



LIKKUTEI TORAH • PARSHAS BEHAALOSCHA • MAAMAR 5

אם את כל דגי הים כו'

If All the Fish of the Sea



Moshe's level was so high that even eating meat in order to elevate it would be a descent for him, and since his level dwelt within the people, meat, and even fish, would pull them down from it. Ordinary eating descends step by step, fish from the hidden world before meat from the revealed world; what fits Moshe is bread and the manna, and G-d answered with fat quail, birds of a higher root than cattle.

DEDICATED IN HONOR OF

מוקדש לכבוד הגאון המקובל רבי לוי יצחק שניאורסאהן זצ"ל

Dedicated in honor of the Rebbe's father, Reb Levi Yitzchok



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THE BIG IDEA

Moshe's level was so high that even eating meat in order to elevate it would be a descent for him, and since his level dwelt within the people, meat, and even fish, would pull them down from it. Ordinary eating descends step by step, fish from the hidden world before meat from the revealed world; what fits Moshe is bread and the manna, and G-d answered with fat quail, birds of a higher root than cattle.

Each section: the Hebrew, then the translation, then a short explanation under a gold rule. Small numbers in the Hebrew are the notes at the end.

THE MAAMAR IN BRIEF

Why did Moshe speak of fish, when the people asked only for meat? His cry, "From where shall I have meat?", means that his level was too high to draw life-force from meat, which makes a person corporeal. An unlearned person may not eat meat, and only a Torah scholar can elevate it; but for Moshe even that ascent would be a descent. Since his level is "in the midst" of the people, meat would "find" them, overtake them and pull them down from it. Whatever exists on land exists in the sea, so fish are the meat of the sea, the hidden world, as against dry land, the revealed world. Ordinarily one descends first into the hidden world of fish and only then to meat, which is why Jews eat fish before meat. For Moshe, rooted in the supernal Adam of Atzilus who rules the fish of the sea, even fish are too low; bread, whose root is higher, and the manna, food of Chochmah, are his food. So G-d sent quail: birds, rooted in the cherubim, above cattle, which stem from the face of the ox; and fat, for fat is Chesed.

OUTLINE

- | | | |
|--|---|----|
| 1 | Why fish? | ¶1 |
| <hr/> | | |
| <p>The people asked for meat, yet Moshe spoke of fish. "From where shall I have meat?" shows a level too high for meat: even the elevation a Torah scholar achieves by eating it would be a descent for Moshe.</p> | | |
| 2 | Meat that finds and overtakes | ¶2 |
| <hr/> | | |
| <p>Moshe's level dwells among the people, so meat would "find" them and pull them down from it. Fish are the meat of the sea, which is the hidden world, as dry land is the revealed world.</p> | | |
| 3 | Fish before meat; bread, manna and quail | ¶3 |
| <hr/> | | |
| <p>Fish prepare the descent into eating meat, hence the custom to eat fish first; but for Moshe, rooted in the Adam of Atzilus, even fish are a descent, and bread and the manna fit his level. G-d sent quail, birds of a higher root than cattle, and fat ones, for fat is Chesed.</p> | | |
| <hr/> | | |

KEY CONCEPTS

the hidden world (alma de'iskasya) עלמא דאתכסיא

The concealed level, represented by the sea, which covers the creatures that live in it; its “meat” is fish.

the revealed world (alma de'isgalya) עלמא דאתגליא

The revealed level, represented by dry land; eating its meat in order to elevate it is a great descent.

elevating food להעלות

Eating in order to raise the food up to holiness. The text says only a Torah scholar can do this with meat, and that for Moshe even this ascent would be a descent.

Adam of Atzilus אדם בארץ אצילות

The supernal Man of the World of Atzilus (Emanation), in which Moshe is rooted. To him it was said, “rule over the fish of the sea,” so he stands above the lofty souls called fish of the sea and birds of the heavens.

fish of the sea (nunei yama) נוני ימא

Lofty souls in the higher worlds, called by the name of the creatures of the hidden world; Moshe's root is above them.

food of Chochmah מזונא דחכמתא

The manna, which came down in Moshe's merit: the food that matches his level.

red meat and fat בשרא סומקא / שמנונית

Red meat is the level of Gevurah (restraint) and fat is the level of Chesed (kindness), which is why the fatness of the quail matters.

SECTION 1 • 11

Why fish?

1 אם את כל דגי הים כו'. להבין הא לא שאלו דגים כלל אלא בשר. הענין כי משה אמר מאין לי בשר.¹

“If all the fish of the sea,” etc. [We need] to understand: surely they did not ask for fish at all, but only for meat. The explanation is that Moshe said, “From where shall I have meat?”

The verse is Moshe’s reply when G-d promised the people meat: “If all the fish of the sea be gathered for them...” (Numbers 11:22). The puzzle is why Moshe speaks of fish at all, when the people asked only for meat. The answer starts from Moshe’s earlier cry, “From where shall I have meat?”, which the Alter Rebbe reads as a statement about Moshe himself.

פ' שהוא במדרגה מאד נעלה עד שא"א לירד למטה לקבל חיות מן הבשר כי הבשר מגשם

That is, he is at a very exalted level, so that it is impossible [for him] to descend below to receive life-force from meat, for meat makes [one] corporeal.

Read this way, “From where shall I have meat?” means that Moshe stood so high that he could not come down to draw his life-force from meat. Meat makes a person more corporeal, binding him more closely to the physical.

ולכן ע"ה אסור לאכול בשר² רק ת"ח יכול להעלות כו' אבל לגבי מדרגת משה שהוא הגבה מאד נעלה אפילו עליי זו ירידה תחשב.³

And therefore an unlearned person (am ha'aretz) is forbidden to eat meat; only a Torah scholar can elevate [it], etc. But relative to the level of Moshe, which is lofty [and] very exalted, even this ascent would be accounted a descent.

The Gemara rules that an unlearned person may not eat meat, while one who occupies himself with Torah may (Pesachim 49b); the text explains that a Torah scholar is able to elevate the meat he eats. For such a person, eating meat is an ascent for the meat, but at Moshe’s far higher level even this elevating would count as a descent.

SECTION 2 • 12

Meat that finds and overtakes

2 וזהו שש מאות אלף רגלי העם אשר אנכי בקרבם ואתה אמרת בשר אתן להם⁴ כו'

And this is [the meaning of] “Six hundred thousand on foot are the people in whose midst I am, and You have said, ‘I will give them meat,’” etc.

Moshe’s earlier words (Numbers 11:21) are now read in the same light: the people number six hundred thousand, and Moshe is “in their midst.”

פ"י כי מאחר שאנכי היינו בחי' משה בקרב העם איך תאמר בשר אתן להם כו'

That is: since "I" (Anochi), meaning the level of Moshe, is in the midst of the people, how can You say, "I will give them meat," etc.?

The weight falls on the word "I" (Anochi): Moshe's own lofty level is present within the people. Since his level dwells among them, how could they be given meat, which would pull them down?

וזהו הצאן ובקר ישחט להם ומצא להם⁵ פ"י ומצא להם שהצאן ובקר ימצאם וישיגם ברדוף אחריהם להמשיכם למטה ויפלו ממדרגת משה כו'.

And this is [the meaning of] "Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, and suffice them (umatza lahem)?" The meaning of "umatza lahem" is that the flocks and herds will find them and overtake them, by pursuing after them, to draw them down below, and they will fall from the level of Moshe, etc.

In its plain sense "umatza lahem" asks whether the animals will suffice them, but the Alter Rebbe reads it from the root "to find": the flocks and herds would "find" the people and overtake them, as a pursuer catches the one he chases. Eating that meat would draw the people downward, and they would fall from the level of Moshe that is among them.

ולזה אמר אם את כל דגי הים כו' כי הנה כל מה שיש ביבשה יש בים.⁶ והבשר שבים היינו דגים אלא שהים הוא מעלמא דאתכסיא ויבשה מאתגליא.

And regarding this he said, "If all the fish of the sea," etc. For, behold, all that exists on dry land exists in the sea, and the meat that is in the sea is fish; only, the sea is of the hidden world (alma de'iskasya), and dry land of the revealed [world] (de'isgalya).

This is why Moshe went on to speak of fish. The Sages teach that whatever exists on dry land has a counterpart in the sea (Chullin 127a), so fish are the "meat" of the sea; but the sea, which covers what lives in it, belongs to the hidden world (alma de'iskasya), while dry land belongs to the revealed world (alma de'isgalya).

SECTION 3 • 13

Fish before meat; bread, manna and quail

3 והנה הירידה הגדולה לבחי' עלמא דאתגליא לאכול בשר שביבשה להעלות כו' ולא יפול למטה בגשמיות

Now, [for] the great descent to the level of the revealed world, to eat the meat that is on dry land in order to elevate [it], etc., and not fall down into physicality,

Eating the meat of dry land in order to elevate it is a great descent into the revealed world, and it carries the danger of falling into physicality instead of raising the meat up.

יש עצה ע"י ירידה תחלה לעלמא דאתכסיא דגים שבים שבהם ועל ידם יוכל אח"כ לירד יותר כו' ולכן מנהג ישראל לאכול דגים קודם בשר.

there is a way: by first descending to the hidden world, the fish that are in the sea, in which and through which one can afterwards descend further, etc. And therefore it is the custom of Israel to eat fish before meat.

The way to make this descent safely is to go down first into the hidden world, represented by fish, and from there to descend further. This, the Alter Rebbe says, is the reason for the Jewish custom of eating fish before meat.

אך לגבי מדרגת משה אפי' אם את כל דגי הים יאסף להם ומצא להם⁷ ג"כ שגם בחי' זו דדגים ימשיך ויוריד למטה ממדרגת משה

But relative to the level of Moshe, even [of] "If all the fish of the sea be gathered for them" [it says] "umatza lahem" as well: that this level of fish, too, would draw [them] and bring [them] down below the level of Moshe

For Moshe, however, even fish would be too low: the words "umatza lahem" are said of the fish as well, meaning that even this hidden level would draw the people down below Moshe's level.

(והענין י"ל כמ"ש במ"א דמשה הוא מבחי' אדם בארץ אצילות דלעילא דעליה אתמר ורדו בדגת הים⁸ כו' דהיינו שהוא למעלה גם מבחי' נשמות עליונות הנק' נוני ימא ועוף השמים כו')

(and the matter can be explained as is explained elsewhere: that Moshe is from the level of Adam (Man) in the way of Atzilus (Emanation) above, concerning whom it is said, "And rule over the fish of the sea," etc.; that is, he is above even the level of the lofty souls that are called nunei yama (fish of the sea) and "birds of the heavens," etc.

The parenthesis explains why. Moshe is rooted in the supernal Adam (Man) of the World of Atzilus (Emanation), the one to whom it was said, "And rule over the fish of the sea" (Genesis 1:28); he therefore stands above even the lofty souls called "fish of the sea" (nunei yama) and "birds of the heavens."

ולכן גם בענין המזון ירידה היא לו אכילת דגים ובשר הגשמיים כיון שהוא למעלה גם מבחי' נוני ימא שבעולמות העליונים כו'

And therefore in the matter of food, too, the eating of physical fish and meat is a descent for him, since he is above even the level of the nunei yama (fish of the sea) that are in the higher worlds, etc.

Since Moshe's root is higher even than the spiritual "fish of the sea" in the higher worlds, eating physical fish or meat is a descent for him.

ואע"ג שהלחם הוא למטה מהבשר הרי שרשו גבוה יותר כמ"ש במ"א בענין שתי הלחם ע"ג שני הכבשים ותדע שבהמ"ז אינו אלא על לחם כו' ועוד דהא המן ירד בזכות משה⁹ מזונא דחכמתא ועמ"ש בד"ה ואהיה אצלו אמון¹⁰ כו')

And although bread is lower than meat, its root is higher, as is explained elsewhere on the subject of the two loaves upon the two lambs; and know that Grace after Meals is [said] only over bread, etc. And further, for the manna, the food of Chochmah (wisdom), came down in the merit of Moshe. And see what is written in the discourse beginning "And I was beside Him as a nursling (amon)," etc.).

Bread, by contrast, is lower than meat in nature but higher in its root, as is shown elsewhere from the two loaves offered upon the two lambs, and from the fact that the full Grace after Meals is said only over bread. The manna, too, fell in Moshe's merit (Taanit 9a) and is food of Chochmah (wisdom), and the reader is referred further to the discourse beginning "And I was beside Him as a nursling (amon)" (Proverbs 8:30).

אך הקב"ה הגיז שליו שהם עופות והם למעלה מבחי' בשר בהמה כי הוא מבחי' פני שור¹¹ כו' בחיות שבמרכבה ועופות הם מבחי' כרובים כו'

But the Holy One, blessed be He, swept in quail, which are birds, and they are above the level of the meat of cattle; for that is from the level of the face of the ox, etc., among the chayos of the Chariot, whereas birds are from the level of the cherubim, etc.

Instead of the meat of cattle, G-d swept in quail, which are birds and stand higher. The meat of cattle stems from the "face of the ox," one of the four faces of the chayos, the holy beings of the Divine Chariot in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:10), whereas birds stem from the cherubim.

וגם היו שמנים מאד כדאיתא בגמרא תליסר רפתא¹² כו' כי בשרא סומקא בחי' גבורה ושמנונית בחי' חסד כו':

And they were also very fat, as is stated in the Gemara: "thirteen loaves," etc. For red meat is the level of Gevurah (restraint), and fat is the level of Chesed (kindness), etc.

The quail were also very fat: the Gemara (Yoma 75b) describes a quail so rich that it was set upon thirteen loaves. Their fatness matters because red meat corresponds to Gevurah (restraint), and fat to Chesed (kindness).

IN ONE'S AVODAH

Eating is a descent into the physical in order to elevate it, and it must be done without falling into physicality. The Jewish custom of eating fish before meat makes the descent gradual: first into the hidden world of fish, and only then into the meat of the revealed world.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why should the elevation a Torah scholar achieves by eating meat count as a descent for Moshe?
2. How does the maamar read “umatza lahem,” and what does that reading say about the effect food has on the one who eats it?
3. Why are fish the “meat” of the hidden world, and how does eating them first make the descent into eating meat safe?
4. Bread is lower than meat in nature, yet its root is higher. What signs of this does the maamar bring?
5. Why were quail, and fat ones, a fitting answer to Moshe’s objection?

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Notes

PARAGRAPH 1

1 מאין לי בשר

Moshe's cry, "From where shall I have meat to give to all this people?" The Alter Rebbe reads it as saying that Moshe, at his own level, has no connection to meat.

במדבר י"א:י"ג: Numbers 11:13

מֵאַיִן לִי בָשָׂר לָתֵת לְכָל־הָעָם הִנֵּה כִּי־יָבֹכּוּ עָלַי לֵאמֹר תִּנְהַיֵּלֵנוּ בָּשָׂר וְנֹאכְלָהּ:

Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they trouble me with their weeping, saying: Give us flesh, that we may eat.

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2 ע"ה אסור לאכול בשר

Rebbi teaches that an unlearned person may not eat meat, while anyone who occupies himself with Torah may eat the meat of cattle and fowl. The maamar explains this by the Torah scholar's power to elevate the meat.

פסחים מ"ט ב:3: Pesachim 49b

תַּנְיָא, רַבִּי אוֹמֵר: עִם הָאֶרֶץ אֲסוּר לֶאֱכֹל בָּשָׂר, (בְּהֵמָה) שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְזֹאת תֹּרַת הַבְּהֵמָה וְהָעוֹף": כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה מוֹתֵר לֶאֱכֹל בָּשָׂר בְּהֵמָה וְעוֹף, וְכָל שֶׁאֵינוֹ עוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה אֲסוּר לֶאֱכֹל בָּשָׂר בְּהֵמָה וְעוֹף.

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3 Moshe answers G-d's promise of meat: "Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them... if all the fish of the sea be gathered for them, will it suffice them?" The maamar opens by asking why fish are mentioned at all.

במדבר י"א:כ"ב: Numbers 11:22

הֲצֹאֹן וּבָקָר יִשְׁחַט לָהֶם וּמִצָּא לָהֶם אִם אֶת־כָּל־דְּגֵי הַיָּם יֵאָסֹף לָהֶם וּמִצָּא לָהֶם:

If flocks and herds be slain for them, will they suffice them? or if all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, will they suffice them?"

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PARAGRAPH 2

4 שש מאות אלף רגלי העם אשר אנכי בקרבם ואתה אמרת בשר אתן להם

Moshe says that the people in whose midst he is number six hundred thousand on foot, and yet G-d has said, "I will give them meat" for a whole month. The maamar reads "I" (Anochi) as Moshe's level dwelling among the people.

במדבר י"א:כ"א: Numbers 11:21

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה שֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף רַגְלֵי הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי בְּקִרְבִּי וְאַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ בָּשָׂר אֶתֶן לָהֶם וְאָכְלוּ חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים:

And Moses said: 'The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand men on foot; and yet Thou hast said: I will

give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month!

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5 הוצאן ובקר ישחט להם ומצא להם

In the plain sense, "Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, and will it suffice them?" The maamar reads "umatza" as "find": the flocks and herds would find and overtake the people and draw them down.

במדבר י"א:כ"ב: Numbers 11:22

הֲצֹאֹן וּבָקָר יִשְׁחַט לָהֶם וּמִצָּא לָהֶם אִם אֶת־כָּל־דְּגֵי הַיָּם יֵאָסֹף לָהֶם וּמִצָּא לָהֶם:

If flocks and herds be slain for them, will they suffice them? or if all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, will they suffice them?"

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6 כל מה שיש ביבשה יש בים

The Sages teach that everything that exists on dry land exists in the sea, except the weasel. Here it shows that fish are the sea's counterpart to the meat of dry land.

חולין קכ"ז א:י"ב-י"ד: Chullin 127a

תנו רבנן כל שיש ביבשה יש בים חוץ מן החולדה אמר ר' זירא מאי קראה (תהלים מט, ב) האינו כל יושבי חלד אמר רב הונא כריה דרב יהושע ביברי דנרש אינו מן הישוב אמר רב פפא בשמתא נרש תרביה משכיח ואליתיה (ירמיהו כב, כט) ארץ ארץ ארץ שמעי דבר ה' אמר רב פפא לא אבה נרש שמוע דבר ה'

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PARAGRAPH 3

7 אם את כל דגי הים יאסף להם ומצא להם

The second half of Moshe's question. The maamar applies "umatza lahem" to the fish as well, so that even fish would draw the people below Moshe's level.

במדבר י"א:כ"ב: Numbers 11:22

הֲצֹאֹן וּבָקָר יִשְׁחַט לָהֶם וּמִצָּא לָהֶם אִם אֶת־כָּל־דְּגֵי הַיָּם יֵאָסֹף לָהֶם וּמִצָּא לָהֶם:

If flocks and herds be slain for them, will they suffice them? or if all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, will they suffice them?"

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8 ורדו בדגת הים

G-d's blessing to Adam: "And rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens." Moshe, rooted in the supernal Adam of Atzilus, is above the souls called "fish of the sea" and "birds of the heavens."

בראשית א:כ"ח: Genesis 1:28

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וּבִכְשֶׁף וָרֹדוּ בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל־חַיַּי הָרֹמֵשֶׁת עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

And G-d blessed them; and G-d said unto them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth.'

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9

בזכות משה

The Gemara lists three gifts given through Israel's three leaders: the well in Miriam's merit, the pillar of cloud in Aharon's, and the manna in Moshe's. The maamar uses it to show that the food belonging to Moshe's level is the manna, food of Chochmah.

Taanit 9a:9ט:א תענית

מיתבי, רבי יוסי ברבי יהודה אומר: שלשה פרנסים טובים עמדו לישראל, אלו הן: משה ואהרן ומרים. ושלש מתנות טובות ניתנו על ידם, ואלו הן: באר, וענן, ומן. באר — בזכות מרים, עמוד ענן — בזכות אהרן, מן — בזכות משה. משה מרים — נסתלק הבאר, שנאמר: "ותמת שם מרים", וכתוב בתריה: "ולא היה מים לעדה", וחזרה בזכות שניהן.

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10

ואהיה אצלו אמן

Wisdom says: "And I was beside Him as a nursling (amon), and I was His delight day by day." These words open the discourse to which the Alter Rebbe refers the reader.

Proverbs 8:30ל:ח משלי

ואהיה אצלו אמן ואהיה שעשועים יום יום משחקת לפניו בכל-עת:

Then I was by Him, as a nursling; And I was daily all delight, Playing always before Him,

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11

פני שור

In Ezekiel's vision each of the chayos of the Chariot has the face of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle. The maamar traces the meat of cattle to the "face of the ox."

Ezekiel 1:10י:א יחזקאל

ודמות פניהם פני אדם ופני אריה אלהימין לארבעתם ופני שור מהשמאל לארבעתן ופני נשר לארבעתן:

As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man; and they four had the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four had also the face of an eagle.

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12

תליסר רפתא

The Gemara describes the quail: put in an oven, it swelled until it filled it, and it was set upon thirteen loaves, the last of which could be eaten only mixed with other food. The maamar brings it to show how fat the quail were.

Yoma 75b:7ז:ב יומא ע"ה

אמר רב חנן בר רבא: ארבעה מיני סלין הו, ואלו הן: שיקלי, וקיכלי, ופסיוני, ושליו. מעליא דכולהו: שיקלי, גריעא דכולהו: שליו. והוי כציפורתא, ומותבינן לה בתנורא ותפח והיה מלי תנורא, ומסקינן לקה אתליסר ריפי, ואחרונה אינה נאכלת אלא על ידי תערובת.



LikuteiTorah.com
THE CHASSIDISHE PARSHA

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This edition contains the Hebrew text, the English translation, our explanations, and the notes.

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The Rebbe asked that the maamarim of the week's parsha, the "Chassidishe Parsha," be learned during that week, spread over its seven days (Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel 5725 · Toras Menachem vol. 42, pp. 306-309). Why learn it, and the Rebbe's brachos: likuteitorah.com/about/the-chassidishe-parsha/

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DEDICATED IN HONOR OF

מוקדש לכבוד הגאון המקובל רבי לוי יצחק שניאורסאהן זצ"ל

Dedicated in honor of the Rebbe's father, Reb Levi Yitzchok