

Parashas Chukas

• 689 •

ט' תמוז תשפ"ה
5785

י"ל ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ
רבי גמליאל הכהן
רבינוביץ שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

העבודה להחדיר את האמונה

The service to hone the Emunah

טיב המערכת

ספר מלחמות ה'

The book of the Wars of Hashem

In our *parasha*, we encounter one of the great miracles that happened to our forefathers. After the Amorites saw what Israel had done to all the nations on their way to the Land of Israel, they planned to ambush them. What did they do? There was a valley that passed between two high mountains that stood opposite one another. In one mountain were many caves, and in the mountain opposite were large protrusions. The Amorites stood below in the valley, and some of them entered the caves holding large rocks which they planned to throw down on the heads of the Children of Israel. They said: when Israel comes to pass through the valley, we will surprise them with a combined attack from below and above. But 'יושב בשמים ישחק' - "He who sits in the heavens will laugh" (Tehillim 2:4). HaKadosh Baruch Hu hinted to the mountains, and the protrusions of one mountain entered into the caves of the opposite mountain, crushing them all, and they died. *Bnei Yisrael* passed through and did not know of the miracle that had occurred for them.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu said: Who will inform My children of these miracles? After Israel had passed, the mountains returned to their place, and the well descended into the valley and brought up from there the blood of the slain, along with arms and limbs, and carried them around the camp. And Israel saw and sang a song. Rashi says on the words 'על' - "Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of Hashem, 'Vahev in Suphah, and the streams of Arnon'" (21:14) - just as the miracles of the Sea of Reeds [Yam Suf] are recounted, so too must the miracles of the streams of Arnon be recounted, for here as well great miracles were done.

Two important teachings we learn here. The first is that when one sees miracles that HaKadosh Baruch Hu performs for Israel, one must give thanks, just as when Israel saw the miracles that were done for them, they all stood and sang a song - 'אז ישיר ישראל' - "Then sang Israel" (Shemos 15:1). But not only at that moment, rather for all generations, as Rashi says: "Just as the miracles of the Sea of Reeds are recounted," and just as we recount the miracles of the Sea of Reeds every day, and each year on the night of the Seder, "so too must the miracles of the streams of Arnon be recounted."

And although a special time was designated for recounting the miracles of the Sea of Reeds - Pesach - no special time was designated for the miracles of the streams of Arnon.

Seemingly, however, the Shabbos of **Parashas Chukas**, in which we read these miracles in the Torah, is the time to recount the miracles and to thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu for them. And of course, it is also the time to give thanks for the abundant kindness of HaKadosh Baruch Hu 'that in every generation they stand against us to destroy us, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu saves us from their hands.'

Tiv HaTorah - Chukas

ולא היה מים לעדה ויִקְהָלוּ. עַל מִשָּׁה וְעַל אַהֲרֹן: וַיָּרֶב הָעָם עִם מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר וְלוֹ גִּזְעֵנוּ בְּגֹעַ אֲחִינוּ לִפְנֵי ה': וְלָמָּה הִבַּאתֶם אֶת קֹהֶל ה' אֶל הַמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה לָמוֹת שָׁם אֲנַחְנוּ וּבְעֵירָנוּ: וְלָמָּה הֶעֱלִיתֵנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לְהִבְיֹא אֶתְנוּ אֶל הַמִּקְוֹם הָרָע הַזֶּה לֹא מָקוֹם זֵרַע וְתֵאֵנָה וְגֶפֶן וְרִמּוֹן וַיִּמָּוֶן אִין לְשִׁתּוֹת: וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן מִפְּנֵי הַקֹּהֶל אֶל פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל פְּנֵיהֶם וַיִּרָא כְבוֹד ה' אֲלֵיהֶם: (כ, ב - ו)

There was no water for the people, and they gathered against Moshe and Aharon. The people quarreled with Moshe and spoke up, saying, "If only we had perished like our brothers before Hashem! Why have you brought the congregation of Hashem to this wilderness to die there, we and our animals? And why did you bring us up from Egypt to bring us to this evil place? Not a place of seed, or fig tree, or grapevine, or pomegranate tree, and there is no water to drink!" Moshe and Aharon went from the presence of the congregation to the entrance of Ohel Moed and fell on their faces. The glory of Hashem appeared to them. (20:2-6)

Behold, at the time when Bnei Yisrael came with complaints against Moshe and Aharon, these two righteous men were in terrible distress. For the suffering of Israel was indeed great, since without water it is impossible to live and survive. And the very fact that the people turned to them added to their anguish, for they still did not know what was incumbent upon them to answer the people. And despite all of this, we see that they did not lose hope, and they did not immediately begin to consider how to produce water for the people through natural means. Rather, immediately and without delay, they turned to the Ohel Moed, and there they first prayed to Hashem Yisbarach.

The strength of their faith at that moment was not only expressed in the very act of turning to Hashem Yisbarach, but also in the manner in which they turned to Him. For as the Torah testifies, it was by "falling upon their faces." And we have learned in the Gemara (Ta'anis 14b): "A distinguished person is not permitted to fall upon his face unless he is certain he will be answered, like Yehoshua bin Nun," because prayer in that form is a degradation to a person, and it is forbidden for a distinguished and righteous person to degrade himself unless he is certain that he will be answered in his prayer, for then it will not be looked upon as disgraceful. And if we see that Moshe and Aharon did not take their honor into consideration, it is a sign that even in their great moment of distress, their faith remained steadfast that their prayer would be answered.

In truth, this matter is not considered a novelty when speaking about the Master of the Prophets and his brother, who was

equal to him — [and as we see, even his student Yehoshua merited this]. And the Torah did not relate this to inform us of the height of their spiritual level, but rather the Torah wanted to teach even simple people who study our Torah that they too must follow in the footsteps of these righteous men and accustom themselves to trust, and when they find themselves in a time of distress, they too should place trust before effort, and not be quick to immediately engage in physical efforts, for this is proof that their faith is not firm.

Every Jew who is observant of Torah and commandments, if he is asked whether he has faith, will surely answer with full confidence: Yes! And his answer is indeed truthful, for otherwise he would not dedicate his time to Torah and its observance. However, most of the time this is not complete faith, and a time of trial will prove it — for then a person forgets that the fulfillment of his heart's desire depends primarily on the Supreme Will, and instead turns first to technical means, upon which he believes the resolution of his distress depends...

And how sweet is the holy language of Maran the *Chazon Ish* when he speaks on this matter in his small *sefer Emunah u'Bitachon* (chapter 2), and here are his words: *"It is easy to be trusting when the main task of trust is not at hand. But how difficult it is to be trusting at the time of its task, etc."* And indeed, in this a person will be tested — whether his mouth and heart are aligned; whether he truly trusts, or whether he has merely trained his tongue to chirp 'trust, trust,' while trust does not truly dwell in his heart.

And there he brings a concrete example: *"And what we see in life — Reuven, a moral man, with the song of trust always on his lips, always condemning excessive efforts and detesting the pursuit of livelihood. And indeed, he is a successful man — in his shop he lacks no customers and has no need for much effort. He loves the concept of trust, for indeed trust also smiles upon him. But behold, we are suddenly astonished to see*

this trusting Reuven whispering with his assistants and advisers how to foil the plan of his colleague who wishes to open a shop like his, and he begins clear and open efforts to dissuade his fellow from his intention..." End of his pure words.

Situations like these stem from the fact that faith is not reviewed and internalized properly. A person generally relies on the faith he acquired in the past, and it seems to him that this faith will accompany him through all circumstances. However, it does not occur to him that there are situations in which his faith must be something real and tangible, visible to the senses; for if not, the pressure will carry him away from faith toward natural means, which to him seem more real...

This is what the holy Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin, may his merit shield us, spoke about when he explained the *posuk* (Tehillim 116:10), 'האמנתי כי אדבר' - *"I have believed, for I shall speak"* — that I have merited to reach the level of *"I have believed"*, meaning that my faith is clear and strong, *"for I shall speak"*, because I have not removed my mind from faith, and I constantly spoke and reviewed to myself sayings that strengthen faith.

I will bring you an example that illustrates

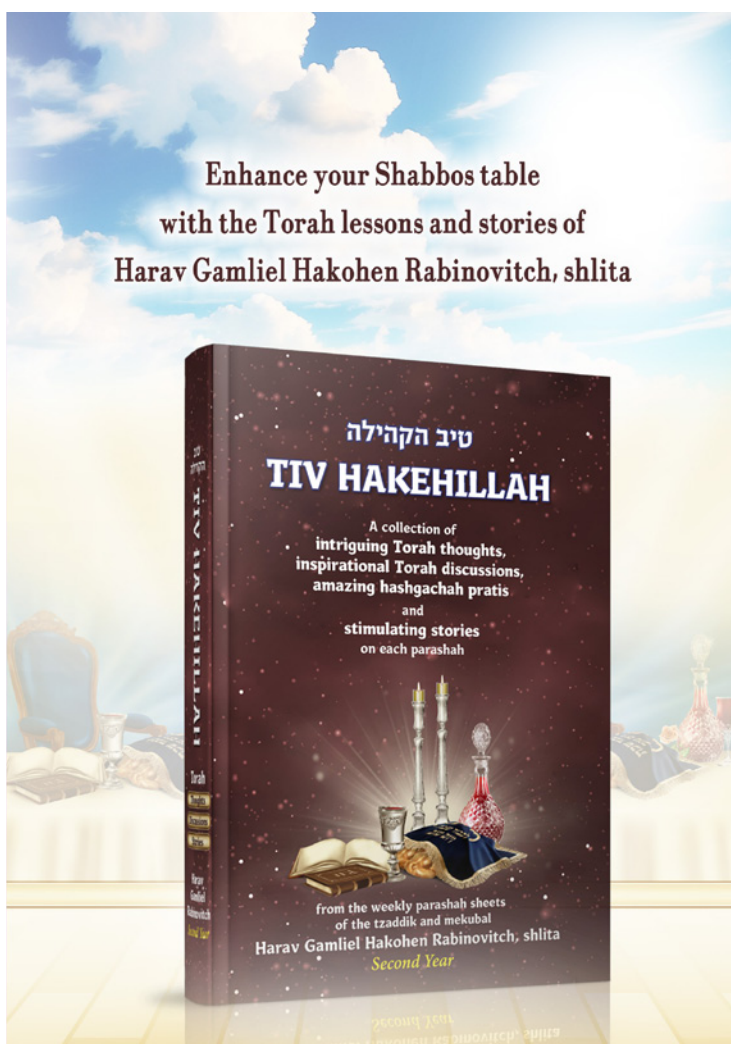
the reality for many people, as a result of the fact that their faith is not as bright as the midday sun. Most of the time, when one hears that someone has been stricken with illness, if you ask him what he did to ease his suffering, he will reply that he took a certain medication. And when asked what he did to heal, he will reply that he went to a particular doctor...

Such is the situation! He does not respond, *"I first turned to Hashem Yisbarch and then took the medication,"* but immediately begins to speak about the medication. And as long as he was able to continue with his efforts, he did not recall at all the need to turn to his Creator. If the commonly prescribed medicine for that illness did not help, he then turns first to another doctor. And only when that doctor too is unable to bring healing to his illness, then the memory awakens — the awareness that, in truth, there is One Who grants permission to the doctor to heal, and that the healing depends on His will, and to Him must one turn and plead that He send His word and heal.

And see the language of the Ramban (Vayikra 26:11), what the righteous did, who were steeped in faith, in such a situation — and here are excerpts from his words: *"So too did the righteous act in the time of prophecy — even if sin caused them to fall ill, they would not seek out doctors, but rather prophets..."* *"And what portion do doctors have in the house of those who fulfill the will of Hashem..."* *"If it were not their custom to use medicine, a person would become ill according to the punishment of his sin, and would be healed by the will of Hashem..."* *"But when a person's ways are pleasing to Hashem, he has no dealings with doctors."* End quote.

Behold from his words what is the proper path that a person should choose in his time of distress, and this is only found in those who are imbued with faith and trust — they are the ones who never divert their minds from faith and are constantly examining and engaging with it.

**Enhance your Shabbos table
with the Torah lessons and stories of
Harav Gamliel Hakohen Rabinovitch, shlita**



‘מה’ מצדדי גבר כוננו’
‘One story leads to another’

In honor of Shabbos, we traveled to my sister’s home in Yerushalayim. I arrived with the gift that Hashem had given me in the form of a sweet and uniquely special child, who is also on a ventilator. I brought with me all the necessary medical equipment required for Shabbos, and we prepared to welcome Shabbos early. Suddenly, I noticed that I had mistakenly not brought one of the tubes for the ventilator, and without that tube, it is not possible to ventilate him. We began to think and devise a plan for where we could obtain this part. Suddenly, an idea came to my sister’s mind to go up to her neighbor on the seventh floor who has a daughter with a disability, and maybe she would have such a tube.

I thought to myself: what is the connection between a disabled girl and ventilation? Is every disabled person on a ventilator? But with hope, I went up together with my sister, and we asked whether she had one, or if she knew of a family that might have a ventilator?

The woman who opened the door began to cry out of emotion, saying: “I do not believe it!!! I do not believe it!!!” When she calmed down a bit, she quickly brought out a large box full of ventilator parts. She told us that a month earlier, a delivery person from Kupat Cholim had come to her house and dropped off this huge box in her living room. When she asked in bewilderment what it was for, he answered that this equipment was designated for her daughter. She explained to him that her daughter had not needed this equipment for nine years — ever since she had been weaned from the ventilator, from birth until the age of one. He told her that those were the delivery instructions.

“I did not know what to do with it — after all, it takes up space in the house, and Kupat Cholim does not take it back because it belongs to me!!!

Now I understand the whole story — HaKadosh Baruch Hu prepared the remedy before the affliction, and already a month ago He knew that you would arrive here and need this part, and ‘From Hashem are a man’s footsteps established!’”

And what was left for us to do but to thank Hashem and to delight in the holy Shabbos day with a feeling of sublime Divine love from Hashem!!!

HaKadosh Baruch Hu gives us trials and gifts, but one must remember that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is with us in the trial, chalilah, He makes no mistakes!!! This story certainly strengthened within me the feeling that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is with me, and everything He does is for our complete good. As a righteous man once told me: “In this world there are no answers, but in the World to Come, there are no questions!!!”
 ר.ח.

I traveled from Yerushalayim to Netanya to serve as the sandek at a bris. The devoted driver who picked me up asked if I remembered to bring a tallis. In truth, I had forgotten. I wanted to call home and ask a grandson to bring me a tallis, but I discovered that I had also forgotten my cellphone at home. I saw how great is Hashgacha — if the driver had not asked me about the tallis, we would have traveled without the phone. Everyone can understand for themselves what it means for me to be without a phone for several hours when there are pressing matters that cannot be delayed...

Moreinu HaRav shlita

Our Master, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh

In honor of the great Yom Hillulah of our Master, Rav Chaim ben Attar zt”l, author of the “Ohr HaChaim” commentary on Chumash, which falls on the 15th of Tammuz (he passed away on Motza’ei Shabbos, the 15th of Tammuz 5503), let us share an excerpt from the collection of Tiv Hamaasiyos from what our revered Rav shlita, recounted on various occasions about him. May his merit protect us and all of Yisrael!

Our Master, the Holy Ohr Hachaim, wrote in our *parashah* that the death of holy tzaddikim is like a transition to another place, a hidden elevated place, where they are gathered in the heavenly academy together with the holy and exalted tzaddikim of earlier times. These tzaddikim are like diamonds and precious stones placed before Hashem Yisbarach in a casket, and from time to time, He takes one out to enjoy it in the hidden spiritual heights.

And these are his holy words (*Chukas* 20:1): “*Bnei Yisrael arrived at the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and Miriam died there and was buried there.* We need to understand why it says she *died there*. Chazal expounded (*Mo’ed Katan* 28a) that they did not delay her. This interpretation seems implied from the words, *and she was buried there*. To answer our question, it appears that because the text mentioned death, it was concerned with the honor of the righteous woman, for it says (*Berachos* 18a) that the righteous are called “alive” even in their deaths. Therefore, it carefully states *there*, meaning she died *there*, meaning she did not remain among the people but was taken to another place, among the righteous. *For the righteous are like precious stones in a casket, placed before the Holy One, Blessed be He. And when He desires one of them, He takes him out of the casket and sets him as an adornment among His adornments.*

• • •

I remember the days of old, decades ago, on the *yom hillulah* of our Master, the saintly Ohr Hachaim, when I ascended with a small number of *talmidim* to his holy grave on the slopes of *Har Hazeisim*. Very few people were there, and almost no one from the Sefardi community.

I was astonished at this, for he was one of the greatest tzaddikim of the Eastern lands, and many great leaders of the generation from the Eastern communities were his *talmidim*, as is known. So why did they rarely visit his holy grave?

When I asked the elder Sefardi Kabbalists about this, they revealed some hidden reasons. They said they feared for their souls due to the overwhelming holiness of the Ohr HaChaim, who in his burning holy fire was very strict about absolute observance of holiness and purity, and he would rebuke anyone for even the slightest negligence in such matters. They feared that they might, *chas veshalom*, be scorched by his fiery coal, which was entirely ablaze with fire!

They also told me about his holy *sefarim*, filled with fiery flames and sometimes written with great sharpness. For example, they showed me the severe warning in the introduction to his *sefer* Chefetz Hashem on the Talmud, where he cautioned that anyone who does not study his *sefer* for its own sake should not study it at all. And these are his holy words (*Chefetz Hashem, first edition Amsterdam* 5492, *introduction*): “It is revealed and known before my Lord, Blessed be He, that my whole intention is to fulfill the will of my Creator. Therefore, anyone who opens this *sefer* should do so only with fear and love for the sake of Heaven, to understand words of pleasantness. And if he does so, he will understand what is before him, and the pleasantness of my words will be sweet to his palate, and he and I will be praised above. Otherwise, he should withdraw his hand from me and not defile the Torah of Hashem to criticize, for in such a case, it is better for him not to have been created (*Berachos* 17a). Thus, we say to a pig, ‘Go around; do not approach the vineyard of Hashem of Hosts.’ For our whole intention was only for merit and not for liability, so that Hashem, Blessed be He, would be pleased. Therefore, I chose to call this *sefer* with the help of Heaven Chefetz Hashem, because my whole intention is to fulfill His will.”

Over the years, as the large pilgrimage to the holy grave began, and many of our Ashkenazi brothers from all communities started to flock to visit his grave, especially

on the *yahrzeit*, members of the Sefardi communities also began to go to the holy grave. Initially, they would gather together to study his holy Torah, sitting and delving into the *sefer* Ohr HaChaim with reverence and awe, and only after they completed their study in his *sefer* would they go up to pray at the *kever*.

Holy and exalted tzaddikim have said that by studying the holy *sefer* Ohr HaChaim, one will have the special merit of being blessed with good children.

They explained the reason, saying that since the Ohr HaChaim did not merit to have offspring, he infused all his procreative power into his holy *sefer*. (As it is written in holy *sefarim*, anyone who has not merited to be blessed with lasting offspring should print his *sefer* and distribute it, thus fulfilling the mitzvah of being fruitful and multiplying through increasing and enhancing the Torah. See the *sefer* Derech Pikudecha by the holy author of Bnei Yissaschar, *mitzvas pru urevu, chelek hamachashavah*, for further elaboration.)

There are already many accounts of childless couples who undertook to study the holy *sefer* Ohr HaChaim regularly, and thereby merited to be blessed with offspring.

I have already suggested, in my humble opinion, that just as this holy *sefer* has the power to bless one with children, it also has the power to grant salvation in finding a suitable and good match. For if one does not find his match, he cannot have children. Consequently, we learn that it also possesses the supreme merit of securing good matches!

[It is also widely accepted among the holy Jews that studying this *sefer* has other wonderful powers, such as its remarkable power to heal eye ailments. Those who have dim eyesight will recover by studying the Ohr HaChaim. These facts are well known.

More than seventy years ago, after the Arabs expelled all the Jews from the Old City of Yerushalayim in pogroms, the Jordanian kingdom took control of the large cemetery on the Mount of Olives. They began to dig up and uproot many tombstones and graves from their places. The bones of the dead were disgracefully and contemptuously thrown out into the fields! These desecrators paid no attention to the place's sanctity and built a large roadway in the middle of *Har Hazeisim* that still exists there today.) To build it, they plowed through many graves and destroyed tombstones, as is known.

Initially, the plan for the road's route was to start right from the bottom of the mountain, in a direct continuation from an intersection at the beginning of the mountain, so that

those coming from *Har Habayis* (through the Lions' Gate) and going to the *Kosel* and other places could drive straight up from the base of the mountain. To this end, they began digging up the first section at the beginning of *Har Hazeisim*, the resting place of our holy Master, the Ohr HaChaim.

The Jordanian workers, as usual, paid no attention to the holy and ancient graves and tombstones on the Mount of Olives. They came in droves with all kinds of destructive tools and heavy equipment and began destroying the cemetery. But suddenly, as the tractor approached the holy grave of the Ohr HaChaim, the tractor inexplicably overturned, and the driver died on the spot. The shock was great; the work halted, and experts were sent to investigate the circumstances of the tractor's overturning. When they found nothing, the workers returned after a few days and tried to continue their destruction. But again, the miracle repeated itself; the second tractor also overturned, and its driver died like the first. After this happened several times, the Jordanians were forced to reroute the road away from that section. They began carving the road higher up the mountain as it is built today. Due to some inexplicable and mysterious reason, they could not build it directly from the intersection below.

Thus, the resting place of the tzaddik was guarded with supreme protection and constant Divine oversight, and the hands of the wicked did not succeed in harming it at all.

The holy gravesite of Rav Chaim ben Attar, the Ohr HaChaim *zt"l*, has long been known and publicized as a wondrous place for accepting prayer and the annulment of harsh decrees. This became especially evident a few years earlier, during the terrible Holocaust, when the Nazis, may their name be erased, attempted to enter the gates of Eretz Yisrael with their vile plan to destroy, kill, and annihilate *chas veshalom*. They had advanced to El-Alamein in nearby Egypt, and a terrible fear fell upon the land's inhabitants. Everywhere, people gathered in fasting, prayer, and cries of supplication.

At that time, a large assembly was held at the holy grave of our Master, the Ohr HaChaim, with the participation of the great and righteous leaders of the generation, headed by the holy Rav Shlomo of Zvihl and the holy Rav of Husiatyn *zt"l*. After the prayer, as they were leaving, the Husiatyn Rebbe said to the Rav of Zvihl that, *baruch Hashem*, their prayers were effective, and no enemy would enter the gates of Yerushalayim. For he saw the Name of Hashem shining and radiating over the grave of the Ohr HaChaim!

Indeed, shortly after that great prayer

assembly, the Nazis began to suffer defeats and failures on the battlefield in Egypt. Despite their previous victorious battles, which, under natural circumstances, should have enabled them to easily conquer Egypt and Eretz Yisrael, Heaven fought against them and pushed them back. All their vast forces were halted and completely defeated. For the Jews living in the Holy Land, it was a great salvation, thanks to the holy and exalted tzaddik, the Ohr HaChaim, may his merit protect us.

One of the righteous geniuses of the previous generation in Yerushalayim was the Rav David Klein *tz"l*, author of *Beis Arazim*, a faithful *talmid* of his teacher, the holy Minchas Elazar of Munkatch *zt"l*. He merited to follow in his footsteps for many years, from his youth, serving him and studying in his exalted yeshivah. The Munkatcher Rebbe mentions him in his *sefer* Divrei Torah (part 7, section 85), where he struggles with a particularly difficult question. Rav David, then a young *talmid* in his yeshiva, provided a wonderful resolution. And these are his holy words: "And while I was troubled by this, the best of our yeshivah students, my dear friend, sharp and knowledgeable in the chambers of Torah, the wonderful David Klein from here, provided an answer, etc."

Rav David Klein merited to ascend to the Holy Land and embrace its soil. After settling in Yerushalayim, he refused to leave it under any circumstances. In his great diligence and care not to waste time, he would not travel to holy places at all. Even when many Yerushalayimites arranged trips to Meron or other holy sites, he always refused to join them, saying that none of these trips justified neglecting Torah study!

As a general rule, from the day he arrived in Yerushalayim, the holy city, he strove not to leave it, saying that just as the Land of Yisrael is holier than all other lands and should not be abandoned, so too is Yerushalayim holier than all other cities in *Eretz Yisrael* and should not be left! (See *Responsa Chatam Sofer, Yoreh De'ah*, chapter 233).

However, I remember that once on the 15th of *Tammuz*, the *hillula* of the holy Ohr HaChaim, after much pleading, he was persuaded to join a trip to the holy grave on *Har Hazeisim*, since it is within the boundaries of the holy city and he did not have to leave its sanctity. He agreed to travel to the holy grave just that one time, and aside from that, he never participated in such trips. His usual practice was only to go every Shabbos night for the *Kabbalas Shabbos* and *Maariv* prayers at the site of the remnants of our holy *Beis Hamikdash*, as was the custom of many Jerusalemites from earlier generations.

Hashem granted me the privilege to be close to him, to serve him in Torah, halachah, and various matters, but this is not the place to elaborate. (Read about him in *Tiv HaKehillah* 5771, *Parashas Emor*, and in *Tiv HaKehillah* 5772, *Shavuot*.)