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מרא דאתרא מושב מתתיהו ראש הישיבה—ישיבה גדולה מתתיהו

ד.נ. מודיעין 71917

Dear Friends,

I have read portions of the book "Tiku Shofar Bitziyon" by Rabbi Bentzion Ettlinger. The author, himself a talmid chochom and a veteran and expert baal tokaya, presents a literal encyclopedic compendium of the laws, customs, and practica of shofar blowing. He documents the customs of the various different sects and communities regarding the various aspects of the mitzvah. The work is spiced with anecdotes, stories and the rulings of contemporary halachic Poskim encompassing every nuance and detail of the mitzvah of shofar.

I found this work informative, enlightening and interesting and recommend it as an effective guide to understanding every aspect of this great mitzvah.

I commend the author for a truly quality presentation and pray that Hashem Yisborach bless him and his family (His wife, Devorah nee Seidman was a talmida of mine many years ago.) with life, health and the wherewithal to continue to merit the community through action and instruction.

> Sincerely, With Torah blessings JW JU Rabbi Zev Leff

בס״ד

# Novominsker Rebbe of Boro Park 3"00 2000 2111 11 הידא לפני תכריק בתהים אדטי וני וניני הנדלב אוב"ב דן ציון 1664 נאדר ןכ"ו אאט בחג הדכוך אנכ לבולהית אשר אול זויט שהור האפות והנהאות הצניצי ה הנוארוז לאצות תקידת עופי בייה והנה וביבי הוו הןהו תלמיבו עד אאומלי בבללבית אהיאי אטר טאט כלא הואידה שיי ההו דצת ואונון הוו. ה. ובתר אמנינו קאניי אטאט כרא תוקע תקהלה הפומה הני וכצ' חצי איאאי אוי בטיה וקוריא ומצות תקאית שובי חביד זויא זי לאחג ותצאית אא מיל לציון ציק אתת הרבה הלכות והליכות האיינית א נצור חטארה ציאת ובכן כאמר בנגוני להא הכמרוק זו חיבורי ואאונ יציציאת ותבודאת אצר הרצתי שרקים ובני אאננו ניטוק איצנה או ברקות הטניק אדטוק המרה ובוצנות ניד הטק הטובה דאון וגבות המורה ואנוצ לו ואנא ואנוו זצי נבכר טוני איאג הנהיא והי היא ההוא ותקי הטובר אבוו ההואת אשות דדיא הנים אתיק הוקנה אדקוצגו התאדה יהוא העניא הנקוא



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface xix
Acknowledgments xxi
INTRODUCTION
The Next-to-Greatest Shofar Story1
Shake Up3
TALES OF OUR GEDOLIM
B'Simchah
It's Evident, No Evidence5
Blow the Shofar, Not Your Top
Does It Have a Taste?9
What to Think
You Have to Try!
He Went Home
I Didn't Mean You
Who Makes Kiddush?15
Let's Make a Deal16
Saved by the Sound16
The Shofar That Roared

The Last Shofar of the Rizhiner	.18
Klug Means Smart	.19
Behind a Wall	.19
A Faint Sound in Kotzk	.20
Kavanos and the Kedushas Levi	.20
It Happened in Radomsk	.22
One Hundred Thousand Kolos	.23
Cautious about Money	.24
Which One to Choose	.25
Mussar	.26
Leave Now!	.27
Close of Summer	.27
SHOFAR DURING THE SHOAH AND OTHER HISTORIC EVENTS	
In Der Lager	.30
Shofar in Auschwitz	.31
Shofar in the Cauldron	.33
Moshe Winterter's Shofar	.35
The Rebbetzin's Story	.37
Dueling Shofaros	.38
Shofar on the Road	.41
Concierto Don Fernando Aguilar	.42
Shofar in Auschwitz	.43
An Astonishing Secret	.44
The Sound of Eternity	.47
Revolting	.48
Rav Chaim Stein's Diary	.52
The Stropkover's Shofar	.56
No Sound in Montreux	.58
A Shofar in Siberia	.60

# SHOFAR MESHALIM I

Mashal of the Satmar Rebbe	63
The Man on the Stoop	65
The Last Arrow	69
Children of the King	71
Small Opening	71
Don't Throw Stones	72
The Open Door	74
What's the Difference between Them?	76
Tax Collector	
Hiding the Tears	79
The Watchman	
Puddles of Wine	
Wagon Grease	83
Shofar on Shabbos	
Missing the Target	
The Baal Shem Tov's Ax	
Fixing Concrete	90
Breath of Life	
HALACHIC ISSUES	
A Tumult in Shum	
Turn It Around	96
Stop, Stop, Stop!	96
No Change	
Six vs. Seven	
The Rolling Teruah	
Call Them Back or Not?	
Mezakeh the Rabbim	
L'Haniach Tefillin	
Join in Olam Haba	

The Great Kiddush Debate1	L04
To Eat or Not to Eat1	L06
The Bris Comes First1	L08
The Reversal1	L09
Under Cover1	L10
It's Not Chicken Soup1	111
Ketanim and Mitzvos1	L12
The Lederman Shevarim-Teruah1	13
Uncanny in Uman1	14
Do-Over in Dovart?	L16
0	
Flush Out1	
What's Harder?	
The Ultimate Call	
Don't Wake Her Up1	L26
Just Do It!	L27
Hey Mister, I Mean You!1	
He Doesn't Hang Up1	131
The Most Treifah Expression1	L32
Nachbar	L33
Twins and Triplets1	L34
Cot in the Kitchen1	L36
Thrown Out1	L37
Blue Marble	L38
Areivus	L40
	To Eat or Not to Eat 1   The Bris Comes First 1   The Reversal 1   Under Cover 1   It's Not Chicken Soup 1   Ketanim and Mitzvos 1   The Lederman Shevarim-Teruah 1   Uncanny in Uman 1   Do-Over in Dovart? 1   PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS 1   Nothing Else but Him 1   Rav Nosson Tzvi's Kavanos 1   Don't Be a Show-Off 1   No Blow 1   Flush Out 1   Bringing Together. 1   What's Harder? 1   The Ultimate Call 1   Jon't Wake Her Up 1   Just Do It! 1   Hey Mister, I Mean You! 1   He Doesn't Hang Up. 1   The Most Treifah Expression 1   Nachbar 1   Thrown Out 1   Blue Marble 1

A Good Year14	1
Love and Fear	13
Home Plate	13
SHOFAR MESHALIM II	
	. –
Created for Yisrael	
Lost King	
Breaking Barriers	
Narrow Bridge15	
Ki'm'at Kat	
Surrounded by Soldiers15	53
Cryptography	6
Bagpipes	6
The King Chooses the Music15	58
Nor Gloom of Night	;9
Coronation	50
Stradivarius	52
Red Lighthouse	33
Face the Judge	55
The Great Appeasement16	55
A Workaround	
Who Is the Enemy?	
, Magnets	
Sonar	
MORE SHOFAR STORIES	
The Shofar Blower	'6
Hole in One	32
Anavah	33
The Prodigious Banquet18	34
Exacting	35
The Greatest Shofar Story18	36



# TALES OF OUR GEDOLIM

#### B'Simchah

It is said that Rav Eliyahu of Vilna, the Vilna Gaon, displayed great *simchah* at the time of *tekias shofar*. The Gaon expressed that on Rosh Hashanah, we should feel the great sensation of a nation that is coronating its king.

The Vilna Gaon's *talmid*, Rav Chaim Volozhiner, also displayed great *simchah*, and said one should have great *simchah* and *chedvah* like on the coronation day of a king. So too are we declaring the Ribbono shel Olam as King of the world.<sup>1</sup>

### It's Evident, No Evidence

The *Maor VaShemesh*<sup>2</sup> relates the following about the Chozeh of Lublin: The *rebbe* Rav Yaakov Yitzchak HaLevi Horowitz, known as the Chozeh of Lublin, was a *talmid* of the Mezritcher Maggid, the Berditchever, Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg, and the *rebbe* Reb Zusha. His main teacher was Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk.

The impact of the Chozeh on *Chassidus* is indescribable. The vast majority of chassidim today are from streams that were *talmidim* of the

<sup>1</sup> Mivchar Elyonim, Rosh Hashanah 5782.

<sup>2</sup> Rav Klonimus Kalman Epstein, Hamaor VaShemesh (Mossad Zecher Naftoli), end of chap. 5.

Chozeh. Most Chassidic thoughts today are reflective of the Chozeh's teachings, even more than of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings. Considering this, it is no wonder that the *Chiddushei HaRim* said, "We refer to him as 'the Rebbe of Lublin,' because he is 'the Rebbe' until Mashiach's days."

In Belz too, the Chozeh was referred to as "the Rebbe of Lublin." The *Sar Shalom* said, "The Lubliner was the *rebbe* of all Yidden, even of Yidden who know only of *Torah She'bichsav* [probably referring to the Maskilim], and even of those who are horse thieves."<sup>3</sup>

This widely circulated story occurred on Rosh Hashanah 1815 (תקע״ה) in Lublin, which was not long before his holy *neshamah* left this world.

The chassidim of the Chozeh were shifting in their seats uneasily. *Shacharis* of that first day of Rosh Hashanah had ended some time before, and they were now waiting for the blowing of the shofar to begin. However, it was impossible to start because the Chozeh had not yet come out of his room.

As was his custom every Rosh Hashanah, he had gone into his study after *Shacharis*. In the quiet seclusion of his room, he was able to sense what the new year would bring for all of Klal Yisrael. If it had been decreed that the year would be one of peace and prosperity, he would only tarry a few minutes in his study. If, *chas v'shalom*, it was to be a year of harsh judgments against the Jewish People, the Chozeh would not budge from his room until he had found some way to soften the decree.

Everyone in the packed shul knew what the long wait meant. They could almost sense the tension in the air as the Chozeh, behind closed doors, engaged in a mighty struggle to defend Klal Yisrael before the Heavenly court. But how and when the struggle would end, no one knew.

Rav Dovid of Lelov was one of the chassidim sitting in the shul. Each year, he would make his way from Lelov to Lublin to be with the Chozeh for Rosh Hashanah. With him was a young orphan whom Rav Dovid was raising in his home.

Rav Dovid tried to remain calm and focused on his own lofty thoughts, but even he was not immune to the mounting tension. Finally, Rav Dovid,

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi P. Lerner, Belz Institutions.

one of the Chozeh's closest *talmidim*, got up and approached the Chozeh's study. Rav Dovid entered the study with his young ward close in tow. Rav Dovid explained to the Chozeh the tension gripping those waiting to hear *tekias shofar*. The Chozeh, unperturbed by his *talmid*'s entry into his study, said to Rav Dovid that the fear of those in the minyan was not unfounded. A terrible decree was hanging over Klal Yisrael. Rav Dovid did not know what to say. The silence was gripping!

After a few minutes, the Chozeh noticed the young boy who had accompanied Rav Dovid. "Who is this boy?" asked the Chozeh. Rav Dovid explained the boy's story and why he was with him. The Chozeh then asked the child what *inyan* he was learning in *cheder*.

The boy quickly responded that he was learning the halachos of *eidus*. The Chozeh then asked the boy if he had any *chiddushim* on the topic. Rav Dovid was taken aback at the interest the Chozeh had taken in the child, especially at a time like this. It did not seem appropriate to ask the boy about what he was learning when the entire *tzibbur* was waiting and the fate of Klal Yisrael seemed to be hanging over them. The child was very confident in his *limud* and was eager to share what he had learned. He didn't hold back from telling the Chozeh that he was learning the halachos regarding saying testimony about a relative. The boy, who was himself an *iluy*, a child prodigy, and eventually became a *rebbe*,<sup>4</sup> said he had a problem understanding why it is that a relative is not permitted to testify for or against his family member.

"I can understand why he can't testify on behalf of his relative," the boy said, "as he may just want to have the charges against his relative dropped, and therefore might not say something that could be trusted. But why can he not testify *against* his relative?"

The Chozeh listened intensely as young Yitzchak was speaking. It seemed to Rav Dovid that the Chozeh himself had this question that had to be resolved right away. The Chozeh asked the child if he had thought about a possible answer to the question.

<sup>4</sup> Rav Yitzchak of Vorki.

"Yes," came the response from the boy. "I have an answer I was satisfied with."

"Please tell me your thought," said the Chozeh.

The child answered, "We see the Torah refers to witnesses as *anashim*, people. From this we see that a witness must be someone whom we would be able to place in the category of 'people.' A person who would willingly offer testimony against a relative does not fall into the category of humanity. Therefore, he is invalid as a witness."

Upon hearing this, the Chozeh clapped his hands and began to smile. "Thank you, my child," the Chozeh said warmly. "Your words have nullified all the accusations that threatened us in the Heavenly court."

The Chozeh quickly stood up and prepared to return to the shul so that *tekias shofar* could begin. Rav Dovid, however, could not let his *rebbi* leave the room without an understanding of what had just occurred.

"Rav Dovid, this is a matter that even a child can understand. Are we not the sons of Hakadosh Baruch Hu? Is He not our Father? Since we are His relatives, how can any evidence be brought against us in the Heavenly court?"<sup>5</sup>

# Blow the Shofar, Not Your Top

One year, Rav Yissachar Dov of Radoshitz took quite a while on *Yom Hadin*, the Day of Judgment, Rosh Hashanah, to join his congregants for the blowing of the shofar. When he finally came out of his room, he told his chassidim the following:

"My *rebbi* was Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz, the famous Chozeh of Lublin. I would like to tell a story about him, which will help explain why I have been delayed.

"One Rosh Hashanah, the Chozeh remained for a very long time in his room. He felt unable to leave and join his chassidim for the blowing of the shofar; he was heartbroken at the thought that he had to his credit no single merit that would give him the strength to go ahead with this

<sup>5</sup> This story is repeated in many sources with numerous levels of detail. It also appears in *Sippurei Chassidim*, by Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin, story # 23.

special mitzvah. Finally, he remembered that he had, in fact, one merit in his favor: for the entire year, he had not spoken any words of anger to anyone—an incredible accomplishment!

"One time, he almost did lose his temper, though. His *shamash*, attendant, forgot to prepare water next to his bed so that he would be able to wash his hands as soon as he got up in the morning. Rav Horowitz decided to deal sternly with the attendant for not doing his job properly. However, prior to letting loose on his *shamash*, he recalled the warning of the Sages that anger can be destructive and can lead to idolatry. It is important to control our anger and not let it control us. The Chozeh thought to himself, 'For the sake of the mitzvah of washing my hands in the morning, am I going to allow myself, God forbid, to become an idol worshipper?' He therefore said nothing.

"When the Chozeh reminded himself that he had this one merit to his credit, he went ahead with the blowing of the shofar."

It appeared from the story he related that Rav Yissachar Dov of Radoshitz himself had experienced a similar situation in which he had not been ready for *tekias shofar* but found a *zechus* for himself and thus proceeded.

After relating the story, Reb Yissachar Dov proceeded to lead his own congregation in reading *Tehillim* 47, which speaks of the majesty of the Creator and is said as the introduction to the blasts of the shofar.

# Does It Have a Taste?

Both the *Mikdash Yisrael* and the *Leket Yosher*<sup>6</sup> discuss what happens if someone dozes off during *tekias shofar*. They both conclude that the dozer would not be *yotzei* for those *kolos* he missed. The *Mikdash Yisrael* adds that if a person becomes deeply "*fartracht*" (שיפ פארטראכט), meaning oblivious to his surroundings, spaced out, and thinking of other things, thus not paying attention to the *kolos*, there is a fear that he also would not be *yotzei*.

<sup>6</sup> Leket Yosher, Orach Chaim, p. 125; Mikdash Yisrael, Rosh Hashanah 183–86.

At a minimum, doing a mitzvah thoughtlessly has no *taam*, no taste. This reminds us of a story often told by Rav Shimon Schwab.

In the early 1930s, when Rav Schwab was a *talmid* in Mir, he returned home to Frankfurt but did so taking a detour via Radin to spend a most memorable Shabbos there and see the Chafetz Chaim. Rav Schwab was there for forty-eight hours...forty-eight hours that lasted a lifetime! The visit provided him with a lifetime of experiences and learning that inspired him, his *talmidim*, and the attendees of major Agudath Israel gatherings with whom he shared these experiences.

On Friday night, the Chafetz Chaim spoke and discussed the *mahn*. The Chafetz Chaim mentioned that whatever one had in mind for a taste is what the *mahn* tasted like. This was so even if a person just had it in mind as a thought but didn't express it. He just thought of it—"*hat gebeben a tracht*"—and the *mahn* would assume the taste that person thought of.

The Chafetz Chaim then asked, "What occurred if a person did not have a thought at all? What kind of taste did the *mahn* have then?" Rav Schwab said he remembers vividly how the Chafetz Chaim asked the question and waited for someone to give the answer. He looked around, right and left across the room to see if someone had an answer. Inquisitively, he panned the room and asked, "Haaah?" He then repeated, "What kind of *taam* did the *mahn* have if someone didn't think of anything?" Since nobody gave an answer, the Chafetz Chaim said, "I will tell you. If one doesn't think, it has no taste! In *ruchniyus*, if you don't think, you have no taste!"

The Chafetz Chaim then threw in a word that was only caught by those who knew what he was talking about. He said that with regard to *terumah*, the Torah says "*v'nechshav*." He said just that word. He did not elaborate, but he was referring to the fact that for a *davar she'b'kedushah*, one has to have a *machshavah*. Then he continued, "If a person learns a *blatt Gemara* and doesn't think, it has no taste." The Chafetz Chaim then kissed his fingertips and exclaimed, "It's so sweet. But one has to think. Without thinking, it has no taste."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Heard from Rav Shimon Schwab.

#### What to Think

The *Chasam Sofer* said that all of our *Torah ha'kedoshah* and all the mitzvos are built upon a very deep foundation (meaning spheres of mystical and esoteric thought that are far beyond normal comprehension).

Anyone who does not believe this, said the *Chasam Sofer*, is like a person who touches a *Sefer Torah* with his bare hands. Regarding such a person it is said that he will be buried bare—an egregious result of an egregious act.

The homiletical interpretation of this halachah is that it refers to a person who does not believe that there is a deep-rooted foundation to the holy Torah. He gives the example from *Masechta Sanhedrin* in which King Menasheh poked fun at passages in the Torah.<sup>8</sup> Menasheh asked in a mocking fashion for what purpose they were written. "Did Moshe have nothing better to write about than the ancestry of Se'ir, the offspring of Eisav?"

Despite the deep-rooted nature of Torah and mitzvos and the seriousness of it, the *Chasam Sofer* said that one should not rely on a *mekubal* and believe that the mitzvos are just a *remez* to the higher spheres of thought. The following anecdote emphasizes this point.

Reb Shmuel Deutsch, a *baal tokeia* in Pressburg, once approached the *Chasam Sofer* and asked him to learn with him the *kavanos* for the *tekios* of Rosh Hashanah, like those that the *Magen Avraham* writes about in the name of the *Shelah*.<sup>9</sup>

The *Chasam Sofer* simply walked over to one of the bookshelves and pulled out a Chumash. He flipped the pages and pointed to the *pasuk* of "*yom teruah yihiyeh lachem.*" That was the lesson on the *kavanos* of *tekias shofar*!<sup>10</sup>

### You Have to Try!

Rav Chaim Berlin was born in 1832 in the Lithuanian city of Volozhin, and was *niftar* in 1912 in Yerushalayim. He was the son of Rav Naftali

<sup>8</sup> Sanhedrin 99b.

<sup>9</sup> Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim 585:11.

<sup>10</sup> Zichronos U'Mesoros al HaChasam Sofer.

Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, known as the *Netziv*. His memory stands tall, as the great bastion of Torah, Yeshivas Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn, NY, is named after him.

Rav Berlin became the chief rabbi of Moscow in 1865. In 1889, he moved to Volozhin, where he was the head of the rabbinical court. In 1892, he became the chief rabbi of Kobrin (1892–1897), and then of Elizavetgrad (1897–1906).

As the son of the *Netziv* of Volozhin, Rav Chaim Berlin was a cherished friend of Rav Shmuel Salant (1816–1909), the chief rabbi of Yerushalayim, from early on in their lives, and they corresponded very frequently. Eventually, Rav Chaim Berlin left Russia, joined Rav Salant in 1906, and settled in Yerushalayim.

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein relates the following story: While in Moscow, the Russian czar issued terrible edicts banning Jews from Moscow and forcing them to settle in what was called the Pale of Settlement. He threw out all the Jews who were living there at the time. As the chief rabbi, Rav Berlin felt the imperative, as the captain of a sinking ship, to stay until everyone left. The czar allowed a few Jews who were needed by the government to remain for a time. Rav Berlin was also permitted to remain. Needless to say, any *davar she'b'kedushah* was difficult to perform and had to be done with tremendous mesirus nefesh. When Elul came around, the remaining Jews in the city sought to be able to be *mekayem* the mitzvah of tekias shofar for Rosh Hashanah. They searched and searched and were able to come up with just a single shofar. As Rav Zilberstein relates, the Satan was able to "mish" his hands in, and they found the shofar was cracked lengthwise from end to end, which unquestionably makes the shofar *pasul*. It appears that repairing it was not an option. This was the only shofar they were able to find in the entire city.

What was this *gaon* and *tzaddik* to do? A person whose heart and soul pines to do the will of Hakadosh Baruch Hu does not sit by idly. Rav Chaim Berlin reviewed and reviewed the halachos until Rosh Hashanah night. Even that wasn't enough, so he stayed up all night learning the halachos, trying to figure out what to do. But it was to no avail. Morning came, and he made his way from the *beis midrash* to the shul, quite in

despair because they would not be able to be *mekayem* the mitzvah of *tekias shofar* in a *l'chatchilah* way. (With no other choice, they probably could have blown that shofar, but without a *berachah*.)

As Rav Berlin made his way to shul in the early morning, down the street he noticed a non-Jewish junk hauler pulling his wagon. As he got closer, he noticed in the wagon the shape of something familiar. He approached the wagon and, lo and behold, in a load full of all kinds of junk, there was a shofar in that wagon! He approached the non-Jewish wagon driver and asked him, "To whom does that shofar belong?"

In a split second, the wagon driver respectfully said, "Oh, I'm so sorry. Forgive me, I didn't know the shofar belonged to the *rav*."

Rav Berlin then tried to establish if the shofar was made by a Jew or by a non-Jew. (Rav Zilberstein correctly wonders about this part of the story, because it doesn't matter if the shofar was made by a Jew or a non-Jew. That is not *me'akev*, and certainly not if there's no other choice. We can perhaps assume he was concerned that it was a shofar of *avodah zarah*, which would make it *assur* to use.)

After pressing the junk man, Rav Berlin was able to establish that the junk collector had gone into an abandoned shul and collected it from there. (My question here is whether the non-Jew had *ne'emanus*. One would have to say that the junk man's explanation was what we call *l'fi tumo*.)

The junk collector thought that Rav Berlin was the *rav* of the shul from where he had gotten the shofar, and hence was quick to give it to Rav Berlin without him even having to ask—and without him having to buy it, as it was Rosh Hashanah!

This shofar stayed with Rav Berlin when he emigrated to Eretz Yisrael and eventually ended up in the hands of the *tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, Rav Aryeh Levin, father-in-law of Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv.

Rav Zilberstein explains that the lesson from this story is that no matter what the situation, a person has to work on trying to be *mekayem* a mitzvah. And even if there is no *eitzah*, still try to be *mekayem*. And when Hakadosh Baruch Hu sees his *matzav*, He will help to bring about the ability to be *mekayem* the mitzvah.

## He Went Home

The *sefer Ish al Ha'eidah* relates the following story:<sup>11</sup>

One year, during the *hafsakah*, break, prior to *tekias shofar*, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv was sitting in his place in his *beis midrash* when he was approached by someone who asked him for a *p*'sak halachah on a particular matter. Rav Elyashiv told him to come back in a half hour, and he would give him an answer. Rav Elyashiv got up from his seat and walked to his home, which was very close by. After a half hour, he returned and rendered a *p*'sak to the questioner.

The incident raised a lot of questions amongst the *mispallelim*. What did Rav Elyashiv do in his home? Did he forget the halachah and have to look it up? Something like that almost never happened. And, if in fact that was the case, what took half an hour? Later, the *rebbetzin* was asked what had occurred when the *rav* had come back home. She said that he had gone to sleep! Astounded, his *talmidim* later asked Rav Elyashiv for an explanation. He answered that shortly before the questioner came over to ask his question, he made *Kiddush*. (This was later in his life, when because of his weaker condition he made *Kiddush* prior to *tekias shofar*. Until that time, he allowed for a *hafsakah* so that the *mispallelim* could make *Kiddush*, though he himself did not.) Hence, it was forbidden for him to render a *p'sak* unless he slept first.

# I Didn't Mean You

Rav Bunim Yoel Tausig, known as the Mattersdorfer Rebbe, relates in his *sefer*, *Tiferes Banim*,<sup>12</sup> that he attended a *shiur* given by Rav Elyakim Getzel Finkelstein of B'nei Brak, who was *zocheh* in his youth to be with Rav Yeshayah Steiner of Kerestir (known as Rav Shayaleh Kerestirer) for the *tefillos* of Rosh Hashanah.

Rav Shayaleh was one of the most famous Chassidic *rebbes* in the early twentieth century, a *talmid* of both the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz, Rav Chaim Halberstam, and Rav Mordechai of Nadvorna.

<sup>11</sup> P. 204.

<sup>12</sup> Tiferes Banim, p. 400.