A LADDER SET ON THE EARTH

The hidden tzaddikim and mekubalim I knew

TOLD BY

HaRav Yosef Shani



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Swift Sofer

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Told by HaRav Yosef Shani. Translated from the Hebrew of his recorded talks and edited by Swift Sofer, swiftsofer.com.

The stories were told over twenty-one evenings, in the order they came to mind. In this book they are gathered by the person and the theme they belong to.

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Hakdamah

A Word Before You Begin

This is not an ordinary book, and it is not for every reader.

The stories in it were told aloud, over many evenings, by HaRav Yosef Shani: what he saw with his own eyes and heard from the mouths of the tzaddikim he knew. They are the hidden tzaddikim of Yerushalayim, the mekubalim of the old Sephardi world, simple men whose simplicity was a disguise. They lived in a world most of us never glimpse: neshamos returning in gilgulim, sheidim and dybbukim, malachim and the Beis Din shel Maalah, tikkunim for the living and for the dead.

Some readers will find these accounts strange. Some will find them hard to believe, and some will find them unsettling, even disturbing. A number of them speak frankly, as the tzaddikim themselves spoke, about matters of kedushah and tznius. They are told for their lesson and with care; they are not for children, nor for anyone who would rather not meet them.

And yet, for the right reader at the right moment, a single page of this book can change a life. Those who heard these stories came away knowing that one tefillah can turn a decree, that a poor shoemaker in a back alley may be holding up the world, and that Hashem is far closer than we had dared to think.

In His Own Words

Some of those who listen to my shiurim have asked me to begin, alongside the shiurim, a series of talks about tzaddikim I knew. They are stories more than shiurim. I grew up in my grandfather's house, which was a gallery of tzaddikim, and it was through that house that I came to know most of them. Each of them was a giant of the spirit, a man unique in his kind, and their memory must be kept for the generations. I will tell only stories that I saw with my own eyes or heard directly from their mouths.

Book One

My Grandfather's House

Chapter One

From Bursa to Yerushalayim

Chacham Menachem Menashe, my grandfather

A Home Where Torah Came Before Bread

Talk Nine · 0:00

In this series on the tzaddikim I knew, I have given this one, the ninth, to my grandfather, Chacham Menachem Menashe, alav hashalom. At first I meant to leave him for last. There is far more for me to tell about him than about all the other tzaddikim together, and one sitting will not be enough, so I thought: acharon acharon chaviv. But after hearing from those who follow these talks, I understood that now is the time to begin with him, and only afterward to go on to other tzaddikim. So I am doing as they asked.

My grandfather was born in a small village near the city of Bursa (in northwestern Turkey). His father, Yaakov, was a poor man and a yerei Shamayim who cared above all for the chinuch of his children. He had three sons and two daughters, and my grandfather was the second of them. He paid for their chinuch even out of his small parnassah. Chinuch came first, and only after it the other expenses of the house, food included.

When my grandfather was ten, his father passed away. His mother, Sultana, took the whole burden of the house on her shoulders and ran it the same way: chinuch before every other expense, food included. She worked hard to support the family. Many times they had no food at all. Besides her regular work, she helped the neighbors in the village bake their bread, and in return she received a little bread for the family. Very often that bread was all they had to eat. They did not want their situation known in the Bursa community, and no one knew how things really were with them. They were poor people who kept their poverty to themselves. They would rather be poor and give the children chinuch than have a little more to live on and be unable to pay the talmud torah.

My grandfather told me that one year it came to the point where they had nothing at all. For several months they lived only on the bread they received from the neighbors. Then Pesach came. For nine days, the day of erev Pesach and the eight days of Pesach, chametz is forbidden, so they could not eat even that bread, the only food they had. They did not want to tell the community and receive support. So for all of Pesach they lived on nothing but potato peels, which they gathered from the neighbors' garbage bins, washed, cooked and ate. That was their only food for all nine days of Pesach.

Such was the yiras Shamayim in that house, and such was that mother. She lived a long life, more than a hundred years, and I knew her. She lived out her years here in Yerushalayim until her last day. She was a woman of great yiras Shamayim, to whom the chinuch of her sons mattered, as I said, more than anything. From such a mother came such a son. Of my grandfather one can truly say: ashrei yoladeto.

Istanbul and Rabbi Rafael David Saban

Talk Nine · 4:00

When my grandfather was still young, fourteen or fifteen, he left the family and went to the city of Istanbul. That is apparently where he learned the trade of tinsmithing, from which he later made his living when he came to Eretz Yisrael. He worked at it, as I will tell further on, and he also taught the trade to children. But most of his time he gave to Torah.

Istanbul in those days was a city full of chachamim and sofrim. There were mekubalim who were giants of the spirit, and there were gedolei Torah. In every neighborhood there was an av beis din and a beis din, there were morei hora'ah and gedolei Torah. The Turkey of before the First World War was one of the great centers of gedolei Yisrael of every kind: darshanim, pashtanim, chassidim, mekubalim, ba'alei sigufim, giants without number. The Saba Kadisha, Rav Alfandari, was there (Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari, the great mekubal of Istanbul, who later lived in Tzfas).

Among these gedolim was Rabbi Rafael David Saban. The picture we have of him is a late one, from 5714 (1953–54), when he was appointed chief rabbi of Turkey, the Chacham Bashi as the title is called, and he is wearing the robes of that office. But already in 5667 (1907) he was one of the great poskim, and a chassid as well, who joined together Torah, chassidus, Kabbalah and kedushah. He was then appointed rav of several neighborhoods of Istanbul: Galata, Beyoğlu, Kasımpaşa and Şişli. My grandfather lived in Galata, but because of his work he was very often in Şişli. That is where he met my grandmother, and that is where he married. So he

lived close to Rabbi Rafael David Saban, and I assume he absorbed much of his Torah, his kedushah and his chassidus from him.

When I was in Turkey a few years ago to give a shiur, I still met people who had known Rabbi Rafael David Saban, and they told me of his greatness. I davened in the shul where he used to daven, and they showed me the place where he sat. They told me that after tefillah he would sit for several hours wearing two pairs of tefillin together, learning with great hasmadah before he went out to the beis din.

In that period a member of our family, Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak Menashe, was also one of the great rabbanim of Istanbul. Perhaps my grandfather had a connection with him and perhaps not; that I do not know.

The reason the picture of Rabbi Rafael David Saban is from so late is that after the First World War, in 5683 (1923), the situation in Turkey changed. The Jews were forbidden to learn Torah, and many other things were forbidden to them. When the previous Chacham Bashi, Chacham Chaim Bejarano, passed away in 5691 (1931), the government did not allow another rav to be appointed. They forced the rabbanim to shave their beards and changed everything for them. This was when Kemal Atatürk rose to power[1] and turned Turkey from a Muslim state into a godless one. All religion was forbidden in the country, and the chinuch of the Jews fell terribly, until it was almost entirely lost. Only in 5713 (1953) did things soften a little. Then, after close to twenty years without any rav at all, let alone a chief rabbi, they agreed to appoint a chief rabbi once again, and that was Rabbi Rafael David Saban, as I said.

Chevras Mazhirei Shabbos

Talk Nine · 9:00

In Istanbul my grandfather did not only learn Torah and chassidus. In my opinion he was already learning Kabbalah there as well and knew a great many of its concepts. He also belonged to Chevras Mazhirei Shabbos (the society of "those who warn about Shabbos").

The situation in Turkey then was that the rule of Torah and dass was felt in every corner. But there were already many who saw themselves as maskilim and wanted to move things a little in the direction of "haskalah", toward a chinuch that was less religious and more secular. The rabbanim of Turkey stood against this with all their strength. One man even wanted to open a school in place of a talmud torah, a

[1] Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded the Republic of Turkey in 1923 and was its first president. He did away with the old Ottoman order and made the state strictly secular.

sort of "state religious" school, and all the gedolim came out against him and put him in cherem. It was a hard battle, until the plan was dropped.

There were also many people who were lax on erev Shabbos because of their work and were late in closing their shops. The barbershops, the grocery stores and the like stayed open right up to shkiah. On erev Shabbos, at bein hashmashos, close to shkiah, the yetzer hara always reminds people that they forgot something and have to run to the grocery, to drag out the time more and more, so that people come into shkiah unprepared for Shabbos. This is what Chevras Mazhirei Shabbos watched for. Every Friday they went from shop to shop, to every owner who was lax about Shabbos, and urged him to close. For most of them, words of persuasion and arousal were enough: close the shop. For a few, more than words was needed, and it took threats and a real commotion to make them close. There was a special group that took this on as its mission, to sanctify the name of Shabbos in Klal Yisrael, and my grandfather was among them. He joined Chevras Mazhirei Shabbos and was active in it. These were people with real mesirus nefesh for every point and every kotzo shel yud, that it should go on in Klal Yisrael in taharah and kedushah, without compromise. Of course, not everyone looked on such people with enthusiasm, let us say, for the way they acted.

A Home in a Bor

Talk Nine · 54:00

When my grandfather came to Yerushalayim, they needed a place to live, and there was no money for rent. All they could take was an apartment nobody wanted to rent, the kind one could rent with payment put off until he found work and could pay. And what does such a fourth-rate apartment mean? It was the apartment my grandfather chose in the neighborhood of Beis Yisrael (next to Meah Shearim) in Yerushalayim.

An ordinary apartment in those days had no kitchen and no bathroom. Outside each apartment, at its entrance, there was some corner, under the stairwell or in some small nook, where they kept the ptiliyah (a kerosene wick burner) or the primus (a kerosene pressure stove), a tin of kerosene, and if there was room maybe three or four pots, and that already counted as a fancy kitchen. There was one bathroom for the whole courtyard, outside, for all the families of the courtyard, and they went out to it day and night, in the cold and in the winter, and waited their turn. Of course it had no water; each person had to bring a vessel of water with him from home. Those were the conditions then. But at least the rooms were proper rooms: two large, roomy, orderly rooms. The apartments were good.

In the courtyard my grandfather came to live in, there was also a bor. Who had a tap then? Who had ever heard of a tap? The first time in my life I saw a tap I was nine years old. Until I was nine I lived there, and every day I had to draw water from the bor. Sometimes I stood there half an hour when the bucket fell into the bor, fishing for it with the jangal, a round tool full of hooks, until it caught the bucket and I could pull it up. That is how we lived.

In the courtyard my grandfather moved into there were two borros. The first was an old one that had been turned into an apartment, and next to it they had dug a new, large bor that held the water. Every bor had steps going down into it, so that people could go down to plaster it and keep it in order. In the old bor they had broken away the front part, the outer side, and it became an opening, like an ordinary doorway, about a meter ninety high and two or two and a half meters wide, very wide, with the steps going down under the ground. That opening was the only light that came in. The floor of the bor was the living room, the workroom, the bedroom, everything. That was it. The floor of the bor, about two meters by three, was the whole room. Going down the steps, everything was dark. Light and air came in only through the entrance, so of course when it had to be closed there was nothing. They always had to leave it open in order to have light and air.

The kitchen was not a kitchen either. I remember it. It was under the stairs that went up to the second floor, a narrow space about a meter wide and less than two meters long. There was room there only for a primus, a ptiliyah and a tin of kerosene, and no more.

This is what my grandfather rented.

Two Apartments in Beis Yisrael

Talk Nine · 1:05:00

She agreed to everything, and in such conditions she bore him two more sons. His first son, Yaakov, was named after his father. The second, Nissim, was named for the nissim that had been done for him, and the third was Mordechai, named after my grandmother's father. These two were born in that first apartment.

Later on, as I will tell, my grandfather managed to move into the apartment next door, which was already a normal apartment: two orderly rooms with two entrances, one from the courtyard and one from the street, right opposite the oven, the bakery of Beis Yisrael, the bakery of Yaakov al-Farran (al-farran is Arabic for the baker). I remember sitting there at that entrance as a child of two or two and a half, on my grandmother's knees, when the kalaniyot passed by. The kalaniyot were the

British soldiers with their red berets.[2] I remember that they drove us inside: there was a curfew, and they ordered us to go into the house at once. I remember that too, from when I was two and a half.

In any case, that was already in their second apartment. There was an opening, there was air; it was a normal apartment. The kitchen was a little bigger as well: under the shelf that held the primus and the ptiliyah there was room to keep dishes. That was already something finer. Their fourth son was born in this second apartment.

When my grandfather was already in this apartment, opposite him, in the apartment where he had lived before, lived Raz. He was a tzaddik who every year made a siyum on the Zohar on Taanis Bechoros, a man unlike any other. May his zechus protect us.

The Shamash of the Shtieblach

Talk Nine · 1:07:00

They raised their children in conditions like these, in shameful poverty. Why? My grandfather looked for work, but what work could he find? He had no money to put into a business, to rent a shop and set himself up as a tinsmith; all that takes money, and he did not have it. He was looking for something that would bring in a living right away, and then they offered him the job of shamash of the shtieblach of Beis Yisrael.

The shtieblach were literally two steps from his home: you crossed the street and you were there. The shtieblach of Beis Yisrael were enormous. There was a huge courtyard, and in the courtyard were two shuls and half an apartment where the Rav of Teplik later lived when he came; that too belonged to the community and was not a shul. There were two more shuls outside, and up a flight of stairs was the great shul, a huge shul, very large, called Beis Yaakov. At its entrance was a large hallway. On the right was a Beis Din room, where tefillos were usually held as well. The entrance to the shul itself was huge, and on its left side was the entrance to the ezras nashim. Next to that entrance stood an oven of the old kind, made of clay, enormous, perhaps two and a half or three meters high, two meters long and about a meter wide. They had to put wood into it and light it to heat the place in the winter.

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[2] After the Second World War the British, who then ruled Eretz Yisrael, stationed their paratroopers there. Because of their red berets the people called them kalaniyot (anemones, a red flower). In the years of the struggle against British rule before 1948 they often put neighborhoods under curfew.

From there you entered the ezras nashim, which was large as well. The ezras nashim alone, as I estimate it now, was some fourteen or fifteen meters. It was full of sefarim; it was also the library of the place, a huge library, with sefarim everywhere. All of this was the shamash's job. In that library people would learn until close to chatzos. Then, tired, they would leave the sefarim on the table and go home to sleep, and in the morning the shamash had to come and put all the sefarim back in their places, clean the place, and prepare it for Shacharis, which was davened at netz. There was always a minyan at netz hachamah there, I think to this day; all those years there was a tefillah at netz hachamah. Everything had to be ready.

All that work and cleaning was nothing; that was no problem. The main problem, the reason not many people were willing to be shamash and it was hard for them to find one, was the lack of water. As I said, in those days there was no water in taps. Water carriers went through the streets with big baskets on their shoulders holding tins, and sold water. They were usually Arabs who walked the streets calling "Moya, moya!" (water). That is how people bought water. Those who had a bor were set; the borros filled with rainwater. We had a bor in our courtyard and drew from it. But the shtieblach of Beis Yisrael had no bor, and that was the problem.

They needed two tins of water every day. When I say tins, you should know these are conditions you do not know today. In those days there were tins made of sheet metal, about thirty centimeters by thirty and about forty high, with a wooden handle fixed across the middle to lift them by. Two of these had to be carried from wherever you got them, and it was very heavy. Buying the water was a fortune; who could afford to buy two tins of water every day? It was a lot of money.

So the shamash's job was to walk to Maayan HaShiloach every morning and bring two tins of water: one to wash the floor, and one so that people could wash their hands before davening, and for the Kohanim before Birkas Kohanim. They made do with one tin of water for that. And one tin of water for washing the whole place, because that needs water too. It was a "Scottish wash," as people called it: there was no question of pouring out a lot of water for a proper washing. You took a rag, wet it, wiped it across the floor, wrung it out and wiped again. That was how they cleaned; there was nothing else to do.

Would a shamash agree to get up at two or three in the morning in summer? In winter, on days of rain, they could sometimes get the water from the rain. If not, they had to go in the winter as well. Getting up and walking the whole way took about three quarters of an hour from Beis Yisrael to Maayan HaShiloach. You had to go up the whole length of Meah Shearim, cut across what is today called Musrara, reach Shaar Shechem, go straight in at Shaar Shechem down the whole

length of Rechov HaGai to Shaar HaAshpos, turn left and go down, and you came to the spring.[3] There you filled the two tins and then had to climb back up.

The way back was hard. To climb with two full, heavy tins up the slope to the Old City was something crushing; it was all uphill with two tins in your hands. After that it was easier, because it was only level ground, and then downhill to Beis Yisrael, so that part was not so terrible. But it all took time and strength.

My grandfather agreed and took the job. He had no choice. He had to support his wife and child and pay the rent; he had to take it.

Then Savta Tzviyah said to him, "Menachem, you have to learn Torah. I have an idea for you. You will get up at chatzos as you are used to."

All his life, as far as I know, my grandfather got up at chatzos and learned until the morning. Not, of course, when he was in the army, but in his own life. That is how I knew him, and he made me do it with him too. From the age of twelve until twenty and a half I grew up in his house, and he never let me sleep one night past chatzos. Except for Friday night, I did not know what sleep was. Twelve at night, we got up. On winter nights I was cold and wanted another half hour, and he would call, "Yosefiko, levanta!" (Ladino: get up!) I would answer, "Two more minutes, two more minutes." He would say, "Come on, get up!" My grandmother would say to him, "Leave him a few more minutes." He would say, "In the kever he will sleep enough. Here we came to learn. Here one does not sleep; in the kever one sleeps. Don't worry, one day he will get to the kever, and there he will sleep. Now let him get up." With those words my grandfather would get me up at chatzos.

So she said to him, "You will get up and go learn. Now you have a huge library there, the way you love it, and you have your hiding place, where you can learn quietly with no one knowing. I will go draw the water. I will bring the water."

She took this grueling work on herself. A young woman, going out at chatzos, toward morning, in the cold and the winter, in snow and rain and wind. No sun, of course, at such hours, but there were sometimes days of chamsin, as they called it then, sharav days (the burning, dry desert wind), when one has no strength. She walked the whole way with two tins and carried them back full of water. She left her babies asleep at home, alone. She did not tell her husband, "You sit and be the babysitter; I am going to bring water." No: "You go learn; Hashem will watch over the children." They closed half the door and left half open so there would be air.

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[3] Musrara is the neighborhood between Meah Shearim and the walls of the Old City. Shaar Shechem (the Damascus Gate) is the gate in the northern wall of the Old City; Rechov HaGai runs from it southward through the Old City; Shaar HaAshpos (the Dung Gate) is in the southern wall, near the Kosel. Maayan HaShiloach is the spring in the valley below the Old City to the south.

One had to live. And she went out, left her babies, and walked for two grueling hours to draw water and come back, so that her husband could sit and learn Torah.

This is how a woman acquires Olam Haba! Woe to the woman who says to her husband in the evening, "You are not going to the Torah shiur; you are going to help me put the children to sleep." She is putting his neshamah to sleep from learning Torah, and she will pay for it. She does not understand what she loses by not sending her husband to learn Torah. That was my grandmother. There is much to learn from her.

She would go, draw the water and bring it, and my grandfather, before morning, put everything in its place. He had already gotten up at chatzos. He had the keys; he went into the ezras nashim, finished Tikkun Chatzos, pulled out all the sefarim and learned, looked into them, sat with them. He had two or three hours of contentment, a taste of Olam Haba. And the moment the first people began to arrive, those who came early for the netz minyan, he would suddenly jump up as if he had arrived two minutes before, and start gathering the sefarim and putting things in order, arranging here, arranging there. They saw him arranging sefarim; no one knew he had come hours earlier and had been learning Torah. A simple shamash putting sefarim away. He davened Shacharis with everyone at netz, then went home to rest a little, and afterward came back to finish the work he had there.

That was his daily schedule. At noon he had time, and in the evening he was free, because most of the work was before noon, and the main part of it was the water, which his wife took care of. And so my grandfather sat and learned Torah, and also found enough time to busy himself with gemilus chassadim.

RAV SHIMSHON OF TEPLIK

Talk Nine · 1:46:30

After my grandfather had already been the shamash in the shtiblach for several years, the gaon Rav Shimshon of Teplik came to Eretz Yisrael. He was a great gaon. From his youth he had been the chief rav of Teplik, a town near Uman in Ukraine, where he served as rav and posek. He was a gadol baTorah. When he arrived here, the Ashkenazi rabbanim were overwhelmed by his greatness. Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld[4], zechuso yagen aleinu, received him at once and appointed him rav of Beis Yisrael. They gave him a room on the lower floor of the shtiblach building, next to the shuls, to live in. There he lived and paskened halachos.

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[4] Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld was the rav of the Ashkenazi chareidi community of Yerushalayim and one of its great leaders, until his petirah in 1932.

He was a very great man. Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul told astonishing things about him. He told me that bochurim from Porat Yosef used to come to learn Torah with him, and that he would recite whole passages by heart from every part of Torah: the Gemara, the whole Shas, the poskim, the Beis Yosef, the Rishonim and the Acharonim. He quoted the exact words as though the page were in front of his eyes. He had greatness, depth and an astonishing understanding.

Chacham Ben Tzion told me that once several of the Porat Yosef bochurim came to learn with him, and he said to them, "I have a question for you." He asked a certain kushya on Maran the Beis Yosef in hilchos Pesach, to see whether they could offer an answer. One of the bochurim thought for a moment and said, just like that, "Apparently Maran erred in explaining two words."

The moment Rav Shimshon heard this, he fainted and lost consciousness. It took a long time to revive him. When he came to, he said, "Send this bochur out. How can anyone say that Maran the Beis Yosef erred in a single line? Does he not understand who Maran the Beis Yosef is? How could he say such a thing?" He fainted because he could not bear to hear that anyone would say Maran the Beis Yosef had erred in even a small thing. Hearing such a thing was beyond his strength. These were people of real stature. He was a very, very great man.

It was he who later said that my grandfather is the Baal Shem Tov of the Sephardim, because he saw everything my grandfather did.

In his first year as rav, though, he did not yet know my grandfather at all. As far as he knew, Menachem was the simple shamash who could not learn anything, who always arrived ten minutes before the people came to arrange the sefarim and ran off after Shacharis, and that was all.

My grandfather told me that once he said something to Rav Shimshon. During Sukkos, while others were making the hakafos with a lulav, there were people who had no lulav and went around in the hakafos anyway. My grandfather told the Rav of Teplik that he should stop them: when someone finishes his hakafah, the one without a lulav should take the lulav and go around, because the whole point is to go around with a lulav.

My grandfather did this very carefully. "I was afraid," he told me. "I had said one word too many, and I worried that he would catch on to me. But I had to say something, so that people would be careful in this matter of the hakafos."

He said it in such a way that he was already afraid he would be found out. Indeed, Rav Shimshon of Teplik suddenly began to understand that this shamash, this am ha'aretz, understood something. And not only did he understand; it bothered him when others did not do things properly. That shows yiras Shamayim. There are many rabbanim who know a great deal, but when others do not do what they should, it does not move them at all. Why? Because they have no yiras Shamayim.

Rav Shimshon saw that it bothered my grandfather, and he marked him. But that was all, for now.

Menachem Menashe Pechach

Talk Nine · 1:55:00

Meanwhile my grandfather was already known among the Bukharim, who had seen that he was a man of truth. He went and borrowed a small sum from them to rent a shop and buy merchandise.

The merchandise was huge sheets of galvanized tin. You do not know what those are: enormous sheets, about three and a half to four meters long and a meter sixty or seventy wide. With special shears you cut them and make vessels out of them. In those days, everything that is made of plastic today was made of tin. Tin was the one material from which everything could be made, from netilos and funnels to pots and cups. We cooked in tin pots and drank from tin cups; everything was tin. So it was something very much in demand.

They lent him the money. On the way up the hill from the shtiblach in Beis Yisrael toward Meah Shearim, on Rechov Sonnenfeld, on the right side as you go up, there were small wooden shacks. I still remember them; as a boy I used to go there to visit my grandfather. They were real shacks, all of wood, built not of planks but of rough pieces of wood. You went up two steps into the shack, and there my grandfather hung all the tin vessels he made and sold.

Across from it stood a huge building full of tenants. Just the stairs were frightening to climb; they ran up through the courtyard, hanging in midair. In its front there were two shops. One was empty, and the other was a makolet. I remember running there to buy dairy goods.

There my grandfather began to sell, and he became known as Menachem Menashe Pechach (the tinsmith). That was how he always signed his name: Menachem Menashe Pechach. This was his framework. Through it he drew children close, through it he carried out all the activities I will tell about further on, and through it he still found time to sit and learn Torah.

He took in all the young people and had them learn tinsmithing with him, showing them the work so that they would have a trade in hand. He made sure that people had a trade! Many of his talmidim learned tinsmithing there. I knew them personally, every one of them.

The Stories

The Chachamiko of the Soldiers

Talk Nine · 15:00

At nineteen my grandfather was called up to the army. He used a trick: he drank water in which tobacco leaves had been boiled, which produces something like spots on the lungs, along with irritation of the intestines and the throat. Because of that, his service was put off until he was twenty. Only at twenty, a few months or so before the First World War, was he taken into the army.

In the army my grandfather never ate anything of the army's food except dry bread. He would go out to the villages, which were all full of Jews, to get kosher food, or at least fruits and vegetables. The army's cooked food he never touched. When there was dry bread, he ate it; when there was no bread, he went without that too. Many times he simply went hungry.

There were many Jewish soldiers in the army who knew nothing. My grandfather was a tremendous talmid chacham, and he became the soldiers' "chachamiko" (Ladino for "the little chacham", an affectionate name for a rabbi). Against his will he became their rav, moreh hora'ah and posek. These were no simple halachos. The military situation, in time of war, called for careful judgment in many areas of halachah, and he took on himself the responsibility of paskening for them how to conduct themselves and what to do.

My grandfather told me that in the First World War the Turkish soldiers were killed like flies. When they went out to battle, all the soldiers were terribly afraid. My grandfather told them: "Listen. The whole time you are under fire, in battle, say these words without stopping, and you will all be saved":

שמע ישראל, ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד, מן המצר קראתי-ה,
אנא ה' הושיעה נא, אנא ה' הצליחה נא, ראה עניי וחלצני כי תורתך לא
שכחתי, ריבה ריבי וגאלני לאמרתך חייני

And so it was. At the end of the war they all came back safely, without harm, except for one who, in the terror of the battle, did not say the words, and was wounded in the head. But he immediately went back to saying them, and he came out alive with his wound, left somewhat disabled, but alive. Except for him, all of them came out unharmed, while all around them the Turkish soldiers fell without number.

The Wine for Kiddush

Talk Nine · 18:30

In the camp my grandfather gave himself without limit for the soldiers and for their Torah, that they should go in the way of Hashem completely. One of the things he gave himself for was the wine, for kiddush and havdalah. The army was Muslim, and there was a law that anyone who brought wine into the army was punished very severely. Wine was forbidden to drink and could bring disaster in battle, so a man who brought in wine was treated like a spy, like one who causes the army to be defeated. Because of their Muslim belief, they were strict about wine far beyond an ordinary breach of camp orders.

Every Friday my grandfather would slip out under the camp fence, run to one of the villages, and come back with a bottle of wine hidden in his coat. Then he gathered all the Jewish soldiers for kiddush on Friday night, again on Shabbos morning, and for havdalah.

One Friday my grandfather came back with a bottle of wine and crawled in under the fence, and who should see him slipping under the fence into the camp but the chief commander of the camp himself. He sent for him at once, and my grandfather came immediately.

"What were you doing outside the camp?" he asked. "Why did you sneak in instead of coming through the main gate?"

"I had to go out to the village for a certain need," my grandfather answered. "I had no choice, and I didn't want it known, so I did it this way." He did not want to lie.

"What was it?"

"It's a private matter."

At once the commander ordered him searched, and in the search they found a bottle of wine. The Muslims' enemy number one, found in the coat of this kofer who drinks wine! The commander came at him in a fury. He slapped him across the face, beat him with his fists, threw him to the ground, and called the whole camp to come and watch how he dealt with him for so grave a breach of orders. In front of everyone, as my grandfather lay on the ground groaning in pain all over his body, he trampled him with his hobnailed boots and tore his clothing and his skin, until blood began to flow from his body. Only when he had poured out all his anger on him did he tell the Jewish soldiers: "Take him away from here."

The Jewish soldiers, who loved my grandfather so and worried about him so, ran at once, picked him up, washed him, bandaged his wounds and gave him water to drink. My grandfather told them: "Before shkiah, bring me the commander's name and the name of his mother." They ran, searched, found out and brought it.

Then my grandfather said: "Ribono shel Olam, kadeish Shimcha b'olamcha al am makdishei Shimcha. I came to sanctify the Shabbos, and this rasha both destroyed the wine and struck me. Avenge me on him."

A few hours later, on Friday night, the commander began to scream with pain and thrash about. The whole camp was on its feet. The chief commander was suffering, writhing and twisting in agony: his stomach, his head, his sides, his hands, his whole body, every moment in a different place, pains like the fires of Gehinnom. After two hours of terrible suffering he collapsed and died. Everyone said it was the hand of Elokei Yisrael, because he had harmed Chacham Menachem, and there was a great Kiddush Hashem in the camp.

The Candle in the Tent

Talk Nine · 23:30

I do not know whether it happened in the same camp or in another one, but my grandfather had an even more wonderful neis. The order in the camp was lights out at ten o'clock: from ten at night not a single light was to be left burning anywhere in the camp. They did hard labor all day long. The Turkish army was no candy; it was very heavy labor. The soldiers would come in at night straight to supper, eat something, and fall onto their cots in their tents like dead men.

My grandfather was the only one who would take out a candle each time, light it, and sit and learn. Without learning Torah he could not live. He learned until twelve or one at night, then said Tikkun Chatzos, went to sleep for a few hours until morning, and got up for a new day. He was breaking the camp's orders against lighting a light. Yet none of the soldiers around him, Turks or others, saw what he was doing. They were all exhausted and fell asleep like dead men, and no one noticed whether a candle was burning or whether anyone was there.

One evening, for some reason, the commander came into that tent and saw a soldier sitting by the light of a burning candle, reading a sefer. He did not think twice. He ran at him shouting, "What are you doing? You're leaving a light on?!" and raised his hand to strike my grandfather. The moment he raised his hand, it withered. He could not lower it. Fear came over him; his hand was paralyzed, and he began to scream, until he had the whole camp on its feet. And my grandfather went on learning quietly by his burning candle, as though nothing were happening.

Officers came, commanders came, and there was a great uproar. There stood the chief commander of the camp, screaming with pain in front of a Jew who sat learning by a burning candle, paying no attention to anyone. The Jew sat and

learned in quiet, the chief commander screamed with his hand stretched out in the air, and everyone stared.

They asked him, "What is this?"

"I came to strike him and my hand was paralyzed," he said. "What am I going to do? I can't move my hand! I'm in pain, I'm afraid!"

They asked my grandfather, "What is this?"

"I don't know," he said. "I'm sitting and learning."

"But he came to strike you because you broke the military law."

"Listen," he said. "By day I am your servant and do everything you want. But I am also a servant of the Borei Olam. I have to do what He wants too, and He commanded me to learn Torah. The day you took from me; the night has come, so let me have it! What harm will this little candle do in the tent? No one even sees it. Why should you disturb me from learning Torah for nothing? I will not give it up, do what you will."

"All right," they said. "Now how will he be healed?"

"If you give me permission to learn every night without interruption, against the law as it stands, he will be healed."

"Agreed," they said.

He said, "Ribono shel Olam, heal him, so that I can learn Torah." At once the commander's hand came free and dropped down, and he went out. From then on my grandfather sat regularly and learned Torah in quiet and in peace, with no one to disturb him.

The Shark

Talk Nine · 27:30

During the war a group of soldiers was moved by sea from one front to another. Every ship must carry enough lifeboats for all its passengers, but in wartime, who is careful about such things? Too many soldiers were loaded onto the ship, and because of the weight, or for whatever reason, the ship split in two and everyone was thrown into the sea. Those who had lifeboats managed to jump into them and were saved. But there were many, my grandfather among them, who did not reach the lifeboats, and they drowned.

My grandfather was already drowning. In those moments, as he felt that in another moment he would be swallowing water, he cried out: "Ribono shel Olam, if You want this, I do not mind. Whatever You want is good for me, even this. But have mercy on my mother, who is a tzaddekes, a widow and a tzaddekes, who will

weep over me. Do not let her weep. Save me for her sake." He had not finished saying the words when he began to swallow water and lose consciousness.

Suddenly a shark came up beneath him and lifted my grandfather onto its back. It swam toward a ship that was gathering in all the drowning men and pulling them out of the water, to save them or to bury them. When the shark came near the ship, it gave one stroke with its tail and flung my grandfather onto the ship. The soldiers on the ship saw him fly out of the sea onto the deck. They took hold of him at once and examined him, saw that he was drowned, thought he was dead, and carried him to the room of the dead.

A few minutes later a doctor came in for some purpose and heard my grandfather gurgling. Immediately he took hold of him, hung him up with his feet in the air and his head down, and began to strike him on the back, until my grandfather brought up all the water. Then he came back to himself. They cared for him for a few hours so he could rest and recover, and then sent him for a short rest in one of the camps. Not home, chas v'shalom, to sit at home! After a few days, when he had recovered, they sent him back to the front, to the war.

A Jobnik in the Commander's House

Talk Nine · 31:30

In the heat of a battle my grandfather saw that his commander, not the commander of the whole camp but the commander of his battalion, had been hit. He was wounded and had fallen, bleeding. My grandfather decided to save him at any price. With those pesukim in his mouth without stopping, he went into live fire, dragged the commander out and rescued him.

My grandfather did not do this only to save the commander. He did it to save himself. In the Turkish army any commander could take soldiers to his home to do all the work of the house. Such soldiers were called "jobniks" (the word Israelis use for a soldier with an easy job far from the fighting). Instead of being in battle, they stayed in the commander's house, cooked, put things in order, and took care of everything, as servants of the house, while wearing a uniform and serving out their army time, until their time came to be released. My grandfather wanted to be a jobnik. What was he to do in the middle of these battles, these dangers, these situations?

So he dragged the commander out, rescued him, and carried him on his shoulder to a field hospital. On the way he said to him: "Look, I rescued you, I saved you from death. Take me with you. Make me a servant in your house."

"Yes, yes, of course, of course," the commander said. He gave orders that my grandfather should stay with him in the hospital for as long as he was being treated, to look after him. Afterward the commander went home as a wounded man, and my grandfather went along with him. That is how my grandfather became a jobnik.

Instead of the storm of battle, the fighting and all the rest, he lived in calm. The house was in a kind of village of the wealthy, an agricultural area in the middle of the city, where each one had a plot of land to work, a chicken coop and a few sheep. There my grandfather began to work. He received orders for what to do each week, and he divided all the work so that on Shabbos he would not have to do any of the work forbidden on Shabbos, only what is permitted.

So my grandfather was happy. He kept Shabbos, and there was food. There were fruits and vegetables, and he did not even need to eat the goyim's bread; he could live on plenty of fruits and vegetables. There were eggs too. An egg cooked by a goy is forbidden: that is bishul akum, which is forbidden to eat, with no heter at all. But he cooked the eggs himself, and there was no shortage of eggs. He ate fairly well compared to before, and he had a great deal of time to sit and learn in quiet, with no one bothering him. Those were good days as army service goes, with learning and with kosher food. The whole area around was also full of Jewish villages, and from time to time he had a chance to go out and eat a hot meal in their homes.

Locked in the Chicken Coop

Talk Nine · 36:00

One day, on Shabbos, the commander ordered him to do work that is forbidden on Shabbos, weekday work.

"No, no, I won't do it," my grandfather said. "Today is Shabbos. I am not willing to do it; I keep Shabbos."

"You are disobeying an order."

"Listen," my grandfather said. "I did not save you so that you would make me disobey an order of the Borei Olam. Look, I risked my life for you; I put my life in danger to save you. Remember that for me as hakaras hatov, and don't make me be mechallel Shabbos."

The commander was angry with him and ordered at once that he be put into the chicken coop. A chicken coop is one of the foulest-smelling places there is. According to halachah one may not even say a pasuk of Torah there, nothing at all. Two other soldiers, of the several who served in the house, came and put my grandfather into the chicken coop and bolted the door behind him from the outside.

So my grandfather sat there, in a foul, disgusting place, where he could not even daven. He only lifted his eyes straight up to Shamayim, and in his thoughts he said: "Ribono shel Olam, save me."

Then the commander began to suffer pains like the fires of Gehinnom: pains in his body, in his head, in his stomach, and he did not know what was wrong with him. But he was no fool. After a few minutes of pain he said: "This is because of that Jew." He sent for him, and they let my grandfather out and brought him to the commander.

"What are these pains of mine?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"Could it be because of you?"

"It could be that Hashem wants me to keep Shabbos and you don't want me to. I rescued you from death, but He wants to give you death right here."

As soon as he heard that he might be about to die, he said to my grandfather: "Listen. From today on, on Friday at noon, go away from here and come back on Motza'ei Shabbos. Go to your Jews. I give you all those hours."

And for the Jews there was orah v'simchah v'sason vikar. From then on, every Friday my grandfather went to the village, and he had Shabbos: tefillah b'tzibbur, Jews who were ashreihem in hachnasas orchim, and the three seudos as the halachah requires. Even before, he had never given up kiddush; he always went and brought the wine as usual. But now he had the three seudos properly and tefillah b'tzibbur, and my grandfather had great simchah at how everything was beginning to turn for the better.

Yom Kippur on the Hill

Talk Nine · 39:00

Then Yom Kippur came. My grandfather told me this himself, and I will never forget how he told it to me.

At noon on erev Yom Kippur he went to the commander and said to him: "Sir, tomorrow is our Yom Kippur. It is a very holy day for us. Give me permission to go to the village now and spend the holy day there. I will come back tomorrow night."

The commander shouted: "Are you crazy? I gave you Shabbos, and now you want Kippur too? Absolutely not! You stay here!"

My grandfather told me: "I decided: I stay, I stay, but let him jump; on Kippur I do nothing. I went outside, sat down on a hill, and began to say the piyut 'Lecha Keli Teshukasi'."

My grandfather loved this piyut deeply. It is a piyut of forty-five stanzas, all of it longing for HaKadosh Baruch Hu and a plea to come to Olam Haba clean and pure, so that the malachei hashareis will greet him with song. It was composed by Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra before his death. My grandfather loved it so much that all his life he told me: "Before I die, I want to say this piyut in full, and to die with this piyut." And so it was. The night before he passed away, he took a truck full of people to the kever of Shmuel HaNavi, they davened there, and he said the whole piyut with a longing soul. The next morning he passed away.

But to return to that day. My grandfather told me how he stood there and began to say "Lecha Keli". With its Turkish niggun, the piyut takes more than an hour, an hour and a half, to say: forty-five stanzas, each one full of the soul's longing:

לך א-לי תשוקתי, בך חשקי ואהבתי, לך לבי וכליותי, לך רוחי ונשמתי

With such a niggun, with such longing, my grandfather sat and began the piyut.

A quarter of an hour had not gone by when the commander's wife was lying on the floor, screaming with pain. She said to the commander: "Do you want to kill me? What did you do? You started up with that chachamiko? With Menachem? Don't you understand that one does not start up with him? I am going to die because of him!"

At once he called my grandfather and said to him: "Listen, heal her right now so she'll be well, and go to your Yom Kippur!"

My grandfather said, "Refuah sheleimah," took his things and left at once for the village. My grandfather told me: "I still managed to reach the village before shkiah, and to spend all of Yom Kippur with them in kedushah, in a special elevation of spirit. Afterward I went back to the camp."

Like Yosef HaTzaddik

Talk Nine · 41:30

But HaKadosh Baruch Hu loves to test His chassidim, His servants, His faithful ones, and my grandfather was given a nisayon like that of Yosef in his time.

When my grandfather married, he did not report the marriage to the authorities. He knew that the world war was close; the spirit of war was already in the world, and he did not want his marriage known. The marriage was, of course, k'das Moshe v'Yisrael and recorded in the community, but for some reason the community did not report it. He asked them not to report it. Whether he had arranged it from the start so that the community would not report it, or whether the community did it more privately on its own, I do not know. In any case, the community never reported to the authorities that he was married, the authorities did not register him as

married, and because of that he never received any leave. He was in the army the whole time without a single leave.

This commander had a daughter. One may not say of a goyah whether she is good-looking or not, but she was not ugly at all, let us put it that way. She was young, about seventeen, and she fell in love with my grandfather and tried to make him stumble in an aveirah. For several months while my grandfather was there, she kept coming near him half-dressed, a quarter-dressed. This was inside the house: outside they go about covered from head to toe like Taliban women (the Islamist rulers of Afghanistan, whose women may not show themselves in the street), and inside, all modesty is gone. Several times she even called him in the middle of her bath to bring her water, to bring water, to heat water, on purpose, so that he would desire her, his senses would cloud over, and he would fall into sin.

My grandfather guarded kedushas einayim and kedushas hamachshavah one hundred percent. She tried all kinds of tricks, in all kinds of ways; she even asked him outright. He would not listen to her, just like Yosef HaTzaddik, who would not "lie beside her" in this world, nor "be with her" in Olam Haba. Not in any way. Like Yosef, he kicked away his yetzer. She provoked him, she tried and tried in every way, she tried to drive him out of his mind; but he did not lose his mind at all, because his mind stayed pure and clean.

She tried to drive him out of his mind and did not succeed. He sat in kedushah, guarding his eyes, in kedushas hamachshavah, his thoughts wholly bound in holiness to the Borei Olam. When she saw that she could not prevail over him, she fell ill. There is such a thing as lovesickness, and she fell into it. She became half anorexic and ate almost nothing.

Her father, worried about his daughter, saw her suddenly turning from a person into a little bird. He asked her what it was, and she said: "I'll tell you the truth. I am in love with the soldier Menachem. I love him, and I want to marry him."

"No problem," he told her. He called my grandfather and said to him: "Listen, my daughter is in love with you. Get ready for the wedding. You know she is a good girl. You will be released from the army and live here, and you will have everything, every comfort. Get ready for the wedding."

My grandfather understood that here no more cleverness would help. This time nothing would help, not even if the officer and his wife both fell into a faint. He understood that the time had come to go home. One morning he slipped out of the house, as if going out of town on errands, to do the shopping, took to his feet, and went back to Istanbul.

Under the Bed and on the Mountain Road

Talk Nine · 47:00

When my grandfather reached Istanbul, he went to the house of his mother-in-law. The authorities did not know he was married, but they knew that house as the place where he lived, and his wife and his baby were living there too. He could not stay with them, because he knew they would come looking for him. If they caught him it meant hanging, for in wartime the punishment for running away from the army was death. So he lived in nearby streets with people he knew, hiding from house to house until the danger would pass. Still, from time to time he slipped into his mother-in-law's house to sit a little with his wife and child. I do not know why he went there of all places, but that is how it was.

And then, yishtabach Shemo, it was exactly while my grandfather was sitting in his mother-in-law's house with his wife and the baby that he saw through the window a group of soldiers coming to look for him. Soldiers who come to search a house do not all come from one side. Some surround the house on every side, so that if the man tries to run they will catch him, and the rest go inside. My grandfather saw that it was over. He could not escape through the window or over the roof. There was nowhere to run. He was inside, and they were at the door.

My grandfather told me, "I got under the bed. I knew they would lift the bed, but it was the only place there was." Lying under the bed, he made a neder to the God of Israel: if he was saved from their hands, he would go up to Eretz Yisrael. Then, in a quiet whisper, he said the pasuk said of the men of Sedom at Lot's door (Bereishis 19:11):

ואת האנשים אשר פתח הבית הכו בסנורים מקטן ועד גדול וילאו למצא הפתח

He said it forward and backward, again and again.

They came into the house and began to search. What did they not turn over? They overturned the cupboards; they turned over everything. "The moment they reached my bed," he said, "I held my breath." They lifted the bed and did not see him, and they put it back down. My grandfather saw the great nes that had been done for him. He lay still and waited until they had gone out and were far from the place. As soon as they were gone he came out, fled, and hid again with the people he knew. He told his wife, my grandmother, "I made a neder. We are going up to Eretz Yisrael."

He took the few belongings he had, and from somewhere, I do not know where, he got a little cash for the journey. Everything he brought up from Turkey was one crate, about a meter high, a meter and twenty long, and half a meter or perhaps sixty centimeters wide. It was called a baúl (a wooden trunk). Inside it they packed a

few household things, some bedding and clothing, and that was all. That was all they owned.

He hired a wagon to take them to Lebanon, and from there they would reach Eretz Yisrael. So they did. They climbed onto the wagon, and the driver took them toward the mountains of Lebanon. The whole way there is mountains. In places the road is narrow and runs along the top of the mountain, with a drop below, and there is no room for two wagons to pass. One wagon goes through easily; two cannot. For such a case there was a law all over Turkey: a wagon of the government or the army had the right of way. If neither was a government or army wagon, there were rules of who goes first: whoever was closer went first, or they came to some arrangement between them. Usually you could see the road ahead and stop in time, so that the two did not meet. But if they did meet and were stuck there, one of them had to move aside, press himself right against the wall of the mountain without moving, and let the other wagon pass by him quickly.

My grandfather told me that as he was leaving, his wagon came to such a place, on such a narrow road, and who should be coming toward him in a wagon? None other than his own commander, the one he had run away from. There was no chance the commander would not see him, all the more since by law my grandfather had to press against the mountain and the commander's wagon would pass right by him. He would certainly see him and recognize him, and once he was caught it was over: hanging. My grandfather was afraid and did not know what to do.

My grandfather never in his life said a word that was not true. He told me, "At that moment Moshe Rabbeinu came to me. Moshe Rabbeinu appeared to me, I saw him, and he said to me, 'Do not be afraid. You go through! The commander will stand aside and not see you, and you will reach Yerushalayim in peace.'"

And that is what happened. He told the wagon driver, "You go through, don't be afraid. I take all the responsibility on myself." The driver went ahead, the commander for some reason pulled aside, and he never noticed that it was my grandfather passing him. And so my grandfather came, by way of Lebanon, to Yerushalayim.

Because of these two great nissim, done for him completely beyond the way of nature, when his second son was born he named him Nissim, after the two nissim Hashem had done for him. About this Nissim I will soon tell a number of things.

The Sheid at Chatzos

Talk Nine · 1:51:00

Then something happened that came from Shamayim.

As I have told you already in connection with the building of the Kaf HaChaim, all of Beis Yisrael had been built over unclean water, and because the water was not clean a number of sheidim roamed there. All sorts of things happened in Beis Yisrael. I have told about them already and do not want to repeat them.

One night my grandfather arrived at chatzos as usual and went to turn on the light so he could sit down and learn. Before he managed to turn it on, he saw a sheid in front of him. It was night, it was dark, and he was alone. Those are three conditions under which one does not engage a sheid. So what did he do? He fled.

He went downstairs to the home of Rav Shimshon of Teplik. Rav Shimshon was still learning; the true gedolei Yisrael know that the night was created only for learning Torah. My grandfather knocked on the door, and Rav Shimshon opened it.

"Rav Shimshon," my grandfather said, "there is a sheid upstairs. Come help me drive it out."

Rav Shimshon closed his Gemara and went up with him, so that they would be two. When they came up they saw the sheid moving about. It came at them to harm them, but now they were two, so my grandfather was not afraid. He drove it out and cast it out of there: "Get out of here! In the name of such-and-such I expel you!" And he sent it flying.

Rav Shimshon of Teplik suddenly saw my grandfather driving out a sheid. He could not understand what my grandfather was doing in the shul at chatzos. He was supposed to come before dawn; why was he there three hours early?

"Reb Yid," he asked him, "what are you doing here at such an hour?"

"I came to rest here a little."

"Rest where? It is assur to sleep in a shul!"

"In the ezras nashim. Sometimes I come and rest there a little before it is time."

The ezras nashim was where the library was. Rav Shimshon began to understand that this shamash did not come there at chatzos for nothing. He did not come to sleep; he had a home. He began putting things together, and he concluded that my grandfather came to learn Torah and was hiding who he was. He went back downstairs to his learning, and my grandfather returned to his.

Morning came, and with it the time for tefillah. As my grandfather walked past Rav Shimshon, the Rav stood up! Oy vey! My grandfather was terrified. The Rav was standing up in his honor? And besides that, he addressed him with the title of honor reserved for talmidei chachamim. That frightened my grandfather more than

the sheid. "What? They are giving me kavod? The Rav has already discovered who I am?" That was not going to happen.

That same day he handed in his resignation. He would not continue; he did not want to be revealed. A resignation meant that he still had to keep working for a week or ten days, until they found someone else, but after that he was free.

Nissim

Talk Nine · 1:21:00

Now I will tell briefly about my grandfather's son Nissim.

His second son, Nissim, as I said, was a fine young man and a real talmid chacham, who learned, I think, in Porat Yosef in the Old City.[5] My grandfather sent him to learn there. When he was about seventeen, between sixteen and eighteen, I do not know the exact age, Arabs once chased him on his way home from the yeshivah. I do not remember whether they stabbed him in the liver or whether the running alone twisted his liver. I heard that his liver was injured and twisted; that much I know, but whether it was also from a knife or not, I do not remember. In any case, he was in danger. He was taken to the hospital and was truly in danger of his life.

My mother, aleha hashalom, told me that she remembers that at the time of her brother's illness Chacham Fetaya (Chacham Yehudah Fetaya, the great mekubal of the Baghdadi community in Yerushalayim, author of Minchas Yehudah) tried to save him with all kinds of special segulos. But he told my grandfather, "I see that it is not working. Apparently this is a neshamah that has to return to its place." And so it was: he passed away.

For a long time my grandfather could not be comforted. Every time he came into the house he would close the door and cry out in Ladino, "Nissim! Where are you? Come to me right away! Where are you?" He cried it with streams of tears, in the pain of a broken heart. For several months he cried out like this in his anguish over his son.

Then one day his son appeared before him, smiling, while he was awake. He stood before him and said, "Father, why are you crying over me? I am finished; what do I have to look for here? My tikkun is complete. I merited it; I sit above and enjoy the ziv haShechinah. Only your crying pains me. Today I received permission from the Beis Din shel Maalah to come and appear before you, to tell you not to

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[5] Porat Yosef was the great Sephardic yeshivah in the Old City of Yerushalayim, until the Old City fell in 1948 and its building was destroyed.

cry. See how happy I am. It is good for me. I sit in the yeshivah shel maalah and enjoy the ziv haShechinah. What is there in this world? I merited it! Be happy with where I am. Don't cry anymore."

My grandfather said to him, "I will not be happy. I know you are in a good place, but I miss you. That it is good for you there is very good, and I am glad of it, but it cannot make me happy, because I long for you. I love you very much, and the parting from you is hard for me. I want you to get permission to come to me from time to time and tell me what is happening above."

Nissim said, "Good, I am going. I will come back to you with an answer." He disappeared. Later he came back and told him, "In Shamayim they agreed. I may appear to you from time to time and tell you what is happening with me above, and in general what there is above."

And so it was. For years and years he came to my grandfather, appeared to him while he was awake, and sat with him, spoke with him, and told him things.

I remember that when I was about seventeen, I went one day with my grandfather to Kikar HaShabbat in Yerushalayim (the junction at the edge of Meah Shearim). At the stop of the number 14 bus, which goes to Katamon (a neighborhood in southern Yerushalayim), my uncle Mordechai was waiting for us, because they had to travel together to Katamon. I heard my grandfather say to my uncle Mordechai, "I met Nissim, your brother. He told me more things about Gan Eden. Among other things, he told me that if you enter Gan Eden in a dream and see glass there, it is a sign that it is Gan Eden hatachton. If there is no glass, it is Gan Eden ha'elyon. That will be a sign for you."

I heard this and took it to heart, and later, when I went to visit them there, I remembered this sign, and it always let me know where I was and where I was meeting them. From time to time my grandfather would also tell his son Mordechai some of the interesting things he heard from Nissim.

The Daughter of Chacham Fetaya

Talk Nine · 1:27:00

By the way, Rav Fetaya also lost a daughter in his lifetime, a daughter he loved very, very much. He asked her to come to him after her passing; he wanted to speak with her every week, because he missed her. And so it was for a long time. Every week she came, and he sat with her, awake, and spoke with her: "My daughter, how are you? What is new? What is happening above?" She told him what goes on above in the women's side, where she was, in which mador, what chiddushei Torah they had said there, what niggunim they had sung there. She told him astonishing things.

One day she came sad, truly upset. He was alarmed and asked her, "My daughter, what happened to you? Is there a problem?"

She told him, "Yes."

"What is the problem?"

"That you make me come here to you. It is hard for me. I have gone up another level, higher, and from that level, coming down to this world, I cannot bear the stench of this world. I feel as if I am inside a sewer, and you are choking me. Allow me not to come anymore."

He said to her, "My daughter, go in peace. There is no more need." And he released her, so that she would not come anymore.

Short Accounts

The Branch in the Night

Talk Nine · 30:30

My grandfather told me that one night he had to stand guard, with a weapon, though only one of the rifles of those days. He stood all night at some post, and far off in the dark he saw the shadow of someone, apparently one of the enemy, who every few moments tried to move forward and then stopped, moved forward and stopped. All night my grandfather did not sleep. He stood in fear with his weapon ready, waiting for the man to come a little closer so he could shoot. All night he was tense, while the other moved forward and stopped, moved forward and stopped, and he did not know what to do. Quietly my grandfather davened: "Ribono shel Olam, save! Ribono shel Olam, help!" When day broke, he saw that it had been nothing but the branch of a tree swaying in the wind.

It was as the pasuk says in the curses: "ורדף אותם קול עלה נדף". A blown leaf frightened my grandfather? It frightened my grandfather. He said that the hard night he went through was a kapparah for his sins.

The Baal Shem Tov of the Sephardim

Talk Nine · 1:19:00

It was not for nothing that the Rav of Teplik, who later became the Rav of Beis Yisrael and who had a story with my grandfather, called him "the Baal Shem Tov of the Sephardim."

And one of my rebbeim, Rav Chaim Brim, about whom I will tell more later, called my grandfather something else. I was in Skver (the Chassidic town of New Square, in New York), where he spent a year or two as rosh yeshivah. On Friday night there were hundreds of people in the shul, and after Maariv everyone stood in line to go up to the Rebbe for a berachah. Rav Chaim took me up first, and in front of hundreds of people he said to the Rebbe in Yiddish, "This yungerman is the grandson of the Chafetz Chaim of the Sephardim."

Rav Chaim Brim was a man who was careful with his words. He was a very holy man; when I tell you about him you will not believe he was a human being at all. He was a malach; the malachim were small next to him. It was known that every word of Rav Chaim Brim made an impression in Shamayim at once. And these words he said about my grandfather in front of everyone, on leil Shabbos kodesh, in the middle of the shul. He stood behind every word. He crowned my grandfather as the Chafetz Chaim of the Sephardim, and he knew what the Chafetz Chaim was. All of us are moved just to hear what the Chafetz Chaim was. The Chafetz Chaim was not a man; he was a malach. With this title he crowned him, because of the things my grandfather did, which I will soon explain. It is part of his work of educating the youth, and I will come back to it shortly.

The Shul Above the Mikveh

Talk Nine · 1:57:30

One of these talmidim noticed that every afternoon my grandfather closed his shack. From one o'clock until nearly three the shack was locked, and my grandfather disappeared. The talmid began to follow him and saw that he did not go home at all.

He saw my grandfather go up to the mikveh of Beis Yisrael, which was farther up Rechov Sonnenfeld in the direction of the Bukharim. That mikveh still exists today, and it has a history of its own that I will tell about later. Above the mikveh was a shul called Be'er Sheva, which also had a huge library.

The talmid watched my grandfather arrive in secret, check that no one was watching, and open the shul; he had keys. He went in and locked the door behind him. The talmid tried to get up there, found a place to climb, and peeked in through a window. He saw my grandfather sitting with sefarim open on the table, delving into them like a talmid chacham. A talmid chacham does not look into just one sefer. He takes one sefer, and another next to it, and looks into this one a little and that one a little. The table was full of sefarim, and my grandfather sat delving into them, on and on, learning.

That is how my grandfather's secret came out: that Menachem Menashe Pechach, who supposedly knew nothing except how to give a little shiur in halachah in the evenings to simple people, was really a man who sat and toiled in Torah.

The Man Who Was Not There

Talk Nine · 1:59:30

I will finish here with one more point, something my grandfather told me.

Across from him, next to the makolet I mentioned, there was the other shop that had stood empty. A man rented it and began selling tin goods, the same goods my grandfather made and sold. The only difference was that he imported them. Naturally my grandfather could sell more cheaply, since he made the goods himself, but the other man more or less kept up and matched his prices. It did not bother my grandfather that someone had opened a shop across from him. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives parnassah to everyone.

My grandfather told me, "One day I was sitting in the shop, and I saw a customer come to buy a netilah from me."

My grandfather had two kinds of netilos, and he was the only one who had both. One kind was made from new tin, a finished product with two handles, made into a netilah for netilas yadayim. The other came from the period of the tzena[6]. There was nothing to eat here in Eretz Yisrael then, and people were given kokosin. I still remember those tins. They were round tins about the size of a netilah, filled with a white oil made from nuts[7]. It was white like dough, and people cooked with it; it was the only cooking oil in those days. It came in blue tins, very nice ones. My grandfather bought the old tins from people for a few prutos, soldered handles onto them, and made them into netilos. These cost half the price of an ordinary netilah. If an ordinary netilah cost half a grush, these cost two or three mil[8].

"One day," my grandfather said, "a customer came, and I saw him looking over the netilos, deciding which to choose, this kind or that kind. Then I saw the shopkeeper from across the way come over and say to him, 'Don't buy from him. Come buy from me.' And he took him to his own shop to sell to him."

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[6] The tzena was the period of austerity and rationing in the early years of the State of Israel, from 1949 through the 1950s, when food was scarce and handed out by ration.

[7] Kokosin was the name of a coconut fat sold in tins in those years.

[8] The grush and the mil were coins of that time. A grush was worth ten mil, so half a grush was five mil.

That is forbidden; it is hasagas gevul. You may open a shop next to mine, and the buyer will choose where to go in. But for you to tell a customer, "Don't go in here, come to me," is chutzpah, and it is assur.

My grandfather saw this and said to himself, "I will not rebuke him now. One should not rebuke a person while he is in such a state; he will not accept it. I will keep quiet, but tomorrow I will go and tell him that he acted against the halachah. It is my duty to tell him, but not now."

"I kept quiet that day," my grandfather told me. "The next day I went to him and said, 'Sir, what you did yesterday is against the halachah. It is forbidden.'

"'What did I do yesterday?'

"'Yesterday, when you were open, a customer came, and you told him to come to you.'

"'Sir, yesterday I did not open at all. Yesterday I was closed. I have witnesses that I was not even in the city yesterday. I was not here, and my shop was shut.'

"'But I saw you come and take a customer.'

"'Excuse me, sir, that never happened.'"

My grandfather said, "I believed him. It was a maaseh Satan, sent to test me, to see whether I would get angry and lose all my Torah." One who gets angry loses all his Torah. He has to make a tikkun for anger and then start reviewing everything again, because the Arizal is very strict about anger. Through anger a person exchanges his neshamah, chas v'shalom. This is what is called "toref nafsho b'apo." Anger is a very grave thing, graver than all the aveiros.

"It was a test for me," my grandfather said. "It was an illusion that Shamayim showed me to test me." A person suddenly sees in front of him a picture of something that does not exist, and he can become convinced that it is real. "Baruch Hashem," he said, "I did not get angry that day at all."

That is how my grandfather began his life in Yerushalayim, devoting himself above all to the chinuch of the youth.

Chapter Two

Saba's Tzedakah

the orphans, the poor and the children of Yerushalayim



The Beis Yesomim Chofetz Chaim

Talk Nine · 1:43:00

My grandfather met these Bukharim, and they began to watch him. They gave him money and wanted to see what he did with it. They saw that he did not buy even a cup of milk for his own children with that money. All of it was hekdesh, to give to the poor, to help the poor, to educate the poor. They saw that this was an upright man who could be trusted, and they told him, "Listen, whenever you have a special tzedakah, we are behind you. Don't worry about money."

My grandfather took their word. He went and bought a huge courtyard with a number of rooms on Rechov Auerbach in Beis Yisrael. Of course, what the Bukharim gave was not enough on its own, and more was needed, so he brought in several Ashkenazim who had also come with money. Together they opened a beis yesomim (orphanage) there and named it Chofetz Chaim, after the Chofetz Chaim.

My grandfather was one of a group of directors, and he brought in part of the money, but he was its living spirit. He brought the poor children and placed them there. He gave them shiurim, and he arranged for teachers to come and teach them both Torah and a trade, so that they would grow up to be baalei battim and craftsmen, people who were yirei Shamayim.

Every evening my grandfather gathered people there and gave them a shiur in halachah, with stories. It was a special wisdom, one that needs a great deal of siyata d'Shmaya, to give people shiurim in halachah with many stories in order to draw them close. Those shiurim were the basis of the sefer *Ahavas Chaim*, which he later wrote, and of *Likutei Menashe*, which he had written before.

At the same time he remained, in people's eyes, a poor, foolish am ha'aretz who did not know how to learn. That is an art. On one hand he gave shiurim, displayed knowledge and paskened halachos, and on the other hand he remained a simpleton

who knew nothing. That is a special greatness, and my grandfather did it. He gave shiurim every evening, gathered Jewish children and took care of their chinuch in every direction, as I will explain further on. And all the while he went on behaving like a fool, an ignorant am ha'aretz who knew nothing. People believed that this was what he was. They did not connect what he did in the evenings with the man they saw during the day, a simpleton who supposedly knew nothing.

But Shamayim wanted otherwise.

The Orphanage at Fishel Levi 9

Talk Ten · 1:30

Saba lived on Fishel Levi Street, at number 9, where Ahavas Chaim also was, and he lived in one of its rooms. He had left his own apartment when Ahavas Chaim was in great need of money. His apartment was held with key money (a tenancy bought with a large payment, which the tenant could sell to the next one), so he sold it in order to put all the money into Ahavas Chaim, and in exchange he took a small room in Ahavas Chaim that had become free. He took it for another reason as well: in the large room he had built an orphanage himself. There were twenty beds there, and he cared for the children and invested in them, so he needed to be right by the place. He and his wife, an elderly couple by then, with all their sons already married, took that one room and lived in it, to watch over the long room he had built. It stood between the shul and his room, at the two ends of the building: between the two apartments on either side of the property he built one long room, and there he ran an orphanage.

He also ran a Talmud Torah. In the shul he had made, and in two other places, he gathered children, brought them teachers, and set up classes for gan and for first, second and third grade, for a certain period. For even religious parents thought it was not so terrible if a child learned with boys and girls together in a secular place: "It's not terrible, it's only third grade, second grade; later we'll move him up to a religious place." That is how they thought.

First of all, a Jew's chinuch does not begin at five. In those places they spent the first five years singing the children songs about dancing, about being free, free from work, free from learning, and all kinds of nonsense. That is what they sang to them in gan at five. Among us, the children of yirei Shamayim knew at five not only how to daven; they could read, they knew some arithmetic, and they had already begun to understand Mishnayos. That was the chinuch. At two and a half, or perhaps three is more accurate, I do not remember which and it does not matter, I already knew how to read the aleph-beis; that is how they taught us. They also taught us to

say the whole tefillah and Birkas HaMazon by heart; they began training us in this from age two, when we had just begun to talk. At five, we memorized Pirkei Avos by heart. That is how it was. In any case, Saba saw to it that Jewish children would come into good learning.

If a father was a miser who really would throw his child into a secular school or a secular institution if Saba did not pay, my grandfather paid, and it did not matter to him even if the father was rich. But if the father was rich and was only trying to squeeze Saba, Saba, who was shrewd, saw right through the man and insisted until he paid himself. In most cases, though, they really were people who either had no money or had no sense to invest in their children's chinuch. In those cases Saba invested; Saba spent; Saba gave. He also married them off, and married off other orphans as well, and he had special siyata dishmaya.

Saba's Shabbos

Talk Ten · 1:13:30

Saba collected money and maintained everything he had taken upon himself: the institutions and the chinuch of the children. In the talmud Torah there was also a hot lunch every day; on the Ahavas Chaim pushkas of that period there was a picture of the children eating their lunch. They sat and learned Torah, and in Saba's merit generations of Jews grew up yirei Shamayim.

Saba also went out to give derashos. Besides running Ahavas Chaim, he gave shiurim every evening. In the early evening hours it was something like a club. Children came from the secular schools, and children from the religious schools came as well. There were two divisions: one for those who learned in religious schools and a separate one for those who learned in secular schools. They drew the children in the evening with candies and sweets, and the older ones with coins as well, so that they would come and learn Torah and get to know it. Those from the secular schools came so that they would know there is Torah in Yisrael. Those from the religious schools came so that they would not hang about in the street and be spoiled, so that they would not spend their evenings with children from schools that did not raise them properly. They came to advance further in their learning: the teachers reviewed their learning with them, told them stories and inspired them, and that kept them all within a good framework. That is what Saba did.

On Shabbos, Saba's schedule was as follows. At first he began with a shiur in the morning, after the Shabbos meal, at about eleven o'clock, in the Musayof shul. He gave the shiur there until half past twelve or one. All the simple folk of Beis Yisrael gathered there, Bukharim, people from Meah Shearim, and people who came

from Machane Yehuda, and he gave them a shiur. In the afternoon he gave a shiur in Mamilla.

One day, it was in the year 5710 or thereabouts, new olim began arriving from the Balkan countries. They all spoke Ladino. As I said, everyone who had lived under Turkish rule spoke Ladino. They were all Sephardim whose families had come from Spain by way of Turkey or other places, and Ladino was the language they spoke. They did not know Hebrew; they barely knew a few words. Saba then took Chacham Yaakov Duek and said to him: "You give the shiur in Musayof. I am going to take care of these poor people."

From then on Saba's schedule changed. He finished his meal early, at about half past ten, and walked on foot from the valley of Beis Yisrael up the whole length of the hill until he reached Rechov Yafo. He crossed Rechov Yafo, and there was a neighborhood called Mishkenos. Today nothing is left of those neighborhoods; the big buildings swallowed everything. It was a lovely, delicate little neighborhood, Mishkenos. There Saba gave a shiur. A group of Jews came, and I remember that many times I went with him. He sat there and gave them a whole hour in Spanish of halachos, stories and mussar, until about twelve, a little after twelve.

Then he went on to the Shauli shul in Machane Yehuda, not far from there. It stood on the main street. In that shul Saba also held his ta'aneis dibbur, and he gave a shiur there every Shabbos as well. All the people from the surrounding neighborhoods gathered there. In those days Machane Yehuda was surrounded by many neighborhoods: Beis Yaakov, Neve Tzedek, Shevet Tzedek and several others nearby; I do not remember them all. Each was a neighborhood of its own, with a wall and a bolted gate. They all gathered there, simple Jews, working men, but yirei Shamayim, and came to hear Torah, mussar and halachos from Saba, to know what to do.

After an hour and a half or two hours of shiur for them as well, he went back home, down the whole slope. He went to Musayof to daven Minchah, came home, ate seudah shlishis quickly, quickly, and immediately set out for Mamilla, near Har Tzion. Mamilla was then settled by all sorts of Jews who had come with the aliyah, especially the aliyah of the Kurdish Jews, who lived there. (It was a neighborhood just outside the walls of the Old City, and in those years it lay right on the border with Jordan.)

But his audience there was not the Kurds. It was the Turkish Jews who lived near the windmill, in a neighborhood called Yemin Moshe, with its houses along the hillside facing Har Tzion. These were Jews who had come from Turkey and knew nothing of Yiddishkeit, because in Turkey their Yiddishkeit had been stolen from them. In the year 5683, Kemal Atatürk (the founder of the modern Turkish state) came to power. He was an atheist, and he did away with all the religions; in

Turkey they were all banned. He persecuted Yiddishkeit very harshly. When the chief rabbi, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Bejarano, passed away in 5690, he did not allow another rav to be appointed in his place. Only in 5714, about twenty years later, did they appoint a new chief rabbi, Rabbi Refael Saban, of whom I spoke earlier.

They grew up there without a talmud Torah. It was forbidden to teach anything, anything at all. They taught the children Torah in secret, a little, as much as they could teach in secret. The very people whose fathers had fled Spain so as not to become anusim there became anusim in Turkey. The study of Yiddishkeit was banned completely. I think that even today it is not really permitted in Turkey.

In any case, that situation brought them all down to the lowest level of ignorance. The Jewry of Turkey, which before the First World War had been a world of Torah full of gedolei olam, became an empty pit with no water in it. And if there is no water in it, there are snakes and scorpions in it. The poor people grew up on a Turkish education and knew nothing of Yiddishkeit. They were tinokos shenishbu.

These people came up to Eretz Yisrael and were settled there, and they would come to Mamilla, where a shul agreed to host them for a shiur, and Saba gave them the shiur. That was because the Kurdish Jews loved Saba very much. The rav of the Kurds there in Mamilla was then Rabbi Naftali Ma'alimi. He also made some use of kabbalah ma'asis (practical Kabbalah: working with Sheimos and amulets), but he was a very fine man. In my opinion he was one of the lamed-vav hidden tzaddikim. He truly did a great deal. I remember that he would always come to Saba and sit with him in his home like a talmid before his rebbi. We even have a photograph of him coming to daven with Saba; I put it in Toldos Menachem. He was a very fine man. As the rav of the Kurds, his word was final, and when my grandfather asked for the shul to give shiurim there in Spanish, they gave him the place at once.

Saba gave them a shiur of about two hours and came back to Beis Yisrael after shkiah. Meanwhile, at shkiah, people were already gathering in the shul of Ahavas Chaim, and my father gave them a shiur and held the crowd until my grandfather arrived. Then Saba came and continued with another shiur of an hour and a half more. At Ahavas Chaim they ended Shabbos after the zman of Rabbeinu Tam, and a quarter of an hour or half an hour later still, so that it became Rabbeinu Tam and lemehadrin. That is how it was. Everyone came to hear Saba, and they loved him. That was Saba's schedule.

Knocks in the Night

Talk Ten · 1:53:30

My grandfather was full of chessed. People gave him money and donations, and he accepted all of it, and he went out to ask for more besides.

I remember him when he was already old and no longer worked. He was entirely devoted to the tzibbur. His whole income, his and my grandmother's, was what they received from Bituach Leumi (the state's national insurance, which paid the elderly a small monthly pension): sixty lirot for him and sixty for her.[9] That was their entire salary, and on it they lived in poverty and with very little. For years my grandfather did not change his clothes. For years, the same clothes! My grandmother was the same. They lived in the poorest way, with nothing in the house: some Pesach dishes in a wall closet, a few things, a few chairs, an old table. When my grandfather's bed broke, he had nothing to fix it with. He tied the broken iron pieces to one another with ropes and slept on it, a bed full of ropes holding it together. He lived in poverty, with dignity, and even from that little he separated his maaser. I watched him take out the maaser and put it into the tzedakah box. He never had a penny of benefit for himself from the tzedakah money.

From the age of twelve until I married at twenty and a half, I grew up in my grandfather's house. One of the grandchildren had to be there, because my grandmother had a heart condition and the old couple needed someone with them at all times. At that time I was the oldest of the grandchildren. There had been an older one before me, but when he married and left, I was next in line. So I lived there: I slept there, I ate there, I sat there, everything. My bed was a wooden board. They accustomed me to sleep only on a board, without even a mattress. I slept on a bench of wood, nothing but a plank, with one blanket, summer and winter. How long did I sleep? Three hours, four hours, and then at chatzos my grandfather woke me: "Alevanta!" (Ladino for "get up!").

I sat with him while he wrote a sefer on Pirkei Avos. It was never printed. There is a sefer on Pirkei Avos under my grandfather's name, but that is a mistake: he did not write it. One of his talmidim, a man named Yosef Adi, whom I knew personally, wrote it, and my grandfather only put the name of Ahavas Chaim on it so that it would sell and help that man earn a living. But my grandfather did write a great sefer on Pirkei Avos, full of many other stories. He wrote it in Turkish, in a special script for that purpose, and I read through it with him and helped him translate. Afterward he looked for someone to read it and translate it into Hebrew too, and it was to be reworked and reworked again. But in the middle of all this he passed

[9] The lira (the Israeli pound) was the currency of Israel before the shekel.

away, and everything was left in manuscript, in Turkish. All the notebooks he had written lay on the aron kodesh in Ahavas Chaim, and one day they disappeared. I do not know what became of them.

From the moment I came to live with him at twelve, I found I had a new seder at night. I knew that if I went to my grandfather he would not let me sleep. He was learning, and I had to learn with him. That is how it was, summer and winter. He sat on his bed, I sat facing him, and we sat with the papers and the learning. He spoke to me in Ladino, and I explained certain words to him in Hebrew so he would know them. He learned with me and wrote and wrote, preparing the sefer. So it was, for years.

But there was something I did not understand. Suddenly there was a knock in the middle of the night. From where? Who knocks at two in the morning, at one in the morning? What happened, have people gone mad? I could not understand it. My grandfather would tell me, "Open the door." I opened it and saw people whom I knew by day as respectable, well-to-do men, knocking on the door at two, at one, at three in the morning, each one half an hour after the next.

My grandfather already had envelopes of money ready for them. They were poor, without bread to eat. They had once been well-off, and nobody knew their situation, and they were ashamed. So they came at midnight or toward morning to take the envelopes my grandfather prepared for them. Every night there were three or four of them, and over the week the people changed. Each had his weekly allowance; my grandfather put a few lirot inside so they would have money to buy food. He arranged each one half an hour apart, so that they would not meet one another and nobody would be embarrassed. None of them knew about the others. Later I came to know them all, and I knew, as each one arrived, which envelope to get up and give him.

Besides all this, he went to many poor people to give them money in their own homes. He would take me, and several times he took my cousins too. He put an envelope in our hands and took us as far as the house. Then he waited below, across the street, hidden, and said: "Go up and say, 'Saba sent this. He said he owes it to you.'" We did not know what he could owe them. Perhaps these people had lent him money in earlier gilgulim, so he owed them. In truth he owed them because it is written in the Torah, "You shall surely open your hand to your brother." That is why he owed them. In this way he supported family after family.

I remember going like that with thick envelopes holding notes of five lirot; rarely there was a single note of ten, and that was already something. I would give it to the person and say, "Saba said he owes you." "Yes, yes, thank you, he owes me, that's fine." That way nobody was put to shame.

The Stories

Two Sacks of Gold for Two Aravos

Talk Nine · 1:37:30

I want to give you one example of who these people were.

The first of them came by ship. Only later, when the railway was built, could they travel by train, and then the journey was very easy. These were very wealthy merchants, and they brought a great deal of gold. They would make their way somehow to Odessa (a port city on the Black Sea, today in Ukraine), and from Odessa they would board ships to Yaffo.

One of these olim had four huge sacks of gold. He expected to reach Eretz Yisrael by ship before Rosh Hashanah, but to be safe he took an esrog, a lulav and hadassim with him. These can last a long time; they keep for two or three months and stay kosher, with the hadassim still meshulashim, without any difficulty. The difficulty is with the aravos.

So he took these three minim with him, along with the four sacks full of gold. Because of thieves and robbers, people would fill the top quarter of such a sack with food or other goods, so that no one would know it was full of gold. The sacks were loaded onto the ship, and he boarded with them.

As luck would have it, the ship was delayed. There were all sorts of happenings and unexpected stops at all sorts of shores, and on Erev Sukkos they were still in the middle of the sea. The Jew said, "Ribbono shel Olam, tomorrow is Sukkos! How can I not take the four minim? I have three; I am missing the fourth. I need two aravos." He thought about what to do. He was in the middle of the sea; he could not run to the market to buy two aravos. Where would he run to? Should he ask the fish for aravos?

He went to the captain and asked him, "Tell me, do you know of an island somewhere around here where aravos grow?"

"Yes," the captain answered. "If we leave the main route and sail six hours in a certain direction, there is a large island with aravos on it. I know it; I have been there several times."

"Would you be willing to take me to that island?"

"Are you mad? We are already late. There are passengers on this ship; they will kill me."

"Listen," the Jew said. "I will give you two sacks of gold. That is worth more than all the passengers and everything you have been paid here. Take me there; I need to take a few aravos."

"All right," the captain said. "I will do it. I don't care if the passengers burst."

And so he did. It was six hours each way, sailing there and back to return to the regular route. He brought him there and gave him a boat with sailors to row him to the island and wait for him to come back. The captain received two sacks of gold. That was a fortune, half of the man's savings, and he gave it to him.

The Jew went and came back with a handful of aravah branches, singing and rejoicing. When he returned he said to the captain, "Thank you very much." He had paid him two sacks of gold, and he thanked him besides.

"What did you bring?" the captain asked.

"These leaves."

"You really did all this for that? I was sure you had some treasure sunk there that you wanted to bring up. That is why you gave me so much gold."

"No," he said. "Tomorrow I have a mitzvah from Hashem, to take two of these together with what I have here. The mitzvah is worth two sacks of gold to me. I have no clever calculations. He gave me the gold, and He gave me the mitzvah. He is my G-d. Just as He gave to me, if He wants He will give to me again. I am paying this for His mitzvah."

The captain said to him, "You Jews, it is impossible to understand you. You are a strange nation."

That is true; we are a strange nation.

The next day he took the lulav and the four minim on the ship, full of joy and happiness that he had merited to fulfill the mitzvah of the four minim, aravos included, which he had bought at such a high price. Ashreihem Yisrael! These were the Bukharim who came to Eretz Yisrael.

Five Hundred Lirot for an Orphan

Talk Ten · 48:00

Let me tell you how much siyata diShmaya Saba had.

As I said, Saba lived on Fishel Levi Street. Three or four buildings away, on the same street, lived my rebbi, Chacham Yehuda Tzadka, alav hashalom. He too had a kupas tzedakah, and he too married off orphan boys and girls and the children of poor families. Later my father was one of the big givers to his kupah. He looked after people who needed help, especially bnei Torah, to marry them off and help them. If they learned in Porat Yosef he felt a greater personal responsibility for

them. At that time he was a teacher in Porat Yosef. I am speaking of the days before he became rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef, while Rabbi Ezra Attiya was still rosh yeshivah. Still, he felt responsible for them.

I remember one morning at about seven o'clock. Saba had finished davening and come home, and he was sitting in the house. Suddenly Chacham Yehuda Tzadka walked in. I even remember how he looked as he came in: in an ordinary shirt. The rabbanim of those days did not put on airs or look for show. He came wearing a Bukharan kippah, the large embroidered one that covers the whole head. Saba often wore one too, at home and in the street, for the same reason. He was not looking for show either.

Chacham Yehuda came in, in his ordinary shirt, and said to my grandfather: "Chacham Menachem, last night we made an engagement for an orphan, a talmid chacham."

"Mazal tov."

"But we committed ourselves for the wedding. In fact we committed a larger sum for the wedding expenses, but we decided that you will bring five hundred lirot. We decided it for you."

Do you know what five hundred lirot was in those days? That was money. And do you understand? They decided for a grown man what he would do.

Saba heard him out and said: "All right. You decided, I accept. I will see to five hundred lirot for your orphan. I do not have it now, but it will be there. I will bring it."

That morning Saba was not feeling well. He was somewhat pale. But he said to my grandmother: "I have to go to Tel Aviv to get the money."

"But only a short while ago you went to look for money for your people, for your poor," she said, "and you have not managed to get all of it yet. And now you are going for this?"

He said: "There is a chasan here, a talmid chacham, an orphan. I may not sleep until I raise the money for him. I do not know from where."

Saba went to Tel Aviv, to his son Mordechai, who lived in the Shapira neighborhood. When he got to his son's home he was pale, and he said to his daughter-in-law: "Listen, I do not feel well. The trip wore me out. I am going to sleep for an hour, an hour and a half. Wake me in an hour and a half, because I have to go."

After an hour and a half he got up by himself. She said to him: "Abba, your face is still pale. Maybe you should rest a little longer?"

"No," he said. "I have work. I did not come here to rest."

A Bris in Hadassah

Talk Ten · 52:30

It was about three in the afternoon. He went down the stairs, on his way to a few factories there belonging to Turkish Jews who knew him, to start asking. He had been to them only the week before, but every day is different, yishtabach shemo; maybe today some money had come in and they could give him more.

As he came down to the street he met a very fine Jew, alav hashalom, named Moshe Cohen, who also came from Turkey. Moshe Cohen said to him: "Chacham Menachem, there is a bris right now in Hadassah, a bris of Turkish Jews. Come, it is a mitzvah!"

When my grandfather heard "bris," that was a mitzvah, and he had to go. Eliyahu HaNavi is there, and if Eliyahu HaNavi is there, he too needed to be there. "Let's go!" he said.

So Saba came to the bris of people he did not know at all, in Hadassah in Tel Aviv (in those years Hadassah also ran a hospital in Tel Aviv). The baby was being brought in to be given to the sandak. The sandak takes the child and holds him on his knees during the milah. The father of the child, the mohel and the sandak are called the three ba'alei bris Avraham, and that day is their Yom Tov. But the woman or man who carries the baby in to the sandak, to the bris, also counts for something. As I said, everything affects a child, and who knew these things better than Saba?

In those days women hardly ever wore pants. It was not done. Who wore pants? Only the kibbutzniks (the women of the secular kibbutzim) went about in khaki pants. Everyone else wore a ponytail and a sarafan (a simple pinafore dress). Now he saw a young woman in khaki pants carrying the baby to the bris.

On the spot, in front of everyone, where nobody knew him, Saba called out: "Madam! Please, I beg of you, do not give him to the sandak! Give him to someone else to give to the sandak, I beg of you!" He shouted it in a hard voice, but he did say "please."

Everyone looked at him. Who is this man? Who invited him? Who even knows him? Why is he getting involved here? Nobody paid him any attention, and those who did looked at him with hostility: who are you to come and tell me what to do? They did not listen. He shouted it twice more, trembling all over, and they paid no attention. She gave the baby to the sandak, and the bris was over.

Mr. Russo

Talk Ten · 56:00

Now everyone sat down to the seudah, and Saba got up to leave. He had not been invited to the seudah, and who knew what the kashrus was there? He was not looking for anything. He had come to hear the bris and the berachos. It was over; Eliyahu HaNavi was leaving, and he was leaving too. He had nothing more to do there.

As he was going out, a man stopped him at the door. He was a Turkish Jew from America who had been at the bris, named Russo, Mister Russo. He grabbed my grandfather by the beard. My grandfather had a small beard. It never grew long, but he never touched it. When you do not touch a beard it does not grow much; when you touch it, it grows more and more. Saba had a small beard and never in his life touched it. This man grabbed him by the beard and, in a rage, shook his whole head with it.

He spoke to him in Ladino (the Spanish of the Jews of Turkey and the Balkans), and said: "Aren't you ashamed? By your beard I'd say you're a small rabbi; you have a small beard. Aren't you rabbis ashamed to go and disturb people at their simchos? Why are you sticking your nose in? Why are you shouting at a young woman and shaming her in public? You don't know who she is or what she is. Why do you meddle in a quarrel that isn't yours and start telling people what to do and what not to do? Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?" All of it he said with contempt.

When he had finished, my grandfather asked him: "Did you only want to let out your anger, so that now you are done and I may go? Or are you really waiting for an answer? Do you have something to answer me?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then I will ask you a question," said Saba, "and answer me exactly. Suppose you are at a wedding, in the middle of the chuppah, in the middle of the sheva berachos, and everyone is listening to the chasan and kallah. Now you see a baby fainting. Will you say, 'I will not disturb the ceremony'? Or will you shout, 'Help! Help! Take care of the baby first! The ceremony can go on afterward, nothing will happen to it. The baby comes first!'?"

"Of course I would shout for help," he said. "A baby is fainting!"

"That is what I did."

"I don't understand. No baby fainted here. What did you do?"

So my grandfather told him: "That young woman is a niddah. She does not keep taharas hamishpachah. I do not know whether she is married or not, but from what one can see of her, she is a niddah. Since she is a niddah, if she hands the baby over

as a niddah, he will have a stain, a scar on his neshamah, all his life. The child is fainting! I had to shout for help!"

"What is a niddah?" he asked. "I've never heard of such a thing. What is it?"

My grandfather began to explain to him what a Jewish neshamah is, what a niddah is, what the stain of niddah does to a person's neshamah, and how severe the matter is. Saba also knew how to speak. He talked with him for about half an hour and made him understand. Saba had already forgotten that this man had shaken him by the beard and the head. He saw a Jewish neshamah that wanted to hear, so he began teaching him Torah for half an hour. He brought him examples and stories and told him what a Jewish neshamah is, how holy it is, what that kedushah does, and how it is affected when a person who is not holy touches another.

There is a matter of tumah here. Today it is forbidden for a woman to give her hand to men for this reason, and not only for this one. A man who has become tamei through a niddah and touches another person's body makes him tamei, and that person needs to go to the mikveh because of it. People shake hands with whoever comes along. It is better not to shake hands even among men, not only with women, which is altogether forbidden; even between man and man, one should shake hands as little as possible.

So Saba explained the matter, and the man listened. After half an hour my grandfather said to him: "Sir, I think I have answered you very well. I have made sure there will be no chillul Hashem, and that you understand that what I did, I did to save the baby. I did not succeed; that is no longer my problem, but I tried. Now I have to go. I have no time for you. I have things to do."

"What do you do?"

"I collect money for poor families, and right now I also have to marry off an orphan. I have no time."

Moshe Cohen was about to leave as well. Russo knew him, since he was family, so he asked him: "Tell me, is this man trustworthy?"

Moshe Cohen said: "If there were a few more like Chacham Menachem, Mashiach would already be here."

A Check for a Thousand Dollars

Talk Ten · 1:01:00

Then Russo said to my grandfather: "Listen. I want you to give me another hour or two of Torah. I'll pay you for your time, and you'll be satisfied. You won't need to collect donations today. I'm paying."

When my grandfather heard that, he sat with him for several hours and began to explain what a Jew is, what Shabbos is, what taharah is. He understood that he was dealing with a man who did not know his right hand from his left and knew nothing whatsoever. He began explaining these things to him, and the man sat and listened thirstily. Things he had never heard of in his life he was hearing now. He felt that these were words that came from the heart and entered the heart. And Saba knew how to explain, to bring examples and more stories, a story from here and a story from there.

The man had a hirhur teshuvah. He said to my grandfather: "I promise you that from now on I close my factory on Shabbos. I have a big factory that works on Shabbos, and I'm closing it. I give you my word."

"And what about you on Shabbos?" Saba asked.

"I'll try to keep it. I don't know hilchos Shabbos. Whatever I know I'll keep, and I'll try to learn hilchos Shabbos."

He started to write my grandfather a check in dollars, and my grandfather said: "Listen. If you will not keep Shabbos, I cannot take money from you. I gave you three hours so that you would wake up, but…"

"No," he said. "If that's the price, I keep Shabbos. I take it upon myself to keep Shabbos, and I'll start learning Yiddishkeit. Now I understand things I didn't know before. You've woken me up."

"Ah, you are keeping Shabbos? Good."

He wrote him a check for a thousand dollars. My grandfather took the check, got on a bus and went back to Jerusalem. By then it was late in the evening, with barely enough time to daven Ma'ariv. He had davened Minchah in Tel Aviv. He davened Ma'ariv and went to sleep.

I may have told you already, and if not I will tell you later: my grandfather went to sleep with the chickens and got up with the chickens, and that was the daily schedule he got me used to as well. I went to sleep a bit after the chickens, but he went to sleep along with them, an hour after Ma'ariv. At exactly chatzos he was awake, and he woke me too, to learn with him until morning. He never gave me any rest in my life, and I am glad of it. Back then it was a little hard for me; today I am happy about it.

In the morning he said to me: "Yosefiko, I have a check for a thousand dollars. Go change it with Rabbi Yaakov Lider."

In those days there were heavy restrictions on foreign currency. Whoever sold it anywhere other than a bank went to jail. It was a serious crime. Trading foreign currency outside the banks was criminal, and whoever was caught, woe to him on the day of judgment and woe to him on the day of rebuke. All foreign currency had to go through the banks: let them make the profit, not you. On the black market a dol-

lar was then worth one lira eighty, which made a lot of money. Through the proper channels you had to wait nine days for the check to clear, and after the commission and all the other deductions they would give you barely fifteen or sixteen hundred. They skinned you alive. Why should we need that?

Rabbi Yaakov Lider was a fine, pleasant Jew who lived in Jerusalem. Later he lived in Beis Yisrael, across from the Mir Yeshivah, but at first he lived inside Meah Shearim, near Torah VeYirah. In his home he ran a money-changing business, not legal of course, and he paid well.

Saba said to me: "Go now to Rabbi Yaakov Lider, give him the check and bring me the money. And hold the money tight! It's a lot of money." I was barely a boy then; I was not yet bar mitzvah. "Listen," he said, "he is going to give you a lot of money. Hold it tight, very tight, and come straight back here."

Saba had signed the check with his name and stamped it with the stamp of the Ahavas Chaim society. I took the check with Saba's signature and stamp to Rabbi Yaakov Lider and received from him one thousand eight hundred lirot. Do you know how much money that was? Now Saba had enough to cover the five hundred he had promised the orphan, and all his earlier obligations as well, and a little was left over. A lot of money. Saba took the money, as was right.

The File That Disappeared

Talk Ten · 1:06:30

That same day the police raided the home of Rabbi Yaakov Lider. They seized all his papers and all the checks; they confiscated everything. Someone had informed on him. There were informers going around in those days for a percentage of the take, looking for cases. There had been an informer even before this, and they had been lying in wait, and the moment they sensed the business was hot, a few detectives came: "Sir, you are under arrest, and all the documents are confiscated."

There were no computers then; everything was files and papers. There was a list of checks, and each check carried a signature by which its owner could be identified, and the place it came from, especially since this one said Ahavas Chaim. Apparently my grandfather's signature was also well known.

Less than two weeks later, my grandfather received a summons, first to be questioned at the police. So Saba went to the police. "Yes, what do you want from me?"

He was used to the police by then. They were always calling him in about all sorts of things, as I will tell you later; a number of times there were thefts in Ahavas Chaim, and things of that kind. So he came to the police: "What do you want?"

"Listen, did you deal in dollars?"

"What do you mean?" he asked them.

"There is a check here that, instead of changing it at a bank, you went and changed with the money-changer Lider."

"Yes, that is true."

"Do you know that it is illegal?"

"Yes, I know."

"Then why did you do it?"

"For the money! It is tzedakah money. I cannot be a tzaddik at the expense of money that is not mine; there is no justice in that. I have to give this money to the poor, every lira." In those days it was not shekels but lirot. "Every lira counts."

"All right. Sign here that you admit your guilt, and go."

Several months passed, and one day Saba received a summons to trial: to appear at ten o'clock at the court, which was then, I think, in the Generali building (a large building on Rechov Yafo in Jerusalem), to be tried for trading in foreign currency. There was a punishment for it, a number of years in prison and so on.

I was sitting at home that morning, and I heard my grandmother crying and saying to my grandfather: "Guay de mi! Woe is me! What will be? Who knows what they will do to you now?"

My grandfather smiled and said to her: "Esther, don't be afraid. No te espantes. I am going to do a mitzvah of hashavas aveidah. Today I will go and bring the check back to Rabbi Yaakov Lider. The poor man paid me money for it. Don't worry, I know that everything will be all right."

He calmed her and went to the court, without knowing anything. Saba did not take a lawyer, and he did not go looking for people to speak on his behalf. He took nothing. He went, and he had the Borei with him. "Ribbono shel Olam," he said, "I am relying on You to bring me the check as well."

Saba walked into the corridor of the court. He did not know anyone there. Suddenly a Jew came up to him, a religious Sephardi Jew, one of ours, a yerei Shamayim. "Chacham Menachem, what is kevodo doing here?"

"I received a summons, so here I am."

"Be quiet! I am the shammash here. Be quiet. Go downstairs and wait for me below, by the exit door." He took the paper, looked at it and said: "That's it, wait downstairs."

My grandfather went down. Not twenty minutes passed, and the man came down and brought him the whole file. "I stole the file," he said. "The files that have to come before the judge are arranged in order. I managed to slip yours out, put it under my shirt, and here it is. Take it and run! If they catch you, we are both lost. Take it and run. No file, no trial."

My grandfather took the file and came home. I was home by then. At half past twelve or one I came home for lunch, hungry, and my grandfather came in, calm, with the file. I can see it before my eyes exactly how he opened it. It was a binder of sorts; I think it was light blue, but I am not sure. All the documents were inside. My grandfather opened it and took the papers out one by one, and with a rip, rip, tore each sheet into several pieces, so that afterward he could soak them in water, make one lump of dough out of them, and throw it in the garbage.

When he reached the check, he took it out and said: "Yosefiko, here is the check. Go now to Rabbi Yaakov Lider and give it back to him."

That check was legal evidence. It sat in the file as evidence against the great criminal Chacham Menachem, who had committed the grave sin of changing tzedakah money with a private money-changer. Oy va'avoy, woe to him on the day of judgment!

I took the check and ran. By then Rabbi Yaakov Lider was already home, with everything settled. I said to him: "Rabbi Yaakov, Saba is returning your check. Hashavas aveidah."

Such was Saba's siyata diShmaya all along the way: how to raise the money, and, if chas veshalom something happened afterward, how to come out of it with only one thing, with the Borei yisbarach with him, and nothing else.

The Radio Across the Street

Talk Ten · 1:24:30

In the Machane Yehuda neighborhood (the quarter around Jerusalem's great market) stood the Shauli shul, where many Jewish working men from every eidah davened. Like all of my grandfather's people, they were loyal to him and would have given their very neshamah for him. When he held a ta'anis dibbur (a fast from speech, with the whole Tehillim said three times in a set order), the shul was packed from wall to wall, and people sat there the entire day saying Tehillim three times over, with the whole seder of the ta'anis dibbur.

It is a very important seder. My grandfather was a talmid of Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah, who instituted it and taught its great worth. Later the two of them arranged a special nusach of tefillah for it, called Kol Yaakov. In my Sedeh Tapuchim I printed the entire seder of the ta'anis dibbur, with its tefillah and its full nusach. On the ta'anis dibbur they also used to make the modaah (a formal declaration) of the Shevet Mussar, which is a very important thing for a person to do in his lifetime, and that too appears in Sedeh Tapuchim. A new edition of Sedeh Tapuchim is about to come out, be'ezras Hashem. It has the whole seder of the ta'anis dibbur,

laid out just as they did it in my grandfather's time, together with all the tikkunim. I have added more tikkunim as well, among them a tikkun for one who has no children and a tikkun for another aveirah.

On Shabbos, too, the shul was full. Simple Jews came to hear halachos. Whatever they had heard the year before about the halachos of the Yamim Tovim they had forgotten, so every year he had to teach them the halachos all over again, and add new ones besides, for our Torah is longer than the earth and wider than the sea. There were halachos, a few stories, and some mussar, and the people sat and delighted in it.

Across the road lived a Jew from the Balkans. He was not Turkish, but he spoke Ladino (the Spanish of the Jews who were exiled from Spain). After the First World War all the Torah had fled from those lands as well. In truth he was raised mostly here, since he came to Eretz Yisrael as a young man. I do not remember exactly where he came from, whether Yugoslavia, Bosnia, or one of those places. His two sons were raised in Hashomer Hatzair and lived on its kibbutzim.[10] He seems to have studied in the Alliance schools,[11] and this is what he took from them: he hated religion.

My grandfather's shiurim were thorns in his eyes. How could this be? This chacham was deceiving people, selling them stories about Olam Haba. Who had ever been there? Who had ever come back? It was all nonsense. He was enlightened, he was wise, and he felt he had to put a stop to such foolishness.

In those days a radio was the size of a watermelon. There were no transistors. The whole set had to be a huge wooden box with loudspeakers inside to give out the sound. Every Shabbos, the moment my grandfather began his shiur, this man turned on his radio full blast. Suddenly the whole shul heard songs and music, and the shiur was disturbed.

The people saw what he was doing and wanted to go out to his house. These were not men who looked for clever solutions. They would not have thought twice, and they would have torn him apart like a fish. They got heated: "Chacham Menachem, we're going to take care of him now."

My grandfather motioned to them with his hand. "Nobody goes out. I do not allow any protest, I do not allow you to do anything. We go on." The radio dis-

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[10] Hashomer Hatzair was a socialist Zionist youth movement whose kibbutzim were known for raising their children far from Torah and against it.

[11] The Alliance Israélite Universelle was a network of French Jewish schools spread across the lands of the East, which gave its pupils a modern, Western education.

turbed them through the whole shiur, but my grandfather raised his voice and gave his shiur.

They thought it would be one Shabbos and that would be the end of it. The next week the man turned the radio up again. It seemed impossible to make it louder than the time before, but he made it louder still, and it disturbed the shiur. This time the people were truly hot-headed. "Chacham Menachem, give us permission. We'll take care of him, and he'll forget his own name."

My grandfather threatened them: "If you go out, I am not coming back here to give a shiur. All of you will sit right here, and the shiur will go on just like this. In the end we will beat him."

One week, two, three, four. The shiur suffered and there was noise, but my grandfather overcame it and gave the shiur.

The man had been ready all along, only waiting for them to come so that he could start a fight. He knew who he was dealing with. He had prepared some stones, and the telephone was ready for calling the police. There would be a real commotion. He waited and waited, but nobody came out and nobody said a word to him. In the fourth or fifth week the tables turned and he broke. He decided to go into the shul himself and fight my grandfather.

Suddenly everyone saw him come in. He was a tall, heavy, powerfully built man, as broad as he was tall. My grandfather saw him enter and told the people, "Move over, make room for him next to me." They seated him beside my grandfather.

He was furious, and in front of everyone he asked in Hebrew: "Rabbi, why are you deceiving these poor people? Why are you selling them stories about Olam Haba? Has anyone been there? Has anyone come back? What are you selling them? There is no Olam Haba, there is no judgment and no Judge. Every man does what is right in his own eyes. We are an enlightened world, a cultured world. That is how I was raised. Stop confusing these poor people. You are just leading them by the nose."

The people who heard this thought that now they would fall on him and tear him to pieces. My grandfather signaled them with his hand to stay still, and he began to explain: "There is an Olam Haba. You see people suffering. Why do they suffer? Why should a man who did nothing suddenly suffer? It is because of his previous gilgul. You ask whether anyone has come back from Olam Haba? Yes, people have come back." He told him stories of people who had been there and returned. In those days there were not yet the many stories we hear today about people who come back from a coma. But history has a few such stories and such things are known, and he told him about people who came back as a dybbuk. There

is a whole sefer by Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael on these matters, Nishmas Chaim,[12] and my grandfather told him several stories from it.

The man broke and began to listen. For about twenty minutes my grandfather answered his questions. Then he paid him no more attention and went on with his usual shiur: the halachos, and the parashah of the week and what is written in it. The man sat and listened until the end.

Suddenly this enlightened man discovered things he had never known, things that truly speak to the heart. It became clear to him that he was the fool, the one who knew nothing, and not the great sage he had imagined. To his credit, he was an honest man. He was a poor tinok shenishbah who thought he would provoke them and come out ahead. The very next Shabbos he was the first in line to come in and hear divrei Torah. For a whole year he came to the shiurim, and he did complete teshuvah. He rescued both his sons from Hashomer Hatzair.

He came to my grandfather constantly. In their language they called candies "balgamiko." We called them "bonbon," but they said "balgamiko." He was always coming for my grandfather to give him a candy, which he regarded as a segulah for berachah and for refuah: "Chacham, el balgamiko, por favor!" He would come with his wife, sit with my grandfather, and visit, a complete baal teshuvah.

Then he decided that he had to do true teshuvah for everything he had sinned. What would his teshuvah be? He would become a mezakeh es harabim. He began to study sefarim and to teach, and he had a real gift for speaking. I remember that when I was sixteen he came to me and offered me a fine sum of money to put the nekudos into the Shevet Mussar for him. The Shevet Mussar is a wonderful sefer of mussar written about two hundred or two hundred fifty years ago by Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen, one of the great rabbanim of Izmir (a city on the coast of Turkey). It is a very important sefer, and he wanted to tell it over to people. He began reading it to people and speaking on it.

He wrote down the stories he heard from my grandfather. I remember one year my grandfather traveled to kivrei tzaddikim and he came along. He wrote down every place and every word my grandfather said, and afterward he told it all over to others. He became a serious talmid who gave others to drink from everything he drew. In time he became one of the most sought-after darshanim. I do not call him a rav, because he was not really a rav. He was invited everywhere and to every occasion, and he gave derashos, told stories, and was mezakeh es harabim. And not only he: the two sons he had pulled out of the kibbutz also became darshanim. One spoke in Yerushalayim and drew a young crowd, and the other spoke in New York.

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[12] Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael was a rav in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, known also for his efforts to have Jews readmitted to England.

That was my grandfather's mesirus nefesh. He brought out the precious from the worthless and made it precious indeed.

The Ice in the Mikveh

Talk Ten · 1:36:00

When I was about eighteen my language was still Ladino. Today I have forgotten some of it, because I have not spoken it for many years, but back then I spoke Ladino better than Hebrew.

My grandfather was particular about tikkunim. I will tell more about the tikkunim later. They made tikkunim for aveiros. The mekubalim make tikkunim for every aveirah, even for ones they do not know how a person could ever commit. Why? Perhaps we sinned in an earlier gilgul, or one from the shoresh of my neshamah sinned, and I too can suffer for it. So they made tikkunim for the gravest aveiros of arayos: a man with another man, with another man's wife, with a niddah, with a non-Jewish woman. They did not even know how such aveiros are done, yet they made tikkunim for them. For some of these aveiros the tikkun also requires gilgulei sheleg (rolling in snow).

You young people do not even know what I am talking about, because I am speaking of an older generation. In those days there were no electric refrigerators. There was an icebox. There was a factory that made blocks of ice. Each block was about a meter or a meter twenty long and twenty by twenty centimeters across. Stores sold half a block or a quarter of a block. We would buy one and put it inside the icebox, which was lined with tin. The ice cooled the tin, and the tin cooled the food. That was how it was then, before anyone had heard of an electric refrigerator. Besides the stores, trucks also drove through the streets ringing a bell and calling, "Ice! Ice!" and people ran out to buy.

My grandfather would buy fifty or eighty of these blocks, I do not know exactly how many. At the mikveh of Beis Yisrael (the neighborhood next to Meah Shearim) they moved the benches aside and covered the whole floor of the area where people change their clothes with blocks of ice. Then he and a whole group of old men, in the middle of the summer, fasting, did the tikkun of gilgulei sheleg on the ice. They rolled seven times or nine times, depending on the aveirah, and they did this over several fasts. They had to roll the whole body over, get up, and roll again, seven times. Afterward my grandfather could barely speak for a whole week. He drank nothing but hot water the whole time to get his voice back.

One such tikkun was done at the beginning of the month of Av, and my grandfather became ronko, hoarse, truly hoarse. He said to me, "Yosefiko, this Shabbos I

cannot give the shiur in Spanish. This morning I barely managed to give the shiur in Mishkenos and in Shauli. Now I have to go to Mamilla (a neighborhood just outside the walls of the Old City), and I have no voice. I cannot do it. You will come with me and give the shiur today. Teach them the halachos of Tishah b'Av. If you can tell them a story, tell them one. If you cannot, just teach them the halachos, so at least they will leave with something."

I knew the halachos of Tishah b'Av, baruch Hashem. So I walked with him all the way to Mamilla. It was all uphill: from Beis Yisrael up to Meah Shearim is one steep climb, and from Meah Shearim we kept walking until at last we reached Mamilla.

What did I see there? A crowd of older people, pleasant and yirei Shamayim, sitting in the shul. The women sat in the ezras nashim, properly covered and modest, with their hair covered. It was a religious crowd. You could even call them chareidi, except that among Sephardim the idea of "chareidi" does not exist. That is an invention of the Ashkenazim. With us there is no such idea. There is a Jew, and that is all: a Jew who keeps the whole Torah and all the mitzvos, all six hundred thirteen. What he wears makes no difference. Among the Sephardim they were not particular to wear only black and white. They wore whatever came to hand. My grandfather often went about in gray, or in green, often in green trousers. What difference does it make? The main thing is that they kept the Torah and mitzvos. The clothes do not make the man; the man makes the clothes, as long as the clothing is modest, of course.

They were ordinary people, in caps and every kind of yarmulke, but it was a lovely shiur. There were several minyanim of men, and more upstairs. I explained the halachos of Tishah b'Av to them. People asked questions. They wanted to understand what one may do and may not do in the week in which Tishah b'Av falls, how they should eat, what is permitted and what is not. I answered all their questions and sat with them until the shiur ended, and then we went home.

The Story Club in Mamilla

Talk Ten · 1:42:00

On the way home my grandfather said to me, "Do you see this crowd? Do you know who they are? Let me tell you.

"When they came to Eretz Yisrael in the early fifties, they knew nothing of Yiddishkeit, nothing at all. They were settled in Yemin Moshe, and they lived there like goyim. I went to them and said, 'Listen, I know how to tell stories very well, and I want to open a club for stories. What do you say? Will you come and hear stories?'

"They said to me, 'All week we work hard for a living. Only Shabbos is free.'

"I said, 'Fine, come on Shabbos.' I did not want to hold it in Yemin Moshe itself, because it was very hard for me to climb all the way there. Yemin Moshe sits on another hill, facing Har Tziyon. So I looked for a place in between, and the rav here gave me a place in Mamilla. For them it is one short walk down the slope from Yemin Moshe, and I am spared a great climb. They come down in five minutes, and I wear myself out getting here to tell them stories.

"They all came, in the middle of the summer, to hear the stories. Every one of them came with a cigarette in his mouth and in immodest clothing."

Now, my grandfather was a kanai. He gave himself over for his kana'us. I told you earlier how he gave himself over in the matter of the chevra kadisha. When the Edison cinema opened in Yerushalayim, near Meah Shearim, by Zichron Moshe, they started showing films on the first Shabbos. The first film was at seven o'clock, which in the middle of the summer is still Shabbos, and at four o'clock they already opened up to sell tickets. There were two iron rails, and people walked between them up to the ticket window to buy tickets for the cinema. The religious people heard about it and came to protest. My grandfather came too. Everyone shouted, "Shabbes! Shabbes kodesh!" to stop the selling of tickets on Shabbos.

My grandfather did not shout "Shabbes." He pushed his way through the people to the cashier's window, put his head inside, and gripped the iron bars with all his strength. He did not move from there. They beat him. The cashier struck him on the head, since his head was right there in front of him. The people buying tickets beat him all over his body. The police came and also began beating him so that he would move away, and he did not move. He took blows over his whole body and did not move, because it was Shabbos! In the end they dragged him away by force and threw him out. That is how he fought with his own body for kedushas Shabbos.

At that very same time, while he was fighting for kedushas Shabbos, these people came into the shul on Shabbos, all of them with cigarettes, men and women sitting together. The Turkish Jews had an expression, "ungezha," which means walking arm in arm. Husband and wife did not walk one behind the other, as if he were afraid she would run away from him. They walked together down the street, arm in arm, linked to each other. That is how they came into the shul on Shabbos, men and women in immodest clothing, with cigarettes in their mouths.

My grandfather received them with a smile. He did not shout "Shabbos," and he said nothing at all. He welcomed every one of them. Wonderful! They all sat down, and he began to tell them stories. He had a treasury of stories. In Ahavas Chaim there are only four or five hundred, but he knew many more. When he told a story, he lived it. "He went! He arrived! He came! Yes! He spoke!" Everything was with

expressions of the face. For these people it was a free club, and they loved hearing the stories.

My grandfather told me, "I said nothing to them. For several Shabbosos they came like that with their cigarettes, and I did not say one word to them about religion, so as not to drive them away. The rabbanim in Meah Shearim sent to tell me: 'If you do not stop your club with those people there, pritzes! chillul Shabbes! we will put you in niddui.' I sent back to tell them: 'You take care of your people, and let me take care of mine. Do not tell me what to do.' I paid them no attention and went on with my people.

"Only after several Shabbosos did I explain to them that on Shabbos it is forbidden both to light a fire and to put one out. So if they are already smoking on Shabbos, at least they must not put the cigarette out. That was all. It took a few weeks until I had explained to them the halachos of smoking: if they are already smoking, they must not knock off the ash, because that too is putting out. And at home they must not cook on Shabbos but prepare the cooking on Friday.

"Midwinter came, and they all arrived in the rain. Who had umbrellas then? Nobody. Each one came with a coat over his head to soak up the rain, and they arrived drenched. At the entrance to the shul each one wrung all the water out of his coat and came in. I watched them wringing out their coats on Shabbos and did not say a word to them!

"They all sat down, men and women, and now that it was winter I could speak to them about tznius. All summer I had not spoken to them about it, because I would have driven them away. I waited for the winter. Now I spoke to them about tznius. Because of the winter they were dressing modestly anyway, and I told them they must keep up that tznius in the summer too. I also began to speak to them more about shemiras Shabbos and about halachos. Every few stories at the club, I slipped in two halachos. Slowly, slowly. It took a year or two until these people became the Yidden, yirei Shamayim, whom you see now."

He won not only them but their children too. Some of the children had already grown up in the state schools, and it was hard by then to save them. One man who worked on the railway always came to my grandfather. I do not want to mention his name, but his son was a well-known player, the darling of the crowd on one of the Jerusalem teams, and a well-known mechallel Shabbos. Everyone went to watch him, and they applauded him and fought over him. This father always came to my grandfather in tears, begging him to daven that his son should do teshuvah. But others did come back. Not only these people themselves: I know avreichim today whose fathers came back to Yiddishkeit through those shiurim in that place.

At root these people all came from great families, from the world of Torah that existed until the First World War. The Torah returned to its lodging place. After

they had fallen, they came back through my grandfather, with a great deal of patience.

When a person goes and shouts at another, he does not bring him close. He only pushes him further away. One must know how to bring people close to Torah, and someone who does not know how should not start with these things, so that he does not ruin them. One has to know what to do. When they hold their foolish parades and do all kinds of nonsense in them, there is no need to fight with them or protest against them. One should give them a gift: booklets that speak about these problems, so that each one can take one home and read it. Eighty percent will throw it away. Twenty percent will take it and read it, and they can be awakened. These poor people need to be awakened to teshuvah, because they too are poor souls who need teshuvah. There are people from the left who did teshuvah when they discovered the truth. They simply do not know; they think they are on the right path. Of them it has already been said, "ממחדל למחדל כוחנו יגדל" ("from blunder to blunder our strength grows"). Such people must be brought back only with pleasantness, with a sefer, with booklets, not with arguments and not with fights. Nothing comes of those, and certainly not of violence. That only pushes people further away.

At the cinema it was a fight that had to be fought, and so he fought. That was no place to start talking with the ticket buyers. Those were people who knew everything and wanted the cinema, and that is something else. But these people were tinokos shenishbu. Today more than eighty percent of Klal Yisrael are tinokos shenishbu, and our approach to them must fit that. And what pearls come out of them then!

That is what my grandfather did, and that is what he told me on the way home: "Do you see the crowd? This is that crowd." I went around a great deal with my grandfather, to Petach Tikvah, to the Shapira neighborhood, to Yehud, to Or Yehudah. All of these were centers of Ladino-speaking Jews. I saw all these families. In some of them the sons were already lost, poor things, burned by an education they did not understand, because they had been raised wrongly. But some families did manage to raise their sons rightly as well. All of them treated my grandfather with awe and honor, because he had saved them, kept them on the right path, and educated them toward the truth.

My grandfather did much more. Later I will tell how, in his zechus, the border of the State of Israel in Yerushalayim was drawn, and how he saved the Beis Yisrael neighborhood in the last minutes before the enemy, the Arab Legion (the army of Jordan in the War of Independence), was about to capture it. But that will come later, when I speak about tefillos and tikkunim. For now I will speak about his acts of chessed.

The Sack of Shoes

Talk Ten · 2:24:00

There are more stories. It is late and I must finish soon, but I will tell you three or four more.

One day Saba received a donation of shoes, a few dozen pairs, from a man who gave them so that Saba would hand them out to poor people who needed them. There was no shortage of poor people, with feet of every size, who could wear them. Saba took the whole bundle, a sack of shoes, and put it in the ezras nashim of Ahavas Chaim. He left it there and went out.

A man came in, saw a sack of shoes, and did not think twice. He hoisted it onto his shoulder and went to Machaneh Yehudah (the big open-air market of Yerushalayim) to sell the shoes and make some money. He stole them. He laid them out on the sidewalk in Machaneh Yehudah and began selling them for next to nothing. A pair of shoes worth a lira he sold for a few grush.

The police noticed: a man selling shoes for ten percent of their price? "Who are you? Where are you from? Where did these shoes come from? Come along for questioning." They took him and the shoes in for questioning, and the man broke down. "I stole them from Chacham Menachem, from Ahavas Chaim," he told them.

They called Saba at once. When he came, they said to him, "Listen, this man stole your shoes. Here they are. Sign here, file a complaint for theft, take your shoes, and we will deal with him."

"Are you out of your minds?" said Saba. "I gave him the shoes, so that he could sell them and have food for his home. Why are you holding him at all? I gave them to him. They are his by right!"

"What? He said he took them from Ahavas Chaim!"

"Yes, that's right, he took them. I gave him permission. Please give him back all the shoes and let him go sell them. You will not hold a man for nothing. The shoes are mine, and I have every right to give them to him."

When they saw this, they told the man, "Take the shoes and go." He took the shoes, went out with them, and put them in his house. Then he told his family, "Return these to Chacham Menachem," and ran away from Yerushalayim out of shame at having been caught stealing.

Saba went home, and an hour later the shoes arrived from the man's family. "Listen," they told him, "he returned the shoes and ran away from home, and we don't know what to do now. He ran off. He is ashamed. He got the name of a thief."

"Don't worry," said Saba, and he went to look for him.

I do not know how Saba discovered that he was in Tel Aviv. Saba traveled to Tel Aviv for that purpose alone, and it took him a week to find the address where he was staying. He came to him and said, "Why did you run away? In my eyes you are not a thief. In my eyes you are an honest man. You were simply under pressure. You had no money to feed your children, you saw shoes, and you broke. I understand you. It is nothing! Go back home. Here is money for the trip. And know that everyone knows I gave you the shoes to sell. No one knows that you stole. You will go back to your place with your honor." He persuaded him to go home.

Then the man who had donated the shoes came to Saba. "What? You let a man sell them? I told you to give them out!"

"Listen," Saba told him. "You know that I am a man of tzedakah, and you knew that it is a mitzvah to give people shoes to wear. But I saw that it was a greater mitzvah to give this man food, so that his children would not die. So I did a mitzvah! The zechus will stand for you, I promise you. But by the way, the man did not manage to sell them after all. He returned them; he did not succeed in selling them, and I am giving them out to poor people just as you wanted."

That is how he calmed things down.

The Chassan's Suit

Talk Ten · 2:28:30

There was another story. One day Saba was in Tel Aviv and went to a clothing store, a fine shop, and asked for a suit for a chassan. He gave the measurements, and the owner gave him a suit for a chassan: a good, proper suit from a good, reliable store, checked for shatnez, with no problem of shatnez in it, a chassan's suit. Saba took the suit in a paper bag. In those days there was no nylon. There were no plastic bags like today; who ever dreamed of nylon? Everything was a paper bag.

Saba held the paper bag and got on the bus to Yerushalayim. The bus's last stop was on Rechov Yafo, at Kikar Tziyon (the main square of the center of Yerushalayim), where the building of the central bus station stood. A building? What kind of building was it? It was hardly anything: a little room and a few rows of railings for people to pass through to the buses, then some open space where the buses stood and left from. That was all. That was the central bus station of Yerushalayim. On the way there the bus made stops, and its first stop was at Machaneh Yehudah.

Sitting next to Saba on the ride was a criminal, who looked at Saba and set his eye on the suit. When they reached Machaneh Yehudah, in a flash he snatched it and got off at the stop. Saba did not run after him or shout "Thief! Catch him!" He

saw him snatch it and go, but the man was already off the bus. Saba continued the ride to the last stop and went home to Beis Yisrael (a neighborhood near Meah Shearim).

The man took the suit, got off at Machaneh Yehudah, and right there began calling out, "Gentlemen, a suit! Half price! Half price!" He was selling it for a few grush. The police knew he was a criminal who helped himself to things. As they say, he could not walk four amos without "netilas yadayim": whatever he could take with his hands, he took, in order to sell it. So they came over: "Sir, come here. Where is this suit from?"

He broke down. "I'll tell you the truth. I was on the bus with Chacham Menachem" (everyone knew Chacham Menachem) "and I stole it from him to sell it."

"All right, come with us now."

They took him to the police station. In those days the police station was in Machaneh Yehudah itself, a few meters from the market, near Yeshivas Etz Chaim. They brought him there and called Saba: "Come, here is the suit. File a complaint against him, take the suit, and we will deal with him."

"Are you out of your minds?" Saba said. "Give him the suit. It is his. I brought it to him as a gift."

"But he says he stole it from you!"

"I am the owner of the suit, and I say that I brought it to him as a gift. Now you will give him the suit, let him go with it. It is his. Let him go."

"Listen," they told him, "we know he stole it from you. We know him. But by your words you have no complaint, and you claim that he received it honestly. So now we have to give him the suit and send him off? You are sending a thief out!"

"Gentlemen," he told them, "do not tell me what to do. It is his. I brought him the suit as a gift. What do you want from me?"

They had no choice. They gave him the suit, and he went off with it to the market to sell it. Saba knew he was going to sell the suit and said nothing to him. He went home. The man sold it for a few grush, and the whole affair became known to everyone.

The owner of the store who had given the suit heard the story afterward and came to Saba shouting: "I gave you a suit for a chassan, and you go and give it to some poor man?"

Saba did not answer him a word. He took all the shame. He did not tell him, "The man stole it; I didn't want to give it." He took all the shame and said to him, "Listen, you are right. I was taking care of a suit for a chassan, and the zechus will stand for you just as that suit would have. I had to give up that suit, but in its place I got him another suit, so the mitzvah stands to your credit. What does it matter to you?"

"No! Suits that I give you, you will not do whatever you please with!"

Saba accepted the insults and left there quietly.

People who knew him asked him, "Why? Why did you do that?"

"What," he said, "should I be moser a Jew? Should I hand a Jew over to the police? Hand a Jew over to prison? By halachah a thief does not get prison for such a thing. He has to pay tashlumei kefel (double the value of what he stole), but not that. Shall I, chas v'shalom, be a moser over four shekels' worth of a suit? Let him be healthy with the suit."

That was Saba.

May his zechus stand by us and protect us, and may we all merit, b'ezras Hashem, the coming of Mashiach Tzidkeinu, as the pasuk says: "Through tzedakah you shall be established," and "Tziyon will be redeemed through justice, and those who return to her through tzedakah." Baruch Hashem l'olam, amen v'amen.

Short Accounts

The Bukharim

Talk Nine · 1:33:30

Next to Beis Yisrael lay the Bukharim neighborhood (Shechunas HaBucharim), which the Bukharim had built several decades earlier. These Jews from Bukhara (a city in Central Asia, today in Uzbekistan) were millionaires. Once there was a railway, the way from Bukhara to Eretz Yisrael was very short, and they arrived with sacks of gold. They were yirei Shamayim and lovers of Torah.

Most of the Bukharim are from shevet Naftali. To this day the place there, along the main road, is called by a form of the name Naftali: Naftalo, as they say it. The Jews of Samarkand and Bukhara are known as people who did not know of the rest of the Jewish people until a few hundred years ago, when they were discovered and brought back into Klal Yisrael. They were from the Ten Tribes. They lived along the road to China, the Silk Road, the route running from Bavel to China along which silk and all the other goods of that time were carried. To this day there are things in the cellars there from the Ten Tribes, from 2,500 years ago. The Bukharim keep them hidden, but by now it is known. In any case, they are known to be shevet Naftali, of whom the pesukim say "Naftali ayalah sheluchah" and "u'malei birkas Hashem, yam v'darom yerashah."

They came here with mesirus nefesh for Torah and mitzvos, out of love for Torah and mitzvos, and they loved Kabbalah. They built the entire Bukharim neighborhood, with shul after shul. There is a shul on every corner, huge and magnificent, and they were filled with vessels of silver and gold. At their own expense they printed siddurim, tefillos and sefarim of Kabbalah in great numbers, and they gave them out to people who were worthy and fit to learn from them, not to anyone who happened to want them. They supported mekubalim and enabled them to learn. They opened a yeshivah of Kabbalah for them, Rechovos HaNahar, in one of their shuls. All of those shuls are still standing today: Yissacharoff, Kubayoff, Babayoff, and Musayoff, which was the most famous of all.

It was a very rich neighborhood, with magnificent houses, real palaces. They came with a great deal of money, but they had worked for it. A man who worked for his money knows its worth and does not throw it away for nothing. Where it is needed, he gives it with all his soul for a good cause; where it is not needed, he will not give a prutah. That is how they were. Where it was needed they opened their hands and poured out gold. They printed the *Etz Chaim*, they printed the writings of the Arizal and other sefarim. The Bukharim of that time were people of a rare kind.

One of them even built a building for Mashiach, a great building in his honor, so that when he comes he will have a home. That building is well known to this day in the Bukharim neighborhood. Later it became the Spitzer school, and today it is a school for girls. It is a huge, very beautiful palace, and he built it only for Mashiach. That is the kind of people they were.

The Grocer of Meah Shearim

Talk Ten · 2:01:30

In Meah Shearim there was a Jew who owned a grocery, and he gave food to people for free. Every Thursday all the poor came and received supplies, every kind of grocery, for nothing. He also brought them meat, already packed. The families were registered with him, and he gave to them. He even gave them vegetables and fruit, which a grocery does not usually sell, packed into bundles like baskets. Everyone admired him as a tzaddik and a good man who helped everybody. He supported a great many families, every Thursday.

None of these families even knew my grandfather. Perhaps they had heard his name. Most of them were poor residents of Meah Shearim, and most were not Sephardim. My grandfather did not personally know the avreichim who lived in Battei Ungarin (the "Hungarian Houses" beside Meah Shearim), in Battei Neitin, and in all

those courtyards. The grocer knew them and gave to them, and my grandfather relied on him. So it went on for years.

My grandfather passed away on a Thursday. That same week the grocer still gave out food. The following week he came and told them: "I have nothing. All of this was given to me by Chacham Menachem. He paid for everything, and he passed away last week. There is nothing."

Only then did it come out that for years my grandfather had supported dozens of families there through him, people he did not even know. They did not know him, had never met him, had never heard of him. Only after he passed away did it become clear that everything had come from him. That is how my grandfather did tzedakah and chessed.

A Loan Before the Fall

Talk Ten · 2:04:00

He did even more than that. He went to merchants he knew were about to collapse. He would come and say, "Sir, I have heard about your situation. Tell me the truth. I heard you are having trouble in your business."

"Ah, Chacham Menachem, daven for me. I'll tell you the truth, business isn't going well," and so on and so on.

"Fine." A week later he came back and brought him a loan of a hundred lirot, two hundred lirot, a thousand lirot, depending on how much was needed. "Take this. It is a loan. Give me a note that you borrowed it from me. You will repay it when Hashem helps you, with no date set. This is special money, not for your house but for your business, so that you can keep it going. Take it and invest it. You can buy merchandise and sell it, so that you can get back on your feet."

This is a greater mitzvah than tzedakah: "כי ימוך אחיך והחזקת בו" ("when your brother grows poor, you shall hold him up"). Holding a person up so that he does not fall into poverty is a greater mitzvah than helping someone who is already poor. Before a man collapses, give him a few hundred lirot so that he can turn over some merchandise and save the situation, and he can come back to himself. That is what my grandfather did for many people as well.

"They Are Slaughtering Their Neshamah"

Talk Eleven · 1:26:30

My grandfather was strongly opposed to the whole Zionist government and to everything it was doing. He would walk in the street and cry. When he saw little children going to school, his heart tore. He would groan, "Och! Och!"

I would ask him, "Saba, what is it?"

He said, "What are they teaching these children? That there is no Din and no Dayan? Is that not shmad? They are slaughtering their neshamah! Jewish children! Pure neshamos!"

His heart tore for every child who walked with a schoolbag to school and not to a talmud torah. It was a bleeding wound in his heart.

The Pidyon HaBen He Did Not Attend

Talk Eleven · 1:27:00

In those days there were not as many parties as in today's mess; there was only one religious party. Some rabbonim took part in it. My grandfather was against all of that. From his rebbeim he had received that one must not attach himself to any party at all.

Yet when he saw rabbonim who joined some party, he said nothing to them. He gave them full honor, and everything was in order with them. Why? "They are in error in a matter of mitzvah," he said. But the rabbonim of the religious Zionists he despised; he could not bear to look at them.

He lived in the courtyard of the Ahavas Chaim shul. One Motza'ei Shabbos there was a pidyon haben in the shul, and my grandfather heard about it and got ready to go too. Going to a pidyon haben is an important thing. It is not, as people say, equal to eighty-four fasts; it is not that. But there is something in a pidyon haben, a great sod: everyone who is present there is released from certain things. When the son is redeemed from certain things, everyone who is there can also receive some measure of pidyon for his own nefesh. I do not know exactly how to explain it now, and it does not belong to our subject. In any case, people made an effort to go.

But then he learned who had come: Tzvi Yehudah Kook, the son of the man who built the Chief Rabbinate (Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael), through which, he held, all of Yiddishkeit was destroyed. When my grandfather heard that Tzvi Yehudah Kook was there, he said that this was a mixing of kodesh with chol. He did not go. He sat at home, two meters from the shul where the pidyon was taking place, and did not go in or out. He

wanted no dealings and no contact at all, not even to be within the four amos of the rabbonim of the Zionists. To him they were truly muktzeh machmas mi'us.

Tzedakah Given Twice

Talk Eleven · 1:24:00

My grandfather always gave tzedakah twice, not once. First he gave for hakamas Shechinta me'afra (raising the Shechinah from the dust), and only afterward for the refuah of so-and-so, for the aliyas neshamah of so-and-so, and the like. Never did he give a perutah without saying first, "For hakamas Shechinta me'afra." Raising the Shechinah from the dust stood at the head of all his concerns.

His Words

Matzah and Chametz

Talk Nine · 1:28:30

For several years my grandfather served quietly as the shamash there. During that time he began collecting tzedakah to raise Jewish children to Torah and mitzvos, as I will explain. He was the shamash until midday, and from then until the next morning his time was his own. He spent it going around collecting money and gathering up the Jewish children who were wandering the streets.

The state of chinuch in Eretz Yisrael was very bad in those days. After the First World War the roads opened, and many Jews from the Eastern lands came up to Eretz Yisrael. They thought that when they arrived they would find the Mashiach. Instead they found, l'havdil elef alfei havdalos, not the Mashiach but the *masriach* (the one who reeks): the Zionists, who had begun coming here with their slogans, "With blood and sweat we will build ourselves a race," "We will build our land, our homeland," and all sorts of other nonsense. They began enticing the youth to go to their schools instead of to Talmud Torahs, and to raise them in an education more bitter than death, an education of Haskalah (the "Enlightenment" movement that drew Jews away from Torah), which left their neshamos bereaved. In my sefer *Toldos Menachem* I tell the whole history of that education: how it came about, how they tried to entice the children, how they tried to pour all the filth of to'evah and kefirah into the neshamos of Klal Yisrael, how little by little they succeeded, and how in this way they pulled the youth away.

My grandfather wanted to save these young people, especially the orphans and the poor, who were cast out in the streets with no one to take them in. A Talmud Torah costs money. The melamdim cannot teach purely l'shem Shamayim. They have to live; they have families. And each child needs several melamdim in a day, every one in his own subject, because the children learn all day long and no one melamed teaches a child the whole day. Besides that, there is the building, and the costs are large. If the parents do not pay, who will? There were very few donors, and usually they gave only the first foundation. After that the Talmud Torah had to run on its own, on what the parents paid. A man who had nothing to pay with left his child to wander the streets, or else the Zionists took the child for free: "Come to us, free education, with all sorts of good things," and they drew the children in.

You already know the difference between matzah and chametz. Matzah is thin. Chametz is puffed up and big; it fills you more and it tastes better. That is the difference between kedushah and the sitra achra. Kedushah is the thin matzah, and it costs dearly. How much does bread cost? A few prutos, and it fills you, and it is puffed up and big. And matzah? It costs ten times what bread costs, you eat it and nearly choke on it, and two hours later you are hungry. That is how kodesh stands next to chol: chametz and matzah. The Zionists had all the money and all the means, and they handed out chametz in abundance. The Talmud Torahs gave matzah. But matzah is what one needs.

Who could look at these children and not have pity on them and bring them into Talmud Torahs, under a proper chinuch? This was especially true of the young bochurim, who besides learning needed a way to earn a living. Who would give them all of this? It was my grandfather who took care of them. He saw to it that they learned a trade, and not one trade but several. He brought them teachers for each trade, and he even brought them a little money to take home so that they would agree to come and learn. In the evenings he had to give each of them a few prutos every day, at least enough to buy bread and nothing more.

All of this cost a fortune, and my grandfather himself was desperately poor. Who would provide all this? So he went around collecting tzedakah. People thought he was some poor beggar who knew nothing, and they gave him prutos. That changed when he became acquainted with the Bukharim.

CHAPTER THREE

Saba's Tefillos

the nights, the kevarim and the gates of Yerushalayim

THE NIGHTS WITH MY GRANDFATHER

Talk Eleven · 1:16:30

As usual, my grandfather would wake me at chatzos for tefillos and to learn with him. First he said Tikkun Chatzos, and he trained me to say Tikkun Chatzos properly. Then he would sit with the list of all the sick people whose names had been given to him and daven for them, and he did not rest until he had cried for them. He would take money out of his pocket, from his own few coins, to make pidyonei nefesh for people he knew needed a pidyon. He would sit and immerse himself completely in helping people. After that came his writing. We did not sleep until morning; as I have already said, we were together in learning.

CHACHAM RAFAEL

Talk Eleven · 23:00

While on this subject, I will tell you about one more such man. I knew him myself; his name was Chacham Rafael. He was short, with a red face. He wore a round hat like the ones the sheikhs used to wear, a kind of Arab hat. Over his trousers he wore a long robe like the rabbanim of old; he was not a rav, but that was how he dressed. He had a walking stick, he was always on the move, and he was always smiling.

Every time I saw him I was afraid of him. I was a boy of six or seven. I don't know why, but he frightened me, and whenever he came into our house I would run inside quickly. One day my mother said to me, "Calm down. Why are you afraid of him?" I said, "I don't know. His face, all his movements, the way he comes in..." Yet he was always happy.

He too had bought himself a grave on Har HaZeisim. It is the minhag of Yerushalayim that on Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul and Erev Rosh Chodesh Nisan all its people go up to the beis hakevaros. On those days he would go down into his grave and say all of Tehillim. It was an open grave, with no matzeivah and nothing else. There was only the dug pit, with the blocks on which earth is later placed to bury the dead. He would clear away the earth, uncover the blocks, go inside and say Tehillim, and then he would begin to dance inside the grave.

On every such day, what shouting and dancing there was! Many people would gather to see the old man dancing in his grave. He was short, and inside the grave his head barely showed above the ground. He would dance and sing songs in Ladino (the Spanish spoken by Sefardi Jews). One was a well-known song, "Nehallel, nodeh...," sung with many Ladino words woven into it. When people gathered, he would say to them, "Rabbosai, this is the true house! What are those houses of ours over there? They are only for a few years. In the end, this is where we come." He aroused people to teshuvah; he was a wondrous man. In the end he was not buried there, because in the meantime the war of Tashach broke out, and he was buried on Har HaMenuchos.

The Woman Who Combed Her Hair on Shabbos

Talk Eleven · 26:00

My mother told me an interesting story about this man. He grew up on Corfu, an island in Greece. There too everyone spoke Ladino; all the Jews of Greece, in all those places, spoke Ladino among themselves. On Corfu there was a small community of chareidi Jews. There were also Jews who did not keep Torah and mitzvos at all and did not want to hear about it. It did not interest them, and they grew up like the Greeks. He was born to such parents. Until the age of seven he had never heard of Shabbos. He knew nothing; they ate everything, and everything was permitted to them.

When he was seven, a very interesting thing happened there. There was a woman, one of those who did not keep the Torah, who liked to comb her hair on her balcony every Shabbos morning. The rav would pass by on his way to shul, and every time he told her, "Madam, it is forbidden to comb your hair on Shabbos. It is chillul Shabbos; it pulls out hairs."

"Hee hee hee, Rabbeinu! Hee hee hee, Rabbeinu!" she would laugh at him.

Every Shabbos he passed by patiently, and she would wait for the time he came out, so that she could comb her hair and annoy him. One Shabbos he said to her, "Know that every woman who combs her hair is hung in Shamayim by her hair."

"Oh, Rabbeinu, muchas gracias (Spanish for "thank you very much")! Thank you for revealing the secret to me!" She went at once and wrote a will that when she died they should shave her head bald. Then she would have no hair, and in Shamayim there would be nothing to hang her by.

This reminds me of some of the new Breslovers, the puffed-up ones, who grow peyos so that Rebbe Nachman can pull them out of the kever by them. That is the only reason they grow them. They carry on with all their foolish behavior, but they have peyos, so Rebbe Nachman has something to pull them out by. Yes, he will pull them out by their peyos, straight into the seventh compartment of Gehinnom, if they do not do real teshuvah and truly accept upon themselves the yoke of Torah and mitzvos. Rebbe Nachman is not going to make a mockery of the Torah for such people.

That woman thought the same way: she would have a bald head, and with no hair there would be no hanging. But yishtabach Shemo, melo chol ha'aretz kevodo! With Him nothing happens by chance. He directs everything, each and every thing, with perfect exactness.

The Jews on Corfu, the men too, used to wear a kind of long robe. It had only one pocket, like a shirt pocket, on the left side of the chest. That day the head gravedigger was walking with four hundred drachmas (Greek coins) in that pocket. He had borrowed the money from people he knew to marry off someone in his family, a son or a daughter, I don't know which. As he was walking, people came and told him that this woman had died and he had to go and bury her. He ran at once to take care of her burial, with the money still in his pocket.

They brought her, of course, just as she had asked: her head as bald as a gourd, shaved as it should be. They wrapped her in tachrichim, and he buried her himself. He lowered the body into the grave and bent down to set the block in place, as it should be, so that the earth could be put over it.

When he came home, he found that the four hundred drachmas were gone. He began to retrace his steps. Where had he lost it? Where was it? What had happened? He thought it all through and understood that when he bent down to bury her, the money had fallen from the upper pocket into the grave. He had buried the four hundred drachmas together with her.

What was he to do? He needed the money. He went to the rav and began to cry. His wages for a whole year came to only a few coins, and here, in one blow, he had lost four hundred drachmas, and he owed the money.

The rav told him, "No problem. Take a minyan and open the grave; it is still fresh. Ask mechilah from the deceased woman, and take the money."

He said, "Rebbi, I deal with the dead; I bury them. But once they are buried, I am afraid to have anything more to do with them. You come with me."

The rav said, "I will come with you."

The rav took the shamash along, so they were three. On the way they gathered seven more men, and the whole minyan came to her grave. The rav said Tehillim l'iluy nishmasah. He did not know who the deceased was. She was one of the women there who did not keep the Torah, and it made no difference to him who she was. It was not his own kehillah, whose people he knew one by one, but a Jewish woman lay buried there. He said Tehillim, and they all asked her mechilah for opening her grave. They cleared away the earth and opened the blocks.

And what did they see before their eyes? A terrifying sight. The dead woman lay on her back with her tachrichim open and her hair a meter long. She was curled up like a spring, legs and head drawn together, tearing out her hair. Blood poured from her head where she tore it out, and her face was covered with blood. The hair she had already torn out filled the grave, a real heap of it, and still she went on tearing, with the blood running down.

The rav asked, "Who is the deceased?"

They told him, "It is So-and-so."

"Ahhh," he said.

The gravedigger said, "We buried her without hair, two hours ago! What happened?"

The rav said, "Call all the people of the town, the ones who do not keep the Torah too. Let them come and see what HaKadosh Baruch Hu does."

It was Chacham Rafael who told this story to my mother. He told her that his parents went there and saw with their own eyes what had happened in the kever to this woman who had combed her hair on Shabbos. A large part of those who had not kept the Torah saw it with their own eyes and took upon themselves complete teshuvah because of it. Then, at the rav's word, they took the woman and cleaned her, lifted the body, wrapped her again, and laid her back and buried her anew.

From the age of seven he grew up in the Talmud Torah. After this his parents did complete teshuvah. They planted in him so deep an emunah in the survival of the soul, and in what happens after death, that he would dance like that in the grave. Alav hashalom.

The Ziyara

Talk Eleven · 42:30

This is where the custom of going to daven at kivrei tzaddikim comes from. My grandfather made such a journey once a year, sometimes twice. It is called in Arabic a *ziyara*, a journey of hishtatchus (stretching oneself out) on kivrei tzaddikim. Most

people who go do not actually stretch out on the kever; they only daven. According to the inner meaning, though, one should stretch out upon it, to join nefesh to nefesh and ruach to ruach with the tzaddik, while doing the yichudim of the Arizal that are found in Shaar Ruach HaKodesh. That is where the word hishtatchus comes from.

Every year my grandfather would take a truck of sixty men, and sometimes two trucks with a hundred and twenty. They would all travel for three or four days through the Galil, from one kever to the next, with tefillos, tachanunim and bakashos.

Their order was this. First they went to the kivrei tzaddikim of the Galil and came to Tzfas or to Meron. If they had time for two days in that area, they stayed one night in Tzfas and one night in Meron; if not, they went only to Meron. Afterward they went down to the lower Galil and spent a night at the kever of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess, in one of the rooms in the grounds beside it. Everyone spread out and slept wherever he could find a place, and they spent the night there in tefillah.

In Tzfas, after an hour or two of sleep, everyone rose at chatzos. My grandfather would be in the shul of the Arizal, near the cemetery. It is called by the Arizal's name, but in truth there was no shul there in his time. The Arizal davened in the Abuhav shul or in the shul of the Alshich, or in the Ashkenazi shul that was near them. Being an Ashkenazi, he often davened there, especially on the Yamim Nora'im, and the rest of the time he davened with the Sephardim, in the shul of the Alshich or in the shul of Rabbi Yitzchak Abuhav.

What was there was this. Facing the cemetery stands a wall of rock, and in it there is a cave. The Arizal would sit in that cave and learn a great deal of Torah with Eliyahu HaNavi. It was not a shul then, only an empty space facing the cemetery. Below it, down the slope, was the spring that is the mikveh of the Arizal. The Arizal would tovel there and then go up into the small cave, and Eliyahu would already be sitting there waiting for him, and the two of them would sit and learn. Most of the Torah of Kabbalah that has come down to us, which the Arizal received from Eliyahu, was given in that cave.

Today the cave is inside a shul. The shul was built some decades after the Arizal's petirah, because of a remarkable story. To this day it says on the stone at the shul that it was built by, I believe, Mr. Yitzchak Gueta, or Chacham Yitzchak Gueta, who donated the place and built it.

Lag BaOmer

Talk Eleven · 1:24:30

Lag BaOmer at my grandfather's was something special. On the night of Lag BaOmer everyone who needed a yeshuah would gather, and the shul filled from wall to wall.

A bowl was brought, and candles were lit in it, ten, twelve, I think up to twenty; I do not remember the exact number. They were lit for the aliyas neshamah of the tzaddikim, in honor of the hilulah of Rabbi Shimon. The first candle, of course, was in honor of Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Elazar his son; then candles were lit in honor of the Avos, in honor of the Tanna'im and Amora'im. Each candle was sold for a great deal of money, for the tzedakah causes my grandfather supported.

My grandfather would tell them, "Know that when you light this here, the tzaddik comes, sees you, and is a good meilitz yosher for you." Many people waited all year for their yeshuos, to come there and buy a candle to light at any price, in order to see a yeshuah. And people did see yeshuos after the lighting of the candles there, yeshuos beyond the way of nature.

All the great men were there. Chacham Sasson Levi was there, and Chacham Chabah; I think it was Chacham Yitzchak Chabah, but I no longer remember exactly. There were others as well. Everyone sang with joy, special songs and praises before HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and the whole crowd rejoiced there in song, in zemer, in divrei Torah, in the divrei Torah of the Tanna'im and Amora'im. There were several hours of elevation in kedushah. The candles were not lit at once; only then would my grandfather say, "Now the tzaddikim are here. Whoever a candle is lit for, the tzaddik sees him and is a meilitz yosher for him." People waited for this, and they saw great yeshuos.

The Stories

The Border of Beis Yisrael

Talk Eleven · 7:30

The historians of the war of Tashach tell a story, and I copied it from them more or less. Through his tefillos, my grandfather set the line beyond which the Legionnaires could not take control, and in the end that line became the border of the place where the Jews lived. I wrote it in my sefer, as I copied it from one of the

books that the chroniclers of the generation wrote about the war, in the account of the battle of Beis Yisrael. This is how it happened.

After the Zionists proclaimed the founding of their state in Iyar 5708, the soldiers of the Jordanian Legion[13] decided to conquer the Jewish neighborhoods of Yerushalayim. They meant to destroy, kill and wipe out all their inhabitants and take their spoil as plunder. The Legion held the hills that surround Yerushalayim to the east and north, from Nebi Samwil (the hill of the kever of Shmuel HaNavi) opposite the western end, to Har HaZeisim in the east, with Har HaTzofim between them. From there they dominated the whole of the new city.

Under cover of artillery shells that rained down on the neighborhoods, they drew close. Several neighborhoods fell into their hands: Shimon HaTzaddik, by his kever, and Nachalas Shimon beside it, Nachalas Yitzchak and Batei Silbergrin. These bordered Beis Yisrael on the north and lay across Rechov Shmuel HaNavi. The Jewish residents fled for their lives. The Legion soldiers plundered the property, then destroyed the houses and wiped the neighborhoods out entirely. They left an open field and stood facing Beis Yisrael.

All the area across Rechov Shmuel HaNavi, up to the top of Har HaTzofim, was called Sheikh Jarrah, and all of it was in the hands of the Arab Legion. The edge of Beis Yisrael was Rechov Shmuel HaNavi, along its entire length. It ran from the corner of the beis hakevaros of Sanhedria to the corner that borders Batei Ungarin, near Meah Shearim, where the street continues toward the Old City. At that corner stood a house that commanded the whole area around it, called Beis Mandelbaum. That whole line, along that street, was the border between the Jewish area and the Arab area.

The Jews had already fled from everything near Beis Mandelbaum, close to Meah Shearim: Rechov Shivtei Yisrael and all the streets around it. They feared for their lives, for it was dangerous to live there, so close to the Arabs in the Old City. And the Arabs tried to advance through Beis Yisrael to wipe it out.

On Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Bechukosai, the twentieth of Iyar 5708, the Legion on Har HaTzofim shelled Beis Yisrael. The Legion's snipers had positioned themselves on the ruins of the captured neighborhoods. They fired with precision at the mispallelim of the neighborhood's central shul and the shtiebel beside it, and that Shabbos they killed twelve men and women. At the whistle of the bullets and the thunder of the shells, the residents along the border of the neighborhood, on Rechov Shmuel HaNavi and around it, fled for their lives to other parts of the city.

The shul of Rav Shaul Tzedakah, in the heart of the neighborhood on Rechov HaKohanim, filled up with men, women and children. They were packed into it and

[13] The Arab Legion, the army of the kingdom of Jordan, which was then commanded by British officers.

into the ezras nashim beside it, shaking with fear of the cruel enemy who had declared openly that he wished to slaughter the Jews. They asked my grandfather zt"l to daven to Hashem to annul the evil decree. My grandfather did not join them. He stayed in his own house to make his own special tefillos. But he sent word that everyone should say the ninety-first kapitel of Tehillim ninety-one times in a row, and he stood in his house in tefillah from the depths of his heart. A short while after they finished saying the kapitel for the ninety-first time, the shelling stopped, and the residents went back to their homes.

A few days later, the Legion soldiers camped on the ruined neighborhoods began to prepare to storm Beis Yisrael and destroy it completely. Shells were falling on the neighborhood from Har HaTzofim, and snipers' bullets filled its streets. Under cover of that fire, they advanced toward Rechov Shmuel HaNavi. The shuls of the neighborhood were full of people saying Tehillim without stop and pleading before the Borei Olam, Shochen Shechakim. My grandfather, with a great crowd gathered around him, took a sefer Torah out to Rechov Sonnenfeld.

Rechov Sonnenfeld is the other side of Beis Yisrael. Below lies Rechov Shmuel HaNavi; above it runs the parallel street, the second border, Rechov Sonnenfeld. It begins at the Bucharim neighborhood and ends at Shmuel HaNavi. Behind Batei Ungarin the two streets come together like the point of a triangle, and there, at Beis Mandelbaum, Sonnenfeld and Shmuel HaNavi meet.

My grandfather walked with the crowd and the sefer Torah along the whole length of Rechov Sonnenfeld, many times, back and forth. They went from the corner of Rechov Betzalel Ashkenazi, which borders the Bucharim neighborhood, to near the back of Batei Ungarin by Meah Shearim. They all cried out to the Borei Olam with weeping and screams and pleaded for His mercy. My grandfather shouted the ninety-first kapitel of Tehillim, "Yoshev b'seser elyon," in a loud voice, and the crowd answered after him. Shells flew over their heads and lodged in the walls of the houses. My grandfather signaled to the frightened crowd to go on without stopping and without fear, and they kept walking as he told them, saying the kapitel as they went.

The advancing Legionnaires reached the very edge of the neighborhood's houses. They crossed Shmuel HaNavi and came within two or three meters of the houses, and there they stopped, for no logical reason. In one place they did not even reach Shmuel HaNavi. There was a small neighborhood there, one more street running below Shmuel HaNavi, and they could not cross even that; that was as far as they came.

They stopped for no logical reason, and the yeshuah of Hashem was plain for all to see. Beis Yisrael became the border of Yerushalayim, with the border of the kingdom of Jordan right up against it. My grandfather and the mispallelim had

come with the sefer Torah close to Beis Mandelbaum, at the upper end of Rechov Shmuel HaNavi. That house became the end of the city and the gate to Jordan for many years.[14]

BEFORE THE SIX DAY WAR

Talk Eleven · 1:08:00

Before the Six Day War[15] there was great fear here. That kelipah Nasser (Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt) had closed the Straits of Tiran.[16] There was nobody in the streets of Yerushalayim; everyone had been called up. It was real danger. People were shaking with fear; they walked in the street crying from fright.

My grandfather took Jewish children with lulavim (whether there were esrogim too, I no longer remember, but there were lulavim) and went out into the streets of Yerushalayim: Machaneh Yehuda, Beis Yisrael, the Bucharim quarter (neighborhoods of Yerushalayim). All that afternoon they went with tefillos and with cries and shouts.

He came home calm and smiling. Fine, he came home calm and smiling. At chatzos he woke me as usual. He always woke me to learn with him until morning, and nothing ever changed that. At chatzos he said, "Hayda, Yosefik, kum!" ("Come, Yosefik, get up!") We sat and learned until morning as usual, and afterward we went to daven at netz.

About half an hour after netz, around six or seven in the morning, Chacham Yeshua Sharabani suddenly appeared. I have already told you about him among the tzaddikim I knew. The Ben Ish Chai himself accompanied him when he went up to Eretz Yisrael. He was a man of wonders upon wonders. He was old, and suddenly there he was, knocking at my grandfather's door. I opened the door for him, and he came in.

My grandfather and Chacham Yeshua sat down at the table, and I heard their conversation. Chacham Yeshua said to my grandfather, "Last night in a dream they read me the pasuk, 'תרום ידך על צריך וכל אויביך יכרתו.' I understand that next

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[14] The crossing at Beis Mandelbaum, known as the Mandelbaum Gate, was the only passage between the Israeli and the Jordanian parts of Yerushalayim until the Six Day War in 1967.

[15] In June 1967 (Iyar 5727), Israel fought Egypt, Jordan and Syria in a war that lasted six days. On the third day, 28 Iyar, the Old City of Yerushalayim and the Kosel came into Jewish hands.

[16] The narrow sea passage at the southern end of the Gulf of Eilat. By closing it to Israeli ships, Egypt cut off Israel's sea route to the south, and this was one of the steps that led to the war.

week there will already be Jews at the Kosel HaMaaravi, and that soon we will all be able to go and daven at the Kosel."

My grandfather said to him, "Yes, that is already clear. The whole western part, the West Bank (Yehuda and Shomron, west of the Jordan River) — the Arabs will flee from there; that is clear. And know that Nasser is about to lose everything. It is already clear." Apparently he had understood this during the tefillos of the day before. "We are already finished with it," he said. "There is no problem here. There is nothing to fear at all."

At that point even the Zionists did not know that there would be a war in Yerushalayim at all. They had made an agreement with Hussein (the king of Jordan, which then ruled the Old City and the West Bank) that no war would break out between them and that neither would touch the other; the war was to be only with Egypt. Yet my grandfather and Chacham Yeshua were already speaking about the Kosel and the Old City, and about the West Bank, which would no longer be under Jordanian rule.

What happened was that on the first and second days of the war, Nasser falsely announced that he was winning and conquering, when in fact he was being beaten. He deceived Hussein into joining him, and Hussein joined and opened fire. So it was really by mistake that the war came to Yerushalayim, and the Arabs all left. The Arabs and their rule fled to the other side of the Jordan.

The Servant and the Ten Barrels

Talk Eleven · 45:30

Yitzchak Gueta lived in Tunisia (a country in North Africa). I believe it was Tunisia, though I am not certain. He was an am ha'aretz. It seems he had no parents to raise him in Torah and send him to a Talmud Torah, and he grew up as a boy and then a young bochur with no Torah and nothing at all. He worked as a servant for a rich man to earn his bread. He was not clever either; he did not pick things up quickly.

In those days rabbanim were sent out to collect money for Eretz Yisrael, for its four cities: Chevron, Tzfas, Teveria and Yerushalayim. These shluchim were usually mekubalim and great men, like the Chida; each one of them was a mekubal of great worth, and their tefillos and berachos made a great impression in Shamayim. Where are they today? Alas for us, the men of faith are lost.

One of these great men came to that town and stayed with the rich man, who received him with great honor. The rich man told Yitzchak Gueta, "You will serve the Rav. Take care of everything he needs."

The Rav was old, and Yitzchak did everything for him. He put his shoes on for him and tied them, and he took him wherever he had to go. The poor Rav had to visit all the houses of the wealthy to collect money for Yerushalayim, or for whichever city he had come for. Yitzchak went with him, guided him, helped him up the steps, brought him his food and looked after him. He did it all with his whole heart. For the several weeks the Rav was there, he was a faithful servant to him in everything.

When the Rav was ready to continue on his way, he blessed the rich man with good health, not with money. Then he called the boy, Yitzchak Gueta, and said to him, "I bless you with great wealth." And in front of the rich man he added, "In your merit the rich man's wealth will also grow. And in the merit of the wealth you will receive, Hashem will open your heart to His Torah and to yiras Shamayim, and you will become a talmid chacham." The rich man heard the words of the berachah the Rav gave Yitzchak Gueta.

A few weeks passed, and war broke out between Tunisia and France. That is how I remember it now: Tunisia and France. Tunisian ships would rob every French ship that passed by at sea. They were pirates.[17] They would seize a ship, plunder it, and sell the people on it as slaves. In those days the slave trade was a very ordinary thing.

Once they captured a ship that flew the French flag, and on it they found ten barrels of *shabb*.[18] I do not know its name in Hebrew, and most of you probably do not know what it is. It is something like oak, if I am not mistaken; it is melted down and used to make various things. It does not matter. They brought the ten barrels to be sold in the town square.

The sale in the square was a public auction. A man did not even have to say a price out loud. Whoever was interested put his hand on the goods, and as long as he did not take it off, the auctioneer kept raising the price for him by another ten and another ten. They would begin at ten and finish in the thousands.

The auction of this shabb was about to begin, and Yitzchak Gueta did not understand how it worked. He did not know that putting your hand on the goods meant you were buying them. He wanted to watch the sale, so he put his hand on one of the barrels and leaned on it to see what was going on. The auctioneer saw this boy with his hand on the barrel and recognized him as the rich man's servant, his worker. Apparently the rich man had sent him to buy.

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[17] For hundreds of years, pirates sailing from the ports of North Africa attacked European ships and sold the people they captured as slaves.

[18] In Arabic, the word *shabb* usually means alum, a mineral salt that was used in dyeing and tanning.

How much were all ten barrels worth? Twenty, thirty, forty dinars, I do not know. Each bidder called out his price, and Yitzchak was still leaning on the barrel, so the auctioneer kept raising the price for him, until in the end he bought them for about fifty dinars, a very large sum, far more than the goods were worth.

The rich man knew nothing about it. Suddenly porters arrived at his house with the barrels and demanded the money.

"I did not buy anything," he told them.

"Your worker stood there with his hand on the barrel," they answered. "That is final. It is a sale in every sense, and you must pay. If you do not, you will pay fines and get into all kinds of trouble. The sale is already over."

He saw that he had no choice, and he paid them. Then he looked at Gueta as at someone who had just ruined his life. The goods were worth nothing. What would he do with ten barrels of this stuff? People make do with half a barrel for a hundred years.

The next day he said to Yitzchak, "Come, let us see how we can get rid of these goods." The two of them went down and began to empty one of the barrels. What did they see? The bottom third of the barrel was full of gold jewelry and all kinds of gold things. Their eyes opened wide. What was this? A treasure!

It came out that a daughter of the king of France had been moving her property from one place to another, and was to receive it in France. To hide it, they had divided it among ten barrels: the shabb on top, and in the bottom third of each one, diamonds and jewelry. They opened the second barrel on the spot, and it was the same; the third was the same, and so were all ten. They realized that they now owned a great treasure.

The rich man looked at Yitzchak and said, "Listen, you bought this, not me. All I did was pay the fifty. I remember the Rav's berachah, that I would become wealthy through you, and that you would become wealthy. Everything here is half mine and half yours, and there is nothing to discuss. This is the Rav's berachah, fulfilled through you and in your merit, and I received from it too. I would never have gone to buy this in my life."

They divided the treasure between them at once. Yitzchak immediately went to look for a shidduch. When he was poor nobody had wanted him; now everyone wanted him. He found a shidduch and took a rav to teach him Torah. His eyes and his mind opened to Torah, and he grew. He even published a sefer, a chibbur on Shas; I do not remember its name now. He moved to Eretz Yisrael and built this shul, which is called the shul of the Arizal, facing the cemetery.

Midnight in the Arizal's Shul

Talk Eleven · 53:00

This is the shul my grandfather came to. I remember the old woman who was its gabbai. We would climb up many steps (people used to count them all) until we reached her to take the key and open the shul. My grandfather would give her a few coins so that she would be happy, and she would hand him the key for twenty-four hours.

The ezras nashim there was enormous, and people spread out in it to rest, while in the shul itself people sat and learned. Then chatzos came and everyone got up. What tefillos, what selichos! I remember that my father was with my grandfather there, together with many tzaddikim, all of them holy men. They all sat there together. To see that place and the tefillos in it was something not of this world.

The Kever of Rabbi Chiya

Talk Eleven · 58:00

My grandfather never took me to Rabbi Chiya and his sons. We would come to Teveria and go to the kivrei tzaddikim there. At the Rambam and at Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai my grandfather would stand in yichudim and tefillos. We went to Rav Kahana, and to Rabbi Yirmiyah, which is near Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess. There used to be a large cemetery there, and the Zionists destroyed all of it to build a hotel; they left the kever of Rabbi Yirmiyah standing in the hotel's garden. In those days we went there and davened.

But my grandfather would not go in to Rabbi Chiya, and I was amazed. Rabbi Chiya and his sons are equal to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. So says the Gemara in Bava Metzia: Eliyahu HaNavi revealed the secret to Rabbeinu HaKadosh that they are equal to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and that if the three of them daven together they bring the geulah. When Rabbeinu HaKadosh tried to bring them to bring the geulah, Eliyahu HaNavi had to step in and interrupt their tefillah. These are unique neshamos, great beyond any others. And to their tziyun he would not go?

Several times I said to him, "Saba, why don't you go?"

"No time," he said. "No time."

That did not sound like my grandfather. When he wanted to go to a kever, he went, even to a remote place. He went as far as Rabbi Kruspedai, who appears in the Zohar. His kever is opposite Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai, and to reach it you have to climb an entire mountain, step after step, all the way to the top. It is very hard and takes a long time; the climb takes the life out of you. Yet he would climb it to make

tikkunim and daven. And Rabbi Chiya, which is close by, up a few easy steps, he would not visit? I understood that his answer was a way of avoiding the question. My grandfather did not want to tell me why he did not go to Rabbi Chiya.

Years later, around the year 5760, I decided that I had to find out where Rabbi Chiya really is. I sat down to study Shaar HaGilgulim, and I saw that the place shown today as Rabbi Chiya is not Rabbi Chiya. The Arizal places Rabbi Chiya in a cave with a large porch and a large entrance, north of the kever of Rabbi Akiva. Today they show Rabbi Chiya south of Rabbi Akiva, a plain grave in an open field. That does not fit the Gemara either. The Gemara says that Rabbi Chiya was buried in a cave with his sons, and that when Rav Huna was brought from Bavel he too was laid in that cave. The Arizal also says that Rav Hamnuna Saba, whom Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai held to be a very great man, is buried there. It is a cave! Where is the cave? There is nothing there. And it is supposed to be to the north. I said to myself: I must find the place.

One morning I went and walked around all the places there, and I did not find it. I saw a kind of round hill that matched the place, but it had no opening of a cave at all. It was a closed hill with grass on top, with no trace of a cave or of anything else. Still, it was the only place that could fit.

Seeing that I could not find it, I went to the place where they show Rabbi Chiya today, which is certainly not where he is, and I davened a special tefillah to connect with the nefesh of Rabbi Chiya. I said, "Rabbi Chiya, wherever you are, I connect with you. Show me; guide me to your kever." As soon as I finished the tefillah, I felt a kind of pull again to go to that hill.

I went to the hill and looked very carefully, and suddenly I saw the opening of a cave. It was completely blocked, filled to the top with mud, sand and stones, so that you could not tell there was an opening at all. Then I noticed that the whole hill was in fact made of caves, all of them blocked.

The Arizal says that these caves were beneath the Jewish cemetery, which was above them. I understood that the green grass on top was where the Jewish cemetery had been. Either a wicked hand had come with tractors, destroyed everything and brought the place down, or the rains and floods of all those years had ruined the graves and washed them all down into the valley beside them, and in the process every cave had been blocked. I looked carefully and saw a cave opening that matched what the Arizal said. I understood that I was standing before the kever of Rabbi Chiya and of Rav Hamnuna Saba.

I went straight to a shul nearby, at the corner of Rechov Nachum Ish Gamzu. There were yeshiva bochurim there, and I said to them, "Chevreh, I found the kever of Rabbi Chiya. Come, let us make a minyan." I took a minyan, and we davened there and said the Yud-Gimmel Middos of Rachamim.

Within a few minutes, it was as if the place split open. Over the four or five times I davened there, it opened by itself to a depth of half a meter; the earth fell away, and now there is a kind of niche half a meter deep. The rest is still blocked. It is a large cave, still sealed. But the kever of Rabbi Chiya is there, and tefillos there are something tremendous.

THE PLACE OF THE SHECHINAH

Talk Eleven · 1:04:00

On that same visit I went to look for the place of the Shechinah. I have already told you that I found it, so I will not repeat it now: it is at present inside a church. Fortunate is the one who will succeed in rescuing that place and returning it to kedushah.

It was a Jewish shul, and to this day it is not registered in the Tabu (the land registry) in the church's name. The place belonged to Jews, and about a hundred and fifty years ago the Christians stole it and built on it. The Jews went to complain to the *vali* (the Ottoman governor) in Damascus, but the vali took a bribe from the Christians. So he said that of course the Jews would get the place back (he could not say no), but only on condition that they pay the Christians all their expenses. The Jews had no money, and he knew they had no money. So the place stayed stuck in the Christians' hands, and rachmana litzlan, it is a church, and there the Shechinah is. We davened there, many times.

I have also told you that once, on a Shabbos in Tammuz of 5761, as I was dozing off, I saw the Shechinah there, in that place. Her face was like the face of a woman whose face had been fried in boiling oil. She was dressed entirely modestly, from the throat all the way down, in a long dress reaching to her feet. Only her feet were uncovered, and her toes were large and black, like those of someone who has walked through the desert.

When I saw her, I asked her, "Ima, what are you doing here?"

She said, "You know, there is a pit there, into which the sparks fall." It is a long story; I wrote it in *Toldos Menachem*. In short, she said, "I am guarding the sparks here."

I saw her in her pain, and how she looked. Since it was Shabbos, she was wearing beige, not black. She had a large hat that covered all her hair, so that not one hair of her head could be seen: a big sombrero (a wide-brimmed hat) of straw. She was entirely covered; only her face was uncovered, and it was full of burns from our aveiros. My heart broke to see Ima like that, and I cried a little. I said to her, "Ima, what is this? Until when?"

She said to me, "Come, I will show you."

She struck with her hand, and the cave under the building split open. There really is a deep cellar there. It opened, and I went out with her toward the sea. Suddenly I saw her beautiful, wearing a flowered headscarf that again covered all her hair. She was bright and beautiful, and her face was smooth. What a woman, what light, something beyond words! I saw two long tables full of tzaddikim sitting there and enjoying themselves; it was a real seudah. And she stood there, smiling.

The whole scene lasted a fraction of a second. Suddenly I found myself back inside the cave with her, and she said to me, "Soon it will be."

I saw her standing before me like that until the picture faded away from me completely. I had not been sleeping. I was tired, and my eyes had closed heavily, and suddenly I saw this and my eyes opened. Because I had davened a great deal there, in Tikkun Chatzos and with other avodos, over the galus of the Shechinah, I was given this as a gift.

It is a very important place. Fortunate is the one who will succeed in rescuing it from the hands of the kelipos and returning it to kedushah.

The Druze Elder of Shezor

Talk Eleven · 1:14:00

With my grandfather we also used to go to the kevarim of Shezor (a Druze village in the Galil), which is opposite Karmiel. In those days there was no Karmiel yet;[19] there was only Shezor. On the way to Peki'in (the village in the Galil where Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai hid in the cave) we would pass through Shezor and go in to daven at the kever of Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol, may his merit protect us.

Once I went there with my rebbi, Chacham Yehuda Tzadka, and the talmidim of Porat Yosef (the yeshiva in Yerushalayim where he was rosh yeshivah). We went to the tziyun of Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol, and I was privileged to join them. There is a building over the kever there, and the door was locked. They immediately sent for one of the Druze (an Arabic-speaking religious community in the north of Israel) elders to come and open it. He came, an old man, and opened the place respectfully.

My father-in-law and rebbi, Chacham Yehuda Tzadka, asked him, "Why do you have the key?"

"My father built this place," he said.

"Why did your father build it?"

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[19] The town of Karmiel was founded in 1964.

He explained. The kever used to stand in an open field, the way there are other kevarim there in the field: that of Rabbi Shimon Shezuri and one more (I do not remember now whose), besides Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol. This kever, too, stood in the open field. His father had no children. He stood at this kever and pleaded, "Tzaddik of the Jews, I want a child."

That night the tzaddik came to him in a dream and said, "If you build me a room over the kever, and take care that the place is always clean, I promise you a child."

His father began to build immediately. His mother became expecting, and he was born.

"I know," he said, "that my life is bound up with this place."

May the merit of all the tzaddikim, wherever they are, protect us.

SHORT ACCOUNTS

THROUGH THE STREETS OF YERUSHALAYIM

Talk Eleven · 6:00

People told me what my grandfather did in Tashach, before the war began. The Arabs were already rising up, and there was already a smell of war here. My grandfather took the children of the Talmud Torah with lulavim and esrogim and went out with them in tefillah through the streets of Yerushalayim, from Beis Yisrael to Machaneh Yehuda. They davened, blew shofaros and wept.

One who was there told me that those tefillos tore him apart. Most of the Jews in Machaneh Yehuda, almost all of them, closed their shops and joined the tefillah. Some of them were aroused to teshuvah and took upon themselves complete teshuvah. One of them told me that he was there and that it brought him to an awakening of teshuvah, and he took teshuvah upon himself. I think it was the same man; many years have passed, and I do not remember clearly. My grandfather aroused people to teshuvah because teshuvah, tefillah and tzedakah remove the evil decree.

Selichos on the First Day of Pesach

Talk Eleven · 16:30

My father, alav hashalom, told me that once, on the first day of Pesach, in the middle of Mussaf, my grandfather turned to the congregation. "Selichos!" he said. "You are not going to eat! There is a very harsh gezeirah, and we must annul it. Quickly, everyone say Selichos!" They all began: the Thirteen Middos of Rachamim, "Anshei Emunah Avdu," the Selichos, the vidui and Rachamana. Within ten minutes of crying out Selichos there was a commotion throughout the neighborhood. My grandfather ordered that all his talmidim be called. More and more people gathered, and the shul filled with people davening as on Yom Kippur.

The rabbanim, who thought they knew everything, heard about it and sent a delegation to my grandfather. "Today is Yom Tov," they said. "What you are doing is forbidden. It is forbidden to fast past chatzos. Send the people to eat."

My grandfather answered them, "You do not understand what is about to happen. Under no circumstances. The people will not eat today until close to shkiah. We must annul the gezeirah. So that they should not fast the whole of Yom Tov, we will eat before shkiah if it is possible. Now we must daven."

He began again, crying out together with everyone: Selichos, "Keil Melech yoshev al kisei rachamim," with all of them following him. They saw him crying out and tearing open the heavens, and everyone followed. So it went until about two o'clock in the afternoon. Then my grandfather looked up for a moment and said, "Rabbosai, baruch Hashem, the gezeirah has been completely annulled. Go and eat b'simchah. Chag sameach."

At the Kever of Shimon HaTzaddik

Talk Eleven · 19:00

My grandfather made a great many tefillos at all the kivrei tzaddikim, especially those around Yerushalayim. At the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik, before the war of Tashach and afterwards too, he made many, many tefillos.

In those days there was the Shomrei Emunim Rebbe, alav hashalom, a great and holy man. His sefer was recently reprinted, and at the end there is an addition with the testimony of one of the people who lived in that period. He testifies that the Shomrei Emunim Rebbe once went to daven at the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik with his talmidim. When they arrived, they saw my grandfather inside with a crowd, davening. The Rebbe waited outside and said to his people, "Do not go in. Right now Chacham Menachem Menashe is inside, turning over the heavens for the good

of Klal Yisrael. There is no reason to go in. Wait." They waited patiently until my grandfather finished the tefillos and the yichudim, and only then did they go in.

A VOICE FROM THE GRAVE

Talk Eleven · 20:30

Many people used to go to the kivrei tzaddikim on Har HaZeisim to make tefillos, above all at the kever of Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh. Notices of the tefillos there were always posted in the streets. No transportation was provided; everyone came on his own to the kever of the Ohr HaChaim for whatever tefillos were being held.

My grandfather told me that one day he went with a group of people across Har HaZeisim to reach the tziyun of the Ohr HaChaim. In those days all the graves were still standing. Today they are destroyed, and there are no graves there, because the kingdom of Jordan uprooted a wide area of them. But all this was before the war of Tashach, when the mountain was full of Jewish graves.

As they were walking among the graves, they heard a voice coming from inside one of them. People began to be afraid: they clearly heard the voice of a dead man talking. People ran away. The brave ones stood a few meters off, at a distance, to see what would happen. Suddenly they saw the matzeivah rising and a man's head coming out. Everyone took to his heels, except my grandfather and two other men. My grandfather said to them, "Come, don't be afraid," and they went closer. They saw the head coming out and the matzeivah lifting. Then the man climbed out and stood beside the grave, a living person.

My grandfather went up to him at once and said, "Tell me, who are you? Are you dead or alive?"

"I am a living Jew!" he said. "I have a vegetable stall in Machaneh Yehuda."

"Then what are you doing here?"

"I bought a grave, and I want to make the place holy," he said. "So I dug out the grave and left the stone of the matzeivah on top. Every day I come, move the stone aside a little, go in, and say all of Tehillim. There is a small crack of light, and I know the Tehillim. I say all of Tehillim and go home."

That was the voice they had heard, and that was the head that had come out. What Jews there once were! How they thought about their lives and about their Olam Haba.

Leil Shishi at Kever Rachel

Talk Eleven · 42:00

My grandfather went almost every leil Shishi, meaning Thursday night, as Jews call it, to Kever Rachel Imeinu. There they said Tikkun Chatzos and learned until morning. Chacham Abda also received great inspiration there, and many times he spoke with Rachel at her kever. He even described her, because he saw her.

The Snake

Talk Eleven · 54:00

My uncle Yaakov, Chacham Menachem's son, told me that he once traveled with my grandfather and the group to one of these tefillos. When you enter the shul, the cave where the Arizal learned with Eliyahu HaNavi is in the wall on the left. Out of that cave came a big, long, black snake.

My grandfather was in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei. When my grandfather davened Shemoneh Esrei, a tank could have gone by and he would not have noticed. He stood with his hands folded on his chest, swaying in tefillah, entirely not in this world.

The snake reached him and climbed up on him. Its head came to rest beside his head, above his right ear by the temple, and its body wrapped itself around his waist like a belt.

The whole congregation was terrified. My grandfather felt nothing; he was in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei. A snake was resting its head against his head and wrapped around his body, and he did not feel it. Everyone wanted to cry out to him, but my uncle told them, "Leave him! Quiet! Do not say anything. Leave him as he is."

My grandfather went on davening. When he came to Oseh Shalom, the snake came down by itself, went back into the cave and disappeared.

After that, for decades, the cave was kept closed. When I came there and saw that it was closed, I asked why, and my uncle told me this story. Because the snake had come out of it, they had closed the cave.

Kever Benayahu

Talk Eleven · 55:30

That is how it was with my grandfather in Tzfas. In Meron, too, they rose at chatzos and stayed up until morning. What selichos, what tefillos! Then there was the

kever of Benayahu ben Yehoyada, where they made seven hakafos. The tefillos that went on there brought about a great many yeshuos.

Benayahu is unique. All the mekubalim longed to come to his kever, and this is why. The Arizal writes that a man can go to the kever of a tzaddik and daven a thousand times without being answered at all. If he is not from the tzaddik's shoresh neshamah, his tefillos there do not help; it is as if he davened in a shul, and the tzaddik cannot help him. A tzaddik can help only someone from his own shoresh neshamah. When such a person davens, the tzaddik's nefesh at the kever receives the tefillah and carries it further up. But when someone else davens there, the tzaddik can do almost nothing for him above. The tzaddik hears his tefillah, but when he goes up, he can pray before the Kisei HaKavod to help that person only if he has a channel to him through the shoresh neshamah. If not, he cannot. This is why people go to many kivrei tzaddikim: a man does not know which tzaddik is from his shoresh neshamah.

There are tzaddikim, though, whose shoresh neshamah is connected to all of Klal Yisrael, and Benayahu ben Yehoyada is one of them. Whoever goes there, Benayahu can speak well of him in Shamayim if he wishes, because there is a connection. These are neshamos connected at their root, like Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe Rabbeinu included all of Klal Yisrael within himself: all six hundred thousand neshamos of Yisrael are connected to the neshamah of Moshe Rabbeinu. So a tzaddik whose neshamah is bound up with Moshe Rabbeinu's in some way is connected to everyone, and anyone who davens at his kever can be helped. Benayahu is one of these.

That is why all the gedolei Yisrael would hurry to the kever of Benayahu to do yichudim and daven: there it is easy to cleave to the tzaddik. Everyone is connected to Benayahu, so anyone can receive wonderful things there through yichudim and tefillos. Benayahu is something special.

When the Ben Ish Chai came there, he too received a special elevation, so much so that he named all his sefarim after Benayahu: Benayahu, Ben Yehoyada, Ben Ish Chai, Ben Ish Chayil, Rav Pe'alim, Mekabtze'el. All of these are words of the pasuk in Shmuel Beis about Benayahu ben Yehoyada, *ben ish chai, rav pe'alim, mi-Kavtze'el*, who struck the lion in the pit on the day of the snow. It is a tremendous pasuk, and the Zohar in Bereishis, on daf 6 and daf 7, reveals tremendous secrets about it. That is Benayahu.

At Shemaya and Avtalyon

Talk Eleven · 1:11:30

I remember once going with my grandfather and the whole group to the kever of Shemaya and Avtalyon. When we got there, everyone said a short tefillah and went out, but my grandfather stayed behind. I looked at him. His eyes were closed and his hand was on the tziyun, and I understood that it was as if Saba was not here at all. Everyone else went outside, but I insisted on staying with him.

When he finished, his whole face was smiling. As we went out, I took him aside and said to him, "Saba, tell me the truth. What happened today there with Shemaya and Avtalyon?"

He said, "It was a great delight. It was a real elevation of the soul."

I understood that he had had a conversation with them.

Chaggai and Malachi

Talk Eleven · 1:12:00

Once I persuaded my grandfather to make a tefillah at the kever of Chaggai, Zechariah and Malachi, in their cave on the slope of Har HaZeisim, near Har HaTzofim. Their kever is there, and I asked him to go. When he heard me, he thought it over and did not say yes immediately. In the end he said, "Fine. If you say so, we will do it." It was as though he had waited to see whether Shamayim agreed.

We gathered a group and a vehicle and came to the open area next to their kever, beside the hotel there. We went down into the cave, which is very large; at its entrance there is a large space, and we davened there. I think there was also a lulav. It was a great tefillah, with Sheva Korsei Bris, and there was great hislahavus.

When we came out, my grandfather was very happy. I asked him, "Que pasó? What happened? What went on in there?"

He told me, "The neviim Chaggai and Malachi stood beside us through the whole tefillah and joined us. It was a wonderful tefillah with them, and it brought about great yeshuos for Klal Yisrael in Shamayim." He was full of joy.

I asked him, "What about Zechariah?"

He said, "Apparently Zechariah is not buried there. That is a mistake."

By the way, this means Zechariah the navi of the Bayis Sheni, not the Zechariah of the Bayis Rishon, who is buried below, in the kever of Zechariah HaNavi down in the valley. These are of course two different men named Zechariah.

Kever Shmuel HaNavi

Talk Eleven · 1:16:00

My grandfather loved going to the kever of Shmuel HaNavi very much. He davened there a great deal and did many yichudim there; he would always go there, in all kinds of situations. He also spent the last night before his petirah at the kever of Shmuel HaNavi, as will be told further on.

The Back Seat

Talk Eleven · 1:17:00

I traveled a great deal with my grandfather. From the age of twelve until almost twenty and a half, I was always at his side.

Whenever we traveled, we went by bus, and he always made sure to get on at one of the first stops so that he would have a place on the back seat. I do not remember a single time that we sat anywhere else. Why? Because of shemiras einayim. When my grandfather sat on the back seat, nobody passed by him on the way to another seat. He would sit, close his eyes and concentrate on the Shemos HaKodesh or on thoughts of Torah, going over in his head all the Torah he knew by heart. People got on and off, and he had no idea what was going on. He got off only at the stop where he needed to be, and usually he got on at the first stop and got off at the last.

These were journeys between cities. Inside the city I never traveled with him, because we did not ride inside the city. He always walked everywhere; all of Yerushalayim was to him like a kezayis. I do not know whether he ever once rode a bus within the city. All his bus journeys were between cities.

Once, I remember, I was sitting next to him. Today you see wide roads in Yerushalayim, but when we traveled, the roads were narrow and dangerous. The climb up the Kastel (the steep hill on the road up to Yerushalayim) was very dangerous, and in general the roads were not what they are now.

From time to time the bus would be stopped for half an hour or a quarter of an hour so that rocks could be blasted to widen the road. In those days there were no machines as there are today. They would drill a hole in the rock, put explosives into it and blow it up, breaking the whole rock apart. This was called *barud* (the Arabic word for gunpowder). They would stop the cars on both sides and shout, "Barud! Barud!" and everyone knew that a rock was about to be blasted and there would be a quarter of an hour's wait.

While we were waiting in the middle of one of these blasts, my grandfather said to me, "Do you see? The Zionists destroyed Eretz Yisrael. They caused the churban

of the Bayis Sheni. They are all those same kana'im of whom it is written in the Midrashei Chazal that they caused the destruction of the Bayis Sheni. And now they are building up what they destroyed, so that when Mashiach comes he will find the place ready."

Before the War of 5708 (the War of Independence, when the State was founded), people did not know what would be. Would there be a state or not? Would Mashiach come? Was the state itself Mashiach, the aschalta degeulah? In the year 5706 my grandfather's talmidim asked him, "Chacham Menachem, what does kevodo say?"

He said, "There will be a state, but it will not bring Mashiach. It will bring chevlei Mashiach."

The Arab on the Back Seat

Talk Eleven · 1:20:00

My uncle Mordechai, alav hashalom, told me that he was once riding a bus with my grandfather, and they sat, as always, on the last seat. The buses then all had two seats on each side with an aisle down the middle, and the last seat held five: two on each side and one in the middle. My grandfather and my uncle sat in the two places on one side, two other people sat on the other side, and one place, in the middle, was left empty. The rest of the bus was full.

This was before the State was founded, and the bus was going from Jaffa (the Arab city beside Tel Aviv) to Yerushalayim. An Arab got on and took the empty place. He was fat, and the moment he sat down he squeezed everyone on both sides until they were pressed flat like pitas. He sat there like a bully, fat, caring about no one. My grandfather and my uncle were badly crushed.

What did my grandfather do? He sat where he was, closed his eyes, and began to meditate on holy thoughts. Not a minute passed before the Arab got up and went to the driver, who was also an Arab. He stood next to him and the two of them began chattering in Arabic. For half an hour, three quarters of an hour, they chattered, while my grandfather sat in comfort. There was room now, and all four of them sat at their ease.

Then my grandfather felt tired and decided to doze for a few minutes. He had hardly closed his eyes for two minutes when the Arab came back and sat down again. Now, like it or not, my grandfather could no longer sleep. That was the end of it; he was being pressed into a piece of steak. He said to my uncle, "It seems that Shamayim does not let me sleep. They must want me to learn."

He closed his eyes again and set his mind on his learning. Another minute passed, and once again the Arab got up, hurried to the driver, and talked with him in Arabic for the rest of the ride, until they reached the central bus station and got off. My grandfather had quiet for the whole trip.

The Bus That Waited for a Tefillah

Talk Eleven · 1:22:30

My uncle Mordechai also told me that once they were again riding from Jaffa to Yerushalayim. Before the State was founded nearly all the drivers were Arabs, and most of the buses belonged to Arab companies.

On the way they came near the Sivuv HaRatuv (the "Wet Curve"), as that place was called then; today it is called the Beis Shemesh junction. There the engine suddenly stalled. The Arab driver tried to start it, and it would not go. He climbed down to look. In those days the engine sat in the nose of the vehicle; the buses were strange-looking things with a kind of nose in front, and that is where the engine was. He opened it up and looked, cursing in Arabic, trying to find out why it had stopped.

My grandfather called my uncle and said, "Come, let us go to the kever of Dan ben Yaakov. We have to daven now."

My uncle said, "And meanwhile the bus will leave."

"Don't be afraid," my grandfather told him.

The two of them went. It was a few kilometers, and they walked slowly until they arrived. My grandfather davened there in peace and made a great tefillah. When they finished, they walked back, and the Arab was still searching for the fault. They had just got on and sat down when he suddenly found it, and they drove on and reached Yerushalayim.

This I heard in the name of my uncle Mordechai, and we hope it is accurate.

Tevilah with the Head

Talk Eleven · 1:29:30

I remember once being with him in the mikveh of Beis Yisrael. A talmid chacham came in. There are some chachamim who, when they want to make many tevilos, do not dip the head in and out; they raise the hand out of the water and lower it again. Their reasoning is that every moment the hand is out of the water it is as if the person is not immersed, so when he puts it back in, it is as if he has made a new tevilah.

My grandfather said to him, "No, no, you are mistaken. One must only lower the head in and bring it up. That is the matter of tevilah. It is the head that counts here: in the sod of the Kabbalah, the head comes out of the water and goes back into the water."

That is how he explained it to him.

Tikkunim at the Kever of the Chida

Talk Thirteen · 1:29:00

Someone asked me: "Why did your grandfather make tikkunim at the kever of the Chida[20] against the erev rav? I noticed that you wrote about it in your sefer."

He did it there a number of times, mainly on Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan and Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul, when people go up to the kevarim. He would gather a crowd at the kever of the Chida to make tikkunim there. But he worked against the erev rav everywhere, not only there. His war, his spiritual war, was always against the erev rav. He hated the erev rav, no matter how they looked: with a beard, with peyos, shaven, it made no difference. Anyone who is erev rav, anyone who gives a hand to the rule of the erev rav and joins with it, in his eyes was erev rav.

And we already need Mashiach Tzidkeinu, that he come speedily in our days, amen.

His Words

What Remains at the Kever

Talk Eleven · 34:30

When one goes to kivrei tzaddikim, there is also a special bond with the tzaddik. There are yichudim from the Arizal for this. When a person goes to the kever of a tzaddik and does the yichud, he can even speak with the tzaddik, receive answers, and be raised up. One does not go to a kever only to say shalom to the body.

For what is there in the kever? We must understand this. The neshamah goes up above, and the nefesh goes up as well. All that we say about Gan Eden, with its flowers and the like, refers only to the lower Gan Eden, the place of the nefesh,

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[20] The Chida passed away in Livorno, Italy, in 5566 (1806). In 5720 (1960) his remains were brought to Eretz Yisrael and buried on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim.

because the nefesh is close to the pleasures of the body. There is no eating and drinking there. There are fruit trees, but the nefashos do not eat from them, for they have no need to eat. But there are spiritual pleasures there, clothed in a physical form like flowers and trees.

There is also, however, what is called havla d'garmei (the breath of the bones). It is made from the levush of the mother. When a person is formed, the mother gives a part of her levush, of her nefesh, into him, and the father gives a part as well. If the father is a kohen, his part is what makes the child a kohen. The mother's part is what makes the child Jewish, if she is Jewish. If she is not Jewish, it makes no difference who the father is: the child is not Jewish, and if he is not Jewish, he is certainly neither a kohen nor a levi. But once the mother is Jewish and her part makes the child Jewish, the father's part determines what kind of Jew he will be: a kohen, a levi, or a yisrael.

The father's part also reaches the lower Gan Eden. The mother's part remains at the kever until techiyas hameisim, and this is what is called havla d'garmei, the breath of the bones. This havla that rests upon the bones has a "telepathic" connection with all the other parts, in Gan Eden and everywhere, and it suffers as well. Of this the pasuk in Iyov says, "אך בשרו עליו יכאב ונפשו עליו תאבל," "But his flesh upon him will feel pain, and his nefesh upon him will mourn." The nefesh mourns. Therefore Chazal said that a worm is as painful to the dead as a needle in the flesh of the living. This nefesh lets the body feel life until it becomes dust, so that it feels the pain of every worm that bites it. How cruel! In feeling the pain of the body, the size of the nefesh makes no difference, so long as the body is connected to the nefesh. This holds even when it is connected not from within but from without.

In truth, every nefesh of ours is connected from without. The meridians and chakras (terms from Chinese and Indian healing for the body's paths and centers of life-energy), and all such things, surround the body and shine into it. The body lives more from this radiation from outside, all the radiation that enters inside, and this is called ohr pnimi (the inner light), not ohr makif (the surrounding light). That is why one of the things that can draw negative energy out of the body is healing (treatment through the body's energy), or the lighting of candles on the body in a certain way, which draws the negative energy out. Lighting candles is something that whoever does not know it should not meddle with; he can endanger himself. Everything depends on how it is done.

In any case, there are things that draw the energy out, because in truth it surrounds the body. But while it surrounds it, it also enters inside, and so the body is alive. When a person dies, it no longer enters inside. Only the mother's part remains, surrounding from outside and entering only the flesh, as long as the flesh

still exists. There is no nefesh inside for nefesh to join with nefesh, like one magnet joined to everything; inside, the body is empty of nefesh. The father's part, which joins within and makes the whole body function as a living person, has disappeared.

When does some of it come back to the body to shine into it? On the fifteenth of the month and on Erev Rosh Chodesh, and on the yahrzeit, though on the yahrzeit it is in a different state. There is an even greater state than these. On Friday after chatzos, the nefesh goes to pass on to the upper Gan Eden. A pillar raises it, and on its way it passes through the kever. In those moments there is a certain elevation in the kever, as it were, from the tzaddik who comes and passes through.

That is why, when one goes to a kever and does yichudim, one does them with the havla d'garmei. Since it is "telepathically" connected with all the parts above, one can receive knowledge from it: secrets of the Torah, private messages, everything. Then the dead person functions like a living one. The havla d'garmei enters into the body and rests in the place where the father's part of the nefesh used to be, and it makes the whole body function. From here come all kinds of yichudim, and from here comes the whole matter of kivrei tzaddikim, where people go to daven and ask for mercy.

My grandfather learned the way of these journeys to kivrei tzaddikim, the method and everything about it, mainly from Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah, alav hashalom, and also from Chacham Yehuda Fetaya.

CHAPTER FOUR

Saba's Hidden Ways

his Torah, his yeshuos and his trials

THE TORAH OF SABA

Talk Twelve · 0:00

In this chapter I will go on telling about my grandfather, and this time about some of the wonders that we know were done through him.

The pasuk says, "If you bring forth the precious from the worthless, you shall be as My mouth." The Gemara in Bava Metzia says that a man who merits to teach Torah to the son of an am ha'aretz is promised by Hakadosh Baruch Hu that his mouth will be like His mouth: the tzaddik decrees and Hakadosh Baruch Hu fulfills. Chazal also said that whoever learns Torah lishmah merits many things.

Saba's Torah was Torah lishmah. He wrote a sefer of halachah, Likutei Menashe, and it may be called the first sefer of halachah that gathered together the halachos suited to Eretz Yisrael. Until then people followed either the Ben Ish Chai, whose halachos fit the practice of Iraq, or Maran, who wrote for Eretz Yisrael. But in many matters the practice no longer followed Maran, because people had taken on the chumros of the Arizal and the minhagim of Eretz Yisrael, which were also somewhat different. So although the Shulchan Aruch is our very life and the foundation of our halachah, in certain halachos and minhagim the practice was otherwise, and there was no one to guide people. Each community had also brought its own minhagim from the land it came from, and once everyone came to Eretz Yisrael and they all mixed together, there was no single halachah to guide them all. So he sat down and wrote Likutei Menashe, to be mezakeh the rabbim.

He did not put his name on it. The sefer came out through "Ahavas Chaim," and once he signed himself "hamishtadel Menachem Menashe," as if he were only the one who brought someone else's sefer to print. He took pains that all his Torah should stay hidden, so that people would not know of him. Yet he was a great

talmid chacham. Whenever people came and asked him, he ruled on the spot, even in complicated halachos, as I saw with my own eyes.

Several times I traveled with him, and on the way we went in to daven Minchah and Maariv in shuls in all kinds of towns outside Yerushalayim. Between Minchah and Maariv a talmid chacham would be saying halachos. Sometimes we heard that he was not stating the halachah clearly, and people could become confused and not understand. Then my grandfather would act like a foolish am ha'aretz who understood nothing, and ask the talmid chacham questions: "And what happens in such a case? And what about this?" He did it so that the talmid chacham would say the matter plainly and the tzibbur would hear the halachah clearly. Everything was in hiding, with humility. That was Torah lishmah.

As I mentioned before, he also put many sons of poor families into yeshivos so that they could learn Torah, and he paid for them. That is "bringing forth the precious from the worthless."

Of course, "If you bring forth the precious from the worthless, you shall be as My mouth" holds only on condition that a man conducts himself wholly in kedushah and taharah and guards his mouth. If he brings forth the precious from the worthless and gives drashos to the public, but his own conduct calls out for an explanation, the promise has nothing to do with people like that.

Saba was a tzanua. Even inside his home he was so modest that one almost never saw him without his clothes. Never. He was always dressed. When he wanted to put on his pajamas, it was done under the blanket: he took off his trousers under the blanket and put on his pajamas under the blanket, so that his body would always remain completely covered. That was Saba: kedushah and tznius, even as a man.

I never saw him with even a small kippah on his head, the kind we, to our sorrow, go around with. Never. He always had a large one that covered his whole head. It was really a cap and not a kippah, a thin cap, like a knitted cap but made of cloth. Only when he was at home and going to sleep did he take off his kasket (the peaked cap that men wore in those days) and put on that cap. As long as he was awake and moving about the house, he always wore the kasket. On the hottest days it did not leave his head. Since he had no hair, he would sweat. He would take a handkerchief, wipe off the sweat for a minute, and put the hat back on his head.

His tznius, his humility and his good deeds made him habib Allah (Arabic: beloved of Hashem). His berachos and his advice always came true, and people always saw yeshuos through them. One friend brought another, one tefillah brought another, one person sent another, and so he had a very large following who came for his advice and his berachos and saw yeshuos. Saba never used kemeyos, nor Shemos hakodesh. He worked only with tefillah, teshuvah and tznius.

Tefillos for Those Who Strayed

Talk Twelve · 32:30

Until I was twenty and a half, until my wedding, I lived there, and I saw his tefillos for the sick. I saw wonderful things, above all through the power of his tefillah.

I also saw him during the day. Several times people brought him photographs of people who had left the dati world and gone off the derech. I remember how he would take the photographs at midday, open the aron kodesh, and plead with tears, the photographs in his hand. He would put them beside the Sefer Torah and say, "Ribono shel Olam, it is for these that I am davening."

He would also do yichudim. There is a special yichud from the Arizal for bringing people back in teshuvah; it belongs in Shomea Tefillah. He would sit and do this yichud outside of davening, with its kavanos, and he did not stop, with tears, until the people came back. Afterward they would tell him that his tefillos had brought results. He gave himself over in tefillah for each and every one of them.

The Stories

The Neighbor's Kabbalah

Talk Twelve · 4:30

Since I have mentioned tznius, I will tell another story, which I heard from my mother a"h, l'iluy nishmasah. Afterward I will return to Saba.

In the building next to ours lived an Ashkenazi family. The wife kept her head shaven and wore a black tichel, which of course covered her whole head; without hair it covers all the better. Summer and winter she wore thick black stockings, like the women of Meah Shearim, with an extraordinary tznius.

My mother told me that this woman came from a modern home. When she married her husband, she wore brown stockings that were rather thin, forty denier (the measure of a stocking's thickness) instead of eighty. She kept her hair and wore an ordinary head covering, and sometimes even a sheitel. The sheitels of those days were all like a piece of straw on the head; it was a miracle that the donkeys did not eat them off the women's heads as they walked in the street. With such a sheitel one could see that she was a married woman. It was not like the sheitels of today, which make a woman look like a film actress. Any woman who goes about in them is machshil es harabim and plainly has no share in Olam Haba, neither she nor the rav

who permits it to her. Both of them are bnei Gehinnom va'avaddon without any doubt.

So she dressed fairly modestly, but in that manner. Then her mother fell dangerously ill. The doctors told them it was over and they could already pack the last suitcase to send her to the next world; she was near the end. The daughter was very attached to her mother and loved her, and she said, "Ribono shel Olam!" She took upon herself to remove her hair and to wear a black tichel and black stockings, and to go in the tznius of those Hungarian women of Meah Shearim, if Hashem would heal her mother. After she accepted it, her mother began to feel better, and within three or four days she was herself again.

At once she went and did what she had taken on. She removed her hair and dressed like the women of Meah Shearim. Three months later, when her mother was home and healthy and all was well, she had had enough of that dress, of the covering on her head and the black stockings on her legs. It was too much for her; she had not been brought up that way. She said, "Surely my mother got well only because of the medicines. What I took upon myself was just in a moment of emotion, and I don't need to keep it." She went and had hataras nedarim before three, and went back to her ordinary clothes.

As soon as she put on her ordinary clothes and ordinary stockings, her mother fell ill. Her hair had not yet grown back, but she had already changed her tichel from black to other colors. Within a few hours her mother was in the same dangerous state as before. It was that very day! They ran to tell her that her mother was in danger again. She understood that it was because of this, and she said, "Ribono shel Olam, I take it back. I am going back to those clothes, back to tznius." She went immediately and changed her clothes, her stockings and her tichel back to what they had been. Her mother recovered a second time and lived several more years in full health.

Even after her mother passed away, she knew that her kabbalah had been a complete kabbalah, once and for all. I remember her walking about in that dress, with the tznius of the women of Meah Shearim, a hundred percent.

That is what tznius does.

The Blue Scissors

Talk Twelve · 8:30

There was another very interesting story in Yerushalayim, also with an Ashkenazi family, in Geulah. They had a boy of five who went to cheder, and he was playing on a swing. I don't know what swings are like today; I have not seen one in many

years. In those days a swing was two lengths of rope hanging down from a pole, with a piece of wood at the bottom to sit on, and the children swung on it. As the boy was swinging, he looked behind him for a moment. Meanwhile he twisted the rope, the rope wound itself around his throat, and he choked. By the time people came to save him, he had already lost consciousness. Not enough oxygen had reached his brain. They took him to the hospital, and for several months he lay there like a vegetable. All Yerushalayim davened for this five-year-old boy, a rachmanus, that Hashem should save him, and he lay there like a vegetable.

In Yerushalayim there was a tzaddik named Rav Dovid Frankel. One night he had a dream about the boy. In the morning he went to see the boy's father and told him, "Listen, I must tell you a dream I had last night."

He had seen himself sitting in the yeshivah shel maalah, in the Beis Din shel Maalah. He saw three dayanim, tzaddikim who had passed away, and in front of them were three boxes. On one was written "Neshamos," on another "Chaim," and on the third "Maves." They took notes with all kinds of names out of the box of neshamos and judged each one, whether it should go to life or to death. After judging, they put each note into the proper box, this one or that one.

"I saw them take out a note with your son's name," he said. Everyone knew that the boy was lying in the hospital like a vegetable. "They judged him for death, and they went to put the note into the box of death. As they put it in, suddenly, I don't know how, I saw a pair of blue scissors come from the direction of Shuk Machaneh Yehudah (the great open-air market of Yerushalayim). The scissors caught the note and cut it to pieces. They cut your son's note away from the side of death, took it out of there and threw it away in crumbs. I don't understand what it means, but I saw something so remarkable that I said to myself that I must tell you."

A few minutes later the father got a phone call from the hospital: he and his wife must come to the hospital at once. They were frightened, not knowing what had happened, and they ran as fast as they could to Shaarei Tzedek hospital, which was then in the neighborhood near Machaneh Yehudah. They arrived out of breath, and the doctor smiled at them. "Do you know what happened?" he said. "Two or three hours ago the boy suddenly got his color back. Little by little he opened his mouth and came back to consciousness. Here he is, a healthy boy. Take him home; there is nothing wrong with him. Everything is fine, all by itself."

They took him home in joy. On the way the husband said to his wife, "You know, Rav Dov Frankel had a dream. He said that blue scissors came from Machaneh Yehudah and cut up the note of death, and right then the boy was saved!"

When she heard "blue scissors from Machaneh Yehudah," she fainted. She did not lose consciousness completely, but she was so dizzy that she fell to the ground

there in the street. They lifted her up, and her husband asked her, "What happened to you?"

"Blue scissors from Machaneh Yehudah?" she said. "Let me tell you. You know that I sew. I have a special pair of expensive scissors that cut cloth with an artist's edge. Every time I go to buy cloth in Machaneh Yehudah, I take my scissors with me so that the man will cut the cloth with them. And I always handed the scissors to the man who cuts, from my hand into his. That was all I did, handing him the scissors to cut the cloth I was buying. This last week, when I went to buy cloth, I said, 'Ribono shel Olam, for the sake of my son I take upon myself an added measure of tznius. I will not hand the scissors to a man; I will put them on the table, and he will take them from the table.' And that is what I did. Two or three days ago, when I went to buy cloth, I put the scissors on the table. He took them himself, cut the cloth and put them back on the table, and I took them. We did not pass the scissors from hand to hand. Those were the blue scissors."

For an added measure of tznius as fine as that, she got her son back to life. Today that son is a married man living in Yerushalayim, and I think he is already a grandfather. He keeps the scissors in a vitrine next to the bookcase. It is a kind of glass case, like those in cabinets where people keep silver vessels, and the scissors lie in it as a testimony for all to see. Because his mother kept an added measure of tznius with those scissors, he was saved at the age of five and merited a long and good life and a fine family.

That is the power of tznius in Shamayim! "Elokeihem shel eilu sonei zimah," the G-d of these people hates lewdness. Even Bilaam ben Be'or knew it. He knew the power of the taharah and kedushah of Klal Yisrael, and that the only way to destroy and corrupt them is by harming their kedushah and their taharah. That is what the erev rav are doing in our days. They try to spread as much tumah and filth as they can and to make the neshamos of Klal Yisrael stumble, so as to hold back the Geulah. Whenever a person takes upon himself an added measure of tznius, he does not know how much good he is doing for himself, for his family, and for all of Klal Yisrael.

The Baby Who Fell

Talk Twelve · 15:00

People always came to my grandfather for advice, not only about parnassah but also about illnesses. Most often they came when the doctor wanted to operate, and he would generally tell them to avoid the surgery. "Instead," he would say, "do teshuvah, do a tikkun, a day of fasting, daven such and such, and everything will be all

right." And so it was. After a few days of tefillah and teshuvah, people recovered from serious illnesses, even from terminal ones.

The doctors would argue with the families who refused the surgery, and the families would say, "Chacham Menachem said no. He said to do teshuvah and tikkunim instead." The doctors shouted at them, "You are mad! You are endangering the life of someone dear to you!" It made no difference; these people were stubborn. Two or three days later the patient would suddenly get up, put on his own clothes and walk out of the hospital healthy. It was a great kiddush Hashem.

One day a woman came to him. I did not only know her; several times Saba had sent money to this poor family through me. He would give me an envelope and say, "Go upstairs and give it to them. They have no bread to eat. Tell them Saba owes it to them." I would go up and give it to them, so I knew this family well.

One day this woman was walking in the street with her three-month-old baby, and somehow he fell from her arms. He fell on his head, and his skull was fractured. The poor woman took him to the hospital, and the doctors said that his condition was extremely dangerous. There was a dangerous operation they could do, but there was nothing to lose, since he was going to die anyway. She told them, "You will do nothing until I go and ask Chacham Menachem."

She came to my grandfather. Saba put on his hat, went with her into the shul and made a pidyon nefesh for the baby. Then he told her, "Go and take the child to a great doctor, and let him examine him. Even if the doctor says to operate, do not agree to the operation. After the great doctor has said yes, operate, take the baby out of the hospital without an operation and bring him home. I will daven for his recovery."

So it was. She brought a great doctor, for a large sum of money. He sat and looked and said, "Madam, there is nothing to be done. An operation is the only chance that he might be saved." After he had said his piece, she said to him, "Fine, you have said it. Chacham Menachem told me that after your ruling I should take the child home."

The doctors shouted, "You are mad! You want to kill the child! You are not giving him a chance! You will sign here now that it is on your full responsibility." She said, "I'll sign everything. Chacham Menachem said it, and nothing else interests me." She took the baby out to bring him home.

On her way she passed Yeshivas Porat Yosef (the great Sephardi yeshivah of Yerushalayim), and she decided to go in to the chachamim, the mekubalim who learned there in the room of the mekubalim, so that they would bless the child. She brought him before them in his very dangerous state. At that hour Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri was there, and Chacham Yosef Zaruk a"h. I have not yet told you about him; when I do, you will be shaken to learn that such a man ever lived in the

world. Chacham Sasson Levi and Chacham Yeshua Sharabani were there too. All of them put their hands on the baby's head and blessed him with a refuah sheleimah, and she went home.

Little by little, over a few days, he recovered completely. All the fractures in his head knit together. He opened his eyes, came back to consciousness and began to eat by himself, and within a short time he was a normal child. A few months later she took him to the hospital for more tests. When they saw a healthy child, they said to her, "Tell us, what did you do for him? Which professor managed to cure him? Where did you have such a big operation that succeeded so well?"

She told them, "The professors I went to were four mekubalim in Porat Yosef who blessed him, and I followed the instructions of Chacham Menachem."

The Bulgarian Jew

Talk Twelve · 19:30

One day a Jew from Bulgaria came to him. The Jews of Bulgaria came to Eretz Yisrael mostly in the first years of the State, and the poor people had no Yiddishkeit there at all. They grew up truly amei ha'aretz, far from any religion.

This man said to him, "Listen, Rabbi, I don't know you. I don't know chachamim at all, and I don't know Torah." He had a son of ten with a defect in his heart, a hole in the heart. Since the hole had been discovered and the boy's life was in danger, the doctors wanted him to go abroad for an operation that could not be done here in Eretz Yisrael. The boy was in a terrible condition, and meanwhile they were only giving him medicines to keep him going until they found a way to fly him to America for the operation. "I don't know," he said. "My friends told me to go to Chacham Menachem, that he could help me. I don't know how you can help, but they told me to, so I came."

My grandfather looked at him and said, "Listen, your son is in real danger of his life. By nature he cannot be saved, not even through a hospital in America. But if you do teshuvah, your son will be saved. Are you prepared to accept upon yourself ol Torah u'mitzvos: Shabbos, taharas hamishpachah, kashrus?" In about ten minutes he gave him a lightning lecture on what Shabbos is, what taharas hamishpachah is and what kashrus is.

The man said, "Listen, for my son I am ready for anything. If it will help, I'm ready."

My grandfather told him, "If you are ready to do teshuvah, come with me now to the shul and we will daven Minchah." He went with my grandfather. He knew how to read Hebrew with nekudos, though he did not know what Minchah was,

and there was a siddur. My grandfather told him, "Now, in Minchah, accept upon yourself a taanis for tomorrow. From tomorrow morning until tomorrow night you must fast. I am also accepting the taanis with you for your son. The two of us will fast for your son. Do teshuvah."

The poor man! These are pure neshamos, only unfortunate, raised as tinokos shenishbu. He sat with tears and accepted it out of emunah, emunas chachamim, that there is a Creator of the world Who can heal his child. He took the taanis upon himself, and he truly accepted to keep Torah and mitzvos. Right there, before the shkiah, my grandfather put tefillin on him so that he would not lose the mitzvah of tefillin. For the first time in his life he had a bar mitzvah. He put on tefillin that moment, and that was his bar mitzvah.

My grandfather told him, "Come to me tomorrow morning. I will show you how to daven Shacharis, and we will take care of your son." He came the next day, and my grandfather explained to him what Shacharis is, had him put on tefillin, and told him to say at least Krias Shema and Shemoneh Esreh. The poor man, what did he know? It was the first time; he was just beginning. Then my grandfather said to him, "Come, let the two of us sit and say the whole Tehillim. You will say Tehillim for teshuvah on all your aveiros and for the child's recovery, and I will also say it for teshuvah on your aveiros and for the child's recovery."

The two of them sat for three hours. The Bulgarian told the story himself. He came to my grandfather's shivah and told it to us. "I sat with Chacham Menachem," he said, "and we said the entire Tehillim, word by word. It took several hours. When we finished the Tehillim, Chacham Menachem looked at me and said, 'You can go to the hospital now and take the boy home. Your child is already healed; your teshuvah has been accepted. From today you keep the taryag mitzvos as they should be kept, and your son is healthy. Go to the hospital and take him.'"

He went to the hospital, and they saw that the boy really was better. The pink color had come back to his cheeks and his face. He told them, "I want to take the boy home. Examine him again and take a new x-ray."

They said, "What, are you mad?"

"Look," he said, "his face is pink."

"No," they told him, "that is from the pills. On the outside he looks fine, but inside the problem is still there! Go find a doctor."

"No," he said. "Chacham Menachem said he is already healthy. I am taking him home."

"Who is Chacham Menachem? Are you mad? Leave the rabbis alone; you are endangering your child! Find a way to fly him to America, quickly!"

He said to them, "I am taking the child home. Chacham Menachem said he is healthy. Take a new x-ray now." He insisted, and they went and took a new x-ray.

They found that the heart was whole and healthy. There was no hole; it had all closed up by itself! They were stunned and could not believe what they saw in the x-ray. It was a great kiddush Hashem, and he took the boy home. When he came to the shivah, he already came dressed as a chareidi, and he told us his story.

At Kever Shimon HaTzaddik

Talk Twelve · 26:30

During the days of mourning for him, a man came whom none of us knew. We had never seen him anywhere near Saba. He came in and began to weep and beat his head and say, "Chacham Menachem has passed away! Woe, you don't know what you have lost!" He said it to Saba's sons, my uncles: "You don't know what you have lost! I have a story for you that you have never heard."

This is the story he told. He had a son who had been mute from birth. It is not easy to raise a mute child, but the poor man had no choice. One night, when the boy was six or seven, he dreamed that someone was telling him, "If Chacham Menachem davens for him, he will get well. Know that your son's recovery is in the hands of Chacham Menachem."

The man got up from his sleep at twelve at night. He did not think twice. He got his son out of bed, dressed him and said, "Come with me, we are going to Chacham Menachem." At one in the morning he reached my grandfather's house and knocked on the door, and my grandfather opened it. One in the morning was already part of my grandfather's working hours. He came in, and my grandfather asked him, "What do you want?" He had come with a child at such an hour.

"I dreamed that you will daven for my son and he will be completely well. So here he is, he's right here. Daven for him; I want him healthy."

My grandfather said to him, "Tell me, are you mad? Do I live by your dreams? Don't you know that 'dreams speak falsehood'? Go away from here, do me a favor. What do you want from my life? What can I do? I want to daven, and you are just taking my time. What can I do for this child? Leave me alone, really."

"No," he said, "I am not moving from here. You will daven, and you will heal him."

"Chacham Menachem began to learn," the man told us, "and I stood there in the middle of the room with the boy. He started learning, and I didn't move. He said to me, 'Do me a favor, let me learn. I can't help you.' But I insisted. I told him, 'Listen, the dream I saw is true, and you will help me.'" For a whole hour, he said, he stood in the middle of the room with the boy and would not budge. When my

grandfather saw that it was already two, two-thirty at night and they were not moving, he said to him, "All right, come with me."

This was in the years before the Six Day War (1967). The border between the Kingdom of Jordan and the Jews living in Eretz Yisrael ran at Mandelbaum Gate (the one crossing point between the Israeli and the Jordanian parts of Yerushalayim in those years). Rechov Shmuel HaNavi was the last street before the border with Jordan, and the way into Jordan was through Mandelbaum Gate. On the other side of the crossing there was a turn to the left that led to kever Shimon HaTzaddik. From Mandelbaum Gate to kever Shimon HaTzaddik was four or five minutes on foot.

My grandfather took them, and they came to Mandelbaum Gate. He told them, "Now take hold of my garment tightly. Don't you dare let go for one moment, and follow me."

"We went into Mandelbaum Gate," the man said, "and passed among the Jordanian soldiers, and they did not see us. We passed a whole group of Jordanian soldiers. We went in among them and walked through them, and no one saw us. We came out onto the road that goes to kever Shimon HaTzaddik, and we reached the kever at two-thirty at night. He said to me, 'You stand at the entrance; the boy and I will go inside.'"

He went in with the boy and davened there. "I stood at a distance," the man said, "and watched him daven, holding the boy beside him, concentrating on his tefillos." He davened for about half an hour, holding the boy by the hand. After half an hour he came out. "Again we took hold of his garment and passed among the Jordanian soldiers. We actually brushed against them, and they did not see us. The three of us were ro'im v'einam nir'im, seeing and unseen. But we held on to his garment tightly, as he had said."

They came out of Mandelbaum back to Rechov Shmuel HaNavi, into Israeli territory. When they got there, my grandfather said to him, "Listen, tomorrow morning your son will begin to speak. It is done. I davened at Shimon HaTzaddik, and he healed him. But know one thing: if you tell what happened here tonight, you are killing me. As long as I am alive you may not say one word, not about how the boy got well, not about what happened here, not about what you saw. If you want to kill me, say one word. But know that you must guard your mouth; my life depends on it."

"I promised him," the man said, "that I would not let a word out of my mouth as long as Chacham Menachem was alive. Now that he has passed away, I am telling you." In the morning the boy got up and began to speak like anyone else. Everyone was amazed. They came and asked, "What happened? Where did you get him healed? How did it happen?" "I swallowed my tongue," he said. "I filled my mouth

with water and told them nothing. I said, 'Tefillos, tefillos, yishtabach Shemo,' and that was all. Now I am telling you exactly what happened and how my son began to speak. Now that he has passed away, I am permitted to reveal the story."

That is what he told us.

Menachem in the Jordan

Talk Twelve · 33:30

When I married, my brother Refael a"h came and took my place. My grandmother had already passed away and Saba was alone, in the period before he married a second time, as I will tell later on. Saba could not be left alone; another grandson had to be with him, and since I had married, my brother Refael came. He was two years younger than I. He took care of everything that had to be done in the house and helped Saba. Saba no longer woke him every night at chatzos as he had woken me; he let him sleep. But he kept him busy during the hours of the day.

One night, at chatzos, my grandfather woke him. "Quick, quick, get up!"

"What happened?"

"Menachem, your cousin, is in danger, and we must daven for him now so that he will be saved. Come immediately! Get up! Wash netilas yadayim and say birchos hashachar."

My poor brother got up at once, washed netilas yadayim and said birchos hashachar. "Now give me a Tehillim," Saba said. "Quickly, sit and say Tehillim! It doesn't matter which chapter. Start saying Tehillim for Menachem. Quickly!"

He sat down, and they began to say Tehillim for him. Menachem was our cousin, the son of Saba's son Moshe, and he was in the army, in the paratroopers. In those years many infiltrators came across from Jordan into the West Bank, and from there into Israel to make trouble. From time to time the army made raids into Jordan, toward Sedom and, above all, toward Tzoar, a-Safi, Sela'a and Kerak, the places on the side of the Aravah that belongs to the Jordanians, south and east of Yam HaMelach. From there a mishlachas malachei ra'im set out each time, so the army would go there to raid them.

That night a group of soldiers set out to cross the Jordan and make a raid on one of these places. How did they cross the Jordan? One soldier swam across, dragging a pole and a rope. When he reached the Jordanian side, he drove in the pole, which had the rope tied at its top. The other end of the rope was on the Israeli side, where they had also set up a pole and tied the rope to it tightly. The soldiers, in full gear, all crossed hanging in the air, holding the rope hand over hand. That was how they crossed from side to side, so that the silence would be kept and they would not

be discovered while crossing. All the soldiers crossed to the Jordanian side this way to continue their raid.

My cousin had a big crate of ammunition on his back, and he too began to cross along the rope. In the middle of the crossing over the Jordan, his hands slipped off because of the weight. He fell straight down into the water and sank at once. The ammunition on his back was very heavy, and he drowned.

We did not know what had happened. In the middle of the night my grandfather said to my brother, "Tefillah! Come on, Tehillim, Tehillim!" For three quarters of an hour my grandfather stood as if he were drunk, with tefillos and pidyonos, saying again and again, "Zeh chalifaso, zeh temuraso" (the words of a pidyon: this is in his place, this is his exchange), and putting down coins here and coins there. Saba's pockets were always full of heaps of coins, both to give to the poor and to make pidyonos. It was all with the white grush coins of those days. So he went on with the tefillos and the coins, and after three quarters of an hour he said to my brother, "Baruch Hashem, Menachem your cousin is saved. You can go back to sleep."

"What happened?"

"Tomorrow Menachem himself will come and tell you what happened."

The next day at noon Menachem came, to thank Saba for saving him. My brother, astonished, asked him, "What happened? How did he save you?"

Menachem told him that they had been crossing from side to side on the rope, and in the middle of the crossing his hands had slipped and he had sunk. As soon as he felt himself drowning he swallowed water, and he was almost finished. Suddenly he felt a car tire come from somewhere in the water. It floated up, lifted him above the water, and threw him onto the bank on the Jordanian side. But he had already drowned.

"Suddenly," he said, "I saw Saba coming. Saba came and grabbed me and struck me on the back, a great many blows, until I had brought out all the water and come back to myself. I saw Saba. He came and struck me and did not say a word to me. But he beat me on the back until I was free of the water and was myself again, healthy and conscious. Then Saba disappeared."

"I knew the route the men were to take back," he said, "and I crawled toward it and managed to get there. The men had left me behind. The commander had said, 'Do nothing. The man drowned. Move forward. We can't lose the whole planned operation because of him.' They all moved on and left me in the water. I crawled by myself to the place they had to come back through and waited for them, and when they came back they picked me up and we got out. Because of what I had been through, I was given a few days' leave to rest, and the first thing I did was come to Saba to thank him for coming and saving me."

And Saba, of course, had been at home the whole time with his Tehillim. His ruach, his nefesh, had gone out to save his grandson Menachem.

The Slap in Beis Yisrael

Talk Twelve · 42:30

Time and again I saw my grandfather daven that no one should be harmed on his account, that no Jew should come to any suffering because of him. At first I did not understand what was going on. Later I understood that people had hurt him, and he was davening for them, that they should not be punished from Shamayim for what they had done to him and to his kavod.

One Shabbos in Beis Yisrael (a chareidi neighborhood of Yerushalayim, next to Meah Shearim), my grandfather was walking home from one of the shiurim he gave before noon. On the way he saw a bochur riding a motorcycle. When the bochur passed him, my grandfather said to him, "Chabibi (my dear), today is Shabbos." He said it respectfully and gently. My grandfather never shouted in a way that would anger a person. He spoke pleasantly, so that the person would accept his words. He always began with "Chabibi"; the word was constantly on his lips, and I heard it from him hundreds of times.

This bochur was a kal da'as. He jumped at my grandfather and slapped him across the face. My grandfather took the slap quietly, said not a word, and went home.

A few minutes later the bochur had an accident. He flipped over with the motorcycle, it landed on his head, and he was badly hurt. A Magen David Adom (Israel's ambulance service) ambulance came right away, and they began trying to revive him. His body lay on the ground while they tried resuscitation and everything else.

His mother came crying to my grandfather. "I heard what happened," she said. "People saw him slap you, and we know that is why this happened to him. Daven for him, be mochel him."

"Good," my grandfather said. "I have to go there and see him."

He went out and saw him lying there with people treating him. My grandfather did not do much. He went over to the body lying on the ground and whispered something into his ear. Then he stood up and said to the mother, "Don't worry. Today he will be completely well. He will come out of all this healthy. This very day he will be home with you, well. You have nothing to worry about. I promise you."

And so it was. A few minutes later he came to. He recovered, they took him to the hospital, and after a series of tests they told him, "There is nothing wrong with you. You can go home. Everything is fine."

A large crowd had gathered to see what was happening, and as my grandfather left, people who knew him asked, "What happened here?"

"I saw that his neshamah had already left the body and was standing beside it," he said. People who were in a coma often tell that they saw their body from outside while others came and treated it; this was the same. "I saw his nefesh outside his body, standing and looking at it. I went in and whispered into his ear, so that the nefesh would hear. Into the ear of the body I said, 'Are you ready to accept upon yourself complete teshuvah?' The nefesh said yes. The moment it said yes, I decreed that it go back into the body, and he came back."

That bochur did complete teshuvah. Later he came to my grandfather and became one of his great chassidim.

Saving Aharon

Talk Twelve · 52:30

There was a man in Yerushalayim who ran a mosad. It was a Sephardi mosad, but more kana'i, and not in my grandfather's way. My grandfather ran Ahavas Chaim his own way.

This man decided to latch onto my grandfather and get him to attach Ahavas Chaim and its building to his own mosad. That way, if he ever needed to take loans or the like on its account, my grandfather would be in the picture as a guarantor. My grandfather told him, "Absolutely not. I am not willing. I want no dealings with you."

From then on he was my grandfather's enemy, and wherever he went he disgraced him. He even put out an alilah about my grandfather, a very degrading one, and did great harm to his kavod. In the end that man got what was coming to him. Because of the alilah he spread about my grandfather, his wife eventually went mad, he suffered cruelly from his children, and he went through seventy levels of Gehinnom in his own home.

But at the time, when he first began spreading ugly words and disgracing my grandfather, one of my cousins was furious. This cousin was older than I was. He was the one who had attended to my grandfather before me. He said to me once, "Just let me catch Aharon" (that was the man's name; I will not give his family name, so that no one will know who he was), "and I'll tear him to pieces. I am not giving up on Saba's kavod."

One day, at four in the afternoon, I was sitting at home with my grandfather. He sat calm and at peace. Suddenly my cousin came in, and the moment he walked in my grandfather began shouting at him: "Why did you chase Aharon? What did you

do to him? How much did I have to daven this last half hour that you should not hurt him? I do not want anyone punished because of me!"

I did not understand a thing. I had been sitting with my grandfather the whole last half hour. He had not davened and had not done anything. True, there were a few moments when he sat lost in thought, but it was always his way to stop for a few minutes and think about all sorts of things. I was used to it; it was nothing unusual.

"Why did you run after him just now?" he went on. "This last half hour I had to strain so that you would not hurt him."

I asked my cousin, "Tell me, what happened?"

"Just now I was running down the street," he said. "I saw Aharon and said to myself, 'Now I finish him.' I started running after him, and he started running away from me. But I'm lighter than he is, so I kept running. He went into a building, and I knew that this time he wouldn't get out of it, this time I would finish him. I went into the building and turned it upside down, room after room, place after place, and I didn't see him. I don't know where he disappeared to. He got out of my hands alive, and not b'derech hateva."

"I strained to save him from your hands," my grandfather told him, "so that you would not hurt him."

Among the Mines

Talk Twelve · 1:09:30

One Shabbos, in the middle of seudah shlishis, my grandfather suddenly raised his eyes and asked me, "Where is your sister Yocheved?" She was a year younger than me.

"I don't know," I told him. "She's not supposed to come here."

He gazed for a few minutes and then hurried through seudah shlishis. As soon as he finished bentching he said to me, "Come with me."

I went out with him. Instead of heading toward Meah Shearim and on to Mamilla, I saw that we were going down toward Shmuel HaNavi. This was a few months after the Six Day War. Shmuel HaNavi had been the border until then,[21] and anyone who wanted to get to Har HaTzofim had to go through the Mandelbaum crossing and up the paved road that climbs from Shimon HaTzaddik to the road

[21] From 1948 until the Six Day War, Yerushalayim was divided between Israel and Jordan. Between the two sides lay strips of no-man's land, many of them mined, and Har HaTzofim remained a small Israeli island inside Jordanian territory. The Mandelbaum Gate was the one crossing point between the two halves of the city.

leading to Har HaTzofim, because all the fields were mined. The whole area was no-man's land, the mines had not yet been cleared from it, and it was dangerous to walk anywhere off the paved road. None of the housing blocks that stand in Shmuel HaNavi today were there yet; there was nothing at all. It was all desolate, open fields, from Sheikh Jarrah up to the ascent toward Har HaTzofim.

I came with him to about where the Shmuel HaNavi housing blocks stand today, roughly between Rechov Yechezkel and Rechov Bar Ilan. We stood there on the road, both of us looking, and he kept gazing out toward the open land of Har HaTzofim.

"Your sister went with her friends to walk around Har HaTzofim," he told me, "and they went into minefields. They are in great danger, and they have to be saved."

He gave up his shiur in Mamilla and stayed standing there. We stood like that from about half past two or three in the afternoon until almost six. He stood in tefillah with his eyes closed, saying Tehillim, with machshavos and yichudim, and I stood next to him, bewildered, watching him. I could see him truly straining in tefillah. It was not an ordinary tefillah or ordinary Tehillim; he was straining and straining, with kavanos and yichudim and machshavos. I stood watching my grandfather, stunned. In all the years I had known him I had never seen such an effort in tefillah, for over two hours, giving up his regular shiur while people waited for him. Who knew what was about to happen?

At about half past five, I suddenly saw my sister and a few other girls coming toward us, walking across the no-man's land as if they were strolling through a rose garden, without a second thought. They all came along, crossed the road and the fence, and reached Shmuel HaNavi. My sister saw Saba standing there and ran to him.

Saba looked at her with a stern face and said, "What did you do? You walked around among the mines. Another second and you would have stepped on live mines and been blown up." He said it with a word in Spanish, something like *patladeyar*; I don't remember it exactly. "I stood here with a great effort, so that you would walk among the mines without stepping on them. You gave me hard work to do. Baruch Hashem, you came back safely."

Then we went home, and he went in to give his regular shiur at Ahavas Chaim.

The Illness at Sixty

Talk Eleven · 1:30:00

Until that time my grandfather still ran the orphanage I mentioned. He cared for orphans and brought them in, close to twenty of them, in Ahavas Chaim, in the long room. He brought in a house father for them as well, but he himself was the main one who looked after them: who saw to their food and to everything else they needed.

When he was sixty, the strain overcame him and he fell ill. Afterward the doctors told him he was not permitted to run the place anymore, and he had to place the children in all kinds of institutions and pay twenty-five lira for each one, until later he passed the task on to me. What became of the task he gave me I will tell further on.

He fell ill, and for two weeks he lost consciousness. He stayed at home. Even without consciousness he ate; he took sour cream and leben, and that was his only food the whole time. My mother would give it to him, and so would I; we would put it into his mouth, and that is how he was fed. He lay unconscious, in a very grave state.

Then people came from every circle of the Jewish community and davened. In many places special minyanim were opened to say Tehillim for his refuah. We had not known how much the people valued Saba, how much the whole nation loved this simple man, the tinsmith of Beis Yisrael. Great rabbonim came from everywhere and began to cry as over someone dear to them. They were not allowed to come in; it was forbidden. I myself stopped people at the door. Only a few were let in, because the noise and the crowd were not good for him. But they came weeping, in tears. In many places the Tehillim that was begun for him continued even after he recovered, and it remained for the good of all Klal Yisrael.

There were two hard weeks. Then suddenly, from Shamayim, on his own, he opened his eyes, came back to consciousness, and returned to himself.

The Sister from Turkey

Talk Eleven · 1:32:30

Later, when he was sixty-seven, there was an interesting story.

My grandfather's eldest brother, Shmuel, lived near him, one street apart: he lived on Rappaport Street and my grandfather on Ish Shalom Street. They were always good friends. In the shul, my grandfather had given his brother a special place near the aron. He himself always looked for a place by the entrance of the shul, like the simplest man, right at the entrance. Even when no one was there and he sat to

learn by himself, he never sat in his brother's place. Why? Because he was his elder brother, and kibbud av va'eim includes honoring the elder brother. Never did he sit in his brother's place. I saw it! Many times, for one reason or another, I brought him straight to that spot, and he was careful to sit on the bench beside it and not in the place itself. That is how careful he was in his conduct, even in honoring an elder brother.

His younger brother, Yom Tov, had stayed in Turkey, and so had his sister. Now his sister came to Eretz Yisrael for a visit. I remember how she came and saw my grandfather and said to him, "Menachem! You are handsome! You are strong! Your younger brother looks older than you! You are jahil!" That is a Turkish word that means, as she used it, young and full of energy. She said it out of love. She was here a week and went back to Turkey.

A day or two after she went back to Turkey, my grandfather took to his bed. He lost consciousness completely. He was still at home, and he was still being fed by mouth, but his condition grew worse from day to day.

At that time there was a doctor in Yerushalayim, Dr. Shtark, a doctor like no other, an outstanding specialist in nerves, known as the expert. My grandfather had come to such a state of utter weakness that they brought Dr. Shtark to him. A visit from him was not like an ordinary doctor's visit; it cost like the visits of ten doctors, with ma'aser and chomesh on top! But there was no choice, and he was called in specially.

He came and examined my grandfather and said, "You brought me to a man who will die in half an hour? Are you mad? Is this my honor, to bring me to someone like this, in a state like this?" He took his money and left in a rage that they had brought him to such a case.

My grandmother heard this, broke down completely, and began to cry: "The doctor said another half an hour!" As if a doctor hands out life!

As my grandmother sat crying, in walked Mulla Asriyas, alav hashalom. He was an old Jew who had a greengrocery in Meah Shearim and davened regularly at Ahavas Chaim. He had come to visit my grandfather several times, and that day, at noon, he suddenly came in. He heard what had happened and said, "I am now putting myself at risk for Chacham Menachem. I will save him. Go bring me tin."

He was going to pour molten tin into water (an old custom among the Jews of the East, used to find and draw out an ayin hara). I ran at once, like an arrow from a bow. Within a few minutes I reached my brother's shop; he had a large smithy up Sonnenfeld Street, toward Meah Shearim. I took from him one long strip of tin, new, because he had said to bring new tin. He also asked for a ladle.

We melted the tin in the kitchen, not near my grandfather. He melted it, poured it into water, and mentioned my grandfather's name. Suddenly it came out flat, and

there appeared the likeness of my aunt, my grandfather's sister, with two eyes like holes. I can still see that flat piece of tin before my eyes; I see it now in my mind and remember it.

He looked and said, "Do you know this woman?"

We said, "Of course. It is his sister."

He said, "She gave him an ayin hara, not on purpose, and that is why he has been struck. Save him quickly. Is there any garment of hers?"

We told him there was nothing.

"Nothing at all of hers?"

We told him there was a soap from the airplane. In those days the airlines handed out a small bar of soap to every passenger. She had washed her face and hands with hers, and what was left of it had stayed at her brother's.

He said, "Wash him with it, quickly."

It was brought at once, and my mother, aleha hashalom, and I washed Saba together. We put the soap into water and began to wash his whole body. We had only just finished washing him when he opened his eyes and came back to consciousness. Then, little by little, it took him another week or two to recover, until he began to speak. He had to learn again, as it were, to speak and to walk. He got up and returned to himself, and so he went on for close to eight more years until his passing: running, walking, and being mezakeh the rabbim to his very last day.

This is what the Gemara says: ninety-nine die of ayin hara, and one of an ordinary death. People do not know this. Mulla Asriyas was sent like a malach, and we discovered who had done it. That is the whole point: to discover who did it. It is not just a matter of taking lead or tin, pouring it, and the person is well. Sometimes the lead or the tin by itself draws out kinds of ayin hara. But to draw out the particular illness a person has, the particular problem, one must know why it happened and how it happened, and then know how to cleanse it. Once it was known that it came from her, and her soap was taken, he was delivered: tzaddik mitzarah nechelatz. He returned to himself. May his zechus protect us, amen.

Short Accounts

The Butcher's Niece

Talk Twelve · 24:30

Another of my grandfather's talmidim, whom I knew well, had a butcher shop in Machaneh Yehudah. He also came to my grandfather's shivah and told his story.

His brother's daughter, a young girl, had the well-known illness. In those days people had not yet heard of any cure for that illness at all; it killed without a second thought. His brother began to weep that his daughter was in danger. My grandfather told him, "Go now and do one day of general teshuvah for all your aveiros. Fast that day, and sit and say the whole Tehillim twice with tears, as the number of kofer." That is three hundred chapters, a hundred and fifty each time, which is the gematria of kofer (atonement). "Then come back to me."

When he came back the next day at the end of the fast, after he had said the Tehillim, my grandfather looked at him and said, "I see that your teshuvah has been accepted. Go home. I promise you that you will yet see grandchildren from this daughter."

Within a few days the illness was gone. He told us that she is married and has children, and his brother is alive and sees his grandchildren from her.

The Ruach Ra'ah from the Beis HaKevaros

Talk Twelve · 26:00

One day a woman came to him weeping. Her son, a boy of ten, had suddenly become ill and turned mute; he could not speak. They took him to the hospital, but whatever they looked at, they found nothing, and the boy was mute.

My grandfather took his name, stood for a minute in the street, looked, and said to her, "When you were expecting, you went to the beis hakevaros. A ruach ra'ah from the beis hakevaros entered you and entered the child while he was still inside you. It has accompanied him until today, and it caused this. Go home and don't worry; I will take care of it. In a few more hours the ruach will leave him, and he will be completely well."

And so it was. She went home, and a few hours later the boy really did open his mouth and speak, and he was a normal child again.

The Pasuk Under Fire

Talk Twelve · 39:30

My cousin Menachem told another story as well. One day my grandfather called him over and said, "Menachem, you are about to go out to a dangerous battle.

There will be an ambush, and the bullets will come down on you like rain. Don't forget to say the pasuk *Re'eh onyi v'chaltzeini ki Sorascha lo shachachti* (ראה עניי וחלצני כי תורתך לא שכחתי, 'See my affliction and rescue me, for I have not forgotten Your Torah'). Say it without stopping. Tell your friends to say it too. Whoever says it will be saved."

A few days later, Menachem said, his unit walked into an ambush in enemy territory, and the bullets began to fly over their heads like rain. He told the others to say the pasuk, but nobody paid attention to him, and there were many wounded. One friend said it together with him, and only the two of them kept at it. Nothing happened to them. Then, for a single moment, his friend stopped saying it, and the instant he stopped he took a bullet in the forehead. Menachem kept saying it without a break, and he was saved. Of the whole group that was there, he was one of the very few who came out without any injury at all, in a way that was not b'derech hateva.

Savta Came to Tell Him

Talk Twelve · 41:30

One night my brother Raphael, a"h, was not sleeping at Saba's house but somewhere else. Suddenly he felt terrible pains in his back. He had no idea what was wrong with him, only pain and suffering, and his wife became quite frightened. It was a hard night. Toward morning everything let go, he came back to himself, and he went to Yerushalayim.

When he came to Saba a few hours later, Saba said to him, "Tell me, what was the matter with you last night? Weren't you feeling well?"

"Yes," Raphael said. "Everything seized up."

"Savta came to me from the olam ha'emes," Saba told him, "and told me that you were ill and that I should daven for you. I davened for you, and baruch Hashem, you are well."

The Kupah in Shuk HaCarmel

Talk Twelve · 47:30

Madame Angel, a"h, who collected my grandfather's tzedakah kupos in Tel Aviv, once told me this story.

It was in the days of the incitement against the religious, when the newspapers and everyone else were turning the country against them. That was the time of the

search for Yossele Schuchmacher.[22] His grandfather, Nachman Shtarkes, was a holy man, a tzaddik who had come from Russia, but his daughter and son-in-law did not keep the Torah. The boy's mother wanted to go to Russia and raise him like a goy, so his grandfather took him from her and sent him abroad, where he would be raised as a Jew and a yerei Shamayim. All day long people shouted, "Where is Yossele? Where is Yossele?" It made a tremendous uproar, and the secular press went after the religious, calling them thieves who steal children from their parents. It was a very well-known story, and it set off a whole campaign against the religious.

One day my grandfather came to Madame Angel with a kupah and some twenty-odd grushim (small coins; in those days everything was grushim). He told her that he had been walking through Shuk HaCarmel (Tel Aviv's big open-air market), not to collect the kupos, which was her job, but simply on his way. A man who had one of the kupos came out of his shop, took it, and threw it at my grandfather, onto the ground and in his face. "You religious are thieves! Parasites!" he shouted, and disgraced my grandfather.

"I picked up the kupah," my grandfather told her, "and gathered all the coins that fell on the ground. Here it is, take it. Write him a receipt now for the sum, and tomorrow take the receipt to him in Shuk HaCarmel."

"Fine," she said.

The next day, when she went to deliver the receipt, she found his shop closed with a death notice on it. She asked the people there what had happened. They told her that the afternoon before, he had suddenly felt pains in his stomach. They took him to the hospital, and his neshamah left him.

However much my grandfather said that he forgave him, and forgave him again, and did not want him harmed, in Shamayim they did not give up my grandfather's kavod, and the man left the world.

"GANAV!"

Talk Twelve · 50:00

One day my grandfather was walking in Yerushalayim when a man ran after him shouting, "Ganav! Chacham Menachem, you're a ganav! Ya ganav!" and poured a stream of filth out of his mouth. My grandfather heard all of it and did not react. He kept walking as usual, as if nothing had reached his ears, and went home.

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[22] In 1960 Nachman Shtarkes hid his young grandson Yossele Schuchmacher so that his parents would not raise him far from Torah. The boy was smuggled out of the country, and for two years the affair shook all of Israel, until the Mossad found him in New York in 1962.

A few hours later the man was writhing as if in the pains of childbirth. He had contractions, terrible stomach pains, toothaches and headaches, and he was certain he was going to die. His household panicked and did not know what to do for him. "This is because of Chacham Menachem," he told them. "I disgraced him. Do me a favor, call Chacham Menachem to come here and be mochel me."

They ran to my grandfather and said, "Chacham Menachem, this man says he disgraced you a few hours ago, and that is why he is ill. He cannot move. If you are willing to come, he wants to ask your forgiveness."

My grandfather, out of his great anavah, got up and went with them to the man's house. The man began to cry. "Chacham Menachem, I'm suffering! Forgive me! I'm only human. I hurt your kavod!"

"It is not because of me," my grandfather told him. "What do you want from me? It is not because of me. Who knows what aveiros you have done? Do teshuvah for your aveiros, and Hashem will heal you. I have nothing to do with it at all. You are only imagining that it is because of me. For my part, I bless you with a refuah sheleimah and that you should have every good thing. I have nothing to do with it. Do teshuvah before the Borei Olam for the aveiros you have done, and Hashem will have mercy on you."

As soon as my grandfather left, the man slowly calmed down from the pains, came back to himself and recovered. To him the whole thing was like a passing dream.

What Remained Hidden

Talk Twelve · 1:14:00

There are many more stories like these, but I do not remember them right now. From time to time one comes back to me while I am on the way somewhere, and to my great sorrow I do not even write it down.

I remember his travels too. Many times I went with him by train to Tel Aviv, which was a very long ride, and I remember how he conducted himself as we waited for the train, how he guarded his eyes, and how many times, in the things he wanted, it was *terem yikra'u va'ani e'eneh* (before they call, I will answer), right there on the spot. There are also things I cannot go into.

That, more or less, is the picture of my grandfather. I assume there are thousands more stories that people simply never told us, and that he himself hid and concealed all of it. I will end with one thing.

CHAPTER FIVE

Savta

my grandmother



MY GRANDMOTHER

Talk Nine · 12:00

My grandmother was a woman of great yiras Shamayim. She came from a wealthy family that had moved to Istanbul from Adrianople (Edirne, in the European part of Turkey). Her father, Mordechai, of the Charasi family, was a great ba'al tzedakah and ba'al chessed. When she was about fourteen, he drowned in his bed. They lived near the seashore, and the sea rose over its banks and flooded the houses, and those who could not escape drowned in their beds. He was among them.

From then on the family's fortune was broken. But because of the large savings they had, they remained well off, not rich, but comfortable, and they also gave to the poor. In the years of the First World War they still had enough to give to the poor who were literally dying of hunger, and they handed out almonds and all kinds of dried fruit that they still had in their storehouses, to save people from starvation.

My grandmother was two years older than my grandfather. That did not bother him; she was a woman of great yiras Shamayim. She knew that he belonged to Chevras Mazhirei Shabbos, and not every girl wanted to marry one of them. But she wanted it very much, because the love of Torah was deep in her heart. She was looking for exactly such a man, one who set times for Torah seriously and gave his life for it. For that she agreed to live even a life of poverty and to follow him into the wilderness, as she did.

I must tell you that from the day of their wedding until the day my grandmother passed away, my grandparents never quarreled. More than that: they never once raised their voices to each other. The love between them, the shalom between them, was such that they felt themselves one neshamah. The love, the mutual respect, the respectful way they spoke to each other lasted all the days of their lives. They had the kol chasan v'kol kallah: that gentle voice of a chasan to his kallah in

the seven days of the chuppah, before it turns into "Nu, where's the food?", and that gentle voice of the kallah, so tender with him, before she starts: "What did you do? Why didn't you buy it? Why did you bring that?" That voice they kept all the days of their lives.

When my grandfather was about eighteen he married her, and when he was close to nineteen his firstborn son, Yaakov, was born.

Bought Through Yissurim

Talk Nine · 59:00

My grandmother agreed to all these conditions. It was a real wilderness, a crushing poverty, and she came from a respected and wealthy home. But my grandmother was a talmidas chacham. She knew a great deal of Torah; she had learned a lot, and that is why she wanted my grandfather.

I remember that from when I was a small boy, nine or ten, I do not remember the age exactly, I would sit with her every Shabbos and read Me'am Lo'ez to her in Ladino (the Spanish of the Jews of Turkey and the Balkans). By the age when I could already read to her, at nine or ten, she was blind. I do not know whether she could read before that, or whether she had heard everything by learning and listening. I have no idea whether she could read and write; I never saw her read or write. But her knowledge was enormous.

The Me'am Lo'ez that is printed today in Hebrew did not yet exist then; it had not been translated. There were huge volumes of Me'am Lo'ez in Ladino, in Rashi script, on all five chumashim, and also on Nach, some parts in other sefarim. It was written by a number of authors, not one.[23] What all of them had in common was that they were full of mussar, stories and halachos, all in Ladino, in Rashi script. I would sit as a little boy and read them to her, and she would show how much she knew. She would listen to whole parshiyos. To know the Me'am Lo'ez well is in itself to be half a talmid chacham. She had this knowledge.

My grandfather had told her three things. As the Gemara says in Maseches Berachos, Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says that three things are acquired only through yissurim: Eretz Yisrael, Olam Haba, and Torah. She agreed to buy all three of them through yissurim: the Torah, Eretz Yisrael and Olam Haba.

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[23] The Me'am Lo'ez was begun by Rabbi Yaakov Culi in Constantinople, where its first volume, on Bereishis, was printed in 1730. After his death other chachamim continued it on the rest of the Torah and on other sefarim of Tanach. It was later translated into Hebrew.

And she truly merited it. She merited to be my grandfather's wife, and in Olam Haba I have seen where she sits. I saw her, and I saw what she does there too. I met her there and spoke with her, as I will tell further on; I will tell more about her place in Olam Haba, and my grandfather's. I was there and visited them a number of times.

Savta's Passing

Talk Twelve · 1:20:30

Right after Rosh Hashanah, Savta fell ill. Her illness was serious, and although Saba prayed with tears, aloud, he understood that the end was sealed and the gates of tefillah had been locked. Two or three days before Yom Kippur, Saba had her taken to the hospital; he knew it was the end. And so it was. On the morning of Erev Yom Kippur, at four o'clock, she passed away.

We took care of the burial at once, so that she could be buried before Yom Kippur, and by chatzos she was already buried on Har HaMenuchos. Then Yom Kippur came in. Yom Kippur cancels the shivah, of course, so there were no seven days of aveilus. But that Savta was gone was painful for all of us, and for Saba too.

Then Sukkos came. In the sukkah Saba felt its kedushah, and that was what strengthened and comforted him. On Sukkos he already looked like his old self again; you could see the difference. Even so, he sat at night and wept over Savta. He would get up at chatzos, and right after Tikkun Chatzos he added a kinah of his own: "Esther, where are you?" In Spanish: "Donde estás, Esther?" With heart-breaking tears he would sit for a quarter of an hour and cry only these words, "Esther, where are you?" He knew perfectly well where she was. He missed her.

The Stories

Savta Asks for Help

Talk Twelve · 1:23:00

The night of Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan came, twenty days after Savta's passing. I was asleep in my own house; by then I was already married.

In my dream I saw myself on the steps that led up from the lower courtyard of Ahavas Chaim to the upper courtyard. From the street there was a small square through which one entered the shul; one went up a few steps, and there was the

entrance to the shul and to the courtyard of the house where Saba lived. Saba's sukkah stood in that courtyard. Of course, it had already been taken down on Motza'ei Sukkos. But in my dream I saw the sukkah standing, and I was standing next to it, near the door of the shul, when Savta came toward me.

She did not come dressed as she used to dress. She came in white tachrichim, her face white as plaster, all of her white, and she came closer to me. I loved her very much and she loved me very much; there was a love of the soul between us. The last words she spoke before she passed away were "Yosefiko, onde estás?" She was asking where I was. As I have told you, I would sit with her every Shabbos and read to her from the Me'am Lo'ez, and she would respond and understand. She was a very wise woman.

Suddenly there was Savta in front of me, pale, and she said to me in Spanish, "Yosefiko, I want to talk to you."

I said to her, "I am afraid to have you come near me. You have passed away, and I am afraid of you."

She said, "No, come. I need to sit and talk with you."

I said, "You know what? Let's go to the steps. You sit on the top step, and I will sit on the third. One step will separate us, and then I am ready to talk with you."

And so it was. In the dream she sat on the top step and I on the third, and she told me in Spanish that the next morning she was to come back in a gilgul, in a child who would be called Mercado. She did not want a gilgul; she wanted to go to her mechitzah in Gan Eden. There was still something she had to fix in this world, and for that she would have to be reborn in a baby, a child called Mercado, live a few years, go through her tikkun and her suffering, and then rise to her mechitzah in Gan Eden. She did not want to go through that suffering. "Help me," she said. "Save me."

I said, "Savta, I will save you. But promise me that you will come and tell me what happened with you once I have saved you."

She said, "I will tell you."

I went down with her and escorted her. She walked in front and I a little behind her, and we walked as far as Rechov Shmuel HaNavi. There she said to me, "You cannot go any further. From here the way to Olam HaBa is close. Do not escort me any more." So I escorted her to about the corner of Rechov Yechezkel and Shmuel HaNavi, and there she disappeared.

I got up in the morning; it was Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan. Right after Shacharis I went to Saba. Saba, nebach, was a poor man and owned nothing at all. All his money he gave to tzedakah, and of everything people gave him he did not keep a prutah for himself. But I was determined. I did not tell him the dream. I only said, "Saba, I need sixty lirot right now, to make a Tikkun HaNiftarim for Savta today."

He asked me, "On Rosh Chodesh?"

"Yes," I said.

"You want sixty lirot?" He did not argue much with me; he usually listened to me. But he did not know where he would get it from. He did not have it. So he tried to talk me out of it, suggesting that I wait a day or two until he could raise the money. I said to him, "I am not moving from here without the sixty lirot. Go and find it at the end of the world, but bring me the money." I was afraid to tell him the dream.

It was around seven or eight in the morning when I began speaking with him. By about nine he was still sorrowing and wondering what to do, and in walked my uncle Mordechai, his son. He had come from Tel Aviv in the morning hours, for no reason and without any plan, not in any natural way. It was as if a spirit had picked him up, brought him, and set him down inside.

Saba said to him, "Mordechai, do you have sixty lirot?"

"Yes, I have," he said.

"Give it to Yosefiko so he can make a tikkun for Savta, and Hashem will help."

My uncle Mordechai took out sixty lirot at once and gave them to me.

The Note in the Wardrobe

Talk Twelve · 1:41:00

So Saba decided that Savta's clothes should be given away to tzedakah. My uncle Yaakov, who lived in Yerushalayim, and my mother, alehah hashalom, decided to come together to sort the clothes, and perhaps to take a few small things for themselves as a remembrance.

What did Saba own in his house? A refrigerator; the baul (a trunk) I mentioned, the chest they had brought from Turkey with a few things inside; and a wardrobe. The wardrobes of those days were made of wood, with a mirror on the outside and three doors. In those days there was not enough plywood; I don't even remember plywood at all. They used thin strips of wood joined one to another to make the back or the bottom, and this wardrobe was made the same way. It was made of slats about ten centimeters wide and two meters long, joined to each other to close the back and to make the floor of the wardrobe above the drawers. The drawers were below, and between the wardrobe and the drawers there was this floor.

They began taking down the clothes and sorting them: what to give, to whom, and how. They arranged them and folded them. My mother was weeping over her mother, crying as she sat, and my uncle Yaakov sat with a very serious face, the two of them taking out the clothes to pass them on.

As they took out the clothes, my uncle Yaakov suddenly saw a note. It was between those slats of the floor I described, in one of the cracks. He picked up the note and opened it, and he said, "Shema Yisrael! If he ever finds out, he'll kill me!"

What words were these? What was this note? My mother and I stood there staring at him, stunned. In one minute the man had been turned over. The note had changed the color of his face. Words like these from him? What was this note? Then he showed it to us.

I don't remember the words written in the note, but I remember what it meant, and I will tell you the story.

Ten years earlier, exactly ten years earlier, my grandmother had been dangerously ill, again with her heart. As I told you, she had heart trouble; she could barely breathe. She was at home, not in the hospital, but her condition was very bad; she was half goses. Saba stood beside her and did tefillos and yichudim, everything he was used to doing, but she was very sick. She did not get up the way she usually did when he did these things, within two hours. No. He did it, and for two or three days she stayed in the same state. When it is closed above, it is closed.

Now, at that time they had begun producing the Fireside, heaters that burned with a wick. It was something new. Before that, the heaters people used in winter were tall and round, about a meter high, with the wick of asbestos below inside. That was the standard. Then they invented the Fireside, which was lower and more square, and it had a coating like glass all around it, so that the light would heat several times more, because the reflection of the light from the sides adds heat too. It was something new.

My uncle was working then in Givat Shaul, at the Friedman factory, where these heaters were made. They had received an order for Firesides for the coming winter and had to prepare a large quantity. My uncle told them he could not come to work for a few days because his mother was in danger. They told him, "If you don't come, you're fired. That's it. Everyone has to report, full work. On Erev Yom Kippur we work as on a Friday. Two hours before Yom Kippur you can go eat and go to your Yom Kippur. Whoever doesn't work is fired."

What could he do? My poor uncle had no choice; it was his parnassah, and he had a family. On Erev Yom Kippur he went to work, crying all the while. He had to solder the metal sheets and put things together; he was an expert at soldering. He sat there working, crying and saying Tehillim. His heart was breaking, so what did he do? Tehillim. He worked on the metal and said Tehillim with tears.

Next to him stood a Jew who was a complete apikoros. He said to him, "Tell me, are you crazy? What will your Tehillim help? If she has life, she'll live, and if she doesn't, she'll die. What nonsense are you saying? What are these Tehillim? You actually believe in this?"

My uncle said to him, "On Erev Yom Kippur you talk like this?"

He answered, "What is Yom Kippur? What is Yom Kippur? Do you know what I do on Yom Kippur? I paint. I have a day off; after a meal I sit and paint pictures. It's a day of pleasure: to eat and to paint!"

What a man my uncle had fallen upon, an apikoros like that! So my uncle said to him, "You don't believe in Olam HaBa?"

"Of course not. There is no such thing."

"Are you willing to sell ten years of your life to my mother?"

"Sure! I'll sell! You're crazy. You're willing to pay me for nonsense? I'm ready to sell!"

My uncle said to him, "Here is half a lira." I think there was a half-lira note then; if I am not mistaken it had a picture of a woman soldier on it. "Take half a lira and give me a note."

The man wrote: "I sell to Esther Menashe ten years of my life," and he signed it. That was the note my uncle found.

Savta passed away exactly ten years later, by the clock. She passed away on Erev Yom Kippur before dawn, and he had made the deal on the morning of Erev Yom Kippur, on the first shift. She passed away on that very day. Perhaps two or three hours were missing from the ten years, but it was the same day.

Now my uncle saw the note and said, "Look at this note, look! Shema Yisrael! Savta lived ten years, this man's ten years! He sold them! If he ever finds out, he'll kill me! If he hears that it really came out to exactly ten years, then I am finished!"

I am a witness to this story. I saw the note when he took it out from between the cracks. Ten years.

The Tachash

Talk Nine · 1:01:30

Briefly, I will tell one thing here. Once, after my grandfather had passed away, I went to rest on Shabbos after the seudah, and I merited that my nefesh was freed a little from the body and went out to walk in good places. I came to Gan Eden hatachton.

At the entrance to my grandfather's mador (chamber) I saw a man who had sold clothes in Yerushalayim. His name was Chasid. I remember him: a short man, a talmid of my grandfather. He sold fabrics and clothes, children's and babies' clothes, in Shechunas HaBucharim (the Bukharan Quarter of Yerushalayim). He was one of my grandfather's loyal followers and came to all his shiurim. I knew him well in his lifetime. And here I saw him sitting at the entrance to my grandfather's

place. When I came to go in, he saw me, recognized me, and opened the door, and I went in.

I went inside and saw my grandmother, and I saw the special place she had in Gan Eden, in one corner. There was a huge bird there. What a bird! Ostriches are small next to it. An enormous bird, colorful, beautiful; such colors, something astonishing. My grandmother was feeding it grains.

I asked her, "Where is Saba?"

She told me, "He is in the yeshivah shel maalah now. Today is Shabbos; he went up to the yeshivah shel maalah to learn, and I stayed here."

I asked her, "What is this creature? What is this bird?"

She told me, "This is called a tachash. Every tzaddik in Gan Eden hatachton raises a tachash. It is written that l'asid lavo Hakadosh Baruch Hu will put shoes of tachash leather on the tzaddikim. There is a very great sod in this. It is the sod of the tachash that was in the Mikdash, in the oros techashim that were over the Mishkan. There is a great sod in it, the sod of the word tachash. So I raise it. This is the tachash from which they will make shoes for the tzaddikim."

She was all filled with happiness. All the worthless life of this world, short, seventy years, had been worth it for her for an eternal life like this. She was overjoyed.

But we will come to more of this later. I return now to our story.

Short Accounts

The Fire Savta Saw

Talk Twelve · 56:00

Once, in the middle of the night, my grandmother, a"h, got up and saw fire in the house. She began to shout in Ladino, "Menachem! Fuego! Fuego! Ke pasa aki?" (Fire! Fire! What is happening here?)

He came out and said to her, "Esther, what are you saying? Look, everything is quiet. There is nothing here."

"But I really saw fire here!" she said.

He told her quietly, "Calm down. Fortunate are you that you saw it. You merited it; you have a zechus. But don't tell anyone."

In the morning, as soon as the family arrived, she said, "You don't know what happened last night! I saw fire, such and such, and I think it was Eliyahu HaNavi."

My grandfather heard her talking, and so did everyone else. In front of them he said nothing and brushed her words aside, as if she were just imagining things. After they left he said to her, "Didn't I tell you to keep quiet? I'm asking you not to tell any more."

After that, when people came and tried to draw it out of her again and again, she held her tongue too. Her mouth was sealed, and that was the end of it.

Dr. Cohen

Talk Twelve · 1:15:30

One of the reasons I lived in my grandfather's house all those years was my grandmother. Besides being unable to see, she had a heart condition, and time and again she had a dangerous heart attack.

There was a Dr. Cohen, a"h, an older man, a thorough yerei Shamayim and a very pleasant person, who did his work faithfully. Several times he even came on Shabbos in his car to save her. Once I even had to ride with him in the car on Shabbos to bring a special medicine for Savta at once.

In those days we had no telephones or anything else. So it was always the same: at two in the morning Savta would begin an attack, and I would have to run on foot to Rechov Strauss (a street in the center of Yerushalayim), all the way up the hill of Strauss, knock on his door at two in the morning and tell him, "Dr. Cohen, Savta is ill." Within a few minutes, just as he was, I would be in the car with him, and we would arrive and he would treat her.

But in the meantime Saba was at home. As soon as an attack began he would get up, daven and make a pidyon kapparos for her. By the time Dr. Cohen arrived he would already say, "She went through a severe heart attack, but now she is all right. She is already past the attack. Just give her some more rest." And he would confirm that she could stay at home. We needed his confirmation, because of *v'nishmartem me'od l'nafshoseichem*.

Saba at Bikur Cholim

Talk Twelve · 1:17:30

Once, when Saba was away in Tel Aviv, Savta had a heart attack in the middle of the day. We called Dr. Cohen, and as soon as he came and saw her he said she had to go to the hospital at once. It was a dangerous attack. I don't remember whether it was an ambulance or something else, but she was taken to the hospital right away.

My mother told my sister and me, "Don't say anything to Saba. When he comes, don't tell him a thing. I want to prepare him slowly, so that he learns that Savta is in the hospital without hearing it as a shock." She was very afraid of what would happen to Saba if he suddenly collapsed at the news. The two of them loved each other like a couple on the night of their wedding. It is hard to believe. Savta was two years older than he was, and I have already spoken about the love and the respect between them. I wish such affection on every Jewish couple in the world. What love there was, what speech! Never once did either of them raise his voice to the other.

Early in the afternoon Saba arrived. He had not yet reached the house when he saw my sister, and he did not ask her where Savta was or what was happening. He came straight at her with a question: "Which hospital is Savta in?" There was no need to tell him anything at all. Since he was already asking which hospital, she answered him: "Bikur Cholim" (the old hospital in the center of Yerushalayim).

Saba went straight to Bikur Cholim. Savta was in who knows what condition, and he did for her what he did every night she had an attack. He took the coins out of his yelek (a vest he wore with two special pockets for coins, one on each side), circled them over her head, saying "זה חליפתי...", and had his kavanos. Within ten minutes the whole situation changed, and she was back to herself.

Then he said to the doctor, "I think you can discharge her now." The doctor did not know him, and he looked at my grandfather as if he had fallen from the moon. "What are you talking about? She is in the middle of an attack!"

"Try examining her," Saba said.

The doctor listened to him and examined her. "Sir," he said, "she went through an attack, but she is fine now. We can send her home." And Savta came home.

His Words

Tikkun HaNiftarim

Talk Twelve · 1:29:00

Why did I ask for sixty lirot? Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah (the great Baghdadi mekubal of Yerushalayim) wrote a Tikkun HaNiftarim, and he writes that the highest way to do it is with twelve young bochurim, yirei Shamayim, from bar mitzvah until eighteen, bochurim who have never blemished the bris. That is Tikkun HaNiftarim number one. What people do nowadays with a minyan of older men who are yirei Shamayim is also good, and it helps. I even have interesting stories about it.

But I must tell you something here: there are those who do it, and there are those who do it.

I know of a baalas teshuvah from the center of the country who grew up in a secular home. Her father, nebach, was far from Yiddishkeit. He had grown up in the Alliance in Iraq,[24] where he received a non-religious education, and when he came to Eretz Yisrael he married a Polish woman who knew nothing at all of Yiddishkeit. The daughter was a fine girl and she did teshuvah; later she merited to marry an avreich, baruch Hashem. But at that time she was still single, a complete yiras Shamayim, and she decided to make a Tikkun HaNiftarim for her father.

She went to someone who does Tikkun HaNiftarim with advertisements and publicity and a great deal of noise. She gave him the money, and they did the tikkun there. That night her father came to her in a dream and said, "My daughter, I have received permission to come and tell you that I am suffering greatly. Because of the Tikkun HaNiftarim you made today I have come to tell you that the tikkun was not fully accepted. That is not a place where the Tikkun HaNiftarim works one hundred percent. But all the same, they gave me permission to tell you this."

She got up at once. We found another place for her, and the Tikkun HaNiftarim was done for her there. Two nights later her father came to her in a dream all in white, in a white suit, smiling, and said, "My daughter, the tikkun has been accepted. I have now come out of the great suffering I was in."

Do not think that Tikkun HaNiftarim is hocus-pocus, that whoever has it done for him goes straight into Gan Eden and sits there, and that's that. No. It causes them to take him out of the kaf hakela, so that he enters Gehinnom at its lowest level, suffers there and is cleansed a little, and even enters the lower Gan Eden a little. Afterwards he comes out again to receive more and to be punished more, for every single matter has its own new din. That is why Tikkun HaNiftarim is not done only once. Whoever can do it hundreds of times for his relatives is doing something very good. Saba commanded me to do it for him at least thirteen times within the year: to do a Tikkun HaNiftarim for him within the shivah as well, and then to complete at least thirteen times by the end of the year. That is what Saba asked of me, and of course I fulfilled his request. In any case, Tikkun HaNiftarim is a very important thing.

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[24] The Alliance Israélite Universelle, a French Jewish organization founded in Paris in 1860, ran a network of modern schools for Jewish children across the Middle East and North Africa, including in Baghdad. The education there was mostly secular, in French.

The Tikkun at Porat Yosef

Talk Twelve · 1:33:00

Now back to my story. I took the sixty lirot and went to Yeshivas Porat Yosef. I had learned there, and although by then I was already an avreich learning in a kollel elsewhere, I knew the bochurim there; some of them had been my own talmidim. When I was learning at Porat Yosef I took the younger boys of the lower classes, and during the breaks I gave them shiurim based on the words of the Chida, guiding them toward halachah according to the Chida. I was active with them. I knew that these bochurim, baruch Hashem, guarded the bris one hundred percent.

We made the tikkun. We sat from twelve noon until four. We took out a sefer Torah onto the teivah and did the seven korsei bris, the whole Tikkun HaNiftarim as Chacham Fatiyah arranged it, everything as it should be, complete. At four everyone went his own way, and we were done. By evening I had already forgotten about it. That is, it did not stay in my mind as anything special. Yes, we made a Tikkun HaNiftarim; Savta came in a dream; so what? It left no strong impression on me. I was not under the spell of the dream or of the tikkun as something unusual. It all simply passed.

That night I went to sleep. I had only just closed my eyes when I saw Savta in front of me: smiling, in her own clothes, shining all over, radiant with happiness. She said to me, "Yosefiko, thank you. When you made the Tikkun HaNiftarim between twelve and four" (she even told me the hours) "I was with you in the ezras nashim. My heart was bursting with fear, whether they would accept your tikkun or, chas v'shalom, not.

"Know that early in the morning two malachim came to take me, to put me into a drop for the gilgul in which I was to be born. A bas kol went out and said, 'Leave her. Today they are busy with her tikkun. Wait until we see what becomes of the tikkun.' I heard the bas kol. I saw you come in to make the tikkun for me, and I stood with you, all of me in fear and dread, whether your tikkun would be accepted or not.

"As soon as you finished the tikkun at four, I suddenly felt a wind carrying me straight to the kever of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. I came to the kever of Rabbi Shimon, and I saw Rabbi Shimon together with Chizkiyahu Melech Yehudah sitting and learning in the cave. Rabbi Shimon was at his tziyun down in the cave, with Chizkiyahu beside him; their nefashos were sitting there, engaged in sisrei Torah. I stood off to the side and listened to them learning.

"After some time they finished learning, and Chizkiyahu Melech Yehudah said to me, 'Come with me. I will escort you to your mechitzah.' He escorted me to my mechitzah in Gan Eden. When I came to enter, the guard said to me, 'You do not

have permission to enter. You undertook to your grandson that you would tell him what was done in your din. As long as you have not told him, you have an obligation below, and you have no permission to enter here.' I waited at the entrance until you fell asleep, and I came to tell you. Thank you very much. I am going to my mechitzah."

That was the Savta who gave her life for Saba. I have told you how she used to carry buckets of water from Silwan (the village beside the Shiloach spring, below the Old City) all the way to Beis Yisrael, so that Saba could go and learn in that time. In the dark hours of the night, from chatzos until morning, she would go with tins to draw water from Silwan and bring it home, so that Saba could sit and be occupied with Torah.

After that I saw her in Gan Eden again, once or twice; I no longer remember. She was all filled with light. I saw her in Saba's mechitzah, of course. Saba I saw many more times, but when I saw her she was all joy.

This was on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan of 5727 (תשכ"ז). She passed away on Erev Yom Kippur of that year.

SAVTA'S CLOTHES

Talk Twelve · 1:39:00

A few days later, toward Rosh Chodesh Kislev, Saba decided that all of Savta's clothes should be given away to tzedakah. In those years, the fifties and the sixties, there was great poverty, and people wore second- and third-hand clothes. Savta's clothes were all tznius, all of them loose. To give them away was a zikui harabim.

Those who give the immodest clothes of a woman who has passed away to others cause harm both to the niftar and to those who take them; they make the many stumble, for they have given them immodest clothing. But when modest clothing is given to someone who needs it, it is a zechus for the niftar.

Any garment of a niftar may be given away except a hat and shoes. The hat and shoes of a niftar may not be given away; they must be destroyed in whatever way it takes, so that no other person will ever wear them. It is a danger. The shoes of a niftar and the hat or kippah of a niftar, under no circumstances. The kippah or hat of a tzaddik is a different matter: people take it, for the zechus of putting it on the head for a few minutes, in order to receive the shefa. That one may do, and all the more so with the rest of their clothes.

I wore all of Saba's clothes: I took his undershirts and all his white garments and wore them. To this day I have his large tallis, the big tallis he used to wrap himself in. It is a tallis like no other; Saba wrapped himself in it, and it is something special.

Fortunate is the one who wraps himself in it. In any case, it is kept and put away with me. But to take the hat of an ordinary person and wear it is a danger, and so too shoes, shoes above all. Shoes are a very serious matter.

Chapter Six

My Parents

The Shoes and the Thirty Lirot

Talk Twelve · 57:30

When I was fourteen or fifteen, I used to get up with my grandfather at chatzos and learn with him until morning, as I have told you. During the night people would knock at the door, and I knew they had come for the envelopes of money. It was a matter of routine. Every half hour or three quarters of an hour I opened the door, a man came in and took an envelope. I already knew each of them by his face and knew which envelope was his. In every envelope there was money for him to support his family.

One night at twelve o'clock, before chatzos (in those days chatzos was around half past twelve), my grandfather was still asleep, and so was I. I heard knocking at the door at an hour when no one came. I opened it, and there stood my father, crying.

"Abba, Abba!" he called. My grandfather was not his father but his father-in-law, but out of respect my father called him Abba. "Abba, Abba, get up and help me!"

My grandfather got up and washed netilas yadayim. "Avraham! What happened?"

This is what my father told him. In those days, every product sold had to carry mas kniyah (purchase tax), which was paid with stamps. The stamps were put on everything that was sold; nothing went out without a mas kniyah stamp. It was not a paper stamp that could be peeled off and moved from one thing to another. It was made of a sort of plastic, a material like glue, that could be stuck in one place only. To get it off, you had to scrape it into crumbs, and that was the end of it. There was no way to take it off whole and use it again.

My father sold ordinary shoes and orthopedic shoes, which he made himself. On ordinary shoes he had to put a blue stamp, thirty agorot of mas kniyah for every

pair. On orthopedic shoes he had to put one lira (the Israeli currency of those days) of mas kniyah for every pair, and those stamps were orange. My father kept a packet of stamps at home, blue and orange, to put on the shoes when he sold them. Of course, when one of our own people came, he did not put a stamp on. Why should he? He sold the shoes and that was that, saving the money both for himself and for the buyer. But when ordinary customers came, he added the tax into the price of the shoes and put on the sticker.

My father had close to a thousand pairs of shoes. He had a large shop and a small shop, both in Meah Shearim, right next to each other, and they were full of shoes. He made them and sold them little by little.

There was an informer in Yerushalayim named Yehuda. We knew him. He davened in a shul and often talked with my father like a friend, but he was known as a shtinker, an informer for the tax authorities. He would go and tell them about people who were hiding taxes, in order to receive twenty-five percent of whatever money was later collected from the person for the tax he had evaded. This Yehuda went and informed on my father.

One day inspectors came to my father. "Listen," they said, "you have shoes here. Why are there no stamps on them?"

"I don't have to put a stamp on now," he told them. "I put it on when I sell. What, am I supposed to support the law now with hundreds of lirot, thousands of lirot, to put stamps on everything here? Am I a millionaire? The moment I sell, I stick on a stamp. That is the law. Look, here are my stamps. When a person comes and buys, I put the stamp on. You buy, and I'll put the stamp on for you too and sell to you."

"No," they said. "We received information. Someone has informed on you that you don't put stamps on even when you sell, that you don't sell to everyone with stamps. You are now under investigation. We have come to take all the shoes, and you will face an investigation and a trial, and we'll see what becomes of you."

Two trucks came, took all his shoes and emptied his shop. It took until twelve at night to load the trucks, and as soon as they left he came straight to my grandfather, at twelve at night, crying. They had emptied his shop of a thousand pairs of shoes, they wanted to put him on trial, and there was a witness against him. We all knew where it had come from: it was Yehuda who had informed. What could he do now?

My grandfather listened to the whole story and said, "Come with me." The three of us went straight to the shul of Ahavas Chaim in the courtyard. It was still before chatzos, so my grandfather did not daven. He only went up to the aron kodesh, opened it and said Ana B'choach, and then stood for several minutes deep in thought.

After a few minutes he said to my father, "Avraham, are you willing to finish the whole thing for thirty lirot?"

"I'll pay whatever they say," my father said, "just take this gezeirah off me."

"Shh! Don't say a word," my grandfather told him. "Tomorrow morning, go at eight o'clock. Don't wait for the hour they gave you; be there at eight. For thirty lirot, tomorrow all the shoes will be back with you, and tomorrow you'll be selling again. Don't refuse."

I was the only one sitting there and hearing what my grandfather told my father in the shul, all of it before chatzos. My father went home completely broken. I was tired and went to sleep; we had another quarter of an hour before we had to get up for chatzos. My grandfather went to sleep too, with a quarter of an hour left. He never gave up chatzos. Chatzos was chatzos.

In the morning, my father had a paper summoning him at eleven o'clock to the old train station of Yerushalayim, in Emek Refaim.[25] The whole tax office was there, a big area with warehouses and so on, and there were two large huts where the tax people handled their affairs. Saba had told him to go at eight, so my father went at eight, even though his paper said eleven.

As he arrived at eight, he saw a clerk opening the place and going in. The clerk knew my father; they had been "friends" (I will explain in a moment what that means). "Avraham, what are you doing here?" he asked. They greeted each other, and my father said, "I have this paper."

"Come, come into my room," the clerk said.

Who was this man? My father had belonged to a group called Shomrei Shabbos. Before Milchemes Tashach (the War of Independence of 1948), every Shabbos the Arabs would carry big wooden trays, the kind they still sell today, about a meter and a half long and close to eighty centimeters wide. They filled them with ka'ak, bagels with za'atar on them, and hard-boiled eggs, and went to sell them in the Jewish market on Shabbos. Many light-minded Jews would buy from them on the spot on Shabbos, a hot, fresh bagel with a hard-boiled egg, and eat it. The eggs were forbidden as bishul akum. The bagels were forbidden because they were made with unfiltered water from the cisterns there, which were full of worms, so there were worms in the bagels. On top of all that, it was sold on Shabbos: Jews bought with money, the Arabs sold for money, and they were making Jews be mechallel Shabbos. The Arabs would go around the Jewish neighborhoods selling.

So there was a group of Shomrei Shabbos who would lie in wait for them. They carried the trays on their heads, on a kind of cloth ring with the long tray set on top

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[25] The old railway station of Yerushalayim, at the southern end of the German Colony near Emek Refaim, served as the city's train station from Turkish times for about a hundred years.

of it. As soon as the Arabs came out of Shaar Shechem (the Damascus Gate of the Old City), the young men would jump out and kick the tray, sending it flying off their heads and everything onto the ground. They broke the eggs and ruined all the ka'ak, so that it would not reach the Jewish neighborhoods. This was called the Shomrei Shabbos group, and they lay in wait in all sorts of places. My father was in this group, and this man was one of those who had joined it too. That was the whole of their acquaintance. They would meet every single Shabbos, lie in wait for the Arabs, and when they came out, knock the trays off their heads. After the state was founded, my father never saw him or heard from him again.

And now my father arrived there, and this man was a clerk! He called my father in. "Come here. What are you doing here?"

"Here is the paper," my father said.

"What luck that you came now and not later," the clerk said. "By your teudat zehut (identity card) number, your file doesn't belong to me. It belongs to another clerk, who will be here soon. Lucky for you that you came to me."

He sat and looked over the file for about a quarter of an hour and then said, "Listen, I have some advice for you. Pay thirty lirot here now. I'll write that you made such and such claims, these and these, and that on that basis I fined you thirty lirot. The shoes go back to you today."

And so it was. My father paid thirty lirot, and that same day all the shoes came back, just as Saba had said.

My Mother

Talk Six · 1:07:30

I now come to tell something I weighed for a long time whether to tell or not, especially before so wide an audience. I hesitated a great deal, because it is something personal, about my mother, aleha hashalom. I had not thought of telling it at all. But last night in my sleep I felt as if a voice was telling me, "This is something very important. Tell it, and let people understand the full truth from a firsthand source." So with a broken and crushed heart, with great pain, I tell you a personal story. I myself had a part in some of what happened in it, together with Mori Chaim, and I tell it with heartache.

My mother, aleha hashalom, was forty in 5730; she was born in 5690. She was my grandfather's only daughter, after five sons. When she was born my grandfather said that from Shamayim he had no daughters in his neshamah to bring into the world, only five sons. But he wanted a daughter in order to fulfill pru u'rvu properly, according to the halachah, so he drew down a great neshamah, a very great

neshamah, from Shamayim to be his daughter. He drew down a special neshamah, but in Shamayim they made a condition with him: she was being given only for a time, and the moment they wanted her back, he would not interfere or hold her back down here. He agreed to the condition, and my mother, aleha hashalom, was born. All of us knew of these things. He told everyone, "My daughter came into the world because I asked for her, and this is the condition they made with me." We did not much like that condition, but what could be done? That was how it was. That is how my mother came into the world.

My grandfather saw to marrying her off at fourteen. She was born in 5690, and her chuppah with my father was on the twelfth of Adar, 5704. She was about fourteen and my father about fifteen, and my grandfather married them off. Their chuppah was at three in the afternoon, on the twelfth of Adar, 5704, in Shechunas HaBucharim (the Bukharan Quarter in Yerushalayim). There was a beis tamchui (a public soup kitchen) there, on what was called Rechov Shmuel, the last stop of bus number three, and there my mother had her chuppah and kiddushin, at that age. She gave birth to me at the beginning of 5706, when she was about fifteen and a bit.

She was a very beautiful woman: tall and healthy, with blue eyes and very light hair. She was truly a very fine-looking woman. Of course, when she married at fourteen and a half, she covered her hair completely, as is proper, with a mitpachat, and she went with a mitpachat her whole life. She was a woman of yiras Shamayim. And I merited to grow up a talmid chacham.

At the beginning of 5730, right after Rosh Hashanah, she called me. "My son," she said, "today you are a talmid chacham who gives shiurim to the public. I am your mother, and I come to you with a question. What must I do? When I was thirteen, until my wedding, I liked to make myself beautiful: to comb my hair nicely, to put on a little perfume, and to walk in the street. I enjoyed seeing the young men look at me. There was a time when I went about like that and young men looked at me." She meant boys of those ages, still children. "Now I understand that I made them stumble, and I want to do a tikkun. What must I do?"

"Mother," I said, "fast once or twice, and make a tikkun for it that way."

"Yes, that I will do," she said. "But I have also accepted upon myself to say the whole Sefer Tehillim every Shabbos without stopping. My neshamah tells me this is the best tikkun for these things."

I do not remember whether she did the fasting I told her as well; I think she did, but I no longer remember exactly what I told her and what she did. But I do know that every Shabbos she sat, with no friends, no chatter, nothing. She sat with her Tehillim in her hand, beginning right after the Shabbos morning seudah, and she said the whole Tehillim word by word without stopping, with the correct pronunci-

ation. The whole Tehillim took her about two or three hours, word by word; perhaps it took four hours, however long it took.

My mother, aleha hashalom, was a mezakah rabbim. For a long period she gave shiurim to women, several evenings every week. She taught them Pirkei Avos and other things. My mother knew Torah well; she was the daughter of a talmid chacham and was learned herself, and she taught Torah. I remember my father preparing her for the shiurim beforehand. My father was a distinguished talmid chacham who knew a great deal of Torah. Perhaps he did not know Shas in order, but he knew much Chassidus and many maamarei Chazal; he had knowledge. He would also guide her on what else to say and how, and prepare the shiur with her. So she was mezakah the rabbim. But she was not satisfied with all that. She said the Tehillim every Shabbos, Shabbos after Shabbos, with dveikus.

My mother had a nature that whenever Selichos began each year, from the time I first knew her as a child, as soon as she heard the niggunim of Selichos she would begin to cry, and you did not know why. Her heart would open; she wept at Selichos in a way that was not ordinary. It was as though her heart foresaw something, foresaw it without knowing what.

When 5730 came, as she approached forty (she had not yet reached forty, since she was born in the middle of 5690), she began the Tehillim, as I said, and all that winter she said Tehillim, word by word. I think she may even have begun it a little before 5730, in 5729; I no longer remember exactly. But it went on for months, perhaps even up to a year, that she did this without stopping.

Then came Pesach of 5730. On Pesach she complained that she could not sleep. Everyone was sleeping and she wanted to close her eyes, and it did not work. Sleeping pills did not even touch her. Nothing. She went to doctors, and they gave her stronger sleeping pills; nothing helped. She did not close an eye. After a month or two without closing an eye at all, she began to collapse, losing consciousness and regaining it, losing it again. She was in a grave state.

I traveled to Mori Chaim and asked him to daven for her. He said he would. Once he said he would daven, I was calmed. But I saw that her condition did not change for the better. Nothing moved.

My father went to Chacham Mordechai Sharabi (the great mekubal, rosh yeshivah of Nahar Shalom in Yerushalayim) and gave him sixty lirot. In those days a tikkun cost sixty lirot; he made tikkunim to heal people with grave illnesses. After the tikkun, Chacham Mordechai called my father and told him, "The tikkun was not accepted. If you want the money back, I will give it to you. If you want to leave it for the avreichim here, the talmidei chachamim who learn here, you may. But I am telling you that the tikkun was not accepted, and I am not making another tikkun, because in Shamayim they have closed the gates."

Then my father went to the tzaddik Patilon and asked him to daven for her. "I see that the doors are locked," he told him. "However much I daven, it will not help. The time has come. She is going back."

My uncle went to the elder, Reb Moshe Zahav, a great man who had giluy Eliyahu, of whom I will tell more later. He was a wonder. He lived in Katamon (a neighborhood in Yerushalayim), and I merited to be with him several times. My uncle turned to him to daven for her, and there too it was the same: everything was sealed, all the channels above were blocked, and there was no way to move it. Everyone said the same thing: the gates are locked; it is sealed.

I went in to Mori Chaim. "The Rav promised to daven?"

"Yes," he said. "I am davening."

"Nu?"

"It will not help. I promised you, and I am davening, but it will not help. It is already over; it is already sealed."

"A woman of forty," I said, "with a four-year-old child at home! What is this? Rachmanus!"

"Listen," he said. "It is a gezeirah from Shamayim. She has finished her tikkun. She is going up."

"And if I go now," I asked him, "because of pikuach nefesh, to one of those who deal in things that are not kedushah, so that he will save her, what does the Rav say?"

He looked at me and said, "I don't advise you to do anything. It won't help anyway, and even if it would help, it is forbidden to go to them. Don't go to them."

"But for pikuach nefesh," I said, "perhaps it can be permitted?"

"Don't go to them!" he said. "It is forbidden!"

I loved my mother very much, and the temptation to go was great, because I had been told about someone who uses tumah but had truly put sick people like her back on their feet. I went back and forth: to go, not to go, it is permitted, it is forbidden. My judgment was no longer sound. My love for my mother kilkelah es hashurah; it threw my thinking off its straight line. From everyone I heard that it was all sealed, that there was nothing to be done. But against that, a man I knew from the market had told me that this person worked wonders, though not with kedushah.

"What shall I do?" I said to myself. "Pikuach nefesh." And I went to him. "Listen," I said, "this is the situation." He wrote a note of a few words and told me, "Put this under her pillow. I promise you she will get up. It will stay there twenty-four hours, and she will be back on her feet."

I, a donkey, a fool, took the note and put it under my mother's pillow. Half an hour went by, an hour. My mother was unconscious, in a faint, and suddenly she

got up! She began to shout, "Tumah! Tumah!" She lifted the pillow and shouted, "Tumah! Tumah! Get the tumah out of here!"

I got up, took the note out and threw it into the garbage, and that was the end of it. My mother's neshamah was so pure that she could not bear that filth.

Do you see what I did? Chatasi, aveesi, pashati; es chata'ai ani mazkir hayom. I made a grave mistake. I did it in those very moments when I was broken from seeing my mother in such a state, with a small child at home. I went looking for heterim. I looked for something the Maharshal said: there is a certain teshuvah of the Maharshal, a certain se'if, that says such-and-such. I began to spin spider webs of a supposed psak of heter. When a person is bribed by something, his head does not work normally. What the Maharshal said in a different direction, I applied here. I did not understand him correctly, and I made a mistake. We had paid for it, of course, and we had thrown it out.

My mother went into the hospital, and she passed away in the month of Elul, 5730, exactly one week before Rosh Hashanah.

Searching for My Mother

Talk Six · 1:20:00

There is a certain practice which, if a person knows it and does it at the kever of the niftar within thirty days of the passing, the niftar comes to him in a dream and speaks with him. I had done this two years earlier, in 5728, when my grandfather passed away. He too passed away in Elul. I could not go to his levayah, because all of a man's descendants are forbidden to accompany it (the Yerushalmi custom). The next day a taxi driver who had been at the levayah took me to the place, and I did what I did. My grandfather came to me on Friday night and told me everything he had gone through, in the Beis Din shel Maalah as well, and where he now was. He was already in the lower Gan Eden, at his own level there.

Now I came to do it again. After my mother's levayah I did what was needed so that she would come to me. The whole shivah she did not come, and I wondered at it: why was she not coming? We got up from shivah exactly on Erev Rosh Hashanah. That year, as I remember it, Rosh Hashanah fell on Thursday and Friday, with Shabbos right after it. On Rosh Hashanah there was nothing to be done; it was the Yom HaDin. On Friday night, when Rosh Hashanah was over, I said: Where is my mother? Why is she not coming? I must search for her.

You do not know what the power of Torah is, what real power is. If a person knew what Kabbalah truly is and what Torah truly is, he would not be idle from

learning Torah for one moment. "For they are life to those who find them." What a thing that is!

When I saw that she was not coming that Friday night, I set out to find where she was. At chatzos I got up and began to search, and somehow I came to understand that she was neither in Gan Eden nor in Gehinnom. She was in neither place, and that was why she could not come to me. I said: Perhaps, chas v'shalom, she is in the kaf hakela? I was in terrible pain. I turned to the Ribbono shel Olam: I want to clarify this with my mother; summon her to me. Because I had been mezakeh the rabbim, Hakadosh Baruch Hu heard my tefillah.

I dozed off, and I dreamed that I was on Rechov Hoshea in Yerushalayim, where my parents lived. I knew that it was Shabbos, and I knew the exact hour: Shabbos morning, the time of Shacharis. I saw the whole street full of sheidim, sheidim of every kehillah. There were Iraqis, Sephardim, and Ashkenazim in Ashkenazi dress. Every one of them could be recognized by his feet, for they had the legs of a horse. The upper part of them, though, was dressed like a real person. The Ashkenazim were even in long black coats with their round hats, and the Sephardim in their own dress, just like human beings. But I knew that they were all chitzonim (the forces of the sitra achra).

I walked among them, paid them no attention, and reached my mother's courtyard. My mother had two courtyards: a large one on Rechov Hoshea, from which one entered a smaller courtyard, and from there the house. That courtyard too was full of them. I stood in the courtyard opposite the main entrance, on the far side of the courtyard, close to the wall of the neighbors. As I stood there, I suddenly saw four figures dressed like Ashkenazim bringing my mother. She was among them, the four of them surrounding her, and she came with them. They came up to me and said: "We have received an order from Shamayim to leave her with you for ten minutes, to speak with her. In ten more minutes we will come back to take her."

I remember it as if it were now: one of them, and perhaps a second, though of the first I am certain and of the second I am not, stretched out his hand so that I would give him tzedakah. I knew that if I gave him tzedakah, no matter what, even a crumb of food or anything that was in my pocket (it need not be money), it would be avodah zarah, because they are not kosher and it is forbidden to give them. As he stretched out his hand, I saw that one could not see the lines of his palm. A strip of skin like wax covered his four fingers and stuck them together. Only the thumb was uncovered and separate; the four were joined by a thin yellow skin, like wax. I understood that this was what Rabbeinu Shimshon of Ostropoli (the great mekubal who was killed al kiddush Hashem in the gezeiros of Tach v'Tat) said: that the four fingers of the sheidim's hands are stuck together by a thin, yellowish skin, like wax. And here I saw it before my eyes.

They went away. I went with my mother into the second courtyard and from there into the house, and we sat together on the bed. She began to tell me: "My son, you do not know how I am suffering. It is because of that one minute when you put the note of tumah there. It gave them shlita over me. Because of that note, through which I became tamei, I am now in terrible suffering among them. You do not know what suffering this is; it is worse than Gehinnom. These sheidim are foul and disgusting. The stench that comes from them, from their very nefesh, is worse than sitting in a sewer full of filth, rachmana litzlan. They are loathsome. They do nothing to me; they have no permission to touch me. I only sit among them, and they guard me so that I do not leave. It is a dreadful torment, and all of it is because of one minute of that note, because you went to a man who is not in kedushah and made me and my neshamah tamei."

I began to cry. I said: "Mother, forgive me. I wanted to do you good. I loved you; I was worried for you." She said to me: "My son, I forgive you, because I love you. But I am suffering. Try to get me out of this suffering."

I got up at once, shaken, and began to beat my head: Oy li, oy l'nafshi, what have I done? I brought this upon my mother! That I should be so low, that I should cause my beloved mother such cruel suffering of her nefesh! I could find no rest. I got up, dressed, and ran quickly to Rav Yosef Dayan. I went to his house; we were good friends. He was awake. He was all kodesh kodashim. I said to him: "Chacham Yosef, my mother, such and such has happened. Get her out of there at once!" He said to me: "You will get her out. Only you. You did it, and you will get her out. You!" I said to him: "I do not know how." He said: "You do know. You will do it. Go and get her out." He spoke to me with great firmness; he was a firm man.

I left him and said: Now my mother still has to be rescued. Of course I sat and said Tehillim, and I did a number of yichudim and kavanos to bring her out of that terrible place. On Sunday I ran to my teacher, Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai, of whom I have told already, and said to him: "Do a tikkun hanifterim for my mother quickly; get her out." We did the tikkun hanifterim several times. Every day I went to her kever and said Tehillim there, the whole Sefer Tehillim. It went on like this for several days, and I was in terrible pain, oy li, oy l'nafshi. I could not eat. I could not open my mouth to put food into it when I knew what I had caused in the one minute that I relied on that tamei vessel and put that paper there. What suffering I caused her neshamah!

I tell this now only so that it will be l'iluy nishmasah, to raise her higher and higher, and so that this great shame of telling it before people will be a kaparah for my own aveiros. I tell it so that you will learn how careful one must be not to go to any of those who disguise themselves as kedushah and are tumah. If a person goes and uses even something small of tumah, he does not know what he is causing him-

self and all his children and family. He does not understand what he is causing! When he comes Above it will already be too late; it will be one shattering upon another. He thinks: What, just a little, I only wanted... Woe is me for what I caused because of a few minutes of a note with which I thought I might save her. Woe is me for my brokenness.

I am ashamed to tell it, but I tell it only so that it will be a kaparah for my aveiros, and above all so that you will learn the lesson. It is important to me that you know the truth. I am telling you things bound up with my own nefesh, not telling you legends. Every word I say is true. I lie about nothing when I tell a story, for the Zohar says that when a person lies, all the worlds Above turn to darkness. All the stories of tzaddikim that I tell you are emes l'amitto. But these are things I tell you now from the very root of my nefesh.

After several days of this, with the tikkunei nifterim and everything together, I dreamed one morning toward dawn and saw my mother. She said to me: "Baruch Hashem, I have gotten out of their hands. The tikkunim and your tears and all of it helped. I have gotten out of their hands. I am now in a calm place, like a convalescent home, because the shock they cause the nefesh is very hard. I have been here several days already, to air myself out from all the stench that clung to my nefesh from them. Tomorrow morning I go to immerse in the Nehar Dinur. All the neshamos pass through the Nehar Dinur, and then I will be able, little by little, to reach my proper mechitzah. For now, I am already settled."

I got up. Baruch Hashem, at last. I went to the Musayof shul, to the one called Beis HaKnesses Beis, as those who know it will know, to daven and also to say Kaddish for my mother. When I went in, I met my brother, alav hashalom. He said to me: "Yosef, did you see Mother in a dream?" I said to him: "Yes. How do you know? Have you become a navi?" He said: "No. She came to me in a dream and said to me: 'Go tell Yosef not to be pained, because everything is already settled.' I do not understand what 'settled' means, but she said that you would know. So I said to her: 'Instead of my going to tell him, go and tell him yourself.' She thought a little and said: 'Good, I am going.' She told me she was coming to you to tell you. Did she tell you?" I said to him: "Yes. She came and told me, and everything is all right."

So she had gone to my brother and told him to let me know. Now it was clear that it had been true.

Shaar Yosef

Talk Six · 1:38:30

Still, I felt that I had to do something for my mother, some recompense for all of this.

At the very beginning, that same Shabbos when I saw all this and Rav Yosef Dayan told me that I would do the tikkun, I had run at once to the kever of the Chida[26], on Shabbos itself, even though one does not go to kivrei tzaddikim on Shabbos. I ran like a shell from a cannon and landed straight at the kever of the Chida. I said to him: "I promise you that I will open an evening kollel, or later even an institute of Yiddishkeit to bring people back in teshuvah, in your name. I want the payment already in advance: save my mother. I need your intervention to save my mother from the hands of all the kelipos and to bring her to her mechitzah, until she reaches her proper mechitzah Above."

The very next day I set about opening a kollel named Shaar Yosef. To this day my institute is Shaar Yosef, and everything I do is under that name: all the tzedakah I give to the poor, which I receive from people and distribute to the poor and to needy families, and also the baalei teshuvah I bring back. In my time I also printed booklets and sefarim; today I do not have the budget for it. If I could, I would reprint Toldos Menachem and spread it, even at a very low price and perhaps much of it for free, in places where it could awaken people to teshuvah, and Zer HaTapuchim as well, but I do not have the means. If there is a person who wishes to help, may a berachah come upon him; he can also be remembered in the sefer.

So I had promised the Chida that I would open it, if only he would help. Then I really began. I took a donation of 15,000 lirot (the Israeli currency of those years, before the shekel) from my father, which was a great deal of money. He gathered it for me from here and there, in all sorts of ways, and with it I opened an evening kollel for bnei Torah named Shaar Yosef, after the first sefer of the Chida.

Where would I open it? I said I would open it downstairs, in my own home. The new apartment I had bought had another huge room below it with a separate entrance, and I said: This will be the kollel. It took time; it does not happen in a day. Until I had organized suitable talmidim and until we had raised the money, and I tell you that 15,000 lirot did not grow on a tree in a minute, it took a month or a month and a half, I do not know exactly how long, until we had the place ready. We paid the avreichim well every month to learn, so that they would also have some par-

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[26] The Chida passed away in Livorno, Italy, in 5566 (1806). In 5720 (1960) his remains were brought to Eretz Yisrael and buried in Yerushalayim, on Har HaMenuchos.

nassah and the learning would go on, all in honor of the Chida and l'iluy nishmas my mother.

On the night the kollel opened, the avreichim came, and we held a great seudah. Everyone sat there; there was the first shiur and some divrei Torah. When it was over, everyone left, and I remained alone to clear away all the leftovers and gather up and take out the garbage. As I sat there, I suddenly felt tired and weary. I sat down on the bench and closed my eyes. Suddenly I saw, coming in at the entrance opposite me, my mother, her face shining like the sun, and on either side of her the Chida and my grandfather. All three of them shone with a light before which the light of the sun is pale. My mother was smiling, and the Chida said to me: "I have done what you asked. Now do what you promised. Here, you have begun." I said to him: "I am grateful to you all my life. Everything I do will be in your name, Shaar Yosef."

My own sefer Shaar Yosef was also written in honor of the Chida, and it is named not for me, though my name is Yosef, but for the Chida. It is a sefer of zikui harabim, which has brought merit to many, and I wanted him to have a share in it, because I am grateful to him for what he did.

My mother was all light, all smiles. Ach, what a joy it was to see her! I see her before my eyes now; I see the three of them before my eyes now, how they stood: my grandfather all smiles, in his gray suit and his kasket (a flat cloth cap); the Chida standing at her right, my grandfather at her left, and she between them. What light! What light! May the merit of all three of them protect us.

Rabbosai, I have told something personal here only so that the lesson will be learned: what the life after life is, what the true life is, what it is and how it is. Only a foolish ostrich shuts his eyes and says: Leave it, this world. This world is foolish, with all its disgusting pleasures that draw us in the moment and afterward turn bitter for us. Oy, woe to the man who is drawn after the falsehood of this world. Here is the emes l'amitto; I have told you things exactly as they were.

The Child Who Saw His Grandmother

Talk Six · 1:46:30

I will end with one more thing. On that same morning when I saw my mother in the dream and she came to tell me that she had gotten out of their hands, I got up and opened the door, and I saw my little son, who was four years old. He said to me: "Abba, I saw Savta just now going into your room. She passed by here." "I was awake," he said. "I was walking around." He used to get up early, get out of bed and wander about the big room, amusing himself and looking for some game to

play; he was a child. He said: "A few minutes ago I saw Savta pass by here and go into your room through the closed door."

That was at the very moments when she came and told me that everything was all right, just as my brother told me afterward that she had come to him earlier that same night. This is the truth. The body is nothing at all! Know and understand the truth. I have told you something firsthand, rabbosai.

Why I Have Told This

Talk Six · 1:48:30

I weighed it very, very much; I did not want to tell this. I told it at six in the morning, speaking before the camera, after it was as if someone had woken me two hours earlier and said to me: "Get up and tell this story. Awaken the Yidden; it is important!" I had already begun giving this shiur about Mori Chaim before the camera the day before, and I stopped and began again from the start in order to put this story in its place. Oy, it was hard for me to speak this part. But may it stand as a merit for everyone, and if even one person is saved by it from the hands of all these kelipos and all those who draw people after them, that will be the reward of the tzaddikim I have mentioned, and mine as well.

Only the Living Can Help

Talk Twelve · 2:12:30

Both before he married his second wife and after, Saba did not stop his avodah. He always wept over his first wife, even after he married the second. He would sit and cry, in great pain. He did many spiritual things that I cannot speak about; he knew what was happening with her. I have told you that after she passed away she came to him to tell him that my brother Refael was ill, so that he would daven.

I also know of my mother, alehah hashalom. After she passed away, and after the whole episode I told you about, which came about through the mistake I made, she came to me one day in a dream in Yerushalayim. That same night she came to my sister, alehah hashalom, who was then living in Bnei Ayish in the south, and to my brother in Canada. To all three of us she came on the same night to say: "Do a mitzvah. Help your brother, so-and-so, who is suffering above. Do everything to save him."

I said to her, "Why doesn't Saba do something for him?" Saba too had already passed away by then.

She told me, "Only the living can. A father cannot help his son; the son can help the father." That is an explicit Gemara: "ברא מזכה אבא, אבא לא מזכה ברא". When I asked her about Saba anyway, as if to say that Saba is Saba, she told me, "No. You have to do it."

That is the point, rabbosai. The tzaddikim think only of how to arrive above complete in every respect, and one of those respects is marriage. People do not understand the value of marriage. If a man knew what marriage is and how to guard the kedushah of marriage, he would turn worlds upside down. The Chida writes that a man should honor his wife and in everything have the Shechinah in mind: when he honors his wife, he should have in mind that he is honoring the Shechinah, for the Shechinah clothes itself in the woman. That is if the woman is a yiras Shamayim and a tzaddekes. If not, we are not speaking of such women, Hashem yerachem; we are speaking of women who are yiras Shamayim.

You should know that on the forehead of every man of Yisrael the Shem Havayah is written, and on the forehead of every woman of Yisrael the Shem Adnus. People do not see it because their eyes are closed, because they do not guard their eyes. Whoever does not guard his eyes sees less of the spiritual, and the more a man guards his eyes, the more spiritual things he sees. But these things are there. So when a man is married, he has the Havayah and she has her Adnus, and there comes about the yichud of Kudsha Brich Hu u'Shechintei, which is Havayah and Adnus.

May it be His will that we too merit the yichud of Kudsha Brich Hu u'Shechintei, b'dechilu u'rechimu, u'rechimu u'dechilu, לייחדא שם י"ק בו"ק בייחודא שלים בשם כל ישראל, and that we merit the coming of Mashiach Tzidkeinu speedily in our days, amen.

I have spoken of the tikkunim and the tefillos we used to do with Saba. There is a picture of me with Saba when I was sixteen, from the days when we would go to kivrei tzaddikim, at the kever of Rabbi Elazar b'Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. May their zechus protect us, amen.

Chapter Seven

Saba's Last Years

his second marriage and his passing

A Man Must Be Married

Talk Twelve · 1:49:00

Two or three months after Savta's passing, a few months, Saba wished to marry again. As far as I remember him and know, by the age of sixty he no longer had the strength for married life. He was worn out; I remember him, and I know. He had no strength to come close to a wife. But according to the Zohar, a man must be married at all times. There must not be a moment when he is not married. These are the words of the Zohar:

מאן דלא אשתכח דכר ונוקבא, אקרי פלג גופא. ולית ברכתא שריא במילה פגימא וחסירא, אלא באתר שלים, ולא בפלגות מילה. ופלגות מילה לא יתקיים לעלמין ולא יתברכן לעלמין.

Whoever is not found as male and female, married, is called half a body. Berachah does not rest on something blemished and lacking, only in a complete place, and not on half a thing. And half a thing cannot endure in the olamos and cannot be blessed in the olamos. "לעלמין" here does not mean "forever"; it means the upper worlds. The upper worlds do not bless a man who has no wife, and in their eyes he does not stand as a man. This is in fact the pasuk, " ...זכר ונקבה בראם ויקרא את שמם אדם": the name "adam" is for the two of them together. It is also an explicit Gemara in Maseches Yevamos that only a man who is married is called adam; a man who is not married is not called adam. He is half a man.

The Maharsha writes that sometimes he is not only not a man; he is a sheid. For if, because he is not married, he comes to keri, then he fathers sheidim, and he turns into something like them. What we see as the form of a man is only a wrapping. The nefesh turns over and becomes a different nefesh.

A Man and His Zivug

Talk Twelve · 2:03:00

Also, when a man has no wife, his nefesh is not complete. Every man has a wife above. Every neshamah must be joined, male and female. When a man does not take his true zivug, it is tohu vavohu. Sometimes they live well together, but the children are not truly his complete children, and he will suffer from the children. Sometimes the children are his, because they came in such-and-such a way, but there are still other kinds. Things do not go so smoothly. But many merit to take their zivug. Baruch Hashem, I have seen many, hundreds upon hundreds.

Sometimes, even when a man takes his zivug, there are wars between them. If a man quarrels with his wife, it does not follow that she is not his zivug. Absolutely not, and you should know it. We have no one greater than Rabbi Chiya, who suffered from his wife, and Rav, who suffered from his wife, and they were their true zivugim. That comes from other reasons. What happens between them, in short, comes from reasons belonging to earlier gilgulim. Rav and Rabbi Chiya, the light of our eyes, did not have to suffer from their wives for no reason. They were their true wives; it depends on other things, and there are many.

The Arizal says that in his time there were many talmidei chachamim whose wives ruled over them. The wives were the man of the house. The talmid chacham was the nebach: he kept his feet tucked in, learned, walked about quietly and said nothing, and the wife was the boss. They had great pain from it. This was especially so in Tzfas, where many talmidei chachamim could not bring parnassah home, and the women worked. The clothing industry in Tzfas was widespread; the garments of Tzfas spread throughout the Middle East and reached as far as Europe. In Damascus, in Iraq, in all the lands of the east, people knew that the clothes of Tzfas were something special, and they paid dearly for them. The clothing industry was successful and brought in a great deal of money, and most of the workers were women. The talmid chacham learned, and the wife went out and earned the living.

Now, not every woman has the sense to think, "I support him, and he supports my neshamah. I bring the food, and he brings me neshamah, Olam HaBa." Not every woman has that sense. There were women who thought, "I brought the money, so he had better not dare say a word to me! Who is he? What is he? Me! Me!" There were such women. There were indeed women who, although they did all the work, would bow before their husbands, kiss their hands, and bring everything to them so that the husband would decide what to do with the money, because they knew how to value his greatness and his Torah. But there were talmidei chachamim who suffered from their wives because of this.

The Arizal saw them and said that they were suffering because they had been in the Dor HaMidbar, and these husbands had taken part in the Eigel, while the women had not. Not a single woman was a partner to the Eigel; only the men made it. So these wives had not made the Eigel and the husband had, and now Shamayim arranged that she should rule over him. Why? She is greater than he is in this zechus, that she did not take part in the making of the Eigel and he did. These are the words of the Arizal.

So there are many reasons why a man may take his zivug and still suffer at her hands. It does not follow that he should just get up and leave. Every case must be judged on its own, with great deliberation, at every step one takes.

SABA'S SECOND MARRIAGE

Talk Twelve · 2:07:30

In any case, a man who is not married is half a body, a פלג גופא. This shows in his image in Shamayim; that is what the Zohar says here, that he does not endure in the olamos. Above he does not stand in the complete form of a man. Here you see a whole body coming and going; in Shamayim, when he comes and goes, they see half a neshamah, half a man! Why? The other half is air, empty. That is why a man must marry, even if his wife has passed away and he is already old, sixty, seventy, eighty. Every day that he is with a wife is a tikkun in the upper worlds. Even if down here he has no strength for anything and does not need her, he needs her for the tikkun above.

You will ask: but he has a wife above? Yes. But he needs one here too, in the body. Every second here is a tikkun of its own. And you will ask: will he then have several wives above? Yes, and so what? All the wives above are united there as wives bound to him, and each one receives her whole Olam HaBa with him in completeness, without one disturbing the other. There is no jealousy there, no hatred, no competition. There is completeness, and in this way the completeness of the nefesh only grows. So there is great importance in marriage, no matter the age, and no matter whether the man can fulfill the mitzvah of onah with her or not.

That was why Saba wished to marry. And he found a tzaddekes, a yiras Shamayim, and married her. She lived with him until the day of his passing, and afterwards she returned to her own home because of something that happened, which I will tell later. Toward the end of the winter, before Pesach of 5727, he married his second wife.

I know from anshei emes who saw her beside Saba above, besides Savta, her too. When I saw Savta above, this woman was not beside her, but she too sits be-

side Saba above. Neither disturbs the other. Each is a different kind of world, a joining of nefesh of a different kind. There is room for nefashos there. The joining I cannot explain to you, but I know what happened above with Saba's first wife and with his second. Both of them enjoy his Torah and him, and neither at the expense of the other. That is how it was with Saba: he married in order to remain complete, so that he could continue the tikkunim and the yichudim above as a whole man and not as half a body.

By the way, every divorced man who does not remarry before he dies is a nebach: he has no wife above. A widower has a wife; his wife is waiting for him above. For him too it is very important to marry and remain married until his last day, as long as he can. But a divorced man has had the bond with his wife cut. The get cuts; it cuts completely. Once there is a get kerisus, it cuts, and it is as if the man had never married. If he has children, that is something else, but he has no wife above. Being up there without a wife is one of the kinds of kares. This is unless Shamayim took him young, before he married, so that he never came down to marry at all. That is something else. He came only to fix other things, so it does not apply, because his neshamah is the same neshamah that sits and waits above; he came only to fix some particular thing, and he will go up and continue there. But an ordinary man who came here, married a wife and divorced, must do everything to marry again, no matter whom. Let him stop being so choosy. The main thing is that he should have a wife with whom he can continue to rise in the upper worlds, so that he does not die without a wife.

Lecha Keli Teshukasi

Talk Thirteen · 0:00

There is a piyut that Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra composed before his death: *Lecha Keli Teshukasi*, which we say on Erev Yom Kippur. It has forty-five stanzas, and you know it. It is all hislahavus and mesirus nefesh for the Borei Olam: to You my eyes, to You my hands, to You my strength, to You my ruach, to You am I while I live. It is pure longing. Whenever my grandfather began this piyut, he entered other worlds, as though in a trance of the upper worlds.

He used to print many pieces from the tefillos of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur on separate sheets, and many tikkunim and tefillos that were said in all kinds of places. *Lecha Keli* was among them. I remember it printed on a sheet, with everyone sitting at the kever of a tzaddik. When my grandfather truly wanted to rise up to the upper worlds, it was *Lecha Keli Teshukasi*. More than once he told me, "Yosifiko, my dream is to say all of *Lecha Keli* before my petirah."

It began like this. It was a Wednesday, at three in the afternoon, 11 Elul. I was always his shadow and was with him in almost everything. My sister, a year younger than I, aleha hashalom, also happened to be in the courtyard that day. Perhaps it was chance, or perhaps he davened that it should be so. She had no reason to be there and never came to that place.

Already at the beginning of Rosh Chodesh Elul he had put up notices that on the tenth, at five in the afternoon, they would go to kever Shmuel HaNavi (on the hill just north of Yerushalayim) for tefillah. He had ordered a truck, or perhaps two; I don't remember, but one truck I am sure of. In those days people traveled in trucks, not as today, when everyone takes an air-conditioned bus. We sat on benches along the sides of the truck, and the ride itself was a bit of yissurim on the way to the tzaddik.

At three o'clock he called me, "Yosifiko," and took me into the beis knesses. It was empty. He brought me to his fixed place to the left of the aron kodesh. Every Erev Shabbos he sat there to say shnayim mikra v'echad targum and Shir HaShirim. As soon as midday came, he went to the mikveh, toveled, came to the beis knesses, and sat and said shnayim mikra v'echad targum and then all of Shir HaShirim. For years upon years this was an unbreakable rule.

He sat in that place, put both his hands on my head, and began to bless me, berachah after berachah. He had never done such a thing before, sitting with me like that and giving me berachos of my own. I did not ask him why. I thought perhaps he saw some gezeirah and was annulling it. One does not ask Saba questions. When he finished with me, he said, "Go call your sister." She came in and I went out; he did not let me stay in the beis knesses. He put both his hands on her head too and blessed her without end.

After he had blessed us both, he went about his usual matters. He saw to it that the people got onto the truck and that there was room for everyone, and they set off for kever Shmuel HaNavi. I did not go with them. Afterwards I was told that he sat there as shaliach tzibbur and said all of *Lecha Keli*, word by word, with the Turkish niggun, which by itself takes an hour or an hour and a half. The piyut ends with a man's petirah, until its last words: *v'sachas tzel kenafecha v'sham t'hei mechitzasi*, and beneath the shadow of Your wings, there shall be my place. They told me he said all of it with deep longing.

The Last Morning

Talk Thirteen · 5:00

That was Wednesday night, the night of Thursday, 12 Elul. At four in the morning I was already in the beis knesses, having come for Selichos. He was already up, as always, and had lit the primus.[27] Just lighting the primus took ten minutes, getting it going with the spirit so that it would not smoke. That was how one boiled water. He set the urn of hot water on it to boil and made tea and coffee for those who came to Selichos. We said Selichos, and he handed out the tea and coffee himself, so that people would wake up and say the Selichos.

When the davening was over, I went into his home with him for a few minutes, then left him there alone. What he did in his last three hours I do not know.

At about ten he went out for a haircut. He had his hair cut every Thursday, because according to Kabbalah there is an inyan to cut one's hair every week, and to take it off the head with a razor. That was only the head. His beard he never touched. There was a barber in Meah Shearim[28] named Calderon, and he came to him regularly every Thursday morning for a haircut l'kavod Shabbos, week after week.

He went as usual. On the way he saw an Arab woman selling figs, and he shouted at her, "Get away from here!" and drove her off. He always did this; it was not the first time, and it was not that he was upset. He always drove away the Arab women who came into the neighborhoods to sell all kinds of things, and figs above all, since most of the figs they bring are full of worms. They gather them from all kinds of trees and cause Jews to stumble, and he always stood against it.

He reached the barbershop, sat down, and waited his turn. Suddenly he laughed a great laugh, out loud, and everyone looked at him. He turned pale, and within a minute he was niftar. By the time they reached him he was gone, with a great laugh.

The Takhrichim and the Shtar

Talk Thirteen · 8:00

They took him at once to Bikur Cholim hospital (in the center of Yerushalayim), to the room where the dead are laid. Within a few minutes my talmidim came and told

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[27] The primus was a small kerosene stove, common in homes in those years before gas ranges. It was lit by first heating its burner with a little alcohol (spirit), and if this was not done properly it smoked.

[28] Meah Shearim is the old chareidi neighborhood of Yerushalayim, just outside the walls of the Old City to the north-west.

me, "Saba is there." First I went there and saw him, and then I went straight to bring his takhrichim.

He had special takhrichim. According to Kabbalah, the purer and cleaner the linen of a person's takhrichim, the greater the segulah for the neshamah and for the body, that they not be harmed. He had special linen, and he always warned me, "Only with my takhrichim!" For years it had been ready on top of his cupboard: a package of takhrichim with a bar of soap. He always told me, and he told everyone who came, "This is all I own. With this I go up there. Everything here is nonsense." And truly, all he had was nonsense. What did he have? An old cupboard, a broken bed. But he said, "With this I arrive there." He never forgot it. The takhrichim were always before his eyes. His day of death never left his sight.

I went to bring them, and when I opened them I found a shtar shlishus inside. Two men had made some deal between them and deposited the document for the money with my grandfather, as a trusted third party, with instructions as to whom it should be given if such and such happened. With it he had written: *I command that no one touch me or attend to me until someone of the family has taken responsibility for this shtar, that it be in faithful hands, to do everything written in it.* That is what he had been concerned about in those moments.

I took it in my own hands and brought it to my mother. She said, "I take it upon myself to deal with this properly," and she kept it. And indeed, during the shivah two men came from Meah Shearim. One of them told the whole story and spoke of the shtar shlishus. We checked his name and every detail, and we saw that everything was done just as the shtar said, as my grandfather had commanded.

THE IRON RUNGS

Talk Thirteen · 10:30

Then I ran to find the bed on which the niftar is carried. The Chevra Kadisha had just begun a new model, carrying the niftar on plastic stretched between two poles. According to Kabbalah this is not good; one should carry the niftar only on rungs of iron. Until my grandfather's time I remember how all the tzaddikim were carried out. There was a pole with iron rungs on one side and another pole on the other side, and they joined them, very simply, pole to pole, made a bed of it, and laid the niftar on it.

There is a great inyan in this. It is one of the secrets of Chizkiyahu HaMelech, who dragged his father on a bed of ropes, for which the Chachamim praised him. My grandfather was very particular that he be taken to burial only on rungs of iron. I went to several places and there was none, but at the Chevra Kadisha of the Mo-

roccans they still had one. I took the iron rungs from them, so that he would be carried on them.

The Levayah

Talk Thirteen · 11:30

They took my grandfather to the levayah. We were not permitted to go out (I will explain why below). The whole family stayed inside Ahavas Chaim, in the room where he had lived, and from inside I saw the levayah outside.

The crowd was estimated at between ten and twelve thousand. He was niftar at eleven in the morning, and by three the levayah had already begun. In those few hours ten to twelve thousand people managed to come, from the small Yerushalayim of those days. It was called a giant levayah. The streets of Beis Yisrael (the neighborhood next to Meah Shearim) were packed, several streets of them, with no room to move.

The word was given out, as my grandfather had commanded, that women were not to go to the levayah. They were all gathered in one place, and he had commanded that they not go even one meter. He was very particular that women not go to a levayah. In the Zohar it is very severe for women to go to a levayah: whoever looks at the face of a woman coming back from a levayah, the Malach HaMaves can kill him. Many people suffer yissurim, illnesses and ruchos without knowing what is wrong with them, because at a levayah they happened to see the form of a woman, without even meaning to look at her, just a passing glance. The Malach HaMaves dances over people's heads. This is an explicit Zohar. My grandfather was very particular about it, and of course at his own levayah it was announced, and not one woman went.

So great was the people's love for him that they did not go only as far as putting him into the car that would take him. Thousands of people accompanied him all the way to the kever. So I was told.

I heard the levayah. All the gedolim of Yerushalayim eulogized him, and at their head was my rebbi, Chacham Yehudah Tzadkah, who began to cry out: "Chacham Menachem, who will give us one in your place? Who will give us your like? Who will marry off now all these poor girls who need to be married, and all these young men? Who will bring the bochurei Yisrael into the yeshivos? Who will support all the poor people you kept up?"

The people wept, each one as though for his only son. The weeping there was very great. To each of them he had been like an only father. Most of those people he had raised and educated, and brought into a life of work and Torah together. He

built a generation of Jews who were yerei Shamayim, who worked and supported their families, a thing hardly known in those days. Almost all who went out to work went off and were spoiled. Not everyone was suited to sit in yeshivah and learn, so he arranged all kinds of parnassah for them together with shiurei Torah, so that they would build a generation of yerei Shamayim. And they all came.

The Moda'ah of the Shevet Mussar

Talk Thirteen · 15:00

There is something more. In my sefer *Sadeh Tapuchim*, in the section on taanis dibbur, I bring the nusach of the moda'ah (a formal declaration made before witnesses) of the Shevet Mussar. The one who put it into the taanis dibbur was my grandfather, and he saw to it that it was always said. I don't remember whether it appears in the *Kuntres HaYechieli* as well; perhaps it does. He was very particular about it.

What is it? It is good for every person to make this moda'ah once in his life. Before a person dies, in his last moments, the Satan comes to entice him to become a kofer. Many people, in the last minute, became kofrim and lost everything they had done in their lives.

Yehudah's Test

Talk Thirteen · 16:30

I have told you about my talmid, but I will tell it again here. I have talmidim in America, all yerei Shamayim. One of them is from a family whose yichus goes back to the Ra'aviah, Rabbi Eliezer ben Yoel HaLevi, one of the great Rishonim of Ashkenaz.[29] My talmid's name is Yosef, and he had a brother named Yehudah.

Yehudah was twenty-two years old and he had the terrible illness. I met him one year in Elul and tried to help him. He told me, "Rav Shani, don't waste your effort." He knew that he was going. He knew that he was a gilgul who had come to make a tikkun, and there was nothing to be done; he had to go. He davened only that he die on Motza'ei Yom Kippur. Why? Because the Gemara says that one who dies on Erev Yom Kippur, it is not a good sign for him; one who dies on Motza'ei Yom Kippur, it is a good sign for him, for he passes away after Yom Kippur, the day of mechilah. That was what he asked of Shamayim all the time: to die on Motza'ei Yom Kippur, and not before.

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[29] The Ra'aviah lived in Germany in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. His sefer, *Avi HaEzri*, is the source of the name Ra'aviah.

He was a bochur who was a yerei Shamayim in the fullest sense, and he learned here in Yerushalayim, in Belz. I met him for some three or four days and spoke with him every day. He was strong in his emunah. He was niftar on Simchas Torah of chutz la'aretz, which is our Isru Chag. They brought him here and buried him in a plot right next to the Chida.[30] I was at his levayah.

When I came to America afterwards, in Cheshvan, I met his brother and asked him, "What happened with your brother?" This is what he told me.

My talmid Yosef learned *Shaar HaKavanos* with me, and so he knew that Motza'ei Yom Kippur is Simchas Torah. In Shamayim, Motza'ei Yom Kippur is Simchas Torah, because, as I have explained, the judgment of Yom Kippur goes on until Hoshana Rabbah, when there is one more sealing. So Simchas Torah is the true Motza'ei Yom Kippur. But Yehudah did not know this. He was a ben yeshivah who learned Gemara and did not know Kabbalah.

Yosef told me that one day during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, Yehudah lost consciousness. Yosef was beside him in the hospital, and they did not know what had happened. For close to an hour he was unconscious. After an hour he came back, recovered, and said to him, "Yosef, know that I am a ben Olam Haba, and that I will be niftar on Simchas Torah, because in Shamayim the day of Simchas Torah is called Motza'ei Yom Kippur."

Yosef asked him, "How do you know that you are a ben Olam Haba?"

He answered, "I was not here. I had already gone out. I left the body and found myself in a tunnel of darkness. Everything was dark. Suddenly I saw a black figure standing before me, frightening and menacing, and he said, 'Listen, deny the God of Yisrael and I will save you now. I will give you life. Go back to life and be well. Just deny the God of Yisrael.'

"I said to him, 'There is a Borei to the world. I believe only in the God of Yisrael.'

"He said, 'Listen, if you do not deny Him now, I will take my revenge on you.' In the distance I saw a pack of dogs spitting fire, coming toward me, a whole pack. He said, 'In another minute they reach you. If you do not deny, they will tear you to pieces. You don't know what is coming. Deny quickly!' While he was talking to me they came closer. When they were very close I cried out, '*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad*,' and closed my eyes. I knew they were going to eat me.

"After a minute I opened my eyes, and they were gone. The black one was still standing there. He said to me, 'I see you did not want to deny the God of Yisrael.

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[30] The Chida, Rabbi Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai, was niftar in Livorno, Italy, in 1806. In 1960 his remains were brought to Eretz Yisrael and buried on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim.

Then at least let us start to talk a little about things of desire and taavah. You know, women. Come, let us talk a little about a woman's body; let us describe it.'

"I said to him, 'A Jew does not make his mouth tamei, nor his ears. I am not willing to speak a word with you about this, nor even to hear you speak of it.'

"He said, 'The dogs could not overcome you, but with the pigs you are finished.' From far off came a herd of pigs. They did not come running like the dogs, but slowly, slowly, slowly, spitting fire. He said, 'Before they reach you, you must start talking with me about a woman.' He had only just begun to speak when I closed my ears and said, 'I don't want even to hear you!' The pigs arrived. I knew I was lost, and I cried out, '*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad*,' and closed my eyes.

"After a minute I opened them, and everything was white. An old man was standing before me, all in white, smiling, and he said to me: 'You have passed the test. You are a ben Olam Haba, and a place is waiting for you there. You wanted to go on Motza'ei Yom Kippur; know that Motza'ei Yom Kippur is Simchas Torah, and Simchas Torah of chutz la'aretz is the Motza'ei Yom Kippur of chutz la'aretz. When they begin Bereishis, you will come to us. A place is waiting for you.'"

His brother Yosef told me this with tears. He told me that on Simchas Torah he was with him in the hospital, and the two of them davened Shacharis together. In chutz la'aretz the Yom Tov is two days: on the first they read *Kol HaBechor*, and on the second they read *V'Zos HaBerachah*. After Shacharis they began to read *V'Zos HaBerachah*. "We finished it," he said, "and began Bereishis. As soon as he said *asher bara Elokim la'asos*, he closed his eyes and was niftar." The next day they brought him here. He is buried not far from the Chida.

This is done to every single person who comes up above before his death: they test him, so that at the last moment he should lose everything.

THE CHASSID OF KOTZK

Talk Thirteen · 24:00

You may not have heard, but among the gedolei haChassidus there was a Rebbe called the Kotzker Rebbe.[31] He was the root of Chassidei Ger: he was the Rebbe of the first Gerrer Rebbe, and also his brother-in-law. He was a sharp man who did nothing but throw knives at people. Whoever wanted a knife came to him; whoever wanted a kiss went looking for other Rebbes. That is how strong he was.

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[31] Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk lived in Poland, from 1787 to 1859. The first Gerrer Rebbe was the Chiddushei HaRim, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter.

The Kotzker Rebbe's talmidim were each one of a kind, and each had passed his test. A chassid of Kotzk was a man who knew all of Shas, or at least all of the Rif, and the Shulchan Aruch. Not like today, when everyone becomes a chassid. They kept what is written in Pirkei Avos: *v'lo am ha'aretz chassid*, an am ha'aretz cannot be a chassid. Today they have dropped the "*v'lo*," and every am ha'aretz becomes a chassid. But in those days that is how it was.

One of the chassidim of Kotzk was an old man, and before his petirah they saw him smiling. They asked him, "Why are you smiling now?"

He said, "Look at this disgusting Satan. I am about to die, and he comes even here? Even here he won't leave me alone? He tells me, 'Say *Shema Yisrael* in a loud voice, so that people will say what a tzaddik died with *Shema Yisrael*.' Do you see? He wants to steal everything I have done, in the last second, through gaavah. Do you see what a disgusting creature he is? I won't give it to him." He said *Shema Yisrael* in a whisper and was niftar.

Who can do that in the moment before death? Only the chassidim of Kotzk, who were trained for it, trained for battles of this kind. They knew how, at the moment of battle, to pull out the grenade before the Satan's eyes. Had he said *Shema Yisrael* aloud, he would have died with *Shema Yisrael*, and in that moment gone to Gehinnom. Finished: everything he had done would have been worth nothing. Why? Gaavah. HaKadosh Baruch Hu hates the baalei gaavah, and that is what the Satan wanted of him. The Satan waits, lying in ambush for a person in a corner, for the very last second. He is filth (*najes*, in Arabic). You have no idea what filth he is.

The Letter in the Hand

Talk Thirteen · 27:00

The Shevet Mussar, Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen of Izmir,[32] was a very great man. To give you a small example of his greatness: every Shabbos he gave the people a derashah of mussar on the parashah. One Shabbos, poor man, he fell asleep. He was tired and not feeling well, and he did not go to the shiur. By the time he woke up, the time of the shiur had passed.

He was distressed: "What have I done this Shabbos? I did not give zikui harabbim." For him this was a terrible loss. What did he do? On Motza'ei Shabbos he sat down and wrote the zechusim of Yisrael. He filled a page: *Ashreihem Yisrael.*

[32] Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen was a darshan and dayan in Izmir, in Turkey, and was niftar in 1729. His sefer *Shevet Mussar* is one of the classic sifrei mussar.

How much they suffer, and they all believe in Hashem. In all the depth of the galus they all still keep the mitzvos, and keep them, and do them. He wrote a long letter.

In the morning there was a levayah for a man of the city, and he said, "Put this letter in his hand. Bury him with the letter." The Rav had said it, so they put it into his hand.

That night the man came to him in a dream, all shining, and said, "Rebbi, thank you very much. You saved me."

He asked, "What happened?"

The man said, "As soon as I went up, malachei chabalah were waiting for me by the hundreds of thousands. I was condemned; I was to be torn to pieces as prey. They were all looking at me in anger. You know how many white malachim there are up there, but the black ones were a whole crowd. Then one of the dayanim said, 'What do you have in your hand?' I said, 'The Rav of the city gave me a letter.' They read it, the zechusim. The moment they read your letter, the place filled with light. Light burst out of your letter, and the whole Beis Din was filled with light. The dayanim began to read it and rejoiced. Then they said, 'The Rav has spoken so much merit for Klal Yisrael that we must judge Klal Yisrael favorably. And this man is a shaliach mitzvah, and shluchei mitzvah einan nizokin; that is the halachah. You are a shaliach mitzvah. Go.' That was all. They brought me into Gan Eden. Because of you I was saved!"

See what hashgachah from Shamayim is. That man must have had some zechus of his own as well, for everything to turn out so that he would carry such a letter and be saved. That too takes some zechus. "Shluchei mitzvah einan nizokin. Because of you I got in!"

THE NUSACH OF THE MODA'AH

Talk Thirteen · 30:00

This was the Rav, the Baal Shevet Mussar. He wrote a nusach called *nusach mesiras moda'ah*, which every person should say standing before ten men. In it he addresses them, *Shim'u na raboseinu*, hear now, our masters, the words of our mouths and the intent of our hearts. You know that the kelipah came before the fruit. And you know what Chazal said: at the hour of great danger, the hour of distress close to the going out of a man's neshamah, is the most fitting time to return the pikadon entrusted to him all the days of his life, to do teshuvah, confess his aveiros and accept ol malchus Shamayim.

Then the Satan does just the opposite. He turns on him with terrors, with speech smoother than oil, to swallow his soul into She'ol and Avaddon, telling him

to go and serve other gods. He promises that this will sweeten things for him and lift the hard and bitter yissurim from him. All his aim is to throw him down to destruction, to rule over his body and multiply dinim, and above all to slaughter him with a nicked knife and make him treifah.

Therefore we now give moda'ah. If, chas v'shalom, at that moment we err and are afraid, and out of fear say that we give in, we ask your honors to join the Shechinah HaKedoshah with you and annul whatever is done, from today and forever, against this moda'ah. There shall be no substance in our speech, our hints or our thoughts when he comes to entice us in those moments.

This is the mesiras moda'ah. It is good for a person to say it at least once in his life, and if he says it every Elul, that is a very great thing. It is important to gather a minyan for it, just as one does for hataras nedarim and hataras kelalos, and it is very important that this nusach be said in every place. It is truly a wonderful thing.

That is how it usually goes when people are niftar.

The Cherem Yerushalmi

Talk Thirteen · 32:00

Now I return to the petirah of my grandfather. There is what is called the *cherem Yerushalmi*. In Yerushalayim the minhag is that sons and daughters do not go out after the mitah of their father, only after that of their mother. Today it has become an empty custom, because the main thing is missing.

In earlier times, and still in my grandfather's time, they made a cherem. Three men stood as a Beis Din and declared: "We put under cherem that none of his offspring, none of those who came forth from him, go out after him." Then not only we, his children, could not go out; neither could all the drops.

As soon as a person dies and leaves his body, he sees millions around him. He sees every drop he ever wasted, standing before him as his children. Those who came back from a coma tell what they saw there, and it is frightening. They all come and take revenge on him: "You are our father! Why did you bring us into being? We are suffering," all these drops.

There is one man on YouTube whom I know personally, a good friend of my son: Nir Abujan. To this day he weeps when he tells it, truly in tears. My son says that what he tells on YouTube is a quarter of what he saw. On YouTube, in brief, it takes an hour, an hour and something; he told my son what happened above for three whole hours. He wept as he told it, and there are others as well.

These drops chase after a person, crying, "You are our father." Even now they pursue people. Many people do not succeed in business, or do not succeed in get-

ting married, because of these drops, which get in their way. The person does not know. He did not see them, and he thinks, "I didn't see, so there is nothing." These drops are a terrible thing. After a person dies, they take their revenge on him.

So what did the mekubalei Yerushalayim do? They made a cherem that none of his offspring, none of those who came forth from him, go out after his mitah at all until he is buried. All their power lasts only until he is buried. After the burial it is over: once he is in the ground, he is covered from them. Then he is taken up to the Beis Din shel Maalah, and there the reckoning opens anew. But at least this part, the levayah, is gained. So with the cherem, his physical children cannot go out, and these cannot either, for they are afraid of the cherem. These ruchos are very, very afraid of charamim and hashba'os and keep away from them.

I remember how they came and took a shard of earthenware, declared the cherem, and threw the shard down to break it in two at that same moment. Breaking the shard is part of the order of the cherem. I remember them doing it, and from that moment we could no longer leave the room. The whole levayah went out in peace. Only after they had buried him did we come out. We allowed an hour or an hour and a half, and then we left the room.

CHAPTER EIGHT

After His Passing

LEIL SHABBOS

Talk Thirteen · 35:30

The next morning, Friday, I went to a taxi stand and asked a driver, "Do you know where my grandfather is buried?"

He said, "Of course. I was at the levayah, all the way to the end."

"Take me there."

I went to my grandfather's kever that Friday morning, and I did what I did so that he would come to me on Leil Shabbos. And on Leil Shabbos he came.

Now I will tell you what happened on Leil Shabbos. I dreamt that I was in a great and beautiful beis knesses. What a beautiful beis knesses it was, and what light! It was Shabbos morning. I dreamt it toward dawn, but in the dream it was already Shabbos morning. The whole place was full of niftarim, all dressed in white and shining like light, and my grandfather was among them. I came in through the door and stood just inside it, behind the door, and my grandfather came over to me. We spoke.

I asked him, "What happened to you?"

He told me that some weeks earlier they had come to him and asked whether he was willing to go in place of several baalei batim, heads of families, who were due to go and leave behind widows and orphans. Was he willing to go in their place, to spare Klal Yisrael widows and orphans? He agreed to go in their place. They told him, "Get ready; they are coming to take you."

He knew he was about to go, and he knew when. That was why he went to say *Lecha Keli*, why he arranged everything and prepared everything, and why he blessed us. He knew that he was going the next day; he only did not know at what hour.

The truth is, I was an esrog merchant. That was my only business; I was learning in kollel. I sold esrogim that were not grafted, Yemenite esrogim, one of a kind. Every year, toward Rosh Chodesh Elul, I would already bring in the esrogim. My

grandfather was my first customer, my father the second, and after them came the other customers. They would choose the most mehudar ones and pay. For an esrog, money meant nothing to them. I did not ask them for money. I asked each of them only ten grush, so that it would not be for free, but both my father and my grandfather paid with an open hand.

That year I came to my grandfather around 7 Elul, in the first days of Elul, with an esrog box. I said, "Saba, I have beautiful esrogim here."

He said, "No, this year I don't need one."

I did not understand why he said that. He always pounced on the esrogim as if they were his very life. He would sit and look and look, exclaiming over them, until he was all aflame, and then he took one. But this year, "I don't need one." I truly did not understand why, and it did not occur to me.

Now in the dream he told me that he had known he was to go, and that in the barbershop he saw them coming toward him to take him. He was so happy that he laughed a great laugh, because he was glad they had come for him. "At once I left the body and went with them in great joy."

I said to him, "Saba, it is so good here. I want to stay here with you."

He said to me, "You have work to do down below, a great deal of work! What are you talking about? Get out of here!" He opened the door, pushed me out, and closed it. I woke up. That was on Leil Shabbos, after his petirah.

Running Ahavas Chaim

Talk Thirteen · 40:00

On Chol HaMoed Sukkos my grandfather came to me in a dream. "Listen," he said, "I am asking you to run Chevras Ahavas Chaim (the organization my grandfather had run, with its shul in the Bukharim neighborhood). You are the only one who knows the work. You know everything and you know what goes on there, and you are strong besides. You can run it. This needs a strong man."

"I can't," I told him. "It's bittul Torah. I sit in kollel, I learn, and I want to grow. This will take me away from learning."

He began to press me. "Even so, it is zikui harabim. It is a great thing."

"You know what," I said, "I will ask my rav." I had a rav in Yerushalayim, whose name I do not want to mention.

"Fine," he said.

In the morning, on Chol HaMoed, I came to the rav. The moment I walked in, he laughed. "Your grandfather was already here before dawn," he said. "I know

why you've come. He has already settled it with me: half the day you will run the chevrah, and half the day you will learn in kollel."

So I took it on. I was a young man, already married, but how old? Twenty-two, something like that.

I am not one who thinks long thoughts. I opened the books and saw that I needed five hundred lirot.[33] Why? There were children learning in mosdos, and my grandfather had been paying twenty-five lirot a month for each one, for the dormitory and for the learning. These were children I had to pay for so that they would not be thrown out. They were in Porat Yosef in Katamon, in Blumenthal, in Diskin,[34] in several places, even in some mosad in Petach Tikvah. On top of that, the shul had to be kept up, with all its expenses. In the kupah there were twenty lirot, and I needed five hundred. Where was I going to find five hundred lirot?

I did not do very much. I kicked the money drawer and said: "Let all the menahelim go to Azazel! Let's see them send these children out of school for one month. It won't happen. Let me see anyone who wants to try it; I'll go after him with my own hands. You don't throw out a child because there's no money. He is already learning there. Let them wait. Chacham Menachem has passed away; let them wait until we raise the money. What can I bring in a single day?" That is what I said. I closed up and went to sleep.

I was barely asleep when my grandfather came. "Yosifiko," he said, "tomorrow at one o'clock in the afternoon go to the office. All the money you need to pay will come." He said one o'clock because at one I finished kollel. The moment kollel ended, I would run to the office.

At one I was in the office, sitting, and people came in. How much did a person give? Ten grush, five grush.[35] You today don't even talk in such numbers, but then a whole lira was a great deal of money. Everything was in grush. A man who gave chai grush thought he had already bought Olam Haba. And who gave half a lira? That was a great, great deal of money. So people came and gave five grush, ten grush, chai grush, and with that I could do nothing. I needed five hundred lirot.

Half an hour passed, and in walked Mulla Yochai Israelov with a contractor named Dadash. Mulla Yochai ("Mulla" is the title the Bukharian Jews give a rav and melamed) had been my melamed when I was two years old. At two he taught me alef-beis, and bentching by heart, and when I made a mistake in learning he hit me on the fingers with a ruler, like this. For many years he was the gabbai of the Mus-

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[33] Lirot: Israeli pounds, the money of Israel in those years.

[34] Blumenthal and Diskin were orphanages in Yerushalayim.

[35] A grush was a hundredth of a lira.

sayoff shul. He was a pleasant man and a tzaddik, a very great tzaddik. He has grandchildren who are rabbanim here in Bnei Brak. Mulla Yochai was a great man, and tall; when we saw him from far away, we would all stand up in his honor. And here was Mulla Yochai himself walking in, and with him the contractor Dadash.

Dadash I knew from the street, from the neighborhood. I had also seen, going through the books, that he was the one who had renovated Ahavas Chaim a few years before; he did the work, got the receipts, brought the money, handled all of it. And now he came up to me and said, "Here are five hundred lirot."

"What is this?" I asked him. "You never give. What happened? In recent years I haven't seen you give a perutah."

"Mulla Yochai will tell you," he said. "I brought him with me because I was afraid to come alone."

"Afraid to come alone? You're bringing money and you're afraid? I'm looking for plenty of cowards like that to come to me!"

Then Mulla Yochai told me what had happened. My grandfather had come to Dadash in a dream and said to him: "My grandson needs five hundred lirot and he doesn't have them. I want you to give them, and I bless you with success." Dadash heard the dream, and it was clear to him that it was a true dream. He went to Mulla Yochai and said, "Listen, here is what happened: Chacham Menachem came and told me this. I want you as a witness; come with me." So they came, and he gave me the five hundred lirot. Everything fell into place, in peace.

From then on my grandfather came to me every few nights and told me what to do: how to do this in the chevrah, how to do that.

The Collectors

Talk Thirteen · 46:30

My grandfather had collectors who went around emptying the pushkes. What tzaddikim they were! You don't know them, the people of that generation. The simple people in the street were angels walking on two legs.

I remember one who collected for him for many years; his name was Reb Feivel. My grandfather had pushkes spread all over Yerushalayim, and Reb Feivel went from neighborhood to neighborhood gathering them. I remember sitting with them as a boy and helping them count. He brought heaps of grush. Every grush was a big brown coin like this, that landed with a thud; you could go weigh them on a scale. Heaps of grush, and shillings, everything in small change. They would sit and make the reckoning down to the last perutah, and he took his percentage.

I was there and saw it the day he came into the shul, finished the reckoning, and said to Chacham Menachem: "Here are the ledgers; I'm done. Here are the keys to the pushkes. I'm not going out anymore. I have reached sixty. From now on my life is given to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Until sixty it was for this world; now it is all for Torah. It's finished. My parnassah, I'm not doing it anymore. From now on I am giving myself only to getting ready for Olam Haba, to packing the suitcase."

From then on you would see him sitting in Zichron Moshe (a neighborhood of Yerushalayim known for its shtieblach) day after day, learning for hours upon hours, learning Gemara b'iyun. Many times he brought his grandchildren and learned with them. It is a great thing for a person to teach his grandchildren Torah. The Gemara says it is like Maamad Har Sinai: "והודעתם לבניך ולבני בניך."

Those were the collectors he had, each one a special person. Later I appointed a collector for some of the pushkes, because there was no choice, and my grandfather came to me at night and said: "Fire him. He is not honest. I don't care about what he takes, but I don't want him to stumble in gezel. Send him away." He told me what to take and what to do, all of it in dreams.

The Night of the Eighth of Adar

Talk Thirteen · 48:30

At that time I was giving shiurim in Ahavas Chaim, and I had talmidim who were devoted to me and never questioned a word I said. They were all young baalei batim, older than I was: thirty, thirty-five, forty at the most. Every single evening I gave them a shiur in Gemara and in halachah.

I will never forget what happened. Even now I live those moments. On the night of the eighth of Adar that year, 5728, I was asleep in bed.

When a person goes to sleep in his bed before chatzos, he has to put the basin and the water next to his bed, so that he does not walk even four amos; it is very important to wash his hands right away when he gets up. If he goes to sleep after chatzos, this no longer matters, and he may get up and go wash his hands at the basin elsewhere. But if he is asleep at chatzos, at the very point of chatzos, then the ruach ra'ah clings to him, and he must not walk four amos without washing. It is very important to wash next to the bed. So next to my bed I had my netilas yadayim: the basin and a full cup of water.

We lived on the second floor at Rechov Shlomo Mussayoff 1. The walls of the building were sixty centimeters thick, the old walls of long ago. We had two rooms. In the first room there was a couch, one armchair, a bookcase, and the bed of my

son, my bechor; my grandfather had been his sandek. In the second room my wife and I slept, with a clothes closet. That was all there was.

Suddenly I felt someone waking me. I opened my eyes, and I saw my grandfather standing in front of me. I was awake. I saw him in his gray coat, standing there, and he said to me quietly in Spanish (that is, in Ladino), "Shhh, so your wife won't wake up. Come into the first room; I want to talk to you." I washed my hands right away, beside the bed, got up, and went out with him to the first room.

I saw my grandfather. But who told me it was my grandfather? Maybe it was a sheid in disguise. There are many impostors; they come in the form of tzaddikim, in the form of Eliyahu HaNavi, in this form and in that form. There are many of them! How was I to know who this was? Yet I saw my grandfather exactly as I had known him. I knew my grandfather for years!

He stood there. "Please," I said, "stand by the main doorway, next to the mezuzah." He stood there. "Please lift your trousers; I want to see your legs." He lifted them, and I saw human legs. Had he been a sheid, he would have had legs like a rooster's or like a horse's. But no: they were a man's legs.

I was still not convinced. I did not say "kevodo" to him or "Saba," only "you." "Please," I said, "tell me the meaning of the pasuk 'כדנה תאמרון להום אלהיא די שמיא וארקא לא עבדו...'" (the pasuk in Yirmiyahu written in Aramaic). I knew that pasuk by heart. Chacham Fatiyah[36] writes that this is how one tests whether it is a neshamah or a sheid.

He did not smile; he translated it for me. He understood that I was testing him and that I had to do it. When I go to the bank to take money out of my account, they ask me for my identity card, and I am glad they ask. Why? If someone else came and said, "I am so-and-so," and they gave him money without an identity card, I would say to the clerk, "How can you give him money without an identity card? I want them to check!" So when the clerk asks me for my card, I know he is doing his work faithfully, and that tomorrow, if an impostor comes, he will not take money out of my account. It was the same here. He knew I was checking his ID to know whether it was really he. So he did not smile; he only listened to the instructions and did what I asked.

After he answered me and explained the pasuk, I said to him, "Shalom, Saba. Sit down." I think he sat in the armchair and I on the couch, or the other way around; I no longer remember. We sat, and he said to me in Spanish:

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[36] Rav Yehuda Fatiyah, a great mekubal from Baghdad who spent his last years in Yerushalayim, famous for the tikkunim he made for neshamos and ruchos.

"Listen. Tomorrow thirty soldiers of the IDF are meant to be killed. You have to save them. Tomorrow afternoon take a minyan and go to Kever Rochel. Say tefillah and selichos; I will be there with you too. Save them."

"That is what I will do," I told him.

When he finished, he stood up, and I stood up too. "Saba," I asked, "may I touch you?"

"Yes," he said. "Touch my hand." He held it out to me, like this: "Touch it." I touched his arm, here, and it felt like pressed air, the way a man driving at two hundred kilometers an hour feels the pressure of the air when he puts his hand out the window. I felt pressed air.

Then he walked into the wall before my eyes, was swallowed up in it, and was gone. The second floor, a wall sixty centimeters thick, and he was swallowed up and gone. The whole thing took a few minutes.

I went back to bed to sleep. Lying there, I began going over it all in my mind, and I said to myself: "What a fool I am! My grandfather came to me while I was awake, and I didn't ask him for a berachah? That's plain foolishness." I lay there thinking, "What an idiot I am," and fell asleep.

As soon as I fell asleep I saw him in a dream, at the Beis Yisrael shtieblach. I lived in Bukharim, and from there to the Beis Yisrael shtieblach is not far. I saw him standing next to the shtieblach, waiting for me. "Listen," he said. "I saw that you were sorry I hadn't blessed you. I did not have permission to appear to you again while you were awake, so I waited for you to fall asleep, to bless you before I go to my place in Gan Eden." And he blessed me.

"Good," I said. "I'll walk you." I walked him as far as Rechov Shmuel HaNavi, more or less between Rechov Yechezkel and Rechov Bar Ilan. There he said, "Until here. You may not go any farther." Afterward too, all the times he came to give me instructions about Ahavas Chaim, I would walk him to that same place, and he would say, "Until here; you may not go farther. The entrance to Gan Eden is near here."

I told him, "One day I want to come in and see you in Gan Eden."

"Fine," he said. "I will ask permission for you. When there is permission, I will call you."

At Kever Rochel

Talk Thirteen · 56:30

In the morning I got up and went to the Mussayoff shul, and there I met one of my talmidim. He had a pickup truck, a Studebaker (an American make, common in

those years). I told him, "This afternoon at four I want a minyan. That's it; you take care of it." A little before four, or maybe at three, I no longer remember the exact time, my talmidim came, a full minyan, and we drove to Kever Rochel.

The trip to Kever Rochel was long, close to an hour each way. There was no road like the one there is today. You had to go by way of Tzur Baher, and through an Arab village that runs down the slopes, and circle around to climb up near Beis Lechem. That was the old road, the Jordanian road[37]; the road of today did not exist yet.

So we drove and arrived at Kever Rochel. My grandfather had said that he too would be with us. Among the talmidim was one who had never known my grandfather; he had done teshuvah only after my grandfather's petirah. He was there with us too.

We said selichos and davened, all of us, and I kept looking for my grandfather and saw nothing. I was disappointed that he had not come. What, had he fooled me? He said he would be with us; I was looking for him and could not see him. We davened, finished the selichos, and by then it was close to sunset. Yalla, out we go.

As we were leaving, the new talmid asked me, "Rebbi, who was the old man who stood next to you the whole time and davened with us?"

"What old man?" I asked.

"What, you didn't see? An old man stood next to you the whole time and said selichos with us."

"I didn't see," I said. "Are you sure? You're pulling my leg."

"Why would I pull your leg? I'm serious! There was an old man there."

On the way back, on the seven o'clock news on Kol Yisrael (Israel's state radio) from Yerushalayim, there was a report: an army vehicle carrying soldiers, a nagmash (an armored personnel carrier) or a truck, something like that, had fallen into a wadi, and they all came out safely. Thirty soldiers came out safely. It was on all the news. If you look up the news of those days, you will find it; it should be there. There was such a report.

We all went to my office, since it was time for the shiur between Minchah and Maariv. I took out the picture of my grandfather that I kept in the office and asked the talmid, "This one?"

"Yes!" he said. "That's the old man. He was there."

He saw him; I did not.

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[37] Built while this area was under Jordanian rule, before the Six Day War.

A Visit to Gan Eden

Talk Thirteen · 59:30

That was in Adar, and my grandfather had promised me: "When I receive permission, I will invite you to Gan Eden." I was waiting for that invitation. Would I give up on such a thing?

Then, at the beginning of the summer, one Leil Shabbos, I had a dream. Even now I am living it. I dreamed that it was Shabbos morning, the very hour at which I was dreaming; I dreamed the real hour that it was outside. I dreamed that I was on Har HaTzofim,[38] walking with my uncle, my grandfather's son. The two of us were walking down the slope of Har HaTzofim when it began to drizzle, and we stood at the mouth of a cave, waiting for the rain to stop so we could go on.

"Wait," I said to my uncle. "Nikanor is supposed to be buried here." The cave of Nikanor is on Har HaTzofim; today it is in the botanical garden of the university. But then everything was new; who knew Har HaTzofim then? Nikanor is the one through whose doors nissim were done. He donated the copper doors of the Beis HaMikdash, and nissim happened with them; to this day it is called Shaar Nikanor, after him. "Nissim were done through his doors, and he is buried here somewhere," I said. "Maybe he is buried in this cave. I'm going in. Come in with me."

"Oh no," he said. "You love caves, you love kevarim. I'll wait for you here. If you want, go in by yourself."

I went into the cave. It was not the cave of Nikanor. Years later, when I saw the cave of Nikanor, I found that you cannot even get into it; it is a small square hole, hard to enter. This cave had a fairly ordinary entrance. Inside I saw a long cave, narrow and long, over two meters high, and it curved around in a half circle, like this. I walked through all of it; it was about thirty or forty meters deep. At the end, on the left side, I saw a green door, low down, more or less in the first meter from the ground.

I did not think twice. I opened the door and went out, and I found myself in a garden. What a beautiful garden! But there was a guard. As I came to go in, there was an old man there, all white, guarding the door, and next to him a table that blocked the way, to check who came in and who went out. The moment I came in, the old man said, "What are you doing here?"

"My grandfather is here," I said. "I came to visit him."

Before he could start asking questions, I did not think twice: I jumped right over the table and started running, so he wouldn't catch me. I ran and ran inside. Then I

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[38] Har HaTzofim, where the Hebrew University stands. From the War of Independence until the Six Day War it was a small Israeli enclave cut off behind Jordanian lines, so in those days hardly anyone knew it.

looked back. What was there to be afraid of? He was laughing. He did not chase me at all; he sat there quietly.

I saw that all the tzaddikim were there, groups of tzaddikim, and there were two large buildings. I went to the first building and looked around, and I saw that there was glass there. That interested me, because I remembered something.

One day I had been sitting with my grandfather at the stop of the number 15 bus in Yerushalayim, and my uncle Mordechai came by. My grandfather said to him, "You should know that your brother Nissim came to me." His son Nissim had passed away and was in the Olam HaEmes. My grandfather had made an agreement with Shamayim that his son would come and speak with him, and he would always call him, and Nissim would come and talk with him. Then he would tell my uncle what his brother had said. That time I heard him say: "You should know that your brother Nissim came and told me that if you are in Gan Eden and see glass, it is a sign that it is the lower Gan Eden. If there is no glass, it is the upper Gan Eden. Let that be a sign for you."

At that moment I remembered it. When you are outside the body, you remember everything. Only inside the body, the body is a dull lump that keeps you from remembering things; once you leave the body, you remember everything. I remembered, I looked, and I saw glass.

I walked on, and I met my grandfather's brother. "Tío Bechor," I said to him (Uncle Bechor, in Ladino), "where is Saba?"

"No," he said, "he belongs over there, in the second building. Go there."

I went to the second building, and there I saw that everyone was wearing both legs in one trouser leg. They moved as though hopping, like dancing. My grandfather too had both legs in one trouser leg; the trousers had no place for two legs, only one. On the spot I understood that these are the baalei kabin (literally, those who walk on a single wooden stump) that the Zohar mentions in Parshas Shelach. There the Zohar speaks of the tzaddikim in Gan Eden who go as baalei kabin, both legs as one, pressed together like a single leg, hopping. I understood that my grandfather had merited to reach the level of the baalei kabin, a special level there in Gan Eden.

I saw my grandfather, and many other tzaddikim there, and every one of them wore something like a kamei'a on a chain, like a diskit (the metal identity tag a soldier wears around his neck). You all know what a diskit is. My grandfather wore one too.

I stood there with him, the two of us, and he said, "You see? I asked permission, I received it, I invited you, and you came. I invited you here. You see us here. This is Gan Eden; this is my place for now."

"Here?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "This is the first year. Soon the year will be over, and then you will see me in another place. Yes, it's the first year; look, it is perfectly fine here."

"Tell me," I asked, "what is written here?"

"Here is written the whole history of each person's life and all his gilgulim. Everything is here."

"Show me," I said. "I want to read yours."

"Mine, no, I can't give it to you. But I will give you someone else's." He called over an Ashkenazi who was standing near him, a tzaddik, full of light, and said to him, "Let him read yours." The man drew it out and gave it to me to read. It was written on something like a small mezuzah, maybe a thousand lines, and perfectly readable. I no longer remember what I read there. I remember only that at the end it was written that he had been killed in Bergen-Belsen[39] in the Churban of Europe. This was a tzaddik who was killed in Bergen-Belsen.

I gave it back to him, and my grandfather said, "You see? He is from the Churban, and he sits here and delights in the ziv haShechinah. I am in my first year here; after this I have another place to rise to."

I saw him there, and I said, "Saba, how good it is here! I'm staying. I want to stay here."

He shouted at me: "Go, quickly! You have a wife and children! Get out of here, quickly!" It was as if to say, "What, did I call you here to keep you here?" The words were sharper in my own telling; what he said was, "Go away from here, quickly!"

I smiled, said goodbye, and left. The old man gently moved the table aside. I opened the door and went back into the cave, came out of the cave, and found my uncle. "What you missed!" I told him. "I was with Saba. I met him, I saw him, I spoke with him."

I walked on with him on foot until Rechov Shmuel HaNavi. From there I walked my uncle to his house and went on by foot, all the way up through Bukharim. I reached my house, went inside, saw my body, entered into the body, and woke up. I had taken a walk outside the body. I saw the body, went inside, clothed myself in the body, and woke up. It was exactly the hour of the morning that I had dreamed, and I had been with my grandfather just as I had seen.

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[39] A Nazi camp in Germany where tens of thousands of Jews died.

At the Gate of Beis Din shel Maalah

Talk Thirteen · 1:08:30

I had a bochur named Yehuda Cohen, a shomer bris of an extraordinary level. Whenever I made a tikkun, a taanis, I would send him on Motza'ei the tikkun to the gate of Beis Din shel Maalah.

Why? Every time a person makes a tikkun, as the fast goes out, they judge him above. A Beis Din is opened for him, and after the fast they judge what to do with him: to continue, to change, to move him on. There is no such thing as a person making a tikkun and not being judged on it in the very second he finishes and breaks his fast and eats. There is no such thing!

So I sent him to the gate of Beis Din shel Maalah every time, and every time they chased him away: "Don't come in here! Up to here; stay outside!" And he would tell me: "I see them judging you." He saw the other side, the mekatreg, and he also saw who came to defend me. He saw the names of the tzaddikim who came to defend me. He really peeked in and saw exactly who came to defend me and who did what.

Let every person know: the moment he finishes a tikkun, they are judging him. The moments after the tikkun, how a person behaves in them, are more important than the whole tikkun. Those are the moments in which he is judged. It is truly astonishing.

Carrying On His Work

Talk Thirteen · 1:10:00

At that time I wanted to renovate Ahavas Chaim. I reached a settlement with the widow that she would move out, so that the place could be enlarged, and after the settlement I got her out. But then family troubles arose there: they took over the place, did not let me enlarge it, and took over the other part. So I left Ahavas Chaim.

I understood that I had to continue my grandfather's work. The building is not important; the goals are what matter. So I took upon myself zikui harabim and supporting poor families, and to this day that is my shlichus from my grandfather.

From the age of ten he trained us to go out with envelopes and give tzedakah. Not a few shillings to a person: he gave us envelopes and said, "Go give this man an envelope." That man had to pay rent; he had to feed his whole family. In the envelope there were ten or twenty lirot, and that was real money, not perutos. He trained me to support families, to pay their rent, to pay for all kinds of things that people don't pay for, that poor people need and are stuck with.

People think, "Give him a chicken for Shabbos, and we're done." With that chicken he will pay for electricity? He will pay for water? He will eat and drink, dress his children, pay rent, all from the chicken you gave him for Shabbos? It would have to be a chicken made of gold. From an ordinary chicken, nothing comes of it.

So I took this upon myself, and I carry on with it to this day. Since it is the continuation of my grandfather's work, whoever helps me in it will have my grandfather's zechus stand for him.

The Tehillim

Talk Thirteen · 1:12:00

My brother, alav hashalom, was named Refael. I told you that after I married, he came to be with my grandfather. Refael lived in Canada, and his wife was ill with that well-known illness. His daughter lived in New York, where she was learning in seminary, and he gave her my grandfather's Tehillim so that she would daven from it for her mother's refuah.

One Leil Shabbos, as she slept, she suddenly felt someone striking her, hitting her on the back. She woke up and saw nothing. She went back to sleep, and again she felt someone striking her. This time she did not open her eyes; while she was being struck, she dreamed, and she saw my grandfather standing beside her. "Get up quickly," he said, "and say Tehillim for your father, for your father's refuah. Quickly."

"I don't know how to daven for my father," she said. "You daven."

"I will daven, and you daven too," he said. "Get up now and say Tehillim now, and I will daven with you for your father's refuah."

She got up, and she did not understand. As far as she knew, her father was perfectly healthy; it was her mother who was sick. But Saba had said to daven for her father. So she got up and said several kapitlach of Tehillim from that very sefer, my grandfather's own, and went back to sleep. That was Leil Shabbos. She knew nothing of what would happen in Canada on Sunday.

On Sunday my brother went to the hospital to visit his wife, and the doctor said to him, "Listen, her condition is somewhat critical." You know how doctors are; they know how to bury a person while he is still alive. He began describing to him how critical it was, and in short he frightened my brother very badly, and on the spot my brother had a heart attack. Right there. The doctor kept his head and dragged him, any way he could, across the floor, quickly into the resuscitation

room. The doctors there said that had he come one minute later, there would have been no one left to revive. They managed to revive him and bring him back.

That was on Sunday, after my grandfather had come on Leil Shabbos and asked his daughter to say Tehillim for her father's refuah.

Refael's Passing

Talk Thirteen · 1:14:30

There were more things like this. When my brother passed away a few years ago, a cousin of mine in Yerushalayim had a dream. My brother passed away in Canada, and there is a difference of several hours between there and here: there it was the beginning of the night, while here it was already close to dawn.

My cousin dreamed that he saw my grandfather and my grandmother walking along, happy. He asked them, "Where are you going?"

"To take Refael now, in Canada," they said. "He has passed away, and we are going now to take him to us."

Here no one yet knew what had happened to him. It was at the very moments that he passed away there, close to dawn here, that my cousin dreamed they were saying, "We are coming now to take him and bring him to us."

David Levi's Daughter

Talk Thirteen · 1:15:30

A woman told me this story. I had known her father; he was one of my grandfather's talmidim among the Turkish Jews who had come here in the time of the Balkan Wars.[40] Every Shabbos my grandfather taught them in Spanish, and I remember going with him to Mishkenos. Mishkenos was a neighborhood off Rechov Yafo in Yerushalayim; today nothing is left of it but a street or two. In the shul there my grandfather gave a shiur in Spanish for the Turkish Jews.

One of them was a plump, pleasant man named David Levi. He was always smiling, and he always came among the first, thirsty to hear the shiur. They were temimusdike Jews, yirei Shamayim. My grandfather raised them in yiras Shamayim in an extraordinary way.

This David Levi's daughter told me that she had been ill. She had pneumonia that grew complicated, and her body did not respond to the medicines. The doctors

[40] Wars in the Balkans in 1912 and 1913, in which Turkey lost most of its lands in Europe.

gave up hope and threw up their hands. They saw that she was already going; she was more there than here.

One night in the hospital she dreamed, and she saw my grandfather standing before her, looking at her and shaking his head, like this. The next night she saw her father standing before her and davening. Suddenly he said to her, "My daughter, I cannot stay here any longer; I have to go."

That morning she got up healthy. Within an hour the doctors had done their tests and said, "Gveret, go home. You have nothing to look for here." She had been dying, and she got up completely healthy.

The Sefer Ahavas Chaim

Talk Thirteen · 1:17:00

A woman telephoned me and told me that whenever she has a question about her affairs, she opens my grandfather's sefer, Ahavas Chaim, and receives an answer. She gave me several astonishing examples, about matters of real destiny, matters of life. She opened the sefer and received answers like the Urim VeTumim.

Others told me that every Shabbos they read the parshah in his sefer, and when they lit a candle l'iluy nishmaso and asked for yeshuos, they saw yeshuos.

My Father's Last Months

Talk Thirteen · 1:18:00

Two months before my father passed away, I went to visit him at his home. He was paralyzed and confined to the house. "Yosifiko," he said to me, "I am about to go."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"On Erev Shabbos," he said (or Leil Shabbos, or the night before, I no longer remember), "Chacham Menachem, your grandfather, came to me, together with Rav Zev Chashin." Rav Zev Chashin was my father's rav; he had learned much with him, and he was a very holy man. "The two of them came, full of light, and said: 'Avraham, we have prepared a place for you next to us. Soon you will be coming to us, and we have prepared a nice place for you beside us.'" Both of them were happy and full of light. "So I know," he told me, "that I am about to go."

That was about two months before his petirah.

Friday Night in London

Talk Thirteen · 1:19:00

I was once in London. There is a very dear Jew there, Rav Yechiel Doron, a Teimani rav, a pleasant man and a great mezakeh harabim. He has a shul on the Golders Green road, and there he brings the many to merit. Crowds of young Israelis come to him, baalei teshuvah, and he strengthens them and encourages them. He is a very pleasant man, and he has a great idea for bringing people close to teshuvah, and he carries it out. I would not have the courage to do what he does, but he does it, and he succeeds.

In London food is very expensive, especially cooked food. A small piece of cooked fish costs eight or nine pounds, pounds sterling, and that is money. An ordinary cake starts at a pound. Many of the Israelis there are hungry for bread. Here they come and show off: "We're in London, we're this, we're that." It is all air. There they barely have bread to eat; they are hungry for food.

So what does he do? Every Shabbos, all three meals, he sets a table that costs him thousands of pounds sterling. He opens a table for close to a hundred people, young men and young women, chilonim, all of them, and they come to eat. And what a table! What portions, what food! A chasunah is small next to what he gives them: big slices of those huge salmon, cooked and tasty, and the salads and everything. He sets a table for them so they will come to eat, as long as they hear Torah, hear Kiddush, hear divrei Torah. Ashrei lo. They come to eat, and meanwhile, whether they want to or not, they hear divrei Torah, and little by little each one who can be saved is saved. "Kol hamekayem nefesh achas miYisrael, ke'ilu kiyem olam malei."

He called me in. While I was staying there, I was a guest in a house across from where he lived. "Listen," he said, "come this Leil Shabbos and you give the shiur."

"No problem," I said. "I'll come."

I came, and I sat at the head of the table, a small square table on a bimah. Facing me was a long table, seventy or eighty meters long; the whole hall was open, and young men and young women sat on both sides, putting away a meal. Of course he made Kiddush, and they all stood for Kiddush and listened. At home they never saw Kiddush. Where would they have seen it? This was the first time they saw Kiddush.

They were all sitting there, and now I had to speak. Israelis like to talk too; they don't like to listen, only to talk. If I started speaking, they would all talk and disrupt the shiur. How was I going to close their mouths?

"Chevreh," I said, "I have a hard question on Elokim. Maybe you can help me."

That opened their eyes. A question on Elokim? What's the question? They all looked up.

"I don't understand," I said. "Why is this world full of suffering? Where is the justice? Where is the fairness? Wicked people, robbers, do evil, and they live; the more people curse them, the longer they live and the fatter they grow. And poor, good people suffer. Why is a baby born an invalid? What did he do? If a man sinned and broke his leg, fine, he deserved it. But a poor baby, fresh, newborn, who hasn't done anything yet, and already he's an invalid, already this, already that. It's a pity! Where is Elokim? Where is the justice?"

That spoke to them; it really was the question. They all sat quietly to listen.

Then I began. "The Chafetz Chaim, alav hashalom, says: Dovid HaMelech says, 'משפטי ה' אמת צדקו יחדיו.' What does that mean? 'The judgments of Hashem are true' we know; we accept it on our heads. But what is 'צדקו יחדיו,' they are righteous together? The Chafetz Chaim says: you see a wicked man, a tyrant, flourishing like a fresh tree. Somewhere else, years later, you see an invalid baby. You wonder why Hakadosh Baruch Hu does not punish the one, and why the other poor thing was born this way. If you knew that it is the same person, you would not pity him. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave him his whole life to do teshuvah. He did not do teshuvah, and now he is born an invalid. The invalid you see being born now, suffering, with all kinds of troubles in his body, his heart, his health, is the very same one. So when are 'the judgments of Hashem true'? 'צדקו יחדיו': when you join the two stories together, the first part of the rasha with this part of the one born this way. Join them, and you will see that it is all just. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives a person his time; perhaps he will do teshuvah. If not, the end will come, and he will pay for it in full."

That is how I began, and then I began giving them examples of gilgulim that I myself had seen with people, interesting stories about gilgulim. They all sat and listened to me with great attention.

The shiur ended; it went on an hour, an hour and a half; I don't remember how long I spoke, but I spoke a lot. Then came bentching, and I headed home. It is the way of the world that a few people walk the rav who spoke on his way home. That is natural; people want to ask another question, to find out something more, this and that. It was a long walk, and about ten people walked with me.

Among them was one man about whom they told me he was a "psychic." What is a psychic? He sees hidden things. He sees sheidim and ruchos and such things, and he deals with them. That is called a psychic.

He was walking with me, and he said, "Rav, I have a question for you. I am not alone. There is someone here beside me, a woman. You can't see her, but there is someone here beside me. She was at the table next to me the whole time, and she

tried to murder you. She decided to kill you. You were interfering with her, because you were here and people really listened to you. She decided to kill you.

"But three neshamos surrounded you. One wore a cap, with a white beard down to here and a long gray coat to his feet; he stood like this and protected you. Next to him stood one who was shaven, also wearing a cap, thinner, with a short coat, and he stood with light on his face. The two of them stood like this, and next to them stood one with a hat, not like the Ben Ish Chai's but a little different, a strange sort of hat."

He was describing to me the Chida, my grandfather and Chacham Fatiyah.

"These three protected you," he said, "and now we decided to finish you off on your way home. She is here beside me. We want to harm you, and we can't. These three surround you and protect you, and she can't come near. I can barely come half a meter from you, and she is farther off; she can't come near, she's afraid. Who are they?"

When I heard that, fear took hold of me. Even though he said they could not, and the three were standing beside me, still, better safe than sorry. "These are tzaddikim," I told him, "these are tzaddikim," and I began walking fast, fast, fast. I fled as fast as I could, went into the house and closed the door, as if that helps anything. It's psychological. That is the story of what happened.

My daughter too, may she live and have long days in all good, was once torn over a certain matter, a matter of real destiny in her life, and she did not know what to do. At night my grandfather, Chacham Fatiyah and the Chida came to her. The three of them came and told her what to do and how it would turn out, and just as they told her, so it was.

They are present. They are the living; we are only a shadow of life. They are the true life. May their zechus stand and protect all of us, all of Klal Yisrael, and me and all my children, for all the yeshuos we need, and may we all merit with Hashem's help to see them at techiyas hameisim, and to see the true geulah, speedily in our days. Amen.

Carrying On Saba's Tzedakah

Talk Ten · 2:05:00

From those days on, Saba raised me to understand that helping poor people has to be in one's blood. In the many years since, I have had the means, both from my own money and from what others gave me, and I have supported poor families. I still do. These are not ordinary collectors. They are people who come to me for advice, or people whose story I have come to know, or people whose real situation I

know. Such people need more than food. There are families who will lose their apartment if the rent or the mortgage is not paid: the apartment will be sold, or they will be put out of it, so someone has to pay their rent. Some of them are learning. Some do not work but are simply unfortunate people without the means to manage. Some work and still do not earn enough to bring home food for the whole family. They need help too. Saba got me used to taking care of people like these, and I carry on with it to this day.

There are many days when I am in great want and I daven to Hashem: where will the money come from? Very often it suddenly comes. And very often I also go into debt for these people.

Anyone who wishes to help in this work, l'zechus Saba, may call me and speak with me about it, from anywhere in the world, and I can give him my bank account. It is all personal. We are not talking about institutions. Just as Saba did it personally, I personally receive from whoever trusts me and wants to give, and he may know that the money goes to poor people in real need.

I ask only this. One may not switch money from one tzedakah to another, and there are several kinds of tzedakah. Whoever gives through me should tell me clearly what his money is. If it is pidyon ta'aniyos (money given in place of fasts one owes for his teshuvah), he should say so. If it is plain tzedakah or maaser, he should say that, because they do not go to the same place. Pidyon ta'aniyos I take care to give only to truly poor bnei Torah who really need it, people who are, as the expression goes, down on the rims. It also goes to small children whose parents may not be learning. Sometimes it is a mother raising small children alone, and those children must have food too. All that comes from the pidyon money. Maaser money goes to wider purposes of tzedakah and chessed, which do not meet the same standard, and also to further zikui harabim. So please say which it is.

One more thing. I ask married women not to bring me a single prutah, under any circumstances, without their husband's consent. By halachah, a married woman, even if she works and earns money, needs her husband's permission for that money as long as he is the one who provides for the home. Chazal say, "Whatever a woman acquires, her husband acquires." The husband has rights in that money, and without his permission it is gezel. That is very serious, and I must not be made to stumble in gezel.

Rav Shmuel Salant and the Consul's Check

Talk Ten · 2:09:00

On this point I will tell you a most interesting story. It is not part of the picture we are drawing here, but you came to hear about tzaddikim, so you will hear about another one.

About a hundred years ago, the rav of the Ashkenazim in the Old City of Yerushalayim was Rav Shmuel Salant. He was a tzaddik, an enormous talmid chacham, a holy man, kodesh kodashim. At that time there was also a hospital inside the Old City called Misgav Ladach. It exists to this day, though no longer in the Old City. One of its specialties was helping women who had difficulty having children.

In Yaffo lived the French consul. He was a Jew from an assimilated family. I do not mean, chas v'shalom, that they had married gentiles. They had simply grown up with a French education and knew nothing at all about Yiddishkeit. He and his wife were Jews who knew nothing of being Jewish. His wife could not have children. She heard that at Misgav Ladach they might be able to treat her, and she came.

She was the consul's wife, an educated woman who looked European, not one of the people of the Old City. But she too had to wait her turn for the doctor, and there were other women waiting with her. Now, can women sit together and not talk? Impossible. Chazal say that ten measures of talk came down to the world and women took nine. Some add that they stole the tenth as well. In any case, that is how it is, baruch Hashem, and so it was with these women: they sat waiting in line, and of course they talked. Many of the people of the Old City knew languages. Arabic was on everyone's tongue; it was the language of the land. The consul knew Arabic, his wife knew Arabic, and the Jews of the Old City knew Arabic, so they had a common language.

"Madam, what are you here for?" they asked her.

"To have a child," she said.

"We have a tzaddik here, Rav Shmuel Salant," they told her, "and his berachah is something great. Go and get a berachah from him. It is worth it."

She thought: what do I lose? I will finish my treatment with the doctor and stop at the rav on the way. When her treatment was done she went to the rav. They showed her the house; the whole Old City was the size of a k'zayis, a few streets altogether. She knocked on the door, and the rav received her graciously.

"Yes, madam, who are you? What do you want?"

"I am the wife of the consul."

"Very well. What do you want?"

"A child."

The rav blessed her: "Yehi ratzon that this year, b'ezras Hashem, you will merit a son, and in the zechus of this son you will also do teshuvah." He added that sentence. What she cared about was the first part, that she would have a son. The second part, that they would do teshuvah, did not matter to her. She left.

Two months later she was expecting. For her it was a wonderful gift! She said to herself: this must be in the zechus of the rav's berachah. Her heart told her it was because of the rav and not because of the doctor's treatment. From a doctor's treatment one does not become expecting within two months; one has to wait "a time, times and half a time," as in sefer Daniel. Two months? This must be the rav's berachah.

What did she do? On her own, without telling anyone, she took out her checkbook. Her checks were in French francs, which were worth a great deal. She wrote a check for a thousand francs, put it in an envelope and mailed it to Rav Shmuel Salant in Yerushalayim. That was enough of an address: "Rav Shmuel Salant, the Old City, Yerushalayim." It arrived.

It happened to be between Purim and Pesach. The city's fund was nearly empty, and the rav and his gabbai were racking their brains over where they would find money for Pesach for all the poor of the city. The chalukah money (the funds collected abroad for the Jews of Yerushalayim) that usually came in those days from Amsterdam had not come in sufficient amount. Not enough had come in, they did not know what to do, and they were in great distress. And suddenly an envelope arrived with a thousand francs! That could carry the whole community. All the poor people would have, baruch Hashem, matzos and wine, and meat and fish too.

The gabbai saw it and was overjoyed. He came to the rav: "Rebbi, we are saved! Here, a check!"

"Give me the letter," said the rav. "Read me what it says."

The gabbai read: "Kevod HaRav, thank you very much for the berachah. I am expecting a child. I thank you, and I am writing you a check. Do with it as you see fit, for whatever purposes you see fit." It was signed by her, and the check, too, carried her signature alone.

When the rav saw that the signature was hers alone, he told the gabbai: "Send the check back to the consul. Send it by registered mail, now, urgently, so that it is sure to reach their hands." It took three or four days for a letter to get to Yaffo by the Turkish coaches; this was still in the days of the Turks (when Eretz Yisrael was under Ottoman rule, before the British came in 1917). "Send it back," said the rav, "and write to the lady: Since I do not see that your husband is recorded on the check as consenting to the donation, I am forbidden by halachah to accept it. By halachah one may not accept money from women without their husband's consent. I am sorry, but I am prevented from accepting it, and I am returning your check.

Only if your husband agrees, let me know, and I will accept it anew with his written consent. Without that, please do not send me any tzedakah, because I am forbidden to accept it."

He stamped it with his seal, "R' Shmuel Salant," and sent it off. The gabbai's face fell. He had already thought the yeshuah had come, and suddenly, for the sake of one halachah in the Shulchan Aruch, the rav was turning all these poor people into paupers. All these people would have no matzah on the night of Pesach. All they would have was maror. That was all. The rav takes nothing into account: halachah is halachah, and that is the end of it.

Now let us leave the rav and go to the consul's house. On the evening of the day she sent the check, her husband came home from the consulate. She said to him, "Do you know what I did? Today I sent a check to the rav, a thousand francs, because it is in his zechus that we are having a baby!"

"Idiot! Madwoman! You believe these fanatic rabbis? They are all thieves, all bloodsuckers, leeches! What does he have to do with it? What can his berachah do? Who is he anyway? It was the doctor. He gave you treatment and it helped. Now this rabbi will celebrate with the money. He will laugh at all of us, and he will go and make a party at the expense of your stupidity, because you gave him a thousand francs."

"No," she said. "I saw that the rav is a tzaddik, a holy man."

"What do you understand? What do you know? Enough!"

He started to fight with her and was angry with her. A thousand francs is not small money, and one does not give away such a sum, certainly not to these rabbis, leeches who suck the blood of everyone they can. Enough of all these religious people! And so the two of them were angry with each other, and for three or four days they did not speak. She was deeply hurt by the way he had behaved and the way he had spoken to her. She was sensitive, she was wounded, and she would not talk to him. He too was in a temper over the money that was gone. A signed check, after all, is a signed check. Nothing could be done; it gets cashed, and the bank pays. There was a bank here, the Anglo-Palestine Bank,[41] which paid every check that came in; it took the check and passed it on, and that was that. The money was lost. These religious people had managed to trick her and get a thousand francs out of her.

Three or four days they sat that way, and then the envelope with the check arrived. The woman opened it, read it, and began to shout: the rav had returned the check because her husband had not given his consent!

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[41] The Anglo-Palestine Bank was the bank founded by the Zionist movement in Eretz Yisrael in 1902; it later became Bank Leumi.

"Shame on you!" she told him. "That is how you spoke about a holy rav? Look! Here, he sent back the check! Is he a bloodsucker? Is he a leech? Or is he a holy man? Here is the money; choke on it! He gave it back to you! He did not want to take a prutah without your consent, because that is Jewish halachah. The Jewish religion is the true religion! Look at it! Look at such honesty! How could you speak that way about religious people and about their rav? Aren't you ashamed?"

The man saw it, and his face fell, like Haman's. "You know what?" he said to her. "You are right. My conscience is bothering me. Come, let us go to the rav."

At once the two of them took a diligence, a special carriage drawn by horses that took about eight hours, most of a day, to go from Yaffo to Yerushalayim, and set out. Late in the evening they reached the rav and knocked on the door: the consul and his wife. The rav opened the door to them with great respect and asked what they wanted.

"Rebbi," the consul said, "I am very sorry. I insulted you. I called you a leech, a bloodsucker, a thief. I thought you had tricked my wife in order to take money from her. But when I received your letter and saw your honesty, I came to believe that my wife is expecting because of your berachah, not because of the doctor. Now I believe it. I was angry with her over the thousand francs she gave you, as if you were a robber. Now that I see that you are a holy man and a tzaddik, and that I was wrong, here is a check for two thousand francs. Please, do with it whatever you wish."

The rav said to him, "I do not want money. I want you to do teshuvah. You have a child through my berachah, and this child must grow up in teshuvah."

"I am prepared to come once a week to hear Torah from you," the consul said.

And so it was. First of all, those two thousand francs brought the Jews there light and joy that year. They had a real yetzias Mitzrayim, a real Pesach, with everything they needed. And the man came closer, little by little. A year later he was sent back, since the consuls were replaced every so often, and he returned to France and began keeping Torah and mitzvos. They raised their son with yiras Shamayim.

That is the power of halachah, the power of Torah. Rabbosai, that is the power of real tzedakah: when a person takes what is permitted and not what is forbidden, it goes to a good place. If not, it does not go to a good place, and that is a pity.

So please, whoever wants to help these unfortunate people, I am ready to be the gabbai for him and give him the zechus of this mitzvah, and may Saba's zechus stand by him. But that is the condition.

One more thing I ask: anyone who is mechallel Shabbos, or who is involved with non-Jewish women, should not give money. I ask this. It is a very serious matter, and Saba was particular about it. Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah (a great mekubal of Yerushalayim in the last generation) used to write on his receipts: "Please, whoever

is mechallel Shabbos should not donate!" So I ask that people with either of these two pegamim not send a single prutah as long as they have not done teshuvah, and not call me about money. If they call me to speak about teshuvah and tikkunim, I am ready to hear them anytime, twenty-four hours a day. But about money, chas v'shalom, they should not mention it until they have done teshuvah.

My telephone number is 052-314-5665. Whoever wants to help, may Saba's zechus stand by him and protect him.

The Pillar of Chessed

Talk Twenty-One · 2:02:00

As I have mentioned, nearly all these gedolei Yisrael collected money for poor families. My grandfather was like that too. The pillar of chessed was part of their lives, together with the pillar of Torah and the pillar of tefillah. These are the three pillars the world stands on, as Shimon HaTzaddik says: "The world stands on three things: on Torah, on avodah and on gemilus chassadim." In our days avodah is tefillah. In their time avodah was the avodah of the Beis HaMikdash, the korbanos. Today tefillah takes the place of the korbanos. So the world stands on these three: Torah, avodah and gemilus chassadim.

They worked for this and made sure of it. They lowered their own honor to raise money in every way they could for those poor and wretched people. The Shechinah is called poor and needy. When a person helps the poor, he brings it about that the Shechinah too receives help Above.

We have also heard that a person never becomes poor from tzedakah; so Chazal said. In the end, whoever gives receives it back, beyond what was decreed for him on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. On the one hand, it is added to his parnassah. On the other hand, the money would sometimes have gone out of his own pocket to the doctors, the medicines, the car repairs and the like, and he is saved from all that through the tzedakah he gives. No tzedakah goes to waste.

We see that tanna'im and amora'im also busied themselves with the mitzvah of tzedakah, collecting in order to give to the poor and the needy. This is especially true of one who gives his tzedakah to those who toil in Torah. He joins Torah to it: he supports Torah together with the mitzvah of gemilus chassadim, and so he holds up two pillars at once.

I have already told you, in the thirteenth shiur on the tzaddikim, that my grandfather turned me in this direction from childhood. When I was eight or nine he would give me the envelopes to take from house to house and hand out. Later, from the age of twelve, when I was already growing up in his home, I would open

the doors at two o'clock at night for all kinds of poor people so they could receive their tzedakah. It was matan b'seser for those who could not come by day. In daylight they looked like people who give; no one knew they were the ones receiving.

To this day I continue this practice of my grandfather, and whoever wishes to help, may a berachah come upon him. I give money to the poor. Most of those I give to are poor people who, if I do not give them, have nowhere else to receive from. Some work part-time and it is not enough. Some cannot work at all. Some learn Torah all the time and give their lives for the Torah. All of them have families.

Just now I was approached about a ben yeshivah, a bochur of nineteen who has celiac (a disease in which the body cannot bear gluten, found in wheat and other grains) and is therefore very weak. He sits in yeshivah and learns Torah. I have taken this project on myself as well, to raise for him now the thousands he needs for his teeth. That is in addition to all the others I have truly taken in hand. Among them are some who, without my help, would get by somehow, in very great hardship, from other places. Others have nothing at all, and they must be helped.

So I ask: whoever wishes to help through me, may a berachah come upon him. My telephone number is 052-3145665. Whoever helps will be helped from Shamayim. The situation of these poor people is pressing, and in this merit we will come to the true geulah, as it is written: "Tzion will be redeemed through justice, and her returnees through tzedakah."

Book Two

My Rebbeim

CHAPTER NINE

Rav Zev Cheshin

my rebbi from the age of ten



MY REBBI FROM THE AGE OF TEN

Talk Seventeen · 0:00

I knew Rav Binyamin Zev Cheshin, zechuso yagen aleinu, from the time I was ten years old. He was a friend of my father and of my grandfather, the Saba. In the Saba's time he gave shiurim in Ahavas Chaim, and the Saba drew him close, because he knew how great he was. Rav Zev was great in Torah, great in anavah, great in middos tovos, and great in zikui harabbim.

He had been my father's teacher when my father was eight and ten years old. My father had come to Eretz Yisrael from chutz la'aretz as an orphan, and the family lived in shameful poverty. He learned only half a day in the Talmud Torah Bnei Tziyon. He could barely finish his lessons before he had to go and work for a few hours, and he often missed lessons altogether because of the work. He was a boy of eight, and he had to support his mother and three brothers with the few prutos he earned.

When Rav Zev saw how badly this boy wanted to learn, he set up special shiurim with him. He encouraged him and raised him up, until in the end my father, who was very gifted, became his chavrusa. For years they learned all kinds of things together. Between them they learned much of the hidden wisdom: chochmas hayad (reading the lines of the hand), the wisdom of the candles (reading the flame of a candle), and much more. All this was besides the vast, all-embracing knowledge of Torah that Rav Zev had. He also influenced my father, outside his working hours, to sit all aflame with learning.

From the age of ten, my father sent me every day to the Breslov shul in Meah Shearim to learn with Rav Zev Cheshin for an hour and a half or two hours, and this went on for a long time. My father supported Rav Zev, and one of the things Rav Zev did in return was to learn with me. My father wanted me to receive the

kind of chinuch that is not taught in school at that age. So Rav Zev sat with me, a boy of ten, and began to learn with me the Sippurei Maasios of Rebbe Nachman with their explanations. He also began to teach me Likutei Moharan, as far as my mind and understanding could reach then.

The Breslov of those days was not the Breslov of today, and I will speak about the Breslov of those days at length. I am not a Breslover chassid. But we are chassidim of all the true tzaddikim, from the Baal Shem Tov to the Vilna Gaon, without distinction: of Rebbe Nachman, and also of those who opposed him, like the Saba Kadisha of Shpola (a famous chassidic tzaddik of Rebbe Nachman's time who was among his fiercest opponents). We are talmidim of all the true gedolei Yisrael.

Before I come to that, though, I want to tell how I knew the man himself: his middos and his clear, pure speech. I saw him and took in his influence day after day at that age. I can say about him what Rabbi Chanina said about his mother: "The oil and hot water with which my mother anointed me in my childhood are what stood by me in my old age." In the same way, the Torah I learned with Rav Zev Cheshin in my childhood has stood by me all the days of my life, into my old age as well. Without a doubt, one of the foundations on which I have leaned all my life is the holy flames that came out of his mouth.

He could come down to the level of a ten-year-old boy, and he could rise to the level of the gedolei hador. He went up and down all the rungs of Yaakov's ladder without pause. But I will not get ahead of myself.

Yosef Nargaon, Who Served Him in Life and in Death

Talk Seventeen · 28:30

Rav Zev was one of the great mezakei harabbim of our days. Whenever he was invited to give a shiur, before a gathering of people or for a family in a beis avel and the like, he went. If there was a chance to save one more neshamah, to awaken one more Jew to teshuvah, he was there. He was the first, the pioneer. How much he did! That was besides his regular shiurim in the Saba's Ahavas Chaim, and later, for a very long time, in Beis Aharon.

One of the regulars at Ahavas Chaim was a precious Jew named Yosef Nargaon. He was a grown man and I was a boy, but we grew up together a great deal; we learned and davened together. He would come straight from work in his khaki shirt and khaki trousers and sit every day and learn with Chacham Sasson Levi, the holy and pure tzaddik I have already told you about. The two of them sat together as chavrusos, alone in Ahavas Chaim, for an hour or two every day, learning Shulchan Aruch with the Kaf HaChaim word by word, and Chacham Sasson would open up

all his knowledge and pour it out there. Now and then I would come and watch how the two of them learned.

Yosef Nargaon was Rav Zev Cheshin's shamash. Every Thursday night in Beis Aharon he was the first to arrive. He would bring and prepare all the glasses of tea and hand them out to the listeners, so that they would sit, listen and learn. A glass of tea was something big then, not like today. And when the Rav was giving his shiur with everyone sitting around him on a cold Yerushalayim night, that tea was half of Olam Haba.

Rav Zev Cheshin knew how to hold them spellbound with his speech. He had a Hebrew that still echoes in my ears to this day: the sweetness of the language, the way he spoke it, with such gentleness and grace, in a pure, clear Hebrew. People sat longing to hear him. Whoever came once was captivated, and so he brought many back in teshuvah. And Yosef Nargaon brought drinks for everyone.

A short time after Rav Zev Cheshin's petirah, Yosef Nargaon passed away as well. Do you know why? Because Rav Zev Cheshin had said, as Rabbeinu HaKadosh said, "Yosef Nargaon served me in my life; he will serve me in my death." He went up to continue serving Rav Zev Cheshin above.

I am speaking to you of people whom I want to cry over the moment I remember those days. What tefillos, what yiras Shamayim, what people walked in the streets then! Malachim walked in the streets, in khaki clothes, and not just one or two.

When I was a boy, in the Bukharan quarter and Beis Yisrael, the neighborhoods went to sleep when the roosters did. An hour or an hour and a half after tzeis hakochavim, that was it; there was not a living soul in the streets. But when chatzos came, it was like the middle of the day. You would see everyone going to the Turkish bathhouse to tovel, or to the mikveh of Beis Yisrael, and afterwards sitting down to learn until the morning. The shuls were full. In the Bukharan quarter, the shuls of Mattatof, Yissacharof, Babayof and Kubayof were all full of people learning until morning. Then they davened, and each went off to his work: "Man goes out to his work and to his labor until evening." They were simple people, but that is how life went on then. Everything was lived with a feeling of kodesh kodashim. If the simple people were like that, if the hyssop on the wall was like that, what can be said of the cedars? Their flame was immense.

THE STORIES

The Dogs That Stood Still

Talk Seventeen · 4:30

Rav Zev himself received his greatness as a small child from the greatness of the generations before him. He told a story in the name of his grandfather, Rav Yeshayah Cheshin. I do not know whether his grandfather told it to him himself or his father told it to him in his grandfather's name.

When Rav Yeshayah Cheshin was a boy of six, he went out early one morning, before daybreak, and walked through the streets of the Old City. The family lived in the Old City, where most of the yishuv lived in those days. Suddenly a pack of big dogs came running toward him, and he was terribly frightened.

At that moment one of the mekubalim passed by on his way to Beis El (the yeshiva of the mekubalim in the Old City) to daven Shacharis. He said to the boy, "You have nothing to be afraid of. Hold on to my belt and come with me." When the dogs reached them, they all stood still in a single row. The two of them walked past, and the dogs, afraid of the mekubal, let them pass quietly.

The boy asked the mekubal, "Why do all the dogs stand still before you?"

The mekubal answered, "Shemiras habris. Everything depends on it. The pasuk says that the fear and dread of you will be upon all the earth and upon every beast of the field. When a man has the tzelem Elokim on his face, the animals and the beasts are afraid of him." The Gemara says that a beast cannot pursue a man unless he no longer looks to it like the tzelem Elokim, but like a beast like itself. "It is all because of shemiras habris," the mekubal told him. "Because of the tzelem Elokim on our faces, they are afraid of us. Everything depends on this guarding. If a man guards his bris, no creature in the world can touch him for harm."

Rav Zev grew up on sayings and stories like these. Later in life he proved to people himself that it is not the snake that kills but the sin, as I will tell further on.

The Bochur Who Stopped Rav Isser Zalman's Shiur

Talk Seventeen · 10:30

Rav Zev was a chavrusa of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (one of the greatest poskim and roshei yeshivah of Yerushalayim in the last generation), who was known as a great and holy man, zechuso yagen aleinu. I too merited to know Rav Shlomo Zalman, and I even merited to receive a letter of haskamah from him on my sefer, Tiferes Menachem, baruch Hashem.

These were men who lived for amal haTorah, and what middos they had! I remember the levayah of Rav Shlomo Zalman's wife. He stood beside the mittah and said to her, "I have nothing to ask your forgiveness for, because I never once hurt

you." What man can say such words beside his wife's mittah? I am speaking of men for whom the truth was a lamp to their feet, men who knew what it means to honor one's wife more than oneself.

Rav Zev was a man of this great level. Rav Shlomo Zalman told that when the two of them sat in Yeshivas Etz Chaim and learned under Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer (the rosh yeshivah of Etz Chaim, one of the gedolei hador), Rav Isser Zalman, who was famous for his tremendous greatness in Torah, came one day to give a shiur he had built with great toil. A shiur is not simply explaining the words. It means kushyos and terutzim, bringing sugya upon sugya and going back and forth from one sugya to another. It is a building put up with great effort.

When Rav Isser Zalman began the shiur, he laid down a certain yesod, and on it he meant to build the whole structure. Suddenly a young Yerushalmi bochur stood up. It was Rav Zev Cheshin. He said, "Mechilah from kevodo, but how do kevodo's words fit with the Tosafos in such-and-such a masechta, in such-and-such a place?"

Rav Isser Zalman was an older man, known as a giant, and everyone was waiting to hear what he would say, when this young bochur stood up and asked him a question. Here you can see the greatness of both of them. Rav Isser Zalman did not brush him off so that he could go on. He sat and thought for several minutes and looked up a few places. Then he said, "I am stopping the shiur. This bochur has destroyed in one moment the whole shiur I built. He has knocked down my entire building."

That is the greatness of two anavim: the bochur in his knowledge, and Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, who was not ashamed to say, "A young bochur has knocked down all the Torah I prepared." The Torah is truth. This is the greatness of gedolei Yisrael who learned Torah in truth. Only the truth mattered to them, not any rotten kavod of "I said it, how can I go back on my words?"

The Old Man in the Dream

Talk Seventeen · 16:30

Now I will bring you into a new world. There are neshamos that are close to one another; together they are called the shoresh of one neshamah. It is like a tree. A tree has a trunk and branches, the branches have smaller twigs, and on them are leaves, and all of it is one tree. If I pour poison on one branch, it can harm the whole tree. Not as much as if I poured it on the roots, but it can have an effect, because it is all one body. When even part of the tree is damaged, the whole tree is

damaged. Cutting a branch off a tree is like cutting off a man's hand: that is the pain it feels, because it is part of it.

Neshamos are like trees, too. Above there are trees of a sort, with a trunk of neshamah, and from it neshamos spread out, up to sixty ribo. When one of them is damaged, they are all damaged. That is why the mekubalim made tikkunim even for aveiros they did not know how anyone commits. It was not only in case they had sinned in an earlier gilgul. Perhaps someone from their shoresh had sinned, and that damages them too. Even when they sit above in Gan Eden according to their good deeds, it is not the complete Gan Eden as long as the whole tree is not complete, and that is hard to bear. So when someone in the tree, especially on the same branch, has strayed, the others try to bring him back in teshuvah and draw him close. Even if he is very far away, they try somehow to awaken him to teshuvah, both so that he will come back and so that they themselves will be mended through his teshuvah.

This is what Rav Chaim of Volozhin says in Nefesh HaChaim: when a Jew slackens a little in his learning in his yeshiva, he causes some Jew in Paris to go off the derech. What is the connection? Because a man here did not daven well, or held back some of his learning and cut his time short, that causes it? Yes. If both are on the same branch, each affects the other.

That is why we know stories about all the great tzaddikim, who came to people in dreams even while they were alive. They would send their nefesh, or the nefesh would even go out without their knowing, to that person to awaken him to teshuvah.

Yaakov Avinu sat mourning for Yosef. He did not know where Yosef was or what had become of him, and he sat and wept bitterly. But when Yosef stood before his nisayon with the wife of Potiphar, the Gemara says that the image of Yaakov appeared and said to him: "Yosef, be careful. When all your brothers are on the Choshen and the Eiphod, worn by the Kohen Gadol, don't let yourself be erased from among them. Stay with them. Guard yourself; you are facing a nisayon."

Yaakov came to Yosef. Did Yaakov know? He did not; he did not know where Yosef was. He did not send his nefesh on purpose. But a part of Yaakov's nefesh is bound up with Yosef, and if that part were damaged, chas v'shalom, Yaakov would be damaged too. Yaakov in his body did not know, because Shamayim hid it from him. But the nefesh within him did know, and it went out by itself to awaken Yosef to guard his bris, so that he would not fall from among the brothers and there would be no blemish in the seed of Yaakov.

There are such things. I have heard many stories like this, where people had no idea what was happening, but a part of them had already gone to someone else and

awakened him to all sorts of things. These are well-known matters in Kabbalah, and very clear.

There was a Jew in Paris, far from Torah, who kept seeing in his dreams an old man who came to him and said, "Do teshuvah, do teshuvah, come to Eretz Yisrael." He could not understand what was wanted of him. What did he have to do with teshuvah, with religion, with Torah? He had grown up on French culture, and Torah did not interest him. Why should some old man drive him crazy in his dreams night after night?

After several nights of this he was nearly losing his mind. He telephoned his cousin in Eretz Yisrael and told him the dream. The cousin said, "You know what? Come to Eretz Yisrael. We'll go to the Kosel HaMaaravi together and you'll daven there. Come and see what comes of it."

He listened, came to Eretz Yisrael, and the two of them went to the Kosel HaMaaravi. There was Rav Zev Cheshin, waiting for them, sitting in the men's section saying Tehillim. As soon as the man saw Rav Zev Cheshin, his face fell. "That's the old man who comes to me in my dreams!" he said. Rav Zev went over to him, received him warmly, spoke with him and guided him, until he brought him back in teshuvah sheleimah.

EREV SHABBOS AT THE KOSEL

Talk Seventeen · 23:00

I remember the time when the Kosel was in the hands of the Jordanians,[42] when for us going to the Kosel HaMaaravi was a dream. I was twelve then; the Kosel was not liberated until I was twenty-one. At twelve I was already learning in Porat Yosef, where Chacham Avraham Rafful, alav hashalom, gave us half an hour of mussar and stories every day. We would wait and long for twelve o'clock, when Chacham Avraham Rafful would come and tell us stories until half past twelve. That half hour of mussar and stories every day strengthened us greatly. He too laid a stone in the foundation on which I grew up, zechuso yagen aleinu.

He always told us of the tradition in Yerushalayim that the holy Avos, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, come to the Kosel on Friday afternoon and daven Minchah there. From the age of twelve my ears heard this tradition many, many times. It passed among all the Jews of Yerushalayim, and there were people who went and even saw the Avos there. I remember hearing a story about it from Chacham Av-

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[42] From the War of Independence in 1948 until the Six-Day War in 1967, the Old City of Yerushalayim, with the Kosel, was under the rule of Jordan, and Jews could not go there.

raham Rafful, but I don't remember the details clearly; many years have passed. In any case, it is well known that people used to go there to see.

Rav Zev Cheshin never in his life gave up going to the Kosel on Friday at midday, because the Avos are there. It was something tremendous for him. Even when he was sick, he would slip out of the hospital to be there at chatzos on Friday. He did everything, with mesiras nefesh, to get there. He probably also saw them; a man who goes so faithfully must have a reason.

He had a talmid who used to drive him to the Kosel every Friday. One Friday the talmid telephoned him and said, "I can't come today. I'll take you by taxi."

"Why?" Rav Zev asked.

"The pump in my car is damaged. The mechanic says I have to leave the car with him and bring it in on Sunday to fix it. There's a whole set of repairs, the pump and the oil and everything around it; it isn't an hour or two of work. My car can't run. The pump is broken and it can't be driven. I can't take you in my car, so I'll take you by taxi."

Rav Zev said to him, "Come with your broken car. Take me in your broken car."

The talmid did not understand how he could drive it. But the Rav had said it, so he did not think twice. He got in, started the car, came and picked him up, and they drove there and back. He was amazed: a broken engine without a drop of oil in it is dangerous, yet they drove there and came back.

On Sunday he went to the mechanic and said, "Well, what about the repair?"

The mechanic said, "Are you crazy? You've already fixed it. Look, everything is repaired, the oil is where it should be, everything is in order. It's done."

A Million Dollars

Talk Seventeen · 1:08:00

Now I will tell you something very interesting. I used to receive people in New York. A young woman would come to me from time to time to ask advice about shidduchim, whether this one was good for her or not. Her parents lived in Canada, but she was a teacher in New York. All those teachers used to come to me for advice about shidduchim: is this shidduch worthwhile or not, what should I do. I would guide them.

One day she came and told me that her father wanted to visit me. She asked me to give him a set appointment on Sunday, because he was flying in and flying back the same day and would have only two or three hours here. I gave it to him. He came with his son. I saw him and spoke with him. He had a problem of shalom

bayis; his wife was ill, and that caused the trouble. I sat and spoke with him, baruch Hashem, about everything that needed to be put in order.

Then the brother came in, a bochur of eighteen, and showed me his palm to see whether I could tell him something. I saw that he was supposed to die at twenty-five or twenty-three. I do not remember exactly anymore; I think twenty-three. His name was Dovid. But he was a Yid, and the lines of the hand of a Yid can change according to his deeds.

I asked him, "Dovid, do you put on tefillin?"

"Avade! Avade! Of course. What kind of a question is that?" They were chassidim, yerei Shamayim to the core.

I saw that he was born in the month of Nissan, the mazal of Taleh. For all of them it is tefillin. Talking in shul, or chol talk on Shabbos, or chol talk while wearing tefillin, even outside a shul, harms them severely. And guarding themselves from these helps them very much, more than other things. Whether by his birth or by his name, he had the mazal of Taleh.

I asked him, "And what do you think about putting on Rabbeinu Tam?"

"After the wedding," he said. "We are chassidim. After the wedding we put on Rabbeinu Tam, b'ezras Hashem."

"Maybe now?"

"No. My friends will laugh at me. Why now? By us chassidim the minhag is to put on Rabbeinu Tam after the wedding."

So I said to him, "You know what? How would you like to make a million dollars at twenty-three? Do you want that?"

"Yes."

"If you start putting on Rabbeinu Tam, I promise you that at twenty-three you will make a million dollars."

What, was I going to tell him that he was going to die, and that by this he would win his life? One may not say such things to a person. When one learns these things, one learns what not to say more than what to say. It is forbidden.

"Ah," he said, "for a million dollars I'll put them on."

I said to him, "Look, think logically. I am not telling you to buy Rabbeinu Tam from me so that I can make a few dollars off you. I am not telling you to buy them in Canada from a certain store with which I made a deal for a percentage. I don't know anyone in Canada. Go into any store you like and buy them. I have nothing to do with it. What interest do I have in telling you this, unless it is good for you? It's worth it: a million dollars."

"Fine," he said.

Years passed, five years in fact. On Erev Pesach in Yerushalayim, just as I was about to leave for davening on the night of Pesach, the phone rang. It was ten

minutes before shkiah and I had to run to Minchah, but I said, let me see who is calling at such an hour. It was she, his sister, crying. Her brother had fainted and lost consciousness, and they did not know what would be with him.

I remembered. I asked her, "Does he put on tefillin of Rabbeinu Tam?"

"Yes," she said. "He even said that any day now he expects to make the million dollars you promised him."

"It is not a million dollars," I told her. "It is his life. Don't worry about him. If he puts them on, it will be all right."

On Chol HaMoed Pesach she called me again. He had regained consciousness, but both his kidneys were not working, and they wanted to buy him a kidney for a hundred thousand dollars. What did I tell her? I asked, "Does he put on Rabbeinu Tam?"

"I asked him," she said. "He says yes. He never stopped."

"Nothing else is needed," I said. "The Rabbeinu Tam that he puts on, that is the million dollars. Besuros tovos."

A few days after Pesach she called and told me that both kidneys had started working by themselves, that he was living perfectly well and was out of it all. I told her, "That's it. Tell him that this is the million dollars. He received his life."

Several years later I was in Boro Park, on Sixteenth Avenue, and went into the shul of Rav Menashe Klein (the Ungvarer Rav, the author of Mishneh Halachos), on the corner of Fifty-Sixth Street. Klein means small, and they call it Menashe HaKatan. I walked in and saw him. He came toward me and said, "Rav Yosef, my life is worth only a million dollars?" We both laughed. He had won his life.

That is a Yid: his life can change. His lines, and everything they show, are true, yet everything can change through tefillah. That is the power of tefillah, the power of tefillin, the power of the mitzvos. Ratzah Hakadosh Baruch Hu lezakos es Yisrael, lefichach hirbah lahem Torah umitzvos.

There is no end to it. If I went on about Reb Zev, the time would run out before the stories did.

Short Accounts

The Gentile in the Shul

Talk Seventeen · 13:30

Rav Zev's shemiras einayim and his kedushah were great, and with everyone who spoke with him he tried to have an influence: "Guard your eyes, guard your bris." That was his motto all his life.

He grew up in Yeshivas Etz Chaim and could have become a gaon in Torah and a brilliant rosh yeshivah. But rather than learning for himself and teaching talmidim, he chose zikui harabbim, with the fire and purity of kedushah. He wanted to bring the many to zechus. His zikui harabbim was not like that of the mezakei harabbim of our days, who take a few worn-out lectures, read a few sefarim, and start repeating things whose source I don't know. His was built on knowledge, on Torah, and on middos. Chazal said, "If the rav is like a malach of Hashem Tzevakos, let them seek Torah from his mouth," and it was said about a man like him. It was said about all the gedolim I learned from. They were truly great. They cared only for the truth and for Torah, their knowledge of Torah was all-embracing, and their yiras Shamayim embraced even their knowledge.

When a man guards his eyes, his eyes repay him: he begins to see with ruach hakodesh. Ruach hakodesh never left Rav Zev Cheshin. It was always with him, as if it lay in his pocket.

Once a few poor men came into a shul to collect money. Rav Zev was so humble that he would never dare hurt even a small child. He treated small children with the same respect as grown men, and the warmth and respect he showed every person are hard even to describe. Yet suddenly people saw him beside himself. He took hold of one of the poor men and said to him, loudly, in front of everyone, "Get out of here, quickly! Don't stand in this shul one more minute! Out!"

People asked him, "Rav Zev, what happened?"

He said, "Can't you see he is a goy? He is a poor goy who came here to collect money. A goy standing among the men also gets in the way of the minyan; according to halachah, it is as if he blocks it. And he is fooling people into thinking he is a Jew collecting money. Why should he fool people here? Let him go outside!"

They went and checked, and found that he was indeed a goy.

It was very simple for Rav Zev. He could see on every person whether the Shem Havayah was whole in him, or lacking, or not there at all, and on what level it was present. Yet he never looked at people. He would not dare; he guarded his eyes from looking. He would not even look at his own granddaughters. When they passed by him, he would say the pasuk, "Turn my eyes away from seeing vanity; give me life in Your ways." That was how great his shemiras einayim was, and that was how great his vision with ruach hakodesh was.

Tikkun Chatzos at the Kosel

Talk Seventeen · 26:30

Like all the Jews of Yerushalayim in those days, Rav Zev said Tikkun Chatzos with weeping, with tears that rose to Shamayim. He did not just read the passages. He sat over every word and truly lamented the churban, and everything written there about the churban of Yerushalayim, about the tzaddikim, about all of it.

When I was fourteen or fifteen, I heard him tell how, in order to think about the Kosel, they would have to go up to Har Tzion and climb the tower there, like a minaret, to its very edge, to see from afar the road that goes down toward the Kosel. They would look at it and, with longing, try to picture the Kosel from there. That is what they used to do.[43]

I also knew about Rav Yosef Waltuch. From the age of twelve I saw how he went to the Kosel every Rosh Chodesh and came back. For me it was already a fixed fact: I would see him come, take notes from the Saba, go, daven, and return.

But I remember that at that age, around fourteen or fifteen, I heard Rav Zev Cheshin say that he knew a group of old Breslover chassidim who went to the Kosel every night to say Tikkun Chatzos and then came back, and that he knew them personally. Rav Zev Cheshin never let out of his mouth even the faintest shadow of a doubt of an inexact word. When he said such things, it brought us into a hidden world, a world of tzaddikim who knew how to go there, whom borders did not stop, who went to do the will of their Creator, reached the Kosel, davened, and came back. Zechusam yagen aleinu.

The Breslov of Those Days

Talk Seventeen · 32:30

Rav Zev was one of the cedars. He spoke always of shemiras einayim and shemiras habris, and he turned many away from aveirah, also through the things he saw with ruach hakodesh. He would let people feel that he knew what was going on with them, and they would all be awakened. He did it with his sweetness, and the things he said were nothing new; he did not invent new teachings.

By rights he should have been a Litvak, one of those who sit and learn Torah twenty-four hours a day. But he searched for more kedushah. The whole Torah is kodesh, of course, and learning Torah itself makes a man holy and brings him to very great levels, without a doubt. But there is a kohen and there is a Kohen Gadol;

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[43] In those years Har Tzion, where kever Dovid HaMelech is, was the place in Israeli hands closest to the Old City, and Jews used to go up there to look toward the Old City from afar.

both serve in the Mikdash. And that higher level can be reached only through avodah atzmis: through breaking one's middos, through adding more and more kedushah upon kedushah and yirah upon yirah. In his youth he discovered the sefer Likutei Moharan of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, and he became a chassid of Rebbe Nachman in his heart, his soul and his mind.

I am speaking of the Breslover chassidim of sixty years ago. Sixty years ago I was ten, and I used to go there and see them all, and I knew all the great Breslovers there. Rabbosai, in the Breslov beis medrash of those days there were many well-worn sets of Shas. People there learned Shas, as Rebbe Nachman writes that he wants his chassidim to learn Gemara every day and requires them to know the whole Shas. Those were his true chassidim.

They did not have long peyos like those of today, the pretenders, so that they will be pulled out of Gehinnom by their peyos. They don't know that their peyos are only a little more fuel for their Gehinnom. A man who thinks he can sin and behave in a disgraceful way and that the main thing is to have peyos, because they will pull him out of Gehinnom, is mistaken. Those Breslovers were holy, pure men, and they all knew that the Tikkun HaKlali is only for the pegam of mikreh laylah; not one of them thought otherwise. They all lived with fasts: Rav Zev, and the others I knew there, and I knew gedolim there! Most of their days were spent learning Torah, with fasts, with yiras Shamayim, sanctifying and purifying themselves. They were the true Breslov, a Breslov that suited Rebbe Nachman and that Rebbe Nachman suited.

What a generation that was! They would take Likutei Moharan and go down into its depths, not like today, when all kinds of low people go and become rabbanim. People whose past, who knows what happened there, people who knew what had been with their bris before, suddenly become... Well, they did teshuvah, and that is perfectly fine. It is forbidden to remind a baal teshuvah of his earlier deeds. But from there to sitting and teaching, bringing out things from their own bellies, as if they had become the meforshim of Rebbe Nachman? That is chillul hakodesh. Such things, such coarseness!

Once I went into a shul in Beitar (a chareidi city near Yerushalayim) on Shabbos to daven Minchah. Before Minchah one of the Breslover rabbanim stood up and gave a shiur to simple people. I heard him say, "If Rabbeinu had said that one must know the kavanos of the Arizal in order to daven, I would go and learn them to have the kavanos. But Rabbeinu said to daven like a baby, so I don't learn them."

The donkey! Had he invested his whole life, could he have understood even one daf of the writings of the Arizal? Could he have reached, in his whole life, the kavanos of the Arizal and the Rashash? What was he talking about? Making a big show in front of people, about what? I wanted to stand up and tell him, "Be quiet,

fool, you don't know what you are talking about." But I bit my tongue. I had not gone there to disturb people in what they believe, in what he was selling them.

Did Rebbe Nachman himself drop the yichudim of the Arizal? He includes several yichudim of the Arizal in Likutei Moharan itself. He only tries to make things simple, so that they are within reach of everyone. All the writings of the Arizal were fluent on his tongue, and on the tongues of the Breslover chassidim I knew. They were thoroughly at home in the writings of the Arizal and knew them very well. They were not like these people, crying "Rabbeinu, Rabbeinu, Rabbeinu" without even knowing what he intended.

They sell people lies: "You don't need tikkunim; the Tikkun HaKlali is enough." They have taken the Tikkun HaKlali, bar minan, and turned it against the purpose it was made for, which was to bring people close and lead them to tikkunim and true teshuvah for their aveiros. Oy lanu, what have we come to! Oy to all these actors, these dancers in the street. Oy to all those who stammer "Na Nach Nach Nach," as if something were stuck in their throats, or like that fool who went and said that whoever says "Na Nach" has all his aveiros erased. They are sick in the mind. These are things that must not be said. It is all chillul Hashem, all these madmen dancing in the street who think they are making the public happy.

Do they know what simchah is? Is that how one makes people happy? Is that how it is done? They muddle people's minds, instead of letting them sit, sanctify themselves and learn Torah in truth. What are these things? Is this what Breslov was all those years? You would see them sitting together in a taanis dibbur, with a holy fire of Torah learning coming out of them. I remember them one by one. There are still such people in all kinds of places to this day. But the good ones sink to the bottom, and what stands out is the dregs; the worm-eaten ones float to the top and announce, "Look, we are here!", like that song, "Our marching steps will yet thunder: we are here!" It is the same kind. They make a lot of noise. About what? About nothing! They are empty. They do not understand at all what Torah is, what chassidus is, what yiras Shamayim is.

To make a sad Jew happy is a very great mitzvah. The Gemara says that Eliyahu HaNavi pointed out two people and said they were bnei Olam Haba because they cheered up people who were sad. When a Jew is sad, the Shechinah is sad too. To cheer him up and encourage him is a very great thing, and a man merits Olam Haba for it. But that does not mean all this foolishness, casting off all dignity and everything else the way it is done. That is not what is meant.

The Breslov of those days, in any case, had what to learn, what to see, and how to become holy. They put the emphasis on shemiras habris and shemiras einayim. The whole Torah is full of this, and woe to the one who is careless in it. But they

put special emphasis on it, sanctifying themselves with trembling and with special care.

As I told you, when my father grew older, he and Reb Zev Cheshin became chavrusas and learned all kinds of things together. Among them was chochmas hayad (the wisdom of reading the lines of the hand), which they gathered from many different traditions. I had their manuscripts, all the pages of what they learned, and I received them from my father as an inheritance. While he was still alive, he taught me part of them.

I do not use chochmas hayad today. For some years now I have made a fence for myself not to look at it at all, with one exception: children. To help people who have no children, I still look, to this day. In anything else I do not look. But there was a time when I learned it. It is not ordinary palm reading. It is a special wisdom, and Reb Zev used it to bring people back in teshuvah. The knowledge they had was great.

Part of it they learned from the greatest master of the hand in those days, the elder Rav Meshi-Zahav. I have already told you several stories about him, if I am not mistaken. Eliyahu HaNavi was a ben bayis by him. I merited to come to his house several times with my father and to see the greatness of the man. I will tell you more about him later on; I cannot put everything together at once. He was a very great man. With such people, they did not go looking for Eliyahu. Eliyahu came to them. For them Eliyahu was no figure out of legend. He was a living reality, almost a daily one. I sat there as a child, riveted, while he spoke with my father about the hand, and they said very interesting things.

I also told you that I once brought a talmid of mine to him. Rav Meshi-Zahav told him that his shalom bayis was ruined because of a certain pegam, and that if he said Tehillim twice a week he would have shalom bayis. The talmid said it only once instead of twice, and nothing moved. After a month I took him back. Rav Meshi-Zahav looked at him and said, "Why did you say it only once instead of twice? You did not make the tikkun. The tikkun was in saying it twice." I remember it as if it were yesterday.

My father and Reb Zev were both also expert in reading the Shabbos candles, the fire and the flame spoken of in the Zohar on Bereishis, daf 50 and 51. My father used this until his last day, and Reb Zev Cheshin was great in these things. They had outstanding knowledge of it, but they kept it hidden.

Waiting for Mashiach

Talk Seventeen · 44:00

Reb Zev Cheshin's waiting for Mashiach was not ordinary. It was something he could almost touch. Before his passing he asked to be shown the little children of his family, the great-grandchildren who had been born to him. They asked him why. He answered, "These will surely see Mashiach. I want to see the faces of those who will see Mashiach." That is how they felt.

Reb Zev fought milchamos Hashem for kedushah, great wars. There was one especially hard war in which he made me his partner. It is a very long story and a very painful one, and to my great sorrow its effects are felt to this day among those he fought against. It too will seem to you not of this world, and I do not know whether I will tell it. It concerns a false messiah. I told part of the matter in the story about Rav Sharabi. What came afterward was that some people went off the derech through that false messiah, whose name was Moshe, and they began doing ugly things. Reb Zev Cheshin had to stand up and fight them. He made me his partner in that fight, and I saw his greatness and his holiness.

How He Honored Me

Talk Seventeen · 45:30

He was my father's shadchan. He had been my father's rebbi from the age of eight, and he made the match between my father and my mother. When they married, my father was fifteen and my mother fourteen. Then I was born and grew up, and he honored me. I was already a rav giving shiurim at twenty, twenty-two, and he honored me.

And who was he? He was old enough to be my grandfather. More than that, he was a giant in Torah and a giant in everything. Yet he spoke to me truly "as a man speaks to his friend," with great kavod, more kavod than he gave himself. It was a wonder. What anavah, what chassidus, what clean speech, what holy speech, what pure eyes! He would run to the end of the world to bring back one Jew in teshuvah. The neshamah of every Jew was precious to him. I say it to you again: the Breslov of old was a pearl beyond price.

His Shiurim

Talk Seventeen · 47:00

He began every shiur with a short piece from Likutei Moharan and explained two words of it. The rest of the shiur was not Likutei Moharan; everything flowed out

of him. The piece was only to draw Rebbe Nachman's koach into his shiur, the starter, as they say, the ignition. After that the Likutei Moharan lay on the table, and his mouth brought forth pearls. He was a wellspring, nachal novei'a mekor chochmah. And always, with ruach hakodesh, he knew what was happening with every single person there.

The Falafel

Talk Seventeen · 47:30

Once a man said to his friend, "Come to Rav Cheshin. Come hear him."

"Leave me alone," the friend answered.

"Listen, come. It is worth your while to hear him. He is a great and holy man. Come in with me."

"All right, I'll come with you."

Before they went in, the friend bought a portion of falafel outside and ate it without netilas yadayim and without a berachah. Then he went in. Reb Zev Cheshin was giving the shiur, and this fellow felt that he did not understand anything. He felt resistance. The Rav was bothering him; this was not for him. He wanted to get up and leave. He felt pushed away.

Suddenly he heard Reb Zev Cheshin say, "A person comes to my shiur and feels pushed away, because beforehand he ate a portion of falafel without netilas yadayim and without a berachah. What does he expect? Without netilas yadayim, without bentching, without berachos, he wants to feel no resistance to my shiur? What about the klipah he took in with that food and with all those aveiros? Does he think he can come with that and hear words from me?"

The man stood there stunned. He was seeing ruach hakodesh before his own eyes, and it broke him. Little by little he came back to the right path.

The University and Australia

Talk Seventeen · 48:30

There was a young man who wanted to go to university. A friend of his came and said, "You know what? Tonight, Thursday night, there is a shiur at Beis Aharon. Come hear Reb Zev."

"Leave me alone, please."

"It's worth your while. You don't know. There you see mofsim."

"Mofsim? That's worth it. I'll come and see mofsim."

They came, and Reb Zev began to speak: "Some people want to go to university, eh? They don't understand what will happen to them there." He went on to describe the young man, what he was planning to do at the university, what he planned to study, all of it. "It is a pity on them," he said. "They will go and waste their time there instead of learning Torah. They do not know what the end will be."

Some time passed, and this same young man decided to travel to Australia. Again they told him, "Come, come," and again he came to Reb Zev's shiur. Suddenly Reb Zev began: "People think that if they go to Australia, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not there? He is there too! He is there exactly as He is here, and there too one must keep everything."

The young man was in shock. He made up his mind: "If I am with this man, I have to do teshuvah." And he did a complete teshuvah.

Canada

Talk Seventeen · 50:00

There was another man who was thinking of going to Canada. He was fed up with it here, and he was not so much of a yerei Shamayim either. "I'll go to Canada," he said, "and try my luck." The moment he walked in, Reb Zev began to say, "People should know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is in Canada too, and that there too one must keep Torah and mitzvos completely, not only here." The man was struck on the spot.

The Man from Yehud

Talk Seventeen · 50:30

Once Reb Zev was giving a shiur in Yehud (a town in the center of the country, near Petach Tikvah). A man came up to him with long hair. In Israel a ponytail is called a kuku; this was already a kukuriku. It hung like an American Indian's, down past his shoulders, all down his back. All he was missing was for someone to scalp him. He came up full of confidence and said, "Rav, I want to see whether you really know something, whether there really is a Din and a Dayan. Tell me my aveiros. Let's see you."

"You want it in front of everyone?" Reb Zev asked.

"Yes!"

"Last night, at one o'clock, in such-and-such a place, what did you do?"

The moment the man heard him name the place where he had been at one in the morning, knowing what he had done there, he fled for his life.

Seven Years

Talk Seventeen · 51:30

There was a man who had no children for seven years. People told him to go to Reb Zev Cheshin's shiur. He went to Reb Zev's house to ask for a berachah. Reb Zev said to him, "Come to one shiur of mine, and there you will receive the yeshuah. My shiur brings down yeshuos." He came to the shiur and heard one shiur, and right away his wife was nifkedes. She became expecting, and children were born to him after one shiur by Reb Zev.

They were simple shiurim, yet worlds came out of them, and tzaddikei olam came to hear them. My cousin once told me that he saw my grandfather, after his passing, come to Reb Zev's shiur while he was giving it. Everything Reb Zev did, he did with the koach of Rebbe Nachman. He was a man who was an angel, a fire, eish shalheves.

In the Beis Avel

Talk Seventeen · 52:30

Once he was called to a beis avel to give a shiur there and strengthen the mourners. He went. To him every neshamah was a treasure to be repaired. He went in and began to speak. One of those there, a brother-in-law, had turned on the electricity by mistake the Shabbos before. Reb Zev sat and said, "A person should not think that if he turned on the electricity by mistake, he is exempt from making a tikkun and a complete teshuvah for it. For this too one can pay dearly, in this world and in the next." The man was in shock.

He went on. There was a man there who played the part of a yerei Shamayim and a learner, but he had sent his children to a secular school, and his son was mechallel Shabbos. Reb Zev continued: "And there are people who think that because they learn a little here and fast, they have already become great tzaddikim. But they sent their son to a secular school, and the son is mechallel Shabbos. The father will pay for his son's chillul Shabbos, because he sent him to such a school."

He finished the shiur, and people were in shock. In the course of it he had told several more people what was happening in their homes, all as part of the mussar, innocently, as though he knew nothing. After he left, they started quarreling with the one who had invited him: "Tell us, did you go and tell him everything that goes on in the family, so he would come and give it to us here?"

"Wallah (Arabic for 'I swear')," he said, "I didn't tell him a thing! Nothing! I only asked him to say a few divrei Torah l'ilui nishmas the niftar. I told him nothing at all!"

That was his way of bringing people back in teshuvah and awakening them.

The Talmid's Back

Talk Seventeen · 58:00

Reb Zev learned Kabbalah at Yeshivas Shaar HaShamayim on Rechov Rashi in Yerushalayim, the yeshiva where Kabbalah is learned. A talmid of his used to take him there every time from Shaarei Chesed (a neighborhood in Yerushalayim), where he lived. One day this talmid's back went out. He got up in the morning in terrible pain and could not move. Suffering as he was, he picked up the phone and called Reb Zev. "Kevodo, today I can't come to take you. My back is locked."

"You will come as usual."

"My back is locked."

"You will come as usual."

A quarter of an hour before it was time to take him, the talmid's whole back let go and was completely free. He came and took Reb Zev as usual, and brought him back as usual.

Mashiach This Year

Talk Seventeen · 59:00

How humble he was, how humble! Many times I said things to him that were even somewhat provoking, and he answered with anavah.

Every year he would say that this year Mashiach would come. He looked for pesukim and remazim showing that this year was the year of the geulah. I was a young bochur, and I was bold enough to say to him, "Reb Zev, you see that every year you say it and it doesn't happen. What are you saying? You're just making up gematrios?"

He said to me, "No. You should know that sometimes there is an eis ratzon, and sometimes there are mekatregim. So I bring pesukim to sweeten the kitrug and to show that the time of the geulah can be now too. I do it to awaken rachamim above, so that the geulah should really come now. That is the only reason I do it."

He answered me humbly and gently. He did not send me packing.

The Child He Would Not Bless

Talk Seventeen · 1:00:00

One day several children were brought to him for a berachah. He blessed a few, and one child he did not want to bless.

"Bless him!" they said.

"I don't want to bless him."

"Why not?"

"I don't bless goyim, only Yidden. This child is a goy."

This was a child like all the others, learning in cheder, a Jew through and through. "No," Reb Zev said, "he is a goy."

They went and asked the boy's father. "Yes," he said, "he is adopted. He is a non-Jewish child we adopted. They converted him and gave him a bris."

But such a geirus is not yet a finished thing. Until thirteen, any child converted by a beis din, even with his father's consent or his mother's, is a ger only on condition. If at his bar mitzvah he agrees that the geirus should take hold, it takes hold by itself and he is a Jew. But if at his bar mitzvah he decides, "I don't want it," he remains a goy. It is not a complete geirus but a conditional one. So Reb Zev said, "As long as I don't know what will be with him at his bar mitzvah, I do not bless him." He saw by himself the difference between this child and the others. No one had told him anything.

The Empty Tefillin

Talk Seventeen · 1:01:00

Once a bochur from a Litvishe yeshiva came to daven in the shul where Reb Zev davened. Reb Zev called him over and said, "Sir, check your tefillin."

"What? My tefillin are mehudar."

"I am asking you to check them."

The bochur did not answer him. He came to daven in that shul for several days, and every day Reb Zev met him and told him again, "Go check your tefillin." After two or three times he went to his rosh yeshiva and said, "Listen, I don't know what to make of it. My tefillin are excellent, and this Reb Zev keeps telling me to check them."

"If Reb Zev said to check, check!"

They opened them and found them empty. There were no parshiyos inside at all. The batim had been closed over nothing, and that is what he had been given to put on. One has to check very well. Beautiful batim, and inside the bayis there is nothing. There are such things too.

The Lost List

Talk Seventeen · 1:02:00

Reb Zev Cheshin collected money for the poor, to give them food for Shabbos, for the seudos of Shabbos. In fact, all the tzaddikim I knew collected money to give the poor for their Shabbos expenses. They had their regular poor, needy people, and they gave to them. Reb Zev kept a list. Each time he would add someone or take someone off, according to what was happening, and he arranged everything by that list.

One Thursday, when he wanted to prepare everything, the page disappeared. He prepared everything according to the list: how many people were in each family, how many children. One with two children is not like one with seven. Now he had to prepare and arrange it all, and the page was gone. He walked down the street in distress: where is the page?

Suddenly, out of nowhere, an old man stood in front of him and said, "Perhaps this is kevodo's page that fell?"

"Yes, yes, that is the page." And he gave it to him.

Of this old man who brought him the page it is said, "Ashrei mi she'ra'ah panav bachalom." Vehamevin yavin.

The Fast That Went On

Talk Seventeen · 1:03:00

As I said, he fasted often. When a fast ended he always broke it with a cup of tea that was made for him. Often, especially on summer evenings, when the fast ended late and he was about to begin his shiur, that was how the fast ended.

One day the fast was over, and he did not eat. He went on fasting. Those who knew asked him, "Why doesn't kevodo eat? You have to give a shiur soon."

He answered, "No. There is a man who listens to my shiurim, and it is hard for him to do teshuvah. I know that if I give the shiur while fasting, he will do teshuvah. So I prefer not to eat after the fast until after the shiur, even though it weakens me, so that the man will do teshuvah. I know that this is what will save him."

Quinces on Rosh Hashanah

Talk Seventeen · 1:04:00

Those who speak Hebrew had better not eat quinces on Rosh Hashanah, because in Hebrew a quince is a chavush, and that is a siman of a prisoner: ein chavush matir atzmo mibeis ha'asurim, a prisoner cannot free himself from prison. But those who

spoke another language made a point of eating quinces on the night of Rosh Hashanah. In Yerushalayim they were careful about this, and in Spain as well. In Spanish, and I think in Yiddish too, the quince is called bembrios.

A man who had no sons came to Reb Zev Cheshin and told him, "I want sons."

"Listen," Reb Zev said, "to give you sons, to daven for you, is not so easy. But come to me on the night of Rosh Hashanah and eat the seudah with me."

What? Reb Zev invites him to eat at his table on the night of Rosh Hashanah? He came with his wife, and the two of them sat at the seudah. Suddenly Reb Zev brought out the quinces and said, "Eat. It is a segulah for sons."

Why? Because they are called bembrios. Split the word in Hebrew and it comes out ben bri'us: a son of health, a healthy son. "You will have a healthy son." He gave him the quinces to eat, and that very year his wife bore a healthy son.

The Army

Talk Seventeen · 1:14:30

Reb Zev was strongly opposed to all of Zionism and to voting in the elections (for the Knesset, the Israeli parliament). A man came to him and said, "Listen, the army is after me. I don't know what to do. It's hard for me. I don't want to go to the army."

"Did you vote in the elections?" Reb Zev asked.

"No."

So he gave him a berachah and said, "Whoever did not vote for them, they have no power over him. Be calm." And so it was. After that the man went to them one more time, they gave him an exemption, and that was the end of it.

Nehallel

Talk Seventeen · 1:15:00

When there was a siyum at Ahavas Chaim, Reb Zev would come, and on Yom Tov he would come for Tashlich. Afterward he would start the whole crowd dancing. He would stand and sing, "Nehallel, nodeh u'nehallel; nehallel, nodeh u'nehallel." Then he would begin to add, "U'vias haMashiach, nodeh u'nehallel!" and everyone answered, "Nehallel!"

It was the hislahavus of temimim and yerei'ei Shamayim, all answering after him, while he stood with eish kodesh on his face. His face was truly a blazing fire. You could see the Shechinah resting on him in those moments. It was a sight that can-

not be explained. I am telling you things that people cannot grasp, and I have no way to explain them. May the zechus of Reb Zev Cheshin stand and protect us.

My Father's Last Shabbos

Talk Seventeen · 1:16:00

Two months before my father passed away, I came to visit him. He was confined to his bed, paralyzed. He said to me, "Yosef, I am about to go up above."

"How do you know?" I asked him.

He told me that on the last Leil Shabbos, my grandfather and Reb Zev Chashin had come to him together, their faces shining with a precious light, and had said to him, "Avraham, prepare yourself. We have prepared a place for you beside us."

He was completely calm and at peace. He knew he was going. My grandfather and Reb Zev had already come to tell him that a place was waiting for him beside them.

May the zechus of all of them stand for us and protect us, and in their merit may we all merit, b'ezras Hashem, the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, speedily in our days. Amen.

His Words

A Well That Loses No Drop

Talk Seventeen · 7:30

When a man guards his bris, his memory too becomes a wonder. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hurkenos that he was "a plastered well that does not lose a drop." The baalei mussar explain: who is a "plastered well"? Who is the man who keeps everything he learns in his memory and never loses it? The one who does not lose a drop: the one whose every drop is kept holy and pure as it should be, so that not a single drop, chas v'shalom, leaves him in vain. The kedushah of the bris brings about everything.

Rav Zev grew up holy in his bris, with a wondrous shemiras habris, from the day he was born and the day he came to understanding. In those days people were not ashamed to tell children what the bris is and what shemiras habris means. Today they are afraid to tell it to children. In those days parents told their children with trembling: "You are now nine years and a day old. Know what the bris is, and

what shemiras habris is, and how to be careful with it. You bear the seal of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. It is forbidden to spoil the King's seal. Whoever damages the King's seal is like one who damages the King Himself." That is how children were raised then. From the age of nine we were trained to go to the mikveh every morning. That is how we grew up, and we knew nothing else. It was a way of life.

Because he grew up this way, Rav Zev remembered everything he ever learned. He was one of those geonim who could have a pin stuck through a closed Gemara and tell you, on every daf, where the pin was, whether in the Gemara, in Rashi or in Tosafos, and what was written there, and then go on to recite the rest of the passage by heart. He proved it more than once. He was very humble, and he did not do it to show himself off. But many times, when he wanted to show his talmidim what amalah shel Torah is and how high a man can reach through toil in Torah, he told them, "Test me, and see!"

It is not the shallow world of "I learned it three times, I know it already, I can't keep reviewing it, I want a new sugya." Not so! Chazal say that one who reviews his learning a hundred times cannot be compared to one who reviews it a hundred and one times. It means sitting and investing days and nights in learning without a break, killing oneself over divrei Torah. That is how all of them were, and that is how he grew up.

The Stain Remover

Talk Seventeen · 54:30

He always stressed something that I did not understand then, though I understand it now. He always said that Tikkun HaKlali is for a mikreh laylah: do Tikkun HaKlali. And if, chas v'shalom, you do not even know whether you became tamei or not, say Tikkun HaKlali, because it purifies the neshamah. He insisted that people say the ten chapters of Tikkun HaKlali every day for zikkuch haneshamah. He never said that it fixes anything else.

He himself sat in ta'aniyos and taught others to fast too. When I came to Breslov I saw many people fasting there. Several times when I came to learn with him I caught him in the middle of a fast. He was careful not to touch anything and waited until tzeis hakochavim to taste something. He very much wanted people to purify their neshamos.

The tikkunim of the Arizal are one thing, and the tikkunim of zikkuch haneshamah are another. As I told you, the tikkun of a ta'anis dibbur is worth tens of thousands of fasts. That is not for kapparas avonos but for zikkuch haneshamah. These are two different things.

I did not know this difference myself. I am an am ha'aretz in laundry; they did not teach me that in yeshiva. When I came here, I wanted to buy soap for the washing machine so the wash would come out clean. I saw a bottle that said "stain remover." "Oh, wonderful," I said, "this takes out stains." I put it in. Then my daughter came over, and I said to her, "Listen, I don't know. The laundry came out dirty, and I don't understand why."

She went in and said to me, "Abba, you don't have any laundry soap at all."

"Here, it says stain remover," I said.

"No," she said. "That is only for special stains. It doesn't wash. It is something you add to the washing machine along with soap, so it gets washed." She went and bought laundry soap. I had not known. I thought a stain remover removes everything.

What happened to me in gashmiyus happens to people in ruchniyus. The powder for the washing machine is the tikkunim of the Arizal. The stain remover is zikkuch, zikkuch haneshamah. There is also what is called a whitener. A whitener does not wash, but when the laundry is washed, it whitens it. That is a ta'anis dibbur: it is a whitener, not a washer. That is zikkuch haneshamah. People do not understand the difference, but it is a big difference. I too did not see the difference between one thing and the other. It is not my job to do the laundry; there are people in the house who do it. There was a time when they could not, so I tried, and that is what came of it.

Reb Zev also used to tell of a great tikkun for zikkuch haneshamah in the name of Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl, who heard it from Eliyahu HaNavi himself. One of the mighty tikkunim for the neshamah is to say the whole Tehillim once during the weekdays and once on Shabbos, week after week. It is a great tikkun and a great zikkuch for the neshamah. The zechus of David HaMelech and of Tehillim is certainly very great. If he said it purifies, it truly purifies.

The Lines of the Hand

Talk Seventeen · 1:05:30

Reb Zev knew the kav hachaim (the line of life in the hand) and the whole of chochmas hayad, and he knew it very well. There are many things in it that are not found in the ordinary palm reading that people learn, the chiromancy (the reading of the hand) of Cheiro (the pen name of William John Warner, an Irish palmist famous at the beginning of the last century), who wrote a book on the hand. It is true that Cheiro knew a great deal. I saw his book. It is very close to the truth, not one

hundred percent, but very close. Still, it is only the body of the true lines of the hand.

I also saw a book written in Spanish by a woman in Brazil, an anusah (a descendant of the Jews of Spain who were forced to convert). I was about twenty-eight when I saw it. She wrote it according to a tradition she had from the mekubalim of Spain, handed down generation after generation from their manuscripts on the hand. It is a very interesting book, and many of the true secrets of the hand, whose roots are in the Zohar, are found in it. But the reading was hard for me. It was not so much the language as the letters: it was written in Latin letters, the letters of English. I saw it only in passing, for a short time, an hour or two, so I could not get much out of it. But I very much enjoyed what I did take in. The wisdom there is truly very deep.

The true wisdom was known to my father and to Reb Zev Cheshin, and I learned a small part of it from my father, alav hashalom. Reb Zev always used to say that among goyim the hand does not change, but among Yidden it changes. I have seen this myself several times in the kav hachaim. He spoke especially about the kav hachaim.

CHAPTER TEN

Into Porat Yosef

the yeshivah and its mekubalim



INTO PORAT YOSEF

Talk Three · 1:22:00

I came to the house of my rebbi, Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka[44], when I was twelve years old. He raised us on this principle, as did my grandfather and everyone I grew up with.

My grandfather said to Chacham Yehuda, "Here is my grandson. Now he needs to become a talmid of Yeshivas Porat Yosef[45]." Chacham Yehuda came over and looked at me. He had ruach hakodesh, and he knew how to judge each boy for himself. He looked at me and said, "Today at eight o'clock come to the yeshivah." It was half past seven in the morning, so I had half an hour to get there. "Be'ezras Hashem you will go straight into kitah beis of the yeshivah. Go in and tell them that I said you are to begin learning there."

That is how, at the age of twelve, I entered kitah beis of Porat Yosef. We began learning Gemara there, and little by little I came to know all the figures of Porat Yosef. It was a gallery of gedolei olam, each of them a giant among giants. I had come to a place where giants walked about.

Be'ezras Hashem I will yet tell about my rebbi, Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka, zechuso yagen aleinu, and about Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul[46], the two gedolim who

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[44] Chacham Yehuda Tzadka, one of the great Sephardic gedolim of Yerushalayim and rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef.

[45] Porat Yosef is the great Sephardic yeshivah of Yerushalayim. It was founded in the Old City, and after the Old City fell in the War of Independence (1948), the yeshivah continued in the new part of the city.

[46] Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, a great posek and mekubal, and with Chacham Yehuda Tzadka a rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef.

sat together and were mezakeh es harabim, and about my rebbi Rabbi Ezra Attiah[47]. They are all waiting their turn, and I will tell about every one of them. I will also tell about the great tzaddikim I knew there, such as Chacham Yeshuah Sharabani, zechuso yagen aleinu, and about the gedolim in the room of the mekubalim. When I was still a boy of thirteen or fourteen and wanted to see what the Tannaim and Amoraim looked like, I would go into the mekubalim's room to look at those tzaddikim and see their greatness. The old pictures from before my time show what they looked like, and the mekubalim of my own day were just the same: the same tarbush (the tall red cap, the fez) on their heads, sitting and occupied with Kabbalah. It was a wonderful world, and I will describe it further on. I merited to know that whole great gallery.

But before I tell about the giants, I will tell about one who was not a giant, yet was a giant no less than the giants. He was not one of the rabbanim of Porat Yosef, only the simple man of Porat Yosef. His name was Chacham Yosef Tajer, zechuso tagen aleinu.

The Stories

The Houses of Beis Yisrael

Talk Four · 1:57:30

Chacham Moshe Chai Sharabani, may his zechus protect us, told me another story. He too was a great tzaddik, and a humble man. Humble is not the word for it! Where are there people like that, like Moshe Chai? He toiled at everything for zikui harabbim. He was something wonderful.

He told me that the first houses of the Beis Yisrael neighborhood, down below, were built with used water.

In those days there was no water as there is today; there was no water in the taps. Even when I was a child there was no water in the taps. Only when I was nineteen did they put a tap in our house. Until I was ten or eleven, I used to go and draw water from the bor. We had a bor in the yard, and I would let down the bucket and draw water, so that we would have water to drink and water for all our needs. We at least had a bor. There were poor people who walked all the way to the spring

[47] Rav Ezra Attiah, the rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef for many years, who raised a generation of Sephardic talmidei chachamim.

at Lifta, or to the spring at Silwan, to draw water. Once Silwan was closed off in the War of 1948,[48] they went to Lifta. What a long way! It is where the road out of Yerushalayim is today. They went to draw water and bring home a few jugs, so that there would be something to drink. It was not like today. People do not even understand what we are talking about.

So when they wanted to build a house, they reused water. When people washed netilas yadayim, when people washed their clothes, they did not pour the water away. Laundry was done by hand. Until my third son was born I did not know what a washing machine looked like; there were none. Then the first washing machines came out, which still needed half the work done by hand: you took the clothes out of one part and moved them to another, and wrung them out yourself, until better machines began to appear. Before that everything was done by hand. We had big tin boilers. We boiled the water on the primus (a small kerosene stove used for cooking in those days), put the clothes in, boiled them, and stirred them with a stick to wash them. Laundry day took a whole day. It was not like today, one button and you are finished.

But the water was not poured out afterwards; it was used again. We never poured laundry water into the garbage or into the drain. It was precious water, good water. We used it afterwards for sponja (washing the floor by spilling water over it and pushing it along with a squeegee). We cleaned the house with it and the yard, and washed everything down with it. That was water.

They also took this water for building. Many times they also took urine for building. They mixed it in with the water so that there would be enough liquid, and built with it; it went into the cement along with everything else. That is how the first houses in Eretz Yisrael were built. Since this water was reused, it was already impure water: water of netilas yadayim, water with all kinds of human waste in it, people's sweat. People bathed, and the water that ran off after the bath was thrown into the building. Because of this, chitzonim dwelt in those houses. They were full of sheidim.

Today there are not many sheidim in houses. Today there are very few, perhaps hardly any, souls of the dead in houses. I have come across such stories, poor people who suffer, but there are very few. But then the houses were full of chitzonim, ruchos ra'os and sheidim, because of all this water. That tumah had rested on the building from the moment it was built.

One day a man came to the Kaf HaChaim weeping. He did not know what had happened. His son had been lying in the cradle and had suddenly disappeared. A

[48] Silwan, the village by the Shiloach spring just below the Old City, was on the Jordanian side from 1948 until 1967.

baby! He cannot stand up, he cannot go out. The bed was empty! "Ribbono shel Olam, who took him? Who snatched him? No one came into the house. There are no thieves who steal babies like that. Where did he vanish to?" He did not know.

The Kaf HaChaim said to him, "Come, I will go with you." He went with him to the house and looked at it, and then and there he said, "I adjure you: return the child!" Within a minute they saw the child in his bed.

He told the father, "It is the chitzonim. In this house they used water from the beis hakisei, not just ordinary water, and there are sheidim here. Sheidim from the beis hakisei snatched the child." He had adjured them, and they had returned the child.

Then he adjured all the houses of Beis Yisrael, all the chitzonim there, to leave for the desert, so that not even one of them would remain. From then on the whole neighborhood was quiet. Until then, although children were not taken, money would disappear from people, they fell ill without understanding why, and troubles went about in those houses. Living in all those houses in Beis Yisrael was not simple. From that moment, when he adjured them all and drove them away, calm and quiet returned to the neighborhood. His zechus should protect us.

The Avreich Who Wanted to Bring Mashiach

Talk Four · 1:18:30

Here is a story that Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul told me. He told me several interesting stories; we learned by him too. He did not tell stories regularly the way Chacham Yehuda did, but now and then he would tell one.

This is what he told me. In the Gemara in Maseches Kesubos it is written that HaKadosh Baruch Hu made Yisrael swear not to press the end: "I adjure you, daughters of Yerushalayim, that you not awaken or stir up the love until it pleases." That is, there is an oath there that HaKadosh Baruch Hu made the daughters of Yerushalayim, who are Klal Yisrael, swear: not to press the end, and not to stir up the love, which is the coming of Mashiach, until it pleases, until there is a will from Shamayim. One must not press the end too hard.

The Arizal comes and explains how it would be possible to press the end and bring Mashiach quickly. It is very simple. HaKadosh Baruch Hu swore, as the Gemara says,[49] that He will not enter Yerushalayim shel maalah until Yisrael enter Yerushalayim shel matah. So if HaKadosh Baruch Hu is brought into Yerushalayim shel maalah, Yisrael must enter Yerushalayim shel matah. And Yisrael entering

[49] In Maseches Taanis (5a).

Yerushalayim shel matah means the coming of Mashiach; it does not mean simply walking into the Old City.

How does one bring HaKadosh Baruch Hu into Yerushalayim shel maalah? Its secret is a certain yichud in tefillah, especially at "Melech ozer umoshia umagen" in Shemoneh Esreh. There there is a place to have in mind a certain Shem Havayah together with Shem Ehyeh, but there one may not have the nekudos in mind. Whoever has the nekudos in mind brings HaKadosh Baruch Hu into Yerushalayim shel maalah. That is why it is not enough to learn Kabbalah and know it; one needs a teacher who will guide him also in how to be careful and what to be careful of.

This is a warning for whoever already learns the Siddur (the siddur of kavanos), learns kavanos and knows these things. I, ba'avonos, did not learn the Siddur, but the story I know. When one reaches a kavanah of this kind, of Shem Havayah together with Shem Ehyeh for a particular purpose, he must be careful to have it in mind only without nekudos, and never with nekudos. Whoever has the nekudos in mind there is called one who violates the oath. And if he is a worthy person, he will bring HaKadosh Baruch Hu into Yerushalayim shel maalah. Not everyone who reads it will bring HaKadosh Baruch Hu in; HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not a pendulum that anyone can swing. But if a holy man, out of kedushah and chassidus, makes this kavanah, it is as though he asks, "Adoni HaMelech, please enter." And the King, for the sake of His honor, will not refuse him, and then the geulah will come.

Chacham Ben Tzion told us that at Porat Yosef in the Old City they learned Kabbalah; there was a special department for learning Kabbalah. There is no peshat without Kabbalah and no Kabbalah without peshat. All the pashtanim knew some Kabbalah, and all the mekubalim knew a great deal of peshat.

One of the young men there, a young avreich who learned Kabbalah, was in the shtieblach of Beis Yisrael in Yerushalayim. He sat there with his friends and told them, "Listen, I am going to bring Mashiach. In five more minutes Mashiach will be here."

They said to him, "How?"

He said, "We are davening Shacharis now. When I reach 'Melech ozer umoshia umagen,' I will have this in mind there, with the kavanos, with the yichud, with the nekudos. The moment I have it in mind, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will have to enter Yerushalayim shel maalah. And if He enters, then yallah (come on!): get ready to hear the shofar of Mashiach. Within an hour we will be in the geulah."

He prepared himself, went to the mikveh, readied himself completely, and they began davening Shacharis, and he came to Shemoneh Esreh. Now everyone was trembling. He wanted to bring HaKadosh Baruch Hu into Yerushalayim shel maalah, and if so, in a moment the geulah would come.

He stood wrapped tightly in his tallis and tefillin and began Shemoneh Esreh. It takes about five minutes to reach "Melech ozer umoshia umagen"; with the kavanos of Kabbalah the tefillah takes time. After five minutes they were coming to it, and everyone was waiting to see what would happen. He fell down dead. A minute before he could have it in mind, they struck him down. They took him, so that he would not have it in mind and bring about the geulah by force.

That is greatness; that is Kabbalah. Moshe is emes, and the Arizal is emes, and their Torah is emes. Be'ezras Hashem, may we merit that HaKadosh Baruch Hu will already desire to bring the geulah, and may we merit the true geulah, bimheirah veyameinu, amen.

Short Accounts

Kabbalah in Porat Yosef

Talk Four · 9:30

Chacham Ezra was like all the Sephardi rabbanim. For the Sephardi rabbanim, life was not only Gemara and halachah; Kabbalah was part of it too, all of it mixed together. Every word of Rabbeinu the Arizal was part of the very constitution of a person's neshamah in the yeshivos, in Porat Yosef.

It was well known: every year in the Bein Hametzarim, at twelve noon, everyone suddenly closed their Gemaras, sat on the floor and began saying Tikkun Chatzos. Where else is there such a thing? Only in Porat Yosef. That was how it was. It is a minhag of Rabbeinu the Arizal, and everyone did it.

In which yeshivah do they make sure that in the days of Shovavim there is a ta'anis dibbur (a day of not speaking, spent saying Tehillim)? Who ever heard of it? In Porat Yosef it was done. The chachamim and the talmidim, every class, all of them: from Tu BiShvat on, on those days nobody learned Gemara. Everyone sat with Tehillim, keeping a ta'anis dibbur and saying all of Tehillim three times, as it should be done. They came from morning to evening to finish Tehillim three times and to do the whole order of ta'anis dibbur without moving one kotzo shel yud. That was Porat Yosef.

In the same building, besides Yeshivas Porat Yosef, there was another yeshivah under the same administration and supervision, called Oz VeHadar. That was the yeshivah of the mekubalim. They sat and learned Kabbalah. There were gedolei olam there, and it was a pleasure to go in and see how they sat and toiled in Torah.

It was like watching the Tanna'im and Amora'im at their shiur two thousand years ago. All the mekubalim sat together like that, learning in their traditional dress, the dress that has since disappeared from among us but was once ordinary. You saw how joyful they were, the words of Kabbalah coming from their mouths as though given at Sinai. It was a mighty sight.

Even as a boy I was drawn to the room of the mekubalim. My breaks were holy; I gave a good part of them to going in there to see them. They all sat in their dress, toiling in Sha'ar HaKavanos or Eitz Chaim. Chacham Yosef Sha'yo sat and read out a passage and suddenly asked a kushya. On the spot Chacham Yosef Zaruk came to give an answer, and Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri gave a different answer, all with gentleness. Suddenly Chacham Yosef Sha'yo came out with a great shout: "How? How can you explain it that way? It goes against the reality!" Then, pleasantly, Chacham Sasson Levi came and tried to support Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri's explanation. And such honor among them all, such a matter!

The room itself was dim. It was not a bright room; it was off to the side, in a wing where the lighting was weak anyway, and that added still more majesty to the place. There was one bookcase of sifrei Kabbalah there, and it was something. To sit and watch them, such glory, such splendor. I have no words to describe the picture I saw. Of course it set us on fire as well.

THURSDAY NIGHTS IN SHOSHANIM LEDAVID

Talk Four · 2:03:30

Since I have mentioned Shoshanim LeDavid, I must tell you more about it, though I do not know how to describe it to you. It was the glory of an earlier world.

Every Thursday night after Maariv the beis knesses filled with young bochurim from all sorts of yeshivos, and we sat there and learned until morning. As I have told you, in the middle of the night the Rebbe's shamash gave each of us ten or fifteen grush (small coins of those days) from what he had collected. We came from families that were not wealthy. With that money we went to the mikveh before Shabbos: we bought soap and paid for the mikveh, and perhaps a pruta or two was left over for something else. That was all. But we did not come for the money. We came to learn. We loved the Torah, and we loved to sit and learn.

Above all, Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri, alav hashalom, sat with us. His place was beside the Aron Kodesh on the left side, and he learned the whole night. Until chatzos he learned in the ezras nashim, where he sat learning Etz Chaim with a talmid or two beside him. Several times I sat at that table in the large ezras nashim myself. On one side sat Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri, learning and teaching Kabbalah.

On the other side sat Rav Aharon Slutzky, alav hashalom, another of the mekubalim. He had merited to learn under Chacham Shaul Dweck, alav hashalom, who lived in Rechovos HaNahar. Rav Slutzky was a tremendous mekubal, and he too sat there teaching a few Ashkenazi talmidim. Moshe Rabbeinu was on my right, Aharon HaKohen was on my left, and I sat between them. On one side they were learning Kabbalah in Etz Chaim, and on the other side they were learning Kabbalah in Etz Chaim. To hear them and to see them was pure delight. So it was until chatzos.

Chacham Sasson Levi, zechuso yagen aleinu, was also among the learners. He usually arrived two minutes before chatzos, knocked on the table, and called out, "Kel Melech Ne'eman! Shema Yisrael!" As I have told you, he roused everyone not to lose the moment, and to say Krias Shema two minutes before chatzos. This is Krias Shema she'al hamitah in which only Krias Shema itself is said, the three parshiyos. Said at that moment it is a very great tikkun, the main Krias Shema she'al hamitah, as I have already told you. At once everyone began "Shema Yisrael" after him.

When they finished Shema, suddenly it was Tisha B'Av. Everyone sat on the ground for Tikkun Chatzos. I remember that Chacham Yitzchak would go into the beis knesses itself and sit on the ground beside the Aron Kodesh. For a quarter of an hour everyone wept over the Churban. They did not rush through "Al Naharos Bavel" the way people rush through some Mi Sheberach. They truly sat over the Churban and wept, saying it word by word, in pain over the Shechinah in galus and over all the upper worlds that grieve for the galus of the Shechinah.

When Tikkun Chatzos ended, after several hours of learning, some went home. But a few dozen stayed and sat until morning, and then came the real pleasure. When we were hungry we took a pita with chilbeh (a spicy fenugreek spread) and one hard-boiled egg, washed netilas yadayim, and ate it all in four or five minutes. It was not for enjoyment, for stories and talk. It was only to strengthen ourselves so that we could go on learning. Then we went back into the beis knesses and learned until morning.

Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri sat without moving from his place and said the entire Tehillim, word by word. It was a wonderful sight to see him sitting like that and saying all of it. All around the beis knesses dozens sat and learned, every table covered with Gemaros, meforshim and poskim, taken out and put back again. That was something. Oh, how I miss those days.

THE NIGHTS AT SHOSHANIM LEDAVID

Talk Four · 1:41:00

Since I am already speaking of Shoshanim LeDavid: Chacham Yehoshua's grandson was Moshe Chai Sharabani. He was a tzaddik who ran Shoshanim LeDavid and kept it going. He would go around collecting money in his hand, like a beggar, from many people, to keep up the Tikkun Kares that we held at Shoshanim LeDavid every Thursday night. We learned the whole night, and at chatzos he brought us all something to eat to keep up our strength.

He brought a big bowl of chilbah (a relish of ground fenugreek). And the owner of the ashtanur bakery in the Bucharim donated to the place every Thursday night. (The ashtanur is the Iraqi pita, baked in the old style; the Iraqis would eat only that.) He worked all night making ashtanurim for Shabbos, and at chatzos he would bring a heap of several dozen, hot and fresh. Each of us took one ashtanur with chilbah and a hard-boiled egg. That is what we ate to hold out and learn until morning.

That learning there was something wonderful. Oh, that learning! "מי יתנני כירחי קדם". I still long for that learning and for that place. What Torah, what light! The place was holy.

The Kaf HaChaim, Rabbi Yaakov Sofer, alav hashalom, was the rav of the place. Dressed in a coat and a tarbush (the red felt cap worn by men in the Middle East), he gave a derashah there every Shabbos. He was the guide of all the Jews from Bavel who came to that place. His beis din was there; everything there was his. In the zechus of Rav Yaakov Sofer, may his zechus protect us. As is well known, he is the author of the sefer Kaf HaChaim.

After the passing of his wife, he moved his whole enormous library, all the sefarim from which he composed the Kaf HaChaim, to the ezras nashim of Shoshanim LeDavid. That needs a great many sefarim; the Kaf HaChaim is a whole encyclopedia. Shoshanim LeDavid had two ezras nashim. There was a large one right at the entrance on the right, and that is where his enormous library was. Upstairs, up a flight of steps, there was a small upper ezras nashim, perhaps two meters by a meter and a half in all, and he made it his place to sleep. They brought him his meals there, poor man, whatever he ate all week, and he sat there; on Shabbos too they brought his meal up to the ezras nashim. He ate there and slept there on the bench until the day he passed away, busy with his writings.

It was a real pleasure to go up there. I used to go up and sit there to learn. On the nights when we were not learning on Thursday night, I would often go up there to sit. The reshimu (the imprint left behind) of the kedushah that had been there still remained, and it was a pleasure to sit there. It was a special feeling. I cannot explain it to you; these are things that cannot be explained.

The Kaf HaChaim on Shabbos and at His Meals

Talk Four · 1:44:30

Chacham Moshe Chai Sharabani, who knew the Kaf HaChaim personally, told me several stories about him and about what happened there with him. I will tell only a little.

First, Chacham Mutzafi, alav hashalom, told me that on Shabbos they saw the Kaf HaChaim's face change. He was a different man; this was not the same Rav Yaakov Sofer they knew all week. His face changed completely. There was light on it, a special radiance, and you could see that this was a man on whom, on Shabbos, the Shechinah rested. The Shechinah rested on him at other times too, but on Shabbos there was a special light upon him. Anyone who looked at him saw it, not only people with special eyes.

Chacham Ben Zion Abba Shaul told me how moved he was to watch him eat. He ate barely half a pita, and it took him perhaps half an hour or three quarters of an hour, with all the kavanos of eating. Simple people do not eat like that; for them the main thing is to push the food into the stomach. But the talmidim of the Arizal, all the mekubalim who follow the way of the Arizal, do not eat like that. There are kavanos in eating. When a man eats he must have in mind the grinding of the teeth, the thirty-two teeth and what they stand for. There are five kavanos in eating. The Arizal says that Manoach (the father of Shimshon) was an am haaretz. Why? Because he had in mind only two of the five kavanos.

Whoever wants his eating truly to become a mizbe'ach, that "שולחנו של אדם יהיה כמזבח", should take the sefer Lashon Chachamim of Rav Yosef Chaim. At the beginning there is a tefillah that even simple people can say, in which the kavanos are mentioned briefly, so that a man's eating will be counted as korbanos of bulls and sheep before the Borei. Rav Yaakov Sofer also brings these kavanos lehalachah in the Kaf HaChaim; in his sefer of halachah he includes the five kavanos that one must have in mind.

On paper all these kavanos take two or three minutes. But Chacham Ben Zion Abba Shaul told me that with his thoughts and his way of thinking about them, the Kaf HaChaim took close to half an hour over them. As he chewed, he had in mind the thirty-two teeth, such and such and such. To watch him eat was like watching a kohen going up to offer the chelev and the blood on the mizbe'ach.

Seudah Shlishis at Shemesh Tzedakah

Talk Four · 2:27:30

On Shabbos too we used to go to the yeshiva to learn; we were not idlers. No one had to come to the yeshiva on Shabbos, but almost all of us were already there from eleven or eleven-thirty in the morning, after the Shabbos chamin, sitting and learning. Only a very few came back after seudah shlishis, because after seudah shlishis we all went to Shemesh Tzedakah, the beis knesses of Chacham Tzedakah Chutzin.

In my time Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi was there. I remember Chacham Tzedakah Chutzin as well: he was an angel. He passed away past the age of ninety, and his face and his whole form were not of this world. You may think I exaggerate, since I say "not of this world" about every one of them, but no; each of them truly was like that. People like these are not seen in the street today. He walked bent over, and I remember his levayah, zechuso yagen aleinu.

Rav Yaakov Mutzafi was the rav of the beis knesses then. We all came after seudah shlishis, and he sat in his corner. The light was not turned on, because there were no Shabbos clocks there; in those days there were no Shabbos clocks like today. How did the light go off on Friday night? They used an ordinary large alarm clock, wound by hand with a key. They set the hour at which it was to ring. When it rang, the key turned back by itself, and as long as it turned the bell rang; when it stopped, everything stopped. They made a hole in the key of the clock and tied a string from it to the main light switch of the beis knesses, which also had a hole in it, and pulled the string taut. They set the hour for it to ring, finished davening Friday night, and the clock rang by itself, pulled the switch down, and the lights went off.

In the morning they came in the dark to daven at netz. They came in at alos hashachar, when there was a little pale light, and by that light everyone davened slowly until netz, when they stood for Shemoneh Esreh. By then it was gradually growing light, and they read the Torah and did all that was needed.

On Shabbos afternoon there was no one to turn the light on. At shkiah everyone finished seudah shlishis and came there. It began to grow dark, and soon the place was pitch black. The beis knesses was full of people, and no one could see his neighbor. Someone would begin to sing the Iraqi tune of a Shabbos song, "Yom HaShabbos Ein Kamohu," and everyone answered after him. When they had finished the whole song, all of it by heart, someone else began another song, "Yah Ribon Alam," and everyone sang after him. So it went for an hour or an hour and a half, in the dark. No one saw anyone else, and the songs flowed with their tunes. It

was a delight. When the zman of Rabbeinu Tam came, someone said "Baruch hamavdil bein kodesh lechol" and turned on the switch, and they began Maariv.

That is how it was for years at Shemesh Tzedakah. I went there often. It was a delight, a taste of Olam Haba.

The Minyan in Wallach

Talk Three · 10:00

Since I have mentioned the shul in Wallach, I remember something that happened there. As a young bochur I used to walk every Shabbos morning, after the morning seudah, up to Givat Shaul. It was half an hour on foot, climbing from Beis Yisrael up to Givat Shaul, and on the way I passed the Wallach hospital with its shul. In Givat Shaul I learned with my chavrusa, the same chavrusa I told you about earlier, with whom I was learning Sefer Yetzirah when a neshamah came and explained to us the commentary of the Raavad. He was married and I was still a young bochur. I would go to learn with him, and we would sit for several hours learning Gemara. Then we davened Minchah there in Givat Shaul, and I went back to my grandfather in Beis Yisrael for seudah shlishis.

One Shabbos he said to me, "Listen, I am going back with you, because I need to be somewhere in Machane Yehuda (Yerushalayim's great market)." So we started back together, and of course the whole way we went over the shiur again. As we passed the Wallach hospital, someone came out and said, "Rabbosai, we need two more for a minyan for Minchah. Maybe you will come in?"

I said to my friend, "Let's go in."

He said, "No, I'm in a hurry."

I said to him, "I am in a hurry too. But Shamayim is sending us into the Wallach hospital, into the shul, and better a shul than some other place in there. If Shamayim has brought us here, and he is calling us, which has never happened to me before, and now he is calling the two of us, we should go in. They do not usually need people for a minyan; they always have patients, and everyone comes down, and they have plenty for a minyan. Today of all days they are short, just as we are passing. Let's go in."

"No, no, no, I'm in a hurry." He kept walking. I went in, one more man came along, and we completed the minyan. I had already davened, but I sat with them through the whole tefillah anyway, and then I went home.

That same week, my friend came down with a severe case of jaundice, the illness his father had died of. His liver was swollen, and that very week he was taken into

Wallach. He lay there a long time, more than a month, and for a while his life was in danger, until, baruch Hashem, he recovered and went home.

When I went to visit him that week, I said to him, "Do you see? Had you gone in to daven Minchah in the hospital, you would already be out of the hospital, and you would not need to stay here in the ward. Shamayim tested you, and you did not stand up to the test, so now you had to come inside."

A person does not know why he is suddenly being called, why something is suddenly being asked of him. But if a person stops to look around him, he can see that he is being sent wonderful things, things he never dreamed of, in order to rescue him afterward from troubles that would otherwise have come upon him.

Chapter Eleven

Chacham Yehuda Tzadka

rosh yeshivas Porat Yosef

The Mother of Chacham Yehuda Tzadka

Talk Three · 34:30

Staying in those years, I move on to a little later, when I was almost twelve. One morning I came to my grandfather to daven Shacharis in the shul in his courtyard, and he said to me, "Yosefiko, that is enough. From now on you are going to Yeshivas Porat Yosef. Now you will be one of the talmidei chachamim of Porat Yosef."

Right after davening that morning he took me to the house of my rebbi, the crown of my head, Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka, alav hashalom, zechuso yagen aleinu. He lived near us. By then I was living with my parents in Geulah, but we came to daven there; my grandfather lived on Rechov Chaim Ozer, and three houses farther down the same street lived Chacham Yehuda Moallem, zechuso yagen aleinu, and Chacham Yehuda Tzadka. On the third floor lived Chacham Yehuda Moallem, and on the fourth floor lived Chacham Yehuda Tzadka.

As a little boy I did not yet know the tzaddik; perhaps I knew him from having seen him once in the market, I do not know. But his mother I knew well. His mother was a tzaddekes beyond all wonder. She was already a poseket of halachah back in Iraq. She was a relative of Rav Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai; I do not remember whether she was his brother's daughter or his sister's daughter, I do not know exactly, but she was his relative. She was a tremendous talmidas chacham, who knew Shas and the poskim by heart. Whenever people came to the Ben Ish Chai with questions about women's mar'os, he sent them to her, so that she would pasken. She was a faithful talmidah of Chacham Tzadka and went to the ezras nashim to hear all his shiurim, without missing a single one.

She was a tzaddekes, and she raised Chacham Yehuda Tzadka like Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananyah. From when he was little she would take his cradle and put him in the batei midrash, so that already as an infant he would begin to hear divrei

Torah and grow up entirely in them. And so we merited a man who was a giant among giants, humble among the humble, my rebbi Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka, of whose greatness and holiness I should tell a little.

I remember the mother of Chacham Tzadka, and I remember the day she passed away. Every day she davened vasikin. At my grandfather's, in Ahavas Chaim, there was a vasikin minyan. She was already old, but she never gave it up and never missed a single day; day after day she came and davened the entire tefillah at vasikin. After vasikin she went home, drank a cup of coffee with milk, and sat down to learn eighteen perakim of Mishnayos. Not little pieces: eighteen perakim with understanding, understanding them with the Bartenura and all the meforshim. To understand the Mishnayos is to understand half of Shas! All her life she learned the Mishnayos with their commentary and with their understanding. Only after eighteen perakim of Mishnayos did she turn to her other affairs, to breakfast and to other things. It was a fixed rule with her.

So it was on the day she passed away as well. I remember that day as if it were now. I saw her climb the steps to the shul, I saw her daven vasikin, and I saw her go down and walk home. That day too she drank her cup of coffee and began her eighteen perakim of Mishnayos, and she finished them. After she finished them she felt a little unwell, said Shema Yisrael, and rose to the world that is entirely good.

That is how a Jewish woman passes away! With a clear mind, in kedushah, just as she had conducted herself all her life. She was given, until the very last moment, a good and long old age, a good and long life. She had much suffering in her life, but in kedushah she had a good life in ruchniyus, including her eighteen perakim of Mishnayos until her last day. Of her it may be said, "אשרי מי שבא לכאן ותלמודו בידו." This is said not only of a man but of a woman too: to such heights a woman can rise, so far she can reach in her madreigah. Zechusah tagen aleinu.

Netz in Bucharim

Talk Three · 39:30

When I came, Chacham Yehuda was sitting in his house. He too had davened at netz that morning. In those days nearly all the tefillos were at netz, and only the batlanim davened after it; that was simply called the minyan of the batlanim.

There were generally three kinds of minyanim. A few people davened before netz, and that was called the minyan of Terach, the father of Avraham. Avraham is tefillah at netz, as the pasuk says, "וישכם אברהם בבוקר"; so the minyan before him was named for his father. Most of the tzibbur davened at netz, since people also had to go to their work.

I remember that time well, for I grew up there, and it was a time when truly everyone, from the smallest to the greatest, was a yerei Shamayim and a real oved Hashem. An hour after the sun set there was no one in the streets. It was frightening to walk through Bucharim (the Bukharan Quarter of Yerushalayim, built by Jews from Bukhara). It was pitch dark. There was nothing but a small lamp here and there that barely gave enough light to keep people from walking into one another. There was no lighting like today. These were little lamps left over from the days of the Mandate (the British rule over Eretz Yisrael before the State). I still remember how they looked: four panes of glass set around, and inside a small bulb that hardly lit the way for a man to see where he was going. How frightening it was! If we passed through there at eight in the evening, after we had finished everything, we walked through a sea of darkness, and there were no people either. Everyone was asleep. They went to sleep with the chickens and rose with the chickens.

But when chatzos came, you would see the market and the streets of Bucharim bustling. Everyone was running, either straight to shul or to the chamam (the Turkish bathhouse). There were two mikva'os there: one was the Turkish chamam, and the other was in the Beis Yisrael neighborhood, on Be'er Sheva Street. Both were full. People went, toveled, and went to learn from chatzos until the morning.

It was a pleasure to walk through the streets of Bucharim then. The Bukharan Jews built a great many shuls there, one close beside the other, and every one of them was full. In Avrahamof sat mekubalim and learned. In Sofiof sat simple Jews and learned Mishnayos. In Yissacharof they were learning. Jews sat and toiled in Torah, every one of them a hard-pressed man. After a grueling day they slept a few hours, then rose, and first of all learned Torah until the morning. They all davened at netz, and then each went out to his work until evening. That was the order of the day. That is how simple people lived.

They did not look for luxuries, and they did not ask for much from life. If a man managed to bring home a little food for his household, it was enough. Who had all the luxuries and all the things there are today? People did not even think such things were needed. They knew that we are here only for a while, and when a man is on the road, he does not look for much.

CHACHAM YEHUDA TZADKA AS A CHILD

Talk Four · 26:00

Now I will come to my master and teacher, the crown of my head, Chacham Yehuda Tzadka. With him I was raised and learned not only Gemara and halachos but how to be a person: mussar, the way of life, the way to look at life.

By then we were already married, new avreichim, about thirty of us sitting and learning before him. He never began the shiur on any day without first giving a quarter of an hour or half an hour of mussar with stories, mostly personal stories from his own life. He did not rely on us. We were already talmidei chachamim; we would become rabbanim. He was afraid that we would become "ra banim," bad sons. Torah alone is not enough. There must be mussar, middos, derech eretz. He told us all kinds of stories and roused us about all kinds of things, wonders upon wonders.

When he was still small and would enter the beis knesses, Chacham Mudafi, zechuso yagen aleinu, would stand up for him. They asked him, "Why does kevodo stand for a child of six or seven?" He answered, "I see in him that he will be one of the pillars of the next generation. I am standing in honor of his neshamah."

Fighting for the Children of Israel

Talk Four · 33:00

Chacham Yehuda would shake all the worlds so that people should know that here was a great light in Klal Yisrael. He worried greatly about Jewish children. He suffered great pain over the secular education they were receiving, and went days and nights without sleep over it.

He went together with several Iraqi rabbanim, Chacham Ben Tzion Chazan and Chacham Ephraim Cohen. When the olim from Iraq came to the ma'abaros (the transit camps where new immigrants were housed), in 5714, what was the first thing the government did to them? It took their children and moved them to secular schools, in order to raise a generation here that does not know Hakadosh Baruch Hu. It was in 5714 that the law was passed in the State of Israel, the compulsory education law.

Why specifically 5714? Because it is written in the Torah: "Tzur yeladecha teshi, vatishkach Keil mecholelecha." "Teshi" is Tashyad, 5714. "Yeladecha" means both the One who gave birth to you and your own children. "Tzur yeladecha teshi": you wear down His strength in Tashyad. For what purpose? "Vatishkach Keil mecholelecha." The aim of the education here was to make them forget Your Torah and to turn them away from the laws of Your will.

He fought against it like the Chashmona'im in their time, who fought the Yevanim who did the same thing. They went to the ma'abaros, sat with the people and spoke to them in their own language, Iraqi Arabic, and explained to them that they must resist with all their strength, even if it cost them the red booklet (the Histadrut membership card, on which work and benefits depended) and their food. To

guard their children's education, to ask only for talmudei Torah, only to put them into talmudei Torah. He gave his soul for this.

There were activists there from Yad L'Achim. With all his greatness, he would come to them and say, "Now I am a young volunteer. Whatever you tell me, I will run and do." When they began all the registration for the talmudei Torah and made a real campaign of it, he harnessed himself to it like a young boy, to help them, with no trappings of honor, nothing. "Let me. I must help save them."

In his time he also founded, together with Rav Shalom Lopes, Mekabtziel, which took all the boys wandering the streets and educated them in Torah and yiras Shamayim. They accomplished a great deal. I have already told you about Chacham Shalom Lopes, in the story of the kamei'a of Shlomo HaMelech: when that boy from the Krayot came there with the eagle, Chacham Shalom Lopes commanded the eagle to carry the boy up to Avraham Avinu, on a mission from Avraham Avinu. Chacham Shalom, zechuso yagen aleinu, built up Torah in Akko, and we will come to him later, b'ezras Hashem. In any case, the two of them together invested their lives in educating Jewish children.

Whoever educates Jewish children in Torah has a higher level in Shamayim than all the Tanna'im and Amora'im. The Gemara in Maseches Bava Metzia tells that Eliyahu HaNavi said to one of the talmidei chachamim in Teveryah: "You may gaze at all the gedolei Yisrael when you leave your body and go up to see them. You may see their neshamos as they rise to the heavens, the malachei hashares helping them go from the lower Gan Eden to the upper Gan Eden to hear the shiur from Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself. But do not dare gaze at the chariot of Rabbi Chiya when he goes up."

He asked, "How will I know which one it is?"

Eliyahu answered, "He goes up alone, without the malachei hashares. He does not need them; he has more strength than all of them."

Why? Because he did not only sit in the yeshivah and learn; he went out to teach Torah to Jewish children. How did he do it? He paid hunters to hunt deer and took their hides. These were processed in kedushah and taharah, for the purpose of writing holy words on them. Sofrim wrote the Chamishah Chumshei Torah on them, several sets, each sefer on its own, Bereishis by itself, Shemos by itself, and also the Mishnayos, which Rabbeinu HaKadosh composed in that period. He went to every village, every place, every city, and sat the Jewish children down. He taught one Bereishis, one Shemos, one Vayikra, one Seder Zera'im, one Seder Mo'ed. He taught them and invested in them, and then told them, "Teach one another." He left them one set of everything so they could sit and learn, and went on to another place with more such sets, until he had built talmudei Torah and accomplishments for Torah.

That is why his greatness above is so great. Whoever goes and invests so that Jewish children will sit over the Torah, in the kedushah of the Torah, his reward above is greater than that of all the Tanna'im and Amora'im, so great is it. The Tanna'im and Amora'im taught Torah to adults, but he went and taught Jewish children, the next generation. If there are no kids, there will be no goats. It is a very great thing.

We learn one more thing from here. A child can be given a sefer to learn Torah from and still not receive the Torah. He can remain an animal, a donkey who finished high school. Why? The writer has a great influence on the reader; the sefer has a great influence on the one who reads it. For the learning to be stamped into the Jewish children, into their very blood, so that they would truly grow up in Torah and kedushah, it was not enough for Rabbi Chiya to go buy them Chumashim in the market and hand them out. In those days such were sold. There were sofrim who took ordinary hide, made ordinary parchment, wrote on it and sold it. That was cheaper than looking for hunters and deer and having them processed lishmah. Why did he do it? Because when it was done in kedushah, the parchment, the sofer, everything, the child who learned from it received light from within the words.

When a person learns from a sefer written by an author who is not good, even if he writes words of Torah, it will influence the reader with tumah, not kedushah, even if he is reading a Chumash, even a sefer Torah. That is why our Rabbis said that a sefer Torah written by a min is to be burned. Burned! You might see a great talmid chacham, a rav in Yisrael, take a sefer Torah, light a match and burn it. What would you say? "Bar minan! What happened?" Yes: a min wrote it, a man who does not believe. He wrote it for business; he had nice handwriting, so he sat and wrote. Whoever learns from that sefer Torah will not receive "Anochi Hashem Elokecha"; he will receive the eigel. It is not the words; it is the writer, the one who influences. Part of the writer's nefesh is poured into it. It is forbidden to learn from the sefarim of minim, even the Torah they write. See how important it is, when a person brings sefarim into his home, that he check who the writer is, not only what is written, who the author is. That is what brings greatness and kedushah to the person who reads it.

To return to our subject: both of them, Chacham Shalom Lopes and Chacham Yehuda, alav hashalom, dedicated their lives from their youth to educating Jewish children in Torah. As I said, Chacham Yehuda would go to the Yad L'Achim activists and give himself over for the education of Jewish children. To this day there is no substitute for the work they do. Besides what one must give to the poor themselves, which is another matter, whoever truly wants to give tzedakah to a very important place should know that every perutah given to Yad L'Achim builds that person's rungs in Shamayim. All they do for pidyon shevuyim, to rescue Jewish girls

from all kinds of Arab villages, all they do to fight the tumah of the mission in Eretz Yisrael, and much more besides: about everyone who supports and helps them it is said, "Chaver ani lechol asher yere'ucha." It is a very great virtue. I receive nothing from them for saying this; on the contrary, I myself try to raise money and give it to them, because what they do is a wonderful thing. Chacham Yehuda discovered this treasure called Yad L'Achim and knew how to use it very well, to go out and influence and help.

THE STORIES

THE BAAL SHEM TOV'S FRIEND IN THE VILLAGE

Talk Three · 42:30

There is a well-known story with the holy Baal Shem Tov. One of his chassidim was a very wealthy man, and every year he came to daven with the Baal Shem Tov on Shavuos.

Why Shavuos? It is a small chag, only two days. It is not a chag for which much is done at home; it has no special mitzvos, no sukkah, no lulav, no matzos and no Seder night. What is there on this chag? You learn Torah all night on both nights, and you have a modest seudah on the chag. That is what there is to do, and so it is a fitting chag to travel for. Many chassidim came especially to spend Shavuos with the Baal Shem Tov, and this rich man was among them.

He was a pampered man. When he ate, it had to be food fit for kings; his bed had to be a little paradise. But by the Baal Shem Tov, where everyone gathered, they ate bread and fish, salted fish, with a little meat on the yom tov itself, on both days of the chag, l'kavod yom tov, and that was all. They slept wherever they could, in the ezras nashim or wherever there was room. He, of course, as a rich man, rented a room and paid for it. He had money, so he slept well and ate good food; as the pasuk says, "והכסף יענה את הכל".

One year, when he had finished the chag in the company of the Baal Shem Tov, full of delight and having absorbed enough hislahavus of yiras Shamayim to last him a long time, he came to take leave of the Baal Shem Tov before going home.

The Baal Shem Tov said to him, "You live in such-and-such a place, don't you?"

"Yes," he said.

"Do you know that on your way, if you turn aside to the right, there is a village called such-and-such? I have a good friend there; his name is Leibele. Perhaps you could stop there and give him regards from me?"

"With the greatest honor! Gladly!"

To him this was a fine opportunity to get to know another tzaddik. "Reb Leibele, should I not get to know him? Who knows what he must be, if the Rebbe is what he is and this is the Rebbe's friend! Tell me who your friend is, and I will tell you who you are. The Rebbe's friend? Rebbe, no problem, I will be there."

He took his leave and set out. Being a rich man, he had a carriage of his own, a handsome one with two horses, and he drove it himself. After six hours of travel he reached the village, and he asked the people, "Where is the gaon here, Reb Leibele?"

They said to him, "There is no rebbe here and no gaon. There is no gaon here and no Reb Leibele."

"What? The Baal Shem Tov told me that his friend lives here!"

"Listen, you are imagining things. There is no such person here. You have the wrong address."

"But the Rebbe said so, and the Rebbe knows what he is talking about."

So they told him, "You know what? There is one Leibele who always sits behind the bimah saying Tehillim. He is the only Leibele we know. He is not a laborer and he is not a merchant; he sits and says Tehillim. But to us he is a poor fellow who does not know anything beyond Tehillim. If you want to go and speak with him, go and try. Maybe he knows some Leibele."

He went straight to the shul and did indeed find Leibele there. He said to him, "Reb Leibele, the holy Baal Shem Tov sent me to you to give you regards from him."

"He is a good friend of mine! Truly, thank you very much for bringing me his regards. He is a good friend of mine."

So he had come to the right address after all. Then Reb Leibele said to him, "Look, it is almost Minchah. Daven Minchah with us. There is a shiur, then Maariv, and after Maariv come home with me. You have already been traveling; three quarters of the day are gone. Why travel now? You will not reach your town before night, and where will you go on the roads? Come to me. Supper is waiting for you. Sleep like a mentsch, get up in the morning, and after Shacharis set off on your way. I am inviting you to my home."

What an honor! To sleep in the house of the Baal Shem Tov's friend! Who knew what he would see there at night? Surely he would see the malachim leaping in through the windows. What a zechus he had; he was all set. "Of course!" he said. "I am here, I am with you."

The poor man was hungry. He had not eaten all day and was waiting for a sandwich, for something. But this was a village, and there were no sandwiches to buy there, nothing at all. He would have had to go to some private person and say to him, "Here is money; give me something to eat, give me a place to sleep." But if the Rav was inviting him to his home, then fine, in another two hours he would eat, and that was not so terrible.

Minchah came and Maariv came, and after Maariv he went out with Reb Leibele to his home. By now he was hungry and waiting for a good meal, and he was also tired; a few good hours on a good mattress would not do him any harm. He saw that Reb Leibele was leading him out of the village, and they came to a ruin. Reb Leibele went in with him. It was an old house, ready to collapse, with no glass in the windows; glass there was nowhere to be seen. He saw that there were no beds and no tables. There were many crates and many wide planks, and that was all. He did not understand. What was this place?

Reb Leibele said to him, "Baruch haba! Welcome under my roof!"

Right then he saw Reb Leibele take two crates, set one opposite the other and lay a plank across them, and there was a bench. Then he took two crates for one side and two more for the other side, one on top of the other, laid a plank across them, and there was a table. "Please," he said, "sit down and let us eat."

The guest was so hungry by now that he did not care what he sat on, as long as he ate. Reb Leibele said to his wife, "Please, we have a guest. Bring us the delicious soup you made, that wonderful soup." When the guest heard "soup," his mouth began to water.

"Netilas yadayim!" said Reb Leibele. Of course, netilas yadayim. Water there was in plenty, for the river was not far away, so they washed their hands generously, as one should. They sat down, and his wife brought the bread. The guest saw that the bread was rather hard. What was the story? Stale bread was sold cheaply, at half price, because nobody wanted to buy what was left over, so she bought that. Where would the poor woman have money from? She worked hard just to bring a little parnassah into the house.

"All right," he thought, "it is not so terrible. There is soup. I will dip the bread in the soup, and everything will be fine." He took a hard piece, scraped off a bit for the berachah of Hamotzi and made the berachah, but the bread could not be eaten; it was terribly hard. Everyone in the house was eating this hard bread and licking their fingers, but if he so much as put it in his mouth, his teeth would stick to the bread and never come out. He could not do it, so he waited for the soup.

Then the woman brought the soup in good, deep plates, full to the brim. There was no color to the soup; it was white, but there was a small piece of tomato in it, and he understood that it was vegetable soup.

What was it really? The poor woman had gone and gathered the rotten tomatoes the greengrocer had thrown away, cut off the rotten parts, and put what was left into the pot: a few tomatoes in a big pot of water, so there would be enough for everyone, and salt. That was all.

The poor guest did not know what kind of soup awaited him. He dipped the bread in the soup to soften it, and when he saw that baruch Hashem it had softened a little, he put it in his mouth. Rachmana litzlan, it was salt water. The tomato did not even give it a taste. It was not batel in sixty; it was batel in six hundred. It gave no taste at all. It was nothing but hot salt water with a piece of hard bread.

The poor man could not eat. His throat had already begun to burn from the salt, and he could no longer swallow the bread either. It stuck in his throat, it stuck in his chest. He understood that he was not going to get any food here today, and that was the end of it. Everything was closed, there were no people about, and there was nowhere to rent a place. The chickens were asleep, people were in their homes going to bed, and he had to be a chicken now like everyone else. There was nothing to be done. At least he would go to sleep and forget his hunger.

The bread was stuck in his chest and burning him, and what suffering it was. Where had he fallen to? Everyone else was eating with pleasure. He saw them licking up the soup, and the husband said to his wife, "Oh, blessed be your hands! What hands, what a soup you made! It is sweeter than honey!"

The whole household sat and ate, and the meal was over. There was indeed another room there, an empty one. Reb Leibele went and opened two crates and took out some army coats from some long-forgotten war, all of them completely in tatters. He set two crates side by side at one end and two at the other, laid two planks over them, and for a mattress he spread out a few of those tattered old coats, so that the guest would not be sleeping on the bare boards. He took one more coat in somewhat better condition and said, "This is the blanket."

The poor man was not used to such things. He thought to himself that even in Gehinnom they would at least give a man some kind of padded mattress. But there was no choice; kaparas avonos. He climbed onto the planks and covered himself. The whole place was open, and the cold came in. The family were already asleep in the other room; he could hear them all snoring, already in the middle of their seventh dream. Soon they would be seeing Yaakov's ladder in their dreams, they were sleeping so soundly.

But the poor guest was hungry and could not sleep. The hunger tormented him. The salt burned in his stomach, the bread burned in his throat and stuck in his chest, and he could neither bring it up nor get it down. He was all in torment. And every time he turned over, he struck the plank. His bones were already saying "כל עצמותי תאמרנה ה' מי כמוך". He shifted to this side, he shifted to that side: "Mi-

chael on our right and Gavriel on our left," and both malachim were weeping over him. He could not move. The poor man lay there flat as a board, waiting for morning to come. Ribbono shel Olam, to escape this nightmare! When would netz come at last, when would dawn break, so that he could say "Baruch shepetarani"?

When a man is waiting for the morning, the night grows long. It was lucky that it was summer and the night was short, but to him it seemed as long as the galus.

In the morning they all got up, "Baruch shepetarani," and he got up too. He knew one thing: he was never coming back to this place. He went to daven with his host, Reb Leibele. When Shacharis was over, Reb Leibele said to him, "Perhaps you will come and eat pas shacharis?"

"No, Rebbe, thank you very much. No, no, no, I am in a hurry. I must travel. I am leaving right now with the wagon."

"Very well," said Reb Leibele. "I will accompany you as far as the edge of the village."

Now he was truly stuck. He had no intention of leaving the village. He was half dead, hungry, his bones broken; how could he travel? He wanted to get away from Reb Leibele so that he could go and find somewhere else. But he said, "All right," for he could not shame Reb Leibele; this was the Baal Shem Tov's friend. So he made himself a plan: "I will go out with him now as far as the outskirts. When Reb Leibele wants to go back to the village, I will go back too. I will grab some person and pay him as much as he wants, to give me a good bed and a normal hot meal, so that I can forget this nightmare, and a few hours of sleep, so that I can go on to my home."

He waited for Reb Leibele to get down, but Reb Leibele sat comfortably in the wagon with him. When they reached the edge of the village, Reb Leibele stopped him and said, "I am getting down now. But tell me the truth: how do you feel? How was it in my house? Did you enjoy it? Was it good?"

"Rebbe, since you ask, I will tell you the truth. My insides are burning from the water and the salt; you have killed me. I cannot breathe here; I do not know how I am still breathing. The bread will not go down and it will not come up; the little piece I ate is stuck right here. My bones, don't ask, are already crooked. I am waiting for you to leave so that I can go back into the village, rent a place from someone, bring my bones back to life and forget the terrible nightmare you gave me. And I was cold all night as well."

Reb Leibele said to him, "You know, I am a very rich man."

"What?!"

"I am a millionaire. I have houses, I have treasures, I have rooms full of every good thing."

"But Rebbe, then why do you suffer like this?"

"That is all Above," he said. "But tell me the truth: how did you get through the night? Why did you not die?"

"The whole time I held on to one thought: it is only one night. In the morning I will get up, and it will all have been a bad dream, and it will pass. It is only a night; it is nothing. Another half hour, another hour, it passes. The night will not last forever. I will get through it and get up in the morning. I was already picturing my home, the food waiting for me, the servant making up my bed, and what a mattress, the kind you sink into as soon as you lie down. So it is one night; kaparas avonos, there is nothing to be done, I will get through it."

Reb Leibele said to him, "I say the same. All of life here is only one night. I have everything Above. What do I need it for here? It is only one night; one gets through life. And do not forget: when the Baal Shem Tov sent you to me, he knew exactly what was waiting for you in my house. This is what there is by me. He only wanted me to tell you these words. This is a passing world; it is only a night. Whoever prepares everything for the corridor and leaves the house empty is to be pitied. A normal person does not deck out the corridor with every good thing and leave the rooms empty, with nothing in them."

Two Tickets to America

Talk Three · 59:00

I once compared this to two men who worked in a large, respectable factory, and both of them won the Outstanding Worker prize. What was the Outstanding Worker prize? A plane ticket to America, with two weeks in a hotel, not a grand place but a simple hotel, and a ticket back. They were good friends at work, and both of them won it. The flight was to be in two months.

One of them knew no language except Hebrew. The other knew French as well. One evening the one who knew French said to his friend, "Come, let's go out and enjoy ourselves."

"I have no time to go out," said the friend. "In two months I have to be in America."

"So what?"

"So I need to know where I am going. I have just bought myself a dictionary, and I am starting to learn a little English."

"Are you crazy? What is the matter with you? What are you imagining? Forget it! We are going to enjoy ourselves!"

"I also need to know what money is used there, so that I can prepare the right currency. I am not going in order to sit in one place. I want to travel around and

enjoy myself. I am not going to shut myself in a hotel and stay there; I want to go out and know what I am seeing, and for that you need money. I have already found out that over there they do not use lirot (Israel's money before the shekel) or shekels; those do not pass there. There you need dollars. So I have already checked the exchange rate and where dollars can be bought most cheaply, and I am going to buy some dollars so that I will have them."

"Do what you want; you are crazy. Come, let's go out, let's live a little! Forget it!"

But no. Night after night the man came home from work, and instead of going out the way they always used to, with their friends, to drink a little whisky and talk and sit together, he suddenly took to beating his head against the wall: "Yes, yes, yes."

"What do you want with your English? Leave it alone, I beg you!"

"No, this is what I am doing."

Then the day of the flight came. The friend who knew French arrived with a small bag in his hand, in a light suit and a shirt, and he saw his friend bringing along an enormous suitcase, so heavy he could hardly carry it. He was dragging it along, breathless.

"Are you crazy? What are you doing?"

"Don't you know there is snow there? It is winter now. You have to bring the right clothes. I have sweaters here, and I have..."

"Look how hot it is here! Look at this weather!"

"Yes, you are in Ramat Gan right now, not in New York. In Ramat Gan the weather is wonderful at the moment, but you are going to New York. I have packed coats here, two warm coats, dubonim (the heavy padded jackets soldiers wear on the Golan), and sweaters, and I have also packed a little food and a few other things."

"My friend, I packed nothing. You are a fool. I prepared shekels. I took fifty thousand shekels of savings out of the bank. Over there there is everything; you bring money and you can get anything."

"But shekels do not pass there!"

"Don't worry. Everywhere there are merchants. I will change it; they will change it for me and I will buy. Don't worry!"

Today you can fly to America in twelve hours and land there on a direct flight. But when I was young it was not like that. When we flew to America we had to make a stopover of a few hours in Europe while they prepared the plane for the rest of the journey; you could not do it in one go. That was before the big jumbo jets (the giant Boeing 747 airliners) came out and everyone rushed to fly on them. These two men also boarded a plane that had a stopover in France.

When they reached France on their way to America, the captain announced to everyone, "Gentlemen, you may now go out for seven or eight hours. Come back here in seven hours; in eight hours the plane takes off for America." There was no point in staying on board. The plane had to be put in order, cleaned and refueled, and all sorts of things had to be prepared, so the passengers had to get off.

They came out of the terminal, and the one who knew French began: "Comment ça va? Comment allez-vous?" He chattered away in French and felt wonderful.

His friend did not know French; he had learned English. He sat there like a mute, knowing nothing, like a fool. When he needed the restroom he had to ask people with his hands, and they pointed him to it. He bought no food; he bought nothing at all. Luckily he had a few sandwiches in his bag, so he took out a small sandwich and ate it, something small to tide him over.

The other one sat and talked with people, and they talked with him, and right there he found someone to change his money. He took out a few bills and received francs (France's money before the euro). Then he went and bought himself food, whatever one is permitted to eat: fruit and other things that could be eaten. He sat down to eat, perfectly content, and looked his friend up and down: "Do you see how I swim in this place?"

Then they went back to the plane, flew on, and landed in New York.

The first man was well prepared. He had learned English. He knew what a hotel is and what a taxi is, and he knew where all the places to visit were, for he had gotten the whole list of sights from the travel agent. He knew how to speak. He stopped a taxi and said, "Take me that hotel," and gave the driver the address. The driver took him, he paid and went in. What a hotel was waiting for him, what a pleasure!

He went out, and he could talk with people, for he knew the language. He did not speak Oxford English, but he knew enough to get by. He went to all the sights, and he had dollars in his pocket, so he paid and went in. He did not have much, so he did not go into every place, and he took the subway instead of taxis from place to place. But he enjoyed himself. He saw wonderful things there, and he enjoyed it all. It was cold and snowing, so he took a warm dubon out of his suitcase, and now, yishtabach Shemo, he was warm and comfortable. He had boots too, which he took out and put on, and off he went to enjoy himself. Everything he saw was a pleasure to him.

The other one had not prepared. As soon as he got off the plane and came out of the terminal: brrr, how cold it was! He wanted to buy a sweater but did not know where or how to buy one. First of all, though, he had to get to the hotel and get himself settled.

The word "taxi" he did know; there is no Israeli who does not know the word "taxi." People do not even know how to say "monit"; they say "taxi." So he called out, "Taxi! Taxi!" and stopped one. He told the driver in Hebrew, "Take me to such-and-such a hotel." The driver did not understand what he was saying. So he took out the address he had, for they had been given the address of where to go, and showed it to him. The driver read it and understood.

When they arrived, he did not know how to ask the price. The driver said, "Twenty-five dollar." He did not understand what the man was saying, so he took out shekels and said, "Take it." The driver told him, "I want dollars." He did not have a single dollar on him. So they argued without understanding each other. The driver spoke to him in English: "Give me dollars." He did not know what the driver wanted from him and shouted at him, "Take shekels! Take shekels!"

The driver started up the car and drove him straight to the police. "Here is the man," he said. "He won't pay me! What is he showing me these papers for? What am I supposed to do with them? I want money. I gave him a ride, and he will also pay for my bringing him here now. I want the whole amount; there is a meter. Not half."

The police spoke to him, but he did not know the language and did not know what they wanted from him. By the time they managed to bring an interpreter who could understand him, he had been through a nightmare. Now he had to pay double, but he had no money; he had nothing but shekels. In the end he found someone to change them for him, who took advantage of the situation and charged him six times the rate. At last he managed to pay, get rid of them, and reach the hotel.

Now the poor man wanted to go out and see a little, but he sat in the hotel, afraid to go out. He did not know the language; he knew nothing. He said to himself, "I will go out a little and take a walk through the streets." As he was walking, he felt that he urgently had to relieve himself. He asked people, "Sherutim! Sherutim!" Nobody understood what he wanted. Nobody understood, for he could not speak the language. "Sherutim! Sherutim!" He tried to hold himself in, and could not; he soiled himself. Now the whole of him stank, and everyone ran away from him, and he did not know what to do.

He knew only one thing: the address of the hotel, within walking distance. He never went far, because he had no money for a taxi. He had nothing; shekels did not pass there, and most of what he had changed had been taken from him. He was afraid, he did not know what would become of him, and he was cold too. He waited for a sunny day to venture out a little, like a mouse out of its hole, when it was a bit warmer, to go and see something. He walked a few streets, and again the same thing happened to him: he had to relieve himself and did not know what to do. What a stench! He had no clothes to change into, so he had to go back to the hotel,

wash his clothes himself and get rid of the smell, wait until they dried, and sit there for hours more.

As for food, he ate the little that the hotel gave him, whatever came with his room, and beyond that he got nothing. He did not know anything; he did not even know how to ask for a glass of water if he wanted to drink. Whatever was on the menu, that was all there was. And so he went through his suffering.

After two weeks they met again; each of them had been in his own hotel. They met on the way to the airport. The first one had barely a few dollars left, just what he needed to get home. They sat together on the flight back.

"Nu?" said one to the other.

"What a pleasure, what a delight!" said the first. "Where have I not been? I was in the Twin Towers (the two towers of the World Trade Center that stood then in New York), and in this building and that building. I saw the Hudson River, and I saw this, and I was in that place, and in this square, and in that square. What a pleasure! I enjoyed every moment. I was warm, I was comfortable, I knew what to buy, I knew how to get around, I rode the trains. It was really something. I enjoyed it."

The other said to him, "Enjoyed it? I curse that place now! It is Gehinnom, that place; it is a horrible place. Look what happened to me: my stomach gave way in the middle of the street, and there was nobody even to tell me where to go. I could not go out; I had no money; I did not know the language and could not say a word. I went through Gehinnom. Well, enough. Now I am back in Eretz Yisrael, and I want to forget it. I want to spend a week in bed, come back to myself, and forget that I was ever in that terrible place of torment."

Rabbosai, that is the mashal. The nimshal is this world and Olam Haba.

There is a man who does not prepare for Olam Haba and gets nothing ready for it. He thinks the main thing is here: "I know the language here; I am clever; I know how many goals so-and-so scored." Fools! The whole game of football is nothing but men playing tag. It is a shame and a disgrace to watch them running after a ball: "Oh! Oh! Goal!" Fools! People make a whole world out of it; they are sick in the head! Besides which, football carries an issur of avodah zarah, and whoever does it is charged in Shamayim with avodah zarah; there is no question about it, for it is the avodah zarah of the Yevanim. But even without that: "Oh! Oh!" Sick in the head! What pleasure is there in a ball?

The other man goes and learns Gemara. What a joy! Abaye and Rava, how beautiful! What a machlokes between them, and how it is resolved! Abaye asks a kushya, Rava gives him an answer like this, and the two of them sit and argue. What a pleasure! What a world! A pure world, a world of kedushah. What a life! That is already a gain here and now.

This man prepares for Olam Haba. He gets ready, as the pasuk says, "והלך לפניך צדקך כבוד ה' יאספך". He knows that he has to buy dollars. But what are the dollars of that world? Tzedakah, mitzvos, maasim tovim. That is what buys things there; there nothing is bought with money. A man who comes there with money will not be able to buy a thing. Korach was swallowed up with all his money, and with all his millions he could not buy so much as one spiritual glass of Coca-Cola there. He sits there to this day. He will have a few bonuses, but those are for the future, not now. He will receive royalties on account of his descendants, Shmuel HaNavi and the bnei Korach who are mentioned in Tehillim. In the future he will receive bonuses on their account; in their zechus he will rise and come out and be among us again. But all that gold, with which he went down into She'ol, does him no good whatsoever there.

Against this, there is the man who knows: "I am here only for a while! Only for a while! I am about to arrive in another world, a true and long one, and I can make it Gehinnom for myself or Gan Eden; it is in my hands. If I do not learn, if I do not send things ahead to that place, if I do not prepare, then I will arrive there and have nothing at all. That is the Gehinnom."

That is the Gehinnom. All the more so if a man has also soiled himself here: he arrives there dirty, and he has to be washed there too. So a little mei esh (the strong acid used to scrub floors) here and a little mei esh there, and that is how they clean him. Instead of sitting four hours scrubbing a dirty floor, you take a drop of mei esh with water and pour it on the floor, and in two minutes all the dirt has come together; you lift it up, and the floor is clean. That is what is done when there are big stains. There is industrial mei esh, thirty or forty percent. There, too, they pour a spiritual mei esh on the neshamah, and the man screams to the heavens. But what can be done? You soiled yourself, so you have to be cleaned. They do not want to take revenge on you; they want to clean you. There is nothing to be done.

So when a man knows these things ahead of time, he prepares ahead of time. That is how all the people I am speaking about were, in their greatness. They knew what they were doing, and what they were doing it for.

What a Man Takes With Him

Talk Three · 1:15:00

I remember coming to the house of Chacham Yehuda. What furniture did he have? A small bookcase and a table with four chairs, and that was all. It was not some fine table, only one of those rickety tables of years ago, and the chairs had faded, both the wood and the cloth. Most likely they were left from his wedding and had served

him all those years. In the other room there were probably two iron beds. I did not peek in and did not see, but that is what people had then: two iron beds, and nothing more.

I remember my grandfather. He had a broken iron bed that he tied together with ropes, and on that he slept. I myself slept on a plank: a board cut to size, with a thin mattress on top. I was raised from then on to sleep only on boards, and to this day I find no rest on any mattress unless it is as hard as stone.

My grandfather had almost no furniture in the house. But one thing he did have. On top of the clothes closet lay a bundle, and I would hear him tell everyone, "Do you know what this is? This is what I am taking with me." Inside were tachrichim and soap. "Of everything you see," he said, "this is all I take. Everything else stays here." Meanwhile the bundle stayed up there for years and years.

That is how people looked at life, and that is how they raised generations: this world is a passing world, and everything passes. "Our days are like a passing shadow," and our Rabbis said: not like the shadow of a house, and not like the shadow of a tree, but like the shadow of a bird flying through the air. Yesterday I was seven years old, playing marbles with the other children and running in the streets. Today I am close to ten times that age, and it feels like yesterday. It was a dream, and it has all flown away. Does it matter now whether the days were hungry or full? It makes no difference. What was, was, Hallelukah. It is over.

A man passes on, and what does he take with him? A suitcase. And what is in the suitcase? Either good things for Olam Haba, or snakes and scorpions. The suitcase is closed. He does not know what is inside or what is waiting for him. When they open it above, either the place will light up with pearls, or snakes and scorpions will come out and fall upon him. It is all in a man's hands here. Here a man makes his own Gan Eden and his own Gehinnom.

That is how they raised us and educated us: to see life through the right lens. You are here in a passing world. Take into account that there is an eternity, and do not trade eternity for what passes.

A man who wants to become a millionaire without effort buys counterfeit dollars. They come cheap. But when he goes to use them, he will be taken to prison for having them in his hands at all. Whoever wants real dollars works hard to earn them and guards them, so that he will have them when he needs them.

There are diamonds that cost five shekels for a whole packet: beautiful, shining, sparkling, set in rings, enough for every finger, each ring with several stones. Why only five shekels? Because it is all plain glass with a bit of tin that will only rust on his hand. A real ring with stones like those does not cost five thousand dollars; it costs fifty thousand. But whoever has no patience to wait until he can reach the real thing takes the fake, and in the end he has nothing in his hand at all.

A man must know that his life is still ahead of him. The real life is the life after this life. Here is a passing world, a temporary world. Everyone was once young, and everyone became old. Look at pictures of a person from his childhood to his old age, and see how the face changes. He was small, grew big, grew handsome, was young, began to age and to wrinkle, until he was all wrinkled, as the pasuk says, shriveled before their time, their foundation poured out like a river. It is over. Then he begins to go up, and they ask him: What did you bring in your bundle? That is man.

How He Raised Us

Talk Four · 42:00

When we learned before Chacham Yehuda, his concern was not that we should know the Gemara well, and not that we should know the Maharsha excellently. His concern was that we should be menschen. Before everything else comes derech eretz kadmah laTorah. What does that mean? People think derech eretz means walking about neatly and properly. That is not derech eretz; that is derech eretz Pelishtim. Derech eretz kadmah laTorah means that a person should know that the Torah is a diamond, but it must be set in a vessel of gold, so that it is not, chas veshalom, a golden ring in a pig's snout.

So every morning, when we were already avreichim, married men, learning before him, he gave us half an hour of mussar. He told us stories of what he had been through, interesting things that had happened to him, and encouraged us with them. He found it worth investing in us, and not only in our Torah. He invested in us yiras Shamayim, and a whole way of life.

The Bochur Who Was Burned

Talk Four · 44:30

I remember that one day he came in and said, "Baruch Hashem! Baruch Hashem!" All the others sat quietly and waited for him to open his mouth, but I had no patience. I was always impetuous. I said to him, "Chacham Yehuda, what is 'baruch Hashem'? What happened?"

So he told us. There was an unmarried bochur of eighteen, an Iraqi. The Iraqis have a kind of pastry, something like puff pastry, that they fry in very deep oil. This poor boy was frying these pastries in a deep pot of oil when suddenly, for no reason at all, the whole pot tipped over and the oil poured over him, and he fainted. Meanwhile the boiling oil spread over his entire body.

They took him to Hadassah Hospital. This was what was called Hadassah Gimmel, on Rechov HaNevi'im in Yerushalayim, back in my time, before Hadassah Ein Kerem was built. That was still being built then, and the departments were still scattered around Yerushalayim.[50] There they put him, and the doctors said he would die. He had nothing to breathe with: more than seventy percent of his skin was burned, and he had no skin left to let the body breathe, for the body breathes through the skin. All they gave him was morphine ointment to dull the pain, so that he would not scream from the agony and could die quietly.

His mother got up in the morning in a terrible panic and ran to Chacham Yitzchak. Every morning Chacham Yitzchak received the public in the Musayof shul (in the Bukharim neighborhood of Yerushalayim). He had carried on the work of Chacham Fatiyah, whom I told about earlier. He sat there, people came to him, he received all of them pleasantly and wrote holy Names for them on almonds, on apples and on other things, and people saw tremendous yeshuos from it. It was all lesheim Shamayim. He would not take even a worn-out perutah for it. He only wanted to truly help people.

She came to him and began, "Chacham, dakhilak (I beg you), ibni (my son), such and such has happened, he is in the hospital." He answered her in Iraqi Arabic, "Terja'i bukra" (come back tomorrow). "Come back tomorrow morning, and I will see what can be done for you."

The next day she came back, and he told her, "I made a she'elas chalom (a question asked of Shamayim, answered in a dream). They told me in the dream that in his previous gilgul your son sinned with his mother-in-law. He was not content with her daughter. As if to say, 'Two are better than one,' he sinned with the mother as well, bar minan. The Torah says that a man who sins with his mother-in-law is punished with sereifah (burning). Now he has come in a gilgul in order to be burned. He has to die by burning like this for that sin."

She said to him, "If so, what? It is decreed? It is over, khalas (finished)?"

He told her, "Go to Chacham Yehuda Tzadka and tell him what I said. He will know what to do."

Chacham Yehuda told us, "The woman came to me and told me what Chacham Yitzchak had said. I got up at once and went with her to the hospital. I saw the bochur lying on the bed, bar minan, so badly burned that it was hard even to look at him, suffering terrible yissurim. I said to him, 'Listen. In your previous gilgul you sinned with your mother-in-law. Make a tikkun for it now, so that you can live.'

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[50] After the War of Independence in 1948, Hadassah's hospital on Har HaTzofim was cut off from the rest of Yerushalayim. Until its new medical center in Ein Kerem opened in 1961, the hospital worked out of temporary buildings scattered around the city, one of them on Rechov HaNevi'im.

"He said, 'What tikkun? What should I do?'

"I told him, 'First of all, say viduy now. Just as you lie there flat on the bed, say viduy and regret that in your previous gilgul you sinned with your mother-in-law. And accept upon yourself that if you get well and come out healthy and whole, you will also do tikkunim as the mekubalim will instruct you: a day of fasting, and so on.'

"That was last week," Chacham Yehuda said. "I saw him, and he accepted it upon himself. Today he left the hospital healthy and whole. Chazi! (See!) So I say, baruch Hashem. Once he accepted upon himself to make a tikkun, Shamayim helped him come back to life in this world, healthy. Yishtabach Shemo. 'A G-d of faithfulness, without iniquity, righteous and upright is He.'"

This story became a guide for my whole life. It stood before my eyes like a candle, and taught me what to do when similar cases came to me.

The French Couple

Talk Four · 49:30

There was once a case in Yerushalayim. A French couple who lived in Yerushalayim came to me and told me that they were both healthy and everything was in order with them. They had been married for over ten years, ten or eleven, I do not remember exactly, and they had no children. The doctors could not find the reason. Everything was in order, but the current was not flowing. There was no electricity.

I sat, looked at them and considered. I told them, "Listen, I don't know. I am not the Wizard of Oz; don't think I can do some hocus-pocus for you here. But I have the Torah. Here it is." I took out a Chumash Vayikra and read to them. The Torah says of a man who lives with his aunt that they will die ariri'im (childless). And of a man who lives with his brother's wife it is also written that they will be childless. This is said only of these two.

I told them, "Perhaps in a previous gilgul you were a man with his aunt, or a man with his sister-in-law, who sinned in this aveirah? We see that the Torah says they will die childless. Yet how many people have lived with their sisters-in-law and had children, both of them, and each one died with ten children, like the ten sons of Haman? Where is the Torah's 'they will die childless'? It does not come true before our eyes. And truly, why should children suffer because of a foolish father or mother who committed this aveirah? The children who were born are poor innocents; why should they die? If 'childless' meant that even the children they have would die before them, so that when the parents die they would have no child left, bar minan,

then where is the justice? Those children were already born, and fathers are not put to death for sons, nor sons for fathers. So what is going on here?

"Rather, that is not the meaning of the Torah. This is what it means. When a man lives with his sister-in-law, he will die with several children and she will die with several children. But both of them will come back in a gilgul and marry each other, and this time they will want children and will not be able to have them. They will die childless. If there is no logical reason for your childlessness, it seems that you are the gilgul of such people."

I gave them a tikkun. I had prepared and arranged a tikkun for this, which I have to this day: a fast of twenty-four hours, together with tikkun kares (the tikkun said for aveiros punishable by kares), for which one must sit up the whole night and learn a set order. I gave it to them and told them, "But both of you must do this three times, not once." They said, "Fine," took the tikkun and went.

Three months passed, and the man came back to me badly shaken, in terrible fear. I asked him, "What do you want?"

He told me, "After we did the tikkun once, my wife and I, she became expecting. She is now in her second month, seven weeks." A woman who is expecting must have a certain hormone in her blood, I don't know exactly what, at a level of around fifteen hundred. If it is four hundred, the baby is lost. His wife had been at fifteen hundred, and suddenly it fell to seven hundred. That is very close to the edge, bar minan. Nobody knew what would happen with her, and this was a child after so many years. What should they do?

I said to him, "Tell me, how many times did you do the tikkun?"

He said, "Once."

I said, "Didn't I tell you three times?"

He answered, "I saw that after once it had already happened and she was expecting, so I said, baruch Hashem."

I told him, "Tell me, do you think you can fool HaKadosh Baruch Hu? You accepted upon yourself, in front of me, to do it three times. After you did it once, HaKadosh Baruch Hu already gave you the bonus, the child. But you are still obligated to do it twice more. You did not do it, so He is taking back what He gave you. Run and do the tikkun!" And he ran.

Several months passed and I heard nothing from him. One day I was walking in Shechunas HaBucharim, and I met him coming toward me. I went over to him and said, "Tell me, what happened?"

He said that he had not managed to do the tikkun in time, and his wife had miscarried. That was the end of the story.

A few years ago I was in France. I was davening in a shul when a man came over and said, "Rav, may I come to speak with you privately at the house?" I said

yes and gave him the phone number and the address. He came, and as soon as he walked in he said, "Do you remember me?"

I said, "No. Who are you?"

He said, "Do you remember the couple who came to you then about such and such, about children?"

I said, "Yes, I remember."

"That is me," he said. Afterwards he had completed the tikkun properly, his wife became expecting, and now, in another month, the son born from it was having his bar mitzvah. Now there was another problem. Since he had seen that what I told him worked, he had come to consult me about another matter. With that he closed the circle for me, yishtabach Shemo.

As the pasuk says, Hashem does not desire the death of the rasha, but that he should return from his way and live. HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not looking to punish a person. "Come," He says, "I want to cleanse you. If you will be cleansed in a better way, I will be happy."

So Chazal say in Maseches Kesubos: even though the four death penalties of Beis Din have ceased, the judgment of the four death penalties has not ceased. One who was sentenced to die by stoning, bar minan, falls from a roof and is crushed. One who was sentenced to die by burning is bitten by a snake, which is also a burning, or a fire breaks out, bar minan, and he is turned to ash.

Now how does this fit? We see so many people who sinned, mechallelei Shabbos, who fell asleep and died calmly and peacefully, smiling. No stoning, nothing. Rather, as I said, the Gemara is not speaking of the same gilgul. If it were the same gilgul, there would be no bechirah. If every person who was mechallel Shabbos died by stoning, even thirty years later, nobody would be mechallel Shabbos, and there would no longer be any bechirah. What would that be worth? So they give him time. He dies, he comes back in a gilgul, and now, in his second gilgul, suddenly there is a car accident, some accident or other, or he falls from a roof, and nobody knows how or what happened. Everyone wonders: such a nice, gentle person, what happened to him? Yes. He came to pay.

That bochur was unmarried. What mother-in-law? Did he have a mother-in-law? He had come to pay for his mother-in-law from the previous gilgul. But the moment he accepted upon himself to make a tikkun for this, he annulled the evil decree. For what was the whole decree for? To atone for his sin. Once he had gone and said viduy, and through the viduy he was granted atonement for the sin, he no longer needed to be burned, and he came back to health.

Chacham Yehuda told us many very interesting stories like this. Some of them I am deliberately not telling, and some I am not telling for other reasons. But his stories were great mussar for us in life, and guidance for our whole lives.

A Minchah Worth a Million

Talk Four · 58:00

A Jew from Turkey used to come to Porat Yosef from time to time. He told us that every Minchah he davened was worth, in Shamayim, at least a million Turkish lirot, which was half a million Israeli lirot. In those days a Turkish lira was worth half an Israeli lira, and the Israeli lira was worth a great deal on the market.[51]

This is what he told us. He was in the textile business. The Turkish government, the Turkish army, held a tender (an auction where each buyer offers a price) on a large stock, a whole railway car full of fine cloth, I don't know where they had obtained it. He won the tender. The usual procedure was that the three who offered the highest sums were called in, in order of their offers. The highest bidder was called first. If he signed the deal and put down an advance payment, the deal was closed. If for some reason he did not come forward when they called him, they went to the second, and if not, to the third.

He had offered two million Turkish lirot for this carload of goods. It was the highest offer, and he had won. He had already spoken with a client who was waiting to take it from him for three million Turkish lirot. All he needed to do was sign with the government on the deal he had won and pay. Within ten minutes he would go to his client, pass the rights on to him, and instead of the two million he paid, receive three million: a clean profit of one million Turkish lirot, an enormous sum.

He said, "I arrived at the place where they were to call me to complete the deal. The other two came after me, the one who had offered less and the one who had offered less still. That was the law. I was waiting for them to call me, and they did not call me. Suddenly I looked at the clock, I looked at the sun, and I saw that the sun was about to set, and I had not davened Minchah. What should I do?"

Minchah takes four or five minutes, if you daven it word by word like a mensch and not in a hurry, swallowing it whole just to finish. And what would happen if they called him in the middle of Minchah? He could not interrupt his tefillah for this.

He said, "Whatever will be, will be." He stood up to daven Minchah. In the middle of his Minchah they announced, "So-and-so, come forward! So-and-so, come forward!" They called him three times, and he did not come; he was in the middle of Shemoneh Esreh. So they called the second one below him and closed the deal with him.

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[51] The lira was Israel's currency until 1980, when it was replaced by the shekel.

He said, "I lost a million Turkish lirot so as not to give up a Minchah. Surely in Shamayim I receive the reward according to what I gave up for it, and even more." That was the kind of man he was.

The Tongue That Said Hallel

Talk Four · 1:01:30

One morning Chacham Tzadka came in and said, "Do you know? This man is in the hospital, and they cut out his tongue." They had found, bar minan, something malignant, and they cut out his tongue. The poor man was now without a tongue. "This morning," Chacham Yehuda said, "I went to visit him."

When this unfortunate man came up from Turkey, in his first year he thought that the State of Israel was the Mashiach. He did not know that the State of Israel arose to hold back the Mashiach from coming, to hinder his coming. He thought they were the Mashiach. There have been many false Mashiachs, and this is another false Mashiach. So when he came here, he said Hallel on Yom HaAtzmaut. Afterwards, through the rabbanim, he understood the whole truth: that all they wanted was to educate the children in a secular education, and that the government fought against those who keep Torah and mitzvos. Then he stopped. He had said it once or twice.

Chacham Yehuda said, "I told him this: 'Ashrecha, Rabbi so-and-so, that the tongue which once said Hallel on Yom HaAtzmaut was cut off. Ashrecha that it was cut off here, and you will not pay dearly for this Above.'" Afterwards, when he understood, he had stopped saying any Hallel at all, bar minan.

One who says Hallel on that day is called one who blasphemes and reviles. What are you saying Hallel for? For taking a million children and teaching them shmad? For teaching that man comes from the apes, as Darwin said? That there is no Creator of the world? That pride parades and the toeivah of mishkav zachar are excellent things, and that those who do them are ordinary decent people, to be encouraged? It is a shame and a disgrace. We have almost become like Sedom and resembled Amorah. It is disgusting. And you say Hallel for this? What are you praising?

Don't tell me you are praising the Jews. What Jews? Jews here are in more danger than in chutz la'aretz. Jews have died here in the wars and at the hands of enemies by the thousands. What are you talking about? And even if there was some rescue here, what was its price? Was the price worth it? Whole communities, whole edos that came here from chutz la'aretz, have been destroyed in their neshamos and

in their chinuch. Is that worth the price of living here, that you should say Hallel for it?

All these things are clear to any sane person who has not exchanged our Torah for nationalism. Eretz Yisrael is one small mitzvah out of the six hundred and thirteen, and it is counted among the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos only according to the Ramban; the Rambam does not count it at all. It is not a mitzvah for which one must give up his life; it is not yehareg ve'al ya'avor. Certainly one may not lose other mitzvos, and lose an entire people, for the sake of Eretz Yisrael. Whoever thinks so is not walking in the way of the Torah and is not thinking straight.

Since this is so, we are careful on that day not to do anything out of the ordinary. One year there was a bris milah at the Chazon Ish on Yom HaAtzmaut, and he told them to say viduy (tachanun). There was a bris, and still he made no account of Eliyahu HaNavi, first of all so that people should not think viduy was left out there because of the day.

This, as you have now heard, is the chinuch I received from my grandfather and from Chacham Yehuda. In fact, all the mekubalim I mention held this view, and so did all the rabbanim I knew. So Chacham Yehuda told him, "Ashrecha, so-and-so, that the tongue which said Hallel on Yom HaAtzmaut is paying for it here and was cut off, and you will not pay dearly Above for what you said."

A Cup of Tea

Talk Four · 1:06:00

Chacham Yehuda taught us to be very careful with berachos. A berachah is not a coin that you toss off, click, just to get the food into your mouth. One should divide the berachah into three parts: "Baruch Atah Hashem," then "Elokeinu Melech haolam," then the third part, "shehakol nihyeh bidvaro," "borei pri ha'adamah," and so on, so that the words come out clear and correct. Otherwise a person not only eats without a berachah, but is even punished for his berachah.

When he had to decide whether to accept a talmid into the yeshivah, or to give him semichah for his learning, he did not test him on his knowledge. Anyone who came to him for a recommendation, or for semichah, or the like, he first served a cup of tea. The man did not understand what was going on. A host serves a guest a cup of tea; they sit together. While Chacham Yehuda asked him a question or two, he watched how he drank the tea, and by that he knew whether to give him the recommendation or not. If he saw that the man made the berachah word by word and conducted himself in a special way, he gave it to him. If in the middle of the berachah the man winked or made some gesture, or skipped a word, then even if he

knew the material well, Chacham Yehuda would not give it to him. He would apologize, "I can't," and send him away without it.

Chamin in Chevron

Talk Four · 1:07:30

Chacham Yehuda, alav hashalom, told us a story of which he was an eyewitness. At the time of the riots of Tarpat[52] Chacham Yehuda was nineteen; he was born in 5670. On that black Shabbos when the Arabs murdered the Jews in Chevron, Rav Franco was in Chevron. I do not know his first name. He was one of the old rabbanim of Chevron.

That Shabbos morning he davened at netz hachamah and came home. His wife was asleep, and he did not disturb her sleep. Let the poor woman sleep another hour or two; she would get up, say birchos hashachar, daven a short Shacharis, and they would sit down to eat. Meanwhile he took a sefer and learned.

Suddenly he heard noise and screaming. He opened the window and saw that the Arabs had cut off the head of his neighbor, the Jewish woman on the floor below, and put it on a primus. A primus is a flame. In those days all of us used them; we boiled and cooked everything on a primus, which burned kerosene.[53] They lit the primus and set her head on it to burn it.

He saw this and was in shock. They saw him too, and made the sign at him with the hand, across the throat: wait, you're next. They always love to make that sign when they see a Jew. I remember that they used to make it at us. When we lived in Beis Yisrael, on Shabbos we would go to the border; they were on the other side. Rechov Shmuel HaNavi was the border, and there was a small strip of no-man's land.[54] As children we would go there to look at them on the other side, and when they saw us they made this motion at us: soon we will slaughter you. Yimach shemam vezichram.

In any case, they made this motion at him. He went straight to his wife, woke her up and said, "Listen, soon they are going to slaughter us. Come, let us fulfill a great mitzvah before we die."

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[52] In Av 5689 (August 1929) Arabs attacked Jews in several places in Eretz Yisrael. On Shabbos morning in Chevron they murdered dozens of Jews, and the ancient Jewish community there came to an end.

[53] A primus is a small portable stove that burns kerosene, used in almost every home in Eretz Yisrael in those years.

[54] From 1948 until the Six-Day War in 1967, Yerushalayim was divided. The Old City and the eastern part of the city were in Jordanian hands, and neighborhoods like Beis Yisrael stood right on the border.

She said, "What mitzvah? Viduy?"

He said, "No. Bring the chamin and we will eat it lekavod Shabbos." That was the black Shabbos. "Bring it. It is a great mitzvah." Eating chamin lekavod Shabbos, the seudos of Shabbos: in Shamayim nothing is valued more highly. On the day of his passing, Rabbi Shimon praised himself only for this, that he had never in his life missed the seudos of Shabbos.

"Bring the food." The poor woman got up, washed negel vasser and said birchos hashachar very quickly, and they served the food. He made Kiddush and they began to eat chamin. They knew that below them the Arabs were running wild and would soon come up. They were a poor old couple; what could they do? Even young people could not stand against them. Their sentence was sealed, and they sat and ate chamin lekavod Shabbos.

Who is able to eat chamin in such a situation? Only someone who eats lesheim Shamayim. This is what a man's table is. It shows that all those years, whatever he ate on Shabbos, he enjoyed the food, yes, but it was lekavod Shabbos and not for the honor of his stomach.

In the middle of the meal the door suddenly opened. They thought the worst had come. In the doorway stood an English officer. He said to them in broken Hebrew, "Rabbi, you and your wife are going to Yerushalayim now, before the Arabs here take care of you." He took them downstairs himself. Below stood several vehicles of the English soldiers. He was a commander, with all his metal and his insignia on his shoulders, and every soldier who saw him saluted. Woe to him if he didn't! He called two soldiers with a vehicle and told them, "You are taking these Jews to Yerushalayim now. You are responsible to me for whether they arrive safely or not." He took down the soldiers' details, and they put the couple into the vehicle at once and took them to Yerushalayim.

As far as we know, the English were then cooperating with the Arabs to kill Jews. Suddenly an officer comes and saves him? Who knows, perhaps it was a malach in the form of an officer. Who knows. When Rabbeinu Tam was attacked in the crusades,[55] and they came to kill him, a knight passed by and said to them, "Leave him to me. I will deal with him." They saw that he was a knight, one of the great men of war, and left Rabbeinu Tam in his hands. He took him to the next street and told him, "Come, hide here until they have all left the town," and saved his life. That was no human being. They told Rabbeinu Tam that it was a neshamah that had come from Above to save him. Here too, who knows who it was.

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[55] Rabbeinu Tam, Rashi's grandson, was the greatest of the Baalei HaTosafos. During the Second Crusade (1146-1147) crusaders broke into his house in the town of Ramerupt in France and wounded him, and he was saved at the last moment by a passing knight.

In any case, in Yerushalayim they knew nothing of all this. The soldiers asked him, "Do you know what address to go to?" He said, "Yes. To the Tzadka family, to Chacham Shaul Tzadka," the father of Chacham Yehuda.

Suddenly, on Shabbos, early in the morning, Chacham Franco and his wife arrived in an English vehicle and got out next to Rav Tzadka's house. Chacham Shaul opened the door for them: "Come in!" He did not understand. They had come from Chevron on Shabbos? What had happened? He asked him, "What happened?"

Chacham Franco said, "Before anything, I won't tell you what happened. First bring me a piece of bread. Do you have a kezayis of bread to bring me?"

Chacham Shaul said, "With great honor," and brought it. Chacham Franco washed, ate it, and bentched slowly, calmly, as though the whole world lay before him. When he finished, he told him how the Jews there had been slaughtered, and his neighbor too, and how they had been about to kill him. "I told my wife, 'Come, let us eat chamin lekavod Shabbos,' and in the middle of the chamin an officer came and saved us. And here we are.

"But I had not bentched. I made a calculation that an hour and a quarter had not yet passed, so I could still press myself to bentch in time." Lechatchilah one must bentch within an hour and a quarter, before the food is digested; digestion takes an hour and a quarter. Only if an hour and a quarter have passed and he has not yet bentched, he must bentch as long as he is still satisfied from the food in his stomach. But lechatchilah it must be within an hour and a quarter.

"So I calculated," he said. "From the moment we left Chevron until we reached you took fifty minutes, so there was still time. Even so, so that the berachah should be close to the place where I ate, you gave me a kezayis, and I bentched and had in mind also what we ate in Chevron." In complete simplicity: we ate chamin lekavod Shabbos, and they saved us.

Chacham Yehuda said to us, "See what the value of Shabbos chamin is. This zechus saved them. And see what the value of the seudos is: a Jew knows that in a moment his life will be in danger, and not just in danger, but of a cruel death, and he sits down to eat chamin lekavod Shabbos."

After His Passing

Talk Four · 1:15:30

After Chacham Yehuda's passing I merited that he revealed himself to me several times and told me wonderful things, wonders upon wonders. I cannot tell everything; some of it is personal. I can only say this. When Chacham Yehuda passed

away I was in New York and did not merit to take part in his levayah. When I came back a week later, I said, "The Chacham has passed away; I must go to his kever." I went to his kever and said Tehillim and davened. I also had a very difficult problem that had dragged on for years, and I davened about it. When I finished davening I went home. I knew that it was one-way: I daven, and who knows what comes of it, whether it helps or not. I did not know.

On leil Shabbos I dreamed that I was walking in Geulah (a neighborhood in Yerushalayim) to Yeshivas Porat Yosef. I knew that it was leil Shabbos. I came to the building, and the building was dark; there was no one there. I went up to the second floor, to the hall, and the whole hall was dark, but in one corner there was an extraordinary, blazing white light. I went over there. It was exactly the place where Chacham Yehuda used to sit, at the mizrach, on the right side. When I came there I saw the form of Chacham Yehuda inside that great light. I saw Chacham Yehuda and recognized him, but I could not look at his face. Just as the light of the sun darkens the eyes, so was his light.

He said to me, "You came to my kever and asked. I have come to tell you: do such and such, and you will be saved." There is a long story afterwards, how I did it and was not saved, and I came, and how he spoke with me, but now is not the time to tell it, and I refrain.

In any case, he came to me several times and told me beautiful things. He continued to teach me after his passing. One of the beautiful and interesting things he told me was this: "Know that in Shamayim the most important aliyah there is, is shlishi at Minchah on Shabbos." That is, all three aliyos at Minchah on Shabbos are very important, but kohen is for a kohen and levi is for a levi. "Shlishi," he said, "is something special. But on condition that you daven in that same place. Not that you daven in one place and take an aliyah in another; that is not worth it. In the place where you daven, if you go up for shlishi, its value is very great." That is what he told me. He also explained to me some interesting things about the Menorah, wonders upon wonders. May his zechus stand and protect us forever.

Chapter Twelve

Chacham Ezra Attiah

Chacham Ezra Attiah and the Way of Iyun

Talk Four · 0:00

In this series on the tzaddikim I knew, I will go on now with my rebbeim at Porat Yosef. After that I will begin going through the tzaddikim I knew in order of my own age, from my childhood upward.

When I entered Porat Yosef, the rosh yeshivah was our master and teacher Rav Ezra Attiah. He was a very great man, in Torah and in deeds, and also in true kanaus lesheim Shamayim (zeal for the sake of Heaven). Above all he was great in the method of iyun that he developed and in which he trained his talmidim. That method was what made Porat Yosef unique, both in the Geulah neighborhood under his leadership and earlier in the Old City.

He was the second rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef. The yeshivah in the Old City was built on the advice, the recommendation and the guidance of Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai. Its first rosh yeshivah was Rav Shlomo Laniado, who served only a very short time and was niftar young, zechuso yagen aleinu. He sat on a beis din together with Chacham Yosef Yedid. I have already told you that story: on reaching Gan Eden, all the masechtos stood and would not let him in, because of two minutes. One Shabbos he slept two minutes longer and did not learn Torah in them.

After him, Chacham Yosef Yedid's talmid, Chacham Ezra Attiah, was appointed. He followed his rebbi's approach: Chacham Yosef Yedid was a great kanai for every matter of kedushah. All the rabbanim of Porat Yosef recoiled from Zionism and from everything connected to it.

Chacham Ezra knew how to educate talmidim and reach down into a talmid's soul. What made him unique, though, was the way of learning. This is how we were trained: it is impossible to understand a Gemara without understanding the Rashba and the Maharsha. Those were the most classic of the meforshim. We had to sit and

understand every line of the Rashba in all its depth, and the Maharsha too. Whoever cannot explain a Maharsha shows that he does not know the Gemara. We sat over our iyun in this way, a way all its own. It was called "the pure Halabi iyun" (the learning style of Aleppo, Halab in Arabic). He rooted in his talmidim that the Maharsha is the Maharsha.

The Maharsha Comes in a Dream

Talk Four · 2:30

The Maharsha repaid him for this. Chacham Ezra himself told Chacham Yehuda Tzadka, zechuso yagen aleinu, that twice, when he was in great trouble, the Maharsha himself came to him in a dream and said, "Do not worry. Everything will be all right."

The first time, his son was very ill. Chacham Ezra was in great distress and found it hard to concentrate on his learning because of his son's illness. The Maharsha came to him and said, "Do not worry. Your son will get well." From that moment the son began to recover, and within a short time he was completely healthy.

The second time, his son was in the Old City when everyone there was taken captive to Jordan in 5708.[56] He was on neither list, the killed nor the captured. He was missing. Chacham Ezra was in great pain, not knowing what had happened to his son. The Maharsha came to him and said, "Do not worry. Your son will come home safe and sound within a short time." A short time later it became known that he was among the captives, and when they all returned, he too came home in peace.

The Get That Nearly Went Wrong

Talk Four · 4:00

Chacham Ezra had a special siyata diShmaya that no takalah (mishap in halachah) should ever come out from under his hand.

He sat as a dayan in the beis din of the Sephardi rabbanim in Yerushalayim. The custom of the batei din in Yerushalayim went back to before the Chida, and they followed it with the Chida himself as well: every three months the dayanim changed. The dayanim came from the yeshivah of Yerushalayim, and every three

[56] In the War of Independence the Jewish Quarter of the Old City fell to the Jordanian army (Iyar 5708, 1948). The men who were left there were taken as prisoners of war to Jordan and released some months later.

months others sat, so that four groups of dayanim served in the course of a year. Chacham Ezra too sat for a period this way as a dayan.

A get came before them. They sat and clarified all the names. In a get, the hardest thing is to know the names, how they are written and spelled, because any change can make the get pasul, or even completely batel. A get is no joke. You do not just take a document, walk out, and you are divorced. A get requires a great many halachos. Knowledge from the sefarim is certainly needed; our Rabbis said that whoever has no knowledge of the nature of gittin and kiddushin should have no dealings with them. There are a great many halachos in it, many fine details, much knowledge and much responsibility. But something else is needed too: checking the names of the husband, of the wife, and of their fathers, and making sure the get is given willingly and not under compulsion. If it is given under compulsion, if they forced the husband to divorce, the get is not merely pasul but batel; it is as though it does not exist. The woman then walks out with a big get in her hand and goes to marry, while she is still an eishes ish, and her children from the second husband are mamzerim. It is a very grave thing.

Chacham Ezra Attiah sat, and they prepared the get for the man. The man was wild, a difficult person, a ka'asan. He was giving the get of his own free will; he had no problem with the get itself. But he was angry and restless, quarreling every moment with everyone there, a poor, unsettled man. The sofer was already sitting down to write the get when suddenly the man began cursing his father.

The dayanim had had enough of him. They were only waiting for the get to be finished so that he would leave. Such a strange man, making the whole beis din tremble. But Chacham Ezra went over to him, entirely calm, and said, "Why are you cursing your father? Isn't it haram (forbidden, in Arabic)? Isn't it assur? Is there no kibbud av va'eim in the world?" He spoke to him like this, two minutes of mussar and no more.

The man answered, "He isn't my father. He's the man who adopted me. I never knew my father at all. I don't even know his name. He's the one who raised me, and that's who I'm cursing."

"What?!" They were about to write a get with the name of a man who was not his real father. Had that point not come up, a takalah would have gone out from under their hands. They would have written "So-and-so son of So-and-so" when he was not that man's son. The get would have been pasul and batel; the woman would have gone and married, brought mamzerim into the world, and transgressed the aveirah of eishes ish. They had thought of asking everything. They had asked him his father's name. But to ask whether this was really his father, that had occurred to no one.

At once they told the sofer, "Stop! The get is pasul. Throw it away." They went and wrote a get without the father's name. If they do not know the father's name, it is not needed; it does not hold back the get. The father's name is only lechatchilah. Where there are doubts, where one is not sure of the father's name or of his lineage, it is left out, and only the man's own name is written. They wrote the get without it, and the woman went out divorced with no takalah from under their hands.

One of the other dayanim had shouted at Chacham Ezra, "Why are you giving him mussar? Let's send him off, finish the get already and let him go!" He answered, "No. 'Hochei'ach tochiach' was said about this man too." After one minute of hochei'ach tochiach, it came to light that a terrible takalah had been about to go out from under their hands. Yishtabach Shemo, Hakadosh Baruch Hu guards His chassidim, "le'olam nishmaru", so that no takalah should go out from under their hands.

The Vote and the Shemittah

Talk Four · 13:30

There were elections at that time, and in Porat Yosef it was known that it is forbidden to vote, forbidden to give one's finger to anyone. In those days there was only one religious Chareidi party. People came and said to Chacham Ezra, "We must vote. There is no choice. There is the matter of abortions, the matter of autopsies. Whoever does not go to vote is, as it were, lending a hand to these ugly deeds. We must." They sat with him and did not rest until they had taken him to the ballot box, and he put a slip in.

When he left, after two minutes he felt pains; his hand was burning. He said, "This is the aveirah of my having voted." He could not rest. He called Chacham Yosef Adess and Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, put a sum of money into Chacham Yosef Adess's hand and said, "Go to Rav Pinchas Epstein." Rav Pinchas Epstein was the rosh beis din of the Eidah HaChareidis, which put out notices against the elections. "Tell him in my name that I am sorry, that I sinned and voted, and that I promise never again to dirty my hand. And here is money for a pidyon nefesh, so that Rav Pinchas Epstein should daven for me." And so they did. That was the approach in Porat Yosef.

Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul also gave a whole shiur against voting. One thing he said was this: You go in order to get good things there, more mikva'os, more limud Torah, more wonderful things. But you are a partner. For that you also sign the budget, and you let them choose judges against the Torah, who will not judge by din Torah. Through the budget you give secular studies in the schools, to

destroy Jewish neshamos with an education that stands against the Borei Yisbarach, and you are a partner in that too. There is no half a partner. No partner can tell you, "Sir, I want to be a partner only in the profits; the losses are all yours." Is that a partnership? You are a partner in both. Who permitted you to go and become a partner, to obtain in this way things supposedly for the sake of religion, when through your partnership you share in everything done to destroy religion on a large scale? Who permitted you this?

From the Gemara it is implied that it is forbidden, and in the Rambam it is explicit. We have an explicit halachah: if there are a thousand people and the enemy comes and says, "Give us one of you and we will kill him and let all the rest go; if not, we will kill you all," it is forbidden to hand over even one, even if they kill everyone. They may not say, "Come, it is pikuach nefesh. Let us save nine hundred ninety-nine; give one and be done." No. If there are a thousand women in one place, and an enemy comes and says, "Give us one woman to defile her; if not, we will defile you all," it is forbidden to send out one to be defiled, even if all of them will be. I may not do something on my part to gain other things, even so great a gain. You do not do it; leave the work to the Borei Yisbarach. That was their approach all along.

When the shemittah year came, there was not much to eat in Porat Yosef. There was the heter mechirah (the sale of the land to a non-Jew for the shemittah year), on which some rabbanim were lenient. People came and said to Chacham Ezra, "Perhaps in such a time of need we should permit it for the bochurim?" He said, "Under no circumstances. The heter mechirah will not enter this yeshivah. Only shemittah, whatever it costs. And if there is none, let them eat bread alone. That does not solve the problem." That was the strength and the greatness of Chacham Ezra Attiah.

A Nest on a Man's Head

Talk Four · 18:00

Chacham Ezra had other instances of siyata diShmaya as well. In the First World War, the Turks (the Ottoman Empire, which then ruled Eretz Yisrael) wanted to seize their subjects and take them to war. To come back from it would have needed a miracle and a half, not only a miracle. Many fled to Egypt, and Chacham Ezra Attiah fled to Egypt too. There they received him with honor, and he began to give shiurim.

In the Gemara in Maseches Chullin, in the halachos of shiluach haken, there is the question of a nest on a person's head: a dove made its nest on someone's head.

Is it treated like a tree or like the ground, so that shiluach haken applies, or is it a person, so that if she nested on him it is only a person and shiluach haken does not apply? The Gemara says that shiluach haken applies here too.

Chacham Ezra sat and learned this with the talmidim, and by talmidim I mean baalei batim. One of the baalei batim got up and said to him, "Chacham, how long will you chachamim busy yourselves with such nonsense? Are you bored with life? A nest on a man's head? Have you ever in your life heard of a dove sitting and laying eggs on a man's head while he sits quietly and doesn't chase them off, and waits until the mother comes and nests on them and hatches chicks, until this man has a shiluach haken? What are you talking about?!"

Chacham Ezra answered him, "If our Rabbis said it, there is such a reality. There must be such a reality. Our Rabbis did not speak for nothing." All the baalei batim were looking on, no longer knowing whom to believe, the Rav or the one asking. It really did seem abnormal, illogical.

Not ten minutes passed, a quarter of an hour, and in came one of the baalei batim who had not been there for a whole month. He did not know what they were learning. He had left them in Maseches Chullin a few dafim earlier and had no idea which sugya they were on. As soon as he came in, he said, "Chacham, I have to tell you something new. I can't keep it inside."

"Finish the shiur," the Chacham told him.

"No, no! I have to tell you something interesting. I was in India. There are people there who sit for hours and days in a trance, their heads somewhere else. I saw a wonder: a dove came and laid eggs on the head of one of the dervishes (Muslim ascetics), and the eggs stayed there for many hours, and the man did not move. He stood as if frozen in his meditation."

Everyone looked at one another. Chacham Ezra asked him, "You saw this?"

"Yes, certainly. I was amazed by it."

He turned to the other man: "Did you hear? He is your friend. Do you believe him?"

"I believe every word. I know him; he is a truthful man."

He had not known which shiur they were learning. From Shamayim they sent a man to the place as a witness, so that chas veshalom the simple emunah of the baalei batim should not be damaged, so that they should not say, "Ah! Such a thing?" Here it was, a reality. Yishtabach Shemo, how in His hashgachah He had already arranged that when they would sit and learn the shiur, and someone would come wanting to confuse the simple emunah of Yidden, there would already be a man who had witnessed that such a thing exists.

Two Words in Rashi

Talk Four · 22:00

I remember that at that time a great rav used to come from America. Out of respect I do not want to mention his name. He was a great rav, an old man, over eighty, an enormous talmid chacham. He would come to give a derashah with pilpul in Porat Yosef. All the talmidei chachamim gathered, and Chacham Ezra, alav hashalom, came as well and sat beside him. He gave an hour and a half of pilpul. He brought a certain difficult topic, asked kushyos and gave teirutzim, and everyone sat licking their lips. What a beautiful shiur!

That is the whole pleasure of a shiur: to bring a sugya, ask on it from another place, and try to reconcile the two. Ah, it is a supreme delight! People do not understand what Gemara is, what learning is, what a joy it is. Abaye comes and says something; Rava comes and asks a kushya on him; then it spreads. Rashi comes and explains it this way; Rabbeinu Tam comes and disagrees with him. The Rif comes and explains the sugya differently, and suddenly the whole sugya takes on a different picture. Suddenly the Rambam comes and gives another explanation of everything. It is a delight; it is Gan Eden in this world. The greatest Gan Eden in this world is to sit with a cup of tea in your hand and a daf of Gemara, and to sit like that for a few hours. Ah, that is Gan Eden! The poor people in the street do not understand what it is. What a wonderful thing it is.

He finished the shiur, and everyone said, "Now that was a shiur!" Before he left, Chacham Ezra called him aside and said, "Kevodo, let kevodo look here, at Rashi in Sanhedrin. Let kevodo read two words."

He read and said, "My whole shiur is cancelled. Rashi here gives a different explanation that changes everything I said. There are no kushyos and no teirutzim. Why didn't kevodo point this out to me in the middle?"

Chacham Ezra answered, "What, should I hurt your shiur, which you prepared and worked on? Should I come now to show everyone that we know how to learn? You gave a beautiful shiur and everyone enjoyed it. But here is a point to look at; here are the words."

It is not only learning the sugya; it is learning the person together with the sugya. That is what Chacham Ezra Attiah taught us, and that is the way in which he trained us.

My First Derashah

Talk Four · 24:30

I remember that when I was sixteen I had the zechus to give a derashah before everyone on Chanukah. It was the first derashah of my life. All the talmidim of the yeshivah and all the rabbanim, with Chacham Ezra Attiah at their head, sat there while I gave a derashah on the subject of Chanukah. How much I prepared for it, how much I worked on it, with the kushyos of why Chanukah is eight days and not seven, and so on.

Among other things, I said an explanation in the name of the rav of the Zionists, the one called Kook (Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael). I saw the rabbanim looking at me sideways, in wonder. I did not understand why. I went on speaking.

After I finished, Chacham Ezra Attiah sent one of the avreichim to tell me: "That rav and his sefarim are not mentioned in our beis midrash. Do not dare repeat it." It was said gently, quietly, pleasantly, with no commotion. Two words, and they lasted forever. That was the greatness of Chacham Ezra.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani

CHACHAM YESHUAH SHARABANI AND THE FEVER

Talk Four · 28:00

Once, when he was young, Chacham Yehuda fell ill. One night he was suddenly seized by a high fever, and nobody knew what he had. His fever rose to over forty degrees. In those days it was not like today, when you take a pill and the fever goes down and the story is over. There were no such things. It was very serious.

That night, Chacham Yeshuah Sharabani, zechuso yagen aleinu, was involved. I want to tell only a very little about him now, because I want to keep him for later, together with all the rabbanim and all the stories. Still, I will tell this much.

Chacham Yeshuah Sharabani was an avreich in Iraq for whom Chacham Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai, would stand up. The Ben Ish Chai honored him and loved him greatly. Once a rumor spread in the beis midrash in Iraq that every Motza'ei Shabbos Rav Yosef Chaim sat on his second floor and learned with Eliyahu HaNavi, who came and sat and learned Torah with him. They said, "How can we find out?" They said, "The one closest to him is Chacham Yeshuah Sharabani."

They prepared a serious kushya, a bombshell of a kushya on a sugya, and said to him, "On Motza'ei Shabbos go straight up to the second floor, as if to ask him the question, and meanwhile look at what is going on in the room, what you see there." Chacham Yeshuah prepared himself. Perhaps he would have a giluy Eliyahu; perhaps he too would see. He was trembling with awe the whole Shabbos, going over the question, a great question.

On Motza'ei Shabbos, the moment they finished Havdalah, he hurried to the house of Rav Yosef Chaim. As an avreich whom Chacham Yosef Chaim valued, he was at home there; he would come and go. Now he went straight to the stairs to go up to the second floor, knowing that Chacham Yosef Chaim was there. He had only set foot on the first step when Chacham Yosef Chaim came out of the room upstairs and stopped him. "Chacham Yeshuah! Wait downstairs, wait here. You came

with such and such a question. Here is the answer. Go in peace." Through ruach hakodesh he already knew the question. He gave him the answer and sent him off before he could come up, so that he would not see what was happening upstairs.

When Chacham Yeshuah, as a young avreich, went up from Iraq to Eretz Yisrael, Rav Yosef Chaim with a whole entourage escorted him several kilometers outside the city in his honor. That is how much they valued him.

Now, on that night when Chacham Yehuda was ill as a young bochur, Rav Yosef Chaim came to Chacham Yeshuah in a dream and said, "Chacham Yeshuah, get up quickly and daven for Chacham Yehuda. He is in great danger. Daven for him."

Why? The tzaddikim above, without the tefillah of a person below, of a talmid chacham below, cannot accomplish much. They can annul gezeiros above on condition that there is also someone below davening. Only here below can one arouse the world of tefillos above; from above it is no longer possible to arouse the world of tefillah. So when someone here below davens, they can clothe their tefillah in his and raise it all up. Their tefillah then has a body, the tefillos from below, and when these go up they can act with the power of their greatness.

And so it was. He got up at once and went to Shoshanim LeDavid, a special beis knesses about which I will tell you much more. It is in Yerushalayim, at the corner where the Bukharim neighborhood borders on the Beis Yisrael neighborhood. He stood there by the aron kodesh, davened, and went home.

In the morning he went to meet Chacham Yehuda at the yeshivah and said to him, "Tell me, do you feel well?"

"Yes."

"Did something happen to you last night?"

"Yes. I had a high fever. I don't know what happened; suddenly it stopped, and I came back to myself."

He said, "Know that you were in danger, and Chacham Yosef Chaim himself came to me in a dream and asked me to daven for your recovery." That is greatness.

Rav Yosef Chaim was also Chacham Yehuda's uncle. What do I mean by his uncle? His mother's uncle: the daughter of Rav Yosef Chaim's sister was Chacham Yehuda's mother. I have told already what greatness she had, how far she reached, and about her learning.

Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani and the Six-Day War

Talk Four · 1:23:30

Since I have mentioned Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani and Rav Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai, may their zechus protect us, I will tell a little more in their praise.

I knew Chacham Yehoshua from Porat Yosef from my youth, as I said. He was a great man. We saw him as he learned, together with all the mekubalim there in the mekubalim's room.

I remember him coming in one morning a week before the Six-Day War.[57] The whole country was trembling. There was great fear. Everyone had been called up to the reserves, and you hardly saw people in the streets. The danger was great and people shook with fear, because Nasser (Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt, Israel's great enemy in those years) had closed the Straits of Tiran.[58] No one knew how things would turn out.

After Shacharis I was sitting with my grandfather in his house when Chacham Yehoshua came in and said to him, "Chacham Menachem, last night they showed me in a dream the pasuk 'תרום ידך על צריך וכל אויביך יכרתו', and next week we will already be sitting at the Kosel HaMaaravi. The Kosel will already be in Jewish hands. What do you say to that?"

My grandfather answered, "Yes, it is clear. Next week the Kosel HaMaaravi will be in the hands of Yisrael, and be'ezras Hashem, within a short time we will be able to go to the Kosel and daven there."

They began to talk about the war that was about to break out, and about how the whole West Bank (the land west of the Jordan River that was then held by the Kingdom of Jordan) would be in the hands of Yisrael. We lived right on the border. Perhaps fifty meters from us the Arabs were already walking about in the land of Jordan, for the border ran along the edge of Shmuel HaNavi Street. And the two of them spoke about all this plainly. These were Chacham Yehoshua's words: "The bochurim of Yisrael will stand at the Kosel next week and daven for us."

And so it was. A week from that day the bochurim of Yisrael stood at the Kosel, and among them was a talmid. He was in the first group that reached the Kosel, and he can be seen in the photographs of the soldiers who took the Kosel, holding a large shofar. They stood there and davened, just as the two chachamim had said beforehand.

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[57] The war of June 1967 between Israel and Egypt, Syria and Jordan, in which Israel took the Old City of Yerushalayim and the Kosel.

[58] The narrow sea passage at the southern tip of the Sinai, the only way by sea to the port of Eilat. Nasser closed it to Israeli shipping in May 1967, and this was one of the main causes of the war.

The Money for Shabbos

Talk Four · 1:26:30

Even before that, before the War of 1948, Chacham Yehoshua was in great need of money. It was a Thursday, and he was sitting and learning in the Or HaChaim beis knesses in the Old City, the beis knesses of Rabbi Chaim ben Attar.[59] He did not have a single perutah for Shabbos and did not know what to do, but he sat there sunk in his learning.

For a moment he lifted his head from the sefer and remembered that Shabbos was coming the next evening and there was still nothing in the house. He said, "Ribbono shel Olam, Shabbos! Where will I get the money for it?" and went back to his learning.

The main door was locked. No one could possibly come in. And suddenly a man came in through the locked door, walked over to him, put a sum of money in his hand, and went out without saying a word to him. No one ever knew where he had come in or where he had gone out. But the money was in Chacham Yehoshua's hand. In the afternoon he went home, gave it to his wife and told her, "Here is everything we need for Shabbos." And they made Shabbos with great simchah and in plenty.

Kerem Shlomo

Talk Four · 1:28:00

The memory of Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani and of Chacham Salman Mutzafi was frightening. Their greatness in Kabbalah and their tremendous memory are very hard to understand. It came only from their kedushah, for it is written, "כי אין שכחה לפני כסא כבודך". A man who clings to the Borei cannot forget, certainly not divrei Torah. Perhaps he can forget the things of this world, because they do not interest him much and he may not pay attention to them. But in divrei Torah, every man who has not made a pegam in the Yesod is called "בור סוד שאינו מאבד טיפה".

This is the praise with which Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai praised his talmid Rabbi Eliezer ben Hurkenos: "a plastered cistern that does not lose a drop." The simple meaning is this. When you pour water into a cistern that has been plastered with lime, it does not lose even one drop. The water is not swallowed into the walls, because the lime seals the holes and all the water stays inside. But the mekubalim

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[59] The Or HaChaim HaKadosh, author of the Or HaChaim on the Torah, who came from Morocco to Yerushalayim and passed away there in 1743.

explained it differently, for there are great sodos in the words בור סוד. The Yesod is called sod, and the bor is the matter of the yud that joins with the Yesod. So בור סוד is the Yesod "that does not lose a drop." A man who never wasted a single drop levatalah, who never made a pegam in the daas, must have a wonderful memory.

This was revealed in these two geonim, Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani and Chacham Salman Mutzafi. Here is what happened.

They used to sit in Shoshanim LeDavid. Shoshanim LeDavid is a beis knesses that has a special kedushah to this day. Whoever goes in and davens there to this day feels that it is a special tefillah and a special kedushah. Like Porat Yosef, it was built on the advice of Rav Yosef Chaim. I do not know whether there was such kedushah in other places, but in these two there was. Why? Because the berachah of the gaon and tzaddik Chacham Yosef Chaim, and his counsel, rested on them. And in both places sat holy men of the highest level, as I have been telling you about Porat Yosef, and as I will now tell you a little about Shoshanim LeDavid.

In those days there sat in Shoshanim LeDavid Chacham Salman Mutzafi, Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani, and the father of Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, who was called Chacham Salman Eliyahu (Salman is Shlomo). In his youth he had been a clerk. Afterwards he gave himself over completely to learning Torah, both pshat and Kabbalah, until he became a tremendous mekubal. He wrote a very large sefer, Kerem Shlomo, in manuscript, a tremendous work covering the whole of the Etz Chaim.[60]

In those days nearly everything was written in pencil. Who had a pen? Most writings were in pencil, and he too wrote his sefer in pencil. It is in the nature of pencil that little by little the writing rubs off and becomes blurred. He wrote his great sefer and sat in Shoshanim LeDavid with Chacham Salman Mutzafi and Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani and read his manuscript to them, once or twice, no more. They heard his whole commentary and took it in.

Decades passed. Chacham Mordechai Eliyahu, who became the Rishon LeTzion,[61] and his brothers decided to print the sefer from the manuscript. They opened it, and what a calamity! Whole sections that had been written in pencil had been erased. There were sections in order, and then suddenly something was missing: a page, two, three, the writing so blurred that you could not make out one clear word. A few pages more, and again; a few pages more, and again. And this was

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[60] The main sefer of the Kabbalah of the Arizal, written by his talmid Rabbi Chaim Vital.

[61] The title of the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel. Rav Mordechai Eliyahu held the office from 1983 to 1993.

handwriting, not print. One printed page is many pages of handwriting. Almost half the sefer was erased. And it was not even in order, so that they could print it: a section yes, a section no, a section yes, a section no. What could they do?

Chacham Mordechai Eliyahu said, "These two tzaddikim have a good memory." They went to Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani and said to him, "Does the Rav remember the sefer Kerem Shlomo that our father wrote?"

He answered, "Certainly. It was read to me once or twice."

They began to read him a section. As soon as they reached the place where something was missing, he went on by himself, on and on until the next section, while they wrote down what he said. Then they read the next section, and again he went on. They saw that everything he said in the sections they had in front of them was exactly what was written there, without missing a word; and where the manuscript was missing, he went on as though he were reading it, in order. He said the whole sefer to them by heart.

When they had finished, since they saw that he said the sections that really were there perfectly, without adding a word or leaving out a word, they understood that what he said in the missing sections was also correct. Still, they said, "We need to check it once more."

They took a copy of the incomplete manuscript to Chacham Salman Mutzafi and said to him, "This is our father's manuscript. Things are missing here. Perhaps the Rav can complete it from memory?"

He said, "Be'ezras Hashem." He took the manuscript home for one night, looked through it all, and filled in from memory everything that was missing. When they compared what he had written with what Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani had said, the words were exactly the same.

Half a sefer! It is a huge sefer; in print it is several volumes. And not only once: the two of them, each on his own, neither left out a word nor added a word. They said every one of the sections exactly the same. That is "כי אין שכחה לפני כסא כבודך".

The Power of Tefillah

Talk Four · 1:35:30

Chacham Avraham Adas, alav hashalom, was a man whose tefillos bore fruit, and everyone knew it. In the Bucharim neighborhood and all around, everyone knew that his kedushah and his tefillah could bring the dead to life. When he passed away, Chacham Ezra Attiah (the rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef) was pained. He said,

"Who will daven for us now? Who will ask for rachamim for us? Whom do we have in this generation?"

That night they came to him in a dream, I do not know who, and told him from Shamayim, "Do not be pained. There is Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani. The power of tefillah has now been given into his hands." Shamayim made sure he would not worry.

And so it was. My cousin was dangerously ill. He had a high fever and lay in bed for several days, unable to move. They brought a doctor to the house; he examined him and gave him medicines, but in his case no medicine helped. He was slipping away before their eyes.

In the end my uncle got up, took his son on his shoulders, and walked to the house of Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani, a few streets away. He said to him, "Chacham Yehoshua, my son is in such a state." Then and there Chacham Yehoshua put his hand on the boy's head and gave him a berachah for a refuah shleimah. At once color came back into the boy's face. He stood up and walked home on his own feet.

Three Doves

Talk Four · 1:37:00

Chacham Yehoshua had a son named Avraham. As soon as he was born, Chacham Yehoshua looked at him and told everyone present, "This is a gilgul of three neshamos of the early poskim. All three are reincarnated in him."

The child grew up a good boy, busy with Torah, a child of perfect yiras Shamayim. When he was nine he fell very ill. He called his mother and asked her to dress him in white clothes. Why? He saw three doves before him, smiling at him; they had come to take him with them to Gan Eden. She did as he said. He asked her to wash him as well, and then she dressed him in white as he had asked. And so he returned his neshamah to its Maker, with fear and with love.

Three poskim had come to make a tikkun. Even the great tzaddikim, even the poskim, come back to the world to repair small things left over from earlier gilgulim, for, as the pasuk says, there is no tzaddik in the land who does only good and never sins. They came to repair those things, and he returned to his rest.

Soap

Talk Four · 1:38:30

Chacham Yehoshua lived to a great age; he passed away at ninety-four. I remember that in his old age Dermafon came out. Dermafon was something new: "soap without soap," as they called it. Until then, when we went to wash at the mikveh, we took those big square bars of soap, about fifteen centimeters by fifteen centimeters each. It was laundry soap, it was bath soap, it was everything. We would take a huge chunk like that and wash with it.

Then Dermafon came into the world, a new thing, in yellow bottles. People would take a drop and spread it over the body. A chiddush!

I was in the mikveh of Beis Yisrael, and Chacham Yehoshua was there as well. When we both went into the pool of the mikveh, he asked me, "What is this that these people are putting on their bodies?"

I told him, "It is soap."

He said, "What does the body need soap for?"

I said, "The body needs soap to clean off the sweat."

He said, "In all my days I have never washed my body except in the water of the mikveh, when I tovel lekavod Shabbos and every day. That is all. What else is needed?" He understood that one must wash one's hands with soap on coming out of the bathroom; that was a matter in itself. But the body? "What for?" he said. "Smell my body and see whether it needs soap."

I smelled his hand. The fragrance was sweet, a pleasure, like the smell of a baby nursing from his mother. That pleasant fragrance came from his body. His zechus should protect us. He passed away, and his rest is in honor. His zechus should protect us.

Chapter Fourteen

Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah and Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai Moallem

My Rebbi, Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai Moallem

Talk Two · 0:00

I come now to my rebbi, through whom I merited to learn Kabbalah. Apart from the small portions I learned with Rav Yitzchak Kaduri, I learned a great deal with this Rav, who drew me very close: Rabbi Shaul Dovid Chai Moallem. Before I go on to other tzaddikim, I will tell a little about him.

Chacham Shaul was born in Baghdad. From a young age he learned Kabbalah with Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, zechuso yagen aleinu, who was also the rebbi of my grandfather, Chacham Menachem. Chacham Yehuda drew him very close and raised him in Kabbalah from his youth. He himself rose very high, in kabbalah maasis (practical Kabbalah) as well, mostly through manuscripts of Rabbi Chaim Vital and the like that he obtained and mastered. Chacham Yosef Zaruk used to say: "There is no one in our day as expert in true kabbalah maasis as Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai."

Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah was known for his kabbalah maasis. Why did he use it? In those days, when the Jews of Iraq had illnesses and the like, they would run to all the fortune-tellers, the sorcerers, the ovos and yidonim, to get all sorts of things from them to be healed. They also had the dangerous and forbidden custom of pouring water and salt for the sheidim. It went so far that Chacham Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai, zechuso yagen aleinu, arose and explained to the people how severe the issur is, and composed a special tikkun in his Leshon Chachamim for one who had sinned by pouring water and salt for the sheidim. These were poor, simple people, amei ha'aretz who did not know much, and they went off to the fortune-tellers. It is a very grave thing.

When Chacham Yehuda saw this, he said: "Come to me." In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man. He had no choice, so that people would not go to tumah and sell their neshamos.

For whoever goes to such people goes to lose his neshamah with them. It is the same today, when people go to all sorts of po'alei yeshuos and all sorts of "mekubalim." They are told to do this and to do that, and these things are not always permitted by halachah. I do not say this of all of them; I say it of most. There may be some among them who truly go according to the Torah, as one should. I do not know who or what. I speak in general: there are many who use spiritual forces, spiritual beings, which are all, bar minan, sheidim, may Hashem protect us from them. A man who goes and asks such people for help is to be pitied after his death. If he does not do teshuvah, he does not know what awaits him after his petirah.

To save these people, Chacham Yehuda agreed to take upon himself this great burden: to receive the public and lose precious hours of Torah learning, in order to help people in the way of kedushah and keep them from falling, chas veshalom, into such tumas hanefesh.

Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah himself went up to Eretz Yisrael in 5694. Chacham Shaul had been born in 5671, and by the age of twenty he already knew Kabbalah and knew how to use kabbalah maasis. In Eretz Yisrael too, Chacham Yehuda went on doing great mofsim to awaken people to guard their kedushah, so that they would not fall into the hands of all the unfit people who were then in Yafo, in the old city. To prevent this, he sat in Yerushalayim in the Musayof shul (in Shechunas HaBucharim), in what is called Minyan Aleph, and received the public there. After his petirah Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri took his place and continued in this very path, to bring merit to the many, so that they would take their yeshuos through kedushah and not, chas veshalom, any other way. When Chacham Yehuda went up, Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai, who was in Iraq, took his place there, also to do pe'ulos and yeshuos for people and keep them from going to the side of tumah.

Since I have mentioned Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, I will begin by telling a few things about him that are very important to know.

THE STORIES

Rav Yeiva Saba Comes to the Limud

Talk Two · 8:30

Also in Iraq was Chacham Salman Mutzafi, zechuso yagen aleinu. I knew him; he lived in Yerushalayim. I merited to know him and even to speak with him, and I heard from him a story or two about Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, very wonderful things. He was a talmid of Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah already in Iraq.

When the azkarah of Chacham Salman's father came, he made a learning through the night. In Iraq the custom was that whenever they made a limud l'ilui nishmas niftarim, they learned through the whole night; it was a tikkun kareis. They sat and learned at least until chatzos, and whoever could, until morning. A minyan and more would come and sit, and what they learned was the Saba d'Mishpatim. Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah himself writes so in his hakdamah: at such a limud they usually learn the Saba d'Mishpatim.

The Saba d'Mishpatim is a passage in the Zohar, Parshas Mishpatim. One day talmidim of Rabbi Shimon came to Rosh HaNikrah (the cliffs on the northern coast of Eretz Yisrael). In the language of Chazal Rosh HaNikrah is called Sulma d'Tzor. They stayed there at an inn. An old man had gone along with one of them the whole day and spoken to him of things that seemed to him like nonsense; he did not understand him at all. They called the old man and asked him: "What was this nonsense you spoke today? What did you want to tell us?" He opened his mouth and told them all the secrets of the gilgulim of the neshamos. The Arizal's whole Shaar HaGilgulim is built on the words of this old man. This old man was the neshamah of Rav Yeiva Saba, who together with Rabbi Shimon learned all these secrets before Rabbi Akiva. The Shaar HaGilgulim that we have, Rabbi Akiva taught to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and to Rav Yeiva Saba. And Rav Yeiva Saba came and told them all the secrets of gilgul. This is what they learn.

They were all sitting and learning the Saba d'Mishpatim, Chacham Salman sitting among them as the host, when suddenly he began to tremble. Chacham Yehuda said to him: "Tell your friends what you see, so that they will have cheishek."

He said: "I see my father coming in, dressed in Shabbos clothes, and another man is coming in with him. The two of them are sitting and listening to what we are learning here." He was trembling with emotion as he said it.

Chacham Yehuda told the people: "That man is Rav Yeiva Saba. He came himself because his own learning is being learned here, and he came together with the father of the host to see and to share in this learning. And what nachas ruach this gives that man, the father! He came dressed in Shabbos clothes because his son is sitting here now and learning this great limud with all the people."

The Murder in Ba'quba

Talk Two · 16:00

Since the sefer Minchas Yehuda is not found by everyone, I will bring a story or two from it.

Chacham Yehuda tells that in the month of Av 5679 he was a guest in a village near Baghdad called Ba'quba (a town north-east of Baghdad), and he stayed there for Shabbos. On Sunday, after Shabbos, the host who had put him up said to him: "Chacham, come, let us go to comfort a man here. His name is Moshe Shasha'a HaKohen. When he was fifty an only son was born to him, named Menashe. When this Menashe was twenty, he took money, a large sum of gold coins, and went to Baghdad to trade. On the way robbers caught him and killed him, but they did not manage to take the money. The police came, the robbers fled, and the police returned the money to his parents. Now his father is seventy, and he sits weeping over the only son they had and lost. The money he did not lose; the money came back to him. But what is the money worth? The son is gone. Come, let us comfort him."

He said, "Very well," and went with him to comfort the man. But what comfort was there to give? He told him that everything is from Shamayim, everything is a gezeirah, everything is tikkunim. What else could he say?

The father said to him: "Chacham, if it is a tikkun, do me a kindness: look into what the tikkun here really was. What is the story? Let me know. I want to know."

Chacham Yehuda told him: "Good. B'ezras Hashem I will go back to Baghdad, sit over my sefarim and look into it. If I find something to tell you, I will tell you."

Chacham Yehuda relates that on Tishah B'Av, as he sat on the floor of the shul in the middle of the Kinos, he suddenly dozed off, and he saw something like a film before his eyes.

He saw a young man leave another town and go toward Baghdad to trade and earn money. He had left old parents at home and taken the money to make a parnassah to bring back to them. On his way to Baghdad he came to the village of Ba'quba, where this Moshe Shasha'a HaKohen lived. That is, Moshe lived there now, not then; what Chacham Yehuda was seeing was a story of many years before.

He saw that this young man, on his way to Baghdad, reached Ba'quba at nightfall, stayed in the village, went into the inn there, paid, and got a room. There was an old man at the inn, at the front desk, who saw the young man come in. He noticed that this young fellow had come with a purse of money, with gold coins in it, and he coveted the money. But he could not rob him himself: the other was a young man, and the old man was not worth a single blow. So he got hold of another young fellow whom he knew and said to him: "Listen, there is a young man here

with money. What do you say, let us rob him of it. Half for me, half for you, and then we run off." The other said, "Fine."

What did they do? They had a copy of the key made, a kind of master key. In those days keys were big, and it was easy to fake one key from another. The whole difference between one door and the next was one notch or two; all one had to do was file the key a little on the side, and it could be used for all the rooms.

When night fell, the young fellow went in while the old man watched the corridor so that no one would come. The young fellow first took a knife and stabbed the boy without waking him, and killed him. Before he could begin looking for the money, a caravan of people arrived, and the two of them fled at once so as not to be caught. In the morning the boy was found murdered, rachmana litzlan, and the money was still in its place, with his address and all his details, everything. They sent the money to his father.

The neshamah of the murdered boy went up above and cried out that it wanted vengeance. They asked it: "Will you not forgive these two?" It said: "I will not forgive them in any way. My parents are weeping over me now. I went out to support them, and now they are destitute and weeping." He would not forgive in any way; he wanted vengeance. They told him: "Good." Then they dealt with him according to his own din, whatever had to be done with him there, whether Gehinnom or kaf hakela or Gan Eden; I do not know where he was.

After some years the old man died a natural death, and he was born again as this Moshe Shasha'a HaKohen. He was the gilgul of that old man.

Fifty years passed, and the young fellow died too. He grew old and died in a good old age, and no one knew anything of how he had murdered a boy in his youth.

On that very day it was arranged from Shamayim that Moshe Shasha'a, who was living in Baghdad, decided to move to Ba'quba. On the first day, when he arrived, he did not yet have an apartment; he had not found anything yet. Until he could settle in, he needed an inn. He went with his wife to the inn and was given exactly the room in which the boy had been murdered. He did not know any of this. He was given a room; who remembers anything about a boy murdered there fifty years before? He stayed there with his wife; his wife was tehorah, and they were together as husband and wife.

At that very moment they took the neshamah of the murderer, who had been young and, fifty years later, had grown old and died. They told him at once: "Go down now and stand in the room where you murdered. Stand there; you must now enter the child of that old man." Chacham Yehuda saw how the neshamah went in there, afraid that they would put it into the body of the child about to be born, into the drop from which a child was about to be formed. It did not want to go in; it

was afraid. They forced it in, and it entered that drop. That was the son, that was this Menashe who was born.

And now it was all middah keneged middah. As he had murdered at twenty, he was murdered at twenty. And the money: just as he had not managed to steal it then, now too it went back to its place. And the old man, who had caused the harm, had to suffer and weep over a son taken from him, because of what he had brought about back then. The whole picture was a copy of the earlier picture: a man had come to pay for his earlier gilgul.

Chacham Yehuda writes: "On Motza'ei Tishah B'Av I wrote down the story and sent it to him, so that he would know exactly what he was, who he was, what had happened and why it had happened; that there is Din and there is a Dayan."

The Old Man's Tikkun

Talk Two · 24:00

He tells further that one day an old man came to him and said, "Chacham, I went wrong." At some time in his life, while his son was not at home, he had enticed his daughter-in-law and stumbled with her in that grave aveirah. Now he wanted a tikkun. I do not know whether it happened more than once; he did not say how many times. It may have been only once. In any case, he wanted a tikkun.

Chacham Yehuda told him: "Come, make a fast of twenty-four hours, and bring with you a pidyon of 325 taaniyos." According to the Arizal, 325 taaniyos repair the pegam of eishes ish, not of a daughter-in-law. But his daughter-in-law was an eishes ish; she was his son's wife, and his son was alive. He told him, "Come and do the tikkun."

He did the tikkun, twenty-four hours of fasting, and on the day of the fast he came to the Chacham with the money. He was an am ha'aretz; he did not know how to read or daven. He simply brought the money and said, "Here, the Chacham said that..." Chacham Yehuda told him: "Say after me: I give this as a pidyon of 325 taaniyos, which one must fast for such and such an aveirah," and so on, and he repeated it all after him. Then Chacham Yehuda took the money and said: "Yehi ratzon milfanecha, Ribbono shel Olam, that this pidyon stand for this man as though he had fasted 325 taaniyos, to atone for the aveirah of eishes ish."

He took the money, and he writes: "More than that, I saw that this old man was poor and had no money; he had borrowed it from other people. So I gave part of the money back to him as a poor man, for he was poor, and I had already gained the mitzvah of tzedakah through it. I returned part of it to him, and a small part I took for other poor people, so that his tikkun would still be complete."

He writes: "Some time later I saw that the old man had passed away. I saw how his neshamah went up to the Beis Din shel Maalah. They came to judge him for the aveirah with his daughter-in-law, an eishes ish, and they saw that he had done a tikkun. But the tikkun was not complete, because he had done a tikkun only for eishes ish and not for his daughter-in-law."

He had done two aveiros in a single act. Had they been two aveiros in two separate acts, he would have needed kaf hakela and every punishment of the kever and beyond for the second aveirah: what he repaired was repaired, and what he did not repair he would pay for. But since both were in one act, at one time she was both his daughter-in-law and an eishes ish, and he had repaired the eishes ish but not the daughter-in-law, the Beis Din lifted their eyes upward. Two malachim came down and took him, all without words, as if by telepathy, to another room. There they performed an operation on his bris milah and removed the rust of the second pegam, so that he could continue on his way in judgment over other matters without this one.

Chacham Yehuda says: See this old man. For one day, given what he had done, how much he saved himself from kaf hakela and from all sorts of things he could have fallen into, rachmana litzlan!

A Haskamah from Rabbi Shimon

Talk Two · 27:30

We also learned a great deal from Chacham Yehuda's sefarim. We learned his commentary on the Etz Chaim, called Beis Lechem Yehuda, a very wonderful commentary. We also learned much of his commentary on the Idros, Yein Ha-Rekach. It is a true pleasure to read; without it, it is hard to understand the Idros of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the Idra Rabba and the Idra Zuta.

There is a well-known story about it. The Adess family is well known. In Yerushalayim today there is Chacham Yehuda Adess, rosh of Yeshivas Kol Yaakov. His father was Rabbi Yaakov Adess, whom I merited to know. Rabbi Yaakov Adess's father was Rabbi Avraham Adess, a man of tremendous ruach hakodesh. He lived in Shechunas HaBucharim and was known as a baal ruach hakodesh, wonder of wonders.

When Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah was forty-five, he came to visit Eretz Yisrael as a tourist. That was the first time he came to the land. As soon as he arrived, the very next day, Chacham Avraham Adess came to his house. Chacham Yehuda was alarmed, for Chacham Avraham Adess was already old, close to ninety. He came to

his house, and Chacham Yehuda said to him: "Chacham, why did you come? You should have called me; I would gladly have come to you."

He said: "I came only to tell you something. You have composed a commentary on the Idra Rabba and the Idra Zuta, on these passages of the Zohar. Please, print it. And if you have no money, I will see to it that the gevirim here give you money to print it."

Chacham Yehuda said: "Chacham, how does the Chacham know that I wrote a commentary? It is a secret! It is in a safe! No one in the world knows of it! How does the Chacham know what I wrote?"

He answered: "I will tell you the truth. Rabbi Shimon came to me in a dream and said to me: This chacham who has come up from Bavel, whose name is Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, has a very wonderful commentary on the Idros that I said. Influence him to print it."

Chacham Yehuda said: "If Rabbi Shimon told you, then I know that I now have a haskamah from Rabbi Shimon. I have no problem." He went back to Bavel and printed the commentary.

These are men for whom Rabbi Shimon came to ask that their commentary be printed. What greatness! What men! Chacham Yehuda, zechuso yagen aleinu.

Guests at the Siyum

Talk Two · 30:00

All that I have told until now is about Chacham Yehuda, zechuso yagen aleinu. But my rebbi, Rabbi Shaul Dovid Chai, learned with him and grew up under him, and when Chacham Shaul was twenty-four, Chacham Yehuda left, and Chacham Shaul filled his place, in kabbalah maasis as well. He was great in Kabbalah too, and it was a pleasure to learn with him.

Why do I mention him before all the others? Because of something that happened.

I did not merit to learn very much with him; I came from time to time. He opened a yeshivah in Yerushalayim, in the Zichron Moshe neighborhood, in the shul of the Gurjim (the Georgian Jews), called Yeshivas Ben Ish Chai, a yeshivah for learning Etz Chaim. Why did he call it Ben Ish Chai? Because when he decided to found a yeshivah, the Ben Ish Chai came to him in a dream and said: "Chacham, the yeshivah you are opening, call it by my name. I ask this of you." Rav Yosef Chaim himself came to him in a dream with such a request! He answered him: "Al einai ve'al rasi!" (an Iraqi expression: "on my eyes and on my head," that is, gladly), and he went and opened the yeshivah in the name of the Ben Ish Chai.

Understand what interests the great tzaddikim above, like the Ben Ish Chai and all those gedolim. What interests them? Where is their mind? On when, down here, a yeshivah will be opened in their name for the subjects of Kabbalah and such things.

I merited to come to his shiurim a number of times and hear him, though not regularly; still, from time to time I came to hear him, and he was very fond of me. He loved me, and when I was his talmid there was a wonderful bond between us.

Then they finished the Etz Chaim. To my sorrow I have not merited to this day to finish the Etz Chaim; who am I and what am I? But they finished it and made a seudah. Where was the seudah? In the house of Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai, which was also in Zichron Moshe. His whole house was barely... I can see it now before my eyes: four meters by three meters, one room. That was his whole house. There was one wide bed, room for a table, and that was all, besides a few chairs. Perhaps he had another room and I did not notice; in my memory there was no other room.

We sat there at the seudah. I came with my son Avraham, who was then six or seven; I brought him with me, and we sat beside the Chacham. Chacham Shaul sat at the side of the bed, I sat right next to him, my son sat beside me, and two or three more people sat on the bed. On both sides there were people on chairs, and in front sat all the rest who had come to the siyum.

We washed netilas yadayim and began to eat in honor of the siyum. It is a great thing when people make a siyum and a seudah. It is a seudas mitzvah, and there is something very great in it. All the koach of that masechta, of the place they learned, of what they learned, pours great nitzotzos into the food, and whoever eats of it merits wonderful things. It is a very great thing. Especially if they bring meat or fish to such a seudah, the value of the seudah is very, very great.

So they made the seudah, and I sat at the seudah with him, enjoying it all, with divrei Torah of course in between and an uplifting of spirit; a seudah of men who were all baalei tzurah. I was young, the youngest among them; I was under thirty.

We were sitting there when suddenly Chacham Shaul stood up, all of him, looked at my place, and began pushing us: "Move! Move!" He pushed us. I said to him, "There is no room!" That did not interest him. He pushed us until we were squeezed together, leaving an empty space between me and him of perhaps half a meter. We sat pressed one against the other, afraid to move.

He stood there trembling all over, so moved that his hands shook. He looked straight ahead and smiled. Then he turned his face and looked at us, at the empty place at the side, looked at it like this and like this, trembling, moved, moved, moved. It took I do not know how long: a minute, two minutes, three minutes. To us it seemed an eternity; I do not know how long it really took.

After some minutes he straightened up, looked toward the door, bowed, and said: "Shalom aleichem, shalom aleichem." Then he let us move back to our places, and we sat down.

Then he said: "Rabbosai, when I merited to finish the Etz Chaim together with Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, still in Iraq, suddenly Chacham Yehuda rose to his feet, all moved and trembling all over, and we heard him say, 'Baruchim haba'im! Baruchim haba'im!' and afterward, 'Shalom aleichem, shalom aleichem.' He told us: 'Just now Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and the Arizal came in here to take part in our siyum.' After a few minutes they left, and then he let us continue the seudah.

"Now, rabbosai, here in this place," and he pointed to the empty place, "sat just now the Arizal and Chacham Yehuda. The two of them came to take part in our siyum. Here they stood, here they sat beside me just now, the Arizal and Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, and they rejoiced with us at the siyum. Now they have left, and they have left us life and shalom. Yehei shalom."

That was my rebbi, whose every word was measured. These were men whose every word was worth a sela, not idle talk.

Chacham Shaul and the Sheid of Kirkuk

Talk Two · 36:30

Chacham Shaul received semichah at the age of twenty-four from Chacham Yehuda Fetaya, to be a rav, a talmid chacham, a posek and a moreh hora'ah. I knew Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai personally, and I loved him, among other reasons because he was more than an ordinary mekubal. He had manuscripts of Rav Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai, and of Rabbeinu Chaim Vital, and he would read in them. In a word, it was a pleasure to be in his presence.

In his own handwriting he recorded that in the year 5696 (1936) a woman came to him in Baghdad from the city of Kirkuk (a city in northern Iraq), weeping. A sheid was tormenting her. It harassed her, physically as well, drove her out of her mind and gave her no rest, and she suffered day and night. He wrote that all the tikkunim and yichudim he did for her did not help at all. In the end, he wrote, he had no choice: he devised a tikkun of his own. He took the Names and placed his hands on her eyelids.

The eyelids of a person are a very great place, and people do not know what they are. It is not for nothing that Dovid HaMelech writes in Tehillim, "עפעפיו יבחנו בני אדם". All the powers of a person's neshamah are found in his eyelids. It is not for nothing that we say in the berachah, "המעביר חבלי שינה מעיני ותנומה מעפעפי". The Anshei Knesses HaGedolah did not set down a single word for

nothing. We know what the eyes are, but why did they mention the eyelids? They could have finished with "who removes the bonds of sleep from my eyes"; is that not enough? No: there is also slumber on the eyelids. There is a great secret in the eyelids. When it reaches the brain, the brain sets the "third eye" to work, and the third eye is worked through the eyelids; the eyelids are what some call its key master. That is why it is written, "לא ינום ולא יישן שומר ישראל". Why does it not say only that He does not slumber, or only that He does not sleep? Slumber is of the eyelids, and sleep is of the eyes. This is a secret, and we mention it every day in tefillah when we say "who removes the bonds of sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids." It was not established for nothing; it is a very great secret, and when a person understands it, he understands. This is also the secret of the Leviathan: in its description Sefer Iyov speaks of the eyelids of the dawn. The eyelids are mentioned there because the whole matter of the Leviathan is a very great secret. These are things of very great value, the matter of the eyelids.

So Chacham Shaul wrote that he placed two fingers on her eyelids and made a yichud of the Shem Ayin-Beis, the seventy-two Names that come from the three pesukim of Krias Yam Suf,[62] together with the Names that come out of them, which are mentioned in the Zohar. He said them and performed them, and with this he killed the sheid. That is what he wrote.

NASSER BREAKS HIS LEG

Talk Two · 40:00

He did other wondrous things as well. I remember this one as if it were yesterday. I remember how he was hurt, poor man.

It was after the War of Attrition (the fighting between Egypt and Israel along the Suez Canal after the Six-Day War, which ended in the summer of 1970). Gamal Abdel Nasser (the president of Egypt, Israel's great enemy in those years) was ruling Egypt, and Kosygin (Alexei Kosygin, the premier of the Soviet Union) was in Russia, and Russia had joined hands with Nasser. A group of chachamim decided to kill Nasser and Kosygin: Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri; Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai; Chacham Yosef Zaruk, who was also my teacher and about whom I will tell wondrous things further on; and Chacham Sasson Levi, whom I have mentioned before, joined them as well. Their aim was mainly Nasser, and afterwards to break Kosygin too.

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[62] The three pesukim in Parashas Beshalach that begin "ויבא", "ויסע" and "ויט" each have seventy-two letters. Joining their letters gives seventy-two Names of three letters each.

What did they do? There is a segulah from Rabbi Chaim Vital that is done with a liver. One takes the liver of a cow and does what is done with it, with Shemos Ha-Kodesh. It is something tremendous.

Chacham Shaul decided to do it. That night they came to him from Shamayim and told him: "Do not get involved. The klipah of Nasser and of Russia is strong. Do not get involved with them; you will be harmed." He got up in the morning and, though Shamayim had told him not to get involved, he decided he would do it anyway, but without Shemos HaKodesh. He took the liver and did what he did. Three days later, Nasser did in fact die.

But before Nasser died, the very next morning after he had done it, Chacham Shaul woke up with a broken leg. What had happened? He had seen Nasser in a dream. Others were there in the room as well, Rav Kaduri and more, but Chacham Shaul was the one who had done the work. Nasser came and shouted at all of them: "I have no business with you, only with this man. Give him to me; I want to kill him!" Chacham Shaul cried out to his son, whose name was Yehuda: "Yehuda, save me!" His son came and saved him. In the morning he woke with a broken leg, and he said, "Nasser broke my leg."

There was another of the chachamim of Yerushalayim, whose name I do not want to mention, who also came out of it with a broken arm: Nasser came to him too and struck his arm. Chacham Yosef Zaruk was also harmed by this affair. I do not remember exactly what he had; he too had some break, I do not remember whether an arm or a leg. In short, Nasser hurt them.

This is a klipah. Its klipah is above. What do you think it is, something down here below? It is the klipah above that acts. The ones down here are like the wooden pieces on a chessboard, which are moved about; the power comes from above.

Chacham Shaul told that Kosygin also came to him and said, "Do not get involved with us, and we will not get involved with you. Leave us alone." And indeed, what they had done brought it about that however much Nasser raged, in the end he fell and died, after three or four days. Chacham Shaul slowly recovered from the whole affair. It was a very interesting story; I have told it briefly.

The Ruach in Mexico

Talk Two · 47:30

Among those who went was a bochur named Antebi, a few years older than I. At Porat Yosef the classes learned separately, but in the afternoon all the classes, from the youngest to the oldest, would go up to the hall to learn together and review all the shiurim. There the boys of every class met, from twelve and thirteen up to

twenty and twenty-two, all sitting and learning together, and so there was at least a passing acquaintance among them. Among those learning there was Chacham Antebi, who in later years became a shochet in Mexico.

Years passed. When I was about thirty, I came to Mexico, and I stayed with him as his guest. He remembered me from Porat Yosef: "Ah, Shabtai, welcome!" He was altogether a great machnis orchim, wondrously so; there were always guests at his home. I had barely arrived at the Aleppo community there (the community of Jews from Aleppo, in Syria) when he saw me: "You are my guest, no questions." So I stayed with him for several days. Since I speak Ladino (the Spanish of the Sephardic Jews), and the differences from Spanish are not so great, I was able to speak there as well, to give a shiur, to explain, to say divrei Torah. I had contact with the people; I was not mute.

On Friday night we sat at the table. He had brought many guests, I do not remember how many; the table was full to overflowing. Among the guests were a husband and wife. I did not care who was at the table; I did not look at them, and they did not interest me. To this day I do not remember what the woman's face looked like; I have no memory of it at all. But I noticed that there was a husband and wife there who were not at peace. It was not my business. I eat, I go to my sefarim, I go about my day, and that is the end of it.

On Sunday Chacham Antebi came to me and said, "Shabtai, do you know what is going on here? Do you remember that couple?"

I said, "No. I did not see their faces, but I saw that they were not at peace."

He told me: "That woman was alone in the kitchen of their home one day, cooking, when suddenly she heard footsteps. The house was locked, everything was locked. She looked behind her and saw a man who looked like an Englishman, with a reddish face and hair down to his shoulders, like one of those pictures of tall Englishmen. He only showed himself to her and disappeared. She was terrified and ran to another room. After a few minutes she calmed down and went back to the kitchen. The next day he appeared again, and this time he came close and embraced her. Several months have passed since then, and he truly lives with her as husband and wife and does not let her be with her husband. He disturbs her whole life and drives her mad. Not only does he live with her; he does not let her take care of the children or the house. He wants her only for himself. Time and again she faints, and when she comes to, it is plain that she has been with someone as a wife is with her husband. No one has seen anything, but the signs are there on her. She weeps and does not know what to do, and their home is about to be destroyed. What do you think? Perhaps you can help them?"

I said, "Yes. Call the husband here."

The husband came and told me everything. Chacham Antebi gave me klaf and ink, and I wrote two words on each of two pieces of klaf. I told the husband, "Put one on yourself and one on your wife. We will see what happens within three days; tell me, and we will decide."

On Thursday morning Chacham Antebi came to me and said, "Listen, nothing has changed."

I said, "What is the problem? I will go. I will deal with it; I am not afraid." I was foolish. I was young, and I thought I was wise. "I will go," I said.

I told the husband, "Take your wife to another house, not the house you live in. I want to examine her there." He agreed and took her to his brother-in-law's house. I came there and saw the woman sitting on a chair. As soon as I came in, she turned her face aside. I asked her in English (she knows Spanish too, but her mother tongue is English), "Why are you turning your face away?"

She said, "Because you came in, and I see that there is a light of Torah on you. I cannot look at you. The ruach disturbs me from looking." She did not say the ruach within her, only that the ruach disturbed her.

I asked, "And where is the ruach now?"

She said, "Here. It is sitting on this chair."

It seemed strange to me. I went and sat on that chair and said to her, "Well, here I am sitting on the chair. Where is it now?"

She said, "No, it ran away. Now it is behind the door."

It sounded to me like a delusion. I said, "That cannot be. There are no such things; from what I learned, there is no such thing." I told her to give me her palm, and I looked at it. I saw in the lines of her hand that she was very given to imagination. I asked her husband, "Tell me, what has she seen lately that gives her these imaginings? It may all be nothing but imagination."

He told me that she had seen The Exorcist, a film that was showing then in several languages.[63]

I said, "There is the answer. She was influenced by it."

He added that she also read books full of fantasies and subjects of that kind.

I said, "There you have it: one and one make two. I think there is nothing here. The woman is a little cuckoo, and that is all; there is nothing. In any case, there is nothing on her and nothing in this house, no ruach, and she just turns her head from side to side. There is nothing here." I had sat in that very place, and I decided: there is nothing here. The story is over.

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[63] The Exorcist is an American film of 1973 about a girl possessed by an evil spirit. It was shown all over the world.

Then I said to him, "Let us check your house. Perhaps there is something bad in your house. If she tells a story like this, perhaps it is something connected to the house, not to you."

At eleven at night I went with him to his house. The brother-in-law also told me, "She is just imagining things. There is nothing wrong with her; I can see it. She is talking nonsense. Something snapped in her head, a few screws came loose, probably because of the film she saw, and that is all. There is nothing." He did not believe at all, not in ruchos, not in sheidim, not in anything. He did not believe; let him not believe. But I, who do believe, told him that it had to be checked.

I drove with the husband to his house, and we arrived close to midnight. I said to him, "First of all, bring me all the mezuzos and I will check them." I checked all the mezuzos one by one, and they were mehudar, exactly as they should be. We put them back in their places. I began to go through the rooms; I thought that perhaps I would smell some odor of something wrong, perhaps I would sense something. I felt nothing, and I thought there was nothing.

I said to him, "Listen, it is already one in the morning, and I am tired."

He said, "Good, we will sleep here tonight. In the morning I will take you: Chacham Antebi goes up to shul, so take your tefillin and go to shul. There is no reason to go now, at one in the morning, and wake Chacham Antebi from his sleep; it is not fair."

I told him, "You are right."

I went up to sleep, and he turned off the light. The moment he turned off the light, I felt someone throw himself on me and punch me in the side, in the lower part of my body. He gave me such a blow that it paralyzed my leg. On the spot I cried out, "Isaac, me pegó! He hit me!" The husband's name was Isaac. He quickly turned on the light. I tried to get up and could not; the leg was paralyzed. In place of a leg I had to drag a stone, a heavy stone. Standing on one leg and dragging the other, I said to him, "Listen, I am not staying here one more moment."

He said, "All right, let us go to a hotel."

I said, "I am not going to a hotel; there are no mezuzos there. Take me back to Antebi."

He took me back to Antebi's. When we got there, I woke him from his sleep and said, "Look, I have a paralyzed leg."

He laughed at me. "'I will go,' you said, eh? 'I will go, I will go!' Now eat it. You wanted to show off? Here are the results." But what did I really want? I wanted to help the couple.

I thought: I am asleep, this is a nightmare. In the morning I will get up, and it will all be like a dream that has ended. But I got up in the morning with a paralyzed leg. I was in very great distress, and frightened. My imagination began to work on

me too: perhaps there is a ruach and it has entered my body? Perhaps now I have a dybbuk? Imagination drives a person out of his mind.

On Shabbos morning I was to be the shaliach tzibbur and read the parashah in shul; I had promised them I would read it. So I dragged the leg. A walk of a few minutes took me a very long time. I walked with a dragging leg, leaning on the walls along the way, eight blocks, until I reached the shul.

I sat there, and I knew that if this was a ruach, then when the Sefer Torah was taken out I should be completely well. That is how it is supposed to be. And so it was: the moment they took out the Sefer Torah and placed it on the teivah, as soon as they said "וזאת התורה", my leg began to work again. Both legs were working! It became light and worked. I read the Torah with ease, with both legs working well. But as soon as they returned the Sefer Torah, the leg became a stone again, just as it had been.

I began to be afraid, because this is usually a sign that there is some ruach. What would I do now? I made my way home on Shabbos in great distress. The whole way I was adjuring: if there is a ruach inside me, let it leave. I did yichudim and kavanos on myself: remove the ruach from me! I had gotten myself into trouble, and here I was at the end of the world, in Mexico. What would I do now? My family was in Eretz Yisrael, and I was in such a state; who knew what would become of me? I was in distress all day.

I waited until Shabbos was out in Mexico, when it was already close to morning in Eretz Yisrael, and I telephoned my brother. I said to him, "Do me a favor. Go to Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai, my teacher, and tell him the story. Let him help me; let him save me. I am already lost; I do not know what to do."

He said, "All right, I will go. Tomorrow I will give you an answer."

In the meantime Sunday came in Mexico, and I did not know what was going on. What did I do? I told the woman and the brother-in-law to go with her to her own house, without the children, alone, and stay there to see what happened with her: whether everything was all right or whether there was trouble. I wanted to check. I told them it had to be done, and she went back to her house. All this, although they told me that the entire Shabbos she had felt wonderful with her husband and the children. She was happy, truly joyful; she had never had such a thing. She was happy, and I had the blow, and my imagination was already driving me mad: who knew what was happening with me?

At midday I received word. She had arrived at the house, and the brother-in-law was sitting in the living room. She went to boil water for a cup of coffee to serve him. After she served him the coffee, she went to straighten up the children's room. He saw that she was not coming out, so he went in to see what was happening, and he found her unconscious. The dead man had dealt with her again.

They let me know at once and asked what to do. I said, "Get her out of there immediately." I told the brother-in-law to take her to his house again, to get her out of that house, and they took her out. Now I understood, first of all, that it was something in the house and not on me; the proof was that she had been harmed again. I calmed down, knowing that at least I had only received a blow and nothing more.

In the afternoon I received the answer from my brother. Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai had told him: "Do not worry. It is a ruach of the house. Both of them must leave the house and cross the sea." I had to cross the sea immediately, and so did the couple. They had to cross the sea, and that would be the end of it.

At once I took my passport, boarded a plane and flew to Chicago; there is sea on the way. The moment the plane was over the sea, my leg was released. For a period of several years I still had pain in that place, until little by little it calmed down and passed completely. They too crossed the sea. They came to New York and built their home there, and that was the end of it.

That is what Chacham Shaul did for me, to save me. And I received an education: to know that such things are not so pleasant to get involved in, when a young man thinks he knows too much.

May the merit of the tzaddikim, of Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai and of Chacham Rav Fetaya, and of all the gedolei Yisrael, stand for us and protect us, and in their merit may we see yeshuos and wonders, speedily in our days, amen.

The Four Minyanim and El Alamein

Talk Eleven · 0:00

In the Second World War, the German army under Rommel fought its way across North Africa until it stood over Egypt.[64] What did Chacham Yehuda Fetaya do? He called his talmidim, my grandfather among them, and said to them, "Listen, this is an eis tzarah l'Yaakov, and we must annul the gezeirah. Know that he is about to come from Egypt to Syria, and from Syria to Eretz Yisrael." Chacham Yehuda had seen that rasha's map in Shamayim and knew what to say. "Therefore we must now make special tefillos."

He sent four minyanim to the four corners of Yerushalayim to daven there in a special way, all of them around the city and one of them at Kever Rochel. They were to daven at one and the same time to annul the gezeirah. He sent my grandfa-

[64] Erwin Rommel was the German general who led the army fighting in North Africa. El Alamein is a town in Egypt, west of Alexandria; there the British stopped his advance and drove his army back.

ther too, at the head of a group, to stand at one of the four corners. His place fell, I believe, on the side of Givat Shaul, which was then the very edge of Yerushalayim. There they were to stand and make special tefillos to annul the gezeirah.

When they had finished all the tefillos, Chacham Yehuda called my grandfather and told him, "Your tefillah worked. In the merit of the tefillos you made today, Syria will be exchanged for him with Russia. The Satan above, who directs Hitler, shem resha'im yirkav, in everything he does, had already received the power to come to Syria and take control of it. Your tefillah made him mix up the letters (in Hebrew, סוריה, Syria, and רוסיה, Russia, are the same letters in a different order), and he received Russia instead of Syria. Now the German army will go to Russia and sink there in the Russian mud, and the Jews here will have a yeshuah."

Meanwhile, the German army still stood at El Alamein. A day or two after that tefillah, Rabbi Yaakov Abuchatzeira[65] came to Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah in a dream and said to him, "Listen, now the Germans must be removed from Egypt too. Come to me, bring a minyan, and daven at my tziyun to drive the Germans out of Egypt."

Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah got up in the morning, and after davening he went straight to the train station. He had no passport, no food, nothing. He took a bottle of water and his tallis and tefillin and boarded the train that went from Yerushalayim to Egypt. Normally no one was allowed in, since it was wartime. Only the English could travel, and only with papers; civilians had no way in at all. None of this concerned him. He found the train open, went in and sat down, and no one asked him a thing.

Suddenly an English general came and sat down beside him and said, "Rabbi, I have come to sit beside you and guard you until you reach Egypt. No one will say a word to you. The whole way, at every station, I am here." Who was this English general? No one knows to this day. The general sat beside him until they reached Egypt.

When they arrived, he got off the train and went to the people of the kehillah in Cairo. He told them, "Listen, we must make a tefillah at the kever of Rabbi Yaakov in Damanhur. Bring a minyan." They came at once, and several minyanim gathered with him. They took along one sack of flour and one tin of oil, and he said to them, "With this flour and this oil we will make levivos to eat, until the German army falls." They sat there at the tziyun of Rabbi Yaakov and davened. After two days the whole German army there fell and fled, routed at El Alamein.

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[65] The great tzaddik of Morocco, grandfather of the Baba Sali. He passed away in Damanhur, a town in Egypt near Alexandria, on his way to Eretz Yisrael, and was buried there.

In those same two days, that rasha, the tzorer hayehudim Hitler, did something else as well. He had joined hands with Russia and made a pact with them to divide all the countries there between them, this part for them and this part for him. Suddenly he went mad, broke his treaty with them, and went out to war against them, and he fell in the steppes of Russia. And so a great yeshuah came about for the Jews.

AT THE KEVER IN DAMANHUR

Talk Nineteen · 50:00

I have already told you about Rabbi Yitzchak Alfiyah, zechuso yagen aleinu, the rav of my grandfather. When the Germans reached Egypt, at El Alamein,[66] my grandfather and others here were saying the tefillos to drive them back. Rabbi Yaakov Abuchatzeira came to Rabbi Yitzchak Alfiyah in a dream and told him, "Tomorrow morning come to my kever in Egypt.[67] Come to me and say tefillos, and through your tefillos we will drive the Germans out completely, so that they will not come near Egypt or Eretz Yisrael."

In the morning Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah took his tallis and tefillin, took one pita from his house, which was all he had, along with a bottle of water, and went to the train station in Yerushalayim. Now this was wartime. Who was allowed to travel? It was impossible. And he had no papers at all: no passport, no identity card, nothing.

He came and entered the train station, and no one said a word to him. He boarded the train, which was going to Alexandria in Egypt, and sat down. Suddenly a great English general came and sat down beside him and said, "Rabbi, I am guarding you until Egypt." No one asked any questions, no one asked for papers, no one asked for anything, and they arrived in Egypt.

He got off in Alexandria and gathered the Jews there. "Rabbi Yaakov has called me," he told them. "Come with me to Damanhur, and bring along whatever food you have." They took one sack of flour and one tin of oil, and they took a minyan

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[66] In 1942 the German and Italian armies under General Erwin Rommel swept across North Africa into Egypt and reached El Alamein, about a hundred kilometers west of Alexandria. Had they broken through, Egypt and then Eretz Yisrael lay open before them. There the British stopped them, and in the battle of El Alamein that autumn the Germans were defeated and driven back.

[67] Rabbi Yaakov Abuchatzeira set out from Morocco for Eretz Yisrael and passed away on the way, in 1880, in Damanhur, a city in northern Egypt southeast of Alexandria. He is buried there.

and set out. That was all the food they had: oil and flour, to make a kind of dough to eat.

They went there and said tefillos for two days. On the third day all the German soldiers retreated. They had lost the battle, and the whole danger that hung over Egypt and Eretz Yisrael was annulled. That is how it happened.

Short Accounts

The Stones in the Pouch

Talk Two · 5:00

An Iraqi man told me a story that happened in Musayof. There was a Jew named Shasha; I think I knew him. Large stones had formed in the pouch below, in that most private place, and every time he passed water he screamed with pain. They were big stones that were hard to remove, and the pain was driving him out of his mind. He came weeping to Chacham Yehuda in the Musayof shul: "Chacham, I cannot pass water, and they do not know what to do." He was afraid of surgery; he did not know what would come of it, and it was a sensitive place.

Right there Chacham Yehuda said to him, "Ta'al hon" (Arabic: come here). He drew him close and put his hand beneath that pouch, under his garment, and said the pasuk: "Lo yihyeh bekischa even va'even, gedolah uketanah" ("There shall not be in your pouch a stone and a stone, a large one and a small one").

The pasuk means that a man must not cheat with weights. He must not keep two weights in two pouches, one that is supposed to be a kilo but is a kilo and a hundred grams, and one that is only nine hundred grams. When he buys, he says, "Here is my weight; weigh me out a kilo by this," and he steals. Or when he sells, he says, "Here is a kilo weight," and it is only nine hundred. This is forbidden: there shall not be in your pouch a stone and a stone, a large one and a small one.

But Chacham Yehuda took this pasuk and had certain kavanos while his hand was right beneath the pouch with the stones. After he had said it several times with a certain kavanah, he told him: "Go pass water. Do not be afraid." He went and passed water, all the stones came out like dust together with the water, and he was completely healed. That was Chacham Yehuda, zechuso yagen aleinu.

The Berachah That Went Elsewhere

Talk Two · 7:30

Another story, which I heard also happened in Musayof. Perhaps I am mistaken and it was somewhere else; where it happened makes no difference.

One day a man came to Chacham Yehuda weeping that he had no children. He did not know what to do, the poor man; he wanted children. Chacham Yehuda told him: "B'ezras Hashem, now there will be children." Very well; he went on his way.

Three months later the man came back to Chacham Yehuda with a sour face. "Chacham, you promised me children, and they have not come. Three months have already passed, my wife is still barren, there is nothing."

"What?" said Chacham Yehuda. "Wait." He closed his eyes for a few minutes. Then he said to him: "Rasha! I blessed you with children, and you gave the berachah to the Yishmaelite woman you were with in the hotel? Are you not ashamed? She has conceived from you! Is this what you did with my berachah?"

The man lowered his face in shame and left there as fast as he could.

A Cup of Tears at Kever Rachel

Talk Two · 11:30

Chacham Yehuda, zechuso yagen aleinu, himself tells several stories in his Minchas Yehuda that happened with him. They are well known, but I am bound to his tikkunim; I put his whole seder tikkun into my sefer Sadeh Tapuchim. So I have a certain reverence for him. Not a little: he is Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, even though I did not merit to know him. But my grandfather was his talmid.

My uncle told me that every Thursday night my grandfather, together with Chacham Yehuda, who had a very large following, would go with a great crowd to Kever Rachel to make a tikkun kareis there, learning through the whole night. At chatzos Chacham Yehuda would take a cup, sit on the ground, and say Tikkun Rachel weeping. He did not get up until the cup was filled with the tears of his weeping. And it was a big cup, not a small one, not a little whiskey glass, but a tea glass! A full cup of tears over the Churban, over the tza'ar of the Shechinah. When he finished, he would stand by Kever Rachel and drink the whole cup of tears. My uncle told me that he saw him do it.

My uncle also told me that once, when Chacham Yehuda stood with them at Kever Rachel, he told them that he saw Rachel. How beautiful she is! He said that there is no cave there or anything of the kind; it is an ordinary grave. She lies a meter or two deep in the earth.

But he said that the matzeivah of Kever Rachel does not lie exactly along the grave. Rachel lies at an angle to the matzeivah. Yaakov Avinu did this on purpose. He did not build the matzeivah along the length of Rachel's body, but built it so that it covers her entirely at an angle, because the matzeivah is not a grave marker. It is not like the matzeivah anyone builds on a grave, which is built along the length of the body. It is the kind of matzeivah that HaKadosh Baruch Hu loved when the Avos made them before Matan Torah: like the matzeivah Yaakov set up at Beis El and poured oil upon its top, or the matzeivah he made at Beis El afterward when he returned, or the twelve matzeivos Moshe set up at Har Sinai for the twelve shevatim of Yisrael. It was that kind of matzeivah, a matzeivah of kedushah, that he built over her grave. So that it should not look like the gravestone of a woman who had died, he did not build it in the shape of her body but in a different way, to show that this matzeivah is set apart l'shem Hashem.

That is why there is kedushah in the matzeivah itself, not in Kever Rachel alone. The matzeivah standing there now is covered with plaster over the original stones. There were eleven stones there, and on top of them one huge stone. The eleven stones were what the shevatim put there, the eleven shevatim, since Binyamin had only just been born. They put small stones only as a kind of remembrance. The holy matzeivah is the great stone that Yaakov placed on top of them. He placed it as a matzeivah to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, for a matzeivah is one stone; a mizbeiach is built of many stones, but a matzeivah is a single large stone. He set it up as a matzeivah to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and that is why there is a special kedushah at Kever Rachel. When the Vilna Gaon says that the Shechinah is at Kever Rachel today, that there is a special kedushah there, he means this matzeivah: not only because Rachel is buried beneath it, but because of the very matzeivah that Yaakov set there.

So Chacham Yehuda said that he saw her, that she is beautiful, and that the matzeivah lies at an angle to her actual grave.

The Ruach at Shoshanim LeDovid

Talk Two · 43:30

Chacham Shaul removed many dybbukim and many ruchos ra'os. One day at Shoshanim LeDovid (a yeshivah of mekubalim in Yerushalayim) there was a ruach that was very hard to remove: a dybbuk that had entered a girl. Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri wanted to remove it, and the ruach threatened him: "If you take me out, I will enter your son!" He was afraid to get involved with it, and they had given up hope. But in the end Chacham Shaul fought it, struggled with it, and drove the ruach out.

There were a number of such cases; he spoke with ruchos. He was a man unique of his kind.

The Flight He Warned Against

Talk Two · 44:00

In 5730 (1970), two brothers came to visit Eretz Yisrael. They were rabbanim who had been at Porat Yosef (the great Sephardic yeshivah in Yerushalayim) and had moved to America, where they had kehillos. I know them personally, but I do not want to mention their names. It was around the summer, I think.

Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai went over to one of them and said to him: "You have to go back next week on such-and-such a plane? Do not go back then; put off the trip by a day. Please, do not fly on the flight you have for that day."

They did not wonder how he knew they had a flight; they thought that perhaps someone had told him, or that he had asked and been told. They were not moved, and they were not so impressed with Chacham Shaul either. "The Chacham said it, so must we listen to him?" They did not listen. I believe it was Elul; I do not remember exactly when it was. In any case, they were in a hurry for their El Al flight and did not want to give it up.

That plane was hijacked and landed in Jordan.[68] They were held captive in Jordan for some time, until after negotiations they were released and returned to their countries. That is what the Chacham had warned them about.

Ten More Years

Talk Two · 45:30

One day, in 5729 (1969), a man came to Chacham Shaul weeping over his mother, who was sick and in danger. Chacham Shaul closed his eyes, opened them, and said to him: "Sir, she has ten more years. Do not worry; nothing will happen." And indeed, she passed away in 5739, exactly ten years later.

These were people who came from a world of wonders upon wonders.

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[68] In Elul 5730 (September 1970), terrorists hijacked several airliners and forced them down at a desert airstrip in Jordan, where many of the passengers were held hostage for weeks.

Chapter Fifteen

Chacham Sasson Levi



Chacham Sasson Levi

Talk One · 27:30

Now let us go on with Chacham Sasson.

I knew Chacham Sasson from Ahavas Chaim, the beis knesses where we grew up. He davened with us there on Shabbosos and Yamim Tovim, and he was there every night as well, for a fixed shiur: one man sat with him regularly, and every night the two of them learned halachos in the Kaf HaChaim.

He learned at Porat Yosef, in the yeshivah of the mekubalim. That yeshivah of the mekubalim was something not of this world. As a boy I always loved to go in there; I do not know why, but I was drawn to the place, to see all the mekubalim in their garments, the dress of those days, all sitting and learning Etz Chaim and Shaar HaKavanos (the writings of the Arizal as Rav Chaim Vital set them down). I did not understand; I was a young boy. But I watched how they argued.

There was Chacham Yosef Shayo. When he disagreed with someone's pirush, he would raise his voice: "What is this?! It is like this!" Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri sat to the side and answered quietly, "Ah, ah, it is like this," every word measured. My teacher, Chacham Yosef Zaruk, always sided with him and agreed with his pirush. And Chacham Sasson Levi always sat and put in short comments. All of it was in short comments, and afterward they sat together in such peace, such love. All the argument was the storm of learning. There were two or three who brought the excitement into the learning, but otherwise everyone sat on still waters, learning. It was a delight. Chacham Sasson was among them.

But he had one special thing. When everyone had finished learning and gone home, he would go into a room by himself and sit there learning alone until evening. Why?

In Sefer HaKanah, which is attributed to Rabbi Nechunya ben HaKanah (we do not really know who wrote it, but it is an ancient sefer of Kabbalah, with things in it

unique of their kind), it is written on the pasuk said of the eved Ivri, "Six years he shall work, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing," that every man is an eved Ivri to the Borei Yisbarach. If he works six years, in the seventh he goes out free. Anyone who fasts for six years, six years in a row, except on the days when it is forbidden to fast, and sanctifies himself in learning Torah (not fasting and then going off to do all sorts of foolishness, but sanctifying himself in learning Torah and rising higher through it), then in the seventh year, on the night that begins the seventh year, he kills his yetzer hara. The yetzer hara can never again prevail over him. He goes out free, for nothing; the yetzer hara has no more place in him. And Chacham Sasson was then in the middle of those six years of fasting.

I remember how we boys used to run to merit the mitzvah of making him a cup of tea at tzeis hakochavim. We would race to bring it: who would bring the cup of tea to Chacham Sasson? Who would merit this mitzvah, to let him break his fast after a day of fasting? He sat wholly in kedushah, in learning Torah. He was a tremendous gaon, at home in all of Shas and all the poskim, and in Kabbalah too, but he was great above all in kedushah and in chassidus. Chacham Sasson, zechuso yagen aleinu.

Even after the seven years he could not stop fasting. Almost to his last day, he kept on fasting. I will continue later with what happened to him in his last years; now I am speaking of the time of his youth, when he was in the midst of these things.

He was a wonder of wonders of a man. His berachos came true. Chacham Mordechai Eliyahu (later the Rishon LeTziyon, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel) was his chassid. Whatever the trouble, he would say, "Go to Chacham Sasson, get a berachah; it will help." His berachos were a wonder; there were a great many mofsim and nissim with his berachah, as I will tell further on.

He wore a long robe with two long pockets, one on each side. When he walked down the street, we would all run to kiss his hand; to kiss a chacham's hand was a great thing, and that is how we had been raised. He would put his hand on our heads and bless us. People came from all over the world, for they had heard of Chacham Sasson, and Chacham Mordechai Eliyahu saw to it that he had a great deal of work giving berachos. They would come: "Chacham Sasson, a berachah: someone is ill, such and such." He would give a berachah. Afterward they would give him money, and he would take it; he never said no. He held out his hand and took it, without even looking at what he had been given, and put it in his pocket, and the pocket filled up with money.

The director of Yad L'Achim (the organization that rescues Jews from the missionaries) in Yerushalayim told me that Chacham Sasson came to him every Thursday without looking at what was in his pocket. He would turn around, his face

forward and his pocket behind him toward the table, empty his pocket out onto the table, and leave. He did not even know what he had received or what was there. The director showed me: there were dollars, there were francs of every kind, there was Israeli money, a whole pile. He did not even know what he had in his pocket. He emptied it and walked out.

As for himself, he lived in a poverty that cannot even be described. The Rabbanim of Porat Yosef gave his salary to his wife, so that she could buy what was needed with it. Had it reached his hands, who knows? He would surely have given that to tzedakah too and lived on air.

I used to see him at the vegetable seller in the Bukharim neighborhood. He would always come on Erev Shabbos to see whether there were plain vegetables that were about to be thrown away, and take them for pennies: things that could not keep until Sunday and would spoil. He would come and ask, "What do you have? Give it to me." And the seller would give him all the rejects, whatever was left. Several times I was there, and I signaled to the seller with my eye: give him good produce, and I will pay. So the seller would say, "Chacham Sasson, *ta'al! Chud hada, w'hada*" (in the Arabic of Iraq: "Come! Take this, and this"), and bring him the choicest fruit.

"What is this?" Chacham Sasson would ask.

"I don't need it. Soon I have to close for Shabbos."

So he took good produce, and as soon as he left, I paid for it. As long as Chacham Sasson lived in this world, he never knew of it. After his passing, when he discovered what I had done for him, he took care from there to come and help me here in this world, as I will tell further on.

He was a tremendous gaon, a great talmid chacham who knew halachah. Whenever he was asked for a psak, he answered offhand. Many times, as a boy of fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, I asked him halachos, and he would draw out the poskim, everything, just like that, and answer me in full.

He was a close friend of Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi, who was the posek in Beis Knesses Shemesh Tzedakah in the Geulah neighborhood, zechuso yagen aleinu. They were good friends, and both came from the same land. They spoke the Arabic of Iraq, which came easily to their lips, but Hebrew too, especially in the beis knesses. When they gave a shiur in halachah, it was in Hebrew.

THE STORIES

The Old Woman on the Way to Har Tziyon

Talk One · 12:30

Since I have mentioned Rav Uri and Har Tziyon, I will tell you another fitting and very beautiful story about Har Tziyon.

I told you that the way down to Har Tziyon was steep and not at all easy. From Emek Refaim, near the train station, the whole descent was a road with a sharp slope, very tiring. You went down it in a straight line to the foot of the hill, and then came the climb up the steps. As I said, it was not easy even for young men.

There was a young man from the Edot HaMizrach whose father had passed away and left him a tzava'ah: "My son, every Erev Yom Kippur go to the tziyun of Dovid HaMelech and light a candle l'iluy nishmasi. That is what I ask of you." The son's name was Binyamin. He was only a young lad, but for several years he fulfilled his father's tzava'ah every year.

In those days even Egged (the national bus company) was more careful about the kedushah of Yom Kippur, and by twelve noon all the buses had already stopped. Binyamin lived in Katamon. He had to take the number 4 or number 15 bus to the stop near Emek Refaim, walk the whole way down and the whole way up, and back again, then go home by bus, and he had to hurry.

On Erev Yom Kippur of 5727 he came in the early hours of the morning and began to go down. When he reached the top of the hill facing Har Tziyon, just before the steep descent, he saw an old woman, bent over, with a black shawl covering her head and the upper half of her body. She was walking very slowly and carrying a heavy basket. When she saw him, she said to him, "Young man, do me a favor. It is hard for me to carry. Help me bring this to kever Dovid."

He was pressed for time, but he had no choice; he could not watch a woman in such a state carry that basket. He helped her. The basket was heavy. He took it and walked beside her, slowly, slowly, step after step. The descent and the climb to the top took him close to three quarters of an hour, while he was anxious to finish quickly, light the candle, and get back in time for the last bus.

When they reached the plaza at the top, already close to the tziyun, he told her, "I have to run." He left her on the upper plaza of Har Tziyon itself, ran quickly to the tziyun of Dovid HaMelech, lit the candle l'iluy nishmas his father, and then ran at full speed down the whole descent and up the whole climb. Out of breath, after seven or eight minutes, he reached the top of the climb, at the very place where he had met the woman.

He looked, and there was the woman standing beside him with the heavy basket, smiling at him.

He was stunned. He had left her up at the top seven minutes before. The descent and that climb alone take an ordinary person a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes; for an old woman like her it would be at least three quarters of an hour again. And she stood beside him, smiling, and said to him, "Binyamin, my son, come and escort me to my home. I live at Kever Rachel."

Kever Rachel was across the border. The way there went along Derech Chevron as it was then, as far as the border, and from there, beyond the border, it was another two or three kilometers to Kever Rachel. "Come and escort me."

Terror seized him. He took to his feet and fled, and came home all shaken. Everyone asked him what had happened. He said, "I don't know. I took an old woman, and suddenly I found her beside me, and she told me to take her to Kever Rachel. I was afraid."

His family were relatives of our grocer, Eliyahu Elias. He heard the story, for they told it to him at once: "Listen, such and such happened, and we don't know what to do; the boy is in shock." He told them, "I am going right now to Chacham Sasson, and I will ask him."

I knew Chacham Sasson from my childhood; we grew up with him in Beis Knesses Ahavas Chaim. Chacham Sasson Levi was one of the greatest tzaddikim I knew, zechuso yagen aleinu, and because of this story I will soon tell you about him.

Chacham Sasson said to them, "Tell him not to worry. Let him be calm. Rachel Imeinu came to say that this year we will be at her tziyun. This year the Zionists will take the part that is in the hands of Jordan, and we will all stand at Kever Rachel and daven. Had he gone with her, he would have reached Kever Rachel in two minutes, davened there and aroused rachamim, and afterward she would have brought him back home, and he would have had nothing to fear. But he was afraid. Do not worry; it is a sign that this year it will happen."

He said this on Erev Yom Kippur of 5727. The grocer came back at once, and when I went into his shop half an hour later, he told me, "Do you know, this is what happened with Binyamin, and this is what Chacham Sasson said." When Chacham Sasson said something, he knew what he was saying. But to us it seemed like a dream of Aspamia. The border was right next to us, on Shmuel HaNavi Street. Who could even peek past the Mandelbaum Gate (the one crossing point between Israeli and Jordanian Yerushalayim)? For us Kever Rachel was a dream.

And so it was. In Sivan 5727 we were already at the tziyun of Kever Rachel.

The Mezuzos in the Cursed House

Talk One · 20:00

Since I have mentioned Eliyahu Elias, before I turn to Chacham Sasson I will tell you another remarkable story that Eliyahu Elias told me.

In India they worship the cow. The cow walks wherever it likes; it is as it was in Mitzrayim. Those animals remain to this day: a beast bowing to a beast, a beast on two legs bowing to a beast on four.

There was a goy there who worshipped the cow. He lived in the apartment above that of Eliyahu Elias's parents, and besides it he owned a villa in the center of the city. Whether it was in Calcutta or in Bombay, I no longer remember; many years have passed since then. In any case, he had a villa in the center of the city, but it stood empty. No one wanted to buy it; no one even wanted to pass by its entrance. Anyone who slept there did not get up in the morning; they found him dead. After several people had slept there and in the morning their bodies had to be dragged out, people understood that the building was cursed. They were afraid even to walk along the road beside it. They would not walk on the sidewalk on that side; they crossed to the other side of the street to go on their way, so frightened were they.

He wanted to be rid of the place, but how? No one in the city would take it even for free. He went to a dealer in land and property and said to him, "Listen, whatever you can sell it for, bring me the money. I want to be rid of the place, and whatever you bring me will be a berachah. You will get a high percentage."

The dealer knew he could not sell it to the people of the city; who would buy it? So what did he do? He went looking for a victim at the train station: one of the newcomers who arrive by train, some naive stranger to sell it to. As he stood at the station, he saw an Iraqi family; many Iraqis came to India in those days. A man with his wife, several children and his mother-in-law, all arriving with their bundles.

He went over to him and said, "Listen, sir, I have a bargain for you. I have a building in the center of the city, with so many rooms, with land, at half price. It is worth such and such, but the owner has to go abroad and wants to sell quickly and leave. You put down cash, and you get it at half price."

"All right," said the man. "Show me."

The dealer brought him the keys and said, "Go by yourself. I cannot go in with you right now; I have other things to do. Here is the key. Go, look the place over, come back to me with the key, and tell me what you want."

The man was thrilled. To find something like this at half price, a real bargain! He said, "Here is the money." The dealer brought the owner, the goy who worshipped the cow, and they signed a contract for the place. He paid him the money, and the

goy told him, "You can move in right away. In a day or two we will go to a lawyer to finish the matter." It was already his, and he could move in.

He came in joy with his wife, his children, his mother-in-law, all of them, and they went in. What beauty, what a place; he had never dreamed of such a thing. And naturally, what is the first thing he did as a Jew, as the Torah commands him? He had brought mezuzos with him from Iraq. "Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam asher kiddeshanu b'mitzvosav v'tzivanu likboa mezuzah." He put up a mezuzah in every room, and they went to sleep for the night.

Eliyahu Elias told me that his father could not sleep that night. Why? Because the goy upstairs did not sleep the whole night. He paced back and forth, knowing that in the morning they would be carrying bodies out of that house. He had sold it and taken the money, so it was no longer his concern, but he was dying to know what would happen there. He knew that whoever slept there did not get up. Who knew how many bodies would come out this time? Would one of them be left alive, or would they all go? He did not know. All night long he paced back and forth, back and forth, nervous and impatient, treading on their ceiling and keeping them from sleeping; ceilings were not soundproof then.

Early in the morning he went out and stood at a distance outside the building to see what would happen. And he saw the Iraqi Jew come out in the morning with his tallis and tefillin under his arm, on his way to beis knesses.

He went up to him and said, "Tell me, are you alive?!" He knew him, of course; just yesterday he had sold him the house, they had sat together, done business, and been paid.

"What a question! Why shouldn't I be alive?"

"I will tell you the truth," said the goy. "I had no intention of traveling. I sold it to you because of the danger of the place."

The Jew laughed. "Come with me," he said, and brought him back to the house. The goy was afraid to go in! "Come and see," said the Jew. "Everyone is already getting up. My mother-in-law has already started lighting wood for the fire to make hot drinks. You see, we are all here, alive and well."

"How can it be?!"

The Jew showed him the mezuzah. "You see this? It was not here before. Hashem is guarding us. I put up a mezuzah, we slept in peace, and we are all alive and well."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. Hashem is guarding us."

"That is a mezuzah? I want to see."

For a whole week he watched people living there, alive and well and normal; the Jew had gotten a building for pennies. Then he said, "If this is how it is, I must be-

come a ger." He took his whole family, they were megayer, and they came to Eretz Yisrael. Eliyahu Elias even told me where in Eretz Yisrael they live. I will not say it, out of respect for the people; without their consent I cannot speak of it. They became complete geirim, every one of them, and they came to know the Torah through this.

In the end he sold the house cheaply, but he gained eternal life, he and his whole family. Yishtabach Shemo.

The Thousand Nights

Talk One · 44:30

When a person makes a certain tikkun for his aveiros, or sanctifies himself in some way, Shamayim tests him with a nisayon, to see whether he is worthy of receiving what he is meant to receive in return. If he does not stand the test, he can lose everything.

There is a well-known story from the time of the talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov. A certain man, a talmid chacham, heard from one of the talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov that whoever sits a thousand nights learning Tikkun Kares (learning done as a tikkun for aveiros whose punishment is kares) the whole night, from sunset until morning, will see Eliyahu HaNavi on the thousandth night. If he is alone the entire night, Eliyahu HaNavi reveals himself to him and speaks with him.

"I will do it," said the man. He sat a thousand nights, from sunset until morning, and learned Torah, about three years of nights. He gave it everything, with no excuses: not the night of Pesach and not any other night. He sat and learned. As soon as he finished the Seder, he sat right down to learn. The learning was all he had in his head.

The thousandth night arrived. He could not be at home, because Eliyahu HaNavi was going to come and his family was there. He decided to go to the beis knesses. There he could learn with nobody around. The people would go home, and Eliyahu HaNavi would come. He went to the gabbai and told him, "Listen, tonight I am not learning at home. Leave me the keys. I am learning here, I will be here all night. Come in the morning and I will be here." The gabbai knew him as one of the respected members of the kehillah, and he saw no problem. He left him the keys.

It was a winter night, and it was raining. The man locked himself in from inside and sat and learned. At chatzos he heard knocking at the door. He went over and asked, "Who is there?"

"A man, a poor man. I have just come from outside the city. It is raining outside. Open the door; I want to come in."

"I cannot open for you tonight. I must be here alone. Go to the hachnasas orchim. It is two streets from here, turn left, three, and there is the hachnasas orchim. It is open, and you can go in and stay there."

"But I am cold. I don't know the place, and it is dark. Please, open for me. I am shaking from the cold."

The man made his calculation: "What? I learned a thousand nights, and now this fellow is going to ruin everything for me? What will become of me?" He told him, "I cannot. Please, go there. Two streets, right, left, turn this way and that, and you will get there."

The poor man answered, "I cannot turn this way and that. I am cold. Open for me; I am shaking from the cold."

"Listen, my friend, I cannot. Go two streets and you will get there. Goodbye." And he went.

The man learned until morning, and neither Eliyahu nor anyone else came. He came out bitterly disappointed and went to the rav from whom he had heard it. "Rebbi, what you said did not come true. A thousand nights I sat and learned with determination, and nothing came of it."

"Tell me, what happened on the last night?"

"I sat and learned in the beis knesses so that I would be alone."

"Nu?"

"In the middle of the night some poor man came and asked to come in. He was stubborn, he insisted on coming in. I was afraid he would ruin everything for me. He told me he was cold, and I told him to go to the hachnasas orchim. He argued with me for a few minutes, saw that it did him no good, and went off to the hachnasas orchim."

The rav said to him, "And if I tell you that it was Eliyahu? Had you opened for him and said, 'I am ready to give up everything I have learned so that a Jew should not be out in the cold, should not catch a chill, should keep his health,' you would have received Eliyahu. It was Eliyahu, testing you."

What are a thousand hours, a thousand nights of learning, worth, if after all of it you are not a mentsch, and you do not know how to give away your Olam Haba so that a Jew should not catch a chill and come to no harm? Is that worth anything? Is the learning the main thing? The main thing is what comes of it. You did not stand the test: goodbye. That is how it is.

Chacham Sasson's Test

Talk One · 49:00

So it was with Chacham Sasson as well. His thousand, his seven years, came to an end in a particular week.

Every Thursday night, which is leil Shishi as Jews count it, there was a shiur in the Zohar in a shul called Toag on Rechov Rashbam in Yerushalayim. They learned until chatzos, and at chatzos everyone went home. Chacham Sasson was a regular there. That Thursday night he went to learn as usual. Chatzos is not exactly twelve o'clock; it is around a quarter to twelve. They finished and said Kaddish and Shema, since everyone says kerias Shema al hamitah a few minutes before chatzos. Then they said Kaddish and went home.

Chacham Sasson also got up to go home. He lived down below Shmuel HaNavi, in lower Beis Yisrael, on the border of Shmuel HaNavi. Leaving Rechov Rashbam, he went into the main street to reach Rechov Yosef ben Matisyahu, in order to turn left from there toward Rechov Malchei Yisrael and get home. As he came near Yosef ben Matisyahu, he saw what he saw. He took to his heels and ran to my grandfather.

It was a quarter past twelve at night when he knocked on the door. My grandfather opened it and said, "Chacham Sasson, what does kevodo want?" He was in a storm of agitation, and he had come barefoot, without shoes! My grandfather asked him, "What happened?"

"I left the shul, and on my way I passed by Beis El, the Beis El shul on the corner of Rechov Rashi. Suddenly a woman came toward me and asked me what time it was. I told her it was about twelve. She was wearing a robe, and suddenly, bar minan (far be it from us), she pulled off the robe and, bar minan, called on me to sin with her! And I, bar minan, bar minan, was afraid for my neshamah, and I ran away. To run faster, I left my shoes there and ran barefoot, and I came to you. Bar minan! Fire, fire! A blazing fire! Fire, bar minan!" He was utterly shaken.

That night my cousin happened to be sleeping at my grandfather's house. My grandfather woke him and told him, "Go bring him his shoes." In the middle of the night he sent him to bring back the shoes from the corner of Rechov Yosef ben Matisyahu and Rechov Rashi.

He had the nisayon, and he stood in it.

Two of Chacham Sasson

Talk One · 55:00

On leil Shabbos kodesh of Parshas Tetzaveh, 5763, I dreamed that I was in Yeshivas Porat Yosef, upstairs on the floor of the main hall. There were many people learning there, and Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi was sitting there in his Shabbos clothes, giving a shiur.

As I arrived, he finished the shiur and was going out. I was coming in as he was going out, and we met. He asked me, "Do you have a question?" I said no. After he had gone a little way, I remembered that I did have a question. I asked him a question about the mesirus nefesh and kiddush Hashem that a person has in mind during kerias Shema. I asked him a certain question, and he explained to me that the Menorah is the sod of HaKadosh Baruch Hu with the Shechinah, and the fire of the lights is the sod of Binah (one of the Sefiros, called the "mother" in the Kabbalah), which shines upon them like the mother hovering over her young. He explained a very wonderful sod there, all while I was walking him on his way.

As I was walking with him and speaking divrei Torah, we came to a certain place in Yerushalayim, a corner of Rechov Shmuel HaNavi. He said to me, "Up to here you can come. You cannot come any further with me." I tried to go in with him, and I saw him go in and be swallowed up into the ground. There is an opening to Gan Eden there; I already knew that from my grandfather before.

In that same dream I went back to Porat Yosef. This time I saw Chacham Sasson Levi standing there, blessing people. But I saw two of Chacham Sasson, exactly alike, like twins! One was wearing his usual clothes, the black jubba (a long robe) that Chacham Sasson always wore. The other was Chacham Sasson as well, with the very same form, but dressed entirely in white.

There was a long line of people waiting for a berachah from the one dressed in white. What could I do? HaKadosh Baruch Hu created me without patience, and to this day I lack patience in life. I did not have the patience to wait in a long line for a berachah from him. I said to myself, "I will go to Chacham Sasson in the black clothes and take a berachah from him. Why should I wait in this long line?"

I went over to Chacham Sasson and said, "Let kevodo bless me."

He said to me, "No. These are weekday clothes. Go to the Shabbos clothes, go to the other one. Go to my neshamah yeseirah."

I immediately stood in line for the Chacham Sasson who was dressed in white. When I reached him, he remembered me. He remembered me, and at once he began a Mi Sheberach, mentioning my name and my mother's name.

I said to him, "Chacham Sasson, a year ago I was in France, and I did not manage to raise money in a magbis there. I have many poor families that I support, and

their situation is very hard. I have nothing to give them. Now the situation is difficult. I am preparing to travel next week, right after Purim. The expenses of Pesach are coming, and I have to give money to poor families. Last time I did not succeed. Daven for me now, bless me that this trip should succeed."

He blessed me immediately and said, "This time you will come back with a great berachah."

I traveled a week later, and it went beyond nature. People searched me out to give to me. Instead of my running from person to person and convincing each one that I was collecting for needy families before Pesach, people came to me: "Rav Shani, please! Rav Shani, Rav Shani!" I came out of there in a way beyond nature. The first time I had barely brought in a small sum, two thousand euros over the cost of the ticket. This time I came out with three times as much, four times as much, far more. Baruch Hashem, all the poor families also had a share in the berachah he had given me that night.

The Glass of Gan Eden

Talk One · 1:00:00

Another time as well, because I had helped him while he was alive, he repaid me. Once, when I was under pressure, he came to me. I saw myself going to the same place where Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi had gone in and vanished from me. But this time I went into the place where he had been swallowed up. I went in and saw Gan Eden. I saw a beautiful place. There are buildings there too, in the lower Gan Eden, and the buildings have glass in them. I knew this from my grandfather.

My grandfather had a son named Nissim who had passed away. Nissim died after Arabs chased him to kill him and stabbed him in the liver. He reached the hospital and passed away there. My grandfather was in tremendous grief after his passing. He would sit and cry, "Nissim! Onde estás, Nissim (where are you, Nissim)? Eicha, Nissim?"

One day, in the middle of his crying, his son Nissim stood before him and said, "Abba, why are you crying? I am in a good place above. My time had come, and this was only the way by which I left the world. I sit above in the company of the upright and the wise, and I enjoy the radiance of the Shechinah. Do not grieve over me. Above, I grieve that you grieve over me. I received permission to come to you."

My grandfather said to him, "I cannot be comforted except on one condition: that every time I call you, you will come and talk with me. There are things I want to talk over with you."

Nissim said, "Fine. I have received permission from the Beis Din shel Maalah, and I will come to you." And so it was. From time to time my grandfather would call, "Nissim! Nissim!" and in the blink of an eye his son would appear and talk with him.

I was young, fourteen or fifteen, when one day I went with my grandfather to the bus stop of the number 15 line in Kikar HaShabbos (the square at the edge of Geulah and Meah Shearim). We sat there together with my grandfather's son Mordechai. I heard my grandfather tell his son, "You should know that Nissim came to me and told me secrets from above. Among other things he told me this: if in a dream you see Gan Eden, look. If there is glass, it is the lower Gan Eden. If there is no glass, it is the upper Gan Eden. That will be your sign."

I took in those words. And the several times that I had the chance to visit Gan Eden, I always looked, automatically, to see whether there was glass or not.

Now, in this dream, there were rooms and there was glass, everything. First I saw Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi sitting on the lower floor, completely immersed in the radiance of the Shechinah. I asked him, "Where is Chacham Sasson Levi?"

"Go up one floor," he told me.

I went up the stairs one floor and saw Chacham Sasson, wonder of wonders. All the avodah he had done here was worth it for what he had above. Just to see him was a pleasure.

I said to him, "Chacham Sasson, I have such-and-such a problem."

He said, "Now it is Shabbos. We do not speak about problems; those are weekday matters. Come to me on Sunday at one o'clock. And don't forget to bring the oil."

On Sunday at one o'clock I was at his tziyun with oil. I lit the oil and made my request there, and he did what he could to help me. That was the reward he gave me for helping him back then with the vegetables.

May the merit of all the tzaddikim I have mentioned stand and protect us and you, for every yeshuah. Amen.

Short Accounts

A Drop of Soap in the Tea

Talk One · 36:30

Every evening Chacham Yaakov gave a shiur in the beis knesses for baalei batim. I took part in that shiur several times, and when my son Avraham was older, he took part in it several times too. He knew Chacham Sasson well; Chacham Sasson was part of our very neshamah.

One day my son came to me and said, "Abba, you won't believe it. Chacham Sasson came in, trembling all over with fear, and stopped Chacham Yaakov in the middle of the shiur. He said, 'Chacham Yaakov, bar minan (Aramaic: far be it from us), bar minan, what shall I do?'

"'What happened?'

"'I drank tea. They served me a cup of tea, and I tasted amah in the tea.'"

Amah is a laundry soap that they used to wash the cups with.

"'And I don't know whether this amah is kosher or not. What shall I do?'

"Chacham Yaakov thought for a minute and said to him, 'Fast two days.'"

Is that Shulchan Aruch? Is that halachah? According to halachah, even if that amah had been made from pig fat, nothing at all would be needed. It is a few drops; besides being batel b'shishim, it is also nosein ta'am lifgam. Even on Pesach, if someone cooked food that took in chametz with a spoiled taste, the food may be eaten. For example: if on Pesach someone took by mistake a chametz pot from the rest of the year, a pot that had not been kashered, and cooked food for Pesach in it, he may eat the food. That is the psak of Maran (the Shulchan Aruch): nosein ta'am lifgam is permitted even on Pesach. True, the pot has a taste of chametz in it, but that taste was cooked into it days before, and any taste from food cooked more than twenty-four hours earlier is left in the pot spoiled. It is nosein ta'am lifgam, and permitted even on Pesach. So what does it matter whether there was amah in the tea or not? Does anyone drink amah? Its taste is bar minan to begin with. Besides, it was a drop that fell in: batel b'shishim, and a spoiled taste besides, nosein ta'am lifgam.

Had people come to Chacham Sasson with such a question, chas v'shalom he would have told them, "Nothing is needed. There is nothing to worry about." But for himself, he trembled so.

And Chacham Yaakov was our teacher in the halachos of Yoreh De'ah. There was a kollel (sixty men came to it) in Beis Knesses Shoshanim L'Dovid, and he taught Yoreh De'ah there until chatzos, these very halachos: the halachos of nosein ta'am lifgam, the halachos of taaroves. He was a tremendous gaon. Did he not know the halachah? For something like this he would tell anyone, "Don't worry, it is nothing, go home." But not here.

It seems that for neshamos that are like a bride's gown, there are other halachos. When we go about in greasy work overalls, a little dirt does not matter. But for one who wears a bride's gown, even a little dust is another matter altogether.

A Handshake in France

Talk One · 39:30

When my son first told me the story, how Chacham Yaakov had told him to fast two days over a drop of ama, which according to halachah is nothing at all, I did not understand him. And who am I? A small child, with a small mind, next to these giants. When did I come to understand? When I had a similar story of my own, from a different direction.

I was staying in France, and one day I was receiving people. My hosts in the shul had set out fruit for me: a plate full of fruit on the table, with bananas, oranges, and a few other kinds that have thinner peels. Every so often I took a piece of fruit to eat, to keep up my strength. I had not eaten breakfast there, so this was what I ate.

Suddenly a man came over and sat down on the other side of the table. He held out his hand to greet me, and I gave him my hand. His hands had been resting above the table. As soon as I shook his hand, he drew it back and said, "Kevod HaRav, I have AIDS. Can you help me?"

The moment I heard "AIDS," right after I had given him my hand, I was horrified. I knew that it passes only through blood. All the same, perhaps a drop of his sweat had fallen on the fruit, and perhaps not. How could I eat that fruit, and how could I touch him? First I sent him off quickly. I gave him something or other and said to him, "I am not well versed in these matters, but here, take this and do it. Perhaps it will be a tikkun for whatever you damaged." I gave him something, I do not remember what, and sent him on his way. Then I quickly left everything and ran to wash my hands.

I washed like a madman. I had touched an AIDS patient! I washed my hands with soap and dried them, and again, and again. Perhaps, chas veshalom, I had a scratch on my hand and a drop of his sweat had gotten in. I knew it made no sense. I knew this could not harm me. But still, perhaps? Why should I catch AIDS? I washed and washed.

Then I came to the plate of fruit. Even if his sweat had dripped onto the fruit, what could happen? Take off the peel, and the story is over. But would I eat from a plate that the hand of an AIDS patient had been over? I could not bring myself to do it. I took all the fruit straight to the garbage, so that, chas veshalom, nobody else should take it and be harmed.

Then I understood him. They saw in every drop of a safek of issur what I saw in AIDS. Had someone else asked me about such a thing, I would have told him, "Sir, what do you care? Nonsense. Wash the fruit and the story is over. It has a peel, too; take it off and be done with it. Wash the fruit very well with soap, and that is the end of it." I would also have told him, "What, are you crazy, washing your hands over and over? Leave it. Wash your hands once, at most if you have a scratch or something, and you need nothing more." I know how to say this to other people. But when I went through it myself, I suddenly felt that it was not enough. It had to be clean, completely clean!

Then I remembered the story of Chacham Sasson, and I said to myself: now I understand these two giant geonim. They knew how to give every person the halachah, but for themselves, how strict they were over every small thing! What chumros, what taaniyos, over such a thing! Because they understood what an issur is, to its depth and at its root, they feared every safek: perhaps, and perhaps, and perhaps, and perhaps. Two days of fasting over a drop of ama! It was exactly how careful I was over a handshake with a man who carries such a virus in his body.

That is how they looked at things, and so in Shamayim they were looked at the same way. "Hashem tzilcha," Hashem is your shadow: as you feel things, so they are felt in Shamayim. That is why Hashem was with them in all their ways.

The Baby Who Turned

Talk One · 51:30

There was an avreich whose wife was having a very hard labor. The doctors said, "We want to do a cesarean." Why? The baby was lying sideways across the womb, and it was impossible to deliver him. One of the people in the hospital told the husband, "Go to Chacham Sasson."

The husband immediately ran to Chacham Sasson and told him the whole story. Chacham Sasson said, "Don't worry, it will be fine." He made a Mi Sheberach for him with the woman's name and sent him back. When he reached the hospital, they told him, "Mazel tov, she had a normal birth." He checked the time. It was exactly the hour when Chacham Sasson had finished blessing him. The baby had turned by itself, and the birth was normal.

From then on, every time his wife was expecting, he would come to Chacham Sasson in the ninth month for a berachah for an easy birth, and Chacham Sasson would bless him.

Once, he and his wife made a mistake in their counting. He came in the middle of the eighth month and said to Chacham Sasson, "The time has come for my wife to give birth. Give me a berachah as always."

"No," he said, "you have come early. This is not the time. Go, and come at the right time. Now you are early."

The man went home without the berachah and told his wife, "Chacham Sasson says we are early." They checked their calendar and saw that they had made a mistake of two weeks. Two weeks later he came to him, Chacham Sasson made him a Mi Sheberach, and she gave birth normally.

Call Him Shmuel

Talk One · 53:30

One of Chacham Sasson's neighbors had no children, and she was in great pain over it. On Rosh Hashanah she was in shul when they read the haftarah of Chanah, who had been barren: "until the barren one bore seven." On Rosh Hashanah Chanah was remembered. As the haftarah was read, she said, "B'ezras Hashem, if I have a son, I will call him Shmuel."

That year she was remembered and expected a child. When her time came, she gave birth to a boy, b'sha'ah tovah, and the bris was set. But she had forgotten her neder, and she wanted to give him a different name. She decided that she would call her son by such-and-such a name.

The day of the bris came. An hour before the bris she went to invite Chacham Sasson: "Chacham, in another hour there is a bris; kevodo should come."

He said to her, "Call him Shmuel."

She said, "I have already chosen another name to call him."

"No," he said. "Call him Shmuel." He insisted that she call him Shmuel.

She went home and said to herself, "Why did the Chacham insist on the name Shmuel? I have another name!" She sat and thought, and she remembered her neder, that she had vowed to call him Shmuel. The Chacham had reminded her of her neder. He knew of it with ruach hakodesh and reminded her, and the child was named in Yisrael Shmuel.

Chapter Sixteen

Rabbi Avraham HaKohen

Rabbi Avraham HaKohen

Talk Three · 0:00

I have arranged these stories in the order of my own years. I begin with Rabbi Avraham HaKohen, zechuso yagen aleinu.

I remember him from when I was a boy of eight or nine. I used to see him in the street, walking with his cane, crossing roads with his eyes shut. There were not many cars then, but there were cars, and the roads held their danger. He walked with his eyes closed for the sake of shemiras einayim. At least once I saw this with my own eyes: a car was coming, and his cane stopped and would not let him go on. With his eyes still closed, he stood still until the car had passed. I do not remember whether I saw it more than once, but once I certainly saw it, and I remember it as if it were now. It was on Rechov Yaffo in Yerushalayim, in the days before traffic lights, when nobody had even thought of such a thing. He was walking with his cane, and suddenly the cane stopped. He tried to lift it, and it stayed where it was. He waited, and once the car had gone by, the cane by itself became light again and he walked on.

He was a holy man. He was a talmid of Rav Mordechai Sharabi (the great mekubal, head of Yeshivas Nahar Shalom), and it was from him that he learned Kabbalah. I remember him as very tall, with a face like an angel of Hashem Tzevaos.

When he went out to collect money, he would come on Shabbos to every shul, stand up, and begin to speak in praise of Kabbalah and of those who learn it, so that people would give to help the yeshivah of Rav Mordechai Sharabi. He had a special voice, and he would open in rhyme: "Our masters the mekubalim, whose every word is true; my masters, they need funds for their affairs." From there he would go on, setting in rhyme the need to help talmidei chachamim who learn Kabbalah, who with every word build worlds, bring closer the yichud of Kudsha

Brich Hu and His Shechinah, and bring the geulah closer. He knew how to make the words sweet, and he said it all in a way that softened the heart.

He never touched the money. The gabbaim collected it from the donors and sent it straight to the yeshivah of Rav Mordechai Sharabi, so he never knew what came in or how much, and he did not take one percent of any of it. When people met him and handed him money for tzedakah ("Chacham, here is the money"), he kept it in his house and passed it on whole to Chacham Mordechai at the first chance he had.

He was born in Monastir in Yugoslavia.[69] In those years, before the First World War, that whole region belonged to Turkey. There was no difference between Istanbul and Yugoslavia and all the Balkan lands: they were all under one government and spoke one language. His family was from the Jews expelled from Spain, so Ladino (the Spanish language of the Sephardi Jews) was fluent on his tongue. It was the main language of the Jews in Yerushalayim, in Istanbul and in all the Balkan lands.

Maran Rav Yosef Karo, zechuso yagen aleinu, was for a time the rav in Budon. What is Budon? The river of Budapest runs through the middle of the city. Buda, on one side, belonged to Turkey, and Pest belonged to Hungary, and the river was the border. Only after the First World War did all of Budapest come to belong to Hungary. Maran was there, and his shul stands there to this day; for a time he gave shiurim in it, in Ladino, of course.

In those days everyone kept Torah and mitzvos, and his parents raised him in a Talmud Torah. But the poverty was heavy, and while he was still young he had to leave his learning and become a shopkeeper, helping his father in the store. Later he traveled to America for two years. There he took great care that he and his friends, who had gone there to earn a living, would keep everything. He cooked his own food so that it would be kosher lemehadrin, because in those years it was not easy to find kosher food in the market.

He came to Yerushalayim alone at first, and then asked his wife and family to come and join him. He opened a candy shop. It was the first shop in Yerushalayim that made candies and sold them; he was the pioneer of making candy and selling it in Yerushalayim. For a certain time he stood in the shop, but when the time came for Minchah and Maariv, he left the shop open for two or three hours and went to daven Minchah, stayed for a shiur until Maariv, and after Maariv another shiur, and only then came back to the shop. He left no guard and nothing at all: an open shop in the Old City, where all kinds of people passed, and not only Jews. Never did an-

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[69] Monastir is the city known today as Bitola, in North Macedonia. In those years it was part of the Ottoman Empire, the empire of the Turks; after the First World War it became part of Yugoslavia.

yone come in to touch his cash box, or even a single crumb of anything he sold. He knew that the guarding is in the hands of the Borei yisbarach. He went and came back, and everything was as usual.

That is how he stole time for learning: two hours here, three hours there, half an hour somewhere else. At the age of twenty-nine he could bear it no longer. He said, "From now on I dedicate my life to Torah." He left everything and entered the yeshivah of Chacham Mordechai Sharabi. There he learned pshat and Kabbalah, and he became one of the great mekubalim.

The Mekubalim Count the Omer

Talk Three · 14:00

It is known among the mekubalim that the deepest and longest kavanos are not in any of the regular tefillos, but specifically in the days when there are no kavanos. During the days of the Omer the mekubalim do not have any kavanah in their tefillah. They daven like anyone else (slowly, of course, word by word and clearly), but with no kavanos at all, except for Sefiras HaOmer. The kavanos of Sefiras HaOmer, though, are long and deep, and they change every night. I had the zechus to see this with several mekubalim. During Sefiras HaOmer I went especially to see Chacham Nissim Beracha while he was counting the Omer with its kavanos, and it was a sublime pleasure to see them at that hour. It was a complete separation from everything in this world.

Rav Yosef Waltuch, himself one of the great mekubalim of kavanos, told me that he used to stand and watch Rabbi Avraham HaKohen do the kavanos of the Omer. The kavanos of the Omer took him an hour and a half, and he was truly not in this world. The colors of his face changed: from red to white, from white to pale, from pale to the white of lime, and back again to red. His eyes were closed throughout; all the kavanos were done with closed eyes. For an hour and a half there were very deep yichudim and kavanos, of all kinds of yichudim and Holy Names, each in the form that belongs to that night. There is a general kavanah for the berachah, but after the berachah, the count of that day takes a long time, to have in mind what that day is and its greatness: gadlus rishon, katnus rishon, gadlus sheni (stages in the kavanos of the Arizal), and so on, with all the kavanos and Names that belong to that day, to that aspect and to that sefirah. All of this changes; for forty-nine nights it is different every night. To see him sitting and doing these kavanos was something not of this world. Even Rav Yosef Waltuch, who was not impressed by seeing Eliyahu HaNavi, was amazed to see how Rabbi Avraham HaKohen did these kavanos.

My son David, when he was a boy, used to go on the nights of the Omer to the shul near Rechov Rashi to see how Rav Kaduri and all the mekubalim did their kavanos. They all sat with their siddurim and did the kavanah for a long time, every one of the kavanos. My son told me: "I saw Rav Kaduri standing with his eyes closed, leaning a little on the side of the teivah, doing all the kavanos for more than an hour, with awesome yichudim. To see him was to see a man who is not in this world. You could see on his face how the light came down upon him."

I too, when I saw Chacham Nissim Beracha (I went especially to see him while he made the berachah on Sefiras HaOmer), saw his eyes and his face, his eyes closed the whole time. It was like seeing the Shechinah come down like a white pillar. Not a pillar of fire, but a pillar of white cloud, as if it were coming down from the sky onto his head. There was a halo shining from his mouth and rising upward. I can no longer say whether the light came down from above onto his face, or came out of his face and rose upward. But it was something immense, to see them at the hour they count the Omer. It is a yichud unlike any other. And when Rabbi Avraham HaKohen did it, it was a great wonder.

The Kiddush of Shovavim

Talk Three · 17:30

Rabbi Avraham HaKohen was a close friend of my grandfather, and together they undertook many fasts and afflictions for Klal Yisrael and for the Shechinah. The two of them sat together trying to raise the Shechinah from its galus. That was in their minds all the time: how to raise the Shechinah from the dust.

Many barren women, mute people and people who were dying he brought back to life. He would take upon himself to fast for them, to afflict himself and to daven, real taaniyos, so that they would be healed, and they were healed completely and stood on their feet.

For seventeen years he kept the same custom, both while he lived in the Old City and afterward. When the Old City fell to the Jordanians,[70] he moved to the new city and lived in Zichron Tuviah, a neighborhood near Machane Yehuda, and there he kept the same custom he had kept in the Old City. What was the custom? Every year during Shovavim (the weeks of the parshiyos from Shemos to Mishpatim, a time of teshuvah and fasting), he fasted from Motza'ei Shabbos until Leil Shabbos, the whole week. At Minchah on Shabbos he accepted upon himself a fast

[70] In the War of Independence in 1948, the Jordanian army captured the Old City of Yerushalayim and drove out its Jews. It remained in Jordanian hands until the Six-Day War in 1967.

for a full week, six whole days, and he broke the fast on Leil Shabbos with Kiddush. This was something special. All the nights, of course, were for learning, for tikkun kares, for making himself holy. It was a week of kedushah and taharah, not just fasting while going about other business. He was holy and pure in any case, but this was a rising to an extraordinary level.

People who were there and saw it told me that every time he finished such a week, the sick and the suffering, people whose lives the doctors had already given up on, all gathered at his house on Leil Shabbos. The house was packed, and more people waited in line outside. He took the cup of Kiddush, with which he would break his fast, and made Kiddush with all the kavanos of Kabbalah. Those kavanos are no small matter; the kavanos of Kiddush are something immense too. The table has to be set in a particular way, with the circling of the hadassim and all the arrangements of the kavanos and yichudim, and then the cup itself has all its kavanos, especially at the word "shevi'i." Three times the word "shevi'i" comes in Kiddush, and each one has immense kavanos. Then pouring the water has its kavanos: there are nine particular Names that are called "mayim," four of the Name Havayah and five of the Name Ehyeh, with kavanos that produce mayim from them, and more kavanos of water, and then of the wine, all the kavanos.

The Gemara puts all of these kavanos into a single phrase. Rav Ashi put it into the Talmud: "גדול יין שניתן לשבעים אותיות." What does it mean? Yayin has the gematria of seventy. These seventy letters are found within deep kavanos of Kabbalah, which one has in mind at the time of Kiddush.

It was an extraordinary Kiddush. Before him stood a huge barrel full of wine. When he made Kiddush and said the berachah of borei pri hagafen, he had the whole barrel of wine in mind. When he finished Kiddush, he tasted a drop of the wine and poured the whole cup into the barrel. The halachah requires one to drink a revi'is, so he then took a cup from the barrel and drank it to fulfill the revi'is.

Whoever drank from that barrel was healed of any illness at all. People waited all year. They knew they needed no doctors and no medicines; they only had to hold on until Shovavim, until Rabbi Avraham HaKohen made Kiddush. People knew it was their last chance, their only chance, and their sure chance to be saved from all their illnesses. And there was not one who was not healed at once. Not after an hour or two: they drank the cup and walked out healthy. They came in sick and miserable, in pain and in suffering, some of them dying, crawling on all fours, dragging themselves in. They drank from that wine and walked out healthy and whole. A lame man threw away his cane and walked on his own feet. People came out of there happy as they went and joyful as they came. It was a wonder!

One year, in the middle of Shovavim, in the middle of the week, he fell ill. He felt very bad. His family were frightened for him: they saw him turning pale and his

face changing, and they called a doctor. The doctor said, "Quickly, eat something! Your life is in danger!"

He laughed at the doctor. "What are you talking about? I know it is nothing; it will pass. I am not budging. I know that Kiddush will be as usual, with no change at all. I am not afraid of anything. I know that you are mistaken."

And indeed he was not mistaken. He went on, recovered his strength, and everything continued as it always did. It had been a test from Shamayim, to see whether he would stand up to it or not. He knew when something was a test, and how far the pasuk "ונשמרתם לנפשותיכם" applies and when it does not. He knew it himself.

The Passing of Rabbi Avraham HaKohen

Talk Three · 23:30

I was at the levayah of Rabbi Avraham HaKohen. I went to it with my grandfather, and it was my grandfather who buried him. The tzaddik Rav Yosef Waltuch told me how Rabbi Avraham HaKohen passed away, as he heard it from Rabbi Ezra HaKohen.

Who was Rabbi Ezra HaKohen? He was a Jew in Tel Aviv, a very great baal hachnasas orchim. All the mekubalim stayed in his house, the whole company of them. Who was not there? Chacham Fatiyah (Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, the great mekubal of Baghdad) was at home there, my grandfather was at home there, Rav Yosef Waltuch was at home there, Rabbi Avraham HaKohen was at home there, and many more mekubalim and hidden tzaddikim, for whom that was their home. When they came to Tel Aviv, that was their house; each one felt as if he were in his own home. They slept there and ate there.

Every year in the month of Adar, Rabbi Avraham HaKohen traveled to Tel Aviv and spent the first Shabbos of Adar there, to collect for the mekubalim's yeshivah of Rav Mordechai Sharabi, Nahar Shalom. This was his regular practice. He got up in the morning, davened vasikin, and went out at once to all the shuls around and onward. Tel Aviv was small then. The house was near Shechunat Shapira (a neighborhood in the south of Tel Aviv). He finished Shechunat Shapira and went on from there all the way to Yaffo, to Abu Kabir, where Yaffo ended. He went from shul to shul making appeals, and afterward, as I said, the gabbaim sent the money to the yeshivah. He finished with the last shul around midday, already near chatzos, davened Minchah gedolah, and went back to Rabbi Ezra HaKohen's house to sit down for seudah shlishis. Afterward everyone sat over divrei Torah,

learning, without one moment free for idle talk. That is well known: even on a weekday there is no time for idle talk, and all the more so on Shabbos.

That year, 5723 (1963), he came as usual, with his usual bag. He arrived at Rabbi Ezra HaKohen's house, and on Leil Shabbos they sat at the table, a wonderful seudah, all divrei Torah, all wonderful kedushah. On Shabbos morning he got up as usual, davened vasikin, went and made all the appeals he always made, finished, davened Minchah gedolah and came back. As soon as he came back he sat down to seudah shlishis; a fine seudah shlishis was ready for him as usual, and he sat and ate. When he finished eating, he got into bed, with his sefarim already beside him. He sat there and did not get out of the bed. He sat and learned and learned and learned.

When the time for Maariv came, Rabbi Ezra said to him in Ladino, "Haide, Rabbi Avraham, let's go! Come to Maariv."

He answered that he no longer had permission to leave the bed. He would daven on the bed; he had no permission anymore to leave this bed.

Rabbi Ezra did not understand what he was talking about. Perhaps he was not feeling well. He left him and went to daven, and came back. In the meantime Rabbi Avraham HaKohen had davened all of Maariv on the bed, including the Amidah. He did not get up; he sat in the bed and did not rise from it. When he had finished Maariv, Rabbi Ezra came to make Havdalah for him. "Come to Havdalah."

"No. Only on the bed."

When Havdalah was over, he took out of his bag the sefer Maavar Yabok. Maavar Yabok was written more than two hundred years ago in Italy by Rabbi Berechiah,[71] who was a great mekubal. It is a sefer on how to die; the mekubalim die with this sefer in their hands. It is a special sefer, with which a person before his death has in mind the yichudim of how he dies. One does not die just like that. He has in mind that he is handing over his nefesh, by means of these and these yichudim, to Olam HaAsiyah of Atzilus; his ruach, with these and these kavanos, to Olam HaYetzirah of Atzilus; his neshamah to Olam HaBeriah; and the yechidah that is about to enter. For at the passing of a man, if he is a tzaddik, the whole neshamah enters into him, and when the thread above the neshamah comes to enter, the whole neshamah is drawn up as if by a magnet, rises along that thread and goes up.

That is the secret of "תוסף רוחם יגועון." It does not say "You lessen their spirit, they perish," but "You add to their spirit." Why? Once it is added, they see everything above, even Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as it is said, "כי" "לפניו תכרע כל ברך. לא יראני האדם וחי": in his lifetime a man does not see Hakadosh Baruch Hu, but

[71] The sefer Maavar Yabok was written by Rabbi Aharon Berechiah of Modena and was first printed in Mantua in 1626.

at the time of his death, if he merits it, he sees. He sees the Shechinah and more. He sees as our fathers saw at the Yam Suf, when they said "זה אלי ואנוהו," or as all of them saw Him at Har Sinai as an elder dressed in white. He sees Him by means of the part that is above the neshamah. At that moment the nefesh no longer wants to hear of anything except rising upward, and it is drawn up entirely. That is the secret of "תוסף רוחם יגועון."

For all of this one has to prepare. These are kavanos. One washes netilas yadayim six times, as it is to be done, six times alternating, and reads the whole seder with the viduyim, with all the kavanos, so that if, chas veshalom, there is some small blemish, it will be cleansed through such kavanos and such things. That is the seder with which one passes on. It is the equipment one takes up above.

He took out the sefer Maavar Yabok and began. In the middle, Rabbi Ezra HaKohen came in and said, "Chacham, seudah revi'is." (So he called the melaveh malkah.)

He answered, "No. Seudah revi'is is above; they are waiting for me there. We will make seudah revi'is above, not here."

Rabbi Ezra said to him, "You are making too much talk. Today you went around half of Tel Aviv, you went, you came, you did everything. What are you talking about? Get up, come to the seudah."

"No, no, no, no. It is above."

Rabbi Ezra left him and made seudah revi'is. Afterward Rabbi Avraham called him: "Ezra! Ven!" (come, in Ladino).

He came, and Rabbi Avraham said, "Come, let us sit and learn a little."

"What shall we learn?"

By then he had finished the Maavar Yabok and everything in it. "Mishnayos."

"Which masechta?"

"Bring Maseches Tamid."

He brought it. Near the end of the perek there is a mishnah that says: "נפנו אלו לאלו, אמרו שלום, הכל שלום." In the Beis HaMikdash there were treasuries of gold, and there were guards, which were also a guard of honor for the place. The Ish Har HaBayis would go out with one group as soon as dawn broke and enter from one side, not of the Heichal, but of the building of chambers that surrounded the Beis HaMikdash, where many of the treasures were kept. One group went in from one side, the second group came from the other side of the Mikdash, and they met in the middle. Each one asked the other what he had seen, whether everything was in order and in its place: "נפנו אלו לאלו, אמרו שלום, הכל שלום."

He started from the beginning of the perek with Rabbi Ezra: "בשלשה מקומות הכהנים שומרים," and the Levi'im in twenty-one places. When they reached "נפנו אלו לאלו, אמרו שלום, הכל שלום," he stopped.

Rabbi Ezra said to him, "Finish the perek!"

He answered, "הכל שלום," and closed the sefer.

Rabbi Ezra went out. Rabbi Avraham HaKohen began to do yichudim, sitting alone and meditating. Suddenly he called, "Ezra! Ven, ven!"

He came. "What do you want?"

"There is one moment left to say Shema Yisrael. Say Shema Yisrael with me."

He still did not understand. "What are you talking about?"

Rabbi Avraham looked at him and said, "Listen. I am saying my last Shema Yisrael. But know that there is only one thing I regret: that Rav Yosef Waltuch is not here. Had he been here to see this, he would have risen many times over, for all his greatness. Please, tell Rav Yosef Waltuch everything that has happened here now."

Then he closed his eyes and said, "Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad." He took the blanket, wrapped it over his head, and passed away to the life of Olam Haba.

That is the death of a Jew! That is how a Jew passes away: he knows the door through which he goes from one room to the next. That was Rabbi Avraham HaKohen.

As soon as he passed away there was a great commotion, and Rav Yosef Waltuch came. Rabbi Ezra HaKohen said to him, "Know that these were the last words he said: to tell you all that happened, the whole story from morning to night, with the Mishnayos and with the Maavar Yabok and everything. He said it was a pity you were not here." Rav Yosef Waltuch told this to me with great pain. "Ah!" he said. "This is what I heard from Rabbi Ezra HaKohen, and I did not merit to be there."

Such were these men. That is how far a Jew can reach, to what levels, when he truly gives himself over entirely to making himself holy and pure.

There were many more stories about Rabbi Avraham HaKohen, and I heard several of them later, but I no longer remember them clearly, and I do not want to tell things that are not clear to me. May his zechus stand and protect us, and may we too merit to be saved with the yeshuos he gave to Klal Yisrael through his deeds and through that Kiddush.

Chapter Seventeen

Rav Uri Avrishaf

and the seudah at kever Dovid HaMelech



Rav Uri Avrishaf and the Seudah at Kever Dovid HaMelech

Talk One · 0:00

I came to know Rav Uri when I was a talmid in Yeshivas Porat Yosef, at about the age of fourteen. Again and again he would come and urge us to join him at kever Dovid HaMelech on Motza'ei Shabbos, to make the seudah revi'is (the melaveh malkah) together with him there.

The way to Har Tziyon was not what it is today. It was very hard, even with a bus. We had to walk from Beis Yisrael up the hill to Geulah, to what is called Kikar HaShabbos today, and take the number 15 bus as far as Emek Refaim. The stop was near the old train station of those days. From there we went down a steep descent, the whole slope of the hill, to the foot of Har Tziyon, and then began to climb dozens of hard steps until we reached the top. Part of that climb was even under the eyes of the Arab Legion (the army of Jordan, which held the Old City from 1948 until the Six Day War). Its soldiers stood on the walls of Yerushalayim and watched us through the slits, and we could see them. It was not pleasant, especially at night.

At the top of the hill we entered a very large grove, and from the grove we turned left into a group of buildings. They were like a cave, though they were not a cave; they were only very dark houses. On the left were stairs up to a second floor, where there was a high courtyard above one of the buildings, and from there more stairs led up to a small tower. Every so often we climbed all the way up to see the Old City from far away. I am speaking of the time when I was fourteen, some years before the Six Day War, and the border ran right there. The approach to Sha'ar Tziyon was blocked; that was no-man's-land, a border that could not be crossed. So we turned right and went into kever Dovid HaMelech, and there we made the seudah with him.

It was a hard way for us. We usually did all of it on foot, young bochurim without a penny in our pockets, sat there for several hours, and came back from kever Dovid late on Motza'ei Shabbos night, with the morning seder in yeshivah waiting for us. But he would ask and plead, and we came. It was a delight to make the seudah revi'is with him there. He was a holy man, a quiet man, wholly wrapped up in his thoughts with the Borei. We could see that we were sitting beside a man who was not here at all. He spoke with us, but he was in the upper lights: a ladder set on the earth whose top reached Shamayim.

Why do I bring him up for Purim? Because he taught me a minhag that he kept, and which I later brought to my own talmidim as well. Before Purim, on Motza'ei Shabbos of the two Shabbosos before Purim, I would see him take a kosher Megillas Esther and read half the Megillah. I asked him, "Rav Uri, what is this?" He showed me that Maseches Soferim (one of the small masechtos added at the end of the Talmud) writes that it was an ancient minhag to read half the Megillah on Motza'ei Shabbos, and he explained it to me with great sense. It made such an impression on me that I began to keep the minhag myself, and I saw how much Shamayim loves it, as I will tell in a moment.

Every so often he would also take care to invite musicians, men who feared Shamayim. One would come with a clarinet, or with an accordion, which was the most common instrument in those days, to stir up a feeling of simchah with niggunim of simchah. We sat there with him, and every Motza'ei Shabbos was a lifting of the soul. That is why we made the effort to come.

A Megillah in the Bank

Talk One · 5:30

Many years later I was in London, and on the first Shabbos of Adar I was staying as a guest with a family there. I did not even think of asking them for a Megillah to read half of it; they would have looked at me like someone who had fallen from the moon. I did not know what to do. It was Thursday, and on Motza'ei Shabbos I needed to read half the Megillah, as Rav Uri had accustomed me. What was I to do?

I said, "Ribbono shel Olam, if this minhag is dear to You, let me merit to read the Megillah this year too." I was not going to ask my host; I knew he would not look kindly on it. He was what is called a conservative man. The English are conservative to begin with, and he was the most conservative of the conservatives. There was no room even to speak of it.

I made that request at about ten in the morning. At about eleven I happened to go into a bank in Stamford Hill (the chareidi neighborhood of north London) on

some matter. The bank was empty. There were no people, neither Jews nor goyim; I was the only one who came in. To prepare the forms to hand to the clerk, I had to go to a counter at the side and fill them out, which takes time. I turned to the counter, and what did I see lying on it? A Megillas Esther, ready, kosher and mehuderes, lying there waiting for me. Yishtabach Shemo!

But whose was it? I sat and looked at it. I opened it, and on the outside, at the end of the Megillah, a man's name and address were written. I took it with me at once, finished at the bank, and went back to my hosts. I asked my hostess to please find me this man's telephone number, and she found it in the telephone book. I called him and said, "Sir, have you perhaps lost a Megillas Esther?"

"Yes!" he said.

"Do you remember where?"

"No."

"Do you have simanim?"

He gave me the simanim of the Megillah, and added, "My name is also written on the back."

"Can you guess more or less where you lost it? Go back over your way."

"I don't know," he said. "I was at the bank, and in a few other places, and in one of them I lost it. I had just picked it up from the sofer after the hagahah."

Since he mentioned the bank too, I told him, "Now I know it is yours." I had needed to make sure it was his: a name written on the back does not yet prove that it belongs to him; perhaps he had sold it to someone else. Once I was sure, I said to him, "Listen, I found your Megillah in the bank, and it is in my hands. Could you lend it to me until Sunday, and I will return it to you? I want to read the Megillah on Motza'ei Shabbos."

"With great honor!" he said.

So I had a Megillah for reading the first half on Motza'ei Shabbos. By the second half I was already, baruch Hashem, back in Yerushalayim, and I read it from my own Megillah.

I tell this only to show you how, when Shamayim loves something and a person truly wants it, they help him from Above.

How Dovid HaMelech Saved Rav Uri

Talk One · 8:30

One day, when Rav Uri was already old and weak and found it hard to walk, I asked him, "Rav Uri, why do you go to so much trouble to come all the way to kever Dovid for the seudah revi'is? Make it in your own house, in Mekor Baruch, near

Yeshivas Porat Yosef. We will come, and it will be easier for everyone. You put us to so much trouble on such a long, hard way; it costs hours and effort."

The tzaddik Rav Uri answered me, "How can I give up this place? Come, let me tell you."

"From the day I came to Eretz Yisrael, I made it my minhag to make the seudah of Dovid HaMelech every Motza'ei Shabbos at kever Dovid HaMelech. In the fighting of 5708 (the War of Independence, in 1948), it was dangerous to come here, but I could not give it up. I asked people to come with me, and no one was willing to go up to Har Tziyon. So I took my sandwich and said, 'I will go. I will not neglect the seudah revi'is at kever Dovid.'

"I came, sat down, made the seudah and finished it, and then I went into the tziyun." (The tziyun is an opening beneath which there is a cave, through which one enters the cave of Dovid HaMelech.) "I reached the tziyun and began saying Tehillim. Suddenly I heard: '*Itbach al-Yahud!*" That is Arabic: "Kill the Jew!"

"I looked toward the window and saw two Arabs in red kaffiyehs." The red kaffiyeh was the sign of the men of the Jordanian Legion. They could not come in through the window, because it was high up and had thick iron bars, which are there to this day, perhaps 30 millimeters thick, impossible to move or tear out. To reach him and kill him, they had to go around the whole courtyard and the whole building, about two minutes with the detour.

"When I heard it," he told me, "I fled. I ran up the stairs that lead toward the tower." They came to the tziyun to find him, did not find him, and began to search. "I heard them coming up the stairs. I was already at the entrance to the tower, on the upper landing, and I could hear them on the stairs." In another minute they would reach him and slaughter him; there was no doubt of it.

"I was white," he said. "I did not know what to do. Suddenly I saw Dovid HaMelech before me, in his royal garments, with a crown of malchus. I saw Dovid HaMelech, and he said to me, in these very words: 'Rav Uri, do not be afraid. Close your eyes.' I closed my eyes, and after a minute I found myself on a hill in Yerushalayim, near the windmill (the windmill that Sir Moshe Montefiore built), close to where the King David Hotel stands today. I found myself on the hill opposite. Dovid HaMelech came, took me, rescued me, lifted me up, and in one minute set me down there, and went away. Dovid HaMelech came and saved me. Can I give up this place?"

Until his leg was amputated, he did not miss a single Motza'ei Shabbos at that place. Only afterward, when it had become impossible, did he make the seudah at home, in the new city of Yerushalayim.

That was the man. What greatness; what people they were! He was a humble man. Dovid HaMelech does not come to everyone; he came to Rav Uri to save him.

He was a holy man who guarded his mouth and never exaggerated. Until I pressed him and questioned him, he would not let this story out of himself. These are the people I knew. Zechuso yagen aleinu.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Hidden Ones of Porat Yosef

the tea man, the shamash, the builder and the masmid

THE TEA ROOM OF CHACHAM YOSEF

Talk Three · 1:25:00

Chacham Yosef Tajer was a Jew who came from Morocco, short and plump, with a beret on his head. I have no picture of him; I never managed to get one. But I can see him before my eyes now, standing in khaki trousers.

In those days simple clothing was all khaki. Everyone bought the clothes of Ata[72]. There was a factory in Kiryat Ata where all these clothes were sold, the khaki shirt and the khaki trousers, and that is what nearly everyone wore. We wore them too. We came to yeshivah in khaki clothes with a kasket (a flat cloth cap) on our heads, and that was us.

There were none of today's toys then: black and white, black lo aleinu, and all the rest. Nobody looked at such things. My rebbeim did not go about that way either. Only someone who was a rav wore the garments of the rabbinate; everyone else wore other clothes. Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul would come to yeshivah in a maroon sweater and sit and learn in it. Today, if a rosh yeshivah appeared in a maroon sweater, they would throw him down every flight of stairs and say, "This is no talmid chacham." Today a person is judged by his clothes. In those days nobody looked at clothes. Everyone wore simple clothes, but they themselves were what was inside the clothes.

What do you think, that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai went about in these ugly frock coats and the top hat? He wore a tarbush, or some head covering of those days, and a long robe, and sandals on his feet. That is how Rabbi Shimon went about. What did you think?

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[72] Ata was an Israeli clothing company with a large factory in Kiryat Ata, near Haifa. In the early years of the State its plain khaki clothing was what almost everyone wore.

Chacham Yosef received permission from the rabbanim to use a small room, three meters long and a meter and a half wide. As one came in through the first entrance to the ground floor of the yeshivah, it was the first door on the right. It was called the tea room. There he kept a huge aluminum urn of hot water and a primus (a small kerosene stove), with tea and plenty of sugar. I do not remember whether there was coffee at all. He sat there the whole day with the Zohar, reading Zohar all day long.

Tea was our only drink. Today bochurim everywhere are given machines with buttons; they press, and out come all kinds of drinks and all kinds of nonsense. That was not our world. Often we did not even have time to drink at home, because we ran to the yeshivah. We learned from eight in the morning until seven in the evening; that was the required schedule. But almost all of us stayed until eleven at night, out of the desire to learn, and a cup of tea revived us.

It was the time of the tzena[73]. What was there to eat? We brought one small sandwich from home for the entire day. At noon the yeshivah served a meal, with a hot drink as well, and at four and again at six in the evening there was a cup of coffee with cake, regularly. That was all. When we simply wanted something to drink, we went to Chacham Yosef and gave him half a grush (a small coin of those days). "Ara li hakos! Ara li hakos! Bring the cup!" he would say to us. He rinsed the cup, poured a cup of tea at once, took his half grush, and was mabsut (Arabic for well pleased). That was our drink, and that is how we grew up. But we learned.

We knew that this Chacham Yosef was a tzaddik. How did we know? A story went around among all the talmidim. When he was still in Morocco, he once found himself in a certain tall building, and there an Arab woman tried to make him fall into an aveirah with her. She locked the door with a key and would not let him out until she had made him sin with her. She was no old woman, but a young one, the kind the eyes are drawn after, and he did not want even to look at her.

He saw that there was no way out. He could not escape, she would not let him go, and she was set on it. So he did not stop to think long. He opened the window, said "Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad," and jumped, to die rather than sin. He knew he would be dashed to pieces below and that would be the end, and that did not trouble him. But when he reached the ground, he came out whole from a fall of several stories, and he ran home.

Afterward he merited to come up to Eretz Yisrael, and that is where we knew him. The rabbanim knew his worth and gave him his place in the yeshivah. His duty was to bring tea to the rabbanim. The rabbanim changed over at noon, with other

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[73] The tzena was the austerity period in the first years of the State of Israel, from 1949 into the 1950s, when food was rationed and very scarce.

rabbanim coming for the afternoon. At ten in the morning one of the talmidim would go to him: "Chacham Yosef, tea for the rav." He made tea for all the rabbanim, and again for the rabbanim of the afternoon. Because of this the rabbanim also understood that we talmidim needed a little to drink, especially in the winter, a Yerushalmi winter, but in the summer too.

Rachamim the Shamash

Talk Four · 2:08:00

The one who took care of us all night was the shamash of the beis knesses. His name was Rachamim Pachah, and may his zechus protect us again and again. He was a simple shamash, an am ha'aretz who could barely read the alef-beis. He was thin and not tall, perhaps a meter sixty-five, and stooped, with his cap. He did the work.

The poor man barely had a home. In the wall beside the stairs there was a tiny space, and he lived next to it. At first he also did a little shoemaking there, barely. His whole shop was a meter deep and a meter and a half wide. Below it, underground, was his home, and that is how he lived, poor man, an old couple. His main parnassah was washing and cleaning the place.

One of his jobs was to stay awake every Thursday night. When one learns Gemara properly, one does not take a single Gemara and learn from it alone; there is no such thing. The whole Shas must be at hand, with all the meforshim and poskim. You read a line and must look into it. Tosafos sends you to another masechta, Rashi sends you to another explanation, the Maharsha sends you to yet another masechta. Then you must bring the Rashba on it, and the Ritva on it, and the other explanation, and look into each one. You take sefarim and pile them on the table, heaps and heaps on every table. Putting them back and taking others is heavy work.

Who did it? Old Rachamim. He went quietly from table to table. When someone finished with a sefer, he took the pile and put it back on the shelves, so that three minutes later others could take the sefarim out again and use them. A sefer could not simply be left on the table, because others needed it. All night long he carried sefarim from the tables back to the shelves, and within a few minutes they were already at another table, being learned.

He also served us tea, and that tea kept our spirits up and our minds settled so that we could learn until morning. Again and again he made tea and went around with the tray so that everyone could take a glass. We were young and absorbed in our learning, with the glass of tea and the piles of sefarim beside us. One small

knock, and crash, the glass went down on the floor, the tea with it and sometimes the broken pieces too. He would come quietly. Never did he say a word to anyone, never did he open his mouth to say, "You did this," or "You did that." Quietly and patiently he gathered the pieces, cleaned everything, washed everything, and left the place clean so that we could keep learning.

He was almost a mute. In those days there were two silent men in Shoshanim LeDavid: Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri and Rachamim. I sat with Chacham Yitzchak for years, and I cannot say that I heard more than a thousand words from him in my life, apart from divrei Torah. Divrei Torah I heard from him a great deal, because several times I sat and learned before him. I mean words about ordinary matters, and what is a thousand words? Nothing. From Rachamim, in all the years I learned there, I do not think I heard even a few hundred words. You might hear two words from him in a month. Whole nights went by in silence: taking, bringing, nothing more. If you asked him a question, he answered with one word. A hundred words? I wish.

So we learned, and he did his work. In the morning, at alos hashachar, a few of us escorted Chacham Yitzchak home. His first home was near Shoshanim LeDavid. The rest of us went either to the mikveh or straight to put on tallis and tefillin and go to the beis knesses to daven, word by word. After davening we went to rest a little. That was our seder on Thursday nights for a long time.

We all saw how Rachamim davened. He held the siddur close to his eyes and ran his finger along the words so that he could read what he was davening. Poor man, we thought, he cannot read.

The Stories

Rabbi Shimon's Seudah

Talk Three · 1:30:30

What else did Chacham Yosef Tajer, alav hashalom, do? He received a small pension from Bituach Leumi (the government office that pays old people a monthly pension). He lived alone with his wife, the two of them old people in their home, and they had few expenses, so they managed. He gathered perutos, from where else I do not know, and saved a little all year.

Every year he finished the whole Zohar. On erev Lag BaOmer he made the siyum, and on the night of Lag BaOmer he held a seudah, a siyum on the Zohar in

honor of Rabbi Shimon. The seudah had whatever he managed to get: some fruit, some vegetables, and sometimes fish and meat too. He set it all on the table and invited ten talmidei chachamim. One more thing he always did. He prepared ten envelopes and put a lira[74] in each. The lira was a paper bill. Today the shekel is not worth the paper it is printed on, but then a lira was real money, an important coin. The ten talmidei chachamim came, he gave each one a sealed envelope with a lira inside, and they held the seudah. He finished the Zohar with its closing words, "ברוך ה' לעולם אמן ואמן," and it was a seudas mitzvah.

Chacham Sfadia told the following story; he was one of the ten. Chacham Sfadia was my rebbi in kitah daled at Porat Yosef. He was one of the remnants of the Knesses HaGedolah, from the Porat Yosef of the Old City, where he grew up, zechuso tagen aleinu. He was a tzaddik.

He told that one year Chacham Yosef said to his wife, "This year I cannot make a siyum. I have no money. I have not a perutah left. I have no envelopes for the chachamim and nothing to buy food with. I will just finish by myself, and Hashem will help." He said this to his wife in the afternoon.

I never remember Chacham Yosef in a coat. Perhaps in the winter he had some winter coat; that I do not remember. I remember him only in a khaki shirt, a blue beret and khaki trousers. The shirt had a pocket here on the chest, and that is all there was.

That night, as he slept, he saw Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in a dream. Rabbi Shimon said to him, "Chacham Yosef, why will you not make me a seudah this year?"

He answered, "Ma fi fulus (Arabic: there is no money)."

Rabbi Shimon said to him, "You have no fulus? I will give you. I have just put money in the pocket of your shirt. Do not open it, do not count it, and do not tell anyone. As long as you tell no one, however much you take out and spend, the money will come back. The moment you tell, whatever is there is all there is, and the rest will vanish at once. Be careful not to tell anyone."

He awoke in the morning, and behold, it was a dream. But it was a true dream. He got up, put on his shirt, and laid his hand on the pocket. He felt that it was swollen. That pocket had always been smooth, perfectly flat, smooth as his heart, and suddenly he felt a good thick pile there. He did not look to see what was inside. He finished Shacharis and ran to Machaneh Yehudah[75].

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[74] The lira (the Israeli pound) was the currency of the State of Israel until it was replaced by the shekel in 1980.

[75] Machaneh Yehudah is the great open-air market of Yerushalayim.

There he began to buy, and he took out the bills. And what bills! Not one-lira bills, but fives and tens. It was a pile of bills you could have bought a house with in those days. He bought meat and fish and drinks. Drinks then were not what they are today. Everything was expensive, and the juices were more real, in glass bottles. There were none of these sweets that are all poison, so that whoever drinks them transgresses "ונשמרתם מאוד לנפשותיכם." He bought everything in abundance, and in each envelope he put ten lirot. Do you know what ten lirot were in those days?

His wife began cooking the whole seudah, and she saw her husband bringing and bringing without stopping. And what fish! It was the tzena, and fish cost a fortune. Getting meat was like bringing the mann down from Shamayim. And he did not buy one kilo; he bought in quantity, so that they should eat to their health.

She said to him, "Yosef, you said you had no money, and this year you have more than in any other year! Where is the money from?"

He would not lie. Had he lied even once in his life, Rabbi Shimon would not have come to him. Rabbi Shimon does not come to liars; all the Torah of liars is worth nothing. He said to her, "It doesn't matter. I am not allowed to reveal it."

When a woman hears "I am not allowed to reveal it," she becomes all the more curious. Once you tell a woman that something may not be revealed, you have no idea what box you have opened. You can be sure she will not let you rest until you tell her; that has been tried and tested. He had stirred her curiosity. "Yosef, you won't tell me? How can that be? What is this? What are you not allowed to reveal? You have to tell me!"

He had no choice, and he told her: "Rabbi Shimon put money in my pocket. Here it is."

From that moment, whatever he spent did not come back. He still had a few bills left, and he found among them five one-lira bills. He used them, and that was the end; nothing new came again.

Chacham Sfadia said: "The meal we ate that day..." The chachamim, too, were poor. What did they have to eat at home? For them it was the one real meal of the whole year. "Such a thing can never be forgotten," he said. "The taste of that food was not a taste of this world. It was a taste of Gan Eden." And each of them, Chacham Sfadia among them, received an envelope of ten lirot, a real windfall for those talmidei chachamim.

He was a simple Jew who knew how to say Zohar. I do not know whether he even understood the Zohar. But he said the whole Zohar through: "Amar Rabbi Shimon, amar Rabbi Shimon, amar Rabbi Shimon." "Khawaja (Arabic: master) Rabbi Shimon, khawaja, khawaja." Rabbi Shimon was his whole life, and Rabbi Shimon came and gave to him.

Zechusam ya'amod veyagen aleinu ve'al kol Yisrael, bimheirah veyameinu, amen.

A Dream of the Beis Din shel Maalah

Talk Four · 2:13:30

Years passed, and I still learned there, after my marriage as well. It was not only for unmarried bochurim; married men came too, and as married men we also came for the whole of Thursday night. Is a man exempt from learning because he has married? On the contrary, he must learn double, for himself and for his wife, since she is his partner in the avodah of their home.

There came a time when many of the tzaddikim I had known were no longer in this world, and those still alive were not always within reach. Then I ran into a hard problem, a serious legal case concerning my house, and I did not know what to do. My grandfather had already passed away. All the tzaddikim I had known in Yerushalayim were gone. There were tzaddikim in the center of the country, but I had not reached them. The trial was set for Sunday, and it was a complicated case. On Thursday I realized that on Sunday I would have to stand in court, and I was in great distress.

On Thursday night I fell asleep. I saw in a dream that I was in the Beis Din shel Maalah, and I saw the dayanim judging the neshamos that had arrived, the ones that had passed away that day. I looked and was astounded. There was Rachamim the shamash, who at that very moment was handing out tea and coffee in the beis knesses, sitting as av beis din. Two neshamos of tzaddikim whom I did not know sat on either side of him. They brought in the neshamos of those who had passed away, and he judged them and decided who would go to Gehinnom, who to Gan Eden, and who to the kaf hakela. He was the one who decided.

I could not understand it. The man was handing out tea and coffee right now! Then I remembered that every night there was an hour or two when he sat at the side, half dozing. It happened after chatzos, when only a few dozen people were left; before that the place was full and he had a full-time job. After chatzos we would see him sitting at the side, leaning on his hand with his eyes closed, for an hour or two. We used to say, poor man, he works hard and he is old; he deserves a rest. Now I understood that in that hour or two he was not here at all. He was not in Shoshanim LeDavid; only his body was there. He was above, and in those hours he sat and judged people.

Rachamim, who did not know the alef-beis, sat there with his face shining. Light truly radiated from him. It was not a light falling on him from outside; it came out

of his skin. You could see his skin as though transparent over the bone. His skin was somewhat dark, and the light came out of it dark and grew brighter and brighter around him. I saw him judge two or three of the departed; I do not remember how many. He decided what was to be done with them, and I saw the whole din Torah above.

Then I went up to him and said, "Rachamim, please, I have a hard legal problem on Sunday. It concerns my house. What should I do?"

He said, "Come to the beis knesses tomorrow morning and we will talk."

I woke up, and I knew with certainty that this was a true dream and not imagination. Not even in my wildest imagination would I have thought that Rachamim sits in the Beis Din shel Maalah.

In the morning I went to Shoshanim LeDavid. Davening there was at netz, so I would have had to come very early; I arrived at seven or seven-thirty, and they had already finished. Only Rachamim, the poor man who could not read, was still in the middle of Shemoneh Esreh. He stood with an ordinary siddur, running his finger along it. This time I understood that this "actor" was not doing it because he could not read. He was having in mind, by heart, all the kavanos of the Siddur HaRashash (the siddur of Rav Shalom Sharabi, with the Kabbalistic kavanos for every word of tefillah).

I have told you that the memory of these tzaddikim does not fail them in anything that touches kedushah. He knew the entire Siddur HaRashash with all its kavanos by heart, and as his finger moved, he had in mind all the kavanos above for every word. That is why his Shemoneh Esreh at Shacharis took some three-quarters of an hour. All along we had thought that he read that way because he could not join the nekudos to the letters, and so the poor man needed three-quarters of an hour for Shemoneh Esreh, slowly, "Ba-ruch A-tah." We did not know that when he said "Ba-" he already had in mind above the whole order of the olamos, the partzufim, the sefiros, and the yichudim of each one with its nekudos. Now I understood with whom I was dealing, and I was overwhelmed.

I waited an hour and a half, from the middle of his Shemoneh Esreh until he finished Shacharis, slowly and calmly, in the empty beis knesses. When he finished, he had to wash the floor and clean the beis knesses to prepare it for Shabbos. I went up to him and said, "Rachamim, shalom aleichem. Last night I met his honor in the Beis Din shel Maalah, and his honor promised me that if I came now, he would help me with my trial on Sunday."

He said, "What are you talking about? Are you crazy? Do I even know how to read? What Beis Din shel Maalah? What are you talking about at all? You dream dreams, is that my fault? What do you want from me?"

I am not a man who argues much; I have no patience for it, and I wanted him to help me all the way. So I said, "Very well. If that is what his honor says, there is no problem. I will start telling my dream to everyone here. They will all hear what I dreamed, and they will know who his honor is."

"No, no, no, no!"

I said, "What do you mean, 'No, no'? His honor called me and told me to come in the morning so that we would talk about it. Now his honor tells me he knows nothing? Fine. On Sunday morning everyone in Shoshanim LeDavid, everyone who comes here, will know who his honor is."

"No, no, do not tell!"

"Then what will be?"

"I will help you. But you will not tell a single word of what you saw."

"No, I will not tell."

He said, "On Sunday you will go to the trial and receive everything quietly. You will receive all that you asked for, more than you expected. But promise me that you will tell nothing, all the days of my life."

I said, "All the days of his honor's life, I will swallow my tongue."

And so it was. On Sunday morning I went, and baruch Hashem, within a short time I received everything I wanted. From then on, whenever I came into Shoshanim LeDavid, I saw him as an ordinary shamash. I did not say a word to him or exchange a word with him, nothing at all, because I had promised.

When he passed away, I heard that only a few people went to the levayah of that am ha'aretz, an old man who did not know the alef-beis. Had I known, I would have run to his levayah, but I heard that he had passed away only a day or two later. Only then did I begin to tell who this tzaddik was.

The Masmid Who Walked on Air

Talk Four · 1:47:30

Chacham Moshe Chai Sharabani told me that in the days when the Kaf HaChaim was already sleeping in the ezras nashim, there was a yungerman in Porat Yosef in the Old City, something wonderful. I do not want to mention his name, because the honor of his family may be involved. He was known as a masmid, a shakdan not of this world.

I heard a story about this shakdan from Chacham Amram Rafful, alav hashalom. It was well known that he would sit learning in Porat Yosef in the Old City. Many times, when everyone went home to sleep at night, he sat by the window looking into a sefer or a sugya of Gemara, and when they came in the morning to learn they

found him still in the same place with the sefer, sunk in understanding it. The whole night had passed over him and he had not felt it. He was something tremendous.

This is what Chacham Rafful told me. In the summer it was very hard to learn in the Old City. The place was crowded and cramped and stifling. All of Batei Machseh[76] was one big hole, you could say. So they used to go up onto the roof to learn. On the roof there is more air. It was still summer, but Yerushalayim has mountains around it, and on the roof there was air. They sat and stood there and could learn in more normal weather.

He too would sit on the roof and learn, and several times they saw him get up in the middle of his learning and begin to walk. The roofs of the Old City had no railings; people went from roof to roof, jumping across. Very few roofs had a railing, because most of the houses were rented from Arabs. The Jews who owned their houses put up a railing on part of the roof, a small railing, and left part without one. Was it so that they could cross from roof to roof on purpose? I do not know. That is how it was there.

Once he was sitting there, deep in his learning, and he walked right off the roof. Everyone saw a wonder: he was walking in the air! They ran to call out to him, "Hey, come back in!" But one of the chachamim said to them, "Shh, don't say anything to him." He walked around in the air as though he were treading on the floor of the roof, until he came back to the roof. The moment he was back on the roof, still absorbed, they took him by the hand and brought him down. He did not even know that for several minutes he had not been on the roof, and that he had not fallen. There were eyewitnesses to this.

Thirty Days

Talk Four · 1:52:00

This bochur learned with tremendous hasmadah, and then he married. About two or three weeks after his chasunah, the Kaf HaChaim was sleeping upstairs in Shoshanim LeDavid, and he dreamed a dream. What did he see? A levayah. He asked the people, "Who is the niftar?"

They named that yungerman, the young chasan.

He asked them, "Why?"

They told him, "He married a woman who is not his zivug. Soon her time will come to marry her true zivug, and he is in the way."

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[76] A large complex in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, built in the nineteenth century as housing for poor families.

So it is written in the Zohar, in Parashas Vayeilech, on the pasuk "ויש נספה בלא משפט". Many men marry a woman who is not their zivug. They can live with her and even have children with her, everything, but he is not her zivug. When her time comes to marry her zivug, if the husband has zechus, a sudden urge comes over him and he divorces her. If he has no zechus, they take him, to clear the place for her zivug. The woman goes free from her husband either through a get or through his death. Since this man had married her now, and had been married to her only a few weeks, and her time to marry the other was coming soon, they were going to take him.

The Kaf HaChaim said to them, "Give me time. I will tell him to leave her, so that you will not take him."

They answered, "No. It is a gezeirah."

He woke up, went down into the beis knesses, opened the aron kodesh and began to weep: "Ribbono shel Olam, he is an important talmid chacham. Do chessed! Give me the chance to go to him and ask him to divorce her, so that he will stay alive." When he had finished davening, he went back upstairs and fell asleep. All this was before chatzos. The mekubalim make an effort to sleep until chatzos so that they can get up at chatzos and stay up until morning. That is the mekubalim's limited time for sleep: from after Maariv until chatzos, no more.

He went back to sleep, and in a dream he saw the chevra kadisha that carries away the dead coming with an empty bier. They told him, "Shamayim has given you thirty days. For now there is no levayah."

He got up in the morning. He was old and it was hard for him, but what does one not do? He walked on foot from Shoshanim LeDavid, at the corner of the Bucharim neighborhood and Beis Yisrael, all the way to the Old City, to Porat Yosef. Even for young people it is a twenty-minute walk, but for an old man it was a hard walk. The road was not paved as it is today; you went up hills and down valleys and climbed over rocks. To Shaar Shechem (the gate on the north side of the Old City) is a fair way. To us it is not far, but for old people it is hard. He walked the whole way, came to Rechov HaMeidan, went into Porat Yosef in the Old City, came to the bochur and said to him, "Listen to me. Give your wife a get."

"What? What is the Rav saying? Why? What happened? Chas veshalom, does the Rav know something bad? Has the Rav heard of some pesul, some pegam, something?"

He said to him, "No. I will tell you the truth. I dreamed such and such. I asked for rachamim, and they told me they were giving me the chance to speak to you, so that you would leave her."

The yungerman answered, "Chacham, divrei chalomos lo maalin velo moridin. We pay no attention to dreams. Chelma tava chazis, chelma tava chazis, chelma tava

chazis. Did the Rav trouble himself the whole way for this? Isn't it a pity? Let the Rav leave us where we are. Everything is fine."

Three or four times during that month the Kaf HaChaim came to him at the yeshivah to ask him to give her a get. He stood his ground. On the thirtieth day, at shkiah, he fell and died.

Afterwards his wife, poor woman, had to wait a year, a year and a half, to receive chalitzah. Then she married a driver, an Egged bus driver (Egged is Israel's large bus company), who was her zivug.

Chacham Amram Rafful

Talk Four · 1:51:00

Chacham Amram Rafful told me this, may his zechus protect us. Chacham Amram Rafful was a holy man, a man who did not know how to lie and did not know how to exaggerate. All his days he wept over a great aveirah that he had in his hands. What was it? Until the age of twelve he did not know that according to the Zohar a man may not look at his own bris, and he used to look at it. Only at twelve did he hear that according to the Zohar a man may not look at his own bris milah, all the more so at someone else's. From then on he stopped and guarded his eyes, and did not look even at his own bris milah. And all his days he wept because until twelve he had not known this and had looked at it. What kedushas einayim, what things! That was Chacham Amram Rafful, and he said that there were eyewitnesses to the story.

The Promise of the Ben Ish Chai

Talk Four · 2:23:30

Since I have spoken here about Rav Yosef Chaim as well, how can I not tell more? Rav Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai, is our crown, our head, our neshamah: kedushah and chassidus. The whole sefer Ben Ish Chai is not a sefer of halachos. It is a sefer of kedushah. To learn halachos from the Ben Ish Chai is not only to learn what to do; it is to draw real light, kedushah, and ruach hakodesh. As I have already told you, it is not the sefer, it is the author: he rests his spirit upon the sefer. I will tell you one story about Rav Yosef Chaim.

In Yerushalayim I merited to know a simple Jew, also with his cap, whose name was Menashe Yosefan. When I knew him he was in his seventies, I do not remember exactly. He had a grey beard and was truly one of the people of old.

I heard, though I did not see it, that some years earlier, when they built Ohel Rachel, the beis knesses of the Iraqis on Dovid Yellin Street in Yerushalayim, he was among the builders. The beis knesses itself is high, perhaps two or two and a half stories, and above it rises a large dome, as tall as another story. Many people volunteered to build it, not for money but to have the zechus of building a beis knesses, and he was one of them. The whole building is made of stone, Yerushalayim stone, and each stone is huge and dressed. They carried each one on their shoulders up wooden ladders to the top of the scaffolding, to set it into the dome. I do not know how old he was then, perhaps sixty, but he was old in any case. He took the heavy stone, carried it up to the top of the dome, and set it in place.

Once the stone slipped from his hands and pushed him aside, and he rolled from the dome all the way down to the street. The stone fell too, but not on him; it landed in some other corner. He lay on the ground on Dovid Yellin Street. People ran over, sure that he had been crushed and fearing the worst. He stood up, shook himself off, and went back to the scaffolding. They said to him, "Sir, you are an old man. Go to the hospital and let them examine you. Maybe something is broken, maybe something happened to your body!"

He laughed and said, "Rav Yosef Chaim promised me complete health until old age. What are you talking about? Nothing is wrong with me." He did not listen to them. He took another stone of the same size, climbed back up, and went on building.

I heard this story when I was a boy of fourteen or fifteen. From my youth I always wanted to find out the facts, and the story fired me up. I said to myself, with a man like this, if you do not squeeze the lemon, you get no juice.

HALF A RIYAL

Talk Four · 2:31:30

One day we caught Menashe Yosefan and said to him, "Menashe, please, tell us what happened. How did you fall and get up, and why did you say that Rav Yosef Chaim had promised you? Why did he promise?"

He said, "Come to Porat Yosef on Shabbos after seudah shlishis, and I will tell you."

A few of us came to Porat Yosef that Shabbos after seudah shlishis. Menashe Yosefan arrived, very old and shriveled like an olive, and began to tell us the story in Iraqi Hebrew, more Iraqi than Hebrew. But we had grown up among such people and understood his language well. This is what he told us.

When he reached bar mitzvah, which in those days was nothing like the celebrations of today, his father came to him and said, "My son, today you are bar mitzvah. Take the tefillin I bought you and go to Rav Yosef Chaim's house. He will put them on you for the first time, and you will learn to put on tefillin, and you will have the zechus that Rav Yosef Chaim himself places them on your arm. And here is a gift in honor of your bar mitzvah: half a riyal." Half a riyal was a small coin. That was his father's bar mitzvah gift, and that was the whole bar mitzvah; it began and ended with that.

He took the half riyal and set out for Rav Yosef Chaim's house. On the way a poor man came up to him and stretched out his hand for tzedakah. He took out the half riyal and gave it to him.

He reached Rav Yosef Chaim's house. It was a big house, a house of the wealthy, for Rav Yosef Chaim's brothers were rich and had made him a partner in everything, and he was registered as their partner. He knocked; the door was open, and he saw Rav Yosef Chaim sitting some four or five meters away. As soon as he came in, Rav Yosef Chaim said to him, "What did you do? What did you do?"

The boy was frightened, because the Chacham was shouting at him, and he began to cry. Rav Yosef Chaim got up from his chair, ran to him, and asked, "Why are you crying?"

"You frightened me."

"No! You did something good just now, on your way here. I see a very, very great light above your head. What did you do?"

"On the way here? Nothing."

"Try to remember."

"Nothing. I had only half a riyal, and I gave it to a poor man."

Rav Yosef Chaim said, "Know that this poor man had not eaten for three days. He had a few prutos, not enough to buy food. With the half riyal you gave him he went and bought bread, ate, and revived himself. You gave life to a Jewish neshamah. I see on you a great light from the tzedakah you did. And because I frightened you, and you were afraid of me, I promise you that you will be healthy and whole until old age, and you will know no illness and no sickness."

"He blessed me," Menashe told us, "and since then, my whole life, I have not known what illness is or what sickness is. So I fell from the height of a third story. So what? I fell from the dome with a huge stone that rolled out of my hands, and I rolled down all the slopes of it. What happened? He promised! I got up, shook myself off, went back up, and carried on as before, and nothing happened. Look at me, strong as a hammer, perfectly fine." That is what he told us.

Along the way he mentioned that he had also had the zechus to be the shamash of Rav Yosef Chaim's son, Chacham Yaakov Chaim. "Ah! Tell us!" When a lemon

is in front of you and you do not squeeze it, you are a fool. He began, and we said, "Go on." He told us wonderful things, several stories, but I do not remember them. It was not that I did not love to listen, but his language was somewhat difficult and confused by his old age. He spoke clearly, yet it was hard for me to take in everything. He told several stories that I am not sure exactly how he told, and I do not want to tell things that are not clear. I remember that he told a story about a snake with several heads that he killed through kavanos in the beis hakisei, and that because of this he passed away young. But I do not know the exact details, so I do not tell it.

The Note in the Robe

Talk Four · 2:37:00

One story he told us I remember clearly. After the petirah of Rav Yosef Chaim, Rav Yaakov Chaim served as rav in his place in Bavel, in Baghdad. There was a Jewish woman there, very beautiful, who lived as a zonah; that was her trade, and all the great men of the kingdom came to her. Because of this she had great power in the government, and people were afraid to tangle with her. If anyone interfered with her, she went straight to the government and gave his name. There was neither law nor judge there. When someone in the police or the government was told about a man and wanted to be rid of him, he sent two policemen at once. They took the man away and dealt with him, and that was the end of him. No one wanted to tangle with her.

Several times Rav Yaakov Chaim sent messengers to her to say, "Stop. This is a grave aveirah; stop it." She did not listen. The messengers themselves trembled. They would say, "The Chacham asked us to tell you to stop," only to fulfill their duty, and then they ran away. She went on as before.

Menashe told us: "Chacham Yaakov Chaim called me and gave me a note. He said, 'Put this in her robe. Find a way.' I said, 'Chacham, release me from this. I am afraid; I do not want to tangle with her.' He said, 'You are commanded to do it. You have no choice.' I took the note and waited for an opportunity. I went to her house. There was a waiting room, a reception room where people waited while she was in the other room at her trade. I went in and saw that the waiting room was empty, and her robe was hanging there. I pushed the note deep into the pocket of her robe and ran away."

She came out of the room and put on the robe. The moment she put it on, she began to swell like a balloon. She swelled and swelled, as a balloon keeps swelling until it bursts. Her body truly swelled up. She tried to get out through the door and

could not. She began screaming from inside the room, "Help! Save me!" No one came near her. It was as if air had entered her body and blown her up like a balloon, until she burst altogether, and they took her to the beis hakevaros.

That was Rabbeinu Yaakov Chaim, the son of our Rabbeinu, Rav Yosef Chaim.

The Snuffbox and the Boat

Talk Four · 2:43:30

Chacham Moshe Yechezkel told a story not of this world about Rav Yaakov Chaim, the light of our eyes, the son of Rav Yosef Chaim.

One day they made a siyum on Masechta Sanhedrin in the beis knesses, which stood ten minutes from the bank of the Chidekel (the Tigris, the river that runs through Baghdad), and held a seudas siyum. Rav Yaakov Chaim did not move a finger without kavanos. He was known as a holy man, holy through and through; if he moved a finger, there was a reason.

In the middle of the seudah, Chacham Moshe Yechezkel saw Rav Yaakov Chaim suddenly take his snuffbox, which stood in the middle of the table, and push it aside, all the way to the edge. He asked him, "Chacham, why did you do that? What bothered you about it standing in the middle, that you moved it to the edge?"

Rav Yaakov Chaim answered, "Just now two Jewish boys were in a boat with an Arab boatman, in the middle of the Chidekel, and he wanted to lift them up and throw them into the river to drown them. I saw it, and when I took the box and moved it aside, I moved his boat. In one moment I brought his boat to the shore, and in his fear he let them go there, and they ran."

Chacham Moshe Yechezkel said: "When I heard these words from the Chacham, I ran at once to the Chidekel. I saw two frightened boys on the shore and asked them, 'What happened?' They said, 'A few minutes ago we were in the middle of the Chidekel, and the Arab wanted to throw us into the water. Suddenly, we do not know how, some wind came and pushed the boat to the shore within a minute, and we were swept to land. He was afraid, put us off the boat quickly, and fled.'"

He said to them, "Come, come," and took them with him to the beis knesses. They were badly shaken. He sat them down, calmed them, gave them something from the seudah to taste, and told them, "Sit here and rest." Not a quarter or half an hour passed before the seudah ended. Chacham Yaakov Chaim got up to go home, and Chacham Moshe Yechezkel accompanied him. As he went out he saw the boys and said to Chacham Moshe Yechezkel, "Here, these are the two boys I saw in the river with the boat." Chacham Moshe Yechezkel had not told him that

he had gone and brought them, or anything else. On his own he said, "Here, these are the two I saw."

This is greatness! This is kedushah! This is our Torah, for which Hakadosh Baruch Hu prepared us. He told us to be a treasure among all the nations: "Vihyisem li segulah mikol ha'amim, ki li kol ha'aretz." What does "ki li kol ha'aretz" mean? The whole earth is nothing; do as you wish, only be Mine. I created you, and I gave you power.

May their zechus stand and protect us, and may we merit, b'ezras Hashem, in their zechus, the eternal geulah, the geulah of each one of us and the geulah of all Klal Yisrael. Amen, ken yehi ratzon.

SHORT ACCOUNTS

SUGAR FOR THE KOLLEL

Talk Four · 2:40:30

In Tel Aviv there lived the gaon Chacham Moshe Yechezkel, a very great man, a talmid chacham and mekubal. He opened a kollel in Tel Aviv named after Rav Yosef Chaim.

As I have told you before, in the years of the tzena[77], in the fifties, everything was rationed. Who got sugar? Each family received a small amount, with points and coupons. I remember going to the grocery with the coupons. The grocer tore off one coupon for sugar, one for margarine, one for oil. Everything was rationed.

In the kollel they davened Shacharis and then sat down to learn Chok LeYisrael (the fixed daily portion of Tanach, Mishnah, Gemara and Zohar). Without it an Iraqi Jew would not leave the beis knesses. He finished davening and sat for another three-quarters of an hour in tallis and tefillin, learning Chok LeYisrael slowly. But they needed tea. Before davening one does not eat or drink. They came, sat, davened a long tefillah, and now they were sitting for another three-quarters of an hour; they needed a glass of hot tea. And tea without sugar is like a body without a neshamah. There, the sugar ran out.

One morning they told him, "Chacham Moshe, mafi sukkar, khalas! (Arabic: there is no sugar, it is finished!) There is not one teaspoon left."

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[77] The tzena (austerity) was the rationing regime of the young State of Israel, from 1949 into the 1950s, when food was scarce and every family received fixed portions with ration coupons.

He said, "Soon there will be sugar." He went out into the courtyard of the beis knesses and said, "Rav Yosef Chaim! We need sugar! Get us sugar!" Then he went back in, and they began learning Chok LeYisrael quietly. He had told them there would soon be sugar.

In less than half an hour a man arrived with a cart full of sugar. Where could anyone find a cart full of sacks of sugar in those days? Where was there sugar at all? He came in and asked, "Who is Chacham Moshe Yechezkel?"

"I am."

"A man met me half an hour ago and hired me as a porter. He loaded these sacks of sugar and paid me for the delivery. Take them; unload them."

And so they had sugar, yishtabach Shemo, for a long, long time. That was Chacham Moshe Yechezkel.

Chapter Nineteen

Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri

Rav Kaduri's Promise

Talk Fourteen · 26:30

Since I have already mentioned Rav Kaduri, I will tell you a few incidents with him that I knew personally, for I merited, baruch Hashem, to be close to him, zechuso yagen aleinu. You have surely heard many stories about him already, and there is no need for me to repeat them. I will tell small things that are usually not so well known.

The first story goes back to what I told you before: how at seventeen I came back from Patilon, after I had seen the cat. The cat came and spoke with the tzaddik, and he made a tikkun for her. She had been a girl of seventeen who sewed on Shabbos, and he made a tikkun for her before my eyes. I saw it, I was stunned, and I went into shock. I told you about it already. Afterwards, in Yerushalayim, I saw two cats standing head to head and starting to growl, and I said a perek of Tehillim, "Vihi No'am" and "Yoshev BeSeser." One of them died and the other ran away, and I was completely shaken.

That same evening I went to Shoshanim LeDavid. It was leil shishi (Thursday night), and Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri would sit there and learn all night. We learned there as well. At a later stage I also joined the learning there. They learned until chatzos, and then whoever wanted stayed on until morning. Chacham Yitzchak stayed until morning, saying Tikkun Chatzos and then Tehillim until morning. At dawn we would walk him home. After half an hour of sleep he would get up and go to the mikveh, and immediately afterwards daven Shacharis and Musaf. That was Chacham Yitzchak.

But at seventeen I was only beginning, and it was new to me. I knew Chacham Yitzchak was there, because I had already started going to Shoshanim LeDavid. That time I went straight there, all fired up: I am going to learn Kabbalah! I took a sefer of Kabbalah, Sha'ar HaKavanos, from the shelf of the mekubalim's sefarim

and began to read. After a few words I came to a word I did not understand. I went to Chacham Yitzchak and said, "Chacham Yitzchak, what does this mean?"

He explained it to me superficially, and then he said, "Go now to the yeshivah and learn Torah. I promise you that after you marry, you will come to me and I will teach you Kabbalah." He knew he would live, and he knew he would teach me. And so it was.

That spurred me to marry. I sat and learned in the yeshivah seriously, and I did everything I could to marry as quickly as possible. At twenty and a half I married, only so that I could come to Chacham Yitzchak to learn. I went to Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai, zechuso yagen aleinu, and learned the beginning with him, and afterwards I continued with Chacham Yitzchak for a number of shiurim as well. I learned only a little with him, but later I also merited to receive his haskamah on my sefer Tiferes Menachem, chelek beis, which deals with these subjects as well.

That is how close I was to him. Right after my marriage, within a short time, I began to learn with him, and he was truly very fond of me.

Thirty Thousand Sefarim

Talk Fourteen · 29:30

Chacham Yitzchak himself knew thirty thousand sefarim by heart. The library of Porat Yosef in the Old City had thirty thousand sefarim, so I have heard, and he bound them all. He was called Chacham Yitzchak the Bookbinder. He was a good bookbinder who bound strongly, and he never bound a single sefer without first going through it from beginning to end. Chacham Yitzchak's memory was astonishing.

He did not speak much. But when the chachamim of Porat Yosef wanted to test one another, they would give him the pin test. What is the pin test? They would take a needle, open a Gemara at random wherever it opened, and pierce it. Then they would say to the person: "Where the pin went in, what is there? Rashi, Tosafos or Gemara? And what does it say there?" He had to know by heart exactly what was written at the spot where the pin went in. It does not tear the Gemara or anything like that; it is a tiny little hole. Wherever they opened, Chacham Yitzchak always knew what was written at that very spot.

I remember that once I asked him a question in Kabbalah: why is a woman exempt from the mitzvah of sukkah? According to pshat we know the reason, since it is a mitzvas asei shehazman grama, but according to Kabbalah it is not so clear. Chacham Yitzchak did not give me an answer. He only said, "Look in such-and-such a place, and in such-and-such a place." He gave me the names of several se-

farim that deal with this very question, like an index of where to search: "Look in Derech Tevunos in such-and-such a place, look in such-and-such a sefer in such-and-such a place, look in such-and-such a place." Just like that, he gave me a list of several places, every one of which discussed exactly this subject. He did not need to explain; he only told me where to look.

Afterwards I went to Chacham Mordechai Sharabi, alav hashalom, and asked him the same question. He answered me by himself, from his own head, with three answers, the very ones written in those sefarim. On his own he gave me answers just like those, precisely. It was very interesting. In any case, that was Chacham Yitzchak.

THE STORIES

THE BEAN

Talk Fourteen · 32:00

At that time the Six Day War broke out.[78] After the Six Day War not everyone could enter the West Bank. One needed a special entry permit from the military government of Yehudah and Shomron. Whoever went in suddenly entered the world of Salah a-Din (the Muslim ruler who took Yerushalayim from the Crusaders), a world of the Thousand and One Nights. Suddenly there was the Old City with all its alleys and all the Arab markets there, and in Gaza too. It was something Israelis had never known, something astonishing. Everyone wanted to see what was going on there, in the territories, in Shechem and Ramallah. It interested everyone.

A relative of my wife's was a policeman in the south, with a wife and two children; his wife was my wife's relative. There was a beautiful love between them. They never quarreled, there was mutual respect, and they were raising two children very nicely. The love between them was tremendous.

The husband's sister hated the wife, simply hated her, and she was always trying to speak badly of her to her brother. He told her, "You are my sister, and all respect to you, but not my wife. About her I am not willing to hear a word; change the subject." He never let her turn him against his wife. The love between them was complete.

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[78] The Six Day War, in Iyar 5727 (June 1967), in which Israel took Yerushalayim's Old City, Yehudah and Shomron, Gaza, the Sinai and the Golan Heights.

In those days, as I said, going into Gaza required a special permit, and the markets there were something only an Oriental imagination could have produced. One day he came to his wife and said:

"Listen. Tomorrow they are making an outing for all the policemen's wives. Here are fifty lirot (the Israeli currency of those years). Tomorrow morning I am not going to work at the police; I am staying home as babysitter for the children. They will go to school, and when they come back I will be here for them. In the morning a police car will come and take all the policemen's wives to Gaza. Here are fifty lirot; go buy yourself whatever you want in the markets there. Have a good time; it is a day out for the wives."

In the morning she went, and he stayed home. At noon the children came home, and he was there for them. Suddenly his sister arrived.

"Where is your wife?"

"She went on an outing. She will be back toward evening."

"And what will you eat?"

"I bought cheeses. We will eat cheeses for one day. So what? Must we eat cooked food every day?"

"No, I will cook for you."

She went and cooked ful (stewed fava beans, a common Middle Eastern dish). She served them the food, and he and the children ate the ful. His sister finished and left. The moment this man ate the ful, a hatred for his wife came over him that was not of this world. The poor woman knew nothing.

She came home in the afternoon in high spirits and said to him, "Thank you so much! It was so nice, it was good, I really enjoyed it." He listened to her, and after two minutes he said, "Go into the other room, the bedroom." She went in, and he took his belt and beat her murderously. She was in shock. Never in his life had he laid a hand on her, and suddenly he was beating her.

She ran to the neighbor. The neighbor was frightened to see her suddenly come into his house screaming, "Save me!" She was already swollen all over and trembling, she did not know what to do, she was in shock. Never in her life had anything like this happened. She wailed and wept without understanding what was happening to her.

An hour after she ran away, the husband left the house. He took a suitcase, packed his clothes into it, and went out. When the neighbor had made sure he was no longer in the house, she went back home. The children told her that their father had taken a suitcase with clothes and left. She opened the closet and saw that his clothes were gone. He had left. She was afraid: would he come back? Would he beat her again? She did not understand why. What had happened? Why all of a sudden? What was her crime, what was her sin? She understood nothing. She was in shock.

The husband did not come back. For ten days he did not come back. She did not know where he was or where he had disappeared to, and she could not understand what had suddenly happened. Her whole world had collapsed on her.

After ten days she received a letter from a lawyer, which said: "Your husband maintains that you were a good wife. He can no longer look at you, and he wishes to divorce. He is prepared to leave you the house and to give you as much in support as you demand. He wants the get. Come and sign a divorce agreement, and whatever you want, you will receive. You are separating."

When she read it, she was in shock. On the spot she phoned my wife: "Listen, this is what happened. I must get in to Rav Kaduri. You are a Yerushalmi and you have a connection with him. Tell me what to do."

My wife said, "What? My husband works with him. Come!"

That same day she came to our house. She showed my wife her back. It was blue, covered with blue stripes of bruising from the beating she had received, still not gone ten or twelve days later. She said, "I do not want a divorce. He was a good husband. I do not know what happened here. There is something here I do not understand."

The next morning I went with her to Rav Kaduri's house. I came in and said to him, "Chacham Yitzchak, there is a serious case here." He said to me, "Go out; when the person here finishes, I will let you in." The man finished, and he received me.

Chacham Yitzchak used goral hachol. Chol is an acronym of chamah and levanah. It is a goral that the holy Avos, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, used. It is a very complicated and difficult goral, and a very interesting one, and its answers are precise. One makes all sorts of dots on a sheet of paper without counting. Then one turns them into lines, in pairs, so that each comes out either a pair or a single. One does this four times, and from the four come up to sixteen figures of lines. Then there is a sefer that explains these things.

The Midrash says that when Binyamin came down to Mitzrayim with his brothers, Yosef called him aside and said to him, "Come here. Where is your brother Yosef who disappeared?"

"We do not know."

"Here is goral hachol. You know how to use it, don't you? Do it now, here."

He did it, and said to him, "I see that Yosef is right here in the house, next to me."

"Yes, I am Yosef. But do not reveal it to your brothers; it is dangerous. I am telling you: tomorrow I will put the goblet in your sack. Do not be afraid. Everything here has been prepared in advance; do not be afraid of anything."

And so he put the goblet there, and all that followed happened. Our holy Avos used this goral. It is a very interesting goral.

Chacham Yitzchak was an expert in this goral, and he had a manuscript of his own explaining all the figures of goral hachol. It seems he found the manuscript in one of the sefarim that passed through his hands. There is a sefer called Yalkut Moshe, composed in Europe, which has the first part of goral hachol, how to do it. But the explanation of the results, of the sixteen figures, is not there. Chacham Yitzchak had that as an entire sefer in manuscript, and that manuscript is tremendous and awesome.

I went in with the woman, and Chacham Yitzchak did the goral hachol, opened the manuscript, and said on the spot: "The husband's sister came and cooked ful. He ate the ful, and there is one bean inside his body that has not come out. It is kishuf. The ful she cooked was bewitched; she put kishuf into the pot of food, so that he would hate his wife. The moment this bean comes out of his body, he will return to his former love."

That was only the first part: knowing the cause of the problem. Now the solution. On the spot he wrote a note in his own handwriting on a piece of paper, a small kamea. He said to me, "Put this into tea and give it to him to drink. He will drink the tea, and everything will be put right."

Now she asked me, "How is he going to drink tea with this note? He doesn't even come home. Where will I put it?"

I said, "Madam, here one must work with one's head. I will give you advice. Write to the lawyer that you are not willing to sign except on condition that he comes to the house and sits with you. You are prepared to sign the divorce agreement, but only at home, when he comes himself and the two of you talk." He would have no choice. He was set on getting the get, so he would come.

"Arrange in advance for your brother to be in the house on the day he comes, so that you will not be alone, in case he suddenly beats you again. He is capable of pulling out his belt again and going wild. Have your brother in the house, so that if he tries to raise a hand, your brother will jump on him, grab him and stop him. Meanwhile, when he sits with you, make tea, put the note in it, serve him a cup, and tell him, 'Drink.' You will see: he will drink the cup of tea. Meanwhile, talk to him about the clauses, and sign. Do not be afraid. Know that by law, even if you sign, you can cancel it afterwards; it is nothing. You can say that you are withdrawing from the agreement, and it binds you to nothing. The main thing is that while you are signing and keeping him seated, you give him the tea to drink."

That is what she did. He came, and her brother came too, to be safe. He came in grim-faced and said to her, "All I want is the… Here, write whatever you want and I will sign for you. Come on."

She said, "No, not like that. Sit down, I will make a cup of tea."

"No, no, no, no."

"You came here, didn't you? You will drink a cup of tea. Without it I am not signing anything for you."

"All right, fine, just sign for me."

He drank the cup of tea slowly, while she wrote, "I agree; bring this, and the house, and so on," and kept writing and writing. He was already waiting for her to sign. When he had drunk half the cup, he suddenly vomited. After he vomited, he looked at her and said, "Tell me, am I crazy? I would leave you?" He threw his arms around her and hugged her and said, "I love you. I don't know what happened to me."

"It's over," she said. "Wait, and you will see in a moment what happened to you." She put her hand into what he had brought up and took out a whole bean. She said, "This is what your sister fed you. This is what gave you all the hatred. The tea made you bring the bean out of your body, just as Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri said. Here is the bean."

The bean came out, and they went back to a complete love between them, everything as it should be.

That was Chacham Yitzchak, zechuso yagen aleinu.

Short Accounts

Rav Kaduri in Katamon

Talk Two · 45:30

Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri also removed ruchos together with Chacham Shaul a number of times, several ruchos.

I remember that when I was at Porat Yosef, as a boy of twelve or thirteen, or perhaps fourteen, somewhere between twelve and fourteen, I do not remember, a car would come every day at noon to take Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri to Katamon (a neighborhood of Yerushalayim). There was a woman there who had three dybbukim in her body: one a Jew and two gentiles, their ruchos inside her. Rav Kaduri fought them until he drove all three out of her body.

Many bochurim from Porat Yosef would go there to Katamon as well, to see how he spoke with the ruchos. One could hear the ruchos speaking Arabic; they were the ruchos of people from Arabic-speaking lands, and he spoke with them in

Arabic. He would compel them with hashba'os (oaths invoking holy Names) and yichudim to leave. It was not done in one time; it took a period of several weeks until he succeeded in driving them out.

I remember it, and I remember that the older bochurim especially would go to see it. I was afraid to see it, even though at the age of twelve I already knew Minchas Yehuda (the sefer of Chacham Yehuda Fetaya, with his accounts of the ruchos he dealt with) and all the stories in it, and I knew Haruchos Mesapros very well too; I knew them all by heart. We grew up on these stories, on these things, in this atmosphere. Even so, I was afraid to go. But those older than I went.

"I Hear His Heartbeat"

Talk Fourteen · 43:30

I was a witness to this story myself. One day a couple came to Chacham Yitzchak. The wife was in her fifth or sixth month, and for several days the doctors had found no heartbeat in the baby. They told her it was dangerous and that she must end the pregnancy. That is how those doctors are: for everything, they say to abort, the resha'im.

Chacham Yitzchak listened to the husband and said, "What nonsense are you talking? I can hear the baby's heartbeat from here. He has a heartbeat, he is alive. Right now I am hearing his heartbeat."

The couple lived in another city! And he said, "I am hearing his heartbeat now, and it is perfectly fine. Go home. There is nothing wrong. The child is healthy, and everything will be all right."

And so it was. The doctors heard no heartbeat, but he heard one, and she gave birth to a healthy, whole child, without any problems at all.

Twins Again

Talk Fourteen · 45:00

There was a woman, a mother of twins, who caught the flesh-eating bacteria (a rare infection that destroys the flesh very quickly and is often deadly). After all sorts of treatments, cortisone and I don't know what else, she recovered. The doctors told her that she must not become pregnant now. It was dangerous; her body would be weak, and who knew what could happen. Under no circumstances was she to become pregnant.

But she became pregnant. The doctors pressed her to end the pregnancy and told her that otherwise her life was in danger.

Her husband went to Chacham Yitzchak. Chacham Yitzchak said to him, "Nonsense, utter nonsense! Your wife is healthy. You are having twins again, and you have nothing to fear. They are healthy, they will be born, two healthy twin girls."

And so it was. Healthy twin girls were born to him, with nothing wrong.

The Key That Turned

Talk Fourteen · 46:30

I remember that once there was a theft at Porat Yosef. Something was stolen from one of the people there; one of his garments, as I recall, though I no longer know exactly how it happened. All sorts of drifters used to come in and go out of the place, and they suspected one of them, but they were not sure.

I remember that a group of us went together to Chacham Yitzchak's house. He was an expert in Shimush Tehillim (an old sefer of segulos that tells for which needs each perek of Tehillim is said, and how), and he performed many of its segulos. He was tremendous!

There is a segulah done with a large key. You do not remember those keys. In the old days we used them for the gates of courtyards: a big lock, and a key about fifteen or twenty centimeters long, gold-colored, and with it the gate was opened. He had a key like that, tied inside a sefer Tehillim. Chacham Yitzchak said perek 16 of Tehillim and held the two ends of the key between two of his fingers, with the Tehillim hanging from it. Then he said, "Say the names."

They said several names, and the key stayed still. Then they mentioned the name of one of those drifters who came in and out, the one they suspected. As soon as that name was said, the key turned by itself, and the whole sefer made a full turn. He told them, "This is the thief."

Afterward they caught him. That is how they caught the thief. May his merit protect us.

Two Days

Talk Fourteen · 48:30

Chacham Yitzchak used to receive the public at the Musayof shul. I have already told the story of the woman who came to him there because her son had been burned. Chacham Yitzchak said that it was because in his previous gilgul he had stumbled in a grave aveirah with his mother-in-law, whose punishment is sereifah. Afterward Rav Kaduri, may his merit protect us, gave him a way to do teshuvah. He accepted a tikkun upon himself, and he was healed.

Now let me tell you another story that happened with Chacham Yitzchak and concerned me.

I was teaching talmidim in Yerushalayim, but I also used to travel to America, since I had a following there as well. Once, while I was in America, my plan was to stay three weeks. After I had been there a week and a half, my talmidim here began to feel the pressure. They wanted me back for the shiur; things had become hard for them without me.

I had a talmid named Aharon who davened every morning with Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri at Musayof, in his minyan, which was at around eight or nine o'clock. It was a Monday. Aharon bought pesichas haheichal and gave the honor to Chacham Yitzchak. As Chacham Yitzchak opened the heichal, Aharon stood beside him, since he was the one who had honored him, and Chacham Yitzchak asked him, "What do you want?" He thought Aharon wanted a refuah sheleimah or something of the kind.

Aharon said, "The Rav is in America, and we want him to come back. His plan is to stay another week, but we need him here now."

Chacham Yitzchak said the Mi Shebeirach, with a berachah that I should return, and told him, "Don't worry. In two more days he will be back in Eretz Yisrael."

In America, meanwhile, my mind suddenly turned around. I felt pressed, and I decided to cut the trip short and go home. Within two days I had landed in Lod.

I thought I was the great chacham who had made up his mind on his own. I came to the shiur, and that bochur, Aharon, said to me, "Chacham Yosef, do you know that Rav Kaduri had a hand in this?" and he told me the whole story. In no time at all I had landed in Israel. May his merit protect us.

Four Almonds

Talk Fourteen · 51:30

I also saw how he did his work of healing people, what you might call his remedies. One of them was done with almonds. To some people he gave four almonds, and on each one he wrote one name: Pishon, Gichon, Chidekel, Peras (the four rivers that went out of Gan Eden). He wrote on the brown skin of the almond, and he had them eat one each day. With this he healed light illnesses.

Severe illnesses he also healed with almonds: three almonds, with three names written on them. He gave them to the sick, and many people were healed this way.

That was Chacham Yitzchak, may his merit protect us. Amen, ken yehi ratzon.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Chacham Yosef Zaruk

CHACHAM YOSEF ZARUK'S CHOICE

Talk Fourteen · 0:00

Now I will begin to speak of my rebbi, a giant among giants, in whose head, mind and mouth the entire Torah was fluent. There was nothing in the Torah, in pshat, in Kabbalah, in remez or in drush, that he did not know. It is staggering to think of. One can say that since the Vilna Gaon I have not heard of anyone with knowledge on such a scale. But there was one difference: he was blind. He could not see with his eyes.

Even so, he knew the entire Torah, and he knew where every matter appears: on which daf, which amud, which line, which place. It might be in Rashi, the Gemara or Tosafos, or in any sefer at all, in Etz Chaim or the kisvei ha'Arizal, the Maharsha or the Maharam Schiff, the Pnei Yehoshua or any of the meforshei haShas, the Rambam or the Ramban. It made no difference. He could point to the exact place and give the exact wording, word for word. That was my rebbi, Rabbi Yosef Zaruk, alav hashalom.

He did not reach this by chance. This is what happened.

Chacham Yosef was born in Libya in the year 5669 (1909). When he was six he had a children's illness that darkened his sight, until his vision was almost nothing. When he was about eleven, his father decided to take him to Italy for treatment. In those days Libya and Italy were as one, since Libya was under Italian rule, if I am not mistaken.[79] There was a doctor there who by every account was an expert in the eyes, and in his son's problem in particular, and could cure him. A simple operation, and he would see.

How the little boy Yosef davened! "Ribono shel Olam, open my eyes, open them! I want to toil in Your holy Torah; open my eyes for me." A boy of ten, he

[79] Italy took Libya from the Ottoman Turks in 1911 and ruled it until the Second World War.

would sit and daven with tears: "Ribono shel Olam, I want to see so that I can learn Torah."

The appointment with the doctor was arranged, and the next day he was to leave Libya for Italy. The night before the journey he had a dream. He saw Avraham Avinu, Moshe and Aharon, and Eliyahu HaNavi. They were coming toward him, and he went out of the doorway of his house to meet them. When they met, Eliyahu HaNavi turned to him and said:

"Listen. Hakadosh Baruch Hu has accepted your tefillah. If you travel to Italy tomorrow, you will have the operation and be healed, and you will see like any other person. But then your Olam Haba will be like that of everyone else: in doubt. If you succeed in guarding your eyes, in guarding the kedushah of your eyes, you will merit great levels Above. But if, chas veshalom, you blemish your eyes, you do not know where you will end up. You have a choice. Either go and be healed, or, and this is what I advise you, do not go and do not be healed, and lose your sight entirely. I promise you that if you lose your sight, you will become great in Torah, you will know the entire Torah by heart, and a very great place will be kept for you in Olam Haba. Decide what you want: to be healed and face the tests of guarding the eyes, or to give up your sight entirely."

He got up in the morning, and his spirit was troubled. A boy of eleven, he understood that this was no dream. It was more than a dream; it was a revelation. He decided to give up his sight for the sake of Olam Haba and for the sake of learning Torah, as Eliyahu had promised him. He told his father, "Cancel the trip. I am not going."

He began to learn without seeing, and his memory suddenly became frightening, astounding: a plastered cistern that does not lose a drop. Everything he heard, he took in. He began to learn, and he took an interest in the layout of the dapim as well. Before the age of eighteen he was already a baki in all of Shas with all the meforshim, and he could say exactly where everything was in Tosafos, on which line and in which place, with the exact wording. All four chalakim of the Shulchan Aruch with the meforshim were engraved in his memory. Before eighteen he received semichah from his rabbanim for his vast knowledge, his kedushah and his chassidus.

He was a holy man, a chassid in all his ways. All his life he urged everyone to go to the mikveh every morning before davening. He would argue that just as in the Beis HaMikdash one could not bring korbanos without first going into the mikveh, so too with tefillah. It is not that one may not daven without it; according to halachah one may daven without a mikveh. But without it one cannot receive the light of tefillah and its full power, and accomplish tremendous things the way one does after the mikveh.

Nine Years at His Side

Talk Fourteen · 6:30

His kedushah was wondrous and his hasmadah was astonishing. I merited being near him for about nine years, from the age of eleven and a half until twenty and a half, when I married, from more or less the day I entered Porat Yosef (the great Sephardi yeshivah in Yerushalayim).

In the mornings he was at home until about half past ten. We knew that if we wanted to prepare for tests, or simply to review, Chacham Yosef was sitting at home waiting. Afterwards he would go to the yeshivah of the mekubalim in Porat Yosef and learn with them, and then go upstairs to the ulam (the yeshivah's main study hall). We would go up to the ulam after noon as well, and learn there until late at night. He would take a chavrusa and learn with him, and we would come to him with questions of every kind. His knowledge was astonishing.

There was a test about once a week, and in the days before a test especially, he would sit at home waiting for us for almost the whole first half of the day, to prepare us. We would read the Gemara before him, and on purpose we would leave out a word in Rashi or in Tosafos, to hear how he would correct us.

"Eh? You left out a word in Tosafos, down there on that line, two lines before the end of the dibbur. You left out such-and-such a word. Say it again."

We enjoyed it. On purpose we would leave out a word here and a word there, and there was not one word we could leave out without his catching it.

Sefarim Nobody Knew

Talk Fourteen · 9:30

Many times we would be speaking about something, and he would say, "In such-and-such a sefer, in such-and-such a place, there is something like this. On such-and-such a daf you will find this statement." These were sefarim that were not known at all. Who knew of a sefer of derashos called Binah LeIttim? Who had ever heard of it? He could quote the wording of sefarim like that, and of all kinds of sefarim.

My grandfather was fond of him, and there was a great friendship between them. In every round of ta'aniyos dibbur that my grandfather held (gatherings at which the public refrained from speech for the day and said Tehillim together), he invited him to give derashos, and he gave them. My grandfather also mentions him in Ahavas Chaim, on parashas Naso, about a story he heard from him.

The Mekubalim of Oz VeHadar

Talk Fourteen · 10:30

As a grandson of my grandfather I had a closeness to mekubalim, and a chance to see how they learned. In the other wing of Porat Yosef was Yeshivas Oz VeHadar for mekubalim. The mekubalim sat there: Chacham Yosef Shaya, Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri, Chacham Moshe Ades, Chacham Yitzchak Kadayah, Chacham Sasson Levi, Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani, Chacham Nasan Salem and Chacham Yosef Zaruk. Sometimes my rebbi who later taught me Kabbalah, Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai, joined them there as well. In every break we had, I would go in to see how they learned Sha'ar HaKavanos and Etz Chaim together. I would sit quietly at the side and watch them. It was a sublime sight, beyond description.

There is a photograph of how they sat. It is not from my time, but from some years earlier, in the days of Chacham Efraim Kohen, when they sat in the same way and in the same dress. At the head sits Chacham Efraim Kohen, and the third on the right is Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri. All of them wear their gelimos (the long robes of the Sephardi chachamim) and their hats, a sight of splendor and majesty. The only one without a gelimah was Chacham Yosef Zaruk, who went about in his short suit and plain hat and sat among them.

I remember sitting there and watching them. They would sit quietly and read a passage from Sha'ar HaKavanos or Etz Chaim, and suddenly they would run into a difficulty in understanding it. Etz Chaim is not a sefer one can simply read through. Every matter must be understood exactly where it stands. Many people go wrong in learning Kabbalah because they do not know which world they are in, and so they suddenly have questions: "How can this be? It contradicts the previous page!" It does not contradict it. The picture you see on Rechov Yerushalayim in Tel Aviv is not like the picture you see on Rechov Tel Aviv in Yerushalayim.

So they would be sitting, and they would run into a kushya. Suddenly Chacham Yosef Shaya would stand up and call out, "Hey, there is a kushya here!" He had a strong, clear voice. At once they would all try to answer it. Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri would give an answer, quietly. He was sparing with words, and every word of his was worth gold; he would condense his answer into a single sentence. Chacham Yosef Shaya would argue with him: "Impossible! That is no answer; it is like this!" Then Chacham Sasson Levi would come to Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri's aid and bring proofs that he was right. And while they were weighing those proofs, Chacham Yosef Zaruk, sitting at the side with them, would suddenly give them a different explanation of the whole sugya. Then they would all start discussing that.

And the respect with which they argued, the manner of it! The room was somewhat dim. It was the northern side of Porat Yosef, the light from outside was weak,

and there was only the electric light. To see them sitting like that was an astonishing sight. That picture has influenced me greatly throughout my life.

When the mekubalim finished learning, at about one in the afternoon, and went home, Chacham Yosef usually went home to eat lunch. Sometimes he came down with us to the restaurant to eat. Afterwards he would immediately go up and sit with us in the ulam of the yeshivah until close to eleven at night, learning with chavrusos, while we learned with him and asked him questions. He swam in the Torah.

THE ALEPH-BEIS ON A SILVER PLATE

Talk Fourteen · 13:30

He knew the whole Torah, including things that a person who cannot see cannot know. At a very young age he asked that all the letters be written for him on a silver plate, with the letters raised, and that is how he learned the aleph-beis itself, by touch, the way the blind read Braille (a writing of raised dots felt with the fingers). Afterwards, all the kavanos of the Arizal that depend on the letters and on Sheimos he could learn by himself from the aleph-beis: combining the letters and understanding them, with their nekudos, all by hand.

He went so far as to be an expert in the halachos of writing sifrei Torah and mezuzos, and he taught people those halachos, although he was blind and had never seen the form of a letter. He knew all those halachos like a sofer who sits and writes sifrei Torah. Shechitah too: all of hilchos shechitah, bedikos and treifos, everything. He raised a whole generation of shochtim, dayanim and mohelim, without ever in his life having seen these things. His genius, his bekius, and the way he learned in order to understand things were astonishing. He commanded all the hidden treasures of the Torah, as Eliyahu HaNavi had promised him.

THE STORIES

THE SHIDDUCH HE WEPT OVER

Talk Fourteen · 22:00

His kedushah and the sight of his ruach hakodesh were astonishing. He could sit in his house and tell what was happening at that moment anywhere in the world, as if he were seeing it with healthy eyes: what was happening right now in such-and-such

a place, what was happening here in such-and-such a place. He could describe it all with his clear spiritual sight.

I had a friend in Porat Yosef who went out to meet a girl. Apart from the shadchanis, nobody knew about it, neither his family nor the girl's. Both of them wanted to keep the first meeting secret, because they were embarrassed that if nothing came of it, it would be a failure. So the shadchanis arranged it in complete secrecy.

In Porat Yosef we were required to learn until seven in the evening, and at seven anyone could go home. But on our own we learned until eleven at night. Nobody wanted to get up. Who leaves Gan Eden to go home? We enjoyed every minute of learning. We sat and learned from Shacharis in the morning, and as bochurim in the yeshivah we did not leave until eleven at night. Why leave? Where else is there such a Gan Eden, to sit over a Gemara and learn? What a pleasure! We saw how the rosh yeshivah, Chacham Yehuda Tzadka, also sat and learned until eleven at night, never moving from his chair, sitting with his chavrusa in hasmadah, and that spurred us on to learn. We were expected to know the Maharsha and the Rashba on the sugya thoroughly. It was a sublime pleasure, and we sat with it.

My friend went out to the meeting at half past six and came back at eight. He had met the girl, decided to continue to another meeting, and they had exchanged phone numbers. Then he came back to learn. He was sitting next to me, learning aloud. One does not learn Gemara by looking and thinking; one must bring the words out of one's mouth, as Chazal say: "כי חיים הם למוצאיהם", do not read it "למוצאיהם" but "למוציאיהם בפה". Learning is by bringing out the words from the mouth, one by one. And Gemara is learned with a niggun: "Amar Abaye, amar Rava! Ah!" That is how one learns.

He began to learn that way, and suddenly Chacham Yosef heard his voice. He said to him, "So-and-so, come here." He got up at once and went over to Chacham Yosef.

"What does kevodo want?"

"You just met with so-and-so?"

The bochur was in shock. "Yes."

Chacham Yosef began to cry. The bochur asked him, "Why is kevodo crying? Is she not my zivug?"

"Yes, she is your zivug. You will marry her."

"Then why is kevodo crying? There won't be children?"

"There will be. You will have four children from her."

"Then why is kevodo crying?"

"What do you care? Go learn. It is not your business."

The bochur went to learn and little by little forgot about it. He did marry the girl, and he began to suffer a life of Gehinnom with her. There was no communica-

tion between them, and their life together was Gehinnom. He suffered, but his wife was expecting, so he did not want to divorce. Then a son was born, and he certainly did not want to divorce. A son followed a son, and another followed, until there were four children. One day he felt he could not go on any more; their life together was very hard. So he went to Chacham Yosef.

All the years of his marriage he had not seen Chacham Yosef, because the kollel where he learned was not in Porat Yosef but somewhere else. All those years Shamayim made him forget, and the fact that he suddenly thought of going to Chacham Yosef after four children was itself a wonder. He came to Chacham Yosef's house and said to him, "Chacham Yosef, I am suffering from this woman."

"Yes, I know. Do you remember that I cried? I cried because I saw your suffering. I knew that you had to marry her and suffer, for your tikkun. But how many children do you have?"

"Four."

"I told you four. Now the time has come; you may separate. That was your tikkun: to have four children from her amid such hard suffering. That is what I was crying over then."

LIKE RAV YOSEF IN THE GEMARA

Talk Fourteen · 26:00

That is the greatness of kedushah and of Torah, in a man who agreed to give up the light of his eyes for the sake of kedushah.

There is a story in the Gemara about Rav Yosef, the rebbi of Abaye and Rava. He too wanted to guard the kedushah of his eyes. He went into a dark room for a period of close to forty days and learned there. Then he went out into the light once, in order to become blind, and he became blind, to guard the kedushah of his eyes. His name was Rav Yosef, and this was Chacham Yosef. Perhaps there was some connection of neshamos between them; I cannot know. But that was Chacham Yosef, zechuso yagen aleinu.

SHORT ACCOUNTS

A Kohen with Glasses

Talk Fourteen · 8:30

His knowledge, the way he tied everything together, and the depth of his iyun were tremendous. I remember that once, when I was seventeen, I asked him in the ulam of the yeshivah whether a kohen with glasses may do the avodah in the Beis HaMikdash. Do glasses interfere with the avodah? Do they disqualify it, as an addition to the bigdei kehunah, and the like?

On the spot he pulled out for me not just ordinary proofs. He even brought a proof from Maseches Kesubos, about a kohen who may put pepper in his mouth so that his breath should not smell during the avodah. He brought me all sorts of astonishing proofs that a kohen with glasses is kosher for the avodah: they are no problem for his sight in the avodah, they are not a pesul of a mum, and they are not an addition to the four bigdei kehunah.

The Animals on the Moshav

Talk Fourteen · 15:00

His ruach hakodesh was astonishing. He had a relative with a farm on a moshav (a farming village), who often took Chacham Yosef there to tell him what was wrong with the animals. Thousands of animals passed under Chacham Yosef's hand. He would touch an animal, whether a cow, an ox, a sheep or a goat, and say whether it was chalak, kosher or treif. He would say exactly where the treifah was: whether it was sirchos (adhesions, which belong to the lung), in the chest, or in the kidneys. Never once, among so many thousands of animals, did he change his word or make a mistake. It was astonishing.

A Son for a Sandeka'us

Talk Fourteen · 15:30

His ruach hakodesh showed itself in many things. Any barren woman, any childless couple who came to him, no matter what the woman's problem was, and that did not interest him: never did a couple come to him and not merit children, on one condition. He would say to the wife and the husband, "Promise me the sandeka'us, and I promise you a son this year." They promised him, and that same year she conceived and gave birth to a son.

He went out of his way to be sandek, and he was sandek for many children of parents who had no remedy for their childlessness and came to him. With a single promise of his, he was sandek for their son. There was never a case of people who

came and promised him the sandeka'us and did not receive his promise. That was his condition.

HIS TEFILLOS

Talk Fourteen · 16:30

His tefillos also worked on the spot. Not always, but when he davened, it was on the spot. Even with people who were dangerously ill, within a minute things would change. Or they would not change at all, which meant the tefillah had not been accepted. But when it was accepted, in many cases it was seen on the spot: after one tefillah of his, a dangerously ill person would suddenly get up on his feet. It was not a normal thing.

REVIEWING THE SHIUR ON THE WAY HOME

Talk Fourteen · 17:00

Besides learning in Porat Yosef and in the yeshivah of the mekubalim, he learned at Shoshanim LeDavid as well. My rebbi, Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai, opened a Kabbalah shiur twice a week: once in Porat Yosef, and once on Motza'ei Shabbos at Shoshanim LeDavid, on Rechov Sonnenfeld in Yerushalayim. Chacham Yosef was one of the participants. Afterwards they would walk him home. He lived in Geulah, on Rechov Modi'in, close by, opposite Porat Yosef. By the time they brought him there, he had reviewed the entire shiur with them by heart, in its exact wording, with explanation, making clear to them whatever they had not understood in the shiur. It was astonishing.

TEARS IN THE SILVERA SHUL

Talk Fourteen · 17:30

Once, at midday, I was walking past the Silvera shul in Machane Yehuda (the market neighborhood of Yerushalayim). It is on a narrow street, and the shul is upstairs, on the second floor; one climbs stairs to reach it. From inside the shul I heard terrible weeping, heartrending cries. I did not understand what it was, so I went in to see what was happening. I climbed the stairs, opened the door, and saw Chacham Yosef sitting and weeping in tears.

And he had no eyes. He had tears, but he had no eyes. As if it were not enough that he could not see, at a later stage he received a blow to the head, and both his eyes had to be removed. There were two hollows, covered by sunglasses. Whenever

he took off the glasses for a moment to wipe away sweat or the like, one could see the hollows, with a film of eyelid covering them, several centimeters deep. Yet there he sat, weeping and shedding tears. It was astonishing.

I did not understand what had happened. I said to him, "Chacham Yosef, what happened? Can I help kevodo with anything? Why is kevodo crying?"

He said to me, "I was just going over Etz Chaim in my head, and on such-and-such a daf, on such-and-such a line, I do not understand what Rabbeinu ha'Arizal meant. How can I not cry?"

I, of course, could not help him, and he went on weeping. He wept over a single line, until afterwards he understood it. He knew Etz Chaim by heart, and he could say the daf and the line he was reviewing that he did not understand, and he sat and wept heartrending tears. This was the same Chacham Yosef who could count off all of Shas by its lines, and all the kisvei ha'Arizal by their letters. It was something not of this world.

He learned amid pain and suffering. All kinds of illnesses and pains were always coming upon him, and he learned through hard yissurim.

"Give Me Your Hand"

Talk Fourteen · 20:00

At that time Rav Kaduri, alav hashalom, gave a Kabbalah shiur in Yeshivas Beis El, not far from Porat Yosef, on Rechov Yosef ben Matisyahu at the corner of Rechov Rashi, on the second floor. Chacham Yosef Zaruk was one of the participants. It was close to his house, and they would bring him there for the shiur.

One day he could not come. He had a fever and terrible pains, and he stayed home. Chacham Yitzchak came to the shiur and looked around: "What about Chacham Yosef? He is not here. Where is he?" Chacham Yitzchak got up, left everyone, and went to Chacham Yosef's house. He found Chacham Yosef groaning with pain.

"Chacham Yosef, why didn't you come to the shiur? We are waiting for you. Today we cannot do without you."

"Look at me. I am sick all over."

"Give me your hand."

He gave him his hand, and Chacham Yitzchak said, "יהב ליה ידיה ואוקמיה" (he gave him his hand, and he raised him up). There is a great secret in Kabbalah in these words. It is a Gemara in Maseches Berachos about one of the Amoraim who was sick, and Rabbi Yochanan came and said to him, "הב לי ידך" (give me your

hand), and "יהב ליה ידיה ואוקמיה." There are secrets in this of how one raises a person from his illness.

As soon as he said it, Chacham Yosef got up healthy. Within a minute all his pains were gone. He got up like a lion and went with him to the shiur.

His family began to worry. The shiur ended after an hour and he should have come home, but he did not come, and they could not understand what was happening. He arrived after two hours, an hour late. They asked him, "What is this?"

He said, "I was so happy that I had become healthy and could learn that I said, I will add another hour! We sat another hour and learned!"

Chapter Twenty-One

Chacham Mordechai Sharabi

Chacham Mordechai Sharabi

Talk Fourteen · 52:30

On this occasion I will also tell you about the holy tzaddik and mekubal Chacham Mordechai Sharabi, alav hashalom. I merited to know him personally, to come into his home, and to sit a little in his shade.

He was born in Sharab, in Yemen, and that is why he was called Sharabi, after the town of his birth. He was born in 5672 (1912). At around the age of seven he was orphaned of both his parents. A Yemenite talmid chacham, a "Mori" (as the Yemenites call a teacher), took him into his home and taught him Mishnayos, which he learned until he knew them by heart. Afterward Mori Chaim Sa'wani also took him in and put great effort into him. And so this cedar of Levanon grew up, morenu verabbenu.

In His House

Talk Fourteen · 1:22:30

There are many more stories about him, but I do not want to go on at length now. I merited to enter his house many times. Whenever I came in, I would find him sitting and learning, either Gemara or Rambam. When I came, he would close the sefer, kiss it, and then sit and talk with me.

I also merited to receive a haskamah from him for my sefer Tiferes Menachem, the second volume. He gave me the haskamah and said to me, "Write: 'muskam miShamayim' (agreed upon in Shamayim)," and he signed. Baruch Hashem, I merited to know him. May his merit protect us.

The Stories

The Baby in Mexico

Talk Fourteen · 1:00:00

In my younger years I used to travel as well. Once I went to Mexico, and since Spanish comes easily to me, I gave shiurim to the community there and built a connection with them. A few years later I went back to Mexico a second time.

I let them know there that I was coming, and when I arrived at the airport, one of the men of the community came with his car to take me from the airport to the community. That is the Chalebi community there (Jews from Aleppo, in Syria), Kehillas Magen David, in the Polanco neighborhood (a well-to-do district of Mexico City). It was the beginning of the month of Cheshvan when I arrived, and on the way he told me a shocking story.

There, almost every family of the wealthy ones keeps a special room in its house for a gentile woman, one of the native Indians of the country, who works for them. These women take care of all the household needs as servants; they eat, drink and sleep there in one of the rooms, and handle everything. Some families even have two servants to do all the work, and the lady of the house does nothing but the shopping.

This man had a regular servant, and in the middle of the summer his wife gave birth to a baby girl. Since there was now a baby, he hired another worker besides the regular one, to come and take care of everything the baby needed. She worked for a short time, a few weeks, and one day she disappeared with the baby. She kidnapped the baby and ran away.

They turned the country upside down to find the child, and they did not find her. The parents fell into despair. As I was driving with him from the airport, he told me that it was already close to forty days that she had been missing: from the middle of Elul, when she was taken, and through the whole month of Tishrei. All the rabbanim promised that they were davening for her and that she would come back, but no one said when, or how, or from where. He told me that Rav Sharabi too had promised that she would come back healthy and that they should not worry. But in the meantime everyone was worried, and there was no trace of her.

More than that: one day they were told that a dead baby girl had been found in the area, and they went to see whether it was their daughter. They were disappointed that it was not. They would rather have found her dead, just to find her, than to know that she had vanished and not know what had become of her.

I arrived at the apartment of my hosts, and in the evening I went with my host to visit this family. They were sitting in the courtyard, in a sort of sukkah they had there, the two of them in the dark, sad. People came in to encourage them and speak a good word to them, but they were broken. To see them: the two of them were crushed. Their world had collapsed.

The next day, Thursday, the parents could not hold out any longer. They telephoned Chacham Mordechai Sharabi again and said, "Listen, they are going to break down. They cannot take any more. You promise that she will come back; tell us when."

Chacham Mordechai Sharabi told them, "Do not worry. Next Tuesday she will arrive, healthy and whole. I promise you."

He set a date! On Thursday night, in the Magen David shul, everyone heard it: Rav Sharabi had promised that on Tuesday the child would come back healthy. Everyone waited to see what would happen on Tuesday.

And on Tuesday morning, on the same street from which the child had been kidnapped, where their church stood, the priest went in the morning to open the door. There he saw a baby girl wrapped up, alive. She was wrapped in a local newspaper, put out in another city four hundred kilometers away, bearing the date of the day before. That newspaper cannot be found in this city, Mexico City; it is from a faraway city. The priest did not know who the child was, Jewish or not Jewish. He knew nothing, and he telephoned the police. The police came, and right away they recognized her. She came home.

But they understood that only the day before she had still been four hundred kilometers away. That means the kidnapper had traveled all night on a fast train from there. What sudden madness had entered her head to bring the baby back to the very street from which she had stolen her? She rode four hundred kilometers by train, from noon of the day before until she arrived before dawn, put the baby down there, and went back.

The seudas hoda'ah to Hashem that the community made was enormous, and I heard them all saying, "Baruch Hashem, Elokei HaRav Sharabi."

Twelve Thousand Lirot

Talk Fourteen · 1:18:00

There was an amazing story with him. The doctors told a certain man that they had found a growth in his head. They had done an X-ray and found a growth, and they told him he needed an operation; bar minan, his life was in danger. The poor man was terrified, and he went to Chacham Mordechai: "What should I do?"

Chacham Mordechai said to him, "Who said you have a growth? You do not have a growth in your head."

"Yes I do. There is an X-ray."

"Bring me the X-ray."

Chacham Mordechai looked at the X-ray and said, "This is not a growth. It is a clot; there is a blood clot there. You do not need anything. It will dissolve by itself, and you will be fine. It is not a growth, and nothing needs to be done about it. But give me twelve thousand lirot (the Israeli currency before the shekel) for tzedakah, and with the help of Hashem the clot will disappear and you will be healthy."

The man did not understand: if it is only a clot and it will disappear, why must I give twelve thousand lirot? But one does not argue with Chacham Mordechai; emunas chachamim is emunas chachamim. And twelve thousand lirot was a fortune! You could buy a third of an apartment with it. In those days you could buy a good three-room apartment in Geulah, in Yerushalayim, for thirty-five thousand lirot. But Chacham Mordechai told him, "Give twelve thousand, and the clot will go away." So he came and paid him the twelve thousand.

Then Chacham Mordechai told him, "Now that you have paid, go back to the doctors and have them take a new X-ray and look at it again."

They did, and they told him, "Sir, it is only a clot, and we can see that it has begun to dissolve. It will disappear. You do not need an operation."

So he came back to Chacham Mordechai and said, "Chacham Mordechai, I gave you the twelve thousand you asked for tzedakah. I know it was not for you; it was for tzedakah. But why did you ask me for such a sum? Was there a growth, and through the tzedakah it turned into a clot and disappeared?"

He answered, "No. From the very first moment it was a clot, and it was going to disappear, because it was not decreed upon you, chas veshalom, to leave the world. What was decreed upon you was to lose twelve thousand lirot. When your expenses were fixed for you on Rosh Hashanah, it was decreed that you would suffer a loss of twelve thousand lirot. The doctors were going to make a mistake and operate on you for nothing, and only then see that it was a clot. You would have suffered all that pain and all those yissurim, and you would have paid the doctors twelve thousand lirot for the operation, because you would not have taken the ordinary 'shoemakers'. You would have gone through Sharap (the private medical service, where one pays to choose his own surgeon), with a special doctor, and that would have cost you twelve thousand lirot. You would have suffered all of that only in order to lose the money. Afterward the operation would have succeeded, and you would have recovered from the clot.

"I saw this, and I told you to give the money to tzedakah instead of losing it there. In the merit of the tzedakah, the yissurim of the operation and all the rest were removed, the clot went away on its own, and you recovered."

And that is truly what happened.

Short Accounts

Ten Lirot in a Puddle

Talk Fourteen · 53:30

Chacham Mordechai himself told this story. When he came to Eretz Yisrael with his wife, in the time of the Mandate (when the British ruled Eretz Yisrael, before the State), they did not have a penny to their name. They lived in very heavy poverty.

One day his wife said, "I cannot bear this poverty anymore. Do something."

He turned to Hashem: "Ribono shel Olam, have mercy."

He went outside and saw a puddle of water, and on it lay ten lirot. That was a great deal of money then. One could live on it for several months, sparingly of course, and it lasted them a long time. Shamayim helped him.

His Shiurim

Talk Fourteen · 54:30

Besides his shiurim in Kabbalah, which were wonderful, he had a sweetness of speech. I remember how he used to sit in the yeshivah Nahar Shalom (the yeshivah of mekubalim in Yerushalayim that he headed). Everyone had seforim in front of them, and he, by heart, read the whole Eitz Chaim (the teachings of the Arizal as written by Rav Chaim Vital) with them and explained it. What sweet language, how beautiful, what a voice and manner of expression he had! He had a special kind of Hebrew, an Israeli-Yemenite accent, with clear words. His lips were full of sweetness.

I also attended his shiurim to baalei batim, though only a very few times. He used to give a shiur between Minchah and Maariv, or after Maariv (I no longer remember), in Menoras HaMaor. In those days it was common to learn this mussar sefer in the batei knesses. Pele Yo'etz and Menoras HaMaor were the mussar sefo-

rim usually read in the shuls to the general public, and he explained Menoras HaMaor there with that sweetness of his.

A Villa

Talk Fourteen · 56:30

When I was nineteen, I said to my friend, whose name was Meir, "Come, let's go hear Chacham Mordechai Sharabi."

So we went. From Porat Yosef to Machaneh Yehudah is a very short distance. On the way we talked, as boys of nineteen do, and he said to me, "Listen, I dream that when I get married I will have a villa. I am not willing to live in a small apartment. Look at the apartments here, how crowded they are. I want a nice villa that I can enjoy."

He was talking about this, and in the middle of the conversation we arrived. We came in. It was quiet; everyone was listening to the chacham. We sat off to the side, not even facing him, in a place where he could not see us at all.

A minute after we sat down to listen, he began: "There are people who want a villa in this world. They do not know that 'villa' (וילה) is made of the letters vai lah (וי לה, 'woe to her'). They are looking for Olam Hazeh in place of Olam Haba. Instead of investing in learning Torah, they want to invest in a villa."

The two of us were in shock. He had sensed us. He had sensed what we were talking about, and he had already let that friend of mine have it.

Sixty Lirot

Talk Fourteen · 58:00

When all sorts of sick people came to him for a refuah, to ask for a yeshuah, he would always tell them, "Give sixty lirot to tzedakah, for a tikkun." He chose sixty deliberately, because it is a number in Kabbalah. The sod of sixty is six sefiros (of the ten Divine attributes of Kabbalah), each one times ten. He would take the money and seat a minyan of men, giving six lirot to each of them, and they would sit and say Tehillim. Meanwhile, in his house, he would do yichudim for the refuah of that person.

Once a man came to ask for his wife. Chacham Mordechai told him, "Give sixty lirot." They had only just begun, and he had gone into his house to do the yichudim, when after one minute he closed the sefer of the tikkunim and said, "It is too late. There is nothing to be done." And indeed, the woman passed away.

My father too, when my mother was sick: I remember that I went with my father to him, and my father gave him sixty lirot. A few hours later my father went back to him, and he told him, "It is closed. The tikkun did not work. I gave the tzedakah to people to learn, as we do, but above it is closed. The time has come. There is nothing to be done."

Friday

Talk Fourteen · 59:30

A good friend of mine, who lives today in Beit Shemesh, was unconscious when he was three years old. His mother came to Chacham Mordechai Sharabi, and he promised her that on Friday the child would get up. "Do not do anything to him," he said. "Leave him as he is. On Friday he will regain consciousness, and he will be healthy."

And so it was. On Friday he opened his eyes, came back to himself, and everything was all right.

The Wallet

Talk Fourteen · 1:08:00

One day Chacham Mordechai was walking in Machaneh Yehudah with a wallet that held a little money for his Shabbos shopping. Suddenly two youths snatched the wallet and started to run.

He only stood there. He felt that they had snatched it, and he stood and looked at them. They got about twenty meters away, and suddenly they stopped, paralyzed. They wanted to move and could not; they were stuck to the ground. They started screaming in strange voices, "Help! Help!" They could not move.

Chacham Mordechai stood there and beckoned to them with his finger: come to me. The moment he called them, they felt themselves released from the magnet that had held them to the ground, and they came over to him.

He said to them, "Give me the wallet. If you promise that you will never again rob any Jew in the world, you may go. If not, you will stay standing here."

They gave him a complete promise, handed him the wallet, and left.

The Envelope

Talk Fourteen · 1:10:00

One day a man decided to give Chacham Mordechai a sum of money anonymously, for him to use as he saw fit. He put the money in an envelope, gave it to someone, and said to him, "Go to Chacham Mordechai and give him this. Do not tell him who it is from. It is anonymous; tell him it was handed to you to give him."

The messenger went. Before he had even managed to enter the house, Chacham Mordechai called to him from the courtyard: "Come. I know that So-and-so sent you with money for me. Come, I have been waiting for this money; I need it." And he said the man's name.

The messenger was in shock. How did he know? Does he see it from there? He gave him the envelope and left.

The Sheet

Talk Fourteen · 1:11:00

A child in Haifa was injured in the head and was in a dangerous condition. They took him to Rambam Hospital in Haifa, and the doctors said he needed an urgent operation. His life was in danger with the operation and without it; perhaps there was a small chance with the operation, and the father needed to sign his consent.

The father said, "I will not sign without Rav Mordechai." He telephoned his brother in Yerushalayim: "Ask Chacham Mordechai what to do."

Chacham Mordechai said, "Do not do anything. Wrap his head in a sheet, and he will already feel more comfortable. In three days he will regain consciousness on his own and return to perfect health. Do not do anything."

And so it was. They wrapped his head in a sheet, and he stopped screaming and felt relief. And indeed, after three days he regained consciousness on his own and came back to himself, with nothing wrong.

The Dog

Talk Fourteen · 1:12:30

There was a man in Machaneh Yehudah who kept a dog, a big, frightening dog. Everyone was afraid of it; the children were so frightened that they dreamed about the dog at night.

The parents came to Chacham Mordechai and said, "Look what this man is doing, keeping a dog like that. He refuses to listen, and all the children here are terrified."

He told them, "Do not do anything. Everything will take care of itself."

Two days later the dog attacked its owner and bit him. They immediately called a veterinarian to check whether the dog was healthy and what had happened, and on the spot the veterinarian gave it an injection and put the dog down. That was the end of it.

The Blorit

Talk Fourteen · 1:14:00

One day a father came to him crying. His son, a boy of fourteen or fifteen, had stopped learning. He did not want to hear about Talmud Torah, he did not want to hear about anything. He sat at home and nothing interested him anymore. He was going around with bad friends and starting to go bad. The father came to Chacham Mordechai crying: what should we do?

Chacham Mordechai told him, "Cut off his blorit (the long forelock combed up over the forehead, the style of the secular youth), and everything will be all right."

At night, while the boy was asleep, his father got up, took a pair of scissors, and snip, cut off the whole blorit. The boy woke up screaming: what have you done to me! But it was too late; the blorit was gone.

In the morning he went to a barber to have his hair fixed, and suddenly, on his own, he turned around. He went back to learning, he became a good boy again, and he came back to kedushah and to everything.

The Debtor Who Could Not Move

Talk Fourteen · 1:15:30

There was a man who lent money to his friend. When the time for repayment came, he came to him and said, "Where is the money I lent you?"

The friend said, "I already paid you. True, you lent it to me, but I already paid you. I gave it back."

The poor man had trusted him and given him the loan without a note, without anything, without a shtar. They were friends, they trusted each other. That is foolishness according to the halachah. It is forbidden to lend money even to the closest person without a note stating that he borrowed from you. But this was a simple man who did not know the halachos; they were friends, and he went along.

So he had given him the loan, and now he said, "Give me the money," and the friend said, "I already paid you."

"What do you mean you paid? You didn't pay!"

"Yes, I paid!"

"You didn't pay!"

He said, "Let's go to Chacham Mordechai Sharabi, and whatever he says, we will do."

"Fine."

The two of them came to Chacham Mordechai, and he heard the story. He said to the borrower, "You borrowed from him?"

"Yes."

"You paid him? You say that you paid him?"

"Yes."

"If you paid him, you may go. Go."

He could not move. He was stuck.

"Go!" He could not move.

"Why can't you move? Go!"

He understood that it was over; he was lost, and he would not move from there. On the spot he broke down crying and admitted it. As soon as he admitted it and promised to pay, he could move. He went and returned the money he had not wanted to pay.

The Missing Son

Talk Fourteen · 1:17:30

One day a woman came to him crying. Her son had gone abroad and disappeared. She did not know what had become of him, she heard nothing from him, and she was consumed with worry.

Chacham Mordechai looked at her and said, "Don't worry. Tomorrow he will be here with me; he will come to the courtyard. Calm down. Tomorrow I will call you. Give me your telephone number."

She gave him the number, and the next day the son arrived. Right away Chacham Mordechai telephoned her and said, "Come, here is your son. Come and take him." And she was reunited with him.

His Words

What He Taught

Talk Fourteen · 1:23:30

He always insisted that people daven Minchah on Shabbos wrapped in a tallis. He was firm about it and said, "This is very important; let them not worry about what others do." To wrap oneself in a tallis gadol at Minchah of Shabbos, he said, brings or makif (the "surrounding light" of Kabbalah) to a person, and it is a very great tikkun. It is truly important for many people to do this, especially people who want a good memory or who are sick. They should wrap themselves in a tallis gadol at Minchah of Shabbos, because it draws a great deal of great light, at that hour of ra'ava d'ra'avin (the time of the greatest Divine favor), onto the person wrapped in it. In general it is good for a person. He warned people about this very strongly.

He was also very particular that people put on two pairs of tefillin together, Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam. They should buy small ones that can be worn together, but mehudar ones, because some small tefillin are not written well precisely because they are small, and problems come up with them. One must know whom he is buying from. He was very particular about this and said it was very important. He was always stirring people about these things.

He also said that anyone who has seen keri should immerse in a mikveh that same day, and after the mikveh say the whole fourth sefer of Tehillim (perakim 90 through 106), and afterward say perek 51 seven times, each time repeating pasuk 9 seven times as well. He said that this is a tikkun for keri, and through it a person is cleansed completely.

May his merit stand for us as well, for shalom and for nachas. And may it be Hashem's will that in the merit of these tzaddikim of whom I have spoken, we all merit the coming of Mashiach Tzidkeinu speedily in our days, with nachas, and the return to Tziyon with rachamim. The return to Tziyon is near. The geulah is closer than people think. It is near; it is no longer even right to say "near," because it is already at the door. It is closer than close. But may it come with rachamim. May Hakadosh Baruch Hu save us; may our eyes behold the King in His beauty, and may we rejoice with Him in the Beis Hamikdash speedily in our days, in this very year. Amen, ken yehi ratzon.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Chacham Avraham Raful



Rav Avraham Raful

Talk Twenty-One · 15:00

The gedolim of Chalab were tremendous, and I must mention one of them here: Rav Avraham Raful. He was one of my rebbeim. I will not call him my regular teacher, but I learned more from him than from other teachers. Every day at noon he came to Porat Yosef (the great Sephardi yeshivah in Yerushalayim). He sat with us for half an hour, taking the time from the shiurim, and told us stories and gave us mussar about all our conduct and about the whole future ahead of us as young bochurim. This was very important, and it had a great effect on us. He told us much about the gedolei hadoros, especially the rabbanim of Aram Tzova, and he was one of them himself.

He was a very great man, a holy man, a tremendous gaon with a wondrous kedushah. I do not have enough stories about him to speak for hours on end, but I knew many stories with him. In the hespedim when he passed away, they said that he cried his whole life. Until the age of twelve he did not know that according to the Zohar a person may not look at the place of the bris on his own body, so great is kedushas ha'einayim. Not knowing it, as a child until the age of twelve, he looked. For this he cried all his life.

This is a wonder of wonders. What does a man sit and cry over his whole life? Not, chas veshalom, over something that is pegam habris, or pegam ha'einayim by looking at what is outside him. Only that until the age of twelve, and not a day after, he did not know to guard himself from looking at his own bris. Woe to us, where we stand! These gedolim obligate us. What will we do, and what will we answer when we come Above? We, bar minan, what will we answer about shemiras habris and about tikkun ha'einayim? See how far a person can reach in kedushah.

Because of this, when he was old, he woke up one Thursday morning and found he was blind. He could not see at all. He called his son Yosef and said to him, "Listen, I can't see. Tell me, what is happening today? Is it very cloudy?"

"No," Yosef said, "the sun is shining."

"But I can't see."

"Then there must be something wrong with your eyes. Let's go to the doctor."

"What do we need a doctor for? Doesn't the Gemara say that a person who has trouble with his eyes should look at the wine at Kiddush on leil Shabbos, and his eyes open and his sight comes back? Tomorrow night is leil Shabbos. We will make Kiddush and everything will come back. What do we need a doctor for?"

He said these words calmly and at peace, and so it was. For two days he saw nothing; he was completely blind. Kiddush came. He poured the wine, took the cup in his hand and looked into it, and his sight opened. He could see again, perfectly, like anyone else.

They lived the Torah, and the Torah gave them life exactly as they lived it. "נפש עמל עמלה לו": Chazal say this means that when a man toils in Torah, the Torah also toils for him.

He told us about Aram Tzova and its gedolei Torah, Rav Avraham Antebi, Rav Mordechai Labaton and many more. I will have to mention them again later in connection with the bakashos, which are also bound up with Chacham Tzion Bracha.

Gold in the Cracks of the Wall

Talk Twenty-One · 18:00

Rav Avraham Raful also told us that his father lived in the Old City of Yerushalayim, and they were desperately poor. They had no money and nothing else.

It was the day before Erev Pesach, and he still had nothing in the house: no matzos, no wine, nothing at all. His wife said to him, "Tomorrow night is the Seder. What will we do?"

He said to her, "Am I the one who has to worry for HaKadosh Baruch Hu? He has to worry for me. I know that He relies on me, and I rely on Him. I am sure that tomorrow He will provide us with everything, the whole ke'arah with everything that belongs in it, in great plenty, the meat and the fish too. Don't worry. I put my trust in Hashem."

The night of bedikas chametz came. He did not even have chametz to search for. They had long since eaten all of it. There had been nothing left to eat but a few

crumbs, and those were eaten too. But there is a mitzvah of bedikas chametz, so he took the candle and went to search.

Today bedikas chametz is not so hard, because our walls are all plastered, and painted over with whitewash and color besides. In the Old City of Yerushalayim it was not so. I still remember the houses there. Inside, the walls were bare stones laid one on another without plaster, Yerushalmi stone on stone, held together by mud and earth in the cracks between them. In many places the earth had crumbled away over the years, leaving holes and hollows everywhere. That is how they lived, and his house was one of those houses in the Old City with walls like these.

In such a case one must search every crack in the wall. When a wall has a crack in it, a person sometimes puts a cookie there, meaning to take it soon, forgets it, and on Pesach the cookie is found there. So a person whose walls have wide cracks, wide enough to put things in, must search every single one.

He took the candle and went searching the cracks, looking into the holes, and suddenly, in one hole, he found money: a pouch with money in it. This was inside the house; no one had put it in from outside. The holes did not go through to the outer side of the wall. On the outside the wall was sealed with mortar so that the rain would not come in, and all the holes were on the inner side of the house. The money had certainly never been there. He knew those holes better than he knew the streets of Yerushalayim; he lived there. Yet suddenly Shamayim had sent it to him: he found a pouch with several gold liras. In the morning he bought matzos and everything else, in plenty, for the whole Yom Tov. Yishtabach Shemo, Borei Olam.

My father-in-law, Rav Avraham Raful, alav hashalom, told me this about his father. This is how he grew up. When a father has grown up in such bitachon, such sons grow up after him.

Book Three

The Hidden Tzaddikim

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Rav Yosef Waltuch

the street sweeper of Tel Aviv

THE STREET SWEEPER OF TEL AVIV

Talk Five · 10:30

On Rosh Chodesh he would return to his home in Tel Aviv to sweep the streets, for he was a street sweeper. From 5708 (1948) on, that was the trade he chose for himself: a sweeper of the streets for the Tel Aviv municipality. He rose at chatzos, said Tikkun Chatzos, and learned until three. At three in the morning he went out with his broom to sweep the streets, so that in the morning people would find them clean. That was his trade and his parnassah. He did not want to benefit from other people at all. It was a respectable enough trade to earn a living with dignity, as our Rabbis said: "פשוט נבילתא בשוקא, ואל תאמר גברא רבא אנא": skin a carcass in the marketplace, and do not say, "I am a great man; it is beneath me." Do not need other people, for nothing.

More than once he came upon young people there about to commit an aveirah, and he would shout, "Fire! Fire!" and chase them away from the place.

When he finished sweeping the streets in the morning, he came to Yerushalayim, to my grandfather, took the notes, and went to the Kosel HaMaaravi. So it was every month. During the month as well he often came to Yerushalayim. He finished his work at eight or nine in the morning. He davened at netz, of course, stopping his work for the tefillah, and afterward finished the little that was left. Then he took himself to Yerushalayim, where he met all kinds of Admorim, tzaddikim, and rabbanim. He was always closely connected with them. He was a wondrous man.

From then on I began to attach myself to him. Every time he came, I would run and make him a cup of tea, sit with him, and ask him questions. He treated me with respect and answered me as an equal among equals. So I formed a bond with him that grew tighter over the years, until I was really going out with him and coming

back with him, speaking with him openly about all kinds of lofty matters. He told me stories and showed me things.

He told me that one day Chacham Yaakov Musa showed him a whole sugya in Maseches Chullin and how it is to be understood as speaking about autopsies. In those days they had begun doing autopsies, and people were greatly pained by it. Rav Yosef came to Chacham Yaakov Musa and said, "See what has happened." He answered him, "Don't you see that it is written here, that now is the time it must be?" And he showed him a whole sugya in Maseches Chullin whose meaning, al pi sod, is this very thing. Wonder of wonders.

Rav Yosef was part of that gallery, and they all used to sit together. Rav Avraham HaKohen would come from Yerushalayim, and my grandfather would come; they were all one group. They would all gather in the home of Rav Ezra HaKohen, who lived there in Tel Aviv. He gave them food in abundance, and it was where they wanted to meet one another; it was their meeting place. That house was a beis vaad lachachamim.

The Stories

Two First Meetings

Talk Five · 0:00

In this series I am telling about the tzaddikim I knew, and from here on I will go more or less in order. By rights I should begin with my grandfather, whom I knew before all the others and in whose home I grew up. But I am leaving him for last, *acharon acharon chaviv*, because I have a great many new things to tell about him. I did not write them in the printed sefer *Toldos Menachem*, because I only learned of them afterward.

The first, then, is Rav Yosef Waltuch, zechuso yagen aleinu. I do not know how to begin speaking about a giant; a giant cannot be measured in centimeters. Still, I will try.

Rav Yosef was a very great man, a giant among giants, a holy man. He was born in 5681 (1921) in Ukraine, and he was a descendant, son after son, of the Maggid of Zlotchov.[80] The Maggid of Zlotchov was so great that he would often argue even

[80] Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, one of the talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov and of the Maggid of Mezritch.

with the Baal Shem Tov over the tikkun for people's aveiros. His greatness was known as kodesh kodashim.

Rav Yosef came to Eretz Yisrael as a boy and grew up in Eitz Chaim in Yerushalayim, where he also learned. He learned as well in Rechovos HaNahar, a yeshiva of mekubalim in the Bukharim (the Bukharan quarter of Yerushalayim), and in Yeshivas Shaar HaShamayim. In each of these two yeshivos he came to know a holy man: in Rechovos HaNahar, Chacham Yaakov Musa, and in Shaar HaShamayim, Rav Yair Weinstock. He was wonderfully close to both, and he told me very interesting things about each of them, which I will tell later on.

I came to know Rav Yosef twice "for the first time." How can a person meet someone for the first time twice? I will explain. The first time, I was a boy of ten. I did not know him; I only saw him, and I did not understand what was happening. Only later did I come to know him, through a wondrous thing that I saw with my own eyes and in which I had a part. Even that part I did not know until I was older, past the age of twelve, when I came to know Rav Yosef in a more "official" way.

This is what happened the first time. One morning, at about ten o'clock, I was suddenly struck with a headache. My head began to pound. I told my melamed, "I cannot learn. I have a terrible headache, and I want to go home and rest." He believed me, and it was true, and he sent me home. We lived in Geulah then, two or three streets from the talmud torah where I learned. I came home and knocked on the door, and there was no answer. My mother, aleha hashalom, was not home, and the house was locked. What was I to do, sit in the courtyard with my head bursting? After a few minutes I thought it over and decided to go to my father's store in Meah Shearim and sit there.

On my way from Geulah to Meah Shearim I passed through Rechov Chavakuk, a little street that some of you may know. At the corner of Chavakuk a man I knew from Meah Shearim caught sight of me, and he suddenly set upon me: "Your father is no good! Your father is this and that! I don't know what has happened to him!" He said a few insulting words about my father. I was a child, and it hurt me that he spoke that way about my father. I did not answer him at all. What could I answer? I was a little boy; what could I do against a grown man? I went straight on to the store.

In the store I saw a tall Ashkenazi man standing with baskets in his hands. He always walked with two baskets in his hands. The reason was that, like Rabbeinu HaKadosh, he never lowered his hands below his navel. Not only did he never look at his bris, or at others; he never even lowered his hands below the navel, and he never in his life touched his bris. That is why he always walked with two baskets, so that his hands were held in that position. The baskets were filled with sefarim, and that is how he went about all the time.

There was another reason for the two baskets of sefarim. Chazal said that a man should not pass between two women, nor a woman between two men. He did not look at women at all, and so he did not see what was going on in the street. If it ever happened by chance that he passed between two women, or that they passed on either side of him, the sefarim on both sides would guard him, as though he were walking with two other men at his sides, and he would not be harmed by it. He lived in a kedushah that was not of this world.

He was not sitting; he stood there just so. When I came in, I paid him no attention. I turned to my father and said, "Abba, you know, So-and-so just insulted you on the way. Why did he speak about you like that? He said such and such words." I was a little boy; what did I know of the halachos of lashon hara, of what is permitted and what is forbidden? So I told him, "Look, So-and-so just insulted you, like this and like this."

When my father heard it, he began to dance. I thought, "Has my father gone mad?" He was dancing and clapping his hands, saying, "Reb Yosef, hersht? Hersht?" ("Did you hear? Did you hear?") He asked it in Yiddish, because Yiddish was the language they spoke fluently. And the other man answered him in Hebrew, "Baruch Hashem, Baruch Hashem."

I did not understand what had happened, and I asked. Then they explained to me that my father had been waiting for exactly this. A half hour or an hour before I came in, Rav Yosef had arrived at the store. He had come from Tel Aviv straight to my father's store, and he told him, "Reb Avrom, know that there is a harsh din against you in Shamayim. I do not know how to sweeten it for you. I hope that today people will shame you. The moment they shame you, the din will be lifted from you. Daven that you receive shame today."

At the very moments he was saying this, I felt the headache and left the talmud torah. Within a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes I had found no one at home, set out for my father, met the man who shamed him, and come in to tell it. My father, who had been in great distress over the din against him without knowing what to do, began to clap his hands: the gezeirah had been annulled! And he said to him, "Reb Yosef, Baruch Hashem."

This whole story took place, and I had a part in it without knowing what was happening. But I did not know the man, and two more years passed without my knowing who he was.

The Lists on Rosh Chodesh

Talk Five · 6:00

At twelve and a half I began living in my grandfather's house, and I lived there until I was twenty and a half, until my wedding. In truth it was my permanent home. The reason was that my grandmother could not see, and she suffered greatly from her heart. One of the grandchildren, the oldest one, had to be with them at all times, to run and bring a doctor or call the family if something happened. That happened often; she had frequent trouble. Besides, my grandfather was an old man and could not go out for help himself. There were no telephones then; it was very rare for anyone to have one, and someone had to go and call people. Until then my cousin had stayed with them. When he married, I was the next oldest grandchild in the family, so I had to be there to serve them in whatever they needed as old people, and chas veshalom, if something happened, to call for help. That is how I came to live there.

I was at my grandfather's nearly all day. I went to yeshiva to learn and came back home, and at midday too, when there was a two- or three-hour break, I came back to my grandfather's, in case I was needed.

One Rosh Chodesh Rav Yosef arrived. I did not even recognize him as the man from my father's store. A man had come, with a fine hadras panim; he looked like someone special, but who could tell who he was? He came with the baskets, and my grandfather gave him a list of notes and said, "Go in peace," and he left.

In the afternoon, I do not remember at what hour, I came home again and saw that Rav Yosef had returned. He sat down with my grandfather and went through the whole list of names he had been given, by heart: "So-and-so, like this. So-and-so, like this. This one will recover. For this one it will not be; for that one it will be." He counted them one by one, like the pasuk "המוציא במספר צבאם, לכולם בשם יקרא", and told about each one what would be.

After he left, I asked my grandfather, "What was that I just saw?"

He said, "He went just now to the Kosel HaMaaravi and davened for everyone on the list I gave him. He came back to tell me what he saw in his tefillah, what will be with each one."

I said to him, "The Kosel HaMaaravi? That is in Jordan!"

We lived in Yerushalayim near Rechov Shmuel HaNavi, on a street right beside it. At the end of Shmuel HaNavi, two minutes' walk from our house, was the Mandelbaum Gate.[81] That was the border with Jordan. The whole Old City was in Jor-

[81] From 1948 until the Six Day War in 1967, Yerushalayim was divided between Israel and Jordan, and the Old City, with the Kosel, was in Jordanian hands. The Mandelbaum Gate was the one official crossing point between the two sides of the city.

dan's hands. Past Shmuel HaNavi lay a small strip of no man's land, and after that was the Kingdom of Jordan. How could he go to the Kosel HaMaaravi? It was in the hands of another country; there was no way in!

I asked my grandfather, "But it is in the hands of the Arabs. How does he go there?"

He said, "They do not see him. He goes, he enters, he davens, and he comes back, and no one sees him. He goes to the Kosel HaMaaravi, and he has never given up the Kosel on Rosh Chodesh." All those years since 5708 (1948), when there was no access to it, he went every Rosh Chodesh, davened, and came back, and no one saw him.

To see such a man and to hear such things, I was amazed. I said to myself, I must make a connection with this man. From then on I began searching after all these things. I had a pull toward all these "sweets," and at my grandfather's I began to find such sweets in abundance. That was the first.

Then I found out that every Erev Rosh Chodesh he traveled to Meron. He was bound with every fiber of his soul to Rabbi Shimon, to Meron, to Tzfas, and to the kevarim of the tzaddikim there. Every Erev Rosh Chodesh he went to Meron and davened there and in Tzfas, and did his yichudim. There are many yichudim according to the Arizal, yichudim to be done on the kevarim of tzaddikim in order to connect with them and speak with them. He did them, and he spoke with them.

The Bus to Shechem

Talk Five · 26:00

Later Rav Yosef also came to know Yosef Dayan and went with him often. Yosef Dayan discovered Patilon, but it was through Patilon that I caught hold of Yosef Dayan and discovered him, and Rav Yosef Waltuch came to know him through Patilon and through me. Once they knew each other they became close, and Rav Yosef often joined Yosef Dayan when he went to do yichudim on the kevarim of tzaddikim. Rav Yosef Waltuch made himself subordinate to Yosef Dayan, even though Yosef Dayan was younger than he, because Yosef Dayan was occupied with yichudim twenty-four hours a day; he was all kodesh, all yichudim. When I come to him I will tell about him; he did several things for me personally, even from Shamayim.

Once Rav Yosef arranged with Yosef Dayan that they would go to Shechem to do yichudim at the kever of Yosef HaTzaddik. They set the time at one o'clock. Yosef Dayan was exact. And how exact! One o'clock did not mean two minutes past one, and it did not mean one minute before.

The Arab buses to Shechem left from their central station at Shaar Shechem in Yerushalayim. In those days it was not so dangerous; it was not like today. It was right after the Six Day War,[82] and the Arabs were subdued and did not make trouble, at least not especially. A bus left for Shechem every hour.

Rav Yosef arrived at five past one, and Yosef Dayan was no longer there. He understood that Yosef Dayan had taken the one o'clock bus and gone. He said, "I will not give up the yichudim with him," and he boarded the next bus as well.

The bus reached Ramallah on its way to Shechem. He was, after all, sitting alone among a great many Arabs. He was absorbed in his own matters, but still, out of some fear of danger, he was not quite at ease.

When they reached Ramallah, two soldiers of Tzahal got on. They told the driver and the two people sitting behind Rav Yosef, "Give us your details," and they wrote them down. Then they said to them, "Listen. There is a Jew here. This Jew is to arrive safely in Shechem. If he does not arrive safely in Shechem, we will hold you responsible for him. You guard him." And they got off.

So he reached Shechem and sat with Yosef Dayan. On the way back he was no longer afraid, because Yosef Dayan stood guard over him. All the Arabs were afraid of Yosef Dayan. He would go out alone against a hundred of the haters of Israel there in Balata, the village by Shechem. They were all haters of Jews, all the time, and when Jews came there they would torment them, either demanding money to let them in or sometimes for no reason at all; they were simply not normal there. And he would go out by himself and shout at them, and they would all run as if a lion had come out of the forest against them. The fear and terror of him fell upon them all, and they trembled before him.

THE TELEGRAM TO NETANYA

Talk Five · 30:00

I return to my own story. I was fourteen and learning in yeshiva. Every year a few bochurim from each yeshiva had the zechus of receiving a cheap ticket to the rest home that the Vaad HaYeshivos had in Netanya. One went for two weeks, rested there, learned a little, rested a little, went to the sea; it was a summer rest. That year I had the good fortune to be given a ticket almost for nothing, for a few prutos. In those days, when every pruta mattered, that was something one could manage: truly a few prutos.

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[82] The war of 5727 (1967), in which Israel took Yerushalayim's Old City, Yehudah and Shomron, among them Shechem, from Jordan.

I took the ticket. On Thursday Rav Yosef came, and I said to him, "Rav Yosef, you know, on Sunday I am going to Netanya, for a week or two in the rest home."

He took me completely seriously and said, "Wait, give me the address and the telephone number." I took out the ticket and showed it to him, and he wrote down the address and the telephone number. A telephone call was expensive then; a telegram was cheaper, and there were telegrams in those days. He took the address with the utmost seriousness.

On Sunday morning I set out early. For me, seeing the sea was like seeing I do not know what. A Yerushalmi does not know how to swim. What does he do when he goes to the sea? He touches the water, sees that it is wet, and that is all; he has nothing more to look for there. That is one of the signs by which you know him. Still, I was a bochur of fourteen, still with all the excitement over the sea. I ran there among the first and arrived by nine in the morning, and I got a room that really faced the sea. Now I was free until twelve, when lunch was served.

So I went to the sea. By nature I loved to be alone. There was a beach there set aside for religious people, and at that hour it was for men. But what was I going to look for in the sea? I could not swim. I began walking alone along the sand until I reached a place where there was only sand, sand to the right and sand to the left, the sea meeting the sand, and no one there at all. I said, "This is a good place." I put on the bathing suit I had brought, went to the water, and saw that it was wet. I touched it; it was wet and cold, and I did not even dare go in. I lay down on the sand and sat there alone with my thoughts, just to rest, in the quiet.

I do not know where she came from, but a woman appeared and asked me what time it was. Like a fool, I said, "Just a moment," ran to look at the watch I had left on the beach with all my things, and told her the time. As I was about to go back, she asked me, "Tell me, do you know anything about astrology?" I said, "Of course. Such and such and such." I had learned all of it; I loved learning such things and had read everything. So we talked about it.

As time went by I looked at my watch and saw that it was a few minutes before twelve. I said to her, "Ma'am, I must run. We have lunch, and I cannot talk any more." I got up and left.

Only after I had walked away did it dawn on me that I had in fact been talking with a girl and not with a man. The whole time I had been gripped by the conversation, not by the one I was talking to. It was as if I were talking with a chavrusa in yeshiva; I paid no attention to who it was. I did not regard her at all, only the ideas; she was brilliant, and we talked. Now, suddenly, I began to realize that I had been speaking with a girl. I put it out of my mind and went to eat.

I finished eating, and a telegram from Rav Yosef was handed to me: "Do not dare step out of the door of the hotel until I come. You are in danger."

I knew Rav Yosef. I knew he was not a man whose words were empty air. If he said I was in danger, I was afraid: perhaps, who knew, if I went out there would be a traffic accident or something. I was shaking. I did not go out. I waited for him to come. It was a telegram; you could not speak with him. It was not a telephone or anything else, just a telegram, where every word cost money and was written as briefly as possible.

I waited and waited for him. I sat and learned; I began going over the Gemara. An hour passed, then two. I rested, slept two hours, learned two hours, and did not know what to do with myself. But I did not go out the door; he had warned me.

At nine or ten at night, I do not remember which, he came. He said to me, "Know that in Netanya the Satan is waiting for you. He sent you that girl today. If you stay here, she will bring you to stumble in an aveirah that carries kares. Be careful. You are getting on a bus back to Yerushalayim this minute. And never again in your life enter Netanya, even when you are a rav teaching talmidim. Do not enter Netanya; he is waiting for you around the corner. Be careful." He did not rest and was not quiet until I did it.

I listened to Rav Yosef and obeyed him, and I got into a taxi going to Yerushalayim. I reached Yerushalayim late at night, as was my way, and the next morning at ten I was already sitting in yeshiva, bent over the Gemara. That was the end of it; the whole affair was over.

I wondered: who told Rav Yosef? Who saw me? No human being saw me. There were only the sky, and the water, and the sand. That is all.

That was when I was fourteen.

The Bus at the Kastel

Talk Five · 36:00

When I was seventeen I came to know Patilon and began going to him. He showed me the cat, a story I will tell in full further on: he showed me the gilgul of a girl who had sewn on Shabbos and had come back as a cat, and he gave her a tikkun before my eyes. The cat went outside and was killed. That changed my whole way of thinking about life. From then on I would travel to him from time to time, to visit him and to see his greatness.

I was coming home from one of those trips to Patilon. You do not know the buses of those days; several generations of Egged buses have come and gone since then. Thirty years later I saw buses like them, I believe in Ukraine, though I am not certain, still in use, with people driving them and riding them, and I remembered: these are the buses of long ago. They had a window in the back for emergencies, set

in a wooden frame with a hook. In time of danger you opened the hook and jumped.

The trip to Tel Aviv was dangerous then, not like today. The climb at the Kastel (the hill west of Jerusalem where the old road to Tel Aviv climbed steeply) was very narrow, and there was a real danger of falling into the abyss. Today they have widened it so much that it is nothing. In those years they were widening all those roads by blasting the rock with explosives. Before each blast they would shout "Barud!" (Arabic for gunpowder, the warning cry before a blast), and then they set off the charge.

I was riding home from Patilon on an Egged bus. We were at the top of the Kastel, just before the descent toward Jerusalem, when the engine burst into flames. The driver shouted, "Jump out the window!"

I always sat in the back of the bus, as my grandfather had taught me. It is good for shemiras einayim, because you do not see who gets on and who moves about, and there were other reasons as well. Sitting in the back, I saw at once that the bus was starting to roll, and I was the first to jump. The bus was still moving when I jumped, so I did not land straight on the ground. I was dragged along it. My arms were scraped below the elbows, and my trousers were torn at the knees, leaving holes. The flesh under them was scraped as well, and all the skin was rubbed off. But I got to my feet, and several more people jumped after me.

It was a nes. Instead of going down into the abyss, the bus turned toward the mountain, because the driver managed to swing the wheel toward the rock. The bus jammed against the rock and stopped. The rest of the passengers got off in the ordinary way and ran before the whole thing exploded on top of them in a huge blaze, which is what happened.

Since I had jumped first, while the bus was still rolling with the people inside, I got away at once. I ran and caught a ride with another driver, and he brought me to Jerusalem. I told no one anything. I went to my parents' house and changed the trousers, and told them only that they had torn. Nobody saw the scratches on me.

That was Erev Rosh Chodesh. On Rosh Chodesh Rabbi Yosef came to the yeshiva as usual. Every Rosh Chodesh I would wait for him there so that I could talk with him a little. He turned to me and said, "Yesterday you had a nes on the bus? The bus rolled, you jumped, and you were not hurt."

"Yes," I said. "How does kevodo know?"

He said, "At that very hour I was at the kever of the Arizal, speaking with him. He told me that you were on a bus in danger and that I should daven for you at his kever. So I davened for you at his tziyun, as he asked."

It gave me great simchah that the two of these gedolei olam had been talking about me.

Rabbi Akiva Is Waiting for Us

Talk Five · 41:30

If I start telling about Rabbi Yosef, I do not know where to begin or where to end. There is truly no end to the stories about him, and an hour would not be enough. I will take a few points.

When I was about twenty-two, I had talmidim whom I taught a shiur in Gemara every evening, encouraging them and strengthening them. One day we arranged for all of us to go to Meron. They had the day off from work. I do not remember whether it was an election day or their holiday on the fifth of Iyar; it was one of the two. We decided to go to the kevarim of the tzaddikim in Meron, Tzfas and Teveryah.

My talmid Yaakov came with a big pickup truck. I sat in front beside him, and all the talmidim sat in the back. We had arranged with Rabbi Yosef that he would come by bus as far as Parod junction, and there we would pick him up. He would ride with us the whole way around to all the kevarim and make the yichudim. It was important to me to see him while he made the yichudim and to see what happened.

We came to Parod and found Rabbi Yosef there, took him into the truck, and drove to Meron. There were tefillos, yichudim and great uplifting; then Tzfas, the Arizal, Benayahu ben Yehoyada, one level above another. By seven in the evening we had reached Teveryah, and at about seven we left the kever of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes. We were heading home, and we had come to the turnoff where the road climbs to Kiryat Shmuel, from which you go out through Teveryah Ilit toward Afula.

There Rabbi Yosef said, "Now we must go to Rabbi Akiva."

I felt responsible for my talmidim. Each of them had a wife at home, and I did not want them to get back late. It was already seven, we had three more hours of travel, until ten at night, and if we stopped at Rabbi Akiva as well, when would we finish? I said to him, "Rabbi Yosef, with all respect to kevodo, I have a responsibility to these people and to their shalom bayis. I cannot hold them up too long. We are not going to Rabbi Akiva."

He looked at me with eyes that struck terror. He said, "Rabbi Akiva is waiting for us. What do you want? He is waiting for us, and we will not go to him?"

I did not take his words seriously. I said, "Rabbi Yosef, with all respect to kevodo, there are people here who have homes. I know of at least some of them that if they come home late, their shalom bayis will become, rachmana litzlan, a Lag BaOmer bonfire. I am not looking for that." And I told my talmid, "Drive."

We drove five hundred meters, and the truck turned over on its side for no reason at all. We all came out of it whole; nothing happened to any of them. They were

shaken, but everyone got up, and together they lifted the truck back onto its wheels and set it upright on the road.

Rabbi Yosef said to me, "Now are we going to Rabbi Akiva?"

I said, "Rabbi Yosef, it is impossible."

He said, "This time you came out whole. Do you want to come out with injured people? Go on home, then."

I said, "I am not going to argue with kevodo." We went to Rabbi Akiva, and only after that did we finish and drive back to Yerushalayim.

The Two Tzaddikim and the Zoo

Talk Five · 53:00

Rabbi Yosef often went to accompany tzaddikim like these. He wanted to learn from them and to follow the ways of all the tzaddikim. He searched out hidden tzaddikim, and later he himself became one of them. He went to the generation before him to find them and learn from them. So he came to know Rav Shlomo, who was a very great man.

He also knew an eccentric man who lived in Meah Shearim, whom people called Rabbi Yaakov. He lived in a narrow hole of a room. His house was open on all sides, with no windows or anything. There he sat in his hole all day, thinking and thinking, and nobody even knew what he was thinking. Rabbi Yosef suspected that he was a hidden tzaddik.

I think it was to my son that Rabbi Yosef told the following story; that is how I remember it, but I am not sure. I do not want to say anything that is not true. Perhaps he told it to someone else and I heard it from him. But I believe it was so.

Rabbi Yosef told how one day, toward evening, he came into Rav Shlomo's house and saw Rav Shlomo hurrying everyone out, all his chassidim and everybody else. Why? Because this Rabbi Yaakov, the eccentric, had come in. As soon as Rav Shlomo saw him, he began telling the people, "Go out, I am busy, I cannot continue now," and he sent them all away.

What did Rabbi Yosef do? He said, "I played asleep. I put my head down on my folded arms on the table, like someone who has dozed off." The whole greatness of these tzaddikim was that whatever they wanted to do, they would not hurt anyone for it. They would not be tzaddikim at the expense of another person by disturbing his sleep. So he knew they would not throw him out.

He said, "I pretended to be asleep. When everyone had left, Rav Shlomo and Rabbi Yaakov came over to check whether I was really asleep. They looked at me

from every side, and I played asleep with all my strength until they were convinced. But I was awake, waiting to hear what they would say."

"All night they sat and talked. What did they talk about? The zoo. One said to the other, 'Do you know that the monkey came out of the forest and met the elephant?' And the other said, 'Do you know that the elephant went and spoke with the lion?' And so on, all about animals: the peacock said this, another bird answered him that, this animal did this and that animal did that. It was names of animals, a language of which I did not understand a single word. I understood that they were busy with lofty yichudim, though I could not understand them. When morning came they went out. I made as if I had just woken up, and I left."

MOTZA'EI YOM KIPPUR IN SHAMAYIM

Talk Fifteen · 51:30

I have already told you that in Shamayim, Simchas Torah is Motza'ei Yom Kippur. Our Rabbis said that whoever passes away on Motza'ei Yom Kippur, it is a good sign for him, and that is all the more so of Simchas Torah, because it is Motza'ei Yom Kippur Above.

I have told you several times the story of my friend from New York, whose brother passed away young, in his twenties, from cancer. The brother lost consciousness for about half an hour and then came back, and he told his brother that he had gone through a terrible trial of fire there. This was during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. He saw a tunnel and darkness. They asked him to speak words of kefirah, and he refused. Dogs of fire came at him, and he screamed "Shema Yisrael." Then they told him to speak words of filth and lewdness of every kind, and he refused. Pigs came at him, and he screamed "Shema Yisrael." Then there was light, and they told him that he was a ben Olam Haba.

This young man had already said in Elul that he knew he was going to pass away, that he was a gilgul who had to fix something, but that he was davening to Hashem to be taken only on Motza'ei Yom Kippur. He did not know when Motza'ei Yom Kippur was. After he came back from the coma, he told his brother Yosef, "Know that Motza'ei Yom Kippur in Shamayim is Simchas Torah. I am a ben Olam Haba. On Simchas Torah morning, when everyone says Vezos HaBerachah, I will go."

Rav Yosef, his brother, knew this already. He had learned Kabbalah with me, and he knew that Simchas Torah is Motza'ei Yom Kippur in Shamayim. The second chasimah ends on Hoshana Rabbah, and the conclusion of it all, the results, "Yismechu haShamayim vesagel ha'aretz," takes place on Simchas Torah, at the

time of Musaf in the morning, for those who daven at netz hachamah. Whoever passes away at that hour, if he is a holy man, is joined to these things, and of this it is said that it is good for him.

And Rav Yosef told me that his brother really did pass away just that way. He was with him in the hospital. When they finished Shacharis and Hallel, the two of them began reading the parshah of Simchas Torah together. When they finished Vezos HaBerachah, they went on to Bereishis. The moment he said "asher bara Elokim la'asos," his brother smiled, said "Shema Yisrael," and closed his eyes. Yes, that is the time Above.

The Dybbuk in the Ades Shul

Talk Twenty · 54:00

Once they asked Rav Yosef Waltuch about a man who had a dybbuk, a ruach ra'ah, bar minan, inside his body. They brought him to the Ades shul (the shul of the Aleppo Jews, near the Machane Yehuda market) and tried to get the dybbuk out. I remember that time, when that man with the dybbuk was there and they were trying to get it out. Several people came to try their strength. I remember the event.

They asked Rav Yosef Waltuch too to come and help get the dybbuk out. "Fine, I'll go," he said. Just as he got near the shul in Machane Yehuda, a little before the Ades shul, he saw three malachei chabalah. They said to him, "Listen, don't get involved. We advise you not to get involved, so that you won't be harmed. We are here. We don't want this man helped; don't help him under any circumstances."

He turned around and left. He understood that if they had shown him this, Shamayim did not want it.

As he came out of Machane Yehuda toward Meah Shearim, Reb Alter Zaslav came toward him and said, "Nu, you saw three malachim, eh? They told you not to get involved, eh? I'm telling you too: it's good that you didn't get involved."

The Dybbuk in Elad

Talk Twenty · 55:00

On the subject of dybbukim: right now there is a dybbuk in a woman who comes to Elad, to Rav Asayag, and Rav Asayag is working to get it out.

Rav Asayag spoke with the dybbuk itself. The dybbuk spoke from the first moment and made no trouble. It only lied about its name and gave a false one, but it told its story on the spot. It said that it was in kaf hakela because of an aveirah of niddah that it had committed, and because of the anger it used to give way to. For

these two things it has a punishment of kaf hakela for decades, and it suffers, and so it is inside her body.

Now, last week, after they had done many times the yichudim of the Arizal, a special yichud of "Hafkeid alav rasha" (built on the pasuk in Tehillim) that comes down to us from the Arizal, the dead man no longer speaks. Instead the memuneh (the angel appointed over it) speaks; with each one, memunim go along. The memuneh over it said: "He is already worn out from this. Continue; soon he will be exhausted. And know that these tikkunim have brought it about that instead of decades more of kaf hakela, the tikkunim and yichudim you have done have left him only one more year. Continue, continue; perhaps they will finish it entirely and he will come out completely."

SHORT ACCOUNTS

RAV YOSEF WALTUCH AND ELIYAHU HANAVI

Talk Three · 7:00

Rav Yosef Waltuch was himself one of the great mekubalim of kavanos, a giant among giants. It is hard to believe that such a man walked among us. He told me that there was hardly a bris milah at which he did not see Eliyahu HaNavi. For him it was a simple thing, truly simple.

One day there was a bris, the third or fourth of that day, and he did not see Eliyahu. He was in great distress. He was a close chavrusa of Rav Meir Abuchatzeira, the son of the holy Baba Sali (Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira, the great tzaddik of the Moroccan Jews). Rav Meir was a ladder set on the earth with its top reaching to Shamayim. The two were close friends and sat together for hours learning. Rav Yosef Waltuch told my son Avraham that there were days they sat and learned so long that when they got up, the chair had a mark in it. The wood could not hold out any longer, and it kept a permanent mark from their sitting and learning hour after hour without a break.

On that day when he did not see Eliyahu HaNavi, he was sad, and he took the first bus to Rav Meir in Ashdod. Before he had even had time to go in, Rav Meir called to him from the window: "Rav Yosef, Eliyahu HaNavi said: You saw him enough today. So at one bris you did not see him; that is nothing terrible. You saw him enough today." That was what he told him, through the window, and Rav Yosef got up at once and went back home.

The Old Man by the Bookcase

Talk Five · 22:30

I asked Rav Yosef, "Have you seen Eliyahu HaNavi? Tell me a story about Eliyahu HaNavi."

He told me that one day he was at a bris in Shaarei Tzedek. The Shaarei Tzedek hospital stood then on Rechov Yaffo itself.[83] Anyone could walk straight in to its shul: as you came into the courtyard through the gate of the hospital, the shul stood in the middle, facing you. Whenever there was a bris, anyone could go there for it, with no difficulty.

He went to the shul, knowing there was a bris, and he saw Eliyahu HaNavi. He was not allowed to tell people that he saw Eliyahu HaNavi, so he sat quietly. He did not even go near him; he only saw him.

To speak with him takes other occasions and another way. At a bris one does not speak with him, because the Eliyahu HaNavi who comes to a bris is not the Eliyahu HaNavi with whom one speaks. It is only a nitzotz that comes in the form of a man, seen or unseen. Sometimes he is seen by people too and sometimes not; it depends on the neshamah of the baby. At such a time one cannot speak with him. When he clothes himself in a greater nitzotz, one can also speak with him, ask him questions, and the like. For Eliyahu HaNavi, too, appears in many levels, and they are not all the same.

At this bris, because there was a need for it, he revealed himself to people as well. But people did not know. They saw an old man standing by the bookcase of the shul and thought he was just an old man. Eliyahu HaNavi began to take a sefer, to touch it, and one of the guests came over and chased him away: "Mister, did you come here to steal sefarim? Get out of here!" He did not know that it was Eliyahu HaNavi who had come to the bris, and he chased him away.

People do not know what they lose when such things happen. They do not know that sometimes they see figures and do not know who or what they are. There are such things, truly very interesting things that happen, when a person sees a figure that suddenly vanishes before his eyes: you see him, and before your eyes he is gone. What experiences, wondrous experiences!

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[83] The original building of Shaarei Tzedek, on Rechov Yaffo, served as the hospital until it moved to its present building in the late 1970s.

Enough for One Day

Talk Fifteen · 38:30

Once Rav Yosef Waltuch went to a bris and did not see Eliyahu HaNavi. He was so sad that he could not calm down. On the spot he took the bus and went to Ashdod, to Rav Meir Abuchatzeira. He had not yet opened his mouth; he had not even started up the stairs. The moment he arrived downstairs, Rav Meir Abuchatzeira put his head out of the window and said to him, "Reb Yoisef, Eliyahu HaNavi says: you have seen him enough times today; there was no need for another time. Do not be hurt. It is not because of you. It is because you already saw him, and he did not want to be seen by you yet again after so many times. There is a limit to how many times."

It seems that it was his second or third or fourth bris that day; I do not know. When he heard this, he did not even go up. He said "Thank you very much" and went straight back the way he had come.

That is the greatness of these two men. Rav Meir Abuchatzeira knew with ruach hakodesh why he had come, and he already had the answer for him. Eliyahu HaNavi had already come to tell him: "Listen, he is coming to you; tell him this."

I have already told you that Rav Yosef Waltuch told me that once Eliyahu HaNavi was at a bris in the shul of the Wallach hospital,[84] and one of the people there thought he was some old man who had come to steal a sefer, and chased him out of the bris.

The Cow Climbed the Ladder

Talk Five · 56:30

I heard another story from someone else. Rabbi Yosef was a close friend and chavrusa of Rav Meir Abuchatzeira (Baba Meir, the son of the Baba Sali), who was a very great man. Rabbi Yosef told my son, may he be distinguished for long life, that they learned together so many times that a mark wore into the chair in their yeshiva where they sat learning together. They were good friends and a good chavrusa and learned together for many hours, and Rabbi Yosef often went to Baba Meir, the son of the Baba Sali.

He was truly a holy man. Those were not the "Babas" of today; today all kinds of people call themselves I do not know what. Both of them were kedoshei elyon, the Baba Sali and Rabbeinu Rav Meir alike. I too merited to know Rav Meir.

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[84] Shaare Zedek hospital in Yerushalayim, which people called by the name of its founder, Dr. Moshe Wallach.

A man who was there told how one day Rabbi Yosef made a special trip to Rav Meir's house in Ashdod. He did not go into the house. Rav Meir saw him from the window and said to him, "Do you know that the cow climbed the ladder?"

Rabbi Yosef answered, "What, really?"

Rav Meir said, "Do you know that the elephant" (I do not know which animal he mentioned) "was in so-and-so's house?"

Rabbi Yosef answered, "What, really? Thank you very much." He turned around and went home.

That was the whole conversation between them. He traveled there, and he traveled back. They understood these things; we do not even understand what was meant. We understand only that there are lofty secrets here that are none of our business. Rabbi Yosef troubled himself to travel the whole way to hear it, and he was moved by what he heard. We are still far from understanding what goes on in the dust under the feet of the tzaddikim.

Rabbi Shimon Wakes Him

Talk Five · 18:30

Since I have already mentioned Rabbi Shimon and Rav Yosef, I will tell you one more thing. Once Rav Yosef went to learn the whole night at Rabbi Shimon's. At chatzos he grew drowsy; he was tired, and he fell asleep over the sefer. Suddenly he saw in a dream a man with a radiant hadras panim waking him and saying, "You did not come here to sleep! Get up and learn!" The man shook him, and he really felt someone physically touching him and shaking him. He woke up and saw no one, and he began to learn.

In the morning he came back to Tel Aviv and did his work of sweeping honestly, as always. When he had finished the cleaning, he went straight to Patilon to ask him what had happened. Before he could even open his mouth, Patilon said to him, "Last night you had a giluy from Rabbi Shimon, didn't you? He came and woke you from your sleep so you would not doze, because he wanted you to learn. That was Rabbi Shimon." Patilon already knew about the giluy he had had.

When I come to these tzaddikim, I will tell about them. For now we will keep to Rav Yosef.

The Window Facing Kever Dovid

Talk Five · 24:00

I asked him to tell me whether he saw Dovid HaMelech. He told me that he went often to kever Dovid HaMelech. Kever Dovid HaMelech is not in the place on Har Tzion that is shown to people. There is an opening there, but the place itself is on the slopes of Har Tzion. He explained it to me exactly: he knew the actual place of kever Dovid, and he went there and davened.

I am speaking with you about the time before 5708 (1948), when all of that was in the hands of the Arabs. I asked him whether he still went to kever Dovid after 5708, and he swallowed his tongue. He did not want to tell me yes or no. About the Kosel he could not hide anything from me, since my grandfather had already told me. What was known to us was known; what was not revealed to us, he did not want to tell. But he could not lie and say no. Every time I pressed him on it, he swallowed his tongue.

One day he simply had enough of my pressing, and he said, "You know what? Instead of that question, let me take you to something else. Let me take you to a place where there is access to kever Dovid, and it is a good place for tefillah."

I do not remember how old I was, sixteen or seventeen. I went with him to Har Tzion, which was then the border. There was a locked door there, and behind it was no man's land up to Shaar Tzion, where the Legionnaires stood on the wall.[85]

He took me to a place there. Before the entrance to the tziyun that is shown today, there is a dark room. Today they have built restrooms there, and that can help a person find the place. In that room, where there is the entrance to the restrooms, on the right, toward the east, the north side, there are two windows. He told me that the right-hand window is the place to daven. "From here there is a straight line to kever Dovid. Whenever you want to receive yeshuos, come here and daven."

With that he got rid of my question.

The Fragrance at Kifl Haris

Talk Five · 28:30

Once Rav Yosef traveled with Yosef Dayan and took another man along, and the three of them went to Kifl Haris (an Arab village in the Shomron). Both Calev ben Yefuneh and Yehoshua bin Nun are buried there.

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[85] The soldiers of the Arab Legion, the army of Jordan, who held the walls of the Old City until 1967. Shaar Tzion is one of the gates of the Old City wall, facing Har Tzion.

Yehoshua bin Nun has no kever there. There is a room in which he is buried, but no one knows exactly where in it the kever is. When they arrived, that man asked Rav Yosef, "Tell me, where is the kever?"

He said, "Wherever you see Yosef Dayan stand, know that that is the kever. He stands exactly on the kever when he does his yichudim. He sees Yehoshua in the place where he is."

The third man, who was with them, told what happened. As soon as Yosef Dayan and Rav Yosef arrived and both began their yichudim, a fragrance of perfume began to rise from the ground, truly a fragrance of Gan Eden, and it flooded the whole room. Before that there had been a foul smell there, because the Arabs hate Yehoshua bin Nun and leave dung beside the room, sometimes even inside it, to disgrace him. They had also destroyed the kever, which is why there is no kever there. But the moment they came in and began the yichudim, a good fragrance began to rise from the kever. It changed the whole smell of the place, where before it had been hard to stand, into a good fragrance, so that they could do their yichudim in air that was fit, kosher, and proper for them.

That was Rav Yosef, alav hashalom.

What Rabbi Yosef Told My Son

Talk Five · 47:00

Some years after the Six-Day War I no longer had much contact with Rabbi Yosef. My son Avraham, shlita, was by then an older bochur, and he was very close to Rabbi Yosef. He sat with him for hours and heard a great many things from him, a great many stories and remarkable matters. Rabbi Yosef opened the secrets of his heart before him. What he had not revealed to me in my youth he revealed to my son. He sat with him and told him wondrous things that I knew nothing about; I heard them only through my son.

For example, my son asked him about Oron Yarden. He was a boy who disappeared, and no one knew what had become of him. The whole country was in turmoil asking what had happened to him. My son asked Rabbi Yosef, and he answered, "He is already buried in the sands. There is no point looking for him. He is in the sands, and he is no longer alive." A few days later they did find him, in the sands, just as Rabbi Yosef had said.

Rabbi Yosef also told my son that my grandfather once took him along, and the two of them went together to the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik. They saw awesome things there and made wondrous yichudim.

The Lulav in the Mikveh

Talk Five · 58:30

My son also told me about a good friend of his who knew Rabbi Yosef. One day this friend came to him and said, "Listen, I do not understand what I saw with my own eyes."

"What did you see?"

"Just now, in the mikveh of Beis Yisrael, I suddenly saw Rabbi Yosef standing in the water of the mikveh, unclothed, holding a lulav. It was not Sukkos or anything. He was taking the lulav and shaking it in every direction, doing the naanuim in the water. I asked him, 'Rabbi Yosef, what is kevodo doing?' He said, 'I am killing the Satan. I cannot bear what he did to Klal Yisrael, to the bochurim of Klal Yisrael, on Yom Kippur. Now I am killing him.'"

That was in the morning. The friend came and told my son, and my son came and told me: "Do you hear? Rabbi Yosef is in the mikveh of Beis Yisrael, unclothed, shaking a lulav, and he says he is killing Sadat" (Anwar Sadat, the president of Egypt, who had opened the Yom Kippur War against Israel in 1973).

I said, "Sadat? What has gotten into you? He is a sultan in Egypt, sitting on his royal throne like Pharaoh. What are you talking about?"

That very day, not many hours later, someone assassinated Sadat (at a military parade in Cairo, on 6 October 1981).

If I start telling about Rabbi Yosef, I will never finish: stories he told me himself about things that happened to him, testimonies of all kinds of things. Whole sefarim have already come out about him, page after page full of stories.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Holy Sandler

and the hidden tzaddikim of Yafo

THREE HIDDEN TZADDIKIM IN YAFO

Talk Fifteen · 11:00

I am talking about the Tel Aviv of those days. It was a city of kedushah upon kedushah, without a break. There was chullin there too, much less than today, but Shabbos was kept in Tel Aviv. The mayor of Tel Aviv himself put up notices asking people to keep Shabbos. That was what the times were like then, in the Hebrew city (as Tel Aviv was proudly called). Though it was a secular city, there were many yeshivos in Tel Aviv and in Yafo next to it, and talmidei chachamim, admorim and gedolei olam lived there.

Rav Yosef Waltuch and a number of other hidden tzaddikim lived in Tel Aviv in those years. But I am speaking now of Yafo, right next to it. In Yafo there were three hidden tzaddikim then, living hardly a street and a half from one another. The holy Sandler lived at the corner of Shabazi Street. In the middle of Shabazi Street, at the corner of Samech-Ches Street, lived Chacham Hillel Simchon, alav hashalom. And a little further on, two streets over on the right, on Elazar Street, lived Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon, whom I have already told you about.

Chacham Simchon was a very great man. I had the zechus to know him a little, at the end of his days, when he was already confined to bed. His greatness was very great, and he was a melamed of small children in a Talmud Torah; that was his official work. Chacham Simchon told me that he knew the Sandler well, and he also knew Patilon well, so the three of them all knew one another. Of course he also knew my grandfather well, and I assume the Sandler was connected with my grandfather too, even if it was hidden. But none of them ever spoke about another.

In all the time I lived with my grandfather, I never heard a word about the Sandler, just as I never heard about many other hidden tzaddikim he was connected with. Everything was hidden upon hidden, so that even the people of his own

house did not know about them. Rav Yosef Waltuch sat with the Sandler every Tuesday and Thursday and learned with him. I went with Rav Yosef Waltuch for years, close at his side, before he moved to Yerushalayim, and I never heard a word from him about the Sandler, though in those days he was in and out of the Sandler's house without end. That is their strength: knowing how to guard their mouths as well.

The Holy Sandler

Talk Fifteen · 0:00

The tzaddik I will write about now is the holy Sandler, Rav Moshe Yaakov Rabikov zt"l. He was born in Lithuania in 5633 (1873). From his youth he sat and toiled in Torah without a break. While still young he entered the world of Kabbalah and learned it together with the author of the *Leshem Shevo VeAchlamah*.[86] The Leshem was a very great man, an enormous man. The Chofetz Chaim used to say of him: "Look well at his face now, because in Olam Haba it is not at all certain that you will be able to see even his mechitzah, never mind him." That is how much he was in awe of him.

For his great sefer on Kabbalah, the *Leshem Shevo VeAchlamah*, the Leshem took a haskamah from Rav Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai. When he was asked why, he answered, "In Shamayim they proclaim of him that he is the head of all the bnei hagolah. His haskamah is worth more to me than all the others." And the holy Sandler was the Leshem's chavrusa; they learned together.

The Sandler came up to Eretz Yisrael and opened a small shoemaker's shop in Yafo, at the corner of Shabazi Street, and he lived there as well. That is how everyone knew him: a man who sat a few hours a day mending shoes. Shoes he repaired did not tear again for many years. He worked be'emunah and sewed everything by hand, so that every perutah he was paid would be worth its full value, never a quick, careless job.

Everyone thought of him as a simple shoemaker who gave a little Torah. At seudah shelishis, in the Ohel Talmud shul nearby, he would say some divrei Torah that he had supposedly gathered from other people's sefarim. Nobody knew that the root of these words was his own, and that he had clothed a great many sodos inside the simple divrei Torah he said. Nobody could have found him out either, except the hidden tzaddikim, who knew one another exactly.

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[86] Rav Shlomo Elyashiv (1841–1926), one of the greatest mekubalim of the last generations, and the grandfather of Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv.

The world came to know him through the Chazon Ish, the gadol hador of that time. The Chazon Ish used to come to him and sit with him for hours, speaking with him in private, and he was mevatel himself before him. When the Chazon Ish gave someone advice and was told that the Sandler had said the opposite, he would answer, "Do as the Sandler says. Don't listen to me." This was the Chazon Ish, every one of whose words was fixed Above in a way that could not be changed; whatever he said down here was accepted in Shamayim. All the same, he was mevatel himself before the Sandler.

THE HEAD OF THE LAMED-VAV

Talk Fifteen · 8:00

Let us return to the tzaddik I did know, the holy Sandler. The hidden tzaddikim, Rav Yosef Waltuch and Rav Shlomo Green, the well-known holy tailor, who were enormous talmidei chachamim, were mevatel themselves before him. They were regulars in his home, sitting with him and listening to every word that came out of his mouth.

He never turned away anyone who came to him for advice or for a yeshuah, and the crowds grew after everyone heard what the Chazon Ish had said. Once the Chazon Ish let a word slip out: he said that the holy Sandler was the head of the lamed-vav tzaddikim. The moment the Chazon Ish said it, the dam burst, and people began coming to him day and night. He received them all with a pleasant face, spoke with them all, and blessed them all, and his berachos brought yeshuos. If someone went and gathered everything people came to him for and all the yeshuos that came about, dozens of volumes would not be enough.

But this is part of the tefillos of the hidden tzaddikim: that even if they do thousands of miracles, all of it be forgotten and sink into oblivion, and people not know. One story from here and one from there, and that is all. We could put together a few dozen stories, barely a booklet, about what these men truly did, when thick volumes would not be enough for them. This holds for all of them, for the other hidden tzaddikim I have spoken about too, my grandfather among them. Where do we know the stories from? One from here and one from there, and from what I saw myself when I sat with him and watched him a little. The stories of these men were not counted in ones and twos and threes.

Once I came to his house in the morning, a few months before he passed away. He was in the middle of eating porridge. That was his only food: porridge, once a day. The moment I came in, he stopped in the middle. The relative who was taking care of him (I do not know whether she was his granddaughter or some other rela-

tive) begged him to go on eating, and I said to him, "Let the Rav eat; I will wait." Under no circumstances. A person was waiting, a person needed a yeshuah. He did not touch the food until I had finished.

The Stories

"I Don't See Him!"

Talk Fifteen · 34:30

Now we come to the story. Whenever the holy Sandler was invited to a bris, he went. Why? To meet Eliyahu. He would see him, without a second thought.

After the Chazon Ish had made the Sandler known as a man head and shoulders above everyone, chassidim naturally gathered around him. They listened to his every word and saw him as a man whose feet stood firm on the ground and whose head reached the heavens. One of these men had a son born in Tel Aviv, in the Hadassah hospital in Tel Aviv, and he invited the Sandler to come to the bris.

He came to the bris. They called the people together, the baby was brought in, and they were about to do the milah. Suddenly the Sandler began to shout angrily in Yiddish, "He is not here! He is not here!" He got up and left the place in anger, bitterly, with a kind of protest.

The father saw what he had done and said, "Rabbosai, I am calling off the bris. There is no bris. Go home. If there is a bris tomorrow, I will let you know." He called it off and went to the hospital in Tel Aviv where his wife had given birth. I think it was Hadassah, but I am not sure. He told them, "Listen, the bris was supposed to be today. This baby is not mine. If the Sandler HaKadosh said that Eliyahu HaNavi did not come, that he is not here (for whom did he mean but Eliyahu HaNavi?), then if Eliyahu HaNavi is not at the bris, it is a sign that this is not my son. I want my son!"

They said, "What, are you mad? This is your son! Every baby has a bracelet with his name on it, and here is the bracelet."

He told them, "I demand an investigation on the spot." He made a great commotion there, and they investigated. It did not take long to find that his child had been switched with the child of an Arab woman from Yaffo who had given birth beside his wife. When they brought the babies to be nursed, the bracelets had fallen off both babies' hands, and since the beds stood side by side, they put the bracelets back the wrong way, each baby with the other's bracelet.

Only after he made a commotion did it come out. They said, "It cannot be," and he said, "It can." They asked who had been beside his wife, and were told it was an Arab woman. They brought her baby and looked at the two of them, this one alike, that one not. They saw real differences in the color of the skin and in the features of the face, and understood there had been a mistake. They uncovered it and gave him back his own child.

Now he was happy. He took his son for the bris and called the people again, and the next day he invited the Sandler. He wanted to see what he would say this time. He was still not at ease, in spite of all they had uncovered: perhaps this was not his son either, perhaps this was the Arab child, perhaps something was still wrong.

The Sandler HaKadosh came, and they brought the baby. The Sandler began to smile and said, "Oh! Now he is here! Now he is here! Mazel tov! Mazel tov!" They did the bris, and he was all smiles.

That is greatness. It is proof of how far, when they said they saw him, it was not imagination. It was true seeing.

Three Months, Not Six

Talk Fifteen · 3:00

Here is one example of the Chazon Ish's greatness. Rav Mordechai Eliyahu (who later became the Rishon LeTziyon, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel) told me this himself, a few decades ago.

In his youth Rav Mordechai Eliyahu was a great kanai. When the decree of drafting girls came,[87] he and his companions planned to throw a grenade into the Knesset, which then sat on Ben Yehuda Street in Yerushalayim. They meant to throw it while the Knesset was in session, to strike at members of the government, as a protest against the drafting of girls. But they were being followed, and they were caught with the grenade a few minutes before they could carry it out. He went to prison, under arrest, and afterwards to trial.

Before the trial he was released for a while, and he went to the Chazon Ish and asked him what to do. The Chazon Ish told him, "Say such and such, and you will sit only three months in prison, no more."

He went back to his lawyer and told him, "This is the way I want to go."

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[87] In the first years of the State of Israel, the government wanted to draft girls, religious girls among them, into the army or into national service, and the gedolim fought against it with all their strength.

"Under no circumstances," the lawyer said. "Go that way and you won't be finished with decades in prison. You will not go that way. You will go only the way I guide you according to the law."

"No," he said. "Only what the Chazon Ish said."

"On your responsibility?"

"On my responsibility."

So they went only the Chazon Ish's way. The trial came, and they made their claims just as the Chazon Ish had said. Then the day of the verdict came, and everyone gathered to hear it. The judge began: "The accused, Mordechai son of Eliyahu, in light of all the claims and the facts, I sentence to six months in prison."

On the spot he burst out, "How can you say six when the Chazon Ish said three?"

The judge looked down and said, "Did I say six? Three. Here, it is written in front of me: three." He had made a slip of the tongue and said six.

Rav Mordechai Eliyahu told me himself what happened to him. That was the Chazon Ish.

At the Kever of the Chazon Ish

Talk Fifteen · 5:30

If I begin to speak about the Chazon Ish, I will not finish. We knew and heard and saw wonders upon wonders about him. He passed away when I was a young child, but I heard stories from those close to him who were there when they happened. Here is one.

A secular man's daughter was about to give birth, and the labor was so hard that her life was in danger, and the doctors did not know what to do. People told him, "Go to the Chazon Ish. His word decides in Shamayim." He went straight to the Chazon Ish. The Chazon Ish heard him out, blessed her, and said, "This moment she has given birth in peace. You have nothing to worry about." The man hurried back to the hospital. Right after the berachah of the Chazon Ish, she had given birth easily.

A year later it happened again. The birth was hard and dangerous. It was not something a Caesarean alone could solve; there were complications. I do not know exactly what happened, but she was in danger. Once more he went to the Chazon Ish; he already knew the address. But when he got there they told him, "What are you looking for? He has already passed away." It had been a few months.

The man began to cry. "This is what happened last time. What do I do now?" They told him, "Go to his kever." He went there at once, davened, begged for ra-

chamim, and looked at his watch. When he got back to the hospital he learned that at the very moment he had finished davening at the kever, she had given birth again, healthy and whole. I do not know if it was a boy or a girl.

There is no place to begin with the Chazon Ish and no place to end. Zechuso yagen aleinu. Perhaps one day we will give him a shiur of his own. But it could not be part of the tzaddikim I knew, because, to my great sorrow, I never had the zechus to know him. His close ones and his talmidim I knew without end.

Hides on Purim

Talk Fifteen · 43:00

Once two merchants came to the Rebbe of Premishlan on the edge of bankruptcy. What had happened? They had bought a great many hides, hoping the price would rise and they would make a good profit. Suddenly the market fell. It was flooded with hides that arrived from other places, the price dropped, and they stood to lose an enormous sum on what they had invested. This was on Erev Purim, and they came to Premishlan completely broken and told the Rebbe the whole story.

He told them, "Come tomorrow to the seudah."

They came to the Purim seudah, and he said to them, "Come, drink! Be happy!"

"Rebbe," they said, "our throats are choking. How can we be happy?" They were about to lose all their money. They had borrowed from people and invested it here; it was a huge investment.

"Now you will drink and be happy," he told them, and he made them drink.

After they drank, he said to them, "In the Megillah it says, 'Layehudim haysah orah vesimchah vesasson vikar.' Come, I will explain it for you. *Layehudim*, the Jews: that is you. *Haysah orah*: read it *orah* with an ayin, hides. There were hides, and the price fell to nothing. What happened? *Vesimchah vesasson*: they drank on Purim and were happy. *Vikar*: the price of the hides went up, and they made a good profit. Go home."

A day later, who knows what happened, the price of the hides suddenly jumped threefold, and they made a very large profit.

Since such tzaddikim cannot simply bless, he clothed their berachah in a pasuk and brought it upon them through the sod of the kedoshim. Every word of Torah, Nevi'im and Kesuvim is all kodesh, all Shemos HaKodesh. He took the Shemos HaKodesh in this pasuk, and through their form he brought upon them all the light of the pasuk, so that through the light he drew down upon them, the price of the hides would rise.

When people came to the Rebbe of Premishlan with serious illnesses, he would say, "One moment. You have such an illness? All right." He would take the name of a goy from the lists they brought him. Not just any goyim: goyim who hated Yisrael, corrupt goyim, goyim known as people it would be good to wipe from the world. He would take one of those names and say, "I am passing the illness from here to there, and that is that. Let it go to them as a gift." And then the person was healed, and the other one got the illness.

The Snake of Rabbi Elazar

Talk Fifteen · 45:30

The source of this is in the Zohar. It tells there of Rabbi Elazar that once they saw a snake running. Rabbi Elazar called out to it, "Stop! Stop!" The snake did not stop. Rabbi Elazar shouted to the snake, "Stop, the man has done teshuvah!" It kept running. He shouted to it, "Go back to your hole! You already have someone else there in his place!" At once they saw the snake turn right around and run back to the place it had come from.

His chaveirim, the talmidim of Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Elazar, asked him, "Shu hada? What is this?"

He told them, "There is a Jew who sinned with an aveirah. He too is going about in the desert, and because of this aveirah it was decreed in Shamayim that a snake would bite him. This snake received permission to run and bite him. A snake thirsts for human blood; it got permission, and it was running there. I saw that this man had done teshuvah. He does not deserve death; he has already done teshuvah. But when a snake receives a decree, it will not give it up. It wants its prey. I shouted to it, 'He has done teshuvah, get down,' and it did not want to. I told it, 'Go back to your hole; you have someone else there.' When it heard that it had someone else in his place, it let him go.

"But you should know that it could not just be without blood. Something else happened. Another man, a goy, grabbed a Jew, beat him, robbed him, and is now asleep beside the snake's hole. I sent the snake to take this goy. Let us go there too. We will follow the snake and do hashavas aveidah."

As they were walking, they saw on the way a Jew crying and screaming, his clothes all torn. They asked him, "What happened to you?" He said that a little while before, some goy had grabbed him, beaten him, stolen his purse with his money and disappeared, and it was all the money he had.

"Come with us," Rabbi Elazar told him. "Come, don't worry. Your money is waiting for you. Come with us."

They all took him and went to the snake's hole; Rabbi Elazar knew the address too. When they got there, what did they see? The goy lay there dead, bitten, and the snake coiled around him. Rabbi Elazar said to the Jew, "Take your purse."

"I'm afraid," he said. "There's a snake around him."

Rabbi Elazar said to the snake, "Move. He wants to do hashavas aveidah and get his money back. Let us do hashavas aveidah. Move away from here." The snake moved, he went and took the money, and it was returned to him.

Sometimes, when the decree is harsh, someone else has to be given in exchange. There are plenty of goyim who will go as *chalifaseinu, temuraseinu, kaparaseinu*, and the Erev Rav too, to be our exchange and our kaparah. There are enough of them to go.

The holy Sandler did this too. Many times people came to him with things that, when he looked, he saw could not be taken away completely; the illness could not be uprooted. He would say, "Go, and give this illness as a gift to a certain goy you will see, one you know makes trouble for Jews and the like." The person would go and give it, and "tzaddik gozer vehaKadosh Baruch Hu mekayem," as he used to say. People were stunned. He was a wonder, a wonder of wonders.

Simchas Torah

Talk Fifteen · 50:00

The holy Sandler passed away on Simchas Torah. This is how it happened. He was alone at home, and he did not want to die alone. It is not good for a person to pass away alone; it is a very great thing to have someone standing beside him. Even for such great tzaddikim, whose kavod is assured, it is good for someone to be with them at the time of yetzias haneshamah.

So he went outside. It was Simchas Torah morning, and everyone was in shul. He went out looking, and suddenly he saw a chareidi Jew. "Come up to me," he said. "Come up! Come in here."

"What do you want?" the man asked.

"Come say just one perek of Tehillim with me." The holy Sandler's name was Yaakov. He began to say: "Halleluyah..." until he reached the pasuk "Ashrei she'Kel Yaakov be'ezro, sivro al Hashem Elokav" (fortunate is he whose help is the G-d of Yaakov, whose hope is in Hashem his G-d). When he reached "Ashrei she'Kel Yaakov be'ezro," he began to tremble, and he said it with his face like flames. The man watching understood that something out of the ordinary was happening here, and he thought, "I will wait a few more minutes." He saw the holy Sandler finish

that perek of Tehillim, get into bed, say "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad," and pass from the world.

That was this man's way: he called the Jew in so that he would see it. And that is how the whole story became known.

Short Accounts

The Tzaddikim of Yaffo

Talk Five · 13:00

Rav Yosef was a small part of a whole gallery of such tzaddikim who were in Tel Aviv–Yaffo. Rav Yosef himself lived in Tel Aviv, but the Tel Aviv of those days was very small and right next to Yaffo. In Yaffo, spread over two or three streets, lived a number of hidden tzaddikim, each one mighty in his greatness.

One of them was Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon, about whom I will tell later. It was he who pushed me into all my learning at the age of seventeen, when I was wasting Shabbos from Torah on a game. And it was he who showed me the cat, as I will tell later: it was a gilgul of a girl who had sewn on Shabbos. When I come to him, I will tell it at length. He was a very holy man, and he lived on Rechov Eliezer, right by Rechov Shabazi.

On Rechov Shabazi itself lived Shimchon, a very great man, whom I also merited to know. He was a melamed of young children, and a man of wonders. I once merited to visit him together with my son Dovid, and he told him something he saw about his neshamah. He told him, "Do such and such," and to this day my son keeps his words.

The Letter after Lag BaOmer

Talk Fifteen · 54:00

The holy Sandler passed away in 5727, at its beginning, on Simchas Torah of 5727. I remember that in the Six Day War,[88] a few months after he passed away, in the summer, after Pesach, there was great fear here; we were all shaking. That klipah, Gamal Abdel Nasser (the president of Egypt, Israel's great enemy in those years),

[88] The war of Iyar 5727 (June 1967), in which Israel defeated Egypt, Syria and Jordan in six days, and the Old City of Yerushalayim with the Kosel came back into Jewish hands.

went and closed the Straits of Tiran,[89] and there was great fear here of what would happen.

At that time it was announced that a letter had been found which the Sandler had left behind after his passing, to be opened only after Lag BaOmer. I remember that year: on Lag BaOmer there was not one person in Meron. Perhaps a handful came; from where would they come? They opened the letter on Lag BaOmer, and this is what it said: "You are now at a time when a very terrible war is about to break out. I announce to the Jews in Eretz Yisrael not to be afraid at all. There will be miracles and wonders here such as have not been seen in all the earth and among all the nations. Be calm." How much that calmed us!

And indeed, a few days later the war broke out, and baruch Hashem, baruch Hashem, "Layehudim haysah orah vesimchah vesasson vikar."

May his zechus protect us and stand for us, and may we merit, with Hashem's help, the true geulah, speedily in our days. Amen.

HIS WORDS

TAKING AWAY THE ILLNESS

Talk Fifteen · 40:00

There are a number of kinds of tzaddikim, and each has a different way of helping Jews. The Rebbe of Premishlan (a great Chassidic tzaddik of Galicia) had a special way of bringing yeshuos to people. Sometimes it was by drawing light down upon them, and sometimes it was by taking the illness and passing it on to someone else. That was when there was a great kitrug and the person could not receive shefa from Shamayim. Not everyone can receive shefa.

When the holy Sandler blessed people with a refuah sheleimah, or with parnassah and the like, he would add another berachah: "And may it be His will that you be a vessel fit to receive the berachah that rests upon you."

Do you think that everyone the gedolei Yisrael blessed, the Baba Sali and others, saw the berachah fulfilled? Not if the vessel itself was not fit. Sometimes even a person who does not keep Torah and mitzvos is fit for it, because his neshamah is great and he will one day keep them; they give him credit in advance, because in

[89] The narrow sea passage at the southern end of the Gulf of Eilat. Closing it cut off the ships going to and from Eilat, and Israel had declared that it would treat this as a cause for war.

Shamayim they know that this person still has a good chance, so they give. And there are those who look fine, but the berachah does not suit them, and so it does not rest on them, because of middas hadin. For such people the great tzaddikim had several ways of bringing a berachah upon them.

The Rebbe of Premishlan would take the illness and pass it on to someone else, to a goy. As the pasuk says, "Ve'eten adam tachtecha" (and I will give a man in your place), and our Rabbis say, do not read *adam* but *Edom*. Sometimes, when there is a harsh decree that cannot be taken off the person and annulled completely, they can, with their power, take it out of this person and pass it on to someone else, to some goy who will receive it. That is what the Rebbe of Premishlan did, and that is what the holy Sandler did.

Rav Fish, by contrast, did not act this way. He would shame the person, humble him, break him and shout at him until he was broken and the middas hadin was annulled, and then he would bless him. These are different ways; each went in his own way to annul the din hanging over another person and to help him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Patilon

the holy painter of Salonika



THE HIDDEN TZADDIK OF TEL AVIV

Talk Eight · 0:00

Now I come to the eighth of the tzaddikim I knew: the holy tzaddik Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon, zechuso yagen aleinu. He was a hidden tzaddik and a truly wondrous man.

I have already told my own story with the cat. When I was seventeen, my grandfather once caught me playing ball with a boy from the neighborhood. He was not pleased that his grandson was playing with that boy, and he sent me to Patilon, and Patilon showed me the cat of the girl who had sewn on Shabbos. There is no need to tell all of that again, nor what he told me about his neighbor who used to shave with a blade. All of that has already been told.

In Salonika (a city in Greece that had one of the great Jewish communities of Europe) he was still unmarried. He came up to Eretz Yisrael at a somewhat older age, and he could not marry because of his terrible poverty. He was a gifted painter, but he was very innocent. People bought his paintings from him for pennies, and what he earned was barely enough to live on, while others made a great deal of money from them. It reached the point that his paintings were shown at an exhibition in Paris, and he won a great prize. They invited him to come and receive it, but he gave it up. He would not leave Eretz Yisrael, and he certainly would not go to a place of tumah for the sake of money.

He told me that when he was eight years old, his grandfather got him used to rising with him at night for Tikkun Chatzos and learning, and to fasting as well. With such a grandfather comes such a grandson. Already at eight his grandfather taught him what shemiras einayim is, what the kedushah of the eyes is. How beautiful! When a child of eight knows how to guard his eyes, afterward his eyes see only the whole truth of this world, with all the secrets of this world.

Among the Tzaddikim

Talk Eight · 10:00

Rav Yosef Waltuch, Chacham Yeshua Sharabani, and all those I have already mentioned to you held him in great esteem, came and went at his house, and were amazed by him. Chacham Yeshua Sharabani, in whose hands the berachos were given over, used to come to him to receive a berachah. Why? You know that a prisoner cannot free himself from prison. He could give berachos to the whole world, and his berachos worked; but for himself he had to take a berachah from someone else, and that someone else was Patilon. Each time he would travel to him, bring him a few things, and take a berachah from him.

My father was a very close friend of his. He was always in and out of his house and helped them as well. My father told me that he knew Patilon had a nitzotz of Rabbeinu HaKadosh. He did not tell me how he knew. I imagine he heard it from my grandfather, since he could not say such a thing without having heard it from someone with real authority, and my grandfather thought very highly of Patilon.

I do not know where to begin and where to end with the stories about him; I become confused. I used to sit with him in the courtyard. He would sit there in the doorway of his house, and I would sit beside him while he told me stories of his childhood, wonderful stories, important things, which I no longer even remember: so many wonderful things about his grandfather, about his childhood, about the kedushah his grandfather instilled in him. It is a pity that I did not write them down then so as to remember them.

The Stories

Rav Hillel Simchon and the Shidduch

Talk Eight · 2:30

When he arrived in Eretz Yisrael he lived, as I said, in the depths of poverty. He did not even have a place to sleep. So he went to the mekubal, the hidden tzaddik Rav Hillel Simchon.

I remember Rav Hillel Simchon; I was in his house in his old age. He lived on Rechov Sach, at the corner of Rechov Shabazi. He was a melamed of young children, and he was one of the chevraya kadisha of hidden tzaddikim: my grandfather, Rav Yosef Waltuch, Patilon, the holy shoemaker, later also Rav Fish, and Rav Av-

raham HaKohen, known as Galeria. Each one of them was a ladder set on the earth whose top reached Shamayim.

Patilon went to Rav Hillel and told him that his poverty was crushing him and he could not marry. Rav Hillel Simchon looked at him and said, "Within forty days your zivug will come here, and I will marry you off."

And so it was. Within forty days a woman came to Rav Hillel Simchon, I do not know whether for a berachah or for advice, and he married the two of them on the spot. They lived together in the corridor of a house belonging to strangers, the two of them in one corridor, in great poverty, until later he managed to come to some small corner of his own.

The Money under the Mattress

Talk Eight · 4:30

A man who had been his neighbor told me this story. After Patilon married, he managed to get, not really an apartment of his own, but a small room; the chaverim of Rav Hillel Simchon all made efforts to help him get a little room of his own. It was in Tel Aviv (not in Yafo; in those days it was Tel Aviv), close to the place where all the hidden tzaddikim used to gather. This man was a boy at the time and lived next door. He too spoke Spanish (that is, Ladino); they all spoke it. As neighbors they davened together in the same shul, and that is how he came to know Patilon.

When Patilon's wife was expecting, he told her, "Know that you have a son now. It is my father who has come."

One Shabbos morning, the neighbor, who was by then a young man, came into the shul for Shacharis and saw that Patilon was somewhat sad. He asked him, "Why is the Rav sad?"

Patilon answered, "My wife has given birth to a son, and I have no money: not for the bris, not for the baby, not even milk to give him, and certainly nothing for the expenses of the bris. She is in the hospital now and is to come out in another day or two, and I have not a penny to my name. I do not know what to do."

At Minchah, when the neighbor came back, he saw Patilon smiling, laughing and happy. He asked him, "Rav Yehuda, now why is the Rav happy?"

He answered, "A little while ago I met my grandmother. She came to me from the Olam HaEmes and said, 'Leon, be happy, a son has been born to you. Why are you sad? Because of money? I have put a bundle of money for you under the mattress, for all the expenses.' My grandmother promised me, and I am calm."

The man told me, "When I heard that, I said to myself: I am not moving away from him until he goes to that mattress." They davened Minchah together. Patilon ate seudah shelishis, finished, and came back to the shul, and the young man attached himself to him. After Maariv he walked home with him. But he saw that Patilon was in no hurry at all to get to the mattress. He sat at his ease and made havdalah slowly, with Pasach Eliyahu, with Eliyahu HaNavi, with Veyiten Lecha, and everything that is customarily said on Motza'ei Shabbos. He had time. Only after a whole hour, when he had said the entire seder, did he turn to him and say, "Ayde, vamos al kolchon (Ladino: Come, let's go to the mattress)."

They lifted the mattress, and there lay a large bundle of banknotes, lirot (the Israeli currency of those years). It was simply enormous. He took the money with joy and made from it the bris and the seudah. He bought the baby a cradle, a carriage and everything a baby needs, and there was still enough to keep food in the house for the baby and for everyone for several months.

A Pair of Shoes

Talk Eight · 8:30

Once, when his son was two or three years old, there was no money for shoes for the child. His wife came and said to him, "Leon, the child needs shoes. He is already starting to walk; he needs shoes."

He told her, "Do not worry. Today there will be shoes. If they are needed, today there will be. There is a Creator of the world." And he went to his studio to paint for the few pennies that barely paid for food.

Not an hour or two had passed when an old man knocked at the door. In his hand was a pair of small new shoes, baby shoes, the sizes of eighteen or twenty that babies wear. He said, "I heard that there is a child here who needs shoes. I have brought you a gift, a pair of new shoes." Nobody asked, and nobody knew, where this old man came from or where he went. But the shoes came with him.

Some years later his wife was expecting again, and he told her, "Now the second one is coming: the mother." And a daughter was born to him.

Patilon and the Cat

Talk Five · 1:00:30

What else can I tell that I remember of Rabbi Yosef, something truly special? Yes, when I was seventeen. But first, I see that I must tell the story of Patilon. I keep going around and around, and his story was my first.

I was seventeen, and my grandfather saw that I was starting to go bad. I had a friend who on Shabbos would take me out a little to play soccer in the plaza of the Beis Yisrael neighborhood, by the shtieblach. One day my grandfather caught me in the middle of the game, and I went home with him. He understood that I was starting to go bad.

One Thursday he told me, "Today come home from yeshiva at twelve. I need to send you somewhere." I left the yeshiva at half past eleven and got home close to twelve. He gave me money and a letter, and said, "Take the first bus to Tel Aviv now. Go to Yaffo, go to Patilon, and give him the letter." The letter was written in Turkish and was sealed, so that even if I opened it I could not read it. Only later did I understand that the letter meant: "My grandson: take care of him, he is starting to go bad." At the time I did not know.

The trip to Tel Aviv then took an hour and a half or two hours. They would stop the bus in several places along the way for half an hour or an hour, in each direction, to blast the rocks for widening the roads. They would shout "Barud!", set off the blast, and then the bus would go on. I am speaking of more than fifty years ago.

I took the letter and traveled, and at about half past two I reached Yaffo. In those days Yaffo was one-story houses. They were Arab houses; some of the Arabs had fled, and Jews had taken their places. I came into his yard and saw an enormous courtyard: his one-story house, and at the side his studio, for he was a painter. In the courtyard were a few trees (I do not even remember what kind), and mud, and in the mud were cats and chickens and swans, all going about together.

I went in to him. He was sitting on the sofa. I saw a thin Jew, very thin, with a beard of barely a week's growth and a cap. I gave him the letter; I spoke with him only in Ladino. I said, "My grandfather sent this." He looked at it and said, "Come, sit down."

He began telling me stories about the dead and about gilgulim. I loved hearing stories, but this was a world I knew nothing about. He told me that he had a neighbor in Salonika (he came from Salonika) who shaved with a razor blade. He would always tell him, "This is assur, it is an aveirah," and the neighbor would answer, "You will not tell me what to do. Who are you to tell me what to do? Leave me alone." He would not listen.

He said, "One day I was walking along Rechov Allenby in Tel Aviv, and there was a donkey." In the time I am telling you about there were still donkeys on the road together with buses. In Yerushalayim we often went about the streets with only a donkey. Mulla Baruch would take us from place to place in a cart pulled by a donkey. Who would take a bus? There were buses too, but they cost money, and a donkey was cheaper. It was the same in Tel Aviv: people went about with donkeys.

"The donkey left its owner," he said, "and came over to me and said, 'Know that I am your neighbor. I am suffering now because I did not listen to you. Save me.' I gave him a slap in front of everyone and said to him, 'Go now and suffer, so that you will have a tikkun.'"

That was the sort of story he told me. It seemed strange to me, but he went on telling and telling, and I did not know what he wanted from me.

I had a watch. In those days it was rare for a person to have a watch, not like today. Today, as the Tanna says, "there is no man who has not his hour," but in those days it was not so. I had a watch; I had received it as a bar mitzvah present, and it was a marvel.

As I sat there, a cat suddenly came in and began to wail. I heard it going "meow, meow," and he said to her, "Go, come back in half an hour." She went out. I was not impressed. When a person is used to animals and talks to them, they understand him.

He asked me, "What time is it?" I looked at the watch and said, "Tres justo, exactly three." He went on telling me stories, drawing out the time, and suddenly she came back. He asked me, "And what time is it now?" I looked at the watch: exactly half past three. She was a real yekke, that cat. He said, "You see? She came on time. Give me a few minutes with her."

I said, "Take your time. Stay here until tomorrow if you like. What else would I do?"

She sat up facing him on her two front paws. I see her now before my eyes; I remember her. The picture is rising before me now: he is sitting here on the sofa, to my right, and I am sitting here; there is a small, low table, and she is on the other side of it, facing him on her two front paws. She began to wail, "meow, meow," moving her head like a human being. I was in shock. I do not know how many minutes or seconds she went on murmuring.

Then he grew serious, lowered his head and closed his eyes. She stood there waiting for an answer, standing at attention on her two front paws. I was watching an astounding sight.

I do not know how many minutes passed. He opened his eyes and spoke to her in Hebrew, the Hebrew of gedolim, the language of great men and nevi'im, whose Hebrew is somewhat different. He said to her, "Go, the matter will already be put right." She went out.

The moment she left I said to him, "Tell me, do you talk with cats?" I was in shock.

He said, "That is a girl of seventeen who sewed on Shabbos." I did not grasp then that I was seventeen and that he was showing me a girl of seventeen as a cat.

Only later did I realize that she had been the same age as I was, l'havdil elef havdalos.

"She sewed on Shabbos," he said.

I asked, "And what happened?"

He pointed at the ceiling and said, "Now I see her in Shamayim. The cat is already dead. Did you know she is dead? I see the neshamah going up now. They are judging her for other things; for this one I have already given her a tikkun."

I said, "What, dead? How do you know she is dead?"

He said, "Yes, the truck outside has already killed her." We had heard no screech of brakes, nothing, but he said it with certainty.

I went out of his house shaken. About three hundred meters from his house, on Rechov Shabazi, I saw her crushed. I recognized her: she was black, with a white stripe along her back. I saw her there, crushed; a truck had run over her. I went back to him trembling all over. He saw me shaking and smiled. He said, "Now go to your grandfather and tell him that everything is fine."

I left him not knowing how to take in what I had seen. Rabbosai, at this moment it all comes up before my eyes. I see her standing, I see her body before my eyes, I see the street. I see it all. It all rises in my memory and stands before me.

I got on a bus straight to Yerushalayim. Now I had two more hours to turn the story over. I did not know how to take it in. I turned it over from every side, and the picture would not leave my eyes.

THE TWO CATS IN MY PARENTS' YARD

Talk Five · 1:11:00

By the time I reached Yerushalayim it was beginning to grow dark. I decided to stop first at my parents' house for a few minutes and then go on to my grandfather. My parents had a house on Rechov Hoshea in Yerushalayim with two courtyards: an enormous main courtyard at the entrance, and from it a small courtyard leading to their house.

I came into the big courtyard and saw two cats standing face to face, head to head. One went "oh-oh" to the other, and the other answered "oh." They were not wailing; they were making sounds like that. And I began to understand that one was telling the other his sufferings and his troubles. They were talking between them about the troubles they were going through as cats, for they were gilgulim of people. I suddenly understood it.

I said, "Ribbono shel Olam, what if I try to give them a tikkun?" I stood two meters from them and began saying "Vihi Noam" and "Yoshev b'seser elyon." I

had just finished the kapitel, "v'arehu bishuasi," when one cat died and the other ran away. If I had been meshuga before, now I was meshuga and a half. I said a kapitel Tehillim, and the cat died, and the other one ran away. I was completely beside myself.

I went in to my mother, took the things I needed, and hurried to my grandfather. I said to him, "He said everything is fine," and left at once.

The Word in Shaar HaKavanos

Talk Five · 1:13:00

From my grandfather I went straight to Shoshanim LeDavid. It was at the edge of where we lived; we lived on Rechov Sonnenfeld at the corner of what was then called Rechov Fishel Levi, and the shul Shoshanim LeDavid was at the upper corner of the Bucharim (the Bukharan quarter). There was a kollel there that learned all night on Thursday nights, as I have told you before, and later I too took part in it. There I also came to know Chacham Pesachya, alav hashalom, the hidden tzaddik, who was among the Beis Din shel Maalah.

At that time I was still a young bochur, barely seventeen. I ran there and said to myself, "Now I must learn Kabbalah. If Rav Kaduri will teach me, I am going to learn." I came in and saw everyone learning, and Rav Kaduri sitting alone in the ezras nashim, learning by himself.

I took a sefer from the shelf in the shul, and Shaar HaKavanos came into my hand. I said to myself, "Whatever Kabbalah sefer comes out, that is the one I take." It opened at Shaar HaKavanos on Purim. I began to read, and suddenly I saw the word "dormita," and I did not understand what it was. I went to Rav Kaduri and said, "Chacham Yitzchak, it says here dormita. What is that?"

He said, "Dormita is sleep."

"Sleep," I said. "Ah yes, I know that in Spanish dormir is to sleep." I understood that it meant sleep. I read on and made the connection.

He said, "What this sleep is, these are lofty secrets. I promise you: go learn Gemara now, and learn it well. When you marry, I will teach you. I promise you that." He was sure he would still be alive. He was young then, about sixty, and baruch Hashem he lived a long time after that and was mezakeh the rabbim for many years more.

I put the sefer back and went home. Of course, I had already stopped the games on Shabbos. I sat down to learn, and this time I learned in earnest.

THE REST OF THE STORY OF THE CAT

Talk Eight · 19:00

Since I mentioned the story of the cat, I think I should tell how it continued. After I had been to Patilon and seen what happened with the cat, I got rid of the friend I used to play ball with a little every Shabbos (I was a young bochur then); I stopped, and that was the end of it. Then, as Rav Kaduri had encouraged me, to go and learn all the time, with his promise that afterward I would learn with him, I went to yeshiva to learn in earnest. And in time I married and became a rav as well. I had talmidim, a whole group of them, to whom I gave a shiur every evening in Gemara and in halachah, and on Shabbos too.

I was already married when one day the telephone rang. I picked up the receiver and heard a voice: "Ahlan, Yosef (Arabic: Hello, Yosef), how are you?" Who was speaking to me like that? For years that language had not reached my ears. "Who is this?" I asked.

"It is me, your friend." I will call him X.

I answered him in kind: "Ahlan, kif halak (how are you)?"

He said, "Listen, I am about to get married, but I do not know the halachos of taharas hamishpachah. We grew up, you know, in homes where everyone was religious, but nobody talked about these halachos. It was not the home of a talmid chacham; it was a home of traditional Jews. And I want to keep them. Teach me."

I told him, "Come to my house and bring a notebook and a pencil, and I will teach you." I set a time for him in the evening, and he came. I sat with him and explained, and he wrote down in the notebook the halachos he needed to remember, and when to ask a chacham about various particular questions. He wrote it all down. He sat for an hour or two, I do not remember exactly, until he understood everything. He had a good head and understood the matters thoroughly.

When I had finished with him, I said, "X, I know that you have no money; yours is a poor family. Does the girl at least have money?"

"No," he said. "She is an orphan, she has no father, and she has not a penny to her name."

It was truly a match made in Shamayim: both of them with nothing.

I said to him, "I am not asking you for nothing. It is not curiosity; I am asking for a particular reason. I assume that since you have no money and she has no money, you will not want to have children in the first years. You will want to work and save money to build a family. Know that, chas veshalom, you must not do this in a forbidden way. First of all, it is assur; a man has to make his own reckoning with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. But even if you will not listen to me and you do want to

hold off, do not do it in a forbidden way. Know that the aveirah of zera levatala is very grave. In Shamayim people suffer for it. Be careful!"

He took offense: "What? Did I ask you to tell me what to do? I only came to learn taharas hamishpachah. Other things are none of your business."

I said, "X, I am warning you again. You are about to marry and build a life of kedushah. Do not fall, together with your wife, into the aveirah of zera levatala." I could imagine that someone like him would want to prevent children, and the simplest way would be to do as Onan did, as Chazal put it, threshing inside and winnowing outside, not completing within. I warned him.

"Come on, leave it, do not tell me what to do. Thank you very much for the halachos. Shalom." And he left.

Three years passed. Yishtabach Shemo, the whole earth is full of His glory: how He turns things around! I needed to go from my home in Bucharim to the kollel at Porat Yosef, and for some reason I had to stop on the way near Meah Shearim. So I was walking to Porat Yosef by way of Meah Shearim, and I passed through Kikar HaShabbos. There, on the left side, was the stop for the number 15 bus, which went to Katamon. As I passed the stop, I saw X sitting there.

I knew him; he had always been thin, but now he was thinner than thin. His face was turned to the ground; he was broken. I recognized him, but he was not the way I was used to knowing him. I stopped and said, "X, what are you doing here? And why are you so sad? What is the matter?"

"Do not ask," he said.

Good, I did not ask. I knew he would tell me on his own; when someone says "Do not ask," he means "I will tell you myself." Do not ask what I have been through. And he began to tell me.

After he married, he told his wife, "We will not have children now. We will save until we have an apartment, until it becomes possible." She said, "Fine." And he lived with her in issur. What does that mean? He kept taharas hamishpachah properly, according to the halachah. But each time he was with her as husband and wife, he sinned with zera levatala: he spilled the seed outside. Rachmana litzlan, and how I had warned him!

He sinned with her in this way for close to two years. Then one night, when he had finished sinning with her, he went to sleep, and there it came: he saw his father-in-law in a dream. He came to him with an angry face and said, "You are playing games with my daughter, and because of it I am suffering above, from the two of you, cruel suffering. Enough! I have come now to warn you. One more time and I will strangle you." He took his two hands and brought them up to X's throat. "One more time I squeeze, and you are dead. Never again do this thing with my daughter!"

The niftar left, and X woke up in terror. He was still not quite himself; as he began to come to his senses, he saw his wife, who had been sleeping beside him, suddenly wake up in terror as well.

He asked her, "What happened, that you woke up in terror?"

She said, "I dreamed of my father. He came and said, 'You are playing games with your husband that are causing me pain in Shamayim. No more!' And he put his fingers on my throat and said, 'One more time and I will strangle you.'"

"Well, that is a good sign," he said to her. "He said the very same things to me."

Right then he and she did the mitzvah as it should be done, and she conceived that very night. She gave birth to a daughter.

This daughter was now six months old and had not yet left the hospital. She suffered from a heart defect, a problem in the liver, and asthma as well. The doctors had asked that one of the parents always be with the baby; they could not keep a nurse beside her twenty-four hours a day. It was impossible: one of the parents had to be with the child. So he and his wife took turns. His wife had stopped working and was there from morning until evening. Every evening he finished work, came there, took his wife's place and stayed until morning, and in the morning his wife took over from him. So it had been for half a year already.

"We have no life," he said. The baby lay in the hospital; they had no normal meals and no normal life. He slept there in the hospital in an armchair, half sleeping and half sitting, and every so often he had to get up and see how the baby was. That is no sleep at all. So he came to work tired and fell asleep in the middle of his work.

That morning the manager had called him in and said, "Listen, until today we have taken your situation into account, but we cannot any more. Nothing comes of your work; you fall asleep in the middle, and we are employing you for nothing. It cannot go on. Now we want one thing: take a week's leave. During this week, find someone else to be with the baby in your place, so that you can sleep at night and get up in the morning and do your job. If not, we will let you go."

They had just given him this notice, and he had come out of work and was sitting there not knowing what to do. His world had collapsed on him. He had no home, no wife, no life, and now he was about to lose his job too, and he did not know what to do.

I said, "X, come with me. Come." Instead of going to the kollel, I went back home and took him with me to Bucharim. We sat down in my house, and I told him, "Now you will do a tikkun for the aveirah of zera levatala, and then Hashem will help you. All this came because of that aveirah."

He was completely broken over the job. Whether he believed or did not believe, he had nothing to lose. I explained to him: "Sit down now and eat well." I brought him out a meal. "Now go to the Musayof shul (the well-known shul in Bucharim)

and say Tehillim. Soon it will be time for Minchah Gedolah; at Minchah, accept upon yourself a fast for tomorrow, twenty-four hours. Fast from shkiah. Tonight go sleep by your daughter so that your wife can go and rest a little, and stay there with your daughter. Tomorrow morning, as soon as you finish, come here and I will arrange the seder of the tikkun with you."

And so he did. He went, and I went back to the kollel; I had to learn, and I could not give up my own seder either. The next day he came. I did not go to the kollel; I sat with him while he said the entire Tehillim and the whole seder, and I showed him what to do: the viduy, the pidyon, everything. He did it, and the tikkun was finished.

That night he went to the hospital again to take his turn with his wife. The next morning at seven, when his wife came to relieve him, the doctors approached and said, "Listen, both of you stay. We need to speak with you."

His heart leaped; who knows what had happened, if they were keeping both him and his wife there because they wanted to talk to them? He saw the doctors running back and forth, taking the baby for an X-ray and coming back, consulting among themselves and sitting down. They took the soul out of him. He was terrified and did not know what to do.

At ten o'clock came the time of the doctors' rounds. He saw a whole group of doctors going from bed to bed. They reached the baby's bed, stood there, closed the curtain, sent him and his wife outside, and began to talk among themselves. They talked and talked and talked, and when they had finished, they called him in.

"Listen," they said. "We have decided that you are taking the baby home. We do not know what happened, but we saw a great change. We took X-rays, and the heart and the liver have healed completely. How? We do not know. A drastic change. It seems the treatment and the medicines helped."

Yes, their treatment. Suddenly a turn of one hundred eighty degrees, you understand? Fine.

"But the asthma remains, and for asthma we do not keep a child in the hospital. Go home, buy an inhaler, give her inhalations, do this and do that, give her steam, and that is all." He went at once and took the baby home with his wife.

He came to me like a rocket. At midday, when I came back from the kollel, he came in: "Yosef, you do not know what happened!"

I said, "I do not know," but I knew he would go right on talking. "Good, what happened?" I waited.

"The baby is home, she is healthy! The tikkun worked!" Now he could really go to work as usual, sleep at home like a normal person, eat a normal meal, and the baby was home.

I told him, "Listen, X, the tikkun has to be done four times. You have done one. Come, do another."

"Gladly! When?"

"Do it today and tomorrow," I told him.

"I am going!" He went, davened Minchah, accepted the fast, and did another day. The next day he came to me, and again I sat with him and explained what to do and what to say, everything, and he did it.

While he was doing it all, I said to him, "Tell me, how is it that you still have no apartment? Are you not entitled to one? You also have rights and points with Prazot." Prazot was the company that rented out apartments for a nominal price, and as far as I knew, given his family and his circumstances, he was entitled to one.

"Yes," he said. "I already submitted a request to them a year ago, and nobody looks at me. When the baby was born, I wrote to them that I am entitled; I have the points, but nobody looks at me and they give me nothing."

I said, "You know what? You have just done a tikkun. Go tomorrow and check; maybe something has moved."

He did not go the next day, because it was Friday and the office was already closed. On Sunday morning he went. He came to the clerk to ask what was happening, and the clerk said, "Oh, good that you came! I was about to write you a letter. Good that you came. On Thursday there was a meeting, and they decided to give you an apartment in Ir Ganim (it was called Beit Mazmil then; Beit Mazmil is Ir Ganim), in Yerushalayim. Here are the keys. You have an apartment, for so-and-so many lirot a month in rent. That is all; go."

He came to me happy: "Here is the key!" Fine, very good. And everything turned out well.

Did I deserve a box of chocolates? What do you think? Not much: one box of chocolates, a single piece of chocolate, a little hakaras hatov. After a week the man came to me with his "box of chocolates." I was sitting at home alone, and he came in and punched me and knocked me to the floor, shouting: "You are to blame for everything I went through in all that suffering! I went through half a year of hell, and you are to blame! Why did you not warn me beforehand? I would not have sinned, and I would not have suffered all that terrible suffering! I would have gotten a good apartment from Prazot sooner, with the baby healthy. You are to blame!" And he stormed out.

He had forgotten how much I had warned him. Only after several years had passed did he come and ask mechilah, and we made peace, and that was the end of it.

Rabbosai, what he shouted at me, and the punch he gave me: every son will give his father such a punch in Shamayim. He will say to him, "You are to blame! You

sent me to a secular school instead of a religious one! You are to blame for what I became!" There he will look at his father with blood in his eyes, at the father who loved him so much down here, who called him "sweetheart, sweetheart," who gave him candies so he would get well, "now eat." For every candy he will sue his father in Shamayim in fury: "Why did you do this to me? Why did you not educate me properly? Why did you feed me forbidden foods? Why did you make me stumble? Look what became of me, an animal! And now I am suffering in Shamayim!" That is how it will be.

All those who are friends here, where one makes the other stumble, become enemies when they arrive above. They understand what wrong they caused one another, and they become enemies. But by then it is too late.

Short Accounts

Illness at Forty

Talk Eight · 12:00

He lived in hiding, but one told another and another told a third, until there was a small group of talmidim who knew him. The same man who told me the story of the mattress had someone in his family who wanted to marry a certain woman. He went to Patilon to ask his opinion, and Patilon told him, "It is not worthwhile for you."

"Why?" he asked.

"At forty she will fall into a very serious illness. It is not worthwhile for you to marry her; it will be hard for you to bear."

He said that he wanted her all the same. Patilon told him, "Good. Then daven that at forty the illness should not be so severe."

He married her, and indeed, when she reached forty, that woman fell into a very, very serious illness.

Shells over His Head

Talk Eight · 13:00

During the Six-Day War (June 1967), one of the men who knew him came to him. Suddenly Patilon began to pound on the table, pounding and pounding. Then he said to him, "I now see your son in the middle of the war. There is a war now.

Shells are whistling over his head and falling on every side of him, and baruch Hashem, nothing happens to him. I promise you that nothing will happen to him. He will come home safe and sound."

The man looked at the time and the date. When his son came home on leave, he asked him, "What happened at such-and-such an hour on such-and-such a day?"

"Oh," said the son, "it was an inferno! We were trapped in a hell of fire, the shells were falling all over us." And baruch Hashem, he came out of it without a scratch.

First Go Put On Tefillin

Talk Eight · 14:00

Once a wealthy man came to receive a berachah from him. It was already midday, and Patilon said to him, "You have not yet davened Shacharis, you have not yet put on tefillin, and you come to take a berachah from me? First go daven, put on tefillin, say Krias Shema, and afterward come and we will talk."

He went and put on tefillin, came back, and Patilon gave him a berachah.

Kaparos with a Few Coins

Talk Eight · 14:30

One day a man came to him weeping. His son was lying in bed with a fever of forty degrees (104 degrees Fahrenheit), and none of the medicines they had given him brought it down. They did not know what to do. In those days it was not as it is today, when a doctor comes and that is the end of it; it meant hospitals and complications and who knows what. Instead of going to the hospital, he ran quickly to Patilon and asked him what to do for his child.

Chacham Patilon looked for one minute, took a few coins out of his pocket, and did kaparos with them for the child. He told the man, "Go home now. The child is completely well. At these very moments you will see him take a ball and throw it from his bed against the wall and back, against the wall and back."

The man came home and found his son smiling, sitting up in bed, throwing a ball against the wall and back.

My Grandfather's Illness

Talk Eight · 15:30

When my grandfather was ill and unconscious (until afterward, baruch Hashem, he recovered, as I will tell when I come to him, b'ezras Hashem), my uncle went to Patilon and asked him, "What will be with Chacham Menachem?"

Patilon said, "He will yet be well. He will yet come here on his own feet. Do not worry." And so it was.

The House He Saw

Talk Eight · 16:00

When I was engaged, I had great difficulty finding an apartment, so I went to Patilon. I said, "Chacham Patilon, what should I do?"

He closed his eyes and said, "I see that you have a beautiful house. You go straight into the house; on the left side there is a large garden, and you go down, and below there is another large room." He described a wonderful house to me.

Of course, when I married, it was not according to his description. I married into a barely livable apartment in Bucharim (a neighborhood in Yerushalayim) that was very hard to live in. But afterward, as I told you in earlier shiurim, Mori Chaim told me, "Take the best apartment, and do not worry about the money." As I told the story there, the apartment I found and took was exactly as Chacham Patilon had described it.

Three Kinds of Bottles

Talk Eight · 17:00

One day I came to Rav Patilon with a man I knew from the neighborhood. He was not a yerei Shamayim, but he was a good person, and I wanted to draw him closer to kedushah. I told him, "Come, let us go to Patilon"; I was sure that Patilon would awaken him. He was going out at the time with a shidduch and wanted to know whether to marry her or not. He was very torn, and I told him, "Come, let Patilon decide for you," so he came with me.

He came without a kippah. I did not tell him to put on a kippah in honor of the tzaddik or anything of the sort. Putting on a show is not our way. Let him come as he feels; if he needs to get it straight, the tzaddik will give it to him.

We did not even go inside. Patilon was sitting, as I remember, by the door of his house, and we came and stood before him. I said, "Shalom, Kevodo. I am here with a friend of mine."

He looked at my friend and asked him, "What is the difference between a bottle and a bottle and a bottle?"

We did not understand what he was asking. He said, "Let me explain it to you. A bottle of wine has two covers; one is not enough for it. A bottle of water has one cover. An empty bottle has no cover. Why have you no cover? Are you an empty bottle?"

Then he turned to me, standing there, and lifted my cap, and there was a kippah underneath it. "You see?" he said. "A bottle of wine holds two covers. Why do you not have even one?" That was the remark he made to him.

Afterward he told him about the shidduch, that she was not his zivug, and he blessed him that he would have another zivug later.

Against the Doctor's Orders

Talk Eight · 38:00

My aunt had a very difficult birth, and the doctor said that she must not nurse, because her milk was very dangerous for the baby. My uncle asked Patilon what to do, and he told him, "Do not listen to the doctor. Her milk is healthy and good for the baby." She did nurse him, against the doctor's orders, and the child grew up healthy and whole, without any problem.

A Short Life

Talk Eight · 38:30

A relative of his met someone she wanted to marry, but she asked Patilon his opinion, and he told her not to marry him.

She said, "Why? Are there problems with his character, something like that?"

He said, "Everything is fine. But I see that he does not have long life, and it is not worthwhile."

And so it was. That young man fell in the Yom Kippur War (October 1973), rachmana litzlan.

Wine for Kiddush

Talk Eight · 39:30

One Friday night Patilon came home from shul to make kiddush and saw that there was no wine on the table. He asked his wife, "Where is the wine?"

She said, "The money was not enough. I did not buy wine. There is no wine."

He thought for a moment and said, "But lechatchilah one should make kiddush on wine, not on the bread. I need to make kiddush on wine. Hashem will help."

He went and opened the cupboard where there were usually bottles of wine; this time it was empty. He opened the cupboard, put in his hand, and took out a bottle of wine. And on it he made kiddush for the whole Shabbos, for all the seudos. When I say all the seudos, I mean Friday night, Shabbos morning, and seudah shelishis too, on which, according to the Kabbalah, kiddush is not made, but during the meal a cup of wine is poured and drunk with a berachah. And havdalah as well. All of them he made from that one bottle.

You Say You Have Nothing?

Talk Eight · 41:00

Once he rebuked one of the people close to him, who used to come to him often: "Why are you so stingy? Why do you not give tzedakah? What are these pennies you give? You have money; give generously! Poor people, nebach, need money."

The man said, "But I have nothing. I do not earn anything; I do not have enough money myself."

"What?" said Patilon, and he began to count off for him every place where he had money. "In the bank you have so much in such-and-such an account and so much in such-and-such an account. At home you have so much money in such-and-such a place and so much in such-and-such a place." The man was stunned. Patilon told him all the treasures and the money he had, and the amounts. "And you tell me that you have nothing, and you do not want to give?"

The man stood there stunned. His heart turned over for the good, and he began to give to tzedakah with an open hand.

The Ushpizin's Chair

Talk Eight · 42:00

Patilon's sukkah was truly like being under the Ananei HaKavod. The hashra'ah there was a special one. Beside the place where he sat, on his right, there was an empty chair for the Ushpizin of that day.

One day, during the day, not at the time of the seudah, a man came to visit him and sat down in that chair. Patilon said to him, "Get up! Someone is sitting here! What are you doing sitting here?" He had him get up and seated him somewhere else.

The man did not understand; he saw nothing, everyone sits here. Patilon seated him elsewhere, finished talking with him, and the man left. Then his son Yaakov asked him, "Abba, why did you tell him not to sit next to you?"

He said, "But the Ushpizin was sitting here! Did you not see? The Ushpizin of the day was sitting here! What, did he not see him? How could he sit on him? Did he not understand that someone was sitting there?"

THE GUEST AT THE DOOR OF THE SUKKAH

Talk Eight · 42:30

Once a Jew appeared at the entrance of Patilon's sukkah. He looked every inch a chareidi: the whole costume of the clothing, the beard, and all the rest. As he came to step inside, Patilon shouted at him, "Get out of here! Do not come into my sukkah and make it tamei! Last night you sinned with such-and-such an aveirah, and such-and-such, and such-and-such, and you are still tamei! You have not done teshuvah yet, and you have not gone to the mikveh, and you want to make my sukkah tamei? And you came here today without even davening Shacharis!"

The man fainted on the spot. People had to sit with him and tend to him until they brought him back to consciousness, and then they took him out of there. Of course, he could not deny a single word of what Patilon had told him.

Stories of this kind simply flowed from Patilon. I cannot remember every detail, but these are the stories in their general outline.

HIS WORDS

RUACH HAKODESH AND PRIDE

Talk Eight · 39:00

Patilon also told my uncle that many great tzaddikim do not merit ruach hakodesh, because when they speak in public, a little pride comes over them, and that already ruins the whole worth of everything they say, as far as the reward due them is concerned. But truly simple people, who have no pride, can merit it.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Yosef Dayan

HIS WAY OF LIFE

Talk Eight · 54:30

I do not know where to begin with the greatness of Yosef Dayan.

Rav Yosef Waltuch knew him as well. They became attached to one another and were good friends, and when Rav Yosef Waltuch saw Yosef Dayan's greatness, in pshat and in Kabbalah alike, he bowed his head before him, submitted to him, and accepted his words as though they came from Shamayim.

Several times I came to his house and found him eating. I saw that his whole meal was uncooked rice soaked in water, with dry bread. Sometimes he also added a raw potato. All this was so as not to have pleasure from eating during the weekdays. Once a week, on the single kerosene burner he had in his kitchen, he boiled a cup of milk and drank it hot, against his will, only to fulfill the mitzvah of kibbud em, because his mother had asked him to drink a cup of hot milk every week.

I also know from eyewitnesses about his fast days, and most of his days were fast days. When he had to eat properly before a fast in order to hold out, or after a fast, he would go to Belz on Rechov Agrippas late at night and collect the leftovers of everyone's food. He took the leftover bread, and the leftover vegetables that were about to be thrown away, made himself a salad of them, and sat and ate. With this he prepared for his fasts, or broke them, late at night.

The kitchen in his apartment was empty and shabby. There was one kerosene burner, a water faucet, a sink, two or three plates, and a cup or two, and that was all. When I offered to bring workers and fit out a proper kitchen for him at my expense, he refused outright. He said, "I do not need more in this world than what I have. What do I need in this world? What I have is enough for me."

He toiled in Torah day and night. He was expert in all the yichudim, and I understood that he was also expert in the entire Yad HaChazakah of the Rambam with its commentaries. Why? Because he was a descendant of the Rambam, father

to son. It is known that the Dayan family of Aleppo[90] are descendants, father to son, of the Rambam and of Dovid HaMelech, and he was a son of that line.

Like a Lion Before the Gentiles

Talk Eight · 57:00

When he walked through the shuk in his khaki clothes (he made a point of wearing only khaki), he looked like an unlearned am ha'aretz who knew nothing. The Jews did not know how to value him. But the gentiles were seized with fear and terror of him.

Wherever he went, even into dangerous Arab villages, the Arabs were afraid and ran from him. Once he went into Shechem (the large Arab city in the Shomron) all by himself, and the Arabs came out with heaps of stones to throw at him. He simply stepped out toward them and roared at them like a lion, and they all ran away. There were dozens of Arabs, and he came out alone, with nothing, without a single stone in his hand, and roared at them, and they all fled and hid in their dens.

Why? Because he never once blemished the bris, and so he fulfilled the pasuk that the fear and dread of man will be upon all the animals. These were like the beasts of the field.

At Kever Shmuel HaNavi

Talk Eight · 58:30

At kever Shmuel HaNavi, too, the Arabs gave him endless trouble at first. Their mosque stands over the tziyun of Shmuel HaNavi,[91] and they would not give him a key or let him go in, and they kept making problems. He did everything he could and went in despite them and against their will. One day they came to him in submission and said, "We surrender to you. Here is the key to the place, to the mosque. Take it, go in, go down below, and do whatever you want, whenever you want." That is how far they bowed before him.

Night after night he sat there from chatzos until morning, learning Torah together with Shmuel HaNavi. We were very good friends, and once I said to him, "Tell me the truth: is Shmuel HaNavi buried there? Are you sure he is there? Are

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[90] Aleppo (Chalab), in Syria, had one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world, famous for its chachamim. The Keser Aram Tzova (the Aleppo Codex) was kept there for centuries.

[91] Kever Shmuel HaNavi is on a hilltop just north of Yerushalayim. A mosque was built over it, and the kever is in a chamber below.

you sure of it?" He gave me to understand that not only was he sure, but more than that. I understood from him that they learned together. Later on he began, once, twice, several times (I no longer remember how many), to give me messages from Shmuel HaNavi.

How many tefillos he said there, how many tears he poured out there, how many yichudim he did there! Every week he would also bring people there for special tikkunim and for yeshuos for Klal Yisrael. How many gezeiros against Klal Yisrael he annulled there!

THE STORIES

A SIYUM IN MERON

Talk Eight · 44:00

Now I will tell you something very interesting connected with Patilon. It is what led us to find the next hidden tzaddik on our list. This is how it happened.

My grandfather, alav hashalom, taught talmidim in the Ahavas Chaim society. He had gathered them himself, raised them, and taught them a trade along with Torah. He took them off the street, and every one of them went on to build a family of G-d-fearing Jewish craftsmen. Even after they married, they kept coming to Ahavas Chaim for the shiurim there, together with Rav Yaakov Mutzafi zt"l, a holy and wonderful man.

They also went to learn in the Beis Yisrael neighborhood, in a shul on Rechov HaKohanim named for Rav Shaul Tzadkah, the father of my rebbe, Rav Yehuda Tzadkah (the Rosh Yeshivah of Porat Yosef). There Rav Yosef Adess gave a fixed shiur in Gemara every evening, and in that shiur they finished all of Maseches Shabbos.

They said: Maseches Shabbos belongs to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Why? First of all, it is written in the Zohar that Rabbi Shimon was called Shabbos. When he finished the Idra Rabba (the great gathering of Rabbi Shimon and his talmidim recorded in the Zohar), his talmidim came and said to him: Your name is Shabbos; you are the seventh, you are the Shabbos, for the whole world is sustained through you. According to Kabbalah as well, the secret of Rabbi Shimon is the secret of Shabbos. That is why in a great many halachos of Shabbos the halachah follows him, while on Yom Tov the halachah does not follow him but Rabbi Yehudah, because Yom Tov belongs to Rabbi Yehudah, in the secret of the neshamos. Shabbos,

though, belongs to Rabbi Shimon. In very many of our halachos of Shabbos we pasken like Rabbi Shimon, even to be lenient: in melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah, in muktzeh, and so on. What is more, the whole story of how he hid in the cave and came out of it appears in Maseches Shabbos. So Shabbos is the masechta that belongs to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and whoever wants to bind himself to Rabbi Shimon can do it through Maseches Shabbos. Rabbi Shimon's bond with Rabbi Akiva is also tied to Maseches Shabbos; that is why there is an entire perek in Maseches Shabbos called "Amar Rabbi Akiva." These are wondrous matters and secrets, and this is not the place to explain them.

In any case, these men, who had sat before great lights and understood the secret of Shabbos, decided to make the siyum on Maseches Shabbos in Meron, by Rabbi Shimon. And if you make a seudah there, it must be a seudah done properly. Who would pay for it? They decided that my grandfather, Chacham Menachem, would. They came to him and said, "Kevodo, we have just made a siyum on Maseches Shabbos, and we want to hold the seudah in Meron. But the seudah has to have meat and fish and every delicacy, a royal meal, in honor of Rabbi Shimon."

He told them, "No problem. I am coming too, together with my family, and everything will be ready. I will also bring my people from Tel Aviv."

A seudah like that cost a great deal of money. So my grandfather went to Tel Aviv and met his people there. They were all from Turkey and Salonika, Ladino speakers,[92] and they all held him in great honor; when I tell you later about my grandfather himself and his ties with them, you will understand what kind of people we are speaking of. He told them, "I want money from you for this seudah, and it has to be something grand. You should know that this will be no ordinary seudah, and it is worth it, because you do not know the power of Rabbi Shimon and how great it is there." He knew how to set fire to everyone's heart, and he received a donation from them. He also suggested that they come with him to the seudah.

Patilon Sees a Tzaddik at Kever Benayahu

Talk Eight · 48:30

This group, all of them Tel Avivis, knew Patilon quite well. They were weighing whether to go or not. Was it worth traveling all the way to Meron? It was far, the end of the world. In those days the trip from Tel Aviv to Meron took six hours by

[92] Salonika (Thessaloniki), in Greece, was home to one of the greatest Sephardic communities in the world until the Nazis destroyed it in the Holocaust. Ladino is the Spanish-based language that the Jews expelled from Spain carried with them to Turkey, Greece and the Balkans.

truck, and a truck is not comfortable. You climbed up into the back and sat on benches made of planks. It was not like today, when everything is air-conditioned and a person climbs in and sits as though he were in a penthouse. Every trip was a hard trip.

They went to Patilon and asked him, "What does kevodo say?"

He closed his eyes and told them, "I now see a young Jew, a hidden tzaddik, with a pillar of fire over his head. He wears khaki clothes, he is a bit plump and not tall, and right now he is sitting at the kever of Benayahu ben Yehoyada doing awesome yichudim, with a sefer of yichudim in his hand. He is doing awesome yichudim, and a pillar of fire stands over him. It is worth your going, also in order to get to know him. Go to Meron, because in Meron itself you will have a great awakening, but do not give up on Benayahu ben Yehoyada. I see that when you get there, three or four days from now, when the time comes, he will still be sitting there. Do not dare offer him money, because I see a wallet full of banknotes in his pocket. He does not need money from others."

When they heard this, they were all fired with enthusiasm: there was a new hidden tzaddik, and Patilon was speaking about him with real excitement. They all went and arrived in Meron.

The next morning the seudah ended. Some went straight back to Yerushalayim, and some joined my grandfather and these Tel Avivis and went on to Benayahu ben Yehoyada. And there they saw a young man in khaki clothes sitting with his head bowed, leaning against the tziyun of Benayahu ben Yehoyada, completely absorbed in a sefer of yichudim. The sefer in his hand was itself called Benayahu ben Yehoyada, a sefer of yichudim composed in Yerushalayim some decades earlier, and he sat there with the kavanos, concentrating on them.

They came closer, looked, and saw that he was holding a sefer of kavanos, of yichudim of Shemos HaKodesh. They understood on the spot that this was the man Patilon had spoken about. But they saw no pillar of fire and nothing else; they had eyes of flesh. Patilon was the one who had the eyes. I have already explained this to you: a person who guarded his eyes from the age of eight has spiritual eyes, the eyes of a true Jew.

What did they do? They wanted to test whether Patilon was right down to the last detail. They put together a few lira notes[93] among themselves and said to him, "Kevodo, please take this." He did not want to interrupt himself in the middle, so he simply took out his wallet and showed them that he had a bundle of lirot in it; he did not need anything from them, and they should not give him money.

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[93] The lira, or Israeli pound, was the currency of Israel until 1980, when it was replaced by the shekel.

Then they asked him, "What is kevodo's name?" He told them Yosef. That was not his real name; his name was Shlomo. But he told them Yosef.

When they pressed him hard, he did not want to hurt them. After all, the whole greatness of the hidden tzaddikim is that they do not hurt people. Bein adam lachaveiro, a person's honor in their eyes, "let your friend's honor be as dear to you as your own," was very important to them. So when they pressed him hard, he told them that he lived on Simtas Matisyahu, at the corner of Rechov Rashi. That was all. He did not want to prolong the conversation, and they left him there at the tziyun with his kavanos.

I Find Yosef Dayan

Talk Eight · 53:00

That evening they came home, and my grandfather told the whole story: the man Patilon had spoken of was at the tziyun, his name was Yosef, and he lived in such-and-such a place. The moment I heard it, I flew there like an artillery shell. It was the next day that I came, and he had in the meantime returned home that same evening.

I met him and began to speak with him. At first he started putting on all kinds of shows for me. But I already know the hidden tzaddikim and all their shows. They do all sorts of strange things so that people will take them for animals, not even for ordinary respectable people. I said to him, "Chacham Yosef, put all the shows aside. I already know who you are. Patilon has already told us; we know, it is over. Now let us get to the point."

Then I sat with him, and with him it was only divrei Torah. We sat and opened up, and I saw the man, came to know him, and saw his greatness. That is how the hidden tzaddik Yosef Dayan was revealed to us.

The Stone He Broke

Talk Eight · 1:00:00

I had a friend in New York who had a son who could not get married. Why? He was mute.

When I was in New York, he brought the boy to me, and I saw him. I said to him, "Listen, your son is not mute. Your son is normal; he can speak."

He said, "He does not speak. He only says 'mmm, mmm.' He understands everything, but he only goes 'mmm' and talks with gestures, with his fingers, with his hands."

I told him, "He has a problem of the nefesh, not of the body. You can see that he is healthy. But I do not know at all what to do about his problem."

Now he was looking for a shidduch for his son. The boy was twenty-two and wanted to get married. Of course, he was not looking for an ordinary girl for him, but for one who also had some difficulties of her own, so that it would be a suitable match. He did not find one. He came to Eretz Yisrael to look for a shidduch and did not find one here either. He said to me, "Take me to Yosef Dayan."

I took him to Yosef Dayan, and they met. Yosef Dayan looked at him and said, "I promise you that within..." (I do not remember the time he gave him: a week, or two weeks, or forty days; I do not remember exactly) "...your son will become engaged here. There will be a shidduch here, and he will become engaged."

My friend was both the rav and the gabbai of a shul in New York. He had come here in the months of Tammuz and Av, their vacation months. Elul was approaching, which in their terms is the end of August, and he had to go back. And for his son there was still not a trace of a shidduch. Nothing!

He came to me and said, "Chacham Dayan promised that my son would be engaged before I leave, by such-and-such a day. Tomorrow evening that day ends. Tomorrow evening! And there is still nothing."

I said to him, "What do you want from me? Let us go to Yosef Dayan."

I went with him to Yosef Dayan. Yosef Dayan thought for a moment and said to him, "Come tomorrow before noon to kever Shmuel HaNavi."

He came there. Yosef Dayan took a stone, had a certain kavanah, and split the stone in two. He said to him, "Tonight, mazal tov! Tonight your son becomes engaged." There was still no shidduch, nothing at all! "Tonight he becomes engaged, mazal tov! Tomorrow you travel with a chasan."

Within an hour or two of his leaving there, a man came to him and said, "Listen, I have a girl who is G-d-fearing, healthy in her nefesh and healthy in her body; everything is healthy. Only her family is very poor, and because of the poverty nobody will take her. I think this could be a suitable shidduch." She had been raised in the chinuch of the people of Mea Shearim and wanted someone of that kind, of that chinuch, like the people of Reb Areleh,[94] and he belonged to the Satmar kind,[95] something of that type. So she was interested.

That evening they met. The chasan wanted her, and she wanted him, and both families suddenly became enthusiastic. He said to them, "Rabbosai, I am traveling

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[94] Rav Aharon Roth, a Chassidic Rebbe in Yerushalayim known for his fiery avodah. His chassidim are among the most zealous circles of Mea Shearim.

[95] Satmar is a large Chassidus founded in Hungary, known for its strong opposition to Zionism.

tomorrow. If you want, I will come back with my son after Sukkos and we will make a vort, we will make tena'im."

They told him, "Tonight!"

That same evening they made tena'im. The next day the chasan traveled, and after the Yamim Nora'im the chuppah took place in America. To this day they live together very happily.

What happened was that immediately after the chuppah he opened his mouth and began to speak like any other person. The problem of his nefesh disappeared. Today he is a man who speaks normally, a talmid chacham, with a family; everything is fine with him.

The Twin at the Tachanah Merkazis

Talk Eight · 1:04:30

If you remember, in one of my stories I told you about a certain Jew whom I brought back to teshuvah from Paris. We saw what his previous gilgul had been, and the whole story with the non-Jewish woman. Because of that he left her, once the whole truth of his story became clear to him, and he did teshuvah and came to Eretz Yisrael. He lived with me in my institute, Shaar Yosef, and he wanted to get married, but it was hard for him to find a shidduch.

I sent him to Yosef Dayan and told him, "Ask him for a berachah; it is worth it."

He came to Yosef Dayan, and Yosef Dayan said to him, "You have the wrong address. What do you want from me? Me? You are mistaken!" He confused him completely and sent him away without a berachah, without anything. He came back to me empty-handed.

I sent him again and told him, "Do not let go of him until he blesses you."

Again he began to speak with him, and this time Yosef Dayan suddenly started talking politics with him: about the prime minister, who at that time was Begin,[96] about Zionism, about the government, and all kinds of things like that. Then he sent him away. He came and told me.

I said to him, "Listen. Go now and tell him in my name: no more stories, and he should not hide. Tell him I sent you, and he should help you with a shidduch."

When he came and told him this in my name, Yosef Dayan said to him, "Look. Do not go to shadchanim, and do not answer any shidduch proposals, because in a while you will meet her yourself, without shadchanim. The very first moment she

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[96] Menachem Begin, prime minister of Israel from 1977 to 1983.

sees you, she will agree to whatever you ask, even marriage, at the first meeting. And the sign by which you will recognize that she is the one meant for you: she will be taller than you, and many years younger than you."

After some time, someone suggested a shidduch with a woman who was taller than he was, and they said she was younger than him. He was torn whether to take her or not, and he brought her to me. When I saw her, I told him, "First of all, I do not think she is suited to you at all. In terms of family yichus, I have doubts about her family. Drop this. She is not the one Yosef Dayan meant, for certain."

Even after I told him this, he was still somewhat undecided. He went out, and suddenly he met Yosef Dayan face to face. He went up to Yosef Dayan and asked him, "What does kevodo say?"

Yosef Dayan answered, "Did I not tell you that she would come to you by herself, without shadchanim? This is not her! Wait; she will come to you. This one is older; this is not what I told you."

So he left her. Afterward we checked, and she was indeed older.

One day he was passing by the Tachanah Merkazis in Yerushalayim, and he saw a young woman, taller than he was, whom he recognized from his workplace; for a short period he had worked somewhere outside Yerushalayim. He went up to her and said, "Shalom."

She said to him, "Who are you at all? I do not know you. Why are you saying shalom to me? Are you trying to start up with me? Shame on you!"

He said, "No, I know you from work."

She said, "What are you talking about? You do not know me."

He said, "But I worked with you! I know you!"

She said, "Maybe you mean my sister? I have a twin sister who looks like me."

He said, "No, I know it is you. You are putting on a show for me."

She told him, "Wait."

A few minutes passed, and her sister arrived, as alike to her as two drops of water. He had confused the two of them; they were so alike.

At once he remembered what Yosef Dayan had told him: younger than him, and taller. He saw her and said to himself, "This is the one." He went over to the second one, the twin who had just arrived, and said to her, "Listen, what would you say to coming with me to the Kosel?"

She said, "I will come with you."

They went to the Kosel, and within a few days they had concluded tena'im between them. He married her and built a family.

Short Accounts

The Brother Who Got Up One Morning

Talk Eight · 1:09:00

Once a woman came to ask Yosef Dayan to daven for her brother, who was a heavy drug addict. Every kind of rehabilitation they had tried in order to wean him off had failed.

He told her, "Leave him alone. Do not give him any treatment. Leave him as he is; it is a waste of time and money. One day he will get up by himself and be healed, and he will also return in teshuvah le'altar." That word, le'altar, was always on his lips. Le'altar means at once. "Le'altar he will do teshuvah."

The family did not listen to him. They went on treating him and spent money on everything, without success, until they gave up hope. Several years later, one day, without any treatment at all, he got up in the morning a different person. He threw away all the drugs, did teshuvah, and lived a stable, normal life in kedushah and yiras Shamayim.

The Tax Investigators

Talk Eight · 1:10:30

One of my acquaintances in the United States had serious trouble with the income tax authorities. They always suspected him of concealing income, and they were always taking him in and investigating him. He used his right to remain silent, and still they kept investigating him, bringing him in and letting him go, until he was sick of it.

One day he came to Israel and visited me. I told him, "Go to Yosef Dayan; he can help you."

Yosef Dayan saw him and said to him, "I promise you that from today on they will not make you any problems. Go." He also told him, "As long as I am alive, you will have no problems."

And so it was. For several years they forgot about him! But no sooner had Yosef Dayan passed away than, a month later, they called him in again for all the investigations, and the whole case fell back on his head.

The Girl Who Saw Him in My House

Talk Eight · 1:11:00

There were many more stories with him; of stories I have heard there are a great many. He would also come to me regularly. There was a bond between us, and from time to time he would come to my house and sit with me, and there were special matters between us.

There was once a young woman in my house who was a drug addict, a very hard case; it was very difficult with her. Her family had brought her to my house so that I might try a tefillah or a mi shebeirach or something, so that she would be freed from it. While she was with me, Yosef Dayan arrived.

I do not know what happened; she only saw him, and it was exactly the way the gentiles saw him. She was terrified of him. She was not cured on the spot, but on the spot a very noticeable change came over her, and within a short time she came back to herself and built a fine, kosher home in Klal Yisrael.

Kabbalas Shabbos Above

Talk Eight · 1:12:30

He also took great trouble to build shuls. He collected money and donations to build shuls, and above all, Aronos Kodesh.

There was one shul in Yerushalayim that he renovated, and he built its Heichal Kodesh entirely of marble. He pressed the contractor to finish the work that same week. He paid him many times over so that he would bring workers to work more and more and finish the job that week. He insisted and insisted: finish the work this week, by Wednesday. And indeed, on Wednesday they finished the whole Aron Kodesh and the shul, and he was overjoyed.

Every Wednesday a few of his acquaintances would come and go with him to the kever of Shmuel HaNavi, where they made seven hakafos and learned. On that last Wednesday he asked one of the participants to take all the sefarim they learned from, which had all been borrowed, and return them to their owners on Sunday, because they would not need them anymore. He did not tell him why, and no one understood what he meant.

He also asked the people who came with him to say the tefillos, his acquaintances and talmidim, "On Friday, I ask you to come visit me at home. Do me a chessed: come and visit me." He had never asked anyone to come to him or to do anything for him, and suddenly he was asking this.

On Friday morning they came and found him dozing. They asked him what was the matter, and he told them that he had spent the night at the tziyun of Shmuel

HaNavi. He had sat at the tziyun learning until three in the morning, had come home at three, and so he was a little drowsy. In the middle of the conversation with them, he fainted. They immediately took him to the hospital, where they revived him, and evidently they brought him back home. When they brought him home, he told them to know that he would be making Kabbalas Shabbos above, in the Yeshivah shel Maalah; they were waiting for him there for Kabbalas Shabbos.

He came home healthy and well, and so it was: two hours before Shabbos he fainted, and an hour before Shabbos his neshamah departed. He had asked the talmidim beforehand, and a few friends who had stayed there and saw it took him at once for burial. They finished burying him five minutes before sunset.

He passed away, just as he had said, on the ninth of Tammuz, Erev Shabbos, and that night, the night of the tenth of Tammuz, he was already in the Yeshivah shel Maalah, where he had said he was going. That was why he had rushed the work and everything else: so that he could arrive at the Yeshivah shel Maalah.

There are many stories about him. He saw many niftarim. He would see them at the Kosel; several times he met my grandfather at the Kosel after my grandfather had passed away, and there were other such things as well. There are many stories, all verified. But I am telling you mainly the ones that show who and what Yosef Dayan was.

May the zechus of Yosef Dayan stand and protect us and all of Klal Yisrael: his, and Patilon's, and that of all the tzaddikim I have mentioned and will yet mention. May their zechus stand for us forever and ever, amen, ken yehi ratzon.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Mulla Yochanan

Rabbi Yochanan Zhanian

MULLA YOCHANAN

Talk Eighteen · 23:30

This time I am going to write about a man of wonders. I knew him very well, and yet everyone who knew him did not really know him, so hidden was he. Even when people saw him do things beyond nature, he went on hiding himself, letting them feel, "What you saw, you saw; I am a simple man." The man was a wonder.

Now I begin to write about the hidden tzaddik, the man of wonders of Yerushalayim, Rabbi Yochanan Zhanian, a most wonderful man.

To tell about Rabbi Yochanan, I must first tell about the place where he grew up. Rabbi Yochanan was born in Persia. We used to call him Mulla Yochanan, because in Persian a rav is called mulla. So we always knew him as Mulla Yochanan, but everyone else knew him as Rabbi Yochanan. In Persia he was orphaned of both his parents, and as a small child he came up to Eretz Hakodesh together with his older brothers.

In Yerushalayim lived Reb Shlomke of Zvhil.[97] Reb Shlomke was a heavy cannon, one of the gedolim of Yerushalayim, one of its greatest mekubalim and kedoshim. I did not know him myself, so I cannot tell stories about him as one of the tzaddikim I knew. There is a whole sefer of stories about him, and whoever wants can buy it and read wondrous things.

I did merit to know his son, Rav Gedalia Moshe, who was also a very great man. More than sixty years ago, when I was a child, my father a"h took me to him. I knew him in his home and saw him.

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[97] Rav Shlomo Goldman, the Zvhiler Rebbe, who came to Yerushalayim in 1926 and lived there until his passing in 1945. Zvhil is a town in Ukraine.

His home was in Beis Yisrael, exactly on the spot where they found the bones and the ash of the deshen of the Beis Hamikdash. It was a small house, and its foundations stood on that very spot. Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld a"h (the great Rav of Yerushalayim in the generation before the State), who was a very holy man and who simply had gilui Eliyahu, chose that place and paid for it. When they came to dig the foundations for part of the neighborhood, at its lowest point, where there had once been a swamp, they found bones and the ash of korbanos that had been poured out there from the Beis Hamikdash. When the deshen was taken outside the camp to a makom tahor, that makom tahor was Beis Yisrael. And it was right at the center of that spot, where the bones and the ash were found, that Reb Shlomke lived. As a child I was often by the house, going in and out, and together with my father I merited to go in and receive a berachah from Rav Gedalia Moshe, who was also a very great man.

Rav Gedalia Moshe and the tzaddik Rabbi Yochanan Zhanian both learned together by Reb Shlomke. Reb Shlomke, Rav Shlomo of Zvhil, adopted the boy Yochanan as his own son in every way. As a small child he grew up as the son of the Zvhiler Rebbe together with the Rebbe's real son, and the two of them grew up together to tremendous heights. To this day many mofsim are seen at the kever of Rav Gedalia Moshe. He is buried in Givat Ram in Yerushalayim, and people go there to this day, daven, and see yeshuos.

In the House of Reb Shlomke

Talk Eighteen · 32:30

For all that Reb Shlomke was an Admor, people did not know how hidden he was. After people left his home, he would make sure to sit and occupy himself with very lofty yichudim, things the mouth cannot speak of.

This is the house Rabbi Yochanan grew up in. Reb Shlomke raised him like his son and gave him every abundance so that he could learn. Rabbi Yochanan grew up and learned Shas and poskim, and as a young bochur he already knew the kavanos of Kabbalah; he knew Kabbalah thoroughly. He sat immersed in learning days and nights. And no one knew who he was. He was an orphan bochur whom nobody knew, raised in the Rebbe's house, eating from the Rebbe's bread, going in and out of the Rebbe's house.

But as such he also merited to see things in the Rebbe's house that others did not see. He saw Eliyahu Hanavi. Once he came into the house and saw an old man there handing the Rebbe a cup full of coins and then leaving. He asked the Rebbe who the old man was.

"You saw him?" the Rebbe asked.

"Yes."

"You have merited," the Rebbe said. "Ashrei whoever has seen his face." He understood that it was Eliyahu.

Later Eliyahu became close to him. I do not know if I am allowed to say "his friend," but he was very close to him. He would come to his table and sit with him, and they always learned together. Every Motza'ei Shabbos he had a chavrusa with Eliyahu Hanavi, not for a few minutes, but for several hours. It was something wonderful. Soon I will tell things about him that are not of this world.

Such was his greatness. He sat and learned the kavanos and merited to master all the kavanos of the Rashash. He was part of the special minyan of Rabbi Salman Mutzafi[98], the minyan of mekavnim, men who daven all the tefillos with the special kavanos.

A TZADDEKES IN SIMPLICITY AND POVERTY

Talk Eighteen · 44:30

His wife too was a very great tzaddekes, living in utter simplicity and utter poverty. There were periods when they bought only dry bread by weight, and that was all their food for the whole week. She bought clothing tenth-hand, the most used of the used, and that is what she wore. Whenever she had money, she gave it all to tzedakah. All the money she received from here and there, sometimes from her brothers who helped her, she took straight to tzedakah. She wanted nothing at all of this world.

She knew Sefer Mishlei and Sefer Tehillim thoroughly, and all day she read these two sefarim and went over them again. When she wanted to give someone mussar, she would say a few pesukim from Mishlei that fit the case. Mishlei was always on her lips, and she lived her life by the ways of Sefer Mishlei.

The simplicity of these two tzaddikim is hard to describe. I saw the same simplicity in my grandfather, so I can recognize it and understand it. My grandfather did not even have a proper bed to sleep on. His bed was broken, tied together all over with pieces of iron and with ropes so that he could sleep on it. Yet he moved large sums of money to tzedakah.

Rabbi Yochanan too collected money for tzedakah and gave it to hidden tzaddikim and to poor people in real need, whom he knew through ruach hakodesh.

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[98] Rav Salman Mutzafi, a great mekubal born in Baghdad, who lived in Yerushalayim and passed away in 1975.

Nobody turned to him to ask; he himself went to give. He knew who these people were by his ruach hakodesh, which was at work twenty-four hours a day, every day, without a pause.

When he married his wife, his Shabbos chasan was in my grandfather's shul. My grandfather was overjoyed to see him, because he knew what a diamond he was. And Rabbi Yochanan always used to say about my grandfather: "A tzaddik nistar, a tzaddik nistar!" He was himself a tzaddik nistar, and he went around calling my grandfather a tzaddik nistar. He was a man not of this world.

A Hidden Tzaddik in the Satmar Shul

Talk Eighteen · 38:00

I will tell you about Rabbi Yochanan Janian from the time I first came to know him. I knew him from when I was very young, from the Satmar shul.

He was a great actor. Every night he rose at chatzos and learned alone until morning. Many times people heard him behind the door learning with someone, though nobody ever entered his home after chatzos. On his table lay Gemaros, sefarim of Kabbalah, the Zohar and the Tikkunei Zohar, and they would hear him talking and learning with someone. In the morning he opened the door and there was no one there. He was alone. They understood that he was learning with lofty neshamos. Who they were nobody knew, but they were the neshamos of great tzaddikim who came to his home to learn with him.

When he finished, he ran to the mikveh, toveled, and ran to daven at netz, in minyanim where nobody even knew he davened. After davening at netz he went home, and at about nine or half past nine he arrived at Satmar as though he had come to daven now. He looked like a tired man who had been asleep in bed until that moment and had only now rolled out of it.

I remember how he would lay his tallis on his shoulder and walk around like that for a quarter of an hour, then put on tallis and tefillin and keep walking around. I never once saw him stand and daven Shemoneh Esreh, because he had already davened that morning. He walked about doing his kavanos and his yichudim, wrapped in tallis and tefillin as if he were davening now, to show people: look what a batlan I am. I get up only now. Leave me alone, I am nothing.

He would tell people all kinds of mofsim, and they saw who he was. But when people see a batlan who gets up at half past nine to daven and sways all over, they stop paying attention to him. This broke all the awe they would have had of so great a man. That is what he set out to do, and he succeeded.

One of the Bnei Heichala of Rashbi

Talk Eighteen · 51:30

He was one of the bnei heichala d'Rashbi, the members of Rashbi's heichal. This is a term for special bnei aliyah whose bond with Rashbi was very great.

These are people who do a yichud. There is a yichud called the yichud ha'elyon. In this yichud a person goes to the kever of a tzaddik and through the yichud binds himself to him, nefesh to nefesh, ruach to ruach, neshamah to neshamah. He connects with him and speaks with him as with a living person. The tzaddik rejoices in him, because at that moment the person gives him life too. A wonderful bond forms between them, and when it is done several times the tzaddik is drawn to that person as well. They love one another. This is what is called the bnei heichala of such-and-such a tzaddik, and he was one of the bnei heichala of Rashbi.

People testified that they saw him squeeze through the small hole underneath the kever that is shown today as the kever of Rashbi, and go into the original cave, to do the yichudim at the actual tziyun of Rashbi down inside the cave, not above. What people see today as the kevarim of Rashbi and Rabbi Elazar is not their real kever but a marker. It is set directly over the kever below, in the cave. Above the cave, in this building, they made kevarim facing them, but the real kevarim are down below in the cave.

I know that two or three years ago a man went in there and did not come out. People were afraid to go in to get him; they dragged him out, barely managing to get in to bring him out for burial. He had thought he could go in through the opening there, a small breach, and rachmana litzlan. It is dangerous to go in there. Besides, there is a snake there that circles the kevarim, and it bites anyone who is not worthy. Rashbi is not a simple thing to enter. But Rabbi Yochanan always went in and did the yichudim of the yichud ha'elyon there, at Rashbi's original tziyun. That is why he was called one of the bnei heichala d'Rashbi.

Night after night, from chatzos until morning, he was immersed in Gemara, Zohar, Tikkunei Zohar and kavanos. That is the whole greatness of all these tzaddikim I have told you about. Take Rav Patilon, as I said: from the age of eight his grandfather did not let him sleep. At eight years old his grandfather woke him for tikkun chatzos, and that is how he learned, that is how he grew up, and that is how the Patilon of all the stories I told you came to be. So it was with my grandfather, zechuso yagen aleinu. That is how they grew up; that is how they learned.

He traveled often to Rashbi to do the yichudim. When he grew old and walking became hard for him, he could no longer travel. One of the people close to him asked him: "What about Rashbi? You don't go to him anymore?" He answered: "When I could, I went to him. Now that I can't, he comes to me." He said it quite

simply. He was not a man who exaggerated his words; he was a man who sought humility. He was very humble. When people came to him whom he did not want around, he would suddenly act as if he were after money or honor, so that they would leave him alone. In truth he wanted neither honor nor money, and nothing interested him except the yichud of Kudsha Brich Hu and His Shechinah, twenty-four hours a day.

The Stories

The Partner at Kiddush

Talk Eighteen · 29:30

He lived on the very place where they found the remains of the korbanos. In Beis Yisrael, when they dug foundations for houses, they found under several of the houses all the bones and the deshen of the Beis HaMikdash that used to be taken out. As the pasuk says, it was taken out to a makom tahor, and this was that makom tahor. They found heaps there that had lain in that place since the days of the Mikdash. On the spot where those heaps were found, in Beis Yisrael, on the street then called Rechov Rapoport (I do not know what it is called today), next to where there is a garden today, lived the Zvhiler Rebbe, Rav Shlomo, alav hashalom.

I did not merit to know him, but I did merit to know his son. My father took him to me when I was a child, and I received a berachah from him. He too was a lion among the company. But Rav Shlomo was a wonder of wonders, known as kodesh kodashim, and a sefer of stories about him has already been printed. People would come to him with all kinds of troubles. He would go to the mikveh, make yichudim and daven, and things would change. People who were sick and in mortal danger came out alive. All kinds of troubles were turned around. He was known as a kadosh.

One small story will give you a real picture of who this man was.

A woman was having an extremely difficult labor. The baby was also large, and they were going to have to do a Caesarean operation on her. A few decades ago a Caesarean was dangerous. There was not yet all the hygiene there is today, and it often led to infections and serious complications for the mother. Beyond the danger, the operation itself was very hard. They were torn about what to do, and meanwhile the woman was in great difficulty.

On Friday night they came to ask the Rebbe of Zvhil to daven for her. They decided not to disturb him during Kiddush and to wait until he finished, and tell him during the meal. He finished Kiddush and sat down to eat. After he had begun eating the fish, they came and said, "Rebbe, perhaps now the Rebbe will daven for so-and-so, who is in serious danger?"

He looked for a moment and understood that her situation was truly very grave. "Why didn't you tell me before Kiddush?" he said. "In one moment I would have solved her problem. Now it is hard work. Many dinim must be sweetened over her."

He hurried through the seudah very, very quickly, bentched, and went to the mikveh. He sat there a full hour with kavanos and yichudim, and when he came out he said, "Now she has given birth." And so it was. At that very moment she gave birth safely to a healthy son, with no operation and nothing else.

They asked him, "Why should we have told you before Kiddush?"

He said, "The Gemara says that whoever makes Kiddush on Friday night becomes a partner with Hakadosh Baruch Hu in maaseh bereishis. When I am standing next to the Partner, I can ask Him in one minute. Why should I afterward have to run and look for Him, and by the time I catch Him and ask, it takes time, by way of the mikveh? When I make Kiddush, the Partner is right beside me; I am a partner with Hakadosh Baruch Hu in maaseh bereishis. Beside the Partner, you ask in one moment and you receive. It is very easy. The Partner was right next to me. Why didn't you tell me?"

That is how this man felt Kiddush. He was sure that if he asked at the time of Kiddush he would receive, because he was beside the Partner.

So anyone who has troubles and wants a yeshuah should also try to be a partner of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He should make Kiddush b'dechilu ur'chimu, with trembling, properly, in the greatest taharah and kedushah, according to everything the halachah asks. He should stand for Kiddush, and of course his wife should be modestly covered, as is proper for Kiddush. Not as at home, where she is a little less careful about tznius; at the time of Kiddush the tznius should be complete. Let him make Kiddush feeling that he is now a partner with Hakadosh Baruch Hu in maaseh bereishis, and then let him ask. Perhaps it will help an ordinary man too; I do not know. It is worth trying.

A Gemach for Egg Cartons

Talk Eighteen · 59:30

Once a bochur came to him who could not get married. It was not working out for him, the poor fellow. He was a yeshivah bochur who wanted to marry, and nothing was moving. He asked: "What should I do to get married?"

Rabbi Yochanan said: "Open a gemach for egg cartons."

Today you buy eggs and throw away the carton; what is it worth? But fifty years ago, in the days of the tzena,[99] it was not like that. Everything was worth money. Every scrap of tin, every bit of garbage cost money. Nothing was thrown away. The farmers did not have enough cartons. They bought cartons once, sold them together with the eggs to the grocery, and the grocery had to return the cartons to them in order to get more eggs. Many times people did not return the cartons, or a carton tore, or an egg broke and the whole carton was lost. There was a shortage of cartons, and it was hard for the farmers. They brought eggs in buckets. It was not like today, when Tnuva (the large Israeli dairy and egg cooperative) and all the rest bring everything automatically. Life was different then.

So he told him: "Make a gemach for cartons. Many people throw their cartons away; they don't use them, they are worth pennies. Collect them. There are many such places. Make a gemach and sell them to the farmers for pennies. That way you will get to know the farmers and start selling to them."

The bochur did not understand. "What do I need this for? It's worth pennies!" But he had no choice, and he did it. For two months he ran a gemach for cartons. The farmers came to know him: whoever was short of cartons came to him, because he had cartons. He went around collecting them, buying them for pennies from people who wanted to throw them out, and he had cartons. Whenever a kibbutznik (a member of a kibbutz, a communal farming settlement) got stuck without cartons, he came to him, and the bochur sold them to him for pennies, at what they had cost him, as a gemach.

Suddenly one of these farmers said to him: "Listen, I like you. I have a daughter." And he married her. It turned out that everything Rabbi Yochanan had told him to do was so that this farmer would come and introduce him to his daughter.

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[99] The tzena was the period of austerity in the first years of the State of Israel, when food and other goods were rationed.

Chacham Ben Tzion's Seudas Hodaah

Talk Eighteen · 1:06:30

Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul (the rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef) was once ill and had to undergo a dangerous operation. I do not know exactly what it was. He made a neder that if he came through it safely he would make a seudas hodaah. The operation succeeded and he came home safely, but he forgot about the seudas hodaah. He was busy with his learning, went back to his learning and to preparing his teshuvos, and it slipped his mind.

One night he had a dream. He saw Mulla Yochanan (Mulla is the Bukharian title for a rav), who said to him: "Chacham Ben Tzion, you promised to make a seudas hodaah. Why aren't you making it? Please do what you vowed."

He got up in the morning remembering the dream. As he was walking through Shechunas HaBucharim he saw Mulla Yochanan coming toward him, now, wide awake! Mulla Yochanan said to him: "Chacham Ben Tzion, you vowed to make a seudah."

Nobody had told him about it. It was between Chacham Ben Tzion and himself; he had made the neder privately on his way to the operation and had told no one. Nobody knew about it! And suddenly Mulla Yochanan was telling him: "You vowed and you haven't done it. Get up and make the seudah." So he made the seudah. There is even a video of the seudah he made afterward, with the divrei Torah said there and everything that happened there.

Half a Million Dollars

Talk Eighteen · 1:23:00

A man came to Mori Yochanan who had a court case abroad. He was a millionaire, and the case was with the tax authorities there. They wanted millions upon millions from him. When they take millions from someone, prison comes with it too: he had not paid on time and had smuggled away the money, and on top of it there were fines. It was a hard case. He came here to Eretz Yisrael completely beside himself, and people told him, "Go to Mori Yochanan. His berachos are worth something."

He came to Mori Yochanan, who told him, "Do not worry. I promise you that you will come out zakai in the case. You will not give them anything. The whole thing will go out of their heads."

The day of the trial came, and he went there. The prosecutor began to get confused, the papers were not in order, nothing was as it should be, until the judge threw out the case. "What is this?" he said. "This is how you come to court?" He cancelled the case and sent the man home.

The man saw a miracle before his eyes. What did he do? He made a bank transfer of half a million dollars for Mori Yochanan, in the name of one of his acquaintances there, so that this acquaintance would pass the half million on to him. The acquaintance came to Mori Yochanan and said, "You have been given half a million dollars."

"I do not want to accept it," Mori Yochanan said. "Tell him to take it back. I am not interested in his money."

Apparently he understood that whatever yiras Shamayim this man had was shallow and flighty, not enough, and he did not want his money. One does not take money from just anyone. Money that is not of a yerei Shamayim is better not touched; it only brings trouble. All the tzaddikim I knew would not take money from people who did not keep Shabbos properly, or did not keep taharas hamishpachah properly, or who, chas v'shalom, looked at non-Jewish women, even if they did not sin with them. Such money is not needed, in any way.

I follow their example. It is true that I have a tzedakah fund and collect for people who are broken and in need, but I ask once again: a person who does not keep Shabbos, a person who has any connection with non-Jewish women, even in his thoughts, even only thinking about them, or whose wife does not keep taharas hamishpachah, please, let him not bring me a perutah. I am not interested in that money. And as I have also said before, women should not bring me tzedakah without their husband's permission, for they may not give a perutah without it. I do not want it.

So the man received his half million back; Mori Yochanan did not want it. A short time later, his friends enticed him to go to such places as they did. His eyes grew big, he began to look where he should not, and he was about, chas v'shalom, to lose his Olam Haba. At once people told Mori Yochanan about it, and he sent him a message: "Be careful. I warn you not to fall into sin. Stay in your home, in the state you are in, and guard your neshamah."

Everyone else had told him before this to stop, that it was not worth it, that it was a grave aveirah, and it had not helped. But the moment Mori Yochanan told him, having seen that Mori Yochanan returned his half million, he accepted his words at once. He dropped the whole matter and did not commit any sin.

The Ten Boys

Talk Eighteen · 1:30:00

Once ten boys came to Mori Yochanan, all of them mechallelei Shabbos b'farhesya, young, sixteen years old. All of them said to him, "Mori Yochanan, if you tell us our aveiros, we will do teshuvah. Can you tell us our aveiros?"

All ten sat down, and he told each of them everything he had done over several years, all of his aveiros. Not one aveirah of all ten escaped him; he laid it all out before them. They were beside themselves, for he was telling them everything they had done in the most hidden places. All of them did teshuvah and went into a yeshiva to learn.

After a year they were called up to the army. They asked him, "We want to learn. What will be?"

"Do not go," he told them. "Do not answer their letters, nothing at all. Sit and learn. Do not answer." Whenever letters came telling them to report, they went to him, and he told them not to worry.

They listened to him and did not answer anything. One day an army patrol car came and gathered up all ten of them, the whole group, and took them together to be held under arrest. Afterwards all ten came before a judge for desertion, for not reporting to the army. They took the first one, whose name was Mordechai, and the judge was harsh with him and sent him to prison.

The other nine sat outside, trembling. "Mori Yochanan was wrong," they said. "Look, he has gone to prison. What happened here?" Then all nine were brought in together. The judge looked at the nine of them and said, "You I am releasing. Go; I am letting you off." But Mordechai was sitting under arrest. They were amazed that they had been let off, but nine is not ten.

All nine went straight from the courthouse to the home of Mori Yochanan. "Mori Yochanan," they said, "you promised that all of us would be saved. But Mordechai was caught."

He looked like this and said, "I see that he is at home. What do you want?"

"No! We saw them take him to jail in a car."

"You are mistaken. He is at home."

They did not believe him. They went to his house and found him sitting at home. What had happened? Afterward the judge had sent word to release him as well. And it went beyond anything one could believe: they were exempted from the army altogether, all ten of them. They went back to the yeshiva to learn, all of them with yiras Shamayim, just as Mori Yochanan had told them.

The Sack of Hadassim

Talk Eighteen · 1:32:30

Before his passing, Mori Yochanan asked a certain Yid to continue his practice of distributing hadassim,[100] at least to the tzaddikim: one sack of hadassim every Shabbos. The man promised him.

Mori Yochanan himself, as I told you, used to travel by kefitzas haderech. I remember it as if it were yesterday. One Thursday morning at half past nine I saw him in Satmar. He still had to go to Meron (the place of the kever of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, in the Galil) to bring the hadassim, and I thought he would come back at night. At one in the afternoon, or whatever time exactly it was in the afternoon, I already saw him walking around Yerushalayim with hadassim. And cutting the hadassim takes time as well: cutting them, sorting them and arranging them. When did he go, and when did he come back and bring them? He traveled by kefitzas haderech; it was no problem.

But the poor man he had asked to continue did not have kefitzas haderech. For him it was a six-hour trip each way, and back again, a hard burden, and it was not worth the money, the few perutos he received. For several Shabbosos after the passing of Mori Yochanan he traveled to Meron and brought the hadassim. Then one Thursday he could not go. He was tired. "I cannot, I cannot," he said. "This is not for me."

That afternoon he was walking in the street. There was a small grove there near his house, and he said, "I will go into the grove." He went in and saw a sack of hadassim waiting for him, exactly the kind of sack he was used to taking. How it got there he does not know. He took the sack and distributed it, and that gave him the encouragement to go on distributing the hadassim afterward.

Yehi ratzon that the zechus of Mori Yochanan and of all the hidden tzaddikim should stand and protect us.

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Short Accounts

[100] It is a minhag from the Arizal to make the berachah on besamim over hadassim on Erev Shabbos and at Havdalah.

The Cats of Reb Shlomke

Talk Eighteen · 27:00

To know what kind of home Rabbi Yochanan grew up in, I will not tell stories of Reb Shlomke of Zvhil, because I did not see them myself, but tremendous things are told about him.

It is well known that there were many cats around his house. He would take them in and feed them, and they even had a kind of bed in the yard where they would come to rest. He told people not to bother them: "These are gilgulim of the people of Slavita."

What does "the people of Slavita" mean? About two hundred years ago a Shas was printed there.[101] The holy sons of one of the Admorim printed the Shas, and people rose up against it. Many went to the authorities and informed on some people there, until some of the gedolei Yisrael there were thrown into prison because of the informing of men who did it for the business of the Shas, who sold them out and destroyed them. So Reb Shlomke would say that these cats were those informers come back in a gilgul. He gave them food and drink so that little by little they would be rectified. There were some ten, even seventeen, suffering cats there.

He was a very great man, his tefillos were a wonder, a great and holy man with a tremendous knowledge of Kabbalah. He did not reveal himself, but those who knew, knew that he was not someone who just gave berachos as empty words. He brought tremendous yeshuos through his kedushah and taharah.

Kabbalah and Pistachios

Talk Eighteen · 35:00

Rabbi Yochanan saw how Kabbalah is learned in our days and said, "Kabbalah! I remember the mekubalim in my youth who learned Kabbalah: they trembled when they touched the sefer! Today they sit and learn Kabbalah eating pistachios! What is this?"

He was right. I also see how people learn Kabbalah, one leg crossed over the other, a cup of coffee in the middle, as if they had opened some café with a little Kabbalah for dessert, rachmana litzlan. Is that how one learns Kabbalah?

When I was about twenty I learned in the kollel of Chacham Ben Tzion, and once we came to talk about Kabbalah. He told me, "When I touch the Etz Chaim I

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[101] The famous Slavita Shas, printed in the early 1800s by the brothers Rav Shmuel Abba and Rav Pinchas Shapira, grandsons of Rav Pinchas of Koretz. After informers slandered them to the Russian government, the brothers were thrown into prison and suffered terribly for many years.

tremble all over. How can one born of a woman touch this great sefer? How did I, born of a woman, merit to touch the sefer Etz Chaim, which teaches all the secrets of the upper worlds above? I tremble when I open this sefer and look into it." That is what he told us.

Of course a man receives the power of a sefer according to how he connects to it. Whoever receives it with pistachios will in the end get one pistachio on his head, and that's all. But whoever sits and learns it on the proper level is sanctified by the sefer.

Close to eighty years ago there were very great mekubalim in the Old City of Yerushalayim. One day an Arab came and began reciting to them pages of the Etz Chaim by heart. He knew Etz Chaim! He recited Etz Chaim from memory! So what? Did that make him holy? An Arab stayed an Arab, that's all. Why? He was what is called a donkey carrying sefarim.

When a man learns these things in kedushah and taharah, he merits that the light of the author and of the words flows onto him. Just as on the side of tumah, chas veshalom, the ruach ra'ah clings to a man when he reads, here a ruach of kedushah comes upon him, but only on condition that he is fitting for the sefer and the sefer is fitting for him.

A House of Ruins and Snakes

Talk Eighteen · 40:00

Let me describe his home to you. Whether it could be called a home I do not know, but that is where he lived.

On Rechov Ezra there was a ruin. First you entered a small, broken-down courtyard, a neglected courtyard from about eighty years earlier, from among the first buildings put up in Shechunas HaBucharim (the neighborhood in Yerushalayim built by Jews from Bukhara). Then you came to a building with a sign on it from the Jerusalem municipality, posted by the city's engineers: "Danger! Entry to this building forbidden. Danger of collapse." We would walk past that sign and go into that ruin.

It was a tiny apartment. The door opened straight into a small first room, perhaps two meters by two and a half, very small. From there a doorway, more like a hole, led into a second room. I do not even know whether that room had windows. Whenever we came in it was dark there. Either the shutters were closed or there were no windows at all. I never looked from outside to see.

That was his home. There was no plaster on the walls; the whole place was a ruin. The building stones stood one on top of the other with no plaster, nothing, held

up by a nes. Between one stone and the next there were two or three centimeters of earth, or simply holes. That is what the whole room was like. What was in the second room I do not know.

Many times I heard the snakes moving about in there, and I was afraid. I sat there shaking. There were snakes there, crawling around. Once a man came into his home and saw a snake in one of the holes, shedding its skin. He was terrified. Rabbi Yochanan's wife Sarah, a tzaddekes like him, said to him: "Why are you afraid of a snake? We are Hashem's children! Hashem's children are not afraid of snakes. The snakes have to be afraid of us. If you are a child of Hashem, he is afraid of you. Why are you afraid of him?" I merited to know her; she was a very great tzaddekes.

People were afraid to come into his home only because every time there was some snake crawling around. But he was not afraid of any animal, not even a snake. The snakes were afraid of him. They lived there, and the snakes moved around there, and he lived an ordinary life without giving it a thought. He was no snake charmer. He did no whispering over them and had nothing at all to do with them. They came in and went out and crawled about, and he sat and learned and lived his life there with his wife, and raised children, all inside such a ruin.

Once I came into his home and heard a snake rustling. I was shaking a bit, because I knew the snake was a meter away from me. These were not little snakes. I mean real snakes. He looked at me and said: "Why are you afraid? What is there to fear? A shomer bris is not afraid of snakes. Someone who does not guard the bris really should be very afraid of snakes. But for a shomer bris, the Torah says that the fear and dread of you will be upon every beast of the field. The animal has to be afraid of us. The Gemara says that no animal has power over a man until he looks to it like an animal. The moment the tzelem Elokim departs from a person, the animal sees him as another animal, and that is why it attacks him. But as long as the tzelem Elokim is there, what animal can come near a man? They see the tzelem Elokim!"

He was not afraid.

HADASSIM LEKAVOD SHABBOS

Talk Eighteen · 46:30

When he was an avreich, Rav Aharon Roth, the author of the Shomer Emunim,[102] told him: "Your parnassah will come from bringing hadassim and selling them lekavod Shabbos."

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[102] Rav Aharon Roth, known as Reb Arele, was the founder of the Shomer Emunim chassidus. He lived his last years in Yerushalayim and was niftar there.

According to Kabbalah it is a great thing for a person to have two bundles of hadassim on Shabbos. The source is in the Gemara in Maseches Shabbos. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Rabbi Elazar had been in the cave for many years. The first time they came out, every place they looked at went up in flames because of their greatness, until Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to them: "Have you come to destroy My world? Go back into the cave." After another year there they came out again. To calm them, so that their minds would be at ease, they met an old man; some say it was Eliyahu Hanavi. It was Erev Shabbos, and they saw the old man walking with two bundles of hadassim. They asked him: "What are these for?" He said: "Lekavod Shabbos." They asked: "Why two?" He said: "One for zachor and one for shamor." When they heard how much Yisrael cherish the mitzvos, they calmed down.

There are secrets in this in the Gemara, and the Arizal also reveals great secrets about the hadassim and the order of the Shabbos table; I think the Ben Ish Chai brings it as well. On Shabbos, at night and by day, one makes hakafos around the table with hadassim in hand. If he has two bundles of hadassim meshulashim (whose leaves grow in threes), the maaleh is greater still. Then he sits down, smells the fragrance, and makes the berachah borei atzei vesamim. The fragrance reaches the place of the neshamah yeseirah and raises it to a higher level. This is the secret of reiach nichoach isheh laShem, and that pasuk is said as well. These are tremendous secrets. All the gedolim of Yerushalayim and all the tzaddikim used to put hadassim on the table Erev Shabbos. It was a simple thing, according to the Arizal. Whoever lived by the Arizal did it.

So Rav Aharon told him to bring hadassim, and so it was. He went to the mountains around Meron, where all the hadassim were hefker. This was many years ago, before people came and made themselves owners of the place, and there were whole fields of hadassim that were hefker. I remember that we also went to pick hadassim. As a boy, fifty or sixty years ago, I too went there to look for hadassim and pick them, above the kever of Rabbi Yochanan HaSandlar (the Tanna buried in Meron), where the hadas bushes grew.

He went with a big sack of hadassim and sold them. All the gedolim and tzaddikim of the generation and their talmidim bought from him. Many times he brought me some and said: "Take, take them for free, take hadassim lekavod Shabbos!" He would meet me and say: "Take, take hadassim!"

One day people came to visit the Baba Sali,[103] and there were hadassim on the table. He said to them: "Do you know where these come from? From the great

[103] The Baba Sali was Rabbi Yisrael Abuchatzeira, the great tzaddik of Moroccan Jewry, who lived his last years in Netivos.

tzaddik Rabbi Yochanan. I merited his hadassim." The Baba Sali took pride in the hadassim he received from him.

Five Years without Tefillin

Talk Eighteen · 50:00

His ruach hakodesh was with him twenty-four hours a day without a break. There was no person in the world whom he saw without knowing whether he put on tefillin or not, whether his tefillin were kosher, and whether the mezuzos in his home were kosher or pasul. He knew about every Jewish home in the world what was going on with its mezuzos, which were kosher and which were pasul. He knew the tefillin each person put on; he looked at a person and knew whether his tefillin were kosher or pasul. He would tell people who came to him: "Fix your tefillin."

Once an avreich came to him who was about to divorce his wife because of the troubles she was causing him. He did not know what to do and came to ask for an eitzah. Rabbi Yochanan did not answer his question. He said to him: "For five years you have not put on tefillin."

"What do you mean, I haven't put on tefillin? I put them on every day!"

"Your tefillin are pasul. Go fix them. For five years you have not put on tefillin. Put on tefillin and your home will straighten out."

He went and opened his tefillin and was stunned. They were pasul. For five years he had been putting on pasul tefillin, which is like not putting on tefillin at all. He went and had them fixed, and suddenly there was no talk of divorce at all. Everything straightened out.

The White Snake at Meron

Talk Eighteen · 55:00

Once, toward Lag Ba'Omer, he traveled with his young children to the kever of Rashbi. He arranged a place for them on the floor near the kever of Rabbi Elazar so they could sleep a little, and he sat down to learn.

Many people slept in that big room, people who had come for ziyarah (the visiting of kivrei tzaddikim) and slept there at night. We used to sleep there too. Many nights we slept there with my grandfather. We would spread a few rags or a big coat on the floor and sleep on it a few hours, after the strain of the trip, which was a hard journey in those days. We got used to sleeping there.

Suddenly there were screams. A huge white snake had come into the room. Everyone began to scream and run. He saw it and said: "What are you screaming

about?" He picked up the snake the way you take a mosquito out of a glass of water it fell into. He grabbed it by the neck, lifted it up, threw it outside into the field and said to it: "Go, don't disturb here!"

The snake was afraid of him.

The Snake That Came to Smell the Hadassim

Talk Eighteen · 56:30

Another time he was sitting and learning in one of the small rooms in the building over the tziyun of Rabbi Shimon. The hadassim he had picked were there beside him in a big sack. He was saying Tehillim with fire, and there were a few other people in the room.

Suddenly a big snake came into the room. Everyone screamed: "A snake! A snake!" He said to them: "What are you screaming for? He came to smell the hadassim. Don't be afraid." He took one hadas and threw it toward the snake. The snake smelled it a little, and he said to it: "Now go." The snake went out and left.

Always Joyful

Talk Eighteen · 57:00

All day long he was happy. There was always a smile on his face and joy on his face, though he was full of problems and full of troubles. He was always like that.

As I said, he saw tremendous things by Rav Shlomke of Zvhil, and Rav Shlomke guided him in this direction, to be a tzaddik nistar from the start. He could be a complete tzaddik nistar because he carried no burden of being a Rebbe. Rav Shlomke's son, Rav Gedalya, later carried the burden of being a Rebbe. However much people thought they knew him, they did not know him either, and he too was a very great man. As I told you, I merited to know him as a child, because my father took me.

The people of those days were angels walking on two legs. I am not speaking about the Rebbes of today; I do not know them and do not know who they are. But the Rebbes of sixty years ago! Rav Aharon of Belz was an awesome man, beyond imagination. In the Holocaust he came out through nissim, escaped from the hands of the accursed ones and reached here.[104] He came to Yerushalayim for the chanukas habayis of the building they built then on Rechov Agrippas, and I remember

[104] Rav Aharon Rokeach of Belz escaped from Nazi-occupied Europe during the war and reached Eretz Yisrael in 1944.

coming together with my father and receiving a berachah from him. I was also there when the Satmar Rebbe, Rav Yoel, came here, and I went in to him. Rav Yoel was someone the malachei marom were afraid of. That is what Rav Yoel was.

These were gedolei olam. I merited, in the zechus of my father, who was close to all these things, at least to see them, to catch once the fragrance of their besamim.

A Note for a Man No Longer Living

Talk Eighteen · 59:00

Rabbi Yochanan was a very great man. Once two bochurim wanted to make fun of him. They wrote a note with the name of a man who had already died and said to him: "This man is sick. Would the Rav daven for him?" He looked at the note and said: "What? This man has already passed away! Why are you bringing him to me? You are bringing a note for a man who is not among the living at all! Get away from here!" When they saw this they were shaken and did teshuvah. They saw that the man before them truly had ruach hakodesh.

The Mezuzah in the Satmar Rebbe's Basement

Talk Eighteen · 1:08:00

That is the kind of man he was. He would tell anyone how many mezuzos he had in his home, how many were pasul and how many kosher, and exactly where: which room and which spot.

When the Satmar Rebbe came to Yerushalayim, he went to visit Rabbi Yochanan and gave him a kvittel for a berachah. The Rebbe, who made worlds tremble, gave him a kvittel for a berachah!

Rabbi Yochanan said to the Rebbe: "Let the Rebbe forgive me, I want to tell him something." "What is it?" He described to him his house in America: the house, the rooms, the entrance. He said: "On such-and-such a side, down below, there is an entrance to the basement. The mezuzah there is pasul. Please, let the Rebbe see to it that they replace it."

The Rebbe heard this, and his meshamesh, Rabbi Lipa, who was with him, heard it too. When they returned to America they went to exactly the place he had described, opened the mezuzah, and it was pasul. He sat here and saw in America exactly where the mezuzah was and whether it was kosher or pasul.

Three Mezuzos

Talk Eighteen · 1:09:00

Once a man came to him and said: "I need a berachah for something."

Rabbi Yochanan told him: "First of all, you have three mezuzos in your house and all of them are pasul, and your tefillin are pasul too. Go fix them, and then see whether you still have a problem."

He sent him off. The man went, and exactly as he had said, all three mezuzos were pasul, and the tefillin were pasul.

The Doctor's Rabbeinu Tam Tefillin

Talk Eighteen · 1:09:30

At the end of his life there was a doctor who treated him and helped him a bit. He came regularly to visit him and see whether he needed some treatment, a massage or something of the kind. This doctor was a yerei Shamayim.

One morning, as he was putting on his Rabbeinu Tam tefillin, he thought: "Maybe these tefillin need to be checked? Maybe they are not kosher? I haven't checked them in a long time. I need to check them." He did not say a word aloud; he only thought it to himself.

When he came at midday to treat Rabbi Yochanan, Mori Yochanan said to him: "This morning you were thinking about your Rabbeinu Tam? Know that they are kosher. There is no need to check them. Why did you think they were pasul? They are not pasul. They are fine. You can be calm."

Eliyahu HaNavi at His Table

Talk Eighteen · 1:10:00

Eliyahu HaNavi was a ben bayis by Mori Yochanan, literally. He came and went in his house many hundreds of times. On Motza'ei Shabbos they sat together behind a closed door and learned, and on other occasions as well he would sit with him a great deal. On Motza'ei Shabbos, when Eliyahu came, not even his own sons entered the house. The door was locked, and he did not let them in. Whoever came had to go away; there was nothing to be done.

The few times I came to his house to speak with him about one matter or another, I saw the room where he sat. It was a small room, and a large table filled all of it. At night that table was covered with seforim. In the other room he hid all his seforim so that nobody would see them, and nobody ever in his life entered that other room. The room with the table was bare; the walls were empty, and I do not

remember whether there was anything there besides the table. Certainly there was nothing special. At that table he sat and learned, bent over all those seforim. Several times he said to us: "At this table I sat with Eliyahu HaNavi."

The wonder of it was that when he said such things, though we knew they were true, we were not stirred at all. It was as simple to us that this man sat with Eliyahu as it is simple to me that I spoke with my neighbor across the street.

A BERACHAH IN HAND

Talk Eighteen · 1:12:00

As I said, Mori Yochanan collected a great deal of money for aniyim nistarim (poor people who hide their need) and gave it to them. In fact, all the hidden tzaddikim I knew collected money to give out as tzedakah to unfortunate people whom they knew personally and whose true situation they knew.

Once, on Erev Pesach, an avreich came to him. He had small children at home and no money for the expenses of Yom Tov, and he thought to come and ask for a berachah that he might have some parnassah. The moment he walked in, before he had opened his mouth, Mori Yochanan said to him, "Take," took out everything that was in the kupah and gave it to him: several hundred liros.[105] In those days a few hundred was like thousands today. "Go," he told him, "and make your Pesach in complete simchah." The man had come in to receive a berachah, and he walked out with the berachah in his hand.

THE ENVELOPE

Talk Eighteen · 1:12:30

Another time, Mori Yochanan called one of the people who listened to him and said, "Take this envelope." There were several thousand liros in it. "Go to such-and-such an avreich and give it to him. His wife is ill and must undergo an operation. This is the sum the doctors are asking for, and he does not have it."

The avreich could not understand how he knew about him. These were his private matters at home; nobody knew of them, and he had told no one. He had just come back from the doctor, who told him that his wife needed a very difficult operation, a private one, which costs a fortune. He did not know what to do. He had

[105] The lira (the Israeli pound) was the money of the State of Israel until 1980, when it was replaced by the shekel.

not yet opened his mouth to anyone, and already the envelope from Mori Yochanan had arrived.

These are exactly the kind of stories that happened by my grandfather.

The Pidyon

Talk Eighteen · 1:13:30

For this reason, when people came to Mori Yochanan, he would sometimes look at their trouble and see that it could not be solved without a pidyon. His pidyonos were four hundred, no less; four hundred or four hundred and twenty, I no longer remember.

I came to him several times about my own troubles. Once or twice he told me, "Bring four hundred." That was real money. At one time I was earning two hundred liros a month as my salary from the yeshiva; that was the salary for the whole month of every avreich with children. When this happened, though, it was somewhat later, and I was already earning a bit more. Still, when he asked, I gave, and he made the tikkun. Each time I gave him the money, the trouble was solved.

Once more he asked me for it, and this time I was annoyed. "I already brought you once, twice," I said. "Do us a favor now, and bring us the yeshuah without a tikkun."

"Without a tikkun it will not happen," he said. "Bring four hundred."

I did not give it to him. Whether I could not bring it or I was being stubborn and did not want to, I do not know what the reason was, but I did not give, and that trouble was not solved.

A Daughter

Talk Eighteen · 1:14:30

Mori Yochanan knew about every woman: when she would give birth, whether she would give birth, everything.

When my son was newly married, he and I and all of us used to daven Shacharis in Satmar (the Satmar beis medrash in Yerushalayim). As I wrote earlier, Mori Yochanan would arrive there at half past nine, as if to daven as well. He would walk about there for half an hour or three-quarters of an hour in his tallis and tefillin, swaying, having his kavanos in his mind without opening any sefer, and then he would finish and leave. This was his fixed practice, and we used to meet him there often.

One day, a few months after my son's wedding, he came up to him and said, "Mazel tov! Tonight your wife conceived, with a daughter. You have a daughter; be happy." That was my first granddaughter. And it was so: that very night his wife had conceived.

Like Four Rooms

Talk Eighteen · 1:15:30

One day a man came to him and said, "Rebbi, I have a tiny house, hardly a house at all, and many children. I cannot manage in it."

"Do not worry," Mori Yochanan told him. "I see that soon you will have something like four rooms. Do not worry."

The man did not understand what "like four rooms" meant. Three rooms or four rooms, but what is "like"? A few months later he suddenly became able to get an unexpected mashkanta (a mortgage), along with help to cover the rest, since a mortgage is given for only part of the price. He bought an apartment that had three large rooms and one very small one. That was the "like four rooms" he had been told.

The Mouse

Talk Eighteen · 1:16:00

One day his doctor, Dr. Ayash, came to give him treatment, and suddenly he saw a mouse standing on Mori Yochanan's foot. He wanted to chase it away.

"Why are you chasing it?" Mori Yochanan said. "Leave it. It has come to ask for a tikkun. I know it. It is all right; leave it."

A Baby Turned Around

Talk Eighteen · 1:16:30

Once some people came to him about a woman whose baby was lying the wrong way. They did not know what to do. The doctors were about to perform a Caesarean operation, which was also difficult because she was then in the eighth month, and there was a real problem.

As soon as they spoke to him, he said, "Nothing is needed. She has just now given birth to a healthy child. Go to the hospital and see." And so it was.

Son or Daughter

Talk Eighteen · 1:17:00

He would tell every person exactly what he would have, a son or a daughter.

One day there was a couple who had several daughters and wanted a son. They went for an ultrasound and saw that it was a boy, but they were not sure, so they went to Mori Yochanan. "Mori Yochanan," they said, "she is expecting and we want a son. What do you say?"

"You saw on the machine that it is a son," he answered. "Why are you asking me?"

There was also the opposite case. A man had several daughters and was beside himself. He said that if she gave birth to another daughter he would lose his mind; he could not go on, he wanted a son. People want a son so that he will say Kaddish, so that he will learn Torah; it is a different matter altogether, not simple favoring of a son over a daughter. They do not mind having several daughters, as long as a son comes too afterward. A son is needed also for the mitzvah of peru u'revu. This man went with his wife for an ultrasound, and they saw a girl, and his face fell, like Haman's. Another daughter? He lost all control and began fighting with his wife as if it were her fault. A man does not know that if a daughter comes, it is he who is the cause, for when the man is first, a daughter is born. That is how it works.

He was under such strain that he went to Mori Yochanan and said, "What will I do? Another daughter!"

"This time you have a son," Mori Yochanan said.

"But on the machine they saw a girl."

"The machine was mistaken. They did not see correctly. You have a son; do not worry."

And so it was. A son was born to him, and all was well.

A Room and a Half

Talk Eighteen · 1:18:30

One day a man came to him and said, "Rebbi, my house is very small, and I do not know what will be."

"What are you talking about?" said Mori Yochanan. "They have already added a room and a half for you."

That very week the man received a letter from the iriyah (the city municipality). They were enlarging all the buildings in the shikunim (public housing blocks) of Shmuel HaNavi (a neighborhood of Yerushalayim), adding a room or two to each

apartment, and under the new building plan they added a room and a half to his. Within a short time he really had a room and a half more.

The Wallet

Talk Eighteen · 1:19:30

Once Mori Yochanan was standing in the street, and a man came up to him and said, "Listen, my father-in-law lost a wallet with a lot of money in it. We are searching for it and cannot find it."

"What are you talking about?" said Mori Yochanan. "Eliyahu HaNavi just now told me that the wallet has been found."

"Two minutes ago my father-in-law was still crying and shouting, not knowing what to do," the man said.

"Eliyahu told me the wallet has been found," Mori Yochanan answered. "What do you want?"

The man went home, and it was so. At exactly that moment the wallet had been found, just as he had told him.

"Why Did You Not Tell Me?"

Talk Eighteen · 1:20:00

One day a man came to Mori Yochanan asking for children. "You will have a son; do not worry," he told him. "But come and let me know when your wife is expecting."

The man did not come and did not let him know. One day Mori Yochanan met him in the street and said, "Your wife is in the fifth month. Why did you not come to tell me that she was expecting? Did I not tell you to tell me? Why not?"

He needed this in order to daven for the pregnancy to continue. When, with his thoughts, he had already brought about that people would have children, and he told a person what was about to come to him and blessed him with a son or a daughter, and then said "let me know," it was so that he would know to keep mentioning him and keep davening that the child should grow well and be born healthy and whole.

He Stepped Away

Talk Eighteen · 1:20:30

One day a man came with his wife to Mori Yochanan to ask a berachah. Suddenly, on the spot, Mori Yochanan, who had been standing beside them, ran out and moved away from them both.

"Why is the Rav running away from us?" the man asked.

Mori Yochanan told him quietly, "Your wife has this very moment become a niddah. I cannot stand near her now. She is not tehorah at this moment; I cannot stand near her."

"How can that be?" the man said. He knew that his wife was tehorah and that she still had time before then. Mori Yochanan gave them a berachah from where he stood and sent them on their way. The man went with his wife and told her what Mori Yochanan had said. "Give me a moment," she said, "let us see what he means." She went home and saw that he had been one hundred percent right.

The Ganenet

Talk Eighteen · 1:21:30

There was an avreich whose wife had studied to be a teacher and could not find work. She searched for a teaching position and found nothing, and he was beside himself, for there was no parnassah at home. He sat and learned in kollel, and the parnassah was to come from her.

He went to Mori Yochanan and said, "What do we do? There is no parnassah; they are not taking her as a teacher."

"I see that she will be a ganenet (a kindergarten teacher)," Mori Yochanan told him. "Do not worry. Soon she will be a ganenet."

"But she did not study to be a ganenet!"

"It will be fine."

A few weeks later, a gan opened in Ramot (a neighborhood of Yerushalayim). They were looking for a ganenet, and they took her. Little by little she advanced and became a certified ganenet, and that became their parnassah from then on.

"Now a Kallah"

Talk Eighteen · 1:22:00

One day a family came to Mori Yochanan whose daughter had become engaged. They came for him to wish them mazel tov. But when they came, he did not say mazel tov. He said, "Yehi ratzon that she should be a kallah."

They did not understand him. She was already engaged! But he said what he said, and they went. A few weeks later the shidduch fell apart, and each side went its own way.

A few weeks after that a new shidduch came up. This time they came to him before she became engaged, for they had already understood that the time before he had not wished them mazel tov because he saw that the shidduch would not last. As soon as they came in, he said, "Now a kallah! Mazel tov, may it be so!"

The Shidduch from London

Talk Eighteen · 1:23:00

There was a man who was distressed. "Rebbi," he said, "I am not getting married, and I do not know what to do."

"Why are you distressed?" Mori Yochanan said. "Your shidduch is in London! It will come from London soon. A man will come from London, and you will have a shidduch."

A short time later a man came from London and made a shidduch for him with his own daughter, and everything turned out well.

Five Hundred Lirot for the Trip

Talk Eighteen · 1:26:30

Once a man said to Mori Yochanan, "Chacham, I want to travel up north now and spend Shabbos there with my family. Give me a berachah that the trip should go well."

"I want a pidyon of five hundred lirot," Mori Yochanan told him.

"What happened? I came to ask for a berachah, and it is five hundred lirot?"

"Fine," Mori Yochanan said, "go. I am not telling you anything. If you want a berachah from me, pay five hundred lirot."

The man did not give it and traveled without it. On the way, as he came near his destination, something in the engine blew up. There was nothing to do. It was Erev Shabbos; he had to get there at once and settle in for Shabbos where they were going, and it was already too late to go back home. The car was finished. On the spot he found a tow-truck driver who was ready to come right away and fix it for him for five hundred lirot. He had no choice, and he paid the five hundred lirot there.

Had he given it to Mori Yochanan, at least the money would have gone to tzedakah, and he would have gained the tzedakah and not had the trouble. Mori Yochanan saw that he was destined to lose five hundred lirot on that trip and told

him to give them to him. He did not give them to him, so he gave them somewhere else.

So it was with me as well, the time he asked me for four hundred or four hundred and twenty lirot as a tikkun for a trouble I had, and I would not give it, after the earlier times I had given. It cost me more than the four hundred, and the matter was not fixed.

Two Voices in the Sukkah

Talk Eighteen · 1:28:00

Once Mori Yochanan sat in his sukkah, and people heard him learning with someone. They went into the sukkah and saw that he was sitting alone. They had heard the voices of two people learning! Apparently it was the ushpiz of that day himself who was learning with him.

The Coin

Talk Eighteen · 1:28:00

One day a man came to Mori Yochanan crying. His son had swallowed a coin, and it was stuck in his throat. It would not go down, and it could not be brought out. The doctors were thinking of operating on his throat to take it out; it was a danger to his life, and he could hardly breathe. The man came trembling all over.

"Do not worry," Mori Yochanan told him. "At this very moment the coin went down into the stomach. It is over; everything is perfectly fine, nothing is needed."

He went, and it was so. At the very moment Mori Yochanan said it, the coin went down into the stomach; the boy swallowed it and was freed.

The Old-Age Home

Talk Eighteen · 1:29:00

There was a man whose mother lived in an old-age home in Yerushalayim, in the old building where the home had been for some time. The care there was good; everyone was Jewish, everything was arranged according to halachah, and the food was properly kosher. Then the home moved to the outskirts of Yerushalayim, to a large building somewhere else, and there the caregivers were no longer only Jewish women; they took on all sorts of others to care for the elderly who needed nursing. They wanted to move his mother there along with a group of old women.

He did not want it, and he begged them to leave her where she was. They refused, for that place was to be kept only for special care for people who paid more, "A1" as it is called, and she was not one of those, so they would not let her stay. "Sir," they told him, "this is a decree. All of them are going there, and there is nothing to be done."

He went to Mori Yochanan, who told him, "Do not worry. She will stay. Be calm."

And indeed, they moved all the old women except his mother. They left her with a different group, women who paid more and needed care with a few more stars. She stayed with them. He asked the nurses, "Why did they leave my mother?"

They told him that the nurses, the caregivers there, had held a protest so that she would not be taken. They loved her and wanted her to stay with them, so they protested, and she was left there.

The Cats at His Door

Talk Eighteen · 1:32:30

Many cats used to come to the door of Mori Yochanan, crying for him to make tikkunim for them, and he made tikkunim for them as well.

His Words

Birchas Habanim on Leil Shabbos

Talk Eighteen · 1:01:30

Many people with sick children came to him, and he told them: "Bless your children with birchas habanim on leil Shabbos." He put great emphasis on this. The berachah a person gives his children on leil Shabbos is no joke and no small thing.

The children should first come and kiss their mother's hand. There is a great sod in kissing the mother's hands on leil Shabbos. The Arizal, for all his greatness, went every leil Shabbos to his mother's house to kiss her hand before he went into his own home. There are great secrets in kissing the mother's hands on leil Shabbos. Kissing the father's hand in order to receive his berachah is something else. Kissing the mother's hand is itself a great sod in the upper worlds. Fortunate is he who can do it, fortunate is his portion. That is, provided the mother is a kosher woman who keeps Shabbos. If the mother does not keep Shabbos, there is no inyan in it at all.

The Berachah Yaakov Avinu Set in Klal Yisrael

Talk Eighteen · 1:05:00

In any case, if the mother keeps Shabbos, there is a great inyan in kissing her hand on leil Shabbos, and afterward kissing the father's hand to receive his berachah.

Birchas habanim is a berachah that Yaakov Avinu established in Klal Yisrael. It is no joke. It is in this week's parshah: בך יברך ישראל לאמר ישימך אלקים כאפרים וכמנשה. What does "through you shall Yisrael bless" mean? That every father blesses his children: "May Elokim make you like Ephraim and Menashe." To a son he says: "May Elokim make you like Ephraim and Menashe," because that is what Yaakov Avinu instituted to say. A daughter he blesses too, putting his hand on her head: "May Hashem make you like Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah."

These things can bring it about that sick children become well. They draw much shefa onto the children. If the father then adds a few more berachos of his own, they too can come to rest on the children and do them good, provided, of course, that the father is a yerei Shamayim who keeps Shabbos, and he blesses his son on leil Shabbos after the son kisses his hand, or even without the kiss. These berachos are worth a great deal and must not be taken lightly.

Rabbi Yochanan was very particular about this. When people came with sick children he told them: "Don't come to me. Give him the berachah on leil Shabbos, and that's it." Birchas habanim on leil Shabbos is something very important.

The Table Set on Friday Morning

Talk Eighteen · 1:11:30

Mori Yochanan was careful to set the table for Shabbos every Friday morning. There is a sod in this. For many people in trouble, too, one of the segulos for a yeshuah is to set the Shabbos table already on Friday morning, l'kavod Shabbos, so that it stands ready: the tablecloth, the challos and the wine, everything waiting for Kiddush.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Rabbi Avraham Shamash

the tailor of Meah Shearim



Rabbi Avraham Shamash

Talk Nineteen · 54:00

This time I will tell you about Rabbi Avraham Shamash. Oh, how well I knew him! Knew him? He brought me back to life. He saved me.

I sat with him a great deal, and my son Avraham, may he live and have long days, sat with him too. My son sat with all of them, with Rabbi Salman Mutzafi and with all those tzaddikim, and he heard stories and teachings from them. My son grew up on these things even more than I did. He sat with them, and they showed him a shining face and told him wonderful things, wonders upon wonders. With me they spoke briefly; with him they spoke at length.

So, Rabbi Avraham Shamash, zechuso yagen aleinu. I will tell you, and you will not believe me.

He had a tailor shop in Meah Shearim, right where you go up toward Beis Yisrael, opposite Rechov Sonnenfeld, at the entrance to Rechov Meah Shearim. But there was no sign; there was nothing at all, only an old door. You would just open the door, and you were in another world. You passed through a thousand light years in a single minute. One door changed you; you were in another world, and you felt that you were in another world.

I once brought there a man who was far from everything, a man on drugs. He just stepped through the door, and he was completely transformed. It was that simple; it did not take much to transform a person. Had I brought you there, you would have become different people, and that would have been that. You would not need all my shiurim, with me straining my lungs. You would have become different people in a minute, in a fraction of a second, from the moment you opened the door. It was unbelievable, and I will never forget it. We would just open the door, and you were in another world, an enchanted world.

You saw a room whose walls were peeling. Instead of plaster, they were covered with paper. In those days there were sheets of brown paper, a meter by a meter each. I do not know if you are familiar with them, but I remember them; we used them to cover our sefarim and to wrap furniture and everything else. There was a glue that was made from flour and water. There were no glues then like there are today. They would mix flour with water, stir it, and heat it a little on the fire until it bubbled, and with that he had pasted the paper over all the walls.

You would come in (I am describing it now, and I can see it before my eyes) and opposite you stood a long tailor's table of the kind on which cloth is cut. Here was a sewing machine, and he sat at the sewing machine, like this. Beside him were shelves with a few booklets of yichudim, and on the floor was a big crate full of sefarim, tossed in and covered over as if it were old sheimos for genizah. No one knew that he sat and studied them between one customer and the next.

That is how he sat. You walked in and were cut off from reality. You did not know what was going on in the street; it was finished, you were in another world. The kedushah in that room was so thick you could have sliced it with a knife. I tell you, if that is what it was like there, we will never be able to grasp what there was in the Beis HaMikdash. There was kedushah in that room; even his tailoring was an extraordinary kedushah. It was beyond anything normal. To sit there was to be turned over.

Everyone I took there said to me, "Thank you." I took there people from the tohu vavohu of Tel Aviv and all those glittering types. I brought in one kind of person, and another kind of person came out. Suddenly you stood before the truth, before the reality of Olam Haba within this world. Such a thing has disappeared. It was something else entirely, of a different kind from everything I have told you until now.

The Pulse and the Yichudim

Talk Nineteen · 58:30

I would sit next to him, and he taught me how he examined a person's pulse. His hand would tremble, like this, but he would press it to the pulse, as the Arizal did. From the pulse he knew whether a person was sick and what his sickness was: whether it was fear, or coldness, or a ruach ra'ah, or what it was, precisely, and which yichud had to be done to bring the person out of it. His berachos and his yichudim never once came back empty.

At times he explained things to me, and he also told me interesting things. He told me about how he had learned. He was a talmid of Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah,

alav hashalom. All of his Torah, all of his kedushah and all of his chassidus he received from Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, already in Iraq. He was his talmid there, and afterward here as well.

He was a tremendous talmid chacham. You would not have taken him for someone who could read a sefer at all, yet he was a master of both Kabbalah maasis (the practical use of Shemos and yichudim) and Kabbalah iyunis (the study of its wisdom). He also wrote several kameos for me. In every kamea I saw the Shemos, and I was amazed by his knowledge. I acted as if I did not understand them well, and he explained to me each Shem, its form, how and what and all of it. It was a true pleasure to sit with him; it was Olam Haba itself. He also took out his pages and showed me exactly which yichudim he did for each thing. All of this was a mesorah he had from Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, alav hashalom. He also told me many stories of things that happened to him.

Separated from This World

Talk Nineteen · 1:05:30

Rabbi Avraham Shamash was separated from the world. He never ate salads. On the one hand he was afraid of tola'im, and on the other hand he did not want to take pleasure from this world. Not to take pleasure: eat a little of what you must eat in order to live. Salads, parties and all such things are unnecessary. Even on Shabbos he did not eat them. He never in his life sat in an armchair or on a sofa. Why? So as to take as little pleasure from this world as possible.

When he sat in the shop or at home and a fly landed on his forehead, he would not chase it away. He wanted to suffer yissurim as a kaparah for aveiros. The sifrei chassidus write that when a person suffers the yissurim of a mosquito sitting on him and does not remove it or chase it away, or a fly that he does not remove, those yissurim are a very great kaparah. Even one second of it, and he is irritated; one slap is all it would take to finish it off. When a person masters himself like that, it is a very great kaparah for aveiros. He was one of those who accepted their yissurim this way. Each of the gedolei Yisrael, at the point that matched the shoresh of his neshamah, stood ready to accept his yissurim and his kedushah, so as to reach the level that he reached.

He learned Kabbalah together with Chacham Salman Mutzafi, who was known as a tremendous mekubal and whom I also merited to know. But in reading the pulse I never saw another man like Rabbi Avraham Shamash. Even in his old age, when his whole body shook like this, he would place his hand and feel the pulse on

the spot. The Arizal writes about the pulse at the beginning of *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh*, and I saw him use it with wondrous precision.

The Stories

The Witch in the Ma'abarah

Talk Nineteen · 1:14:00

He told me an interesting story. When they came from Iraq, they lived in the ma'abaros,[106] and his wife became expecting there. In the ma'abarah there was a woman, a cursed witch, who made a kishuf on his wife so that she would lose the baby.

In the middle of the night his wife was suddenly seized by pains, and it was clear that in another moment she would lose the child. "I understood that a kishuf had been made on her," he told me. "On the spot I said some tefillos, and I also poured out water." He explained to me that one of the ways to undo a kishuf is to pour out water. "I took the barrel of water and poured it out, and each time I poured, I did it to purify, with all kinds of yichudim. I did this, and I broke the kishuf."

A healthy daughter was born to them.

Some time later, after they had already left the ma'abarah, his wife was walking down the street with her daughter when the witch came toward her. "What," the witch said, "you had a daughter? You didn't lose her?" She went mad that her kishuf had not worked, and she went and took her own life. " כן יאבדו כל אויביך ה"", so may all the erev rav be lost.

He hated the erev rav. He did not have words to describe them. He was a man who did not speak; he was a gaon of silence, who knew how to keep quiet. But when he had to speak about the erev rav, he would express himself in a few short words, rachmana litzlan, two words straight to the point. To talk with him about elections was like talking with him about eating chazir on Yom Kippur. That is how far it went. His berachos, too, were measured out word by word.

[106] The transit camps of tents and tin huts where many of the new immigrants to Eretz Yisrael, especially those from the Arab lands, were housed in the first years after the founding of the State.

Short Accounts

A Hidden Tzaddik

Talk Nineteen · 1:08:00

He was utterly hidden. He always tried to hide his greatness and his knowledge from others. "No," he would tell them, "what do you want from me? What do I know? I know nothing. You only imagine that I know something." That is how he was.

Once they said to him, "Are you a tzaddik nistar?"

"I am not nistar," he said. "If you think I am a tzaddik, then I am no longer nistar. A nistar is someone nobody knows about at all."

This is what he was always in the habit of telling people, to turn their attention away, so that they would not look into who he was. He was a man of wonders upon wonders in his conduct and in his deeds.

He learned half the day, every day, and opened the shop only in the afternoon, for a few hours, without a sign or anything at all. Once they asked him, "Why do you have no sign?"

"Because once another tailor opened a shop opposite me," he said, "and then I decided that I would not put up a sign. Whatever comes to me is my nisayon from Shamayim, and I will stand up to it without one. Whoever comes will come to me. The parnassah that is meant for me, I will receive."

The Wasp Sting

Talk Nineteen · 1:09:00

Once they brought him a boy who had been stung by a wasp, and his whole arm had swollen up. Rabbi Avraham Shamash whispered over the arm, and the swelling went down on the spot.

From that moment on, for thirty years, that boy could walk among bees and wasps and not one of them would touch him. They all flew around, but they did not come near him. That is how far it went.

A Few Words of Yichud

Talk Nineteen · 1:09:30

I was helped by him a great deal. Once, after a problem I had, I felt very unwell, and he came to my house and sat with me. Baruch Hashem, in a single minute he

could turn everything around. With a short lachash of a few words of yichud, he would drive the hardest illnesses out of people. He did this for very many people.

The Tooth

Talk Nineteen · 1:10:00

One day one of his grandsons came to him with a toothache. "I need to go to the doctor," he said. "He told me I have a problem with a tooth and it has to be pulled."

"No," the tzaddik told him. "This is spiritual. It is not what the doctor thinks." The doctor had said that there was decay there. "It is spiritual," he repeated. "Don't go to the doctor. Come."

He whispered over him twice, and the grandson was healed. For years afterward he did not even remember that he had a tooth there.

In Front of His Shop

Talk Nineteen · 1:10:30

Once a man was wounded near his shop, and his intestines came out of his belly. This is a real danger to life, and the people around did not know what to do until an ambulance could be called.

When the tzaddik heard about it, he came out of his shop and stood there. He held his hand toward the man's belly from a distance and said a few perakim of Tehillim. It took only minutes, and the intestines went back into the belly on their own, without anyone touching them. The man was able to recover himself, and all this happened in front of everyone. He did it openly only because he had to: a Jew's life had to be saved.

My rebbi, Chacham Yehuda Tzedakah, once said about him: "You should know that he is a tzaddik, probably one of the hidden tzaddikim. Be careful with his honor."

A Garment Sewn with Kavanos

Talk Nineteen · 1:11:30

Once people came to him weeping over a bochur who was going off the derech. What could be done?

"Don't worry," he told them. He sewed the bochur a garment. There was no kamei'a in it; he sewed the garment itself with kavanos, every stitch according to the

kavanos. "Put it on him," he said. As soon as the bochur put on the garment, he did teshuvah.

I could use a few suits like that, and urgently. He did sew clothes for me: in his time he made me several pairs of pants, one of linen and one regular, and other special linen garments as well. But mine were without kavanos. What can I do? I did not merit to be brought back in teshuvah by them.

Chazal say the same about Chanoch: he was a shoemaker, and he had kavanos as he worked. When a person lives by "בכל דרכיך דעהו", he knows the secrets of every garment and what it means. We see in the Torah that a garment has great importance. There is a garment called a simlah, a salmah, a chalifah and a kesus, and each is a different kind of garment, a different olam. I wrote about this in Sifsei Shani, in Parshas Vayigash I think, and explained the differences. Each of them belongs to a different olam, and all the secrets of these garments, according to how they are sewn, hold a very great sod. He knew them.

"Run and Save the Child!"

Talk Nineteen · 1:13:00

One day a little grandson of his was in the hospital with some problem. Suddenly the tzaddik called the child's parents. "Run, quickly, save the child!" he told them. "They want to kill him!"

They ran, and what did they find? The doctors, together with a group of students, wanted to operate on the child without the parents' permission so that they could teach the students on him. Meanwhile the child could have been lost. The parents arrived just minutes before the operation, when the students were already standing ready with their instruments of destruction. They made a commotion, took the child, left the hospital, and saved him. That was why he had told them to run at that very moment.

A Soft Egg Every Day

Talk Nineteen · 1:16:00

He was careful to eat a soft egg every day. He said that the Arizal was careful to eat a soft egg every day, so he was careful about it as well. In Shaar HaMitzvos it is in fact written that the Arizal used to eat soft eggs, and did not check whether they had blood or not, but relied on the rov. That is what it says there; it does not say that he ate one every day. But the tzaddik said he knew that the Arizal ate a soft egg every day. "If the Arizal ate it, I eat it too."

It was an egg that was practically raw. He only took the chill off it a little, without cooking it: a few minutes in hot water. Then he made a small hole in the shell and drank it straight from the shell, not into a cup. That is how the Arizal did it, and so did he, and he was careful about it.

The Voice on Rosh Hashanah

Talk Nineteen · 1:17:00

In the last year of his life, on Rosh Hashanah, he asked his family, "Did you hear the voice?"

"We didn't hear anything."

"You didn't hear the voice? I heard it."

"What did you hear?"

"I heard a voice: 'Avraham ben Simcha is summoned to the yeshivah shel maalah.' That was all. Avraham ben Simcha."

"Nu?" they asked.

"I told them that the time has not yet come."

And so it was. His time was drawn out until Erev Pesach, and on Erev Pesach he passed away. On those days of Rosh Hashanah he had put them off for six months.

Three Bochurim and the Army

Talk Nineteen · 1:17:30

His berachos brought yeshuos. Bochurim who were called up to the army would come to him for a short berachah, and that was the end of it: the army never heard from them again.

Three such cases came to him of bochurim who were being called to the army. To the first he said, "Don't go and don't come. They will forget you." And they forgot him. He grew up, married, raised a family, and through it all it was as though he had simply been erased from the list; he did not exist for the State.

To the second he said, "Go there and tell them that you want to enlist right away." He came to them and said, "I want to enlist." They told him, "We won't take you. We don't want yeshiva bochurim in the army," and they gave him an exemption on the spot.

To the third he said, "Go and tell them that you don't want to, and they will give you an exemption." And so it was. Each one did the exact opposite of the other, each one received his exemption and walked out, and they sat and learned Torah.

Limud haTorah is above everything. It is what guards Klal Yisrael; it is the main protection, not the army. The soldiers too need the protection of those who learn Torah.

Lost in a Sefer of Kabbalah

Talk Nineteen · 1:19:00

When he sat and took a sefer of Kabbalah and went deep into it, he would not have noticed a tractor turning over next to him. People tested this several times. On Shabbos in the Or HaChaim shul he would sometimes take seforim of Kabbalah and look into them off to the side, where no one would see him. People would make noise and shout right next to him, and he heard nothing. He was entirely sunk in his learning. I remember him, and I remember him very well.

Too Late

Talk Nineteen · 1:19:30

One day a man suffering from the well-known illness came to him and said he wanted to be healed. The tzaddik told him that he had sinned greatly in pegam habris, and that it was already too late. A short time later the man was in fact gone.

His aveiros of pegam habris were very severe by then, the poor man. Even the tzaddik could do nothing for him. Would all the tikkunim have helped? Not at all. Only teshuvah could help him before the Beis Din shel Maalah.

These are the things they did; this is their greatness.

His Words

His Shemiras Einayim

Talk Nineteen · 1:00:00

His shemiras einayim had no equal. He did not know his daughters-in-law or his granddaughters. He did not recognize them! He did not know who they were. They would come to the house, and he would see them there and ask, "Who are you? What do you want?" He did not know!

One day his wife needed money for something, and she sent their granddaughter to the shop in Meah Shearim to bring it to her. The granddaughter came and

said, "Saba, Savta told me you should give me money." He gave her money, a serious sum.

Later, when he came home, his wife asked him, "Do you know which granddaughter came?"

"I do not know," he said. He did not know who had come.

"Maybe it was not our granddaughter at all? Maybe she only told you she was?"

"I felt from her speech that she was my granddaughter," he said. "I did not just believe her; I felt it. I had a sense that she was one of the family, so I believed her and gave her the money. Who she was, I do not know. I did not see whom I gave it to. I saw nothing at all."

He walked in the street without knowing where his feet were. He never raised his eyes and did not know whether someone was walking beside him or not. Nothing! His eyes were like this, lowered, all the time. He was a tall man, but from his youth he had a stoop, because from his youth he always walked like this.

When he walked from the beis knesses to his home, instead of a five-minute walk he took a half-hour walk, to go around by way of a place where there were no women. He went around a whole neighborhood, the long way, a half hour on foot, in the rain, in the heat, through the stench, in Iraq! There the summer heat is rachmana litzlan, and he walked a half hour instead of five minutes to get home. Why? Because on the short way home there were women passing; that was certain. When he went around through the fields there were no women and nothing at all, and he could keep his eyes clean. He never in his life looked at newspapers or secular books. Only kodesh, only kodesh.

Through shemiras einayim a person merits very great things. Our yichud, everything, all our kedushah comes from shemiras einayim. The word שמ"ע is the roshei teivos of שמור עיניך. Shemiras einayim is something tremendous.

It was on this level, as I have told you, that the shevatim stood. What was their greatness? They were Shivtei Kah! What was their greatness? They sold their brother Yosef, and they compelled the Shechinah to join them in it, and the Shechinah joined them. It went so far that Yitzchak could not tell Yaakov that Yosef was alive, even though he knew it, because they had put a cherem on anyone who would tell.

Yosef himself did not send word either. For nine years Yosef ruled in Egypt, the seven years of plenty and two years of the famine, and he could not write a single letter to his father: "Shalom aleichem, Abba, I am here, everything is fine"? He knew his father was weeping and grieving over him. He could not send one letter? What kind of son is that? Nine years he was king! And how far is Eretz Yisrael from Egypt? Four or five days by camel. Let him send a letter to his father: "Abba, everything is fine, I am here." What son would not do that? Why did he not do it? Because he had heard how the shevatim had put a cherem, and he was afraid of his

brothers' cherem. He was dying to tell Yaakov, "I am alive and I am here," but without their permission he could not say it. Until he told them, "Hurry, go tell my father," he could not tell him.

What was their greatness? Yosef treated them harshly: go, come back, you are spies, you are not spies. And they did not lift their eyes to look at him, because they did not look at a gentile. They did not look at a woman, and they did not look at a gentile man either; such was their shemiras einayim. Yosef knew: "I can treat them harshly, I can drive them out of their minds, and they will not raise their eyes to look and see that I am Yosef."

Otherwise, were they so dull that they could not recognize their own brother? Until he was seventeen they talked with him and ate with him and saw him every day, and then he disappeared, and they did not know him? True, he had grown a beard. But what the Gemara says, that they did not recognize him because of the beard, means that at a passing glance, if they had only flicked their eyelids, they would not have recognized him. But had they sat for five minutes and looked at him, would they not have known him? What were they, illiterate? Were they dullards? They were kedoshim! Yosef knew: "I can do anything. They are tzaddikim, they are kedoshim, and they will not raise their eyes to look at me. In their eyes I am a gentile."

The first time they saw him was the moment he told them, *Ani Yosef achichem*. What does it say? *Ki nivhalu mipanav*. It was the first time they had seen his face! Do you understand what kedushas einayim is? Because of this the Shechinah bent to their will. And with those words Yosef laid everything open before them. These are the Shivtei Kah.

This kedushah of the eyes is a gift we have received, and through it we can come to holiness: *vehiskadishtem vihyisem kedoshim*. Twice every day we say in Krias Shema, with love: *velo sasuru acharei levavchem ve'acharei eineichem*. And people go to work with women and to study with women, for money; it is a shame and a disgrace. They have no emunah and bitachon in the Borei Yisbarach. A man sits with a woman: where is his shemiras einayim? In the garbage, rachmana litzlan. And what about the hirhurim? What is this? A man loses his Olam Haba, all for a profession he might perhaps work at later on. Perhaps.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Mori Chaim

Mori Chaim Yichye Sinwani, the head of the hidden tzaddikim

WHO MORI CHAIM WAS

Talk Six · 12:30

In time he also told me the story of his life, all of it. Nobody knew him. A few students in Ra'anana knew him; for them he was the rav. From time to time he would go there, daven Minchah with them, they would ask him a question or two, and he would come back. Once he also took me with him to Ra'anana, to one of his meetings with his students. Otherwise nobody in Eretz Yisrael knew him. He hid himself completely.

He told me everything he went through in Teiman, and what he went through with the Zionists in Aden.[107] This was later printed in his sefer *Makom Mikdash*, which came out after his passing; the one who edited and published the sefer wrote his life story there. It is all there: how he suffered, and how the Zionists were already trying there to uproot the religion. They did not even wait until the people reached Eretz Yisrael to slaughter their neshamos; they tried to do it already there, in the camp in Aden. The rabbanim stopped it, so they fought the rabbanim and starved them. Whoever did not want to be corrupted and become like them, they gave no food. He himself was punished. Mori Chaim went and shechted an animal there against their will, and they wanted to imprison him, and all kinds of things. He went through a hard war with the Zionists already in Aden, and he already knew their true face very well.

He told me that when he came to Eretz Yisrael, since he had been a rosh av beis din in Teiman and was known as a talmid chacham, Rav Katz, alav hashalom, the

[107] In 1949 and 1950, almost all the Jews of Teiman were brought to Eretz Yisrael by airlift. Most passed first through a transit camp near Aden, where they waited, sometimes for months, under the authority of the Jewish Agency's people.

chief rav of Petach Tikvah,[108] approached him and said, "Perhaps you will put yourself forward here to be a dayan in the beis din in Petach Tikvah. We want someone like the Rav."

He answered him, "I do not give my hand to the Chief Rabbinate. I know that *meirsha'im yeitzei resha*. Since they take a salary from the Zionists, in the end everyone here will go over to the Zionists and ruin the whole Torah. I have nothing to do with them."

That is what he told me. And in those days there really were very great people at the head of the batei din. I will not mention names, but they were true gedolei Torah who cared about Torah. But he already foresaw the next generation and saw where the Rabbanut would sink, until today, lehavdil, every get that comes out of there has to be checked to see whether it is kosher according to halachah. Mori Chaim saw all this in advance, and so he told me, "I did not want to go in with them, and I did not want anything from them. I have no parnassah, I have nothing. I sit here with my son, modestly, with the very little I have, what I eat here, and that is all."

What he did do was travel at his own expense, at the expense of what he did not have, to all the Yemenite moshavim, to strengthen them in yiras Shamayim, and to all the ma'abaros (the tent and tin-hut camps where new immigrants were housed in those years). He went to them to strengthen them in Torah, so that they would not fall under the knife of the sitra achra, of the erev rav, and leave the Torah; I mean the slaughter of the neshamah.

That is what he told me, and that is why he was not known. I was the first of the people outside the close circle of his Yemenite students to come to know him suddenly as a great man. Nobody had heard of him.

He told me that at the age of twenty-four he had already been tested on all of Shas, with the poskim, the Rishonim, the Rambam, the Tur and the Beis Yosef. I believe he said he knew all of them by heart; I no longer remember that word clearly, but I believe that is what he told me. He was diligent, he was already a great mekubal, and he was a tremendous talmid chacham. At twenty-four they appointed him rosh av beis din of Sirwah and the whole area around it. That is how far it went.

Even before that, he corresponded in Torah with Rav Amram Ratzon of Najami, one of the great poskim and mekubalim of Teiman, a famous man about whom there are astonishing stories. They tell that he and his chaverim would ride on lions into the desert to learn Torah there in the wildernesses of Teiman, and come back

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[108] Rav Reuven Katz, chief rav of Petach Tikvah from 1932 until his passing in 1963, the author of *Degel Reuven*.

riding on lions. There are astonishing things told of their kedushah, that every beast of the field would submit to them. They were people truly not of this world. A sefer has already come out telling about Mori Chaim and also about Rav Amram Ratzon, with very interesting stories, by a man known for bringing things from more or less reliable sources.

In any case, Mori Chaim was in contact with him, and Rav Amram Ratzon gave him a poem he had written that contains all of Kabbalah in the order of the aleph-beis, from the beginning of Kabbalah to its end, techiyas hameisim. Mori Chaim knew it by heart, and he taught it to me by heart, and he did not rest until I had learned it by heart before him. He used to tell me, "Review it from time to time." I was so taken with this poem that I told him, "Mori, I want to write a peirush on it." He smiled and said, "Write." Afterward he gave me a haskamah on the peirush. He, Rav Sharabi, and Rav Mordechai gave me wonderful haskamos on that peirush, and I printed it in its time.

He told me wonderful things about how he used to travel to Aden and to Abyssinia to find Yemenites who, because of the troubles and the hunger at home, had left and gone there for parnassah, and had left their wives agunos. In the meantime they had met other women there, in Sudan, and married them, and the ones in Teiman were left agunos. He would go to these men to get from them a shlichus for a get, so that he could arrange gittin for the wives and free them from being agunos. How many agunos he freed! How he fought over every single thing! He went from city to city and village to village to check the shochtim and their knives, and all the affairs of each kehillah, to see that everything was in order according to halachah, that there should be, chas veshalom, no breach and no outcry in our streets. He did the work with all his heart and soul, truly.

He also learned Kabbalah, and he told me of the great levels he reached when he learned it, wonderful things that I do not know whether I am permitted to tell. He was open with me and told me everything. He enjoyed it very much when I came and would sit with me, because I was the only chavrusa he had then. When I came it was a yom tov for him, and a yom tov for me. I could not come every time because of the distance and because I had no way of getting around, but I used every opportunity.

The Stories

How I Came to Mori Chaim

Talk Six · 0:00

I come now to my rebbi, the holy hidden tzaddik Mori Chaim Yichye Sinwani, one of the seraphim of the heights, zechuso yagein aleinu. (Mori is the title Yemenite Jews give their rabbanim.)

I have already told how our acquaintance began. It was in Yerushalayim. One morning I met Rav Yosef Waltuch, and he said to me, "Chacham Yosef, I just met Rav Yair Weinstock, and he told me that in Shamayim they are now proclaiming that Rav Chaim Sinwani, a Yemenite who lives in Yehud, has become the head of the lamed-vav hidden tzaddikim. I very much want to know him, but right now I have no time. I would rather you go first. Look him over and tell me what he is."

Rav Yosef was placing such an important shlichus on me, so I told him, "Very well, at the first opportunity."

It was not easy. Yehud (a small town east of Tel Aviv, near Petach Tikvah) was at the end of the world from Yerushalayim. There was no direct bus that you got on and arrived. Even a place that was fairly close meant traveling to another city, changing buses and being shaken about. To reach Yehud by bus you had to go to Tel Aviv, to the Central Bus Station, and take bus 37 from there to Yehud. That bus did not come every five minutes, only every so often. It was a great bother, and afterward you had to make the whole trip again in the other direction, back to the Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv and then the bus to Yerushalayim. It was a whole undertaking.

So I waited for an opportunity, and it came on the fifth of Iyar (the State's Independence Day, when nobody goes to work). All my students were working people, paid by the month or by the day, but on that day there was no work, so we arranged to travel together to Meron. From time to time we would look for days when people were free from work, such as an election day or this day, and travel to the kevarim of the tzaddikim in the Galil. These trips, too, I had learned from my grandfather, and I never left off what I learned from him.

We set out for Meron in the morning in a pickup truck, my students and I, and I told them, "We are going by way of Yehud. I have to see a hidden tzaddik and get to know him."

In their imaginations, the hidden tzaddik had already grown wings.

I told them, "I am going in alone. I have to examine the man and know whether this is really so or just fancies. You wait outside. Nobody comes in; I go alone."

We reached Yehud and searched here and there. We had no address, only a name, but there was siyata diShmaya, and within a few minutes we found his house

on Kaplan Street. I knocked on the door and heard a voice say, "Come in." I turned the handle, the door opened, and I went in.

In the first room sat an old Jew, thin all over. He had no shirt on; it was a very hot day, heavy with humidity, and he sat in a small tallis katan with a large black kippah on his head and a Chumash in his hand. He made no impression at all. Woe to the one who goes by impressions!

I went over to him and saw that he was looking into a Chumash. I had thought he would be looking into some sefer of the deepest secrets of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Now the Chumash is also the deepest of secrets for one who knows how to read it, but it looked like a sefer anyone at all opens.

He asked me, "What do you want?" I remember it as if it were now. He sat like this and I stood facing him, and I said, "I have a question to ask the Rav. Perhaps the Rav can explain it to me?"

"Yes," he said, and turned his eyes to me to hear the question. They were sweet eyes, large and pleasant and full of warmth.

I said to him, "I wanted to know how the oros clothe themselves in the Adam Ha'elyon (the supernal form in which the Sefiros are arranged)." I did not put it to him in these words. With him I spoke in the deeper terms that carry this meaning. There are all sorts of views and versions on this, and it is a complicated question. I thought: if he knows this, I know I am speaking at least with a man who knows Kabbalah thoroughly. If not, well, there are many who can rattle off the ten Sefiros and so on and think they know Kabbalah, and they have not even reached the door.

I asked him, and he said nothing. He got up, went into the second room, and came out with a sefer: an encyclopedia of Kabbalah that had come out in Yerushalayim two or three years before. I had already glanced at it a little in Yerushalayim, here and there, and it had not drawn me. He came and showed me the letter tzaddi, the entry *tzelem*, and explained to me how all the views and versions are set out there, and the conclusion of how the supernal oros truly clothe themselves in the Adam Ha'elyon.

The man understood the subject. But I was still looking, like the foolish do, for the "click." I did not find it. I was looking for some radiance on his face, some air of royalty, and he simply sat there. I was not yet impressed. Besides, we were in a hurry to get to Meron, and I could not stay now to examine him more deeply. One thing I had checked, and I already knew it. I wanted to leave.

But I thought, since I am already here, it is an opportunity. I told him, "My wife has terrible headaches."

This was in 5729. In 5728 my grandfather had passed away, and then suddenly someone came and told me about Mori Chaim. It was as though he had come now in my grandfather's place: with my grandfather I had seen with my own eyes what

he did, and now I was being told of Mori Chaim. I married in 5726, and my oldest son was born in 5727. From the day of that birth my wife suffered from terrible headaches. The birth had affected some vein or nerve, I do not know which, that affected her head. She went through all kinds of tests, isotopes at Hadassah, all sorts of strange machines they have deep underground in their basements, and they found no cause and no way to free her of it. She suffered greatly; it was a real pity to look at her.

So I said to him, "Perhaps the Rav will daven for her. Her name is so-and-so bas so-and-so."

He said, "Fine, she is already well."

I said, "Daven!"

He said, "I have already davened. She is already healed."

I heard every word that left his mouth, and I heard no *Mi Shebeirach*, no tefillah, nothing. He did not even raise his eyes upward. He told me, "She is already well."

To my great sorrow, I took it very lightly. I said, "Fine, thank you very much." I looked at my watch: it was eleven in the morning.

I went out, and he walked me to the door. I remember that he came outside, saw the pickup with all the students, and smiled. He said, "Go in peace and return in peace to Yerushalayim." So we had a special berachah with his escort, that we would go in peace and come back in peace to Yerushalayim, and so it was.

We traveled north and were at the kevarim of the tzaddikim: the Rashbi, Benayahu ben Yehoyada, the Arizal, and a few other places. Afterward we went down to Teveryah and came back to Yerushalayim in the middle hours of the evening, neither early nor late, around ten o'clock as I recall.

As soon as I came into the house I said to her, "Tell me, what is happening with your headaches?"

She said, "I don't know. Since eleven in the morning it stopped. Everything is normal. I am functioning as usual. I don't even have a slight pain."

I was stunned. She said eleven, and at eleven I had left him; that was the time he told me she was healed, and he was right.

I said to myself: the truth is, I was not so impressed with him. He passed the test in Kabbalah, but I was still not impressed; I did not see what I expected to see. And now it appears that his tefillah bore fruit, and in thought alone, not even in speech. And Rav Yair Weinstock says he is of the lamed-vav hidden tzaddikim. This needs a second examination. My mistake was that I went pressed for time, with students waiting outside. I have to go alone.

I did not let laziness stop me. I took a bus to Tel Aviv and took the 37. The wait for that bus was nerve-racking, once in thirty or forty minutes or so, I don't re-

member exactly. And do not forget that waiting in Tel Aviv is half Gehinnom; it is a war for shemiras einayim. It is not easy.

I came to him and knocked, and this time he got up himself and opened the door. This time he wore a hat, a round black hat of the kind the Yemenites wear, and a shirt with a vest over it. He held out his hand in greeting and said, "Come in," with honor. Apparently he understood from the first visit that I knew how to learn a little, and a talmid chacham like him, an anav like him, would surely honor a man who knew how to learn Torah. That is simple. He honored me and brought me in.

But this time he said, "Come into the other room." It was the small room he had there: you went straight through the first room, there was a little hallway, on the right a door, and you came into his room. I saw his room. There was one old iron bed. Beside the bed was a shelf, and on it were some ten or twelve small sefarim, each wrapped in brown paper, with the name of the sefer written on it by hand in square letters. And there was a big old four-door clothes closet, only one level high, but one of those heavy ones, and very deep, perhaps more than sixty centimeters. A clothes closet; what can there be in a clothes closet? Nothing special.

He sat on the bed, brought out a chair for me, and we began to speak in Torah. That is how it was: two people meet, there are no personal questions, nothing, straight to divrei Torah.

I thought: it may be that he knows Kabbalah. There are many mekubalim who, to our great sorrow, are only mekubalim. They know Kabbalah and know neither Gemara nor anything else. All their Kabbalah is like a man building a building in the air with no foundations. Without pshat, without knowing Shas well, there is no place for all those mekubalim. It is a pity. One must learn both. A person who already knows how to learn a blatt Gemara well may go on further, but first of all Gemara!

So I began to ask him questions, here in the Gemara and there in the Gemara, and he answered every one in its place. We spent about an hour like that in learning.

One thing led to another, and at some point he needed to take out a sefer to show me something. He opened the clothes closet, and I saw that there was one garment in it. All the rest was full of sefarim, in double rows! A huge library, hidden inside a clothes closet behind doors so that nothing would be seen. The sefarim inside were all wrapped, and on each one he had written its name in his own hand. Since the closet was deep, they stood in two rows, so it held twice as much, and he knew the place of every sefer and could pull it out at once to show it. There were all the sefarim on Shas, many sefarim of Chassidus, and many sefarim of Kabbalah.

He began to speak with me about all kinds of special kavanos, both of the Kabbalah and of the Baal Shem Tov, and we had a very interesting conversation. That is how we became bound to each other.

"Hamakom Yenachem Eschem"

Talk Six · 20:00

A week after this, a man came over to me, a relative of Chaim's. He was smiling, shaven clean as can be, and the smell of his perfume, his aftershave, was enough to make you hold your nose. It was plain that he was secular, and that he had put on a kippah for my sake. You know how secular people keep a kippah in the pocket of their pants for when it is needed; they take it out folded in four and put it on, and it stands up there like a rooster's comb. His kippah stood up like that too. You could see he was not one of those who wear a kippah, and not one of those who sit in the beis medrash.

He said to me, "Rabbi, I must get to Mori Chaim. I have a private matter for him. Take me."

I told him, "Listen, for me this is an opportunity. Do you have a private car?"

"Yes."

"Then it is an opportunity. At one o'clock I finish the shiur in the kollel, and at three I have to be back. You come at exactly one and pick me up, we will go to Mori Chaim, I give you a quarter of an hour with him on condition that you give me half an hour with him too, and afterward you bring me back to the kollel."

I would be spending my whole afternoon break on it, but for me it was a chance to get there, because from Yerushalayim to Yehud by car is less than forty minutes, depending on traffic, and we would make it there and back.

He said, "Fine," and so it was.

The whole way he smiled. He drove, I sat beside him, and he smiled and started talking politics with me, and I kept pulling him toward divrei Torah. I was trying to influence him and bring him to teshuvah, so I tried the parashah of the week on him, some idea, a bit of mussar, and right away he pulled me back: "So what about so-and-so in the government? What about so-and-so in the government?"

I told him, "Please, leave the government alone. What is this government? Start talking about your neshamah, about serious things." And he pulled me back over there. The whole drive was a race between us to see who would win: whether I would pull him into divrei Torah or he would pull me into idle talk. He spoke normally and smiled.

We reached Yehud and he parked. I knocked on Mori Chaim's door, and Mori Chaim ran to open it. He did not run for me; he ran for him. The moment he opened the door he went over to him, held out his hand to the man, and said to him, "Baruch haba. *Hamakom yenachem eschem besoch shaar aveilei Tziyon viYerushalayim.*"

I stood there. That is what one says to a mourner! This man did not look like a mourner to me. Shaven clean, reeking of aftershave, smiling, politics; is this what a

mourner looks like? But that is what Mori Chaim said to him, and right away he took him and brought him into his room, and I sat in the outer room and waited.

He spoke with him for about a quarter of an hour, and when they came out I went in. The other man went out to the car to wait for me, and I sat with Mori Chaim. It was an opportunity, a half hour, and every moment was precious. Of course I did not ask him what he had said to that man or what was going on with him. Even if I had asked I would not have gotten an answer, because the halachos of lashon hara keep a person from speaking about someone else, and it really should not concern me. So I said nothing about it, and we spoke about other divrei Torah. He, for his part, did not say a word to me about it either. I delighted in divrei Torah with him a little, and then we had to go back, because I had to be at the kollel at three.

I went back to the car and we drove to Yerushalayim. On the way I said to him, "Listen, sir. I have brought people to Mori Chaim once or twice, but this is new to me. What does it mean that he said, *Hamakom yenachem eschem besoch shaar aveilei Tziyon viYerushalayim*? Perhaps you can explain it to me. I am really curious."

He said to me, "Yes. You see me shaven? You see me smiling? All of that was an act in front of you, so that I could be sure that you and Mori Chaim would not sell me your tricks."

"What tricks?"

He told me that he had lost a son and had just now finished the shloshim. But this son was not an ordinary son, and he had not lost him in an ordinary way, and he wanted very much to know who this son was. "If you had known that I lost a son," he said, "I would not have believed you. You would have picked up the phone to Mori Chaim and told him there is someone coming who lost a son, and then he would tell me stories, and who knows if it is not all nonsense? Why should I rely on you? You tell him, and you, you religious people, I don't know what you cook up for each other. But now I know that he knew nothing from anywhere, and you knew nothing either, and he hit the mark exactly. Now I know that everything he told me is true."

I said to him, "Are you willing to tell me more?"

"Of course," he said, and he began to cry. Perhaps he did not shed tears, but he spoke about his son with terrible sadness and grief. This is what he told me.

He had a very beloved son who at the age of ten suddenly decided that he wanted to go to a Talmud Torah and did not want to go to a secular school anymore. His father told him, "No, under no circumstances." So the boy would go to school and run away. He ran away and was punished, ran away again and was punished, and he drove them all crazy. He said, "Give me as many punishments as you want. I am not learning here."

In the end his father reached a compromise with him: he would go to school during the day, and in the evening he would go to learn in Yeshivas HaMasmidim. That was a place where boys and children learned Gemara in exchange for tickets that earned prizes; it was common in our day. All of us used to go in the evening to Yeshivas HaMasmidim to learn another hour or two of Gemara, to review the day's shiurim or learn some more Torah with a teacher. We got a ticket, collected tickets, and received prizes, some sefer or things like that. For us, the children of bnei Torah, this was natural. But a secular child? Who goes there? Who would send him in the evenings? But that was his agreement with his father: he was willing to go to school on condition that in the evening he went to Yeshivas HaMasmidim, and so it was.

The boy began to be religious. On Shabbos he refused to travel with the family; he stayed home. He would eat only food that had been cooked on Friday. "He drove us out of our minds," the father said. "But we saw that he would not eat, so we had no choice. We started arranging things so that he could eat too. He was stubborn."

One day they discovered that he had broken open his savings box. Bank Leumi had in those days a box called *Teivas Noach*, shaped like an ark, into which a child put the savings he gathered, a gift he received, one grush, two grush, five grush. When it filled up, you took it to the bank, opened an account in the child's name, and deposited the money to his credit. This boy had such a box, and when it filled with money he broke it open. When they asked him where all the money was, he said, "I gave it to tzedakah."

They said to him, "That money is for you, for your future!"

He said, "I gave it to tzedakah. I also have to make a tikkun for my neshamah, and the tikkun of the neshamah is through tzedakah."

A ten-year-old boy, beginning to speak about such things!

Another day they discovered that he was fasting. He did not eat breakfast at home. He took his breakfast with him, telling them it was for ten o'clock, and did not touch it. In the evening, too, when he came home, he did not eat until after sunset. Once or twice they did not notice that he was playing such games, and then it came out that he was fasting.

His father was horrified. He said to him, "Are you crazy? You are fasting at your age? It cannot be!"

The boy said, "I have to make a tikkun for my neshamah."

"What, at ten years old one makes tikkunim? Fasts? Are you crazy? Grow up, then do it!"

He would not listen. So the father took him to Rav Elbaz, who was then the rav of the Beis Yisrael neighborhood in Yerushalayim, and said to him, "Rabbi, tell him

it is pikuach nefesh, it is forbidden; *venishmartem me'od lenafshoseichem*. Look, ten years old and fasting!"

And Rav Elbaz did say to him, "Listen, at ten years old one does not fast. At ten years old one does not even fast all of Yom Kippur, only half a day; one is getting ready for bar mitzvah, to fast then. What, you are fasting a whole day now? Tikkunim? Grow up, then make tikkunim!"

The boy asked Rav Elbaz, "Is anyone promising you that I will grow up? Are you sure that I will grow up? Does a person know when he will leave the world? What do you want from me? I don't know. I know that today I am alive, and I have to make my tikkun."

What could Rav Elbaz answer him? He said, "B'ezras Hashem you will grow up and all will be well. Now eat and drink."

The boy said, "I don't believe that... I don't know. Nobody promises me what will be with me in the future."

He did not listen, and every week he fasted a day or two. Nothing helped.

When he reached the age of about eleven, the boy became sick with cancer. That had nothing to do with his fasts, that is certain. He suffered months of yissurim until he passed away, and now the father had just finished the shloshim for his son.

He was a wondrous child, with all that he went through, and the father was very curious to know who this child was. He said to me, "The whole way I spoke politics with you. Do you think politics interests me? Do you think politics is on my mind? Do you think I combed my hair and shaved like this to show off? I did it all to mislead you and your rav, so that when I came looking like this they would think I am living in comfort and pleasure. Then, if he caught nothing, it would be a sign that all of this is nonsense. But I came with you, you knew nothing, and he opens his hand and says to me *Hamakom yenachem*. I understood that I was with a man to whom all the secrets of the world are revealed."

I said to him, "Nu?" I was all tense now. "Nu?"

He told me that Mori Chaim took him inside and explained it to him, only he did not allow him to say who it was. He told him that this was the neshamah of one of the kings of Israel in the days of Tanach who served avodah zarah, a king mentioned in Tanach, who had come down to make his tikkun. That is how he made his tikkun; he reached the last tikkun, and now he is in his place in Gan Eden. That is why he knew: his neshamah knew its source, and from a young age he was already making his tikkun. "He merited to complete his tikkun and go up," the father said.

That man and his whole family returned at once in complete teshuvah, and to this day they are a well-known family, all of them yirei Shamayim through and through, as one should be.

That is my Mori Chaim, who with two words spoke to him and revealed the truth to him.

The Esrog Tree and the Apartment

Talk Six · 31:30

In those days I lived in the Bucharim neighborhood (Shchunas HaBucharim, an old neighborhood in Yerushalayim), in an apartment that was very cold. That was what I could afford. Before my chasunah, Patilon the tzaddik had described to me that I would have a house of a floor and a half, entirely my own, with a garden. He described something as if they had taken it from Gan Eden and set it down in this world for me to live in. In reality it did not happen. My grandfather barely managed to get me a little money to take an apartment in Bucharim with key money,[109] two rooms, and it was very cold. My son was born, and so that he would not freeze in the winter, I had to cover his crib with blankets like a tent. It was real hardship, but that was what there was.

By then I had become close to Mori Chaim, and I told him, "I must move. It is really hard for me to live in this apartment."

He asked me, "What is your work?"

I told him, "I sit and learn; I am an avreich in kollel. But once a year I deal in esrogim." I did not earn much on the esrogim. I would buy a tree for a hundred lira and sell its fruit for six hundred or seven hundred lira. It left me a few hundred lira. That helped me manage; it was a nice sum, but it was not enough, and certainly not to buy an apartment. Where is there money?

I said to him, "Perhaps the Rav has some way, some advice, so that I can move?"

He said, "Yes. Find out how much you can get for your apartment and how much is missing, and look for a good apartment. Look into a good apartment."

Later I came to him and said, "Mori, I found an apartment." It was truly the apartment the tzaddik Patilon had described to me before my chasunah, exactly: an entrance floor, with a half floor below it and a garden. Something wonderful.

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[109] Key money (*dmei mafteach*) was a common arrangement in Eretz Yisrael in those years: instead of buying an apartment outright, a tenant paid a large sum up front for the right to live in it as a protected tenant for a low rent.

He said, "Take it." And he asked, "Do you have someone who will lend to you?"

I said, "Yes, I have people who will lend me every last penny without interest, for a year or two. I can get loans, but a loan has to be paid back. Where will I get such a sum? There is none." My whole salary in the kollel was two hundred lira a month. In those days there were no shekels at all, everything was in lira, and the lira was worth more than the shekel of today.

He said, "Nu, what about esrog trees?"

I said, "This year, as it happens, I don't know. I haven't bought. I was lazy and didn't go."

It was hard to get to Tarum (a moshav of Yemenite settlers in the hills west of Yerushalayim) to buy the trees there, and I did not buy just any tree. In Tarum, too, there were many trees, and one must know that even among the Yemenites a great many trees had been grafted. It was the work of the Satan. In those days the State would go looking for every single esrog tree standing in any place in order to graft it. I used to meet the grafters from the Ministry of Agriculture in Tarum. They threatened that whoever had an esrog tree and did not let it be grafted would not get feed for his chickens, and their whole livelihood rested on raising chickens and receiving feed from the authorities. So they had them by the throat.

I said to one of them, "What do you care if this tree is not grafted? What bothers you? We cannot make a berachah on a grafted esrog, only on one that is not grafted. Why are you doing this?"

He said to me, "Don't you understand that an esrog tree that is not grafted is full of diseases, and it passes diseases on, and we have to wipe out the diseases?"

It was all the work of the Satan, to drive them out of their minds so that Jews would not be able to make a berachah on an esrog properly and according to the law. All the esrogim that were not Yemenite were in doubt of being grafted; it was almost certain that they were grafted. So Rav Alfandari testified: those esrogim in Eretz Yisrael have the status of grafted esrogim. The Yemenites had brought seeds of esrogim with them and planted them here, and they truly produced esrogim that were not grafted, and suddenly people came to graft them. This caused me great pain.

So when I went to buy esrog trees, I had to check whether the tree was grafted or not, not only by the signs but also by testimony, because signs alone are not enough in every matter; there must also be testimony. It was hard to find many such trees. Even the seller I bought from had many trees, some of one kind and some of the other, and I had to mark which trees I was buying from and which not.

What does buying a tree mean? You buy it for that year. You say to the owner, "Listen, sir, take about a hundred lira," eighty or a hundred depending on the size

of the tree, "and the fruit of this tree, whatever comes out, until Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, until after Succos, is all mine to do with as I wish." I used to do this in Tammuz. That is what buying a tree means. So I would buy a tree and earn a few hundred lira on it, as I said: parnassah, but not enough to buy an apartment.

I told Mori Chaim, "This year I still haven't bought, and it is already close to Elul. I don't know whether I will find trees. I couldn't travel; traveling was not so easy then either. I didn't go, and I don't know what will be."

He said to me, "Go buy yourself a tree, and b'ezras Hashem you will buy the house too and move into it. Don't be afraid."

Mori Chaim was promising me; what could be better than that? I went to buy trees. I remember that I came to the seller, Mori Yehuda, and said to him, "Mori Yehuda, what about the trees?"

He said, "Sold, sold, sold."

"You have no tree at all for me?"

He said, "Here, there is a really small tree at the entrance. It barely puts out a few fruits." It stood right at the entrance, by the road, next to the entrance to the house.

I said, "And how much do you want for this tree?"

"Twenty lira."

I saw there was no blossom on it at all, and it did not even look as though blossoms would come out of it. And it was a small tree. Even if it blossomed, how many esrogim would come out of it? Thirty? How much would I have to put in to sell them? But Mori Chaim had told me to buy a tree, so I bought a tree.

Then Mori Yehuda, the seller, said to me, "Listen, don't regret it if this tree gives no fruit. This tree doesn't give fruit every year; it barely puts out a few. And don't regret it if you don't even get your twenty lira back out of it."

I told him, "And you, don't regret it if esrogim come out here in abundance."

He said, "No, a deal is a deal."

We shook hands that a deal is a deal. He became calm that the twenty lira would stay his, and I was glad that, if more came out as Mori Chaim had said, he would not make a sour face afterward or anything like that.

I went to Mori Chaim and told him, "I bought a tree."

He said, "Take this Name," and he gave me a Name and said, "Engrave it on the tree." I engraved it on the tree.

That year the tree put out hundreds of esrogim, beautiful ones, beyond nature. How many come out on an ordinary tree? Four or five special esrogim that can be sold to those who understand esrogim for a hundred dollars each. The ones who buy the most mehudar esrogim are Chassidim, who look for a Yemenite esrog, but a "Yemenite from Ashkenaz." What does a "Yemenite from Ashkenaz" mean? One

that is thin and tall and has a gartel. A gartel is a belt, like the one worn for davening. The esrog grows in such a shape that at its waist, partway up its height, it has a belt: it is narrower there, a ring that narrows it all around, just as if it were girded with a belt. It is something wonderful. How many of those come out? If any come out on a tree, one or two. And those can really be sold, provided of course that they are clean, entirely clean, with nothing, no blemish, no bump, nothing at all, and on an esrog tree that is very hard. And here quite a number of them came out for me, wonder of wonders. The other esrogim too came out mostly beautiful and clean, beyond nature.

Now I had beautiful merchandise, but one also needs fine buyers. Ordinary buyers pay between half a lira and five lira for an esrog; ten lira is already the most beautiful esrog that ordinary people buy. Here I needed buyers for esrogim of at least a hundred dollars each. A hundred dollars was then worth about a hundred and eighty lira. That was money. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent me the buyers too. One or two who used to buy such esrogim from me told their friends that I had esrogim not of this world, and they all came and bought.

From that small esrog tree I paid off my debts. The year after, I bought another tree, a more regular one, and it was the same, without a Name and without anything. Mori Chaim told me, "This will already accompany you from now on."

Of course, I moved into the apartment. This was still in 5729, toward 5730. When I moved in, I said to Mori Chaim, "I am making a chanukas habayis now. Perhaps the Rav will come?"

At first he said, "Yes." After a moment he stopped and said to me, "I do not have permission. I cannot come."

I said, "What happened?"

He said, "In Yerushalayim there are kelipos that are holding back the geulah, and I see them from here now. I know that if I come to Yerushalayim, I will have to fight them; I cannot remain indifferent to them. And if I fight them, since this is not a fitting time for the geulah, it could cost many Jews their lives. In Shamayim they hold me back because of this. I will not go and endanger Jews for this; I must stay here. It is impossible that I go and not fight, and it is impossible that I fight now, for this reason. I must stay here and not enter Yerushalayim. Once I was in Yerushalayim. I went in and was shaken; I saw that the war would cost dearly, and I left Yerushalayim. I am not going back to Yerushalayim; it is impossible."

And I lived in the apartment exactly as Mori Chaim had said, the apartment that had been described to me as if in a photograph. I lived there in peace and went on teaching my students, and everything was good. On the contrary, now I could even bring them to me for Shabbos, make Seudah Shlishis at my home, and daven

Maariv in my house, since there was already a half room suited to it, and there we could carry on things that I could not do before.

The Mukhtar's Daughter

Talk Six · 48:00

Mori Chaim also told me that when he lived in Yemen, he used to go often to the kever of Mori Salem Shabazi[110] in Ta'izz (a city in southern Yemen). That kever was known as a place of mofsim and wonders. Beside it was a small spring of water. People would daven, the spring would open, a stream of water would come down, and people would bathe in it and be healed of their illnesses. When a person was not worthy, the spring would only drip a little, and the water did nothing. People saw the wonder plainly: through tefillos the spring would suddenly begin to pour out water in abundance, and wonders came through it. The kever was famous; it was a tel talpiyos for the Jews of Yemen. For Mori Rabbi Shalom Shabazi was a very great man, an enormous talmid chacham in pshat and in Kabbalah. Not only are his shiros all longing for the geulah, every one of them a shiras kodesh, but the man matched his shiros and the shiros matched the man. He was a holy man.

Mori Chaim told me that on the way from Sana'a (the capital of Yemen) to Ta'izz, about half an hour before you arrive, there was a large Arab village whose people were bitter haters of Yisrael. Every Jew who passed through the village was shamed, beaten and spat upon, until the Jews were afraid to enter it. They would all make a detour of several hours around the village in order to continue on their way. That was hard, because it was all on foot, walking and walking through the desert in the heat. It was no asphalt road.

"I always went straight through," Mori Chaim said. "I wasn't afraid of them; I didn't make any cheshbon with them. No one bothered me. I walked straight, crossed the village and went on to Mori Salem."

One day, as he was crossing the village, the head of the village, the mukhtar (village headman), came up to him. "Yahud (Jew)," he said, "I want you to do something for me at Mori Salem's. I know you are going to Mori Salem, and I want something."

"What do you want?"

He had a daughter who had been born paralyzed in both legs. She was close to eighteen. She had grown up well; she spoke and she thought. But the upper half of

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[110] Rabbi Shalom Shabazi, called Mori Salem, the great tzaddik, mekubal and paytan of Yemenite Jewry, who lived in the seventeenth century. His shiros are sung by Yemenite Jews to this day.

her body was a person and the lower half was stone. She had no control over herself or her body at all. She had to be cared for like a baby and lifted onto a chair by hand, because her legs did not work. "It is a terrible suffering," he said. "And I know that you have a tzaddik there. Mori Salem is a tzaddik. Daven for her."

"All right," Mori Chaim told him.

"I went on," he told me, "and toward evening I arrived at the kever of Mori Salem. I sat there and forgot all about the goy and his errand. I sat in yichudim and kavanos." There are special yichudim in Kabbalah for connecting with one who has passed away and speaking with him; this is called the yichud ha'elyon. "I was doing the yichud ha'elyon there and connecting with him. It was a true wonder. All the learning there was a delight; the whole night was truly a piece of Gan Eden. I spent the whole night there in kedushah and taharah together with Mori Salem Shabazi.

"In the morning, after Shacharis, I set out for home. Before I left I stood and paused for a moment and said: Mori Salem, what I learned all night is for the Shechinah, for Klal Yisrael. This is something else, entirely separate from what I learned. I ask of you: half an hour from here there is a village of haters of Yisrael who beat the Jews. The Jews suffer greatly; they are afraid to pass through and must make long detours, and it is very hard for them. It lengthens their way, their time, their trouble, everything. The head of the village has a daughter, whose name is such-and-such, who is paralyzed. Perhaps you will ask Shamayim to heal her, so that there will be a kiddush Hashem.

"That is all I said. I did not say a pasuk to him, not a berachah, not a Mi Shebeirach. It was the minimum I could ask, without any connection to the rest, on the side, in parentheses. If he wanted to, he would do it; if not, not. I only wanted to fulfill my obligation. I had promised, and I kept it.

"I walked on and reached the village. The head of the village already saw me from far away; he was waiting for me. I didn't know what he wanted. He came toward me and ran to me, and before I understood what he wanted from me, he lifted me onto his shoulders."

That is a wonder, for a Yemenite Arab to honor a Jew; such a thing could hardly happen in Yemen. Jews were forbidden to enter many places, even to wear certain colors, and all sorts of other things. And here was this?

"He put me on his shoulders," Mori Chaim said, "carried me into the village and ran through it with me like a madman, shouting, 'Blessed is the God of the Jews, and blessed is His holy servant, Mori Salem Shabazi!' He danced with me and shouted, and the whole village gathered to hear. Their own village head was carrying a Jew and praising him. And he began to shame all the qadis (Muslim judges) and all the other men of their religion. 'Know this,' he told them. 'I went to every one of them, to all the qadis. They all did what they did, and the girl stayed paralyzed. Yes-

terday I met this Mori and asked him, and now, as he comes back, the girl has already begun to walk this morning.'"

What had happened? That morning the girl suddenly called him. "Abba," she said, "take me down from the bed. Suddenly I feel some kind of warmth in my legs. Something is flowing in my legs." She did not know what blood flowing in her legs was; she had never had such a feeling. "I feel warmth; something warm is flowing in my legs. Help me get down. I'm afraid to do it alone."

"I helped her down," the mukhtar said, "and she began to walk. She is already well. She runs, she walks, everything is normal. Who did this? Did the qadis do it? Mori Salem did it, in the name of Allah al-Yahud (the God of the Jews)!" And he began to shout, "La ilaha illa Allah al-Yahud (there is no god but the God of the Jews)!"

A very great kiddush Hashem came about there.

A Bone in Chutz La'aretz

Talk Six · 55:00

Mori Chaim told me that in 5730, when I moved into the new apartment and, as I said, began making seudah shlishis there for my students.

I had a baal teshuvah, who came back to Yiddishkeit through me when he was around twenty-five. It was known that in his youth, around the age of twenty or twenty-two, he had wandered around the world, and he had stumbled in an aveirah with a non-Jewish woman in Holland. Of course he did teshuvah, a complete teshuvah. They bound his legs with irons, as is proper; he did that tikkun and other tikkunim. That man did tikkunim for nearly a whole year, with harsh afflictions. He would actually prick his legs with needles to quiet his desire for women. He worked on himself.

"Rav," he told me, "I want to get married, and I don't know what to do. How will I find my zivug? I want a frum girl, and frum girls don't want a baal teshuvah like me, with a past like mine. I want one who truly has complete yiras Shamayim, and those girls usually look only for bnei Torah. I'm not a ben Torah; I work. I'm rich, I have money, but they aren't looking for money. They're looking for Torah, and that I don't have to give them. But I want one of those."

"Come," I told him, "I will check your mazal for marriage in Tanach."

At that time I had a gift, which I no longer have; let no one turn to me for it, because I don't have it. For several years I had gifts from Shamayim, and one of them was that I could open a Tanach and see a person's gilgulim, and what had to come about with him as a result.

"Come, I'll open the Tanach," I told him. I opened it in a special way, in the manner by which I knew how to find the reason there, and I saw that he had been married to her, to this non-Jewish woman. Nineteen hundred years ago she was a Jewish woman, and he was married to her. He became one of the followers of Yeshu, one of the first to believe in him. In those days there was such a belief: there were Jews who believed in the Yeshu of that time, and later they all left for Christianity. He left together with them; the period when they left for Christianity was about seventeen or eighteen hundred years ago. He was among them, and he brought his wife out to Christianity as well. Now she had been born as a non-Jew. That was why he had a connection with her this time too: he had a nisayon, he did not withstand it, and he stumbled with her. And she was his bas zug.

"I see," I told him, "that your bas zug is this non-Jewish woman."

"What? A goyah my bas zug? How can that be?"

"You must sit and be osek in Torah," I told him. "Since she is part of the bond of your neshamah, when you learn Torah it awakens her neshamah to want to be megayer, without any connection to you. She doesn't even know who you are. She once made you stumble in an aveirah and you fell with her; do you think she remembers you? You are one of dozens. But your learning Torah will reach her like telepathy, and she will begin to be awakened to Yiddishkeit. On her own, with no connection to you, she will be megayer and become a true giyores tzedek. Then Hashem will bring the two of you together, you will marry her, and that is your tikkun. A true giyores tzedek, not one for show, and not after she gets to know you, but without knowing you. You will get to know her afterward as a giyores tzedek with complete yiras Shamayim."

"I don't want that," he said. "I want a kosher Jewish girl."

"Listen," I said. "I don't know where there is such a kosher Jewish girl for you. I see what is written here. If you want, let's go to Mori Chaim. Perhaps he can arrange something else for you. Who am I? Katonti. I barely know how to read what is written here, that's all."

"All right," he said.

I traveled with him to Mori Chaim. That day Mori Chaim was in excellent spirits. When we opened the door he was sitting in the first room, and his whole face shone. He was truly uplifted. Apparently he had finished a masechta, or some secrets had been revealed to him from Shamayim; there was a light of special simchah upon him.

The moment we came in, he pointed his finger at my student and said, "What does this one want?"

"Mori," I said, "he wants to get married. He needs a wife."

He looked at him again and said, "He has a bone in chutz la'aretz." He meant that non-Jewish woman in Holland.

The bochur understood, and he cried out to him, "I don't want a bone! I want glatt meat! Glatt meat, not a bone!"

Mori Chaim looked at him and said, "I have a kosher Jewish girl for you, but she is thirty-two, seven years older than you. Do you want her?"

"Okay," he said.

"Nu, I've arranged it for you. Go in peace."

That was all. He went outside, and I sat with Mori Chaim alone. That is how it used to go: I would bring students, they would speak with Mori Chaim for two minutes and go out, and I would stay with him afterward to finish with him.

"Mori," I asked him, "where did you get a zivug for him? I know he has no zivug except the non-Jewish woman."

"Do you know how he died in his previous gilgul?" he asked me.

"Yes," I said. "I saw it in the Tanach." In his previous gilgul he had died in the Holocaust. The Nazis took Jewish men and Jewish women who were married to others, and ordered each man to be together with a married woman as husband and wife. While they were together, the Nazis shot them both in the head, killing each of them in the very act of transgressing with an eishes ish. It was a special cruelty: to kill Jews at the height of their tumah. He too had been with an eishes ish at the moment he was shot.

"Well, you know," Mori Chaim told me, "that eishes ish has already come back to the world, seven years before him, and she has no zivug. And he needs her, because of the bond from when he sinned with her then. It was an eishes ish, and he has to repair it. Now I have arranged her for him, so that he will repair the sin with her."

We talked a little longer. In one minute he had arranged it all for him in Shamayim, put all the files in order as they should be.

We went out, and the bochur asked me, "What do you say?"

"What do you care if you'll have one who is seven years older?" I told him. "Let's wait and see."

"But what will be with the non-Jewish woman, who is my bas zug?"

"Don't worry," I said. "In Shamayim they know how to arrange things and sew them together as they should be. When you meet the girl and want her, the non-Jewish woman will die, and her nefesh will come into this Jewish girl as an ibbur (a soul that joins the soul of a living person). You will be taking the non-Jewish woman within the body of the Jewish girl. Everything will work out. In Shamayim they know very well how to repair neshamos."

The man went out to look for shidduchim. But how was he to find one? He tried here and there, and nothing came of it.

Then, in the days of the Omer, I was making seudah shlishis for my students at my house, and a student named Eli came. He was older, about thirty-six, and looking for a shidduch. "This week," he said, "I met a shidduch through CFU."

We asked him what CFU was; it was something new.

"Yes," he said, "now there are shidduchim by computer." In those days the computer itself was something new; who had heard of computers? "There's a kind of computer that matches shidduchim according to the details. It's called CFU. I signed up there and got a list of girls. I called one of them and met her, and I liked her, and I said to her, 'Let's go to a movie.'"

This bochur had begun to do teshuvah but was not yet a complete baal teshuvah. He still had ninety percent of himself outside, as they say, and barely ten percent of his feet inside the kodesh. He didn't even daven yet. His head was still a poor thing, from the secular education that had raised him. But he wanted a frum girl, so he went looking for one, and he got one. And he suggested to the frum girl that they go to a movie.

"No," she told him. "What do you mean, a movie? Let's go to the Kosel."

"All right," he said, and he went with her to the Kosel. She said to him, "I'm going into the ezras nashim here to daven, and you go in with the men. In half an hour we'll meet outside at the exit."

"After half an hour I came out," he told us. "I was bored. What is there at the Kosel? I was bored. I walked around and looked at people. Maybe at the end I opened up and said one perek of Tehillim, just since I was already there, and I came out. As I came out, she came out too, and she said to me, 'Mister, get out of my sight. You are not frum; you are a fraud. I watched you the whole half hour. You didn't daven Maariv, you didn't do anything, you just wandered around like a bored man. That is not what a frum man does at the Kosel. You are a fraud. You're not frum. Get lost. I'm going home by myself.'"

"What a disgrace she gave me," he said. "She threw me away there like a banana peel and went off by herself, and I'm all upset."

He told this in front of everyone, the poor fellow. My student, the one I had been with at Mori Chaim's, heard it and said, "Wow! One like that is what I want! Do you remember her phone number?"

"Sure," he said, and gave it to him. It was easy to remember in those days; there were only six digits altogether.

All this happened at seudah shlishis, while we were still at the table. Shabbos was already over by the regular zman, but we would continue at the table until the

zman of Rabbeinu Tam to make Havdalah. We made Havdalah and counted Sefirah, and the bochur said, "Yallah, I'm calling from your house."

"Take the phone," I said.

He called the girl. "Listen," he said, "I want to meet you."

"Who are you?"

"I'm from the story."

"Go away," she said. "You're all liars. I don't want to see you."

"Today is such-and-such a day of the Omer," he told her. We had just counted Sefirah; it was the days of the Omer. When she saw that he said the right count of the Omer, she said, "All right, I'm willing to meet you."

They met. He liked her; she was young and pleasant. And she liked him. They met two or three times, and he saw there was a bond between them. Now, he was afraid she wanted him for his money, because he was rich.

"When you go to the girl," I told him, "go like a poor man. Park your private car a few streets away and walk to her as if you came on foot. Wear simple clothes, respectable but simple. Don't come to her with a gold clip holding your tie, and without trinkets. Tell her you are a simple man who works and learns, and we'll see what happens."

At the third meeting he told her that. "Yes, that's perfectly fine," she said. "There's no choice. We'll both work, we'll rent something small together, and we'll begin building a life of Torah and kedushah, a holy home."

He liked that, and told her it was fine. Then he came to me. "Rav, I have one problem. Everything is excellent, but I don't know. She looks young to me, and Mori Chaim said she would be seven years older than me."

"What's the problem?" I said. "Ask her her real age. If it's seven years, there's no problem. If it's not seven years, we'll go back to Mori Chaim and ask what he says. We have the tzaddik; we have no problems. Relax."

At the fourth meeting he asked her, "Tell me, how old are you, exactly, truly?"

"I don't hide my age," she said. "I'm thirty-two."

When he heard thirty-two, he said, "Oh boy!" He walked with her a few streets and said, "Here is my car. Get in."

"What?"

"Yes." He drove her around and showed her: "This is my house, and that is my house. These are apartments I rent out; they belong to me. And everything belongs to you."

And he married her. This is what Mori Chaim arranged for him.

Mori Chaim and the Couple Who Wanted a Child

Talk Six · 1:49:30

If I were to go on telling about Mori Chaim, there would be no end, no end.

In those years I had a talmid who is well known to this day; I do not mention names. This talmid's brother had passed away without sons; as I remember, he died without sons, and it was known that for many years he had had no children.

I had brought this talmid back in teshuvah, and his wife as well. It was a real pleasure. I would go to them and drink a cup of coffee with them in the evening, giving up my time to sit with his wife and talk with her, slowly, slowly, because they had grown up in another world. It took several visits of sitting with them and speaking gently, little by little, until she agreed to cover her hair, and afterward she went about with a complete covering, like our holy Imahos, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah. But the pants were very hard for them. For her, taking off pants and putting on a skirt was the churban Beis HaMikdash. Yet after much gentle talking and explaining, one day she called me on the telephone and said: "Rav, come; today I have a surprise for you." I finished my shiur and went with her husband. He told me nothing; he said there was a surprise and that he did not know what it was either. We came to the house, and I saw her in a long dress beside a heap of pieces of cloth. She said: "These are all my pants. I tore them into pieces and made them into rags for cleaning the windows and the panes and such things. It is finished." Their joy, both of them, reached the heavens. They were a splendid, yerei Shamayim couple.

But there was a problem. She had given birth to twins, and after that she could not conceive. The doctors said that her ovulation came during the shivah nekiyim. If she wanted a pregnancy, then by all means, let them transgress the issur niddah during the shivah nekiyim, and then they would have a son. But if they did not transgress the issur niddah, after the shivah nekiyim there was no ovulation, no children, nothing. It was a hard nisayon for new baalei teshuvah who wanted children, when the doctors told them: "It's lost! There's no way, except the way of tumah." What would they do? What would he do?

He came to me to find him a heter. I said to him: "There is no heter at all. Even if there are never any children, there is no heter to transgress the issur niddah in order to have children. There is no possibility."

Today I know an eitzah for this, and I will tell it here for cases where such things happen. A woman takes coral, singes it lightly in fire, and then pounds it with a hammer into powder. This powder is salts; it is all salts from the sea. On the day before her period and on the day of the period itself, on those two mornings, the first thing she drinks should be a level spoonful of this powder of salts, followed by

plenty of milk, or coffee with milk, because it causes heartburn, being all salts. Women who did this found that it regulated the period. It is enough to do it for two months, twice. Instead of a long period of six or seven days, it lasts only three or four. In many cases that is enough for her to become tehorah, to reach complete taharah, and then the ovulation comes with the mikveh night or a day after it, but not before the mikveh. It is a help that can help many women; it has been tested and proven.

But at that time I did not know even this. And as far as I recall, in their case even three or four days of period would not have been enough. She would have had to begin counting shivah nekiyim on the very day after the period, for her ovulation came eight days after the period.

He was in trouble, and I was afraid he would transgress the halachah for the sake of children. It is a grave thing, kares. Niddah is kares, bar minan: "and the souls that do them shall be cut off from among their people." It cuts off the neshamah. And know, by the way, that niddah is not only a married woman. An unmarried girl too, from the age of her periods, from the age of twelve when she begins to see them, has the full tumah of niddah, so that whoever was together with her falls under "and the souls that do them shall be cut off," and they must do a tikkun for the aveirah of niddah to repair their neshamos.

I saw that the man was in trouble, and I said to him: "Come, let us go to Mori Chaim. We have an address." I took him with me to Mori Chaim and said: "Mori Chaim, this is his problem with his wife. What do you say?" He said to me: "Good. How do you pasken for them? Gozrin shimshah atu lo shimshah (do we decree that a woman who was not with her husband is treated as though she had been), or do we not?" I said to him: "We do not."

What do these words mean? I will explain. When a woman has seen blood, can she immediately make a hefsek taharah, or not? It depends on when she was last with her husband. A woman can make a hefsek taharah, once she has stopped seeing blood, from the fourth day after she was with her husband. In the first three days after she was with her husband, even if she has no more blood, if she saw blood and it stopped, she cannot count shivah nekiyim. She must wait until three days have passed from the time she was with him, make the hefsek taharah on the fourth day, and begin counting the seven clean days on the fifth. From this we already have an automatic halachah: for an ordinary woman, once she sees her period, if it lasts two weeks, she keeps away for two weeks; there is nothing to be done. Afterward, as soon as it stops, she makes a hefsek taharah and counts shivah nekiyim; there is no problem. And if she stopped seeing after three days, there is no problem either: on the fourth day she makes a hefsek taharah, and on the fifth she begins counting shivah nekiyim, so that altogether she has eleven days from the

start of her period until she goes to the mikveh. Shivah nekiyim means seven days that are truly clean; hefsek taharah means that she checks and sees that she is already clean.

Now, what happens with a woman who saw blood for only one day? Can she now make a hefsek taharah, or not? According to the Rema and some other poskim, and in Baghdad too they followed the Rema, she cannot. Even if she was not with her husband for a week or two, it makes no difference. She must count all four days, and even five, and only afterward the seven. That is their minhag. There are places that keep six and seven, seven and seven, five and seven, each place with its own minhag, but not less than that. We pasken like Maran in the Shulchan Aruch, that it is not so: it depends on when she was with him. If she was not with him for several days and she saw for only one day, she makes a hefsek taharah the next day and counts shivah nekiyim. Everything depends on whether she was with him or not.

So Mori Chaim said to me: "Good." And he said to the man: "This month your wife will conceive. Do not worry; you will have a son."

He went out happy, and I waited eagerly to see what would happen. That month her period lasted only one day. Instead of the four, five or six days that were usual for her, it stopped after one day. And since, as it happened, she had not been with him for a week, without his having planned it, she made a hefsek taharah right away, and the night of her ovulation fell on the night of her tevilah. She conceived, and his son was born. Afterward everything put itself right on its own. After the birth it all righted itself, and he went on to have many more sons and daughters, a whole group of them. By now he probably even has grandchildren from them.

That was the story with Mori Chaim. With one word of his he set the matter right.

The Bris in Paris

Talk Six · 2:02:30

Some years after Mori Chaim passed away, I was in France. A couple of baalei teshuvah came to me and said: "Listen, we have a problem. The doctor said that her ovulation comes during the shivah nekiyim. We want a heter from you to transgress the issur niddah. We want children." I said to them: "Who will permit this to you? Am I a Reform rabbi?! There is no one who will permit it to you. Moshe Rabbeinu himself would not permit such a thing. 'And the souls that do them shall be cut off from among their people.' There is no room to permit it, even if there will be no children."

They looked at me as if Har Sinai had fallen on their heads. I said to them: "Listen. Mori Chaim has passed away, and such and such a story happened with him. But you have come to me now, and it is the month of Adar. I came here after Purim, and I am here on the twenty-seventh of Adar, the day of his passing. I have a talmid; I will telephone him now and have him go and pray for you on his yahrzeit. I know that he had great power in this; he healed my talmid. Perhaps his merit will stand for you too, someone will pray for you, and you will conceive."

On the spot I telephoned Eretz Yisrael and said to my talmid: "Yonah, see to it that on the yahrzeit someone stands there and asks for children for these people."

That was the end of it; the matter was forgotten. I went back to Eretz Yisrael, went on with everything as usual, and even forgot about them.

About nine months passed, and in the middle of the winter I came to Paris. I was standing in line at a public telephone, waiting for the others to finish so that I could make a call, when a man came up to me and said: "Shalom aleichem! Have you come for the bris?" I said to him: "What bris?" He said: "That couple who came to you." Whether he had sent them to me or someone else had, I no longer remember, but he knew the story. He said: "That couple who were trying to have children. A month after the tefillah you had said at the tzaddik's kever, that the man prayed there, she conceived. Her period lasted only one day; she made shivah nekiyim right away and went to the mikveh. Now they have a son, and the bris is in an hour and a half, right here."

I said to him: "Really? I did not know about it; no one told me." They had not known that I was coming to France. I had only just arrived, and they had not known to invite me from Eretz Yisrael. I said to him: "Here, I am coming." And I was at the bris milah of that baby, who was born through the power of Mori Chaim. May his merit protect us.

Baruch Hashem l'olam, amen v'amen.

A Din Torah for the Sheidim

Talk Seven · 11:30

Mori Chaim told me that one day, when he was still in Teiman, a sheid appeared before him.

"Mori," the sheid said, "we have a din Torah, and we would like you to judge it for us."

"What have I to do with you?" asked Mori Chaim.

The sheid explained that they were Jewish sheidim. As Jewish sheidim, they had a beis knesses where they davened. Now he had built another beis knesses for an-

other group of sheidim, and those who ran the first beis knesses were protesting and demanding that he not open it. "We want to go according to the halachah," said the sheid, "and since you are the rav of Sirawan and the whole region around it, you are our rav too. Come and judge our case."

Jewish sheidim who daven may seem strange to you, so let me explain. I have already explained this in my talks on Yahadus uMistikah and on Beri'as HaOlam ve-HaAdam. In the Zohar, Rabbi Shimon says that the neshamah of a person has a sospita dedahava (literally "the dross of gold"), and that the gold also has its sigim. What does this mean?

When HaKadosh Baruch Hu first created the neshamah that He placed in man, He did not create it completely pure. He created it with a material that was refined, and the neshamah came out of it. The neshamah is a chelek Eloka mima'al, but the moment it had to come down and take on form in this world, so that a person could cleave to it, it took on a little material as well. This material bound to the neshamah is very spiritual, and it has two layers. One layer is finer than the neshamah's other covering and is pure; it is called the sospita dedahava, and from it the malachim are formed. The other part is the coarse material, the dross, the sigim, and from it the sheidim are formed. So every person has above him both a malach and a sheid from his own root.

Often, when a person sins with grave aveiros, the power of this sheid falls upon him, and he falls into his own sheidim. A person who falls into his own sheidim is not one of the sheidim I spoke of before. He has gone down into his own klipah, and afterwards he can rise up out of it through teshuvah and the like.

Before a person comes to this world, he serves as a malach above. The Arizal says that many neshamos do not come straight to this world from the source of the neshamos above. Since the neshamah also has a sospita dedahava, before it is clothed in a human body it is clothed in the sospita dedahava and serves as a malach above for a certain time. Afterwards that garment separates from it, and it goes and enters a human body to shine within it.

The neshamah is never actually inside a person's body. It cannot enter; if it entered, the person would die, burst from the abundance of light. Only the nefesh enters. The ruach is joined to it and connects the nefesh to the neshamah, part of it inside and part outside. The neshamah only surrounds him as an or makif, and even that is only a small part of it; most of the neshamah remains above. But that small part is as though it were all of it. A single drop of blood contains everything in the blood of all two hundred and forty-eight limbs; the small drop of neshamah here is connected to the whole neshamah above. Everything we do here strikes, through the nefesh, upon the ruach; through the ruach upon the neshamah; and from the neshamah here upon the neshamah above, and it is all one bond.

So the sheidim have, not neshamos, but nefashos. As I told before, when I saw them, they were dressed exactly like people: some like Ashkenazim in Ashkenazi dress, some like Iraqis, some like ordinary Sefardim. Just as a person is dressed here, so his nefesh is clothed, his neshamah is clothed, the sospita dedahava is clothed above, and the lower part, the sigim, takes on the same form as well.

A sheid like this came to Mori Chaim with his request.

"I told him," Mori Chaim said to me, "'Very well. Come tomorrow at noon, and I will go with you to your din Torah.'"

He prepared his wife. "Tomorrow at noon," he told her, "I am going to faint. Do not be afraid; nothing will happen. I will be unconscious for an hour, and then I will come to by myself. Do not make any noise or any commotion." To her it would be perfectly natural.

The next day at noon, as soon as the sheid arrived, Mori Chaim left his body. The body lay still on the couch, and he went out with the sheid.

"Even after I left the body," he told me, "it was hard for me to walk, so he carried me on his shoulder." For half an hour the sheid carried him on his shoulder, until they reached their settlement, some faraway place where the sheidim live.

There everyone was waiting for him with great honor. He sat and judged their case, and ruled that this sheid could open a beis knesses as well: there is no monopoly on Torah or on mitzvos, and so he had every right to open another. When he had finished the din Torah, the sheid carried him back again and brought him to the door of his house. From there he went in by himself, slipped back into his body, and woke up.

The Secret That Had to Wait

Talk Seven · 27:30

One day Mori Chaim said to me, "Come to me tomorrow at ten in the morning. I will teach you a great sod in Kabbalah."

There are sodos that are not taught to everyone, and not every hour is fitting for a person to receive them. A person must be at a special time, in a spiritual aliyah, to be able to receive them. We are all human; we are all on Yaakov's ladder, going up and coming down, going up and coming down. One moment we are above, the next moment below. He looked at me and said, "Come tomorrow at ten and I will teach you this sod."

What a great simchah it was for me! To learn such a thing was a wonderful gift.

It was the afternoon, and I went home the way I have described: I took bus 37 to the Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv, and from there the bus to Yerushalayim.

This was the old Central Bus Station, by the Shapira neighborhood. On a corner there was a shop of junk books, old books. Every book people threw out of their homes he sold for a few prutos. I passed by there every time, because often he had seforim too, and for me it was a find to come across such a wonderful sefer for twenty grush or half a lira (the lira was the Israeli currency of those years). What an opportunity! So I always stopped there to look.

That day too I passed by on my way, and I saw there a sefer called Sefer HaRazim. One of the newspapers had put it out as an edition of its own. It is a book one may not read. It is a book of avodah zarah, of the avodah zarah of the generation of Enosh, a book from that time, and it explains how they used to worship the sun and what they did.

This interested me very much. Why? Because some seforim of kedushah have things of chol mixed into them. There are many seforim of Kabbalah, holy seforim, that have unholy material mixed into them, and woe to the person who uses it, woe to his soul.

For example, the Bris Menuchah is a very holy sefer, which the Arizal praised highly; he said not to use it, because the Names in it are deliberately written wrongly so that people will not use them. At its end there is a last chapter full of tumah, full of sitra achra. How did that tumah get into that sefer? Nobody knows. Wherever there is kedushah, klipah clings to it like filth. Apparently, whoever brought it out from manuscripts used a manuscript to which some book of tumah had been attached, and he did not know it. He thought it was all Bris Menuchah, and so he made a Bris Menuchah with a pegam habris in it as well. At the end there is a chapter that is pure tumah, avodah zarah of sheidim and all that kind of worship. It is forbidden, forbidden to have it in the house. Anyone who owns a Bris Menuchah should look at the last chapter, and if it is there, tear it out and throw it in the garbage: the last page, only the last page. The sefer itself is kodesh kodashim.

The same is true of the sefer Shorshei HaShemos. Woe to whoever printed it, woe to him on the day of judgment, woe to him on the day of rebuke! Such a sefer may not be printed at all. It is all Shemos HaKodesh, and whoever uses them loses his Olam Haba, even with the holy ones among them. But as always, kodesh and chol are mixed together; the klipas nogah, this kind of filth, clings to the kodesh to interfere.

The Shorshei HaShemos was written by the Ramaz (Rav Moshe Zacuto). He was a gaon olam and a kadosh elyon in Italy. The Chida quotes him on every side, especially in his commentary on the Zohar; there is hardly a page where he does not mention something from him. The Ramaz wrote down all the yichudim and all the Shemos HaKodesh in them, and he also included in it the sefer Shimushei Torah. Shimushei Torah was once a sefer in the hands of the Geonim, who would use the

pesukim, the roshei teivos and sofei teivos of the pesukim with their nikud, to make all kinds of wonderful segulos from them. Today the sefer Shimush Tehillim is available, which is a small piece of this, something on each perek of Tehillim. There are things that are permitted to do and things that are forbidden, and before doing anything a person must ask a chacham whether it is permitted. The sefer is wonderful; the Geonim used it. But if it is Kabbalah Ma'asis, it is dangerous and forbidden; if it is not Kabbalah Ma'asis, it is permitted.

I remember that Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri (the great mekubal of Yerushalayim) used it to find a thief. I saw how he did it with the key: the key turned by itself and revealed the thief. These things come from Shimush Tehillim, which he used a great deal. The malachim loved him. For others, though, it is something else.

In any case, there was a manuscript of this sefer in Tunisia, and a Tunisian named Avraham Alnekar joined to it another sefer of segulos, which contains Shemos HaKodesh alongside names of tumah and outright avodah zarah. In the first edition the printers still put them separately, each in alphabetical order: that of the Ramaz by itself and that of Alnekar by itself. In the second edition they already mixed it all together. Why? It was not enough for the tumah to ruin people that way; it had to ruin them more thoroughly, so they went and mixed it all together.

A person who keeps the sefer Shorshei HaShemos in his house should know that evil will not depart from his house. It is a sefer that can bring every kind of trouble into his home and even lead his children off the derech. It is forbidden to keep this sefer in the house. One must take the pages apart and scatter them among several genizos, so that nobody can later come and put them back together into a sefer. In it there are things that are truly tumah; in one part he even writes that it is tumah. Bar minan, the things of tumah that are in there! It is all mixed together, Rachmana litzlan. And many people do not know that it is tumah. They think, "A chacham wrote it; it is fine." But the chacham did not write it. Tumah got mixed in there.

At that time I did not yet know that sefer, because it had not yet been printed. But I already knew about seforim that have such things mixed into them, like the Bris Menuchah and others. Even in Raziel HaMalach there are passages that do not look right and do not smell good. There are passages of Kabbalah Ma'asis that are forbidden to do; there are wonderful passages worth knowing; and there are passages that one may not even know. It is all mixed together. The Raziel HaMalach we have today is not really Sefer Raziel HaMalach; the name was simply put on it. It is a collection of passages from several manuscripts that someone put together and gave that name.

So when I saw the Sefer HaRazim, I bought it. It was a thin booklet; I do not remember how much I paid for it, less than half a lira, a few dozen grush, maybe

less. As soon as I took it, I understood that I was taking an outright book of tumah, bar minan. But I said to myself: I need to know it, so that I will know where this has gotten mixed into kedushah and can separate them. If a person cannot tell a chickpea from a worm, he will eat the worm too. He must know where the worm is so he can throw it away; to know which chickpea has a worm in it, he must know what worms look like. That is what I thought.

I read it during the bus ride. As soon as I finished reading, I tore the pages to pieces and threw them away with contempt, as tumah.

The next day I got up to prepare to go to Mori Chaim. Of course I went to the mikveh first, to receive this wonderful gift from him.

Mori Chaim was a punctual man; he was like one of the Yekkes with their punctuality. Let me tell you what the punctuality of the Yekkes is. I was once in Zurich (in Switzerland), where Minchah was at one o'clock. I came at five to one, and to my surprise there was not a single person in the beis knesses. I was the first, or perhaps the second; I no longer remember. Five to one, five minutes before tefillah! At one minute to one there was still nobody. At one o'clock there were already two minyanim, and they began Minchah. That is punctuality! It has nothing to do with the Israeli mentality.

Mori Chaim was punctual, punctual, punctual. If he told me ten o'clock, it was ten o'clock, as Sefer Yetzirah says: "Ten and not nine, ten and not eleven." So I knew I had to set out in good time, with the buses and all the traveling, and at exactly ten I arrived at the door of his house.

I knocked on the door, and nobody opened. I thought he must have been delayed at his daughter's, since she lived further along the same street, Rechov Kaplan. Perhaps he really was at his daughter's and would come any minute; I would go out to meet him. I went out, and from far off I saw the figure of Mori Chaim coming toward me with his staff, an old man's walking stick. I ran quickly toward him.

"Shalom, Mori Chaim," I said.

He did not answer me. He ignored me.

I came closer. "Mori Chaim, shalom."

He took his stick and pushed me away with it. "Who are you?" he said, and walked on without speaking to me.

What did he mean, "Who are you?" Did he not know me? He walked toward his house, and I followed him. "Mori Chaim, what happened?" He did not answer and paid me no attention at all; I was air. But I am stubborn. I followed him the whole way: "Mori Chaim, Mori Chaim." When we reached the courtyard of his son's house, where he lived, he ran ahead quickly, like a young boy, opened the door with

his key and shut it behind him so that I could not come in. He did not say a word to me, in tremendous anger at me. What had I done? I did not know.

It was then ten o'clock, a few minutes after ten. I knocked on the door and called out, "Mori Chaim, please open! Mori Chaim, please open!" I was speaking to the trees and the stones; I had become Shlomo HaMelech. The difference between me and Shlomo HaMelech was that when Shlomo spoke of the trees and the stones, he spoke words of chochmah; I only spoke to the door. "Mori Chaim, please open," and I knocked and knocked and knocked, for an hour, an hour and a half. There was no voice, no answer, no response. I did not give up. I said, "I am not moving from here."

At about a quarter to twelve his daughter-in-law came home. She knew me. As soon as she opened the door, I went in. She let me in; she knew I was like one of the household by Mori Chaim. I went to his room, opened the door, stood there and said, "Mori Chaim, what happened?"

He looked at me with eyes that cast terror and said, "Yesterday on the bus you read a book of avodah zarah, and now you come to learn sodos of kedushah? Get out of here!"

Rabbosai, apart from the Borei Olam, nobody saw me. Nobody. Nobody understood what book I had bought. People saw me reading, but nobody noticed what I was reading; nobody knew what it was. There was nobody on the bus who had anything to do with such matters. And Mori Chaim threw it in my face like that.

"Mori Chaim," I said, "you know that I am a researcher. I do not only learn Torah; I also research Torah. The Rambam writes that he had the avodah zarah books of the generation of Enosh before his eyes and saw them; he mentions it in a sefer he wrote. I was only curious to see it. But I ask mechilah, and I promise I will not do such foolish things anymore."

I sat there like a small child. I do not know whether there were tears in my eyes, but with a broken heart I asked mechilah. Then his gentle face came back to him, with all its softness, that innocent, pleasant face.

"All right," he said, "sit down. But I will not teach you; you are not worthy now. With what you did, you have drawn a great tumah onto your neshamah. When it goes away, we will talk."

He sat with me and we spoke of other divrei Torah, and then I got up and left.

After that I went to him many, many times, and he never said a word about it to me, and I never said a word to him; I was afraid to bring it up. After a long time, I do not remember exactly, perhaps a year or more, I came to him one day as usual, and he said to me, "Come. Now is the time."

He stood up in honor of this Torah. He always sat on his bed, because he was weak, a frail man; but in honor of this he stood up. He stood by the window and

began to explain it to me. He wrote one line and said, "Here, this is the explanation; it is like this." He gave me what he could not give me then, when he had been so strict with me.

"The Doctors Say, and I Say"

Talk Seven · 43:30

One day a friend of mine from Canada called me. His brother's son, a small child, had fallen ill with a grave illness, a large growth in the head, rachmana litzlan, rachmana lishezvan. The doctors wanted to operate on his head, and they had put it before the family this way: if they did not operate, the growth would kill him. If they did operate, he might die on the table, since in the end they would be working on the brain. Or they might succeed in saving his life, but he would no longer be normal. He would be a vegetable. The family had to decide.

He asked me to go to Mori Chaim and ask him what to do, because I had told them in Canada about Mori Chaim and the stories about him. He would of course pay all my expenses; I was not a man who could lay out such money from my own pocket. And he wanted an answer quickly.

I took a special taxi, there and back. It cost me sixty lira,[111] which was a lot of money then. Sixty, *"ששים המה מלכות"*. But what of it? He would pay; there was no choice.

I came to Mori Chaim and told him the child's name and the whole matter. He thought for one moment, right there, and said to me, "Tell them to do the operation. The child will be healthy and whole and completely normal. They should not be afraid."

I went back. There were no cell phones then, none of the toys people have today; I had to get home to make a call. I reached Yerushalayim and called him from my house. He said to me, "R' Yosef, the Rebbe, the tzaddik, probably did not understand what you told him. It is obvious that the boy will not be normal; the doctors have already decided that. The question is whether to keep him alive or to leave him as he is."

"But Mori Chaim said clearly that he would be as normal as anyone," I told him.

"Go and ask him again," he said.

So again I took a special taxi and went to Mori Chaim. "Mori Chaim," I said, "perhaps I did not understand the Rav?"

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[111] The lira was the Israeli currency before it was replaced by the shekel in 1980.

"No," he said, "you understood correctly. The doctors say, and I say. Who are they? Let them do their work. This child will be as healthy as anyone."

I went back and told him. And so it was. The operation went well, and the child grew up. Today he is alive and completely normal, without any defect even in his speech.

"This Month"

Talk Seven · 47:00

My friend from Toronto had a friend of his own, one of the most respected people there. One day this man appeared at my house in Yerushalayim with his wife, a young couple married for some years. He told me that my friend had sent him. They had no children, and the doctors gave them no hope of having any. He had come to Eretz Yisrael for a special course of treatments at Hadassah (the large hospital in Yerushalayim), having heard that there were special tests there and that perhaps they could still help him have children. My friend had told him, "Since you are going to Yerushalayim anyway, go to him, and he will take you to the Rebbe from Yehud."

I took him to Mori Chaim. Mori Chaim looked at him and did not bless him. He said neither yes nor no. I understood that when he says neither yes nor no, it does not mean anything good. But I told the man, "Listen, we must not give up. The Rav did not answer now; next week we will be at his door again."

And so it was. The man came with me again and again, two or three times. One time we came to him and I saw that Mori Chaim was not well. It was a little before they took him to the hospital, the time when he laughed at the doctors. They had told him something about "flesh of worms," and he said, "What worms? I have worms? There is no rimah or tolei'ah in me. What are they talking about?" That day I saw that he was pale, and I said to the man, "This is the moment. Mori Chaim must not slip out of our hands before you have children. Now beg him. Plead with him."

The man began to cry. "Mori Chaim, Mori Chaim," he said, he wanted a son. Whatever would come of the treatments, he needed this.

Mori Chaim, as weak as he was, looked at him and said, "Good. This month your wife will conceive. You will have a son."

The man went out in great joy. A month passed, then two, then two months and a bit more. I did not ask him whether Mori Chaim's words had come true. I do not go into other people's lives: if they tell me, I listen; if they do not, I do not hear.

One day he came to me and said, "Listen, Mori Chaim was right. That very month, as he said, my wife conceived. But I waited another month to be certain that it was not my imagination, that it was sure, that it was holding. Baruch Hashem, what he said worked; everything is fine. Now come with me. We will go to him and thank him. Baruch Hashem, we truly merited it."

And so we did. After his wife gave birth to the first, more children came, and for those they no longer needed Mori Chaim. All of them were born by caesarean. Later, when I was in Canada, I went to visit him once, and his house, baruch Hashem, was already full of boys and girls sitting there and playing.

Two Women from Toronto

Talk Seven · 52:30

I could go on at length. There is still to tell how Mori Chaim came to know Chacham Mordechai Sharabi (the great mekubal of Yerushalayim) as an orphan boy. The boy used to learn Mishnayos together with a certain mori who had taken him in, and afterward Mori Chaim took him and raised him in his own home, and there was a very close friendship between them. But there would be no end to it. I will tell instead, briefly, some other stories that are connected to Mori Chaim only indirectly, but in which one sees the hashgachah elyonah, His greatness and His watching over the world, to see a little of the deeds of Hashem, how awesome they are.

One summer day a big van, the kind that holds twenty people, stopped by my house in Yerushalayim. Two men got out and came up to me.

"Who are you?"

"We are from Canada, from Toronto."

"Good. And what do you want?"

Two women were sick with the well-known illness, and they wanted a berachah from Mori Chaim. They had heard about him through the man whose wife had conceived. *Chavrach chavra is leih*, and your friend's friend also has a friend; all the stories had spread there in Toronto. "We came to you so that you would take us to Mori Chaim."

Why not? They had a car, and I had no car of my own, so this was a chance for me to get to Mori Chaim. "Let's go," I told them. I got into the car with them on the spot, and we drove to Mori Chaim. The two women were in the car with their daughters and the small children, everyone; they had come to Eretz Yisrael on vacation.

I brought the two women in before Mori Chaim together with their husbands. Mori Chaim of course did not look at the women; they only stood near him and asked for a berachah, and he blessed both of them with a refuah sheleimah. After they went out he said to me, "Mrs. A will be saved; she will be healthy. Mrs. H will pass away from the illness. It is a gezeirah from Shamayim."

Out of pity for both of them, since they were suffering, I said to them, "Listen. Now I will take you back to Yerushalayim, but not the way you are used to. I want to show you antiquities, wonderful things."

Instead of going back by the regular road, I took them by a road that passes through Givon. Givon, the city where Yehoshua made the sun stand still, is a hill that is called al-Jib today. As we passed it I said to the driver, "Stop. Do you see this place?" I was showing him an empty hill.

"So? Yes, I see it. What is it?"

"Watch what I do," I said. "ברוך שעשה ניסים לאבותינו במקום הזה."

"What? What's that?"

"Here Yehoshua made the sun stand still. This is Givon. He did miracles for our fathers in this place. Mach a berachah. Make the berachah."

"Can you show me some more interesting places?" he asked.

"Why not? Come with me."

We drove straight from there. First I took him to Kivrei HaMelachim,[112] where King Munbaz and Queen Helene were buried, a very wonderful place. There I explained to him the mikvaos: how they cut channels and grooves into the rock so that the water would run straight into the mikveh and not be mayim she'uvim. I showed him this so that they would understand how carefully taharah was guarded in the days of the Bayis Sheini.

From there I took him to the place that is easy for you to find today; it is called the Tayeles at Armon HaNatziv.[113] In those days there was no Tayeles and no Armon HaNatziv; they were only beginning to put up the first buildings, as far as I remember. From there you look down on Har HaBayis; the place stands higher than Har HaBayis, and the whole of it is spread out before you.

"Do you know where you are standing?" I asked him.

"Where am I standing?"

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[112] An ancient burial cave north of the Old City of Yerushalayim, known as the burial place of Queen Helene of Adiabene, who became a giyores together with her son Munbaz in the days of the Bayis Sheini.

[113] A hill in the south of Yerushalayim, named for the residence of the British High Commissioner from the years of the British Mandate. The promenade there looks out over the Old City and Har HaBayis.

"Look," I said, "you have to learn to understand this. The road we just came on is called Derech Gav HaHar (the ridge road). Four thousand years ago they built their roads along the back of the ridge, not along the slopes, for fear of falling stones and landslides. They always traveled along the top of the ridge. This is a road of four thousand years." That is the road that is called today Derech Chevron, which runs close beside the ridge road; it is built on an ancient Roman road, a very old road.

"This is the road," I told him, "on which we see that Yaakov Avinu, coming from Shechem, traveled along this ridge and came to Kever Rochel. He passed along this very road at Kever Rochel, on his way to Beis Lechem, on his way to Chevron. That is this road; it is called Gav HaHar. And just as Yaakov came from Shechem along this road and reached Kever Rochel, Avraham came from Chevron along this road to Har HaBayis to bind Yitzchak, and he arrived here. You are standing," I told him, "in a place where Avraham and Yitzchak and Yishmael stood, and Eliezer. This is the place. Look. Here you are at the top of the hill, on the road. 'וירא את המקום מרחוק': this is that place.

"Come, take a little imagination. Here Avraham and Yitzchak have stopped, and Avraham is telling Eliezer and Yishmael, 'שבו לכם פה עם החמור, ואני והנער נלכה'. Do you see this slope going down? Here Avraham and Yitzchak went down. Picture it now: Yitzchak walking with the wood on him, and Avraham walking with him, and they are going down to the Akeidah. They see from far away what you see from far away: Har HaBayis, the golden dome (the Muslim shrine that stands today on Har HaBayis). The Mikdash was beside it; it was not in the place of the golden dome but some meters in front of it. That does not matter; this is the place. This is Har HaBayis. You are seeing exactly what they saw. Here is where they went down, Avraham and Yitzchak, and went over there. And here, on this road you see now, was the conversation written in the Torah: 'אבי, הנה האש והעצים, ואיה השה לעולה?' and he answered him, 'השה לעולה בני'. And they came and saw the place from afar. Do you know where you are standing?"

I have told this at length so that you too will know and be moved. People pass by there and do not know where they are passing. Go and look at the place, and understand that what is written in the Torah happened here. Then it takes on a different picture!

So a friendship grew between us. Afterward, when I went to Canada (I used to go every year, always in the winter), Mr. A and his wife hosted me in their home. It is a neighborhood of villas, where each family has a house of its own. It was more comfortable than staying elsewhere; they received me with great honor and gave me a special room, well arranged. I would go to the yeshiva and the kollel there, and they also helped me print an edition of *Tiferes Menachem*, parts alef and beis.

The House That Was Not for Her

Talk Seven · 1:03:30

The one woman, Mrs. A, recovered from the illness. The illness stayed with the other woman, Mrs. H.

One day while I was in Canada, her daughter came to me crying that her mother was very sick. I ran to the poor woman's house and saw that her condition was very grave. I said at once, "Bring a chicken; we will do a kaparah." When a kaparah of this kind is done, it is done with a hen, since she is a woman: a female for a female. Then the head, the wings and the feet (not the legs, the feet) are buried in the beis hakevaros, so that if it was decreed that she be in the beis hakevaros, a part of her is already there, and that is the end of it, and she can stay alive. They went immediately and brought the shochet and everything else. I did the kaparah, and he shechted it right away. I took the parts and buried them in the beis hakevaros to save her.

I finished what I had to do there and went on my way. It turned out that it did not help. In those days she passed away.

While she was still sick, though, something had happened. Her husband loved her very much. They lived in an apartment that was really very small, and she had a number of children. Seeing what a large family it was and how small the apartment was, her husband built another house, a white house, with all the wood painted white. He renovated it, and he himself began finishing the building: doing all the electrical work, putting everything together, little by little, by himself.

She said to him, "You are not doing this for me. You are doing it for another woman. Stop."

He cried and said, "I have no other woman in my life but you. It will be easier for you there; it will be a big home; it will be good."

"I am asking you," she said, "do not go on. It is not for me. It is meant for another woman. I don't want it. Stop building it."

When I came, she cried before me: "Tell him not to finish the house there." And he cried in tears and said that it was only so that things would be easier for her. He loved her very much.

I went back to Eretz Yisrael and heard that she had passed away. When I came again to Canada, he was already married a second time. The rabbanim had told him to marry immediately. There were small children, babies of one, two and three years old; even with the illness she had borne children. "Marry right away," they told him, "the children need a woman in the house."

He had indeed moved into his new house. The first wife did not merit it. When she passed away, leaving small children, he had already sold the old apartment in order to move and had to vacate it, so he moved into the new one. A few weeks

after he moved in, someone was suggested to him. He met her, and she wanted him and agreed to care for his children. She was divorced and had no children. He agreed to take her; she was a yeras Shamayim, a good woman, and they married.

When I came to Canada that time, he met me and said, "Do you remember how she said it was not for her, that it was for someone else?"

"Yes," I said, "I remember."

"It was true," he said. "She did not understand what she was saying, but she was a neviah."

"I will tell you the truth," I said. "Mori Chaim told me that she would pass away from the illness, but I could not tell you."

Then he told me this. The woman he had married was not from Toronto. She was an American, from New Jersey, and for many years her husband had held back her get. They had no children, and she wanted children, and she could not get her get. One day her husband suddenly said to her, "Listen, I want to give you a get with all my heart. Come now to the Chacham." They went to the Chacham, and he gave her the get.

Two and a half months after the get, a friend of hers made a wedding in Toronto. She came to the wedding, and there people saw her and arranged for the two of them to meet. Within two weeks they met a number of times and decided to marry. By then it had been exactly three months, for a divorced woman may not marry until ninety-one days have passed from the get. On the ninety-first day they married.

When they went to arrange the papers for the wedding, what came out? When had this woman been divorced? In the very hours that his first wife passed away, she received her get from her husband.

That is hashgachah. That is how the Borei Olam arranges things. This is what Mori Chaim meant when he told me she would pass away from the illness, and I had not understood him. He had already seen that her husband had a second wife, and that she would make room for the second one.

May the zechus of Mori Chaim stand for us and protect us, and bring us all yeshuos. Amen, ken yehi ratzon.

Short Accounts

Rav Yosef Sends Me to Yehud

Talk Five · 1:15:30

One day Rabbi Yosef came and told me that Rav Yair Weinstock had told him that it had been proclaimed in Shamayim that the head of the lamed-vav tzaddikim now was a Yemenite Jew living in Yehud, called Mori Chaim. He said to me, "Go and find out what is in the jug."

So I went and discovered Mori Chaim Sinwani, may his zechus protect us, about whom I will tell, b'ezras Hashem, further on.

Chaim's Headache

Talk Six · 19:00

By then I was already giving shiurim. I had begun around 5726 or 5727 in my grandfather's beis knesses, and I had a following. Many of them were baalei teshuvah whom I myself had brought to teshuvah, and all of them were baalei batim. They came every evening, learned and grew stronger. I had a fine circle of students, and I had told them about Mori Chaim: that I had merited to be with him, and that my wife had been healed of her headaches at once.

A few shiurim later, still in 5729, a student named Chaim came to me, a young fellow who had been learning with me for a few months. He said, "Rabbi, I have suffered from chronic headaches for years, since I was a child. The doctors cannot find the cause. I suffer, and everyone knows I do not function well because of it. Take me to Mori Chaim so he will help me."

I told him, "Certainly, with great honor."

I took him with me on one of my trips to Mori Chaim and said, "Mori Chaim, he suffers from headaches."

He looked at him and said, "He is already well." He did not ask his name, he did not bless him, nothing. He said, "He is already well."

And from that very moment the headache disappeared, and he became like any other person. Wonder of wonders.

Coffee with Kavanos

Talk Seven · 6:00

I once gave a shiur on the pasuk "Im bechukosai telechu," which Chazal explain to mean that you should toil in Torah. I explained there what amalah shel Torah is: to live by the Torah. Before every step a person takes, whether in eating, in drinking or in business, he should first think through all the halachos. Before a person opens

his mouth, he must know all the halachos of speech, so that he does not stumble in sheker, in lashon hara or in flattery. That is called amalah shel Torah. At that moment he is about to keep the Torah in his speech, and he must know all the halachos, so he thinks over what is permitted and what is forbidden, and that itself is limud haTorah. So it is with eating, too.

I mentioned in that shiur an example I saw by my grandfather. On every bite he put into his mouth, on every spoon of soup, he would say "for His service, may He be blessed," "l'shem yichud Kudsha Brich Hu u'Shechintei," or "Know the G-d of your father and serve Him." He would look for fitting pesukim and repeat them on every bite. One may not eat only for bodily pleasure. He may well have enjoyed the taste of the food too, but that was not what he was after, and he showed it and reminded himself of it on every bite.

Mori Chaim did more. He would take the food and have in mind to raise it up with tremendous sodos of Kabbalah.

I was very, very close to him and sat with him a great deal. One day I came into his house, and he was standing in the kitchen, boiling water for a cup of coffee.

"Yosef," he said to me, "come in here."

"Yes, Mori," I said.

"Come and see how one drinks coffee. Do you know what the shin-ayin nehorin are?"

"Of course," I said.

"I have them in mind with the coffee."

There are three hundred and seventy supernal lights above, called the shin-ayin nehorin (the three hundred and seventy lights). Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai speaks of them at length in the Idra Rabba (the great gathering of his talmidim told in the Zohar), and the Arizal speaks of them at great length too. They are the sod of the kavanah of the berachah "malbish arumim"; there are tremendous kavanos in those words. These three hundred and seventy lights come from the letters alef-lamed, alef-lamed. Spell out alef and lamed in full and you get one hundred and eighty-five: alef, written out, is one hundred and eleven; lamed, written out as lamed-mem-dalet, is seventy-four; together they come to one hundred and eighty-five, the gematria of kafeh, coffee. Twice one hundred and eighty-five is three hundred and seventy: a hundred and eighty and a hundred and eighty are three hundred and sixty, and five and five are ten more. The shin-ayin nehorin ila'in.

"You see," he said to me, "you made me coffee. Now I always drink two sips together."

Each sip he meant as the sod of alef-lamed, and he drank two of them together, kafeh twice, to receive the sod of the shin-ayin nehorin ila'in. With kavanos like these he drank, and ate, and smoked.

He smoked very seldom; he could not bear cigarettes. Only once in a while, when he saw that there were dinim and wanted to sweeten them, he would take a cigarette and have in mind the kavanos of the ketores before the Borei. He smoked it with special kavanos, the kavanos of ketores, and in Shamayim it was counted as though he had offered ketores. In all the long years I knew him, I saw him smoke perhaps two or three times, and he told me that this was what he meant by it.

By the way, I once said in jest (I no longer remember whether I ever said it to him) that Chazal teach on the pasuk "Kaveh el Hashem, chazak veya'ametz libecha, vekaveh el Hashem": why is "kaveh," hope, written twice in the pasuk? Chazal said: hope, and hope again. Even if you hoped and did not receive, do not despair; hope to Hashem, be strong and let your heart take courage, and even if you still have not received, hope to Hashem once more. Now, Sefardim call coffee "kaveh," kahwa. So I said in jest that this was what he was doing: he took kaveh and thought to hope, kaveh twice. But in earnest, he sat and ate everything with kavanos of this kind.

The Doctors and the Worms

Talk Seven · 11:00

I remember that one year his family took him to the hospital. He had felt unwell and fainted, and nobody knew what he had. A few days later he came home, and he laughed as he told me, "The doctors thought I have worms in my stomach. Worms? All the meat I eat is a single kezayis from Shabbos to Shabbos, l'kavod Shabbos. I know what I eat. I have worms? They understand nothing. Why did they take me there?"

Well, he recovered. It was yissurim, he said. All of us here go through yissurim. The poor man went through a great deal of yissurim in his life.

A Ruach in the Unborn Child

Talk Seven · 41:30

Mori Chaim once told me about an Admor who came to him. By then I had already made Mori Chaim known, and people had begun to come to him without me. In the first year or two no one could come in except through me; I was the sieve. But after one person came, and then another (*chavrach chavra is leih*, your friend has a friend), people began to come on their own, and I was only one of many.

He told me that one day a great Admor came to him in great pain, because his wife had miscarried.

"I did not understand it," Mori Chaim said. "This man looked to me like a man of kedushah, truly a yerei Shamayim. You could see the yiras Shamayim on his face; everything about him was in order. He had brought this child into the world in taharah: the child was conceived in purity, with holy thoughts. So I told him, 'Right now I do not understand why. Come again, and I will tell you why.' After he left, I looked into it, and I understood that his wife had gone to the beis hakevaros. A ruach had attached itself to the unborn child, and it was able to make her miscarry."

Mori Chaim was very strict that women should not go to the beis hakevaros. Certainly not a woman who is expecting, and certainly not a married woman at a time when she is not tahor. On this he was very strict.

His Words

The Kavanos of Tefillah

Talk Seven · 0:00

In this chapter I will tell a little more of the great life of my teacher, Mori Chaim Sinwani, alav hashalom, of whom I have already spoken.

His kedushah was on a level a person can hardly understand. I have already described how far it went: he would only think a thing, and in Shamayim his thought was accepted and carried out in the world. He was a master of the kisvei haKabbalah, and of all the kavanos of tefillah set out in the siddurim of the mekubalim.

I want to explain what this means. The pasuk says, "You shall serve Hashem your G-d, and He will bless your bread and your water, and I will remove sickness from your midst." Serving Hashem is avodah. On the pasuk "to serve Him with all your heart" Chazal expounded: what is the avodah of the heart? It is tefillah.

Tefillah is not only words brought out of the mouth. The words must be said aloud; one cannot daven in thought alone, even though HaKadosh Baruch Hu searches the heart and the kidneys. Tefillah is not only a request from HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The moment a person says the words, they bring about very great spiritual results. But Chazal also said that tefillah without kavanah is like a body without a neshamah. "To serve Him with all your heart" is the request made when one knows its sod, and knows what one is meaning.

That is why a large part of the writings of the Arizal deals with the kavanah of tefillah: of every word and every letter, of the Yamim Tovim and of ordinary days. The Arizal wrote the kavanos in a general form. To explain that general form and

widen it a little, each of the mekubalim wrote according to his own understanding. They explained the words, and the Shemos HaKodesh that come out of them, which the Arizal writes only in roshei teivos, they wrote out in full, so that it would be clear how to daven.

First of them all was the Rashash (Rav Shalom Sharabi, the great mekubal of Yerushalayim in the generations before us), who took apart the kavanos of tefillah more deeply, with more kavanos, building whole worlds out of them. In his way it was not enough that the building of the worlds would come about by itself through the kavanah. Every world was drawn out in writing, and one meant each of them: how each world is built, how each spiritual power is built in the Adam HaElyon, in all the upper worlds. The true siddur of the Rashash is not in our hands today. All the siddurim of the Rashash we have are those of his talmidim, which are abridgments of the long kavanos the Rashash and his talmidim really had in mind. Even so, the siddur we have is very long.

Besides this siddur there are many other siddurim of kavanos, especially among the Ashkenazi rabbanim: the siddur of Rabbeinu Asher, the siddur of Rav Yaakov Koppel, and many more. I remember that the tzaddik of Yehud (the small town near Tel Aviv where Mori Chaim lived) had in his house a whole shelf of nothing but siddurim with kavanos. He knew every kavanah and every difference between one siddur and the next.

Once he heard that another siddur with the kavanos of the Arizal had come out. He did not rest and was not quiet until he had it. From the few meager prutos he had, he gave me a sum of money and said, "Whatever it costs, bring me the sefer." It was a siddur called the Siddur Rabbi Yitzchak; I do not know if many people in the world have ever heard the name. It had been printed once, I do not know how many hundreds of years ago, and now it had been offered for sale in Yerushalayim. In those days there were shops in Yerushalayim that sold old seforim. I do not know how he found out about it, but he told me, "Go to such-and-such a shop; they have this siddur for sale now. Get it for me."

When I brought him the siddur, he rejoiced like one who finds great spoil. What simchah! When I met him a day or two later, he already knew the whole siddur by heart, with all its kavanos and all its differences. Each mekubal received the explanation of the Arizal according to his own understanding, and added a few points of his own that can shed light on the whole picture. That is the importance of every single siddur. Knowing all the kavanos of tefillah from every side, in every form that any mekubal wrote, was a great part of Mori Chaim's whole being.

Dovid HaMelech and Chushai HaArki

Talk Seven · 17:30

I learned with Mori Chaim. When I came to him I already had knowledge and learning; I did not begin from the beginning with him. Mori Chaim taught those who already knew, because to them he had something to teach. He did not go to teach beginners; that was not for him. He was not a gardener who plants. He was for those already on a level of knowledge, to add to what they had, to pour shemen hamor where knowledge already was.

That is how he explained passages of the Gemara to me according to the Arizal. He once explained a passage to me in an amazing way.

The Gemara in Maseches Sanhedrin says that when Dovid fled from Avshalom, he sought to serve avodah zarah. Chushai HaArki came to him and said, "A king like you will serve avodah zarah?" Dovid answered, "A king like me, his son will kill him?" and Chushai held him back from serving avodah zarah.

This is astonishing. Do you really believe that Dovid HaMelech went to serve avodah zarah? Had he had even the tiniest thought like that, would he be Dovid HaMelech? He would not even be a Dovid from the marketplace! When Dovid fled from Avshalom, he accepted the din of Shamayim with love. It was precisely in those moments that he became the fourth leg of the Merkavah. Shim'i ben Gera came and shamed him, and he accepted the din of Shamayim with love and said, "Hashem told him: curse; leave him be." In those very moments he became the fourth leg of the Merkavah, and at that very time he would go and serve avodah zarah, or seek to? Does that seem possible to you? Chas veshalom. This Gemara is very puzzling.

It is true that one of the mefarshim about two hundred years ago, in Altona (near Hamburg in Germany), the author of the Aruch LaNer, Rav Yaakov Ettlinger, zechuso yagen aleinu, explained it in a very beautiful way. Dovid HaMelech feared a chillul Hashem: everyone would say, "Look at Dovid! A man like Dovid, and his own son killed him!" So what did he decide to do? To stand before an avodah zarah and bend down as if to pick something up from the floor, so that to people it would look as though he was bowing to the avodah zarah. Then, when his son killed him, people would say, "Of course! There's Dovid; you see who Dovid really was? It was all a fraud; look, he bowed to avodah zarah." And then there would be no chillul Hashem. His intention was for the good. That is how Rav Yaakov Ettlinger explained it, and according to the pshat of the Gemara it is a beautiful explanation.

But we know that every word in the Gemara is sodos. Every word in the Gemara is something! And I wondered about this Gemara.

One day Mori Chaim spoke to me about a certain very great yichud, called Yichud HaVavin. It is the yichud Yaakov Avinu did when he came before Yitzchak and brought him the dishes. As I understand it, he did this yichud then so that Yitzchak would not discover that he was Yaakov, and the whole episode would pass peacefully without Yitzchak recognizing that he was Yaakov and not Eisav. In any case, it is a tremendous yichud.

Now, the Arizal says that when a person does yichudim, woe to him and woe to his soul if, chas veshalom, the chitzonim get a grip on them. Woe and alas!

When a person carries a sum of money, whatever the amount, he can take it in his car, in the trunk; nobody knows, and it gets through. But when he has to move a whole bank's worth of money, whole treasures, it is not done that way. There is a special armored truck, a Brink's truck (the armored trucks used to carry money), with two guards with submachine guns accompanying every step, so that chas veshalom nobody comes and robs the money. If that is so with material money, what about the nitzotzos of kedushah? With yichudim, a person raises things up on high. It is a tremendous thing, and especially this yichud: whoever does it does something enormous.

That is why the Arizal says that when a person does one of these yichudim, he must first do another yichud, which combines two Names of Elokim, so that the chitzonim will have no grip on our kavanos and yichudim; it drives them away. When a person does the other yichudim, he says a yehi ratzon before and after them and has in mind the yichud combining two Names of Elokim with a certain nikud. Through this the chitzonim have no grip on the tefillah, the kavanos or the yichudim, and it all goes to Kudsha Brich Hu u'Shechintei. Woe and alas to the person who does yichudim without this yichud. No person can be perfect, one hundred percent; we are in a body of material. In things this great, chas veshalom, if the chitzonim should get even a tiny grip, bar minan... These are treasures. We need to be armed, not with two submachine guns, but with two combined Names of Elokim in a certain yichud.

Now, what chiddush did the tzaddik of Yehud tell me? Something tremendous: a king is forbidden to have this in mind. A king must do the yichudim whole, just as they are, and they rise up. A king does not do the yichud that keeps out the chitzonim, because a king is malchus Shamayim and has no need of it. He does only the kavanos as they are.

And this, he said, is the explanation of the Gemara. When Dovid HaMelech fled from Avshalom, Chushai HaArki came and accompanied him. This was at the beginning of the flight; later Chushai went back to Yerushalayim to mislead Avshalom, so that he would not follow the counsel of Achitofel. At the beginning, though, when Chushai came to him with earth on his head, Dovid HaMelech want-

ed to do this great yichud, but as usual, without the yichud that drives away the chitzonim. Why? He considered himself a king. But had he done it this time without the kavanos that drive away the chitzonim, like any ordinary talmid chacham, he would have been serving avodah zarah.

That is why it is written there:

ויהי דוד בא עד הראש אשר ישתחוה שם לאלקים

"Dovid came to the summit (harosh), where he would bow down to G-d." Chazal said that rosh always means avodah zarah. And this yichud is called rosh; that is its name in Kabbalah, the yichud of the rosh. This is how he explained it to me. "Dovid came to harosh": he came to have in mind the kavanah of this yichud. "Where he would bow down to G-d": whenever he bowed, he did the rosh alone, without the Name Elokim. He bowed to Elokim, but he did not need to have the Name Elokim in mind there. This time too he wanted to do it as usual, without having the Name Elokim in mind, because he thought he had the din of a king.

Chushai HaArki came and said to him, "This is avodah zarah; this time have the Name Elokim in mind."

Dovid answered, "A king like me, his son will kill him? What are you saying? I am a king. I must do this yichud so that my son will not be able to touch me now. If I do it with the additional kavanos, that means I am not a king. As a king, I do not need to have the other kavanos in mind."

Chushai's words, "A king like you will serve avodah zarah?", were not a question. He said it as a plain statement: "A king like you, who is not a complete king now, who is fleeing. If you do this yichud without having in mind the two Names of Elokim, it is called serving avodah zarah. This time you must have it in mind."

Dovid answered, "No. A king like me, his son will kill him? If you call me 'a king like me,' as if I do not have the din of a king, you are giving power to the other side, to Avshalom, to kill me. I have the din of a king, and I do not need to have this in mind."

That was the argument between Dovid and Chushai HaArki. In the end Chushai HaArki made Dovid understand that this time he was forbidden to do the yichud except together with the combination of the Names of Elokim, to drive away the chitzonim so that they would not take hold of it. Dovid did so. He had this yichud in mind, this time in a way that the chitzonim could not touch it, and afterwards came what happened with Shim'i ben Gera, and he rose to be the fourth leg of the Merkavah.

What a beautiful explanation! This is how Chazal spoke; every word, for one who understands the sod in what I have said, fits exactly like a button in its loop. This was the greatness of the tzaddik of Yehud: to look into every line of the Ge-

mara and understand what Rav Ashi and Mar bar Rav Ashi truly meant when they put this statement here. According to the pshat it seems truly shocking. How beautiful! When we take a yichud and know that Dovid HaMelech, alav hashalom, had this very yichud in mind, and that Yaakov Avinu, alav hashalom, had it in mind, we cleave to the Avos as though it were yesterday, not three or four thousand years ago. The same yichudim, because it is the same Borei Olam and the same worlds. How beautiful!

Chapter Thirty

Rav Chaim Todros

who played the fool

The Hidden Tzaddik Who Played the Fool

Talk Twenty · 0:00

I now continue the series of tzaddikim I knew. Only a few of them remain for me to tell about. The one in this chapter was a different kind of tzaddik nistar from all those I have described until now, and his path was a different path. There are many paths. In an army there are many kinds of soldiers, and they do not all march in the same order. So too with the hidden tzaddikim: each has his own path in avodas Hashem, and all of them do the work of the Borei for the sake of Kudsha Brich Hu uShechintei.

Rav Chaim Todros, or Todros for short, as I used to call him in his lifetime, looked like a simple man: a drunk, an am ha'aretz, confused and pitiful. In truth he was a pillar of the world, the beloved son of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, a protector and savior of Klal Yisrael. He toiled in Torah day and night. In his youth he also rescued children and teenagers from all kinds of corruption and going astray, and brought them into Talmud Torahs. The gedolei hador knew him and honored him, because he was a holy tzaddik and an immense talmid chacham. There was nothing in Torah that he did not know by heart, together with its source. Shas Bavli and Yerushalmi, the Zohar, Kabbalah, poskim and ancient sefarim were all fluent on his lips. Only the few who knew him knew this. To everyone else he was the greatest am ha'aretz, a man who could barely recognize the shape of a letter.

He would come from time to time to the library of Porat Yosef (the great Sephardic yeshiva in the Old City of Yerushalayim), and Chacham Ben Tzion (Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, rosh yeshiva of Porat Yosef and one of the great Sephardic poskim) would rise in his honor. The Chazon Ish knew him, and so did the Steipler. The Steipler, the father of Rav Chaim Kanievsky, was a very great man, and it was known that every word that left his mouth was fulfilled in Shamayim. I

also merited to know the Steipler, though only a little. I was in his house and received his berachah several times. He was known as a man whose every word HaKadosh Baruch Hu carried out, and Rav Todros was his beloved. The Baba Sali, Rav Yachya Shneur and Rav Meir Abuchatzeira (the son of the Baba Sali) also held him in the highest regard and honored him greatly.

He turned himself into an object of mockery and scorn in the eyes of the public, and in his own special way he annulled gezeiros, healed the sick, brought yeshuos, and gladdened broken and crushed hearts. That was his main purpose, and he put his whole life into it: making broken people happy. He would sit with them, dance before them, and speak to them words of encouragement. He did not rest until a broken, weeping person brought a smile to his lips; until then he would not let him go. He was a genius at encouraging people and at making them happy, and if it came at the cost of his own disgrace, that did not bother him at all.

The Gemara in Maseches Taanis, daf 22, tells that Rebbi Beroka was once walking in the marketplace and met Eliyahu HaNavi. He asked him, "Is there anyone in this marketplace who is a ben olam haba?" Eliyahu showed him two brothers and told him that they were bnei olam haba. (There was one more there besides them, but I will speak only of the two brothers.) Rebbi Beroka asked who they were, and Eliyahu told him to go and ask them. He went and looked into what they did, and saw that they were people who gladdened every poor and broken person, encouraging him and making him happy. That was what earned them their reward.

Of course they were yirei Shamayim. It is not that a man can commit every aveirah, cheer people up, and receive olam haba; it does not work that way. The meaning is that they were yirei Shamayim, and by their own level and deeds they would have received only a very small portion of olam haba. Because they encouraged the poor and gladdened the downtrodden, they merited very high levels in olam haba. Rav Todros was like that too.

In the Porat Yosef Library

Talk Twenty · 4:30

I merited to know him from a young age. He used to come to the library of Porat Yosef, and I met him there often, until eventually we would talk together.

At first, when rabbanim came in, he would sit off to the side like a batlan. There was one table at the entrance to the library, and he sat there as though dazed, staring into space. Even though they honored him and showed him respect, and knew exactly who he was, he paid them no attention. He acted like some confused man who did not know what they wanted from him, and sat waiting for them to leave.

When they had all gone out, he would sit and look into whatever sefarim he wanted.

At first, when he saw me, he also waited until I left. I understood that this was what he was waiting for, and I went out. Slowly, though, he stopped minding me. I behaved as if I did not understand much about him, and then he paid no attention to me and would sit and look into the sefarim. I watched how he sat there and studied whatever he wanted, not for long, and then got up and left.

Little by little I built a connection with him. It became quite a pleasant relationship, and because of it I was even in his home once or twice.

The Stories

Sardines in Meron

Talk Twenty · 22:30

Once, two days before Sukkos, he was in Meron. He planned to return to Yerushalayim that night, so that the next morning, erev Sukkos, he could build his sukkah. Hashem would surely help him obtain the daled minim. He did not know from where, but Hashem knew from where. He did not have to know; he only had to receive.

That evening a man came to him, from one of the moshavim in the area, crying. His wife was very sick. "Chacham, daven for her," he said.

"Come," Rav Todros told him, "go bring me a can of sardines. The two of us will make a seudah lekavod Rabbi Shimon."

"Daven for her!"

"Yes, I will daven. Bring the sardines."

The two of them sat and ate the sardines. It was a single can, which they opened and divided between them. They ate it with netilas yadayim and a berachah, as one should, with divrei Torah at the table. It took about half an hour to eat it with a little Torah.

When they finished, Rav Todros said to him, "Go home. Your wife is already well. Sar hadin (the judgment is removed). You ate sardin, and I had in mind that the din be removed. Once there are no dinim, she is healed. Your wife is already well."

The man did not believe him. "No," he said, "come home with me. I beg you, come with me and bless my wife, dakhilak (Arabic: please, I beg you)." He began to

cry. Rav Todros had a merciful heart. He could not bear to hear a person make even a little sound of crying; his heart would melt like butter in the sun. "All right," he said, "I will come with you."

He had someone with him who was accompanying him, and he said to him, "Come with me, we are going to them now."

"But tomorrow is Yom Tov, Rav Todros!" the man said. "I haven't bought daled minim yet."

"You haven't bought daled minim," Rav Todros answered, "and I haven't built my sukkah yet either, and tomorrow is erev Yom Tov. But I trust in Hashem that tomorrow morning we will reach Yerushalayim in time and manage everything, with time to spare. Come, rely on HaKadosh Baruch Hu."

He dragged him along. They went there at night; it was a moshav, with no transportation. Rav Todros spoke with the woman and encouraged her. By then she already felt much better, but she did not understand that she was already well. She felt better, but was there a doctor to tell her she was well? She assumed it was only temporary. He began to encourage her and cheer her up, telling her, "You are already completely well, don't worry."

They stayed the night on the moshav. In the morning he wanted to leave. They had to cross a field of thorns to reach the main road, and from there take a bus. It was seven in the morning; they would take a bus, and by the time they arrived it would be another three or four hours, and it was erev Yom Tov!

"It's erev Yom Tov, Rav Todros!" his companion said.

"I know that we will reach Yerushalayim in time to manage everything," he answered. "How? I don't know. But I rely on my Father in Shamayim. He will arrange everything. Don't worry; I am calm."

"How calm you are!" the man said. It was several hours of travel, and that was after waiting for a bus.

As they were crossing the field of thorns, one of the people of the moshav came over, a man they did not even know. "Rav Todros, Rav Todros, come here," he said. "I have money to give you. Once you blessed me and helped me, and I want to give you something."

"I don't want money," Rav Todros answered. "I need to get to Yerushalayim. I don't want to be held up."

"Yerushalayim?" said the man. "Come, I have an idea for you. The two of you get into my car right now and we will drive to Rosh Pinah (a town in the Galil not far from Meron, which had a small airfield). In ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, a plane is leaving for Yerushalayim. Come, I will buy tickets for both of you, and you will fly to Yerushalayim."

Rosh Pinah was close by, and they got there. They saw that the plane's doors were already shut, and it was taken. It was not actually full, and it had to leave, but two more passengers who had booked and paid for their tickets still had to arrive, and the plane was waiting for them before closing. These were nine-seat planes; I myself flew on them several times in that period, between Yerushalayim and Tzfas. The two had already paid and were expected, so the plane was waiting a few more minutes for them.

The man went over and said to them, "I have two passengers here."

"Listen," they said, "we are leaving in ten minutes no matter what. If the two who paid come, they fly, because it is their time to go. If they don't come, these two can board. We have to leave in ten minutes; we are already late."

They waited a few more minutes, and when the two did not arrive, they said, "Both of you, get on." Both of them boarded. The man had given Rav Todros a sum of money and had also bought them their tickets to Yerushalayim. Within an hour the two of them were in Yerushalayim, in the morning, with all that money. He built his sukkah, and that year Rav Todros bought, with the money he had received, daled minim more beautiful than in any other year. Yishtabach Shemo.

Rolling on Thorns

Talk Twenty · 27:30

He took a great deal of suffering upon himself for the sake of the Shechinah. He would roll on thorns, naked, until all his flesh was streaming with blood.

There is a matter in the Arizal of rolling on charulim. Charulim are those big thistles with a purple flower, if you know them, covered with spikes on every side like a Magen Dovid, like a star full of spikes, with the purple on top. It is a great sod, and such rolling is done for a number of different things.

It is told about Rav Chaim ben Attar (the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh) that once, in the mountains around Tzfas, he was walking to Meron. On the way he saw a whole hillside covered with these thorns. What did he do? He rolled down over them. His talmidim were terrified. How could he roll over such thorns? Bar minan, it is like knives in the whole body. They were frightened, and not one of them dared to do as he did. He was dressed in his clothes, but these thorns pay no attention at all to clothing; they know how to pierce well. He had taken off only his coat. When he reached the bottom, he put his coat back on.

"Rabbeinu, what is this?" they asked him. "How could you do that?"

"For the sake of the Shechinah," he said, "for the galus of the Shechinah. I shared in her pain."

When they reached Rabbi Shimon, he began to smell the air. "Oy, oy, what a wonderful smell! The smell of Gan Eden! The smell of Gan Eden!" Every moment he said, "I smell here the smell of Gan Eden."

"Rabbeinu," said the talmidim, "we don't smell anything."

"One who did not roll on the thorns," he told them, "how will he smell this smell? That is the price. I paid the price, and I receive the smell of Gan Eden. You did not pay the price; where would you receive it from?"

There were such things, and there were also other self-afflictions done in this way. Rav Todros did these things, and afterwards came out all covered in blood. People saw him wounded and bleeding all over, and no one understood what it was. Only a very few who knew understood where this man was coming from. Others did not understand. They thought he had probably had a little too much to drink, fallen on the ground, and got banged up here and there. No one understood that he had done it for the galus of the Shechinah.

Dancing on the Baba Sali's Table

Talk Twenty · 30:30

He would dance and annul gezeiros.

Once, long ago, he came to the Baba Sali in Netivos (a town in the Negev where the Baba Sali lived). The Baba Sali honored him and loved him greatly. Rav Todros came in and out of every tzaddik's house freely. To get in to the Baba Sali was not so easy, but he had free entry.

He walked in and found them in the middle of a seudah. The Baba Sali was sitting at a seudah, apparently for the hilula (the yahrzeit celebration of a tzaddik) of one of the tzaddikim; for every tzaddik's hilula they would make a seudah and sit together. There is a great matter in such seudos. When they are made lesheim Shamayim, the table becomes a mizbe'ach. Today we have no mizbe'ach. Where is our mizbe'ach? A man's table is his mizbe'ach. So they made seudos with kavanah, and ate all the food there with kavanos, just as on the mizbe'ach itself. That way it is like korbanos: through it they make tikkunim in the worlds, and things can be set right. So the Baba Sali was sitting with his people, making a seudah.

Suddenly Rav Todros came in. What did he do? He climbed up onto the table, right where all the plates and the food were, and began to dance on it. He lifted his legs and brought them down, stamping on the table and shaking the whole thing.

One of the shamashim there, not the Baba Sali's well-known shamash but just someone who was there, shouted at him, "Mister, you are disturbing! What are you doing here? Get out of here!"

The Baba Sali was furious with that man. "Get out of here, fast!" he told him. "What are you saying against Rav Todros?" And to Rav Todros he said, "Rav Todros, keep going, keep going, keep dancing on the table!" Rav Todros kept dancing, on the table itself.

No one understood. The table is like a mizbe'ach; they were sitting there eating so that it would be a mizbe'ach, and this man was dancing on the mizbe'ach! What was going on?

After a quarter of an hour of dancing, he came down and sat, and they served him from the food of the seudah. When Rav Todros had gone, the Baba Sali told them, "You don't know. There was a harsh gezeirah in Shamayim that I had not succeeded in annulling, and that is why I made this seudah. With his dancing on the table he annulled the gezeirah completely."

Rav Todros knew what he was doing. He saw the gezeirah and wanted to annul it. That is why he did it specifically on the table, which is the mizbe'ach. As he danced, he offered himself up as one offers himself on the mizbe'ach. With every step, every time he lifted his foot, he had yichudim of mesirus nefesh. It was truly like Akeidas Yitzchak: he gave himself over on the mizbe'ach to annul the gezeirah, and he succeeded in annulling it.

And that fool, who knew nothing, went to rebuke Rav Todros! What can we understand of the greatness of such people?

The Captive Child and the Envelope

Talk Twenty · 36:30

Once a child fell captive in Syria. To get him out they needed a thousand dollars of those days, which was a great deal of money. Rav Todros went to raise it. He raised a small sum, a few hundred dollars, and saw that it was not enough.

He said, "I will go to Rabbi Shimon (bar Yochai, at his kever in Meron). There I will get the money." He traveled there at once, and decided that with the money he had collected he would make a seudah in honor of Rabbi Shimon, and through the seudah Rabbi Shimon would see to all the rest. He bought food, and there were all the poor people of Meron. In those days there were heaps of poor people at Rabbi Shimon's kever, sitting and waiting for someone to bring them something to eat. That was fifty years ago, and I will never forget it.

He made the seudah and opened his table to everyone, in abundance: "Eat in honor of Rabbi Shimon! Make berachos rishonos and acharonos, properly, all according to halachah." He presided over them all.

Suddenly the Baba Sali arrived at Rabbi Shimon with his entourage. The moment they came in, the Baba Sali said to his gabbai, Alfasi, "Take this envelope and give it to that Ashkenazi." He took out an envelope and handed it over. Rav Todros opened it: exactly one thousand dollars, the very sum needed for the pidyon. That was all. They did not even speak to each other that time. The Baba Sali was busy with his yichudim, and Rav Todros was busy with his seudah. Rav Todros paid the ransom, redeemed the child, and did everything as it should be done. Yishtabach Shemo.

The Promise of Sandeka'us

Talk Twenty · 49:30

There was a truly astonishing story with him. When he was restoring the kever of Dan ben Yaakov, which is near Eshtaol, he would sleep at night in Eshtaol, and by day he went and restored the kever with his own hands, not with money.

A family lived there, and they had a boy of seven who grew attached to him and would talk with him. Rav Todros told him, "I see that you will be a talmid chacham and get married. I want you to give me the sandeka'us."

"Of course I'll give it to you."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

Many times while he slept there he would say to him again, "You will be a talmid chacham. But you will give me the sandeka'us?"

"Yes, I'll give it to you."

"You promise me?"

"I promise."

Years passed and it was all forgotten. The boy married at twenty-three, and at twenty-seven, after several daughters, a son was born to him. Now he did not know where Rav Todros was. Where could he look for him? He wanted to give him the sandeka'us but did not know where to find him. He searched here and there and did not find him; he asked people, and they did not know.

The day of the bris came. He had already fixed the time, and he said, "I'll wait. If there is a nes, Rav Todros will come. If not, I'll give it to someone else."

As they sat there an hour before the bris, suddenly Rav Todros arrived. "I have come to the bris," he said.

"How do you know about it?"

"You promised me sandeka'us, didn't you? I came to be sandek."

He sat as sandek, and that was that. No questions of from where and how. With Rav Todros, one does not ask questions.

TWO CHILLULEI SHABBOS

Talk Twenty · 1:01:00

Once an acquaintance of an acquaintance of his, a man who did not keep Torah and mitzvos, got cancer. His friend said to him, "Come, I'll take you to Rav Todros."

He came to Rav Todros, and Rav Todros told him, "If you take upon yourself to keep Shabbos, the illness will go."

"I accept." At such moments a person will do anything, as long as he lives. "I accept."

"Go, you are healthy."

"What do you mean, I'm healthy?"

"You are healthy. Go, get tested, you'll see."

He went to the hospital and asked for a new scan. They put him in and said, "Sir, it's clean. There's nothing." Then the doctor said, "Apparently the earlier scan wasn't yours. We must have made a mistake. Look, yours is clean."

He had kept one Shabbos on the strength of this, and now a doctor came and told him that apparently it had been a mistake, that he had probably never had the illness at all, and that the earlier scan had belonged to someone else and got switched. "Yallah, baruch Hashem," he said. "Now I can be mechallel Shabbos. I don't owe the chacham anything." He was mechallel Shabbos, two Shabbosos.

Then he felt the pains. He went back, they looked at his scan, and, bar minan, the illness had returned in full force. He ran quickly to Rav Todros. "Look what happened. Can it still be fixed?"

"You are lucky you were mechallel Shabbos only twice and no more," Rav Todros told him. "That is why you can still fix it. Had it been three times, there would have been no tikkun for you."

On the spot he took Shabbos upon himself, and afterwards the illness left him completely, in one minute. He was healed, and as a result he became fully shomer Torah u'mitzvos.

In Place of an Earthquake

Talk Twenty · 1:02:30

A short time before his petirah, he said that he saw a severe earthquake in Eretz Yisrael that would take a very heavy toll. He could not accept such a price, and therefore he was ready to go as a kaparah in its place. He was about to depart soon, he said, instead of the earthquake.

So it was. A short time afterwards he became ill and lay in the hospital. One day someone came to visit him, and he said, "Wait here. I am about to leave the world. Be here with me to say Shema Yisrael."

The doctor came in on his rounds. He looked at him, looked at the ECG monitor and all the other machines, and everything was fine. "You are in perfectly good shape," he said. "You are progressing well." And he went out.

After he left, Rav Todros said to the man who was with him, "One more minute is left. Come, let us say Shema Yisrael." After a minute all the systems collapsed, and he went to the life of Olam Haba.

Zechuso yaamod v'yagen aleinu. In his zechus may we too merit, b'ezras Hashem, long days and years, and may we merit the true geulah, bimheirah b'yameinu, amen.

Short Accounts

A Poor House, a Clean House

Talk Twenty · 7:30

He was the poorest of the poor. His home was in a wretched state, with no furniture at all. He had one clothes closet with no bottom, and a table that was about to collapse. It was truly pitiful to walk into his home and see the conditions he lived in.

Yet everything was clean. As far as cleanliness goes, the house was clean and orderly.

Whenever I went to any of the great people I am telling about, the first thing I checked was whether there was order and cleanliness there. When I went to someone who was said to be a great man and saw that there was no order and no cleanliness, I ran away. I knew that where there is no order and no cleanliness there is no kedushah; it is impossible. Several times I went to great people and smelled their babies' diapers in the house, and I ran from there, knowing there was no kedushah in that place. A man who does not know how to keep himself and his home clean,

so that a clean smell is there, has a problem. Even with babies in the house, whose diapers have to be dealt with, it can be done. In those days there were no disposable diapers, only cloth ones that had to be washed. They should be washed properly and kept in a hidden place. A house has to have a clean smell, because a bad smell harms the nefesh. The Arizal writes at length about cleanliness and order, and about how much smell affects the nefesh and how much harm a bad smell can do to it.

So I always looked at their homes. They could be wretched and poor, but were they clean or not? What smell came from them? His house was clean. He had very small children, yet the house was orderly and not a mess. The poverty showed from every corner, and it was greater poverty than I saw in the homes of other poor people. In that broken-down closet he kept a few sefarim, and they too were in a state almost ready for genizah, alav hashalom.

His bitachon in Hashem was boundless. I never saw anyone else with such bitachon. He was always happy, and always made others happy.

The Steipler's Berachah

Talk Twenty · 14:30

When he was about to marry, he went to receive the Steipler's berachah. As I said, the Steipler honored him very much. The Steipler said to him, "Rav Chaim, you want to get married, but you behave in such a way that where will parnassah come to you from? With the way you act, you cannot even get into a kollel."

He said this to him with great respect. Then, on the spot, the Steipler answered himself: "Don't worry, it is nothing terrible. You will be a nes among all the nissim, and your parnassah too will be a nes among all the nissim. You do not live by the way of nature, and the nes of your parnassah will not come by the way of nature either."

The Steipler also gave him money, a very large sum in the liros of those days (the lira was Israel's currency before the shekel), so that he could buy an apartment in Bnei Brak and live there. Rav Todros was a Yerushalmi. He accepted the money, but his family did not want him to leave Yerushalayim. So he went back and returned the entire sum to the Steipler. "My family does not want me to live in Bnei Brak," he said. "Please, here is all the money."

Years later he said, "I am glad I did not go to Bnei Brak. In Bnei Brak I could not have hidden myself so well; they would have made a big thing out of me. Baruch Hashem I stayed in Yerushalayim, where I let people fail to understand who I am, and go crazy over me, and think I am mad."

Coming to Take Leave

Talk Twenty · 16:00

Before the petirah of each of the tzaddikim he knew, he would come to him the day before to take leave of him. He knew that the tzaddik was about to go up above, and he came to say his last shalom.

His sister had some difficulty, and she asked him to take her once to the Chazon Ish for a berachah. The berachos of the Chazon Ish were known to make a wondrous impression above. He labored and toiled in Torah, and a man who sits and toils in Torah cleaves to HaKadosh Baruch Hu; Oraisa veKudsha Brich Hu veYisrael chad hu. So she wanted the Chazon Ish's berachah.

One Thursday he said to her, "Come quickly, we are going now."

"Now, on Thursday?" she said. "It is nearly erev Shabbos and I am rushed. Let us go on Sunday."

"Sunday will already be too late," he told her. "I am going now. If you want to come, this is the opportunity." He pressed her to come with him that Thursday, and she came.

When he arrived, the Chazon Ish smiled serenely and said to him, "Rav Todros, you knew when to come. I see that you know." The two of them sat together behind a closed door and talked at length with a settled mind, and then Rav Todros came out. On Shabbos the Chazon Ish was niftar. Just as he had told his sister: Sunday would already be too late.

So too with the Pnei Menachem, the Gerrer Rebbe. The Pnei Menachem was an immense mekubal. People do not know this; I do not know if even Gerrer chassidim know who their Rebbe was. He was a holy man, a tzaddik nistar. Even though outwardly he was an Admor, he was a hidden tzaddik. When he received the public, he would first, while no one was there, take a Gemara and learn. The moment people came in, he would hide it on a shelf under the table, put a copy of HaModia on the table, and act as though he were reading the newspaper. What did he have to do with newspapers? It was only so that no one would see how much Torah he learned. He had mastered all the treasures of Kabbalah and was a very great man, who knew the kavanos of the Kabbalah. He also used Kabbalah ma'asis (practical Kabbalah, acting through holy Names). When he lived in Arad (a town in the desert in the south of Eretz Yisrael), he used Kabbalah ma'asis against all kinds of kelipos and sheidim. He helped the people there a great deal who had been struck by the sitra achra, and helped free them. He was a very, very holy man.

On Motza'ei Purim Rav Todros came to him and said, "Tonight, tonight."

The Pnei Menachem smiled and said, "I know. I have already prepared."

In fact, even before Rav Todros arrived, the Pnei Menachem had already called his wife and told her that tonight he was going. Everything was calm. Such people know; their suitcase is packed, and they are going to a good place, as it is written, "ותשחק ליום אחרון." He told her that he no longer belonged here, simply did not belong to this world. He already felt himself there, about to go. And that very night he left life to all Yisrael and went to chayei olam haba.

The Torn Note

Talk Twenty · 20:00

He had a dignified appearance. Even though in himself he acted crazy and made a show of madness, outwardly he looked the part of a distinguished man.

Once an old man saw him and said to him, "Rebbe, take this note. It is a note for a sick person; daven for him."

What did he do? Before the old man's eyes he tore the note in two and began to dance. The old man walked off saying, "A meshugener!", which is to say, majnun (Arabic for a madman), and left.

There was a man who used to accompany Rav Todros, and Rav Todros said to him, "He did not understand that the moment I tore the note, I annulled the gezeirah. The sick man named in that note is already healed. That he does not know. If he knew, he would not call me a meshugener. But it is good that he does not know."

Two Baskets for Shabbos

Talk Twenty · 20:30

His bitachon in HaKadosh Baruch Hu was not of this world. He never had money in his pocket; where would he get money from? Every Friday he took two baskets, stood at the doorway of his home and said, "Ribbono shel Olam, I am Your son, Chaim Todros ben Devorah. I ask You to fill these baskets lekavod Shabbos Kodesh."

Then he went out with them to do his shopping: meat, fish and all kinds of delicacies. In a short time he came back with the baskets full of everything, and he had paid for all of it. With what? When he set out, he himself did not know. But from all kinds of directions things came his way, so that he paid for everything in cash without owing a single perutah, and had everything he needed for Shabbos in great abundance.

Once he went into a vegetable store and began buying vegetables, choosing them and putting them in the basket. A man came over to him who knew that Rav Todros was very poor and had been thinking of giving him a sum of money. Seeing Rav Todros gathering vegetables, he asked him, "Rav Todros, do you have money to pay for these?"

"I have no money to pay for them," he answered. "But I knew that you would come, and that you were thinking of preparing a sum of money for me. You have a sum ready for me. You will pay for me here, and you will also give me the difference."

And that is what happened. On the spot the man took out a sum and said, "Yes, it is true, I was thinking of you." He gave him the money, and with it Rav Todros bought everything he needed for Shabbos with plenty to spare.

That is one example of how things came to him from all sorts of places. He never knew how he would manage. He knew only this: "I asked Abba, and Abba will give me; He has many messengers." His bitachon was something I do not know if there is anything like it.

In the Mikveh

Talk Twenty · 29:30

Once he was in a mikveh and saw an older man there trying to strike up a relationship with a few boys. He was speaking ugly things to them and defiling their neshamos, and apparently he even had a plan to defile them in body as well.

Rav Todros saw it and was furious. How could such a thing be? To defile Jewish children!

He went over to the man and only asked, "Who says he won't get the illness within a few days? He goes around here corrupting children; is he so sure he will live a few more days? Maybe he will get the illness and go?"

It happened just as he said. Within a few days that man fell sick with the illness, and within a short time he had vanished from the face of the earth.

Rav Yosef Waltuch and Rav Todros

Talk Twenty · 33:30

Rav Yosef Waltuch, a good friend of his, used to say that in Shamayim they give Todros's word all too much weight.

A man cannot always annul a gezeirah by himself. Sometimes he has to go to others to annul it for him; when a gezeirah is too hard for him alone, he needs

someone else to join him. So whenever there was a hard gezeirah on Rav Yosef Waltuch, he would go to Rav Todros and say, "Rav Todros, decree now that it should be this way." In Shamayim they accepted Todros's decrees and carried them out at once. "I will not leave you alone," Rav Yosef Waltuch would tell him, "until you decree right now that it be so and so."

The Real Hidden Tzaddik

Talk Twenty · 34:00

Once a few people came to him and said, "You are a tzaddik nistar."

"I am not hidden and I am not a tzaddik," he told them. "Don't confuse yourselves. What do you want from me? All I love is arak (the anise liquor of the Middle East). Bring me arak." He began to dance and to do all kinds of crazy things.

They would not leave him alone. When he saw they would not let up, he said, "Come, I will take you to a real tzaddik nistar." He took them to Meah Shearim, where there was a Moroccan Jew who sold vegetables, a man as simple as could be. "This is a true tzaddik nistar," he said. "His berachos work in Shamayim; he is a man before whom they tremble in Shamayim." When Rav Todros said such a thing, it was true. And the man he showed them was one whom nobody there would have valued at a penny.

There were such people once, in days gone by.

A Night Without Pain

Talk Twenty · 35:00

Rav Todros lived in Beis Yisrael. He had a friend who lived in Reches, in Ramat Shlomo, a very long way off, at least an hour's walk.

One Friday night this friend lay writhing in pain. Suddenly Rav Todros appeared. The man was startled: what was Rav Todros doing here?

"I came to you on foot, all the way," Rav Todros said.

"Why?"

"I saw that you are suffering and not sleeping. I decided to take your pain from you onto myself for one night, so that you can sleep."

He made a motion with his hand, and all the pain left the man. Suddenly he felt wonderful, and Rav Todros began to groan. All the pains the man had had passed over to Rav Todros, really and truly. Rav Todros could not sleep the whole night, "Oy! Oy!", while the other slept like a baby after several nights without sleep.

In the morning Rav Todros got up and told him, "I gave you one night of sleep in honor of Shabbos. Now I am going back home."

A Glass of Arak

Talk Twenty · 38:30

Once a bochur came to him with anemia, bar minan. His hemoglobin had dropped lower and lower, until he was nearly dead. The doctors treated him and could not raise it, and he was in great trouble.

He came to Rav Todros. What did Rav Todros do? He drank a glass of arak, had his kavanos for him, and said, "Now everything is fine. Go."

He went and was tested, and they saw that everything had suddenly gone back to normal. He was like any other person again: his hemoglobin, which had been far down, came to 11, 12. The whole problem was solved, through one glass of arak that Rav Todros drank with the kavanos he had.

"Batel u'Mevutal"

Talk Twenty · 39:30

Once there was a girl who was very sick. Rav Todros saw her and said, "Take her to intensive care quickly. But take me with her too."

They brought a car and rushed her to intensive care, taking him along. The doctor saw her condition and said they had to begin treatment immediately. They would not let Rav Todros in, because he was not family; only family were allowed in, and only in special sterile clothing. The family told them, "He is the family's Rav; we cannot manage without him." In the end they agreed to let him in with the proper clothing, and he went in.

He told the family, "Ask the doctor what she has." The doctor, after thorough, comprehensive tests, began to list: "She has this, and this, and this." To each thing she said, he answered, "Nonsense. Impossible. It doesn't exist. It isn't true. It's already annulled. Batel u'mevutal." She listed some seven or eight problems, and he annulled every one of them.

Then he said, "Now take her out of here. Smuggle her out, just take her out." The doctors would not let her be taken out: she was in danger! The family said, "On our responsibility." Rav Todros told them, "She is already healthy. It's over." The moment the doctor listed the illnesses and he annulled them, they were annulled. She was healthy. They took her out and brought her home, and she was completely well.

The Children Who Threw Stones

Talk Twenty · 41:00

Once he was walking down the street with a friend, one of his melamdim, and there was a group of children, close to forty of them, playing. He said to his friend, "Watch. As soon as I walk by, they will all see me and think I am crazy. They will throw stones at me and go wild. Don't turn to them; I will stop them, and they will stop. Except for this one." He pointed out one child among them all. "Do you see that one? He will not stop. Why? Because he did not come into the world in taharah. All the others came into the world in taharah. The moment I tell them to stop, they will stop without understanding why. He will not accept my order; he will keep going."

So it was. They walked along, and the children started throwing stones and running wild: "Here comes the madman!" On the spot he said to them, "Children, enough!" They all stopped, except that one, who kept on, exactly as he had said.

"Get Out of Here!"

Talk Twenty · 41:30

Once a man came to him weeping. "I have three unmarried daughters at home, thirty to thirty-five years old. I don't know what to do. Nothing works, nothing moves for them."

"Invite me to your house for one Friday night," Rav Todros said, "and everything will be taken care of."

"Please, come."

"Prepare wine."

"I will prepare it. Come."

The man prepared wine and Rav Todros came. Right after Kiddush he began drinking wine and acting crazy. He drank several cups and started carrying on, "Ah! Oh!", like a drunkard. It was Friday night, a chareidi home, and the daughters were all sitting at the table. They said to their father, "Abba, this is a poor drunk. Get him out of here. Look what he is doing to us, he is ruining our whole Shabbos. Why did you bring him? Take him out, get rid of him."

He heard it and shouted at them, "You get out of here!" Then he shouted at each one separately: "You get out of here! You get out of here! You get out of here!" When he had finished shouting, he calmed down, finished the meal, bentched, and went home.

Within a month all three were engaged, and within half a year all three were married, and each one had left for a home of her own. When he shouted at them

on Friday night, "Get out of here!", he was drawing down upon them that they should leave, each one through a chasunah, not just leave. That was his way of drawing down yeshuos.

The Pidyon for His Poor

Talk Twenty · 43:30

He also collected money for poor and unfortunate people. He himself had nothing to eat and did not know how the food in his own house would last, but to the unfortunate he gave food. He always collected for them and gave to them; he fed them, gave them to drink, and looked after them. He took money from people for their sake, not for his own.

One day a man came to him and said, "Listen, Prazot (the government housing company of Yerushalayim) won't give me an apartment. By law I am entitled to one under such and such terms, and they won't give it."

"I give you a berachah," Rav Todros said. "Go now and you will get it."

He got it, within a few days. After that he did not see Rav Todros for several months. About five months later, Rav Todros was walking in the street and met him. "You got it," he said. "Give me a pidyon. I am owed a pidyon for the poor. Now you are able to; give it to me now." He took a pidyon for the poor from him and said, "Yallah, goodbye."

The Military Police

Talk Twenty · 44:30

One day a man came to him and said, "Listen, Rebbe, my son has no deferment from the army. Every time the military police come, he hides and runs away. They come to his house, they come to his mother's house looking for him, and every time he has to flee. They come back, and they come back again. He doesn't know what to do; he has no life anymore. How can I be rid of them?"

"Give me a hundred dollars for my poor, and you will be rid of it," Rav Todros told him. "They will not come to you at all anymore."

The man believed him. A hundred dollars was a lot of money then, and he gave it to him. From then on they stopped coming. Decades have passed since then, and that was the end of it. They forgot altogether that such a person existed.

The Trip to the North

Talk Twenty · 45:30

Once he urged his friends to set out with him at once for the north, to the kivrei tzaddikim, to daven. Why? Just so. They knew that one does not ask Rav Todros questions. His friends, a group who did know him somewhat, brought a car and set out immediately. They made a whole circuit of the kivrei tzaddikim.

In the evening, when they had finished and were heading home, he told the driver, "Turn on the radio. It's time for the news. I'm curious to hear what happened today." They turned it on and heard that there had been a terror attack, but no one had been hurt.

"Baruch Hashem," he said, "we brought about yeshuos." Apparently he had seen it, and that was why he went.

The Gabbai Who Refused

Talk Twenty · 46:30

There are gabbaei tzedakah who manage funds: people donated apartments so that the rent would go into a permanent fund for tzedakah. One such gabbai had a great deal of money. Rav Todros said to a certain man who was very poor and destitute, "Come, I will go with you to the gabbai and recommend that he give you a donation."

They came to him, and the gabbai said, "I don't want to give you anything. Get out of here."

"Listen," Rav Todros told him, "if you don't give, it could cost a man his life."

"Don't bother my head. Get out of here."

Two days later the gabbai collapsed and was gone.

No Shopping

Talk Twenty · 47:30

Once a man who was a rosh kollel came to him. "I want to go abroad to raise money for the kollel. The situation is hard; I have nothing to pay the avreichim. Give me a berachah."

"I give you a berachah that you will succeed," Rav Todros told him, "on one condition: that you do no personal shopping. You are going only to collect money for the kollel. You will not take money from it now to go shopping as well and bring things back with you. Do you promise me?"

"I promise you."

He went and truly succeeded; wherever he spoke, people opened their pockets. One day he had nowhere to go, a free day with no shul where he could speak and raise money. He said, "I'll go along 13th Avenue in Boro Park and do a bit of shopping." He did some shopping, and when he got back to his hotel, the telephone rang. On the line was Rav Todros.

"I told you the condition was that you do no shopping. Why did you just go around 13th Avenue shopping? Why did you break the condition?"

He froze where he stood. Rav Todros was in Eretz Yisrael, and already saw what he was doing over there! "How did you do that?"

Nothing There

Talk Twenty · 49:00

A man came to him weeping that he had gallstones.

"You have nothing in your gallbladder," Rav Todros told him.

"No, I want a berachah."

"There is no berachah, because there is nothing there."

The man did not believe him. He went for medical treatment and they operated on him for four hours. In the end they told him, "Sir, we found nothing. There was not a single stone there. We thought there was."

Another time a man came to him with a tumor and began weeping that it was a dangerous growth. "Wait," Rav Todros said. He drank a glass of arak, had his kavanos, and said, "Go, it has all disappeared." They went and saw that it was gone; there was nothing.

The Widow

Talk Twenty · 51:00

He used to take upon himself the pains of people who were suffering. They would be healed, and he would take all their pain, and groan with it.

Once he lay groaning in pain, and a widow came with her troubles and wanted to speak to him. Within a minute, in all his pain, he got up, dressed, and began to cheer her as if he were the healthiest man alive. He ignored everything he was going through and did all he could to gladden her, encourage her, and comfort her. When he finished, he felt better.

"So what was that?" they asked him.

"That was my tranquilizer," he said. "I gladdened a widow, and Shamayim eased my pain."

A Chasunah with One Check

Talk Twenty · 51:30

He had to marry off his son and had nothing to do it with. He was a poor man who did not have from one moment to the next. How would he make the chasunah?

Rabbi Meir Abuchatzeira (the son of the Baba Sali) told him, "Listen, in two weeks is the hilula of Chacham Yaakov Abuchatzeira (the Abir Yaakov, the Baba Sali's grandfather). I am making a gathering here in my house, and many wealthy people will come. Come, and I will make an appeal for you among them; it will bring you money."

"Fine," he said.

Afterwards he decided that he did not want to take help from people. If it was needed, Hashem would help, and He could help through one person. Why take from ten people, each one writing a check, to cover it? If Hashem wanted, He would help through one man. What did he do? He came late to the seudah of the hilula. When he arrived, all the people had already left.

"Why are you late?" Rabbi Meir said to him. "All the important people have gone. Only ordinary people are left here. I could have raised the whole chasunah for you. What have you done?"

As they were talking, one of the guests who was standing nearby said, "Chacham, how much are we talking about?"

"In my opinion, he needs such and such a sum," Rabbi Meir told him.

The man wrote him a check, put it in his hand, and that was the end of the story.

The Rambam Came Out to Greet Her

Talk Twenty · 53:00

Once he was at the levayah of the wife of one of the roshei yeshivah, in Yerushalayim or somewhere in Eretz Yisrael, I do not know. He told the family that he saw the Rambam coming to greet her, to speak in her favor in the Beis Din shel Maalah and to bring her to her place.

Why? Because she honored her husband like a king and never let him lose a moment of Torah. However much he wanted to learn, she helped him. Never did she say to him, "Come help me here, do this, help with the children, help with that." She took the whole burden on herself so that he could sit and learn Torah. The Rambam was greatly impressed with what she did, and came out to greet her and bring her to her place.

With a meilitz yosher like the Rambam, one can walk about Above protected.

The Stamping in Machane Yehuda

Talk Twenty · 56:30

One day he stood in an alley near Machane Yehuda, close to Rechov Meyuchas, and began stamping his feet, shouting, raging, and making noises. Everyone thought he had gone mad, or that something was troubling him. He shouted and shouted. For a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes, he stood there stamping and shouting, as if he had gone completely out of his mind.

After twenty minutes he left, disappointed. Afterwards he met someone and told him, "I didn't succeed this time. I tried and didn't succeed."

"What?"

"Tomorrow you'll know."

The next day there was a terror attack there, and rachmana litzlan, the price there was heavy.

His Nights

Talk Twenty · 57:00

His greatness was that at night he sat and learned Torah. By day they took him for a madman. At night he would go into some shtiebel in Meah Shearim and sit there sunk in Torah, where nobody knew him. He sat and learned; that was his portion.

The Five Liros

Talk Twenty · 57:30

One day one of the people who knew him was outside Yerushalayim and in a tight spot. He thought to himself, only in his head: "If I get through this and the problem is solved, I'll give five liros to tzedakah." Those were the days of the lira (the Israeli currency before the shekel). He only thought it; he did not even say it aloud.

The problem was solved, and he made it to Yerushalayim. As he reached the entrance to the city, Rav Todros was waiting for him. "Give me the five liros you thought of giving to tzedakah. I have someone waiting for it who needs it. Bring it right away."

Yesurim Frozen for Yom Tov

Talk Twenty · 58:30

He would mention names of sick people and ask that all their yesurim come upon him.

Once on Chol Hamoed he was full of yesurim and pain. He stood and said, "Ribbono shel Olam, 'Vesamachta bechagecha.' On Yom Tov I don't want this. Take all the yesurim and freeze them for a week; next week give them back."

So it was. As soon as he finished saying these words he was well, a healthy man. He came and went, danced and rejoiced the whole Yom Tov. On Motza'ei Yom Tov everything came back, just as he had agreed to accept.

The Cross at the Kosel

Talk Twenty · 59:00

One day he was walking through the Old City toward the Kosel with a few people accompanying him. Suddenly, in the plaza, there was a priest, one of those Russian priests who walk around carrying that filth of theirs, a long wooden board of a cross, this long. He passed by full of pride.

Rav Todros could not bear it. He leapt at the priest, grabbed the cross, smashed it on the ground, and broke it to splinters.

The people with him ran away. They said, "Now everyone around sees this, and they will all fall on him and tear him apart like a fish! Besides, there are police; they will come on the spot, and who knows what they will do to him!" They all fled.

Rav Todros finished, and walked slowly, like a chassan to his chuppah, slowly, until he reached the Kosel. Nobody stopped him and nobody chased him; nothing at all. At the Kosel he met the people who had been with him. "Tell me, why did you disappear? What happened to you? What were you afraid of?"

The Baby Who Would Not Eat

Talk Twenty · 1:00:00

Once there was a baby who would not eat. He kept his mouth shut; when they tried to feed him, he spat it out and would not put anything at all in his mouth. For several hours he had eaten nothing.

The father came to Rav Todros. "Rav Todros, the baby won't eat."

"Come, I'll go home with you." He came to the house and said to the baby, "Now eat. Start eating." Suddenly everyone saw the baby smile, open his mouth, and begin eating normally.

The Nurse

Talk Twenty · 1:00:30

He would go into hospitals to gladden the sick in their suffering. He would dance before them and sing songs and make them happy.

Once he went into a hospital where there were several patients and began dancing to cheer them up. The nurse came, and she did not like it. "Sir, the patients here need quiet. Quiet! If not, I'll throw you out."

He stood and looked at her and said, "If you don't get out of here right now, I'll tell what you did here at night. Do you want me to start telling what you did here at night?"

She turned and fled, and he went right on dancing. Whoever was left there stood open-mouthed.

His Words

The Kosel After the Six Day War

Talk Twenty · 6:00

After the Six Day War (June 1967, when Israel captured the Old City of Yerushalayim and the Kosel) there was a question whether to go to the Kosel or not. Some rabbanim forbade going, among them the Satmar Rav. We did go, but there truly was some pain in everything that went on there. The Old City had been opened to Jews, and as a result Shabbos was desecrated there. I do not want to speak kitrugim against Klal Yisrael, but there were problems with chametz on Pesach and so on, so that it is truly a great question whether the whole victory was worth it, since Jews stumbled because of it.

In any case, some said not to go to the Kosel because of all this, and some said to go. Rav Todros did go. He found an explicit Gemara for it and explained to me an entire sugya in Maseches Bava Kamma, in the second perek, about the dog and the goat that jumped from the top of a roof. He explained the whole sugya according to the dispute between the two views on going to the Kosel, and showed how the poor souls of Klal Yisrael who learn in secular schools, who are like captives in the hands of those schools, are purified through the Kosel. It was a very, very beautiful sugya, the way he explained it all according to the reality here in Eretz Yisrael after the Six Day War. It was a wonder of wonders.

Arak

Talk Twenty · 9:30

He brought about yeshuos by drinking arak (an anise liquor drunk especially by Jews from Arab lands). Everyone thought he loved arak, that he was a drunk and a drinker, and he looked like one. But once he let slip that every cup of arak he drank made him suffer in his whole body and tore him to pieces. He could not bear it, and it made him nauseous. He drank wine and arak for the kavanos in them.

The sod of the kavanos of wine is set out explicitly in the writings of the Arizal. Yayin is seventy in gematria, and in it one has in mind the seven holy Names, whose letters come to sixty-nine; with the kollel (adding one for the word as a whole) they make seventy, which is the sod of yayin. That is how the mekubalim have it in mind. Many great men brought about great things with wine when they drank it with its kavanos, usually on Shabbos. The kavanos of wine work mainly on Shabbos, but with arak one could bring about yeshuos all week long, and that is what he did.

He always stressed the word: "Arak!", with the ayin. Even though he was an Ashkenazi, he pronounced the ayin exactly as the Edot HaMizrach do. I remember how he used to say it. The reason is that arak with an ayin, ערק, is 370 in gematria. When he drank, he had in mind to draw down lights from Keser. With every small cup of arak he drew down yeshuos straight from Keser Elyon, high above. The supernal lights that come from Keser Elyon are 370, shin-ayin nehorin ila'in, as the Zohar calls them. Sometimes they are counted as 378, the gematria of malbush, but 370 and 378 are one and the same; the extra eight are an addition on top of the original 370. These 370 are the shin-ayin nehorin ila'in that Rabbi Shimon speaks of at length in the Zohar, in the Idra Rabba, in their awesome sod.

He drank arak the way the tzaddik I wrote about earlier drank coffee, to have in mind the 370 lights; twice kafeh is 370. Rav Todros did it with arak. It caused him suffering, but he drank. In everyone's eyes he looked drunk, but his mind was clear.

He had several kavanos in it. Here is another. Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai, brings tikkunim for certain aveiros, especially pegam habris, and there he brings a nusach of tefillah composed by the Rashash (Rav Shalom Sharabi, the great mekubal of Yerushalayim, whose kavanos the mekubalim follow). In that tefillah it says that we make these tikkunim so that the sparks we cast down among the kelipos will flee from there and rise up to kedushah. In Aramaic, to flee is "arak," ערק. There is a sod in its being said in Aramaic and not in Hebrew, the sod of arak. Both the Rashash and Rav Yosef Chaim wrote it in their tefillos: that the sparks should "arak," flee, in order to rise to kedushah.

He drank the arak with this kavanah: to raise the sparks of that sick person, that poor man, that person with troubles, whose sparks had fallen below. As he drank the arak he had in mind to raise the sparks that the person had cast down, and the moment the sparks rose, the problem was solved. All troubles come because sparks fall down into the kelipos; the kelipos then draw strength from them and harm people. Once the sparks rise up through tikkunim, the matter is set right. How much depends on how much tikkun the person has done, how much he still needed to do, how many sparks fell and how many have risen. Rav Todros raised them for people through the arak he drank, in both sods: the 370 lights and arak, "flee."

"Vatosef Esther"

Talk Twenty · 13:00

He was always dancing, and through it he annulled dinim. That was his way, as I will describe shortly.

He always hid himself more and more. Those who already knew him knew him, and he could not disappear from them. But from those who did not know him he hid himself as much as possible, to the point that they shamed him, spat at him and threw stones at him, and how pleased he was with that! They thought he was some drinker, a drunk, a madman in the streets, and he was glad of it.

He explained the pasuk in Megillas Esther:

ותוסף אסתר ותדבר לפני המלך ותפל לפני רגליו ותבך ותתחנן לו

This is how he explained it. "Vatosef Esther": one who keeps adding to his hiddenness (hester), one concealment after another, merits "vatedaber lifnei hamelech," to speak before the King, Melech malchei hamelachim, HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Not everyone merits to speak that way and have his words accepted. All of us speak, but the point is that whenever such a man speaks, his words are accepted above and his will is done. That was how he explained it: one who is "vatosef Esther" is the one who merits "vatedaber lifnei hamelech."

Meat and Fish

Talk Twenty · 19:00

He used to say: "One who eats meat and fish only on Shabbos sees everything. One who eats fish on a weekday sees nothing."

He meant to say how little people should be eating for the enjoyment of this world's meals; they should eat only to keep the body alive. Even a person who needs meat and fish for his health should have them on Shabbos. If a person is sick

and needs something special, that is another matter, and "ונשמרתם מאד לנפשותיכם." But to eat these things out of desire, there is no place for that; on weekdays, as little as possible.

Inside and Outside

Talk Twenty · 36:00

He used to say: one who looks at the outside of things shows that he belongs to the chitzonim (the forces outside of kedushah). A person has to look at the inside of things. What is the outside? On the outside, anything can be fake.

All Our Notes of Debt

Talk Twenty · 47:00

He used to say that a person who has debts and does not know how to get free of them should say what we say in Avinu Malkeinu during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah: "Avinu Malkeinu, mechok berachamecha harabim kol shitrei chovoseinu." With the words "kol shitrei chovoseinu" he should have in mind both the spiritual debts Above and the material debts below. If a person says it with all his heart, he said, he will be answered and be done with his debts.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Rav Fish

of Tel Aviv

THIRTY-TWO YEARS WITH THE SANDLER

Talk Sixteen · 12:00

Rav Fish was the closest talmid of the holy Sandler (the shoemaker), whom I wrote about earlier. For thirty-two years he came home only once a week, for Shabbos. All week long he worked as a plasterer. That was his trade, and he was one of the men who built Tel Aviv. When he finished work he came straight down from the scaffolding and went to the Sandler's house. There they would eat a piece of dry bread and learn the whole night. That is where he learned the whole Torah.

Many times the Sandler himself would send people to him, and he would tell them, "Go to him. He will start acting crazy and doing foolish things. Pay no attention to the foolishness. Pay attention, because in the middle of the foolishness he will slip in the berachah you need." That is how it always was. He would talk nonsense, and in the middle he would drop in the berachah they wanted, without their noticing. But since the holy Sandler had told them, they paid attention.

Later, when he had already become very well known and understood that he could not play these games any longer, he received everyone, the poor and the downtrodden, with chesed, and he blessed them with yeshuos. His berachos were real berachos; when he blessed, the blessing came. And when he had to shout at people in order to sweeten the dinim (harsh judgments from Shamayim), he would shout and curse them. And what curses!

THE STORIES

The Baba Sali and Rav Fish

Talk Five · 20:00

Rav Yosef was very close to the Baba Sali.[114] At that time Rav Fish was still hidden, for all his greatness. He was the talmid of the Sandler HaKadosh. Rav Fish too lived in Tel Aviv, on Rechov Kalisher, close to Yaffo, just two streets away. Yet Rav Yosef did not know about him, because even the Sandler HaKadosh told people nothing special about his talmid Rav Fish, who learned with him every night for thirty years. That is how it was with them.

I sat with Rav Yosef for years and spoke with him, and he never once told me about the Sandler HaKadosh, though he was like a member of his household. I heard about him from other places. And from my grandfather, or any of these people, I heard nothing either. They did not speak about one another; it was as though they had sworn an oath on their tongues. I had to discover each one of them by my own efforts. Rav Yosef my grandfather could not hide from me, because he came to the house. Patilon he could not hide either, because he himself sent me to him over a particular matter. But Shimchon I came to know only later, even though Shimchon was one of the heads of the chaburah; it was he who married off Patilon. Only later, going from tzaddik to tzaddik to tzaddik, did I see that a piece of the puzzle was missing, and I caught it and found him.

The Baba Sali was very close to them, and he always received them with honor. And what honor! For Rav Yosef there was no line and nothing of the kind. The Baba Sali already knew when he was on his way and would say, "The moment he comes, let him in. I am waiting for him. He is already here; he is entering Netivot. In a moment he will come to me." And so it was. There was a wonderful friendship between them.

Before the Baba Sali passed away, he told Rav Yosef, the last time he was there, that he was about to leave the world and would not see him here again. "But know that I have a successor who takes my place, and that is Rav Fish in Tel Aviv." He gave him the address and everything else, and told him, "Know that he will try to hide himself. Do not let him."

Rav Yosef went with a few people and came to Rav Fish. Rav Fish began to play the madman and so on, but it did not help him. Once Rav Yosef said, "The Baba Sali sent me to you," none of the games could help. Then a bond opened between them, and once again two giants stood side by side, as I will explain when I come to these tzaddikim as well.

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[114] Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira, the great tzaddik and mekubal from Morocco, who lived his last years in Netivot, in the south of Eretz Yisrael, and passed away in 5744 (1984).

THE BAVA SALI SENDS THEM TO RAV FISH

Talk Sixteen · 0:00

This chapter is about the tzaddik Rav Avraham Fish zt"l. I knew him personally, and knew him well, for a good number of years.

The one who revealed him to the world was the Bava Sali (Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira, the great tzaddik of Moroccan Jewry, who lived in Netivot), alav hashalom. About two months before the Bava Sali passed away, around the beginning of Cheshvan, Rav Yosef Waltuch came to him together with several of his friends. They were hidden tzaddikim like himself. The Bava Sali always received them with honor, without their having to wait in line. He would sit with them and close himself in with them for hours, and they would speak of the loftiest matters in the world.

This time he told them that they would not be able to come to him anymore, and he gave them to understand that he would no longer be here. "From now on," he told them, "go in my place to Rav Avraham Fish in Tel Aviv." He gave them no address, but he described the house: there is a tall building there, it looks like this, and like this, and like this; go there. Rav Yosef Waltuch lived in Tel Aviv and knew the city well, and from the description he understood more or less where the place was.

When they went, they said to one another, "Let's see who this man is." They knocked on the door. A man opened it and asked them what they wanted.

"The Bava Sali sent us to the Rav," they said. "We would like a berachah, and to sit and speak with the Rav."

He began acting like a madman. He jumped about and carried on wildly. "What are you coming to me for? You have the wrong address! It's simply a mistake. It isn't me. Go and look for the man he meant." He did all kinds of crazy things and spoke nonsense, only to be rid of them.

But every man knows his own trade. They were hidden tzaddikim just like him, and they knew these games as well; as the saying goes, don't sell me what I sell to others. So they smiled, and when he had finished they said to him, "Kevodo, it won't help. We know we have come to the right address. If the Bava Sali sent us, this is all a waste of time; nothing will help."

When he saw how things stood, he said, "Nu, enough. Come in and let us sit down to business." He brought them inside and spoke with them in an altogether different language. Afterward they made him known in public.

His Father, the Head of the Chevra Kadisha

Talk Sixteen · 3:00

Rav Fish was not only holy, holy, holy himself; he came from holy people. He was born in Poland, in the town of Szczuczyn, to a father who was a very great tzaddik. Imagine the tzidkus of his father.

His father was the head of the chevra kadisha. One day a man passed away, and when they came to bury him they found that his kever was already taken. He had bought that plot on purpose. A great man lay buried on its right side, and he wanted to be buried next to him, and he had paid dearly for the place. Now, for some reason, they had made a mistake and buried someone else there. What were they to do? Take the other man out in order to bury this one?

Everyone stood there at a loss, and they called the head of the chevra kadisha. "Kevod HaRav Fish, what do we do?"

"We don't do anything," he said. "The meisim will move."

He went over to the kevarim on both sides and said to them, "Please, all the rows, move. Some of you this way and some of you that way. Make room here to bury this man."

All the kevarim moved, and everyone saw the wonder. Every one of them shifted, half a kever's width to the right and half to the left. A place for a kever opened up, and they buried the man there. Room had been made for him.

That is gadlus. That is kedushah. That is Toras Yisrael. It is not sheidim, and not kishuf, and not anything of the kind. It is the kedushah of a man who knows how to speak with HaKadosh Baruch Hu and who is beloved before Him: tzaddik gozer, v'HaKadosh Baruch Hu mekayem (the tzaddik decrees, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu fulfills). He did not even daven. He only asked the meisim, "Please, move." Could they refuse such a great man? They all moved, together with the earth. The earth moved too.

The Karliner Rebbe's Aron

Talk Sixteen · 5:00

Something similar happened in Teveria some decades ago, thirty-some years ago, I am not sure exactly how many. The previous Karliner Rebbe passed away in New York. I believe he lived there, though I am not certain. An El Al plane (Israel's national airline) was hired to bring him to Eretz Yisrael. For some reason the aron in which he was being carried was very wide, and it did not fit through the plane's door. Nobody knew what to do. Take him out now, change the aron, go looking for another one?

They stood in front of the aron and pleaded, "Rabbeinu, perhaps the Rebbe will go in?"

The plane moved. The aron did not shrink; the plane widened, and everyone saw the wonder. The plane widened, and the aron went straight in without any trouble. They did not have to turn it on a slant or do anything else; it went straight in. As soon as they had finished bringing it in, the plane returned to its place. When they landed in Eretz Yisrael and took him out, the walls of the plane moved apart again by themselves, so that the aron could come out straight.

And that was not all. There is apparently a special section for Karlin in Teveria, and he had asked to be buried in a particular place. When they got there, the place was too narrow. They had already seen the first nes, so they asked, "Tzaddikim, we want to bury him here." At once the place opened: the earth and the kevarim on both sides moved, and they buried him. There were hundreds upon hundreds of people at the levayah, and the tens of people who stood close by saw how it all happened.

This is exactly what Moshe Rabbeinu said: "Ha'azinu haShamayim va'adabeirah, v'sishma ha'aretz imrei fi" (give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth). The earth will hear what I want and do what I want, and so will the heavens. That is how it was.

THE FIG TREE OUT OF SEASON

Talk Sixteen · 9:30

The Gemara[115] tells that once, in the middle of the winter, when the fig trees were bare and had nothing on them, the workers of Rabbi Yosi of Yokeres came to his son. "Listen," they said, "your father agreed with us that he would give us food. We want to eat."

"My father isn't here," he told them. "I don't know what to give you."

"Listen, we are hungry. You are obligated to give us something to eat. Bring us some fruit to keep us going."

There was a fig tree in the yard. He said to it, "Te'enah, te'enah, bring forth your fruit, and let my father's workers eat." Within a minute figs appeared on it, every one of them whole, large, good and ripe. He picked the figs and told them, "Sit down and eat."

Half an hour later Rabbi Yosi of Yokeres arrived. "I beg your pardon," he said. "I am late; I couldn't come sooner. Here is the food."

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[115] This story is in Maseches Taanis, daf 24a.

"We have already eaten," they said. "It was delicious. We ate fresh figs."

"Figs? Where are there figs now?"

"Your son asked the fig tree, and it brought them forth."

He looked at his son and was angry. "You go and trouble the tree, and the Borei Olam, to bring forth fruit out of its time? Chas veshalom that you should remain. You too should leave the world out of your time." Rachmana litzlan, that son passed away.

That is how they were. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, "Im totzi yakar mizolel kefi tihyeh" (if you bring forth the precious from the worthless, you shall be like My mouth): like the mouth of the One Who by His word created the heavens, and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts. These are the kedoshei Yisrael.

They say the apple does not fall far from the tree. Rav Fish was not far from the tree at all; he was part of his father's tree. Rav Fish told the story of his father himself, and he was a holy man who never once said a word that was not a hundred percent accurate.

The Curses That Married Off His Children

Talk Sixteen · 14:00

I had a good friend in America who knew Rav Fish well. This friend had several children at home waiting their turn who were not getting married: a daughter, a son, a daughter, a daughter. Nothing moved. The train was stuck. One was holding up the next, and the next was holding up the third. So he said to me, "Reb Yosef, please, when you go to Rav Fish, ask him for a berachah for parnassah too, and that my children should get married."

I will never forget it. I can see it in front of my eyes right now. I knocked on the door and Rav Fish opened, or rather, I think the Rebbetzin, aleha hashalom, opened for me. I went in. Rav Fish was sitting at the table opposite the door, alone. The Rebbetzin must have gone into the bedroom, because I do not remember seeing her again that evening.

All I said to him was, "So-and-so asks for a berachah for parnassah and for his children, that they should get married."

He opened his mouth and began to curse. First all the Jews of America: they should burn! Why don't they all come up to Eretz Yisrael? They should be torn to pieces! What curses he cursed! Then he turned on my friend: he should not marry off a single one of his children! Nothing good should come to him! He should have no parnassah! What curses!

I understood that he was sweetening the dinim and blessing; I knew it, and I was not frightened. All the same, I backed away. There was an iron front door, then a hallway, and then a door into his room, which was one big room; that was all there was there. On the right was a tiny room where his wife usually was, a kitchen or some small room, I don't know. In any case, I backed up as far as that inner door of his room and stood there, I don't know how long, a quarter of an hour, half an hour, I don't remember. His mouth did not stop. Such curses! Until he finished.

I did not say another word about my friend or anything else to do with him. I spoke with him about other things, and he was completely calm. He was calm and spoke with me about everything, as though this man had never in his life uttered a curse or been angry.

I came home and telephoned America. "Listen," I told my friend, "he cursed you up to your great-great-grandfather. There is not a curse he left out, on you, on your children and on your parnassah. You should know that this year you will marry off all four of them."

Three of them or four, I don't remember. And that is what happened. That year parnassah came to him from where he did not expect it, and his business did better than he had planned. And all three or four of his children, I don't remember which, got married that year, one right after the other. That came from his curses.

NO SIRENS ON THE WAY

Talk Sixteen · 21:00

I know a woman who was a nurse by profession and an expert in reflexology (a treatment given by pressing on points of the hands and feet). She was very, very close to Rav Fish. During the Gulf War[116] he suffered great pain in several places in his body, and she would come and give him reflexology on the palms of his hands, and it would ease his pains.

One day she said to him, "Kevodo, I can't come anymore. I'm afraid. The sirens drive me out of my mind. I'm simply terrified of them. Every time there are sirens on the way, I don't know what to do, where to run, where to escape."

He told her, "From today, whenever you come here, there will be no sirens on the way."

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[116] In the winter of 1991, during the Gulf War, Iraq under Saddam Hussein fired Scud missiles at Israel, many of them at the Tel Aviv area. Whenever a missile was on its way, sirens sounded and people ran to their sealed rooms.

And that is how it was. The war went on for a good number of days after that, and from the time she left her house until she reached his, there was never a single siren.

Once, two minutes after she arrived at his house, there was a siren, and a missile hit Tel Aviv and flattened a whole building. Yet the people came out. That too was one of the nissim of HaKadosh Baruch Hu during the Gulf War. He destroyed houses but left the people alive. People came out of buildings where the iron bars were bent in two from the destruction, shook the dust off their coats or their pajamas, and walked outside. It was unbelievable, yishtabach Shemo, Borei Olam. And the missiles that fell in Eretz Yisrael came to thirty-nine, the number of the lamed-tes melachos of Shabbos. But all the same HaKadosh Baruch Hu had mercy on His people and let them strike wood and stones. Baruch Elokeinu shebera'anu lichvodo v'hivdilanu min hato'im (blessed is our G-d, Who created us for His glory and separated us from those who stray).

So that time, just as she came in, the missile struck. It was close by. There was a great noise, there was a blast, there was everything, and she began to tremble.

The Rebbetzin said to her, "Don't tremble. Five minutes before you came, Rav Fish threw himself down on the floor and began to cry. He said, 'The missile is going to hit here now!' and he davened. Five minutes ago he sat right here on the floor, beside himself with weeping. Don't be afraid; he has already fixed it. Calm down."

The missile that fell came down near Kolbo Shalom (the big department store in the Shalom Tower in Tel Aviv). It went into the building and did not explode. That was after Rav Fish's tefillah on the floor.

The Deaf Girl and "Rachem B'chasdecha"

Talk Sixteen · 35:00

Another time, also on Motza'ei Shabbos, a man brought his daughter, who was deaf and could hear nothing at all, and sat her down there.

Since Rav Fish was close to Dovid HaMelech himself, as I have been explaining, the geulah was very important to him, and he was very deeply connected to the geulah that has to come. There was one song he loved above all, and they always sang it: the stanza "Rachem b'chasdecha" in the zemer "Tzur Mishelo Achalnu." Everyone sang it together to a tune full of longing: "Rachem b'chasdecha al amcha tzureinu, al Tzion mishkan kevodecha, zevul beis tifarteinu; ben David avdecha yavo v'yigaaleinu, ruach apeinu meshiach Hashem" (in Your kindness have mercy on Your people, our Rock; on Tzion, the dwelling place of Your glory, the abode of

our splendor; the son of David Your servant will come and redeem us, the breath of our life, Hashem's anointed one).

He was very bound up with this. Even on his kever his tzava'ah is written: whoever comes to his kever should say "Rachem b'chasdecha" a number of times, and he promises to daven for him in Shamayim for a yeshuah.

"Ben David avdecha yavo v'yigaaleinu." B'ezras Hashem, very soon the ben David will come, and I have no doubt that one of those who accompany him when he comes will be Rav Fish. It is true that techiyas hameisim will come after the coming of Mashiach, but there will be some who rise together with Mashiach himself when he comes. Among them are the Avos, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and Dovid. They will rise and walk among us!

And not only that. The Gemara in Maseches Sanhedrin says that they will walk among us, and we will take maaser and bring it to Aharon HaKohen. Imagine how beautiful that will be. Each of us will receive his vine and his fig tree from Mashiach, the portion and inheritance that HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave us. Each of us will grow a few things in his field or his garden, and he will come to Aharon HaKohen and say to him, "Aharon HaKohen, with respect, here is terumah, terumas Hashem." Aharon himself will come and take the terumah. He will rise before the general techiyas hameisim. Who knows, perhaps we will go and bring the terumah to Aharon HaKohen himself, and the zero'a, the lechayayim and the keivah, which must be given to the kohen from every animal that is slaughtered. Who knows, perhaps we will still merit it, Hashem yezakeinu, b'ezras Hashem. What a wonderful thing that is! We are already very close to those wonderful moments.

We only have to merit them, through teshuvah, tznius, shemiras Shabbos, chinuch habanim, and seudah revi'is. Of course, if there are no three seudos there is no seudah revi'is. But when there are first the three seudos k'halachah, and afterward seudah revi'is as well, ai!

So this man came to Rav Fish with his daughter who was deaf. Rav Fish sat facing her and began to sing, "Rachem b'chasdecha al amcha tzureini." Tzureinu, tzureini, I don't know how he said it; it makes no difference, in Shamayim everything is accepted. He sang with longing until she began to hear.

"Nu," he said to her, "do you hear my songs?"

"Yes," she told him.

She began to hear, and she was healed that very evening, before everyone's eyes.

Dovid HaMelech in the Forest

Talk Sixteen · 39:30

Since I have come to seudah revi'is, I must tell you something of its greatness. I have quite a few stories about it, many stories of mofsim that Dovid HaMelech himself performed. I have already told elsewhere the long story of Sender, whose money disappeared so that he would not be murdered and robbed of it on Motza'ei Shabbos. But now I will tell you a story that I heard from my grandfather himself.

I used to eat the Shabbos meals with my grandfather. On Leil Shabbos his granddaughter, who helped my grandmother with the cooking, also came and stayed for the meal, but on Shabbos morning it was only the three of us: my grandfather, my grandmother and I. There was a little time before the shiur, and I would sit with him and he would tell me stories. That was an hour of oneg, stories from Zeidy. One of his stories was about seudah revi'is, and this is how he told it.

There was a man who was extremely careful about seudah revi'is. Never in his life did he give it up. And a seudah to him was not a sandwich eaten like some poor fellow. In one word, you open a table. You open a table!

In those days people had to travel all night to get to the fair. Usually there was a fair every Sunday. People brought merchandise from all over to one place, and there everything sold at half price; each one sold his grain and his wares. It was a market that people came to from all the towns around, a night's journey away. This man also traveled to the fair every year, and all was well.

One winter, when Shabbos goes out early, his friends came and said to him, "Come, let's set out for the city."

"No," he said. "I have not made seudah revi'is yet."

"So take a sandwich. We will wait for you."

"No! You have to open a table." You sit down to it and give it everything: Dovid HaMelech, zemiros. The Ashkenazim have songs about Eliyahu HaNavi, "Ish Chasid Hayah" with its "bli mazon u'michyah," and "V'tzaveh Yeshuos Yaakov," and more. You have to sit, because this is the business of Dovid HaMelech and of Eliyahu HaNavi. Guests like these are not dismissed with a sandwich; that is not nice. So he sat and made the seudah properly, another hour and a half, until he was done.

By then his friends had left, but he knew the way. He harnessed the horses to the wagon and set out. Suddenly it began to snow.

Do you know the forests of Ukraine? Whoever has traveled there has seen them. To this day, when you drive from town to town, there are trees without end on both sides of the road. Today there is an asphalt road, and even an asphalt road is covered by the snow and cannot be seen. How much more so in their days, when

there were no asphalt roads at all, only paths. The snow came down and he lost the way. Was it here, or there, or over there? He did not know what to do. There was a moon, but that does not help you find your place. He was lost in the forest. It was midnight, the snow was falling, he was beginning to freeze, he did not know the way or where he would end up, and he kept going around in circles.

Suddenly he saw in the distance a house with a light burning. "Baruch Hashem," he said, "there is a person here." He ran there and knocked on the door to ask how to get from there to the road to the city. The man opened the door and said, "Come in, come in, it's cold outside, come in."

The moment he came in, the owner threw himself at the door, locked it from inside and took out the key. "Good that you came," he said. "Because of this cold, my dog has not been able to eat a person for several days, and he loves eating people." There, stretched out on the floor, lay a huge bulldog, rachmana litzlan. "And now you have come just in time. But I will not wake him from his sleep. When he finishes sleeping he will see you and eat you. You stay here with him."

He got up, went out, closed the door behind him, locked it from outside, and left him there.

Now this Yid was stuck, locked in a room with a dog beside him whose very sight was enough to strike terror into a person, bar minan. What a size, what a look, rachmana litzlan! He knew that any minute it would get up and devour him, and, in the words of the pasuk, ולא נודע כי באו אל קרבנה. He went to the window and shook the bars, but the bars were strong and he could not pull them out. Nothing helped. He was afraid even to say Tehillim aloud so as not to wake the dog, so he began in a whisper. Every time the dog moved a limb in its sleep he jumped with fright and his heart nearly leapt out of him. What will be? He sat saying Tehillim, Tehillim, quietly, quietly, his eyes turned to Shamayim. He was afraid even to cry, so as not to make noise.

Suddenly he saw a man smiling at him from behind the bars and signaling to him, "Shhh." The man pulled at the bars, tore them out, took hold of the Yid and pulled him out through the window. He sat him down in the wagon, his own wagon, but in the passenger's seat, not the driver's, and the man who had rescued him sat in the driver's seat.

"Close your eyes," he said. "I have saved you. Close your eyes."

He closed his eyes. After a minute the man told him, "Open them." He opened his eyes and found himself at the gate of the city. In one minute they had come from the snowbound forest to the city gate.

When he found himself there and could not understand what was happening to him, the man said to him: "I am Dovid HaMelech."

In Shamayim it had truly been decreed that he would be eaten by that dog. Why? Because he had transgressed the words of the Chachamim. Our Rabbis commanded that a person should not go out on the road alone at night. In their times, of course, there was no lighting and no transportation, no people and no cars in the streets, and so a person should not go out alone. And he had transgressed and gone out. And whoever transgresses the words of the Chachamim is chayav misah; so our Rabbis said. Since there was already a kitrug against him over other matters, this was the straw that broke the camel's back. The moment he did it, they prosecuted him, and it was truly decreed that he would be eaten by that "erev rav" lying there on the floor.

"But," Dovid HaMelech told him, "since you delayed because of me, I spoke well of you. They told me, 'You may save him,' and I came and saved you. From now on, do not dare go out at night alone."

And he vanished.

My grandfather told me this story. This is the greatness of seudah revi'is.

I have already told you about Rav Uri, zechuso yagein aleinu, whom Dovid HaMelech came himself and saved from the Arabs on Har Tziyon. He told me the story himself, at seudah revi'is on Har Tziyon. I was fourteen, and I was trembling all over as Rav Uri told me how Dovid HaMelech had saved him.

There is nothing to compare to seudah revi'is. The yetzer hara gets in people's way: "Impossible. Don't eat. You already ate before, and now you'll eat again? Don't eat. Have a sandwich, have something." Rabbosai, the geulah is at the door. It is well worth being careful about seudah revi'is in honor of Dovid HaMelech.

The Barefoot Woman

Talk Sixteen · 56:30

There was a woman living in Chadera whom I mentioned to you, who used to come and give Rav Fish reflexology treatments. Her name is Chaya. She was very close to him and came to him regularly. He had many people close to him, men and women, and I am telling you from their own personal stories. Him I knew very well, and soon I will tell you what happened with me too.

Once she came to him with a sum of money and said, "Kevod HaRav, I have brought you money for tzedakah, from all my ma'aseros and everything I have collected. Here, take it for tzedakah."

"Today I do not accept money," he told her. He closed his eyes and said: "Go outside, stand behind the door, and wait until I call you. And do not say a single word to anyone! If anyone comes and asks you anything, not a word. Keep your

mouth completely shut. Do not dare say a word until I call you. Do not dare speak!"

She stood outside. Not many minutes passed before a chareidi couple came in. The man was dressed entirely like a chareidi, and the door was open; she had left it open, and she could hear and see everything that went on. His whole room was tiny, and everything could be heard outside at the doorway.

They came in. The woman was chareidi, with a sheitel. Any chareidi woman with a sheitel is already not a complete chareidi according to the true Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu. One must have only a real head covering. A sheitel is called being overes al das Moshe v'Yehudis; she causes other people who look at her to stumble, and it is repugnant. In any case, this woman came with a sheitel and otherwise dressed modestly, and her husband was dressed in complete chareidi dress, with a big beard and a big hat, you know.

They came in, and the man took out a bundle of twenty-seven thousand dollars and said to Rav Fish, "Kevod HaRav should accept this from me now."

"Today I do not accept money from people," he told him. "This woman waiting outside too, you can ask her: I did not accept money from her today. Today I do not take money from people. Please, go with your money."

However much the man pressed him, Rav Fish did not discuss anything with him. The man kept bringing him the money and he kept saying, "I do not accept," until the man left.

After he had gone out with his money, Rav Fish called to her and said: "Did you see that person? That was not a person. That was the Satan himself. That was Ashmedai, the king of the sheidim, and he came here with the sheidah. Had I taken money from him, I would have lost my Olam Haba completely. I had to take a neder upon myself today not to accept money from anyone, so that he could not force me to take the money. Since I already made the neder and did not accept from you, I was also able not to accept from him.

"So now I am not accepting the money from you. Today I do not accept money. Go to work. I will send someone who will take the money from you. You do not need to come all the way here. It will happen there in Chadera, at your place of work; there is no need to come all the way to Bnei Brak."

She took the money and went back. For several days it sat in her purse, wrapped in paper, set aside as tzedakah money.

She works in an office, and her boss sits not far from her. One day, in the middle of work, a woman came in, dressed with complete tznius, but barefoot, and asked her for tzedakah. Only her did she ask. On the spot she opened her purse to take out a few coins, saw the tzedakah money that had been meant for Rav Fish, and gave her all of it.

While she was giving her the money, the boss also saw the woman, and he too opened his drawer to take out something for her. By the time he had taken out the money to give her, the woman had vanished. He began asking all the workers, "Where is the woman who was just here?"

"What are you dreaming about?" they said. "No woman was here." There were several workers in the room, and not one of them had seen her. Only he and this woman, Chaya, the two of them alone, had seen her. And she had given her the money, and the woman had taken it and gone.

For a few minutes they were stunned. How had she disappeared within a minute? What had happened? Well, so be it.

An hour later... There was a "Clark" there. That is what she called it. I do not know what a Clark is; I understood it is some sort of machine for lifting heavy loads, like a forklift.[117] She stepped on the forks of the Clark, which were sharp, and as she stepped on them the Clark tipped over onto her. By nature she should have been killed. It is very heavy iron, and it fell on all of her and crushed down on her. But she felt as though there were an air cushion separating that heavy machine from her body, some sort of air cushion between them, and she was whole. They immediately brought workers and lifted the machine off her, and she got up healthy and whole. Nothing at all had happened to her.

Some time later she came back to Rav Fish, and he said to her: "I sent you someone fitting to take the money. You see? And by the way, צדקה תציל ממות was fulfilled too."

That was one of the neshamos that come down. It may well have been Rachel Imeinu herself; there are such things. I know stories like this. I myself know two stories of this kind, where similar things happened.

That was Rav Fish, zechuso yagein aleinu.

The Last Bus

Talk Sixteen · 1:06:30

One day a man came to him from Yerushalayim with his family. At eight in the evening they finished with him, with the berachos and the conversation. He received them beautifully; his face truly shone toward them. When he was done with them they got up to go, and he told them, "You are not going. You are staying here."

Fine. Ten o'clock. "Rebbe, we want to go home!"

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[117] In Israel a forklift is commonly called a "Clark," after the American company that made them.

"No, you are staying here."

Eleven o'clock, and the last bus was leaving for Yerushalayim. "Can we go?"

"No, you are staying here."

Where would they stay all night? A whole family, wanting to sleep, where would they stay? "You are staying here."

Half an hour after the last bus had already left, he told them, "Now you can go."

"But there are no buses!" they said.

"Go to the Tachanah Merkazis (the central bus station). You will have a ride all the way home."

They went to the Tachanah Merkazis, and a man said to them, "Are you going to Yerushalayim, maybe? I'm going. Do you want a ride? Come with me."

He took them, and what did they see on the way? The last bus, the one that had left, had overturned, and there was a whole commotion there. They passed by and reached home.

So tell me, why did he not let them leave at eight in the evening, before the last bus? Apparently, on whatever bus they would have traveled from eight o'clock on, they would have had to be on it, and it would have overturned. Apparently it was mainly because of them. But since they were not on it, the last bus overturned without them, and they were saved. Apparently they had a seal of mortal danger on them. Others may have come out with light wounds, but they would not have come out with light wounds; they would not have come out at all.

A House That Would Not Sell

Talk Sixteen · 1:16:00

One day a Yid came to him with his wife, sad and broken. They had a house that was like a curse. However much they tried to sell it, they could not. They lowered the price and there was no buyer. No buyer! The apartment was an expensive one, and they had taken many percent off its real price, but there was no buyer at all, and they did not know what to do. They had already bought another house, sure that they would manage to sell this one to cover the purchase, and now they were stuck, and time was pressing.

Rav Fish looked and told him, "Next week, by the end of the week, you will sell it at full price. No discounts."

He went out, but he said to his wife, "What did Rav Fish say? On Monday I have miluim (reserve duty in the army). How will I sell it while I'm on miluim? I report for miluim from Monday. It can't be. I don't know what will be this week."

Sunday passed without a single buyer. Monday morning he left for miluim and told his wife, "I'm going to miluim now, who knows for how many weeks. I don't know what will be with the apartment, I don't know what will be with the payment."

He arrived at miluim, and as soon as he got there the officer said to him, "Why did you come? You were called up by mistake. Go back home." And he sent him home.

On Friday afternoon a man came and saw the apartment, fell in love with it, and signed a contract with him on the spot at full price.

Do Not Lend

Talk Sixteen · 1:19:00

The woman I mentioned before, Chaya: at the end of his days Rav Fish was in Yerushalayim, and he did not answer every phone call. Around Shavuos, his last Shavuos, she called his phone, and he picked up! He had told her, "Whenever you call, I will know it is you and I will pick up, even though I don't pick up for others." And indeed, as soon as she called, he picked up at the first ring.

He told her that he was about to go, and that she would no longer be able to come to him. But she must be careful not to believe people, even those who are called rabbanim. "Be very, very careful," he said. "You know, you yourself have seen many times how I lent money to people called rabbanim, and it was very hard to get the money back from them. It was very, very hard. Be careful."

A few months after his petirah, a man who is called a rav came to her, a "poel yeshuos." All these poalei yeshuos, rachmana litzlan, one has to be careful who they are and what they are. One must beware of them. He came and said to her, "I want you to lend me a sum now," some tens of thousands of euros; I do not remember the amount.

"No," she said, "I don't lend. Rav Fish told me not to lend to anyone. I don't lend."

She would not lend to him. The next day her mother fell dangerously ill. When she saw that, she said, "Oy, she is dangerously ill. I'll go to him so he gives a berachah; he is a poel yeshuos."

He told her, "She is sick because you did not lend me the money. Bring me the money, and she will be healthy."

Now she was under pressure. She went and lent him the money for half a year. Her mother did not get better; it was a complete lie. She recovered only after a long time, through medicines, and what he had said never came to pass.

When she came to ask for the money, he said, "Lady, your mother got better. That is the payment for the money."

"But she got better through medicines and a doctor, after several months, not through you."

"No, that is the payment." He refused to pay her back in any way.

She began to cry, "Rav Fish, what will I do?" He came to her in a dream and said, "Why? I told you not to lend. Why did you lend? Why did you believe?"

It was very, very hard to get the money out of him. She had to involve several people to force this rav to give her back her money.

The Stolen Silver

Talk Sixteen · 1:23:30

A few weeks ago Mrs. Malkah, she should be well, whom he appointed apotropos over all his possessions, told me the following.

Since he had no children, after his petirah his things were still in his house. There was a break-in, and the silver vessels of the seudah revi'is disappeared, along with several other valuable things that were there. Rav Fish lived like a poor man for himself and had nothing; only for seudah revi'is did he have what he had, as I told you. Those valuable things disappeared.

She did nothing. Where would she go looking? No complaint, nothing. By us one does not run to file a complaint over everything, not to the police and not to anyone. Rav Fish would take care of it.

Some time later two men came to her, each of whom looked like a hardened criminal, built like a gorilla. They came to her barely able to see, their vision truly blurred, half feeling their way and half seeing. They told her that they were the ones who had stolen the things, and that the moment they stole them they lost their sight. Their vision was close to nothing, barely there, all blurred. They understood that it was because of this, and they did not know what to do. They went to a rav in Yerushalayim, who investigated and investigated until he found that she was the apotropos. They came to her and said, "Here are all the things we stole."

As soon as they brought her the things, the moment they reached her hands, their eyes opened, and they left her healthy and whole.

The Rider in the Cemetery

Talk Sixteen · 1:25:00

This same apotropos told me about a man who knew Rav Fish and worked for the chevra kadisha in Tel Aviv. One day, when Rav Fish was sick, the man came to help him, and Rav Fish told him, "No. You will come to me only after my petirah. There, if you want, you will help me, not now."

When Rav Fish was niftar, she was in Tel Aviv. She had a baby, and she was there to put the house in order and close it up, and to take the tachrichim and his things to bring to Yerushalayim, so that they would take them along to Tzfas. This man came with his wife and asked, "Where is the levayah?"

"The levayah will be at Tzomet Glilot," she told him. "It leaves from Yerushalayim and comes through Tzomet Glilot; you can come there."

It was Erev Shabbos and it was late, and the man did not make it to Tzomet Glilot either.

A few weeks after Rav Fish had been buried, he came to the man in a dream and said, "You said you would come to me. Why didn't you come to me? I am inviting you to come to me."

The man was afraid that he was inviting him to come to him in Olam Haba, and he became frightened! "Come to my tziyun," Rav Fish said.

The dream came once, and twice. His wife told him, "No, you don't feel well, and now it's winter. It's hard, hard." He was niftar in Elul, and a month or two later the winter had already begun.

One night it was already the third time that Rav Fish had come to him. He told his wife, "It's one o'clock at night now. I'm taking the car and going to Tzfas."

"I'm coming with you," she said.

The two of them set out and reached Tzfas in less than two hours. It was still dark, the middle of the night; in winter the night is long. They arrived in Tzfas and did not know where his kever was. They wandered among the graves of the beis hakevaros of Tzfas, around and around, without knowing where his kever was.

"Rav Fish," he said, "I've come to your kever. Where are you?" There was no answer, nothing.

Suddenly he remembered Rav Fish's tzava'ah. He said to his wife, "Come, let's both start." The two of them began to cry out in a loud voice, "Rachem b'chasdecha al amcha tzureinu." They said it with fervor four or five times, and suddenly, as they stood there, a man was standing beside them with a horse, riding on a horse.

They asked him, "Maybe you know where the kever of Rav Fish is?"

"Of course," he told them. "Come, I'll show you." He brought them right to Rav Fish's tziyun.

When they reached the tziyun and turned to thank him, he had vanished! There was neither horse nor man. Gone! The man's wife was badly shaken; for some time afterwards she was in terrible fear from what she had been through. But they had reached the place.

That was Rav Fish, zechuso ya'amod v'yagein aleinu.

There is a great deal more to tell about him, but, as we say on Yom Kippur, יכלה הזמן והמה לא יכלו. It is impossible. Zechuso yagein aleinu. And b'ezras Hashem, just as he asked, may we too merit now that בן דוד עבדך יבוא ויגאלנו, רוח אפינו משיח ה', and may we all merit to see him: מלך ביפיו תחזינה עינינו, bimheirah b'yameinu, amen.

Short Accounts

The Black Dog

Talk Sixteen · 20:30

Once there were people in Rav Fish's house, and they saw a big black dog come in. They tried to drive it out, but it pushed its way in by force. However hard they pushed it to make it leave, it would not go. It came all the way up to Rav Fish, stood beside him and licked his feet.

Rav Fish said to it, "Machul lach, machul lach, machul lach" (you are forgiven).

Everyone saw the dog shed tears. It went out at once, down to the street, and a car came and ran it over. The tikkun was complete.

Dovid HaMelech at the Table

Talk Sixteen · 31:00

Once one of the well-known Admorim, one of the great and holy ones, asked him why he gave himself over so completely to seudah revi'is in such a way. There were Admorim who were truly great and whole; in our generation there were many such. Rav Fish told him that Eliyahu HaNavi and Dovid HaMelech themselves had told him the value of seudah revi'is.

Another time, someone else who was also close to Rav Fish asked him, "When Kevodo makes the seudah, do neshamos come here?"

"Certainly," he said. "Dovid HaMelech himself comes, with Eliyahu HaNavi. Both of them are at the seudah, every seudah revi'is."

"Is it possible to see them?"

"All right," he said, "I'll show you."

At the seudah revi'is he called him over to the candles. "Do you see the candles? Look behind the candles. I am letting you see something slight, no more than that." He passed his hand over the man's eyes like this and said, "Look behind the candles."

The man said that he saw a figure, a figure with a crown. That is what he saw. Immediately Rav Fish told him, "Enough. Go sit down."

The Silver Cup

Talk Sixteen · 32:30

I said that he would hand out the drinks there, pouring for the people himself in silver cups. He had special silver cups for seudah revi'is. After his passing they were stolen, and I will tell you further on what happened with that theft. But first, this.

Once, when people were sitting at his table for seudah revi'is, one of them saw these cups and thought, who knows what segulah there is in them, and besides, they are pretty and nice. After he finished drinking, he took the cup and put it in his pocket. They went on eating, and everything was pleasant and orderly. When they stood up to leave, he could not get up. He tried to move and could not; he was stuck in his place. He was terrified. He was stuck like a nail and could not move. He could rock back and forth, but he could not get up or shift himself from his place.

As he sat there, bewildered and dumbfounded, Rav Fish came over and said quietly into his ear, "Nothing happened. Put back the cup and get up."

He put back the cup, picked up his feet and ran.

The Tzedakah Bowl

Talk Sixteen · 33:30

The wonders done there were very great. On the night of seudah revi'is Rav Fish would put a bowl on the table and tell the people to give tzedakah. It did not matter how much they gave. There were wealthy people there who gave large sums, and there were those who gave pennies. But he looked at each person who gave and said to him, "Tell me, do you put on tefillin? Do you keep Shabbos? If not, don't put money here. Whoever doesn't put on tefillin and doesn't keep Shabbos should

not put money here. Oy va'avoy if he does." And he would give such people their money back.

The Mute Boy Sings

Talk Sixteen · 34:00

Once a woman came to seudah revi'is with her son, who was mute, and asked Rav Fish to daven that the boy should be healed. It was Chanukah, Shabbos Chanukah.

Right there Rav Fish said, "Let us all begin to sing for his refuah." First, since he himself was pure (naki), he stood and davened for the boy's refuah. Then he told everyone to sing a song in honor of Chanukah. Then he stroked the boy's face and said to him, "Sing in honor of Chanukah, one of the songs."

Suddenly the boy opened his mouth and began to sing a Chanukah song, the one the people there had sung before, or a different one, I don't know; a song in honor of Chanukah. From then on his mouth was opened, and he spoke like anyone else.

Ointment from the Bottles

Talk Sixteen · 39:00

One day a man came to Rav Fish with his son, who had gone blind in both eyes, rachmana litzlan, and asked for a yeshuah. When the seudah revi'is was over, Rav Fish took a little from all the bottles of drink on the table, mixed them together in one cup, and told the father to rub it on his son's eyes. He rubbed it on, and Rav Fish sent them home. The next morning the boy opened his eyes, completely healthy.

Torn Banknotes

Talk Sixteen · 52:00

Rav Fish was extremely careful not to accept money from mechallelei Shabbos, under any circumstances. People who had been saved through him would bring him money in great amounts, and he would say, "Take this away from here, tfu! Money of mechallelei Shabbos? Take it!"

One day a man came to him and said, "Kevod HaRav, you blessed me with a son and I had one. Here." He had brought him a thick bundle of banknotes. The

largest note in those days was a hundred lirot.[118] Lirot, not shekalim. With a shekel (שקל) you only have to take off the head, the neck of the ל, and it becomes a lie (שקר). But this was lirot.

He brought him a bundle like this, and Rav Fish told him, "Get out of here! Throw it away. You are a mechallel Shabbos. Throw it away!"

The man forced it on Rav Fish and pushed it into his hands. What did Rav Fish do? He tore all the notes into two or three pieces and threw them on the floor. "Fine," he said. "Now gather up all the papers and take them out of here. Tfu! Such tamei money I will not take from someone who has been mechallel Shabbos."

The man gathered up all the papers. It would have been a shame for them to go to waste. Rav Fish was not going to tape them together; the man understood that he would sweep them out to the garbage with all the rest. So he collected every piece and left in disgrace.

Clean Money

Talk Sixteen · 53:30

Once a man came to him and brought him a bundle of dollars. Rav Fish was a great baal tzedakah; I will soon tell you about his tzedakos. The man said, "Rebbe, take it," and Rav Fish smiled and took it from him.

After he had taken it with a smile, the man said: "Rebbe, the last time, you threw my money back at me because my factory works on Shabbos. Because you threw it on the floor in disgrace like that, it shook me up. I took upon myself to keep Shabbos, and my factory is closed on Shabbos. This is clean money."

Rav Fish already knew. He smiled. I remember his smile; he had a broad smile, like this. And he took the money from him.

Apartments, Ovens and Refrigerators

Talk Sixteen · 54:00

He would give out to poor people, especially to chassanim, even apartments. Apartments, literally! He would buy apartments and give them to people who had none. And refrigerators and ovens too. There was not a chassan who came to him and did not receive an oven and a refrigerator from him.

Refrigerators in those days were not like today, when everyone just goes and buys one. Getting a refrigerator was very hard. When I got married I had no refrig-

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[118] The lira was the money of the State of Israel before the shekel replaced it in 1980.

erator, until my eldest son was born and I managed, through protektzia, to get one a little more cheaply. Who had one? We lived in a different era from today. To you, what is an oven, what is a refrigerator? No, it was something of great value.

A friend of mine from New York, Rav Avrum, who was his gabbai, as I said, serving him and helping him, told me that one day a rich contractor came in. Rav Fish told him, "If you bring me thirty refrigerators within twenty-four hours, I promise you thirty years of life more than what was allotted you in Shamayim."

After the man left, my friend Rav Avrum asked him, "Thirty years?"

"Yes," he said. "If I promise, I must keep it. If by sunset tomorrow he brings me thirty refrigerators, he will gain thirty more years on his life. When I give my word, I keep it."

That was Rav Fish.

Two out of Five

Talk Sixteen · 55:30

One day five men came to him, friends together, and brought him money. From two he took it; from three he did not. They stood there stunned. "From mechallelei Shabbos," he said, "I do not accept."

And it was true: the two kept Shabbos and the three did not.

The Film That Failed

Talk Sixteen · 56:00

One of the great actors here in Eretz Yisrael, of the secular Zionists, came to Rav Fish. He wanted to make a film, and he said, "If this film succeeds, I promise you a million dollars from the income."

Rav Fish told him: "I am telling you that the film will not succeed. You will lose, but you will do teshuvah, and you will gain the teshuvah."

Indeed, many people know this man today. The film did not succeed, but he merited to gain his neshamah. After he went through a heart attack or something of that sort, I do not know exactly, he accepted upon himself the full yoke of teshuvah, and today he is a complete baal teshuvah.

The Fifth Question

Talk Sixteen · 1:03:00

Once they brought him a boy who was lame and walked on crutches, and asked for a refuah. Rav Fish told him: "Stay like this until Leil Pesach. On Leil Pesach, when everyone asks Mah Nishtanah, add a fifth question to the four: Why am I different from all the children? All the children walk normally, and I am on crutches."

That was all. The boy asked it, and in the morning he got up with his legs free. He ran, without crutches, without anything, and walked healthy and whole.

Two Pairs of Tefillin

Talk Sixteen · 1:03:30

Once a man came to him, a talmid chacham from Yerushalayim. Rav Fish looked at him and said, "I cannot help you. You do not put on tefillin."

"I?" he said. "I put on two pairs of tefillin!"

"You do not put on tefillin. I cannot help you. Go away from here."

The man went home and checked his tefillin, and he found that they were pasul.

The Chair of Yeshuos

Talk Sixteen · 1:04:00

In his room, as you come in on the right, there was a small mirpeset (balcony), and there he kept a chair. He said it was the "chair of yeshuos," because it had belonged to the previous owner of the apartment, who was a great talmid chacham.

There was a period when I felt very, very bad. I came there and said to him, "Rav Fish, I don't feel well."

"Sit on the chair," he said. "Sit for half an hour and you will be healthy."

I sat on the chair. But I did not just sit there waiting for the chair to heal me. I began watching Rav Fish, and I saw that he was making yichudim. As if it were the chair doing the healing, he was making the yichudim so that I would get up healthy.

That was Rav Fish.

A Closed Door

Talk Sixteen · 1:05:00

Once I came to Rav Fish with my son, my younger son, Chaggai. I knocked on the door and nobody opened. For a quarter of an hour I knocked on the door and

shouted, "Rav Fish! Rav Fish! Rav Fish!" so that he would hear my voice. I felt like Shlomo HaMelech, talking to the trees and the stones. No answer.

I went downstairs and told my son, "I have a feeling he is inside and does not want to answer me today. Apparently there are some dinim on me today and he does not want to. You go up alone."

My son went up alone. He was a young bochur, sixteen or seventeen or so. He knocked on the door, and Rav Fish opened for him on the spot and received him with a smile, with kavod.

"Your father is downstairs?" he asked him. "Today I am not letting him in. But know that he will yet teach Torah to Klal Yisrael, not the way he teaches a small class now. He will teach Torah in a big way."

He already saw me then teaching you through the video; he said this back then. And he said, "Your father thinks he is sick. He thinks he is going to die." I had pains of a kind that made me say, apparently I am going to die. "Tell him he will not die. He will yet teach Klal Yisrael; many Yidden are still waiting for his Torah. He will teach in a big way."

He saw back then what he saw, alav hashalom. He did not let me in. Apparently the dinim had to be sweetened in this way as well.

From a Previous Gilgul

Talk Sixteen · 1:08:30

Once a young couple came to him asking for children; the husband was an avreich. Rav Fish told him, "I cannot help you. This comes from a previous gilgul, and I do not have permission to help you." He sent him out and did not help him.

The Photograph

Talk Sixteen · 1:09:00

I have an acquaintance in New York, not a friend, an acquaintance, a photographer by nature and by profession. At that time he went to visit Rav Fish and photographed him, and afterwards he went to Rav Kaduri. When he got to Rav Kaduri he showed him the picture of Rav Fish. Rav Kaduri looked at the picture and was astonished. On the spot he wrote on the back of the picture his own name and his mother's name, Yitzchak ben Tufcha, and said, "Ask this man to daven for me. I need his tefillah. This is a person unique in his kind."

That is how a connection came about. He went and told it to Rav Fish, and a bond formed between these two giants. They met; this Yosef from New York ar-

ranged the meeting for them. When two malachim meet, it is something out of the ordinary.

The Phonograph

Talk Sixteen · 1:09:30

There was an acquaintance of mine who used to come to Rav Fish regularly, and he would give her berachos. One day she came to him all in a storm. "Listen, Rebbe," she said, "I have a problem with my sister."

In those days there were the big noisy phonographs, with huge discs that went around with a needle on them and began to play. That was called a phonograph. "My sister sits all day with the phonograph," she said, "turns it up loud, and all day I go out of my mind from her songs and all her nonsense, at full blast! I cannot take it any more. Over and over I tell her to turn it down, and she doesn't listen to me. At that moment only the song interests her; she is in the clouds."

He told her, "Go home. There is no more phonograph. It's over. The phonograph is already in the storeroom. Go! Shalom."

She came home and found it quiet. She did not understand what had happened, so she asked her mother, "What happened? Where is my sister's phonograph?"

"It's in the storeroom," her mother said.

"What happened?"

"Today they drove me crazy. Suddenly I felt the noise was bothering me, and I told her, 'Young lady, in my house there is no phonograph any more.' I took it and put it in the storeroom, and that's the end of it. She won't use it. When she gets married she can take it to her own house. Here she will not use it any more."

It was just as he had said.

Back to London

Talk Sixteen · 1:11:30

This same young woman worked in London for a short time. She went there to look for a shidduch and meanwhile worked a little; she took the job in London in order to find a shidduch there. She found nothing. After Purim she returned to Eretz Yisrael, thinking she would make Pesach here and afterwards see what would be.

She came to Rav Fish and said, "Kevod HaRav, I'm here."

"Why are you here?" he said. "Why aren't you in London?"

"Well," she said, "I didn't find a shidduch. After Pesach I'll go back."

"No," he told her. "You are going now! Tomorrow morning you take your suitcases and fly to London. You make Pesach in London, not here! Your chassan is waiting for you there. Go get married, quickly!"

When Rav Fish says something, that's it. The next day she took her suitcases and flew to London.

It was close to Pesach. She was a young girl, and families usually invite such girls for Shabbosos and Yamim Tovim so that they will not spend them alone. A family invited her, and that same family also invited a certain bochur. The two of them met there at the table, and it ended in a chasunah. They are yerei Shamayim, and in the last few months they married off their son.

A Car for a Delivery Boy

Talk Sixteen · 1:13:00

After the chasunah this young man needed parnassah and had none, so he came to Rav Fish and said, "I need parnassah."

"What is your parnassah now?" Rav Fish asked him.

"I'm a delivery boy," he said. "My employer has a car, and I drive it and take all sorts of packages of shopping to people's homes. But since it isn't my car, I earn only a tiny sum. That could have been fine for a bachelor, not for a married man."

"Go," Rav Fish told him. "Someone will give you a car of your own. Don't worry."

By then they already had two small children. Until then he had worked as a hired employee at this job and barely got by, and now with two small children it was hard. He went to the rav of the kehillah where he davened and said, "Listen, I need a car."

The rav said, "I'll give you a letter," and gave him a letter of recommendation: this man has small children to support and needs a car for his work; everyone should help him. But how much can people give? Half a pound, a pound sterling (English money). Will a car come of that? Not even a wheel!

Suddenly a man came to him and said, "Listen, I am buying you the whole car. I want you to earn a living with dignity, not take handouts." He went and bought him a used car for two thousand six hundred pounds sterling. But he made a condition with him: "I am buying you the car. The insurance you will take care of at your own expense." He wanted the young man not to take it lightly. That is the English nature; they are like that. He did not want the man to treat the car carelessly: "Here, I got it for free; yallah, whatever happens, happens." He wanted him to pay some-

thing from the sweat of his own brow. "You will collect donations for the insurance," he said, "and pay the insurance on the car I am buying you."

And so it was. But since the insurance had to be paid out of tzedakah money he collected, he took only what I think is called third-party insurance, only the compulsory insurance that one must have. A few months later the car was stolen. Since the insurance did not cover theft, he was left without a car again and did not know what to do.

His wife said to him, "Rav Fish told you that you would get a car, right? You got a car. And Rav Fish did not say that so that they would steal the car from you. If the car was stolen, call the man and tell him it was stolen."

"I'm embarrassed," he said. "He gave me a present and it was stolen."

"So what is your fault? Do it."

He was afraid, so she telephoned the man herself. "Thank you very much for the car you bought us," she said. "But the trouble is that the car was stolen, our insurance wasn't complete, and now we have no car."

"Is that so?" he said. "Has the man been working properly and earning from his own money? Since the day he got the car, has he not taken a penny of tzedakah?"

"No," she told him. "He worked and earned."

"If so," he said, "I am buying him another car for five thousand pounds sterling, with the insurance."

I myself rode in that second car. When I was in London, that man drove me in it.

Garlic and a Grush

Talk Sixteen · 1:18:00

Rav Fish used to give out garlic to people: a clove of garlic and a coin, with the first perek of Tehillim to say. Several times I received from him cloves of garlic with coins and the perek of Tehillim. These were the big grushim of the old days; you do not know the grushim. They were not the agoros of today. They were big grushim with a rim around the edge, serrated like teeth all around. He always gave it in a little bag, with a clove of garlic and the first perek of Tehillim. He gave me several such bags. A pity that not one is left with me. If one were left today, maybe my situation would be better.

One day a man came to him who wanted children; he was weeping for children. Rav Fish gave him three cloves of garlic and said, "Take these and keep them. You will have three children." And indeed, within three years, one after another, he had two sons and a daughter.

Erev Shabbos, Thirteenth of Elul

Talk Sixteen · 1:22:00

Rav Fish was niftar on Erev Shabbos Kodesh, the thirteenth of Elul 5758, and he is buried in Tzfas.

He always used to tell his people: "No one will be able to come to my levayah. You will all be hurrying home to make Shabbos. I will barely have a minyan." So he said.

And indeed, on its way from Yerushalayim to Tzfas, the levayah stopped at Tzomet Glilot.[119] One of his trusted ones, a woman called Malkah (I will not say her family name), a very great tzadeikes and a wonderful woman, was his right hand. He also appointed her apotropos over all his possessions, since he had no children. She took care that he would have the tachrichim and everything, and sent them so that the taharah would be done in Tzfas, right before the kevurah. They brought him out of Yerushalayim without taharah and carried him to Tzfas in an ambulance. At Tzomet Glilot, people who heard about it came, I think about two hundred people, on Friday afternoon, to give him his last kavod for a few minutes. Then the vehicle that was carrying him went on and reached Tzfas, and there they still managed to do the taharah and bury him just minutes before Shabbos came in.

As I told you, he asked in his tzava'ah that whoever comes up to his tziyun should say, "Ani maamin be'emunah sheleimah b'vias haMashiach, v'af al pi sheyismahmeiah, im kol zeh achakeh lo," and say "Rachem B'chasdecha" three times, as I said before, and then he will intercede well for him in Shamayim.

His Words

The Moon That Hid for Two Days

Talk Sixteen · 7:30

The Gemara tells about Rebbi Chiya that once, on the night that by the moon was truly Rosh Hashanah, he saw the new moon shining. But Chachmei Yisrael wanted to push Rosh Hashanah off by a day or two. We do push it off: we never let Rosh Hashanah fall on a Wednesday or a Friday. That year they apparently needed to push it off from Tuesday or Wednesday to Shabbos. Most likely it was Wednesday,

[119] Tzomet Glilot is a major highway junction at the northern edge of Tel Aviv.

and they wanted to push it to Shabbos, not to Friday or Thursday. One day was not enough for the whole order of the calendar they wanted to set up.

Chachmei Yisrael have the power to push off the moon even when it can be seen. How many times do we keep Rosh Hashanah two days after the moon is already shining in the sky? We do not look at the moon. We look at the months as Hillel HaTzair (Hillel the Second, the Nasi who fixed the calendar we keep to this day) sanctified them. That is the power of Chachmei Yisrael. About this Chazal said on the pasuk "asher tikre'u osam bemo'adam" (which you shall proclaim in their appointed times): do not read "osam," them, but "atem," you, whether you set the time by mistake or on purpose.

So Rebbi Chiya saw the moon, and he said to it, "We want to sanctify you two days from now. If you are seen now, what will people say? That Chachmei Yisrael are making a joke of it?" He called out to the moon, "Madam, we want to sanctify you two days from now. Please, get out of the way and disappear!"

The moon disappeared for two days, and it was not seen until they had sanctified the month. It did not stop in its place the way the sun and moon stood still in Yehoshua's day, "shemesh b'Givon dom, v'yare'ach b'emek Ayalon" (sun, stand still at Givon, and moon, in the valley of Ayalon). The moon went on along its course as usual; it simply could not be seen from the earth. On Shabbos it appeared looking three days old. But people cannot tell the difference between a moon one day old and a moon three days old, and so there was no la'az (mockery) against Chachmei Yisrael, because they had done it according to the calendar they themselves had built.

That is "Ha'azinu haShamayim va'adabeirah." And what happened with those tzaddikim is "v'sishma ha'aretz imrei fi."

The Blessings That Sounded Like Curses

Talk Sixteen · 17:00

There is a Gemara[120] that once two tzaddikim came to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. I think they were Rabbi Yonasan ben Asmai and Rabbi Yehudah ben Geirim. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai honored them, sat with them and spoke divrei Torah with them. After they left, his son Rabbi Elazar came in. He was a new chassan, married two or three years, and very young; in those days they married at twelve, thirteen or fourteen.

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120 The story is in Maseches Moed Katan, daf 9b.

Rabbi Shimon said to him, "Go to those tzaddikim, kiss their hands and take a berachah from them. Their berachah counts for a great deal in Shamayim; their mouths are something special."

Rabbi Elazar went to them, kissed their hands and asked for a berachah, and they began to curse him. Your house should be destroyed! You should not see a new year! And a whole series of other curses, one after another.

He heard all this and came back upset. "What did you do to me?" he said to Rabbi Shimon. "Where did you send me? They cursed me, one curse after another!"

"No," said Rabbi Shimon. "They blessed you. 'Your house should be destroyed' means your kever. Here is not a house; here is a hotel. The kever is a person's real house. It should be destroyed, meaning you should stay in this world. 'You should not see a new year' means you should not marry another wife. You should have shalom bayis and live your whole life in peace with this wife. When a man takes a new wife, the pasuk says, 'naki yihyeh l'veiso shanah echas' (he shall be free for his house one year). He has a new year: he must make his wife happy, sit with her and give her his time. It is a special year, and that is what is called a new year. 'You should not see a new year' means you should stay with this wife." And so he went on, translating all their curses into berachos.

The mekubalim explain (I do not remember whether it is the Arizal himself or one of the Arizal's talmidim) that at that moment there were harsh dinim on Rabbi Elazar. The tzaddikim could not bless him outright, because the mekatreg would be roused. When a person has dinim on him and they bless him, it can turn out worse. Why? The moment they bless him, his file goes up above, and if there are dinim, they may suddenly find something and throw him down even deeper. So that is a problem. What, then, should they do? Bless him in spite of the dinim? Instead they blessed him with words that looked like curses.

In Shamayim they know the truth; they go after the intention. Words need interpretation, and when a person thinks about what he is saying, they take the thought and join it to the words. Since the thought was good, the words went after the thought, and every one of them was a berachah.

The opposite was Bilaam. He came to curse Yisrael and ended up blessing them. But his intention was to curse, and so, the Gemara in Maseches Sanhedrin says, all his berachos turned into curses, except "Mah tovu ohalecha Yaakov" (how good are your tents, Yaakov). That one turns into a curse only on one condition: if Yisrael talk in shul. If not, it does not. That is why, when people talk in shul, the Shechinah is no longer there for them; it is over. The Shechinah is there, but it no longer responds to people. Very often people daven with all their hearts, and their tefillah is not accepted because other people in that shul spoke devarim beteilim inside the beis haknesses. It is finished. "Mah tovu ohalecha Yaakov, mishkenosecha Yisrael"

holds when Klal Yisrael themselves guard their tents and their dwellings in kedushah. But all the other berachos have already turned to bad, as Bilaam intended, because everything goes after the intention, not after the words.

His Seudah Revi'is

Talk Sixteen · 24:00

Every Erev Shabbos Rav Fish would hand out hot bagels. He had kavanos in it, and he gave them to everyone who needed them. Ah, ashrei whoever ate from those bagels!

But what was truly special about Reb Avrum Fish was his seudah revi'is (the melaveh malkah, the fourth meal, eaten on Motza'ei Shabbos). It was a whole order. Every Motza'ei Shabbos at ten at night the place filled up with people. Whoever wanted a yeshuah knew that this was the place and this was the time. He made seudah revi'is in grand style, with wonderful seudos, and he kept this up for more than thirty years. Everyone took part, and many wonders and miracles happened there in front of everyone's eyes.

He would light thirteen candles, corresponding to the thirteen middos of rachamim. And he used to say that whoever makes seudah revi'is with good, pleasant drink and with candles will see yeshuos. There were all kinds of drinks there too, I think thirteen kinds of drink on the table as well: from sweetened water and juices to arak (an anise liquor) and cognac, all in honor of Dovid HaMelech. He had small silver cups, and he himself would pour for the people with them.

At every seudah revi'is he told stories of the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov has a great connection with seudah revi'is, because he was from the zera of Dovid HaMelech. He was connected to Dovid HaMelech, and he also passed away on Shavuos, like Dovid HaMelech. The bond between the Baal Shem Tov and Dovid HaMelech is tremendous. That is why the rebbi who came to teach the Baal Shem Tov was the neshamah of Achiyah HaShiloni. Why? Because Achiyah HaShiloni received his semichah from Dovid HaMelech. Since the Baal Shem Tov had a spark of Dovid HaMelech, Achiyah HaShiloni, as his talmid, now came to teach the one who had been his rebbi before.

It was the same with Rav Chaim Vital, who was a gilgul of Rabbi Akiva, and the Arizal, who was a gilgul of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, Rabbi Akiva's talmid. This time the Arizal came into the world to teach Torah, above all to Rav Chaim Vital. He told him, "I am your talmid from the previous gilgul. I came to teach you. You are the main thing; I came for you." The talmid comes back, as it were, to return to his rebbi the Torah he had from him in the previous gilgul. Achiyah HaShiloni has a

wonderful place; Rabbi Shimon too chose his place in Shamayim next to Achiyah HaShiloni. That is why Achiyah HaShiloni came to teach the Baal Shem Tov.

Since there is a great connection between the Baal Shem Tov and seudah revi'is, there is an inyan to light a candle in honor of the Baal Shem Tov, as well as for Dovid HaMelech and for Eliyahu HaNavi. There is an inyan to light four candles at seudah revi'is. But there should be a beautiful tablecloth and nice dishes, not a meal where you grab a bite, some kezayis, and that's it. There should be a beautiful table with candles burning on it in candlesticks, silver candlesticks if you have them, or at least nice ones, at least four candles. Rav Fish was particular to light thirteen.

The Goy Who Spread the Straw

Talk Sixteen · 27:30

Each time, Rav Fish told a story of the Baal Shem Tov, but he would always begin with one particular story.

Before the Baal Shem Tov was revealed, he lived in a certain village, and summer and winter he would go down to the river to toivel. Kedushah without mikveh is impossible. Mikveh is part of the neshamah of a Yid; there is no beginning and no end to the levels a mikveh brings. So he would go to toivel in the river. Many times, because the water moved back and forth and left the bank muddy, he would slip on the way in. It was very hard for the Baal Shem Tov, with all that slipping, to go down, climb back up and keep his hold.

A certain goy saw how the Baal Shem Tov struggled on the way down, and he understood that this Yid was a holy man. What did he do? Every time, he went to the spot where the Baal Shem Tov toiveled and spread straw over the whole stretch of the entrance, so that the Baal Shem Tov would not slip. The straw made it rough, gave something to hold on to, and the Baal Shem Tov could go down more safely.

When the Baal Shem Tov was revealed and left the place, he called the goy and said to him, "Listen, you did chesed with me while I was here, and I have to pay you for it." It is forbidden to take chesed from a goy without paying him for it in this world, so that he should not have any hold on all the kedushah of the Baal Shem Tov afterward. One has to pay him right away.

"Listen," he said, "I am ready to bless you. Decide what you want: long life, many children, or money."

What did the goy answer? "All three."

"You have them," said the Baal Shem Tov. And indeed, he received all three.

Then Rav Fish would add, "If a goy can receive such berachos, then we, the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, can certainly receive them. Nu, we will receive them too, the whole tzibbur here!" That is how he used to say it.

A friend of mine was often there. He served Rav Fish a great deal; he used to come from America especially for a period of time to serve him, to do all his shopping, to see to everything and arrange it all. Once or twice he noticed that sometimes Rav Fish said these words clearly, and sometimes he stammered and the words would not come out of his mouth. So he asked him, "Kevodo already says this story by heart, week after week. Why does Kevodo sometimes stammer?"

"When the tzibbur is not worthy of receiving the berachah," he answered, "it doesn't come out smoothly from my mouth. I don't stammer because of some problem of my own. It's because the tzibbur here isn't worthy of receiving it, so it doesn't come out, and I have to force the words out of my mouth."

Three Neshamos on the Plate

Talk Sixteen · 31:00

Once that same friend sat eating breakfast with Reb Avrum Fish. Rav Fish looked into the plate and said to him, "There are three neshamos in gilgul here that you are eating now." He saw the neshamos inside the food my friend was eating.

A Segulah for Parnassah

Talk Sixteen · 48:00

Whoever wants parnassah, we have a segulah from the Baal Shem Tov. A person should light four candles: one in honor of Dovid HaMelech, one in honor of Eliyahu HaNavi, and two more in honor of whomever he wishes. One can light them in honor of the Baal Shem Tov himself. And he should peel garlic and eat at least one clove at the seudah. He must peel it himself, not give it to someone else to peel. A person who needs parnassah should peel the garlic with his own hands.

There is a secret in peeling the garlic, a very great secret, and I will now reveal a little of it to you.

Rachel is the secret of the garlic. That is why there is an obligation to eat garlic on Leil Shabbos: bachelor or old man, married or not, sick or healthy, there is an obligation. It is a takanah of Ezra HaSofer that a person must eat garlic on Leil Shabbos. Only, if a person is married and has a wife who is tehorah, he should eat cooked garlic, because cooked garlic increases the zera. But if he has no wife and is a bachelor (the Gaon says the bachelors should also do it), he should eat raw garlic,

because raw garlic lessens the zera. It is good for men who have no wife to eat a great deal of raw garlic. It also cleans the blood; raw garlic is very healthy. True, it makes the mouth smell a little, but afterwards one can chew parsley, which takes away the smell of the garlic.

There is a name here. The Shechinah, Rachel, is called שם. When the ו of Hakadosh Baruch Hu is inside it, it becomes שום. This is the secret of the shum mentioned in the Haggadah. On Pesach we say "על שום מה," "על שום מה," "שום מה"; it is mentioned there, and not for nothing. Every word in the Haggadah is full of wonderful secrets, as you know from Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli,[121] how great the value of every single word there is. This garlic is an enormous secret, as I told you: it is an elevation for the Shechinah.

Now, on Leil Shabbos there is an inyan to eat garlic, and on Motza'ei Shabbos there is an inyan to peel garlic, even if others eat it. Why? To remove the kelipos from the Shechinah. When a person peels garlic on Motza'ei Shabbos, he should have in mind to remove the kelipos from the Shechinah, so that she may be entirely holy to Hashem.

But this is on condition that it gets eaten. Peeled garlic that has been left all night may no longer be eaten. A ruach ra'ah rests on it, and whoever eats it can be harmed by the ruach ra'ah. So it must be eaten before morning. He may peel one clove and eat it himself, or peel several so that the members of his household eat too.

Peeling the garlic is a very great thing: it removes the kelipos from the Shechinah. A person who does it merits, middah k'neged middah, parnassah. Peeling garlic for parnassah, on condition that it is eaten, is a segulah from the Baal Shem Tov. But the reason I have just revealed to you is not from the Baal Shem Tov; it comes from elsewhere.

That is the value of seudah revi'is. Ashrei whoever does it, and in its merit may we, b'ezras Hashem, merit the geulah that is coming.

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[121] Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli was a great mekubal in Poland, killed by the Cossacks in the massacres of 1648.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Chacham Tzion Bracha

of Aram Tzova

REVEALED AND HIDDEN

Talk Twenty-One · 0:00

I close with a davar shel berachah: our teacher and rebbi, the great tzaddik Chacham Tzion Bracha, zechuso yagen aleinu. As much as his greatness could be seen, it was hidden.

I do not know how to begin with this gadol or how to end. It is true that I knew him, but no one can say he knows a tzaddik. Whatever we know of such people is our own knowing, and it is very shallow. We can tell some mofsim and stories about them, but the mofsim and the stories are not really them. They are perhaps one face of the seventy faces that the Torah has, and that they have too. They themselves are their kedushah, their taharah, their deveikus with the Borei Yisbarach. The few things we saw or heard happen around them are only what grows out of that. Even of these, we do not know what truly happened. One thing here and one there was seen by a few people who told it, or we saw it ourselves. Greatness is not measured by how many stories happened with a person, and not by the eye and the measure we have as human beings. It is measured by where the person stands before Shamayim: his worth in Shamayim, and the love that HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and Shamayim, have for him.

There are neshamos for whom it is decreed that they come into the world as orphans. From the very first moment they must know that they have only one Father, the One in Shamayim, and no father down here as well. As a rule, these are very great neshamos.

It makes no difference whether such a neshamah is born to chilonim or to frum parents. A neshamah's weight is not measured by its parents or by the place it was born, but by its true worth. A very great neshamah can be born in a secular kibbutz, far from everything. That does not show the neshamah's worth, its lowliness or its

greatness. It shows only where it must begin its tikkun in this world. A great neshamah may have erred in its deeds in one of its gilgulim, so that instead of gilgulim there came kilkulim, and now it must repair everything from the root and start again from the beginning, born in a secular kibbutz. Another neshamah may be born into a family of tzaddikim and be on a lower madreigah, and it too must reach its own madreigah, each one its own. The place a person is born does not show the quality or the greatness of his neshamah. Of course surroundings and society have great influence. When a man with a great neshamah is born in a great place, he has a better chance of fulfilling the hopes that Shamayim placed in him, for which he came into the world.

Chacham Tzion Bracha, alav hashalom, was born an orphan. His father died while his mother was expecting him, and his mother was blind; she could not see. He had to grow up like this and still become all that he was meant to be. Why was this so? "הנסתרות לה' אלקינו." But a child who grows up without a father knows that he must turn only to his Father in Shamayim. He has no father of flesh and blood down here through whom to receive from the Father Above. Whether they want to or not, these neshamos know from the very first moment that they have no father in this world. Then, each according to his madreigah, one learns to turn to his uncles and to his family in a father's place, and another knows that there is a Borei of the world and turns only to Him.

Those poor souls who did not grow up in such a place, never heard of Him, and did not know Mi She'amar Vehayah Ha'olam have a different problem. That too was part of their tikkun: to begin on their own and come to know Him. But those who grew up in an atmosphere of Torah and yiras Shamayim turned their eyes to the Borei of the world at once. Chacham Tzion always had this pasuk on his lips:

עליך השלכתי מרחם, מבטן אמי אלי אתה

He too grew up in a place that knew Mi She'amar Vehayah Ha'olam very well. He heard of Him and knew Him, and he knew that his trust was in Him alone. When a person's trust is in Hashem more than anything else, his middos can grow further and reach a much higher madreigah.

We find this with Abaye. Abaye's name was not really Abaye; his name was Nachmani. He was orphaned of father and mother together. His father died while his mother was expecting him, and his mother died when she gave birth to him. He grew up a complete orphan in the house of his uncle Rabbah, his father's brother, who raised him. Rabbah called him Abaye for two reasons. First, the boy was named Nachmani after the father of Rabbah bar Nachmani, and Rabbah did not want to call him by his own father's name. Second, Abaye is the roshei teivos of the pasuk "אשר בך ירוחם יתום." An orphan finds his comfort only in the Borei. He

has no people here he can rely on. A person's main strength is his father, and when his father is not beside him, he turns only to his Father in Shamayim. Chacham Tzion Bracha grew up in this same mold.

The Mother's Share

Talk Twenty-One · 7:00

His mother was blind, yet she tried to give him as much of the right chinuch as she could, to raise him in the way of Torah and yiras Shamayim.

From this we should learn that the koach of a woman is far greater than that of her husband. The Gemara in Maseches Berachos, daf 17, says that the promise HaKadosh Baruch Hu made to women is greater than the one He made to men. HaKadosh Baruch Hu calls the women "נשים שאננות." The word sha'anan is said only of one who has reached very high madreigos in Olam Haba. It is the sod of the four faces of the Merkavah, called "אלפי שנאן, ה' בם סיני בקדש." Women attach themselves that high.

Above, the madreigah of women in Gan Eden is greater than that of men. It is so great that the wives of the great talmidei chachamim sit before them as a crown upon their heads. This is a great sod in the kisvei Arizal. Chazal say that in Olam Haba tzaddikim sit with their crowns on their heads, and the Arizal explains that "their crowns" is the sod of the atarah. Just as in a man's bris there is the atarah, which is the aspect of malchus, so "their crowns" means the keser, the keser malchus. An atarah always means a royal crown, and a man's keser malchus is his wife.

Why is that? Because she made it possible for him to become a talmid chacham. It makes no difference whether it was his mother or his wife; both have this zechus. The Gemara there asks:

הני נשי במאי זכיין

With what do women earn so great a promise, since they do not learn Torah? The Gemara answers: by sending their sons and their husbands to learn. She lets her husband go and learn. She does not hold him back with "Come help in the house, go out to work." She tells him, "Go learn. You make your connection with the Borei, and I will receive my percentage from Him through you." She is the investor, and he carries the work out. Sometimes an investor who puts in a large sum receives a bigger percentage than the man who works with the money. Here the woman gives up her life so that her husband can sit and learn Torah. Everything rests on her head: the whole house and everything in it. Sometimes even the parnassah is on her, and the chinuch of the children, and caring for them. It is all on her, so that her husband can sit and learn. Her investment is greater than what he

accomplishes in his learning. Even if he is a tremendous gaon who is mezakeh es harabim, however much he does, her reward is greater. Every woman's share in what her husband learns is as great as the part she gives him to learn, as much as she is willing for him to sit and learn at the expense of the household's needs. That is her reward, and her percentage is the larger one.

So it is when they send their husbands or their children to learn Torah. A mother gets up in the morning and sends her son off to learn. When that son grows up in Torah, all the Torah he learns as a child, "מפי עוללים ויונקים יסדת עז," and all he learns later when he grows up, are her investment. She will receive her investment to the last percent, everything that is coming to her. This is why the madreigah of women is greater than that of men.

This mother too merited to raise such a great diamond, under impossible conditions. There is no doubt that her influence did much for his growth and his greatness. And the child, on his own, was searching for the Borei.

From Chalab to Yerushalayim

Talk Twenty-One · 21:00

Chacham Tzion grew up in such a town, Chalab, where gedolei olam walked the streets and learning Torah was the most honored thing in the world. They knew how to honor bnei Torah there. Everyone who grew up there loved Torah and sought Torah, and it was part of his very soul. He grew up in such a place, a child who sat in the beis midrash all the time from his earliest years and learned Torah.

He longed for Eretz Yisrael and decided to go up. While he was still young he went to Tel Aviv, which was then a new place still taking in olim. After a short time there, his aunt in Yerushalayim invited him for a Shabbos. As soon as he came into Yerushalayim he fell in love with the city and never left it again. He stayed there on the spot, a young bochur, and began to learn Torah. He lived in impossible conditions, but the main thing was to learn Torah.

He became what the Tanna tells us: "עשה תורתך קבע ומלאכתך עראי." It is good to join Torah with derech eretz, and a person must also work for his parnassah. But he must not make parnassah his fixed thing, the main purpose of his life, with Torah only something added on. It is the other way around: the Torah is the main thing and the work is arai, temporary. A person needs parnassah to live, for the minimum this world requires, and the rest is for Olam Haba, and that is learning Torah. So he too made his life this way. At first he was a greengrocer in Machaneh Yehudah (the great market of Yerushalayim). Later he became a post-

man in the post office. There are some interesting stories with him from those days as well.

His Learning

Talk Twenty-One · 46:30

He learned a great deal with Chacham Mordechai Sharabi and with Chacham Salman Mutzafi (one of the great Baghdadi mekubalim of Jerusalem), until he merited to become the permanent chazzan, with all the kavanos, in the beis knesses of Chacham Mordechai Sharabi. Together with Chacham Salman Mutzafi he went through all of Shas from beginning to end, and all the writings of the Arizal.

Raising the Shechinah from the Dust

Talk Twenty-One · 48:30

He opened a yeshiva for mekubalim, and also for baalei teshuvah, to bring them back. He called his yeshiva Leshem (לש"ם), the roshei teivos of Lehakamas Shechinta Me'afra (raising the Shechinah up from the dust).

His whole life was the galus of the Shechinah: how to lighten the galus of the Shechinah, how to take suffering upon himself in place of the Shechinah, and how to bring people back in teshuvah so that the Shechinah would suffer less from the aveiros of Klal Yisrael.

He would go from shop to shop and from person to person and influence them to do teshuvah. He spoke from his whole heart and with love, never with shouting, never with harsh words, only with fondness and love for every single person, trying to explain to him how important it is to keep the mitzvos, and so many people came back in teshuvah through him. Bochurim with long ponytails who knew nothing about Yiddishkeit, when he approached them with such fondness and such love and talked with them, many of them ran after him and clung to him, and later they became talmidei chachamim.

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The Stories

The Stall in Machaneh Yehuda

Talk Twenty-One · 38:00

Chacham Tziyon Bracha decided, to begin with, to make his living as a greengrocer. He had no choice; a man needs parnassah. Every day at eleven in the morning he would leave his stall and run to Rav Mordechai Sharabi (the great Yemenite mekubal of Jerusalem) to learn for two hours. That was the hour when Rav Mordechai Sharabi gave his shiur in Kabbalah, and he did not want to miss it. He would simply leave everything as it was and come back afterwards, and many times he did not even have anyone to watch the stall.

Often his merchandise was nothing special, so it did not trouble him much. People did help themselves to a little of it, and whatever happened when there was no one watching did not bother him very much. But when he had good merchandise that he had paid a high price for and had to sell, he would arrange beforehand for someone to watch it during those two hours, because it would be a shame to lose it.

One day he had bought exactly such fine, expensive merchandise, and the man who was supposed to watch it did not come. It was a shame to abandon such good merchandise, but the time for the shiur had arrived, and there was no one to watch it. What would be?

It took him less than half a minute to decide. "I do not care about the merchandise, for its trade is better than any trade. I am going now to learn Torah. Whatever will be, will be." He said, "Ribbono shel Olam, I am in Your hands, and my merchandise is in Your hands. You watch my merchandise for me." He got up and went to learn with Chacham Mordechai Sharabi.

Not a minute after he left, two British policemen arrived. This was in the days when the British ruled the land, before the State was founded. Those British were colder than ice. They were frozen men with all the time in the world; the world could come to an end and they would still be standing in the same spot. They had come to write him a ticket, because his stall was illegal. In the market every man set up a stall or a cart, put his goods on it and sold them, and none of it was licensed. They wanted to give him a ticket, but they could not find him, since he had left a minute earlier.

So they waited beside his stall for two hours for him to come back so they could give him the ticket. For two hours they stood there like ice, without budging, and the whole time they were guarding his merchandise, because no one could steal anything while they stood there. After two hours they gave up. They saw that the man was not coming, so they got up and left.

Two minutes after they left, he arrived. The shiur had lasted two hours, and how far was it from Machaneh Yehuda (Jerusalem's great open market) to Rav Sharabi's yeshiva? Two moments, a few steps on foot. A minute or a minute and a half after they walked away, he was back at the stall. Everything was untouched. From Shamayim they had guarded all his merchandise for him, and he got no ticket and nothing else. He left a moment before the ticket and came back a moment after the men with the ticket had gone, and in between they guarded all his merchandise. Yishtabach Shemo.

Out of the Kishleh

Talk Twenty-One · 47:00

Once he was learning with Chacham Salman Mutzafi at night. Their main learning was at night: from chatzos until morning they sat and learned. In the morning the two of them got up to go to the beis knesses, but the British had imposed a curfew. When there was a curfew, anyone found in the streets was breaking it; they would catch him, arrest him and put him in a holding cell until they decided what to do with him.

So these two tzaddikim finished their learning in the morning and set out to daven in the beis knesses, and British policemen caught them. "Curfew! What are you doing? Get into the patrol car!" They took them to the Kishleh, the jail in the Old City by Shaar Yafo (the old Turkish police station beside the Jaffa Gate), and locked them in a cell until "the morning," meaning eight or nine o'clock, when the officers would come, talk it over, write them up and decide what to do with them. Meanwhile they sat inside, the door was locked on them, and the policemen sat outside guarding them.

Chacham Tziyon said to Chacham Salman, "What is this? It is time for Shacharis!" On the spot the two of them did some yichudim to put the guards to sleep. Within ten minutes of their yichudim, both policemen guarding them had fallen asleep. They opened the door, walked out and went to the beis knesses. By the time the guards woke up, they found that the two rabbanim had slipped right through their hands.

The Tallis Katan

Talk Twenty-One · 58:00

The mitzvah he was most particular about and most careful to keep in the finest way, and the one he said he had come into the world for, was tallis katan. He said that he had come into the world in order to awaken people about tallis katan.

Tallis katan is a very great thing. It guards a person, and many people who were in battle told how the tallis katan saved them. It is also a very great protection against other things, even against aveiros. The tallis katan has many segulos that can help a person in many different ways, even without his knowing them.

For example, let me give you a story told in the sefer Aleinu Leshabe'ach. The author apparently knew the person. The stories in that sefer are stories either told to him by reliable people or about people he knew himself.

He writes that there was a bochur who suffered from a serious illness. He came to the hospital, where they were to do a special scan on him. It was done without any of one's own clothing, only in the sterile clothing they put on the patient. He had to undress completely, and they gave him a special sterile garment to wear, a kind of special pajama, and in it he had to go through all the tests in a room that was entirely sterile. They also had to give him a special injection for the scan and the tests.

When he came into the room before it, the nurse said to him, "Take off all your clothes."

He said, "I am not taking off the tallis katan."

"You will not go in with it. There is no such thing as a sterile tallis katan. You will not go in with this tallis."

He said, "No. I am not taking off the tallis katan under any circumstances."

"Then you will not go in," she said.

"Then I will not go in," he answered.

He sat outside for two hours like that, waiting for permission to go in with his tallis katan; he was not willing to take it off. Suddenly a doctor came in and asked him, "What are you doing here?"

He told him the whole story. The doctor said, "Wait a moment." He looked at his papers, went over to the nurse, looked again, and said to him, "You are lucky. If she had given you the injection, you would have died. She made a mistake with the substance. What she prepared to inject into you the moment you took off the tallis katan would have killed you. Hashem watched over you from Shamayim because of the tallis katan you insisted on, and you stayed alive. Now you will go in with the tallis katan, as a special exception, with the right syringe, and you will go through the treatment." Yishtabach Shemo.

A Room Full of Tallisos Ketanim

Talk Twenty-One · 1:00:30

Chacham Tziyon was very particular about tallis katan and influenced people about it. Once he received a sum of money that was his own personal money, and he did not even have to ask himself what to do with it. On the spot he went and bought a whole room full of tallisos ketanim in order to give them out.

That was the motto of his life: every person should go about in a tallis katan, and a person should make sure to have at least two, one for Shabbos and one for weekdays, and not go about in the same tallis katan on Shabbos and during the week.

According to Kabbalah, the value of the tallis katan is truly very great; it is the inner light of a person. Many people who suffer from anxieties and from all kinds of emotional troubles should wear a tallis katan, and in many cases this makes the anxieties disappear, to that extent.

There are anxieties that will not go away even with a tallis katan. A person must wash his hands after he comes out of the bathroom, or out of a shower room, or even out of the bathroom when he did nothing at all there but only went in and came out. If a person cut his nails, he must wash his hands. A person who had a haircut, or even removed a few hairs from his body, no matter from where, must wash his hands. If not, he can suffer nightmares and fears without knowing the reason, and then no rabbanim will help him and no pill will help him; he does not understand why it is happening. But when a person does keep these things, which our Rabbis commanded us to keep so as not to come to anxieties, and he still has anxieties, a tallis katan can help against them. It is very important that people know this. Again, not in every case, but in many cases it helps.

Three Hours in the Courtyard

Talk Twenty-One · 1:04:00

There was a bochur there who had come back in teshuvah through him. He was a wild boy, a poor fellow, brought up with no religious education, and he had done foolish things. When Chacham Tziyon took hold of him, he drew him close, and closer, until he truly became a complete yerei Shamayim.

Suddenly a problem fell upon him. He came to Chacham Tziyon and said, "Listen, I have to marry a certain girl." Back when he was not yet keeping the Torah, he had been with her as husband and wife, and now she was expecting a child from him. He could not abandon her, and he wanted to marry her. But she was telling him, "Absolutely no religion. Religion does not interest me, I do not keep any reli-

gion, and I do not even want chuppah and kiddushin. I want to marry you only officially, in a lawyer's office. Chuppah, kiddushin, none of it interests me, and I will not keep taharas hamishpachah or anything else. Forget about it."

He did not know what to do. He said to Chacham Tziyon, "I want to keep Torah and mitzvos. On the other hand, she is not willing to keep them, and I must marry her because of the baby. I do not know what to do. She is expecting."

Chacham Tziyon asked him, "What about an apartment?"

He said, "For now I have rented an apartment, so that if I marry her we will live there. I have to marry her and afterwards try to influence her. What else can I do?"

Chacham Tziyon said, "You cannot marry her when she does not keep Torah and mitzvos. What will you do about taharas hamishpachah? What will you do about everything else?"

He said, "Then what should I do?"

Chacham Tziyon asked, "Where is the apartment you rented?"

He said, "It is in such-and-such a place, an apartment with a courtyard. I have rented it, but we have not moved in yet, because it has to be fixed up and renovated, and there is time until the wedding."

Chacham Tziyon told him, "Take me to the courtyard." He came, bringing several sefarim of Kabbalah with him, went into the courtyard and said, "Leave me here for three hours. Go, and come back in three hours." He sat in the courtyard for three hours learning Kabbalah, learning and learning. When he finished, after three hours, he left.

That afternoon the bochur brought the girl there to see the place and plan how to renovate it. The moment she walked into the courtyard she changed completely; she was turned around. She said to him, "You know what? I am ready to do teshuvah, and to have chuppah and kiddushin properly, according to halachah. Come, let us go now to a rav who will arrange the chuppah and kiddushin for us as they should be. I am beginning to keep Torah and mitzvos."

She was suddenly turned around, and they became a married couple keeping Torah and mitzvos according to halachah. What kedushah this is; what things these are.

Lost in Samu'a

Talk Twenty-One · 1:14:30

Once Chacham Ben Tzion traveled to Me'aras HaMachpelah, and one of his talmidim drove the car. On the way back from Chevron they lost their way and came into Samu'a. Yatta, Samu'a and the villages around them (Arab towns south of

Chevron) are full of sonei Yisrael, bar minan; many terrorists have come out of there. By mistake they drove right into the market square. Every eye was on them. In another moment they would be dragged out, and the crowd would lynch them, bar minan.

At that moment Chacham Ben Tzion closed his eyes. As soon as he closed them, a car pulled up, driven by a man who also looked like an Arab. He said to Chacham Ben Tzion's driver, "Don't be afraid of anything. Follow me." His voice was so calming that the driver went after him. Everyone saw that he was following this Arab, and they all moved aside. Nobody did them any harm. The man led them out of the village and brought them to the road to Yerushalayim.

When they reached the Yerushalayim road, which the driver already knew, he went to thank the man. Suddenly he saw that there was no Arab and no car, nothing at all. He was alone there. At that moment Chacham Ben Tzion lifted his head and smiled. "It's done," he said to him. "Drive on."

The Malach Refael in the Hospital

Talk Twenty-One · 1:22:30

One day he asked his talmidim to take him to a hospital. Chas veshalom, what did he want in a hospital? But he wanted to go, so what could they say? He came to the hospital and went into its shul. In the shul he cried out, "The Malach Refael is not here! The Malach Refael is not here!"

He went up to the teivah. When he came down, whether by accident or not, I do not know, he fell down one of the steps there, rolled onto his head and was slightly hurt. At that very moment he said, "Oh! The Malach Refael is here! Get up and take me home."

They said to him, "Now that we are here, you want to go home? Go upstairs and let a medic bandage the wound on your head."

He said, "No. The Malach Refael has already come. Take me home. There is no need."

What came to light afterwards? On one of the upper floors lay an injured child whose condition was unstable. However hard they tried, they could not stabilize him. At the very moment Chacham Ben Tzion said, "The Malach Refael has come, take me home," the child's condition stabilized, and he was able to recover little by little. They understood that he had gone there so that this child would be saved and healed.

Maseches Gehinnom

Talk Twenty-One · 1:43:00

There was a Holocaust survivor whom what he had seen in the Holocaust drove to kefirah. He went to a secular kibbutz, and there he became a full-fledged kofer. Once he came to Yerushalayim to visit relatives of his who were chareidim, and he went on in his own way. He sat with them and began to argue: "What do you say? Look what happened in the Holocaust! Where was the Borei Olam? Where was He then?"

They said to him, "Listen, you want to know where the Borei Olam was? We don't know how to answer you. Come with us to Chacham Ben Tzion Bracha."

"I'll come! What can he tell me?"

"Come."

They came. Chacham Ben Tzion was in the middle of a shiur. They walked in, and as soon as Chacham Ben Tzion saw the man, he said on the spot, "Bring me Maseches Gehinnom." Maseches Gehinnom is printed in Reishis Chochmah (the classic sefer of mussar and yiras Shamayim). He began to read what happens Above, and to explain what had happened, why people suffered in the Holocaust even though they were holy people, how they went, and where the Borei Olam was. All of this on his own! He did not know who this man was or what he was; seemingly he knew nothing. It was all hashgachah, and he knew only through ruach hakodesh.

He sat for two hours and explained everything. Then the man began to cry like a small child and took upon himself teshuvah sheleimah. He never went back to the kibbutz; he only took his belongings from there and fled. He came to Yerushalayim and used to sit in shuls, saying Tehillim in tears over everything he had done. In the end that baal teshuvah passed away inside a shul, in the middle of saying Tehillim.

Out of the Jungle

Talk Twenty-One · 1:46:30

One day a chareidi Jew came to his yeshiva. As soon as he saw Chacham Ben Tzion, he began to stare at him, and stare, and stare. People saw that he was looking at him without moving his eyes, and they said to him, "Tell us, what do you want from the Chacham?"

He said, "This man saved us from the jungle."

Chacham Ben Tzion heard and said, "Talmidim, devarim beteilim, devarim beteilim! Go on! Go on learning!" But when they saw how Chacham Ben Tzion was

brushing it off, they understood that there was something to it. They asked the man, "What happened?"

He told them that when he was a young man, he had been in the jungle of the Far East with many other Jews. The place was full of wild beasts, and they lost their way. They could not find the way back, and there was danger that the animals there would tear them apart. They did not know what to do.

"Suddenly," he said, "we saw this tzaddik, this old man, standing before us. He said to us, 'If you take upon yourselves to do teshuvah, I will save you from here. That is the condition.' We all agreed and took upon ourselves to do teshuvah. He came, took us, watched over us, guided us and brought us out of the jungle. Now I see him, and I am sure it is he."

Of course, he had sent his nefesh. He himself had never been there and had not gone to save them in his body. But when he saw their situation there, he sent his nefesh, and it came in his likeness and saved them.

Short Accounts

Aram Tzova

Talk Twenty-One · 11:30

He grew up in Aram Tzova, which is Chalab (Aleppo, the great city of northern Syria).

When the Gemara speaks of Surya, as it often does, it means Chalab. Much of what is called Syria today is not Surya at all. A large part of it is Eretz Yisrael that Moshe Rabbeinu conquered, what is called Ever HaYarden, and it has all the dinim of Eretz Yisrael. The same is true of much of Jordan and much of Syria. Jordan today also takes in the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. These do not belong to Eretz Yisrael now. When Mashiach comes they will belong to Klal Yisrael; they are the Keini, the Kenizi and the Kadmoni that Hashem promised Avraham for the time of Mashiach. But there are also large areas there that Moshe Rabbeinu conquered in Ever HaYarden, all the lands of Sichon and Og, and these include most of today's Syria.

The original Surya, though, had a Jewish community already from the days of Dovid HaMelech, before the galus and before everything. Dovid HaMelech came to Aram Tzova and conquered it, as we say in Tehillim: " בהצותו את ארם נהרים ואת ארם צובה." He settled Jews there as part of Eretz Yisrael. Chalab, which has

been so much in the news in recent years together with the whole area around it, has the status of half Eretz Yisrael. In some things it is like Eretz Yisrael, and in some things like chutz la'aretz. Dovid HaMelech conquered it before all of Eretz Yisrael had been conquered, so it was not given the full din of Eretz Yisrael, only a share in the kedushah of Eretz Yisrael. Even so, many mitzvos and many matters of Eretz Yisrael apply there that do not apply in other countries.

There is a shul there that Yoav ben Tzeruyah, Dovid HaMelech's general, built in Dovid HaMelech's own time. Jews have lived there in an unbroken line since the days of Dovid HaMelech. So in the times of the galus the place was not struck by the churban Beis HaMikdash and the exiles. The Jews there were already settled and established, living there as residents of the place and not as exiles wandering from land to land. Torah increased there, and chassidus grew there. Aram Tzova, as is known, was one of the places that had the very greatest gedolei Torah in every generation.

All our nikud, all our teamim and our whole Tanach in its present form came to us from Aram Tzova. This is known as the Keter Aram Tzova, the Tanach by which the Rambam corrected his text and ruled in his halachos how a Sefer Torah is written.[122] It follows Ben Asher. Ben Asher lived in Teveria, but his sefer reached Aram Tzova, and from there, by roundabout ways, parts of it have reached us here in Eretz Yisrael today.

The Manager at the Post Office

Talk Twenty-One · 41:30

Later he worked at the post office. Each mailman there received the letters for the neighborhood he was to deliver in. Whether he finished in ten minutes or in four hours was his own business and no longer the post office's; he only had to finish his quota that day. Chacham Tziyon would hurry and run like a deer from place to place, delivering everything so that he could finish by eleven, come back to sign that he had finished his work, and go to learn. He did not want to waste time and miss the shiur of Chacham Mordechai.

There was a gentile manager there who began to harass him. "What is this, you are finished at eleven? Everyone else finishes at one in the afternoon, and you come

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[122] The Keter Aram Tzova was written in Teveria more than a thousand years ago, and its nekudos and teamim were set by Aharon ben Asher. For hundreds of years it was kept in the great shul of Chalab. When the shul was burned in riots in 1947, part of the Keter was lost. Most of what remained was later brought out of Syria to Eretz Yisrael, and it is kept today in Yerushalayim.

back now and want to rush off! Who knows what you do with the letters? Maybe you threw some of them away? Maybe not everyone they were addressed to got their letters? What are you doing?" He began to drive him out of his mind. Almost every day Chacham Tziyon came back early, because he took care to finish everything properly, and every time he came back the manager made his life miserable.

After some days of this, Chacham Tziyon said, "Ribbono shel Olam, I want to learn and he is getting in my way. What shall we do with him?" He said this, and the next morning the manager did not come back. It turned out that he had gone to sleep that night and never woke up. Kein yovdu kol oyvecha Hashem.

Pas Shacharis and the Birkas Hamazon

Talk Twenty-One · 42:30

At the post office he would also sit and wait to receive the letters he was to deliver. He came straight there from tefillah, and while he sat he would take out his pas shacharis and eat breakfast.

Eating pas shacharis is a great thing. The Gemara praises it and says wonderful things about it, and whoever eats pas shacharis in the morning is saved from a number of illnesses. Pas shacharis means a slice of bread in the morning. A cup of coffee with cake at ten o'clock is not pas shacharis. Pas shacharis means that as soon as a man finishes davening, he sits down, takes a slice of bread and eats it.

Only the bread must be kosher. You will ask: kosher bread? Yes, kosher bread. Here in Eretz Yisrael it can be found, but even here one must look for the right hechsher, because nowadays all kinds of things are mixed into bread. Not every bread is kosher. It really needs a good hechsher, because today more than a hundred different products and ingredients go into bread. Bread is not the bread of years ago. Beyond that, there are places in chutz la'aretz where they put ingredients that are completely assur into bread.

In America, even kosher bread with a hechsher may not be eaten everywhere, because many rabbanim there are not careful about chadash, and now, in the winter, the chadash bread there is forbidden to eat min haTorah. That is so for Ashkenazim too, not only for Sefardim. It is not as some chassidim there claim, who try to be clever and say that it is permitted in chutz la'aretz; those are stories. It goes against the plain halachah in Shulchan Aruch. The Rema too rules in Shulchan Aruch like Maran, that chadash is forbidden min haTorah everywhere. Much of the ordinary wheat there is new wheat, which took root after last year's Pesach, and it may not be eaten until the next Pesach comes. So from September, around Sukkos every year, the flour sold in the markets of the United States and Canada may not

be eaten unless it has been checked to be old flour that grew before the previous Pesach. Otherwise it is forbidden to eat until Pesach has passed over it.

Many people are careful about this. You see it written on bread, on cakes, on every flour product, including macaroni, and also on barley, because all five kinds of grain have this halachah. On all of them it should be written "yashan," or "yoshon," the way Ashkenazim say it with their accent. It is written yoshon in English, or yashan, old flour, and that is what may be bought. Otherwise it may not be eaten; the bread is not kosher, and one must be careful about it. According to Maran it is even more severe than pig. Pig is batel in sixty, but this bread is not batel even in sixty, because it is a davar sheyesh lo matirin (a forbidden thing that will become permitted by itself, here after Pesach).

In any case, he would sit there and eat breakfast and then say Birkas Hamazon with the kavanos. Birkas Hamazon with the kavanos takes at least twenty minutes, and this annoyed one of the workers there, a gentile. Every time he would grumble, "What is with this Jew? Twenty minutes his Birkas Hamazon takes him, sitting there!" It bothered him, and he began to harass him.

After some days of this, Chacham Tziyon said, "Ribbono shel Olam, he is harassing me. I want to say Birkas Hamazon, and this animal is disturbing me. Help me." On the very day he said it, the gentile finished work and walked out of the post office, and on Rechov Yafo a bus came and crushed him to death. Kein yovdu kol oyvecha Hashem.

A Deal with the Workers

Talk Twenty-One · 46:00

In those days he would also say to the Jewish workers, "Come, let me make a deal with you. Put on tefillin, say Krias Shema, say Shemoneh Esrei. How long will it take you, a quarter of an hour? Twenty minutes? In that time I will deliver your mail for you. You sit here; the main thing is that you merit to put on tefillin and daven." That is how he brought merit to the many: he did their work for them in their place.

The Watchmaker Who Shaved

Talk Twenty-One · 49:30

There was a watchmaker in Machaneh Yehuda who shaved with a razor. That is a very grave aveirah. When a man shaves with a razor, it is as if he ate pig five times. Eating pig is one lav min haTorah, and when a man shaves with a razor there are five corners of the beard, and each one of them is a lav min haTorah, just like eat-

ing pig, with no difference. It is very grave, bar minan. There are frightening stories about how such people are judged in Shamayim. A man who shaves with a razor will in the end come back here in a gilgul of an ox, suffer greatly, and have no rest until he is slaughtered. Only the suffering of the shechitah will atone for him, after he has also suffered very hard labor here as an ox.

Every morning Chacham Tziyon would go into his shop and tell him, "It is forbidden to shave with a razor, forbidden, haram (Arabic: forbidden)! Your neshamah!" He spoke to him so nicely that the man could not even throw him out of the shop. But the watchmaker was stubborn. When Chacham Tziyon finished his ten-minute monologue and left, the man would say to himself, "Yalla, baruch shepetarani, now I can go on with my own ways."

But Chacham Tziyon kept at it year after year and went to him hundreds of times, until finally the man broke and began to cut his hair as the halachah requires.

The Wine Seller

Talk Twenty-One · 51:30

There was a wine seller there who was far from religion. Not only that, but wine was also bought by criminals, and many drunkards went in and out of his shop buying wine. A wine shop in those days was not like today, when wine is sold in every supermarket. It was a special shop for wine only. You could not buy wine in every grocery; that was not how it was then, because it required a special license. And such a shop usually drew criminals and drunkards.

Chacham Tziyon would always come and talk to him: "Keep the Torah, keep the mitzvos, put on tefillin, keep Shabbos." The man would take hold of Chacham Tziyon's beard and stroke it, as if he were some sweet old man who had come only to drive him crazy and nothing more. "Say whatever you want. You've finished? Shalom, go." And he carried on with his own ways.

One morning Chacham Tziyon came to him and did not say a word. He only said, "Yehi ratzon that Hashem should cancel the gezeirah that is upon you today," and walked out.

A few hours later, criminals who owed the wine seller money tried to kill him. They fired three shots at him. They should have hit him in the head, but every one of them passed over his head and made a hole in the wall. After firing the three shots they fled, and he was saved.

He said, "Wallah, this old man came in the morning and told me that Hashem should save me from the gezeirah, and that is exactly what happened. I was saved

by a real miracle. This old man is obviously not just selling stories. I have to listen to him." And he did complete teshuvah.

The Yeshiva of HaKadosh Baruch Hu

Talk Twenty-One · 53:00

He would pay the avreichim of his kollel, and all the expenses of everyone who worked there, the cleaners and everything else, every week. That is the most correct custom. It is not like what is done today, paying once a month. People cannot manage with that through the whole month; they are left pressed for money, and they have trouble with the money for Shabbos, searching for it Erev Shabbos until they get their salary at the end of the month. He paid the salaries every week, on Thursday. That is the most correct custom. If only all the yeshivos and all the kollelim would adopt it, dividing the monthly salary into four and paying it every Erev Shabbos.

In any case, that is what he did. The total came to five thousand shekels a week, and it always came from Shamayim. He had no fund and nothing else; there was only what people donated into the kupah, and when the kupah ran out, it ran out.

One Thursday he was walking with his grandson from home to the beis knesses, and he said to him, "You know, there is still no money to give out today."

His grandson said, "What will you do?"

He answered, "What is this? Is it my yeshiva? It is the yeshiva of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. He has to worry about the money, not I. I only know how to teach; that is all."

As they reached the entrance of the beis midrash, a man was standing there waiting, and he handed him five thousand shekels. He said, "It came into my mind to give you this as tzedakah for your yeshiva."

That is how it went with him.

Money That Was Not His

Talk Twenty-One · 55:00

Another time, on a Thursday, the shamash came to him and said, "Where are the five thousand? We have to give them out."

He told him, "There is no money in the kupah."

Just as he was saying that there was no money in the kupah, a rosh yeshiva walked in and took out five thousand for him. He said, "I received fifteen thousand

to divide among three yeshivos: five thousand for my yeshiva, five thousand for this other yeshiva, and five thousand for yours. Here is the money."

Chacham Tziyon said to him, "Chas veshalom, I do not accept it."

The shamash was astonished. There was no money in the kupah, and here was exactly the sum that was needed; it seemed plainly to come from Shamayim. But Chacham Tziyon said, "I do not accept it. Take the money; it is not mine."

The man said, "But it is yours. It was given for you."

He said, "It is not mine. I do not want this money. Take it away from me."

After the man went outside, the shamash said, "I will go after him, take it from him and give it out. What else are we going to do?" But he heard the Chacham say, "Do not go after him, and do not take anything from him! Forget about this money."

It seems that the donor of that money did not keep Shabbos, and the Chacham did not want to benefit from it. He saw that it was not kosher money, and so he would not take it. And indeed, a few hours later the money came in by other ways.

Thirty Thousand Shekels

Talk Twenty-One · 56:30

Another time a man came to him with a donation of thirty thousand shekels all at once, and the kupah was empty as always. He would not take the money.

He told him, "I do not want it."

The man said, "Take it. I want the zechus of your taking it." He looked chareidi; he looked like everything he should be.

But the Chacham said, "Under no circumstances. I do not want to use this money. I do not want to take it. Do not put it here."

However much the man insisted, it did not help him. Chacham Tziyon sent him away together with his money. Afterwards it came out that the money came from gambling. The man was involved in gambling and drew others into gambling, and that was how he made his money. Without knowing the man at all, the Chacham understood exactly that this was money that should not be benefited from, and he sent him away with it.

Ruach hakodesh was always with him. Whenever there were people before him, he knew through ruach hakodesh what would happen. All those around him saw it; ruach hakodesh was, as the saying goes, rolling about under the carpet.

The Tears

Talk Twenty-One · 57:30

Once he was walking in the street and saw a man. He said to him, "Listen, put on tefillin. Here, put on tefillin for one minute." The man would not agree.

On the spot Chacham Tziyon began to cry, with real tears. The man asked him, "Why are you crying?"

He said, "Your neshamah is a lost neshamah. It does not want to put on tefillin, and it hurts me for you." He went on crying, and the man broke and put on tefillin.

The Floor Tiles

Talk Twenty-One · 1:02:00

The floor in his yeshiva was made of the old Jerusalem floor stones. You do not know the old Jerusalem floors. They were stones, with a gap of two or three centimeters between one stone and the next. In our own courtyard there were whole beds of all kinds of plants growing between the stones, to that extent. It was a well-known thing; all the old houses were like that, and there were no floor tiles as there are today. Floor tiles in those days were made in Chevron, in all sorts of patterns, so that a floor came out looking like a carpet; not like the tiles of today.

Finally, when the situation had become unbearable and there was a little money in the kupah, he told them, "Start taking up the old floor and replace it with proper tiles." They tore up everything, but after they had laid one room, there was not enough for the second room, nor for the several other rooms there. Those rooms were left with no floor at all.

Chacham Tziyon came at midday and asked, "What happened? Why did they stop the work?"

They told him, "There are no tiles and there is no money. No more tiles were bought, there is nothing to do, and we do not know where we will get the means to finish."

So he said, "Ribbono shel Olam, You certainly have no shortage of tiles. Bring us tiles."

Not ten minutes passed from the moment he said those words, and a man arrived with a car full of durable tiles, and not just any tiles but ceramic. He said to Chacham Tziyon, "I renovated my house and I was left with a huge quantity of tiles. Please, take them for yourself."

With those they truly laid the whole rest of the floor. Everything was laid in ceramic, and he received it at the very moment he asked for it.

The Missing Sister

Talk Twenty-One · 1:04:00

Once a man came to him, weeping that his sister had disappeared, bar minan, thirty years earlier, and no one knew what had become of her. He told him, "Yehi ratzon that she should be found." The next day she was found.

The man came back full of amazement, and Chacham Tziyon said, "This is the power of tefillah. It is not I; it is the tefillah. Understand what tefillah can do."

The Cat and the Dove

Talk Twenty-One · 1:06:30

One day, as he sat teaching his shiur, a cat came in. Everyone tried to chase it out, but the cat slipped away from them, jumping here and jumping there, until it reached Chacham Tziyon's feet. When it reached his feet, it looked up at Chacham Tziyon, lowered its head and died.

Chacham Tziyon told them, "Take it aside. This was a gilgul that came to fix itself, and it has fixed itself."

Another time a dove came into the beis midrash and began walking around. He told them, "Take it. It will give itself over to you; it will not fly away and it will not run off. Take it and shecht it, and it will be a tikkun for it. Now it must be eaten with a great berachah."

They went over to the dove, and the dove waited, as if it were waiting for them to take it. It had heard what was said, and it did not fly away; it waited on the table. They came and took it, shechted it, and made a berachah over it as a great tikkun.

The Politician's Money

Talk Twenty-One · 1:08:00

Once one of the men of the religious political parties came to him and asked for a berachah for a yeshuah. He promised him a large sum of money that he had to give, and also that he would support his kollel on a permanent basis.

Chacham Tziyon would not hear of it, because all the religious parties were loathsome in his eyes; he regarded them as muktzeh machmas mi'us. He guarded himself completely from all that foul politics, from all the religious parties and the others, so as not to come near them and not to get involved with them. He saw in all of them one thing only: they were tied to a government that causes Jews to leave the Torah and the religion, that harms the honor of the Shechinah, that adds to the tza'ar of the Shechinah and holds back the coming of Mashiach. He was not willing

to take a single perutah from such people or from anyone involved with them. He never took even one shekel from them, and certainly not large sums.

Guests at the Seder

Talk Twenty-One · 1:09:00

Once one of his talmidim had nowhere to be on Seder night, and Chacham Tziyon told him, "Come, be with me on Seder night." The young man's parents lived far away. He had come to learn and could not get to them, and perhaps they did not keep Torah and mitzvos either. In any case, he had nowhere to make the Seder, so Chacham Tziyon told him to come and make it with him.

This bochur told that when they came to the Seder, each person took his cup in his hand. But as soon as Chacham Tziyon took his cup in his hand, a sudden sleep came over the bochur. He fell asleep and could not control himself; he sat there with his eyes shut. After ten minutes he opened his eyes and saw that Chacham Tziyon had finished Kiddush and was smiling and full of joy. He said, "Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Rabbi Elazar, and Chacham Mordechai Sharabi, were here just now. They came to take part with us in Kiddush." The bochur did not have the zechus to see it; he had fallen asleep.

Another time Chacham Tziyon fell asleep in his sukkah for about a quarter of an hour. When he got up, he was completely shaken and said, "The holy Avos were here just now! Did you not see them?"

Hidden in Plain Sight

Talk Twenty-One · 1:10:00

Once one of his talmidim owed money to the hotza'ah lapo'al (the government office that collects debts by court order) and had nothing to pay with. They were looking for him in order to arrest him, and he fled from his home and slept in other places. They knew they would find him at Minchah, because he came to daven at Chacham Tziyon's; they would find him there.

He did indeed come to daven Minchah, and Chacham Tziyon told him, "Start the korbanos. Start now. 'Lamnatzei'ach al hagittis livnei Korach mizmor,' start. Pitum haketores, up to Minchah, up to Ashrei." And he began.

Suddenly two policemen came in to look for him. As soon as they entered, Chacham Tziyon lowered his head and closed his eyes. According to the information they had received, the man was supposed to daven Minchah there, and that was exactly why they had come. They came in looking for him, looked right at him

and moved on. They made a second round, looked at him again and moved on; they did not recognize him. Then they got up and left.

The moment they left, Chacham Tziyon raised his head and said, "Nu, b'kavod, now with yishuv hada'as. Continue." The talmid understood that Chacham Tziyon had lowered his head and done a yichud so that they would not recognize him, so that they would not disturb his tefillah and throw his mind into confusion.

The Kaddish for Two Thousand Dollars

Talk Twenty-One · 1:12:00

Once the situation was very difficult. He used to sell the Kaddish that is said after the learning. The Kaddish at the end of the shiur, before they went in to daven Minchah, he would sell, so that a few perutos would come into the yeshiva. But usually the people who came to daven Minchah were simple folk, so how much would they give for that Kaddish? Ten grush, twenty grush (a few pennies), it made no difference; the zechus of saying it was sold for a few perutos.

One day, before they sold the Kaddish, he told them, "Today we are selling the Kaddish for two thousand dollars." Who would give two thousand dollars for a Kaddish?

Right after he said it, they came to say Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya, which is said before the Kaddish is sold, and the call went out: "Kaddish! Who will buy it?" The moment that was said, a diamond dealer walked in and said, "Two thousand dollars!" He bought the Kaddish and gave him the money.

It was exactly what he had said, and exactly what the kupah was missing. He said it, they heard it in Shamayim, and at once they made the purchase for him. Just as he said, so it came to be.

The Father and the Television

Talk Twenty-One · 1:13:00

There was a young man who had begun coming close to Torah through Chacham Ben Tzion, who drew him in. He too had worn his hair long, tied back in a ponytail. Chacham Ben Tzion would say to him, "What is this, you go around like a girl? Are you a girl? What is this ponytail?" That was how he drew him close, and the young man woke up and, little by little, came nearer.

One day he brought his father along. The moment he walked in with his father, Chacham Ben Tzion looked at the father for one minute. Then and there he began half an hour of mussar about people who waste their nights watching television. It

is a tamei device, he said, and it damages the eyes. A person who watches television has to pay for it with several tikkunim. The first tikkun is for shemiras einayim, for the damage to his eyes. The second is for the damage to his thoughts. The third is for bittul Torah. And if it was at night, woe to him on the Day of Judgment, for that is far more severe: the Tanna says in Pirkei Avos that one who is awake at night and does not occupy himself with Torah forfeits his life. He went on about this at great length.

When he finished, the man lowered his eyes and said, "Holy Rav, I know you meant me. Last night I watched television the whole night. I accept your mussar, and I have taken upon myself to get that device out of my house. It is finished."

The Kavanos of Sefiras HaOmer

Talk Twenty-One · 1:16:00

Ah, Chacham Ben Tzion, where is he now?

I remember him well. When I had special questions, I would go to Chacham Mordechai Sharabi and ask him. Or I would ask Chacham Yitzchak, but even when I asked Chacham Yitzchak, I would also go and ask Chacham Mordechai. Chacham Yitzchak answered very briefly and only told me where the answers were to be found, while Chacham Mordechai answered at length. At that time Chacham Mordechai was still alive, but he was no longer able to function. So I went to Chacham Ben Tzion and asked him a question about Sefiras HaOmer.

I went to his house. He put aside everything he was doing and came out with me, because there was no room to bring people into his house; it was very cramped. He sat with me in the open space in front of the house and began to lay out for me, by heart, the entire order of the kavanos of part of the berachah of Sefiras HaOmer. He explained it word by word, like pearls. It was a wonder to hear him, a true pleasure.

Once I also went to watch him while he made the berachah on Sefiras HaOmer. It was a sight of elevation, pure elevation. Altogether, to see these gedolim, all of them, at the time of Sefiras HaOmer was something special. He himself used to go and watch how Chacham Avraham HaKohen made the berachah on the Omer. He told me that when Chacham Avraham HaKohen counted, he was cut off from this world for an hour or an hour and a half. His face changed colors, red, then white, then white, then red, and he was entirely in the upper worlds with his kavanos.

All the mekubalim were like that. I influenced my son Dovid to go and watch as well. To this day he has not forgotten the scene he saw: the mekubalim counting the Omer in Yerushalayim, at Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri's. They sat beside the

teivah with their heads leaning on their hands, holding all the kavanos in their minds for a long hour. One could see the Shechinah on the faces of those men.

I also went to see Chacham Ben Tzion's face at the time of Sefiras HaOmer, yishtabach Shemo. Even now it stands before my eyes: how he stood with his eyes shut, making all the kavanos of Sefiras HaOmer, looking just like Eliyahu HaNavi, with his white beard. I must also tell you that his picture, as you see it, with that hat, that beard and that whole appearance, is very like the picture of Rabbeinu HaArizal. How do I know the picture of Rabbeinu HaArizal? That is a story for another time.

"I Do Not Promise Yeshuos"

Talk Twenty-One · 1:19:00

Once a man came there and gave a large sum of money; he wanted a yeshuah. The gabbai took the money and told him, "Very good. The Rav's zechus will stand by you." A minute later Chacham Ben Tzion heard about it and said, "Give him back all the money. I do not promise yeshuos. All I can do is daven. Who am I to promise yeshuos?" Such anavah! He did not rest until the entire sum had been returned to the man.

The Tenth Man

Talk Twenty-One · 1:19:30

One morning they had no minyan; there were only nine. They went out to look for a tenth. They always did this: they would take whoever came by, even a secular man, put a kippah on his head and count him in the minyan. That was a way of drawing the young man, or whoever it was, close, so that he would be awakened to teshuvah sheleimah. Many people did teshuvah because they were called in as the tenth man for his minyan and brought into the shul.

That morning, while they were looking for a tenth, an Arab who worked there decided to make fun of them. He put on a kippah and said, "Here, I'll come in." When he came in, Chacham Ben Tzion looked around and said, "Where is the tenth? Why don't we have ten? There are nine."

They said to him, "Here is the tenth!"

He said, "I see only nine. I don't see a tenth."

"Chacham, there is a minyan here."

"No, there is no minyan here. Bring a tenth. Go look for another one."

When the Arab heard him shouting that there was no tenth man there, he understood that in another moment they would discover he was an Arab. He threw

off the kippah and ran. Everyone chased after him, and then they saw he was an Arab. As far as Chacham Ben Tzion was concerned, the man did not exist at all; he had gone on looking for a tenth for the minyan.

The Mall in Canada

Talk Twenty-One · 1:21:00

There was a man who owned an enormous mall in Canada. The tax authorities there hit him with a huge fine for tax evasion, and he was fighting them in court. He was about to be ruined. He came to Chacham Ben Tzion for a berachah, and Chacham Ben Tzion blessed him that the trial would go well and he would win. In a wondrous way, he won.

Afterwards he came and brought three hundred thousand dollars. "Kevod HaRav," he said, "here is money. Build yourself another building."

Chacham Ben Tzion told him, "I don't need another building. Take the money back. I don't need a building or anything else. I am fine here in this building. If it falls apart, so be it; as long as it stands, I will not look for another place." He would not take a single perutah from him and gave him back all the money.

The Shechinah Has No House

Talk Twenty-One · 1:22:00

I personally know a man who helped Chacham Ben Tzion a great deal at the end of his life. He was a Gerrer chassid, a travel agent, and he told me this himself. The Gerrer Rebbe had told his chassidim, "Whoever wants to help the Shechinah should help Chacham Ben Tzion." So this man took everything upon himself: he paid the rent, and he also moved him from one apartment to another, paying the rent there too.

Later I read that this man wanted to buy the house outright for Chacham Ben Tzion, so that he would not have to pay rent every month. Chacham Ben Tzion refused firmly. "The Shechinah has no house," he said. "I do not need a house either."

The Smell of Torah

Talk Twenty-One · 1:38:00

Chacham Ben Tzion had a special practice that we never heard of from anyone else. He used to go out to empty places around Yerushalayim or Beit Shemesh. He

would climb a deserted hill, some bare hilltop around Yerushalayim, and sit there with sefarim of Kabbalah, learning there day after day for an hour, two hours, three, sitting and studying.

Every place where he sat, within a few months a neighborhood of Jews was built there, a large part of them shomrei Torah u'mitzvos. All the new neighborhoods of Beit Shemesh, all of Ramat Beit Shemesh, both Aleph and Bet: when they were still empty, he would go and sit there toiling in Torah. "I smell the smell of Torah here," he would say. And indeed there is a settlement there now; thousands of religious families have built their homes there. Eretz Yisrael grew in population. It was the same around Yerushalayim. This was something special that he knew how to do.

Gilo and Beit Jala

Talk Twenty-One · 1:39:00

Once he came to Gilo (a neighborhood in the south of Yerushalayim) and began to learn there. Gilo was already built. He went and sat at the edge of Gilo, the edge that faces Beit Jala (an Arab town across the valley), learned there and went home. Every day he learned a little, a few more meters along the edge of Gilo. He learned that way for two or three weeks and then went back home.

A short while later, shooting began from Beit Jala, night and day, and it was a time of real danger from the gunfire. Baruch Hashem, nothing happened. The bullets barely scratched the walls of the houses; not a single Jew was hurt. Then they understood, looking back, that he had gone to learn there so that when the bullets were fired, they would not hit any Jew.

The Laundry Above

Talk Twenty-One · 1:41:00

Once a man came to him, weeping that he was suffering terrible yissurim. Chacham Ben Tzion said to him, "Do you know what kind of laundry there is Above for the neshamah? All these yissurim here are a gift for you, so that you will not suffer in the laundry Above for everything you did. Thank Hashem for the yissurim."

"Has Mashiach Come?"

Talk Twenty-One · 1:41:30

Once, from the greatness of his yissurim, he lost consciousness for several days. When he opened his eyes and came to, what was his first question? "Has Mashiach come?" He had been unconscious for several days and did not know what had happened, and that was the first question that concerned him: whether Mashiach had come.

The Gang in Nachlaot

Talk Twenty-One · 1:41:30

Once a group of violent young criminals rented an apartment in Nachlaot, the neighborhood where he lived. People were afraid to go near them. They were known as criminals who feared no man and did whatever they wanted, and they committed all kinds of aveiros there in that room.

When Chacham Ben Tzion heard about it, he was not afraid of them. He got up and went. They were all in the room. He opened the door and walked in, landing suddenly in the middle of the room, and began to give them mussar about pegam habris, about pegam ha'einayim and about their behavior: that they were causing pain to the Shechinah and to Mashiach, and causing pain to Hakadosh Baruch Hu with the way they lived. He gave them mussar in a loud voice, a raised voice, and let them have it thoroughly.

In the first moment, when they heard him, the young men thought to cut him down, fold him in two and throw him out the door in two pieces rather than one. But suddenly a fear came over them. They sat there weak as puppies and heard every word he said, unable even to move their bodies.

When he finished and left, his words entered some of them, into their very bodies and souls. They got up then and there and left. The group broke apart, and some of them did teshuvah.

The Dog in Gan Sacher

Talk Twenty-One · 1:45:00

When Chacham Ben Tzion was tired, or not feeling well, they would take him to Gan Sacher (a large park in Yerushalayim) near his yeshiva so that he could have fresh air. There he would lie on his side on the grass while they learned with him. The talmidim sat and asked questions, he answered, and so they sat and learned in the open air.

One day, as they were sitting like this, a man came with a big dog of the breed called Amstaff (an American Staffordshire terrier, a powerful fighting breed), which is dangerous. When he saw religious Jews sitting there, what did he do? He unhooked the dog from the leash in his hand and let it go on its own, and the dog went straight for them.

They saw the dog coming at them, and the Chacham was lying on the ground. How could he get up now and run? What could they do with a dog like that coming at them? They all stood behind Chacham Ben Tzion. "Chacham Ben Tzion's zechus is great," they said. "Surely nothing will happen." So they all stood behind him.

The dog reached Chacham Ben Tzion. He only opened his eyes and looked at it, and the dog died. The owner began to shout, "You killed my dog!" And that was the end of it.

The Petirah of Chacham Ben Zion

Talk Twenty-One · 1:48:00

Chacham Ben Zion left this world on Erev Sukkos. He was in the beis knesses, wearing tefillin, in the middle of davening. He said Shema Yisrael, and with that he went up to the sukkah of Dovid in Olam HaBa, to sit there with the ushpizin and enjoy the ziv haShechinah together with them.

May his zechus stand by us and protect us. May we too have the hirhurei teshuvah (stirrings of teshuvah) that he brought into everyone he met, may we come to a complete and true teshuvah, and may we merit to see Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

His Words

The Bakashos and the Maqamat

Talk Twenty-One · 1:24:00

He introduced something special in his yeshiva: learning the bakashos and the piyutim with their maqam (the Middle Eastern system of musical scales). Every Tuesday he invited the finest paytanim to teach bakashos in the yeshiva. He would gather all the talmidim and sit with them so that they would learn.

But I need to explain to you what bakashos are. They began in Aram Tzova, among the Jews of Aleppo. In honor of Shabbos they composed melodies for older

songs, and they also wrote new songs of their own in praise of Shabbos. The authors were not simple people; they were gedolei olam, such as Chacham Mordechai Labaton. Every word they wrote is holy, and so are the tunes.

You must know one thing: the song of the Beis HaMikdash was Arabic-style music. So writes the Vilna Gaon. The instruments mentioned in the Mishnah, the ones they played in the Beis HaMikdash, are also instruments that suit Arabic melodies, not other kinds.

Arabic melodies follow scales. Such a scale is called a maqam, and the plural is maqamat. Each maqam is a different scale with its own name, and one has to know how to move from one scale to another and how to blend them. These scales are named after places where the Ten Tribes were exiled. Among them are Rast, Hijaz and Nahawand; Hijaz and Nahawand are both places where, as our Rabbis explained, the Ten Tribes are found. When the Ten Tribes went into exile, they took with them the melodies of the Beis HaMikdash. Everyone used to come up for the regalim and hear those melodies, how the Leviim sang them.

Dovid HaMelech was the master of the maqamat. What was the kinor for? All of his songs, all of Tehillim, were set to the maqamat. Each of these things has its scale. It begins with Rast, which is very short, and goes up to Sigah, which is like the tune of krias haTorah, with all sorts of others along the way; Bayat is longer. Each has its name and its scale. It is a wonderful thing to know how to carry the scale from one to the next.

The mekubalim took these melodies for the kavanos of tefillah as well. With the siddur of Rabbeinu HaArizal one can make the kavanos quickly, because the kavanos there are brief. The Rashash (Rav Shalom Sharabi, the great mekubal of Yerushalayim, whose siddur of kavanos the mekubalim daven from) expanded the kavanos of the Arizal and made them very, very many. The true siddur of the Rashash is about two hundred daf from the start of Shacharis until Hodu alone, and from Hodu onward there is more and more; that is called the long siddur. Today there is a shorter siddur of the Rashash, which was abridged from it and keeps the main kavanos. Even there, Shacharis alone runs to more than a hundred and fifty pages. And this is tefillah, and one has to have all of it in mind.

Now, one can say "Baruch" and then be silent, waiting until one comes to "Atah." That can take a minute, or two, three or four, depending on the person and on the details of the kavanah. So sometimes the "Baruch" has to be drawn out as long as possible. If this were done according to the maqamat, it would sound like a wonderful tefillah: done to the melodies, knowing exactly where to shorten and where to lengthen. The chachamim of Aram Tzova, who were also great mekubalim, were the first to teach how to fit the kavanos into the melody.

On the Yamim Nora'im especially, this is wonder upon wonder, because the kavanos are enormous. For example, "Zachreinu l'chaim, Melech chafetz bachaim, v'chasveinu b'sefer hachaim, l'maancha Elokim chaim" is eleven words, yet the kavanos on them are huge; they fill several pages in the siddur of the Rashash. And they change every day: in the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah the kavanos are different each day, in other places and in other worlds. They are long. So how can one have all that in mind in eleven words?

The Jews of Aram Tzova, which is Aleppo, have a special melody for "Zachreinu," drawn out so long that it can hold all the kavanos. The word "chaim" alone is stretched out for a minute or a minute and a half. "Chaim" is said four times there, and each one takes a minute or a minute and a half, in a single breath. Many of the songs of the maqamat need a very, very long breath, and this is one of them. The word "chaim" is drawn out until all the kavanos fit inside it.

So Chacham Ben Tzion would say, "We must learn the maqamat. Otherwise, how will people make the kavanos in tefillah?" He set up a fixed order of learning the bakashos there, and it was a wonderful thing.

People would get up for these bakashos every Shabbos morning. I did not always get up, but I did get up several times. Almost all the Sephardim of Yerushalayim used to rise for them. At first it was only in Ades, the great shul of the Aleppo Jews in Yerushalayim; there was no other place. The finest paytanim came there, and they got up at two in the morning on Shabbos, on long winter nights. Everyone came and sat there with the finest paytanim, and the shul was packed from wall to wall. People got out of a warm bed for this. They sat over the cup of tea that was handed out and sang bakashos for hours, until Shacharis at seven. Each time some Rav also came and gave a short derashah to awaken the hearts and be mezakeh the rabbim. These bakashos were something tremendous, an elevation like no other. Later they continued it in the Musayof shul (in the Bucharim neighborhood of Yerushalayim) as well, in imitation of Ades. This went on for years and years.

It was truly a taste of Olam HaBa. Those melodies and the way they flowed from one to the next were pure elevation. Those who knew the kavanos of the words, even of the songs that the Rabbanim of Aram Tzova had composed, reached tremendous heights in those moments. I still knew Chacham Shaul Abud, who was one of the paytanim and among those who ran all the bakashos. He printed the sefer of bakashos once or twice, and he used to daven with us in Ahavas Chaim. I do not know how even to begin speaking about the bakashos; that subject alone would need a two-hour talk.

There is also what came of them: many people were saved through the bakashos. People who were suffering, in terrible trouble, would get up for the bakashos

and sit there in kedushah and taharah, Shabbos after Shabbos, and within a few weeks everything worked itself out. Why? The author of the Pele Yoetz already wrote in his sefer Oros Elim that we have a kabbalah: when the gates of tefillah are locked, the gates of song are open. It cannot be that the gates of tefillah and the gates of song are both closed. When one is closed, the other is open. Sometimes both are open, but that both should be closed is impossible.

The Power of a Niggun

Talk Twenty-One · 1:32:00

Much can be saved through a niggun; a great deal can be accomplished with it. A person's soul binds itself to the niggun and reaches very high worlds. Above there are entire worlds called the Heichal HaNeginah. The Heichalos of Neginah are such an exalted place that a person who enters them can bring about tremendous things and great yeshuos there. About this it is said, "Ki v'simchah seitzeiu." That is the simchah of "HaBocher b'shirei zimrah," yishtabach Shemo.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu seeks out shirei zimrah, but not because He enjoys hearing the tunes, the "yalel yalel" or the "li-lai-lai." It is because through shirei zimrah a person is elevated, and that elevation is what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants. In those moments of niggun a person empties himself, leaves this world and cuts himself off from it, each according to his level. That is what Hakadosh Baruch Hu is looking for: that a person should raise the spirit above the material, and song is one of the ways.

Even the Nevi'im could not reach nevuah without first taking a niggun. "Bring me a musician," said Elisha HaNavi, and as the musician played, the spirit of Hashem came upon him. And everything Dovid HaMelech attained, he attained because he played on the kinor. He would rise until he took the kinor in his hand, and his neshamah would go up to the worlds of the Heichal HaNeginah. From there he drew down ruach hakodesh and began with "L'Dovid mizmor" or "Mizmor l'Dovid." Wherever it says "L'Dovid mizmor" or "Mizmor l'Dovid," it means that the Shechinah sat with him and said the words with him, word by word. In the other chapters, where these words are not written, the Shechinah was there too, but those were said from the Shechinah that was already resting on him from before. "L'Dovid mizmor" and "Mizmor l'Dovid" were said when the Shechinah was not yet upon him and he wanted to bring it. Where the Shechinah came first, it says "L'Dovid mizmor"; where he began first in order to draw it down, it says "Mizmor l'Dovid." Sometimes it was one way, sometimes the other. There is a machlokes between the Zohar and the Gemara about which is which: in which case Dovid

brought the Shechinah to himself, and in which the Shechinah came on its own to rest upon him so that he would say it. In any case, this is what happens to a person at the time of a holy niggun.

Therefore, when a person listens to tunes of tumah, bar minan, they can enter him like venom for the rest of his life. Afterwards he may learn Torah and do everything right, and suddenly that impure tune can uproot him from many holy things. How careful a person must be with the tunes of goyim, tunes of tumah, tunes of mocking, carefree songs, songs with words of disgrace and of shameful desires, bar minan. He must guard himself from them.

There is, however, great value in taking these melodies and setting holy words to them. On the contrary, it is like taking out what was swallowed from its mouth: you take a tune that had disgusting words and put holy words on it. For every niggun has a world above it, and if it is from the world of tumah, bar minan, it brings tumah into the world, rachmana litzlan. Many, many bnei Torah, and girls from chareidi homes, were ruined in the end and left the whole Torah because of tunes they heard, tunes of songs that were not kosher.

A person must know that just as it is forbidden to hear nivul peh and the like, which damages the soul greatly, so the melodies of songs with such words, rachmana litzlan, are a sword to the neshamah. How careful a person must be! On the other side, when a person listens to melodies of holy songs, they can bring a spirit of taharah upon him. It depends, of course, on the singer. If the singer is tamei, one of those religious singers, shem resha'im yirkav, who go to make men and women dance together and give mixed performances so that people will hear them, all for money, then no kedushah comes out of the holy songs they sing. But when there are G-d-fearing singers who sing truly, in a holy way, the effect of those melodies and songs on the neshamah is very, very great.

That is why Chacham Ben Tzion insisted so much that people be raised on this, on the maqamat, to build up a "dor yesharim yevorach" who would know how to sing them in shul, and through them draw an abundance of taharah and kedushah upon those who listen.

Shnayim Mikra

Talk Twenty-One · 1:37:00

He was very particular about shnayim mikra v'echad targum, that people should say it specifically on Friday, and the earlier the better. I have already spoken about this in my shiurim on Kabbalah and mysticism: shnayim mikra v'echad targum is a tri-

angle, and the echad targum is the point of the triangle facing downward. I explained those secrets there; they are very great secrets.

A person should know that this is also something that can undo kishuf. A person who suffers from anxieties, or from psychological problems he does not understand, should be careful with shnayim mikra v'echad targum. It can save him from them.

Kedushas HaBris

Talk Twenty-One · 1:39:30

He was very strict about kedushas habris. Already when children were small, he warned them that when they stood, they should not let their hands go below the navel and should not put their hands into their pockets; they should not even think of moving their hands to the lower part of the body. He was very, very particular about this, like Rabbeinu HaKadosh, for that was his greatness: one of the reasons he was called "Kadosh" is that he never put his hand below his navel. Chacham Ben Tzion was very careful about this himself, and he tried to influence others as well. The less people let their hands go down, he said, the more abundant the kedushah in Klal Yisrael.

In the last seventeen years of his life he suffered terrible yissurim. Several times the doctors offered him an operation that would cure him, and he did not want it. He said he was ready to accept these yissurim so that the Shechinah would not suffer them. They would atone for the generation, for the aveiros of pegam habris committed by this unbridled generation. The Shechinah suffers greatly from them, and to ease her pain, he was taking the suffering upon himself. For seventeen years he suffered terrible yissurim.

Book Four

Other Lights

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Rav Amram Blau

GREATNESS WITHOUT MOFSIM

Talk Nineteen · 1:20:00

Until now I have told you about the greatness of mofsim, which is what you love to hear. You measure a man by his mofsim: how many Arabs he killed with a look of his eye, how much he destroyed with a breath of his nose, how many sick people he healed. That is what you love. But that is not their only greatness. Their true greatness is something else. Now I will tell you about someone great, great, great, without any of these mofsim.

I knew him from my childhood. From the age of nine or ten I already used to follow him through the streets. This is the holy and pure Rav Amram Blau,[123] zechuso yagein aleinu: a kana'i for Hashem, a fighter in the wars of Hashem Tzevakos, a kadosh elyon, a great tzaddik.

He did a great deal, and for the Sephardim too he did a great deal. He gave himself up for the Sephardi children, who in those days had no one to give them a chinuch. They had come here as new immigrants, and he would take them on at his own expense, invest in them, raise them, provide for them, and toil for them. With his own two hands, and with the last perutos he had, he built generations of holy and pure Sephardim. He was a man not of this world.

I remember how every afternoon he would walk with a huge sign: "It is forbidden to walk in pritzus! Bnos Yisrael must dress in tznius!" People would walk after him through the streets, and I too would go along after them for a few streets each time. Everyone knew that when Amram passed by, they had to go along with him.

He was a great man, a holy man. Every protest in Yerushalayim was his: for Shabbos, against the treif restaurants, against the cinema, against the digging up of

[123] The leader of the Neturei Karta in Yerushalayim, who led the fight against the Zionist state and against chillul Shabbos; he passed away in 1974.

kivrei tzaddikim in places around the country. He went out to these battles and took blows from the right and from the left, yet he never once raised a hand against a Jew. Policemen beat him until he bled, and he never lifted a hand even to push them away. He sat in prison after prison, and he went through everything, but he did not raise a hand. He said, "I rebuke with my whole body and soul. I give my body over to those who strike it, for the honor of the Torah, of Shabbos, of Yiddishkeit."

Shammai Comes in a Dream

Talk Nineteen · 1:22:30

One night Rav Amram was asleep in Meah Shearim, and who came to him in a dream? No less than Shammai: Shammai HaZakein, the colleague of Hillel. Hillel and Shammai, Beis Shammai: who does not know Shammai? His name runs through half the Shas. Shammai is buried in Meron, opposite Rabbi Shimon, on another small hill.

Shammai came to him in the middle of the night and said, "Rav Amram, save me! Save me! The archaeologists want to get at me. Get up quickly and save me!"

When Shammai himself comes and tells you this, you don't think twice. He went and woke a few people. In those days there were seven-seat taxis; there are no such things today, but in our time most of the taxis had seven seats. He brought six more men from Meah Shearim, men whose build made it plain that they had arms that could do the job, and told them, "Yallah, come with me quickly. Shammai needs us." They took a "special" (a whole taxi hired privately) and drove straight to Shammai's kever.

When they got there, the archaeologists had arrived just ten minutes before them. They had kept the whole thing secret. They came with all kinds of special instruments for testing and examining, expensive equipment, not just tools for digging. They had barely set down when suddenly Amram Blau arrived from Yerushalayim with a few others, and they began shouting at them, "You will not do anything here!"

"Tell us, how do you know?" the archaeologists asked. "How do you know? We kept the plan to come here a secret. How do you know?"

He told them, "If you don't leave here, I am calling all the people in Meron right now." Meron is a five-minute walk from there, and there are always people in Meron, endless numbers of them, day and night. The archaeologists knew that if people came from Meron now, they would smash all their equipment and might even hurt

them, and they did not want to tangle with the dossim. They saw how things stood, took to their heels, and ran. They never came back.

Shammai HaZakein himself came, and he knew exactly to whom to turn and whom to tell, "Save me from the hands of the archaeologists."

A Home for Every Poor Man

Talk Nineteen · 1:24:30

He was a man who would make himself as nothing before every metzora, every zav and every madman. He made himself small before them, attended to them, and served them as if each one were a king's son.

His home was a room and a half, but every poor man in Yerushalayim knew where to go if he wanted to eat and where to go if he wanted to sleep. He gathered them into his house. He had another little room, something like a storeroom, and he arranged that as well. People would come, people who stank, beggars who had not washed for weeks, who sat in the garbage, with a stench coming off them so strong that everyone was afraid to come near them, and he would bring them into his house, seat them, and serve them like kings. Sick people with contagious diseases, whom everyone was afraid to approach, he brought into his house and took care of them. It was perfect care. He saw to all their needs, to their sleep, to everything. It was beyond all reason, and he did these things.

There were little orphans whom he saw going out to work at a young age instead of learning. He would gather them into his house and take care of them. Either he put them into good dormitories and paid for them, or into good yeshivos, or he himself, in his own home, provided their food and everything they needed, until he married them off. He stood as the chassan's side, paid the rent on the apartment, and covered everything, as though each of them were his only son. He had very many like these. What mesirus nefesh he had for this! What did he not take care of, what did he not do!

There were people who were truly mad, and they knew that at his house they would not only get food but also have the right to go mad. They would come and start singing songs, carrying on and driving everyone out of their minds, and he would accept them, until the neighbors said, "Sir, this concert is driving us mad."

He was a holy man and an enormous talmid chacham. There was not a second when he was not learning. He never wasted a minute in his life; every free moment he was with a sefer. He was an enormous gaon, an enormous kadosh, and he knew what he was doing.

Never in his life did he hold the money of the State of Israel. He did not recognize that state. All his purchases and all his tzedakah were in dollars and American coins. This state is apikorsus, he held, and it is forbidden to touch anything of it. That was his shitah: he did not want to recognize it in any way. He went this way and took blows and arrests for it, and never once did he hold a coin of the State of Israel in his hand. Everything was in foreign money, and this at a time when it was forbidden to hold gold coins, with heavy fines for it.

It is impossible to go on at length about him, since time is already short, but he did a great deal.

The Sephardi Guest

Talk Nineteen · 1:28:00

There was a young Sephardi bochur who learned in a yeshiva and ate there during the week, but on Shabbos the yeshiva had no place for him and he had nowhere to go. Rav Amram saw that he had nowhere to eat and invited him to his home for Shabbos.

This bochur was spoiled. He ate only fried fish. Rav Amram's house made cooked fish, the gefilte fish of the Ashkenazim, and the bochur would not touch gefilte fish; just seeing it made him shudder. So they would specially make fried fish for him, and other special things.

Now, Rav Amram was machmir. There is room to be machmir, and some people are machmir not to open a faucet on Shabbos. Today there are new faucets in a few places that may be opened on Shabbos, but that is a new invention, developed only in the last couple of years. Many religious people do not open a faucet on Shabbos, because when you draw water, the whole system runs on electricity. The pressure of the water comes from high places, from the water towers, and all of it is driven by electricity. When you draw water here, you set the system in motion so that more water is pushed through to you, and you are activating electricity. We permit it bedi'eved, as grama degrama and the like, but it is not so simple. Don't think that we are such great tzaddikim. You are not even aware of the problems there can be in opening a fridge. You think opening a fridge on Shabbos is a simple matter? It takes one heter on top of another to open a fridge on Shabbos. When you open it, you let warm air in, and that starts the motor; if you had not opened it, the motor would not have started so soon. You are causing the motor to run through grama. So it is grama, and grama on Shabbos, but you only mean to open the fridge and take something out, not to let the warm air in, so it is not intended... and so we begin propping up the table with two nails here and four nails there to

make it stand. Fine. But with a faucet it is the same thing: it reaches the electricity and sets it working, and there are problems with it.

Rav Amram did not open faucets on Shabbos. Everything came from barrels of water prepared in advance, the drinking water too. When this bochur first started coming for Shabbos, he did not understand why there was a barrel of water standing there, so he went and poured it out. He left Rav Amram without water for the whole Shabbos. No water means no netilas yadayim; it means problems. They had to go wash their hands somewhere else, at one of the few other houses that were also careful about water in this way. If not for them, there would have been nowhere to wash. A whole story.

Rav Amram also did not go by our clock. He kept to the old Eretz Yisrael time. You may not know these clocks. In my day, most shuls had two clocks, a European clock and an Arab clock. The Arab clock counts twelve hours from morning to evening, and it is reset each morning: one o'clock begins at alos hashachar, and twelve ends at sunset. My grandfather in Petach Tikvah also had two clocks, an Arab clock alongside the regular one. Rav Amram went by this clock, which was called Eretz Yisrael time. The bochur saw the hands, thought they were wrong, and changed them on Shabbos. So poor Rav Amram was suddenly stuck the whole Shabbos without a clock and without water.

He did not get angry at him at all. He smiled at him, went on smiling at him, kept supporting him and providing him with everything, without a word. What greatness! What things! This is greatness, not only the mofsim that you understand. If he had wanted to do mofsim, I am sure he could have. Of a man like this it is said, "צדיק גוזר והקדוש ברוך הוא מקיים"; he was one of those people. But he was a ba'al chessed not of this world.

The Shoemaker's Apprentice

Talk Nineteen · 1:32:00

There was an orphan bochur from the Edot HaMizrach, a poor boy who wandered around the batei knesses neglected and with nothing. Rav Amram took him into his home, arranged a place for him, changed his clothes, bought him everything, and told him, "Go learn a trade."

"I also need some money to buy things for myself," the boy said.

"I will take you to a shoemaker who will teach you the trade," Rav Amram told him, "and at the same time you will work and earn a few perutos."

The boy did not know that it was Rav Amram who was giving the shoemaker the money to pay him. That is what he was like; things of this kind. He was a very great man.

The Giyores

Talk Nineteen · 1:32:30

But it was decreed in Shamayim that Rav Amram would be married to a woman born a goyah. What do you say to that? I have told you: "מה' מצעדי גבר כוננו ודרכו יחפץ". If it is decreed on a man that he will be with a goyah, he will be with her. But how will he be with her? He can be like a rasha who sins with her, and afterward comes back in a gilgul as a dog, some bulldog. Or it can happen in the greatest kedushah. That is what happened with Rav Amram. It was decreed from Shamayim that he must be married to a Frenchwoman, and that is what happened. I merited to know her.

She began to come to know Yiddishkeit. When a man is holy and his zivug is a goyah, his kedushah stirs in her thoughts of geirus. She converted with a true geirus, not a forged one, truly l'shem Shamayim.

Rav Amram was seventy when his wife passed away, and he needed to remarry. I have told you that among Jews, even at ninety a man must remarry. Not to remain alone for a moment; that is not good in Shamayim. He needs a zivug. He was seventy, and she was suggested to him. She was forty-five, and she agreed to marry a man of seventy. She knew that he was a stubborn man, a hard man, but she loved his middos and loved his kana'us. That is the kind of woman she was. She became a yirei'as Shamayim to the utmost.

There was once the story of Yossele, Yossele Schumacher,[124] which you do not know; it is a story from long ago. The entire Shabak was on its feet until they found him, and it was she who hid him, in America. I was once in the house in Monsey of the people who hid him, the Gertners. These are stories from long ago; you have not heard them.

She married him. But in Yerushalayim people did not want them to marry and made trouble for them, so they moved to Bnei Brak and married there. They lived in Bnei Brak for some time, until they returned to Yerushalayim. Rav Amram married her, and she was his zivug from Shamayim; he knew it. See what Shamayim did,

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[124] A little boy in Eretz Yisrael whose grandfather, together with other religious Jews, hid him around 1960 so that he would not be raised without Torah. The government searched for him all over the world, and he was finally found in New York in 1962.

to give him a woman like this. He could have, chas v'shalom, fallen on the other side like everyone else, and taken her that way. But when a man is holy and pure, and every word of his makes an impression in Shamayim, they bring her to him in the height of kedushah.

She looked like a noble woman. She was very learned too, and very wise. She dressed exactly like the Ashkenazi women of Meah Shearim: a tichel covering half the forehead and all the hair, and a shawl over it. That is how she went, perfectly dressed, with perfect yiras Shamayim.

Once I sat with her in New Jersey, in Lakewood, at a Friday night seudah at someone's table, and I told them that in Vienna there is a grave of a fish. In the Jewish cemetery in Vienna there is a grave with a matzeivah and a picture of a fish, where they buried a fish. What happened? A woman bought a big fish lekavod Shabbos. There are long fish, two meters, a meter and a half, enormous ones, and she bought one like that. The fish was alive, and she took a stick to strike it on the head and kill it so that she could cook it. Suddenly the fish cried out "Shema Yisrael!" She heard the fish say "שמע ישראל ה' אלוקינו ה' אחד". A fish saying Shema Yisrael really belongs on the front page of the newspaper. But her hand was already in the air, and she could no longer stop it. While the fish was still saying Shema Yisrael, she brought down the blow and killed it. She came to the Rav crying, "I murdered a fish that said Shema Yisrael!" The Rav said, "Take it and bury it in the cemetery," and they buried it.

When I told this story at the Friday night table, she said to all those seated there, and to me, "I was at the grave of that fish."

She was a yirei'as Shamayim to the utmost. Ashreha! What high levels she has above as his wife! Do you understand what it means to go from being a goyah to reaching the level of being the wife of such a tzaddik, with her tznius, her yiras Shamayim, and the kedushah in which she lived? Her son from her first marriage also converted together with her. See how far a person can come: " מאשפות ירים אביון". Who knows what pure neshamah this was, that had fallen so deep into the kelipos in earlier gilgulim because of how she had acted, and that was still meant to make him fall. And she merited that instead of her making him fall, he raised her up.

I remember her: her tznius, the way she walked. What tznius, what kedushah! How she davened! Her bentching! If only we had such a bentching. How measured it was, word by word, something extraordinary.

Zechusam yagein aleinu, and the zechus of all the tzaddikim I have mentioned. May we too merit, b'ezras Hashem, to be sanctified in this kedushah, to be faithful sons to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu bimheirah b'yameinu, amen.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

The Tzaddikim of the Maghreb

Rabbi Yaakov Abuchatzeira, the Chida and their like

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BEFORE THE TZADDIKIM I KNEW

Talk Nineteen · 0:00

I had meant to speak about tzaddikim I knew: mainly Rav Avraham Shemesh, and, if there was time, Rav Amram Blau. But that night was the hilula of Rav Yaakov Abuchatzeira,[125] and it is impossible to let it pass without a few words in his honor before turning to the tzaddikim I did know. דבר בעתו מה טוב. His sefarim and his Torah warmed us, and we grew up on the knees of the Baba Sali, Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira, his grandson.

First, you must know that Abuchatzeira is not the family's original name. The original name was Elbaz. Several hundred years ago the head of the family was Rav Shmuel Elbaz, one of the rabbanim of Yerushalayim, and he was known to use kabbalah maasis (practical Kabbalah: working with Shemos and kamei'os to act in the world). Before I tell his story I have to explain what kabbalah maasis is. Is it permitted to use it? Is it forbidden?

KABBALAH MAASIS

Talk Nineteen · 1:00

Let me explain it with a mashal: a loaded gun. Even a child can fire a loaded gun and kill. To our great sorrow this happens often: a child picks up a gun as a toy, fires it, and kills his own brother. It takes no hero to pick up a loaded gun and shoot, to receive semichah of "yoreh yoreh" (in Hebrew, yoreh means both "he

[125] Rav Yaakov Abuchatzeira (1806–1880), of the Tafilalt region of Morocco, author of many sefarim. He passed away on 20 Teves in Damanhur, Egypt, on his way to Eretz Yisrael, and is buried there.

shall rule" and "he shoots"). One squeeze of the trigger is all it takes. Loading an empty gun is a little harder, but if the gun and the bullets are there, that is no great matter either. Even a small child who has watched once or twice how a magazine is pushed in can do it; it is truly not much work.

And it works. It can cause damage, and it can also save a person. There are moments when a loaded gun really saves a man from robbers or enemies coming at him. Nothing is absolutely bad or absolutely good; everything can be either, depending on the circumstances. But none of this is called learning warfare. Such a person can easily make a mistake and shoot himself. He only has to hold the gun wrongly, tilt it slightly, and a bullet goes into his foot. I won't say into his heart. There is a great deal of training in how to hold a gun, at forty-five degrees, in which direction; it is not simply picked up. And many people have hurt themselves because of exactly this.

So it is with kabbalah maasis. A man who has no kabbalah iyunis (the learned, theoretical Kabbalah) usually writes a kamei'a that is not heeded, if he writes it in kedushah. If he works with tumah, they heed him at once, because they want to take his nefesh. The sheidim give their service on the spot, because on the spot they take their payment: parts of the man's nefesh. They do not work for nothing at all. Kedushah does not take. On the contrary, a man who does it in kedushah becomes sanctified, but only if he is truly holy.

If he is not holy and he writes kabbalah maasis, there are Shemos that work even through tumah: even an impure man writes them and they work. But afterwards he pays for it in Shamayim, for having used them. It is like a zar, an impure man, entering the Kodesh HaKodashim. Imagine it. He is able to enter. Don't we see today people who call themselves religious going up onto Har HaBayis? They walk over the whole place, they tread even on the Kodesh HaKodashim, and they say, "No, we are not walking on that place." They have no idea what damage they are doing to their own neshamos and to all Klal Yisrael. All these stabbings and knives (the Arab knife attacks of those days) are the dowry they bring us, these people of Har HaBayis, shem resha'im yirkav. That is how it is with kabbalah maasis. A man who writes it harms his wife, his children and his grandchildren. Nobody comes out of it clean.

Even the gedolei Yisrael who used it did so in fear and awe, and most of them also paid for it. These are spiritual forces of malachim, and the malachim do not let it pass that they were used. They are forced to carry out the act, but afterwards they are angry, and they do harm.

Still, there is such a thing. The Arizal writes that only a man who is entirely in true kedushah may use it: one so given over that at every moment he is ready to give himself up al kiddush Hashem, cleaving twenty-four hours a day to "al kein

alamos aheivucha." What does that mean? Chazal say: read not alamos but al maves, unto death. Those who are ready at every minute, at this very second, to die al kiddush Hashem, and who of course also have all the knowledge, the kedushah and the taharah, together with this readiness, can use kabbalah maasis without being harmed. There were such great men, men of true kedushah and true ability, who really lived "al kein alamos aheivucha." They did it in kedushah, it was accepted, and in Shamayim they are loved for it.

I knew Rav Kaduri[126] very well, and I saw how he sat and wrote his kamei'os and how they worked. Not all of them worked, because sometimes the person who received the kamei'a was not fit for it to act on him. The person it is made for also has to be free of kitrugim. He does not have to be worthy, but there must be no kitrugim on him. So there are such cases too, but usually it worked. I knew him; I saw it.

Those who were gedolei olam, sunk in Torah twenty-four hours a day, whose souls cleaved to HaKadosh Baruch Hu in the secret of "al kein alamos aheivucha," of whom the Arizal writes, those men may use it, even though we have no ashes of the parah adumah. Besides, there are many things that can be done even without the parah adumah and that work, even lechatchilah, on condition that the man cleaves to the Borei. And when they did it, chas veshalom it was never for their own material ends, only for some need of Klal Yisrael and things of that kind.

THE STORIES

RAV SHMUEL ELBAZ AND YEHOSHUA KOHEN GADOL

Talk Nineteen · 7:00

Rav Shmuel Elbaz was one of the chachamim and mekubalim of Yerushalayim and one of its gedolim. All the great mekubalim of Yerushalayim knew the whole Shas and poskim, Rishonim and Acharonim, and combined Kabbalah with it. They held all of PaRDeS in their hands.

Once the chachamim of Yerushalayim were learning Maseches Yoma, and they were in doubt how the Kohen Gadol did the chafinah. Among the meforshim there are several views of exactly how the chafinah was done: whether he used his teeth, or rolled it in some way. The chafinah of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur is an

[126] Rav Yitzchak Kaduri (died 2006), the elder of the mekubalim in Yerushalayim in his generation.

acrobatic avodah. Understand what he had to do. He had to take two handfuls of ketores, fine as dust, דקה מן הדקה, and put it into a kaf. In the kaf there is room; no problem. Now he takes the kaf with the ketores in one hand and in the other a machtah full of burning coals. He enters the Kodesh HaKodashim and puts down the machtah of coals between the badim of the Aron, or, in the Bayis Sheini, on the Even HaShesiyah. So far, so good. Now he has to take the kaf, which holds two full handfuls, and roll its contents into his hands so that not one grain of dust falls to the floor, hold all the ketores in his hands, and heap it onto the machtah of coals.

How is it done? The Kohen Gadol practiced it the whole year. With the kaf in one hand, how can he bring it into his two hands? He has to take it in his teeth and roll it and do all kinds of maneuvers with the kaf until it reaches. The Rambam says he would take it into his bosom and make all kinds of movements to roll it so that not a speck spilled on the floor; if it spilled, he would have to do everything over again. There are several shitos in this, and they were weighing the shitos.

While they were weighing them and could not tell exactly how it was done, Rav Shmuel Elbaz stood up and said, "Wait. In a quarter of an hour I will give you an answer." He used kefitzas haderech and went to Iraq, to the kever of Yehoshua Kohen Gadol. Yehoshua Kohen Gadol is buried in Iraq, not far from the kever of Yechezkel HaNavi (at Kifl, south of Baghdad). He went to the kever of Yehoshua Kohen Gadol and made a yichud of nefesh benefesh (a yichud through which one's soul joins the soul of the tzaddik), raised him, spoke with him, and asked him, "Tell me exactly how it was done." After a quarter of an hour, half an hour, he was back, and he told them exactly: "I was with Yehoshua Kohen Gadol, I asked him, and he told me precisely how he did it. This is how."

The Mat on the Sea

Talk Nineteen · 10:00

No wonder, then, what happened afterwards. Times were hard in Yerushalayim; people were poor. Their debts to the Arabs who rented them their apartments were very high, and the Arabs were not gentle: whoever did not pay was thrown out into the snow, and they made pogroms and troubles. For money they turned the world upside down. The Jews sent several delegations abroad to raise donations for the yishuv here. It reached a desperate point, and they said to Rav Shmuel, "Perhaps you will go abroad?"

They gathered prutos and bought him a ticket on a ship to Europe, or perhaps to Morocco, I do not know where; but first one needed a ship. When he came to the ship, for some reason it had already sailed. He saw that it had left, and he did

not hesitate. He took his mat, spread it on the sea, sat down on it, said a Shem, and began to move. He passed by the ship, and the people saw him there on the mat, moving along, and they were beside themselves. Then he traveled right alongside the ship, as though attached to it in a kind of cloud; wherever the ship went, he was beside it. So they arrived, he sitting on his mat and they on the ship, and because of this the ship also arrived sooner than its usual time.

They reached the shore, and everyone had seen it. In Arabic a mat is called chatzira, so they called him Abuchatzeira, father of the mat. His name changed from Elbaz to Abuchatzeira, and so he became Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira, the father of the Abuchatzeira dynasty. They were holy men.

The Chida and Parshas Sotah

Talk Nineteen · 20:30

The Chida[127] alav hashalom lived in Livorno (in Italy). He was honored there, but he took no rabbanus; he lived there as a private man. He wrote sefarim and sold sefarim, and he also sold pearls, simple pearls, which could help poor and sick people. It was a mitzvah to give the sick a kamei'a to help them. There was no medicine then as there is today, and even today, what does medicine do? In many places it stands helpless with its tongue hanging out and only does harm. Back then nothing was developed. People in Morocco did not know what doctors were; if someone was sick, they went to the Chacham. One Mi Shebeirach for a refuah did not help? They made another Mi Shebeirach. So it was in Iraq, so in Morocco, so in all the lands of the East: the Chacham was also the doctor. These gedolei Yisrael proved themselves. With ruach hakodesh one merits all this.

The Chida lived in Livorno as a simple man, but people knew that this Chida stood head and shoulders above everyone. He was the uncrowned rav of all Yisrael, of the whole world; whoever heard his name stood at attention before him.

There was a woman from the family of the heads of the kehillah, people among whom money did all the talking and politics did all the talking. Her husband suspected that she was being unfaithful to him. He barely hinted at it, and her whole family, all of them rich from bribes, rose up against him: "One more word and we'll tear you apart and spill your blood! What are you saying? How dare you slander her? A modest woman, a good woman!"

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[127] Rav Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai (1724–1806). He was born in Yerushalayim, traveled to many lands as a shaliach of Eretz Yisrael, and spent his last decades in Livorno, where he passed away.

The husband had his suspicions, but a woman is not divorced on suspicions when there are no witnesses and no proof. He could give a get just like that, but a get means an enormous kesubah, and he did not have the money. And he did not really know whether she was permitted to him or forbidden; he knew nothing. He suspected. He had all kinds of suspicions, some raglayim ladavar.

In his distress he went to the Chida and said, "Rav Chida, I don't know. Look, I suspect my wife and I don't know what to do. The beis din is all on the side of her family; money greases the whole system. They go by the book: as long as there are no exact details, sit at home. But my heart is not at peace. I don't know what to do. Give me some advice; tell me what to do."

The Chida looked at him, asked him her name, and said, "She is forbidden to you. Go to the beis din and tell them you want a get immediately. She is forbidden to you. I forbid you to be with her."

One may not pasken by ruach hakodesh. But since the husband had suspicions and simply wanted to divorce, he was permitted to give his wife a get. True, he would have troubles, and he would have to give her the kesubah. On the strength of the Chida's words he could not divorce her without a kesubah on the claim that she was unfaithful; one does not pasken by ruach hakodesh. So he would have to pay the kesubah, and the Chida told him, "Pay the kesubah, even if you have to sell your trousers. Pay her the kesubah and leave her."

Now, if he left her on the claim that she was unfaithful, even after paying the kesubah, it was a great stain on the family: "This woman was divorced because she was unfaithful!" A great stain. The family did not want her divorced, and the beis din did not want it either. But he was in the right. According to halachah a man may give his wife a get without asking her, even against her will, especially among the Sefaradim, who divorce against the wife's will. All the more so in a case like this, where he suspected her. And now he also had the Chida's backing. He went to the beis din and said, "The Chida told me to divorce. I want to divorce, and nothing else interests me. You want a kesubah? I'll give a kesubah. True, according to halachah one does not pasken by ruach hakodesh, so I'll pay the kesubah. I want a get immediately."

They went and told the woman and her family what the Chida had said. You know what a demonstration is. But a demonstration of millionaires you have never seen, against one poor rav who barely had furniture in his house. Out came the woman, brazenly. A woman who is unfaithful is usually brazen as well, as the pasuk says, "ומצח אשה זונה היה לך מאנת הכלם"; such women are usually brazen too. She came with her whole family behind her, all in their carriages, with their gold, gold cufflinks on their shirts and diamond pins, each of them sure he had bought the whole world with his money. They all came, stood outside, and shouted at the

Chida: "How are you not ashamed? You throw a stain on a woman? Who are you? What are you? How can you do such a thing? Is such a thing permitted?"

People saw a demonstration, and it was like the frog in Mitzrayim, when one became a million. Suddenly there is a demonstration; one more gathers to see what will happen, and another, and suddenly a great crowd is standing in front of the Chida's house.

The Chida had a sefer Torah in his house. In front of the house there was a kind of patio, an outer balcony, a small courtyard. He went out there with the sefer Torah, opened it to Parshas Sotah, and stood and read Parshas Sotah before her eyes. As soon as he reached the pesukim "ואת כי שטית תחת אישך," "הנקי ממי המרים," and the curse, "וצבתה בטנה ונפלה ירכה," the moment he said those words she began to swell. Her belly swelled and her thigh fell. Suddenly the woman swelled up, bar minan, like a balloon, and with the swelling her thigh twisted and gave way so that she could not drag it along.

Everyone saw that Rav Chida was reading Parshas Sotah and it was working on her. She was guilty, plain to see! They were all suddenly horrified. They took her and hurried her away, so that she would not make our Rebbi's house tamei. By the time they reached her house she was no longer alive; they were dragging her body.

That is the greatness of the gedolei Yisrael; all of them had ruach hakodesh. Only the Chida never went out to show it at other times; he always kept it to himself. Once, when they drove him past his limits, it was seen. But it is not as though this was the one time, a single mofes of ruach hakodesh that we know of and nothing more. The Chida had many mofsim like this.

The Robber in Tunis

Talk Nineteen · 27:00

I will give you just one example. The Chida writes himself that when he was in Tunis, women followed him to kiss his robe, his tall coat, because of his greatness. Women came together with the men and took off their earrings, their bracelets, everything, and gave them to him, with their husbands' consent of course; without the husband's consent he would not take anything. He gathered sacks of gold there, two big sacks full of gold for the poor of Eretz Yisrael. The Tunisians gave jewelry and everything with an open hand for the tzaddik; they saw the tzaddik, knew his greatness, and gave.

There was an Arab there, a robber. He saw how great this Jew was and how freely people gave to him: in this man's house there were sacks of gold! Easy money.

At two in the morning, after chatzos, the Chida was sitting on the floor saying Tikkun Chatzos. Suddenly the window in front of him was forced open, and the Arab robber came in to take all the money. He only wanted to take the sacks and leave. But he was also jealous of the honor people gave the Rav. He already knew the Rav; he had seen them kiss his coat and honor him, and he said, "Such honor for this Jew? I must disgrace him." What did he do? He wore a long robe; he lifted it and uncovered himself in order to urinate on the Rav. He stood facing the Rav uncovered, about to urinate. A few drops came out.

The Chida turned his head aside and said, "Ribbono shel Olam, chasom pi sheten ve'al yashtin aleinu." In tefillah we say "חתום פי שטן ואל ישטין עלינו," seal the mouth of the Satan so that he not accuse us. The Chida said it with sheten, urine, in place of Satan.

The gentile stood there like a stone. He wanted to urinate and could not, and he screamed in pain. He stood rooted in the window and screamed and could not move. There was a commotion, and his screams woke the whole neighborhood. Everyone got up.

The Chida sat where he was, his face turned away, and went on with Tikkun Chatzos. The Chida's Tikkun Chatzos was not five minutes like ours; it was two hours. The galus of the Shechinah: to sit and weep. It was not only words; it was a feeling. Everyone came and saw a wonder. The candles were burning, and by their light the Chida sat, not caring at all about the gentile, sitting and weeping: woe for the galus of the Shechinah, woe for the churban of the Beis HaMikdash. And the gentile stood there screaming in pain, unable to move, clutching his waist and screaming.

They asked what had happened and saw that he had come to rob, and so on. Then the gentile's family came and begged the Chida to forgive him. He said, "For the sake of kiddush Hashem I am ready to forgive him, on condition that from today he never again does harm, and robs neither Jew nor gentile." The man accepted it and went.

The Kid Goat in Algiers

Talk Nineteen · 35:30

Rabbi Yaakov would travel to collect money, both for his yeshiva and for the poor. All the gedolei Yisrael collected money for poor families; that was only natural. On one of these journeys he came to Algiers (the chief city of Algeria, to the east of Morocco).

In Algiers he stayed with a certain baal habayis. On Thursday he told his host, "I want to leave. I will not stay here for Shabbos; I want to go on to another town. I have been here several days and I have finished what I came to do."

"Rebbi, I beg of you," the baal habayis said, "stay here for Shabbos. You will be doing a great mitzvah. It is already Thursday; give us the honor of a Shabbos with you."

"No," Rabbi Yaakov answered. "I want to go."

Outside the house was the baal habayis's large flock of sheep and goats. Suddenly one kid left the flock, came over to Rabbi Yaakov, laid its head on his knees, and looked up at him. Rabbi Yaakov looked straight into the face of the kid for several minutes. Then he said to the baal habayis, "I am prepared to stay on one condition: that this kid be slaughtered, by my talmid, with kavanos, and that we eat it at the Shabbos seudah."

"For the Rav's honor, the whole flock," the man said. "Only stay."

"I also want you to bring a minyan of talmidei chachamim to eat this kid with us at the Shabbos meals. We have to eat it." A kid is not half a kilo or two kilos. It weighs several kilos, enough for everyone at the Shabbos seudah.

"We will bring a minyan, gladly," said the baal habayis. "Only stay."

And so it was. The minyan of talmidei chachamim ate it over Shabbos. Most of the meat was eaten already at the seudah of Friday night, and at the morning seudah they ate what was left, since seudah shelishis is generally mostly fish.

On Motza'ei Shabbos the gvir, whose room was next to the Rav's, heard two voices coming from the Rav's room. Someone was speaking with the Rav and saying over and over, in Arabic, "Thank you, thank you." He could make out only the words "thank you" and did not understand what it was about.

In the morning he got up trembling and said to the Rav, "Rebbi, what was that? I heard two voices."

"Yes," Rabbi Yaakov said. "That was the kid. He was a talmid chacham who committed a certain aveirah in his previous gilgul and never made a tikkun for it, so he came back in the gilgul of a kid. He asked me to make the tikkun for him, and that is why I stayed here. Through the seudah we made with him, with the kavanos and everything, he received his tikkun and went up, and on Motza'ei Shabbos he came to say thank you."

The Forty Robbers

Talk Nineteen · 38:30

Once, when Rabbi Yaakov was collecting money for the poor, he had a very large sum with him. People gave; who would not give to a man like Rabbi Yaakov? Each one gave as much as he could, and a great deal more than he could. Rabbi Yaakov was traveling by wagon with a sack full of money, and he had hired a gentile, an Arab, to help him carry his things along the way.

On the way they came to a fork. One road was paved, and the other went through a forest. "Take the forest road," Rabbi Yaakov told the Arab.

"No, there are robbers there. I am afraid."

"Do not be afraid. I hired you; come with me, and you have nothing to worry about."

The Arab said to himself, "Well, the chacham of the Jews has spoken," and he went with him.

As they made their way through the forest, forty robbers came out against them and stopped the wagon. "Rabbi Yaakov," they said, "hand over the money."

He looked at them and said, "Take it. Take it."

"No," they said. "Now we also have to kill you. We cannot leave you alive."

"Kill me," he said.

The moment he said this and they started toward him, all forty began to sink into the ground. Right where they stood they sank, until they were in the earth up to the navel, half outside and half inside the ground, and there they stood. The gentile with him was stunned by what he saw.

"Come," Rabbi Yaakov said to him, "keep driving. There is no time to waste." He left them just as they were.

Rabbi Yaakov came home to his city in the Tafilalet.[128] Now the robbers' families knew where they had gone. The robbers had told them, "The Jewish Rav has a lot of money with him now; we are going to rob him." The families saw the Rav arrive safely, together with his servant, and their men did not come back. They came to the Rav to ask what had happened, but he did not answer them at all and paid them no attention. It was like talking to the walls; he simply went on with his own affairs. So they went to the gentile servant. "Tell us, what happened?"

"What do you mean?" he said. "They are swallowed into the ground up to the middle of the body. They are standing there and cannot move."

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[128] The Tafilalet is a region of oases in southeastern Morocco, on the edge of the Sahara. It was home to many Jewish communities and to the Abuchatzeira family.

They ran to the place and saw them, and they were terrified. They could not move them and could not pull them out; the robbers were stuck fast. The families went to the Rav weeping.

"What do you want from me?" he said, and refused. In the end, seeing they had no choice, they broke down and cried.

Then he said to them, "For the sake of Kiddush Hashem I am prepared to release them, on condition that every one of them promises never to rob again, neither Jew nor gentile. They must leave this business entirely."

The families went to the robbers, who could not speak. "Listen," they told them, "this is what the Rav said. Do you agree?" The robbers could only nod their heads yes. At once they were all freed and went away.

Rabbi Yaakov had taken that road on purpose, to put a stop to the robbery and plunder of Jews. Such was their greatness.

THE WIND AT THE WALLS OF THE MELLAH

Talk Nineteen · 41:30

The Jews in those lands lived in the mellah. The mellah was like what is called a ghetto (the word "ghetto" comes from Italian), an enclosed and closed-off place. The mellah had walls and gates. It was truly closed: very high walls, with gates, and inside them only Jews lived. This was their protection. So that the gentiles could not run wild, they kept the gates shut.

One time, while Rabbi Yaakov was sitting at home, the gentiles decided the time had come to take revenge on the Jews: to do, in the words of Megillas Esther, *lehashmid laharog ul'abed*. The Jews sensed that something was wrong and closed the gates, gates of iron, and bolted them from inside. If the gentiles wanted to come in and wipe out the Jews, they would have to climb the walls. A great commotion and uproar arose, and the Jews heard from behind the walls the great noise as the gentiles got ladders and other things ready to climb the walls, break in, and finish them off.

They went to Rabbi Yaakov. "Rabbi Yaakov, look what is happening! We are in danger!"

He went outside, looked at the wall, and said, "Sit quietly. Nothing has happened."

The gentiles climbed onto the walls, and suddenly a tremendous wind came and blew them away, every one of them. The Jews did not see what had happened or where the gentiles had flown. Everything became quiet, and there was nothing.

All this had happened toward evening. The next day the dignitaries of the Muslims came and knocked on the gates for the Jews to open. They knocked and asked politely, "We want to speak with your Rav. We have come in peace. Open for us." The Jews asked the Rav, and he said, "Open."

They came before the Rav and began to plead. Their people had vanished. All those young rioters who had wanted to attack had disappeared and were nowhere to be found. The Jews had thought the wind had thrown them down from the wall. No; they were simply gone.

"It is finished," the Rav told them. "They have already flown to all the winds. There is nothing to be done; Hashem scattered them. Forget about them."

They were all afraid of the Rav, for they had seen his greatness, and they went out, and that was the end of it. Those rioters never came back. They had flown away.

The Collar of the Jellabiya

Talk Nineteen · 44:00

Once Rabbi Yaakov came to Rissani (the chief town of the Tafilalet). A certain Jew there decided to convert to Islam, and he went to the kadi (the Muslim judge and ruler of the town) and told him so.

"Listen," the kadi said, "are you sure? Do not make a fool of me."

"Certainly," the man said. He wanted to become a Muslim.

"In that case," said the kadi, "I must make your conversion into a great celebration. I want it to be such an event that all the Jews will know of it and see it."

He set a day for him. Then the kadi went to the Jewish tailor and said, "Make me a beautiful Muslim garment, a jellabiya (the long robe worn by the Arabs), something special. I want to give it to him as a gift. When he converts, I will invite all the important people of the city to his conversion. We will hold a celebration, and he will receive this garment as a gift. You will sew it for me."

The Jewish tailor did not know what to do. He had received an order from the ruler of the town to sew a garment as a gift for a man who was about to convert to Islam. Was it permitted or forbidden? Rabbi Yaakov happened to be in Rissani just then, so the tailor went to him. "Rabbi Yaakov, what shall I do?"

"Sew it for him," Rabbi Yaakov said. On the spot he wrote a small kamea and said, "Sew this into his collar, and everything will be all right."

Now the tailor had both a heter from Rabbi Yaakov to sew the garment and his word that all would be well. He went and sewed it, placed the kamea in the collar, and delivered it. The kamea was hidden inside the collar, where no one could see it.

The appointed day came, and the Jew arrived. "You want to become a Muslim?" they asked him.

"Certainly!"

In front of everyone? There was a seudah? Yes, why not. There he sat among the great men of the city, in great honor; now that he wanted to convert, he had double the honor. He converted, and accepted the religion of Islam in front of all of them.

Right then the governor said to him, "Now you must receive a gift from us: a garment. Put it on now, and let us see you in it."

He put it on, and the moment he did, he began to shout, "Shema Yisrael!" Three times he shouted "Shema Yisrael." The Muslims went wild.

"You have just become a Muslim," the governor said to him. "Why are you shouting Shema Yisrael?"

And he shouted Shema Yisrael once more.

The governor's anger burned within him. "I did all this so that through him I might draw in more Jews. They would see him and the honor he received, and maybe others would follow. And he has made a mockery of all of us? Hang him at once!"

They took him and hanged him, and within a few minutes the Jew was dead. They took him for burial, and the chevra kadisha laid him in a grave.

A few hours later the governor changed his mind. "What? He made a mockery of all of us, and hanging is enough? No. I want his body burned." He sent men to the cemetery at once to take his body out of the fresh grave so that it could be burned. They opened the grave and saw that there was no body. The grave was fresh, and there was no body in it.

They went to the governor. "Listen, there is no body."

"No body? That cannot be. Are you sure that is the grave?"

"What do you mean? We were there when they buried him."

"Well," the governor said, "the Jews' Rav must have done this. Who knows what kind of sorcerer he is. Now we have to deal with the Rav. Summon him to come to me at once."

They summoned Rabbi Yaakov, and he answered them, "Tell the governor: if he wants the Rav, let him come to the Rav. If he wants me, let him come to me."

When the governor heard this answer his anger burned within him. "Tell the Rav to come immediately. If not, I will deal with him. I will show him what is what. He must come here at once!"

They went back to Rabbi Yaakov and told him this. Rabbi Yaakov said to them, "Listen. I am prepared to come, on one condition: for every step I take in the pal-

ace, one of his sons goes. Does he take responsibility for that? He has his ten sons of Haman. If he agrees, I will come."

They went and told the governor. He was so furious that he said, "Who is this Jew? He dares open his mouth? Whom is he threatening? Bring him here!"

Rabbi Yaakov entered the palace, took one step, and stopped. One of the governor's sons died on the spot. Rabbi Yaakov stood still and said, "Ask the governor whether I should go forward another step."

"Yes, of course," the governor said. "What happened is a coincidence. It has nothing to do with this. It is a coincidence. Another step!"

Rabbi Yaakov took another step, and another son died. Again he stopped and asked, "Ask the governor whether I should go forward."

Now the governor was enraged at the Rav. "I want to see you! Come to me at once! I will show you!"

Rabbi Yaakov took two more steps together, and two more children died. The governor's anger burned. He saw what was happening to him, but he had gone mad. Now he had to have the Jewish Rav; with blood in his eyes, he was going to finish him off and would not give in. Nine of his children died, for the nine steps Rabbi Yaakov took. Only then did he say, "Enough! Take him out! Take him out!" so that at least some of his dogs would be left alive.

They took him out, and *laYehudim haysah orah vesimchah*.

Such was their greatness.

Short Accounts

The Chicken at the Seudah

Talk Nineteen · 30:00

Such was their greatness, and they did not need to go about showing everyone "Look at me." Rav Yaakov was kodesh kodashim, as all of them were. The Chida was kodesh kodashim; all of them were kodesh kodashim. But Rav Yaakov lived in a situation where he had to show it. Why? There were many brazen people. There were roshei kahal who were brazen, who thought that with their money they could rule, that they would set the halachah and not the rabbanim. Not all of them, chas veshalom, but there were individuals like that, and they had to be educated.

One day Rav Yaakov came to a certain city. This time the rosh hakahal, who was a talmid chacham, received him well and warmly in his home, and they pre-

pared a seudah. Because they were in a hurry, they had to bring fowl: a chicken is quick to slaughter and cook and takes little time, not like beef. Immediately they went and slaughtered a chicken and made a seudah in Rav Yaakov's honor.

Rav Yaakov called the host and asked, "Who slaughtered the chicken?"

He said, "We have mehudar shochtim here who slaughter."

"Did you take it to the shochet?"

"No, my sons did."

"Call your sons."

They said, "What is the Rav checking here? Whenever food is brought to him he asks no questions. Why is he asking me?"

He said, "Bring your sons." The man brought all his sons, and he asked them one by one: "Did you slaughter it? Did you take it to the shochet? Did you take it?" Every one said no. Finally the last of the sons said, "I didn't have time. I gave it to my servant to take to the shochet."

"Call the servant."

He said to the servant, "Tell me the truth. Who slaughtered this chicken?"

The servant was terrified, and he said, "I'll tell you the truth, Rebbi. I went to the shochet's house and he wasn't home, and I knew they wanted it quickly. I said to myself, I also know how to slaughter, what's the problem? Just as the shochet takes a shechitah knife, I took a knife from the kitchen, slaughtered it myself, and brought it."

That is their greatness: with ruach hakodesh they already sensed in the food what may be eaten and what may not.

The Hesped That Was Refused

Talk Nineteen · 32:30

One day Rav Yaakov came to a certain city, and they told him that a certain talmid chacham's time had come, and they wanted him to come to the levayah to eulogize him. He told them, "Yes. If he is a talmid chacham, it is a mitzvah; I am ready to come."

As soon as he told them this, the talmidim went to give word. Now the rosh hakahal loved to interfere in everything, and he was a rasha, not an upright man, and arrogant besides. He said to them, "What? Are we short of rabbanim in this city that you bring a rav from outside? A guest who has just come here is going to give the hesped? I will not allow him to eulogize. Under no circumstances. Go tell him not to come and not to eulogize. Only the rabbanim of this city will eulogize here. We do not want other rabbanim."

What could they do? They were caught between the hammer and the anvil. They went to the Rav and said, "Rebbi, perhaps it is better that you not come. It is a long way." They began to make the way sound hard: "It is a long way, and the Rav is old. Perhaps the Rav will give up the idea."

He laughed and said to them, "You think I don't know what he told you? And now you come to put me off like this? The rosh hakahal told you such and such, and that is why you came to me." They stood there. Then he said to them, "Know that the rosh hakahal, avono yisa (he shall bear his sin)." That was all. The rosh hakahal had also spoken words of contempt against Rav Yaakov. "Avono yisa."

By the time they got back, the rosh hakahal was dead. At the very moment Rav Yaakov said "avono yisa," the rosh hakahal died. That was the end of it.

This is how people saw that there is a G-d in Yisrael, and it strengthened them in Torah and kedushah. You can see it to this day: among the Moroccans, rabbanim are rooted in their blood. Even when they are already far from religion, far from everything, when they hear of chachmei Yisrael, of chachamim, of kivrei tzaddikim, they suddenly turn around and become different people. It is in their roots: everything they saw, the greatness of the rabbanim and the mofsim they did, planted emunah in them.

The Tumah Upstairs

Talk Nineteen · 52:00

Once Rabbi Yaakov came to a house with two stories. The wealthy owner received him with honor and gave him a seat, and suddenly he saw that Rabbi Yaakov had turned into a ping-pong ball. Rabbi Yaakov moved over there; he sat here, and a minute later he moved a meter, hop, moved over here, came back here, went over there. The Rav could not sit still. He was dancing about underneath the stairs, underneath the upper floor.

"Rav," the man said, "what is wrong?"

"Upstairs there is tumah. Wherever it goes, I flee. The tumah upstairs is moving around, here, everywhere, and wherever it goes, I flee. What can I do?"

What tumah? He knew his wife was upstairs, but he also knew that his wife was tehorah. He went upstairs and said to his wife, "Tell me, what has happened? Check yourself." She checked and found that she had become tamei without even knowing it: she had found kesamim that made her a niddah. That was why, as she moved about upstairs, Rabbi Yaakov could not bear the tumah wherever she went, and he fled out from under it.

With kedushah like this, a person reaches such things. This is kedushah! We have received a gift from HaKadosh Baruch Hu: *vehiskadishtem vihyisem kedoshim*; *kedoshim tihyu*. Why? *Ki kadosh Ani Hashem Elokeichem*. "I am holy. If you cleave to My kedushah, I, Hashem your G-d, will give you a part of Me." You will be able to receive from His kedushah and do things with it. You hold in your hand a part of the power of the Borei. This is kedushah!

THE SEFER MAASEH NISSIM

Talk Nineteen · 53:30

There is much more to tell about Rabbi Yaakov. There are many stories about him; there is a whole sefer of wondrous stories about him, *Maaseh Nissim*. What I have told is only a little of it, l'zechuso shel Rabbi Yaakov. These are not tzaddikim I knew, but they are tzaddikim whose powers we know were immense.

I knew the author of *Maaseh Nissim*. We learned together in Porat Yosef. He was a Moroccan chacham, married into the family of the Baba Sali (Rabbi Yaakov's grandson), and he wrote down these stories only after checking and sifting them one by one according to clear testimony, passed on from one man to the next. They are not just tales, idle stories gathered to fill up a sefer. He wrote a small booklet, and he was a man who was exacting in what he wrote.

May the zechus of Rabbi Yaakov stand and protect us.

❦

HIS WORDS

A NESHAMAH DRAWN DOWN IN HOLINESS

Talk Nineteen · 11:30

Understand that a son receives a great deal from his father. A man can also reach kedushah on his own. Avraham Avinu reached what he reached even though he came from so lowly a man as Terach, a seller of idols. Why? When a man's neshamah is great, it can climb higher and higher and break through every fence and screen that stands in its way. All the more so when his parents brought him into the world in a special kedushah. When these people brought children into the world, they were not here at all. Their minds had no thought whatever of the desires of this world; everything was at the height of connection above. And it was on

leilei Shabbos kodesh, and only after chatzos. All this draws down a special neshamah for the child.

Second, they raised the child so that from his earliest childhood he would see nothing: he would not see women, he would not see anything, he would not see his mother's body. Besides the fact that the mothers were modest, and a mother's tznius affects her children very, very much, the child himself never saw his mother's body. Even when she nursed him she stayed covered, with only a small opening in her garment. He never saw his mother's body, not one centimeter. Their kedushas einayim began in the womb.

With us, the moment a baby is born, we take him and wash his hands six times, at once. That is what we did for all our babies: the first thing after birth, netilas yadayim six times, before anything else, so that he begins in taharah. What a child sees of women in the first second after his birth affects him for his whole life. People think, "He is a baby, he doesn't see." No. The nefesh is not a baby; the body is a baby. The nefesh takes in everything, and it is affected. Rav Yehudah HaChassid writes in his sefer that if a newborn boy coming out of his mother is wrapped in a cloth that was first used to wrap a baby girl, all his life he will think about women, until old age and gray hair; there will always be women somewhere in his head. And the same in reverse. That is how much it affects him. Everything that happens to the nefesh from its very first second leaves a strong mark, even if we ourselves do not understand it.

Take a man and put him under hypnosis, and he will tell you how many buttons were on the other man's shirt. Can you tell me now how many buttons there are on my shirt? No. But if you were hypnotized now, you would say exactly how many buttons I had, because your nefesh took it in. It already knows everything, every precise detail of all that happened. It absorbs, and it stays in the subconscious, in the storehouse of the mind, and it has its effect.

So their greatness lay in how they raised their children, and in what neshamos they drew down to begin with. Clearly a זרע ברך ה' like that carries on.

Much depends on the mother too, and the mother of Rav Yaakov was also very great in her deeds. Even the way she came to be his mother was entirely beyond the way of nature. This was not his father's first marriage but an additional one: he had two wives at the same time, not after a divorce or the death of a wife. He took another wife, and that was how it was. When a man is older, the children born to him are finer, because he is calmer, more complete, more sanctified. Everything has its own virtue. It is not the stormy blood of a man of twenty but the blood of a man of forty or sixty. Everything was with cheshbon, and Rav Yaakov was born. It was said of him that he had a spark of Yaakov Avinu alav hashalom.

He was raised by his father in a special kedushah from childhood; he was born that way. And truly, already in his youth he was sunk in the world of the Talmud, Shas and poskim. There are no true mekubalim who do not know all of Shas and poskim thoroughly, and all four chelkei Shulchan Aruch thoroughly, and who cannot pasken in them as the halachah requires. Forget about mekubalim in the past who lacked this. Today every metzora, every zav and every tamei lanefesh calls himself a mekubal, rachmana litzlan.

Greatness Is Not Measured in Mofsim

Talk Nineteen · 16:30

Rav Yaakov's greatness was wondrous, but people do not understand the greatness of the mekubalim. They understand it only by the mofsim they did. One did ten mofsim: oh, he is great! Another did twenty: he is greater still! That is not how it goes. These are foolish people who do not know how to measure mekubalim; they measure them by their mofsim. Their greatness is not in the mofsim they did; it is in their connection with the Borei. One did none because there was no need. Another did them and we do not know what he did. And of a third we know more, because the situation needed it: it required that he act, and that he let it be seen.

Rav Yaakov Abuchatzeira lived in Morocco at a time when the Moroccans were not on such good terms with the Jews. There were problems, there were pogroms. Rav Yaakov's son, Rav David Abuchatzeira, was murdered. It was not easy. The Arabs were quiet, quiet, quiet, until someone lit a small match. Light a small match and that was the end: suddenly you saw a fire there like two Lag BaOmers, not one. That is how they are, rachmana litzlan. So the Jews were in danger and needed these things. Besides, the Jews themselves had begun to slip somewhat from the kedushah they once had. The Morocco of old was a Morocco where everyone was holy and pure, but with time things began to decline, and a spirit of "progress" began to come in from France and from all kinds of places. The rabbanim had to show mofsim so that people would not run wild, so that they would know that there is din and there is a Dayan.

So when they did mofsim, it was not for show: "Look at me, beware of me, give me the honor I deserve." All of them did it למען ישמעו ויראו, so that people would know there is a G-d in Yisrael. The roads swarmed with highway robbers who robbed people, and if no rav stood up to stop them, many people would have been in danger: they set out from city to city and never arrived, murdered or robbed. There were many agunos; the shaalos u'teshuvos are full of such cases. The gedolei Yisrael had to show their greatness in this too, and so their greatness also

showed itself in the mofsim they had to do. But that does not mean that one of whom there are not enough stories is less than another of whom there are. That is a mistake.

In any case, ruach hakodesh was with them. Why? As I have told you before, ruach hakodesh is the result of kedushah and limud Torah together. Learning Torah and becoming sanctified: from the union of the two ruach hakodesh is born. All the gedolei Yisrael who learned Torah in kedushah merited ruach hakodesh, and each one showed his ruach hakodesh in a different way. But all of them had it, every one. If I began to tell everything that happened with all of them, we would never finish, neither with the tzaddikim I knew nor with those I did not know, not in a day and a night. The gedolei Yisrael were always with ruach hakodesh, whoever you like.

Book Five

What These Stories Teach

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Kedushah

THE KALIVER REBBE'S MESSAGE

Talk Eighteen · 0:00

People ask me: are there such men in our days? Where is one we can go to and be helped? People beg for yeshuos and search for such a man.

I tell them: yes, there is one in our days too. I know that he has a wonderful bond with Hoshea ben Be'eri (the navi, first of Trei Asar), with the kever of Rabbi Yehoshua in Tzfas. He is the Kaliver Rebbe.[129] Let me tell you one story of his greatness, and may Hashem lengthen his days in good and his years in pleasantness.

A friend of mine had no children for many years. The doctors said his wife could not have children and it was a waste of effort; nothing could be done. After many years he came to the Kaliver Rebbe and said, "Rebbe, I must have children. I want a son. What should I do?"

The Rebbe told him to go to Tzfas, to the kever that everyone calls the kever of Hoshea ben Be'eri. The navi is really buried somewhere else, and Rabbi Yehoshua is the one buried there. But since the whole world calls it Hoshea ben Be'eri, one can ask there of Hoshea ben Be'eri as well. Once a place is linked to a certain tzaddik, he comes there and is bound to the place, even if he is not buried there. And so at Rabbi Yehoshua's kever there is also a hashra'ah of the navi Hoshea ben Be'eri.

"Go there," the Rebbe told him, "and give him regards from me. Tell the navi Hoshea ben Be'eri that I asked him to arrange a child for you. That's all, and you will have one."

He went to the tziyun in Tzfas, at the place where Rabbi Yehoshua is buried, and said exactly these words: "Hoshea ben Be'eri the navi, I am a shaliach of the Kaliver Rebbe. He asked me to give you regards and to say that he recommends

[129] Rav Menachem Mendel Taub, a survivor of Auschwitz who rebuilt the Kaliv chassidus in Eretz Yisrael.

that you take care of me in Shamayim and daven for me to have a son." That was all he said.

That same month, or the month after, his wife was nifkedes. Baruch Hashem, he has a healthy son, today about ten years old. This is a story I know myself.

I have seen something else there in many cases. People looking for a yeshuah made a neder that as soon as it came, they would make a seudah in honor of Hoshea ben Be'eri, up on the flat area above the tziyun, near the way down to the old beis hachaim of Tzfas. I saw those people helped. It is a wonderful segulah that works to this day. I won't say it works for everyone, each man with his own zechuyos, but in many cases it does: of the people who were suffering and came there to ask, many saw yeshuos.

He is another of the giants of old. I speak only of him because I know him. Others I have no idea who or what they are, and I do not speak about them.

The War with the Books of Tumah

Talk Eighteen · 15:00

Some decades ago a craze swept through this mad world, a world full of tumah and filth. The people here, whose proper Jewish chinuch was stolen from them and replaced with an empty chinuch, are poor souls who grab at any air, even foul air, in the hope that some yeshuah may come from it. So a few years back there were articles here about books, put out in Hebrew as well, written by a man who was a kelipah, a very impure sorcerer, and the young people here were very taken with them.

At an earlier time the young people had been wildly taken with the nonsense of Däniken,[130] and I wrote my article against it then, and baruch Hashem it straightened out the thinking of many people. So I thought to write an article against this too. I bought his filthy books in the Hebrew translation and began reading them in order to write against them.

I read one page, two pages, and sat down to write against them, and I felt the tumah wrapping itself around me. I felt a dreadful tumah. Every two pages of the book I had to leave the book, run to the mikveh and tovel, then sit and think all kinds of thoughts of kedushah and Torah to cleanse myself, and only then write my articles and my objections to what he wrote. I proved, with proofs from the writings of our Rabbis, that everything he wrote was tumah and kishuf.

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[130] Erich von Däniken, a Swiss writer whose books, starting in the late 1960s, claimed that ancient peoples were visited and helped by beings from outer space. His books were very popular in Israel and the world over.

I went on like that, page after page, and for two months I fought hard battles. Every day I wrote, I had to read two thin, small pages, five minutes of reading, in order to write my objections. Then I had to go to the mikveh and tovel dozens of tevilos, and afterward sit and learn Pasach Eliyahu.

Pasach Eliyahu, the passage from the Tikkunei Zohar printed in the siddurim, is a very important thing to say. It is one of the things that bring taharah to a man. If a man says it after the mikveh, he can slowly break the kelipos inside him and come back to kedushah. The Pasach Eliyahu of Eliyahu Hanavi is something tremendous. A man who says it, even without knowing what the words mean, makes light in Shamayim, wonder of wonders.

It is important to get used to saying Pasach Eliyahu and to learn it by heart. Then a man can say it on buses too, wherever he goes, as long as there is no bad smell and no forbidden sights in front of him. If there are forbidden sights, he should close his eyes and say it. He can repeat it hundreds of times, and each time he receives the reward of learning Torah, "uv'lechtecha vaderech." He should first learn it by heart and then keep on with it.

A man walking on the road should also repeat Pitum Haketores several times, the whole text, from "Tanu Rabbanan pitum haketores keitzad" until "ukeshanim kadmoniyos," and repeat Pasach Eliyahu. These are the things that purify the nefesh; they bring a tremendous taharah. This is the refining of the nefesh. I had to use all these methods to clean away that filth.

It made me feel ill; I was choking. The ruach hatumah began to wrap around me. After I had already written quite a few large pages, terrible troubles came upon me. The kelipah gave me no rest. What troubles I went through! I understood that it was because of this. I saw I could no longer bear these troubles, so I went and burned all the papers I had written, so as not to deal with them anymore and to be calm. And all at once, within five minutes of the burning, every trouble I had was gone. It had all come because I wanted to fight those forces. They fought me, and I had no strength against them.

People do not understand what ruach hatumah does to them, even when they just read a newspaper, an article written by an apikores, rachmana litzlan, how much it affects a man. It was not for nothing that our Rabbis said that a sefer Torah written by an apikores is burned. Picture it: a kosher Jew, a tzaddik, takes a sefer Torah, lights a match and burns it. What would you say? You would faint! But that is the halachah. An apikores wrote it, so it is burned. Why? It leaves tumah in the world. Even though the words written there are divrei Elokim chaim, the true Toras Moshe, the writer puts his own atmosphere into the writing. All the more so when he writes an article of his own, rachmana litzlan.

People read all kinds of storybooks written by writers who are not good people. Even if there is nothing bad written in them, no nivul peh, no zimah, nothing, just a simple innocent story, it has a very bad effect on a man's nefesh. A man who looks at such things, rachmana litzlan, where can he end up! I cannot describe to you how much the kelipah wraps itself around a man. The Gemara says that an aveirah wraps around a man until the Yom Hadin. Every aveirah a man does wraps itself around him and surrounds him.

Ashrei the baal teshuvah who can slowly break apart all these wrappings, come to kedushah and even cling to kedushah and taharah. Ashrav! Every baal teshuvah who was sunk in tumah and comes out of it, enters kedushah and sanctifies himself, has a spark of Avraham Avinu, that much. It is about these that it was said that in the place where baalei teshuvah stand, complete tzaddikim cannot stand: about those who broke hard kelipos that surrounded them and crossed the lines into kedushah.

Short Accounts

I Am No Mekubal

Talk Eighteen · 4:00

Here I must say something plainly. I tell stories of great tzaddikim, but standing beside them did not make me like them. If only it were catching! It is not. I could stand beside all of them for years and remain just as I am. I cannot bring yeshuos and I see nothing. People ask me, "What do you see?" What should I see? Without my glasses I cannot even see the people in front of me! I see nothing. I only tell.

It is true that in my youth I did she'alos chalom (asking a question of Shamayim and receiving the answer in a dream) a few times, and other such things, and they showed me answers. I paid dearly for it, and I am still paying. Such things are not free. They do answer, not everyone, and to me they did answer. That was not because of any greatness of mine. Perhaps it was in the zechus of my grandfather, perhaps in the zechus of the tzaddikim I knew, perhaps because I asked for the good of other people. But the price they took from me for it is very high. I will never use it again, even if the world turns over. I no longer deal in these things.

I decided to put these shiurim out publicly only because they open new paths for people. They are a way of opening the eyes, following the Arizal.

I am also not a mekubal. I bring you many things from Kabbalah, but not everyone who sells fruit is a gardener; he buys it secondhand and brings it to market. I search out interesting things here and there in the kisvei haArizal and bring them to you. That does not make me a mekubal. I do not daven with the kavanos, I do not know them, and I do not deal with them at all. If only I merited it! I learned and I have semichah to be a rav; I have no certificate to be a mekubal. So no one should come to me about seeing or not seeing, because I do not see, and I do not want anyone to be disappointed. The Rebbe I told you about is a very great man, and I believe that if he wants, his tefillah can still change things.

MUST SHE LIGHT CANDLES?

Talk Eighteen · 1:02:30

Since I am speaking about whether she keeps Shabbos or not, I was asked to make a comment. Someone sent me an email with a question: is a woman who is mechalel Shabbos obligated to light Shabbos candles or not? I answered him that she is obligated in all the mitzvos, including lighting Shabbos candles. Of course, before shkiah, not after shkiah, so that she should not be mechalel Shabbos with the lighting itself. One thing has nothing to do with the other.

He asked me to let people know, because people are making a mistake. There was some rav (I do not know where this rav sprang from; "gam teven gam mispo rav imanu") who said that a woman who is mechalel Shabbos should not light Shabbos candles. I do not know who this man is or what he based it on. Perhaps he meant she should not light after shkiah, which is obviously forbidden. I do not know who the rav was, what he said or why he said it; I have no idea. In any case, it is not true.

There is a story about the Vilna Gaon. Once the door of his house needed fixing, and the carpenter in the neighborhood was a Jew who had converted to Christianity. He came, and the Gaon showed him what had to be repaired. It was a hot day and the man was sweating at his work, so the Gaon brought him a glass of water to drink and said to him: "Make a berachah."

The man said: "I converted. I'm exempt!"

The Gaon told him: "There is a separate Gehinnom for converting, and there is a Gehinnom for every berachah you skip. You will get it for everything, even for this glass of water. If you don't make a berachah on it, you will get Gehinnom for it. You are not exempt. Say shehakol!"

"What? Didn't converting exempt me from all the mitzvos?"

"No. You are obligated in everything."

He had converted because he thought he would now be free of all the mitzvos. "If so," he said, "if it exempted me from nothing, then I take it back." And he did teshuvah.

Every person is obligated in all the mitzvos. Not keeping one mitzvah does not exempt him from another. Every mitzvah that comes into his hands, he must fulfill. So these women who are mechalel Shabbos are obligated to light Shabbos candles, which bring shalom bayis. They must light before shkiah, not after, which would be chillul Shabbos, rachmana litzlan, and with a berachah, like every halachah. Perhaps in this zechus, in time, they will be inspired to go further and keep Shabbos, and merit the things of Olam Haba. Who knows? Is any neshamah of Klal Yisrael beyond hope? The two have nothing to do with each other. Not keeping Shabbos does not exempt them from lighting the candles. They are obligated to light, even though they do not keep Shabbos, and to light them at the proper time.

His Words

The Key Is Kedushah

Talk Eighteen · 6:30

Where did the greatness of all these tzaddikim come from?

The key is kedushah. It is taharah. "The G-d of these hates zimah"; even Bilam knew that. The smallest breath of zimah, rachmana litzlan, makes a man tamei. Every aveirah wraps itself around a man.

People do not understand, so let me explain a little what ruach hatumah is. The pasuk says, "And I will remove the ruach hatumah from the land." What is ruach hatumah? There are people who know the whole truth. They learned in yeshivos, they know everything, they even learned Kabbalah, and they commit the gravest aveiros with open contempt. Why? The tumah surrounds them. Once tumah surrounds a man, all his knowledge is tossed aside.

It is like the many people who cannot do without a cigarette. They know cigarettes cause cancer; they have no doubt about it. There was a professor who lectured for two hours on how dangerous cigarettes are, how they cause cancer, and in those two hours he finished a whole pack, one after the other, like a chain. With such people knowledge is one thing and deeds are another. Why? The desire is so great that they do not think twice. When tumah surrounds a man, no knowledge will help him. None!

The first thing needed is taharah. Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair says: nekiyus brings to taharah, and taharah brings to perishus. Perishus means that a man sanctifies himself even in what is permitted to him. During the week he does not sit at lavish feasts, but eats a little, what his body needs to live; on Shabbos he eats l'kavod Shabbos. Perishus also means that with his wife, too, everything is done in the greatest kedushah, sanctifying himself in what is permitted. Perishus brings to kedushah, kedushah brings to anavah, anavah brings to yiras chet, yiras chet brings to chassidus, and chassidus brings to ruach hakodesh.

There are levels and there are steps. Hakadosh Baruch Hu cannot dwell with a man who is proud. Even if he has all the Torah and kedushah, even if he sanctifies and purifies himself, if he is proud, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "He and I cannot live in one place."

The key of kedushah, of taharah, of anavah brings a man to yiras chet. What is yiras chet? It is not that he is afraid to sin because he will get Gehinnom above. He is afraid of the chet itself. He understands that the chet itself is the pegam, whether he is punished afterward or not. He fears it as one fears his greatest enemy. These things then bring to chassidus, and a man begins to act with chassidus.

People think that guarding the eyes is chassidus. No, that is halachah. It belongs to the first part, the part of taharah. People think that guarding the mouth and not talking nonsense is chassidus. No, that is still before taharah, in halachah itself. Taharah too is part of halachah, but I mean the lower layers before it, the part of nekiyus, since nekiyus brings to taharah. That a man guards his mouth and guards his thoughts belongs to nekiyus, which brings to taharah, and from there it goes on in order.

The men I have been telling you about went up these steps until ruach hakodesh lay open on their table. All of them, and all of them hid it. Even when they did mofsim, they hid the mofes, as if it had happened entirely by chance and they had nothing to do with it. Even when they revealed one tefach of themselves, they kept ninety-nine tefachim of their greatness hidden. And even that one tefach they tried to blur afterward, so that no image of a holy and pure man would peek out of them, only that of a very simple man. Such men are rare.

Let me explain more what ruach hatumah is. Every time a man looks at an improper picture, in real life, in a newspaper, on the internet or anywhere else, rachmana litzlan, it already sends a kind of radiation of an evil spirit onto his body. Every time he reads sefarim chitzonim, even a newspaper! He picked up a newspaper to see some article that matters to him, and the very fact that it came to him through them already makes him tamei; it hovers over him. Suddenly bad thoughts come to him, and he asks, "Where did this come from?" When the Mishnah says that one who reads sefarim chitzonim has no share in Olam Haba, it is because the

reading makes him tamei in the end, and the man falls and falls, far, far away. With all the maalos he had, he can lose them all in one minute.

You do not understand what ruach hatumah is. An ordinary man does not feel it, but it can be felt. It is terrible, because it wraps itself around a man. It seeps into him slowly, it creeps in drop by drop, until suddenly he finds himself flooded with a ruach hatumah that surrounds him and does not let him even lift his nose out of it, rachmana litzlan.

How careful a man must be with every extra word and every extra thought! If a man is riding a bus and the driver puts on improper songs, he has the right to tell the driver, "Take that off, lower it, or turn it off. As a passenger I may ask you to." Every such thought and every such sound enters a man's mind and damages his kedushah there.

We live in a generation of the fifty shaarei tumah, where tumah surrounds us at every step. To break out through the walls of tumah and come into kedushah, one must sanctify himself more. One must guard his eyes according to halachah and even add perishus.

I grew up with men who did not even look at their daughters or their granddaughters, so strong was their shemiras einayim. They looked at their daughters until they married them off, and after that they no longer lifted their eyes to see even what their own daughter looked like. That is how it was. That is how all the gedolei hador were in the generations before us. Why did they reach their greatness? Through their kedushah, each one according to his level.

Whoever sanctifies himself below is sanctified from above, and whoever makes himself tamei below is made tamei from above. In the way a man wants to go, he is led. Afterward he sees that the way of tumah has suddenly become easy for him, and he says, "You see? This is from Shamayim." Yes! What does "from Shamayim" mean? A man chose tumah, and in the way a man wants to go, he is led. Rachmana litzlan, one aveirah draws another, just as one mitzvah draws another.

Sanctify Yourself in What Is Permitted

Talk Eighteen · 22:00

Kedushah is the key. Kadesh atzmecha bemutar lach, sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you. It is permitted to eat a good steak in the middle of the week. If you need it for your health, eat it as medicine, for the sake of refuah. If you do not need it, save it for Shabbos and make do with something less.

Just as the food of Shabbos sanctifies a man and refines him, and the three seudos of Shabbos are a wonderful level, so the food of the weekday makes a man

tamei. Whatever he eats beyond what his health truly needs, his lavish feasts and the things he really does not need for his health, the nachash takes all of that. The shulchan (שלחן) turns into the letters of nachash (נחש), and the nachash takes it and makes the man tamei through his eating.

To say nothing of moshav leitzim, the seat of scoffers, rachmana litzlan: "uvmoshav leitzim lo yashav." A man sits and chatters all kinds of nonsense with all kinds of friends. Besides the bittul Torah, for which woe to him on the Yom Hadin, he makes his nefesh tamei and draws tumah into it, until he does not even feel that he is in the wrong. The Gemara says that if a man did an aveirah and repeated it, it becomes to him as if it were permitted. Why? Because the tumah of the aveirah has already surrounded him, so that he no longer senses the pegam of the second aveirah, rachmana litzlan.

I am writing to you about men who sanctified themselves, and therefore they were sanctified from Shamayim.

WHAT THE NEFESH ABSORBS

Talk Ten · 9:00

There is one more thing that people do not know, and it is very important. Today there are many people who are drawn male to male, or female to female. Where does it come from? It is not an illness, as people today want to describe it: "It is a condition; there is such a behavior." No. The Chida writes explicitly that whatever aveiros a person committed in a previous gilgul, he is born with them this time as an inborn nature. A person who in his last gilgul turned aside and did these things, following his own perversion, is born the next time with such a nature. But it is his duty to overcome it and fight it; for this he was born, for this he was created this way. He developed it himself in an earlier gilgul.

The matter of women with women is a kelipah that once existed in Mitzrayim alone, the kelipah of the gods of Mitzrayim, of their avodah zarah. It has a name too, something like Amon, which I do not want to say. About this kelipah it is said in Yeshayahu HaNavi: "Behold, Hashem rides upon a swift cloud and comes to Mitzrayim... and I will stir up Mitzrayim against Mitzrayim, and all the idols of Mitzrayim will tremble before Him." All of that is on this subject. And when the Torah says, "Like the deeds of the land of Mitzrayim you shall not do," Chazal said that this refers to the practice of women who behave with one another as husband and wife. Men and women who did these things in earlier gilgulim are now born with them, and they think, "I am not to blame; I was born this way."

There is another problem as well: people seek to change themselves from male to female or the reverse. Madness! Where does it come from? The moment a baby is born, he is already sensitive to everything that happens to him. As I have said before, the nefesh attaches to the clothes it wears; it affects them and is affected by them. If a person wears a garment that a tzaddik wore before him, it will affect him; if he wears a garment that a rasha wore before him, it will affect him. Sefer Chassidim writes that if, at the moment a baby boy is born, they wrap him in a garment that a newborn girl was wrapped in before him, all his life he will think about women. What a pity on him! He will sit in yeshiva and learn, and his mind will always be on women. Why? The first garment he took in here gave him the power of a female nefesh, which attached to him the moment he entered this world. Whether a woman or a girl makes no difference; it is female. The same for a girl: if at the moment she is born they dress her in a garment that belonged to a boy, all her life she will chase after men, lose her head, and do foolish things. How serious this is!

All the more so those who go on dressing children, not just once, in clothes that are passed through the family, from boy to girl and from girl to boy, from brother to sister. These things can destroy children's neshamos! People do not understand what they are doing, and afterward all they invest in chinuch will not help; the child has already absorbed it. The nefesh is delicate and sensitive, and it absorbs whatever the nefesh of the one who wore the garment before left on it.

Likewise, if there are irreligious people in the family, and they hand down clothes worn by some poor child who did not keep Torah and mitzvos, and a man takes them to dress his own God-fearing children, it will affect their chinuch. They will grow up without knowing why they do not want to keep Torah and mitzvos. He does not understand it; he gave them the best chinuch. But he did not realize that together with the chinuch he smothered their nefesh in childhood with clothes worn by people who did not keep Torah and mitzvos.

If there is no choice and such clothes must be worn, they must first be immersed in a mikveh. One should go to a mikveh, or to the sea, or to a spring, immerse them completely, wait until they dry, and only then dress the children in them, so that the previous nefesh departs and does no harm, from boy to girl, or from one who does not keep the Torah to one who does. Adults too, of course, who wear second-hand clothes must be careful about this. You do not know who wore them, and it can even affect your mazal.

Sometimes a person brings an object into his house, not only clothing, though clothing all the more so, and if it belonged to someone whose mazal was not good, his own mazal can go down. I have had several such cases: people who had no children because they had brought into their homes objects belonging to people who had no children, and only when they took them out were children born to them.

Sometimes it affects parnassah, and a man does not understand why his business has suddenly stopped. You do not understand why? You brought some furniture into your house, beautiful antique furniture, Louis the Fourteenth or Louis the Zeroth. You brought it in and enjoyed it, but its owner had bad mazal, and his mazal came into your house together with the furniture. Now go and live with it! Sometimes it affects business, sometimes life, sometimes shalom bayis.

I knew a woman whose friend got divorced and divided up the property; they had no choice but to sell the house and the rest of their belongings. This woman took a salon table. I told her, "Don't take it. It will bring you to divorce your husband, because it comes from a house of divorced people." "No, what are you talking about? It's a beautiful piece." She took it, and she divorced her husband. Suddenly quarrels began in the house that had never been there before. That table caused it. The nefesh of the couple who had fought was on the table, and it affected the second couple as well.

Sometimes people move into a house and suddenly begin to fight for no reason. The people who lived there before left a bad spirit behind in the house, of quarrels, of battles and the like. When a person opens a store or takes an apartment, he must check who the previous tenants were and how things went there. All the more so with the clothes a person wears, and with what he dresses his little children in.

FROM THE FIRST MOMENT

Talk Ten · 24:30

A woman who is not careful and walks about the house unclothed near her baby, a day old or a week old, can bring very harsh things upon the child. A God-fearing talmid chacham, who sits and learns Torah, came to me and said, "Rav, I cannot visit my mother. I am drawn to her in a forbidden way. She is a widow and asks me to come and help her, and I avoid it, and she does not understand why. I love her and I want to help her, but I cannot. The moment I see her, forbidden thoughts take hold of me, and I am afraid of what I might do." They call this an Oedipus complex (a psychologists' term), some complex or other, nonsense.

I sat and looked into the matter. Until the age of five or six this child had seen his mother unclothed. When she bathed, she would put him in the bath with her to keep him from running wild, and in the bedroom she went about however she went about. The child absorbed it. A child of five understands nothing of matters between a man and a woman, but the nefesh had already taken it in. The poor man could not go to his mother; he could not come to her. "I am going out of my

mind," he said, "I do not know what to do." His mother caused it without knowing.

The Vilna Gaon did not become the Vilna Gaon by his own merit alone. It was also in the merit that when his mother nursed him, she wore a covering with only a small opening through which he could nurse, so that he would not see her body, the place from which she nursed him. Kedushas einayim for a child from the moment he is born! He was not to see his mother's body, the place from which he nursed. Such shemiras einayim! Through this he merited, and she merited, to have a son like the Vilna Gaon, zechuso yagen aleinu. To be the mother of the Vilna Gaon is no less a merit than to be the mother of Avraham Avinu.

The Gaon, the Vilna Gaon: these words must be said with awe and trembling. There is a line of gedolim whom we can hardly grasp, who they were and what they were: Rabbeinu HaArizal, the Vilna Gaon, the Baal Shem Tov. We cannot even grasp whom we are mentioning when we say their names. And all of them, their mothers began their chinuch the second they were born, with the garment they wore or were dressed in, and with the shemiras einayim their mothers kept.

In fact, it is written in the Gemara. The Gemara says of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, "אשרי יולדתו" (fortunate is she who bore him). Almost the whole Torah follows Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, all our halachos. He was the rebbi of Rabbi Akiva, and when he disagreed with the Chachmei Yisrael, the halachah follows him in almost every case, ninety-nine point nine nine percent. How does one reach such greatness? "Fortunate is she who bore him." What does that mean? When he was a baby, on the very day he was born, his mother took him and placed his cradle in the beis midrash, in the yeshiva, so that he would hear divrei Torah. A baby a day or two old needs what he needs, and that is no problem; she would sit right beside him, and whatever he needed, she would change him and clean him. But he would hear divrei Torah.

Not like today, when they make the child's neshamah tamei the moment he is born. The poor thing does not yet understand anything, and they put a picture of a bear in front of him, a teddy bear, a plastic teddy with a few scribbles, so that he will play with it, and he begins seeing the image of a non-kosher animal before his eyes. Later, when he grows up like a teddy bear, they will ask why! All of it has an effect. Kedushah begins from the first second a person is born, in what he wears, what he looks at, and what he hears. That is how Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya grew up, with his cradle inside the yeshiva so that he would hear divrei Torah. That is how the Vilna Gaon grew up, with shemiras einayim even over the place from which he nursed.

Saba knew all this, and so he took care over these children in gan. In those days people thought, "In gan there will be boys and girls together; it's not terrible, it's

only gan, it's only first grade, what can happen?" Rabbosai, it is not first grade and it is not gan; it is the groundwork, the foundation of the person's whole life afterward. Even if later he learns Torah and becomes a yerei Shamayim, down at the root he will have hirhurim, and he will have a hard war to drive them away.

The nefesh is sensitive. It is not as we think; we do not grasp what the nefesh truly grasps. You look at a person, and your nefesh has already taken in how many buttons were on the shirt of the man you spoke with. You say, "What? I spoke with him, and how many buttons did he have? I didn't notice; I don't even know whether he had buttons." Hypnotize such a person and ask him, and he will tell you exactly how many buttons there were. The nefesh took it in. That it has not yet passed it up to the mind means nothing. It took it in; it is inside, already internalized, and one day that picture will come out in some situation or other. How careful we must be with children's nefashos and their chinuch from age zero! More than that, from the pregnancy!

When the malach came to the mother of Shimshon, he warned her that already during the pregnancy she must not eat things that are not good, so that Shimshon would come out Shimshon. The Gemara tells of two women expecting children who smelled the aroma of a cooked dish on Yom Kippur, and their hearts were drawn to eat. One held back and restrained herself, and from her came Rabbi Yochanan. To the other the rabbanim said, "You are going to faint; eat." The poor woman ate a little food on Yom Kippur while she was expecting, and it affected her son. He became one of the resha'im, an oppressor of the poor, a hoarder of produce. In days when food was scarce he would go and buy up all the produce, so that the poor would have nothing to buy, and then sell it to them at a high price. He was a bad man.

It began with food, and not non-kosher food, only that she ate on Yom Kippur. Eating on Yom Kippur is less harmful than eating non-kosher food, which defiles the nefesh more. As to the issur, eating on Yom Kippur carries kares, and eating non-kosher meat does not carry kares, only eating chelev does. But as to the tumah that affects the nefesh, rachmana litzlan!

Whatever a woman eats during pregnancy already affects the unborn child. He eats it too; he receives it from her blood. What a woman eats affects him, and so does what she feels. Many people are born with disturbed minds because their mothers suffered emotional troubles during the pregnancy, as a result of the pregnancy, and passed them on to the child. The child takes not only the mother's physical blood but also the powers of her nefesh in those moments. In truth it begins even earlier, from the moment husband and wife are together: from their thoughts at the moment the child begins to be formed, the child's nefesh already begins to

take shape accordingly. All the more so once he comes out into the world, he begins absorbing the impressions of the world.

So Saba went and opened his Talmud Torah, and he spared no toil and effort to find teachers and melamdim who would educate the children in pure kedushah from age two, when they begin learning Torah; all the Talmud Torahs began at two in those days. This influence lasts for generations, Rabbosai. With the girls it is the same: it lasts for generations.

Saba knew all of this, and so he made sure that the small children in the gan were looked after properly. People thought: "In the gan there will be boys and girls together. What harm is there? It is only a gan, it is only first grade. What could come of it?" Rabbosai, it is not first grade and it is not a gan. It is the foundation on which a person's whole life is built afterward. Even if he later learns Torah and becomes a yerei Shamayim, down at the root he will have the hirhurim, and he will have a hard war to drive them out.

The nefesh is sensitive, far more than we think. We do not understand what the nefesh really takes in. You look at a person, and your nefesh has already taken in how many buttons were on his shirt while you spoke with him. You will say: "Buttons? I spoke with the man. I never noticed whether he had buttons at all, or how many." Hypnotize him and ask him, and he will tell you exactly how many buttons there were. The nefesh took it in. That it did not pass it up to the mind just then means nothing. It took it in, and it is inside. One day, in some situation or other, that picture will come out.

How careful we must be with the neshamos of children and with their chinuch from the age of zero! More than that: from the pregnancy. When the malach came to the mother of Shimshon, he warned her that already during the pregnancy she must not eat things that are not good, so that Shimshon would come out Shimshon.

The Gemara tells of two women who were expecting and who, on Yom Kippur, smelled the aroma of a cooked dish, and their hearts were drawn to eat. One held back and took hold of herself, and from her came Rabbi Yochanan. To the other the rabbanim said: "You are going to faint. Eat." The poor woman ate a little food on Yom Kippur while she was expecting, and it affected her son so much that he became one of the resha'im who oppress the poor, a hoarder of produce. In years when food was scarce he would go and buy up all the produce, so that the poor would have nothing left to buy, and then he would sell it to them at a high price. He was a bad man.

It all began with food, and not even food that was not kosher. It was only that she ate on Yom Kippur. As far as the issur goes, eating on Yom Kippur is kares, and eating meat that is not kosher is not kares, except for cheilev. But as far as the

tumah that enters the person, eating non-kosher food is worse than eating on Yom Kippur, because it is food that makes the nefesh tamei, rachmana litzlan.

What a woman eats while she is expecting affects the child, because he eats it too. He receives it from her blood. Whatever she eats and whatever she feels affects him. Many people are born unwell in the mind because during the pregnancy their mother suffered from emotional troubles brought on by the pregnancy, and she passed it on to the child. The child takes from his mother not only her physical blood but also the strength of her nefesh in those moments. In truth, it begins even earlier, from the moment husband and wife are together. From their thoughts at the moment the child begins to form, the nefesh of that child is already being shaped. All the more so once he has come out into the world: he begins to take in the impressions of the world around him.

So Saba went and opened talmudei Torah. He spared no toil and no effort to find teachers and melamdim who would raise the children in purity from the age of two, when they began to learn Torah. In those days all the talmudei Torah began at the age of two. That influence lasts for generations, rabbosai. The same is true of the girls: it lasts for generations.

THE MERCEDES AND THE SUSITA

Talk Twelve · 1:51:30

Here I will tell you an incident I have refrained from telling until today.

You see people and you think they are people. Chazal said that reshaim in their lifetime are called dead. What does it mean, that reshaim in their lifetime are called dead? They are alive; they walk around. Let me explain.

Take a man who bought a car. What is the expensive car on the market today? I don't know; I don't understand cars. When I see a car I can't tell an arod from a chamor. These things are not my field. Let's say the good car is a Mercedes; in my day it was either a Cadillac or a Mercedes. And in my day the simplest car was the Subaru, or rather the Susita.[131] I don't know what there is today, or whether there is still a Susita; I haven't heard that name in a long time. Let's say, then, that the gap between a Volvo, a Mercedes or a Cadillac and a Susita is enormous. It shows in the power, in the speed, and so on. You understand these things better than I do.

Now imagine a man who had a Mercedes, and for some reason part of the engine broke. A spare part for a Mercedes is expensive. So what did he do? He took

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[131] The Susita was a small, inexpensive car made in Haifa from the late 1950s, with a body of fiberglass. The Carmel was another model from the same factory.

apart a Subaru or a Susita, one of the simpler cars, fitted that part into his engine, and the car runs. Now what is he driving, a Mercedes or a Susita? He is driving a Mercedes; let's say ninety-five percent Mercedes. Then another part broke, and again he put in a part from a Susita, and he keeps driving. Every time a part broke, he decided, "Instead of going to buy a Mercedes part every time, which costs a fortune, I'll put in a Susita part that costs pennies." Each time he replaced a part, and another, and another, until in the end he had a Susita engine: a Mercedes body with a Susita engine.

You tell me: what is this car called, a Susita or a Mercedes? Whoever looks at the body says, "Look what a Mercedes he has! How beautiful!" But whoever really knows, the mechanic, will tell you that he is driving a Susita. He cannot go past sixty or seventy kilometers an hour; if he goes a little faster, the whole engine will fall apart. It doesn't have the performance. It is only a body. There is no Mercedes inside.

So it is with us. The Jewish neshamah, a chelek Eloka mima'al, is found inside a human body. The goyim also have a body just like ours, but the neshamah there is different; it is another kind. I have told you that in the time of Adam HaRishon, when he ate from the Eitz HaDaas, the nefashos of animals became mixed in. In every person there is also an animal part, on which the nefesh of the man is built. There the animal nefashos grew stronger, and there are some who are like people, who think and eat and everything, but the force that drives all of it need not be human; it can be an animal.

And when a person sins, part of the holy neshamah departs, and a neshamah of tumah, of the sitra achra, comes in its place, and these are called death. With every aveirah he commits, some sparks of kedushah depart and some sparks of the kelipah come in their place. They steal the kedushah and enter in its place. Little by little, as a person sins and sins and sins, it can be that his whole neshamah has become a neshamah of the kelipah. He goes about in the garb of a Jew, with a bris milah and everything; the body is a Mercedes, but the engine is a Carmel Susita. It's over. All his thinking and all his behavior are crushing tumah. He cannot understand kedushah, because all of it has been ruined; his neshamah has been completely exchanged. Every person has his neshamah exchanged by some percentage, and by that percentage he is called dead, because parts of death, of the kelipah, have come inside him.

When I was in France... I try, baruch Hashem, to guard my eyes. I teach people to guard their eyes, and one must practice what he preaches, so I try very hard.

You must know that when a person dies and goes up above, his brain has millions of cells, and there is a device there that reads those cells. It is a camera: all those pictures come out and are shown to the man, every picture he saw, and he

gives a din v'cheshbon on each and every picture, on every second of what he saw in his life. Nothing is erased. A nefesh is a nefesh, and its cleansing must reach every fiber of which it is made, to the very last detail.

Now, what is a man to do if he saw the image of a woman, even without intending to, and it stayed in his mind? A person can close his eyes right now and think for one moment of a picture he saw eighty years ago, and he will see it. It will be drawn up out of the film inside the camera to the mind above, and he will see it. I can bring up things in my mind right now that I saw at the age of two. As I am speaking to you, I remember the Englishman who put us out of the house for a curfew when I was two years old, me and my grandmother. I remember it now. Perhaps not his face exactly, but I remember his tall stature and his red beret; they called them kalaniyos (anemones, the name given to the British paratroopers for their red berets). In a moment I bring up the memory, and anyone can bring up his memory and see. So what will be when an unwanted picture remains? For that one needs shemiras einayim. The eyes are everything. Everything begins and ends with the eyes.

One day I was riding the Métro in France. Under the ground there are passageways for going from one Métro line to another, and thousands walk along them in both directions, one stream facing the other. This time I was not changing lines; I wanted to leave the Métro and go up to the street. It was exactly the station opposite the Rue de Rivoli, where one comes up to the old Jewish quarter, at Rue Pavée. As I came out of the train and walked toward the exit, I suddenly saw a goyah in front of me, and her image registered clearly.

I stopped and said, "Ribbono shel Olam, the image of a goyah is going to stay in my mind? Bar minan! How can such a thing be?"

What did I do? I took my hand and circled it over my head, and I imagined the white ball. I have spoken about this white ball many times in several of my shiurim, especially those on Judaism and mysticism and others. I have told you that with this white ball one can even find a parking space; people tell me it is tested and proven, and it works. I took hold of the white ball like this and held it in my hand. I imagined that I had the ball in my hand and that I was painting it black. I stood facing her and threw it at her, the black ball, boom!

I looked at her again, and what did I see? A dog. And what a dog: charging forward. Her legs were the dog's front legs, the lower part of her body was the dog's mouth, her body was the dog's body, her arms were the dog's hind legs, and her hair was the dog's tail. At that moment her image was wiped from my mind. I do not remember what she looked like. I remember the image of the dog; I can picture it now, in the very place where I saw it. I understood that by doing this I had seen her nefesh. You saw the body of a woman; I no longer remember anything of what

she looked like outwardly. But in the moment I took her in and saw her, I wanted to erase it, I did this, and the erasing worked in my mind. I saw her nefesh.

Then I understood the words of Chazal, who said that whoever lies with a goyah is bound to her like a dog. Our Rabbis say that he is like a dog, and the Arizal says that he will come back in the gilgul of a dog. Why a dog? I had not understood. At that moment the words of Chazal and of the Arizal became clear to me in a different way. From Kabbalah I knew that the dog is the secret of the kelipah stealing from the kedushah, what is called mayin nukvin (a Kabbalistic term), and the number fifty-two. That I knew. But suddenly I saw the image in front of me, and I understood. People walk about in a body, smiling, but you do not know what nefesh is driving them inside: is that engine a Subaru, or a Mercedes, or a Cadillac, or what? Today maybe it's one of those electric cars; who knows.

This is something that happened to me. To tell the truth, until today I hesitated whether to tell it. I hesitated and hesitated, and in the end I decided that the benefit of Jews being awakened by it is greater than the reasons I had for not telling it.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Eliyahu HaNavi

WHO IS ELIYAHU HANAVI

Talk Fifteen · 14:00

Now I want to tell you a story of the holy Sandler and Eliyahu HaNavi. But first I have to explain who Eliyahu HaNavi is.

There are two Eliyahu HaNavi. Two? Yes. True, Eliyahu HaNavi is only one. Let me explain.

Nadav and Avihu were very great neshamos, greater than Moshe and Aharon. As Moshe told Aharon on the pasuk "Bikrovai akadesh," Hashem had said, "I thought it would be through me or through you; now it is clear that they are greater than me and you." This was when the two of them died at the chanukas haMishkan. The neshamos of Nadav and Avihu had in them the part of Adam HaRishon that he had before the cheit: the Yechidah. Whoever has that part never dies, and Nadav and Avihu had it. The moment they offered ketores they had not been commanded to bring, this neshamah departed from them, and that is why they died. But to be men of such a level of neshamah is something.

After they died, the part of Adam HaRishon that had been in them, together with parts of their own neshamos joined to it, remained waiting in the air for a fitting person to come and receive them.

When Pinchas was zealous for Hashem and went to kill Zimri ben Salu together with Kozbi bas Tzur, at the moment he went with the spear in his hand, his neshamah left him from fear. Clinical death, as it is called. It does not need doctors' certificates to be clinical death. It lasted a few minutes, or a few seconds. At once his neshamah returned to him, but this time joined with the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu.

For the neshamah of Pinchas to be joined to the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu, a new neshamah had to come as well. The neshamah of Pinchas had already been in use in him until that moment, and the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu had

already been in use in Nadav and Avihu. Now they were all being joined together, with the part of Adam HaRishon that had been on them, the part that whoever has it does not die. But a new neshamah was needed to join them all. Neshamos that come in a gilgul can never come without a new neshamah. Every one of us who is a gilgul also has a new nefesh of his own, which joins all the gilgulim to this body. A person cannot come only as a gilgul without a new part of his own; it is impossible.

So now Pinchas received a new neshamah, which is called Eliyahu HaTishbi, and Pinchas lived together with them as a malach. Once he had the part of Adam HaRishon that is called Zihara Ila'ah (Aramaic, "the supernal radiance"), he was no longer an ordinary person; he was also in the category of a malach. That is why, when Rachav hid the meraglim, she did not need to hide Pinchas at all, only Kalev. The pasuk says *vatitzpeno*, "and she hid him." Why? Pinchas could not be seen! He was in the category of a malach. He could reach a state in which they would not see him, and he would vanish from their eyes. Pinchas went about with these levels, and that is why the pasuk calls him a malach: "Vaya'al malach Hashem" (and the malach of Hashem went up), which is written in Navi, means Pinchas.

After the passing of all the zekeinim and of Elazar HaKohen, Pinchas was the greatest man there was. He filled, as it were, the place of Moshe and Yehoshua, until he taught Eli. Then Eli took his place, and Pinchas passed away.

How did he pass away, if he had such a great neshamah? When Yiftach vowed that whatever came out of the door of his house he would offer up as an olah to Hashem, his daughter came out. A daughter cannot be offered; that was never the meaning of his vow. But he needed hataras nedarim, and for such a thing only the gadol hador could do it, and that was Pinchas. Yiftach, in his stinking arrogance, said, "What? I am the leader, the nasi of all the Jews, and I should go to him? Let him come to me!" And Pinchas said, "Whoever wants hatarah, let him come to me!" Pinchas did not go to him, and Yiftach in his pride did not go to Pinchas either. And so the daughter went about in the mountains until she died there alone, from hunger and the like.

That stain stood against Pinchas, and he lost those neshamos: Eliyahu HaTishbi, Nadav and Avihu, and the Zihara Ila'ah, the part of Adam HaRishon that he had. Once more they waited for another person to receive them all. That is why Divrei HaYamim says of Pinchas, "לפנים ה' עמו" (in former times Hashem was with him). Why "in former times"? Because by the time Divrei HaYamim mentions him, he had already lost these powers.

Rabbosai, how much mussar there is in this! A person can reach such levels and lose everything in a single minute. Chas veshalom, we cannot say of Pinchas that it was a matter of kavod. It was a matter of his reasoning: he thought it was not kavod haTorah for him to go. That is why he said, "Whoever wants the Rav, let him come

to him." Not "Look at me, I am the chief rabbi, come to me," but he thought it was not kavod haTorah for him to go to a man like Yiftach, who was an am ha'aretz; Yiftach should come to him. He did not take into account that if he did not go, that fool in his pride would bring about the death of his daughter, as indeed happened. That consideration he did not weigh, and when it happened, he lost everything. How much careful judgment a person must have, even a man so great, the first in the world. What mussar this is.

Pinchas is buried in Awarta.[132] The kevarim of Elazar and Isamar are there, and higher up is the kever of the seventy zekeinim, all the seventy zekeinim who went up with Moshe to Har Sinai, and Pinchas is buried there too. There is a cave, with a small opening through which you bow down into the cave toward the kevarim. We used to go there and daven with a minyan forty years ago, when there was no fear of intifada and things like that.[133] Today it is forbidden to go to these places; whoever goes puts his life in danger. But then you could go freely, and baruch Hashem we had the zechus to daven at the kever of Pinchas too.

Pinchas is Eliyahu. This does not mean that Eliyahu HaNavi is Pinchas himself; he is his gilgul, as I will explain. In the days of Dovid HaMelech and a little after, in the days of Achiyah HaShiloni, such a neshamah was born anew with all its parts, and the part of Eliyahu HaTishbi received with it another new neshamah. This is the second Eliyahu HaTishbi, because a new neshamah was needed to come with all the parts. So Eliyahu was born from Shevet Gad. He received semichah from Achiyah HaShiloni, and he will be somech Moshiach. He is Eliyahu HaNavi who will come and turn back the hearts of the fathers to the sons. He is the Eliyahu of Tanach, with all the wondrous deeds he did there, until he went up to Shamayim.

When that Eliyahu went up in the storm to Shamayim, all the parts went up: the Zihara Ila'ah of Adam HaRishon, Nadav and Avihu, and the first Eliyahu HaTishbi who had joined them to Pinchas. They remained above and never again came down to this world. But the second Eliyahu HaTishbi did come down again in a gilgul. The part that had come from Shevet Gad was born by itself in a man of Shevet Binyamin, of the descendants of Rachel, also called Eliyahu. That man later passed away, and his neshamah went back and joined with them. It goes up and comes down, and it is joined to them, so that he is really they and they are really he.

The great neshamah that went up is very spiritual, and it can no longer come down to this world. For Eliyahu to be able to come to this physical world, to come

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[132] An Arab village near Shechem, in the Shomron.

[133] The intifada was the uprising of the Arabs against Israel that began in 5748 (1987), and then broke out again in 5761 (2000).

and divide himself and do what he wishes, he had to go through this whole process: the second Eliyahu HaTishbi, who had been in Gad, had to come into the neshamah of a man from Binyamin. A neshamah from on high cannot come down in such a way. But since this neshamah has already been in a man who passed away, it comes down to this world like any neshamah that comes to the world.

So this Eliyahu HaNavi is not a gilgul that came back to live again. He is part of a neshamah that never died, a part still joined to the second Eliyahu, to Nadav and Avihu, and to the Zihara Ila'ah, and so he cannot die. But he comes down to the world each time. This is Eliyahu HaNavi of whom it is written that he comes down and appears, and everything we know about Eliyahu HaNavi. He is joined to the upper parts, but the part that goes about down here in the world is this one.

That is why we can say there are two Eliyahu HaNavi: one above, from Shevet Gad, and one down here below, from Shevet Binyamin. In truth both are one neshamah, joined above to the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu and to the Zihara Ila'ah, which is the Yechidah of Adam HaRishon. They are all joined together.

Six Hundred Thousand Sparks

Talk Fifteen · 26:00

The neshamah of a person can divide into as many as six hundred thousand points. It is like a big drop of kaspis (quicksilver, the liquid metal). If I take a big drop of quicksilver and throw it on the floor, it breaks into thousands of droplets, every one of them round, exactly like the big drop. The only difference is in the size, not in the shape. The neshamah is the same. It can divide into as many as six hundred thousand parts, and every one of them has the same image, the same form, the same thinking, the same speech and the same knowledge. But when it comes to bringing knowledge to others, each part can bring it only from its own part, and its knowledge is limited. For the knowledge to be complete, all of them have to join again into one big drop.

So when Eliyahu HaNavi came to the Chachmei Yisrael and spoke with them, he did not pasken halachos for them. He could give shiurim of derashos: there is *Tanna Devei Eliyahu*, Rabbah and Zuta, which the Gemara in Kesubos tells us was Torah he taught Rav Anan. He could appear in batei midrash and speak with the tzaddikim, but pasken halachah for them? That he did not do. He did not even tell them the Torah he had learned in his own time, how he paskened when he was alive and paskened halachos as a dayan, as one who had semichah. He could not, because whatever of Eliyahu HaNavi came to them was one spark.

A person can divide his sparks into six hundred thousand places at one and the same time, and each one knows of the others and recognizes them; there is a bond between them. But at that moment each is looking at the special point marked out for it. That is why Eliyahu HaNavi can be at every bris, even if there are hundreds of thousands of brissim in the same minute. There will never be six hundred thousand brissim in the same minute anywhere in the world; there never were and never will be. But if such a thing could happen, he could divide himself into as many as six hundred thousand and be at every bris at the same time, because each time it is one point. Even so, it is a great zechus to see the face of Eliyahu, even in a dream; even one such point is enough.

WHEN ELIYAHU COMES

Talk Fifteen · 29:00

When Eliyahu HaNavi comes, and with Hashem's help we hope it will be in the coming days already, to announce Moshiach, he will come clothed in all the parts. They will all join together with the upper Eliyahu, joined with the first Eliyahu HaTishbi. Since he will be joined with everything, he will be able to pasken. He will come as a posek, and he will give semichah to the Chachmei Yisrael of our day.

Baruch Hashem, there are talmidei chachamim in Yisrael, tzaddikim and yirei Shamayim, who have no connection of any kind with the Erev Rav. There are such yirei Shamayim, kedoshei elyon, baruch Hashem; lo almon Yisrael. Only they do not put themselves forward. Eliyahu will take seventy men from among them and first give them semichah, a semichah handed down man from man back to Moshe Rabbeinu, so that they will be a Beis Din of semuchim. Then they will give semichah to Moshiach too, to be a posek.

Moshiach has to be a talmid chacham who knows the halachos, all of them. At that moment he will also receive the spirit of counsel and might, and then he will already have a neshamah with all the knowledge inside it. But he needs semichah. Eliyahu HaNavi and the Beis Din of seventy, who will be the Sanhedrin Gedolah, will give him semichah to be Moshiach. Without the semichah of the Beis Din HaGadol, the Sanhedrin Gedolah, saying that Moshiach is Moshiach, he will not be called Moshiach.

And of course it is impossible to give semichah to a person who has passed away. So all those dreams and fantasies people have about certain people being Moshiach cannot be. True, the Gemara says that if Moshiach is from among the dead, it is so-and-so. But this does not mean that a dead man will rise. It means that he will come back in a gilgul in order to be Moshiach. It is possible that people in

our day who are gedolei olam are the gilgul of someone who was fit to be Moshiach, and now he will come and be Moshiach again. But clearly this has nothing to do with the dreams and fantasies of those people who call themselves chassidim, as it were, of whom I do not even know if they have Olam Haba, because they uproot the mitzvah of sukkah, sleeping in the sukkah, as I said, rachmana litzlan. And some of them also do away with seudah shelishis. Woe to them on the day of judgment.

Eliyahu in the Homes of the Tzaddikim

Talk Fifteen · 32:00

I know that Eliyahu HaNavi was in and out of the homes of Rav Yosef Waltuch, Rav Meir Abuchatzeira and many others I knew. They would meet him and talk with him. Many times they did not talk with him but saw him, felt his presence. There was a bond between them. That Eliyahu HaNavi came in and out of the homes of gedolei Yisrael we know, and to this day there are those whose homes he comes in and out of, and he speaks with them. He is not keeping a taanis dibbur; they sit with him.

Eliyahu HaNavi came to the Ben Ish Chai every Motza'ei Shabbos to sit with him and learn for one hour. Were there no brissim in the world at that hour? There were brissim in the world. It was night in Baghdad, but it was not yet night in Yerushalayim, nor in America. There were brissim! It made no difference. Eliyahu can sit and learn two or three hours with a person, while at that very hour his other parts go to brissim. He was together with Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (the Rav of the Eidah HaChareidis in Yerushalayim), and Eliyahu sat and learned with him two or three hours a day. Were there no brissim at that time? There were. One has nothing to do with the other.

Eliyahu always has the same image and the same form. Of course, each time he disguises himself in other clothing. Sometimes he goes about dressed as an Arab, sometimes in other clothes; each time he wears another kind of clothing, so that he will not be recognized. He can also not be seen at all. But generally, when he comes to brissim, he can be seen; a good spiritual eye can see him. So, so that you will not know who it is, he disguises himself.

All the stories of Eliyahu HaNavi, the chassid who had no food or livelihood whom Eliyahu told to sell him, and who then built the building, and all the stories of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi who went with Eliyahu HaNavi: they are all true. Each is one of the six hundred thousand parts in the neshamah of Eliyahu, and each one, as I said, is a whole world, only in miniature.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

This World and the Next



THE TRANSIT STATION

Talk Twenty-One · 23:30

When the Tanna said, "עשה תורתך קבע ומלאכתך עראי," he wanted us to understand one thing: this whole world is arai. It is a transit station. As Moshe Rabbeinu says in Tehillim:

ימי שנותינו בהם שבעים שנה ואם בגבורת שמונים שנה

That is all. Even one who lives to ninety, or a hundred, or two hundred, is included in those eighty years. A person can live to a hundred and something, even to two hundred. In our days people generally do not reach even that; if only they reached a hundred! A hundred and twenty, a hundred and thirty: only a few reach it. In any case, even a man who lived a thousand years would feel it was ten minutes, and he would not want to die. He feels yesterday as yesterday, and twenty or fifty years ago as if it were yesterday too. Life is so short. Our days are like a passing shadow, the shadow of a bird flying through the air: it was there, and it is gone. So every person sees his own life. Yesterday we were still running in the streets playing marbles, and today we are raising grandchildren. That is how it is.

We are here only arai, and a person must know it. In a transit station no one pampers himself with a bedroom or with fine food. He eats whatever sandwich comes along, and he sleeps even on his suitcase in the terminal, on the floor or on a bench, until the plane is ready to take off. This is how our fathers and our rabbanim looked at life in this world: as a transit station where everything is temporary, and one does not invest much in something temporary. Only a fool spends all his money in the transit station, so that when he reaches the real destination he has nothing left. He has spent it all. What have you done?

I once gave a mashal for this. Two Israelis were told that they had been chosen as outstanding workers. For their prize, the factory gave them a plane ticket to

America and a hotel room there, the hotel and the most basic meals at the factory's expense. Anything else they wanted they would do on their own, at their own expense. They had one month in America, as was due to outstanding workers.

One of them knew French well; he had been born to French-speaking parents. Neither of them knew a single word of English. The one who knew French did not care at all, not about English and not about anything else. "We'll get there and we'll manage. It'll be fine."

The second was more serious. He decided, "I have to go to America for a month. I have to know what goes on there. What language do they speak there? English. I have to know it. Am I going to walk around like a mute for a whole month? I need to be able to speak." He bought a phrasebook, Hebrew-English, and began to learn "yes" and "no," and slowly more words, putting them together and getting used to the language. He had a month to prepare and get used to it.

In the evening his friend came and said, "Come, let's go out for a walk."

"Are you crazy? We're going to America. We have to prepare."

"Prepare for what? We'll get there and we'll manage. What do you think, we're new at this? We're babies? We'll manage."

"No, sir. I have to prepare. I don't go out walking in the evenings anymore. I sit with the phrasebook. I have to learn the language."

When he had learned some of the language, he also needed to know what is done there. He found out that shekels do not go there; over there shekels are worth as much as shkarim. Whoever wants something buys it with dollars. No dollars, no anything. Go to a grocer there and say, "Take Israeli money and give me something to eat," and he will throw you down the steps. "I have to get used to that too," he said. So he began to save money, and suddenly became a miser. He had been used to spending, and now he took his money and changed it into dollars. He worked hard to earn a hundred shekels, and when he looked at what was in his hand, it was only twenty or thirty dollars. He put it aside. Why? "I'm going there, and I have to prepare for there. Here I'll tighten my belt for now. I must prepare for there."

He also learned that it would be the middle of winter there, with snow and freezing cold, so he had to stock up on clothing. Baruch Hashem he had clothes, but he had to get ready, and he did. He went to the American consulate and asked for tourist guides. He received pages showing him where everything was: this place and that place, which places were beautiful to visit, this museum and that museum, what each place costs, and a map of how to get to each one. He began to read and to understand.

They set out together. When they came to the airport in Israel, the one who had prepared arrived with two huge suitcases, full of winter clothes, wool clothes, coats, boots and everything else.

The other said to him, "Listen, we're in Tel Aviv. There's beautiful sun in Tel Aviv. What are you taking all this for?"

"You're in the sun now. In twelve hours, in twenty hours, you'll land in America, and there it's snowing."

"Aha, I have money. Tomorrow I'll buy a coat there, and that's that. What do I need to drag things for and tire myself out? Are you crazy?"

He came with one small suitcase, a little bag in his hand. "I'm happy. I don't have to drag anything and wear myself out carrying it on my back. Am I crazy? We'll manage, we'll manage." The other dragged two heavy cases in his suitcases and loaded them onto the plane.

Today there are direct flights to America, but when I was young there was no such thing; no one had thought of it yet. Every flight had to stop in Europe before going on to America, and usually the stop was in Paris. We would come down in Paris and wait two or three hours while they prepared the plane and refueled it to reach America.

These two also came to the stopover, the transit station, in Paris. The steward told them, "You can go off now for three hours. In three hours we fly again. There is a big terminal here, a big passenger hall. Walk around, look around, do what you like, and come back in three hours."

They both went out. The one who knew the language felt at home. He was delighted. He asked questions and talked with this one and that one, with the sellers, with the buyers, even with the cleaners. He knew the language, he talked, and he was happy, and he looked at the other one like a batlan. The other did not know a word. He sat there for three hours like a mute, with nothing he could say. In the meantime he needed something to drink and wanted to buy something, but he did not know how to buy. With great effort, the poor batlan pointed with his finger to show that he wanted a bottle, but then he had to pay, and he had no French money. So all he could do was point until they showed him where there was water. Water costs nothing; there are faucets everywhere. They showed him, and he drank only water. The other walked around delighted, talking, asking, taking an interest in everything, comfortable and feeling fine. The one who had prepared felt like a mute, and it was not very pleasant for him. That went on for three hours.

The three hours passed. They both got back on the plane and landed in America. They stepped off, and what a cold met them! The one who had prepared opened his suitcase on the spot, took out a good wool coat and two sweaters, and put them on. Baruch Hashem, he was warm, and he could walk and get around. The other had come in a thin suit, and as he walked he froze. He wanted to buy a coat, but he had no money for it, only shekels.

They were both taken from the plane to the hotel at the company's expense, and both arrived. Now the second one wanted to go out of the hotel. Was he to sit there all week, all month, like in a prison? He wanted to go out, and he was cold. He took his Israeli money and went to a shop to buy a coat, and they threw him out. Who would take that? What would he pay with that? "Get out!" He was left shaking all over with cold.

The one who had prepared took his dollars, took a taxi, went wherever he needed and enjoyed every place. He had the language. He was no great expert in it, but he could talk, get answers, buy things, go to all the museums and enjoy them. Everything was wonderful for him.

For the other it was the opposite. He walked in the street and could not even ask anyone where there was a restroom. He did not know how. He was cold, and he got a stomachache. He could not hold himself back, and he found himself in the street, bar minan, soiled and smelling. He could not get back to the hotel by taxi. He could not speak to a driver, and he had no money to pay one; nobody there would take his Israeli money, or even look at it. And he could not walk far. So he had to stay close to the hotel, and even then he ran back there quickly and sat there smelling. He had brought no clothes to change into, so he had to wash his clothes himself. What torment it was for him, sitting in the hotel restroom washing his own clothes! And after all that they were not as they had been before; the smell and the stains stayed, and he went around in disgrace. He spent one month there in a terrible, dreadful Gehinnom.

After the month they both came home, and people asked them, "How was it?"

One said, "What a time it was! I'm already planning the next trip. How good it was for me there! I went everywhere, I toured and saw things and enjoyed it. A whole new world!"

The other said, "Don't ask. What a Gehinnom it was there, what a disgusting place! I couldn't manage. I was cold, I had no clothes. What could I do? Wherever I went I couldn't do anything. I only walked on foot and couldn't see a single place. Most of the time I sat in the hotel like a dog, waiting for them to bring me the minimal food. I couldn't even buy myself one more piece of cake. What suffering I had! What a disgusting place!"

They were both right. One had prepared his Gan Eden from here, from Israel. While he was still in Israel he knew.

So it is with a person who comes into this world, the transit station, and does not want to know the Torah. He feels fine here. He buys with his money, he goes out, he works, he enjoys himself. He does not think, "In a few more years I will leave this world, this transit station, and come Above. What is there Above? What

is waiting for me there?" That does not interest him. "אכול ושתה כי מחר נמות": that is what interests him right now.

But it is not so! One day, soon, you will reach your final destination. What will you do there? And there it will not be only for a month, after which you can come back. There it is forever, le'olam. You arrive there: what are you bringing with you? Do you know the language there? What is the language there? The language of Torah, the language of maasim tovim. That is what you go with. " והלך לפניך צדקך כבוד ה' יאספך," says the pasuk. Prepare for it; get it ready!

"No! Right now I need to enjoy myself here. Leave me alone. When I get there I'll manage; I'll manage Above."

He comes Above, feeling that he is all set, and the malachei chabalah come to him: "Sir, you have built yourself a Gehinnom. You did ugly deeds. You transgressed the laws of the Torah. Come now and pay for it. You did no maasim tovim. You have nothing to live on Above, nothing to receive Above. What will you receive Above, and on what account? Did you send ahead the currency that is used here? Did you prepare? Did you get ready?"

The opposite is a person who knows that there is a future, that there is an Olam Haba, and so he prepares. He asks, "What currency is used Above? Torah and maasim tovim." He begins to learn Torah and to pack his bags for over there. When such a person arrives there and finds himself in Olam Haba, he smiles. Of him it is said, "ותשחק ליום אחרון."

All the gedolim I knew drilled this into their own heads and into the heads of their talmidim: we are in a transit station. We will pass through it and come to a place that is all good, but we must prepare for that place in order to enjoy the good. The good is there. Whether we will be able to receive it depends on us: on our deeds and on our preparation.

Is the Boy's Account True?

Talk Seventeen · 1:17:00

Someone in the audience asked me about everything the boy Natan had told: was it true, or was it, as some rabbanim claim, an invention?

I have already said once that I have no doubt it is true. Now I will reveal a little more. Even if it were true, if I had been asked I would normally have kept from answering at all. What do I have to do with such matters? But I understood that Shamayim wants me to answer and reveal the truth: that it is not only true, it is the absolute truth. It is so, as I said, that there are things the boy did not state precisely, because of his own limited understanding of them. But I have no doubt whatsoever

that this boy saw these things himself and did not receive them from anyone. I also know them in a way I do not wish to make known, how I know that it is so. But it is so.

It is also clear by simple logic. The boy is no great genius, and there is no boy genius who could absorb and hold so much information and knowledge through preparation, on so many different subjects, without getting confused. Nor is there any genius of a man who could teach him all these things, even if he drilled him for an entire month. Besides, as I said, the boy did not reveal even ten percent of what he saw. These things cannot be told in two hours or in fifteen hours; he saw much more. In another transcript, afterward, he also told of the noise of Gehinnom and such things, and he told further things, and everything he says fits together. No one could have guided him and prepared him on Moshiach, and on techiyas hameisim, and on Gehinnom, with all its names, its levels and its form, together with knowledge of future events written in the Kesuvim. It is simply impossible. The knowledge this boy shows did not come through learning, nor through hearing, nor even as if someone had inserted a SIM card into his brain. These things come from seeing and observing while staying in that place, and from seeing things that are about to happen.

That he is mistaken on a few points, there is no doubt. I would not even call it a mistake; he is confused on a few points, as I said. But the substance of what he received is true, and it is a message from Shamayim to Klal Yisrael. This boy opened a way for Klal Yisrael to be awakened to teshuvah, which many others have not done.

I do not know why others try to oppose these things. What do they think, that they gain something by it? That they are standing for some principle? On what basis do they deny it? On the basis of body language? I see how he spoke! The boy sat there; did he suddenly become a stand-up performer? This is someone who does not know how to speak before an audience, a boy who comes from a world far away. Suddenly he is speaking, turning his head to the sides, talking to people without getting confused, and not looking every moment into the eyes of someone feeding him the words, as they claim. You can see when he looks and when he does not. He gave over the matters with great clarity even when he turned his head to the sides. This is not a person used to standing before an audience.

A few hours ago I took his details, his name, his mother's name and his date of birth, in order to know who he is. Why did this thing come into the world through him? There is no doubt that he is a shaliach from Shamayim, that he carried a special message to give over to Klal Yisrael. I want to know who he is, what he is, and why this message passed through him. I do not know yet. I am looking into it now, in ways that are mine alone.

I am not imagining things. Everything I told about the nesher, too, is the absolute truth. There are hundreds and even thousands of people in the world who were present when the man went up with the nesher and told what he told. By the way, I am not the only one who went up on the nesher. There was another before me who did it in front of an enormous crowd: Refaeli, the butcher from Machaneh Yehuda (the great market of Yerushalayim). He did it before many people and brought people back in teshuvah without end. These things are well known. The trouble is that a person who does not know something thinks that whatever he does not know must be imagination. These things are clear and known; they are not imagined.

I am not a man of imaginings. I have semichah from gedolei Yisrael, and titles of Rav from gedolei Yisrael of the previous generation, not one and not two. I have sat for years with the public, and I know the right order of every word I say. I have no fantasies. But the truth I do not hide, even when it seems far from the reality the other person lives in. These things are true. I see the boy, I watch him, and I know what it is to leave the body; I know what yetzias haneshamah is. I know it from close by, far closer than people think. I have also met people who left the body several times; I know such people. I know others who went through clinical death and saw things, without having any certificate or anything else to show for it.

Go prove to me that you were dead! When he comes before the Beis Din shel Maalah to be judged, they will tell him, "First bring a death certificate that you are dead, and then we will judge you." You will be surprised to hear it, but that too happened.

A Friend Who Left Before His Time

Talk Seventeen · 1:23:00

I have told this in one of my shiurim as well. I had a very good friend. I will not say a yedid nefesh, but a very close friend. We learned together and grew up near each other. I was born in the Beis Yisrael neighborhood of Yerushalayim (an old neighborhood near Meah Shearim), and he was born in the Bukharim neighborhood (built by Jews from Bukhara), near the Musayof shul. We met often as children, we learned together, and we went a long stretch of life together.

He married an American woman, moved to America, and lived in Flatbush (a Jewish neighborhood of Brooklyn) in New York. When I was in Flatbush I stayed with them for a long time, and they hosted me with real mesirus nefesh. They would ask me what to cook and what to prepare, so that, chas v'shalom, they would not cook food I did not like and end up eating while I did not. What mesirus

nefesh, what a good friendship there was between us then! Now he rests in Gan Eden.

This friend passed away somewhere between forty and fifty, close to fifty, of cardiac arrest. He went to sleep and did not get up. They brought him here and buried him on Har Hazeisim, beside his parents. A year or two later his wife remarried here in Yerushalayim; she passed away only last year. She married another man here in Yerushalayim, a yerei Shamayim. I know him, the second husband, and I have had occasion to speak with him several times.

Once, many years ago, I was in a certain difficulty and was looking for an answer to it. I needed an answer from Shamayim desperately. It was Erev Rosh Chodesh Kislev. What did I do? When you want to receive an answer from Shamayim, you have to know how to ask. I fasted on Erev Rosh Chodesh Kislev, and I asked one of those who had learned Torah from me, whom I had taught the sod of malkos, to give me malkos according to the kavanos of the Rashash (Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, the great mekubal of Yerushalayim). I received malkos with all the kavanos of the Rashash. Then, that night, Leil Rosh Chodesh, I waited to see whether Shamayim would give me an answer.

As soon as I fell asleep, I found myself in the Old City of Yerushalayim. I went into some place there, and I saw this friend who had passed away sitting there, neither sad nor happy, but serious, in the same short blue suit he used to wear. I turned to ask him something. We used to speak a little Yiddish together, so I said to him, "Reb Dovid, vos hert zich?" (How are you?)

He looked at me and said, "They sent me from Shamayim to tell you the answer to your question," and he gave me the answer: such and such.

He was not exactly sad, but he was not smiling either. Other niftarim I have seen were smiling and happy, as if they had come from some good place; he was rather indifferent. I asked him, "What is happening with you?"

He told me that his time to die had not come. But the time had come for his wife to marry her second husband.

It is stated explicitly in the Zohar, Parashas Vayeilech, that there is such a thing as one nefesh being pushed aside for another. If a man is married to a woman whose time has come to marry another husband, either they put it into his heart to divorce her, or they take him, so that he will not stand in the way. Look in the tefillos of the Chida, in all his tefillos, especially those said on Rosh Hashanah after Tashlich: he writes that we pray, "ואל תדיחנו מפני שום נברא שבעולם" (do not push us aside before any creature in the world). That is what it means. Look at the tefillah the Ben Ish Chai, Rav Yosef Chaim, established to be said in Chodesh Elul and Chodesh Nissan, after the korbanos of the Nesi'im. It speaks there of those neshamos that stand in the six hundred rows in Gan Eden and chirp like birds, and

of those who passed away before their time and were handed over to Dumah (the malach appointed over the dead). The source of all of it is in the Zohar, Parashas Vayeilech. There is such a thing, rachmana litzlan.

They had lived together beautifully. They never quarreled. I never saw a couple like that in my life. Apart from my grandfather and grandmother, I never saw a couple who never once raised a voice at each other. The honor she gave him was beyond belief. But her time had come to marry the second. These are the tikkunim of people who come into this world to fix their neshamos. They have to fix them here; nobody comes here to play. The time of the tikkun had come. Since he was still alive and her time had arrived, they pushed one nefesh aside for another, rachmana litzlan.

He told me that when he died of cardiac arrest, he immediately found himself wandering through the upper worlds, but not in any particular place. On his own he began roaming between the worlds, searching for the way to the Beis Din shel Maalah. No one called him, no one at all. He went on by himself, on and on, until he found the Beis Din shel Maalah and came before them. He said to them, "Rabbosai, I am here. Judge me."

They told him, in my language, "You have no death certificate." They did not put it that way; that is my way of saying it. What they told him was that his time had not come. He had left before his time, and in their eyes he was still alive. When his time to depart from the world came, they would call him. Until then he had no place, so he wandered.

But I had also seen his conduct abroad. He worked and earned a very good salary, and he gave maaser from it. Besides that, every morning he went around the shuls collecting coins for tzedakah. He held out his hand, in order to marry off orphan girls and poor girls, and with that money he did marry off orphans and poor girls. On Fridays, too, he would go to a number of stores and ask for money. He humiliated himself. He was a young man, and people would shout at him, "Go to work! What are you collecting money for?" He never reacted and never answered a word. He accepted the disgrace with dignity and went on collecting money to spend on the weddings of orphans and poor girls.

He told me that when he arrived above, because of this they gave him two hours every day to sit in the Yeshivah shel Maalah, until the time of his judgment comes. He said that he wanders now between the worlds and has no rest, but every day he has two hours in the Yeshivah shel Maalah. He sits there and delights in the ziv haShechinah, and that is his rest until his time comes.

There are such things.

The Time of the Final Birur

Talk Seventeen · 1:31:30

To return to the matter: the boy certainly went through what is called clinical death. What does clinical death mean? That his nefesh went out, as the pasuk says, "my soul went out when he spoke," and he saw what he saw. In a quarter of an hour he saw all these things, and then he came back here.

The difference between a dream and this is that a dream is one sixtieth. A person who sleeps is only one sixtieth of death. Here it is not one sixtieth; it is something like fifty out of a hundred. Clinical death is also not a full hundred percent; if it were death at a hundred percent, he could not have come back to his body. The whole system of the body is still working. But any departure stronger than sleep is already a kind of disconnection. Being there, the boy spoke of things that no one could have taught him. These things are true, and it is an important message.

We are also seeing it now with our own eyes. Since the date the boy named, Erev Rosh Hashanah, when the Russian ships came and crossed the Dardanelles and the Bosporus (the straits through Turkey that lead from the Black Sea toward the Mediterranean), we have seen great changes take place in the Middle East. We see all the words of the navi before our eyes. We see how these fight those, and those fight these, as our Rabbosai said would happen before Gog uMagog. For now they are all gathering here, supposedly to fight one another, but in the end all the gun barrels will be turned toward our tiny little land, all of them. Then there will be a time of tumult here, about which our Rabbosai said, "Let him come, but may I not see him." Only one who is loyal to the Elokei Yisrael will be left. That will be the final birur, about which the pasuk says, "and I will refine them as silver is refined." The navi speaks there of three kinds of birur. I no longer remember the navi's exact wording, but he speaks of the third being refined in fire. That is this fire. With it HaKadosh Baruch Hu will refine the third, and this now is the third time.

Is there reason to be afraid? Certainly. Yaakov Avinu was afraid of Esav, even though he had received a berachah from HaKadosh Baruch Hu. He did not say, "Should I be afraid? I am already clean!" He was afraid: "Yaakov was very afraid, and he was distressed." That is this week's parashah. He had received a promise from HaKadosh Baruch Hu and still he was afraid. Why? Chazal said: perhaps sin would cause it.

Certainly a person must prepare himself for these days, do more teshuvah, and awaken himself more. The erev rav will go. Those who stubbornly refused to do teshuvah will go. Those who do teshuvah will all escape, but according to the greatness of their teshuvah, so will they escape. Even in escaping these things there are

levels. They will all come out, but some will come out at the cost of a tooth or an eye, some at the cost of one of the twenty-four limbs, and some whole in body.

This is a time to strengthen ourselves in the Borei Yisbarach, and to know that, as things stand, it is very close. We do not know when, but we are speaking of a very short time. It is done; we are already at the opening of the geulah, from which there is no turning back. About these times the pasuk says, "It is a time of trouble for Yaakov," but, b'ezras Hashem, "from it he will be saved."

May we all merit the true geulah speedily in our days. Amen.

A Bochur Paying for His Last Gilgul

Talk Twenty-One · 1:54:00

Last week a bochur came to me. He is a yerei Shamayim, though he was born into a family that is not. He came to the truth on his own. But he suffers terribly.

He cannot be among people; he cannot be among men. He has a strong inclination toward men, and it torments him. There was even a time when he stumbled in that grave aveirah. He came to me crying and crying out: "Save me! Help me! Why am I like this? I don't want to be like this. I want to be like everyone else."

I sat and looked into it, through the means I have of finding out why a person is the way he is. It became clear to me that in his last gilgul he had been this way because of his own desires. For the sake of his corrupt desires he had ruined several Jewish children. Now he has come into the world to repair it. He was born with the very desires he created for himself in his last gilgul. This is not a punishment he received for nothing. "A G-d of faithfulness, without wrong, righteous and upright is He." Nothing is done for nothing.

He is suffering a cruel suffering now, and he cries out to Hashem to save him from it. He cannot go into a beis knesses. He cannot, chas v'shalom, go to a mikveh, or even think of going there. He cannot be among people, among men; it drives him out of his mind. His desire overpowers his reason. He sits apart, holds himself back, weeps and cries out: "Ana Hashem, hoshi'ah na."

I told him that this is middah k'neged middah. Just as he made others suffer, just as he destroyed the lives of families and of small, innocent children in his last gilgul, now he must pay for all of it. He pays with cruel suffering while knowing the truth: that these things are grave, and that he, like every person, has to take himself in hand. He may not say, "I was born this way; this is my nature!" The Torah does not change from one person to another. It is very simple: he was born with this nature, which he made for himself in an earlier gilgul. However hard it is for him, this is his

tikkun: this cruel suffering, which he must withstand even if he has to climb the walls.

I said to him: "Do you think that a normal man, who needs a wife, has it easier than you? Think of one who is divorced. He was married for some years, and suddenly he has no wife. He sits and goes out of his mind; he climbs the walls looking for a wife. Do you think his suffering is less than yours? Doesn't he too go out of his mind, weep, and cry out to Hashem?"

I know men who cannot sleep in a bed, because they have no wife and are afraid even to go near a bed, lest it stir their desires, chas v'shalom. They have no choice. They sleep on chairs, they sleep on the floor, and even that is a hurried sleep, so that, chas v'shalom, they will not blemish themselves after having grown used to married life. They too are paying for the desires of their earlier gilgul, when they were unrestrained in such matters. Now, middah k'neged middah, Shamayim has decreed this suffering upon them.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

What We Must Learn

WHAT WE MUST LEARN FROM THESE STORIES

Talk Eighteen · 1:34:30

Rabbosai, we must learn mussar from these stories: how far a person can reach. Every one of us can reach it. Eliyahu HaNavi says in Tanna Devei Eliyahu that he calls Heaven and earth as witness that ruach hakodesh can, as it were, rest upon every single person according to his level. However much a person purifies himself, even a little, for one who purifies himself a little is purified from Shamayim a great deal. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says: "Open for Me an opening like the point of a needle, and I will open for you an opening like the opening of a hall." A person only has to begin. He has to jump, to leap out of the tumah to the side of kedushah, and begin.

The more a person goes to the mikveh, even if he feels nothing, it does its work. The mikveh is a very, very great thing. There is hamtakas hadinim in it, and very important things besides. How very important it is for a person to accustom himself to go to the mikveh! I am not speaking only of when a person needs it, after being home and keeping the mitzvah of onah, when he is obligated to go and immerse, which is truly called tevilas Ezra, which is needed. Rather, as often as a person can immerse, it is very important. What a great matter it is! It is wonder upon wonder, what the mikveh can do for a person. B'ezras Hashem I will tell you soon, in one of the shiurim, about Rabbi Chaim Brim, mori v'rabbi: what he would do in the mikveh, what the mikveh is, and how that man came to be like a malach through the mikveh.

The mikveh is something tremendous, as much as a person can go and immerse. This is especially so for one who is careful not to shake hands even with men who have been with women who are niddah: men who live with wives who are niddah, or who have given their hand to a woman who is niddah. The tumah passes over. It

makes the person tamei, and all of a sudden he finds himself distant from kedushah. Why does he have no desire for divrei kodesh?

The more a person draws a ruach of taharah upon himself from Shamayim, the more they draw upon him. A person opens an opening like the point of a needle: a little taharah, a little shemiras einayim. He sees a woman from a distance; let him close his eyes for two minutes. What happened? He sees a shadow from far off; let him lower his eyes until she passes, or walk slowly, looking only at the ground. A person does not know how much reward there is Above for every act of shemiras einayim. Rabboseinu said that the measure of good is greater than the measure of punishment. As great as the punishment is for p'gam einayim, so great is the reward for shemiras einayim. Rabboseinu asked who will merit to see Mashiach, and answered with the pasuk: one who shuts his eyes from seeing evil, his eyes will behold the King in His beauty.

And there is nothing more evil than watching television or opening an internet that is unguarded. Oy va'avoy to such a person, and oy to his neshamah! Oy to him! How many people have fallen and lost their neshamah through this! Drop by drop the tumah seeps into a person.

We must draw a ruach of taharah upon ourselves. When a person opens a sefer kodesh and learns, even Tehillim, all day, this also draws taharah, for it is a great thing. I do not mean that a person need not learn Gemara and halachah; he must. But even if that does not work out for him, let a person sit and learn and be osek baTorah as much as he can, and on the road too, let him put on discs of shiurim when he can. And if not, as I told you, let him say Pasach Eliyahu (the passage of the Tikkunei Zohar that begins with these words) as much as possible and cleave to Eliyahu HaNavi. This is a very important thing. Whoever repeats a teaching in the name of Eliyahu HaNavi, Eliyahu HaNavi is grateful to him.

Let a person say it, and in its zechus may we all merit, b'ezras Hashem, the geulah sheleimah, bimheirah b'yameinu, amen.

The Tzaddikim Served Hashem Through Suffering

Talk Twenty-One · 1:48:30

With this, our series on the tzaddikim I knew comes to an end. It took twenty-one shiurim, the gematria of the Name Ehyeh. Now we must take the lesson from all these gedolei olam whom I knew.

Like every person in the world, they were born, they lived, and they went through hard lives and hard crises. They helped the whole world with its troubles, but they themselves had bitter troubles of their own. These came to them from

Shamayim, either for their own earlier gilgulim or as a tikkun for the Shechinah and for Klal Yisrael.

We already find this in the Gemara. A bas kol used to go out and say: "The whole world is fed for the sake of Chanina My son, and for Chanina My son a kav (a small measure) of carobs is enough from one Erev Shabbos to the next."[134] What does "enough for him" mean? Who decided that it was enough for him? The Gemara tells us that he lived in heavy poverty. Why? Because he had to repair his earlier gilgulim. It is true that the whole world was fed in the merit of his greatness, his kedushah and his deeds, and yet he himself lived in suffering.

So it was with all the tzaddikim I have spoken about. Their lives were not easy. They did not serve Hashem out of plenty. They served Him out of pain and out of yissurim.

Rav Tzion Bracha too, may his zechus protect us, spoke with me once or twice about a member of his family who had no children. However much he davened, he also asked others to daven for him. He could bring yeshuos and healing to the whole world, yet he could not help his own family, only others. As Chazal said, a navi has no honor in his own city, and a prisoner cannot free himself from prison. That is how it is.

All the gedolei Yisrael were like this. My grandfather stood up for the whole world, cared for people and healed them. Yet every Monday and Thursday his wife suffered a heart attack. He saved her: each time he davened anew, only that the attack should pass. He had other yissurim as well, in his family and in his parnassah. He accepted all of it with love, and in spite of everything he reached the heights that he reached. That was true of him and of the others.

For most of his life, almost all of it, the wife of Rav Yosef Waltuch was in the hospital. He lived a life of perishus in wondrous kedushah and taharah. That was a test a hundred times over: to live with all those great levels when he had no children, when his wife was not at home with him, when he had to go again and again to visit her in the hospital and keep faith with a woman who hardly knew how to live with him in one home. With all the pain and all the suffering, these tzaddikim served Hashem out of love and with mesirus nefesh.

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[134] The tanna Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, famous for his tefillos that were answered and for his great poverty.

Nisayon Raises a Person

Talk Twenty-One · 1:52:00

We must know that in this world, as I have said, every one of us has nisyonos. These gedolim had nisyonos as well. Avraham Avinu was tested with ten nisyonos. Moshe Rabbeinu was tested with several. Our fathers who went out of Mitzrayim were tested with ten.

The pasuk says, "For in order to test you, Elokim has come." The word נסות comes from נס, which means a banner, something raised up high, as the pasuk says, ארים נסי, "I will raise My banner." A nisayon is also a test, and the test is what lifts a person and raises his banner higher. Every nisayon of Avraham brought him up to a higher madreigah.

All of us are in nisyonos, and the nisyonos are hard. There is not one of us who is not tested, whether with money, with health, with family or with something else. We must know how to stand up to them. In those hard moments we must know that the Borei Olam is the true G-d. We must not say then, "Where are You? What did we do? How much we davened, how much we asked!"

We do not know where our tefillos go. We do not know why our cries are sometimes not accepted. We do not understand what we are, who we are, what we were in earlier gilgulim, what we came to repair, what is waiting for us, or how much has already been sweetened through tefillah. Whatever we suffer may be only one part in thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads of what we would have had to suffer without it, either in this world or in the tikkunim of suffering in the next. We came here to repair.

We Came Here to Repair

Talk Twenty-One · 1:58:00

Others have other suffering. Everyone pays. We came here to repair what we did in our earlier gilgul. Fortunate is the one who merits to repair it through tikkunim, through teshuvah and through good deeds that awaken in him. But whoever cannot is made to pay from Shamayim, so that it will be repaired.

That is how our fathers paid in Mitzrayim. There, before Matan Torah, there was not yet any place for teshuvah, and so they paid "with mortar and with bricks and with all work in the field," with hard labor. A person, too, comes here to pay "with mortar and with bricks and with all work in the field," to pay for what he caused in earlier gilgulim. "A G-d of faithfulness, without wrong, righteous and upright is He."

Even a great tzaddik, who can bring down an abundance of rachamim on the whole world, must still pay for himself. "The whole world is fed for the sake of Chanina My son, and for Chanina My son a kav of carobs is enough," while he himself lived a hard life.

We should all know this. These tzaddikim did not serve HaKadosh Baruch Hu with a light heart, sitting by the fleshpots. Just the opposite. They lived in cruel suffering over the pain of their own lives, the lives of their families and their health. They served Hashem with the emunah that He is a G-d of faithfulness, and that this is the way to cleave to Him more and more.

Ben Sira[135] already said: "For gold is tested in fire, and the beloved of G-d in the furnace of affliction." All the gedolei Yisrael were like this. Every one of those I knew had heavy suffering of his own. Not one of them lived in calm and quiet.

We read about Yaakov Avinu, the chosen one among the Avos, that he wished to dwell in tranquility, and at once the trouble of Yosef sprang upon him. Rashi says that HaKadosh Baruch Hu said: "Is it not enough for the tzaddikim what awaits them in Olam HaBa, that they want it in this world too?" And at once the trouble of Yosef sprang upon him. Why? Because he had to repair the chet of Adam HaRishon, whose neshamah was reincarnated in him.

There is nothing to do but tefillah and tachanunim. We must know that all this is part of our nisyonos, so that we guard ourselves and stay guarded. And we must walk in the ways of the gedolim I have spoken about. They were able to rise and cleave to the Borei Olam until they reached the level Chazal describe: "The tzaddik decrees and HaKadosh Baruch Hu fulfills."

All of us must remember that our neshamah is a chelek Eloka mima'al (a part of G-d above), and that the neshamah itself directs us to the right path. As the pasuk says, "The breath of Shakai gives them understanding." The trouble is that the yetzer hara does not let us hear the neshamah. It starts playing all kinds of other tunes for us to confuse us. We must know that the more we strengthen ourselves, remember the ways of these gedolei Yisrael and resolve to walk in them, the more surely we will get through this passage in peace and reach the right place, our safe and final destination.

May we all merit, b'ezras Hashem, to sit and toil in Torah. May we, our children and our children's children all know the Name of HaKadosh Baruch Hu and learn His Torah lishmah, and may we merit, b'ezras Hashem, the true geulah, speedily in our days. Amen.

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[135] Ben Sira was a wise man from the time of the second Beis HaMikdash. His sefer of mussar and wisdom is quoted several times by Chazal.

Where Each Story Was Told



HaRav Shani told these stories in twenty-one recorded talks. Beside each story stand the talk it was told in and the time in the recording where it begins, given a little early so that a listener comes in just before it. The list after this one follows the talks in their own order.

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The stories in this book were told aloud, over many evenings, by HaRav Yosef Shani: what he saw with his own eyes and heard from the mouths of the tzaddikim he knew. They are the hidden tzaddikim of Yerushalayim, the mekubalim of the old Sephardi world, simple men whose simplicity was a disguise.

And yet, for the right reader at the right moment, a single page of this book can change a life. Those who heard these stories came away knowing that one tefillah can turn a decree, that a poor shoemaker in a back alley may be holding up the world, and that Hashem is far closer than we had dared to think.

Translated from the Hebrew of his recorded talks
by Swift Sofer