



AT THE ARTSCROLL YOM TOV TABLE

WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

PROJECT DEDICATED BY MENACHEM AND BINAH BRAUNSTEIN AND FAMILY
L'ILLUI NISHMAS RAV MOSHE BEN RAV YISSOCHOR BERISH AND MARAS YENTA BAS YISROEL CHAIM

SUCCOS

CRIES THAT TEAR THE HEAVENS

Rav Mattisyahu by Avrohom Birnbaum

For many years, the Salomons would go to Manchester to spend Succos with Rav Mattisyahu's parents-in-law, R' and Mrs. Avrohom Tzvi Falk. The Falks took such pride in their illustrious son-in-law and daughter, and, indeed, the Manchester community reveled in his presence. During Succos and Hoshana Rabba, he would address the community, and people from all over town would flock to hear his *shmuessen*. Rav Mattisyahu greatly valued the *ehrllichkeit* of his parents-in-law and showed them tremendous respect and love.

After the passing of the Rebbetzin's parents, the Salomons began spending Succos in Gateshead, at home.

And what a *simchah* it was!

In general, the Salomon home was very simple, and luxuries were eschewed, with one exception: mitzvos. For Succos in particular, Rav Mattisyahu insisted on one luxury that he deemed an absolute necessity: the luxury of a large succah!

In order to achieve that goal, the Salomons built an annex onto the back of their home to house a large, expansive succah. The Mashgiach invested hours and hours of time and extensive effort into making that succah perfect.

It was with heartfelt care and devotion that each decoration was placed. It was with a mindful calculation that *gedolim* pictures were selected and hung. The aesthetics were important. The Mashgiach himself lovingly hung up many of the decorations.

When it was finally complete and Yom Tov arrived, Rav Mattisyahu was filled with pure delight.

Just the sight of Rav Mattisyahu sitting in his succah, simply reveling in the pleasure of fulfilling such a precious mitzvah, gave insight into the definition of a true love of mitzvos.

During Succos, the family would learn a *perek* of Mishnah from *Maseches Succah* together at each *seudah*, and during Rosh Hashanah it was a *perek* of *Maseches Rosh Hashanah*. Small Mishnah booklets would be distributed, and Rav Mattisyahu would ask one of his sons or sons-in-law to learn the *mishnayos* out loud.

His *dalet minim* on Succos were like his baby. The way he reverently held them! The way he would caress them!

He would tell the person selling the *arba'ah minim*, "I will pay you for your time." In this way, he could spend all the time he needed, unhurriedly picking the *dalet minim*.

The time and care he invested in finding the perfect *esrog* were

a sign of the *chashivus* he attached to the mitzvah. He exerted great effort to find the greenest, straightest, nicest *lulav*. Every *hadas* and every *aravah* were meticulously, slowly, and carefully chosen with love, and that was just the beginning.

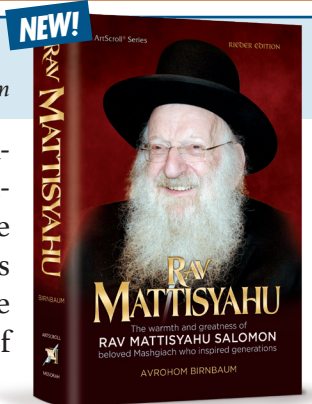
Then it came time to put them together. His face shone with an ethereal light and *simchah* as he lovingly, slowly, and carefully bound them together. Even the simple act of placing the

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R' Mattisyahu Salomon

**OY! THE SIMCHAH IN THE
SALOMON HOME WHEN
RAV MATTISYAHU CAME
HOME WITH HIS ESROG!**



lulav in the bathtub so it would remain fresh was done with a glowing face.

Money, too, was never an issue when it came to mitzvos. The Mashgiach was far from a wealthy man, but when it came to mitzvos, there was virtually no price that was too much.

Rav Mattisyahu so loved and valued holding the lulav and esrog that he didn't want to relinquish even one minute. His son R' Meir recalls, "when I was growing up, it was not customary for children to possess their own set. They would just use their father's. But my father? My father simply couldn't bear to part with even one moment of the joy of the mitzvah so my father had a simple solution".

"He got all his children their own set!"

Rav Mattisyahu so loved and valued holding the *lulav*

Oy! The *simchah* in the Salomon home when Rav Mattisyahu came home with his *esrog*! The very *esrog* that he had spent hours upon hours searching for.

One year, the Mashgiach found a particularly beautiful *esrog*, so beautiful that it filled him with even greater joy. Like every other year, the Mashgiach's children, despite having their own *esrogim*, came to their father's home after *davening* to have the opportunity of also using the beautiful *esrog* belonging to their father.

But this time, their eager anticipation turned to surprise. When they came to their father, they saw that instead of the *mehudar*, magnificent *esrog*, he was using a P'eylim *esrog*. (P'eylim, an outreach organization in Eretz Yisrael, sent the

Mashgiach an *esrog* every year.)

They couldn't contain their shock! Why was their father using this *esrog*? True, it was *mehudar* and it was beautiful, but it wasn't anything close to the level of *hiddur* of the *esrog* he had chosen!

"What happened?" one son asked. "Why are you using this simple *esrog*? What happened to the beautiful *esrog* that you worked so hard on finding and paid so much money to buy?"

"There is a *bachur* here who



THE MASHGIACH SPENT HOURS MAKING THE SUKKAH PERFECT



came from out of town. He doesn't have an *esrog*, so I let him borrow mine," the Mashgiach explained. "When I picked up the *esrog* after he returned it, the *pitom* was off, so I asked someone to fetch the P'eylim one from home."

End of conversation.

It was a mishap that *passeled* his *esrog*, but it did not in any way diminish his enthusiasm and *chavivus* for the mitzvah.

"What was amazing to me," commented his son, "was that it didn't matter that he had invested heart and soul into picking the best *esrog*, and it meant so much to him to find and have a *mehudar esrog*, but the mishap didn't faze him or upset him at all. He took the P'eylim *esrog* and shook it with the same love for the mitzvah as if it had been the *esrog* that he had so carefully chosen!"

"Even more amazing was the fact that the *bachur* himself never knew what had happened. The Mashgiach didn't breathe a word to him, nor did he say anything to the Rebbetzin. There was no reason...

It was toward the end of his life when he was confined to bed. In better times, the venerated Mashgiach used a wheelchair. On that Hoshana Rabbah, this last day of Succos, the Mashgiach was unresponsive. He didn't laugh, he didn't cry, he didn't smile.

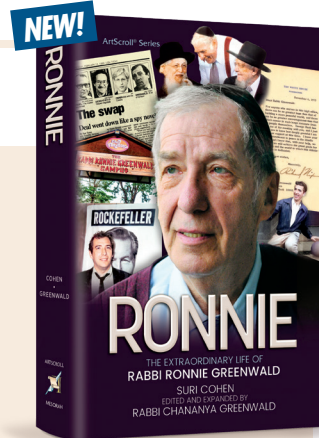
The Mashgiach's son-in-law, R' Moshe Yehuda Halpern, carefully took the *esrog* and *lulav* and placed them in the Mashgiach's hand. R' Moshe Yehuda watched in amazement as the Mashgiach clamped his fingers around the *arba'ah minim* and held them tight!

One minute, two minutes...

After a few minutes, R' Moshe Yehuda went over and gently tried to take the *lulav* and *esrog* from his *shver's* hands, but he held tight. He would not let go.

"Then I saw something miraculous. I watched as the Mashgiach began to cry. Tears began pouring from his eyes. He simply couldn't bring himself to *gezegen* — he couldn't bring himself to take leave of the *arba'ah minim*. Throughout his life, he had lived for that mitzvah, he had possessed such unbri-

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As a teen, Ronnie Greenwald joined the young men who formed the nascent Zeirei Agudath Israel minyan (The Young Agudah) in Boro Park. Many of those members ultimately played major roles in shaping the American yeshivah community. Yisroel Perkowski, as yet unmarried, was the group's unofficial rabbi, while Yehuda Oelbaum, known then as Julie, was its president.

"I was about fourteen years old," R' Dovid Trenk related, "when suddenly this incredibly charismatic young man appeared. Everybody was drawn to him, but as soon as he came, he was gone! He had gone back to Telz for the *Yamim Noraim*. Everyone looked forward to his return. He was part of a *chaburah* of guys that included Zyshe Heschel, the Kopycznitzer rebbe's son, Heshy Ehrenthal, and Dovid Reiss, who were all Kopycznitzer boys. The Rebbe used to call them Zyshe's chassidim.

R' Trenk remembered a Chol HaMoed Succos bike ride organized by Ronnie in 1955.

"About twenty-five of us met at the appointed time, and he lined us up on our bikes. We asked him where he was taking us.

"We're going to Queens."

"Eyes popped as a bunch of teenagers wearing yarmulkes and tzitzis flying in the wind, biked to Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn and then continued for fourteen miles from there to Forest Hills, where Ronnie's brother Sidney was principal of a yeshivah with a large *succah*. We ate, sang, hung out, and then headed back.

"One guy's bike had balloon tires, which were harder to ride on than the three-speed racers that most of us had. At one point he just couldn't keep up the pace. Ronnie noticed and immediately said, 'No problem, switch with me.' All along he 'Ronnie'd' us and took care of us.

"We had a nightly *seder* for about three years before I went to Lakewood," R' Moshe Hillel Hirsch related. "Ronnie had the energy and drive to accomplish whatever he set his mind to do with flair. There was once an incident where a boy went missing. Ronnie wanted to get his picture and information into the *Daily Mirror*, a local newspaper, but it was impossible to reach the

editor.

"He finally walked into the building, and as he passed by each desk on his way to the editor's office, he said out of the side of his mouth, 'Greenwald, Greenwald, Greenwald' — with the assurance of a veteran employee who belonged there. And he got in to see the editor! No one else could have done that.

"He was quick, smart, and likable, and he used those abilities for *kiruv*. Even at twenty, he was able to influence people to become more *frum*. He was a funny man who was deeply serious, with an essential understanding of what was important in life. If you needed a favor, he was the address."

R' Moshe Hillel's parents had a catering business where Ronnie earned money by setting up the sweet table and cleaning up the hall after events. He also gave a weekly *shiur* in the Hirsch home for people who weren't in yeshivah and arranged *shiurim* for women there, sponsored by Mrs. Hirsch.

R' Yosef Fried's* father was a European immigrant, a *talmid chacham* who died at a young age, leaving behind an American born wife and two small children. One Shabbos morning, Yosef and his brother were playing outside their house when eighteen-year-old Ronnie passed by on his way to the Zeirei.

Struck at the sight of the orphaned boys, Ronnie asked their mother for permission to take them to shul.

Although he was already too old for the Pirchei minyan, he took the boys there and davened with them every Shabbos for a few years until they were old enough to go to *mesivta*.

Mrs. Fried once called Ronnie into the house, pointing out shelves filled with *sefarim* covering the walls.

"My husband left all these books. We have no use for them, and I have to support my family. Can you help me sell them, maybe to a school or a library?"

"Don't get rid of them," Ronnie replied. "Your sons will learn from them one day."

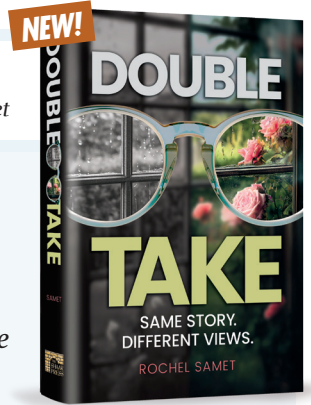
The yeshivah world was tiny in those

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Ronnie with R' Moshe Hillel Hirsch

**AS HE PASSED
BY EACH DESK
HE SAID OUT
OF THE SIDE
OF HIS MOUTH,
"GREENWALD,
GREENWALD,
GREENWALD."**



We often insist we're right and everyone sensible will agree — yet real life rarely splits into neat rights and wrongs. The stories in Double Take spotlight everyday clashes that wound feelings and strain relationships, but invite us to pause, step into another's shoes, and remember the Torah's call to judge the whole person favorably. Instead of arguing louder, we can listen — truly listen — to words, and observe the body language, seek understanding, and look for common ground. Even if we sometimes end up unbudging, the effort alone can soften hearts — including our own.

Mr. Scharf Talks...

There was a line snaking half-way through the store. Why was there only one checkout open?

I dashed into the back room. Sure enough, two of my workers were deep in conversation while they loaded a cart, ostensibly to restock shelves.

"Dave — I need you at the checkout. Mikey, those boxes have to get out pronto. Guys, it's Erev Yom Tov, things are hectic, let's keep the show moving."

They exchanged glances and shuffled off. I leaned against a mound of boxes, caught my breath, then plunged back into the frenzy.

"Mr. Scharf, do you have cans of tomato paste in the back?"

"Where's the frozen dill?"

"I bought this by mistake, can I exchange it?"

I plastered on my most patient smile. Customer service is key — especially for a small grocery competing against the large supermarkets. Business was good, baruch Hashem, but only because I worked hard to keep those standards high.

Not that it was easy.

"Mr. Scharf?" Copper curls, light eyes — one of the Golden. Cute kid, maybe ten. "My mother asked me to get pickles, the sweet kind, not too sour. And also olives with red pepper inside. But I can't reach the back of the shelf. Could you get some down?"

"Sure." I passed him a jar.

He frowned at his list. "I don't know which size. Maybe the big one? Or the small one, because that's what's in our fridge. Can I call my mother?"

I sighed. "Go to the counter, use the store phone. Ask your mother all your questions at once, okay?"

Last time, it had taken four calls to get it right. And then Mrs. Golden had called about returning products, strictly against policy.

WHY SHOULD MY STORE AND MY CUSTOMERS PAY THE PRICE FOR YOUR UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS?

Soon enough, Moishy was back with another question. Then another. Then a request to reach something else. Some customers were just... higher maintenance.

And the Succos season was always intense. Vegetables for stuffed cabbage, trays of chicken, dips, challahs, grape juice, honey — shelves turned over fast.

That night, the phone rang.

"Mr. Scharf? Hi, this is Mrs. Golden. You don't do phone orders before Yom Tov, do you?"

We never do phone orders. Years ago, I'd tried deliveries. Too many problems, wrong items, endless returns.

"No, I'm sorry, we don't."

She hesitated. "I have a long list,

but I don't want to come unless I know what's in stock. Can you check for me?"

I sighed inwardly but agreed. She rattled off her list: challah, kishke, soup nuts, grape juice, dips. Then the Succos specialties: stuffed cabbage leaves, kreplach dough, honey.

"Could you put aside two packages of the dough? And a few bottles of grape juice? And... oh, better reserve a few dips, too."

I usually don't set things aside, but I thought: what harm could it do? The Succos rush would be over in a week anyway.

But by the time the call ended, I'd promised to hold aside half a dozen items.

The next day, customers streamed in. At closing, Mrs. Golden still hadn't appeared.

The following morning, someone picked up a clearly labeled "RESERVED" package of kreplach dough. "Can I take this? It's the last one."

I shook my head. "Sorry, another customer asked me to hold it."

She looked crushed. I felt awful. I never do reservations, and here I was turning away paying customers.

And still no sign of Mrs. Golden.

Finally, she called. "I can't make it out... you wouldn't be able to deliver, just this once?"

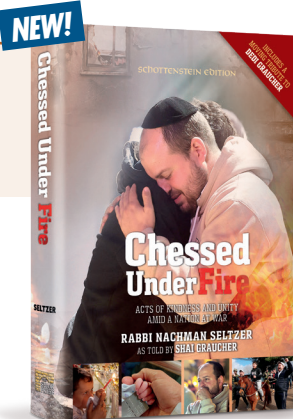
That was it.

"No. I'm sorry. We don't do deliveries. And I don't

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THE SIMCHAS TORAH THAT UNITED AM YISRAEL

Chessed Under Fire by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer



On October 7, 2023, the Yom Tov of Simchas Torah went from the brightest light to the most terrible darkness. Over the course of that never-to-be-forgotten day, bits and pieces of news began trickling in, and we learned that the worst atrocities had been committed against the Jewish people. In what had always been havens of quiet and simplicity, the *moshavim* and *kibbutzim* of the Negev were transformed into scenes of horror. Terrorists stormed these peaceful communities, shattering their serenity, ripping over a thousand souls from us.

From one second to the next, one of the holiest and happiest days of the Jewish year was turned into a day of sadness and shock — a day that would forever be remembered as the most painful day in the history of the Jewish people since the Holocaust. On that day, amid those feelings of sadness and shock, like everyone else in the country, Shai Graucher asked himself, *How do we go on from here? How do we contain such endless pain?*



Shai with some of the thousands of seforim he helped distribute

Yet while that first day was truly tragic, something amazing happened in its wake — something that's almost impossible to describe in words. Suddenly a new wind began to blow across the land. As if, despite everything that had occurred — or maybe *because* of everything that had occurred — Am Yisrael remembered who they really are. As hearts opened and tears flowed, the nation realized that it could not afford to forget that we are all part of one family.

In the wake of one of the most horrific days in recent history, Jews throughout the country united into one brotherhood.

Suddenly we witnessed the light of giving, the light of the Jewish soul, and the beauty of Am Yisrael. Virtually from one moment to the next, incredible amounts of support were offered by total strangers to those in need. Families opened their doors and gave refugees who had to leave their homes or whose homes had been destroyed a place to stay, treating them like relatives. People stood in line for hours to donate blood

and thousands headed help distribute food, equipment, love, and embraces.

One day, a woman from Beersheva called Shai.

“Shai, a piece of shrapnel hit my baby carriage and destroyed it. It was a double carriage, and now I have two babies and no stroller. My husband is in the army, and I’ve been trying to raise the money to buy a new carriage.”

“And?”

“And I haven’t been successful. Everyone wants to help, but I haven’t been able to raise enough funds.”

Shai asked her what kind of carriage she needed, and forty-five minutes later she was the proud owner of a brand-new twin stroller.

Shai likes to quote the Meiri, who says that when a person acts quickly, it proves that it’s important to him. “The faster you do something, the more important it is,” says Shai. “Helping people is important to me. And that means there’s no time to waste.”

“On the twelfth of November 2023,” one member of Shai’s *chevrah* relates, “we visited a widow living in the city of Netivot down south. Her husband had been a police officer who was killed a few weeks before, on October 7, and now we were going to see the widow to present her with a check for ten thousand shekels and some *chizuk*.”

“When we walked into the house, we found a woman who couldn’t even speak. All she could do was cry. It took her time to get the words out, but she finally explained that we were catching her in the middle of packing for the family’s move to a new apartment in a different city.

“We’re moving to Beersheva, to be near my parents,” she informed us. “There is no point in staying here by ourselves when we have family somewhere else. But I’m having a hard time with the packing. I asked two of my sisters to come over and help me for moral support, but I find that I’m unable to do what” *continued on page 7*

A PIECE OF SHRAPNEL HIT MY BABY CARRIAGE AND DESTROYED IT

really do reservations either, but I made an exception for you. Please make sure someone collects the items this afternoon.”

She promised. No one came.

By the next day, other customers were begging for the reserved stock. I finally called her.

“Put them back,” she said hurriedly. “I’ll figure out something else. Thanks anyway.”

And she hung up.

I was left staring at the phone, frustrated. I’d bent the rules for her, lost customers, wasted time, and now she was going elsewhere.

If I could tell Mrs. Golden one thing, it would be:

Why should my store — and my customers — pay the price for your unrealistic expectations?

Mrs. Golden Talks...

“I don’t know how you do it,” my sister said.

I laughed. “Chaya, you work full-time, volunteer, and don’t even have cleaning help.”

“But Mendy’s home in the evenings. You’re alone all week. I couldn’t.”

It’s true, it isn’t easy. Ephraim is away most of the week for work. But I’ve learned to make it work. My mother-in-law does school pickups, I work from home part-time, and the boys are my built-in

grocery shoppers. Whoever goes gets to pick a treat. Win-win.

We live down the block from Mr. Scharf’s grocery, and I’ve been a loyal customer since he opened. It’s close, family-friendly, and the kids know their way around.

But Succos shopping was another story. All the extras — stuffed cabbage leaves, kreplach, fancy dips, trays of chicken — too complicated to send the kids for.

I'D LOVE TO KEEP SUPPORTING YOUR STORE, BUT IT HAS TO WORK FOR MY NEEDS.

I made my list meticulously: shopping divided by categories, with detailed notes. I’d do one big trip myself.

But the night before, the baby spiked an ear infection. After a sleepless night and a frantic morning at the doctor, my plans fell apart.

I called the store. “Do you, by any chance, do phone orders before Yom Tov?”

“No, we don’t.”

“Maybe you can just check stock for me? I don’t want to drag the baby out if you don’t even have what I need.”

He agreed. I rattled off my list: challah, dips, *kreplach* dough, grape juice.

When he confirmed they were in stock, I asked: “Could you put aside two packages of the dough? And the dips? And the grape juice?”

He agreed. I felt relieved. At least the essentials would be waiting.

But life spiraled again. Supper disasters, kids fighting, the baby crying — suddenly it was bedtime, and I hadn’t left the house.

The next day, exhaustion hit me like a brick. I thought maybe I’d call again, ask for a delivery. Just this once.

But he said no.

I tried arranging for siblings to help, but no one could. The list was too big to send the kids — too many glass jars and trays.

Finally, I texted another grocery across town. They did deliveries. I placed my order, and relief washed over me.

Only later did I remember the items reserved at Mr. Scharf’s.

I meant to call and explain, but between the baby crying, the kids bickering, and the sticky kitchen floor, I never managed.

If I could tell Mr. Scharf one thing, it would be:

As a loyal, long-term customer, I’d love to keep supporting your store — but it has to work for my needs.

SO WHO DO YOU THINK IS RIGHT? Mr. Scharf? OR Mrs. Golden?

	MONDAY OCT 6 י' תשרי	TUESDAY OCT 7 ט' תשרי	WED OCT 8 י"ז תשרי	THURSDAY OCT 9 י"ח תשרי	FRIDAY OCT 10 י"ט תשרי	SHABBOS OCT 11 כ' תשרי	SUNDAY OCT 12 כ"א תשרי	MONDAY OCT 13 כ"ב תשרי	TUESDAY OCT 14 כ"ג תשרי	WED OCT 15 כ"ד תשרי	THURSDAY OCT 16 כ"ה תשרי	FRIDAY OCT 17 כ"ו תשרי
BAVLI	Zevachim 22	Zevachim 23	Zevachim 24	Zevachim 25	Zevachim 26	Zevachim 27	Zevachim 28	Zevachim 29	Zevachim 30	Zevachim 31	Zevachim 32	Zevachim 33
YERUSHALMI	Shekalim 44	Shekalim 45	Shekalim 46	Shekalim 47	Shekalim 48	Shekalim 49	Shekalim 50	Shekalim 51	Shekalim 52	Shekalim 53	Shekalim 54	Shekalim 55
MISHNAH	Menachos 10:4-5	Menachos 10:6-7	Menachos 10:8-9	Menachos 11:1-2	Menachos 11:3-4	Menachos 11:5-6	Menachos 11:7-8	Menachos 11:9-12:1	Menachos 12:2-3	Menachos 12:4-5	Menachos 13:1-2	Menachos 13:3-4
KITZUR	138:2-End	98:1-7	98:8-13	98:14-22	98:23-32	98:33-99:2	99:3-100:4	100:5-10	100:11-16	100:17-End	1:1-4	1:5-2:4

I need to do.'

"We noticed her husband's tallis bag, *sefarim*, and other personal items, all testifying to a life that had been cut off in its prime, and we understood why she was finding the task of moving so challenging. Unable to do what she knew she must, all the widow could do was cry.

"Enter Shai. 'You are not going to do the packing,' he told her.

"I'm not?"

"No. Tomorrow I'm sending a team of professional movers to your apartment, and they will do the entire job for you.'

"She was overcome. But Shai was far from finished. 'We're also going to send a designer to your new apartment in Beersheva to design a beautiful room for you to move into, complete with new furniture and anything else you might want. I'll do the same for your children's rooms and provide anything else you might need in your new home. We're going to turn it into something beautiful!'

"Shai was true to his word. The next day the packers were there bright and early, and the interior designer was already hard at work, creating a wonderful decor for the *almanah* and her children. Not for a minute did he think this would dispel the darkness and make up for their great loss. But Shai is a big believer in finding whatever light exists and using it to remind people that life does continue after loss, that one should never give up hope."

When hostages were released later that year, Shai reached out to every interior designer he knew, asking them to redesign their bedrooms so that the rooms can offer comfort and peace after their harrowing ordeal. The designers were deeply honored to contribute to the project.

One day, Shai visited the bereaved parents of a sol-

dier named Alon Safrai, who had been killed when his tank was struck by a rocket.

"Seeing how broken the father was by the loss of his son," Shai says, "I was reminded of the sanctity of the father-son relationship and the important place it holds in the life of a child. It also reminded me of a conversation I'd recently had with someone I met in the *shuk* in Yerushalayim. In the

course of the conversation, this man admitted that he hadn't spoken to his father for over a year. Hearing that bothered me immensely. I told him how much I missed my own father and how I wished I could spend more time with him.

"I told him about the hundreds of families I'd met who had lost children or fathers. And I told him how so many people had said to me that they would give anything just to be able to give their father or son another hug.

"This is your father and you still have the chance to talk to him and spend time with him,' I said. 'You can still hug him! I don't

know if he's wrong or if you're wrong. Either way, go give him a hug. Or at least make a phone call.'

"The man called me a few days later. 'I just wanted to tell you that I called my father today, and we spoke for the first time in over a year. I'm calling to thank you for helping me realize that the time we waste when it comes to the important relationships in our lives is something we can never get back.'

"I was really happy to hear that this person had started patching things up with his father," Shai concludes, "and I knew that I had only been able

to find the right words to reach him because of everything that I'd seen and experienced since October 7, how it had devastated so many families, who were left wishing they could see their son or father again." 📖



Shai with Ralph Reider, who sponsored a Sefer Torah to fulfill the wish of a widow and mother in mourning

I TOLD HIM HOW SO MANY PEOPLE HAD SAID TO ME THAT THEY WOULD GIVE ANYTHING JUST TO BE ABLE TO GIVE THEIR FATHER OR SON ANOTHER HUG.

SUCCOS

THE ANGEL OF RIBNITZ ON SUCCOS

The Ribnitzer by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer

At the conclusion of Yom Kippur, it was time to build the succah. The Ribnitzer Rebbe made sure to be involved in the entire process. Even in the years when he had a succah that remained intact throughout the year, the Rebbe lifted each and every piece of *schach* and said, "*L'sheim mitzvas succah.*"

The Rebbe also waved his *lulav* and *esrog* in the succah — an *avodah* that took a long time, since he put his entire *neshamah* into it. He shook the *lulav* and *esrog* with all his strength, and sometimes they became *pasul* from his exertion, as *lulavim* broke and *esrogim* became squashed. The Rebbe went through many *esrogim* and *lulavim* each year, and the gabbaim knew that they needed to be prepared.

When the Rebbe shook the *lulav* and *esrog* and waved them downward, he bent over almost double and remained that way, sometimes for fifteen minutes straight.

In the early years, not long after the Rebbe came to the United States, he shook his *lulav* and *esrog* when he was alone and didn't allow anyone access to the room during his *avodah*. One notable exception to this rule was his old friend Reb Avraham Markovitch who had accompanied the Rebbe on many of his missions when they were still living in Russia.

Knowing that the Rebbe allowed Reb Avraham into the room and that he could watch the Rebbe's *avodah*, people used to ask him to tell them what the Rebbe did in there.

"If the Rebbe doesn't let anyone into the room," Reb Avraham replied, "no doubt he doesn't want me to reveal what I saw either."

Everyone understood that something incredibly holy was happening in the room, but that there was no need for them to know what it was.

Or at least, not yet.

The days between Yom Kippur and Succos were days of continuous *avodah*, with fasting and long hours of reciting *Tikkun Chatzos* and the copious use of ashes. But the moment night fell and Succos began, the Rebbe's demeanor went from one extreme — from the somber

avodah of the Yamim Noraim — to the intense joy of Succos. His face lit up with happiness, and he even made jokes, bringing smiles to the face of every person who had the good fortune to be in his midst. The atmosphere in Ribnitz was lighthearted, the food was plentiful and delicious.

On those days of incredible joy, the angel from Ribnitz ate and drank. It was *Zman Simchaseinu*, and a visitor who didn't know better could have imagined that he had just entered the world of a Yid who enjoyed life enormously.

And the truth is, they would be right.

Because the Rebbe did enjoy life.

Sometimes with ashes on his head and tears rolling down his cheeks, and sometimes with fish and meat and wine.

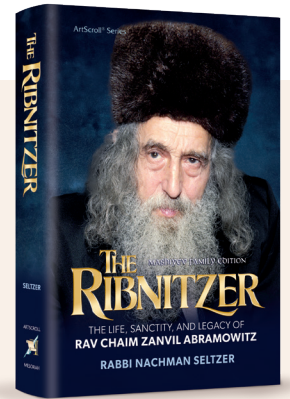
It all depended on what Hashem wanted from him at the moment.

On the night of Hoshana Rabbah, the Rebbe read the entire *Sefer Devarim* standing in the succah. He followed that with the recitation of the entire *Sefer Tehillim*.

When the Rebbe became old and frail, it became increasingly difficult to perform the *avodah* the same way. One Hoshana Rabbah morning, the Rebbe carried out his *avodah* with the *hoshanos* and when he was finally done and the *hoshanos* lay in tattered disarray on the floor, it was clear to everyone there that his energy was entirely sapped. He didn't even have the strength to recite the *Yehi Ratzon* that is said after beating the *hoshanos*, and he asked one of his gabbaim to say it in his stead. It was only when the gabbai came to the words "Erase my sins and accept my repentance" that the Rebbe picked up his hands and eyes and spoke from his heart:

"*Ribbono shel Oilam! Tatte! Ich vel folgen altsding vus di heist! Master of the world! I will obey everything that You say.*"

It was a simple message from an elderly man who could no longer do the *avodah* as he used



The Ribnitzer

**THOSE WHO
WATCHED COULDN'T
UNDERSTAND HOW A
MAN OF HIS AGE — OR
ANY AGE — COULD
DANCE WITH SUCH
STAMINA AND ENERGY.**

continued on page 11

One of the most basic requirements of a *succah* is that its walls not be higher than twenty *amos* (about thirty-five to forty feet). *Mishnah Berurah* (633:3) explains that the reason for this disqualification is that *Chazal* determined that until this height, even walls made from reeds would be able to stand on their own. Walls higher than this would, like permanent housing, require additional supports, thickness and foundations. Such construction could not be considered a “temporary dwelling,” and would be invalid for use as a *succah*. The thickness of walls less than twenty *amos* high is of no concern because *theoretically* the walls could have been built as a “temporary dwelling” without supports.

There is much symbolism in the requirement for a *succah* to be a temporary dwelling. Succos follows the forty-day period of *teshuvah* which begins on Rosh Chodesh Elul and ends with the conclusion of Yom Kippur. It is an opportune time to absorb a fundamental lesson of the *succah* — to consider one’s time on this earth as a temporary dwelling. Although a person needs a place to live, clothing to wear and food to eat, this should not be the focus of his existence. He should realize that this world is a temporary dwelling, *a vestibule before the World to Come* (*Pirkei Avos* 4:21). This will motivate him to spend his limited time on this earth pursuing spiritual goals and attainments.

There is another way to explain the words of the Talmud to *leave the permanent dwelling and settle in a temporary dwelling*. Occasionally one meets a person whose entire life revolves around himself. He is constantly thinking about his own needs, desires, pleasures and so on. His “permanent dwelling” is his own mind. From time to time, he may think of other people and even give up some of his own desires to fulfill their needs. This is his “temporary dwelling.”

The Gemara says that the underlying theme of Succos, the *zeman simchaseinu*, is to leave one’s permanent dwelling and settle in a temporary dwelling. This means that if a person truly desires to attain happiness and satisfaction in life, he must spend more time thinking about the needs of other people, and not

be self-centered. By trying to bring *simchah* into the lives of those around him, especially the unfortunate and forsaken, he will bring joy into his own life as well.

The Midrash (*Koheles Rabbah* 1:34) says, *A person does not leave this world with even half his desires fulfilled*. This is perhaps an overstatement; many people go through life without attaining even a tenth of what they want. Life is a continuous string of hardships, disappointments, frustration and misery — *if* their lives revolve around themselves. However, if a person concentrates on helping others overcome their problems and lightening their “*peckel*,” he himself will feel a sense of joy in his own life.

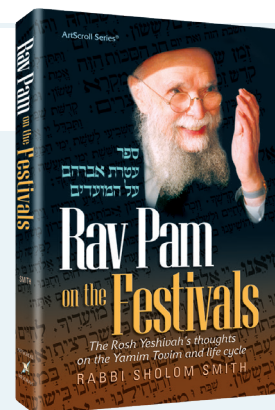
A depressed woman once called Rav Pam for an *eitzah* for her difficult situation. She had been married for a number of years and was still childless; the medical prognosis seemed hopeless, which was the cause of her depression. Rav Pam suggested that she get involved in *tzorchei tzibbur* (the needs of the community). His reasoning was simple: If she was thinking about herself and her unfortunate predicament throughout the day, it was no wonder that she fell into depression. If she were to occupy her mind and time with helping others, it would give her a sense of satisfaction and purpose that would bring joy into her own embittered life. The woman accepted Rav Pam’s advice and threw herself into volunteering for a number of worthy *tzorchei tzibbur* projects.

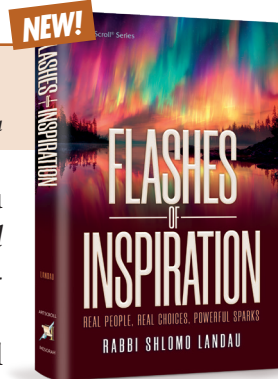
In a letter to Rav Pam a few months later, her husband, a distinguished *talmid chacham*, reported that he had seen a dramatic change for the better in his wife’s mood. It is human nature for a person to be self-centered. Helping others is the formula for a life of *simchah*. The theme of Succos is that one must leave his permanent dwelling — his own mind — and settle in a temporary dwelling — thinking of the needs of others. In doing so, he will find contentment in his own life and will enjoy a year-round *zeman simchaseinu*. 📖



R' Avrohom Pam

THE THEME OF SUCCOS IS THAT ONE MUST LEAVE HIS PERMANENT DWELLING — HIS OWN MIND — AND SETTLE IN A TEMPORARY DWELLING — THINKING OF THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.





It had been a very long day for Harav Aharon Tausig, one of Eretz Yisrael's well-known *mashpiim*. He had spent the day in Yerushalayim and had just finished a very long and complicated meeting. The hour was late, and it was time for R' Aharon to go home to his *mishpachah* in Bnei Barak.

R' Aharon exited the building where the meeting had taken place and walked to the street, hoping that he could hail a taxi that would drive him home. Sure enough, within just a few minutes, a taxi pulled up and agreed to take R' Aharon to Bnei Brak.

As he settled down, he warmly greeted the driver, "*Erev tov, adoni hanahag hanechmad* — Good evening, sweet and honored driver."

The driver's response somewhat surprised R' Aharon. He shouted, "*Todah laKeil*, thank you, Hashem, *shamata et tefilati*, you answered my tefillos!" And the drive continued to repeat over and over, "Thank you, Hashem!" And then he said, "You realize that thanks to you, I can finally go home?"

R' Aharon was a bit taken aback by the dramatic reaction. He assumed that the driver needed the extra fare to meet his daily financial requirements, as perhaps he had not had a particularly successful day of driving. But the driver dispelled his assumption. "*Baruch Hashem*, I had a very busy day today. I was all over Central Israel, but unfortunately, today's passengers were all so busy and caught up in themselves that no one thought to give me a kind word. It really bothered me, and I told myself that I was not going home until at least one passenger shared a kind word. *Kevod Harav*,

before you were even seated, you greeted me warmly. *Todah laKeil* for people like you; now I can finally go home!"

They continued to chat all the way to Bnei Brak. As the taxi

was pulling up to R' Aharon's building, Alon, the taxi driver, turned to R' Aharon and said, "One good deed deserves another; in return for your kindness, I am going to put on tefillin tomorrow. And by the way, the last time that I put on tefillin was at my bar-mitzvah."

R' Aharon's less-than-regular taxi ride was at the beginning of Chodesh Adar. When the first day of Pesach ended, R' Aharon's phone rang. "*Kevod Harav*, do you remember me? It's Alon, the taxi driver!"

Instinctively, R' Aharon replied, "*Erev tov adoni hanahag hanechmad*—good evening, sweet and honored driver. Of course, I remember you! How did putting on tefillin after so many years feel?"

Alon replied, "*Kevod Harav*, amazing, and by the way, I have not missed a day since our ride; it has been transformational! So much so that right before Pesach, I said to myself, 'It really doesn't make sense that a guy who puts on tefillin daily is not having a Pesach seder.' *Kevod Harav*, last night I enjoyed the first Pesach seder of my life!"

Wow! replied R' Aharon, that's truly amazing! But is that why you called?

Actually not... I really just called to hear you say, "*Erev tov, adoni hanahag hanechmad!*" 📱



Harav Aharon Tausig

**TODAH LA'KEIL
FOR PEOPLE LIKE
YOU; NOW I CAN
FINALLY GO HOME!**

CRIES THAT TEAR THE HEAVENS continued from page 2

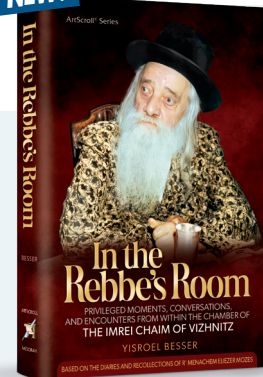
dled enthusiasm for the mitzvah, and now he clearly seemed to realize that this might be the last time he would be holding those sacred *arba'ah minim*."

He had not cried or smiled in

many months, but suddenly, when it came time for him to take leave of the *arba'ah minim*, his core was so touched that his reaction bordered on the supernatural.

This story illustrates the Mash-

giach's special love, eagerness, and passion for mitzvos. It was a love, eagerness, and passion that he developed through a lifetime of *avodah*, and it encompassed every mitzvah and every Yom Tov. 📱



The Vizhnitzer Rebbe spent his first Succos in Eretz Yisrael at the Vizhnitzer shul in the Batei Milner neighborhood. The Rebbe had *hakaras hatov* to the *gabbai* of the *minyan*, R' Yisrael Vegh, because back in Grosswardein he helped the Ahavas Yisrael make his way to shul.

Following *Krias HaTorah*, the Rebbe directed R' Yisrael to do *hagbahah*, and the Rebbe himself did *gelilah*, rolling up the Sefer Torah. In this way, he was adding honor to the *kibbud* given R' Yisrael, another way to express gratitude.

If the Rebbe lived with an intense sense of appreciation to people who had helped him, he was consumed with gratefulness to his Creator.

After the Rebbe took ill in 1968, he could no longer make the short walk from his home to the *beis medrash* for the Shabbos davening, so the *gabbaim* would carry the Rebbe on a chair.

R' Shaul Leib Apshen, a devoted chassid, was approaching the *beis medrash* on the first Shabbos that the Rebbe was being carried this way, and he looked on in dismay. The Rebbe noticed his expression and asked what was wrong.

"How can I look as the Rebbe is carried by others?" the chassid

asked by way of reply.

"Ah, this bothers you?" the Rebbe asked with a smile. "I cannot stop thanking the Ribbono shel Olam, all the way here, that by me the signs of *ziknah* are starting here" — the Rebbe indicated his legs — "and not here," and the Rebbe pointed to his head.

Once he settled in Eretz Yisrael,



The Imrei Chaim being carried by gabbaim

FEAR HUNG HEAVY IN THE STREETS OF BNEI BRAK, BUT THE REBBE WAS CONFIDENT THAT GREAT MIRACLES WERE ABOUT TO HAPPEN.

the Rebbe did not tire of expressing gratitude for the gift of living on holy soil. On Succos, the gratitude was especially effusive. "In the *heim*," the Rebbe would recall, "we spent so much time on Succos figuring out if the weather would allow us to sit in the succah and did not even imagine being able to sleep there. Here

the weather allows us to sit in the succah and sleep in the succah!"

In the days leading to the Six-Day War in 1967, the Rebbe was in a state of heightened emotion. Fear hung heavy in the streets of Bnei Brak, but the Rebbe was confident that great miracles were about to happen.

"Maybe," he said, "we will even get back the Old City of Yerushalayim and the Kosel."

When the Rebbe heard the joyous news that his prediction had been realized, he said, "I ask Hashem Yisbarach only that I never forget to thank Him, even for a moment!"

Then, in the tune he used at Minchah on Erev Shabbos when reciting the *perek* of *Hodu LaShem Ki Tov*, the Rebbe sang out, "*Yodu laShem chasdo v'nifle'osav livnei adam* — Let them give thanks to Hashem for His kindness, and His wonders to the children of man," and tears flowed down his cheeks as he offered his thanks: gratitude for what was and the hope that he would never forget the feeling of being grateful. 📖

THE ANGEL OF RIBNITZ ON SUCCOS continued from page 8

to do. But the impact of his words was more powerful than ever, precisely for that reason.

On Simchas Torah, the Rebbe danced in a way that was beyond nature, dancing for hours on end. Those who watched him couldn't understand how a man of his age — or any age — could dance with such stamina and energy.

One year, another Rebbe joined the Ribnitzer on Simchas Torah. Both of them were honored with holding *sifrei Torah* as they danced. But the newcomer hadn't counted on dancing the way the Rebbe danced. Before long, he was utterly fatigued and close to faint-

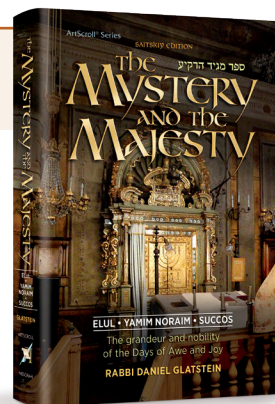
ing, while the Ribnitzer was still going strong and seemed to have barely begun.

Someone asked the Rebbe how he had the energy to dance with such passion and fervor and for so long.

"If you're holding the Torah in your arms," the Rebbe replied, "it's not difficult at all."

Another time the Rebbe replied in response to the same question that a person carrying a *sefer Torah* feels like those whose task was to carry the *Aron* because the *Aron* carried those who carried it.

"It's not that we are carrying the Torah," the Rebbe explained. "It's the Torah that is carrying us." 📖



The Vilna Gaon was renowned for his joy throughout Succos, yet on Shemini Atzeres his joy soared even higher. Succos is זמן שמחתנו, the time of our gladness, but Shemini Atzeres somehow contains the pinnacle of that joy. What quality sets this day above all the days of Succos?

Rav Shlomo Kluger notes that three *parashiyos* give the commandments of the Yamim Tovim—Emor, Pinchas, and Re'eh. In Emor and in Pinchas, Shemini Atzeres is included with Succos. In Re'eh, however, there is no mention of Shemini Atzeres. The *Shulchan Aruch*, however, instructs us to insert Shemini Atzeres in the Succos Shemoneh Esrei, and to refer to it as a “*chag*,” a festival.

In *Moed L'chol Chai*, R' Chaim Palagi writes that the *tefillos* of Shemini Atzeres demand extraordinary *kavannah*. The *tikkun* (spiritual repair) that begins on Rosh Hashanah and continues through the Yamim Noraim, concludes on Shemini Atzeres; everything hinges on this climactic day. No day in this season matches its *eis ratzon*. It is uniquely primed for Hashem's attentiveness to our prayers. Hence the day should be invested in introspection, Torah learning, and heartfelt requests. Why is this day so unique?

Consider the additional (*mussaf*) *korbanos*. Throughout Succos, fourteen sheep were offered daily—ninety-eight in total—corresponding to the ninety-eight curses listed in Parshiyah Ki Savo; a total seventy oxen were offered during the festival—corresponding to the seventy nations. On Shemini Atzeres, by contrast, the *mussaf* consists of just one ox and one ram. *Midrash Tanchuma* explains: during Succos, Bnei Yisrael brought offerings on behalf of the nations. On the eighth day, however, Hashem says: now bring offerings for yourselves. It's like a king who hosted a weeklong banquet for his entire kingdom; after it ended, he turned to his most beloved ones and said, “Let's celebrate privately, just you and I.” For that intimate time, a smaller meal sufficed.

The Bnei Yissas'char wonders: If this final day is for Hashem and His beloved children, shouldn't the offerings be *more* abundant? The answer is that Shemini Atzeres is about quality, not quantity—about *yichud* (pri-

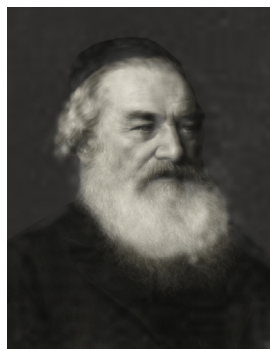
vacy), not display. When a *chas-san* and *kallah* enter the *yichud* room, elaborate cuisine would distract from their togetherness as man and wife. The nations are not beloved intrinsically; for them to feel honored requires pomp. Klal Yisrael, however, is beloved for its very essence. Hashem's *hana'ah*, His pleasure, on Shemini Atzeres is simply to be with us—without distraction. Fewer *korbanos*, a simpler *seudah*, and a single focus.

Seen this way, Shemini Atzeres becomes the day of our deepest closeness to Hashem. On it, He celebrates the *essence* of Klal Yisrael—our intrinsic spiritual value—in a way unmatched all year. The rhythm of the festival seasons reads like stages of marriage. On Shavuot, we experience *kiddushin/eirusin* (betrothal) “תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת” (עקב,” with *morashah* read as *me'orasah* (betrothed). The Torah became our bond, like a ring. The *nesuin*—the *chuppah*—occurs in the *succah*, when we leave the outside world and inhabit a space reserved for Hashem, akin to the *Mishkan* in the Wilderness. The next, even more intimate stage—*yichud*—is Shemini Atzeres: “אני ואתם נשמח ביהוד” (עקב,” we and Hashem rejoice together. Fittingly, Hashem reduces the number of *korbanos*: when the essence is togetherness, one ox and one ram suffice.

This also clarifies the nature of the day's great *simchah*. In Emor, the Torah commands, “ושמחתם לפני ה'... שבעת ימים” —rejoice before Hashem: *lifnei Hashem*, as two distinct parties. On Shemini Atzeres, Chazal teach, “אני ואתם נשמח ביהוד” —Hashem says *you and I* will rejoice as *one*.

Citing the Rama MiFano, the Chasam Sofer explains why the day is not called a *chag*. The word *chag* is related to חוג—a circle, revolving around a focal mitzvah. Each Yom Tov orbits an object or act: shofar on Rosh Hashanah, *inui* (affliction) on Yom Kippur, *Dalet Minim* on Succos, matzah on Pesach, *Shtei HaLechem* (Two Mussaf Loaves) on Shavuot. Only Shemini Atzeres has no such object, because its central point is Hashem Himself. Any concrete mitzvah would divert attention

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Rav Shlomo Kluger

**WHAT REMAINS,
UNIQUELY ON
SHEMINI ATZERES,
IS ONLY SIMCHAH—
ACH SAMEI'ACH—
REJOICING WITH
HASHEM HIMSELF.**

from the One at the center. In a broader image, the festivals form a ring around a hub—Shemini Atzeres. They line the circumference; Shemini Atzeres rests at the center. Its mitzvah is simply to rejoice with Hashem personally, undistracted—few *korbanos*, no special mitzvah objects—just *yichud* with the Ribbono shel Olam.

This perspective explains the Vilna Gaon's unique elation on Shemini Atzeres. It is the one day we rejoice only with Hashem and the Shechinah, with no external mitzvah-item to mediate the relationship. It also reframes the verse וְהָיִיתָ אֶדְ שְׂמִיחַ, *you should be exclusively joyous* (Devarim 16:15). Although Shemini Atzeres is not mentioned explicitly in Parashah Re'eh, Chazal find an allusion to it in this verse. They expound on the *ach* in this pasuk to *include* the night of Shemini Atzeres in the mitzvah of *simchah*, even though the word *ach* is usually understood to *exclude* something, i.e., only *this*, but not something *else*. The answer is that it indeed excludes—it excludes the many mitzvos of Succos: on Shemini Atzeres there is no *succah*, no *lulav*, *esrog*, *hadas*, *aravah*, no *Simchas Beis HaSho'eivah*.

What remains, uniquely on Shemini Atzeres, is *only simchah*—*ach samei'ach*—nothing but rejoicing with Hashem Himself.

The Zohar describes why this is the year's premier day for tefillah. During Succos, the seventy oxen channel *berachah* to the seventy nations; their *berachah* concludes on Hoshana Rabbah, after which they enter *judgment*. For Israel, judgment begins on Rosh Hashanah and concludes on Hoshana Rabbah; then we enter *berachah*, as the very next day—Shemini Atzeres—we delight privately with our King and receive His blessings for the entire year. No one else shares that moment. A private audience with the King is the time to ask for one's deepest needs. Hence, אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר ה', *I loved you, says Hashem* (Malachi 1:2). There is no greater day for *tefillos u'vakashos* than Shemini Atzeres.

What follows practically from this is simple and profound. Spend Shemini Atzeres in *simchah*, *yichud*, and heartfelt tefillah—learning, reflecting, and asking Hashem for all your needs. Minimize distractions.

With no object to utilize and no multitude of offerings to prepare, the avodah of the day is the pure joy of being with the Ribbono shel Olam—*ach samei'ach*. 📖

SEEING WITH HIS HEART

continued from page 3

days. The widowed mother, unaware that it could be an option for her children, exclaimed indignantly, "Are you making fun of me?"

"No, of course not. I'm serious. These are your husband's *sefarim*. Some of them have his comments in the margins. It's his legacy to your children."

His words proved prophetic. The *sefarim* would one day be used by Yosef with a depth and passion she would never have imagined.

In the Zeirei, young Yosef found role models to emulate and a mentor in the caring teen who had plucked him off the street. Ronnie not only took the Fried boys to shul but bought them shoes, *yarmulkes*, and *tzitzis* as well.

The spark had been lit. Once young Yosef had a taste of Torah, he focused on it with laser-like concen-

tration to the exclusion of all other pursuits. *Talmidei chachamim* who knew him well attested to his mastery of every area of Torah. His life revolved around unceasing Torah study, *tefillah*, and the performance of mitzvos.

R' Fried credited Ronnie for his



Ronnie with R' Moshe Hillel Hirsch

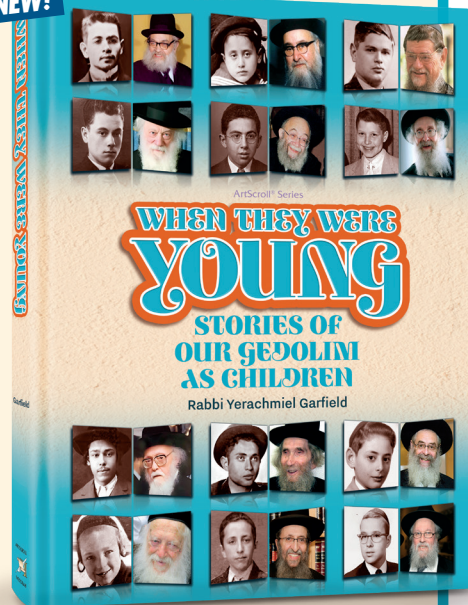
life's direction and was bothered that he had never properly expressed his gratitude. At a Fried *sheva berachos* with Ronnie in attendance, R' Fried related the story of their long relationship and how a young Ronnie

had introduced him to the sweetness of Torah. As Ronnie listened, tears poured down his face.

Many years later, R' Fried married off his last child and was short ten thousand dollars. "I knew he wasn't rich, but I figured that he started me off and he might be the one to help me again, all these years later. I called him and he found me the money." On the day of the wedding, Ronnie, recuperating from a hospitalization, was determined to attend.

"I went to the wedding," said a mutual friend, "and there, pale and weak but very much there, was Ronnie! Even for him this was unbelievable."

Ronnie and R' Fried embraced and danced, tears welling in Ronnie's eyes as he saw the growth of the seeds he had planted sixty-five years earlier, when he had taken the time to see with his heart. 📖



Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin

Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, later known as the Netziv (נפתלי = נציב) (צבי יהודה ברלין), was born in Mir in 1816. He married the daughter of R' Yitzchak of Volozhin. R' Yitzchak was the son of the founder of Yeshivas Volozhin, R' Chaim Ickovitz, who was better known as R' Chaim Volozhiner. R' Chaim Volozhiner was a *talmid* of the Vilna Gaon. The Netziv's second wife was his niece, the daughter of R' Yechiel Michel Epstein, also a famous *talmid chacham* and author of *sefarim*.

The Netziv served as rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Volozhin for close to forty years. Yeshivas Volozhin produced most of the Jewish people's greatest *talmidei chachamim* and leaders during that time. In addition, many yeshivos today were established by *talmidim* of the *talmidim* of Yeshivas Volozhin.

The Netziv is also known for his *sefarim*, *Haamek Davar*, *Meishiv Davar*, *Haamek She'eilah*, and others. They are learned and enjoyed to this day.

He passed away in 1893.

DON'T GIVE UP!

RABBI NAFTALI TZVI YEHUDAH BERLIN

הרב נפתלי צבי יהודה ברלין זצ"ל

Position: Rosh yeshivah

Place: Volozhin

Publications: *Haamek Davar*, *Meishiv Davar*, *Haamek She'eilah*, and others

Birth: 1816

Petirah: 1893

Known for: His role as rosh yeshivah of Yeshivas Volozhin; his *sefarim*

When Naftali Tzvi Yehudah, known as Hirsch Leib in his youth, was a boy, he faced many challenges in yeshivah. He wasn't a quick learner, and this often left him feeling behind his classmates. Because he struggled, many of his peers ignored him, while others made hurtful comments that deeply embarrassed him. He began to feel worthless, as though he didn't belong. Each day, Hirsch Leib's loneliness grew, and his heart became heavier with sadness.

A STORY FROM HIS YOUTH

There were moments when the struggle felt too much for him to bear. He began to wonder if perhaps learning Torah wasn't meant for him. "Why should I stay in yeshivah if learning is so hard for me?" he thought to himself. At times, the idea of leaving yeshivah altogether crossed his mind. Maybe he could go from town to town as a peddler, selling small items to earn a living. The thought made him sad, but the difficulties he faced made it seem like the only option.

Hirsch Leib's frustration reached a peak, and his heart was filled with despair. But just when it seemed that all hope was lost, a remarkable thing happened. He met one of the greatest Torah scholars of the generation, Rabbi Dovid Luria, known as the Radal (= רד"ל). Reb Dovid noticed the sadness in the young boy's eyes and gently asked him what was troubling him.

With a heavy heart, Hirsch Leib opened up to Reb Dovid. He shared how hard learning was for him, how lonely he felt, and how he was thinking of leaving yeshivah. Reb Dovid listened patiently, his kind eyes full of understanding. When Hirsch Leib finished speaking, Reb Dovid placed a hand on his shoulder and said warmly, “Hirsch Leib, don’t give up. You are stronger than you think. The Torah is not just for the quickest or the brightest. It’s for those who work hard, who don’t give up, and who show Hashem how much they want to learn His precious gift.”

Reb Dovid paused for a moment and then added something surprising. “Do you know why some of the boys are not kind to you? It’s because, deep down, they are jealous of you. They see how hard you work. They know that real success doesn’t come from being the smartest; it comes from effort and perseverance. They wish they could be like you, with your determination and strength.”

Hirsch Leib was stunned. No one had ever spoken to him like this before. For the first time in a long time, he felt a spark of hope. Reb Dovid’s words gave him the strength to keep going. He returned to yeshivah with a renewed sense of purpose. Slowly but surely, his efforts began to pay off. His hard work and determination bore fruit, and his learning improved.

Years later, Hirsch Leib—now the Netziv, one of the greatest Torah leaders of his time—would often recall that pivotal moment with Reb Dovid. The Netziv’s story reminds us all of the power of perseverance and the difference one kind word of encouragement can make. Every person has their own journey in Torah, and sometimes, it’s the hardest struggles that lead to the greatest successes.



You notice that your friend, who is not from the best students in the class, is feeling down about his situation. Perhaps he just failed another test.

What can you say to him to make him feel better about himself?



Think about a time when someone’s encouragement inspired you to believe in yourself and not give up. **What ended up happening?**

LESSONS TO LEARN

This incident reminds us that everyone can overcome difficulties and achieve their goals. And it teaches us two lessons:

One, not to give up. And two, to support others and make them feel good about themselves.



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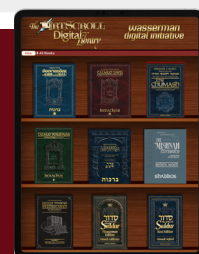
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One who studies halachos each day is assured that he is destined to the world to come (Niddah 73a).

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