

# Me'Oros Ha'Tzaddikim

## LIGHTS OF OUR RIGHTEOUS TZADDIKIM

Issue (# 11)

*A Tzaddik, or righteous person makes everyone else appear righteous before G-d by advocating for them and finding their merits. (Kedushas Levi, Noach Bereishis 7:1)*

### Parshas Vayechi

### Kedushas Ha'Levi'im

### THE RIGHT ADDRESS

### **Yehudah, you your brothers shall praise... (Bereishis 49:8)**

The Holy Berditchever asks us to study the prayer of Eliyahu (found in *Tikunei Zohar*, Introduction 17a), which says “*Leis machshavah tefisah bach klal* – No thought can grasp You at all.”

The *Kedushas Levi* says that you might ask yourself, how then can we possibly say “Blessed are You,” using the familiar second person, when reciting a blessing? [If we can’t know Him, how can we address Him in such a familiar manner?]

The Berditchever cites the *Mishnas Chassidim* which explains that the souls of *Bnei Yisrael* are able to grasp *Hashem’s* attribute of *malchus*, kingship, through the *mitzvos* and good deeds that they perform.

It is incumbent on us then to serve *Hashem* with fear and awe in order that His kingship will be apparent to us. Therefore it says that regarding Yehudah, who symbolizes *malchus* [since the royal family of King David descended from Yehudah], which the souls of *Bnei Yisrael* can grasp [as opposed to *Hashem’s* essence, which is impossible to grasp], we say, “Yehudah, you” – *atah*, using the familiar second person – “your brothers shall praise.” [In other words, it is the attribute of kingship, which we do have the ability to grasp, that we are referring to in the second person in our blessings.]

### THE REWARD FOR OVERCOMING THE PHYSICAL

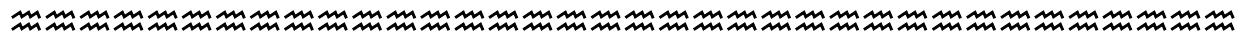
### **Yissachar is a strong-boned donkey crouching between the boundaries. (Bereishis 49:14)**

This hints that the *sechar*, reward [from the same root as the name Yissachar], comes because the physical body is pulling a person in one direction [opposite the wishes of the soul] and [since he resists its temptations] he receives his reward. This is the implication of “Yissachar” (יששכר), which can be read as “*yeish sechar* — there is reward.” Because “*chamor garem*” — the physical body [made of *chomer*, physical material] is the *goreim*, or the cause, of his receiving a reward.

## **A Blessing over Water**

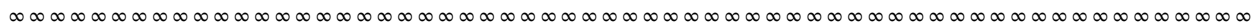
*It is well known that when the holy Berditchever was rav of Pinsk, he was chased out of town for several “transgressions.” One of these transgressions that he was accused of was related to the following episode:*

A local householder entered the Berditchever *rav*’s home to seek his counsel. Upon entering, he noticed that the room appeared empty except for one lone cup of water sitting by itself on the table. He was startled by a loud voice shouting “*Shehakol niheyeh bidvaro!*” — the conclusion of the blessing recited over water. To his amazement, Rav Levi Yitzchak rolled out from under the couch, stood up, and drank from the cup! It was his great fear and awe of *Hashem* that often caused him to hide when he pronounced blessings, in line with the verse “They will enter caves in the rocks and tunnels in the ground, because of the fear of *Hashem* and from the glory of His greatness” (*Yeshayahu* 2:19). This incident was one of the reasons Rav Levi Yitzchak was chased out of town.



## Refuah Sheleima

Esther Fruma Bas Henya & Yosef Ben Malka ~ Besoch She'ar Cholei Yisroel



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## Teves Yahrzeits For Week Of Parshas Shemos



It is a great and known *segula* to light candles *leilu nishmas* the *tzaddik*.

## 12 Teves

- ❖ Rav Moshe Margulies, author of *Pnei Moshe* on the *Yerushalmi* (1781).
- ❖ Rav Moshe of *Pshevorsk*, author of *Ohr Pnei Moshe* (1805).
- ❖ Rav *Mordechai Chaim Kastelantiz* of *Teveria*, known as “*Reb Mottel Slonimer*” (1953).

### 13 Teves

- ❖ Rav Moshe ben Dovid Biderman, the Lelover Rebbe (1776-1850 or 1851). Born in abject poverty, he married Rachel Rivka, a daughter of the Yid Hakadosh of P'shischa. After the latter's petira in 1813, he became a chassid of Rav Simcha Bunim of P'shischa, along with his friend, Rav Yitzchak of Vorki. In 1843, he finally agreed to a leadership position, agreeing to be rav of the community of Przedborz, Poland. In the last years of his life, he decided to move to Eretz Yisrael. He and many of his Chassidim arrived at Akko on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan. He traveled to Yerushalyim, but immediately took ill. Tragically, between the illness and the Arabs, he was never able to daven at the kosel, his life-long dream. He was succeeded by his son, Rav Elazar Mendel, and a vibrant community of Lelover Chassidim still exist in Eretz Yisrael today. Sadly, the community in Przedborz – about 4,500 Jews – was liquidated at Treblinka.
- ❖ Rav Menachem Mendel of Vishiva, the She'eris Menachem (1941).
- ❖ Rav Yechiel Mordechai Gordon, Rosh Yeshivas Lomza (1965). Among the roshei yeshivos who travelled to the United States to raise funds during WW2 were Rabbis Eliezer Yehuda Finkel from Mir, Yechiel Michael Gordon from Lomza, Aaron Kotler from Kletzk, Shimon Shkopf from Grodno, Elchanan Wasserman from Baranowitz, and Baruch Ber Leibowitz from Kamenetz.
- ❖ Rav Yitzchak Hakohen Huberman, the tzaddik of Raanana. (1896-1977). He was born in Tomashov (Tomaszow Lubelski), near Lublin. An 1895 census reveals that, out of a population of 6,077, over half the citizens, 3,646 were Jews. The first shul in this town was built in 1594, but after the Chmielnicki massacres of 1648-49, only 18 of the original 200 families still remained. The most famous Jew of the town was the Kotzker Rebbe, Rav Menachem Mendel Morgenstern of Tomashov, who lived here until he left for Kotzk. Rav Yitzchak became a follower of the Imrei Emes of Ger and, after his mentor's petira, of his son, the Beis Yisrael. In 1940, Josef Stalin deported 200,000 Polish Jews, including Rav Yitzchak, to forced labor camps in Siberia and elsewhere. This saved their lives, since most of those left behind were murdered by the Nazis when they invaded Russia, a year later. After the war, Rav Yitzchak served as a rav for six years in Germany before moving to Eretz Yisrael, and settling in Raanana. Rav Yitzchak wrote a collection of chiddushim on Megillas Esther and entitled it Higidah Esther, in his mother's memory.

### 14 Teves

- ❖ Reuven ben Yaakov Avinu.
- ❖ Rav Raphael Meir Penijel (1804-1894). Born in Bulgaria, he moved with his family to Eretz Yisrael when he son was 3 years old. When Raphael Meir was 15, his father died. When he was 17, he married the daughter of Rav Asher Halevi. In the early 1940s, he was chosen as one of the "shadarim" (sheluchei de'rabbanan) and sent to Northern Africa to collect funds for the yeshuv. Following stints in Morocco and Tunisia, he traveled to Italy. While there, he befriended the Pope, who offered to show him the Vatican's archives. There, he saw some of the sacred vessels that Titus had stolen from the Beis Hamikdash. The visit is described in his sefer, Lev Hamarpei. When he returned to Eretz Yisrael, he founded the Doresh Tzion Yeshiva in 1868 and was instrumental in helping to found the Tiferes Yerushalayim institutions. In 1881, he succeeded Rav Avraham Ashkenazi as Yerushalayim's Chief Sephardic Rabbi, the Rishom LeTzion. In addition to the sefer noted above, he also authored Sheilos U'Teshuvos Leshon Marpei.
- ❖ Rav Reuven Dov Dessler (1863-1935), father of Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, the Michtav Eliyahu. Born in Libau, Lithuania to Rav Yisrael Dovid and Chinke Hinde, who (along with Rav Yisrael Dovid's brother, Rav Eliezer) were great philanthropists and who helped Rav Simcha Zissel move his yeshiva from Kelm to Grubin, a small town near Libau. When he was 12, Rav Reuven Dov was sent to Rav Simcha Zissel's yeshiva and stayed there for 11 years. When it closed, he moved to Kelm to continue learning with the Alter. In 1891, he married Henne Freidel

Grodnensky, daughter of Rav Eliyahu Grodnensky, a leading dayan in Vilna. Her maternal grandfather was Rav Yisrael Salanter. She gave birth to Rav Reuven Dov's only son, Rav Eliyahu Eliezer. Sadly, she was nifter 4 years after they wed, and Rav Reuven Dov married Fruma Rachel Rabinowitz of Telz. A few years later, he moved to Homel, on the Okraïne-White Russia border. Although he was very successful in business, he maintained a rigid learning schedule, and he took off every Elul and Tishrei to travel to Kelm to learn. In 1923, the Communists gained control of the area, and Rav Reuven Dov lost all of his assets. His final years were trying. In 1931, he moved into his son's home in London and immersed himself in Torah study.

❖ Rav Alter Elazar Menachem of Lelov (1935-2001). Born to the Admor of Lelov, Rav Moshe Mordechai, he learned with the Chazon Ish in Bnei Brak as a youth. In 1958, he married the daughter of Rav Shimon Aharon Hershkowitz, the ga'avad of Slavita. In 1965, he founded his beis medrash on Rabbi Akiva Street in Bnei Brak. After the petirah of his mother in 1978, he established the Or Menachem network of kollelim. He also founded Kehal Ateres Moshe of the Lelover Chassidim of the United States, now headed by Rav Alter Elazar Menachem's son, Rav Dovid Tzvi Shlomo.

❖ Rav Leib Bakst, studied at Mir from the age of 13 under Rav Eliezer Finkel and Rav Yeruchom Levovitz; he also studied with the Brisker Rav and Rav Baruch Ber Leibovitz in Kaminetzka. He was involved in the miraculous escape of the Mir Yeshiva to Kobe, Japan, and Shanghai, China, and eventually came to Detroit. There, he became the Dean of the Yeshiva Beis Yehuda rabbinical college. In 1985, he founded the Yeshiva Gedola Ateres Mordechai as an independent high school (1915-2004).

### 15 Teves

❖ The Amora, Mashrisha bar Pekud of Bavel.

❖ Rav Raphael of Bersed, a talmid of Rav Pinchas of Koritz (1827).

❖ Rav Chaim Mordechai Rosenbaum of Nadvorna (1904-1977). Born to Rav Issamar of Nadvorna, he learned with his father in his youth, and married a first cousin at age 19, then learned full-time, supported by his father-in-law. He took a position as Rav of Seret in 1928. In 1941, Romania allied itself with Germany. Of the 420,000 Jews of Romania, 160,000 were murdered by German and Romanian soldiers, and another 150,000 were shipped by cattle cars to Transnistria in the Ukraine; 10,000 died on the trip and another 80,000 died in the camps there. In 1942, Rav Chaim Mordechai and his family arrived in the Djurin camp in Transnistria. They survived and arrived in Yerushalayim on Sukkos 1948, but moved to Tel Aviv because of the war. He established Yeshivas Ma'amer Moredechai in Yaffo and moved his yeshiva to Bnei Brak in 1961. He was succeeded by his only son.

### 16 Teves

❖ Rav Chaim Kreiswirth, Rav and Av Beis Din of Antwerp and son-in-law of Rav Avraham Grodzinski. Rav Chaim was well-known to have memorized Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi, as well as Rishonim and Acharonim (1920-2001).

### 17 Teves

❖ Rav Yaakov Krantz, Dubna Maggid (1741-1804). Born in a province of Vilna, Jacob ben Wolf Krantz showed exceptional homiletical and Kabbalistic talents at an early age, and by the age of twenty became the darshan of his city. From there he began preaching through the cities of around Lublin in Poland, finally settling in Dubnow. His reputation as a maggid spread, bringing him in contact with the great rabbis of the period, including the Vilna Gaon. The majority of his works were in homiletics, using stories and parables to transmit deeper ethical and moral teachings.

- ❖ Rav Ephraim Fishel Shapira of Strikov (1743-1822). A disciple of the Magid of Mezritch, the Rebbe Elimelech and the Chozeh of Lublin, he was called the "Oleh Temimah."
- ❖ Rav Aryeh Leibush Lipschitz of Vishnitsa, the Aryeh d'Bei Ilai (1849).
- ❖ Rav Pinchas Epstein, Av Beis Din of Yerushalayim (1887-1969). Born in Griva, Lithuania, his primary teacher was R' Zalman Sender Kahana Shapiro in Bialystok. In 1904, he settled in Eretz Yisrael with his father and began studying at Yeshiva Toras Chaim in the Old City of Yerushalayim. R' Epstein was one of the founders and early leaders of the Eidah Ha'chareidis, a group which split from the established Yerushalayim community in 1919 in response to the growing influence of the Zionists on the existing religious council. In 1949, he was appointed to head the Eidah Ha'chareidis.
- ❖ Rav Suleiman (Salman) Mutzafi of Yerushalayim (1900-1974); born in Baghdad. His father, Rav Tzion Meir, descended from an illustrious family of Torah scholars who first arrived in Baghdad during the Spanish expulsion.



## *Ma'Asay Ha'Tzaddikim*

### **WEEKLY STORIES**

#### **Yahrzeit 15 Teves**

### *Rav Raphael of Bershad Zt"l*

#### **Anger Control**

Whenever an opportunity presented itself the *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz would retell this story about Rav Raphael of Bershad's amazing control over his *middos* and character. For example, once after his *tisch* – conducting the *Chassidic Shabbos* banquet where the *Rebbe* presides over his table, sharing song, stories and words of *Torah* at his meal with his devoted *chassidim*, which lasted some seven hours, the *Imrei Chaim*, exhausted and weak walked home in the cold and rain only to discover that his attendant the *gabbai*, who had the keys was nowhere to be found! While waiting an infuriatingly long while for him to show up the *Imrei Chaim* related this story:

Rav Raphael of Bershad had a burning desire for many years to acquire pure wool from the holy land to fashion a *Tallis Katan* and *tzitzis* to wear in a *Mehadrin*, resplendent and glorified manner befitting such a precious mitzvah.

After great effort, he finally succeeded and one day he acquired pure white wool from *Eretz Yisroel!* His joy knew no bounds. Elated, he passed the wool on to one of his *chassidim* and asked him to

take extra special care of the wool and to fashion with it a *Tallis Katan* and *tzitzis*. The *chossid*, who realized the importance of this task and the great lengths the *Rebbe* had gone to procure this wool, approached the task with awe and love. However, his attempt failed and in his haste to tailor the garment he accidentally folded it over twice, so that when he cut the hole in the middle of the *Tallis Katan* to create the opening where the head is placed through, he ended up with two holes instead of one! When he unfolded the garment and held the *Tallis Katan* open instead of one opening for the head there were now two!

With great fear and trepidation he brought the ruined garment before his expectant *Rebbe*. Rav Raphael was waiting on tenterhooks with excitement, but when he noticed the sad *chossid* and his downfallen countenance, he beckoned him near. “What is it? What is wrong?” The *chossid* was so ashamed and dumbstruck, that he silently with his head down presented the ruined garment before the *Rebbe*, waiting for the *Rebbe's* anger and disappointment to break over him.

What he heard instead was the smiling Rav Raphael's delighted voice proclaim, “Why off course this garment needed two holes! Yes, yes, exactly, one hole just as any *Tallis Katan* has for the head, and another hole to teach Raphael to suppress and contain his emotions and not be angry.”

When he concluded the tale the *Imrei Chaim* said with great emotion: “*Kodesh HaKadashim!* Holy of Holies! From where can we learn such lofty holy ways and manners of behavior?! This story shakes me up and excites me much, much more than any miraculous tales you could tell me about the *tzaddik!*”



*Me'Oros Ha'Tzaddikim* is a weekly publication with the same format – A *vort* or two from the *Kedushas Levi* on the weekly *parsha*, an interconnected story of the Berditchever Rav, upcoming *yahrzeits* of *Tzaddikim* for the following week and a related story on one of those *Tzaddikim*.

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*Me'Oros Ha'Tzaddikim* was written by Rabbi Tal Moshe Zwecker who has published a translation of the *Noam Elimelech* into English, a collection of essays on *Teshuva* titled Returnity, The Way Back to Eternity and a collection of essays on Jewish Meditation.

He hopes to publish the *Kedushas Levi* in English, as well as collection of essays on *Pirkei Avos* with a *chassidic* commentary and many more projects soon. A *Noam Elimelech* sequel is in the works as well as several collections on *Simcha*, *Emuna & Bitachon*, *Torah & Tefillah* are all on the way so stay tuned. He currently resides in Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel with his wife and children. He can be reached at [chassidusonline@gmail.com](mailto:chassidusonline@gmail.com)

*Gut Shabbos.*