**Parshas Voeschanan – ונשמרתם מאד לנפשותיכם**

**S.O.S. – Save Our Shabbos**

To all of us, the Word of G-d is, well, the Word of G-d. Who, in our circles, would willingly and willfully defy the דבר ה'? Yet, it is not unusual for some of the finest and most Ehrlich Yidden to do just that. People who have worked hard their whole life to resist the draw and enticement of their Yetzer Hora, will deliberately refuse to fulfill the Torah’s obligation of ונשמרתם מאד לנפשותיכם and וחי בהם. Hatzolah members in communities worldwide, responding to emergency calls on Shabbos and Yomtov, encounter patients who refuse to travel to the hospital, talk to a doctor over the phone or cooperate with anything that has a whiff of Chillul Shabbos V’Yomtov. However, taking such steps, despite being Shabbos, is, in the words of the Ohr HaChaimHaKadosh, the greatest Shmiras Shabbos – אין לך שמירת שבת גדול מזו.

Indeed, the Mishna Berura teaches, it is the obligation of every Rov to teach the members of his Kehilla, BEFORE an emergency happens, how to handle a life-threatening emergency on Shabbos and Yomtov, so that there will be no hesitation, should the need arise, chasvsholom. It is for this reason, the Rambam teaches, that הנשאל הרי זה מגונה – a Rov who has to be consulted in a moment of crisis, whether to be Michalel Shabbos or not, is contemptible. Precious time is being wasted, treatment is being delayed and suffering is being prolonged, because of the hesitation to act and ignorance of the Halacha. Public Health and Emergency Preparedness officials always emphasize that knowing what to do, BEFORE it happens, is the single most important step to saving lives.

You don’t have to be an official member of Hatzolah to do Melachah that is usually forbidden, in order to save a life. You do have to be astute and on-the-ball enough, though, to take action unhesitatingly and decisively. Act Now. Ask questions later. If you think it may be an emergency, then assume it is. A ספק פיקוח נפש, an uncertainty of a threat to life, is deemed in Halacha as definite פיקוח נפש. Halacha forbids us to second-guess and assume, or hope that it’s okay to wait and see.

Ambulances were flying around in every community this past week, because people were unwell and unsure whether they should stop fasting, or fast at all on Tisha B’Av. Others assumed they could withhold medication for a day. Instead of checking with their doctor or pharmacist a few days before, they ended up hospitalized after compromising their health.

R’ Yaakov Kamenitzky, zt”l, when he was a Rov in Europe, refused to participate in the funeral of someone in his Kehilla who passed away, after not heeding his advice to stop fasting on Yom Kippur. R’ Yaakov said he was a רשע who defied Halacha! R’ Yaakov Ruderman, zt”l, once took a Bachur who was diagnosed with Diabetes, into a side room in the Yeshiva on Yom Kippur. He gently encouraged him to eat, by saying that the two of them together would have the special זכות of fulfilling the Torah’s Mitzvoh to eat on Yom Kippur, under such circumstances!

I thank the Ribono shel Olam for the Zechus of being a member of Hatzolah for many years. Hatzolah members and anyone else who unhesitatingly steps up to the plate when seconds count, are among those who rightfully deserve the title and distinction,conferred by the Rambam, of “Gedolai Yisroel”. The אור החיים הקדוש (פ' כי תשא) hails those who put aside Hilchos Shabbos for PikuachNefesh, as the true Shomrei Shabbos – the protectors of Shabbos. Their bold and decisive action will assure that Yidden will live to keep yet another Shabbos, Gezunterheit. They are fulfilling the letter and spirit of the Halochos, as detailed in שולחן ערוך סימן שכ"ח. So they have every Yid’s and the Torah’s “Shkoiach”!

Have a Gezunten Shabbos, yk

**L’RavchaD’Milsa Weekly Almanac**

**Wednesday, Shabbos Nachamu, 13 Av**

**RavNosson Nota Shapira, author of MegalehAmukos** and RanavOfanim (1585-1633). EliyahuHaNavi is said to have visited with him regularly. Son of Rav Shlomo Shapira, and grandson of RavMatisyahu ben Yosef Treves of Provence (1325-1382) who was appointed Chief Rabbi of Paris by Charles the Fifth. The Shapiro family originates from the German town of Shpeyer from where the founder of the family escaped at the time of the First Crusade in 1096. **The MegalehAmukos wrote 252 insights on the word “Voeschanan”!**

**HagaonHarav Yosef EliyahuHenkin**, zt"l, (1973) was one of America's premier poskim in the pre and post-World War II generations and the legendary leader of the Ezras Torah Tzedaka Relief Organization.  Just invoking his name conjured up the image of a gadol possessed of the gaonus, erudition of the spiritual giants who were molded in the great Lithuanian yeshivos of pre-World War I and a posek who ruled on the most complex halachic questions, covering the entire gamut of the four sections of the ShulchanAruch.  Perhaps more than all of the above, RavHenkin represented a unique and beautiful blend of Torah scholarship, humility and a lifelong dedication to the highest levels of discreetly preformed chesed.  During his almost half a century at the helm of Ezras Torah, he secretly saved and improved the lives of countless individuals by distributing many millions of dollars to needy talmideichachomim throughout the world.

 RavHenkin was born on Rosh Chodesh Adar I, 5641 (1881) in Byelorussia.  His father, Rav Eliezer Klonymus, z"l, was a talmidchacham who headed a yeshiva in the town.  As a young boy EliyahuHenkin learned Chumash with his great-grandfather Rav Yitzchak for a year.  The following year he was taught by his grandfather, Rav Avrohom and for the three subsequent years he learned gemara and other topics with his father. At the age of 15, RavHenkin traveled to the city of Slutzk hoping to be accepted into the Yeshiva Gedola of RavIsserZalman Meltzer, zt"l. In the year prior to his arrival in Slutsk, RavHenkin reviewed the entire MesechtaEruvin forty times!  Upon meeting him for the first time, RavIsserZalman asked him why he had come all the way to Slutzk.  The youngster replied that he wanted to attend the Yeshiva.  To the other talmidim standing there, this seemed absurd.  They were young men already accomplished in their learning, talmideichachomim in their own right, and here was a mere boy of 15 seeking to join their ranks!

RavIsserZalman continued, "Tell me, my son, what have you learned lately?" "Mesechtos Shabbos and Eruvin." Astonished that a young boy had learned these difficult tractates, he asked, "Are you prepared for an examination?"

"Yes," the youngster replied, whereupon RavIsserZalman questioned the boy on the entire breadth of the two mesechtos.  He answered all the challenges with ease, exhibiting an extraordinary knowledge and understanding of every Rashi and Tosefos.  RavIsserZalman was flabbergasted, "This child knows these mesechtos better than I do!"  RavHenkin was immediately admitted to the Slutzker Yeshiva.

At the age of twenty, RavHenkin received semicha from the Rav Yaakov DovidWillensky, zt'l the Ridvaz, who served as the Rav of Slutzk, Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, zt"l and from Harav Yechiel Michel Epstein, zt"l, Rav of Novorhodok and author of AruchHashulchan.

In 5663 (1903) RavHenkin married Freida Rivka Kreindel, the daughter of Rav Yehuda LeibKreindel, the Rav of Kritschev.  For the following ten years, RavHenkin served as Rav in numerous small comunities in White Russia and Georgia. He then took up a post as Rav in Smalian, a town in the Vitebsk region of White Russia, where he remained for nine years.  Already then, his reputation as a posek of great stature was growing and rabbanim from the neighboring towns consulted him.

In 5680 (1920), RavHenkin's wife and her newborn child succumbed to an epidemic that had took both their lives.  She had been busily engaged in the mitzva of bikurcholim, tending the contagious sick people, for there was nobody to bring them food, and became infected herself.  RavHenkin extolled his wife's selfless devotion to the constant provision of the needs of others, despite tremendous hardships and personal frailty. Afterwards, he married his second wife Chana Kazakovz, the daughter of Rav Yaakov LeibKazakovz.  His second wife stood by him for 43 years raising his six young orphaned children from his first marriage. In 5681 (1921), Mohliev and half of White Russia were annexed to Soviet Russia, coming under Communist rule.  As the communist oppression of all Torah observant Jews and especially Rabbis became acute, RavHenkin realized that there was no alternative other than emigration. Two years after the communists came to power, Rav and RebbetzinHenkin and family left Russia for the United States with the help of RebbetzinHenkin's brother who already lived there.  After spending five long weeks in detention on Ellis Island, the Henkin family was finally released and settled in the neighborhood that had become the home to tens of thousands of impoverished Jewish immigrants, the Lower East Side of Manhattan.  Soon after, RavHenkin was appointed as Rav of BeisHakenessesAnsheiStutchinGreiva. RavHenkin always spoke with great warmth about the members of his Kehilla, who stood behind him with both moral and financial support in all of his endeavors.

RavHenkin was also a prolific writer and authored seforim on some of the most complex talmudic and halachic topics. In 1925 he wrote PerusheiIbrah. The first half was devoted to topics related to marriage and the laws of testimony, the second half were RavHenkin's derashos. In 1946, he published, EdusL'Yisrael, a compilation of complex practical halachos and in 1955, he published 32 of his halachic and hashkafic discourses titled Lev Ibrah. In addition he wrote numerous halachic and hashkafic essays in rabbinical journals and in the Hebrew and Yiddish newspapers. Eventually all of his writings were published in 1982, in a two volume set of seforim called KisveiHagaonHarav Yosef EliyahuHenkin, zt'l.

The year 1926 proved to be a turning point in the life of RavHenkin and perhaps more importantly in the lives of thousands of talmideichachomim world over, whose plight eased with his  appointment as the director of the legendary tzedakah and relief organization, Ezras Torah.  Ezras Torah had been founded during the First World War (1915) by the AgudasHarabbonim (Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada) at the behest of the Chafetz Chaim, zt'l and Harav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, zt'l to aid newly destitute rabbis including some foremost Rosh Yeshivas, in war-torn Europe. Its founding president, RavYisrael Rosenberg, zt"l felt that to subject rabbanim and bnei Torah to the humiliation of waiting in line for meager relief would erode even further the already dangerously low prestige and authority of Torah and its representatives. In the depression years (late 1920's and early 30's) and the subsequent anti-Jewish boycott years prior to World War II, Ezras Torah, under RavHenkin's leadership provided financial aid to thousands in Europe, Russia and China (Shanghai).  After the war, Ezras Torah also saved thousands from becoming belated casualties through the support and shelter it extended.  After the lives of the Torah-learned refugees had stabilized and they were absorbed into their respective countries, Ezras Torah focused its efforts on aiding the struggling bnei Torah of the yishuv in EretzYisrael. Today, as the precarious security situation has paralyzed the economy, Ezras Torah is sending enormous sums monthly to support struggling talmideichachomim in EretzYisrael. As HagaonHaravYechezkal Abramsky, zt"l wrote after moving to EretzYisrael, "Today I received 15,000 marks from Ezras Torah.  Praised be the name of Hashem who has shown me grace, kindness and mercy. I cannot describe the severity of my situation."

All of this amazing chesed was performed with the active participation of RavHenkin.  For more than four decades, RavHenkin invested his heart and soul into the operations of Ezras Torah.  He spent full days working in the office.  Throughout the year, particularly in the summer, he would visit different shuls on Shabbos, where he would make appeals.  Even when it meant traveling to far off cities and having to pack his own food for Shabbos, RavHenkin never hesitated.  He traveled far and near to give as many Jews as possible the opportunity to help Ezras Torah help ease the plight of more Torah Scholars. It is no wonder that RavIsserZalmen Meltzer, zt'l, once remarked, " All tzedakos are kodesh, but Ezras Torah is kodeshkodashim!"

RavHenkin's dedication to Ezras Torah was legendary.  As Rabbi NaftoliRiffzt'l, president of Ezras Torah (1958-1976) recalled, "On several occasions I noticed RavHenkin refer to a mysterious small notebook.  He once revealed to me that in this notebook he kept a log of those minutes during the day that he did not utilize for Ezras Torah.  He was not involved with his own personal business during those minutes, but when someone came to his office to discuss divrei Torah or if he received a telephone call, as he often would, from anywhere in the world requesting his opinion on a particular problem or sheaila, he immediately looked at the time and noted in his record how many minutes he had borrowed from Ezras Torah.  He would then know how many minutes to "make up" on behalf of Ezras Torah related work."

RavHenkin carried on his shoulders the plight of literally tens of thousands of Torah dedicated families throughout the world - their daily well-being was his daily personal concern - yet he never revealed to a soul who these families were.  RavHenkin never turned anyone away without a suitable sum of money.  On rare occasions when a recipient felt that what he had received was insufficient, RavHenkin did not respond bureaucratically. RavHenkin was known to cry with these individuals explaining that he understood how great their need was and he only wished that there were additional funds to provide.

In the 1960's, his weekly salary as the director of Ezras Torah was paltry $50.00.  However, when a resolution to increase his salary was made at one of their meetings, RavHenkin immediately rose from his chair and declared, "Must I leave Ezras Torah?  The less I personally benefit from Ezras Torah, the greater the aid for talmideichachomim in distress."

Presently 95% of Ezras Torah's funds are directed towards EretzYisrael. It distributes more than 1 million dollars in financial aid that reaches out to over 10,000 families per year in addition to over 1 million dollars circulating as free loans. Ezras Torah assists countless families of Torah scholars to help pay not only for wedding expenses but also, they advance substantial interest free loans to help pay for housing for young couples. Another focus of Ezras Torah's extension ofTzedakah is its rapidly growing assistance for emergency medical needs. In view of Israel's current security crisis, decreased economy and huge government budgetary cut to Yeshivas, Chadorim and large families, a great burden has been placed upon these families who have no hinterland of savings that could meet these enormous costs. These anguished families turn to Ezras Torah for help. Indeed, the growing number of scholars that sacrifice and devote their lives to Torah study, Torah teaching and Torah leadership and the large number of people that are in need of Yom Tov grants, widow-orphan grants and maternity grants has placed a tremendous responsibility upon Ezras Torah to meet the increased requests that are coming in.

As in 1926 when RavHenkin took over at the helm of Ezras Torah, Ezras Torah continues to be at the forefront of discreet tzedakah giving for needytalmideichachomim and their families.

As Harav Emanuel Gettinger, shlita, the current president of Ezras Torah recalls:  "While on a visit to EretzYisrael, a wizened old man approached me in Tzfas.  "Are you from America?" he asked. Yes replied RavGettinger. "Oh, I have a father there."  A father?  Thought RavGettinger. The man appeared to be over eighty himself!  "Yes, a father who takes care of me.  His name is Rabbi Yosef EliyahuHenkin." (Adapted from the Ezras Torah Biography of RavHenkin, zt”l)

**Shabbos KodeshNachamu – 16 Av (some say 13 Av)**

**Sir Moshe (Chaim) Montefiore** (1784-1885). Born in Livorno, Italy, of Sephardic descent, he traced his lineage back to the exiles from the Spanish Expulsion. When he was still a young child his family resettled in England. Young Moses became a member of the London Stock Exchange at a time when there were only 12 licensed Jewish brokers in all of England. In a matter of a few years he had amassed great wealth and had become a member of the London Aristocracy. In 1812, he married his wife Judith, whose sister was the wife of Reb Nathan Meyer Rothschild, one of the wealthiest Jews in Europe at the time. Sir Moses eventually became the stockbroker for his brother-in-law and as a result of their partnership they amassed a tremendous fortune. In addition, he was a partner in a large insurance company as well as a gas company that introduced gas lighting to many of the major cities of Europe. Sir Moses also had a hand in building railroads and many other industrial and financial enterprises. As the years passed, Moses and Judith grew together in their Yiddishkeit. In 1837, Montefiore was appointed Sheriff of London. In the same year, Queen Victoria, who had recently ascended the British Throne, awarded him the honorary title of Knighthood, bestowing upon him the title “Sir” Moses. In 1846, he was elevated to the rank of Baron. By the time he was 41 years old, Sir Moses, with his wife’s encouragement, decided to retire from business affairs and devote the rest of his life, time and considerable resources to Jewish affairs. The welfare of the Jewish People became his sole business for the next 60 some years and his list of accomplishments is truly magnificent. When he was appointed as Sheriff of London, he specifically wrote in his contract that he would be absolved from working on Shabbos and yom tov. He also specified that he was to be absolved from entering a Church on non-Jewish holidays. Even when he was traveling, he almost always made sure to travel with an entourage of at least 10 Jews to ensure that he would have a minyan. He also took one of the many sifrei Torah that he owned along with him. In 1840, a monk named Thomas disappeared from his home several weeks before Pesach. The French Counsel in Damascus blamed the Jews for his disapperance and claimed that they killed the monk to use his blood for matzos. Prominent Damascus Jews were imprisoned and tortured. Many died and some, who could not withstand the torture, “confessed” under duress to the crime. Upon learning of it, Sir Moses traveled to Damascus to save the country and the honor of the Jewish people. In 1846, Sir Moses was invited by the Russian government to visit Russia in connection with its Jewish situation. Upon returning to London, he demanded equal rights for the Jews and stressed that it would also be an economic blessing for the country. Montefiore’s 100th birthday was celebrated as an official holiday in London and he was accorded great honor by both Jew and non-Jew alike. The Montefiores died childless, but they left behind a legacy of tzedaka and chesed that endures to this very day.

**Erev Shabbos Nachamu, ChamishaAsarB’Av**

**NachumIshGamzu,** Rabbi Akiva's rabbi for 22 years buried in Tsefas.

**Rav Shimon ibn Lavie**, author of Kesem Paz and composer of “Bar Yochai” (1588)

**Rav Asher, the StolinerRebbe** (1760-1828). The son of RavAharonKarliner, he was raised by Rav Shlomo Karliner after his father’s petira. Rav Asher later settled in Stolin.

***Sunday, Parshas Eikev-17 Menachem Av***

***“KavahNerHaMaaravi”.***The ShulchanAruch lists this dark day in history as a *Yom Taanis Tzadikim* commemorating the day, during the reign of *Achaz,* father of *ChizkiyahuHaMelech,* that the *NerHaMenorah*closest to the *KodeshHaKodoshim*extinguished for the first time since it was lit when the *Avodah*began in the first BaisHaMikdosh. Some say it was on 18 Av.

**Monday, 18 Av The Chevron Massacre** by Arab rioters resulted in 67 deaths, among them many Talmidim of the famed Chevron Yeshiva.

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