

THE Zera Emes זרע אמת PROJECT

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לבנך
Keeping
Their
Torah Alive.



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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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Reb David Blum

Rav Yona Forst (*Divrei Yona, Shemos*) once told his students, "I want to tell you about a story about a person that I knew, whose name was **Reb David Blum**. He was a special person. Tragically, he passed away without children. He followed the righteous path of Torah and was a *yiras Shamayim*, even when faced with terrible *nisyonos*. For a while he was very wealthy, and he would donate large sums of his wealth to help yeshivos. My personal feeling was that Reb David felt that charity was the best way to continue his legacy after he passed away, with the knowledge that he had no children. Not only would he give out large sums of money, but he would do it discreetly. ... He was on an extremely lofty level! He passed away when he was over 80 years old. For more than 50 years he was wealthy. At a certain point, he reached a dire situation where he had nothing left."

Rav Yona continued, "During this period of his life, he once called together his friends to his home, and there he addressed everyone, saying, 'You all know that I was not a person who needed a lot of money. All the years I worked was only for me to give it to

charity, mainly to *yeshivos* to produce more Torah. And now, to my dismay, I don't have that ability anymore, as I am destitute. But I want you to know that none of you should think for even a second that I have any complaints against Hashem. ... Not only do I not have complaints, but I only have complete gratitude to Hashem that throughout the years, He gave me the opportunity to help people learn Torah...'"



REB DAVID BLUM

RAV YONA'S UNDERSTANDING

Upon concluding the retelling of Reb David's words, Rav Yonah continued to explain the importance of this attitude. He told his students, "Of course, people asked, why would Hashem take away the money from a person who ... gave most of it away for charity? I think the answer is, Hashem

knew how great Reb David's desire was to continue to give charity to those in need, and his **desire** to give charity at that point was worth more to Hashem than the thousands of dollars that he actually could have given out.

"There are times when the desire for the mitzvah is so great

דוד טעניל"ר אברהם שלמה בלום

Reb David Blum (27 Av, 1890 - 9 Teves, 1975). Born in the Galician town of Sokal, Ukraine, a village near Belz. David became a devoted adherent of R. Yissachar Dov Rokeach (1851-1926), the third Rebbe of Belz. He married Freida Schurberg (1898- 19 Teves, 1961), who hailed from a family of Sadigur chassidim in Radevits, Bukovina. Amidst the upheaval of the First World War, the Blums (along with many other Eastern European refugees) found themselves in Vienna, Austria. In Vienna, David was blessed with financial success and devoted himself to philanthropic endeavors. The Blum home in interwar Vienna was widely known as an "open house," where they cared for all who needed assistance.

They remained loyal to Belz, continuing with **R. Aharon** (1880 - 21 Av, 1957). The Blums managed to emigrate to Mandatory Palestine in April 1940, settling in Tel Aviv, where David developed a warm relationship with **R. Avraham Yaakov of Sadigur** (8 Av, 1884 - 5 Teves, 1960). When R. Aharon of Belz succeeded in reaching Eretz Yisrael in 1944, Rav David Blum was naturally one of his most stalwart supporters. He maintained his reputation for magnanimity by contributing generously to individuals and institutions. In his twilight years, David's fortunes declined, and he was occasionally reduced to eating his Shabbos meals with the students of the Belzer Yeshiva. When he protested at being served first, he was told: "A father is served first, and here, you are like a father."

that the reward is greater than for one who actually fulfills the mitzvah!"

RAV YONA'S LIFE

Rav Yona connected this idea: "The opening words of the *Mesillas Yesharim* state that a person is supposed to think about what his obligation is while he is alive. These thoughts must come along with the knowledge and belief everything is done in accordance with [Hashem's] Will, which is all good.



RAV YONA

"Some people are born without the ability to fulfill an important mitzvah, like *pru urvu*. Of course, everyone wants to produce generations of people, and so one will wonder why it has been decreed that he cannot have children. What, then, is his purpose? "Sometimes," Rav Yona explained, "the answer is that the **desire** the person has to fulfill the mitzvah, along with his prayers that he be given the opportunity to fulfill *mitzvos* in Hashem's world, is a **much greater**, more valuable service to Hashem than if he were actually able to fulfill it." Rav Yona was not just speaking theoretically; he lived this way as well.

PUTTING OTHERS FIRST

Rav Yona supported *almanos* without anyone knowing. His house was open for the broken-hearted, who came for *chizuk*, and everyone was treated equally; the poor didn't feel inferior. Rav Yona did not even sit at the head of the table.

When a store was selling items Rav Yona felt were inappropriate, he quietly asked the storekeeper how much profit he made from the sale of these

items. He then made a deal that going forward, he would give the owner that same amount of money at the beginning of the week, on condition that the store would no longer carry those items. No one else knew of this arrangement.

One of Rav Yona's students was once taken to the hospital, and every single day, he would call the student to study together on the phone. One day, a different student called and said, "Rav Yona told me to call you to apologize that he cannot make it to the phone today." This happened for the next few days, until the boy became concerned.

It was then revealed that Rav Yona had had a severe heart attack; yet he had the presence of mind to instruct the second *talmid* to make this daily phone call so that the first boy would not be caused undue stress.

YIRAS SHAMAYIM

It was said about Rav Yona that anyone who heard him recite *Tefillas Zakah* on Erev Yom Kipper would immediately do *teshuvah*. When he passed away, his students were despondent that they would no longer hear his poignant recitation of *yehei shmei rabbah*...

TEFILLAH

Rav Yona once told a 14-year-old boy, "It's never too early to daven for children." The boy was bewildered; at 14 years old, having children was not even on his mind. However, he always remembered this advice, particularly when after he married, he did not have children for over 20 years. He used to say that had he listened to Rav Yona right away, he might possibly have avoided the lengthy wait.

ר' יונה הלוי פורסט

R. Yona Forst (7 Tishrei, 1915 – 16 Teves, 1983). Born in Vienna to a family of Galician emigrants. As a teenager, he traveled to Trnava, Slovakia, to study under R. Shmuel Dovid Ungar (1886-1945). When R. Shmuel Dovid assumed the rabbinate of Nitra, R. Yona followed along, continuing his studies there until the outbreak of the Second World War (aside from a stint in the renowned Yeshiva Chachmei Lublin). As a young man, R. Yona suffered from a neurological incident that left him unable to walk for the rest of his life, but he refused to let his disability hinder his determination to develop into a genuine Talmid Chacham. R. Yona miraculously survived the War (in the forest; and in a hospital in the Theresienstadt concentration camp), and emigrated to the United States in late 1947, joining R. Ungar's son-in-law, R. Michael Ber Weismandel (1903-1957) in Somerville, NJ, in an attempt to resurrect the Nitra Yeshiva. In 1949, the Yeshiva moved to a campus in Mt. Kisco, NY, and R. Yona played an integral role on the faculty for more than three decades. R. Yona married Rivka (d. 2000). Although the Forsts were never blessed with biological children, in the 1960s they adopted three brothers (who had been orphaned from their mother), one of whom published two volumes of R. Yona's shiurim on Chumash, entitled *Divrei Yona*, posthumously.

Mazel Tov

Mazel tov to one of our Zera Emes supporters, who donated last winter in the zechus of his children, who as yet had not been zocheh to children. Baruch Hashem, he just informed us of the birth of his grandchild to that very couple!