



Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner's Eulogy
for Ha-Rav Yehoshua Yeshaya Neuwirth ztz"l:
The Gaon "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata"

On the 3rd of Tammuz, at the age of 86, Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Yehoshua Yeshaya Neuwirth ztz"l ascended on high, after many years of learning and teaching Torah. The book "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata" requires no advertising. It is found in virtually every home of G-d-fearing Jews, and is used by Torah scholars and the masses alike.

But his genius is virtually unknown. People do not know that he wrote other books: Kitzur Dinei Shemitah Karkaot (Concise Laws of Shemitah), Ohel Sarah – On the Laws of Family Purity, Chinuch Ha-Banim Le-Mitzvot (Educating Children for Mitzvot), an halachic guide for nurses in hospitals and tens of articles and hundreds of halachic ruling quoted in other books.

And his traits were those of a great Torah scholar – humble, inconspicuous and not out for publicity. He did not speak about himself but devoted all of his strength for the good of Hashem, His Torah and His Nation.

It is possible to see one thing clearly in his book "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata": he is the faithful student of Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman

Auerbach. He learned from him since his youth in Yeshivat Kol Torah, and he established the rulings in his book based on his words. In fact, the foundation of a Torah scholar (Talmid Chacham) is being the literal meaning of that title: the student of a Sage, a faithful student, a devoted student, a student who sits in the dust of his Rabbi's feet.

His students obviously know him well, students of Yeshivat Kol Torah and also the students of the Yeshivot he established: Pnei Shmuel Le-Tze'erim, Chochmat Shlomo, Netivot Chochmah, and he was also known in the Sha'arei Tzedek Hospital, where he was the Posek.

But, in truth, this is improper from our perspective. Before recognizing a Torah scholar's wisdom, one needs to recognize his fear of Heaven. If there is no fear, there is no wisdom.

We have now merited the third edition of the book "Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata", 45 years after the first edition in which the author relates his life story under the title: "It is good to show gratitude to Hashem". Obviously, it is without a trace of self-promotion, rather in order to relate the incredible kindnesses of Hashem for his family and for himself, and for the great miracles Hashem performed for him.

Ha-Rav, the son of Ha-Rav Aharon Neuwirth, grew up on Berlin, Germany, when Hitler – may his name be blotted out – rose to power. He and his brother were sent on a "Kindertransport", children's transfer, to good-hearted Jewish families in Belgium. Much later, his parents also left Germany, on account of a special permit of the Queen of Holland for 42 Rabbis. The children were then reunited with their parents in Holland. But Holland itself was conquered by the Nazis – may their names be blotted out, and they were also unable to obtain food since there did not have food-ration cards. The underground supplied them with forged food-ration cards and this is how they survived for years. Their little money ran out. The Jews of the underground then requested from the leaders of the underground to appoint a Rabbi for

them, just like – Lehavdil - the non-Jews have a priest. Their request was answered, and his father, Ha-Rav Aharon, was appointed the Rabbi of the underground, and this brought with it a salary – which in and of itself was a great wonder.

But there is no end to the miracles which occurred for them. We will only mention a few. The Nazis once burst into their apartment searching for Jews and discovered the Aron Kodesh and they inquired about it. Ha-Rav Aharon, who was filled with Emunah and feared nothing, opened the Aron Kodesh and showed them the Sefer Torah. "What is written in it", they asked. He replied in German: "It says: Do not murder." "What else," they asked. He said: "Love your fellow as yourself." [And this next sentence does not appear in the book, but I heard it]: He added: "I am obligated to cling to Torah. You do what you are obligated to do, and I will do what I am obligated to do". A great miracle occurred and the Germans accepted his words and did not touch him. They wished him good night and left.

Later on, all the Jews were arrested and brought to a huge prison hall. When Rosh Hashanah arrived, Ha-Rav Aharon pulled out a Shofar, which was hidden under his jacket. They covered themselves with jackets, and he blew the Shofar three times, and miraculously, they were not discovered. In the end, they were released for a reason unclear to this day.

Ha-Rav Aharon sent his daughter to work as a house-keeper for a non-Jewish Dutch family, since she did not have a Jewish-looking face, and he hoped to save her in this way. But they required her to work harder on Shabbat than any other day in preparation for Sunday, which is a holiday for the Christians. After a few Shabbatot, Ha-Rav Aharon decided to bring her back, even though she was safe there and well fed. But on account of the Shabbat desecration, it was impossible to continue. She returned home on a Friday, and on Sunday they heard that that family had been killed on Shabbat by an

aerial bomb. Indeed "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata" – observing Shabbat according to the Halachah – saved them.

Baruch Hashem, the war ended. Our Rav, Ha-Rav Yehoshua Yeshaya Neuwirth ztz"l, went to the port in Marseilles, France in order to travel to Eretz Yisrael, but they told him to board on the ship on Shabbat. This greatly bothered him: "During all of the difficult years of the war, I succeeded in observing Shabbat and how is it possible that now with the liberation, I will desecrate it." But his situation was desperate and it appeared to be life-threatening to remain in a strange place, with no money, no food and no place to go. He was forced to board the ship but he regretted it for many years, especially since it became clear much later that it was a deception of Shabbat-Desecrators who wanted the religious to violate Shabbat. He then took it upon himself that if Hashem merits him, he would do something for Shabbat, and later the idea came to write the book "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata".

When he arrived in Israel, he was captured by the British, released and then people advised him to work for his sustenance and to help his parents come to Israel. But his deepest aspiration was to completely devote himself to Torah learning. He asked his father what to do, and he responded in a letter: The One who has helped up to now will continue to help! We went through five years of the Holocaust in for our son to learn Torah! You will learn only Torah. And our Rav wrote: "After years of physical salvation during the war, I was saved again, but this time it was spiritual salvation."

May we merit learning the book "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata" in breadth and in depth, and may we merit following in the path of Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon ztz"l, his modest, his humility and his great devotion to Hashem.

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



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