



The True Gaon, Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv ztz"l

The Ark of G-d, Ha-Gaon, Ha-Tzadik, Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv ztz"l, has ascended on high.

The True Gaon - because in our days, every rabbi and Torah scholar is called a "Gaon" for the honor of Torah. We therefore emphasize with great respect that he is a True Gaon.

The True Gaon - on account of his virtuous characteristics, on account of his great modesty, since he did not pursue publicity and position, since he was secluded, did not give speeches or appear in public, and lived in an extremely simple apartment.

The True Gaon - since he was a "Shakdan" (one who learns Torah with great diligence), just as the book about him is called - "Ha-Shakdan", and the first of the 48 ways to acquire Torah is learning (Avot 6:5). Already in his youth he was a great Shakdan and Torah scholar. The Chief Rabbi of Israel, Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon Yitzchak Isaac Ha-Levi Herzog, therefore appointed him as a judge on the district Beit Din and then quickly to the Beit Din Ha-Gadol. He filled this position for more than 20 years.

The True Gaon - on account of his complete loyalty to Torah and standing with full strength like a wall against any innovation (Chiddush) that was not in accordance with the Torah. This complete loyalty came through flawless adherence to our holy Rabbis throughout the generations. If we were asked what was our Rabbi's unique method of learning Torah, we would respond: It is simple, he did not innovate anything. The words of our Rabbis are so great that they do not require innovation. And so too, if we were asked what was our Rabbi's innovation in his Pesak Halachah? we would respond: He did not innovate anything. How great is the old. Maran Ha-Rav Kook in fact taught in his book "Olat Ha-Re'eiyah" (vol. 2, p. 159) that Moshe Rabbenu's greatness

did not lay in the fact that he created anything new, but in the fact that he received the word of Hashem, "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai" (Avot 1:1). By doing so, he established the principle of adherence among the Nation and all the worlds. The great innovation of our Rabbi is that he did not innovate, and this itself is a major innovation: the innovation of loyalty to tradition, the innovation of healthy and clear conservatism, the great self-sacrifice for every letter of the Torah. And when our Rabbi was forced to innovate, the new was entirely old, as Rashi says in the name of our Sages on the verse: "It will be if you surely hearken": "If you hearken to the old, you will hearken to the new" (i.e. if you truly learn the Torah as is, you will gain fresh insights into the Torah you already know. Devarim 11:13 with Rashi).

The True Gaon - since he also knew how to be lenient when it was needed and required, all according to the way of the Torah, and in this realm too he did not fear anyone.

The True Gaon - since he respected every Torah scholar even if there were differences of opinion.

[For example, in his relationship to Maran Ha-Rav Kook. His connection with Ha-Rav Kook already began with his grandfather, Ha-Gaon Ha-Gadol Ha-Mekubal, Ha-Rav Shlomo Eliyashuv, the author of "Leshem Shevo Ve-Achlama," from whom Rav Kook learned. And Rav Eliyashuv greatly respected his student. He once said: There are different ways in Kabbalah: Ha-Ra'avad and Ha-Ramban, Ha-Ramak and Ha-Ari, Ha-Rama Mi-Pano and Ha-Ramchal, Ha-Gra and others, but Ha-Rav Kook includes all of them, no hidden teaching escapes him.

In the year 5682, Ha-Rav Kook attained permission for Ha-Rav Eliyashuv to make Aliyah, and his grandson, our Rabbi, made Aliyah with him. Rav Eliyashuv and Rav Kook also learned many nights together in Yerushalayim. When zealots spoke against Rav Kook, Ha-Rav Eliyashuv silenced them: You can't tell me who he is. We have spent nights learning together.

Rav Eliyashuv was extremely poor and in the winter suffered from the cold. Rav Kook took off his long Rabbinic coat and gave it to him to keep him warm. His grandson inherited the coat, and it hung in Rav Elyashiv's closet.

R' Aryeh Levin once spoke with Rav Kook about his sorrow that there was a wonderful, righteous, young Torah scholar who would be a great match for his (R' Aryeh's) daughter, but the young man did not respond favorably to his suggestion (either because he thought he had better options or because he was not ready to marry). Rav Kook asked for the identity of the young man, and was told that it was our Rabbi. Maran Ha-Rav called for the young man and spoke to him. The younger Rav Elyashiv then accepted the proposal and the couple married. Rav Kook served as the Mesader Kiddushin. Ha-Rabbanit Sheina Chaya ztz"l shared her husband's respect for Rav Kook, and when she once saw from the window how people were scolding him on the street and trying to knock off his hat, she was incapacitated for months.

It once happened that one of the editors of the "Otzar Mefarshei Ha-Talmud" (Treasury of Talmudic Commentators) refused to include Rav Kook's teaching on the Gemara, and was therefore fired by the chief editor. The editor did not accept his decision, and they went to our Rabbi. Ha-Rav Elyashiv was shocked and said to the editor: "Did you know Ha-Rav Kook?! You should know – he was holy. I would have fired you too." And this happened with other books as well.]

The True Gaon, the great Gaon has ascended on high, but his strong spirit is spread throughout all parts of the entire Nation. May we merit following his path and standing with great respect before his memory.

Fortunate am I, the humble one, to merit learning in the building of Yeshivat Torat Chaim (which today houses Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim) where our

Rabbi learned in his youth. To stand on the same holy ground, and to learn his teachings.

May his soul be bound up with the bonds of the living with all of the Tzadikim.



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