

# 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)

❧ **BESHALACH** ❧

❧ CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA ❧

## THE SONG AT THE SEA

*And the sea returned to its original strength.*

Our sages teach that the word Le'Aysano can be read as LeTna'o - to its original condition, referring to the condition Hashem made with the sea during the creation of the world - that it would split on behalf of Bnai Yisrael.

The Modzitzer Rebbe in Divrei Yisrael asks that since Hashem had already stipulated with the sea that it must go against nature and split for the Jews when the time comes, why is Nachshon Ben Amindav's act of jumping into the sea considered to be one of mesirus nefesh and an immense act of self sacrifice?

He answers that in reality, the act of mesirus nefesh was a precondition - that although the sea was to split for Bnai Yisrael, it was to do so, only once they had thrown themselves in nose-deep! Why is this so?

He explains this based on a teaching, a thread that runs throughout his sefer repeatedly from his illustrious forebear, the Tzaddik, Rav Chatzkele Kuzhmimir (see below for Yahrzeit and stories). Hashem created angels and He created men. Angels have neither tests nor trials. When they sing Shirah, there is no novelty in their actions. There is nothing outstanding when angels fulfill the will of the Ribbono Shel Olam - because that is their nature; that is what they were created for and there is nothing holding them back, preventing them from carrying out their role. Human beings, on the other hand, live lives full of Meniyos and Ikkuvim - preventive obstacles with various different barriers and obstructions that block and bar us from fulfilling our tafkid -

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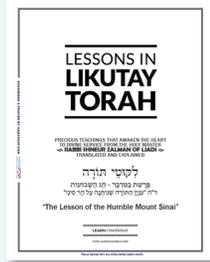
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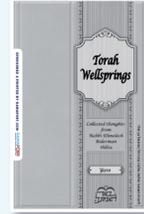
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to do and fulfill the will of the Master of the World – adhering to the Torah and Mitzvos. When we face Meniyos and Ikkuvim head on, and despite them, overcome and defeat them to serve Hashem, this causes tremendous joy, pleasure, satisfaction and Nachas Ruach to Hashem.

Kriyas Yam Suf, the splitting of the sea, explains the Divrei Yisrael, was the first example of an obstruction, a barrier, that prevented the Jewish people as a nation, from reaching and serving Hashem. When Klal Yisrael left Egypt en masse, their Exodus was barred and impeded by the sea. Their mission was to reach Har Sinai and “*serve Hashem on the mountain.*” It was to accept the Torah and become Shomrei Torah. Only one thing stood in their way... the sea. They needed to demonstrate self-sacrifice and mesirus nefesh as a key to unlock the promise and condition that the sea would then split for them. Not only did Klal Yisrael pass this test, but by acting with self-sacrifice to overcome the difficulty presented by the sea, they passed this trait down to us as an inheritance.

This trait itself was ingrained in the Jewish people by Avraham Avinu who was assailed by the Satan on his way to overcome the test of the Akeidah. The Medrash says that the Satan conjured the image of a deep river, which Avraham Avinu *also* had to pass in, neck-deep, until he emerged victorious. This self-sacrifice - to perform Hashem’s will, has now been passed down to us. From Avraham Avinu to the Shevatim in the Egyptian bondage and from them on to us, their descendants. The Divrei Yisrael writes that any trial and trait that was overcome by our ancestors, is inherited by their future generations and enables them to overcome the various Meniyos and Ikkuvim, that face the Jewish people throughout history. Thus, just as the sea was THE obstacle preventing Klal Yisrael from reaching Har Sinai and getting the Torah, whenever any of us, in any of the generations, face an obstacle to our keeping of the Torah, mitzvos and Avodas Hashem, and we take hold of the keys passed on to us by our ancestors and act as they did - immersing ourselves neck and nose-deep with mesirus nefesh to battle against the tide - then not only will the sea split for us, they will become our aid as well. Just as the sea turned against the Egyptian pursuers and bore fruit and treasures for the Jews, so do the very same Meniyos and Ikkuvim contain within them the very secret to our salvation, if we just persevere and overcome them.

Serving Hashem despite and through the various Meniyos and Ikkuvim is the job of man in this world. For example, the challenge of earning a living, is perhaps one of the most formidable and greatest challenges. It is no coincidence that Chazal compare it the splitting of the sea when they say “Kashin Mezonosav Shel Adam Ke’Kriyas Yam Suf.” We are not angels. We have a Yetzer Hara, and the Ol HaParnassah, the burden and yoke of being human, is exactly why Hashem treasures our victories and gives us the aid and strength needed to overcome and fulfill His will. That is the Song of the Sea, the Shiras HaYam - the song of victory over all barriers and obstacles in our lives, as we fulfill our tafkaid to Hashem.



## **The Night the Rebbe Reb Shmelke Slept in a Bed**

The Rebbe Reb Shmelke of Nikolsberg rarely slept in his bed. He and his disciples would study at their shtenders in the Bais Medrash until they dozed off or fell asleep - it was part of the way they served Hashem. A talmid was once found asleep on his arm on the shtender. The Rebbe remarked, “If you had the strength and presence of mind to put your arm down, so that you could lay your head on it, you must not have been truly tired!”

Once, the Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk and his brother the Rebbe Reb Zisha of Anipoli, made a special trip to Nikolsberg to get the Rebbe Reb Shmelke to sleep in his bed that night.

The two holy brothers made the bed with special Kavanos, holy thoughts and meditations. That night, the Rebbe Reb Shmelke indeed slept in his bed for several hours. The next day, he felt much more enlightened than usual. He stood and davened as the chazzan, as was his holy custom. When he reached the recitation of the daily Shiras HaYam, he was so deeply engrossed in his prayers and he was in such a state of enrapture and dveikus - that in his exalted frame of mind, he felt as though he was actually crossing the sea. So much so, that he even began to lift up the coattails of his bekeshe so as they should not get wet!!!

After Davening, he turned to the two Tzaddikim and admitted that he never realized what a good night's rest could do for davening. However, he told them outright, that he would not be able to keep up this practice on a regular basis...



## **Preparing for the Mon on Erev Shabbos**

*VeHachinu Es Asher Yaviyu - and they prepared whatever they needed to take.*

Every Shabbos, for a period of twenty-two years, Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov was known to have spoken about Parshas HaMon. By doing so, he drew down an abundance of Shefa, Berachos and Parnassah for all of Klal Yisrael.

(Ateres Menachem)

One of the amazing things he taught about the Mon was that since it was "angel food," it was thoroughly pure and had no waste. As such, when it was consumed, it did not go down the esophagus into the stomach to get digested and absorbed in the intestines. Instead, it went down the windpipe - straight from the lungs into the heart, and from there, it was directly injected into the bloodstream and carried off to all the limbs of the body!

(Menachem Tzion)

Once, when Rav Tzvi Hirsh Meshares was still Rav Menachem Mendel's gabbai, the Rebbe's house was entirely bare. Neither food nor money was to be found. It was still the beginning of the week and every day the Rebbitzen asked Rav Tzvi Hirsh to alert the Rebbe as to the dire financial situation in their household. For his part, the loyal gabbai went to tell the Rebbe. Each time he opened the door, he found the Tzaddik in such lofty states of dveikus and rapture that he dared not disturb his master.

Finally, as Shabbos was rapidly approaching, and Rav Tzvi Hirsh could no longer hold back the Rebbetzin's dire warnings and pleas. He entered the Rebbe's room and told Rav Mendel that there was neither food for Shabbos, nor money with which to buy any. "Do not worry," explained the Tzaddik. "We shall fulfill the dictates of the pasuk in Parshas HaMon - VeHachinu Es Asher Yaviyu - and they prepared whatever they needed to take. And so, Rav Hirsh drew water, filled up all the empty pots and put them over the fire, as if to cook. "Now," said Rav Mendel, "we have prepared and done our part... and now, Shabbos shall do hers!" Not long after, a guest appeared who wished to stay with the Rebbe for Shabbos, and wouldn't you know...? He just happened to be traveling with all the needed provisions -

challos, fish, meat and all that was needed to fill the empty pots and make Shabbos. "You see," said the Tzaddik, "we prepared ours, and the Mon came... Shabbos did the rest!"

(Chasdei Avos)



## הילולא

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Hebrew Tefilla for Lighting a Yahrzeit or Hilula Candle

[תפילה הנמצאת בספר אלה המגן מבעל הפלא יועץ על פְּרֶשֶׁת וַיֵּצֵא עֲמוּד כ"ד]

הַרְיֵנִי מִדְּלִיק נֵר זֶה לְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִלּוּי נַשְׁמַת אָבִי / אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי / הַצַּדִּיק \_\_\_\_\_  
בְּ/בֵת \_\_\_\_\_, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים  
וּבְרָצוֹן כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הַטּוֹב שֶׁאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה, בֵּין בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה, בֵּין בְּדַבָּר, בֵּין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וַיְהִי הַכֹּל  
לְזָכוֹת וּלְמִנוּחַת וּלְעִלּוּי לְנַשְׁמוֹת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְפָרֵט לְנַפְשׁ רּוּחַ וְנַשְׁמָה שֶׁל אָבִי / אִמִּי /  
צַדִּיק \_\_\_\_\_ . יְהִי רְצוֹן שֶׁתְּהִינָה נַפְשׁוֹתֵיהֶם צְרוּרוֹת בְּצְרוּר 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](http://www.yeshshem.com/hilulah.htm)





## ❁ GEDOLIM BE'MISASAM YOSER ❁



YAHARZEITS BEGINNING SHABBOS BESHALACH

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

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

### \* 13<sup>th</sup> of Shevat ~ Begins Friday Night (Feb 7<sup>th</sup>)

- \* **Rav Mordechai** *ben* Rav Noach of Lechovitch, founder of Kobrin and Slonim dynasties, a descendant of the *Levush*, *talmid* of Rav Boruch of Mezhibuz and *talmid muvhok* of Rav Shlomo of Karlin and Rav Moshe of Kobrin. He always told his *Chassidim* that he first learned *Torah* from Rav Aharon of Karlin, who taught him *Torah* from the heart. Rav Mordechai is known by his mother's name Rav Mordechai *ben* Adel (or Udel). He was succeeded by his son, Rav Noach, (5570/1810);
- \* **Rav Yaakov Shimon** of Zaslav, son of Rav Pinchas of Koretz, (5568/1808);
- \* **Rav Boruch Sorotzkin**, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Telshe in Cleveland, born in Zhetl, Lithuania, where his father, Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, was *Rav* (the father was later known as the Lutzker *Rav*). Rav Boruch's mother was the daughter of Rav Eliezer Gordon, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Telshe. As a young man, Rav Boruch studied under Rav Elchonon Wasserman in Baranovich, and then under Rav Boruch Ber Leibovitz in Kamenitz. In 1940, he married Rachel Bloch, daughter of the *Telsher Rav* and *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Avrohom Yitzchok Bloch. With the advent of World War II, they escaped to America and settled in Cleveland, where he joined his wife's uncles, Rav Eliyohu Meir Bloch and Rav Chaim Mordechai Katz, who re-established Telshe in America. In 1943, Rav Boruch began delivering *shiurim* in the *Yeshiva*. In 1964, Rav Boruch, together with Rav Mordechai Gifter, assumed responsibility for the *Yeshiva*. He was also very active with *Chinuch Atzmai*, *Torah Umesorah* and *Agudas Yisrael* of America, (5677–5739/1917–1979).

### \* 14<sup>th</sup> of Shevat ~ Begins Motzai Shabbos (Feb 8<sup>th</sup>)

- \* **Rav Yaakov Yehoshua Falk** *ben* Rav Tzvi Hirsch Katz, the *Pnei Yehoshua* (1680–1756), was born in Cracow, Poland, the scion of a rabbinic family. Rav Yaakov studied at Lvov (Lemberg), where he became *Rav* in 1718, succeeding the *Chacham Tzvi*; he became *Rav* of Berlin in 1730 and Metz in 1734, succeeding Rav Yaakov Rischer (the *Shevus Yaakov*), then *Rav* of Frankfurt in 1740. At the tender age of twenty-two, Rav Falk's life was forever changed: on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of *Kislev* 1702, he was trapped under fallen rubble, following an explosion that killed a total of thirty-six Jews of Lemberg, including his wife, Lea, and their only daughter, Gittel. He vowed that if he got out alive, he would write a *sefer*. Miraculously saved, he gathered the strength and courage to complete what would be his life's mission: to carry on in the tradition of his grandfather and commit himself completely to *Torah* study. In doing so, he created the *Pnei Yehoshua*. Rav Falk also became renowned for his diligence and piety. It is told that before he began writing his *Pnei Yehoshua* he studied the entire *Talmud* thirty-six times, corresponding to the thirty-six lives that were lost in the explosion. But Rav Falk was also famous for his stubbornness, and his unwillingness to compromise forced him to move from community to community. At the height of his career, he was appointed chief *Rav* of Frankfurt am Main. There he became embroiled in the Emden-Eibeschutz controversy. Due to his vociferous support of Rav Yaakov Emden, he was forced to leave Frankfurt in 1751. When he was invited back to Frankfurt several years later, his opponents prevented him from teaching publicly, causing him to flee once again.

Rav Falk lived in Worms and Offenbach until his *petira* in 1756. Although he requested no eulogy, he was eulogized by Rav Yechezkel Landau, the famed *Noda B'Yehuda*, and was buried in Frankfurt, (5516/1756);

- \* **Rav Doniel Ben Naftoli Hertzka Frisch**, *Mechaber* of *Mosok Midevash* on *Zohar*, (5765/2005);
- \* **Rav Yechiel Danziger (Danczyger)**, first *Rebbe* of Alexander. Born to Rav Shraga Feivel of Gritz-Makova, he became a *Chassid* of Rav Yitzchok Kalish of Vorki, then his son, Rav Mendel of Vorki. Following Rav Mendel's *petira*, Rav Yechiel became a follower of Rav Dov Ber of Biala. After his own *petira*, Rav Yechiel was succeeded by his son, Rav Yisrael, (5654/1894);
- \* **Rav Arye Kaplan** (1935–1983). Born in New York City, Rav Arye had a prolific but tragically brief career, producing over sixty works. After his early education in *Torah Vodaas* and *Mir Yeshiva* in Brooklyn, he studied at the *Mir Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim. He also received a master's degree in physics and was listed in the *Who's Who in Physics*, (5743/1983);
- \* **Rav Aharon Aryeh Leib Leifer**, *Nadvorner* (*Nadworna*) *Rebbe*, *mechaber* of the *Yad Aharon*, the son of Rav Yissochor Dov Bertzi Leifer of *Nadvorna*, succeeding him as *Rebbe*, (5577–5657/1817–1897);
- \* **Rav Elozor Hendeles**, close aide to the *Gerrer Rebbes*. Born in Lodz, Poland, he immigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* in 1937. He was a confidant of the *Lev Simcha* and a loyal messenger of the *Bais Yisrael*, establishing homes for refugees, working on *hachnossas kalla*, helping the sick and poor, and establishing Orthodox communities in Tel Aviv, Ashdod and Arad, (5673–5764/1913–2004).

### \* 15<sup>th</sup> of Shevat ~ Begins Sunday Night (Feb 9<sup>th</sup>) – Tu B'Shevat

- \* **Rav Chaim Mordechai Margulies** *ben* Rav Mordechai Manish, *mechaber* of *Sha'arei Teshuva* on *Shulchon Aruch*, (5583/1823);
- \* **Rav Gedalya Aharon Rabinowitz** of *Linetz* *ben* Rav Yitzchok Yoel, *mechaber* of *Chein Aharon*, grandson of the *mechaber* of *Teshuas Chein*, Rav Gedalya of *Linitz*, (5638/1878 [some say 1877]);
- \* **Rav Refoel Shlomo Laniado**, *Rosh Yeshiva Poras Yosef*, (5685/1925, according to *Yated* 2008);
- \* **Rav Boruch Kunstat**, born in *Pressburg*, Hungary, to Rav Avrohom Aryeh, a descendant of the *Chasam Sofer*. He studied in the *Yeshiva* of Rav Simcha Bunim Sofer (the *Shevet Sofer*) and his son, Rav Akiva Sofer (the *Daas Sofer*), and was appointed *Rav* of *Fulda* in 1907 at the age of twenty-two. There, he married *Tzipora*, daughter of Rav *Elchonon Moshe Emanuel*, and he founded a *Yeshiva*. After spending time in *Buchenwald*, he was released and moved to *Eretz Yisrael*. Along with Rav Yechiel Michel Shlesinger (who also survived the camps), he founded *Yeshiva Kol Torah* in 1939. It was the first *Azhkenazi Yeshiva* in *Eretz Yisrael* in which *shiurim* were delivered in Hebrew and not Yiddish, the format having been approved by the *Chazon Ish*. In his will, Rav Shlesinger, who was *niftar* in 1946, expressed the hope that Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach would replace him as *Rosh Yeshiva*, (5645–5727/1885–1967).

### \* 16<sup>th</sup> of Shevat ~ Begins Monday Night (Feb 10<sup>th</sup>)

- \* **Rav Dovid** of *Kolomai*, a *talmid* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, (5492 or 5502/1732 or 1742);
- \* **Rav Yona Navon**, *Rav* of *Yerushalayim* (1713–1760). Appointed *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshiva*

*Gedulas Mordechai* in Yerushalayim at the age of nineteen, he later moved to Italy due to the harsh poverty. Supported by relatives, he published *Nechpa Bakessef*, his *sefer* of responsa. He also authored *Get Mekushar* on the *sefer Get Poshut* of Rav Moshe ibn Chaviv, as well as *Pri Mipri* to refute the questions on *Pri Chodosh* raised by the *Pri To'ar* and the *Simla Chadasha*. Among his many *talmidim* was Rav Chaim Yosef Dovid Azoulai, the *Chida*, (5520/1760);

- \* **Rav Osher Tzvi** of Ostraha, *mechaber* of *Maayan HaChochma*, (5577/1817);
- \* **Rav Yaakov Hager** of Zablatov *ben* Rav Dovid, grandson of Rav Menachem Mendel of Kosov, (5641/1881);
- \* **Rav Sholom Mordechai HaKohen Schwadron**, the *Maharsham* (1835–1911), also known as the *Brezaner Rav*. He gave *semicha* to Rav Meir Shapiro of Lublin. He was the ultimate rabbinical authority, not only for the *Rabbonim* of Galicia, Poland and even Lithuania, but for the entire Diaspora. His writings include *Mishpat Sholom* on *Choshen Mishpot*, *Darchei Sholom* on the *Talmud* and its commentators, *Da'as Torah* on the laws of kosher slaughter and *Gilui Da'as* on sections 61–69 of *Yoreh De'a*. One prominent opponent of the latter book was Rav Tzvi Hirsch Shapira, *mechaber* of *Darchei Teshuva*, head of the rabbinical court of Munkatch. Rav Sholom Mordechai was the grandfather of the *Maggid* of Yerushalayim, who bore the same name, (5671/1911);
- \* **Rav Alter Yechezkel Horowitz** (1930–1994). At the age of fifteen, he was deported with his father to Auschwitz, then to Gluzen in Austria. His mother had been *niftar* when he was twelve, and his father did not survive the war. In 1946, he joined a *Yeshiva* for refugees in Austria. When he was nineteen, he came alone to America. He met Rav Aharon Kotler and joined the *Yeshiva* in Lakewood. At the same time, he also became a close follower of the *Satmar Rebbe*. In the 1960s, he moved his family to Monsey and became part of the *Kollel* of *Bais Medrash Elyon*. In 1968, he opened his *Bais Medrash*, the *Sanzer Kloiz*. In 1984, the *Viener Kehilla* in Boro Park asked him to serve as their *Dayan*. Thereafter, he also took on the position of *Rosh Bais Din* of *Kehillas Adas Yere'im*, (5754/1994);
- \* **Rav Avrohom Shlomo Biderman**, the *Lelover Rebbe* of Yerushalayim (1927–2000). Son of Rav Moshe Mordechai of Lelov, he was born in Cracow, Poland, on *Rosh Chodesh Adar*. He was only four years old when his father decided to immigrate to *Eretz Yisrael*, settling in the *Botei Warsaw* neighborhood of Yerushalayim. When his father moved to Tel Aviv in 1943, he transferred to the *Bais Yosef Novardok Yeshiva*. He married the daughter of Rav Zundel Hager. In 1965, when his father moved from Tel Aviv to Bnei Brak, he was appointed *Rav* of the *Bais Medrash* in Tel Aviv. With the *petira* of his father, Rav Avrohom Shlomo was appointed *Admor*, and he moved to Yerushalayim, (5760/2000).

\* **17<sup>th</sup> of Shevat ~ Begins Tuesday Night (Feb 11<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* **Rav Chaim Falagi (Palagi)** *ben* Rav Yaakov, *Rav* of Izmir (1788–1858). Rav Chaim was a *mekubol* and *halachist*. He derived much of his *Torah* knowledge from his grandfather, Rav Refoel Yosef (the *Chikrei Lev*), and together with him, wrote the work *Semicha L'Chaim*. After his father's *petira* in 1828, he accepted the positions of *Dayan* and *Mashgiach Ruchani* in the *Bais Yaakov Rav Yeshiva*. In 1855, he was appointed to the position of *Rav HaKollel*, the highest rabbinical position in Izmir. He authored *Kaf HaChaim*, *Moed L'chol Chai*, and at least seventy other *seforim*. He also wrote a *sefer* called *Tenufas Chaim*. Seventy-two of his works are known, but some of his manuscripts were destroyed in the great fire that struck Izmir in 1841. It is said that he wrote seventy-two *seforim* to connect him to the mystical aspect of his studies.

In one of his works, Rav Falagi describes his own life as follows:

I call heaven and earth to testify that from the age when I could control my faculties until I was twenty, I used to devote myself single-mindedly to *Torah* study, day and night, with no wasted time. I had no involvement with worldly matters. From age twenty to age forty, when my children were dependent on me, I dealt with worldly matters as a broker. Nevertheless, whenever I had no work, I did not turn to frivolity and wasteful things, but rather I returned to my studies. From age forty, when I was appointed to be a rabbinical judge and teacher and to handle matters of concern to the public, until this day, there is not a minute when I am not surrounded by litigants or by public affairs. These matters come both from this city and its environs, and also various decrees of the government keep me busy with matters affecting the public. Therefore my heart worries within me that I do not spend sufficient time studying. I therefore force myself to use the limited time that I have for studying, and may others see me and do the same; may they learn from me that when distractions come along, whether they come from public or private matters – for one's eyes and heart search for a spare moment – that spare time, when it comes, should not be wasted. If one lives thus, his *Torah* studies will be blessed.



- \* **Rav Yechezkel ben Rav Tzvi Hirsch Taub** of Kuzmir (1772–1856). Born in Plonsk, Poland, a disciple of the *Chozeh* of Lublin, he was the grandfather of the first Modzitzer *Rebbe*. After opponents of *Chassidus* drove Rav Yechezkel out of Plonsk, he moved to Shanana. Rav Yechezkel became an *Admor* in 1827. After becoming famous throughout Poland, Rav Yechezkel moved to Kuzmir. One of the most idyllic towns in Poland, Kuzmir lies next to the Vistula river, in the shadow of a fourteenth-century castle, reputedly built by King Casimir the Great. A Jewish community had existed there since 1406 and, by Rav Yechezkel's time, Jews comprised half the town's population. Today, Jewish visitors to Poland pass through the town to visit the surviving *shul* and cemetery that date back to the sixteenth century. Rav Yechezkel's *Torah* insights were collected by a son-in-law and published in the *sefer Nechmad MiZohov*, which was reprinted, along with other *Divrei Torah* of the dynasty, in the *sefer Toras Yechezkel*, in 1973, (5616/1856);
- \* **Rav Yehuda Chitrik** (1899–2006), a Lubavitcher *Chassid* known for his encyclopedic memory, and for passing on the *Chassidic mesora* of previous *Rebbes*. A book of translations of his stories, *From My Father's Shabbos Table*, was published in 1991. Rav Chitrik was born in Russia and was sent by his father at the age of fifteen to study at the central Lubavitch *Yeshiva* near Smolensk, Russia. After World War II, he moved to the Netherlands and then to Montreal. He moved to New York City in 1983 after the *petira* of his wife. He is survived by well over three hundred children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren, (5766/2006).

\* **18<sup>th</sup> of Shevat ~ Begins Wednesday Night (Feb 12<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* **Rav Yaakov Margulies**, *Av Bais Din* Nuremberg (*Early Acharonim* states 1501; *Yated* 2008 says 1520]. *Mechaber* of *Seder HaGet V'haChalitzta*, which is quoted extensively by the *Rema*. His son, Rav Yitzchok, was a *Rav* in Prague and was the one who compiled his father's *sefer*, (5252/1492) ;
- \* **Rav Binyomin Beinish Finkel**, *Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva* (1911–1990), born in Mir on *Yom*

*Kippur*. In 1931, he studied under the *Chofetz Chaim*, and in 1934–35 under Rav Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik of Brisk. Rav Beinish married the daughter of Rav Shmuel Greineman, the *Chazon Ish*'s brother-in-law. He took over as *Rosh Yeshiva* for his father, Rav Eliezer Yehuda Finkel after the latter's *petira* in 1965, (5750/1990);

✳ **Rav Moshe** of Kitov (Kitover), *talmid* of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, (5498/1738).

✳ **19<sup>th</sup> of Shevat ~ Begins Thursday Night (Feb 13<sup>th</sup>)**

✳ **Rav Elimelech Menachem Mendel Landau** of Strikov (1859–1936), born Menachem Mendel (Elimelech was added a year before his *petira*) to Rav Dov Berish of Biala. After the *petira* of Rav Yitzchok of Vorka in 1848, the majority of Vorka *Chassidim* chose to follow Rav Menachem Mendel's father, Rav Dov Berish. After his *petira* in 1876, none of the sons were willing to accept leadership, so the *Chassidim* followed Rav Dov Berish's primary *talmid*, Rav Yechiel of Alexander. Rav Menachem Mendel and his brothers moved to Alexander to follow Rav Yechiel, and – after his *petira* in 1894 – his son, the *Yismach Yisrael*. When the *Yismach Yisrael* passed away childless in 1910, Rav Menachem Mendel's brother, Rav Aharon Tzvi, founded a court. Only when he was *niftar* did Menachem Mendel accept leadership of the *Chassidim* and set up court in Strikov. After World War I, he settled in the town of Zhgierz, adjacent to Lodz, and founded *Yeshiva Bais Aharon*, named after his brother. When he visited *Eretz Yisrael*, he founded *Yeshivas Zechusa DeAvrohom*. His *Divrei Torah* were printed in *Maggid Devorov L'Yaakov* and in *Bayeshishim Chochma*. His son, Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Don, succeeded him and was murdered by the Nazis (4<sup>th</sup> of *Cheshvan* 1943). His son, Rav Avrohom, survived the war and reestablished Strikover *Chassidus* in *Eretz Yisrael*, (5696/1936);

✳ **Rav Binyamin Zev Shapiro** of Prague, (5478/1718);

✳ **Rav Yitzchok Boruch** *ben* Rav Eliyohu Sofer, father of the *Kaf HaChaim*, (5665/1905);

✳ **Rav Shmuel Weinberg** of Slonim, the *Divrei Shmuel*, grandson of Rav Avrohom of Slonim, the *Yesod HaAvoda*. He was succeeded by his sons, Rav Yissochor Leib and Rav Avrohom, the *Bais Avrohom*, (5676/1916 [*Yated* 2008 says 1936]);

✳ **Rav Shimon Greenfeld** of Somihali (Szemihaly), the *Maharshag*, a *talmid* of the *Maharam Shick*. His nephew and *talmid*, Rav Shmaya, was the first *Rav* of the Satmar *Kehilla* in Montreal, (5690/1930);

✳ **Rav Shmuel Carlebach** (1927–1999). Educational director of the Bnei Brak *Or HaChaim* Seminary and the *Bais Yaakov* Seminary of Ashdod. Born in Frankfurt, Germany, he was sent to Belgium during the War. In 1939, the Carlebach family settled in Tel Aviv. Rav Shmuel merited being one of the first *talmidim* of *Yeshivas Kol Torah* under Rav Yechiel Michel Schlesinger, its founder. In 1946, he learned in Ponovezh and became close to Rav Abba Grossbard and Rav Eliyohu Dessler. After his marriage in 1951, he continued his studies at the Ponovezh *Kollel*. In 1954, Rav Wolf asked him to direct the *Or HaChaim* Seminary for girls. He headed this institution for thirty years. In 1985, he was appointed head of the *Seminar Avos* of the Ponovezh Institutions of Ashdod, and the educational director of *Be'er Miriam* in Bnei Brak, retaining those positions until his final day, (5759/1999);

✳ **Rav Hershel Mashinsky**, co-founder of *Kupas Ezra* of Rockland County. He began teaching at *Yeshiva* of Spring Valley in 1947, and then, after marrying Malka Leah Felsenburg and moving to Monsey, at the *Talmud Torah* and *Mesivta Ohr Reuven*, (5685–5764/1925–2004).

## ❁ HILLULA DE'TZADDIKA ❁

### WHAT'S BEHIND YAHRZEIT MEANINGS & CUSTOMS

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

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

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



## ❁ GEDOLIM BE'MASAYHEM ❁

### STORIES & ANECDOTES

#### Rav Mordechai of Lechovitch, 13<sup>th</sup> of Shevat

Forefather of the Slonimer Dynasty

Please enjoy selected stories and teachings of Rav Mordechai of Lechovitch from the *sefer Returnity, The Way Back to Eternity – Selected Teachings from the Chassidic Masters on Teshuvah* by Rav Tal Zwecker.



#### Small Steps on the Journey of Teshuva

There was once a prince who was captured by a band of cutthroat thieves, and they took him so far away from his father, the king, that if he had tried to walk home, it would have taken him ages to arrive. The king sent messengers to tell his

son, the prince, that he was awaiting his return.

“If you do not begin your journey,” he wrote, “then the king can’t draw closer to you either.” The prince had to take the first step and set out on the journey, even though his steps might have seemed small and insignificant, and he might have thought that he was not getting anywhere. But if he started out, then the king would come toward him, taking long, powerful strides – and then surely they would be reunited very soon.

The *Novi* (prophet) says, “Return to Me [says *Hashem*], and I will return to you” (*Malachi* 3:7). This is what the verse

means: “Return to Me,” even if it means taking small steps, “and I will return to

you” — I will return with abundant mercy.



## Rav Yaakov Yehoshua Falk, 14<sup>th</sup> of Shevat

*The Pnei Yehoshua*

### The Vow that Saved His Life

Author of the *Talmudic* commentary *Pnei Yehoshua*, and grandson of the famed Rav Yehoshua, *mechaber* of the *Maginei Shlomo* and responsa *Pnei Yehoshua*, for whom he was named, Rav Falk served as the head of the rabbinical court in Lwów after the *Chacham Tzvi* and afterward in Berlin, Metz and Frankfurt.

During his tenure in Lwów, a calamity occurred in which an explosion of several barrels of gunpowder caused a terrible fire that killed some thirty-six Jews, including his in-laws, his wife and daughter.

It was during this tragic episode, which the *mechaber* of *Pnei Yehoshua* describes in great detail in the introduction to his multi-volume *Talmudic* commentary, that he was trapped under the rubble. Lying there beneath the heavy beams of his destroyed home, paralyzed by

shock, he waited for the collapsing structure to subside. As he lay there immobile, he vowed to *Hashem* that just as his illustrious maternal grandfather, the *mechaber* of *Maginei Shlomo*, for whom he was named, authored a commentary on the *Talmud*, should G-d help him to survive this disaster, he vowed that he too would not rest until he had studied, reviewed and authored a similar *Talmudic* commentary.

Miraculously, no sooner had he vowed this, than the rubble mysteriously parted and he found a path through which he crawled out – unscathed. Seeing this open miracle and understanding that *Hashem* had accepted his vow, he undertook to study and write novel interpretations and commentary on the *Talmud* and its commentaries, *Rashi* and the *Tosfos*. It is this famous multi-volume work which has preserved his fame till this day.



## Rav Doniel Ben Naftoli Hertzka Frisch, 14<sup>th</sup> of Shevat

*Mechaber of Mosok Midevash on Zohar*

### A Holy Man With a Holy Mission – Sweeter Than Honey

Rav Yaakov Meir Shechter grew excited as he remembered and described how Rav Frisch would spend his days immersed in study and *dveikus* in Meron at the *Tziun HaRashbi*. As he sat there, the wellsprings of wisdom opened for him and the power of the sanctity of the remains of the G-dly *Tanna* [Rav Shimon bar Yochai] gave him the ability to begin the task of composing his *sefer* [the commentary *Mosok Midevash* on the *Zohar*.]

Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz added, “Rav Frisch attached himself in *dveikus* to *Rashbi*. At the end, he merited an *ibbur neshoma*, where the soul of the *Tzaddik* impregnated itself within him, as the *talmidim* of the *Arizal* once merited, and through this *ibbur neshoma*, a pure spirit took hold and allowed him to compose the *sefer* in a supernaturally fast manner.”

The whole story began when Rav Doniel Frisch started spending time in Meron. He was summoned by the *Rebbe* of *Toldos Aharon*, the *Divrei Emuna*, and given a mission and a *shelichus*.

The *Divrei Emuna* handed Rav Frisch a handwritten manuscript. Tears filled Rav Frisch's eyes as he gazed at a new commentary on the *Zohar* that the *Toldos Aharon Rebbe* was authoring. Then the *Rebbe* said, "I have a tradition that the *Chozeh* of Lublin said to his *talmidim* that before the coming of *Moshiach*, a Jew will come forth who will compose and author a new commentary on the *Zohar* and enlighten the eyes of Klal Yisrael who await the redemption! I thought I would be that person," explained the *Divrei Emuna*, "and so I began to compose a commentary, as you can see, but I feel that I am growing

weak and my ability is not what it once was. I am asking you to let me appoint you as my *shaliach* (emissary) to fulfill this mission, to author a commentary on the holy *Zohar* that will be appropriate for anyone and all souls, that will open the gates of the *Zohar* and allow everyone to understand the *Toras HaRashbi*."

Rav Doniel nodded his consent and the *Divrei Emuna* of *Toldos Aharon* enumerated for him several benefits and ideas that the commentary should contain. Rav Frisch agreed, and so the *Mosok Midevash* was composed. (*Ba'al Mosok Midevash* p. 100–101)



## Rav Sholom Mordechai Ben Moshe HaKohen Schwadron, 16<sup>th</sup> of Shevat

*Av Bais Din* of Berzhon, *Mechaber* of *Shu"t Maharsham*

The *Maharsham's* father, Rav Moshe, was a *talmid* of Rav Meir of Premishlan, and he himself received *semicha* from the *mechaber* of *Shoel UMeishiv* and from Rav Shlomo Kluger of Brod. The *Maharsham* also traveled to see many *Tzaddikim*, including Belz, Stretin, Zidichov, and Tchorokov.

The *Yeshuos Moshe* of Vizhnitz related how his grandfather, the *Ahavas Yisrael*, sent his father, Rav Chaim Meir, to be tested for *semicha* by the *Maharsham*, the *Gaon* of Berzhon. He was not born as the Berzhoner *Rav* – he had to work at it, continued the *Yeshuos Moshe*. For example, every *Shabbos* he studied and completed the entire *Maseches Shabbos*. Do you have any idea what *chazora* on the entire *Maseches Shabbos* means? However, this is a case in point – the very fact that he reviewed it weekly caused him to know it so well by heart, like you and I recite *Ashrei!* That is how one must accustom oneself from the younger years to study and review. What was his greatness? He knew how to use his time wisely and how to use each opportunity to serve *Hashem*, his Creator. He would review his learning

countless times – this is the way *Gedolim* reach greatness.

The *Yeshuos Moshe* of Vizhnitz related how when the Berzhoner *Rav* grew old and lay on his sickbed, many great *Talmidei Chachomim* came to visit him. As they stood outside his room they began to discuss whether or not in today's times there was a *mitzva* to give gifts of *Matnos Kehuna*. Hearing the heated discussion, the Berzhoner *Rav* turned to Rav Meir Shapira and asked what was being discussed. When he was told the topic, he replied, "This is answered explicitly by the *Darchei Moshe* in *Hilchos Mezuzah!*"

Upon hearing his words, they thought that in his old age his wisdom had dimmed and senility had crept up on him, for why would such a topic be discussed in the laws of *Mezuzah*?

When the Berzhoner *Rav* heard them continuing to discuss the matter, he asked if they had looked up the *Darchei Moshe*. When they did, they were astounded to see that he was correct! He then asked someone to bring a copy of his *Shulchon Aruch* and when it was brought they all saw written in his volume how he

had reviewed the entire *Shulchan Aruch* four hundred times, when he began the

cycle and when each review concluded! (*Sarfei Kodesh Vizhnitz*, p. 231–234)



### Rav Dovid of Kolomai, 16<sup>th</sup> of Shevat

Rav Dovid of Kolomai once lost his way during a trip on behalf of “*Chanuka Gelt*” for ransoming Jewish captives. He wandered into the home of the *Ba'al Shem Tov* before his revelation and was welcomed by his wife. Accustomed to receiving guests from the village, she prepared a table for him and offered him a room in which to rest. The *Ba'al Shem Tov* meanwhile returned and joyfully served Rav Dovid a meal prepared by his wife. He made his bed and prepared water for him to wash his hands.

Lying asleep on his bed that night, Rav Dovid suddenly awoke to notice a fire blazing from beneath the stove. Afraid that the blaze would spread, he cried aloud, “Fire!” He seized the pitcher of water and ran to pour its contents on the stove. But

when he reached the blaze he saw an unbelievable sight. The *Ba'al Shem Tov* was seated next to the stove saying *tikun chatzos* (a prayer recited after midnight) and a bright light shone about him. Rav Dovid fainted and lay almost lifeless on the floor until the *Ba'al Shem Tov* revived him. Awakening, Rav Dovid turned to the *Ba'al Shem Tov* for an explanation of the strange sight he had seen. “I was only saying some chapters of *Tehillim* but it is possible that my attachment to *Hashem* created the blazing light which you saw.”

That very night the *Ba'al Shem Tov* removed his mask and revealed his true identity to Rav Dovid. The latter swore his allegiance and eventually developed into one of his foremost disciples and disseminators of his *Torah*.



### Rav Yechezkel Taub of Kuzmir, 17<sup>th</sup> of Shevat

Grandfather of Rav Yisrael of Modzitz

#### The One That Got Away

Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir always did whatever he could to arrange a special fish delicacy for *Shabbos*.

The *mitzva* of honoring the *Shabbos* by eating fish was beloved to all Jews, but especially to the *Tzaddikim* of each generation. It is said that the *Ba'al Shem Tov* chose to dwell in Medzibuzh rather than in Nemirov, because of its proximity to a river that contained fish with which to honor the *Shabbos*.

Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir had a special regard for this *mitzva*, and did whatever he could to find a special fish delicacy for *Shabbos*. Everyone in Kuzmir – down to the non-Jewish fishmongers –

knew that if they came across a special, large fish, they could command a good price for their efforts by bringing it to the *Rebbe*.

*Chassidim* are accustomed to bring a *kvittel* (note) to their *Rebbe* with their names and requests on it, so that the *Rebbe* might bless and/or pray for them. This *kvittel* would be accompanied by a *pidyon* (redemption), usually a sum of money, which the *Rebbes* generally used to support poor people and orphans, redeem captives, and for other charitable activities. However, Rav Chatzkel's *Chassidim*, aware of his special way of honoring the *Shabbos*, knew that the best *pidyon* they could bring him would be a choice fish for *Shabbos*.

And so it was that one of Rav

Chatzkel's *Chassidim*, who needed help from the *Rebbe*, had a strong desire to bring him a *kvittel*. However, he was very poor, and he wouldn't allow himself to give the mere few pennies he had available for a *pidyon*. He therefore constantly postponed his journey to the *Rebbe*, hoping to come across some special coin that he could bring as a suitable *pidyon*.

This *Chassid* lived in a town located on the banks of the same river that flowed through Kuzmir. From time to time, he would go fishing at this river to provide a meal for his household. Whilst sitting on the riverbank, the *Chassid* pondered the water and grew jealous, for while he was "stuck" in his place, these waters flowed all the way to Kuzmir!

One day, while engaged in such thoughts, he felt a strong tug on his fishing line. He held on tightly, realizing that this was no small fish that he might catch. Concerned that his line might break, he carefully drew it in until the fish was close to the riverbank, its mouth firmly caught on the fishing line.

As soon as the fish poked its head out of the water, the *Chassid* realized that this was a fitting *pidyon* sent to him from Heaven, for which he had been waiting for such a long time. This fish was destined to be served at the *Rebbe's* table, and would be the means for this to happen. The *Chassid* did not allow these thoughts to distract him from his task of fishing; he was very careful to pull on the fish, not allowing it to escape.

Upon pulling the fish out of the water, he saw that it was not only extraordinarily large for him, but even the fishmongers did not have such a huge fish in their stores. The fish began jumping and moving convulsively, trying to make its way back into the water. But the *Chassid*, a skilled fisherman, maintained his control over the fish, holding it tightly in his arms. He put it into a sack, tying it closed tightly. Only then did he allow himself to sit down

near the riverbank, reveling in the wonderful *pidyon* that he would bring the *Rebbe* – and thinking of the wonderful salvation it would bring him.

In the midst of these pleasant thoughts, a terrifying idea arose in his mind. Since there was quite a distance to Kuzmir, surely the fish would die on the way – and by the time he arrived in Kuzmir, it would not be fit to eat at all! He began to panic and despair of any way that he could bring a fresh fish, fit to eat, to the *Rebbe*.

But as we know, "nothing can stand in the way of one's will". He began to probe his mind for some way he could bring such an outstanding *pidyon* to the *Rebbe*. Suddenly, he had an idea! He got up, removed his *gartel* (a prayer sash worn by *Chassidim*), opened the sack with the fish still convulsing inside, and tied the long *gartel* around the fish. As he did so, he thought, "Indeed, this fish should come to the *Rebbe* wearing a *gartel* like a dedicated *Chassid*." He kept wrapping the belt around the fish until it was completely tied up.

He then took the fish and cast it back into the water, all the while maintaining his grasp on the other end of the *gartel* as a "leash". He then made his way toward Kuzmir. When the fish tried, from time to time, to get away, the *Chassid* maintained a firm grip on his "leash" to make sure that this would not happen.

Filled with joy, he continued on his way toward the *Rebbe*. But he couldn't follow the shortest or easiest path, since he was forced to stay along the riverbank. His feet bumped into rocks along the way, the sun beat down upon his head, and the fish did not cease trying to break loose – and the *Chassid* had to hold on tightly so that it would not get away. His pain and distress vanished, however, when he thought of the moment he would appear before the *Rebbe* with this fish.

As the path became an arduous one, he thought to himself, “A *pidyon* without some difficulty is not a *pidyon*. A man earns his livelihood by the sweat of his brow, and then must take from it to give to the *Rebbe* as a *pidyon*. You didn’t work so hard to catch this fish, it came to you from Heaven - what value does it have? But now that you have to work so hard for it, this fish is a real *pidyon*, and oh, what a *pidyon*!”

Owing to the length of the journey to Kuzmir, the *Chassid* had to rest from time to time. When he did, he took the end of the *gartel* that was in his hand and tied it firmly to rocks and stones. Only then would he sit down on a rock himself. He then pondered the fish, which was a foot or two beneath the surface of the water. He would smile as he thought that this “*Chassidic* fish”, wearing a *gartel*, was immersing itself in the river, purifying itself in preparation to come before the *Rebbe*.

As he was eager to get to Kuzmir, he never allowed himself to rest for too long. After a brief respite, he would get up and take hold of the *gartel* and continue on his way. When he felt a strong tug by the fish, he tightened his grip. Sometimes, however, he felt that the fish was pulling him to Kuzmir. He thought that surely the fish knew to whom it was heading, and was rushing to get there. “Slow down, Mr. Fish. You’ll get to the *Rebbe*, but together with me,” he thought.

Eventually, though, his thoughts became haughty. “Who else ever merited to bring such a *pidyon* to the *Rebbe*? Even the wealthiest *Chassidim* could never find such a fish as this!” Such thoughts began to run through his mind, without his realizing that he had lost all the innocence and simplicity that he had had up till now.

He continued with such arrogant thoughts, when suddenly there was a fierce tug on the “leash”. He tried to hold on tightly, but lost his balance and almost fell into the river. He was able to extricate

himself – but not the fish. The *gartel* slipped out of his hands, together with the fish, who returned to its “friends” in the deep waters. He soon saw the end of the *gartel* disappear beneath the surface of the water, and was dumbfounded.

His previous thoughts vanished, and he felt as if his world had been destroyed. Standing on the riverbank, he stared into the water, where the fish that was once “his” was now swimming to its freedom...

Brokenhearted, he sat down on the ground, and began to feel the pain in his feet and the exhaustion in his entire body from the long journey. His hand that had held the *gartel* up till now was also in pain from the immense effort of holding onto his *pidyon*.

Halfway to Kuzmir, the *Chassid* sat and wept over his misfortune, and his dashed hopes. He felt like a rich man whose ship had sunk at sea. After a long cry, he took hold of himself and resigned himself to his fate – he would go to Kuzmir anyway, and give the *Rebbe* his *kvittel*, without a *pidyon*.

Being that it was now Thursday, the *Chassid* realized that if he wanted to spend *Shabbos* with the *Rebbe*, he should leave the riverbank and take the shorter way to Kuzmir. Now he could certainly go at a quicker pace, without encountering all the stones and other obstacles near the river. But his broken heart was very heavy, and if it were not for the approach of *Shabbos*, he would not have been able to budge.

In place of his previous joyous thoughts, he was now filled with sorrow and dejection. He began to think, “Why did this happen to me? What sin did I commit to deserve this?” And thus began his *cheshbon hanefesh* (introspection). “The *Rebbe* doesn’t need my gift, nor those of the other *Chassidim*,” he thought. “The *Rebbe* is always giving to others. What then, is the meaning of this custom, that *Chassidim*, rich or poor, bring gifts to the

*Rebbe* – and the *Rebbe* receives them so graciously? It should be just the opposite!”

He came to the realization, that even by receiving, the *Rebbe* is really giving. For when a distinguished man consents to receive a gift from anyone, his taking is really a gift to the one who gave to him. So it is with the *Rebbe*. He receives only from the One Above. From everyone else, whether they give or receive, the *Rebbe* gives to them.

This was the *Chassid's* sin and the reason for his loss. When he had the huge fish with him, his heart was filled with pride and joy; he forgot his own poverty and lost his humility. He then thought that *he* was actually *giving* something to the *Rebbe*. If he were to come to the *Rebbe* with such thoughts, could the *Rebbe* then do anything for him? If he were coming to give to the *Rebbe*, how could the *Rebbe* give him what he needed?

From Above it was known that this *Chassid* ultimately had pure intentions. *Hashem* had mercy on him, so that all his trouble would not be in vain. He who brought the fish to his line, was the One who caused it to get away – in order that he should learn this lesson.

Concluding his self-examination, the *Chassid* thought, “It was worth losing such a fish, and even [if it were] a bigger one, if only to learn this lesson. *Hashem* was kind to me. Imagine if I had come to the *Rebbe* with that huge fish in hand, and my head and heart swollen even bigger than that?” Not only did the *Chassid* accept what had befallen him, he even praised *Hashem* for it. With these thoughts he approached Kuzmir. “Now I can go in to the *Rebbe* and give him my *kvittel*. My *pidyon* will be my poverty. *Hashem's* help comes in the blink of an eye.”

Meanwhile, as the *Chassid* was undergoing his self-examination, the fish was on its way to Kuzmir. Still bound up in the *gartel*, which severely limited its

movements, the fish had no choice but to go with the current of the river, flowing toward Kuzmir.

It was Thursday night, and the non-Jewish fishermen of Kuzmir were busy at work in their fishing boats. They had to be diligent, in order to appear on Friday morning at the market with fish to sell to the Jews for *Shabbos*. Pulling in their nets, their eyes beheld an amazing spectacle – a huge fish wrapped in a *gartel* like a real *Chassid*! This wondrous sight brought smiles to all their faces.

Even without the *gartel*, they would have brought such a fish to the *Rebbe*, knowing it would command a good price. But now that it appeared with a *gartel*, it was obvious to all that its place was at the *Rebbe's* table. And so they brought it to *Rebbe* Chatzkel's house. His family could not make sense of what their eyes saw, but the *Rebbe* saw in the fish what they did not.

As the *Rebbe's* family was preparing the fish for *Shabbos*, the *Chassid* arrived at his destination, *kvittel* in hand, brokenhearted. As he entered the *Rebbe's* chamber, the *Rebbe* received him warmly, joyfully saying, “What are you so worried about? Your *pidyon* arrived before your *kvittel*!”

*This translation-adaptation by Rav Yitzchok Dorfman, an old dear friend living in Yerushalayim, based on a story told by the Chassid Mendel Berichta, of blessed memory, is taken from the official Moditzer website, www.moditz.org.*



### **The Rebbe Skips Town To Go To Har Sinai For Shavuos**

The *Rebbe*, Rav Shlomo of Radomsk, the *mechaber* of *Tiferes Shlomo*, initially refused to accept the burden of being a *Rebbe*. The week before *Shavuos*, he saw that a large group of *Chassidim* were beginning to flock to him, in order to be with him for *Yom Tov*. He warned them to return to their homes, adding that he was not a *Rebbe* and had no intention of

letting anyone stay with him.

When he saw that the *Chassidim* were not paying attention to him, and the group was growing larger, he packed up and left. He himself traveled to his *Rebbe*, the *Admor*, Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir, to bask in his presence for the *Chag Mattan Torah*.

“Is it proper to abandon a large *kahal* like sheep without a shepherd?” asked Rav Yechezkel in astonishment. “Doesn’t *Rashi* explain on the pasuk “And Moshe descended from the mountain to the people” that Moshe did not turn to his business but directly to the people. The question is: what kind of business did Moshe have? Was Moshe *Rabbeinu* a businessman?”

The *Rebbe* continued, “The explanation is that Moshe did not turn to his spiritual business. Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who was on such a high *madreiga* (spiritual level), needed to prepare for *Kabbolas HaTorah* even more than the rest of Yisrael. Despite this, he didn’t turn to his “business” but straight to the people to prepare them for *Kabbolas HaTorah*.”

The *Rebbe* then repeated his question, “How could you leave the *kahal* of Yisrael in order to come here?!”

The *Tiferes Shlomo* answered, “Moshe *Rabbeinu* was at *Har Sinai* and therefore did not need so much preparation – I also want to be at *Har Sinai*...”

The *Rebbe* of Kuzmir did not answer, and the *Admor* of Radomsk remained in Kuzmir for *Shavuos!* (*Chayim Sheyesh Bahem*)

[www.revach.net/tefila/article.php?id=2306](http://www.revach.net/tefila/article.php?id=2306)



### **All Part of the Same Body of Klal Yisrael**

The story is told of Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir who once visited his colleague, the legendary Rav Bunim of Peshis’cha.

Toward the end of their conversation, Rav Yechezkel took out a box of snuff and offered some to his friend. After delighting in a whiff, Rav Bunim asked, “Tell me, Yechezkel, how did you know that precisely at this moment I needed some snuff?”

Rav Yechezkel replied, “Tell me, Rav Bunim, how does the hand know when the nose desires a bit of snuff...?”

[www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/1263142/jewish/Im-a](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1263142/jewish/Im-a)

[Jewish-Body-Part.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1263142/jewish/Im-a-Jewish-Body-Part.htm)



### **Recognition**

The voice of Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir rang out, “Why are you staring at me so much?”

One Friday night in Kuzmir, a man arrived at Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir’s *tisch* (table) whom none of the hundreds of *Chassidim* present recognized. For the duration of the entire evening, this man stood opposite the *Rebbe* and stared directly at him. The *Rebbe* continued in his usual way with *Shabbos* songs. At the end, the *Rebbe* wished his guests, “Good *Shabbos*,” and went off to his room. The strange man left as well. No one asked about his unusual behavior; in fact, no one spoke to him.

This strange behavior repeated itself at the *tisch* on *Shabbos* morning after the *tefillos*, with the man again standing opposite the Kuzmirer and staring at him for the entire time. And at *Sholosh Seudos* (the third meal, held close to sunset), again this man came and stared at the *Rebbe*. At nightfall, the custom was to have candles brought to the table (either by a non-Jewish attendant, or by one of the *Chassidim* who was prepared in advance to *daven Ma’ariv* immediately at nightfall, and was then permitted to light a fire). This unusual guest then positioned himself where he could see the *Rebbe*’s face directly in the light of the candles, and stared at

him once again.

The *Rebbe* then said words of *Torah*, accompanied by cries of *dveikus* (devotion). His lofty words, said in a very sweet and pleasant voice, caused everyone present to forget his own problems and to become attached to our Heavenly Father.

But suddenly, the *Rebbe's* voice rang out, "Why are you staring at me so much? Don't you recognize me?" Immediately thereafter, the *Rebbe* asked for *mayim achronim* ("final waters" used to wash one's hands at the end of a meal) to be brought, *bensched* (said the Grace after Meals), *davened Ma'ariv* and made *Havdola*.

There was one *Chassid* present who was really curious about what the *Rebbe* intended by his words to this strange man whom nobody knew. Surely there was "more than meets the eye" going on here. He was so intent in finding out that he followed this man out of the *shul* after *Havdola*, and when they reached an isolated spot, a dark alleyway, he asked him what this encounter with the *Rebbe* was all about.

"Oh, this is an old story," replied the man, trying to avoid a full answer. But the *Chassid* was not satisfied with this reply and insisted on hearing all the details. "In that case," replied the man, "you'll have to come with me to my place of lodging, and I'll tell you the whole story."

Over a cup of tea, the man began: "I left *Olom HaZeh* (this world) for the *Olam HaEmes* (the World of Truth, where the *neschoma* (soul) goes after death) some twenty-two years ago." The *Chassid* began to tremble, seized with a terrible fright – could it be that he was speaking to some kind of spirit or ghost? Reassuring him, the man said, "Allow me to speak, and then you'll understand everything."

"Twenty-two years ago, I was a *melamed* (a teacher of young children). Even though my livelihood only allowed us

to have some black coffee and dry black bread, but no meat, fish or fancy clothes, my wife, our two children and I were happy with our lot and never complained. We accepted our lot in life with love.

"Around that time, I contracted a severe case of pneumonia. The doctors attempted to treat it with medicine, but I could tell by the look on their faces that they didn't hold out too much hope for me; my days on earth were limited. Nevertheless, they informed my family that I was improving and that I would be able to return home in a few days. You can just imagine what it's like for a young man of twenty-two years to leave this world and leave behind a young widow and two small children!

The man continued, "You know, when a person departs *Olom HaZeh*, he still thinks he's alive. So it was with me – I merely thought that I didn't have the strength to get up. I thought my family didn't want to hear what I wanted to say to them. They invited the *Chevra Kadisha* (Jewish burial society) to begin their holy work on me (preparing the body for burial). My wife and children were crying. It was then that I realized that I had left this world, and I thought, What a tragedy – a young man leaves behind young orphans – who's going to care for their welfare, that they should receive a proper *Torah chinuch* (education) and in such a society! Who is going to care for my little children?

"Perhaps I should have been concerned over what was happening to my *neschoma*, but maybe because I was a *melamed*, all I could think about was the *chinuch* of my children – and I was broken-hearted thinking about their future. My soul began to feel the absence of the body, and it began to rise, higher and higher, turning and rising, and I was thinking, What will happen now, who knows me, and how will I end up?

"Suddenly, I felt different from before, and didn't understand why I had

risen so high. I saw thousands upon thousands of souls, and tried to stop myself, when suddenly the soul of another young man came up to me and asked, 'Who are you, and where are you going?'

"I felt as if I knew him, and asked, 'Perhaps you can tell me where I can find out why my soul was taken from *Olom HaZeh* at such a young age, and who's going to watch over my children that they should go in the ways of *Hashem*?'"

"You are in the World of Souls (*Olom HaNeshomos*),' the man answered. Pointing into the distance, he said, 'Over there, the Heavenly Tribunal (*Bais Din Shel Ma'ala*) sits, and judges who is fit to be cleansed from *Olom HaZeh*, and who is fit to enter *Olom Haba* (the heavenly world). I will tell you something that can be very helpful to you. You should go to that distant place where the judges are. Among them is one of the *Tzaddikei HaDor* (most righteous in his generation), a man of *Olom HaZeh*. He was chosen to be on the tribunal because he is so righteous; in fact, he is the only one from *Olom HaZeh* – with a body and soul – who is on the tribunal. Since he is still involved with *Olom HaZeh*, he can find merits for your case, and fully understand it.' Upon finishing his advice, the soul of this man vanished.

"So I went to the place which the man had told me about, and tried to find the *Tzaddik HaDor*. Not before long, the judge who was sitting in the middle called me and asked in a very pleasant and sensitive voice, 'What do you want?'

"I began to cry profusely, and was so overcome with emotion that I could not utter a word. The *Tzaddik* reassured me, in the same voice, that he would listen carefully to every word of mine. It took all my strength to rein in my emotions, and I was finally able to cry out to the heavenly court, 'How could it be that I was taken away at such a young age from *Olom HaZeh*, and left behind young orphaned children without any guidance?'

"The *Tzaddik* then asked me, 'Do you mean that your only concern is for your children, that they should grow up to be *ehrich* (spiritually refined; not coarse)?'

"And I responded, 'Of course! My whole life was dedicated to *chinuch*; we lived in abject poverty only so that I could give the proper *chinuch* to my children.'

"I watched as the judges discussed my case, and then the *Tzaddik* called me over to give their decision: 'The clear and pure words that you have uttered before us indicate that they are completely true, and we have decided to allow you to remain in *Olom HaZeh* for another twenty-two years.'

"Back at my funeral, the *Chevr Kadisha*, my family and all those who attended were astonished to see me sit up suddenly, and in their extreme fear, they all fled the cemetery. I was left alone in the cemetery with hundreds of graves, but I remembered everything that had happened. At nightfall, I got up and walked home. Of course, there was a great tumult throughout Galicia about this awesome *techias hameisim* (revival of the dead), but over time, things quieted down and it was forgotten.

"But I never forgot! I always wanted to know who this *Tzaddik* from *Olom HaZeh* was, who was part of the Heavenly Tribunal, and in whose merit I was granted more years of life. I wanted to see his face and thank him personally. I began to travel throughout Galicia and Hungary in search of the *Tzaddik*, whose image was always before my eyes. But I didn't find him! I gave up my search and returned home, but whenever someone from out of town came to our town, I told him my story and described the *Tzaddik*; perhaps someone would know where I could find him.

"Over the course of time, I began to forget exactly what the *Tzaddik* looked like. When I reached my forty-fourth birthday, I realized that the additional time allotted to me by the *Bais Din* was soon to expire. It

upset me very much that I still hadn't found him in order to thank him. So I began again to inquire in all the *shuls* and *Botei Medrashos*, until I found a Polish Jew who had come to my town. I told him the story, and he asked for a description of the *Tzaddik*. I remembered that his most distinguishing feature was that he was extremely tall; in fact, he was a head taller than the other judges.

"It must be Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir, who is indeed very tall," he told me. "In fact, when he needed a new hat, they needed to make a special order for it; and also for his walking stick." (This walking stick has been passed down from father to son in the Kuzmir-Zvolin-Modzitz dynasty, and is indeed much taller than normal).

"I left everything and went to Kuzmir, Poland. At the *tisch* on Friday night, I couldn't remember if the *Rebbe's* face was the same as the judge who was on that Heavenly Tribunal. However, his pleasant voice was somewhat familiar. Similarly, at the second meal, I still wasn't sure if this *Tzaddik* was the judge who had

helped me. But at *Sholosh Seudos*, when I heard his awesome *Divrei Torah*, I remembered clearly that this was exactly how his voice sounded when he was discussing my case in the Heavenly Court.

"It was at that very moment, when I was certain that he was that *Tzaddik HaDor* who had told me that I could live for another twenty-two years, that he finished his *Divrei Torah* and said to me, 'Why are you staring at me so much? Don't you recognize me?'"

(Excerpted and adapted by Rav Yerachmiel Tilles from "Why Are You Staring at Me?" as translated and adapted by his good friend Rav Yitzchok Dorfman, who prepared this story, for publication on [www.modzitz.org](http://www.modzitz.org), and states that it was told by Rav Yitzchok Lipa Fishbein in the presence of the previous Modzitzer *Rebbe*, the *Imrei Aish* of blessed memory, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat* 5740/1980 in the name of Rav Elazar Gewirtz, a *mekubol* who lived in Yerushalayim and was present in Kuzmir when the incident occurred.)

[www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=380-23](http://www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=380-23)



## Rav Chaim Ben Rav Palagi (Palaji), 17<sup>th</sup> of Shevat

*Rav of Izmir (Smyrna), Turkey – Mechaber of Kaf HaChaim and over Eighty Other Seforim*

### The Supernatural Author

Among the *seforim* Rav Chaim Palagi authored and printed is the well-known *Kaf HaChaim* on *Orach Chaim* and twenty-three other *seforim* in the realm of *Halacha*, fifteen on *Medroschim* and *Derushim*, nine on *Chiddushim* on *Shas*, *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, seven on *Tanach* including *Tehillim*, three on *Mussar* topics and many others. He conducted a *Seudas Mitzva* upon the printing of each *sefer* and never sold them, instead giving them as

presents to *Talmidei Chachomim*. His first *sefer* was finished when he was just sixteen years old and his last was completed a day before he was *niftar*. Some people thought his gift in penmanship must be supernatural and through using divine Names, but his son Avrohom [whose famous photo is often mistaken for his father] testified, "My father's fear and awe of Heaven, and his wisdom were much greater and stronger than any divine Name used to write with!" (*Oros Mimizrach*)



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### Hilula

13 - Rabbi Baruch Sorotzkin

14 - Rabbi Ya'akov Yehoshua Falk,  
author of 'Pnei Yehoshua'

15 - Rabbi Chaim Mordechai  
Margaliot, author of 'Sha'arei  
Teshuva'

16 - Rabbi Shalom Mordechai  
Hakohen Shwadron

17 - Rabbi Chaim Falaji

18 - Rabbi Binyamin Beinush Finkel,  
the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva

19 - Rabbi Yitzchak Baruch Sofer



## The Redemption from Egypt in Contrast to other Redemptions

**"On that day, Hashem saved Israel from the land of Egypt, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore"**

(Shemot 14:30)

The Chida questions why it is that at every opportunity, both in blessings and prayers, we mention 'a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt', while all the other redemptions that Am Yisrael experienced over time, are not mentioned at all. Not the salvations that took place during the period when the Judges ruled, as is brought in length in Sefer Shoftim, where Hashem saved the Jewish people time and again from the hand of every oppressor. Neither the deliverance from the Babylonians, nor the deliverance from Haman's plot at the time of Mordechai and Esther, nor the salvation from the Greeks that the Chashmonaim merited, that brought about the celebration of Chanukah. Why then is the redemption from Egypt singled out?

I would like to suggest, with Hashem's help, that the redemption from Egypt was fundamentally different than any other redemption. The miracle of leaving Egypt was comprehensive since every member of Am Yisrael was part of it. Without this redemption, Am Yisrael would have had no future. They would have all assimilated and given themselves up to the Egyptian servitude, under Pharaoh's rule, especially since they were so close to falling to the fiftieth and lowest level of impurity. But with the other redemptions, even without the salvation, a small group would have anyway survived. Had even only one Jewish woman remained, and even if she would marry a non-Jew, the children that she would give birth to would be considered Jewish (as is the case with a servant or non-Jew who marries a Jewish girl [Yevamot 45b]), and Am Yisrael would not become extinct. Even at the time of the Purim miracle, some remnant of Am Yisrael would have remained, despite Haman's decree to kill all the Jews. This is true also for the oppression that took place at the time of Chanukah, and all other world wars, including the most horrific circumstances that European Jewry suffered at the time of the Holocaust. Only the future and final redemption with the arrival of Mashiach will be remembered in its own right (Berachot 12b), for this redemption will be like the Exodus of Egypt, an all-encompassing redemption. As it says (Micha 7:15) "As in the days when you left the land of Egypt I will show it wonders", which refers to the final redemption.

The reason why we only mention the redemption from Egypt is that this redemption was the greatest and it includes all the other redemptions.

This can be compared to a rich man who when giving charity, gives a large donation, while a poor person donates merely a small amount. When faced with the rich man's donation, the poor man's gift becomes insignificant and does not register, but if we are focused on the poor man's donation, it will also remind us of the rich man's contribution. So too when comparing the Exodus from Egypt with all the other redemptions, its magnitude is mentioned when talking about the other redemptions since they were less significant. Certainly, it is appropriate to appreciate the more minor salvations as well, but they are included when mentioning the most significant of them. Therefore, when we mention 'a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt', which was the most powerful redemption, we are including within it all the other redemptions that Am Yisrael merited.

Furthermore, the other redemptions were not a universal redemption, as was the case in Egypt. After the redemption from the Babylonian exile, Jews still remained in this foreign country even once they had been delivered and were able to return to Eretz Yisrael and build the second Beit Hamikdash. With the Chanukah miracle too, although we were delivered from their hands, the Greek culture is still prevalent in the world. And even though Haman's decree was annulled, we are from time to time faced with new troubles.

Now we will return to the Chida's question: Why is the redemption from Egypt singled out? As we will explain, the true redemption of the Jewish people is Torah and repentance. This is the only way we can be liberated. Exile is distancing oneself from the Torah, for exile (גלות) has the same root as redemption (גאולה), the determining factor being the Torah.

The entire purpose of the redemption from Egypt was to receive the Torah. If the Jewish people would agree to accept the yoke of Torah and its mitzvot, their redemption would be immediate. Even though they had not actually received the Torah, Hashem redeemed them with supernatural miracles, although they were steeped in the forty-ninth level of impurity (Zohar Hachadash, beg. of Parshat Yitro). Therefore, at every opportunity, we mention Hashem's kindness in redeeming us from Egypt in a most miraculous way. All the other redemptions took place once we already had the Torah and mitzvot and the reason for the exile was because of a laxity in observing the Torah. Immediately upon returning to a life of Torah, the troubles are removed and redemption arrives. This is why there is no mention of the other redemptions since the power and merit to be redeemed is in our hands, if we only wish. For Torah can be found in an unobtrusive corner, and whoever wishes can come and partake of it and experience redemption.



## Walking in their Ways

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

### In the Merit of Inner Will

I was once visited by a Liberal Rabbi, whose outlook on life was in direct contrast to mine, as an Orthodox Rabbi. Nevertheless, he asked for my blessing in the merit of my forefathers. I was taken aback by his humbling himself by asking for my blessing on his matters, in light of the vast difference in our outlook on religion. After asking for my blessing, he added, "Honored Rav, I have a friend who has tried, for a long time, to convince me to meet you so that we can discuss matters of religion. I have come today in order to do so."

Unfortunately, I didn't have time just then to spend with him on this subject, as the line behind the door was growing longer by the minute. People were waiting for advice and berachot, and I had to cut our meeting short. Heaven put just the right words into my mouth, that had an effect on this Rabbi. I quoted the opening verse of Chumash Shemot (1:1), "And these are the names of the Children of Israel who were coming to Egypt with Jacob, each man and his household came." I have no idea why, but I kept emphasizing the name Jacob aloud a few times. Suddenly, I noticed the man's face turn pale and it looked like he was going to collapse any minute.

"How do you know that it was my friend, Jacob, who sent me to you?" he asked weakly.

"I had no clue that he sent you. Hashem put these words into my mouth. He saw that you made the effort to go and speak to an Orthodox Rabbi, who is in direct opposition to your worldview, with the intention of investigating your Jewish roots. I was, therefore, made His emissary to say the words that would shake you into doing complete teshuvah."

This Liberal Rabbi's inner desire to discover the truth was the merit that brought him to me and caused me to quote the most appropriate verse that would shake him up and inspire him to let go of his mistaken opinions on Judaism.

## The Haftarah

**"Devorah sang"** (Shoftim 5)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah speaks about the downfall of Sisera and his army, and about the shira of Devora the prophetess and Barak the son of Avinoam, where they praise Hashem for the miracle of saving them from their enemies. The Parsha talks about the downfall of the wicked Pharaoh and the drowning of his army in the depth of the Yam Suf, and about the shira of Moshe Rabbeinu and Bnei Yisrael that they sung by the sea.

Ashkenazim read from **"Devorah was a prophetess"** (Shoftim 4).

## Guard Your Tongue

**When It Is Permissible to Believe Lashon Hara**

If it has been established that someone is a rasha, since it has become public knowledge that he contemptuously transgressed clear Torah prohibitions several times, one may believe the lashon hara that is said about such a person.



## Words of our Sages

### Which Kind of Music Speaks to You?

**"Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Hashem"** (Shemot 15:1)

Judaism gives song a place of honor, as is evident from all mitzvah celebrations, for example, at weddings, Shabbat and Yom Tov meals, on completion of a Masechet, at a Brit or Bar Mitzvah. There are even certain sections in our prayers that are accorded special attention and we don't consider it sufficient to just recite the words; these sections are always accompanied by holy melodies. Even the Great Sages, for whom every minute was precious and calculated, set aside time to compose songs that would inspire the future generations.

The following lines are an excerpt from the viewpoint of the educator, Harav Pinchas Breuer shlita, who is involved in composing and singing. It is worth paying attention to his instructive insights:

Song has a powerful effect. Song speaks straight to the soul, it breaches walls and traverses borders. Even the toughest person will be moved on hearing a stirring tune, on the other hand, even a broken, despondent and depressed person will start dancing on hearing a cheerful and joyful song. This is the exclusive power of song. There is no physical element which can stir the soul,

like song. We have never come across a person who was moved to tears from eating a well-done steak. We have also never come across a miserable person who is suddenly joyful after a long sleep. It is only song that possesses this wonderful power of having an immediate influence on the soul.

One can arrive at a wedding tired, troubled, and with frayed nerves, yet suddenly find oneself spinning around joyfully in circles, indifferent to all that was and will be. The opposite is also true: on hearing a soulful, moving melody, we are drawn into a different world.

A song that is rooted in holiness, a song which is an expression of nobility, or a composition that one can sense was arranged by a G-d fearing person, this kind of song will certainly inspire one to avodat Hashem, as reality shows us. On the other hand, words that were set to music by an empty, hollow person, the kind of person whom you would not allow your precious son to be found in his company, how can you then let him talk to your son's soul?

Who is even talking about the new fashion of 'converting' secular or non-Jewish songs? Composers take a coarse song and patch it up with holy words, in the same way as the hypocrisy of immersing in a ritual bath whilst holding an impure creature. In no time this 'new' song becomes the latest hit at religious weddings and precious yeshiva bachurim dance and let off steam to its beat.

If song speaks to the spiritual soul, then these cheap songs speak to the emotional heart. It is as if we are listening to all those empty, shallow (original) composers. Would we be prepared to have a heart to heart talk with those empty-headed people? Why do we then allow them, in a round-about way, to speak straight to the hearts of our sons and daughters?!

One of the Gedolei Hador once asked a singer why he sings second-rate songs. He answered that this is his way of bringing Jews closer to religion, for they form a connection with him through the songs he sings.

The Gadol countered his reply with a story: Once this type of singer came to the Heavenly Court and when he was asked why he sang like a non-Jew, he answered that his intention was to bring Jews back to their source. He felt that his main occupation in life was instigating people to repent. The Heavenly Court had a ready response: Take a chair and sit next to the entrance of Gan Eden. As soon as the first ba'al teshuva arrives and declares that he became an observant Jew in the merit of your songs, you may then enter Gan Eden together with him.

The Gadol finished off: This singer is still waiting for his ba'alei teshuva...



## Torah Exists Through Joy

***"Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Hashem, and they said the following: I shall sing to Hashem for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled horse with its rider into the sea" (Shemot 15:1)***

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 233) brings: "The angels wished to sing shira (a song of praise), but Hashem said to them: My Handiwork is drowning in the sea and you wish to sing shira?"

This gives rise to a question: How were Bnei Yisrael allowed to sing shira? What is the difference between them and the angels?

It could be that since it is hard for Hashem to punish His own Handiwork, He, therefore, did not allow the angels to sing shira. But Bnei Yisrael who suffered torment under the rule of the Egyptians during all those years of the bondage, were allowed to sing shira for their enemies who drowned in the sea. Without this joyful shira that gushed from the depths of their hearts, they would not have felt strongly that they are now freemen and able to become Hashem's servants.

One can also say that Am Yisrael was on the way to receiving the Torah and Torah cannot exist in the absence of joy. As it says in Tehillim (100:2), "Serve Hashem with gladness". This is the reason why Hashem allowed them to sing and rejoice, for with this joy they could prepare themselves for the receiving of the Torah with gladness. Besides, without this joy they would not merit seeing the Shechina.

It is told about Rabbeinu Tam zya"a, of the Ba'alei Tosfot, that when he studied Torah he would place money in front of him so that the money should cause his heart to expand with joy and in this way, he could connect to his learning. Without a doubt, Torah was more important to him than money, and the proof is that he spent his time occupied with Torah study and did not look for ways to earn money, but since money caused his heart to expand with joy, he placed it in front of him. According to this one can say that after Bnei Yisrael rejoiced about the downfall of the Egyptians, Hashem gifted them with the spoil from the sea, so that later their hearts would expand with Torah.

David Hamelech a"h says in Tehillim (84:3), "My soul yearns, indeed it pines, for the courtyards of Hashem". My esteemed grandfather, Rabbi Yeshayahu Pinto zya"a, explains that the word 'נבספה', (yearns), is an expression of the longing that David Hamelech had for the courtyards of Hashem. 'נבספה' also has the same root as the word 'כסף' (money). This implies that money brings joy and awakens a feeling of longing for the courtyards of Hashem.



## Pearls of the Parsha

### Crying About Lack of Yirat Shamayim

***"And they were very frightened and they cried out" (Shemot 14:10)***

Why did Bnei Yisrael cry out?

Rabbi Klonimus Kalman HaLevi Epstein of Krakow zt"l, the author of 'Maor v'Shemesh', explains that in fact, Bnei Yisrael cried out because of this fear. Their hearts were in pain from the fact that they were afraid of a human being, for a true G-d fearing person is embarrassed and ashamed to be afraid of anything in the world, besides Hashem.

### For Whose Sake?

***"They said to Moshe, 'Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the Wilderness?'" (Shemot 14:1)***

Bnei Yisrael's complaint is explained beautifully by the 'Ktav Sofer': Since they saw all the miracles and wonders that Hashem performed for them in Egypt in order to redeem them, yet now once again saw themselves facing considerable hardship, they therefore despaired of being saved. They imagined that all the miracles that Hashem performed in Egypt were not for their sake, but solely so that they should be able to take out the bones of the tribes and the coffin of Yosef so that they should not be buried in Egypt, an impure place.

They therefore said: "Were there no graves in Egypt". Since there were no fitting graves for our ancestors in Egypt, therefore, "you took us to die in the Wilderness". What have we gained from this? It is only of benefit to our fathers, not to us.

### In the Morning, 'Beloved'; In the Evening, 'Children'

***"Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Hashem" (Shemot 15:1)***

Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky shlita, asks the following question:

Why in the evening prayer do we say, "When His children perceived His power, they lauded and gave grateful praise to His Name", while in the morning prayer we say, "For this, the beloved praised and exalted G-d". How does it come about that from evening until morning we change from being 'children' to 'beloved' ones?

Rabbi Chaim explains: There is a big difference between children and beloved ones. A son is something eternal; even a son who does the worst injustice to his father will not lose the title of 'son', as the Gemara brings (Kiddushin 36a): "Rabbi Meir says: Either way you are called sons, as it says, "evil offspring, destructive children". On the other hand, only a son who honors his father merits the title of 'beloved one'.

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer tells us that when Bnei Yisrael were in the desperate state of the Egyptians surrounding them from one side, with the sea on the other side, they were very afraid. They threw away all the abominations of Egypt and repented.

The Rambam (Hilchot Teshuva 7:6) writes, "Repentance brings those distant closer; yesterday this one was hated by Hashem, repulsive and distant and abominable, and today he is beloved and delightful and a close friend". We can derive from this that in the evening, before the Splitting of the Sea, Bnei Yisrael were only considered as children, but towards morning when they already repented, as the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer tells us, they were now deserving of the title 'beloved ones'.

This, then, is the difference between the evening prayer where we say, "When His children perceived", to the morning prayer where we say, "the beloved praised".

# A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



***"Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt"***

(Shemot 13:17)

Rashi says: "They will think thoughts about their leaving and will want to return". This is quite amazing. Bnei Yisrael will wish to return? To where? To Egypt? To the crushing harshness of the enslavement?

Rabbi Leib Chasman zt"l explains that a person is made up of two opposing powers. On the one hand, every person possesses a G-dly essence which enables him to experience lofty moments, yet at the same time he is an ugly, obscure and foolish physical being, created from "dust from the ground". Man is open to change to either extreme at any given moment. "He is likened to the silenced animals," when faced with a battle, his intelligence disappears. Like a horse who perceives war will turn back, and it makes no difference to him whether a king or a simpleton is riding on him, so too a human being can change his position from moment to moment. One minute he behaves like a Heavenly angel, while the next moment he can behave like a horse.

What lies behind this concept is 'habit'. The power of habit is extremely great, and a person can even long for Egypt, for blows, for harsh work conditions, for this is the power of habit! Being familiar with the supermarket, the Health center and the bank, gives a good feeling- this is the power of habit!

Rabbi Shalom Schwadron zt"l would tell over the 'Story of the Chalutz (Pioneer)' that took place with the establishment of the State of Israel. The government ordered every household to foster a pioneer family (new olim). This is how it came about that the distinguished Auerbach family, the parents of the Gaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman zt"l, were also requested to host a couple. This couple, who were

far from being observant Jews, came to stay in the house of the mekubal, the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Leib Auerbach. While welcoming the guests and helping them feel at home, he gently explained that they should try and preserve the delicate nature of living in close proximity, while taking care not to offend the atmosphere and orthodox way of life of the occupants.

But with the onset of the first Shabbat, the visitors openly profaned the holy day. This offense disturbed the Shabbat tranquility and blemished its holiness. So the Rabbanit a"h asked her son, then the young Shlomo, to try and explain in a pleasant way, about the receiving of the Torah on Har Sinai, the Ten Commandments and the holiness of Shabbat, in order to prevent further friction.

The young Shlomo cleverly started to explain, in a warm and affable manner, about the concept of the Shabbat Queen and how a Jew honors his Creator who created the world in six days. The husband jumped up and retorted: "Are you trying to tell me that there is a Creator? I saw him!" The young Shlomo was taken aback. "Where did you see Him, maybe you want to share the tale..."

Now it was the pioneer's turn to address the family:

"Many years ago, as was want to happen, when a local ruler either intentionally or unintentionally offended the neighboring ruler, a squabble would break out between the neighboring villages and this would end in a real battle, with both sides shooting at each other. The battle intensified until one side initiated 'reconciliation'.

It once happened that I found myself conscripted to fight in a battle that was waged on behalf of the honor of the ruler, who was seemingly offended by someone. From my hiding place between the pits of sand, I kept shooting at the 'enemy'. At a lull in the fighting, I started thinking to myself, why am I involved in this? What will anyone gain from this battle?!

Suddenly I noticed that a group of orthodox bachurim from my village had joined our forces. I also noticed that at every break, they utilized the time to read from small books that they kept with them.

I found myself approaching them and asking them to explain what they were doing. I didn't understand exactly what

they explained, but one thing was clear to me: While I was confused and disoriented in my present reality, they firmly believed that there is a Ruler of the World who directs every occurrence! There is order and purpose in every circumstance, even if we don't understand exactly how or why. These young boys were certain that there was some benefit behind the circumstances brought about by the Creator.

Then an interesting thing happened. For the first time in my life, I found myself talking to G-d! I said, "I apologize for being so blunt, but if You can really hear me, please send me a sign! I would love to be released from army service, but, perish the thought, not due to any disability which will harm my future. Can I maybe ask for some small injury, let's say in a finger? Something which will grant me release from the army but will not leave me handicapped?!"

"While I was still talking to G-d", the pioneer continued while waving his half thumb in the air, "I heard the sharp whistle of a bullet, and half of my thumb was severed, as you can see!

You should know, that of course I was then taken away from the front lines for treatment and then recovery in the military convalescent home. I promised myself that as soon as I would be allowed home, I will immediately find out exactly what Judaism means and come closer to my Father in heaven, who listens to the prayers of every single person...

But what actually happened was, although I intended to go straight to Yeshiva after my release, this didn't happen in the end. So today I am standing here, ignorant in the ways of Judaism, and you, young boy needs to reprove me for profaning the Shabbat. Had I gone straight to Yeshiva, I today, could be your teacher in the laws of Shabbat!" The pioneer continued:

"I am telling you this so that you should know that it is very hard for a person to let go of the chains of habit! Therefore, you at least, should take care that every time you feel some awakening to improve yourself, do something about it straight away, take some positive action."

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