

Parashas
Shemini

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י"ל ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

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

טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

במעלת העבודה לשם שמים

On the virtue of service for the sake of Heaven

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' תַּעֲשׂוּ וַיֵּרָא אֵלֵיכֶם כְּבוֹד ה': (ט, ו)

Moshe said, "This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do, then the glory of Hashem will appear to you." (9:6)

These words of Moshe serve as an introduction to his words stated afterward (9:7), in which he detailed to Aharon what was incumbent upon him to do. He prefaced by saying to him, "This is the thing that Hashem has commanded"—that he did not fabricate these matters from his own heart, but rather all his instructions were only the commands of Hashem. And so it is also implied from the end of the posuk, that these words were said to Aharon and his sons, for the purpose of the service that was placed upon them was to draw down the resting of the Shechina into the lower realms; therefore he concluded and said to them that if they would act in this manner, their deeds would succeed: "and the glory of Hashem will appear to you."

However, it must be understood why Moshe needed this introduction at all. Did it enter his mind that Aharon his brother suspected him of fabricating matters from his own heart?! For he was equal to him, and Hashem chose him to serve Him, and the height of his level testifies about him that he did not question the prophecy of Moshe. If so, why did Moshe need to preface and instill in him faith in his prophecy?

It can be said that this introduction was stated only to Israel, who were gathered and standing then before Hashem. And even to them he did not say it in order to instill in them faith in his prophecy, but rather to arouse them to perform all their deeds for the sake of Heaven.

In order to understand these matters, let us first cite the words of the holy Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech zy" a, in his sefer Noam Elimelech (Parashas Kedoshim), and this is his language: "'Do not turn to the idols' (later 19:4). In the Gemara (Shabbos 149a) they said: 'Do not turn to your own thoughts.' Their explanation appears according to what is written in the seforim, that in every limb or movement that a person performs in it a mitzvah or something of holiness, then the soul rests in that limb. And when the soul rests in that limb, then the limb moves by its power, and because of this the movement is seen outwardly. And this varies in each person, according to his deeds so are his movements. And because of this, the movements of the righteous are sweet and good to those who see them, for the movement is by the power of the soul, and the soul is a portion of G-d from above, in which all goodness is found," end of his words.

What is understood from his words is that when a person performs a mitzvah, he arouses the supernal holiness both upon the limb with which he performs the mitzvah, and upon the movements that he makes at the time of its fulfillment. And according to the purity of his intentions, so is the level of holiness that is drawn into his movements and his limbs. And that holiness arouses grace, and therefore the righteous person, whose deeds are exceedingly refined, is very sweet and good in the eyes of those who observe his actions, for the grace poured upon them is very strong.

In light of his words, it can be said that Moshe knew of Aharon that all his deeds were only for the sake of Heaven. And the posuk itself testifies to this after the command regarding the acts of the Menorah (Bamidbar 8:3): 'ויעש כן אהרן' - "And Aharon did so," and Rashi explains: "to tell the praise of Aharon, that he did not deviate"—that he performed the service only with proper intention, without any ulterior motive or deviation for blemish. Therefore, one who observed him at the time that he performed the service would certainly recognize the great sweetness and grace that rested upon his movements, and would understand that not for nothing was he chosen for the service of the priesthood, for through the great holiness that rested in his deeds, he had the power to draw down the holiness of the Shechina also upon the entire camp of Israel. However, even after the Children of Israel perceived the great grace that was infused in the deeds of Aharon, they still did not know to what to attribute it. And this is the secret that Moshe sought to reveal to them in the posuk before us: that it is because all his intention in performing "this thing" was in order to fulfill "that which Hashem

טיב המערכות

עליונים למטה *The upper ones were below*

A certain man was struggling greatly with his livelihood. Everything he tried did not succeed. His wife would ask him to find himself a partner, to open a business together with him, and perhaps in this way he would succeed. But he did not want any partner.

One day, when she pressed him greatly with her words, he went out to the nearby forest, and there he poured out his conversation before the Creator. And so he said: "Ribono shel Olam, my wife asks me to find a good partner, but how will I know who is a proper partner? Is he honest or chailah not? And perhaps even with a partner I will not succeed in business—then what will become of me? Therefore, I turn to You, and I ask that You agree to be a partner with me. And I promise You that from this day onward, every business that I do, and everything that I earn, we will divide between us equally."

The man returned home and informed his wife that he had found a good and proper partner, and also a very wealthy one. Indeed, from that day he began to succeed in his business, and he did not forget to set aside half of his profits for charity. In addition to this, a wondrous thing occurred: his blessings were fulfilled. People would come to receive a bracha from his mouth, and every blessing that came from his mouth was fulfilled in its entirety. One of the righteous men, when he heard the story, said: It is no wonder that his berachos were fulfilled, for Chazal ruled (Bava Kamma 33b), "A partner—what he does is effective." And since this man is, בביכול, a partner with Hashem, HaKadosh Baruch Hu has no choice, as it were, but to fulfill what he decrees. In one of the services of the Mishkan, the Torah describes (9:20): 'ושימו את החלבים על החזות ויקטר את החלבים המזבחה' - "And they placed the fats upon the breasts, and he burned the fats upon the Mizbeach." Rashi explains: after the waving, the priest who performed the waving would give them to another priest to burn them, thus "the upper ones were below."

Beyond the order of the service, the Torah teaches us here an important principle: as long as a person feels that he is "above," he is not fit to be brought near before Hashem. Only after he reaches a state of lowliness—of "the upper ones below"—then he is fit to be brought near before Hashem.

And also Aharon and his sons—only after they attained this concept were they able to bless Israel. For as long as a person thinks that he blesses through his own power, his blessing does not make an impression. But one who understands that the blessing is not from his own power, but rather from the power of the Creator, he is able to bless Israel, and his blessing makes an impression Above.

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commanded,” and there was in it no defect of any personal inclination. Therefore, also you—if only “that which Hashem commanded you do,” then “the glory of Hashem will also appear to you.” For every person, wherever he is, can refine his deeds so that they will be more and more for the sake of Heaven, and in this way he will draw more holiness through his deeds upon himself and upon all his surroundings.

In light of what has been said, the intention of the posuk at the end of Sefer Shemos (39:42) is well understood, that after it described in great detail all the work of the construction of the Mishkan by the “wise-hearted,” it concluded: “כל אשר צוה ה' את משה בן עשו בני ישראל את כל העבדה” - “According to all that Hashem commanded Moshe, so did the Children of Israel perform all the work.” This posuk calls out, “expound me,” for it is obvious that they did what they did only according to what Moshe was commanded from the mouth of the Almighty, for if not for all the commands that were said regarding the construction of the Mishkan, they would not have exerted themselves at all. It must also be understood the length of its language and the repetition of its words, for it would have been sufficient had it said, “According to all that Hashem commanded Moshe, the Children of Israel did.” What did it intend to add by emphasizing “so did they do,” and by concluding again “all the work”? Also, in the following posuk (there, 43), it repeats the matter by saying: “וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל הַמְלָאכָה וְהִנֵּה - “And Moshe saw all the work, and behold they had done it as Hashem had commanded, so had they done, and Moshe blessed them,” whereas it should have said only, “And Moshe saw all the work and Moshe blessed them,” and from the previous posuk I would have understood that when he saw the work, he also saw that they had done it “as Hashem had commanded.” And here too it emphasized again “so had they done,” and

the intention of all this must be understood. According to our words, it can be said that the Torah did not intend to relate the mere fact that they did everything outwardly as Hashem commanded, for in this it is obvious that they did not change anything from all that Hashem spoke explicitly. Rather, it speaks only about the inner intention: that all the wise-hearted individuals each performed his work only for the sake of Hashem, without any personal inclination whatsoever. And even though this was skilled craftsmanship, and it required broad understanding, and they knew that ultimately, when their handiwork would succeed, they would be able to take pride in their craftsmanship, nevertheless they did not intend for this, and all their intention was only that the will of Hashem be fulfilled.

And according to this it is also well understood

what it says there, after each specific item of work, that it was done “as Hashem commanded Moshe,” for each vessel was made by a different person, and therefore it was necessary to inform regarding each vessel separately that it was made only for the sake of Heaven. And this is what it emphasized at the end, that “according to all that Hashem commanded Moshe, so did they do”—that is, in every detail literally, not only outwardly but also in the inner intention. And it added “all the work” to inform that all the wise-hearted had intention for the sake of Heaven, and therefore all the details of the Mishkan were made for the sake of Heaven. And behold, when Moshe saw the work, the verse did not need to inform us that he saw with his eyes that it was done according to the command of Hashem, nor did it need to inform that through his holy spirit he knew that everything was done for the sake of Heaven. But in addition, the Torah wished to inform us of another quality that existed in this work, which is also recognizable through sight, and that is the grace of holiness that the wise-hearted drew upon all the vessels of the Mishkan through the power of their proper intention.

And this is what it said: “And Moshe saw all the work”—when he came to the level of seeing, “and behold,” there was yet another matter that testified that “they had done it as Hashem commanded,” for “so had they done”—they had made things upon which the grace of holiness hovered. And therefore “Moshe blessed them,” and Rashi explains that the blessing was, “that the Shechina should rest in the work of your hands”—that the holiness that hovered over the work of their hands should be the cause to draw down the resting of the Shechina, similar to that holiness that would in the future be aroused through the service of Aharon, which would be a cause for the resting of the Shechina within the entire camp of Israel.

‘פינוי בניו’

‘Urban renewal’

About a week before the Chag of Pesach, the telephone rang in the house, and on the other end of the line was an avreich, a family man in severe distress. His non-Jewish landlord had not extended his rental contract, and he found himself thrown out with his family, without a roof over their heads. He searched quickly for an apartment and closed on an empty one—without furniture or household contents—anything, as long as they would not remain in the street. And when I say empty, I mean without a kitchen, living room, closets, bookcases—without anything at all! He related this and gave thanks to Hashem that he had at least found a roof for his family.

We organize all the donations of second-hand furniture in our area of residence in England as an act of kindness. People know that instead of throwing away a table or a closet, they call us, and we match the furniture with those who can benefit from it.

We explained to the avreich: “It is Erev Pesach, and it is hard to believe that people will now be giving away furniture, but if something comes in, we will put you at the top of the list because of the urgency, and whatever is found we will transfer immediately!”

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I said at home that apparently there is no chance in the world that right now, a moment before Pesach, there will be a salvation for this avreich! People may indeed replace furniture during this period, but certainly not in the week before Pesach! I had not yet finished the sentence when the phone rang again. This time, on the other end of the line was a person who told us that he had just sold his house, and the buyers demanded to receive the house empty of equipment and furniture because they were bringing everything new, and whatever remained would be thrown into the trash! He detailed that he had there a kitchen, a living room set, closets for the rooms—a whole house in excellent condition that it would be a shame to throw into the garbage! This was expensive and good furniture!

Immediately we called the astonished avreich and informed him, and Baruch Hashem both sides came out satisfied!!!

At that moment I understood that there is hashgacha of a miraculous nature in the world, and truly everything is supervised—one only needs to contemplate and to give thanks!!!

ס.ל.

טיב המעשיות

The Holy Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk zy" a

On the occasion of the *yahrzeit* of the holy tzaddik Rav Menachem Mendel (son of Rav Moshe) of Vitebsk zy" a author of *Pri HaAretz*, which falls on Rosh Chodesh Iyar, whose resting place is in the old cemetery of the holy city of Teveria, let us glimpse, in some small measure, the greatness of his holy conduct, so that we too may learn from him how to fear Hashem and to love Him.

His eminent disciple, the holy tzaddik Rav Avraham of Kalisk zt"l, wrote in the sacred epistle that was sent from Teveria to the chassidic community overseas, in which were recorded teachings of living Divine words from the holy Rebbe of Vitebsk. At the conclusion of that letter, the Kalisker added: "The words of the Rav [shlit" a], are words of the living God, and these are precisely the matters acquired through the acquisition of Torah and avodah, for 'their roots are emunah and their branches are tevunah.' And what need is there for me to continue [with my praises of him] as it would be merely like the brightness of a candle in daylight, which adds nothing (see *Chullin 60b*)—for everything is encompassed in his holy sayings, and whoever tries to add, merely detracts."

Our master and teacher, the holy tzaddik Rav Dov Ber, the great Maggid of Mezeritch zy" a, as is well known, sent his foremost disciples to many locations throughout the Diaspora, in order to draw the hearts of Klal Yisrael closer to Hashem and to His holy Torah. He matched each disciple to a place according to his individual character and mission, and instructed them in their sacred path. He sent his great disciple, the master of the present *hillula*, the holy tzaddik Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk zy" a, to the province of Reisen, a vast region populated with thousands of Jews. Indeed, Rav Mendel accomplished there mighty and wondrous deeds, and many were brought close through him to Torah and avodah.

On one of his journeys to Mezeritch to appear before his great teacher, the Maggid asked him about his activities there in Reisen. Rav Mendel replied with wisdom: "When I arrived there in Reisen, I found Jews with 'tzerissene kapotkes un gantze hertzer'—torn coats but whole hearts." That is to say, outwardly they appeared as servants of Hashem walking about in tattered garments, but inwardly their hearts were whole; their avodah had not penetrated inward to break the heart. Therefore, he said, "I reversed the form, so that they would be 'gantze kapotkes mit tzubrochene hertzer'—complete coats with broken hearts." Meaning: outwardly they should not take pride in their piety, but appear as people clothed properly and respectably (and he also alluded that he influenced their livelihood for the better, so their garments would indeed be fitting and perfectly whole), while inwardly they should walk with broken hearts, with humility and inner humbleness, serving Hashem from the depths of the heart.

These words are most fitting for the one who said them, for it is known that the exalted sacred path of the holy Rebbe of Vitebsk was such that outwardly he conducted himself with authority and regal bearing, while inwardly his heart was

utterly humbled and shattered to fragments. As he would frequently sign his name: "The one who is truly lowly."

By contrast, to several disciples who were giants in revealed Torah, the Maggid instructed that they publish their works in *nigleh*. Thus, for example, he directed the holy tzaddik, the author of the *Tanya zt"l*, to compile *Shulchan Aruch Harav*. Likewise, he instructed the holy tzaddik Rav Pinchas, the great Frankfurter Rav zt"l—the brother of Rav Shmelke of Nikolsburg zt"l—to compose the work *Hafla'ah* on *meseches Kesubos* and *Hamakneh* on *meseches Kiddushin*, and to disseminate them among Klal Yisrael.

The Maggid sent His holy disciple, the tzaddik Rav Levi Yitzchok zt"l, to serve in the rabbinate of the great city of Berditchev, where he acted as *av beis din*, taught Torah to the multitudes, and ignited their hearts in *avodas Hashem*. Many other disciples of the Maggid likewise served as *rabbanim* in various communities.

On another occasion, Rav Ber sent two of his disciples—both distinguished *rabbanim*—to a certain town, to return the hearts of the local Jews in repentance to their Father in Heaven, to uplift them and draw them closer to Torah and *avodas Hashem*.

The faithful disciples set out on their way. Upon arriving in that town, they initially attempted to speak directly to the hearts of the local Jews, to admonish them and arouse them to the purpose of life and bring them closer to fear of Heaven. Before long, however, they understood that their words were making little impression. The Jews of that town were simple folk and unlearned people, distant from Torah, and they lacked the proper "vessels" to accept words of rebuke.

These great disciples did not despair. They resolved not to leave until they had properly fulfilled the mission entrusted to them by their master, the holy Maggid.

Accordingly, these two "golden pillars" settled in the local *beis midrash* and began to occupy themselves, with fiery holy passion, in Torah, *tefillah*, and *avodas Hashem*, according to their holy way. Slowly, the townspeople began to draw near to these holy tzaddikim, to observe up close how the prayer of a Jew should appear inwardly, what faithful *amal haTorah* truly is, how one is meticulous with lenient and serious *mitzvos* alike, what the inner essence of *Shabbos Kodesh* is, and the exalted nature of its sanctity, and the like. The locals took these matters to heart and undertook to repent out of love [*teshuvah me'ahavah*].

The two disciples did not hasten to leave. As the days passed, the townspeople increasingly began to grasp how far these matters reached. The simple Jews bonded with, and cleaved to, these two exalted guest tzaddikim who had settled for

a time in their town. The tzaddikim, for their part, reciprocated fully, teaching them paths of Torah and *yirah*, and elevating their level to a wondrous inner spiritual ascent.

Here, within this study group, the Gemara's teaching (*Yoma 86a*) was fulfilled: "It was taught (*Devarim 6:5*): וְיָאֵהְבֶתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, And you shall love Hashem your God, [meaning] that the Name of Heaven should become beloved through you; that one reads and studies and serves Torah scholars, and that one's dealings with people are gentle. What do people say about him? Fortunate is his father who taught him Torah, fortunate is his teacher who taught him Torah; woe to those who did not learn Torah—look at this one who learned Torah, how pleasant are his ways, how refined are his deeds. Of him the *navi* says (*Yeshayahu 49:3*), וְיֹאמְרוּ לִי עַבְדֵי אֲתָהּ יְשׁוּעָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בָּרַךְ אֶתְּפֹאֶר, - And He said to me: You are My servant, Yisrael, in whom I will be glorified.

For about a year, the two disciples remained in that town fulfilling their master's mission. Only after a full year, when they saw that they had set them firmly upon the right road, did they return to Mezeritch to their great teacher.

When they appeared before the master, the Rebbe questioned them closely about all that had transpired in that town, and why they had remained there for so long.

They recounted matters as they were: that when they initially attempted to speak directly to the people's hearts, they found that the listeners could not properly comprehend the inner dimension of what stood before them, and that it was necessary to open pathways of love within their hearts. Therefore, they were compelled to walk with them along a different path, in accordance with the *pasuk* (*Devarim 28:10*), וְיָרְאוּ כָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי יִשָּׂם ה', And all the peoples of the earth shall see that the Name of Hashem is called upon you, and they shall fear you. For with simple unlearned folk, words of rebuke and admonition are ineffective; rather, they must see uprightness with their own eyes. When all the peoples of the earth shall see that the Name of Hashem is called upon you, then, of itself, pure *yiras Shamayim* will be drawn into them—and they shall fear you—and they will return in complete repentance before their Creator.

In the year 5537, the holy tzaddik Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk zt"l traveled to the Holy Land together with his disciple, the tzaddik Rav Avraham of Kalisk zt"l, at the head of an entire community numbering several hundred chassidim. They settled in the holy city of Teveria, which at that time was a central locus of Jewish settlement in the Holy Land.

Upon the arrival of this sacred community in Teveria, these tzaddikim and leaders instituted a number of customs and enactments that they had practiced in the Diaspora. Among them is the well-known custom, observed to this day throughout the Galil, that the *kohanim* do not recite *Birchas Kohanim* every day. For in Eretz Yisrael the prevailing custom was for *kohanim* to *duchen* daily, whereas in the Diaspora the custom was to

do so only on festivals. Therefore, in Teveria they established a kind of compromise: the kohanim would recite Birchas Kohanim also on Shabbos, but only during the Musaf prayer. As is known, they had additional concealed reasons—[razin de-razin]—for instituting a practice that differed from the accepted custom in Eretz Yisrael and in other western lands to recite the priestly blessing every day, for (Mishlei 25:2) כְּבֹד אֱלֹהִים הַסְתֵּר דָּבָר, - the glory of God is to conceal a matter.

Another custom instituted by the holy Rav of Vitebsk in Teveria was that the entire congregation would wrap themselves in a tallis gadol for the prayer of Kabbalas Shabbos, until after the Ma'ariv of Shabbos, in accordance with the custom of the chassidim of Reisen, which they had held from ancient times.

This custom is practiced to this day in several holy communities, as is well known—among them the communities of the chassidim of Slonim and Karlin in Eretz Yisrael—as preserved from their ancient communities in Teveria. This beautiful custom is already alluded to in the Gemara (Shabbos 25b), “Thus was the practice of Rabbi Yehudah bar Ilai: On the eve of Shabbos they would bring him a basin full of hot water, and he would wash his face, hands, and feet, wrap himself, and sit in fringed garments, resembling an angel of Hashem Tzeva’os, and his students would hide from him in the folds of their garments.” And further (Shabbos 119a): “Rabbi Chanina would wrap himself and stand at the entrance on the eve of Shabbos and proclaim, ‘Come, let us go out to greet the Shabbos Queen.’ Rabbi Yannai would don his garments on the eve of Shabbos and proclaim, ‘Come, O bride, come, O bride.’”

Now, several decades after the passing of Rav Mendel of Vitebsk, his holy sanctuary in the Old City of Teveria stood desolate, until a letter was written by that exalted and wondrous tzaddik, the holy author of Beis Aharon of Karlin zt”l. In it he commanded his chassidim in Teveria to gather funds, and purchase for themselves the beis knesses and the entire building of the Rav of Vitebsk. Indeed, they upheld their Rebbe’s command with faithful spirit, exerting themselves with much self-sacrifice, until they succeeded in fulfilling his will. From that time until today, that holy edifice has remained in the possession of the chassidim of Karlin, who preserve the place in sanctity and purity as befits it, and they maintain there all the customs and enactments that had been practiced in that beis midrash from earliest times.

After the holy tzaddik Rav Yochanan of Karlin zt”l came to Eretz Yisrael, on one of his visits he traveled with his many chassidim to spend a Shabbos in the holy city of Teveria. There, among his congregation—ancient chassidim from generations past—he conducted his holy tishen and tefillos in the ancient kloiz of Karlin in Teveria, which had been acquired many years earlier at the directive of his grandfather, the holy Rebbe zt”l.

When the holy Rebbe arrived, accompanied by his flock, at the beis midrash for the Minchah prayer

on Friday afternoon, he was received with great honor. However, he was not wrapped in a tallis, as it was not his custom to don a tallis for Kabbalas Shabbos. Seeing that he had no tallis, the faithful attendants approached him with holy trepidation and presented him with a fine tallis to wrap himself in, according to the custom of the place.

The Rebbe was deeply moved by this sacred custom, whose pure source lay in the great beis midrash of the Vitebsker mara de’asra. He trembled slightly and replied, “I did not know of this custom and did not prepare myself for it. To fulfill such a sanctified custom, I require great preparation; you should have told me several hours beforehand so that I could prepare myself properly!”

From this we learn paths of pure fear of Heaven: the great preparation required before every mitzvah, that even for the fulfillment of a mere custom the tzaddik must prepare himself to perform it with awe and love, to bring satisfaction to his Creator.

After the holy tzaddik Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk zt”l, author of Pri HaAretz, made aliyah to the Holy Land, he went to the city of Teveria, accompanied by approximately three hundred chassidim. At that time, Teveria had one organized community of Jews from the Eastern lands.

Rav Mendel met immediately upon his arrival with the great rav and leader of that community, known as the Chacham Bashi. They found much favor in each other’s eyes, and a mutual love developed between them. At that very meeting they resolved that peace and unity would always prevail between the two communities—a unity preserved in exemplary fashion in Teveria for generations—and that all matters of the city would be conducted and decided only by joint agreement of the two rabbanim together, the Sephardic rav and the Ashkenazic one.

For many years thereafter, Teveria continued to be governed according to this model: in every matter, the Ashkenazic rabbi and his beis din united with the Sephardic rav and his beis din, and together they would sign all enactments and communal affairs of the city.

One of the first assemblies following this important decision was scheduled for the middle of the month of Elul, with several important communal matters on the agenda. A distinguished emissary from the Va’ad HaKehillah arrived at the sacred residence of the tzaddik of Vitebsk and delivered into his hand the invitation to the rabbinic assembly.

When the day of the assembly arrived, all the great Sephardic and Ashkenazic rabbanim gathered and assembled, headed by the Chacham Bashi, and they waited expectantly for the arrival of Rav Mendel, as arranged. After a lengthy wait, however, the tzaddik sent his faithful disciple, the holy Rebbe of Kalisk, to apologize that unfortunately he would not be able to attend the assembly that day.

The Chacham Bashi was distressed by the Rebbe’s absence, and when he later met him, he questioned him about it. Rav Mendel apologized and asked his forgiveness, explaining the reason for his absence: “From Rosh Chodesh Elul until after Simchas Torah,” he said, “I am exceptionally occupied with holy service, and I find no free moment for other matters.”

Here the tzaddik added a chilling statement: “Believe

me, Chacham Bashi, even if I were to walk in the street during these awesome days and find at my feet a vast treasure of precious stones and pearls, I would not have time even to bend down and pick it up!”

It was well known that our exalted master and teacher, my eminent mentor Rav Avraham Yurovitz zt”l, dayan of our holy community, the Eidah HaChareidis here in the holy city of Yerushalayim was profoundly devoted to the holy Rebbe Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk zy”a and to his pure work Pri Ha’aretz, in glory and splendor. He even named his beis midrash after him, calling it Ohel Menachem.

It is well known and widely spoken of that the humility and lowliness of spirit of the holy Rav of Vitebsk were almost without parallel, and he was among the unique individuals of the generations in this regard—so much so that he would sign his letters and writings, “The one who is truly humble.”

For many years, Rav Avraham would travel on every Erev Rosh Chodesh to prostrate himself at the gravesite in Teveria. At all times and seasons he would delve with great depth into the study of the sacred work Pri Ha’aretz, and for more than twenty years he even delivered a regular shiur on this holy sefer. I myself learned much Torah from him from this sacred work, and several fine compositions emerged from his sweet teachings.

It was a familiar expression on his lips that there is scarcely any sefer among the disciples of the holy Baal Shem Tov zy”a that arouses the themes of lowliness, self-nullification, and humility as does Pri Ha’aretz.

Indeed, the trait of humility and lowliness was one of the noble qualities for which the tzaddik Rav Avraham was especially famous. He conducted himself with simplicity and gracious humility toward every person; he treated every child with respect, and toward every rav and Torah scholar he was filled with reverence and self-effacement. He was filled with pure faith, burning like fire, as received from the great beis midrash of the Rebbe of Vitebsk, with which his entire sefer is suffused.

In every event that befell him, or in any trouble he heard of from others, he saw a sign from Heaven that he must correct himself. In general, in everything that occurred in his life, he perceived a heavenly indication demanding self-rectification. Even when someone came to relate his own troubles, he saw in this a sign from Heaven that he himself must correct something, and therefore he would promise salvation—because he reasoned that if he would correct himself in what Heaven had hinted to him, the other person’s trouble would evaporate, for it had already accomplished its purpose.

Similarly do we find regarding our holy master Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk zy”a, as cited in the sacred work Notzer Chesed by the holy Rebbe of Komarna zy”a (Pirkei Avos 6:11), and these are his holy words: “I, the lowly one, heard from our master Rav Elimelech, who said, ‘The entire world cries out before him—this one pleads for his children, this one cries to me for livelihood, another one pleads for life.’ And he said, ‘Because I sinned and tipped the world to the side of guilt, they cry out before me: give us children, life, and sustenance, for they were taken from us because of you—and these words burn like fiery torches.’” According to another version, these words were said in the name of his brother, the holy Rebbe Reb Zusha zy”a.