

SPONSORED BY



יואל ווערצבערגער,  
נשיא מכון

THE  
Zera Emes  
זרע אמת  
PROJECT

והגדת  
לבנך  
Keeping  
Their  
Torah Alive.



MATOS - MASEI • JULY 10, 2026 • 25 TAMMUZ 5786

REFUAH SHLEIMA FOR YITZCHAK NUTTA BEN MINDEL

L'ZECHER NISHMAS HABACHUR ELIYAHU BEN YEHUDAH YECHESKEL (JULY 5, 1991 - JUNE 19, 2011)

The Zera Emes Project by Rabbi Moshe Hubner was created to honor and share the Torah of over 250 Gedolim who weren't zocheh to descendants of their own. Their legacy lives on through their words of Torah and emunah that continue to inspire and touch countless lives. By bringing their timeless divrei Torah and wisdom to life, we create a powerful connection to the past to help inspire today's generation.

For sponsorship opportunities or to sign up to the weekly newsletter, email [weekly@zeraemes.com](mailto:weekly@zeraemes.com) or visit [www.zeraemes.com](http://www.zeraemes.com)

## Delaying Death

In this week's parashah, we read about the war of retribution that the Jewish people were commanded to wage against the nation of Midyan. The Midianites had enticed the Jewish people into sin, leading to a devastating plague that claimed the lives of 24,000 Jews.

Hashem tells Moshe Rabbeinu, "Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites" (*Bamidbar* 31:2). He then adds a striking detail: "Afterward you shall be gathered unto your people," meaning that Moshe would pass away only after the war was completed.

The Midrash understands this connection literally. Moshe's death was contingent upon the completion of this campaign. Had he delayed the war, he would have delayed his own passing.

This raises an obvious question: Why was

it necessary for Moshe to remain alive until this particular war had been fought?

### REPENTANCE

The *Ohr Hachaim* traces the answer back to the beginning of the story.

When Zimri ben Salu publicly brought the Midianite woman before Moshe and challenged him regarding the permissibility of marrying her, Moshe remained silent. Pinchas ultimately remembered the halachah and zealously executed Zimri, thereby stopping the plague.

The *Ohr HaChaim* explains that, on some level, Moshe's passivity required Heavenly atonement. Hashem therefore gave him the opportunity to rectify this lapse by personally directing the war against the nation responsible for the tragedy. Leading the campaign against

Midyan would, in effect, uproot the earlier failing.

Accordingly, Hashem decreed that Moshe could not pass away until the war had been completed. This ensured that he would leave this world with his spiritual account fully rectified.

### THE ZERA SHIMSHON

The *Zera Shimshon* (*Drush* 4) combines a practical halachah with profound kabbalistic principles to answer this question.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 154:3) rules that an item designated to house sacred objects—such as a bag for tefillin or an ark for a Sefer Torah—acquires a degree of sanctity itself. Consequently, when it is no longer usable, it must be treated respectfully and buried—just as the holy article itself.

## אור החיים

R' Chaim Ben Moshe Attar (4 Av 1696 – 15 Tamuz 1743), renowned as the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, was born in Morocco, where he studied under his grandfather, R' Chaim Attar. He first married Fatzunya, of whom it was said that she wore tefillin, following the example of Michal, daughter of King Shaul. Later, he married Esther, the daughter of Meir Kapas.

In 1739, a severe famine compelled him to leave Morocco. He journeyed to Italy, where a yeshiva was established for him. In 1741, he set out for Eretz Yisrael with 30 students. Due to the epidemics prevalent at the time, he initially founded his yeshiva, *Knesses Yisrael*, in Acre, later relocating it to Yerushalayim.

Among his distinguished students was R' Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai—the *Chida*—who described his Rebbe's Torah mastery as capable of "uprooting mountains," and his holiness as awe-inspiring. He noted that R' Chaim's published works represented only a fraction of his vast knowledge.

Approximately one year after arriving in Yerushalayim, R' Chaim passed away and was buried on Har HaZeisim.

There is, however, an important exception. If the container is actually harmful to the sacred object it holds—for example, an Aron Kodesh built into a wall that causes damage to the Sifrei Torah—then it does not attain sanctity. Since it harms rather than serves the holy object, it need not be buried.

There are two options for the container; either accessory or damager.

The Zera Shimshon explains that this distinction exists in the spiritual world too. Kabbalistically, every great and holy soul is surrounded by kelipos, spiritual shells. If these kelipos serve the holy soul and contribute to its growth, they possess a measure of significance. If, however, they are detrimental to the soul, they have no such standing.

He then cites kabbalistic sources stating that the Jewish leader who wages war against a nation must possess some personal connection to that nation. Without such a connection, he cannot execute Divine vengeance against it.

Why is this connection necessary?

Because it demonstrates that the spiritual influence associated with that nation was ultimately harmful rather than beneficial. Had it truly benefited the holy individual, it would possess a degree of protection, just as an accessory to a sacred object acquires sanctity. Only once it is established that the connection was spiritually damaging may it be destroyed.

According to this approach, Moshe alone was qualified to initiate the war. Having been raised in Midyan and having married Tzipporah, a Midianite, he possessed a unique connection to the nation.

Had Moshe died before leading the campaign, no later leader could have waged the war with



REB SHALOM JACOB Z" L COLLECTION

complete certainty. The Jewish people would always have been left to wonder whether Midyan's connection to Moshe had ultimately been beneficial or detrimental. That unresolved doubt would have prevented the nation from carrying out the Divine command of vengeance.

### MESHECH CHOCHMAH

The *Meshech Chochmah* offers a related idea, although he presents it in more practical rather than kabbalistic terms.

He likewise notes that Moshe had lived in Midyan and married into a Midianite family. Had he never participated in the campaign against them, people might have concluded that he was reluctant to fight because of personal gratitude or favoritism.

Everyone understood that Midyan deserved punishment. If Moshe had abstained from the war entirely, his motives could easily have been misunderstood.

### זרע שמשון

R' Shimshon Chaim Nachmani (1707 Modena - 6 Elul 1779). His grandfather was R' Yehudah Matzliach. R' Nachmani published the *sefer Toldos Shimshon*, on *Pirkei Avos*, and in the preface he explained that his only son had recently passed away, and that this *sefer* would be his son's remembrance. In 1775 R' Nachmani published the *Zera Shimshon* and wrote in the preface, "anyone who learns from this *sefer* will be helping my soul and he should be blessed with children, praise, health, wealth and honor." R' Nachmani was buried with his Kabbalistic writings. His *sefarim* have become a worldwide phenomenon.

### ר' מאיר שמחה הכהן

The *Meshech Chochmah*: R' Meir Simcha Hacoheh (1843-4 Elul 1926) was named after R' Meir Mi'Tiktin, who gave his father a brachah that he would have a son who would "light up the world." In 1888 he became Rav of the non-Chassidic community in Dvinsk (the Rogatchover was the Rav of the Chassidic community in Dvinsk). In 1907, he was offered the position of Rav of Yerushalayim, but the people of Dvinsk begged him to stay. In 1919 there were false reports that he was killed, and the Torah Journal Hadvir (Yerushalayim) eulogized him. Although he wrote the *sefer Meshech Chochmah* before *Ohr Sameach*, he was advised to publish the *Ohr Sameach* first and the *Meshech Chochmah* was not published until after his real passing. His only child, Osnas, married R Avraham Luftiver (1860- 23 Nisan, Isru Chag, 1918) and they both predeceased her parents without children.