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A Word from the Editors

A businessman sits in his office.

Many merchants come and offer him merchandise. He examines it well and chooses carefully. If it is good, he buys it in bulk, investing a lot in it with the hope that he will be able to profit and make a substantial income.

He must always be on the look out to avoid falling into the trap of crooks, who try to pass on damaged goods. They may look good on the outside, but later their faults become apparent. Then he would sustain a heavy loss.

This is business as usual, the way of commerce.

Once a year, as is customary, the office doors are closed for a few days. The shutters and blinds are drawn over the shop windows. The businessman locks himself in his office with his records and carefully reviews the balance sheets.

This is when the real numbers are revealed. This is the time he calculates all the transactions performed throughout the year.

Was his business successful? Did he profit?

Did he act with sharp acumen, or perhaps he was lured into making a quick profit, which ultimately fell way short of its promises?

After taking stock, the truth becomes apparent to the businessman.

The profitable deals from the past year reflect well on his business. But the poor and unsuccessful investments serve as warnings to act with greater wisdom and improve in the future. Then he will continue to keep his business thriving and earn a substantial income for many years to come, with the help of Hashem.

The Days of Awe are drawing close.

We conduct many transactions during the year. We buy and sell; sometimes we are tempted to behave rashly, but we try hard not to.

However, now, on these fateful days, the time has come to make an honest personal accounting, each one on his own, while facing his Creator, an accounting whose results are so significant! The *pasuk* discussing the war which Sichon waged against Moav says, "*Al kain yomru hamoshlim bo'u cheshbon,*" hinting that the "*moshlim*" – the ones who rule over their negative inclinations are obligated to make a "*cheshbon,*" an accounting of their deeds during the previous year.

Will we merit doing this? Are we clean of sin and flawless, or not? Do we have profits to show in the Days of Awe and Judgement? This is the time to correct our ways.

Hopefully Hashem will be pleased with our deeds, and we will merit a good judgment.

The publication you presently hold includes the following inspirational articles:

There are stories of tzaddikim and their messages, words of inspiration from Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita, and sacred customs "Bechatzrot Hachaim" (in the Courtyards of the Tzaddikim) during the Days of Awe, in which we find ourselves presently.

We have also included information updating you about the worldwide activities of Moreinu Harav, shlita, and his messengers across the world.

We are honored with the privilege of presenting all this to you.

It is our fervent prayer that we all merit being inscribed in the *sefer* of tzaddikim, for a blessed and happy life. May we merit celebrating the festivals in joy and happiness, and may our future year be many times more prosperous than the past.

*The Editors
Bechatzrot Hachaim*



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WORDS OF INSPIRATION

DELIVERED BY THE GAON AND TZADDIK
RABBI DAVID CHANANYA PINTO, SHLITA

ROSH HASHANAH

WITH MUCH APPRECIATION

“IN THE BOOK OF LIFE,
BLESSING, AND PEACE...
MAY WE BE REMEMBERED
AND INSCRIBED BEFORE YOU”

(Yamim Noraim liturgy)

On the Yamim Noraim, we beseech Hashem to seal us for a good, peaceful life. How much gratitude must we have toward Him for His benevolence! In truth, we are undeserving of all the good that He showers upon us as He inscribes us in the Book of Life. Hashem goes beyond the letter of the law in His dealings with us.

At the time of the shofar-blowing, Hashem rises from the Seat of Justice and sits on the Seat of Mercy. Why doesn't He initially sit on the Seat of Mercy instead of switching places, so to speak, as we sound the shofar?

We deserve tremendous punishment for our numerous misdeeds, *rachmana litzlan*. This is expressed by Hashem sitting on the Seat of Justice. However, in His infinite kindness, Hashem analyzes our deeds and perceives our inner yearning to improve and correct our faults. The shofar arouses us

to this realization. This is why the time of the shofar-blowing is auspicious for Hashem to switch from the Seat of Justice to the Seat of Mercy.

How enormous is each person's debt of gratitude toward Hashem! How do we repay Him for all the good He constantly does for us? By wholeheartedly resolving to fulfill His mitzvot, with fear and love. This is the greatest form of gratitude we can show Him.

In the Torah reading of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we read about the covenant between Avraham and Avimelech, king of the Pelishtim (*Bereishit* 26). How is this covenant connected to Rosh Hashanah?

Let us study this covenant in order to understand its relevance to the day. Why did Avraham make a peace treaty with Avimelech? Moreover, in this treaty, Avraham swore that he would not expel Avimelech's progeny from the land. Avraham's children paid a steep price for this covenant. The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni, Vayeira* 54:4) says that because Avraham gave Avimelech seven sheep,

seven of Avraham's descendants fell at the hands of the Pelishtim. They were: Shimshon, Chafni and Pinchas, Shaul and his three sons. Furthermore, the Pelishtim caused the destruction of the seven sanctuaries of Bnei Yisrael: Ohel Moed, Nov, Gilgal, Givon, Shiloh, and Beit Olamim (a reference to the two Batei Mikdash). And lastly, the Aron was held in Pelishti hands for seven months.

Our nation endured severe repercussions for this treaty of "peace." Why did Avraham enter into it, surely knowing his people would suffer?

Avraham felt a strong sense of gratitude toward Avimelech, who had allowed him entry into his land. Such was the trait of Avraham, the symbol of kindness. He could not refuse Avimelech's gesture of goodwill. Avimelech asked Avraham, "Now swear to me here by G-d... according to the kindness that I have done with you, do with me, and with the land in which you have sojourned" (*Bereishit* 21:23). Just as Avimelech had granted Avraham permission to stay in his land, he asked Avraham not

to harm his progeny who wished to remain in Eretz Canaan.

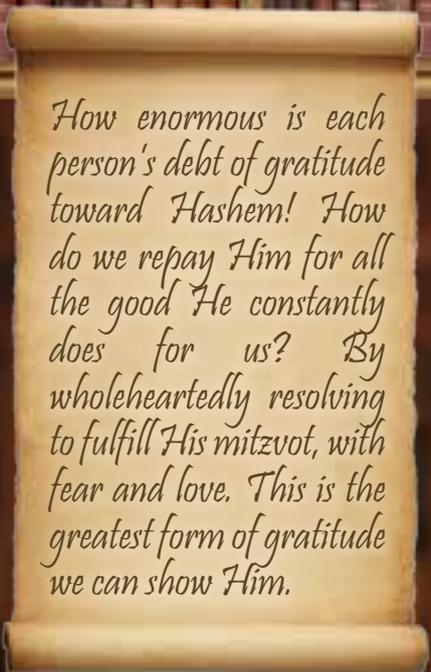
Avraham immediately swore to Avimelech's conditions (ibid. 21:24). Although he was aware that his descendants would pay dearly for this covenant, he could not tolerate the thought of being ungrateful toward one who had done him a service.

We read this on Rosh Hashanah in order to learn from Avraham how far-reaching is the quality of gratitude. If such is the case regarding a human being, how much more must we display appreciation toward Hashem, Who demonstrates His love for us by moving from the Seat of Justice to the Seat of Mercy! He wants to judge us favorably and inscribe us in the Book of Life.

We show our gratitude to Hashem for His infinite kindnesses by wholeheartedly accepting His sovereignty over us. This precept is in effect throughout the festivals of Tishrei. A similar message is conveyed after we have closed our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur *machzorim*.

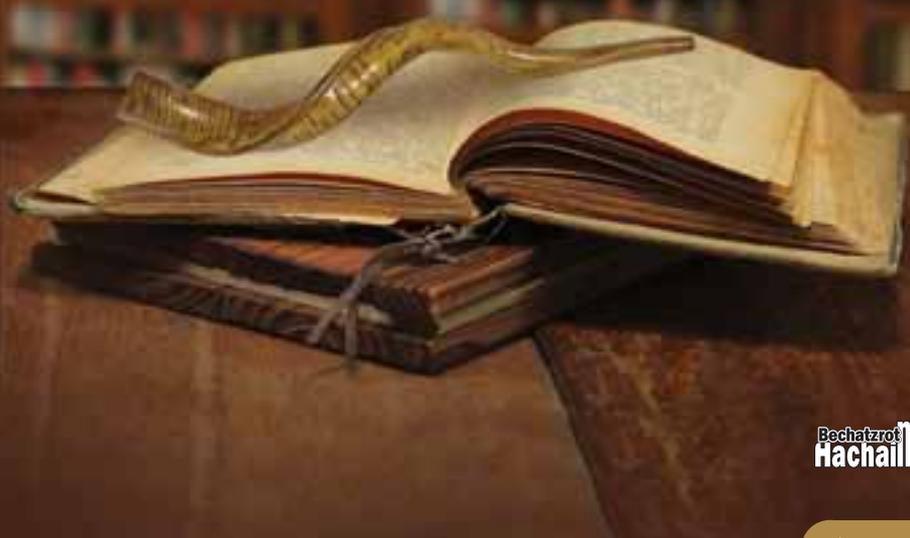
We sit in the sukkah to commemorate the Clouds of Glory in which Hashem ensconced Bnei Yisrael after redeeming them from Egypt, as it says, "So that your generations will know that I caused Bnei Yisrael to sit in booths when I took them from the land of Egypt" (*Vayikra* 23:43). Why isn't it enough to remember the wonderful miracles that occurred at the Exodus, and thank Him for them with hearts bursting with gratitude? Why are we commanded to exert the effort to build a sukkah and sit in it?

This mitzvah, too, is founded upon the concept of gratitude. The lesson of the sukkah is pertinent to



How enormous is each person's debt of gratitude toward Hashem! How do we repay Him for all the good He constantly does for us? By wholeheartedly resolving to fulfill His mitzvot, with fear and love. This is the greatest form of gratitude we can show Him.

**“IN THE BOOK
OF LIFE, BLESSING,
AND PEACE...
MAY WE BE
REMEMBERED
AND INSCRIBED
BEFORE YOU”**



everyone. The sukkah reminds us of the miracles that Hashem did for Bnei Yisrael when they dwelled in booths after they emerged from Egypt. We must feel a sense of gratitude and thank Him for His kindnesses. However, if we each did this only in thought, the message would quickly evaporate from our national memory. Things that are relegated only to the heart have a tendency to become ancient history.

Since “seeing is believing,” physical expressions of gratitude are much more effective than mere “heartfelt” appreciation. An act, as opposed to a memory, has the power of etching an impression into the soul. When one puts all his energy into building a sukkah and expends effort into beautifying it, he is declaring his thanks to Hashem for His kindness in protecting us with the Clouds of Glory.

Every mitzvah contains the element of action. The *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 26:3), “If you will go in My statutes and keep My commandments to do them,” seems to use a double language. What is the difference between “keeping” commandments and “doing” them? The *sefer Vayomer Avraham* explains: The question is asked, “Since the mitzvot were given in order to accomplish mystical things in the World Above, why must man make the effort to do the mitzvot in this world? Isn’t it sufficient to imagine laying tefillin or blowing the shofar? Every positive command should be performed merely by contemplating it.”



The *sefer* continues: “If we will not actively perform the mitzvah, but just imagine it, it will be quickly forgotten. Anything committed to thought alone is liable to fade with the sands of time. The heart is full of various distractions. With time, one would likely forget to think about the lofty concepts of tefillin, shofar, etc. However, when one is commanded to actively perform a mitzvah, he will not so easily forget about it. By the natural order, things that are done physically become etched into the heart and mind and, as such, are not easily forgotten.”

With this in mind, we can understand that the words, “Keep My commandments to do them” are not redundant. It is important to “keep” Hashem’s commandments in one’s heart, but one must also “do” them. By actually performing the mitzvot, we reinforce the faith which is in our hearts.

The obligation of gratitude is extremely significant. *Chazal*

say that one who fails to express gratitude toward his fellow man will eventually deny the goodness of the Creator. Thus, gratitude rests at the very foundation of our *avodat Hashem*.

For this reason, Hashem commanded Aharon instead of Moshe to strike the water and the ground during the first three plagues of blood, frogs, and lice. Why wasn’t Moshe asked to initiate these plagues? Because he had a debt of gratitude toward the river and the earth. The water protected him when he was an infant, as his basket floated over the river, and the earth came to his rescue when he killed the Egyptian and needed a quick burial plot. Thus, it was inappropriate that Moshe should strike the water or the earth (*Shemot Rabbah* 9).

How far does gratitude go? We may not show ingratitude even to an inanimate object, as our Sages teach us, “Do not throw a stone into a well from which you drank water” (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 22). We are told that “flesh in the field that has been torn, you shall not eat; you shall throw it to the dog” (*Shemot* 22:30). Thousands of years ago, the dogs in Egypt went against their nature and remained silent when Bnei Yisrael left the land. For this reason, we are commanded to offer them any *treif* meat that we find.

At the end of *Perek Shirah*, we recite an interesting passage: Rabbi Yeshaya, a disciple of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, fasted eighty-five fasts in order to merit understanding why

dogs which are “greedy and are never satisfied” (*Yeshayahu* 56:11) merit singing *shirah* to Hashem. After his self-imposed fast, an angel appeared to him and answered him, in merit of his being the student of a great man. The angel said that the dogs have the singularity contained in the *pasuk*, “And against the Children of Israel, no dog shall whet its tongue” (*Shemot* 11:7). This offered them the honor of singing praises to Hashem.

Nearly four thousand years have passed since the dogs refrained from disturbing Bnei Yisrael at the Exodus. Nevertheless, Jews all around the world are enjoined to throw *treif* meat to the dogs for this service they did our people. How all-embracing is the quality of gratitude!

The previous examples teach us how deeply ingrained must be the trait of thankfulness. One must constantly work on refining it.

When I first began my foray into public service, *b’siyata di’Shemaya*, I was immensely helped by a specific man. He did his utmost to assist me and guided me in various areas. Over the years, we maintained a warm relationship. However, little by little, I discerned a cool attitude toward me. This snowballed into his publicly besmirching my name. Using various ploys, he attempted to defame my reputation.

I was extremely hurt by this. However, my father, Rabbi Moshe Aharon zt”l, insisted that I always remember

When I entered the man's room, there was no limit to his surprise. He well remembered the angst he had caused me and could not comprehend how I was burying the hatchet so easily by paying him a visit. "Did you actually come to visit me?" he spluttered.

the man’s former kindness with me. Father would calm me down with the words, “Remember, my son, that although this man is causing you untold grief at the moment, he was of invaluable assistance in your time of need. For this, you must show him gratitude. Remember this always. Certainly, you may not, *chas v’chalilah*, harm him in any way. It is worthwhile for you to remain silent.

“How is it possible to behave that way?” you might ask. Always envision the good years, when he supported you with help and good advice. This alone will enable you to remove all grievances from your heart and replace them with gratitude.”

My father’s wise words contained a powerful message regarding gratitude. We have unlimited debts of gratitude toward others. We would do well to see the positive in others and focus on the benefits we have gained from them. This

will propel us forward in our quest for perfection.

Bearing this in mind, I was able to rise above my hurt and help this man in his hour of need. His daughter had complex health issues and required my advice and guidance. Putting aside all personal agendas, I graciously offered my assistance. I was empowered by Father’s words, which had seared their mark into my conscience.

I remember, when, years later, this man lay on his deathbed with a terrible illness, I made sure to visit him in the hospital. His room was close to that of my mentor, the tzaddik, Rabbi Gershon Liebman, zt”l. Both my *rebbe* and this man passed away a short while later.

When I entered the man’s room, there was no limit to his surprise. He well remembered the angst he had caused me and could not comprehend how I was burying the hatchet so easily by paying him a visit. “Did you actually come to visit me?” he spluttered.

Remembering Father’s sacred words, I calmly replied, “I came to see how you are doing. I owe you gratitude for all those years that you supported me. I will always remember your sound advice.”

Praiseworthy is the man who takes these words to heart, viewing everybody favorably and remembering the kindnesses they have done for him. May Hashem allow us to see only good in each other and polish the quality of gratitude to a high sheen.



WORDS OF INSPIRATION

DELIVERED BY THE GAON AND TZADDIK
RABBI DAVID CHANANYA PINTO, SHLITA

YOM KIPPUR

THE JOY OF SHEHECHEYANU ON YOM KIPPUR

“IN THE ASSEMBLY ON HIGH
AND IN THE ASSEMBLY
BELOW, WE ALLOW PRAYING
WITH THE TRANSGRESSORS”
(Kol Nidrei)

“BLESSED ARE YOU, HASHEM,
OUR G-D, KING OF THE
UNIVERSE, WHO HAS KEPT
US ALIVE, SUSTAINED US, AND
BROUGHT US TO THIS TIME”
(Shehecheyanu)

Yom Kippur, the monumental day when Hakadosh Baruch Hu forgives and pardons the sins of His people, Am Yisrael, is celebrated in solemn fashion in every *beit kenesset* throughout the world. When the Jewish people gather in their multitudes and begin their prayers with *Kol Nidrei*, preceding *Ma'ariv*, the gates of Heaven are opened.

What is the essence of this prayer? The Gemara (*Nedarim* 23b) states that one who wants to ensure that any vows he makes during the year shall be void, let him stand on Rosh Hashanah and declare, “Any vow that I will make in the future shall be void,” [his vows are void] as long as he remembered this at the time of making the vow. The

Ran explains (beginning with the words *Rabbah says*): It seems that the reason some congregations say *Kol Nidrei* on Yom Kippur... is because they have the intention to nullify any vows that they might make after this time.

More people than usual come to the *beit kenesset* to pray on Yom Kippur night. Perhaps some of them did not nullify their vows previously, and this might have a negative effect on the prayers of the congregation. Therefore, we now nullify their vows so that the entire congregation can pray as one purified unit.

This is somewhat surprising. During the rest of the year, we are not required to nullify vows in order that everyone can pray with the congregation. Why is Yom Kippur different? Why is it more serious on this day to pray with those who have made vows?

Immediately after reciting *Kol Nidrei*, we make the blessing *Shehecheyanu*. The entire congregation fulfills their obligation by reciting this blessing in the *beit kenesset*. This is also unusual. We typically say *Shehecheyanu* on a new garment, a new fruit, or when we make

Kiddush on a festival. On Yom Kippur, we neither eat nor drink, but fast in affliction. We do not make Kiddush on this day. Thus, on Yom Kippur there is no physical pleasure to which we can attach the *berachah* of *Shehecheyanu*. So why do we say it?

In various versions of the *tefillot*, there is a special *tefillah* to request forgiveness from Hashem for all the sins that a person did throughout his life, “From the day I was created until now.” This is very strange. Every year, one’s sins are atoned for on Yom Kippur. Why should he request atonement for sins he did in previous years?

Perhaps we can explain in the following way, *b’siyata di’Shemaya*. In the *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Neilah*, we say, “May you, in Your great mercy, have mercy on us, for You do not desire the world’s destruction... You favor the repentance of the wicked and do not desire their death, as it says, ‘Say to them... I do not desire the death of the wicked, rather that the wicked will repent his ways and live...’ and it says, ‘Do I desire the death of the wicked?’ says Hashem G-d. Rather that he return from his ways and live.”

Hakadosh Baruch Hu, in His great mercy, waits and anticipates the return of every person who has sinned. Hashem bears the burden of the sinner, supports him, and keeps him alive in the hope that he will do *teshuvah*. Chazal (*Yevamot* 22a) tell us that a convert is considered to be a new person. It is as if he is reborn. Similarly, when a person does *teshuvah*, it is as if he is a new person. Moreover, he purifies himself to the extent that his sins are transformed to merits.

On Yom Kippur, we do various things in order to resemble the angels. We wear white clothes, and when we recite the *Shema*, we say, "Blessed be the Name of His kingdom forever and ever" in a loud voice, rather than in a whisper as we do during the year. Many people stand throughout the *tefillot*, resembling the angels, who are called "those who stand." This is indicated by the *pasuk* in *Zechariah* (3:7), "I have established for you those who go amongst these who are standing." Bnei

Yisrael are termed "those who go," since they continuously increase their performance of Torah and mitzvot. "These who are standing" refers to the angels, who remain on one level.

When Bnei Yisrael resemble the angels on Yom Kippur, purifying their bodies through fasting, and dressing in white, Hakadosh Baruch Hu helps them attain the lofty levels of the angels. The "earthly angels" are surely more exalted than the heavenly ones, since they nullify their nature in order to become sanctified. In fact, the prosecuting angels created by the sins of these "earthly angels" throughout the year become confused. They see these people

'DO I DESIRE THE DEATH OF THE WICKED? SAYS HASHEM G-D. RATHER THAT HE RETURN FROM HIS WAYS AND LIVE.'

now in a purified state, dressed as heavenly angels, even though they sinned. The prosecuting angels are silenced. They are unable to recognize the people who created them and cannot attribute any sin to them.

The very essence of Yom Kippur atones. This is the most propitious time for a person to change his essence and improve. Yom Kippur is the culmination of the Ten Days of Repentance. During these ten days, Hashem is closer to us than usual. Rav Nachman tells us (*Yevamot* 105a) in the name of Rabbah bar Avuyah that this is the time when we should "seek Hashem when He is found, call out to Him when He is close" (*Yeshayahu* 55:6).

According to these thoughts, we can better understand why we introduce the holy day of Yom Kippur with *Kol Nidrei*. We are told to "purify ourselves before Hashem" (*Vayikra* 16:30) and know that the tremendous sanctity of Yom Kippur purifies us. Anyone who sinned during the past year is fitting to stand before Hashem. He is close to Him, and Hashem does not desire his death. Who are we to proudly exclude these people from our congregation when Hashem Yitbarach, the King of kings, desires them? In *Kol Nidrei*, we affirm that we may pray together, in the knowledge that they resemble angels just as much as we do.

This realization brings us to the pinnacle of spiritual heights. It is now fitting to say the *berachah* of *Shehecheyanu*. The *neshamah*, a portion of the Divine, constantly yearns to come close to Hashem. It longs to be on the level of the angels. But the *neshamah*

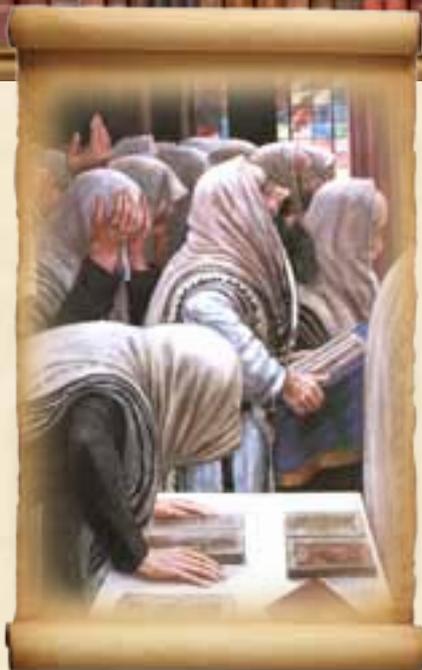


is trapped inside the physical body, surrounded by materialism, which prevents its spiritual light from shining in full force. On Yom Kippur, the *neshamah* is unhampered by the physical. For this, it is most appropriate to make the *berachah* of *Shehecheyanu*.

Let us examine how the words of *Shehecheyanu* reflect the essence of Yom Kippur. We thank Hashem “that You have kept us alive... and brought us to this time.” On Yom Kippur, we become new creations. We are purified from all the sins of the past year and the negative influences of the materialism in which we were immersed.

In light of the above, *b’siyata di’Shemaya*, we can offer a wonderful explanation of *Chazal’s* statement, “There is one who acquires his world in a single hour” (*Avodah Zarah* 17a). This is the hour when Yom Kippur descends in every Jewish house. During this hour, each person is able to acquire his world of closeness to Hashem Yitbarach, which is the sublime wish of every Jew. David Hamelech declared, “And for me, closeness to Hashem is good” (*Tehillim* 73:28). The *Ibn Ezra* explains, “Closeness as opposed to being distanced. The reason it ‘is good’ is because this is the true good.” When one comes to this realization, he will be urged to make the *berachah* of *Shehecheyanu*.

I have witnessed the truth of this many times. More than ten years ago, a certain man from the United States came to the yeshiva in Paris on Erev Yom Kippur and requested to pray there on the upcoming holy day. At this juncture, this man was far from Torah and mitzvot. His appearance belied the fact that he



was a Jew, and he did not even keep kosher, consuming forbidden foods, *rachmana litzlan*.

As he stood in prayer among the congregation, with their prayers resounding throughout the *beit midrash*, the hidden spark in his soul was lit. As everyone around him prostrated themselves amidst copious tears, accepting the yoke of Heaven upon themselves, his heart was opened.

He was now receptive to hearing the speeches of inspiration and words of *mussar* delivered during the day. The messages they contained made an impression on him. He came to the realization that a person who conducts his life according to the tenets of Judaism experiences untold joy. Then and there, he determined to change his life. He committed himself to living as a Jew in every aspect, in thought, speech, and deed.

Gradually, he started climbing the ladder of *teshuvah*, steadily progressing on this momentous journey. His decision to change was so profound that he influenced his family to join him in his quest.

Throughout this time, I was aware that he was, with the

help of Heaven, strengthening his commitment to Judaism. Eventually, even his outward appearance reflected his fear of Heaven, as he now dressed in a suit and hat as befit the *talmid chacham* he had become.

My gratitude to Hashem for this wonderful turnaround was boundless. “Look,” I told myself, “this man has merited becoming an angel.” He was a living example of the power of Yom Kippur to enable a person to change for the good. Such a person can surely say the *berachah* of *Shehecheyanu*.

We must understand that true joy and satisfaction are not found in the pleasures of this world, but in keeping Torah and mitzvot. The *neshamah* delights in spiritual matters. Hashem gives us a wonderful gift on Yom Kippur: the ability to do *teshuvah* for our past deeds, completely wiping them out. Sin itself is a defect, which damages the *neshamah*. When a person demonstrates his desire to repair this defect, and then does so, he feels tremendous joy. Certainly, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Who is merciful, compassionate, and magnanimous, will grant him atonement.

This is illustrated by the following moving story (brought in the *kuntrus* “*Beit Tzaddikim Ya’amod*,” published by my dear brother, the tzaddik, Harav Chaim Shimon Pinto, shlita). This story is related in the name of the holy *mekubal*, Rabbi Shalom Buzaglo, zy”a, as written in the *sefer* “*Mikdash Melech*” on the Zohar Hakadosh on *masechet Shabbat*.

Harav Buzaglo was traveling by boat from London to Tzefat. The boat stopped in a port along the way, and some of the passengers

disembarked to take a breather. Rabbi Shalom was one of them. He was so immersed in his holy thoughts that he did not realize the boat had set sail again. It was Friday, and he was alone.

Shabbat was approaching, so he began to seek a place to stay. Suddenly, he saw a large eagle coming closer. It spread its wings in front of him, as if inviting him to climb on its back. He did just that, and the eagle soared into the sky and flew until it reached a magnificent palace.

Many miracles were wrought for the tzaddik there. He found a *mikveh* in which he could immerse, as was his custom. The most delicious foods were set out for him to celebrate Shabbat Kodesh. He prayed in unison with the prayers offered by the Heavenly Assembly.

When Shabbat came to an end, he fell into a deep sleep. In his dream, he saw how the Heavenly Tribunal judges those who had died on Shabbat.

Among those being judged was a righteous Jew, who had owned a tavern near the city of Tzfat. It was decreed that he deserved a place in Gan Eden.

Suddenly, an angel dressed in black, with a terrifying appearance, declared that this man was not worthy to go to Gan Eden. What was his accusation? One time, on a Shabbat, a gentile had come to the tavern and asked the innkeeper to sell him a bottle of drink. This upright Jew did not want to acquiesce since it was Shabbat, but the gentile threatened to kill him if he did not. In the end, he told the gentile to take the bottle of drink himself.

Gradually, he started climbing the ladder of teshuvah, steadily progressing on this momentous journey. His decision to change was so profound that he influenced his family to join him in his quest.

According to certain opinions, there was a slight aspect of *chillul Shabbat* in this act. Because of this, the prosecuting angel said the man could not go straight to Gan Eden.

Now the man's judgment was changed. Although he had been forced to act as he did, since it was a question of life and death, and he had not sold the gentile the drink, it was decreed that he must return to this world. His punishment was to wander through it for seven years; then he could take his place in Gan Eden.

Rabbi Shalom heard this and trembled. The wicked suffer the punishments of Gehinnom for only twelve months. Why did this man have to suffer a punishment of such long duration? He requested to take the place of this righteous innkeeper and suffer the punishment in his stead, enabling him to go straight to Gan Eden.

Rabbi Shalom's desire to accept upon himself the punishment of the other man was looked upon so favorably that the judgment was shortened from seven years to seven days; one day for each year. The innkeeper had seven sons.

Thus, each night, Rabbi Shalom would spend the night with one of them. This is exactly what happened.

Apart from the wonderful message of the depths of loving a fellow Jew, this story illustrates the exacting measure of judgment. A person would do himself the greatest favor by refraining from sin. In this way, he will avoid much suffering.

The stirrings toward *teshuvah* generated by Yom Kippur are tremendous, enabling a person to sanctify himself in the best possible way. It is most appropriate to say the *berachah* of *Shehecheyanu* for this. When one contemplates that on Yom Kippur he is standing before Hashem, Whose glory fills the entire world and Who desires to receive his *teshuvah*, he should be filled with joy.

The following two *pesukim* that we say in the *tefillot* of Yom Kippur describe the close connection Am Yisrael have to their Father in Heaven on this holy day. It says (*Vayikra* 16:30), "For on this day He will atone for you, to cleanse you from all your sins before Hashem you shall be cleansed." It also says (*Yeshayahu* 55:6), "Seek Hashem when He can be found, call out to Him when He is close."

On Yom Kippur, Hashem enables man to resemble the angels, concealing his sins from the eyes of the prosecuting angels. On *Motzai Yom Kippur*, we are accustomed to say *perek* 85 of *Tehillim*. There David Hamelech declares (vs. 2-3), "You have returned the captivity of Yaakov. You have borne the offense of Your people, You have concealed their entire sin, Selah." Rashi explains: If You have returned the

captivity of Yaakov, and You have borne their iniquity and concealed their sin, and You have turned away Your anger, then (as it says at the beginning of vs. 2) “You will have favored Your land,” and Your world will be at peace. Until You do this, Your land and Your world will not be at peace.

In light of all the above, we can resolve our former question as to why some versions of the *tefillah* include a confession for sins from previous years. Have they not been forgiven on previous Yom Kippurs? Even though a person does *teshuvah* and raises his spiritual level on Yom Kippur, unfortunately, he often returns to the very sins for which he repented. Thus, his *teshuvah* is lacking, and his sins are not completely forgiven.

This is a frightening thought. One needs to do *teshuvah* for deeds spanning many years. When one is inspired to improve his actions, he must include what he did in the more distant past as well. Hashem waits for our *teshuvah* and does not desire the death of the wicked, but that he should repent.

I read the following astounding story. There was a man who turned to the path of wickedness, but after several years began to have stirrings toward repentance. But he was despondent. How could he improve? Was there still hope for him? Would Hashem forgive him for everything he had done?

He went to one of the great tzaddikim of the generation and poured out his heart. The tzaddik asked him to describe the details of what he had done. The man began to do so, and the tzaddik listened attentively.

When the man had finished, the



tzaddik turned to him and said, “Indeed, you have committed many sins. But there is still hope. Are you willing to accept upon yourself certain actions in order to gain atonement?”

“Certainly. I will do whatever is asked of me in order to be forgiven.”

“If that is the case,” said the tzaddik, “I recommend the following afflictions and fasts. When you have completed them, come back to me. Then, you will have to drink boiling lead. Your death will atone for your sins.”

The man agreed to everything. At the appointed time, he returned to the house of the tzaddik. He was hardly recognizable. He was emaciated from the many fasts he had conducted, and his contrite heart was reflected in his expression. He knew the time had come for him to die the strange death decreed by the tzaddik, in order to gain full atonement.

He began to prepare for death. First he recited *Shema*, and then the *viduy* of Yom Kippur. The tzaddik told him to sit down while he heated the lead. He then told the man to close his eyes and

open his mouth. Again, the man said *viduy*.

Quickly, the tzaddik put a spoon full of honey into the man’s mouth, as he told him, “Your sins have been removed; you have gained full atonement.”

The man was stunned. He had been prepared to die in order to cleanse his soul, and now the tzaddik had filled his mouth with sweet honey to salve his broken heart.

The tzaddik explained in a soothing tone, “Did you really think I would kill you, *chas v’shalom*? By accepting your fate, it is as if you were burned in atonement for your sins, since Hashem considers a good thought as a good deed. Your desire to repent is very precious to Hashem.”

This poignant story highlights the essence of Yom Kippur. The smallest stirrings toward *teshuvah* are highly valued by Hashem. When a person regrets his past deeds, his willful sins are transformed to merits. Who can stand in the presence of such an elevated person?

Chazal (*Berachot* 34b) tell us that complete tzaddikim cannot stand in the place of *ba’alei teshuvah*. In light of what we have said, perhaps one reason is that the greater their sins, the greater their merits after they do *teshuvah*.

With all this in mind, we can understand how appropriate it is to say the *berachah* of *Shehecheyanu* on Yom Kippur. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us life, enabling us to stand before Him in order to attain atonement for the past. He waits for our *teshuvah*, always. “Fortunate are you, Israel. Before Whom are you purified, and Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven.”

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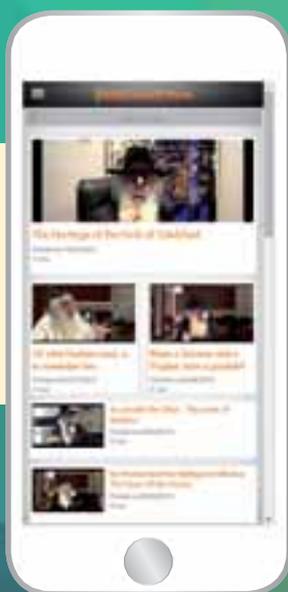
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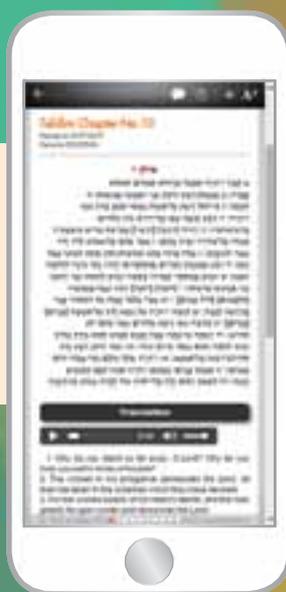
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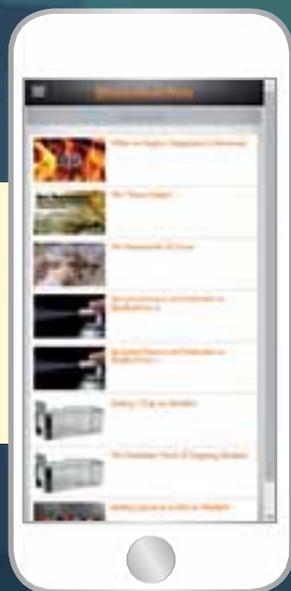
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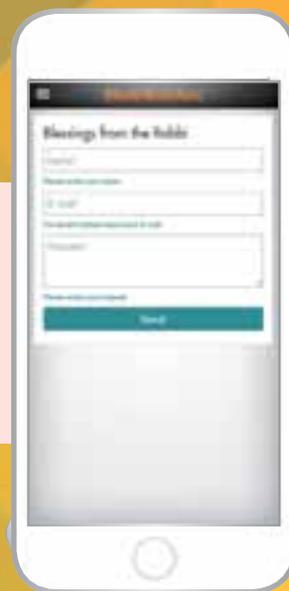
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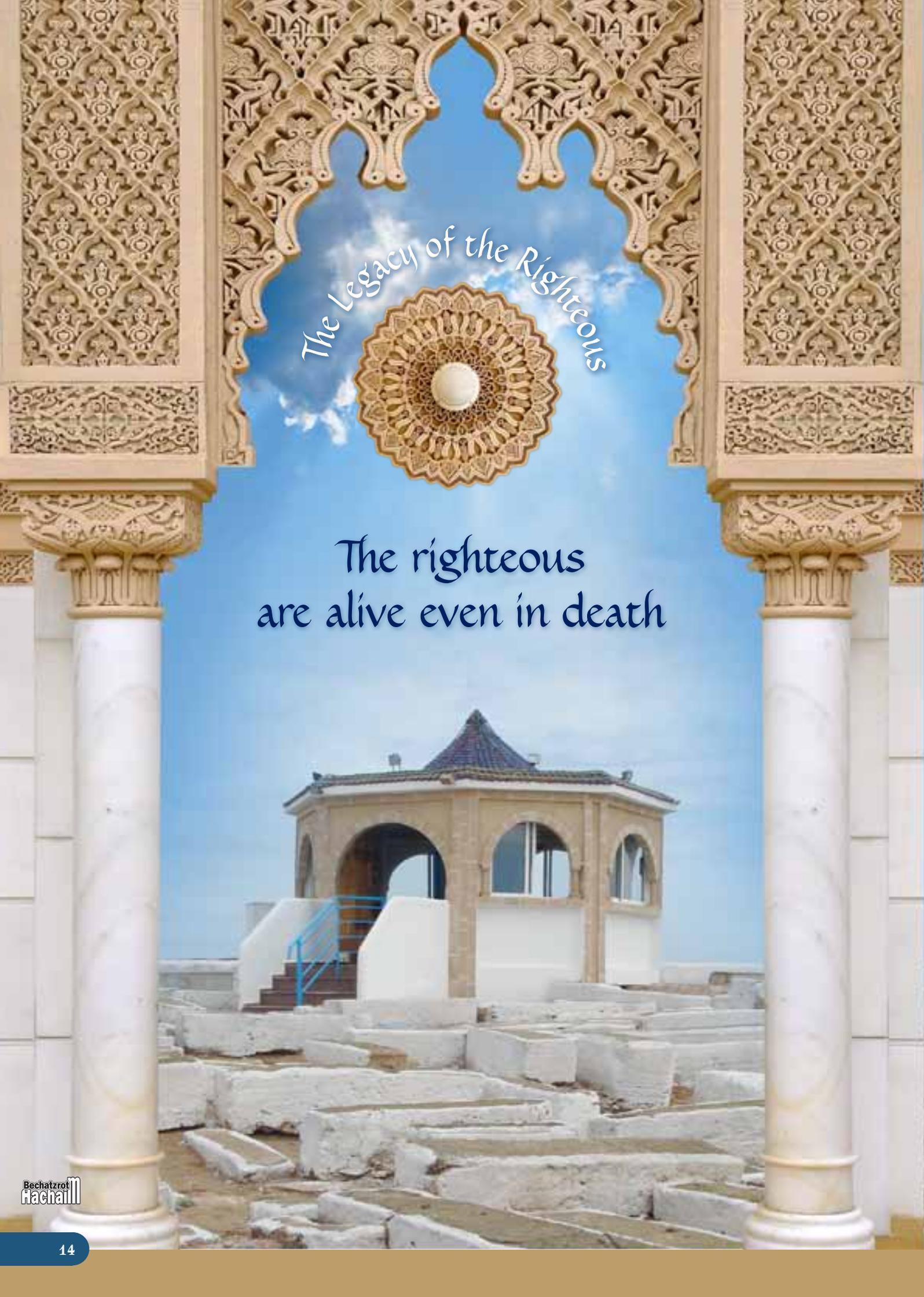
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The Legacy of the Righteous

The righteous
are alive even in death

The Holy Tzaddik, Mekubal, and Miracle Worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol, zy" a

Over three hundred years have elapsed since the passing of the holy tzaddik and *mekubal*, **Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto Hagadol**, zy" a. The saintly aura that surrounded the tzaddik in his lifetime stemmed from his greatness in Torah and his overwhelming *kedushah*. This was manifest in his extraordinary power of speech, bringing miraculous results, which continues to this day, as it says, "A tzaddik decrees, and Hashem fulfills his will." Many people testify in awe about the outstanding miracles they experienced after praying wholeheartedly for the merits of the holy tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, to stand in their stead.

The name of the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, was revered for centuries among the Jews of Morocco and beyond. His name and word of his Divine inspiration spread far and wide, across borders, oceans, and continents. Many stories have been written about this wondrous tzaddik and holy *mekubal*. Some of them appear in the well-known *sefer*, *Shevach Chaim*, which was written in Arabic by Harav Makhluף Mazal Tarim, zt"l. It was recently translated to Hebrew by Rabbi David Cohen, shlita, the student of Moreinu, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita. Others were drawn after him, viewing it as a great merit to record for posterity the wonderful conduct of the righteous tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy" a.

Rabbi Chaim's fame spread from a young age, since he adopted the exalted conduct of his holy ancestors, dedicating himself to the study of Torah in complete sanctity. His name was lauded throughout the land, and he became famous among the Jews of Morocco. The native Arabs also greatly respected him and considered him a holy miracle worker.

His good name reached beyond the borders of Morocco, to Europe and the Middle East. He often received requests from Jews from far off countries, beseeching him to pray

for them and help them merit salvation, and annul harsh decrees.

The doors of his home were open throughout the day to all, rich or poor, prominent or simple. He would make an effort to assist each person who turned to him, as a father caring for his son.

When his esteemed teacher Rabbi Yaakov Bibas died, the members of the community turned to Rabbi Chaim Hagadol and asked him to fill his position as Rav of Mogador. At first, Rabbi Chaim refused due to his immense humility. However, since the leaders of the community insisted, Rabbi Chaim agreed to fill the position of his holy mentor. He took upon himself to bear the burden of the people in all matters, communal and individual.

Rabbi Chaim was aided in his rabbinical duties by his close friend Rabbi David Chazan, zt"l, who served as his assistant in leading the community and was also a member of the special Beit Din established under his auspices.

Blessed Is He Who Saw His Countenance

Close to midnight, Rabbi Chaim Hagadol would strengthen himself as a lion and begin his evening schedule of *avodat Hashem*. At that hour, his attendant Rabbi Aharon ibn-Chaim would fulfill his holy duty of brewing a hot drink for the Rav.

One night, the attendant heard two voices coming from the study of Rabbi Chaim. Rabbi Aharon thought to himself, "If the Rav has a *chavruta* in learning Torah tonight, I should also prepare a hot drink for the guest."

Acting upon his noble intentions, he took in two cups of hot drinks to the Rav.

The next day, following the Shacharit prayers, Rabbi Chaim called his attendant, Rabbi Aharon, and said to him, "Tell me, please, why did you bring me two hot drinks instead of one, as usual?"

"I heard the Rav speaking with someone else, and I thought that I should honor the guest with a hot drink as well."

The tzaddik Rabbi Chaim nodded his head in silence and gazed at Rabbi Aharon, saying, "Blessed are you, my son, that you merited hearing the voice of Eliyahu Hanavi. His was the second voice that you heard last night. However, I forbid you to reveal this secret to anyone."



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Rabbi Aharon honored the Rav's wishes for many years and did not reveal even a hint of what he had heard. When the time came for Rabbi Chaim to depart from the world, Rabbi Aharon felt that he could finally disclose this amazing secret to the followers of the Rav. He told them how Eliyahu Hanavi had come to learn as a *chavruta* with Rabbi Chaim Hagadol.

Along these lines is the following account: Many people would frequent the house of Rabbi Chaim Hagadol, seeking advice in different matters regarding the religious community of Mogador.

Among those who came to his house one day was Rabbi Makhluf Loyb (also known as Rav Lissa). He was summoned to Rabbi Chaim's house on an urgent matter. The incident took place late at night. Rabbi Makhluf knew how to reach Rabbi Chaim's study by the telltale candle that burned in his room. Upon entering the study, he saw two men.

One was Rabbi Chaim, his face aflame, shining with a brilliant light. The other was an unfamiliar figure, who resembled an angel. Rabbi Makhluf felt his knees buckling under, and terror gripped him. He turned on his heels and fled.

The next morning, Rabbi Chaim Hagadol met Rabbi Makhluf and told him, "Blessed are you, Rabbi Makhluf, that you merited seeing the countenance of Eliyahu Hanavi, of blessed memory."

Rabbi Makhluf was astonished, but his heart pounded with the fear that perhaps he would be punished for gazing at the countenance of Eliyahu Hanavi. He beseeched Rabbi Chaim to pray for him that he should not die before his time.

Rabbi Chaim promised to do so. He begged mercy from Hashem that Rabbi Makhluf should not die young. His prayers were accepted on High, and Rabbi Makhluf lived a long life, passing away at the ripe old age of 110.

This incident was recorded by Rabbi Makhluf himself in the *siddur* from which he prayed. His sons and grandsons, who were close to the Pinto family, publicized the story.

No Locust Remained

The city of Mogador experienced years of famine and suffering, in which many of the residents became impoverished and even lost their lives, perishing in hunger and thirst.

Every few years, a plague of locusts would strike. Flocks of locusts would raid the fields and orchards, leaving them bare of produce. The plague would lead to a sharp rise in the price of food, causing a huge financial crisis and widespread poverty.

One year, when the locusts descended in masses upon the city of Mogador, the people were panic-stricken, anticipating the extensive losses that would follow.

At this difficult time, the Jews of Mogador beseeched Hashem for mercy, as their ancestors had done in times of trouble. A day of fasting and prayer was designated throughout Morocco. Unfortunately the Jews of Mogador were not spared, but suffered greatly.

In the midst of the plague, just as Rabbi Chaim Hagadol was engaged in learning with his students, the house suddenly turned dark. Hordes of locusts descended and clouded the atmosphere. Some of the locusts covered the *sefarim* of the students, making it impossible for them to continue learning.

Rabbi Chaim halted his lesson. He took out his shofar and began to blow, in order to avert the terrible decree. Afterward, he prayed fervently, citing the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. He did not stop beseeching Hashem until the decree was annulled. Suddenly, western winds began to blow, scattering the locusts and saving the city.

The Excommunication of Adar Bet

Hard times came upon Morocco. Half the month of Adar Bet had already elapsed and not a drop of rain had fallen to dampen the earth.

The Jews of Mogador approached Rabbi Chaim Hagadol, beseeching him to save them from their troubles and pray for them. There was already a great shortage of wheat, and with tears streaming from their faces they begged the tzaddik to arouse Heavenly mercy.

Rabbi Chaim declared, "Tomorrow, everyone should gather in the *beit kenesset*. Do not eat or drink. Immerse yourselves in prayer and afterward head toward the cemetery, where we will await Hashem's salvation."

The next day, there was a public announcement about the mandatory fast day designated for communal prayer. The crowd gathered in the *beit kenesset* to pray, and when they concluded their supplications, everyone went to the cemetery, with Rabbi Chaim heading the procession.

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Rabbi Chaim stood next to one of the tombstones and asked his attendant to proclaim loudly, “Adar Bet is excommunicated! Adar Bet is excommunicated! Adar Bet is excommunicated!”

The attendant did as he was told, even though he did not understand the extraordinary procedures, which were way beyond his grasp. Just as he was waiting to see how things would develop, Rabbi Chaim called out in a loud voice, “Adar Bet, we allow you; Adar Bet, we forgive you; Adar Bet, we permit you,” just as one states in the procedure for annulling vows.

Rabbi Chaim concluded the ritual and turned to go home, with all the people following behind him.

As the congregants made their way to their homes, the skies suddenly opened, and torrents of rain came pouring down.

It is told that before the people were able to reach their homes, their clothing was soaked from the rain that descended in the merit of the tzaddik’s prayers.

A Hug and a Kiss

Shabbat was most beloved to Rabbi Chaim, more than any other day of the week. On Shabbat Kodesh, he would feel elevated and inspired, and would enthusiastically compose songs and lyrics. At every meal he would sing *zemirot* in his beautiful voice, sounding the praises of Hashem, while concentrating on deep Heavenly secrets. (As we know, Rabbi Chaim left bags full of manuscripts of his songs and lyrics which he composed, but most of them were lost when bandits looted the city of Mogador.)

Moreinu v’Rabbeinu adds the following:

I heard from my elders that one Shabbat, Rabbi Chaim Hagadol was singing the *piyutim* of the composer, Rabbi Yisrael Najara, zt”l, with his magnificent voice, as usual. He sang with such enthusiasm and devotion that Rabbi Yisrael Najara appeared to him. He gave him a hug and a kiss for singing with such intense emotion in honor of the *Shechinah*.

Rabbi Yisrael Najara Is Waiting for Us

Rabbi Chaim Hagadol merited having his journeys miraculously shortened. Once, while traveling to a distant location, he took another person along with him. This is what happened:

Rabbi David Chassin, zt”l, was known as a famous composer of *piyutim*. He lived in Meknes, which was very far from Mogador. Once, in the middle of the night, Rabbi Chaim came to Rabbi Chassin’s house, woke him up and told him, “Come with me to Mogador. Rabbi Yisrael Najara is waiting for us there.”

Rabbi Chassin hesitated, since it takes several days to get from Meknes to Mogador. “How can I go? My wife may get up in middle of the night sensing my absence and be worried.”

Rabbi Chaim reassured him, “With the help of Hashem, we will leave and return quickly, even before your wife gets up.”

“Although I have heard about your greatness and outstanding capabilities, I cannot leave, since I am concerned about my wife.”

Rabbi Chaim continued persuading him. “I promise





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you that your wife will not know anything about our departure.”

In the end, Rabbi Chassin agreed. Their journey to Mogador was miraculously shortened. There they met the holy Rabbi Yisrael Najara, who descended from Heaven to sing with them the praises of Hashem.

When they finished singing, Rabbi Yisrael promised them that from then on, every Rosh Chodesh, he would appear to them and sing together the *piyutim* in honor of the *Shechinah*.

Their meeting turned into a regular custom. Every month, Rabbi Chaim Hagadol would come to Rabbi Chassin's house and together they would travel from Meknes to Mogador in a miraculously shortened journey. They would sing lyrics and *piyutim* together with the lofty composer Rabbi Yisrael Najara. (As heard from Rabbi Aharon Chassin, *zt"l*, Rosh Av Beit Din Mogador, a grandson of Rabbi David Chassin.)

I Will Not Leave You

In Elul 1845 (5605), approximately ten days before Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Chaim Hagadol deviated from his usual learning program in his *beit midrash*, and he began preparing his students for the approaching Days of Awe. The Talmudic lectures that he customarily delivered were replaced by discussions of the virtue of *teshuvah* and its importance in these days, when a person's fate is pending.

The tzaddik requested that his students continue to strengthen themselves in the observance of Torah and mitzvot, promising them explicitly, “I will continue to stand in prayer before Hashem after I die, just as I did during my lifetime. I will not abandon you in my death, as I did not abandon you in my life.”

The concern in his voice left a deep impression on

the people, and they began to sense that the tzaddik was about to return his soul to the Creator.

The bitter news passed throughout the city, quickly spreading to all Morocco as well, and a great cry arose. Everyone began to recite *Tehillim* and pray for their Rav, hoping that perhaps the terrible decree would be annulled and Rabbi Chaim would continue to live.

A Miracle Worker

Rabbi Chaim continued to speak passionately about service and fear of Hashem. Ultimately, on the twenty-sixth of Elul, 1845 (5605), his flame was extinguished, and his holy soul returned to its source from beneath the Heavenly Throne.

Rabbi Chaim was buried in the old cemetery in Mogador. Prior to his death, he requested of his sons neither to build a monument over his grave nor to inscribe any praise on his tombstone, but only to write his name.

After a consultation with the city's rabbis, it was decided to inscribe the following words, which appear on the tzaddik's grave until today:

“The tombstone of the holy Rabbi, a bastion of strength, who was the most senior authority and known for performing miracles, *Moreinu v'Rabbeinu*, Chaim Pinto, *zy"ta*, who returned his soul on the twenty-sixth of Elul, 5605, may he rest in peace.”

A few years ago, Mr. Shimon Levi from the city of Mogador built a magnificent shelter over Rabbi Chaim Pinto's grave. May his merits serve as a protection for us and for all Am Yisrael to shower goodness and blessing upon us, and may we all merit to be written and sealed in the Book of Life and experience the everlasting redemption, *Amen*.

When poor children reached the age of thirteen, Rabbi Hadan would purchase tallitot, tefillin, clothing, and other provisions, so that they would be able to celebrate their Bar Mitzvah with complete joy.

A few years later, when these boys grew of age to marry and build a Jewish home, Rabbi Hadan would undertake the important mitzvah of *hachnasat kallah*.



The Holy Tzaddik, Mekubal, and Miracle Worker Rabbi Yehudah Pinto, zy"á, Known as Rabbi Hadan

The tremendous void left by **Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol's** passing was soon filled by his righteous son, the tzaddik **Rabbi Yehudah Pinto** – known as Rabbi Hadan, zy"á. He was famous for his swiftness in performing mitzvot, fulfilling Chazal's dictum, "Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven."

Rabbi Hadan was well-known for his vast knowledge of Torah and Kabbalah. He would diligently study *sifrei kodesh*, day and night. He was an outstanding tzaddik and *chassid*, and performed many wondrous miracles. Many people flocked to him in order to receive his blessings.

Because of his sagacity in all areas of life, the leaders of the city and state would consult with him. Foreign diplomats and representatives of various countries made their way to him, standing in line by his door to receive advice and assistance in pressing issues.

Correspondence directed to him from foreign countries passed through the various consulates that were situated in Mogador. He shared his wisdom generously, giving beneficial advice to every individual, both in spiritual and physical matters. This was in addition to praying for each member of Am Yisrael to merit salvation and mercy.

Rabbi Hadan inherited from his father the virtues of generosity and kindness, which were rooted in the very fiber of his being. It is told about him that he would distribute all his funds to charity. Rabbi Hadan was very careful not to go to sleep at night if he still had a coin remaining in his pocket. He would hurry to donate it to the poor.

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Hadan would purchase *tallitot*, tefillin, clothing, and other provisions, so that they would be able to celebrate their Bar Mitzvah with complete joy.

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Fulfilling a Promise

Rabbi Hadan enjoyed an excellent reputation among his people. His kind heart and commendable character traits served as shining jewels in his splendid crown of Torah glory. One of his worthy customs, for which he was well-known, was to escort each person as he left the city, whether for business or for health purposes, or for any other reason.

Our story begins with two merchants, Chacham Bihu and Rabbi Yosef Elmaliach, who set out for England by sea for business purposes. Rabbi Hadan followed the two to escort them to the port.

When Chacham Bihu noticed Rabbi Hadan's shining countenance, the thought crossed his mind that perhaps the saintly tzaddik's intentions were to request that they donate some of their profits to charity. Somehow, he uttered scornful words to Rabbi Hadan. Rabbi Hadan heard the insults and suffered his humiliation in silence. He did not respond, but the disparaging words caused him much pain. "Why? For what reason did Chacham Bihu embarrass me?" he agonized.

Rabbi Hadan returned home humiliated. In his anguish, he fell ill and began to vomit blood. His attendant advised him to ascend to the roof of the house and breathe fresh air so that perhaps he would feel a little better.



On the roof of the house overlooking the ocean, they spotted two commercial ships sailing at sea. "Whose ships are these?" Rabbi Hadan asked his attendant. The attendant replied that these were Chacham Bihu's ships. One ship was carrying all the merchandise, and the other ship carried the passengers.

Rabbi Hadan paused a bit and then said, "Just as he caused me burning pain, bringing me to vomit blood, so too will Hashem do to him. The ship with all the merchandise will burn completely. However, the other ship will be spared from any harm."

This is exactly what transpired. A short while later, the ship carrying the merchandise went up in flames and sank to the depths of the sea. The attendant, who witnessed the event, ran frantically to Chacham Bihu's house and told his wife what had happened. He described how Rabbi Hadan had vomited blood because of the humiliation that he had suffered from her husband, and what had eventually happened to the ship.

Chacham Bihu's wife hurried to the Rav's house and begged him to annul the decree. However, the Rav declared, "I cannot. The words that come out of my mouth are like bullets. The moment they are shot, they can never be returned. But, the most important thing is that the ship which your husband is traveling on will not suffer any damage."

Approximately one month later, Chacham Bihu set out on his return voyage to Mogador with a fleet of five ships. He longed to see his family, and dreamed of meeting them soon.

But alas! Suddenly a storm struck at sea, which threatened to capsize the ships with all its passengers. The winds were so strong that everyone was sure that the ship would sink to the bottom of the ocean.

At this critical time, Chacham Bihu remembered the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto. He prayed from the depths of his heart to Hashem that if He would save him in the merit of the tzaddik, he would give his son Rabbi Hadan fifty

royal, in addition to a watch and chain made of pure gold.

His prayers were answered. The ships were saved, and Chacham Bihu arrived home safely. Many people came to greet him, happy to see him home. Amidst all the fanfare of his homecoming, Chacham Bihu forgot about the vow he had made when his life had been in danger.

That night, when Rabbi Hadan went to sleep, his father, Rabbi Chaim, appeared to him in a dream and told him, "Wake up, my son, and go quickly to the house of Chacham Bihu. Remind him of the vow he made during the storm at sea, since he is obligated to keep his promise."

When Rabbi Hadan awoke from his sleep, he hurried to Chacham Bihu's house. Upon entering, Rabbi Hadan began to recount all the miracles that had happened to Chacham Bihu at sea. It was as if he himself had been present at the time.

When he finished describing the events, Rabbi Hadan turned to Chacham Bihu and told him, "You made a promise and now you must fulfill it."

Chacham Bihu, who had completely forgotten his vow, was absolutely amazed. How did the Rav know exactly what had occurred? He turned to Rabbi Hadan and asked him, "Honorable Rabbi, who revealed all this to you?"

"My esteemed father, Rabbi Chaim," answered Rabbi Hadan. "He came to me in a dream and told me everything. Now, please fulfill the promise that you made."

Chacham Bihu immediately rose from his seat and with great admiration excitedly kissed the Rav with respect. On the spot, he fulfilled his pledge and gave the Rav the money that he had promised to pay (*Shevach Chaim*).

The *gaon*, *tzaddik*, and *mekubal*, Rabbi Hadan, passed on to the Heavenly Yeshiva on the sixteenth of Av, 1881 (5641). His grave is situated in the new cemetery in Mogador, and on his holy tomb, the following words are engraved:

"Here is the grave of the perfect all-encompassing Chacham, who brought merit to the public and was swift to perform mitzvot, stemming from holy ancestry, Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Rabbi Yehuda Pinto. He passed away on the sixteenth of Av *Rachaman*, in the year 5641."

The Holy Tzaddik, Mekubal, and Miracle Worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto "Hakatan," zy" a

One of the spiritual giants, descendant of the grand Pinto dynasty of Morocco, was the righteous tzaddik and miracle-worker **Rabbi Chaim Pinto "Hakatan," zy" a**. He is one who gained great merit for himself while granting much merit to the public, both in spiritual and material matters. He brought many of his brethren back to their faith during his lifetime and continued doing so even after his death, as we learn: "Tzaddikim are greater in their death than in their lifetime."

Therefore, we collected several inspiring stories in honor of the tzaddik as heard

directly from his holy grandson, the *gaon* and tzaddik, **Rabbi David Chananya Pinto**, shlita:



In 2003 (5763), on *parashat Vayeira*, when Moreinu v'Rabbeinu was staying in France, the following story took place:

A woman came to him in despair. She told him that she had been diagnosed with cancer in its progressive stages, *rachmana litzlan*. Tearfully, she poured out her heart in sorrow, bemoaning that she had not yet married off any of her children, and she was on the brink of death.

Her dire situation touched Moreinu

Her dire situation touched Moreinu v'Rabbeinu's heart. Since that night was the fifteenth of Cheshvan, the hilula of his grandfather, the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hakatan, he told her, "Go home, and the merit of the tzaddik will protect you. Tomorrow, on the day of the hilula, come to inform me of happy tidings."



v'Rabbeinu's heart. Since that night was the fifteenth of Cheshvan, the *hilula* of his grandfather, the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hakatan, he told her, "Go home, and the merit of the tzaddik will protect you. Tomorrow, on the day of the *hilula*, come to inform me of happy tidings."

The woman went home as instructed, and on the following day, after the Ma'ariv prayers, a *hilula* was celebrated in honor of Rabbi Elazar Menachem Mann Shach, zy" a, who passed away on the sixteenth of Cheshvan. The woman came to the *beit kenesset*, and in the presence of an enormous crowd of people, including scholars such as Rabbi Bergman, shlita, (Rav Shach's grandson), she publicized the following miracle she had experienced.

At the hospital that day, after taking an ultrasound and other tests, the doctors proclaimed that her illness had entirely disappeared. The doctors could not explain the strange turn of events. She was perfectly healthy and out of danger.

Four Thousand Dollars

R' Refael Amar, a disciple of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita, relates that once he traveled to Morocco with his business partner. He was a pilot in the Israeli Defense Forces and had begun to take an interest in Judaism. The two went to Morocco to pray at the grave of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Hakatan.

When they arrived at the cemetery, an Arab caretaker showed them to the tzaddik's grave and handed them *Sifrei Tehillim*.

The pilot noticed that the caretaker was holding something in his hand, and he asked him what it was. The Arab told him that he had a picture of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto, which he had once received from a tzaddik who was Rabbi Chaim's grandson.

The pilot, who was not accustomed to such reverence, told R' Refael Amar in Hebrew, so that the Arab would not understand him, "Let's buy the picture from the Arab. We will offer him some money, and maybe he will agree to sell it."

The pilot offered the Arab a sum of money, but the Arab caretaker was not prepared to sell the picture under any circumstances. The pilot raised the price to one thousand dollars, but the Arab still refused. The pilot offered to buy it for a sum of over four thousand dollars, and even for this exorbitant sum (an amount of money with which one could buy a house in Morocco) the Arab was not prepared to negotiate at all.

The pilot was very moved and told R' Refael Amar, "See how much faith the Arab has in the tzaddik. His faith is deeply engrained in his very being. Although the picture in his hand is already old and torn, he will not part from it for all the money in the world. This is because he witnessed wondrous miracles wrought by the tzaddik. For him, the picture is his whole life. And if a non-Jewish Arab has such faith in the tzaddik, how much more so should we."

When Moreinu v'Rabbeinu heard this account, he commented: It is important to note that faith without Torah is not complete, since they are interconnected. For this Shlomo Hamelech prayed to Hashem (*Melachim* I 8:41) that when a non-Jew will pray to Him, He would immediately accept his prayer. However when a Jew prays, He should not accept his prayer immediately. Why?

For a Jew, a single prayer is not sufficient to bring miraculous salvation. Simple faith is not enough, since a Jew is also required to be a bastion of Torah and observe the mitzvot with fervor. This is not so regarding non-Jews, since they have no connection to Torah. Therefore, if a gentile exhibits faith, Hashem suffices with his prayers and answers him immediately.

A Jew must bask in the light of Torah, engaging in mitzvot and good deeds. Only then will Hashem perform miraculous wonders for him.

"Father, Why Are You Crying?"

The virtue of stories about tzaddikim and their exalted conduct is evident in the following account:

In 1962 (5722), a strong earthquake shook Agadir. Entire buildings collapsed, burying thousands of people. Many who tried to escape from under the rubble were electrocuted by the power cables strewn in the streets. The Jewish community lost whole families. All the yeshiva students and their teachers were buried alive under the ruins of the yeshiva's building. It was a terrible time of suffering for all the Jews.

What was the cause of this painful tragedy?

At that time, Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto published the *sefer*, *Shenot Chaim*, in which he related stories about his father, the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hakatan. He sent the *sefarim* to all corners of the world so that people would read about his father and strengthen their faith in tzaddikim. He also sent a shipment of books to Agadir.

However, Rabbi Moshe Aharon experienced great

disappointment. A short while later, all the *sefarim* he had sent were returned to him. He received a message from Agadir that no one wanted to buy the books, since they claimed that they were already familiar with stories about the tzaddik. Rabbi Moshe Aharon decided to send the *sefarim* again to Agadir and offer them free of charge.

But even that was met with opposition. Shortly later, the *sefarim* were sent back to his home. It seemed that the people of Agadir did not want to read and learn about the wonders of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Hakatan.

That night, Rabbi Moshe Aharon had a dream. He saw his father Rabbi Chaim sitting on the ground and crying bitterly. Rabbi Moshe Aharon asked him, "Father, why are you crying?" "You will yet hear," he answered him ominously.

Rabbi Moshe Aharon woke up to the tremors of a massive earthquake. A few days later, he heard about the tragic events that had taken place in Agadir. The city lay in shambles, and many Jews and precious yeshiva students had been killed, *rachmana litzlan*. This is probably the reason why Rabbi Moshe Aharon had sent the *sefarim* the second time. He tried his utmost to cancel the terrible decree, but the Satan's ploy succeeded. These were the consequences of refusing to purchase *sefarim* which would have strengthened people's faith in tzaddikim.

The Holy Tzaddik and Miracle Worker Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, zy" a

Great levels in *avodat Hashem* were achieved by the tzaddik **Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto**, zy" a, the favorite son of the holy tzaddik, Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto Hakatan, zy" a, and the father of Moreinu v' Rabbeinu, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita.

The saintly conduct which Rabbi Moshe Aharon absorbed in his parents' home was carefully guarded by him and he continued excelling in his refined character traits, "rising in levels of saintliness and not diminishing them." The piety of Rabbi Moshe Aharon was manifest by the way he scrupulously implemented the dictates of Chazal in *Masechet Avot*. Regarding this the Gemara states (*Bava Kama* 30a), "One who desires to be exceedingly pious should implement the dictates of *Masechet Avot*." He meticulously observed every ruling of the holy *Tanna'im*, without exception.

Rabbi Moshe Aharon lived by the words of the Mishnah, "Be exceedingly humble in spirit." Every Shabbat, when he would arrive at the *beit kenesset* to pray, he would hunch over at the entrance, as if trying to shrink, in order to be as inconspicuous as possible. He was appalled at all signs of

respect directed to him and, in a self-deprecating manner, vehemently opposed any deference shown him.

The outstanding trait of humility with which Rabbi Moshe Aharon was blessed was immediately perceived by all those in his proximity. Everyone was aware that they were standing in front of a great personality, who towered over them, but whose head was bent in order to share in the burden of each man who was created in the image of Hashem. Everyone who came to his house was greeted with blessings and a shining countenance at every hour of the day.

When someone would approach him, whether young or old, prominent or destitute, Rabbi Moshe Aharon would stand up to honor him. When he was once asked about this behavior, he explained, "Every person possesses a spark of Hashem, and I stand up in honor of that spark... Do not look at the vessel, but what is in it."

Torah scholars testify that they saw with their own eyes how the tzaddik would humble himself completely before those who study Torah and wave its banner. When they would approach him to ask for his blessings, he would





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quickly offer his hand in greeting and then quickly pull his hand away so that they should not kiss it.

When people would pour out their hearts and ask him to pray for them, his face clearly reflected that he did not see himself worthy of this task. He would tell the Torah scholars, “Who am I to bless you? After all, you sit all day in the *beit midrash* and merit engaging in the study of Torah. You are the source of all blessing.” This is as *Chazal* say (*Avodah Zarah* 19a), “He who is occupied with the study of Torah, his desire shall be granted.” And they also say (*Berachot* 5a), “If one studies the Torah, painful sufferings are kept away from him.”

He Guards the Steps of His Devout Ones

Chazal say, “In the way a person wishes to go, he is led.” This indicates that if a man wishes to be righteous or become charitable, he will be presented with opportunities by Heaven in order to achieve this goal. But if he, G-d forbid, wishes to do evil, he will also be assisted in his objective. *Chazal* say, “Everything is dependent on Heaven, except for the fear of Heaven.” First, one must make the effort to be purified, then he will be assisted by Heaven. This lesson was clearly evidenced by the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aharon, as is illustrated by the following story:

Rabbi Moshe Aharon would always eat his main meal exactly at 12:00 noon. At that time, no one would be allowed to disturb him. Afterward, he would rest a bit, receive people, and then resume learning Torah. At night, he was careful to go to sleep on time. At midnight, he would get up and pray for Am Yisrael. He continued doing so until his last years.

Once, the Rabbanit had to travel to Tel Aviv. Before setting out, she asked Grandmother, a”h, to take out a chicken from the refrigerator, cook it, and serve it to Rabbi Moshe Aharon at exactly 12:00. Grandmother willingly agreed, and she began to prepare the food in order to serve

it to the tzaddik. However, Hashem orchestrated events so that exactly at 12:00 noon people came to see the Rav on an urgent matter. The Rav veered from his routine and agreed to receive them. Afterward, he wanted to taste his food, but suddenly more people entered. The Rav told Grandmother to allow the people in to see him. The whole afternoon passed in this way. Rabbi Moshe Aharon neither ate nor rested.

When the Rabbanit returned from Tel Aviv, she asked Grandmother if the Rav had already eaten. She told her that he had not yet tasted any food, because he had been occupied with people throughout the afternoon. The Rabbanit was visibly distressed.

“What should I have done? He asked to let the people in to see him,” Grandmother explained. Then, the Rabbanit asked Grandmother, “Did you *kasher* the chicken?”

“No, I thought that you had already *kashered* it.”

Suddenly everything became clear. The Rabbanit entered the room, quickly grabbed the plate of food and threw it away. She proceeded to take another chicken out of the refrigerator to *kasher* and cook it. Suddenly, the Rav asked for food. She then told him the whole story. The Rav smiled and said, “This is in accordance with *Chazal’s* statement, ‘In the way a person wants to go, he is led.’ I never allowed non-kosher food to pass my lips. Even when you were not present to supervise my meal, Hashem continued to protect me, assisting me to succeed in my spiritual endeavors.”

Rabbi Moshe Aharon never completely finished the food on his plate during meals. Instead, he would begin eating and then discontinue. When his wife, the Rabbanit, noticed this behavior, she assumed her husband did not like the way she prepared the food. The tzaddik sensed her uneasiness and told her, “I enjoy your food, but nevertheless, I eat only a little at a time. If I would eat the whole portion at once, I would desire more and ask you for an additional portion. But I prefer that my desires should be consecrated only for Hashem and Torah, and not for the vanities of this world.”

Customs of Our Gedolei Yisrael during the Yamim Noraim

Rosh Hashanah

Inspirational stories describing the customs and behavior of our illustrious Torah teachers, from all segments of Jewry, throughout the ages.

Rags – Or Riches?

One Rosh Hashanah, immediately before the shofar was to be blown, Rabbi Zushia of Anipoli left his *beit midrash*, scanning the streets.

Every Jew, from young to old, was in a *beit kenesset*. The streets were silent, without a soul in sight. But Rabbi Zusia did not give up. He eagerly went up one street and down another. Finally, he met a neglected young urchin, wandering about in tatters.

Rabbi Zusia seemed to have found what he had been looking for. “Tell me,” he gently asked the street-boy, “Are you envious of the gentile boy who lives on the other side of town? He lives in wealth and comfort. He eats to satiation and wears expensive clothes. Wouldn’t you like to switch places with him?”

“*Chas v’shalom!*” the boy spat out, his body trembling at the thought. “Let him have what he has. I will never give up my faith!”

Rabbi Zusia turned back to the *beit midrash*. He stood up on the *bimah*, his eyes turned heavenward and proclaimed, “*Ribbono shel Olam!* Who is like Your people, Israel! You have heard as well as I that this pitiful boy accepts his situation with love. He is unwilling to exchange his faith for anything!”

Only after this short soliloquy did Rabbi Zusia begin blowing the shofar, with great enthusiasm.

Direct Line

Rabbi Naftali of Ropshitz blew the shofar one year in a barely-audible tone. After the *tefillah*, he asked his wife, “Did you hear the shofar blasts? They rent the very heavens!”

His Rabbanit admitted that she had asked somebody else to blow the shofar for her, as she had not been able to hear her husband’s blowing at all.

“The shofar’s sounds were accepted on High specifically because they were soft. The Satan did not pay attention to them, assuming they were not acceptable according to Jewish law. Since there was no one to intercept them, they went straight up to Heaven!”

It Sounds Good

From Rosh Chodesh Elul, Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin would invite professional shofar-blowers to test their abilities.

Only those who could emit a smooth sound without vibrations, aside from conforming to the *halachic* intricacies, were chosen to blow for him on Rosh Hashanah.

After the festive meal, Rabbi Yehoshua Leib was still afraid that perhaps the blasts had not been perfect. He spent the rest of the day listening to the shofar being blown, until sunset.

Rav Binyamin Cohen
Rav Aryeh Mussabi



Petrified

The year before his passing, Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Levaton, zt”l, Rabbinical leader of Aleppo, appointed his son, Rabbi Kalfon, zt”l, as the shofar-blower and the *shaliach tzibbur* for the Mussaf prayer on Rosh Hashanah. Rabbi Kalfon dutifully blew the shofar blasts before the silent prayer. Suddenly, he could not continue. His father took his place and continued both the prayers and the shofar blowing.

After the prayers ended, Rabbi Chaim Mordechai approached his son with strong words of reproach. “What did you do?! Had I not immediately taken up the position of *shaliach tzibbur*, the entire *beit kenesset*, together with all its congregants, would have gone up in flames from the sanctity of the angels that you brought down with your shofar blows!”

“Indeed,” agreed his son. “I saw the angels descending and became so afraid, I could not continue.”

Strong and Sturdy

At the onset of the *Asseret Yemei Teshuvah*, the Yerushalmi tzaddik, Rabbi Sasson Mizrachi, zt”l, would be cloaked in fear in anticipation of the upcoming Days of Judgment. He explained to his disciples:

“We don’t have to do *teshuvah* only for our *aveirot*. Even when we do mitzvot, thought of personal gain sometimes enter our minds. This can be compared to

a person who builds a building. If the foundation is shaky, he cannot expect the building to endure. We must do mitzvot with pure hearts, so that they are one hundred percent perfect, without any flaw.

“It is also imperative that we pray for Divine assistance to do all our deeds for His sake alone.”

A Prayer and a Tear

Rabbi Yehoshua Greenwald described Rosh Hashanah, 1944 in the Malek concentration camp in Austria: One of the inmates informed me that there was a *siddur* located in a distant hut. I secreted my way there, grasping a piece of paper which I had found one day on my way to work. I copied out the Shemoneh Esrei prayers of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur from the *siddur*. When Rosh Hashanah came, I was able to pray from this sheet of paper, unbeknownst to the German watchmen.

I was not alone. Approximately two thousand people repeated the words of the *Shemoneh Esrei* after me, in utter silence, but with copious weeping.

As soon as we successfully ended our prayers, we rushed to work. Our workload was not reduced on this holy day. The sorrow and suffering were heart-wrenching. How sad it was to have to spend these holy days in this defiled place, amidst dogs and savage animals with human features! Hundreds of our brethren soaked their work tools with their tears.

First Response – Second Nature

For seven years, Rabbi Shimon Aluf, shlita, Rav of the Egyptian community in New York, served as the *shaliach tzibbur* in the *beit kenesset* of Maran Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, zt”l. He related tales of inspiration which are impressed into his heart, from those glorious days.

On Rosh Hashanah, the Rav himself would blow the first *tekiot*, and his son, Harav Hagaon, Rabbi Yitzchak, would blow the rest. His blows were perfect, with nary a slight “off note.” Until this day, Rabbi Aluf cannot explain it. It was like the *Shechinah* itself was emerging from the Rav’s throat. He would stand and blow his small shofar without covering his head with a tallit and without weeping. He was simply like a man standing at the gate to the city, proclaiming, “The King is here! The King is here!”

One saw his elevation of spirit in his service of Hashem and was quickly caught up in the atmosphere.

It was astounding to note the contrast between his *avodah* on Yom Kippur, when he rent the heavens with his tears in fear and trembling, and his service on Rosh Hashanah, when everything was done in a state of controlled joy and a spirit of majesty.

For three years, Maran prayed in the Beit Hametivta on the Yamim Noraim. One Yom Kippur night, I merited seeing something unbelievable.

As was his custom, at the conclusion of the *tefillah*, Maran would bless the congregants to “merit many years of life.” After the last of the congregants left, Maran turned to leave, as well. The women’s section was located on the second floor. Maran noticed that some of the women were still on their way out of the building. As if struck by a snake, he turned back into the *beit kenesset*, opened the door of the bookcase, and pulled out the nearest Gemara. He sat down and began learning. The entire process took but a moment.

Only after he assessed that all of the women had exited and were quite a distance away, did he make his exit, as well.

I suggested to him that perhaps the next day, we should announce that the women should wait until all of the men have left so that the Rav could leave earlier.

He replied, “It is not necessary.”

I was left with an impression of the Rav’s intense efforts in guarding his eyes. He has bequeathed to me a memory of a man who, through great effort, made *shemirat ha’einayim* second nature.

In a Timely Fashion

In the Zichron Meir neighborhood in Bnei Brak, 2011, the multitudes were gathered, as every year, in the study hall of Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin, to hear the Shabbat Shuvah lecture of the eminent *gaon*, Rabbi Shmuel Halevi Wosner, zt”l, author of *Shevet Halevi*. As was his custom for decades, at the culmination of his halachic discourse, Rabbi Wosner offered words of inspiration to the masses. He mentioned areas in need of improvement. Here is a summary of his words: “It is known that the recital of *Kriyat Shema*, in which the Jew accepts upon himself the yoke of Heaven, is a positive Torah commandment according to a majority of opinions. If one missed the time of reciting *Kriyat Shema*, he has transgressed a Torah-ordained mitzvah.

“Unfortunately, many *minyanim* are established in which *Kriyat Shema* is recited three or four hours after the correct time. Whoever prays in such a minyan without reciting *Kriyat Shema* earlier, neglects a Torah-mandated mitzvah on a daily basis. Those who institute these prayer times, offering the option of annulling the recital of *Kriyat Shema* in its proper time, are essentially abolishing a mitzvah! I hope these people will remove this shame from the holy city, Bnei Brak. They are sinners who are causing the masses to sin.”

A few days earlier, an announcement had been made in the Ramat Elchanan neighborhood by Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, shlita, together with other neighborhood rabbis.





They asked the residents not to allow *minyanim* to take place after the designated hour for saying *Kriyat Shema*. Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein said this is urgent in our day, when our enemies are seeking various ways of destroying us. As it says in *Sotah*: In the merit of *Kriyat Shema*, we receive Divine protection from our enemies. “He Who watches Yisrael, will protect the remnant of Yisrael who proclaims, ‘*Shema Yisrael!*’”

Don't Wait Until the Last Minute

The Gemara in *Berachot* (10b) says, “Greater is the one who recites *Kriyat Shema* in its proper time than one who occupies himself with Torah study.” Moreover, the Midrash (*Kohelet Rabbah* 1:37) says, “If the time has come to recite *Kriyat Shema* and one neglected to do so, this is an example of “a twisted thing which cannot be made straight” (*Kohelet* 1:15).

The Zohar relates the following incident: Rav Yitzchak and Rav Yehudah were on their way when they reached Kfar Sachnin, the town where Rav Hamnuna Saba lived. They lodged in his home, where his wife lived with their

The Steipler, zt”l, used to pray daily at 7:00 a.m. in the Lederman *beit midrash*. He would often look up to the clock to ascertain that they had not missed the time for *Kriyat Shema*, according to the ruling of the Magen Avraham.

young son. The son came home from his Torah studies and his mother told him to approach the rabbis for a *berachah*. He came close to them and then recoiled, telling his mother, “I don’t want to get near them because they neglected reciting *Kriyat Shema* today. I learned that one who does not say *Kriyat Shema* on time is excommunicated the entire day!”

The Sages agreed with him, but explained that they had been involved in a mitzvah and were

thus absolved of the mitzvah of *Kriyat Shema*. They asked him how he had perceived that they had not recited *Kriyat Shema*. He said he had smelled it on their clothes.

The Steipler, zt”l, used to pray daily at 7:00 a.m. in the Lederman *beit midrash*. He would often look up to the clock to ascertain that they had not missed the time for *Kriyat Shema*, according to the ruling of the Magen Avraham. He once told the *shaliach tzibbur* that missing the designated time for saying *Kriyat Shema* is likely transgressing a Torah command. One cannot wait until the last minute, in case the clock is inaccurate.

An Etrog and a Prayer

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt”l, was scrupulous in reciting *Kriyat Shema* according to the time specified by the Magen Avraham. He would say, “If you were offered an etrog that is invalid according to the opinion of the Magen Avraham, you surely wouldn’t buy it. Why, then, are you not careful to adhere to his ruling regarding *Kriyat Shema*?” (*Halichot Shlomo* 70:91).

In his letter of approbation for a *sefer* on the mitzvah of *Kriyat*

Shema, the gaon Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka, zt”l, writes: There are a number of opinions regarding the hour of *Kriyat Shema*. One who is punctilious will try to follow all opinions. Everyone agrees that the earlier one prays, the better. When one purchases an etrog, he agrees to pay a lot. He will travel far and wide in his search of the perfect specimen. Why, then, regarding *Kriyat Shema*, does he not try to follow all opinions? There is no response for this. Praiseworthy are those congregations that make sure to pray on time on Shabbat morning so that the people can merit reciting *Kriyat Shema* and its prior blessings in time.

A Reason to Weep

In one of his talks, Maran HaRav Shach, zt”l, said: There are many *bachurim* who learn well and have *yirat Shamayim*. They will look at their watches to see if six hours have passed since eating chicken soup. This is proper. However, nearly every day, they miss the appropriate time of *Kriyat Shema d’Orayta*, which is a Torah-mandated mitzvah, similar to eating matzah and blowing the shofar.

“I never missed the time of *Kriyat Shema* according to the Magen Avraham. Once, when I was nine years old, I woke up late. I cried so much that day, like someone who fell asleep before the Seder and woke up the next morning, only to discover that he had missed the whole thing.”

Shameless and Slothful

Rabbi Nissim Karelitz, shlita, quotes the Mishnah in *Pesachim* that speaks about the *Korban Pesach* being slaughtered in three groups. Although the *halachah* states that the nation should be divided into three, the Gemara calls the third group the “group of the indolent.”

These people fulfill the mitzvah of *Korban Pesach* on time. Nevertheless, because they did not hurry, they are called lazy. All the more so regarding the mitzvah of *Kriyat Shema*. Its earliest hour is *vatikin* (at sunrise). Those who perpetually pray at a questionable hour display contempt towards Heaven. They certainly cannot be called punctilious in fulfilling mitzvot.

Sukkot

Obtaining the Perfect Etrog - A Fruitful Endeavor

Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, zt”l, cherished mitzvot, but especially those that were seasonal.

When Sukkot came, he basked in the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah. All year long, he anticipated the mitzvah of taking the Four Species.

His son Rabbi Moshe Yosef, shlita, relates: In his last year, he spent Sukkot in the hospital. During the holiday, he lost consciousness. He finally regained consciousness on Isru Chag. “Father awoke and conveyed to us that he wished to take the Four Species. We explained that it was Isru Chag (when this mitzvah no longer applies). Instead, he asked that we help him don tefillin.”

Maran always scrutinized the *etrogim* he would use on Sukkot, making sure they were blemish-free and fit to use for the mitzvah of bringing glory to Hashem’s Name.

There was a special *segulah* in these *etrogim*: A woman who could not have children would receive a dish made of the *etrogim*. After making a blessing upon it, she would invariably have a child.

Supporting Torah

The Imrei Emet of Gur says the following: The *schach* of the sukkah hints to *talmidei chachamim*. This is why it must be free of anything that receives impurity. However, the walls, which allude to those who support Torah, need not be made only of pure materials. They may be made of things that receive impurity. They receive rectification by playing their part in upholding the sukkah.

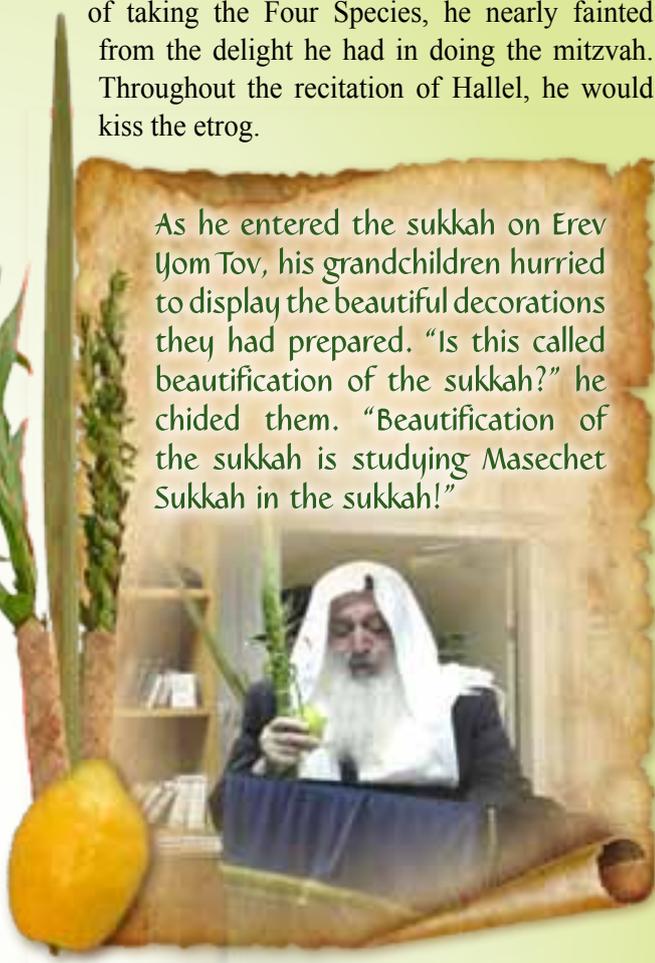
Occasion for Joy

Rabbi Moshe Bolbin relates that once, he had the only set of Four Species in the entire town. Of course, he brought them to the *gaon* Rabbi Shimon Shkop, zt”l, to use first. Afterward, the rest of the town took them for the mitzvah. Rabbi Shimon Shkop asked that he place them on the table when the people were done with them so that he could look at them throughout the day. When he saw

the Four Species, it infused him with the joy of the festival.

For Love of a Mitzvah

The *gaon* Rabbi Shmuel Shinover said the following about his teacher, Rabbi Shlomo Yehudah Leib Mi'Lentchna, zt"l: When he performed the mitzvah of taking the Four Species, he nearly fainted from the delight he had in doing the mitzvah. Throughout the recitation of Hallel, he would kiss the etrog.



As he entered the sukkah on Erev Yom Tov, his grandchildren hurried to display the beautiful decorations they had prepared. "Is this called beautification of the sukkah?" he chided them. "Beautification of the sukkah is studying *Masechet Sukkah* in the sukkah!"

A Sukkah of Love

Rabbi Yitzchak Mi'Letzan relates the following about the *gaon* Rabbi Chaim Leib Mi'Stavisk, zt"l: A visitor saw him get out of bed a number of times in the middle of the night, when he assumed his guest was asleep. He would enthusiastically kiss the walls of his sukkah. He hardly left his sukkah during the entire festival.

True Beauty

Rabbi Elchanan Halpern, shlita relates that his grandfather, Rabbi Shmuel Engel, zt"l would often tell the following regarding the Divrei Chaim of Sanz, zt"l: As he entered the sukkah on Erev Yom Tov, his grandchildren hurried to display the beautiful decorations they had prepared. "Is this called beautification of the sukkah?" he chided them. "Beautification of the sukkah is studying *Masechet Sukkah* in the sukkah!"

Simchat Torah

Morning, Noon, and Evening

Rabbi Meir of Primishlan, zt"l, was known to say that the *hakafot* are so powerful, that when the congregants circle the *bimah* with the Sefer Torah, one can abolish harsh decrees.

Rabbi Chaim Vital emphasizes (*Sha'ar Hakavanot*) that the custom of removing the *Sifrei Torah* from their places to dance with them around the *bimah*, during Shacharit, Minchah, and Ma'ariv, as well as Motza'ei Yom Tov, is a true one. He quotes the Arizal, who learns from the Zohar, that one should be mindful to circle the *bimah* with the Sefer Torah and sing in its honor with all his might. He would make sure to circle the *bimah* seven full times, aside from the *hakafot* of the day of Simchat Torah.

The custom of *hakafot* was especially dear to the Arizal, Rabbi Chaim Vital continues. "He would prance before the Sefer Torah and encircle it, with intense joy." He would go from one *beit kenesset* to another in order to fulfill this custom. It is said that the Arizal earned his exalted level of sanctity in merit of rejoicing in this mitzvah with all his might.

The Chida mentions Rabbi Chaim Vital's words in his sefer, *L'David Emet*: The *Sefer Hakavanot* says to make *hakafot* during Shacharit and Minchah, and again on Motza'ei Yom Tov. I have seen it mentioned in the name of the great Kabbalist, the Rashash, that he would make *hakafot* in his own *beit kenesset* after Ma'ariv on the night of Simchat Torah, again before Mussaf, during Minchah, and the eve of Motza'ei Yom Tov. He says there are many esoteric concepts behind this.

The Vilna Gaon, zt"l, danced in ecstasy before the Sefer Torah. His face shone like a fiery flame. He would clap and dance with every fiber of his being.

The author of *Yesod V'Shores Ha'Avodah* writes that whoever is meticulous in this matter is guaranteed that the Torah will remain in his family always. In the courts of

Ruzhin and Sadigura, they believe that during the hakafot, all the Sifrei Torah rise until the Throne of Glory. They encircle it and advocate on behalf of Am Yisrael.

Different Dances; Same Song

Many customs have evolved around the *bimah*. Rabbi Yichyeh Kapach, author of the sefer *Halichot Teiman*, writes that in Yemen, the number of *hakafot* can reach twenty. Children are brought into the *beit kenesset* from the tender age of six months.

They would take out all the Sifrei Torah. During the week, a light would be left on in the synagogue. In some *batei kenesset*, they removed eighteen or twenty-six Sifrei Torah, the *gematria* of the Name Hashem.

The Chida describes the *hakafot* in his sefer *Avodat Hakodesh*: A Sefer Torah was placed in the Aron Kodesh. A *yarei Shamayim* would hold onto it throughout the duration of the *hakafot*. The Rashash was very meticulous about this. The Rav and other esteemed members of the congregation would be honored with leading the first *hakafot*. The rest of the congregation would be honored with later ones.

They would kiss the Sifrei Torah which were carried by the congregants.

Everybody participated in this joyous event. Even youngsters below Bar Mitzvah age were allowed to carry a Sefer Torah. Of course, this was done under parental guidance. In some places, only Sifrei Nevi'im which were written on parchment were given to youngsters to hold.

In Eastern communities, it was the practice to throw candies and pastries at the dancers. Rabbi

Chaim Palagi, however, abolished this custom, as it could become dangerous. The sefer *Shulchan Hakriah* says that in Vilna one of the distinguished congregants would wear royal clothes of a previous era, with a majestic hat on his head. He would lead the dancers.

Dancing in Peace

Rabbi Chaim Palagi relates that some communities had the custom of postponing the *hakafot* from Simchat Torah to *Shabbat Bereishit*, in order to prevent disputes among the congregants. In his sefer *Beit Moed L'chol Chai*, he says: There are some *batei kenesset* that do not have

hakafot on the night of Simchat Torah,

because this

leads to

arguments

over who

gets which Sefer.

They therefore

conduct the *hakafot*

on *Shabbat Bereishit*.

This is the custom

of the congregations

in Portugal. Other

congregations have

taken their lead.

Rabbi Chaim

Palagi himself did

not condone this

practice. He advises

to use only one Sefer

Torah for *hakafot*.

The one who holds

it should be the

treasurer, *Chatan*

Torah, or *Chatan*

Bereishit. Another

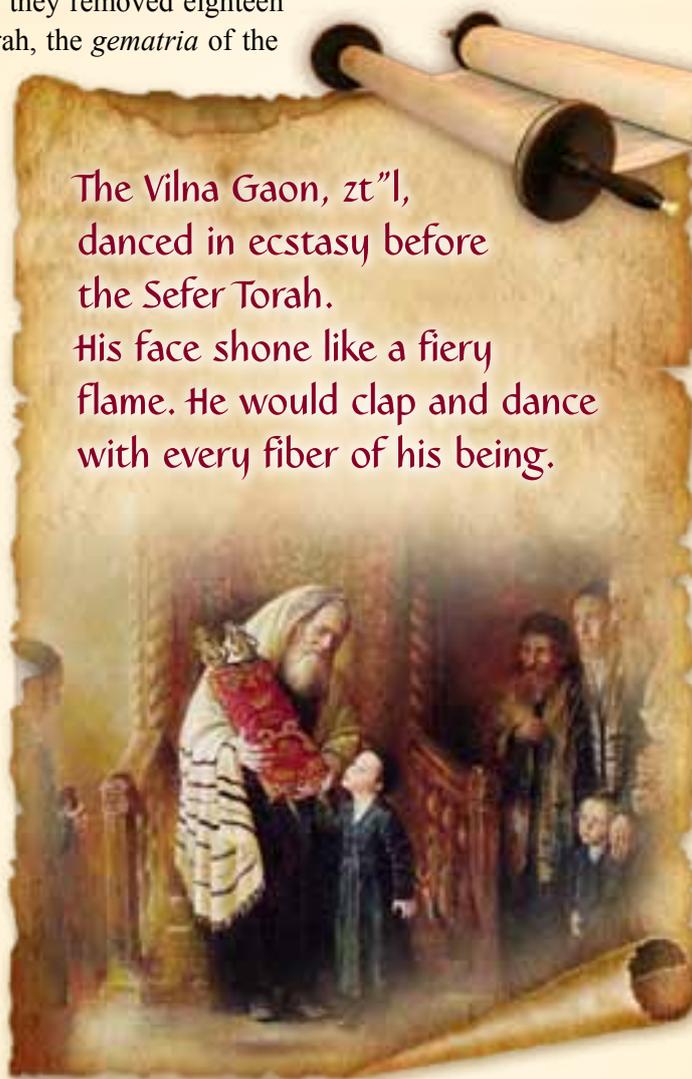
suggestion is to sell

the *hakafot*. Whoever

pledges the largest

donation merits holding the Sefer Torah.

An unusual custom, which the Torah Sages did not approve of, is mentioned in the sefer of Rabbi Avraham Chai Adati. He says it has no reliable source and should be abolished. These are his words, "In the village Maslata, a three-day journey from Tripoli, they blow the shofar at each *hakafah* on Simchat Torah."



With the approach
of the New Year,
We extend our greetings
and blessings to the Rabbanim
and avrechim and all those
who grace the courtyards
of our institutions,
To those who generously support
the institutions throughout the world,
To our dear friends, and to all Klal Yisrael.

May Hashem grant us a good New Year -
A year of blessing and success,
A year of redemption and salvation,
A year of good health and sustenance.

May we all be written in the Book
of the Righteous immediately,
for a good life and peace.

From the editors of Bechatzrot Hachaim



“The *beit kenesset* will not be opened until it is completely finished, down to the last detail,” Rabbi Chaim Korson announced, regarding the new synagogue opening in his home.

“Ohr Chaim U’Moshe” is the name proudly displayed on the sign at the entrance, inviting all those who wish to bask in the radiance of this majestic edifice.

Rabbi Chaim’s motto is, “Beautify the House of our G-d.” He maintains that a majestic *beit kenesset* brings glory to Hashem.

Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita, went to great lengths to attend the splendid *Chanukat Habayit* held in honor of this palace. He was extremely impressed with its grandeur and spoke about the obligation to fill it with the sound of Torah.

“Only Torah!” the Rav declared. Rabbi Chaim nodded in agreement. The impressive *Chanukat Habayit* of the center was attended by the Rabbanim of Mexico as well as distinguished Rabbanim from Eretz Yisrael.

There will be a Kollel Shishi (Friday Kollel) and Kollel Shabbat, as well as a daily morning *kollel*, followed by *shiurei Torah*. B’ezrat Hashem, a kollel to learn Choshen Mishpat will also be opened in the center. Currently, the directors are seeking a Rav to run the center.

In the Kollel Shishi, the Shabbat is welcomed by a study group comprised of *avrechim* alongside businessmen who cherish the Torah.

The sanctity of Shabbat extends to the Kollel Shabbat, in which the participants become sanctified together with the Shabbat.

Throughout Shabbat, *shiurei Torah* are delivered throughout the day of rest, for the wider public, who come in droves to soak up the atmosphere of holiness. A festive *seudah shelishit* is arranged, spiced

Mexico

AN EMPIRE OF TORAH



Ohr Chaim U'Moshe

Rabbi Chaim’s motto is, “Beautify the House of our G-d.” He maintains that a majestic *beit kenesset* brings glory to Hashem.

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with enriching Torah lectures.

During the week, the day begins with Tefillat Shacharit. After a short breakfast, a study session for the businessmen takes place. Before engaging in worldly pursuits, they earn a portion in the World to Come. This sets the tone for their entire day, steering it on the path of *halachah* and adherence to mitzvot.

The crowning glory of this empire is the daily *kollel* of *avrechim*. Several men delve into the intricacies of the Talmud, from 9:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

The sound of Torah doesn't fall silent. Minchah is at 8:00 p.m., followed by Ma'ariv. Afterward, there is a long stretch of Torah study in which *avrechim* learn together with businessmen.

"The sound of Torah resounds in our land!" Rabbi Chaim Korson proudly declares. And he has many more projects in mind.

Shaken by the Hand of Heaven

Over 120,000,000 people live in Mexico. The Jewish community is the third largest in Latin America, following Argentina and Brazil. The first Jews arrived there from Spain in 1519. To date, approximately 50,000 Jews call Mexico their home. Most of them are concentrated in the capital, Mexico City.

Many years ago, a terrible earthquake took place in Mexico. Thousands were killed and hundreds of thousands were injured. The site of the earthquake was a shopping center that held *shiurei Torah* in one of its offices. After the *shiur*, many people would stay for Minchah services.

After the terrible tragedy, the man who arranged the *shiurei Torah* approached the Rav, shlita. He reported that the earthquake had devastated the entire area, including the building where his office was located. However, his

office had miraculously remained intact.

Many people came to see this wonder with their own eyes. What a *kiddush Hashem*!

The Rav was extremely impressed by the dedication of the Mexican Jews to Torah. "There is no doubt in my mind that this office remained standing in merit of those Jews who closed their businesses midday, in order to hear *divrei Torah* and pray with a minyan. Their strength of spirit was absorbed by the very walls, keeping them standing even while the earth shook."

Taken for a Ride

The Rav has often noted the special *siyata di'Shemaya* that accompanies him on his visits to Mexico. He is also exceptionally touched by the unity of the people who love Torah and tradition. A strong bond has been forged between the Rav, shlita, and Rabbi Chaim Korson, the initiator of this wonderful *beit kenesset* and other special projects.

"Over twenty years ago, the Rav arrived in Mexico," Rabbi Chaim Korson reveals in a personal interview with Bechatzrot Hachaim. "Rabbi Moshe Gopez, who always designated a room in his house for Rabbi Pinto to receive people, was given priority to receive a blessing from the Rav, as well as the chance to ask his advice."

About eighteen years ago, Mrs. Gopez told her friend, Mrs. Korson, that the Rav would be staying at their home. Perhaps she would like to receive a blessing from him? The Korson couple came, asked for advice on personal matters, and received a blessing. Just as they were about to leave the room, the Rav called after them, "Beware of Moshe!"



Inauguration ceremony

Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita with Rabbi Chaim Korson and Rabbi Moshe Gopez, who both founded the community in Mexico



"I forgive him with all my heart. I even secretly thanked him for offering me the opportunity to withstand the challenge of obeying da'at Torah even when it is uncomfortable. One never loses out by seeking rabbinical advice."

"Who is Moshe?" they wondered. They decided to beware of a certain acquaintance with this name. However, the story doesn't end there.

The Korsons live in Mexico, but they also own a home in Monsey, N.Y. They spend their summer vacations there. Rabbi Chaim proudly announces that this home was in close proximity to Rabbi Kaminetzky and Rabbi Shwab, zt"l. He speaks with the air of one who knows how to choose the best neighborhood in town. His family spent two months every year in this idyllic location.

Wealthy individuals are afraid to drive in Mexico, due to the many kidnappings and other forms of violence. In contrast, Monsey is situated in the rural countryside, far from any such fears. Thus, Rabbi Chaim purchased a car to use during their vacations. His wife did not like the fact that such an opulent car was purchased for only two months a year. She asked her husband to try to sell it at the end of their vacation that year, which he did.

He put an advertisement in the newspaper and a fellow Jew came, tested the car, and said he wanted to buy it. "I am returning to Mexico tomorrow," Rabbi Chaim informed him. "You can pay my neighbor for the car. He will take care of the paperwork and make sure to transfer the money to me." About three weeks later, the man called up Rabbi Chaim to relate that he had the money for the car. Everything was taken care of, as pre-arranged.

Suddenly, a month and a half later, Rabbi Chaim got a phone call from the police. They impassively informed him that he had to appear in court in Monsey urgently.

When he got there, he was unceremoniously informed that they had placed a lien on his bank account, due to monies that had recently been deposited. He was shocked to hear this, explaining that he had just sold his car, and he showed them the papers to prove it.

The looks on the faces of the police somewhat softened. They understood that this man was not a criminal. They removed the lien, yet notified him that the money from the car was being confiscated.

"Why?" asked Rabbi Chaim, utterly baffled. He was even more shocked when he heard the reason:

"The man to whom you sold the car is a criminal. This kind of people use counterfeit money for large purchases."

He was told that his only choice was to open a file against this man at the police station. "If he will be caught," they explained, "it will help you get your money."

He opened a file and then returned home to Mexico.

During that time, the Rav, shlita, made a trip to Mexico. As was his custom, Rabbi Chaim came to ask for advice and receive a blessing. As soon as he walked into the room, however, the Rav preempted him with the grievance, "Why didn't you listen to me when I told you to beware of Moshe?!"

Rabbi Chaim was flustered by the Rav's outburst. "Suddenly, I remembered that the man who had bought the car from me was named Moshe."

After Rabbi Chaim calmed down, the Rav instructed him to cancel the complaint against "Moshe."

"If the police asks why I am

cancelling all charges, what should I tell them?"

"Tell them your Rabbi told you to do this," he emphatically replied. "Are you waiting for them to burn down your house?"

"To be truthful," Rabbi Korson reflects, "at that moment, I had an inner battle whether or not to obey the words of a Torah Sage. It was extremely difficult for me to approach the police and explain why I wanted to drop all charges. By doing this, I was effectively sealing the one chance I had of ever seeing my money. While I managed to clear myself of all connection with the underworld, I was placing myself under suspicion." Finally, he overcame his hesitations. He headed to the police in Monsey and filed a retraction.

As was expected, their suspicions were on high alert at this turn of events. They began investigating and inquiring why he was making such a seemingly foolish move. "I explained that my Rabbi told me to do this. I added

the Rav's rhetorical question regarding whether or not I wanted them to burn down my house."

A senior agent came to Rabbi Korson in secret and asked, "Who is your Rabbi, who told you to drop charges?"

"I admit that I was surprised at this question. Nevertheless, I replied that Rabbi David Chananyah Pinto is my mentor."

As if revealing a secret, the man turned to him and said, "You should know that I am also a Jew. I have nothing but admiration for your Rabbi, who is completely right. These people can become extremely violent and penalize those who dare oppose them. Their favorite form of vengeance is burning down houses."

The agent saw to it that all suspicions were removed from Rabbi Chaim. He lost a lot of money, but he obeyed the opinion of Torah, as expressed by its sages.

Approximately sixteen years passed. One day, the phone rang in

the Korson home. Mrs. Korson picked up and was asked, "Did you sell a car to a Moshe, about sixteen years ago?"

With rising suspicions, she validated the facts. The man said that Moshe had mended his ways and would very much like to return their money. In the next phone call, Rabbi Chaim was asked if he was planning a trip to New York in the near future. He said that yes, he was planning to attend a kosher food festival, scheduled to take place on such-and-such date. He even gave them the address of the Plaza Hotel, where he had booked a room.

"My son tried to dissuade me from going there," Rabbi Chaim confided. "He logically explained that I had little chance of getting the money from criminals. In the best case, this was a practical joke. In the worst case..."

Rabbi Chaim travelled to New York, as planned. On one of the days of the festival, he received a phone message: We are coming





to give you your money.” Rabbi Chaim waited in the hotel lobby. Suddenly, he noticed three rabbinic-looking figures heading his way. They removed the stash of cash and asked for only one thing: that he should sign that he received the money and completely forgive Moshe.

The kosher money switched hands. The signature was given. Rabbi Chaim had only one question: How was it that a criminal reconsidered and even sent Rabbanim to pay him, while asking forgiveness? Something didn’t make sense.

Rabbi Chaim sat back as he listened to the fascinating tale of a Jewish man who spent his life in fraud and deception, thievery, and trickery. Suddenly, his children became very sick. His finances took a downward turn. He understood that this was all a punishment for his dastardly deeds. He chose to do *teshuvah* and return all that he had stolen. “Please, we beg of you,” the rabbis asked Rabbi Korson, “forgive this

man wholeheartedly for all the anguish he has caused you.”

“I forgive him with all my heart. I even secretly thanked him for offering me the opportunity to withstand the challenge of obeying *da’at Torah* even when it is uncomfortable. One never loses out by seeking rabbinical advice.”

Mysterious Memento from Mexico

Rabbi Chaim Korson has a very special relationship with the Rav, shlita. He relates another fascinating story, which further solidifies their bond:

A certain young man once visited the Rav and left him a unique gift. It was a metal plate, shaped like a scroll, with his name engraved on it. The Rav took it from him and put it into a drawer. The Rav generally does not save gifts which people bestow upon him as tokens of their thanks, or any other souvenirs. Either he passes them on to others who could enjoy them, or he simply discards them. But every time he

took this plate out of the drawer and looked at the young man’s name, for some reason, he put it back.

For approximately eight years, whenever he thought of trashing it, he ended up keeping it. Why was he saving a piece of metal with someone’s name written on it? And especially since he had long forgotten what the boy looked like.

Moreover, whenever he did manage to throw it out, his secretary would invariably return it to his drawer, assuming he had deposited it in the wastebasket by mistake. Most mysteriously, this hunk of metal sat in his desk drawer for years on end, seemingly a keepsake of no worth.

Meanwhile, his daughter, Sara, reached marriageable age. Many *shidduch* prospects came in, but he discounted all of them, for various reasons. A delegation from Mexico once visited him, suggesting a very familiar name as a *shidduch* prospect. It was this very *bachur* from Argentina,



whose tablet sat in his drawer for the past eight years.

It was then that the Rav remembered the incident of a few years earlier. During the Purim feast, when he was in a most joyous state and slightly inebriated, his wife asked, "From where will Sara find her happiness? Will it come from France? From Eretz Yisrael?"

To which the Rav responded, "From Mexico."

"From Mexico?" his wife asked, aghast. "What is in Mexico?"

"I have no idea," the Rav replied, in all honesty. "That is what came out of my mouth."

Now, when these men came from Mexico, suggesting a match with an Argentinean, the story came to the Rav's mind. He shared the incident with his wife. "But you said her intended would come from Mexico, not Argentina. Did you perhaps make a mistake? Is this Sara's intended?"

"You are right," he replied. "This point is what is holding back the *shidduch*. On the other hand, I strongly feel Hashem's hand at work here. For eight years straight, I have kept a memento with this boy's name on it. Whenever I decided to get rid of it, for some reason, I put it back in the drawer. Maybe it is a Heavenly sign that this boy is Sara's intended. But, as you pointed out, he is not from Mexico. That is enough reason to nix it."

The Rav did not have to worry for too long. As soon as he confided his hesitations to Rabbi Korson, the latter settled the entire matter with one statement. "Honored Rav, the boy was born in Mexico! His parents moved to Argentina only later. He is the one referred to in your prophetic words that Sara would find a

shidduch from Mexico."

"Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good!" I declared. "May He be blessed. I have not been mistaken. *Baruch Hashem*, for He has led me in the right direction. This is His Divine intervention, leading my daughter to her truly intended."

The Rav's daughter married the young man from Mexico and merited establishing a fine Jewish home with him.

The Gift of Recovery

Rabbi Moshe Gopez of Mexico is another man who is extremely close to the Rav. He is very involved in supporting the Rav's institutions throughout the world, particularly in Mexico.

The Rav has stayed at his home on countless visits to Mexico. He always enjoys true hospitality there.

Regarding one of his visits, the Rav confided: "Rabbi Moshe is so special. He literally sacrificed himself on my behalf. He made every attempt to make my stay pleasant, all for pure intentions.

"Before leaving his home, I felt compelled to leave him a gift, in thanks for the wonderful *hachnasat orchim* which I was privileged to experience in his home. But what could I offer him? Anything I would give would be a drop in the bucket, nothing compared to the kindness I had received. I therefore turned to Hashem and asked Him to give me a good idea for how to repay my host.

That very night, I had a dream. Father, zy" a, appeared to me and said, "There is one invaluable gift which you can give your host. His daughter has developed a serious intestinal disorder. She



That very night, I had a dream. Father, zy" a, appeared to me and said, "There is one invaluable gift which you can give your host. His daughter has developed a serious intestinal disorder. She must be operated on immediately. But her father is not yet aware of this illness. Go and inform him about it, so that her life can be saved."



Within minutes, the entire batch of tzitzit had disappeared. The Rav blessed the audience that in merit of this precious mitzvah, Hashem would fulfill their hearts' desires.

must be operated on immediately. But her father is not yet aware of this illness. Go and inform him about it, so that her life can be saved.”

When I awoke in the morning, I clearly remembered my dream, but I was reluctant to reveal it to R' Gopez. Dreams are often figments of the imagination. Maybe it was just nonsense. I kept the entire matter to myself.

Later in the day, a meeting of Rabbanim took place at the home of R' Gopez. Suddenly, I felt a strong obligation to reveal my dream immediately. I realized that if it was discovered that the girl was deathly ill and I had kept this knowledge from them, I would never forgive myself. Even if it would turn out to be nothing at all, what did I have to lose? No harm would come from her father bringing her to the hospital on a false alarm.

I called aside R' Gopez and instructed him, “Bring your daughter immediately to the emergency room.” I then related the details of my dream. He heard the urgency in my voice, and hurried his daughter to the hospital. Approximately one hour later, he called me up. “Rabbi David!” he began, his voice laden with emotion. “Your dream was 100% true! Had I waited any longer, my daughter’s life would have been in grave danger! The doctors wheeled her into the operating room right away.”

The next morning, *Baruch Hashem*, the girl opened her eyes, and her father thanked me profusely. “Honored Rav,” he started, in a tear-choked voice, “you saved my daughter’s life. This is the greatest gift you could have given me.”

Proud to be a Jew

A warm heart beats within the Jews of this hot climate. Although many are distant from Torah Judaism, they feel an affinity to all things Jewish.

Jews have lived in Mexico for hundreds of years. Many of them fled to its welcoming shores from the Spanish Inquisition, when Mexico was a colony of Spain. In later times, Jews immigrated to Mexico from Eastern and Western Europe, a conglomeration of Sephardim and Ashkenazim who found a haven in this country.

It is not an easy thing to dwell in a land where the Catholic Church is in full power. Many Jewish identities have become obscured over time due to assimilation among the Marranos and their children. Nevertheless, the Rav constantly points out the warm Jewish heart that beats within the Jews of Mexico. On one occasion, he demonstrated this with the following story:

On a visit to Mexico, a group of Jews came to see me, sporting *kippot* in the traditional Jewish custom. But on Shabbat, I noticed that they were bare-headed. As they saw my surprise at their uncovered heads, they were filled with shame.

One of the men, seeing me approaching, suggested to his comrades that they turn back so as not to encounter me and confront my displeasure. But his friends, who did not know me, could not understand what the fuss was about.

As our paths crossed, I nonchalantly removed the *kippah* from under my hat and placed it upon the head of one of the men. This was my silent rebuke to him to be proud to be a Jew and never

feel ashamed by those who taunt him for it.

The young man bowed his head slightly and then lifted it. His eyes were full of thanks. He heard the message in my act and felt proud to be identified as a Jew.

Fringe Benefits of Tzitzit

On one of the Rav's trips to Mexico, Chevrat Rabbi Chaim Pinto organized a Shabbaton for the Jewish residents. With *siyata di'Shemaya*, all who attended experienced a Shabbat of exaltation and sanctity.

Whenever the Rav noticed that the congregants were in an especially happy frame of mind, he removed packages of tzitzit and announced, "Whoever wears tzitzit will merit success and blessing."

The Rav expected maybe one or two Jews to stand up to attain the mitzvah of tzitzit. To his great surprise, many people stood up, eager to undertake this wonderful mitzvah.

Within minutes, the entire batch of tzitzit had disappeared. The Rav blessed the audience that in merit of this precious mitzvah, Hashem would fulfill their hearts' desires.

A few days later, Rabbi Chaim Korson phoned the Rav. "An amazing miracle happened to me," he began. "It was in merit of the tzitzit that you distributed in Mexico."

"My friend's wife," he began, "is sitting in prison for neglecting taxes. She has many years of jail to look forward to. I suggested to my friend to undertake the mitzvah of tzitzit, to provide them with a merit for her release. I even offered him a pair from those the Rav had distributed on Shabbat in Mexico.

"At first, my friend refused to wear tzitzit. However, I insisted, saying that they were blessed by the Rav. The Rav's blessing always bears fruit. He finally relented and undertook to always wear tzitzit. He prayed that in this merit, his wife should be set free.

"Suddenly, his wife's lawyer called up to say that the judge was looking favorably upon her case and was interested in releasing her very soon. The lawyer could not explain the judge's decision, but called to let them know that he was releasing the woman from prison very shortly.

"What joy was in their household at that time! They thanked Hashem for His obvious miracles."

Rabbi Korson believes it is the merit of the tzitzit that saved his friend's wife from a lengthy prison sentence. When this man took the step of placing tzitzit on himself, Hashem allowed his wife to escape prison.

A Release of Faith

Rabbi Moshe Gopez, shlita, was once sitting shivah in Eretz Yisrael. The Rav, shlita, paid him a condolence call, even delivering a shiur in Mishnayot for the elevation of the deceased man's





He tripped over his words in his excitement while relating that the Rav's words had come true. During Shabbat, the level of security at the prison had somewhat slackened, and the abducted man snatched the opportunity to escape to home and safety.

soul. After Tefillat Ma'ariv, the Rav intended to travel to Yerushalayim. Mr. Yechezkel Ben-Moshe, manager of a branch of Bank Mizrahi, offered to drive him. His friend, Mr. Nachmani, from Mexico, joined them. He wanted to ask the Rav's advice regarding an issue he was dealing with.

During the course of the trip, Mr. Nachmani related that a relative in Mexico had been kidnapped. His captors had been holding him for the past month, demanding the astronomical sum of ten million dollars for his release. Due to the complicated situation, there was a real danger to his life.

After a few moments of thought, the following words came from the Rav's mouth, of their own accord, "*B'ezrat Hashem*, your relative will be released by the end of this week."

Mr. Yechezkel Ben-Moshe joined the Rav for a most uplifting Shabbat in Ashdod. After Shabbat, he packed up his belongings and turned on his cell phone, which had been off all Shabbat. Suddenly, a call came in from his friend, Mr. Nachmani. He tripped over his words in his excitement while relating that the Rav's words had come true. During Shabbat, the level of security at the prison had somewhat slackened, and the abducted man snatched the opportunity to escape to home and safety.

For Love of Torah

The following story was told by the Rav with great emotion. "This story justifies all the difficulties I undergo and exertions I invest in travelling to the most remote corners of the world, especially Mexico." A smile breaks out on

his face as he recalls the details.

In Mexico, a young man grew up far from a Torah lifestyle. On one occasion, he visited the Rav and they had an emotional discussion. The Rav somehow convinced him to learn in a yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. The boy spent two weeks in Bnei Brak, where he got his first taste of Torah study.

A year later, the Rav met this young man once again. The boy explained that although he wished to continue learning in a yeshiva, his parents were adamantly against it. They insisted that he take a college course and learn an honorable trade instead.

The Rav was touched by the boy's sincere desire to grow in Torah knowledge. He therefore set aside time to speak with his parents, trying to persuade them that it was in their son's best interest to broaden his Torah wisdom. After much persuasion, they finally relented. They agreed that he could learn in a yeshiva for a specified amount of time, after which he would pursue a degree.

The young man accepted his parents' condition and traveled to Eretz Yisrael to follow his heart's true desire. In the short time allotted to him, he threw himself into his learning. After this period of time passed, he approached the Rav and asked that he be allowed to continue studying Torah in a yeshiva.

"I knew the boy well and realized he had tremendous potential. He was destined to be a Torah genius. This is why I made the trip from Argentina to Mexico to speak with his parents once again and encourage them to allow him to continue in this pursuit."

The words emanating from the

Rav's warm heart entered the hearts of this boy's parents. Hashem enabled him to offer them words of inspiration which hit their mark. They eventually relinquished their dream of "their son, the doctor."

This boy made great progress in his Torah studies. In four years, he managed to cover material that it would ordinarily take a boy fifteen years to learn. He eventually married and established a fine Jewish home.

Many Torah Sages from Eretz Yisrael and around the world attended his wedding in Mexico. "At that time, I thanked Hakadosh Baruch Hu for allowing me to be the agent to help this young man advance spiritually," the Rav confided. "He successfully abandoned the pursuits of this world. With iron determination and a large dose of *siyata di'Shemaya*, he established Torah as his profession. He has attained great levels in Torah study and has become a true *ben Torah*."

No Way, José

A gentile Mexican boy went missing. His parents, middle-income people who worked in a factory, tried to find their lost child, but came up against a brick wall. The factory owner was a Jew who used to come to me for blessings and advice in the merit of my holy fathers. When I arrived in Mexico, four months after the boy had disappeared, the broken parents came to me, relating their sorry story. They said that in spite of all their efforts, they did not have a thread of a clue as to his whereabouts.

I asked them, "Did your son, by any chance, mention the city Acapulco before he disappeared? Did he ask to travel there?"

"No," was their definite answer.

"Did he smoke drugs?" I pressed onward.

To the best of their knowledge, he did not.

"Does he by any chance, have a friend named José?"

"We have no idea."

I instructed them to return home and pray to Hashem for their son's

safety, as they had been doing until now. I added, "G-d willing, you will return to me on Sunday, together with your son."

The parents were stunned by my words. They left my room with hope in their hearts. The very next day, their son called up from the bus stop. He had just arrived from Acapulco. He asked that they come to get him.

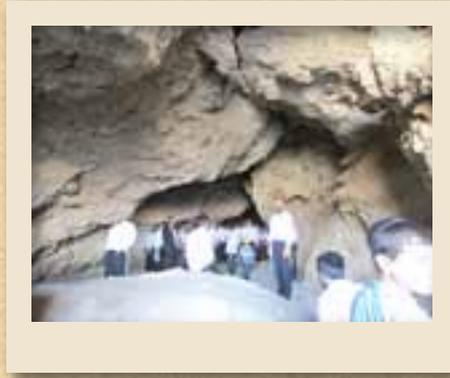
That Sunday, the three of them came to see me. Before he could open his mouth, I asked, "Who is José?"

He answered that it was an older youth who had gotten him involved in drugs.

I then turned to the father and warned him, "Make sure not to strike your son, because the next time he runs away, he won't come back!"

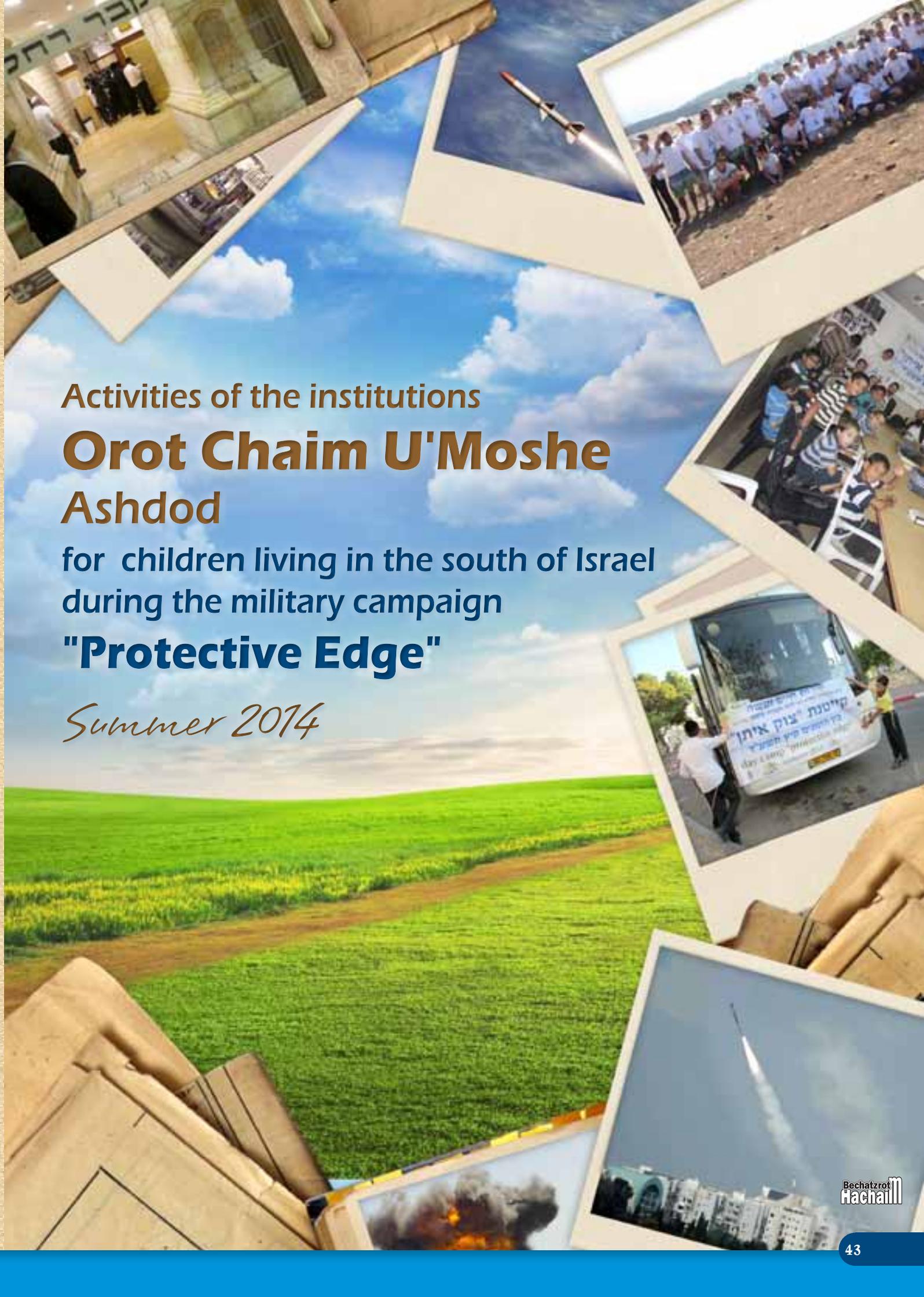
This story made waves throughout the entire city, resulting in a tremendous *kiddush Hashem*. Even the gentiles realized that Hashem performs wonders through His agents.





"In every generation, Hakadosh Baruch Hu saves us from their hands"





Activities of the institutions
Orot Chaim U'Moshe
Ashdod

for children living in the south of Israel
during the military campaign

"Protective Edge"

Summer 2014

SCENES FROM MARSEILLE

OPENING OF THE CENTER CHASDEI DAVID



HARAV YOSEF ELKOUBY



For many years, Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita, has regularly visited Marseille to increase Torah learning in the city and guide its members on the path of Torah. During these years, a very strong and unique connection has been forged between the kehillah and the Pinto family, with the Rav at its head.





Marseille, the second largest city in France. It boasts the second largest Jewish *kehillah* in France.

For many years, Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto**, shlita, has regularly visited Marseille to increase Torah learning in the city and guide its members on the path of Torah. During these years, a very strong and unique connection has been forged between the *kehillah* and the Pinto family, with the Rav at its head. The Rav himself has on many occasions described the mutual feelings of closeness between himself and the community in Marseille.

For thirty-five years, the community has pleaded with the Rav, shlita, to establish a Torah institution in memory of the holy tzaddik, Rabbi **Chaim Pinto**, zy" a. Now, to the great joy of so many people who have thirsted to establish their own spiritual foundations under the Rav's direction, the time

has finally arrived! In the Eighth District (Paradise Road), Moreinu has opened the center "**Chasdei David.**"

Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto**, shlita, has established a Beit Midrash that has quickly been filled with Torah activities throughout the day. These begin early in the morning with Shacharit, and last late into the night with a night *kollel*. The day itself is replete with Torah lectures.

The center caters for all sectors of the community, and all ages. Every Sunday, which is the official holiday from school, classes are given for children in the "**Talmud Torah.**" Those who participate are given snacks and are rewarded with prizes and candies.

Each night during the week, there are interesting lectures for "*ba'alei batim,*" as well as a night



kollel. A variety of Torah-based activities is included for special occasions, such as on Rosh Chodesh and before the festivals.

The center is open every day, including Shabbat. Each Shabbat there is a special class given for the youth, from three till eight, explaining different topics of Gemara according to the level of the attendees.

The directors of the institution have plans to fill the Beit Midrash with even more Torah. *B'ezrat Hashem*, in the near future, they intend to open a full-day *kollel* for *avrechim*.

There is great anticipation for such a *kollel*, which will augment the activities of the center and enable all those who enter its gates to enjoy constant Torah study, throughout the day.

Surely the blessing and success of this center is due to the presence and influence of the righteous members of **Family Pinto**, says Yoel Marciano, a resident of the city and one of the main organizers of events in the community. He continues:

We are full of praise and thanks to Hashem for this spiritual center, for which we have waited for so many years. It is a tremendous pleasure to see the Beit Midrash filled with *avrechim*, who have merited immersing themselves in the depths of Torah and filling themselves with the words of Abaye and Rava, sitting side by side with the youth, who have now, due to these *avrechim*, merited experiencing the pleasures of Torah, returning to the tradition of their forefathers, and sometimes even to the essence of being a Jew.

They sit together, *bnei Torah* dressed in traditional

garb, shoulder to shoulder with young men whose *kippot* are perched on top of a shock of hair, or a haircut that denotes that they have only recently come to this place. The sweetness of such a sight is obvious to all. The enjoyment of Torah connects and unites these very different people into one cohesive unit – a unit where all differences are blurred.

We extend our gratitude to all those who have helped, and continue to help, this beautiful center to open and thrive. May Hashem bless them and their families, and ensure their success in all their endeavors.

We would like to extend special thanks to Rav **Yaakov Mattout** and Rav **Aharon Mattout**, for their constant and continued efforts in increasing the splendor of the Torah and thereby the honor of Hashem. We wish them continued success and blessing.

Yoel Marciano relates a wonderful story concerning the establishment of the spiritual center in Marseille:

I moved to this area, the Eighth District, a short while ago. Many Jews live here. One day, I noticed a sign announcing that the long-term rights of rental of a certain property were for sale. I thought this would be a wonderful place to establish a center for Torah and *tefillah* and phoned to find out details about it. I heard that the rights of this property belonged to a brother and sister who were not Jewish. I asked how much money they were asking. The answer was 400,000 euro. This seemed an inflated sum to me, but I phoned Rabbi **Rephael Pinto**, shlita, to ask what he thought. He agreed that it was too expensive, and that we did not have a way to get this amount of money.

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replied, "There should be good tidings."

After a short while, in a truly fantastic way and without any natural explanation, the owner informed us, "I will give you the rights of rental for free!"

Words cannot describe the wonderful miracle that we witnessed in this event. This surely took place in the merit of the holy tzaddik Rabbi **Chaim Pinto**, zy" a, in whose honor and memory the Beit Keneset

was established. Without a doubt, it was through the blessing of Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita, that in the city of



The weeks passed, and I saw that the property was still available. I phoned again to ask the price and was told a slightly smaller sum than previously. But it was still a large amount, and we did not know how we could raise the money for it.



I turned to Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto**, shlita, and explained the situation to him. The Rav listened attentively to what I had to say, clarifying all the details, and

Marseille this Beit Knesset was founded, which is a spiritual center for the community and will, *B'ezrat Hashem*, continue to influence the entire city for years to come.





TO THE HOLY ONES BURIED IN THE EARTH

Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita, on a trip to pray for the community and the individual at the graves of the tzaddikim in the Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Poland





MAY THE MERIT OF OUR FOREFATHERS PROTECT US

May the Eternal One of Israel redeem us and raise us from the pit of exile to serve Him eternally in the House of Hashem



TO THE HOLY ONES BURIED IN THE EARTH

Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, shlita, on a trip to pray
for the community and the individual



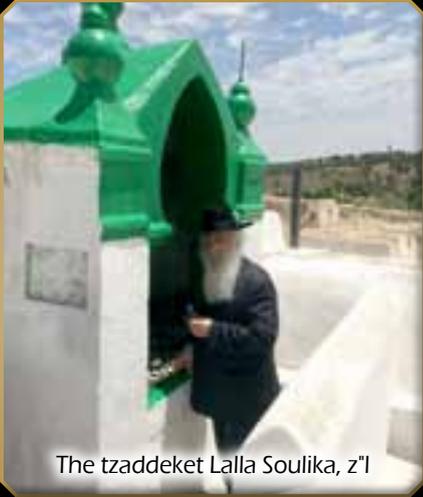
Tzaddikim of the Tsarfati family, zt"l



Rabbi Shmuel Elbaz, zt"l



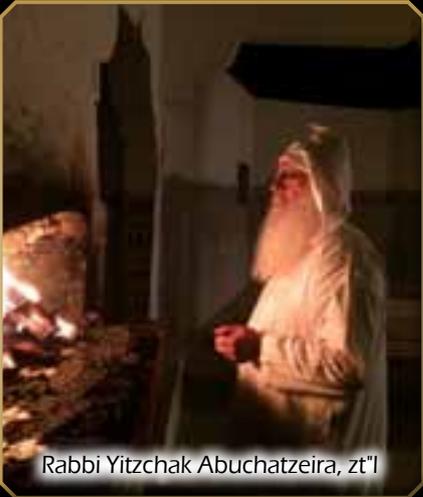
Rabbi Vidal Hatsarfati



The tzaddeket Lalla Soulika, z"l



Rabbi Yehuda ben Attar, zt"l



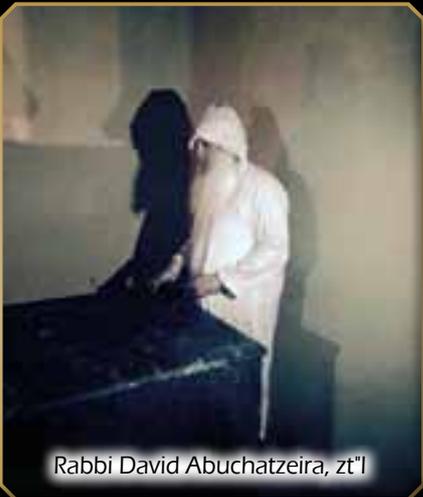
Rabbi Yitzchak Abuchatzeira, zt"l



The cemetery in Fez



Rabbi David Abuchatzeira, zt"l



Rabbi David Abuchatzeira, zt"l

In the Tents of the Tzaddikim



*The hilula
of Rabbi Moshe
Aharon Pinto,
zyl'a*



*Moreinu
at the grave of
Rabbi Yehyeh Charfi,
zkl"l, and his wife,
Marat Mamach
Charfi, z"l*



In the Tents of the Tzaddikim



*Inauguration
of the new Jewish
school in Cordoba,
Argentina*



*Moreinu
v' Rabbeinu
visiting the community
Chevat Pinto,
Argentina*



In the Tents of the Tzaddikim



*The hilula
of Rabbi Chaim
Pinto, zy"o,
Morocco*



In the Gents of the Tzaddikim



*Bein
Hazmanim
Orot Chaim
U'Moshe,
Ashdod*



*Distribution
of Kimcha d'Pischa,
Orot Chaim
U'Moshe,
Ashdod*



In the Tents of the Tzaddikim



Distribution of the sefer "Pachad David" in Yeshivat Ore Goraah



Siyum of Masechet Ketubot in the Night Kollel of Peninei David, Jerusalem



Moreinu v'Rabbeinu visiting the gaon Harav Kanievsky, shlita, and the gaon Harav Steinman, shlita



זה השער לה'
צדיקים יבואו בו

*This Is the Gate of Hashem
the Righteous Shall Enter through It*



"The Temple was built of intact stone"

The Institutions of Mikdash & David

*Simulation of the building that will be built,
b'siyata di'Shemaya, in "Ma'ar" Ashdod South*