

# The Jewish Weekly

In Loving memory of  
**Mendy Klein**  
 ר' מנחם משה ז"ל  
 בן ר' נפתלי הירצקא  
 נפטר ל"ג בעומר  
 י"ח אייר תשע"ח  
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## The Secret Sage

By Rabbi Benyamin Adilman

Rabbi Avraham Mattisyahu of Shtefanesht was known for his miraculous powers. Wherever he went, he was followed by thousands of onlookers, both Jews and non-Jews. On his annual visit to Bucharest, the capital of Romania, all the shops and businesses were closed as tens of thousands lined the streets to welcome him.

Despite his fame, the Shtefaneshter was considered one of the true hidden tzadikim of his generation. In his eighty five years, he never once recited words of Torah publicly and there is not even one Torah thought that can be said in his name. He sat and learned in his private study, and whilst he was doing so, he strictly forbade anyone to enter the room. Every day when he finished, he carefully replaced the books on their shelves, leaving no indication that they had been used.

Only on one occasion was the Rebbe caught with a holy book in his hands. Once, late at night, a fire broke out in the Rebbe's house and the flames gave off a thick heavy smoke which spread throughout the building. When the Shtefaneshter didn't emerge from his quarters, one of the household members opened the door to the Rebbe's private study. The Rebbe was sitting deeply engrossed in a small book. The fumes and soot had totally blackened the whole room including the Rebbe's face and clothes.

The Rebbe however remained totally oblivious to everything around him, and only after the intruder told him about the fire did he look up from his book. As they left the room, his attendant looked to see what the Rebbe had been learning. He saw that it was Sefer Raziel HaMalach, which is one of the most difficult kabbala tomes and is understood only by the greatest kabbalists.

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Indeed, the Shtefaneshter's total immersion in his Divine Service, his study and prayer, was truly more amazing than all his wonders. He once went out to the courtyard of his house with a minyan in order to sanctify the new moon. In the field just across the road a large division of tanks had gathered in preparation of a training exercise. The commanding officer had forgotten to warn the local population of the exercise. Suddenly, while the Rebbe was in the middle of Kiddush Levana (the prayer for blessing the new moon), the tanks started to fire right over their heads. The chassidim, who had been quite unaware of the neighboring tanks, ran for their lives. The tremendous noise and the streaks of fire made them flee in panic in every direction. The Rebbe, however, remained rooted to the spot as if he hadn't heard anything. He carried on his prayer without even lifting his head from his siddur!

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The introductory passages of the Shacharit [morning prayer] took him over an hour. The chassidim sat and studied until the Rebbe was ready for Baruch Sh'amar [after which prayer there can be no more talking]. After many hours, at around midday, he finished Shacharit and then his attendants brought him his solitary meal of the day. The Shtefaneshter would taste just a few spoonfuls and this would suffice him until the next day. His shirayim (leftovers) were distributed to his chassidim who told of the many miracles brought about through them.

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On one occasion a chassid came to the Shtefaneshter Rebbe, crying that his daughter had fallen ill with typhus and was in a desperate condition. Her hours were numbered and only a miracle could save her. The Rebbe gave the chassid his personal spoon, which he used every morning to eat breakfast, and a piece of his bread, and told the chassid to feed the bread to his daughter with the spoon. Although the girl couldn't swallow and hadn't eaten anything in days, she readily consumed the Rebbe's shirayim, and a few days later she was back to herself. She lived to a ripe old age; the spoon, handed down from generation to generation, is until today a family heirloom.

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Despite his fame the Shtefaneshter was the epitome of humility and regarded himself as a simple ordinary person. A Jew who had several elderly daughters to marry off came crying for help. He pleaded, "Since the Rebbe is the most righteous one of the generation and our sages say, "The tzadik decrees and G-d fulfills," I beg that the Rebbe promise me that this year I will marry off all my daughters."

When the Rebbe heard himself being labeled as the most righteous one of the generation, he exclaimed, "What are you saying, that I am the Tzadik Hador? Do you know what it means to be the Tzadik Hador?"

The chassid, who was no fool, realized that he was about to ruin everything with his flattering terminology, and answered, "Even if the Rebbe is not the Tzaddik Hador, he surely knows who is, therefore I'll give my petition note to the Rebbe and he should hand it over to the Tzaddik Hador."

The Rebbe was pleased with the chassid's new wording, for such was his way, to explain away his miracles as if they had nothing to do with him. Taking the Jew's hand in his own, the Rebbe blessed him: "The Al-mighty should help you to marry off all your daughters this year." This blessing was completely fulfilled.

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Although the Rebbe was surrounded on all sides by the simple and the ignorant, in Shtefanesht there were also a large number of chassidim at a highly advanced spiritual level. These were people who cut themselves off totally from the outside world and devoted themselves to Divine Service. They lived in the Rebbe's court and many of them stayed for months or years at a time, during which the Rebbe worried for their food and lodgings.

One of the most famous of these chassidim was Rabbi Chaim Zanvil Abramovitz, who became famed as the holy tzadik, the Ribnitzer Rebbe. The Rebbe said that Rabbi Chaim Zanvil was the end product of all his efforts; the chidush (innovation) he had worked so hard to create. Like his Rebbe, the Ribnitzer was also famed for his miraculous powers and prophetic like divine insight.

Another of these elite chassidim was Rabbi Eliezer Zusha Portugal, who later became famous as the Skulener Rebbe, known for his extensive deeds of kindness and Holocaust rescue activities, as well as his unusually lengthy and intensive prayers, similar to his Rebbe. He too merited much special attention from the Shtefaneshter, who regarded him very highly.

When news of his passing became known on the 21st of Tammuz 5693 (1933), people fainted in the streets. The crown and glory of Romania had left them. In 1969 the Shtefaneshter's holy remains (which were still as whole and fresh as the day he died!) were transferred to Nachlas Yitzchok in Tel Aviv, where his grave is still a noted prayer site for thousands of Jews.

Reprinted from [www.nishmas.org](http://www.nishmas.org).

Editor's Note: Rabbi Avraham Mattisyahu Friedman of Shtefanesht ז"ל's, 87<sup>th</sup> Yahrzeit is Monday, 21st Tammuz – July 13th of this year

## It Once Happened..

### Handle with Care

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

It was early in the summer of 5503 (1743) and Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar was on his deathbed, in Jerusalem. The best doctors had been called in to treat him, but to no avail. In a short while he would leave this world. His wife approached the bed. With tear-swollen eyes, she cried, "When you leave me, I will be all alone in the world. Who will support me? What will become of me?"

Gathering his last bit of strength, he whispered to her: "Do not fear, I will not allow you to starve. After my passing, a rich man will, come to you from Constantinople (Istanbul) to buy my tefillin. You may sell them to him, but you must warn him that he should guard their sanctity very carefully. When he puts them on, he should not take his mind off of them, and not speak even the slightest mundane conversation."

After the Shloshim [30-day mourning period], a wealthy merchant from Constantinople appeared in Jerusalem, seeking directions to the home of the Ohr HaChaim, as he was known. "Please sell me the tefillin your saintly husband prayed with," he begged Rabbi Chaim's widow upon his arrival. "I'll give you 300 ducats [golden pounds] for them."

"I can sell them to you," she replied, "only if you will treat them with the utmost sanctity." She then delivered the details of her husband's warning. The man agreed, accepting the tefillin with extreme reverence.

Arriving home, the man indeed treated the tefillin with extreme care and sanctity, never taking his mind off them while he had them on - even for a moment. And from the time he began to wear these tefillin, he experienced an arousal of holiness he never had before. The prayers left his mouth with fervor and great feeling.

One day, the wealthy man was in the main beit midrash (study center) in Constantinople, praying with these special tefillin on. Suddenly, one of his young attendants entered and started pestering him with questions related to his business. At first, the man did not react, but continued to pray. But the lad would not relent, and, unable to restrain himself, the man finally answered the question, sharply.

He immediately returned to his prayers, but the words came out clipped and garbled. The special feelings of holiness that he had previously felt had also disappeared. As soon as he realized this, he felt greatly disturbed, but could not pinpoint the cause of the loss. He certainly did not attribute the change to that one sharp word he had spoken. He innocently thought that perhaps a problem had arisen with one of the letters in the tefillin, and decided to take them to a sofer (professional scribe) for an examination.

When the sofer opened the tefillin boxes, he and the wealthy man were astounded at what they saw. The parchment of the tefillin was completely blank - all the letters had flown away!

Reprinted from an email of [KabbalaOnline.org](http://KabbalaOnline.org).

Editor's Note: the Ohr HaChaim - Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar ז"ל's, 277<sup>th</sup> Yahrzeit was last Tuesday, 15th Tammuz – July 7th of this year



## GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Pinchas

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	7:12	8:29	9:04
Tel Aviv	7:27	8:32	
Haifa	7:20	8:33	
Be'er Sheva	7:28	8:30	



### The Shabbat of Missed Opportunity By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Once during his travels, Rabbi Aharon of Karlin arrived at the town of Zarowitz close to the Shabbat. He saw a small cottage situated on the edge of the town and he knocked on the door, hoping to find some hospitality there. A small woman opened the door and listened to his request to remain there for the Shabbat. "You are welcome to stay," she replied simply, "my husband, will be home soon," and she ushered him into the house.

As soon as he set his foot inside the door, Rabbi Aharon felt himself enveloped by an overwhelming sense of holiness, and he realized that there must be something unique about the occupants of this house. R. Aharon prepared himself for the Shabbat and was about to go out the door to the synagogue when he met Reb Yitzchak, the owner of the house, just returning from his workday. The man was dressed in simple peasant garb, and there was nothing to distinguish him from any other worker. He introduced himself as Yitzchak and greeted his guest warmly, but his features disguised any emotion.

Aharon of Karlin was accustomed to celebrate the Shabbat with enthusiastic singing and prayers, and he followed his usual rituals. His host, however, rushed quickly through the prayers, hurriedly said kiddush over the wine and then sat down to eat his simple meal. But even in this plain food, R. Aharon could detect an undeniable holiness, although he couldn't figure out what it stemmed from. He studied the man and woman, but there was nothing special about anything they said or did that would set them apart from any of ten thousand other poor Jews.

When the Shabbat ended R. Aharon thanked his host and hostess and continued on his journey, the mystery unsolved.

The following week, a woman turned up in the Study Hall of the nearby city of Premishlan and spoke to the members of the local burial society requesting that they come with her. "Please come with me to Zarowitz now, for my husband is dying and he has asked that you be with him in his last moments."

The men immediately followed her to her home, but when they entered the house, her husband wasn't even there. "What is this, some kind of joke? Have you brought us all this way for nothing?"

"No, of course not, gentlemen," she replied. "My husband is on his way and will be here shortly."

Shortly after, her husband walked through the door, holding a bunch of straw. He spread the straw on the floor and laid down upon it, on his back. Then he began speaking to the burial society officials:

"My friends, it is now time for me to leave this world. I have lived a secret life as a hidden tzadik (perfectly righteous person) all my life, but the time has come for me to reveal myself. The moment that I die, go with all speed to Premishlan and bring back as many scribes as you can gather. Have them bring pens and paper, for here they will copy over my secret writings. This must be done while I am still lying here on the ground, before I am buried. Watch me, and when you see a change in my face, all writing must cease at once."

R. Yitzchak finished speaking, closed his eyes, and for a moment his face burned like a fire. Then, his lips which had been moving in silent prayer became still, and he was gone.

Scores of scribes were hurriedly brought to the cottage where the tzadik lay. Each one was given a leaf of paper to copy and they raced against time to complete their holy task. The officials' eyes were fixed on the face of the tzadik, looking for any change. Suddenly, the face lost all of its color and the box which contained his writings mysteriously closed by itself. The scratching of pens stopped abruptly, and preparations were quickly begun to ready Yitzchak the tzadik for burial.

When Rabbi Aharon of Karlin heard of the death of the tzadik and the circumstances which surrounded it, his heart was filled with bitter regret. What wondrous Torah secrets he might have learned from the deceased! He went to pay his respects to the widow and perhaps to glean some bit of knowledge from her husband's secret life.

"Well, there's nothing I can really tell you," she said. "I'm sorry, but my husband wouldn't permit it."

R. Aharon was bitterly disappointed. He wished her comfort, among all the mourners of Zion, and turned to leave. But just as he reached the door, the widow called out to him, "Wait, there's one small thing I can show you. Do you see those candlesticks there on the shelf? Well, from the day I married until the day my husband died, the candles that were lit in them burned constantly, all by themselves."

Rabbi Aharon left the cottage deep in reflection. The wondrous accomplishments of the hidden tzadik would remain one of G-d's many secrets, perhaps to be divulged only by Mashiach, himself.

*Reprinted from an email from KabbalaOnline.org.*

I heard from the Chief Rabbi of England and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis that, great leaders are not irreplaceable. They ensure that they will be replaced by the best possible person. This was the hallmark of the greatest of all of our leaders – Moshe Rabbeinu.

In Parashat Pinchas, Hashem informs Moshe that he is just about to pass away. Moshe expresses no remorse. He doesn't wallow in self-pity, even though he will not be achieving his lifelong aspiration to enter into the Holy Land. What is his response? Moshe says, "יפקוד ה' אלוקי הרוחות לכל בשר – May the Lord, the God of the spirits of every person, appoint a leader over the community."

Moshe's only consideration was, who was going to succeed him and he went about ensuring that the mantle of leadership will be passed over from him to his successor during his lifetime. And how does Moshe describe Hashem in this context? It is a description for the Almighty we do not find anywhere else. "ה' אלוקי הרוחות לכל בשר" – God of the spirits of every person."

You see, Moshe recognized in Hashem the fact that He is the Creator. He is the Master of the entire universe and at the same time He cares about every single person.

Similarly, Moshe is saying, the type of leader I would like to be succeeded by, is someone who will lead the nation at global level but would also be a person who cares about every single individual within that nation.

Here we find the attribute that is necessary for a truly great leader. It is not just a national leader, it could be an organizational leader or the chairman of a shul. They have to worry about the entire community, the direction that the whole community is moving in and, at the same time, they need to have genuine care for every single person who makes up that community.

We have a fascinating blessing to be recited on rare occasions. When you see more than six hundred thousand Jewish people, we say, "ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם חכם הרומים – Blessed is the Lord, the God of the entire universe Who has the knowledge of the secrets of every person."

When seeing such a vast crowd of people, one would have thought that the blessing is over the huge group of people, but instead the blessing mentions the fact that Hashem knows the secrets in the minds of each person. What is most important in that large gathering is every single individual. That is exactly what Moshe identified as being the characteristic of a great leader – to lead the nation and also to care for every single person.

So therefore, here in our Parshah, we have one great leader, passing on the mantle to another great leader and yet again the Torah shows the way.

So let's try to love every individual for who they are and let's pray with all our hearts, for the recovery of all the sick from this crazy pandemic, as well as praying for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, and those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, sweet and happy Shabbat.

*Yossi*

## פנחס

This week has been sponsored by Shmuel and Dina Halpern In memory of his mother פראדל בת ר' מרדכי ע"ה A Holocaust survivor Whose first Yahrzeit was ט' תמוז

And in memory of her parents ר' מרדכי בן ר' יעקב יצחק ורחנה בת ר' יואב מיכאל and her five brothers יואב מיכאל, אברהם לייב, משה שמעון, חיים אליה ויונה murdered in Auschwitz and who's yahrzeit is י"ז בתמוז May all their Neshamot have Aliyot

## The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 6  
MITZVOT ASEH: 6  
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 168  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1887  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7853

HAFTORA: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3 Divrei Yirmiyahu (The three Haftorot of the three weeks preceding the Ninth of Av, are called the — לשלש דפורענותא — the "Three (Haftorot) of Punishment").

This week we study Chapter 1 (Diaspora and some in Israel study chapter 6) of Pirkei Avot