



# The Path To Follow

MIKEITZ

268

Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> 08

1st Tevet 5769

Publication

HEVRAT PINTO

Under Aegis of

RABBI DAVID HANANIA

PINTO CHLITA

11, rue du plateau

75019 PARIS

Tel: +331 42 08 25 40

Fax +331 42 08 50 85

[www.hevratpinto.org](http://www.hevratpinto.org)

Responsible of publication

Hanania Soussan

## GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

### Hypocrisy

Each person cries out, "Ascribe to the L-RD, O families of the people, ascribe to the L-RD glory and strength" (Psalms 96:7). In the end, we are the very ones who diminish His glory, for the Holy One, blessed be He, has given us several passages on how to properly use the tongue, and yet we ignore them. Thus where is the glory that we ascribe to Him? To what can this be compared? It is like a great fire that is raging in the city. People cry out, "Bring water to extinguish the flames." They continue to cry for help, and yet the fire does not die down. In fact it gets worse! Eventually, people see what is happening and realize that those who are crying out for help are secretly fanning the flames. Thus we cry, "Ascribe to the L-RD...ascribe to the L-RD glory and strength," yet we are the very ones who disregard His holy words. Therefore where is His glory?

- Chafetz Chaim, Kuntrass Michtavim VeTakanot

## HOW A PERSON COMES TO KNOW HASHEM

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him" (Genesis 42:8). This is surprising, for the Sages tell us that Joseph resembled Jacob (Bereshith Rabba 84:8). Therefore how could his brothers not have recognized him? Furthermore, Joseph was not called Tzafnat Pa'aneach, for the name given to him by Pharaoh had been forgotten. That being the case, perhaps a few Egyptians called him Joseph? Since Joseph is a Hebrew name, how could his brothers not have recognized him by it?

We must perforce say that his brothers did recognize him. Why then does the Torah state that they did not recognize him? It is because they refused to recognize his sovereignty. The proof is that, as we read in the very same chapter, they said to him: "All of us are the sons of one man" (Genesis 42:11) – thereby including Joseph among them, as our Sages have said (Bereshith Rabba 91:7). Furthermore, we read that Joseph's ten brothers went down to Egypt (Genesis 42:3), and Rashi notes that the text does not say that "the sons of Jacob" went down to Egypt. This teaches us that they regretted having sold Joseph and decided to act towards him in a brotherly manner and free him regardless of the price. Hence when they descended into Egypt, it was to free him and allow their brotherly feelings to resurface. However they did not go to Egypt to find a sovereign, and they still refused to recognize his sovereignty and admit that his dreams had been correct.

Along the same lines, concerning Pharaoh we read: "A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). Our Sages are divided as to the meaning of this statement: "Rav and Samuel [differ]. One said that he was really new, while the other said that his decrees were new. He who said that he was really new did so because it is written 'new,' while he who said that his decrees were new did so because it is not stated that [the former king] died and that he reigned [in his place]. 'Who knew not Joseph' – he was like one who did not know [Joseph] at all" (Sotah 11a). This must be the case here, since further on it is written, "They drank...with him" (Genesis 43:34), which the Sages explain to mean: "With him they drank, but away from him they did not drink, for Rabbi Levi said: 'During the entire 22 years that he did not see them, he tasted no wine, and they too tasted no wine until they saw him'" (Bereshith Rabba 92:5; see also Shabbat 139a). If they avoided wine during all those years, why did they drink it now? After all, did they know that this viceroy was none other than Joseph?

We are forced to say that they knew who he was, although they still refused to recognize his sovereignty. When did they recognize it? It was when he told them, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. And now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you" (Genesis 45:4-5). He said to them: "I am Joseph your brother" – know that I did not willingly become a ruler, for do you think that I desire all this glory? I became a ruler only to feed you during this famine. Furthermore, there was already a decree that you would descend into Egypt, and had I not become a ruler in Egypt, you would have come here in chains. Now that I've become the ruler of Egypt, you will come down in chariots and with great honor. The Sages cite Joseph as telling them:

"Hashem decreed that we are to descend into Egypt in chains, as it is written: 'Your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own' [Genesis 15:13]. However the Holy One, blessed be He, created the remedy before the illness, sending me before you to prepare the way."

This is why Joseph said to them, "I am Joseph your brother." In other words: "I am not a ruler, but rather your brother. I know that you do not recognize my sovereignty, and that you came to Egypt in order to free me, though only as your brother, not as a ruler. You should realize, however, that it was Hashem Who brought me here for your good, not mine." When his brothers heard these words, they immediately recognized his sovereignty and bowed before him.

We must all learn a lesson from this, namely that we can perform mitzvot and study Torah, yet still fail to recognize Hashem. As the Sages say on the verse, "These things that I command you today shall be upon your heart" (Deuteronomy 6:6): "Rabbi states, 'Why mention this? Since it is written, "You shall love the L-RD your G-d will all your heart," [it means that] I do not know how to love G-d. Therefore it is written, "These things that I command you today shall be upon your heart." Place these things upon your heart, and as such you will recognize the One at Whose utterance the world was created, and you will cleave to His ways'" (Sifrei, Devarim 33). This is surprising, for will a person not recognize Hashem if he does not place these things upon his heart?

There are thousands of people who perform all the mitzvot and study Torah! Can we possibly say that they have failed to recognize the One at Whose utterance the world was created? From here we learn that a person will not recognize the Holy One, blessed be He, unless he separates himself from the meaningless pursuits of this world in order to cleave to Hashem. When a person is in love with the things of this world, he will not love G-d or even recognize Him. Even if he performs all the mitzvot, it will not constitute a true recognition of G-d. Of King Solomon it is written, "Know the G-d of your father and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing soul" (I Chronicles 28:9). This means that man is commanded to know the Holy One, blessed be He. How? By loving Him!

On the verse, "Then you will return and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves G-d and one who does not serve Him" (Malachi 3:18), the Sages have said: "The 'righteous' is the same as 'one who serves G-d,' the 'wicked' is the same as 'one who does not serve Him.'" [Hillel] said: One who serves Him and one who does not serve Him both refer to those who are perfectly righteous. However one who studies a chapter 100 times cannot be compared to one who studies it 101 times" (Chagigah 9b). This teaches us that there is righteous person who serves G-d and a righteous person who does not serve Him. How is this possible? One who studies a chapter more than necessary does so not only to understand it, but because the Creator commanded him to study Torah. That is, he studies it out of his love for G-d, which leads him to recognize Him. As for a person who does not study more than is strictly necessary, this indicates that he studies only for the sake of understanding it, not because he loves G-d. Hence he is not described as one who serves Him.

# MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

## The Evil Eye

*It is written, “The sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who came” (Genesis 42:5). Rashi explains: “They hid themselves so that they would not be recognized, because their father had commanded them not to all appear at one entrance, but for each one to enter through his own entrance so the evil eye would have no power over them, for they were all handsome and strong.”*

The evil eye is a serious matter. In Sefer HaBrit (Part I, 17:3) it is written, “Sometimes even a person who is good in his own eyes harms a person by putting the evil eye on him, even if he loves him like his own soul. He is guilty without even knowing it, for the very air that emerges from him is evil. How much more is this true when a person is evil by nature! If he is someone’s neighbor, he will look upon him with an evil eye, gazing upon his belongings and envying him. This is a potentially disastrous situation, which is why it is better to be discreet in everything we do.”

Hence this is a matter that we should not look upon lightly, for even the Patriarchs feared the evil eye, as Jacob told his sons: “Why do you make yourselves conspicuous?” (Genesis 42:1). Furthermore, concerning the expression, “You [Hagar] are with child” (ibid. 16:11), the Sages state that Sarah placed the evil eye over Hagar’s fetus and the result was that Hagar miscarried during her first pregnancy. Sarah did this measure for measure, eye for eye, as it is written: “Her mistress was despised in her eyes” (v.4). The Sages say that when a person finds a lost object and takes it home, he should not spread it out, otherwise the evil eye may cause it to be destroyed (Bava Metzia 30a). They also say, “He who trades in cane and jars will never see a sign of blessing. What is the reason? Since their bulk is large, the [evil] eye has power over them” (Pesachim 50b). Here Rashi states: “Market traders are exposed to public gaze, and therefore to the evil eye, which is a powerful source of misfortune.”

Rabbi Elazar Azkari wrote: “One who envies his friend places the evil eye on him. This is especially so if he speaks of him by saying, ‘Look at how rich so-and-so is!’ Such a person is a follower of Bilam, who looked upon Israel with an evil eye and opened his mouth to say, ‘How goodly are your tents, O Jacob.’ By his mouth he becomes the agent of the Satan, and of him it is said: ‘You dispatched your mouth for evil’ [Psalms 50:19]” (Sefer Charedim, ch. 66).

## A Pearl From the Rav:

### *Just How Far Should Gratitude Extend?*

The Sages have said, “At that moment, Jacob sent Joseph a letter in which he issued demands and threats. He wrote: ‘From your servant Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham the Hebrew, the prince of G-d. As G-d lives, when my sons told me how you acted towards them, I did not call upon G-d concerning you, for otherwise you would have perished along with all your people before my son Benjamin presented himself before you. Yet I told myself that my son Shimon was with you, and that perhaps you would treat him well, which is why I did nothing to you’ ” (Sefer HaShir, p. 200).

From here we learn that Jacob had the ability to destroy Egypt and rescue Shimon and Benjamin. Why did he not do so? It was because the righteous Joseph had acted kindly with his brothers and fed them when they were hungry. Jacob could therefore not demonstrate ingratitude by harming him. Even though Joseph had spoken harshly to them and placed Shimon in prison, Jacob had no right to harm him, a fact that he alluded to in his letter by stating: “Yet I told myself that my son Shimon was with you, and that perhaps you would treat him well, which is why I did nothing to you.” This teaches us that Jacob refrained from praying against him only because he might be treating Shimon well, not to men-

tion the good that Joseph did for them by filling their bags with grain and giving them all they needed. From here we learn just how far gratitude should extend. Even if Joseph made his brothers suffer and they could not understand what he wanted, Jacob did nothing to him because his sons benefited from Joseph. Hence Jacob had no right to be ungrateful towards him.

## Mikeitz: An Allusion to Chanukah

*It is written, “And it happened [vayehi] at the end [mikeitz] of two full years [shnatayim yamim] that Pharaoh [u’pharo] was dreaming [cholem], and behold [vehinei] he was standing [omed] by the river [al haye’or]” (Genesis 41:1).*

Vayehi is formed from the first letters in the expression Venichbash Yosef HaTzaddik Yud (“the righteous Joseph was imprisoned for ten [years]”). Mikeitz is formed from the first letters of Mechalom Kam Tzaddik (“the righteous was raised up by a dream”). Shnatayim is formed from the first letters of Smol Ner Tadlik Yamin Mezuzah (“You shall kindle the light on the left, the mezuzah on the right”). Yamim is formed by the first letters of Yhiu Mechuvanim Yachad Mismol (“they proceed in the same direction from the left”). U’pharo is formed by the first letters of Vekach Pirshu Raboteinu Aleichem Hashalom (“as our teachers explained it”). Cholem is formed by the first letters of Cheit Leilot Madlikin (“we light for eight nights”). Vehinei is formed by the first letters of Vekach Hu Nussach HaHalachah (“and this is how the law is formulated”). Omed is formed by the first letters of Amad Mattiyahu Arba Dorot (“Mathias stood for four generations”). Al haye’or is formed by the first letters of Aleinu Ligmor HaHallel Yachid O Rabim (“we must recite the entire Hallel, by ourselves or with the community”).

– Chacham David

## Benjamin Knew the Secret

*It is written, “Joseph saw Benjamin with them” (Genesis 43:16).*

In his book Ye’arot Devash, Rabbi Yehonatan Eibeshutz cites Sefer HaYashar in stating that before Benjamin returned home to his father, Joseph told him that he was really his brother. Joseph also told him to hide this secret from his brothers so he could determine if they were willing to offer themselves for the sake of Rachel’s offspring. Although Benjamin saw that his brothers suffered greatly over the plot involving Joseph’s cup, he said nothing to them. He remained silent in order for them to be punished for having sold the righteous Joseph. Since it was better for them to suffer in order to atone for their sin, Benjamin kept quiet.

## The Guardian at Israel’s Doors

*It is written, “They spoke with him at the door of the house” (Genesis 43:19).*

“At the door of the house” – because Jacob had prayed for them by saying: “May G-d Alm-ghty grant you mercy before that man” (Genesis 43:14). Therefore when they reached the door, they remembered the mezuzah in which G-d’s Name appears and they said: “Our father told us that G-d Alm-ghty would grant us mercy, and at the door is where this prayer can be fulfilled.” Hence they did not approach Joseph, but rather the individual who was standing at the door, an individual who welcomed them, for at that point Jacob’s prayer had taken effect.

– Sifte Cohen

## Money Played its Role

*It is written, “Your money has reached me” (Genesis 43:23).*

This is surprising. The individual who was standing at the door of the house was Manasseh, so how could he tell a lie? As the Zohar tells us, however, the goal of the famine that affected Egypt was to gather tremendous riches for the Children of Israel, riches that they would take with them during the Exodus. Therefore Manasseh was correct in saying

that “your money has reached me,” meaning that all the money reaching him was really theirs, so why would he take any from them?

– Sha’ar Bat Rabim

### A Father’s Anguish Over His Son

*It is written, “When he sees that the lad is missing, he will die, and your servants will have brought down the gray hair of your servant our father in sorrow to the grave” (Genesis 44:31).*

When Jacob sees that his son is missing, he will die. Yet what of Benjamin’s ten sons, who will all suffer on account of losing him? Why not mention their suffering as a reason for releasing Benjamin? From here we learn that a father’s anguish over the death of a son is far greater than the grief that a son experiences over the death of his father.

– Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

The reason why this happens, explains the Rebbe of Ostrovitz, is because fathers transmit their character traits and tendencies to their children. Since the first man did not have parents, but only children, he bequeathed to them the anguish that he felt when his own son died. He could not transmit to his children the grief that he felt over the death of his own parents, for he had no parents.

– Likutei Batar Likutei

### I Despise Pride

*It is written, “If your youngest brother does not come down with you, you will not see my face again” (Genesis 44:23).*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev used to say that here the Torah is telling us by allusion that it does not love people who say, “What do I care about others? What matters is what happens to me!” To such people our Torah says: “If your brother does not come down with you, you will not see My face again” – for I despise you!

– Likutei Batar Likutei

### A Father’s Responsibility to His Son

*It is written, “For how can I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest I see the evil that will come upon my father?” (Genesis 44:34).*

Every father should constantly ask himself, “How can I go up to my Father in Heaven if the lad is not with me” – if the younger generation is headed for disaster?

– Divrei Meir

This verse teaches every individual to think about rectifying the days of his youth. He should tell himself that he cannot go up to his Father in Heaven if he has squandered his younger years.

– Ma’ayana Shel Torah

### Overview of the Parsha

In this week’s parsha, Joseph is taken from prison in order to become the viceroy of Egypt and distribute food to the surrounding countries. He also plots against his brothers by means of the grain that they come to purchase.

Because Joseph interprets dreams while in prison, he is called upon to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams, and as a result he is appointed as viceroy. When years of abundance eventually end and a famine begins, Joseph’s brothers come to Egypt for food. Recalling his dreams, Joseph accuses them of being spies and imprisons Shimon. The next time they come to Egypt, when they run out of food, they are obligated to bring Benjamin their youngest brother, who becomes Judah’s responsibility. Benjamin receives more than his brothers as they dine in the home of Joseph, who once again accuses them of conspiring against him, this time to steal his cup.

## REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

### Why Eight Days?

The Beit Yossef asks why we celebrate Chanukah for eight days, since the miracle of the flask of oil lasted only seven days, having contained enough oil for one day. The Alter of Kelm replies that the Greeks wanted to eliminate the Children of Israel’s faith in G-d, Who directs the world according to His will. They wanted Jews to believe that everything which happens in the world occurs naturally. Many Jews had already adopted this view, but when they saw the supernatural miracle of the oil, everyone realized that it came from Hashem. They also realized that even when the world follows its “natural” course, it is still the hand of G-d that is directing everything. Hence when we give thanks for the oil that burned for more than seven days, we cannot forget to give thanks for the fact that oil “naturally” burns. Even nature is nothing but a miracle that is constantly recurring, which is why in the piyut of Chanukah we say: Bnei bina yemei shemona kavu. Since they were bnei bina (“men of understanding”), individuals who perceived how things are interconnected, within this miracle they realized that oil burning naturally is itself a miracle. The difference between miracle and nature resides in frequency only. Miracles that occur very infrequently, which cannot be explained by natural laws, are called miraculous, whereas miracles that occur all the time are called natural. As Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler writes in Michtav Me-Eliyahu, “Let us imagine that we saw a dead person laid to rest in his grave. The body decomposes and turns to dust. Then slowly, from the depths of the grave, something begins to grow. ... Eventually the earth is thrust aside and a complete, living human being shakes himself free of the earth and emerges from the grave. What would we say? We would be absolutely sure that we had witnessed a great miracle of the resurrection of a dead person. But then why do we not see the same miracle in the growth of a seed? ... Why should this event not also be considered a resurrection of the dead? In fact it is. The only difference is that we are used to the resurrection of seeds, but we are not used to the resurrection of people.”

## ESHET HAYIL

### How Fortunate Am I!

It is written in the Zohar (Parsha Beshalach), “There is a palace above that is reserved for Bitya the daughter of Pharaoh and the myriads upon myriads of righteous women with her, each having a special place of delight. Three times a day it is proclaimed, ‘The faithful prophet Moses is arriving,’ and Bitya goes to another place where a curtain is hanging, and through it she sees the appearance of Moses and says: ‘How fortunate am I to have raised this light!’ She then turns toward the women who are with her, all attired in beautiful garments, as they were in this world, garments that shine with great light. In another palace there is Serah the daughter of Asher, accompanied by myriads upon myriads of righteous women, and three times a day it is proclaimed: ‘The righteous Joseph is arriving.’ She then rejoices and goes to the curtain that is hanging there, and she sees the light of Joseph’s silhouette. She says, ‘How fortunate am I, and blessed be the day when I announced the news to my grandfather Jacob.’”

– Sefer Kav HaYashar, ch. 54

## YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

### Rabbi Zeev Nachum Bornstein – The Author of Agudath Ezov

Born into the Chassidic Polish world more than 150 years ago, the famous gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Zeev Nachum Bornstein Zatzal was the Rav of Biala and author of Agudath Ezov. Rabbi Zeev Nachum was a cedar of Lebanon, a powerful Torah figure who illuminated the firmament of Polish Jewry in his time. Considered as one of its greatest rabbis, Rabbi Zeev Nachum taught Torah for his entire life and made thousands of disciples, including famous rabbis and great Torah scholars of Poland.

It is said that for many years he would choose an etrog immediately after Yom Kippur, proceeding to synagogue even before Havdalah in order to select it. He would take his etrog from a case of etrogim, but without even looking at it. He would then place it, still wrapped, in an etrog box and not open the box until the first day of Sukkot, on the morning before taking the lulav. As it turned out, the etrog was always magnificent and the finest in the city. Several years before his death, however, Rabbi Zeev Nachum stopped choosing his etrog in this way. Instead he would choose it like everyone else. His relatives asked him about this change, as well as why he had not previously been worried that he might choose an improper etrog for the mitzvah. The Agudath Ezov replied that it was all very simple: “G-d made man upright,” and therefore when two things are placed before him, one good and one bad, why would he choose the bad? Yet sin damages a person, which is why he is drawn towards evil. However at the conclusion of Yom Kippur, once all sin has been forgiven, a person is once again drawn to the good. Nevertheless, he cannot rely on this fact near the end of his life. In fact during the last year of his life, it is impossible for a person’s sins to be completely erased, for in that case he would not leave this world. Since his sins are not completely forgiven, there again exists the possibility that he will not choose the best etrog, or even one that is unsuitable.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

### A Menorah of Gold

It is written, “Behold the stone that I have placed before Joshua: Upon one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription, says the L-RD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day” (Zechariah 3:9-10). The heart of every man is described as “one stone,” for as long as the evil inclination reigns over man, he is like a stone, so difficult that it is to concretize the potential that is rooted in his soul. Yet in the future, “I will engrave its inscription,” meaning that the heart will be engraved with a desire to serve Hashem and run towards Him like a wild gazelle, for then “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” That is, evil will disappear all at once, and therefore freewill will also completely disappear. This is this meaning of the menorah that the prophet Zechariah saw. He was told that in the future, oil will be drawn to the menorah on its own, without the need for human intervention of any kind, for freewill will be abolished. At that time the earth will be filled with a knowledge of G-d, and the righteous will grasp the Torah to an even greater degree, as it is written: “Seven ducts for the lamps on its top” (Zechariah 4:2). Likewise the light of the sun will be seven times more intense, like the light during the seven days of Creation. In fact the term “menorah” will be used to describe the Torah and mitzvot. Today, each time that a person has a choice to make, he must oil the lamps by himself in order to concretize the potential that is rooted in his soul. However in the future, when freewill will be abolished, light will shine in Israel not because of itself, but because of Hashem’s spirit.

– Ner Mitzvah

## THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

### Rabbeinu HaKadosh and Antoninus

Rabbeinu HaKadosh was born at a time when the Romans authorities had decreed that Jews could not circumcise their sons. Rabbeinu HaKadosh’s father, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, said: “The Holy One, blessed be He, has commanded us to circumcise our sons, and these evildoers want to stop us? We cannot annul the decree of the Holy One, blessed be He, in order to fulfill the decree of those evildoers!” Thus Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel circumcised his son. When the governor of the town was told of this, he summoned him and said: “Why have you transgressed the emperor’s decree by circumcising your son?” He replied, “It is what the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded me to do!” The governor said, “I greatly respect you, for you are the leader of your people. However I cannot absolve you from a decree of the emperor.” Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel replied, “What do you want of me?” He said, “I want you to send the baby and his mother to the emperor, and he will decide what he wishes to do with them.” He said, “Do what you want.” The governor immediately sent the baby (Rabbeinu HaKadosh) and his mother to the emperor, and they traveled for the entire day. At night they arrived at the palace of the emperor, whose wife had recently given birth to a boy named Antoninus. The mother of Rabbeinu HaKadosh came before the mother of Antoninus, and the latter said: “What are you doing here?” She replied, “You have decreed that we cannot circumcise our children, and now that I’ve circumcised my son, I have been sent to the emperor.” When Antoninus’ mother heard this, she said: “If you want, we can exchange babies, for in this way your baby’s life will be spared.” She immediately agreed, and off she went to the emperor. The governor came before the emperor and said, “Sire, this woman transgressed your decree by circumcising her son. I have brought her to you. Do with them as you wish.” The emperor said, “Verify that her son is circumcised.” When it was discovered that the baby was not circumcised, the emperor became angry with the governor and said to him, “I issued a decree against circumcised babies, and you bring me a baby that is not circumcised!” The emperor ordered the governor killed, and he annulled the decree and sent the baby and his mother back in peace. Before she returned home with her baby, she was told by Antoninus’ mother: “Given that the Holy One, blessed be He, performed a miracle for you through my son, they will be forever linked.” As a reward for the milk that Antoninus drank from the mother of Rabbeinu HaKadosh, he merited to study Torah and serve Rabbeinu HaKadosh. Antoninus also became emperor and inherited this world and the World to Come.

## A TRUE STORY

### Concern for Others

It is more important to be concerned that others have something to eat than to fervently recite Shir Hashirim. As we read concerning Joseph, “He was the provider to all the people of the land” (Genesis 42:6).

An important guest was staying with the tzaddik Rabbi Nachum of Horodna, who was late arriving home one Friday night after prayers. Rabbi Nachum was occupied with finding lodging for Jewish soldiers in the Russian army on Shabbat, in order for them to rest from their harsh duties. It took Rabbi Nachum quite some time before he could finish this holy task, and he arrived home to recite Kiddush a few hours late. Needless to say, he was distressed by the fact that his important guest had been forced to wait so long before eating the Friday night meal. Rabbi Nachum began offering his apologies to his guest, saying: “It was the custom of the gaon Rabbi Alexander Ziskind Zatzal, the author of Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah, to immerse in a mikveh on the eve of Shabbat and to wash his hands, feet, and face, as well as to wear white garments on Shabbat and go to synagogue with a parchment containing Shir Hashirim, just like a Sefer Torah, which he himself had written. He would read Shir Hashirim patiently and with great care, enthusiasm, and fervor. Our forefathers have handed down to us the tradition that angels stop singing in order to hear the pleasant sound of Shir Hashirim, a sound that traverses the heavens. All this occurred in former generations, when there was no obligation to support Jewish soldiers. In our time, however, it is certain that the holy gaon and author of Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah would not have hesitated for an instant to stop reciting Shir Hashirim in order to immediately save the soul of a single Jewish soldier in need.”