

Fascinating INSIGHTS

יה' אייר תשפ"א
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EXCITING NEWS: I am happy to announce that the book **Incredible Insights** is available for purchase and delivery at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/Bo8VCH8Z7T> where you can also see the reviews. It can also be bought from the author by sending an email to yalt3285@gmail.com. The essays contained in this book, written from a Torah outlook, deal with a wide array of assorted topics that are unique, inspiring, interesting, thought-provoking, encouraging, enlightening, and transformational. The book includes Haskamos from R' Shmuel Kamenetsky, R' Yisroel Reisman, R' Moshe Wolfson, R' Yitzchak Breitowitz, R' Zev Leff and R' Yitzchak Scheiner. Over the last number of years these insights have inspired thousands around the world, in more than forty countries. This read is for all ages. It has something for everyone, for beginners and scholars, and students and teachers. It makes a great gift for friends, relatives, business associates, and learning partners. Please spread the word about it.

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Inconceivable Integrity

Many people are afraid to say they don't know. R' Dovid Gottlieb would describe how the Bostoner Rebbe responded "I don't know" to each of his initial questions. Rather than be put off, he was intrigued by his Rebbe's honesty.

The following account was related by R' Yonah Merzbach¹ (1900–1980) who was a rebbe at Yeshivas Kol Torah at the time. In 1949, the co-founder² and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Kol Torah,³ R' Yechiel Michel⁴

¹ He was former rabbi of Darmstadt, Germany, and chief editor of the Talmudic Encyclopedia.

² He founded along with R' Baruch Kunstadt (1884-1967) who was a dayan in Fulda, Germany from 1907-1939 and director of Chevras Shas.

³ It was the first mainstream Charedi yeshiva to teach in Hebrew, as opposed to Yiddish, as was accepted at the time (Those against the Hebrew language would spell it עוורת instead of עברית, meaning to say a blind language as this is what עור

Schlesinger⁵ (1898-1949) passed away. The staff now had to search for someone suitable to fill that role. Three candidates were chosen. They each presented a shiur in front of the students and staff of the yeshiva in order to see who would be most fitting for the position. The first two candidates were impressive with the shiur they gave. The third contestant was delivering his shiur when a boy in the audience asked a question that refuted his entire thesis. Realizing his theory was refuted, he expressed his gratitude for the opportunity and then stepped down from the podium in order to exit the premises. When he entered his house, his wife eagerly asked him how it went. She desperately wanted him to get this position since they needed the money to feed their ten children and her husband's kollel stipend wasn't nearly enough. He related what happened and said further that really he had three answers for the questions the boy asked. And although the audience would have been impressed, the truth was that the question was valid and my answers weren't. And so I didn't reply with any answers. As for parnassa, Hashem has many ways to send us." In the end, the staff (who were unaware that he had three potential answers that he didn't say) hired this candidate because that lesson of stepping down from the podium, which

means). This innovation had the crucial support of the Chazon Ish.

⁴ Originally, R' Schlesinger wanted to call the yeshiva, "Kol Yaakov" based on the pasuk *Hakol kol Yaakov v'hayadaim yedai Eisav* (Breishis 27:22). However, at that time in Yerushalayim, there was another group that chose the name Kol Yaakov. To avoid any conflict, he changed the name to "Kol Torah."

⁵ He learned in the Slabodka and Mir yeshiva. After marriage while he was in Ponevezh, R' Yechiel Michel trained to become a *dayan*, doing *shimush* in the *beis din* of the Ponevezher Rav. He was called to serve as a *dayan* on the Frankfurt *beis din*, and as the head of Rav Breuer's Yeshiva there. When he decided to escape the Holocaust by fleeing Germany he was offered the prestigious position of Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaas Yeshiva in New York. However, he preferred to move to Eretz Yisroel, because there it was not compulsory to teach children secular studies. Additionally in Eretz Yisroel, unlike in the Diaspora, there was no concept of "Sunday," which has idolatrous connotations to it. His rav from the Galanta Yeshiva, R' Dushinsky who had already settled in Eretz Yisroel, also ruled that he should move there. R' Schlesinger's aspiration was to establish a yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel for German boys who had moved to Eretz Yisroel. R' Schlesinger managed to escape the German inferno together with his wife and children on the morning after Kristallnacht, the 11th of Cheshvan in 1938. A chain of miraculous events, during which R' Yechiel Michel hid in the floor of a rented taxi, led them to Switzerland, where the rav's brother-in-law, R' Yechiel Guggenheim, was waiting for him. As soon as he reached Yerushalayim, a few days after Pesach in 1939, at the beginning of the summer *zman*, he founded the Kol Torah Yeshiva in Yerushalayim, setting a clear Torah path for German Jewry in particular, and for immigrants from Western Europe and members of the new *yishuv* in general. His wife gave him the remainder of her father's dowry to use for the boys in the yeshiva, and helped him with the day-to-day needs of the boys, many of whom were refugees from war-torn Europe. She also helped him by recruiting funds for the establishment and continued existence of the yeshiva. After his death, the Rebbetzin felt a duty to continue her husband's work and, after consulting with the Chazon Ish, she traveled to chutz la'aretz to recruit funds for maintaining the yeshiva. This was done without taking any remuneration for herself, thus following her husband's example during his lifetime. Additionally, she also devoted herself to raising her eight children on her own, of which the youngest was just six weeks old).

was embarrassing, was a powerful lesson in truth. This is the type of educator they wanted for the yeshiva. This candidate was the famed R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach who led the yeshiva for 46 years!

Shabbos Zemiros

Part of the Shabbos experience is the singing of Zemiros.⁶ Where does this come from?

The Gemara tells us that on Shabbos we eat, drink, say Torah and say words of praise to Hashem.⁷ The Zohar⁸ says ושיריה וחדוה, on Shabbos we must arouse song and joy. Singing Zemiros is shown in the words of the Shir Shel Yom of Shabbos: מזמור שיר ליום השבת, טוב להודות לה' ולזמר לשמך עליון, a song for the Shabbos day, it is good to thank Hashem and to sing praise to Your name.⁹

The Sefer Chassidim writes that Shabbos is Bracha as it says ויברך אלהים את יום השביעי¹⁰, Hashem blessed the seventh day. Where do we see that Bracha refers to Zemiros? When Iyov cursed the day of his birth, he said אל תבא רננה בו, may no joyful song come onto it.¹¹ Consequently, we see that one should sing songs and praises to Hashem on Shabbos (since Shabbos is Bracha, the opposite of curse).¹²

What is the nature of the various Zemiros and what about those who authored them? The Yismach Moshe¹³ tells us Zemiros that became widespread by the Jewish people were revealed with Ruach Hakodesh. The Sefer Taamai Haminhagim¹⁴ brings from the Sar Shalom of Belz that those that have a נשמה כללית, collective Neshama, their פיוטים were accepted by the Jewish people. Those who have a פרטיות, their poems didn't spread.

⁶ Shabbos is strongly connected to song as is shown in the following: 1) We sing Zemiros. 2) Some welcome Shabbos in Shabbos with Shir Hashirim, song of songs. 3) In Kabbalas Shabbos we say מזמור לדוד, מזמור שירי לה', מזמור שירי לה'. Then we sing Lecha Dodi followed by מזמור שיר ליום השבת. 4) The Pesukai Dzimra on Shabbos is longer. 5) The Shir Shel Yom of Shabbos is מזמור שיר ליום השבת.

⁷ Megila 12b.

⁸ Eikev, p. 272b. The Ohr Zarua (2:95) writes from רבינו יוסף טוב עולם that Zemiros on Motzai Shabbos shows honor to Shabbos just like those who escort a king with happiness and song (Also see Siddur Rashi 534).

⁹ Tehillim 92:1,2. Sefer Chassidim 271, 409. The Midrash (Midrash Tehillim, שוחר טוב, 92:3) says that when Shabbos enters we receive it with song—שירה וזמרה.

¹⁰ Breishis 2:3.

¹¹ Iyov 3:6.

¹² Sefer Chassidim 1147. Tosafos (Sanhedrin 37a, Tosafos s.v. מכנף) quotes that each of the six wings of the Malachim (Yeshaya 6:2) is designated to sing Shira to Hashem on one of the six days of the week. Concerning Shabbos, Hashem says I have a wing on earth that sings to me today. The Ohr Zarua (Hilchos Shabbos 42:4) writes that our sages have established special songs in honor of Shabbos since Hashem doesn't listen to the songs and praises of the Malachim on Shabbos as He prefers to listen only to the songs of the Jewish people.

¹³ Vzot Habracha.

¹⁴ P. 273.

What do we accomplish with our Zemiros? The word זמירות means to prune as in תזמור.¹⁵ As a gardener prunes his trees, thereby removing the inferior branches for the purpose of improving the fruit-bearing ability of the superior ones so too our emotional, joyous recitation of the Zemiros is designed to remove the impure barriers separating us and Hashem and liberate the soul from the weekday to its Shabbos dimension. Let us conclude with the amazing words of R' Yaakov Emdin:¹⁶ “The words of Shabbos Zemiros are taken from Pesukim of Tanach, Halachos, Shas, Zohar and Midrashim regarding Shabbos. One who says them brings good to the world. Hashem attaches Himself to him and listens to his voice. He is pleased and sustains the world so that it doesn't become destroyed.”

Experience This!

It has been said regarding the Simcha of Lag Ba'omer that מי שלא ראה שמחה זו לא ראה שמחה מימיו, one who hasn't seen this Simcha, has never seen Simcha in his life.¹⁷ The Bnei Yissoschar¹⁸ writes that ...the Simcha on this day by the Tziun of R' Shimon Bar Yochai is above nature. We are left to wonder why the first 32 days of Sefira we mourn for those who died and on the 33rd day—Lag Ba'omer—we celebrate? The question is also asked concerning other Tzadikim that died where we don't celebrate their Yartzheit like R' Shimon Bar Yochai?

During the first 32 days of Sefira, when the students of R' Akiva died, their Torah was also lost, as we don't have any of it. Consequently, we mourn. However, when R' Shimon Bar Yochai passed away, secrets of Torah were¹⁹ revealed.²⁰ What does it say about his Torah? דנהיר כל עלמא באורייתא—²¹ R' Shimon lit up the world with his Torah. That is a cause for celebration.²²

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the books, Fascinating Insights and Incredible Insights. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹⁵ Vayikra 25:4. See the Menoras Hamaor (חלק א, פרק ג) that songs are called מזמורים as it is related to תזמור, don't prune, as the Zemiros we say prior to davening removes the stumbling blocks and sins. When our Tefilos come before Hashem, it can be heard and accepted.

¹⁶ Siddur Yaavetz, Seuda Rishona, s.v. כל. See Shir Hashirim Rabba 8.

¹⁷ Taamai Haminhagim, p. 275. There is a custom to learn Mesachta Shavuot, which has 49 pages, during Sefira—which has 49 days. The Chassam Sofer tells us a fascinating hint: since a Mesachta starts on ב (the second page), the 34th page is what is learned on the 33rd day—Lag Ba'omer. What does it say there? R' Shimon says... מחכו עלה במערבא. This alludes to the celebration that takes place in Eretz Yisrael (במערבא) on Lag Ba'omer (Taamai Haminhagim, pp. 271-2).

¹⁸ Iyar 3:3.

¹⁹ Regarding other Tzadikim that died where we don't celebrate their Yartzheit like R' Shimon Bar Yochai, we didn't lose their Torah with their death but we also didn't gain, like we did with R' Shimon Bar Yochai.

²⁰ This is consistent with the words of R' Shimon elsewhere ה"ו שתשתכח תורה מישראל, G-d forbid that the Torah be forgotten from us (Shabbos 138b).

²¹ Zohar 1, 156a.

²² See the Munkatcher Rebbe in his Sefer Shaar Yissaschar, Maamarei Chodesh Iyar, Maamar Gal Einai, Os 23.