



# MEOROS HATZADDIKIM

— Lights Of Our Righteous —

*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)**

## Pesach & Sefiras Haomer & Shevi Shel Pesach & Neilas Hachag Pesach & Isru Chag Pesach

CHASSIDUS ON THE PARSHA

לזכר נשמת

ר' זכרי' שמעון הכהן בן יצחק

Acharon Shel Pesach

**Rav Mordechai Steiner**

Why Do We Call the Eighth day of the festival *Acharon Shel Pesach* and not *Shemini Shel Pesach*?

Rav Mordechai explained why we call this eighth day of the festival *Acharon Shel Pesach* and not *Shemini Shel Pesach* as follows:

Chazal teach us (Rosh HaShana 11) that “we were redeemed during the month of *Nissan* and we are destined that our future redemption will take place again during *Nissan*.” The holy *seforim* teach us that on *YomTov* Pesach is the most appropriate time of *segulah* for *geulah*; just as the *galus* and bondage in Egyptian exile was the epitome of all future exiles, incorporating them all, so is the Exodus and delivery of redemption from Egypt the epitome of all future *geulas* including the final redemption.

Therefore, Pesach and the Exodus are a *segulah* for *geulah*, and perhaps this is what is meant by (Micha 7:15) “As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I shall show you wonders and miracles.” During those very same days when the Exodus took place on Pesach, ‘I shall show them wonders once more,’ again when the final redemption takes place!

Seudas Moshiach

Perhaps another reason is that we call the *seudas Neilah* by the name *Seudas Moshiach* is because during *Neilas haChag* it is an auspicious time of *segulah* to awaken the *geulah* as Chazal teach us in (Berachos 12a) that “ all things everything follow the conclusion and the way that they are sealed.” Therefore, the primary *shefa* of *YomTov* flows down to us during the *Neilas haChag* and that is why we call it Moshiach's *seudah* to awaken and rouse the awareness that we need to ask for the redemption and *geulah* now!

Based in all this we can explain that the reason why we call this day *Acharon Shel Pesach* is to awaken and rouse awareness that this final day of Pesach reminds us to beseech for mercy and ask of Hashem to send us the final redemption. Therefore, we need to take proper advantage of this time. Perhaps this, hints at what we say during *Kedushas Kesser* - “I have redeemed you at the end as I did in

the beginning - *hen gaalti eschem acharis ke'reishis.*"

That Hashem is telling us that He will redeem us on *Acharon Shel Chag* - the final last day of the festival, even though the redemption from Egypt took place on the first day of *YomTov*, but we look forward that Hashem redeem us at the conclusion of the *chag* on the final last day.

May Hashem help that we merit as we did in those days when we came out from the land of Egypt, that Hashem shall show us wonders and miracles. Amen.

# Stories on Pesach & Sefiras HaOmer & Shevi Shel Pesach & Neilas haChag Pesach & Isru Chag Pesach



## Please Don't Lick The Bones

Once, on Rosh Chodesh Nissan during the Rebbe's Rosh Chodesh seuda, the tzaddik entered, looked around and declared, "I see here many soldiers have gathered; now I wish to admonish you all. Although you may be forced to eat *treifos*, I beg you, do not lick the bones in delight!"

The chassidim were very confused by the Rebbe's declaration and admonishment, since only chassidim were present with not a single soldier among them. After several years, however, the First World War broke out and the draft began. Many of them indeed were conscripted into the army. It was then that the tzaddik's pronouncement rang in their ears and his *ruach hakodesh* was revealed, as now they had become soldiers who were beset by the challenges the rebbe had referenced. (Zichron Yehuda, Dzhikov p. 52)

# Gedolim Be'misasm Yoser



**Yahrzeits for the 19th of Nissan ~ Begins Friday Night  
( 04-27-2024 )**



**Rav Yehoshua HaKohen Falk (5374 / 1614 - 410th Yahrzeit)**

Rav Yehoshua was cited by the acronym Maharuch by the Bach (standing for Rav Valk Kohen) and cited by Tosfos YomTov as Rafak (Rav Falk Kohen). As Rav Falk himself writes in the introduction to his work Sem" a, he studied under the famed Rav Moshe Isserles (the Rema) and under Rav Shlomo Luria (the Maharshal). Before he served as the Rav of Lvov he served as Rav in Belz around the year 5340.



**Rav Aharon Hagadol of Karlin (5532 / 1772 - 252nd Yahrzeit)**

Rabbi Aharon ("the Great") of Karlin; (1736- 19 Nissan 1772) was a disciple of Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritch. He was the pioneer of Chasidism in Lithuania, as is evidenced by the fact that in contemporary sources, "Karliner" became a local synonym for "chasid". He is remembered for the ecstatic and unrestrained fervor of his prayer, for his solicitude for the needy, and for the moral teachings embodied in his *Azharos* ("Warnings"). He was succeeded by his disciple R. Shlomo of Karlin, after whose death the succession reverted to R. Aharon's son, R. Asher of Stolin (d. 1823). The dynasty still thrives today; the Chasidim are known for the volume of their communal prayers.



**Rav Pinchos Eliyahu - Sefer Habris (5581 / 1821 - 203rd Yahrzeit)**



**Rav Shlomo Yehuda Leib of Lentchna (5603 / 1843 - 181st Yahrzeit)**



**Rav Chaim Betzalel - Rav of Balkan, Derech Yivchor (5634 / 1874 - 150th Yahrzeit)**



**Rav Menachem Ziembra (Prager) - Totz'os Chaim (5703 / 1943 - 81st Yahrzeit)**



**Rav Yaakov Yosef Weiss of Spinka - Siach Yaakov (5748 / 1988 - 36th Yahrzeit)**



**Rav Shmuel Alexander Unsdorfer of Montreal & Petach Tikva (5762 / 2002 - 22nd Yahrzeit)**

*(Some say the Yahrzeit is on the 27th of Sivan)*

*(Some say the Yahrzeit is in the year 5680 / 1920 - 104th Yahrzeit)*

Rav Shmuel Alexander Unsdorfer of Montreal and Petach Tikva (2002). He served as Rosh Yeshiva of the first Mesivta of Canada, founded in 1948 by the Klausenberger Rebbe. In 1956, he was sent by the Canadian Rescue Committee in Montreal to Vienna to help refugees from Hungary. He later moved to Eretz Yisrael and served as Rav of the Chassidei Tzanz Beis Hamedrash in Petach Tikvah.



**Rav Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron - Rishon Letzion, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Bat Yam, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Haifa (5780 / 2020 - 4th Yahrzeit)**

Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, who served as Israel's Sephardic Chief Rabbi (Rishon Letzion) between the years of 1993 and 2003, passed away on April 12, in the middle of Pesach, as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19). He was 79 years old. Bakshi-Doron was born in Yeurshalayim in 1941. His father, Rabbi Benzion, was a native of the Holy City, and his mother, Tovah, was originally from Aleppo, Syria, then home to a thriving Jewish community. From a young age, Eliyahu displayed a keen devotion to Torah study and developed a connection to many of the leading Torah sages in Israel, in both the Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities.


## **Yahrzeits for the 20th of Nissan ~ Begins Saturday Night ( 04-28-2024 )**




**Rav Hai Gaon of Pumpedisa (4798 / 1038 - 986th Yahrzeit)**

Rav Hai Gaon was the last of the Geonim of Pumpedisa. With him came to an end the era of the Geonim (the brilliant Talmudic scholars who headed the great Yeshivot of Sura and Pumpedisa) that lasted nearly 450 years (The Geonim who flourished in Babylonia (from about 4350 to 4800) were the successors to the Rabbanan Seburai (about 4260-4350), who in turn succeeded the Amoraim (about 3980-4260), after the completion of the Talmud Bavli, 4260). He was the son of his equally famous father, Rav Sherira Gaon, head of the Yeshiva of Pumpedisa (a small town near present-day Baghdad, the capital of Iraq). Rav Hai served as Gaon of Pumpedisa for forty years, until his death (on 20th of Nissan 4798/1038), at the age of 99 years.

 **Rav Meir HaLevi Abulafia - Yad Rama (5004 / 1244 - 780th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rabbeinu Chaim Vital - Etz Chaim (5380 / 1620 - 404th Yahrzeit)**  
Rabbi Chaim Vital (1543 - 30 Nisan 1620) Student of Rabbis Moshe Alshich and Moshe Cordevero, but best known as the main disciple of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria and the authoritative redactor of his doctrines, as recorded in *Etz Chaim* ("Tree of Life"). *Pri Etz Chaim* ("Fruit of the Tree of Life"), and *Shmoneh Sha'arim* ("Eight Gates"). Author of several books of his own as well.

 **Rav Yaakov Weissblum of Maglintza (5568 / 1808 - 216th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Elazar Fleckeles of Bohemia, Prague (5586 / 1826 - 198th Yahrzeit)**  
(Some say the Yahrzeit is on the 17th of Sivan)

El'azar Fleckeles was born to a well-off, patrician family in Prague; his father served as an elder of the Jewish community. Fleckeles studied in the yeshivas of Mosheh Kohen Rofe and Me'ir Fischels and then, for a decade, with his prime mentor, Yechezkel Landau, the rabbi of Prague, becoming his favorite disciple. He served from 1779 to 1783 as the rabbi of the Moravian community of Goitein (Kojetín), and then received a call to return to Prague to take up the posts of rabbi in a kloyz (a study hall established by a private fund) and judge in the community's extensive court system. He rose gradually to become the presiding judge (Oberjurist), the rosh or rav beis din.


 **Rav Yechezkel Panet of Karlsberg - Mareh Yechezkel (5605 / 1845 - 179th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Yitzchok Dov Ber of Liadi - Siddur MaHaRiD (5670 / 1910 - 114th Yahrzeit)**


## **YAHARZEITS FOR THE 21ST OF NISSAN ~ BEGINS SUNDAY NIGHT ( 04-29-2024 )**

 **Rav Shmuel Shapiro - Elder Breslov Chossid**

 **Rav Dovid Lehkes (5559 / 1799 - 225th Yahrzeit)**


 **Rav Yekusiel Asher Zalman Enzil of Tzuzmir - Sh"ut Mahari"az Enzil (5618 / 1858 - 166th Yahrzeit)**

Rabbi Yekusiel Asher Zalman Enzil was the son of Rav Menachem Nachum Tzuzmir and son-in-law of Rabbi Yosef Asher Elenberg. He was the *talmid muvhak* of Rabbi Aryeh Leib Hakohen, the head of the rabbinical court of Stryj and author of *Ketzos Hachoshen* and *Avnei Miluim*. Rav Asher Enzil wrote glosses on the *Avnei Miluim*. He was the head of the rabbinical court in Stryj, and then in Przemyśl, succeeding his father-in-law, after his passing.

 Rav Yitzchak Churi - Dayan in Djerba, B'Nei Shloshim (5628 / 1868 - 156th Yahrzeit)


 Rav Shmuel Tzvi Weiss of Munkatch (5639 / 1879 - 145th Yahrzeit)

 Rav Yissocher Berish Eichenstein of Ziditchov - Malbush L'Shabbos V'Yomtov (5684 / 1924 - 100th Yahrzeit)

 Rav Shimon Yisroel Posen - Rav of Shafran, Toras Elef (5729 / 1969 - 55th Yahrzeit)

**Yahrzeits for the 22nd of Nissan ~ Begins Monday Night  
( 04-30-2024 )**

 Rav Yehuda Rosanes - Mishneh Lamelech (5487 / 1727 - 297th Yahrzeit)


 Rav Yisrael Yitzchak Kalish of Vurka - Ohel Yitzchok (5608 / 1848 - 176th Yahrzeit)

Rav Yisrael Yitzchak was the son of Rav Shimon Kalish, known as *Rabbi Shimon Baal HaRachmanus*, and a descendant of Rav Mordechai Yaffe *Baal HaLevushim*, Rav Yitzchak was born in 5540 (1779). He became a *talmid muvhak* of Rav Dovid Lelover, as well as a disciple of the *Chozeh* of Lublin and the *Yid HaKadosh*. After his Rebbe's passing he travelled along with Rav Moshe Lelover in search of a new rebbe until they reached Rav Mordechai of Chernobyl, who refused to accept them, saying they were ready to serve as rebbe themselves. He decided to join the other chassidim in Peshischa.

 Rav Gedalia of Malin (5669 / 1909 - 115th Yahrzeit)


**Yahrzeits for the 23rd of Nissan ~ Begins Tuesday Night  
( 05-01-2024 )**

 Rav Moshe di Trani - Hamabit (5345 / 1585 - 439th Yahrzeit)

 Rav Yisroel Sholom Yosef Friedman of Bohosh - Pe'er Yisroel (5683 / 1923 - 101st Yahrzeit)

**Yahrzeits for the 24th of Nissan ~ Begins Wednesday Night  
( 05-02-2024 )**

 Rav Moshe of Premishel - Mateh Moshe (5366 / 1606 - 418th Yahrzeit)

 Rebbetzin Sasha Mindel Hertzberg (nee Kluger) (5614 / 1854 - 170th Yahrzeit)

 **Rav Chaim Menachem Heschel of Zinkov (5653 / 1893 - 131st Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Yosef HaKohen Friedman of Riminov (5673 / 1913 - 111th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Eliyahu Akiva Rabinowitz of Poltava (5677 / 1917 - 107th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel Weinberg - Slonimer Rebbe of Tel Aviv, B'Oholei Yissocher (5738 / 1978 - 46th Yahrzeit)**

Harav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel Weinberg was born in 5658/1898. His father was Harav Yissachar Leib of Slonim, zy" a. Following the *petirah* of his father, on 28 *Nisan* 5688/1928, Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel was asked to lead the Slonimer Chassidus, but he was reluctant to become *Rebbe*; he would travel from Warsaw to Slonim from time to time, on set dates. After the *petirah* of his father's brother, Harav Avraham, who was *Rebbe* in Bialystock and later in Baranovitch, on *Rosh Chodesh Iyar* 5693/1933, Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel acquiesced to move to Slonim as *Rebbe*. In 5695/1935, Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel moved to Eretz Yisrael, and settled in Tel Aviv, where he opened a *beis medrash* for the Slonimer Chassidim in the city.

 **Rav Chaim Yitzchok Chaikin - Rosh Yeshivas Aix-les-Baines (5755 / 1995 - 29th Yahrzeit)**

Rav Chaim Yitzchok was born in 1907 in Kossova, Lithuania. Died in Sarcelles in 1993. Pupil of Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman in Baranovitch. Rav Chaikin studied for 12 years in the *Radin Yeshiva*. He served in the Neudorf *Yeshiva*, the "Yeshiva of France," until the advent of World War II. Upon his release in May 1945, he was hired as *Rosh Yeshiva* for the nascent *Yeshiva* in Aix-les-Bains. Faithfully transmitting the values and teachings of the *Chofetz Chaim* to his thousands of students, Rabbi Chaikin lead the yeshiva for 48 years until his death.

### **YAHARZEITS FOR THE 25TH OF NISSAN ~ BEGINS THURSDAY NIGHT ( 05-03-2024 )**

 **Rav Dan of Radvil (5598 / 1838 - 186th Yahrzeit)**

 **Rav Yosef of Mirtchov (5599 / 1839 - 185th Yahrzeit)**



**Rav Chaim Halberstam - Sanzer Rav, Divrei Chaim (5636 / 1876 - 148th Yahrzeit)**

Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz was known as the *Divrei Chaim* after his magnum opus on Halacha. He was the founder of the Sanz dynasty and was a famous Chassidic leader. The *Divrei Chaim* was born in 1793, in Tarnograd, Poland. He studied under Rabbi Naftali Zvi of Ropshitz who became his lifelong mentor. He went on to move to the town of Sanz where he founded a Hasidic dynasty. He attracted many followers partly due to his great piety. During his 46 year tenure as Rabbi of Sanz, that city was transformed into a vibrant center of Chasidism attracting tens of thousands of devotees.



**Rav Nachum Tzvi Goldberg (5766 / 2006 - 18th Yahrzeit)**

Rav Nachum Tzvi was born to Rav Kalman Avraham Goldberg, Rav of Vasilkov, he moved with the family to America in 1926. He taught at *Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yaakov Yosef* (RJJ) for over 20 years. After his father was *nifter* in 1968, he replaced him as Rav of *Adas Yisrael*. In 1973, he also became administrator of *Ezras Torah* and made out the checks for all the *yungeleit*.

# Biographies of the Tzaddikim



**Rav Yehoshua Falk (Nissan 19, 5374 / 1614 - 410th Yahrzeit)**

He married Baila, the daughter of the great *gvir* of Lvov, Rav Yisrael Aidels. Rav Yisrael married off orphans, and his home was a great meeting place for *Rabbonim* and sages. He was very generous with his money to the poor and he gave his son-in-law a fully furnished multi-storied home and supported him for twenty-eight years, as well as his *Yeshiva* and students.

Rav Yehoshua authored the well-known work *Sefer Meiras Einayim* or *Sem" a*, a commentary on the *Shulchon Aruch*, as well as commentaries named *Derisha* and *Perisha*

on the *Tur*.

He is cited by the acronym *Maharuch* by the *Bach* (standing for *Rav Valk Kohen*) and cited by *Tosfos YomTov* as *Rafak* (*Rav Falk Kohen*).

(His son *Rav Yosef HaKohen* adds in his own introduction to his father's *Derisha* that his father also authored commentaries and *seforim* on *Shas*, *Rif*, *Semag*, *Rashi*, *Ran*, *Mordechai* and the *Rosh*, as well as works of *Kabbola*, philosophy, *deroshos* on the *Torah*, *Mishna*, *Aggoda*, *Medrashim* and *responsa*, which unfortunately were all lost in a fire.)

As *Rav Falk* himself writes in the introduction to his work *Sem" a*, he studied under the famed *Rav Moshe Isserles* (the *Rema*) and under *Rav Shlomo Luria* (the *Maharshal*).

Among his *talmidim* were the *Av Bais Din* of *Cracow*, *mechaber* of *Maginei Shlomo*; *Rav Yissochor Ber Eilenburg*, *mechaber* of *Be'er Sheva*; and *Rav Avrohom Katz Rappaport* (*Shrentzel*), *mechaber* of *Eison HoEzrochi*.

Before he served as the *Rav* of *Lvov* he served as *Rav* in *Belz* around the year 5340.



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<http://www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=rebbeBios>



**Rav Shmuel Alexander Unsorfer (Nissan 19, 5762 / 2002 - 22nd Yahrzeit)**  
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**Rav Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron Rishon Letzion, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Bat Yam, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Haifa (Nissan 19, 5780 / 2020 - 4th Yahrzeit)**



Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, who served as Israel's Sephardic Chief Rabbi (Rishon Letzion) between the years of 1993 and 2003, passed away on April 12, in the middle of Pesach, as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19). He was 79 years old.

Bakshi-Doron was born in Yeurshalayim in 1941. His father, Rabbi Benzion, was a native of the Holy City, and his mother, Tovah, was originally from Aleppo, Syria, then home to a thriving Jewish community.

From a young age, Eliyahu displayed a keen devotion to Torah study and developed a connection to many of the leading Torah sages in Israel, in both the Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities.

In 1970, shortly after marrying Esther Lopes, daughter of Akko Chief Rabbi Shalom Lopes, he was appointed as a neighborhood rabbi in Bat Yam, just south of Tel Aviv. Four years later, he was chosen to serve as the city's Sephardic chief rabbi. In 1975, he was selected to serve as Sephardic rabbi of Haifa, a position he would hold for the next 18 years.

In that position, he worked closely with Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries to the city and participated in many Chabad events. When they completed the first "Unity Torah Scroll" during the Lag BaOmer parade in 1982, he took a leading role in the celebration.

"On one hand, Rabbi Bakshi-Doron was a great scholar," says Rabbi Leibel Schildkraut, longtime director of Chabad of Chaifa. "At the same time, he was an approachable and unassuming leader who connected with people on an individual level."

Schildkraut recalls serving as a go-between between the Bakshi-Dorons and the Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory. The exchanges ranged from the communal to the personal, as when the rabbi went through great lengths to ensure that the Rebbe received a copy of *Binyan Av*, his compendium of responsa in Jewish law, to when his wife sought the Rebbe's blessing for marriage proposals for their children, as well as other personal issues.

From 1993 to 2003, Bakshi-Doron served as Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisroel, alongside his Ashkenazi counterpart, Rabbi Yisrael Lau.

A hands-on leader, he worked tirelessly to elevate the spiritual lives of his constituents, giving countless Torah classes and lectures. His care, however, extended to many other areas as well. He served on the boards of a number of institutions, including Rambam Hospital in Chaifa and Keren Lavi, a civilian charity that supports soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces.

Over the decades, he visited Chabad institutions and events all over the world, and would often speak of his admiration of the emissaries' devotion and dedication to fostering Jewish life and community.

During his long and fruitful retirement, he founded and led the Jerusalem-based Binyan Av institute, a yeshivah that attracts young men from Sephardic communities worldwide.

Predeceased by his wife in 2005, he is survived by their 10 children, in addition to many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

[https://www.chabad.org/news/article\\_cdo/aid/4726341/jewish/Rabbi-Eliyahu-Bakshi-Doron-79-Former-Chief-Rabbi-of-Israel.htm](https://www.chabad.org/news/article_cdo/aid/4726341/jewish/Rabbi-Eliyahu-Bakshi-Doron-79-Former-Chief-Rabbi-of-Israel.htm)



**Rav Hai Gaon (*Nissan 20, 4798 / 1038 - 986th Yahrzeit*)**

Rav Hai Gaon was the last of the Geonim of Pumpedisa. With him came to an end the era of the Geonim (the brilliant Talmudic scholars who headed the great Yeshivot of Sura and Pumpedisa) that lasted nearly 450 years (The Geonim who flourished in Babylonia (from about 4350 to 4800) were the successors to the Rabbanan Seburai (about 4260-4350), who in turn succeeded the Amoraim (about 3980-4260), after the completion of the Talmud Bavli, 4260). He was the son of his equally famous father, Rav Sherira Gaon, head of the Yeshiva of Pumpedisa (a small town near present-day Baghdad, the capital of Iraq).

Rav Hai grew up under the care and tutelage of his great father. While still a young man, he became famous for his extraordinary mastery of the entire Talmud and the writings of the generations of Geonim, which were carefully preserved in the archives of the Yeshiva. Under the influence of the works of Rav Saadia Gaon (last but one of the Geonim of Sura, who died in 942), Rav Hai became proficient also in the sciences and various languages.

At the age of 48, Rav Hai was appointed as Av Bet Din (Head of the Highest Court), second highest office, next to the Gaon. Thus, father and son held the two highest offices in the leadership of the Jewish people at the same time, until Rav Hai succeeded his illustrious father as Gaon of Pumpedisa, a short time before his father passed away (in 998).

Rav Hai served as Gaon of Pumpedisa for forty years, until his death (on 20th of Nissan 4798/1038), at the age of 99 years.

Rav Hai was greatly revered by all Jews in all lands, from Persia and Turkey in the East to Spain in the West. The greatest Torah scholars of his time, such as Rabbi Shlomo ben Yehuda in the Land of Israel, Rabbeinu Nissim of Kairwan (North Africa), the latter's disciple, Rabbi Shmuel Hanagid of Spain, and other scholars and communal leaders in various parts of the world sent him inquiries and accepted his opinions and rulings as the highest authority. These Halakhic opinions - Teshuvot, Responsa made a substantial addition to the Responsa literature of the Geonim that preceded him. Indeed, nearly half of all the Geonic Responsa was written by Sherira and Hai. These two Geonim wrote about 1000 Responsa. These Responsa were usually written in the language of the inquiry: in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Arabic.

In addition to the Responsa, Rav Hai Gaon wrote many Halachic works, mostly in Arabic, the spoken language of most Jews in the Arab land. Some of these were later translated into Hebrew. Several of his works have been preserved in part, either in the original Arabic or in Hebrew translation, or in both. Some have been published with commentaries by other scholars. He has also been frequently quoted in other Rabbinic works.

Among Rav Hai's major works, in addition to the Responsa, are the following:

Mishpat Shavuot or Shaarei Shavuot, "Laws of Oaths," which had been translated by an unknown translator from Arabic into Hebrew. It was printed for the first time in 5362 (1602) in Venice.

Sefer Mekach uMimkar, "Book of Purchases and Sales," published with a summary of a separate work, "Laws of Loans." This work, comprising 60 chapters, was translated from Arabic into Hebrew by Rabbi Yitzhak al Barceloni. The original Arabic text was lost.

These and other works deal with different aspects of business laws, such as contracts, agreements, litigations, and related subjects that come under the classification of Civil Law.

He also wrote works in the area of the dietary laws, such as the "Book of the Forbidden and the Permitted"; on the laws of Shechitah; on the laws of Tefillin; and other areas of the everyday Jewish life.

Rav Hai also wrote commentaries on T'NaCh, Mishnah and Gemara. He wrote commentaries on at least seven tractates of the Talmud. Of all these works only parts have been preserved.

He also composed religious poetry in the form of Piyutim and Selichos. An expert grammarian, he wrote treatises on Hebrew and Arabic grammar.

Clearly, Rav Hai was an accomplished scholar in many fields. It would be difficult to evaluate fully his many and lasting contributions in the field of Halachah, in the interpretation of the Talmud and the Holy Scriptures, the history and development of Jewish Tradition, Jewish customs and prayers. Divine Providence blessed this great sage with a long and fruitful life and with extraordinary talents, so that, as the last of the Babylonian Geonim, he could transmit the spiritual treasures of the crucial Geonic era to succeeding generations. He was thus one of the main links in the unbroken golden chain of the Massorah (Tradition) from Moshe Rabbeinu, the Prophets and the Men of the Great Assembly, through the Tannaim and Amoraim and their successors, the Geonim. This link was all the more important as it forged the smooth transition from the Talmudic to the post-Talmudic era, at a time when the center of Jewish life was moving from the East to the West.

Rav Hai's work was continued by his many disciples and leading Torah authorities of the next generation. The respect and reverence which Rav Hai enjoyed in the Jewish world of his time and thereafter is also reflected in such titles attached to his name as "Father of Israel" and "Teacher of all Jews."

[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/112498/jewish/Rav-Hai-Gaon.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112498/jewish/Rav-Hai-Gaon.htm)



**Rabbeinu Chaim Vital Etz Chaim (Nissan 20, 5380 / 1620 - 404th Yahrzeit)**

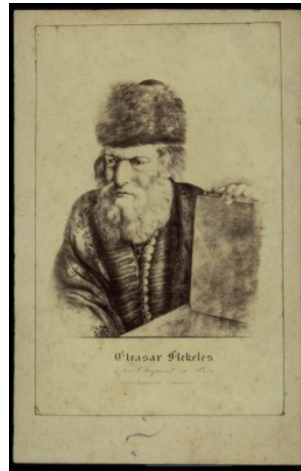


Rabbi Chaim Vital (1543 - 30 Nisan 1620) Student of Rabbis Moshe Alshich and Moshe Cordevero, but best known as the main disciple of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria and the authoritative redactor of his doctrines, as recorded in *Etz Chaim* ("Tree of Life"). *Pri Etz Chaim* ("Fruit of the Tree of Life"), and *Shmoneh Sha'arim* ("Eight Gates"). Author of several books of his own as well.

<http://www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=rebbeBios>



**Rav Elazar Fleckeles (Nissan 20, 5586 / 1826 - 198th Yahrzeit)**  
(Some say the Yahrzeit is on the 17th of Sivan)



El'azar Fleckeles was born to a well-off, patrician family in Prague; his father served as an elder of the Jewish community. Fleckeles studied in the yeshivas of Mosheh Kohen Rofe and Me'ir Fischels and then, for a decade, with his prime mentor, Yechezkel Landau, the rabbi of Prague, becoming his favorite disciple. Fleckeles's wife, Esther, also belonged to one of the oldest and most prestigious Prague families, the Bondys.

In stereotypical fashion, Fleckeles entered the rabbinate perforce after going bankrupt. He served from 1779 to 1783 as the rabbi of the Moravian community of Goitein (Kojetín), and then received a call to return to Prague to take up the posts of rabbi in a kloyz (a study hall established by a private fund) and judge in the community's extensive court system. He rose gradually to become the presiding judge (Oberjurist), the rosh or rav bet din, in 1801—the highest religious post in Prague, since the position of chief rabbi or av bet din remained unfilled for almost 50 years after the death of Landau in 1793.

Besides lecturing in the yeshiva, Fleckeles was also a gifted and controversial preacher, who published a four-volume series of sermons, 'Olat ḥodesh (though several volumes carry an additional title), between 1785 and 1800. (A famous series of paintings depicting the Prague burial society shows him delivering a eulogy in the graveyard.) He was also an important halakhic authority, whose responsa, Teshuvah me-ahavah (3 vols.; 1809, 1815, 1821), were published during his lifetime.

It was the publication of his second volume of sermons, subtitled 'Olat ha-tsibur (1787), that propelled Fleckeles into the midst of the brewing Kulturkampf between maskilim and the rabbinical establishment in the 1780s. His sermons lashed out against the growing laxity and acculturation of the times, as well as against Netivot ha-shalom, Moses Mendelssohn's German translation of the Bible, and its Bi'ur commentary. Fleckeles's name had already appeared in 1785 alongside those of Landau and other members of the rabbinical court in an approbation endorsing Zusman Glogau's rival Bible translation and explaining why it was preferred to Mendelssohn's unnamed one. Fleckeles was attacked in the maskilic journal Ha-Me'asef for being the actual author of the approbation (a remark alluding to an insignificant student could only have referred to him), and later by David Friedländer in an extensive review of the sermons.

Fleckeles's sermons were later reprinted and even anthologized by such ultra-Orthodox opponents of the Haskalah as Akiva Yosef Schlesinger. Yet, surprisingly, there is evidence that by the 1790s, his own stance had moderated. He cited the maskil Naftali Herts Wessely approvingly and later in life would insist that the Prague rabbinic court had opposed Mendelssohn's work purely on pedagogic grounds. He enjoyed the close cooperation of Prague maskilim, in particular that of Marcus Fischer (the grandson of his teacher, Me'ir Fischels), who translated an important statement by Fleckeles on religious toleration toward Christians (Geist des Judenthums: Frey bearbeitet nach dem Hebräischen von M. Fischer; 1813). It was a stance that Fleckeles was to reiterate in a friendly Hebrew correspondence he conducted with the censor Karl Fischer, in which Jewish customs and practices offensive to gentiles, such as avoiding studying Torah on Christmas Eve (Yid., nitzl) or the open disparagement expressed in Yiddish in front of uncomprehending non-Jews, was discussed. There is even a query raised by Fischer in this correspondence, on the binding nature of oaths to non-Jews that is included in Fleckeles's Teshuvah me-ahavah (pt. 1, sec. 26), a responsum to a Christian that is perhaps unique in the annals of rabbinic literature.

This universalistic and rationalistic turn in Fleckeles's thinking may be attributed in part to a reaction against the havoc wreaked by the public ascendancy in the mid-eighteenth century of the Kabbalah and its related movements—Hasidism and, more relevantly in the Bohemian milieu, Sabbatianism. Fleckeles had clashed earlier with Sabbatians in Goitein. In the summer of 1799, he instigated a fierce campaign against the resurgence of the last remnants of the movement that formed around the prestigious Wehle family in Prague. The fourth volume of his sermons, *Ahavat David* (1800), agitated against the sect and earned him several days in jail.

In a fashion similar to that of his mentor Landau, Fleckeles viewed the threat that Sabbatianism posed to tradition, in particular to the centrality of Talmud and its study, as emanating from excesses of both rationalism and mysticism. Hence even legitimate Kabbalah and its derived practices, such as prefacing mystical intentional formulae to the recitation of blessings, should, he believed, play no public role. Rather, as in days of yore, such practices should become esoteric observances restricted to a learned elite. Fleckeles also denounced religious reform, participating with his Prague colleagues in condemning the Hamburg Temple reforms in particular.

Fleckeles's son-in-law, Yom Tov Spitz, published his biography soon after his death. The poet and radical politician Moritz Hartmann was Fleckeles's grandson.  
[https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/fleckeles\\_elazar\\_ben\\_david](https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/fleckeles_elazar_ben_david)

Austrian rabbi and author; born in Prague Aug. 26, 1754; died there April 27, 1826. He was the pupil of Moses Cohen Rofe, Meïr Fischels, and Ezekiel Landau. At the age of twenty-four he became rabbi of Kojetein, a small town in Moravia. In 1780 he was appointed dayyan in his native city. Later he accepted the office of rabbi of the bet hamidrash founded by Joachim Popper and Israel Fränkel. Fleckeles was renowned for his scholarship and oratorical gifts, and for his skill in worldly affairs. He twice had audience with Emperor Francis I.

Fleckeles wrote: "*Olat Ḥodesh*," in four parts, containing sermons, a criticism of Mendelssohn's translation of the Pentateuch, and an address directed against the followers of the pseudo-Messiah Shabbethai Zebi, Prague, 1785-1800; "*Teshubah me-Ahabah*," responsa, in three parts (the responsum concerning Eleazar ha-Kalir is often quoted by writers on Jewish hymnology), Prague, 1800-21; a funeral sermon on the

occasion of the death of Joachim Edler von Popper, ib. 1795; "Meleket ha-Ḳodesh," two funeral sermons and two essays on the holy names of the Lord which occur in the Scriptures; "Nefesh Dawid we Nefesh Ḥayyah," delivered by the author on the death of his parents, ib. 1812; "Ma'ase de-Rabbi Eliezer," a commentary on the Haggadah of Passover, ib. 1812; "Mebasser Tob," two sermons delivered by the author on the occasion of the victory of the Austrian army at Naples in 1821, ib. 1821; "Ḥazon la-Mo'ed," a part of his "Sefer ha-Doresh," ib. 1824; "Mille de-Abot," a commentary on Pirḳe Abot; "Mille de-Oraita," sermons. Many of his sermons were translated into German by J. Jeitteles, Marcus Fisher, and Isaac Spitz.

<https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6182-fleckeles-eleazar-ben-david>



**Rav Yekusiel Asher Zalman Enzil Sh"ut Mahari"az Enzil (Nissan 21, 5618 / 1858 - 166th Yahrzeit)**

Rabbi Yekusiel Asher Zalman Enzil of Tzuzmir (Galicia, 1790-1858)

Author of *Shu"t Mahari"az Enzil AvBeisDin* of the community of Stryj.

Rabbi Yekusiel Asher Zalman Enzil was the son of Rav Menachem Nachum Tzuzmir and son-in-law of Rabbi Yosef Asher Elenberg.

He was the *talmid muvhak* of Rabbi Aryeh Leib Hakohen, the head of the rabbinical court of Stryj and author of *Ketzos Hachoshen* and *Avnei Miluim*. Rav Asher Enzil wrote glosses on the *Avnei Miluim*.

He was the head of the rabbinical court in Stryj, and then in Przemyśl, succeeding his father-in-law, after his passing. His sefer of responsa, *Shu"t Mahari"az Enzil* was published in the year 1882/5642 in Przemyśl.

He passed away on 21 Nissan 1858/ 5618.



**Rav Yisrael Yitzchak Kalish Ohel Yitzchok (Nissan 22, 5608 / 1848 - 176th Yahrzeit)**

Son of Rav Shimon Kalish, known as *Rabbi Shimon Baal HaRachmanus*, and a descendant of Rav Mordechai Yaffe *Baal HaLevushim*, Rav Yitzchak was born in 5540 (1779). He married at fourteen to the daughter of Rav Meir of Zharik. He moved there and studied under Rav Dovid of Czenstachov, author of *Bais Dovid*.

Even as a young child, Rav Dovid Lelover, who drew the young Yitzchak to the Chassidic movement, predicted that he would grow up to be a great *tzaddik* and a leader of thousands.

He became a *talmid muvhak* of Rav Dovid Lelover, as well as a disciple of the *Chozeh* of Lublin and the *Yid HaKadosh*. Between the years 5574-5575, all his rebbes passed away. After their passing, he travelled along with Rav Moshe Lelover in search of a new *rebbe* until they reached Rav Mordechai of Chernobyl, who refused to accept them, saying they were ready to serve as rebbes themselves.

He decided to join the other chassidim in Peshischa. There he studied under Rav Simchah Bunim of Peshischa, the primary successor to the *Yid HaKadosh* and afterwards to Rav Bunim's son, Rav Avraham Moshe. After his passing, he took upon himself the mantle of leadership first in Gorvatshuv and Ruda, and afterwards he settled in Vorke, which became the center of chassidus. He had strong ties with the *Chiddushei haRim* and together they fought against the *maskilim*.

He passed away on *Acharon Shel Pesach*, 22 Nissan 5608 (1848), and was laid to rest in Vorke.

Rav Feivel of Gritza eulogized him in his *hesped*, saying: "Our *rebbe* passed away on the final *sefirah* of *Malchus She'b'Chessed* because he was the one to finalize the rectification of the *middas hachessed*, the attribute of unconditional kindness. Like Avraham Avinu before him, all the acts of *chessed* and loving kindness came about through him and went with him."

His son Rav Yaakov Dovid of Amshinov was the founder of the *Amshinov* dynasty which continues to this day; and Rav Menachem Mendel, who succeeded his father in Vorke.

His teachings were collected and published in *Ohel Yitzchak* and his biography and stories

in *Niflaos Yitzchak*.



**Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel Weinberg Slonimer Rebbe of Tel Aviv, B'Oholei Yissocher (Nissan 24, 5738 / 1978 - 46th Yahrzeit)**



Harav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel Weinberg was born in 5658/1898. His father was Harav Yissachar Leib of Slonim, *zy"a*, who was the son of the *Divrei Shmuel*, *zy"a*, and a great-grandson of the *Yesod HaAvodah*, *zy"a*.

Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel was brought up in the court of his grandfather the *Divrei Shmuel* in Slonim.

When he became of age, Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel was taken as son-in-law by Harav Dovid Weidenfeld of Warsaw, *zt"l*, a known *talmid chacham* who was also the father-in-law of the *Beis Yisrael* of Ger, *zy"a*, in his *zivug sheini*, after the war.

After his marriage, Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel settled in Warsaw, near his father-in-law.

Following the *petirah* of his father, on 28 *Nisan* 5688/1928, Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel was asked to lead the Slonimer Chassidus, but he was reluctant to become *Rebbe*; he would travel from Warsaw to Slonim from time to time, on set dates.

After the *petirah* of his father's brother, Harav Avraham, who was *Rebbe* in Bialystock and later in Baranovitch, on *Rosh Chodesh Iyar* 5693/1933, Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel acquiesced to move to Slonim as *Rebbe*.

In 5695/1935, Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel moved to Eretz Yisrael, and settled in Tel Aviv, where he opened a *beis medrash* for the Slonimer Chassidim in the city.

He wrote an encyclopedic work based on *Chazal's* words from the *Gemara* and *Midrashim* on all topics mentioned in *Tanach*. Seven volumes have been published thus far of his monumental set, *Otzar Arachei HaTorah-B'Ohalei Yissachar*, named for his father.

Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel was *niftar* on 25 *Nisan* 5738/1978 at the age of 80. He was buried in Bnei Brak, near the *kever* of the Ozherover *Rebbe*, *zy" a*.

Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel had two sons: *Harav Shmuel*, who was deputy mayor of Bnei Brak, and *Harav Aryeh*, *Rosh Yeshivas Shuvu Banim*.

*Zechuso yagen aleinu.*

hamodia.com



**Rav Chaim Yitzchok Chaikin Rosh Yeshivas Aix-les-Baines (Nissan 24, 5755 / 1995 - 29th Yahrzeit)**



Born in 1907 in Kossova, Lithuania. Died in Sarcelles in 1993. Pupil of Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman in Baranovitch. Rav Chaikin studied for 12 years in the *Radin Yeshiva*. Of

these years, he spent seven years, from 1926 to 1933, as one of the closest students of the revered *Chofetz Chaim*, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan. In 1938 Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman suggested Rabbi Chaikin to be the *Rosh Yeshiva* of Chief Rabbi Ernest Weill's new *yeshiva* in Strasbourg-Neudorf. He served in the Neudorf *Yeshiva*, the "Yeshiva of France," until the advent of World War II when he enlisted as a soldier in the French Foreign Legion. Captured by the Germans, he was a prisoner of war in Germany for 5 years. Upon his release in May 1945, he was hired as *Rosh Yeshiva* for the nascent *Yeshiva* in Aix-les-Bains. Faithfully transmitting the values and teachings of the *Chofetz Chaim* to his thousands of students, Rabbi Chaikin lead the *yeshiva* for 48 years until his death.

<https://yeshiva-aixlesbains.com/presentation/biographies.html>



**Rav Chaim Halberstam Sanzer Rav, Divrei Chaim (Nissan 25, 5636 / 1876 - 148th Yahrzeit)**



Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz was known as the *Divrei Chaim* after his magnum opus on Halacha. He was the founder of the Sanz dynasty and was a famous Chassidic leader.

The *Divrei Chaim* was born in 1793, in Tarnograd, Poland. He studied under Rabbi Naftali Zvi of Ropshitz who became his lifelong mentor. He went on to move to the town of Sanz where he founded a Chassidic dynasty. He attracted many followers partly due to his great piety. The Sanz dynasty per se is not around today but is succeeded by the Sanz-Klausenberg dynasty and the Bobov dynasty.

The Divrei Chaim was acclaimed by the leading rabbis as one of the foremost Talmudists, Halachic and Kabbalistic authorities of his time, he received queries from communities all over the world. His responsa, as well as his Torah commentaries, published under the title *Divrei Chaim*, reflect his Torah greatness, his humility, and his compassionate nature. He was a champion of the poor and established many organizations to relieve them of their poverty.

During his 46 year tenure as Rabbi of Sanz, that city was transformed into a vibrant center of Chassidism attracting tens of thousands of devotees. Among his disciples are counted such leaders as Rabbi Zvi Hirsh of Liska, Rabbi Solomon HaCohen of Radomsk, Rabbi Meir of Dzhikov, and the Yetev Leiv of Sighet. Rabbi Chaim's five sons all became famous Rebbes. His seven daughters all married Chassidic leaders.

<https://breslev.com/260165/>



**Rav Nachum Tzvi Goldberg (Nissan 25, 5766 / 2006 - 18th Yahrzeit)**

Born to Rav Kalman Avraham Goldberg, Rav of Vasilkov, he moved with the family to America in 1926. As a bachur, he learned with Rav Shlomo Heiman for 5 years, then moved to Lakewood to learn with Rav Aharon Kotler for 9 years (1943-1952). As a married man, he moved back to the East Side and taught at *Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yaakov Yosef* (RJJ) for over 20 years. After his father was *nifter* in 1968, he replaced him as Rav of *Adas Yisrael*. In 1973, he also became administrator of *Ezras Torah* and made out the checks for all the *yungeleit*.

matzav.com

# Gedolim Be'Masayhem



## Stories & Anecdotes

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**Rav Yehoshua Falk (Nissan 19)**

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### **WIFE OF THE DERISHA**

His wife, Baila, the daughter of Rav Yisrael Aidels, authored a few novel rulings in Jewish law cited by her son in his introduction to his father's work the *Derisha on Yoreh De'a* Volume II. The two novel laws cited regard the manner in which women light the candles on *Yom Tov* and how *Yom Tov* lighting differs from *Shabbos* candle lighting. Although some authorities, such as the commentary *Mogen Avrohom*, ruled against her, most of the later authorities concurred with her rulings and praised her insight.

(Footnote: It seems that in her time women had two customs that she took issue with. First, they recited the blessing after lighting the candles both on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, and second, they lit the *Yom Tov* candles only when their husbands returned from the prayer service in the evening as opposed to at the onset of the holiday.

Rebbetzin Baila felt that the *berocha* on *Yom Tov* candles should be recited prior to lighting them as opposed to on *Shabbos*, the reason being that many *Rabbonim* are of the opinion that reciting the *berocha* on lighting the *Shabbos* candles is tantamount to accepting upon oneself the sanctity of *Shabbos* as well as the restrictions of *Shabbos*. Therefore, once *Shabbos* has been accepted, one would no longer be able to light a flame or kindle the *Shabbos* candles. So, having no other option, the *berocha* is recited after the candles are lit. However, since it is always preferable to recite *berochos* before the *mitzvos* are performed, on *Yom Tov* when one is permitted to light a flame from an existing flame, the *berocha* recited should precede the lighting of the *Yom Tov* candles.

Regarding the second practice where women waited for the return of their husbands before lighting the candles on *Yom Tov*, Rebbetzin Baila felt that this should only be done on the second night of *Yom Tov* in the Diaspora. Since just as on Shabbos we prepare everything beforehand so that when the Shabbos day enters all is ready, waiting and prepared to greet the festive day, similarly on *Yom Tov* everything, including the candles, should be lit beforehand so as to prepare to greet the sanctity of the *Yom Tov* holiday. On the second night of *Yom Tov* in the Diaspora, when we wait till sundown before doing any preparations or work (since one may not prepare from one day of *Yom Tov* for the other), only then is it proper and necessary to light the candles later, after the husband returns from *shul*.)

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### Rav Aharon Hagadol (Nissan 19)

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#### **DRESSED IN DAZZLING DIAMONDS**

Rav Mottele Rachmastrivker told the following story when he lived in Yerushalayim:

It was Marcheshvan, and Rav Nachum of Czernobyl, the *Meor Einayim*, had passed away. The entire township of Czernobyl sat in *aveilus* - even the non-Jews mourned the passing of the Tzaddik. Into this melancholy town, sad and despondent, came the news that the Tzaddik, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *mechaber* of the *Tanya* and *Shulchon Aruch HaRav*, famed talmid of the Mezritcher Maggid and a colleague of the deceased Rebbe, was on his way to pay a *shiva* call to the bereaved family.

The entire township and all its citizens lined the boulevards to wait and catch even a glimpse of the holy Tzaddik's visage. Thus they stood in awe as he passed through the throngs, no one even daring to shake his hand or give him a *Sholom Aleichem*, due to the glint of fire in his holy eyes.

When the Ba'al HaTanya entered the *shiva* house, he came before Rav Mordechai, sitting *shiva* for his father, and the Ba'al haTanya told him:

"My master, the Maggid of Mezritch, once remarked that he had the ability to grant a lofty soul to one of his talmidim, but he did not know who would merit such a gift.

“When Rav Aharon HaGodol of Karlin left this world, the Maggid commanded your father Rav Nachum of Czernobyl to go to his *tziun* in the *bais hachaim* and tell him in the name of the Maggid of Mezritch that Rav Aharon Karliner’s daughter, the orphaned Chaya Sora, must be wed, and since Rav Nachum himself was destined to soon have a son, Rav Mordechai [to whom the Ba’al HaTanya was telling this tale] they were to be betrothed and wed. Rav Nachum went and fulfilled the word of his Rebbe, the Maggid. He traveled to Karlin to Rav Aharon HaGodol’s *tziun* and afterward returned to the Maggid and to his home.

“The next year, Rav Nachum had a son and named him Mordechai. He married Rav Aharon Karliner’s daughter, Chaya Sora, and they had three sons: Rav Aharon of Czernobyl, Rav Moshe of Karistshuv and Rav Yaakov Yisrael of Tsherkas, as well as one daughter, Malka, who later married into the dynasties of Rav Boruch of Mezhibuzh and Rav Yosef of Yampola.

“Now the *teno’im* and wedding contract between this orphan girl, Rav Aharon HaGodol’s young daughter, and Rav Mordechai were drawn up between the families in the home of the Mezritcher Maggid, and all the *talmidim* and *chevraya kadisha* participated with their presence. The Maggid honored Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, mechaber of Pri HaAretz, with reading aloud the *teno’im*. When Rav Menachem Mendel reached the name of the *kalla* and read, ‘Chaya Sora bas HaRav Rav Aharon who stands by the side of the *kalla*,’ he fainted away! No one could revive him, until the Maggid of Mezritch came and placed his hand on Rav Menachem Mendel Vitebsker’s shoulder and said, ‘Why are you seized with such fright? Did you never before meet or see Rav Aharon?!’

“Rav Menachem Mendel Vitebsker recovered and said, ‘Rebbe, Master - *Mori veRabi!* I was awed and terrified because I saw Rav Aharon dressed in dazzling white garments that glowed and sparkled as if they were made of pure white diamonds and gemstones! The tradition I received tells me that only one or two single individuals in each generation can merit such garments - and in all my life I had not realized that Rav Aharon had reached such staggering heights!’” (*MeOrei Aish* p. 81-82)

#### **THE POWER OF EMUNA**

Rav Mordechai of Slonim used to tell that Karlin was in Lithuania, whereas when Rav Aharon became part of the Maggid of Mezritch’s circle, he became well known as a

miracle worker in Volhynia. “Why does the Rebbe work miracles only in Volhyn and not in your own hometown?” they complained. “What should I do, there they have more *emuna* (faith) and that draws down the *shefa* (bounty)!”

(*Maamar Mordechai*).

#### **A DIFFERENT KIND OF BA'AL AVEIRA BECOMES A DIFFERENT KIND OF BAAL TESHUVA**

When Rav Avrohom Elimelech of Karlin visited Yerushalayim, Rav Mordechai of Slonim went to see him and he teasingly asked the Tzaddik, “They say that your Zeide, Rav Aharon the Great of Karlin, made some eighty thousand *ba'alei teshuva* (returnees); *nu*, so where are yours?!”

Rav Avrohom Elimelech answered him thus, “The sinners in my great-grandfather’s day had passions and desires, so my Zeide showed them a way to taste the delight and vitality in *Avodas Hashem*. He channeled their energy into holiness, each way corresponding to its opposite pole. Thus he turned them around to the path of true goodness. In our generation, however, these sinners are apostates and faithless; they stray after *kefira* and *apikorsus*. I doubt my *Zeide* would have made from them *ba'alei teshuva*!”

(*Maamar Mordechai*).

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### **Rabbeinu Chaim Vital Etz Chaim (Nissan 20)**

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#### **AN ACCOMPANYING SOUL**

It happened on the 29<sup>th</sup> of the Jewish month of *Menachem-Av*, *Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul*, 5331 (1571). “I want you to go to Kfar Avnis,” said Rav Yitzchok Luria, the holy *Ari*, to his main *talmid*, Rav Chaim Vital, “to *daven* at the graves of Abaye and Rova.” The *Ari* taught him the special *yichudim* (‘Unities’) which were necessary, what he had to learn and the *tefillos* he was to say, so that his soul would become bound up with two of the greatest Talmudic sages, thus enabling him to understand the secrets of *Torah* which they were then discussing in the Heavenly *Yeshiva*.

Rav Chaim went to Kfar Avnis. The sun beat down upon his head and he stopped to rest on a mound of stones just outside the village of Biriya. While sitting there, he reviewed

everything his master had taught him so that they would flow smoothly when the time would come to prostrate himself on the grave.

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

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

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

"My dear *talmid*," Rav Yitzchok replied, "The deference I showed you was in respect for Benoyohu *ben* Yehoyoda who accompanied you when you entered."

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **MISSED OPPORTUNITY**

Rav Chaim Vital's reputation for greatness spread even to the non-Jews of *Eretz Yisrael* – and this in itself sometimes caused him serious problems. Despite his strong wish not to leave the Holy Land, he was once forced to flee for his life to Damascus. Here is that story:

One Friday, all the gates of Jerusalem were sealed off. No one was permitted to enter or leave the city. The Muslims gathered in the mosque that, tragically, stands where our holy Temple once stood in all its glory.

One of their high-ranking officers, a rabid Jew-hater by the name of Abu-Sifin, was passing by one of the gates. In the silence of the empty roads, he heard the sound of water flowing beneath the gate. These were the waters of Nachal Gichon, the stream of water that King Chizkiyohu had sealed off when facing the enemy, Sancheriv [see *Divrei HaYomim* II 32:30].

The official, recalling the existence of this water channel and knowing who had sealed it off, turned to his men.

"Is there any Jew who is capable of opening this channel?"

"Certainly," one of his men replied. "Not far from here lives a great *Rav*. He can do anything!"

Within the hour, Abu Sifin was standing in Rav Chaim Vital's doorway.

"Listen, Jew," he said. "The people of this city need the waters of the Gichon. I command you to open the channel - on pain of death!"

Rav Chaim did not want to use *Hashem's* holy Name to perform open miracles in public. Instead, he fled, and with *kefitzas haderech* (miraculous shortening of the way), he arrived in Damascus the same day. He fell asleep and had a dream in which his master in *Kabbola*, the holy *Arizal*, appeared to him.

"Why didn't you open the Gichon?" the *Ari* asked. "This would have been the proper time to repair what King Chizkiyohu did against the Sages' wishes. Had you opened the Gichon, it would have been the start of the Redemption!"

Rav Chaim Vital wished to return to Yerushalayim at once, but the *Arizal* stopped him. "The time has passed," he said. "We have lost our chance."

[Source: Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from *Stories My Grandfather Told Me* (Mesorah) by Zev Greenwald]

#### **HOW RAV CHAIM VITAL CAME TO THE ARIZAL AND DRANK FROM MIRIAM'S WELL**

Rav Chaim Vital lived in Damascus and for a period of some months the *Arizal* kept coming to him in his dreams each night and spoke with him, urging him to come to Tzefas to learn from him. "Come and I shall reveal to you secrets that have never before been revealed since the Creation of the world!" Rav Chaim, however, took no heed of these nightly visions, and assumed at the time that his own learning was superior to the *Arizal's* - after all, he had already authored his own sefer of commentary on the holy *Zohar*. One day, after contemplating the matter, Rav Chaim finally agreed to visit the *Arizal* and see for himself if his nightly visions were true and what the *Arizal* could teach him.

He traveled to Tzefas and approached the *Arizal*, testing him through a certain *ma'amar* in the *Zohar*, a very difficult passage that Rav Chaim Vital already thought he understood very well. The *Arizal* revealed the meaning of the passage of *Zohar* together with profound, hidden secrets that were so powerful and awesome that when Rav Chaim Vital heard them he felt his soul almost leaving his body! Rav Chaim then asked about the

meaning of a different passage of Zohar and the Arizal opened for him many more openings of great spiritual light. Eventually, Rav Chaim became humbled before the Arizal like a servant before his master. When he asked for another explanation, the Arizal held up his hand and replied, "Sorry, the boundary is here. You are unworthy of knowing more."

Hearing this, Rav Chaim was extremely distressed. He went home, donned sackcloth and began to cry and wallow in ashes and dirt, pouring the ashes on himself and wailing, bemoaning his unworthiness, begging to be found worthy of studying Toras HaKabbola from the Arizal. He fasted and cried all night in prayer to Hashem.

The next day he fell before the Arizal, kissing his hands and feet and the hem of his robes and cried, prostrating himself, begging to be worthy of studying and learning from him. "Please, for Hashem's sake, do not send me away empty-handed!"

The Arizal responded, "Really I should turn you away for having held back so long from coming before me for some three months. However, your fasting and mourning in sackcloth and ashes have succeeded and now I shall not hold back any more secrets of Torah from you."

Rav Chaim sat among the talmidim but he would learn and forget, learn and forget, again and again, over and over - until they traveled to Teverya.

When they reached Teverya they took a small boat and sailed on the waters of the Kinneret. They sat in the boat together, Rav Chaim Vital and the Arizal, until they reached two large pillars, the ruins of an ancient shul. The Arizal took a small flask and filled it with water from between the sunken pillars and gave Rav Chaim Vital to drink, and told Rav Chaim, "Now you will be able to hold onto this wisdom and stop forgetting, for these waters are from the wellsprings of the Be'er Miriam." Rav Chaim stopped forgetting and was able to remember and gain insight into the depths of wisdom of the secrets of Torah. (Shivchei Ha'Arizal)

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**Rav Dovid Lehkes (Nissan 21)**

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## **LACK OF FAITH**

The following stories were told by Rav Mordechai of Slonim:

Rav Dovid once requested some money from one of the Chassidim and the latter replied that he had none. Rav Dovid grew upset and retorted that he lacked faith, explaining what he meant with the following story:

“We once sat together with the holy Ba’al Shem Tov and we drank l’chaim. We were drinking honey mead, which at the time was an expensive drink that cost some two gold coins a bottle. The Ba’al Shem turned to me and said, “Reb Dovid, go and buy a bottle of mead for us!” I immediately stuck my hand in my pockets and pulled out two golden coins, even though I was so poor at the time that I knew clearly and logically that there had been no money in my pocket for some two weeks! Nonetheless, I had no doubts and I believed with emuna that if my Rebbe asked me for money I must be able to give it to him and therefore I found in my pockets what he asked for...but now you say you don’t have - and that is a lack of emuna.”

## **YESHUOS FOR SALE**

Once, Rav Dovid sorely needed money and he had none. He calculated that his needs amounted to some five gulden. First, he davened to Hashem that whatever he did would be accepted on high and he then went about and declared so that the word got out that he was selling his berochos: two gulden bought a male baby and one gulden a bouncing baby girl! Hearing this amazing opportunity, a Jew who had not yet been blessed with children approached Rav Dovid. “For such a price and at such an opportunity I’d best grab what I can!” he declared as he paid up five gulden on the spot for berochos for two boys and a girl.

Word spread quickly, but when more people came, Rav Dovid turned them all away explaining, “Sorry, it’s over. I already have what I needed.” And that was that. (Maamar Mordechai Slonim p. 21-22)

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**Rav Yisrael Yitzchak Kalish Ohel Yitzchok (Nissan 22)**

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## HE ISN'T EVEN HUMAN

The first time Rav Yitzchak arrived at the court of the *Chozeh of Lublin*, accompanied by Rav Dovid Lelover, it was *Rosh Hashanah*. The *Chozeh* did not come out for *tekiyas shofar* for a long while, until Rav Dovid entered the inner sanctum accompanied by the *Vorker*, who was then a young lad.

“What *halachos* are you studying?” asked the *Chozeh*.

“I am studying the laws of *eidus* - witnesses and testimony.”

“Have you come up with any *chiddushim*?”

He replied that he was bothered by the following question: “Why is someone who is a relative of the accused disqualified as a witness and unable to testify even against the accused party? It is understood why he cannot testify in favor of the accused (they are family after all, and we worry he is not impartial), but why not against him alongside the prosecution?”

“What did you answer?” asked the *Chozeh*.

“I thought that since the *pasuk* says that ‘two people stand as witnesses,’ you need the witnesses to be actual human beings. But someone who testifies against his own family cannot be considered a person. He loses his status as a human being for he lacks humanity, therefore he is disqualified to serve as a witness!” replied Yitzchak.

The *Chozeh*'s eyes lit up and he replied joyfully: “Now we can go out and blow shofar, for the harsh decree has passed! We are Hashem's children and He is our father; how can He accept testimony against His own family?” (*Kedushas Yitzchak* 72)

## THE REBBE LIKE ELIYAHU WITH THE TALMID LIKE THE REBBE REB MELECH

Rav Yeshaya of Pshedburz once expressed his wonder at Rav Yitzchak's attachment and bond to Rav Simchah Bunim of Peshischa. Rav Yitzchak told him that Rav Bunim has the same power as Eliyahu HaNavi. “When he takes hold of your hand, or even of the hand of one of the simplest and lowest of his disciples, into his own hand, you are immediately infused with a fiery excitement. Your heart is filled with such a fierce love for Hashem and

His Torah that you become willing to sacrifice yourself for His sake □ even to die *al kiddush Hashem*.”

The love and affection was mutual. Rav Simchah Bunim once remarked, “One day I will raise up a disciple that will be as great as the Rebbe Reb Melech of Lizensk!” The *Kotzker* revealed the identity of that *talmid* as was none other than Rav Yitzchak of Vorke.

#### **THE KA'AS KAPOTE**

Vorke was characterized by intense *Ahavas Yisrael* that was so strong that the rebbe nullified himself and his own person for the sake of his chassidim and followers. “I nullify myself like a sugar cube in a glass of hot water,” the *Vorke Rebbe* used to say.

The Rebbe even owned a special garment called his *ka'as kapote*. Whenever he absolutely needed to get angry, he would order the *ka'as kapote* to be brought to him! By the time they brought it he would usually have ‘calmed down.’

Once there was a matter that upset the rebbe greatly, and since he was, by nature, filled with *ahavas Yisrael*, he could not stain nor sully himself with such a base *middah* such as anger.

Since the matter required anger, the *Vorker* ordered them to bring him the *ka'as kapote*! By the time it arrived and the *rebbe* donned it, he turned to his *mashemesh*, the devoted Reb Feivel Shamash, and ordered him: “Feivel, you get angry for me! I just cannot do it.”

#### **WHO NEEDS A KEY?**

The *Imrei Chaim* of Vishnitz would relate that a G-d fearing *chassid* once approached Rav Yitzchak of Vorki and cried out: “Rebbe, please open up my heart so that I can repent and do *teshuva*!,” the rebbe replied, “But I do not have the key to your heart.” “So what, Rebbe,” answered the *chassid* passionately, “who needs a key? Rebbe, grab a hatchet and hack away to break it open!”

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**Rav Chaim Halberstam Sanzer Rav, Divrei Chaim (Nissan 25)**

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## A FAIR TRADE

The *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz was once conducting a *siyum* to celebrate the learning of all of *Shas* when he was stuck on the meaning of a specific *Tosfos*. He travelled to the author of *Be'er Moshe*, the *rebbe* of Kozhnitz and asked him for his help in understanding the difficult *Tosfos*.

Due to Rav Moshe's great humility, he claimed that he did not understand the *Tosfos* and said, "You have already concluded studying all of *Shas* whereas I have just concluded saying all of *Sefer Tehillim*."

The *Sanzer Rav* was undeterred. "Maybe you would agree then to an exchange? Let's do a trade, you and I - I will trade you my study and *siyum* of all *Shas* for your *siyum Sefer Tehillim*?"

"No," the *Be'er Moshe* said, shaking his head, "I won't agree to trade." Eventually he agreed to help the *Divrei Chaim* and they began to study the *Tosfos* together. When they were half way through, thanks to the *Kozhnutzer*, the *Sanzer Rav* understood! (*Otzar Yisroel*)

## TRUE CHASSIDIM

Rav Yaakov Yitzchok, the *Chozeh of Lublin* once asked Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanow if he had any followers and Chassidim? "Yes, we do," responded Rav Menachem Mendel.

"And in what way are they Chassidim?" inquired the *Chozeh* further.

"Our Chassidim, my followers," answered Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanow, "study in depth *halocha* and *Tosfos*."

"If so," replied the *Chozeh*, "then they are indeed true Chassidim!" (*Bais Menachem* 5:2)

Similarly, regarding the study of *halocha* and *Tosfos*, Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanow said that he never understood the secret of the matter until recently, that those laws and *halochos* forgotten during the *aveilus* over Moshe (see *Temura* 16a) were returned to us by Osniel ben Kenaz during the days of *Sefiras HaOmer*. Therefore, it is a *minhag Yisrael*,

which has the status of Torah, to study *halocha* and *Tosfos* during these holy days. (From the letter *Igeres HaKodesh* of Rav Yechezkel Paneth of Karlsberg, originally published in *Shu"t Mareh Yechezkel Siman 104* {it is known that on the thirty-fourth day of the *Omer*, the *yahrzeit* of Rav Menachem Mendel of Rymanow, they found the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz reviewing this *teshuva* and his eyes poured forth tears of longing. *Derech Yivchar* by Rav Chaim Betzalel Paneth of Tash and son of the *Mareh Yechezkel*})

#### **EACH SIGH OF REGRET CREATES ANOTHER BRILLIANT DIAMOND FOR HASHEM'S CROWN**

The *beis medrash* was packed. Every seat was occupied by someone deeply engrossed in Torah study, earnestly reciting *Tehillim*, or absorbed in fervent prayer. *Elul zeman* was in full swing and the atmosphere reverberated with a tangible sense of *teshuva* that came with upcoming *yomim noraim*.

It was this intense environment into which the *Uhjler Rav*, Rav Moshe Yosef Teitelbaum entered. To his great consternation, however, he felt cold and impassive to the electric energy of *Elul*! He was bitterly disappointed in himself when the feeling didn't dissipate. Rather, but the matter grew worse through all the days of *selichos* the *aseres yamei teshuva*.

"What is wrong with me?" the *Uhjler rav* sighed. *Elul* passed without so much as a flutter of passion in his heart. "Why do I feel unmoved by these auspicious days of mercy and good will - *rachamim ve'ratzon*?!" he cried.

His answer arrived from none other than his *zeide*, the holy *Sanzer Rav*, the *Divrei Chaim*. Immediately following the *yomim noraim* (the days of awe), the *Uhjler Rav* made his way to Sanz.

That Shabbos as the *Divrei Chaim* was in the midst of conducting his *Friday Night tisch*, he recited the words to the *Arizal's* poem in honor of Shabbos "*Na'avid lehon kistrin bemilin yakirin* - We shall create crowns with precious words." He then paused and said:

"When *Klal Yisroel* serve Hashem with prayer and devotion, their *avoda* creates the crown jewels for Hashem. The luster of each jewel is based on the quality of each person's *avoda*. Some shine bright and some are duller; and some jewels..." Here, the *Divrei Chaim* paused for emphasis "...some jewels dazzle the most from those who agonize over their

apparent lack of feeling and who are unable to muster enthusiasm though they yearn to be close to Hashem. This is why we say “*Na’avid lehon kistrin bemilin yakirin* – We shall create crowns with precious words,” as these words for Hashem’s crown are “*yakirin*”: substantial, consequential, precious, because they were said with a heavy heart that longs for Hashem!”

Rav Moshe Yosef had received his answer; the *Uhjler Rav* rejoiced. (*Zichron Ish Chayil Naapest* p. 152)

#### **NOW THEY CAN ALSO ACQUIRE YIRAS SHOMAYIM**

The *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz used to say: The *Rambam’s* heart burned with a devotional fire for Hashem, which made him ever-conscious of how a Jew should behave. The *Rambam* saw that most people would not have time to set aside to study how to acquire *yiras shomayim*. First, they would have to study the entire Torah. Understanding this difficulty, the *Rambam* set out to author his fourteen volume Magnum Opus, the *Mishne Torah* which is also known as *Yad HaChazaka*. The *Rambam* wrote the *Mishneh Torah* in order to allow for the straightforward study of *halacha*. With access to a *sefer* from which to more easily learn how to act and behave, people would now have time left to engage in studying how to acquire *yiras shomayim* and *dveykus*.

#### **THE ROPSHITZER’S MIRACLE OIL**

The *Shinover Rav*, *mechaber* of *Divrei Yechezkel*, did not refrain from saying *Tachanun* on the *yahrzeits* of various *tzaddikim*. Similarly, he did not have the custom to visit the gravesites of *tzaddikim*. There was one exception: He observed the *yahrzeit*, and visited the *tziyun* of the *heilige Ropshitzer Rav*, *mechaber* of *Zera Kodesh* to whom the *Shinover Rav* felt he owed his very life. This is the story why: When Rav Yechezkel Shraga was seven-years old when his life was almost cut short by a terrible accident. Rav Yechezkel Shraga’s uncle, Rav Avigdor of Dukla, was in town visiting his brother, Rav Chaim of Sanz in Rudnick. At the end of the visit, when Rav Avigdor entered his carriage to leave, he realized that he had forgotten something back in the house and sent young Yechezkel Shraga on an errand to fetch the forgotten object.

In his zeal to help his uncle, he dashed across the street. A passing wagon carrying a heavy load of lumber came careening down the road at high speed, running him over! The heavy wheels had crushed his body. When the doctors rushed to examine his mangled body, they shook their heads. They despaired for his life as the surgeon determined that

the wheel had sliced his liver in half!

Hearing the terrible diagnosis, Rav Avigdor raised his hands heavenward and cried, "*Ribbono Shel Olam* - Master of the World, if I am destined to have a son, I would gladly exchange him so that this young man's life be spared." And so it was that Rav Avigdor never had any sons born to him, only daughters.

The holy *Divrei Chaim* examined his son's broken body and each limb he touched, the bones grew back together and straightened themselves out! Even later, in his old age, people would remark - especially the physicians - how straight and stately a stature the *Shinover Rav* had!

The *Divrei Chaim* still feared for his young child's life, as Yechezkel Shraga's internal organs had been damaged beyond natural repair. He sent word with one of the chassidim to his own rebbe, the great *tzaddik*, Rav Naftoli Ropshitzer, to *daven* for his son's life. The Rebbe did this and more: he sent back a flask of pure olive oil with instructions to anoint and massage the child's body. In a short while, miraculously, the child healthy again.

In the weakened state of old age, the *Shinover Rav* would recount his miraculous salvation. He would recall how when he was massaged with the oil sent by the *Ropshitzer*, he could feel his bones repair themselves and how his organs regenerated and straightened themselves until his body became healed and whole again. He would then sigh and remark longingly, "From where could we get such pure, holy oil today if we needed it?" (*Divrei Yechezkel* pp. 2-3)

#### **ROCK SOLID FAITH**

On *Erev Pesach*, after having finished baking matzos about a half hour before *Mincha*, Reb Shimon approached the *Divrei Chaim* of Tzanz with the traditional blessing "*LeShana HaBa Be'Yerushalayim* - next year may we eat the matzos in Yerushalayim!" "Why next year?" the *Tzaddik* yelled and thundered "I have not yet despaired of eating the *kezayis* matzo in Yerushalayim this very night!" Such was the *Divrei Chaim's* rock solid, unshakable *emunah*.

*Chemda Genuza*

## **SIMPLE FAITH**

Once, the *Divrei Chaim* related how he watched a simple Jew recite the blessing *Ga'al Yisrael* in the *Haggadah*. So saying, the Jew got to his feet and stood tall and erect and began to bow and prostrate himself silently - shuckling away. After saying *Ga'al Yisrael*, he proceeded to *daven* as he always did during *Shacharis!* The *Divrei Chaim* derived great pleasure at the simplicity of these faithful Jews.

*Chemda Genuza*

## **THE DIVREI CHAIM DEFINED A CHILUL HASHEM**

Rav Yisrael of Rizhin was imprisoned for 22 months - 16 in the notorious Kiev dungeons in a dark and damp cell and then another 6 months in Kamenetz. No charges were ever brought against him and he was never placed on trial. The *Rizhiner*, undaunted, continued to lead his Chassidim even while incarcerated, despite the fact that he was allowed almost no visitors.

The way he fully accepted upon himself this decree and *sanctified* Hashem's name while in prison, can be comprehended by the way he left his imprisonment. When, on *Shushan Purim*, March 20, 1840, the iron cell door creaked open to release the *Rizhiner*, he walked out, paused, turned around and stepped back in the cell. To the wonderment of those present, he remained inside for a few moments before finally stepping out to freedom. Everybody understood that the time he had spent in prison were holy days; to learn from and to be remembered — not forgotten. Days later, after receiving information that the authorities were planning on re-arresting him, and a sentence of lifetime exile in Siberia was in store for him, he made a miraculous flight to the town of Sadigora, where the Austrian government declared him a citizen and granted him a safe haven. The *Rizhiner* spent the rest of his days in Sadigora, and even now that name is synonymous with *Rizhiner* chassidus.

One of the admirers of the *Rizhiner* was the *tzaddik*, Rav Chaim of Tzanz, the *Divrei Chaim*. Rav Chaim had an illustrious Rabbinic career and in his later years was the Rav of Tzanz and presided over its *Bais Din*. (Rabbinical court) When he retired, his son Rav Aharon assumed his position.

Once, when Rav Aharon was presiding over the *Bais Din*, he rendered a certain decision that displeased the guilty litigant. Not only did he not accept the verdict against him, but

demanded that the results be reversed - insisting that he would not take "no" for an answer. Rav Aharon, unmoved, refused to be influenced and called the case closed.

At that point, the unfortunate litigant, desperate for things to go his way, claimed that if the Rav would not reverse the results he would report him to the local authorities on some trumped up charge which carried the risk of imprisonment. After Rav Aharon again refused to reverse the decision of the *Bais Din*, the fellow followed through on his threat by fabricating some story in the eager ears of the local authorities. They arrived promptly at the home of Rav Aharon, arrested him and threw him into prison without any investigation.

His family and students came running to his father Rav Chaim to report the news, but to their great astonishment, he was calm and surprisingly unconcerned. "If my son were sitting in jail because of some crime or indiscretion that he committed, that would certainly bother me," he told them. "But that he was thrown into jail because rendered an honest and fair judgment upholding the sanctity of the Torah... it should only be so!"

When the family saw that they were getting nowhere with Rav Chaim, they went to see his *mechutan* (the father of a son or daughter's spouse) Rav Yehoshua of Belz, and asked him to intervene; perhaps he would be able to convince Rav Chaim to use his influence to get his son out of jail.

Rav Yehoshua agreed to take on the mission and went immediately to speak with Rav Chaim. He related to him all that had transpired; from the case that had come before the *Bais Din* until the current tragic outcome. He explained how difficult it must be for a refined person like Rav Aharon to be in a Hungarian jail, and how important it was for his family as well as for the community to have him back. And last but not least, there was a *Chillul Hashem* (desecration of Hashem's name) involved.

At that Rav Chaim ignited, and he turned full force to Rav Yehoshua. "Do you really believe that if one is put into prison because he upheld the *Kedushah* (holiness) of the Torah by rendering an honest and true judgment, that it is the cause of a *Chillul Hashem*?! Would you label Yosef HaTzaddik's sentence in the prison of Pharaoh a *Chillul Hashem*?! Were the twenty-two months that Rav Yisrael'tche (the *Rizhiner*) spent in prison a *Chillul Hashem*?! No! Just the opposite! It was a *Kiddush Hashem*! Both Yosef

HaTzaddik and Rav Yisrael'tche sanctified the name of Hashem until the highest heights. My dear *mechutan*, listen to me! Anybody who calls himself a Jew and is not attached body and soul to his Creator every hour of the day - that is *Chillul Hashem*!

(Source: *Sefer Ner Yisrael*, "Dalet" page 145-6, as told by *Rav Yankele* of Antwertp zt"l)

### THE BITTER TASTE OF SIN

Rav Chuna Halberstam of Kolshitz once related that on *Hoshana Rabbah*, the *Sanzer Rav* used to tell the following parable which he in turn had heard and received as a tradition from his rebbe the *heilge Ropshitzer*:

There was once a *galach* (priest) who constantly rebuked and castigated his parishioners against drinking vodka and other forms of hard liquor. Once, when this *galach* passed through the marketplace he saw one of his parishioners lying like a drunkard on the sidewalk in a dazed stupor.

When his alcohol induced state wore off he reported to the *galach* to await punishment for his public misconduct. The *galach* proceeded to rebuke him to his face. "I am sorry," replied the parishioner, "but there is nothing that can make me give up my drinking habit, I am hooked on this drink and that's that!"

When the *galach* heard this, he asked one of his attendants to bring him some brandy so he could sample it for himself. "I must see for myself why this drink is so addictive," he thought, "it must taste so wonderful and be so tempting that he cannot give it up!"

The attendant brought his master a glass of strong brandy and the *galach* sipped the drink and immediately spit it out wrinkling his nose, while wheezing, hacking, coughing and retching violently.

"This is disgusting!," he declared, "how can you drink such strong, bitter liquid!?" he questioned the drunkard. With a wave of dismissal, the *galach* said "you can go! You don't need any punishment at all! Drinking such bitter horrible stuff such as that . . . there is no better punishment for you!"

When he concluded the story he explained the parable's message:

The same is true regarding sins and transgressions that people do. People sin and transgress thinking of the pleasure and delight they will feel.

However, anyone who has never tasted sin in his life would taste in such actions the bitter and vile poison that they really are!

With this we can advocate on behalf of *Klal Yisrael* and say: *Ribono Shel Olam* - Master of the World there is no need to further punish the *yidden* for any of their sins! The bitter taste of sin itself should be punishment enough!

(*Sippurei Tzaddikim Succos* - page 18)

#### **THE DIVREI CHAIM CASTS HIS BREAD UPON THE WATERS**

The *Divrei Chaim* was approaching a busy train station in Vienna surrounded by his chassidim. Suddenly, he stopped and mentioned to his chassidim that he hears the sound of crying and asked them to locate the source of the crying. One of the chassidim walked in the direction that the Rav pointed him to and he found a young girl, who was well-dressed, but whose eyes were red from crying. It was apparent that she had been crying for a long time.

The chassid asked her what was wrong and the girl, who was the daughter of a non-Jewish minister, told him that she was supposed to travel home by train, but her money had been stolen, and now she was stranded. She had been sitting there crying for a long time, but no one had paid any attention to her. "What will I do now?" she said, beginning to cry again, "How will I get home?"

The chassid went back to Rav Chaim and explained to him the source of the crying. Immediately, Rav Chaim took some money out of his pocket and said to the chassid, "Return to the girl with this money and tell her that Rabbiner Halberstam sent her the money." The chassid did as instructed, and the girl happily accepted the money as she wiped away her tears.

Years later, Reb Shmuel, a Sanzer chassid, came to Rav Chaim with a tale of woe. Reb Shmuel owned a thriving boot factory and one of his clients was the Hungarian army. The army had recently ordered a large supply of boots for the approaching winter. A jealous

non-Jewish competitor decided to take matters in his own hands and informed the army general that Reb Shmuel's boots were made out of inferior materials and Reb Shmuel was a liar and a thief, just like the rest of the Jews. The army general was more than willing to accept these anti-Semitic trumped-up charges and informed the Hungarian government. Reb Shmuel was now facing serious charges and faced imprisonment.

Rav Chaim listened and then told Reb Shmuel, "Don't worry at all. Go to the justice minister in Lemberg and tell him that Rabbiner Halberstam said that you're not guilty and these are false accusations."

Reb Shmuel traveled to Lemberg, but the justice minister was not in his office. He remembered Rav Chaim's reassurance not to worry and decided to go to the justice minister's home. To his surprise, the justice minister invited him in immediately and allowed Reb Shmuel to tell him his story. He ended his story with the words, "Rabbiner Halberstam told me to come to you and tell you in his name, that I'm not guilty and these are all false accusations."

The minister was silent, but his wife, who had also listened to the story, turned to Reb Shmuel and asked with great interest, "Who told you to come here?"

"Rabbiner Halberstam," said Reb Shmuel, who was surprised by her interest.

"Rabbiner Halberstam of Sanz?!" she asked excitedly.

"Yes," Reb Shmuel replied, now even more curious why this non-Jewish woman was so interested in his Rebbe.

"Do you know who that is?" she said to her husband. Once, when I was a girl, I was stuck in the Vienna train station when all my money was stolen. I sat and cried there for a full hour, and not one person in the crowded train station paid any attention to me, except that Rav - Rabbiner Halberstam. He heard me crying and gave me enough money to buy a ticket to travel home. He's an angel of G-d, this Rabbiner Halberstam, and I'll remember him as long as I live. If this angel of G-d is supporting this man, he is surely not guilty."

When *Reb Shmuel* left Lemberg, after he was cleared of the charges, he immediately

traveled to Sanz and told Rav Chaim the story. Rav Chaim smiled and said, "This is what it means when it says, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it.' When you act appropriately to every person that was created in the image of Hashem, you will only gain. And this is not referring to only important people..."

*(Leorum Neilach)*

#### **FATAL WHITEWASH**

A young man, who was afflicted with a severe case of tuberculosis, was housed with a poor householder in the town of Sanz. Before *Pesach*, the householder wished to whitewash his house, as he did each year. The problem was that the doctor had warned him that although the young man did not have much time to live as it was, since his lungs were badly eaten away, the smell of the whitewash would hasten his death.

The landlord ran to the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz and told him, in anguished tones, that he could not forgo whitewashing his house for *Pesach*, so he felt he had no choice and must turn the sick young man out.

The Rebbe was shaken by the tale. He pondered briefly and then asked the man to wait a short while, until the illness would pass, and then he would be able to whitewash the house without worry.

The doctor heard about what the Rebbe had said and laughed scornfully. But after a few days had passed, he was forced to admit that the patient had improved. And, shortly thereafter, the sick man was found to be completely cured.

The *Divrei Chaim* dismissed with the wave of his hand the talk of miracles that was on everyone's lips, but his grandson Rav Shlomo, the future *rebbe* of Bobov, pursued the doctor and asked him, "Nu, what do you have to say now?"

"It would seem that I was mistaken when I said the lungs were eaten away and disintegrated," replied the doctor.

"Why don't you admit, rather, that you were wrong in mocking the words of my grandfather, the Rebbe of Sanz?" insisted the *Bobover*.

"If your grandfather can create new lungs, why doesn't he make the blind see and give speech to the dumb?" countered the doctor.

"If my grandfather were to give sight to the blind, you would have no choice but to repent," said the *Bobover*. "However, Hashem wants man to have free choice and choose the good from his own will. That is why the *tzaddik* only performs miracles of this sort which allow the doctor to say, 'I was mistaken in my diagnosis.'"

#### **ARE YOU HOLIER THAN A NESHOMA?**

The *Sanzer Rav*, the *Divrei Chaim*, once asked a guest who had come to spend an uplifting spiritual Shabbos in Sanz, where he was staying and what he was eating. "Is that what I came to Sanz for?" retorted the Chassid incredulously, "to sleep, eat and drink?!"

The *Divrei Chaim* replied, "Are you any better than the neshoma? Do you think you are somehow greater than your soul? The soul comes down to this world with only one purpose: to serve her Creator. Still, if she is not provided with food, drink and sleep as she needs to live, she will depart her body and go!" (*Maamar Mordechai Slonim #4-6*)

#### **HOW CAN THEY SLEEP AT NIGHT**

The *Divrei Chaim* was renowned for his charity. He not only gave away thousands for *tzedoka*; he could not sleep when money was left over in his home.

When he first heard about safes that people kept at home to guard their wealth and money from thieves, he queried his family asking them, "Can't the thieves steal the keys to the safe?"

His family explained that people slept with the keys under their pillows. Incredulously, the *Divrei Chaim* cried out, "How can a person sleep at night if he hasn't already given out all his money for *tzedoka*?!" (*Haggoda Darchei Chaim Sanz*)

#### **WHAT IF SHE HAD BEEN YOUR WIFE?**

The *Sanzer Rav's gabbai*, Moshe Yehoshua, stood at the Rav's doorway looking in with wonder and astonishment; since when did the *Divrei Chaim* sit and study without his housecoat?!

"Where is the Rav's *chalatel*?" asked the *gabbai*. The *Divrei Chaim* patiently explained

how a poor widow had just been to ask for a donation. "What should I have done?" the *Divrei Chaim* excused himself to the irate *gabbai*. "I had no money left, so I gave her my *chalatel* to pawn for some money."

"But Rebbe," persisted the *gabbai*, "why did you have to give your own *chalatel* off your back?"

"You wouldn't ask me that question," leveled the *Divrei Chaim* sternly, "If that poor widow had been your wife!" (*Ner Yehoshua* page 281-282)

#### **HE CAN ALWAYS SAY HE IS THE SANZER RAV'S SON!**

When the time came for the *Divrei Chaim's* son, Rav Boruch of Gorlitz, to marry off one of his daughters, he approached his father, the *Sanzer Rav*, and asked him for money, to which the *Sanzer Rav* replied, "At this time I have none."

A few days passed and some wealthy Jews came to visit the *Divrei Chaim* and left him a sizeable donation. Rav Boruch was overjoyed; surely now, when he had asked his father for help, he would get the much-needed funds for his daughter's upcoming wedding. But alas, that was not to be. As soon as the wealthy Jews left, the *Sanzer Rav* sent for a local pauper, and he gave all the money he had just acquired to the poor Jew, so that he could marry off his daughters.

When Rav Boruch came in to see his father and requested money for his daughter's *chasuna*, the *Divrei Chaim* explained, "I have already donated all the money to that poor Jew to marry off his daughters."

Hearing this reply, Rav Boruch burst into bitter tears of disappointment and cried, "Why am I any worse than him? Don't I also need money to marry off my daughter?!"

The holy *Sanzer Rav* explained how he saw matters differently. "You are my son. You can go anywhere, travel to any town or city and people will recognize you and give you money to help you marry off your daughter just because you are the son of the *Sanzer Rav*. However, this poor Jew has no one. If I don't give this pauper money, who will?" (*Eser Tzachtzachos* Chapter 9 #22)

## WHO NEEDS SEFORIM?

A pauper once approached the *Divrei Chaim* complaining that he had to marry off his daughter but lacked the necessary funds. The *Divrei Chaim* did not hesitate and replied, "Look, I have no cash left, but I have a house full of *seforim*. Surely you can sell or pawn them for the funds you need? I have no real need of *seforim* when I can learn in the *Bais Medrash*."

The pauper did not need to be told twice and did not wait for the *Sanzer Rav* to change his mind. He quickly ordered a wagon and loaded the *Divrei Chaim's* entire library of *seforim* onto it. He drove the cartload of *seforim* into town, sold them all for a hefty sum and married off his daughter. The *Sanzer Rav* from then on simply went to the *Bais Medrash* to learn. "Who needs *seforim* when there are plenty in the *Bais Medrash*?" he explained to his astounded *gabbai* and family. (*Haggoda Darchei Chaim Sanz*).

## SUKKA DECORATIONS

The *Bobover Rav* once told how on *Erev Sukkos* the *Divrei Chaim* told them all how there is an extra special *mitzva* of *tzedoka* on *Erev Sukkos* and that this is the most beautiful decoration a *sukka* can have, because the *Ushpizin* (heavenly guest) of the first night is none other than Avrohom Avinu, whose attribute is *chessed*. We therefore give extra *tzedoka* to merit to have Avrohom, the pillar of *chessed*, as a guest in our *sukka*.

That *Erev Sukkos*, continued the *Bobover* in his story, the *Divrei Chaim* had already given away all his money. However, the *Sanzer Rav* felt as if he had not yet properly fulfilled the *mitzva* of *tzedoka* to its true extent. What did he do? He noticed all the *esrog* merchants packing up and heading home. The *Sanzer Rav* went and begged them to lend him their money. "Surely you have money from selling *esrogim* - lend me some for *Noy Sukka* - for decorations to light up my *sukka*!" And they did, and the *Sanzer Rav* immediately began to purchase the most exquisite *sukka* decorations he could think of - distributing all that money to the poor for *tzedoka*! (*Zemiros LaAter Pesora* p. 154 cited in *Ner Yehoshua* page 265)

## RAV MORDECHAI OF SLONIM USED TO TELL THE FOLLOWING STORIES ABOUT THE DIVREI CHAIM OF SANZ:

Our Tzaddikim Comfort

The Chassidim in Sanz were once sitting around the table telling *sippurei Tzaddikim* when the *Divrei Chaim* himself entered and said to them, "There is a bird named the *Re'em*, whose feet are covered in hideous boils and this embarrasses him so much that he hates his life and feels like he wants to end it by killing himself. But the Creator gave him a gift - he has wondrous, beautiful plumage that covers the entire top half of his body. When he sees his own dazzling feathers he is comforted and filled with *simcha*. So it is with the body of *Klal Yisrael*. When we look at ourselves and see our despicable lowliness and how unworthy we are, we are filled with sadness and despair. But when we see the holy *Tzaddikim* and *Gedolim*, we comfort ourselves and are filled with joy."

### Free Bird

A different time, the Chassidim in Sanz sat and discussed *Chassidus* well into the night past chatzos. The *Divrei Chaim* himself entered and remarked, "When hunters capture a bird and place her in a cage, she approaches the bars of her cage and comes to the locked door. She pecks at it again and again, coming back over and over. Even though all her previous efforts were in vain, she doesn't give up and tries again and again...maybe this time she will be successful. So too regarding Chassidim - they try all manner of tricks and strategies to overcome the *yetzer hora* and free themselves from his bondage. They never give up. Even when it feels like they tried previously and were unsuccessful, they try over and over until they escape his clutches and run free from darkness into light."

### Are You Holier Than a Neshoma?

The *Sanzer Rav*, the *Divrei Chaim*, once asked a guest who had come to spend an uplifting spiritual Shabbos in Sanz, where he was staying and what he was eating. "Is that what I came to Sanz for?" retorted the Chassid incredulously, "to sleep, eat and drink?!"

The *Divrei Chaim* replied, "Are you any better than the *neshoma*? Do you think you are somehow greater than your soul? The soul comes down to this world with only one purpose: to serve her Creator. Still, if she is not provided with food, drink and sleep as she needs to live, she will depart her body and go!" (*Maamar Mordechai Slonim #4-6*)

### **NO CHIDDUSH**

The *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz once told Rav Shimon Sofer of Cracow regarding his father the

*Chasam Sofer* that:

“It was no *chiddush* that your father the *Chasam Sofer* was so great and holy and rose to such heights when he had a rebbe such as Rav Nassan Adler.

Regarding whom I heard from my own rebbe Rav Naphtali of Ropshitz who heard in turn from his rebbe the Rebbe Reb Melech of Lizensk author of *Noam Elimelech* who said that ‘for many years a soul such as Rav Nosson Adler’s had not descended to this world besides the soul of the *Baal Shem Tov*.’”

# לעילוי נשמת לזכר עולם יהי' צדיק



התנא רבי חנינא בן דוסא

הרה"ק רבי משה חיים בן הרה"ק ר' יעקב זצוקללה"ה זי"ע

הרה"ק רבי ישעיה בן הרה"ק ר' משה שטיינער מקערעסטיר זצוקללה"ה זי"ע

הרה"ק רבי חיים זאנוויל בן הרה"ק ר' משה אבראמאווויטש מריבניץ זצוקללה"ה זי"ע

## זכותו הגדול יגן עלינו ועל כל ישראל אמן

הרה"ח אברהם חיים בן מוה"ר שלום ז"ל

מרת זיסל בת מוה"ר מאיר זאב הכהן ז"ל

מוה"ר שלום בן הרה"ח אברהם חיים ז"ל

מוה"ר יצחק מאיר זאב בן הרה"ח אברהם חיים ז"ל

מוה"ר משה יחזקא-ל שרגא בן הרה"ח אברהם חיים ז"ל

מרת שרה ביילא בת מוה"ר ארי' לייב ז"ל

ר' יוסף בן שמואל הלוי ז"ל

ר' ברוך בענדיט חיים בן יצחק יעקב ז"ל

**ימליץ טוב בעד משפחתו היקרה**

**ויקום לגורלו לקץ הימין במהרה**