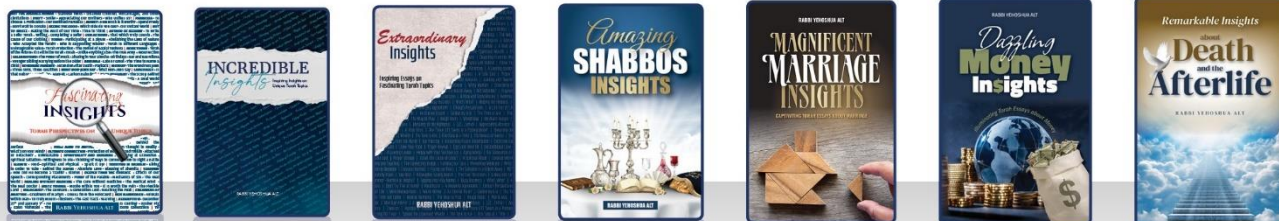


# Fascinating INSIGHTS

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לעילוי נשמת הירש בן שלמה ומנחם מענדיל בן יוסף מאיר

## Avoiding Arguments

The son-in-law of the Noda B'yehuda (1713-1793), known as R' Yosef Hatzadik,<sup>1</sup> was asked by R' Yisrael Yonah Landau<sup>2</sup> the following: There was a stunning *chazzan* for the Yamim Noraim who was a morally low person. Although the people appreciated his voice, the Rav knew he was morally low. He therefore felt that he needed to make an uproar because how could they have such a *chazzan* for the Yamim Noraim. R' Yosef Hatzadik answered him in a letter ...מוטב שיעמוד צלם בהיכל. **it is better to set up an idol in the sanctuary than for there to be a machlokes amongst the Jewish people.**

How do we say hello? With the word שלום. This same word is also how we say goodbye. This is because even if we disagree it is all within the context of peace, that we love each other.<sup>3</sup>

The Satmar Rebbe<sup>4</sup> (1887-1979) vehemently disagreed with others yet he gave them *tzedakah* because in essence he loved them.<sup>5</sup> The argument was within the context of peace.<sup>6</sup>

We see this with other great people such as R' Ovadia Yosef who refers to R' Elyashuv as ידידנו, our friend,<sup>7</sup> even though the styles of these two greats differed significantly.

<sup>1</sup> The Noda B'yehuda (1713-1793) wrote about this son-in-law, "Whenever I think of you, my entire body quakes and shakes from כבוד for you."

<sup>2</sup> R' Yisrael Yonah Landau, who passed away in 1824, belonged to a well-known rabbinical family. In his youth he was Av Beis Din of Lubomil and from 1786 served in Kempen.

<sup>3</sup> At times one may enter Shul and see someone in his seat which may cause feelings of hostility. One shouldn't be disturbed by this and as the saying goes, "It is better to sit in front and think why am I not in the back than to sit in the back and think why am I not in the front." In this way we can grasp מקומו את המכיר, knowing one's place, as one shouldn't be so particular with where he sits (Avos 6:6).

<sup>4</sup> It may come as a surprise to some but the Satmar Rebbe, who was especially known to be against the State of Israel, fasted for the six days of the Six-day War (he ate at night) and davened constantly during that period that the Jewish soldiers not get injured or killed.

<sup>5</sup> The saying goes, "We agree to disagree."

<sup>6</sup> The Gemara (Yevamos 14b) says that despite disagreements, Beis Shamai didn't refrain from marrying the women of Beis Hillel nor Beis Hillel of Beis Shamai.

<sup>7</sup> Yabia Omer volume 10, Even Ha'ezer 14. R' Shalom Messas (1909-2003) was the Chief Rabbi in Morocco. Even non-Jews there respected him, most notably King Hassan the Second. The King consulted with him on all matters of the government. Twice a year, R' Messas would be summoned to the King's palace to bestow upon the King his blessings. When R' Messas would bless the monarch in events at the Royal Palace, the King would bow down. In 1978, then Israel-Chief Rabbi R' Ovadia Yosef asked R' Messas to come to Yerushalayim and become its Chief Sephardic Rabbinical authority. When he left for Eretz Yisrael R' Messas was escorted to the airport by King Hassan himself who requested that R'

Despite the seriousness and intensity of the clash between R' Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld and R' Kook regarding the Zionists, the dispute never invaded the personal realm, and each displayed his high regard for the other. Even at the height of the dispute, whenever R' Yosef Chaim and R' Kook would meet at a bris or wedding, they would engage each other in friendly conversation.

When R' Gifter was considering closing his Yeshiva, the Lubavitcher Rebbe<sup>8</sup> sent a messenger to R' Gifter, who opposed Chabad.<sup>9</sup> The message was that if he wants to close the Yeshiva because of financial reasons, he should rather leave it open and the Lubavitcher Rebbe will take full responsibility for the finances.<sup>10</sup>



There were two Chassidische Rebbes that were involved in a *machlokes*.<sup>11</sup> When one of the Rebbes passed away, his son made peace with the other Rebbe. When his Chassidim asked how he could make peace with the other Rebbe if his father didn't, he answered, "I don't have the Torah or Tefillah of my father. Should I also hold on to the *machlokes* of his?!"

When R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz spoke about divisions that had plagued the Jewish people in the past,<sup>12</sup> he would mention the following parable. There was a wealthy man who lived an opulent lifestyle with two sons-in-law, one who ate no meat and the other ate no dairy. For many years, the rich man fed them both in his house according to their tastes. One sat at one table with his family eating meat and the other sat at a second table with his family eating dairy. Eventually the father-in-law<sup>13</sup> lost

Messas bless him one last time before his departure. That became his last official act in Morocco.



<sup>8</sup> In the Telz Yeshiva in Telz, Lithuania, they, including R' Gifter, learned Tanya.

<sup>9</sup> R' Gifter did consider, though, that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was from the Gedolai Hador.

<sup>10</sup> Heard from R' Gifter's son, R' Zalman.

<sup>11</sup> R' Yitzchak Friedman (1850–1917), also known as the Pachad Yitzchak, was the eldest son of R' Avraham Yaakov Friedman (1820–1883), the first Sadigura Rebbe. Upon the death of his father in 1883, R' Yitzchak and his younger brother R' Yisrael (1852–1907) assumed joint leadership of their father's Chassidim. Such a thing was rare, that following their father's passing they led the dynasty together. Included in this was leading the *tisch* together. Although they were content with this arrangement, many of the Sadigura Chassidim preferred to have one Rebbe, and in 1887, the brothers agreed to draw lots to determine who would stay in Sadigura and who would move out. The lots fell to R' Yisrael to remain as the second Sadigura Rebbe, while R' Yitzchak moved to the neighboring town of Boyan and established his court there, becoming the first Boyaner Rebbe. Under this arrangement, R' Yitzchak assumed the mantle of *nasi* of kollel Vohlyn in Eretz Yisrael, and with it the merit of lighting the fire in Meiron on Lag Baomer as well as the Tiferes Yisrael shul in the Old City of Yerushalayim.

his fortune and served the whole family bread and potatoes. He told his sons-in-law, "Now that I can't afford meat or dairy delicacies,' why sit at separate tables?" Similarly today, said R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, we lack the greatness, the scholarship, the zeal and the intensity of those from earlier times — we have neither meat nor dairy — so there is no point eating at separate tables.<sup>14</sup>



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### Pearl Harbor Lesson

A person should be so busy with good deeds that he has no time for sin.<sup>15</sup> A person who is busy learning Torah, davening, performing acts of kindness<sup>16</sup> and the like doesn't have time to sin.<sup>17</sup>

Concerning the many cases of mental illnesses today that require psychiatric help, an elderly man once commented that when he was younger "We were too busy making a living to be crazy!"

There was a 17-year-old who worked aboard a ship at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. On the infamous day of December 7, 1941, following the Japanese attack, this boy rescued numerous people throughout the night. The next day he grappled with intense trauma, reliving the harrowing events. Seeking guidance, he confided in a mentor who questioned, "If you are struggling now, how did you manage to save so many lives on December 7<sup>th</sup>?" The boy explained that he was so busy aiding others that he didn't have time to think. His mentor then suggested, "Why don't you continue to help people?" The boy then enrolled in a Paramedics course and dedicated his time to rescue efforts. This is what kept him going.<sup>18</sup>

Rabbi Alt mentored to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nicheemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of six books including the recently released Dazzling Mosaic 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 [Shemot 1, 27:2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

<sup>12</sup> It has been said concerning the Jewish people, "Many times we don't always like each other, but we always love each other."

<sup>13</sup> Tangentially, the Zohar (Naso) tells us that a son-in-law, with his learning Torah and good deeds, causes a spiritual elevation to his father-in-law in the עולם העליון, higher world.

<sup>14</sup> The Jacobs family moved into a new building and soon discovered that the Cohen family who lived on the floor above them and the Goldstein family who lived below them were not on talking terms for twenty years. One week the Cohen family was making a kidush for their granddaughter. Mrs. Jacobs decided that she was going to buy two platters to give them. One would be from her and the other would be on behalf of the Goldstein's. She called Mrs. Goldstein and told her that she would give the Cohen family a platter with a nice note on their behalf. And so Mrs. Jacobs purchased a stunning platter and gave it to Mrs. Cohen along with the note. Upon receiving it, Mrs. Cohen was dumbfounded. Mrs. Cohen then scooted over to the Goldstein's to show her gratitude and invite them to the kidush. And they indeed came. Look at the power of one gesture!

<sup>15</sup> The Kotsker Rebbe told his Chassidim that their sins didn't bother him as much as that they had time to sin. He would say, "I don't expect my Chassidim to have the fortitude not to sin. I expect them not to have time to sin."

<sup>16</sup> There is a saying, "Everyone wants to live on top of the mountain but all the happiness and growth occurs while you are climbing it."

<sup>17</sup> There is an expression, "Idle hands are the devil's playground."

<sup>18</sup> Of course seeking professional help for trauma is essential. This story just emphasizes the importance of engaging in meaningful activities.