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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.

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Rosh Hashanah, Segulos, and Knives

The Gemara (*Kerisos* 6a) cites Abaye as stating that since we have established that omens are significant, one should accustom oneself to eat, at the beginning of the year, certain foods that serve as favorable omens: gourd, fenugreek, leek, beets, and dates. Elsewhere, however, the Gemara indicates that Abaye's practice involved merely *looking* at these foods as a favorable *siman* for the coming year (*Horayos* 12a).

The custom of eating these foods is cited in the *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 583:1). The Rama adds the familiar *minhag* of eating an apple dipped in honey, which is likewise presented as a *siman* for a sweet year.

These practices are but some of the many traditions that have been transmitted throughout the generations as favorable signs and *segulos* for the year ahead.

When discussing *segulos* and *minhagim* of this nature, it is important to appreciate that, in general, a custom that has

been transmitted with specific details is to be observed in *accordance with those details*. *A seemingly minor deviation from the established practice* may be significant. Indeed, there are occasions when attention to a particular detail resolves what might otherwise appear to be a contradiction between a *segulah* and another *halachah* or established *minhag*.

There appears to be a *segulah* recorded in nineteenth-century sources in the name of Gedolim who lived in the eighteenth century that connects knives with Rosh Hashanah. The various traditions differ somewhat from one another, and of course, we are going to cite *Zera Emes* Gedolim.

The *sefer Segulos Yisrael* (*Maareches Reish*, os 4; R' Shabsai Lifshitz, 1905) states that the *mechaber* heard from trustworthy sources, who heard directly from Rav Yitzchak Isaac Ziditchover (1805–1873), that on Erev Rosh Hashanah, each person should purchase a new knife

and sharpen it as a *segulah* for successful *parnasah* during the coming year. R' Shabsai further states that the Karmarna Rebbe would say of Rav Yitzchak Isaac Ziditchover that “the *Shechinah* spoke through him and he did not speak words without *yichud*” (presumably this means an attachment to Hashem).

THE KNIFE OF YITZCHAK AVINU

Fascinatingly, Rav Yonah Freidman of Monsey points out that the sharpening of a knife on Erev Rosh Hashanah might be linked to our forefathers.

When Yitzchak Avinu determined that it was time to bless Esav, he called him and instructed him: “Now go and sharpen, please, your gear, your sword and your bow; go out to the field and hunt game for me ... so that my soul may bless you before I die” (*Bereishis* 27:1–4).

The Vilna Gaon understands that this episode took place on Erev Rosh Hashanah.

The instruction to sharpen the knife requires explanation. Yitzchak was not telling him to sharpen his knife so that it would be in perfect condition for the slaughtering and to ensure a proper *shechitah*. That would have been self-understood, and it was something Esav would have known about for years.

Why, then, does the Torah emphasize the sharpening of the knife at this particular moment?

The reason to point it out at this particular time was because Yitzchak was teaching his son the custom of sharpening a knife on Erev Rosh Hashanah.

(R' Shabsai does not add any other details from the Ziditchover, such as what is the purpose of the knife; is it all about purchasing and sharpening the knife, or is there more to it?)

THE KNIFE OF EREV ROSH HASHANAH

R' Moshe Aryeh Freund used



to purchase a new knife on Erev Rosh Hashanah and would instruct people to perform proper *hagalah* (placing it over a fire) and then *tovel* it. He would then use that knife to cut the challah on Rosh Hashanah night (*Ateres Yehoshua, Zemiros for Yom Tov, os 266*). He did not seem to be concerned about sharpening the knife.

(It should be noted that, in general, R' Moshe Aryeh was very strict about never accepting a knife as a present. This stringency is based on *Sichos HaRan*, in which R' Nosson quotes R' Nachman of Breslov in the name of the Baal Shem Tov (his great-grandfather) that a knife should not be given as a present.)

The *minhag* of the Shomrei Emunim Rebbe was to use a knife to cut the apple that was eaten as a *siman* for a good year.

THE KNIFE OF ROSH HASHANAH

There are others who connect knives and Rosh Hashanah in a way that makes it clear that the *segulah* is related to Rosh Hashanah itself, and not to anything that should be done on Erev Rosh Hashanah.

Rav Yitzchak Neschiza (*Zichron Tov*) writes that the Lubliner (the Chozeh of Lublin) would distribute knives on Rosh Hashanah to his relatives as a *segulah* for a financially successful year. [See above regarding what was cited in the name of the Baal Shem Tov.]

However, Rav Yechiel Michel Hibner (*Maaseh Yechiel, Parashas Beshalach*) cites a tradition that the Lubliner would carry a sharp, smooth knife in his pocket over the Yom Tov.

THE KNIFE OF THE YEAR

The sefer *Segulos Yisrael (Maareches Peh,*

os 30) records yet another practice: using a sharp knife throughout the year so that fewer crumbs are produced when cutting challah. The concern with crumbs is rooted in the idea that *crumbs* can be a cause of poverty.

Along similar lines, there is a general *minhag* to sharpen one's knives every Friday (*Taamei HaMinhagim, Shabbos, p. 246*). While this latter practice is not specifically connected with Rosh Hashanah, it adds another dimension to the broader tradition surrounding the importance of maintaining a sharp knife. The *Taamei HaMinhagim* cites Rav Yechiel Michel Hibner in connecting the two together.

CUTTING THROUGH

At the same time, the Klausenberger Rebbe cautioned against placing undue emphasis on the external preparations associated with the Yamim Noraim. He wrote, "People should not make the mistake that the preparation for the Yamim Noraim is buying a new *machzor* when they do not know how to interpret the words of the *machzor*. Instead of running to buy new clothing or purchasing a new knife, they should instead be studying Torah, which gives true life and lengthens the days of the people who study it" (see *HaMevaser Torani* 616).

This perspective provides an important framework for understanding the various *segulos* and *minhagim* associated with Rosh Hashanah. One important note to remember: the traditions surrounding the knife may be fascinating and may carry significance as transmitted *segulos*, but they should not obscure the primary preparations for the Yamim Noraim: Torah, *tefillah, teshuvah*, and a sincere *avodah* of the heart.

Kesivah Vachasimah Tovah and a gut, gebentched yahr!

ר' יצחק ב"ר מרדכי שפירא מנשכז:

Although R. Yitzchak Shapiro (1788-21 Shevat 1868) was the third son of R. Mordechai (1742-8 Nisan 1800), the first Rebbe of Neshchiz (Ukraine), he succeeded his father. Apart from his father, R. Yitzchak was a student of the Chozeh (1745-1815), as well as his wife's grandfather, R. Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev (1740-1809). With the passing of the Chozeh, R. Yitzchak began his 50+ years of leadership in Neshchiz. His teachings were collected and published posthumously in a volume entitled *Toldos Yitzchak* (Warsaw 1868). Among his students was the Toldos Adam (R' Yehoshualah Ostrova), the Ramatim Tzufim, and R' Elimelch Grodzitz.

ר' משה אריה ב"ר ישראל פריינד:

R. Moshe Aryeh Freund (6 Tishrei 1903- 20 Elul 1996). Born in Honyad (Romania), where his maternal grandfather, R. Zev Volf Goldberger (d. 1911), was the Rav. Shortly after R. Moshe Aryeh's birth, his great grandfather, R. Mordechai Yehuda Lev (d. 1904), the Rav of Entradam and Naszod passed away. His position was filled by his son-in-law, R. Avraham Yehoshua Freund (1850-1932), the Rav of Rodna, (and paternal grandfather of R. Moshe Aryeh). R. Avraham Yehoshua tested a 13-year-old Moshe Aryeh on Shulchan Aruch, Yorah Deah with Pri Megadim and Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat with Ketzos.

When R. Avraham Yehoshua left the rabbinate of Rodna it was then assumed by R. Yisrael Freund (d. 1940), where he served until 1930, when he was appointed Rav of Honyad.

In 1921, R. Moshe Aryeh married his first cousin, Baila Goldberger - the couple would be blessed with 8 children. R. Moshe Aryeh taught Torah in Naszod and Honyad, until 1938, when he was appointed by Rav Yoel Teitelbaum as a Dayan in Satmar. During the Holocaust, the Freunds were sent to Auschwitz; only R. Moshe Aryeh survived. After liberation, he returned to Satmar, and (in 1946) married Freida Dachner (1914-1982), the daughter of R. Pinchas Yosef (1875-1942) the Rav of Berehomet, Ukraine. Tragically, the couple's newborn son passed away. In 1951, R. Moshe Aryeh and his wife emigrated to Israel, and he was appointed to lead the Satmar Yeshiva 'Yetev Lev' in Yerushalayim, as well as becoming Rav of the Beis Yisrael neighborhood. In 1969, he joined the Beis Din of the Eida HaChareidis, ascending to the position of Raavad in 1979, and Gaavad in 1989. R. Moshe Aryeh's novellae on all areas of Torah were published in a series of volumes entitled *Ateres Yehoshua*. In 2019, a three volume work of collected anecdotes and oral traditions related by R. Moshe Aryeh was released, entitled *Mara D'Uvda*.