimelech** of Tosh (now Nytass), Hungary. Son of the founder of the Tosher dynasty, Rav Meshulem Feish Lowy, (5707/1946);
- * **Rav Shabsai Yudelevitz**, *Yerushalmi Maggid*, (5685–5757/1924–1996).

* **24th of Kislev ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Dec 21st)**

- * **Rav Chaim Chizkiyohu Medini**, the *Sdei Chemed* (1832–1904). Rav Chaim was born in Yerushalayim and was married at eighteen. After his father was *niftar* two years later, Rav Chaim's cousins in Constantinople offered to support his learning if he moved there. After thirteen years in Turkey, he took the position of *Rav* in the small city of Karasubazar in Crimea. He served there for thirty-three years, fighting the forces of the Karaites, before moving back to Yerushalayim. He lived there for two years, then moved to Chevron, where he was appointed *Rav* of the city in 1880. His *Sdei Chemed* is a monumental, universally-acclaimed, eighteen-volume *Talmudic* and *halachic* encyclopedia.

* **25th of Kislev ~ Begins Sunday Night (Dec 22nd) – 1st Day of Chanuka**

- * **Rav Avrohom**, son of the Vilna *Gaon*, (5569/1808);
- * **Rav Yaakov Ettlinger** (1798–1871), son of Rav Aharon, *Rosh Yeshiva* of the local *mesivta* in Karlsruhe, Germany, and grandson of the *Shaagas Aryeh*. In 1823, he was appointed *Rosh Yeshiva* of the *Bais Medrash* in Mannheim, and twelve years later became *Rav* and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Altona. He authored many *seforim*, including *Aruch LeNer*, *Binyan Tzion*

and *Bikurei Yaakov*. He gave *semicha* to Rav Shimshon Refoel Hirsch after the latter learned with him for barely a year, (5632/1871);

✧ **Rav Avrohom Mordechai Nissim Harari-Raful**, (5752/1991);

✧ **Rav Yochanon Twersky**, the Tolna *Rebbe* (1906–1988). He was the son of Rav Dovid Mordechai of Tultchin, where his grandfather, Rav Menachem Nachum, was *Rav*. The latter had moved there from Tolna a year earlier, (5749/1988);

✧ **Rav Refoel Avrohom Sharabi** (1875–1927). Son of Rav Sholom Mizrachi Sharabi, he was active in helping the victims of the Damascus blood libel. He authored *Divrei Shalom*, (5688/1927);

✧ **Rav Chaim** of Antineya, the *Tal Chaim*, (5692/1931).

✧ **26th of Kislev ~ Begins Monday Night (Dec 23rd) – 2nd Day of Chanuka**

✧ **Rav Avrohom ben Dovid, Raavad III**, also known as the *Ba'al HaSogos* (1121–1198). The third of three great Jews named Avrohom *ben Dovid* who lived in the same era, this Rav Avrohom was born in Provence in the small village of Puskeiras (Posquières) to a wealthy and prominent man who was close to Prince Roger. At the age of twelve he went to Lunel to study with Rav Meshulem *ben Moshe, mechaber* of *Hashlama* on the *Rif*. He married the daughter of Rav Avrohom *ben Yitzchok, Av Bais Din* (known as *Raavad II*), the *mechaber* of *Ho'Eshkol*. He then learned in the *Yeshiva* of Narbonne, headed by Rav Yosef *ben Marven HaLevi*. The *Ravad's* brief critical notes to the *Mishne Torah* are known for their abrasive quality. He objected to the *Rambam's* methodology of presenting normative rulings without indication of their sources of rationales. In his later years, he learned *kabbola*, and his two sons, Rav Dovid and Rav Yitzchok *Sagi Nohor*, were among Provence's first *mekubolim*. Among the *Raavad III's* greatest students were Rav Yitzchok *HaKohen* of Narbonne (the first commentator on the *Yerushalmi*), Rav Avrohom *ben Nossan HaYarchi* (*mechaber* of *HaManhig*), Rav Meir *ben Yitzchok* (*mechaber* of *HaEzer*), and Rav Asher *ben Meshulem* of Lunel, (4959/1198);

✧ **Rav Elozor** of Kozhnitz [Kozienice]. Son of Rav Yisrael, the *Kozhnitzer Maggid*, his thoughts are recorded in *Likutei Mahara*. One of his *talmidim* was Rav Aryeh Yehuda Leib *HaLevi* Epstein (1837–1914), “Rebbe Leibush the Second,” *mechaber* of *Birkas Tov*, (5624/1863);

✧ **Rav Meshulam Roth** (1875–1962). Born in Gorodenka, Galicia (now in Ukraine), his teachers in *Talmud* and *Halocha* were Rav Yaakov Weidenfeld (*Rav* of Grimaylov and father of the *Tschebiner Rav*, Rav Dov Berish Weidenfeld), Rav Avrohom Mendel Steinberg (*Rav* of Brody) and Rav Meir Arik (*Rav* of Bucach, and perhaps the leading Galician sage of the period). For a time, Rav Roth also studied with Rav Yehuda Modern of Sighet, from whom he gained a strong attachment to the works of the *Chasam Sofer*. After his marriage, he was elected *Rav* of Chorostkiv (Ukraine). Rav Roth was eventually elected *Rav* of Shatz (Suceava, Romania) and later Czernowitz (Tchernovitz), Ukraine, where he witnessed the community's destruction during the Holocaust. In 1944, Rav Roth managed to escape to *Eretz Yisrael*. [16 *Kislev*, according to *Yated* 2006 and 2007], (5723/1962);

✧ **Rav Yehoshua Zelig Diskin**, *Rav* of Pardes Chana (1896–1970), born in Chislavichi, son of Rav Shimon Moshe Diskin (1872–1930), *mechaber* of *Medrash Shimoni*. Rav Yehoshua wrote the preface to his father's *sefer*, entitled *Toldos HaMechaber*. His son, named for his father, Rav Shimon Diskin (1932–1999), was born in the town of Periaslov in the Kiev region of the Ukraine where Rav Yehoshua Zelig was *Rav*. He became one of the *Roshei Yeshiva* of *Kol Torah*. The Diskin family is descended from the *Maharal* of Prague and the

Chavos Yo'ir, (5731/1970);

* **Rav Dovid Hirsch Mayer**, *Rosh Yeshiva, Bais Binyomin*, Stamford, Connecticut (1947–2002). Son of Rav Yitzchok Zev Mayer (Nitra, Czechoslovakia), *mechaber* of *Maharsha Ha'Oruch*, a close friend of Rav Michoel Ber Weissmandl. His mother, Leah, was the main character in the famous story of the woman who demanded a knife for her newborn son as she was being taken away to a concentration camp; she then circumcised her eight-day-old child. The child was Rav Dovid Hirsch's older brother, Menashe. The family survived and moved to America. Rav Dovid Hirsch learned at the Nitra *Yeshiva* in Mount Kisco, NY, then in Lakewood. He was close to Rav Shneur Kotler and Rav Nosson Wachtfogel and was instrumental in the founding of the Los Angeles *Kollel*. He founded *Bais Binyomin* in 1977, (5763/2002).

* **27th of Kislev ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Dec 24th) – 3rd Day of Chanuka**

* **Rav Tzvi Hirsch Rosanish**, *mechaber* of *Tesha Shitos*. He was the son of Rav Yissochor Berish, *Av Bais Din* of Podhajce, and grandson of Rav Yaakov Yehoshua of Cracow and Lvov, *mechaber* of the *Pnei Yehoshua*, (5565/1804);

* **Rav Chaim (Tirar) Czernowitz** (or Chernovitzer) (1760–1816), *mechaber* of *Be'er Mayim Chaim*. Born near Butchatch, Galicia (now Poland), he studied under Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Botchatch and became a *Chassid* of Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, Rav Shmelke of Nikolsburg and the *Maggid* of Mezritch. He became *Rav* in Czernowitz in the Bukovina province of Romania, in 1789, and remained there for twenty-three years. In 1812, war broke out, and Bukovina was annexed by Austria. The new government issued harsh anti-Semitic decrees, resulting in Rav Chaim's departure, first to Botchan, then to *Eretz Yisrael*. He settled in Tzefas, where he lived privately for the last five years of his life. He is buried in Tzefas, (5577/1816);

* **Rav Yechiel Mechel** of Galina, son-in-law of Rav Meir of Premishlan, (5627/1866);

* **Rav Shaul Margulis** of Lublin, (5648/1887);

* **Rav Avrohom Yitzchok Kahan** (Kohn, Kahn), the *Toldos Aharon Rebbe* (1914–1996). Born to Shaindel Berocha of Tzefas and named for his great-grandfather, Rav Yitzchok Avrohom Heller of Tzefas, Rav Avrohom Yitzchok and his family were forced to leave *Eretz Yisrael* in 1918, moving to Honiad in the Zibenbergen region of Romania. There he learned in the town's *Yeshiva*, headed by Rav Avrohom Freund (father of Rav Moshe Aryeh Freund, later to head the *Badatz* in Yerushalayim). He eventually moved to the *Yeshiva* of Krulle, headed by Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, and moved with the *Yeshiva* to Satmar. He became very close to Rav Aharon (Arele) Roth, founder of *Shomrei Emunim* of Meah She'orim, and later married his daughter. When his mentor was *niftar* in 1947, Rav Avrohom Yitzchok became his successor. He authored *Divrei Emuna*. Following his *petira*, two of his sons became *Rebbs*. The younger son, Rav Duvid Kahn of Monsey, a *talmid* of the Satmar *Rebbe*, became the *Toldos Aharon Rebbe*. The elder son, Rav Shmuel Yaakov Kahn, a *talmid* of the Vizhnitzer *Rebbe*, became the *Rebbe* of a group that was named *Toldos Avrohom Yitzchok* after his father, whose main *Bais Medrash* is also in Meah She'orim, one block away from the *Toldos Aharon* building. Another son is a *Rosh Yeshiva* in Kiryas Yoel, New York. Rav Avrohom Yitzchok is said to have instructed his followers to learn the works of Rav Aharon *HaLevi* of Staroselye (Strashelye), which include *Sha'arei HaYichud VeHaEmunah*, *Shaarei Avoda* and *Avodas HaLevi*, (5757/1996);

* **Rav Boruch Yehoshua Yerachmiel Rabinowitz**, *Rebbe* of Munkatch and chief *Rav* of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Cholon, *Eretz Yisrael*, (5675–5758/1914–1997).

✧ **28th of Kislev ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Dec 25th) – 4th Day of Chanuka**

- ✧ **Rav Avrohom Ravigo.** Born in Modena, Italy, he became highly esteemed as both a supporter of *Torah* and as a great *Torah* scholar himself. He and a party of twenty-five set sail from Livorno, Italy, for *Eretz Yisrael* in 1702. When they arrived in Yerushalayim, his wife, daughter, and closest *talmid* died in a plague. He opened a *Yeshiva*; among the ten *Rabbonim* who learned there was the son-in-law of Rav Yehuda *HeChassid*. After the *petira* of Rav Moshe *ben Chaviv*, Rav Avrohom was appointed *Rishon Letzion*. However, he passed away during one of his trips abroad trying to raise funds. His *talmid*, Rav Mordechai *ben Yehuda Leib Ashkenazi*, wrote *Eshel Avrohom* on the *Zohar* and other *Kabbalistic* teachings that he received from Rav Avrohom, (5745/1714);
- ✧ **Rav Avrohom Madjar**, *Av Bais Din* in Yerushalayim and *mechaber* of *Divrei Sholom*, (5595/1834);
- ✧ **Rav Boruch Dovid Twersky** of Klintowitz, *mechaber* of *Vayevorech Dovid*, (5686/1925);
- ✧ **Rav Ezra Hamway**, *Ra'avad* of Aram Tzova in Syria, (5706/1945);
- ✧ **Rav Eliyohu Meir Bloch** (1894–1955). Born on *Simchas Torah* in the small Lithuanian city of Telshe to Rav Yosef Leib, *Rav* and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Telshe, having assumed the helm of the *Yeshiva* from his father-in-law, Rav Eliezer Gordon, the founder of the *Yeshiva*. After his marriage, he spent twelve years as a *Rosh Yeshiva* at Telshe. When it became clear that the *Yeshiva* could not continue under the Soviets, the administration sent Rav Elya Meir and his brother-in-law, the late *Rosh Yeshiva* Rav Chaim Mordechai Katz, on a mission to the United States, to raise funds to move the *Yeshiva* to either America or *Eretz Yisrael*. When they arrived, they learned of the Nazi invasion. They decided to restart the *Yeshiva* in Cleveland, (5716/1955);
- ✧ **Rav Chaim Mordechai Wainkrantz** (1920–2004). Born in Popov, Poland, he studied at the Novardok branch in Polutsk, then traveled to Bialystok to learn at the *Bais Yosef Yeshiva* under Rav Avrohom Yoffen. During World War II, he was exiled to Siberia. In 1947, he moved to America, married, and learned in *Kollel* for another ten years under Rav Yoffen. He then founded a *Yeshiva Ketana*. He was also *Maggid Shiur* at Congregation *Shomrei Emuna*. In his later years, he became *Rosh Yeshiva* at *Bais Yosef*, (5765/2004).

✧ **29th of Kislev ~ Begins Thursday Night (Dec 26th) – 5th Day of Chanuka**

- ✧ **Rav Aharon Shimon Shapiro** of Prague, (5440/1679);
- ✧ **Rav Chizkiya ben Dovid da Silva**, *mechaber* of *Pri Chodosh* on the *Shulchon Aruch*, born in Livorno, Italy, (5420–5459/1659-1698);
- ✧ **Rav Gedalya** of Linitz, *mechaber* of *Teshuos Chein*. Son of Rav Yitzchok, he was a *talmid* of the *Maggid* of Mezritch. Rebbe Nachman said about Rav Gedalya of Linitz that he was foremost in bringing people to *teshuva* in that generation, even though he never gave lectures and only sat and learned all day, (5564/1803);
- ✧ **Rav Tzvi Mordechai** of Plavna, (5627/1866);
- ✧ **Rav Shlomo HaKohen** of Vilna, *mechaber* of *Cheshek Shlomo*, (5666/1905);
- ✧ **Rav Boruch Hager** of Vishiva, (5705/1944);
- ✧ **Rav Yitzchok Shmuel Eliyohu Finkler** of Radoshitz (Radoszyce), (1902–1944), son of Rav Meir Menachem Finkler, (5623–5673/1862–1912);
- ✧ **Rav Yisrael** of Husyatyn and Rizhin. The son of Rav Mordechai Shraga and grandson of the Rizhiner *Rebbe*, he married Nechama Gitel, a granddaughter of his uncle, Rav Avrohom Yaakov of Sadiger, when he was fourteen years old. He was also the uncle of Rav

Moshenyu of Boyan. In 1937, he moved to Tel Aviv, along with his son-in-law, Rav Yaakov, who would succeed him twelve years later, (5710/1949);

✳ **Rav Shlomo Dovid Kahana** of Warsaw and Yerushalayim, the *Avi Ho'Agunos*, (5714/1953);

✳ **Rav Zushe Waltner** (1918–2002). Born in Hungary, he traveled through Cracow and Switzerland until he was eventually admitted to England in 1937. There, Rav Waltner developed a very close relationship with Rav Eliyohu Dessler. After the war, Rav Waltner and Rav Arye Grossnass traveled to Europe to help the shattered remnants of European Jewry, and founded the *Yeshiva* in Sunderland to accommodate some of them. Traveling to Tangiers to recruit *talmidim* for Sunderland, he met Rav Shmuel Toledano, who soon built a *Yeshiva* building and then invited Rav Waltner to come and found a *Yeshiva*. At the advice of Rav Dessler, who consulted with the *Chazon Ish* on the matter, Rav Waltner accepted the challenge. There he set up a *Yeshiva* called *Eitz Chaim*. There are thousands of *Bnei Torah* and religious *balabatim* today who freely acknowledge that he is responsible for their spiritual life. He also established the *Otzar HaTorah* institutions in Morocco. Among his *talmidim* from Tangiers are Rav Shimon Pinto of Strasbourg and Rav Shlomo Farrache of Bnei Brak, (5763/2002).



❁ 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 מהשיי"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 Elozor Ben Moshe Elyokim Breyah of Kozhnitz, 26th of Kislev

Rav Elozor of Kozhnitz had a custom: he was very strict regarding travel on *Erev Shabbos* and would never travel anywhere after midday, no matter how short a distance and no matter what the circumstances – no exceptions.

Rav Elozor was once traveling home on *Erev Shabbos*. When they were just a few miles from their destination, the *Rebbe* noticed that the time of day was *Chatzos*. Since it was midday and the *Rebbe* was careful not to travel after *Chatzos* on *Erev Shabbos*, he refused to travel any further and ordered the *gabbai* to stop.

“We will spend *Shabbos* here in this village,” explained the *Rebbe* to the shocked *gabbai*. When the *gabbai* went to see to their lodgings, he discovered that fewer than ten Jews lived in this village and that wherever they could stay the food and provisions would be simple, meager and certainly not the *Shabbos* delicacies they were accustomed to for honoring *Shabbos*.

“*Rebbe*, please, we are just a few miles from home – we must continue!” declared the *gabbai* as the *Rebbe* shook his head in refusal. “But *Rebbe*, it’s just another half hour!” pleaded the *gabbai*, “and there is no food in honor of *Shabbos* here – they don’t even have a *minyán*!”

All his protests fell on deaf ears. “You know,” explained Rav Elozor calmly, “that under no circumstances do I travel after *Chatzos*, and so I will go no further.” So saying, the *Rebbe* went to immerse himself in the river to purify himself for *Shabbos*.

Meantime, while the *Rebbe* was busy preparing and immersing, the *gabbai* set off toward Kozhnitz. He decided that if the *Rebbe* was so obstinate as to stay, he could

still gather *Shabbos* food and bring it back with time to spare. When the *gabbai* arrived in Kozhnitz and word spread throughout the city that the *Rebbe* was spending *Shabbos* alone with no *minyán*, just half an hour away, the *Chassidim* gathered, and scores of *yungeleit* and *bochurim* began making preparations to travel to the *Rebbe*. When the *gabbai* arrived in the small village with the *Shabbos* food there came with him tens of *Chassidim* and the *Shabbos* ended up being an uplifting, spiritual experience for all.

The *Rebbe* was greatly pleased and told the *Chassidim* a story:

The holy *Chozeh* of Lublin owned a special white *bekesche* that he always wore when he was honored as the *mohel* at a *bris mila*. Once, the *Chassidim* noticed that the *Chozeh* donned the special white robe even when he was not performing a *bris*, and as there was no circumcision the entire day, their wonder only grew. It was the custom that on *Purim* the *talmidim* were allowed to ask any questions they wished. The *Chassidim* asked the *Chozeh*, “Why did the *Rebbe* wear the white robe even though he wasn’t a *mohel* that day?” The *Tzaddik* answered them with a story:

There was a wealthy but miserly merchant who came to conduct some business in Lublin. He was delayed in his business and with half an hour to *Shabbos* he found himself in Lublin with no relatives or acquaintances where he could find lodgings to spend *Shabbos*. As he was stingy, he did not wish to rent a hotel room or pay for his lodgings and so, not knowing anyone, he decided after running out of any other ideas, to head to the *Rebbe’s hoif*.

Although he was not a *Chassid*, he trusted the *Chessed* of the *Rebbe* and the *Chassidim* to provide him with food and lodgings for *Shabbos* for free. And so it was. On *Motzoei Shabbos* he headed to the *Rebbe* with a *kvittel* and a *pidyon*, a note of petition with his name to ask for the *Rebbe's* blessing and a small donation. Paltry indeed – he was so miserly that his half-coin donation was merely symbolic. The *Rebbe* nonetheless accepted both his *pidyon* and his *kvittel*, blessed him and he went on his way.

After the miser passed away, his soul arose to the heavenly worlds and continued until it reached a certain point where one of the angels stopped him from continuing.

“Stop! You can go no further, explained the angel, for you have a blemish in your *bris mila*.”

“What? How can this be?” protested the miser. “I was once visiting the *Tzaddik*, the *Chozeh* of Lublin, whose eyes can see from one end of this world to the other; if I had a blemish wouldn't he have let me know and rectified the matter?”

The angel took his protest and argument to the court, which ruled that he had a good point. They ruled that he had permission to ask the *Rebbe* for a *tikkun* and so he did, and that is why the *Rebbe* wore his white *mohel's bekeshche*, which he normally wore for a *bris mila*, since he rectified that Jew's *bris*.

“And now,” concluded Rav Elozor of Kozhnitz to his *Chassidim*, who had come to spend *Shabbos* together in the village with him, “if that miser wasn't a *Chassid*, and only visited the *Rebbe* on the pretext of saving himself the fare of a hotel lodging for the weekend, and only donated a paltry half coin as a *pidyon*, yet in Heaven they saw fit that the *Chozeh* should do him a favor and rectify him with a *tikkun*, just think how much more so are you true *Chassidim*, desiring favor and blessings, since you came specifically to spend *Shabbos* here with me! Just think what blessings and favors await all of you!” and he promised them all manner of *berochos*. (*Yafe Sichoson Radomishla* II p. 6:9)



Rav Chaim Ben Shlomo Tirar of Czernowitz, 27th of Kislev

Mechaber of *Be'er Mayim Chaim*

The Promise

When the *Be'er Mayim Chaim* was *Rav* of Czernowitz, there was a *bochur* who wanted to be *chazzan*, but the heads of the congregation were against it, until Rav Chaim convinced them to allow him. From then on, this *bochur* became an avid *Chassid* of the *Be'er Mayim Chaim* and attended to his *Rebbe's* needs all the time.

After many years, before the *Be'er Mayim Chaim* moved to *Eretz Yisrael*, he promised his young *Chassid* and attendant that if he ever needed his assistance or a salvation of any kind he should mention his name and picture his face, and that he would save him.

Many years later, when this young man was in the *mikve*, he accidentally slipped and fell into the boiling hot water of the heating pit. In those days some of the *mikvaos* were built in such a way that one of the pits was filled with water that was heated and boiling hot and this was mixed together with cooler water for bathing. Everyone thought that surely there was no way he could have survived, but when they pulled out his “body” they discovered that not only was he alive, he appeared like a new person.

When they asked him how he had survived he told them of the *Be'er Mayim Chaim's* promise before leaving for *Eretz*

Yisrael and that even though now the *Be'er Mayim Chaim* was no longer alive, his promise lived on. "When I fell into the boiling water, I immediately pictured the *Tzaddik's* face and form, and the *Be'er Mayim Chaim* came and anointed my entire body with fragrant oil from *Gan Eden*, healing me completely! (*Maasei Tzaddikim* p. 81)



A Head Taller

It is a well-known fact related by many *Tzaddikim* that on *Shabbos* the *Be'er Mayim Chaim* was a head taller than on weekdays. Rav Dov Beirish Weidenfeld, the Tchebiner *Rav*, used to explain this phenomenon as follows: It simply means that during the week the *Tzaddik* was so intimately involved in suffering the pain and anguish of *Hashem's* Divine Presence, the *Shechina*, in Her exile, that he was bent over in mourning. However, on *Shabbos Kodesh* he felt the awesome sanctity and holiness of *Shabbos*, especially according to his own lofty level, so much so that this straightened him out and everyone clearly saw that he was indeed a head taller on *Shabbos* than on weekdays. (*Yafeh Sichoson* II #45)



A True Taste of Shabbos

(This is a very famous story about the *Be'er Mayim Chaim*; I have even heard a version that was told by Reb Shlomo Carlebach.)

Hershel was a pure comedian, one of a rare breed. He didn't just tell jokes; he breathed them. Certainly, it seemed to the people in his village of Mosayov in the Marmorash area that he had never drawn a serious breath in his life. He lived for laughs. Nothing was sacred or out of bounds to make fun of. Fear of *Hashem* was absolutely foreign to him. The grin never left his face.

As might be expected, Hershel soon became the most popular guy in Mosayov among the idle, the crude, the silly and the drinkers. Whenever there was a crowd of people on the street or in the village tavern laughing hilariously, it was guaranteed that in the middle was to be found Hershel, perfecting his craft.

Hershel himself was not numbered among the unemployed. He made a nice living as a seller of livestock. As his business took him to all the neighboring towns and villages, his reputation as a comic spread throughout the Marmorash region.

Each year he would travel to the annual great livestock fair in Czernowitz. Another person who consistently attended the fair was the *Rav* of the city, the well-known *Tzaddik* and scholarly author, Rav Chaim of Czernowitz. He would circulate among the merchants and give them the opportunity to contribute to the many worthy causes that he was involved in for helping needy people and educational institutions.

One year, the fair took place from Sunday through Friday. By the last day the *Tzaddik* had already gathered a significant sum. As he made his final rounds of the stalls, he came across a large group laughing raucously, slapping their thighs and winking at each other. No doubt about it – Hershel the Mosayover must be in the midst of them. And in top form, too.

Rav Chaim thought to slip around them inconspicuously. He knew that from these crude, empty-headed types he could not expect much 'business' anyway. But Hershel was quicker than him. "Hey! Holy *Rebbe! Sholom Aleichem!*" he called out, still grinning from the last joke he had just successfully cracked.

"*Aleichem sholom*, my fellow Jews," responded the *Rav* warmly. The die was cast. Now he could no longer turn away. "Perhaps you gentlemen would care to take

a share in the great *mitzva* of *tzedoka*?”

“And why would you need charitable contributions?” asked Hershel, still smirking.

“For *pidyon shevuyim* – redeeming Jews in captivity, called the greatest *mitzva* of all,” the *Rav* responded promptly. “There is a poor, unfortunate Jew who owes a large debt of 1500 *zylotas* (Polish gold currency) to his noble. Now he is languishing in a dungeon.”

Hershel’s companions were all grinning in anticipation. They waited eagerly for their friend’s witty riposte in the rabbi-jester dialogue.

Hershel put his hand in his pocket and took out 1500 *zylotas*, all the money he had brought with him to replenish his livestock. “Here you are, *Rav*,” he said quietly, with a strange look on his face. “Here is the entire sum you need for the redeeming captives *mitzva*.”

All the onlookers were startled for a moment, but then they realized this must be one of Hershel’s clever jests. The naive *Rav* would put out his hand for the money, and Hershel would pretend to give it to him and then at the last moment he would snatch it back, making a fool of the gullible scholar.

But the *Tzaddik* was not so naive after all. He held back, and simply gazed at the clownish Hershel thoughtfully.

“No, No,” exclaimed Hershel, as his face took on a fully serious expression. “I really mean it. No joke. Please. Take the money.” As he spoke the words, he approached the *Tzaddik* and pushed into his hand the bulging wallet he had drawn out of his pocket.

The astonished *Rav* felt himself overwhelmed with emotion: excitement and relief at being able to secure the release of the poor imprisoned Jew, amazement that such a lowly soul could ascend to the highest of peaks in the briefest of moments. His cheeks were flushed; warm tears

pooled at the corners of his eyes.

Hershel himself was stunned. He couldn’t understand what he had just done. It had been a spontaneous impulse that had overcome him, but why had it been so irresistible?

The *Tzaddik* wished to bless his donor appropriately, but wasn’t sure how. For *Rav* Chaim, life turned on one hinge: *Shabbos*. He had even written a unique book, *Sidduro Shel Shabbos*, explaining according to mystical principles the exaltedness and holiness of the Seventh Day. But how was that relevant to the loutish man who stood before him? Nevertheless, he thought to himself, such a deed deserves the greatest blessing of all. Still brimming with enthusiasm, he exclaimed:

“I bless you that, in the merit of this great *mitzva* that you have done, you will experience the true taste of *Shabbos*.”

Hershel was still numb. He nodded his head as if he understood what the *Tzaddik* was talking about and answered, “*Amen*.”

On Sunday Hershel returned to Mosayov. Since he had no money, there was no reason to remain in Czernowitz. Still, he remained his cheerful, joking self.

As the week progressed, however, he began to feel a strange feeling welling up inside him, a spirit of holiness, something he had never felt before in his life. When Friday dawned and the feeling was even more intense, he realized that it must be connected to the oncoming *Shabbos*, and that this *Shabbos* would definitely be like no other he had ever experienced.

He went shopping to purchase appropriate food, and he could barely control his trembling. As the hours went by, his inner upheaval grew stronger and stronger. He didn’t know what would be.

All those who encountered Hershel that *Shabbos* could hardly recognize him. Was that really him – singing, dancing,

studying, praying with ecstasy? Hershel could barely recognize himself! His entire being was bursting with the pleasure of *Shabbos*.

It was the talk of the town. The idea that Hershel the clown could be caught up in a *Tzaddik*-type of intense love of *Shabbos* cracked up everyone who heard it even more than Hershel's intentional jests. They even entertained the possibility that he had gone insane.

But then the news spread about what had happened at the livestock fair in Czernowitz – of the incongruous charitable deed that Hershel had done and the extraordinary blessing of the *Tzaddik*. People began to consider the issue more seriously.

After that *Shabbos*, Hershel returned to his customary light-hearted joking manner. But by the following *Shabbos* he was again overwhelmed by the

same spirit of holiness. It was as if there were two Hershels: the weekday persona and the special *Shabbos* one.

Weeks went by, and months, without change in his situation. Hershel felt himself cracking under the strain of his dual personality. He decided to travel back to Czernowitz to discuss his situation with the *Tzaddik* who had blessed him.

Rav Chaim told him that in order to absorb the taste of *Shabbos* without spiritual and psychological damage, he would have to refine his weekday behavior. Hershel decided to stay on in Czernowitz in order to attach himself to the *Tzaddik* and to learn from him. He did so, and became a completely different person as his daily lifestyle changed to be harmonious with his weekly *Shabbos* elevation.

Translated and freely adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *Sichas*

HaShavua #461.



Rav Gedalya Ben Yitzchok of Linitz, 29th of Kislev

Mechaber of *Teshuos Chen*

So Deep

Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev writes in his letter of approbation to the *sefer Teshuos Chen*:

“Rav Shmuel Yehuda Leib, the son of the *Tzaddik*, the *Gaon* and holy flame, our Master Gedalya, showed me his father's holy writings. I saw them and studied them and they are among the loftiest things in the world.” (*Haskoma to Teshuos Chen*)

The Berditchever *Rav* said further that many people were unable to delve deep enough to understanding the meaning behind the holy *mechaber* because his writings are so profound.

(Publisher's Introduction to *Teshuos Chen*)



Why Must Eliyohu HaNovi Precede Moshiach?

The prophet Malachi proclaims (3:23), “Behold I am sending you Eliyohu *HaNovi* before the great and awesome day of *Hashem*.” Rav Gedalya of Linitz writes that he received a tradition from his masters and teachers that *Moshiach* will be able to advocate on behalf of all *Klal Yisrael* and find their merits. This *limud zechus* will cause everyone to be filled with feelings of remorse and regret, known as *hirhurei teshuva*, leading them to become *Tzaddikim*.

This concept unlocks the gates of light; it illuminates the words of *Chazal* and allows them to be understood. For *Chazal* taught that [*Moshiach*] *ben Dovid* will only come to a generation that is either

totally unworthy and guilty or to a generation that is all totally worthy and meritorious – *kulo chayav* or *kulo zakai*. *Moshiach* will be *melamed zechus* (find merit), give everyone the benefit of the doubt and advocate on behalf of all of them; they will then all do *teshuva* and be meritorious.

The problem is those who are *baalei machlokes*, masters at causing arguments, strife and disagreements. If *Moshiach* will try to find merit with one side, the other will be guilty by default, and if *Moshiach* attempts to justify the other side, the opposing faction must also by default be wrong.

And so *Hashem* must send *Eliyohi HaNovi* first, one day before *Moshiach* arrives, in order to make *sholom* in the world. Then afterward *Moshiach* will arrive speedily in our days and will be *melamed zechus* on everyone; the entire world will

then be meritorious. (*Teshuos Chen* p. 114)



The Holy Challa of Rebbetzin Perel

Rav Levi Yitzchok and his *Rebbetzin* once spent *Shabbos* in the town of Linitz at the home of the local *Rav*, the famed *Tzaddik* and *talmid* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, Rav Gedalya of Linitz, *mechaber* of *Teshuos Chein*. The Linitzer *Rebbetzin* gave the honor of braiding the *challo*s for *Shabbos* to Rebbetzin Perel, the Berditchever *Rebbetzin*.

When Rebbetzin Perel braided the *challa* in honor of *Shabbos*, she whispered a personal prayer: “*Ribbono Shel Olam* – Master of the world! I beseech You – help my Levi Yitzchok, when he recites the blessing of *Hamotzi* over the *challa*, to have in mind the same holy *kavonos* and intentions that I had at the time I braided them.”



Rav Shlomo HaKohen of Vilna, 29th Of Kislev

Mechaber of Cheshek Shlomo

Rav Shlomo *HaKohen* was born in Vilna in 5588/1828. His father, Rav Yisrael Meir *HaKohen*, served as a *Dayan* on the Vilna *Bais Din*. Rav Shlomo learned under his older brother, Rav Betzalel, whom he mentions in his *seforim*, and later under Rav Yitzchok Shirvaniter. At sixteen, Rav Shlomo had already finished the entire *Shas*. Rav Shlomo's glosses on the *Gemora* were published in the Vilna Edition *Shas* under the name *Cheshek Shlomo*. His *halachic* responsa were published under the title *She'eilos U'teshuvos Binyan Shlomo*. Rav Shlomo was a *Dayan* in Vilna for nearly forty years.

It is related that when thieves once

broke into his house, he ran home and checked to see if his copy of *Rabbeinu Yerucham* was still there. (*Rabbeinu Yerucham* was an expensive and rare *sefer* at the time). Upon seeing that it was untouched, he declared, “*Boruch Hashem*, nothing was stolen.”

The *Chofetz Chaim* said that Rav Shlomo, who was a *Kohen*, was ready for *Moshiach's* arrival and was fluent in all *Halochos* pertaining to *Kohanim* and the *Avoda* in the *Bais HaMikdosh*. Rav Shlomo was *niftar* on the 29th of *Kislev*, the fifth day of *Chanuka*, 5666/1905, at the age of seventy-seven.

Zecher Tzaddik livrocha.



| SPECIAL CHANUKA EDITION |

Hachona Shel Mitzva - Preparing for Mitzvas Hadlokas Neiros Chanuka

Whenever a person performs any *mitzva*, no matter which, even if he does not fully understand the meaning behind the *mitzva* or even if he fails to comprehend its essence – so long as he understands that this is a divine commandment and that *Hashem* ordered him to do it, he fills the entire world with holiness, which spreads throughout the world.

When a person purchases oil to light the *Chanuka* candles and receives this oil in hand, this act has the power to bring holiness into the entire world and to cause them all to return and do *teshuva*. This requires *dveikus* and attachment to *Hashem*, to cleave and bind oneself to the Creator of Genesis and to perform the *mitzva* for the sake of His blessed Name. Regarding this awesome act and moment, it is said *yesh koneh olomo beshaa achas* – “there are those who acquire their [share or portion] in the [coming] world in one moment”. In this one moment we can acquire the entire world and bring about *teshuva*!

(*Binas Yisrael Chanuka* page 67b)



Rav Melech Biderman related a story that I believe illustrates the above teaching well:

Many decades ago, when Australia was still a barren spiritual wasteland and before many holy *kehillos* were established there, a *Chassid* visited the land down under for business. It was Thursday and by now our *Chassid* was worried where he would spend *Shabbos*. He decided to enter a fish store, trusting that surely here a Jew would come to buy fish *lichvod Shabbos Kodesh*. And so it was, that the proprietor handed a customer a large fine fish, whereupon the *Chassid* turned to the customer and asked if by any chance he was Jewish. Answering in the affirmative, the customer warmly invited the *Chassid* to his home for *Shabbos*. Our *Chassid* was overjoyed and amazed at the mansion where his host brought him. Gate after gate of the grounds opened up before them, as they drove toward their destination, a palatial home where he would spend *Shabbos* in grandeur in honor of the holy day. As our *Chassid* delighted his hosts with *divrei Torah* and was plied with good food and drink, he noticed something odd; in the display case where the family's beautiful silver was proudly on display, among the expensive silver articles was a broken flask of oil. Puzzled by this strange phenomenon but ashamed to embarrass his host with awkward questions, the *Chassid* held his tongue all *Shabbos* long, until *Motzoei Shabbos*. As he took his leave and thanked his host, he conspiratorially whispered the burning question, “Pray tell me why you have a broken old flask of oil among your most expensive silver.” The host answered his query with a story:

“When I was but twelve years old, my father passed away and I had no choice but to go out and seek employment to help feed and clothe my mother and siblings and support them. I was very successful and eventually grew wealthy and forgot all about my upbringing and my Jewish roots. I decided to live my life as I pleased with no second thought to *Yiddishkeit*. Eventually, I forgot all our traditions.

“One day, as I was going on my way, I chanced upon a young boy who stood crying

bitterly. On the pavement beside him lay a broken flask of oil. 'What is wrong, young man, and why are you crying?' I asked in sympathy.

"As the boy told me his sad tale, he burst into fresh sobs. 'Tonight is the first night of *Chanuka* and we need to light candles. My father and I are very poor and we have little money. He borrowed a few coins from our neighbor and asked me to go out and buy oil for lighting candles. He warned me sternly to make sure that I would not drop the flask or it would break and I did my best...but...but,' his lip trembled, 'a c-c-cat jumped out just now and fr-fr-frightened me and I dr-dr-dropped the flask and now it broke!' And he wept in misery, crying, 'How can I face my father without the flask of oil in hand?'"

Explained the wealthy host to the *Chassid*, "This simple sentence uttered by the pure child echoed in my ears with a personal retort toward me: 'How can I face my Heavenly Father, *Hashem*, without the flask of oil in my hands?!' My heart went out to the boy and I pressed a few coins into his hands. As he dried his tears I asked him to please go and purchase two new bottles of oil and to guard them well – one for himself and his father – and one for me. That night, I was a changed person, and I resolved to mend my ways. I lit the *Chanuka* candles as I had not done for many years. From that moment I returned to my heritage and *mitzva* observance, from details to stringencies. I kept the broken flask of oil as a memento to remind myself of my own personal *Chanuka* miracle. (*Be'er HaChaim Chanuka* p. 43-45)



The Tzaddik's Flaming Fire

Once, the Neshchizer related how one of the *Tzaddikim* told the Berditchever that after witnessing his great over-exertions and wild movements during prayer he now had an answer to a difficulty in understanding *Rashi's* commentary regarding the lighting of the *Menora*. *Rashi* writes that the *Torah* praises Aharon for not making any changes – *lehaggid shevacho shel Aharon shelo shina*. "If, however, they would have honored you, my esteemed colleague, with lighting the *Menora*, surely you would have made some changes; you would have accidentally poured all the oil onto the ground, as you would be shaking and jumping from one corner to the next during your recitation of the blessing!" (*Zichron Tov Inyenei Tefilloso* #33 p. 37)



Cooling Off in the Snow

The *Chassid* Rav Shaul Leib Gantz used to relate the following story every year on *Chanuka*, and this was his tale:

Once, on *Chanuka*, the holy Ropshitzer was seen entering his home while his feet were sore and bleeding. When his family questioned him as to why he appeared so bruised and injured, he answered that he had been rolling in the snow (in those days this was a common form of self-affliction for penitents to atone for their sins). When his family exclaimed their surprise that an elderly *Tzaddik* such as himself still felt the need for such heavy measures of torture and self-affliction, he explained himself by telling them the following story:

“When I was a young man, I was filled with a great burning desire to see the holy Berditchever *Rav* light *Chanuka* candles! Nothing could deter me: not the long distance or the lack of funds for travel. And so, in the dead of winter, in the bitter cold, I began my trip and set out on foot toward Berditchev. Since I had no money, not only was transportation out of the question, but I spent my nights sleeping on the hard benches of the *Bais Medrash*, warming myself by the oven in the cold, winter nights with neither a blanket nor a cover. Many a day I froze as the bitter winds bit at me, and the frost hung on my beard and whiskers. I relied on the hospitality of strangers for food and eventually a carriage driver spotted me and had mercy on me, taking me part of the way gratis.

Finally, I reached Berditchev, cold and hungry, but with a fire burning inside me goading me on. When I reached the Berditchever *Rav*'s home, my heart leaped, but when I entered, it dropped into my stomach.

“The Berditchever's home was not like the homes of today – large and well furnished – it was but a small, cramped flat with only two rooms. In the larger room gathered a great many Jews who, like myself, had come to observe the holy *Tzaddik's avoda* in lighting the *Chanuka* candles. How, I thought to myself, will I ever see the Berditchever with such a crowd here preceding me? I grew dismayed at the thought that all my efforts could have been in vain. But I was determined at all costs to see the Berditchever *Rav* – and then I had an idea. I began to creep on the ground on all fours in between the legs of the assembled crowd.

“This was in the Ukraine in the winter; all the assembled were wearing heavy boots caked with mud and clay. Nonetheless, I continued on all fours, pushing my way through the crowd of booted feet as I was stepped on and jostled. Obviously, when I emerged, I was covered in bruises and mud but I had succeeded in reaching the far side of the room. Thus, on my hands and knees, I peered through the cracks and crevices of the ill-fitted wooden double doors and this is what my eyes beheld:

“There stood the holy Berditchever *Rav*, *mechaber* of *Kedushas Levi*, his face aflame, his excitement and ecstasy palpable as he stood pouring oil into his *Menora*! Of course there was more oil on the floor than there was in the *Menora* but I had seen enough!

“Now understand, my children,” concluded the Ropshitzer, “that today I once again remembered that *Chanuka* and the look in the Berditchever *Rav*'s eyes; his excitement set me aflame once more, and the only way I could contain myself and cool off was to roll in the snow, which is what I just did.” (*Otzar Ephraim Behaalosecha*)



What Does the Graf Know About Oneg?

In the courts of the Rizhiner dynasty on *Chanuka*, when lighting the *Menora*, they used to tell the following story about the *Tzaddik Rav Levi Yitzchok* of Berditchev:

Once, the holy Berditchever *Rav* entered his *Bais Medrash* on *Chanuka* and observed a group of *Chassidim* assembled, speaking in undertones. When they noticed the Berditchever approaching, their hushed whispers ended and they stood silently, embarrassed.

“What were you discussing?” asked the Berditchever. Abashed, the *Chassidim's* cheeks burned red with shame, as they stood silent, unanswering. However, the Berditchever was

not so easily dissuaded, and he pursued the matter once again. "Nu, what were you discussing, eh?"

Finally, one of the *Chassidim* confessed, "*Rebbe*, we were discussing the Graf Potatzski, the local squire, and how much wealth and material comfort he has. He has it all – why, even in the heat of summer if the fancy strikes him to ski, and of course there is no snow to be found, he gathers sacks and sacks of sugar and skis on the sugary mountains of artificial snow!"

The Berditchever looked back at them and countered, "Does the Graf light *Chanuka* candles?"

"Of course not, *Rebbe!*" answered the astonished *Chassid*. "The Graf is a gentile!"

"Well then," answered the Berditchever, declaring with finality, "then surely he has never tasted any true *simcha* in his life at all!" (*Yalkut Bnei Bina*)



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

בת הרה"ה מו"ה מאיר זאב הכהן כ"ץ ע"ה הי"ד מעיר נירעדהאז יע"א
ונכדת הרה"ק רבי אהרן צבי טערקלמייב זי"ע מבריד
אשת הרה"ח מו"ה אברהם חיים ע"ה גאלדענבערג

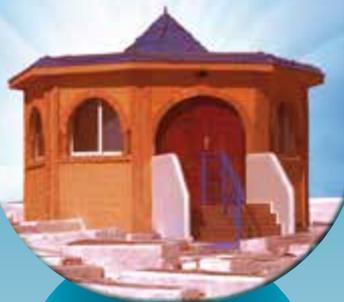
She was a Holocaust survivor who never let that period of time define her life. Although she lost most of her family - she claimed that *Hashem* gave her an amazing life. She had a unique knack of making everyone who encountered her feel like they were the most important loved person. Her inimitable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

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

(מתוך אמונה טהורה) בדרך המסורה
(והתנהגה כאשה כשרה) לכל משפחתה,
היא הודה היא הדרה - נקיה וטהורה
היוצר וצר צורה (וקיבלה הגזירה)

נפטרה בש"ט בת תשעים שנה ביום כ"ד לחודש כסלו (ערב חנוכה) שנת תשע"ח לפ"ק
תמליץ טוב בעד משפחתה היקרה ותקים לתחיה לקץ הימין מהרה ת'נצ'ב'ה'

א פריילעכען חנוכה



The Chanukah Lights Teach Us Diligence

"Reuven heard, and he rescued him from their hand; he said, 'We will not strike him mortally!' And Reuven said to them: 'Shed no blood! Throw him into this pit in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him!' – intending to rescue him from their hand, to return him to his father" (Bereishit 37:21-22)

The Midrash writes on the verse, "All my dudaim emit a fragrance; all at our doors have the precious fruits of comely deeds" (Shir Hashirim 7:14), that there is a connection between Reuven protecting Yosef and the Chanukah lights. "All my dudaim emit a fragrance", this refers to Reuven, and "all at our doors have the precious fruits of comely deeds", this refers to the Chanukah lights. This is a perplexing Midrash. How do we understand the comparison?

We can explain it in the following way: When Reuven's mother, Leah, gave the dudaim to Rachel, he understood that this act was an expression of her enormous valor. The dudaim symbolized Reuven overcoming his desire since he did not eat them and also showed his caution with regard to the sin of theft (Sanhedrin 99b). Through this act, Reuven became an example of restraint to his brothers. Leah's desire (for the dudaim) was not simply for the physical pleasure that she would enjoy when partaking of them, rather she wanted to feel the great delight represented by the dudaim – her son's strength of character. It was these dudaim that Leah presented to Rachel.

Ya'akov rebuked Reuven for changing round his father's bed and bringing it from the tent of Bilhah to the tent of Leah. Ya'akov's rebuke was that in this situation, Reuven did not use the attribute of restraint that he possessed, as he had demonstrated with the incident of the dudaim. He now behaved with rashness and let his anger lead him. The lesson that we can derive from this is that a positive attribute must be adhered to incessantly in every situation.

"All my dudaim emit a fragrance", this refers to Reuven. The meaning is, you Reuven possess the power to rule over your natural tendencies, to overcome the lust for eating and other desires. "All at our doors have the precious fruits of comely deeds", this refers to the Chanukah lights which represent the mitzvot that are within the reach of every Jew. They are the mitzvot which one can fulfill on a regular basis, as Chazal say (Makot 23b): "Hashem wished to give merits to Yisrael, therefore, He increased the Torah and mitzvot that He gave them". In this way, we remain constantly connected to mitzvot and good middot. "All my dudaim emit a fragrance", when a person knows how to overcome his yetzer hara for the sake of fulfilling a mitzvah (as Reuven showed us), he must know that "All at our doors have the precious fruits of comely deeds", he is surrounded by additional, endless mitzvot which he must take care to fulfill persistently.

This idea is symbolized by the Chanukah lights; another mitzvah and another light, until one completes the mitzvah in its entirety. The message that was inherent in Ya'akov's rebuke penetrated Reuven's essence, the proof being that he once again excelled in the attribute of restraint when

he saved Yosef. Ya'akov showed favoritism and a special love for Yosef who on the face of it took the place of the firstborn. Nevertheless, Reuven who was the true firstborn, overcame his middot, protected Yosef and saved him. When Leah gave Rachel the dudaim, Reuven had no bad feelings about this, neither against Rachel nor against her son Yosef who was born as a result of this incident. Reuven once again showed his great strength of character and despite reasons to the contrary, he saved Yosef from the pit.

"All at our doors have the precious fruits of comely deeds", this refers to the Chanukah lights. We can also learn from this verse that the mitzvah of kindling the Chanukah lights only reaches its perfection when lighting all the eight lights with perseverance, for one ascends in holiness and does not descend, according to the opinion of Beit Hillel (Shabbat 21b), who says that every night one should add an additional light. Reuven's attribute did not reach its perfection due to one incident of weakness, moving the beds, which caused a deficiency in his persistence.

This parsha is sometimes read on Chanukah, a time when we are surrounded by the mezuzah on one side and the Chanukah lights on the other. On each day of Chanukah, we read the Torah section that describes the offering brought by the leaders during the dedication of the Mishkan. Their offerings were identical yet were brought by a different leader each day. This teaches us that just like the leaders of the holy tribes, from big to small, were all unified, so too must we take care that there is no schism in Klal Yisrael at all. Each tribe brought his individual portion and the end result was an outcome of their true unity and was a perfect, complete offering.

The Zohar tells us (Vol. 3, 73:1), "Yisrael, the Torah and The Holy One are all one". The Chanukah lights symbolize the Torah, and we light them for eight days just like the numerical value of the first letter of the word Chanukah (חנוכה). The word 'שמונה' (eight) is made up of the same letters as 'נשמה' (soul) and 'השמן' (the oil). Chazal tell us (Shemot Rabbah 36) that Klal Yisrael are compared to oil. Just as oil, when mixed with water, will always float to the top, so too every time Klal Yisrael is trod upon with the intention of annihilation, they overcome their oppressors and rise up intact without even a single 'drop' remaining below. In order to achieve perfection in fulfilling the mitzvot, we are obligated to be united, since every Jewish person is connected to the other and all of us rise up together. Unity, with the absence of any negative feelings, is the condition that guarantees the existence of Am Yisrael. On Chanukah we say "In those days at this time" and the implication is that throughout the generations, we must be on the level that Bnei Yisrael achieved when bringing offerings for the dedication of the Altar. The word "Chanukah" (חנוכה) is from the term "dedication" (חנוכת המזבח). We must educate and instill in ourselves to increase love and brotherhood among us. The number eight symbolizes the neshama (of the Jewish people), while the Chanukah lights symbolize the Torah. When the Jewish people observe the Torah in unity, they are at one with Hashem.

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Hilula

23 - Rabbi Ben Zion Alfass, author of 'Ma'aseh Alfass'

24 - Rabbi Massad Shitrit, the 'Baba Sidi'

25 - Rabbi Avraham Harrari Rafel

26 - Rabbi Avraham Ben David, the Ra'avad

27 - Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kahen, the Admor of Toldot Ahron

28 - Rabbi Ezra Chamou

29 - Rabbi Yisrael Friedman



Walking in their Ways

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

Ruling out Reflections of Revenge

In Elul 5764, during the week of parashat Shoftim, I was in Montreal, receiving people before delivering a speech. A man came in with his wife and children, to ask for a blessing. As we spoke, I learned that the man intended to leave immediately after our meeting. I urged him to stay for my speech, saying, "Don't leave just yet. Stay to hear some words of inspiration. We are in the month of Elul, when everyone seeks ways of strengthening himself in teshuvah and good deeds. It can't hurt to hear some words of chizuk."

The man agreed and went into the hall to find seats for his family. During the course of the speech, I mentioned the Torah prohibitions of taking bribery, taking revenge, and bearing a grudge.

After my speech, this man came over to me, extremely moved. He kissed my hand and thanked me profusely. I asked him to explain his enthusiasm. He explained, "Of all the people who met with the Rav before the lecture, I was the only one whom the Rav asked to stay for the speech, even though I was with my wife and family. The Rav usually does not allow children to attend his speeches, because they disturb. But this time, my children did not disturb at all."

I still did not understand what he was driving at and he continued, "the Rav's speech spoke to me on a personal level. I did indeed have intentions of taking vengeance against a specific Rabbi for ruling against me. But now, after hearing your speech, I realize that this is wrong to take vengeance and bear a grudge against him for this. I will now accept his ruling without question."

"Additionally," he continued his personal confession, "I thought over his ruling and came to the conclusion that he was right. According to the Torah law, I am guilty and my adversary is innocent. I am most grateful to the Rav for enlightening me and saving me from improper thoughts of vengeance. In the merit of the Rav, I was spared terrible sins."

"Do not thank me," I told this man. "Baruch Hashem, I was chosen as the messenger to enlighten you so that you should not sin, chas v'shalom. But think about it yourself. Perhaps you did a good deed recently in which merit Hashem saved you from these serious sins."

The Haftarah

"Thus said Hashem: For three transgressions" (Amos 2,3)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah hints to the selling of Yosef Hatzaddik, as it says: "for their selling a righteous man for money". The selling of Yosef Hatzaddik is described in detail in the Parsha.

Guard Your Tongue

Be Wary Only

We explained that when hearing lashon hara one is permitted to be wary in order to protect oneself from harm. But G-d forbid, one may not cause this person any harm or embarrassment, in any form. One is even forbidden to hate him in one's heart.



Words of our Sages

Why Did the Doves Come to Rav Shteinman's Bedside?

"Ya'akov settled in the land of his father's sojournings" (Bereishit 37:1)

Before returning to his father's homeland, Ya'akov Avinu lived through great challenges. He suffered from Lavan, from Esav and from the incidents of Dina and Yosef. Chazal, in Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer on the verse, "I was not secure, I was not quiet, I was not at rest; and torment has come" (Iyov 3:25), tell us that Ya'akov did not have security because of Lavan, did not have quiet because of Esav, did not have rest because of Dina and his torment came because of Yosef.

What is the reason why Ya'akov Avinu had to go through so much suffering until finally experiencing tranquility?

The Midrash Talpilot writes in the name of the 'Galei Razy'a', that the intention behind all the suffering that Ya'akov went through, was so that he should not feel arrogant and superior to his brother Esav. He explains that had Ya'akov merited serenity and tranquility, he would have become conceited and felt greater than Esav and "Every haughty heart is the abomination of Hashem". The Shechina does not rest on such a person, and where there is no Shechina there is no Divine assistance and a person sees no success in his efforts. Ya'akov's lack of peace and quiet with the troubles and challenges that Hashem brought upon him, caused him to feel humble and therefore he merited Hashem saving him and returning to his father's homeland, without fear of Esav.

It is important to understand that any kind of hardship or suffering that a person is faced with, is orchestrated by the Hand of Hashem and we do not know the reason behind it. But once we are faced with a challenge, we should realize that it contains an element of lowering a person from feelings of pride. Would he always live in peace and tranquility, he might come to personify "Every haughty heart is the abomination of Hashem", G-d forbid.

One of the exceptional attributes of Maran Harav Ah-

ron Leib Shteinman zt"l, was fleeing from honor and from the trait of arrogance. He ascribed many of life's adversities to an outcome of pride.

Harav Yitzchak Levenstein zt"l, who enjoyed a close relationship with Harav Shteinman zt"l, told over the following story:

Once when Maran had to be hospitalized in Maynei Hayeshua, the staff wished to assign him the most comfortable room in the department. A quick check revealed that this room was already occupied by an elderly, respectable gentleman and they felt uncomfortable telling him why he was being asked to move to a different room.

The head nurse volunteered to inform him of the change and explained that the Gadol Hador would shortly be arriving and they wished to offer him the optimal conditions for recuperation. She explained that this comfortable, quiet, side room would allow him total rest. On hearing this, the elderly man rejoiced at the opportunity to do chessed with the Gadol Hador and immediately agreed to change rooms.

Several days later when Maran zt"l was about to be released, they told him that the elderly gentleman in the adjacent room had agreed to give up his original room for the Rosh Yeshiva and that maybe he wishes to visit him and bless him.

As soon as Maran heard this he said: "Now I understand why doves came to sit on the window sill of my room. They remained there the entire time and I was most puzzled. The holy sefarim tell us that it is the way of kosher birds to be attracted to a holy place. I couldn't understand why my room should be considered holy but now I understand! Since previously this elderly Jew occupied my room and he performed this noble act of sacrificing for someone else, this kind of deed brings holiness to the place and this is why the doves constantly sat by the window!

Maran did not think for a moment that maybe the doves had come because the Gadol Hador was occupying the room. He remained puzzled until he came up with a solution that had no connection to himself. This is the attribute of modesty at its perfection and an example of distancing oneself to an extreme from any thoughts of pride.



Pearls of the Parsha

A Great Foundation in Education

"Ya'akov settled in the land of his father's sojournings" (Bereishit 37:1)

Ya'akov wished to settle down in tranquility but the anguish of Yosef's kidnapping pounced upon him (Rashi). The Mashgiach Rabbi Chaim Friedlander zt"l, uses this verse to point out an important foundation in educating our children (brought in the sefer 'Kol Ram'):

Hashem certainly desires that the tzaddikim should live in tranquility, as Chazal say, "Fortunate are the righteous who have peace in this world" (Horiyut 10b). However, the intention here is tranquility in instructing one's children. Ya'akov Avinu assumed that since all his children are righteous, he no longer needs to be concerned about their education and he can now settle down in tranquility... This is why the anguish of Yosef's kidnapping pounced upon him.

This teaches us that a father must continue to pay heed to even his older and righteous children's behavior, and continue teaching them and showing them the correct path!

Conquering the Yetzer Through Faith

"But he adamantly refused; he said to his master's wife, "Look – with me here, my master concerns himself about nothing in the house, and whatever he has he placed in my custody" (Bereishit 39:8)

The 'Ilana Dechayai', in the name of Maran Harav Shlomo Chaim of Kodnaveh zt"l, explains that the word 'אָמַי' (he refused) contains the same letters as the word 'אָמַי' (he believed).

Yosef merited refusing his master's wife and conquering his yetzer hara by means of complete emunah.

He adds that the cantillation mark (ta'am) on the word 'אָמַי' is a 'shalsheles' (a long sounding repetitive note). The reason for this is because Yosef Hatzaddik refused time and time again.

Evaluating the Advice of the Evil Inclination

"How then can I perpetrate this great evil and have sinned against Hashem" (Bereishit 39:9)

The Sfat Emet queries: How did Yosef know with certainty that this act was a sin against G-d? Do not Chazal say that the intentions of the wife of Potiphar were for the sake of heaven since she saw that in the future she would bear children from Yosef? We can assume that she told this proof to Yosef. The verse tells us, "And so it was – just as she coaxed Yosef day after day", meaning that day after day she tried to convince him that the act was in fact permissible and correct. This being the case, how was Yosef able to declare with certainty that "I have sinned against Hashem"?!

The Sfat Emet zt"l answers that due to the many proofs that she brought and her constant persuasion, Yosef knew with certainty that this must be the guise of the yetzer hara. The yetzer hatov is not a nuisance, and since she bothered him with her 'proofs' day after day, Yosef took it as a sign that it was a ruse created by the yetzer hara who doesn't let up for a moment.

This principle is explained by the Vilna Gaon (Rut 1:18) on the fact that Naomi agreed to allow Rut to accompany her back to Eretz Yisrael, since "She saw that she (Rut) was exerting herself to go with her". The Gaon explains that if one wants to verify if one's actions stem from the yetzer hatov or the yetzer hara when performing the act one should observe if one's limbs are co-operating with him, or if they feel heavy. If his limbs move with alacrity to perform the mitzvah, the act is probably one that the yetzer hara is pushing you to perform since it is not natural that a person's heavy limbs, that originate from the dust, should run to perform the will of Hashem. This is simply the counsel of the yetzer hara in order to trap you in his net.

Since Naomi saw that Rut was struggling to walk and it wasn't easy for her, she took it as a sign that she was following her yetzer hatov and this is why the yetzer hara made her limbs feel heavy.

Treasures

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



Yosef's Self-effacement in Front of His Brothers

"These are the chronicles of Ya'akov: Yosef, at the age of seventeen years, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock, but he was a youth with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Yosef would bring evil reports about them to their father" (Bereishit 37:2)

"These are the generations of Ya'akov: Yosef". Why, out of all Ya'akov's children, is Yosef singled out? This teaches us that Yosef acted with humility when facing his brothers, just as his father Ya'akov played down his own worth. Yosef Hatzadik demonstrated great strength of character by acting with humility before his brothers, despite all that they did to him. The word יַעֲקֹב is made up of the letters 'י' and 'עֲקֹב', heel. The heel is a concealed limb which is found on the underside of a person's body, but it is that which is responsible for a person's entire stability. So too the letter 'yud' is the smallest of all the letters but is always written at the top of the line, which shows its significance. Ya'akov always made himself insignificant and played down his worth, but in fact, his place was reserved on high. He was considered the 'Choice one of the Avot'.

"The deeds of our forefathers are an indication for their descendants" (Tanchuma Lech Lecha 9). Yosef learned from his father's conduct and therefore he knew that it was appropriate to diminish his status in front of his brothers, even though he ruled over the entire Egypt. Before his brothers set out on their journey home, Yosef told them, "And now, be not distressed" (ibid 45:5), since when a person feels sad, the Shechina does not rest on him. Since the Shechina only rests in a place of joy (Shabbat 30b), you must leave in a spirit of happiness so that you merit Divine Inspiration which will enable you to see the truth. What is the truth? You will realize "it is my mouth that is speaking to you". 'פ' (lit. mouth, here hinting to a bodily opening) refers to the brit. Even though I lived in Mitzrayim, 'כִּי פִי', I did not commit any sins which would blemish the holy covenant, therefore, my brit remained holy. 'הַמְדַבֵּר עִלְיֵכֶם', and had I spoken lashon hara about you, holiness would not have rested on my brit.

This could be the reason why it says "These are the chronicles of Ya'akov: Yosef". Yosef Hatzadik is singled out because he was the one who personified the elevated and exalted attributes of Ya'akov Avinu.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



When a person is in danger, for example, he is facing an abyss and right behind him are people who wish to kill him, he should jump into the abyss rather than fall into the hands of man, as David Hamelech a"h said, "Let us fall into the hand of Hashem, for His mercies are abundant; but let me not fall into human hands" (Shmuel II, 24:14). What lies behind this insight? When a person who believes in Hashem faces some kind of natural danger, he places his faith totally in Hashem Yitbarach and cries out to him with all his might. The result is that Hashem watches over him and performs a miracle for him. However, when it is a human being who is the cause of the 'danger', it is natural to imagine that your fate is in his hands and he therefore becomes the address for your rescue efforts. Since one doesn't place one's trust in Hashem alone, Hashem does not watch over him with the same complete supervision and he can fall into his enemy's hands. All the more so if he completely forgets about the existence of Hashem, and only sees the human being opposite him, then Hashem removes His protection from him and he will definitely fall prey to his enemy.

Based on this idea, the 'mefarshim' explain the incident of throwing Yosef into the pit:

Yosef's brothers decided to kill him. When Reuven saw that the brothers were determined to kill Yosef, he decided to save him from their hands. Therefore, he suggested that they throw him into the empty pit... Rashi tells us that the pit was indeed empty of water, but it did contain deadly scorpions and snakes...

This seems to be most puzzling: What did Reuven think? What kind of act of rescue was this? Throwing Yosef into a pit that is full of deadly scorpions spells out certain death. Would it not be better to leave him in his brothers' hands? Maybe he will be able to arouse their mercy and they will decide not to kill him!

The answer is, explains Rabbi Shalom Arush shlita in his sefer "Garden of Faith", that Reuven knew that Yosef Hatzaddik

was a ba'al emunah, he possessed great faith. It was clear to him that as soon as Yosef becomes aware of the danger that he faces from the snakes and scorpions, he will immediately cry out to Hashem with all his heart, and then Hashem Yitbarach will certainly save him from them. For this is the condition that Hashem formed with nature: As soon as a person cries out to Hashem with all his heart – nature must change. As we are told (Lekutei Hilchot Birchot Hashachar 5): "Hashem made a condition with the sea that it should split for Bnei Yisrael. Meaning, Hashem warned nature and all the angels that are appointed over the running of the world, that the following behavior is an inherent part of nature: As soon as Bnei Yisrael cry out and wish to change the natural order of the world, they are obligated to fulfill their wish: Water should transform into dry land, the sun should stop, fire should not have the power to burn nor lions to devour."

This is why Reuven was so sure that through his act he was saving Yosef, even though he knew that the pit was full of snakes and scorpions. This is the meaning of the words, "Reuven...rescued him from their hand". The verse uses an expression of certainty. It does not say, "and he tried to save him from their hands", which would denote a possibility. For tzaddikim understand the power of prayer and they believe without a doubt that when a person cries out to Hashem, nature is immediately altered for him.

However, Reuven did not rely on Yosef Hatzaddik's faith which would be tested were he challenged by a human being who has free choice. He understood the difficulty inherent in this kind of test and he was concerned that Yosef would become confused and turn to his brothers, pleading with them or attempting to pacify or persuade, for example by saying to them, "I am your brother", or, "Have mercy on Father". As indeed was the case, it is clear from the brothers' confession that he did beg his brothers: "Indeed we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us and we paid no heed" (Bereishit 42:21). Reuven was concerned that Yosef would not place his trust in Hashem alone, in which case Hashem's protection would not be complete and the brothers would be able to kill him without any difficulty.

Of course, when Yosef was thrown into the pit, he did not plead with the snakes

or scorpions that they should not harm him, rather he cried out to Hashem with all his heart and this is why Hashem indeed saved him.

Know Before Whom You Stand

The lesson that we can derive from the above is that when a person faces a challenge presented by a human being who has free choice, for example, a driver is stopped by a police officer, or someone from his family is causing him distress, he must determine unequivocally who is really standing in his path, as it says, "Know before Whom you stand"! If he decides that he is standing before faith, meaning that he believes that this situation was determined by Hashem Yitbarach, and it is not his children, wife or police officer who are doing this to him, then he will not try to flatter, beg or put forth any effort to persuade this person, who is seemingly responsible for his fate, to leave him alone or listen to him. All the more so, he will not grow angry, despise the person or curse him. Rather, he will turn to the One who watches over him and presented him with this challenge, who is the only One who can help him, the Creator!

Even when a person suffers because of his own mistakes or failures and it seems that the ramifications are an outcome of his own free choice, he must know that indeed he made a mistake, he had the free choice not to err, but once the mistake has already occurred, he must believe that this situation holds a Divine message for him! Therefore, he shouldn't blame himself and fall into the trap of guilt and upheaval.

The explanation for this is simple: A believing person knows with certainty that when he chooses correctly, it is only because Heaven helped him. This is something that every believing person must admit and if not, it shows that he is guilty of arrogance since he feels "I am the cause of my success". This is why we are always particular to use phrases like, "with siyata dishmaya", "with the help of Hashem", "with Hashem's kindness", "Hashem helped me". In the same measure, a person is obligated to believe that even if he mistakenly chose incorrectly, this is due to the fact that he was denied Heavenly assistance. He must accept his failures with faith and love, and use them as tools for self-improvement.

In short, we must believe that without exception, any form of distress that a person experiences, or any kind of personal imperfection, is all a result of Hashem's will!

בס"ד

From our family to yours

חנוכה שמח

HAPPY CHANUKAH

THE RAMAPOST TEAM

Sharon Rajz Dani Zeman Nikki Linn Sarah Frutkin Sherry

