Toldos Menachem

The Life of the Hidden Tzaddik Chacham Menachem Menashe zt"l

HaRav Yosef Shani

Swift Sofer

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Author of the sefer *Ahavas Chaim* on the Torah, together with the lives of his rebbeim and friends, the hidden tzaddikim of the Yerushalayim of old

Told, edited and arranged by his grandson, who was a son of his house and his right hand for many years

HaRav Yosef Shani

Expanded edition, with changes and additions

Prepared by Swift Sofer

Toldos Menachem: The Life of the Hidden Tzaddik Chacham Menachem Menashe zt"l

By HaRav Yosef Shabtai Shani. Translated from the expanded Hebrew edition, with changes and additions (Yerushalayim, 5773). A companion to *A Ladder Set on the Earth* and *Gilgul Neshamos HaMurchav*.

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Translator's Note

This translation follows the expanded Hebrew edition of *Toldos Menachem HaMurchav* (Yerushalayim, 5773). The author's voice, including his first-person accounts, has been kept. Hebrew and Aramaic terms in common use in the Torah world are left in transliteration; they are explained in the Glossary at the back of the book. The author's notes appear as footnotes; notes added by the translator are marked "—Trans."

Some of these accounts also appear in *A Ladder Set on the Earth*. Where the two books differ, this translation follows *Toldos Menachem*.

The photographs are those of the Hebrew edition, coloured for this one: only colour was added, and every face and line is as it was photographed. The documents (letters, notices and title pages) are shown as printed, each with its text in English beneath it.

Introduction

NOW THAT I SIT down to write about my grandfather, the chassid and anav Chacham Menachem Menashe zt"l, my mother's father (my mother, Sarah z"l), I hardly know where to begin. How does one put on paper the life of the greatest of the giants of his generation? He was the "morning star" of Edos HaMizrach Jewry in Eretz Yisrael, the man on whom every holy undertaking rested.

The great gaon Rav Shimshon of Teplik zy"a, of whom I will write later, called him "the Baal Shem Tov of the Sephardim."

In 5735 (1975) I was in Skver, the Chassidic town of New Square near New York, and there I met HaRav HaGaon, the holy Rav Chaim Brim zt"l, who was rosh yeshivah there (more about him, too, later on). In front of the whole congregation, with the Skverer Rebbe present, he introduced me as the grandson of the tzaddik Chacham Menachem Menashe, "the Chofetz Chaim of the Sephardim."

Many of my grandfather's wondrous deeds were done in secret, and only a small part of them came out later, through others. Still, I cannot leave them untold altogether, so I have written down the little I remember of what I saw with my own eyes. I grew up in his house. From 5718 (1958), when I was twelve, until my marriage in 5726 (1966), I had the merit of serving him day and night, and even after I married I spent several hours with him every day, until his petirah. Wondrous stories about my grandfather z"l went around the family, but I have recorded, as a remembrance for Bnei Yisrael, only those I believed free of imagination and exaggeration.

The first edition of this sefer was welcomed by every part of the public. People took it not as one more collection of stories about tzaddikim but as

an original sefer, a living testimony to most of what it tells, and it strengthened them in yiras Shamayim. That encouraged me to add several more stories, ones I heard firsthand or in which I knew some of the people involved.

A new edition usually brings in what came to light after the first printing, and what became known because of it. This one does too. I have added material, and the additions, with everything that followed from them, led me to arrange the sefer differently from before.

My thanks go to HaRav Yosef Moshe Sofer, who allowed me to draw on his sefer *Mara d'Ara d'Yisrael*; to the mezakeh harabim Rav Mordechai Elmas shlita, who allowed me to draw on his sefer about my grandfather and on his *Tzaddikim Nistarim BaDor HaAcharon*; to Mr. Avraham Levi, who allowed me to reproduce several pictures from *Derech Tzaddikim*; and to Mr. Yaakov Kohen, who allowed me to reproduce the pictures of Chacham Sasson Levi zt"l and Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l from the Siach Yisrael collection.

Y.S.

CHAPTER ONE

His Birth, Lineage and Youth

MY GRANDFATHER Z"L WAS born in 5653 (1893) in Kayik, a village near the city of Bursa (in northwestern Turkey). His father, Yaakov, of the Menashe family, had little money and much yiras Shamayim. Poor as he was, he made sure his sons went to school and grew up in Torah and yiras Shamayim.

The Menashes are known to be one of the families driven out of Spain. They scattered to Turkey and Greece, and from there to Tzfas and Egypt as well, and they produced talmidei chachamim great in Torah and in yiras Shamayim. One of the exiles who went up from Turkey to Tzfas was the mekubal Rabbi Shabsai Menashe, a talmid of the Arizal.[1]

A father named Yaakov with a son named Menachem appears in the family a generation before my grandfather, too. The great gaon Rabbi Yaakov Menashe zt"l, author of *Ohel Yaakov*, *Be'er Mayim* and *Ein HaMayim*,[2] served as a dayan in Kushta (Istanbul) and then as general dayan of Salonika (Thessaloniki, today in northern Greece), where he passed away.[3] His

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[1] He appears in the list of the Arizal's talmidim drawn up by Rabbi Chaim Vital zt"l, in *Shaar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 39.

[2] *Ohel Yaakov*, on dinim and kelalim, Salonika 5592 (1832); *Be'er Mayim*, responsa on the four parts of the Shulchan Aruch, Salonika 5596 (1836); *Ein HaMayim*, chiddushei halachos on Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah, and derashos, Salonika 5618 (1858).

[3] In Kushta he served as dayan for the halachos of issur v'heter between 5550 and 5557 (1790-97). At the beginning of 5557 he was made av beis din there for these halachos, and in the middle of that same year he was appointed general dayan of Salonika. He passed away there on Pesach 5592 (1832).

sons Rabbi Menachem Menashe[4] and Rabbi Meir Menashe were among the chachamim of Salonika.

Another son, Rabbi Avraham Menashe, was one of the chachamim and rabbanim of Izmir (a port city on Turkey's western coast). The chachamim of his day called him "Sinai v'oker harim," "humble as Hillel," "a gavra rabba," "a menorah all of gold" and "HaRav HaKollel."[5] His son, Rabbi Shimon Menashe, was also counted among the chachamim of Izmir. Rabbi Shimon's son, Rabbi Chaim, was my grandfather's age, and already in his youth he was a talmid chacham great and mighty.[6] Kushta had a Menashe family as well; one of its sons was the eminent rav Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak Menashe, of whom I will write later.

My grandfather was ten when his father passed away, leaving a widow and five children with nothing at all. The eldest, Shmuel, was known to everyone as "Bechor"; my grandfather was the second; the youngest boy was Yom Tov; and there were two girls, younger still. Their mother, Sultana, gave her life to her sons, to raising them in Torah and yiras Shamayim. She took whatever work came her way and did all she could to support them, as long as they could learn in the talmud torah like other boys their age.[7]

Food was rare in that house. Often the only thing to eat was the bread their gentile neighbors gave them. My grandfather told me that on Pesach they had nothing at all for the whole Yom Tov. Bread was forbidden, so they went truly hungry. They were too ashamed to hold out a hand or to let the nearby community know their plight, and all through Yom Tov they lived on the potato peels the neighbors threw in the garbage.

He told me, too, that he was a very sensitive orphan. For many years he wept for his father and could not be comforted, because he felt so keenly the lack of a father to support him and love him.

As a boy he learned with the chachamim of Bursa. Later he went to Istanbul (Kushta), where he conducted himself with chassidus and learned Torah day and night from the city's rabbanim, working just a few hours for

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[4] He passed away in 5637 (1877).

[5] See the introduction to *Neveh Tzedek* by Rabbi Saadiah HaLevi, Salonika 5601 (1841), and *Barech Es Avraham* by Rabbi Avraham Palagi, Salonika 5617 (1857).

[6] So Rabbi Yitzchak Palagi describes him in his sefer *Yafeh LaLev*, part 6.

[7] She merited a long life and passed away in Yerushalayim at close to a hundred years of age.

his meager living. What his work was, I do not know exactly; my grandfather spoke little about himself. But when he came to Eretz Yisrael he was an expert tinsmith, so he probably worked at it already as a young man.

IN ISTANBUL

Kabbalah drew my grandfather from his earliest youth. Istanbul, then the capital, had wonderful gedolei Torah who shared the warmth of their Torah and their yiras Shamayim, men who had the wisdom of Kabbalah at their fingertips, as they had received it from their rebbeim. From the day he arrived, my grandfather sat in the dust of their feet.

Istanbul was "a great city to G-d," full of chachamim and sofrim, tzaddikim, chassidim and mekubalim. Every neighborhood had its own dayanim and morei hora'ah for issur v'heter, appointed by the central beis din. Exactly where my grandfather learned, and with whom, I do not know. As far as I know, he lived in the Balat neighborhood and spent a good deal of time in Şişli (his wife's family apparently lived there), and that gives me the impression that he learned with the gaon Rabbi Rafael David Saban zt"l.[8] In 5667 (1907) Rabbi Saban became av beis din of Hasköy. He served there for eight years, and from there he was also mara d'asra of Galata, Beyoğlu, Kasımpaşa and Şişli. Those are exactly the years my grandfather lived in Istanbul.

[8] Author of *Madras LaPeirushim*, sources, glosses and notes on Rashi's commentary on Tanach, Yerushalayim 5765 (2005). He was born in Kushta in 5637 (1877), was appointed Chacham Bashi (chief rabbi) of all Turkey in 5710 (1950), and passed away in Kushta in Kislev 5721 (1960).



The gaon Rabbi Rafael David Saban zt"l in the robes of the Chacham Bashi.

He certainly learned with the gaon Chacham Yitzchak Eliezer Ariel zt"l as well, or at least heard Torah from him, for in the years my grandfather lived in Balat, Chacham Yitzchak Eliezer was the rav and leader of its community.[9]

He most likely learned too with a relative, the eminent rav Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak Menashe zt"l.[10] Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak had been spreading Torah in Kushta since the generation before my grandfather's, and in my grandfather's own time he sat as a dayan on the beis din of Chacham Yitzchak Shaki, alongside Rabbi Rafael Saban and Chacham Yaakov Arguiti.

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[9] From 5667 (1907) he was also chief av beis din of all Kushta. He was born in 5619 (1859) and passed away in Tishrei 5692 (1931).

[10] So the great gaon Chacham Rafael Bitran zt"l calls him in *Middos Tovos*, his commentary on the Mechilta, Yerushalayim 5749 (1989).

From what my grandfather told me, I understood that he began to conduct himself with chassidus while still a young man in Turkey. He never once touched his beard. He was zealous with the zeal of Hashem against anyone who tried to throw off the yoke of Torah and mitzvos. He also belonged to Chevras Mazhirei Shabbos (the society of "those who warn about Shabbos"): every erev Shabbos its members went around warning the shopkeepers to close on time, and they fought every foreign influence that threatened to make its way into Jewish homes.

I assume that he learned with the city's mekubalim, above all with the colleagues and talmidim of the holy gaon Rabbi Yitzchak Akrish zt"l.[11] Rabbi Yitzchak Akrish was a great zealot for Hashem and His Torah, and one of the foremost talmidim of the mighty gaon, a zealot like Pinchas, the Saba Kadisha, Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari zatzuk"l. In 5622 (1862) Rabbi Yitzchak Akrish and Rabbi Shlomo Kimchi[12] put the gvir Avraham Camondo (a wealthy Jewish banker of Istanbul) in cherem: he had opened a school in the community that did not follow the accepted tradition. Rabbi Yitzchak Akrish was jailed for it, and released after public pressure and the government's intervention.[13]

Among those talmidim and colleagues was Chacham Yaakov Arguiti,[14] the dayan and moreh hora'ah I mentioned earlier; the Saba Kadisha, Rav Alfandari, calls him "chacham" and "yedid nafshi" (the beloved of my soul).[15] Another was the distinguished dayan and consummate chacham, Chacham Yehuda Ovadiah Didia Nishli.[16]

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[11] Author of *Kiryas Arba*, Yerushalayim 5636 (1876).

[12] Author of *Meleches Shlomo*, Salonika 5622 (1862); *Yakhel Shlomo*, Izmir 5625 (1865); *Yemei Shlomo*, Izmir 5634 (1874); and *Mimei Shlomo*, Yerushalayim 5746 (1986).

[13] In 5634 (1874) he went up to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Chevron.

[14] Author of *Yerech Yaakov*, responsa on the four parts of the Shulchan Aruch, Kushta 5700 (1940), and *Zecher Asos*, ma'arachos and responsa, Yerushalayim 5723 (1963). He was born in 5622 (1862) and passed away in Nissan 5704 (1944).

[15] Responsa of the Saba Kadisha, Orach Chaim, siman 7.

[16] So Rabbi Yitzchak Akrish calls him in his responsa *Kiryas Arba*.

Besides these gaonim, Istanbul had many other rabbanim and talmidei chachamim around the time my grandfather lived there, some we know of and some we do not. I cannot name them all, but here are a few.

The gaon Chacham Chaim Yitzchak Shaki zt"l was one of the great rabbanim of Kushta and head av beis din of its central beis din. His *Torizoro del Djudaizmo*, also called *Milei d'Avos*, is a comprehensive commentary on Pirkei Avos in Ladino (the Spanish language of the Sephardi Jews).[17] Sitting with him on his beis din were the gaonim Rabbi Rafael Saban, Chacham Yaakov Arguiti, Chacham Avraham Danon, Chacham Yehuda Pereira and Chacham Yehuda de Avila.

Chacham Dovid Albochar zt"l, a talmid of the gaon Rabbi Yitzchak HaLevi (author of the responsa *Rov Dagan*), was a dayan in Kushta in those years.[18]

Chacham Rafael Yaakov HaLevi zt"l was a dayan for issur v'heter in Kushta from 5654 (1894) on.

Chacham Shabsai HaLevi zt"l was in charge of rulings on issur v'heter in Kushta from 5654 (1894), and in 5678 (1918) he was one of the city's chief rabbanim.

Chacham Siman Tov de Toledo zt"l[19] was a rosh yeshivah in Kushta from 5635 (1875).

Chacham Rafael Abulafia zt"l, whose *Toras HaMinhagos* is in manuscript, was in charge of issur v'heter in Kushta from 5647 (1887).

Chacham Chaim Shmuel Ner zt"l, one of the chachamim and rabbanim of Kushta, was a talmid of the Sdei Chemed.[20]

The hidden tzaddik Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon zt"l told me that until the First World War broke out, all of Turkey was full of chachamim and sofrim whose hasmadah in Torah was astonishing. Then came the war, and the terrible famine in its wake. Most of them died in that famine over the pages of the Gemara, accepting the judgment of Heaven.

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[17] Cairo and Yerushalayim, 5667-5668 (1907-08).

[18] He engaged in halachic discussion with the Sdei Chemed zt"l.

[19] He was the son of Rabbi Eliezer de Toledo zt"l, author of the responsa *Mishnas Rabbi Eliezer*.

[20] See the responsa *Michtav LeChizkiyahu*, siman 6.

His Marriage

At about eighteen he married my grandmother, the tzaddekes Esther, of the Charaz family. She was an orphan, two years his senior, born in Adrianople (Edirne, in the European part of Turkey). Her family were known as great philanthropists and baalei chessed. While she was still a girl, her parents moved to Istanbul. One day the sea rose and flooded the houses near it, and her father, Mordechai, drowned in his bed; the family went from great philanthropists to people of middling means. She married my grandfather knowing that he was a talmid chacham, a zealot for yiras Shamayim and a member of the Mazhirei Shabbos. His firstborn son was born, I believe, in 5674 (1914), and he named him Yaakov, after his own father.

In the Turkish Army

At nineteen he was called up to the Turkish army (the army of the Ottoman Empire). Before his medical examination he drank several glasses of tobacco water, to make something like spots show on his lungs and so slip through their hands. It bought him about a year's deferment. Only at about twenty, roughly a year before the First World War broke out, was he taken into the army. He would not defile himself there with forbidden food, and at times that meant living on dry bread, or going hungry altogether.

The Rav of the Jewish Soldiers

He was not the only Jew in the army, and my grandfather became the rav of the Jewish soldiers. Here the gift of speech he had had since childhood, and his knowledge of Torah, came into their own. He gave them all his free time. He taught them "the word of Hashem, which is halachah," and he strengthened and encouraged them to hold firm, in ruchniyus and in gashmiyus.

When the First World War broke out on Tisha b'Av 5674 (1914), my grandfather told me, all his friends, the soldiers who were his talmidim, gathered together, terrified of what was coming. He said to them: "I promise you: from the moment you go into battle, if you keep saying, 'Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad, Baruch shem kevod malchuso l'olam va'ed'; 'From the straits I called to Hashem; Hashem answered me with expansiveness'; 'Please, Hashem, save now; please, Hashem, bring success now'; 'See my affliction and rescue me, for I have not forgotten Your

Torah. Take up my cause and redeem me; give me life for the sake of Your word,' no harm will come to you, and you will come home in peace." And so it was. Turkish soldiers died around them like flies, yet every one of his Jewish talmidim came home at the end of the war healthy and whole.

Wine for Kiddush

The Turkish army of his day was made up entirely of believing Muslims, whose faith forbids them wine. Bringing wine into the camp was explicitly prohibited, on pain of severe corporal punishment. But my grandfather decided that Hashem's mitzvah of making kiddush over wine on Shabbos came before every law of the army. Each Friday he slipped out of the camp to the Jewish villages around it and came back with wine, and so he gave every Jewish soldier the merit of the mitzvah of kiddush.

One erev Shabbos, he told me, an officer caught him coming back into the camp, searched his clothes and found the wine. Beside himself with rage, the officer decided to teach him a lesson. He had all the soldiers called at once to the camp square, and there, in front of everyone, he beat my grandfather with terrible cruelty all over his body. My grandfather lay sprawled on the ground, streaming with blood, and still the officer did not stop until he had trampled him with his hobnailed boots.

Afterward the Jewish soldiers brought him to his bed, tended his wounds and gave him water until he began to come round. Then my grandfather asked them to find out the officer's name and his mother's name. The names reached him on Friday night, and he davened what he davened. That same night the officer died a strange death, in great agony. The whole camp connected his death with what he had done to my grandfather, and it made a great kiddush Hashem there.

The Candle by His Bed

The army worked him to exhaustion all day, but my grandfather would not give up his set times for learning. The camp rule was lights out at ten, and anyone who broke it could expect harsh punishment. Still, he would light a small candle beside his bed and learn by it late into the night, as long as he could keep going. His roommates, worn out, were asleep before ten and never noticed.

One night an officer came into the room for some reason and found him learning by candlelight. Furious, he raised his hand to hit him, and the

hand froze. He began to scream with pain. The screams woke everyone nearby, and more officers came to see what was going on, the camp commander at their head. They found my grandfather still reading by his candle, and the officer standing in front of him with his paralyzed hand stretched out, screaming.

The officer told them what had happened: he had raised his hand to punish the Jew for burning a light after hours, and the hand had frozen and the pain had begun. The officers turned to my grandfather and asked what was going on. "We Jews received a Torah from the Creator of the world," he answered, "and we are commanded to toil in it day and night. By day I am bound to your work, so I have to make up my learning at night. Nobody outside can see the light of this little candle, and it disturbs no one. If this officer wanted to stop me from learning the holy Torah, it was the Giver of the Torah who stopped him. Your complaint is not with me."

The camp commander was deeply impressed by what he had seen and heard. "From today," he told my grandfather, "you may learn by candlelight every night, as you wish. But give this officer back his health." My grandfather raised his eyes to Shamayim. "Ribono shel Olam," he said, "act for the honor of Your great Name, that it be sanctified in the eyes of the goyim, and heal this officer." At once the hand came free, and the pain stopped.

The Shark

Once my grandfather was among a group of soldiers being moved by sea from one place to another. Out in the open sea a storm broke, wrecked the ship and sank it. There were not enough lifeboats, and many of the soldiers drowned, my grandfather among them. Before he lost consciousness he managed to say "Shema Yisrael..." and then: "Ribono shel Olam, I accept Your decree with love. But act for the sake of my mother, who will suffer greatly if I die."

Moments later a shark several meters long rose up beneath him, lifted him onto its back and flung him toward the rescue ship, which had come to take off the soldiers and lay at anchor. The rescuers grabbed him and tried to get him breathing. When nothing worked, they gave up on him and sent him to the room of the dead, where all the drowned men's bodies pulled from the water were being gathered.

A few hours later a doctor came into the room of the dead and heard my grandfather gurgling. He called more men over at once. They hung him up by his feet, head down, and struck his back until he brought up the water he had swallowed and his breathing steadied. When he was well again, they sent him back to his military service.

In the Commander's House

At the height of the First World War my grandfather's company was sent to the front. In battle the company commander was wounded, and my grandfather, under heavy fire and at the risk of his life, got him off the field and took him to the military hospital himself. He had his reasons. He was thinking of his own good, knowing the commander would return the favor when he asked for it.

Turkish commanders customarily kept soldiers in their homes to do all their private and household work. So when my grandfather asked to be brought back from the front, the commander agreed and let him work in his house instead of in the army. On Fridays my grandfather did whatever work would be needed on Shabbos, and Shabbos became for him a day of menuchas ahavah u'nedavah.

Locked in the Chicken Coop

One Shabbos the commander asked him to do some work that would have meant chillul Shabbos. My grandfather refused. The work was forbidden to him that day, he explained, because Shabbos is holy to the Jewish people. The commander lost his temper, shut him in the chicken coop in the yard and closed the door on him from outside.

At that moment the commander's wife was seized with terrible pains. A few moments later the commander was at the coop, letting my grandfather out and asking his forgiveness. "I know my wife has fallen ill because I put you in the coop," he said. "Please, daven for her recovery." From then on he let my grandfather go to the nearby Jewish community every erev Shabbos and stay until Motza'ei Shabbos.

Yom Kippur in the Grove

While he was in that commander's house, my grandfather told me, erev Yom Kippur came around. He asked permission to go to the community for Yom Kippur too, as he did every Shabbos, but the commander would

not hear of it. "It's enough that you're free of my work every Shabbos of the year," he said. "You are not getting one more day."

My grandfather finished the seudah hamafsekes well before nightfall and went out of the house. He sat down by the trees of the nearby grove and began to say the tefillah *Lecha Keli Teshukasi* to the traditional Turkish niggun. At that very hour the commander began to writhe in pain. "This is because of the Jew," he told his wife. "Send him to the community, on condition that I get well." My grandfather set out at once for the nearby village, reached the Jewish community before shkiah and spent the holy day with them.

Like Yosef in His Day

The commander had a grown daughter, and she fell in love with my grandfather. Day after day she tried to make him stumble, tempting him toward an aveirah of arayos with words of desire and enticement. My grandfather z"l shut his eyes and ears and fought his yetzer. "And it was, as she spoke to him day after day, that he did not listen to her."[21] She grew more downcast every day, until she took to her bed. Then she told her father that she loved my grandfather and wanted to marry him, come what may. Her father lost no time in granting her wish and asked my grandfather to marry her. My grandfather saw there was no way out, and he fled the commander's house.

Under the Bed

He made his way back to Istanbul and hid with the neighbors. The commander sent soldiers after him, and among the places they searched was his own home in Istanbul. As it happened, my grandfather was there just then, visiting his wife and little son. He saw the soldiers coming and had no time to get away, so he hurried to hide under the bed.

He knew, he told me, that they would lift the bed, but there was nowhere else to hide. Under his breath, without stopping, he repeated the pasuk "And the men who were at the entrance of the house they struck with blindness, from small to great, and they wearied themselves to find the entrance" (Bereishis 19). And he made a great neder to Elokei Yisrael: if he

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[21] Bereishis 39:10, said of Yosef and the wife of Potiphar. —Trans.

was saved, he would go up to Eretz HaKodesh at once. The soldiers came to the bed and lifted it. They saw nothing, and left the way they had come.

On the Road to Lebanon

My grandfather kept his neder without delay. He took his wife and son and hired a wagon to carry them to the Lebanese border. (Whether his mother came with him, or followed later with her eldest son and her daughter Rivkah, I do not know.)

On the way the road ran through a narrow place, wide enough for only one wagon. When two wagons met there head-on, the passengers of one had to climb down, ease their wagon carefully to the side and wait for the other to go by. The law required every civilian wagon to make way for a military one.

As they were passing through, my grandfather saw a wagon coming toward them: the wagon of the commander he had run away from, with the commander inside. In his distress he cried out to Hashem to help him that very moment. Suddenly, my grandfather told me, he saw Moshe Rabbeinu alav hashalom before his eyes and heard him say: "Do not be afraid. Go on your way. The commander will stand aside, and no harm will come to you." Then he was gone.

My grandfather did as he was told and had the driver keep going. The commander's wagon turned aside of its own accord, and my grandfather went on until they reached the Lebanese border, and from there to Yerushalayim.

CHAPTER TWO

In Yerushalayim

IN 5678 (1918) MY grandfather came within the gates of Yerushalayim, and there he lived for a full fifty years, a whole yovel. The journey had used up all his money, and the "apartment" he found in Beis Yisrael, at the corner of Leib Dayan and Rappaport streets, was really a water cistern that had been emptied of its water. You went down into it from the courtyard by a few steps. It was completely dark inside, and the only air came in through the doorway. The "kitchen" was a spot in the courtyard beside the entrance, one meter by one meter.

There were no water taps anywhere in the neighborhood. Each courtyard drew its water from its own cistern, and anyone without one bought water by the tin from the water carrier, or fetched it himself from the springs nearby. This courtyard had a second cistern besides the empty one, and that one held water. The "kitchen," which was not even plastered, held a "primus"[22] and a "ptiliyah" (a kerosene stove that burned with wicks), a few pots, and a place for a tin of kerosene. No house in this neighborhood or in the ones around it had "facilities" of its own; all the residents shared one bathroom in the courtyard.

[22] A primus was a kind of stove, something like today's small gas burner, and it was filled with kerosene. To light it, you poured a little spirit onto its head (shops sold spirit for the purpose in special bottles) and set it alight; then you worked the kerosene pump, which sent up kerosene that went on burning with a loud roar. It was the only quick means of cooking and boiling.

The Shamash of the Shtieblach

My grandfather needed a living, and he found work near his home, as shamash of the shtieblach of Beis Yisrael. The shtieblach took up a large courtyard, with a building of several rooms opening onto it, each room a place of tefillah of its own. The holy gaon Rav Shimshon of Teplik zy"a, who was appointed Rav of the neighborhood, later lived in one of the houses of that courtyard.

Over the whole building stood a large, spacious beis haknesses. A side room off it served the gabbaim as a meeting place (and, I think, as a beis din as well), and when there was nowhere else, minyanim davened there. On the other side of the beis haknesses was a large ezras nashim, reached from outside by its own staircase, with another door leading from it into the beis haknesses.

Cleaning the whole building and the courtyard in front of it was hard, exhausting work, all the more so because the courtyard had no cistern. Every morning my grandfather had to walk to the spring in Silwan, at the foot of Har HaBayis, to draw water for the large congregation and for the cleaning: at least half an hour's walk there, and close to an hour back, with the climbs and the weight of the load. But my grandmother wanted him to sit and learn Torah at that hour, so she took the work on herself. Day after day she went and drew the water, and carried back several tins of it on her shoulders.

The pay was small, barely enough for the rent on the "apartment" and the basics: bread, sugar, oil and milk. Chicken they had only in Tishrei, for Erev Yom Kippur and Sukkos, from the kaparos the people of the neighborhood gave them.

In time, as the family grew, my grandfather moved to the apartment next door. It had two spacious rooms, and a small kitchen in the courtyard by the entrance to the house, about a meter and a half by a meter, under the stairs that led up to the second floor.

When I was a boy and visited my grandfather and grandmother in that house, the old "apartment" was home to the tzaddik Mulla Yehoshua Agajan Raz zt"l (Mulla is the title the Jews of Persia and Bukhara give a rav). By day he worked as a porter. (I still remember him in his old age, pulling the wooden cart with the iron wheels to earn bread for his second wife, whom he married late in life after he was widowed, and for the little daughter she

bore him.) At night he rose at chatzos and sat learning until vasikin, and davened vasikin in the beis haknesses of Chevras Ahavas Chaim. Every year he finished the whole Zohar in time for Taanis Bechoros on Erev Pesach, and for several years I took part in his siyum. My father z"l told me that he was expert in the holy Names, among other things.

A Man and His Household

My grandmother knew my grandfather's worth and valued his deeds, his Torah and his kedushah. He had taught her the words of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Gemara, Berachos), that Torah, Eretz Yisrael and Olam Haba are acquired through yissurim, and so she accepted all the suffering with complete love.

In the eight years I lived with them, day and night, they never quarreled, and neither of them ever raised a voice to the other. Everything they said to each other was said with love, affection and calm. As far as I understood, that was how they lived all their lives, even in the very hardest hours.

My grandmother was a woman wise in her deeds and her middos, and learned as well: she knew a great deal of Torah, the holy sefer *Me'am Lo'ez* among it. I remember sitting with her, from a young age, on many a Shabbos, and reading her the week's parshah from that sefer, which is written in Spanish (Ladino), in Rashi script.

Nissim

My grandfather's second son[23] was named Nissim, in memory of the nissim done for my grandfather in the army, under the bed in his house and on the road to Lebanon, as told above. He grew up in Torah and yiras Shamayim, as my grandfather wished. When he was about eighteen, Arabs chased him with a drawn knife, and he ran from them until he fainted and lost consciousness. Whether the Arabs managed to wound him in the liver, or the running itself damaged it, I do not know. Either way, a few days later he passed away to the life of Olam Haba; may those who hear this be granted long life.

For months on end my grandfather wept bitterly over him and would not be comforted. Once, sitting alone in his house, he was weeping and

[23] I think he was born in 5679 (1919).

crying out, "Nissim, where are you?" Suddenly his son stood before him, while he was awake, and said: "Abba, do not grieve over me. I am in a good place in Gan Eden. I have finished my tikkun in this world, and there is nothing more for me here."

When my grandfather saw that it truly was his son standing there, he grew calm. He told him: "Ask the Beis Din shel Maalah, in my name, for permission to come to me whenever I call you, and also to answer the questions I ask you about Olam Haba and such matters." His son came back and told him that they had given their permission.

From then on my grandfather would call him from time to time and talk with him about the world above. Once I heard my grandfather tell his son Mordechai some of what his brother Nissim had said to him, and from the way they spoke I understood that it was not the first time my grandfather had told Mordechai about his meetings with Nissim.

My Mother, Sarah

Besides his firstborn, who was born in Turkey, my grandfather had four sons, born in Yerushalayim one after another, and then my grandmother had no more children. For several years my grandfather davened to be granted a daughter, so as to fulfill the mitzvah of pru u'rvu as the halachah requires. In 5690 (1930) my mother, Sarah z"l, was born.

It was said in the family that when she was born my grandfather spoke of her neshamah as a very high one. He had received it from Shamayim on loan, he said, and had undertaken to give it back when it was asked for, without holding it back in this world. My mother knew of this too. At forty she fell gravely ill. We davened for her in all sorts of places, at my grandfather's kever as well, and we remembered his words, that he would not hold her back in this world when she was called to return. It grieved us deeply.

I went to the hidden tzaddik Mori Chaim Sinwani zt"l, and he told me there was nothing to daven for, because her tikkun was complete. My father z"l went to the holy mekubal Chacham Mordechai Sharabi zt"l, who made a tikkun and then said there was nothing to be done, because her tikkun was complete. My uncle went to the hidden tzaddik Rav Yehuda Patilon zt"l, who told him: "I am davening, because I was asked to, but it does not help and it will not help." My uncle went as well to the tzaddik Rav Yisrael

Yitzchak Meshi-Zahav zt"l, and his answer was: "It is sealed above. There is nothing to do." (About these tzaddikim, see further on.)

And so it was: those above prevailed over those below,[24] and she went to her rest.

Hidden Among the Vessels

As shamash of the shtieblach my grandfather could not hide his yiras Shamayim, but who he was and what he did, he kept hidden. His job was to rise in the small hours and clean the beis haknesses upstairs, where people had learned late into the night, and in winter to light the stove at the back of it as well, a tall brick stove faced with earthenware and fed with logs. In the ezras nashim stood a library crammed with sefarim, and he had to put back in their places the sefarim that had been learned from in the early part of the night, so that all would be ready for Shacharis at vasikin.

He rose far earlier than the work required, and used the time to learn in that library without anyone noticing. The moment the first of the mispallelim arrived, he would shut his sefer and start gathering up the sefarim to put them away.

The Sheid in the Shul

One time my grandfather came to the beis haknesses before dawn as usual, opened the door, and saw a sheid inside. It gnashed its teeth and tried to do him harm. He was alone, and it was night, when one may not provoke them, so he fled to the house of the Rav of Teplik, who was up learning, and told him what was happening. The Rav rose at once and went back with him into the beis haknesses. The sheid was still standing there, but now they were two together, and they drove it out.

Rav Shimshon understood that my grandfather was a talmid chacham who kept himself hidden. He stopped letting him serve and began to honor him in front of everyone, and that frightened my grandfather more than the sheid had. He went looking for other work, where no one would honor him at all, and turned to tinsmithing, a craft he knew thoroughly.

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[24] Chazal's words on the passing of Rebbi (Kesubos 104a): the malachim above and the tzaddikim below both held on to him, and those above prevailed. —Trans.

The Tinsmith's Shop

On Rechov Sonnenfeld, on the right as you go up toward Meah Shearim, stood a few small wooden huts that served as shops. When one came free, my grandfather rented it and began making tin cups, tin pots and the like, and selling them.

Before plastic was invented, tin goods were in great demand; nearly everything made of plastic today was made of tin then, from barrels and boilers to cups and netilos for washing hands. I remember how my grandfather put to use the empty cans of a product called "Kokosin," much sought after in my childhood as a substitute for oil, which could not be had. It was a vegetable spread made of coconut oil, brought from abroad in beautiful blue tin cans the size of an ordinary netilah. My grandfather soldered handles onto them and made them into netilos, and people wanted them, because they cost less than a netilah of new tin.

Even the plainest glass cups were expensive. My grandfather found a way to take old bottles and cut them precisely with a metal wire drawn back and forth; with their rims polished, they made cheap cups that people wanted.

Another tin article, very common and much in demand, was made from old water tins. (Water was carried in those days in square tins, about 50 centimeters high and about 40 centimeters on each side.) A circle about 15 centimeters across was cut from the middle of the bottom, and nearly the whole of one side was opened, leaving only a frame about 5 centimeters wide. The tin was set upside down over a kerosene lamp with a long-necked glass chimney, and on Shabbos it served as a plata to keep warm the food cooked beforehand on a ptiliyah or a primus. So tinsmithing made a good living, and it was counted among the respected trades.

The Shop Next Door

My grandfather told me that near his shop was another one that sold tin goods. One day, standing in his shop, he saw plainly how a customer began looking over my grandfather's goods at the front of the shop, and how the owner of the neighboring shop came up to him and coaxed him to come and buy from him instead, and the customer went off with him. My grandfather decided not to get angry and not to react at all that day. The next day,

with pleasant words, he would show the man his mistake and how wrongly he had acted.

The next day he went to his neighbor and began to talk to him about what had happened. To his surprise, the man told him that he had not opened his shop at all the day before, because he had been busy with various matters.

My grandfather said to me: "I believed him, and I am sure it was an achizas einayim (an illusion) from the sitra achra, to test me and see whether I would get angry. Baruch Hashem, I stood the test."

CHAPTER THREE

Yiddishkeit in Yerushalayim and Eretz Yisrael in Those Days

Above All Among the Sephardim

ON 26 KISLEV 5678 (1917) the British general Allenby (commander of the British army that took Eretz Yisrael from the Turks in the First World War) took Yerushalayim. With that the Zionists raised their heads, and the destruction of Yiddishkeit began. At that very moment Hashgachah sent my grandfather z"l to stand in its way, a general for Hashem and His people, to strengthen Yiddishkeit. As the pasuk says, "Elokim has made this one opposite that one" (Koheles).

When the British conquered Eretz Yisrael, the Zionists conquered it with them. They were allies of the British; at the end of the war they had fought on the Allied side in the Hebrew Battalions (Jewish battalions in the British army), which they raised from the young men of the Jewish yishuv in the land. A month or so before the conquest, on 17 Cheshvan 5678, they had won the well-known Balfour Declaration (named for Balfour, the British foreign minister), in which the British agreed to set up a national home for the Jews in Eretz Yisrael. The Zionists were jubilant: they knew the house would be handed to them. The gedolei Yisrael understood what the declaration meant, and by the letters of his name they called Balfour "Baal Peor."

No sooner had the British taken the land than the Zionists began collecting money from the Jews of Europe, the overwhelming majority of whom were faithful, Torah-true Jews, as careful with a light mitzvah as with

a weighty one. Officially the money was "to save the institutions of Eretz Yisrael that collapsed because of the war," and a great deal of it came in.

Some three months after the conquest, Weizmann (the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann) and his fellows, shem resha'im yirkav, arrived as delegates of the Vaad HaTzirim (the Zionist Commission) and set to work to take over chinuch. Weizmann made the rounds of the mosdos of kedushah in the land. He was holding money collected for them, he told them, and they could have it on one condition: from now on they would stand under the guardianship of the Vaad HaTzirim.

Some of the Sephardi askanim needed that money like air, to pay their teachers, and they went along with the Zionist fund. After a long death agony the Talmud Torah of the Sephardim, with its four hundred or so talmidim, fell too, a sacrifice to Zionist chinuch. The Ashkenazi institutions, reduced by the war to the shame of hunger, did not know which way to turn either. Some could not resist the temptation and gave in to these resha'im, but most stood the test and refused. For about four months Weizmann sat on the money the Jews of the golah had meant for them, until word of it got out abroad and he was forced to hand it over to the mosdos of kedushah without their yielding an inch.

The Lämel School

This bid for what holy chinuch still remained was nothing new. For some sixty years they had worked steadily to destroy chinuch in Yerushalayim and in the land, and they had succeeded.

It began as early as 23 Tammuz 5616 (1856), when Ludwig Frankl, shem resha'im yirkav, one of the leaders of the Reformers in Vienna, opened a secular school for boys in Yerushalayim, the Lämel school, dressed up as a "talmud torah." The Ashkenazi rabbanim knew the man and how corrupt he was. They fought him with mesirus nefesh, and they kept their children out of this slaughterhouse of neshamos that called itself a "school."

The Sephardim knew nothing of Reform or of the "Haskalah" (the "Enlightenment" movement that drew Jews away from the Torah). His smooth tongue won them over, and they took up his offer. They did have their suspicions, so they set conditions: the chinuch would be supervised by the Vaad Adas HaSefaradim (the council of the Sephardi community), and

the school, they stated plainly, would be fully religious in its chinuch, its character and its customs.

When the Ashkenazi rabbanim heard what this villain had done with the Sephardi rabbanim, they told them plainly that the man was not what he seemed: he was founding no talmud torah but a place for learning sefarim of kefirah and minus. A severe cherem on the school was proclaimed at once, signed by the Ashkenazi rabbanim and also by the rosh yeshivah of Beis El, the yeshivah of the mekubalim, the holy gaon Chacham Rafael Yedidyah Abulafia zt"l.

It was too late. He already had the Sephardi rabbanim's signatures. The Sephardi public as a whole kept its children away, but this swindler still netted a number of simple, innocent Sephardim who thought they had found a kosher talmud torah for their children, and "for free." At first those early talmidim still learned limudei kodesh and tefillos there, and came home reciting pesukim and pieces of tefillah. But the dam had been breached. In time more Sephardim were swept in after them, and within a few years the rotten fruit had ripened.

Girls had places of learning too, besides the boys' talmudei torah (the kutabs, from the Arabic word for a children's school). They were run by women teachers (maestras), for the daughters of the Sephardi community alone, not of the other Edos HaMizrach. There, about ten girls to a place, they spent most of the day learning to read from the siddur, to write in Spanish (Ladino), and a little Hebrew as well.

In 5625 (1865) a Lämel school for girls opened as well, and it at once destroyed a number of Sephardi and Edos HaMizrach homes. For parents the temptation was strong. Their daughters were bored at home and growing up unable to read or write; the school promised a chinuch that was entirely holy; and it asked no tuition. Some were taken in, or could not resist, and by the time they saw their mistake it was too late.

When the Ashkenazi rabbanim of Yerushalayim saw the secular "chinuch" begin to bite large pieces out of the neshamos of the Sephardi children, they opened a school for them in 5626 (1866), Doresh Tziyon, run by yirei Shamayim under their own supervision. It was a rescue, if only in part.

On 1 Sivan 5634 (1874) the Talmud Torah of the Sephardim was dedicated, supported by the kollelim of the Sephardi community (its charity funds). In its three classes a boy went from his first steps in reading and

tefillah all the way to Tanach with its commentaries and Hebrew grammar. The secular studies included arithmetic, Arabic, and Turkish, the language of the state, which they needed to make their way in life. The talmud torah prepared them for Yeshivas Tiferes Yerushalayim, open since 5603 (1843), where Gemara and its meforshim were learned in depth. A committee chosen by the Sephardi chachamim and rabbanim ran the institution, with the Rishon LeTziyon, the Chacham Bashi, at its head (the Rishon LeTziyon was the chief rav of the Sephardim in Eretz Yisrael), and close to four hundred talmidim learned there.

In 5640 (1880) the School for the Education of Orphans opened in Yerushalayim under the Reformer Dr. Herzberg. It was backed by the "maskilim" of Berlin, and people called it "the Berlin institution." Once again the first victims were Sephardi boys, because among its teachers were men who kept the mitzvos in outward show.

In 5643 (1883) Eliezer Ben Yehuda, shem resha'im yirkav (the man who worked to make Hebrew a spoken, secular language), came up to the land and published the newspaper *HaTzvi*. This low man saw in the Sephardim the ideal victims for shaping the figure of a "new Jew" in Eretz Yisrael, "enlightened" like all the nations and emptied of every trace of Torah and mitzvos. He chose them for their innocence, and their rabbanim's, of everything to do with the Reform and the Haskalah that had torn into the living flesh of Yiddishkeit in Europe, and because they spoke Hebrew fluently and were open to foreign languages and secular studies, though they kept the mitzvos and were as careful with a light mitzvah as with a weighty one. For thirty years (5645-5675, 1885-1915) he followed what went on in the Sephardi community, in his newspaper and his articles (*HaTzvi*, *HaOr*, *HaShkafah*).

In 5646 (1886) the Sephardi rabbanim, headed by the Rishon LeTziyon, Chacham Rafael Meir Panigel (the Marpe), put Ben Yehuda and his newspaper under cherem. It made little stir, since his readers belonged to the circle of the "Haskalah."

HaChavatzeles, a newspaper that began to appear in the same period, was put under cherem too, by the geonim the Rishon LeTziyon Chacham Avraham Ashkenazi zt"l, Rav Shmuel Salant zt"l and Rav Meir Auerbach zt"l.

The Alliance

In 5642 (1882) Nissim Bechar, shem resha'im yirkav, opened the Kol Yisrael Chaverim school (Kiach for short; the Alliance, a French Jewish organization). The greatest of the Ashkenazi rabbanim, headed by the holy gaon Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin zt"l, put it under cherem at once. Seventeen Sephardi chachamim published a notice forbidding it as well, but they did not carry enough weight, and some Sephardi boys went to learn there.

The prohibition seems to have failed because the rabbanim saw no real difference between this school, run supposedly by the Torah and the halachah, and the other talmudei torah. They based their prohibition on "the learning of the abominable and detestable language, the language of Fransis (the French language), which drives out the Jewish character and brings tumah into the palace of the King, the holy city of Yerushalayim, may it be rebuilt and established."

One Ashkenazi, Yehoshua Yellin, sent his son Dovid to the school, and so fell under the cherem laid on any Ashkenazi who sent a son there. (And this son was indeed a stumbling block to chareidi Jewry all his life.) Yellin claimed that he had asked the Sephardi chachamim whether sending his son to Kiach broke a din Torah, and that the rabbanim Panigel and Elyashar had told him there was no prohibition as long as the school's management conducted itself with yiras Shamayim.

His words are not to be believed at all. By halachah those rabbanim could not have ruled for him: once one rav has forbidden a thing, another may not permit it. Besides, this was a communal cherem laid on the Ashkenazim alone, and it was not theirs to annul. Still, that he could say it at all, and put in their mouths the condition "that there is no prohibition as long as the management of the school conducts itself with yiras Shamayim," shows the face the school wore: a Torah-keeping talmud torah where they "only" learned foreign "languages" as well. In Sephardi eyes there was nothing wrong in that; it was even a good thing. So the fear of learning "Fransis" counted for little. Along with the "languages," these talmidim drank in the spirit of the "Haskalah," and it seeped into them slowly, like poison. At first nothing showed in how they behaved in their parents' homes or in the community; only long afterward did it break out and spread its filth.

In 5655 (1895) Rav Avraham Aminoff opened the Bnei Tziyon talmud torah in the Bukharim neighborhood. For Jewish children it was a lifeline, a place where they received a kosher and proper chinuch, and all the gedolei Yisrael of the next generation came out of it.

In 5664 (1904) the Alliance organization, founded by Kiach, tried to set up a "school" in Chevron. But the holy gaon Chacham Chizkiyah Medini zt"l (author of *Sdei Chemed* and other sefarim), for all his great age, stood firm against them and blocked it.



The holy gaon Chacham Chizkiyah Medini zt"l.

When the organization's heads saw that the attempt was doomed, they gave it up. Ben Yehuda and his fellows were beside themselves when they heard how joyfully and eagerly the Chevron community took the news, on 25 Kislev 5665 (1904), that the school would not open. His newspaper reported: "When the good news reached them that the school would not be

opened, they pledged donations, drank brandy, and held a simchah shel mitzvah."

But to the community's sorrow, the gaon, the *Sdei Chemed*, passed away that same year. The Alliance officials had feared him; once he was gone, they opened the school at once. It started with a few Sephardi children. In time the parents saw that a great deal of limudei kodesh was taught there and did not grasp what the other studies were, and more talmidim were dragged into this slaughterhouse of neshamos. By the time the parents saw their mistake, it was too late.

The Moshavos

In those years, up to the British conquest, the "maskilim" took over nearly every moshavah (Jewish farming village) in the land. The moshavos had been founded by chareidi Jews whose heart's desire was to settle Eretz Yisrael, work its soil and keep the mitzvos that depend on it. Working through the officials of Baron Rothschild (the wealthy Jew of Paris), who had taken the moshavos under his protection, the "maskilim" forced the settlers to profane the shemittah year with the work forbidden in it, and later to make light of terumos and maasros as well. Last of all they opened schools in the moshavos and forced the settlers to send their children there, threatening anyone who held back with the loss of his pay for his work on the land.

At first the schools taught supposedly "holy" studies, with "only" secular studies, languages and the like besides. Once the children were in, the truth came out, and the teaching of kefirah began. Petach Tikvah, "the mother of the moshavos," was among the first to fall. Its people saw that the worst had come. The "maskilim" had carried out their threat and brought them to the shame of hunger, and there was no way out: the children would have to move from the traditional cheder to a chinuch of the "Haskalah." Yet they did not see how great the danger was. To their rebbeim, the rabbanim of Yerushalayim, they made excuses: the only difference between these schools and the cheder, they said, was that besides limudei kodesh the children would learn "languages." And so, with their own hands, they led their children to spiritual slaughter.

Tel Aviv-Yafo was the center of the Haskalah and of Zionism, and there secularism, in every sense of the word, ruled unchecked.

The Rishon LeTziyon

The Rishon LeTziyon was meant to be the spiritual authority of the Vaad HaEidah HaSefaradis (the Sephardi Community Council), which held the hekdesh funds and ran the community's other affairs. The office was badly shaken by the passing of the Rishon LeTziyon Chacham Yaakov Shaul Elyashar zt"l.[25] The contests for the post went beyond the accepted bounds of a dispute between rabbanim, where each side cares above all for the spiritual good of the community. They turned political. The Alliance and the Ezra society (a German Jewish organization) meddled in the elections, each pushing a candidate of its own who would serve its aims, and what both wanted from their man was leave to set up institutions of chinuch in the spirit of the "Haskalah," which has destroyed many neshamos.

Of the six Rishonim LeTziyon after him, nearly all were temporary stand-ins, replaced one after another. Under the Turks, whose government gave it legal force, the office had stood firm; the British conquest weakened it badly, under pressure from the Zionists, led by Weizmann, who wanted an official Chief Rabbinate in its place. And the Sephardi youth, growing up like sheep without a shepherd, fell prey to the "Haskalah," and to Zionism and its movements.

The Talmudei Torah

Some twenty-two talmudei torah were at work in Yerushalayim at the time. A few grew fast, such as the Persian talmud torah, founded in 5661 (1901) with sixty children from the Neveh Shalom and Shevet Tzedek neighborhoods; by 5662 (1902) it already had a building of its own in nearby Zichron Tuviah.

Some talmudei torah began teaching in Hebrew instead of Arabic and Ladino, the usual languages of learning until then. But some principals were so innocent that they did not see who these "maskilim" were, or their contemptible aim: to tear the religion out of these tender boys and leave them nothing but the "wrapping" of the Hebrew language. Far from teaching the boys to beware of these destroying foxes, some even gave them a smiling welcome. (Ben Yehuda visited the Georgian talmud torah Sheeris Yisrael in 5668 (1908) and praised the boys for their fluent Hebrew.) And some of the

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[25] In Tammuz 5666 (1906).

young people, on finishing the talmudei torah, innocently went on to learn secular studies or a trade in schools that looked Torah-observant from outside, and they fell, casualties on the altar of the accursed "Haskalah" and of shameful Zionism.

In *HaCheirus*, the newspaper of the Sephardi "maskilim," the "maskil" Yehuda Burla testified in 5671 (1911) that "some of the young Sephardim who are being educated in the institutions of the 'Alliance' (Kiach) tend toward assimilation." Other issues of the paper report that "more than a third of the Sephardi children learn in Hebrew schools, and among the young Sephardim in Eretz Yisrael identification with the national goals is growing stronger ... for the advance of national education in the land." (National education means secular Zionism.)

The Talmud Torah of the Sephardim Falls

On the eve of the First World War, young Sephardi teachers, graduates of the Hebrew Teachers' Seminary and infected with the "Haskalah," set out to win more influence over the Talmud Torah of the Sephardim and Yeshivas Tiferes Yerushalayim attached to it, and to bring in a different method of chinuch. The gabbaim saw this as an extreme, bold step, one that would bring fundamental, decisive changes in the very nature of the chinuch, and they feared, rightly, that the "Haskalah," with all that comes of it, would overcome the talmud torah. At first they resisted.

But these "teachers" did not give up. They convinced some of the innocent parents that they wanted nothing but the children's good: that was why they wanted a method of chinuch suited to the times, and limudei kodesh would stay as they were. These parents apparently paid tuition that helped keep the institution going, and under their pressure the gabbaim gave way. The talmud torah and its yeshivah passed into the hands of the "maskilim." The chachamim and melamdim were dismissed, with a yearly allowance for life from the fund of the Sephardi kollelim, and teachers infected with the "Haskalah," graduates of the Hebrew Teachers' Seminary, took their places. The Sephardi rabbanim were not pleased with the new management, but as members of the Vaad HaEidah HaSefaradis, which supported the institution, they could still keep an eye on the talmidim's chinuch and intervene to some degree.

When Weizmann arrived with the donated money in the name of the Vaad HaTzirim, the Vaad HaEidah HaSefaradis held a special session, on 2 Iyar 5678 (1918). Present were the rabbanim Chacham Nissim Elyashar, Chacham Binyamin Alkotzer and Chacham Nachman Angel, and the askanim Shmuel Lupo, Yosef B"N Meyuchas, Ezra Benvenisti, Ezra Astruc, Moshe Yeshayah, and the banker Aharon Valero. They resolved: "Since the Vaad HaTzirim has allotted a sum of money for improving the existing schools and opening new schools, it is proper to use this opportunity to improve the talmud torah, to raise it from its low state and set it at the needed level. This can be reached if it is proposed that the Education Committee take the talmud torah under its protection."

They agreed to choose a committee to look at the question from every side: the rabbanim Binyamin Alkotzer and Nachman Angel, and from the "maskilim" Shmuel Lupo and Yosef B"N Meyuchas, with two more representatives to be added by the council of the rabbanim. It would meet with the Zionist Education Committee and work out what changes would be made in the course of studies and the management. The rabbanim were ready to agree, provided the management stayed in their hands and half the hours of study were limudei kodesh.

The Zionist Education Committee, for its part, insisted on taking over the management itself. The talks dragged on for about a year and a half, and meanwhile the rabbanim looked for another way to keep the talmud torah out of secular hands. They were men whose yiras Shamayim came before their wisdom, and in ordinary times it seems unlikely that they would have worked with the people of Mizrachi (the religious Zionist movement). But where they stood, they apparently saw it as the lesser evil, and they tried to bring the talmud torah under Mizrachi.

On 11 Tishrei 5680 (1919) they wrote to the Sephardi Council: "We find it necessary to announce that we stand by our demand that the talmud torah and the yeshivah must under no circumstances be left under the present management, for the management of the talmud torah must be religious and moral together." They were negotiating, they announced, with the institutions of the Mizrachi Organization for it to take the institution under its protection. The letter was signed by the Rishon LeTziyon Chacham Chaim Moshe Elyashar, Chacham Avraham Filosof, Chacham Rafael Shako, Chacham Ben Tzion Avraham Cuenca, Chacham Yosef

Mordechai HaLevi, Chacham Ben Tzion Pizanti and Chacham Dovid Papo, zt"l.

But the institution's fate had already been sealed. As M. D. Gaon put it: "Meanwhile there was another spirit all around: the abundance promised by the Vaad HaTzirim encouraged, calmed, and decided the matter."

Hashgachah brought my grandfather to Yerushalayim just as all this was happening, to save the surviving remnant from the hands of the wicked. He found himself in an all-out war, and in defending the kedushah of the people and the land he went so far as to give his back to the smiters and his cheeks to those who plucked at them.

HOW THINGS UNFOLDED

As soon as the British had taken the land, the Zionists, hand in hand with their British allies, began to undermine the authority of the communities' institutions and of the rabbinate, and they did not rest until they had them in their grip.

The Levayah at Wallach

My grandfather told me that at that time the Sephardi chevra kadisha, under the influence the Zionists had on the Sephardi "maskilim," decided to imitate all the nations. Men in black uniforms would escort the dead, the niftar would be carried on a black wagon, and the body would be covered with a black cloth embroidered with a Magen Dovid. (This is a custom of the nations, for whom mourning the dead is mourning a body that is lost and has no future. See *Ahavas Chaim*, Parshas Vayikra.)

The first death after the decision came in the Wallach hospital (Shaarei Tzedek hospital, which people called after its founder, Dr. Moshe Wallach), and Hashgachah had my grandfather there. When he saw how they were dressed and what they were about, he ran straight to the nearby Machaneh Yehudah market and hired several Jewish porters. He promised each of them an enormous sum, a gold napoleon (a French gold coin), if they would take a beating to stop the levayah. He set out with them for the hospital, and they arrived before the levayah had left the courtyard. My grandfather and his porters threw themselves on the ground in the gateway, under the horses' hooves, and with all their strength kept the levayah from going out. Let it be done, they demanded, as it had always been done.

The "chevra kadisha" called British policemen to clear away the protesters. The policemen, some of them gentiles, threatened to club them half to death if they did not clear off. "We are ready for that," my grandfather told them. "That is what we came for." From where he lay, he shouted to the porters: "A gold napoleon is worth taking a few blows for." And they all stayed down.

Suddenly a Jewish policeman came up to my grandfather. "I will persuade him to get up," he told the British officer, and then, in Hebrew, to my grandfather: "Chacham Menachem, don't get up, even if you are beaten. It has been decided that if you don't get up, they will break up the levayah."

The policemen grazed them with a few half-hearted blows, and when they saw that my grandfather and the porters would not budge, they told the chevra kadisha: "Don't bother with them. Bury the dead man as usual. We will not stop them from holding you back." The chevra kadisha men had lost enough time over the new rule. They changed back into their ordinary clothes, wrapped the niftar in a tallis and went on their way. From then on the new rule was dropped completely.

The Chief Rabbinate

Conquering the institutions of chinuch and bringing them under its wing was not enough for the Zionist Vaad HaTzirim. It wanted every matter of Yiddishkeit in its own hands. So they set up the Vaad HaIr (the city council of the Jews of Yerushalayim) and the Vaad Leumi (the national council of the Jews of the land), which became an official, recognized body. They got the authorities to decide on a Chief Rabbinate for all of Eretz Yisrael, whose rabbanim alone would be recognized as official in their rulings, and step by step they moved toward it.

On 19 Teves 5679 (1918) the Rabbinate Office in Yerushalayim was set up, tied to the Vaad HaIr of the Jews of Yerushalayim and to the Zionist Vaad HaTzirim. Its members were rabbanim great in Torah whom poverty and hunger had driven to work with these committees. On 18 Teves 5680 (1920) the Rabbinate Office crowned as Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim a "rav" close to the heads of secular Zionism.

On 13 Adar I 5681 (1921) rabbanim and men of the Zionist Vaad Leumi met in a joint assembly to set up the Chief Rabbinate Council for Palestine-Eretz Yisrael (the land's official name under British rule). The as-

sembly lasted three days. The secular members wanted three secular men added to the Rabbinate Council, and after an argument it was agreed to add to the Chief Rabbinate Council "three secular men who know Torah and keep the mitzvos." The decisions adopted on 16 Adar I read:

> *"The Government of Palestine-Eretz Yisrael will recognize the Council, and every beis din approved by it, as the one competent institution in all that concerns Jewish law. It will carry out, through the government's civil courts, all the rulings given by the beis din of the Council, both by the beis din of first instance and by the beis din of appeals. It will likewise carry out all the rulings given by any of the batei din in Palestine-Eretz Yisrael approved by the Council.*
>
> *"The office of Chacham Bashi no longer exists in Palestine-E.Y., and the government will not recognize any man as Chief Rabbi in Palestine-E.Y. except the two rabbanim chosen by the Council."*
>
> *Signed: W. H. Deedes, Civil Secretary.*

This "rav" was chosen unanimously as Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael for the Ashkenazim, and after him Chacham Yaakov Meir was chosen as Chief Rabbi for the Sephardim.

The Chief Rabbinate was the axe that cut down every beis din then working in the land. A beis din it did not recognize could no longer have its rulings carried out by the government, and it recognized only those that joined it. The rabbanim saw the plight of those who had won their cases, orphans, widows and divorced women among them, with no one to enforce the judgment and save the oppressed from his oppressor. Against their will, and not by their choice, they had to give in and join this "kilayim rabbinate," set up in partnership with the men of secular Zionism.

The gedolim of Yerushalayim, headed by the holy Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l (more about him further on), saw far ahead, and they saw the grave harm this rabbinate would do. They decreed that the day the Chief Rabbinate for Yisrael was founded be a day of fasting, weeping and hesped, because through the rabbanim of this "rabbinate" dinei Torah had been made to bow under the hand of those who act wickedly against the covenant in Eretz HaKodesh.

The Hebrew University

In 5685 (1925) the Hebrew University was dedicated on the heights of Har HaTzofim in Yerushalayim, a place of study for men and women together,

Jews and gentiles. The "maskilim" and the Zionists celebrated wildly for three days. This "rav" took part in the opening ceremony beside Weizmann and his fellows, haters of Yiddishkeit. Before thousands of people from all over the land, men and women mixed together, he stood on the platform of honor and spoke in "praise" of the university and its virtues.

From there, with rabbinic backing, the road to learning in mixed places lay open and easy.[26]

It should be said that the Jews of Yerushalayim, on the instructions of the rabbanim, kept the three days of the university's opening celebrations as three days of mourning over this terrible breach, which all but destroyed the whole character of Jewish chinuch, as it had been through all the generations, throughout Eretz Yisrael.

Such was the spiritual state of things when my grandfather came to Yerushalayim. At once he girded his loins to save the Sephardi youth and bring them back to their Father in Shamayim, and many he turned back from sin.

[26] See at length in the sefer *Mara d'Ara d'Yisrael*, volume 2.

CHAPTER FOUR

"The Chofetz Chaim of the Sephardim"

SABA HAD HARDLY SET foot in Eretz Yisrael before he took up the cause of poor children in distress: orphans above all, and children whose homes had been wrecked by fighting, divorce and the like. He raised money for whatever they needed and got people to open an orphanage for them. It went by the name Chofetz Chaim, and it stood in a big courtyard on Rechov Auerbach in Beis Yisrael, where a building with roomy quarters housed the children. Much of the cost fell on my grandfather z"l himself, though his own life was one of hardship and deep poverty. He also kept up a place of learning there for adults, where every evening and on Shabbos he taught them Torah and halachah. That arrangement lasted until he set up Chevras Ahavas Chaim of his own, which he ran personally.

The First World War left the world's map, and the standing of its nations, transformed. Once it was over, Jews of the Edos HaMizrach began arriving in great numbers, most of them from Yemen, Persia, Bukhara (a city in Central Asia, today in Uzbekistan), Afghanistan and Kurdistan. They had expected to find the Mashiach waiting in Eretz Yisrael. What they found instead was the Zionists, who began gnawing at the young people and corrupting them, luring them into Zionist schools, movements and kibbutzim and knocking every last spark of Torah and Yiddishkeit out of them.[27] My grandfather took to going everywhere, into every corner, sound-

[27] The secular kibbutzim and moshavos were for the most part founded between 5660 and 5670 (1900-10). Those were the years when Zionist aliyah, chiefly from Russia, gathered strength, brought by people resolved to come to the land and build a "homeland" without the yoke of Torah and mitzvos.

ing the alarm against this erev rav. Yet he knew that "a servant will not be corrected by words," and that "it is not study that is the main thing, but deed." So he began to collect young Jews by the dozens and the hundreds. He made sure they learned a trade and worked to keep their parents and their big families (brothers, sisters and so on), that each evening they fixed times for Torah, and that the families they raised would be built on purity and kedushah.

Tinsmithing was his own livelihood, and he taught it to many children with his own hands, urging them to take it up and make a respectable living. For them he started evening shiurim, and to bring them in he handed out sweets and prizes, with coins for the older ones. The teachers he hired were talmidei chachamim and yirei Shamayim, and what he raised was a generation of working men with yiras Shamayim in every fiber.

His work reached well beyond Yerushalayim, following the immigrants wherever they settled in the land, to Tel Aviv and Petach Tikvah above all.

Years afterward I used to go with him to the Shapira neighborhood of Tel Aviv, and I remember how people would get to their feet when he came, full of awe and respect. One man told me, "That is our rebbe. We keep Torah and mitzvos, we and our children, in his merit. We had nearly fallen prey to the evil of the Haskalah and Zionism when he took us in and taught us a trade and Torah."

Work on such a scale could only grow with a proper organization behind it, a chevrah with many branches to expand it and to raise its funds officially, in good order and under supervision. Out of that seed came Chevras Ahavas Chaim, founded in 5690 (1930).

HIS REBBEIM IN YERUSHALAYIM

Chevras Ahavas Chaim had another root as well: my grandfather's devotion to the holy mekubal Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah zt"l. In him, and later in the wondrous mekubal Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l, who came up to Yerushalayim after him, my grandfather found his teachers and his spiritual rebbeim.

From his first days in Yerushalayim, my grandfather was drawn to the city's chachamim, its mekubalim, and to none more than Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah, a man cast in the mold of Aharon HaKohen. Chacham

Yitzchak was at ease among people. He moved from place to place, and his derashos and his deeds left their mark on the public.

He was "the man raised up on high." The taanis dibbur (a fast from speech) was his creation, and he made it widely known. For that day he set out a nusach of tikkun and tefillos into which the entire Tehillim is woven three times, and he printed it in his sefer *Kuntres HaYechieli*. He would lead a large crowd out to the kevarim of tzaddikim across the land, where they prostrated themselves and cried out for mercy over the galus of the Shechinah and the troubles of Klal Yisrael. In the words of the Zohar: "When the world is in pain, and the living go to the kevarim of the tzaddikim to daven to Hashem, asking them to stand in tefillah as well before the Kisei HaKavod, the tzaddikim too stand and daven. If not for the tefillah of the tzaddikim who have passed on, the world could not go on existing."

The Levayah of a Living Man

Many returned from sin through him, and his methods were anything but ordinary. One time he saw how far the generation had fallen. Each man was swallowed up in making a living and caring for his family, and no one ever stirred to look at the state of his own soul. Chacham Yitzchak asked his talmidim to spread the word that he had died. Word went out across the city: the levayah would leave from such a place at such an hour. Thousands from the new neighborhoods of Yerushalayim came and walked in the procession, on foot, from Batei Machseh (a compound of homes for the poor in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City) toward Har HaZeisim. The whole crowd climbed to the top of the mountain and gathered at the open grave. Then he sprang up from the bier and uncovered his face, and there he stood in his tachrichim before them all, speaking about man, whose end is death, and about the answer he will give when he stands before the Beis Din shel Maalah. "Suppose what I did had been real," he said. "What would I have done then?"

He spoke as Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai had spoken in his own time: Hashem judges truly, and no one escapes His judgment. On the day he dies, a man must give a din v'cheshbon for everything he ever did. That is the day of wrath and reproof, of trouble and sighing; the day the reckoning is spread out, the book lies open and the scales of judgment rest in Hashem's hand; a day of dread and terror, a day no ransom can buy off, a day of

trembling and outcry, of ruin and groaning. "To whom can we run for help, and who will shelter us? Come, let us return to Hashem before the stars of our twilight go dark."

Much more he said in the same vein, in that sweet way of his, until the people wept and wept, and that day many of them did teshuvah. After that he went home.

A Cup of Tears at Kever Rachel

In 5694 (1934) "a lion came up from Bavel" (Babylonia, that is, Iraq): the famed mekubal Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l. At once my grandfather became both his talmid and his right hand. He grew deeply attached to Chacham Yehuda's talmidim too, mekubalim themselves, who had come up from Bavel with their rebbe. Among them were two great lights, the holy rabbanim Chacham Salman Mutzafi zt"l and Chacham Avraham Barzani zt"l.

Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l and Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah zt"l complemented each other as Moshe and Aharon did. Chacham Yitzchak was the Aharon. Chacham Yehuda was the Moshe: he stayed at home with his circle of talmidim, immersed in Gemara and Kabbalah. He would draw large crowds for tefillos and selichos, and into these he worked the tefillos that correspond to the Sheva Korsei Bris (the seven "who made a covenant"), which Sephardim customarily say as part of Tehillim on the night of Hoshana Rabbah. He wrote tefillos and bakashos of his own to precede and follow them. He also wrote selichos in the name of each of the four Imahos, the longest being the one for Rachel Imeinu. At her kever, every Thursday night, he would hold the seder of Tikkun Chatzos, then say Tehillim and make the hakafos of the Sheva Korsei Bris in the order he had arranged.

I was told by a man who saw it that while Chacham Yehuda said these selichos at Kever Rachel, he would weep into a large water glass until it was full to the brim, and then drink it. Rachel Imeinu, he said, lies just under the ground beneath the matzeivah. He had seen her. Her body was whole, as though she had fallen asleep a moment before, and she is very beautiful. And she does not lie straight, he added, along the line of the matzeivah, but on a slant.

My grandfather became the foremost talmid of both men and joined their two paths into one. On one side were the hakafos with the Sheva Korsei Bris; on the other, the taaniyos dibbur and prostrating in tefillah at the kevarim of tzaddikim; together they took up a large part of his world. Like his rebbeim, he made time for anyone poor or broken, and helped with counsel, with money and with tefillah. He never used kemios (amulets), not once in his life, yet the power of his tefillah saved many, after they had resolved on complete teshuvah.

THE FOUNDING OF CHEVRAS AHAVAS CHAIM

While the Turks held the land (the Ottoman Turks ruled Eretz Yisrael until the end of the First World War), Jews and Arabs lived quietly side by side. Arab madness and wickedness did flare up now and again and claimed victims, but each outbreak was unplanned and local, and soon burned out. Then came the Zionists, men with no conscience and nothing of the spirit in them, set on seizing the land and ruling the people of the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael). They called for a "national home" and coined empty slogans like "In blood and sweat we will build ourselves a race," "It is good to die for our country," and others of the kind. They started the "Kosel case" (the dispute over rights at the Kosel) by claiming the plaza in front of the Kosel as theirs. All this enraged the Arabs and stoked the fires of strife, until in 5689 (1929) the Arabs rose in pogroms across the land. In Chevron many of the town's Jews were slaughtered, and heavy gray clouds blackened the sky over Eretz Yisrael because of what they had done.

The great mekubalim understood that an era was closing, and that what Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai had foretold was starting to happen: **"The erev rav will rule over Am Yisrael in the Holy Land. They will be the leaders of the generation and the masters of the land, and they will part Yisrael from their Father in Shamayim and the Shechinah from HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Of them it is said, 'Her adversaries have become the head,' and 'Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves; every one of them loves bribes and chases after payments.' Woe to Yisrael when they are swallowed up and mingled among them"** (Zohar, Parshas Naso; Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 21). The Arizal wrote the same: **"In the final era before the Geulah, the entire Dor**

HaMidbar will return in gilgul along with the erev rav, and of them the pasuk says, 'And this people will rise up and go astray after the foreign gods of the land'" (*Shaar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 20).

They put their heads together: how could they soften the pain and damage that the Zionists' work of destruction was sure to bring? They settled on two things. First, associations would be formed to swell the voice of tefillos, selichos and pleas for mercy, and so sweeten the middas hadin poised to break out over Klal Yisrael's slide away from Torah and mitzvos, a slide the Zionist vipers would cause. Second, fitting darshanim would go out to our Jewish brothers in every place they lived in the land, to shore up their emunah, warn them of the corrupt Zionist chinuch and what it did to the young, and urge them to unite and stand up for their own souls and the souls of their families. **And who was first to run and carry out the words of his holy rebbeim the mekubalim, to the letter, if not "Menachem Menashe HaPechach"** (the tinsmith: that was my grandfather's name for himself, and if anyone called him "Rav" or "Chacham" he objected).

My grandfather now called together a number of his talmidim, grown men by then, along with his backers. These backers had stood by him with large sums from the time he arrived in the land. Their money had paid the heavy bills for starting evening shiurim for the young: the running costs, the teachers' salaries, and the prizes, sweets and cash that drew the many children to learn. It had also paid for his journeys the length and breadth of the land, to bring our Jewish brothers close with his derashos. Hundreds of stories went into those derashos, and the people, thirsting for them, took them in eagerly and drew great strength from them.

Most of these backers came from among the Bukharan immigrants, who had built the Bukharim neighborhood some years before he arrived. They were enormously rich, and they lavished gold from their purses on splendid shuls and on printing siddurim, chumashim and sifrei Kabbalah for the public merit. In my grandfather they saw a man of integrity whom they could trust completely. He lived in utter poverty and would not benefit in the least from the gifts of flesh and blood; everything he did and every sum he raised was sanctified to Hashem and to His people Yisrael. So they gave him their help gladly and openhandedly, and beyond all that, they helped him keep poor families going in secret.

Still, a handful does not satisfy a lion. There was not enough money for everything he aimed at, and to carry out his plans my grandfather had to look for more donors.

The meeting was held in the Maskil El Dal shul, beside the courtyard where my grandfather lived, and there they resolved to found Chevras Ahavas Chaim. Its purpose: to bring Yisrael close to their Father in Shamayim by every fitting means, among them (a) spreading Torah among the people and the youth; (b) caring for the new immigrants to the land, body and soul; (c) running a boarding home for young immigrants and getting them places in workshops; (d) aiding the sick and the poor; (e) supporting talmidei chachamim who had no means; (f) setting up an agricultural school; (g) arranging tefillos, taaniyos dibbur and the hakafos of the Sheva Korsei Bris all over the land, and above all at the kevarim of tzaddikim, to sweeten the harsh decrees hanging over Klal Yisrael and bring the Geulah nearer. And naturally, they would build a home of their own to be the center of all these holy aims.

They set to work on every one of these aims at once, and with great energy. Tefillos and taaniyos dibbur were held very often in Yerushalayim, and big crowds came. Most took place in the Kubayof shul on Rechov HaKohanim in Beis Yisrael, which for some five years was the hub of everything the Chevrah did; others in the Shauli shul in the Nachalas Achim neighborhood and the Yagel Yaakov shul in the Mekor Baruch neighborhood. In Tel Aviv the gatherings were in the shuls of the Shapira neighborhood, in Petach Tikvah near Shikun Fajja, I believe, and there were other places too. For these occasions my grandfather brought out the sefer *Likutei Menashe*,[28] a work of mussar and halachah, printed with *Seder Taanis HaDibbur* (the order of the taanis dibbur). It was followed by a booklet arranged by Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l, *Seder HaHakafos Keneged Sheva Korsei Bris, VeNosaf Alav Seder Bakashas Rachamim al Kol Tzarah Shelo Savo* (the order of the hakafos corresponding to the Sheva Korsei Bris, with an added order of pleading for mercy over every trouble, that it may not come),[29] and that booklet opened the way for further booklets and sefarim. In 5701 (1941)

[28] In 5697 (1937).

[29] In 5700 (1940).

the *Hakafos* booklet appeared again, much enlarged beyond the first printing with Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah's own additions.

Every effort went into bringing in as many children as possible, from every neighborhood, and in particular those enrolled in the secular schools. Yet boys from the various talmudei torah, raised in purity and kedushah, had a class of their own as well. The worry was that once their school hours were done, the children of the street would drag them down. At Chevras Ahavas Chaim they could keep learning, safe in the shelter of kedushah.

With its founding, the Chevrah printed membership cards for its regular donors and a student card for every talmid, and the work took on the form of a settled, well-run organization.

The Courtyard on Fishel Levi Street

The same decision that founded Chevras Ahavas Chaim called for buying a fitting home for the many-sided work that would center on the Chevrah. My grandfather wanted that home in Beis Yisrael, because the neighborhood had a character all its own: chareidi, with Sephardim and Ashkenazim living side by side, but no secular people among them.

"The Beis Yisrael neighborhood is the makom tahor the Torah speaks of. When they began building its houses, they came upon heaps of deshen (ashes) and bones of korbanos of the Beis HaMikdash, poured out there, as the Torah says: 'And he shall carry the deshen out beyond the camp, to a makom tahor' (Vayikra 6). This revealed that the neighborhood is the very place where the deshen was poured out, the place of which the Torah speaks."

Lacking the money, though, they could not buy a place of the Chevrah's own, and for some thirteen years its work went on in shuls all over Yerushalayim.

Around 5703 (1943) a fitting property was bought at 9 Fishel Levi Street in Beis Yisrael: a large courtyard standing higher than the road. From the street you stepped into a first courtyard, level with the road, and from there climbed a flight of steps to the upper one. On the right-hand end of the lower courtyard was a storeroom, topped by a little one-room house; on the left-hand end, the cellar of the house over it, home of the tzaddik and masmid Rav Gershon Lapidos zt"l. The upper courtyard had buildings in its two remaining corners. On the right were a small room and a half, and

through them you reached a very large room, which had its own way out onto the street running parallel, Rechov HaBaal Shem Tov; a second door let you into the large room straight from the courtyard. On the left, steps climbed to a yet higher courtyard, where the Lemberger family lived. My grandfather bought the right half of the courtyard, from end to end, for **Chevras Ahavas Chaim: "a permanent acquisition, never to be sold and never to be redeemed."** The large room was put to use at once. The little house by the entrance from Fishel Levi Street came down, along with the storeroom under it, and on the storeroom's foundations rose a long, narrow building for the shul, the ezras nashim and a kitchen.

Over the years the flow of immigrants grew, and the Zionists pushed harder and harder to impose a secular life on the newcomers and pull them into the kibbutzim. My grandfather enlarged his work to meet it. He rented further places as boarding homes for young men who learned Torah and worked as weavers, printers, bakers and carpenters.

To cover the costs, my grandfather went to the Vaad Adas HaSefaradim in Yerushalayim as well and asked it for help, though some of its people had come out of the schools and carried the taint of the Haskalah. He had two reasons for going. (a) The gabbaim included yirei Shamayim too. (b) The money itself was kosher, every bit of it. It came from yirei Shamayim in the lands of the Diaspora, collected by the shadarim (emissaries sent abroad to raise money for Eretz Yisrael) whom the Sephardi rabbanim and the Vaad HaEidah dispatched to wherever those Jews were scattered. It came, too, from the hekdeshos (endowments) left by holy and pure men who never forgot Yerushalayim and who willed part of their estates to its poor. Money like that ought to be spent on kosher and mehudar work, and the aims of the holy Chevras Ahavas Chaim were exactly that.

AIMS OF THE ASSOCIATION:
1) Spreading of the Torah among the people and the youth.
2) Support to needy Rabbis.
3) Help to indigent sick people.
4) Accomodation of new immigrants.
5) Foundation of Boarding houses for young immigrants and their settlement in factories.
6) Foundation of an Agricultural School.

ב"ה
חברת
"אהבת חיים"
שכונת בית ישראל הישנה-ירושלים
"AHAVATH HAYIM"
ASSOCIATION
OLD BETH ISRAEL QUARTER-JERUSALEM

Founded in 1930 נוסדה בשנת התר"ץ
Permit No, 3939|1566 רשיון הממשלה מס.

מטרות החברה:
א) הפצת התורה בין העם והנוער.
ב) תמיכה לתלמידי חכמים מחוסרי יכלת.
ג) עזרה לחולים נזקקים.
ד) סידור העולים החדשים בארץ.
ה) החזקת פנימיה לנוער העולה וסדורו בבתי מלאכה.
ו) יסוד בית ספר להקלאות.

Jerusalem P. O. B. 1382 ירושלים 14 באוגוסט 1944 ת. ד. 1382

לכבוד
ועד עדת הספרדים בירושלים
רחוב הסולל
כ א ן .
א.מ.נ.

הננו שמחים להציג לפניכם את חברת "אהבת חיים" שנוסדה בירושלים בשנת תרץ (1930). מטרות החברה היו עד כה: לעזור לעניים וחולים אמללים, ולסדר שעורי ערב לילדים עזובים ודרשות לעם בשבת.

כמה מחברינו בראות הקשיים בהם נתקלים אחינו הספרדים הפליטים בהגיעם ארצה הציעו לנו לפתוח מחלקה "לנוער ולעולה". כוחות צעירים פעילים נכנסו למחלקה זו והיא שמה לפניה למטרה את ששת הדברים הבאים: 1)-ליסד פנימיה ובתי-מלאכה למען הנוער העולה. 2)- ליצור קרן הלואות למשפחות העולות. 3)-באם גם האמצעים ירשו ניסד נקודת ישוב שתכלול בית-ספר לחקלאות.

חברתנו נגשה בראשונה להקמת הפנימיה והננו נותנים בזה את הפרטים הבאים:

המקום: הפנימיה נמצאת ברחוב דוד מס.36 שכונת הבוכרים. בקרבת התחנה הסופית של אוטובוס מס. 3ב'. היא מכילה שלשה חדרים אולם גדול ומטבח. בקומה העליונה של בנין זה היה פעם בית הספר לנגרות על שם "בלילוס".

תנאי השכירות: המקום נשכר לפני חמשה חדשים בערך על ידי שני חברים מפא"גי שחשבו לסדר בו פנימיה ביחוד לאלה התמנים הצעירים הבורחים מהקבוצים החפשיים. הם שלמו את שכר הדירה עד מוחרם הבא במחיר של עשרים לירות א'י לחדש. שני האנשים הנ'ל הם עסוקים מאד ומאחר שראו שאינם יכולים לנהל את המוסד,באו אלינו בהצעה לקחת את הנהלת הפנימיה . אנו קבלנו את ההצעה והמקום הועבר לרשותנו,~~בלי שום תשלום,דרך~~ בתנאי ~~אחד~~ שהם ינתקו את כל הקשרים עם המוסד הנ'ל. בפנימיה נמצאים ששה או שבעה נערים תימנים שעובדים על חשבון עצמם ומשתכרים כשבע לירות לחדש.

תקונים וריהוט: הסדורים הבאים ההכרחיים לפני פתיחת הפנימיה: 1)- לנקות את המקום היסב ולעשות בו תקונים הכרחיים. 2)- להכניס חשמל בבית.3)- להכין כלי מטבח. 4)- לקנות ספסלים ושלחנות. 5)- לקנות לפחות עשר מטות בשביל צעירים אחרים שיוכנסו להבא לפנימיה. תכניתנו היא לחלק שעות היום לעבודה וללמוד.

מקצועות: אחד מחברי חברתנו שם לרשותנו ארבע מכונות אריגה כדי ללמד את המקצוע הזה לחניכי המוסד. אנו יכולים להתחיל בעבודה תיכף אחרי שנקבל רשיון מהממשלה ואנו מקוים שועד העדה והנציגות יעזרו לנו בזה.

קבלנו הצעות אחרות בעד פתיחת סנדלריה ונגריה. פאג'י מוכנה לקבל צעירים אחדים בבית הדפוס והמאפיה שלה. כודאי שנוכל למצוא עוד מקומות עבודה אחרים.

בקשתנו מועד העדה: א)- הלואה בסך של מאה לירות א'י (100 לא'י) כדי להסב את המקום ולקנות את כלי המטבח הנשונים..

B"H

Chevras
"Ahavas Chaim"
Old Beis Yisrael Neighborhood, Yerushalayim

[In English:] "AHAVATH HAYIM" ASSOCIATION
OLD BETH ISRAEL QUARTER-JERUSALEM

Founded in the year 5690 / Founded in 1930
Government permit no. 3939/1566

[In a box at the right, in Hebrew:] Aims of the Chevrah: (a) Spreading the Torah among the people and the youth. (b) Support for talmidei chachamim without means. (c) Help for the sick and the needy. (d) Settling the new immigrants in the land. (e) Maintaining a boarding home for immigrant youth and placing them in workshops. (f) Founding an agricultural school.

[In a box at the left, in English:] AIMS OF THE ASSOCIATION: 1) Spreading of the Torah among the people and the youth. 2) Support to needy Rabbis. 3) Help to indigent sick people. 4) Accomodation of new immigrants. 5) Foundation of Boarding houses for young immigrants and their settlement in factories. 6) Foundation of an Agricultural School.

Yerushalayim, 14 August 1944
P.O.B. 1382

To the honorable
Vaad Adas HaSefaradim in Yerushalayim
HaSolel Street
Local.

Dear Sirs,

We have the pleasure of introducing to you Chevras "Ahavas Chaim," founded in Yerushalayim in the year 5690 (1930). Until now the aims of the Chevrah have been to help the poor and the unfortunate sick, and to arrange evening shiurim for neglected children and derashos for the public on Shabbos.

Seeing the hardships that our brothers, the Sephardi refugees, meet on their arrival in the land, several of our members proposed that we open a department "for youth and immigrants." Active young forces have joined this department, and it has set itself the following three aims: 1) To found a boarding home and workshops for the immigrant youth. 2) To create a loan fund for immigrant families. 3) Should our means also allow, to found a settlement that will include an agricultural school.

Our Chevrah has undertaken, first of all, to establish the boarding home, and we hereby submit the following particulars:

The place: *The boarding home is at Rechov Dovid no. 36, in the Bukharim neighborhood, near the last stop of bus no. 3b. It contains three rooms, a large hall and a kitchen. The upper floor of this building once housed the Belilios carpentry school.*

Terms of the rental: *The place was rented about five months ago by two members of PAGI,[30] who intended to set up a boarding home there, especially for the young Yemenites who are running away from the irreligious kibbutzim. They have paid the rent until next Muharram,[31] at twenty Eretz Yisrael lirot[32] a month. These two gentlemen are very busy, and seeing that they could not run the institution, they approached us with the proposal that we take over the running of the boarding home. We accepted the proposal, and the place was handed over to us ~~without any payment, and only~~ on the ~~one~~ condition[33] that they cut all their ties with the said institution. There are six or seven Yemenite boys in the boarding home, who work on their own account and earn about seven lirot a month.*

Repairs and furniture: *Before the boarding home opens, the following arrangements are necessary: 1) To clean the place thoroughly and make the necessary repairs. 2) To bring electricity into the building. 3) To provide kitchen utensils. 4) To buy benches and tables. 5) To buy at least ten beds for the other young men who will be taken into the boarding home in the future. Our plan is to divide the hours of the day between work and learning.*

Trades: *One of the members of our Chevrah has placed four weaving machines at our disposal, to teach this trade to the boys of the institution. We can begin the work as soon as we receive a license from the government, and we hope that the Vaad HaEidah and the Representation will assist us in this.*

We have received further proposals to open a shoemaking shop and a carpentry shop. PAGI is prepared to take a few young men into its printing press and its bakery. We will surely be able to find still more places of work.

Our request of the Vaad HaEidah: *(a) A loan of one hundred Eretz Yisrael lirot (LP 100), to furnish the place and buy the various kitchen utensils.*

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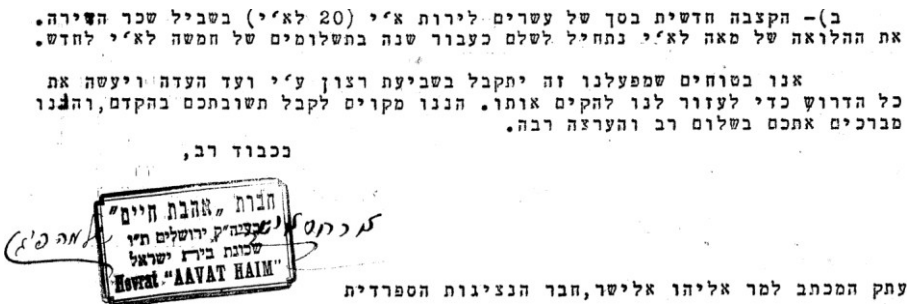
30 Poalei Agudas Yisrael, the workers' movement of Agudas Yisrael. —Trans.

31 The first month of the Muslim year. —Trans.

32 The Palestine pound, the currency of the British Mandate. —Trans.

33 The words struck through are crossed out in the original letter. —Trans.



ב)- הקצבה חדשית בסך של עשרים לירות א"י (20 לא"י) בשביל שכר הדירה.
את ההלואה של מאה לא"י נתחיל לשלם כעבור שנה בתשלומים של חמשה לא"י לחדש.

אנו בטוחים שמפעלנו זה יתקבל בשביעת רצון ע"י ועד העדה ויעשה את
כל הדרוש כדי לעזור לנו להקים אותו. הננו מקוים לקבל תשובתכם בהקדם, והננו
מברכים אתכם בשלום רב והערצה רבה.

בכבוד רב,

חברת "אהבת חיים"
בהקצה"ק ירושלים תו"ו
שכונת בית ישראל
Hevrat "AAVAT HAIM"

עתק המכתב למר אליהו אלישר, חבר הנציגות הספרדית

(b) A monthly allocation of twenty Eretz Yisrael lirot (LP 20) for the rent. We will begin repaying the loan of LP 100 after one year, in installments of LP 5 a month.

We trust that this undertaking of ours will be received with satisfaction by the Vaad HaEidah, and that it will do all that is needed to help us establish it. We hope to receive your reply soon, and we send you our greetings, with every wish for peace and with great esteem.

With great respect,

[Signature:] Menachem Menashe Pechach
[Stamp:] Chevras "Ahavas Chaim," in the Holy City of Yerushalayim, may it be rebuilt and established, Beis Yisrael neighborhood. Hevrat "AAVAT HAIM"

Copy of the letter to Mr. Eliyahu Elyashar, member of the Sephardi Representation

The Talmud Torah

With so many new immigrants arriving, a good number of families could not pay for a talmud torah. The burden was heaviest for the youngest, in the first to third grades, where the fees were high, and the secular kindergartens beckoned as the alternative. These parents were yirei Shamayim, but they saw no great harm in putting such little children in a kindergarten where boys and girls mixed. They failed to grasp that this is precisely the age at which a child's soul takes shape, and that it determines his path in kedushah for life (because whatever a child's soul lives through in his first days and years shapes his whole life deeply, below the level of his awareness). So my grandfather opened a talmud torah for these children as well, where the first to third grades learned for free and got lunch besides.



The Ahavas Chaim talmud torah: the first grade, in the Chevrah's shul. The teacher, Rav Moshe Betzalel z"l.

The first grade had its lessons in the Chevrah's shul. The large room was the dining hall, and the second and third grades, who learned in other shuls nearby, took their meals there too. Every evening the same room was given over to activities and shiurim for the young.

On Shabbos it became a shul for a congregation from Tangier (a port city in northern Morocco), who davened there by their own minhag and with their own tunes, some passages of it in Spanish.

His Derashos on Shabbos

For decades Saba's Shabbos kodesh followed the same pattern. He ate the morning meal in a hurry and set off on foot for the Mishkenos neighborhood, on the far side of Rechov Yafo (Jaffa Road). From the valley of Beis Yisrael it was uphill the whole way, a steep climb. (I often walked it with him. He had to stop and rest several times, and through it all he smiled at the great privilege that had fallen to him, to be mezakeh the rabbim.) In Mishkenos he taught a congregation of Jews from the Balkans for about

two hours, on the week's parashah and on halachah, in their own mother tongue, Spanish (Ladino).

Next came the Shauli shul in the Nachalas Achim neighborhood, near Machaneh Yehudah, where a congregation of Edos HaMizrach heard much the same shiur, close to two hours of it, in Hebrew.

Then he headed home, stopping on the way to daven Minchah at the Musayof shul. At home he ate a quick seudah shlishis and was off again on another long walk, nearly all of it uphill, from the valley of Beis Yisrael to the Mamilla neighborhood at the foot of Shaar Yafo (the Jaffa Gate of the Old City). There, for a large congregation of Jews from Turkey, he gave a shiur of about an hour and a half, again in Spanish (Ladino).

From Mamilla he went straight back to Chevras Ahavas Chaim, where one more shiur, in mussar and aggadah, was already under way. My father z"l began it about an hour before shkiah, teaching the week's parashah in the way of Chassidus, full of original ideas of his own. A little after shkiah my grandfather would arrive, and my father would wind up and hand him the floor. My grandfather then spoke for about an hour and a half, and Maariv was davened a little after Shabbos ended by the reckoning of Rabbeinu Tam. That was his Shabbos until the very last day of his life.

The day had not always begun in Mishkenos. His first shiur used to be in the Musayof shul in the Bukharim neighborhood, in Hebrew, for a congregation of Edos HaMizrach. Then he heard that a large group of new olim had arrived from the Balkan countries, people who did not know their right hand from their left in Yiddishkeit, and he hurried to open a shiur in Mishkenos for them.

He did not leave the Musayof congregation without a shiur, though. He appointed Chacham Yaakov Dweck HaKohen zt"l to take his place: a humble man, an important talmid chacham and a mezakeh es harabim. Back in Egypt, Chacham Yaakov had learned under the gaon Chacham Ezra Attiah zt"l and helped found Chevras Ahavah VeAchvah there, a great center of shiurim for the public. In Eretz Yisrael he had the merit of assisting the G-dly mekubal Chacham Shaul Dweck HaKohen zt"l in his holy work. Week after week for decades, until he was old and gray, he gave that Shabbos shiur in my grandfather's place.

The Radio across the Street

His listeners were bound to him by cords of love, and when he spoke at the Shauli shul they filled it wall to wall. (Every year, too, he held a ta'anis dibbur there, with learning and tikkunim.)

Across from the shul lived a Jew who openly desecrated Shabbos and hated religious people. His sons were raised in the kibbutzim of Hashomer Hatzair (a secular, left-wing youth movement with its own kibbutzim), and Saba's shiurim were a thorn in his eye.

One Shabbos, in the middle of the shiurim, he turned his radio up full blast to disrupt the shiur. The congregation saw the provocation for what it was and wanted to get up then and there and settle accounts with him. My grandfather held them back. He pleaded with them, every way he knew, to ignore the man completely, during the shiur and after it. The neighbor had been spoiling for a fight and was waiting for a reaction. None came, and he was disappointed. The next Shabbos he tried again, and again the congregation, seething, held itself in because my grandfather had asked it to. This went on for several weeks.

Finally, seeing that he was getting nowhere, he came into the shul himself. My grandfather had the people make room for him right at his side, and the moment the man sat down he started in with his questions: "Who says there is judgment and a Judge? Who says there is an Olam Haba? You are fooling simple, innocent people who never had the luck to be 'enlightened,' selling them stories about things that do not exist and cannot be proven."

Now the congregation was in an uproar. This time, they felt, enough was enough. It was time to put an end to his mischief, and a man like this deserved to be torn apart like a fish. My grandfather stopped them with a wave of his hand. With a smile, he took the man's questions one by one. That there is judgment and a Judge he showed from what happens every day: people afflicted now for a sin or a wrong they did years earlier, punished measure for measure in that very matter, and much more of the same. On Olam Haba, too, he had interesting examples and proofs. The "great maskil" had never heard any of it, and his faith in "enlightenment" began, a little, to waver. He lowered his head and sat through to the end of the shiur.

The next Shabbos he was one of the first in the shul, waiting for my grandfather to come. He became a regular talmid and did teshuvah, and

within a few months he was learning elsewhere too, on weekdays as well. In the end he decided to make up for his past by being mezakeh the rabbim himself, and he became a much sought-after speaker on Yiddishkeit. I remember that early in his new life (I was about sixteen) he came and asked me to put the nekudos into the sefer *Shevet Mussar* (by Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen of Izmir) for him, and offered to pay the full price for the work.



A ta'anis dibbur in the Shauli shul. First from the right, my grandfather zt"l. Next to him, his talmid and his right hand for many years, Mr. Moshe Chaim z"l.

For many years after that he was zocheh himself and mezakeh the rabbim. He merited to get his sons out of the kibbutzim and bring them back in complete teshuvah, and two of them went on to be mezakei harabim as well, one in Eretz Yisrael and one in New York.

The Story Club in Mamilla

One Shabbos Chazon, the Shabbos before Tishah b'Av, when I was about eighteen, my grandfather was hoarse. He asked me to come along to his regular shiur in Mamilla and give it in his place, in Spanish (Ladino).

The congregation I found there was older, and yerei Shamayim: the men sat in awe and respect, the women in the ezras nashim. I spoke about the

halachos of Tishah b'Av, and they listened in earnest and asked questions to be sure they understood the halachos thoroughly.

On the way home my grandfather told me how it had all begun, some fifteen years earlier. These people had come up to Eretz Yisrael from Turkey utterly far from religion[34] and had been settled in the Montefiore neighborhood (Yemin Moshe), facing Har Tziyon. My grandfather wanted to bring them close, so he went from door to door. He was opening a story club in Spanish (Ladino), he told them, in the Mamilla shul. It would be worth their while to come, listen and see for themselves. Shabbos was their only free time, so the club met on Shabbos afternoon.

The olim were bored, and they had not yet learned Hebrew, so one Shabbos they came to give it a try. They sat facing the aron kodesh, men and women mixed together, immodestly dressed, cigarettes in their mouths. My grandfather (a fervent kana'i in every matter of kedushah) sat facing them and told stories, nothing more; he knew hundreds of them, perhaps thousands. When he told a story he swayed with his whole body to its rhythm and its spirit, and carried his listeners right into it. They enjoyed it and decided to keep coming.

My grandfather went on. "For several weeks I said nothing to them about the way they behaved, not the smallest remark. Some Ashkenazi rabbanim heard about it and came to warn me: if I did not stop, they would put me in cherem. I told them, 'Go look after your own congregation, and leave me to look after mine.'

"Several weeks later I asked them, when they had a cigarette going, not to put it out but to let it go out by itself, since putting out a fire is forbidden on Shabbos. Several weeks after that I told them about the issur of lighting a fire on Shabbos, and talked them into giving up smoking on Shabbos al-

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[34] From 5683 (1923) on, Torah was forgotten in Turkey. The "Turkish Republic" was founded, and Kemal Atatürk, who ruled it, closed shuls and banned the teaching of Hebrew and of Yiddishkeit. Jews had to marry in a civil ceremony before the chuppah and kiddushin, and rabbanim were forbidden to grow beards. Only at the end of 5710 (1950) did the decrees ease a little, and then the gaon Rabbi Rafael Saban, mentioned earlier, was appointed Chacham Bashi in place of the previous Chacham Bashi, Chacham Bechor Chaim Bejarano zt"l, who had passed away in 5691 (1931).

together. Yiddishkeit itself was still a long way off. I armed myself with patience.

"Then winter came. They came to the story club under umbrellas and with clothes pulled over their heads, and wrung the clothes out as they came into the shul. Only after several more weeks did I start speaking to them about Torah and mitzvos. By then the stories had sunk in and they had begun to understand the lessons in them, and they went along with me, one mitzvah at a time. When summer came, I spoke about tznius in dress and about separating the men from the women, and little by little they became the congregation you saw."

One of them, I remember, was a "policeman." He used to come to my grandfather's house now and then to ask how he should conduct himself on the Shabbosos when he had to be on duty, and what he must avoid.

Some of their sons, too, boys in the schools of the government "Molech," came to keep Torah and mitzvos through their fathers' influence, and some even merited to build a chareidi home. I remember another father whose son had become a soccer player the crowds adored. Again and again he came to my grandfather and wept like a baby that his son should merit to do teshuvah.

When the new olim arrived in 5709-10 (1949-50), my grandfather traveled from one place to another to rouse them to Torah and yiras Shamayim. This came close to real mesirus nefesh. The authorities were set on wiping out every trace of religion among the olim, and whoever got in their way was beaten, injured and threatened. My grandfather would not give up. With mesirus nefesh he established the yoke of Torah among them.

As a child I would go along on his trips to Yehud, Or Yehudah and Petach Tikvah (towns in the center of the country), and I remember meeting some of those olim. Because of what he had said and done, they had stayed shomrei Torah u'mitzvos, simple, wholehearted Jews.

The Edison Cinema

When the Edison cinema opened near the chareidi neighborhoods of Yerushalayim, the Yakirei Yerushalayim (the loyal old-time Jews of the city) came out to demonstrate against it. At four in the afternoon, in the very midst of Shabbos kodesh, the box office opened to sell tickets for the Motza'ei Shabbos show, and frivolous people who had thrown off the yoke

lined up to buy them. Many residents gathered at once to protest so terrible a breach.

My grandfather, it is told, went up and put his head into the ticket window to block the sale with his own body. Sellers, buyers and police rained blows on him all at once, on every part of his body, and he neither rose nor stirred from his place until they dragged him off by main force.

His "Only Sons"

Saba had many "only sons." He looked after them from early childhood until after their weddings. They came from broken homes: a father who drank ("set his eye on the cup") or gambled at cards and the like, and a mother broken and in pain, her spirit in turmoil, with no one to lean on. The children were left to the street, and the street was luring them into frivolity and even theft. Then, out of nowhere, Saba would appear, take the child and put him into a talmud torah or a dormitory at his own expense. Everything was on him: clothes, schoolbooks and attention, the bar mitzvah celebration and the tefillin, finding a shidduch, and all that a chuppah takes. If the young man needed support after the wedding, he got that too. This was how Saba established the yoke of Torah, and "brought out the precious from the worthless."

Other parents were about to put their children into the mission (the schools of the Christian missionaries). Whenever a neighbor or acquaintance told Saba of such a case, he had the children placed in chareidi dormitories to grow up in Torah and yiras Shamayim, and he carried all their needs himself, the institutions' fees included, every single month. Some of these children were in the Diskin and Blumenthal institutions (both orphanages) and in Porat Yosef in Katamon, all in Yerushalayim, and others in dormitories like them in the center of the country.

Until these children were accepted, my grandfather often took them into his own home and cared for everything they needed. They had no spark of Torah, mitzvos or derech eretz, so he gave them food and drink without insisting on a berachah, and tried only with pleasant, gracious words to bring them to make one. At bedtime he said the pasuk "Shema Yisrael" with them himself, or sent me to say it with them. They had never heard it in their lives. What came out of their mouths instead were filthy street songs, learned from the "enlightened," "progressive" education of the

schools of the state that calls itself "Israel," a state that sins by giving the children of Yisrael, the children of the living G-d, a corrupt and crooked education.

The yeshivos with dormitories expected the boys' families to share the cost. More than once a family could not pay, and the administrators sent them to my grandfather, to take on the monthly payment in the parents' place. He first made sure the parents were not simply dodging the bill to take advantage of the tzedakah fund. If their situation truly left them no choice, or if they were so stingy that they would otherwise keep the boy out of yeshivah, he gladly gave them a written commitment to pay for the boy every month for the whole year, on one condition only: that the boy sit and occupy himself with Torah. He did it happily even when he knew from the start that the boy would never be an outstanding talmid chacham, so that he would learn in a good, proper place and company and grow up a yerei Shamayim with the fragrance of Torah.

Envelopes after Chatzos

Many men whom everyone took for people of means used to knock at his door after chatzos. I would get up and let them in, and my grandfather would give each one a sealed envelope with the money he had ready for his livelihood, and no one knew how hard up they were. He made sure no two came at once, giving each his own hour so that they would never meet and be ashamed.

Then there were the homes whose troubles he knew. He would go to them himself, with one of his grandchildren or talmidim to hand the family an envelope of money, sometimes without saying whom it came from. Sometimes he told me to say that Saba had sent it, as if I had no idea what was inside. Other times I would say, "Saba owes you money and sent me to return it." He waited in the next street until I came back, so that they would not see him and be ashamed.

Here is one example of many. Reb M. was orphaned as a young man. When he reached marriageable age, my grandfather urged him to build a home in Yisrael and set about finding him a suitable shidduch. After many inquiries he heard of a girl with yiras Shamayim, from a good family, on one of the moshavim in the south. He made the trip to that distant moshav, much of it on foot along sandy dirt paths, to meet the kallah's parents and

settle the shidduch between the families. Before the young people were to meet, the bochur asked my grandfather to come with him, and my grandfather agreed and went with him to the moshav. He heard the kallah speak, with humility and modesty, and told the bochur, "This is your zivug. Take her, and may it be in mazel tov." So the shidduch was made, in kedushah and yiras Shamayim.

After the wedding he sat and learned, and in time he became a talmid chacham and a mezakeh es harabim. His wife, a nurse by profession, supported the family. Some years later, for whatever reason, she could no longer work, and they were left with no income and several small children. I remember, from when I was still a child, how Saba would bring me now and then right up to their door, put an envelope of banknotes into my hand, a large sum, and send me in to give it to her and say, "Saba says he owes you money. I have come to pay."

The Grocer in Meah Shearim

After my grandfather's passing, people began to talk about a grocer in Meah Shearim. Every Thursday he had been giving dozens of poor families all the groceries they needed, free of charge, even things his store did not carry, like meat and vegetables, which he got for them specially. He had done it for years, and everyone knew him as a baal chessed. About a week after Saba's passing the families came for their groceries, and he told them, "I have nothing to give you. It was all from Chacham Menachem's money." Only then did it come out that my grandfather had stood behind this whole great chessed, and no one had known a thing.

His Real Possession

As I have said, my grandfather kept nothing for himself of the tzedakah he collected and gave out. He lived in want and poverty on his Bituach Leumi payments alone (the state's national insurance, which paid the elderly a small pension), and he wore the same clothes for many years.

In his last years his home was one room in the courtyard of Chevras Ahavas Chaim. In it were an old table and a few chairs, two old iron beds, a wide wooden bench (my bed), a clothes closet and a small icebox kept cold with blocks of ice. There was a big crate as well, the one he had brought his few belongings in when he fled from Turkey, and it held sheets, blankets

and household utensils. The wall closets held the Pesach dishes and a few odd seforim.

He owned one more "possession," and it sat on top of the closet: a bundle of tachrichim and soap. Every so often, when he wanted to stir his visitors to teshuvah and to the purpose of life, he would point to it, explain what was inside, and say, "This alone is my real possession, the one I will take with me to Olam Haba."

There were merchants and shopkeepers, too, whom he saw to be in financial trouble. Several times he went to such a man and gave him a large sum as a "loan," to put into the business and keep it from collapsing. The loan was due "when Hashem helps and the borrower is able to pay."

The Truck to Shmuel HaNavi

Once my grandfather set out with a group in a truck for the kever of Shmuel HaNavi (on a hilltop north of Yerushalayim). On the way the driver was careless and the engine was badly damaged, and they were all stuck by the side of the road, rocky country in those days and far from any settlement. My grandfather stayed calm. Quietly, he sent a messenger on foot to Yerushalayim to hire another truck, so that they could carry on.

That evening, the driver, M. Y., told me, my grandfather came to him and gave him the price of a new engine (1,500 lirot), on top of the fare they had agreed on for the trip. The driver protested that he had not earned it, but my grandfather gave him no peace until he had made him take every lira. The driver was astonished, and so moved that he resolved to do complete teshuvah; and he did.

Money like that did not come easily to my grandfather. He wore out his feet for it, going from one factory owner to the next and from one ordinary shop to another, in Yerushalayim and in the center of the country, and it was grueling and even humiliating.

The Stolen Shoes

Someone once donated several pairs of shoes to my grandfather for the needy. Before he could give them out, a man from Yerushalayim walked into Chevras Ahavas Chaim, stole the lot, and set them out on the sidewalk in the Machaneh Yehudah market at far below what they were worth. That made the police suspicious. They arrested him to find out where the shoes

came from, and after a "hard" interrogation he admitted that he had taken them from Chevras Ahavas Chaim.

The police got in touch with my grandfather. "This man admits he stole the shoes from you," they said. "Please file a complaint for the theft, and you will get them back."

My grandfather shouted at them. "What right had you to arrest a man and make him confess to something he never did? The shoes were donated to me. I needed money, so I gave them to him to sell. Give him the shoes, please, so he can sell them for me."

The policemen could make nothing of it, and they set the thief free, shoes and all. But he was so ashamed that he ran away from Yerushalayim, leaving his family with no one to provide for them. When my grandfather heard, he was deeply troubled. He searched hard, tracked the man down in the center of the country and went straight to him. "Why did you run away?" he said. "To me you are not a thief. I understand you needed money, and it is all right. Here is some money; go home. People already know from me that I gave you the right to sell the shoes. Your name is clean in everyone's eyes." He did not rest until he had brought the man back with honor to his family in Yerushalayim.

The donor heard the story, came to my grandfather in a fury and heaped insults on him. How could he take shoes that had been given to him as a donation and hand them over to be sold? It took a great deal to calm him down. "Look," my grandfather said, "this man was in very hard straits. I decided the bigger mitzvah was to let him sell the shoes, so that he could bring food home to his family." He bore every insult gladly, as long as the thief and his family came to no harm from the affair.

The Chassan's Suit

A clothing factory in Tel Aviv once gave Saba a donation: a suit for a needy chassan. On the way back to Yerushalayim, the man in the next seat was a criminal, and when he saw the new package of clothing, he decided to steal it. In those days the central bus station stood in the middle of Rechov Yafo in Yerushalayim, and that was where my grandfather was getting off. The thief got off first, at the Machaneh Yehudah market stop, taking the package with him. Off the bus, he spread the suit out for the passersby and offered it for a tenth of what it was worth. Police detectives already had their

eye on him. They caught him, took him to the station and questioned him about the suit until he admitted that he had stolen it from my grandfather.

The police sent for my grandfather, and when he came they said, "Here is the suit. The thief admits he stole it from you. Confirm it, your confirmation will be testimony against him, and you will have the suit back."

"What right had you to arrest him?" said my grandfather. "He did not steal anything. I gave it to him. It is his, and he is entitled to sell it, even for one grush (a coin of very small value). He did not steal."

"Look," said the policeman, "we know he stole it, and he has admitted it. But if that is what you say, we will have to let him go."

"Of course you will let him go. Why are you holding an innocent man?"

When the donor heard the story, he was angry with my grandfather. "Why did you do that?" he asked. "It is an expensive suit."

My grandfather answered, "Not for all the money in the world will I be a moser, chas v'shalom."

The "Rav" at the Maccabi Grounds

My grandfather told me how he once heard that a Bulgarian in Tel Aviv, a man people called "Rav," was calling women up to the Torah. Every Shabbos, too, this man went to the Maccabi grounds (a sports field), made "Kiddush" for the team and blessed them with success, in the midst of terrible chillul Shabbos. "A dayan has nothing to go by but what his own eyes see," my grandfather said, and he went to spend Shabbos with his son in the Shapira neighborhood of Tel Aviv. In the morning he walked a long way on foot to the Bulgarian's shul.

He saw what he saw, and went straight to the home of the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, Chacham Yaakov Toledano z"l, whom he found at his Shabbos morning meal. "Such a grave thing is going on in the city," my grandfather said, "and you are silent?"

"What can I do?" he replied. "They do not listen to me."

"Come, the two of us will go out and demonstrate." They set off together toward that shul. On the way they stopped, and my grandfather went into a shul where they were finishing Mussaf and talked the people into joining them. Several dozen people set out behind Chacham Toledano, the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, and my grandfather, demonstrating and crying out at the desecration of what is holy. With the Zionists' own Chief Rabbi tak-

ing part, the police could do nothing, and the journalists came and made a big story of it. Because of all this the thing stopped for several years, though in the end it went back to the way it had been.

The Orphanage in the Courtyard

Inside the grounds of Chevras Ahavas Chaim there was a long courtyard, running from the shul on the east to the big house on the west, and built against the big house was a small apartment of a room and a half. My grandfather pulled the apartment down and put up a long building over the whole stretch between the shul and the big room, with a courtyard alongside it from end to end.

By then the talmud torah was no longer needed: the children had been taken into good talmudei torah in the area. So my grandfather moved into the big room, and the long building became a home for orphans and unfortunate children, with about twenty beds. The children were seven to ten years old. The only exception was a homeless bochur of eighteen, who learned in a yeshivah by day and at night slept with the children so that they would not be alone. The shul's kitchen became the dormitory's kitchen, and the children ate in the shul.

His Illness at Sixty

At about sixty my grandfather fell ill and lost consciousness. For some two weeks he lay at home unconscious, taking only liquids by mouth: soups of every kind, yogurt and the like. All the rabbanim and gedolim of Eretz Yisrael came to see him, with roshei yeshivah of every eidah. They wept aloud, bitter at heart over his condition, and stirred people throughout the country and the world to tefillos and Tehillim for his recovery. By Heaven's kindness he suddenly came to, with no special medicine, and within a few days he was functioning normally again.

His strength, though, had not fully returned, and he was weak all over. The doctors ordered him to close the dormitory. He placed every child in another institution and undertook to pay for each of them every single month: about twenty-five lirot a month per student.

The Tin and the Soap

When my grandfather was about sixty-seven, his sister came from Turkey to visit him. She stayed with his eldest brother, who lived on the next street.

I remember her coming to see my grandfather and telling him, out of sincere love, "You look so well and so young. Your younger brother (Yom Tov, who lived in Turkey) looks older than you."

A few days after she went home, my grandfather fell ill and lost consciousness again. This time he lay unconscious at home for more than two weeks, and the best doctors with their medicines could not cure him. They ordered him taken to the hospital, but my grandmother refused outright, and my father took on all the cost of caring for him at home under the doctors' guidance. There was no need to feed him intravenously, since his mouth worked normally: unconscious as he was, he chewed and swallowed light foods such as porridge and the like. The doctors forbade visitors in his room, and only certain special gedolei Yisrael were allowed in to stand by his bed. Once more the tefillos and pleas of thousands of Jews throughout the country and the world went up on high, and they sent the right messenger to save him.

One day, I remember, he took a turn for the worse, and they called in Dr. Shtark, a well-known neurologist. He examined him and said, "I have no medicine for this patient. His hours are numbered."

Everyone stood there helpless. Just then one of the mispallelim of the Chevras Ahavas Chaim shul came in to visit, Mulla Asher Yazdi, by then a very old man. When he heard the doctor's verdict, he said, "I am ready to put myself in danger to save Chacham Menachem. Bring me a new piece of tin."

I ran straight to his brother's tinsmith workshop nearby and came back with a long strip of new tin that had never been worked. Mulla Asher melted it in a soup ladle and poured it into a pot full of water, saying my grandfather's name and his mother's name as he poured.[35] The tin hardened in the water into a flat lump shaped like a woman's head, with two holes for eyes, and at once we saw in it the likeness of my grandfather's sister.

"This woman gave him an ayin hara," said Mulla Asher, and asked if there was anything of hers. There was: a small bar of soap from the airplane she had come on, which she had used to wash her face and hands. "Wash Chacham Menachem with it," he said.

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[35] Pouring molten metal into water to find and remove an ayin hara is an old custom among the Jews of the East. —Trans.

My mother and I washed Saba's whole body with that soap then and there. Just as we finished, his eyes opened and he came to. (Mulla Asher's hand was paralyzed right after he poured the tin, and it was several days before it worked normally again.) It took about another month before he could speak and function normally. Then he took up all his deeds and his tefillos again, and his long, hard walk every Shabbos to be mezakeh the rabbim with his derashos, just as before, until his last day.

A Visit to Yavneh

There was no limit to his hakaras hatov toward anyone who had ever helped him. I remember a man from chutz la'aretz who had once given money to Chevras Ahavas Chaim and who asked my grandfather to visit his son at a yeshivah near Yavneh (a town south of Tel Aviv). The yeshivah lay far out of town, and the walk was very long. Old as he was, my grandfather not only made the visit but invited the son to come and see him in Yerushalayim, and asked my mother z"l to host him in our home whenever he came. In time he drew the young man very close and made a shidduch for him with the daughter of one of his close followers in Tel Aviv, and they merited to build a holy and glorious home.

When Mrs. Flor Danon, the gabba'it of the Chevrah's "kupos" (charity boxes) in the center of the country, passed away, my grandfather took care of everything: her burial, the purchase of the grave, the building of the matzeivah and the rest.

CHAPTER FIVE

Tikkunim and Tefillos

EACH SUMMER MY GRANDFATHER gathered a large crowd to make tikkunim for aveiros, following the kavanos of the Arizal and of the Rashash (Rav Shalom Sharabi, the great mekubal of Yerushalayim) zy"a. There were fasts and sigufim (afflictions of the body), the order of tikkun for the four misos beis din, and gilgulei sheleg (rolling in snow).

The gilgulei sheleg took place in the changing room of the Beis Yisrael mikveh. Dozens of blocks of ice were laid across its floor until several square meters were paved in one solid sheet. Then the men, still fasting, undressed and rolled over the ice, back and forth, again and again. For a week afterward my grandfather was hoarse, and he drank only hot water.

On Hoshana Rabbah, year after year, Saba made a practice of collecting the congregation's lulavim and esrogim and putting them away on the roof of the shul. Whenever a special time of trouble and distress came, the congregation would circle the teivah (bimah) of the shul, or the tziyun of the tzaddik where they had come to daven, lulavim in hand, and beg for mercy. Those tefillos never went unanswered. Either the gezeiros were annulled, or rescue and victory for Klal Yisrael followed.

Four Groups, and El Alamein

By the time the German army reached El Alamein, close to Egypt,[36] its aim was no secret: to push on to Syria, and from Syria into Eretz Yisrael, and

[36] El Alamein is a town in the western desert of Egypt, some hundred kilometers west of Alexandria. It was there, in 1942, that the British halted Rommel's German army and drove it back. —Trans.

wipe out every Jew. It had allied itself with the Mufti of Yerushalayim (the head Muslim religious authority of the city), Haj Amin al-Husseini, yimach shemo, who was training Arab SS men (Hitler's Nazi troops) for the purpose. It was an eis tzarah l'Yaakov. The holy mekubal Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l called the people together for a special tefillah. He split them into four groups and sent one to each of the four corners of Yerushalayim, to stand there and daven the hakafos of the Sheva Korsei Bris in the order he had arranged, with other tefillos besides.

One group he put under my grandfather. When the tefillah was over, Chacham Yehuda sent for him and, with everyone present listening, told him, "Your tefillos today did their work. They confused Hitler's sar (the angel appointed over him above), and he switched the letters of Syria for Russia (in Hebrew, סוריה, Syria, and רוסיה, Russia, are the same letters in a different order). From now on he will head for Russia, and there he will fall."

A few days later the holy gaon Rabbi Yaakov Abuchatzeira zt"l zy"a,[37] a man accustomed to miracles, appeared to Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah zt"l in a dream. He asked him to bring a congregation to his kever in Damanhur, in Egypt, and daven there about the situation. Chacham Yitzchak got to Egypt by way of miracles (see further on). There he gathered a congregation, and together they prostrated themselves on Rabbi Yaakov's tziyun and davened for a long time. On the third day of their tefillah the German army was beaten at El Alamein. Hitler, yimach shemo, turned on his allies the Russians and went to war in Russia, where he met his downfall.

In the Streets, 5708

People who remembered the war of 5708 (1948) told me what happened then. The enemies of Yisrael had the Jewish settlements in the land surrounded, Egypt to the south, Syria to the north and Jordan to the east. Saba took out a large crowd, children at its head, carrying lulavim and shofaros, and they went to daven in the streets of the city, from the Bukharim neighborhood all the way to Machaneh Yehudah and Nachlaot. Seeing them, some shopkeepers shut their shops and joined in, weeping with fear at what

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[37] The great tzaddik of Morocco, the Baba Sali's grandfather. On his way to Eretz Yisrael he passed away in Damanhur, a town in Egypt near Alexandria, and he was buried there. —Trans.

was happening, and many did teshuvah there and then. After these tefillos a small army with no weapons, nothing in its hands but sticks and tin cans, routed tens of thousands of armed Arab soldiers, and the Jewish settlement in the land was saved.

Selichos on the First Day of Pesach

My father z"l told me of a first day of Pesach when, in the middle of Shacharis, my grandfather announced that a terrible gezeirah hung over the Jewish community of Eretz Yisrael and they must plead hard in tefillah. Halachah does not allow fasting on Yom Tov even until chatzos, he said, yet this time the meal must wait until close to shkiah, and they must say many tachanunim and selichos and the Thirteen Middos of Rachamim. A great crowd of his talmidim and acquaintances joined in, and every neighborhood was in an uproar.

The rabbanim asked him to stop, for the honor of Yom Tov. "You do not know how harsh this gezeirah is," my grandfather answered. "There can be no rest until it is annulled." He kept on with the congregation, tachanunim and selichos at length, exactly as on Yom Kippur. Some time after chatzos he stopped and told them, "Go and eat your bread with joy, for Hashem has accepted your tefillah. Baruch Hashem, the gezeirah has been annulled entirely."



My grandfather davening in the streets of Yerushalayim to annul evil gezeiros, around 5714 (1954).

The Battle for Beis Yisrael

In Iyar 5708 (1948) the Zionists proclaimed the founding of their state, and the soldiers of the Jordanian Legion (the Arab Legion, the army of the kingdom of Jordan) made up their minds to take the Jewish neighborhoods of Yerushalayim: to destroy, to kill, to wipe out every inhabitant and carry off their goods as spoil.

The Legion held the hills that ring Yerushalayim on the east and the north, from Nebi Samwil (the hill of the kever of Shmuel HaNavi), facing the city's western end, to Har HaZeisim in the east, with Har HaTzofim in between. Those heights gave them command of all of new Yerushalayim, and while artillery shells rained down on the neighborhoods, they crept closer.

Shimon HaTzaddik and Nachalas Shimon, Nachalas Yitzchak and Batei Zibenbergen, the neighborhoods on Beis Yisrael's northern border, fell to

them, and their Jewish residents ran for their lives. The Legionnaires looted the property, then demolished the houses, wiped the neighborhoods off the map, and stood facing Beis Yisrael.

On Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai, 20 Iyar 5708 (1948), the Legion shelled Beis Yisrael from Har HaTzofim. Its snipers, dug in among the ruins of the captured neighborhoods, took careful aim at the people davening in the neighborhood's central shul and in the shtieblach next to it. That Shabbos they killed twelve men and women.

With bullets whistling and shells thundering, the people living along the edge of the neighborhood, on Rechov Shmuel HaNavi and the streets around it, fled for their lives to other parts of the city. In the heart of the neighborhood, on Rechov HaKohanim, the shul of Chacham Shaul Tzadka filled with men, women and children. Packed into it and into the ezras nashim beside it, they shook with fear of a cruel enemy who had openly declared his wish to slaughter the Jews, and they begged my grandfather to daven to Hashem to annul the evil decree.

My grandfather, alav hashalom, asked them all to say the ninety-first kapitel of Tehillim ninety-one times straight through, while he himself stood davening from the depths of his heart. Shortly after they had said the kapitel for the ninety-first time, the shelling stopped, and people went home.

A few days later the Legion forces camped on the ruins began getting ready to storm Beis Yisrael and destroy it completely. Shells from Har HaTzofim pounded the neighborhood and snipers' bullets swept its streets, and under that cover the enemy moved toward Rechov Shmuel HaNavi. In the shuls of the neighborhood people said Tehillim without stopping and pleaded with the Borei Olam, Shochen Shechakim.

Surrounded by a great crowd, my grandfather, Chacham Menachem zt"l, carried a sefer Torah out into Rechov Sonnenfeld. Back and forth they walked, the whole length of the street, many times over: from the corner of Rechov Rabbi Betzalel Ashkenazi, where the Bukharim neighborhood begins, to near the back of Batei Ungarin, close to Meah Shearim. All of them wept and cried out to the Borei Olam, begging for His mercy.

At the top of his voice my grandfather called out the ninety-first kapitel, "Yoshev b'seser elyon," and the congregation repeated it after him. Shells flew over their heads and buried themselves in the walls of the houses, and

my grandfather signaled to the frightened people to keep saying the kapitel as they walked, without a pause and without fear. The Legionnaires had come right up to the outermost houses of the neighborhood. There they halted, for no reason anyone could explain, and everyone saw the yeshuah of Hashem. Beis Yisrael did in fact become the border of Yerushalayim, with the Kingdom of Jordan's border right up against it. For many years Beis Mandelbaum, at the top of Rechov Shmuel HaNavi, near the spot the mispallelim had reached with my grandfather and the sefer Torah, marked the end of the city and served as the gate to Jordan.[38]

[38] The Beis Mandelbaum crossing, known as the Mandelbaum Gate, was the one way through between the Israeli and the Jordanian parts of Yerushalayim from 5708 (1948) until the Six Day War in 5727 (1967). —Trans.

A Voice from the Grave



ב"ה

מודעה

היות וידוע שאנו נצרכים לבקשת רחמים גדולים, לכן מודיעים שביום חמישי ט"ו לחדש תמוז יארצייט של הגאון ר' חיים בן עטר ז"ל (בעל אור החיים) בל"נ אנו הולכים להשטתח על קברו בהר הזיתים משעה 8 עד 11 בבקר לומר התהלים ולבקש רחמים.

מקבשים מאת הקהל בלי הפרש עדה לבוא להשתתף אתנו ביום זה.

הערה — אין אנו מתקבצים במקום מיוחד בכדי לעלות להר הזיתים, אלא כל אחד יבוא לשם בעצמו.

חברת «אהבת חיים»

A notice from between 5690 and 5700 (1930-40).

B"H

NOTICE

As it is known that we stand in need of great mercy, we hereby announce that on Thursday, the fifteenth of Tammuz, the yahrzeit of the gaon Rabbi Chaim ben Attar z"l (the author of Ohr HaChaim), we will, bli neder, prostrate ourselves on his kever on Har HaZeisim from 8 to 11 in the morning, to say Tehillim and ask for mercy.

We ask the public, of every community without distinction, to come and join us on this day.

Note: There will be no gathering place for going up to Har HaZeisim together; each person is to come there on his own.

Chevras "Ahavas Chaim"

My grandfather told me that he was once crossing Har HaZeisim with more than a minyan of men, on the way to daven at the kever of Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, when they heard a voice coming from one of the graves. A few of them went closer, and they heard it plainly: a man's voice, speaking from inside the grave.

Before their eyes the matzeivah rose, and a man climbed out of the grave. Terrified, everyone fled except my grandfather and one other man. The two of them turned to the dead man and asked him what was going on.

"I am a simple Jew from the Machaneh Yehudah market," he told them. "I bought myself a grave here, opened it, and set a matzeivah stone over it. Since this is the end of every man, I come here every day, close the matzeivah over myself, say the whole Tehillim inside the grave to sanctify the place, and go home."

Before the Six Day War

I remember the days before the Six Day War in 5727 (1967), when the whole country trembled at the war it saw coming. The president of Egypt had declared the Straits of Tiran (the narrow sea passage at the southern end of the Gulf of Eilat, Israel's sea route to the south) closed, and in Gaza the Arabs paraded through the streets brandishing their weapons and shouting "Itbach al-Yahud" ("Slaughter the Jews"). My grandfather went out with a crowd and lulavim to daven through the streets of Yerushalayim, the children of the talmudei torah leading the way.

A few days later I was at his house one morning when the mekubal and tzaddik Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani zt"l (about him, see further on) walked in. "Chacham Menachem," he said, "last night in my dream they read me the pasuk, 'Your hand shall be raised over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off.'"[39] The two of them spoke of how war would break out right away, and how within a week Klal Yisrael would again be davening at the Kosel HaMaaravi.

At that point nobody knew whether Hussein, the king of Jordan, would join an all-out war against Israel. (It came out later that the men in power in

[39] Michah 5:8. —Trans.

Eretz Yisrael had a secret agreement with him that he would not be swept along by the declarations of Egypt's president; in truth, both sides were drawn into this war by mistake.) And so it was. The next week Jewish young men stood before the Kosel, davening and blowing the shofar.

At the Kever of Binyamin

The kever of Binyamin HaTzaddik, son of Yaakov Avinu a"h, near Kfar Saba (a town in the Sharon, northeast of Tel Aviv), was especially dear to him. Every so often he arranged trips there, several truckloads from Yerushalayim and Tel Aviv together, to daven at the holy tziyun. There he brought about great yeshuos, for the community and for individuals.



Tefillos at the tziyun of Binyamin, son of Yaakov Avinu a"h.



At the tziyun of Binyamin, son of Yaakov Avinu a"h. On his left stands the tzaddik Chacham Dovid Laniado zt"l.



Tefillah in the courtyard of the tziyun of Binyamin, son of Yaakov Avinu a"h. In the background on the right, facing the camera, is my grandfather, a sefer and a lulav in his hand; beside him am I, in a checked shirt, blowing the shofar.

One midsummer I went there with him and a very large crowd, and from late morning until evening he led awesome tefillos, with selichos and hakafos with lulavim. On the way home I asked him, "How do you know this is the kever of Binyamin HaTzaddik? Maybe it is only the grave of some Arab sheikh."

"I know clearly that Binyamin the son of Yaakov Avinu, alehem hashalom, lies here," he answered. "You have no idea what a wonderful illumination this place has. It is so great that, if I could, I would leave everything I am busy with, come to live near the tziyun, and serve as its shamash."

Chaggai and Malachi

After the Six Day War I proposed to my grandfather that we make hakafos in the cave of the neviim Chaggai, Zechariah and Malachi, high up on Har HaZeisim. Naturally he agreed, and he announced it publicly. Several minyanim came, and we made the "Hakafos and Sheva Korsei Bris." When we were done, my grandfather told me that the neviim Chaggai and Malachi had stood beside us as we davened. "And Zechariah?" I asked. He said he was not sure Zechariah is buried there. (The Zechariah meant here is the navi of the beginning of the Bayis Sheni, who prophesied together with Chaggai and Malachi, not the navi Zechariah of the days of the Bayis Rishon, whose kever is known, at the foot of Har HaZeisim.)

Yavneh, and the Kever of Dan

I remember a time we went to Yavneh, a very large crowd, for a tefillah my grandfather had arranged at the kever of the holy Tanna Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh, the Nasi of the Sanhedrin. Every moment he davened in that holy place, my grandfather's face shone with happiness.

Another time Saba brought a large crowd from Yerushalayim to the kever of Dan ben Yaakov, and they held a great tefillah there that took up most of the day. When we finished, I remember, Saba was smiling and happy, and I think he said that this tefillah had made a great impression in Shamayim and annulled evil gezeiros.

Journeys to the Galil

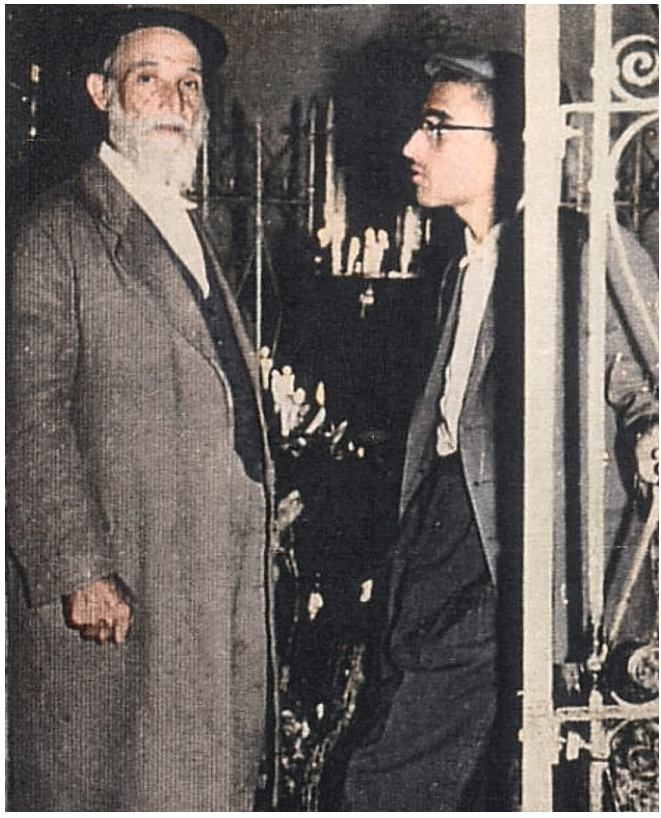
Several times a year he took a congregation to daven at the kivrei tzaddikim in the Galil, all of them riding with him in a truck, sometimes two. (A truck held about sixty men.) Hiring trucks cost a great deal, and the tickets never

paid for the trip, since most of them went free to people who could not afford one. But those who came truly wanted to daven; they were not out for a pleasure trip.

Each journey to the kivrei tzaddikim of the Galil took three or four days running, and they stopped for hakafos at almost every kever. At midday there was a short break to buy food and eat it in a public park, or in the ezras nashim of some shul along the way. The rest of the day belonged to the tefillos.

My grandfather would bring along a primus (a kerosene pressure stove) and a big tin drum, and in it he boiled water so that everyone could have coffee and tea, morning and evening. Many a time, after an exhausting trek that included climbing mountains on rocky paths to the kevarim of Tanna'im and Amora'im tucked away in some hidden cave, he himself filled the heavy drum, hauled it, lit the primus and boiled water for the tired crowd.

On these journeys they usually spent one night in Teveria, sleeping on the floor of the shul beside the tziyun of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess, and a second in the Sephardi shul of the Arizal in Tzfas. There, after only a little sleep, my grandfather would wake the travelers as early as chatzos for tefillos and selichos until daybreak. The third night was spent beside the tziyun of the holy Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron. When a trip lasted three days, they slept the second night in Tzfas or in Meron, however things worked out.



My grandfather and I at the tziyun of Rabbi Elazar b'Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai zy"a.

In Tzfas and Gush Chalav

In Tzfas he was particular about visiting the kever of the Tanna Rabbi Yosi Banaah, who lies inside a shul in the middle of town. He would spend several hours of the morning there saying selichos, for the place, he used to say, is very mesugal.

At the tziyun of Shemaya and Avtalyon in Gush Chalav (a village in the upper Galil), I once saw him stand with his eyes shut, lost in thought. He stayed longer than he usually did, and on the way out I asked him why. "This time I felt great ruchniyus," he said.

Also in Gush Chalav are the kevarim of Yochai, father of the Rashbi, and of Rabbi Meir Baal HaHakdamos, and at both he took care to daven and say selichos.

In the Tzfas cemetery he took pains to hold a tefillah at the mouth of the cave of Chanah and her seven sons. It faces the kever of Rabbi Ye-

hoshua ben Chananiah, which people wrongly call the kever of Hoshea ben Be'eri the Navi. And at the kever of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair he never once left out the seven hakafos.

The Snake in the Arizal's Shul

This one I heard from my uncle. My grandfather was davening Minchah with a big congregation in Tzfas, in the Arizal's shul (the Sephardi one, by the cemetery). In the wall of that shul is a cave where, the tradition says, the Arizal learned Torah with Eliyahu HaNavi, and that is why a shul bearing his name went up on the spot after his petirah. All at once a large snake crawled out of the cave. It climbed onto my grandfather, coiled itself around his waist and rested its head by his ear.

He was so deep in his tefillah that he noticed nothing. The people around him were terrified and wanted to stop him, but my uncle held them back and asked them to keep still until he was done. When he finished and began his steps back, the snake slid off him and returned to the cave by the way it had come. For many years afterward the mouth of the cave was kept shut.

Benayahu ben Yehoyada

Not once did my grandfather pass up the tefillos at the holy tziyun of **Benayahu ben Yehoyada zy"a**, near Tzfas.

The mekubalim count this kever among the few that stand apart, unique in kind and in level. One reason is the greatness of Benayahu's neshamah, in the sod of "ben ish chai, rav pe'alim, mi-Kavtze'el"; another is the bond he has with every Jew who comes to his tziyun with a request, above all one who has kavanos and holy yichudim in mind there.

The holy gaon Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l, the Ben Ish Chai, came up from Bavel to daven at the tziyunim of the tzaddikim in the Galil. After his tefillah at the holy tziyun of Benayahu ben Yehoyada his face was shining, and he said that there he had been given hasagos (spiritual perceptions) wondrous and tremendous. For that reason a number of his great and holy sefarim carry the names *Benayahu*, *Ben Yehoyada*, *Ben Ish Chai*, *Ben Ish Chayil*, *Rav Pe'alim* and *Mekabtze'el.*

My grandfather opened the tefillos there with seven hakafos around the tziyun, and with every round the whole congregation cried out with hislahavus the pasuk "And Benayahu ben Yehoyada, the son of a valiant man,

great in deeds, of Kavtze'el: he struck down the two lion-like warriors of Moav, and he went down and struck the lion inside the pit on the day of the snow." Lofty and exalted secrets lie hidden in this pasuk.



My grandfather at the tziyun of Benayahu, with me (on the right) and my brother Rafael z"l (on the left).

The Cave of Rabbi Chiya

I went with my grandfather to the kevarim of the tzaddikim in the Galil many times, and I cannot recall a single time we went up to daven at the kever of Rabbi Chiya and his sons. Yet it lies close to the kever of Rabbi Akiva, and to reach Rabbi Akiva we would walk a long way on foot. I asked him why we never went. "There is no time," he said.

That puzzled me. He found time for every other kever, even ones well off the main road, and davened and said selichos at each. Rabbi Chiya and his sons stand, as the Gemara explains, on the level of the holy Avos, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and for them alone he never had time. I could

tell he was brushing me off with an excuse. Years later, when I was older, I saw that our master the Arizal writes that Rav Hamnuna Saba lies in that cave with them, the same Rav Hamnuna Saba whom Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai could never mention without being stirred, and my wonder grew sevenfold.

One day, on my own, I went up to the tziyun of Rabbi Chiya and his sons, and to my surprise what I found was a flat grave out in an open field. According to the Gemara, Rabbi Chiya and his sons lie in coffins inside a cave. The Arizal too describes their cave, as an achsadra (a covered hall, open on one side) with three walls, and his words make it plain that its mouth is wide, taking up the whole front. Here there was no cave anywhere in sight. Perhaps, I thought, they did not rest here at all; people were pointing to the wrong spot, and that was why Saba stayed away.

I went back to the Arizal, at the end of *Shaar HaGilgulim*, and studied his words again: **"Afterward you go to the north side, bearing to the west. There, on that hill where the people of Teveria bury their dead, there is an achsadra built of three walls, and people call it the cave of Rabbi Chiya and his sons. Know that in those windows in the northern wall are buried Rabbi Chiya and Yehudah and Chizkiyah his sons, and Rav Hamnuna Saba, who is constantly mentioned in the Zohar, and Rav Huna the Reish Galusa. From there, up the hill to the west and bearing well to the south, there in a cave is Rabbi Akiva."**

He says it outright: the cave of Rabbi Chiya lies **north** of the kever of Rabbi Akiva, which is on the hilltop, and Rav Hamnuna Saba and Rabbi Chiya and his sons rest on the hillside, in the cemetery. The spot marked today as his kever, though, is **south** of Rabbi Akiva's cave, with no cemetery there and no sign of one anywhere near it. Besides, the pilgrims who traveled there in the Middle Ages all describe Rabbi Chiya's cave as one cave among many, not a cave on its own, and the Gemara bears them out (Bava Metzia 85b: when Reish Lakish was marking the caves of the Rabbanan in Teveria, the cave of Rabbi Chiya was hidden from him). Here not a single cave is to be seen. This is certainly not the place.

So my guess had been right. Saba, it seems, knew it, and kept it from the world so that people would go on davening in the merit of these tzaddikim in any case, wherever they lay.

In 5760 (2000) I went to Teveria to look for the cave of Rabbi Chiya by the Arizal's signs. At the northwestern corner I searched the ground below Rabbi Akiva's cave, up the slope and along the diagonal running north, and found no caves and no cemetery. There was a hill with a rounded corner that matched the description, but it seemed to be a single solid mass with no cave in it. Its top, where it meets the flank of the mountain crowned by Rabbi Akiva's cave, was grassed over, with no sign of kevarim. So I went to the spot shown today as the tziyun of Rabbi Chiya and davened to Hashem that I might find the cave I was after.

All at once I felt drawn back to the hill with the rounded corner, to stand facing its middle and look again. This time I saw the opening of a cave, blocked up, with only a little of its lintel sticking out. From the lintel's width, the opening had run the whole width of the cave, an achsadra of three walls, just as the Arizal describes it. This, I understood, was the cave I had been looking for.

A closer look showed me that the whole hill was ringed with caves, every one of them completely blocked; that was why at first it had looked to me like one mass with no cave in it. Looking carefully, I saw what blocked them: earth mixed with human bones. It was clear to me what had happened. The cemetery the Arizal mentions, which in his day lay on top of this hill, had been washed away by heavy rains (or deliberately destroyed with heavy machinery), and the earth of the graves and the bodies had slid down the slope and sealed the caves.



The cave of Rabbi Chiya.

Rejoicing, and thanking Hashem Yisbarach for letting me find the cave of Rabbi Chiya, I walked over to the Tiferes Banim shul close by (fifty meters south of the cave, at the corner of Rechov HaTanna Nachum Ish Gamzu). Young bnei Torah were there, waiting for Minchah. I told them what a place they had in their neighborhood and talked a minyan of bochurim into coming to the mouth of the cave, where we said selichos, the Yud-Gimmel Middos and Kaddish. As we finished, the mouth of the cave opened slightly. In the hislahavus of that moment I asked Rabbi Chiya that Shamayim grant me to find the holy shul the Arizal speaks of as well, since tefillos there would surely bring Mashiach sooner.



A blocked cave next to the cave of Rabbi Chiya; this is how Rabbi Chiya's cave looked when I first saw it.

We have been back to the tziyun of Rabbi Chiya with a minyan several times since, and after our tefillos there the cave has opened further. Its mouth now stands about two meters high and about half a meter deep.

The Arizal's Place in Teveria

At the end of *Shaar HaGilgulim*, Rabbi Chaim Vital zt"l writes: "In Teveria, inside the city itself, at its southern end on the shore of the sea, there is a large shul of the Jews, **and there is great kedushah there from ancient times**. But it is not at the southern wall, where the heichal (the aron kodesh) now stands, but in the middle of the length of the shul, at the second arch, in that corner on the western side. There my teacher the Arizal would fix his place of tefillah when he was there, because there is wondrous kedushah there." *Shivchei HaAri* adds that the Arizal went from Tzfas to this very spot in Teveria by kefitzas haderech, to daven that gezeiros be annulled.

I had always taken this to be the shul of Rabbi Chaim Abulafia zt"l, on the seashore. Still, I had my doubts, for in all the times I went in there with Saba to daven, he never said a word about this passage of the Arizal. I looked for the true place and could not find it.

The same week I davened at the mouth of Rabbi Chiya's cave to find it, a sefer called *Teveria* came my way, a history of the city from its earliest days. Turning its pages, I came on what my soul longed for: a whole article about the shul in the Arizal's writings. The author tells, among other things, that the holy Shelah made his home in the courtyard beside it while he lived in Teveria, and that the place bears his name to this day: "Kapos HaShelah." In 5630 (1870), because of our sins, the vali of Damascus (the Ottoman governor) sold this holy place to the Greek Christians, and they built their house of "worship" on it. The Jews protested and fought the case up through the gentile courts, which ruled that the place go back to the Jews, provided the Jews paid for the building the sitra achra had put up. They had no money to pay it, and so the place has stayed in the Christians' hands to this day.

I went to Teveria and there, on the spot, stood the church of tumah. It is no longer in use, Baruch Hashem, but the kelipos still hold the place captive, and idolatrous images stand on its roof. At the base of the building, on the north side, was an iron door with bars, locked fast; through the bars I could make out the entrance to the building and its inner courtyard. Deeply moved, I stood there and said kapitlach of Tehillim. A few nights later a minyan of us came and held Tikkun Chatzos and selichos, with the Yud-Gimmel Middos and the shofar, to raise up the Shechinah, which is in galus there. Ever since, I have come back with a minyan now and then to daven over the galus of the Shechinah.

The Shechinah in the Cave

On Shabbos Kodesh, in Tammuz 5761 (2001), I lay on my bed thinking about the Shechinah in Teveria and asked Hashem to show me whether what we were doing found favor in Shamayim. As I thought, my eyes closed. I did not fall asleep, yet I found myself, as in a kind of dream, standing in a large cave, and I knew it was the cave under the building in Teveria. In the middle of it was the mouth of a large, deep pit. To see how far down it went, I picked up a stone and threw it in. When it struck bottom, a spark of fire flared. In my heart I understood that this is where the sparks of kedushah fall when Yisrael sin, and that when the aveiros grew strong, the holy place fell into the hands of the kelipos, Hashem save us.

I looked up and saw a woman coming toward me. Who she was, and what she wanted of me, I could not tell. She was tall and full-bodied. A wide-brimmed straw hat hid all her hair, leaving only her face showing, and a long beige dress covered the rest of her, all but her feet, which were bare. Her face was covered in burns, as if it had been fried in oil, and her feet were swollen like two watermelons, the feet of a man who has walked the desert for many years.

In an instant I knew: this was the image of the Shechinah, which dwells in this place. My heart trembling, I asked her, "Ima, what are you doing here?"

"Surely you know what is in this pit," she answered softly. "I am guarding what is inside it."

At once I understood that this is how she appears while she is in galus, and that the aveiros of Yisrael had burned her face and done that to her feet. Her pain and suffering shook me deeply, and I asked, "Ima, how long will this suffering of yours go on?"

She walked to the wall of the cave that faced the sea and struck it with her palms. It split lengthwise, a crack about half a meter wide, and I followed her out through the opening. Before me were tables set, with tzaddikim sitting at them, joyful and glad, eating and drinking, their faces shining like the radiance of the sky. She stood before them wondrously beautiful, smiling and happy, a colored kerchief covering all her hair and her light shining like the light of the sun.

A short while later I was back inside the cave, standing before her, her face burned once more, and she told me, I think, that the time of the geulah is near, or something to that effect.

When I opened my eyes, something puzzled me. The building stands right at the water's edge, on a flat shore without a mountain or hill, and I could not see how a cave could lie beneath it. Perhaps, I thought, the cave was only a picture, shown me to make the galus and the geulah clear. I told my family and my talmidim what I had seen.

A few days later my son and I went back to Teveria to daven there over the galus of the Shechinah. While I davened at the barred door, he went off to look around. He was back within minutes, greatly stirred. "The cave you saw is real," he told me. "I found its opening outside the wall of the building." I went after him to the west side of the building, and there, hidden in

a small stand of trees, was the mouth of a cave running in under the building. Several times since, I have brought a minyan of my talmidim to hold tefillos and Tikkun Chatzos beside it.



The mouth of the cave under the building in Teveria.

There the Shechinah lies in the dust to this day, waiting for the one who will redeem her. **Fortunate is the one who will be able to redeem this place and return it to our Father in Heaven.** It would surely shorten the road to our geulah and the redemption of our souls. To my mind, this is where the Sanhedrin sat last of all. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 31b) says that Teveria is the lowest of them all, as it says, "And you shall be brought low, and you shall speak from the earth," and Rabbi Yochanan said: From there they are destined to be redeemed, as it says, "Shake yourself from the dust, arise, sit." Here Eliyahu will come and set up a Sanhedrin with semichah from him, and before them he will testify that Mashiach ben Dovid is the Mashiach we are waiting for. (Without that testimony we will accept no man as Mashiach over us.)

Women on the Trips

Women came on these trips as well, though my grandfather was firmly against a woman going into a cemetery for any reason. So on the trips, too,

they stayed outside the cemetery and begged for rachamim from there. Kevarim of tzaddikim outside a cemetery were another matter: there he encouraged them to come and daven, as long as they were not in their days of niddah. A woman's tefillah is accepted many times more readily, because the two grave sins of zera levatalah and bittul Torah have no bearing on her. (That is why we Sephardim mention a person in tefillah by his mother's name "always," and not only in his lifetime; this is not the place to say more.) To that end he would set aside suitable places for them on the trip, so that the gain would not be outweighed by the loss.

The Scorpion in Meron

My grandmother joined one of the trips, and in Meron a yellow scorpion stung Savta. Her hand swelled and her life was in danger. It was the middle of the night, chatzos, and everyone was up on their feet in terrible suspense, wondering where help would come from. But I watched Saba stand calmly by the tziyun of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and daven for a few minutes, and the swelling went down at once, all of it, and she was well again.

Shmuel HaNavi and the Chida

The kever of Shmuel HaNavi was very dear to my grandfather. Once the road there opened, after the war of 5727 (1967), every so often he would hire a truck and take dozens of people to daven at it. The last night of his life, too, he spent in tefillah at this holy tziyun, as I will tell further on.

When the holy aron of the Chida zy"a, the pride of our strength, was brought up from Livorno (in Italy) to Yerushalayim, my grandfather thought it right to hold a day of tefillah and supplication at his tziyun, for deliverance from the rule of the "erev rav" and for "hakamas Shechinta me'afra" (raising the Shechinah from the dust). That was apart from the tefillos he held at the tziyun every year on Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan and Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul, before the great crowds who go up then, as Yerushalayim's custom is, to the kevarim of their relatives.



Tefillah at the tziyun of the Chida zy"a. I am bent over my grandfather's back; above me, in a white shirt, sits Chacham Naftali Ma'alimi zt"l, rav of the Kurds in the Mamilla neighborhood (the Tannous building), a baal mofes (a worker of wonders) and a faithful friend of Saba who would visit him from time to time. I "suspect" he was one of the hidden tzaddikim.

The Watchmen at the Kevarim

Some kevarim of tzaddikim had an Arab watchman who looked after the tziyun, opening and shutting it and the like, as at the kever of Yosef HaTzaddik in Shechem or of Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol in Shezor (a village in the Galil). When my grandfather held a tefillah at such a place, he was careful to collect a few coins from the crowd and hand them to the man. I asked him why: is it not written "lo sechanem" (one may not give them a free gift)? He answered that the man takes trouble over the place, so he must be given his share, and then he would have no hold on the tefillos. (This may belong with mayim acharonim, or it may be like what the Zohar writes in Parshas Terumah: any mitzvah, other than learning Torah, that a person got for free and did not acquire with money, the sitra achra takes hold of, Hashem save us.)

On that subject: I once had the zechus of going with my teacher and rebbi, Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l, to daven at the tziyun of Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol zy"a. We found the room over the tziyun locked and

had to wait for an old Arab, one of the villagers, to come and open it for us. Inside, everything was clean and well kept.

Chacham Yehuda asked him why he took such care of it. His father, the Arab told him, had gone many years without children. Seeing the Jews visit the tziyunim of the Tannaim in the village fields (besides Rabbi Yishmael, the kevarim of the Tannaim Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar zy"a and Rabbi Shimon Shezuri zy"a lie scattered there too), he said, "I too will go to one of them and pray." The kever he came upon was Rabbi Yishmael's, and there he prayed for a son. That night Rabbi Yishmael came to him in a dream. "If you take it on yourself to build a room over my tziyun and keep it clean," he said, "I promise you a son within the year."

"My father answered him on the spot, 'I promise,'" the Arab went on. "In the morning he started on the room, and a month later my mother was expecting me. My father kept his word from then on. I am his only son, born through the tzaddik's berachah, and I keep the promise too, because I believe my life depends on it."

Unseen at Shimon HaTzaddik

At the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik, too, he would hold tefillos now and then with a large crowd, and he would also go there alone to pray for the sick and the needy. Witnesses tell that even while the place was held by the Kingdom of Jordan, my grandfather went there with others who held on to his coat or his hands. The spot was the border between the Jordanian state and western Yerushalayim, and the Jordanian soldiers on guard there never saw them come or go. My grandfather, it seems, used fitting pesukim so that they would be "ro'im ve'einam nir'im," seeing without being seen.

CHAPTER SIX

The Shiurim at Chevras Ahavas Chaim

RAV YAAKOV MEIR SHECHTER ZT"L

For decades the older talmidim had their fixed shiurim from Rav Yaakov Meir Shechter zt"l, in Gemara and in the weekly parshah, every day without fail and on Shabbos too. My grandfather picked him for this on purpose: he was a man of truth, afraid of no one. His Torah ranged over many fields, and through every shiur ran the view of true Judaism on Zionism and its rabbis, which he could set out in terms clear, plain and convincing.

He spoke on the parshah with depth and conviction. He drew out its ideas, wove them into what was actually happening day by day, and proved from each parshah that the Creator wants us to keep as far as we can from the "erev rav," even for the sake of a great mitzvah, "pikuach nefesh" included. His derashos were truly sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

Every one of these shiurim was l'shem Shamayim, and he would not take a penny for them. He earned his bread with his own hands, teaching arithmetic, dikduk and Jewish history at Yeshivas Porat Yosef, first in the Old City of Yerushalayim and later in the new city too. His life was one of want, plain and modest.



Rav Yaakov Meir Shechter zt"l.

His talmidim did not stop coming to him at Chevras Ahavas Chaim once they married. After a draining day's work they would sit down with him to Gemara and halachah, and together they completed a great many masechtos.

Nearly all of them held to this true outlook to the end of their lives and brought up their children on it: stay away from the Zionist troublers of Israel, keep apart from them, and accept not so much as a small perutah from their Ministry of Religious Affairs for a talmud torah or anything like it. My grandfather's rule was to toil and open a place of Torah without asking this heretical government for help. It may look impossible at first, but whoever keeps at it will succeed in the end. He and Rav Shechter had the merit of raising flock after flock, whole generations, and their children after them, who walk this path in truth and uprightness to this day.



A siyum masechta at one of the Ahavas Chaim shiurim, with Saba seated in the center.



A mitzvah dance at a siyum masechta. At the center is Rav Shechter, who gave the shiur, with Saba behind him. Every one of them began learning here, some as boys and some from the time they came up to Eretz Yisrael.

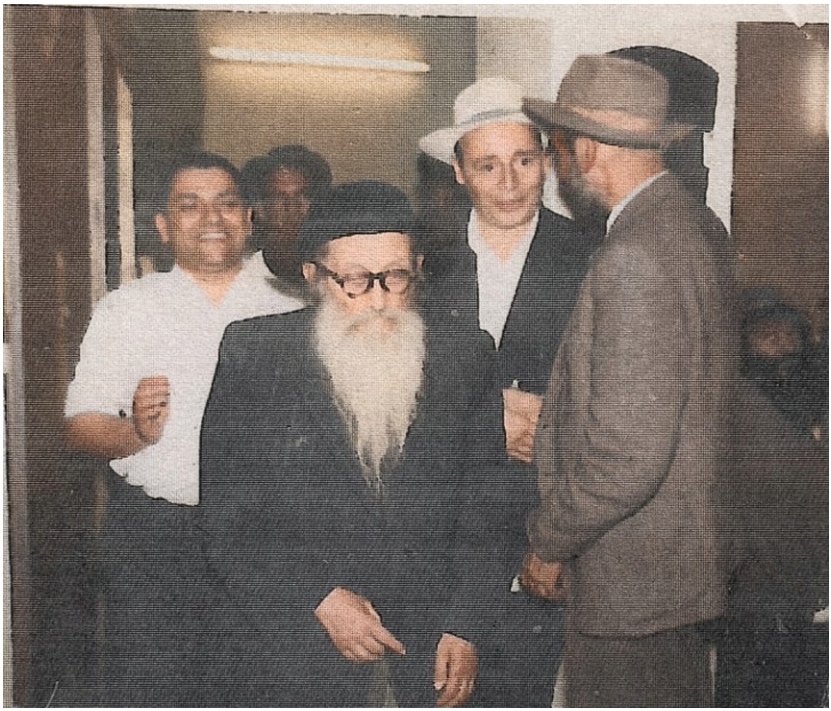
My father z"l was one of his devoted talmidim, men who would follow his word through fire and water. None of them ever soiled his hands with

voting, not even for the parties known as "religious" and "chareidi," those with "the high praises of G-d in their throats" and "a double-edged sword" in their hands: a share in transgressing the religion, the approval of the state budget among it, a budget that includes "avodah zarah, gilui arayos and shefichas damim."

On Zionism and the rulings of its "Rabbinate," he and my grandfather thought alike. One had to keep apart from them: trust none of their rulings on any matter at all, and not rely on their hechsherim for food and the like, even b'dieved. For the families who listened, with small children to feed, it was a hard test. This was the time of the "tzena" (the years of austerity after the State was founded), when food was rationed. Every one of them guarded his own soul and the souls of his household, careful not to defile himself with the food of the "rabbis of the Chief Zionism."[40] In the shemittah years they warned against relying on the heter those rabbis had invented, the sale of the land, or on any of their other worthless inventions.

I remember how, in the shemittah years, fresh vegetables almost never came into our house.

[40] He is playing on "the Chief Rabbinate" (HaRabbanus HaRashis), writing "Rabbanei HaTziyonus HaRashis." —Trans.



Rav Shechter zt"l at my bar mitzvah celebration, with my father behind him at the left of the picture.

Rav Shechter was the author of *Zimras Yesha*, a commentary on Tehillim, and of *Mishpat UTzedakah*, a commentary on *Tanna Devei Eliyahu*.

He would tell people that saying chapter 68 of Tehillim with kavanah for forty days, and then davening for it, is a segulah for finding one's zivug.

MY PARENTS' MARRIAGE

The tzaddik Rav Zev Cheshin zt"l also gave shiurim at Chevras Ahavas Chaim, both to the public and to the young people. He was a holy man, humble and quiet, a talmid chacham and a yerei Shamayim. He spoke a fine, fluent Hebrew, softly and calmly, weighing each word, and listening to him was a real pleasure. He regarded my grandfather as a man of rare stature, and my grandfather in turn thought very highly of him for his Torah, his middos and his deeds. (More about him further on.)

One of the boys from the Talmud Torah Bnei Tziyon who came to the evening shiurim was my father z"l. He was not like the others. Part of each

day he worked to support his family, and at night he caught up on the lessons he had missed, yet he got further than the boys who learned all day. That brought him to the notice of Rav Zev Cheshin, who drew him close. Humble as he was, the tzaddik made my father his talmid-chaver, though they were far apart in years and in knowledge.

My father was born in Herat, in Afghanistan.[41] His father, Yosef z"l, was the shamash of the shul and taught the little children, and he had two wives. My father was the firstborn son; after him his mother had another son and a daughter. Devorah, his father's other wife, passed away young, leaving a daughter.

He was eight when his father passed away, and his mother made up her mind to go up to Eretz Yisrael with her sons and her daughter, and Devorah's daughter too. They were well off, with plenty of silver and gold, and they joined a caravan bound for India, because from there the way up to Eretz Yisrael was easy. In a forest on the road, robbers fell on them and stripped them of everything, their outer clothes included.

They came into India naked, with nothing at all. Fellow Jews, merciful by the very nature of their souls, helped them on their way, and they arrived in Yerushalayim barefoot and in rags. The whole burden fell on his mother. She tried her hand at any work she could find, but could not make a living. My father had been learning in the Talmud Torah Bnei Tziyon under Chacham Shlomo Abbo zt"l, a teacher who gave himself to his talmidim far beyond what his post required; every great man of that generation had learned under him. Now my father had no choice but to go out to work.

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[41] Herat is the "Hara" of the Navi, the place to which the Ten Tribes were exiled. And there they are to this day, there and in neighboring Pakistan, along the river Gozan, which still goes by the same name, "Gozan." The "Pashtu" people of the Afghan nation, more than fifteen million strong, all trace their descent, father to son, to Binyamin the son of Yaakov Avinu, alav hashalom. Alongside them live the "Pathan," descendants of Efraim the son of Yosef HaTzaddik. Among the well-known "Taliban" fighters, many are **without any doubt** descendants of "Gad" the son of Yaakov Avinu. They are called "Jaji," and these tribes marry only among themselves. A man caught with a woman of a foreign people, "zealots strike him down," and there is only one law for him: death. These are "the lost ones in the land of Ashur," who will return with Mashiach Tzidkeinu. All this is as clear as the sun, and well known to anyone who comes from Herat.

(He never forgot how devoted his teacher had been to his progress in learning. All his life he kept the yahrzeit of his teacher and of Devorah, his father's wife, and honored them as is fitting, as the Sephardim do: he said Kaddish, held "berachos" (gathering people to make berachos over food in the niftar's memory) and learned.)

When he was about ten, my father went to learn shoemaking from a Jew in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood, a yerei Shamayim who considered it a mitzvah to teach the trade to an orphan. Right away my father was mending shoes a few hours a day, bringing home a few prutos for the family, and so he went on until he had mastered the making of new shoes.

He was highly gifted, with a powerful memory. Not only did he absorb all he had missed and make it up, he overtook every one of his friends and knew far more than boys his age. The shiurim at Chevras Ahavas Chaim were life itself to him, and above all the private learning with Rav Zev Cheshin, **as a chavrusa**. Rav Zev planted in him a deep, pure yiras Shamayim. Being one of the true Breslover chassidim, he taught him that Torah too, and my father remained a Breslover chassid all his life, one of the settled, calm ones who were great at understanding this Torah and spreading it. For a long time he taught *Likutei Halachos* every evening at Chevras Ahavas Chaim.

When my father was fifteen, Rav Zev Cheshin went to my grandfather and suggested him as a shidduch for my grandfather's fourteen-year-old daughter, Sarah. My grandfather took one look at my father and smiled. He knew this was the one, and agreed on the spot. With Hashem's help, the shidduch went through.

Years afterward the two of them still met now and then to learn together. I still have a booklet they studied together on "chochmas kaf hayad vehapartzuf" (the wisdom of reading the lines of the palm and the face). With this wisdom Rav Zev brought many people back in teshuvah, and with it my father healed many.

My father could also read the Shabbos candles, the fire and the flame.[42] Each week he would tell us what was about to happen in the family and on what day of the week, and it happened just as he said. He already had this

[42] See Zohar, Bereishis 50b.

wisdom when I was small, so it seems likely that this, too, he learned with Rav Zev.

His sister passed away in the last years of his life. Because he was ill, no one told him. The next Motza'ei Shabbos he called her house and asked his brother-in-law how she was. His brother-in-law began to stammer, and my father said, "You have nothing to hide. Last night I already saw in the Shabbos candles that she is no longer in this world."



My father standing beside my grandfather at my bar mitzvah derashah. At my left is Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi zt"l.

The Chomesh

At a time when money was tight, my father undertook to give a fifth of his profits, a "chomesh," to tzedakah. A hard stretch followed, a real test of his finances. He held firm and kept giving the "chomesh," though it came straight out of the bread that money could have bought. Then things eased, and Hashem's berachah and His promise, "and I will pour out for you a berachah until there is more than enough," began to come true.

Many families in Yerushalayim had a share in that berachah. With a note of confirmation from the tzaddik Rav Menachem Mendel Gefner zt"l, a family would get shoes for every one of its members without paying. He and my father had arranged it between them: Rav Menachem Mendel paid a few percent of the shoes' value out of the tzedakah fund he ran, and the chomesh money covered the rest.

A great deal of the money also went to the chessed fund of my rebbi, Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l, rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef, which supported needy avreichim and bochurim. It kept other kollelim and Torah shiurim going as well. Even part of the livelihood of the gaon and tzaddik Rav Meir Abuchatzeira zt"l, a man accustomed to miracles and a true friend of my father, came out of this chomesh money.

The Shop Next Door

I mentioned the trials Shamayim sent my father once he had undertaken to give chomesh from his profits. This was one of them.

The very winter he took on the chomesh, a new shop opened right beside his on the street, selling shoes for less than he charged, and my father could not compete. The shop next door sold factory-made shoes, turned out in quantity and imported by the owner; my father sold shoes he made himself, by hand, and they cost more to produce. Naturally they were sturdier too, but hardly any of the customers were well off, and they bought the cheaper goods from the competitor.

My father had an agreement with the directors of the Diskin orphanage: before every Pesach and every Sukkos he supplied fifty pairs of shoes for the children. (Each child got one pair a year, and the orphanage could not shoe them all at once, so it split them into two groups, one fitted out at Sukkos and the other at Pesach.) The price was low next to the market's, and his profit small. That Erev Pesach the directors came to him with their decision. The competing shop had offered to supply them for less. Since my father had the first right, they would buy from him if he matched the competitor's price; if not, they would have no choice but to buy from the other shop. My father told them there was no way at all he could go lower. Besides, his shoes were sturdier, and in time they would save on the repairs that factory shoes need. They replied that this was tzedakah money and they were duty-bound to buy the cheaper shoes, and they went away without placing their usual order.

My father was left with a large stock and no cash. Heartbroken, he gave the competitor over to the judgment of Shamayim. That same year the man fell into serious financial trouble and had to close his shop. He did not leave the shoe business, though; he became an agent, selling the shoes of manufacturers and factories to the shops.

My father, for his part, went on faithfully giving chomesh from his meager profit, though it came out of the very bread that money could have put on his table and ours, until we began to feel the poverty at home. Then, suddenly, he began to rise and rise. He had devised a patent, a special method of making orthopedic shoes, and it helped many people. Hundreds of sick people limped into his shop bent over and walked out straight and smiling. His shoes became known around the world. The hospital doctors, too, came to recognize his method, and sent him patients who were about to lose a leg to amputation; they kept their legs.

The business grew. My father traded his little shop in the Meah Shearim market for a large one in the Geulah neighborhood, with an enormous cellar, and began making ordinary shoes too, for sale in shops all over the country.

The White Boots

Some years later that agent came to my father asking to sell his shoes to the shops he dealt with. The arrangement looked profitable, so my father agreed.

One day the agent arrived with an order: a large shop wanted several dozen pairs of tall women's boots in fine white leather, and would pay fifteen lirot a pair if they were delivered within a week. A quick reckoning told my father that the deal should leave him about eight hundred lirot clear profit, a very large sum in those days. He took the order, hired workers especially for it, and within the week every pair was ready. But when he called the agent to come and complete the deal as agreed, the man arrived crestfallen. That very day, he said, the fashion had switched to another color, and no one would buy these boots, not even at cost.

My father had sunk money and labor into the deal, and now it had turned into "a stone that no one will turn over" (goods that nobody wants). At first he was deeply upset. Then he pulled himself together and began searching his deeds: why had Hashem done this to him? He remembered how, nine years before, he had given this same agent over to the judgment of Shamayim, and it seemed that this was what had cost the man his shop and turned him into an agent. Chazal say that one who hands another over to judgment is punished too, and so Shamayim had arranged for this great loss and this great grief to reach him through that very man. He went

straight outside, lifted his eyes to the heavens, regretted the judgment he had called down, and did teshuvah for it with all his heart, accepting the judgment on himself as just. The next morning the agent came back. During the night, he said, he had found a buyer for the boots who was willing, against all reason, to pay nine lirot a pair. So my father came out of the affair with no loss, and even a small profit.

An Insult on the Way

One morning when I was about eleven, I was sitting in class with a headache that bothered me badly, and the teacher sent me home. I found the house locked, so I set off for my father's shop. Halfway there a man stopped me. "You are So-and-so's son," he said, and he started to slander my father and run him down. It hurt me deeply.

At the shop I found Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l sitting with my father, the two of them deep in divrei Torah. I did not know Rav Yosef yet, or what sort of man he was. I broke into the middle of their conversation and poured out to my father how a man had opened his mouth wide against him. My father was overjoyed to hear it. "Did kevodo hear?" he asked Rav Yosef. I saw Rav Yosef's face light up with joy. "Baruch Hashem," he said. I was astonished; what there was to be happy about, I could not understand.

Only later did I understand. Before I came in, Rav Yosef had told my father that he saw the midas hadin resting on him, and had said, "If only they would shame you, so that the harsh judgments would be sweetened and lifted from you." Then I walked in with my story. They could not have hoped for better news.

The Baba Sali zt"l

The greatest rabbanim of Jewry, in Eretz Yisrael and abroad, came to my father for orthopedic shoes. One of them was the Admor accustomed to miracles, **Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira zt"l** (the "Baba Sali"). He and his son, the holy Admor **Rav Meir Abuchatzeira**, were dear friends of my father. When my father remarried after my mother z"l passed away, it was the Admor Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira who conducted the chuppah and kiddushin, and he made a large seudah at his own expense.

Thanks to that friendship I had the merit of going in to him several times. On one visit the Baba Sali picked up a bottle of "arak" (an anise liquor) that was, as far as I remember, "empty." As I watched, he whispered over it, and it filled with fine arak. He poured me a large glass. I told him that alcohol does me harm, and he promised me it would not. I drank it all down. It tasted and smelled like very strong arak, yet apart from feeling slightly dizzy I came to no harm.



THE REBBE, RAV YOEL TEITELBAUM ZT"L

Another of his customers was the light of Klal Yisrael, **the holy Rebbe, Rav Yoel Teitelbaum zt"l** (the Satmar Rebbe). Because of that, when the holy Rebbe came to Eretz HaKodesh and tens of thousands crowded to see him, my father went in without waiting, taking me with him, and I had the merit of receiving his berachah.

On that visit everyone could see with their own eyes the Rebbe's boundless ahavas Yisrael for every Jew, wherever he might be. He drew a line between the "erev rav" who rule here in Eretz HaKodesh and the pure

tinokos shenishbu who had fallen captive to them and been "educated" against Hashem and His Torah.

In the line waiting for his berachah stood a soldier in uniform who, by the look of him, did not keep Torah and mitzvos. When his turn came he humbly handed the Rebbe his kvittel and told him about his son, who had been struck by a serious illness. The Rebbe listened closely, looking at the soldier with a father's eyes, full of compassion and pain, and asked at length how his son was doing. When he heard how grave it was, he broke into loud weeping, and tears of sorrow streamed from his holy eyes. He held the soldier's hand for a long while, and still sobbing aloud, blessed him with great kavanah that his son should merit a refuah sheleimah. At last the Rebbe's weeping stopped. He parted from the soldier with warm affection, adding a berachah and the request that he come back soon with good news. Rav Avraham Attik shlita, rosh yeshivah of Yeshivas Be'er Shlomo, who was there at the time, told this story.



The holy Rebbe, Rav Yoel Teitelbaum zt"l.

Some two months before my father passed away, I went to see him at home, and he told me he would soon be leaving the world. This past Friday night, he said, my grandfather Chacham Menachem had come to him in a dream with Rav Zev Cheshin, their faces shining with a precious light. "Avraham, prepare yourself," they told him. "We have come to tell you that we are preparing a place for you beside us."

CHAPTER SEVEN

His Torah

MY GRANDFATHER OFTEN SPOKE about the duty of talmud torah, and about how nothing can free a man from it; he even published a large kuntres on the subject. Yet hardly anyone ever saw him open a sefer to learn, apart from Tehillim. His house held few sefarim, one of them *Taharas Ha-Kodesh*, by the holy Rav Aharon Roth zt"l.[43] Nor was there anything out of the ordinary on the shelves of the Chevras Ahavas Chaim shul, in whose courtyard he lived at the end of his life: Chumashim, the Zohar, a Shas and the sefarim of the *Ben Ish Chai*, and that was all.

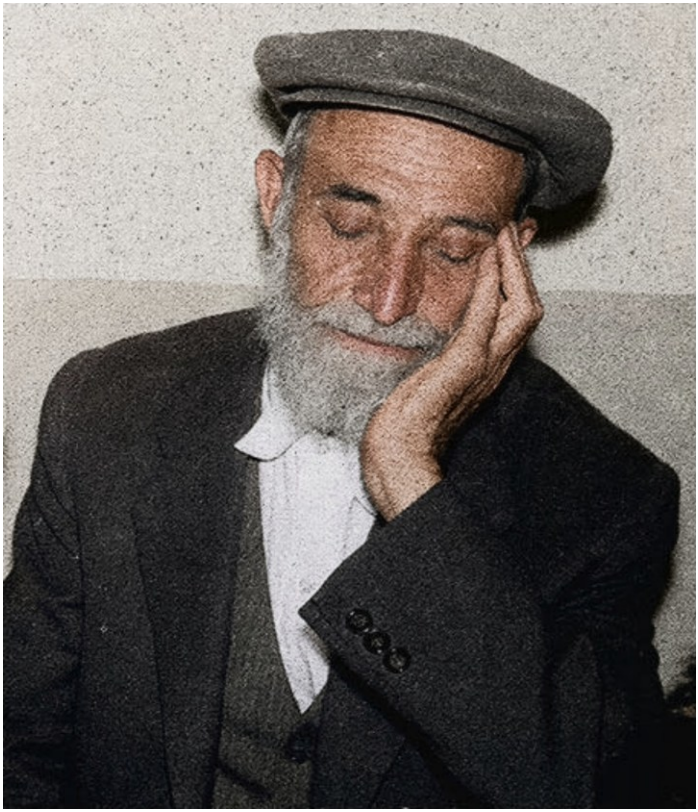
For all that, many people came to him with questions in halachah, beyond the divrei Torah and halachos he taught in his shiurim. He would think for a moment and then answer, and his answer took in every halachah and minhag that touched on the question. I always saw him sit for long stretches, lost in thought, and as a boy I could not understand what occupied him so. Only when I grew older did I understand. Drawing on the great memory he had been blessed with, he was going over his learning by heart, or perhaps making yichudim to bring about the zivvugim (the unions) of the upper worlds.

On every weeknight he rose at chatzos, said Tikkun Chatzos, and learned until dawn. By day, too, he learned in hiding, shut away in old shuls that stood empty. Through the years he worked as a tinsmith, he went off every day at midday for a few hours and locked himself into a shul nearby; I think it was the Be'er Sheva shul, above the mikveh in Beis Yisrael. He had

[43] Rav Aharon Roth, known as Reb Arele, founded the Shomer Emunim chassidus. — Trans.

his own key. He would let himself in, lock the door behind him and sit learning alone. We know of it only because one of the men who came to his shiur every evening "suspected" him of being a tzaddik nistar and followed him.

He took great pains to keep his Torah knowledge hidden, and more than once I watched him do it. Somewhere we happened to be, a talmid chacham would be speaking to people about halachah without going into the details or making the halachah clear, and my grandfather could see that his listeners might come to err. So he would play the am ha'aretz and ask the talmid chacham to explain the details to him, and that way the people heard it and understood.



Saba deep in thought.

When he had finished Tikkun Chatzos he stood and davened for the sick, from a list he held in his hand. For them he also set aside tzedakah out of his own pocket, and there was very little in it: he and his wife had no in-

come but their Bituach Leumi payments (the state old-age pension). I saw for myself that the moment the money came he took maaser from it for tzedakah, and the two of them lived the whole month on what was left. And from that little he gave still more tzedakah for the sick to recover. (As far as I know, the very large sums that passed through his hands never brought him any benefit.)

The tefillah for the sick behind him, he sat down to his writings, editing them and translating them from Spanish (Ladino) into Hebrew. I had a share in this work: I helped with the Hebrew, since his was an old, correct Hebrew, unlike the spoken language, the Hebrew of the second part of *Ahavas Chaim*. The writings filled hundreds of long, narrow notebooks in a Turkish Jewish script, a blend of chatzi kulmus (a half-cursive hand) and Rashi script, unlike any I have seen anywhere else. With difficulty I learned to read it roughly, enough to tell more or less what it said, though never word for word. All of it was in my grandfather's own hand, and when he found the time to write it I do not know. Among much else there was a long commentary on the whole of Pirkei Avos, full of stories. For years the two of us sat from about chatzos until morning: he read aloud to me in Spanish, I put it into Hebrew for him, and he wrote it down afresh in Hebrew, in that same script of his.

After my grandfather's passing, a kuntres was printed with a commentary on Pirkei Avos by Chacham Yosef Adi z"l, one of those who held him in high esteem. Somehow, mistakenly, the commentary came to be credited to my grandfather z"l.

All the years I lived in his house, I cannot recall one weeknight when he was still asleep after chatzos. He traveled with the tzibbur on long, exhausting trips to the kevarim of tzaddikim in the Galil, and on the nights he got home late from them he would sleep a little, then rise like a lion at chatzos to the avodas hakodesh, just as on any other night.

A number of times I rode with my grandfather on the intercity buses. He always took care to sit on the back seat, and the moment he sat down he shut his eyes and was lost in thought. He never told me why, but I understood it was for shemiras einayim, which he guarded with the greatest strictness. On that seat no one walked past him to reach a place, and as a rule the other passengers boarded after him and got off before him.

Once, on our way back to Yerushalayim from the center of the country, the bus was held up a long while as rock was blasted to widen the road. My grandfather opened his eyes and said to me, "Do you see what the Zionists are doing? They are making the roads wide for Mashiach. They are gilgulim of the peritzim (the lawless men) who brought on the destruction of the Mikdash and the land, and Shamayim has now sent them back to build up what they destroyed. Any of them who merits to repair all his sins and transgressions will merit Olam HaBa. As for the rest, woe to them for what is in store."

The Arab on the Back Seat

My uncle, my grandfather's son Mordechai z"l, told of a trip he once made with him from Petach Tikvah to Yerushalayim. My grandfather sat on the back seat, as he always did. The bus filled up, and just as it was about to leave, one last passenger climbed on. The only place left for him was in the middle of the back seat, and he was a fat Arab: if he sat there he would squash the people on either side, my grandfather and his son among them. My grandfather was looking into a sefer he had in his hands. The Arab, rather than going on to the empty place, stayed standing up front, chatting with the driver.

After a while my grandfather grew tired, closed the sefer and thought to rest. A few minutes later the Arab and the driver ended their conversation, and the Arab came back and sat down in the middle, squeezing everyone on both sides. My grandfather saw he could not rest in such a crush. "It seems we have to go on learning," he said to my uncle, and he opened his sefer again. All at once the driver called the Arab back to him; he had something important to tell him. The Arab gave up the seat, my grandfather had room, and the Arab stood beside the driver talking with him the rest of the way.

HIS MINHAGIM

For as long as I knew Saba, he ate only l'shem Shamayim, and his table was a mizbe'ach. On weekdays, when he was not fasting, he ate little: mostly bread with lakerda (smoked fish) and nothing more, or bread with sesame halvah. Now and then he ended the meal with what is called in Spanish halva de semola, a semolina porridge left to set and eaten cold. On his many journeys he carried boyos, dry bread soaked in salted water and baked a

second time, which turns hard as stone and keeps for a long time without a refrigerator. He dipped them in tea, or just in hot water, and that was the whole of his meal or most of it. When he felt weak he had chicken soup with cooked vegetables; but the chicken itself, if my memory serves me, he did not eat on a weekday, keeping it for the Shabbos seudos.

On a weekday nothing went into his mouth unless he first said something like "L'shem Shamayim," "For His service, blessed be He," or "In all your ways know Him." He said it before nearly every bite he took, before every spoonful of soup.

Shabbos was different. At the start of the meal he said the usual nusach, "Askinu seudasa" and the rest, and that alone made the whole meal a great mizbe'ach before Hashem. There was no need to declare over each bite that it was l'shem Shamayim, since everything he ate was purely in honor of Shabbos. On Shabbos he ate meat and fish and all the delicacies prepared in his house, though never to excess.

Every Friday night, between the fish and the meat, he would sing "Kol beru'ei olam ma'lah umatah ya'idu yagidu Hashem echad ushemo echad" ("All the creatures of the world, above and below, testify and declare: Hashem is One and His Name is One"). I can still see his face aflame as he sang it, to a Turkish tune full of holy longing. Even now, when it comes back to me on a Friday night, my heart is moved to tears.

The Kabbalah teaches that the Shabbos seudos stand on the same spiritual level as the spiritual seudos of the tzaddikim in Gan Eden. That is why Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, on the day of his passing, that whoever eats them as they ought to be eaten will merit, after his own passing, the light of Keser Elyon (the highest of the sefiros). My grandfather loved Shabbos Kodesh and its seudos so much that he composed a song in Ladino. It begins: "Karne gorda i bien pishkado, kada Shabat mizhorado, okh ke bien Shabat." (In English: fat meat and good fish, every Shabbos better, how good is Shabbos.)

He was extremely modest about covering his body. By day he never undressed; even on the rare occasions he needed a rest during the day, he kept his clothes on. At night he slept in nightclothes, which he changed into in bed. He changed his shirt with a long undershirt still covering him, and his trousers, if I remember rightly, under the blanket.

He made a point of wearing a tallis katan of pure sheep's wool, a fairly thick one. As Rabbeinu HaArizal warned, he never removed it for even a moment, day or night, not even in the heat of summer; only in the mikveh did it come off.

Each Friday, as soon as midday had passed, he sat down in the shul to say shnayim mikra v'echad targum. Then he went to the mikveh to tovel l'kavod Shabbos, and when he came back to the shul he said the whole of Shir HaShirim joyfully, to a tune. That night, after Kabbalas Shabbos, he said it again together with the whole congregation in the shul.

In the Amidah he kept to the way of Rabbeinu HaArizal, davening with his eyes shut, his left hand on his chest and his right hand over it. He was entirely absorbed, like a man granted a private audience with the King, and no noise in the world could disturb him. That was how he davened every tefillah, every day, whatever the circumstances.

Giving tzedakah to a poor man, my grandfather would say it should be "le'akama Shechinta me'afra" (that is, to raise the Shechinah up out of the dust where she lies rolling). When the tzedakah was for a purpose, such as a sick person's recovery, he gave or set aside two perutos. Over the first he said it was "le'akama Shechinta me'afra," and over the second, "for the refuah of so-and-so" or words to that effect. In the same way, at the tziyun of a tzaddik he would first set aside tzedakah for the elevation of that "nefesh,"[44] so that it would go and tell the tzaddik we had come to the tziyun to daven. Only then did he give tzedakah l'iluy nishmas the tzaddik at whose tziyun he stood.

So humble was my grandfather that he never took a seat at the mizrach of the shul. His regular place was in the corner to the right of the entrance door, and from there he gave the people his derashos. Only at midday on Friday, with the shul all but empty, did he sit at the mizrach, to the left of the aron kodesh, for shnayim mikra v'echad targum and Shir HaShirim. The place at the mizrach to the right of the aron kodesh he gave to his elder brother, who davened there regularly. (My impression is that my grandfather never once sat there, for the sake of the mitzvah of kibbud av, which

[44] In the Kabbalah the nefesh is the lowest part of the soul, the part that stays at the kever. —Trans.

takes in an elder brother too; and part of that honor is not sitting in his place.)

Lag BaOmer

Each year, on the night of Lag BaOmer, my grandfather made a "Hilula Rabba" (a great celebration of a tzaddik's yahrzeit) in the Ahavas Chaim shul in honor of the holy Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. He spoke there in the Rashbi's honor, mostly about his Torah and his ways. The Rashbi, he would stress, merited to reveal the loftiest sodos openly because of his zeal and mesirus nefesh for kevod Shamayim, which went as far as risking his life; that is why he had to flee to the cave and stay there so many years. When his father-in-law,[45] Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair, saw his body covered with cracks from the sand of the cave, the Rashbi told him: "Fortunate are you that you have seen me so, for had you not seen me so, you would not have found me so" (Shabbos 33b). With words like these my grandfather fired his listeners with zeal for the honor of His Name, blessed be He, wherever it might be called for.

For many years two tzaddikim and chassidim, Chacham Menashe Chabah zt"l and Chacham Sasson Levi zt"l, took part in this hilula. Old as he was, Chacham Menashe Chabah had the crowd dancing to his songs, so full of feeling and longing. Chacham Sasson Levi spoke as well, his thoughts wholly bound to the Rashbi. The light that shone from my grandfather and from these tzaddikim made their faces glow with a wondrous radiance.

Midway through the hilula a tray of candles was brought to the table, to be lit in honor of the Rashbi, the holy Avos and several other tzaddikim. My grandfather sold the zechus of lighting each one to the highest bidder, and the money went to tzedakah. With each candle they mentioned the tzaddik it was lit for. "Let everyone know for certain," my grandfather would say, "that when a person merits to buy a candle at this hilula and light it here l'iluy nishmas the tzaddik, the tzaddik comes from Above, sees the face of the one who lights it and intercedes for him Above." Many people waited for this night to buy a candle toward some yeshuah they needed.

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[45] The Gemara there has Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair as Rabbi Shimon's son-in-law. —Trans.

The Maggid's Derashah

For many years, every Friday night, my grandfather went to hear the derashah of the Yerushalmi maggid Rav Shabsai Yudelevitz zt"l, and neither rain nor hail nor snow kept him away. In time Rav Shabsai's derashah moved from the Chaggai Adoniyahu HaKohen shul in the Bukharim neighborhood to the Minchas Yehudah shul in Machaneh Yehudah. That made it a very long walk, with a hard climb from the valley of Beis Yisrael to the top of the hill, but my grandfather would not give it up. Every single Shabbos he went and sat in a corner where no one noticed him, full of delight. Many a Shabbos I went along with him.

One Friday night in the depth of winter, bitterly cold and pouring rain, I asked him on the way what he found in the derashah that made him put himself through so much to get there in such weather. I was a child and did not fully understand Saba's answer. What I took from it later was that the darshan was greater than the derashah. It mattered to my grandfather to be close to the darshan while he spoke, because in Shamayim they waited for this derashah. It brought about wondrous, mighty things Above, through words that came from a pure heart and through the awakening they stirred.



HaRav HaGaon Shabsai Yudelevitz zt"l.

While I am speaking of Rav Shabsai Yudelevitz zt"l: I remember as if it were yesterday a story that stirred up Meah Shearim, when Rav Shabsai was "the talk of the day." It happened like this.

The Black Dog

A man in Meah Shearim took a good idea to heart: in the winter months, when the nights are long, to wake people at dawn on Shabbos Kodesh so they could gather in the shul and say Tehillim until it was time to daven. He talked his neighbors into getting up for it and went around every Shabbos waking them, and a large crowd came.

One neighbor resented him, because the waking of his friends for Tehillim disturbed his own sleep, and he made up his mind to teach the man a lesson. On a cold, rainy morning, as the man stood at a window waking his neighbor, the angry neighbor lay in wait on the balcony and emptied

a full bucket of cold water over him. Frightened and chilled through, the man went home to change out of his wet clothes and warm himself with a cup of hot tea.

Some time afterward, the man who had poured the water fell ill and passed away. A year later, one Shabbos morning, the man rose as usual to wake people, and he had barely left his house when a big black dog that had been waiting outside began to follow him wherever he went. He tried to chase it off, but it did no good. The next Shabbos the same dog was waiting again, and it went with him to every house he called at, then went off with a terrible bark. When it happened a third week, the man could bear it no longer. He went straight to Rav Shabsai's house, woke him and told him the whole story.

Rav Shabsai went out, looked the dog in the face and said to the man, who had come out with him, "You should know that this dog is a gilgul of the man who poured the cold water on you, and he will have no rest until you forgive him completely." The man went straight up to the dog and said, "Machul lach, machul lach, machul lach" (you are forgiven). The words were hardly out of his mouth when the dog dropped dead where it stood. That Shabbos the people of the neighborhood came to see the carcass of the dog that had been their neighbor in his last gilgul, and what the Beis Din shel Maalah had decreed for him.

The Zionist Regime

My grandfather set himself with all his strength against the wicked regime in Eretz HaKodesh and all its parties, **without exception**, and he strictly forbade taking any part in the elections to the national or the municipal "beis hakisei."[46] Yet he never spoke a word against talmidei chachamim who leaned toward the "religious" parties, although he disagreed with them over their tie to Zionism. To their claim that they meant it as a mitzvah, Chazal had long since answered, "Do not join with a rasha, even for a mitzvah." But when such talmidei chachamim came to his house or he met them on the way, he showed them great honor, for he held that they were mistaken about a mitzvah and that their intentions were l'shem Shamayim.

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[46] Beis hakisei, literally "the house of the seat," is the everyday Hebrew for a lavatory; here it is a play on words for the Knesset and the city council. —Trans.

The rabbis of "religious Zionism" were another matter. These he loathed from the depths of his soul, as resha'im who sin and lead others to sin, who hold back the coming of Mashiach and bring on all the troubles that befall Klal Yisrael. I remember a pidyon haben held one Motza'ei Shabbos in the Ahavas Chaim shul, in the days when Saba lived next door to it. When Saba learned that the kohen invited to redeem the child was Tzvi Yehudah Kook (the son of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael), a man who joined Torah with Zionism, he stayed away from the pidyon and remained at home.

The Tevilos in the Mikveh

Once in the mikveh he came across a man who had found a clever shortcut: he was counting up many tevilos by lifting his hand out of the water and dipping it back in. My grandfather pointed out to him that tevilos are counted only by bringing the head up and immersing it again. (The point is not that a tevilah ends once part of the body is out of the water; it lies in the sod of the head, which draws down shefa and light each time it goes under and comes up.)

His Clothes

Black my grandfather never wore, and red never; I did not once see him in either. He dressed mostly in light gray, and on weekdays also in brown, a lighter brown, or beige. To my mind Saba settled on light gray because the Kabbalah makes it a mitzvah to wear white outer garments on Shabbos. In his day only the rare talmid chacham kept to this, and he was too humble to want to be noticed, so he chose a color that comes close to white. And so that no one would see he was keeping it for Shabbos, he wore the same gray during the week as well.

For davening in shul, and any time he came before the public, he made a point of putting on his long gray coat. The rest of the day, at home and in the street, he went about in a cloth vest over his shirt, brown as a rule, now and then gray or pale green. Each vest had a deep pocket on either side, generally full of coins for the poor and for Jewish children on their way to learn Torah.

On his head, indoors and out, sat a gray kasket (a flat cloth cap), and it stayed there. At night he slept in a big cloth cap that covered the whole of his head. I cannot recall ever seeing him in a "kippah."

I remember once urging him to exchange the kasket for a hat, out of respect for the Torah he taught in public, and I set my own hat on his head. He kept it on only a few moments, then lifted it off like a man putting down a heavy burden. "This is for bnei Torah," he told me, "not for simple people like me." Those may not have been his exact words, but that was what he meant.

His beard my grandfather left untouched all his life. When he visited the Saba Kadisha, Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari zt"l (more about him further on), famed as a pillar of the world, one who made the earth tremble, the Saba Kadisha used to stand up for him. If I am not mistaken, he said he saw the Shechinah resting on my grandfather's beard.

I should mention here that my grandfather never grew peyos, let alone curled ones. We are all sons of the twelve shevatim, and every shevet had minhagim of its own, in tefillah and in much else, the length of the peyos among them, each according to the root of its neshamos. Of this it is said, "Hear, my son, the mussar of your father," meaning the Torah and the mitzvos, "and do not forsake the teaching of your mother," meaning the minhagim each community has received from its rabbanim, generation after generation.

Nor did he ever put on a necktie; it had no place in his plain, modest way of life.

HIS SEFARIM

From 5633 (1873) on, Jews of Edos HaMizrach came up to Eretz Yisrael in impressive numbers, and many of them soon found themselves at a loss over minhag and halachah. Back home, everyone around them had followed one minhag and one halachah. Here they lived among other communities, each with minhagim and halachos of its own. On top of that, the Sephardi minhag of Eretz Yisrael was different in many respects from the one they had brought with them from the old country.

Nor was there a sefer to guide them, one that set out the halachos of the Sephardim of Eretz Yisrael. The Shulchan Aruch was beyond the plain man's depth. It also leaves out many halachos the Sephardim keep on the

word of the Arizal, and some of its rulings even run against common Sephardi practice. *Ben Ish Chai*, by HaRav HaGaon Rav Yosef Chaim of Bavel zt"l zy"a, is kodesh kodashim from beginning to end, yet some of its halachos are those of Bavel and not the accepted minhag in Eretz Yisrael. As for Rabbi Chaim Palagi's *Kaf HaChaim*,[47] it was unknown to these working people.

My grandfather saw that Edos HaMizrach needed a sefer of halachah of their own, following the practice of Eretz Yisrael, to show them "the way in which they should walk, and the deed that they should do."

That sefer, ***Likutei Menashe** *("Menashe's Gleanings"), came out in 5697 (1937). He kept it hidden that he had written it: the title page says only "Published by hamishtadel Menachem Menashe" (hamishtadel: the one who took the trouble to bring it out). At the back he added* **Shaar HaChaim** *("The Gate of Life"), a booklet of twenty chapters and sixty-nine pages on the great obligation to learn Torah, its reward, and the kedushah it brings to the mouth. Along with the mussar and the halachah, the sefer carried the* Seder Taanis HaDibbur*, and so that the reader could do the tikkun with ease, my grandfather bought up an entire printing of a Sefer Tehillim and had it bound in with his own sefer.

The public, working people all, were not drawn to it. A sefer of halachah cost more than they could spend, and asked more time than they had. My grandfather had paid for the printing with borrowed money, and now he could not pay the loan back. So he sent copies to men of means, with a letter that opened ***"Take now my blessing, and may my offering be pleasing to you."*** The debts from publishing the sefer, he wrote, had brought him to ask for their help in return for it.

What draws ordinary people, my grandfather knew, is the "maaseh," a story that wins the heart and settles the soul. And so in 5712 (1952) he brought out *Likutei Menashe*, Part Two.

In substance it is the first *Likutei Menashe* over again, only now with stories and derashos alongside the halachos.[48]

The *Kuntres Shaar HaChaim* of Part One was left out of this edition, it seems because there was no money for it. Once more he published under

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[47] The *Kaf HaChaim* of Rabbi Chaim Palagi of Izmir, not the better-known work of that name by Rav Yaakov Chaim Sofer. —Trans.

[48] It has 274 pages and is the size of an ordinary sefer.

the name of Chevras Ahavas Chaim, and his own name appears nowhere. The public grew very fond of this one, Jewish children among them. Years later, in conversation with several talmidei chachamim in Yerushalayim, I heard from them that as boys it was this sefer that made them want to learn Torah and keep at it.



כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ה' מירושלים

בעזה"י

ספר

לקוטי מנשה

בו יבואר דינים של כל השנה
כמנהג ק"ק ספרדים. וגם תענית
הצבור בשמירת הלשון וגם
התהלים וקצת פרקי הסליחות
וגם תפלת יגל יעקב לעיוה"כ
וגם שער החיים על אגדות
חז"ל כפי הזמן

יצא לאור על ידי המשתדל

מנחם מנשה

נדפס

פעה"ק ירושלם תובב"א

שנת תרצ"ז

דפוס יהודא עמרם איתאח, ירושלם
בית ע. דבאח מחנה יהודא

אוהב ה' שערי ציון מכל משכנות יעקב

צדקתך צדק לעולם ותורתך אמת

[Along the top of the frame:] "For out of Tziyon shall go forth Torah, and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim"

With the help of Hashem, may He be blessed

Sefer

Likutei Menashe

In it are explained the dinim of the whole year according to the minhag of the holy communities of the Sephardim; also the public fast on shemiras halashon; also the Tehillim and some chapters of the Selichos; also the tefillah Yagel Yaakov ("Yaakov Shall Rejoice") for Erev Yom Kippur; and also Shaar HaChaim, on the aggados of Chazal, as suited to the time.

Published by hamishtadel

Menachem Menashe.

Printed

here in the holy city of Yerushalayim, may it be built and established speedily in our days, amen

In the year 5697 (1937)

Printed by Yehuda Amram Itach, Yerushalayim

Beis A. Dabbach, Machaneh Yehudah

[Down the right side of the frame:] "And the wise shall shine like the radiance of the firmament"

[Along the bottom, upside down:] "and those who bring the many to righteousness, like the stars, forever and ever"

[Down the left side:] "Hashem loves the gates of Tziyon more than all the dwellings of Yaakov"

בהנ"ו.

חברת „אהבת חיים" ירושלם

קח נא את ברכתי וערבה לך מנחתי



עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה ותומכיה מאושר

מנחה היא שלוחה למזכרת אהבה וידידות למע"כ רודף צדקה וחסד נרו יאיר ויזהיר כאור הבהיר, כיר"א.

מאד נכבד ! שלום ושפע וברכה !

להוי ידוע לכבו, כי חברתנו חברת „אהבת חיים" בראותה את חבור הספר **ליקוטי מנשה** שהוא יקר הערך ואת התועלת הנמצא בו שכולל: דינים של כל השנה כמנהג ק"ק ספרדים, ונוסח תענית הדבור בשמירת הלשון וגם תהלים וארחות חיים וקצת פרקי סליחות, ותפילת יגל יעקב לעיו"כ, וגם שער החיים על אגדות מחז"ל.

היות וברצון החברה היה להדפיס את הספר הזה מבלי הלואות, ולא היה היכולת בידי החברה מסיבת מחסור הכסף, והיא היתה מוכרחה לפנות אל כמה אנשים מטיבי חסד הנם ולוינו מהם כסף להוצאת הדפסת הספר החשוב הזה, בתנאי שאחרי מכירת הספרים להחזיר להם את הכסף אשר לוינו מהם, ולכן הננו מבקשים את מע"כ כי את הספר ברכה זה יביא אל ביתו ויתן לנו את עזרתו, כפי נדבת לבו הטהורה, ויסייע לנו, ויהי לנו להדר עזר בכדי שנוכל לכל הפחות להספיק לפרוע את החובות המוטלות עלינו בעד הדפסת הספר הזה.

ואנו תפילה לאל נורא עלילה, כי ישמרהו ויחייהו, ואורך ימים אשביעהו, ועל במות ההצלחה ירוממהו, וירוץ לו האל ברכה עד בלי די, הן ועושר בביתו, וצחיל, והחזינה עינינו בביאת הגואל לעם ישראל ובבנין בית מקדשנו בב"א.

המחתימים בברכה ושלום

גבאי החברה



הכתובת: מנחם מנשה ספרדי, שכונת בית ישראל הישנה מול תנור ה' יעקב כהן.

With Hashem's help (בהנ"ו).

Chevras "Ahavas Chaim," Yerushalayim

"Take now my blessing, and may my offering be pleasing to you"

[A picture of the Kosel, labeled "Kosel HaMaaravi"]

"It is a tree of life to those who hold fast to it, and those who support it are fortunate"

This offering is sent as a remembrance of love and friendship to his exalted honor, the pursuer of tzedakah and chessed, may his lamp shine and glow like the bright light; so may it be His will, amen.

Most honored sir! Shalom, plenty and berachah!

Let it be known to his honor that our society, Chevras "Ahavas Chaim," saw the composition of the sefer Likutei Menashe, how precious it is and how much benefit is found in it, for it includes: the dinim of the whole year according to the minhag of the holy communities of the Sephardim; the nusach of the taanis hadibbur on shemiras halashon; also Tehillim and Orchos Chaim ("Ways of Life") and some chapters of the Selichos; the tefillah Yagel Yaakov for Erev Yom Kippur; and also Shaar HaChaim, on the aggados of Chazal.

It was the society's wish to print this sefer without loans, but the society was not able to, for lack of money. It was forced to turn to several kind people who do chessed freely, and we borrowed money from them for the cost of printing this important sefer, on condition that after the sefarim are sold we return to them the money we borrowed from them. We therefore ask his honor to bring this sefer of berachah into his home and to give us his help, as the generosity of his pure heart moves him, and to assist us and be a generous help to us, so that we may at least be able to pay off the debts that rest upon us for the printing of this sefer.

And we pray to G-d, awesome in His deeds, that He guard him and keep him alive, satisfy him with length of days, and set him upon the heights of success; that G-d pour out berachah for him until there is no room for more, wealth and riches in his house, and his tzedakah stand forever; and that his eyes see the coming of the Redeemer to the people of Israel and the building of our Beis HaMikdash, speedily in our days, amen.

Signing with berachah and shalom,

The gabbaim of the society

[A round stamp of the society, mostly illegible; in Latin letters: "Hevrat 'Aavat Haim'"] [Two handwritten notes, illegible]

Address: Menachem Menashe Sefaradi, the Old Beis Yisrael neighborhood, opposite the bakery of Mr. Yaakov Kohen.


תורת
יהוה
תמימה

בעזה"י

כי לעולם לא ימוט לזכר עולם יהיה צדיק

זה השער לה' צדיקים יבואו בו

ספר

לקוטי מנשה

חלק שני

דרשות על חמישה חומשי תורה ומעשיות
יקרות ומאמרים שונים מנהגות ולמודים
ודינים של כל השנה כמנהג ק"ק ספרדים,
יקרים מפנינים אשר עלו זכרונם לה'
הפוסקים ראשונים ואחרונים מפוזרות הנה
והנה, חפשתים ואספתים כמטמונים,
לזכות את הרבים, לתועלת עצום.

ונל"וה אליו

תפלת יגל יעקב לערב יוה"כ ובקשות של
תענית הדיבור, גם תקונים לימי השובבים.

יצא לאור מחברת "אהבת-חיים" ירושלים

פעה"ק ירושלים תובב"א

שנת רשי"ב לפ"ק

דפוס "השחר" ירושלים

[On the tablet at the top:] "The Torah of Hashem is perfect"

With the help of Hashem, may He be blessed

"For he shall never be moved; the tzaddik shall be an everlasting remembrance"

"This is the gate of Hashem; tzaddikim shall enter through it"

Sefer

Likutei Menashe

Part Two

Derashos on the five Chumashim of the Torah, and precious stories, and various articles, minhagim and lessons, and the dinim of the whole year according to the minhag of the holy communities of the Sephardim, more precious than pearls, from the poskim, Rishonim and Acharonim, whose remembrance has risen before Hashem, scattered here and there. I searched them out and gathered them like hidden treasures, to bring merit to the many, for great benefit.

And attached to it:

the tefillah Yagel Yaakov for Erev Yom Kippur, and the bakashos of the taanis hadibbur, also tikkunim for the days of Shovavim.

Published by Chevras "Ahavas Chaim," Yerushalayim

Here in the holy city of Yerushalayim, may it be built and established speedily in our days, amen

In the year 5712 (1952), by the minor reckoning

HaShachar Press, Yerushalayim

*The *Hakafos* Booklet*

In 5700 (1940) my grandfather printed a booklet arranged by HaRav HaGaon Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l: *Seder HaHakafos Keneged Sheva Korsei Bris, VeNosaf Alav Seder Bakashas Rachamim al Kol Tzarah Shelo Savo* ("The Order of the Hakafos Corresponding to the Seven Who Made a Covenant, with an Added Order of Prayer for Mercy against Every Trouble, That It Not Come").

His introduction to *Seder HaHakafos* comes down hard on people who talk in shul, for they bring troubles on us and draw out the galus. This is what he wrote:

"If, chas v'shalom, a man is careless and talks in shul, it is not only that his talking spoils his tefillah and his learning. Know, then, that Esav is Yaakov's brother. And who is Esav? The head of the wicked, a great cruel one who has no mercy, rachmana litzlan. Chazal said that talking in shul is one of the things that lengthen the galus, and

that it is as though the man were, chas v'shalom, guilty of immorality. My heart is all the more embittered when I see certain important people and baalei Torah to whom I have spoken several times, gently and in private, and who for all that have not changed their bad ways. For it is well known that whoever talks in shul shows that he does not believe Hakadosh Baruch Hu rests His Shechinah in this house; and so he is brazen enough to talk in the King's palace against the King's will. These are the words of the Zohar, Parshas Terumah: '*Man d'ishta'ei b'vei kenishta milin d'chol, vai lei*, etc., *d'achzi d'ha leis lei Elaha, v'la ishtekach taman, v'leis lei chulka bei, v'la dachil minei, v'anhig kelana b'sikuna ila'ah d'le'eila*.' (Translation: Whoever speaks words of chol in shul, woe to him, for he shows that he has no G-d, that Hashem is not present in this place, that he has no portion in Hashem and does not fear Him; and he brings disgrace on the tikkunim of the upper worlds.) And when these people, who know Torah, talk, they cause, chas v'shalom, the common people to learn from their deeds. Their sin is seen by all, and so he desecrates Hashem's Name in public, that is, before ten Jews, and his sin is greater than an ordinary chillul Hashem, as the Rambam states explicitly in his *Sefer HaMitzvos*, see there. This is a criminal sin, and his sin is too great to bear." The Rav, the author of *Reishis Chochmah* ("The Beginning of Wisdom"), wrote: "Either way, this man who talks deserves great punishment. If he believes that the Shechinah is present in the shul and talks all the same, there is no greater sinner than he. And if, chas v'shalom, he does not believe that the Shechinah rests in the shul, and talks, he has shown himself to be one who denies the Chachamim and the Neviim, and he deserves a punishment worse and more bitter still. That is what the holy Zohar means when it says that whoever talks in shul has no portion in the G-d of Israel, chas v'shalom. May Hakadosh Baruch Hu bring us back to the good, amen." Here his words end.

Saba printed this, it should be remembered, in 5700 (1940), with the Second World War at its height. Edom, the German Amalek, Saba's **"head of the wicked, a great cruel one who has no mercy, rachmana litzlan,"** was then destroying millions of Jews with terrible cruelty. **Survivors who saw it with their own eyes have told how a large group of them once**

stood at a railway station, waiting to be taken away and killed. Suddenly a woman dressed in black appeared before them and cried out, weeping, "Know that this decree was sealed because of the disgrace done to the Shechinah by talk of chol in batei knesses and batei midrashos." Then she was gone. Eretz Yisrael had yet to learn the details, let alone the reason behind them, but Saba, with his ruach hakodesh, pointed to them in his introduction.


זה השער לה' צדיקים יבואו בו

בעזה"י

סדר

ההקפות

כנגד שבעה כורתי ברית

ונוסף עליו

סדר בקשת רחמים

לכל עת צרה שלא תבוא

הכל באותיות גדולות ובנקוד

נערך ונסדר ע"י

הרה"ג כמוהר"ר יהודה פתייא שליט"א

יצא לאור ע"י

חברת «אהבת חיים» תכב"ן

פעיה"ק ירושלם תובב"א

בשנת תרנ"ן לשוני צדקתך לפ"ק

[In an arch at the top:] "This is the gate of Hashem; tzaddikim shall enter through it"

With the help of Hashem, may He be blessed

Seder HaHakafos

Keneged Sheva Korsei Bris

and added to it

Seder Bakashas Rachamim

for every time of trouble, that it not come

All in large letters and with nekudos

Arranged and set in order by

HaRav HaGaon, the honored Moreinu HaRav Rabbi Yehuda Fatiyah shlita

Published by

*Chevras "Ahavas Chaim" (*תכב"ץ*)*

Here in the holy city of Yerushalayim, may it be built and established speedily in our days, amen

In the year "Teranen leshoni tzidkasecha" ("My tongue shall sing of Your righteousness"), by the minor reckoning [the large letters of teranen make 700: 5700 (1940)]

Here I should also mention the Gerrer Rebbe, Rav Avraham Mordechai Alter zt"l, author of *Imrei Emes* ("Words of Truth"). Once he had settled in Yerushalayim, he would go out every day for half an hour of air in the streets near his house, with his family and a few of his chassidim. One day his walk took them past Ohel Rachel, the shul of the Bavli (Iraqi) community near the Machaneh Yehudah neighborhood, and he saw the congregation at Minchah. There was trembling where one might have expected song; the whole kahal sat in respect and awe, listening to the chazzan's repetition. He was deeply moved, and those with him heard him say, **"If they had davened like this in Europe, the Holocaust would have been prevented."**

A second edition of the *Hakafos* booklet appeared in 5701 (1941), with additions by Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l that ran longer than the original itself.

Ahavas Chaim

Then, in 5716 (1956), came *Ahavas Chaim* ("Love of Life"), on the five Chumashim of the Torah, in one volume, and again without his name. Almost all of *Likutei Menashe*, both parts, is in it, and on top of that many times as much again that is new.

Leaving out the introduction, it runs to 543 pages.[49] Besides meshalim, explanations and derashos, it holds 158 stories and every halachah a Jew needs to know.[50] The halachos are given according to the Sephardi minhag. My grandfather did not copy them from any one sefer of halachah; he gathered them from the sefarim of the poskim, Rishonim and Acharonim, as he judged right for halachah l'maaseh.

It was soon sold out, and in 5720 (1960) my grandfather asked my father to rework it in spoken Hebrew, so that young people would take to it easily. My father agreed. He edited Bereishis and Shemos afresh and added much of his own, above all in the parshiyos of Shovavim, which are nearly all his. Being close to Chassidus himself, he brought in its stories, sayings and ways of conduct.

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[49] Pages 1 to 4 carry numbers; page 5 then becomes page alef, and the count runs on from there to the end of page 539 (תקל"ט).

[50] They cover netilas yadayim in the morning, tzitzis, tefillin, Pesukei d'Zimrah, Kaddish, Krias Shema and its berachos, Shemoneh Esreh and the chazzan's repetition, krias haTorah, tefillah, nesias kapayim, Tachanun, nefilas apayim, tashlumin, netilas yadayim for a meal, the meal, Birkas HaMazon, birchos hanehenin, Birkas HaChamah, Birkas HaIlanos, Minchah and Maariv, Krias Shema al hamitah, Birkas HaLevanah, the halachos of Erev Shabbos and Shabbos, Seudah Shelishis and Motza'ei Shabbos; the halachos of the months of Nissan, Tammuz, Elul, Cheshvan, Kislev and Shevat; the halachos of Erev Yom Tov and Yom Tov, Eruv Tavshilin, Chol HaMoed, Pesach, Selichos, Rosh Hashanah, the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, the Arba Minim, Simchas Torah, Chanukah and Purim, Bein HaMetzarim, Tishah B'Av, Rosh Chodesh, talmud torah, shemiras halashon, terumos and maasros, the beis knesses, tevilas keilim, and the prohibition of a woman wearing a man's garment.



ב״ה

זה השער לד׳ צדיקים יבואו בו
כי לעולם לא ימוש לזכר עולם יהיה צדיק

שער
אהבת חיים

ביאורים נפלאים על חמשה חומשי תורה וקצת מהנביאים
עם משלים ונמשלים מתוקים מדבש ונופת צופים המשמחים לב האדם

וגם מוסרים ומעשיות נפלאים על כל פרשה ופרשה שכל הקורא
בספר הזה יראה עצמו כבריה חדשה מרב התנאה
שיהנה בקריאתו, ועוד יבואר גודל שכר
למוד התורה וגודל חיוב האדם
לתורה והשכר למחזיק בתורה
וגודל השכר למי שמקדש
דיבורו בתורה.

כל זה קבצתי ולקטתי מהספר הקדוש חפץ חיים וכן משאר ספרי
מוסר, יען אמרתי אל לבי לשור לדעת להבין ולהשכיל אמונת
התורה הקדושה שאנו נצרכים לזה מאד, כי ישרים דרכי ה׳
צדיקים ילכו בם.

גם דינים של כל השנה כמנהג ק״ק ספרדים
יקרים מפנינים אשר עלו זכרונם לה׳ הפוסקים הראשונים והאחרונים
מפוזרות הנה והנה, כדי לזכות את הרבים, לתועלת עצום.

יצא לאור ע״י חברת „אהבת חיים״ ירושלים

פעיה״ק ירושלים תובב״א

שנת תשט״ו לפ״ק

The title page of Ahavas Chaim, *first edition.*

B”H

“This is the gate of Hashem; tzaddikim shall enter through it”

"For he shall never be moved; the tzaddik shall be an everlasting remembrance"

The title page of

Ahavas Chaim

Wonderful explanations on the five Chumashim of the Torah and some of the Neviim,

with meshalim and their lessons, sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb, which gladden the heart of man.

Also words of mussar and wonderful stories on every parshah, so that everyone who reads this sefer will see himself as a new creation, from the great pleasure he will have in reading it. It also explains the greatness of the reward for learning Torah, the greatness of a man's obligation to the Torah, the reward of one who supports Torah, and the greatness of the reward of one who sanctifies his speech with Torah.

All this I gathered and collected from the holy sefer Chofetz Chaim, and also from other sefarim of mussar, because I said in my heart to look, to know, to understand and to grasp the faith of the holy Torah, which we need so very much, "for the ways of Hashem are straight, and tzaddikim walk in them."

Also the dinim of the whole year according to the minhag of the holy communities of the Sephardim, more precious than pearls, from the poskim, Rishonim and Acharonim, whose remembrance has risen before Hashem, scattered here and there, to bring merit to the many, for great benefit.

Published by Chevras "Ahavas Chaim," Yerushalayim

Here in the holy city of Yerushalayim, may it be built and established speedily in our days, amen

In the year 5716 (1956), by the minor reckoning


זה השער לה' צדיקים יבאו בו

עמ"י עש"ו

ספר

אהבת חיים השלם

חלק א

בו נפתחים שני ספרים

בראשית

"בראשית" הספר מופיע בזהרו מעשי ה' ונפלאותיו בבריאת עולמו. ומטרתו יתברך באיתני עולם אלו אבותינו הקדושים. וסוד התרקמות שבטי יה וירידתם למצרים.

שמות

בו יתבאר בס"ד מפעלות ה' ונוראותיו אשר עשה "שמות" בארץ עת גלה זרוע תפארתו בשדוד מערכות כל ככבי הלכת והשפעתם, למען עם בחירו יעקב חבל נחלתו.

בשילוב

דינים של השנה כמנהג ק"ק ספרדים ועדות המזרח לפי פוסקים ראשונים ואחרונים בעתן ובזמנן בכל פרשה ופרשה עם באורים נפלאים בצירוף משלים ומעשיות יקרים המשיבים את הנפש ומשמחים את הלב.

(קצהו תראה בתוכן המובא בסוף הספר)

היות ורבו המבקשים את הספר ממהדורא קמא ואין באלצנו להעתר ולהדפיסו בשניה לזכות את הרבים. במהדורא זו זכינו להוסיף מעלות רבות על קודמה **מעשיות יקרים** מפנינים מכתבי יד של חכמי ספרד ואספני' כגון מספר הק' "מעם לועז" ועוד אשר לא ראו אור בלשון הקודש, הכל בשפה המונית קלה למען ירוץ כל קורא בו.

י"ל ע"י חברת אהבת חיים ירושלים

לוקט וחובר במהדורא קמא ע"י
מיסד החברה ח' מנחם מנשה שליט"א

נערך מחדש והובא לביהד"פ ע"י הצב"י א. צ. שבתי יצ"ן

שנת צמאה לך נפשי כמה לך בשרי לפ"ק

פעיה"ק ירושלים תובב"א

אבן שלם עמוד לך יום יום לכל תלות השוטם לך

כי חיים הם למוצאיהם ולכל בשרו מרפא

The title page of Ahavas Chaim, *Part One, second edition, which names my father z"l as the one who edited the sefer anew.*

[Above the frame:] "This is the gate of Hashem; tzaddikim shall enter through it"

[In the top corners:] My help is from Hashem (עמ"י) ... Maker of heaven and earth (עש"ה)

Sefer

Ahavas Chaim HaShalem ("The Complete Ahavas Chaim")

Part One

In it open two sefarim:

Bereishis: "Bereishis," the sefer that shows forth in its radiance the works of Hashem and His wonders in the creation of His world, and His purpose, may He be blessed, in the "mighty ones of the world," these are our holy Avos, and the secret of how the tribes of Yah were formed and of their going down to Egypt.

Shemos: In it will be explained, with siyata d'Shmaya, the deeds of Hashem and His awesome acts, which made "shamos" (desolations) in the land, when He revealed the arm of His glory in overturning the orders of all the planets and their influence, for the sake of His chosen people, Yaakov, the lot of His inheritance.

Interwoven with:

the dinim of the year according to the minhag of the holy communities of the Sephardim and Edos HaMizrach, following the poskim, Rishonim and Acharonim, each at its proper time, in every parshah, with wonderful explanations, together with meshalim and precious stories that restore the soul and gladden the heart.

(You will see a part of it in the table of contents at the end of the sefer.)

Since many have asked for the sefer of the first edition, we were compelled to accede and to print it a second time, to bring merit to the many. In this edition we have merited to add many advantages over the earlier one: stories more precious than pearls, from manuscripts of the chachamim of Sefarad and Aspamia, such as the holy sefer Me'am Lo'ez, and others that have not yet seen light in lashon hakodesh; all in a simple, popular language, "so that every reader may run through it."

Published by Chevras Ahavas Chaim, Yerushalayim

Gathered and composed in the first edition by

the founder of the Chevrah, Chacham Menachem Menashe shlita

Edited anew and brought to the press by the least among the thousands of Israel, A. Tz. Shabsai, may Hashem protect him

In the year "Tzame'ah lecha nafshi, kamah lecha besari" ("My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You"), by the minor reckoning

Here in the holy city of Yerushalayim, may it be built and established speedily in our days, amen

[Down the right side of the frame:] "Whoever learns halachos every day is assured that he is a ben Olam HaBa"

[Down the left side:] "For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all his flesh"


זה השער לה׳ צדיקים יבאו בו

עמ״י

עש״ו

ספר

אהבת חיים השלם

חלק ב׳

בו נפתחים שלושה ספרים

ויקרא — במדבר — דברים

באורים נחמדים ונפלאים
יקרים מפז ומפנינים
מלוקט מהמפרשים ומדרשים
אגדות ובריתות וכו׳
אשר מחזה שדי יחזה
מראה מקומות מחז״ל

כל דבר בשם אומרו
למען דעת מקורם
רעיונות אמרות נצוצי אור
של גדולי התורה
המשיבים נפש ומשמחים את
הלב כי ישרים דרכי ה׳
צדיקים ילכו בם

בשילוב

דינים של השנה כמנהג ק״ק ספרדים ועדות המזרח לפי פוסקים ראשונים ואחרונים בעתו ובזמנו בכל פרשה ופרשה בצירוף משלים ומעשיות יקרים מכתבי יד עתיקים של חכמי ספרד ואספניה כגון מספר הקודש ״מעם לועז״ ועוד אשר לא ראו אור בלשון הקודש הכל בשפה המונית קלה (צחה) למען ירוץ הקורא בו.

יצא לאור ע״י חברת אהבת חיים ירושלים
לוקט וחובר במהדורא קמא ע״י
מיסד החברה, הצעיר מנחם מנשה
שנת תשכ״ד
פעיה״ק ירושלים תובב״א

כי חיים הם למוצאיהם ולכל בשרו מרפא

אבן מלא זה שער לה׳ צדיקים יבאו בו

The title page of Ahavas Chaim*, Part Two.*

[Above the frame:] "This is the gate of Hashem; tzaddikim shall enter through it"

[In the top corners:] My help is from Hashem (עמ"י) ... Maker of heaven and earth (עש"ה)

Sefer

Ahavas Chaim HaShalem

Part Two

In it open three sefarim:

Vayikra - Bamidbar - Devarim

[Right column:] Delightful and wonderful explanations, more precious than fine gold and pearls, gathered from the commentators and midrashim, aggados, beraisos and so on, "who sees the vision of the Almighty," with sources from Chazal.

[Left column:] Every saying in the name of the one who said it, so that their sources may be known; thoughts, sayings and sparks of light of the gedolei haTorah, which restore the soul and gladden the heart, "for the ways of Hashem are straight, and tzaddikim walk in them."

Interwoven with:

the dinim of the year according to the minhag of the holy communities of the Sephardim and Edos HaMizrach, following the poskim, Rishonim and Acharonim, each at its proper time, in every parshah, together with meshalim and precious stories from ancient manuscripts of the chachamim of Sefarad and Aspamia, such as from the holy sefer Me'am Lo'ez, and others that have not seen light in lashon hakodesh; all in a simple, popular (clear) language, so that the reader may run through it.

Published by Chevras Ahavas Chaim, Yerushalayim

Gathered and composed in the first edition by

the founder of the Chevrah, the humble Menachem Menashe

In the year 5724 (1964)

Here in the holy city of Yerushalayim, may it be built and established speedily in our days, amen

[Down the right side of the frame:] "Whoever learns halachos every day is assured that he is a ben Olam HaBa"

[Down the left side:] "For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all his flesh"

His reworking came out in 5721 (1961), a volume by itself. His health kept him from going further, so Vayikra, Bamidbar and Devarim were published in 5724 (1964) as they had first been written, in a separate volume. That is why the two volumes differ in their wording.

Defying all logic, the sefer has gone through edition after edition and spread across the whole world. I have come upon it in homes and in shuls in Europe, in America and in South America. Many people have told me that it was this sefer that opened the way for them to do teshuvah, that it is always in their hands, that every Shabbos they read from it aloud to their families, and that they look on my grandfather as their teacher and rebbi.

In New York, for one, I met a talmid chacham, one of the mezakei harabbim and a well-regarded mohel. He came to America from Egypt at twelve, he told me, carrying nothing but *Ahavas Chaim*. In hard times, in a strange and foreign land, that sefer kept him from assimilating, and it gave him the strength to grow up and to raise a family for Torah and "yiras Shamayim."

Another mezakeh harabbim, Rav R. B. shlita, told me of something that happened about forty years ago, when he was about seventeen. He was waiting his turn to see a doctor, reading *Ahavas Chaim* while he waited. When he went in, the doctor, a thoroughly secular man, asked him, "What do you have there?" "The sefer *Ahavas Chaim*," he said. The doctor looked it over briefly. "If this sefer makes people love life," he said, "bring me one too, and I will pay for it." And he did. Years later the two met again. The doctor had become a shomer Torah u'mitzvos, and he told him, "That sefer you brought me all those years ago left its mark on me, and to this day I never let it out of my hands."

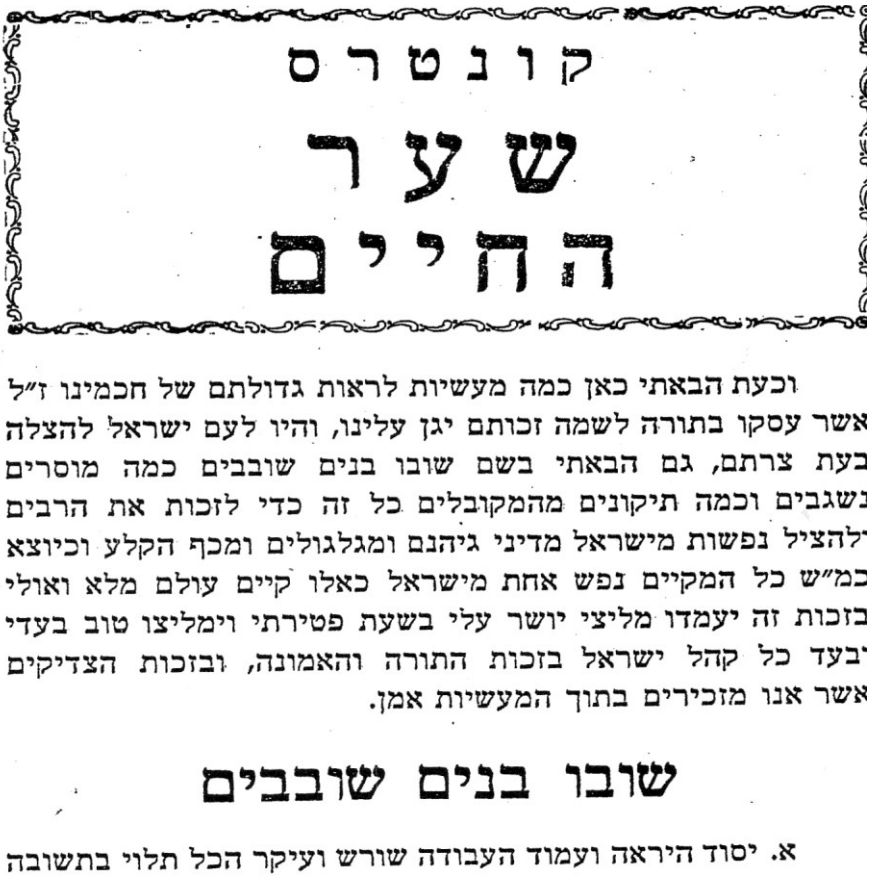
I have also known several couples on the edge of divorce whose lives turned around, toward the good and toward shalom, once they took my advice and began learning this sefer together for about half an hour a day.

Kuntres Shaar HaChaim

In about 5722 (1962) my grandfather brought out, again with no name on it, the *Kuntres Shaar HaChaim*: mussar, and stories of teshuvah and of the punishments of Gehinnom and kaf hakela. Bound in with it was the Tikkun HaNiftarim that his rebbi, the renowned mekubal HaRav HaGaon Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l, had arranged in his sefer *Minchas Yehuda*

("Yehuda's Offering") to rescue the neshamos of the wicked and ease their punishment. My grandfather told me to do this tikkun for him after his petirah, at least thirteen times in the first year, one of them at least within the seven days of mourning. I did as he said. (Further on I tell how this tikkun, which we made, saved my grandmother from coming back in a gilgul.)

My grandfather, as I mentioned, left other works in manuscript, and for years I sat up nights with him getting them ready for the printer. Part of them made up a broad commentary on Pirkei Avos, drawn from many darshanim and commentators and filled with stories, in the manner of *Ahavas Chaim*; the rest had no set shape. They were written in Hebrew, but in a Turkish-Jewish hand, a mixture of Rashi script and *chatzi kulmus* (a Sephardi half-cursive hand), that few people could read. After his petirah some of them stayed in his house and some lay on top of the aron kodesh in the Ahavas Chaim shul. What became of them I do not know. Chaval al d'avdin.



קונטרס

שער

החיים

וכעת הבאתי כאן כמה מעשיות לראות גדולתם של חכמינו ז"ל
אשר עסקו בתורה לשמה זכותם יגן עלינו, והיו לעם ישראל להצלה
בעת צרתם, גם הבאתי בשם שובו בנים שובבים כמה מוסרים
נשגבים וכמה תיקונים מהמקובלים כל זה כדי לזכות את הרבים
להציל נפשות מישראל מדיני גיהנם ומגלגולים ומכף הקלע וכיוצא
בזה כל המקיים נפש אחת מישראל כאלו קיים עולם מלא ואולי
בזכות זה יעמדו מליצי יושר עלי בשעת פטירתי וימליצו טוב בעדי
ובעד כל קהל ישראל בזכות התורה והאמונה, ובזכות הצדיקים
אשר אנו מזכירים בתוך המעשיות אמן.

שובו בנים שובבים

א. יסוד היראה ועמוד העבודה שורש ועיקר הכל תלוי בתשובה

The first page of the Kuntres Shaar HaChaim.

Kuntres

Shaar HaChaim

And now I have brought here a number of stories, to show the greatness of our Chachamim z"l who occupied themselves with Torah lishmah, may their merit protect us, and who were a deliverance for the Jewish people in their time of trouble. I have also brought, under the name Shuvu Banim Shovavim ("Return, wayward children"), a number of lofty words of mussar and a number of tikkunim from the mekubalim. All this is in order to bring merit to the many, to save Jewish souls from the judgments of Gehinnom, from gilgulim, from kaf hakela and the like, as it is said: whoever sustains one soul of Israel, it is as though he sustained an entire world. And perhaps in this merit advocates will stand up for me at the hour of my passing and speak well on my behalf and on behalf of the

whole congregation of Israel, in the merit of the Torah and of emunah, and in the merit of the tzaddikim whom we mention in the stories. Amen.

Shuvu Banim Shovavim

1. The foundation of yiras Shamayim and the pillar of avodah, the root and essence of everything, depends on teshuvah

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Man and His Strength

CHAZAL TEACH: "ONE WHO teaches Torah to his fellow's son will be seated in the yeshivah shel maalah, as the pasuk says (Yirmiyahu 15), 'If you return, I will bring you back, and you shall stand before Me.' And one who teaches Torah to the son of an am ha'aretz, even if Hakadosh Baruch Hu has issued a decree, He annuls it for that man's sake, as it says (ibid.), 'If you bring out the precious from the worthless, you shall be as My mouth'" (Bava Metzia 87a). And the beraisa at the end of Pirkei Avos says: "One who learns Torah lishmah merits many things... and people draw from him counsel and sound wisdom."

So it was with my grandfather. People in trouble came to him for a berachah, because they saw that his berachos bore fruit; in the merit of the great zikui harabim in his hands, they were accepted in Shamayim. They came for advice, too, on shalom bayis, parnassah, shidduchim, health and the like, and once they had seen berachah in his words they returned again and again.

Chacham Rafael

One of the regulars was Chacham Rafael, a short man with a dignified face and a long white beard. He had more than his share of yissurim, yet he was always happy, and he made everyone around him happy too. He had bought himself a grave on Har HaZeisim. Every Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan and Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul, when thousands go up to visit the graves of those dear to them, he would open that grave, year after year, say the whole of Tehillim inside it, and then dance there with songs and praises while a large crowd gathered around. "This is the body's permanent home,"

he would tell them, "once the neshamah has gone up to its place." Then he would point toward the city: "And over there is the temporary one." That was how he stirred people to teshuvah.

(In the end, though, he was buried on Har HaMenuchos (the cemetery at the western entrance of Yerushalayim), because the war of 5708 (1948) left Har HaZeisim under Jordanian rule.)

The Woman Who Combed Her Hair on Shabbos

My mother z"l told me what she had heard from Chacham Rafael himself. He was born on Corfu, the Greek island, to parents who kept nothing of Yiddishkeit at all. When he was eight, a shocking event brought them back in complete teshuvah. This is what happened.

Corfu had a community of shomrei Torah u'mitzvos, and secular Jews as well, who would not take on the yoke of Torah and mitzvos. One of these was a woman who sat on her balcony above the road every Shabbos morning combing her hair, just when the rav of the city went by on his way to tefillah. Each Shabbos the rav would come over to the balcony and rebuke her once more: combing the hair is forbidden on Shabbos, because it pulls hairs out. And each Shabbos she mocked him and his rebuke. Once he told her that a woman who combs her hair on Shabbos is hung by her hair in Gehinnom, in great suffering. "I'll take care of those malachim of yours," she answered. She put it in her will that when she died, her head was to be shaved bare before the burial. Years later she passed away. Her sons did as she had asked and shaved her head, and only then did they call the chevra kadisha.

The men there wore a sort of long robe with a single pocket, at the side of the chest (like the pocket on our shirts). That day the head gravedigger had borrowed a large sum for some need of his, four hundred drachmas (the coins of Greece), and he was on his way home with it when they called him to this woman's levayah. He put the money in his pocket, as always, and went to see to the burial; among other things, he lowered the body into the grave himself. At home he reached into his pocket for the money, and it was not there. Going back over his day, he concluded that it had dropped into the grave when he bent down to lay the body in.

He ran straight to the rav. "Take a minyan," the rav told him. "Ask the deceased for mechilah, open the grave and look for your money." The gra-

vedigger wept. He was too frightened to do it alone, and he begged the rav to come with him. The rav agreed. He had the shamash gather seven more men besides themselves to make up a minyan, and they all went and opened the grave.

What they saw astonished and terrified them at once. The woman lay with her tachrichim slipped off to one side. The hair on her shaven head had grown more than a meter long, and her feet, bent up toward her head, were tearing it out, so that her head ran with blood. The money lay on top of her. The rav spoke at once: "Shamayim made you lose the money in the grave so that we would open it, and everyone would see that there is din and there is a Dayan. This is the woman I used to rebuke for combing her hair on Shabbos." He sent the shamash out at once to spread the word through the city, so that people would see and fear. Most of the city came to look at the terrifying wonder, Chacham Rafael's parents among them. What they saw with their own eyes brought them back to Hashem with all their heart and all their might, and they raised their son in the straight path of the Torah.

The Neighbor's Kabbalah

My mother also told me about a neighbor of ours who wore a black tichel and thick black stockings, the way Hungarian women do. She came from a modern family; my mother remembered her as a new bride in a sheitel and thin, light brown stockings. A few years after her wedding her mother fell gravely ill and came close to death. In her great pain the daughter vowed, for her mother's recovery, to add in tznius and wear a black tichel and thick black stockings. She kept her word, and a few days later her mother recovered and came home.

A few months on, she had had enough of the black clothes. "It was the doctors' treatment that made my mother better," she said. "I can go back to my nice clothes." And she went back to dressing as before. The very next day the illness returned in full force, and her mother was rushed to the hospital. Now the woman saw how things stood: she herself had put her mother's life in danger. She went straight back to the black clothing and promised Hashem never to change it again as long as she lived. And her mother did regain her health.

The Blue Scissors

Something similar, and remarkable, happened a few years ago in Yerushalayim. A five-year-old boy was swinging on a swing in the garden beside his house. He turned his head to look behind him, the rope was pulled, and it wound around his neck. By the time people ran to save him he had nearly choked. He reached the hospital unconscious and in critical condition, and for several months he lay there like a vegetable. His name and his family's were made public, so that people would ask for rachamim for him.

One morning the tzaddik Rav Dovid Frankel zt"l called the family and told the father a terrible dream he had had the night before. He stood in the Beis Din shel Maalah, and three boxes were set before the dayanim. One was marked "Chaim" (life), the second "Maves" (death), Hashem yatzileinu, and the third "Neshamos." Each time, the heavenly dayanim drew a neshamah's name from the box of neshamos, judged it and decided its din: which to put in the box of life, and which, chas v'shalom, the opposite. "I saw them take your child's name out of the box of neshamos," he said, "and hold it out toward the box of the dead. Suddenly a pair of blue scissors appeared, from the Machaneh Yehudah market in Yerushalayim, and cut the note to pieces. I don't understand what those scissors are, or why they came from Machaneh Yehudah, but I felt I had to tell you my dream."

The father had barely put the phone down when it rang again. It was the boy's doctor, asking the parents to come urgently. Hearts pounding with fear, they hurried to the hospital, and the doctor met them with a broad smile. For no medical reason anyone could explain, he said, the boy had suddenly woken up and begun to talk and act like a perfectly healthy child. He was examined, found entirely well, and sent home.

On the way back the father told his wife about Rav Dovid's dream, and there it was before them, come true. She was so shaken that it took her some time to recover herself. Then she told him: she sewed clothes, and she owned a pair of blue scissors that cut cloth as well as a professional's. Whenever she bought cloth at Machaneh Yehudah she took them along and handed them to the seller to cut her cloth with. "This last time," she said, "I decided to add in tznius as a zechus for our son's recovery. I would not pass the scissors from my hand to the seller's; I would put them down on the table for him to pick up himself. And that is what I did. Now I have

heard the dream, I understand it, and I see how my kabbalah was accepted in the Beis Din shel Maalah. How can I stay calm?"

Today that boy is a distinguished avreich in Yerushalayim. The scissors are kept in his home, on a bookcase shelf behind the glass, a lasting remembrance of the life he was given as a gift in the zechus of his mother's precious tznius.

The Bus That Waited for a Tefillah

His son Mordechai z"l used to tell how he once rode with my grandfather on an Arab bus from Jaffa to Yerushalayim. At the Har Tov curve (near Beis Shemesh) the engine suddenly broke down, and the driver climbed out to find the trouble. "Come, let's get off," my grandfather told his son. "We need to daven here." "And how will we get to Yerushalayim?" my uncle asked. "The driver will leave!" "Don't worry," my grandfather answered.

The two of them walked to the kever of Dan ben Yaakov, which is in that area, and there my grandfather davened at length, without hurrying, for all Klal Yisrael. When they came back, the driver was cursing in anger; he still had not found what was wrong. The moment they boarded, he tried the engine again. It started at once, and the bus went on to Yerushalayim without any trouble.

Instead of Surgery

When people came to consult my grandfather about an operation the doctors wanted to perform, he usually opposed it and stopped it, promising that teshuvah and tefillah would bring the sick person back to health. He would daven for him, and within a few days the illness would be entirely gone. If the doctors insisted on operating, calling it "pikuach nefesh," and the family refused on my grandfather's word, the doctors would raise an uproar and decide these people had lost their minds. And when the patient was healed, it was a kiddush Hashem.

One day a woman came to him, weeping and trembling. Her three-month-old son had fallen off the bed and bled heavily from the head. The hospital had found a fractured skull and a concussion, and had decided to operate. The operation was dangerous, but there was nothing to lose. My grandfather took her straight to the shul, opened the aron kodesh and made a "pidyon nefesh" for the baby. Afterward he told her, "Take him to a great

doctor to be examined. Even if he decides to operate, do not agree. Bring him home."

She did as he said. A great professor examined the baby and declared the operation essential; she refused and set out for home with him. On the way she passed Yeshivas Porat Yosef, where the mekubalim Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l, Chacham Yosef Zaruk zt"l, Chacham Sasson Levi zt"l and Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani zt"l laid their hands on the baby's head and blessed him. A few months later she brought him back to the hospital to be examined again, and everything was in order. How had he been healed, they asked her, and what medicines had he been given? "I listened to Chacham Menachem," she said, "and the only medicine the child had was the berachah of the mekubalim at Yeshivas Porat Yosef."

The Bulgarian Jew

While we sat shivah for my grandfather, a yerei Shamayim Jew from Bulgaria came and told us his story. When he came to Eretz Yisrael he knew little of Yiddishkeit, and the home he built in Israel was entirely secular. At ten his son fell ill. Tests showed a hole in the boy's heart, and the doctors declared his condition dangerous. His friends came to him in his distress: "Go to Chacham Menachem and ask him to daven for your son." He doubted it would do any good, but he went.

My grandfather heard him out and said, "Only one thing can change nature for your son: complete teshuvah to Hashem, the G-d of Yisrael." He began to explain to him what the Torah and its mitzvos are. The man said he would do anything for his son, and my grandfather told him, "Come, we'll go and daven Minchah. In the course of the tefillah, take a taanis on yourself for tomorrow." He showed him how to daven Minchah and where to accept the taanis. My grandfather took on a taanis for the next day as well, for the son's sake.

The next day the man returned, and the two of them sat in the shul and said the whole of Tehillim, word by word. When they had finished, my grandfather told him, "Your teshuvah has been accepted. Your son is well." He ran straight to the hospital and saw that the boy looked much better. "Chacham Menachem promised me that because of my teshuvah the boy is already well," he told the doctors, and pressed them to repeat the tests. They laughed and thought him mad. The improvement on the outside, they

said, came from the medicines, which do not heal the heart at all, only treat the illness's side effects. His son was still in danger, and instead of running to rabbis he should find a way to fly him abroad for a dangerous operation.

He would not give in. On Chacham Menachem's word he decided to take his son out of the hospital and bring him home, and only then did they agree to test the boy's heart once more. To their astonishment, everything was in order. The whole hospital staff saw a very great kiddush Hashem, and the man and all his family returned in complete teshuvah to Hashem, the G-d of Yisrael, in Whose hand is the soul of every living thing.

His Brother's Daughter

Mr. Y. N., one of my grandfather's talmidim through all the years, came too. When his brother's daughter was a young girl, he told us, she came down with the well-known illness, rachmana litzlan, and the doctors, who imagine that whether a person lives is up to them, gave up hope for her. The desperate family turned to my grandfather. Her father was to fast one day, he said, do teshuvah in a general way for his sins and look into his deeds, and afterward come back. The father did so and returned. "Baruch Hashem," my grandfather told him, "your teshuvah has been accepted, and the girl is already well. I promise you that you will see grandchildren from her." So it was. The illness vanished of itself, and the girl is now a grown woman, married, with healthy children of her own.

The Ruach from the Beis HaKevaros

A woman came as well. Her son had fallen ill and lost the power of speech, rachmana litzlan, and nothing the doctors tried had helped. When she came to my grandfather for a berachah, he asked for her name and the boy's. The illness, he told her, had come because she went to the beis hakevaros while she was expecting him; a ruach tumah had attached itself to her and harmed the child. From now on she must take care never to enter a beis hakevaros again, above all when she was expecting. He promised her, too, that he would make a tikkun for her son that very day to drive the ruach ra'ah out of him, and then the boy would speak like everyone else. A few hours later the boy began to speak on his own, with no treatment at all.

At the Cave of Shimon HaTzaddik

My cousin told me in his father Mordechai's name that while they were sitting the seven days of aveilus for Saba, a man came in and said, "You don't know how great a loss you have suffered, you and all Klal Yisrael." His son, he told them, had been completely mute at six, unable to say a word. One night the father dreamed that someone was telling him, "Only Chacham Menachem will heal your son, so that he can speak like other people."

He got up then and there and came with his son to my grandfather's house at midnight, asking him to heal the boy. My grandfather tried to send him away. "I am not a doctor," he said, "and I am not responsible for your dreams," and more of the same, so that the man would leave him alone and go. But the man held on to the door and would not budge. His dream was true, he insisted, and he was waiting for his son to be healed. When my grandfather saw him weeping and pleading, he said, "Good. Come with me."

The three of them went to the Mandelbaum crossing (Mandelbaum Gate, which from 1948 until the Six Day War was the one crossing point between the Israeli and Jordanian parts of Yerushalayim), then the border of the state of Jordan. My grandfather took them by the hand, and they walked right among the soldiers of the Legion, who did not see them, and on to the cave of Shimon HaTzaddik nearby. The father was told to wait at the entrance while my grandfather went in with the boy. When they came out, my grandfather took their hands again, and they passed back among the enemy soldiers and through the Mandelbaum crossing to Rechov Shmuel HaNavi. There he stopped. "Go home," he told the man, "and tell no one what you have seen. And know that on the day you tell it, I will have to leave the world." Then they went home.

In the morning the boy got up and began to speak like everyone else. Everyone asked how it had happened, but the father kept the truth to himself, afraid of endangering my grandfather's life. "But now that he has passed away," he ended, "I can tell you how my son came to speak."

Menachem in the Jordan

After my marriage my brother Rafael z"l took my place, living with Saba, who was alone in his house, and helping him. He stayed there for some time, until my grandfather married again. One night, Rafael told me, my

grandfather suddenly woke him: "Get up, and let us daven for your cousin Menachem, who is in danger." He told him what to say. My grandfather lit candle after candle, a tefillah from the depths of his heart on his lips that his grandson Menachem be saved. After a long while he said to my brother, "Now go and rest. Menachem has been saved." My brother asked what had happened. "Tomorrow Menachem will come and tell you himself," my grandfather said.

And the next day Menachem did come, to thank Saba for saving him. He was in a special paratrooper unit, he said, which had been ordered across the Jordan for an operation against the terrorists in the village of Karameh (on the Jordanian side of the river). The river was stormy, too rough to swim across. So two soldiers went over first, carefully, carrying a long rope. They tied one end to a strong post on the eastern bank of the Jordan River and the other end to a post like it on the western bank, and the soldiers crossed by gripping the rope and pulling themselves along it hand over hand.

When Menachem's turn came, the weight of the load on his back, a heavy crate of bombs and ammunition among it, pulled his hands off the rope. He fell into the river and went under. The commander ordered the rest to leave him and go on, since all of them were in mortal danger. Suddenly a wheel came under his feet, kept him from sinking and floated him up to the surface. Then a current carried him along and threw him out on the bank. There, as he lay in a faint, he saw my grandfather come and strike him on the back several times, until he had brought up all the water he had swallowed and came back to consciousness and to his strength. He crawled to the route his comrades were to take back at the end of the operation, waited for them, and returned with them. I also heard this story from a relative, who had it from my cousin Menachem himself.

The Pasuk Under Fire

Menachem also told my cousin that my grandfather once called him in and said, "You are about to go out on a dangerous military operation. You and your comrades, take care to say the pasuk **'See my affliction and rescue me, for I have not forgotten Your Torah'** without stopping, and you will be saved." Not long afterward my cousin Menachem was in a hard battle against terrorists, who poured showers of bullets on them. Bullets flew to

the right and left of the group, and many were wounded. But he and his comrade kept repeating the pasuk without a pause, and despite the hellish fire aimed at them, neither was hit. Then, for some reason, his comrade stopped for a moment, and at once a bullet struck him in the forehead. Menachem, stubbornly determined not to stop at all, was saved, in a way that was beyond nature and beyond reason.

Savta Came to Tell Him

My brother Rafael told me of a night he spent elsewhere, when he fell ill. The pains were terrible, and by morning they had gone as suddenly as they came. The next day Saba called him: how was he feeling, and how had the night been? "Last night," he told him, "Savta came from the olam ha'emes. She knocked on the window and told me to daven for you, because you were ill."

An acquaintance of my grandfather's in Tel Aviv was lying ill once, in pain through his whole body, when my grandfather came into his house. My grandfather put his hand on him; at once the pains left, and the man was healed.

Many others surely had such stories, and theirs never reached us. What I do remember is how he would stand again and again before the aron kodesh, pleading with supplications and tears for cases like these, or for people he had been asked to daven for, that they would return in teshuvah.

The Motorcycle on Shabbos

Many times I heard him daven for Jews who had offended his honor: that they not be harmed or punished on his account, and that no evil whatever befall them, chas v'shalom.

One Shabbos, walking down a street near his house, my grandfather saw a bochur riding a motorcycle. "Chabibi (Arabic: my dear)," he called to him gently, "today is Shabbos. Riding a motorcycle is forbidden." The bochur flared up and, without a second thought, slapped my grandfather across the face. My grandfather walked on home. The bochur rode off, overturned and was hurt.

Soon afterward the bochur's mother came to my grandfather in tears. Her son was in mortal danger, she said, and in spite of what he had done she was asking my grandfather to daven for him to recover. My grandfather went out to the scene of the accident. A crowd stood around, and men of

Magen David Adom (Israel's ambulance service) were treating the bochur. Saying nothing, he went up to him and whispered in his ear. Then he turned to the mother: "Don't worry. He will wake up this very day, and he will recover."

At home the family asked him what had happened with the bochur. He had seen the bochur's nefesh, he told them; it had already left the body but was standing near it. So he went up to the body's ear and asked the nefesh whether it was willing to do teshuvah. It said it was, and he commanded it to go back into the body. That same day the bochur woke and recovered, and some time later he became a complete baal teshuvah.

The Kupah in Shuk HaCarmel

The righteous Mrs. Chanah Angel z"l, who collected his tzedakah kupos in Tel Aviv and the center of the country, told me that my grandfather once came to her house with a kupah. He opened it, counted the few grushim inside, wrote out a receipt for that sum, and asked her to take it the next day to a certain man in Shuk HaCarmel (Tel Aviv's great open-air market). That day, he told her, he had passed the man's shop, and the shopkeeper had come out, thrown the kupah at him and shouted that the religious are thieves and parasites, and so on. (It was probably during the search for Yossele Schuchmacher,[51] when the secular street was full of crude, vile incitement against the religious, and the poor man had been swept up in it.) "I have forgiven him wholeheartedly," my grandfather added, "and may it be Hashem's will to forgive him too."

The next day she went to deliver the receipt and found the shop shut, with a death notice posted on it. The neighbors told her that the afternoon before, for no reason at all, the man had doubled over in pain and died.

"Ganav!"

Once, as my grandfather went along the street, one of his opponents shouted at him, "Ganav! Ganav!" (Thief! Thief!). My grandfather kept walking and gave no response. Soon afterward the man fell gravely ill, and in his

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[51] Yossele Schuchmacher, a young boy, was hidden by his grandfather, Nachman Shtarkes, to keep his parents from raising him far from Torah. For more than two years the search for him stirred the whole country, until he was found in New York in 5722 (1962). —Trans.

suffering he asked for my grandfather. His family hurried over and asked my grandfather, in the sick man's name, to come. He went at once, and the man told him, "I know this suffering has come because I shamed you in public. With all my heart I ask your mechilah and forgiveness."

In his humility, my grandfather met him with warmth. He was probably mistaken, he told him; let him look into his other deeds for the cause of his illness. In any case, my grandfather was davening for him and wished him a refuah sheleimah. Once my grandfather had left the house, the man's condition improved markedly, until he recovered completely.

His War Against Zionism

My grandfather hated secular Zionism and religious Zionism with a complete hatred, and fought them furiously. He could find no rest, seeing Jewish children led to shmad day after day in the slaughterhouses of the Zionist Ministry of Education, where they are taught every kind of kefirah, and that they are not the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov but of an ape that developed. Nor could he rest over what had been done to those who came up to Eretz HaKodesh to live in its kedushah: they had been made into broken vessels and forced to send their children to the Zionists' schools.

He was the friend of a man precious among men, a giant among giants, as great in ahavas Yisrael as in his hatred of Zionism: none other than the one who was zealous with the zeal of Hashem Tzevakos, **Rav Amram Blau zt"l**. With mesiras nefesh Rav Amram fought the battles for Shabbos, for tznius and for the protection of Jewish kevarim, and he was arrested many times and suffered harshly in prison. (About him, see further on.)

The Director Who Became His Enemy

My grandfather was determined to run the Chevrah independently, by his own understanding alone. He looked far ahead, and he would not tie Chevras Ahavas Chaim to any public body at all, fearing that there too politics would one day be in charge, and not necessarily truth and honesty. One of the directors of the chareidi institutions in Yerushalayim, on the other hand, pressed to join the Chevrah to his own institution, its building under joint supervision included, arguing that they agreed in principle. My grandfather fought this with all his strength, and the director became his declared enemy. He persecuted my grandfather in all sorts of ways, even trying to spread

an evil name about him. Not only did my grandfather not pay him back in kind; he davened that the man not be punished on his account.

Once, while I was sitting with my grandfather at home, a relative of mine came into Saba's house. Saba turned to him at once with a complaint: "Why did you chase So-and-so? If not for my tefillah that he be saved from you, you would very nearly have hurt him. I don't want anyone who hates me to be harmed on my account in any way at all." My relative was dumbfounded. How could my grandfather know what had just happened out in the street? I asked him what it was. He had seen So-and-so, my grandfather's enemy, in the street, he told me, and decided to beat him for his behavior and teach him a lesson once and for all. The man ran, my relative chased him, and suddenly he vanished; my relative could not find him.

The Man Who Would Not Send Her Away

I remember a man who sinned with a married woman. Her husband found out and divorced her, and this man married her. My grandfather met him once, went up to him and said, "Divorce the woman. By the din of the Torah she is forbidden to you." The man would not listen. "If you do not divorce her willingly," my grandfather told him, "in the end she will be the cause of your dying before your time." Some years later the man came home early one day and found his wife with another man in his bed. The grief and anguish brought on a heart attack, and he left the world before he was fifty, Hashem yatzileinu.

The Fire Savta Saw

The family used to tell a well-known story about Savta. She got up once after chatzos and saw a flame of fire in the room. In great fright she called out, "Menachem, where are you?" My grandfather was with her at once. He calmed her and showed her that nothing around them was out of the ordinary. But she would not be moved: she had seen fire, she was sure of it, and it was no trick of the imagination. Then he told her, "Fortunate are you that you saw it. Say nothing to anyone." (If I remember rightly, I heard that he told her it was Eliyahu HaNavi.) In the morning she told her children, and Saba asked her to keep the thing quiet. After that, neither of them would ever confirm or deny it.

Savta's Heart

My grandmother, alehah hashalom, suffered from her heart for many years, and several times she came close to a "heart attack." It mostly happened at night, and I would run to Dr. Cohen z"l's house and call him urgently. (Even on Shabbos night he came at once in his car, because of pikuach nefesh.) My grandfather, for his part, would immediately stand in tefillah for her recovery and set aside pidyonos for tzedakah. When Dr. Cohen came, he would almost always say that she had been through the crisis of a mild attack and, baruch Hashem, it had passed by the time he arrived; and he would give her medicines.

Once the attack came in the daytime, while my grandfather was out of town. The doctor said it was serious and she had to be hospitalized at once, and she was admitted to the Bikur Cholim hospital in the center of Yerushalayim. My mother asked us to say nothing to Saba until she could break the news to him gently. But the moment my grandfather reached Yerushalayim he turned to my sister and asked which hospital Savta was in. Seeing that he already knew, she told him. He went straight there, made kaparos for her with money over her head, and stood in tefillah and supplication for her recovery, as was his way in such cases (I witnessed them). The crisis passed at once, and she was discharged and came home.

Mr. Russo

I remember one morning when my master and teacher, HaRav HaGaon Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l, came to my grandfather and said, "Chacham Menachem, yesterday we made a shidduch between an orphan who is a talmid chacham and a poor kallah, and we decided that you will give five hundred lirot for hachnasas kallah." "Gladly," my grandfather told him. "I'll try to raise the money over the next few days."

That same morning my grandfather went to Tel Aviv, to his son's house. "I am tired and need a little rest," he told his daughter-in-law. "Wake me in an hour. I need money for several tzedakah causes, and I must go out and collect it." About an hour later he got up, pale. "Perhaps rest a little longer," she said. "I can't," he told her. "Jews are waiting for the money."

On his way downstairs, by hashgachah from Shamayim, he met Mr. Moshe HaKohen, an honored and distinguished man from the Jews of Turkey. "Chacham Menachem," he said, "come with me to Hadassah hos-

pital for a bris milah," and they went together. At the bris my grandfather saw that the baby had been brought, to be handed to the sandak, by a young woman in trousers. Heedless of everyone present, he stood up and cried out, "Don't! Give the baby to an old woman to hand to the sandak. Don't give him over with your own hands!" No one listened, of course; on the contrary, they scolded him harshly for meddling in a quarrel not his own. My grandfather showed no reaction at all.

After the bris an American Jew named Russo came up to my grandfather, grabbed him by the beard and shook his head in a terrible rage. "How dare you shame a daughter of Yisrael," he said in Spanish, "and interfere in the bris of people who are no family of yours at all?" "Are you asking out of anger," my grandfather answered, "or do you really want an answer?" Seeing that my grandfather was not angry and was not answering anger with anger, the man drew back. "Do you have an answer for me?" he asked.

"Let me ask you something," said my grandfather. "Suppose you were at a chuppah, and in the middle of it a child fainted and lost consciousness. Would you say, 'It isn't nice to disturb the chuppah,' and let the child be lost? Or would you shout, 'Help! A child has fainted!'?" "Of course I would shout," he said. "The child's life comes first."

"That is exactly what I did," my grandfather told him. "I don't understand," the man said. "This young woman is a 'niddah,'" my grandfather answered. "If she hands the baby to the sandak, it will have a bad influence on him his whole life long. How could I keep quiet and not cry out to save the child?" Mr. Russo did not understand what "niddah" meant, or what harm could come of it. So my grandfather sat a full hour and explained to him, in his sweet way, what a Jew's neshamah is, and its purity, and what the tumah of niddah is, and so on, seasoning his words with stories and meshalim, as he always did.

Then my grandfather said, "I think I have answered you to your satisfaction. Now I must stop and get on with my business." "And what is your business?" Mr. Russo asked. "Collecting money for tzedakah causes." Mr. Russo turned to Chacham Moshe HaKohen: "Do you know this man?" "If there were a few more like Chacham Menachem," he answered, "Mashiach would come." Then Mr. Russo said to my grandfather, "Sit with me a few more hours and teach me more about the neshamah of a Jew, and don't worry about the money. Here is a check for a thousand dollars." My grand-

father sat with him until he had brought him back in teshuvah, and from then on Mr. Russo sent him a handsome check twice a year for tzedakah causes.

The Thousand-Dollar Check

There is more to Mr. Russo's thousand-dollar check. When my grandfather brought it home, he handed it to me and sent me to Rav Yaakov Lider zt"l to change it into Israeli lirot. Rav Lider was an outstanding darshan; pearls came from his mouth, and the derashos he gave several times at Chevras Ahavas Chaim set his audience aflame. He also changed money, illegally, in Meah Shearim, and for the check he gave me one thousand eight hundred lirot.

That evening the police raided his house and took everything they found, the check among it, bearing my grandfather's signature and the "Chevras Ahavas Chaim" stamp. My grandfather was called in to the police and questioned. "Yes, I know it is against the law," he told them, "but I did it to get more for it than the bank would give." They opened a file against him for changing foreign currency on the "black" market, and he was summoned to court.

On the morning of the trial my grandmother wept bitterly, I remember; she was afraid the Zionists would arrest him. "Don't worry," he told her. "I am going to do chessed and hashavas aveidah with Rav Lider. I'll be back today with the check." At the courthouse the usher, whom my grandfather had never met, came up to him: "Chacham Menachem, sir, what brings you here?" "I have a summons against me," he said. The usher took the summons and told him, "Go down to the corridor and wait for me there quietly."

A quarter of an hour or so later he was back, holding the prosecution's file on my grandfather. "Take it and go," he said, "and no one will be the wiser. Without a file there is no trial." My grandfather slipped the file under his coat and went home. There, with me watching, he opened it, removed the check that was to have been evidence in court, and tore the file into small pieces. "Come," he told me, "here is a mitzvah of hashavas aveidah. Take the check back to Rav Yaakov."

The Shoes and the Thirty Lirot

My father z"l had a shoe store in the Meah Shearim market. He made every shoe in it himself, some ordinary and some orthopedic. Zionist law required purchase-tax stamps on every shoe sold: thirty grush on a pair of ordinary shoes, one lira on an orthopedic pair.

When I was about fifteen, I remember, my grandfather and I were already asleep one night at ten when I heard a knocking at the door. I got up to open it, and there stood my father on the other side, weeping. I woke my grandfather at once; he quickly washed netilas yadayim and got up. With tears in his eyes my father told him what had happened that day. The tax authorities had raided his store, taken every pair of shoes he had, close to a thousand pairs, and loaded them on two trucks, claiming that the shoes lacked the tax stamps the law requires. My father argued that stamps had to go on only when a pair was sold, and he showed them a booklet of tax stamps he kept, but they paid him no attention. "We have testimony," they said, "that you don't put stamps on even when you sell." He was to report the next day to the customs house in Emek Refaim (in southern Yerushalayim) and agree on a fine of several thousand lirot; otherwise he would be put on trial.

When my grandfather had heard it all, he went with my father to the shul in the courtyard where he lived, and I followed them. He opened the aron kodesh. Since it was before chatzos, he did not say Tehillim, but said the tefillah "Ana B'choach" instead. When he finished he whispered a few words of tefillah and closed his eyes for some minutes. Then he opened them and told my father, "Avraham, go tomorrow early in the morning, as soon as the office opens, and settle the matter for only thirty lirot." "I'm ready to pay even a hundred," my father said. My grandfather silenced him. "Don't open your mouth. The matter will be closed for thirty lirot, as long as you go early in the morning."

The next day my father did as he was told and got there at eight in the morning, instead of the later hour he had been called for. One of the clerks had come in first, and to my father's surprise he was a friend from long ago. Not a friend from learning, or from games, or from the neighborhood, or anything of the kind. In the years before this state was founded, Arabs would come into the Jewish neighborhoods on Shabbos with wide wooden trays on their heads full of hot ka'ak (ring-shaped breads) and sell them to

Jews, with terrible chillul Shabbos. My father z"l and this friend belonged to the "Shomrei Shabbos" group, whose job was to stand by the gates of the Old City every Shabbos. Whenever an Arab came out with his wares, headed for the Jewish neighborhoods, they would knock the tray off his head and scatter what was on it over the road, so that he could not sell it to Jews. The two of them met in the group from time to time, and their acquaintance began and ended there.

Now they greeted each other, and the clerk asked my father, "What are you doing here?" My father told him, and the clerk took his identity card number. "Lucky for you that you came early," he said. "By your identity card number your file belongs to another clerk, who isn't in yet. I'll move it over to myself and see how I can help you." He studied the file and told him, "Such-and-such claims are written here, and on the strength of them you can be released by paying a fine of only thirty lirot." My father paid it, and that same day all the shoes were returned to his store.

With Rav Yosef Waltuch

Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l once told my son Avraham Asher, sheyichyeh, who told me, that my grandfather had brought him to a shul somewhere in Yerushalayim's Beis Yisrael neighborhood and shown him the lamed-vav tzaddikim, all of them, sitting together and learning. My grandfather talked with some of them, and the two of them left. "I went back again and again to look for that place," Rav Yosef said, "and never found it."

He told Avraham Asher another story too. In the winter of 5727 (1967) he joined my grandfather to daven at the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik, which lay inside the Kingdom of Jordan. They set out together, Rav Yosef gripping my grandfather's belt, and my grandfather led them in a zigzag across the entire no-man's land, clear of the mines buried there, until they were close to the building over the kever. Then my grandfather shut his eyes and davened. When he was done he told Rav Yosef, "In a few months the way here will open for Am Yisrael, and we will come to this place with no trouble at all." A few months later, sure enough, the Six Day War broke out, and the soldiers of the state of Jordan fled across to the far side of the Jordan.

(Every Rosh Chodesh, for all the forty years that the Old City of Yerushalayim was held by the Kingdom of "Jordan," Rav Yosef went to the

Kosel HaMaaravi, as will be told further on. I think he took the main road through the well-known Mandelbaum crossing, which had no no-man's land and no mines on the way, and walked past the soldiers of the state of Jordan guarding it, most likely through a holy Name of "ro'eh v'eino nir'eh" (seeing and not being seen) that he used. Rav Yosef surely knew how to pick his way between mines as well; he did it going to the tziyun of Shimon ben Yaakov Avinu, as will be told further on. But since this story took place with my grandfather, he told it as it happened, and in his humility he stressed that part, to make little of himself.)

Among the Mines

One Shabbos after the Six Day War we were in the middle of seudah shlishis, which he ate before going out to give his derashah in the Mamilla neighborhood, when he suddenly asked me, "Where is Yocheved, your sister?" I was surprised. She was not due at his house at that hour, and nothing logical could have prompted the question. She had gone on an outing with her friends, I told him; to Har HaTzofim, I believed.

He quickly brought the meal to an end and went to Rechov Shmuel HaNavi, which before the war had lain along the border. There he stood facing the UN building and the police school in Sheikh Jarrah (where Ma'alot Dafna stands today), and began his tefillah and his kavanos. I asked him what was the matter. "Your sister and her friends are in a minefield," he said. "We must daven that they come out safely." He let the shiur in Mamilla go and stood davening for nearly two hours, until we saw them crossing the field on their way back, heading straight for us.

My sister saw Saba and came straight to him. "Look what you've done!" he told her. "It is a miracle that you and your friends were saved. Why did you step off the road and wander around in a field full of mines? Baruch Hashem that He saved your lives."

The Pesukim from Yeshayahu

On many a Shabbos, when the heichal (the aron kodesh) was opened at Shacharis, he would hold up the taking out of the Sefer Torah and hand the congregation printed sheets with the first twelve pesukim of Yeshayahu, chapter 34, and after them pasuk 22 of chapter 33, for them to say with great kavanah. Usually he was content with once, but at times he asked that they say it several times. Whenever he did this we knew there would be in-

teresting news from the border that week, and so there was. Mostly it was terrorists, "fedayeen" (Arab raiders from across the border), who broke in that week to carry out attacks, and it all ended with no one hurt. On the few occasions when he asked for Shiras HaYam as well, that week brought a "local battle" in the border sector, with exchanges of fire, and it ended in miracles.

Jam on Pesach

One Chol HaMoed Pesach I went along with my grandfather on a visit to a family in Yehud, simple, yirei Shamayim people. They set before us some jam of their own making, and to my astonishment my grandfather made "Shehakol" and tasted it. I did not touch it. I was afraid of chametz b'mashehu, and we had been taught at home not to eat in other people's homes on Pesach. Then Saba said to me, "Eat. **You can see on the food** that it is kosher for Pesach, without any doubt."

CHAPTER NINE

His Rebbeim in Yerushalayim

CHACHAM YITZCHAK ALFIYAH ZT"L

Chacham Yitzchak was born in Aram Tzova (Aleppo, a city in Syria) around 5638 (1878) and came up to Yerushalayim as a young man. In 5667 (1907) he was made a dayan there. What he truly wanted, though, was to go out among the people and bring merit to the many, and that wish won: he gave up his post and founded the Chevras Ohr Chadash VeTzemach Tzaddik. The chevra gave ordinary people fixed times for Torah, each one learning with a talmid chacham as his chavrusa. Two nights were given to Talmud, two to Shulchan Aruch and one to Zohar, and in those days this was something new. The chevra also made tikkunim and taaniyos dibbur, and every Thursday night its members learned Tikkun Kares. Besides all this he opened a kollel for ten distinguished avreichim, on the condition that each of them also learn the writings of the Arizal three hours a day and grow in Kabbalah. He sought nothing for himself in any of it; it was all l'shem Shamayim.



Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah zt"l

He was a great kanai for Hashem and His Torah, ready to give himself up for any minhag rather than see even a part of it changed. Whenever the chance came he cried out and roused people over chinuch, sounding the alarm about parents who send their sons anywhere but to talmudei torah and yeshivos. My grandfather learned from him to be the same in all these matters. When the chevra kadisha wanted to change the minhag, he was the first to cry out against it. It was he who fired my grandfather up to go out and hire workers, at the great cost of several gold napoleons, and to demonstrate with mesirus nefesh, even at the price of a savage beating, to put a stop to their scheme, as told above.

Money That Is Not Kosher

He would not take donations from people who were not yirei Shamayim, least of all from mechallelei Shabbos who believe in Torah and mitzvos (the

"traditional" ones). He warned against it in his sefer ***Ohr Chadash VeTzemach Tzaddik*** as well.

Keeping clear of unkosher money given to tzedakah is no midas chassidus; it is halachah, and the chachamim of Yisrael kept it in every generation. In Rabbeinu's day, though, money was so tight that some gabbaim stopped asking who their donors were, until all restraint began to slip. Rabbeinu rose up and set the halachah back in its place.

A story is told of the Maharit Algazi (Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi) zt"l. While he headed Yeshivas Beis El he traveled on a shlichus to the cities of Europe. In Frankfurt (in Germany) he met the geonim Rav Nosson Adler zt"l and his talmid the Chasam Sofer zt"l, and with their help his shlichus succeeded. When the time came to go, the Chasam Sofer and Reb Dan Guggenheim walked with him to see him off. As he parted from them, the Maharit drew a sum of money from the fold of his robe and handed it to them. It had come, he said, from a man named Lilienthal, **and it seemed that this money was not kosher**; would they please give the man back his money. Seeing this, Reb Dan Guggenheim said, "Ruach hakodesh is at work in our master. This Lilienthal lends with ribbis."

Lilienthal, when the money came back to him, declared, "I will not rest and I will not be still until my money serves the Rav and his beis medrash." He set out for Yerushalayim at once, went to the gabbai of Beis El, and gave him a handsome sum to renovate the shul and put in a new paroches and new furniture. Suspecting nothing, the gabbai did it. When the Maharit Algazi returned to Yerushalayim and found the shul renovated and newly furnished, he asked who had paid for it. Once he understood where the money came from, he ordered everything smashed and thrown out, and his order was carried out.

The gaon and chassid Chacham Chaim Avraham Gagin (known as HaRav Agan), Rishon LeTziyon and rosh yeshivas Beis El, held to the same line. When he lay gravely ill, the doctor of the missionary hospital in Yerushalayim (a hospital run by Christian missionaries) offered to treat him at home for nothing, promising that within three days he would be as healthy as any man. The Rav refused. "**Better that I die by the hand of Hashem than make use of a doctor who entices Jews and leads them astray.**" A few days later he passed away to the life of Olam Haba.

The Rav who wrote *Yaskil Avdi* says this in Part 8, siman 28: "**I say further: one who takes tzedakah from them gives the sitra achra a place to draw nourishment from the kedushah of the mitzvah of tzedakah, and through this they hold back the geulah, etc. The whole purpose of our tefillah and our Torah is to sift out the sparks of kedushah that have sunk among the kelipos, and Ben David will not come until every spark of kedushah has been sifted out, as is known from the words of the Arizal. It follows that one who accepts tzedakah from something through which an aveirah was done brings the sitra achra into the domain of kedushah, strengthens it to overpower the force of kedushah, and causes the geulah to be delayed, chas veshalom. He will bear his sin, for because of him the geulah was held back. Therefore one who guards his soul will keep far from this, and the blessing of good will come upon him.**" There his words end.

My grandfather zt"l walked in his rebbi's footsteps here too. He took care himself, and warned others, never to take money from the "Zionists" and their state for yeshivos and talmudei torah or for any other cause of tzedakah, for that is what has let them take spoil and plunder the Jewish people, in ruchniyus and in gashmiyus alike. Chazal said long ago in the Gemara (Bava Basra 10b): "All the tzedakah and chessed the nations do is a sin for them (that is, for the Jews who receive from them), **for they do it only to make their kingdom last." There, too, they expounded the pasuk "When its boughs are dried up, they will be broken off; women will come and set them alight," and Rashi explains: once the merit in their hands runs out and the moisture of their tzedakah dries up, they will be broken. Who can tell how much this holds back our geulah and the redemption of our souls in a time like ours, how great the pain of the Shechinah is, and the pain of the tzaddikim and chassidim in Gan Eden, and how great the pain of Mashiach, when the power of the Torah is handed over to "a base people." Hashem save us.**

The Wages from Rishon LeTziyon

In 5671 (1911) the committee of the moshavah (farming settlement) of Rishon LeTziyon invited Chacham Yitzchak to come and teach the Jewish boys there. He accepted, and taught there four years straight. Then he

found out that the school's support came from the secularists. He resigned, and handed back every bit of the wages he had been paid in those four years, though he was very poor, and though the First World War, still going on, had brought the land to hard times.

To keep clear of any doubt of gezel, he would stipulate with a donor that the money was given on the understanding that he could use it as he saw fit. Even so, he would afterwards go and find out what the donor had in mind.

His sefer ***Kuntres HaYechieli**** was the first to set out the practice and the order of the taanis dibbur, which spread through the whole world in his own lifetime. He kept the order of hishtatchus on kivrei tzaddikim (praying stretched out on the kever), and brought others to keep it: a long tefillah taking in many chapters of Tehillim, and many hours at the kever of each tzaddik. Through him many yeshuos came about at their kevarim, for the community and for individuals.

At the Kever in Damanhur

In the Second World War, when the Germans stood at El Alamein on the border of Egypt, the tzaddik Rabbi Yaakov Abuchatzeira zt"l, a man well used to miracles, appeared to him in a dream. He asked Chacham Yitzchak to come to his kever in Damanhur, in Egypt, and make hishtatchus there, for the rescue of the Jewish people hung on it.

Civilians in wartime could get no permits to cross into Egypt or to ride the train, and so long a journey in a carriage packed with soldiers was a real danger. Rabbeinu did not hesitate. He rose in the morning, took his tallis and tefillin, and, trusting in the zechus of the tzaddik, went to the station to take the train to Cairo with no permits and no papers of any kind. As he stood waiting, two officers walked up to him. They asked his name, put him on the train and sat him between them all the way to Cairo. There they got off with him and walked him as far as the Jewish quarter, and then, all at once, they were gone.

He lost no time in gathering a large group, several dozen men, and they went to pray at the tziyun of the tzaddik Rabbi Yaakov in Damanhur. As the learning began, Chacham Yitzchak told them, "We will keep learning until the food we brought runs out" (a sack of flour and two tins of oil). On

the second day of their tefillah the Germans were beaten, and it was a miracle.

He insisted, and was very strict about it, that only Jews build a matzeivah. (Anyone who cares for the neshamah of someone dear to him should be just as strict, and should be there to watch over the work himself rather than trust the contractors.) He also warned that the names of the departed go on the top of the matzeivah, not on its side.

The Hand from the Heichal

Rabbeinu tells in his sefer ***Ya'ir Nasiv*** of a great and awesome miracle that happened to him in the shul of the Mishgav Ladach hospital. Fire broke out in the shul, and he saw that the flames were about to consume everything. He cried out, "Ribbono shel Olam, You know that we learn Torah lishmah." That moment a hand reached out from beside the heichal, lifted the burning-hot glass out of the blazing lux lamp (a kerosene pressure lamp), and set it on the tevah, where the rimonim of the Sefer Torah are laid. The fire went out on its own.

Many miracles happened to him on his journeys to kivrei tzaddikim. Once, for example, the Arab driver made up his mind to leave them behind and drive off, but the car would not budge until they had finished their tefillah and climbed in. Another time they drove about the Galil for several days in a car with a broken engine, and nothing went wrong.

When his end came, with a minyan of talmidei chachamim around him, Rabbeinu said Krias Shema and Viduy. In his last moments he sat up, looked at the Shivisi menorah fixed to the wall (a plaque with a menorah of pesukim under the pasuk "Shivisi"), and said with great kavanah, "I have set Hashem before me always; because He is at my right hand, I shall not falter." Then he laid his head on the pillow and went up to eternal life. It was 26 Elul 5715 (1955). He rests in honor on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim, zy"a.

CHACHAM YEHUDA FATIYAH ZT"L

Chacham Yehuda wrote the sefarim *Beis Lechem Yehuda*, a full commentary in two parts on the Arizal's *Etz Chaim*; *Yein HaRekach*, a commentary on the Idros of the Zohar; *Masok LaNefesh*, on the Saba d'Mishpatim of the Zohar; *Minchas Yehuda*; and others besides. Born in Baghdad in 5619 (1859), he

passed away on 27 Av 5702 (1942) and rests in honor high up on Har HaZeisim in Yerushalayim.

Back in Baghdad, the city of his birth, he saw the sick and the downtrodden going to the Yishmaelim for help through segulos, and these dealt in sheidim and defiled souls. He made up his mind that "in a place where there is no man, one must strive to be a man." He told the public to stop going to the Yishmaelim and come to him instead, and with Hashem's help he would save them. So it was, and his name spread as a worker of miracles who brought yeshuos.



Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l

His kamei'os were famous. Many who suffered from a "dybbuk" (the soul of someone who has died that has entered the body of a living person, to escape the punishment of the kaf hakela) were saved through him when he drove it out of them. He wrote about this at length in his sefer *Minchas Yehuda*. (It should be said that the hospitals for the mentally ill also hold

people who are not mentally ill at all; a dybbuk has entered them. Their families see them behave strangely, take them for mentally ill, and turn to doctors who understand nothing of the matter. The doctors send them on to hospitals, where the medicines dull their minds and leave them broken vessels. The dybbuk is still with us today; only, instead of being treated as it should be, it lies buried in the hospitals.)

In Yerushalayim too he received the public every morning after Shacharis, in the Musayof shul in the Bukharim neighborhood. He helped them with kamei'os, berachos and the like, and a great many were saved through him. (After his petirah Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l took his place, sitting for many years in the Musayof shul, writing kamei'os and saving many.)

The Stones in the Pouch

A Jew named Shasha'a once came to him with large stones in the pouch below, in that private place. Every time he passed water he screamed with pain, and he begged to be relieved of it. Chacham Yehuda laid his hands over the man's trousers and said the pasuk "There shall not be in your pouch a stone and a stone, a large one and a small one" (Devarim), with certain kavanos.[52] Then he told him, "Go and pass water." The man went straight to the bathroom, and as he passed water the stones all dissolved and came out with it. He was healed.

Rav Yeiva Saba Joins the Learning

The holy Rav, Chacham Salman Mutzafi zt"l, once held a learning in his home in the Saba d'Mishpatim of the holy Zohar: the secrets of the gilgulim that the neshamah of Rav Yeiva Saba taught the talmidim of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. The holy Rav, Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, sat with them explaining the text, bringing out secrets and wonderful chiddushim in its meaning. All at once Chacham Salman began to tremble with emotion. "Tell your friends what you are seeing," Chacham Yehuda said to him.

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[52] The pasuk forbids keeping false weights. Weights were stones carried in a pouch (kis), and the Hebrew name for the place where this man's stones were begins with the same word, kis. — Trans.

"I see my father coming in here in his Shabbos clothes," said Chacham Salman, "and a holy man with him. The two of them are listening to our learning."

Chacham Yehuda turned to the others. "Rav Yeiva Saba has come to hear our words, and he has brought the father of our host, Chacham Salman, with him from Gan Eden, so that he may take pleasure in the radiance of the Torah's honor as it is learned in his son's house."

The Berachah That Went Elsewhere

A man who had no children once came to him in tears, longing to merit a son. He pressed Chacham Yehuda until he gave him a berachah that in the coming month he would merit a son. Several months went by, and the man returned with a complaint: "Where is your berachah? My wife has not yet conceived." Chacham Yehuda shut his eyes at once. When he opened them he said, "Rasha, you gave my berachah to the Yishmaelite woman you sinned with in the hotel." The man hung his head in shame and left.

The Murder in Ba'quba

In *Minchas Yehuda* Chacham Yehuda writes that in Av 5679 (1919) he was staying in the village of Ba'quba near Baghdad, and went to comfort Moshe Shasha'a HaKohen, who was sitting in mourning for his only son, Menashe. Robbers had killed Menashe while trying to take his money, though they never got it, and he had left neither sons nor daughters. Moshe Shasha'a wanted to know why so harsh a decree had come upon his son and upon him. Chacham Yehuda said he would look into it once he got home. And because "He does the will of those who fear Him," Shamayim showed him the earlier gilgul of father and son, and why this had been decreed on them. This is what he wrote:

> *On Tishah B'Av, while the Kinos were being said, I dozed off and saw a young man going from the city of Bavel (Baghdad) to the village of Ba'quba with a hundred gold dinars, to do business with them there and so support his old father and mother, whom he had left behind in the city of Bavel. When he reached Ba'quba he rented a room at the inn. An old man there sensed that this young man had a hundred gold dinars and wanted to steal them, but he was old and weak and could not do it himself. So he went and told the secret to another thief, a young Jewish man. They agreed between them that the young man would steal, the old*

man would keep watch for him, and the old man would take a share of the theft for himself. They had a key made to open the room the young man had rented.

That night the young man was asleep, the door locked from inside. The two thieves came, and the young thief opened the door quietly. Before anything else he plunged a knife into the heart of the sleeping young man and spilled his blood on the ground. Afterwards, while he was searching for the hundred dinars, a large caravan arrived at the inn. The thieves feared for their lives and fled, taking nothing. At daybreak the young man was found murdered, and no one knew who had struck him. In the end they buried him and sent the hundred dinars to his father and mother in Bavel. This young man had been the only son of his father and mother, and he had supported them in their old age. As for the room in which he was killed, people were afraid to rent it, and it stayed locked for many years.

After the young man was buried, his neshamah went up to the Beis Din shel Maalah and demanded its blood from the murderer and from that old man. He said, "As he did to me, so let it be done to him: let him too be killed, and let his money not be taken; let him too be the support of his father and mother in their old age; and let him too leave no children after him." The Beis Din shel Maalah asked the one who was killed whether he would not forgive them, and he answered that he did not forgive them at all. The Beis Din did as he said. After the old thief died, they brought him back in a gilgul as this Moshe Shasha'a, who lived in Bavel and was not blessed with children until he was fifty years old.

At fifty, he and his wife went to this village of Ba'quba and stayed at that very inn. That night it happened that the inn was full of guests and every room was taken. The only one left was the locked room in which the young man had been murdered. The innkeeper said to himself, "How long will this room stay locked? Better to open it now and rent it to this Moshe Shasha'a and his wife. They do not know that a man was killed in it, and they will not mind." He opened the room for them, and they spent the night in it.

That night the Beis Din called the young man who had been killed and said to him, "The time has come for the soul of the murderer to be born into the world. Do you forgive him or not?" He said, "I do not forgive him at all." They said to him, "If so, go down and stand at the door of the room in which you were killed." The one who was killed went down and stood there until that old man was together with his wife. The neshamah of the murderer came, afraid, trembling and shaking, and would not enter the drop of that union. The one who had been killed stood up and struck it and said to it, "Rasha, enter this drop to receive your punishment." Against its will that neshamah entered that drop. And that is

Menashe, the son of Moshe Shasha'a, who was killed by the robbers, and they took nothing of his money.

All this I saw while I was dozing during the saying of the Kinos. ***All these things were shown to me before my eyes, and not as a story alone; it was as if I were standing and seeing everything that happened from beginning to end.*** *I wrote these things to this Moshe Shasha'a in the village of Ba'quba, as the answer to his question.*

Here his words end.

The Gentile Who Learned Sorcery

In *Ahavas Chaim*, Parshas Mishpatim, my grandfather wrote this:

A story that happened in Baghdad in the days of the G-dly mekubal, our master and teacher Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l. A certain gentile wanted to learn the practices of sorcery. As their way is, he went off in the dark to the deserts, places where the spirits of the chitzonim (the outside forces of tumah) are found, and did as the rules he had in hand prescribed, until the form of a cat appeared before him and signaled to him to follow it. So he was drawn after the cat into the depths of the desert, and there a woman, one of the female sheidim, appeared before him. Before she began to speak with him, she brought a bamia (a kind of vegetable) to his mouth to eat. Once he had swallowed the bamia, he lived with her as with a wife, and she stayed attached to him always. When he returned to his city, Baghdad, he became famous as a worker of wonders, for the sheidah would go on his errands and do whatever he wished.

But from then on a great quarrel broke out between him and his wife, since he had lost his strength as a husband. This caused him deadly distress. None of the remedies he tried brought any cure for his illness, and his wife insisted on divorcing him because of his condition. In those days the name of our master, our teacher Chacham Yehuda, alav hashalom, became famous and praised, for he saved many souls from the hands of the evil spirits, as all this is known from his pure sefer Minchas Yehuda. The gentile did not delay; he got up and came before the honored Rav. The holy Rav wrote something on a paper, erased it in water, and gave him the water with the erased writing to drink. As soon as the gentile drank the water, he vomited up the bamia he had eaten several years before, and the man's strength came back to him. But from then on all his powers were taken from him, and he lost all his wealth. The matter was a miracle and a wonder in the eyes of all the nations, for the holiness of Yisrael.

Here his words end.

Rabbi Shimon's Haskamah

In 5665 (1905), at the age of forty-five, he came up to Yerushalayim for a visit. The day after he arrived he had a caller: the gaon Chacham Avraham Adess zt"l, one of the great mekubalim, a man of wonderful ruach hakodesh whose fame went before him. Chacham Yehuda received him with great honor, and Chacham Avraham told him why he had come. "I am here to ask you to print the commentary you wrote on the Idros of the Zohar. If you need help with the money, I will try to find it for you."

"How does your honor know I wrote it?" Chacham Yehuda asked. "Not a soul in the world knows of it. Ever since I wrote it, fifteen years ago, it has lain hidden away where nobody knows about it."

Chacham Avraham answered, "A few nights ago Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai came to me in a dream and told me, 'In the coming days a great rav named Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah is due to arrive from Bavel. Years ago he wrote a commentary on the Idra Rabba and the Idra Zuta, and he has not printed it. Persuade him to print it.'"

The tzaddik was overjoyed to hear it: the Rashbi himself was recommending his sefer. "I wrote it when I was young," he said. "Now, after what your honor has told me, I will bring it out as soon as I can, and I need no help with the money." Back in Bavel, Chacham Yehuda set about readying the sefer for print, and he published it in Baghdad in 5668 (1908).

The Old Man's Tikkun

He raised high the yoke of teshuvah. In *Minchas Yehuda* he told of the spirits of the departed that had entered living people as a "dybbuk," and of his work to drive them out. From there he went on to set out an order of tikkun for teshuvah, for anyone who turns from his sins and wants to cleanse his soul of its stains. He brought the story of a man who did this teshuvah and was spared by it the harsh and bitter punishments of the kaf hakela, gilgulim, Gehinnom and the like. This is what he wrote:

> *In 5683 (1923) an old man came to me and told me that he had sinned with his daughter-in-law in his son's lifetime. He wanted to return and repair his deeds, but he could not manage fasts and self-afflictions. I said to him, "Can you not fast at least one day, a night and a day, like Yom Kippur?" He said to me, "Yes." I said to him, "Go and immerse seven times, and take upon yourself a fast of twenty-four hours for this sin; only, you are permitted to do any work. On*

the day of the fast come to me with the money of the pidyon for the three hundred twenty-five fasts that are needed for the tikkun of the sin with an eishes ish, and I will make you a tikkun." And so he did.

*When he came to me, we went into a room. He walked four amos barefoot, stood, and said the viduy mentioned above (in the sefer Minchas Yehuda). When he finished the viduy he put the money of the pidyon into my hands and said to me, "Here is this money, the pidyon of the three hundred twenty-five fasts, and you are authorized to distribute it to tzedakah." When I received the money from his hand, I said, "I hereby receive this money from the hand of So-and-so son of So-and-so, who has given it to tzedakah as the pidyon of the fasts he was obligated to fast because he sinned with his daughter-in-law. May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that this pidyon of these fasts be considered and accepted before You as though So-and-so son of So-and-so had actually fasted for his sins. May all the sparks of kedushah that are fit to be sifted out through the fasts be sifted out through the mitzvah of tzedakah, for the sake of Your holy Name that comes out of the pasuk 'Chayil bala vayekienu (*חב"ו*) mibitno yorishenu Keil' ('He has swallowed wealth and shall vomit it up; G-d shall drive it out of his belly').*[53] *And hear our tefillah for the sake of Your holy Name (*ארארית"א*), for You hear the tefillah of every mouth. Blessed is He Who hears tefillah."*

Since I understood that this old man was poor and had borrowed the money from others, I gave all the money back to him as tzedakah, and kept only two perutos of it.

Two years later that old man passed away, and I saw him in a dream standing in the Beis Din shel Maalah. They looked at him and saw that he was a baal teshuvah, except that his teshuvah had been only for the issur of an eishes ish, and not also for the issur of his daughter-in-law. They said nothing to him, and he went by himself into a room at the side of the Beis Din and sat down on his knees. The Beis Din raised their eyes upward, and at once three malachim came down from the heaven above the Beis Din. They performed an operation on him, at the place of the bris, removed the rust and the blemish of the issur of his daughter-in-law, healed him completely, and went out. That is what I saw in the dream.

From this a person can know how great is the precious glory of teshuvah. For it saved that old man from several hundred years in which he deserved to be judged

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[53] The Name חב"ו is formed from the first letters of the pasuk's first three words. —Trans.

in the kaf hakela, in various gilgulim and in Gehinnom. That is why Chazal said that one hour of teshuvah and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of Olam Haba.

So far his words.

He also set out a tikkun for the departed, to save a soul from destruction. After it was made, many of the departed have come in dreams to their relatives, happy and thankful for the tikkun done for them, which had helped them a great deal. My grandfather, as his close talmid, based his sefer *Shaar HaChaim*, Part Two, on this tikkun and brought it out.[54]

My grandfather kept close to these rebbeim of his until the day they passed away, and it was at their direction that he composed the whole order of the *Hakafos* and the *Taaniyos HaDibbur*, which he arranged for the yeshuah of all Klal Yisrael.

The Sick Bochur

Having mentioned the great mekubal, the gaon Chacham Avraham Adess zt"l, famed for the ruach hakodesh that rested on him, I will tell one more story about him.

One of the mekubalim of Yerushalayim had a young son who lay ill for years in terrible suffering, from tuberculosis (a disease of the lungs), I think, for which there was then no cure. He had lain so long that his body was covered in bedsores. One day the holy mekubal who shook the world, Chacham Avraham Adess, every word of whose ruach hakodesh came true, called on the father about some matter. Coming in, he heard the bochur weeping in his pain and crying out, "Ribbono shel Olam, why do You punish me, when I am not yet twenty, and the Beis Din shel Maalah does not punish before twenty," and so on. His heart broke at the bochur's suffering. He went in to him, looked at him, and said to the father, "**This son of yours came into the world with this suffering because in his previous gilgul he was a melamed in a talmud torah. He beat the talmidim harshly, and caused them, when they grew up, to hold back from sending their sons to talmudei torah.** But seeing how heavily he suffers, I will pray for his tikkun." He stood up to pray then and there, and when he

[54] Says the writer: by Hashem's kindness I have included these tikkunim that Rabbeinu set out, for the living and for the departed, in my sefer *Sadeh Tapuchim*; they may be found there.

had finished he told the father, "Tonight at chatzos a tikkun will come for your son." So it was: at chatzos that night the son passed away to the life of Olam Haba.

CHAPTER TEN

Those Who Esteemed and Honored Him, and His Friends

IN TRUTH, EVERY CHACHAM and rav of the generation held my grandfather in esteem. I could never name them all; the time would give out before the list did. So I will mention only the head of the great rabbanim, the Saba Kadisha, Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari zt"l; the gaon Rav Shimshon of Teplik zt"l, whose shamash my grandfather was for a time, and of whom I spoke in the introduction to this sefer; and a few others, above all those I knew myself and from whose own mouths I heard his praises at length. Let me add here that all the great rabbanim of Yerushalayim, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, pashtan and mekubal alike, prized him and showed him great honor.

THE SABA KADISHA, THE GREAT GAON RAV SHLOMO ELIEZER ALFANDARI ZT"L

As I wrote earlier, the family knew well that the Saba Kadisha, Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari zt"l, rose to his feet whenever my grandfather walked into his house. Rav Alfandari was known as a pillar of the world, a man who shook the earth, and few indeed were ever given that honor by him.

I heard, too, that he said he could see the Shechinah resting on my grandfather's beard.

The Voices in the Mikveh

Rav Alfandari zt"l was born in Istanbul in 5570 (1810), and even as a small child he lived in holiness, the way the gedolim do. When he was about ten,

his family was so poor that they had to take a hekdesh room (a room owned by the community's charity fund), whose door opened onto a mikveh. Nobody wanted to live there. At night, with no one in the mikveh, laughter and revelry could be heard coming from it, and everyone understood that these were the voices of evil spirits and sheidim. But the family had nowhere else to go, and they moved in.

When young Shlomo heard the voices, he went to the doorway of the mikveh and declared, "This place belongs to us, and it is ours to hold. Leave the mikveh. You have no right to be here at all, not to live here and not even to stay a while." The moment he finished, the place fell quiet and still, for all the chitzonim (the forces of impurity) had fled.

He married at seventeen and lived with his wife into old age. Their only son died as a small child, and he was never given another.

By about eighteen he was known as a true gaon. Great men of Yisrael, outstanding chachamim several years his senior, sat learning before him the whole day long to grasp the depth of his iyun. At thirty he headed a yeshivah of more than forty talmidei chachamim, every one of them older than himself, and out of it came men who later became gedolei olam in chochmah and hora'ah. Counted among his talmidim, too, are the geonim Chacham Chizkiyah Medini zt"l, author of the *Sdei Chemed* sefarim, and Rabbi Yitzchak Akrish zt"l, author of the sefer *Kiryas Arba*.



Rav Alfandari zt"l

Shailos in halachah reached him from the farthest corners of the earth, and he answered every one, showing his great strength. Dinei mamonos he preferred not to judge. If both parties pressed him, he would listen to their claims and give a short reply: "This one is liable, that one is exempt." They carried out his word at once and accepted it, for everyone stood in fear of him, knowing that whoever went against what he said was putting himself in danger.

He dressed simply, like any ordinary man, and would not wear rabbinic dress on any account. He was zealous for Hashem and His Torah, and he brought up the people in that spirit, his talmidim above all. In Kushta he made important takanos about meat, about the wheat for matzos and about the wine of goyim.

The Earthquake

He once found himself among men learned in the natural sciences who were debating what makes the earth quake, each offering a cause from nature. Rabbeinu rose and said, "Know that by your reasoning and your inquiries, no earthquake can happen now. But if Hashem wills it, there will be an earthquake now, against nature." He had barely finished when a great earthquake shook the whole city, bringing down towers and buildings of the goyim. A terror from Hashem seized them all, and they understood that he was a man of wonders, whose words never come back empty from before Hashem.

He would not live off other people. He had placed money with a merchant, and from time to time the merchant sent him his share of the profits; that was his livelihood. For many years Hashem's berachah rested on their dealings. Then one day he told his partner that he wanted to end the partnership and asked him to send his share. Once they parted ways, the partner's business went into decline, and everyone knew the berachah had been there because of Rabbeinu.

The Decree of Conscription

Ever since the early kings, the Jews in the lands of Turkey had been exempt from serving in the army. The king (Sultan Abdul Hamid)[55] asked the Jews to give up the exemption of their own free will, so that he could pass a law drafting Jewish young men. The chairman of the Vaad Yehudei HaIr (the council of the city's Jews), a very rich man on friendly terms with the ministers of the kingdom, was for the draft. Rabbeinu stood firmly against it, though he knew what the king did to those who defied him: he had them put in a sack and cast into the sea. Yet when the king learned that it was the Rav who opposed the plan and was holding it up, he left him alone. Instead he tried to get around him, asking the Vaad Yehudei HaIr to settle the matter themselves. The vote was set for a certain day, in the afternoon.

That morning Rabbeinu went to the chairman's house. He asked him to vote against the king's request and promised that no harm would befall them if they refused. The chairman would not hear of it. For three hours

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[55] The sultan ruled the Ottoman Empire, which in those days took in Turkey, Syria and Eretz Yisrael. —Trans.

Rabbeinu tried to win him over, without success. On his way out, Rabbeinu warned him that if he approved the drafting of the Jews, his end would be bitter. The gvir went to the meeting that same day, and they voted, as the king wished, to cancel the exemption. The moment the chairman put his signature to the decision, he fell dead.

The city's custom was for the Rav to deliver the hesped over members of the Vaad. Rabbeinu stayed away from this man's levayah. When they asked him to come and eulogize the niftar in the usual way, he refused, and he forbade the other rabbanim to eulogize him as well: the niftar, he said, did not deserve the honor.

The dead man's sons watched their father's bier lie there in disgrace for a long while. At last they brought several ministers of the kingdom with them to Rabbeinu, set a purse full of gold dinars in front of him, and asked him to honor their father with a hesped. The money would go to tzedakah for the elevation of his neshamah, and Rabbeinu could give it out however he chose. Rabbeinu rose, tears running down his cheeks, and said, "I am a servant of the King of kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu. That is why I went to the deceased's house yesterday morning and threw myself before him, 'my life at my petition and my people at my request,' begging him to obey the voice of the King of kings and not the voice of a king of flesh and blood. He would not listen to me, and by his consent he destroyed the city and the country. So now that he is dead, this is the punishment that falls on him, and no pleading will help. I am no doresh damim, and no doresh el hameisim."[56] He handed back their money, and they went away downcast. Everyone knew that a flatterer could get nowhere with Rabbeinu, and that he feared no man, only the King of kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, alone.

In Damascus

When the community of Damascus invited Rabbeinu to settle there and lead them, he hesitated. Then he heard of the gaon Chacham Yitzchak Abulafia zt"l (the author of the responsa *Penei Yitzchak*), a man so great in Torah that every gadol who met him came away astounded at his power.

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[56] A play on two pesukim. "Doresh damim" (Tehillim 9:13) means one who avenges blood, and damim also means money; "doresh el hameisim" (Devarim 18:11) means one who inquires of the dead, and doresh also means one who gives a derashah, here a hesped. —Trans.

That decided him. "I will go up to Damascus," he said, "to hear his Torah and to accept his authority." Damascus received him with great honor. For days on end he sat with Mahari Abulafia, the two of them deep in milchamtah shel Torah, each treating the other with great respect.

Mahari Abulafia zt"l once became dangerously ill. He could neither speak nor move a limb, and the doctors had given him up. Rabbeinu came to visit and told him, in these words, "Chacham Yitzchak, I promise you that you will get up from this illness. But you must believe in the power of my promise, and by that same power you will rise, regain your strength and be well." Before long Mahari Abulafia was well again, and on the very day he recovered, one of his relatives fell sick and died. Mahari Abulafia told Rabbeinu, "When the Rav left my house after promising that I would rise from my illness, this man who has died began to laugh: 'How can this one get up from an illness that is killing him?' And when I got up, he fell, and was gone." Rabbeinu said to him, "Do not tell this to anyone again."

The Governor's Secretary

In Damascus he served as chief rav. He showed the rich no favor and rebuked them for any wrong he found. One of the wealthy, chief secretary to the governor of the city (the vali), was angered by the Rav and said to his friends, "I will have the Rav coming to me to beg for his life." He drew up a false charge against Rabbeinu, got several wealthy men to sign it as witnesses, and gave it to the governor.

As soon as the Rav heard of it, he set out straight for the governor's palace. Soldiers with drawn swords stood guard there, but the fear of him came over them and they let him in. Inside, he spoke to the governor boldly, and when he left, the governor saw him to the door. The next day, when the secretary arrived for work, the governor ordered him to go out at once and come back with a letter from Rabbeinu saying that he forgave him; if not, he would be banished from all the Sultan's lands. The gvir had no choice but to plead with Rabbeinu and ask his pardon. Rabbeinu said he would give him a letter for the governor, to spare him and his household the decree of banishment, but that in the end he would be punished for what he had done. And the gvir lost his sight, Hashem yishmereinu.

In Tzfas

In 5670 (1910), at the age of a hundred, he settled in the holy city of Tzfas. The people all went out trembling to greet him, and they made him head of the rabbanim. Jews and goyim alike stood in awe of him. Talmidei chachamim who rose at chatzos to learn Torah near his home testified that they saw a pillar of fire above his house.

One morning a man came to him. Before he could open his mouth, Rabbeinu said, "Here comes this dreamer. Do not fear and do not be dismayed," and he interpreted the dream for the good. The man was amazed. How could the Rav know why he had come, and what he had dreamed? Yet that was exactly so.

In Nisan 5674 (1914), when he had finished Birkas HaLevanah, tears ran from his eyes. With a deep sigh he said that a great war was about to break out in the world. That Av, the First World War began.

He once met the Turkish Minister of War, who asked him for a berachah. Rabbeinu told him, "A berachah needs humility. Get down, then, from the horse you are riding, and I will bless you." The minister dismounted to receive the Rav's berachah, and Rabbeinu made a point of telling him that it would come true only if he looked after the Jewish people well.

Two talmidei chachamim once asked him to bless them that they would not be drafted, and he gave them his berachah. The two were taken from their homes and sent to an army camp in Akko (a city on the northern coast of Eretz Yisrael). When they got there, a high-ranking officer approached them, said, "These are not fit for the army," and discharged them on the spot.

A couple once came to him to arrange a get. They had been married more than ten years without children, and the husband is obligated in the mitzvah of pru u'rvu. The Rav told the husband, "Come to me on Purim." When he came on Purim, the Rav gave him a drink of the wine left in his own cup, told him to give some to his wife as well, and said, "Trust in Hashem; you will not have to separate. Instead you will be helped with zera shel kayama." About a year later his wife had a son.

Another man, married fifteen years and still without children, came to ask for his berachah. Rabbeinu answered him in these words: "Do not worry at all. With Hashem's help, and by the power of our holy Torah, I prom-

ise you that this year you will be remembered and will be granted a son." And so it was.

My grandfather mentions Rabbeinu in *Ahavas Chaim*, Parshas Bechukosai. While Rabbeinu lived in Tzfas, he writes, a woman next door helped the Rav with his household, and she would tell the neighbors of the wonders she had seen and heard there. One of them: Rabbeinu used to sit learning by a small kerosene lamp, and on the night of the Seder that little lamp filled the whole house with a great and wondrous light.

The Ox

My grandfather also tells of a Sephardi butcher who once paid the Arabs fifty gold dinars for a big ox and brought it to the shochtim of Tzfas for shechitah. A shailah turned up in the ox's head, and they decided to rule it treif. The butcher's world went black, for all his money was about to be lost. "I will go to Rav Alfandari," he decided, "and whatever he rules, I will accept with love." And he ran straight to Rabbeinu's house.

He had not yet arrived when Rabbeinu leaned out of the window and called to him, "Do not worry, the ox is kosher. Go and tell the rav and the shochtim to come to me and look into the halachah." The butcher went back to them in amazement. "Before I got to the Rav's house," he told them, "before I even opened my mouth, he was there ahead of me and ruled that the ox is kosher. He wants you to come to him." When they came, the Rav showed them that his ruling was right, and that the ox was kosher beyond any doubt.

Back in Yerushalayim

In 5678 (1918) Rabbeinu came back to Yerushalayim, the city he longed to make his home, and there he remained to his last day. Few were allowed to call on him regularly: only those he held especially dear for their greatness in Torah and yirah, their purity and kedushah, and their zeal for the honor of Shamayim. My grandfather z"l was one of them.

If I remember rightly, the family told that my grandfather once came to Rabbeinu's house and the attendant would not let him in, because the Rav was sleeping. My grandfather turned around and left. He had not gone far when the attendant came running after him: Rabbeinu was waiting for him, and would he please come back. When he returned, Rabbeinu told him that his house was open to him whenever he came. This from a man well

known to shut himself in his house for days and weeks at a time, cleaving to his Maker, and to receive only a very few.

In *Ahavas Chaim*, Parshas Bechukosai, my grandfather writes that his friend and companion in tikkunim and tefillos, Chacham Dovid Laniado zt"l, had the merit of serving Rav Alfandari zt"l. Of his own bond with Rabbeinu, and of the honor Rabbeinu showed him, my grandfather in his great humility said nothing.

Rav Alfandari zt"l took care never to shake hands with anyone. That custom, he said, is not a Jewish one: a Jew greets another with shalom from his mouth, and the handshake is a practice of the goyim.[57]

The Chief Rabbinate

When the "Chief Rabbinate of Eretz Yisrael" was set up,[58] Rav Alfandari zt"l was deeply pained. Its heads, he said, had written asking him to be Chief Rabbi for the Sephardim in the Rabbinate Office, and he had written back to them in these words:

"It is not enough for you to lead yourselves astray; you want to lead me astray too, and drive the arrow into me. Pray tell: by what power have you come to rule in the land? Is it not by the power of the freethinking Zionists, who would uproot the Torah from the world, chas veshalom, if they could? And you put your trust in them. Let my honor not be joined to their assembly; I will not go down with you in this. On the contrary, I will stand against you with all my strength. I will tell you the end of the matter from its beginning: now the Zionists choose elders; later they will throw them out and put in their place rabbis with black beards, then rabbis with trimmed beards, then rabbis with shaven beards, and so on. **Know, then, that the destruction of the Torah and of Yiddishkeit in the Holy Land begins with you, and you will have to give an accounting to Shamayim for every sin and transgression of all the generations that follow you."**

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[57] This custom is best done away with. *Shivchei HaAri* z"l tells that a man once brushed against the Arizal's garment, and Rabbeinu HaArizal went down to immerse in the mikveh, because that man had been with his wife that night not in the proper way.

[58] The Chief Rabbinate was established in 5681 (1921) under the British, who ruled Eretz Yisrael after the First World War. —Trans.

When visitors came to him, rabbanim or Rebbes who had arrived in Eretz Yisrael, and he heard that they had called on the Chief Rabbi of the Rabbinate, he would not admit them to his house. "They have already been to....," he said. "What do they want from me? And why are you hopping between two opinions?"

Rabbeinu, the great Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari zt"l, passed away on 22 Iyar 5690 (1930), a hundred and twenty years old, his eye undimmed and his vigor unabated. Bnei Yisrael wept for him. Even his adversaries, the men of the "Chief Rabbinate," whom he had never ceased to scorn and condemn, knew and admitted that "a prince and a great man has fallen in Yisrael." He lies in honor on Har HaZeisim, close to the "portion of the lawgivers," where the Rashash and his talmidim are hidden. Zechuso yagen aleinu, amen.

CHACHAM YOSEF YEDID HALEVI ZT"L

One of Rav Alfandari's friends and regular visitors, from his days in Tzfas on, was **the gaon Chacham Yosef Yedid HaLevi zt"l**, then a dayan in Tzfas.

Rav Alfandari, so great himself that he hardly thought any of the gedolei hador a lamdan, used to say of him, "I have one chacham, and his name is Rav Yosef Yedid." Like Rav Alfandari, he was a holy man who fearlessly took up the zeal of Hashem against all who tried to breach the vineyard of Hashem.

The gaon Chacham Yosef Yedid HaLevi zt"l was born in Aram Tzova (Aleppo) in 5627 (1867), and there he learned under the holy gaon and G-dly mekubal Chacham Avraham Adess zt"l. In his youth a goy once fastened onto him on his way to his learning and tormented him. In his great distress Chacham Yosef cursed him, that he should die. Within a few hours the goy, wild with drink, ran amok, and the city police killed him.

In 5650 (1890) he came up to Tzfas, where he was made a dayan and wrote his sefarim *Toras Chacham*, Part One, and the responsa *Yemei Yosef*, Parts One and Two. His poverty there was beyond description.[59]

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[59] The mekubal Chacham Yom Tov Yedid zt"l, who edited the Siddur HaRashash, was his cousin.

In 5671 (1911), at forty-five, he was appointed head av beis din of the Bukharim and the Chalabim (the Jews from Bukhara and from Aleppo) in Yerushalayim. He was the Raavad (the head of the beis din) of his court, and beside him sat his rebbi, Chacham Avraham Adess zt"l, and his talmid, Chacham Rafael Shlomo Laniado zt"l, who later headed Yeshivas Porat Yosef: three generations judging together. His talmidim included Chacham Ezra Attiah zt"l, rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef; Chacham Eliyahu Shama; and the mekubal Chacham Yaakov Kassin, rav of the Jews from Aram Tzova in New York.



HaRav HaGaon Chacham Yosef Yedid HaLevi zt"l

Chacham Yosef was a kanai like Pinchas. Through every religious upheaval in Eretz Yisrael from the First World War until his passing, he was among the leaders in holding the religion firm in its place. Side by side with Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari zt"l he fought those who tore down and de-

stroyed: "rabbis" of every sort, the men of the "Chief Rabbinate," and their like.

He and Rav Alfandari both issued notices urging the public to leave the Vaad Leumi (the National Council), to which the Zionists had attached every resident of the land. Both signed the ban on voting in the elections the Zionists had begun, and they published proclamations forbidding anyone to take part in elections where women vote and are voted for.

He opposed the heter mechirah in shemittah, which was meant to strip the lands of Eretz Yisrael of the kedushah of Sheviis, and he showed that the sale is void at its root.[60]

Two Minutes

The tzaddik Chacham Nosson Salim zt"l, a friend of my grandfather's, was his talmid, and served him and looked after him with all his might. A few months before he passed away, Chacham Yosef called Chacham Nosson Salim zt"l to him and said, "My time to leave the world is near, and I want to thank you for all the chessed you have done for me. Before I go, I want to give you something. Tell me what you would like."

Chacham Nosson replied, "I am already getting on in years and have not yet been blessed with children, so I would like the Rav to bless me with a son. And I ask the Rav to come back from the Olam HaEmes and tell me how the Rav fares in the beis din above." Chacham Yosef gave him the berachah for a son, and agreed to come and tell him what befell him in the beis din above.

On the night of the thirtieth day after he passed away, Chacham Yosef came to Chacham Nosson in a dream. "Know that your wife is in the first days of her pregnancy," he told him, "and you will have a son, as I promised you. And know this: when I arrived above, bands of malachei hashareis came out joyfully to meet me, and the beis din too received me with joy. But one black angel stood off to the side and brought a charge against me.

"Every Shabbos I used to sleep exactly half an hour after eating the chamin, then rise at once and learn the whole day without a break, except for Minchah and seudah shlishis. One Shabbos I slept two minutes past my usual time, and this angel accused me of the bittul Torah of those two

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[60] Responsa *She'eris Yosef*, Part Four.

minutes. The sentence was passed: two minutes in Gehinnom to pay for them. All the malachei hashareis went with me, weeping.

"When I came to the entrance of Gehinnom, all the pages of Maseches Berachos I had learned in my life came and barred my way. They took me to another gate, and all the pages of Maseches Shabbos I had learned in my life came and barred my way there too. So it went at every entrance of Gehinnom: the pages of Gemara would not let me in. They brought me back to the beis din above, which ruled that being led from gate to gate was punishment enough, and that I might go to my own place. And with great joy the malachei hashareis brought me there."[61]

The Letter to the Beis Din Above

It is told that before his wife died, she confided to him that she was afraid of dying, in awe of the beis din above. He told her not to be afraid: he would give her a letter for them, and when she came before them she was to show it, and they would rule that she go to Gan Eden. After she passed away he wrote a letter addressed to the beis din above and placed it in her hand. In it he testified that from the day they married she had never kept him from learning Torah day and night, and so she had a share in his Torah, which had earned her a place of distinction in Gan Eden. She was buried with the letter in her hand.

Chacham Yosef passed away on Shabbos Kodesh, 8 Adar 5690 (1930). He was given great honor at his death: all the children of the talmudei torah walked behind his bier, accompanying him to his resting place on Har HaZeisim.

RAV SHIMSHON AHARON POLONSKY ZT"L, THE RAV OF TEPLIK

I heard that he gave my grandfather the title "the Baal Shem Tov of the Sephardim."

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[61] Author's note: Do not think lightly of two minutes in Gehinnom. Know that the Ramban zy"a wrote that all the bitter sufferings of Iyov, measured by their pain, come to less than a single moment in Gehinnom. Blessed is Hashem, who gave us the mitzvah of teshuvah, so great that baalei teshuvah stand higher than complete tzaddikim. May it be His will that we merit true teshuvah, desired before the Creator: we, our children and our children's children.

On one side he descended from Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, and on the other from Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov. His matzeivah reads: "Of the stock of the holy rabbis Rav Pinchas of Koretz, Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev and Rav Nachum of Chernobyl, zatzuk"l."

He wrote the sefer *Divrei Aharon*, chiddushim and notes on Shas and poskim.[62]

At about twenty he became rav of the town of Medvin, near Kiev (in Ukraine), and later rav of the city of Teplik, near Uman.

The chachamim of his day testified to his astonishing memory and vast bekiyus: once he had read a sefer, he could quote it word for word ever after. He was among the great morei hora'ah of Ukraine. In 5682 (1922) he came up to Yerushalayim and was made rav of the Beis Yisrael neighborhood and maggid shiur in Yeshivas Meah Shearim straightaway. The gedolim of Yerushalayim, with the gaon Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l at their head, counted him among the pillars of the city's morei hora'ah.

He raised large sums and handed them out as tzedakah, while he himself lived poor and in real want. Often he went along with Rav Aharon Katzenellenbogen zt"l to the homes of the wealthy, collecting for poor and broken people Rav Aharon knew.

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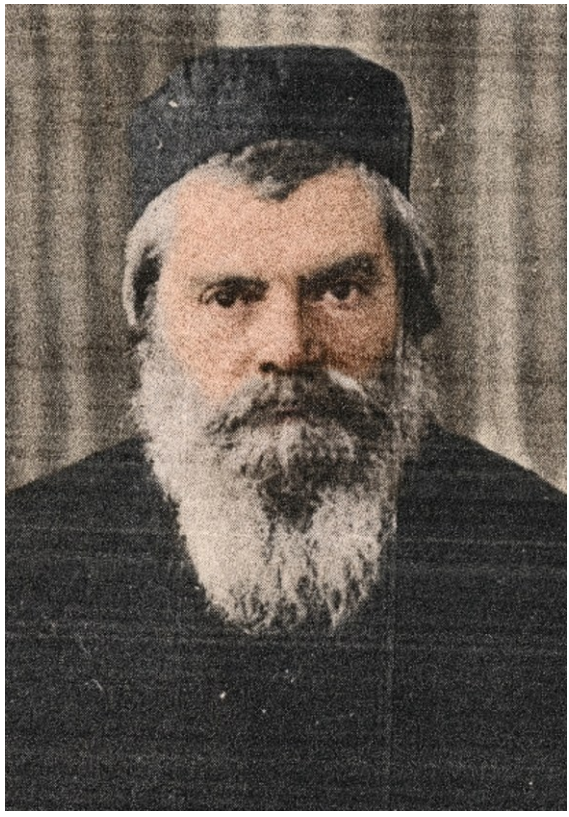
[62] Yerushalayim, 5708 (1948).



Rav Shimshon Aharon Polonsky zt"l, the Rav of Teplik

The Esrog

Once, on the first day of Sukkos, he was seen making the berachah on another man's esrog. Asked where his own was, the esrog he had taken such pains to choose from the crates, he explained. A man in the Beis Yisrael neighborhood had paid a huge price for an esrog, half a lira. While he was at the mikveh, immersing before the mitzvah of netilas lulav, his little stepdaughter accidentally broke off the pitam. Her mother, afraid of her husband's anger, hit the girl. Rav Shimshon heard the child crying and sent his wife to find out what had happened. When she told him, he took his own esrog and gave it to the woman. "Give your husband this esrog in place of his," he said, "and tell him that the Rav of Teplik saw his esrog, had doubts about its kashrus, and gave you this mehudar esrog instead, as an outright gift and not on condition that it be returned." That was why the Rav had to make the berachah on someone else's esrog.

Rav Levi Rabinowitz zt"l writes: "The gaon Rav Shimshon Aharon was a gaon and a tzaddik in all his ways, and his bekiyus was astonishing. One morning he came into the yeshivah looking for Rav Aharon Katzenellenbogen. He did not find him, so I went to Rav Aharon and told him the Rav of Teplik was looking for him, and he went to him at once. When he came back, Rav Aharon told us that twenty years before, he had asked Rav Shimshon a certain kushya, and Rav Shimshon had answered it with a terutz of his own sevara. Now Rav Shimshon had found that kushya and that terutz in a sefer, and he could not contain himself and came to give me the good news."[63]

The Honor of Maran the Beis Yosef

Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l told me that as a young avreich he went with a few other avreichim of Yeshivas Porat Yosef to talk in learning with the gaon of Teplik and gain from his vast bekiyus. Rav Shimshon put to them a kushya on the words of Maran the Beis Yosef in hilchos Pesach. They could find no answer, and one of the avreichim said that Maran the Beis Yosef had not been precise. When the Rav of Teplik heard this he fainted, and they had to bring him around. As soon as he came to, he said, "How can a ben Torah in our time say such a thing about Maran the Beis Yosef?" It pained him deeply that he had heard it.

The Avreich Who Wanted to Bring the Geulah

While on the subject, Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l also told me of an avreich in Yeshivas Porat Yosef in the Old City who was expert in Kabbalah and in the kavanos of the Rashash. He told his friends, "I will transgress the oath and bring HaKadosh Baruch Hu into Yerushalayim shel maalah, and the geulah will come at once."[64] In one of the shuls of the Beis

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[63] *HaChomah*, Teves 5744 (1984).

[64] The matter is this. Chazal said that HaKadosh Baruch Hu swore He would not enter Yerushalayim shel maalah until Yisrael enter Yerushalayim shel matah, that is, at the time of the geulah. They also said that HaKadosh Baruch Hu bound Yisrael by three oaths, one of them that they not press the end. The secret behind their words: there are holy Names one has in mind in tefillah without their nekudos, because having them in mind with their nekudos brings HaKadosh Baruch Hu into Yerushalayim shel maalah; and since HaKadosh Baruch Hu swore not to

Yisrael shtieblach he stood up, in tallis and tefillin, and began the Amidah, meaning to have the Names in mind with their nekudos. At once he fell dead. Hashem yatzileinu.

Moshe is emes, and the Arizal is emes.

RAV AVRAHAM CHAIM BRIM ZT"L

It was Rav Chaim who, in the great shul of Skver, New York, before a crowd of hundreds of chassidim, proudly pointed me out to the Rebbe and announced for all to hear, **"This yungerman is the grandson of the man who was the Chofetz Chaim of the Sephardim, the tzaddik Chacham Menachem Menashe."**

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enter there until the geulah, these kavanos would bring the geulah at once. That is why HaKadosh Baruch Hu made Yisrael swear not to press the end by having these Names in mind with their nekudos. When the mekubalim have these kavanos in mind in Shemoneh Esreh, they hold back from the nekudos, so as not to transgress the oath. This avreich wanted to have these Names in mind in Shemoneh Esreh with the nekudos.



HaRav HaGaon Rav Avraham Chaim Brim zt"l

The Chazon Ish zt"l, the Griz Soloveitchik (Rav Yitzchak Zev, the Brisker Rav) zt"l and Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer zt"l all kept him close and loved him. He was a gaon of tremendous power, and every gadol of his generation knew it; he was an anav beyond measure; and he had ruach hakodesh, as was shown more than once. When he brought about a yeshuah, he did it without a sound.

He learned in Yeshivas Etz Chaim in Yerushalayim. By twelve he had Bava Kamma, Bava Basra and Gittin at his fingertips, together with the entire *Pnei Yehoshua* and *Ketzos HaChoshen*, and the gedolim of Yerushalayim examined him on all of it.

His hasmadah was famous. While still a bochur he had become both a Sinai and an oker harim, and he rose from talmid of the rosh yeshivah of the day, the gaon Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer zt"l, author of *Even HaAzel*, to

his talmid-chaver. He was not yet thirty when Maran the Chazon Ish called him "one of the gedolim of Yerushalayim."

Once he came to know the Chazon Ish zt"l, he learned differently. Before that he had been a builder of great ma'arachos: he would raise dozens of kushyos on a sugya and settle every one of them with a single teirutz. Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer would leap up with delight at them, and very nearly made the berachah over him, "shechalak mechochmaso liyerei'av" ("Who has given a portion of His wisdom to those who fear Him"). Now he took on the Chazon Ish's way, the plain meaning of the Gemara as the Rishonim read it, and in his humility he kept his gift for ma'arachos hidden from everyone.

He was often at the house of the Chazon Ish, who honored him greatly and counted him among the great lights of Yerushalayim. Like a true chassid, he took each word and each movement of the Chazon Ish as a whole Torah, and held to it all his life.

He mixed easily with people, yet his kedushah, his chassidus and his distance from this world went past anything natural to a human being. He was what Chazal call "leis din bar inash" (in the Targum: this is no human being, but a malach inside a body). In shemiras einayim he had no equal. Whenever he went out of his house, he first peeked out from behind the door to see whether a woman was passing anywhere near. Because of shemiras einayim he never rode a public bus; even as an old man he would rather walk enormous distances, where the eyes are easier to guard, than sit within ten amos of a woman, though he would not have looked at her at all. When he had somewhere to go, he took a taxi, and most of his salary went on taxis so that he could guard his eyes as they ought to be guarded. On flights abroad he made sure to sit by the partition, with no one in front of him, so that no woman's form would appear across from him even at a distance. Once that seat was taken, and Rabbeinu stood by the restrooms for all twelve hours of the flight.

He boarded late, so as not to be in the terminal among the passengers with all its mixing, and he was the last one off, so as not to meet any woman on the way to passport control or where the suitcases are collected. He went for his own suitcases only when everyone else had cleared out with theirs.

Ten Minutes in Gehinnom

On one flight, after he had taken his seat, he saw that a woman was sitting a few rows ahead. Rabbeinu was very upset and asked the people close to him to find him another seat, a kosher one. It took them about ten minutes to find a place that suited him, and it was tighter and more cramped. When he had settled into it, one of them asked whether he was comfortable, squeezed in as he was. "Certainly," he answered. "Before this I sat ten minutes in Gehinnom. Do you know what it is to sit ten minutes in Gehinnom?"

Each time he traveled abroad, going and coming back, he spread out paper or nylon on the ground, lay down on it at full length and kissed the dust of the holy land.

Even as an old man he would not look at photographs of his aunts, women older than he was, because of shemiras einayim. Asked to say which of them was which, he refused, and kept his eyes off the picture.

During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah his kedushah rose higher still; he would not so much as look at his granddaughters, two-year-olds though they were.

Past the Twin Towers

Rav Chaim went to Skver in America every Elul to serve as shaliach tzibbur for the Yamim Nora'im, and each year a certain yungerman picked him up at the airport. The drive went by the Twin Towers (the two towers of the World Trade Center in New York), and whenever they came to them, Rav Chaim sighed and recited the piyut "Ezkerah Elokim v'ehemayah": "I remember, O God, and I moan, when I see every city built up on its hill, while the city of God is brought low to the depths of She'ol."

One Elul, as he set out for America as usual, Hashem Yisbarach put several distinguished bochurim on his plane. When they saw him, they saw to everything he needed, in kashrus and in the bounds of tznius, from the moment he boarded until he got off, and they even collected his suitcases. Thanks to them he was out of the plane and the airport early, which was not his way. The yungerman was waiting for him as always, and they set off together for Skver. This time, when they passed the Twin Towers, Rav Chaim held back and did not say "Ezkerah Elokim v'ehemayah" as he always had. Ten minutes after they had gone by, the planes struck and the

buildings fell.[65] Rav Chaim was deeply moved by the siyata d'Shmaya he had been shown: he had left early, and passed the place a few minutes before the attack that threw all of New York into chaos. The yungerman was moved by his ruach hakodesh. This time there had been no need to say "every city built up on its hill" of the Twin Towers, for minutes later they no longer stood on their hill; they had become a tel, nothing but a heap of ruins.

He fasted a great deal and afflicted himself. In the name of the Boyaner Rebbe, the *Pachad Yitzchak* zt"l, he would explain the halachah "ein kiddush ela bimkom seudah" (Kiddush is made only where the meal is eaten): a person's kiddush, his becoming holy, has no place but his meal and the way he eats it. So even after a fast of twenty-four or seventy-two hours he would stand by the food and put off eating until he had broken his desire for it, though that desire came from hunger and weakness and not, chas v'shalom, from craving.

He treasured a saying of the elder Rebbe of Sadigura zt"l: in avodas Hashem there are two things to learn, kal vachomer, from a thief. His main work is done at night, and he hides what he does from every eye. Rav Chaim lived by it. He had broken his craving for food already as a young man and was far beyond it, yet in front of the people eating with him he would praise how good and pleasant the food tasted, so that no one would know or notice that he did not taste it at all.

His rules for a meal were so exalted that he weighed how near his body the plate should be set, so that he would not have to reach out to bring the food to his mouth. For decades he ate no meat. I remember when "the king brought me into his chambers": I was in Skver, and he insisted that I eat the Shabbos morning seudah at his table. In honor of Shabbos Malkesa he had meat and fish and every kind of delicacy brought for me from wherever they could be had, while he himself ate very little (only fish, I think), on the excuse that heavy food was bad for his health. And he rejoiced in Shabbos Malkesa as though he had eaten the meat of the Leviathan.

He immersed in the mikveh again and again, several times each day. Even when he was ill and his strength was gone he would not give it up,

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[65] 11 September 2001 (23 Elul 5761): planes were flown into the two towers, and both of them fell. —Trans.

and asked to be helped there to immerse. He used to say that the letters of **mikveh (מקוה) are the initials of "ואותנו קידשת מכל העמים" ("and You have made us holy from among all the nations").** Once he said that Shamayim had opened his eyes to see that the **final letters of the pasuk "חנון ה' וצדיק ואלקינו מרחם " ("Hashem is gracious and righteous, and our God is merciful") are the letters of mikveh.** He showed as well that mikveh is the gematria of hachna'ah (submission), and that the pasuk "רבות רעות צדיק ומכולם יצילנו ה'" ("Many are the evils of the tzaddik, and from them all Hashem saves him") ends in letters that spell mikveh. For many who turned to him, he brought about their yeshuah in the mikveh. And when people asked him about decisions on which their whole lives turned, he would answer only after thinking the matter over in the mikveh.

His humility was beyond what any human mouth can tell. Before the smallest of small children he made himself small. In the name of the *Sfas Emes* zt"l he would point out that the word "v'lo anachnu" in Mizmor L'Sodah has a kri and a ksiv: the ksiv is "אנחנו ולא" ("and **not** we"), and the kri is "אנחנו ולו" ("and we are **His**"). The pasuk is teaching that the more we feel we are **not**, that we are nothing at all, the more we are **His**, bound to the Creator, yisbarach.

To him kavod habriyos weighed exactly as much as kavod HaMakom, and he lived that way in everything he did. It once slipped out in front of his family that most of his fasts were for fear he had hurt someone's honor, or had not honored him enough.

The Bochur at the Microphone

Rav Chaim once came into a chasunah, and the musicians, seeing him, at once struck up one of the Meron niggunim he loved. But he sensed that to do it they had cut short the niggun of a bochur at the microphone. He did not rest until he had found that bochur and asked his forgiveness, and he promised him that in the merit of forgiving he would be engaged right away, though he did not yet know of any girl. Within two weeks the bochur was engaged, as Rav Chaim zt"l had said.

Chessed ran through the whole of him like a thick rope, without limit; he set his whole self aside to do a person good, in body and in soul. That is why he opened a network of Torah shiurim and brought thousands back

from sin: it was chessed for their souls. For their bodies, too, his chessed knew no bounds.

Once, on his way to a flight abroad, he was held up by a chessed he was doing. "It looks as if we have missed the plane," said one of the men with him. Rav Chaim was calm. "There is nothing to worry about. They will wait for us." They reached the airport very late and found every passenger in his seat on the plane, but it had not taken off, because one of the passengers had fallen ill. So Rav Chaim and his party were able to board.

One Erev Yom Kippur in Skver, after fasting through the whole week from Rosh Hashanah to Erev Yom Kippur, Rav Chaim felt terribly weak and needed something hot to drink to revive him. Just then a yungerman who had been childless for several years walked past. Rav Chaim called him over and asked for a little hot water, and the yungerman ran to bring it. When Rav Chaim had drunk and his strength had come back, he turned to the yungerman and told him, with certainty, "This year you will have a son." So it was.

That Rav Chaim, a chassid among chassidim, learned Kabbalah and occupied himself with it, I do not doubt for a moment. As always, though, he knew how to keep such ways hidden, even from the people in his own home. Yet each of his two Shabbos candlesticks had ten branches, laid out as the ten sefiros from top to bottom: the GaR (the three upper sefiros) above, the VaK (the six middle sefiros) in the middle, and Malchus (the last sefirah) below them.

Rosh Kollel in the Old City

I did most of my learning at Yeshivas Porat Yosef in the Geulah neighborhood of Yerushalayim. Then the Porat Yosef kollel for graduates of the Porat Yosef dormitory in Katamon was renewed inside the Old City, on the site of the destroyed Yeshivas Porat Yosef, facing the Kodesh and the Mikdash, and I moved there for about a year, to learn in the Old City itself, close to Har HaBayis and in sight of it. As my good fortune would have it, that summer Rav Chaim was made rosh kollel, and I came to know him closely, heard his Torah, and saw how great his humility was.[66] He never

[66] I believe Rav Chaim took on the post for a short while partly to be near the Kodesh and the Mikdash for most of his day, and to learn and teach in Yerushalayim shel matah, which faces Yerushalayim shel maalah. It is also, as it happens, the city where he was born.

took a seat that would mark him as rosh kollel; he sat in an ordinary place, like any of the yungeleit. Only when it was time for the shiur did he move to the head of one of the tables, with the talmidim crowding in along both sides.

We had expected wonderful chiddushim from him, mountains ground one against the other. What we found was a talmid chacham who toiled to grasp the plain meaning of the words as the Rishonim understood them, in the spirit of "Sinai is preferable." His great mastery of the learning that uproots mountains in pilpul and builds ma'arachos he kept out of sight (though he had writings full of his own chiddushei Torah in that style, from before he came to know the Chazon Ish). He knew that had he given us just one of those ma'arachos, "ordered in all things and secure," which he carried in his memory as easily as something in his pocket, we would have honored him sevenfold. Even so, he behaved as though he knew no other way to learn.

Rav Chaim zt"l did more than give the shiur. He cared, and not as a duty, how each of the yungeleit and his family were faring, and when someone in one of their families was unwell, anyone could see how he shared the pain.

Shabbos in Skver

In 5735 (1975), while I was in America, I decided to spend a Shabbos in Skver. On Erev Shabbos Kodesh I went into the beis midrash early, before Minchah, and found the hall empty. Suddenly Rav Chaim walked in and began checking how the tables were set and how the cloths lay on them. I was surprised to see him there. He saw me and came over to ask how I was, and I asked him, "Rav Chaim, what is kevodo doing here?" "I live here," he said. From the way he acted and answered, I took it that he had found a living as the shamash of the beis midrash.

He asked how things stood with me, and when he understood that I had nothing but the clothes on my back, his mind at once went to work, hard and fast, on how to get me a decent sum, which I badly needed, and in a way that would spare my dignity. To me he said nothing; he turned and went on his way. When the people arrived I asked what Rav Chaim had to do with the place, and they told me that he was the rosh yeshivah, the second man in Skver after the Rebbe.

When the tefillah ended, with several hundred men looking on, Rav Chaim came up and led me to the door of the Rebbe's room, just off the beis midrash. The Rebbe stepped out to wish the people "Shabbos shalom," and the whole crowd stood in line to file past him and receive his berachah. In front of all of them Rav Chaim placed me before the Rebbe and declared aloud, in Yiddish, **"This yungerman is the grandson of the man who was the Chofetz Chaim of the Sephardim, the tzaddik Chacham Menachem Menashe."** I must tell the truth. I knew my grandfather, and I held him in esteem. But to hear such testimony inside a shul, on leil Shabbos Kodesh, before so many people, from a man of that stature, who weighed the meaning of what he said and the responsibility it carried: then I understood that I had never truly known my grandfather.

His words moved the Rebbe to shake my hand most warmly in front of everyone. Rav Chaim then told me to get a dvar Torah ready for the next morning, to say in the beis midrash after the reading of the parshah. It did not seem fitting to me, I said, because I speak Hebrew and most likely the people would not follow. "The gabbaim already know from me that you are saying divrei Torah tomorrow," he said. "Here, whoever is invited to speak after the reading of the Torah gets paid for it on Sunday, and you need the money." And he told me, "Come tonight to the Rebbe's tish in the beis midrash; it is worth your while. It will do you a great deal of good in your affairs."

When I arrived at the tish, Rav Chaim brought me to sit beside him. His seat was next to the Rebbe's, so that put me up there with him, our faces to the crowd, and I could make no sense of how I had landed in such a position. Then he explained: "The people need to see that you are important here in Skver. This is the effort I can make to help you."

At the Shabbos morning seudah, when I was his guest at the table, Rav Chaim invited one of the bochurim who learned there to join us. On Sunday morning that bochur came and handed me a sum of money. Rav Chaim had commanded him to give it to me, he said, because this was a very important mitzvah. (I gathered from the bochur that the money came from his family. All the same, I do not know that it was not Rav Chaim who gave it out of his own pocket, for the bochur to pass on to me, because in my eyes Rav Chaim is "suspect" of giving tzedakah in secret in this way too.) Rav Chaim made sure that when I left on Sunday evening to go back to

New York I already had a substantial sum in hand, and it truly brought me back to life.

A Big Apartment

For some years a certain man had no children, and the doctors told him plainly to forget about having any. His friends arranged for Rav Chaim to give a shiur at his house. When it ended, Rav Chaim remarked, "You have a big apartment. There is room in it to raise many children." Within the year the couple had a son.

Rav Chaim was once in the hospital at his sick wife's bedside when a yungerman came up to ask him for a berachah. The yungerman's own wife was in the ward next door, gravely ill, and both she and the baby she was carrying were in danger. "People come here for mazel tov," Rav Chaim told him, "not for such things." Soon afterward, wondrously, everything turned out for her in the very best way.

He cared for each of his talmidim as for an only son. Once a bochur in the yeshivah where he taught did something that called for sending him away. Rav Chaim spoke up for him, and when the administration finally decided there was no way out and the bochur must go, Rav Chaim wept in front of him and said, "Have pity on me. If they send you away, I am leaving too." The bochur was deeply moved, and he came back to the right path.

Once, partway through a derashah, he drew a sheet of paper from his pocket and went on speaking from it. Those close to him asked him afterward why, that day, he had read from a written page when he always spoke by heart. The speaker before him had used a written page, he explained, so he had taken one out too and made as if he were reading from it, so that the other man would not be shamed. Zy"a.

CHACHAM YEHUDA TZADKA ZT"L



HaRav HaGaon Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l

I told earlier of the morning Chacham Yehuda zt"l came to my grandfather while I was with him. The night before, he said, he had arranged the engagement of an orphan couple and taken on himself a large sum for their expenses, and he had decided that my grandfather would carry five hundred lirot of it. My grandfather, as a matter of course, agreed gladly and went to Tel Aviv to collect the money. That was one time of many, for the bond between them was very close, full of love and mutual respect. Nor did Chacham Yehuda stop at one shidduch: again and again he took it on himself to make matches for bnei Torah and for the poor in general.

Chacham Yehuda ran a kupas tzedakah vachessed. Through it he supported great numbers of bnei Torah and simple yerei Shamayim in need, and first of all any of his talmidim, from every class he had taught through the years, who were in want. He knew exactly how each of them was

placed, and their needs mattered to him more than his own sons'. Among the pillars of chessed holding up that kupah, as I mentioned before, were my grandfather and my father z"l.

His Birth and His Mother

He was born in 5670 (1910) in Yerushalayim, the holy city. His father, Chacham Shaul Tzadka zt"l, was a great talmid chacham; his mother, Mrs. Simchah, was a talmidas chacham and a yerei'as Shamayim, and a woman who gave halachic rulings. She was a daughter of the sister of the Rosh HaGolah, the rebbi of all Yisrael, Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l, author of the sefer *Ben Ish Chai*, and he taught her much Torah, chassidus and kedushah. For years on end she sat in the ezras nashim to hear Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l give his shiurim in halachah and aggadah, and Rabbeinu, Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l, used to send women with difficult questions of taharas hamishpachah to her. She lived to a very great age. Each day of it held eighteen chapters of Mishnah, learned after she had davened with the minyan at netz hachamah, and Tehillim and other holy learning besides. On the last day of her life I saw her finish her tefillah at netz hachamah, as she had for years, in the Chevras Ahavas Chaim shul, and walk home at full strength to her house on the same street. That same morning, once she had managed to learn her fixed portion of eighteen chapters of Mishnayos and the rest of her learning, her neshamah returned to its Maker. Zy"a.

Even when he was a small child, Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l would stand up for him whenever he came into the shul. Asked why he rose for a little boy, he said, "I see that this little one will be great."

One night in his youth he fell gravely ill, and his life was in danger. That same night Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l (the Ben Ish Chai) came to Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani zt"l in a dream. "What are you doing asleep," he said, "when Chacham Yehuda Tzadka is dangerously ill? Run to the shul and daven for his recovery." Chacham Yehoshua rose at once, went to the Shoshanim LeDavid shul and davened for him. In the morning he went to visit, and found him well again.

He is mori v'rabbi, and each thing he did, each way he conducted himself, was a holy tractate, to be learned and taught. His humility was endless. Sitting with the talmidim of his own talmidim, he was like one more friend among them: he honored them, listened to what they said, and put their

words ahead of his own. And he did it all simply and naturally, with no affected or unpleasant airs.

He worked to bring Jewish children into talmudei Torah, and moved many others to do the same. Many talmidei chachamim, and many baalei battim who are yerei Shamayim, owe him their Torah and their Yiddishkeit; at the very last moment he snatched them from the claws of secular, heretical education.

Mekabtze'el

In 5695 (1935), at the age of twenty-six, he and his friend and colleague Chacham Shalom Lopes zt"l founded Mekabtze'el, the society of Sephardi youth. It brought boys together and drew them close to Torah and mitzvos with shiurim for the young in the evenings.

These boys had been forced out to work to help keep their families, so heavy was the poverty that most people in the city lived with. Without Mekabtze'el they would have been cast aside, and would have slid down into the tempting secular street.

Other boys had no need to work but were in no framework of learning at all, since the new neighborhoods had no yeshivos and their parents, for various reasons, would not send them to the Old City. For these Mekabtze'el opened a full-day yeshivah in the Tzufiof shul in the Bukharim neighborhood. It saved many of them: some became talmidei chachamim and morei hora'ah, others baalei battim who were bnei Torah and yerei Shamayim.

For fifteen years the society carried on its work. It sent large groups of talmidim on to Yeshivas Porat Yosef, where they grew into gedolei Torah and marbitzei Torah, and it accomplished great and wondrous things among the people and the youth.

Mekabtze'el also set out to spread Torah and strengthen the people through derashos in the many shuls of Yerushalayim. It urged young talmidei chachamim to go out among the people and encourage them to set times for Torah, to educate their sons in talmudei Torah, and so on. Rabbeinu and Chacham Shalom Lopes set the example for those talmidei chachamim, for they were the first to put themselves in harness to this holy work.

The Derashah in the Georgians' Shul

One Shabbos after Shacharis, Rabbeinu, then a young yungerman, went up to the bimah in the shul of the Gurjim (the Georgian Jews) in the Zichron Moshe neighborhood. He spoke to the people's hearts and urged them to take their sons out of the secular schools and put them in talmudei Torah. They were simple, God-fearing people who had not understood what kind of schools their sons were in, and their eyes began to open.

All at once two young thugs stood before him, fists clenched, eyes meant to terrify, shouting, "Quiet!" Rabbeinu lost his voice and stood frozen in his place, and the stunned congregation fell silent with him. Then up went a tall, broad young strongman, Yeshayah Chanun, who took his stand beside Rabbeinu. "Chacham," he said, "go on with your important words and do not be afraid. I am standing here, and if they come near you, it will be over my dead body." Rabbeinu found his courage and went on, and the two thugs, fearing the strongman, retreated to a corner and sat down. After the derashah they came to Rabbeinu in shame and begged his forgiveness.

In time that broad-shouldered strongman became one of Yerushalayim's talmidei chachamim, a man who brought merit to the many, and the right hand of the kana'i who was zealous for Hashem, Rav Amram Blau zt"l. Again and again I saw the two of them marching together at the head of a great crowd, protesting the desecration of Shabbos or of tznius in Yerushalayim. He would go out to the moshavim (the farming villages where new immigrants were settled), to reach the innocent Jews who had left their native lands for the holy land in the hope of a life of Torah and kedushah there. They had been caught in the trap of the wicked regime in Eretz Yisrael, which meant to rip their fathers' heritage out of them and compelled them to hand their sons over to its schools, a slaughterhouse of souls. He gave them the strength to keep to their fathers' tradition and to spend their last crust of bread on teaching their sons Torah and mitzvos. I remember how his derashos set the people on fire to go out against the mixed swimming pool being built in Yerushalayim at the time, and how he spoke with fervor of the pilegesh ba'Givah,[67] until there was no one his words had not stirred. Zy"a.

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[67] The outrage committed in Givah (Shoftim, chapters 19-21), which united all the tribes of Yisrael against it. —Trans.

The chachamim of Yerushalayim and its Ashkenazi gedolim set up the Vaad HaChinuch HaChareidi (the Chareidi Education Committee) in 5705 (1945). Its purpose was to strengthen the talmudei Torah already standing and to found more, and so rescue from ruin the children of the innocent immigrants who had been arriving year after year from the lands of the East ever since the First World War ended. In their innocence these immigrants put their sons in the secular schools, unable to tell holy from profane, light from darkness. On the Vaad the Sephardim were represented by Chacham Ben Tzion Chazan zt"l, Rabbeinu, and Chacham Shalom Lopes, zy"a.

He was also an active member of Yad L'Achim, the activists' organization. With no thought for his honor or his age, he did their work like one of the young volunteers; more than that, he would bless them for giving him the merit of saving Jewish children.

In our days as young yungeleit learning before him, he made a point each morning of spending about half an hour before the shiur telling us stories, about gedolei Yisrael he had known or about things that had happened to him that held a lesson in mussar. His aim was to root yiras Shamayim in us, for Torah without mussar may turn, chas v'shalom, into "a gold ring in a pig's snout." He would not trust his talmidim to learn mussar on their own, or count on yiras Shamayim coming to them naturally out of their learning.

On top of this, for years he arranged for HaRav HaGaon Rav Dovid Jungreis zt"l, a dayan of the Eidah HaChareidis beis din in Yerushalayim, to come every Rosh Chodesh and deliver a great shiur in mussar to the boys of every class in the yeshivah.

Whenever he had a free moment, and during the shiur as well, he would trace the Shem Havayah with his fingers, and not for one second did his mind leave it.

I can testify to this myself. Once, before the shiur, he told us, "I have come straight from the hospital. I was visiting R. P., whose tongue the doctors removed because of the malignant disease they found there. I told him, in these exact words: 'Happy are you that they took out your tongue, which

once in its life said "Hallel" on their "yom eidam" (5 Iyar).[68] Now it is spared great spiritual suffering in the Olam HaEmes for that grave sin.'"

The Masmid's Five Lirot

I bear witness to this as well. The morning it was published that "the chief rabbi of the Zionists" had permitted the mamzerim,[69] Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l came in for the regular shiur and began: "No doubt you have heard that this rav has permitted the mamzerim. Let me tell you something that happened many years ago, when he was a young bochur in Yeshivas Chevron in Yerushalayim, learning with wonderful hasmadah. One day at noon the bochurim had gone off to eat, and he was sitting in the yeshivah hall, lost in his learning. In walked that rasha Ch. N. Bialik, shem resha'im yirkav, the poet of the erev rav, who had written a poem about hasmadah in learning.[70] Finding him lost in his learning, Bialik said, 'Here is "the Masmid" of my poems,' and made him a present of five lirot, a great deal of money then. The rosh yeshivah, HaRav Yechezkel Sarna zt"l, was told of it, and he was shaken on two counts: that the rasha of the erev rav had been let into the heichal of the yeshivah, and that money had been given to a ben Torah. 'Who knows,' he said, 'where this money will lead this bochur and his Torah.'" Rabbeinu added, "Now see where that tamei money really did take this bochur's Torah." He was greatly agitated as he told us this. This is Torah, and this is its reward,[71] which comes from the sewers and the privies. The wise will understand.

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[68] 5 Iyar 5708 (1948) was the day the State was declared, and the Zionists celebrate it as a festival. The Torah calls "the day of their calamity" yom eidam (Devarim 32:35), and in the Mishnah "eid" also names the festivals of idol worshippers. —Trans.

[69] Kislev 5733 (1972): a brother and sister whom the batei din had ruled mamzerim were declared free to marry. —Trans.

[70] Chaim Nachman Bialik was the most famous secular Hebrew poet of his time. "Ha-Masmid," one of his long poems, portrays a yeshivah bochur bent over his Gemara day and night. —Trans.

[71] "This is Torah, and this is its reward" are the words spoken in Shamayim when Rabbi Akiva died (Berachos 61b). The Hebrew prints "Torah," "its reward" and "the sewers" with abbreviation marks, leaving the reader to take the hint. —Trans.

The Bochur Who Was Burned

One day while I was learning under Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Chacham Yehuda Tzadka, he could not stop thanking Hashem. A few days before, he told us, an unmarried bochur had been deep-frying levivos when the pot of boiling oil spilled over him and burned him terribly. Eighty percent of his body had deep burns, the doctors said; there was no chance he would live, and they spread ointments on him to ease the pain until he died. The bochur's mother hurried to Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri with the story. He asked for her son's name and her own, and told her to return the following day. When she came back he told her he had made a she'elas chalom (a question asked of Shamayim in a dream), and the answer was that in a former gilgul this bochur had committed an issur of arayos with his mother-in-law. The Torah punishes that sin with death by burning, so he had returned in a new gilgul to pay for it by dying in this fire. She asked whether anything could save him. "Turn to Chacham Yehuda Tzadka," he replied.

Rabbeinu went on: "The woman came to me and told me the whole story. I went with her to Hadassah hospital and said to the bochur, 'You see, in your previous gilgul you committed a grave aveirah with your mother-in-law. If you do teshuvah, you may be saved from the punishment.' The bochur wept and said viduy over that sin, and then took it on himself that if he got up from his bed well, he would do tikkunim of fasting as the mekubalim would direct him." And Moreinu v'Rabbeinu ended, "This morning he went home healthy and whole, baruch Hashem."

As a teacher of iyun, of learning in depth from the root, he was among the very best. Together with Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l he impressed on us, his talmidim, that Gemara and Tosafos cannot be learned without delving into Rashi, the Rashba, the Maharsha, and Rabbi Akiva Eiger in his sefer *Derush VeChiddush*. We learned to feel that Gemara without the Rashba is a body with no neshamah, and Shas without the Maharsha is no Shas at all. Guided so wonderfully by these two great lights, whole generations grew up loving to learn, trying never to step out of the tent of Torah from the morning hours until late in the evening.



The rabbanim and geonim Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l and Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l

They had received this way of iyun from Chacham Ezra Attiah zt"l, rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef. Every word of Rashi calls for thought: one must understand what was troubling Rashi when he wrote "k'lomar" ("that is to say"), why he explained the sugya otherwise than Tosafos or the other Rishonim, and so on. One must also go down to the depths of the Maharsha, for plainly whoever has not grasped the Maharsha in depth has shown by that very fact that he has not grasped the Rashi or the Tosafos the Maharsha is commenting on.



The gaon Chacham Ezra Attiah zt"l

Already in 5695 (1935), Yeshivas Porat Yosef in the Old City made Chacham Yehuda its teacher of the seder of iyun, learning in depth with full explanation, for talmidim who had been through the ordinary course of study in the lower classes. The yeshivah had seven classes then, and his, counting from the bottom, was the fifth. His bochurim were nearly old enough to marry, and ready to take a sugya to its depths.

Chacham Yehuda used to repeat what Chacham Ezra Attiah zt"l had told him: twice the Maharsha had revealed himself to him and made known who he was. The first time, his son lay gravely ill and he was anxious. "Do not worry," the Maharsha told him, "your son will recover." The second time came when the Old City fell.[72] His son was missing, his name on neither the list of the wounded nor that of the prisoners. Again the Maharsha came: "Do not worry, your son will come home safe." A few days later word arrived that he was among the prisoners in Jordanian hands, and he did come home safe.

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[72] In Iyar 5708 (May 1948) the Jewish Quarter of the Old City fell to the Jordanian Legion, and its men were carried off to Jordan as prisoners. —Trans.

With Chacham Yehuda at its head, learning in the yeshivah was free, with no compulsion and no authority pressing down from above. He asked us to be our own guards and not to throw away the precious time of this world on trifles. True, someone noted in the morning who came late, and in the evening who left before seven; but most of the talmidim chose of their own will to stay and learn until eleven at night.

What kept us from stumbling was his way with us, his fatherly presence and his encouragement, and above all that he asked nothing of us he did not do himself. In the morning he taught his class, and when the shiur ended we would see him stay in his seat and learn through the rest of the seder. In the afternoon seder he did not leave his chair until eleven at night. He learned Gemara in the yeshivah hall, and at eight in the evening the great mekubal Chacham Abdul Aziz zt"l (author of the sefarim *Basi LeGani*, a commentary on the writings of the Arizal) would come and sit with him as his chavrusa. The two of them went through the masechtos of Shas in deep iyun.

When Chacham Yehuda passed away, Chacham Abdul Aziz was asked to speak about him. "I know him no better than you," he said. "We were chavrusos for decades, and in all that time not one word passed between us that was not about the learning."

The Sephardi rabbanim wove the wisdom of Kabbalah and its customs into their daily lives, and in their way the yeshivah kept a fixed day each year on Tu BiShvat: a day of learning in taanis dibbur (a fast from speech). Every rav and every talmid of the yeshivah took part. They said the whole of Tehillim three times, with the rest of the tikkun arranged by Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah zt"l. The day falls in Shovavim, and Rabbeinu HaArizal wrote that these days, above all others, favor the repair of the soul from the grave sin of keri and zera levatalah, Hashem save us. That sin calls for teshuvah and tikkun all year round, but these days are more auspicious for it.

He could not abide the very idea of "bein hazmanim." He was forever lamenting the bitul Torah it brought and fought it sharply: in learning Torah, he said, there are no "zmanim" with free time in between, chas veshalom. Each year, as Av drew near, he put up a notice in the yeshivah in his own hand, setting out his opposition and announcing that learning would go on as usual in the days between Tishah B'Av and Rosh Chodesh Elul as

well. The one allowance was for avreichim who had to take their families away for a few days of "rest." The administration would not be strict about their absence, as long as they took care to learn all they could while away. And the hall did ring with Torah in those days too, for Chacham Yehuda himself made a point of arriving on time and not missing a single day in his regular place, as a personal example.

Every bochur whose soul longs for Torah, he would say, must be taken in. Even if he never becomes a gadol baTorah, he will at least grow into a yerei Shamayim who keeps fixed times for Torah. A menahel of a talmud torah once turned a pupil away for lack of room, and Chacham Yehuda told him, "If there is no room in the classroom, hang a bench high on the wall. 'There is no room' is no excuse at all. It is forbidden to push away any soul."



In the company of the great mekubalim. From right to left: Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai Moallem zt"l, Chacham Yosef Sha'yo zt"l, Chacham Ezra Hadaya zt"l, Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l, Chacham Ezra Hadas zt"l

A bochur once came to the yeshivah dressed in a way that did not suit it. Chacham Yehuda took him in as a talmid and never said a word to him about his clothes. Little by little the bochur changed to fitting dress. In time he was tested on all of Shas and Shulchan Aruch, and today he is a rav and mashgiach in a yeshivah well known in the yeshivah world.

Five Lirot for the Barber

A bochur of about twenty once walked into the yeshivah hall with his hair grown long like the street youths, and went straight up to the rosh yeshivah. They spoke for no more than a minute. Then Chacham Yehuda took out five lirot, handed them to him and said, "Go have your hair cut, and come back."

When the young man returned, Chacham Yehuda called over one of the talmidim and asked him to find the newcomer a chavrusa so that he could start learning a little. "But he came in with long hair," the talmid objected, "looking like someone off the street." "He has a neshamah," Chacham Yehuda answered. "The proof is that the moment I gave him money for a haircut, he went and had one." In the end the bochur learned in the yeshivah and grew into a yerei Shamayim.

In his years as a maggid shiur in the Old City, Chacham Yehuda had two talmidim he thought of expelling: one learned well but held false views, the other learned poorly and made trouble besides. One evening he was walking through the alleys of the Old City with the troublemaker when Arabs gave chase. The terrified bochur broke into a run, crying, "Ribbono shel Olam, save us from their hands." Seeing that, Chacham Yehuda said, "I see that he fears the Borei," and kept him in the yeshivah. The one with the twisted views he did want to send away, but the other rabbanim of the yeshivah would not agree, and he stayed. Both grew up to be rabbanim, well-known leaders of the public. The mischievous one became a great yerei Shamayim; the other never let go of his twisted views.

Chacham Yehuda also sat in a gathering of rabbanim led by the eldest of the roshei yeshivah, Rav Abramsky zt"l. One question before it was whether yeshivah talmidim should be sent to learn with baalei batim. The rabbanim all spoke in Yiddish, all of them against the idea, and Chacham Yehuda could not follow a word. When they turned to him for his view, he said: "Chazal said, 'Whoever teaches his friend's son Torah merits to sit in the

yeshivah shel maalah.' Here is what they meant. A man who gives his own time to his friend's son seems to lose some of his rosh yeshivah's chiddushim. So Chazal reassure him: do not worry; you will hear this shiur in the yeshivah shel maalah, from the Rambam himself and the Rif himself. And plainly it is worth more to hear Torah from the Rambam and all the Rishonim in person." Rav Abramsky rose and said, "Reb Yehuda has turned the whole matter upside down."

A bochur in the yeshivah asked Chacham Yehuda's advice about moving to another yeshivah, where he thought his learning would go better. Chacham Yehuda saw in it the counsel of the yetzer hara, out to take him from an orderly place of learning and set him down somewhere new, with all the trouble of settling in and of finding new company. He answered: "On Sukkos we shake the lulav only at 'Ana Hashem hoshi'ah na,' not at 'Ana Hashem hatzlichah na.' This teaches that when a person needs a yeshuah, he should change his place; but if all he wants is more success, he has no reason to move, and 'do not leave your place.'"

Have You Fasted for Him?

One talmid of the yeshivah was slipping, in his learning and in his attentiveness alike, and the teachers and the administration decided to send him away before he spoiled others. Chacham Yehuda was against it. The bochur's conduct went on sinking, until the mashgiach ruchani came to Chacham Yehuda and asked him to remove the boy, since it could no longer be borne. Chacham Yehuda fixed him with a piercing look and asked, in great pain, "**Have you fasted for him?**"

It seems that Chacham Yehuda had fasted for him himself. A year later, at the general examination held every half year, the bochur stood out with his answers on the whole of Maseches Bava Metzia. Late that night, after the examination, when most of the talmidim had gone, Rabbeinu came into the yeshivah hall and found that talmid bent over his Gemara, learning with all his concentration. Rabbeinu went up to him and, with tears in his eyes, kissed him on the forehead.

The Elections

He and the gaon Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l both forbade voting for the "beis hakisei" (the privy; a play on "Knesset"), whether of the government or of the city, even for a chareidi party. So held their great rebbi,

Chacham Ezra Attiah, too. Chacham Yehuda was once told of a rumor that a proclamation of Agudas Yisrael had come out bearing Chacham Ezra's signature. If there was any such thing, he answered, it was meant only for those "greengrocers in the market" who without his signature would vote for the Cheirus party (Herut, the party of Menachem Begin); for them he had chosen the "lesser evil."

The geonim Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l and Chacham Yosef Adess zt"l bore witness to what happened once on election day for the government "beis hakisei." "A delegation of evil angels," a group of talmidei chachamim, came to Chacham Ezra and convinced him that this time there was a great obligation to vote for a certain "chareidi party": religious education in the country was in danger, and abortions, autopsies and the like had to be prevented. They gave him no rest until they had taken him with them to the ballot box to vote for the chareidi se'ir la'azazel. The moment he had voted, his hand began to hurt him badly. He put the pain down to the sin of voting, and sent the two of them to the av beis din of the Eidah HaChareidis, Rav Pinchas Epstein zt"l, to ask in his name forgiveness and pardon for going against their word, since they had forbidden voting. He regretted it completely, and took it on himself never again to vote in any way at all. Chacham Yosef Adess added that before they set out, Chacham Ezra pressed a sum of money into his hand so that Rav Epstein would **make a pidyon nefesh for him, for having sinned and voted**.

In a shiur on the elections, the gaon Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul said:

"The Rambam (Hilchos Mamrim, chapter 1, halachah 1) writes that where chachamim disagree, one forbidding and one permitting, and you do not know which way the halachah goes, you take the stricter view in a matter of Torah law and the lenient view in a matter of rabbinic law. Now, suppose there is an obligation to vote and a man does not vote: in my opinion he has broken no Torah prohibition, only a rabbinic one, since the chachamim told him to vote and he did not. But suppose voting is forbidden: then the man who votes breaks a Torah prohibition. It is by my power that the elected members take their seats. They enter the government and declare that they agree to all its laws, and one of those laws is that the government says to judge by the laws of the arka'os (the secular courts). The Rambam writes (Hilchos Sanhedrin, chapter 26, halachah 7) that such a

man is a rasha, as though he had reviled and blasphemed and raised his hand against the Torah of Moshe. That is a Torah prohibition, as it says, 'And these are the laws that you shall set before them,' and not before idolaters, etc.

"The Rambam said this only for a case where one does not know which way the halachah goes: then in Torah law be strict, and in rabbinic law be lenient. When one does know, one follows what is right in one's own eyes. **So on the elections I have no doubt. I know that one must not vote, and therefore I do not vote.** As for you, let each of you look into it and decide for himself whether it is a Torah prohibition or a rabbinic one. If he knows the halachah, let him do what is right in his eyes, since he knows which way it goes. If he does not, then in a matter of Torah law he must be strict: it is a Torah prohibition; he raises his hand against the Torah of Moshe; he is a kofer.

"Reason would seem to say that we ought to vote, since they hold back secular laws and bring in money for yeshivos, institutions and mikva'os. But if they told us to acknowledge avodah zarah and they would give us money for yeshivos, would that be permitted? Certainly not. In the same way, if they tell us, 'Hand over so-and-so to be killed, or we will kill you all,' it is forbidden to hand over a man to be killed, even though they will kill everyone. **And so, if they tell us, 'Go to the arka'os, or we will make trouble for you,' my view is, bar minan, let them make trouble, and we will not go to the arka'os. In Torah one does not go by one's own reasoning, and Torah knows no compromise.** If they tell us, 'Give us one woman to defile, or we will defile you all,' no woman is handed over, even if they defile them all. Or say Reuven knows where the man they want to kill is, and does not tell the government, and they threaten to kill him unless he tells. May he tell? **No.** If he tells, he has broken the halachah, though it seems against all reason that a thousand should die for one man's sake. Whoever explains to me the reason for this halachah, I will explain the elections to him too, **for it is forbidden to make the calculations that belong to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. And it is worth fasting a BaHaB (Monday, Thursday and Monday) after the elections.**"[73]

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[73] The shiur was recorded and made public. Declaring allegiance to the "laws" of this State, because of the arka'os, is "only" one example among many of why voting is forbidden. Another



Chacham Ezra zt"l during a shiur in the yeshivah. From the right: Chacham Mansour ben Shimon zt"l, Chacham Moshe Hadas zt"l, the rosh yeshivah Chacham Ezra zt"l, and at his right Chacham Yosef Adess zt"l

Chacham Ezra Attiah was a talmid of Chacham Yosef Yedid zt"l, a true kanai for the word of Hashem, and he walked in his ways. It was his wish that brought Rav Dovid Jungreis zt"l to give the mussar shiurim in the yeshivah. He and the gaon Chacham Yehuda Tzadka had this in mind: Rav Jungreis was one of the heads of the Eidah HaChareidis, and he would

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is the declaration of allegiance to the education law, under which studies of kefirah are taught to more than a million children of Yisrael. For this reason Chacham Ben Tzion and the other gedolei Yisrael forbade voting in the city elections too, since through them one becomes a partner to aveiros of avodah zarah and gilui arayos: the "culture" (*tarbus*, as in "tarbus anashim chata'im," "a brood of sinful men") spread through the matnasim (the community and culture centers), for one, and more besides. **I have heard that since 5764 (2004), under their laws, the representatives on the city council too must declare allegiance to this State, that is, their agreement to all the laws of the government, as the members of the "beis hakisei" do; and one who will not may not enjoy his rights as a council member, among them the right to vote in the council and its committees.** If this is so, then the representatives' consent to the ar-ka'os, of which Chacham Ben Tzion spoke especially in this shiur, applies also to anyone who votes for the city council.

surely work in, between the lines, the true daas Torah about the State and **all** its parties, without exception.

In shemittah years Chacham Ezra gave orders that care be taken not to bring into the yeshivah vegetables of the "heter mechirah" (the sale of the land to a non-Jew for the shemittah year), the arrangement made by the **"government officials," the rabbis of the "Chief Rabbinate."**

When rabbis of this "Rabbinate" came asking Chacham Ezra to sign a ban on the shechitah of the "Eidah HaChareidis in Yerushalayim," he turned them away out of hand. Rav Dovid Jungreis and his colleagues he praised, for they had merited to serve gedolim, Chacham Shaul Chaim Dweck HaKohen zt"l (the Sadah) among them.

One year, at the start of the zman, we were told that we would be learning Maseches Yevamos. We asked for Maseches Chullin instead, so as to master shechitah and the paskening of issur v'heter. Chacham Ezra sent back word: "You are lazy, lazy; that is why you say, 'Let us go and slaughter.' Put your strength into Maseches Yevamos, and you will come out morei hora'ah in Yisrael."

When the time came to register children for school, Chacham Yehuda would send every talmid he thought suitable out to work at registration: to go out and save the children of Yisrael by enrolling them in talmudei torah, even at the cost of the talmid's own learning. This bitul Torah, he said, is itself learning Torah.

Many times he cried out against the terrible breach of having women teach young boys. Once he was told, "If you want only men teaching, there will not be enough work for the women teachers, and we will have to let your daughter go" (she taught girls only). "Let her go," Chacham Yehuda answered calmly. And he said that any school where women teach the children of Yisrael is an unfit place, for there will surely be many hirhurei aveirah there, among the pupils and among the other teachers.

At one chasunah, where many of the guests were yerei Shamayim, a woman dancer appeared, rachmana litzlan. When Chacham Yehuda heard of it he was deeply pained. "Was there not one Pinchas there," he asked sorrowfully, "to be zealous for Hashem?" The family had arranged to make the "Shabbos chassan" in a certain shul, and he told its chazzan not to call any of them up to the Torah that Shabbos. The chazzan did as he was told. The family took it as an insult, threatened to murder the chazzan, and

raised a great storm in the shul over the slight to their honor. Not long afterward terrible sufferings came upon the man who had made the threat. He understood that they had all come because of that sin, and he went to Chacham Yosef Adess. "I will pay whatever sum you name," he said, "if only you take these hard and bitter sufferings away from me." "There is no need for money," Chacham Yosef Adess told him. "Just put up a notice in the shul that you confess, regret and do teshuvah for the whole affair, and 'you will return and be healed.'" He did so.

When the immigrants came up from the Arab lands, he gave up his sleep and wore out his feet alongside the geonim Chacham Efraim Kohen zt"l and Chacham Ben Tzion Chazan zt"l. With mesirus nefesh they went into the immigrants' camps (the transit camps that housed the newcomers) and urged the people, in the Arabic that came easily to them, to keep Torah and mitzvos and to see to the chinuch of their sons and daughters.

Once the immigrants were settled in the towns and villages, he still went from place to place, making the word of Hashem heard and stirring people to Torah and mitzvos: to educate their sons al taharas hakodesh, to keep taharas hamishpachah and to set times for Torah.

On nights of Tikkun Kares (the tikkun said for aveiros punishable by kares), or of learning from chatzos until morning, he made a point of going home to put on his tefillin there, so that he would leave his house for shul wrapped in a tallis and crowned with tefillin; the holy Zohar writes that this is of enormous worth. He would urge people to be careful to put on both pairs, Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam, together, as the Arizal, the Chida and the Rashash ruled: both are true, and about this there is no doubt at all.

He was most careful himself, and taught others to be careful, to say birchos hanehenin calmly and slowly, like a man counting pearls. He trained us to say a berachah in three parts, with a proper pause between each part and the next, like this: "Baruch Atah Hashem, Elokeinu Melech ha'olam, shehakol nihyeh bidvaro."

Every Shabbos he gave a shiur in the Maskil El Dal shul in Beis Yisrael: the parshah of the week with Rashi, with iyun and understanding, and after it halachos from the holy sefer *Ben Ish Chai*.

For several years I saw him in that shul at midday nearly every day, alone with his Maker or learning in chavrusa with one of the avreichim.

Sometimes we would be waiting our turn at the barber in the Bukharim neighborhood when Chacham Yehuda came in for a haircut. He insisted that whoever had come in before him, even the least of his talmidim or the son of one of them, be served first. We wanted to honor him and give him our places, but he was surprised that we should step aside for him at all. Only when the barber himself pleaded with him did he give in, and even then only after one or two had gone before him, and after he had asked each person present, one by one, to forgive him.

Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l, I may add, was the same. When he came for a haircut while we were waiting, he did not want to go ahead of us or of our young sons. Only when the barber pleaded with him again and again did he agree to go first, and then only after he had asked each person present for his consent and blessed all who were waiting with all his heart.

The Last Seudah in Chevron

My teacher and rebbi Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l told us this story. In the riots of 5689 (1929) the Arabs ran wild in the city of Chevron on a Shabbos in Av. They killed many of its Jews, a large part of the yeshivah's bochurim among them, and that was the end of the Jewish community there for good.

One of the city's rabbanim was Chacham Franco zt"l. That Shabbos he got up as he always did and went to daven Shacharis in shul at netz hachamah. Back home, he sat down to learn as usual, waiting for his wife to get up and daven; then he would make kiddush over wine and they would eat their Shabbos meal. At that very hour the bloody riots broke out. The Rav lived on the second floor of the house, and suddenly he heard terrible screams coming up from the courtyard. He went to the window to see what they were, and saw to his horror that the Arabs had slaughtered his neighbor and burned her head on a primus (a small kerosene stove used for cooking in those days). From the Jewish homes all around rose the cries of plunder and destruction.

He woke his wife at once. "The Arabs are slaughtering Jews," he told her. "They have slaughtered our neighbor on the first floor, and any moment they may come up here. Wash your hands, and let us do an important mitzvah before we die." "What mitzvah," she asked, "can you want us to do at a time like this?" "Bring the chamin," he said. "We will make kiddush

and eat in honor of Shabbos Kodesh. This mitzvah is very precious in Shamayim."

His wife choked back her tears and her fear and did as he asked. Amid the uproar all around them they washed their hands and began the second meal of Shabbos Kodesh, in honor of Avraham Avinu, alav hashalom. Only a few moments had passed when a British officer appeared at the door. "I have come to rescue you and your wife," he told the Rav. "Your lives are in danger. Two soldiers will take you to the army car, and it will bring you to Yerushalayim."

On the road the soldiers asked him whom he knew in Yerushalayim, so that they could bring him there. He named Chacham Shaul Tzadka (Rabbeinu's father) and gave them his address. In Yerushalayim nothing was known yet of what had happened in Chevron, and Chacham Shaul was astonished to see the aged rav of Chevron and his wife arrive at his house on Shabbos Kodesh. "What has happened," he asked Chacham Franco, "that you had to be mechallel Shabbos and come from Chevron in the middle of Shabbos Kodesh?"

Chacham Franco did not answer the question. All he said was, "Before anything else, you should know that I have not yet bentched on my seudah in Chevron. In a little while an hour and a fifth (seventy-two minutes) will have gone by, and I will lose the berachah. Please give me a kezayis of bread, so that I can eat it and bentch with my seudah in mind." He bentched slowly and with kavanah, like a man counting pearls, and only then turned to tell Chacham Tzadka zt"l of the massacre in Chevron, of the last meal in honor of Shabbos Kodesh that he and his wife had eaten in the face of death, and of the miracle of their rescue.[74]

Chacham Yehuda drew the lesson: "See how great the Shabbos meals are. Facing death, the Rav zt"l thought of nothing but keeping this mitzvah as the halachah requires. So take care to keep the mitzvah of the three

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[74] How great the miracle was they understood only later, when it came out that the British had held back from saving the Jews and kept their weapons silent, leaving the Arabs free to run wild and slaughter. No one could say why a British officer should have rescued Chacham Franco of all people, or who this officer was, or whether he was a British officer at all and not some other being that came to rescue him in the merit of the seudah, clothed in the form of an officer who ordered the soldiers to save the Rav and his wife.

Shabbos meals even when conditions do not allow it. Go out, if you must, and ask for a kezayis of bread as tzedakah, so as not to lose these precious mitzvos."

One Motza'ei Shabbos Chacham Yehuda went to the levayah of someone he knew. When it was over he saw that chatzos was near and he had not yet eaten the seudah revi'is (the melaveh malkah). He went straight to one of the houses nearby and asked whether he might eat it in their home. The family were overjoyed at the great zechus that had come their way and at once laid the table with every good thing. The next day Chacham Yehuda came back to thank them again, and he pressed them until they took a hundred shekels from him for the meal.

It is told that when Chacham Yehuda fell ill and had to move to another apartment, since there were too many stairs up to his floor, one of the well-known rabbanim, without asking him, told the story to one of the great donors in chutz la'aretz and obtained from him a check for a hundred thousand dollars, which he brought to Chacham Yehuda. When Chacham Yehuda heard who the donor was, and knew him for a man who did not keep Shabbos properly, he refused the check, unwilling to benefit from such a man.

More than once, in my own times of trouble, I davened at his tziyun, and I merited to have him come to me in a dream and show me how to set the matter right. Once he told me in a dream that the aliyah of shlishi at Minchah on Shabbos is of very great worth, provided one is called up in the minyan where one davens Minchah. May his merit protect us, amen.

CHACHAM YOSEF TANJI ZT"L

Speaking of the chachamim and rabbanim of Yeshivas Porat Yosef in my day, I remember well a precious man, **Chacham Yosef Tanji zt"l**. Every morning he came to his small room on the entrance floor, boiled a big urn of water and sold the talmidim glasses of tea for a few prutos. At the meal break before noon he would call me and my friends to carry glasses of tea to the rabbanim of the yeshivah.

To look at, he was a simple Jew, short and stout, in a beret and a plain shirt, never a jacket. Yet I always looked at him with awe. I had learned that in Morocco he was once pressed to commit an aveirah, and like Yosef HaTzaddik in his day he threw himself from a high floor, ready to die, say-

ing "Shema Yisrael," to keep the mitzvah of "yehareg ve'al ya'avor." Shamayim saved him, and he stood up unharmed.

Never once did I see him make idle talk with any of the people who came to the yeshivah. Every free moment was holy to him, kept for learning the holy Zohar. Each year he finished the Zohar on Lag BaOmer and made a large seudah at home for ten talmidei chachamim, and at its end he handed each of them an envelope holding a large sum of money. "This," he would say, "is in honor of the Rashbi."

The Money in the Shirt Pocket

Chacham Yosef Adess told this story. One year Chacham Yosef Tanji was hard pressed for money, and in great distress he told his wife that it looked as though there would be no siyum seudah that year; he did not have the money for it. Three days before Lag BaOmer the Rashbi came to him in a dream. "Make the seudah as you do every year," he said, "and give the talmidei chachamim their envelopes as you do every year. I know things are hard for you, so you will see that I have put a sum of money in your shirt pocket. Go in the morning and buy all you need, and the whole time the same sum will stay in the shirt. Only tell no one about it, for once you tell, the berachah will go."

In the morning he got up, and the dream proved true: there was money in his shirt. He did not count it. He went straight to the market, bought generously and paid, and the same money was always there in the pocket. At home he took ten envelopes, put a handsome sum in each and sealed them. His wife saw how much he had bought. "Where did you get money from," she asked, "when you said you were not making a seudah this year?" She pressed him so hard that he told her the story. The moment he had told her, he bought what he wanted, but then the money ran out.

All the same, he made a seudah "fit for a king." Chacham Yosef Adess, who was at that seudah and received an envelope, testified that those at the table felt a special kedushah, in the food and the drink alike, in the merit of the Rashbi, zy"a.

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l

Words fail me when I try to describe the greatness of this great man. Every day of his life was given over to Klal Yisrael, to rescuing chareidi Judaism in

Eretz Yisrael from its oppressor and enemy: accursed Zionism and its hangers-on, the "Mizrachi" men and all their kind.

He and my grandfather were true friends and held each other in deep respect. Their life's work ran together, his and Saba's: one spirit, one outlook, one kind of work, one place. I am certain that their bond included joint efforts in the fight for the kedushah of the people and of the land. But they worked quietly, and the public never learned of it.

It was he, "the man raised on high," who proclaimed a day of fasting and mourning when that "Rav," hand in hand with those who hate Judaism, founded the "Chief Rabbinate," as I told above.

On that day the Yakirei Yerushalayim gathered, fasting and mourning, to lament the ruin that "this rabbinate of kilayim" was bringing on Judaism. Ruach hakodesh came upon him, and he said: "The first chief rav of this rabbinate is a Kohen. The one after him will be a Levi, and the one after him a Yisrael. And the fourth, who comes after them, will permit mamzerim." And so it was.[75] (See above, in the account of Chacham Yehuda Tzadka.)

His Second Marriage

When Rabbeinu was left a widower, his friend the holy gaon Rav Moshe Yosef Hoffmann, known as "the Dayan of Papa" (Pápa, a town in Hungary), advised him to marry again, and in 5686 (1926) he took a second wife. She was a tzaddekes, the widow of a man who had been a talmid chacham and a tzaddik as well.

Their first meeting took place at the Dayan of Papa's home, with the Dayan himself present. She told Rabbeinu of her family's yichus and of how her first husband had conducted himself, and all the while he stood without a word, his eyes on the ground. When she had finished, he turned to her: "I will give my answer tomorrow."

At the appointed hour the next day, Rabbeinu described her first husband to her down to the last detail: how he looked, how he moved, how he

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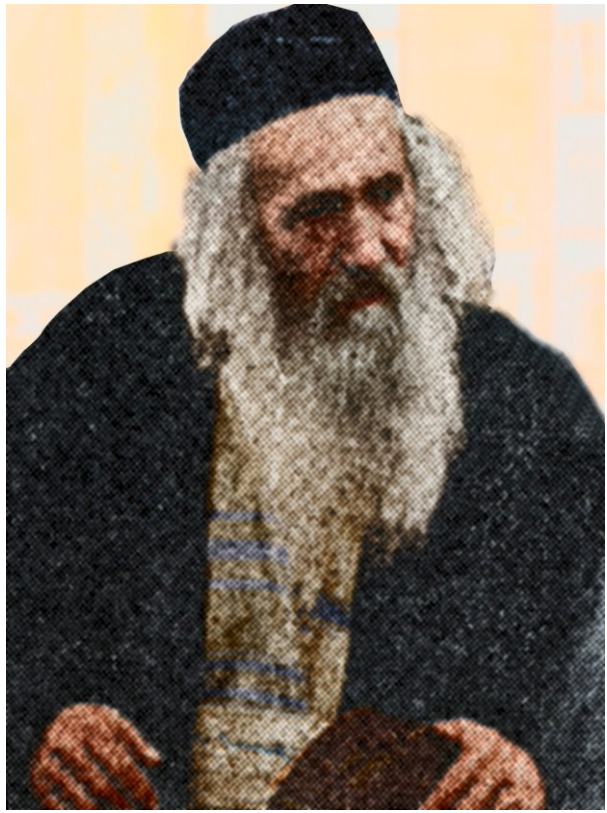
[75] In order, the Ashkenazi chief rabbis were Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, Yitzchak Isaac HaLevi Herzog, Isser Yehudah Unterman and Shlomo Goren. In 5733 (1972) Goren permitted a brother and sister of the Langer family, who had been ruled mamzerim, to marry. — Trans.

went about everything he did. She was astounded. Then he added, "I asked him, and he agreed."



Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l

A Guest on a Rainy Night

His first wife had witnessed open mofsim in their home and kept them to herself. His second wife was not used to such things, and in her amazement she told what she had seen.

One of her stories took place on a winter night of pouring rain. Water was coming into the house, and she struggled with all her might to stop up the gap and bail it out. She meant to ask Rabbeinu for help, but she saw him sitting before a stranger like a servant before his master. The two were deep in sefarim together, unaware of anything happening around them.

The water went on rising, and at last she turned to Rabbeinu for help. Before she could say a word, the man rose to go, and Rabbeinu saw him

out. As soon as the guest was out of the house, the water stopped coming in on its own.

Who was this man, she asked, that he had learned with him so intently and honored him as a servant honors his master? Rabbeinu answered with a question: "Did you say shalom to him?" "Yes," she said. "Then be happy," he told her. And she understood that the guest had been Eliyahu HaNavi.

A Gold Coin at the Door

She told this too: "He would never take anything from anyone, though often there was nothing at all to eat in the house. One day it became too much for me. I went into his room and told him, 'You fill yourself with Torah, and the household goes hungry.'"

The Rav rose from his chair at once. "You are right, you are right," he said. He put on his coat, went to the door of the house, bent down and picked up a gold coin. "Here," he said, "this is something to live on."

Twenty-Five Thousand Pounds

A very rich man, a fervent Zionist, came on a visit to Eretz Yisrael and called on Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. The Rav made a deep impression on him, and partway through their talk he wrote out a check for 25,000 pounds sterling (a legendary sum in those days) and handed it to him for his institutions.

Then the talk turned to Zionism, and the visitor let it slip that he held Herzl (Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement) to have been a navi and a seer. Rav Yosef Chaim was shaken. He stood up to his full height and roared like a lion, "Words of kefirah and minus, in my house?" And as the man watched, he tore the check to shreds.

The donor could not get over Rabbeinu's courage, or that he had let go of a fortune like that. Later he went to those close to Rabbeinu and offered to give twice as much, if only Rabbeinu would take it. Rabbeinu would not see him, and would not take so much as a perutah from him.

The Stranger's Check

A wealthy woman in Hungary lost her husband, and he left no sons, rachmana litzlan. She paid the shamash to say Kaddish for a year for the elevation of his neshamah. When the year ended, seeing that the shamash needed the money, she told him, "Keep saying it, for the elevation of the

neshamos of people who have no one to say Kaddish for them, and I will pay you." So it went on, year after year, for some ten years.

When the ten years were up she wanted to renew the arrangement, but her money had dwindled and she could no longer afford it. She stood at the door of the shul and wept bitterly. Where would help come from, for her own needs and for the shamash's pay?

All at once a man of distinguished bearing, dressed like a gvir and carrying a briefcase, came over and asked why she was crying. She told him her circumstances were tight, and that she could no longer pay the shamash to say Kaddish, as she had for years, for those who had no one to say it.

The man took a checkbook from his briefcase on the spot and made out a check to her for several thousand in the local currency. Then he sent her to the yeshivah across the street to bring two bochurim, who would witness him signing the check and giving it to her. After that she was to take it to the bank, collect the money, and go back to living as she had before. She did as he told her and came back with two bochurim, one of whom was Rabbeinu, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l. In front of them the man signed the check and handed it over.

At the bank, the clerk took one look at the check and, stunned, went straight to the manager. The manager saw it and fainted, and the place was in an uproar. When they had brought him round, he called the woman in and asked where she had gotten the check. "A man I don't know gave it to me in the street today," she said. "He came over and asked why I was crying. I told him that for ten years I have paid the shamash to say Kaddish for those who have no one to say it for them, and that my circumstances won't let me go on. Then he signed the check in front of two witnesses and gave it to me."

The witnesses were sent for, and they confirmed her account. "If you saw a picture of the man," the manager asked the woman and the two witnesses, "would you know him?" They said they would. He brought out a family photograph album and had them turn the pages to see whether the man was there. The woman and the witnesses knew his picture at once.

The manager broke down and wept. "This is my father," he told them. "He died ten years ago, and I have never said Kaddish for him. I know his signature, and I am certain it is not forged. It seems my father was among those helped by the Kaddish this woman paid for, and he came to help her

in return." He paid out the check then and there, and did teshuvah sheleimah.

THE GAON AND TZADDIK RAV AMRAM BLAU ZT"L

I wrote earlier that my grandfather z"l hated Zionism, the secular and the religious kind alike, with an utter hatred, and fought both with fury. He could not rest for a moment, seeing the children of Yisrael led day after day to shmad in the slaughterhouses of the Zionist Ministry of Education, where they are taught every kind of kefirah, and taught that they descend not from Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov but from a monkey that evolved. Nor could he rest over what the Zionists did to the immigrants who came up to Eretz HaKodesh to live in its kedushah: they made broken vessels of them and forced them to send their children to the Zionists' schools.

Among his friends was a most precious man, a giant among giants both in ahavas Yisrael and in hatred of Zionism, a man zealous with the zeal of Hashem Tzevakos: **Rav Amram Blau zt"l**. With mesirus nefesh he fought for Shabbos, for tznius and for the protection of the graves of Yisrael. Again and again he was arrested and held in prison in great suffering.



Rav Amram in sackcloth at a demonstration in the streets of Yerushalayim, with a large crowd taking part

Even as a child I used to go along with the large crowds that marched through the streets of Yerushalayim to stir people up over the tznius of Bnos Yisrael. Rav Amram zt"l and his friends walked at the front, holding up a big sign that called on Bnos Yisrael to dress with tznius.

Rav Amram Blau zt"l fought the wars of Hashem. He gave his back, his face and his belly to those who struck him, and his cheeks to those who tore at them. For years on end, as he stood in the breach for the kedushah of Shabbos and of tznius and against the digging up of the graves of Yisrael, he was beaten without mercy by the police of the misyavnim of our generation, "the government police of the beginning of the flowering of their

redemption."[76] Yet never once did he lift a hand against anyone, policeman or not.

A Dream of Shammai HaZakein

One night Rav Amram saw Shammai HaZakein in a dream, standing before him. "Rav Amram," he said, "get up and save me from the archaeologists." Rav Amram rose at once and woke several of his friends, and they took a taxi straight to Meron, to the tziyun of Shammai HaZakein.

Early in the morning they reached the tziyun and caught the archaeologists unawares; they had arrived only a little earlier and had started to dig. The archaeologists were dumbfounded. Their plan had been kept secret even from those close to them, so that nothing would leak out. How had Rav Amram found out? They asked him, and he answered, "Shammai HaZakein himself came and told me what you were after."

Rav Amram and his friends raised a great outcry. The archaeologists feared that all the people at the kever of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai would join in and make short work of them and their equipment, and they ran for their lives. They never came back.



First on the right, Rav Amram Blau. In the center, Rav Shabsai Yudelevitz. Last on the left, my grandfather.

All his life, every free moment he had, by day and by night, went into toil in Torah.

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[76] He is playing on "reishis tzmichas geulaseinu," "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption," the phrase the Religious Zionists apply to the State of Israel in their prayer for the State; he writes "their redemption." —Trans.

The chinuch of the young was the breath of his life. In 5705 (1945) the Ashkenazi chachamim and gedolim of Yerushalayim set up the Vaad HaChinuch HaChareidi (the Chareidi Education Committee), to strengthen the talmudei torah already there and open new ones, and so rescue the innocent children of the immigrants from ruin. Ever since the First World War ended, immigrants had been coming up from the lands of the East in great numbers each year. Unable to tell kodesh from chol, or light from darkness, they were sending their sons to the secular schools. The Vaad HaChinuch put out a kol korei asking every Jew who cared about the chinuch of the young to give it one lira, paid in installments over a year. Poor as he was, Rav Amram zt"l went further and gave two lirot.

Before anyone crushed and lowly he made himself as nothing at all. Orphans, the wretched, the mentally ill, Hashem yishmor: he cared for them as for his own sons. He took the broken-hearted and the homeless into his home, saw to their needs and did all he could for their comfort and pleasure. Whole volumes could be filled with the stories of his tremendous chessed, and of how he strengthened Jews and drew their hearts near, to bring them back in teshuvah sheleimah to the rock from which they were hewn. Here are a few grains of them.

"Respectable" Guests

One Friday night Rav Amram came home with two new "guests" he had just found lying about in the streets. His wife, the tzaddekes, took one look at their faces and recoiled. "These are the guests you bring home?" she asked him quietly. "Couldn't you bring respectable ones?"

"In fact," Rav Amram answered, "I have been looking for 'respectable' Shabbos guests for a long time. I have invited the gaon Rav Pinchas Epstein, the gaon Rav Dovid Jungreis and others like them. But they, baruch Hashem, have homes of their own and don't need to be my guests. These two have no home. If I don't bring them here, they will have nowhere to eat."

The Shoemaker's Apprentice

A fourteen-year-old orphan from Edos HaMizrach, poor and miserable, used to drift around the beis midrash collecting money to live on. No one looked after him, and his clothes were in rags. Rav Amram approached him

and invited him home, where he gave him new clothes in place of his old ones, fed him and offered him a bed for the night.

Then he asked the boy how much his collecting brought in, and found him work with a shoemaker who paid him a respectable wage. What the bochur did not know was that the money came from Rav Amram, who was paying the shoemaker to support him. Rav Amram learned with him as well, until he was a different person.

When the boy was grown, Rav Amram found him a suitable shidduch and married him off. He was zocheh to build a bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael, and raised an entire generation of God-fearing chareidim.

The Milkman's Sheva Berachos

Once, when he was an avreich, Rav Amram was out in the streets of the city and saw a milkman, a man who earned his living bringing milk to the homes of the neighborhoods. It was the day after the man's wedding, and there he was on his rounds as on any other day. Rav Amram asked him why he was working during the seven days of his sheva berachos.

He could not afford to lose his customers, the man explained. A week without deliveries and they would be gone: once they were used to another milkman, they would never come back to him.

Rav Amram took the chassan's list of regular customers, and for all seven days of the sheva berachos he went from house to house in the neighborhoods of Yerushalayim, delivering the milk himself.

The Fastidious Guest

A bochur from a poor family of Edos HaMizrach used to eat at Rav Amram's table every Shabbos, and in time on weekdays as well. He was a great istenis, and the Rebbetzin had to bake a challah especially for him. His fish, too, was made separately: Rav Amram's house served cooked fish, and he had to have fried. He was given a knife of his own as well, and a towel reserved for him alone.

On Erev Shabbos Rav Amram would fill special vessels with water, to have water for Shabbos. He would not use tap water on Shabbos, out of concern for the shitah of the Chazon Ish, who forbids using electricity on Shabbos because Jews produce it, and the water in the taps is pumped by electric power. Nor did he use electric light on Friday night, and so he

would spend many hours learning by heart. His clock was always kept on Eretz Yisrael time, never on European time.

The bochur could not see why water was standing in those vessels, nor why the clock showed the wrong time. So, in all innocence, he poured the water out and set the clock to European time. On Shabbos day itself Rav Amram found he had no water and no clock he could go by. He said not a word to the bochur. He held himself back and went the whole Shabbos without water and without a clock.

A certain baal teshuvah spent a great deal of time with Rav Amram while he was growing in Yiddishkeit, and all through that period Rav Amram gave him strength and encouragement. Today that man leads an entire community of baalei teshuvah.

A Concert at Seudah Shlishis

Once, at seudah shlishis, one of life's unfortunates turned up at Rav Amram's house. He had brought several bottles of wine with him, and once he had poured them down his throat he launched into chazzanus at the top of his voice, for hours, with every kind of noise.

Rav Amram z"l sat and listened patiently, and now and then he simply joined in. That way it would not seem as if the man was merely shouting; people would think there was singing going on, and not just bellowing in strange voices. In the end it was the neighbors who were shouting at Rav Amram, complaining that the "concert" coming from his house was disturbing them.

Rav Amram lived in all of a room and a half. Small as it was, it became a gathering place for the broken-hearted and a hostel for the downtrodden and the homeless, the kind of people others simply avoided. Beside the house was a narrow room that served as a sort of storeroom, and there he received all his guests, among them unfortunates no one could stand. Even people everyone shunned because of their smell and the like, he took into his home, drew close and strengthened.

On Sukkos 5734 (1973) an elderly Jew, a refugee from Hungary, appeared at his door. He had a place to stay and sleep, he said frankly; it was just that he liked being in Rav Amram's sukkah best, small and cramped as it was. Rav Amram welcomed him with a sever panim yafos like no other, drew him close and talked with him.

The Garbage Collector from Katamon

A young man from the Katamon neighborhood of Yerushalayim, who worked for the city collecting garbage, was thrown out of the house by his family. With no roof over his head and nowhere decent to stay, the poor man somehow found his way to the Chassidim beis midrash in Batei Ungarin and paced back and forth inside it. Rav Amram's sharp eye picked him out. He went over, asked how he was, who he was, where he came from and what he was doing there, and invited him to come and live in his house.

Rav Amram provided for all his needs. He gave him his own cupboard for his belongings and set up a bed where he could lay his head every night. In time he even arranged a shidduch for him, and signed the tena'im on the chassan's behalf.

While the couple were engaged, Rav Amram took the chassan to buy cloth for his wedding clothes and had a tailor make it up into clothes fit for a chassan. He bought him a hat for the wedding too, and signed a "rental agreement" on an apartment in Beis Yisrael so that the chassan and kallah would have somewhere to live. The poor, wretched man he had found became a respected man, one of standing among his people.

Out of his own pocket Rav Amram paid "tuition" to a number of institutions for many children from the homes of the broken-hearted, orphans and the like.

A poor bochur earned his living as a porter, hauling his loads on a bicycle. When the bicycle was stolen he was badly shaken, over the bicycle and over the livelihood it had cost him. Rav Amram bought him a new one, and he went back to earning his keep as before, repaying the debt out of his earnings in small, easy installments, a trifling sum each week.

The children used to make fun of a certain "madman." Rav Amram drew him close and gave him warmth and love in abundance, and the man was transformed, so much so that in time he even became connected by marriage to one of the roshei yeshivah.

Another Jew Rav Amram saw through both engagement and wedding, and for him, too, Rav Amram signed the tena'im on the chassan's side. The wedding was held in Rav Amram's own home in Batei Ungarin: for one night the house was cleared out to serve as the men's section, and the neighbor's house became the women's section.

A secular Jew once arrived from London, a painter by trade who produced flags for children. Rav Amram drew him near and brought him back, until he had become a baal teshuvah keeping Torah and mitzvos.

A man whose mind was somewhat impaired, Hashem yishmor, came to every simchah Rav Amram zt"l made. Too ashamed to come in, he would wait outside until someone told Rav Amram he was there. Then Rav Amram would hurry out with plates of food and drink for him to eat and drink his fill, waiting on him truly as a servant waits on his master.

Released Before Rosh Hashanah

Rav Amram was once in prison for guarding the kedushah of Shabbos. Rosh Hashanah was near, and he assumed he would most likely spend it in prison as well. For himself he made no effort at all to get out.

But one of the other prisoners asked him to put in a word with the investigators and get him released early. Rav Amram did as he asked. He went to the investigator and pleaded the man's case: for about a month the prisoner had been coming to the shiurim and the tefillos, and anyone could see he had changed his ways. The request was granted, and the prisoner was sent home then and there.

In the Middle of the Seudah

A needy man once came to Rav Amram's house after Rav Amram had already washed for the seudah. Seeing him, and understanding that he needed a large sum of money urgently, Rav Amram hurried through a kezayis of the meal, bentched straightaway, and went with him to the Toldos Aharon beis midrash to collect for him there. Naturally, everyone who saw Rav Amram himself giving up his precious time and wearing out his feet to raise money for a mitzvah gave from his own wealth.

Never in his life did Rav Amram hold a banknote or a coin issued by the Zionist state; to him it was muktzeh machmas mi'us. Everything he bought and all the tzedakah he gave, he paid for in American money.

The Journalist on Tishah B'Av

One Tishah B'Av a secular journalist came into the beis midrash wanting to speak with Rav Amram zt"l. He had shoes on, but Rav Amram talked with him all the same and took no notice. Suddenly one of the men in the beis

midrash came up and began to berate the journalist for walking around in shoes on such a day.

Rav Amram cut the man off at once. "This journalist came to me, not to you," he told him. "And if it is 'kana'us' you have in mind, I know very well what kana'us is too, and I won't need to learn that Torah from you. So why are you shouting?"

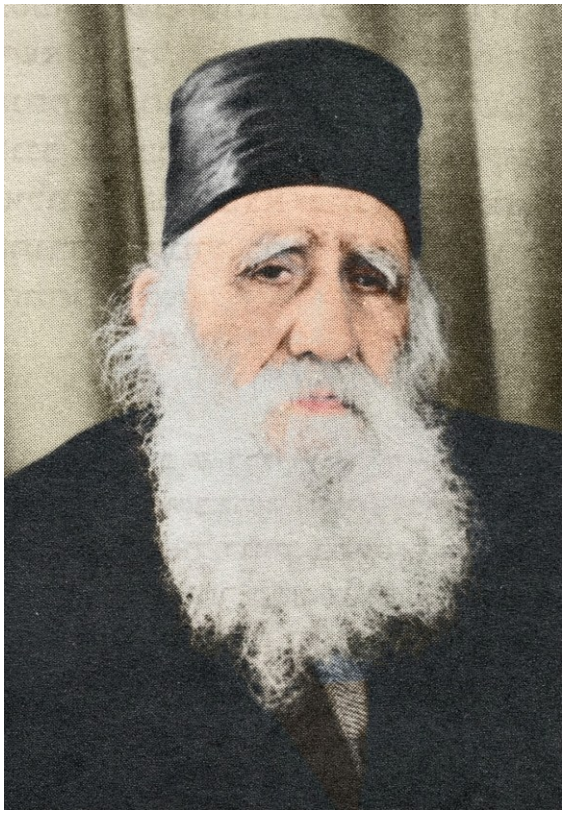
The Man No One Would Take In

A Jew who had caught a contagious disease was wandering the streets. In his desperation he came to Rav Amram's house. He had nowhere to stay, he said; no one would let him into their home, for fear his illness would spread to their families. Rav Amram received him with great honor and looked after him personally. Each day, before going out to daven Shacharis, he set out food and drink for him, so that it would be ready for him the moment he woke.

So it went for a long time. On Simchas Torah, too, Rav Amram left his food ready as always, but when he came home from davening he found that the man had died. At the end of Yom Tov Rav Amram gave a hesped for him, broken by terrible weeping; from the bitterness of his heart he wept over the sudden passing of that poor Jew.

Rav Amram passed away on 15 Tammuz 5734 (1974) and lies in honor on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim. Zy"a.

The Rosh Yeshivah of the Mekubalim, Chacham Efraim Kohen zt"l



Chacham Efraim was born in Baghdad in 5646 (1886), to a family whose line went back to Yechezkel HaNavi zy"a. At eighteen he had already mastered Shas and poskim. He then took up Kabbalah under the great mekubal Chacham Shimon Agasi zt"l and became a mechaven, one who davens with the kavanos of the Siddur HaRashash.

Word of this "wonder of a youth" reached the great luminary Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l, author of the *Ben Ish Chai*, and he sent for him. What he found was "a new jug full of old wine," overflowing its banks, and the young man made a deep impression on him. Every so often he would invite him over to share the pleasure of divrei Torah. "My door is always open to you," he told him. "Come and talk learning with me whenever you like. Even if I am asleep, just say so, and they will wake me."

In 5684 (1924) he came to Yerushalayim. There he joined Rechovos HaNahar, the yeshivah of the mekubalim, and learned with their head, Chacham Shaul Chaim Dweck HaKohen zt"l (the Sadah). Later he was made head of the mekubalim at Yeshivas Oz VeHadar, next to Yeshivas Porat Yosef.



HaRav HaGaon Chacham Shaul Chaim Dweck HaKohen (the Sadah)

(The Sadah zt"l came to Eretz Yisrael from Aleppo, in Aram Tzova. In Aleppo he had climbed steadily in pshat and in Kabbalah under his great rebbeim, Chacham Mordechai Abadi zt"l and Chacham Eliyahu Mishan zt"l, masters of every hidden treasure of the Torah and its secrets. All the writings of the Arizal and the kavanos of the Siddur HaRashash he knew fluently, by heart. Born on 14 Cheshvan 5618 (1857), he passed away on 4 Teves 5691 (December 1930).)

When the immigrants arrived from the Arab lands, Chacham Efraim went on foot from place to place with two other rabbanim and geonim,

Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l and Chacham Ben Tzion Chazan zt"l. They risked their lives to enter the immigrant camps, and there, in the Arabic that came naturally to them, they urged the people to keep Torah and mitzvos and to guard the chinuch of their sons and daughters.

Chazal teach that Hakadosh Baruch Hu does not let a tzaddik stumble over forbidden food, that one who comes to purify himself is given help, and that one who sanctifies himself below is sanctified from above. Chacham Efraim took great care over the kashrus of what he ate. For one thing, he would not touch meat from mass shechitah: with so much pressure and demand, he feared, something might chas veshalom go wrong. His meat came only from a special shechitah, through an honest butcher, a yerei Shamayim, who had his animals slaughtered on their own by shochtim and bodkim of great yiras Shamayim. And so Shamayim guarded him from stumbling even unawares.

One Friday night he was warned in a dream not to eat the chamin. He woke up puzzled: he had checked the meat before buying it and been careful about every detail of its kashrus. So he asked the woman who helped in the house, and it turned out that, to make the chamin tastier, she had bought a little fat at a different shop and added it without telling him.

He would go around the shuls giving derashos, and his words, coming from the heart, moved the listeners to teshuvah. Afterward people came to his house to confess their aveiros, and he set out a course of teshuvah for each of them, following the Arizal's writings in *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh* and Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l's sefer *Lashon Chachamim*.

HaRav HaGaon Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l bore witness that Chacham Efraim had ruach hakodesh. He could tell people what they had done, and people took to running from him rather than be shamed.

I believe I heard in the family that whenever my grandfather went in to see him about something, Chacham Efraim would walk him out when they were done, so great was his honor and esteem for him.

Chacham Efraim passed away on Shabbos Kodesh, 3 Tishrei 5717 (1956), and lies in honor on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim. Zy"a.

RAV YOSEF CHAIM ZT"L

Having mentioned two great luminaries, **Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l and Chacham Shimon Agasi zt"l, the heads of the Golah zy"a**, I think it

right to pass on to the next generation the wonders I heard firsthand about Rav Yosef Chaim and his son Rav Yaakov zt"l. I was also privileged to know the people involved in that wondrous episode concerning Chacham Shimon Agasi zt"l, zy"a.

The Promise of the Ben Ish Chai

Among the immigrants from Bavel in Yerushalayim was an old man I knew, Mr. Menashe Yosefan z"l. Late in life he worked on the building of the great shul of the Bavel immigrants in Yerushalayim, near the Machaneh Yehudah neighborhood. That shul has a very high ceiling, and at its center rises a dome a full story taller.

The story went that he was setting a large stone in place high up in the dome when he and the stone together rolled off and fell to the road below the shul. Fearing the worst, the people nearby ran over to see whether he was alive and how badly he was hurt. Before their astonished eyes, a miracle: the old man stood up as if nothing had happened, picked up the big stone, and climbed the scaffolding back to the top of the dome. They begged him to go to the hospital and be examined, in case chas veshalom he had been injured, but he refused. "I have a promise from Rav Yosef Chaim that no harm will come to me," he said, "and baruch Hashem, you have just seen it come true. What do I need doctors for?"



The head of all the sons of the Golah, Rav Yosef Chaim zy"a, known by the name of one of his sefarim, Ben Ish Chai

Half a Riyal

Late one Shabbos afternoon a few of us bochurim were sitting with him in Yeshivas Porat Yosef, and we asked him how he had come to earn the berachah from Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l that had worked this miracle.

This is what he told us. On the day he turned bar mitzvah, his father handed him a pair of tefillin. "Today you are bar mitzvah," he said. "Take these to Rav Yosef Chaim's house, so that he will put them on you and give you his berachah. And here is half a riyal (a small coin), a present for you."

"On the way," he said, "a poor man stopped me and asked for a donation, and I gave him the half riyal my father had just given me. I walked into Rav Yosef Chaim's house, and as soon as he saw me he came toward me, crying out, 'What did you do? What did you do?' He frightened me. I had no idea what he wanted of me, and I burst into tears.

"He came closer. 'Why are you crying?' he asked.

"'Because the Rav shouted at me about what I did,' I said, 'and I got scared.'

"'On your way here you did a great mitzvah,' the Chacham told me, 'and a great light rests on you. It stirred me, and that is why I asked what you had done.'

"So I told him I had given my half-riyal present to a poor man as tzedakah.

"'You should know,' he said, 'that this poor man had not eaten for days. With your money he bought bread and ate, and you brought him back to life. And because you cried on my account, I bless you with long life and good health, with no illness and no harm to your body.'"

RAV YAAKOV CHAIM ZT"L

Mr. Menashe Yosefan told us as well that he had been privileged to serve as shamash to Rav Yaakov Chaim zt"l, who succeeded his father, Rav Yosef Chaim zy"a, as rav, and he related several of his mofsim.

The Note in the Robe

Here is one. There was a Jewish woman who led an immoral life, and her beauty drew all the great men of the government to her. People in the city were afraid to say a word to her: the government did whatever she wanted, and she could hand anyone over to it. Rav Yaakov Chaim alone did not fear her. Several times he rebuked her for what she was doing, but she did not change her ways.

One day Rav Yaakov Chaim called Menashe and handed him a note he had written and sealed. "Go to that woman's house," he told him, "and slip this into the pocket of her robe without her noticing."

Menashe was afraid of her and tried every way to get out of the errand, but it was no use. So he took the note and went. With siyata d'Shmaya, he found the outer door open and her robe hanging on the wall, while she was shut inside the inner room with one of the gentiles. He mustered his courage, tucked the note into the robe, and ran.

A few hours later the woman put on her robe, and immediately she began to swell like a balloon. She tried to get out the door, but she had swol-

len so much that the doorway was now too narrow for her. She stood in her house screaming for help until the swelling burst her, and she died.

As for Mr. Menashe Yosefan, Rav Yosef Chaim's berachah came true to the letter: he was granted a long life, free of illness and harm.



Rav Yaakov Chaim zt"l

Rabbeinu Yaakov Chaim zt"l, his father's only son, was born in 5614 (1854). Like his father, he lived with chassidus, with chumros and with very great perishus. Throughout his many works his father quotes chiddushei Torah in his name again and again. In 5664 (1904) Rav Yaakov published two sefarim of his own, *Tzitzim U'Ferachim* and *Zechus Avos*. When his father left this world in 5669 (1909), he took over the leadership of the Baghdad community and guided it with wisdom and understanding for twelve years, until his own passing in 5681 (1921). He was a true kanai who stood in the breach without fear. The whole community, as one man, heeded him and

accepted his word without question, knowing him to be a man of G-d and a baal mofes.

I have a faint memory of hearing about him (from Mr. Menashe Yosefan, I think) that he went through something like the story the Gemara tells of Rav Acha bar Yaakov.[77] He was a guest in some village, and while he was in the privy a snake with seven heads came at him. It was pikuach nefesh, so he had to focus on kavanos until he had killed it. And because he had thought holy Names in an unclean place, he passed away fairly young. The details I do not remember exactly.

The Snuffbox and the Boat

The gaon and mekubal Chacham Moshe Yechezkel zt"l told this story. Once, during a seudas siyum on Maseches Sanhedrin in the Eliyahu Reuven beis midrash in Baghdad, Rabbeinu Yaakov Chaim shifted his snuffbox from one spot on the table to another, for no visible reason. His shamash knew that nothing the Rav did was without purpose, and he asked him why he had moved it when there was no need.

Rav Yaakov tried to put him off, but the shamash kept pressing, and at last he answered. "Right now two Jewish boys are in a boat on the river Chidekel (the Tigris, which runs through Baghdad). They went out for a sail, and partway out the Arab boatman meant to drown them. When I moved the snuffbox, I moved the boat to the riverbank."

The shamash hurried off to the river, ten minutes from the beis midrash, and there on the bank he found two frightened boys. They had been far out on the river in a boat, they told him, and the boatman had wanted to drown them, when all at once the boat sped to the shore on its own. The boatman took fright and let them go. The shamash brought them back to the beis midrash to settle their nerves. They had barely walked in, and he had not yet said a word, when Rav Yaakov Chaim said to him, "These are the boys who were in the river."

CHACHAM SHIMON AGASI ZT"L

In those days the world of Bavel rested on three pillars, three giants: the good Rav Yosef Chaim zy"a, Chacham Shimon Agasi zy"a and Chacham

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[77] Kiddushin 29.

Yehuda Fatiyah zy"a, all three of them talmidim of the great and holy elder Chacham Abdallah Somech zt"l. Chacham Shimon and Chacham Yehuda taught Torah to talmidim, in pshat and in Kabbalah alike; they raised up many talmidim and lifted high the yoke of Torah.

In the introduction to his sefer *Bnei Aharon*, a commentary on Rabbeinu HaArizal's *Shaar HaGilgulim*, Chacham Shimon Agasi wrote:

> *I was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. I was happy, success stood at my right hand, and my sons were like olive saplings around my table: the firstborn Aharon, the second Menashe, and the third Meir Sasson Chai, the light of my eyes. Then suddenly, terror: the star of my fortune began to stray from its course and went limping on its thigh. Death came up through my window and entered my palace, to graze in my garden and to gather my roses. It snatched Menashe from my arms, and it did not hold back its hand from destroying, but swung its harsh sword over Meir Sasson Chai as well, the delight of my eyes. I was left desolate, like a man stunned by a blow from the hand of time, which had withdrawn its peace from me and surrounded me with gall and weariness; and I took comfort in Aharon, the first of my strength. He meanwhile had grown tall and handsome, ten times beyond all the boys his age in the unfolding of his lofty gifts and in the fine quality of his moral and spiritual character. He was a pleasant youth, one to make men wise, the glory of young men, young in years and wise, sitting at the feet of talmidei chachamim, righteous and wholehearted.*
>
> *At the beginning of the year 5658 (1897), when he was about sixteen, I decided to marry him off, and I betrothed to him a maiden from the most exalted of the people of the land, of distinguished stock and a high family, of good understanding and full of grace. We set the wedding for the coming month of Adar. I hoped that very soon my soul would tread in strength to rejoice with him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart, and that then Hashem would give me rest from my sorrow and my trouble. But alas, Hashem had counseled otherwise. At the end of Shevat a light illness passed over him, and we said it was nothing bad. But his illness grew heavier on him from day to day, until a seizure took hold of him and he fell like a block of wood, without strength. I knocked on the gates of mercy, I poured out my prayer, I sought forgiveness, and my companions, the chachamim of the yeshivah, may Hashem preserve them, helped me with pleas and supplications at the kever of my master and teacher the tzaddik, his soul in Eden, and of the other holy ones in the land. I rolled in ashes, I watered the earth with a stream of tears, I drenched the mountains, I called to the heavens above with tefillah, weeping and supplication; and all the gates were locked, and He shut out my tefillah. As the light of the night of Purim came in, his*

neshamah went out in purity in that very light, and his faithful spirit left its house of clay and returned to G-d Who gave it. That terrible and dreadful moment is engraved on the tablet of my heart in letters of blood. I will never forget it, and whenever I speak of it my heart trembles, horror seizes me and my strength leaves me. He has traveled to tranquil resting places and left us weeping and wailing, calling for the women who lament. He dwells on high among the erelim and the tarshishim. ***And he left his arusah grieving and forsaken, bound to a yavam eight months old.*** *I wept for my hard day, I cried out from the groaning of my heart: Alas for my breaking, my wound is grievous. Is there any pain like my pain? My sons have gone forth from me and they are no more. My fruit has been destroyed from above and my roots from beneath, and I have become like a lone tree in the desert. I hoped for good, and evil came; I waited for light, and behold, darkness. The month set for gladness and joy, how it has been turned to sorrow and sighing; the week set for a feast of rich foods, how it has been turned to mourning and lamentation. The terrible news pierced the heart of every friend and companion and set the whole city in turmoil. Their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling one to another, saying, "What is this that G-d has done to a fair soul, clean of transgression and innocent?" Then there arose the pride of our strength, our master and teacher and the crown of our head, our honored teacher Rav Yosef Chaim, may Hashem guard and redeem him. With his precious derashah he quieted the tumult of the multitude, explaining the matter to them with good sense and knowledge through the belief in gilgul, and with that the storm of their hearts was stilled...* ***I have called this sefer *Bnei Aharon* because my son, mentioned above, his soul in Eden, went from the world without the delight of children... and also for another reason, which is hidden away with me and may not be revealed.***

So far his words.

*The Secret of *Bnei Aharon**

That secret I will now reveal, as I heard it from one of my rebbeim at Yeshivas Porat Yosef: Chacham Avraham Harari Raful zt"l, if I remember rightly. He came to us at midday to teach mussar, the trop, the tunes of the Yamim Noraim tefillos, the knot of the tefillin and more, and his sweet way of speaking drew us to listen to his stories of the gedolei Yisrael of Aram Tzova, Bavel and Yerushalayim. This is how he told it:



HaRav HaGaon Chacham Shimon Agasi zt"l

When Chacham Shimon Agasi zt"l lost his son Aharon, he would not let them bury him. He climbed into the bed beside him, held him in his arms and said, "I will go down to the grave with my son," and he let no one take the boy from him. They went to Rav Yosef Chaim and asked what to do. "Leave him be," he told them.

Weeping and in tears, Chacham Shimon fell asleep with his son's body still in his grasp. He woke up calm, rose, and called the chevra kadisha to take care of his son. At the levayah he wept, but the turmoil of before was gone.

The next day he sent for the kallah. "By halachah," he told her, "you must wait a little over twelve years, until the boy who is your yavam turns bar mitzvah. You will surely want him to give you chalitzah then, so that you are free to marry someone else, since it would make no sense to marry a child thirteen years younger than yourself. But I ask you to marry him in

yibum. I promise you long years together, in love and brotherhood, peace and friendship. You will have sons and daughters with him, and live to see children and grandchildren.

"You should know that as I lay holding my son Aharon after he died, I fell asleep, and Aharon HaKohen appeared before me in the garments of the Kohen Gadol. 'Chacham Shimon,' he said to me, 'after thousands of years in Gan Eden, my sons Nadav and Avihu wished to enter a very high heichal, and they could not until they came down to this world to repair a certain matter. I found no fitting place to leave my deposit but with you. Nadav you have already given back to me. Why do you keep Avihu with you? Do not refuse to return him to me.' How fortunate you are, to have been betrothed to Avihu the son of Aharon HaKohen. He came to repair the fact that he had never taken a wife, and through you it has been repaired."

The kallah agreed. When the boy turned bar mitzvah he married her in yibum, and in time they were privileged to settle in Eretz Yisrael and raise upright and blessed generations.

In 5732 (1972), at the age of seventy-five, the son who had been the yavam, Chacham Tzion Agasi zt"l, brought out *Bnei Aharon* again, in a new edition with the text of *Shaar HaGilgulim* included. Copies were handed out free to kollel avreichim, and I, as one of them, went to his house, next to the Ohel Rachel shul of the Bavli community in Yerushalayim. It was the yevamah who gave me the sefer. She was past ninety, yet she moved as lightly as a young girl when she brought it to me. I saw him, too, that time.

Several times after that, when I needed to see the hidden tzaddik Yosef Dayan about something, I went looking for him at the yavam's house, for the two of them would sit there behind closed doors for hours, engrossed in the Torah of the upper worlds.

CHACHAM YEHOSHUA SHARABANI ZT"L

Chacham Yehoshua was a good friend of Saba's and came to see him regularly. I told earlier how I happened to be in the house on the eve of the Six Day War when he came to tell my grandfather of a dream in which the pasuk "Your hand shall be raised over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off" had been read to him. I heard the two of them saying

that in the coming week they would be able to go to the Kosel HaMaaravi, and so it was.

He was born in Baghdad in 5639 (1879) and learned in the Beis Zilicha beis midrash, and in time he drew close to the holy gaon and G-dly mekubal, the Reish Galusa of Bavel, Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l.



Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani zt"l

A Revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi

Word once went around that every Motza'ei Shabbos the gaon Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim zy"a was granted a revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi, zachur latov, who learned with him in his room upstairs. The men of the beis midrash wanted to know whether it was true. They decided to send Chacham Yehoshua to the gaon Rav Yosef Chaim the next Motza'ei Shabbos Kodesh, with the excuse that they could not understand a certain sugya, so that he could find out.

When Chacham Yehoshua arrived, Rav Yosef Chaim was waiting for him at the door. "Chacham Yehoshua," he said, "the beis midrash sent you to understand such-and-such a sugya. Go back and tell them it means so-and-so." And he sent him off in peace, without letting him into the holy place within.

In 5663 (1903), aged twenty-four, Chacham Yehoshua went up to Eretz HaKodesh with his wife, his eldest son, his daughter and his mother. When he left, the leading chachamim of Baghdad, headed by Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l, escorted him for several parsaos.

The Money for Shabbos

Once, when he was in desperate straits and had nothing for Shabbos, he sat learning in the Ohr HaChaim shul of the holy Rabbi Chaim ben Attar zt"l in the Old City of Yerushalayim and begged the Borei to send him his parnassah. Suddenly a man he did not know came in through the locked door, put a sum of money in his hand without a word, walked out and was gone.

The Power of Tefillah

The gaon Chacham Ezra Attiah zt"l related that when the holy mekubal Chacham Avraham Adess zt"l passed away, he was deeply pained and troubled. Who would now be the chassid of the generation, the one people could turn to, to daven over the troubles of the community and of individuals? The answer came to him from Shamayim: "Go to Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani; his tefillos are very much accepted." And indeed, Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani's berachos bore fruit at once.

My own cousin once fell ill and was confined to bed, so weak that his eyes stayed shut and he could not even stir. The doctors ("they too are reckoned as Refaim")[78] had no idea what was wrong with him and could make nothing of it. My uncle carried him in his arms to Chacham Yehoshua for a berachah for a refuah shleimah. The moment the berachah was given, my cousin opened his eyes, and he walked home on his own feet.

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[78] Devarim 2:11, said of the Refaim, a giant nation of old. The word refaim is close to rofim, doctors, and also means the shades of the dead. —Trans.

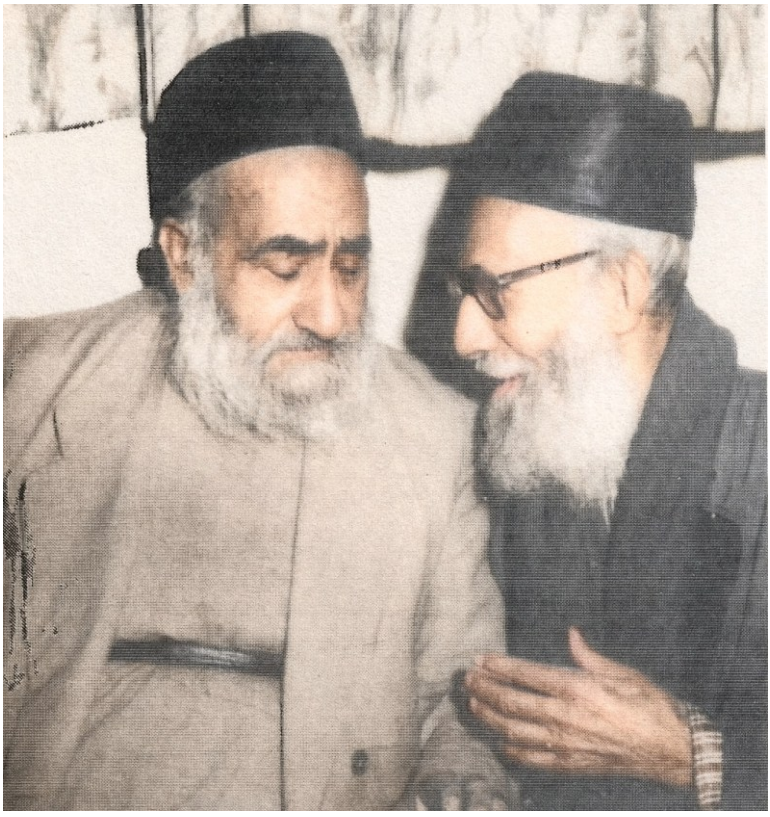
Kerem Shlomo

For years Chacham Yehoshua sat in the Shoshanim LeDavid shul learning the writings of the Arizal with two other mekubalim and geonim, Chacham Salman Eliyahu zt"l and Chacham Efraim Kohen zt"l.

Chacham Salman Eliyahu zt"l wrote a commentary on the writings of the Arizal, beginning with the holy sefer *Etz Chaim*: *Kerem Shlomo*, a great work in size and in quality alike. He read the sefer aloud to his friends Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani zt"l and Chacham Salman Mutzafi zt"l.

Decades later his sons set out to print their father's manuscript and found they could not. Part of it had been written in ordinary pencil, the words had worn away in many places, and they had no way to supply what was lost. In their distress they went to Chacham Yehoshua and began reading the sefer to him from the start. Each time they came to a blank, Chacham Yehoshua carried on from memory, giving the missing words exactly, up to the point where the writing picked up again; and so on through the entire sefer.

When they were done, they worried that Chacham Yehoshua might have slipped here and there. So they brought the incomplete manuscript to Chacham Salman Mutzafi zt"l and asked him, too, to fill the gaps from memory. He did so and returned it with his additions, and they set these beside the words Chacham Yehoshua had supplied. The two matched wondrously, and the sefer was printed accordingly.



Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani (right) in conversation with Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi zt"l, the Ra'avad (head of the beis din) of the Sephardi Eidah HaChareidis

Three Doves

When Chacham Yehoshua's son Avraham z"l was born, his father said the child had been privileged to carry within him three neshamos of the early poskim. At nine the boy fell ill, and the illness took his life. On the day he died he asked his mother to dress him in white, and he told her he could see three doves standing before him, waiting to welcome him. Then he passed on to his eternal home. May long life be granted to those who hear.

Soap

One Erev Shabbos, I remember, I ran into Chacham Yehoshua at the mikveh building in Beis Yisrael. He noticed people washing with a liquid soap that made no lather, a new invention at the time, and asked me what they were putting on themselves. I explained that it was a special kind of soap.

He was astonished. "The body gets dirty and smells only from aveiros," he said to me. "All my life I have never washed my body (apart from after the bathroom and the like) except by immersing in the mikveh, or by washing my face, hands and feet in honor of Shabbos with hot water alone. Smell my body and tell me if it needs anything more."

He held out his hand and arm, and I smelled them. It was the scent of a clean nursing baby, still fragrant with his mother's milk: truly the scent of Gan Eden. One could have made the berachah borei minei vesamim over it.

Chacham Yehoshua passed away on Shabbos Kodesh, 11 Teves 5733 (December 1972), at the age of ninety-four. Zy"a.

THE GAON RAV YAAKOV CHAIM SOFER ZT"L, THE *KAF HACHAIM*

Thirty Days

While we are on the subject: Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani's grandson, that most precious of men, a man of chessed, Chacham Moshe Chai Sharabani zt"l, told me a frightening story about the gaon Rav Yaakov Sofer zt"l, author of *Kaf HaChaim*. After his wife passed away, the Kaf HaChaim left his home and secluded himself in a small upper room in the ezras nashim of the Shoshanim LeDavid shul. There he toiled in Torah, there he slept, and there his meals were brought to him; for tefillah he came down into the shul to daven with the tzibbur.

At Yeshivas Porat Yosef, in the Old City of Yerushalayim, there was a young talmid chacham, R. B. zt"l, a tremendous masmid and a wondrous yerei Shamayim, famous for his hasmadah. More than once his friends went home in the evening leaving him on his feet by the window, working through a sugya, and came back to the yeshivah in the morning to find him standing in the very same spot, still absorbed in it. (One Simchas Torah this talmid chacham was in Chevron. While everyone was dancing with the sifrei Torah, the wondrous gaon Chacham Chizkiyah Medini zt"l, author of the *Sdei Chemed*, rose, hoisted the bochur onto his shoulder and danced with him. "I am dancing with a living sefer Torah," he told the crowd.)

In time he married, and all through his first year as a chassan he kept learning, his hasmadah not diminished in the slightest.

One night the holy gaon, the author of *Kaf HaChaim* zt"l, dreamed that he was at a levayah. He asked the people walking behind the niftar who had died, and they named the young talmid chacham. He asked why he had died. The woman he married, they told him, must be married to her true zivug, and he, being her husband, stood in the way. So his life had to give way before the life of her true zivug, who was to marry her.[79]

"Leave him," the holy Rav told them, "and I will see to it that he divorces her with a get, according to the law of Moshe and Yisrael."

"That cannot be," they answered. "The decree is already sealed."

The holy gaon zt"l woke with his spirit in turmoil. He went straight down to the shul, opened the aron kodesh and pleaded for rachamim for that talmid chacham. Then he climbed back up to his room, fell asleep at once, and dreamed again. The same people he had seen in the first dream, the ones following the niftar, were coming toward him once more, but this time the bier was empty. "Shamayim has heard your tefillah," they told him. "The talmid chacham has been given thirty days to set the matter right. If he frees her with a get, he will be left alive."

In the morning the holy gaon went to Yeshivas Porat Yosef. "I want you to divorce your wife right away," he told the chassan. "Come to my house, and I will arrange the get between you."

"Why?" asked the chassan. "What reason could the Rav have for asking such a thing of me, and even going to the trouble of coming all this way for it?"

"Such and such I saw in my dream," the gaon replied, "and you have been given thirty days."

"I am not willing to accept that," said the chassan. "Divrei chalomos lo maalin velo moridin (words of dreams neither raise nor lower)." The holy gaon urged him again and again, but he would not listen.

Several times that month the gaon zt"l took the trouble to come to Porat Yosef and try to persuade him to give the get, all in vain. On the thirtieth day after the dream, at shkiah, the young man collapsed and died, Hashem yishmereinu. Some time later his widow, after chalitzah, married a simple man off the street.

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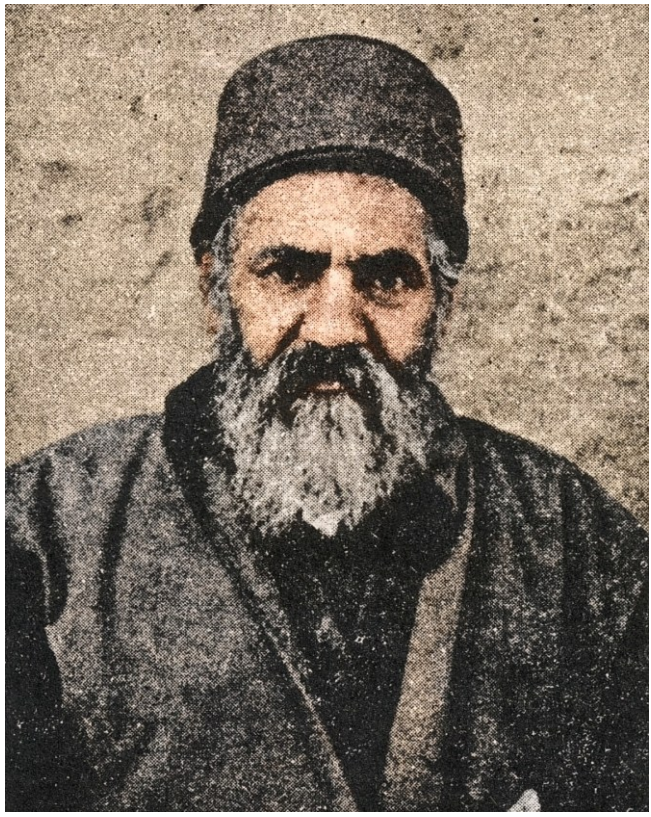
[79] So it is written in the Zohar, Parshas Vayeilech.



The gaon Rav Yaakov Sofer, the author of Kaf HaChaim*, zt"l*

The Houses of Beis Yisrael

Chacham Moshe Chai Sharabani also told me about some houses at the edge of Beis Yisrael. Water was so costly there that the earth and mortar for them had been mixed with water already used once, for washing or for bathing, and whoever went into those houses came to harm from ruchos ra'os.

One day a resident of Beis Yisrael came to Rav Yaakov Sofer in tears. His baby son, he said, had been lying in his cradle and was suddenly gone, though no one had seen a soul enter the house. Rav Yaakov sat in thought for a time, then rose and went home with the father. There he at once adjured the sheidim in the house to give the child back, and all at once the child was there to be seen. When the father had recognized the boy and taken him, Rav Yaakov adjured every one of the chitzonim in all those

houses to take themselves off to places where no people live. From then on people lived in those houses and came to no harm.

His Life and Ways

Rav Yaakov was born in Baghdad in 5630 (1870). He came up to Eretz Yisrael in 5664 (1904) and learned in Beis El, the mekubalim's yeshivah in the Old City, davening there with the kavanos of the Rashash. Later he moved to Rechovos HaNahar, the mekubalim's yeshivah in the Bukharim neighborhood. There he became a talmid of the rosh yeshivah, Chacham Shaul Chaim Dweck HaKohen, who handed him his sefer *Eifah Sheleimah* to edit.

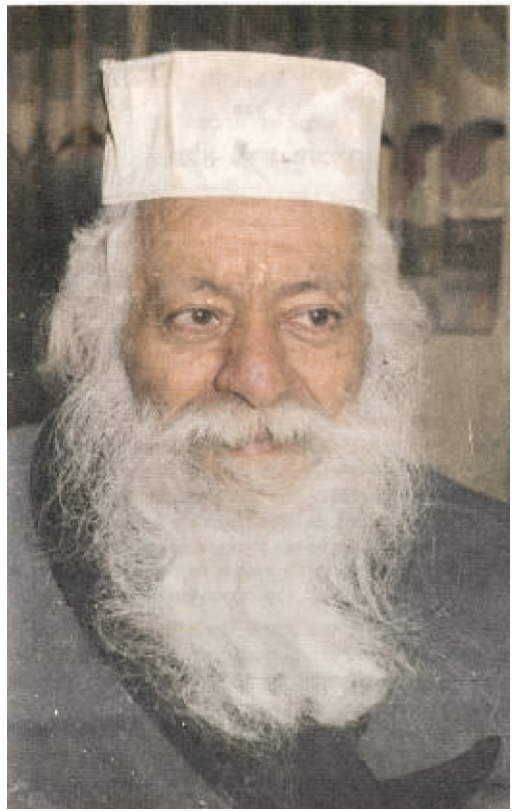
When the Shoshanim LeDavid yeshivah opened in 5669 (1909), he was named its rav and also rosh av beis din of the Bavli community. She'eilos reached him from India, England and Russia, and he answered them. Each Shabbos he gave a two-hour derashah in halachah and aggadah before Minchah Gedolah at the shul and yeshivah of Shoshanim LeDavid, and in the afternoon he spoke again at the Shaul Tzadka shul.

My rebbi, Chacham Yehuda Tzadka, told us that on Shabbos Rav Yaakov's face looked different from the way it looked during the week. When he said a birkas hanehenin, he told us, the Shechinah could be seen on his face, for he made the berachah slowly and calmly, one part after another, with all the kavanos of Kabbalah. And the gaon Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul told us that he ate the way the serafim eat: a little food over a long time, since all through the meal, at length, he had its kavanos in mind.

He was a kanai for the word of Hashem and stood guard over His vineyard against the evil winds that blew through it. Once there was a move to put a chareidi principal with the title "Dr." at the head of the Talmud Torah Bnei Tziyon. Rav Yaakov joined the great mekubal Chacham Shaul Chaim Dweck HaKohen and Chacham Yosef Yedid in fighting it with all their strength, so that the talmidim would not be swept up by the title but would give their minds to Torah alone.

Rav Yaakov Sofer passed away at Minchah time on Shabbos Kodesh, 9 Sivan 5699 (1939). He lies with honor on Har HaZeisim in Yerushalayim, about a bowshot from the tziyun of the Rashash. Zy"a.

The Holy Mekubal Chacham Mordechai Sharabi zt"l



The holy mekubal Chacham Mordechai Sharabi zt"l

It is told that when my grandfather passed away, the great mekubal Chacham Mordechai Sharabi was sitting at home, and he said to the people around him, "One of the greatest of the lamed-vav hidden tzaddikim has just left the world." About an hour later word came that my grandfather was gone.

A whole sefer, *Derech Tzaddikim*, has already been written about Chacham Mordechai and Mori Chaim Sinwani zt"l. It tells at full length how great they were, and I need not go over it again. But I do have things of my own to add about them, things I witnessed myself that no one has yet written down.

Chacham Mordechai was born in 5672 (1912) in Sharab, in Yemen. At about seven he lost both his parents, and one of the chachamim of Yemen took him in and taught him Torah. When he was nine he was walking along

the road with the man who had adopted him, going over Mishnayos with a commentary, when Mori Chaim Sinwani, then rav and rosh av beis din of all Yemen, came upon him. Mori Chaim saw that this boy was meant for great things. He took him and brought him up for several years, preparing him to be a vessel that would hold berachah and pour it out.

Ten Lirot in a Puddle

Chacham Mordechai told how, in his hard years before he became known, his wife was deeply distressed by the dreadful poverty they lived in. He went outside, and there in a puddle of water lay ten lirot. Under the British Mandate that was a great deal of money, and it kept them for a long time.

Chacham Shalom's Share

He told, too, that when he came to Eretz Yisrael as a young man he asked to join the mekubalim's yeshivah of the Gurjim (the Georgian Jews). Its rosh yeshivah, the holy mekubal Chacham Shalom Hadaya zt"l, took him in at once.

The avreichim's stipends were in the hands of Reb Moshe Gurji, who worked hard to raise the money for them. "I have nothing to pay him with," Reb Moshe told Chacham Shalom. "It is all I can do to keep up the stipends of ten avreichim. Where would the money come from?"

"If you cannot find it," Chacham Shalom answered, "give him my share."

"If it matters so much to the Rav," said Reb Moshe, "I will make a greater effort and find money for him as well."

The Villa

When I was about nineteen, a friend and I went one evening to Nahar Shalom, Chacham Mordechai's yeshivah, to hear his shiur in *Menoras HaMaor*. We sat off to the side of the shul, far from the Rav, where he could not see us at all, let alone hear us. There my friend told me, in so faint a whisper that even the people beside us heard nothing, that he dreamed of living in a "villa."

All at once Chacham Mordechai, in the middle of his mussar, began to speak about people who dream of a "villa" instead of rising in Torah and yiras Shamayim. "Villa" (וילה), he said, is spelled with the letters of *vai lah*

(וי לה, "woe to her"). The two of us sat stunned by the ruach hakodesh speaking from his throat.

Sixty Lirot

People came to him in great numbers, looking for a cure for every sort of trouble, the ordinary and the strange. Usually he would tell them, "Give sixty lirot to tzedakah for the men who learn in the yeshivah, and I will make a tikkun, and with Hashem's help it will help."[80] Most of the time the tikkun brought the yeshuah at once. Sometimes Chacham Mordechai's berachah did its work with no tikkun at all, and sometimes it took several tikkunim before anything helped.

When my mother a"h fell into her last illness, still in the prime of her life, Chacham Mordechai made the tikkun, and afterward he told us, to his sorrow, that it could not help: her time had come.

By Friday

I know a man who lay unconscious at the age of three. When they turned to Chacham Mordechai Sharabi, he promised that the child would get up in a week, on Friday. And so it was.

The Baby in Mexico

On one of my visits to Mexico, in Cheshvan, a member of Magen David, the Chalabi community (the Jews from Aleppo) in Mexico City's Polanco district, picked me up at the airport. As we drove to where I was staying, he told me about an important family, one of the community's wealthy and generous ones. That past Elul, with the Yamim Tovim approaching, they had taken on a gentile woman to help beside their regular one, since the mother had given birth to a daughter a few months earlier. This woman had kidnapped the baby and vanished, and the police could not find her trail. Ever since, he said, the family had been sunk in depression and terrible grief.

Once I had reached my lodgings I went to see them. They were sitting in the dark in a corner of the porch, their faces heavy with gloom. Others from the community who were there told me that the parents had gone to

[80] The number sixty holds the sod of six times ten, and that is why the Rav named this sum in particular.

all the well-known rabbanim in Eretz Yisrael, Rav Sharabi among them, and had been promised that the girl would come back safe and sound. Yet more than forty days had now gone by without a trace of her.

The day after I arrived was a Thursday. In shul I was told that they had telephoned Chacham Mordechai Sharabi once more, said that the parents were near collapse, and asked whether he could help. "Do not worry," he answered. "This coming Tuesday the girl will come back safe and sound." Now that he had named a day, a spark of hope stirred in the parents' hearts.

That Tuesday morning the priest of the church on the street beside the parents' home arrived to find a baby girl left on his doorstep. She was wrapped in a local newspaper of the day before, from a place four hundred kilometers from Mexico City. The priest knew nothing of the affair and had no idea the child was Jewish. He called the police, and the police called the parents, who recognized their daughter and found her safe and sound, just as Rav Sharabi had said.

The investigators could not make out what had come over the kidnapper. The night before, she had suddenly decided to bring the baby back to the very neighborhood where its parents lived, and had traveled all night over that long road to do it. But the parents said, "We know. Rav Sharabi's tefillah and berachah did this."

The seudas hodaah given in the shul for the whole community was a great kiddush Hashem, and I heard every one of them saying, "Blessed is the Name of Hashem, the G-d of Rav Sharabi."

The Wallet

One day Chacham Mordechai went to the Machaneh Yehudah market to shop in honor of Shabbos Kodesh. Two youths spotted the wallet in his pocket, came up to him, grabbed it and ran. They had gone only a short way when both of them froze in place like two blocks of wood. They began screaming to passersby to come and help, for they could not move, and the shoppers in the market started to crowd around them.

Rabbeinu raised his eyes to the pair and signaled them to bring him the wallet. At once the freeze let go of them. Trembling, they came to him, gave back his money and begged his forgiveness. Rabbeinu forgave them, on condition that they never rob anyone again.

The Envelope

A man once decided to give Chacham Mordechai a large sum anonymously, for him to hand out to tzedakah as he saw fit. He sent it with a messenger, who was to deliver it to Rabbeinu without saying whose it was. Seeing the messenger approach, Chacham Mordechai spoke before he could: "Shamayim has let me know that So-and-so has sent money with you for me." The messenger, stunned by Rabbeinu's ruach hakodesh and badly shaken, handed it over.

The Sheet

A man's young son had a bad fall and hurt his head. The child lost consciousness and was rushed to the emergency room of Rambam Hospital in Haifa. The doctors examined him and told the father that as they saw it the boy had little chance of living, and asked him to sign his consent to an operation.

The father would sign nothing until he knew what Chacham Mordechai thought. He telephoned his brother in Yerushalayim, explained the situation, and asked him to go to Chacham Mordechai and hear what he would say. Rabbeinu heard the story, went into his inner room and stayed there a few minutes. Coming out, he told the brother, "Tell your brother not to worry, and not to agree to any treatment. In three days the child will take a turn for the better and get well. Meanwhile let them wrap his head in a sheet, and he will feel relief."

It happened exactly as Rabbeinu said. With his head wrapped in a sheet the child felt better, and on the third day, to the amazement of the whole medical staff, he came to. A few days later he went home safe and sound.

The Dog

A man in one of Yerushalayim's neighborhoods kept a huge dog that frightened everyone who walked by. The little children were so afraid of it that they began talking about dogs in their sleep. People asked the owner to tie it up, but he refused, so they came and told Chacham Mordechai. He thought a moment and said, "Wait a little, and you will see the yeshuah of Hashem." Some days later the dog turned on its owner and bit him. A veterinarian was rushed to the scene and put the dog down with an injection.

Nothing to Be Done

A woman fell ill, and her husband came to ask Rabbeinu to daven for her recovery. "We will make a tikkun," he answered. At once he gathered ten men and divided among them the money given for a tikkun, so that they would sit and say the whole Tehillim for her recovery, while he himself sat at home making yichudim and kavanos for her. The tikkun had hardly begun when he closed the sefer of tikkunim and said, "There is nothing to be done." Shortly afterward word came that she had already passed away.

The Blorit

A man once came and told him that his son had stopped learning and was sinking into every kind of issur. Rabbeinu told him, "Cut off his blorit (the long forelock combed up over the forehead, the style of the secular youth), and everything will work out."

That night, while the boy slept, his father took scissors and cut off the blorit. In the morning the son raised an outcry over what had been done to him and went to a barber to have the haircut put right. From that day he went back to his learning and to the yiras Shamayim he had had before.

The Debtor Who Could Not Move

A man had lent money to a friend. When he asked for it back, the friend said, "Yes, you lent it to me, but I have repaid you already." They argued, and in the end they said, "Let us go to Chacham Mordechai."

Chacham Mordechai heard them out, then turned to the borrower and asked, "Did Mr. Ch. lend you money?"

"He did," the man said, "but I have already paid back the loan."

"If you paid the money back," said Chacham Mordechai, "you may go."

In that instant the borrower found himself stuck to the ground. Try as he might, he could not take a step. "Well," Rabbeinu asked him, "are you ready to pay your debt?"

"I will go right now and bring the money," he answered.

"Go," said Rabbeinu. He went straight home and came back with the money.

The Missing Son

A woman once came to him weeping. Her son had gone to chutz la'aretz and disappeared, and the police could not find his trail. "Come back next

week," Chacham Mordechai told her, "and I will give you an answer." When she returned a week later, he said, "Tomorrow your son will come to Yerushalayim." The next day the son turned up in the courtyard of Rabbeinu's house, asking where Rav Sharabi lived. The Rav sent for the woman at once, and she had the joy of seeing her son again.

Twelve Thousand Lirot

A man was facing an operation: the doctors had found a malignant growth on his X-ray, rachmana litzlan. He came to Chacham Mordechai for a berachah. "Who decided you need an operation?" Chacham Mordechai asked. "Please show me the X-ray." The sick man brought it, and when Chacham Mordechai had looked it over he said, "This spot is not a growth. It is a blood clot, and not a dangerous one. Give twelve thousand lirot to tzedakah, and you will not need an operation."

The sick man was puzzled. If there was nothing there, why give so large a sum to tzedakah? And if there was cause for fear, why not have the operation? Still, out of emunas chachamim he gave the money to tzedakah, and at the same time went in for the operation. The doctor took a fresh X-ray for the operation, found that it was not a growth but a blood clot that needed no surgery, and sent him home.

The man came back to thank Chacham Mordechai for his recovery. "Do not thank me," Chacham Mordechai said. "Thank Hashem, Who saved you in the merit of the tzedakah."

"From what the Rav says," the man replied, "I take it that it was a dangerous growth, and the tzedakah turned it into a blood clot."

Chacham Mordechai smiled. "No, not at all. It was a blood clot from the start, nothing more. So you wonder why I told you to give tzedakah. Know that a person's sustenance is fixed for him on Rosh Hashanah, and I saw a decree that you would lose twelve thousand lirot. You were about to lose them on an operation you did not need, spending them on doctors and medicines, and on getting your strength back and recovering. That is why I advised you to give them to tzedakah instead. Once you had given them, you no longer needed the operation, and the doctor's eyes were opened to see that it was only a blood clot, and not a dangerous one."

The False Messiah

Walking down a street in Yerushalayim one day, I met an avreich I knew to be an important talmid chacham. I asked how he was, and he said to me, "Do you know that Mashiach has come, and soon he will be revealed?" I was stunned to hear such strange talk from a man I knew to be entirely sane, and a talmid chacham at that.

I asked him what he meant. A tremendous talmid chacham called "Moshe," he told me, had come from England, a man of whom one could say "no secret is hidden from him," and he conducted himself with chassidus. Several important avreichim had been privileged to draw close to him and benefit from his Torah, and he had revealed to them that he was Mashiach, which was to be kept secret until the time came.

I told him the whole thing made no sense, and that as I saw it he and his friends were nothing but a herd of fools led by a donkey. That hurt him deeply. "How can you judge without seeing him and forming your own impression?" he said. "Come and see him." I agreed, out of curiosity, and he told me, "At ten o'clock at night wait beside the mikveh in Batei Ungarin, near Meah Shearim, and they will come to take you to 'his holiness.'"

At the hour set, another talmid chacham came for me, a man I knew as a great yerei Shamayim, and led me to a cellar tucked away in the neighborhood. There I met "his excellency," his eyes closed as if he were deep in thought. I looked at the palm of his hand and saw before me a man whose mind had been deranged by a great tumah that had fastened on him.

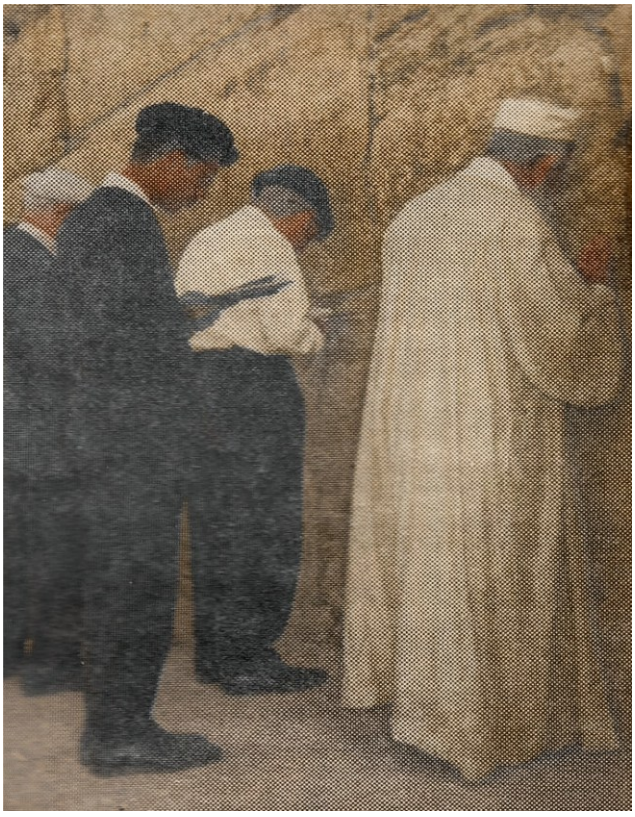
"Beware of him," I told them. "With the great tumah he is in, this man will yet defile you with mishkav zachar." His chassidim who were present actually wanted to kill me. Had a neighbor not come to my rescue and threatened to call the police, I would have been in serious trouble.

And so it was. After some weeks of displaying the breadth of his Torah knowledge, a rumor spread that he had asked his chassidim to hasten the geulah through him by means of mishkav zachar, with him and with one another. These fools, who had already caught his tumah by listening to false teachings rooted in the sitra achra, did as he told them, rachmana litzlan. I heard it with my own ears from the wife of one of the chassidim. With tears in her eyes she told me that this accursed man's chassidim had gathered in her house and, on his instructions, committed the deeds of Sedom and Amorah.

Some time later, I heard, he told them that to bring the geulah, a minyan of his chassidim must go with him to the church of the grave of the Notzri in the Old City of Yerushalayim (the Church of the Holy Sepulchre) and walk around the grave several times. These fools followed him blindly.

When word of it reached Chacham Mordechai Sharabi, he asked at once whether anyone knew of anything unusual about the man when he urinated. A brief inquiry turned up that he urinated many times a day, and each time took longer than it does with other people. Chacham Mordechai understood that this despicable man was drawing his strength from the klipah through the urine. He davened then and there that the man's urine be held back, and sent word that from now on he would not be able to pass water until he came to him.

This klipah did not want to come. His urine was held back, and he writhed in terrible pain and suffering. When he could bear it no more, he came to Chacham Mordechai begging for his life. "If you undertake to leave Yerushalayim and never come back," Chacham Mordechai told him, "and to break off all contact with the fools who listen to you, I will let your urine flow again." He agreed, and he left, never to return.



Chacham Mordechai zy"a at the Kosel HaMaaravi; as far as I remember, the one standing behind him is me.

What He Taught

He held firmly that, lechatchilah, a person should wear two pairs of tefillin together, Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam, and he said that this is the essence of the mitzvah.

The reason is this. There is a machlokes over the order of the parshiyos in the batim, and over the order in which they are written in the tefillin shel yad, and the halachah follows Rashi. It is good and fitting to put on Rabbeinu Tam's tefillin as well, to be mehader and fulfill his opinion too, so someone who puts on one pair after the other also does the mitzvah properly and fulfills both opinions. According to Rabbeinu HaArizal, however, both are true, both were given at Sinai, and they must not be separated. One should therefore do all one can to wear both at once, which joins the worlds together in a wonderful way. Yet one who cannot, because each

of his tefillin is larger than four centimeters, and who for whatever reason has no way to get small ones, should not hold back from putting on Rashi's tefillin alone and Rabbeinu Tam's alone, so as at least to fulfill both opinions, until he merits to obtain two small pairs made according to halachah.

Chacham Mordechai said that one who has seen keri should immerse the same day and say the whole fourth book of Tehillim, with perek 51 seven times, repeating pasuk 9 seven times on each of them.

In His House

Several times I had the merit of coming into his house, and each time I found him at the table over an open sefer, most often the Rambam's rulings. Sometimes he did not notice me come in and went on learning. Whenever I came, he would not talk while the sefer was open. First he kissed the page in his hand, then he closed the sefer, and only then did he begin to speak or to listen.

Chacham Mordechai passed away on 20 Cheshvan 5744 (1983) and was laid to rest with honor on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim. Zy"a.

Chacham Avraham Barzani zt"l

The mekubal and tzaddik Chacham Avraham Barzani zt"l, among the leading talmidim of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l, is as clear in my memory as if I had seen him yesterday. He was a dear friend to my grandfather and to my father both, and he and my father spent many sweet hours in each other's company. Sometimes they sat in his home, and sometimes in the shul of the Arbilim (the community of Jews from Arbil) close by it, in Beis Yisrael, at the edge where the neighborhood meets the Bukharim quarter. That shul was where Chacham Avraham would close himself in for days and nights on end, alone with his Maker, never letting the Talmud or the writings of the Arizal out of his hands.

He was born in 5660 (1900) in Arbil, in Kurdistan (Erbil, a city in the Kurdish north of Iraq). He moved to Baghdad as a child, and it was there that Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l became his rebbi. In 5694 (1934) he went up to Eretz Yisrael with Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah and with Chacham Salman Mutzafi zt"l, and he made his home in Beis Yisrael. There he set up shiurei Torah and taught Talmud to men who worked for a living.



Chacham Avraham Barzani zt"l on the heights of Har HaZeisim, with Har HaBayis in the background.

There was always a smile in Chacham Avraham's eyes, and wherever he was, the people around him grew calm and at peace. He was our family doctor as well. Whatever hurt, wherever in the body it hurt,[81] we knew to hurry to Chacham Avraham. He would lay his hand on the sore place and whisper his tefillos and kavanos over it, and, wonder of wonders, we would walk in aching and swollen and walk out well and smiling. It happened again and again, and not to one or two of us but to the whole family, and to others in the same plight whom we met there.

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[81] Sore throats were the exception. For those we went to the "chacham" Reb Shalom Zlatnik on Leib Dayan Street. He made up an antibiotic ointment of his own and spread it inside the throat, right on the inflammation, and in two days we were well.

One Shabbos at midday, I remember, I was seized by a toothache so fierce it brought me to tears. I reached the shul for Minchah Gedolah in pain and close to despair, telling myself that here was one pain even Chacham Avraham would have trouble driving out. When he caught sight of me, he turned his smiling eyes full on my face, while I stood there with my own face dark from the pain. The moment the tefillah ended he brought me over to the aron kodesh and gave me a berachah, and all at once the pain was simply gone. I could not believe it had really left me. So when I stepped outside I lingered in the courtyard of the shul, waiting for it to come back before I set off. Only after a while, once I saw that the bitter pain was truly over, did I go home.

For some years he headed Yeshivas Ohr Zarua LaTzaddik, which bears the name of Yechezkel HaNavi. He passed away, zy"a, on 26 Sivan 5734 (1974).

Chacham Salman Mutzafi zt"l

Chacham Salman was the leading talmid of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, the G-dly mekubal Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l, and he went up to Eretz HaKodesh together with him in 5694 (1934). My grandfather had accepted Chacham Yehuda as his rebbi and master, and he was bound by ties of love to the rebbi's two talmidim as well, Chacham Avraham Barzani and Chacham Salman Mutzafi. They, for their part, gave him the same love and friendship in return.

How deeply Chacham Salman loved and honored my grandfather I saw for myself after my grandfather was gone. I was running Chevras Ahavas Chaim then, and to manage the Chevrah's affairs I rented a side room from Chacham Salman zt"l, one of his that opened onto the second-floor courtyard. More than once he called me in to talk about the great merit of bringing the many to zechus, and as he spoke I could see how highly he thought of my grandfather. He told me an interesting story, too, of how Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l, back in Baghdad, brought a heavy smoker who was mechallel Shabbos to teshuvah. But "it is the glory of G-d to conceal a matter."[82]

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[82] Mishlei 25:2. The story itself is not told here. —Trans.

I will never forget the Shabbos nights we davened with him in the plaza of the Kosel HaMaaravi. Once davening was over we would gather around him, and he would sing "Eretz HaKedoshah yekarah chamudah" ("O holy land, precious and beloved, you shall be called sought-after for Torah and for testimony"), the song the mekubalim used to sing at the tziyun of the holy Tanna Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai in the days of Maran Rabbi Yosef Karo and Rabbeinu HaArizal. He sang with his eyes shut and the face of an angel, his voice lifting in a niggun of yearning for the holy Shechinah. At the lines "You are rich in blessings in the midst of a treasured people; in you are beauty and kingship; to you praise is fitting," he would press himself to the stones of the Kosel and all but faint, in hispashtus hagashmiyus (the shedding of the body and all that is physical). It was a moving sight that drew hearts to the glory of Shamayim, and the mark it left on us will never fade.



Chacham Salman Mutzafi zt"l.

Nor could I ever forget the night of 11 Cheshvan 5728 (1967), the yahrzeit of Rachel Imeinu, aleha hashalom. Thousands of Jews stood packed together at her holy tziyun, which the Shechinah has never left. All at once Chacham Salman appeared, a group of his friends and talmidim with him. They filled the whole of the first room, the large one before the room of the tziyun itself, sat down on the floor and learned the holy Zohar with great fervor. At chatzos they said Tikkun Chatzos in fear and trembling, weeping over the Shechinah, who waits to be lifted from the dust and to return to our Father in Heaven. It was as though Rachel herself had risen and stood among them, joining in their lament and their pleading.

The life of this tzaddik, zy"a, and his praises are told in the sefer *Olamo shel Tzaddik*.

Chacham Yosef Zaruk zt"l



Chacham Yosef Zaruk zt"l.

Each time I speak of my teacher and rebbi, the memory of him comes back, and my soul is bowed down within me. He was a great and awesome gaon, the "Sinai" of the group, a "master of the wheat" and of pearls,[83] a man for whom "no secret was too hard." The hidden Torah and the revealed were both his, with no gap anywhere in what he knew. The paths of Heaven were as clear to him as the paths of Nehardea:[84] the whole of Shas, Bavli and Yerushalmi, with the meforshim, Rishonim and Acharonim; the Zohar and *Sefer Yetzirah*; the writings of the Arizal with all their "army and horsemen"; the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch with all their nos'ei keilim; Tanach with its meforshim; a great many sefarim of responsa; and sefarim beyond counting besides. All of it he knew by heart, forward and backward, and in every one of those sefarim he could tell you exactly where each word stood. His memory was frighteningly strong, yet his humility and his yiras Shamayim came before his wisdom. Such was the complete chacham, **Chacham Yosef Zaruk zt"l**.

He was not yet eighteen when his holy rebbeim, seeing how great he was and how high he stood, gave him semichah for dayanus.

He and Saba were deeply attached to each other, and Chacham Yosef would speak at the taaniyos dibbur Saba organized at Chevras Ahavas Chaim and in other shuls in Yerushalayim. My grandfather knew his greatness and cherished him, so much that in his sefer *Ahavas Chaim*, Parshas Naso, he names him and brings a story he told.

From childhood he was "sagi nehor" (blind). He wore dark glasses over the place of his eyes, and if for some reason he took them off, one saw two hollows, several centimeters deep, where the eyes should have been, with only the thin film of the eyelids over them. Yet blind as he was, he had learned not only the whole Torah but the very daf and amud on which every matter appears, in the Gemara, in Rashi, in Tosafos and in other sefarim.

From my bar mitzvah until I married, my friends and I went to his house several times a week, to go over with him the sugya we were learning

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[83] Chazal call one whose Torah knowledge is vast and well ordered "Sinai," and "the master of the wheat," because everyone has need of him (Berachos 64a; Horayos 14a). "No secret was too hard for him" comes from Daniel 4:6. —Trans.

[84] Shmuel said, "The paths of the heavens are as clear to me as the paths of Nehardea" (Berachos 58b). —Trans.

or to get ready for a test. Now and then we skipped a word of Rashi or Tosafos on purpose, just to hear him put us right: we had dropped such-and-such a word, the one on such-and-such a line of the amud.

The Dream Before the Journey

Chacham Yosef was born in 5669 (1909) in Libya (in North Africa). At six a disease of the eyes took his sight, and many years afterward, Rachmana litzlan, his eyes were taken out altogether.

At eleven he was to travel with his father to Italy, to a great eye doctor who, they hoped, might give him back his sight. The boy Yosef poured out tears before Hashem, begging Him for a refuah sheleimah for his eyes. On the night before they were to leave, "Yosef dreamed a dream." Avraham Avinu, Moshe Rabbeinu, Aharon HaKohen and Eliyahu HaNavi were coming toward him, and he went out to meet them. As he drew near, Eliyahu HaNavi stepped forward and spoke to him:

"Hashem has heard your tefillah. Tomorrow you will go to the doctor in peace, your sight will come back to you, and you will be like everyone else. After that, your deeds will decide whether or not you merit Olam Haba. But if you are willing to stay blind, I promise you this: you will merit sight of the spirit, you will be a baki in the whole Torah, Written and Oral, and you will merit the life of Olam Haba."

"And it was in the morning, and his spirit was troubled." He knew it had been a true dream, and he chose the second path. "I won't make the journey," he told his father. "I am ready to stay as I am."

From then on his mind was opened to the whole Torah, to understand it and to pasken in every part of it, even in shechitah and treifos and in STaM (the halachos of writing sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos), subjects a blind man has no way of learning. He learned and he taught, and he raised up generations of talmidei chachamim, poskim and dayanim, shochtim and bodkim.

The same Chacham Yosef who could tick off on his fingers every sugya in Shas, and sum each one up with the views of all the Rishonim and Acharonim, could tick off on the joints of his fingers every word in the writings of the Arizal, roots, foundations and branches alike.

Weeping in the Silvera Shul

I was climbing the stairs of the Silvera shul, near Machaneh Yehudah in Yerushalayim, one day at noon, when heartbreaking sobs reached me from inside. I hurried in to see what was wrong. There sat Chacham Yosef Zaruk, crying great, bitter tears, like a man whose dead lies before him. I went up to him and asked what had happened and whether I could be of help. He was going over a maamar of the Arizal in *Etz Chaim*, he told me, and for some reason there was one line on one page that he did not fully understand. That was why he wept from the depths of his heart.

The Mekubalim of Oz VeHadar

At Yeshivas Oz VeHadar, beside Yeshivas Porat Yosef, there learned a group of holy mekubalim: Chacham Yosef Sha'yo zt"l, Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l, Chacham Moshe Adess zt"l, Chacham Yitzchak Hadaya zt"l, Chacham Sasson Levi zt"l, Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani zt"l and Chacham Avraham Salem zt"l. To watch them bent over the writings of the Arizal was an exalted sight. Every one of them wore gelimos (the long robes of the Sephardi chachamim) and a fez, and they seemed like lofty figures from some far-off world, hidden from view. In their midst sat Chacham Yosef Zaruk, in a short coat and a plain hat, arguing the pilpul with them and fully able to hold his own.

Often my teacher and rebbi, Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai Moallem zt"l, a man who dressed with the utmost plainness, in a short coat and a plain hat, would join them too. Their Torah filled all who watched them with a wondrous delight that was not of this world.

Growing up in my grandfather's house, I lived close to that world. As a boy I loved to slip into the study room in the Porat Yosef building and watch them learn, picturing them as the Tannaim laboring in Torah. The pleasure of seeing them sit there, calm and unhurried, working through *Shaar HaKavanos* or the holy sefer *Etz Chaim*, was sublime. One of them would read the text aloud, quietly, and one or two of the others would put in a word to make the meaning clear.

Then, out of nowhere, they would hit a hard kushya. Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri, the quiet one among them, the smile never leaving his lips, would offer a remark to resolve it. All at once Chacham Yosef Sha'yo would turn it down in a loud, clear voice, and a loud argument would break out among

the rest of the mekubalim, Chacham Sasson taking Chacham Yitzchak's side and the others weighing in one by one. Then, just as suddenly, Chacham Yosef Zaruk would offer a different line of reasoning in as few words as could be, and they would all go back and weigh his words from the beginning. It was a sweet and gentle argument, for plainly the truth was all they wanted. Each was careful of the other's honor, and their faces shone at one another.



Among the mekubalim of Porat Yosef. First on the right, Chacham Yitzchak Hadaya. Beside him, Chacham Yosef Sha'yo. Beside him, Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri. Beside him, ... Beside him, Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani. In the center, Chacham Efraim Kohen. Beside him, my teacher and rebbi, Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai Moallem. Zecher tzaddikim livrachah.

The rest of the day, late into the night, Chacham Yosef spent upstairs in the yeshivah's main hall among us, who mostly learned there in pairs. One of us would sit down with him as his chavrusa, and the two of them would swim together in the sea of Torah.

In 5720 (1960) my rebbi, Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai Moallem zt"l, opened a part-time yeshivah for the study of Kabbalah. Those who took part were HaRav HaGaon Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l, Chacham Shmuel Darzi zt"l, Chacham Yaakov Kohen zt"l, Chacham Yosef Zaruk zt"l, Chacham Yehuda Moallem zt"l and, yibadel l'chaim, Chacham Naim

Eliyahu shlita. They met every Wednesday morning in Yeshivas Porat Yosef and on Motza'ei Shabbos in the Shoshanim LeDavid shul. Afterward some of them would walk Chacham Yosef home, and as they walked he went over the whole shiur with them, giving the Arizal's words exactly as written and explaining whatever needed it.

He used to say that a segulah for exemption from the army is to say Tehillim chapters 23 and 34 with great kavanah and then to daven to be exempted.

"Give Me Your Hand"

Every evening Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri gave a Kabbalah shiur in the Beis El shul and yeshivah on Rechov Rashi in Yerushalayim, and Chacham Yosef was a regular there. Once Chacham Yosef was very ill and stayed home. When Chacham Yitzchak saw that he was missing, he went straight to his house, where he found him burning with fever and in great pain.

"Get up," Chacham Yitzchak told him. "We are waiting for you to learn Kabbalah."

"I'm not well," Chacham Yosef answered. "I can't get up."

Chacham Yitzchak said, **"Give me your hand."** Chacham Yosef held it out, and Chacham Yitzchak lifted him to his feet then and there, well and whole. The two of them went off to the shiur together (see Maseches Berachos 5b).

Chacham Yosef came home an hour later than usual and told his family, "The moment Chacham Yitzchak gave me his hand I was completely healed, and we were so happy that we kept learning a whole extra hour."

Ruach HaKodesh Under the Table

Ruach hakodesh was so ordinary with him that it was like something rolling about under the table. Whatever was around him, or even somewhere else, he saw as if he stood there with his eyes open.

Sheep and cattle by the hundreds and thousands were brought to him while still alive. He would touch each animal and say whether it was kosher or treifah, and if treifah, what the treifus was, a sircha (an adhesion on the lung) or something else. Not one of his words ever fell to the ground.

At his request the shapes of the letters were set out for him in relief on a plate of silver, and he learned them by touch. That is how he could learn the halachos of STaM, and keep in mind every kavanah and yichud of the

Arizal that is tied to the shapes of the letters and their nekudos. He did a great many kavanos and yichudim on behalf of the Shechinah and all Klal Yisrael.

He brought many back from sin, and he persuaded many university students to leave the university for a yeshivah.

His body gave him terrible yissurim, yet day and night his lips never stopped learning Torah, and he bore his yissurim with love, his whole face smiling.

He would often press people to go to the mikveh in the morning, before Shacharis. In the Mikdash, he explained, one had to toivel before bringing a korban, and tefillah takes the place of a korban. So it is fitting to go to the mikveh before davening even if one is tahor, and all the more so after fulfilling the mitzvah of onah and the like.

When a childless couple came to him for a berachah, whatever the cause, even barrenness, he made one condition: they must promise him the sandeka'us. Every couple who agreed had a son that same year.

His tefillos split the heavens. There were times when even the dangerously ill got well right after he davened for them.

The Shidduch He Wept Over

A bochur from the yeshivah, someone I knew well, went out to meet a girl from the Beis Yaakov seminary for a shidduch. Both sides had asked the shadchanis, who had nothing at all to do with the rabbanim of the yeshivah, to keep the meeting secret, even from their families, until they saw how things went. Afterward he went back to the yeshivah's hall to learn.

As soon as he began learning aloud, Chacham Yosef heard his voice and called him over. "Did you meet so-and-so tonight?" he asked.

The bochur was stunned. No human being could have told Chacham Yosef. "Yes," he answered.

At that Chacham Yosef began to cry, and the bochur was more puzzled still. "Why is kevodo crying?" he asked. "Is she not my zivug?"

"She is your zivug," said Chacham Yosef.

"Then why is kevodo crying? Won't she give me children?"

"She will give you four sons."

"Then why is kevodo crying?"

"That is none of your business," Chacham Yosef told him. "Go back to your learning."

Before long the bochur settled down and returned to his learning.

The shidduch went ahead. From the start the couple's shalom bayis foundered on the sharp differences between their natures. The wife was soon expecting, so both sides searched for some way to compromise and make peace, but they found none. Son followed son and year followed year, and right after the fourth son was born the husband broke. Life could not go on like this, he decided, and he began to think of divorce.

Then, suddenly, he thought of Chacham Yosef. He had not seen him since the wedding, when he left the yeshivah to learn in a kollel elsewhere. He went to Chacham Yosef's house and told him that the clash of character between him and his wife was driving him out of his mind; "the waters had come up to the soul."

Chacham Yosef heard him out and asked, "How many sons do you have?"

"Four," he said.

"Then the time has come to divorce," said Chacham Yosef. "Do you remember how I cried when you first met her? I was crying out of pain for all I saw you would suffer with her. But I also told you she would give you four sons. Now that all four have been born, the tikkun between you is complete, and the time has come for you to divorce her and marry someone else."

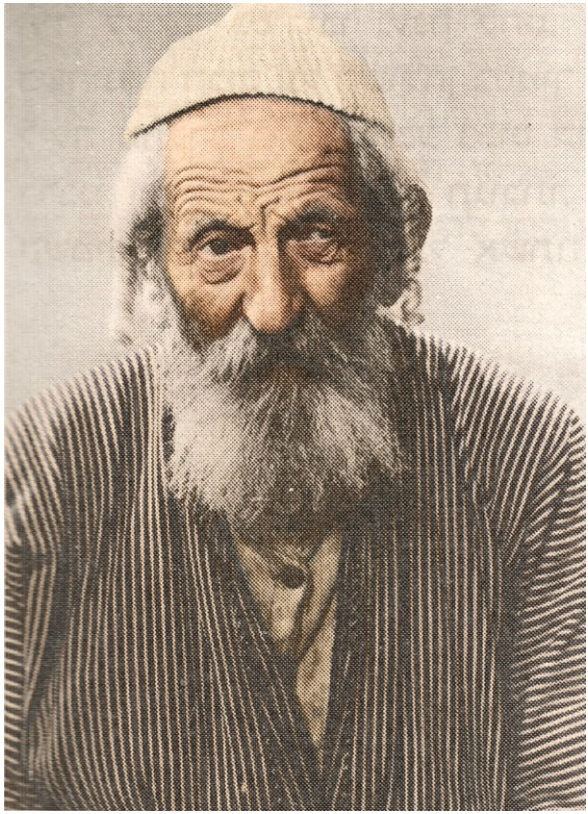
The Elections

Chacham Yosef zt"l held the holy view of the chachamim and rabbanim of Yeshivas Porat Yosef, HaRav HaGaon Chacham Ezra Attiah zt"l, HaRav HaGaon Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l and HaRav HaGaon Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l: voting in the elections to the governmental and municipal "beis hakisei" (the privy; a play on "Knesset") is strictly forbidden, even for a party led by rabbanim. The point is to have no partnership with the seed of Amalek, the leaders of the State, even when that party never joins them at all and stays in the opposition, since the *Tikkunei Zohar* already says that tzaddikim who sit among them take on the tumah of a niddah, Hashem yatzileinu. For all his yissurim and his hasmadah, Chacham Yosef Zaruk would go out and address the people, to make them under-

stand how severe the issur is against taking part in the elections to the wicked government in Eretz Yisrael, even for the parties that are called "chareidi."

Thursday Nights at Shoshanim LeDavid

For many years the holy mekubalim Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani zt"l, Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l, Chacham Yosef Zaruk zt"l and Rav Aharon Slatki zt"l[85] met every Thursday night in the Shoshanim LeDavid shul. They labored over the writings of the Arizal until chatzos and then said Tikkun Chatzos, and Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri stayed on, saying Tehillim, until morning.



The mekubal Rav Aharon Slatki zt"l.

[85] He was the leading talmid of the Sadah, and he led the davening as chazzan with all the kavanos of the Rashash, in the Sephardi pronunciation.

I saw Rav Aharon Slatki still coming to Shoshanim LeDavid every Thursday night in his old age, to learn Kabbalah with one of his talmidim.

Chacham Yosef Zaruk zt"l passed away on Shabbos Kodesh, Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av 5741 (1981), and lies buried with honor on Har HaZeisim in Yerushalayim. Zy"a.

CHACHAM SHAUL DOVID CHAI MOALLEM ZT"L



Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai Moallem zt"l

Chacham Shaul, my rebbi and teacher, was born in Baghdad in 5670 (1910). He threw himself into his learning and climbed so high that, while still young, he was already learning Kabbalah under Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l as one of a group of talmidim. Chacham Yehuda took him close and showed him great honor, and in time set aside hours to learn with him privately, on Shabbos Kodesh and on Motza'ei Shabbos Kodesh. Chacham

Shaul kept his Torah hidden even from the people nearest him, and supported himself as a tailor.

In 5694 (1934), when Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah was about to leave for Eretz Yisrael and settle there, he gave Chacham Shaul semichah as a rav. All over Iraq, Chacham Yehuda had been the one the sick and the suffering knew to turn to, and once he was gone they felt the loss. But "in a place where there is no man, strive to be a man," and Chacham Shaul stepped into his rebbi's place. People in pain and in sickness began coming to him from every corner of Iraq to ask for relief, and he met each of them warmly and helped. His tefillos and yichudim brought salvation to many: childless women had children, single men and women found their match, and the sick recovered.

He himself went up to Eretz Yisrael in 5710 (1950). He wandered a great deal at first and lived for a time in ma'abaros (the transit camps for new immigrants) of every kind, until at last he settled in Yerushalayim and went to learn in Oz VeHadar, the mekubalim's yeshivah beside Yeshivas Porat Yosef. More than once he and Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l worked together to drive a spirit out of a person (a dybbuk).

In 5720 (1960) he founded a yeshivah where Kabbalah was learned at set times, not all day. Its members included HaRav HaGaon Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l, Chacham Shmuel Darzi zt"l, Chacham Yaakov Kohen zt"l, Chacham Yosef Zaruk zt"l, Chacham Yehuda Moallem zt"l and, yibadel l'chaim, Chacham Naim Eliyahu shlita. They met on Wednesday mornings in Yeshivas Porat Yosef and on Motza'ei Shabbos Kodesh in the Shoshanim LeDavid shul.

In 5723 (1963) he opened another yeshivah, this one learning Kabbalah for half of every day, in the shul of the Gurjim (the Georgian Jews) in Yerushalayim. He named it Ben Ish Chai: Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l had come to him in a dream and asked that the yeshivah bear his name.

Guests at the Siyum

When his yeshivah completed the sefer *Etz Chaim*, he made a seudas siyum in honor of the Torah. I had the zechus of being there with my eldest son, and the two of us sat beside him on the bed. Partway through the seudah Chacham Shaul zt"l rose without warning and asked us to move in close to

the wall. He left the space next to him empty and gazed at it, trembling and in awe.

These were his words to us: "When we were zocheh to finish *Etz Chaim* with Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l, Chacham Yehuda stood up at the seudas siyum with his face aflame and said, 'The Rashbi and the Arizal have come to join the seudah.' A trembling came over all of us, and we could feel that something in the room had changed. **Now the Arizal and Chacham Yehuda have come to join this seudah, and here they sit." And he pointed to the empty place.**

For several moments he stayed on his feet, b'dechilu u'rechimu, never taking his eyes off the empty seat. Then a smile came over him. He turned toward the door and said, "Shalom aleichem, shalom aleichem." Calm again, he sat down and let us move back to where we had been.

Water from Miriam's Well

Every so often Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai would set out with a chosen few for the kevarim of the tzaddikim in the Galil. There he had in mind and carried out the Yichud HaElyon (the "Supreme Yichud") of the sefer *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh*, along with other yichudim.

Back from one of these journeys, he phoned and asked me to come to his house. "I have a special gift for you," he said when I came in. He brought out a bottle of water and gave me a single teaspoon of it, to make a berachah over b'dechilu u'rechimu and drink. The water, he told me, came from "Miriam's well," in the Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee), and he had been zocheh to draw it himself. The well lies in a whirlpool and the boat had nearly overturned, so he had come away with very little, and he guarded it as a treasure. It was only because he was so fond of me that he had given me that spoonful.

Ten Mekubalim and a Dybbuk

A woman possessed by a dybbuk, rachmana litzlan, was once brought to the mekubalim's yeshivah. Ten mekubalim, Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai, Chacham Yosef Zaruk, Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani, Chacham Sasson Levi and Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri among them, placed the dybbuk under a cherem: it was to leave by way of her little finger and do no one any harm. Chacham Shaul argued with the spirit, and when the argument was over they drove it out.

The Sister in England

I once went to be menachem avel a friend, a longtime chavrusa of mine, who was sitting shivah for his sister. She had died in England, still in the prime of her life.

A few nights earlier, he told me, she had come to him in a dream, black with soot from head to foot and covered in burns, weeping in her torment. In the morning he called her home to find out how she was, and heard that she had died the day before. Every night since, she had come back to him looking just the same. He was at his wits' end and did not know what to do.

My advice was to say the Tikkun HaNiftarim that Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah had established. He gathered a minyan and said it, yet the dream returned just as before. So I told him to ask Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai zt"l to say the tikkun for her himself, in his yeshivah with his talmidim, and that is what was done. The night after, his sister came to him smiling and happy, her skin clear and unmarked, and thanked him. He never dreamed of her again.

The Flight He Warned Against

In 5730 (1970) two talmidei chachamim came to Eretz Yisrael on a visit. Both had learned in Yeshivas Porat Yosef, and both now served as rabbanim of communities in America. Chacham Shaul zt"l went to see them. "You are planning to fly back to America on such-and-such a day," he told them, "on such-and-such an El Al flight. I beg you, change your flight. Do not go on that plane."

But the two were anxious to get back to their communities, and a different flight would only have kept them away longer. They paid no attention and took the flight they had booked. Terrorists were on board. They seized the plane and brought it down in Jordan, at that time an enemy country, and there the two were kept prisoner for several weeks before they were set free to go home.

Ten More Years

In 5719 (1959) the son of one of the rabbanim of the Chalabi community (the Jews from Aleppo) in Yerushalayim asked him to daven for his mother. She had a malignant illness, rachmana litzlan, and the doctors had given up on her. Chacham Shaul asked for her name and her mother's name.

There was no cause for worry, he then told the son: she had another ten years. And so it was. She passed away in 5729 (1969), just as he had said.

The Sheid of Kirkuk

His own writings record that on 27 Adar 5696 (1936) a woman came to him from Kirkuk (a city in northern Iraq). For fifteen years, she said, a sheid had clung to her, following her wherever she went. She could see it with her own eyes; it talked with her and she with it, and it lived with her as a husband with his wife. At times it would also seize her and rob her of her sanity. Several Yishmaelite exorcists of sheidim had tried and failed to rid her of it. Then she heard of him and came, hoping he would find her a cure.

He worked hard over her, with yichudim and with kavanos of the holy Names. He adjured the sheid with Names and yichudim, put it under cherem and shamta, cursed it, and wrote her a very powerful kamea. The sheid ignored all of it. It would draw back for a little while and then return; it never left her. At last Hashem gave him the wisdom to lay his hand on the woman's eyelids and say this tefillah:

"Yehi ratzon, Hashem our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that You act for the sake of Your holy Name, the Name Havayah, blessed be He, filled out with yuds to the gematria of seventy-two (Ayin-Beis), thus: יו"ד ה"י וי"ו ה"י; and for the sake of the seventy-two Names that come out of the three pesukim Vayisa, Vayavo, Vayet,[86] which I have in mind; that You cut off, destroy and nullify from this maidservant of Yours all sheidim, alulin, mazikin, parchin, tehirin, lilin and lilitin,[87] and every evil spirit of the Sitra d'Mesavusa (the side of impurity), be they of the klipos, Jews or gentiles, male or female, circumcised or uncircumcised, animals, beasts, birds or fish, kings, princes or princesses, servants, maidservants or soldiers, whether in this city or fled to another. May their body vanish from the world like foam on the water, may a flame burn among them, and may no place at all be found for them. And may the sparks of kedushah within them be sifted out

[86] Each of the three pesukim of Parshas Beshalach (Shemos 14:19-21) beginning ויסע, ויבא and ויט has seventy-two letters. Joined letter by letter, they give seventy-two Names of three letters each. —Trans.

[87] Kinds of harmful spirits, under the names the Zohar and the Kabbalah give them. —Trans.

and rise to their root, to their place on high. Please, by the power of Your holy Names that come out of the three pesukim Vayisa, Vayavo, Vayet, which is וה"ו," and so on.

Next he went through the Name of seventy-two drawn from Vayisa, Vayavo, Vayet, letter by letter, with the vowels the pesukim give it. Then he said that Name of seventy-two again, this time joining all three pesukim in their straight order, and after it the Name of forty-two (Mem-Beis). That done, he recited the three pesukim themselves as the parshah has them, all 216 letters, and said "Vayibaku hamayim" ("and the waters were split") three times. Then came "Peka sheida, peka sheida, peka sheida" ("Burst, sheid"), the Name of forty-two once more, and "Baruch shem kevod malchuso le'olam va'ed." The tefillah worked at once, and that sheid was no more.

Nasser and Kosygin

Among the writings Chacham Shaul left is this account: "On Tuesday, 19 Sivan 5727 (1967), after the Six Day War, we were in great and terrible distress. I took a liver to do a segulah with it, as it is written in a manuscript of Rabbi Chaim Vital zlh"h. I brought it home, meaning to combine Holy Names in it, but in a dream I was told and warned to make no combinations of Names at all. I woke at once and resolved to do it with no combination of Names whatever.

"On Monday, 25 Sivan, I did the liver, together with Chacham Rabbi Yitzchak Kaduri hy"v and Chacham Rabbi Yosef Zaruk hy"v. We pierced the liver, the heart and the lungs with a hundred iron needles and set it on a ptiliyah (a kerosene wick burner) for three days. Then we threw it into the garbage can. It had turned as black as coal.

"On the night of the 26th the accursed Abdel Nasser (Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt) came to me in a dream, like a torch of fire, shouting, 'Give me this man, who is mine, and I will leave you alone. Give him to me. This man has destroyed us and ruined us.' In the dream I was shouting to my son Yehuda, may he live, 'Yehuda, get up and save me.' Yehuda came, drove him from the house and pushed him outside, and I woke at once. It was one o'clock at night.

"On Thursday, when I had taken down the liver and dragged it away to bury it in the dung and garbage, Kosygin, the ruler of Russia (Alexei Kosy-

gin, the premier of the Soviet Union), came to me during my afternoon nap and said, 'Please, leave us alone. Do not deal with us any more.'"

From His Notebooks

One of his notebooks also has this, in his own hand: "On 24 Av 5694 (1934) I was told that my neshamah is from Olam HaBeriah (the World of Beriah). On Rosh Chodesh Elul I was zocheh to ruach; before that I had the zihara ila'ah (the supernal radiance) of the level of nefesh. I have something of the ruach of Adam HaRishon, for there are four yesodos (foundations), and I am one of them.

"Rabbi Chaim Vital told me, 'You are of my root. A great neshamah will come to you, and you will succeed with it.' On the night of 12 Tishrei 5717 (1956) he told me that I have a spark of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa. On the night of 13 Tishrei Chacham Efraim Kohen zy"a told me that he had gone from the world as an atonement for the generation, for one tzaddik is taken and atones for the generation; and he told me that I have a spark of Rabbi Nechunya ben HaKanah."

Chacham Shaul owned manuscripts of Kabbalah and of kabbalah maasis (practical Kabbalah) written in the hand of Rabbi Chaim Vital and of the good Rav Yosef Chaim of Bavel zy"a.

The gaon and tzaddik Chacham Yosef Zaruk zt"l said of him, "In kabbalah maasis and segulos there is hardly anyone who knows as much as he does."

Severe illness weighed on his last years. For all the pain and yissurim, he did not let go of his daily order: rising for chatzos, his immersions, his tikkunim and yichudim.

Among his writings is the sefer *Lechem Abirim*, a commentary on the *Sifra d'Tzniusa* (a section of the Zohar),[88] and he wrote others as well. He passed away, zy"a, in 5739 (1979).

THE TZADDIK CHACHAM DOVID BEN TZION LANIADO (MALKI SHUVAH) ZT"L

In *Ahavas Chaim*, on Parshas Bechukosai, my grandfather writes of Chacham Dovid Laniado zt"l, his friend and his partner in tikkunim and

[88] Yerushalayim 5745 (1985).

tefillos, who had the zechus of serving Rav Alfandari zt"l. Serve him he did, for as long as Rav Alfandari lived in Yerushalayim. It was no small thing that Rav Alfandari allowed it; he agreed because of Chacham Dovid's chassidus and kedushah. Every other chacham of the generation Rav Alfandari called by his bare name. Chacham Dovid alone he called "Chacham Dovid." Even when his end came, with all the gedolim of Yerushalayim gathered at his bedside, he asked for water and gave orders that only "Chacham Dovid" was to bring it to him.



Chacham Dovid Laniado zt"l and Saba in tefillah at the tziyun of Binyamin ben Yaakov Avinu, alav hashalom

Chacham Dovid Laniado zt"l was born in Aram Tzova (Aleppo) in Kislev 5660 (1899), and at eighteen, in 5679 (1919), he went up to Yerushalayim. His home was in the Machaneh Yehudah neighborhood, in the hekdesh courtyard of Mr. Aharon Silvera z"l, which held a shul and rooms where talmidei chachamim lived.

He grew in kedushah and chassidus, keeping far from the pleasures of this world. Like my grandfather, he was a devoted talmid of Chacham Yitzchak Alfiyah zt"l, and the two of them would go along with him to his shiurim and his tefillos. He also frequented the homes of great rabbanim and learned from them: Chacham Yosef Yedid HaLevi zt"l; Chacham Shaul Chaim Dweck HaKohen zt"l; Chacham Yosef Yitzchak Shlush zt"l, head of the chevra kadisha and a dayan of the Maaravim community (the Jews from North Africa); and Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l.

Early in 5689 (1928) he took his wife and their two children and moved to Chevron. Each day he went to the Me'aras HaMachpelah and davened there over the galus of the Shechinah and for the recovery of the sick of Yisrael.

The riots of 5689 (1929) broke out on Shabbos Kodesh, 18 Menachem Av, and found him near the Me'aras HaMachpelah. A gang of rioters was on the point of killing him when the "Mufti" happened by and told them to let him be: this was "the chacham of the Jews." Once they let him go he made for home, gathered up his wife and children, and hid with them in a cave outside the city. The rioters tracked them down there as well and set about sealing the cave. Just then British policemen came by. They rescued the family and took them to the police station in Chevron, and from there they were brought to Yerushalayim.

He was a man of immense chessed, and he gave tzedakah generously to any Jew at all, from whatever community. He was also among the great mezakei harabbim. He printed close to twenty sefarim, most of them mussar, along with derashos to stir a person's soul toward kedushah, and gave them away to anyone who asked, his one condition being that the reader learn from it.

One of them was *Lashon Chachamim*, Parts One and Two, by Rav Yosef Chaim zt"l, a sefer of tefillos and of tikkunim for aveiros, which he printed three times between 5707 and 5727 (1947-67). Others were *Be'or HaChaim* by Rabbi Chaim Kapusi zt"l, *Abir Yaakov* by Rabbi Yaakov Antebi zt"l, *Holech Tamim U'Fo'el Tzedek* by Rabbi Avraham Dayan zt"l, *Machalav HaAretz*, *Chochmah U'Mussar*, *Maayan Ganim*, *Ne'im Zemiros*, *Pnei Ohel Moed*, *Beis Simchah*, *Machaneh Yehudah*, *Mei Maayan*, *Yoshev Ohalim*, *Shivchei HaAri*, *Teruas Melech* and more. His own works, *Meilitz Tov* and *LaKedoshim Asher BaAretz*, came on top of all these.

He taught Torah in shuls across the neighborhoods of Yerushalayim, and in the Silvera shul by his home. For a time he was also rav of Kfar Shalem, near Tel Aviv, though he went on living in Yerushalayim.

So great was his anavah that he asked that no hespedim be said for him. He passed away, zy"a, on 9 Cheshvan 5730 (1969), and lies in the rabbanim's section on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim.

RAV ZEV CHESHIN ZT"L



HaRav Binyamin Zev Cheshin zt"l

Even in his earliest youth Rabbeinu was known for a sharp mind and a hasmadah out of the ordinary. He learned as a chavrusa with the gaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l.

Rav Shlomo Zalman told of the day the gaon Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, renowned for his genius and his sharpness, came to Yeshivas Etz Chaim to

give his shiur. The beis midrash was crowded wall to wall with the best lamdanim. Partway through, the bochur Binyamin Zev Cheshin interrupted him: "B'mechilas kevodchem, how do the Rav's words fit with such-and-such a Tosafos in such-and-such a masechta?"

The room went silent. The talmidei chachamim exchanged looks, wondering how the Rav would deal with the "chutzpah" of a Yerushalmi boy who had cut him off. The Rav said nothing. He simply began turning pages, from one place to another. A short while later he shut the Gemara. "This bochur has knocked down the building I built," he said, and brought his shiur to an end.

Where the Pin Went Through

He knew Shas and its commentaries daf by daf, and his bekiyus was astonishing. He was one of those gedolim people would test with a pin: they pushed it through the pages of a masechta and asked what was written on such-and-such a daf at the spot where it had pierced. Without a pause he would tell them which daf it was and whether the hole fell in the Gemara, in Rashi or in Tosafos, and then recite the whole line and go on from there without a stumble. Now and then, at the right moment, he let his talmidim test him this way, to give them a cheishek for learning and spur them to give their time to it.

The Beggar in the Shul

A few beggars once came into a shul collecting tzedakah. Rav Zev went straight up to one of them and showed him the door. Asked why, he said, "This beggar is a goy, and his being in the shul harms the tefillah."

"Do you know him, then?" they asked.

"No," he said. "But on every Jew's forehead I see the Name Havayah written. On his I did not see it, so I understood that he is a goy."

The Dogs in the Old City

Rav Zev zt"l once told a story about his grandfather, Rav Yeshayah zt"l. As a little boy of six, Rav Yeshayah was out at daybreak in the streets of the Old City of Yerushalayim when a pack of big dogs came up in front of him, and he was badly frightened. Luckily one of the mekubalim came along. There was nothing to be afraid of, he told the boy; let him just hold on to his belt, and no harm of any kind would come to him. As the two of them

drew near, the dogs stood still in a line, like talmidim before their rebbi, until the tzaddik had gone by.

Young Yeshayah asked the mekubal why the dogs had all stood still for him.

"Shemiras habris," the mekubal answered. "Everything hangs on that. A man who guards his bris cannot be harmed by any creature in the world."

The Old Man in the Dream

There was a Jew in France who was far from keeping the mitzvos. For several nights in a row he dreamed that an old man was rebuking him and telling him to come back in teshuvah sheleimah. Troubled, he phoned his uncle in Eretz Yisrael and told him about the dream. The uncle's advice was that he come to Eretz Yisrael, and the two of them would go together to the Kosel HaMaaravi and ask for guidance there. When they reached the Kosel they found Rav Zev sitting and saying Tehillim. The Frenchman stood stunned. "That is the old man from my dream," he told his uncle. "He is here, waiting for me."

Fridays at the Kosel

The gedolim of Yerushalayim in past generations, Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike, handed down a well-known tradition: every Friday after chatzos the Avos come to daven at the Kosel HaMaaravi, and some people were zocheh to see them. That is why Rav Zev made a point of being at the Kosel at that hour every week. Even when he was in the hospital for treatment, he would slip out of bed and, with mesiras nefesh, make his way to the Kosel at that time.

The talmid who usually drove him there once told him they would need to call a taxi that day. A complicated fault had drained the oil from his car's pump, and the garage had looked at it and said there was no way to fix it before the following week.

"We will go to the Kosel in your car, as usual," Rav Zev answered. The driver explained that it could not be done, but Rav Zev would not budge: "Come with your car, and we will go." A faithful talmid, he did as he was told. He started the car, they drove to the Kosel together, and they came home again, just like every other week.

Early the next week he brought the car back to the garage to be fixed. "Are you here to make fun of me?" said the owner. "You have already had it repaired. The pump is in working order and full of oil."

Tikkun Chatzos and His Shiurim

Every night he made a point of getting up at chatzos to say Tikkun Chatzos over the galus of the Shechinah, and then he sat down to his set learning. Even on nights when he had been out giving shiurim around the country and got home only half an hour or so before chatzos, he would rest briefly and then get up at chatzos for the avodas hakodesh.

Rav Zev Cheshin zt"l was among the great mezakei harabbim of our generation. He traveled all over the country, wearing out his feet to reach the people, above all in the moshavim (the farming villages) where immigrants from the Edos HaMizrach had been settled, and stirred them to a life of taharah and kedushah. All this came on top of the regular shiurim in Torah he gave for many years in Chevras Ahavas Chaim and in the Beis Aharon shul in Beis Yisrael. His sweet words brought many close to a life of Torah and mitzvos. He spoke out often about pegam habris, rachmana litzlan, and about shemiras einayim, and he turned many back from aveirah. Like my father, he was an expert at finding a person's blemishes through "the wisdom of the hand and the face" (chochmas hayad, reading the lines of the hand and the features of the face), and he used it to rouse people to set right their deeds and their way of life.

Rav Zev was a master of this wisdom of the hand and the face. I still have a booklet on it that he learned together with my father z"l. With it Rav Zev brought many back in teshuvah, and with it my father healed many. My father could also read the Shabbos candles, the fire and the flame,[89] and he already had that wisdom when I was a young child, so it seems reasonable that this Torah, too, he learned with Rav Zev.

Waiting for Mashiach

Once, while we were traveling together, I put a question to him. "Every year the Rav says that Mashiach will come this year, and brings proofs from pesukim and from the midrashim of Chazal. Then the year goes by without

[89] See the Zohar, Bereishis 50b.

Mashiach, and the Rav looks for pesukim and hints that he will come the following year. Shouldn't the secret of when the geulah will come be left to Hashem, rather than joining those who calculate the keitz?"

He explained that he searched the Torah each year for proofs of Mashiach's coming for this reason: should Hashem wish to redeem us and the middas hadin raise an accusation, the weight of these pesukim and their secrets would be there to tip the scale toward the geulah and silence the accuser. "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious."

Rav Zev fought the milchamos of Hashem lovingly, for the sake of His Name. In one of those hard battles, against a talmid of that rasha Moshe (mentioned above, in the account of Chacham Mordechai Sharabi), he gave me the zechus of fighting at his side. There I saw his greatness and his chassidus, and how he guarded his eyes from looking at the face of a rasha. Ruach hakodesh truly spoke from his throat. But this is not the place to go on about it.

His longing for Mashiach was such that a few days before he passed away he asked to see the babies who had been born into his family. He looked at their faces and smiled. "I was not zocheh to see Mashiach," he said, "but at least I see the faces of these babies, who will surely be zocheh to see the face of Mashiach. Fortunate are they, and fortunate their portion."

With My Grandfather and My Father

After my grandfather passed away, my father persuaded Rav Zev to take up his regular evening shiurim in Chevras Ahavas Chaim again, for the zikui harabbim, and he kept them up for a long time.

I wrote earlier that some two months before my father's passing he told me of a dream he had on Leil Shabbos. My grandfather, Chacham Menachem, came to him with Rav Zev Cheshin, both their faces shining with a precious light, and said to him, "Avraham, get ready. We have come to tell you that we are preparing a place for you beside us."

Rav Zev zt"l passed away, zy"a, on 17 Cheshvan 5748 (1987). He is buried on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim.

THE GAON CHACHAM SHALOM AHARON LOPES ZT"L

Chacham Shalom was born on 17 Kislev 5665 (1904), the son of the gaon and chassid Chacham Yaakov Lopes zt"l. His father was a talmid chacham of enormous stature who davened by the Siddur HaRashash, and it was he who taught Kabbalah to the holy mekubal Chacham Mordechai Sharabi zt"l. Teacher and talmid also practiced sigufim together, and gilgulei sheleg (rolling in the snow as a tikkun for aveiros).

Chacham Yaakov's sons were all "gidulei terumas hakodesh," holy growth from holy seed. The eldest, Chacham Nissim, built up Torah in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, among the Chalabi community that had emigrated there, and later served as Sephardi rav of the holy city of Chevron. Chacham Eliyahu was one of the rabbanim of the holy Yeshivas Porat Yosef in the Old City, and gave shiurim there from the day it was founded until he passed away. His brother Rav Avraham, too, taught at Porat Yosef in later years, likewise until his passing. Chacham Shalom took the path of his father and brothers. He gained merit and brought merit to the many, and from childhood to his last day he spread Torah among talmidim.

Chacham Yaakov passed away on the night of 17 Kislev 5697 (1936). When his sons and the chevra kadisha came to do the taharah and lower him into the mikveh, a sudden silence fell over them all and their hands began to shake: they could feel the niftar going down into the mikveh on his own, helping with his own tevilah.



Chacham Shalom Aharon Lopes zt"l

Some months after his passing, on a Thursday night, Chacham Yaakov appeared in a dream to his son Chacham Eliyahu. "Go to Ima," he told him. "She is in distress. She does not have so much as a 'shilling' (a coin of five grush) for her Shabbos expenses." Early the next morning Chacham Eliyahu went to his mother's house and found it was just as the dream had said.

As a young man Chacham Shalom learned in Yeshivas Ohel Moed, headed by the mighty gaon Chacham Shlomo Laniado zt"l. When Yeshivas Porat Yosef opened in 5683 (1923) with Chacham Shlomo appointed at its head, he followed his rebbi there to learn; he was eighteen. For years he kept a fixed schedule, learning from chatzos at night until tzeis hakochavim the following day, and stopping only for a few minutes to eat bread with cheese or bread with za'atar.

By twenty-six he knew all of Shas and the four parts of the Shulchan Aruch thoroughly. The greatest rabbanim and dayanim of Yerushalayim gave him semichah for hora'ah and dayanus, "Yoreh Yoreh, Yadin Yadin," first among them Chacham Avraham Filosof zt"l and the av beis din, Chacham Ben Tzion Avraham Cuenca zt"l.

Mekabtze'el

In 5695 (1935) he and his friend and colleague Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l founded Mekabtze'el, a society for Sephardi youth. Through evening shiurim it gathered boys in and drew them close to Torah and mitzvos. Most people in the city lived in grinding poverty, and these boys had been forced out to work to help keep their families. Without Mekabtze'el they would have been lost, sliding down into the secular street that beckoned them.

Other boys had no need to work but were not learning anywhere at all. The new neighborhoods had no yeshivos, and for one reason or another their parents would not send them to the Old City. For these boys Mekabtze'el opened a full-day yeshivah in the Tzufiof shul in the Bukharim neighborhood. It saved many of them. Some grew into talmidei chachamim and morei hora'ah; others became baalei batim who were bnei Torah and yerei Shamayim.

The rabbanim who gave the shiurim, Chacham Shalom first among them, did it l'shem Shamayim and took no pay at all. And so their own homes were very poor; dry bread soaked in water, with salt, was their usual fare.

The society kept up its work for fifteen years. It sent large groups of talmidim on to Yeshivas Porat Yosef, where they grew into gedolei Torah and marbitzei Torah, and it did great and wonderful things among the people and the youth.

Mekabtze'el also set out to spread Torah and strengthen the people through derashos in Yerushalayim's many shuls. It urged young talmidei chachamim to go out among the people and encourage them to fix times for Torah, to send their sons to talmudei Torah, and so on. Chacham Shalom gave derashos and shiurim in the shuls every Shabbos. People loved his speaking, full of fire and from the depths of his heart, with stories and mid-

rashim woven through it, and they came streaming from far away to hear him.

In 5705 (1945) the Ashkenazi chachamim and gedolim of Yerushalayim founded the Vaad HaChinuch HaChareidi (the Chareidi Education Committee), to strengthen the talmudei Torah that already existed and to found new ones. Its purpose was to save from ruin the children of the innocent immigrants who, every year since the end of the First World War, had been coming up in great numbers from the lands of the East. Unable to tell holy from profane or light from darkness, these immigrants were sending their sons to the secular schools. Chacham Ben Tzion Chazan zt"l, Chacham Shalom and Chacham Yehuda Tzadka sat on the Vaad for the Sephardim.

In Beis Yisrael

In 5698 (1938) he moved to Beis Yisrael, where he would shut himself away in the neighborhood's shuls and learn day and night. The women of the neighborhood saw his kedushah and his hasmadah, and they brought him food and drink so that he could go on learning without a break.

All his life he made a point of davening at netz hachamah. Afterward he gave a regular shiur for baalei batim, and many stayed to hear him before they left for the day's work. He kept toiling in Torah though his house had nothing in it. He could hardly scrape together the money for stale bread, which sold at half the price of fresh, and that was all his household had to eat.

Even then he was known for tzedakah and chessed. He took in guests and gave them the only piece of bread he had. People who knew his honesty and trusted him put large sums in his hands, and he gave every bit of it to tzedakah, keeping nothing for himself.

He was a familiar figure in the house of the Rebbe, Rav Aharon Roth zt"l, author of *Shomrei Emunim* and *Taharas HaKodesh*, and in the house of Rav Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky zt"l, nasi of the Eidah HaChareidis. Every Friday night he davened in Rav Dushinsky's beis midrash so as to hear his derashos. His heart burned with zeal for everything holy, and those derashos gave him seven times the strength to stand guard over kedushah without fear.

He was a true friend of HaRav HaGaon Rav Amram Blau zt"l, the chassid who was zealous for Hashem, and he often joined the demonstra-

tions Rav Amram led, day after day, in the streets of Meah Shearim, to protect tznius and strengthen shemiras Shabbos.

Beis Yisrael was a center for the fighters of the Etzel underground (the Irgun, an armed Jewish underground of the last years of the British Mandate) in their war on the British. They used the neighborhood to hide themselves and their weapons, and boys with little sense who were drawn to them fell away from a life of Torah and mitzvos. The rabbanim of the Eidah HaChareidis gave Chacham Shalom the names of boys in danger of slipping, and he threw himself into strengthening them and bringing them back to Torah and mitzvos.

Chacham Shalom lived in Beis Yisrael, as Saba did, and his work was the very same as Saba's: saving the youth, and giving huge sums in secret to the needy, while keeping not so much as the gleanings for themselves, so that both men lived in extreme poverty. They had friends in common too, Rav Amram Blau and the rabbanim of Porat Yosef among them. I have not the shadow of a doubt that the two were friends and worked together, though I never heard of it from Saba; it was his way to hide what he did and never speak of it at all.

Musrara and the Immigrant Camps

Right after the war of 5708 (1948) he moved to Musrara and opened a talmud torah there. He filled it with hundreds of talmidim, whom his influence moved out of the slaughterhouse of souls that was the "state education" of minim and apikorsim, and into the state education of the King of kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu.[90]

In the great aliyah of Edos HaMizrach, the immigrants were housed in closed pens of tents and tin huts, so as to keep them apart from the country's religious community. There they were "educated" to break with the glorious tradition they had kept in the lands they came from, and slaughterhouses of souls called "state schools" were opened for their children. Chacham Shalom was the first of a number of men of his age who slipped into these camps in the early morning hours, knowing that if they were

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[90] "State education" is *chinuch mamlachti*. *Mamlachti*, "of the state," comes from *mamlachah*, "kingdom," which is why he calls Torah education the state education of the King of kings. — Trans.

caught they faced suffering and arrest. They urged the immigrants to keep the Torah and its mitzvos and to organize Torah shiurim; to fight for the pure souls of their children and demand a religious education for them, even if it meant going hungry. Hashem's will prospered in their hands. Many young people stayed faithful to Hashem and His Torah in his merit, and some of them became talmidei chachamim as well.

Chosen for Akko by Mistake

In the summer of 5710 (1950) Chacham Shalom was offered the post of chief rabbi of Akko (a city on the coast of northern Eretz Yisrael) under the Zionist Rabbinate. He was opposed to being a "rav mi'taam," a rav who serves on behalf of the authorities. But his teacher and rebbi, Chacham Ezra Attiah zt"l, rosh yeshivah of Porat Yosef, urged him to accept the appointment as a shelichus for Klal Yisrael. He wrestled hard with the question and lifted his heart to Hashem, asking to be shown the way. That night his holy father, Chacham Yaakov Lopes, came to him and said, "Akko (עכו) is the roshei teivos of 'Amod kegever vehisgaber' (עמוד כגבר והתגבר), 'Stand like a man and be strong.'"[91] After so clear a message, Chacham Shalom agreed to take the post.

Other "rabbis" had put themselves forward for the post as well, so the "appointments committee" summoned all the candidates to hear them out, take the measure of each man, and decide which of them to choose. Chacham Shalom told them plainly that the city must be led by the way of Torah and kedushah alone, and that was a thorn in the committee's side. He finished by saying, "People think they are the ones who settle and decide who will be rav. It is not so. It is decided in Shamayim, and people make their decisions only as puppets worked by others."

And so it was. He had stood firm and shown the committee members no favor, yet they acted as if under compulsion: the will of Shamayim was done, and Chacham Shalom was chosen. For some reason the committee had imagined that he was one of the Mizrachi people (the religious Zionists), and that whatever he said, he could be bought with honor and money to "toe the line." When Chacham Shalom heard this, he said, "I was chosen rav of Akko by mistake."

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[91] The words appear in the *Selichos* machzor of Edos HaMizrach.

Let it be stressed: had such mistakes been made in other towns too, Mashiach would no doubt be with us already.

The First Minchah in Akko

Chacham Shalom arrived in Akko on 20 Av 5710 (1950), on a public bus, with his few belongings in the luggage compartment. He moved into the "magnificent official residence" the "State of Israel" granted the rav of a large city serving on its behalf: a room-and-a-half Sochnut apartment (housing of the Jewish Agency, which settled the new immigrants), with no bath or shower and no floor tiles, only a slab of concrete instead. Only the tiny kitchen had water. The apartment stayed that way until his last day.

Once his things were put down, he went to find a shul for Minchah, and was astonished to discover that there was none anywhere in that large neighborhood. Even the "shuk," though it was full of sellers who were yerei Shamayim, had no shul. So Chacham Shalom gathered a minyan in a vegetable store whose owner agreed to lend it for davening. For every man there, it was the first Minchah b'tzibbur he had davened since coming to Akko.

Akko was a spiritual desert, without the faintest scent of Yiddishkeit. Most of its people were new immigrants who had arrived a year or two earlier. Back in the lands they came from, almost all of them had kept Torah and mitzvos in full, three tefillos a day with a minyan included. Here they were sent to hard physical labor that left them neither the time nor the means to arrange tefillah b'tzibbur or Torah shiurim. Jewish education and the kashrus of what they ate were the last things on their minds: they did not grasp what kind of education their children were about to receive, and they assumed that everything in Eretz Yisrael was kosher. The authorities wanted them to forget everything holy; they put up public buildings, but a shul or a mikveh was not so much as mentioned. Most of the immigrants davened alone. Some davened only Shacharis, in a makeshift minyan with no sefer Torah, and in winter before the zman of tefillah had even come. The city had a few shuls serving its longtime residents, but the immigrants could hardly get to them.

Chacham Shalom immediately set up a regular minyan for Shacharis at netz hachamah. For Minchah he went to the shuk every day, gathered a minyan, and davened with them in one of the stores. Meanwhile he saw to

the building of a central shul near the housing blocks of his neighborhood, raising the money himself and standing over the workers to make them go as fast as they could. The shul went up quickly and became a lighthouse for all the immigrants in every religious matter. The Rav made it his main place of learning through every hour of the day, and there he opened a center for all the spiritual affairs of the city, a beis din for arbitration among them.

The whole city had one mikveh, in an old building. Chacham Shalom saw to it that more mikva'os were opened, and their funding, too, he saw to himself.

The Children of Akko

The education of the young, who were being raised in the slaughterhouses of secular schooling, gave him no rest. The moment he arrived he set up a talmud torah for boys and a Beis Yaakov for girls in houses he rented for the purpose, and he wore out his feet going from door to door, persuading parents to send their children to the talmud torah instead of to secular education. Within a short time hundreds of boys and girls had moved from the slaughterhouses to places of kedushah. The parents had been warned that anyone who took his children out of the secular school would lose his job. Chacham Shalom persuaded them all the same to put themselves and their livelihood on the line for a holy education for their children.

People sprang up, furious at his work of registering the children, and threw stones at him; no need to guess where they came from. Chacham Shalom carried on without fear and paid them no attention. One talmud torah did not satisfy him. He opened several talmudei Torah and kindergartens across the city, and two Beis Yaakov schools for girls, and for parents who could not afford it he paid the tuition and the cost of books and notebooks.

He never tired of leading his community forward toward Torah education, and he saw to it that a yeshivah opened in the city. It opened in 5713 (1953). Besides its own talmidim, boys from the secular schools came there in the afternoons to learn Torah.

He used every opportunity to influence parents to move their children to Torah education. Many came to ask for his berachos, known by then for bringing yeshuos, and he would not grant what they asked until they promised to move their children over to kedushah.

When children were slow to understand what they learned, Chacham Shalom sat with them for days on end, going over the learning until they found their way in it. He wrote regularly to the graduates of the talmudei Torah who had gone on, through his influence, to yeshivos in the center of the country, encouraging them to keep at it and toil in Torah. When they came home on vacation, they went to Chacham Shalom to bless him and ask how he was before they even set foot in their own homes.

Even in old age he could not rest easy, for every Jewish soul still held captive in the education of the Molech. Under a beating sun, sweat dripping off him, he climbed stairs floor by floor to persuade parents to send their children to Torah education. Once he managed to move three hundred and thirty girls from one school to Beis Yaakov, and the school had to close for lack of pupils.

He worked just as hard to take children out of the education of "Mizrachi" as he did to move them out of the secular schools. He saw in it an erev rav more dangerous than the "state slaughterhouses," and said its harm was double and redoubled, since parents and pupils alike would believe it a true Torah education, when in truth its lukewarm, deficient learning was estranging them from the Torah. He kept many from going to the hesder yeshivos (yeshivos that combine learning with service in the army) and strengthened them to go only to holy yeshivos. "'Hesder' is no yeshivah," he would say. "There they make a hesder, an arrangement, with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The Torah must be learned with nothing added and without compromises."

His Salary

Chacham Shalom knew that "a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise," and he feared that the government salary might turn his neshamah aside from the truth. From his first days in Akko he resolved not to benefit from his salary as chief rabbi. He gave all of it to tzedakah, in checks drawn directly on the account it was paid into, so that the money never so much as touched his hand. For the sake of this pure principle he and his wife agreed to live in hard conditions and deep poverty.

To keep in mind Yerushalayim shel matah, and the guides by whose light he walked, he used to sing the song sung by his friends among the zealous for Hashem, Rav Amram Blau and the rabbanim of the Eidah Ha-

Chareidis. It goes: "Hashem is our King, and we are His servants. The Torah is our life, and by it we reckon. In the rule of heretics we do not believe, and with their laws we have no dealings. In the way of the Torah we will go, through fire and through water; in the way of the Torah we will go, to sanctify the Name of Shamayim."

The Kashrus of Akko

Early in his term he told the local shochtim that they were to sell the butcher shops only the front half of the animal, as is the custom in Yerushalayim, so as to avoid the problems of nikkur of the cheilev (removing the forbidden fats); otherwise the local rabbinate would take away their hechsher. They had no choice and did as he said. He took the rest of the city's kashrus under his care too, appointing mashgichim who were yerei Shamayim: men who did their work faithfully, were not scared off by threats, and despised bribes.

Many people whose hechsher he had taken away or refused threatened him. He stood up to them like a cedar of Lebanon and saw to it that his kashrus was true, without kulos or compromises, and Hashem stood by him. When the owners of a hall sued him for the damage the loss of their hechsher had cost them, he was unshaken. "Our Master is the Master of the world," he said. And so it was: on the eve of the trial the plaintiff had to go abroad, and when he failed to appear in court the case was dismissed.

One of the sellers once raised his hand to strike him for his strictness over the nikkur of the meat, and before everyone's eyes the hand withered. Even when the man begged forgiveness it did not recover its strength, until Chacham Shalom davened for him; then it worked again.

He stood guard over tznius in the city as well. Any woman going about immodestly dressed who caught sight of Chacham Shalom in the distance fled for her life, knowing he would raise a great outcry and set the world against her. He never performed chuppah and kiddushin anywhere the tznius did not satisfy him.

The Religious Council

All this was a thorn in the side of the city council, its members and its heads, and of the "compromising religious people," who tried to put the brakes on his work. They invited him to run the city's religious affairs from the spacious office of the "Religious Council" (the local body that ran reli-

gious services for the state), with a staff of clerks, men and women, to come to his "help," rather than from the shul where he had made his cramped quarters. Chacham Shalom saw through the scheme and declined.

Then they raised an outcry and asked for a "commission of inquiry" into the Rav's conduct. But the people loved the Rav. They saw him as a man of truth who loved his fellow men and drew them to Torah l'shem Shamayim, and they protested. When the plotters realized they were bringing the anger of the crowds on themselves, they let it drop. Through their connections in the right offices, though, they managed to hold back Chacham Shalom's salary for several months, hoping it would push him to resign or compromise. Chacham Shalom laughed at them. "I hate unjust gain," he said, "and I will stay in my post and do the will of my Maker."

His Berachos

His berachos always came true. Ruach hakodesh rested on him at all times and showed itself in what he said and did. Not one person who received his berachah for a refuah sheleimah failed to be healed at once, even from grave illness. Often messengers brought him the names of the sick for a berachah without knowing the sick person's mother's name, and Chacham Shalom, to everyone's surprise, supplied the correct name through ruach hakodesh; when they checked, they found it as he had said.

Chacham Shalom insisted that the whole congregation daven from a siddur, word by word. Once, before Maariv, the power failed and darkness fell. Chacham Shalom at once commanded, "Lamps, light up!" At once "there was light": every lamp came on, and the davening began.

The Tzedakah Envelopes

All his life he lived sparingly and gave his money to tzedakos: to support Torah institutions, for hachnasas kallah, and to help the poor in general and bnei Torah above all. When his talmidim wanted to lay a tiled floor in his house, he stopped them and urged them to give the money to tzedakah instead. For most of their lives Chacham Shalom and his household had no electric refrigerator and no washing machine. He came to his daughter's wedding in the old suit he wore every Shabbos, and to his granddaughter's wedding in the same suit.

Every day letters piled up on his table asking for help: for hachnasas kallah, for families in distress, for the support of bnei Torah and talmudei To-

rah, and so on. He answered all of them with an open, generous hand, sending the money of his salary, and also the tzedakah and maaser money he received from people who knew him and relied on his honesty. All of it went to the needy, and he kept none of it. He lived on nothing but a few perutos from what people gave him personally for his own needs, and most of that, too, flowed out in the tzedakah envelopes he sent.

One of the avreichim among his talmidim used to come and help him distribute the money, putting the checks in envelopes and readying them for the mail. Once the avreich told him that the money was all gone, in the account and in cash, and there were still requests for tzedakah of about three thousand shekels. Chacham Shalom ran straight to the Aron HaKodesh and pleaded for mercy on the tzedakah fund, then went back to his learning. About half an hour later a man came, took three thousand shekels in cash out of his pocket and handed them to Chacham Shalom for tzedakah. "Half an hour ago," he said, "I had the thought of donating this sum, and I came right away to give it, so as not to keep tzedakah money in my hands."

Another time Chacham Shalom needed ten thousand shekels of tzedakah for seven chassanim, bnei Torah, who had turned to him for help. He raised his eyes on high and asked for the help of Shamayim. A few moments later a man walked into the shul, handed him a thick envelope for tzedakah and hurried out again. Needless to say, it held exactly ten thousand shekels.

Those Who Scorned Him

Once Chacham Shalom came into a shul and spoke to the people in praise of davening vasikin. A man in the crowd stood up and shamed the Rav with cutting, painful words. Chacham Shalom answered, "Whoever speaks for the honor of Shamayim, Shamayim will exact satisfaction for his insult." That very moment the man fell down dead before the stunned congregation.

One Shabbos Chacham Shalom saw a Jew sawing wood. He turned to him gently: "Today is Shabbos." "So what?" the man answered, and went on working. That same week his hand was cut off in an accident. He kept up his rebellion, and before long he died. Everyone put it down to his

chutzpah toward Chacham Shalom when the Rav rebuked him for chillul Shabbos.

A Message in a Dream

One Shabbos after Shacharis, Chacham Shalom asked the congregation to daven for the recovery of Chacham Masoud, rav of Misgav Am, a man known as a tzaddik and accustomed to miracles. The people were amazed; only the day before they had seen him well and whole. Chacham Shalom told them, "Last night Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai came to me in a dream and told me that Chacham Masoud is ill and we must daven for him." When they inquired, they found that Chacham Masoud had indeed fallen seriously ill on Friday night and needed the tefillah of the tzibbur.

Chazal said, "Hillel obligates the poor, Rabbi Elazar ben Charsom obligates the rich, Yosef obligates the wicked" (Maseches Yoma 35).[92] **And now we must add: Chacham Shalom Lopes obligates the rabbanim of the towns who serve "on behalf of the government in Eretz Yisrael."**

He passed away at a good old age on 26 Cheshvan 5755 (1994), and he is buried with honor on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim.

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[92] In the judgment of Shamayim, each of them leaves those like him without excuse. The poor man cannot plead poverty, for Hillel learned Torah in poverty; the rich man cannot plead his business, for Rabbi Elazar ben Charsom learned Torah amid great wealth; and the wicked man cannot plead his yetzer, for Yosef withstood his. —Trans.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Lamed-Vav Tzaddikim and the Hidden Tzaddikim

CHAZAL TEACH (MASECHES SUKKAH, daf 45) that every generation has thousands of tzaddikim who merit, now and then, to greet the Shechinah while still in this world, and thirty-six who merit it every day. (The *Tikkunei Zohar* counts thirty-six in Eretz Yisrael and another thirty-six in chutz la'aretz.) Even these stand on different levels, and the Gemara there gives the highest of them the name "bnei aliyah."

Some of the lamed-vav are known, some are hidden, and some stay hidden for a time and are revealed later, as the holy Baal Shem Tov was. Everything depends on what the hour and the generation need. (People have somehow come to believe that the lamed-vav are all hidden. That is simply not so.)

Nor does every hidden tzaddik belong to the lamed-vav, even one with ruach hakodesh who sees from afar. The hidden tzaddikim I write about in this book were not necessarily of the lamed-vav. I have not sat in Shamayim, and I will never know which of them were, except where great and good men have testified to it.

A tzaddik of the lamed-vav is humble and modest, and nothing ever offends him. He has mastered every part of the Torah and labors in it with all his strength. He guards his eyes and his bris and has never sinned with them. His thoughts cleave to Hakadosh Baruch Hu without the smallest break, and he is clean of sin, bein adam laMakom and bein adam lachaveiro alike, down to anything that is only slightly in doubt.

An ordinary tzaddik is another matter. Even a hidden one may be a baal teshuvah who lacks some of these qualities, "for as the man is, so is his

strength." He too can be granted ruach hakodesh and see through it what was, what is and what will be, each in the measure he has refined himself. (L'havdil from those bound to the kelipah (the forces of impurity), rachmana litzlan, who see past, present and future by way of sheidim and the other forces of tumah; what they see cannot be relied on.) His tefillah is answered; he can annul gezeiros and bring shefa down on those he blesses. His power is stronger while he stays hidden, though if he reveals himself for the needs of the public, it takes less away from it.

Here I should mention that someone testified to having heard the holy and wondrous mekubal Chacham Mordechai Sharabi zt"l say that my grandfather was one of these lamed-vav tzaddikim. It is also told that on 12 Elul, a year after Saba's passing, Chacham Mordechai made a seudah in my grandfather's honor and told his talmidim, "Today is the yahrzeit of the hidden tzaddik of the lamed-vav tzaddikim, Chacham Menachem Menashe zt"l, and this seudah is in his honor."

I had the merit of knowing several wondrous hidden tzaddikim, friends of Saba's. They came to his house on one occasion or another, or else my grandfather went and knocked at their doors.

I saw the circle of hidden tzaddikim who gathered around him. In the summer they would meet, together with others, for tikkunim that included fasts and gilgulei sheleg (rolling in snow): they lined the floor of the mikveh in Beis Yisrael with blocks of ice and rolled on them, to repair and atone for what they had done in earlier gilgulim. After a rolling in the snow, Saba had to drink nothing but hot water for a week before his hoarse voice came back. I saw them through every fast and every self-affliction, and I saw greater things than these.

Most of these men passed for very "simple" people; a few were known as talmidei chachamim of middling rank. In secret, every one of them lived like a malach, each in his own way, and their greatness in Torah, like the chessed they did quietly, reached very high.

They gave this world and its needs hardly a thought. Their homes held old secondhand furniture, and no more of it than was necessary. They fasted on most weekdays, and on the days they ate, they ate sparingly, only what the body needs to live. Their thoughts were pure and clung to Hashem Yisbarach even in their sleep. Their ruach hakodesh was wondrous, and with a word from their lips they changed people's lives and their fate.

Their work was Torah, yichudim and the zivugim of the upper middos (the unions of the supernal attributes, in the language of the Kabbalah), and tikkunim for the soul and for the generation. They did not "play" at false humility. When a matter required them to reveal a crack of their greatness, they revealed it, but they tried to credit the wonder, the yeshuah or the ruach hakodesh to something else, anything but themselves.

(Chacham Patilon, for example, would seem to read a person's palm and tell him wondrous things. He never practiced that wisdom; it was a cover for the ruach hakodesh by which he saw. Chacham Yosef Dayan would avoid giving a sufferer a berachah or davening for him. He told him to daven himself, or to do this or that, and Hashem would help; and once the man had gone, he would daven and plead for him until help came. Some would ask the sufferer to give tzedakah to the poor (not through them), and he would be helped; when he had left, they prayed for his salvation. And so on.)

Not one of them would take benefit from other people's money or from donations that passed through their hands. They toiled for a piece of bread for their families, or lived on the meager stipend of the yeshivah where they learned. A few, who were busy day and night with "yichudim" and "tikkunim," took a little from other hidden tzaddikim who knew them and saw to their livelihood. My grandfather, too, went to the trouble of raising money to support the hidden tzaddikim he knew. Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l said that my grandfather knew every one of the special lamed-vav tzaddikim and was connected with them.

As an example, I will tell here about one of the lamed-vav (for he was certainly one of them) whom I came to know some eight years after Saba's passing. I never once saw the two of them together, though they lived near each other. But I have no doubt they were connected in their lifetimes, and that Saba sent him to me from Shamayim to help me when I was in trouble.

THE TZADDIK REB RACHAMIM PACHAH

The Shoshanim LeDavid shul stood at the edge of the Bukharim neighborhood, on the side bordering Beis Yisrael. Its shamash was a simple man, "a complete am ha'aretz," by the name of **Rachamim Pachah**. He davened with the siddur held up close to his eyes, struggling over the letters and

reading very slowly. This "shamash" was a gentle soul who never made conversation. Asked a question, he answered softly and in few words, and when one of the learners got in the way of his work, he never said a word to him.

On Thursday nights dozens of yeshivah bochurim learned in that shul until chatzos. (The wondrous tzaddik Chacham Moshe Chai Sharabani zt"l, the most precious of men, paid them for coming, and the money helped many bochurim with their Shabbos expenses.) After chatzos more than two minyanim of them stayed and learned on until morning.

(Among them, to the left of the aron kodesh, sat Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l. He came to the shul's ezras nashim while it was still evening and learned the holy sefer *Etz Chaim*. At chatzos he said Tikkun Chatzos on the floor beside the aron kodesh, then sat saying Tehillim, calm and full of simchah, until dawn. He then davened for the sick people he had been asked to daven for and went home, to the next building, to rest for a short while, about an hour. After that he davened Shacharis and sat in the Musayof shul receiving people, as he did every morning.)

All night long the bochurim pulled out dozens of sefarim to look things up, until the tables were stacked high. And the "shamash," with endless patience, gathered every sefer and put it back where it belonged, into the small hours. He never once spoke to a learner about the stacks he left, or the tea he had spilled carelessly on the floor, or anything of the sort. He simply took the trouble and cleaned up, quietly and calmly.

The Av Beis Din in My Dream

In 5736 (1976) I was caught up in a hard lawsuit, and my position was very bad. It was a Thursday, the hearing that would decide it was set for that Sunday, and I did not know where to turn. In my distress I stood before Hashem in tefillah and begged Him to help me out of my straits.

Toward morning I had a dream. Rachamim the "shamash" was sitting in the Beis Din shel Maalah with two other talmidei chachamim, judging the departed. He sat in the middle, in the place of the av beis din, and his face shone with a great radiance. The departed stood in line waiting for the word from his mouth: Gehinnom, Gan Eden, or, chas v'shalom, the kaf hakela, or a return in a gilgul.

It was an astounding sight, and the very sight of the departed being judged shook me. (Woe to a person from that moment.) Yet it did not surprise me that Rachamim the shamash was the av beis din. The moment I saw him I understood that he was filled to overflowing with Torah and kedushah, one of the lamed-vav who merit to see the Shechinah every day.

When he had finished with several of the departed, I went up to him and asked his help to win my case down here, in the Beis Din shel Matah. My claims were true, I told him, but I had no way to prove them. "Come to me tomorrow morning after davening," he said. I woke up feeling that the dream was true.

After Shacharis I went into the Shoshanim LeDavid shul. The congregation had finished and gone home. Only the poor shamash who could barely read was left, still in the middle of Shemoneh Esreh, spelling out each word slowly from the siddur up against his eyes. I had seen it many times before, but now it looked different, because now I knew in whose presence I stood. From an ordinary siddur, by heart, he was holding in mind every kavanah of tefillah the Kabbalah teaches, and he hid it by letting the people around him think he was slow because reading came hard to him.

I waited a long while, until he had finished davening altogether, and then I turned to him. "I have come," I said, "as you told me to in the dream."

He made as if he had no idea what I wanted. When I told him the whole dream, he said I was surely mistaken, such a thing was impossible, and he did not know what I could want from a simple shamash and am ha'aretz like him.

Saba's house had long accustomed me to hidden tzaddikim and their evasions, and I knew what I was facing. I did not press him. I only told him that I meant to tell the dream to the whole congregation and let them judge whether I was imagining things.

That truly alarmed him. "Look," he said, "I promise you that you will win the coming hearing, as you ask. But on one condition: from today on you keep silent and tell no one, as if you do not know me. Not a word passes between us, and you treat me like any other shamash."

I promised with all my heart. And that Sunday I won the case, just as he had said. I told no one anything about him until after his passing, zy"a.

Quiet Men at My Grandfather's Side

Among the regulars at the tefillos my grandfather arranged in different places in Yerushalayim, I knew several quiet, gentle men. One, short and plump with a reddish face, came to every tefillah held anywhere in Yerushalayim. He would sit with his Tehillim in hand, swaying gently back and forth and reading each word the way one counts pearls, and he would not eat the food that was handed out. While he learned there was a special charm about him that I cannot explain. He seemed different from the others, so I asked my grandfather who he was. My grandfather smiled a smile full of meaning and said nothing.

I remember the old men who went with my grandfather in the month of Elul to the kevarim of tzaddikim in the Galil, and how they stood davening in holy awe and deveikus, though they fasted every weekday of the forty days from Rosh Chodesh Elul to Yom Kippur (except erev Yom Kippur). Their very being came from the world of the "spirit," which won out over the "material" in all their affairs. This world counted for almost nothing in their eyes.

My grandfather's talmid Mr. Yashar Kohen, hy"v, told of one of those trips to the Galil. They were in Tzfas when my grandfather pointed out a poor old man in plain, shabby clothes and told them he was one of the lamed-vav tzaddikim. They turned to the old man for his berachah, and he was gone. They searched and could not find him.

I will mention here some of my grandfather's friends. Some were hidden tzaddikim I knew myself, and while I was still young the substance of their wondrous lives filled my whole being.

RAV YEHUDA LEON PATILON ZT"L



Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon zt"l

At seventeen I was learning in yeshivah, yet now and then on Shabbos, while Saba was out giving derashos in several shuls, I would play ball with a boy from the neighborhood. Once Saba came home and found me at it. "What is this?" he asked. I loved Saba and was ashamed in front of him; to me he was a man of gold, with a merciful heart. I put the ball down and walked home with him.

On the Thursday of that week he came to me. "Do me a favor," he said. "Take this letter to Chacham Patilon in Jaffa. It means a great deal to me to have his answer."

Chacham Patilon was a painter who lived on Rechov Eliezer, near Rechov Shabazi in Jaffa. My grandfather, my father and my uncle were devoted friends of his and knew his worth. Several families of Turkish origin in Tel Aviv, admirers of my grandfather, held him to be a hidden tzaddik

and came to him for berachos and advice. To look at, he was a very simple man, and he made no impression on me. But Saba had asked, so I took the letter and went. What I did not know then was what Saba had written in it, in Turkish so that I would not understand: something like "My grandson is going bad; take care of him."

The trip from Yerushalayim to Jaffa took some two hours, because rock was being blasted along the roads to widen them. I got to him at about two-thirty in the afternoon and found him on a sofa, in a cap, with a very thin beard that looked a week old. "Saba sent you a letter," I told him. "He is waiting for an answer."

He read the letter. "Come, sit next to me," he said, and when I sat down he began telling me stories of gilgulei neshamos. In Turkey, for instance, he had had a neighbor who shaved with a blade. He kept rebuking him that shaving with a razor is forbidden, and the neighbor laughed at him.

"One day," he told me, "I was walking along Rechov Allenby in Tel Aviv when a donkey broke away from its owner and ran toward me." (That was about fifty years ago, when animals and carts were still an everyday sight in Jaffa and on Allenby.) "The donkey came up to me and said, 'Listen, I am your neighbor from Turkey. Give me a tikkun.' In front of everyone I slapped him and told him, 'I will not give you a tikkun. Suffer, and that will be your tikkun.'"

He told me more of the same: gilgulim of every kind, and IDF soldiers who had been killed without their families knowing, because the army had not informed them, and who came to him asking him to let their families know. All this carried me out of reality into another world altogether, a world of imagination. I did not believe him. It went in one ear and out the other, and I did not take it seriously. He saw that.

All at once a cat came in. That did not surprise me. To reach his one-story house I had crossed a big yard full of ducks, chickens and cats, and nothing is more natural than a cat wandering in from the yard. If you are used to cats and talk to them, they understand you. So I paid it no mind.

The cat began to meow. "Go," he told her. "Come back in half an hour." She went out. "What time is it?" he asked me. I checked my watch. "Exactly three o'clock." He went on with his stories of neshamos, the departed and gilgulim, mostly gilgulim in animals.

Then the cat was back. As she came in he asked me again, "What time is it?" "Exactly half past three," I said. "You see?" he said. "She came back after half an hour. Give me a few minutes with her." "Take your time," I told him.

She stood facing him, propped on her front paws, her head turned up toward his, and meowed. To my ear it was nothing but meowing, but I saw her move her head the way a person does when he talks, and I was astounded. When she had finished, she stayed where she was, looking at him and waiting for an answer. He sank into thought with his eyes shut, and I felt that he was not there. A few minutes passed that seemed to me an eternity. Then he opened his eyes and said to her, "Go. Everything is already put right." And she went out.

"Do you talk with cats?" I asked him.

"No," he said. "That was a girl of seventeen who sewed on Shabbos, and she came to ask for a tikkun. She came back in a gilgul as a cat. I was just telling you about gilgulim; here you have one."

"And what happened?" I asked.

"The cat is already dead," he answered. "The neshamah is already above. I see her up there, giving din v'cheshbon for other things."

I went straight outside, and at the corner of Rechov Shabazi, some two hundred meters from his house, I found her, crushed. A truck had run her over. I knew her by the white stripe on her back. We had heard no screech of brakes, no sound of any kind, and yet he had told me that she had already left the body and that her neshamah was above.

I went back in to him utterly stunned. He looked at my face and smiled. "Go tell your grandfather that everything is fine," he said. Now, after the fact, I came to accept everything he had told me in the hour before about gilgulim of every kind.

I went back to Yerushalayim, and the ride gave me time to think over what I had seen and take it all in. There I went to my parents' house, which had a wide yard at the entrance. As I came into the yard I saw two cats standing face to face, making groaning sounds, not meows. One stood at the other's head and groaned, as though the pair of them were talking.

The cat in Jaffa was still fresh in my mind, and I said, "Ribbono shel Olam, these must be gilgulim." I stood there and said kapitel 91 of Tehillim, "Vihi No'am" and "Yoshev BeSeser Elyon," known as a kapitel for every

kind of thing beyond nature. As I finished it, one cat died and the other ran off.

I was shaken to the depths. That same evening I went to the Shoshanim LeDavid shul in the Bukharim neighborhood. Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri was sitting in the corner, looking into a sefer. I went up to him with a question, and he received me with a shining face; after answering it he urged me to learn with diligence. From then on I left the games behind, and that friend with them, and I moved ahead in my learning.

CHACHAM YITZCHAK KADURI ZT"L

While I am on Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri, here is a story about him worth telling. The year was 5727 (1967), not long after the Six Day War. Yehudah and Shomron (Judea and Samaria), taken in that war, could be entered only with a permit, and everyone was curious and eager to see the new territories.

A relative of my wife's lived in the south with her husband, a policeman, and their two sons. They loved each other as fully as on the day they married. The husband's sister hated the wife and kept trying to set the two at odds, but he cut her short every time and never let her say a word against his wife.

One day he told his wife that the police were arranging a day trip to Gaza for the policemen's wives. He would stay home that day, be there when the children got back from school, and mind them until she came home. When the day came, he handed her fifty Israeli lirot to spend on anything she fancied in Gaza's colorful markets, and stayed behind for the children. Then, out of nowhere, his sister turned up. Where was his wife, she wanted to know. Off on a trip, he said, and home by evening. She offered to make lunch for him and the children, and he accepted.

His wife came home toward evening, brimming with all she had seen and impatient to tell him. He told her to come into the bedroom at once. As soon as they were inside, he pulled off his belt and beat her savagely, leaving cruel wounds. She ran out to the neighbors, stunned and terrified, with no idea what had happened. This was a man who had never laid a hand on her, never so much as raised his voice. What had made him someone else, and why? About an hour later he packed his things and walked out, and she went back to her children, weeping and in pain.

A week or so later a lawyer's letter came on his behalf. He granted that she had been a good wife and that he had nothing against her. He simply could not live with her any longer: she had become loathsome to him, and he wanted a divorce. If she would sign a divorce agreement, the house was hers, and he would pay her generous maintenance every month.

She wanted to get to Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri as fast as she could, so that he would help her turn her husband's heart back to her and keep her home from falling apart. So she came to us and asked me to set up an urgent meeting with him. She spent the night at our house, and showed my wife her back, black and blue from her husband's blows. In the morning I took her to the Rav z"l. He heard the story and cast the goral hachol, a goral he had mastered.[93] On the day of her visit, he said, the sister had cooked them ful (stewed fava beans) and put kishuf into the pot, and it had turned the husband's heart, so that in a fury he cut himself off from his wife. One bean was still lodged whole in his stomach. It was meant to stay there with the kishuf for many years and keep the hatred alive; once it came out, the kishuf would leave him and he would be himself again. Chacham Yitzchak at once wrote a note with holy Names and handed it to me. "Give it to her to put into her husband's drink," he said. "Hashem will help, and everything will be put right."

Outside, I gave her my advice. She should tell the lawyer she was willing to reach an agreement, on condition that her husband come to the house and work out the terms with her in person. For safety, her brother should wait in the next room that day, in case the kishuf drove him to hit her again. When he came, she should sit down with him as though eager to hear his offer, and while they talked, make him a cup of tea, leave the note in it a few minutes, take it out, and give him the tea, pressing him until he drank it. With Hashem's help, good news would follow.

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[93] The word chol is made of the first letters of chamah u'levanah, the sun and the moon. This goral rests on a wondrous wisdom. The Midrash says that the Avos and the Shevatim used it, and that when Binyamin came down to Egypt, Yosef took the goblet and said to him, "I hear your family is expert in this goral. Cast it, please, and find out where your missing brother is." Binyamin cast it and was bewildered. "Why are you bewildered?" Yosef asked. By the goral, Binyamin answered, his brother had to be in this very house. Then Yosef revealed himself to him, "I am he," and the two of them worked out the whole business of the goblet together.

She did just that. Her husband, so set on the divorce that it gave him no peace, came to the house to get her signature, and he was willing to drink anything she liked, as long as she signed and he was rid of her. He was about halfway through the tea when he felt ill and began to vomit. When it was over, he was like a man come out of a drunken stupor. He tore up the agreement. "I love you," he told her. "I do not understand why I wanted to divorce you." "Come and see why you hated me so," she said. She searched through what he had brought up and drew out a whole bean. "This is what your sister fed you with her kishuf. Now, in the merit of Chacham Kaduri, it has come out of you, and you have come back to me and to your children."

Chacham Kaduri never lost his temper or raised his voice, at home or anywhere else. Even in a situation that would have tried anyone's patience, he sat calm and smiling. Once he was writing a long kamea full of kavanos and yichudim and had almost finished it when his wife came in and jostled the table by accident. The ink spilled across the kamea, and the whole thing became one big blot. He smiled. "The Rebbetzin knows what she is doing," he said.

My son Chaim Dovid hy"v told me that when he was young he went to shul every night of the Sefirah to watch Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri and his circle of fellow mekubalim count Sefiras HaOmer. It made the heart tremble, he says. They stood a long time, eyes sunk in the sefer, their thoughts held fast in dechilu u'rechimu (awe and love), every bit of their kavanah given over to the yichud of the worlds and of the sefiros bound up with the Omer as a whole and with that particular night. Chacham Yitzchak stood with his eyes closed and his head resting against the side of the Heichal (the Sephardi name for the aron kodesh). He had no sefer. By heart, he held in mind every kavanah on every holy Name, with all their combinations and nekudos. And these kavanos, it should be said, are partly particular to each night. No night is like another, and they do not come round again as the kavanos of other tefillos do: each one belongs to a single night of the year.



Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l

A man once telephoned him urgently about his wife, who was expecting. The doctors said the unborn baby had no heartbeat and were pushing her to end the pregnancy; what did the Chacham advise? Once he had her name, Chacham Kaduri answered, "The baby is alive. I can hear its heart beating clearly from here. But she is weak. Have her eat almonds with sugar, and all will be well." A few months later she gave birth, and mother and child were both perfectly healthy.

A ten-year-old girl was brought to him before she was to go abroad for surgery to remove a cancerous growth from her head. Chacham Yitzchak wrote her a kamea, placed his hands on her head and gave her this berachah: "Everything you have will go away, and you will be healed. The illness will not touch the children you bring into the world either, and no scar will be left." The operation went well, and it left not even a scar. She grew up, married and had healthy children.

A woman who had given birth to twins caught the "flesh-eating bacterium" afterward. She recovered, but the doctors forbade her to have another child, and when she conceived anyway, they made her end the pregnancy to save her life. When she conceived a second time, the doctors wanted to do the same again, and her husband went to ask Chacham Kaduri. "Your wife is carrying twins again," Chacham Yitzchak told him. "Do not worry. She and the children will be fine." She gave birth to twins, both in perfect health.

The Father-in-Law's Warning

When I was about twenty-three, the friend I used to play ball with six years before called me on the telephone. He was getting married, he said, and wanted to keep the halachos of taharas hamishpachah, but there was no one to teach them to him or his kallah. Would I do it? Gladly, I said, and we fixed a time for him to come over. When he came, I sat down with him and went through the main halachos and the cases that call for a shailah to a rav. He wrote everything down so that he could keep it all.

When we were done, I asked him whether the kallah had money. No, he said. She had lost her father, and her family was in a hard way. "Look," I said, "I know your own family has a hard time making ends meet. If hers is the same, I am afraid you two may hold off on having children the first few years." "You are right," he answered. "That is why we have decided to wait some years for children, until we are both working and starting to get on our feet." "Look," I told him, "parnassah is in Hashem's hands. Do not make these calculations." But he said the matter was settled, and he would not go back on it. I explained to him that the issur of zera levatala is a grave one and he must take care not to stumble in it. He should ask a rav about the decision itself, and if a rav gave him a heter, he should prevent pregnancy only in a way the halachah permits, such as pills made for the purpose and the like. He waved it all away. "I came to learn the halachos of taharas hamishpachah," he said, "not to get advice about other things." And he left.

Some three years later, walking along Rechov Malchei Yisrael in Yerushalayim one day at about eleven in the morning, I came across him sitting at a bus stop. He was waiting for a bus, pale and sunk in gloom. I asked what had happened. Ever since the wedding, he told me, for about a year and a half, he had avoided having children and had sinned with his

wife in the issur of zera levatala. One night, after they had been together in the forbidden way, they both fell asleep. The moment he was asleep, his father-in-law appeared to him in a dream, his face full of anger. "You and my daughter are stumbling in the grave sin of zera levatala," he said, "and you are causing me terrible pain. I have come to warn you: do this aveirah once more, and I will strangle you in your sleep."

He woke up terrified, and while he was still wondering whether to wake his wife, she woke on her own a few minutes later, shaking all over. What was wrong, he asked. She had seen her father in a dream, she said. He was very angry. The aveirah of zera levatala she was doing with her husband was causing him suffering, and if they did it again he would come back and strangle them both. Her father had come to him too, he told her, in a dream much like hers. They came together again then and there, this time k'din u'k'das, as the halachah requires, and she conceived. Six months ago a daughter had been born to them, and ever since, he said, their life had not been a life.

The baby had been born with heart and liver problems, and asthma besides, and was still in the hospital. His wife had given up her job to sit with the baby there all day, and each evening he came and took over until morning. In six months he had not slept a night at home, and he hardly saw his wife anywhere but the hospital. Now, on top of it all, his manager had called him in that very morning when he came to work. For some months, the manager said, his output had fallen, and he had been seen asleep on the job a number of times. They had made allowances for his situation until now, but they could not go on doing so. They were sending him home for a week to find someone to take his night shifts at the hospital; if he could not, they would have no choice but to let him go. So there he sat, at a loss, with no idea what to do. "Come with me," I said, "and we will put this right."

I brought him home with me. "You can see for yourself," I told him, "that this is a punishment from Shamayim for the aveirah of zera levatala. So as I see it, the way out of all of this is to do true teshuvah for it." He agreed, but besides keeping away from the aveirah from now on, he did not know what to do. I told him he would have to fast one day, a full twenty-four hours like Yom Kippur, and learn a particular seder, to repair the matter. In his despair, with nowhere else to turn, he agreed to everything. When

he went to daven Minchah in shul, I said, he should take the fast upon himself in the Shemoneh Esrei. I explained what to say and at which point, and we arranged that he would come back the next day, when I would show him what to say for the tikkun of this aveirah.

He came the next day and sat saying the whole of Tehillim, along with another seder of tefillos (later printed in the sefer *Sadeh Tapuchim*). Partway through the tikkun I asked him about his housing. He was renting, he said. He had applied to the Prazot company (the public housing company of Yerushalayim) for an apartment at a low monthly rent and had handed in the forms showing he qualified, but each time he went there he was put off with "come back later," and nothing moved. He finished toward evening. "I hope your teshuvah, done with a broken and sincere heart, will have its effect and be accepted favorably," I told him. He went to the hospital as usual and took over from his wife.

In the morning, when his wife came to take his place, the doctor came over and asked them both to stay: the baby's condition had taken a turn for the better, and more tests were needed. A few hours later they were told that, in a way no one could explain, the baby was well. The heart and liver problems were all gone. Only the asthma was left, and that was no reason to keep her in the hospital, so she was going home. He came straight to me, overjoyed, and told me of the great miracle that had happened to his baby and to him. Life could go back to normal now, and he could return to work with no fear of losing his job. I told him that by the rules for this aveirah it is good to fast at least four days to be cleansed completely, and suggested another fast day that week. He was glad to take it on, accepting at Minchah that same day a fast for the next. On the fast day he came back to me and said the whole required seder.

A few days later he went to Prazot to ask how his application stood. "Your file came up a few days ago," the clerk told him. "Since your daughter has asthma, it was decided to give you an apartment in the Kiryat Yovel neighborhood, which is high up, where the air is clear. You came just in time; I had not yet sent you the letter. Here are the keys."

MORE ON THE HIDDEN TZADDIK RAV YEHUDA LEON PATILON ZT"L

The hidden tzaddik Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon zt"l was born in Salonika and lived to seventy-seven. The public came to know of him through Rabbi Ezra HaKohen zt"l, a man who, with his wife, gave himself to chessed and to honoring talmidei chachamim. All the hidden tzaddikim, my grandfather among them, stayed in his house as guests.

Chacham Patilon was so poor that he could not marry. He went to the hidden tzaddik Chacham Hillel Simchon zt"l, who told him, "Within forty days, someone will come," and so it happened. He was no longer young when he married. His bride was Victoria, of the Nissan family, and the shadchan was Chacham Hillel Simchon himself, a hidden tzaddik I had the merit to know. He was a Mughrabi (a Jew from North Africa) and lived in Jaffa, on Rechov Samech-Ches at the corner of Rechov Shabazi. The wedding took place in Tel Aviv, at her parents' house. The couple lived in poverty, in the corridor of someone else's apartment, which doubled as his studio, for he was a painter. A gifted one, too, but innocent in business: he sold his paintings for pennies. They became known abroad as well, and before his marriage he was awarded a large prize for them in Paris; but he would not go, and would take nothing from them.

The Money Under the Mattress

Reb Ch. K. shlita, who as far as I know was very close to Chacham Patilon from a young age, told me this. He came in for Shacharis one Shabbos morning and found Chacham Patilon zt"l downcast. Why so serious, he asked. "My wife gave birth to my firstborn son this morning," Chacham Patilon answered, "and I have not a perutah for the first things he needs, never mind the bris milah. I am somewhat uneasy, and I am asking Hashem to help." At Minchah Reb Ch. K. found him cheerful and in good spirits, and asked what had changed. "A little while ago the neshamah of my grandmother appeared before me," he said. "She told me, 'Why are you worried? In Shamayim they have prepared everything your son needs, and more. The money is under the mattress you sleep on.'"

Reb Ch. K. went on: "I did not leave his side from then until Motza'ei Shabbos. When Maariv ended I walked home with him. At the house he was calm, at ease and happy, and he sat learning the seder before Havdalah

patiently, without the least haste. After Havdalah he said to me, 'Now it is time to go to the mattress.' We went over together, and Chacham Patilon lifted the mattress. Under it lay a bundle of banknotes, a large sum, more than enough for all the expenses, the household's keep included, for several months."

Once, when his wife was newly expecting and did not yet know it, he told her, "You are expecting. My father is coming." So it proved, and she had a son. Some years later he told her again, "You are expecting. My mother is coming." His mother's name was Sarah, and the child who came was a daughter, Sarah.

He and the hidden tzaddik Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l were deep friends. Every Lag BaOmer they went up to the Rashbi in Meron, in three cars: Patilon, Rav Yosef Waltuch, the baal hachnasas orchim Mr. Ezra HaKohen zt"l, another Kohen (a hidden mekubal; who he was, and his name, I do not know), and the Chananiah family from Tel Aviv.

The holy mekubal Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani zt"l would also come to Chacham Patilon's house now and then for a berachah for himself and his family. (Chacham Yehoshua's tefillos and berachos brought yeshuos to many, but for himself and his own family he sometimes needed another tzaddik's berachah. As Chazal said (Sanhedrin, daf 95), "A prisoner cannot free himself from prison.")

My father z"l was a close friend of Chacham Patilon zt"l. Every so often he brought him names of people in need of a yeshuah, and many of them were helped by his tefillos.

A man he knew met a fine girl with yiras Shamayim and wanted to marry her. He asked Chacham Patilon, who advised against it. The man pressed him for the reason, and he told him that at forty she would fall gravely ill and stay ill for the rest of her life. When the man insisted on marrying her all the same, Chacham Patilon told him, "Daven that after forty her illness will not be so severe." And that is how it went.

During the Six Day War, Rav Patilon was sitting one day with Mr. A. H., someone he knew, when all at once he began knocking on the table. "Aharon, do not worry," he said. "I see your son. Shells are exploding next to him, and with Hashem's help he will come home safe." Mr. A. wrote down the day and the hour. When his son returned, what he described was exactly what Rav Patilon had said.

A Jew once came to him for a berachah. "You have not davened yet, and you have not put on tefillin yet," he told him. "Come back after davening, and you will get a berachah." The man was astonished. "How do you know?" "It is written on your forehead."

When my grandfather lay ill and unconscious, as I told earlier, my uncle went to Chacham Patilon. "What will become of Chacham Menachem?" he asked. "Do not worry," he answered. "He will recover and walk to me on his own feet." And so he did.

Mr. G. once came to him begging help for his sick son. The boy's fever had climbed to forty degrees (Celsius), and medicine would not bring it down. Rav Patilon took some money and dropped it into the tzedakah boxes in his house, and began saying "Kel na refa na lah." Then he told Mr. G., "Go home. You will find the boy playing ball, throwing it from his bed against the wall. The fever is already down." That is just what he found.

The House He Saw Before My Wedding

Once I brought a "traditional" Jew (one who keeps some of the mitzvos) to see him. The man came in bareheaded, and Patilon said to him pleasantly, "Go into a shop that sells drinks and look. An empty bottle has no cover at all. A full bottle of water has just one. But a bottle of old wine has two at the least."

I was engaged at the time, and on that visit I told him how hard it was to find an apartment with key money (a tenancy bought with a large payment, which the tenant could sell to the next one). He shut his holy eyes for a few moments. When he opened them, he said, "I see you living in a house of your own, one story, with a big yard in front. On the left side of the building, six steps lead down to a large garden, and at the far end of the garden, on the right, steps go down to a large cellar," and more in that vein. I knew him and his ruach hakodesh, and I knew that everything he said was true. Even so, with my slender means, which would not stretch even to a small apartment with key money, it sounded like a dream in Aspamia (a far-off fantasy). Naturally, I went looking by what I could afford, not by his ruach hakodesh, and I found a small key-money apartment in the Bukharim neighborhood, on the second floor of a crowded building packed with tenants. What Chacham Patilon had told me slipped my mind.

For two years I suffered terrible cold there every winter, until things became unbearable for my son, then a year old. I made up my mind to move, but I had no money to do it. In my trouble I went to the holy tzaddik Mori Chaim Sinwani zt"l, whom I had by then had the merit of knowing, and put the matter to him. "Go and buy a private house, one story," he said. And where would the money come from? Could I borrow a large sum for two years, he asked. I could get a loan, I said, with no mortgage and no interest, but a loan has to be paid back. "Do not worry," he told me. "Within two years it will all be paid."

I found a suitable house and bought it. The old apartment, held with key money, brought me twelve thousand lirot, and I borrowed about thirty-six thousand more, relying on what Mori Chaim Sinwani zt"l had said. After the purchase I came back to Mori Chaim and asked how the payments would be met. Had I bought an esrog tree to trade in yet, as I did every year, he asked. Not yet, I said. "Go and buy a tree, and come back." I bought only from certain trees that I knew were free of any concern of murkav (grafting), so the choice was poor, and when I came to buy, all the good trees were gone. What remained was a small tree with hardly a blossom on it, which by nature should have yielded very little fruit, and it did not look healthy either. Having no choice, I bought it anyway, at a reduced price, telling myself that whether it gave esrogim or not would be my mazal. I went back and told Mori Chaim what had happened. He told me to return to the tree and carve on it a holy Name, which he gave me, and I did. That year, against all nature, the tree gave a great many esrogim of the most mehudar kind. They were snapped up at a very high price, enough to pay half the cost of the house. The next year the fruit of that same tree paid off the whole debt on the house by itself. **Only after I had moved into the house did I notice that it was exactly the house Chacham Patilon had described to me before my wedding.**

The tzaddik Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l told of a time he sat down at the table by the holy tziyun of the G-dly Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai zy"a and learned through the night. Toward morning he grew tired and dozed off, and in a dream he saw a man of awesome, majestic appearance come up to him, touch his shoulder and say, "Did you come here to sleep?" Rav Yosef woke at once and learned on until morning. Back from Meron, he went straight to Rav Patilon's house. The moment he walked in, before he

had said a word, Rav Patilon said, "A great light is upon you! You had a great revelation." The man who had woken him in the dream was the Rashbi.

After a hard birth, my aunt was told by the doctor not to nurse: her milk was not healthy for the baby. My uncle asked Chacham Patilon what to do. "Do not listen to the doctor," he said. "Her milk is excellent for your son." She nursed him, and he grew up sound and healthy.

A relative of his wanted to marry a young man she knew, and the two of them very much wanted each other, but he stood in the way. His wife pressed him for the reason, and he told her the young man would not live long. He was killed young, in the Yom Kippur War (5734, 1973).

He knew the root of every person's neshamah. People he saw were in need of rachamim he would send to Chacham Mordechai Sharabi. **He told me that all he had merited came because his grandfather, from the time he was eight years old, had accustomed him to get up with him to say Tikkun Chatzos, and to learning and to fasts.**



At the Kosel HaMaaravi, Chacham Patilon (left) and the baal hachnasas orchim of the hidden tzaddikim, Rabbi Ezra HaKohen (right).

Chacham Patilon told my uncle why many great tzaddikim do not merit "ruach hakodesh." They give derashos in public, and afterward a little pride creeps in and drives the "ruach hakodesh" away. Simple people have no pride, and so they do merit it.

One Leil Shabbos, as he came to make Kiddush, his wife told him there had been no money for wine, so she had bought none. With his great bitachon he went to the kitchen cupboard and reached in, and to everyone's astonishment brought out a bottle of wine. Then he began "Shalom aleichem" and the rest, as if nothing could be more natural.

When their son Yaakov was a year old, his wife came to him upset: there was no money for shoes for the boy. "Do not worry," he told her. "With Hashem's help Yaakov will have shoes today." Toward evening a stranger came to the door with a pair of little baby shoes in his hand. "Are

shoes needed here?" he asked. Before she could reply he had left the shoes with them and vanished.

Once he took one of his circle to task for keeping his hand closed, and told him to be readier to give tzedakah. The man pleaded that money was tight. Rav Patilon rebuked him to his face. "Your silver and gold are in such-and-such a place. How can you say money is tight?" The man was astonished. His heart turned for the good, and from then on he gave to tzedakah freely.

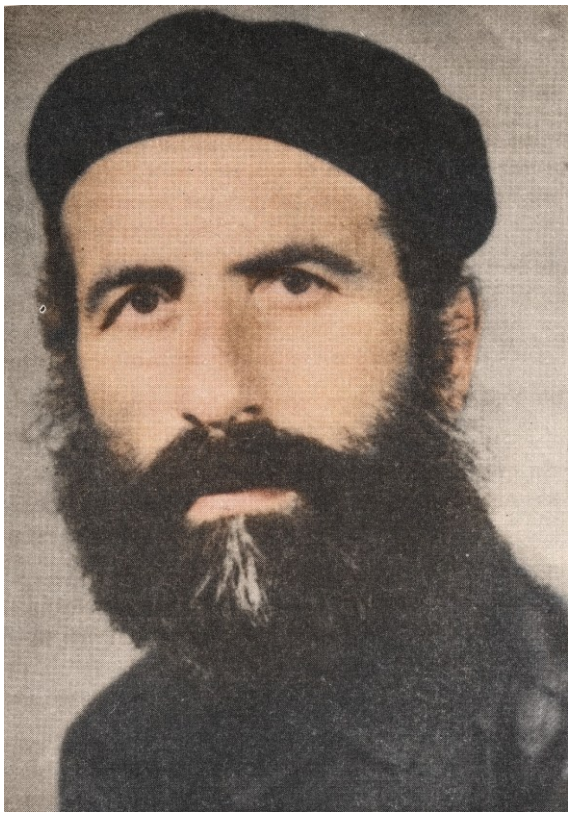
One felt a special hashra'ah in his sukkah. He kept a place empty at his right hand for the holy Ushpizin of the day. Once, as he sat in the sukkah, a man he knew came in and went to sit down next to him. Rav Patilon stopped him at once. "Do not sit here. Someone is sitting here." And he gave him another chair. After the man had gone, his son Yaakov asked him, "Why did you not let him sit beside you?" "But the Ushpizin of the day is sitting in that chair," he answered. "Can he not see?"

Another year a man came into his sukkah who looked every inch a chareidi, his dress mehudar in every detail. He had barely reached the doorway when Rav Patilon shouted at him, "Out, tamei, and do not make my sukkah tamei! Yesterday you did such-and-such an aveirah, you have not yet immersed from the tumah of keri, and you have not davened Shacharis either." The man fainted where he stood, and some of those there looked after him until he came to.

Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon zt"l passed away on 15 Cheshvan 5735 (1974). He lies in the beis hachaim of the Sanhedria neighborhood in Yerushalayim, next to the tziyun of Rabbi Ezra HaKohen zt"l, the baal hachnasas orchim of the hidden tzaddikim.

CHACHAM YOSEF DAYAN ZT"L

The talmidim of Chevras Ahavas Chaim never left the well they had drunk from as boys. Grown and married, they kept on learning, in the Chevrah and elsewhere. One group of them came regularly to a shiur given in the Chacham Shaul Tzadka shul in Beis Yisrael by Chacham Yosef Adess zt"l, one of the rabbanim of Yeshivas Porat Yosef.



Chacham Yosef Dayan zt"l

When they finished Maseches Shabbos in 5724 (1964), they decided to hold the seudas siyum at the tziyun of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron, and they asked my grandfather to join them and to bear the whole cost. He agreed on the spot. He arranged a truck to carry the participants and laid on a seudah fit for a king, raising the money from admirers of his in Tel Aviv, whom he invited along on the trip and to the seudah. These men could not make up their minds. Was it worth losing two days of work to go? To settle it they went for advice to the hidden tzaddik Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon.

That was about a week before the trip. Rav Patilon heard them out and closed his eyes for a few moments. Then he opened them and said, "I see a young man sitting at the kever of Benayahu ben Yehoyada near Tzfas, in khaki trousers and a khaki shirt. He is a great mekubal, a hidden tzaddik, a man of great importance." He described how the man was built, then continued: "He has a sefer of kavanos and yichudim in his hands, and his

whole mind is on them. In his pocket is a wallet full of banknotes; he takes nothing from anyone. Go to Meron, because this seudah matters. But I see that next week this tzaddik will still be sitting at the kever of Benayahu. Do not miss the chance to get to know him."

I was there when they told this to my grandfather. I did not go on the trip myself, but I kept up with the matter, and when they came back I heard what had happened. The participants who knew what Patilon had said went to the tziyun of Benayahu ben Yehoyada, and there sat a man on his own, dressed in khaki, exactly as Chacham Patilon had described him. He was bent over the tziyun, holding *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, the sefer of kavanos and yichudim that Chacham Shaul Dweck HaKohen arranged from the writings of the Arizal. When the rest of the group went back to the truck, these men hung back, approached him and offered him money. He was in the middle of his learning and gave them no answer at all; he only drew a wallet stuffed with banknotes from his pocket, to show that he needed nothing. They kept after him for his name and address until he told them he was **"Yosef Dayan"** and gave them an address in Yerushalayim.

With that I found him, in his poor home. He asked what I wanted, and when I began to talk with him about yeshuos and such things, he behaved as if he had no idea what I meant. By then I knew these "actors" well, and I knew where to press until he had nowhere left to slip away to. I made him known among my talmidim. I believe it was I who brought Rav Yosef Waltuch to his house, and that is how the two came to know each other. They became the closest of friends, and together they did yichudim at tziyunim of tzaddikim that were out of reach.

How He Lived

More than once I came to his house while he was at his meal, and I saw what it was: raw rice soaked in water and a piece of dry bread, now and then with a raw potato besides. He ate this way so as to take no pleasure from food during the week. Once a week he boiled a cup of milk on the one kerosene burner in his kitchen and drank it hot, against his will, only for the mitzvah of kibbud em, because his mother had asked him to.

That kitchen was bare and shabby. A kerosene burner and a water tap were all it held. I offered to bring in workmen and fit it out for him at my

own expense, but he would not hear of it. In this world, he said, he needs nothing beyond what he has.

Day and night he toiled in Torah and in the yichudim of Kabbalah. I understood that he knew the Rambam's *Yad HaChazakah* thoroughly; he was the Rambam's descendant, son after son. I heard, too, that he was an expert in the writings of the Arizal.

Walking through the shuk he looked like an am ha'aretz who could not tell one letter from the next. Yet in him the pasuk came true: "And all the peoples of the earth shall see that the Name of Hashem is called upon you, and they shall fear you." Whenever he went to the kevarim of tzaddikim among Arabs who hated Yisrael, dread of him came over them, and they did what he wanted like cowed slaves.

The holy mekubal Chacham Tzion Bracha zt"l is said to have testified that Chacham Mordechai Sharabi zt"l counted Chacham Yosef Dayan among the lamed-vav tzaddikim mentioned earlier.

At the Kever of Shmuel HaNavi

His soul was bound to Shmuel HaNavi in a special way. Every night at chatzos he came to the kever, said Tikkun Chatzos there, and did yichudim until morning. Once I told him I had my doubts whether Shmuel HaNavi really lies buried there. It is as clear as the sun, he answered, that this is his resting place. From what he said I gathered that in those hours, at the spot marked as the kever, he had learned with Shmuel HaNavi more than once. And indeed, many miracles and things beyond nature came about through him there, for the community and for individuals. Even the local Arabs, who had tried at first to get in his way, came to him of their own accord, without his asking anything, and handed him a key to the kever and to the mosque built over it, so that he could go in whenever he liked, at any hour.

The Twin Sisters

My talmid A., an older bochur and a baal teshuvah, was having trouble finding a shidduch. On my advice he went to Yosef Dayan for a berachah and for guidance. "I am a simple man," Yosef Dayan told him. "You have come to the wrong address." My talmid came back to me with nothing. I sent him a second time, telling him, "Do not let go of him until he blesses you." This time, when he asked for a berachah, Yosef Dayan started in on politics, on "Begin" (Menachem Begin), prime minister of the Zionists, and

on other idle things, and then sent him off. He came and told me. "Go back," I said, "and tell him in my name not to hide. I sent you, and I am asking him to help."

This time he came in my name, and Yosef Dayan said to him, "Listen. Stay away from shadchanim, and do not take up any shidduch you are offered. In a while you will meet her yourself, with no shadchan at all, and the first moment she sees you she will agree to anything you ask, marriage included. This is how you will know she is the one meant for you: she will be taller than you, and many years younger."

Soon afterward someone suggested a woman who was taller than he, and he was told she was much younger. The bochur was badly torn, and he and she arranged to come to me so that I could help him decide. In the meantime, walking down the street one day, he saw Yosef Dayan coming toward him, went up to him and asked what to do. "Did I not tell you not to take up shidduchim?" said Yosef Dayan. "The time has not come yet. Besides, she is not yours, and she is older than you." Since the two had already arranged to come to me, they came. I asked her age, and it turned out that she was indeed older than he, so they went their separate ways.

Some months later he was walking in the street when he met a young woman, taller than he, whom he knew from a place he used to work, and out of politeness he said "Shalom." "Who are you?" she answered. "I don't know you at all." He was taken aback. "How can you not know me? Didn't we work together at such-and-such a place?" "I never worked there," she said. "That is my twin sister. Wait, she will be here any minute, and you will see how alike we are." Her sister did come, and the two were so alike that he could not tell them apart, until he noticed one small difference: a light birthmark on one of their faces. Yosef Dayan's words came back to him at once. "I will try this," he said. He asked the one he had met first to come with him to the Kosel HaMaaravi, and she agreed at once. They said several kapitlach of Tehillim, and as they were leaving the Kosel plaza together he understood that this was the one Yosef Dayan had meant. He proposed to her then and there, and she agreed at once. He married her, and they built a kosher home in Yisrael.

"Do Not Sell the House"

One year before Rosh Hashanah I had it in mind to sell the house I lived in. With the Yamim Tovim at the door, I resolved to put it on the market as soon as they were over. A few days later I met Chacham Yosef Dayan. "Shmuel HaNavi told me you want to sell your house," he said, "and he asked me to tell you not to."

The Addict

A woman came and asked him to daven for her brother to recover. He was badly addicted to drugs, and every attempt to wean him off them had failed. "Leave him without any treatment," he told her. "It is a waste of time and money. One day he will get up by himself, cured, and he will do teshuvah right away." The family kept up the treatments, getting nowhere, until they gave up. A few years later, with no treatment at all, the sick man got up one day like someone waking from sleep. He gave up the drugs on the spot and at once returned in complete teshuvah.

"As Long as I Am Alive"

A man I knew in the United States was in serious trouble with the income tax authorities, who suspected him of evading tax and were making his life miserable. I brought him to Chacham Yosef Dayan, who told him, "Rest assured, as long as I am alive they will not be able to do anything to you." For several years after that they all but forgot him. A few times he was called in for questioning, and each time he was let go after a few hours. The moment Chacham Yosef Dayan passed away, the tax men came after him in earnest, and he would sit and mourn Chacham Yosef Dayan and the power of his tefillah.

Within a Month

A friend of mine in the United States had a son with a disability, and finding a match for him was very hard. After Tu B'Av he came to Eretz Yisrael with the son to look for a shidduch here, and called several shadchanim. When we met, I took him to Chacham Yosef Dayan so that he would take the matter in hand. "Come to the tziyun of Shmuel HaNavi on Thursday and daven with us," Chacham Yosef told him, "and then I will see what to do." After the tefillah he said, "Within a month from today your son will find his zivug and close a shidduch."

Nearly the whole month passed with nothing to show for it. The father was under great strain: in a few days he had to go back to the United States, and there was no putting it off. He came to me asking what to do, and we went back to Chacham Yosef Dayan with the question. "The month I promised ends in two more days," he said, "and by then there will be a shidduch and a vort." The father did not know whether to believe it, since it went against all sense and reason. And that very day a shadchan came with a suitable proposal. The two sides met that evening, and the next evening they closed the shidduch, b'mazal tov. A few months later the couple married and built a kosher, healthy home, which stands to this day.

His Last Days

As far as I know, my grandfather and Yosef Dayan never knew each other, and there was never any tie between them. Yosef Dayan belongs to the generation of "nistarim" that came after my grandfather's passing. I can say this because I knew both of them closely, my grandfather zt"l and Yosef Dayan zt"l alike.

On the last Wednesday of his life he asked one of the men who used to join him in the tefillos at the kever of Shmuel HaNavi to return his borrowed sefarim to their owners on the coming Sunday, since he himself would not be able to. He was also having a marble aron kodesh built for a shul in Yerushalayim that he had put up, and he paid the contractor and the workers double to finish it. He spared no effort and gave himself no rest until the work was done, on Thursday afternoon. No one understood why he was in such a hurry.

Thursday night he learned straight through until morning in the cave of Shimon HaTzaddik. Friday morning, as was his way, he went to the kevarim of tzaddikim on Har HaZeisim for yichudim, and then to the mikveh in honor of Shabbos. At midday he asked the men who davened with him at the tziyun of Shmuel HaNavi to come to his house at three. He fainted and fell before they got there. When they came they took him to the hospital, where he was revived, and he told them that he would be making Kabbalas Shabbos in the Yeshivah shel Maalah. Two hours later, just when he seemed to be gaining strength and on the mend, he lost consciousness a second time, and about an hour before Shabbos his neshamah departed. He was laid to rest before sunset, and he went up to the Yeshivah shel Maalah.

The date was 9 Tammuz 5745 (1985). He lies at rest in honor on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim.

We never knew his real name, "Shlomo"; to us he was simply "Yosef." After his passing his family told us he had been named "Shlomo" at birth, and on his matzevah they wrote "Yosef Shlomo Dayan."

THE HIDDEN TZADDIK RAV YOSEF WALTUCH ZT"L

Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l was born in Galicia (a region of southern Poland and western Ukraine) in 5680 (1920), and was eight when he came up to Yerushalayim with his family. At Yeshivas Etz Chaim he was one of the masmidim, so diligent that his nights were as his days. Shas and the poskim, Rishonim and Acharonim, the "writings of Chassidus," the responsa: all of it he had fully mastered. He took every journal of chiddushei Torah that came out, *HaPardes* and the rest, and knew those too with wonderful expertise. He was a descendant, son after son, of the holy Rav Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov zt"l.



Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l

Besides the revealed Torah he learned Kabbalah too, and placed himself under the wing of the great mekubalim of Yerushalayim, both at the Rechovos HaNahar yeshivah in the Bukharim neighborhood and at Yeshivas Shaar HaShamayim. He learned with HaRav HaGaon the mekubal Rav Yair Weinstock zt"l, whom Rav Yosef described to me as one of the lamed-vav tzaddikim, and with Chacham Yaakov Munsa zt"l. Both were lions of the hidden wisdom, each in his own right, and masters in the house of the Zohar.

Every Rosh Chodesh at the Kosel

I was about twelve, newly come to live in my grandfather's house, when I first met the hidden tzaddik Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l. It was Rosh Chodesh. I saw him come in to my grandfather, take from him slips of paper bearing the names of the sick, of people in distress and the like, and leave. A few

hours later he was back, talking with my grandfather about the people on the slips. Who was this man, I asked my grandfather, and what did he do? A tzaddik, he told me, who goes to the Kosel HaMaaravi to daven for those in need of a yeshuah, the people on these slips among them.

"But the Kosel HaMaaravi is over the border, in Jordanian hands,"[94] I said. "No one can get there. The border at the Mandelbaum Gate is closed." He told me that for decades now the man has gone to the Kosel every Rosh Chodesh, before the war of 5708 (1948) and since, and the Jordanians simply do not see him. I was astounded. Here was someone who crossed the border and came back as if he were moving about inside his own house, and not once, but as a regular practice.

"And where are you coming from?" I asked Rav Yosef. "Every Erev Rosh Chodesh I go to Meron," he told me. "That has been my regular practice for forty years now. I finish my tefillah and come back to Yerushalayim for Rosh Chodesh." From then on I set about making friends with him, and whenever he came I ran to make him tea and to talk with him.

Four Pairs of Tefillin

All the writings of the Arizal and of the other mekubalim were open to him, and so were the kavanos of the siddurim of Rabbi Asher and of Rabbi Shabsai of Rashkov, and the *Kavanos HaRashash*. He wears four pairs of tefillin each day, he told me: Rashi, Rabbeinu Tam, the Raavad[95] and Shimusha Rabba.[96] He told me, too, that although he is Ashkenazi by descent, he is yotzei the mitzvah of Megillas Esther with a megillah in Sephardi script, for reasons of his own.

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[94] That was nine years before the Six Day War, when the Old City of Yerushalayim was taken and the road to the Kosel opened.

[95] Meaning, as Rabbeinu Tam holds, except that the parshah "Kadesh" is placed to the right of the wearer.

[96] Not the common Shimusha Rabba but one that follows Rashi, with "Kadesh" to the wearer's right. In the ordinary Rashi, Rabbeinu Tam and Shimusha Rabba tefillin, "Kadesh" sits to the wearer's left, so that a person reading them reads them in order.

The Street Sweeper of Tel Aviv

After the war of 5708 (1948) he moved to Tel Aviv, where he earned his parnassah sweeping the streets. Once, up before dawn for his usual round, he saw a couple in a corner about to commit an aveirah, rachmana litzlan. At once he shouted with all his might, "Fire! Fire!" and chased them off.

Among the Tzaddikim of His Generation

He was close to every tzaddik of his generation, and he would tell of wonders he had witnessed by the Rebbes and other tzaddikim. Among them were the hidden tzaddikim Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon zt"l and Rabbi Avraham HaKohen zt"l, whom he often visited.

In the house of Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira, the Baba Sali zt"l, and of his holy son Rav Meir zt"l, he was like one of the family, a friend dear to them both. As the Baba Sali's last days came near, Rav Yosef was with him together with several talmidei chachamim, friends of his, and the Baba Sali told them, "From now on go and get your berachah from the building laborer Rav Avraham, who lives in Tel Aviv." Rav Yosef and his friends went and found him. He tried to hide himself and send them away as empty as they came, but Rav Yosef knew that game at close quarters and would not move until he had blessed them. That is how the hidden tzaddik Rav Avraham Fish zt"l came to be revealed.

The Two Baskets

Wherever he went he carried two baskets of sefarim, one in each hand. Yet he did not grip them in his palms, as anyone else would. The baskets rested on his wrists, and to keep them from falling he had to hold his arms up the whole time, level across the width of his body. He did it because he took care never to let his hands drop below his navel (as Rabbeinu HaKadosh did, zy"a).[97]

Eliyahu HaNavi at the Bris

When I was young I pressed him hard about gilui Eliyahu, and he told me that at brissos he went to he had seen Eliyahu HaNavi. Once he was at a bris milah in the Shaarei Tzedek hospital in Yerushalayim. As the bris be-

[97] Rabbeinu HaKadosh is Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, of whom Chazal say that he never put his hand below his belt. —Trans.

gan, an old man stood by the bookcase. For some reason one of the guests suspected him of meaning to steal a sefer from it and put him out. "That old man," Rav Yosef added, "was Eliyahu HaNavi."

At the Kever of Dovid HaMelech

I pressed him further: had the seven holy Ushpizin revealed themselves to him? He stammered a great deal, and only with difficulty agreed to tell me that he knew where Dovid HaMelech and the other kings of Yehudah lie buried, on the slopes of Har Tziyon, in what was then territory held by the Kingdom of Jordan, and that he used to go there. Did he still go there, I asked, as he went to the Kosel? To that he would give no answer.

Once he took me to Har Tziyon,[98] into the large dark room that stands before the courtyard leading in to where the tziyun of Dovid HaMelech, alav hashalom, is shown. That room has only two windows, and they look out toward Shaar Tziyon (the Zion Gate). Daven between them, he told me, but closer to the window on the right, since an opening there is aimed directly at the kever of Dovid HaMelech itself. Then he stood there doing great yichudim.

A House Full of Sefarim

No one was allowed into his house in Tel Aviv. Once I came and knocked softly at his door. He opened it, but not all the way, only a crack, to see what I wanted. I was young and had a streak of chutzpah, so I pushed my way in. He did not get angry; he only asked me not to do it again.

The house, I saw, was a single big, wide room holding thousands of sefarim. They did not merely line the walls. As in a packed library, bookcases ran the length of the room about half a meter apart, each with shelves from floor to ceiling, crammed with sefarim on both sides. The chutzpah got the better of me again, and I opened a few of the sefarim and saw his notes in the margins. When he saw that, he at once steered me to a small table in the room with hand matzos on it. It was during the Omer. He gave me a piece of matzah to eat and told me that eating a little of the Pesach hand matzos on each day of the Omer holds a great sod. I think he ordered me to say nothing of what I had seen, and then he sent me off in peace.

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[98] As I recall, I was seventeen, which makes it 5723 (1963).

The Telegram to Netanya

At about sixteen I got leave from the yeshivah to spend ten days at the Vaad HaYeshivos rest home in Netanya, starting on a Sunday. On the Thursday before, Rav Yosef Waltuch came to my grandfather, and in the course of conversation I mentioned that on Sunday morning I was off to the rest home for ten days. Quite seriously, he asked me for the address and telephone number of the place, and wrote them down in his notebook.

On Sunday morning I reached Netanya, left my things in the room and went down to the shore. I could not swim, so the sea itself held nothing for me; it was the sea air I wanted. I walked along the beach, well away from where people bathed, and sat by myself with the sand, the water and the sky. There Shamayim set me a test in a matter of arayos. Baruch Hashem, I guarded myself, came through it in peace, and went straight back to the rest home. Not a soul in the world knew anything of it.

About an hour later a telegram came for me from Rav Yosef Waltuch: "Be careful, you are in great danger. Do not step out of the door of the building until I come to you." It frightened me. What danger? What had happened? On edge, I waited for him in the building until nearly nine at night, when he arrived. "Today you merited to be saved from an issur kares," he told me. "But one more day here and you are in danger of falling, because in this place So-and-so will fight hard against you to bring you down. So go back to Yerushalayim at once, to the yeshivah. And as long as you live, even if you become a rav and a great talmid chacham, do not dare set foot in Netanya." He gave me no peace until he had put me into the taxi to Yerushalayim. By nine the next morning I was already bent over my Gemara in the yeshivah.

The Bus at the Kastel

I mentioned that Rav Yosef Waltuch used to spend every Erev Rosh Chodesh at the kevarim of the tzaddikim in the Galil and come to Yerushalayim for Rosh Chodesh, to the Kosel (which the Kingdom of Jordan held at the time).

At about nineteen I went to visit the hidden tzaddik Chacham Patilon zt"l in Jaffa. Coming home on an Egged bus, at about four in the afternoon, we reached the descent at the Kastel (the steep hill on the road up to Yerushalayim), a narrow, dangerous stretch with a sheer valley on its left.

Suddenly the engine burst into flames. The driver lost control of the wheel and shouted to everyone to jump. I was in the back seat; I opened the emergency window at the rear of the bus and was the first one out. The bus was still moving, so I was dragged as I fell and scraped my wrists and ankles. Others jumped after me, and by a miracle the bus came to rest against the mountainside on the right. Being in one piece, I walked around the bus and managed to find a car to take me to Yerushalayim. I said nothing to anyone.

It had been Erev Rosh Chodesh. When Rav Yosef reached Yerushalayim the following day, he sought me out. "Yesterday afternoon I was at the kever of the Arizal," he said, "and he told me that you were in danger. I davened for you, and baruch Hashem, you are here." I showed him the scratches, and let him see that I had come out of it safe.

The Gemara in Chullin

Rav Yosef told me of something he witnessed when the gezeirah of autopsies began, in the days of the British. One of the gedolei Yerushalayim came to the Rechovos HaNahar yeshivah to ask the mekubal Chacham Yaakov Munsa zt"l what this gezeirah meant. In answer the mekubal showed him a Gemara in Maseches Chullin which, explained by way of sod, tells of this gezeirah and of the time it would come.



The mekubal and mechaven (one who davens with the kavanos) Chacham Yaakov Munsa zt"l

The White Car at Rosh HaNikra

One day Rav Yosef set out for Tzidon (Sidon) in Lebanon, to the kevarim of the Shevatim Yissachar and Zevulun, and of Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur and Oholiav ben Achisamach, the builders of the Mishkan. An acquaintance of his drove him in a white car, and they had no entry permits. At the border at Rosh HaNikra (the crossing on the coast between Eretz Yisrael and Lebanon) the line stretched for hundreds of meters, crammed with trucks and other vehicles waiting at the checkpoint for their turn to cross. An officer with a loudspeaker was walking up and down, keeping order. All at once he halted the convoy and announced that the white car two hundred meters back was to drive around it and go on into Lebanon. And so Rav Yosef crossed with no permits, no inspection and no delay.

"Rabbi Akiva Is Waiting"

Once I took my talmidim on a trip to the tziyunim of the tzaddikim in the Galil. I had arranged beforehand with Rav Yosef Waltuch that we would meet him at Parod junction near Meron and make the rounds of the tziyunim together, and so we did. When we had davened at the tziyunim of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai and the Rambam in Teveria, I told the driver, one of my talmidim, to head straight for Yerushalayim: it was getting dark, and the men's families were waiting for them. Rav Yosef spoke up at once. "You should know that Rabbi Akiva is waiting for us at his tziyun, and we have to go to him." Impossible, I answered. My talmidim were all baalei batim, and if they came home very late I feared for their shalom bayis. "Even so," he said. I would not agree, and told the driver to carry on to Yerushalayim.

We had gone only a few minutes when the pickup truck tipped over onto its side. All of us got out unhurt. We righted it, and again I told the driver to go on to Yerushalayim. This time Rav Yosef turned to me. "You got off whole and healthy now. If you do not go to Rabbi Akiva, the car will turn over again, and this time I am not answerable for your health." Of course that frightened me, and we went to the tziyun of the holy Tanna Rabbi Akiva, zy"a.

Sadat

One day before noon my son Avraham Asher, sheyichyeh, came in utterly astonished. A friend of his, he told me, had come upon Rav Yosef Waltuch unclothed in the water of the mikveh, shaking a lulav with its minim. Amazed, the friend asked Rav Yosef what it meant: it was not Sukkos, and shaking the minim inside a mikveh was a strange thing to do. "I hate Sadat for what he did to the Jewish people in the Yom Kippur War," he answered, "and now I am killing him." We were amazed and could make nothing of it. Two hours later Sadat (Anwar Sadat, the president of Egypt) was killed in Egypt, in an attempt on his life that succeeded.

The Bus to Shechem

Rav Yosef Waltuch once told my son Avraham Asher, hy"v, of a time he and Chacham Yosef Dayan agreed to meet at one o'clock the next afternoon at the Arab central bus station at Shaar Shechem (the Damascus

Gate) in Yerushalayim. They would ride together to the tziyun of Yosef HaTzaddik in Shechem, and there arouse rachamim over the galus of the Shechinah and over Klal Yisrael. Rav Yosef Waltuch arrived a few moments after the hour. Chacham Yosef Dayan was nowhere to be seen, and Rav Yosef understood that the Chacham, rather than wait, had gone on the bus that left at one.

So Rav Yosef Waltuch waited for the two o'clock bus and made the trip alone, with all the Yishmaelim on board glaring at him in hostility. He kept his mind on his learning and paid them no attention. About a quarter of an hour out, at Ramallah, soldiers suddenly stopped the bus. They went up to the driver and told him, "There is a Jew on this bus. You, and these two next to you, are answerable for getting him to Shechem safely. If not, we will hold you to account." They took down their identity details and got straight off. It was a miracle.

Buried in the Sands

The boy Oron Yarden had gone missing, and all Eretz Yisrael was following the search. My son Avraham Asher, hy"v, asked Rav Yosef Waltuch if he knew where the boy was. "He is buried in the sands," came the answer. So it turned out: some time afterward the boy's body was found, buried in the sands near the city of Netanya.

Across the Border

Many a time he went to the kever of Binyamin HaTzaddik, son of Yaakov Avinu, alav hashalom, near Kfar Saba. When he had prostrated himself on the tziyun and done his yichudim, he would go on to the tziyun of Shimon ben Yaakov Avinu, alav hashalom, some two kilometers off, near the town of Qalqilya, then under the rule of the Kingdom of "Jordan." To get there he crossed the border (which, one may well assume, was mined along its whole length), and he came and went with nothing to stop him and no harm to him.

The Eagle and the Monkey

Rav Yosef Waltuch told my son Avraham Asher, hy"v, of an odd Jew in Meah Shearim in Yerushalayim, Rav Yaakov by name, who kept away from people and lived in a cramped hole, in grinding poverty. Rav Yosef suspected that this was a hidden tzaddik and wanted to learn what he really was.

One night he was at the house of the tzaddik, the tremendous gaon, "holy he shall be called," the Rebbe Rav Shlomo of Zvhil (a town in Ukraine) zt"l.[99] He noticed Rav Shlomo trying to get the people out of his house quickly, and he understood that something important was about to happen, something worth watching. At once he laid his head on the table and pretended to be asleep. When everyone had left, Rav Shlomo came over to see whether he was asleep. Satisfied that he was, he opened the door, and in came the eccentric, Rav Yaakov. Once more the two of them came over to make sure he was asleep. Then they sat down and talked until dawn about what animals had done: "the eagle from such-and-such a place," "the monkey from such-and-such a place," and on and on like that, names of animals and names of places all over the world. "And I understood," he said, "how great Rav Yaakov was."[100]

The Cow on the Ladder

To round off this subject, here is a passage from the sefer *Tzaddikim Nistarim BaDor HaAcharon*, in its own words:

> *One day Rav Yosef Waltuch asked one of his acquaintances, who was often in and out of the house of Rabbeinu Meir Abuchatzeira, to drive him to Ashdod, to Rav Meir's holy dwelling. When they reached his house and had greeted each other, the two tzaddikim began a conversation that made no sense. This is the exchange that was heard:* ***"Has his honor seen the bird on the window?" Rav Yosef asked. "The bird, certainly.... The cow was on the ladder too..." Rav Meir answered simply. "That I know, but the elephant was on the roof," Rav Yosef went on, spinning out the mysterious conversation. "Nu, the elephant on the roof... The raven was at So-and-so's," Rav Meir replied,***

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[99] Author's note: Rav Shlomo was a tremendous baal mofes. He literally revived the dead, and while immersing in the mikveh he would annul harsh gezeiros. There is already a whole sefer in print on his power and might.

[100] Author's note: The two were speaking in the innermost chambers of Kabbalah, of sweetening dinim, of annulling evil gezeiros against the Jewish people, and of setting the worlds of Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah in their proper place. This was the way of all the talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov; they acted so even to raise up the kings and ministers of the world and to bring them down.

naming a certain name. "What, the raven was at So-and-so's? Good night," Rav Yosef closed the conversation.

The conversation lasted no more than a minute, and at its end the two tzaddikim parted warmly. Who knows the hidden secret of that conversation, for whose sake Rav Yosef took the trouble to travel to Ashdod specially? There is no doubt that one moment of this mysterious conversation made a tikkun in the upper worlds like several months of learning Torah.[101]

His Passing

When Rav Meir Abuchatzeira zt"l passed away, Rav Yosef Waltuch said to my son Avraham Asher, sheyichyeh, that he could not go on without Rav Meir. For days and nights at a stretch the two had learned Torah together as chavrusos, until, when they stood up, the chair bore the mark of their sitting. Within thirty days Rav Yosef followed him. Rav Meir's petirah was on 17 Nisan 5743 (1983), Rav Yosef's zt"l on 20 Iyar 5743. Zy"a.

He was deeply attached to Meron and to the tziyunim of the tzaddikim in the Galil, and never let an Erev Rosh Chodesh pass without coming to them, if not more often. On the last day of his life he went up to Meron hale and well, and from there to the nearby Idra cave, where he spent about an hour in seclusion. Then he headed for Tzfas, and on the road there he went up to Shamayim in a whirlwind. He had hinted to those close to him a week before that this was his last week in the world. Zy"a.

MORI CHAIM SINWANI ZT"L

Some months after Saba zt"l left the world, Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l paid me a visit. The holy Rav Moshe Yair Weinstock, he said, had told him of a tzaddik living in Yehud, **Rav Chaim Sinwani**, who wears the crown in Shamayim as head of the lamed-vav tzaddikim I wrote of earlier. Rav Yosef had no time to go looking for the man himself, so he asked me to go and look past the jug to what was inside it.

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[101] Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, in the introduction to his sefer *Beis Lechem Yehuda*, writes that Rabbeinu HaKadosh too hid secrets this way in the Mishnah, in Maseches Nazir. The words are these: "He said, 'This cow said, "I am a nezirah if I stand up."' He said, 'This door said, "I am a nazir if I open."' Beis Shammai say he is a nazir, and Beis Hillel say he is not a nazir," etc.



The holy Rav Moshe Yair Weinstock zt"l in conversation with Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l

Within days I was on the road to Meron with some of my talmidim, married men who worked for a living by day and learned with me every evening. We broke the journey in Yehud, and a short search brought us to his house. I knocked, a voice called out "Come in," and I entered.

An old man sat on a sofa, a Chumash in his hand. I glanced around the room: not one sefer kodesh anywhere. I must have the wrong man, I thought. Still, I was inside now, and he was asking what I wanted, so I said I had a question in learning and put it to him. He went straight into the next room and came back with a sefer that held the answer.

I was astonished. Not wanting to take up his time, I mentioned only one more thing: for three years my wife had suffered terrible headaches, and the doctors had run every test, thorough blood tests too, and found nothing.

"Fine," he said. "She is already healed."

"Would the Rav daven for her to get well?" I asked.

"I have davened already," he answered, "and she is healed already." Yet I had not seen his lips move in tefillah.

I gave his words little weight. A glance at my watch showed how far behind we were: it was eleven in the morning. I hurried my talmidim back into the car, eager to reach Meron and be home again as early as we could.

At home I asked my wife about her headache. It had left her entirely, she said, at eleven that morning.

After that I went back to him, this time alone, and he brought me into his own room. There stood all his sefarim, in a wardrobe shut so tight that no one could have guessed what it held. Then "the King brought me into His chambers," and they were filled with every treasure of the Torah.

I reported all this to Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l. Within a few days the two had met, and they grew very close. I became Mori Chaim's talmid as well, and it was through me, as I will tell further on, that the world came to know of him.

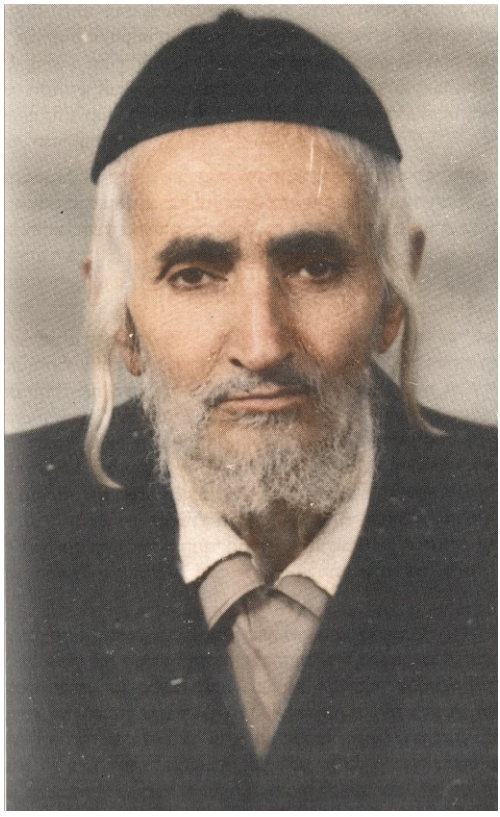
Once I knew the holy tzaddik Mori Chaim Sinwani zt"l, a deep attachment grew between us. He was humble enough to draw me near and tell me the story of his life. He told me how he had walked his feet sore through the towns of Yemen and Sudan, hunting for husbands who had left their wives agunos, to talk them into sending a get through him by a shaliach and so release the women from their chains. He told me, too, how the Name of Shamayim was sanctified through him among the goyim, who saw that the Name of Hashem was called upon him.

The Village of the Sheidim

One of his stories went like this. He was sitting at home in the city of Sinwan when a sheid walked in, looking like a man, and asked a kindness of him. Some four hours from the city lay a large village of sheidim, Jewish ones. Until then they had had a single shul, where all of them davened. But the family of this sheid had built a second one, and the sheidim had fallen into a machlokes: should the community split, some davening in each shul, or should everyone stay in the old one? Word of Mori Chaim's good name had reached them, and they had sent this sheid to ask whether he would come out to the village, hear both sides and rule on the din. As chief rav of the whole district, he was the proper one to grant their request and come.

"I agreed to be their judge," he told me. "We settled that he would come for me at noon the next day and carry me to the village, and bring me home again when I was done. I told my wife that at noon tomorrow I would fall into a faint for a few hours. She was not to be frightened and not to say a word to anyone, for after a few hours I would come to by myself.

"At noon the sheid arrived. I shut my eyes, and my neshamah left my body. The sheid hoisted me onto his shoulders and ran off with me to his village. Four hours of road went by in a few minutes, towns and villages flashing past my eyes. The whole community of sheidim turned out to receive me with great honor. Naturally I took care not to taste any of the refreshments they set before me. I heard their case and ruled that they could put up the second shul, and that no sheid in the world could stop them. When it was over, the sheid lifted me onto his shoulders again and carried me home the way we had come. There was my body, lying on the bed. I went back into it and got up."



Mori Chaim Sinwani zt"l

The Arab Girl

He used to go, he told me, to do yichudim at the kever of the great mekubal Rabbi Shalom Shabazi zt"l in Ta'izz (a city in southern Yemen). The road there ran through a big Arab village whose people hated Yisrael so bitterly that simply passing through was dangerous.

Once, as he crossed the village on his way to Rabbi Shalom zt"l, one of the village heads stopped him. "My daughter is seventeen," the man said, "and she has been paralyzed since birth. I have taken her to every sheikh and every qadi (Muslim judge) for a cure, and none of them could help. I gather you are on your way to the kever of your holy rav in Ta'izz. Ask him to heal my daughter."

"I took her name and her mother's name from him," Mori Chaim said, "and promised to daven. At the holy tziyun I stood all night doing yichudim. In the morning, before starting back, I turned to Mori Salem al-

Shabazi and said, 'There is an Arab girl, so-and-so daughter of so-and-so, paralyzed from birth. Stand before the Creator in tefillah that He heal her, and His Name, blessed be He, will be sanctified among these haters of Yisrael.' For her I took care to do no yichud and no holy kavanah. I simply asked, in plain words.

"When I came back through the village, the girl's father came out to meet me. He lifted me onto his shoulders and carried me from house to house, crying out, 'There is none like the G-d of Yisrael and none like His holy ones. The sheikhs and the qadis are all frauds, vanity and lies. What they could not do in years, the holy Jew has done in a moment.'

"'That morning, he told me, his daughter had suddenly called to him: 'Help me out of bed. I want to walk.' 'I said to her, "Walk? With your legs paralyzed?" And she said, "All at once I can feel the blood moving in them, and they are warmer than usual." I helped her up, and since this morning she has been walking around the house like anybody else. From today I believe neither in the Koran nor in the sheikhs, only in the G-d of Yisrael and in Mari Salem, His holy one.'"

For his semichah as a rav, he told me, he was examined on the entire *Yad HaChazakah* of the Rambam and on all four parts of the Tur, Beis Yosef and Shulchan Aruch, commentaries included. He had learned Torah with hasmadah since he was young, night and day alike, in kedushah, holding himself apart from the cravings of "this world." In 5681 (1921), at twenty-three, he was appointed rav and av beis din of Sinwan and its district.

Mori Chaim was a talmid-chaver of Rav Shlomo Tabib zt"l and of Rav Dovid Yaish Chadad zt"l, the geonim of their generation in pshat and in Kabbalah alike, men well used to miracles.

He was also a talmid-chaver of the G-dly mekubal Rav Ratzon Amram of Najami zt"l, av beis din of Sharab, who held him in high honor. Rav Ratzon was far older than Rabbeinu, yet he answered Rabbeinu's letters on questions of halachah with great deference. This showed most of all in the affair of the get given in 5682 (1922) contrary to the din. Other rabbanim had pronounced it kosher; Rabbeinu raised an outcry that it was invalid, and Rav Ratzon sided with him.

Rav Amram called himself "bar nash," since נש (*nash*) and עמרם (Amram) share a gematria. He composed a powerful poem, arranged by the

aleph-beis, that spans all of Kabbalah, from the hishtalshelus of the worlds to the end of the beirur, and he gave it to Rabbeinu. He ended its verses on a hint to his name: "Ve'al da yiv'ei bar nash, betzafra uveramsha" ("And for this a man should seek, morning and evening"). In the years I knew Mori Chaim I heard him recite it several times, with deveikus.

I saw with my own eyes, "and not a stranger's," how completely he had mastered the writings of the Arizal and of the great ones of Chassidus, the talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov, and I saw the ruach hakodesh that never left him. The kavanos of tefillah according to the sod were especially dear to him. He owned dozens of siddurim of kavanos, and knew every one of them, and every difference between them, through and through.

When the Siddur of Rabbi Asher appeared in the stores, and when he heard that an old siddur of the Ashkenazi mekubalim was on sale in Yerushalayim (its full name escapes me, but if I am not mistaken the name Yitzchak was part of it), he asked me to buy both for him. He would not let me pay any share of it, and he paid whatever price was first asked. When I brought them he fell on them like a man who has found great spoil, like a father meeting his beloved son after years apart. He did not put them down until he had gone through both, and in two or three days he knew them thoroughly, variant readings and all.

Chacham Mordechai Sharabi zt"l was an orphaned boy when Rabbeinu took him into his home and raised him. Growing up in that house made him "Mordechai the Jew, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his seed."

Kavanos and yichudim ran through everything he ate. That, he told me, was why he always drank his coffee in two sips, one straight after the other: *kafeh* (קפה, coffee) taken twice comes to the gematria of ש"ע (370), the number of the Shin-Ayin Nehorin Ila'in (the three hundred and seventy supernal lights).

On rare occasions he smoked, to sweeten the dinim. He loved, he said, the yichudim that the holy Baal Shem Tov used to do while smoking.

In 5737 (1977) severe stomach pains put Mori Chaim in the hospital. He was home again after a few days, and I went to see him. The doctors had wanted to operate, he told me, saying he had worms; he refused and signed himself out on his own responsibility. "I can testify about myself," he said, "that for decades I have eaten no meat, apart from a small piece on

Shabbos in honor of Shabbos. Where would I get worms? These doctors understand nothing."

Outside his Yemenite talmidim in Ra'anana, who had known him and his greatness back in Yemen and whom he stayed close to here, visiting them often, nobody knew who he was, not even his neighbors. In the beginning his only dealings with people came through me, when I brought him those who needed a yeshuah. He was a merciful father to them. He shared their pain and davened for them, and his tefillah never went unanswered, except where he said beforehand that the gezeirah could not be changed, for reasons that belonged to that case.

One of the first to follow me and grow close to him was the hidden tzaddik Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l, the one who had sent me to look inside the jug in the first place. Next came my talmidim, who attended the shiurim I gave each evening at the Chevras Ahavas Chaim. Only after a long while did the circle open up, and he began to receive people who came to him on their own.

The Mourners' Blessing

One of my talmidim had suffered from terrible headaches for years, and the doctors could do nothing for him. When I told my talmidim how my wife's headache had gone after my visit to Mori Chaim, he begged me to bring him there. We went together, the tzaddik gave him a berachah, and the pain left him completely, then and there.

His family knew how he had suffered before he was cured, and they spread the tzaddik's praises among their relatives. A few days later the talmid came to me again. His brother, who was secular, was eager to meet the tzaddik; would I arrange it? Tell your brother, I said, that tomorrow at noon I am ready to ride with him in his car to the tzaddik in Yehud, provided that when his meeting is over he waits another half hour for me, while I see to my own business with the tzaddik.

So at noon the next day I set off with the brother. He was clean-shaven and all smiles. He talked to me about worldly things, and I talked to him about Torah and mussar, and all the way he beamed with good cheer, the happiest man alive to look at him. I did not ask why he wanted to see the tzaddik. His private life, I felt, was none of my affair, and if he chose not to tell me, it plainly was not my business.

At the tzaddik's house I knocked. Ordinarily his daughter-in-law let me in and I went through to his room, but this time he came hurrying to the door himself. He gave me a quick "shalom," then turned straight to the man beside me and greeted him as one greets a mourner: "May Hashem comfort you among the mourners of Tziyon and Yerushalayim." Then he led him off into his room, and the two of them stayed closeted there a long time. I was left in the outer room, puzzled. Why would anyone give a smiling, contented man the mourners' blessing?

On the drive home I could not contain myself. "Look," I said, "I have brought any number of people to the tzaddik, and I have never once asked what passed between them. But I am asking you, if you are able to tell me: why did the tzaddik give you the mourners' blessing?"

He burst into tears. He had just come to the end of the thirty days of mourning, he told me, for his son, a boy of twelve. "I put on that happy face on purpose for the drive," he said. "I was afraid you would sense my grief and start asking, and I would break down and tell you, and you would pass it on to the Rav, and then I could never trust anything he said. But the Rav had no way of knowing what I have been through, and by his ruach hakodesh he knew it at once and spoke straight to it. So now I believe every word he says, without reservation. Sitting there with him, I already took complete teshuvah upon myself and my household."

Then he told me about his son. At ten the boy had dug in his heels: no secular school, only a talmud torah, and he kept running away from school. His father would not hear of a talmud torah; Torah and mitzvos meant nothing to him. When threats got him nowhere, he struck a bargain with the boy: school by day, and in the evenings an evening yeshivah, where he could learn as much Torah as he liked. In time, the father hoped, this "religious craze" would wear off.

He was disappointed. The boy only grew firmer in Torah and mitzvos. One day his father found that he had broken open the savings box the bank had given him with his special children's account, and given away to tzedakah all the money from his birthday and holiday gifts. When the boy was eleven, his father discovered that he was refusing food and fasting several times a week. In anger he took the boy to the neighborhood rav. The rav explained that he must not fast: it could damage his health, and the Torah forbids it, as it is written, "You shall guard your lives very carefully."

"But I want to fix all my aveiros from my earlier gilgulim," the boy answered.

"You will fix them when you are grown," said the rav.

"How can you be sure I will grow up?" the boy replied. "I am here today, and today I will fix them. I will not count on a tomorrow I am not sure of."

A few months later the terrible disease struck him without warning, and he passed away.

"I knew there was a mystery in the boy's whole story," the father told me, "and I badly wanted to understand it, but I had no idea how. I did not trust the rabbanim. Tell them the story and they would say it was a matter of a gilgul, and leave it at that. Then I saw my brother, after years of headaches, cured completely by one berachah from this rav that took a single minute, and I decided it was worth asking him. To be safe, and to shut out any hint of a way he might hear of the case, I wanted to see whether he would reveal it by ruach hakodesh. And as you saw, the tzaddik knew at once why I had come. He told me more about the boy, things the family does not know; only I do. 'Know,' he said, 'that your son was a gilgul of one of the kings of Yisrael in Tanach, who sinned and did evil in the eyes of Hashem. After many gilgulim, now, in this one, he has merited to make his tikkun and enter Olam HaBa.'"

I know this man. He and all his household took on the mitzvos, light and weighty alike, with all their heart and soul, and they keep them to this day.

The Book on the Bench

One day, when Mori Chaim and I had finished learning together, he told me, "Come tomorrow at ten in the morning, and I will teach you a certain matter in the Torah."

My way home to Yerushalayim took me through the central bus station in Tel Aviv. A little secondhand bookshop there had a few books laid out for sale on a bench outside. I stopped to see what they were, and one of them was about avodas kochavim u'mazalos (the worship of the stars and the constellations). Something made me open it, and I saw that the sun worship it described matched what appears in the writings found in the Judean Desert (the Dead Sea Scrolls), which are ascribed to the Baitusim.

That caught my interest as a point of research, because it throws a different light on the whole question of the Baitusim, who opposed Chazal in the days of the Second Beis HaMikdash. Back in Yerushalayim I forgot all about it and went on with my own affairs.

At ten the next morning I was at Mori Chaim's house, and he was not there. That surprised me. I knew how punctual he was, how he counted and measured every moment, and such a thing had never happened before. I set off toward his daughter's house, further down the street, and saw him coming home, stick in hand. I went up and greeted him. No answer. I came nearer and greeted him again. He looked me full in the face. "Who are you?"

Dumbfounded, I said, "Mori Chaim, I've come to learn, as the Rav and I arranged."

He pushed me off with his stick, asked again, "Who are you?" and hurried away toward his house. I could make no sense of it. I trailed after him meekly, like a servant behind his master. Near the house he rushed ahead, opened the door and shut it behind him at once to keep me out.

I knocked and pleaded again and again, "Mori Chaim, open the door for me," but I was a voice crying in the wilderness; no one answered. I was deeply distressed, with no idea what this was or why. For more than two hours I stood outside the door, until his daughter-in-law came home from the market and opened it. She knew me, so she let me in behind her. I went straight to Mori Chaim's room and begged him to tell me why he was so angry: "What is my transgression, and what is my sin?"

And he asked me, "Yesterday you were looking into a book of avodah zarah, and today you come to learn the matter I promised you?"

I tried to defend myself. I had read it only to understand what the Baitusim did; I was sorry and had done teshuvah; I had not absorbed its content; my intentions had been good.

"Today we will learn something else," he answered. "When the time comes that you are fit for that matter again, then I will teach it to you."

His love and friendship were mine again, and so was my learning with him, but I gave up hope of ever learning that matter. Then one day, a long time afterward, he stood up and said, "Now I will teach that matter," and I had the merit of learning it from him.

Mori Chaim hated Zionism, religious and secular alike, and counted its people his enemies, the more so because he had seen their doings at first hand in the aliyah camps in Aden. He had fought them there furiously, standing guard over tznius and offering his back to those who beat and wounded him. He forbade taking any part at all in the elections to the government's or the city's "beis hakisei" (the privy, a play on "Knesset"), even for the "Chareidi" parties.

When he first came to Yehud, Mori Chaim told me, Rav Katz from Petach Tikvah approached him with an offer: a seat as dayan on the rabbinical beis din. **He turned it down. He had made up his mind not to bind himself to the Chief Rabbinate and its dayanim, appointees of the government of shmad. To him they were a "wicked rabbinate," a fig leaf covering the decrees of shmad that the State issued against the immigrants.** Instead, with no thought for his health or for how his family would live, he went out to the Yemenite moshavim, in Ra'anana, Rishon LeTziyon, Chadera, Rechovos, Rosh HaAyin and elsewhere, to strengthen them in keeping Torah and mitzvos the way they had kept them in Yemen. He refused with all his might to be their official rav on the government's behalf; yet he carried their yoke and their burden, their load and their quarrels, with no title and no pay, purely for the sake of Shamayim.

When, by Rabbeinu's advice and berachah, I was able to buy a large, roomy house in Yerushalayim, as I told earlier, I pressed him hard to come and stay with me a few days and let me wait on him as a servant waits on his master. For a moment he agreed. Then he stopped himself. "I cannot," he said. "There are too many kelipos there, in the mosques and the houses of impurity. The galus of the Shechinah pains me so much that I could put myself in danger over it. I would have to fight them and nullify them, and I have not been given permission for that from Shamayim."

The Bone in Chutz La'aretz

A talmid of mine, a baal teshuvah who came to my shiurim, was twenty-five and could not manage to get married, and he came to me to learn why. My opinion, I told him, was that his bas zug might be a non-Jewish woman he had sinned with while he was in Holland.

That frightened him. "Does Shamayim want me to marry a non-Jew?"

"Chas veshalom," I told him. "She was Jewish in her last gilgul, and your neshamos were bound together, but as she stands now she is entirely a non-Jew. Had you not done complete teshuvah for that sin, fasts and iron chains included, you would have come back after your death as a dog, like anyone who sins with a non-Jewish woman and dies without teshuvah. But you have done complete teshuvah and made a tikkun for that sin, so your tikkun now is learning Torah. Because of the bond between your neshamos, your Torah will stir her nefesh to come to Yiddishkeit and convert for the sake of Shamayim, with no thought of you at all. Then you will meet her as a giyores tzedek, marry her, and build a kosher home in Yisrael."

"I don't want a giyores," he said. "I want a kosher bas Yisrael, Jewish from the womb and from birth."

"Come," I said, "we'll go to the tzaddik in Yehud and hear what he says. Maybe I am wrong."

We came in to find the tzaddik sitting there smiling. "What does this one want?" he asked me.

"To get married," I said.

The answer came at once: "He has a bone in chutz la'aretz. Let him wait till she is put right, and then marry her."

The bochur caught his meaning. "I don't want a bone," he cried in alarm, "I want kosher meat."[102]

"I have a bas Yisrael for you," the tzaddik told him, "seven years older than you. Will you take her?"

"Yes," he said, without a moment's hesitation.

Then and there the Rav said, "I have given her to you. She is yours."

Afterward I sent the bochur out and asked the tzaddik where he had found him a bas zug. In his last gilgul, he told me, this bochur had been killed by the Nazis. They had taken men and women and forced them into an aveirah, and while each pair was together in the act, shot them in the head. He was one of those men. "The woman who was with him came back in a gilgul seven years ahead of him, alone, with no partner, and so I gave her to him."

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[102] "Bone" and "meat" (basar in Hebrew, which also means "flesh"): Adam said of Chavah, "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Bereishis 2:23). —Trans.

On the way out the bochur asked me, "The Rav has given me a Jewish bas zug. So what becomes of the non-Jewish woman?"

As I understood it, I told him, she would die before long, and her nefesh would enter as an ibbur (a neshamah that joins the soul of a living person) into the woman the tzaddik had given him.

Some weeks later, on a Shabbos during the Omer, a number of my talmidim gathered at my house for seudah shelishis. This bochur was among them, and so was another bochur with the same name, who was just starting out on the road of teshuvah. The newcomer told me, with the talmidim listening, that he had registered with a computerized shidduch office called CFU and been sent the details of several suitable girls. He met one of them, and she proposed that they go to the Kosel together. After a long while there she came out of the ezras nashim to him and told him to go his way. She would have nothing to do with him: she had seen that the whole time he had not opened a sefer or joined any of the minyanim.

What she had done appealed to the first bochur, and he asked his friend for her details on the spot. After Maariv and sefiras ha'omer at my house, when the others had all gone home, he called her from my house and proposed himself as a shidduch, using the details CFU had given his friend. Hearing that the suggestion came by way of CFU, she said, "I'm sorry, but none of the bochurim I've met through them are religious enough for me, so I'm not willing to meet you."

He answered her, "Today is such-and-such many days of the Omer."

When she heard him give the right count for that night, she agreed to meet him.

Some days later the bochur was back. "My heart is set on this shidduch," he said, "and she seems willing too. What do I do now? Is she the one the tzaddik from Yehud meant?"

"Look," I said, "you are twenty-five, and by the tzaddik's words your bas zug must be seven years older, which makes her thirty-two. How old is the girl?"

He did not know, he said, but she looked younger.

"Ask her straight out," I told him. "If she says thirty-two, then 'the matter has come from Hashem,' just as the tzaddik said. If she gives any other age, the two of us will go back to the tzaddik in Yehud and find out what to do."

The next time they met he asked, and she told him she was thirty-two. He understood at once that this was the bas zug the tzaddik from Yehud had set aside for him in place of "the bone in chutz la'aretz," and he proposed to her on the spot. They were married according to the law of Moshe and Yisrael, and together they merited to raise a "generation of the upright, blessed."

The Boy in Canada

In those years I went to Canada and America every year to raise funds for the Shaar Yosef Institute for Jewish Awareness, which I had founded, and so through me Mori Chaim's name came to be known in those countries too.

One day a friend in Canada phoned and asked me to hurry to Mori Chaim for his advice. His brother's son, a boy of eight, had been found to have a growth in his head. Without an operation, the doctors said, the boy would surely die; with one, he might live, but he would certainly not be in his right mind, rachmana litzlan. The decision lay with the parents, and they wanted to abide by whatever Mori Chaim decided.

I went straight to Mori Chaim and put the case to him. When I had finished, he said, "Tell them to operate. The boy will come through healthy and whole, without the slightest harm."

Back in Yerushalayim I called Canada and gave over the Rav's answer. "You must not have understood," my friend said. "The boy hasn't even a one percent chance of recovering. The question is this: do we operate, when he may die under the doctors' hands, and if he lives his mind will be impaired; or do we leave him as he is and let Shamayim do with him as it sees fit? Go back to the Rav and explain it to him clearly."

So I went to Mori Chaim again and set out the problem in full. His answer was more or less this: "The doctors say, and I say, and I say again: let them operate, and the boy will recover completely and be like anybody else."

I passed it on to my friend, and he did not believe me. The operation went ahead, and the boy made a complete recovery.

Children for Mr. P. H.

One day Mr. P. H. of Canada came to me with his wife, whom the doctors had pronounced barren, and asked me to bring him to Mori Chaim for a

berachah for children. Mori Chaim did promise him children, with no treatment needed. He stayed on in Eretz Yisrael to wait for the berachah to bear fruit, and meanwhile took his wife to Hadassah hospital in Yerushalayim for a series of fertility tests.

Then Mori Chaim fainted at home and was rushed to the hospital, where he stayed a few days. After he came home, Mr. P. H. and I went to visit him, and found him lying in bed, his strength gone. Mr. P. H. was very upset; he feared Mori Chaim was about to slip away to the Upper World before the berachah came true. I begged Mori Chaim's pardon for troubling him in such a state, and told him that Mr. P. H. was heartbroken because his wife had not yet conceived.

"Tell him," he answered, "that this month she will conceive."

Some two months later Mr. P. H. came to me. "Come," he said, "let's go to Mori Chaim and thank him. His berachah has borne fruit. Last month my wife was remembered, just as he said. I waited one more month to be sure all is well, and now I want to thank him, since I am going back to Canada."

Years afterward I called on him at his home in Canada. By then he had several children, born of Mori Chaim's berachah, which had promised him **children**.

Two Women from Canada

Once two Canadian couples, neighbors, came to me together. The wives, Mrs. A. and Mrs. H., both had cancer, Hashem yatzileinu, and they wanted me to bring them to Rav Chaim for a berachah. Mori Chaim gave them a warm welcome and blessed them wholeheartedly. When they had gone, he told me, "Know that although I blessed them, Mrs. H. will not recover from the illness, and Mrs. A. will."

From that meeting grew a close friendship between me and the A. family. Each winter, when I came to Canada, I would fly into their city, and the A. family would come for me in their car and take me home with them, and I stayed as their guest for as long as I was in town.

During one of those stays, the H. family called me to come at once. I found Mrs. H. gravely ill. Weeping, she told me she felt her end was near, and she asked me to talk her husband into halting work on their new house, which was nearly finished: her heart told her that another woman, not she,

would live in it with him. Her husband, out of real love, burst into tears. "Just the opposite," he told her. "I'll finish it faster, so that you can live there in comfort and raise our children in peace." A few days later the illness took her, as Mori Chaim had told me.

She left several children, some of them babies, and the rabbanim urged him to remarry quickly, so the children could be cared for at home and not be sent off to institutions.

A year later I visited Mr. H. in the new house and met his second wife, a few years younger than he, divorced and childless, who was devoted to his children. She told me her story. She had been living in another state in America, married to a man with whom things had gone wrong, and however often she asked him for a get, he was determined to keep her an agunah. Then one day, for no reason at all, he went to the beis din and agreed to give it. The beis din arranged the get quickly and told her that by halachah she could not remarry for ninety-one days. On the night of the ninetieth day after her divorce she came to Mr. H.'s city for a friend's chupah. At the wedding seudah people suggested Mr. H. to her and introduced the two. After a few meetings they decided to marry, and the rav who was to be mesader kiddushin asked her when she had been divorced. **What surprised them both was that the get had been given on the day Mrs. H. passed away.**

The Dream

Several years later, in midsummer, I was asleep at home in Yerushalayim on a Friday night when I dreamed that it was winter and I had landed in Canada as usual. This time, though, the A. family did not come for me as they always did, and I took a taxi to the kollel near their home. As I walked in, the rosh kollel turned to me. "Do you know that Mrs. A. passed away, and her husband has married again?"

"Yes," I told him, "and that is why I came here. I would feel uncomfortable going to his house, and I won't stay with anyone else, so as not to hurt him. I'll leave my things in the ezras nashim and stay at the kollel until my business in this city is done."

All the same, that night, somehow, I found myself in Mr. A.'s car on the way to his house. When we got there he said, "Go in by the front door, please. I'll go in through the garage on the ground floor and bring your

suitcase." I knocked, a voice said "Come in," and I stepped inside and stood behind the door. His second wife came out of the living room toward me. "My husband has told me about you," she said. "Welcome. I will try to honor you as much as the late Mrs. A. did." As she spoke, a shiver seized me and the hair on my arms stood up. Then Mr. A. came in, laid his hand on my shoulder, and we went into the living room together.

I woke at midnight, and I understood that Mrs. A. was gone. On Motza'ei Shabbos, American time, I called a friend there and asked after her. She had passed away, he told me, and been buried on Friday at noon.

When winter came I did not tell Mr. A. I was coming. I took a taxi to the kollel, the rosh kollel came over to me, and our conversation went exactly as it had in my dream. That night Mr. A. came in for Maariv and was surprised to find me there. Why hadn't I come to him as I always did? It was hard for me to come to his house, I told him, and out of respect for him I would not stay at anyone else's; I would stay at the kollel until my business in town was done. He said nothing.

After Maariv he came over to me. "Your suitcase is in my car," he said. "You have no choice; you're coming home with me." I went, and he told me to go in by the front door, just as in my dream. Inside, the very woman I had seen in the dream came toward me and spoke the very same words. This time the hair on my arms bristled and stood up while I was wide awake. Then Mr. A. came in and put his hand on my shoulder. He told me how his wife had died of fluid swelling her legs, and how he had met his present wife a few months after his first wife z"l passed away.

I have written this story down for two reasons. It belongs to Rav Chaim, not one of whose words ever fell to the ground; and it shows that the hashgachah decrees everything in advance: "A man's steps are set firm by Hashem," and "Everything is foreseen, yet permission is given."

The Seven Clean Days

My talmid Y. P. and his wife could not have children. Her fertile time came around the tenth day from the start of her monthly cycle, and since her period lasted six days, it fell within the seven clean days. The doctors were blunt: "If you want children, you have to be together within the seven clean days. Otherwise, forget about children." I could find no heter, and I explained to them that the matter came close to an issur kares. It was a hard

test, and I feared they would not stand up to it. So I suggested that my talmid come with me to Mori Chaim; perhaps the yeshuah would come from there.

When I put my talmid's problem to Mori Chaim, he asked me how I pasken in hilchos niddah for a woman who has not been with her husband for three days and then sees blood: from when do I tell them to start counting the seven clean days? In such a case, I told him, she makes a hefsek taharah that same day and starts counting the next.[103]

Mori Chaim then turned to my talmid and promised him that his wife would conceive that very month. When her time of the month came, a wonder happened: instead of running close to seven days, as it always did, her period ended after one. Shamayim had also arranged that the two of them had not been together in the three days before, so she could make her hefsek taharah as early as the second day and count her seven clean days, and the night of the mikveh fell exactly on the night she could conceive. She conceived and bore a son. From then on she was healed; her fertile time came right, as with other women, and she had more sons and daughters.

Several years after Mori Chaim passed away, I was in France when a baal teshuvah couple came to me with the same sort of problem: the wife's fertile time fell within the seven clean days. I told them of the mofes Mori Chaim had done for my talmid Y. P., and I phoned my talmid Y. K. and

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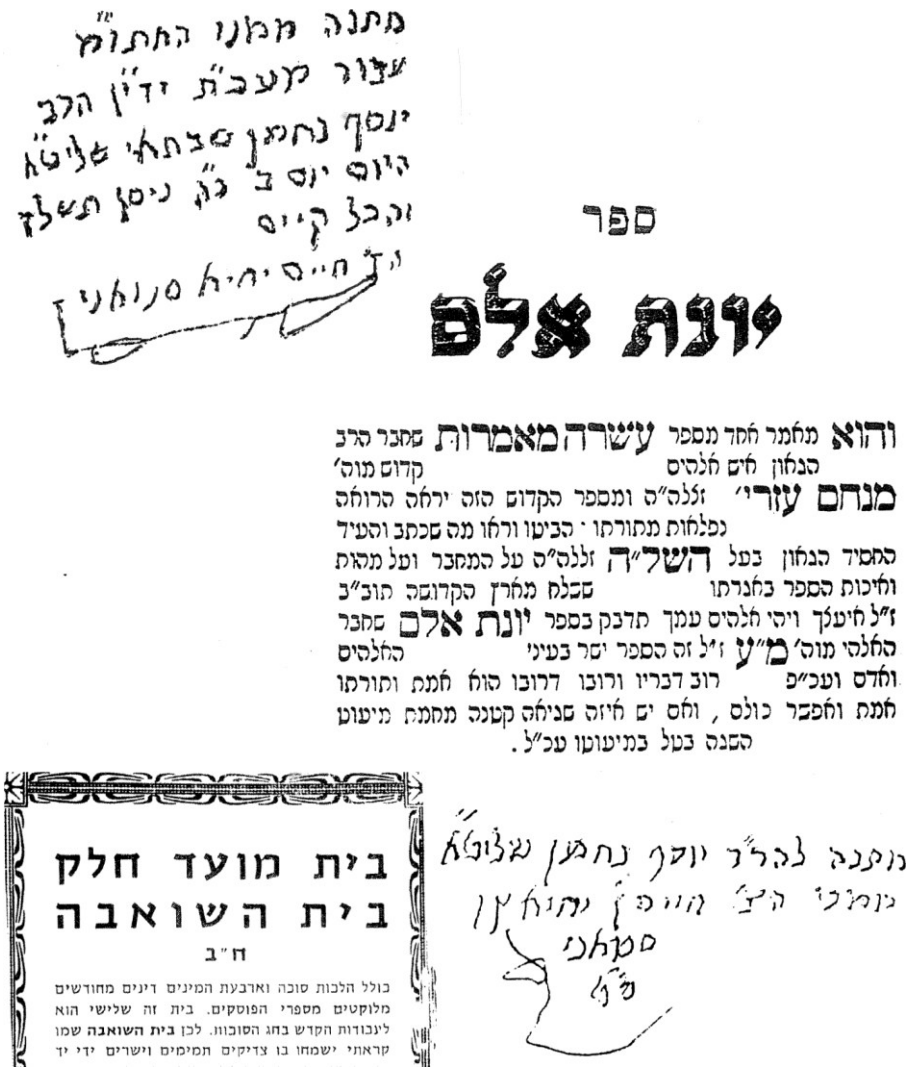
[103] The matter is this. By the din, a woman who was with her husband and then saw blood for a day or two cannot start counting the seven clean days as soon as the blood stops. First she counts four days from the last time she was with her husband, makes a hefsek in taharah and cleanliness on the fourth day, and only from the fifth day starts counting the seven clean days. But where a woman had not been with her husband for at least three days before she saw blood, and stopped seeing after a day or two, the poskim disagree: may she make a hefsek in taharah at once and count seven clean days, or does the din of counting four days first apply to her too? Our Ashkenazi brothers are machmir even here and have her count four or five days before the seven clean days. Among the Sephardim the customs vary with their lands of origin. For all my talmidim I pasken according to the author of the Shulchan Aruch, Maran Rabbi Yosef Karo zt"l: where she had not been with her husband for at least three days before she saw blood, she does not need to count any extra days. As soon as she stops seeing, she makes a hefsek in taharah and begins at once to count the seven clean days.

asked him to go to Mori Chaim's tziyun and daven for them. Once I was home in Eretz Yisrael, I forgot the whole thing.

About a year later I was back in France. One morning in the street I ran into an acquaintance. "You must have come for the bris today," he said, "of that couple's son." That surprised me: so the woman had given birth after all, and the bris was about to begin just then, in one of the suburbs of Paris. I went there at once and arrived just as it was starting. Afterward I asked the father how his wife had come to conceive. A month after I phoned my talmid to go to Mori Chaim's tziyun, he said, her period had lasted only one day, and she was able to finish counting her seven clean days before her fertile time arrived. "And here is the son, before your eyes."

Once the **"government officials,"** the ones called "the beis din of the governmental Chief Rabbinate," issued an order forbidding me to leave the country. I went to Mori Chaim. "Don't worry," he told me. "Go abroad as you always do. Only remember to say the kapitel of Tehillim 'Min hameitzar karasi Kah' ('From the straits I called to Hashem') right through to its end before passport control, and you will go in peace and come back in peace." And so it was.



מתנה מאתנו החתומ
עזור מעבת ידין הלב
יוסף נחמן סבתאי שליטא
היום יום ב' כ"ה ניסן תשל"ז
והכל קיים
ע"ז חיים יחיא סנוואני

ספר

יונת אלם

והוא מחמר חמד מספר עשרה מאמרות שחבר הרב
הגאון חיים חלפיס קדוש מוה'
מנחם עזרי' זללה"ה ומספר הקדוש הזה ירחה הרוחה
נפלאות מתורתו · הביעו ורחו מה שכתב והעיד
המסיד הגאון בעל השל"ה זללה"ה על המחבר ועל מהות
וחיבות הספר בחגרתו שבלח מחרן הקדושה תוב"ב
ז"ל חיעלך ויהי חלפיס עמך תדבק בספר יונת אלם שחבר
החלפי מוה' מ"ע ז"ל זה הספר יסר בעיני החלפיס
וחדם ועכ"פ רוב דבריו ורובו דרובו הוח חמת ותורתו
חמת וחפבר כולם, וחם ים חיזה סניחה קטנה מחמת מיעוט
הסנה בטל במיעוטו עכ"ל.

בית מועד חלק
בית השואבה
ח"ב

כולל הלכות סוכה וארבעת המינים דינים מחודשים
מלוקטים מספרי הפוסקים. בית זה שלישי הוא
ליעבודות הקדש בחג הסוכות. לכן **בית השואבה** שמו
קראתי ישמחו בו צדיקים תמימים וישרים ידי יד

מתנה לכה"ר יוסף נחמן שליטא
מאת הרב חיים יחיא סנוואני

Rabbeinu's holy handwriting and signature on some of his sefarim, which he gave me as a gift in his last years

In his hand, beside the title page of the sefer Yonas Elem:

A gift from me, the undersigned,
to his eminence, my dear friend, HaRav
Yosef Nachman Shabsai, shlita.
Today, Monday, 23 Nisan 5737 (1977).
And all is confirmed.
The humble Chaim Yichye Sinwani

The printed title page:

Sefer Yonas Elem, one of the essays of the sefer Asarah Maamaros, by the rav, the gaon, the holy man of G-d, our teacher Rabbi Menachem Azariah zlh"h.[104] *In this holy sefer the reader will see the wonders of his Torah. See what the chassid and gaon, the author of the Shelah zlh"h, wrote and testified about the author and about the nature and worth of the sefer, in the letter he sent from the Holy Land, may it be rebuilt and established speedily in our days. These are his words: "I counsel you, and may G-d be with you: cleave to the sefer Yonas Elem by the G-dly author, our teacher Rabbi M. A. z"l. This sefer is upright in the eyes of G-d and man. At the least, most of his words, the greater part of the greater part, are truth, and his Torah is truth, and perhaps all of them are; and if there is some small error, from a lesser grasp, it is nullified in its smallness." End of his words.*

In his hand, beside the title page of the sefer Beis Moed:

A gift to HaRav Rabbi Yosef Nachman, shlita,
from me, the humble Chaim Yichye
Sinwani,
s"t (may his end be good).

The printed title page:

Beis Moed, the part Beis HaSho'evah, Part Two. It holds the laws of Sukkah and the Four Species, new dinim gathered from the sefarim of the poskim. This third "house" is for the holy services of the festival of Sukkos; therefore I have named it Beis HaSho'evah. May the tzaddikim, the wholehearted and the upright, rejoice in it [the rest is cut off in the picture].

I once had a hard problem in my family. Mori Chaim would sit holding my hand and weeping. "As long as I am alive," he would say, "I will not be able to help you with this problem. But I promise you that when I get there, I will not rest until it is solved in the best way possible." So it was. On 1 Nisan 5739 (1979), within the seven days after his passing, the problem was resolved in law, and on 10 Nisan it was resolved completely. Zy"a.

Rabbeinu wrote many sefarim, and he left them in manuscript, unwilling to print them in his lifetime and become known to the public. But he want-

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[104] Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano, the Rama MiPano, the great mekubal of Italy. — Trans.

ed very much for them to come out after his passing, and several have already been printed.

Mori Chaim Sinwani zt"l was born on 9 Tishrei 5658 (1897) and passed away on 27 Adar 5739 (1979). He lies in honor in the Beis HaChaim (the cemetery) of Yehud. Zy"a.

RABBI AVRAHAM B'RABBI BINYAMIN HAKOHEN ZT"L

Rabbi Avraham was born in Monastir, Yugoslavia (the city known today as Bitola, in North Macedonia), and he was a close friend of Saba's. The two of them walked a long road together, a road of tefillos, fasts and afflictions.

Each year, during Shovavim, he fasted a full week, from Motza'ei Shabbos to Leil Shabbos. People who saw it told me that when he made Kiddush at the end of the week, he had special kavanos in mind, and his face shone brighter than all the candles and lamps in the room. A crowd would gather: the sick, and anyone else in distress. When he had made Kiddush and drunk a revi'is, they mixed the wine of his Kiddush into a big barrel full of wine and everyone drank from it, and many of the sick were cured on the spot of serious illnesses.

He kept this up while he lived in the Old City, and afterwards as well, when he moved to Yerushalayim and settled in the Zichron Tuviah neighborhood: seventeen years running. One year he fell ill in the middle of the fast week, and his family hurried to call a doctor, who told him to eat immediately or his life would be in danger. Rabbi Avraham laughed. His time had not come yet, he told the doctor, and he knew it; his life was in no danger, he was only weak. He would not give in, and he fasted through to Leil Shabbos as he always did. He lived for many years after that.

The family descended from the Jews expelled from Spain. As a boy Rabbi Avraham did nothing but learn; later, like his father, he kept a shop. By then he was married with two daughters, and he set out for America with some friends and stayed there about two years, doing the cooking for all of them so that they would have kosher food. He brought two Sifrei Torah home with him; and his two daughters passed away. When the mourning was over, he made a special seudah in honor of the Sifrei Torah, and he was granted a special illumination.

Every day, when it was time for Minchah and Maariv, he went off to daven and left the shop with no one to watch it. In 5664 (1904), two years

after he came back from the United States, he left for Yerushalayim without a word even to his wife. Once there, he sent for her, and Sarah joined him. He opened Yerushalayim's first candy shop, with a partner, Mr. Calderon, but his tefillos and his learning took up so much of him that the two of them went their separate ways, and he opened a small shop of his own where he made candies.



Rabbi Avraham b'Rabbi Binyamin HaKohen zt"l

He took up Kabbalah in Yerushalayim at twenty-nine. At about thirty-three he gave up the shop altogether and devoted his days and nights to Torah and Kabbalah. Even as a young man he dressed simply and ate simply. He got up at chatzos, toveled in the mikveh, said Tikkun Chatzos and learned until morning. His was a poor home. He had fourteen children, and only five daughters and one son survived.

With Saba he took on many afflictions, as a kapparah for the galus of the Shechinah and for Klal Yisrael.

He fasted and afflicted himself for women who had no children, for children who could not speak and for the sick of every kind, that they should recover, and they did. He never asked to be paid for it, and many people owed their deliverance to him. When someone lay dangerously ill, the family would send for him to look at the patient and tell them whether he would live or die, and it always turned out as he said.

In the Old City, where he lived, he gave no shiurim and kept to his corner, out of sight. The only ones he drew to Torah were children, whom he won over with sweets.

Rabbi Avraham HaKohen was a talmid of the great mekubal Chacham Mordechai Sharabi zt"l, and he raised the funds for his yeshivah. I can still see him: tall, handsome, his face full of majesty. Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l told me that watching him count Sefiras HaOmer made you tremble. His face burned like fire, and for a long hour he was lost in the kavanos of the count, his face turning white, then red, then white again.

I saw him in the street with a cane in his hand and his eyes closed, to keep them holy. The cane showed him the way. With it he walked safely, crossing busy streets full of traffic without once turning his eyes to what went on around him.

His Passing

This I heard from the hidden tzaddik Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l. On the first Shabbos of Adar each year, Rabbi Avraham would go to Tel Aviv to appeal for funds for Chacham Mordechai Sharabi's yeshivah, Nahar Shalom. In 5723 (1963) he arrived as always on Friday, 5 Adar, at the home of Rabbi Ezra HaKohen zt"l. Rabbi Ezra and his wife kept an open house, real baalei hachnasas orchim, and every one of the hidden tzaddikim, my grandfather too, was at home there.

Friday night went by as it always did, around the table with divrei Torah and zemiros. In the morning Rabbi Avraham got up as he had all his life, davened vasikin, ate the Shabbos meal quickly and set out on his round of the shuls of Tel Aviv-Yafo, appealing in each one for the yeshivah. The round took him until midday, so he davened Minchah Gedolah on the way back and ate seudah shlishis when he reached the house.

That Shabbos, when he had finished seudah shlishis, he lay down in bed with some sefarim and studied them until Shabbos went out. Then his host,

Rabbi Ezra HaKohen, came in to take him along to shul for Maariv. "I do not have permission to get out of bed," Rabbi Avraham told him. Rabbi Ezra did not understand. He supposed his guest was tired and left him alone, and Rabbi Avraham davened Maariv in bed.

When Rabbi Ezra came home, Rabbi Avraham asked him to bring the Havdalah to his bed, and there he made Havdalah. Rabbi Ezra wanted him to get up for the seudah revi'is (the melaveh malkah). "I cannot get up," said Rabbi Avraham. "They are waiting for me Above, to eat the seudah revi'is with them."

"You are in better health than I am," Rabbi Ezra said. "You walked around half of Tel Aviv today, and you talk like this?" Rabbi Avraham said nothing.

Then he turned to his host. "Come, let us learn the Mishnayos of Maseches Tamid." They learned together until they came to the mishnah that says, "These and those arrived, and said, 'Shalom'; all is shalom."[105] There Rabbi Avraham stopped. Rabbi Ezra wanted to finish the perek, but Rabbi Avraham told him, "All is shalom."

Next he took from his bag the sefer *Maavar Yabok*, which he had brought from home.[106] It is a sefer written to prepare a person for death according to the Kabbalah: what to say before one's passing, and how to give every part of the neshamah back to the Borei Yisbarach, returning the deposit whole and pure.

When he had finished learning it, he called his host. "Rabbi Ezra, there is one moment left before the neshamah leaves. Tell Rav Yosef Waltuch it is a pity he is not here with me now; he would have gained a great deal. Come, say Krias Shema with me."

Aloud and clearly he said the whole pasuk of "Shema Yisrael," with its kavanos, the kavanos of mesirus nefesh among them. As he finished the word "Echad," he drew the blanket over his head and passed away to eternal life.

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[105] The first perek of Maseches Tamid tells how, at dawn, two groups of kohanim with torches went around the Azarah from opposite sides to see that everything was in order. When they met, they said, "Shalom": all is shalom, all is well. —Trans.

[106] By the mekubal Rabbi Berechiah of Modena (a city in northern Italy) zt"l.

Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l told me all this as he had heard it from Rabbi Ezra zt"l himself. My grandfather, his close friend, saw to his burial in the Sanhedria cemetery in Yerushalayim, and I had the zechus of going with my grandfather to the levayah.

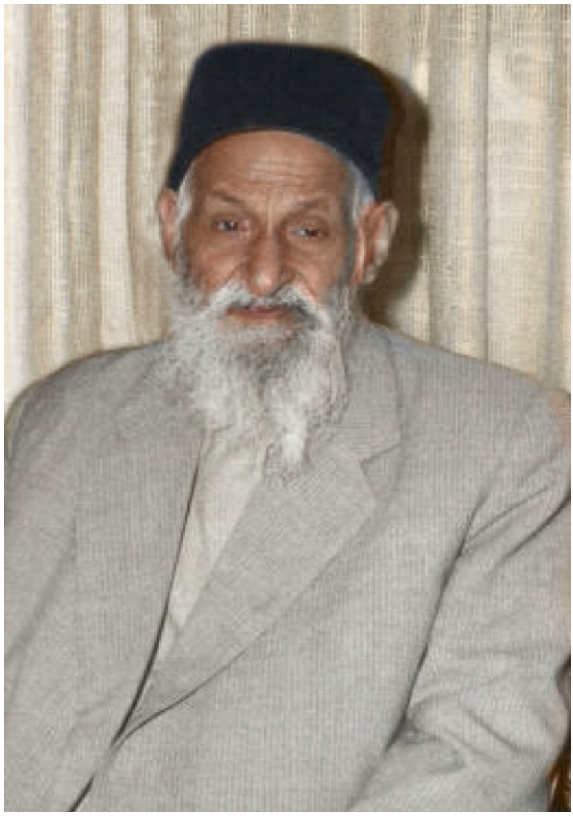
Rabbi Avraham was eighty when he passed away. He had bought himself a grave on Har HaZeisim and later one in Sanhedria, and it is there that he lies (section 18, row 7), zy"a.

CHACHAM SASSON LEVI ZT"L

Chacham Sasson, one of Saba's friends, davened at the Ahavas Chaim shul every Leil Shabbos Kodesh and every Motza'ei Shabbos Kodesh, and came there every night for his fixed shiur.

He was a talmid chacham and a man of the highest kedushah, with an enormous bekius. He knew Shas, the poskim and the sefarim of Kabbalah by heart, down to the amud and the se'if where each thing stood, and the elder of the mekubalim, Chacham Efraim Kohen zy"a, marveled at the reach of his knowledge.

Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l sent him people in need of a berachah and a yeshuah. Chacham Sasson Levi's berachah, he would tell them, was as good as the Baba Sali's: "You do not have to travel to Netivot (the town in the south of Eretz Yisrael where the Baba Sali lived). We have a real Baba Sali right here, and every berachah he gives comes true." His tefillos did save many. Where a complicated operation was needed, he would give a berachah, and the patient was healed at once.



Chacham Sasson Levi zt"l

The Night the Six Years Ended

Sefer HaKanah writes that one who fasts every weekday for six years running is rid of the yetzer hara, as the pasuk says, "Six years he shall work, and in the seventh he shall go out free": free of the yetzer hara. Chacham Sasson kept this fast. (When I was a talmid at Yeshivas Porat Yosef, he spent his days learning in Oz VeHadar, the mekubalim's yeshivah in the same building, and I used to see them bring him a cup of tea in the evening to break his fast.)

I was told that at chatzos on the night his six years were up, Chacham Sasson knocked at my grandfather's door. My grandfather opened it and found him barefoot, shaking from head to foot and crying, "Fire, fire."

Once he had calmed down, he told my grandfather what had happened. As on every Thursday night, he had been learning Zohar until chatzos in the Toag shul in the Mekor Baruch neighborhood. "On the way home," he

said, "I came to Rechov Rashi. There was no one in the street. All of a sudden a woman was standing in front of me, asking the time. I told her, 'Twelve, give or take' (that is, about twelve o'clock). Then without warning she tried to make me stumble in an aveirah. I kicked off my shoes, ran for my life, and came straight to you, Chacham Menachem."

My grandfather sent a relative of mine to fetch the shoes, and he brought them back.

Krias Shema at Chatzos

I knew Chacham Sasson from early childhood, since he davened at Chevras Ahavas Chaim every Shabbos and Yom Tov night. Every Motza'ei Shabbos he came to hear Saba. He did not come to learn something new or to grow wiser; he came to bask in the light of Saba's face while he spoke, a thing only men of their level could understand.

Now and then he spoke in public himself, at Ahavas Chaim and to other congregations in a number of shuls. I often joined the Tikkun Kares learning held in various shuls in Yerushalayim, and he was there too. Not once did he miss it, and not once did he forget to stop everyone about five minutes before chatzos, calling out loudly to remind them to say Krias Shema she'al hamitah.[107]

He said Krias Shema several times a day, with the yichud of mesirus nefesh and of the four misos beis din in mind, b'dechilu u'rechimu.

At chatzos he got up for Tikkun Chatzos and wept bitterly over the Churban. Then he learned until dawn, went to the mikveh, and from there went on to shul. I often met him in the mikveh at that hour. So early in the morning the hot water was still boiling; you could not put a finger in it. He would go straight down and tovel, and come up red all over from the heat.

When the davening was over he stood, eyes shut, and said the piyut "Adon Olam" in fear and trembling. More than once, as I listened, I felt

[107] According to the Kabbalah, a person who is not going to sleep, whatever the reason, must still say it shortly before chatzos, without the berachah of Hamapil. The reason, by sod, is to complete the four times Krias Shema is said each day: twice in the morning, in Zemiros (Pesukei d'Zimrah) and before the Shemoneh Esrei, and twice at night, at Maariv and at bedtime.

myself lifted to the greatest heights. He made a point of saying "b'terem kol yetzir bara" in it.[108]

I remember one Tishah B'Av, after chatzos, finding him alone in the Maskil El Dal shul, sitting on the floor and saying Megillas Eichah, weeping bitterly as though the Churban were happening that moment in front of him.

Whenever Chacham Sasson walked down the street, men, women and children came up to him for a berachah, and he blessed each of them warmly. If someone put money in his hand for the berachah, he took it and slipped it into his pocket without ever knowing who had given, how much, or what the pocket held. Every Thursday he went into the Yad L'Achim office, turned his face away and emptied the pocket, never looking at what came out. The Yad L'Achim people told me the sums were large, coins and bills from several countries. He had no idea of it. He lived in poverty and want, and never took so much as a perutah of it for himself.

A Drop of Soap in the Tea

My son Avraham was there the day Chacham Sasson Levi zt"l came into the Shemesh Tzedakah shul trembling and asked the gaon Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi zt"l for a tikkun for his sin. He had drunk tea from a cup that had been washed with soap, he said. Some soap had stayed in the cup, and he did not know what hechsher the soap had. Woe to him, woe to his soul, that he had stumbled and drunk tea with soap of doubtful kashrus.

Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi was a gaon in halachah. An ordinary person who came to him with such a question would have been sent home with the answer that there was nothing to worry about: even if the soap was made from something forbidden, it is nosen taam lifgam (it gives a spoiled taste). Chacham Sasson himself gave others the same answer when it happened to them. But to Chacham Sasson, Chacham Yaakov said, "For a thing like this, fast two days as a kapparah."

It staggers the mind to think how far these chassidim went to keep their neshamos clean: they shrank from the faintest shadow of a doubtful issur,

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[108] The usual version reads *nivra*, "before any creature was created"; *bara* means "before He created any creature." —Trans.

in food that the halachah permits in any case because its taste is spoiled. Zy"a.

Several times he joined the holy mekubalim Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l, Chacham Yosef Zaruk zt"l, Chacham Yehoshua Sharabani zt"l and Chacham Shaul Dovid Chai Moallem zt"l, the men he also learned Kabbalah with, in driving the spirit of a dead person out of the body of a living one (a dybbuk).

Call Him Shmuel

A woman who had been childless for many years was listening to the haftarah on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, which tells how Chanah, mother of Shmuel HaNavi, was remembered after years without children. Then and there she vowed that if she had a son, she would name him Shmuel. That very year she gave birth to a boy. But somehow she forgot her neder, and picked a different name for the baby.

Chacham Sasson lived on her street, so she went to invite him to the bris. "Call him Shmuel," he said. She told him she had already chosen a name, and he said it again, as an order: "Call him Shmuel." She began to think it over, not sure what to do, and then she remembered the neder she had made on Rosh Hashanah.

Kedushah

He said every one of the birchos hanehenin with yirah, ahavah and holy trembling, eyes closed, his whole being shaking as he mentioned the glorious and awesome Name and blessed Him. In Kaddish and Kedushah his whole body rose toward Heaven.

A man once made fun of Chacham Sasson by imitating him. After he had done it a few times, he found that he talked that way all the time, and everyone who saw him laughed at him and scorned him. Only some time later, when he regretted what he had done and gave up his foolishness, was he cured.

Every davar shebikdushah he said with holy fire, and when the chazzan reached Kedushah in chazaras hashatz, he shook all over with fear. In his last years a grave illness struck his brain, rachmana litzlan, and most of his body was paralyzed. The doctor came to give him physiotherapy, but it was no use; Chacham Sasson would not move. Then his son began to say Kedushah beside him, as though they were davening, and before the aston-

ished doctor's eyes Chacham Sasson moved his hands and feet as he tried to say Kedushah.

A woman once lost her little boy. She looked everywhere and could not find him. In the middle of her search she saw Chacham Sasson coming along the road and begged him to daven that she find her son. He shut his eyes for a short tefillah and told her, "Do not worry. Your son is in the next street, safe and sound." She went there and found him, just as he had said.

A. Ch. once gave Chacham Sasson Levi the name of a woman who was dangerously ill and asked him to daven for her. Chacham Sasson began at once, and in the middle of his tefillah he told A. Ch., "The danger is over. All is well. Go in peace." When A. Ch. got back, he learned that her condition had taken a marked turn for the better at that very moment, and soon after she recovered completely.

Every one of his many derashos carried a warning against Zionism, secular and religious alike, which he hated with all his heart and soul. He was forever quoting the pasuk **"Ki devar Hashem bazah, ve'es mitzvaso heifar"** ("For he has scorned the word of Hashem and broken His mitzvah"), which, he said, speaks of the prophet of the Zionists. **"Bazah"** (בז"ה) stands for Binyamin Zev Herzl (Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement), the man who planned to turn the Jews of his country into Christians. This is what he wrote in his diary:

"I sought to solve the Jewish problem, at least in Austria, with the help of the Catholic Church. First I sought to win over the heads of the Church, and through them to gain an audience with the Pope, so as to tell him: Protect us from the anti-Semites, and I will lead a great movement of Jews converting to Christianity freely and with pride. The leaders of the movement, and I first of all, will stay Jews, and as Jews we will advise the people and urge them to accept the ruling faith of their own will. The mass conversion will take place at noon on a Sunday, with a ceremonial procession in all its splendor and the bells ringing from the church of St. Stephen (the great cathedral of Vienna); not in hiding and in shame, the way Jews have converted until now, but standing proud and upright. All this on condition that the leaders stay Jews and escort the people to the threshold of the church. That will lend the proceedings dignity and wrap them in the

aura of a great revelation. Our children we will convert to Christianity before they are old enough to decide such things for themselves."[109]

Chacham Sasson zt"l once went down from Yerushalayim to Yam HaMelach (the Dead Sea) with a group of talmidei chachamim, to tovel there with the kavanos that belong to that place. While they were toveling, hikers passing by raised a concern of pritzus (immodesty). When this was pointed out to him, Chacham Sasson came out of the water and saw to it that the place was kept pure. Everyone could see how wholly he had shed his physical self: the will of his Maker was all that filled him.

The Baby Who Turned

An avreich's wife was having a very difficult labor, and he was sent to Chacham Sasson for a berachah. Chacham Sasson gave it, and the avreich went back to the hospital, where they told him that the baby, which had been lying sideways, had suddenly turned, and his wife had given birth easily and normally. When he heard the time of the birth, he realized it was the very moment Chacham Sasson had finished his berachah.

After that, whenever his wife reached her ninth month, he came to Chacham Sasson for a berachah for an easy birth, and each time it was so. Once the couple miscounted, and he came for the berachah in the middle of the eighth month. This time Chacham Sasson gave no berachah. All he said was, "You are early. The time has not come yet. Come when it does."

Back home, he and his wife counted again and found they had been two weeks off. He returned at the right time, received the berachah, and again his wife had an easy birth.

He had his own way of explaining the halachah "All lamps may be moved, except for a lamp that is burning on Shabbos," based on the holy Zohar. The Zohar writes that Gehinnom rests on Shabbos only for those who kept Shabbos and are being judged there for other aveiros; one who desecrated Shabbos is punished in Gehinnom on Shabbos as well. A person's nefesh, he said, is likened to a lamp. On Shabbos all the lamps, the nefashos, are moved out of Gehinnom to rest, except the lamp, the nefesh, that "burned" on Shabbos by desecrating it with forbidden melachah. That

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[109] *Kisvei Herzl* (the writings of Herzl), published by Maariv-Davar, volume 10, page 65.

lamp is not moved out on Shabbos; it stays behind to suffer, Hashem save us.

I was told that when his illness first set in, the left side of his body grew heavy, and he was taken to the doctor. They waited their turn until nearly sunset. Suddenly Chacham Sasson stood up, dragging half his body, and walked out, saying it was time for Minchah. He began quoting the Gemara: "A person should always be careful with the tefillah of Minchah," and so on. They begged him, in his state, to daven alone, and he answered with more of the Gemara: "A person's tefillah is heard only in the beis knesses," and so on; and "Behold, G-d is mighty and does not despise," meaning that HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not despise the tefillah of the many; and "He redeemed my soul in peace from the battle against me, because many were with me"; and other sayings of Chazal about tefillah b'tzibbur. Nothing they said helped. Dragging his body, he went off to daven Minchah b'tzibbur.

Later, when the paralysis from his brain had clouded his mind, he refused to eat; he was used to fasting. The gaon Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l gave advice: before each meal, take a Kiddush cup and make Kiddush in front of him, as though it were Shabbos. Then he would think it was Shabbos and agree to eat, and so every meal he ate was in honor of Shabbos Kodesh.

The Old Woman on the Way to Har Tziyon

On the afternoon of Erev Yom Kippur 5727 (1966) I stopped at our grocery on Rechov Sonnenfeld and found the grocer beaming. I asked him what had made him so happy. He told me about a relative of his, Binyamin, a young bochur who had lost his father. Before he died, the father had told his son to light a ner neshamah l'iluy nishmaso every Erev Yom Kippur at the kever of Dovid HaMelech on Har Tziyon, and for several years Binyamin had done as he was told.

"This morning," the grocer said, "he set out for Har Tziyon as he does every year. At the corner of the street that leads down to the mountain,[110] a

[110] In those days the way to Har Tziyon, which was partly in the hands of the Kingdom of Jordan, ran past the train station. From the end of the street beside the station a long slope went down toward the mountain, and from its foot one climbed a great many wide, tiring steps to the

very old woman came up to him, dressed in black and wrapped from head to foot, carrying a big, heavy basket. She asked him to help her get to the tziyun of Dovid HaMelech, alav hashalom, with the basket.

"He was in a great hurry, but he could not refuse her. He took the heavy basket and walked with her patiently for nearly half an hour, up to the grove at the top of the mountain. There he left her and went on to the tziyun of Dovid HaMelech, lit the ner neshamah, and shot off like an arrow toward the train station to catch the last bus home.

"A few minutes later he reached the station, panting for breath, and there, to his amazement, stood the old woman he had just brought to the top of the mountain, right beside him, smiling, basket in hand. 'Binyamin, my son,' she said, 'come and take me to Kever Rachel.' He was terrified. He ran from her all the way home, and from there he telephoned me, shaking all over, to tell me what had happened and to ask me to find out from the rabbanim of Yerushalayim what it meant.

"I have just asked Chacham Sasson Levi. He told me he has no doubt it was Rachel Imeinu, come to test whether he would give his time for her. He passed the test, so she wanted to bring him to her kever to daven for the geulah, and she would have watched over him and brought him safely home. But he was afraid, ran away, and lost the chance. Then Chacham Sasson added, 'Either way, I understand that this year we will be zocheh to stand at Kever Rachel, and the place will be in Jewish hands again.' That is why I am so happy."

Half a year later, in Iyar 5727 (1967), the Six Day War broke out, and after it we all stood at the holy tziyun of Rachel Imeinu. On the night of her yahrzeit, 11 Cheshvan 5728 (1967), it stirred the heart to see thousands of Jews streaming in from every corner of the world to the tziyun of the holy mother Rachel, who weeps for her children and refuses to be comforted for them until the longed-for geulah.

The Mezuzos in the Cursed House

Incidentally, that same grocer, Mr. Eliyahu Elias, told me an interesting story, and I think it worth setting down here for the reader's benefit.

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top. Up there one crossed a large grove to reach the entrance of the building over the tziyun of the kever of Dovid HaMelech, alav hashalom.

His parents moved from Baghdad to Calcutta, in India, and for several years lived on the ground floor of a two-story house. Upstairs lived a wealthy Indian who worshipped the cow as avodah zarah (Hashem protect us). He owned a house of more than ten rooms in the middle of the city, and it stood locked. People were afraid even to walk past it and would cross to the other side of the street when they came near, because more than once everyone who had slept there was found dead in the morning. The whole city knew of the place.

The rich man made up his mind to get rid of the house whatever it cost him. He asked a real estate agent to find a buyer at any price, promising him a high commission. The agent knew no one in the city would buy, so he went to the train station to look for a victim among the newcomers. To his delight, an Iraqi Jewish family stepped off the train: a father, his wife, his mother-in-law and several children. Plainly they needed a big apartment.

He went straight up to the man. "Would you be interested in a house big enough for your whole family, at a bargain price?" The man agreed to have a look. The agent handed him the key, pointed out the house from a distance, and said, "Go in on your own and see what you think. Meanwhile I have to look for other buyers in case you do not want it; I would hate to miss the people off the train."

The Jew took the bait. Inside he found a fine, roomy house that suited his needs, and he came back out to the agent, who was waiting at a distance, and asked the price. The agent named the full price, then added, "If you will pay cash today, you can have it for only thirty percent of that, with all the papers you need, including a contract signed by a lawyer. The owner is in a hurry to go abroad and needs cash." The Jew agreed and bought the house on the spot.

The family moved in, and the first thing he did was put up the kosher mezuzos he had brought with him from Baghdad.

The goy did not sleep that night. He paced up and down, sick with worry: what would happen to the buyers, when whole families had died there on their very first night? Early in the morning he took up a place at a distance, facing the door of the house, to see what would happen. Out came the buyer with his tallis and tefillin under his arm, on his way to shul.

The goy ran over to him. "Tell me, is everyone inside alive?"

"Of course. Why not?"

"I will tell you the truth," said the goy. "I sold it at a third of its price because it is dangerous. Please go and see whether everyone is alive. I am terribly worried."

The Jew laughed. "Do not be afraid. Come in with me and see for yourself: everyone is alive and well."

The goy came as far as the doorway but did not dare go in. "First check again that everything is all right," he said.

The Jew went in and came back out. "Everyone is up, happy and in good spirits. My mother-in-law has already lit the fire, and they are making breakfast."

Seeing the goy's amazement, he said, "Come, I will show you who guarded us," and he pointed to the mezuzah. "Our G-d commanded us to fix this on the doorposts of our houses, and this mitzvah protects us from the mazikin, creatures not made as we are."

When a few days had passed and the goy saw that all of them were still healthy and whole, he was deeply moved, and he and his whole family became geirim, in a geirus of truth and righteousness. Years later they settled in Eretz HaKodesh.

CHACHAM YAAKOV MUTZAFI ZT"L

On Leil Shabbos Kodesh of Parshas Tetzaveh 5763 (2003), I dreamed I was in Yeshivas Porat Yosef. Many people were learning there, and Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi zt"l sat among them in his Shabbos clothes. In the dream, too, it was Leil Shabbos, the very hour it was in waking life. He turned and asked whether I had something to talk to him about, and I said no. Then I remembered a question I had. I ran after him (he was on his way to Gan Eden) and asked it.

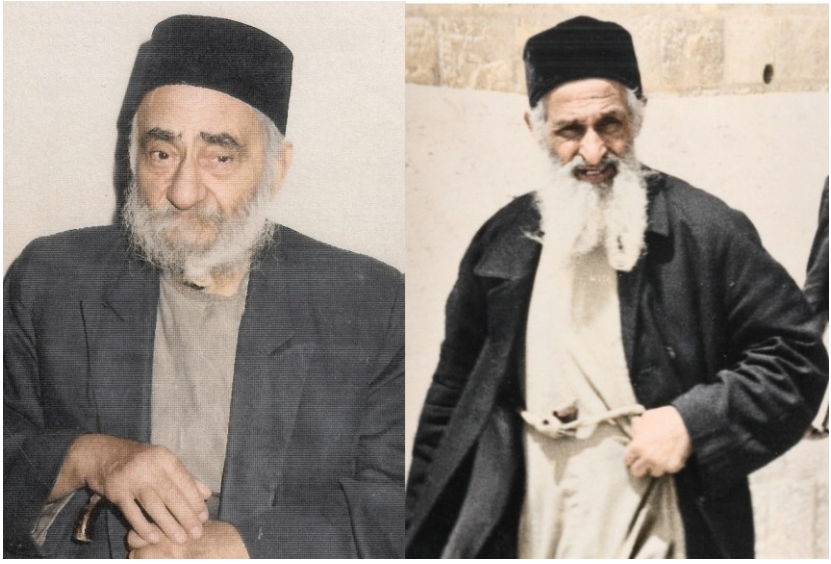
As I asked, we passed through a first door, the one that leads into the corridor between this world and Gan Eden. Walking on, he told me that the branches of the menorah are the aspect of Zu"n (Ze'ir Anpin and Nukva, in the language of the Kabbalah), and the fire is the aspect of Imma (the "Mother," the sefirah of Binah in the Kabbalah): the mother crouching over the young, in the secret of shiluach haken. Then he went through the second door, into Gan Eden, and I was not allowed in.

Still dreaming, I went back to Yeshivas Porat Yosef. Again many people were learning there, and Chacham Sasson Levi zt"l was standing there, but

there were two of him side by side, one in weekday clothes and one in white Shabbos clothes. I understood that the two were one: the first was his weekday nefesh, the second the tosefes Shabbos.

A line of people waited at the Shabbos nefesh for his berachah. I went to the weekday nefesh, who had a black hat on his head, and asked him for a berachah. He sent me to the other, young and handsome in his Shabbos clothes and white hat, who knew me at once, said my name and my mother's name without my telling him, and gave me wonderful berachos.

Then I told him about the fund I raise money for, which supports needy families: it was in very great difficulty. On my last trip abroad I had struggled to bring in what they needed, and I was thinking of going a second time. I asked for a berachah for success, and he blessed me with great success. I woke up and said Shir HaShirim. His berachah did its work: on my trip abroad, only a few days later, I had a special success, beyond the way of nature.



Left, Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi zy"a; right, Chacham Sasson Levi zy"a

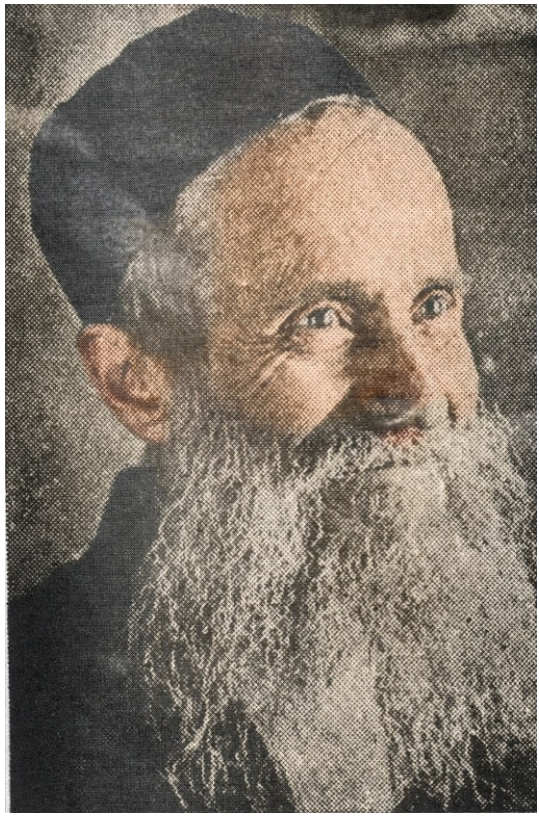
It brought back another dream. A year earlier, on a Shabbos night very close to the yahrzeit of Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi zt"l, I had dreamed I was at the corner of the Rechov Bar Ilan junction in Yerushalayim, beside a large, beautiful garden. I went in and found Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi zt"l,

back in his place in the Gan from a visit to this world. I also found where Chacham Sasson Levi zt"l dwelt, near Chacham Yaakov's own dwelling.

I asked Chacham Sasson for a berachah. He told me to come to him on Sunday at one in the afternoon and bring oil. At one o'clock on Sunday I was at his tziyun with oil; I lit it and davened. Now, about a year later, I had seen the two of them again: Chacham Yaakov gave me counsel, and Chacham Sasson blessed me, zy"a.

RAV MOSHE YAAKOV RIVKOV ZT"L, THE HOLY SANDLER

He was born in Lithuania in 5633 (1873). As a young man he gave himself over to Torah, climbing steadily in nigleh and in nistar, until he was chavrusa to the great mekubal of Vilna, HaRav HaGaon Rav Shlomo Elyashiv, author of *Leshem Shevo VeAchlamah*. At forty he came up to Eretz Yisrael and bought a small house at the corner of Rechov Shabazi, and there he stayed for the rest of his life. Next door he opened a shop where he mended shoes for a few hours each day. Sleep he barely allowed himself. His nights went to Torah and tefillah, alone and with his talmidim, men as hidden as he was.



Rav Moshe Yaakov Rivkov zt"l, the Holy Sandler

The Chazon Ish came often to the Sandler (the shoemaker) and would shut himself in with him for hours. Once, among his close circle, he let it slip that "the Sandler is the head of the lamed-vav tzaddikim of the generation," and with that the secret was out. From then on people came to his door in numbers, hoping he would find a remedy for their troubles.

The holy Gerrer Rebbe, the *Beis Yisrael* (Rav Yisrael Alter), was another frequent visitor. To those close to him he hinted at the reason: "They seek Torah from his mouth." It seems, then, that the two of them sat together over hard sugyos, in nigleh and in nistar, for each was great in both.

The hidden tzaddik Rav Avraham Fish was his talmid of long standing. Every weeknight for thirty-two years without a break, he came to the Sandler's house straight from his job on a building site to learn with him, and went home only for Shabbos nights.

Two more hidden tzaddikim, Rav Yosef Waltuch and Rav Shlomo Green (the tailor), both enormous talmidei chachamim, were often at his house, and whatever passed between them they kept to themselves.

Nobody who came to him for help was ever made to wait. Quite the opposite: he welcomed each one warmly, heard out all his pain like a merciful father, and did what he could for him with good advice. Part of that advice was a set of kapitlach of Tehillim, chosen to fit each person's trouble. Whoever needed a berachah got one, and when he had finished blessing, he always added one more, the berachah that mattered most: that his berachos should come true, and that the person should be a fit vessel to receive the berachah and to keep it.

The wonders told about him, and witnessed in public, were beyond counting; many volumes would not hold them. Yet his wish to stay hidden was granted all the same. That is why there is no sefer of his stories, nor of the stories of many hidden tzaddikim like him. As for the tzaddikim who did have sefarim written about them, those sefarim do not contain even one percent of the wonders done through them.

The Porridge

One morning, I remember, I came to his house for a berachah and found him at his pas shacharis, a bowl of porridge. (It was a few months before his passing, and I believe I was told that porridge was all he ate.) He stopped halfway and turned to me. The relative who looked after him urged him to finish, for his health's sake, and I too begged him to go on: I was in no hurry, I said, and had not come to disturb him, and more in that vein. It was no use. As long as someone needed his advice, everything else waited until that person had been properly seen to.[111] He gave me, naturally, certain kapitlach of Tehillim to say each day, and told me to take care to give a perutah to tzedakah every day in honor of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess. I will add this much. For the long stretch of time that I kept to what he told me, the matters I had come about were settled; when I grew lax, the trouble came back as sharp as ever.

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[111] See Avos d'Rabbi Nosson on how particular he was in this.

A Darshan on Shabbos

His neighborhood of Tel Aviv was full of talmidei chachamim in those days. So although every Shabbos Kodesh he spoke divrei Torah at seudah shelishis in the shul of Yeshivas Heichal HaTalmud, he managed to stay hidden, passing for a minor darshan who had picked up a few thoughts on the parshah from other rabbanim's sefarim. In truth, most of what he said, or nearly all of it, was his own: ideas full of sod, clothed in pshat.[112] Many hidden tzaddikim did the same. They wanted to keep their Torah hidden, and they wanted to be mezakeh the rabbim, and this was the middle way some of them took between the two. My grandfather z"l was one of them.

At least three hidden tzaddikim lived in that neighborhood, not counting Rav Yosef Waltuch and Rav Avraham Fish, whose homes were in a neighborhood close by, also in Tel Aviv. There was the Sandler, at the corner of Rechov Shabazi; Chacham Hillel Simchon zt"l, farther along Rechov Shabazi (at the corner of Rechov Samech-Ches); and Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon zt"l, on Rechov Elazar, right beside Rechov Shabazi. Chacham Simchon told me that he and the Sandler were "well acquainted," and that he was "well acquainted" with Patilon too. I conclude that Patilon and the Sandler, who must surely have heard of each other, were "well acquainted" as well. (I think Chacham Simchon told me that the two knew each other, but I cannot be sure.) My grandfather, too, was "well acquainted" with Chacham Simchon and with Chacham Patilon and spent a good deal of time in their part of town, on this very street; no doubt he was "well acquainted" with the Sandler as well. But hidden tzaddikim do not speak of one another except in unusual cases. That is why I never once heard the Sandler's name from Saba. Nor did I hear it from Rav Yosef Waltuch in all my years at his side, though in those years he spent a great deal of time with the Sandler and learned Torah with him. What is more, Rav Yosef used to bring him sick people who were afraid for their lives, to ask for his berachah.

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[112] Some of his words were gathered and printed in the sefer *Likutei Rav Moshe Yaakov* on the Torah, Bnei Brak 5764 (2004).

Eliyahu HaNavi at the Bris

He made a point of going to every bris he was invited to. At one of them the baby had been carried in and the milah was about to begin when the Sandler cried out, "I don't see him, I don't see him!" and walked out. The father knew the Sandler's worth and understood that he meant Eliyahu HaNavi. Shaken, he held up the bris until the matter could be cleared up. Inquiries showed that in the hospital his child had been switched with a non-Jewish baby from the next bed. With tears in their eyes at so great a miracle, the family invited the Sandler the following day to the bris of their real son. This time, when the baby was brought in, the Sandler smiled. "He is here," he said. "Now I see him."

Giving the Illness to a Goy

He followed the way of Rav Meir of Premishlan zt"l. To a sick man whose illness had no cure, when Shamayim had not agreed to lift it, he would say: go to a goy and make him a present of the illness, and so pass it on to him. A tzaddik of his stature had decreed it, so Hashem carried out his word: the illness left the sick man and went over to the goy. (Author's note: This is the secret of the pasuk "And I will give a man [*adam*] in your place," on which Chazal said: do not read *adam* but *Edom*. This is not the place to say more.)

Once, when people were heaping honor and praise on him, he answered them with a milsa d'bedichusa (a light word). "You should know," he told them, "that a man came here who was ready to pay a million dollars to see my face." They stood there, curious and wondering, and he went on: "Do you know why he would pay so much? He was blind."

Asked about a shidduch, he would go down to the root of the couple's neshamos and say decisively whether their zivug was from Shamayim or not. And so it proved.

A sick person facing an operation he advised to think thoughts of teshuvah, and to say three times the pasuk "Support me and I shall be saved, and I will occupy myself with Your statutes always" (Tehillim 119, pasuk 117).

The Sandler gave this list of kapitlach, to be said in this order, as a help for a person's tefillah to be accepted: 4, 5, 6, 8, 20 (said seven times running), 35, 37, 57, 91, 93, 108.

Sometimes people would bring a question to the holy one of the generation, the Chazon Ish zy"a, and after he had thought it through and advised them, someone would tell him that the Sandler saw it differently. At once he would set his own view aside and tell them to do as the Sandler said.

His Last Simchas Torah

The holy Sandler passed away on Simchas Torah 5727 (1966). While the shuls were in the middle of Musaf, he went out to his doorway and waited for a chareidi Jew to come by. When one did, he called him over at once and asked him to say kapitel 146 of Tehillim with him. At the pasuk "Fortunate is he whose help is the G-d of Yaakov, whose hope is in Hashem his G-d," he was stirred to the depths and his face blazed like fire, and with dechilu u'rechimu (fear and love) he said the kapitel through to its end. The man saw the color of his face and the trembling awe in every word, understood that something was about to happen, and stayed where he was. He watched the holy Sandler go straight to his bed, say "Shema Yisrael" with holy trembling, and rise to the heights of Shamayim. Zechuso yagen aleinu.

In the Kabbalah, the hour of Musaf on Simchas Torah is Motza'ei Yom Kippur, and of Motza'ei Yom Kippur the Gemara says, "One who dies on Motza'ei Yom Kippur, it is a good sign for him." All the spiritual avodah that starts with the shofar of Rosh Hashanah and runs on through Yom Kippur and the chag of Sukkos, sukkah and four minim included, is a preparation for Musaf of Simchas Torah. Then creation is made whole, "and the heavens rejoice and the earth exults" in the perfection of oneness.

The Bochur in New York

On the same subject, let me tell about the brother of a friend of mine in America, from a family that traces its descent to the Raavyah zt"l (Rabbi Eliezer ben Yoel HaLevi, one of the Rishonim). At twenty-two he was struck by the terrible illness, rachmana litzlan. When I visited him in New York in Elul, he told me he knew the time had come for him to leave the world, and that he was paying to put right something from an earlier gilgul. But he was davening to Hashem to keep him alive until Motza'ei Yom Kippur. He wanted one more Yom Kippur in this world, and he wanted to leave it only on Motza'ei Yom Kippur. The bochur passed away in New York on Simchas Torah, 23 Tishrei, at the time of Musaf. He was brought to Yerushalayim for burial and lies in the section near the holy Chida zy"a.

Not long afterward I met his brother, who told me how it had all come about. During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah the sick man's condition had worsened, and he had been admitted to a hospital in Manhattan. One day, as the brother sat by his bed, the sick man lost consciousness for about two hours. When he came round he said, "Know that I have already been Above, and that I am a ben Olam Haba." He would leave the world, he said, on the morning of Simchas Torah, because that is when it is Motza'ei Yom Kippur in Shamayim.

Then he described what he had seen while he was unconscious. His nefesh had left his body, and all at once he was in a dark tunnel. A man in black with a menacing face stood in front of him and ordered him to deny the G-d of Yisrael. His only answer was, "I believe in the G-d of Yisrael." The man tried every kind of enticement to convince him that denying would pay, and he held his ground: his faith was in the G-d of Yisrael alone. Then came threats. If he would not deny, harsh torments awaited him. His mind stayed firm. Suddenly a pack of dogs came racing at him, fire spitting from their mouths, and the figure warned that unless he denied they would tear him to pieces. Still he refused. As the dogs reached him and fell on him, he cried out, "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad," and they were gone.

"'The figure came back," he said, "and told me, 'If you won't deny, at least come and talk words of lust and immorality.' I told him that a Jew does not defile his mouth, and I would not do it. Suddenly a herd of pigs came charging at me, fire spitting from their mouths, and the figure said, 'These are not like the dogs, who let you go. Against these, crying Shema Yisrael even several times will be no use. So be quick and say words of lust and immorality, and they will not touch you.' Again I refused, and they sprang at me in a fury. In terror I shut my eyes and cried, 'Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad.' When I felt that I was unhurt, I opened my eyes. The tunnel was flooded with light, and an old man dressed in white was smiling at me. 'Ashrecha!' he said. 'You have passed the test, and you are a ben Olam Haba. You asked to die on Motza'ei Yom Kippur, and here in our world Motza'ei Yom Kippur falls on the morning of Simchas Torah. So on the morning of Simchas Torah you will come to us, and we will bring you to your mechitzah.'"

And so it was, his brother told me. On Simchas Torah he was at the bedside. The two of them davened Shacharis and read Parshas VeZos HaBerachah from the siddur, then went on to the beginning of Parshas Bereishis as well. When they had finished the pasuk that ends "asher bara Elokim la'asos," his brother said "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad" and passed away to eternal life.

The Sealed Letter

I remember Iyar 5727 (1967), when the Egyptians closed the Straits of Tiran (the sea passage leading to Eilat) to Israeli shipping. It was "a time of trouble for Yaakov," and the Jews of Eretz Yisrael were gripped by fear and trembling. Word went around that before his passing the Sandler had left a sealed letter, to be opened on Lag BaOmer 5727. When it was opened, it said that at the end of Iyar war would break out with the enemies of Yisrael, and that there would be miracles and wonders beyond nature for the people living in the land. The rumor traveled far and wide and lifted the spirits of the frightened people. Needless to say, so it was: the Six Day War came, with miracle upon miracle that Hashem did for His people.

RAV AVRAHAM FISH ZT"L

It was the Rebbe accustomed to miracles, Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira zt"l, the Baba Sali, who brought Rav Fish to light. A few months before his passing, the hidden tzaddik Rav Yosef Waltuch zt"l came to him with two of his friends for a berachah, as was their holy custom. Suddenly Rav Yisrael broke off. "From now on," he told them, "go for a berachah to Rav Avraham Fish, who lives in Tel Aviv." On a piece of paper he drew them the way to his house there. They found the house and told Rav Fish what the Baba Sali had said, and he tried to wriggle out of it with strange claims: the address was a mistake, and the like. But "a man's wisdom lights up his face," and they knew whom they were standing before. They gave him no peace until they had drawn out the secrets of his heart and of his Torah, and then they made him known to the public.

The Graves That Moved

Rav Avraham Fish z"l was born in Stutchin. His father, head of the chevra kadisha, was a very great tzaddik and a holy man. Rav Fish told the holy

Rebbe of Lelov of a time when they came to bury a man in the grave he had bought while he was alive, and found that someone else had been laid in it by mistake. His father went up to the graves on either side and asked them to make room between them for one more. Before everyone's eyes, all the graves on both sides shifted apart and left space for the niftar.

He was the holy Sandler's foremost talmid. For thirty-two years, without missing a weeknight, he sat and learned with him, coming to the house directly from his construction work and going home only on Shabbos nights.

He once told that after the Baba Sali's passing, the Baba Sali had visited him several times, bringing a number of souls with him; and once the Baba Sali came together with his grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Abuchatzeira zy"a.

When Rav Fish saw that his secrets were out, he opened his door to crowds of the broken and the unfortunate. He gave them heart, davened for them and blessed them with a yeshuah. If he saw "dinim" (harsh judgments) resting on a man, he would frighten him with shouting and chase him out, even with loud and bitter curses. Every one of those curses was a berachah in disguise, so that the dinim ruling over the man would not bring an accusation.[113]

[113] As Rabbi Yehuda ben Gerim and his companion did to Rabbi Elazar b'Rabbi Shimon; see the Gemara, Moed Katan 9b.



Rav Avraham Fish z"l

Often he hid from his visitors by playing the madman. The Sandler would sometimes send people to him with a word of warning: "Pay attention, because while he is getting rid of you, he will take care of your request." They would come asking for his berachah, and he would send them off without hearing them out, insisting there had been some mistake. But woven into all the confused talk of rejection was a berachah that fit their situation, and his berachah never came back empty.

The Black Dog

A black dog once got into his house. The people there kicked it to drive it out, but it would not be put off. It forced its way through to the Rav and began to lick the soles of his feet. The Rav said to it, "Machul lach, sharui lach" (you are forgiven, you are released). A tear ran from the dog's eye. It went down the stairs and was run over.

The Missile in the Gulf War

During the Gulf War[114] the Rav fasted and took on many sigufim, so that the missiles would do no harm. His back troubled him, and to ease the pain Mrs. Ch. used to give him reflexology on the palm of his hand (a treatment by pressure on points of the hands and feet). One day she told him how frightened she was of the sirens catching her out on the road. He promised her that they would not sound again while she was on the road. And so it was: the sirens began only after she was inside her house.

The Rebbetzin told her that once she saw him suddenly lie down on the floor, davening and weeping, and asking again and again that "it should not explode." Before she could understand what he meant, a missile came down beside the Kolbo Shalom in Tel Aviv (the department store in the Shalom Tower), went into a building and stopped there without exploding. It was a miracle.

Seudah Revi'is

He urged everyone who came to him to take care over seudah revi'is (the melaveh malkah): a set table, a cloth, lit candles. There is no measuring, he would say, how great the zechus of one who does so.

For more than thirty years he held melaveh malkah seudos himself, and those who sat at them merited great yeshuos. Every Motza'ei Shabbos, during the seudah, he blessed everyone at the table by telling one and the same story of the holy Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Yisrael. Before the Baal Shem Tov zt"l was known, he used to break the ice on the river and immerse, and a certain goy would spread straw on the bank so that he would not slip into the water. Once he became known, he told the goy to choose a berachah: children, wealth or long life. The goy asked for all three. The Baal Shem Tov blessed him with all of them, and every one came true. Rav Fish zt"l would end: "If a goy could receive, we too, the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, can receive." Then he would bless the people with banei, chayei u'mezonei. It was the same story every Shabbos and he knew it by heart, yet many times the telling came hard to him. His meshamesh bakodesh (personal attendant), Reb Avraham Abba Lieberman, hy"v, asked

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[114] The Gulf War of 5751 (1991), when Iraq fired missiles at Eretz Yisrael. —Trans.

him why, and he answered that Shamayim was taking away his power to bless the people.

A certain Rebbe once asked him, "Why does kevodo make so much of seudah revi'is?" Rav Fish told him that Eliyahu HaNavi and Dovid HaMelech themselves had appeared to him and shown him the secret of this seudah and the lofty power it has in Shamayim.

At the seudah he lit thirteen candles in memory of a number of tzaddikim. Among them were Rabbi Akiva Ber of Amsterdam, whose segulah is known above all for finding lost things and for parnassah; Rabbi Menachem Mendel b'Rabbi Yosef of Rimanov, who said that whoever lights a candle l'iluy nishmaso, he will do him a favor from the Upper World; and his own rebbi, Rav Yitzchak of Stutchin, son of Rav Moshele of Rozvadov, of the household of the Divrei Chaim of Sanz. He also gave out thirteen kinds of drinks, one for each of the thirteen middos of rachamim.

Partway through the seudah the Rav would set a bowl on the table and ask for tzedakah. Some of those present were Jews far from the Torah who wanted to give large sums. Rav Fish would put the same questions to each of them at once: "Do you put on tefillin? Do you keep Shabbos?" If the answer was no, he would not take the money, and to anyone who kept pressing he said, "If you don't take your money back, I'll tear up all the banknotes."

Once a simple Jew at the seudah took a fancy to one of the silver cups set out on the table for the occasion, and pocketed it. When he went to get up and leave, he found himself stuck fast to his chair. He sat there staring, at a loss, until Rav Avraham came over and whispered to him, "There's no problem at all. Put the cup back on the table and you'll be able to get up."

One year the seudah revi'is fell on a night of Chanukah, and a woman brought her son, who could not speak, and asked the Rav to heal him. Rav Avraham stood by the lights of the menorah and davened for the boy's recovery. Then he went over to him, stroked his face and asked him to join everyone in the Chanukah songs. At once the boy opened his mouth and sang along with the crowd, and he was entirely cured.

A man once came to the seudah revi'is with his little daughter, who was deaf in one ear. Rav Fish sat down facing her and sang over and over, "Have mercy in Your kindness on Your people, our Rock; the son of

Dovid Your servant will come and redeem us," until she began to hear. She was completely healed.

Another time a man brought his son to the seudah revi'is. The boy had lost the sight of both eyes. Rav Fish poured him some of the drinks on the table and told him to rub it around the boy's eyes. The next morning the son woke up with healthy eyes.

Every Thursday night he gave out hot bagels, with tremendous kavanos in them.

Money of Chillul Shabbos

His house on Rechov Kalisher drew a great many visitors, mechallelei Shabbos among them. The Rav was careful never to accept their money. When they offered it, he told them to give it to the shul.

One visitor would not take no for an answer. He wanted Rav Fish to have a bundle of banknotes from him, and Rav Fish refused outright: "Money of chillul Shabbos does not come in here." The man kept at him, so in the end Rav Fish took the notes, tore them up, and made a spitting noise: "Tfu, tfu." Then he turned to the astonished man. "Now pick up the scraps and leave the house. Money of chillul Shabbos will not come into this house." A few months later the same man was back at Rav Fish's door with a bundle of notes in his hand, and this time Rav Fish took it gladly. For those present who did not know him, the man told what had happened on his first visit, and went on: "Ever since I saw what the Rav did, how the money meant nothing to him and he tore it to bits, I have done teshuvah. I closed the factory on Shabbos, and I keep Shabbos, baruch Hashem. Before that I had been to several rabbanim, and they took donations from me. Here I saw a true rav, who refused with all his strength to touch the money of a mechallel Shabbos. It made a deep impression on me, and in the Rav's zechus I closed the factory on Shabbos."

A rich man once came to Rav Fish and put a thick bundle of thousands of dollars into his hand. "For fifteen years we had no children," he said. "You blessed us, and we were remembered with children. This money is for your great works." Rav Fish asked whether he kept Shabbos. He was not religious, the rich man answered, and so he was not particular about Shabbos. "Take your money back," Rav Fish told him. The man urged him to

accept it, and Rav Fish said, "Sir, take the money away from here. Money of chillul Shabbos, chas veshalom that I should touch it."

Five men once came in to see him, and each held out a sum of money. He took it from two of them and turned the other three away: "I do not take money from mechallelei Shabbos." The three, who admitted that this was so, left his house stunned and bewildered.

It happened many times that people brought him very large sums, saying as they handed them over, "Before, you would not take our money, because we were mechallelei Shabbos. Now we keep Shabbos in your zechus, and the money is kosher, with no chillul Shabbos in it."

Two yeshivah bochurim once came to his house. One he greeted warmly; the other he threw out on the spot, in disgrace. When the two met again in the yeshivah, the second said to his friend, "This holy Rav has ruach hakodesh. He knew that I only pretend to be a ben yeshivah while I spend my nights in places of immorality, and that is why he treated me as he did."

Twenty-Seven Thousand Dollars

Mrs. Ch. once came for a berachah, as she often did, and brought a sum of money with her. "Today I am not taking money from anyone," the Rav told her. "I will bless you without taking a perutah of tzedakah." Press him as she might, he would accept nothing. Then he sat with his eyes closed for long minutes. When he opened them, he asked her to step outside and wait by the door without talking to anyone. She went out, and a few moments later a distinguished-looking man arrived. He had the look of a chareidi, with a long white beard and a hat, and with him was a chareidi woman in a sheitel. The Rav welcomed them and talked with them. The man took out a bundle with twenty-seven thousand dollars in it and offered it to the Rav, to do with as he saw fit, and the Rav would not hear of taking it. When the man pushed hard, he said, "I am not taking money. Not even from the lady waiting outside did I take any; you can ask her." After they had gone, the Rav called her back in. "Know that this was Ashmedai, the king of the sheidim, and his wife," he told her. "They came to test me, to see whether I would take money from him. Had I taken it, I would have lost my Olam Haba." Mrs. Ch. said, "Now that he has gone, take the tzedakah money I brought." The Rav answered, "Since I said I am not taking money today, I

cannot take it. But keep it in your bag, and I will send someone to come and take it."

Two weeks later she was at work, in a large room shared with other workers, when a woman came in, very modestly dressed and barefoot, and asked her, and only her, for a donation. She opened her purse for a few coins, saw the money Rav Fish had asked her to keep, and for some reason gave the woman that. "Tzedakah tatzil mimaves," the woman told her. Her boss was there and had seen the woman. He opened his drawer to give her tzedakah, but when he looked up she was not there; she had vanished. Mrs. Ch. and her boss began asking the others whether they had seen which way the woman had gone out, and the workers had no idea what they meant: they had seen no other woman in the room at all. A few hours later, at her workplace, Mrs. Ch. slipped on the stairs and came down on the tips of a forklift's forks, and the force of her fall tipped the forklift over on top of her. By the way of nature she should have been crushed to death then and there. Instead she felt as if a layer of cotton wool were wrapped around her, shielding her from the weight of the iron. When they lifted the forklift off her, she got up on her feet, whole and unhurt. When she came to Rav Fish, he laughed. "I sent you someone to take the money," he said.

Thirty Refrigerators

He was a great baal chessed. Chassanim and poor people got apartments from him, cars, refrigerators and ovens. Reb Avraham Abba Lieberman, shlita, who served him as meshamesh bakodesh for several years, told me that he once asked a rich man for thirty refrigerators for chassanim. In return he promised him thirty years of life beyond his allotted span, provided he gave them at once, the very next day. To Reb Avraham he said, "If I promise, I must keep it. If he brings the money by sunset tomorrow, he will add thirty more years to his days and years, beyond what was allotted to him."

The Boy on Crutches

A man came and told him about his son. After a certain illness the boy had been left lame and could get about only on crutches. Rav Fish told him, "This coming Seder night, have your son add one more question to the questions of Mah Nishtanah and ask, 'Mah nishtanah, why is it that I walk on crutches?' And with Hashem's help you will see a yeshuah." So it was.

The boy asked his question and went to sleep, and in the morning he got up like everyone else and walked on his own feet.

One day a talmid chacham, a yerei Shamayim, came in, and Rav Fish said to him, "You do not put on tefillin." The talmid chacham was taken aback. "Every day I put on mehudar tefillin," he said. "How can kevodo tell me I do not put on tefillin?" Rav Fish repeated it: "You do not put on tefillin." The talmid chacham took his mehudar tefillin to an expert sofer to be checked, and they turned out to be pasul.

In Bnei Brak a woman was badly injured in a road accident and lay unconscious. People who knew her asked Rav Fish to arouse rachamim for her. He set out with them for the hospital at once, went into her room, cried out a few unclear words and went home again. Right away her condition improved. When she came to, she told how she had already been before the Beis Din shel Maalah, and they had ruled that she must leave the world. But suddenly Rav Fish walked in and told the beis din, "Let her live. As long as I am down below, she will live." The beis din granted his request, "and here I am, back again."

His meshamesh bakodesh, Reb Avraham Abba, hy"v, was once at his breakfast when Rav Fish looked at the food. "With this meal," he told him, "you are making a tikkun for three neshamos that are in gilgul in this food."

Whatever he promised came to pass. And every secular Jew who came to him and was drawn close by Rav Fish zt"l became shomer Torah u'mitzvos in time.

A man in the film business made a big film and poured all his strength and all his money into it. He asked Rav Fish to bless it with success, and promised him a million dollars out of the profits. "The film will not succeed," the Rav told him, "but you will do teshuvah." The film did fail. The man had a heart attack, and lying in the hospital he made a cheshbon hanefesh and came back in complete teshuvah.

I myself had the zechus of sitting in the wondrous chair on his porch. The chair healed the sick, he said, because it had belonged to a great rav who had lived in the apartment before him. But I watched his every movement while I sat there, and I saw that he was concentrating on awesome yichudim to bring me yeshuos, supposedly through the chair.

I heard about a man I know who got into serious trouble with the law in one of the countries of Europe and was held in prison until his trial. The

day before the trial, his brother came to Rav Fish's house to ask for help. "Don't worry," Rav Fish told him. "Tonight I will go to the courthouse there and make the file disappear, and your brother will simply go free." The next day the man was brought before the judge in handcuffs. They called for the file, which had been made ready there the day before so the trial could open, and it was nowhere to be found. They searched long and hard through the whole building and through the files in the archive, and when not a trace of it turned up, they had no choice but to let the accused go.

An avreich who had no children came with his wife to ask Rav Fish for a berachah, that they be helped and remembered with a son. He looked into the matter and said that something from the past stood in their way, and he could not help them. (Author's note: It seems that in an earlier gilgul this couple were a man and his aunt, or a man and his sister-in-law, who sinned together, about whom the Torah decreed "they shall die childless," meaning that they would come back in a gilgul and die without children. That is why the Rav did not want to bless them: so that they could complete their tikkun.) That avreich passed away without children, rachmana litzlan.

One day Mrs. Ch. brought an acquaintance to the Rav for a berachah, and the Rav told him, "Soon a daughter will come to you." The man was surprised, since his wife had only just given birth. Sure enough, a year later his wife had a girl.

Chacham Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l once saw a picture of Rav Fish, knowing nothing whatever about him, and was greatly struck by it. He wrote his own name and his mother's name on the back of the picture and asked the people close to him to ask the man in it to daven for him. They did as he asked, a bond formed between the two tzaddikim, and they even met.

Mrs. G. told me that when she was young she lived in her parents' home in Tel Aviv together with her sister, whose taste ran to loud, noisy music. It truly drove Mrs. G. out of her mind. She begged her sister at least to turn the record player down, but her sister took no notice of her at all. In her distress she went to Rav Fish and asked him to daven that her sister would agree to lower the noise. He heard her out and said, "Go home. There is no more record player and no more noise at all." She came home and was amazed to find complete quiet where the music had been. Later she found out that at the very hour Rav Fish had told her the music was

over, her mother had decided the music bothered her and had carried the record player out of the house to a storeroom.

Mrs. G. also told me that as a young woman she went to London to look for work. Finding none, she came home to her parents in Tel Aviv and went in to Rav Fish for a berachah for parnassah and a zivug. "Go back to London right away," the Rav told her. "Parnassah is waiting for you there at once, and the chassan is there too." Since Purim had already passed, she said she would take his advice as soon as Pesach was over. He would not let her wait even one day: "Go back right away. There are Jews there too who make Pesach; make it with them." She did as he said and went. The moment she arrived she found respectable work, and soon afterward a family had her as their guest for Shabbos, so that she would not be alone. There she met her husband, and together they built a kosher home, full of love and brotherhood, with sons and daughters who are yirei Shamayim.

The Car in London

Mr. K. from London made his living delivering from shops to customers' homes. He had no way to insure his car, and when it was in an accident it was wrecked beyond repair and sold for scrap for a hundred pounds sterling. That left him with no car and no parnassah. In his distress he turned to Rav Fish, who told him, "Don't worry, soon someone will buy you a car." Mr. K. had small children to feed, and he had no choice but to ask the rav of the shul to help with the household expenses; the rav gave him a letter of recommendation so that he could collect donations to live on. Then, out of nowhere, a very rich man walked into his house. "Instead of giving you a donation for your household expenses," he said, "I'm ready to buy you a car, so you can earn your living with dignity. Find yourself a car at a reasonable price and let me know." Mr. K. found a suitable one for two thousand six hundred pounds sterling and told the rich man, who bought it for him on condition that Mr. K. pay the insurance with money he would find somewhere else. Some time later the car was stolen, and he was too ashamed to go back to the rich man. But his wife, whose emunah in Rav Fish zt"l was strong, told him, "It can't be that the Rav blessed us with a car as a gift just for it to be stolen. We have to go back to the rich man." When he still held back out of shame, she phoned the rich man herself and told him what had happened. The rich man saw that with the first car the

husband had earned his own living and had not needed to lean on others, and he bought him another car, this time for five thousand pounds sterling. He works with it to this day.

P. and his wife were eager to sell their house. They had cut the price far below the market, and still nobody would buy. They came to Rav Fish, who told them, "Next week the house will be sold at the full price." That surprised them. The husband was to report for army reserve duty on the Monday of that week, and nobody can sell a house in such circumstances. He reported for duty, but the commander told him he had been called up by mistake and sent him home. On Friday morning the agent brought a buyer who fell for the house and closed the deal then and there, at the full price.

P. told me too that after several daughters had been born to him, he asked Rav Fish for a berachah for sons. Rav Fish gave him three cloves of garlic. "Take these," he said. "Now three sons will come, one after another." And so it was.

His Last Shavuos

Around Shavuos of the last year of his life, Mrs. Ch. felt that she had to phone him, although she knew he did not answer the telephone. He picked it up at once and answered her. What is more, he gave her leave to call whenever she liked: though he did not answer the telephone, he would know it was she and would answer her at once. In that same call he warned her not to trust everyone who poses as a rav. Some of them are swindlers, he said, with, as it were, "the high praises of G-d in their throats" and "a two-edged sword in their hand," out to exploit innocent people and trap them. And let her remember how he had lent thousands of dollars to distinguished-looking people, and when he sent her to collect the money from them, they had evaded her.

After his passing she got to know a certain "rav" who spoke of great and hidden things and told her things that were interesting and true. One day this "rav" phoned her at work and asked her for a loan of twenty thousand shekels for a month. She put him off, saying she did not have it. When she came home she found her mother, who was usually healthy and strong, suffering from pains in her heart. She called a mobile intensive care unit, and it rushed her mother to the emergency room. Fear took hold of her: perhaps her mother had fallen ill because she had refused that man the

loan. She phoned him to come and take it. **He came by special taxi to take the money.** A few nights later Rav Fish zt"l appeared to her in a dream, standing in front of her and wagging his finger in reproach: "Why did you believe that man and lend him the money? I warned you not to believe everyone who calls himself 'rav.'" A month later she asked the "rav" for her money back, and he dodged her: "Your mother is alive in exchange for the money." It took a very long time, and several people whom she brought in, before the "rav" was made to give her money back.

His Passing and His Will

Rav Fish zt"l passed away on Erev Shabbos Kodesh, 13 Elul 5758 (1998), and he is buried in the holy city of Tzfas.

In his will he asked that whoever goes up to his tziyun should say, "I believe with complete faith in the coming of Mashiach, and even though he may tarry, with all that I will wait for him," and also say three times, "Have mercy in Your kindness on Your people, our Rock, on Tziyon, the dwelling place of Your glory, the abode of our splendor; the son of Dovid Your servant will come and redeem us, the breath of our life, Hashem's anointed." Zechuso yagen aleinu.

RAV URI AVRITCHER ZT"L

Speaking of these things, I remember well the tzaddik Rav Uri zt"l, a great talmid chacham and a wonderful tzaddik. He made a point of keeping the mitzvah of seudah revi'is (the melaveh malkah) at the tziyun of Dovid HaMelech, alav hashalom, on Har Tziyon in Yerushalayim, with a big crowd and in festive style. He went to the trouble of rounding up yeshivah bochurim and talking them into coming, and he brought in musicians in honor of Dovid Malka Meshicha (Dovid, the King Mashiach).

I was one of those bochurim, and I had the merit of watching how he lived and what he did, all of it Torah and kedushah.

Each year, on the two Motza'ei Shabbos before Purim, he read the Megillah from a kosher scroll, half of it each night, with tremendous elevation. I asked him where this puzzling minhag came from, and he showed it to me, written explicitly in Maseches Soferim (one of the minor masechtos), chapter 14. I learned the precious minhag from him, kept it myself, and have taught it to others.



Rav Uri Avritcher zt"l

A Megillah in a London Bank

Let me tell, in passing, how "a man's steps are established by Hashem." One year I was in London at the beginning of Adar, and on Thursday I was troubled. How would I keep my reading of half the Megillah that Motza'ei Shabbos, and whom could I ask to lend me a Megillah? I went into a bank in Stamford Hill (the chareidi neighborhood of north London) on some errand, and there, on the counter where people fill in their forms, lay a kosher Megillah. There was not one Jew in the bank.

I turned the scroll over, and on the back, at its end, were its owner's name and address. I phoned him and asked whether he had lost a Megillah, and where. Yes, he said: he had collected it from the sofer who had checked it, then lost it, and could not remember where. I asked where he had been while it was with him, and the bank was one of the places he named. I told him I had his Megillah and asked whether I might read from it that Mot-

za'ei Shabbos; on Sunday I would give it back. He was delighted to agree. That showed me how much this reading matters: Shamayim had sent me a Megillah, and the mitzvah of hashavas aveidah along with it.

Dovid HaMelech Saves Rav Uri

Once I asked him why, at his age, he devoted himself to keeping seudah revi'is here of all places. "Here I merited to see Dovid HaMelech," he answered, "when he came from the upper world to save me. How could I make his seudah anywhere but beside him?"

Then he told me the story. Since the years before the war of 5708 (1948) he had made a practice of gathering people for this seudah beside the tziyun of Dovid HaMelech, whose seudah it is. One week during the war of 5708 the whole area was tense, and people stayed away. He thought it over, decided the danger was not so great, and went to the tziyun alone to eat his seudah.

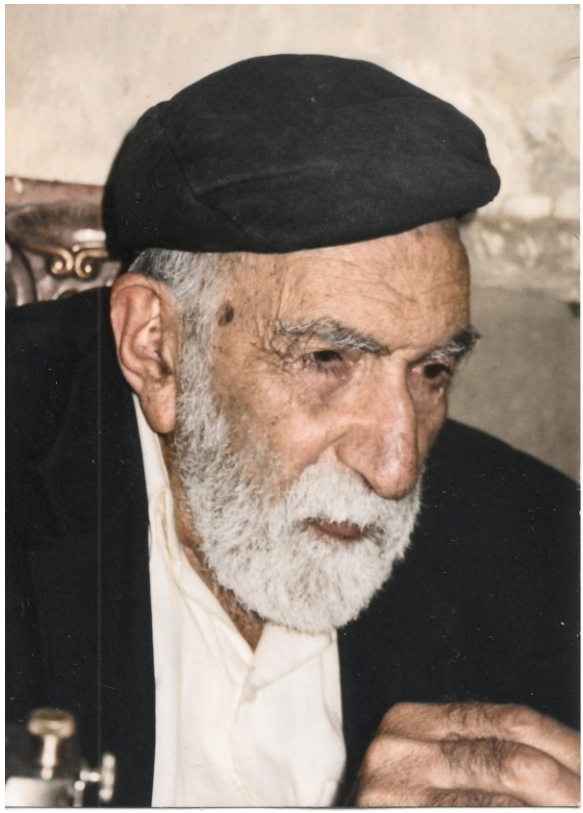
He had finished and was standing by the tziyun saying Tehillim when a shout in Arabic rang out: "Itbach al-Yahud!" (kill the Jews). He looked up and saw two Arabs outside the window, knives in hand. The windows of the tziyun's rooms have very thick iron bars, so to get at him and slaughter him they would have to go around several buildings, and that gave him a few minutes to try to get away. He ran to the next building, which has stairs along its side leading to a courtyard above, with a small tower, and up he went.

A few moments later he heard the Arabs' feet on the stairs. There was but a step between him and death, he knew, and he began whispering viduy. Suddenly he saw Dovid HaMelech, in royal robes and a gold crown, who said to him, "Rav Uri, do not be afraid. Close your eyes." He closed them at once, and in less than a moment he was standing by the windmill (the one Sir Moshe Montefiore built) in the Yemin Moshe neighborhood, across from Har Tziyon. Zy"a.

RABBI AVRAHAM SHAMASH ZT"L

Who can describe the power of the hidden tzaddik Rabbi Avraham Shamash zt"l, one of the last remnants of the Knesses HaGedolah? A talmid of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l, he was great in kabba-

lah maasis (the practical use of Shemos and yichudim), and many who came to him stricken in body or in spirit found in him help and support.



To step into his poor shop in Meah Shearim was to be carried at once out of this world, with its noise and its chase after material things, into another, ancient and enchanted, full of quiet and calm. When the tailor shop's door closed behind a visitor, he found himself suddenly between four ancient walls. The whitewash put on them many years before had long since flaked off, and here and there plain paper had been pasted over the spots to hold up the crumbling plaster. There sat Rabbi Avraham in his simple clothes behind the sewing machine, hands resting on it, his bowed head hiding his eyes; and those eyes were turned heavenward, seeing what no human eye can see, for all the sophisticated instruments invented to help it. Everyone who came in knew and felt that he stood in a holy place.

His shemiras einayim was famous already in his youth. He was a handsome man, yet he walked with his head bowed so as not to see anything

along the way, until he grew hunchbacked. And though his eyes were always down and he never looked about him, he still went home from shul by a route three times as long as the usual one, winding through all sorts of side streets, so as not to pass along a street where women walked. He was just as famous for guarding his mouth: people knew him as a man of complete silence, who weighed and counted his words more carefully than gold coins.

He kept apart from the vanities of this world. He never ate salads, apparently for fear of tola'im (insects). But when asked why, he would not say so, since that would look like pride; he answered instead that the Gemara says vegetables whet the appetite, and one must beware of the desires of this world. He never sat in an armchair or on a sofa, for fear of taking pleasure from this world. A fly that landed on him he left alone, bearing the yissurim as a kaparah for aveiros. He once said that crossing one's legs is not forbidden, but a midas chassidus is to be careful about it, and that he had trained himself not to.

Rabbi Avraham Shamash was an expert at feeling a pulse and reading it, and from it he knew what lay in "all the chambers of the innermost parts": whether an illness came from spoiled food or from the weather, from a ruach ra'ah, from anger, fright and the like. Then he would do the yichud that fitted, and the person was healed of his illness.

He learned Torah quietly and unseen, Kabbalah above all, which he learned for many years together with the gaon and tzaddik Chacham Salman Mutzafi zt"l. When the regular shiur at Kever Rachel was shut down because of the danger from the Arabs, Chacham Salman wanted a smaller shiur and picked just four of the whole group. Rabbi Avraham Shamash zt"l was one of the four.

He told my son Avraham Asher, sheyichyeh, many stories of Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l, of the miracles in which he rescued people from terrible sorcery by the power of the holy Shemos.

The gaon Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l asked him many times to come and learn in Emes VeShalom, the mekubalim's yeshivah that his father-in-law had founded in the Ohel Rachel shul. People say that Chacham Ben Tzion called him one of the lamed-vav hidden tzaddikim.

On Shabbos Kodesh, after Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul's shiur, Rabbi Shamash would stay behind in the shul and learn sifrei Kabbalah

with great hasmadah and deep iyun. Once, at that hour, some people came up to him and wished him "Shabbos shalom," again and again. They stood right beside him, and he did not hear a thing. Only when they tried to rouse him and took hold of his hand did he lift his eyes from the sefer and look at them; then, without a word, he went back to it. Clearly he had no idea what was going on around him, so deep was he in his learning.

Once his grandson opened his bookcase, full of old sefarim, to see what sort they were. At once Rabbi Avraham told him, "These are sefarim in small print, hard for me to read," so that his grandson would not know what he had to do with them. Every hour of the day and the night he gave to learning Torah, opening his tailor shop for just a few hours in the afternoon, and even there he kept sefarim of Shas and Kabbalah hidden in crates and learned from them between customers.

The Wasp Sting

Once they brought him a boy who had been stung by a wasp; his leg had swollen and he could not walk. Rabbi Avraham whispered a few words over him, and at once the leg was strong again. To this day, decades later, no bee or wasp comes near him, even with them all around him.

The Pulse and the Yichudim

I was privileged to see the booklet Rabbi Avraham used for his yichudim against every kind of mar'in bishin (evil illnesses) and ruchos ra'os. Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l had composed it, and in it were a number of single pesukim, each with the holy Shemos drawn from it. As a rule Rabbi Avraham checked a person's pulse and knew exactly where the trouble lay, aiming at a hair and never missing, and then chose the one yichud suited to that person. Sometimes the person was well on the spot; other times he had him come back several times, until the trouble went away.

More than once he helped me myself, and I watched him take the pulse and saw how he read it. My own eyes saw it, not a stranger's: even in old age, when his hands shook, he read the pulse without a mistake.

A man in great pain from his teeth once came to him. Rabbi Avraham examined him and said, "This is no physical matter for a doctor; it is a spiritual one. Come for a berachah for a few days, and you will be healed." So it was, and in all the decades since, that tooth has never hurt him.

When the gaon Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l was ill, his eyes gave him great pain, and after examining him the doctors decided to operate on the eye. Rabbi Avraham heard of it, went and blessed him, and told the family, "There is no need for an operation. Just clean his eye every day with distilled water." A week later the doctors examined the eye again and were amazed: everything was in order, and he could see perfectly. They asked what treatment the Rav had been given. "We cleaned the eye with distilled water," said the family. The doctor could not believe it: "The water alone healed the eye?"

Draft Orders and a Kamea

Three of his relatives got their call-up orders for the army. For one he davened, and they forgot all about him; he has never been called up to this day. To the second he gave a kamea to take along to the draft office, and the moment he arrived the officials grew confused and exempted him from service then and there. The third he told, "Go and tell them you want to enlist right away." He said so, and they promptly exempted him, saying they had no interest in yeshivah bochurim.

Near his shop a man was wounded; his intestines spilled out of his belly, and his life was in danger. A passerby came in and told Rabbi Avraham, who went straight out to the man, wrote a kamea on the spot and laid it on him. At once the intestines went back into the belly and settled in their place, to the astonishment of everyone standing there.

The Voice on Rosh Hashanah

On the last Rosh Hashanah of his life he asked his household whether they had heard a voice. No, they said, they had heard nothing. He asked again, and this time they asked him, "Did you hear something?" "I heard a voice," he said, "saying, 'Avraham ben Simchah is summoned to the Yeshivah shel Maalah,' and I told them the time has not come yet." His life was extended until Erev Pesach.

Rabbi Avraham Shamash passed away in Yerushalayim, old and full of days, on 13 Nissan 5767 (2007).

RAV YISRAEL YITZCHAK MESHI-ZAHAV ZT"L

He was a close friend of my father's, and I remember him from childhood, when I would go along with my father z"l to visit him at home. He was very old even then, frail in body but young in mind. He had ruach hakodesh and was a great expert in chochmas hayad (the wisdom of the hand). But I suspect that for him, as for Chacham Patilon, palm reading was only a show, a cover for what they saw with ruach hakodesh; in their humility they clothed it, so to speak, in this wisdom.

The Son Who Did Not Believe

Once Mr. A., a yerei Shamayim and one of the wealthy men of Tel Aviv, came to him with his son, a married man with children and an apikores. The Rav began to talk to the son about emunah. "I don't believe," said the son. The Rav asked him about his father: "Who is this man?" "This is my father," he answered. "And why do you believe that?" asked the Rav. Then he told him, "I see in the palm of your hand that a heart disease is developing in you, and it is dangerous. Go to a doctor, and believe as well." "I am healthy and strong," said the son. "But I see it," said the Rav.

Some weeks later the father came back in tears. His son had a heart condition and lay in the hospital, and three doctors were conferring over how to treat him. "It is already late," said the Rav. The father begged and pleaded, until at last he took the Rav to the hospital. When the son saw him he broke down weeping: "Bless me, save me." "There is nothing to be done," the Rav told him. "The decree is already sealed. But do teshuvah all the same; it will help you for Olam Haba." And he did. He returned with all his heart, and he commanded his sons never in their lives to budge from the Rav's words. Then he went to his world, Hashem save us.



Rav Yisrael Yitzchak Meshi-Zahav zt"l

The Cement Before Shabbos

As a young man the Rav was a building contractor. Every Friday at twelve noon he stopped work and began to get ready for Shabbos HaMalkah. One rainy Friday, while he was putting up a building in the Talpiot neighborhood, twelve o'clock came and his drums of cement were still uncovered. "From this hour on I do nothing," he said. "It is all in the hands of the One Who sanctifies Shabbos and Yisrael." He left them as they were and went off, as always, to receive Shabbos with joy and gladness. When he came back to the site on Sunday, his drums were covered. A contractor of the Mapai party (the secular workers' party), it turned out, was building next to him and had sent workers to cover his own cement, and by mistake they had covered the Rav's.

Tehillim Twice a Week

One of my talmidim was having trouble with shalom bayis, and I took him to the Rav z"l. The Rav looked at his hand and told him that these yissurim were his punishment for pegam habris in his bachelor years, and that his tikkun was to say the whole Tehillim twice a week for a month. My talmid was lazy and said it only once a week. A month went by with nothing settled, and we went back. The Rav looked at his palm again. "I see you said Tehillim only once a week," he told him, "so the tikkun was not completed. You must say it again, twice every week, so that the tikkun will be accepted."

The Dybbuk and the Cow

During the Holocaust in Europe, Rav Yisrael fasted day and night for the evil decree to be annulled and the surviving remnant rescued. In those days Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l sent him a young woman in whom a dybbuk, rachmana litzlan, had taken up its dwelling, so that he would order it out of her body.

Rav Yisrael went to see Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah and asked why he had sent her to him, when he had never dealt in such things. "For some years now I have been trying to drive the spirit out of her," Chacham Yehuda answered, "and I cannot get the better of it; it brazenly defies the hashba'os (oaths invoking holy Names).[115] So I made an aliyas neshamah to find a tzaddik in the generation who could save her, and I saw your honor. That is why I sent her to you."

Back home, Rav Yisrael's heart grew weak from his fasting, and he was in danger. His wife went to call the doctor, but he was not at home, and when she returned she found Rav Yisrael well. "A pity you went out," he told her. "Eliyahu HaNavi, zachur latov, came to visit me. He brought my body back from its great weakness and comforted me. 'Do not grieve over the decree of Shamayim,' he said. 'There will yet be better days than these, and Yisrael will go up in their multitudes to Eretz HaKodesh.'" While Eliyahu HaNavi was there, Rav Yisrael asked him how to help the young

[115] Author's note: It seems that it managed to slip out of the body while the hashba'os were said, and so it did not feel them.

woman, and Eliyahu answered, "Order it to leave without harming her, and it will have no choice but to obey you."

When the young woman came back, Rav Yisrael ordered the spirit to leave her without doing her the least harm. The dybbuk spoke out of her throat: "I will leave, but you will help me mend my suffering soul." Outside the window a few cows were grazing in a grove. Rav Yisrael opened his door and told the dybbuk, "Go into one of the cows, and I will see to your tikkun." At once the young woman fainted, her little toe swelled, and the spirit went out of her. At that very moment one of the cows began to run wild, and the young woman got up well and went home.

The next day Rav Yisrael went to the Arab who owned the herd to buy "the crazy cow." It was already sold, said the Arab, to a certain butcher. Rav Yisrael went to the butcher and learned that the cow had been slaughtered and found kosher lemehadrin. He rejoiced: "Baruch Hashem, the tikkun of the spirit has been done."

The tzaddik Rav Yisrael Yitzchak Meshi-Zahav zt"l passed away on 13 Av 5734 (1974), at the age of ninety-three, and is buried on Har HaMenuchos in Yerushalayim.

THE TZADDIK RAV YACHYA SHNEUR ZT"L



The walls of my heart cry out when I remember the gaon and tzaddik Rav Yachya Shneur zt"l, humble as Hillel, a man of whom one may say "holy." His door stood open to all who were downcast and in pain. He revived their spirits like dew, encouraging them with counsel and by sharing their pain, and he treated all who came to him "as a father the son in whom he delights." Someone close to him once suggested he post an assistant at the door to receive the public. "What would he stand by the door for?" Rav Yachya asked. "To receive the people," the man said. Rabbeinu's answer was simple: "There is no need to bring people in. They know how to open the door. They will come in, get a berachah, and go in peace."

His day was crowded with Torah and gemilus chassadim. It began at two in the morning, when he rose for Tikkun Chatzos and then learned Torah without a break until davening at netz hachamah. After davening came more learning with chavrusos, and then he received the public until

late at night, encouraging them to return in complete teshuvah. Yet precious as every moment of his life was, during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah he stopped receiving the public, so that he could sit and make a cheshbon hanefesh and do teshuvah, in dread of the Days of Judgment.

His kedushas einayim knew no bounds. By the time he reached gevuros (the age of eighty) he could see with only one eye; he wore dark glasses and kept his head wrapped in a sudra d'rabbanan (the head scarf of talmidei chachamim), so as not to look to either side. Even so, people saw him leap in alarm off the sidewalk into the road. When they asked what had happened, he said he had suddenly seen a woman walking ahead of him, and Chazal have already said, "Behind a lion, and not behind a woman."

His berachos carried great weight in Shamayim and brought yeshuos, and he credited this to the zechus of his beard, which he had never touched, neither to trim it nor to shape it. He would take hold of his beard and say, "This is my portion from all my toil: this beard, which I have not touched from my youth until this day." Like his peer and companion the Baba Sali zt"l, he influenced many to stop touching their beards. After his petirah he came to one of his relatives in a dream and told him that the beard he had taken such care not to touch had helped him greatly in the upper world.

He warned and protested against women going about in a sheitel. When women came for a berachah for children, he made it conditional on their going about only in a tichel, and every woman who took this on received his berachah; it bore fruit and brought yeshuos.

Every berachah he gave a childless woman for children came true at once, even where the doctors gave no chance at all.

Once an Ashkenazi man came to tell him that their minhag is to wear a sheitel, but his wife insisted on a tichel, and it was upsetting their shalom bayis. Rabbeinu rebuked him. "Are there two Torahs, one for the Sephardim and one for the Ashkenazim? And who permitted this pritzus to the Ashkenazim? You have a tzaddekes for a wife, and you want to make her a resha'ah." He did not rest until he had strengthened the man to see to it that his wife kept wearing her tichel.

His sister passed away toward morning, and no one told him. Halfway through his pas shacharis he understood that she was gone. He asked his

wife, she confirmed it, and he was pained at having understood before he finished bentching, since it kept him from bentching.[116]

He gave enormous sums to tzedakah. Whatever people gave him personally after receiving his berachah went to tzedakah, and he added to it most of his own wealth. Above all on Erev Rosh Hashanah and Erev Pesach, he would sit his household down with piles of envelopes for the people who had turned to him for help, and postal money orders for tens of thousands of shekels, and have them help him get it all ready for mailing. To the recipients he wrote that half was from him and half from a man who wished to remain anonymous. Only after his petirah did it come out that all of it was his.

[116] Once he knew of her petirah he was an onen (a close relative of the deceased before the burial), and an onen is exempt from mitzvos and does not say berachos. —Trans.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Savta's Passing and His Second Marriage

MY GRANDMOTHER, MRS. ESTHER z"l, passed away on Erev Yom Kippur 5727 (1966) and was buried the same day.

On the night of Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan I dreamed I was standing at night in the courtyard of the Ahavas Chaim shul. My grandmother came out of her house, which stood in that courtyard, and walked toward me, dressed in white tachrichim, her face as white as plaster. I was frightened and backed away. In Spanish she said, "There is something very important I need to talk to you about."

"Savta," I said, "you are dead, and I am afraid of you. Sit on the top step of the courtyard, and I will sit on the third, and we can talk with a step between us." She did as I asked.

From the top step she told me, "Tomorrow morning they are going to put my neshamah into a gilgul, in a child who will be named 'Mercado.' I am terribly afraid of it. Help me annul the gezeirah."

"Savta, I will try," I said, "but promise me you will come back and tell me how it went." She promised.

In the morning, after Shacharis, I asked my grandfather for sixty lirot so that I could make a tikkun for Savta's neshamah without delay. He did not have it. I begged him to find the money at once, since every moment counted, and just then his son Mordechai arrived from Tel Aviv, where he lived. My grandfather asked him for the money and handed it to me.

I hired ten yeshivah bochurim, from bar mitzvah age up to eighteen, to say the Tikkun HaNiftarim that Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah zt"l set out in his sefer *Minchas Yehuda*; with my brother and me, we made twelve. We began

at twelve noon and finished at four in the afternoon. Savta's promise to tell me how it had gone slipped my mind.

I went to sleep at about ten that night, and the moment I dozed off I saw my grandmother again, this time in her everyday clothes, her face shining with joy and one great smile. "This morning they came to take my neshamah and put it into a gilgul," she said. "Suddenly we heard a bas kol: 'Leave her be. Today they are busy with her tikkun. When it is done, we will see what her judgment calls for.' From twelve noon until four o'clock I was with you in the shul, sitting there and trembling over what would be done with me and whether the tikkun would be accepted.

"The moment you finished, I found myself floating to the tziyun of the Rashbi in Meron. There I saw him sitting and learning with Chizkiyahu Melech Yehudah. I stood to one side and watched, waiting until they were done. Then Chizkiyahu Melech Yehudah took me along and brought me all the way to my resting place in Gan Eden. But the guards at the gate would not let me in. 'You promised your grandson an answer about the tikkun made for you today,' they told me. 'As long as an obligation still ties you to the physical world, you cannot go in to your place.' So I waited by the entrance until you fell asleep, to tell you the tikkun was accepted. Now I am going in to my mechitzah in Gan Eden."

I walked her as far as Rechov Shmuel HaNavi. There she stopped me: "Come no further. There is an entrance to Gan Eden close by, and you have no permission to go further with me." (Many years later, in the episode with Chacham Sasson Levi and Chacham Yaakov Mutzafi told earlier in this book, I learned that there is an entrance to Gan Eden across from the entrance of the Sanhedria cemetery on Rechov Shmuel HaNavi.)

Savta, Half a Lira and Ten Years

At Savta's sheloshim, I remember, I went with my mother z"l to Saba's house to collect her clothes and give them away to tzedakah. My uncle Yaakov z"l was there, emptying the wardrobe. Once the clothes were out, I noticed a note wedged in a crack in the wardrobe floor. My uncle picked it up and unfolded it, and the blood drained from his face. "Oy va'avoy," he cried. "If that man knew now what he did, he would kill me." Then he told us what the note was.

Ten years to the day before her passing, on Erev Yom Kippur, my grandmother had had a heart attack and was in danger. My uncle worked at the Friedman factory in Yerushalayim, and an urgent order of heaters had come in for the winter; the management warned that anyone who stayed home would lose his job. So, ill as his mother was, he had no choice but to go in.

As he worked he said Tehillim for her recovery, weeping. The worker beside him came over. "What are you praying for? It won't help. It's all fate. Whatever's decreed is what will be."

"A Jew talks like this on Erev Kippur?" said my uncle.

"I don't believe in anything."

"Then will you sell my mother ten years of your life?"

"I will. It's all nonsense anyway."

My uncle took out a half-lira note and handed it over, and in return he got the slip he had now found in the wardrobe. It read: "I have sold Esther Menashe ten years of my life for half a lira." Ten years from that moment, to the very moment, my grandmother passed away. That was why my uncle said the man, who still worked beside him at the same place, would kill him if he knew the sale had been real. May Hashem save us.

HIS SECOND MARRIAGE

The holy Zohar says: "Whoever is not found as male and female is called half a body. Berachah does not rest on what is flawed and lacking, only on a whole place, not on half a thing; and half a thing does not endure forever and is not blessed forever." These words are about the completeness that marriage brings a person and his neshamah even in old age, when the body can no longer raise a family, with all that implies. Marriage itself makes the nefesh whole, so that it is not counted half a nefesh, for berachah does not rest on half a nefesh. Nor need this berachah be physical. It is the lights of the nefesh, flowing down from above onto those fit to receive them.

That is why my grandfather asked his talmidim in Tel Aviv to find him a suitable match, for the sake of a whole nefesh. He was very old, and a wife in the physical sense did not interest him. My mother a"h saw to all his needs, his food, his clothing and his cleanliness, fully and with endless devotion. And he loved his late wife deeply; he would sit up at night weeping over her passing. Even so, he asked. Before long Mrs. Sarah Ashkenazi z"l

was suggested, a woman of great yiras Shamayim. At her advanced age she agreed to leave her home in the Shapira neighborhood of Tel Aviv, marry him and move to another city, far from her friends and everyone she knew, in order to serve so great a man and earn Olam HaBa through him. He married her toward the end of the winter of 5727 (1967). It must be said to her credit that she did everything she could so that he might go on, as before, with all the avodas hakodesh that always filled his days.

After my grandfather's passing his widow wanted to pay him the great honor of staying on in his home at least through the first year. Even so, when I asked her to go back to her home in Tel Aviv, so that I could take his living quarters into the shul and enlarge it, she agreed. For that reason alone she left his home, with a heavy heart, and returned to Tel Aviv. But for reasons this is not the place to go into, the plans fell through; the matter was taken out of my hands, I left the management of Chevras Ahavas Chaim, and what had been done could not be undone. To this day I deeply regret the plan that never came to be, and that she gave up the place for nothing. May the good Hashem have mercy. T.N.Tz.B.H.

Saba's Last Days and His Passing

My grandfather often told me how much he longed to merit saying the piyut *Lecha Keli Teshukasi* before he died (it is said at the start of the night of Yom Kippur in every Sephardi community). At the beginning of Elul 5728 (1968) he put up notices announcing a tefillah at the kever of Shmuel HaNavi on Wednesday, 11 Elul 5728, at five in the evening.

I remember that Wednesday. At about four in the afternoon my grandfather called me, and together we went into the Ahavas Chaim shul. He seated me to the left of the aron kodesh, where he always sat on Friday for shnayim mikra v'echad targum, and then, standing with his hands on my head, he gave me berachah after berachah from the depths of his heart. Why he did it I did not understand, but one does not question Saba. Perhaps, I thought, he was lifting some gezeirah off me, chas v'shalom. When he had finished, he called my sister and blessed her, too, with all his heart.

At about five they all set out by truck for the kever of Shmuel HaNavi. A few days later those who had been at the tefillah told me that my grandfather stood through the whole of *Lecha Keli Teshukasi* and said it with them b'dechilu u'rechimu (a long piyut: sung to its well-known niggun, it takes

more than half an hour). Back home, he went to bed early, as he always did, so as to rise at chatzos for his learning and his writing.

At four in the morning I came to the shul for Selichos and found him lighting the "primus" (a small kerosene stove) and boiling water so that the people saying Selichos would have tea and coffee, as he did every day. After Shacharis I sat with him a while and then went home. What he did in his last hours, I do not know.

At about ten, as every Thursday, he went out for a haircut (his head only; his beard he never touched) at a barbershop in Meah Shearim. On his way out of the house he saw an Arab woman sitting on the sidewalk selling figs, and he raised his voice and told her to move off. The barber, Mr. Chanoch Calderon, told me that when my grandfather arrived, there were people ahead of him, so he too sat down to wait. All at once he let out a loud laugh, and every head turned. They saw him smiling as the color left his face, and by the time they reached him he was gone. (Chazal have already said that to die in the midst of laughter is a good sign for a person.)

The Tachrichim and the Shtar

My grandfather's pure body was taken from the barbershop to the Bikur Cholim hospital. Within minutes my talmidim came to tell me he had passed away and where he lay. I went straight there and arranged for one of the relatives to stand beside him saying Tehillim, and meanwhile I ran to his home for the tachrichim. He had always asked me to make sure no one swapped them for others: when he bought them he had insisted on linen that was entirely pure, with nothing of any other kind mixed in, which matters a great deal according to Kabbalah.

Inside the package of tachrichim I found a shtar shlishus (a document left with him as a trusted third party), with a note attached to it in his hand: "Do not attend to my body until you have made sure that someone in the family will hold this shtar shlishus in my place. So-and-so and so-and-so handed it over on such-and-such a condition." My mother z"l took this upon herself. During the shivah, one of those who came to be menachem avel said the shtar was his and gave identifying signs, and once every condition had been met, the shtar went where it was meant to go.

From there I ran to the chevra kadisha of the Maaravim community to borrow one of their iron-mesh stretchers for carrying the niftar. My grand-

father had asked me to see that he was carried on just such a stretcher, since this too matters greatly for the tikkun of the niftar's nefesh, which is not true of the cloth or plastic stretchers the other chevros kadisha had by then begun to use.

The Levayah

Within minutes the news that Saba had passed away swept through Yerushalayim like fire through a field of thorns, and a great crowd began gathering in the courtyard of Chevras Ahavas Chaim, weeping over the loss. He had bought his burial plot in his lifetime, next to his wife's resting place, so the taharah and all the rest were done quickly, and at three in the afternoon, within four hours of his passing, the levayah left the door of his home in the courtyard of Chevras Ahavas Chaim.

The streets all around filled with people, by estimate far more than ten thousand men, and most of them wept aloud over a loss each felt as his own. (The women were gathered in one place and told that by Saba's will no woman was to walk behind his bier.)

The city's greatest rabbanim, led by my rebbi, Chacham Yehuda Tzadka zt"l, eulogized him warmly and in tears, weeping over "the burning that Hashem has kindled." Not one person held back his tears when Chacham Yehuda cried out: "Chacham Menachem, who will give us one to take your place? Who will give us one in your stead? Who will shield the generation with his tefillos? Who will see to the children of Yisrael who must be brought into a place of Torah? Who will see to the chassanim and kallos who need help to reach the chuppah?" and much more in that vein. Every maspid dwelt on his great merit in raising generations of Jews who were yerei Shamayim and who bring up their sons to Torah.

After the hespedim the crowd went out to escort him to his resting place. Nearly everyone stayed for the burial itself; hearing the hespedim and walking a little way behind him was not enough for them.

I myself was not permitted to go to the levayah. Yerushalayim's custom places a cherem forbidding every one of the niftar's descendants to follow his bier. (The reason, according to Kabbalah: hardly anyone is free of drops of keri, and from those drops sheidim and evil spirits are formed. At the hour of his death they follow his bier, crying to him, "You are our father," and take revenge on his nefesh with harsh yissurim. Once a cherem forbids

all his descendants to follow him, these too are barred, for fear of the cherem. This of course applies only to a man. After a woman there is no such concern and no cherem, and her descendants, sons included, go out and take part.)

Leil Shabbos

The next morning, though, Friday, I went to a taxi stand and asked whether any of the drivers had been at my grandfather's levayah. Several had, and one of them drove me to his kever. There I said a fitting tefillah from *Minchas Yehuda*; Saba, a talmid of Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah, held its author and this sefer in the highest esteem. Then I asked Saba to come to me that very night and tell me how things stood with him.

That Leil Shabbos I dreamed of a large, beautiful shul. I stood at its entrance, and on the first bench, right by the door, sat my grandfather in his tallis, shining with a light like the sun's. Without moving from my place I asked him, "Saba, what happened?"

Some time earlier, he told me, Shamayim had asked him whether he was willing to give himself up to death in place of several Jews who were due to leave the world, leaving orphans and widows behind them. He had agreed and made himself ready. In the barbershop he saw those who had come from Shamayim to meet and escort him. He was overjoyed to see them, laughed a great laugh for joy, and left his body to go with them.

He told me something else as well, great and awesome, about what had happened to him in the upper worlds that Thursday after his passing; but "it is the glory of G-d to conceal a matter."

So great was my delight at seeing him in his brilliant light, in that wondrous shul, that I asked him to let me stay with him. He raised his voice at me at once: "You have what to fix below." He pushed me out of the doorway, and I woke.

Some thought his anger at the Arab woman brought on an attack of nerves that killed him. That is not so at all. He was calm and at ease when he reached the barbershop, and shouting Arab peddlers off was nothing new for him; he always did it. Everything told above makes it plain that he had been getting ready for his passing since the day before. My own view is that he expected, as usual, to fit in his haircut l'kavod Shabbos before his passing too, and the wait for his turn kept him from it.

The Esrog He Did Not Need

I should mention that in those years I dealt in esrogim. Every year from Rosh Chodesh Elul I brought in crates of them to sell, and the first thing I did was pick out the most mehudar one for Saba. He treasured his esrog like an only son. He would pay me an exorbitant price and press me to take it, though I wanted no more than five grush from him, just so he would not have the mitzvah for nothing. **And I testify to this:** in the first week of that last Elul I brought him an esrog as usual, and he did not so much as look at it. "This year I don't need one," he said. I did not understand, but one does not question Saba; perhaps, I thought, he had already found a mehudar one elsewhere.

Mrs. Chanah Angel z"l, a tzaddekes who collected his pushkes in Tel Aviv and throughout the center of the country, told me of a day about a week before his passing. An important matter took him somewhere in Tel Aviv, he needed her to go along, and she walked behind him. On their way he caught sight of a woman dressed most immodestly. It hurt him to see it, and he cried out, "Ribbono shel Olam, it is worth leaving the world so as not to see such pritzus."

Tzaddikim in Their Death Are Called Living

On Chol HaMoed Sukkos 5729 (1968) I dreamed that my grandfather zt"l was asking me to take over the management of Chevras Ahavas Chaim. I told him I could not: it would get in the way of my learning in kollel. The zechus of the many would protect me, he answered, so that I would lose nothing of what I learned, even if I had to give up a few hours to the needs of the tzibbur; there was no one else to do it, and chalilah that all his life's work should come to a stop. When he kept pressing, I told him that in the morning I would consult a certain rav in Yerushalayim and do as he said.

In the morning I went to that rav. I had barely begun when he said, "Toward morning your grandfather came to me in a dream and asked me to ask you, when you came, to take over the management. So take it. Try to keep your regular hours of learning, and let your work be the office work only." And that is what I did.

After that, every few nights, my grandfather would visit me in a dream with instructions: what to do, and how to settle the money matters with

those who collected the chevrah's pushkes, which stood in a number of places around the country.

Five Hundred Lirot

On Erev Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan or Kislev of that year, I remember, five hundred lirot was owed to several children's dormitories in Yerushalayim. When my grandfather placed the children in those mosdos, he had undertaken to pay twenty-five lirot a month for each. The chevrah's kupah held about twenty lirot and no more, and I had no idea where so large a sum would come from. I went home hoping that if I missed a month, they would not send the children away.

That night my grandfather appeared to me in a dream. "Tomorrow, between one and two in the afternoon, sit in the office, and all the money will come." I got there at one. A few people came in and each gave a few grush, and I saw that the yeshuah would not come from that.

Then in walked Mulla Yochai Israelov zt"l, the well-known gabbai of the Musayof shuls, and with him the contractor Mr. Dadash, bringing a donation of five hundred lirot. Mr. Dadash had once renovated Chevras Ahavas Chaim, for pay, and I knew him both as a neighbor and from the renovation report kept in the office. He was not on the chevrah's list of donors, so I asked him what had happened that he was giving so large a sum. "Ask Mulla Yochai," he said. Mulla Yochai told me, "Your grandfather came to him last night in a dream and said, 'My grandson needs five hundred lirot tomorrow at noon for the office's expenses. Please agree to give it, and I bless you with success.' He agreed, and he was so stirred that he brought me along to come and give you the money."

I ran Chevras Ahavas Chaim for about five years. My plan was to join to the shul the house in the second part of the Ahavas Chaim courtyard, where Saba had lived until his passing, and so to enlarge both the building and the work done in it, **for this building belongs to the chevrah, and it was bought with donors' money as permanent hekdesh, which may not be sold or redeemed.** I therefore came to an agreement with his widow that she would vacate the place for the expansion. To my sorrow the whole plan came to nothing, because people rose up and blocked it. I resigned from the management of the chevrah and opened an institute called "Shaar Yosef," through which I carry on the tzedakah and the work of

drawing distant people close that Saba carried on for many years. **(See the notice at the end of the book.)**

To keep Chevras Ahavas Chaim from standing empty, my father z"l brought in Rav Zev Cheshin zt"l to give a shiur there each evening, and covered the cost himself. This continued until Rav Zev's passing to the life of Olam HaBa.

The Night of 8 Adar

This is my testimony for all time. On the night of 8 Adar 5729 (1969), about half a year after the passing of my teacher and rebbi, my grandfather z"l, I was asleep at home on Rechov Shlomo Musayof in the Bukharim neighborhood of Yerushalayim. Suddenly I felt someone grip me and shake me, trying to wake me. I opened my eyes, and there stood my grandfather z"l, smiling, like a living man, in his usual clothes, long gray coat and all. He spoke to me in Spanish, the language he always used with me in his lifetime, and in my dreams as well: "Get up and come into the front room. I want to talk to you. Quietly, so your wife doesn't wake."

I washed my hands at once from the vessel by my bed and went with him into the front room. There I asked him to stand by the doorway, and I asked who he was. "I am your grandfather," he answered, smiling. I asked him to raise his trousers above his feet so that I could see their shape. He raised them, and they were a man's feet. Still I was not sure of him: this might be only a sheid making sport of me. So I asked him to translate the Aramaic pasuk "Kidna temerun lehom...": "Thus shall you say to them: The gods who did not make heaven and earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens" (Yirmiyahu 10). Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Chacham Yehuda Fatiyah writes in his *Minchas Yehuda*, Parshas Mikeitz, that sheidim will never translate this pasuk, which speaks of their disgrace, and that he used it to test whether he was talking with a sheid or a human neshamah. My grandfather translated it for me without taking offense, for he understood what I was afraid of.

When he had finished, I asked him to sit. He took the armchair, I sat across from him on the couch, and I asked what he wanted. "Know that there is a gezeirah on thirty IDF soldiers: they are to be killed tomorrow, and the power of tefillah can save them. Tomorrow afternoon take a minyan to Kever Rachel and say Selichos there. With Hashem's help I will be

with you too, and we will annul the gezeirah." "All right," I said. "I will do it."

Then I asked whether I might touch him and feel him, and he agreed. I took hold of his arm and felt that I was touching a spirit one could feel, like the wind a person feels when he puts his hand out the window of a car doing more than a hundred and twenty kilometers an hour.

He then took leave of me in peace and walked into the outer wall of the building (50 centimeters thick, on the second floor), where he was swallowed up and vanished. The whole visit had taken about ten minutes. I went back to bed and began to take in what I had just been through. I was sorry that my grandfather had come to me from the upper world while I was awake and I had let him go back without a berachah. In the middle of my regret, only a few moments later, I fell asleep.

No sooner was I asleep than I dreamed he was waiting for me beside the shtieblach shuls in Beis Yisrael. When I reached him he said, "I saw that it grieved you that I left without blessing you. Shamayim would not let me appear to you twice, so I waited for you to fall asleep, to give you my berachah before I return to my mechitzah in Gan Eden." Then he blessed me. I asked to go with him to Gan Eden. "There is still work for you in your world," he said. "But I will ask permission to invite you to visit me there one day."

First thing in the morning I called one of my talmidim and had him arrange a minyan, with transport, to Kever Rachel for that afternoon, which he did. At about four, a minyan of my talmidim (baalei batim who came to my shiur in Chevras Ahavas Chaim every evening and on Shabbos) and I arrived at Kever Rachel and started saying Selichos. All the while I kept looking to either side for my grandfather z"l, who had promised to join us, and I did not see him.

At about six in the evening we climbed into the pickup truck to go back to Yerushalayim. It was about an hour's drive. Today's road did not yet exist, and we had to go around the hills of Yerushalayim to the east and south and come in by the Tzur Baher road (Tzur Baher is an Arab village at the southeastern edge of Yerushalayim). At seven o'clock my talmid the driver, Mr. Yaakov Kohen, put on the radio for the news, and the very first item was that about an hour before, an IDF armored personnel carrier had fallen into a wadi (a dry riverbed) and thirty soldiers had been lightly injured. My

talmidim knew why we had said Selichos. They fell to embracing one another, thanking and praising Hashem that Saba's words had come true and that our tefillah had worked so wonderfully.

One of those on the trip was my talmid Mr. Yaakov B., who had started coming to my shiurim a few months before and had never known my grandfather at all. On the way back he asked me who the old man was who had stood next to me and joined in the whole time we said Selichos. I told him I had noticed no old man; he must have a lively imagination. But he would not let it go. "Believe me, this was no passing fancy. I watched him through all the Selichos. He stood there the whole time and said every one of them with us, like one of the congregation." When we got to Chevras Ahavas Chaim for the regular shiur, I took him into the office, showed him the picture of my grandfather zt"l and asked whether it meant anything to him. "Of course," he said. "That is the face of the old man who was with us at Kever Rachel."

The Cave and the Garden

A few months later, in the summer of 5729 (1969), on the morning of Shabbos Kodesh, I dreamed that my uncle Yaakov z"l and I were on the eastern side of Har HaTzofim, that same Shabbos morning, at that very hour, when it began to rain. We looked for shelter, found a cave, and stood at its mouth waiting for the rain to stop. I said to my uncle, "I remember that somewhere around here is the burial cave of Nikanor, who donated the doors of the Azarah in the Beis HaMikdash in Yerushalayim. Miracles were done with his doors, and they were named after him, 'Shaarei Nikanor' (the Gates of Nikanor). Let's go in and see whether this might be the one." "Exploring caves doesn't interest me," he said. "If you want, go in by yourself and I'll wait here. Just be quick about it."

In I went. The entrance was a meter high, but inside, the cave rose more than two meters, so I could walk upright. It was about four meters wide and several tens of meters long, with a vaulted ceiling. Within a minute I had reached the far end, and there, on the left side of the wall in front of me, was an opening about a meter high, with a green door. I bent down, opened it, and passed through, out of the cave and into an enchanting, wonderful garden.

Just past the opening stood an old man, a guard, in a short white suit, beside a table that blocked the whole way into the garden. "Who are you, and what do you want?" he asked me. "My grandfather, Chacham Menachem Menashe, is here, and I have come to visit him." Before he could answer, I sprang over the table and ran deep into the garden. A few tens of meters on I looked back and saw that the guard had not chased me at all; he stood where he was, smiling. I began to stroll at my ease among the trees and flowers. The fragrances were intoxicating, the delight without end.

In the distance I saw two long, rectangular buildings with people walking about near them. At once I looked at their windows and saw that they had glass. I did that because I remembered sitting once with my grandfather z"l and his son Mordechai at the number 15 bus stop in the Geulah neighborhood of Yerushalayim, when my grandfather told his son about Nissim, Mordechai's brother, who had passed away in the prime of life. From time to time Nissim used to come to my grandfather while he was awake and tell him secrets of Gan Eden that he had seen up close. He had told him that a person who dreams of Gan Eden should notice whether there are glass windows, for that is a sign that the place is the lower Gan Eden. So I knew I was in the lower Gan Eden.

I came up to a group of people and saw that they all wore white suits, with both legs inside a single trouser leg, and they moved along as if skipping. I understood at once that these people were in the sod of the baalei kabin mentioned in the Zohar, Parshas Shelach Lecha. Each of them had a kamea the size of a mezuzah hanging from his neck. Among them I met my grandfather's brother Shmuel, the one called Bechor. I asked him in Spanish, "Tío Bechor, where is Saba?" He pointed me to the second building and told me where to find him.

I went there and found my grandfather. Like all the rest, he too had both legs in one trouser leg and a kamea on his neck, and he stood smiling, as if he had been waiting for me. As I came near he said, "I promised you then that I would ask permission to invite you to visit me in my place. Now I have been given permission, and here you are."

"Saba," I asked, "what is this kamea everyone wears on his neck?"

"Written in it are all the events of a person's life, and his deeds, up to the day of his passing." (Whether he said in all his gilgulim or only in his last one, I do not remember.)

I asked whether I could read the story of his own life. "Not that," he said, "but I will do something else." He called one of his friends over and asked him to let me see the book of his life. At once the man lifted the kamea off his neck and gave it to me. Opening it, I saw his whole life story, written in very small letters, the letters of a sefer Torah, up to his death at the hands of the Nazis in Bergen-Belsen (a Nazi concentration camp in Germany). I read through parts of it quickly and handed the kamea back.

I asked my grandfather, "Why are you only at this place in Gan Eden? Why have you not gone up higher?"

"Look at this tzaddik," he answered. "He was an oved Hashem and a yerei Shamayim, and he died al kiddush Hashem. Tens of years have passed already, and he is still here."

It was only his humility speaking, I understood. "That is no answer," I said. "You brought merit to the many and turned people back from sin, and the Zohar writes that the reward for that is very great." Since he was still within the year of his passing, he answered, the nefesh is still bound to this world, and so on.

"Saba," I said when he was done, "how good it is here. Let me stay with you." He straightened up like one issuing a command. "You have a wife and children who need you. You must not remain here."

This time I walked calmly up to the guard. He smiled at me, moved the table aside and let me back out to the cave. I went through the cave and out, found my uncle waiting at the entrance, and we headed home. On the way I told him what I had seen. Near his house, at the corner of his street in Beis Yisrael, I parted from him, and in my dream I walked on to my own house in the Bukharim neighborhood. When I got home, I woke up.

The Sefer Tikkun HaBris

Saba's friend Mr. Tzion B. wept over his passing day after day without stopping, until my grandfather came to him in a dream. "Enough. How long will you weep?" he said, and then told him, "The sefer *Tikkun HaBris* you are looking for is in my son Mordechai's house. Go and take it."

The next day Mr. Tzion went to Mordechai's house. They searched for the sefer without finding it, and in the end he gave up and set out for home. Halfway there a friend met him and said, "Last night I dreamed of

Chacham Menachem. He told me to tell you that the sefer you are looking for is in his son Mordechai's house."

"I'm just now coming back from his son's house," Mr. Tzion answered, "and the sefer isn't there."

"It can't be. Look again."

He went back to the son's house and found the sefer.

Saba's Tehillim

My brother Rafael z"l's daughter told me that when she went to New York to study, my brother gave her Saba's Tehillim, the one Saba always davened from, to keep with her as a protection. Her mother was ill, so she used to say Tehillim from it for her recovery.

One Friday night, after she had said Tehillim from it and gone to sleep, she felt a blow, as though someone were waking her, and opened her eyes. She fell asleep again and again felt a blow, and this time she saw my grandfather in a dream, trying to wake her. "Get up quickly and daven for your father's recovery," he said.

"I don't know what to say," she answered. "You daven."

"You stand in tefillah, and I will daven too."

On Shabbos she davened for her father's recovery as he had told her, though she knew her father was perfectly well. On Sunday my brother went to the hospital to visit his wife, and the doctor explained her condition to him and the danger she was in. My brother was so shaken that he had a heart attack right there in front of the doctor, who lost no time and dragged him to the hospital's resuscitation unit. There they revived him, and they told him that had he come a moment later, it would have been too late to save him.

Many yeshuos and wonders have come, and still come, to those who prostrate themselves on Saba's kever and ask him to daven for them in Shamayim. I do not know who goes up to his tziyun or what help each one finds, but a story or two will teach about the rest.

My brother Rafael z"l passed away in Canada at dawn, at the end of Thursday night by Israel time. About two hours before, my cousin dreamed that Saba and Savta were hurrying on their way. "We are going to Canada to greet Rafael," they told him. (As the holy Zohar explains in Parshas

Vayechi, when a person passes away all his relatives come from Gan Eden to greet him.)

I remember one of my grandfather's talmidim, Mr. D. L., a man of Turkish origin whom my grandfather drew close, as told in the body of the book. Every Shabbos he came without fail to Saba's shiurim in Ladino in the Mishkenos neighborhood of Yerushalayim. Years after both men had passed away, Mr. D. L.'s daughter came down with acute pneumonia, which led to an internal complication, and her body did not respond to the medicines. The doctors told her children there was nothing more they could do for her, and gave up hope.

One night she dreamed that my grandfather stood beside her bed, watching her and nodding. The next night she saw her father in her dream, standing beside her bed and davening, and toward morning he told her, "I have no permission to stay any longer." In the morning she woke up well. The doctors were surprised to find that her body had suddenly begun to respond to the medicines and that she could in fact go home at once, and she was discharged that same day.

A woman told me that whenever she is unsure of something in her life, she opens *Ahavas Chaim* and at once finds a clear, exact answer. The examples she gave me simply astonished me.

Several people told me they make a practice of reading the week's parashah in *Ahavas Chaim*. In a time of trouble they lit a candle l'iluy nishmas my grandfather and asked for a yeshuah in his merit, and before long they saw it.

A Friday-Night Seudah in London

In London, HaRav Achiel Doron shlita has a shul on Golders Green Road, and as a way of bringing merit to the many he hosts a Friday-night seudah each week for many dozens of secular young Israelis, men and women. What draws them is the spread: a royal table laden with every good thing, meat, fish and delicacies of all kinds, food that during the week they could hardly pay for themselves. He invites a rav to address them, to bring them closer and lead them to know Him Who spoke and the world came into being.

When I was in London he invited me to be that speaker. I would put the number at the table at about eighty young men and women. As I began,

noise and chatter broke out in the crowd, and I wanted them quiet, so straight away I opened with a question that stunned them.

How does Hashem run the world, when it seems not to be just? When a baby is born an invalid, what has the poor baby done? He has not sinned yet; why is he punished? And on the other hand, when there is a rasha who makes everyone suffer, and they ask the Borei that he die, why does Hashem not listen, and leave him alive to go on tormenting innocent people? Is this the justice we expect from the Borei?

The stunned crowd fell silent at once and waited for the answer. Then I told them what the Chofetz Chaim says on the pasuk **"The judgments of Hashem are true; they are righteous together."** At first glance, the end of the pasuk has nothing to do with its beginning. What it means is this. The rasha whose death people davened for was given his whole life by Shamayim to do teshuvah. When he failed to, he was brought back in a gilgul, in that invalid baby, to suffer for his deeds. "The judgments of Hashem are true" when the two stories are "righteous together," each completing the other. From there I went on to gilgulei neshamos and told what I have seen of people suffering terribly for their sins in an earlier gilgul. The crowd was held fast and listened without a sound for a long time, until I finished.

Among them was a young Israeli known as someone who sees hidden things (a "psychic"). After the seudah a few of them walked me back to where I was staying, and he was one of them. He turned to me and said, "Next to me is someone, a female, whom only I can see. All through the derashah she tried to hurt you and silence you. But she and I both saw three men standing around you, guarding you, and she could not hurt you." He described to me how my grandfather, Chacham Menachem, looked; how the Chida looked; and how Rav Yehuda Leon Patilon looked (whom he had never seen and of whom he had never heard). "Even now," he went on, "she is next to me and wants to harm you, and these rabbanim are protecting you, and she can do you no harm." When I heard this, a trembling seized me, and I hurried on to my lodging and took leave of the whole group.

Esther

On the night of 12 Elul 5770 (2010) I took part in a hillula held in honor of my grandfather zt"l in a shul in Petach Tikvah, and I spoke in his praise and

about his ways. One of those present had a wife who was expecting, in a condition that endangered the unborn baby and to some degree the mother too. He went home and told her what he had heard from me about my grandfather, and the two of them at once took a neder: if the pregnancy went well, a boy would be named Menachem after my grandfather, and a girl Esther after his wife, my grandmother z"l. A test a few days later showed, to everyone's astonishment, that the problem had cleared up, not by way of nature; and in Nissan 5771 (2011) the woman gave birth to a completely healthy girl, who was named in Yisrael "Esther." Here is the gist of the letter the husband sent me:

> *In July 2010 my wife became pregnant, and right away she began to feel weak and extremely exhausted. Blood tests done in August 2010 found a severe failure of the thyroid gland. A high TSH value shows how great the body's lack of thyroid hormones is: the higher the value, the greater the lack. My wife's value was 123.83, while the top of the scale is 4.2. The result was marked in bold letters "tested twice," because it was so far out of range. The head of the department at the hospital told her it was a matter of a few days until, chalilah v'chas, she might go into a coma. In the T4 test, too, her value was 6.4, while the bottom of the medical scale is 10.00.*
>
> *The team of doctors told us that normal levels of these values are vital for the development of the baby's brain in the first stages of pregnancy, and that if the situation was not put right within a week, the baby's brain would be in grave danger. My wife started taking medicines at once to improve her health, with a clear statement from the doctors that at best a change would begin only after about two and a half to three months. For the baby that would already be too late and would not help at all.*
>
> *This was from Hashem. That same evening I came to the azkarah of Chacham Menachem Menashe zt"l. I came out moved by what I heard about him, and I told it to my wife. We agreed that if a boy was born we would name him after the tzaddik, and if a girl, after his wife, Esther a"h. We lit a candle l'iluy nishmaso and asked that he pour out tefillos before HaKadosh Baruch Hu that the situation would improve.*
>
> *After about a week we asked for a repeat test. We had to work hard to get a referral for the blood test, and we were told plainly that there was no chance of seeing an improvement in so short a time, and that it was a waste of time and money. We insisted all the same. The results of the second test,* ***after about a week****, were: TSH down from 123.83 to 5.76 (almost completely normal); T4*

up from 6.4 to 14.7 (completely normal). Everyone was astonished at the result, and b"H a healthy daughter was born to us, and her name is Esther.

At His Tziyun, 5773

This year, 5773 (2013), on the day of my grandfather's passing, more than a minyan gathered at about ten o'clock, led by my grandfather's great-grandson, HaRav R' M. A. shlita, who brings merit to the many with his wonderful leaflet *Ikvesa d'Meshicha*. They said the tefillah of the Hakafos and the Sheva Korsei Bris, which lasted until after eleven in the morning.

At eleven o'clock a man turned up with his two daughters and stood waiting until the Hakafos were over. As soon as they ended, he asked R' M. for a berachah that his daughter would soon be married. A week earlier, he said, she had davened to find her match in the merit of my grandfather z"l, and toward morning on Friday night my grandfather revealed himself to her in a dream. She was to come with her father to his tziyun on the coming Monday, the day of his passing, at 11 in the morning. "There you will find the author of the leaflet *Ikvesa d'Meshicha* with a minyan, making Hakafos, and I will be there as well. When the Hakafos end, your father should give the leaflet 458 shekels, the numerical value of *chassan*, and ask him for a berachah that you marry. Let them wash my kever with water, and you will soon be married."

And so it was: he came just as the Hakafos were ending, told the dream, and they did all she had been told.

May his merit stand and protect us and all Yisrael. Amen.

"HE HAS MADE A REMEMBRANCE OF HIS WONDERS, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS STANDS FOREVER"

There is a young woman I know, a baalas teshuvah with all her heart and soul, who for some five years now has been bringing merit to the many together with her husband. They print thousands of different flyers for distribution to the public, on tznius, on shemiras habris, on the gravity of talking in shul, and on similar subjects.

About eight years ago a secular acquaintance of hers died at a young age. About a month ago she put out several thousand flyers on tznius, **and**

on the severity of the issur of going about in the modern sheitels, which cause the many to stumble, and at the foot of the page she wrote that it was published l'iluy nishmas several niftarim, whom she named; this young man was one of them.

Last week he came to her in a dream, happy and smiling. "You have no idea what a stir your flyers are making in Shamayim," he said. "I've come to thank you. In their merit I sit and learn Torah in the Yeshivah shel Maalah." The page bearing his name had gone clean out of her mind. "But you're secular," she said. "What do you have to do with the Yeshivah shel Maalah?" "That is just why I've come to thank you," he said again, "for the flyers that stirred Shamayim and brought me into the Yeshivah shel Maalah." He thanked her over and over, until he disappeared.

This shows how much zikui harabbim matters, and how great its reward is in Olam HaBa.

❦

Two hundred years ago a great tzaddik revealed himself to his friend in a dream and told him that in Shamayim the hardest sin is gezel, and the most important thing is saying all of Tehillim on Shabbos, straight through, without breaking off to speak at all.

❦

THE "SHAAR YOSEF" INSTITUTE FOR JUDAISM AND FOR AID TO THE NEEDY

Named for the Chida zy"a

Its aims: instilling awareness of Judaism; aid to the needy.

P.O.B. 3200, Bnei Brak. Cell: 052-3145665

B"H

I turn to my fellow Jews, the generous among our people, to be a help and a support to poor families in great need. Most of them, out of shame, do not turn to institutions for help, hard as their situation is; we know them personally.

Besides food, our help covers general necessary expenses. The expenses are heavy, and it is a great mitzvah to come to their aid.

All who help to enlarge the institute and its work, both the tzedakah and chessed for the needy and the expenses of zikui harabbim and of drawing distant people close, will be blessed from Shamayim.

May it be Hashem's will that the merit of the mitzvah and the merit of the tzaddik Saba, Chacham Menachem Menashe zt"l (for this institute follows his way, as he guided me from my youth), protect all the donors and all who help, like a thousand shields, with every good, selah.

Signed, with a request and a blessing,
Yosef Shani

Glossary

Acharonim The later Torah authorities, from about the sixteenth century on.

achsadra A covered hall, open on one side.

Admor Acronym of *Adoneinu Moreinu v'Rabbeinu*, "our master, our teacher and our rabbi"; a title for a chassidic Rebbe.

aggadah (pl. aggados) The non-legal teachings of the Talmud and Midrash: stories, ethics and lore.

agunah A "chained" woman, whose husband has left her without a *get* and who therefore cannot remarry.

a"h Abbreviation of *alav hashalom*, "may peace be upon him," said after the name of one who has passed away.

ahavas Yisrael Love for one's fellow Jew.

al taharas hakodesh "In holy purity"; of a Torah education untouched by secular schooling.

alav hashalom "Peace be upon him"; said after the name of one who has passed away.

aliyah Immigration to Eretz Yisrael (literally, "going up"); also, being called up to the reading of the Torah.

aliyas neshamah "Ascent of the soul"; the soul's rise to the upper worlds during sleep or prayer, to learn what is hidden.

am ha'aretz An ignorant man; one without Torah learning.

Am Yisrael The Jewish people.

Amidah "Standing"; the *Shemoneh Esreh*.

Amora'im The Sages of the Gemara.

amos Cubits; an *amah* is about half a meter.

amud One side of a *daf*.

Ana B'choach A prayer of forty-two words, attributed to Rabbi Nechunya ben HaKanah.

Ana Hashem hoshi'ah na "Please, Hashem, save now" (Tehillim 118:25), said in *Hallel*. Beside it, *Ana Hashem hatzlichah na*, "Please, Hashem, grant success now."

anav A humble man. *Anavah*, humility.

apikores (pl. apikorsim) A heretic; one who denies the foundations of the Torah.

arayos Forbidden relationships. *Gilui arayos*, the sin of forbidden relations, one of the three sins for which one must give up his life.

arka'os The secular courts.

aron kodesh The ark in a *shul* that holds the Torah scrolls.

arusah A betrothed woman.

Aseres Yemei Teshuvah The Ten Days of Repentance, from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur.

askanim Communal activists; those who run public affairs.

Askinu seudasa "Prepare the meal" (Aramaic); the opening words of the Arizal's song said at the start of each Shabbos meal.

av beis din The head of a *beis din*; often the chief *rav* of a city.

aveilus Mourning.

aveirah (pl. aveiros) A sin.

avel A mourner. *Menachem avel*, to comfort a mourner.

avodah Service; prayer. *Avodas Hashem*, the service of Hashem.

avodah zarah Idolatry.

avodas hakodesh Holy work; service of a holy cause.

Avos The Patriarchs, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. *Zechus Avos*, the merit of the Patriarchs.

avreich (pl. avreichim) A young married man who learns Torah full time.

azkarah A memorial gathering.

baal chessed A man devoted to acts of kindness.

baal mofes A worker of wonders; a *tzaddik* through whose prayers miracles happen. *Mofes* (pl. *mofsim*), a wonder.

baal teshuvah A penitent; one who has returned to Hashem through *teshuvah*.

baalei batim Householders; working men, as against full-time Torah scholars.

bakashos Petitions; prayers of request.

baki One with a wide and exact knowledge of Torah.

banei, chayei u'mezonei "Children, life and sustenance" (Aramaic); three things that the Gemara says depend on *mazal*.

bar minan "Apart from us" (Aramaic); may it not happen to us.

bar nash "A man" (Aramaic).

baruch Hashem "Blessed is Hashem"; an expression of thanks.

Baruch shem kevod malchuso l'olam va'ed "Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever"; said after the first verse of the *Shema*.

bas kol A heavenly voice.

bas Yisrael A Jewish woman or girl.

bas zug A man's destined wife.

batim The leather boxes of the *tefillin*.

bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael "A faithful home in Israel"; a home built on Torah, said of a newly married couple.

b'dechilu u'rechimu "In awe and love" (Aramaic).

b'dieved After the fact; acceptable only once done.

Bein HaMetzarim "Between the straits"; the three weeks of mourning from the seventeenth of Tammuz to Tishah B'Av.

beirur Refinement; in Kabbalah, the sorting of the holy sparks from the *kelipos*.

beis din A rabbinical court.

Beis Din shel Maalah The Heavenly Court.

beis hachaim "House of life"; a cemetery.

beis hakevaros A cemetery.

beis hakisei A lavatory. In this book, a mocking name for the Knesset and the city council.

beis haknesses (pl. batei knesses) A synagogue.

Beis HaMikdash The Holy Temple in Yerushalayim.

beis midrash A study hall for Torah learning.

bekiyus Wide and exact knowledge of Torah; also, learning that covers much ground.

ben Olam Haba One assured of a share in the World to Come.

ben Torah A person devoted to Torah learning and observance.

bentch, bentching To say *Birkas HaMazon*; saying it.

berachah (pl. berachos) A blessing.

beraisa A teaching of the Tannaim not included in the Mishnah.

B"H Abbreviation of *baruch Hashem* or *b'ezras Hashem*; written at the head of a letter or notice.

bimah The raised platform in a *shul* where the Torah is read.

birchos hanehenin *Berachos* said before enjoying food, drink or a fragrance.

Birkas HaChamah The blessing over the sun, said once in twenty-eight years.

Birkas HaIlanos The blessing over fruit trees in bloom, said in the month of Nissan.

Birkas HaLevanah The blessing over the new moon, said outdoors once a month.

Birkas HaMazon Grace after meals.

bitachon Trust in Hashem.

bittul Torah Time lost from learning Torah.

blorit A long forelock combed up over the forehead, the style of the secular youth.

b'mechilas kevodchem "With your pardon"; said before disagreeing with a *rav* or correcting him.

Bnei Yisrael The Children of Israel; the Jewish people.

bochur (pl. bochurim) A young unmarried man; a *yeshivah* student.

bodkim Inspectors who examine a slaughtered animal for defects that would make it *treifah*.

borei minei vesamim "Who creates kinds of spices"; the *berachah* said over a fragrance.

Borei Olam The Creator of the world.

bris (bris milah) Circumcision; the covenant of Avraham Avinu.

b'tzibbur With the congregation; in a *minyan*.

Chacham "Sage"; a title for rabbis in Sephardi communities.

Chacham Bashi "Chief Sage"; under Ottoman rule, the title of the chief rabbi whom the government recognized.

chachamim Sages; the Torah scholars of a generation.

chalilah "Heaven forbid." *Chalilah v'chas*, the same.

chalitzah The ceremony that releases a childless widow from *yibum*, so that she may marry another.

chametz b'mashehu Even the smallest amount of *chametz*, leavened food, on Pesach.

chamin A hot dish kept warm from Friday and eaten on Shabbos day.

chareidi Strictly Torah-observant; ultra-Orthodox.

chas v'shalom "Heaven forbid."

chassan A bridegroom.

chassid (pl. chassidim) A follower of a chassidic Rebbe; also, a man of great piety.

chassidus The chassidic movement and its teachings; also, piety beyond what the law requires.

chasunah A wedding.

chatzos Midnight; also, midday.

Chaval al d'avdin "Alas for those who are lost" (Sanhedrin 111a); a lament for what is gone.

chavrusa (pl. chavrusos) A study partner; learning in pairs.

Chazal Acronym for *chachameinu zichronam livrachah*, "our Sages of blessed memory"; the Sages of the Mishnah and Talmud.

chazaras hashatz The repetition of the *Amidah* by the *chazzan*.

chazzan The leader of the prayers in *shul*; a cantor.

chazzanus The art of the *chazzan*; cantorial singing.

cheder "Room" (Yiddish); a school where young children learn Torah.

cheishek Eagerness; desire.

cherem A ban of excommunication; also, a solemn oath under pain of a ban.

cheshbon hanefesh Taking stock of one's soul and deeds.

chessed Kindness.

chevra kadisha The burial society.

chevrah A society; an organized group.

chiddushim Original Torah insights. *Chiddushei Torah*, the same.

chillul Hashem Desecration of the Name of Hashem.

chillul Shabbos Desecration of Shabbos.

chitzonim "The outer ones"; the forces of impurity that draw from holiness.

chol The weekday; the ordinary, as against the holy.

Chol HaMoed The intermediate days of Pesach and Sukkos.

chomesh A fifth; a fifth of one's income given to *tzedakah*.

chumros Stringencies.

chuppah The wedding canopy; by extension, the wedding ceremony.

Churban The destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

daas Torah The guidance of great Torah scholars, drawn from their knowledge of Torah.

daf A folio of the Gemara, both sides of a page.

darshan (pl. darshanim) A preacher; one who gives *derashos*.

davar shebikdushah "A matter of holiness"; a part of the prayers, such as *Kaddish* or *Kedushah*, said only with a *minyan*.

daven, davening To pray; prayer.

dayan (pl. dayanim) A judge of a *beis din*. *Dayanus*, the office of a *dayan*.

derashah (pl. derashos) A public sermon or Torah discourse.

derech eretz Proper conduct; good manners.

deshen Ashes from the altar.

deveikus Cleaving to Hashem; constant attachment to Him in thought.

dikduk Hebrew grammar.

dinei mamonos Monetary law.

dinim Laws.

divrei Torah Words of Torah; a Torah talk. *Dvar Torah*, a short Torah thought.

dybbuk The soul of a deceased person that has entered and taken hold of the body of a living person.

Edos HaMizrach The Eastern communities; the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East.

eis tzarah l'Yaakov "A time of trouble for Yaakov" (Yirmeyahu 30:7); a time of danger for the Jewish people.

eishes ish A married woman.

Elokei Yisrael "The God of Israel."

Elokim A Name of Hashem, denoting His attribute of strict justice.

emunah Faith.

emunas chachamim Faith in the words of the Sages.

erev rav The "mixed multitude" that left Egypt with Bnei Yisrael; in the Zohar, the Jews whose deeds hold back the *geulah*. In this book, a name for the Zionist leaders.

Erev Shabbos Friday; the day before Shabbos.

Eruv Tavshilin Food set aside before a Yom Tov that falls on Friday, which allows cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos.

esrog (pl. esrogim) The citron taken on Sukkos.

ezras nashim The women's section of a *shul*.

gabbai (pl. gabbaim) The manager of a *shul* or of a charity fund; also, the attendant of a *tzaddik*. *Gabba'it*, a woman who collects for charity.

gadol (pl. gedolim) A great Torah leader. *Gedolei hador*, the great Torah leaders of the generation; *gadol baTorah*, one great in Torah.

galus Exile.

Gan Eden Paradise; the abode of righteous souls after death, divided into a lower and an upper Gan Eden.

gaon An outstanding Torah scholar; a title of honor.

gashmiyus Material things; the physical world.

Gehinnom The place where souls are purified through punishment after death.

geirim Converts to Judaism. *Geirus*, conversion.

gematria The numerical value of Hebrew letters; a teaching drawn from it.

gemilus chassadim Acts of kindness.

get A bill of divorce according to *halachah*.

geulah The final Redemption.

gezel Theft; robbery.

gilgul (pl. gilgulim) Reincarnation; also, a soul's particular incarnation, or the person in whom a soul is reincarnated.

gilgulei neshamos The reincarnation of souls; the doctrine of *gilgul*.

gilgulei sheleg Rolling in snow, done as a *tikkun* for sins.

giyores A woman who has converted to Judaism. *Giyores tzedek*, a sincere convert.

golah The exile; the lands of the Diaspora.

goral A lot. *Goral hachol*, a lot cast with sand to seek guidance from Heaven.

grush A coin of very small value.

gvir A wealthy man; a patron.

hachnasas kallah Helping a poor bride to marry.

hachnasas orchim Hospitality to guests.

haftarah The portion of the Prophets read after the Torah reading on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu "The Holy One, Blessed is He"; a Name of Hashem.

hakafos Circuits made in procession while saying set prayers: with the Torah scrolls on Simchas Torah, or around a holy place.

hakaras hatov Gratitude.

halachah (pl. halachos) Jewish law; an individual law.

halachah l'maaseh The law as it is to be practiced.

Hallel Tehillim chapters 113-118, said in praise on Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh.

Hamapil The *berachah* said before sleep, at the close of *Krias Shema al hamitah*.

HaRav "The Rav"; a title of honor before the name of a Torah scholar. *HaRav HaGaon*, "the Rav, the Gaon," is a higher title.

hashavas aveidah Returning lost property.

hashba'os Oaths that invoke holy Names, used to command spirits.

Hashem "The Name"; the way the Tetragrammaton is referred to in speech and writing.

Hashem Tzevakos "Hashem of Hosts"; a Name of Hashem.

Hashem yatzileinu "May Hashem save us"; said on mentioning something sinful or terrible.

Hashem Yisbarach "Hashem, may He be blessed."

Hashem yishmereinu "May Hashem guard us"; said on mentioning something terrible.

Hashem yishmor "May Hashem guard"; said on mentioning a misfortune.

Hashgachah Divine providence.

hashra'ah The resting of the *Shechinah* or of holiness on a place or a person.

Haskalah "Enlightenment"; the movement that drew Jews away from Torah to secular learning and ways.

hasmadah Diligence in Torah learning.

Havayah The four-letter Name of Hashem. *Shem Havayah*, "the Name *Havayah*."

Havdalah The blessing over wine, spices and fire that marks the end of Shabbos or Yom Tov.

hechsher A certificate that food is kosher.

hefsek taharah The examination by which a woman establishes that her days of *niddah* have ended, before counting seven clean days.

heichal "Palace"; the sanctuary of the Beis HaMikdash; also, among Sephardim, the ark of a *shul*.

hekdesh Property given to holy use; communal charity funds.

hesped (pl. hespedim) A eulogy. *Maspidim*, those who give eulogies.

heter A permission; a ruling that something is allowed.

heter mechirah The sale of the land of Eretz Yisrael to a non-Jew for the *shemittah* year, so that it may be farmed.

hilula The celebration held on the *yahrzeit* of a *tzaddik*. *Hilula Rabba*, a great celebration of this kind.

hirhurei aveirah Sinful thoughts.

hishtalshelus The chain of descent by which the worlds unfold from Hashem.

hishtatchus Lying stretched out in prayer on the *kever* of a *tzaddik*.

hislahavus Fervor; burning enthusiasm in serving Hashem.

Hoshana Rabbah The seventh day of Sukkos.

hy"v Abbreviation of *Hashem yishmerehu v'yechayehu*, "may Hashem protect him and grant him life," said after the name of a living person.

issur A prohibition; a forbidden thing.

issur kares A prohibition whose punishment is *kares*.

issur v'heter The laws of what is forbidden and permitted, such as the laws of kosher food.

istenis A delicate person, sensitive in food and comfort.

iyun In-depth study.

kabbalah maasis Practical Kabbalah; the use of holy Names to act on the world.

Kabbalas Shabbos The psalms and prayers that welcome Shabbos on Friday evening.

Kaddish A prayer praising Hashem, said by the *chazzan* and by mourners; it needs a *minyan*.

kaf hakela "The hollow of the sling"; a punishment in which a soul is hurled about through the world without rest.

kahal The congregation; the community.

kal vachomer An argument from a lesser case to a greater.

kallah (pl. kallos) A bride.

kamea (pl. kamei'os) An amulet, usually a written parchment with holy Names.

kanai A zealot for the honor of Hashem. *Kana'us*, zealotry.

kaparos The custom before Yom Kippur of swinging a chicken or money over the head as an atonement, and giving it to the poor.

kapitel (pl. kapitlach) A chapter of Tehillim (Yiddish).

kapparah Atonement.

kares "Cutting off"; a severe Divine punishment stated in the Torah for certain sins.

kashrus The laws of kosher food; whether a thing is kosher.

kasket A flat cloth cap.

kavanah (pl. kavanos) Concentration and intent in prayer or a *mitzvah*; in Kabbalah, specific meditations.

kavod habriyos The dignity of people; respect for every person.

kavod HaMakom The honor of Hashem (literally, "of the Place").

kedushah Holiness. *Kedushah*, the prayer of "Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh" in the repetition of the *Amidah* by the *chazzan*.

kedushas einayim Holiness of the eyes; keeping them from what is forbidden to see.

kefirah Heresy; denial of the Torah.

kefitzas haderech "Shortening of the road"; traveling a great distance in a moment, by a miracle.

keitz The end of the exile; the time set for the *geulah*.

Kel na refa na lah "Please, Hashem, heal her now" (Bamidbar 12:13); Moshe's prayer for Miriam.

kelalim General rules.

kelipah (pl. kelipos) "Husk" or "shell"; in Kabbalah, the forces of impurity that conceal and draw from holiness.

keri Impurity from an emission of seed, especially at night.

kever (pl. kevarim) A grave.

kevod Shamayim The honor of Heaven.

kevodo "His honor"; a respectful way of saying "you" to a *rav* or an elder.

kezayis The size of an olive; the smallest amount of food for most *mitzvos* of eating.

kibbud av Honoring one's father. *Kibbud em*, honoring one's mother.

Kiddush The blessing over wine that sanctifies Shabbos or Yom Tov.

kiddush Hashem Sanctification of the Name of Hashem.

kiddushin Betrothal; the first part of the marriage ceremony. *Mesader kiddushin*, the *rav* who conducts the ceremony.

kilayim Forbidden mixtures of different kinds. In this book, a name for the rabbinate set up in partnership with secular Zionism.

Kinos Laments said on Tishah B'Av.

kippah A skullcap.

kishuf Sorcery; witchcraft.

kivrei tzaddikim The graves of *tzaddikim*.

Klal Yisrael The Jewish people as a whole.

kodesh Holy; holiness.

kodesh kodashim The Holy of Holies; the holiest place.

kofer One who denies the Torah and its faith.

Kohen (pl. kohanim) A descendant of Aharon, member of the priestly family; distinct from a Levi and a Yisrael.

kol korei A public proclamation to the community.

kollel A *yeshivah* for married men. *Rosh kollel*, its head.

korban (pl. korbanos) A sacrifice.

kri and ksiv The way a word of Tanach is read and the way it is written, where they differ.

krias haTorah The public reading of the Torah in *shul*.

Krias Shema The reading of the *Shema*, morning and evening.

Krias Shema al hamitah The *Shema* and accompanying prayers recited at bedtime.

kulos Leniencies.

kuntres A pamphlet; a short work.

kupah (pl. kupos) A charity fund.

kushya A difficulty; a question that challenges a text or an argument.

kvittel A note with a name and a request, given to a Rebbe (Yiddish).

Lag BaOmer The thirty-third day of the *Omer*, the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

lamdan (pl. lamdanim) A learned man; one skilled in the study of the Gemara.

lamed-vav tzaddikim The thirty-six hidden *tzaddikim* in whose merit the world stands.

lashon hakodesh "The holy tongue"; Hebrew.

le'akama Shechinta me'afra "To raise the *Shechinah* up out of the dust" (Aramaic); the aim of a deed done for the sake of Heaven.

Leil Shabbos Friday night.

lemehadrin Meeting the strictest standard.

levayah A funeral.

levivos Fritters fried in oil.

l'iluy nishmas "For the elevation of the soul of" a departed person.

limudei kodesh Torah studies.

lira (pl. lirot) The pound, the currency of Eretz Yisrael and of Turkey in those years.

l'kavod Shabbos In honor of Shabbos.

l'shem Shamayim For the sake of Heaven; with pure intent.

lulav (pl. lulavim) The palm branch taken on Sukkos. *Netilas lulav*, the *mitzvah* of taking it.

maamar An essay or discourse.

ma'arachos Essays on Torah topics, arranged by subject.

Maariv The evening prayer.

maaser (pl. maasros) A tithe; a tenth of produce or income set aside.

machmir Strict in his practice of *halachah*.

machul lach "You are forgiven."

maggid A preacher who gives public *derashos*, often on *mussar*.

maggid shiur One who gives a regular *shiur*.

malach (pl. malachim) An angel. *Malachei hashareis*, the ministering angels.

mara d'asra "Master of the place"; the *rav* whose rulings bind his town.

Maran "Our master"; a title for the greatest Torah authorities, especially Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the Beis Yosef and the Shulchan Aruch.

marbitzei Torah Those who spread Torah; teachers of Torah to the public.

masechta (pl. masechtos) A tractate of the Mishnah or the Gemara.

mashgiach (pl. mashgichim) A supervisor: of *kashrus*, or, as *mashgiach ruchani*, of the spiritual growth of the students of a *yeshivah*.

Mashiach The Messiah.

maskil (pl. maskilim) A follower of the *Haskalah*.

masmid One who learns Torah without pause.

matzeivah A tombstone.

mayim acharonim Washing the fingers at the end of a meal, before *Birkas HaMazon*.

mazal Fortune, destiny; also a sign of the zodiac.

mazel tov "Good fortune"; congratulations. *B'mazal tov*, with good fortune.

mazikin Harmful spirits; demons.

mechallelei Shabbos Those who desecrate Shabbos.

mechilah Forgiveness; pardon.

mechitzah "Partition"; in this book, the place of a tzaddik's soul in *Gan Eden*.

meforshim Commentators; commentaries.

Megillah The Book of Esther, read on Purim.

mehudar Of the finest quality, beyond what the law requires. *Mehader*, to keep a *mitzvah* in its finest form.

mekubal (pl. mekubalim) A master of Kabbalah.

melachah Work forbidden on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

melamed A teacher of young children in a Talmud Torah.

melaveh malkah "Escorting the queen"; the meal after Shabbos ends.

menahel The principal of a school or *yeshivah*.

menuchas ahavah u'nedavah "A rest of love and free will"; words from the Shabbos *Minchah* prayer describing the rest of Shabbos.

meshamesh bakodesh One who serves in a holy office, such as a *rav*, a *dayan* or a *shamash*.

mesirus nefesh Self-sacrifice; devotion to the point of giving up one's life.

mesugal Having a special power for good; favorable, as a place for prayer.

mezakeh harabbim (pl. mezakei harabbim) One who brings merit to the public, especially by spreading Torah and good deeds.

mezuzah (pl. mezuzos) A parchment with the *Shema*, fixed to a doorpost.

midas chassidus Piety beyond what the law requires.

middas hadin The attribute of strict judgment.

middos Character traits.

midrash (pl. midrashim) The Sages' interpretation of Tanach; a work of such teachings.

Mikdash The Beis HaMikdash.

mikveh A ritual bath used for purification.

milchamtah shel Torah "The battle of Torah"; vigorous debate in Torah learning.

Minchah The afternoon prayer.

Minchah Gedolah The earliest time for *Minchah*, half an hour after midday; *Minchah* davened then.

minhag (pl. minhagim) A custom.

minim Heretics. *Arba Minim*, the four species taken on Sukkos.

minyan A quorum of ten men required for communal prayer.

mishkav zachar The sin of relations between men.

misos beis din The four death penalties of a *beis din*; in Kabbalah, *tikkunim* done in their place.

mispallelim Those praying; the congregation.

misyavnim "Those who adopt Greek ways"; the Hellenizers of the Second Temple era, and by extension Jews who adopt secular ways.

mitzvah (pl. mitzvos) A commandment of the Torah; a good deed.

mizbe'ach The altar of the Beis HaMikdash.

Mizmor L'Sodah Tehillim chapter 100, said in *Pesukei d'Zimrah*.

mizrach "East"; the eastern wall of a *shul*, facing Yerushalayim, where the honored seats are.

mohel One who performs circumcision.

moreh hora'ah (pl. morei hora'ah) A *rav* who decides questions of *halachah*.

Moreinu v'Rabbeinu "Our teacher and our master"; a title of honor for one's own *rav*.

Mori "My teacher"; a title of honor for a *rav* among Yemenite Jews. *Mori v'rabbi*, "my teacher and my master."

mosdos Institutions, such as schools and *yeshivos*.

moser An informer; a Jew who hands another Jew over to the gentile authorities.

moshav (pl. moshavim) A farming village of smallholders.

moshavah (pl. moshavos) A Jewish farming village.

Motza'ei Shabbos Saturday night, after Shabbos ends.

muktzeh machmas mi'us "Set apart because repulsive"; a thing too disgusting to handle, a category in the laws of Shabbos.

Musaf The additional prayer said on Shabbos, Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh.

mussar Ethical teaching; the study of improving one's character.

nasi A leader; the president of a body or community.

navi (pl. neviim) A prophet.

nazir (fem. nezirah) One who has vowed to abstain from wine, from cutting the hair and from impurity of the dead.

neder A vow. *Bli neder*, "without a vow," said with a promise so that it does not bind as one.

nefesh (pl. nefashos) A soul; a life; also, the lowest level of the soul.

nefilas apayim "Falling on the face"; the part of *Tachanun* said with the head bowed.

nekudos Vowel marks.

ner neshamah A memorial candle.

neshamah (pl. neshamos) A soul; also, a higher level of the soul.

nesias kapayim "Raising of the hands"; the priestly blessing given by the *Kohanim*.

netilas yadayim Washing the hands from a vessel, before bread, on waking and at other times.

netz hachamah Sunrise.

niddah A woman in the state of ritual impurity associated with menstruation; also, the prohibition of marital relations during that time.

niftar Passed away; one who has passed away.

niggun (pl. niggunim) A melody, often without words.

nigleh The revealed parts of the Torah, as against the hidden.

nissim Miracles.

nistar The hidden part of the Torah, Kabbalah; also, a hidden *tzaddik* (pl. *nistarim*).

nos'ei keilim "Armor-bearers"; the commentaries printed around a basic work such as the Shulchan Aruch.

nusach The fixed wording of a prayer; also, a community's form of the prayers.

Olam Haba The World to Come.

Olam HaEmes "The World of Truth"; the world after death.

olim Immigrants to Eretz Yisrael.

onah The *mitzvah* of marital relations.

parnassah Livelihood.

paroches The curtain over the *aron kodesh*.

parsaos Parsangs; a *parsah* is about four kilometers.

parshah (Parshas) A weekly Torah portion.

pas shacharis "Morning bread"; the morning meal.

pashtan A scholar of the plain meaning of the Torah, as against a *mekubal*.

pasuk (pl. pesukim) A verse of Tanach.

pasul Invalid; unfit for use.

pegam habris A blemish to the *bris*; a sin against the holiness of the body.

perek A chapter.

perishus Abstinence; holding back from worldly pleasures.

perutah (pl. perutos) The smallest coin; a penny.

Pesukei d'Zimrah The psalms and praises said in *Shacharis* before *Krias Shema*.

petirah Passing away; death.

peyos Sidelocks.

pidyon (pl. pidyonos) A redemption by money. *Pidyon nefesh*, money given to *tzedakah* or to a *tzaddik* to redeem a person from a harsh decree; *pidyon haben*, the redemption of a firstborn son from a *Kohen*.

pikuach nefesh Saving a life, which overrides almost every *mitzvah*.

pilpul Sharp argument in Torah learning.

pitam The tip at the top of the *esrog*.

piyut A liturgical poem.

poskim Halachic authorities who decide the law.

pritzus Immodesty; licentiousness.

pru u'rvu "Be fruitful and multiply"; the *mitzvah* of having children.

pshat The plain meaning of a text.

ptiliyah A kerosene stove that burned with wicks.

pushkes Charity boxes (Yiddish).

Rabbeinu "Our master"; a title of honor for a great *rav*. In several chapters, the name for the *tzaddik* whose life the chapter tells.

rachmana litzlan "May the Merciful One save us" (Aramaic); said on mentioning something terrible.

rasha (pl. resha'im; fem. resha'ah) A wicked person.

rav (pl. rabbanim) A rabbi; a Torah scholar who teaches and rules on *halachah*, often for a town or community. *Rav* is also a title before a name.

Reb A title of respect before a man's first name.

Rebbe The leader of a chassidic community; also, one's own teacher and guide.

Rebbetzin The wife of a *rav*.

rebbi A teacher of Torah, especially one's own teacher.

Rechov "Street"; part of a street's name.

refuah sheleimah A complete recovery.

Reish Galusa "Head of the exile"; the title of the leader of the Jews of Bavel in the days of the Talmud; also given in honor to Rav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad.

revi'is "A quarter"; a measure of liquid, about 86 to 150 milliliters, the amount needed for *Kiddush*. *Seudah revi'is*, "the fourth meal," is the *melaveh malkah*.

ribbis Interest on a loan, forbidden between Jews.

Ribbono shel Olam "Master of the World"; a form of addressing Hashem.

rimonim Ornaments placed over the rollers of a *sefer Torah*.

Rishon LeTziyon "The first in Tziyon"; the title of the chief *rav* of the Sephardim in Eretz Yisrael.

Rishonim The early Torah authorities, from about the eleventh to the fifteenth century.

Rosh Chodesh The first day of a Hebrew month.

rosh yeshivah The head of a *yeshivah*.

roshei teivos Initials; an abbreviation made of the first letters of words.

ruach A spirit; also, a level of the soul. *Ruach ra'ah* (pl. *ruchos ra'os*), an evil spirit; *ruach tumah*, a spirit of impurity.

ruach hakodesh Divine inspiration.

ruchniyus Spiritual matters.

Saba "Grandfather"; the author's name for his grandfather, Chacham Menachem Menashe. *The Saba Kadisha*, "the holy grandfather," is the title of Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari.

sandak The man who holds the baby on his knees at a *bris milah*. *Sandeka'us*, the honor of being *sandak*.

Savta "Grandmother"; the author's name for his grandmother.

seder An order; a set order of prayers or of learning.

sefer (pl. sefarim) A holy book; a book of Torah learning.

sefer Torah (pl. sifrei Torah) A Torah scroll.

Sefiras HaOmer The counting of the forty-nine days from Pesach to Shavuos; the *Sefirah*.

sefiros In Kabbalah, the ten Divine attributes through which Hashem created and conducts the worlds.

segulah (pl. segulos) A spiritual remedy; an act that brings protection or blessing.

se'if A paragraph of the Shulchan Aruch.

se'ir la'azazel The goat sent to Azazel on Yom Kippur, bearing the sins of the people. In this book, a mocking name for a *chareidi* party in the Zionist elections.

selichos Prayers asking forgiveness, said in the days before Rosh Hashanah, in the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* and on fast days.

seudah (pl. seudos) A meal, especially a festive or Shabbos meal.

seudah hamafsekes The last meal before a fast.

seudah shlishis The third Shabbos meal, eaten in the late afternoon.

seudas hodaah A meal of thanksgiving after a deliverance.

sevara Reasoning; a logical argument.

sever panim yafos A cheerful face; a pleasant welcome.

Shabbos chassan The Shabbos before a wedding, when the *chassan* is called up to the Torah.

Shabbos Kodesh "Holy Shabbos."

Shabbos Malkesa "Shabbos the Queen"; a name of honor for Shabbos.

Shacharis The morning prayer.

shadchan (pl. shadchanim) A matchmaker.

shaliach A messenger; an agent. *Shaliach tzibbur*, the one who leads the congregation in prayer.

shalom bayis Peace in the home between husband and wife.

shamash The caretaker of a *shul*; also, an attendant.

Shamayim "Heaven"; also, a way of referring to Hashem.

shamta A severe ban; a decree of excommunication.

Shechinah The Divine Presence.

shechitah Ritual slaughter.

shefa Abundance; the flow of Divine blessing.

shefichas damim Bloodshed; murder.

Shehakol "By Whose word all came to be"; the *berachah* said over water, meat and most foods that do not grow from the ground.

sheid (pl. sheidim) A demon. *Sheidah*, a female demon.

sheitel A wig worn by a married woman to cover her hair.

sheloshim The thirtieth day after a death, and the mourning period ending then.

shem resha'im yirkav "The name of the wicked shall rot" (Mishlei 10:7); said after the name of a wicked person.

Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad "Hear, O Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One"; the declaration of Jewish faith (Devarim 6:4).

shemiras einayim Guarding the eyes from seeing what is forbidden.

shemiras habris Guarding the holiness of the *bris*; purity of the body.

shemiras halashon Guarding one's speech from gossip and slander.

shemittah The seventh year, when the land of Eretz Yisrael lies fallow.

Shemoneh Esreh "Eighteen"; the central prayer of each service, said standing; also called the *Amidah*.

sheva berachos The seven blessings said at a wedding, and the festive meals of the week after it.

Sheva Korsei Bris "The seven who made a covenant"; seven figures of Tanach who made a covenant with Hashem. Sephardim say *tefillos* that correspond to them on the night of Hoshana Rabbah; in this book, a set order of *hakafos* and *tefillos* made with them in times of trouble.

Shevatim The twelve Tribes of Israel, descended from the sons of Yaakov.

sheyichyeh "May he live"; said after the name of a living person.

shidduch (pl. shidduchim) A marriage match.

shiluach haken The *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird before taking her young.

shitah The view or method of a Torah authority.

shiur (pl. shiurim) A Torah class or lecture.

shivah The seven-day mourning period after the death of a close relative.

shkiah Sunset.

shlichus A mission; an errand.

shlishi "Third"; the third *aliyah* of the Torah reading.

shlita Abbreviation of *sheyichyeh l'orech yamim tovim amen*, "may he live long and good days, amen," said after the name of a living Torah scholar.

shmad Forced conversion; the uprooting of Jewish faith.

shnayim mikra v'echad targum Reading the weekly *parshah* twice in the original and once in the Aramaic translation.

Shochen Shechakim "Who dwells in the heavens"; a name for Hashem.

shochtim Ritual slaughterers.

shofar A ram's horn, blown on Rosh Hashanah.

shomer Torah u'mitzvos One who keeps the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

Shovavim Weeks in the winter when the *parshiyos* from Shemos to Mishpatim are read; in Kabbalah, a time for fasting and *teshuvah*, especially for sins against the holiness of the *bris*.

shtar A legal document. *Shtar shlishus*, a document left with a trusted third party.

shtieblach Small, simple houses of prayer (Yiddish).

shuk A market.

shul Synagogue.

siddur (pl. siddurim) A prayer book.

sigufim Afflictions of the body, undertaken as part of *teshuvah*.

siman A chapter of the Shulchan Aruch or of a work of *halachah*; also, a sign.

simchah Joy; also, a joyous occasion, such as a wedding.

simchah shel mitzvah A celebration over the doing of a *mitzvah*.

sitra achra "The other side"; the forces of impurity.

siyata d'Shmaya Help from Heaven (Aramaic).

siyum The completion of a *masechta* or a sefer of Torah, and the celebration held for it. *Seudas siyum*, the festive meal of a *siyum*.

sod (pl. sodos) A secret; the inner, kabbalistic meaning of the Torah.

sofrim Scribes; also, Torah scholars who write *sefarim*.

STaM Acronym of *sifrei Torah, tefillin, mezuzos*; the laws of writing them.

sugya (pl. sugyos) A topic of the Gemara and its discussion.

sukkah The booth lived in during Sukkos.

taanis (pl. taaniyos) A fast.

Taanis Bechoros The fast of the firstborn on Erev Pesach.

taanis dibbur (pl. taaniyos dibbur) A fast from speech, a day kept in silence and given to a set order of *tikkun* and *tefillos* into which the whole of Tehillim is woven three times.

Tachanun Supplications said after the *Amidah* on most weekdays.

tachanunim Supplications; pleas to Hashem.

tachrichim Shrouds.

taharah Purity; also, the washing of the dead before burial.

taharas hamishpachah "Family purity"; the laws of *niddah* governing marital life.

takanos Communal decrees; rules set by a *rav* or a community.

tallis A prayer shawl with *tzitzis*. *Tallis katan*, a small four-cornered garment with *tzitzis*, worn under the clothes all day.

talmid (pl. talmidim) A student; a disciple.

talmid chacham (pl. talmidei chachamim) A Torah scholar.

talmid-chaver A disciple whom his teacher treats as a companion in learning.

talmud torah A community school where young boys learn Torah.

tamei Ritually impure.

Tanna (pl. Tannaim) A Sage of the Mishnah.

tashlumin "Making up"; an extra *Amidah* said to make up for a prayer that was missed.

tefillah (pl. tefillos) Prayer; a prayer.

tefillin Phylacteries; small leather boxes containing Torah passages, worn during weekday morning prayers.

tena'im "Conditions"; the engagement contract.

terumos The portion of produce given to a Kohen, which may be eaten only by Kohanim in a state of purity.

terutz An answer to a *kushya*.

teshuvah Repentance; returning to Hashem.

teshuvah sheleimah Complete *teshuvah*.

tevilah (pl. tevilos) Immersion in a *mikveh*. *Tevilas keilim*, the immersion of new vessels.

tichel A kerchief worn by a married woman to cover her hair.

tikkun (pl. tikkunim) Rectification or repair of the soul; also a set order of prayers, fasts, and acts performed to bring it about.

Tikkun Chatzos The prayer of mourning for the *Churban*, said at midnight.

Tikkun Kares A *tikkun* said for *aveiros* punishable by *kares*.

tinokos shenishbu "Captured infants"; Jews raised without Torah, who are not to blame for not keeping it.

tish "Table" (Yiddish); a Rebbe's gathering with his chassidim at a meal.

Tishah B'Av The ninth of Av, the fast for the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

Torah lishmah Torah learned for its own sake. *Lishmah*, for its own sake.

tosefes Shabbos "The addition of Shabbos"; in this book, the added soul a person receives on Shabbos.

tovel To immerse in a *mikveh*.

treifah Not kosher; an animal with a defect that makes it forbidden. *Treifos*, such defects, and the laws of them.

Tu BiShvat The fifteenth of Shevat, the new year for trees.

tumah Ritual impurity; also, the forces of impurity.

tzaddik (pl. tzaddikim; fem. tzaddekes) A righteous person.

tzaddik nistar A hidden *tzaddik*, whose greatness is concealed from the world.

tzedakah Charity.

tzibbur The congregation; the public.

tzitzis The fringes on the corners of a four-cornered garment.

tziyun The monument over the grave of a *tzaddik*; the grave itself.

tznius Modesty in dress and conduct.

Ushpizin "Guests"; the seven holy guests, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and David, who come into the *sukkah*.

vasikin Davening timed so that the *Amidah* begins at sunrise.

viduy Verbal confession of sin, part of *teshuvah*.

vort "Word" (Yiddish); the celebration of an engagement.

yahrzeit The anniversary of a death.

Yamim Nora'im The Days of Awe; Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

yehareg ve'al ya'avor "Let him be killed rather than transgress"; the rule for the three cardinal sins and for times of persecution.

Yehi ratzon "May it be Your will"; the opening words of a short prayer.

Yerushalayim shel maalah The heavenly Yerushalayim. *Yerushalayim shel matah*, the earthly one.

yeshivah An academy of Torah study.

Yeshivah shel Maalah The heavenly *yeshivah*, where the souls of *tzaddikim* learn.

yeshuah (pl. yeshuos) Salvation; help from Hashem.

yetzer The *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination.

yibadel l'chaim "May he be set apart for life"; said when a living person is named together with those who have passed away.

yibum The marriage of a childless widow to her late husband's brother. *Yavam*, the brother; *yevamah*, the widow.

yichud (pl. yichudim) A kabbalistic meditation that unites holy Names, to draw down Divine blessing.

Yiddishkeit Judaism; a Jewish way of life.

yimach shemo "May his name be erased"; said after the name of an enemy of the Jewish people.

yirah Awe; fear of Hashem.

yiras Shamayim Fear of Heaven. One who possesses it is *yerei Shamayim* (pl. *yirei Shamayim*).

yishuv The Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael before the State; also, a settlement.

yissurim Suffering; afflictions.

Yom Tov (pl. Yamim Tovim) A festival.

Yud-Gimmel Middos The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy (Shemos 34:6-7), said in *selichos*.

yungerman (pl. yungeleit) A young married man (Yiddish), especially one who learns Torah.

zachur latov "Remembered for good"; said after the name of Eliyahu HaNavi.

zatzuk"l Abbreviation of *zecher tzaddik vekadosh livrachah*, "may the memory of the righteous and holy one be a blessing."

Zecher tzaddikim livrachah "May the memory of the righteous be a blessing"; said after the names of *tzaddikim* who have passed away.

zechus Merit; a privilege.

Zechuso yagen aleinu "May his merit shield us"; said after speaking of a *tzaddik*.

zemiros Songs sung at the Shabbos table.

zera levatala The wasting of seed, a grave sin that calls for *teshuvah* and *tikkun*.

zera shel kayama "Lasting offspring"; children who live and thrive.

zikui harabbim Bringing merit to the public, especially by spreading Torah and good deeds.

zivug One's destined marriage partner.

z"l Abbreviation of *zichrono livrachah*, "of blessed memory."

zlh"h Abbreviation of *zichrono l'chayei ha'olam haba*, "may his memory be for the life of the World to Come."

zman A *yeshivah* term of study. *Bein hazmanim*, the break between terms.

zocheh To merit; to be granted the privilege.

zt"l Abbreviation of *zecher tzaddik livrachah*, "may the memory of the righteous be a blessing."

zy"a Abbreviation of *zechuso yagen aleinu*, "may his merit shield us," said after the name of a *tzaddik*.