

ME'OROS HA'TZADDIKIM

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

Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)

🕎 VAYECHI 🕎

🕎 CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA 🕎

Dvar Torah

Cures Precede Ailments

Every word in the Torah has a purpose and a meaning. There are no superfluous words in the Torah, and yet there seems to be a redundancy in the *passuk* that describes how Yaakov blessed Ephraim and Menashe. He said, "May the Lord render you like Ephraim and Menashe." And then, the Torah tells us, that "he placed Ephraim before Menashe."

There is a deeper meaning here, explains Rav Levi Yitzchak. The Gemara tells us (Megillah 15a), "Come and see how the Holy Blessed One's attributes differ from those of mortals. Mortals place the pot on the fire and then fill it with water, but the Holy Blessed One fills it with water and then puts the pot on the fire." What does this mean?

It refers to the preparation of the remedy before the affliction appears. The physical suffering is symbolized by the pot, and the divine kindness that restores health and serenity is symbolized by water. A person pours water into the pot after it has been placed in the oven, in other words, he is faced with an ailment and seeks water to pour over it. But the Almighty begins with the water. He wants to do certain acts of kindness for a person, but the person may be unworthy; his pot may be too small, so to speak. So the Almighty afflicts him. He breaks the little pot in order to remold it into a bigger pot that is worthy of receiving the kindness in store for him.

This holds true for any tragedy or calamity that befalls a person. The Almighty has

bounteous divine emanations prepared for him, but sometimes He must first shatter the small, constricted vessel that is incapable of receiving all the blessings in store for him. In other words, the person may simply not be spiritually equipped to receive all the blessings awaiting him. Therefore, the Almighty afflicts him and remolds him spiritually into a form more suited to receive the divine emanations that have been prepared for him all along.

This is what the Torah is telling us about Ephraim and Menashe. The name Ephraim alludes to bounteous blessing, fruitfulness, proliferation, while the name Menashe alludes to tragedies and calamities that are better forgotten. Yaakov “placed Ephraim before Menashe” to indicate that blessings come first and suffering is only the precursor to the blessings that are already prepared.



Story

The doctors had basically given up all hope for the young son of Rav Avraham David Wuhrman, the *rav* of Jaslovitch. The boy lay in his bed burning up with fever, the disease ravishing his frail body impervious to all the medications the doctors had prescribed for him. His mother hovered over him throughout the day, sponging his brow and trying to squeeze a few spoonfuls of soup through his parched lips. Rav Avraham David, his father, looked in on him several times a day but spent most of his time in the *beis midrash* learning Torah and begging the Almighty that his beloved son recover in the merit of the holy Torah.

Rav Avraham David, the future author of *Eishel Avraham* and *Daas Kedoshim*, was known far and wide as a genius. At the age of nine, he had already far surpassed his teachers, and even at that tender age, the best families were vying for him as a son-in-law. At the age of ten, he was engaged to the daughter of Rav Tzvi Hirsh Kara, the *rav* of Buczacz, the author of *Neta Shaashuim*; many years later, when his father-in-law passed away, he succeeded him as the *rav* of Buczacz. After his engagement, he immediately went to Buczacz to join a group of brilliant young students studying under his future father-in-law. The group also included the young Chaim Tirer, the future *rav* of Czernowitz and author of *Be'er Mayim Chaim*. Rav Avraham David and Rav Chaim Tirer remained fast friends for life.

Rav Avraham David came to Jaslovitch as its *rav* when he was only twenty years old. The quiet and peaceful environment enabled him to devote fourteen hours each day to his learning; the town's demands on his time were minimal. He had no interest in the chassidim or anything else that might pull him away from his Gemara. Years passed by in this blissful state. Rav Avraham David drank its waters with thirst and delight. The Torah was his life, his constant companion, the focal point of his thoughts in virtually every waking moment. The days passed as in a paradise, and then the illness of his son threw everything into turmoil.

The doctors tried with all their might, but they could not bring the illness under control. Rav Avraham David and his wife stayed by the side of their delirious son and tended to his every need, trying to conceal the desperation in their hearts.

One day, his wife went out to buy a few things and returned with some interesting news.

“I’ve heard,” she told her husband, “that Rav Levi Yitzchak, the Berditchever Rav, is in Romilov right down the road. I’ve heard that his blessings work wonders. Let’s take our son to him right away.”

"Why do we need to go to him?" said Rav Avraham David. "Can his power be greater than the power of the Torah that lives in my house and blesses me? Instead of spending the time running to Romilov, I should take the time and learn even more Torah. Perhaps if I was a little closer to the Torah its blessings would save our son."

Rav Avraham David withdrew into his study and would not speak of the matter. He stated that he was learning for the recovery of his son and plunged into the Torah. In desperation, his wife went to the leaders of community and begged them to convince her husband to take their son to the Berditchever Rav. They went and pleaded with him but he would not listen. In the end, his wife's tears of frustration persuaded him to relent.

Wasting not a moment once the decision was made, Rav Avraham David, his wife and their moribund son left for Romilov that very night, traveling slowly by the light of the moon and arriving in Romilov before the break of dawn. Rav Avraham David brought his wife and son to an inn, grabbed his *tallis* and *tefillin* and ran to the *beis midrash* to speak to the Berditchever Rav before Shacharis; every moment counted. He waited while the first *minyán* prayed and then the second *minyán*, and still the Berditchever did not appear. Rav Avraham David approached the *gabbai* and asked when the *rebbe* was coming.

The *gabbai* shrugged. "It's impossible to know. The *rebbe* was up all night with his *avodah* and has only slept one hour this morning. And then he has to go through his preparations when he gets here. It could be a very long time."

Rav Avraham David sighed with resignation. He put on his *tallis* and *tefillin* and sat down in a corner. He pulled the *tallis* over head and began Shacharis with a trembling voice.

A few minutes later, Rav Levi Yitzchak arrived in the *beis midrash* and went over to the *gabbai*. "Where is he?" he said.

"Where is who?"

"I sensed troubled cries rising from the heart of a pure and holy person. Where is he? I want to see him."

Rav Levi Yitzchak looked around and saw Rav Avraham David sitting in a corner, rapt in his devotions, oblivious to the world around him.

"There he is," said Rav Levi Yitzchak. "But don't disturb him. Wait until he finishes and then bring him to me."

Rav Levi Yitzchak's eyes lit up when the *gabbai* finally brought Rav Avraham David to him. He stood up, came forward to greet him and clasped his hand warmly.

"*Shalom aleichem*," he said. "Who are you and what brings you here?"

"I am *rav* in Jaslovitch," said Rav Avraham David, "My son, my firstborn, is terribly ill, and the doctors have all but despaired of him ever recovering. The people of my town urged me to come here and ask for your blessing, so here I am."

"Where is your son?" said Rav Levi Yitzchak. "I'll bless him."

"He is at the inn with my wife."

Rav Levi Yitzchak turned to the *gabbai*. "Go and bring the boy to the *beis midrash*," he said.

The *gabbai* brought the boy minutes later. The *rebbe* laid his hands on him and blessed him. Then he looked over at Rav Avraham David.

“Don’t be afraid,” he said. “The Almighty will heal him. He will grow up and provide you with children and grandchildren devoted to the Torah.”

Rav Levi Yitzchak’s words inspired confidence in Rav Avraham David’s heart. He felt he had accomplished the purpose for which he had come to Romilov. And indeed, the boy immediately showed signs of improvement. His fever subsided, and strength seemed to flow into him. The next day, he was clearly out of danger. Rav Avraham David reported to Rav Levi Yitzchak and extended his hand in farewell.

“What is your rush, Rav Avraham?” said Rav Levi Yitzchak. “I have finally met someone whose heart truly burns with faith and love for the Almighty. It would mean a lot to me if you lingered with me here for another week.”

“It is hard for me to refuse the holy *rebbe’s* request,” said Rav Avraham David, “but I am the rav of my town, and they need me there to answer their questions and give them guidance.”

“I understand,” said Rav Levi Yitzchak, “but I’m asking you anyway.”

Rav Avraham David bowed his head. “It’s a *mitzvah* to heed the words of the Sages,” he said. “I will stay for the week.”

Rav Levi Yitzchak was so pleased that he almost danced with joy.

During that week, Rav Levi Yitzchak dazzled his new disciple with numerous insights into all aspects of the Torah. “Perhaps you will stay with me a little while longer,” he said to Rav Avraham David at the end of the week. “I need to travel to Skalit. Perhaps you will accompany me.”

Rav Avraham David had grown close to Rav Levi Yitzchak over the course of the week, and he welcomed the opportunity to spend some more time with him. Later, when Rav Levi Yitzchak concluded his visit to Skalit, Rav Avraham David accompanied him back to Berditchev. All in all, Rav Avraham David spent six weeks with Rav Levi Yitzchak before returning home to Jaslovitch. From that time on, Rav Avraham David became a devoted Chassid of the Berditchever. It often occurred to him that if his son had not fallen so seriously ill he would never have come to know and love Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev.



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

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrew Tefilla for Lighting a Yahrzeit or Hilula Candle

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

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִלּוּי נְשָׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק
 בֶּן/בַּת _____, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים
 וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטּוֹב שָׁאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחְשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדִבּוּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וְיִהְיֶה הַכֹּל
 לְזָכוֹת וּלְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִלּוּי לְנַשְׁמוֹת עַמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפֶרֶט לְנַפְשׁ רּוּחַ וְנַשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי /
 צַדִּיק _____ . יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׁתִּהְיֶנָּה נְפֹשׁוֹתֵיהֶם צְרוּרוֹת בְּצֵרוּר הַחַיִּים.

Translation:

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

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

4) Study some of his teaching or writings.

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



GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER



Yahrzeits Beginning Shabbos Vayechi

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

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

* **18th of Teves ~ Begins Friday Night (Jan 2nd)**

* **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).

* **19th of Teves ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Jan 3rd)**

* **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 Sunday Night (Jan 4th)**

* **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 Abuchatzaira**, grandson of the founder of the Abuchatzaira 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 Abuchatzaira. 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).

* **21st of Teves ~ Begins Monday Night (Jan 5th)**

* Birthdate and *yahrzeit* of **Shimon ben Yaakov Avinu**, (1567 BCE);

* **Rav Shlomo**, *Rav* of Vilna at the time of the *Vilna Gaon*, (5552/1791);

* **Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Mishkovsky**, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Knesses Chizkiyohu* in Kefar

Chassidim, *Eretz Yisrael*. The *Yeshiva Knesses Chizkiyohu* was founded in 1949 at the behest of the *Chazon Ish*. It was first located in Zichron Yaakov and was headed by Rav Noach Shimanowitz. Six years later, it moved to its permanent residence in Kfar Chassidim, under the guidance of the *Mashgiach*, Rav Eliyohu Lopian and the *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Mishkovsky, (20th of *Teves*, according to *Yated* 2007), (5742/1981);

- * **Rav Yisrael Dov** of Vilednik, the *She'eiris Yisrael* (1789–1849 or 1850). Also known as the *Maggid* of Vilednik, he was a *talmid* of Rav Mordechai Twersky (1770–1837), the Chernobyler *Rebbe*. During his lifetime, thousands journeyed to the *She'eiris Yisrael* for blessing, inspiration and consultation. Before he passed away, he told his *talmidim* that whoever would reach out and touch his door seeking help would be aided. Today, even thousands of non-Jews come to pray at his gravesite in their times of need. The *She'eiris Yisrael's* reputation continues to endure among generations of gentiles in the area, and many Jews from around the world travel to his *kever* in Vilednik, Ukraine, on his *yahrzeit*, (5610/1849);
- * **Rav Matzliach Mazuz**, the *Ish Matzliach* (1912–1971). The son of Rav Refoel and Rochel Mazuz, Matzliach was born on the island city of Djerba. When he was eleven, he was accepted into the *Yeshiva* of the eminent Rav Rachamim Chai Chavita *HaKohen*. After his marriage in 1930, Rav Matzliach moved to Tunis, where he served as a *Mashgiach Ruchani* in the *Chevras HaTalmud Yeshiva* for thirteen years. He was later appointed to the position of *Dayan* in the *Bais Din* of Tunis. Six hundred couples came to him for divorces between the years 1955–1958, and he managed to make *sholom bayis* between 75 percent of them. He founded the *Kisei Rachamim Yeshiva* in Tunis, named after his mentor, Rav Rachamim Chai Chavita. Years later, his sons reestablished this *Yeshiva* in Bnei Brak. In 1971, while Rav Matzliach was returning from a pre-dawn *minyán*, clad in *tallis* and *tefillin*, a group of Arabs attacked and killed him. Among Rav Matzliach's writings are: *Shu"t Ish Matzliach*, on the four parts of *Shulchon Aruch*, three of which are in print so far; *Kuntress HaMa'arochos*, which discusses the rules of issuing *halachic* decisions; *Matzliach Yeshua*, a collection of *chiddushim* on the *Shas*; and *Mogen V'Tzina*, answers to questions on the *Maharsha*. The rest of his writings are still in manuscript form. Rav Matzliach is survived by his sons: Rav Mayer, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Kisei Rachamim* in Bnei Brak and the leader of the Tunisian community in *Eretz Yisrael*; Rav Yosef Tzemach, the director and *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the *Yeshiva*; and Rav Rachamim, also a *Mashgiach Ruchani*. One of Rav Matzliach's daughters is married to Rav Yitzchok Barda, *mechaber* of *Yitzchok Yeranen*, and another to Rav Chanan Kablan, a *Dayan*, (5732/1971).
- * **Rav Yeshaya HaLevi Horowitz** (Hebrew: ישעי' הלוי הורוויץ), (circa 1565 – March 24, 1630), also known as the *Shela HaKodosh* (the holy *Shela*) after the title of his best-known work. He was a prominent German *Rav*, *mekubol* and mystic, born in Prague around 1565. His first teacher was his father, Rav Avraham *ben* Shabbetai Sheftel Horowitz, a notable scholar and author, and a *talmid* of Rav Moshe Isserles (the *Rem"á*). Rav Horowitz then studied under Rav Meir Lublin and Rav Yehoshua Falk. He married Chaya, daughter of Rav Avrohom Moul, a wealthy resident of Vienna, and enjoyed comfortable circumstances during his whole lifetime, devoting a large part of his income to charity, to supporting *Torah* study, especially in Yerushalayim, and to the acquisition of a library. In his many *Kabbalistic*, homiletic and *halachic* works, he stressed the joy in every action, and how one should convert the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) into good, two concepts that influenced

Jewish thought through to the eighteenth century, and greatly influenced the development of the *Chassidic* movement. Following the Fettmilch uprising in 1621, and after the *petira* of his first wife, he left his post in Frankfurt, and moved to Palestine. There he was appointed *Rav* of the *Ashkenazic* community in Yerushalayim, and married Chava, daughter of Rav Eleazer. In 1625, he was kidnapped and imprisoned, together with fifteen other *Rabbonim* and scholars, by the *Pasha Ibn Faruh*. He was released after payment of a ransom. One of the *Rav's* most important works, *Sh'nei Luchos HaBris* (Hebrew: שני לוחות הברית, Two Tablets of the Covenant, abbreviated *Shelah* של"ה), is an encyclopedic compilation of ritual, ethics and mysticism. The *Shela* also wrote the *Sha'ar HaShomayim siddur* (prayer book) which had an influence on the later *Ashkenazi Nusach*, and he composed a special prayer, *Tefillas HaShela* – The *Shela's* Prayer, to be said on *Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan*. After 1626, the *Shela HaKodosh* moved to Tzefas, a center of *Kabbola*, and later passed away in Teverya on the 11th of *Nissan*, 5390 (March 24, 1630) and is buried next to the *Ramban*, (5390/1640).

* **22nd of Teves ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Jan 6th)**

- * **Rav Shmuel Heller**, *Ashkenazi Rav* of Tsefas for forty years. On the 24th of *Teves* in 1837, he was discovered buried up to his neck in stones. He had been standing under the lintel of the *Bais Medrash Ari* at the moment of the earthquake. His wounds were so severe that he was bedridden for six months, and lost the use of one arm for the rest of his life. Rav Shmuel was a *talmid* of Rav Avrohom Dov Auerbach of Avritch (1765–1840), who spent ten years as *Rav* in Tzefas, (5645/1884);
- * **Rav Yehuda Leib Eiger** (1816–1888). A grandson of Rav Akiva Eiger, Rav Leibel was born in Warsaw. He learned under Rav Yitzchok Meir Alter, the *Chiddushei HaRim* in Warsaw. At twenty, he married and moved to Lublin, where he *davened* at the *shul* of the *Chozeh*. There, he befriended Rav Yisrael, the *Chozeh's* son. He then moved to Kotzk. He became a *Rebbe* after the *Rebbe* of Izbitza passed away in 1854. After his *petira*, his son, Rav Avrohom, printed his *seforim* *Toras Emes* and *Imrei Emes*, (5649/1888);
- * **Rav Sholom Moskowitz** of Shatz, a Romanian town in the Bukovina district (1878–1958). A direct descendant (fifth generation) of Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov and a great-grandson of Rav Michel of Premishlan, he was named after his mother's great-grandfather, the *Sar Sholom* of Belz. After learning at Shatz, he traveled to the famed *Maharsham* (Rav Sholom Schwadron) of Berzhan to study practical *halocha* and to receive *semicha*. After leading a group of *Chassidim* in Cologne, Germany, Rav Sholom arrived in London, in 1927, where he served for thirty years. Among his *seforim* is a commentary on *Perek Shira*. He promised to help anyone who comes to his *kever* on a Friday morning and lights three candles (a tradition mentioned in *Sefer Tikkunim*). He is buried in the Enfield *Bais Kevoros*, London, England, (5719/1958).

* **23rd of Teves ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Jan 7th)**

- * **Rav Yehuda Aryeh Leib HaLevi Epstein**, known as Rav Leibush of Ople. Orphaned of his father, Rav Yechiel Michel Epstein, and his mother at a young age, Rav Leibush and his two younger brothers were supported by a simple Jew of Ostrovsta. He was a *Chassid* of the *Yid HaKodosh* and the *Chozeh* of Lublin. He became *Rav* of Ozerov in 1812. His most famous descendant was Rav Moshe Yechiel Michel *HaLevi* Epstein, the *Aish Da'as* of Ozerov, (5598/1837);

* **Rav Gedalia Hertz** (1914–1977). Born in Ujazd, near Tomashov, Poland, he left for the Lubavitch *Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim* in Warsaw after his *bar mitzva*. After some years, he went to Grodno to the *Yeshiva* of Rav Shimon Shkop. After marrying in 1935, he moved to *Eretz Yisrael* and entered the *Yeshiva Sfas Emes* in Yerushalayim. The following year, the Gerrer *Rebbe*, the *Imrei Emes*, decided to open a branch in Tel Aviv, which was later named *Yeshivas Chiddushei HaRim*; Rav Gedalia was chosen as *Rosh Yeshiva* while still in his early twenties. After the founding of the State of Israel, he was chosen to be the representative of the *Vaad HaYeshivos* to government officials and was instrumental in getting Ben Gurion to accept a deferral for all *Yeshiva* students. In 1955, Rav Gedalia became the *Rav* of the newly established *Yeshiva kehilla* in Sydney, Australia. In 1963, he returned to *Eretz Yisrael*, (5738/1977).

* **24th of Teves ~ Begins Thursday Night (Jan 8th)**

* **Rav Naftoli Katz**, *mechaber* of *Semichas Chachomim* (1660–1719), descendant of the *Maharal*. Born in Ostracha, Ukraine, he passed away in Istanbul. His father, Yitzchok, a *Rav* in Stefan and a *darshan* in Prague, was *niftar* in 1670. Rav Naftoli married Esther Sheindl, daughter of Shmuel Shmelke Zak of Ostraha, and headed the *Yeshiva* that his father-in-law built for him. After Rav Shmuel was *niftar*, he succeeded him as *Rav* and *Av Bais Din*. In 1704 he became *Rav* of Frankfurt until 1711, when a fire broke out in his home and spread from there, burning down several hundred homes. Rav Naftoli was jailed and accused of setting the fire. When he was released, he left for Prague and Breslau and stayed with Rav Zvi Ashkenazi (the *Chacham Zvi*). They both excommunicated Nechemya Chayun, who wrote a book in favor of Shabbetai Zvi. He had fourteen children, seven sons and seven daughters. Rav Yaakov Emden, the son of the *Chacham Zvi*, married Rav Naftoli's daughter, Rochel. [*Hamodia* 2006 lists Rav Naftoli Katz, the *Semichas Chachomim*, as the 24th of *Shvat*], (5480/1719);

* **Rav Yosef** of Yampula, son of the Zlotchiver *Maggid*, (5573/1812);

* **Rav Shneur Zalman** of Liadi, affectionately called the *Alter Rebbe* (1745–1813), the *Ba'al HaTanya*. The *Rav* became a *talmid* of the *Maggid* of Mezritch at the age of thirty, studying with him for twelve years, and became the leader of *Chassidus* in Lithuania following the *Maggid's petira* in 1772. While raising money for the release of Jewish prisoners from Czarist jails, he was arrested on charges of treason and incarcerated in Peter-Paul Fortress in Saint Petersburg. There he astonished jailers and courtiers with his wisdom and piety. Eventually he was released, and moved to Liadi. In addition to the *Tanya*, he also authored the *Shulchon Aruch HaRav*. The *Rav* was a mystic, a communal activist, a philosopher, a halachic authority, a composer, a *talmudist* – but he was primarily a spiritual guide, who created a practical path that allows anyone to approach divinity. Although Rav Shneur Zalman lived in an era of change and unrest on a global scale, his life and teachings have continued to inspire. His *kever* is in Haditch, Ukraine, (5574/1813);

* **Rav Meir Eisenstadt**, also known as *Meir Ash*. His responsa were published by his son under the title *Imrei Eish*. He was *niftar* in Ungvár, (5622/1861);

* **Rav Avrohom Dov Berish Flamm** (1804–1873). Rav Flamm is considered to be the leading *talmid* of the Dubno *Maggid*, Rav Yaakov Kranz, although, in fact, the two never met. Rav Flamm was, however, the leading student of the *Maggid's* writings, and it was he, together with the *Maggid's* son, Rav Yitzchok Kranz, who edited them and prepared them for publication. Rav Flamm was himself a popular *Maggid*, and he held that post in several

Polish and Lithuanian cities. Besides publishing the Dubno *Maggid's Ohel Yaakov* and *Sefer HaMiddos*, Rav Flamm wrote several works of his own. His *Yerios Ha'Ohel* and *Sefas Ha'Yeria* were printed together with *Ohel Yaakov*, while his *Shemen HaMor* is a free-standing work, (5634/1873);

- * **Rav Moshe Yosef Teitelbaum** (1842–1897). The son of Rav Yekusiel Yehuda Teitelbaum, he was appointed *Rav* and *Av Bais Din* of Stropkov when Rav Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam returned to Sienawa in 1880. In 1891, he left the town for a post in Ujhely, Hungary, (5658/1897);
- * **Rav Shmuel Borenstein**, the *Shem MiShmuel* from Sochatchov (1855–1926). He was born in Kotzk to Rav Avrohom Borenstein, the Sochatchover *Rebbe* and *mechaber* of *Avnei Nezer*. His grandfathers were Rav Nachum Ze'ev of Biala, the *Agudas Eizov* and Rav Menachem Mendel, the *Kotzker Rebbe*. Rav Shmuel considered Rav Chanoch Henoch of Alexander to be his *Rebbe*. After the *petira* of the Alexander *Rebbe* in 1870, the *Avnei Nezer* was made *Rebbe*, and his son followed him as his *Rebbe*. He was married in 1873, but after his wife was *niftar* in 1901, he remarried in 1903. Rav Shmuel served as *Maggid Shiur* in his father's *Yeshiva* in Sochatchov and helped him write *Eglei Tal* on the thirty-nine *melochos* of *Shabbos*, as well as *Avnei Nezer*. After his father was *niftar* in 1910, the *Chassidim* crowned Rav Shmuel their *Rebbe*. His *sefer* contains the thoughts of his famous father, (5687/1926);
- * **Rav Avrohom Shmuel Binyomin Sofer** (II), the *Divrei Sofer* [*Yated* 12.28.07]. {Avrohom Shmuel Binyomin Sofer (I) was the eldest son of the *Chasam Sofer* and Sorel, daughter of Rav Akiva Eiger, and was known as the *Ksav Sofer*, (1815–1871)}, (5709/1948);
- * **Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler** (1892–1953). His father, Rav Reuven Dov Dessler, was a *talmid muvhok* of Rav Simcha Zissel of Kelm, and his mother was a granddaughter of Rav Yisrael Salanter and a niece of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski. After learning in Kelm, he married a granddaughter of Rav Simcha Zissel. During the Bolshevik revolution, he moved to London in 1927. In 1941, he founded the Gateshead *Yeshiva* and *kollel*. In 1948, he was asked by Rav Yosef Kahaneman to join the *Ponevezh Yeshiva* in Bnei Brak. Many of his thoughts and discourses are collected in *Michtov Me'Eliyohu*. [25th of *Teves*, according to *Yated* 2007], (5714/1953);
- * **Rav Moshe Mordechai Biederman**, the *Lelover Rebbe* (1904–1987). Son of Rav Shimon Nosson Nota Biederman, Moshe Mordechai was born in Yerushalayim. When he was just ten years old, his mother passed away and his father moved to Cracow, Poland, leaving him to the care of his grandfather, Rav Dovid. Five years later, after the *petira* of his grandfather, he traveled to Europe and established his place of learning at the Radomsker *shtiebel* in Cracow. He became very close to the *Stoliner Rebbe*, the *Yenuka*. When his father was *niftar* in 1930, the *Chassidim* looked to Rav Moshe Mordechai to become their new *Rebbe*. He stayed in Poland until right before the onset of the War, settling in Tel Aviv in 1944. [*Hamodia* Jan. 3, 2007] (5748/1987);
- * **Rav Mordechai Gifter** (1915–2001). Born in Richmond, Virginia, he moved to Baltimore with his family when his father noted the difficulty in teaching his son in a city without strong *Torah* resources. As a youth, he studied in the Rav Yitzchok Elchonon *Yeshiva* of New York City under his *Rav*, Rav Moshe *HaLevi* Soloveitchik. Rav Gifter studied together with Rav Nosson Wachtfogel, former *Mashgiach* of Lakewood and Rav Avigdor Miller of Flatbush in the *Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Yeshiva*. On the advice of his uncle, Rav Yehuda

Leib Zer, one of the directors of the *Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Yeshiva*, Rav Gifter went to study in the *Telz Yeshiva* of Lithuania in the winter of 1932. He became very close to the *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Avrohom Yitzchok Bloch. In the summer of 1939, Rav Gifter became engaged to the daughter of Rav Zalman Bloch. The wedding date was set for a year later. The couple married in the United States. With the expansion of the *Ner Yisrael Yeshiva* in Baltimore by Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman, Rav Gifter was asked to deliver *chaburos* to the students. In 1943, Rav Gifter became a *Rav* in Connecticut, and later, his uncles, Rav Eliyohu Meir Bloch and Rav Chaim Mordechai Katz, founded the *Telz Yeshiva* in Cleveland. They asked him to join them as *Ra"m* and *Mashgiach*. He moved to *Eretz Yisrael* in 1976, founding the *Telz Yeshiva* in Kiryat Telz-Stone near Yerushalayim. However, three years later, the *Rosh Yeshiva* of Telz in Cleveland, Rav Boruch Sorotzkin, was *niftar*, and Rav Gifter returned to Cleveland to succeed him. And there he remained until his own *petira*, (23rd of *Teves*, according to *Yated* 2007), (5762/2001);

* **Rav Moshe Akiva Tikochinsky**, *Mashgiach* of *Slabodka Yeshiva* in Bnei Brak. *Mechaber* of *Bein HaSh'moshos* and *HaYomom Bekadur Ha'aretz*, (5749/1988).



❁ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❁

WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

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

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

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



❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

STORIES & ANECDOTES

Rav 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 Yissoschor* 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)



It is well known that the holy Tzaddik, the author of the Bnai Yissaschar, was named after the Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk who was his uncle. The Rebbe Reb Elimelech had asked his niece to name the child she was carrying after him; however, since Ashkenazic custom is only to name after non-living relatives, his niece feared to do so. She therefore called him Tzvi Elimelech, adding the name Tzvi. When the infant was brought before his holy uncle for a beracha, the Rebbe was not pleased. He admonished his niece saying, "Had he been named entirely after me, he would have been just like me. Now, his stature will only be half of mine." Others say that the Rebbe said, "A Hirsch iz nisht kayn Melech." This is a pun on the name

Tzvi Elimelech since Tzvi means a deer or Hirsch in Yiddish and a deer is not the "king" (Melech) of the animals.



The Bnai Yissaschar named his most well-known *sefer* on the Yamim Tovim based of the following incident: Every Chanukah, Rav Tzvi Elimelech would feel greatly inspired and his soul was uplifted much more than during any other time of the year. This puzzled him since he was not a descendant of Kohanim, and thus, he did not descend from the Chashmonaim. He travelled to his mentor and Rebbe, the all-seeing Chozeh or Seer of Lublin. As soon as he crossed the Tzaddik's threshold, the Chozeh answered his yet unspoken question and told him he descended from the shevet of Yissaschar and that in his past life he sat on the council and Bais Din of the Chashmonaim!



Once, a pauper came to Dynow, (others say this occurred when the Rebbe still resided in Miszlabritz) and he took lodging by the attendant of the bathhouse. No one took special note of the beggar except the Rebbe, the Bnai Yissaschar. On Shabbos, to the great surprise of his sons, he sent his leftovers (the shirayim which Rebbes distribute as a source of beracha to honor their followers, the chassidim), both from the Friday night and Shabbos day tisch to the stranger. By Shalosh Seudos, the third mystical Shabbos meal, the Rebbe tried to send his shirayim once more to the pauper but no one knew where he was. "He is staying by the bathhouse attendant,"

someone said, and so the Rebbe carefully covered the food with an overturned plate and sent it with one of his sons. Everyone was astonished at the honor and kavod the Rebbe kept displaying for this beggar.

On Motzai Shabbos, the Rebbe's sons came in to wish him a 'Gut Voch' and speak with him, as was their custom. The Rebbe however, uncharacteristically answered them quickly and then shooed them out of his room, all except his son Rav Dovid, who feigned to be asleep. As much as the Rebbe prodded and shook him to wake him up, Rav Dovid pretended to sleep. And then, with a knock at the door the beggar entered. The Rebbe prostrated himself before the pauper and greeted him saying, "Shalom Aleichem Rebbe uMori – Welcome my master and teacher!" Then, they began to converse about what will be in the end of days and the visitor revealed that he had come to him, as well as two

other Tzaddikim (one of whom possibly was the Sar Shalom of Belz).

When Rav Dovid told his brothers what he saw and heard, they hurried early the next morning to the bathhouse attendant to meet the special guest, but the pauper had already departed. However, upon searching, they found that he had left behind some mysterious writings. They gathered them up and ran off to the ezras nashim and there, in the empty women's section, they began to peruse the writings full of secrets. Suddenly, the Rebbe, burst into the room, grabbed the writings and told them that they were forbidden to touch them since they belonged to Moshiach. That is when they realized that their guest had been none other than Moshiach himself!

(Maasai Hashem Volume II, pages 417-423)



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 Tefilat, 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.



Rav Yisrael Dov of Vilednik, 21st of Teves

Mechaber of the She'eiris Yisrael

Rav Yisrael Dov of Vilednik points out a *diyuk* in the words of *Chazal*: *Dovid HaMelech* did not “sin” – rather he was “mistaken” – because at the hand of Heaven he was caused to err, in order to raise up the “fallen souls of Yisrael” (i.e. in generations to come). This is what *Chazal* mean when they say that *Dovid HaMelech* only succumbed to “that incident” (with *Bassheva*) in order to teach us how to do *teshuva*. All those who have succumbed to “*p'gam habris*” can receive their *tikkun* through *Dovid HaMelech (She'eiris Yisrael-Vilednik, Shovavim Likkutim)*. Through *Tehillim*, in particular, one will be brought to repentance, which will bring about the *tikkun*.

The Viledniker's Mother (Famed Rav Shlomo Carlebach story)

One day the holy *Viledniker* was told that the wife of one of his *Chassidim* had moved back to her parents. He was so heartbroken – he called the woman and this is what he said: “I want you to know, your husband loves you so much. He is up all night in the *shul*, reciting *Tehillim* and *davening* that you should come back to him, because he loves you so much. So I'm begging you, please, please, please, go back to your husband who loves you.”

And this is what she said, “*Rebbe*, let it be clear to you: I didn't leave my husband because I don't love him. On the contrary, I

love him so much. But *Hashem* hasn't blessed us yet with children, and a house without children is more destroyed than the *Bais HaMikdosh*. A house without laughter, without crying of children, is so lonely, so empty. I couldn't bear it anymore, so I went back to my parents' home. But *Rebbe*, if you want me to go back to my husband, bless me with children." She was a very clever woman, so she added, "*Rebbe*, if you bless me with children, bless me to have a son like you."

The holy Viledniker just smiled and said to her, "I'll be so happy to bless you to have a son like me, but you have to promise me something: If you will be a mother like my mother, then you will have children like me. Let me tell you about my mother: It should never happen to any child in the world. My father left the world when I was seven, and I had a brother who was only five years old, and my mother was taking care of us. My mother was so good to us; *gevult* was she sweet – *gevult* was she holy – *gevult* was she beautiful. One morning, she woke up and she said, '*Yisraelk'le mien tier kind* [Yisrael'ek'le, my precious son], please bring me a *siddur*. I have to *daven* but I am too sick to get out of bed.' I brought my mother the *siddur* and she held it in her holy hands. This is what she said: 'Master of the world, *Tatte Zeese, Heilege Tatte* [Sweet Father, Holy Father], I'm so sick. I can't even *daven*. But Master of the World, You know the truth; if I won't take care of my children, there is nobody else who will take care of them. So just for the sake of my children, *Tatte Zeese*, Master of the world, make me well.' I swear to you: she got up, she was well.

"One more story about my mother: Can you imagine how many tears my mother shed, how many *tefillos* she offered, when she kindled the lights before *Shabbos*? I was so little, yet I knew; the only one who prayed more than my mother, was the *Kohen Godol* on *Yom Kippur* in the Holy of Holies. So one Friday

she was crying so much, and I guess she bent over the candles, and her tears fell on the candles. When she opened her eyes, it was already *Shabbos*. There were no more candles. The tears extinguished the fire. My mother said, 'Master of the World, *Heilige Tatte in Himmel* [Holy Father in Heaven], I can't live without the light of *Shabbos*. Master of the world, Master of the world, Master of the world, how can I have *Shabbos* without my *Shabbosdike licht* [light of *Shabbos*]? But it's already *Shabbos*, so I'm begging You, Master of the world, please – You, You Master of the world, rekindle my light, rekindle my *Shabbosdike Licht*."

The Viledniker *Rebbe* said to the woman, "I swear to you, I saw a hand coming down from Heaven and kindling the lights of *Shabbos*."



In one of the cities in the Ukraine a terrible plague broke out. As the death toll rose, the community leaders decided to seek out sinners and transgressors, for they felt if they could root them out they could stop the plague from spreading and taking lives.

There was one family in town where it was well known that the husband and wife did not live together, because he was a simpleton and she was sophisticated. Since their family matters were well publicized the council determined that the wife must be at fault; surely it was her infidelity and promiscuous behavior that had brought this plague upon them. They decided to give her lashes. After they had meted out their punishment to atone for her suspected sins, the woman could not hold back her shame. She declared boldly that she was pure and blameless and that their accusation and suspicions were false. She asked that they travel to the *Tzaddik*, the Viledniker *Rebbe*, to whom all secrets were revealed and all things known, so that he too could reveal her righteousness and

proclaim her not guilty and clear her besmirched reputation.

When they arrived she immediately began to scream and berate the community leaders. But the *Tzaddik* turned to her and said, “My dear woman, hold your tongue, for though you are blameless for the sin they have accused you of, nonetheless you are worthy of lashes. For it has been decreed in Heaven that you are to be punished. So what if your husband is no wise man?! Is that a reason for your mistreatment of him? You ignore him and his love, and his wretched soul is so pained by your mistreatment of him that he has sat and sobbed through many chapters of *Tehillim*. He has true *yiras shomayim*. In Heaven they heard his cries and anguish and have judged you guilty and sentenced you to lashes, which you have rightfully received. Now go home and act like a good kosher Jewish wife and all shall be well.” It was then that the woman turned to the *Tzaddik* and said, “If the *Rebbe* will promise me a son as righteous as he himself is, then I will listen to everything the *Rebbe* tells me to do.”

“You wish to merit a son such as I am? Well, if you wish to have a son like me, you must be as my mother was. If you will be like my mother then you will merit such a son.”

The woman asked, “How was the *Rebbe*’s mother?”

“Let me tell you of my mother,” answered the *Vildeniker*.

“When I was very young I was orphaned from my father. I was raised by my mother, but when I was just nine or ten she became deathly ill. As she lay in bed, wasting away, she called me over and asked for a *sefer*.

“I knew that she could not read Hebrew, so I was amazed, but asked her which *sefer* I should bring. ‘Whichever *sefer* you wish – it does not matter,’ my mother answered.

“I brought her a large volume which was the *Rif*’s commentary to the *Talmud*. My mother took the *Rif* in her hands and said: ‘*Heilige Osios! Bet dem obishter das mein Yisrael Ber zol zein ein erlicher yid! - Holy Letters, please approach and beseech Hashem that my son Yisrael Ber will be a holy and righteous Jew!*’ For she foresaw her untimely passing and knew that she would not live to raise me.

“Now,” concluded the *Viledniker*, “do you understand the type of mother I had? When you will be like her, then your son will be like me.”

(cited from the story told by Eliezer Dov Friedman in the name of Rav Betzalel Vilshansky – *She’eiris Yisrael*, p. 14-15)



From the *Rav*’s writing:

“The *Torah* was given over in seventy languages clearly explained” . . . “The holy *Torah* itself is (written using) holy letters. They are initially encloded in the holy tongue (Hebrew). Afterward, they are clothed in sackcloth in thousands of different vestments and it contains the entirety of those seventy languages.

...I heard from my master, the holy *Rebbe* of Czernobyl, that it was revealed to him from heaven in a dream that for three hundred years they are preparing and organizing the limbs of the *Moshiach*. He was told that it is hinted to in a *Rashi* that this preparation and organization is using *La’az*, foreign languages, meaning to say that *Moshiach*’s



limbs are prepared specifically through foreign languages; this is a very deep thing indeed. This is because *Moshiach's* concept is to cause all the nations to call out clearly in their language in *Hashem's* name (*Tzefania* 7:15) because *Moshiach* is revealed once the seventy languages have been gathered together from among the seventy angelic princes which are sackcloth garments for *Torah*, and become nullified to the *Torah* as we all call out in *Hashem's* name. Not so when the *Torah* was given, when there were seventy distinct languages, and they were including at that time in the holy *Torah*. However, in the future, all the power of the seventy languages will be nullified completely, as it

says in *Tzefania* above.

Truthfully, the final task of refinement called *Birurim* is achieved through languages, since every word and idea contains a spark of holiness and that spark is refined and uplifted through true unifications and combinations using foreign languages to elucidate and explain the holy *Torah*. This is the purpose of the unifications and upliftment of the holy sparks. Therefore when you study and learn you should translate all you learn specifically into *La'az* - a foreign language. This rectifies sinful thoughts and evil thoughts which cause the holy sparks to fall into the realm of the broken vessels."



Rav Yosef Shatzkes, 21st of Teves

Av Bais Din of Brod

Rav Shatzkes was a *boki*, well versed in the *Gemora Yerushalmi*. Before he passed away, he requested that only a person well versed in *Yerushalmi* be buried beside him, because he wanted a *chavrusa* in the next world who could learn with him! The *chevra kadisha* read this and accepted it. They were astonished when

some time later, the *mechaber* of the commentary *Pnei Moshe* on the *Yerushalmi* visited Brod, got sick and passed away – and so he was buried next to Rav Shatzkes and became his *chavrusa* in *Yerushalmi* in *Olam HaBa!* (Pinkus of the Brod *Kloiz*, printed in *Arim VeImahos BeYisroel* Volume 6, p. 333)



Rav Sholom of Shatz, 22nd of Teves

Mechaber of *Ohr HaGonuz*

There is a photo of the Shatzer taken with his permission. Written on its reverse side is the *pasuk*: *ba'avur tihey yiroso al pneichem levilti secheto'u* – “in order that fear of *Hashem* be on you to prevent you from sin”. This is the story of such a special photo and its signature:

Once, the Shatzer's daughter, Rebbetzin Chaya, came to visit and requested a photo. Initially he refused, and

quipped, “What will you do with such a photo? Will it help your *Yiras Shomayim?*” She said that yes, it would – and so he agreed and stipulated that he would inscribe the photo on its reverse, which is why his photo is inscribed by himself as a *segula* for *Yiras Shomayim*.

(*Ohr HaGonuz* II, *Kuntres Likkutei Dibburim* 18)

Rav Naftoli HaKohen Katz of Pozna, 24th of Teves

Mechaber of Semichas Chachomim

A Holy Aura

Once, when a young *Tzaddik* was a *Yeshiva bochur*, he was unsure about which *Yeshiva* to attend, until a heavenly voice directed him to Pozna, to the *Yeshiva* of the *Semichas Chachomim*. When the young *Tzaddik* arrived and attended a *shiur*, he was greatly astonished to see a bright, shining aura, burning like a candle, above the head of the *Maggid Shiur*, the *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Naftoli Katz, *mechaber* of the *Semichas Chachomim*!

He decided to shadow the *Rosh Yeshiva* and try to learn what special deeds he must have accomplished to earn such a shining aura like a burning flame. And so he tagged along and observed that he fed many guests, including the poor and indigent at his table – but this was not enough reason. He further investigated and discovered that he served his guests himself and personally attended to their needs, even while he himself ate nothing, for he was fasting – yet he concluded that this too was not enough reason for the shining aura. He continued to follow the *Rav* around and witnessed how he slept. He stole into his bedroom, hid himself and saw how Rav Katz closed the door, locked

it, opened a sealed chest, took out a stone and lay down on the ground and slept on the stone as a pillow! After about an hour, he rose, went over to the bed, messed up the sheets, covers and pillows and rearranged them to make the bed appear slept in, and proceeded to study *Torah* secretly. This, he concluded, was the reason why he merited the shining aura of a candle burning above his holy head! (*Teshuas Tzaddikim* p. 480–481)



Guard Your Eyes

The Spinka *Rebbe*, *mechaber* of *Imrei Yosef*, used to be very careful to guard his eyes from inadvertently gazing at or seeing any forbidden sights. So much so, that when he walked outside in the street he kept one eye closed; the other he opened just a small slit to see. One day, he studied the *sefer Semichas Chachomim* and saw written there that whoever gazes with only one eye is doing something that has a negative sign. This is because the wicked Bilaam was one-eyed. From then on, he would walk with both eyes shut and someone would lead him. (Introduction to *Chakal Yitzchok, Maamar* 5:1)



Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, 24th of Teves

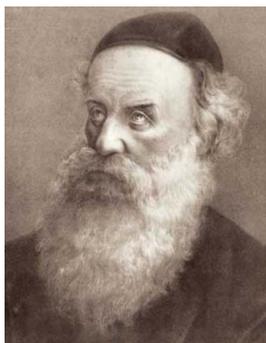
The Ba'al HaTanya, Founder of Chabad Chassidus, Der Alter Rebbe

There was once a *Chassid* of the *Alter Rebbe* who was a peddler of goods and made a living traveling from town to town selling his items. One time, during a *yechidus*, the *Rebbe* asked him questions and, after hearing the *Chassid's* responses, the *Alter Rebbe* advised him always to carry with him three *challos*. The *Chassid* did not understand why the *Rebbe* would give him such a strange instruction, but he

did exactly as the *Rebbe* had instructed, trusting that one day he would understand why he got such advice from the *Rebbe*.

And so it happened one day that the *Chassid* was traveling before *Shabbos* and he lost his way. *Shabbos* was approaching soon, so he quickly tried to find a place to stay. He knocked on a house and the owner came out with a friendly smile. They exchanged greetings and the *Chassid*

explained to the man that he needed a place to stay the night. The man invited him in and led him to his room. Now, this man was a non-Jew, and when he opened the door and led the *Chassid* into the room, the *Chassid* realized that there was a friend that was going to be staying with him that night. It was a huge dog, the size of the *Chassid* himself! He realized that his host was not as friendly as he had first appeared to be and quickly turned around to go back. By this time the door was locked and the non-Jew told him that “in this room people go in but they do not come out.”



The *Chassid* became very afraid. He figured that being in a room with such a friend he did not have long to live. He started *davening* to *Hashem* and saying *vidui* (confession). He noticed that the dog was just sitting in his corner. So the *Chassid* began *davening mincha*. Still, the dog was quiet. He then *davened kabbolas Shabbos* and *maariv*. The *Chassid* remembered that he had three *challos* with him, so when he found some water in the room, he washed and made *kiddush* on the bread. The dog listened to *kiddush*, so to speak, and afterward was very excited. The *Chassid* realized that the dog wanted some *challa*, so he ate a small piece and gave the dog the rest of the loaf. Needless to say, the rest of the night he did not sleep; with such a friend in the room, who could sleep? Morning came and the *Chassid davened shacharis* – and the scene repeated itself with the *challa*.

After *Shabbos* the owner of the house opened the door to the room carrying a broom and bucket, planning to clean up the bones of the man. Lo and behold – he found the *Chassid* sitting in one corner and the dog in the other. So he

screamed at the dog, “Get that Jew – eat him!” But the dog wouldn’t move. The *Chassid* realized that when you feed a dog, you become its owner. So he said to the dog, “Get that man!” The dog jumped on the non-Jew and tore him apart.

Then the dog took the Jew by his *kappota* and dragged him to the forest. There, he took him to a place where the *Chassid* found a great treasure, a chest filled with gold coins. The non-Jew had acquired it all by killing and stealing from his former “guests”. The dog grabbed the Jew again and took him outside the forest near his village. At that point the dog dropped dead. The Jew realized where he was and made his way home. Before going home he stopped by the *Alter Rebbe* to tell him all that had transpired. The *Rebbe* took him in and told him the following: “The dog was a *gilgul* (reincarnation) of a Jew who did not properly fulfill the *mitzva* of eating after making *kiddush*. His punishment was to be stuck in the body of this dog. When you made *kiddush* for him this was his rectification. The reason he took you to show the gold coins is because he wanted to repay you for helping him accomplish his *tikkun* so that he could go to *Gan Eden*.” The *Rebbe* told the *Chassid* that he should open a business with the gold coins. This the *Chassid* did and became a rich man.

Needless to say, the *Chassid* then realized why the *Rebbe* had given him the seemingly strange instruction to carry three *challos* with him at all times.



A mitzva is made to be performed only when it is clothed in the ways of nature.

After his arrest, Rav Shneur Zalman was at once escorted to the secret cells of the dreaded Peter-Paul fortress in Saint Petersburg, where he was to spend over seven weeks until his miraculous release on the 19th (*Yud-Tes*) of *Kislev*, 1798. For the

first three weeks he was held under severe conditions – the lot of those impeached for rebellion against the Czar. The rationale for this was simple: one of the principal charges against the *Rebbe* was that he had treacherously raised funds for Russia's traditional enemy, the Turkish sultan. (He had collected money through the charity boxes of the *Rav Meir Ba'al Haness Fund* for the support of his *talmidim* in the Holy Land, which was then under Turkish rule!)

This interrogation took place not there, but in the headquarters of the Tainy Soviet, the Secret Council on the other side of the Neva River, so that the *Rebbe* had to be taken across each time by ferry.

On one such occasion, the *Rebbe* asked the gentile official accompanying him to stop the ferry so that he could stand and recite *Kiddush Levona*, the blessing recited over the new moon. He refused, whereupon the *Rebbe* said, "If I want to, I can stop the boat myself."

And indeed, after the man again refused to oblige, the boat stopped in the middle of the river. The *Rebbe* then recited the *pesukim* of *Tehillim* 148, which are said before the blessing over the moon, but did not pronounce the blessing itself. The ferryman realized that unusual forces were at work. He begged the *Rebbe* to release the boat. The ferry then proceeded on its way.

When the *Rebbe* again asked the official to stop the boat, he asked, "What will you give me in exchange for the favor?"

In reply, Rav Shneur Zalman gave him a blessing. The man then demanded it in writing, and the *Rebbe* recorded it on a note in his own handwriting.

In later years, when that official rose to a position of power and enjoyed an old age of honor and prosperity, he treasured that note, which he kept under glass in a heavy gold frame. Indeed, it was seen and read by a renowned *talmid* of the *Rebbe* by the name of Rav Dov Zev, who, before he was appointed *Rav* of the *Chassidic*

community in Yekaterinoslav, lived in Stradov, where he was given the main responsibility of teaching *Chassidic* philosophy and guiding the *Chassidim* in observance and self-refinement. He had heard from an aged *Chassid* that there lived a gentile squire not too far from Stradov who was the son of the official who had received that written blessing from Rav Shneur Zalman halfway across the River Neva. The son too revered the note in the frame, he said. Hearing this, Rav Dov Zev made it his business to locate that nobleman, and was thus able to see the note.

One year on the 19th of *Kislev*, on the anniversary of Rav Shneur Zalman's release, Rav Yosef Yitzchok related the above episode and added that as a boy he had been left with a question. Since the *Rebbe* had already stopped the boat, why did he not recite the *berocha* as well, and then he would not have to depend upon the favor of the gentile? When he grew older, he continued, and had grasped the approach of *Chassidus* more profoundly, he understood that there was a point of principle involved. The *Rebbe* had been obliged to act as he did, for a *mitzva* is made to be performed only when it is clothed in the ways of nature, and not through supernatural means.

He added incidentally that the very fact that a manuscript page of Rav Shneur Zalman's handwriting should be found in the hands of a gentile is a mystery known only to the Knower of Secrets.



In 1812, Napoleon's *Grande Armée* invaded Russia, with the self-proclaimed "liberator's" aim to bring the whole of Europe under his hegemony.

Around that time, Rav Schneur Zalman of Liadi wrote to one of his *talmidim*:

If *Bais* – B[onaparte] will be victorious, Jewish wealth will increase, and the prestige of the Jewish people will be raised; but their hearts will disintegrate and be distanced from their Father in Heaven. But if Aleph – A[lexander] will be victorious, although Israel's poverty will increase and their prestige will be lowered, their hearts will be joined, bound and unified with their Father in Heaven. And this shall be your sign: in the near time, the apple of your eyes will be taken from you... (Igros Kodesh Admor HaZoken, letter #64)



[This was a famed and raging dispute, mainly between the Ba'al HaTanya and Rebbe Reb Mendele of Riminov (who were chaverim) with regard to who should win: the Czar of Russia or Napoleon. Rebbe Reb Mendele felt that although there was a threat of assimilation under Napoleon, nevertheless the Jews suffered tremendously under the Russian Czar and felt it was time to live under the freedom of rights that Napoleon's win offered. Although Napoleon ultimately lost, Rebbe Reb Mendele's curse came true in later years, when the Czar's entire family was savagely wiped out.]

The *Chassid* to whom this letter was addressed, Rav Moshe Maizlish of Vilna, was no mere bystander to these events. At Rav Schneur Zalman's behest, Rav Moshe served as a spy for the Russians, passing on information he picked up in the French general command, where he worked as an interpreter, to the czar's generals.

When Napoleon's advancing armies approached Rav Schneur Zalman's hometown of Liadi, the *Rebbe* was forced to flee. The *Rebbe* left Liadi with sixty wagons carrying his extended family and

many of his *Chassidim*, escorted by a troop of soldiers attached to the convoy by express order of the czar.

A few miles out of Liadi, the *Rebbe* suddenly requested from the officers accompanying the convoy that they provide him with a light carriage, two good horses and two armed drivers. Taking along some of his own people, the *Rebbe* rushed back to Liadi. Upon arriving back at his own home, he instructed that a careful search be made to see if any of his personal items had been left behind. After a thorough search, a pair of worn-out slippers, a rolling pin and a kneading bowl were found in the attic. The *Rebbe* instructed that these be taken along, and that the house be set on fire. He then blessed the inhabitants of the town, and quickly departed.



Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, winter of 1812-1813

No sooner did the *Rebbe* leave the town than the first scouts of the French army entered Liadi from the other side. Shortly thereafter, Napoleon himself, accompanied by his generals, arrived at the *Rebbe's* residence, only to find the house engulfed in flames. A proclamation was issued throughout the town and the surrounding villages promising a generous reward in golden coins to anyone who could produce an object belonging to the Jewish *Rav*, or a coin he had received from the *Rebbe's* hand. But nothing was found.

For more than five months, as Napoleon advanced across Russia, took Moscow and then embarked on his disastrous retreat, the *Rebbe's* entourage wandered from town to town and from village to village, only narrowly avoiding the swath of carnage cut by the French army as it moved through the country.

The *Rebbe* rode in the third wagon. In the first wagon sat his grandson, Rav Nachum, with two military officers. Whenever they arrived at a crossroads, the entire procession would halt while Rav Nachum walked to the third wagon to ask Rav Schneur Zalman which way to proceed. At times, the *Rebbe* would reply without moving from his seat; other times, he would walk to the crossroads, lean on his staff and meditate for a while before issuing his directive.

On one occasion, Rav Nachum erred in his understanding of the *Rebbe's* instruction and the convoy took the wrong turn. When the error was revealed, Rav Schneur Zalman instructed that they continue along the road already taken, but said with great regret in his voice, "How fortunate it is when the grandson follows the grandfather; how unfortunate it is when the grandfather must follow the lead of the grandson."

Many trials and tribulations followed that wrong turn in the road, culminating in their arrival in the town of P'yene.

The *Rebbe's* convoy arrived in P'yene in the dead of winter, on the eighth day of *Teves*, 5573 (December 1812). P'yene was a good-sized town, consisting of some three hundred large houses and courtyards, many of which were empty, as the men were away at war. The generous townspeople provided housing and kindling free of charge to the refugees.

Ten days later, the *Rebbe* fell ill. On the 24th of *Teves*, *Motzo'ei Shabbos* following *Shabbos Parshas Shemos*, at 10:30 in the evening, after reciting the *havdola* prayer marking the close of the holy *Shabbos*, he returned his soul to its Maker.

Shortly before his passing (by one account, "after *havdola*, several minutes before giving up his soul in purity to *Hashem*") the *Rebbe* penned a short

discourse titled "The Humble Soul".

"For the truly humble soul," Rav Schneur Zalman wrote, *"its mission in life lies in the pragmatic aspect of Torah, both in studying it for oneself and explaining it to others, and in doing acts of material kindness in lending an empathizing mind and counsel from afar regarding household concerns, though the majority, if not all, of these concern things of falsehood...For although the divine attribute of Truth argued that man should not be created, since he is full of lies, the divine attribute of Kindness argued that he should be created, for he is full of kindnesses...And the world is built upon kindness."*

www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/465708/jewish/The-Passing-of-Rabbi-Schneur-Zalman-of-Liadi.htm#footnote1a465708



Following his release from imprisonment in Saint Petersburg on the 19th of *Kislev*, 5559 (1798), an event which marked the *Chassidic* movement's decisive victory over its opponents, Rav Schneur Zalman of Liadi sent a letter (the letter forms the second chapter of *Igeres HaKodesh*, part IV of *Tanya*) to all his followers, warning them against any feelings of pride and superiority over their antagonists. The letter begins by quoting the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 32:11) [in *Parshas Vayishlach*, which was read on the *Shabbos* before Rav Schneur Zalman's release] in which Yaakov says to *Hashem*, "I am diminished (*kotonti*) by all the kindnesses...You have shown Your servant."

Rav Schneur Zalman explains: "The meaning of this is that every kindness bestowed by *Hashem* upon a person should cause him to be exceedingly humble. For a [divine] kindness is [an expression of]... 'His right hand does embrace me' (*Shir HaShirim* 2:6) – *Hashem* is literally bringing the person close to Himself, far more intensely than before. And the closer

a person is to *Hashem*... the greater the humility this should evoke in him...This because 'all before Him is as naught' (*Zohar*, part I, 11b); so the more 'before Him' a person is, the more 'as naught' [does he perceive himself to be]...This is the attribute of Yaakov...

"The very opposite is the case in the contrasting realm of...*kelipa* (evil): the greater the kindness shown a person, the more he grows in arrogance and self-satisfaction.

"Therefore, I come with a great call to all our community regarding the many kindnesses which *Hashem* has shown us: Assume the attribute of Yaakov...Do not feel yourselves superior to your brethren (i.e. the opponents of *Chassidus*); do not give free rein to your mouths regarding them, or hiss at them, G-d forbid. [I] strictly warn: Make no mention [of our victory]. Only humble your spirits and hearts with the truth of Yaakov..."

Rav Schneur Zalman's great-grandson, Rav Shmuel of Lubavitch, once remarked: "If the *Rebbe* would have omitted the words 'with the truth of Yaakov' from his letter, he would have gained fifty thousand additional followers. But the *Rebbe* demanded truth."



The Black Carriage

By: Reb Yerachmiel Tilles

The 19th of *Kislev* is celebrated throughout the *Chassidic* world as the day of the liberation of the founder of *Chabad*, Rav Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812). Rav Schneur Zalman was arrested by the czarist regime under the accusation that his teachings undermined the imperial authority, and his release allowed the vigorous growth of *Chassidus* and the uninhibited dissemination of its teachings.

During the "intermediate days" of *Sukkos* of 1798, an armed officer arrived in

Liozna to arrest Rav Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the *Chabad* movement. Deciding that it would be advisable at this point to take the biblical advice, "Hide yourself for a brief moment" (*Isaiah* 26:20), the *Rebbe* slipped out a side door. The officer returned to his headquarters empty-handed.

Back in the house, the *Rebbe* decided that if the agent were to return, he would allow himself to be arrested. Some say that he decided this only after consultation with Rav Shmuel Munkes, one of his close *Chassidim*, who happened to be in the *Rebbe's* home at the time. Rav Shmuel reputedly said to the *Rebbe*, "If you are a true *Rebbe*, you have nothing to fear by being arrested. If you are not, you deserve whatever they will do to you (!), for what right did you have to deprive thousands of *Chassidim* from enjoying the pleasures of this world?"

When the officer reappeared on the day after *Simchas Torah*, which fell on Thursday that year, the *Rebbe* did not hide. Within a few hours, he was already seated in the infamous "Black Mary", the carriage reserved by the Czarist regime for rebels who were under capital sentence. Covered on all sides with heavy black metal panels, and with no windows whatsoever, it was designed to cast dread on all those who saw it. Guarded by heavily armed soldiers, the ironclad black carriage pulled out of Liozna on Thursday night and clanked its fearsome way down the highway to Saint Petersburg, via Vitebsk and Nevel.

At half past ten the next morning, some six hours before candle-lighting time, the *Rebbe* asked that they stop where they were until after *Shabbos*. The officer in charge ignored his request. A moment later the axles of the carriage broke. No sooner had they repaired them, than one of the horses collapsed and died. Fresh horses were brought, but they could not move the carriage from its place. By this time the gendarmes gathered that it would be

impossible to press on with their journey against the *Rebbe's* will, so they asked their prisoner if they could detour to a nearby village and spend the next day there. The *Rebbe* refused, but did agree that the carriage be moved off the highway to an adjacent field.

The spot at which the *Rebbe* spent that *Shabbos* is about three miles from the village of Seliba-Rudnia, which is near the town of Nevel. An old *Chassid* who

survived into the twentieth century, Rav Michael of Nevel, used to relate that he knew

Chassidim who were able to point out the exact spot at which the



Rebbe had spent that lonely *Shabbos*. He himself had gone there to see it with his own eyes. All the way there he had seen old and drooping trees on both sides of the road, but that memorable spot was marked by a tall tree with luxuriant foliage.

Commentary from Rav Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, the sixth Rebbe of Chabad:

The story of the *Rebbe's* journey to Saint Petersburg gives tangible testimony to the statement that whatever happens to a *Tzaddik* – and especially to a *Tzaddik* who is a leader of Jewry – takes place only with his consent. Indeed, not only the *Rebbe*, but every *Tzaddik* likewise rules over all material matters. What the *Torah* has to say about the created universe is decisive: all temporal matters are subject to the dominion of the *Torah*.

When the *Rebbe* did not want to travel further, the wagon came to a halt, and it came to a halt where and when the *Rebbe* so desired. Had the wagon stood still at candle-lighting time, this would have

been not at all remarkable. For such things we find concerning even an unwitting reaction, as it is written: “No evil shall befall the righteous” (*Proverbs 12:21*). But that the wagon should stand still at ten-thirty on Friday morning, and not budge – this is a palpable wonder of *Hashem*, like an overt miracle.

From all of the above it should be abundantly clear that one whose word carried weight over material things, as was the case with the *Rebbe*, had the option of not being imprisoned at all, and of not hiding, even for a solitary hour. If he did go nevertheless, this was for the sake of a profound purpose involving the service of *Hashem*.

The patriarch Avrohom opened the channel of self-sacrifice for the sanctification of *Hashem's* Name, and the *Rebbe* opened the channel of self-sacrifice for *Chassidic* service of *Hashem*. From all of this one can gather that the whole episode of the *Rebbe's* imprisonment was only a garment worn by choice, in order to avoid making use of supernatural means.

Truth to tell, this subject warrants a detailed explanation, especially since this would provide at least an inkling of an appreciation of the *Rebbe's* quintessential inner love for Jews in general, for he wanted every individual to start living with zest in his *Torah* study, and in his divine service according to the teachings of *Chassidus*, and his love for *Chassidim* in particular. And this love the *Rebbe* planted in the *Rebbs* who succeeded him. Such a deep-seated and quintessential love is everlasting, throughout all the generations until the coming of *Moshiach*, when it will be granted us, at the time of *techiyas hameisim* (the Resurrection of the Dead), to gaze directly upon the living and luminous countenances of the *Rebbs*.

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The Judgment and the Advice

Rav Noach was a devoted *talmid* of Rav Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the *Alter Rebbe* of *Chabad*, who lived in eighteenth-century Russia. Rav Noach's son eventually married the *Alter Rebbe's* daughter and from that union came the *Rebbe*, known as the *Tzemach Tzedek*. To this day, the memory of Rav Noach is honored among Lubavitchers, who tell this story about him:

After Rav Noach passed away and came before the Heavenly Court, they looked into his case and found that he had been a very good Jew. All his life he had observed the commandments as best he could and never missed any opportunity to perform an additional *mitzva*.

Now, as is well known (*Avos* 4:11), when a Jew fulfills a *mitzva*, a holy *malach* (angel) is created from that very act. These angels, it is said, will come to testify on behalf of the soul after death. And the more properly and sincerely he does the *mitzva*, the stronger the *malochim* will be. So it happened when Rav Noach stood before the Heavenly Court that thousands upon thousands of luminous *mitzva malochim* came to his trial, saying, "I was born from such-and-such a good deed performed by Rav Noach when he was alive on earth."

The Heavenly Court was very impressed by the testimony of all these *mitzva malochim* and was about to decide that Rav Noach should go immediately to *Gan Eden* ("Paradise"). But suddenly another *malach* appeared, a dark one. It stood before the Court and said, "I was created from a sin that Rav Noach committed during his life on earth." Then the *malach* revealed to the Court exactly what the sin had been.

The three judges who sit on the Heavenly Court deliberated thoroughly. On the one hand, Rav Noach was a pious man who had led a basically righteous life, so he deserved to go to *Gan Eden*. But on the other hand, he had committed the sin. Just

as no good deed ever goes unrewarded, so does no sin ever go unpunished. Finally, the Court decided to give Rav Noach two choices: he could spend a half hour in *Gehinnom* ("Purgatory") now, to atone for the sin, and then go straight to *Gan Eden*, or he could avoid the pain of *Gehinnom* by reincarnating on earth once again and making up for the sin there.

Rav Noach answered: "With all due respect to this Court, I would like to consult with my *Rebbe*, Rav Schneur Zalman, before I make a decision. All my life I never did anything concerning my spiritual life without first asking the *Rebbe's* advice. And so I would like permission to ask the *Rebbe* about this now."

The Court consulted the Heavenly Records and found that it was indeed true. Rav Noach never did anything important without first asking the *Alter Rebbe's* advice. "Very well," the Court replied. "You may return to earth in spirit and consult with your *Rebbe* about your decision."

Back on earth, Rav Schneur Zalman was sitting at the table as usual, learning *Torah* with his *Chassidim*. Then the soul of Rav Noach appeared to him and posed the question: "Earth or *Gehinnom*?" The *Rebbe* turned to his *Chassidim* and said, "Rav Noach is here right now, and he is asking what judgment he should choose: a half hour in *Gehinnom* or to be born in this world another time."

The *Chassidim* said nothing. What could they say? If the *Rebbe* wasn't prepared to decide, how could they presume to speak for him? So they sat there in silence, waiting to hear what the *Rebbe's* answer would be.

The *Alter Rebbe* put his hand on his forehead, then rested his elbow on the table and concentrated very deeply. For a long time he just sat there in silence, turning the question over in his mind, weighing all the consequences. Then came the answer: "*Gehinnom* - to Purgatory!"

As soon as the *Rebbe* had said the word “*Gehinnom*”, the *Chassidim* all heard a voice cry out in anguish, “Oy, *Rebbe!*” At the same moment they saw, burned into the wall by the door, the outline of a human hand!

From this the *Chassidim* understood what a spiritual danger it can be for a soul to be born into this world. Better to spend half an hour in the fires of Purgatory than a whole lifetime on earth once again!

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Derelict in his Duties

A *talmid* once came before the *Ba'al HaTanya* and asked to be taught a new lesson in *hisorerus* – awakening excitement for *davening*. When the *Ba'al HaTanya* asked him what type of *davening* he had focused on till now, the *Chassid* answered with the following amazing example:

I was once called in to deal with an official matter with the Russian authorities. As I stood outside the courthouse I noticed a prisoner, a former soldier in uniform, being mercilessly and cruelly beaten. When I asked the reason for such punishment, I was told that this soldier was being punished for being derelict in his duty. It was winter and bitterly cold outside. “He came back from his duty with frozen ears!” they thundered. “This soldier is supposed to be on guard duty,” continued one of the officers. “How can it be that a soldier who is charged with duty to guard His Majesty the Czar would have frozen ears?! The very fact that he is fulfilling his duty to His Majesty the Czar, the very fact that he is

fulfilling His Majesty’s command – that should warm his whole being and should cause his blood to boil from head to toe and circulate throughout his entire being as it resonates with his duty! How could his ears freeze, if not that he was derelict in his duty!”

And so they judged him worthy of punishment. This made a great impression on me and with this manner of meditative contemplation on His Majesty and my duty to *Hashem*, I *davened* with *hisorerus* for some six years. But now I am ready for something new!” (*Otzar Yisrael*, p. 261)

The Sefer HaTanya

Some say that when the *heilige Berditchever Rav* learned *Tanya* for the first time he exclaimed, “Wondrous Wonder!!! How did he [Rav Shneur Zalman, the *mechaber*] manage to get such a great G-d into such a small *sefer*?! (*Yiftach Libeinu BeSoraso*, p. 312)

Rav Ahrele Roth, *mechaber* of *Shomer Emunim* and founder of the *Toldos Aharon Chassidus*, once visited the Satmar *Rav*, Rav Yoel, in *Chutz La'aretz*. During their conversation, Rav Ahrele asked a question on the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 4:7), which teaches that although you desire evil you can overcome the *yetzer hora*. *Rashi* comments there: “If you so will it, you can defeat him.” Rav Ahrele asked the Satmar *Rav*, “How do you get such a will to begin with? From where can you acquire the will to defeat the *yetzer*?”

For that, answered the Satmar *Rav*, you need to study the *sefer HaTanya*. (*Teshuas Tzaddikim* p. 495, in the name of *Zechor LeAvrohom*)



Rav Eliyohu Eliezer ben Reuven Dov Dessler, 24th of Teves

Mechaber of Michtov Me'Eliyohu

Rav Dessler was born and raised in a

| *mussar* environment, his parents scions of

Rav Yisrael Salanter, founder of the *mussar* movement and *talmidim* of Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv of Kelm. He used to joke that in his youth all of Kelm where he was sent to study at age thirteen (and called by his maternal uncle, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, a *wunderkind*) was an incubator for *mussar*, as he used to fondly recall how his meals were served by a relative who always fed him the same bland tasteless bowl of oats, day after day, for years. After such training on such plain fare, he laughed, every dish was a tasty one!

His hometown was Homil, a bastion of *Chassidus*, and it is very possible that when he was forced back there after the German conquest of Kelm, that he learned

Chassidus and added that to his more mystical interpretations and approach of *Chassidus*-infused *mussar*.

He worked tirelessly after the war to help rebuild *Yiddishkeit* from the flames. In Gateshead, England, he gathered about himself great *talmidim* and *yungeleit* to create the *kollel*, the boarding school, the teachers' seminary and many other institutions. He had *talmidim* in London and Manchester as well, for whom he cared spiritually and physically, and taught many students across England. Eventually, he was called upon to be the *Mashgiach* of Ponevezh in *Eretz Yisrael*, where he served until he was *niftar*.



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

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

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

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

ונתחזק

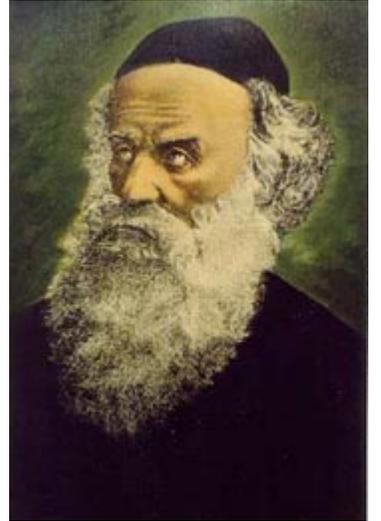
חזק

חזק

Twenty-Eight Teachings from Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi

(free translation)

1. This is what man is all about; this is the purpose of his creation and of the creation of all the worlds, sublime and lowly — to make for G-d a dwelling in the physical world.
2. A little bit of light dispels a lot of darkness.
3. By virtue of its inborn nature, the mind rules the heart.
4. Prayer without direction of the heart is like a body without a soul... Love of G-d and fear of G-d are the two wings by which a deed rises heavenward.
5. Every individual Jew, righteous or wicked, has two souls... One soul derives from *kelipah* (the "husks" of creation) and *sitra achra* (the "other side"), and clothes itself in the blood to animate the body... From it derive the evil traits... and also the Jew's instinctive good traits... The second soul in the Jew is literally a "part of G-d above."
6. "The soul of man is a lamp of G-d" (Proverbs 20:27). Just like the flame of the lamp strains upwards, seeking to tear free of the wick and rise heavenward - though this would spell its own demise - so, too, does the G-dly soul in man constantly strive to tear free of the body and the material existence and be nullified within its source in G-d.
7. The body is likened to a small city: like two kings who wage war over a city, each desiring to capture it and rule over it, that is, to govern its inhabitants according to his will so that they obey him in all that he decrees for them, so do the two souls - the G-dly [soul] and the animal [soul] - wage war against each other over the body and all its organs and limbs. The desire and will of the G-dly soul is that it alone should rule over the person and direct him, and that all his limbs should obey it and surrender themselves completely to it and become a vehicle for it, and serve as a vehicle for its ten faculties [of intellect and emotion] and three



Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), founder of Chabad

"garments" [thought, speech and action]... and the entire body should be permeated with them alone, to the exclusion of any alien influence, G-d forbid... While the animal soul desires the very opposite...

8. There are two types of pleasure before G-d. The first is from the complete nullification of evil and its transformation from bitterness to sweetness and from darkness to light by the perfectly righteous. The second [pleasure] is when evil is repelled while it is still at its strongest and mightiest... through the efforts of the "intermediate man" (*beinoni*)... As in the analogy of physical food, in which there are two types of delicacies that give pleasure: the first being the pleasure derived from sweet and pleasant foods; and the second, from sharp and sour foods, which are spiced and prepared in such a way that they become delicacies that revive the soul...
9. When one's body is viewed with scorn and contempt, and one's joy is in the soul alone, this constitutes a direct and simple way to fulfill the commandment "Love your fellow as yourself" toward every Jew, great or small... For the source of their souls is in the One G-d, and they are divided only by virtue of their bodies. Therefore, those who give priority to their body over their soul, find it impossible to share true love and brotherhood except that which is conditional on some benefit. This is what Hillel the Elder meant when he said about this commandment [the love of Israel]: "This is the whole Torah; and the rest is commentary." For the foundation and source of all Torah is to elevate and give ascendancy to the soul over the body ...
10. Also those who are far from G-d's Torah and His service... one must draw them close with strong cords of love — perhaps one might succeed in bringing them closer to Torah and the service of G-d. And even if one fails, one has still merited the rewards of the fulfillment of the Mitzvah, "Love your fellow."
11. It is written: "Forever, O G-d, Your word stands firm in the heavens" (Psalms 119:89). Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, explained the verse thus: Your word which you uttered, "Let there be a firmament..." (Genesis 1:6), these very words and letters stand firmly forever within the firmament of heaven and are forever clothed within the heavens to give them life and existence... And so it is with all created things, down to the most corporeal and inanimate of substances. If the letters of the "ten utterances" by which the world was created

during the six days of creation were to depart from it for but an instant, G-d forbid, it would revert to absolute nothingness.

12. If the human eye were allowed to see the spiritual vitality flowing from the utterance of G-d's mouth into every creation, we would not see the materiality, grossness and tangibility of the creation, for it would be utterly nullified in relation to this divine life-force.
13. The era of Moshiach is the fulfillment and culmination of the creation of the world, for which purpose it was originally created. Something of this revelation has been experienced once before on earth, at the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai [when] "To you it has been shown, to know that the L-rd is G-d; there is none else beside Him" (Deuteronomy 4:35). G-dliness was then perceived with physical vision.... Subsequently, however, sin coarsened both them and the world - until the era of Moshiach, when the physicality of the body and the world will be refined, and we will be able to apprehend the revealed Divine light which will shine forth to Israel by means of the Torah.... "The glory of G-d will be revealed; and all flesh will see that the mouth of G-d has spoken" (Isaiah 40:5)... This all depends on our deeds and labor throughout the duration of the galut... When a person does a mitzvah, he draws down a flow of Divine light into the world, to be suffused and integrated into the material reality...
14. Our sages have taught, "Whoever gets angry, it is as if he worshipped idols" (Zohar I, 27b). The reason for this is... because at the time of his anger, his faith has left him. For were he to believe that what happened to him was G d's doing, he would not be angry at all. For although it is a person possessed of free choice that is cursing him, or striking him, or causing damage to his property — and is accountable according to the laws of man and the laws of heaven for his evil choice — nevertheless, as regards the person harmed, this [incident] was already decreed in heaven and "G d has many agents" [to carry out the decree]...
15. Rabbi Mordechai of Haradak, a disciple of Rabbi Schneur Zalman, told: The first thing we heard from the Rebbe was: "What is forbidden, one must not; and what is permitted, one need not." Three or four years we toiled with this, until we this approach was ingrained in our lives. Only then would we be received in a private audience with the Rebbe to ask about our individual paths in serving the Almighty.

16. *To a disciple who complained of his financial troubles:* You speak of what you need, but you say nothing of what you are needed for.
17. "One who is satisfied with his lot" ([Ethics of the Fathers 4:1](#)) describes a tremendous virtue in material matters, and a tremendous failing in all that pertains to one's spiritual attainments.
18. During the time that Rabbi Schneur Zalman was imprisoned in Petersburg, one of the czar's ministers asked him to explain the verse ([Genesis 3:9](#)) "And G-d called out to the man and said to him: Where are you?" Did G-d not know where [Adam](#) was? Rabbi Schneur Zalman asked the minister: Do you believe that the Torah is eternal, that its every word applies to every individual, under all conditions, at all times? The minister replied that he did. Rabbi Schneur Zalman was very gratified to hear this, for this was a basic principle of the "subversive" teachings of the [Baal Shem Tov](#), the propagation of which was at the heart of the accusations leveled against him. "Where are you?" said Rabbi Schneur Zalman to the minister, "is G-d's perpetual call to every man. Where are you in the world? You have been allotted a certain number of days, hours, and minutes in which to fulfill your mission in life. You have lived so many years and so many days — Where are you? What have you accomplished?"
19. Once, in the early years of his leadership, Rabbi [Schneur Zalman of Liadi](#) said to his disciples: "One must live with the times." He later explained his meaning: One should live with and experience in one's own life the Torah portion of the week and the specific section of the week's portion which is connected to that day.
20. In essence, every mitzvah is as supra-rational as the law of the Red Heifer. It is only that the divine will is revealed to us in varying degrees of rational "garments".
21. There is love like fire, and there is love like water.
22. Following his release from imprisonment on [Kislev 19, 5559 \(1798\)](#), an event which marked the Chassidic movement's decisive victory over its opponents, Rabbi Schneur Zalman sent a letter to his followers. The letter begins by quoting the verse in which [Jacob](#) says to G-d, "I am diminished by all the kindnesses... You have shown Your servant" ([Genesis 32:11](#)). "The meaning of this," explains Rabbi Schneur Zalman "is that every kindness bestowed by G-d upon a person should cause him to be exceedingly humble. For a [Divine] kindness is [an

expression of] ... 'His right hand does embrace me' (Song of Songs 2:6). — G-d is literally bringing the person close to Himself, far more intensely than before. And the closer a person is to G-d ... the greater the humility this should evoke in him... This because 'all before Him is as naught' (Zohar), so that the more 'before Him' a person is, the more 'as naught' [does he perceive himself to be].... This is the attribute of Jacob... The very opposite is the case in the contrasting realm of ... *kelipah* (evil): the greater the kindness shown a person, the more he grows in arrogance and self-satisfaction..." The letter concludes: "Therefore, I come with a great call to all our community regarding the many kindnesses which G-d has exceedingly shown us: Assume the attribute of Jacob... Do not feel yourselves superior to your brethren (i.e., the opponents of Chassidism); do not give free rein to your mouths regarding them, or hiss at them, G-d forbid. [I] strictly warn: Make no mention [of our victory]. Only humble your spirits and hearts with the truth of Jacob..."

23. The life of a tzaddik is not a life of the flesh, but a spiritual life consisting wholly of faith, awe, and love of G-d.
24. "And now, Israel: What does the L-rd your G-d ask of you? Only to fear G-d" (Deuteronomy 10:12). Regarding this verse, the Talmud asks: "Is fear of G-d a minor thing?" The answer given is, "Yes, for Moses it is a minor thing." At first glance, this answer is incomprehensible, since the verse says "What does G-d ask of *you*" - i.e., every individual Jew! But the explanation is as follows: Each and every soul of the house of Israel contains within it something of the quality of our teacher Moses, for he is one of the "seven shepherds" who feed vitality and G-dliness to the community of the souls of Israel.... Moses is the sum of them all, called the "shepherd of faith" (*raaya meheimna*) in the sense that he nourishes the community of Israel with the knowledge and recognition of G-d... So although who is the man who dares presume in his heart to approach and attain even a thousandth part of the level of the faithful shepherd, nevertheless, an infinitesimal fringe and minute particle of his great goodness and light illuminates every Jew in each and every generation.
25. It is stated in the sacred Zohar that "When the *tzaddik* departs he is to be found in all worlds more than in his lifetime." Now this needs to be understood. For, granted that he is to be found increasingly in the supernal worlds, because he ascends to there; but how can he be found more in this world? ... This can be explained based on [the maxim] that the life of a

tzaddik is not a physical life but a spiritual life, consisting wholly of faith, awe, and love of G-d... While the *tzaddik* was alive on earth, these three qualities were contained in their physical vessel and garment (i.e. the body) on the plane of physical space... All his disciples receive but a reflection of these attributes, a ray radiating beyond this vessel by means of his holy utterances and thoughts... But after his passing... whoever is close to him can receive a [far loftier dimension] of these three qualities, since they are no longer confined within a [material] vessel, nor bounded by physical space... Thus it is very easy for his disciples to receive their part of their master's quintessential spirit, each according to the level of his loving attachment (*hitkashrut*) and closeness to the *tzaddik* during his lifetime and after his death...

26. Rabbi Schneur Zalman's disciples would say: Our Rebbe revives the dead. What is a corpse? Something cold and unfeeling. Life is movement, warmth, excitement. Is there anything as frozen in self-absorption, as cold and unfeeling as the mind? And when the cold-blooded mind understands, comprehends, and is excited by a G-dly idea - is this not a revival of the dead?
27. Before a king enters the city, the people of the city go out to greet him in the field. There, everyone who so desires is permitted to meet him; he receives them all with a cheerful countenance and shows a smiling face to them all. And when he goes to the city, they follow him there. Later, however, after he enters his royal palace, none can enter into his presence except by appointment, and only special people and select individuals. So, too, by analogy, the month of Elul (which precedes G-d's "coronation" as King on Rosh Hashanah) is when we meet G-d in the field.
28. *From a note penned by Rabbi Schneur Zalman shortly before his passing:* The truly humble soul recognizes that its mission in life lies in the pragmatic aspect of Torah, both in studying it for himself and explaining it to others; and in doing acts of material kindness by lending an empathizing mind and counsel from afar regarding household concerns, though the majority, if not all, of these concerns are things of falsehood. For the loftiest beginnings are rooted in the end.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (18 Elul 1745-24 Tevet 1812), known as "the Alter Rebbe," was one of the main disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, and the founder of the Chabad Chassidism. He is the author of *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* and *Tanya* as well as many other major works in both Jewish law and the mystical teachings.

Zera Shimshon

Vayechi

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

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

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

The following is his passionate request to learn his works.

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

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

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

לזכר נשמת

רבינו שמשון חיים בן רב נחמן מיכאל זצ"ל

בעל הזרע שמשון זיע"א

ויה"ר שיתקיימו בנו ברכותיו של אותו צדיק

לזכות רבקה נבון בת חנה ואברהם
יוסף בן חנה לרפואה שלימה ולזיווג
הגון בקרוב ממש ולשנה מבורכת
עם כל הברכות הכתובות בתורה

לעילוי נשמת הרב חיים שאול בן בן

ציון זצ"ל

לזכות זיווג הגון בקרוב ממש

לשושנה נחמה בת חנה פעסא

ורקבה רויזא בת פייגא

יוכבד בת דבורה לרפואה שלימה

ברכת שדים ורחם (מט' כה')

A blessing to the father and mother - Targum (49:25)

The Zera Shimshon explains this passuk to be a blessing to a father and mother to rejoice with their children by seeing them going on the right path. He links this passuk with the passuk in Mishlei (23:25) that says, "*Let your father and mother rejoice etc*", which refers to a child that follows the way of the Torah.

The Zera Shimshon teaches that a couple merits happiness from their children when they work together - as friends - on raising their children.

This, the Zera Shimshon learns from following Mishnayos in Pirkei Avos.

In the second Perek (Mishna 9), the Mishna tells how Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai listed the praises of his five disciples. About R' Yehoshua he said, "Praised is the one who gave birth to him". R' Ovadia Bartenura explains that R' Yehoshua's mother went around to Torah scholars and requested that they pray for the child she was expecting to be a Chacham. Once he was born, she placed his crib in the Beis Medrash so that he should only hear the words of Torah. This is why she merited being praised like this by Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai.

In a later Mishna (11), Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai asked his students what they think the most important thing a person should focus on in order to serve Hashem properly. R' Yehoshua's answer was to have a good friend.

The Zera Shimshon explains that the praises that Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai gave his students and his students' opinions as to what is the most important thing one should focus on - are connected. He explains this as follows.

A husband and wife are referred to by the passuk in Malachi (2:14) as friends. They are in fact friends because for a child to succeed, both the mother and father have to contribute to his growth. This can only happen if they work together - as friends.

This is what Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai meant by his praise of R' Yehoshua's mother. It was in addition to the effort that his father put into him. Most of the time, either parent suffices with what the other parent did. Here, R' Yehoshua's mother added to his eventual greatness by adding to what his father would do. Thus, the praise is not that only his mother contributed to his greatness, rather, that both parents did. What Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai wanted to bring out was the (possibly overlooked) part that R' Yehoshua's mother added.

If husband and wife have to work as friends for their children to succeed, then R' Yehoshua's parents were the prime example of such a couple.

This influenced R' Yehoshua's opinion later on life as to what the most important thing a person should focus on to serve Hashem - a good friend. Although his words were intended to be understood at face value, they were also in reference to his parents and how they worked together as friends, which enabled him to succeed.

ובזכות דברים אלו מרבינו זיע"א נזכה כולנו לזיווגים הגונים, שלום בית, ונחת מהילדים

זכות רבינו יעמוד לר' חיים דוד בן טויבא חוה וכל משפחתו להצלחה ברכה שפע רב וסייעתא דשמיא
מרובה בכל מעשה ידיו ובכל הענינים

Vayechi

January 2nd 2021
18th of Tevet 5781

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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

Published by Mosdot "Orot Chaim U'Moshe" in Israel

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

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



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

A Person is Obligated to Overcome All Life's Challenges

"Ya'akov lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years"
(Bereishit 47:28)

Chazal say that those seventeen years that Ya'akov lived in Egypt were the best years of his life. This was because he merited witnessing how his precious son Yosef retained his righteousness even while in the foreign land of Egypt. Despite all the difficult challenges that Yosef endured, he retained his holiness and purity to the extent that he merited being adorned with the title "Righteous one, foundation of the world".

This is the implication of the verse (ibid 45:27), "And he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him, then the spirit of their father Ya'akov was revived". Rashi writes, "Yosef directed his brothers to say that the last topic he and Ya'akov had studied together was that of 'eglah arufah' [the calf whose neck was broken in expiation of an unsolved murder]. The word 'עגלות', wagons, can also be translated as calves, thus alluding to that topic. Therefore, it is written, 'And he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent' and does not say ...that Pharaoh had sent". I would like to add that the word 'עגלות', wagons, can be split up into two words, 'ע' גלות', 'seventy, exile', implying that Ya'akov discovered that Yosef, his righteous son, merited engaging in the Holy Torah which can be interpreted in seventy languages, even during his exile, and that is why "the spirit of their father Ya'akov was revived".

This is the foundation that our Holy forefathers set down for us during their sojourn in Egypt. They paved the way and showed us that in every situation it is possible to study and grow in Torah, and even when a person is in exile surrounded by difficult challenges, then too, if he only desires, he can study Torah and engage in it with all his strength. The majority of the Torah (the Oral Law) that has been passed down to us from generation to generation emanated from those in exile. For example, the Talmud Bavli was compiled by the Holy Tanna'im and Amora'im at the time of the Babylonian exile, while the Holy Rashi and all the Ba'alei HaTosafot lived their elevated lives in France. The Rambam lived in Egypt and there were others too in all countries of the Diaspora. This shows us that man is obligated to engage in Torah regardless of his situation. He must overcome all life's challenges and divest himself of all his preoccupations so that he feels free to immerse himself in the tent of Torah.

Since Ya'akov Avinu a"h was aware that not everyone would be able to overcome the challenges as did his son Yosef Hatzadik, he therefore decided to establish a Yeshiva in Egypt from where they would merit drawing on Torah and fear of G-d. As it says (Bereishit 46:28), "He sent Yehuda ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen". Rashi cites the Midrash who interprets 'להורות' (to prepare) as 'to teach' which implies that Yehuda's mission was to establish a Torah academy which would impart instruction. For although Yosef Hatzadik merited maintaining his purity even without the atmosphere of a holy Yeshiva and merited ruling over his inclination, this is not a simple matter at all. Not every person is capable of achieving this level, and it could be that the difficult tests presented by Egypt, a country awash with lewdness and obscenity, were enough to make man fall into the trap of the Yetzer Hara, for it is extremely difficult to

abstain from sin. This is why Ya'akov wished to establish a Yeshiva in Goshen. It would serve as a lighthouse, with the holiness of the place shining light onto the tribes and their offspring and influencing them positively. In this way, they will be imbued with strength to guard their purity and holiness even when living in a gentile land.

This was the entire essence of Ya'akov's way of life. His heart's aspiration was to 'kill' himself in the tent of Torah. Even when he went to sleep he was engaged in Torah, as it says (ibid 28:16), "Ya'akov awoke from his sleep", on which Chazal expound, "Do not read 'from his sleep' (משנתו) but 'from his learning' (ממשנתו)".

How is it possible to study Torah while sleeping?

The answer is that if one considers Torah study as one's sole occupation, then even when sleep overcomes him against his will and due to his extreme fatigue from the toil of Torah he falls asleep, he is considered as compelled. In this case, the Torah considers it as if he is still engaged in Torah even while asleep. For in essence his soul desires Torah, and had he not fallen asleep he would strongly wish to continue his Torah diligence. However, since sleep is an inevitable necessity and cannot be ignored, and since he is sleeping contrary to his desire, the Torah considers it as if he is still engaged in Torah.

Just as Yosef Hatzadik guarded the purity of his soul, so too he instructed his pious children, Menashe and Ephraim, to conduct themselves in this way. This is why Ya'akov said to Yosef (Bereishit 48:20), "By you shall Israel bless saying, 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Menashe'". Rashi writes: "One who wishes to bless his children will bless them with this blessing. Each father will bless his son, 'May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe'." It is necessary to understand why Ephraim and Menashe were singled out over the children of the other tribes, to the extent that they became the model for all Jewish children throughout the generations.

The reason is that the other holy tribes and their offspring were raised in the house of their holy grandfather, Ya'akov Avinu a"h. They lived their lives in a holy and elevated atmosphere, so it is no wonder that they merited becoming the holy and pure tribes of G-d. In contrast, Ephraim and Menashe were born and raised in Egypt, an impure and abominable land of idolatry, full of lewdness and abominations. Besides, Yosef's children had close connections with the Egyptian royalty, its ministers and sorcerers, due to the capacity of their father's position. Despite this, they maintained their holiness and purity and Ya'akov observed that they were not lured in the slightest by Egypt's impurity and did not learn from their ways and inferior behavior. On the contrary, their father Yosef raised them in the path of Torah and fear of G-d, to the extent that they were found fitting to be considered as one of the tribes, as it says (ibid 48:5), "Ephraim and Menashe shall be like mine like Reuven and Shimon". In spite of their lives being full of numerous and difficult challenges, they nevertheless overcame all the obstacles that stood in their path. They strode only in the upright way of their holy forefathers, as their father, the tzaddik guided them. With this in mind, each father blesses his children that they should always walk in the path of Torah and never learn from the ways of the sinners who surround us.



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Hilula

18 - Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira,
author of 'Bnei Yissachar'

19 - Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Binyamin
Sofer, the 'Ksav Sofer'

20 - Rabbeinu Moshe Ben Maimon,
the Rambam

21 - Rabbi Matzliach Mazuz hy"d

22 - Rabbi Shmuel Heller

23 - Rabbi Avraham Palagi

24 - Rabbi Shalom Araki

18 - Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira,
author of 'Bnei Yissachar'



Walking in their Ways

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

The Mystical Significance of Wednesday

A famous philanthropist, well-known for his acts on behalf of Torah and chesed, found himself in a very difficult situation. His scholarly twenty-two-year-old son, of marriageable age, was considered a genius in his yeshiva, yet suddenly he was struck with a mental illness which intensified from day to day. He was eventually admitted to the psychiatric ward of the Tel Hashomer hospital, in critical condition.

The boy's illness completely broke his parents. They tried every means available to pull him out of his condition but to no avail. When they heard that I was in Israel, not far from their home, they decided to visit me with their son who was brought from the hospital on a stretcher in a special vehicle.

As they entered my room they burst into heartrending sobs. They bemoaned the fact that they had finally reached the stage where their son, a budding talmid chacham with wonderful character traits, was of a marriageable age when suddenly their world had turned black.

I looked at the stricken boy and then turned to his parents. "Did his illness begin on a Wednesday?" I inquired.

They racked their brains, trying to recall just when this calamity had struck them. Finally, they said, "Yes! It all started on a Wednesday!"

I thought for a while and then calmed them down. "Have no fear," I assured them. "B'ezrat Hashem, your son's malady will begin to heal tomorrow. Within the coming year, he will get married."

The reason I had asked whether his illness began on a Wednesday and not on any other day is that there is a special mystical significance to this day. A certain mighty Heavenly angel is appointed authority over this day, but now is not the place to go into details.

In any case, I realized that it was the impure forces which had wreaked havoc with this young scholar's mind and prayed for his return to normalcy.

In Tehillim (136:4) we read, "To Him Who alone performs great wonders." With Hashem's kindness, the boy slowly but surely emerged from his illness and was finally completely cured. He married a fine Jewish girl from a wonderful home. Together, they have established a true Torah home.

The Haftarah

"Kind David's days grew near to die" (Melachim I, 2)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah speaks about the death of David Hamelech a"h, and his final instructions to his son Shlomo. The Parsha speaks about Ya'akov Avinu's death and his testament to his son Yosef.

Guard Your Tongue

Differentiating Between Lack of Knowledge and Wickedness

The Holy Torah commands us, "You shall not be a gossipmonger among your people" (Vayikra 19:15)

From the word 'your people' Chazal derive that one is prohibited to speak lashon hara about a Jew only when he acts in accordance with 'your people', meaning as long as he follows in the way of the holy Jewish people.

According to this, the prohibition does not include discussing the shortcomings of a cruel and evil rasha. However, one who sins out of lack of knowledge or because he was unable to withstand the temptations of the Yetzer Hara, is still considered as 'your people' and it is prohibited to speak lashon hara about him.



In Our Father's Path

Why Did Ya'akov Avinu Kiss Menashe and Ephraim?

It is a Jewish custom that children kiss the hand of the Sage who blesses them. The Remah of Pano writes that the reason for this is because the Sage writes Torah insights, and therefore his hand attains the status of a mitzvah object on which the Shechina rests. The Holy Zohar writes deep secrets about Sages who inscribe Torah insights at the side of their Gemara.

This shows us that there is validity to the custom of kissing the Sage's hand, and that of one's parents. But what is the source for the Sage kissing the one being blessed? And why did Ya'akov kiss Menashe and Ephraim?

The answer is, explains the sefer 'Doresh Tzion', that a Talmid Chacham can bless with just a gaze, and this is because his eyes have attained a holy status through studying Torah.

The Gemara (Chagiga 5b) tells about Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi who were walking and arrived at a certain town. They asked the local residents: "Is there a Talmid Chacham here whom we can go and greet?"

They answered, "There is a Talmid Chacham but he is blind".

Rabbi Chiya then said to Rabbeinu Hakadosh, "It is not befitting for you to go due to your status of being a leader of Yisrael, rather I will go and greet that Sage."

But Rabbeinu Hakadosh did not agree and went with Rabbi Chiya to greet the Sage. As they took leave of that blind Talmid Chacham, he said to them, "You greeted a face that can be seen but cannot see. May you merit welcoming the Divine Presence that personifies 'can see but cannot be seen'."

Rabbeinu Hakadosh turned to Rabbi Chiya: "And you wished to prevent me from receiving this blessing?!"

The blessing of that blind Sage was significant, even though generally a Sage can bless just by gazing with his eyes that have become sanctified through the words of Torah that they see the entire day.

Concerning Ya'akov Avinu it says, "Now Israel's eyes were heavy with age". Since this was the case, how could he bless Menashe and Ephraim? Therefore, for the blessing to fall, he hugged and kissed them.

Concerning Yitzchak Avinu, we are also told, "And it came to pass, when Yitzchak had become old, and his eyes dimmed from seeing". This is why he asked Ya'akov Avinu, "Come close, if you please, and kiss me" so that the blessing will befall the one being blessed.



Pearls of the Parsha

A Directive for Generations: Return to the Land of Our Fathers

"Please do not bury me in Egypt" (Bereishit 47:29)

When Ya'akov Avinu a"h perceived his children and grandchildren settling in Egypt, he was afraid that they might come to consider this land as their native land, over time forgetting their birthplace and exchanging the Jordan river with Egypt's Nile.

This concern, explains Rabbi Shamshon Rafael Hirsch zt"l, aroused Ya'akov as the Patriarch of the family, to strengthen the hope in the heart of his descendants to return to the Land of their fathers. He said to them, "My children, do you really wish to live in Egypt? I do not even wish to be buried there!"

A Symbol of Brotherly Love

"By you shall Yisrael bless saying, 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Menashe'" (Bereishit 48:20)

The two brothers, Ephraim and Menashe, personified a special attribute. Ever since the creation of the world, dissension between brothers has always been a frequent occurrence. They were always a symbol of jealousy and competition.

This is how it was with Kayin and Hevel, Yitzchak and Yishmael, Ya'akov and Esav, and even Yosef with his brothers.

However, the relationship between Ephraim and Menashe was the exception, as the sefer 'Mikdash Mordechai' points out. Even though Ya'akov put Ephraim, the younger brother, first and Menashe could have justifiably hated him for this, the act did not arouse any jealousy and the two brothers lived in total fraternity.

In line with this attribute that Ephraim and Menashe personified, Ya'akov blessed them that others will be blessed through them. "May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Menashe" who excelled in the attribute of fraternity. They should be a symbol to all who wish to bless their children with love and harmony.

Intention, in Mitzvah Performance Only

"For in their rage they murdered people and with their will, they maimed an ox" (Bereishit 49:6)

The Holy Rashi explains the moral of this verse. "'For in their rage they murdered people', this refers to Chamor and the people of Shechem. 'And with their will, they maimed an ox', this refers to the fact that they wished to disable Yosef who is figuratively likened to an ox."

Rabbi Avraham Palagi, quoting one of the Gaonim of Tzefat, Rabbi Yosef Shaul, offers an interesting explanation on these words. When a person transgresses a sin it is better for him to perform it unintentionally, without intending to transgress. But when a person performs a mitzvah it is better to do so intentionally.

But some people lack mazal and mix things up. They sin with specific intent and perform mitzvot unintentionally.

Killing the people of Shechem because of the sin they transgressed, was considered a mitzvah. But how was it carried out? "For in their rage", with much anger and not with the intention of performing a mitzvah. On the other hand, when they sold Yosef, an act that was considered a sin, they did it with intent, as it says "and with their will, they maimed an ox".

This, then, was the claim against them. Why did they behave like this, "for in their rage they murdered people with their will, they maimed an ox"? If they had no choice but to carry out these acts, they could have at least mixed things up, "for in their rage they maimed an ox and with their will, they murdered people". They should have sold Yosef with anger and with intent killed the people of Shechem.

Treasures

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



The Singularity of Menashe and Ephraim

"So he blessed them on that day, saying" (Bereishit 48:20)

The holy Alshich zya" questions why the verse stresses that he blessed them "on that day". Seemingly it would suffice to say "So he blessed them, saying". He also questions the implication of the extra 'vav' in the word 'לאמר', saying, which is usually spelt 'לאמר'.

I would like to suggest the following answer. Rashi writes on this verse that one who wishes to bless his children will bless them with this blessing. Each father will bless his son saying, 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Menashe'. This means that the holy tribes too were commanded to bless their children "May G-d make you like Ephraim and Menashe". This could have aroused a measure of grievance in their hearts, causing them to think, 'Why are these offspring superior to the offspring of the other brothers? Why should all be blessed to be like Yosef's sons? Are we and our children inferior to them?'

On that day that Yosef brought his sons to be blessed by his father before his passing, certainly the other tribes also brought their children with them to receive a blessing from Ya'akov. And suddenly Ya'akov put his other grandchildren to the side and praised the prominence and greatness of Ephraim and Menashe. In addition, he instructed them all to bless their children to be like them. This could have, G-d forbid, aroused feelings of jealousy in their hearts, for why are Yosef's sons more important than the sons of the other tribes?

But Ya'akov Avinu a"h wished to impart to them an ethical message and way of life. They should understand that they are obligated to listen to and obey Da'at Torah, and if this is what the holy grandfather has established, they have no permission to reflect on his deeds. Since his opinion is Da'at Torah, they must accept it willingly even if they do not completely understand the matter. They are obligated to recognize and understand clearly that their grandfather Ya'akov perceives far into the distance what they cannot see. Therefore, they must accept his opinion without questioning and without differing. The tribes withstood the test and accepted the holy opinion of their father with joy and love. And indeed they all blessed their children with the blessing "May G-d make you like Ephraim and Menashe".

So that this instruction should be preserved for all generations and no individual will be able to contend with the fact that particularly the sons of Yosef were chosen for the 'Blessing of the Children', it therefore says "on that day", implying that this is something they should forever remember. Due to this, Ya'akov went to the trouble of maneuvering his hands before blessing Ephraim and Menashe (he crossed his hands and put his right hand on Ephraim who was standing on his left and his left hand on Menashe who was standing on his right), rather than changing their positions which would make it easier for him to bless them. Even though he was very sick and elderly and maneuvering his hands involved great effort, he nevertheless went to the trouble so that all should remember this day and the act will be imprinted in their memory forever, so that throughout the generations no-one will contend with the blessing that Ephraim and Menashe received.

The verse says "on that day" to stress that we are talking about a special, distinctive day where all witnessed the uniqueness and worthiness of Ephraim and Menashe. This was the day on which Ya'akov invested special effort to perform a unique act of crossing over his hands to bless them. In this way, the great importance of Ephraim and Menashe was made clear for all generations.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



Y

a'akov Avinu crossed back over the river to fetch some small earthenware pitchers that he had forgotten. The Gemara tells us that Ya'akov went back

because "to the righteous, their money is dearer to them than their bodies", because they scrupulously avoid even a suggestion of dishonesty. In this week's Parsha Rashi points out on the words "my grave which I have hewn for myself" (Bereishit 50:5), "Ya'akov took all the silver and gold that he brought from Lavan's house and made it into a heap and said to Esav, 'Take this in exchange for your share in the Cave of Machpelah'". Rashi in Parshat Vayigash (Bereishit 46:6) writes, "But what he had amassed in Padan Aram, he gave it all to Esav for his share in the Cave of Machpelah. He said, 'My acquisitions acquired outside Eretz Yisrael are not worthwhile for me'. This is the meaning of 'my grave which I have hewn for myself'. He stacked for him piles of gold and silver like a heap and told Esav, 'Take these'."

Rabbi Moshe Weiss, in his sefer 'Mei Zahav', brings a wonderful explanation. Ya'akov Avinu did not want to benefit from money acquired in Chutz La'aretz because the Gemara says (Ketubot 110b) that anyone who lives in Chutz La'aretz is compared to one who does not have a G-d. As the Ramban in Parshat Acharei Mot explains, outside of Eretz Yisrael there is a different form of Divine Providence than that of Eretz Yisrael. It is written concerning Eretz Yisrael, "The eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year's end" (Devarim 11:12). Other places in the world are subject to the intervention of angels who are appointed over that country.

It follows that outside of Eretz Yisrael, all the material abundance that comes to the world comes through the appointed angel or the Zodiac signs and not directly through Hashem. Whereas in Eretz Yisrael,

the abundance emanates directly from Hashem.

Since this is the case, explains Rabbi Yosef Salant zt"l, in his sefer 'Be'er Yosef', Ya'akov Avinu said, I do not want to use money that comes to me from the appointed angel or through the Zodiac signs and not directly from Hashem. Ya'akov Avinu gave away all his wealth in exchange for a gravesite in the Cave of Machpelah, saying that in Chutz La'aretz I acquired wealth but lost out on two mitzvot, and all this wealth is not worth losing two mitzvot!

Which two mitzvot did he lose out on? Chazal ask on the verse "Ya'akov became very frightened and it distressed him" (Bereishit 32:8), what was Ya'akov afraid of? Hashem had told him that He will watch over him! Chazal answer that Ya'akov was afraid because of two mitzvot that he did not fulfil, the mitzvot of living in Eretz Yisrael and honoring one's parents.

To counteract this, Ya'akov publicly declared that he was prepared to give away all the money that he earned in Chutz La'aretz in exchange for the merit of these two mitzvot!

How will he merit these two mitzvot?

The Be'er Yosef explains that he handed over all his money to Esav in exchange for a portion in Eretz Yisrael, which also gave him the merit of being buried next to his father. This is how he merited these two mitzvot, both honoring his parents and settling in Eretz Yisrael.

This shows how precious he considered Eretz Yisrael. And if Esav was prepared to sell, for a few pennies, his portion in Eretz Yisrael, it is a sign that he appreciated neither Eretz Yisrael nor his father.

Now we understand why Ya'akov Avinu was prepared to pay a fortune for his portion in Eretz Yisrael. On the one hand so as to atone for not living in Eretz Yisrael and also for not being able to honor his father during the time that he was away from home.

What is the Value of Laying Tefillin?

Harav Rosenblum shlita adds a beautiful story concerning a Jew who lived in Chutz La'aretz. After the shacharit prayers, he mistakenly left his Tefillin in the Beit Kneset and noticed only when he came

home that evening, at the end of a day's work. Since he was extremely tired, he decided not to go to the Beit Kneset to fetch them, despite being afraid that they may be stolen during the night.

The next morning when he awoke, he noticed that heavy snow had piled up on the roads and sidewalk during the night. He decided to pray at home, but how could he do so without his Tefillin? He called his Rav who told him that the Shulchan Aruch rules that a person is obligated to give away a fifth of his assets to fulfil a positive commandment.

He immediately called the municipality: "Why are you not clearing the street where I live?" he demanded.

"Are you crazy?" they replied, "Do you think we send forces to clear the entire New York? We only clear the main streets."

"And how much will I have to pay for the pleasure of having the road from my home to the Beit Kneset cleared, a distance of one and a half kilometers?"

"The pleasure will cost you ten thousand dollars."

He recalled the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch that his Rav had pointed out. \$10,000 was less than a fifth of his assets so he replied, "Okay. It's fine with me. I would like you to come."

After taking care of the payment with his credit card, a team of workers arrived and carried out the work which took a few hours.

When he arrived at the Beit Kneset, his Rav was there. When the Rav heard the lengths to which this man had gone for the sake of retrieving his Tefillin, he told him with emotion: "Shloimele! With this impressive deed that you performed, you attached a price to your mitzvah of Tefillin! You proved that laying Tefillin is as dear and precious to you as \$10,000. From now on you will receive a reward for laying Tefillin in line with how you defined the mitzvah. Besides, all the times you laid Tefillin until today, will retroactively also be regarded in line with this definition, for you proved your relationship to this mitzvah. Two people can lay Tefillin and each will receive a different reward. It depends on the extent to which each one attaches importance to the mitzvah.

Shnei haMeOros HaGedolim – MeOros haMaggid & MeOros Berditchev

Introduction

The holy light of *der groise maggid* – Rav DovBer of Mezritch and his *talmid* Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev are inseparably tied together like a flame within a fiery coal - *shalheves keshura be'gacheles*. That is the imagery cited by many *Chassidic* academics who have researched the foundations of the *Maggid's Torah*.

As the holy *Ba'al Shem Tov's* successor and the *rebbe* par excellence of most of the *Chassidic Rebbes* that founded the dynasties we know today, the *Maggid* of Mezritch's teachings are of utmost importance for understanding the foundations of the *Chassidus* we all know and love. Whether it's the Rebbe Reb Meilech of Lizensk, Chabad Lubavitch, Sanz-Ropshitz, Satmar, Belz the Chozeh and Peshischa from Kotzk down to Ger, to name just a few (and the list just goes on and on) all of these famous living dynasties that inspire us worldwide all share their common root in Mezritch as their founders were either direct disciples or *talmidim* of those disciples.

What is fascinating is that the faithful scribe and recorder, transmitter, and teacher of his *rebbe's Torahs* to us was none other than the beloved Berditchever *Rav*. There are 3 manuscript traditions that have been verifiably identified as collections of the *Maggid's Torah* interwoven and interlaced by the *Kedushas Levi's*. Some of these were in the hands of the *Avodas Yisrael* – the Kozhnutzer *Maggid* himself a *talmid* and disciple of both the *Maggid* and the Berditchever.

Culling from four of these manuscript traditions – the *Imrei Tzadikim*, *Shmua Tova*, *Kisvei Kodesh* and newly uncovered *Dibros Kesav Yad*, we will attempt to present to you selections that are translated for the first time into English. These teachings are peppered with the well-known Berditchev style so familiar to us from the *Kedushas Levi*, so inseparable from the *Maggid's* teachings themselves. Since the mind of the master is now melded to the mind of his disciple and they have fused into one. And so I humbly present to you – *Shnei haMeOros haGedolim* – the two great luminaries of the *MeOros haMaggid* of Rav DovBer of Mezritch and *MeOros Berditchev* from Rav Levi Yitzchok Derbamdigger.

Taste and see the light is good! *Taamu u'reu ki tov!*

Shnei haMeOros haGedolim – Parshas VaYechi

Does Hashem Need Us and Our Honor?

Mishlei haMaggid as recorded by his faithful disciple Rav Levi Yitzchok, the Berditchever Rav:

Citing the *Midrash Rabbah* (97:2) on the *pasuk* in *parshas VaYechi* “And he [Yaakov] blessed Yosef saying: the G-d Who shepherds me,” (*Bereishis* 48:15) the *midrash* records two views of how to interpret our *pasuk*, Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish.

Rabbi Yochanan said the *pasuk* compares Hashem to a shepherd that stands [in the rear while] watching over his flock that walk-in front of him.

Reish Lakish said that the *pasuk* compares Hashem to a *Nasi* who walks [ahead up-front while] leading the elders who follow after him.

According to Rabbi Yochanan, we need to honor Him.

According to Reish Lakish, He needs our honor.

The Mezritcher *Maggid* taught: We can explain and understand this best based on what the holy *Zohar* teaches us (III *VaYikra* 7b) *Bnei Yisroel* give sustenance to their Father in Heaven – *Mefarnesin LeAvihem SheBaShomayim*. At first glance this makes no sense, how can we understand the meaning of the *Zohar* when there is no *parnasah* or sustenance up above in the Heavens - what is the *Zohar* referring to?

The answer is based on the *pasuk* in “Israel in whom I take pride,” (*Yeshaya* 49:3) Hashem takes pride in the righteous acts of the *tzadikim* and in their *Torah*. As it says “my son if your heart is wise, my heart shall also rejoice with me,” (*Mishlei* 27:11) he causes *nachas* – satisfaction and *simchah* – joy on High. We know that *simchah* comes from the feeling of delight and satisfaction that we feel. After we delight then we rejoice. Satisfaction and delight give us satisfaction that satisfies us and makes us feel full and sated.

For example, a *marshal* or parable if a person sits down to eat a meal and afterwards he feels full and satisfied. We can clearly see and observe that he is full and sated from the *chiyus* and *ruchniyus* - the vitality and spirituality that was within that food and not from the physical *gashmiyus* of the food itself. Rather, we can clearly see that the delight that the food gives us, which is something spiritual is what satisfies us. Another proof is that if a person is delighted by some pleasure that gives him satisfaction, he feels full and his hunger is sated, he no longer needs to eat. We can see from these examples that they clearly demonstrate that delight satisfies and satiates. So too, the *tzaddik* when he causes *simchah*, joy and delight on High, this too is called *parnasah*, so to speak, [since it satiates and fills, sating and satisfying.] * See Below how the Berditchever himself explains this in *Kedushas Levi*.

The Mezritcher *Maggid* continues: By way of introduction we can cite the *pasuk* “Gather together and listen the children of Yaakov listen to Yisroel your father,” (*Bereishis* 49:2). Why did the *pasuk* start out calling them the sons of Yaakov and later call them to listen to their father Yisroel, why the change in name?

The answer is based on the *Zohar* (II 42b) all influences and influx of blessings flowing from on High known as *shefa* come from the attribute of *Chochma* as represented by the letter *Yud* (of Hashem's four letter name.) The letter *yud* has a beginning, a middle, and an end (ibid II 180a) these are the top point and the lower point, as well as the body of the letter *yud*

itself. These are in fact three *yuds* (*Tikkunei Zohar* #13, 27b). We can match them so that the top point represents Yisroel which spells the words *Li Rosh* – the head is mine, the lower point represents Yaakov which is the *Ekev yud* – the heel of the *yud*, the lower level, and the body of the *yud* represents the name *Yeshurun* which contains the word *shura* – a queue since *Chazal* say that no queue is less than three standing in line (*Beitza* 14b). All three names also begin with the letter *Yud* – Yaakov, Yisroel, Yeshurun. Yaakov is known as the middle pillar that stands and mediates, halfway between both extremes (*Zohar* II 175b).

Now the *pasuk* says “all of them were formed with wisdom,” (*Tehillim* 104:24) All the life and vitality of all the worlds comes from the supernal attribute of wisdom known as the head start or *Reishis* (*Zohar* II 121b) this refers to the upper point of the *yud* – *Li Rosh* the head start of all wisdom called *Resihis Chochmah*. Yeshurun is the body of the letter *yud* which serves as a pipeline connecting and drawing down from above to below, and Yaakov is the lower point of the *yud*, which refers to gazing and looking at, as is known (*Etz Chaim* 4:1) that the lowest level of *Chochma* is to gaze and look at. This is known as the *Eyn Yaakov* or eye of Jacob (*Devarim* 33:28) and eyes are referred to as wisdom (*Etz Chaim* 8:1) as in the *pasuk* “*Eynei HaEida* (lit. the eyes) – leaders of the congregation.” (*Bamidbar* 15:24).

We can best understand this based on the *mashal* or parable of a father teaching his son. When father and son study together the son is receiving wisdom from his father. Whatever he intellectually grasps is all based on what his father says and speaks to him. The wisdom of the father is very great indeed, so great that it remains hidden. Only that amount that the son can grasp is due to how much his father limits this vast wisdom, constricting it and dumbing it down to his son's level of understanding. He clothes the wisdom in garments of vocal speech, spoken words that convey meaning. When the son puts his mind to it and uses his faculties to comprehend the ideas expressed by his father's spoken words that he is receiving, they fuse and become one at that point. As it says (*Berachos* 22a) open your mouth so your words shall shine forth, wisdom shines within spoken vocalized words of spoken speech. This enlightens others so that students and disciples can also understand and comprehend. When they do understand, then the father delights and he derives great satisfaction from this, from being able to transmit his wisdom and give to others, influencing them. This is due to the well-known rule that more than the calf desires to nurse, the mother cow wants to feed her (*Pesachim* 112a).

The son causes his father delight, similar to the *mashal* or parable of how a small child asks from his father for something. When the father is able to fulfill his child's request and grant them what they asked for, by giving them what they want he receives satisfaction and delight.

As it says “A *tzaddik* rules over the fear of G-d,” (*Shmuel* II 23:3) the will of *Hashem* and the will of the *tzaddik* unite as one, whatever the *tzaddik* wants and desires is His Divine will, and therefore the *tzaddik* can transform the attribute of strict justice into mercy.

This is what our sages, *chazal* meant (*Sanhedrin* 65b) if the *tzaddikim* wished to they could create the world, since “through the spoken word of *Hashem* the Heavens were made,” (*Tehillim* 33:6) and furthermore it says “and He blew into his nostrils the breath of life – a living soul,” (*Bereishis* 2:7) and the *Targum* renders this in Aramaic translation as a speaking, talking soul.

Hashem is not made up of parts, He is infinite *Ayn Sof*, without beginning or end, we cannot say of an Infinite being that He has a part of speech that blew into his nostrils, if so whatever includes speech must encompass the entire whole.

Based on what we said if *tzaddikim* so wished it, they could create the world, since the spoken word of a *tzaddik* is so pure and refined it has no barriers or obstructions to block or impede it. Not like the speech of those (*Mishlei* 16:28) heaven forbid, whose talk and speech separate us from the One true G-d (*Zohar* III 16b). The *tzaddik's* speech is attached to its root source and is truly and really the spoken Divine word of *Hashem* Himself Who made the Heavens, and the will of the *tzaddik* is the very same Divine will of *Hashem*, they are one.

It is known that speech comes from the heart into the lungs and from there the sound of the voice emanates out. This is transformed into spoken words. The understanding of our heart comes from the faculty of thought which is what makes our hearts understand (*Tikkunei Zohar* Intro 17a) which is insightful and helps us understand one thing from another. When he receives one understanding this helps him understand something else and makes him insightful. Thus, pure thought is hewn and engraved through insight whereas the voice is hewn and engraved through speech. These two faculties are clothed as hewn engraved upon one another as it is called "*Livnas HaSapir*," (*Shemos* 24:10) the sapphire means brilliance and shining light, it refers to seeing with wisdom called the eye or *ayin*, like a flash of understanding that illuminates all of a sudden when a flash of lightning suddenly illuminates the dark sky. So, does thought hew and engrave the heart until a flash of understanding comes, like an eye that sees suddenly in the blink of an eye! This is a supernal hewing and engraving. The word for sapphire also refers to cipher – or counting things, referring to the lower engraver, speech and spoken words.

This is what our *pasuk* means the staff of rulership shall not depart from Yehudah (*Bereishis* 49:10) the Jew or *tzaddik* is called Yehudah – the Yehudi, the staff of rulership shall never depart from the *tzaddik*, because the *tzaddik* rules over the fear of G-d. The *pasuk* continues "Neither shall the law giver – lit. the engraver – from between his legs," this refers to the two aforementioned engraves that hew the sapphire stone, as it says "Beneath His feet was like the Sapphire Stone – *Livnas HaSapir*," (*Shemos* 24:10) which refers to the attribute of the *tzaddik* – (*Yesod*) the hidden world as is known.

These *tzaddikim* can cancel harsh Divine Heavenly decrees, and *Hashem* derives *nachas*, pleasure, great delight and satisfaction from this. As Chazal told us (*Bava Metzia* 59b) that when Rabbi Yehoshua said we do not pay attention to Heavenly Voices – *Bas Kol* and when they asked what did *Hashem* respond, His response was that He smiled and said My children have defeated Me.

This all explains the *Midrash* that we cited at the very beginning. *Hashem* is shepherding us, and these and those are both the words of the living G-d and in reality [Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish do not really argue]. Rabbi Yochanan compared *Hashem* to a shepherd watching over His flocks, this refers to the transmission of *shefa* in the direction from above down to below. Whereas Reish Lakish compared *Hashem* to a *Nasi* leading His elders, this refers to the purpose of Creation to give Him *nachas*, pleasure and satisfaction from the direction of below to above as we said – Yisrael give *parnassah* to their Father in Heaven, in this manner He needs us and our honor, since this gives Him pleasure, *nachas* and delight, and He fulfills our will, and so to speak He needs our honor and glory. Understand this.

(Based on *Dibros HaMaggid* Manuscript Pages 172b-173b, also found in *Likkutim Yekarim Siman* 271, *Ohr Torah Ohr HaEmes* page 95a)

* In our English translation of *MeOros Kedushas Levi on Parshas Tazria* on the *pasuk*: If a woman shall conceive and give birth to a male...(Vayikra 12:2)

Rav Levi Yitzchok author of *Kedushas Levi* – the *Heilige Berditchever Rav*

The Holy *Zohar* states: “The verse should have used the past tense: ‘If a woman conceived...’ Rabbi Yosei said: When a woman is expecting a child, from the day she conceives until the day she gives birth, nothing leaves her mouth but ‘Will I give birth to a boy or a girl?...’ ” (*Zohar* III:42b).

Says the Berditchever *Rav*: I heard from my master and *Rebbe*, Reb Dov Ber [the *Maggid* of Mezritch], regarding our Sages’ teaching “Yisrael gives sustenance to their Father in Heaven” (*Zohar* III:7b), based on the verse “A wise son gladdens his father” (*Mishlei* 10:1), that when we perform *mitzvos* and good deeds, it gives *Hashem Yisbarach* pleasure. This is what it means to “give sustenance to our Father in Heaven,” since pleasure and delight is called “sustenance.”

But how can it be that every Jew is able to give pleasure and delight to G-d by performing *mitzvos* and good deeds? Why, the Holy One has many thousands of angels all declaring “Holy, Holy Holy” with awe and fear, and what is a mere human that he may be counted among them?

We can illustrate [our question] with a parable. It is common among the dignitaries of the gentiles to keep parrots which they teach to speak like a human, and those who hear them speaking exclaim in wonder to their friends, “Come and see this novelty!” The analogy is self-explanatory.

[The *Rebbe* is strengthening the question with his analogy: What is so spectacular about a parrot when you have real people who talk? Why do you need people to be holy and act like angels when *Hashem* has actual angels?]

If so, you people, open your eyes and see the amazing virtues of the *mitzvos* and good deeds: even the service of the highest angels is nothing compared to the deeds of men.

Based on this we can explain the *mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (2:1): “Rebbi says: What is the proper path that a man should choose for himself? Whatever brings glory [*tiferes*] to one who does it and is glorified by others.” *Rebbi* is teaching us the good and proper path in serving the Creator: Grasp the attribute of beauty and glory called “*tiferes*” and elevate it; in other words, your primary objective when serving *Hashem* should be that *Hashem* should glorify Himself through you. G-d should glorify Himself through the service of His children, who although clothed with the base and lowly garb of the physical body devote their hearts fully to divesting themselves of their physicality to clothe themselves in the spirituality and holiness of the Creator. In this way He glorifies Himself through us.

לרפואה שלימה ר' שלמה מאיר בן שיינדל מירל

Ohev Yisroel VaYechi

VaYechi Yaakov Be'Eretz Mitzrayim Sheva Esra Shana – And Yaakov dwelled in the land of Egypt seventeen years.

The Apta Rav begins by citing his own *Torah to parshas VaYeshev*: We have already explained above how Yaakov Avinu fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *yibum* study it there at length:

How Yaakov Avinu Fulfilled the *Mitzvah* of *Yibum* By Settling the Land of Canaan and Revitalizing the Sparks left behind.

VaYeshev Yaakov BeEretz MeGeurei Aviv – Roshei Teyvos Vayabam. The Apta Rav notes that the first letters of the words of our *pasuk* form the acrostic *VaYabam* which means to perform the *mitzva* of *yibum*. This hints at the secret of how Yaakov Avinu fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *yibum* – levirate marriage.

We can understand this based on the writings of the Arizal (*Shaar HaKdamos* 62 *Etz Chaim Shaar Melachim* 86) and the *Zohar Kadosh* (Vol I *VaYeitze* 155b) that explain the mystery of the *mitzvah* of *yibum* based on the *pasuk* “If He puts His heart to it, His spirit and His soul He would gather in to Himself.” (*Iyov* 34:14) They interpret the *pasuk* to refer to the fact that after the husband passes away, he leaves behind a spirit that he had initially given to his wife. That spirit remains with her even after his death. When the deceased's brother performs *yibum* and fulfills that *mitzvah* in purity and sanctity, he revives his brother's spirit and gives it life and vitality, reawakening those holy sparks that remain behind from his brother and adds to them his brother's spirit and soul.

[Therefore we reread our *pasuk* in *Iyov* as “If He [the brother performing *yibum*] puts His heart [in] to it [to perform *yibum* on his deceased brother's wife with pure sincere intent with holiness and sanctity, then] his spirit and his soul [the deceased brother's spirit and soul] he [the brother doing *yibum*] gathers [and adds to those sparks that his deceased brother left behind.”]

Therefore, the new child born after *yibum* is called after the deceased brother because they are his remaining sparks that have been given new life and revitalized through this *yibum*.

Hashem created this world to dwell down here within it and rest the holy presence of His *Shechina* upon the earth so that the entire world will be filled with His glory. However, the wicked generations of the *dor nosh*, and of the flood and *haflaga*, they cause the Divine Presence of the *Shechina* to depart from this world (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 19:13). However, there remained behind just a small measure of life and vitality to keep the world going this is known by the holy *Zohar* as the *Kusta DeChayusa* (*Zohar* I 83a).

However, our holy forefather Yaakov Avinu did his best and he settled the land and dwelled therein in his father's house – meaning that he settled the land down here below

creating a dwelling for his Heavenly father. By so doing he gave life and revitalized the holy sparks that remained that aspect known as the *Kusta DeChayusa*. Especially and specifically in Canaan that is the holy land of *Eretz Yisroel*. And by revitalizing and giving life to these remaining sparks of holiness he fulfilled the secret of the *mitzvah* of *yibum* hinted at by the acrostic – *roshei teyvov* of our opening *pasuk VaYeshev Yaakov BeEretz MeGeurei Aviv – Roshei Teyvos Vayabam*.

Returning Back to Our *Parshas VaYechi* and our *pasuk: VaYechi Yaakov Be'Eretz Mitzrayim Sheva Esra Shana – And Yaakov dwelled in the land of Egypt seventeen years*.

Here too we find a hint in the *roshei teyvov* that the letters form an acrostic spelling *VaYabem* – that Yaakov fulfilled *yibum*. Meaning to say that here too in Egypt, Yaakov *Avinu* also fulfilled the secret of *yibum* as well. (Although our explanation here might seem a bit different than how we explained in *parshas VaYeshev* - nonetheless it all heads in the same direction.)

When Yaakov *Avinu* arrived in Egypt, he uplifted all the fallen sparks that fell from such a high lofty place, down to such a lowly place such as Egypt. This was possible because Yaakov's image is hewn on *Hashem's* throne of glory, and he himself was from such a lofty place.

All the good things that fell are hinted at by the seventeen years interval mentioned in our *pasuk* since *Tov* has the gematria of seventeen (*Tes=9 Vav=6, Bais=2* together they equal 17). All the good that is reserved for *tzaddikim* in the future to benefit from and enjoy is similarly stored there as well. When Yaakov *Avinu* arrived in Egypt, he revived and revitalized those fallen lofty holy sparks that fell there. He was able to draw them back to their original source in holiness. Doing so he fulfilled the mystery of *yibum* which we explained above study it there (that *yibum* uplifts revitalizes and revives the sparks of the deceased). Then you will understand this.

“And the days of Yaakov, were the years of his life,” the *Apta Rav* explains that this *pasuk* teaches us that each and every day of Yaakov *Avinu's* life was considered equal to a whole entire year. Meaning that what Yaakov was able to achieve in just one single day would take a normal average person an entire year to achieve and accomplish. Someone else would need to serve *Hashem* for an entire year to achieve and accomplish what Yaakov could do in a day! This is what the *pasuk* means that the days of Yaakov were the years of his life – each day was equal to a year's worth of *avodah*.

“Seven years and forty and one hundred years.” it says in “he built it for seven years,” (*Melachim I 6:38*) this hints at the following idea:

Chazal say that a person only sins if a spirit of insanity overtakes him and enters him (*Sotah 3a*). Then after this spirit enters him, only then he sins, heaven forbid. This transforms

those very same abilities and powers that are actually given to him to serve a holy and lofty purpose and redirects them towards transgression. These are the seven building blocks of the seven days of Creation the seven supernal attributes (*Chessed, Gevurah, Tiferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod* and *Malchus*). For example it perverts his love and misdirects it towards foreign love [desire for the forbidden] and misdirects his fear and awe of *Hashem* towards external fear – to be scared (of what other people will think of him or say and their mockery) and to misuse true pride and positive self-esteem instead for self-aggrandizement, arrogance and false pride. Similarly, regarding all the other lofty seven attributes. Because the spirit of insanity has entered him and taken hold – this *ruach shetus* lowers him and debases these powers and abilities, heaven forbid perverting, warping, misdirecting and abusing these were the seven building blocks of the seven days of Creation the seven supernal attributes.

Then afterwards, when a person repents and regrets his past misdeeds and actions, and does *teshuva* returning to *Hashem* he reaches a true understanding of what he has done wrong, regrets his past and resolves to better himself – this understanding reaches above the seven lowered attributes up to the eighth one of *Binah* – supernal insight and understanding. Then he begins to truly understand where do all these powers and attributes come from? What is their source and from what a high lofty place they originate? When he suppresses his urges and denies them and holds himself back with restraint from sin and transgression then from then on, he attaches himself to the root source of each attribute, in its lofty supernal source on High. This united and binds the seven days of Creation to their lofty root back to *Binah*. That is what is hinted at by the *pasuk* “and he built it with *Binah* in seven years.” He used insight and understanding of *Binah* imbuing the seven attributes with this and uplifting them all back to their source in the supernal realm of *Binah*.

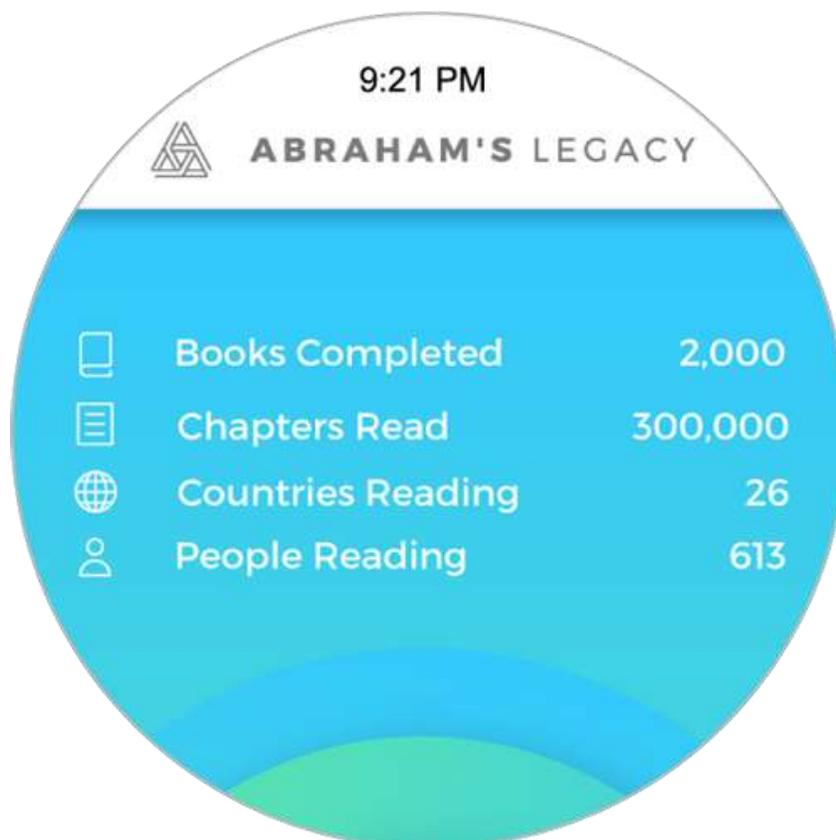
Hashem in His great Divine wisdom orders the world in such a way that He causes each *tzaddik* to go through this process. Each *tzaddik* experiences some kind of downfall all in order to rise up once more (even higher). Because by falling from his lofty level and afterwards getting back up again by doing supernal *Teshuva Illa* – he not only rises up himself, he also uplifts all his *middos* and attributes up together with him to their holy root source. He then takes together all those fallen holy sparks from among external forces of darkness, back to the seven days of Creation, with him and raises them up too.

This is the secret of the *pasuk* in *Mishlei* (24:16) “A *tzaddik* falls seven times and gets back up,” the reason for the *tzaddik's* downfall through all the seven attributes is all because he needs to get back up and raise them all back up together with him. This is known as *yerida le'tzorech aliya* – falling down in order to rise back up again. When he rises back up again, he takes together with him all those fallen holy sparks back to their lofty root source.

Here too we can hint this concept and idea that Yaakov *Avinu's avodah* was seven years – an *avodah* through all seven *middos* – the seven attributes as we explained above. And also, forty and one hundred years. Because one hundred forty equals the *gematria* of the words to ride and get back up *Kam* - קמ = 140. (Because he fell down seven and got back up and rose even higher up he fell down seven and every attribute is made up of the other ten = 70 and he rose back up even higher double the amount to 140 - *vaKam*)

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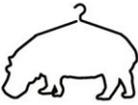
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