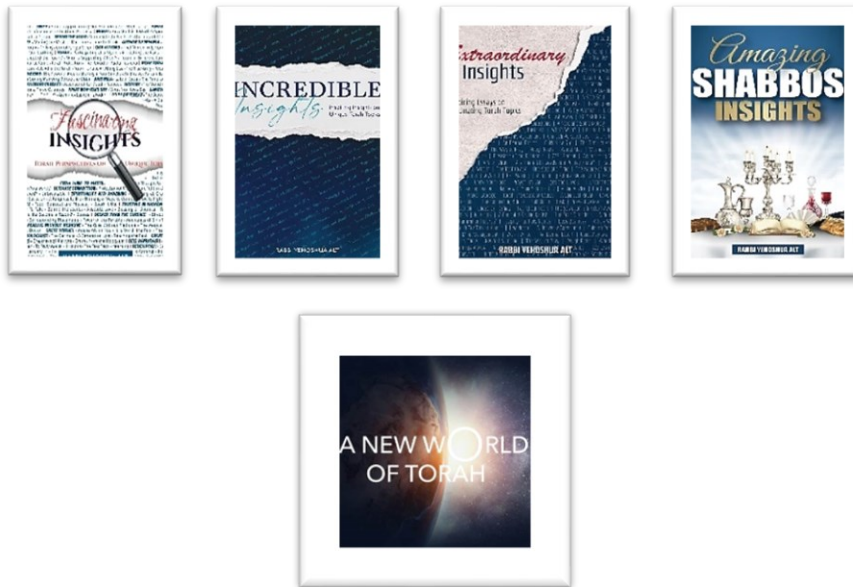


Fascinating INSIGHTS

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[A Martyrs Death](#)

With the yahrtzeit of R' Shlomo Malcho this week (5th of Teves), let us discuss this great person. R' Shlomo Malcho (1500-1532) was raised as a Catholic under the name Diego Perez (He descended from Marranos which were the Spanish and Portuguese Jews that were forced to accept Christianity but continued to observe the Torah in secret). At age 12 he was appointed to serve as secretary at the royal court of King Manuel I in Lisbon, Portugal. Unfulfilled in Christianity, Diego Perez searched for his Jewish roots. He ended up learning Kabbalah from R' Taitatzak in Salonica and became friendly with R' Yosef Karo.

After his time in Salonica and Tzfas, R' Shlomo returned to Europe with Messianic visions. He exhorted the Jews of Europe to do teshuva and many Marranos

returned to religion through his impassioned speeches. Even high-ranking Catholic clergy members were inspired by his fiery sermons in which he prophesized that the Tiber river would overflow its banks and that an earthquake would shake Portugal. On October 8, 1530, the Tiber River overflowed causing great havoc in Rome and on January 26, 1531, Portugal was shaken by an earthquake as he had foretold.

After being reported to the authorities as being a Christian apostate rather than a Jew from the east, R' Shlomo was imprisoned by the inquisition. Through the intervention of the Pope, he was freed and told to escape to safety. However, R' Shlomo continued his mission, appearing before Charles V the Roman Emperor. This time he was imprisoned and told to choose between converting or being burned at the stake. He answered that he bitterly

regretted having spent his youth as a Christian and that he was now prepared to return his soul to his Maker as a proud Jew. He sanctified Hashem's name and was burned at the stake at the young age of 32 years old on the 5th of Teves in 1532. Not only was he a martyr but he became the paragon of Jewish martyrdom of his age. R' Yosef Karo expresses his wish to die by sanctifying Hashem's name as did the holy Shlomo Malcho.¹

Two of R' Shlomo's Kabbalistic works have been published — Sefer Ha'mefoar and Chayas Kaneh. In Hilchos Tzitzis, the Magen Avraham² cites the custom of R' Shlomo Malcho of having the number of wrappings that total the numerical value of the Hashem's name ה-ו-ה-ו, namely 26. R' Shlomo also had his tzitzis strings dyed green. In his commentary on the Rosh, the Tosafos Yom Tov cites this tradition in the name of R' Shlomo Malcho. He then mentions that he saw R' Shlomo Malcho's tzitzis with his own eyes on display in the Pinchas Shul of Prague where he would study before he was appointed Av Beis Din.



The cloak of Rav Shlomo Malcho, on display at the Jewish museum in Prague.

Valiant Vessel

The question has been asked that if Hashem provides us with what we need, why can't a person just open a small bodega and expect to support his growing family with that income? The answer is because according to nature, he won't earn enough money to support his family. It is akin to asking Hashem for a miracle. We trust that Hashem will provide — but naturally, not miraculously. To earn a respectable salary, it is imperative for a person to have the proper conduit.

Someone once came to the Satmar Rebbe and asked for bracha for parnassa so that he can support his large family. When the Rebbe asked the man what he does for a living, the man replied that he was a taxi driver. The Rebbe told him that in that case his bracha will not help. "You need to be a receptacle for the bracha. To sustain a large family, you need a nice amount of income which doesn't come from being a taxi driver. The bracha has no place to take effect." For a person to earn a large sum of money to sustain his family, he needs to put himself in a position where he can do³ that.⁴

In the saga of Elisha and the widow, he tells her to borrow empty vessels and fill them with oil. She fills up vessels with oil until there were no more vessels. Elisha then tells her to sell the oil and pay her creditor and that she and her sons will live on the remainder.⁵ So when there

were no more vessels, the oil stopped — אין עוד כלי ויעמד השמן.



The story is told of a fisherman who went to catch all types of fish. The large fish he caught, he threw back into the ocean while the small fish he kept. The man who accompanied him was astounded by his practice and questioned him about this. The fisherman told him that the reason he only keeps the small fish while ejecting the large fish was because his bucket wasn't big enough to contain the large fish. This idea can be applied to livelihood: if a person desires a certain amount of wealth, then he must make his bucket large enough; he needs to find work that will put him in the position of making that wealth.

Filling a Need

נער הייתי גם זקנתי ולא ראיתי צדיק נעזב וזרעו מבקש לכם, I was a youth and also old and I have not seen a righteous man forsaken nor his children begging for bread.⁶ From taking a glance at the world this doesn't seem to be the case. How are we to understand this pasuk?

There are people that see issues and continue on with their lives while there are others that act upon it. They see a gap that needs to be filled. They start schools, gemachs, programs and organizations. It is in this way that we can understand the pasuk: I was young and also old and I never just watched and stood by as a righteous man was hungry and his children didn't have bread to eat. I acted upon it and filled the necessary need.

The personification of this idea is shown to us in how Hatzalah came about. How was Hatzalah started? In 1969, after a prominent member of the Chassidic Jewish community had a heart attack and died while waiting for an ambulance to arrive, R' Herschel Weber as a response decided to start his own volunteer-run ambulance service which he named Hatzalah. It started with a few volunteers in Williamsburg, Brooklyn that carried oxygen tanks and first aid kits. They had minimal training but maximum motivation. Today, Hatzalah organizations function in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Israel, Mexico, Panama, Russia, South Africa, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Ukraine in addition to ten different US states.

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 four books including the recently released Amazing Shabbos Insights. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, 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.

¹ Maggid Masharim, p. 362.

² Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 11:22.

³ Of course we must realize that hishtadlus is only a smokescreen for the miracle we call parnassa.

⁴ It may be that he would need to acquire a skill or a degree.

⁵ Melachim 2, 4:1-7.

⁶ Tehillim 37:25.