

SHABBOS STORIES FOR

PARSHAS MIKEITZ 5780

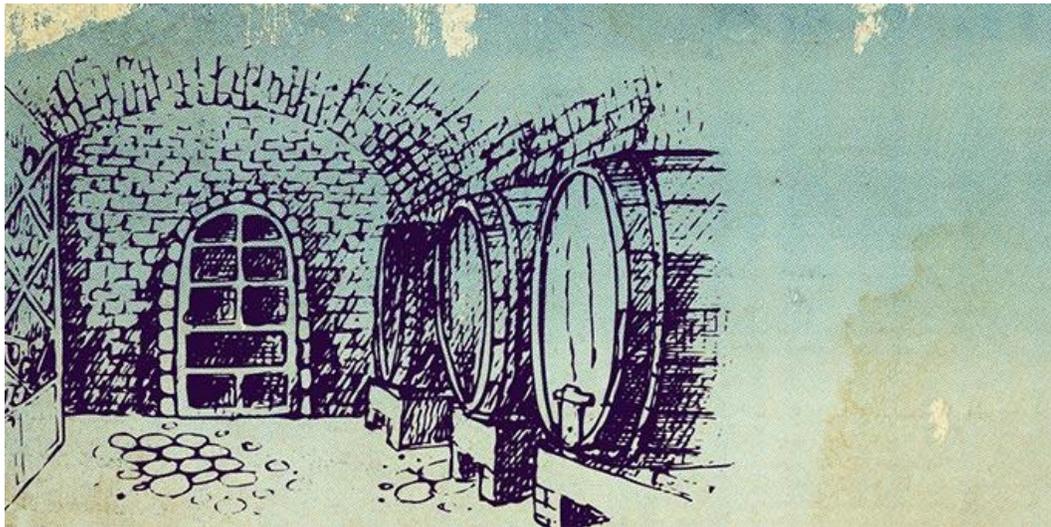
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The Simple Vintner of Slonim

By Asharon Baltazar



Reb Yehuda Leib stopped walking and listened. Mournful sobs drifted from the open synagogue window. Forgetting where he was headed, he rushed inside and was startled to find Ephraim, a sincere but unlearned man, standing in the center of the room, his face red as he recited Psalms with vigor, tears soaking the small book held in his hands.

Ephraim was considered a master vintner in the town of Slonim. Well known in the area, his wine—produced only in small batches and shared privately—was a favorite among Chassidim. Perhaps he could have earned more if he were to apply for a license and sell large quantities, but Ephraim was a simple man, and he had no idea how to apply for a license or how to set up a commercial enterprise.

This was the first time Reb Yehuda Leib had seen Ephraim pray with such fervor. Upon reaching the verse “My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You,”

his voice cracked, the words stuck in his throat. His body trembled with emotion and tears flowed unrestrained. Scrunching his face with concentration, Ephraim enunciated each word again and again. He appeared to be begging for his life.

Begging G-d to Not Let His Family Get Hurt

“G-d Almighty!” he suddenly yelled. “Don’t let my family be hurt ... Please, I beg of you!”

Rooted to the spot, Reb Yehuda Leib watched in bewildered silence. And though it took some time, he waited till Ephraim’s crying subsided to sniffles before addressing him.

“Can you tell me what’s wrong?”

Ephraim sighed weakly. “Less than an hour ago, I heard banging on my door and opened to a government official. Police, he told me, were on their way to raid my house. They’d received an anonymous tip alleging I run an illegal wine business, and would arrest me if they found any evidence at all.”

“Who do you think told them?” asked Reb Yehuda Leib.

“I suspect it's the man who used to kindle my ovens,” Ephraim said, expression sour. “We fought over something not long ago. I ended up sending him out of my house. He swore revenge, and considering it an empty threat, I dismissed his words and forgot about the whole thing. It makes sense now, him being the snitch, since he knew my house pretty well and would certainly be able to make it look as if I have a whole wine business going.

Recovered Somewhat from The Initial Shock

“I recovered somewhat from the initial shock and managed to tell my wife the horrible news before running to the Rebbe’s house to seek his advice and blessing. I felt a second punch to the gut when they told me he wasn’t home. Apparently, he’s out of town. My head swirled. Without his prayers, what was left for me to do? So, I rushed to the synagogue to beg for G-d’s mercy. And if I am to go to jail, at least He should spare my wife and children. A jail sentence for a crime like this would be a very long one, indeed...”

As this took place, the police had been marching along to Ephraim’s house.

Meanwhile, after he had slammed the door and disappeared in a panic, his wife hastily improvised a countermeasure of some sort. She brought in armfuls of straw from the yard and flung them down the steps leading to the tiny basement winery, sprinkling some around the door as well. Once everything was covered with straw, she bolted the basement door shut.

Moments after she had finished, she looked up to see the oven kindler leading the police almost pompously. All they had to do was follow the direction of his pointing finger and discover the wine. The direness of the situation, together with sheer terror, crashed down on her, and she felt overpowered. She hunkered in a dark corner of the house, muttering a prayer and hoping for the best.

The Snitch Gestures the Police Toward the Cellar Door

The officers, their eyes scrutinizing the walls, trooped inside through the house and fanned out in a search. The oven kindler kept silent and watched the police comb the house fruitlessly. With childlike impatience, he gestured toward the cellar door.

“Look over there! The wine’s just down that door,” he panted, eyes glinting maliciously.

The chief steeled his jaw, peeved at the interruption. “Quiet. Let the police do their job.”

The oven kindler’s shoulders sagged, his“ frustration mounting as he watched the officers overturning the house, steadily eliminating the potential hiding places, yet still failing to uncover traces of illicit wine manufacturing. House completely swept, nothing was left for them to do other than leave. When the oven kindler saw the officers turn towards the door, he once again failed to contain himself.

“The Jew is hiding his wine behind that door! I swear to you!”

The Strewn Straw Causes the Police Officer to Erupt Furiously

The chief shot the oven kindler another smoldering look. He walked over to the door and opened it. At the sight of the straw strewn down the stairs, he erupted furiously.

“Don’t you know that straw interferes with fermentation?” the chief roared at the oven kindler, who winced with every word. “I’ve had enough of your lies. Do you seriously think the Jew would ruin his entire inventory of wine with straw?!”

When Reb Yehuda Leib would retell this story, he emphasized, “Look how this simple Jew from Slonim instinctively reacted. When confronted with disaster, it never occurred to him to hire a lawyer or approach a public official. For him, it was either the Rebbe or the synagogue!” *Adapted from Shichat Hashavua #615*

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayishlach 5780 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.

A Very Special Sefer



Rav Dovid Ashear relates an incredible story. During the Holocaust, the Nazis, yemach shemom's, would collect many Jewish artifacts and Seforim, because they wanted to make a museum called, 'The Jew That Was'.

After the war, the allies came into Germany and found many crates of Seforim. They didn't know what to do with them, so they decided to send it to America.

When the crates got there, someone suggested that since all of the Seforim came from Yeshivos, it would be appropriate for them to be sent again to Yeshivos in America. Every Yeshivah got a package.

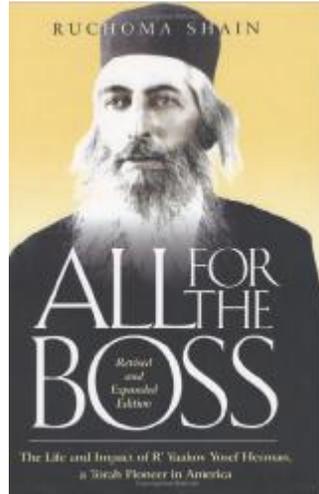
When Ner Yisroel in Baltimore got their package, Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman, zt'l, the Rosh Yeshivah, decided that since he wasn't in Germany during the Holocaust, and the Mashgiach, Rav Dovid Kronglas, zt'l, was there, he said that Rav Dovid should open it.

It was a very emotional time for Rav Dovid as he remembered how the Nazis ym's came and took these Seforim away from people. After Rav Dovid opened the box, he became even more emotional because the top Sefer was Sefer Chachmah U'Mussar, which was written by his own Rebbe, Rav Yeruchum Levovitz, zt'l.

With tears streaming down his face, Rav Dovid's face turned white as he opened the Sefer and saw that written on the inside the cover, it said: 'From the Seforim of Dovid Kronglas'! Hashem worked out that the box that went to Rav Dovid, had his very own Sefer on the top of it!

Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sarah 5780 email of Torah U'Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.

Even a Fire Cannot Mar One's Joy of Shabbos



Rav Yaakov Yosef Herman, zt”l, was very careful to always be happy on Shabbos and never let anything bother him. One Shabbos night, a police officer came to his house with an urgent message. He told Rav Yaakov Yosef that there was a fire in his fur store and the fire department was working hard to put out the fire, and that he must come immediately!

Rav Yaakov Yosef thanked the police officer and explained, “Today is Shabbos, and I will not be able to go there until after Shabbos ends, tomorrow night.”

The police officer was amazed and said, “Your store is burning down! You won’t even go see what is happening?”

Rav Yaakov Yosef shook his head no, and wouldn’t go see his burning store. The entire Shabbos, Rav Yaakov Yosef was happy as usual, and he didn’t show any sign that he was upset. He sang beautiful Zemiros and said Divrei Torah, and did not even hurry to make Havdalah after Shabbos.

On Motzaei Shabbos, Rav Yaakov Yosef went to check on his store, expecting to see it burned to the ground. To his surprise and amazement, though, his store was still standing, and was not damaged at all. It was in perfect condition! However, the fur store next door to his had gone up in flames! (All for the Boss, p. 116)

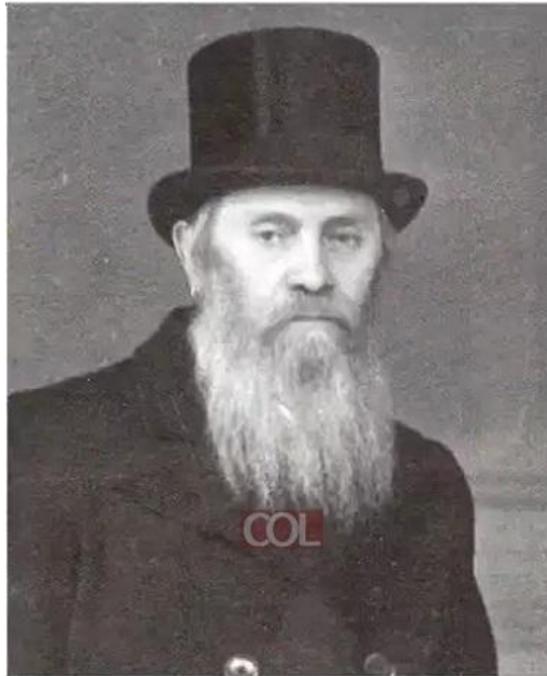
Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sarah 5780 email of Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.

Story #1148

The Unusual Accessories of an "Old Fashioned" Russian Rabbi

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

editor@ascentofsafed.com



Rabbi Menachem-Tzvi Rivkin, known as "*the Ramatz*",

A. The Top Hat

In England, Rabbi **Menachem-Tzvi Rivkin**, known as "*the Ramatz*", represented Chabad and raised funds for the impoverished schools in Europe that were forced underground due to Soviet oppression. He was a respected rabbinic figure and served on the local rabbinic court in Manchester.

In 1924, Rabbi Rivkin accepted a rabbinic position at the Chabad synagogue in Manchester at the recommendation of the sixth Chabad Rebbe, **Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn** (the "*Rebbe Rayatz*").

"You should inspire the community, to come to daily prayer services, and to make time for the study of Chassidic philosophy," the Rayatz wrote him.

"Your spirit should not deflate when you see the vast amount of work in strengthening the spirituality of the Jews in the city," the Rayatz added, "for as the

founder of Chassidism, *Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov*, states, "The natural way of the world is that first there is pain and then success."

As an immigrant from Russia, Rabbi Rivkin looked like and felt like a foreigner in the British city of Manchester. Wearing a Russian kasket beaked cap on his head and sporting a long black beard, the scholarly rabbi was an anomaly to the typical Englishman.

The synagogue, named "Khal Chassidim Nusach Ari," had been established in 1897. When his congregation requested that he exchange his Russian hat for the more contemporary top hat, the perplexed Rabbi Rivkin wrote to his Rebbe.

The Rebbe Rayatz responded that he should follow the custom of the community. He fulfilled the rebbe's request, and a top hat remained on his head always.

During World War II, the Germans bombed England as part of a Blitzkrieg ("lightning war"), a military tactic of mobile forces and locally concentrated firepower.

Rabbi Rivkin's home was one of the buildings that were hit.

Much of the house collapsed while Rabbi Rivkin was sitting in his study; shrapnel came flying toward him, and the door crashed upon him. His only protection was the top hat, which likely saved him from a fatal injury.

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**Source:** Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from an article by **Dovid Zaklikowski** for //COLlive.com.

**Biographical notes:** **Rabbi Yosef-Yitzchak Schneersohn** [of blessed memory: 12 Tammuz 5640 - 10 Shvat 5710 (Jan. 1880-June 1950 C.E.)], known as the **Rebbe Rayatz**, was the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, from 5680 to 5710 (1920-1950 C.E.). He established a network of Jewish educational institutions and Chasidim that was the single most significant factor for the preservation of Judaism during the dread reign of the communist Soviets. In 5700 (1940 C.E.) he moved to the USA, established Chabad world-wide headquarters in Brooklyn and launched a global campaign to renew and spread Judaism in all languages and in every corner of the world, the campaign that was continued and expanded so remarkably successfully by his son-in-law and successor.

## ***B. The Earring!***

Prior to his birth in 5629 (1869), the mother of Rabbi **Menachem-Tzvi Rivkin** had given birth to two boys, both of whom had died at a very young age. When she was pregnant with him, she was sorely afraid that the same thing would happen again.

She sent her husband to the fourth Chabad Rebbe, **Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn** (the "*Rebbe Maharash*"), for help and guidance, for she was extremely worried.

The Rebbe gave him an *atarah* (a silver "crown" that some affix to the collar of the *tallit*/prayer shawl) and instructed that his wife should have an earring made from it that from the day of birth the baby should wear it and never remove it. This would be a *segulah* (propitious) for a long and healthy life.

The instructions were followed and Rabbi Rivkin wore this earring for many decades and enjoyed good health.

Just once, in the course of his sojourn in this world, did he remove the earring-and he became so ill that he replaced it immediately.

*[Now let's take another look at the top hat photo. Look closely at Rabbi Rivkin's right earlobe (on your left) and you can see the earring.]*

One year, 1948, on the eve of *Yom Kippur* 5709, I [Mr. Zalman Jaffe of Manchester], together with a good friend of mine, Mottel Jaffe (no relation), went to visit Rabbi Rivkin in order to extend our wishes for a good new year to him.

After we left, Rabbi Rivkin made his way to immerse in the *mikvah* (purification pool). As he was about to exit the building, he suddenly noticed the earring was not in his ear! He was profoundly disturbed and upset. The earring he had worn all his life at the instruction of the Rebbe!

All those that were present helped him search. They even drained the *mikveh* of all its water in a final, but vain, attempt to find it.

Having no alternative, Rabbi Rivkin continued to the synagogue for *Yom Kippur* services. He was halfway up the steps when he collapsed - and died. He was 77 years of age.

The earring was never seen again.

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**Source:** Compiled and adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a blend of a 1980 diary entry by Mr. Zalman Jaffe, for *Tishrei* (the month of holidays) 5741 (1980) published on //Chabad.org; and (in curly brackets { } part of) a report by Rabbi David Dubow, the emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Princeton NJ, published on //col.org.il in the name of his father, R. Yehuda-Leib Dubow, who heard it from his father, R. Yitzchak Dubow.

**Biographical notes:** Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn [of blessed memory: 2 Iyar 5594 - 13 Tishrei 5643 (1834-Sept. 1882 C.E.)], the fourth Lubavitch Rebbe, known as the Rebbe Maharash, was the seventh and youngest son of his predecessor, Rabbi Menachem-Mendel Schneersohn, the Tsemach Tsedek.

Rabbi **Menachem-Tzvi Rivkin** [5629 - Erev *Yom Kippur* 5749 (1869 - Sept. 1948 [1])], known as "the *Ramatz*", served on the rabbinic court in Manchester. Russian born, he represented Chabad in England, and raised funds for the impoverished schools in Europe that were forced underground due to Soviet oppression.

**Connection:** Weekly Reading of *Vayishlach* - Jewish men with earrings (see Gen. 35:4) Reprinted from the Parshas *Vayishlach* 5780 email of KabbalaOnline.org

# A Miracle on the Yahrtzeit of the Bas Ayin



**Harav Elimelech Biderman leads the *tefillos* at the *kever*.**

**The Bas Ayin was *niftar* childless, and his *kever* in Tzfas is noted as a place of *yeshuos*.**

Reb Shlomo Gross z'l was a Slonimer Chassid from Tzefas who sold kerosene for his parnassah, but he was always extremely tight, financially. There was barely food in his home.

The night of the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit he went to the beis hachaim and prayed at the Bas Ayin's grave, begging Hashem that his parnassah should be easier. That night he saw the Bas Ayin (Rav Avraham Dov of Avritch, author of the serfer Bas Ayin) in his dream.

The Bas Ayin said, "I appreciate that you prayed at my grave [as the Zohar states that tzaddikim have pleasure when people daven at their graves] but why didn't you make a seudah for me?"

In the morning Reb Shlomo Gross gathered ten people for a seudah in honor of the Bas Ayin. After the seudah, he bought a lottery ticket and won a large sum of money.

He donated a portion to the Slonimer Yeshiva, and requested that the yeshivah use this money annually to make a seudah in honor of the Bas Ayin. (Reb Shlomo Gross requested that they should use white tablecloths for the seudah, and he had a few other requests to make this seudah special and inspirational.)

This tradition continues until today in the Slonimer Yeshivos, still funded by the money Reb Shlomo Gross earned on the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit (12 Kislev).

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzei 5780 email of Torah Wellsprings: A Collection of Thoughts of Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.*

# **The Desire of a Holocaust Survivor to Continue Her Dead Family's Heritage**

There's an amazing story from the book "*Small Miracles for the Jewish Heart*" that took place in the early 1900's. It became common for Eastern European Jews, tired of pogroms, poverty and despair, to send their children to the United States, where there were opportunities for a better life.

Because it was very expensive, the parents usually sent their children one at a time as the money for passage became available. The children would stay with relatives in America until the rest of the family arrived.

In 1930, Anya Gold, the oldest of eight children, was sent by her parents to the United States. Having saved only enough money for one ticket, her parents told her they would all soon follow, but they never did. It took them years to accumulate enough money, but by that time, the Holocaust had already begun.

Anya was raised by her aunt in Baltimore. Eventually, around the year 1946, a few stray survivors from her hometown in Poland arrived in Baltimore and brought with them the news that she dreaded to hear: Her entire family had been wiped out.

It was hard for her to go on. She knew, however, that the best way to commemorate her family's legacy was to build a family of her own. She wanted to get married, have a lot of children, and name them after her family members.

Shortly afterward, she married her wonderful husband, Saul, and they began to build their lives together. A couple of years went by and they were still childless. The doctor informed them that there was a problem that would make it

impossible for them to ever have children. They began to contemplate adoption, but Anya was hesitant. She had so hoped to raise her own children to continue her family's legacy.

Finally, they decided to adopt. The Jewish agency they contacted in New York told them that an infant had just been put up for adoption. They became very excited and traveled to New York. When they arrived, their hopes were shot down; the family had reconsidered and taken their baby back.

*"We traveled all this way,"* they pleaded with the agency official. *"Isn't there something else you can do for us?"*

The agent said, *"Yes, we do have a wonderful little girl named Miriam, who is in desperate need of a home."* Miriam was adorable, but she was already eight years old. Anya and Saul really wanted a newborn. Dejectedly, they returned home.

Another year passed with no prospects. They contacted many agencies across the United States, but an infant was very hard to find. Anya's intense longing for a child consumed her. *"Let's see if we can still adopt that little girl, Miriam,"* she told her husband.

They called the agency, and the official said the girl was not yet adopted. *"Not too many people want a nine-year-old,"* she admitted. *"But now there is a bit of a complication. Her little brother has been found in Europe and has joined her in our home for war orphans. The siblings are inseparable, and we promised them that they will be adopted together."*

The couple went to New York and saw the children. Miriam had a sweet demeanor, and her six-year-old brother, Moshe, was adorable as well. Anya and Saul brought them home to Baltimore, happy to finally fill their home with children.

Miriam looked around her new home. Suddenly, she pointed to a picture on the piano and asked Anya, *"why do you have a picture of my grandma here?"* Anya stared at the picture of her deceased mother. What was the child talking about?

Miriam ran to her suitcase, took out a faded picture and showed it to Anya. *"See?"* she cried. *"I have that picture, too. That's my grandma"* Then she took out a picture of her mother. Anya was shocked to see that it was Sarah, her own sister!

Unknowingly, she had adopted her sister's two children! She did have the merit to continue her own family's legacy. Anya and Saul had a difficult life, but they clearly saw the *Yad Hashem* guiding them which brought them much comfort.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Vayishlach 5780 email of Rabbi Amram Sananes as written by Jack E. Rahmey.*

# The Two Million Dollar Error

By Rabbi Ariel Mizrahi



**Al Gindi, co-founder of Century 21**

The huge clothing store in Manhattan, Century 21 was badly hit on the infamous day of 9/11. The owner, Al Gindi, lost a lot of money and filed a claim with his insurance company.

A few weeks later, his son, Raymond walked excitedly into his father's office waving a cheque from the insurance company. Elated, he told his father, "Dad, we hit the jackpot! They made an error of two million dollars. Dad, it's a gift from G-d."

There was no way of the insurance company tracing back their two million dollar error. Al could have easily deposited the check and nobody would have found out about the mistake.

Al refused to do anything dishonest. Without batting an eyelash, Al told his son, "Take that cheque and give it back. That's not our money."

At Al's levaya, his son, Raymond, shared the story of how his father sanctified Hashem's name and gave up the two million dollars. I place Hashem before me always.

We know that every aspect of our lives is holy. Everywhere we go is holy. We can't hide from Hashem and we can't log Hashem out of our business. תמיד is always. Our tefillin are holy, our Torah is holy and let us keep our business dealings holy too.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Vayetztei 5780 email of Oneg Shabbos (United Kingdom)*

# The Chofetz Chaim

Zhetl, Grodno 1839 – Radin, Poland 1933

By Dr. Benji Schreiber



## Biography

The Chofetz Chaim was Rav Yisroel Meir HaCohen Kagan. The name Kagan means he was a Cohen but the real family name was Poupko. He was a shining example of an outstanding talmid chochom and tzaddik.

His year of birth is not known for sure. When he was ten his father, Rav Arye Zev, died and his mother moved to Vilna, where he learnt in the Talmud Torah. His mother remarried (Epstein) and moved to Radin.

At 17 he married his step-sister, Frieda and settled in Radin. His main influence was Reb Nachum'ke of Horodna (1811-1879). He lived simply. He always refused to receive a salary for being a Rov. His wife ran a small grocery store and he did the bookkeeping.

In Radin he was town Rav and then set up a Yeshiva. He had two sons and two daughters from his first wife. The eldest, Rav Arye Leib HaCohen Poupko, worked closely with him in writing and distributing his seforim. He became Rav of Radin after the Chofez Chaim and wrote a biography of his father.

In 1903 Freida died and the Chofetz Chaim married Miriam Freida with whom he had two children, Aharon and Feiga Chaya. Rav Aharon became a Rosh Yeshiva in Radin. He never married and he moved with his mother eventually to New York where he died in 1957.

### **Communal Affairs**

He travelled widely and toiled for communal affairs, taking a leadership role in setting up Agudas Yisrael and strongly supporting the Beis Yaakov network of schools. He even wrote to the diamond bourse in Antwerp urging them to close on Shabbos as most of the traders were Jewish. He toiled to improve taharas hamishpacha, giving public talks to women in Vilna and writing Tahoras Habais for this purpose.

He tried hard, together with Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski and others, to help the Jews of Russia. He set up a network to supply kosher food to Jewish soldiers in the Polish army between the wars. He also wrote a halachic guide, Machanah Yisroel, for the soldiers.

He did not support Zionism but loved Eretz Yisrael and planned to move there in 1925. He tried to calm tension between Rav Sonnenfeld and Rav Kook in Yerushalayim.

### **Writing**

The Chofetz Chaim wrote 21 Seforim. His first work was Chofetz Chaim which lays out the laws of loshon haroh, along with Shmiras Halashon. His major work was the Mishnah Brurah (1894- 1907), his commentary on the Orach Chaim section of Shulchan Aruch, the single most important halachic work for contemporary psak halacha.

He passionately looked forward to the coming of Moshiach and wrote a sefer on the topic. He set up a kollel where Cohanim would learn the halachos and be ready for the Avodah. He wrote Likutei Halacha for this purpose.

### **Talmidim**

His talmidim include Rav Elchonon Wasserman HY"D (1874-1941), Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman (1888-1969) – the Ponevizher Rav, who set up the Ponevitz Yeshiva in Bnei Brak in 1944; Rav Eliyahu Dushnitzer (1877-1949) who taught in the Lomze Yeshiva in Petach Tikva and others. Stories abound about the Chafetz Chaim's simple living, his honesty, his dedication to helping others and his pure speech.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Vayetztei 5780 email of Oneg Shabbos (United Kingdom)*