

THE LIFE & TIMES OF BACHAM BAIM YOSEF DAVID AZOULAY

YEHUDA AZOULAY

the Joe and esther AZOULAY EDITION



Tegend

OF Greatness

THE LIFE & TIMES OF BACHAM BAIM YOSEF DAVID





hacham haim yosef david azoulay

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PRESERVING SEPHARDIC HERITAGE

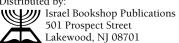
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To send stories, historic facts, letters, pictures, manuscripts and other helpful material on the life of Hacham Yosef Haim zt"l, please email the author at yazoulay@sephardiclegacy.com. This information is necessary to submit in future updated and revised editions of A Legend of Greatness - The Life & Times of Hacham Haim Yosef David Azoulay. He who does so will be blessed in the merit of the Jewish nation.

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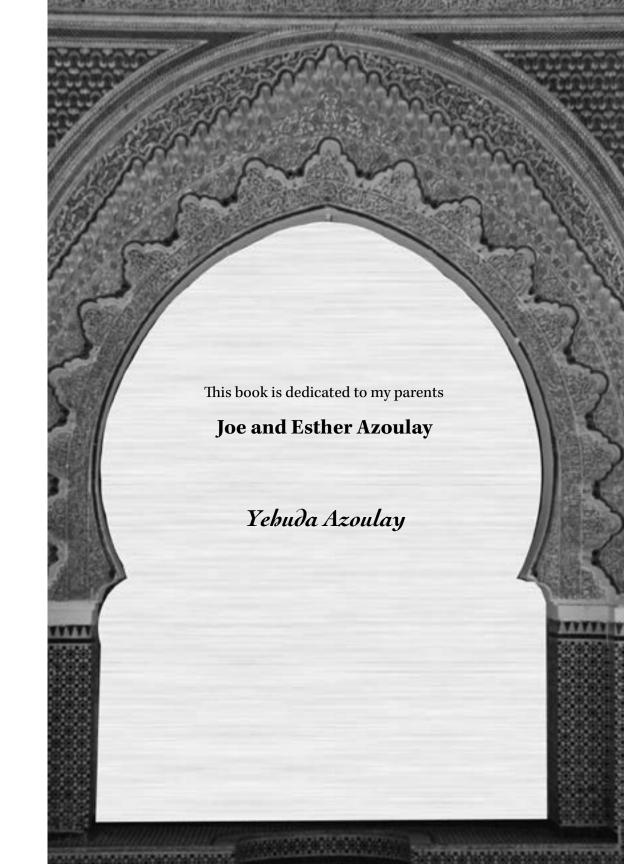
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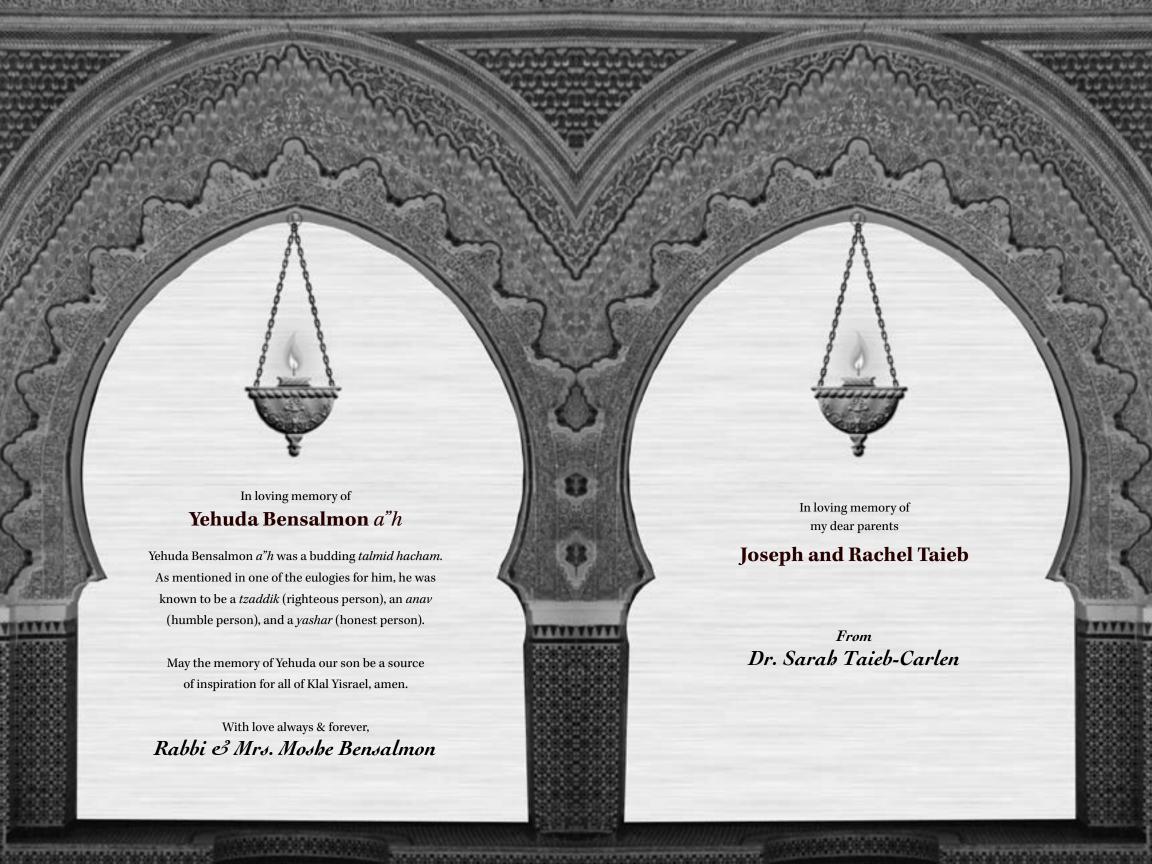


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OVADIA YOSSEF

RISHON LEZION AND PRESIDENT OF TORAH SAGES COUNSIL

עובדיה יוסף

הראשון לציון נשיא פועצת חכפי התורה

JERUSALEM אינושלים לא היא אונושלים

מכתב ברכה

הוכאו לפני גליונות הספר "חכםי ספרד" תולדות חייהם והנהגותיהם של חכמי הספרדים בדורות הקודמים בשפה האנגלית, מעשה ידי אומן, גמע נאמן היקר והנכבד, כש"ת ר' יהודה אזולאי שלים"א, אשר קיבץ כעמיר גורנה ואסף איש מהור מעשיות וסיפורים על גדולי ישראל ערוכים ומסודרים תפוחי זהב במשכיות כסף דבר דכור על אופניו, ולפעלא מכא אמינא איישר כחו לאורייתא.

ויהי רצון שחפץ ה' בידו יצלח לברך על המוגמר בקרב ימים, ועוד יפוצו מעינותיו חוצה בבריאות איתנה ונהורא מעלייא לאורך ימים ושנות חיים במוב ובנעימים שובע שמחות וכל מוב "והיה כעץ שתול על פלני מים, אשר פריו יתן בעתו ועלהו לא יבול, וכל אשר יעשה יצליח".



OVADIA YOSEF

RISHON LEZION

AND PRESIDENT OF TORAH SAGES COUNCIL

Jerusalem

8 Shevat, 5768

Letter of Blessing

I was brought a copy of the book *Hachme Sepharad*, the history and practices of the Sephardic Hachamim in the early generations, in the English language, the handiwork of an expert, a faithful, precious, and distinguished young man, R' Yehuda Azoulay *shelit*"a, who compiled and collected stories and vignettes about the great Sages of Israel. He organized and arranged them as "golden apples in silver coverings," words that are relevant for their context. I congratulate him for his fine work.

May it be Hashem's will that he may soon be privileged to complete this project, and that his wellsprings shall continue to pour forth in good health and wellbeing for many long years of goodness, pleasantness, abundant joy and all good things. "He shall be like a tree set into the ground near streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and whose leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does he will succeed."

Ovadia Yosef

Maran Rabbi Ovadia Yosef wrote this letter for the first volume of *A Legacy of Leaders*; we reprint here with his kind permission.

reaction and the first and the control of the contr This dedication is sponsored in honor of my beloved grandparents Shimon z"l and Susan Azoulay my loving parents Avraham and Chaya Eliana Azoulay and my siblings Avigaiel, Uri, and Taliya Azoulay We are blessed to be direct descendants of the Hida, and we pray that we should continue to emulate his legacy throughout our modern-day lives. Batyah Azoulay

Acknowledgments

I feel privileged and humbled to present this volume describing the life and accomplishments of one of the most important Torah sages of the modern era, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, the Hida. While I have been blessed with the opportunity to produce several other biographical works, this volume is especially meaningful to me and my family, as I am a descendant of the Hida. I have always felt a special connection with the Hida for this reason, and to be able to research and write about his life, and to share this information with readers around the world, is a unique privilege for which I am very grateful.

There are many individuals who were instrumental in ensuring that this dream – a biography of the Hida zt"l – would become a reality. It is only with the assistance, support, and guidance of these special people, and of course with the help of Hashem, that I have been privileged to bring this project to completion.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my publisher, Israel Book Shop, for enabling me to publish my fourth publication with them. I am grateful as well to my wonderful editor, David Silverberg, for his time, diligence, and expertise. My thanks also go to Dr. Yocheved Engelberg Cohen for her valuable editorial assistance.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Sruly Perl for his outstanding work designing the interior and exterior of this book, making it the beautiful volume that it is.

My deepest appreciation goes towards Rafaella Levine for her assistance with the translations for this book, and whose dedicated involvement has been instrumental in making this book a reality.

I take great pleasure in thanking Rabbi Zev Paretzky for granting me permission to make use of a sizable portion of his book, *The Chida: His Life and the Turbulent Times in Which He Lived*, and for his valuable encouragement and guidance throughout this project.

I am grateful as well to David Heskiel from judaica-art.com for allowing me to use his beautiful painting of the Hida on the front cover of this volume.

While researching the material for this book I was the beneficiary of the kind support and assistance of many individuals from the Jewish communities of Italy. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the former Chief Rabbi of Rome; Rabbi Dr. Elio Toaff, Rabbi Victorio Haim Della Rocca, Rabbi Manny Diena, Mr. Rafi Laras, Rabbi Dr. Alberto Somech, and Rabbi Dr. Gadi Polacco (grandson of Rabbi Bruno Gershon Polacco from Livorno). Through their valuable assistance, I have been able to present detailed information concerning the Hida's reburial in Jerusalem in 1960.

I express my deep appreciation and admiration for the late Professor Meir Benayahu, author of a comprehensive, detailed biography of the Hida, which was published by Mosad Harav Kook in 1959, and from which a good deal of information in this volume was taken. Professor Benayahu's son, Hanan Benayahu, graciously granted me access to the archives of his grandfather, former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, at the Yad Harav Nissim institute, where I compiled rare and valuable materials relevant to the Hida's reburial.

I have been blessed, and continue to be blessed, with the guidance of my loving and wise teachers, for whom I feel great admiration and gratitude. I consider you all a very important part of all my achievements. Thank you.

Two outstanding individuals recently joined the Sephardic Legacy Series team: Rabbi Shai Cabessa of Jerusalem, and Leon Sakkal of Deal, New Jersey. Thank you both for your outstanding work. May you always be blessed with opportunities to inspire and educate Jews far and wide through your outstanding talents.

I humbly express my gratitude to the wonderful individuals from around the world who generously support Sephardic Legacy Series – Institute for Preserving Sephardic Heritage. Through their kindness, and with the Almighty's boundless grace, the institute has published thousands of books in English, French, Spanish, and Hebrew. May Hashem bless each of you with much happiness, success, and the ongoing ability and desire to make great contributions to Am Yisrael.

The guidance, encouragement, and support I received from all my friends and colleagues were indispensable to the success of this project. I express my appreciation to you all for allowing me to realize this dream.

I am eternally indebted to my dear in-laws, who entrusted me with their wonderful daughter, Rena. Thank you, Rena, for your endless support and dedication always, and especially during the preparation of this volume. This long journey came at the expense of time spent with you and our two beautiful daughters – Esther Mazal and Yael. I hope and pray that the merit of the Hida will be a source of everlasting blessing to our family, amen.

Finally, I thank my esteemed parents, Joe and Esther Azoulay, to whom this book is lovingly dedicated. My entire upbringing was built upon the foundation of *hakarat hatov* – gratitude – and reflected the exemplary character, integrity, and piety of my dear parents, who imbibed these qualities from our ancient Sephardic traditions. They are inspiring practitioners of *hesed*, loving kindness, who have served and continue to serve as models for all parents and grandparents to

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emulate. I owe them a profound debt of gratitude for all they have done for me, and for guiding me to live a life of Torah devoted to the dissemination of our sacred traditions and values. I am honored to name this volume "The Joe and Esther Azoulay Edition."

This volume is also dedicated in loving memory of my dear cousin, Yehuda Bensalmon a"h, who passed away at the age of twenty-four in the winter of 2012. His untimely passing has left an enormous void in the lives of everyone in our family, and in the lives of everyone who knew him and loved him. His memory remains alive in our hearts, and we pray that our family will know only happy occasions, amen.

I have the privilege of dedicating this publication also in honor of Dr. Peter Carlen and Dr. Sarah Taieb-Carlen, dear and loyal friends of the Sephardic Legacy Series who have supported the institute's work for many years. Their passionate involvement in the institute's efforts to perpetuate Sephardic heritage has been an inspiration to me and to many others. May Hashem bless them with much success, health, and happiness, and may Am Yisrael continue to benefit from their generosity and learn from their example of kindness and devotion to our sacred, ancient heritage.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank Hashem for the innumerable blessings He has bestowed upon me and my family. I pray that He will always guide us toward a life that brings us ever closer to Him and to our nation's final redemption.

Yehuda Azoulay

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Introduction

Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay (1724–1806) is known by the acronym of his four names – חיים יוסף דוד אזולאי – the Hida (מידייא). Professor Meir Benayahu, author of the most comprehensive biography on the Hida, noted in his introduction that the name חידייא resembles the Hebrew word חידה, "riddle." Indeed, the Hida was, and continues to be, a riddle, a mystery. He was the leading scholar of his generation in every area of Torah literature – halachah, Talmud, homiletics, Biblical exegesis, and Kabbalah. But he was also a world traveler, successful fundraiser, masterful lecturer, historian, expert on unpublished manuscripts, bibliographer, prolific author, and community leader. He was truly a חידה, a wonder, a person whose achievements seem far too encompassing for one individual.

The Hida embodied a fascinating blend of different and even divergent qualities. He was a man of halachah committed to each and every detail of halachic observance, and yet was also one of the leading scholars of Kabbalah, who dealt in *gematria* (numerical values of letters) and *segulot* ("charms"). He was renowned for his humility, and yet served throughout the Diaspora as a bold, courageous representative of the Jewish communities of Eretz Yisrael. He lived and breathed Torah, yet also toured the world and displayed a passionate fascination and interest in all areas of life.

A Meeting of East and West

Besides combining vastly different characteristics and scholarly interests, the Hida also represented an unusual blend of East and West, of the Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions. Although he was born into a Sephardic family and certainly identified himself as a Sepharadi – even appending the letters v"v¹ to his signature – his maternal grandfather for whom he was named was the German scholar Rabbi Yosef Bialer. The marriage between the Azoulay and Bialer families – a distinguished family of Sephardic luminaries, and a family of German Torah scholars – marked the combination of the piety and scholarship of Ashkenaz and that of Sepharad. And even as the Hida grew into a towering pillar of Sephardic scholarship, the rich world of Ashkenazic Torah scholarship remained an integral part of his heritage.

This commitment to combining the best of Ashkenazic and Sephardic Torah tradition is reflected in the Hida's writings. On one occasion, the Hida was asked to address comments made by a certain Jew ridiculing the *Had Gadya* hymn customarily recited by Ashkenazim at the end of the *Seder* on Pesah. His response bespeaks

a profound respect for Ashkenazic tradition, despite his unwavering fealty to his Sephardic heritage:

This person has ridiculed the customs of thousands of Jews in the cities of Poland and Germany, which have always had great and holy scholars, may G-d grant them life, all of whom recited and continue to recite this poem. This wicked person therefore is ridiculing many Jews as well as their leaders... You should know ... that there are many explanations of this poem, some in print, and some still in manuscript... The profundity of the religious poems of Ashkenaz is well known. They are based on true wisdom... They are all part of an ancient tradition transmitted from person to person.²

The Hida was unique in the impact he had on diverse intellectual worlds. He was the preeminent scholar of the Sephardic world, and was also held in the highest regard in Ashkenazic communities. And while he was firmly entrenched in the world of traditional rabbinic scholarship, his extensive work in examining manuscripts and checking for errors is appreciated to this day by advocates of a more academic approach to Jewish scholarship.

Moreover, his writings cover an astoundingly wide and diverse range of subjects. He wrote essays on Kabbalah that are studied and probed by the greatest kabbalistic scholars, while his halachic works are mainstays of the Sephardic halachic tradition. He wrote works on history and composed prayers that are cherished by both towering Torah Sages and the simplest laymen. Perhaps this extraordinary breadth is the product of the synthesis he embodied of two diverse traditions with very different approaches, but which shared a love of Torah in general, and a connection to the study of Kabbalah in particular.

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^{1.} The suffix סייט is commonly understood to mean סירדי טהור ("pure Sepharadi"). Its use by the Hida, then, at first seems puzzling, as his pedigree was not purely Sephardic. We might have explained that the term שפרדי טהור might therefore refer not to pure Sephardic family background, but rather to the fact that there were no Marranos in the family's lineage. However, the term is used in documents predating the Spanish Inquisition and the emergence of Marranos. Furthermore, the Hacham Tzvi, who did not descend from Sepharadim, appended v"v to his signature, indicating that the v does not stand for the word מפרדי at all. One theory suggests that it means ספר ("His end shall be good") or סימן טוב ("good sign"), a kind of prayer for success. Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki suggests that might refer to the pejorative phrase "sin v'tin" (mire and mud – Targum on Yeshayah 57:20) and was appended to signatures as an expression of humility, similar to the way some Ashkenazic Rabbis append the word "hakatan" ("the small one") to their signatures. (See Rabbi Samuel Bondi's letter of approbation to the Hida's Sha'ar Yosef.) For further reading, see Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki's published journal Or HaMa'arav (vol. 5, Adar-Nissan 5770/1990, pages 39-56). See Rabbi David Ovadia's Nahagu Ha'am for further discussion regarding סייט.

^{2.} Haim Sha'al 1:28.

Author, Traveler, Leader

A scion of an illustrious rabbinic family with roots in the Golden Era of Spanish Jewry, Haim Yosef David was a child prodigy in Jerusalem, and as he grew he was trained by some of the most renowned sages of that era, including the great kabbalist Rabbi Shalom Sharabi (Rashash), and Rabbi Haim ben Atar (*Or HaHaim*). By the age of thirteen the Hida was already giving Torah classes to laymen. Just several years later he wrote his first book, launching a career in Torah publication that is practically unparalleled by any Torah scholar of any age, authoring over eighty-five books, approximately sixty of which have been published. Among his most unique works is *Shem Hagedolim*, an encyclopedia of biographical information about 1,300 Torah scholars and bibliographical information about 1,200 works of Torah literature. Astoundingly, the Hida composed this work in forty days – from memory.³

At the age of twenty-nine the Hida began what would become another "career," when he was chosen as *shaliah* (emissary) of the Jewish community of Hebron. He spent many years traveling throughout the Jewish communities of North Africa, Turkey, and Western Europe, visiting some 160 cities, raising significant sums of money for the impoverished Jews of the Holy Land, and teaching and inspiring Jews of many different kinds and many different backgrounds. The Hida writes that during his years of travel he often slept on a wooden bench, and made a point of studying fifty-three pages of *Zohar* each day.

He concluded his mission in 1778, in Livorno, Italy, where he settled and remained until his death in 1806. Alongside his arduous and often distressing work to collect funds, and his intensive Torah study, the Hida used his travels as an opportunity to meet with great

scholars and see rare books and manuscripts. He visited numerous libraries, and would spend entire nights copying rare texts by hand.

Despite his humble, unassuming nature, the Hida was an effective and widely respected community leader. He was chosen as a member of a delegation to the Ottoman authorities in Turkey, and served for five years as the Chief Rabbi of Cairo. He spent his final years in Livorno, where, although he did not hold an official rabbinical post, he served as the recognized leader of the city's Jewish community. With his remarkable blend of charisma, humor, scholarship, eloquence, worldliness, common sense, and human understanding, the Hida inspired audiences, successfully resolved conflicts in countless homes and communities, and made a strong impression on nearly everyone he met, Jew and gentile alike. In fact, when he was once taken to visit the Palace of Versailles in Paris, King Louis XVI saw him and mistook him for an ambassador of a foreign country because of his majestic, dignified appearance.

A Jerusalem Sage's Return Home

The Hida returned his pure, sacred soul to his Maker on Friday night, *Shabbat Zachor*, 11 Adar, 5566 (March 1,1806), in Livorno, where he was buried. A century and a half later, in 1960, at the initiative of Israel's Sephardic Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, *zt"l*, the Hida's remains were returned to his birthplace, Jerusalem, and buried in the Har Hamenuhot cemetery. The reburial was observed as a national event in Israel, with numerous special programs held and material published in commemoration of the Hida.

On January 18, 2012 the Yad Harav Nissim foundation, which was established in memory of Rabbi Nissim, graciously granted me access to Rabbi Nissim's personal library and archives. ⁴ These archives include

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^{3.} Foreword to Dr. Benjamin Cymerman's The Diaries of Rabbi Ha'im Yosef David Azulai.

^{4.} Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim's Judaica library was unique, containing a valuable collection of first editions, as well as valuable halachic and scientific manuscripts, some of which he managed to get published. The Rabbi answered halachic questions addressed to him

a treasure trove of information about the Hida's reburial which had been stored for fifty years and never made public. They contain over one hundred pages of documented correspondence,⁵ endorsements, bills, newspaper clippings, and other materials, as well as twenty-eight obituaries about the Hida. Rabbi Nissim kept these pages in his files, arranged in chronological order. I have included some of this material in the latter portion of this volume, which presents detailed information about the Hida's return to his beloved city, Jerusalem.⁶

A Model of Multifaceted Greatness

My goal in publishing the material in this volume is twofold. First, as with any biographical portrait of great Torah sages, the remarkable stories, accounts, and descriptions of the Hida's life will, with G-d's help, provide us with inspiration and motivate us to raise our own standards of Torah study and observance. Additionally, however, this material is intended to depict a model of a balanced, multifaceted rabbinical leader. To whatever extent possible, I endeavored in researching and compiling this information to present to the reader the full range of the Hida's areas of activity and accomplishments.

The reader will likely notice that there is no single area of the Hida's life upon which this book focuses. Instead, it focuses on the breathtaking spectrum of the Hida's achievements: his scholarship, his writings, his personal piety, his communal activities, his travels, his family, his worldly pursuits, and his interactions with many different kinds of people – Torah sages, family members, community leaders,

from almost all corners of the globe. Thousands of responsa, some of them of extreme importance, accumulated in his possession, and following his retirement he began preparing them for publication. Two volumes of these responsa were published in 1979 under the title *Yen Hatov*. Today, his personal library and papers have become the kernel for one of the finest public libraries and publication centers in Jerusalem.

philanthropists, simple laymen, gentile scholars, and government officials. This volume incorporates historical documentation, obituaries, rare photos, inspirational stories, family history, and indepth analyses of the Hida's writings in an effort to portray him as clearly and accurately as possible.

This project was, of course, undertaken with the humble recognition that a full assessment of such a towering figure – particularly one who lived over two centuries ago – is beyond our reach, and that whatever information and insight we can obtain can hardly tell the complete story of this extraordinary Torah giant. Despite my efforts to unearth information about this illustrious sage, I acknowledge the likelihood that important information about the Hida was missed or is simply inaccessible. Nevertheless, I hope and pray that I have succeeded in my undertaking to present an accurate portrait of one of the greatest Torah figures in modern history.

Preserving Sephardic Heritage

The interest in Sephardic history and tradition among Sephardic Jewry has, *baruch Hashem*, grown exponentially in recent years, and I feel both humbled and privileged to have been able to contribute to this trend through the publication of books about great Sephardic sages. As the demand for such material has continued to grow, the Sephardic Legacy Series – Institute for Preserving Sephardic Heritage was established in order to facilitate the publication and distribution of additional works about Sephardic history. Most of the books published by the institute are now available in several languages – English, Hebrew, French, and Spanish – and they will soon be available in Russian and Persian, as well.

This publication marks a very significant and crucial step in this endeavor to preserve Sephardic heritage. The Hida is one of the pillars of Sephardic halachah, tradition, and custom, as his works and rulings are studied, cited, and discussed to this very day, and many of the prayers he composed are recited regularly by Sephardic

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^{5.} There is documented correspondence with dozens of rabbinical leaders, politicians, lawyers, philanthropists, engineers, and others.

^{6.} The entire collection of documents can be viewed at www.sephardiclegacy.com.

Jews around the world. It would be no exaggeration to say that in his lifetime he was the most influential Sephardic Torah scholar since Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the *Shulhan Aruch*. A volume about his life and achievements is thus a vital part of any effort to document and preserve the history of Sephardic tradition.

It has been said that "a man's pen is the mirror of his soul." If this is true, then the Hida's soul was one that was filled with purity, immense love of G-d, His Torah, and His people, and a powerful longing for a connection with the Almighty and the final redemption of the Jewish people.

May the memory and merit of Hacham Haim Yosef David Azoulay zt"l be a source of blessing to all of us and to the entire Jewish nation, אמן.



Kacham Kaim Yosef David Azoulay

The following chapter is dedicated in honor of our dear parents

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Charles and Brenda Saka

Mom and Dad are true role models who lead others by their example.

They have taught and continue to teach us to conduct our lives in the ways of Torah, *mitzvot*, and acts of kindness.

Our Sages teach: Say little and do much (Pirke Avot 1:15), and And all those who perform service for the community should do so for the sake of Heaven (Pirke Avot 2:2).

Our parents are people of action who do whatever is needed.

They are always ready to help *l'shem Shamayim*.

We are honored to call these special individuals

Mom & Dad, Grandma & Grandpa.

May Hashem bless them with many years of health, happiness and success.

With love,

Margie & Sammy Saka and Family Camille & Raymond Saka and Family Juliette & Jeffrey Saka and Family Laurie & Marc Mizrachi and Family Sally & Eddie Cohen and Family

CHAPTER ONE

The Origins of the Azoulay Rabbinical Dynasty

From Spain to Morocco

The Azoulay family was one of several prominent scholarly Jewish families in the Castile region in central Spain. With the onset of the Spanish Inquisition in 1492, the Azoulays, under the leadership of the family patriarch Rabbi Avraham Azoulay, joined the thousands of Spanish Jews who chose exile over conversion. The family left Spain and ultimately found refuge in the city of Fez, Morocco.

The journey from Spain to Fez could not have been an easy one. The Portuguese occupied Northern Morocco, and barred the Jews' passage into Morocco through the Straits of Gibraltar, the shortest and most natural route from Spain to North Africa. Spain at that time occupied parts of Algeria and Tunisia, further limiting the Jews'

^{1.} For information regarding the origin of the name Azoulay (sometimes spelled "Azulay" or "Azulai"), see Meir Benayahu, *Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay* (Hebrew), pp. 275-276, footnote 1.

opportunities of passage to Africa. And many of those refugees who managed to reach the ports along the North African coast were then denied access to the continent's interior by the local sheiks. Small numbers of Jews nevertheless made it inland, but with great difficulty. As one historian put it, "The few exiles who were so determined to make their way to the safety of Fez that they succeeded in moving inland in Morocco were despoiled en route."2 The Azoulays were apparently among those determined few.

According to tradition, Jews first arrived in Morocco already before the destruction of the First Temple.³ Later, at various periods, Spanish Jews moved to Morocco to escape persecution on the Iberian Peninsula. And so when the refugees from the Inquisition arrived in the country at the end of the fifteenth century, they found a substantial Jewish community already in place. Unfortunately, the newcomers were greeted by the native Moroccan Jewish community with a degree of hostility. The Jews of Morocco feared that the Spanish émigrés would bring commercial competition, and, more generally, they saw themselves as superior to the Jews of Spain. They went so far as to question the religious sincerity of the new arrivals - even though these Jews had just courageously opted to leave their home country to avoid forced conversion.

Despite the hostility the Spanish Jews eventually dominated the communities in which they settled, and Fez became their cultural center. They established their own synagogues and communal institutions, and their rabbis instituted many takkanot (enactments), known as the "takkanot of the exile of Castile," which were based on Spanish Jewish tradition and dealt with matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The majority of the Spanish exiles in Morocco thus managed to maintain their Spanish identity in their new homeland and build a thriving community. It is within this new

Spanish exile community that Rabbi Avraham Azoulay and his family settled.

The Azoulay family earned great distinction in the Spanish community in Morocco, producing numerous prominent rabbis, halachic authorities, and kabbalists. Rabbi Avraham was held in high esteem by Jews and gentiles alike for his scholarship and for the miracles he wrought through his blessings. His son, Rabbi Mordechai, who was likely born after the family settled in Fez, was known as an accomplished scholar, and he married the daughter of a pious kabbalist named Rabbi Yitzhak ben Rabbi Avraham.⁴ Their son, Rabbi Avraham, was born in Fez in 1570 (5330) and is the first of the Azoulay family of whom we have some detailed knowledge. In his writings, Rabbi Avraham describes the vibrant Torah community of Fez into which he was born: "All my years I grew up among the sages, on the knees of the Torah, and they guided me from my youth day by day. Week by week I spoke in Torah, and every night I spoke knowledge."5

Later in life, Rabbi Avraham fondly recalled how he lived in Fez "among virtuous scholars ... warming beside their coals toiling in Torah." He was raised in a community that was teeming with outstanding Torah personalities, including Rabbi Yehuda Uziel, Rabbi Vidal Hatzarfati, Rabbi Shemuel Siriro, Rabbi Sa'adia ibn Danan, his son Rabbi Shemuel, Rabbi Aharon ibn Haim, and others. Though it is unknown precisely under which rabbi he studied and whom he regarded as his colleagues, it is likely that he was impacted by these towering figures.

A child prodigy, Rabbi Avraham was nurtured in the thriving Torah community of Fez and grew to become an outstanding scholar

^{2.} Jane S. Gerber, The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience, p. 147.

^{3.} The Jews of North Africa, Dr. Sarah Taieb-Carlen page 19, note 1.

^{4.} Elyakim Carmuli, introduction to Shem Hagedolim.

^{5.} Introduction to Baale Brit Avraham.

^{6.} Cited by Rabbi Yosef Benaim, Malche Rabbanan, p. 10.

and legendary tzaddik. He delivered Torah lectures every evening and on Shabbat, and is described as "the pious one, the modest one, the sweet singer [of Israel], the scholar, our teacher Rabbi Avraham Azoulay."7

Miraculous Journey to the Holy Land

Already from an early age, Rabbi Avraham felt a burning desire to settle in the Land of Israel and study with the great scholars of Kabbalah there. He had studied the great kabbalistic work Pardes Rimonim by Rabbi Moshe Cordovero of Safed, which opened his eyes to a whole new world of scholarship. Rabbi Avraham was so inspired by this work that, in his words, he resolved to "go up to the beautiful land [of Israel] to enjoy the precious light that the Hacham has composed."8

Unfortunately, it was a series of harsh and trying circumstances that brought about the realization of this dream. In 1599 (5360), the situation of Moroccan Jews began to rapidly deteriorate. Civil war erupted, and the population was beset by famine and disease, throwing the flourishing Moroccan Jewish community into turmoil. Rabbi Shaul Siriro, one of Fez's rabbis at the time, wrote, "If I were to tell some of the misfortunes that passed over us, ears would ring, and all who heard would tremble. It has been three and a half years of drought, hunger, and many troubles... Not a day passes without ten or twenty [people] dying of hunger..."9

Rabbi Avraham, in his memoirs, reflected upon this tumultuous period in his life, and his decision to leave Morocco and settle in Eretz Yisrael. "When the days surrounded me, and in the midst of the upheaval that Hashem wrought... I left my courtyard and the doors of my home, despoiled of my possessions, and I desired and swore to come and live in the Land of Israel, a change of place, to separate between sacred and profane."10

Even after leaving Moroccan shores, the family's troubles were far from over. The trip to Eretz Yisrael nearly ended in tragedy, and it was only through G-d's grace and miraculous intervention that the family reached its destination, as Rabbi Avraham describes:

We were in the ship in the heart of the sea when Hashem sent a great storm on the sea, and the ship was near destruction. The shipmen tried to steer back to dry land, but they were unable to do so, for the sea was storming upon us. Realizing our danger, we remembered Hashem and we called out to Him with a broken heart, "Please, G-d, please do not allow the destruction of parents and children..."

Our prayers were heard, and the storm quieted from its wrath. We came to land at the port of Damietta (Egypt). Everyone hurried off the ship, for we were hungry and thirsty. All possessions were left within the ship to be reclaimed the next day. That day, another great storm came up.

The next morning, the chief seaman who was with us looked and saw that the ship was not offshore. He clapped his hands in frustration as he realized that he had lost all his treasure. He waited seven days; perhaps the ship would return. He waited another seven days without result, and all hope of recovering the vessel was lost. We accepted upon ourselves that our property was the redemption for our very lives, and we were comforted.11

^{7.} Introduction to Hesed L'Avraham.

^{8.} Introduction to Or Hahamah, p. 14, cited by Professor Meir Benayahu in Yosef Behiri, p. 193.

^{9.} Ner Hama'arav, p. 95.

^{10.} Introduction to Hesed L'Avraham.

^{11.} Introduction to Baale Brit Avraham.

More devastating to Rabbi Avraham than the loss of his material possessions was the loss of his Torah writings which he had taken with

him on the ship. 12 Nevertheless, for the rest of his life he felt gratitude for his and his family's miraculous survival, and he commemorated this miracle by signing his name in the shape of a ship from that time on.



Signature of Rabbi Avraham Azoulay

A Plague and a Pledge

Rabbi Avraham and his family made their way to the Land of Israel, and arrived there in 1609 (5370), settling in the ancient city of Hebron. Hoping to find stability in Hebron, the Azoulay family soon found itself compelled to relocate once again, in 1619, due to a deadly plague that ravaged the area. The recent arrivals from North Africa were hit especially hard by the plague, due either to their general frailty as a result of their years of hardship and travel, or undeveloped immunities. Tragically, many of the Jews who had fled the persecution of Fez lost their lives in the plague that struck Eretz Yisrael.

Rabbi Avraham describes in his memoirs his family's experiences during this period:

The hand of G-d wrought a great plague, and I fled with my family to the holy city of Jerusalem, but there, too, came the wrath of the Almighty, especially against those who had fled ... from Fez, the majority of whom came close to death, for the wrath of the Almighty was burning and the fire could not be extinguished. I fled

to the areas surrounding Hebron and I sat bewildered, for I did not know where to turn or where to run. It was then that I vowed to compose a book. G-d heard my voice, and the plague abated in Gaza, and I fled there on the 19th of Av, and there we found some respite.¹³

Gaza at that time boasted a large Jewish community. Situated along the main route connecting Syria and Israel with Egypt, it was the site of many successful businesses set up by Jewish merchants. 14 Refugees from Jerusalem and Hebron during periods of plague or instability would seek safety in Gaza, and some remained there permanently. These refugees included several Torah scholars, who established a yeshivah and strengthened the spiritual quality of Gaza's Jewish population. 15 Responsa from that time, which address issues related to the agricultural laws of Eretz Yisrael, indicate that some Jewish residents in Gaza worked in agriculture and owned land.

While living in Gaza, Rabbi Avraham fulfilled his pledge and composed a kabbalistic work entitled Hesed L'Avraham, based upon the Zohar and the writings of the Arizal, as well as Baale Brit Avraham, a Biblical commentary. When the plague finally subsided, he returned with his family to Hebron, where he lived for the rest of his life.

Rabbi Abraham had two daughters, who married two of the outstanding scholars of Hebron, Rabbi Binyamin Ze'evi and Rabbi David Yitzhaki. He also had a son, Rabbi Yitzhak, who appears to have been born later, after Rabbi Avraham's return to Hebron, as indicated by his comments in the introduction to Baale Brit Avraham, "...and I trust in G-d for He will aid me... and give me the merit of fulfilling the mitzvah of being fruitful and multiplying, and then I will call it Baale Brit Avraham and my name will be complete."

^{12.} Ibid. Rabbi Avraham writes that he had to leave his library and most of his manuscripts behind in Fez, but later in this memoir he mourns the loss of his writings, suggesting that he had managed to take a substantial amount of writings with him, or wrote essays en route to Eretz Yisrael.

^{13.} Introduction to Hesed L'Avraham.

^{14.} See Responsa of Rabbenu Eliezer ben Arha (Machon Yerushalayim, 1978), 9.

^{15.} Eretz Yisrael V'yishuvah, p. 244.

CHAPTER TWO

Rabbi Avraham Azoulay: **Towering Scholar, Prolific Author**

Rabbi Avraham Azoulay enjoyed close relationships with the leading scholars of Hebron, Jerusalem, and Gaza. He was especially close with Rabbi Eliezer ibn Arha, the leader of Hebron's Jewish community at that time, and he credits his Kiryat Arba commentary on the Zohar largely to the assistance and guidance he received from Rabbi Eliezer ibn Arha.¹

Although it does not appear that he was publicly active in communal affairs - his name does not appear on a letter sent from Hebron in 1616 (5376) signed by all the rabbis of Hebron² – he was

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Joe & Esther Azoulay

This great honor is the least we can do for you. Your hard work and dedication toward your children deserve honor beyond our capabilities.

Thank you for everything you have done and continue to do for us.

May the *zechut* of the Hida *zt"l* be upon you for 120 years of health, happiness, Torah, mitzvot and nahat from your children and grandchildren.

> Messod, Rachel, Yosef, Refael and David Azoulay

^{1.} Ibid.

^{2.} He did, however, cosign a letter together with Rabbi Arha and Rabbi Yosef Abohab confirming receipt of funds sent from Italy.

widely recognized as one of the generation's leading Torah sages. He wrote prolifically, and published numerous works:

- Hesed L'Avraham sermons and introductory essays to the wisdom of Kabbalah.
- Kiryat Arba four volumes of commentaries to the Zohar entitled Or Hahamah, Or Halevanah, Zahare Hamah, and Or Haganuz.
- Kenaf Renanim a condensed version of the Arizal's meditations for prayers.
- Ma'aseh Hoshev a condensed version of the Arizal's meditations for *mitzvot*.
- Baale Brit Avraham commentary to the twenty-four books of Tanach.
- Ahavah Bata'anugim commentary to the Mishnah.
- Notes on the *Levush* commentary to the *Shulhan Aruch*.

These works earned wide acclaim from the other sages of his generation. When the legendary Rabbi Yisrael Najara, Rabbi of Gaza at the time, read the manuscripts of Rabbi Avraham Azoulay's Or Hahamah, he wrote a short poem in its honor, which Rabbi Avraham printed at the beginning of the book.

It is told that Rabbi Avraham had a disagreement with his colleague and friend, Rabbi Shelomo Amar, regarding the interpretation of a certain passage in the Zohar. After Rabbi Shelomo passed away, he appeared to Rabbi Avraham in a dream and told him that their argument had finally been resolved. "In the Heavenly yeshivah," he said, "they explained to me the passage in the Zohar about which we argued. What I said is true, but Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai's intention was the way you explained it."3

Rabbi Avraham's scholarship had a profound impact upon his greatgreat-grandson, the Hida, who frequently cites him in his writings and

refers to him as mori zekeni ("my teacher, my grandfather").4 The Hida cherished Rabbi Avraham's works. Once, during a fundraising trip to Italy, he found a copy of Rabbi Avraham's work Hesed L'Avraham which had been cleared of printing errors. Despite his busy schedule, he made a point of copying all the corrections onto the margins of his own copy of the work.

A Paragon of Humility

While Rabbi Avraham was working on his commentary to the Mishnah, Ahavah Bata'anugim, he happened to come across the Tosafot Yom Tov Mishnah commentary written by his contemporary, Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller. His first reaction was to discontinue his commentary, feeling that it was unnecessary after the publication of the *Tosafot Yom Tov*, but he then reconsidered. He wrote, "I realized the benefit to myself [of continuing], for in the process of explaining the Mishnah, I merit to study the relevant passages of the Talmud and the commentaries." In his extraordinary humility, Rabbi Avraham proceeded with his commentary only because of the benefit to his personal scholarship, genuinely believing that it would not be useful to anyone else.

In truth, Rabbi Avraham's commentary contains a considerable amount of new and valuable material, including citations from his contemporaries which would otherwise not have been preserved. Among the scholars cited in this work are Rabbi Suleiman Uchana, an accomplished kabbalist, Talmudist, scribe, and one of the Arizal's primary students, as well as Rabbi Yosef Ashkenazi, "the Tanna of Safed," who did extensive research to determine the accurate text of the Mishnah by comparing printed editions and unpublished manuscripts.

^{3.} Eliyahu Maarek, Ma'asehem Shel Hachmei HaSepharadim, p. 128.

^{4.} The Hida was once asked why he referred to his great-great-grandfather as his grandfather, and he responded by noting that this was the practice of earlier scholars (Haim Sha'al 1:68).

^{5.} Rabbi Shimon Sar Shalom, Hachme Morocco, p. 68.

Rabbi Avraham's unique piety empowered him to help people in need. Rabbi Haim ben Atar, author of the Or HaHaim, related that when a seriously ill patient would come to Rabbi Avraham for help, the Rabbi would take a small piece of paper, write on it in Rashi script, "May it be G-d's will to send a full recovery to so-and-so son of so-and-son from this illness," and hang the paper from the patient. The patient would then be healed. Even without sacred Names of G-d, Rabbi Avraham's prayer alone had the power to heal and save people from harm.⁶

The Lost Manuscripts

Rabbi Haim Vital, the most famous disciple of the Arizal, recorded the Arizal's teachings in a work he entitled Shemonah She'arim. This work was edited by Rabbi Haim Vital's son, Rabbi Shemuel, based upon Rabbi Haim's initial manuscript. The mahadurah batra -Rabbi Haim's final edition – was not made available for publication. Rabbi Haim, apparently sensing that the time had not yet come for the dissemination of the additional material, arranged that the manuscripts of the mahadurah batra would be buried with him rather than be published.

Some time after Rabbi Haim's passing, Rabbi Avraham Azoulay and his colleague Rabbi Yaakov Tzemah conducted a series of fasts and special kabbalistic rituals hoping to receive Rabbi Haim's permission to retrieve the text from his grave in Damascus. Indeed, Rabbi Haim eventually appeared to them in a dream authorizing them to take the manuscript from the grave.⁷ Rabbi Yaakov Tzemah's disciple, Rabbi Meir Popperos, later included this text in his edition of Rabbi Haim Vital's work, which he called *Etz Haim*.

Rabbi Avraham Azoulay composed several works on the Zohar based upon the material he found in the mahadurah batra, but these works did not survive and were lost. His great-grandson, the Hida, wrote regarding these manuscripts, "It appears that it was not the will of Hashem that they be revealed, and [thus] these books were completely lost."8

The Sultan's Sword and the Cave of the Patriarchs

Rabbi Avraham passed away on Friday, 24 Heshvan, 1643 (5403), Erev Shabbat Parashat Haye Sarah. A fascinating legend relates how Rabbi Avraham saved the Jewish community of Hebron just before his death.9 The Sultan set out to visit the important sites in his empire, and he arrived at Me'arat Hamachpelah, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, in Hebron. The tomb is a large, majestic structure built above the burial caves of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs. The Sultan came adorned in his traditional royal garb, with his gold sword, studded with diamonds and precious stones, hanging from his waist. The Sultan wandered from room to room, finally entering the huge hall named after Yitzhak Avinu.

This hall is the site of what is likely the most sacred spot in the building of Me'arat Hamachpelah - a small circular hole in the floor, near the wall shared by the smaller chamber named for Avraham Avinu. This hole leads to the actual burial caves. Pilgrims from all over the world would journey for weeks and months to have the opportunity to stand by this small, dark, circular opening leading into the cave

^{6.} Shem Hagedolim, Rabbi Avraham Azoulay.

^{7.} Some deny this account, and claim that the manuscripts were obtained through other means.

^{8.} Shem Hagedolim (Sefarim), Ayin, no. 70. Although Rabbi Haim Vital's actual writings did survive, the Hida apparently felt that the Jewish people were not ready for a commentary explaining these writings.

^{9.} This story appears in Yisrael Mimran's Hofesh Habehirah B'hagoto Shel Rabbi Avraham Azoulay, p. 14. However, the Hida makes no mention of this story in his entry for Rabbi Avraham in the printed version of Shem Hagedolim, though in one manuscript of the work he writes, "Our holy fathers were revealed to him." See foreword to Ahavah Bata'anugim on Nezikin (Machon Or Hamizrach edition) and Mechkarim U'mekorot, vol. 1. See also Rabbenu HaHida, p. 23.

which, according to tradition, was excavated by Adam, the first man. The Sultan leaned over the hole to peer inside, and as he bent over, his ornamental sword fell from his side and into the hole. The Sultan immediately called an officer and ordered him to lower a soldier through the hole into the caves below to retrieve his sword. The officer quickly selected a soldier, and another soldier wrapped a rope around his waist and lowered him into the underground cavern.

As soon as the soldier descended through the hole, shrieks of horror were heard from underground. The soldier outside the hole frantically pulled the other soldier back up - but he was dead. The Sultan ordered that another soldier be lowered into the caves, with the same gruesome result. The Sultan continued sending soldiers into the caves until it became apparent that no one could enter the cave and emerge alive.

He then turned to his hosts and exclaimed, "Who will return my sword to me?"

Without hesitating for a moment, the Arab locals provided an answer. "Why not send down a Jew? If he dies, none of us would care, and if not, you will have your precious saber back!"

And so, the Sultan ordered the Jews - on the threat of death - to supply, within three days, a volunteer to be lowered into the cave to retrieve the royal sword. The Jews panicked. How could they send one of their own to his death? They prayed and fasted, hoping to avert the decree. On the third day, filled with fear, they drew lots to determine who would go. The lot fell upon Rabbi Avraham Azoulay.

"I will enter the holy caves," the Rabbi said. "Do not fear."

The Rabbi prepared himself intensively. He studied matters of Kabbalah related to Avraham Avinu throughout the night. Toward morning, he prayed passionately to G-d, immersed in a mikveh, and donned white garments, the traditional clothing for the dead. He then headed toward Me'arat Hamachpelah. With a rope tied around his waist, Rabbi Avraham was lowered into the cave. Immediately, he saw the ornamental sword, tied it to a rope, and had it returned above ground. At that moment he decided that if he merited reaching this point, he would explore the cave.

Rabbi Avraham looked around him and saw a man standing at his side.

"Who are you?" Rabbi Avraham asked.

"I am Eliezer, the servant of Avraham Avinu," the man replied. "How did you get here?"

Rabbi Avraham told him the story of the Sultan's sword and that he was sent to retrieve it.

"Wait here until I ask the holy Patriarchs if you may come inside," Eliezer said. Rabbi Avraham soon received word that permission had been granted, and he stepped inside the cave. Upon beholding the sight of the Patriarchs, Rabbi Avraham fainted. They revived him with smelling salts, whereupon he regained his consciousness.

Prior to leaving the cave he asked the Patriarchs, "Why should I leave here and go back above? I am already old, and here I have found my forefathers. I desire only to stay here with you!"

But the Patriarchs insisted that he go back above ground, promising him that he would return and be with them by the next day.

Rabbi Avraham returned to the Yitzhak hall, above the cave of the Patriarchs. The Sultan was overjoyed to have his sword back, and the Jewish community declared a holiday to celebrate their beloved Rabbi's safe return.

Rabbi Avraham gathered his students around him and they studied through the night. Toward morning, the Rabbi immersed in a mikveh and garbed himself once again with tachrichim (burial shrouds). He lay down, recited Kiriat Shema, and returned his soul to his Maker. He was brought to rest in the ancient Jewish cemetery in Hebron, overlooking the final resting place of the holy Patriarchs.

CHAPTER THREE

A Miracle Child Is Born

Rabbi Avraham's son, Rabbi Yitzhak Azoulay, was born sometime after 1619 (5379). Little is known about his life. He is not mentioned in the annals of the Hebron Jewish community, and even his greatgrandson, the Hida, in his Shem Hagedolim mentions him only in passing as Rabbi Avraham's son, briefly describing him as "a kabbalist, writer, speaker, and leader... [who] composed Zera Yitzhak." 1 This work, Zera Yitzhak, has been lost.

We do know, however, that like his illustrious father, Rabbi Yitzhak was a renowned kabbalist and a highly respected miracle worker. He was an expert in the field of "practical Kabbalah," utilizing Biblical passages as an aid to understanding events. Rabbi Yitzhak Azoulay had a maggid, an angel who would speak with him and teach him profound wisdom, whom he called "my angel Yehu'el." He wrote a unique, cryptic work of Kabbalah under the inspiration of this maggid,

In honor of our dear parents,

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Azoulay and

Rabbi and Mrs. Joshua Bittan

Words cannot express our love and appreciation for you.

The amount of chessed that you do for your family and the community is truly admirable.

May Hashem continue to bless you with health, happiness, and all the berachah in the world.

Jamie, Nogah e3 Esther Ahuva Azoulay

^{1.} This manuscript was in the possession of the Azoulay family as late as the generation of Rabbi Moshe Azoulay, the Hida's grandson, but was ultimately lost.

the aforementioned *Zera Yitzhak*. He would also receive responses to his halachic queries in dreams, which he would often transcribe. In his writings the Hida cites one such question and the response.

Rabbi Yitzhak married the sister of Rabbi Nechemiah Danino, one of the scholars of Hebron who served as a deputy to Rabbi Meir Rofeh, the community's rabbi. One of his most famous students was his nephew, Rabbi Yitzhak Ze'evi, author of *Orim Gedolim* and head of Yeshivat Hesed L'Avraham in Hebron.²

With the passing of Rabbi Eliezer ibn Arha in 1652 (5412), controversy arose surrounding the appointment of his successor as rabbinic leader of the Hebron Jewish community. Rabbi Yitzhak was instrumental in bringing about a peaceful resolution, and supported the appointment of Rabbi Meir Rofeh. He wrote a special composition about the affair in an effort to restore peace and harmony to the splintered community.

Towards the end of his life, Rabbi Yitzhak embarked on a fundraising mission to Constantinople (what is today Istanbul), where he passed away.

Rabbi Yeshayah Azoulay

Rabbi Yitzhak had a son named Yeshayah, who, the Hida tells us, studied in Jerusalem under the illustrious scholar Rabbi Hizkiah Da Silva, author of *Peri Hadash*



Rabbi Hizkiah Da Silva, author of Peri Hadash (1659–1698)

(1659–1698). Rabbi Yeshayah, like his father, was an accomplished scholar of Kabbalah, and the Hida cites commentaries from Rabbi Yeshayah to several verses, which he had heard from his father and other scholars.

Rabbi Yeshayah established close ties with the group of Jews who emigrated from Europe to Jerusalem under the leadership of Rabbi Yehuda Hassid³ around the year 1700 (5460), a group that included many great Torah scholars. This was the largest organized group of immigrants to the Land of Israel in the early eighteenth century. The impact of this community upon Rabbi Yeshayah's scholarship can be seen in a comment by his grandson, the Hida: "We have a [copy of the] *Zohar Hadash* that was owned by my paternal grandfather, Rabbi Yeshayah, with many correct emendations by the German rabbis, kabbalists who came as part of the group of Rabbi Yehuda Hassid."

Among Rabbi Yeshayah's closest colleagues was Rabbi Yosef Bialer, a prominent member of the new community in Jerusalem, and he selected Rabbi Yosef's daughter, Sarah, as a match for his son, Yitzhak Zerahiah. Rabbi Yeshayah also had a daughter who married the famed Jerusalem scholar Rabbi Yonah Navon.⁴

Rabbi Yeshayah served as a member of Rabbi Rephael Shelomo Havdalah's court together with Rabbi Matityahu ben Rabbi Rephael Ispirial. This court was famous for authorizing an agreement of the Jerusalem scholars from 1700 (5460) regarding the distribution of charity funds.

Rabbi Yeshayah passed away in Jerusalem in Adar 5492 (1732).

Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah Azoulay

Rabbi Yeshayah's son, Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah Azoulay, was a Torah giant and a great teacher. He studied in Bet Yaakov Pereira, as

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^{2.} Rabbi Yitzhak would comment in jest that the verse in *Mishle* (23:15), "My son – if your heart is wise, then I, too, my heart shall rejoice" refers to his nephew, Rabbi Yitzhak Ze'evi. Since the Sages say that people generally resemble their mother's brother, his heart will rejoice if his nephew is wise, for it means that he, too, is wise (cited by Benayahu, *Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay*, p. 304.)

^{3.} Rabbi Yehuda Segal Hassid (c. 1660–1700), not to be confused with the twelfth-century Rabbenu Yehuda Hehassid of Regensberg, Germany, author of *Sefer Hassidim*.

^{4.} According to Benayahu, the source for this is unknown.

did his brother-in-law, Rabbi Yonah Navon,⁵ learning under several prominent scholars, including his uncle, Rabbi Avraham Yitzhaki, who was later named Chief Rabbi of the Sephardic community in Eretz Yisrael. Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah also studied with his father, as well as with other Jerusalem scholars. Later, he and his brother-in-law, Rabbi Yonah Navon, together led Yeshivat Gedulat Mordechai, an institution supported by the renowned philanthropist Rabbi Mordechai Taluk.

He was regarded as one of the seven great sages of Jerusalem, and we find his signature on all the community's regulations, such as the communal *takkanot* enacted between 1749 (5509) and 1762 (5122). His signature also appears in the approbations for several works, including the second volume of Rabbi Nissim Haim Moshe Mizrahi's work of responsa, *Admat Kodesh*.

In one of his responsa, Rabbi Nissim Haim Moshe Mizrahi describes a conditional divorce "that was arranged by the awe-inspiring Rabbi Yitzhaki," and which included the signature of Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah. It is unclear whether Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah actually sat on a rabbinical court together with Rabbi Yitzhaki, but it is known that he sat on other courts together with some of the leading rabbis of the time. He served as a judge on the court of the Turkish sage Rabbi Eliezer Nahum, author of the *Hazon Nahum* commentary to the Mishnah who served as *Rishon L'tzion* until 1742 (5502). He later served on the court of Rabbi Meyuhas Bechor Shemuel.

Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah and Rabbi Eliezer Nahum were close friends and engaged in several documented halachic exchanges. One especially fascinating exchange was begun when Rabbi Eliezer Nahum dreamed that Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah was standing in front of him, and he – Rabbi Eliezer – posed to his colleague the question of whether Yitzhak Avinu recited the *berachah* of *Hagomel* (the blessing

recited after emerging safely from a situation of mortal danger) after the incident of the *Akedah*, when he was nearly slaughtered as a sacrifice. Since Rabbi Eliezer did not receive an answer in his dream, he approached Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah in person and posed the question. This exchange is cited in the Hida's work *Mahazik Berachah*.

The Hida on numerous occasions cites his father's questions, answers, commentaries, and novel interpretations to verses. He also printed four of Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah's written responsa.

Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah Azoulay had two daughters, one of whom married Shemuel Tortus and the other a man named Eliyahu. However, it was through his son, Yosef, that he achieved everlasting fame and his legacy of spiritual greatness was most prominently preserved.

Miracle Infant and Child Prodigy

In 1724 (5484) Yosef Azoulay was born in Jerusalem during his mother's seventh month of pregnancy. At birth, he was so frail and underdeveloped that everyone who saw him mistook him for a stillborn. It was his grandmother who discerned his breaths of life and wrapped him in garments to keep him warm, and the infant gradually began to grow and gain strength. As a child he was called "bechor," because he was his parents' eldest child.⁶

Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah and Sarah named the miracle child Yosef, probably after Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah's maternal grandfather, Rabbi Yosef Bialer. Later the names Haim and David were added, and the young man's full name became Haim Yosef David Azoulay, or "Hida" for short (חיים יוסף דוד אזולאי).

Already at a young age Yosef displayed remarkable diligence. His father, Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah, writes that by the age of six or seven,

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^{5.} Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 13, p. 101.

^{6.} Even today, older Iraqi and Halabi Jews refer to the Hida as "Hacham Bechor." See Benayahu, chapter 1.

Yosef had already "recognized his Creator... [and was] dwelling in the tents of Torah."⁷

Little Yosef's promising future as a Torah luminary was suddenly thrust into uncertainty when he was eight years old. A plague struck the population of Jerusalem in 1732 (5492), and Yosef's mother, Sarah Azoulay, fell gravely ill. Yosef continued studying unabated despite his mother's illness, and his uncompromising diligence provided comfort and solace to the ailing woman, whose greatest desire was for her son to become a Torah scholar. On 8 Iyar of that year Sarah Azoulay succumbed to her illness and passed away. Yosef's beloved grandfather, Rabbi Yeshayah Azoulay, passed away that same year.

Sarah's young, orphaned son responded to the tragedy by devoting himself to his studies with renewed vigor, finding succor in the company of the Sages who engaged his intellect from within the pages of the Talmud. He enrolled in Yeshivat Bet Yaakov Pereira, where his grandfather had studied (and where his father probably still studied at that time).⁸

Unfortunately, the plague of 1732 was not the last of the troubles faced by the Jews of Jerusalem. During the ensuing years, the Ottoman government imposed a series of harsh measures and crippling taxes, and the situation of Jerusalem's Jewish community turned desperate. In 1741 (5501) Rabbi Eliezer Nahum and the other community leaders decided to send Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah, together with a scholar named Rabbi Avraham ibn Asher, on an urgent fundraising mission to Europe and Turkey. It was hoped that Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah's *zechut avot* – the merit of his righteous forebears – would help ensure the success of this vital mission. However, while in Constantinople, Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah became ill and was forced to return to Jerusalem. It was at this time that the name Rephael was added to his name as

a prayer for good health. He continued to live in Jerusalem and was greatly respected as an elder scholar until his passing in Tevet 1765 (5525).

Yosef became one of the outstanding students of Yeshivat Bet Yaakov Pereira. Among the scholars who were then teaching in the yeshivah was the boy's uncle, Rabbi Yonah Navon, author of *Get Mekushar* and *Nechpah Bakesef*, who became his primary mentor. The Hida would later say of his teacher, "I went up before him as a child, a young chick, who has not yet opened his eyes, and he [taught me] with love and compassion." ¹⁰

Rabbi Yonah Navon was especially fond of his prize student, recognizing his future as a leading Torah Sage. When the Hida was thirteen years old, Rabbi Yonah Navon visited Tunis on behalf of the community in Jerusalem, and he met with the city's Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Yitzhak Lombroso. Rabbi Navon told Rabbi Yitzhak of his star disciple who was destined to illuminate the Torah world. This conversation made a profound impression upon Rabbi Yitzhak, who mentioned it in a meeting with the Hida thirty-six years later.¹¹

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^{7.} Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah Azoulay's letter of approbation to the Hida's Sha'ar Yosef.

^{8.} Benayahu, p. 10.

^{9.} Benayahu (ibid, p. 310) tells of a dream that also seems to have contributed to the disruption of Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah's fundraising trip.

^{10.} From the Hida's eulogy for Rabbi Yonah Navon; see ibid, p. 334.

^{11.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 57.



The Rise of a Scholar

An Author in Training

In memory of

Margalite Matild Zaig bat Irene z"l

Joseph and Mamo Ouanounou z"l

Joseph and Kamira Bonan z"l

May their neshamot rest in Gan Eden, amen!

Dr. Aviv e3 Galya Ouanounou

Already at the age of twelve, the Hida began his career of writing Torah literature, a field in which he would toil throughout his life. His first literary undertaking was a commentary to the medieval Sefer Ha'agur. Many years later, in 1770 (5530), he expressed disdain for his early writings. "I have read it and they are invalid - the words of youth. This, and all that is written in these notebooks, should be forgotten and not repeated." The Hida's early writings also include essays on the laws of melihah (salting meat).

Rabbi Yonah Navon took note of Rabbenu's writing talent and encouraged him to write halachic responsa, offering close guidance along the way. Both Rabbi Navon and Yosef's father² taught him from when he was thirteen the art of responding to halachic inquiries and

^{1.} Ibid, p.10.

^{2.} Haim Sha'al 1:65, p. 74a.

issuing written halachic rulings. In fact, some of the Hida's responsa from this "training" period still remain. His first recorded attempt at a halachic responsum is an essay dated 18 Adar II, 5497 (March 21, 1737). The responsum addresses the question of whether a firstborn who feels frail and finds it difficult to fast on Erev Pesah (which is customarily observed by firstborn males as a fast day) is absolved from fasting. The Hida seems to be addressing a situation which he had personally experienced as a *bechor*.

As part of Yosef's training, Rabbi Yonah Navon posed a question for him to answer involving the complex laws of loans. The Hida opened his responsum by commenting, "I am filled with trembling for I am young and unworthy, but it is indeed Torah, and I must learn. Second, it is an obligation placed upon me and I must fulfill the decree of the king, my teacher and master." The young scholar's knowledge and methodology are discernible in this responsum: He builds upon the writings of earlier scholars, carefully scrutinizes the different viewpoints, and courageously reaches his conclusion without fear of disputing his teacher's ruling.³

His teacher penned the following response to Yosef's essay: "I saw your words and took joy in your efforts, and although your conclusion is incorrect, nevertheless this is the way of Torah, and your mistake is now experience. And the teachers of the Mishnah said, 'The shy one does not learn." While insisting that the Hida's proofs and analysis of the words of earlier halachic scholars were "incorrect" and "mistaken," he offers his disciple encouragement and expresses delight over his progress in scholarship: "Your difficulty on my explanation raises a good point and must be resolved." He also teaches him the importance of careful, deliberate analysis: "Open your eyes and delve deeply in analyzing what you read – without haste, and very patiently. He who comes to be purified will be assisted and

G-d will be your aid and enlighten your eyes with His Torah."⁴ These early attempts were not published, as the Hida did not deem the material worthy of serious halachic discussion, but they are valuable as a glimpse into the world of halachic scholarship in eighteenth-century Jerusalem, and into the process of training a child prodigy to become a leading pillar of Torah.

Rabbi Yonah Navon published one of the Hida's responsa in his own work of responsa, *Nehpah Bakesef*,⁵ which is followed by his critique of the Hida's analysis. The essay addressed the situation of someone who placed a chicken with its ten eggs in a nest, and then another person, without the knowledge of the first individual, later placed there five eggs. After all the eggs hatched, the second person demanded five of the chicks, whereas the first claimed that since his hen cared for the eggs, the chicks belonged to him.

Chief Rabbi Nissim Haim Moshe Mizrahi also gave the Hida a question to answer as part of his training, and the Hida's response still exists in an unpublished manuscript.⁶

In the year 1737 (5497), when the Hida was fifteen years old, Rabbi Yonah Navon set out on a mission to raise funds for the Jerusalem community. This was also the year the Hida became engaged to Rachel, the daughter of Rabbi Nissim Berachah, a Jerusalem scholar affiliated with Yeshivat Neveh Shalom. Throughout the period of his mentor's travels, the Hida maintained a steady correspondence of Torah novella and halachic discussions with his teacher.

Rabbi Yonah was elated each time he received a letter from his star student. "I have seen your handiwork," he wrote to Yosef after receiving one of his letters, "and I was overjoyed at your accomplishment and your being settled in Torah study, for that is the essence of man...

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^{3.} This responsum is preserved in manuscript but was never published, as will be mentioned later.

^{4.} Haim Sha'al, p. 75a.

^{5.} Vol. 1, Hoshen Mishpat 4.

^{6.} Fragment 1, NY 0883 pg. 3a.

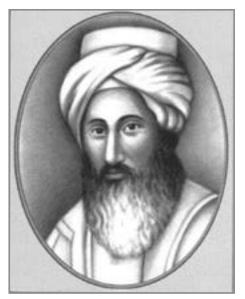
Woe is me, for I have been cast out of my land and I am wandering." Besides his gratification at hearing from his cherished disciple, Rabbi Yonah also proudly noted the Hida's progress as manifest in his letters. Indeed, by the age of fifteen, the Hida was composing responsa that were deemed suitable for dissemination.

Shortly thereafter, when the Hida was around the age of sixteen, he composed a small booklet which he called *He'elem Davar*, or "The Hidden Thing." In this booklet the young scholar notes 150 instances where great authors had posed a question based upon missing or incorrect data. Often, the "hidden thing" was a piece of historical information, such as when an author confused two Sages of the same name, or did not realize that two works were written by the same scholar. Sometimes an author raised a question regarding the words of one authority based upon the words of later authorities, which the earlier Sages could not have seen. This resulted merely from a lack of knowledge about the publication dates of various works. The Hida would later recall, "I recorded in my booklet *He'elem Davar* those things which were overlooked by the early and later rabbis, because, due to their busy schedules, some items were occasionally hidden from them for a time."

By the time the Hida turned twenty⁹ he had authored his first full-length volume, a commentary to *Masechet Horayot* entitled *Sha'ar Yosef*, consisting of 260 large pages of essays on a tractate just thirteen pages long. *Sha'ar Yosef* was published a decade later, in 1757 (5517), bearing twenty-seven endorsements from rabbis in

Jerusalem, Hebron, Livorno, and Amsterdam.¹⁰

Alongside his training as a writer, the Hida's talent as an orator also began to blossom. By the time he reached bar mitzvah age, he had already delivered seven sermons. Most were related to the portion of the week, while two were eulogies for his grandmother. Unfortunately, these early sermons have been lost. The earliest of the Hida's sermons that has been preserved in manuscript form is a lecture he delivered when he was fifteen years old.



Portrait of Maran Hacham Haim Yosef David Azoulay

Soon the Hida was regularly delivering lectures, including topical sermons and eulogies for prominent Torah personalities, mainly in the *yeshivot* of Jerusalem.¹¹ Many of these would later be printed as part of the Hida's collection of sermons.

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^{7.} *Haim Sha'al* 1:61. Interestingly, Rabbi Yonah's complaint about the effects of his travels on his Torah learning foreshadows similar misgivings experienced by the Hida, who spent a great deal of time traveling as a representative of the Jews of Jerusalem.

^{8.} Shem Hagedolim (Gedolim), vav (Kuntres Aharon).

^{9.} Some researchers say that the Hida wrote his first book, *Sha'ar Yosef*, at the age of seventeen, but their source is unclear. The Jerusalem scholars wrote an approbation for the book in which they make reference to the Hida's young age of twenty. Regardless, the bulk of the work in its first form was definitely written at a very young age.

^{10.} Benayahu, p. 88.

^{11.} Many *yeshivot* in Eretz Yisrael at this time expected their students to deliver periodic lectures to the student body, in order to train them in the art of public speaking. The students in Yeshivat Knesset Yisrael in Hebron, for example, were expected to speak seven times a year. And when a local Torah scholar passed away, a student on that week's roster was expected to deliver a eulogy. It stands to reason that many of the sermons delivered by the Hida during his early years were part of a sort of public speaking training program at Yeshivat Bet Yaakov.

An Outstanding Student's Outstanding Peers

The Hida forged close friendships with several other students in Yeshivat Bet Yaakov, the closest of whom was Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi, who would eventually become known as the Maharit Algazi. Rabbi Yom Tov was Rabbi Yosef's study partner during the time they learned under Rabbi Yonah Navon, and the two young scholars developed a deep friendship which would continue long after they left the yeshivah. Although they enjoyed studying together, they developed different styles of scholarship. Rabbi Yom Tov adopted more of an in-depth, analytical approach to Torah study, as reflected in his *magnum opus*, *Hilchot Yom Tov*, a seminal commentary to the Ramban's compendium on the laws of *bechorot* and *hallah*. The Hida, by contrast, preferred a simpler style of learning, and generally focused on topics related to practical halachah.

Other peers included Rabbi Shelomo Hiya Mizrahi, the son of Rabbi Yisrael Meir Mizrahi, author of *Peri Ha'aretz*, who served together with him on the same rabbinical court, and Rabbi Yosef Pinhas Mizrahi, son of the author of *Admat Kodesh*. These two young scholars sat with the Hida on one bench before Rabbi Yonah Navon. As a teenager, the Hida learned with Rabbi Yaakov Biton and Rabbi Eliyahu Yisrael, as well as Rabbi Yosef ben Rabbi Aharon ben Hason, one of the Salonika sages who settled in Jerusalem and authored *Bet Hamelech*. He refers to these four in his writings with the term "*alufi*" ("my colleague in learning"), and he calls Rabbi Eliyahu Yisrael "my friend in Torah," "Rav Haviva," and "Rav Rahumai" ("Beloved Rabbi"). The Hida frequently cites the comments of these scholars in his writings. Most of his peers in yeshivah were older than him, yet he confidently argued with them on matters of halachah.

Among the Hida's younger peers in the yeshivah was Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Meyuhas, the son of Rabbi Meyuhas Bechor Shemuel, author of Peri Ha'adamah, who had also studied in Bet Yaakov and eventually became its head. In the spirit of the famous adage "Kin'at soferim tarbeh hochmah" – competition among Torah scholars results in greater scholarship – there seems to have been a rivalry of sorts between the Hida and Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Meyuhas. Soon after the Hida published his Sha'ar Yosef, Rabbi Mordechai Yosef (who was known by the acronym of his name, ממיים) published his work Sha'ar Mayim - a title clearly intended to correspond to the title of the Hida's book. And when the Hida published his Birke Yosef, Rabbi Mordechai published his Birkat Hamayim. When the Hida composed his *Haim Sha'al*, Rabbi Mordechai wrote his *Mayim Sha'al*. The names of Rabbi Mordechai's two works that remained in manuscript form, Pene Hamayim and En Hamayim, also resemble the names of the Hida's works *Pene David* and *En Zocher*. ¹³



The Hida's Teachers

Rabbi Haim Ibn Atar (Or HaHaim Hakadosh)

Rabbi Haim ibn Atar was born in 1696 (5456) in the town of Sali, Morocco. In 1739 (5499) Rabbi Haim left Morocco together with several students to establish a yeshivah in Jerusalem. After a lengthy stopover in Italy, where the Or HaHaim raised funds for the yeshivah and set up committees to promote the institution, the group arrived in Eretz Yisrael in 1741 (5501). The yeshivah was initially established in Acco, and then in Peki'in, until finally relocating in Jerusalem in the summer of 1742 (5502).

^{12.} Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz of Kaminetz quoted his mentor, Rabbi Haim Soloveitchik of Brisk, as saying that his approach to Talmudic analysis was built upon the work of Maharit Algazi. (This was cited by Rabbi Leibowitz's disciple, Dayan Aryeh Leib Grossnass of London, in *Yated Ne'eman*, 8 Tammuz 5754 [June 17, 1994], vol. 6, no. 23.)

^{13.} Hama'alot L'Shelomo (Hazan), p. 350.

The Or HaHaim's yeshivah, which was called Yeshivat Knesset Yisrael, quickly gained prominence throughout Eretz Yisrael, and he himself testified that "all who come from Jerusalem and from Safed and from Tiberias and see this study [taking place] all day and part of the night in this way, they say, 'Happy is the nation that is thus, happy are its supporters who have merited this." ¹⁴ Unfortunately, the Or HaHaim suddenly passed away on the 14th ¹⁵ of Tammuz, 1743 (5503), after which the yeshivah lost some of its prominence, but nevertheless continued to serve as an important institution of Torah learning. Rabbi Yosef Amzlag succeeded the Or HaHaim as *rosh yeshivah*, and the position was later assumed by Rabbi Yonah Navon, the Hida's teacher from Yeshivat Bet Yaakov.

The Hida was eighteen years old when Rabbi Haim ibn Atar came to Jerusalem in 1742, and the young scholar immediately left Yeshivat Bet Yaakov to join Yeshivat Knesset Yisrael. Although Rabbi Haim lived in Jerusalem only eleven months before his untimely passing, the Hida was deeply influenced by him and quotes him more frequently than any of his other teachers. The Hida reverently describes his impressions of the Or HaHaim:

As a young man, I had the privilege of being in his exalted yeshivah, and my eyes saw the greatness of his Torah uprooting the highest mountains, and his sanctity was extraordinary... The Rabbi's heart was filled with the Talmud, and he was like an overflowing fountain. His wisdom is recognized from his books; however, that is but one tenth of his true wisdom, his depth of heart, and the extraordinary sharpness of his mind...¹⁶

Elsewhere, the Hida describes the experience of accompanying the Or HaHaim on one of the monthly trips the yeshivah would make to gravesites of *tzaddikim*:

When I was young I had the privilege of joining Rabbi [Haim] and all the members of his yeshivah for a *zaira* [visit] to the gravesites of the *tzaddikim* in the holy city of Jerusalem. When we came to the gravesite of the *Peri Hadash* [Rabbi Hizkiah Da Silva], we saw the Rabbi stay behind at the grave for about a quarter of an hour, his lips moving all the while. We understood that he was asking forgiveness [for having argued on the *Peri Hadash* in his work *Peri Toʻar*], and he was explaining that his intentions had been only for the sake of Heaven.¹⁷

Rabbi Yonah Navon¹⁸

Rabbi Yonah ben Rabbi Hanun Navon was born in Jerusalem around the year 1713 (5473). He studied at the Bet Yaakov Pereira yeshivah under Rabbi Yisrael Meir Mizrahi, author of the work *Peri Ha'aretz*. In 1746 (5506), as mentioned earlier, he became head of Yeshivat Knesset Yisrael, the yeshivah founded by the Or HaHaim. Later, he was elected first *rosh yeshivah* of Yeshivat Gedulat Mordechai, and also served as vice principal of Yeshivat Yefa'er Anavim.

Rabbi Yonah Navon was the Hida's primary teacher, under whom he studied at Yeshivat Bet Yaakov. The Hida describes him as "the holy, pious, G-dly kabbalist, *rosh yeshivah*, and head of the Rabbinical Court, my teacher, the true and outstanding rabbi." Elsewhere, he

^{14.} Benayahu, "L'Toldot Bet Hamedrash Knesset Yisrael BiYerushalayim," in Yerushalayim: Rivon L'Chaiker Yerushalayim, vol. 2, p. 109.

^{15.} Other sources say Rabbi Haim passed away on the 15th of Tammuz.

^{16.} Shem Hagedolim (Gedolim), Het, no. 42.

^{17.} Ibid, Peh, no. 143.

^{18.} The material presented from here through the end of the chapter is taken from Meir Benayahu's *HaHida*.

^{19.} The Hida's introduction to Rabbi Navon's book, Get Mekushar.

says, "There is almost no authority on halachah of his stature, and he was a pious man and a kabbalist." ²⁰

Rabbi Yonah made several trips to raise funds on behalf of the Jewish community of Jerusalem. He traveled to North Africa in 1737 (5497), and to Turkey and Greece in 1747 (5506).²¹ He passed away on 16 Shevat, 5520 (February 3, 1760).

Rabbi Eliezer Nahum

Rabbi Nahum was head of the Rabbinical Court in Edirne, Turkey, but moved to Israel in 1735 (5495), soon after which he was named Sephardic Chief Rabbi. He was an exceptional scholar, and authored *Hazon Nahum*, an in-depth commentary to the *Kodashim* and *Taharot* sections of the Mishnah.²² He also authored commentaries to the *Mechilta*, *Sifri*, *Mishneh Torah*, and *Itur*, in addition to written sermons, responsa, and other works.

Rabbi Eliezer became friendly with the Hida's father, Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah, who sat on his court, and the Hida grew quite close to him, despite his youth. In numerous places in his writings the Hida cites ideas he discussed with the Chief Rabbi and halachic decisions he had heard while at Rabbi Eliezer Nahum's court. In one place he writes, "When I was young, the rabbis of Jerusalem, and, at their head, our teacher Rabbi Eliezer Nahum, may his memory be blessed, were putting together a bill of divorce, and I was sitting at their feet."²³ Elsewhere, he says of Rabbi Eliezer Nahum, "My eyes have seen his greatness in Torah, his diligence, and his great modesty. Until literally the end of his days, he was writing halachic decisions and debating

various issues in the yeshivah."²⁴ Rabbi Nahum passed away in 1745 (5505).

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Mizrahi

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Mizrahi studied in Bet Yaakov Pereira under Rabbi Yehuda Hakohen and Rabbi Avraham Yitzhaki. He wrote numerous halachic responsa, which were published in a three-volume work entitled *Peri Ha'aretz*.²⁵ Rabbi Yisrael Meir passed away in 1749 (5509).

Rabbi Mizrahi became the *rosh yeshivah* at Bet Yaakov, and the Hida was one of his students. The Hida learned a considerable amount from Rabbi Mizrahi, and mentions him on numerous occasions in his writings with effusive praise. He writes that Rabbi Mizrahi "spread Torah" and that "his students were leaders of the generation."

Rabbi Yitzhak Hakohen Rappaport

Rabbi Yitzhak ben Rabbi Yehuda Hakohen Rappaport, author of *Bate Kehunah*, was a disciple of the *Peri Hadash*. He was born in Jerusalem around the year 1680 (5440). His maternal grandfather was Rabbi David Hakohen of Jerusalem, author of *Da'at Kedoshim*. He also learned in the Bet Yaakov study hall, and his teachers were the yeshivah's founder, the *Peri Hadash*, and Rabbi Avraham Yitzhaki. He traveled to Turkey and Greece as a representative of the Jewish community of Safed,²⁷ and when his mission concluded, in 1714 (5474), he was appointed Rabbi of Izmir, Turkey, a position he held until his return to Eretz Yisrael in 1749 (5509). On 4 Tammuz of that year Chief Rabbi Haim Nissim Moshe Mizrahi passed away, and Rabbi

^{20.} Shem Hagedolim, his entry.

^{21.} Avraham Ya'ari, Sheluhe Eretz Yisrael, pp. 386-387.

^{22.} Hazon Nahum was published in Constantinople in 1744-1745 (5504-5505).

^{23.} Haim Sha'al 1:39.

^{24.} Shem Hagedolim (Gedolim), Aleph, no. 195.

^{25.} The three volumes were published separately, in 1727 (5487), 1755 (5515) and 1905 (5665).

^{26.} Shem Hagedolim, Meir Mizrahi.

^{27.} Sheluhe Eretz Yisrael, pp. 423-425.

Rappaport was elected his successor. He also served as *rosh yeshivah* of Bet Yaakov Pereira, and it was then that the Hida studied under him. The Hida writes about Rabbi Rappaport, "When I was standing and serving the Rabbi...my eyes saw a box full of his many holy writings." The Hida actually wrote Rabbi Rappaport's formal letter of appointment to the Rabbinate.²⁹ Rabbi Yitzhak Hakohen passed away on 17 Tammuz, 5515 (1755).

Rabbi Gedaliah Hayun

Born in Constantinople, Rabbi Hayun studied in the yeshivah of Rabbi Haim Alfandri. He later settled in Jerusalem, where he devoted himself to the study of Kabbalah. In 1733 (5493) he left for Turkey as a *shaliah* of the Jewish community of Hebron.³⁰ Four years later he established the Midrash Hassidim Bet El yeshivah in Jerusalem for the study of Kabbalah, an institution he led until his passing in 1751 (5511).

The Hida, who studied under Rabbi Hayun in Yeshivat Bet El, glowingly describes Rabbi Hayun's exceptional level of piety:

Our teacher, Rabbi Gedaliah Hayun, is the holy one... and went on a mitzvah mission for the holy city of Hebron with no money or remuneration and returned to the holy city. And he always increased in holiness. He studied the true wisdom and the meditations of our master, the Arizal, with all his strength. He used all the holy Rabbi's meditations for the *mitzvot* and prayers, not missing a single one. And everything was done in holiness, seclusion, and asceticism. He was an exceptionally pious man and prayed for those who were

ill. And occasionally, they would tell the sick man in a dream that he was saved because of the prayers of the pious man.³¹

Rabbi Shalom Mizrahi Sharabi (Rashash)

Born in Sharab, Yemen, Rabbi Shalom Sharabi came to Jerusalem and studied Kabbalah with Rabbi Gedaliah Hayun. He was among the leading figures of Midrash Hassidim, and became the *rosh yeshivah* after the passing of Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Algazi in 1756 (5516). Rabbi Sharabi observed ascetic practices, and is often referred to as "*Harav Hehassid*: ("the pious rabbi"). He passed away in Jerusalem on 10 Shevat, 5542 (1782).

He was known as one of the leading scholars of the Arizal's kabbalistic teachings, and for consolidating the meditations on the prayers. He published several seminal works of Kabbalah, including *Nahar Shalom* and *Rehovot Hanahar* (Salonika, 1806), and kabbalists use his prayer book to this day.

The Hida, who spent time studying under Rabbi Shalom in Yeshivat Bet El, writes about him: "His holiness was one of a kind in our generation; he was an outstanding kabbalist...and he used his great expertise and wisdom to arrange the meditations of the Arizal properly in order.... He used all the meditations of our teacher the Arizal."³²

Other teachers of the Hida include: Chief Rabbi Haim Nissim Moshe Mizrahi, Rabbi Rephael Trivis, Rabbi Avraham Rozanis, Rabbi Eliezer Sofino, Rabbi David Hazan, and Rabbi Reuven Moshe Gokil.

^{28.} Shem Hagedolim, Bate Kehunah.

^{29.} Ibid.

^{30.} Sheluhe Eretz Yisrael, pp. 496-497.

^{31.} Shem Hagedolim, his entry.

^{32.} Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Emergence of a Kabbalist

Yeshivat Bet El

Alongside his studies in Yeshivat Bet Yaakov and Knesset Yisrael, the Hida also frequented Midrash Hassidim Bet El, commonly known as Yeshivat Bet El, a yeshivah in Jerusalem devoted to the study of Kabbalah. As mentioned above, the yeshivah was founded in 1737 (5497), when the Hida was thirteen, by the renowned kabbalist Rabbi Gedaliah Hayun of Constantinople. It was later led by his disciple, Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, the Rashash, a native of Sharab in Southern Yemen who immigrated to Jerusalem as a young man.

Despite his youth, Rabbi Shalom was already an accomplished scholar of Torah and Kabbalah when he arrived in Jerusalem. However, in his humility, he chose to conceal his scholarship, and got himself hired as a helper to Rabbi Gedaliah Hayun so he could observe his conduct and listen to the lectures and discussions in the yeshivah. Once, he overheard Rabbi Gedaliah pose a question

With love and respect,

<u> realization de la contratación de</u>

In loving memory of my dear father,

Mr. Salomon Bendayan (OBM)

who taught me compassion, kindness, and respect by
being an exemplar member of the Sephardic community.

He instilled a sense of pride in our culture and heritage that follows me and my actions

wherever I go, whatever I do. Gracias, Papa!

In honor and admiration of my dear mother,

Mrs. Sarah Bendayan

who inspires me every day to be the best that I can be.

May Hashem protect her and keep her

with us for many years. Amen!

on Rabbi Haim Vital's kabbalistic work *Etz Haim* to which none of the scholars was able to provide an adequate answer. Young Shalom knew the answer, but nevertheless kept his silence.

That evening he found himself alone in Rabbi Gedaliah's room. He carefully wrote down his solution, and gently slipped the paper among Rabbi Gedaliah's writings in a box nearby. The next morning Rabbi Gedaliah found the paper, and as he read it, his eyes lit up excitedly. He approached the yeshivah's greatest scholars and asked each one whether he was the mysterious writer. One after the other, the scholars denied writing the answer. Finally, they turned to young Shalom and asked if perhaps he knew who had composed the answer. The young man began to stammer and eventually admitted that it was he who was responsible for the note. Finally, the secret was out, and Rabbi Shalom earned his place among the scholars of Yeshivat Bet El.

The yeshivah was comprised of approximately forty scholars who were divided into three shifts. The first began its work in the middle of the night with the tearful, soulful recitation of *Tikkun Hatzot* (the midnight prayer mourning the destruction of the Temple). After this prayer was completed, the scholars began their study of Kabbalah, learning Rabbi Haim Vital's *Etz Haim* and *Shemonah She'arim*, and the Arizal's *Sefer Hakavanot*. The scholars sat immersed in this study until dawn, when they were joined by the other two shifts for the *Shaharit* prayer.

The second shift consisted of approximately twelve students who would begin their daily learning regimen by studying immediately following the morning prayers. Their primary focus was the study of Mishnah with the classic commentaries of Rabbi Ovadiah of Bertinoro and Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller (*Tosafot Yom Tov*). Their study lasted until the *Minhah* and *Arvit* prayers in the late afternoon and early evening, when they were joined by the members of the other shifts. For afternoon prayers the scholars followed the kabbalistic practice of wearing *tefillin d'Shimusha Rabba* (*tefillin* prepared

according to the view of the Geonic work *Shimusha Rabba*, which differ from *tefillin Rashi* and *tefillin Rabbenu Tam*).

Students of the third shift began their learning session immediately after *Arvit*. These were generally the most outstanding scholars, and they studied Talmud in great depth until the middle of the night, when the members of the first shift would arrive for their study of Kabbalah.

Each day after *Shaharit* one of the scholars would read aloud from a work of *mussar* (religious and ethical admonition). And each Friday before *Minhah* the students would perform *hatarat nedarim* (annulment of vows). On Shabbat they would study the works of the Arizal until midday, and before *Minhah* they would study Mishnah with its commentaries. This Shabbat afternoon study session was known as "study at the time of Divine favor," based on the *Zohar*'s teaching that the time of *Minhah* on Shabbat is an "*et ratzon*," a propitious time for earning G-d's favor.

The prayers at Yeshivat Bet El followed the customs and traditions of the Arizal. The students prayed softly and trembled as they uttered the words, focusing intently on their desire to elevate the universe. Whenever the community of Jerusalem faced any sort of crisis, scholars from around the city would join the prayers of the kabbalists of Yeshivat Bet El.

It is told that the Hazon Ish (Rabbi Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz, 1878-1953) was once making his way to the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem, and he made a point of stopping in Yeshivat Bet El and spending some time studying there. He explained, "I have a great merit to see the place where such great and holy people learn and pray."

There are now two separate branches of Yeshivat Bet El, one in Jerusalem's Old City, led by Rabbi Yisrael Avihai, and the other on Rashi Street in Jerusalem's Geulah neighborhood, which is under the leadership of Rabbi Shalom Mordechai Haim Hedaya.

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A Father's Dream

When the Hida was about twenty years old, his father dreamt that he was unable to find his son, and when he finally saw him approaching, he was in an especially jubilant mood. Upon asking the Hida where he had been, the young man answered that he had gone to immerse in the Sea of Tiberias (the Kinneret), where he saw the prophet Eliyahu.¹

The dream was a clear indication of the Hida's readiness to delve into the wisdom of Kabbalah, as the Sea of Tiberias is closely associated with kabbalistic teaching. It is told that when Rabbi Haim Vital first began to learn with the Arizal, he could not understand any of his teachings, and would forget all the material he learned. One day, the two took a small boat to Tiberias, and when they passed the pillars of an ancient synagogue, the Arizal took a cup of water from the sea and gave it to Rabbi Haim to drink.

"Now that you have drunk from this water," he told his disciple, "you will grasp this wisdom, since that water is from Miriam's well." The waters of the Sea of Tiberias are associated with the waters of Miriam's well that provided water for *Bene Yisrael* in the wilderness, and they have the ability to open a scholar's mind to the wisdom of Kabbalah. Indeed, once Rabbi Haim drank from the water, he was able to grasp the Arizal's teachings.² The Hida's father's dream about his son's encounter with Eliyahu at the sea was thus taken as a heavenly pronouncement of the Hida's qualifications as a kabbalistic sage.

It appears that the Hida adopted several ascetic practices of the kabbalists already during his youth. Rabbi David Yekutiel Hakohen, who frequently traveled to Western Europe to raise money for the Jews of Jerusalem during the years 1806–1826 (5566–5586), related

stories of the Hida told by the elders of Jerusalem. "In his youth in Jerusalem." Rabbi David Yekutiel told, "he used to practice great penances in order to gain understanding." He said that the Hida's father eventually decided that the boy should leave Jerusalem and spend some time in Hebron, "for the Ploni ('so-and-so,' referring to the Angel of Death) was jealous of him on account of his great holiness due to his penances, and his life might be in danger, G-d forbid."³

In the month of Shevat 1752 (5512), when the Hida was just twenty-eight years old, his father lent him his manuscript copy of Rabbi Haim Vital's *Etz Haim*, instructing him not to lend it to anyone, even for a brief period.⁴

"You Will Grasp the Way of Truth"

As part of his quest for knowledge of Kabbalah, the Hida, together with his friend Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi, began coming to Yeshivat Bet El. They approached Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, but he felt these young students were not yet ready for advanced kabbalistic study. Eventually, after several attempts, they were granted acceptance. The Hida studied there first under Rabbi Gedaliah Hayun and later under Rabbi Shalom, both of whom he would later cite in his writings.

The Hida was initially unable to master the hidden Torah with the same ease with which he mastered Talmud and halachah. Rabbi Avraham Calphon relates that when the Hida first began studying with Rabbi Shalom, the teacher would turn his face away from him. The Hida eventually asked Rabbi Shalom whether he had done anything wrong on account of which he refused to look at him.

"I know that your coming to this world is not to [immediately] study the way of truth [Kabbalah], for you will first grasp other

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^{1.} N. Sefriel, Rabbenu HaHida, p. 36.

^{2.} Introduction to Nagid U'metzaveh; Shivhe HaAri, chapter 3.

^{3.} Sefer HaHida, p. 185, no. 3; Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 558, no. 4.

^{4.} Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 315, no. 2.

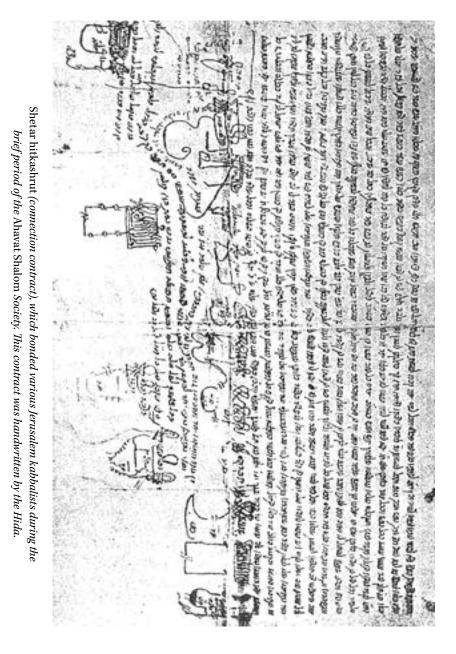
approaches and then, finally, you will grasp the way of truth." Indeed, under Rabbi Shalom's guidance, the Hida's knowledge of Kabbalah gradually developed, until he became an accomplished kabbalistic scholar.

The Ahavat Shalom Society

Within a year of Rabbi Shalom's assuming the role of *rosh yeshivah*, he formed a special group of students which came to be known as *Ahavat Shalom* (Love of Peace). From the forty *hachamim* in the Bet El yeshivah, Rabbi Shalom selected twelve, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Yisrael, who would comprise the special "*Ahavat Shalom* Society." Some of the distinguished scholars included in this group were the Hida, Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi, and Rabbi Haim de la Roza (author of *Torat Hacham*).

One of the group's primary aims was the absolute unity of the participants, to reach the point where, as in the words of the Hida, "...each one is tied in spirit to his friend, so that the twelve of us should be as one soul." They focused very intently on prayer, which they recited with the deep meditations of the Arizal, in an effort to engage in mystical communication with Hashem.

Members of the group were bound by several strict rules. One rule, as the Hida describes, was that "no one praise the other even if he is greater in wisdom and age... and not to rise for him...his full height, only a token rising... so that we act as if we are all one." The members would formally affirm their commitment to the rules, and to each other, through the occasional signing of a document referred to as a *shetar hitkashrut* (literally, "connection contract"). In all, four such



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^{5.} Sefer HaHida, p. 183.

^{6.} Ammer, *Maran HaHida HaKadosh*, p. 194. See also *Shivhe Harav Hida*, in *Sefer HaHida*, pp. 195–196 [2].

^{7.} Ammer, p. 195.

documents were signed during the brief period of the *Ahavat Shalom* Society.

The *Ahavat Shalom* Society seems to have been modeled after a similar group formed nearly two centuries earlier, in 1575 (5335), by a number of kabbalists in Safed studying under Rabbi Haim Vital. The Hida was aware of this group, and even had a copy of one of its *hitkashrut* documents. It is believed that the Hida, despite his young age at the time, was actually the driving force behind the formation of the *Ahavat Shalom* Society. He also appears to have authored the text of the first and fourth *hitkashrut* documents. (The second and third documents were drawn up and signed while the Hida was traveling abroad.)

A Heavenly Voice

Once, during the winter of 1777 (5537), Rabbi Shalom sat with two students, the Hida and Rabbi Haim de la Roza, in a cramped attic overlooking the Temple Mount. Sensing that this was an auspicious time for hastening the arrival of the Final Redemption, these three *tzaddikim*, under the guidance of Rabbi Shalom, had spent three days fasting, praying, and abstaining from all physical activities. It was now the end of the third day, and they engaged in their final prayers and kabbalistic practices in that small attic.

Suddenly, a powerful gust of wind blew over their faces, enveloping them in a thick cloud. A piercing voice then announced, "The time of the redemption has not yet arrived, and you are not permitted to hasten the End of Days. It is decreed that you will never be together again: one of you will die this year, one will go into exile, and the third will remain in the Land of Israel, but not in Jerusalem."

The voice did not specify who would die and who would go into exile. The three sages therefore drew lots among themselves, according to the tradition known to Rabbi Shalom. The lots determined that the Hida would go into exile, Rabbi Shalom would pass away, and

Rabbi Haim de la Roza would remain in Eretz Yisrael. And in fact, Rabbi Shalom died that year, and the Hida prepared for his mission abroad, while Rabbi Haim de la Roza remained alone in Eretz Yisrael, learning and teaching the other kabbalists of Eretz Yisrael.⁸

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^{8.} Rabbenu HaHida, p. 43.



Emissaries from the Holy Land

The Hida spent many years of his life away from home, as a shaliah - emissary - for the Jewish community of Jerusalem. Alongside the dozens of volumes of scholarship that he produced, one of his major contributions to the Jewish world was in his capacity as shaliah, through which he not only raised funds for the impoverished Jews of Jerusalem, but also inspired and influenced Jews in countless different places. The Hida treated his role as shaliah with great seriousness and respect, and went to great lengths to preserve the honor of this position of representative of the Holy Land.

Before exploring the Hida's experiences and accomplishments as shaliah, it is worthwhile to first examine the history and roots of this position which the Hida felt privileged to fulfill.

The notion of *shelihut*, appointing an official to travel to the Diaspora on behalf of the Jews of Eretz Yisrael, is an ancient one, dating back to the time of the destruction of the second Bet Hamikdash. During the period of Roman occupation of Eretz Yisrael, the Nasi ("prince") of the Jewish community would dispatch a shaliah to raise funds for the

In honor of the memory of Jacob and Mercedes Benmergui z"l Harry Kay z"l Jacob and Alegria Benzaquen z"lBy their children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews Robert & Vivian Benmergui and Family Yaakov e3 Esther Bracha Benmerqui and Family

> Yisrael & Malka Woolfson and Family

> Shimon e3 Lisa Benmerqui

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central yeshivah in the Land of Israel. When the Roman authorities abolished the office of the *Nasi*, they forbade the practice of *shelihut*, though emissaries were still sent clandestinely to assist the Jews of Eretz Yisrael. The practice continued even during the Middle Ages, and there are records from the thirteenth century of the yeshivah of Rabbi Yechiel of Paris in Acco, as well as the yeshivah of Rabbi Yitzhak Hakohen Sholal in Jerusalem, dispatching emissaries to the Diaspora. In the sixteenth century, emissaries were sent from Jerusalem, Safed, and Tiberias to represent the *yeshivot* in those cities.

By the first half of the seventeenth century, a system had developed whereby the three holy cities of Eretz Yisrael – Jerusalem, Hebron, and Safed, known by the acrostic *Yahatz* (ירושלים, חברון, צפת) – would send a *shaliah* every several years on behalf of their respective Jewish communities. Later, with the establishment of a sizable Jewish community in Tiberias, it, too, would regularly send out emissaries.

As a general rule, the *shelihim* were authorized to raise funds only for the city that sent them, and not for specific individuals or institutions. Exceptions were made for urgent situations, such as in 1797 (5557), when the Jewish community of Hebron was unable to repay its debts to local Arabs, and Rabbi Yaakov Algazi, son of the Hida's childhood friend Maharit Algazi, was taken captive. The *shelihim* from Jerusalem were authorized to raise funds to secure Rabbi Yaakov's release, though even then Maharit Algazi instructed the representatives to raise money for his son only after they had collected the funds needed to help the Jews of Jerusalem.

More Than Just a Fundraiser

Although the official role of the *shaliah* was to raise money on behalf of the struggling Jewish communities in Eretz Yisrael, the *shaliah* was much more than a charity collector. He served as a liaison of sorts between the Jews of the Holy Land and the Diaspora communities, bringing news from Eretz Yisrael and also attempting to spread the sanctity and ideals of the Jews of Eretz Yisrael throughout the world,

thereby strengthening the communities abroad. For this reason, the *shaliah* had to be a scholar and inspiring figure, capable of not only raising funds but also representing the high religious standards of the holy cities which he represented. Indeed, there were many outstanding Torah scholars who served as *shelihim*.

Most candidates for *shelihut* who were asked to serve in this capacity accepted the role. Although there were some who refused out of a desire to spend their entire lives basking in the sanctity of the Land of Israel, most happily agreed to the assignment, recognizing the urgent need for funds, and also because *shelihut* was a means of earning a livelihood; the *shaliah* was generally awarded one-third of the collected funds as compensation. Due to the harsh economic conditions in Eretz Yisrael, there were some *shelihim* who depended upon the compensation for this work to support their families. Some *shelihim*, including the Hida's teacher, Rabbi Gedaliah Hayun, accepted the role without compensation.¹

Usually the *shaliah* traveled alone, though there were times when two *shelihim* would travel together, such as if there was an inordinate amount of work that was needed, or when a community decided to send an Ashkenazi and a Sepharadi to collect in both kinds of communities. If the *shaliah* was a person of stature, he was given a companion – sometimes this was his son – to aid him on his journey. There were also families in which the role of *shaliah* became a kind of family tradition. The Azoulay family was one such family: the Hida's father and great-grandfather served as *shelihim*, as did his sons Rabbi Avraham and Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah, and his great-grandson Rabbi Yehuda Zerahiah.

The Shaliah's Documents

Before a *shaliah* embarked on his journey he received several documents from the leaders of the community he represented. The

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^{1.} Shem Hagedolim (Gedolim), Gimmel, no. 6.

most important of these documents was a formal letter, usually written by a professional scribe on parchment, outlining the community's financial difficulties. In some instances, the leaders noted the strain caused by an influx of immigrants, emphasizing the arrival of immigrants from the countries now being visited by the shaliah. The community's tax responsibilities were also explained in great detail. Sometimes the letter also emphasized the great spiritual potential of the communities in Eretz Yisrael and the need to help them realize that potential. If funds were needed for releasing Jewish captives, this was noted in the letter so that the community would provide money from its pidyon shevuyim fund, in addition to the resources allocated for the Jews of Eretz Yisrael. This letter also described the credentials of the shaliah, as well as the difficult circumstances under which he accepted the role, such as if he was elderly or ill, or if he had a large family. In situations where the *shaliah* waived his rights to compensation, this was also noted in the official *shelihut* letter.

This letter was signed by the city's Chief Rabbi, the members of his *bet din*, local scholars, previous *shelihim*, *roshe yeshivah*, and other dignitaries. The letter was always written in Hebrew, occasionally requiring the *shaliah* to translate the document into the vernacular upon arriving in the Diaspora community.

The *shaliah* also carried with him a second document, legally authorizing him to collect money on behalf of the community he represented. Additionally, he was given a document carefully stipulating the terms and conditions of his *shelihut*, including compensation, reimbursement for expenses, and the *shaliah's* pledge to provide a precise, detailed account of his trip and the funds raised, and to take an oath affirming this account. Often, the community leaders did not actually demand an oath upon the *shaliah's* return. Regardless, he would receive from them a formal document affirming the completion of his mission.

In addition to these documents, the *shaliah* was also given a ledger in which to record all financial information. The leaders of

the communities he visited, as well as individual donors, entered the amounts they donated into the ledger. This record was used as a receipt and also as a guide for future *shelihim*, advising them of which communities and individuals could be counted on for generous donations.

The Dangers of Shelihut

Travel in those times was fraught with peril, making *shelihut* a dangerous undertaking. *Shelihim* would at times have to travel through deserts or over stormy seas, where they were threatened by the elements, and also faced the risk of bandits and hostile government officials. And this is even before taking into account the physical effects of the rigors of travel, such as disease and sheer exhaustion. Sadly, no fewer than eighty-five of the 850 known *shelihim* – one out of every ten – died en route. The risks of *shelihut* prompted some emissaries to take the drastic measure of divorcing their wives before their departure so that the women would be able to remarry if they did not return.

Avraham Yaari, a historian who researched the missions of the *shelihim*, describes the dangers faced by the emissaries in the following disquieting passage:

The bones of the emissaries of the Land of Israel are scattered upon the face of Italy, Germany, Bohemia, Poland, Lithuania, Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan, Persia, Afghanistan, Yemen, India, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, the United States, and the West Indies. Not all were fortunate enough to be buried, and not all who were brought to burial were fortunate enough to have a marker put upon their grave.²

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^{2.} Sheluhe Eretz Yisrael, pp. 29-30.

It is told that when Hagaon Rabbi Yitzhak Kobo, who served as an emissary for the community of Jerusalem at the age of seventy-three, left the city gates, "he turned his face towards Jerusalem and said, 'Who knows if I will merit to return to Jerusalem,' and tears flowed from his eyes like a stream." Tragically, he indeed passed away during his mission in Egypt.

Spiritual Emissaries

Some shelihim managed to publish written works during their journeys abroad. Many of these books focused on the special sanctity of Eretz Yisrael and the importance of supporting its Jewish population. Some *shelihim* gave their books to donors as gifts. There were also *shelihim* who rewarded donors by pledging to pray on their behalf upon returning to the Holy Land, or offering them a written blessing, which the donors would then keep as a precious souvenir of their meeting with the shaliah.

Shelihim often addressed the religious shortcomings of the communities they visited. Rabbi Haim Yaakov Hakohen Feinstein, for example, who traveled to India three times on behalf of the Jews of Safed, observed many otherwise observant Jews in India riding trains on Shabbat. And so during his second mission to the country, in 1874 (5634), he published in Calcutta a work entitled Imrei Shabbat, explaining why train travel is forbidden on Shabbat. There were also instances where a shaliah assisted the community he visited when that community needed to send its own emissary to raise funds, and asked the shaliah from Eretz Yisrael to write a letter urging surrounding communities to support the cause.

The institution of *shelihut* thus benefited all the Jewish communities involved. In addition to raising desperately-needed funds for the Jews of Eretz Yisrael, the shelihim succeeded in bringing the unique

holiness and spiritual flare of the Holy Land to Jews throughout the Diaspora. While officially serving as representatives of their particular communities, their goal was to help and inspire Jews everywhere, by spreading Torah, connecting Jews around the world to the Land of Israel and their spiritual roots, and igniting the spark of kedushah wherever it was needed.

Disrespect for the Shaliah

Unfortunately, the stature of shelihim suffered a sharp decline toward the end of the seventeenth century. This was due to several causes, one of which was the growing numbers of shelihim visiting Diaspora communities, a trend that resulted in shelihim arriving in a city before the previous ones had left. Some communities were troubled by the constant flow of representatives soliciting donations, and felt they were draining the Diaspora Jews' resources.

The community of Holland was so displeased with the situation that it issued a statement saying, "If somehow all the money sent every year is not enough to support them, with all the other Diaspora Jews, let them leave the Land instead of dragging themselves out by sending emissaries and making themselves a burden on the Diaspora communities, taking away that which belongs to the poor of their own cities." Sensing the growing feelings of animosity toward the emissaries, distinguished scholars began refusing to embark on shelihut, unless they were coerced by their community leaders.⁵

The result was that men of ordinary stature assumed the role of shaliah in place of leading sages. The Hida documents this unfortunate development, and writes that the Jews of Tunis were under the impression that "there are no longer proper scholars in Eretz Yisrael, for they have seen the emissaries, and sometimes they

^{3.} Ibid, p. 2.

^{4.} Sefat Emet, p. 19a.

^{5.} See the letter of Rabbi Yehuda Geron from Firenze from 1721 (5481) in S. Asaf, Mechkarim U'mekorot (Jerusalem, 1946), p. 269.

are ignorant, or at best simple scholars."6 These second-rate emissaries worked solely as fundraisers, and were unable or unwilling to fill the other role of shaliah, of providing inspiration for Diaspora Jewry. This further diminished the communities' respect for the position and its influence.7

It was the Hida, undoubtedly the greatest among all the shelihim of Eretz Yisrael, who restored the honor to the position of shaliah and, in so doing, brought honor to the entire Jewish community in the Holy Land.

^{6.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 63.

^{7.} Benayahu, p. 27.



In loving memory of

Leon Benoliel zt"l

Marcos Benitah zt"l

Isaac Benitah zt"l

May their souls rest in Gan Eden, amen.

Abe e3 Louisa Benitah

Jacqueline, Katie, Jessica,

Vanessa e Marc Benitah

The Hida as Shaliah

In 1753 (5513) the Jewish community of Hebron found itself in dire financial straits that necessitated sending an emissary to collect money from European Jewish communities. The leaders needed a man of stature who was impressive enough to properly represent the community, and energetic enough to undertake the grueling journey. In search of a qualified candidate for this urgent mission, they set their eyes upon the twenty-nine-year-old Jerusalem scholar Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay. The Hida accepted the assignment and embarked on his first voyage to Europe, a journey that would last for five years.

This journey began an extraordinary "career" of *shelihut* that made the Hida the most famous of the hundreds of *shelihim* that were sent from Israel to the Diaspora. The Hida succeeded more than any other *shaliah* in bringing honor and glory to the Land of Israel and its Jewish population. He expended great efforts traveling and spending long periods of time in Diaspora communities, building a meaningful, long-term relationship between those communities and the Jews of his homeland.

The Diaspora's Obligation

The Hida felt very strongly that Diaspora Jews bore an outright obligation to support the Jewish communities of Eretz Yisrael. He expresses this view in his work *Pene David*, where he praises the generosity of Jewish donors in the Diaspora, while criticizing those who show disdain for the *shaliah* and his fundraising efforts:

Praised are [the people of] Israel that when a *shaliah* comes to them from Eretz Yisrael, they honor him and show him kindness... and because Jews of the Diaspora are the reason for the very existence of a settlement [in the Land of Israel], they merit to be part of the mitzvah of settling the Land of Israel... All these words are true to one whose eyes are not bleary, as opposed to those people who look for pretexts to bring down the *shaliah* of Eretz Yisrael, and thus to destroy the inhabitants of Israel who are known as "straight," for their study and *mitzvot* go straight up [to heaven].

The Hida's sentiments echo the view of Rabbi Moshe Hagiz (1671–1750), who similarly regarded support for the Jews of Eretz Yisrael as a bona fide obligation. Diaspora communities kept a special charity box for the emissary from Eretz Yisrael, and the question arose as to whether the *shaliah* may also be given money from the funds allocated for the city's poor residents. Rabbi Moshe Hagiz ruled that "residents of Eretz Yisrael are considered your own city's poor, not of a foreign city... and thus, as Hashem desires the Jews of the Diaspora to have a portion in the Land... hence the *shelihim* are sent out [to the Diaspora communities]." In his view, since Eretz Yisrael is the land of the entire Jewish nation, the poor Jews of Eretz Yisrael are considered part of every Diaspora community. As such, charity collected for the

local residents can be used for the Jews of the Holy Land, who are also considered "local residents."

Rabbi Moshe Hagiz spoke out against Diaspora Jews who enjoyed a comfortable socioeconomic status and felt no need to assist the struggling communities of Eretz Yisrael.³ The Hida⁴ went even further, declaring that the redemption could not come until the Jewish nation is cognizant of the fact that it is in exile, and mourns the destruction of its Temple and its land. This "exile awareness," a Jew's recognition that he is not at home outside the Land of Israel, is achieved by establishing a close emotional bond with Eretz Yisrael. The Hida thus tried to impress upon the Diaspora communities that beyond fulfilling the general obligation of charity, to assist fellow Jews in need, supporting the Jews of Eretz Yisrael served as a vital reminder of the transience of exile, that a Jew's true home is the Land of Israel, even as he enjoys a comfortable life in Europe or elsewhere in the Diaspora. And this reminder is an indispensable prerequisite for our national redemption.

Throughout his travels, the Hida carried this keen awareness of the stature and importance of the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, and it was this sense of mission and duty from which he drew encouragement during the numerous difficult situations he encountered. When he was mistreated by the communities he visited, he prayed that he would be assisted through the merit of the Land of Israel. During one trip to Germany, for example, the townspeople treated the Hida with overt suspicion, and he prayed, "Please, Hashem, act in the merit of Eretz Yisrael and the merit of my forefathers." He recited a similar prayer when he visited the Italian city of Bolzano and was charged an exorbitantly high tax. The Hida writes that in the German city of Harberg, "in my anger and distress

^{1.} P. 98, cited by Benayahu in Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 26.

^{2.} Sefat Emet (Amsterdam, 1707), page 17a.

^{3.} Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 25.

^{4.} Commentary on the Haggadah.

^{5.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 12.

I stood in the doorway and tears streamed from my eyes, and I called to Hashem, 'Master of the World, I know within myself that my sins have brought these things to pass... but give me strength to suffer through it, and act in the merit of the Land of Israel."

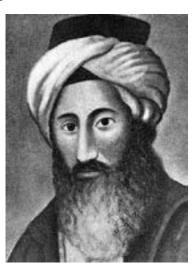
"Beautiful and Crowned with Holiness"

One of the Hida's great contributions was restoring the honor to the post of *shaliah*, which, as we have seen, had begun to decline. He brought to his job grace, tact, charisma, and sincerity, with which he earned widespread respect and admiration. The Hida saw it as his personal obligation to represent the honor and radiance of Eretz Yisrael in order to deepen its influence on the Diaspora communities. And he drew a clear distinction between his own honor and the honor of the Holy Land, which he represented. If he was ever personally offended, he was forgiving, and he often wrote in his journal, "This, too, is for the best." But when the honor of Eretz Yisrael was violated, his soul knew no rest, and he responded with passion.

The Hida had many outstanding qualities that endeared him to the communities and ensured the success of his missions. He had a pleasing appearance, he carried himself with dignity and poise, and his face radiated piety. The impression he made on the communities he visited is perhaps best expressed by Rabbi Gavriel Pereira de Leon of Livorno, who described the Hida's visit to his community: "And he came, beautiful and crowned with holiness... And when he came, fathers, mothers, women, and children ran out in joyous voices and great love to meet him and to bow before him, and they said, 'Come with joy; we are servants to our master."

Even in places where the people initially suspected the validity of his *shelihut*, they realized just by looking at his face that he was a great man. In Frankfurt am Main one of the leaders told him, "Your appearance verifies your integrity, but what should we do, when your letters and their signatures are unrecognizable to us?"

Whenever he traveled, he brought a large number of garments to ensure that he always appeared clean, neat, and well-kept. This additional luggage often invited the hostility of ship captains and wagon drivers, who were displeased with the extra cargo. The Hida mentions many times in his travel journal that he went to great lengths to ensure a respectable, dignified appearance, such as by wearing a special turban. During a visit to Toulouse, France, some of his clothing, including his turban, was lost due to his assistant's negligence,



Portrait of Maran Hacham Haim Yosef David Azoulay

and the Hida lamented this loss, especially the loss of his turban, which could not be replaced. 10

When the Hida arrived in a city, people thronged to see him. The Jews of Europe were not accustomed to the saintly appearance and demeanor of the sages of Eretz Yisrael, and they were enchanted by the Hida, by his radiance and pristinely refined character. His magnetic personality and majestic outward appearance drew the attention of Jew and gentile alike; even non-Jews who saw him observed how he exuded greatness. The Hida was also familiar with several languages besides his native Arabic. He understood Spanish, Portuguese, and

^{6.} Ibid, p. 14.

^{7.} Conclusion to *Birke Yosef*, part 2, page 112b.

^{8.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 22.

^{9.} Ibid, p. 19.

^{10.} Ibid, p 109.

^{11.} Ibid, p. 10.

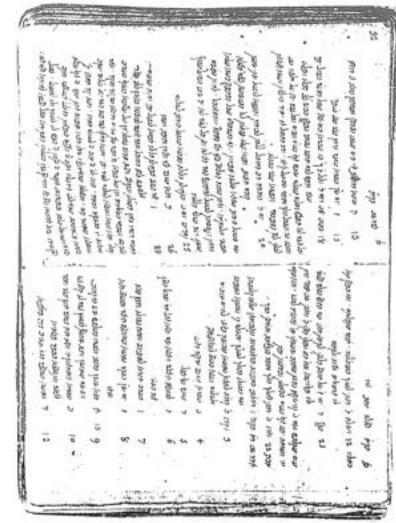
some French, and over the course of his travels he improved his French and also learned Italian and a little English.¹² This knowledge served him well in his efforts to make a strong impression upon, and create a meaningful bond with, Jewish communities across the Diaspora.

Shelihut Down to a Science

Fortunately, the Hida kept diaries of his experiences abroad, which were later published as a book entitled *Ma'agal Tov*. ¹³ These records offer us a close, detailed look at his travels, presenting valuable information of the events that took place, the methods he employed in pursuing his goals, and his thoughts, feelings, and reactions to his experiences. There is no other *shaliah* whose activity during a single day we can trace with such detail.

Whenever he traveled, the Hida armed himself with a great deal of documentation. He took with him letters from the Hebron community leadership – one letter for each city he would be visiting – which were signed by the city's scholars. He also carried a letter of recommendation from the "head of priests in Jerusalem" (referring to the city's rabbinical authorities), certificates from the Constantinople Committee of Officials for Israel, the body appointed over the *shelihim*, and a recommendation by the French ambassador to Constantinople. This is in addition to the account book in which each community filled in details about the *shaliah* and the sum that

A page from the First Diary of Maagal Tov (courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New *York); taken from Dr. Benjamin Cymerman's* The Diaries of Rabbi Ha'im Yosef David Azulai, *pg. 14*



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^{12.} Ibid, p. 145. See also Dr. Benjamin Cymerman's *The Diaries of Rabbi Ha'im Yosef David Azulai*, pg. 8.

^{13.} The Hida did not publish his travel journal. Haim Michael (in his annotation to *Or HaHaim*, p. 349) suggests that the Hida was concerned that individuals mentioned in his journal might be seen in a negative light. The original diaries—two small, neatly written books—are currently held in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and were not published in complete form until 1934. See Dr. Benjamin Cymerman's *The Diaries of Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azulai*, pg. 5. See also Aaron Freiman's introduction to his edition of *Ma'agal Tov* (Jerusalem, 1934).

was given. Along the way he would receive more certificates from the communities he visited. Jews and Christians gave him letters and commendations in Italy. When he reached Lemberg in 1754 (5514) he had on his person 300 letters and certificates in Hebrew, Spanish, and Italian.

Before his first departure for *shelihut*, the rabbis of Hebron gave him the account book of his predecessor, Rabbi Avraham Gedaliah, the former *shaliah* of Hebron to those areas, which he used to prove the authenticity of his letters.¹⁴ The Constantinople Committee of Officials for Israel sent letters to the communities which the Hida visited to announce his *shelihut*, detailing the needs for which he was raising funds and requesting assistance.

Complex political situations and soured international relationships often posed difficulties for a *shaliah*, particularly when crossing borders. Rigorous searches by border officials were not uncommon. The Hida wrote about a search to which he was subjected at the border of Frankfurt am Main early on during his travels, and he writes that his pockets were stuffed with passports of several different nationalities to help ensure smooth border crossing. On his second trip, which took place during the Russo-Turkish wars, he made attempts to secure an Italian passport while in Egypt. He managed to obtain a French passport in 1778 (5538), which served him well throughout his journeys. The Hida describes how he once avoided a search at the border by pulling out his French passport. The clerk removed his hat and allowed him through without any trouble. He had a search at the border by pulling out his French passport.

The Hida also devised a unique strategy for safeguarding his money as he journeyed through dangerous roads and crossed borders, where large sums of cash could have aroused the suspicions of hostile customs officials. He kept the money in a leather pouch which he wore close to his body, such that customs-officials did not always notice it. This strategy helped avoid theft as well.

During one voyage from Turkey to Israel, the ship's captain turned out to be a thief, and he and his crew searched through all the Hida's clothing, including the pockets. With Hashem's mercy, they did not see the pouch. He carried his money for travel expenses in a separate pocket.¹⁸

The Hida as Fundraiser

The Hida's *modus operandi* for fundraising had no parallel throughout the long history of *shelihut*. One unique feature was the lavish, respectable carriages he rode, at great expense. He embraced this practice after numerous instances in which drivers treated him disrespectfully and disregarded his instructions. He decided he had no choice but to purchase his own wagon for the purpose of *shelihut*, to avoid being helplessly at the whim of wagon drivers. It was in Mantua (Mantova), Italy, in 1776 (5536) where he purchased a fourwheel carriage for his travels.¹⁹

Besides collecting money, the Hida made connections with prominent figures who were in a position to influence the communities to donate. He met with and spoke to the community leaders and scholars at length, sometimes resorting to forceful arguments if he found that they were unresponsive. In communities with a strong base of support for Eretz Yisrael, such as Livorno, the fundraising was done through officials assigned over the campaign to support the

^{14.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 12.

^{15.} Ibid, p. 21.

^{16.} Ibid, p. 53.

^{17.} Ibid, p. 125.

^{18.} Ibid, pp. 30, 41.

^{19.} Ibid, p. 95; Kuntres Masa'ot.

Jews of the Holy Land. These officials accompanied the Hida along on his visits to the wealthy donors, and throughout his stay in the city.²⁰

In most Western European communities the shaliah received the money collected in the charity box especially allocated for this purpose, in addition to the amount that the community added out of respect for the *shaliah*. When the Hida arrived in a town, the added amount he received sometimes exceeded the sum in the box. But when a community gave less than the Hida thought was appropriate, he asked permission to approach individuals to ask for money. If his request was refused, he spoke forcefully with the community leaders, utilizing his power of persuasion, often successfully. As mentioned earlier, the Hida felt very strongly about the obligation for Diaspora Jewry to support the communities of Eretz Yisrael, and was never afraid to clearly articulate this conviction. He presented himself not as a desperate pauper begging for help, but rather as a dignified representative of Eretz Yisrael requesting what his community rightfully deserved. At the same time, he maintained an appropriate level of respect and deference to communal leaders and prospective donors, whom he certainly did not wish to alienate. Thus, he always made a point of speaking and conducting himself with a rare blend of conviction, force, and dignity.²¹

Once, when he was visiting the Jewish community in Bayonne, France, he met with the community leaders who explained that they had many poor members who needed assistance, and many debts. He feared that he would not be granted a respectable sum, and this suspicion was confirmed after his meeting with a committee of twenty-six local donors. After the meeting, the committee decided it

would give just 1,200 francs, excluding lodging expenses. The Hida received word of the disturbing decision when he was at the home of one of the committee members. In his diary he described his reaction:

I grew angry and did not want to eat there, and left. One community leader and scholar came to walk with me and I told him such was not my desire, and I met some community leaders, and they accompanied me but I did not acknowledge them. They came over and spoke to me and I said I did not want to accept, and they wanted to argue, and I did not. Signors Pato and Yitzhak Brandeis tried to appease me, but I asked Signor Aliaris to order me a wagon so I could leave at once.

The Hida's response sent the community into turmoil. The committee immediately held another meeting that ran into the evening, and sent four representatives to speak to the Hida. They first spoke harshly, evoking a harsh response from the rabbi in return. The Hida describes what happened next:

I spoke out against them, but managed to remain somewhat diplomatic. I gathered that they were going to insist upon the original sum, and I figured that I should not offend them. So I asked to be able to collect in the synagogue, and they were still debating. I then prayed that Hashem should help me to conduct myself with wisdom, and put it in their hearts to act properly and repent.²²

In the end, the conflict was resolved to the satisfaction of everyone involved. The community leaders wholeheartedly gave the Hida their donation, allowed him to collect in the synagogue, agreed to cover some expenses, and invited the Hida to stay for another week. He left

^{20.} Ibid, pp. 66-67.

^{21.} The Hida's delicate balance between force and gentle diplomacy resembles the approach of one of his predecessors, Rabbi Avraham Conce, a *shaliah* of Hebron who was known as one of the boldest and most distinguished *shelihim*. Rabbi Conce kept a journal of his experiences, which the Hida read, and which likely influenced the Hida in devising his fundraising strategies.

^{22.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 111.

Bayonne on good terms with the community, and was escorted out of the city with fanfare.²³

The Hida would meet with gentiles, too, as part of his fundraising efforts. He visited Christian businessmen to whom he held letters of recommendation,²⁴ and was greeted with special warmth by the Christians in Holland, who wrote for him letters of recommendation for London and Turin.²⁵

The Hida's fundraising work was remarkably successful, and he always made a point of attributing this success to G-d, rather than to his own skill and hard work. He wrote, "May His glorious Name be blessed, Who has given me intellect to interact with them with diplomacy and manners... And I know about myself that I hardly know how to conduct an insignificant conversation, but all of my words seemed like pearls to them, appropriate in intellect and talent."

The Hida's success brought a significant increase in funds for the Jews of Eretz Yisrael, but he was careful not to take advantage of these increases for personal gain. He did not receive a commission, a policy which earned him widespread respect and admiration. He also exercised extreme care not to waste these funds on his personal comfort or convenience as he traveled, as he recorded in his diary: "In order not to take on expenses from the *shelihut's* account, I suffered greatly on account of my luggage. It cost a few guldens to travel from one city to the next, plus the inn expenses, and so on." ²⁷ He also notes how he would try to shorten his trips whenever possible in order to minimize travel expenses covered by the public funds. ²⁸

When the Hida returned home from his *shelihut*, he would send a printed card to all those who helped him during the trip, adding a few personal words at the end. There is no evidence of any other *shaliah* who followed such a practice.

Everyone's Rabbi

Besides fundraising, the Hida also worked hard to assist the communities he visited, spending time helping to resolve conflicts between different communities and factions, as well as within families and between spouses. Additionally, despite being a guest requesting donations, he offered constructive criticism of conduct and policies that he felt were improper, even going so far as to oppose the community leadership, always walking the tightrope between maintaining respect and speaking out when criticism was warranted. The Hida followed the famous rabbinic dictum that one should offer criticism that has a realistic chance of being accepted, and remain silent if the criticism would be rejected. He spoke when he felt his words would have a positive effect, but desisted if he felt it would only invite hostility.

An example of this careful balance was the Hida's involvement in a dispute between the Sephardic and Italian communities in the Central Italian city of Ancona, in 1754 (5514). The Hida tried to influence the Italian leadership, but to no avail. The Sepharadim then asked him to make use of excommunication, but the Hida refused to resort to such harsh measures, especially since the Italians had responded generously to his *shelihut*.²⁹

The Hida was involved in all areas of life in his host communities. He tried to arrange matches for unmarried men and women. In the Italian city of Gurizia, he met with the community leadership and warned them not to eat meat from the local *shohet*, who was not

^{23.} Ibid, p. 112.

^{24.} Ibid, pp. 9, 85, 101, 115.

^{25.} Ibid, pp. 140, 145.

^{26.} Ibid, p. 36.

^{27.} Ibid, p. 20.

^{28.} Ibid, p. 103.

^{29.} Ibid, p. 6.

proficient in the relevant *halachot*.³⁰ He also repudiated the Jews of Venice for using Christian wine for *Kiddush* and on Pesah, and they promised they would not repeat the offense.³¹ In Pesaro, the Hida admonished the people not to violate the Torah prohibition against shaving, and in Montpellier, he spoke about hair coverings, and the prohibition against carrying on Shabbat without a proper *eruv*. He offered his blessings to those who accepted his criticism and committed to change.³²

The Hida became heavily involved in the affairs of the Jewish community of Ancona, awarding titles³³ and arbitrating disputes between the community's clerks and leaders and between businessmen. In Lugo he restored the strained relationship between philanthropist Gedaliah Sinigalia and the community's elected officials.³⁴ In Ferrara, he worked to resolve a conflict between a wealthy community member named Moshe Haim Cohen and the community regarding his tax obligations. The town's bishop, cardinal, and other local officials were involved in the controversy, and excommunication edicts were issued. The community implored the Hida to intervene, and he secretly visited Moshe Haim Cohen in his home. Within a month the matter was peacefully settled, and Moshe Haim held a party in the Hida's honor.³⁵

The amount of time the Hida invested in assisting the communities can be seen from a letter he wrote to Rabbi Shabbetai Elhanan of Cassalle, in which he apologizes for not having written earlier, saying, "My preoccupation with religious and communal matters are many, and I am not a free man even to write a letter." The Hida saw it as his role to not simply collect money, but to look out for the needs of Jews everywhere, and he worked hard to offer help whenever it was needed.

^{30.} Ibid, p. 89.

^{31.} Ibid, p. 53.

^{32.} Ibid, p. 108.

^{33.} See, for example, ibid, p. 47.

^{34.} Ibid, p. 76.

^{35.} Ibid, p. 77.

^{36.} Y. Nacht, Zion, vol. 6, p. 129.



The Hida's First Journey – Part 1

The First Shelihut Begins

mananananananananan mananan mananan menerakan kelalah bermulai dari bermulai bermulai bermulai bermulai bermulai

In loving memory of

Prosper Benarroch zt"l

Simon Corcia zt"l

May their souls be blessed

and rest in Gan Eden.

Charles es Mercedes Benarroch

The Hida set out for Jerusalem on 4 Shevat, 1753 (5513) with his assistant, Shemuel ben Haim, to whom he sometimes referred as "Shevah" ("praise"), the acronym of his name (שמואל בן חיים). They traveled southward to Hebron, from where they would travel to Gaza, and then to Egypt, where they would board a ship headed for Europe.

The trip was eventful from the start. Already on their way to Hebron, they came under attack by Arabs from the town of Halhul. Miraculously, they escaped without injury. Later, as they traveled in a caravan from Hebron to Gaza, they were confronted by villagers from Sumsum, whom the Hida describes as "not men, but serpents and scorpions." Because of Shabbat, the Hida was forced to leave

1. Ma'agal Tov, p. 2.

the caravan in Gaza and wait fifty days until another caravan left for Egypt.

These ordeals were enough to rattle even the most seasoned traveler, and they indeed caused a great deal of distress to the Hida, who was just twenty-nine years old, and had never traveled before. He described his feelings of unease and anxiety in his journal: "Every small thing appeared to me as a great danger and grave crisis, for until now I had not traveled on the roads, in the deserts, or by the waters."2

The next day, on 2 Nissan, the Hida and his assistant arrived in Egypt, where they were shown a synagogue reputed to be that of the Rambam. In a town known as Old Egypt, he saw a synagogue which was said to have been built by the prophet Yirmiyahu, and was told of a Torah scroll identified by some as the scroll of Ezra.3 The Hida makes only brief mention of this experience in his journal, but he elaborates in greater detail in his work Shem Hagedolim, where he cites a letter written by Rabbi Ovadiah of Bertinoro, author of the famous Mishnah commentary, to his father. Rabbi Ovadiah wrote that there had been a scroll written by Ezra in Old Egypt, but a visitor from the West bribed the synagogue caretaker, removed the scroll from its case, and took it with him when he sailed. His ship, together with its passengers and cargo, sank during a storm, and the synagogue caretaker died soon thereafter. The Hida writes that his discovery of this letter settled the controversy that existed in Egypt concerning this Torah scroll:

When I was in Egypt, I went to the holy community of Old Egypt, and in a high place, where hands cannot reach, they say that there is the Torah scroll of Ezra. This place appears to have once been opened, but is

now sealed. The people say that whoever touches the holy scroll is in danger of dying within the year, or even within the month, and for this reason they sealed the opening. The scholars whisper that they have heard that the scroll was removed and is no longer there. Now that I see the words of Rabbi Ovadiah [corroborating what I had heard], I am satisfied.4

Over a month later, on 26 Iyar, the Hida and his assistant Shemuel boarded a Swedish ship in Alexandria heading for Italy, and they docked in Livorno on 23 Tammuz. Two days later they left the ship and were taken to the quarantine camp for forty days, as was required of all passengers from the Orient and the Levant. Upon their arrival they received three baskets filled with delicacies, a gift sent by three local dignitaries - Rabbi Avraham Kariti, a wealthy philanthropist named Shemuel Tedesco, and a man assigned to matters involving the Land of Israel, whose name is unknown.

A Sage's Italian Tour

The Hida and Shemuel left the quarantine camp on Rosh Hodesh Elul and began their work in Livorno. There the Hida befriended a wealthy physician named Dr. Michael Pereira de Leon, who offered a great deal of assistance. Pereira de Leon was a descendant of Portuguese Marranos who had returned to Judaism while living in Livorno, and he served as president of the Massari, the council of Livorno's community leaders.

During his stay in Livorno the Hida visited the grave of Rabbi Haim Cohen, an Egyptian-born Kabbalist who moved to Eretz Yisrael to study under Rabbi Haim Vital, and later served as a leading rabbi

^{2.} Ibid, p. 3.

^{3.} Ibid, p. 4.

^{4.} Shem Hagedolim (Gedolim), Ayin, no. 2. The Hida also mentions a tradition that the Rambam saw the Torah of Ezra in Europe, though he expresses his doubts concerning the veracity of this story.

in Syria. He also authored the *Tur Bereket* commentary to the *Shulhan* Aruch. Rabbi Cohen traveled to Italy to have his books published, and he passed away in Livorno in 1660 (5420).

After two months in Livorno the Hida traveled to Pisa and then to Florence, where he toured the gardens and zoo near the royal palace. He then traveled to Siena, and from there he journeyed "through mountains and valleys" to the town of Monte San Savino. As the Hida and Shemuel approached the city, they passed a group of gentile iron workers, who, upon seeing the visitors, began banging their hammers and screaming "as if, Heaven forbid, a dangerous animal was coming." Soon, other townspeople gathered and joined in the cacophony.

"We arrived," the Hida writes, "embarrassed and humiliated, frightened and confused, and we knew not the reason for what had occurred." To make matters worse, they had trouble finding the Jewish quarter, until they finally chanced upon a young Jew who pointed out the way. And when they arrived, there was no one to meet them. Fortunately, it was time for the afternoon *Minhah* prayer, and the Hida found the local synagogue. After the prayers, he arranged for a place for himself and Shemuel to stay. They were brought to a nearby house, an empty building with open windows letting in the cold winter air.

Upon seeing the accommodations, the Hida turned to the locals and asked, "Who is the leader of this community?" When one of them answered, "I am," the Hida responded, "Woe is the generation that has you as a *parnas* [leader]! Is it proper in your eyes to so belittle an emissary of the Land of Israel?" The parnas accepted the rebuke and immediately invited the Hida to stay at his home.

The Hida's next stop was Lippiano, where he came across a collection of sermons entitled *Torat Hacham* by Rabbi Haim Cohen,

beside whose grave he had prayed in Livorno. He then traveled to Urbino, Pesaro, and Senigaglia.

On 2 Heshvan he and Shemuel arrived in Ancona, where they received an especially warm reception from the local rabbi, scholars from the yeshivah, and potential donors. "These men," the Hida described, "are full of virtue, all equal in goodness, bestowing honor on the emissaries of the Land of Israel. Even to me, a young man, they went out of their way, and day and night until midnight, the dignitaries of the city are with me."6 The Torah scholars of Ancona were especially helpful in ensuring the success of his mission, and the community invited him to deliver a sermon on Shabbat.

At one point during his stay in Ancona he received a pledge of 275 ducats. He jokingly remarked that 275 is the numerical value of the word raah ("evil"), adding, "It is not right for you to repay 'evil' in exchange for the good I have shown you." The philanthropists were taken by his words and immediately added five coins to the sum.

In Ancona the Hida saw the commentary of the medieval scholar Rabbi Hillel to the Sifri.

He and his assistant traveled to Rimini and Faenza, and then hired horses and additional hands to help them through the difficult journey to their next stop, Lugo. The Hida described traveling along a road covered with thick mud, and noted that one of the horses was blind.8 When they finally arrived in Lugo they were invited to the home of the rabbi, Rabbi Reuven ben Yehuda, and the Hida was invited to speak at the Shabbat afternoon prayer service. They then visited the towns of Argenta and Ferrara.

Next along their way were Final di Modena and Modena. They were stopped at the edge of Modena and not allowed entry until the

^{5.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 5.

^{6.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 6.

^{7.} Ibid.

^{8.} Ibid, p. 7.

Hida was able to contact a local scholar who helped them. While in Modena the Hida saw the writings of the medieval commentator Rabbi Menachem Me'iri on the Talmud, "beginning with Berachot and ending with Uktzin." His host in Modena, Avraham Hazak, arranged a nightly study group of distinguished scholars in his home. His next visit was to Reggio, where he saw a manuscript copy of the Ramban's work on the tractates Nedarim and Berachot, which he described as "similar to *Hilchot HaRif*." ¹⁰

During the Hida's visit in the city of Guastalla he delivered a eulogy for the Italian scholar Rabbi Gur Fintzi, who had recently passed away in Mantova. He then traveled to Governo and from there to Mantova, where he visited the graves of Rabbi Menahem Azariah of Pano (1548-1620) and Rabbi Moshe Zacuto (1625-1697), two great scholars and kabbalists who had passed away in that city. After Mantova they journeyed to Verona and from there to Padua, where the Hida met Rabbi Yaakov Hazak, a member of the group of scholars known as Mevakshe Hashem, who had studied Kabbalah with Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato (Ramhal), author of Mesillat Yesharim. The Ramhal had passed away about eight years earlier.

The Hida and Shemuel then reached Venice by boat, and during his visit to the city the Hida found a manuscript copy of Or Hahamah, the work written by his great-great-grandfather, Rabbi Avraham Azoulay.

The Hida writes that in several of the Italian cities he visited, including Ancona, Ferrara, and Verona, he found yeshivot where he was able to study, and where he arrived at novel Torah insights.¹¹

On 22 Iyar the Hida and Shemuel traveled from Venice by gondola and then hired a calleso (carriage). In the middle of the trip, the Hida noticed that his tefillin bag was missing. He writes, "I was terribly

pained by this, for besides the fact that it was filled with rare books, it also contained tefillin Rashi written by the great rabbi and student of the Arizal, our teacher, Rabbi Suleman."12 Thankfully, the driver agreed to ride back by horse, and after a painstaking search, he recovered the case intact.

The Hida and the Patch

The yellow patch, the Jewish badge of shame – or badge of honor, as the Jews liked to call it - has its roots in Islam, and was later passed as law by Pope Innocent III at the Fourth Council of the Lateran in November 1215 (4976). This law obligated Jewish males ages twelve and older to wear a mark on their hats, distinctive in color, to designate them as Jewish. This degrading policy was implemented in Europe, in one form or another, for six hundred years.

On 9 Sivan, 1754 (5514), while in Verona, the Hida was told that he would be unable to pass through the city of Trento without a cloth patch identifying him as Jewish. Trento was regarded as a holy city, as it was home to the Pope's councils, his priests, and all the monks, and it was thus forbidden for Jews to enter the city without a special marker. The Hida asked the driver to circumvent Trento, to avoid having to wear the humiliating patch. The driver, however, disobeyed his passenger's instructions, and entered the city. The Hida had no choice but to wear a patch, but he placed it on his chest, instead of his hat, as required by law. A policeman, who recognized him as a Jew, followed the Hida into his hotel room, and charged him with violating the law. The Hida showed him the badge and offered to move it from his chest to his hat, but it was too late. The policeman stamped all his clothing and belongings with a mark indicating that he had transgressed the law. There was thus no way for the Hida to go anywhere without being clearly and unmistakably identified as a criminal.

^{9.} Ibid.

^{10.} Ibid, p. 8.

^{11.} Ibid, p. 9.

^{12.} Ibid; Shem Hagedolim (Gedolim), Samech, no. 1, p. 10.

A short time later, the officer returned holding an order signed by the local authorities requiring the Hida and his people to pay a fine of 200 Reichsthalers¹³ for hiding the badge. Aghast at the enormous fine, the Hida turned to the people in the room and asked them to intervene on his behalf. They tried, but to no avail. The Hida then went himself to the governor, and immediately noticed that the man was enraged and could not be reasoned with. The Hida tried to beg for a reduced fine, but the infuriated governor could not be dissuaded. In a desperate attempt to argue his case, the Hida noted that he was a man from Jerusalem, and thus deserved compassion. But this only fueled the flames of the governor's fury. As the Hida recalled, "Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey, and he said, 'Who allowed the Jews into Jerusalem to defile it?"14 The Hida then turned his eyes heavenward and cried, "Save me from the hand of Esau!" at which point the ruler suddenly and inexplicably turned compassionate and agreed to amend the sentence to just twelve gulden. The Hida weighed out the money and left in peace.¹⁵

Later in his travels, the Hida would nostalgically reflect upon his experiences in Italy, recalling how the Italian Jewish communities treated him "with great honor." ¹⁶ By and large, the Hida and Shemuel were warmly welcomed and granted the funds they requested for the Hebron community they represented. Unfortunately, however, the success and good fortune they enjoyed in Italy did not accompany

them across the German border, where a very different kind of experience awaited them.

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^{13.} The Reichsthaler was a standard coin of the Holy Roman Empire, established in 1566 (5326) by the Leipzig convention. It was also the name of a unit of account in northern Germany and of a silver coin issued by Prussia.

^{14.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 11.

^{15.} *Ma'agal Tov*, p. 10. Rabbi Alter Meir told this story when the Hida was reinterred in Jerusalem, and he concluded by saying, "Upon this occasion of returning the Hida's remains to Jerusalem, it is fitting to mention the disgrace he suffered at presenting himself clearly as a man of Jerusalem. With his return to the city, some of the debt is repaid and 'the children return to their borders."

^{16.} *Ma'agal Tov*, p. 10.

CHAPTER NINE

The Trip to Germany

The Hida's final station in Italy was the northern Italian town of Bolzano. When they left the town they were joined by a Jewish resident of the city who assisted them along the next leg of their journey. Besides serving as an interpreter - neither the Hida nor Shemuel knew German - he also helped negotiate the various taxes that had to be paid and dealt with some of the hostile people whom the Hida encountered as he traveled. The area through which they traveled, the Hida describes, was rampant with anti-Semitism, and crosses were to be found everywhere. "One night," the Hida relates, "we slept at an inn, and they gave us a place as was customary. When morning came, and they realized we were Jews... their anger towards us was great, for it appeared to them to be a grave sin to take Jews into their house. As a result, they charged us an exorbitant price."1

Frustration in Pfersee

They arrived in Innsbruck on 20 Sivan, and the Hida mentions the impressive castles he saw in the city. Two days later they came

1. Ibid, p. 12.

In loving memory of

Anwar Ouri (Shahin) ben Menashe z"l Rivka (Mamann) bat Yaish z"l Avraham (Mamann) ben Eliyahu z"l Rachel (Mamann) bat Avraham z"l David (Mamann) ben Avraham z"l Lulu (Corin) bat Yaakov z"l

May their neshamot rest in Gan Eden, amen.

Dr. & Mrs. Jack & Rita Shahin and Family

In loving memory of

Jacob Azoulay z"l Juliette Gimole Levy z"l Silas & Minnie Spier z"l Joseph Rubin z"l

Danny Azoulay

to Pfersee, where the Hida once again found himself in trouble. The community member assigned to the donations for the Jews of Eretz Yisrael suspected that the Hida's letters of *shelihut* were forged. He argued that if the Hida's official ledger was genuine, the leaders of Hebron would have issued a handwritten statement affirming that they had given it to him. The Hida responded by drawing the man's attention to the signed letters from the Hebron community leadership which he carried with him. "If you refuse to accept their writing there," he contended, "how would it help you if they had written a few words in the ledger?"

The man told the Hida to go to the nearby community of Kreigshaber and ask them for donations. "If the officials in Kreigshaber agree to give you from the funds earmarked for Eretz Yisrael," he said, "then I, too, will agree to do so." Thus the Hida traveled to Kreigshaber carrying a letter addressed to the head of the town's Jewish community. He approached the man, who received him warmly, but when the Hida returned after the prayer service, he noticed a drastic change in the man's demeanor. The Hida realized that the man from Pfersee had sent a letter to this official in Kreigshaber with his driver. He pleaded with the man to write a pledge in his ledger, and he would send confirmation about his status as *shaliah* from either Frankfurt or Amsterdam, at which point they would send the funds. But the official in Kreigshaber, as well as the official in Pfersee, refused to give or pledge any sort of donation.

Discovery of the Munich Talmud

The Hida was heartbroken over his failed trip to these communities, though he mentions one positive outcome of this visit – a book he saw in the home of the man in Pfersee:

...a full Talmud, with very old writing, written on parchment, with the entire Talmud in one binding, the size of the *Mishneh Torah* vol. III, with the *Kesef Mishneh*, Venice edition. There is an inscription that

says that it was copied in Paris for a relative of our teacher Shimshon of Sens [one of the Tosafists,] in 5103. The minor tractates were included, like *Masechet Soferim, Masechet Semahot*, and *Masechet Gerim...* I read through four or five pages of *Masechet Horayot*, and I found very many textual variants. I would have loved to have had the pleasure of looking through this Talmud, but the man ordered his butler to hurry my departure and did not allow me the time I needed. This, too, is for the best.²

While manuscript copies of individual tractates of the Talmud can be found in various libraries, this volume discovered by the Hida in Pfersee is the only complete manuscript in existence. The manuscript is written on thin parchment in a single 570-page volume, with about eighty lines per page. It contains even the two sections of Mishnah on which there is no Gemara (*Zera'im* and *Taharot*). In addition, the manuscript contains the "minor tractates" ("*masechtot ketanot*"), as the Hida noted, as well as copies of several legal documents for instruction. Unlike more recent editions of the Talmud, in which *Berachot* is the first tractate, in this edition *Berachot* appears at the end of *Seder Mo'ed* (the second section of the Talmud). The manuscript appears to have been completed in the year 1343 (5103). It would later become widely known as the Munich edition of the Talmud.

This find was especially valuable for the Hida. In his *Sha'ar Yosef* commentary to *Masechet Horayot*, the Hida made a number of emendations to the text of the Gemara based upon this manuscript. And when he published his *Simhat Haregel* commentary to *Megillat Rut*, he included the text of *Masechet Gerim* which he copied from

^{2.} Ibid, p. 13.

^{3.} The text is missing several minor portions, the largest of which is a two-page segment in *Masechet Pesahim*.

the Munich Talmud.⁴ In his work *Shem Hagedolim*⁵ the Hida writes that Rabbi Netanel Weil, author of *Korban Netanel*, also made textual emendations based upon this early edition of the Talmud.

"May You Give Me the Strength to Bear It"

The Hida's troubles continued during the next leg of his journey, when he visited the towns of Buttenweisen and Harberg. Not only was he denied donations for the community of Hebron, but he did not even receive a proper carriage. Instead, he found waiting for him "a cart on which they carry out refuse." The Hida saw this as a grave infringement upon the honor of Eretz Yisrael and demanded a proper carriage, even offering to cover the cost out of his own pocket. But his host angrily refused, and literally closed the door on the Hida's face. "I cried out to Hashem," the Hida recalled, and he prayed, "Master of the Universe, I know that my sins have caused this... Nevertheless, may You give me the strength to bear it, in the merit of the Land of Israel and in the merit of my forefathers." The Hida ended up walking an hour and a half until he was able to hire a carriage.

On 30 Sivan he and his assistant arrived in Oettingen, and the Hida explained to the local rabbi his difficulties in Germany, specifically, the suspicions and mistreatment to which he had been subjected by the communities he visited. The rabbi tried to help the Hida by composing and signing a letter affirming that the Hida was a genuine *shaliah* of the community in Hebron. Unfortunately, however, the letter proved unhelpful, even in Oettingen itself. Finally, with the help of some local young men, the Hida managed to get one florin, on the condition that he use it to hire a carriage. In order to avoid setting an example that other communities might follow, the Hida asked the

community official to inscribe in his ledger that the community had given "a certain sum." The official, however, insisted on specifying the minuscule amount of one florin. Finally, a young scholar, recognizing the Hida's stature, called out angrily, "I will do as you ask!" and proceeded to write the inscription as the Hida requested.⁷

The community prepared for the Hida a cart, instead of a proper carriage, whose driver was described by the Hida as a "confused" person who "could not tell his right from his left." The Hida and Shemuel were seated next to another passenger, a man with a bizarre appearance. This took place on a Friday, and thus in order to ensure their arrival in Wassertrudingen, his next destination, before Shabbat, the Hida chose to ride on this cart rather than delay his trip. Not surprisingly, the driver proved incapable of navigating the roads, and it was only with the help of the Hida and his assistant that the wagon reached Wassertrudingen in time for Shabbat.

The Mysterious Agreement

In Wassertrudingen, the Hida lodged in the home of Rabbi Wolf, the leader of the Jewish communities in the Ansbach province, who respectfully greeted and welcomed his visitor, and whom the Hida describes as an impressively righteous scholar. Shemuel was hosted in a different home, "for that is the way of these cities; they cannot house the *shaliah* and the helper together." On Shabbat the Hida visited Rabbi Wolf's son-in-law, Rabbi Yosef, the *dayan* of the Ansbach district, whom the Hida discovered to be a towering Torah scholar. The two sages sat together and discussed complex halachic matters for nearly six hours, and Rabbi Yosef showed the Hida several pages of a manuscript he had prepared of commentaries

^{4.} Rut converted to Judaism, and it is thus fitting to append *Masechet Gerim*, which discusses the laws relevant to conversion, to a commentary on *Megillat Rut*.

^{5.} Vol. 2, p. 149.

^{6.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 14.

^{7.} Ibid, p. 15.

^{8.} Ibid.

^{9.} The Hida mentions Rabbi Yosef in his *Shem Hagedolim*, referring to him by the name Rabbi Yosef Wassertrudingen.

on *Horayot*, a tractate with which the Hida was especially familiar, having composed a commentary (*Sha'ar Yosef*) on this *masechet*. The Hida was impressed with the writings, and he wrote, "I enjoyed his knowledge and intelligence." He was especially gratified to see that he and Rabbi Yosef had come to precisely the same conclusions on certain issues relevant to this *masechet*.

It was here, in Wassertrudingen, where the Hida would finally discover the reason behind the disrespectful treatment he had been receiving in Germany. After Shabbat he told Rabbi Yosef of his recent travails, and Rabbi Yosef explained that there had been an agreement among the communities in the region not to give funds to any shelihim, not even a small coin. The stated reason for this policy was to ensure that all the collected funds could be sent to the needy members of the Ashkenazic community in Jerusalem. Beneath the surface, however, there were other factors that made the German communities suspicious of shelihim, including the discovery of bogus shelihim falsely claiming to represent the communities of Eretz Yisrael. These scams were especially prevalent in regions in Europe where the Jews could not easily decipher the signatures of the Sephardic scholars in Eretz Yisrael. The unfortunate phenomenon of thieves disguised as *shelihim* prompted the Jewish council of Lithuania to issue an ordinance in 1664 (5424) establishing harsh measures to be undertaken if a *shaliah's* papers were more than two years old:

The leaders in each community are obligated to forcibly confiscate them and tear them up, and to confiscate the money that had fallen into their hands by way of these papers and give it to local officials in charge of funds for Eretz Yisrael, unless they have in their hands proof from one of the leaders of the communities of our land that he gave them permission for some reason to stay here longer than two years.¹⁰

10. Sheluhe Eretz Yisrael, p. 42.

There was a documented incident that occurred a century and a half later, in 1808 (5568), in Karlsruhe, where two men disguised as *shelihim* collected large sums of money with forged papers.¹¹

The Hida, understandably, was taken aback upon hearing of this agreement made by the German communities. Nevertheless, despite this policy, the Hida received three florins from Wassertrudingen, and Rabbi Yosef added his comments to the letter which the rabbi of Oettingen had given him. He also hired a proper carriage for the Hida so he could travel respectably.

"Blessed Is His Holy Name Who Gives Strength to the Weary"

The Hida traveled next to Wittelshofen, Bechofen, Ansbach, and Lehrberg. Sadly, the results of these visits were no better than the results of his other stops in Germany, and he received virtually no donations. In the city of Fyord, the community leader compared the signatures on the Hida's document with a document he had in his possession and found them to be identical, seemingly verifying the authenticity of the Hida's papers. But this man was still not convinced. He said, "Perhaps this is only because the Ashkenazim are not proficient in the writing of the Sephardic Jews." ¹²

The Hida then proceeded to Beirsdorf and from there to Vorchheim, where a wagon was hired to transport him and Shemuel to Buttenheim, Retzat, and then Bamberg. In Bamberg the community leaders saw in the Hida's ledger the poor record of donations received from the other German communities, and grew suspicious of his credentials. They questioned Shemuel separately in an attempt to expose a forgery. When he told the Hida of his interrogation, the

^{11.} Ibid, p. 43.

^{12.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 16.

Hida took all his documents, which numbered approximately three hundred papers, and brought them to the community leaders.

"Can you not see all of these papers," he asked them, "written in the holy tongue, Spanish, and Italian, and all the signatures from Hebron and Constantinople, and of the rabbis of Italy, the ambassador of the King of France, and the chief priest of Jerusalem? Is it possible to forge all these with their different writings and signatures? Where is your wisdom? Your Torah, where is it? Hashem several times forbids oppressing the stranger. Is it proper in your eyes to degrade a *shaliah* of Eretz Yisrael?"

Still, the community leaders persisted, noting that the Hida did not receive signatures from any rabbi in Venice. Additionally, they questioned why the signature from Verona appeared in his ledger before the signature from Venice, in light of his claim that he entered Germany from Verona. The Hida succeeded in providing satisfactory answers, as he wrote in his journal, "I answered properly all their improperly asked questions. Blessed is His holy Name Who gives strength to the weary to endure words of degradation." The next day, the Hida received a message from the community leaders instructing him to write in his ledger that they would send ten florins to the Jewish leaders in Fyord for them to send in together with their own donation.¹³

The next town the Hida visited was Ebelsbach, where he and Shemuel were sent to a "gentile inn" to spend the night. After receiving no donations, they left for Knetzgau, and then traveled along the Main River to Hassfurt, where the Hida found a scholar who was sympathetic to his efforts and gave a small donation. From there they traveled to Schonungen and then Schweinfurt. As they waited for a carriage to Niederwern, they were harassed by locals who mocked their foreign dress and beards. They arrived in Niederwern, but there,

13. Ibid, p. 19.

too, they did not receive any support. After Niederwern they traveled to Geldersheim and then Arnsein, where they were not even allowed to enter the town, and the Hida realized that he had lost a packet of important items. Already dejected, they arrived in Thungen, where they were housed by the local official in what the Hida describes as "a ruin with open windows." ¹⁴

The next cities they visited were Himmelstadt, Lauenbach, Zellingen, Leinach, Greusenheim, Hochberg, and Heidingfeld. They spent several days in Heidingfeld, where they were respectfully welcomed by the local rabbi, Rabbi Leib Rappaport. The next destinations were Neubrunn, Wethheim, Fechenbach, Freudenberg, Miltenberg, Heubach, Klingenberg, Worth, Wallstadt, and Aschafenberg, and they had very little success in these communities.

The woeful trend finally began to turn when they arrived in Seligenstadt, where they enjoyed the full cooperation of the local community. The Hida writes that in Seligenstadt "there was one young man, learned and full of sweetness and charm, who went out of his way to be kind and strived to help me as much as he possibly could." ¹⁵

In Hanau the local rabbi did not recognize any of the signatures and doubted their authenticity. As they were talking, the Hida spotted a copy of the *Bet Shemuel* commentary to the *Shulhan Aruch* and immediately engaged the rabbi in halachic discussion until "he saw there is the scent of Torah in me, and he turned a shining countenance to me." ¹⁶

Meeting the Pene Yehoshua

On 14 Av the Hida and Shemuel arrived by ship at the city of Frankfurt am Main. Soon after their arrival they met a young

^{14.} Ibid, p. 20.

^{15.} Ibid.

^{16.} Ibid, p. 21.

rabbi named Rabbi Wolf Hintell from Hamberg, who, immediately impressed by the Hida, declared, "I am your servant and will run before you; do not worry or fear, for I am here to serve you." True to his word, Rabbi Wolf offered the Hida and Shemuel invaluable assistance, taking care of customs, paying the fees, and bringing them into the city.¹⁷

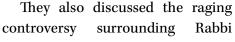
In Frankfurt the Hida received the assistance and cooperation of several Jewish community leaders, but fundraising proved to be exceedingly difficult due to a controversy that was raging in the community at that time. A fierce conflict that had erupted between two local families boiled over when the Frankfurt community became entangled in the turbulent dispute between two famous German rabbis – Rabbi Yaakov Emden and Rabbi Yehonatan Eibshitz – that divided the Jewish world at the time. The rabbi of Frankfurt, the renowned Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk (1680–1756), author of the classic *Pene Yehoshua* commentary to the Talmud, supported Rabbi Yaakov Emden's charge that Rabbi Yehonatan Eibshitz was a follower of the Sabbatean messianic movement. Other community rabbis in Frankfurt, however, defended Rabbi Yehonatan Eibshitz.

The controversy in Frankfurt became so intense that about three years prior to the Hida's arrival, Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua was forced to leave Frankfurt and move to nearby Worms. The Hida writes that the controversy cost the Jewish community enormous sums of money, and also resulted in the appointment of new community leaders, who were not familiar with *shelihut* and the fundraising efforts for the Jews of Eretz Yisrael. This combined to make it all but impossible for the Hida to raise funds in Frankfurt.

After spending several days in Frankfurt the Hida rode the weekly carriage from Frankfurt to Worms, a city which, the Hida writes, had an ancient Jewish community dating back to the time of the Second Temple. He describes a synagogue he saw there, one room of which was said to be the study hall of Rashi (Rabbi Shelomo Yitzhaki, 1040–1105). On one street in Worms he was shown an indentation in the wall along the side of the street. Legend has it that when Rashi's mother was expecting the future scholar, she was walking on this narrow street when a speeding cart began bearing down on her. She had nowhere to turn to escape, and it seemed as though she and her unborn infant would die. Miraculously, an indention formed in the wall, saving her and her baby.¹⁸

During his stay in Worms the Hida visited Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk, whom the Hida described as having an appearance "like that of an angel of G-d." The two sages discussed numerous different topics,

and the Hida told his host that his work, *Pene Yehoshua*, had made a powerful impression in Eretz Yisrael. He made specific mention of Rabbi Yitzhak Hakohen Rappaport, who was gratified to see that his work *Bate Kehunah* was cited in the *Pene Yehoshua*. The Hida also mentioned how he had seen the second volume of the *Pene Yehoshua* during his trip to Hanau, and he read an insight that helped him resolve a difficulty raised by the *Panim Me'irot*, much to his delight.





Pre-1938 interior of the Rashi Study Hall

Yehonatan Eibshitz. The Hida described in his journal the distress he felt upon hearing about this bitter conflict:

^{17.} Ibid, pp. 21-22, 25.

^{18.} Ibid, p. 24.19. Ibid, p. 23.

The world appears as if dark to me, on account of the desecration of Torah and the desecration of G-d's Name; it has reached a point where it is spoken of among the gentiles and written up in the newspapers... Woe to the ears which have heard this. May the beneficent Creator atone for this.²⁰

The Hida described to Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua the difficulties he faced fundraising in Germany, and asked if there was any way for his host to help. Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua compared the signatures on the Hida's documents with those on the documents he had from Constantinople and found that they matched.

"Do not fear," he said, "for I am with you, and it is my opinion that these signatures are genuine and that you are a true *shaliah*." He ordered that a document be composed affirming that the Hida was indeed a *shaliah*. Unfortunately, however, this document was not as effective as the Hida had hoped. When he approached the community leaders of Worms, they were hesitant to donate money, but out of respect for Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua, they agreed to write a pledge in the Hida's ledger that they would send something ahead to Amsterdam. The Hida writes, however, that this pledge remained unfulfilled: "They fulfilled their original intent and have not sent anything until this day." ²¹

Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua arranged sleeping quarters for the Hida "as befits the honor of Eretz Yisrael," and hosted him for Shabbat. The Hida described the Shabbat table as being filled "as for a king," and recalls how he enjoyed Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua's words of Torah at the meal. At one point, Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua's wife, the Rabbanit Gittileh, who was an exceptionally learned woman, said about her

husband's Torah thoughts, "What you have said is good and true," whereupon Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua jokingly responded, "I am happy that [at least] one thing is acceptable to you."²³

Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua would later send a letter to the Hida inviting him to return to Worms and spend Sukkot with him, but the Hida responded that his schedule did not allow for a trip to Worms.

After their stay in Worms the Hida and Shemuel traveled to Gernsheim, Oppenheim, and Mainz, and then returned by boat to Frankfurt, where the Hida once again met Rabbi Wolf, who had helped him during his first trip to the city. He discovered that since his initial visit to Frankfurt, several new letters of recommendation had arrived affirming the Hida's authenticity. As a result, the Hida was treated with far greater respect during his second stay there. During this visit the Hida and Shemuel purchased a substantial number of books, which they left for safekeeping at the home of their host, Rabbi Reuven Scheyer, whom they asked to ship the books to Amsterdam, where they would be going after their trip through Germany.

After several weeks in Frankfurt they traveled by carriage to Mainz and then to Bingen, where the Hida met the local rabbi, Rabbi Yisrael Mengeberg, whose "mouth was constantly moving with words of Torah, whose actions were pious, holy, and pure, and whose strength was great in Talmud and the works of the halachic authorities." They then proceeded to St. Goar, Boppard, Koblenz, Neuweid, Deutz, Cologne, Zons, Dusseldorf, Urdingen, Mors, Rheinberg, and Xanten.

Having concluded a generally disappointing trip through Germany, the Hida and Shemuel crossed the border into the Netherlands.

^{20.} Ibid, p. 24.

^{21.} Ibid.

^{22.} Ibid, p. 25.

^{23.} Ibid; Toldot Hachme Yerushalayim, p.113.

^{24.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 26.



Holland, England, and France

Holland

Dedicated to our lovely children

Judy, Avi, Marcus and Hannah

May Hashem grant you happiness, prosperity

and health for as long as you live, and may

you be successful in all of your endeavors.

You are our pride and joy!

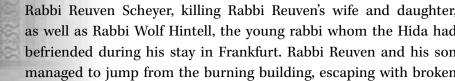
With much love,

Your parents,

David & Joyce Kadoch

The Hida traveled to Holland along the Rhine River and met his mother's sister, Gitteli, the daughter of Rabbi Yosef Bialer. She told him that her mother, Hindel, the Hida's grandmother, had a mother named Sarah, after whom the Hida's mother was named. Sarah's mother was named Hindel, and her father, Rabbi Yehuda, was either a son or grandson of the great Torah scholar Rabbi Yehoshua Hakohen Falk (1555–1614), author of the famous Sema (Sefer Me'irat Enayim) commentary to Shulhan Aruch. The Hida thus learned of his direct maternal link to one of the great Ashkenazic Torah giants.

When the Hida arrived in Nymwegen, he received the heartbreaking news of a fire that had broken out in the home of his host in Frankfurt, Rabbi Reuven Scheyer, killing Rabbi Reuven's wife and daughter, as well as Rabbi Wolf Hintell, the young rabbi whom the Hida had befriended during his stay in Frankfurt. Rabbi Reuven and his son managed to jump from the burning building, escaping with broken



legs. The Hida was disconsolate over the terrible tragedy that had struck, and was pained by the deaths and injuries that it caused. He was also distraught by the loss of a substantial sum of *shelihut* money and the package of books that he had left in the Scheyer home.

A little over a week later, upon arriving in Amsterdam, the Hida was able to find some small comfort when he found two boxes of his books which Rabbi Reuven had apparently sent the day before the fire. Additionally, it turned out that Rabbi Reuven had also guaranteed the money the Hida had stored in his home. Rabbi Reuven passed away several days after his fall, but his son, Yehuda, fulfilled his father's guarantee and sent the money.

The Hida found the community in Amsterdam to be very receptive to his cause, and the people treated him with great respect. He was invited to deliver Torah lectures, and the community marveled at his brilliance. Each Friday night he was invited for the Shabbat meal to the home of a different Jewish philanthropist. (On Shabbat day the Hida ate very little, concerned that his hosts might not be familiar with the intricate laws of food preparation on Shabbat.¹)

Miracle in Amsterdam

The Hida's trip to Amsterdam took place in the middle of the winter, and one morning there had been some rain which then froze on the ground. Despite the slippery conditions, the Hida began walking toward the city's great Sephardic synagogue for the morning prayers. He writes, "My heart was not afraid to go for the purpose of a mitzvah... However, I was careful with my steps and walked very slowly."²

Carefully negotiating the slippery, icy streets, he was approaching the synagogue when suddenly, a horse-drawn carriage started racing toward him at high speed. Before he could decide whether to plunge into the icy river to escape, he slipped, hit his head on the ground, and lost consciousness. His assistant, Shemuel, was not far behind and had seen the episode, but the slippery streets had made it impossible for him to reach the Hida to help him. Instead, a Jewish passerby brought him into the synagogue, where the Hida soon regained consciousness.

Surrounded by concerned congregants, the Hida asked for a siddur, but when he opened it, he found that the text was blurred; the injury had apparently affected his vision. Petrified, he stood up and began to pray with piercing, heart-rending cries, beseeching Hashem to restore his eyesight. After the prayers, to the amazement of everyone present, he regained his vision. The people cried out, "Blessed are You... Who gives sight to the blind!"

The Hida exclaimed, "Blessed is the Almighty... I will thank Hashem greatly... May the Name of the Almighty be blessed forever!"

England

After visiting the Dutch cities of Hague, Rotterdam, and Hellevoetsluis, the Hida left Holland by boat for England, and arrived in Harwich on the English coast on 9 Iyar, 1755 (5515). His welcome was not a warm one. Tensions were brewing at the time between France and England, and the threat of war loomed on the horizon. The suspicious British authorities subjected the Hida to a rigorous examination, and went through his papers very carefully. The process was a lengthy one, but he was eventually allowed to enter the country.

While traveling from Harwich, the Hida had a frightening experience when he came upon a quicksand-like substance, and began sinking. He writes that his driver and assistant came to rescue him at the very last moment, before his head was covered. The Hida concludes his account of this incident by saying, "I thank Hashem with all my heart, for although He punished me, to death He did not

^{1.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 28.

^{2.} Ibid, p. 29.

deliver me. I am undeserving of all His kindness. Blessed is the G-d of Salvation."³

Towards evening on 12 Iyar the Hida and Shemuel arrived in London, where the Hida collected a substantial amount of money for the Hebron community. A letter of recommendation from the English ambassador to Constantinople had arrived in London, raising the Hida's stature in the eyes of the community and ensuring the success of his mission.

During his stay in the English capital, the Hida had the opportunity to tour the famous Tower of London. In his memoirs he expresses fascination over the magnificent treasures he saw, as well as somber reflection over the exile of the Kingdom of Israel:

My eye saw all these, peering through the cracks, and I was both concerned and happy, for if such is the condition of those who transgress His will, then much more awaits those who fulfill His will. Days will come bringing honor and glory to the remnant of Israel, and our eyes will yet see the spirit of our souls, Hashem's Mashiah, radiating and shining seven times the light of the sun, crowned with the crown of crowns; holy of holies is he to Hashem.⁴

The Jewish community in England was relatively new. The Medieval English Jewish community was expelled from the country in 1290 (5050), and it took several centuries for Jews to return. It was only several decades before the Hida's visit to England that new Jewish communities were established, due to the efforts of Menashe ben Israel of Amsterdam who in 1655 (5415) petitioned the English Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, to readmit the Jews to England. The new community was situated mainly in London. As the community was

still being developed, the availability of food at high standards of *kashrut* was scarce, prompting the Hida to learn how to slaughter chickens during his stay in London.

The city's Jewish population consisted of both Sephardic and Ashkenazic congregations, but the Hida concentrated most of his efforts among the Sepharadim. This was probably because they were wealthier than the Ashkenazim, having settled in the country sooner after the readmission.

After finishing his work in London, the Hida traveled to Dover on the English coast, from where he sailed to Calais, France.

France

The Hida was treated to an enthusiastic welcome by the French Jewish communities, and he ended up remaining in France longer than in any other country. In fact, after he left the community in Avignon, the people begged him to return. He accepted their invitation and came back for a second visit. The community leadership even went out to Cavaillon to greet him.⁵

In Calais he boarded a large coach headed for Paris. On Fridays, when Shabbat was approaching, he would leave the coach and spend Shabbat in a rented room. Then, on Saturday night, he would travel by carriage or on horseback until he reached the place where the coach had stopped for the night. He did this several times during his journey to Paris, and during other travels.

The news of the Hida's arrival in Paris spread quickly even among the non-Jews. Many intellectuals came to debate with him and discuss various subjects, and they were dazzled by his profound responses, to the point where he was invited to present himself to the king and ministers. Dressed in his finest clothing in honor of the occasion, the Hida was brought to the Palace in Versailles in a magnificent

^{3.} Ibid, p. 31.

^{4.} Ibid, p. 33.

^{5.} Ibid, p. 36.

wagon and, upon seeing the king of France, he recited the traditional *berachah* over the sight of a monarch.

The Hida was also taken to the French Academy of Sciences, where he visited the library. He inquired into the possibility of seeing old



Etching of the Palace of Versailles, circa 1680, by Adam Perelle

manuscripts of Jewish texts, but was told that manuscripts were made available only on Fridays. Unfortunately, the Hida's schedule did not allow him to return to the library on Friday, and he thus lost a rare opportunity to examine precious manuscripts of important religious texts.

Two days after his arrival in Paris he left the city and headed for Blaye and then to Bordeaux, where he once again was treated to an exceptionally warm greeting. Immediately upon arrival, he was lifted up in a chair and carried through the streets, accompanied by the dignitaries of the Jewish community. The Jews of Bordeaux treated the Hida with honor throughout his visit to the city. He writes, "All the wealthy community members and the leaders of the congregation came to my door. The stream of people did not stop day or night until midnight, the entire time I was there."

During his trip to France the Hida was called upon to intervene in a number of different unfortunate situations that arose, some involving wealthy Jews whose rise to socioeconomic and political prominence adversely affected their religious commitment. French Jewry at this time was on the brink of emancipation, and many Sephardic Jews in the country achieved wealth and stature, and forged close ties with the Christian nobility which could not always accommodate traditional Jewish life.

One instance in which the Hida's intervention was requested involved a wealthy Jew named Shemuel Peixotto, who had married a woman named Sara-Mendes d'Acosta in London, and then moved to Bordeaux. Five years later Shemuel moved to Paris and decided to divorce his wife. He filed a suit at the Supreme Court in Paris to compel his wife to accept the divorce, as she was refusing to do so. When the Hida reached Paris in Kislev 1778 (5538), Peixotto asked him to convince his wife to accept the divorce, promising in exchange a large donation of 1,000 *iskudis* to the Hebron community.

The Hida told him, "If you want to make peace, I will assist you for free, since everyone says your wife is modest... but to separate is a desecration of the name of G-d." Several months later the Hida returned to Paris and expressed his opinion in writing, without addressing the halachic issues involved. The wife's advocate invoked the Hida's opinion in pleading her case, while the husband's lawyer dismissed the Hida's ruling as based on the ancient Talmudic teaching that "the altar itself sheds tears for a man who divorces his first wife." He further argued that the Hida was not authorized to give halachic rulings, and was chosen as an emissary not due to his wisdom, but for his trustworthiness as a fundraiser. The wife's lawyers countered by noting the affirmation of the Hida's credentials expressed by the Sephardic rabbis in Bordeaux, Amsterdam, and London, and argued

^{6.} Ibid, p. 35.

^{7.} Ibid, pp. 121, 164.

^{8.} Gittin 90a.

that the Hida was most certainly an authoritative voice on Jewish law and ethics.

At this time the Jewish community of Bordeaux was in the midst of a controversy regarding the *kashrut* status of the local butchers. The elderly rabbi of the community had deposed the slaughterer (*shohet*) due to what he felt was a halachic deficiency in his work, and the rabbi instead purchased the meat of another slaughterer who happened to be a relative of his. However, most of the community continued to use the meat of the deposed *shohet* due to its availability in the local markets. Upon hearing of the situation, the Hida decided to eat only dairy on weekdays and to slaughter his own chickens for Shabbat.

The local dignitaries came to the Hida and asked him to mediate, but he did not want to impinge upon the honor of the elderly rabbi. After repeated requests, he finally asked the rabbi's permission to become involved in the issue, and he agreed without any hesitation. After securing in writing the promise of both parties to abide by his decision, he reviewed the pertinent laws in *Shulhan Aruch*. Together with two other scholars, the Hida then investigated the two slaughterers involved. They found that the *shohet* deposed by the rabbi was in fact very proficient in the relevant halachic requirements, more so than the rabbi's relative. Additionally, the rabbi's halachic reasoning in deposing the *shohet* was found to be faulty.

The Hida worked to return the first *shohet* to his post, while at the same time maintaining extreme sensitivity to the rabbi's honor, even making a point of praising the rabbi in the two public addresses he delivered in the community.

Throughout his stay in Bordeaux the Hida ate at the home of only one family which he knew strictly adhered to the halachic dietary laws. He was invited by others who offered to serve him dairy foods and fish, knowing his policy not to eat meat while in the city, but the Hida had concerns about their standards even regarding these foods. He writes, "The Almighty caused the fancy fish they wanted to serve

to not be available, and in that way I was saved from eating with anyone except those who were perfectly kosher."9

After his stay in Bordeaux the Hida proceeded to Bayonne, where he spent Sukkot, delivering lectures in various local synagogues and *yeshivot* throughout the holiday. He then traveled to Peyrehorade, Toulose, and then Montpellier, where he came across the book *Elim* written by Rabbi Yosef Shelomo (Rofeh) Delmidigo (known as the "Yashar" of Candia), as well as the work *Nishmat Haim* by Rabbi Menashe ben Israel.¹⁰

After his visit to Montpellier the Hida traveled to Lunel and Nimes, and then to Avignon, where the Hida tangibly sensed the influence of the Catholic Church. Avignon had been the seat of the Papacy centuries earlier, and even in the Hida's time it was officially a papal possession. Regardless, the city's Jewish community treated the Hida with great respect, and invited him to deliver a public sermon on Shabbat.

"Charity Saves from Death"

The Hida then visited Carpentras, where he met several impressive scholars and delivered a public sermon on Shabbat. He then proceeded to Lille, where he was again warmly received and invited to speak on Shabbat. The entire Jewish community escorted him when he left Lille for his next stop, Cavaillon.

After his stay in Cavaillon the Hida returned to Avignon. One night, sometime after midnight, the Hida dozed off while studying, and in his sleep, the famous words "charity saves from death" (מציק ממות – Mishle~10:2) entered his thoughts. The next morning he planned to leave the city, but discovered that the Rhone River, which lies outside the city, was impassible due to a severe storm. The Hida

^{9.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 36.

^{10.} In his *Shem Hagedolim*, the Hida mentions these two authors together, and notes the praise given by the "Yashar" of Candia for Rabbi Menashe ben Israel.

donated three francs to charity upon hearing the news, hoping that the merit of his charity would help save his life and the lives of the townspeople.

By afternoon, however, word came that the floodwaters had destroyed several homes, and by nightfall, they had already entered the city. Property was severely damaged, food storage containers were knocked over, and the city's streams and underground wells began to overflow. There was a *mikveh* in the local synagogue which was fed by spring water, and situated twenty steps down from the synagogue. The water of the *mikveh* rose all twenty steps and flooded the nearby buildings. The rain came down persistently and in torrents, threatening to submerge the entire city. At the same time, news arrived of a devastating earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal, which triggered a wave of destructive fires, adding to the panic and dismay in Avignon.

The Hida urged the Jewish community to go to the local synagogue to recite *Selichot* prayers. However, likely due to their fear of venturing outside to the flooded streets, the people stayed home. The Hida and his assistant sat alone in the synagogue, wore sackcloth, and tearfully recited *Tehillim* and prayers. After midnight, he donated twenty-four soldos to charity in his and the entire community's merit. His prayers and charity, as the Hida described, were indeed effective:

Blessed be the Almighty Who, in His great compassion, had pity on us, and immediately the rain stopped. By morning the waters from the river had stopped rising. And although the wells continued to rise, our minds were at ease. The sun shone and an easterly wind blew, helping the floodwaters to recede, until on the fifth day it was just possible to leave the city. They sent [people] to bring flour from the surrounding communities, for there was a great hunger in the city.¹¹

11. *Ma'agal Tov*, p. 39.

Finally able to leave Avignon, the Hida traveled to Nice de Provence, where he delivered a public lecture on Shabbat.

Reflecting upon his experiences in France, the Hida expressed his high regard and deep appreciation for the French Jewish communities he visited, writing, "The truth is that the French are a mannered and joyful people, and treated us with respect and love." Indeed, wherever he went in France, the Jews accorded him respect and responded favorably to his appeals, and the Hida expressed special affection and admiration for French Jewry.

Nice de Provence would be the Hida's final stop in his successful trip to France. After leaving the city, he and Shemuel embarked on a treacherous journey through the snow-covered mountains along the French–Italian border, to return to Italy, the first country they had visited on this trip.

^{12.} Ibid, p. 165.



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Italy Revisited

On 29 Tevet, 1755 (5515) the Hida and Shemuel arrived in the town of Cuneo in western Italy, and they then proceeded to Fossano and Carmagnola. In Ferrara the Hida was given a demonstration of how silk was produced, and in Mantova he toured a garment factory, observing the entire manufacturing process, from the treatment of the wool to the weaving. He also toured the Palazzo del Te, a magnificent palace in the suburbs of Mantova. While in Mantova he paid a second visit to the graves of the Rama of Pano and Rabbi Moshe Zacuto, which he had visited during his initial trip to Italy.

During his trip to Verona the Hida saw an ancient Roman arena, as well as a garden arranged as an elaborate maze. "This," he writes, "is the [kind] of garden maze of which the Mesillat Yesharim wrote,"

1. Ma'agal Tov, p. 82.

In memory of

realizaran antica a de la compania d

Shirley Warach a"h

and

Messod & Esther Azoulay a"h

May their *neshamot* be remembered by all their loved ones!

Joshua, Alegria, Benjamin, Yael Warach

Dedicated in loving memory of my dear father

Messod & Esther Azoulay z"l

May his neshamah rest in Gan Eden, Amen!

Mair, Janice, and Stephanie Azoulay

Dedicated in loving memory of

Shalom Lahmany a"h

Beloved husband, father, and grandfather

The Lahmany Family

referring to a passage in the famous work by Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato of Italy describing a garden maze which was "common to the ruling class" in Italy. The *Mesillat Yesharim* compares these garden mazes to the "maze" of human life:

The plants are arranged in walks between which are found many confusing and interlacing paths... the purpose... being to challenge one to reach a portico in their midst... The walker... has no way of seeing or knowing whether he is on the true or false path... He who occupies a commanding position in the portico, however, sees all of the paths before him and can discriminate between the true and the false ones... So, too... he who has not yet achieved dominion over his evil inclination is in the midst of the path and cannot distinguish between them. But those who rule their inclination, those who have reached the portico, who have already left the paths and who clearly see all the ways... they can advise him who is willing to listen, and it is to them that we must trust."

In Padua the Hida saw the city's medical university, as well as another garden maze which was so large that the maze he saw in Verona appeared "like a monkey compared to a man." In Venice he saw the Piazza San Marco (St. Mark's Square), and toured the local military arsenal, the library, and the local Jewish printing press. In Modena he saw the town's library and was shown a picture of Shabbetai Tzvi, the infamous false messiah. In Brescello the city's governor summoned him to discuss the welfare of Jerusalem's Christian population.

In Turin, capital of the Italian nation-state of Piedmont, the Hida delivered public lectures on two successive *Shabbatot*. He also accompanied the local rabbi as he went to pay his respects to the

King of Piedmont, and visited the city's library, which he describes as being "like a monkey in front of a man when compared to the [library] in Paris." Though he was unimpressed by the library's size, he did find several interesting volumes there, including a striking set of *Tur* with raised letters printed in Ferrara over two hundred years earlier.

In Vercelli the Hida once again delivered public lectures on two *Shabbatot*, and while in the town he found several manuscripts and printed volumes which caught his interest, including works by Rabbi Moshe Zacuto and Rabbi Menahem Azariah of Pano. He then moved on to Casale di Monferrato, where he delivered a sermon on Shabbat and developed a close friendship with the respected scholar Rabbi Shabbetai Elhanan del Vecchio. This friendship would continue by way of halachic correspondence long after the Hida left Casale.

After leaving Casale the Hida traveled to Alessandria, where he met several local scholars, and then to Genoa, where he boarded a ship to Livorno. Due to an unexpected storm, they arrived in Livorno on Shabbat. According to the strict halachah it would have been permissible for the Hida and Shemuel to disembark, but the Hida wanted to take upon himself the stringency of remaining on the ship until after Shabbat. The authorities, however, forced him off the boat, and he had to leave a substantial amount of money on the ship. The Hida asked his assistant, Shemuel, to stand guard outside the vessel, and thankfully he found his baggage perfectly intact on Sunday morning.

In Livorno the Hida contacted Dr. Michael Pereira de Leon, whom he had befriended during his first visit to the city. He ended up spending over a year in Livorno, during which time he developed close friendships with local scholars. The purpose of his extended stay in the city was to publish his *Sha'ar Yosef* commentary to *Masechet Horayot*, which he had written many years earlier, as a young man. He had carried his manuscript with him throughout his travels, intending to try to publish it in Amsterdam. Circumstances, however,

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^{2.} Mesillat Yesharim, ch. 2.

did not allow him to devote the necessary time to this project in Holland, and thus he delayed it until his trip to Livorno.

The project appears to have taken a great deal of the Hida's time. In a letter he wrote in Livorno to Rabbi Shabbetai Elhanan del Vecchio of Casale, the Hida tells the rabbi that he had wanted to visit him but was prevented from doing so by his preoccupation with the *Sha'ar Yosef*. He noted that eighty pages had already been printed, at a very high cost. In this letter the Hida also asked his friend about the possibility of sending several copies of the publication to Casale, but Rabbi Shabbetai Elhanan responded that there would be little interest in his town for a work of this sort, especially given the difficult financial situation the community faced at the time.

Sha'ar Yosef was finally published in 1757 (5517) with approbations from the scholars of Jerusalem, Hebron, Livorno, and Amsterdam, as well as from the Hida's teacher and uncle Rabbi Yonah Navon, his father Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah, and his father-in-law Rabbi Nissim Berachah. It was dedicated to Dr. Michael Pereira de Leon, the Hida's dear friend who supported much of his work. Before leaving Livorno he gave copies of the book to the leading rabbis of the various congregations for distribution.

Tragically, the Hida suffered an agonizing personal loss during his stay in Livorno. His close friend and devoted assistant, Shemuel, who had accompanied and helped him throughout his years of travel, drowned while immersing in the Mediterranean Sea. The Hida relates that Shemuel was given an honorable burial in Livorno.

On 26 Sivan, 1757 (5517) the Hida was escorted by a large group of members and leaders of Livorno's Jewish community, including his close friend Dr. Michael Pereira de Leon, to the ship that would take him to his next destination, Turkey. During the voyage, on Shabbat morning, the Hida awoke with a Biblical verse in his mind: "Your hand shall be raised over your oppressor, and all your foes shall be cut off" (*Michah* 5:8), foretelling the dramatic events that would ensue.

Shortly before midday, a French guard boat stopped the ship in order to see if any of its crew members or passengers had any allegiance to the English enemy. Both the captain of the ship and the Hida were taken to the French vessel for interrogation. The Hida was kept there the entire Shabbat.

The Hida had several English documents in his baggage, and he feared that their discovery by the French authorities would give them an excuse to arrest him. After a thorough interrogation and heartfelt prayer, the Hida and the captain were allowed to return to their ship at midday on Sunday. Twenty armed men stood guard on the ship, but, as the Hida writes, "Thank G-d, I had the strength and agility to take the English documents and destroy them." Eventually they were released, and the Hida arrived safely at the port city of Candarli on the western coast of Turkey.

Turkey

The Turkish authorities held the passengers in Candarli for several days. When the Hida was finally allowed to leave, he writes, he was "empty of money." He sailed to Izmir, where he was met by the local dignitaries. His fundraising efforts in Izmir were very successful, and made up for the entire sum of money that was taken in Candarli.

During his stay in Izmir the Hida saw a number of important works, including *Avkat Rachel*, a collection of the responsa of Rabbi Yosef Caro (author of the *Shulhan Aruch*). He also saw the *Shitah Mekubetzet* compendium of commentaries to *Masechet Ketubot* by Rabbi Aharon Lapapa, a rabbinical judge in Izmir who was ousted as a result of his stern opposition to the false messiah Shabbetai Tzvi.⁵

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^{3.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 43.

^{4.} Ibid.

^{5.} Rabbi Aharon Lapapa composed anthologized commentaries on the Talmud in the style of the classic *Shitah Mekubetzet* by the sixteenth-century scholar Rabbi Betzalel Ashkenazi. The Hida, in *Shem Hagedolim* (*Bet*, no. 28), suggests that the well-known *Shitah Mekubetzet* on *Masechet Bava Batra* might actually be the work written by Rabbi Aharon

While in Turkey the Hida visited Gallipoli and Constantinople, where he prayed at the gravesite of Rabbi Eliezer Meir Mizrahi (Re'em), author of a famous work on Rashi's Torah commentary. He also toured the reservoir built by Sultan Mahmud I in 1732 (5492) which supplied water to the entire city of Constantinople and the surrounding areas.

During the Hida's stay in Constantinople, Sultan Ahmed III died, and was succeeded by his son, Mustafa III. The Hida witnessed firsthand a lengthy royal procession, and upon seeing the Sultan he recited the blessing said upon seeing a monarch.

On Rosh Hodesh Adar II the Hida boarded a French ship and began his journey back home to Eretz Yisrael. On the 28th of the month, after surviving a violent storm at sea, the ship docked in Beirut, Lebanon, and five days later it arrived at the port of Yaffo in the Holy Land. The Hida traveled from there to Ramleh, and on 4 Nissan he left Ramleh and arrived in Jerusalem. After five years of grueling travel he was finally back home in his beloved land and his beloved city.

Back Home

Upon returning to Jerusalem the Hida picked up where he had left off – as one of the most talented and promising young figures in the yeshivah community of Jerusalem. According to a 1758 (5518) record of yeshivah students in Jerusalem,⁶ the Hida at this time joined Yeshivat Yefa'er Anavim, which was supported by a prominent Livorno family and led by Rabbi Avraham ibn Asher. One of the yeshivah's rabbis was the Hida's mentor and uncle, Rabbi Yonah Navon.

Lapapa, and was not written by Rabbi Betzalel Ashkenazi. He raises this possibility regarding the *Shitah Mekubetzet* anthology to *Masechet Nazir*, as well. The scholarly consensus, however, does not side with the Hida on this issue. See Rabbi Haim Michel's *Or HaHaim*, no. 299.

Students in Yefa'er Anavim spent the mornings engaged in the study of halachah, while in the afternoon they focused their attention on the study of Mishnah with the commentaries. The Hida became an instructor in the yeshivah; many of his students eventually became illustrious scholars. His close students from this period were Rabbi Shelomo Hasan; Rabbi Haim Mordechai Sornega, author of *Peri Shenayim*; Rabbi Yitzhak Kasavi; and Rabbi Avraham Eliezer Halevi, the grandson of Rabbi Netanel Halevi, a leading rabbi in Padua and Modena, Italy. (Rabbi Avraham Eliezer would later be appointed rabbi of Trieste, Italy.)

Alongside his activities in the yeshivah, the Hida sat on the rabbinical court of his teacher, Rabbi Yonah Navon. With the influx of Spanish refugees in Jerusalem following the 1492 expulsion from Spain, the city's Sephardic community created the post of rabbinical judge to address questions of Torah law for the community. At first the appointment was for an entire year, and later the term was shortened to several months.

At some point the community decided to establish a *bet din* consisting of a number of scholars, and later a network of such courts developed. Generally speaking, each court was affiliated with one of the local *yeshivot*, and the *rosh yeshivah* served as head of the court. The members of the courts were appointed by local officials who represented the Constantinople Officials for Israel. These officials were responsible for caring for the general needs of the community, which included the upkeep of the *yeshivot*, and they were thus authorized to make court appointments, as well. The members of the various courts would gather to address the pressing issues facing the city and the community. In 1760 (5520), for example, the Hida, along with the other members of the courts, gathered to proclaim a fast due to a severe drought.

In that same year the Hida was offered the position of Hacham (Chief Rabbi) of the Sephardic community in Amsterdam, a position that had recently become vacant with the passing of the Hacham

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^{6.} Hama'alot LiShelomo, p. 102.

Yitzhak ibn Dana di Brito. The offer was made by the Constantinople Officials on behalf of the Spanish-Portuguese community of Amsterdam. The community was among the wealthiest and most distinguished Sephardic communities in the world, and thus the position would have guaranteed the Hida financial stability and considerable prominence. Nevertheless, the Hida refused. He wanted to continue living in the sacred atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael, and, in his unparalleled humility, did not desire a leadership position of stature. He thus declined the attractive offer, preferring instead to devote himself to the study and teaching of Torah in the holy city of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Controversy in Jerusalem

The Constantinople Committee of Officials for Israel was established to organize economic support for the Jewish community in the Holy Land. The committee was responsible for collecting and allocating donations from the Diaspora, and represented the Jews in the Holy Land before the Turkish authorities in Constantinople and in the local provinces in Eretz Yisrael. These officials were a dominant force in the Jewish community of Eretz Yisrael until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when they began to decline with the establishment of the Council of Officials and Administrators in Amsterdam.

In order to facilitate the collection of funds, the Constantinople Officials appointed local officials in Israel, who were assigned the task of dealing with community affairs. At first, two officials were appointed, and later their number grew to four, with each being assigned a particular set of duties. In Jerusalem, the appointed officials generally served as overseers of the political structure and social welfare of the Jewish community. At a certain point, however,

This chapter in *A Legend of Greatness:*

The Life & Times of Rabbi Haim

Yosef David Azoulay

is dedicated by

Simone & Jack Oziel

in the memory of their beloved brothers:

Salomon Oziel z"l, Leon Oziel z"l,

and Mair Oziel z"l

they began to also involve themselves in religious matters, which by right should have been left in the hands of the rabbis. At one point, for example, they dismissed the old slaughterers and appointed others in their place, against the will of the rabbis. When a complaint was brought to the Constantinople Officials, the local officials were told not to involve themselves in matters which were in the purview of the rabbinical scholars. Naturally, the situation engendered resentment between the scholars of Jerusalem and the local officials, as well as dissension among the officials themselves. The situation eventually reached the boiling point and the Jerusalem community found itself divided, with some members supporting one official and some supporting the other.

News of the controversy reached the Constantinople Officials. In Adar II 1756 (5516) they issued a directive ordering each official to work only in his specifically assigned area of responsibility, but to ensure that all their work was done with the approval of their peers. Unfortunately, however, the situation continued to deteriorate, and dramatically so. Two of Jerusalem's officials accused Rahamim Cohen, a third official charged with overseeing the negotiations and dealings with the Muslim authorities, of monetary impropriety with public funds. Once again the Constantinople Officials intervened. They asked three Jerusalem scholars – Rabbi Meyuhas Bechor Shemuel, Rabbi Avraham ibn Asher, and Rabbi Moshe Bulah – to investigate the matter. The scholars completed their deliberations in Adar of 1757 (5517) and cleared Rahamim Cohen of the charges leveled against him.

A Community in Crisis

Around this time, the Constantinople Officials convened a gathering of philanthropists and rabbis, including Jerusalem's Rabbi Yonah Navon, the Hida's mentor, who happened to be in Constantinople at the time. At the meeting it was decided that if peace was not restored to the community in Jerusalem, the Constantinople Officials would

resign. This would have dire consequences for the Jewish community of Jerusalem, which would be left without the financial and political support of the Constantinople Committee. The committee turned to Rabbi Yonah Navon and asked him to work toward easing tensions and quelling the controversy that raged in the holy city.

Unfortunately, however, these tensions only intensified. Rahamim Cohen enjoyed close ties with the Muslim authorities, which aided him in his role as community representative, but also became a source of friction with community members. In one instance, for example, he solicited the involvement of a Muslim city official in punishing Jewish community members who he felt had committed offenses. More generally, Cohen often led with an iron fist, arousing fierce resentment among the people. On one occasion he confiscated a substantial piece of land from a young scholar as a fine. The scholar responded by forming a group called "the black-headed scholars" to oppose Cohen. Gradually, as resentment continued to build, Cohen's influence and that of the other officials began to decline.

In a desperate attempt to bolster their stature and authority, Cohen and his peers petitioned the judges of Jerusalem to enact an ordinance which allowed for punishing anyone found challenging their authority, even with minimal evidence. The ordinance was issued at the end of Sivan 1762 (5522) and was signed by the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Meyuhas Bechor Shemuel, his son Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Meyuhas, Rabbi Avraham ibn Asher, Rabbi Yitzhak Azoulay, the Hida, and Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi. Several of these rabbis would later oppose Cohen, and it has been suggested that an element of coercion may have been involved in obtaining some of these signatures on the edict.¹

Three days later, on a Shabbat morning, a certain brazen young scholar went up to the Torah in his synagogue to recite the blessing

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^{1.} Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 385.

without first being called. In the heated exchange of words that ensued, the scholar was advised to attend a different synagogue, but he refused, noting that he was a wealthy man and was thus unafraid of angering the officials. When Rahamim Cohen heard about the incident, he sent for the Turkish authorities and the scholar was arrested.

While in custody, the scholar somehow convinced the authorities that Rahamim Cohen was plotting a rebellion, and promised the Turkish ruler of Jerusalem a large bribe if he would depose Cohen and install him – this young scholar – in his place. The ruler accepted the bribe, and Cohen was ousted. However, the scholar did not fulfill his end of the bargain, and never transferred the promised sum of money to the Turkish governor. He was imprisoned, and Rahamim Cohen resumed his duties, all amid growing discontent in the community.

In the winter of 1764 (5524) the scholars of Jerusalem convened to discuss the growing tensions in the city, and they reached the consensus that Rahamim Cohen had to be deposed. When word of the agreement reached the Committee in Constantinople, they immediately resigned their posts in exasperation over the continued problems in Jerusalem. Without the influence of Constantinople, the Jewish community in Jerusalem would now find itself in a precarious position. The community leaders decided to send a delegation of scholars to Constantinople to explain the situation and persuade the officials to resume their positions.

Mission to Constantinople

The Hida was one of the scholars chosen for this undertaking. In Shevat 1764 (5524) he left Jerusalem together with Rabbi Bali Babani and Rabbi Moshe Morforgo, and they headed to Egypt, from where they were to travel to Turkey. On the way, when they were near Kiryat Ye'arim, they were confronted by men from Abu Ghosh, where there was a sheik who controlled the region and imposed a toll on every traveler to and from Jerusalem. Fortunately, they managed to

negotiate a reasonable sum and passed through the area without incident.

Several days later the Hida was joined by Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi, and by his son, Rabbi Yeshayah Azoulay. The delegation would eventually be joined by Rabbi Shemuel Alhadif, Rabbi Haim Alfandri, Rabbi Avraham ben Asher, and Rabbi Yitzhak Abulafia.

Before the group left the Holy Land, word came that Rahamim Cohen's candidacy had been reaffirmed by the officials in Constantinople, who had apparently resumed their positions, as well as the government authorities. The Hida felt there was no longer any purpose in traveling to Constantinople, and that the delegation should turn back, but the other rabbis insisted on proceeding to Turkey to try to persuade the officials to unseat Rahamim Cohen. In the end, the Hida and his son, Rabbi Yeshayah, remained in Egypt, while Rabbi Yitzhak Abulafia traveled to Turkey.

Rabbi Yitzhak's efforts were futile. He pleaded with Rabbi Yaakov Zuna'ah, a well-known fundraiser, to intervene, but he refused. Unfortunately, Rabbi Yitzhak took ill during this trip and passed away in Constantinople, and Rabbi Zuna'ah suddenly died thirty days later.

The Hida and the other delegation members, who were still in Egypt, felt they could not return to Jerusalem with Rahamim Cohen still in power and the issues there still unresolved. Numerous Jewish families had also left Jerusalem and moved to Egypt, due to the tumultuous conditions in the holy city. In addition to the raging controversy and the oppressive leadership of Rahamim Cohen, the Turkish authorities – perhaps in reaction to the unrest – enacted harsh measures against the Jewish community in Jerusalem, prompting many to leave and start again in Egypt.

The Hida was warmly and honorably welcomed by Egypt's Jewish community, but he was not happy living there, far from Jerusalem. During his stay in Egypt, the Hida had a dream which demonstrated how the Holy Land was always in his thoughts, even when he traveled

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or lived abroad. Describing the dream, he writes, "Our father Avraham came. I wanted to go towards him. His face shone brilliantly. I asked him to bless me, and he put his two hands on my head and blessed me. I believe he blessed me that I have a long life and return to the land of Israel."

Cairo

A little over two months after his arrival in Egypt, the Hida was offered the position of rabbi of the city of Cairo. He accepted the offer, albeit with some ambivalence, and delivered his inaugural sermon on *Shabbat Teshuvah* 1764 (5525). In this address he made mention of the two leaders of the community, Rabbi Yitzhak Menashe Marcho and Rabbi Yosef Halevi Sacandri, longtime acquaintances of his who had persuaded him to accept the position. Even after accepting the post, it took some time for him to feel settled in Egypt, and he did not send for his family until the end of the summer of that year.

The Hida also served as head of the Rabbinical Court in Egypt, a capacity in which he received halachic inquiries from places as far as Yemen. His distinguished position imposed many demands upon him, leaving him little time for Torah study. In a letter he wrote during this period to his student, Rabbi Shelomo Hasan, he writes, "I am alone... and impoverished... in Torah."

The Hida's stay in Egypt was made even more difficult by personal tragedy. Not long after his arrival in the country, his daughter Klara took seriously ill. In Tevet 1765 (5525) he received word that his father, with whom he corresponded frequently, had passed away, and Klara died later that same year, in Elul.

Even during the period spent in Egypt the Hida continued working to try to resolve the internecine conflicts in Jerusalem. In a letter to Rabbi Yosef Shemuel Modliano, a rabbi in Salonika, he bemoaned the effects of the controversies, and implored Rabbi Shemuel to try to convince the Constantinople Officials to take action. Finally, in Shevat 1767 (5527) the committee in Constantinople decided to replace all the officials of Jerusalem, at which point many of the scholars who had fled the Holy Land felt they could return. The Hida yearned to join them, but he was bound by his position in Cairo. Even when the Constantinople Officials chose the Hida to serve as *rosh yeshivah* of Yeshivat Damesek Eliezer in Jerusalem, the Hida remained in Egypt, likely because of his sense of responsibility to his community in Cairo.

Several years later, in 1773 (5533), Rabbi Yedidia Tarika of Rhodes reflected on the tragic situation in Jerusalem and the damage it caused. In a eulogy delivered that year, he spoke of the devastating famine that had claimed many lives in Jerusalem:

What is this? Why has our holy and beautiful city been lost? There are several *yeshivot* there where Torah is studied constantly. How could the Torah not have protected them from misfortune? Our G-d is righteous, for all His ways are justice, and He would not bring punishment without guilt.

This [famine] must be due to the controversy that occurred in Jerusalem... regarding the man who went up to the *sefer Torah*... There was dissension and quarreling in the city, and two factions developed. Until this day some baseless hatred remains, which is a terrible sin, because of which the second Temple was destroyed and we were exiled from our land... [As a result,] several Torah scholars were forced to leave, and

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^{2.} Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 557.

^{3.} Sefer HaHida, p. 21.

^{4.} Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, pp. 414-416.

they were scattered about outside the Holy Land. There is no greater desecration of Torah than this.⁵

Return to the Holy Land

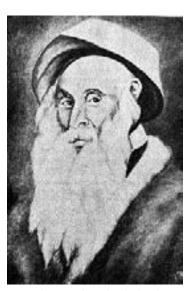
On 5 Adar II, 1769 (5529), after five years in Egypt, the Hida and his family finally left Cairo. They stopped in Damietta, Egypt, and stayed there until 4 Sivan, and then boarded a ship to Eretz Yisrael, arriving at the port of Yaffo four days later. Perhaps because of lingering political tensions in Jerusalem, the Hida decided not to return to his home city, and instead headed to Hebron, arriving there on 24 Sivan. He expressed the emotions he felt on that day on the front page of his copy of the *Sefer Levush*, which had belonged to his great-great-grandfather, Rabbi Avraham Azoulay:

The Merciful One, in His great compassion, allowed me to join the portion of Hashem here in the holy city of Hebron at the end of Sivan, 5529. May He in His mercy allow me to be diligent ... me and my descendants and the descendants of my descendants, in Torah and *mitzvot*. May the merit of my master, my grandfather, the rabbi who is buried here, protect me, so shall be His will.⁶

The Hida took advantage of the tranquility of Hebron, where he would live for the next three years, to focus on spiritual and intellectual growth, investing his time in writing. A significant portion of his *Birke Yosef*, one of his most important halachic works, was composed in Hebron during this period. The Hida also taught students in the yeshivah in Hebron.

The Hida at this time had a student-colleague named Rabbi Yaakov Shaul Elyashar, who helped him copy manuscripts. He also enjoyed a close relationship with the great Turkish scholar Rabbi Aharon Alfandri of Izmir, author of the *Yad Aharon* commentary to the *Shulhan Aruch* and the *Mirkevet HaMishnah* commentary to the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, who moved to Hebron as an old man, and with whom the Hida would discuss halachic matters. His other colleagues in Hebron included Rabbi Yosef Halevi Polako, Rabbi Avraham Castille, and Rabbi Haim Hakohen.

And so, after five years of exile in Egypt, the Hida enjoyed three years of peace and stability in Hebron, enabling



Hacham Yaakov Shaul Elyashar

him to engage in intensive Torah study, teaching, and writing, until he was once again called upon to set out to help the struggling Hebron community.

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^{5.} Ibid, p. 391.

^{6.} Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 24.



The Second Shelihut – Tunis

In 1772 (5532) the Hida was again asked to undertake a fundraising mission for the benefit of the Hebron Jewish community. This time he was a resident of the community and would thus be going as one of its local scholars. He would also be collecting on behalf of the local yeshivah, Yeshivat Kenesset Yisrael. On Erev Rosh Hodesh Heshvan he set out for the port of Alexandria, in Egypt, from where he planned to sail to Livorno. He was accompanied by Rabbi Yaakov Shaul Elyashar, Rabbi Yitzhak Nahmias, and an assistant named Avraham Gabay.1 He had with him the manuscript of his Birke Yosef on Shulhan Aruch, which he hoped to publish in Italy.

Travel in a Time of Turmoil

Sephardic Stories

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It was a period of turmoil in the region, particularly in Egypt. Ali Bey, a former Turkish governor of Cairo, led a revolt against the Turkish rule, proclaiming himself the independent governor of Egypt,

^{1.} Avraham Gabay would turn out to be an unwise choice for the job of the Hida's assistant. (See, for example, Ma'agal Tov, pp. 81, 106, 143.)

and setting his sights upon establishing rule over Palestine, Syria, and the Arabian Peninsula. The Turks were committed to crushing the rebellion, and the unrest made traveling through the region especially perilous.

The Hida and his escorts encountered several incidents as they journeyed, and finally decided to join a large Bedouin caravan making its way to battle Ali Bey's men, figuring they would be protected. Near El-Arish they separated from the caravan to camp for Shabbat. While they were camped in the desert, a local Bedouin sheik demanded money in exchange for their safe passage. The Hida gave the man raisins as a tribute and convinced him to wait until after Shabbat, at which point they negotiated a reasonable price.

After Shabbat they set out in the darkness and inclement weather. After eight hours of traveling, they somehow rejoined the caravan. When they did, they were told that in their absence the caravan had come under attack. "Were we not traveling [separately]," writes the Hida, "their [the assailants'] anger would have fallen upon us, as well."

At one point, a debate arose among the rabbis as to whether they should continue traveling with the caravan or travel separately. Rabbi Yaakov Shaul Elyashar thought they should continue with the caravan, while the Hida and Rabbi Nahmias felt it was preferable to separate and travel on their own. Rabbi Yaakov Shaul Elyashar persisted in his argument, prompting the Hida to exclaim in exasperation, "Although in Torah you are greater than me, in matters of the world, you know nothing!" The Hida and Rabbi Nahmias prevailed over Rabbi Elyashar, and they separated from the caravan.³

When the Hida finally reached Alexandria, he did not immediately leave for Livorno. Russia, which had been fighting against Turkey since 1768 (5528), sent boats to aid Ali Bey's rebels by attacking the Turkish government forces from the Egyptian shore. Russian navy ships were stationed off the Egyptian coast, and the Hida did not want to come anywhere near these warships. He ended up spending seven months in Egypt.⁴

Finally, he heard that the Russian navy decreased its presence in the Mediterranean, and thus decided to make his way to Tunis and from there to Livorno. As he still faced the risk of being met by Russian patrols which would be suspicious of a citizen of the Ottoman Empire, the Hida managed to secure written confirmation from the Italian council that he was a resident of Livorno, as he had a married daughter living there.⁵

On 22 Tammuz the Hida boarded a ship headed for Tunisia, embarking on what would turn out to be a dreadful voyage. The ship's captain, he writes, was "a very wicked man" who instructed his men not to give the Hida water if he requested it. If he wanted water, or anything else, he had to go directly to the captain. On Fridays, the Hida would prepare two cooked dishes for Shabbat. When the captain heard of this practice, he protested that the Hida was not a prince and was thus not entitled to eat so much and waste so much water. The Hida had actually brought his own water, but it was soon used by the sailors. He tried to earn the captain's favor with gifts of tobacco and other commodities, but these gestures were to no avail, and the captain "remained in his wickedness from beginning to end." Because of the forced rationing of water, the Hida never allowed himself to eat the amount which would necessitate his washing his

^{2.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 50.

^{3.} Ibid, p. 51.

^{4.} Two pages are missing from the Hida's travel journal at this point, and thus no information is available regarding his experiences during this seven-month stay in Egypt, other than the fact that he was hosted by a wealthy Jew in Alexandria named Shemuel.

^{5.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 53.

^{6.} Ibid.

hands first. In his diary he laments, "How much anguish I had from this during the holy Shabbat!"⁷

Besides the abuse he suffered at the hands of the captain, he was assigned a dark, narrow place on the ship, and there was a hole in the ship which had to be periodically plugged by the sailors. The boat also ran into stormy seas, and throughout the voyage there was the fear of interception by Russian craft. And yet despite the hardships and anxiety, the Hida spent the voyage immersed in Torah study. He writes, "Throughout all my anguish, I studied... I covered the entire book *Parashat Derachim*, and I wrote several novel thoughts and homilies from *Parashat Vayikra* until *Parashat Emor*."

On 6 Elul the ship docked in Susa, not far from Tunis. The Hida learned that the ship would then be leaving from there directly to Livorno, but he refused to continue his journey on that vessel. He was concerned not only about the discomfort and mistreatment, but also that he would not be allowed to properly observe the approaching holidays – Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. And so he left the ship and shortly thereafter made his way to Tunis.

Tunis

So revered was the Hida by the Jews of Tunisia that expectant women would come to the house where he was staying and stand by the windows in order to catch a glimpse of the holy man. "Once," writes the Hida, "I was walking on Shabbat in the courtyard there, when I realized that women were following, and they were gently taking up the edge of my cloak." As if to clarify that these women were acting out of piety and a profound respect for Torah scholars, the Hida adds, "The women never sit at the [same] table [as the men]."

On another occasion, as he was studying, the daughter of the Tunisian philanthropist who was hosting him came in and placed a paper parcel in front of him. "I did not know what was in it," he writes, "but I spoke with her briefly in a modest fashion, and then she left. I then found in the paper ten coins and four wax candles to study by, as well as a basket full of fruit for the voyage."

Tunisian culture differed significantly from that of the Holy Land, and the Hida often felt uncomfortable with the food and the manner in which it was served, which seemed strange to him. When describing his stay in Susa, he writes, "In my honor they looked around the city to find a spoon." As an exceptionally refined and dignified person, the Hida was disturbed by what he considered a lack of manners.

Other aspects of the community, however, impressed the Hida greatly. He found that Torah study was widespread and highly respected among the people. As he spoke with many local scholars – he writes that he met with around one hundred of the community's three hundred scholars¹² – he found them to be of a high caliber, and met boys as young as fourteen who impressed him with their proficiency in Torah. Interestingly, one elderly Tunisian scholar remarked that he remembered when the Hida's teacher, Rabbi Yonah Navon, had been in Tunis years earlier and had spoken proudly of his young student (the Hida), who was then only fourteen years old.

The Hida discovered that the local scholars concentrated on the commentary on the Talmud of the Tosafot and the super-commentaries of the Maharsha and Maharshal. They placed great emphasis on *pilpul* (sophistry), as opposed to the scholarly tradition familiar to the Hida, which focused more on the straightforward reading of sources and practical halachic conclusion. They were so

^{7.} Ibid, p. 54.

^{8.} Ibid, p. 55.

^{9.} Ibid, p. 56.

^{10.} Ibid, p. 61.

^{11.} Ibid, p. 55.

^{12.} Ibid, p. 57.

passionate about their studies, the Hida writes, that he heard of an incident where scholars were poring over the words of the Maharshal on Erev Yom Kippur until it was time for *se'udat mafseket* (the final meal before the fast). These rabbis had been so engrossed in their studies that they had forgotten to purchase food for the meal.

The Hida did not entirely approve of the Tunisian scholars' approach. He writes:

They occupy themselves in Talmud, the Maharsha, the commentaries of the Ashkenazic rabbis, and a bit of the words of the Rambam, but they are not well acquainted with codes and responsa literature, and they have a short memory, so much so that I, who, to my sorrow, have a poor memory, was considered by them as possessing outstanding retention.¹³

Elsewhere he writes, "I reprimanded them because they did not study $Bet\ Yosef$ and the codes. All their days are spent on the Talmud and the Maharsha." 14

Passing the Tunisian Test

The scholars of Tunis would customarily test *shelihim*, engaging them in rigorous discussions about complex subjects, and bombarding them with questions. They were sharp and erudite enough to discern an unimpressive pseudo-scholar. On one occasion, during the Hida's visit to the city, a blind scholar from Aleppo, Syria, came to visit and delivered a lecture. The Hida immediately realized that all the ideas were taken from a certain book, and the local scholars also noticed the man's mediocre stature. One of the Tunisian dignitaries sent for a ten-year-old boy and had him recite pages from *Masechet Betzah* for the visiting scholar. The dignitary then said to the visitor, "This boy

is blind and read the Talmud by heart," subtly conveying the message that he and his peers were unimpressed by the visitor's lecture. ¹⁵

The Hida was at a disadvantage in his encounters with the scholars of Tunis, because of their vastly different style of learning. Nevertheless, he held his own in his discussions with them, making a deep impression upon them and earning their respect and admiration for his high level of scholarship. He writes that he had prayed to G-d to grant him the wisdom to pass the "test" of the Tunisian scholars, in order to bring honor to the Jewish communities of Eretz Yisrael:

I recognize my lacking and my lowliness in the skill of analysis, as in all wisdom – in truth, not out of humility – for I am truly a simpleton. However, I asked the Almighty, Who has mercy on all, that for the honor of Eretz Yisrael, He should grant me wisdom and breadth of heart. Otherwise, they would say that there are no longer any proper scholars in Eretz Yisrael, for they saw the emissaries, who were sometimes ignoramuses, and even the good ones are simple scholars. He in His mercy had pity on me and gave me what to say.¹⁶

Throughout his stay in Tunis the Hida expressed gratitude to the Almighty for his ability to converse in Torah matters with the great Tunisian scholars. In his trademark humility, the Hida did not regard himself as a prodigy; to the contrary, it seems as though he surprised himself by his ability to study together with the Torah scholars in Tunis. On one occasion, for example, he writes that as he engaged in a halachic debate with a group of Tunisian scholars, "The merit of my fathers stood by me, so that I had a proper response in Torah to the scholars." Is Elsewhere he writes:

^{13.} Ibid, p. 58.

^{14.} Ibid, p. 63.

^{15.} Ibid, p. 62.

^{16.} Ibid, p. 63.

^{17.} Ibid, p. 60.

The Almighty... had mercy on me, and I was able to [debate] with much strength, and truly it was a wonder, for they are great and sharp scholars, whereas I am impoverished and insignificant. I found much favor, and they considered me a great man; this is a Heavenly kindness, for I am but a simpleton.¹⁸

Later, he writes:

Hashem gave me strength and good intellect to debate with them with strength and wit... and the listeners all were awed... I was at ease and spoke in depth the whole night, and my sharpness only increased. We passed from one topic to another until actual daybreak.¹⁹

On another occasion he writes:

"I discussed Torah in abundance with them and had the confidence to ask and answer on different topics that they brought up, and I was able to argue with them, and everything went very easily with G-d's help."²⁰

Once, a large gathering of Torah scholars was held in the city, and someone read aloud a passage from the *Mishneh LaMelech* commentary to the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*. The Hida suggested several strong proofs for the idea cited, and then the scholar proceeded to read the rest of the passage – where, as it turned out, the author presented those same proofs. The Hida writes:

I saw that I had anticipated the words of the rabbi [the author of the *Mishneh LaMelech*], and I was afraid that they would say that I stole the words of the rabbi,

for they would think that I had read the entire work and that I had a good memory. Immediately, I told them that this is what the rabbi says, but I think that the opposite can be said, and I began to prove just the opposite of what I said before. All those listening were amazed, for the Holy One, blessed be He, bestowed His goodness upon the lowliest of the lowly, and I was able to debate with great sharpness... the entire night from one subject to another, until literally the morning.²¹

Some of the local Tunisian scholars inquired about the Hida's knowledge of Kabbalah, which, characteristically, he downplayed. He feared, however, that the scholars would peer inside his box in which he kept his books while he traveled and discover the kabbalistic texts in the box. The Hida therefore made a point of removing from the chest the manuscript of Rabbi Haim Vital's treatise on practical Kabbalah that he had obtained in Egypt. He hid the book among his clothes, and when the scholars did indeed search the box, they did not find this kabbalistic work.

As part of his efforts to conceal his kabbalistic knowledge from the Tunisians, he wrote down on a piece of paper the words of the Arizal's special *kavanot* (meditations) for waving the *lulav*, and kept the paper in his *mahzor* on Sukkot. He feared that people would notice and recognize his proficiency in Kabbalah, because he shook the *lulav* according to the Arizal's practice, and so he wrote down the instructions to give the impression that he did not really understand the *kavanot*.²²

On another occasion, the Tunisian scholars managed to get hold of the keys to the Hida's other chest, where he kept his writings. They were going to open the chest until the Hida vehemently protested.

^{18.} Ibid.

^{19.} Ma'agal Tov, pp. 61-62.

^{20.} Ibid, p. 64. See also p. 63: "A few times when a Torah scholar came to me to answer a question, I told him the answer first, and I thought of the same answer he was going to give."

^{21.} Ibid, pp. 61-62.

^{22.} Ibid, p. 58. He followed this practice on other occasions, as well; see ibid, p. 113.

He writes regarding this incident, "All this was out of friendship and the fact that they mistake me for a man who is great in all matters." ²³

The "Competitor" from Jerusalem

During the Hida's stay in Tunis a *shaliah* from the community in Jerusalem was also visiting the city. At one point, the *shaliah* claimed that the Hebron community owed him money, and he demanded that he be allowed to collect the alleged debt from the local donations earmarked for Hebron. One day, this man approached the Hida and told him that the Hida's father, Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah, had appeared to him in a dream and told him to tell the Hida to pay him, and in the dream the Hida had paid him. The Hida dismissed the story as an outrageous lie.

The man continued to demand funds designated for Hebron, prompting the Hida to issue a statement decreeing that "the officials and the authorities shall not give him even one coin belonging to Hebron." He added that "if he has a claim, let him take his claim to either Constantinople or Hebron."

The community members accepted the Hida's decree, and asked him whether they should evict the Jerusalem *shaliah* from the city. "Heaven forbid," the Hida said. "He retains his honor, as long as he does not interfere with the community of Hebron."

The Hida in Mourning

On Shabbat, 22 Adar, while in Tunis, the Hida received a package of letters delivered from Livorno. After Havdalah he went into his room and opened the package. In one of the letters he read that his wife, Rachel, had passed away. He writes that upon reading the letter, "the world went dark for me."

The Hida and his wife Rachel had raised five children, two sons and three daughters. Their firstborn son, Rephael Yeshayah, was born in Jerusalem in 1743 (5503). It was he who, together with Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi, had joined the Hida on the first leg of what would have been his journey to Constantinople to discuss the governance of Rahamim Cohen. Their second son, Avraham, was born in Jerusalem before the Hida left for his first *shelihut* in 1753 (5513). Their first daughter, Sarah, was probably named after the Hida's mother. She married a wealthy man in Livorno, and it was at their home that the Hida planned to stay upon reaching that city. The next daughter, Klara, passed away in Egypt in 1765 (5525). The youngest daughter, Simchah, was probably born when the Hida and his family were in Egypt.

During this time of emotional upheaval and anguish, the Hida faced a practical dilemma:

Suddenly it came to mind that if I were to tell of the matter, they [the people of Tunis] would give me a wife against my will, and there would be no turning them down, for they are very attached to me, and no reasons will help with them. Literally, as if by royal decree, they would force me. Blessed is His honored Name, that He granted me this kindness, that in this moment of great anguish, He put this thought in my mind.²⁵

In order to avoid the Tunisian Jews' insistence that he marry one of their own, the Hida observed the laws of mourning privately for the brief period mandated by halachah upon hearing after much time has passed of a relative who has died. With what must have entailed extraordinary emotional strength, he kept his profound grief to himself throughout the rest of his stay in Tunisia.

^{23.} Ibid, p. 59.

^{24.} Ibid, p. 65.

^{25.} Ibid, p. 61.

Bidding Farewell

The Jews of Tunis developed a close relationship with the Hida. Many in the community extended great kindness to him, and during his stay in the city he collected a substantial amount of money for his community – all from a city which was not on his original itinerary. Rabbi Yehuda Cohen Tanugi (author of *Eretz Yehuda*), at whose home the Hida lodged, barely let him leave the house and brought all the local dignitaries to his home to meet the Hida. The Hida's visit to Tunisia left a great impression on the community that lasted long after he left. Stories of miraculous feats performed by the Hida in Tunis have been preserved to this very day.²⁶

After Sukkot 1773 (5534) the Hida intended to leave and proceed to Livorno, but the Tunisian Jews swore they would not let him go, and the son of the Kaid Youseph, the civil leader of the Tunisian Jewish community, even threatened to involve the Sultan in delaying his departure.²⁷ He thus ended up staying for another six months, and was finally able to leave on 24 Nissan, 1774 (5534), after more than eight months in the city. The townspeople accompanied him with live music,²⁸ and he was escorted by fifteen men on horseback to the town of Binzart, where he was warmly welcomed. On 6 Iyar the people of Binzart festively bid him farewell as he boarded a ship to Italy, which docked at the port of Livorno eleven days later, on 17 Iyar.



Rare picture of Maran Hacham Haim Yosef David Azoulay

^{26.} See Shivhei Harav Hida, in Sefer HaHida, p. 195.

^{27.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 58.

^{28.} Ibid, p. 65.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Second Shelihut: **Italy and France**

Italy

In honor of Mr. & Mrs. Jack Benquesus and Family

In memory of

Rabbi Eliyahu and Miriam Toby z"l

They were people who left an indelible mark

on our lives and were models of inspiration,

generosity, integrity and devotion to Jewish life.

Eliyabu & Adina Toby

The Hida left Tunis for Livorno, where he was warmly greeted and hosted by his daughter and son-in-law.

The Hida writes in his journal that when he arrived at the Livorno port, even before he was allowed to disembark, "my dear daughter, Sarah, came dressed elegantly with her eldest son¹, and servants."²

Sarah's first question at the port was about her mother. Not wanting to break the bad news there on the ship, he answered her evasively, overcome by emotion. Sarah continued to inquire about her mother, but the Hida still tried to avoid the issue. He writes, "I experienced much anguish from my dear daughter when she inquired

^{1.} This was likely David, for whom the Hida purchased a siddur as a gift during this trip. Sarah also had a daughter named after her sister, Klara.

^{2.} Ma'agal Tov, pp. 65-66.

about her mother. I tried to allow her to remain in doubt. Although she suspected something, she was not certain."3

On 20 Iyar he was allowed to disembark and went to the quarantine station, where he remained for over a month. Each day Sarah sent him a basket of cooked food and fruits, and she and her husband came to visit once a week. Local scholars and dignitaries also visited him frequently during this period. It was during the Hida's stay in the quarantine camp in Livorno that he composed one of his most famous works, Shem Hagedolim, an encyclopedia of the great sages of Israel and classic works of Torah literature. The Hida spent Shavuot in the quarantine camp, and yet still managed to observe the timehonored custom of remaining awake the entire night of Shavuot studying Torah.4

When the Hida was finally released, his son-in-law met him in a carriage and brought him to his home, where he stayed for part of the time he spent in Livorno. The rest of the time he lodged in the home of his friend Dr. Michael Pereira de Leon.

Soon after his release from the quarantine camp, the Hida began discussions with prominent local figures concerning the publication of Shem Hagedolim, as well as his Birke Yosef commentary to the Shulhan Aruch. He had completed Birke Yosef in Hebron, and took the manuscript with him on his second shelihut. When he arrived in Livorno he prepared it for publication and added marginalia from the numerous manuscripts he had seen in his travels.⁵ Publication of Birke Yosef and Shem Hagedolim began before he left Livorno for Pisa during the summer of 1774 (5534). He remained involved in the process throughout the period he spent in Italy, receiving proofs and reviewing them. On a number of occasions he expressed his

frustration over the mistakes made in the printing. By Kislev 1776 (5537), when he was in Venice, the Hida apparently had the major portion of Birke Yosef in printed form. He writes in his journal that a visiting scholar had at that time borrowed a copy of the *Birke Yosef* to Yoreh De'ah and posed to the Hida a question regarding something he read in the work. 6 The Hida added this question, and his answer, in the last page of the book.

The publication of Birke Yosef would take three years to complete, during which time the Hida continued to make additions to the work, mostly opinions of the early authorities from manuscripts. These additions would later be published together with the original work under the title Shiure Berachah. Eventually, a third volume, named Mahazik Berachah, was published, incorporating even more additions to the original commentary.

During his visit to Pisa the Hida toured several interesting sites, including the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa. On 13 Heshvan he left Pisa for Siena, and then traveled to Florence. He describes in his diary his visit to a zoo in Florence, where he saw "a lioness, a tiger, and a bear."7 He also visited the city library, where he saw several old Talmud manuscripts, a manuscript of the Pesikta Midrashic text on Bereshit and Shemot, and several manuscripts of medieval commentaries, including the Ramban's commentary on Masechet Shabbat.

On 13 Kisley the Hida returned to Pisa and then to Livorno, where he met his longtime friend Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi, who was visiting the city. The Hida writes, "I had satisfaction from the Maharit Algazi and those who were with him, [and we] renewed our friendship."8

His trip through Italy included visits to numerous cities, including Pesaro, Senigaglia, Ancona, Rimini, Lugo, Ferrara, Mantova, Colorno,

^{3.} Ibid, p. 67.

^{4.} Ibid, p. 66.

^{5.} Mahazik Berachah, Orah Haim, 112:3, p. 25a.

^{6.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 85.

^{7.} Ibid, p. 67.

^{8.} Ibid, p. 69.

Verona, Padua, Venice, Conegliano, Gradisca, Gorizia, Trieste, Chavres, Conegran, Modena, Rigyo, Guastalla, Brescello, Fiorenzuola, and Genoa.

In Padua the Hida again saw Rabbi Yaakov Hazak, who had belonged to the special Mevakshe Hashem group that studied under Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato (Ramhal), and whom the Hida had met during his first shelihut, twenty years earlier. The Hida had great respect for Rabbi Yaakov Hazak and is quoted as saying, "Rabbi Yaakov Hazak is as holy as an angel of G-d." It is also reported that the Hida would seek Rabbi Hazak's blessing. During this visit to Padua, Rabbi Yaakov Hazak revealed to the Hida material that the Ramhal had taught the group, including profound mystical concepts revealed to the Ramhal by a maggid (angel), and he also showed the Hida the room where they had studied.¹⁰

As opposed to his first *shelihut*, the Hida's second trip did not include England or Germany, thus allowing him to spend more time in each community. He spent two six-month stints in Livorno, over eight months in Ancona, two months in Ferrara, and four months in both Venice and Amsterdam. He also visited Pisa six times during this shelihut.

The experience he had gained from his first *shelihut*, combined with the reputation he had earned through the publication of his first work, Sha'ar Yosef, resulted in greater respect and success during this trip to Italy.¹¹ Community leaders went out of their way to greet him and accord him honor, and many made a point of organizing special events in order to present him to the community. He was occasionally asked to serve as sandak at britot in the towns he visited, and there were some parents who even named their baby after the Hida.

Many communities requested his assistance in resolving conflicts and ruling on complex halachic issues. In Modena he composed a responsum addressing a halachic issue that arose, and this essay was later included in his work Haim Sha'al. Many communities invited him to deliver public lectures, and he also had many occasions to engage in lengthy Torah discussions with local scholars or yeshivah students. During his visit to Mantova he spoke with students for two hours about topics in the tractate they were studying at the time, Masechet Bava Kamma.

France

The Hida crossed the border from Italy to France on 26 Sivan, 1777 (5537). Among the French cities he visited were Nice, Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon, Lisle, Nimes, Lunel, Montpellier, Narbonne, Toulouse, Bayonne, Bordeaux, and Paris.

During his travels the Hida noticed that some communities greeted him with less enthusiasm than they had during his first shelihut,¹² whereas in many others, he was again welcomed with honor and joy.

Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 70.

^{10.} The Hida's cryptic notes regarding this can be found in his Kuntres Masa'ot. See Benayahu, Hamaggid Shel Ramhal in Sefunot vol. 5 (1961), and Sheriki, Or Haganuz, p. 108. Interestingly, the Hida's great-grandfather was also said to have been taught by a maggid, and there is even a source claiming that the Hida beheld revelations of a maggid. See Ammer, Maran HaHida HaKadosh, p. 129, quoting Gerondi, Toldot Gedole Yisrael B'Italia; and Sheriki, Or Haganuz (Machon Ramhal), chapter 8.

A number of scholars have noted that the Hida makes virtually no mention of the Ramhal in his writings, despite his high regard for the Ramhal's close disciple, Rabbi Hazak. One theory claims that the Hida avoided referencing the Ramhal out of respect for Rabbi Moshe Hagiz, who opposed the Ramhal's works, and whose father, Rabbi Yaakov, was a teacher of the Hida's grandfather. (The Hida was well aware of the controversy surrounding the Ramhal's writings, as he writes in Ma'agal Tov, p. 7.)

^{11.} A notable exception was the city of Avignon, which had suffered a negative experience with a different shaliah and thus became negatively disposed toward shelihim. See Ma'agal Toν, p. 103.

^{12.} This may likely have been the result of a general decline in the stature of the institution of shelihut.

He writes:

I have a good name there, and they have attributed to me a hundred times more than I know. I have told them that I am a simpleton, but they think that it is out of humility. Even among the gentiles, the Christian scholars, my reputation has spread, and they ask the Jews about me... Whatever I tell them they consider more precious than pearls...¹³

When he left Cavaillon for Lisle, all the women of the city – Jews and non-Jews alike - stood at the edge of the city to ask for a blessing. Twenty young men on horseback rode in front of the Hida's carriage, while several carriages of dignitaries followed.

During his visit to Paris the Hida met a gentile scholar named Monsieur Fabre from the French Academy of Sciences, with whom he spent a good deal of time discussing a variety of scholarly topics. They went together to the manuscript section of the national library, which was not open to the public on that day, but they were able to visit through Fabre's connections. The Hida was duly impressed by the library, which he describes in his Shem Hagedolim as "the great and precious library of the king of France in the city of Paris" where "there are more than 55,000 manuscripts of all faiths and languages, filling several rooms... and a large room with Jewish manuscripts, with more than two thousand of our manuscripts."14

Several days later Fabre took the Hida in a carriage to tour the great Palace of Versailles, where the Hida viewed "a handsome, adorned room lined with several pillars that were coated with gold on both sides."15 They eventually reached the hall where King Louis XVI, the last king of France, was seated, surrounded by ministers and

a large group of advisors and officials. The king noticed the Hida, and sent one of his men from the court to ask Fabre, in the Hida's words, "where I had come from as an ambassador." Fabre explained that he was not an ambassador, but rather a guest from the Near East. The Hida then describes their departure from the royal chamber: "We walked out, and all those who were standing showed respect, and some of the ladies who passed by bowed, as is their custom."

In Nimes the Hida saw structures from the time of the Roman occupation. In several French cities, Carpentras, Avignon, and Cavaillon, the Hida saw synagogues built especially for women, situated under the men's synagogue. Openings in the floor of the synagogue allowed the women to see the sefer Torah. In these congregations a male cantor recited the prayers for the women in the vernacular. In Bordeaux the Hida was invited to visit Jewish schoolchildren, and he was disappointed to find that the boys were taught only the text of the Humash, without Rashi's commentary. He writes, "They do not even want [the children to study] Rambam. Woe unto the eyes which have seen thus..."16

After leaving France, the Hida passed through Brussels and Antwerp, and then proceeded to his next stop – Amsterdam.

^{13.} Ibid, p. 121.

^{14.} Shem Hagedolim (Gedolim), Aleph, no. 197.

^{15.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 123.

^{16.} Ibid, p. 114.



The Hida's Final Travels

Amsterdam

In honor of our dear parents

Moses & Marie Elmaleh

From: Louis, Leon, Joe,

and Preci Elmaleh

and Families

Unlike during his first visit to Amsterdam, on the Hida's second visit to the city he received a warm, respectful greeting even from the Ashkenazic community, and two hundred people accompanied him from the Ashkenazic Meeting Hall. The communities of Dilf and Rotterdam, which did not give the Hida any donations during his first visit, now displayed the full measure of their generosity, something the Hida called "a miraculous wonder."

The Hida writes that fundraising in Amsterdam was handled in an exceptionally organized and efficient manner. The community appointed patrons who would guide the *shaliah*, organize his business and fundraising, and tend to his needs throughout his stay in the city. During the Hida's second visit to Amsterdam, Dr. S. Moses Rodriguez,

^{1.} Ibid, p. 150.

^{2.} Ibid, p. 160.

a leading figure in the community, influenced Aharon Gapadoze, a wealthy community member, to serve as the Hida's patron.

The Hida notes that "this was a great miracle, for all the emissaries strive very hard for this, and pressure a number of the community's philanthropists who refuse, and need Rabbi Shalem³ to go to efforts on their behalf. And this came straight to me, with no effort or request on my part; it is unbelievable."⁴ Dr. Rodriguez later found a second patron, Moshe di Yitzhak Yisrael Suasso.⁵ The Hida writes that these two men chosen to assist him were "among the wealthiest and most prominent members of this holy community."

What made this honor especially remarkable was the fact that several leading figures in Amsterdam's Sephardic community harbored resentment toward the Hida for his refusal to accept the position of rabbi which they had offered him in 1760 (5520). One dignitary felt the Hida should not be assigned a patron, saying, "I do not hate him, but since we asked him to be a rabbi in our community and he refused, no dignitary in the community should become his patron." Fortunately, this view was not shared by the majority of the community or the local philanthropists.

In addition to the appointment of formal patrons, the system required sending letters to individuals in both Hebrew and Spanish.⁷ Already during the first several days after his arrival the Hida sent out 570 letters. Forty-two days later he went out with his assigned patrons to collect. They first visited all the people of status, leaving cards in the homes of those who were away. A month later the Hida and his patrons held a formal meeting with the community's rabbi,

Rabbi Shelomo Shalem, after having visited him unofficially several times. They then proceeded to visit other community members. The fundraising system in Amsterdam also included small, exclusive parties held in the *shaliah's* honor at the donors' homes. The Hida describes one such party hosted by Signor Yitzhak ben Dana, writing, "We smoked and had tea and bread and such for three hours."

During his trip to Amsterdam the Hida met Rabbi Shaul, the rabbi of the Ashkenazic community there and author of *Binyan Ariel*. Rabbi Shaul's father, Rabbi Aryeh Leib, was the son-in-law of the renowned scholar Rabbi Tzvi Ashkenazi (Hacham Tzvi). Throughout his stay in the city the Hida held Torah discussions with Rabbi Shaul, whom he held in very high regard. The Hida ate the Purim meal at Rabbi Shaul's home, and enthusiastically describes the elaborate model of the Persian palace, including all the characters of the Purim story, all of which was made of candy, which had been given to Rabbi Shaul as a gift by several wealthy Jews in Amsterdam.

Not everything the Hida saw in Amsterdam during his visit met his approval. One Saturday night he observed members of the local Jewish community loudly carousing in the city streets well into the night, acting, in his words, "as if the city was theirs...as if they were the rulers and kings of the land." This conduct baffled the Hida, and he writes, "It is amazing." It appears that in the Hida's estimation, the Jews of Amsterdam felt a greater sense of freedom than Jews of other regions. He clearly disapproved of this conduct, likely out of a belief that even in periods of security Jews must be wary and remember their status as foreigners.

Return to Paris

After completing his visit to Amsterdam, in the summer of 1778 (5538), the Hida returned to Paris. During this visit, he learned that

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³. He refers here to Rabbi Shelomo Shalem, rabbi of the Sephardic community of Amsterdam at the time.

^{4.} Ibid, p. 133.

^{5.} Ibid.

^{6.} Ibid, p. 137.

^{7.} Ibid, p. 135.

^{8.} Ibid, p. 141.

^{9.} Ibid, p. 139.

the queen of France, Marie Antoinette, was expecting a baby. When he had come to Paris earlier that year, during the winter, Senor Avraham Vidal, a prominent member of the Parisian Sephardic community, had asked him to pray on the queen's behalf. Now, in the summer, when he returned to Paris, his friend Monsieur Fabre said to him, "Look how your prayer bore fruit!"

The Hida responded, "It is not in my merit, but in the merit of my forefathers, of blessed memory."

During his return trip to Paris the Hida was granted permission to visit the great national library in the palace and borrow any book or manuscript he chose. He decided to borrow the manuscript of the commentary of Rabbi Yeshayah De Trani on the *Humash*, and spent an entire night copying it. He would later publish portions of this commentary in his Torah commentary *Pene David*. ¹⁰

The Hida then crossed the border into Italy and arrived in Livorno on 28 Elul, 1778 (5538). He was met by several local dignitaries, including his son-in-law, who took him to his home. After six years of fundraising for the Hebron community, his second mission had finally come to an end. This journey had proved to be wildly successful, and the enormous sums of money he received from the communities he visited saved the Hebron Jewish community from collapse.¹¹

The Hida's return to Livorno, where he would live for the rest of the life, marked the end of his distinguished career as *shaliah*, a career that benefited the Jewish communities of Eretz Yisrael, brought

honor to the position of *shaliah* and the Jews of the Holy Land, and inspired countless Jews throughout the Diaspora.

The Sage Who Traveled the World

Below is a list arranged in chronological order of the cities which the Hida visited during his travels.

The First *Shelihut*: 1753–1758 (5513–5518)

1.	Jerusalem	22.	Argenta	44.	Vorcheim
2.	Hebron	23.	Ferrara	45.	Buttenheim
3.	Al-Dawayima	24.	Modena	46.	Hirscheid
4.	Sumsum	25.	Reggio	47.	Bamberg
5.	Gaza	26.	Guastalla	48.	Ebelsbach
6.	Deir El Balah	27.	Mantova	49.	Knetzgau
7.	Bir El Abd	28.	Verona	50.	Hassfurt
8.	Rashid	29.	Padova	51.	Schonungen
9.	Alexandria	30.	Venezia	52.	Schweinfurt
10.	Livorno	31.	Trento	53.	Niederwerrn
11.	Pisa	32.	Bolzano	54.	Geldersheim
12.	Firenze	33.	Innsbruck	55.	Arnstein
13.	Siena	34.	Pfersee	56.	Thuringen
14.	Monte San Savino	35.	Kriegshaber	57.	Himmelstadt
15.	Lippiano	36.	Haarberg	58.	Laudenbach
16.	Urbino	37.	Oettingen	59.	Zellingen
17.	Pesaro	38.	Wassertrudingen	60.	Leinach
18.	Senigaglia (and	39.	Wittelshofen	61.	Greussenheim
bac	ck to Pesaro)	40.	Bechhofen	62.	Hochberg
19.	Rimini	41.	Ansbach	63.	Heidingsfeld
20.	Faenza	42.	Lehrberg	64.	Neubrunn
21.	Lugo	43.	Beiersdorf	65.	Wertheim

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^{10.} Ibid, p. 163. See *Shivhe Harav Hida*, in *Sefer HaHida*, pp. 190–191 [1], which presents a very different account of how the Hida obtained access to the library. While the story told there is fascinating, it is contradicted by the Hida's personal account in his diary.

^{11.} In his diary the Hida records the precise breakdown of the donations he received: 3,673.5 zecchino, 49.5 Roman zecchino, 62.5 Venetian zec., 35 Geliato zec., 119 Hungarian zec., 67.5 sakudi, 2,300 pesos, 23 Spanish pesos, and 40 litrin – all gold coins. This was truly an enormous amount of money at that time.

66. Fechenbach	95. Cleve	123. Torino
67. Freudenberg	96. Nymwegen	124. Vercelli
68. Miltenberg	97. Arnheim	125. Casale De
69. Heubach	98. Amersfort	Monferatto
70. Klingenberg	99. Amsterdam	126. Alessandria
71. Worth	100. Haag	127. Genova (and
72. Wallstadt	101. Rotterdam	back to Livorno)
73. Aschaffenberg	102. Heelevoetsluis	128. Piombino
74. Seligenstadt	103. London	129. Civitavecchia
75. Hanau	104. Dover	130. Napoli
76. Frankfurt am Main	105. Calais	131. Mt. Stromboli
77. Worms	106. Paris	132. Sicily
78. Greusenheim	107. Blois	133. Massina
79. Oppenheim	108. Bordeaux	134. Candia
80. Mainz	109. Bayonne	135. Chios
81. Bingen	110. Peyrehorade	136. Kara-Burun
82. St. Goar	111. Toulouse	137. Izmir
83. Boppard	112. Montpellier	138. Ciandarlik
84. Koblenz	113. Lunel	139. Boghaz-Hissar
85. Neuwied	114. Nimes	140. Gallipoli
86. Bonn	115. Avignon	141. Rodosto
87. Deutz	116. Carpentras	142. Istanbul
88. Koln	117. Lille	143. Samos
89. Zons	118. Cavaillon (and	144. Kos
90. Dusseldorf	back to Avignon)	145. Cyprus
91. Verdingen	119. Nice	146. Beirut
92. Mors	120. Cuneo	147. Jaffa
93. Rheinsberg	121. Fossano	148. Ramle (and back
94. Xanten	122. Carmagnola	to Jerusalem)

The Second *Shelihut*: 1773–1778 (5533–5538)

me second siletti	1110 1110 (00	0000)
1. Jerusalem	24. Forli (and back	47. Pontelagoscuro
2. Hebron	to Faenza)	(and back to Ferrara)
3. El-Arish	25. Ferrara	48. Finale
4. Al Katia	26. Sermide	Dell'Emillia
5. Alexandria	27. Mantova	49. Modena
	28. Rivarolo	50. Guastalla (and
	29. Verona	back to Mantova)
7. Tunis	30. Montebello	51. Revere
8. Livorno	31. Vicenza	52. Brescello
9. Pisa	32. Padova	53. Parma
10. Siena	33. Venezia	54. Fiorenzuola
11. Poggibonsi	34. Mestre	55. Piacenza
12. Firenze		56. Voghera
13. Pontedera (and	35. Conegliano	57. Tortona
back to Pisa)	36. Valoasone	58. Novi
14. Asciano	37. Codroipo	59. Genova
15. Romagna	38. Udine	60. Nice
16. Faenza	39. Nogaredo	61. Cannes
17. Cesena	40. Gradisca	62. Aix
	41. Gorizia	
18. Lugo	42. Trieste	63. Avignon
19. Pesaro	43. Chavres	64. Carpentras
20. Senigaglia	44. Conegian	65. Cavaillon
21. Ancona	45. Sacile (and	66. Nimes
22. Moratta (and	back to Mestre and	67. Lunel
back to Pesaro)	Venezia)	68. Montpellier
23. Rimini	46. Polesine	69. Pezenas

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70. Narbonne	95. St. Andre De	121. Valenciennes
71. Meze	Cubzac	122. Soignies
72. Carcassonne	96. Chevanceaux	123. Bruxelles
73. Alzonne	97. Barbezieux	124. Anvers
74. Castelnaudary	98. Angouleme	125. Moerdijk
75. Villefranche	99. Mausle	126. Puttershoek
76. Castanet	100. Ruffec	127. Rotterdam
77. Toulouse	101. Chaunay	128. Dragahoe
78. Lisle Jourdain	102. Vivonne	129. Amsterdam
79. Gimont	103. Poitiers	130. Leyden
80. Auch	104. Chatellerault	131. Leidschendant
81. Mirande	105. Port de Piles	
82. Rabasteug	106. Tours	8
Bigorre	107. Amboise	133. Boompies
83. Tarbes	108. Blois	134. Zeeland
84. Pan	109. Beaugency	135. Lillo
85. Orthez	110. Orleans	136. Middelberg
86. Peyrehorade	111. Etampes	137. Mecheln
87. Bayonne	112. Longjoumeaux	(and back to Bruxelles, Soignies,
88. Bordeaux	113. Paris	Valenciennes,
89. St. Vincent de	114. Louvres	Cambrai, and Paris)
Tyrosse	115. Senlis	138. Pont Sur Yonne
90. Castets	116. Gournai	139. Joigny
91. Laharie	117. Roye	140. Vermenton
92. Labouheyre	118. Peronne	141. Houvrai
93. Cardosa	119. Spehy	142. Arnay Le Duc
94. Carbon Bleue	120. Cambrai	143. Macon

144. Reyssouse
151. Vercelli
145. Pont De Beauvoisin
152. Casale
146. Chambery
153. Moncalvo
147. Aiguebelle
154. Alessandria
148. Novalesa
155. Voltaggio
149. St. Ambrogio
156. Massa (and back to Pisa and Livorno)

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Back in Livorno

On 7 Heshvan, 1779 (5540), at the age of fifty-five, the Hida married his second wife, a woman from Pisa named Rachel Levi. His marriage to an Italian woman strengthened his already close relationship with Italian Jewry, and he thus decided to remain in Italy rather than return to Hebron. He chose to live in Livorno, which during the mideighteenth century had replaced Venice and Mantova as Italy's center of religious devotion and kabbalistic study. It was also a hub of Torah publishing, and the Hida settled there in the hopes of publishing and selling his works.

A Leader of the Jewish World

The Hida tried as much as possible to remain at home, in solitude, so he could concentrate on his studies and writing. To that end he avoided meetings with the prominent, wealthy members of the Livorno community. On one occasion his son, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah, asked him to meet with a wealthy Livorno resident named Shelomo Moshe Sifli, and the Hida, against his better judgment,

Nachman Aiello

a brilliant light in our world, bli ayin hara.

May he grow strong in his living and teaching of our heritage, and in his love for his fellow Jew, with the help of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, all the days of his life.

This outstanding *sefer* will provide motivation to learn about the wonderful heritage of Italian Jewry. We are privileged to have a book that demonstrates depth of insight and affection for its subject, a great master in Torah.

David & Leah Aiello

attended Sifli's daughter's wedding. In a letter he wrote to his son after the wedding, he expressed regret for having attended the affair, and emphasized that he went only to fulfill his son's wishes.¹

An endless flow of questions and requests for help from communities near and far, especially those with whom he had become closely connected during his *shelihut*, denied the Hida the peace and quiet he craved. In a letter written in 1792 (5552) he laments his lack of free time "both because of responding to some of the letters and due to many other preoccupations." On another occasion, he writes of the constant stream of visitors who came to speak to him. Ordinary individuals and community leaders would come seeking his advice and assistance, and sometimes he was called upon to intervene in major communal matters. In March 1796 (5556) the Jewish newspaper in Ancona advocated for religious reforms, and it was the Hida who signed the letters written and sent out by the Livorno rabbis denouncing the plan.

An example of the Hida's worldwide influence is a story told of Rabbi Messod Hayun, a well-respected *shohet* for the Jewish community of Tripoli, Libya. Rabbi Messod had the extraordinary ability to examine the *shehitah* knife simply by looking at it. A knife with even a single, slight nick is disqualified for *shehitah*, and rabbis and *shohatim* traditionally examine knives by running their fingernail over the blade. Rabbi Messod, however, was able to detect nicks simply by viewing the blade. Word of the unusual *shohet* spread, and the Hida heard about Rabbi Messod's unconventional method of examination. He promptly sent a letter to the community in Tripoli instructing them to depose Rabbi Messod, as he did not follow the standard protocols for *shehitah*.

Rabbi Messod sailed on the next ship from Tripoli to Livorno and went to the Hida's synagogue on Erev Shabbat. The Hida approached the guest and invited him to his home. Throughout his stay with the Hida, Rabbi Messod revealed neither his identity nor any of his knowledge of halachah. On the following Thursday the Hida went to the slaughterhouse to examine the knives, as he did each week, and he agreed to allow his guest to join him.

In the slaughterhouse, the Hida noticed the guest peering at the edge of one of the knives. He asked what he was looking for, and Rabbi Messod said, "I have heard that a knife with nicks is forbidden to be used for kosher slaughter."

"Yes," the Hida said. "What do you see in this knife?"

"It has several nicks," replied the guest.

The Hida took the knife and felt that there were indeed several nicks in the blade. After the *shohet* sharpened it, the Hida felt it again and found it acceptable. The guest then took the knife, looked at the blade, and insisted that there were still a number of nicks. The Hida felt the knife a second time, and saw that the guest was correct; there were several very slight nicks in the blade.

He turned to the guest and said, "Tell me the truth – are you Rabbi Messod Hayun from Tripoli?" The guest answered in the affirmative.

"I asked you to step down," the Hida said, "because according to halachah the knife must be examined with a fingernail. I will now draw up a certificate endorsing you as a *shohet* with my signature on it. Promise me, though, that after you check the knife visually, you will use your fingernail, so as not to give the false impression that others may examine the knife visually." Rabbi Messod promised and returned to Tripoli, where he resumed his position as *shohet*.⁵

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^{1.} Benayahu, Volume 2, pp. 63, 403, 431.

^{2.} Ibid, Letters, 29, p. 46.

^{3.} Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 57.

^{4.} Benayahu, Volume II, p. 431.

^{5.} See Shivhei Harav Hida in Sefer HaHida, pp. 197–198 [2].

Studying Day and Night

Despite his involvement in Jewish communities throughout Italy and other countries, the Hida managed to devote most of his time to Torah and spiritual growth. He maintained his close friendship with Dr. Michael Pereira de Leon, who established a yeshivah for the Hida where he prayed, studied, and wrote. Dr. Pereira's two sons, Gavriel and Yaakov, who had already spent time studying Torah with the Hida during his earlier visits to Livorno, and had also traveled with him to Pisa in 1775 (5535) and studied with him throughout the night,6 now became his regular students. The Hida writes that despite all the demands on his time, he "studied day and night in the home of Senior Michael, reaching higher and higher, and his sons were with me." He almost never left the city, except for occasional visits to his wife's family in Pisa. His son Rephael Yeshayah, who became the rabbi in Ancona, repeatedly asked the Hida to visit him for a retreat from the rigors of his daily life, but the Hida went to Ancona only once, in 1791 (5551).

In all, this period of the Hida's life was characterized by intense devotion to study and spiritual growth. As one author describes, "It seems that after he settled in Livorno he increased his holiness tenfold over what it was during his *shelihut* when he was wandering and occupied with his travels."

The Hida and his two students engaged in meditation and mystical studies and practices in an effort to purify their souls. These included penances, fasts, solitude, and avoiding frivolity. The Hida had especially high hopes for the younger of the two brothers, Yaakov, whom he considered closer to full spiritual perfection than his brother. Yaakov took on special practices, and the Hida even compiled for him

a detailed program for spiritual advancement, entitled *Seder Hayom V'seder Halaylah*, *V'seder Hazmanim*, that formed the framework of his book *Moreh Ba'etzba*. The Pereira brothers studied with the Hida for six years, spending long periods of time together in meditation, and learning together Friday nights until daybreak.

The Hida also founded a society in Livorno called *Hadashim Labekarim*. The members of this society studied very early each morning and every Thursday night, and recited a set of special prayers that the Hida himself had composed. This collection of prayers was also named *Hadashim Labekarim* and published in Livorno in 1795 (5555). One of the stated purposes of their study and prayer was to protect "them and their households and the entire community, and to break all the harsh and evil decrees."

The Hida established close relationships with numerous great scholars in Livorno, including Rabbi Shemuel Hakohen, Rabbi Yaakov Nunis Veis, and Rabbi Eliezer Sa'adon. He also became close with Rabbi Avraham Calphon, the most distinguished scholar of Tripoli in his time, who began a series of written correspondences with the Hida in 1781 (5541). In 1804 (5554) Rabbi Calphon traveled to Livorno and remained there for nearly two years, likely for the purpose of observing and learning from the Hida.

The Unofficial Rabbi

Twice the Hida was offered the position of Chief Rabbi of Livorno, and both times he refused. He received offers from several other communities, as well, including the community in Ancona, which invited him to assume the post of rabbi after the passing of Rabbi

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^{6.} Ma'agal Tov, 69-70.

^{7.} Shivhei Harav Hida, in Sefer HaHida, p. 188 [3].

^{8.} Benayahu II, chapter 6, section 4, p. 564.

^{9.} Ibid, p. 565. There are indications that the Hida also established another, more secretive society, whose name is not known and which was not made public. It is possible that this was formed as a framework for the Pereira brothers, whom the Hida hoped to train and prepare for entry into an exclusive group of mystical study, or it was intended as an extension of the *Ahavat Shalom* society in Jerusalem in which the Hida had been involved many decades earlier. See Benayahu, vol. II, pp. 564–568.

Avraham Yisrael in 1785 (5545). The Hida refused, and recommended his son, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah, who was indeed appointed rabbi of Ancona in 1787 (5547).

Although the Hida did not accept the official mantle of rabbi, the Jews of Livorno nevertheless considered him the leader of the community. All important questions were brought to him, and when people spoke of "the rabbi," it was clear they were referring to the Hida. Indeed, his presence in Livorno had a very strong impact upon the community. His customs and sermons strengthened the influence of Kabbalah in Livorno, and interest in Kabbalah in the city reached its peak during the time he spent there. Additionally, his commentaries and insights were added to the basic Jewish texts in Livorno – the *Humash*, siddur, *mahzor*, *Zohar*, *En Yaakov* and *Hok L'Yisrael*. These texts were used on a daily basis, and thus thousands of Jews – scholars and laymen alike – gained direct exposure to the Hida's brilliance each and every day, making him one of the most influential Torah scholars in modern Jewish history.¹⁰

The Hida delivered public sermons on certain occasions throughout the year. On the four special *Shabbatot – Shabbat Teshuvah*, *Shabbat Zachor*, *Shabbat Hagadol*, and *Shabbat Kallah* (the Shabbat before Shavuot) – he spoke in the Recanati yeshivah.¹¹ On the Shabbat of *Parashat Nitzavim* 1783 (5543) he began to deliver sermons every Shabbat in the yeshivah of Michael Pereira, while continuing to deliver sermons in the Recanati yeshivah on the special *Shabbatot*.

The sermons delivered on these special *Shabbatot* would be included in several of his works – *Devarim Ahadim*, *Kise David*, and *Ahavat David*. Some of these sermons were also included in *Ru'ah Haim*, which he did not publish.

On *Shabbat Teshuvah* 1789 (5550) he delivered the sermon in the Great Synagogue in Livorno, in place of Rabbi Yitzhak Castillo, who had previously delivered the annual *Shabbat Teshuvah* lecture but had recently passed away. The Hida continued to deliver this annual sermon henceforth. A Livorno scholar described the scene as the community prepared for the lecture:

They would wait for him from the entrance of his home to the entrance of the synagogue – a great multitude of people, too many to count. They would stand on either side, and the Rabbi would go between them, and his appearance was like an angel of G-d. As he went, they would go after him until they all gathered together at the entrance to the synagogue. They would go inside with him to hear his holy words, for he found favor in the eyes of all those who saw him, on account of his magnificent wisdom and his beloved teachings... His name went out in the entire land, and both Jew and gentile held him in high regard. ¹²

Many of these sermons addressed the unfortunate decline in religious commitment that was gradually taking place among portions of the Livorno Jewish community. Once the Jews of Italy were given permission to engage in commerce, in the early seventeenth century, a wealthy Jewish upper class began to develop. As a whole, the Livorno Jewish community remained steadfast in its adherence to tradition, but some of the wealthy Jews began to indulge in fancy clothing, extravagant parties, showy homes, elegant carriages, and

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^{10.} Many editions of the siddur with the Hida's commentaries and insights are used throughout the Jewish world even today.

^{11.} The Recanati yeshivah was an institution in Livorno supported by a local philanthropist named Eliezer Hai She'altiel Recanati. The Hida occasionally prayed and studied in this yeshivah. Eliezer Hai She'altiel Recanati passed away on 13 Elul, 1790 (5550), and the Hida delivered a eulogy after his passing. Several years later he would dedicate his work *Kise David*, which included sermons he had delivered in the Recanati yeshivah, to the deceased benefactor. He also maintained a close friendship with Recanati's sons, Yehoshua and Yitzhak.

^{12.} Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 59.

other material luxuries, and eventually, time that had previously been devoted to Torah study, and money that had been used for charitable donations, were being spent on vanity. A renewed emphasis on secular learning also contributed to the diminished focus on Torah study and mitzvah observance.

In his sermons the Hida bemoaned the declining moral standards and commitment to Torah and charity. He expressed particular concern for the "sharp young men who are separating themselves from Torah and going into business and are destroying their souls and bodies..."¹³

As he did not hold a salaried rabbinical position, the Hida supported himself by selling his books, as well as from the lease of his house in Hebron, and gifts he received at various occasions. He also composed amulets, which were considered the most precise, and he received requests for them even from communities outside of Italy. Additionally, he received a salary from Yeshivat Hesed L'Avraham in Jerusalem, of which he was named *rosh yeshivah* after the passing of his daughter's father-in-law Rabbi David Pardo, likely anticipating his return to the Holy Land. He tended to the yeshivah from afar while in Livorno.

A sizable portion of the Hida's income was invested in the publications of his works. While his first book, *Sha'ar Yosef*, was financed by Michael Pereira, and other works were published with the aid of the Recanati family, there were times when funding for publication was not available, requiring the Hida to raise money or to pay out of his own pocket. He also occasionally received assistance from *shelihim* from Eretz Yisrael who were visiting Italy.

The Hida's writings earned widespread popularity, and Jews throughout the Jewish world sought his books. He shipped his books to most of the Jewish communities in Italy, and to many communities

13. Ibid.

outside the country. Copies were sent to his acquaintances throughout Italy who sold them for him, though Torah scholars received the books free of charge.

The Hida was among the most prolific authors of Torah literature in Jewish history. He wrote over eighty books, covering the entire spectrum of Torah scholarship. The time he spent in Livorno writing, publishing, and distributing his works cemented his unique place in Jewish history, as his works continue to be studied and highly regarded throughout the Torah world, by both Ashkenazim and Sepharadim alike. This period of his life thus not only left an indelible impact upon Italian Jewry, but also had a profound impact upon the entire Jewish world for generations to come.

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Stories of a Legendary Tzaddik

Stories abound of miracles performed by the Hida. Legends emerged from virtually every community where the Hida ever visited or lived, including England, France, Tunisia, Italy, Eretz Yisrael, and others. When asked about them, he humbly dismissed them as fairy tales, and when he was pressed for answers in the face of compelling evidence, he attributed the powers to ancestral merit. For example, when he once prayed for a childless couple and learned that they had a child, he responded, "The salvation was not in my merit, but in the merit of my fathers." On another occasion, he quipped, "So they say: Do not let the blessing of a commoner be trivial in your eyes…"

As with all legends, it is difficult to affirm the accuracy or authenticity of many of the remarkable stories told of the Hida. However, we may apply to the Hida the famous statement once made about the legends told about a more recent sage – the Hafetz Haim: There is good reason why such stories are told about him, and not about the average person. The proliferation of these stories in so many different countries testifies to the fact that wherever the Hida

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went, it became clear to the people who met him that they were in the presence of a holy man.

The Holy Housekeeper

The Hida had a housekeeper who would peek into the room before she prepared his coffee to see if he had guests who had to be served. When she once saw three men with him, she prepared four cups of coffee. When she entered the room with her tray, she was stunned to find the Hida sitting there alone. She was certain she had heard no one leave, yet the three men whom she had seen were no longer in the room.

When the Hida saw her, he was just as astonished as she was. "Why did you bring so much coffee?" he asked.

"I peered into the room just a few minutes ago to see how much coffee I should prepare," she explained, "and I saw the Rabbi had three guests."

The Hida would often have the privilege of studying with *maggidim* (angels), and these three "men" whom the housekeeper had seen were in fact angelic beings. The fact that the housekeeper was privileged to behold the sight of these beings was a testament to her level of piety, and thus the Hida, who had until now regarded her as a simple housekeeper, was astonished that she had seen them. From that time on, having been shown his housekeeper's lofty stature, he accorded her considerable respect.¹

The Winning Numbers

A friend once asked the Hida to tell him the winning lottery numbers. The Hida refused, claiming that he could not predict the numbers. The friend persisted, however, and the Hida eventually agreed to write the numbers on a piece of paper that would be sealed,

1. Shivhe Harav Hida in Sefer HaHida, p. 188 [2].

on condition that the man would not open it until after the drawing. The man opened the piece of paper after the drawing and, sure enough, he found the winning numbers written, all in the correct order.²

Swallowing the *Shema*

In Paris, a certain Sir Elija Porpujian brought his wife to the Hida, begging him to help. She had been persuaded to convert to Christianity, and Sir Elija hoped that the Rabbi could change her mind. The Hida spent a few moments deeply engrossed in self-purification, and then wrote the text of the Shema on a piece of paper, having in mind all the mystical intentions of the great kabbalist Rabbi Menahem Azariah of Pano. He folded the paper into a very small square and asked the woman to swallow it. Understandably, she was reluctant, but at the same time she felt that she could only benefit from following the rabbi's advice. She swallowed the slip of paper and, indeed, she recanted her decision to abandon her faith. In fact, this woman went on to become an exceptionally righteous, G-d-fearing woman.

Punishment for Shabbat Desecration

In his work *Davar B'ito* the Hida tells of an extremely depressed woman who came to him for help. Her family members, seeing the discoloration in her face, presumed that she suffered from a physical ailment, but it was clear to the Hida that she had fallen victim to a harmful spirit that had overtaken her soul. He informed her parents of the presence of the spirit, and they wept, begging the rabbi to do everything he could to rid her of the evil spirit that had overtaken their beloved daughter.

The Hida stood near her, and he heard the spirit speak.

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^{2.} Oseh Fele, p. 54; Yosef Tehillot (New York, 1976), p. 6.

"Come to me," it said, "o blessed of Hashem, Who heals the brokenhearted."

"Who are you?" the Hida asked.

The spirit answered that it was a certain person who had lived in Jerusalem.

"What sin have you committed to deserve this bitter punishment?" the rabbi inquired.

The spirit explained that he used to drink tea that had been prepared on Shabbat in a forbidden manner. Before he possessed the young woman, he had been wandering about the city without rest, and the three angels assigned to preserve the sanctity of Shabbat would incessantly beat him and proclaim, "Such shall be done to a man who has desecrated the Shabbat!" He was granted permission to take possession of this woman, he added, because she applied makeup on Shabbat, even more than she used on weekdays.

"Her sin weighs heavily on her," the spirit said, "as her friends reprimand her, yet she pays them no heed. This is why her face has been turned such a bright shade of green."

The Hida turned to the woman and informed her that she was indeed guilty of a grievous sin. "You seem to have no remedy without harsh punishment," he said.

"Please, Rabbi," she implored. "Have mercy!"

"Do you believe in all of the words and decrees of the Sages, and intend to fully repent?" the Hida asked.

"I do! I do!" she cried, and let out a wail.

The Hida promptly turned to the spirit and promised him that he would rectify his sin so he would no longer have to suffer. The spirit immediately left the woman, and departed from this world. The woman regained her natural color, and looked and felt as though she had been born anew.

The Encounter of the Sotah

Rabbi Aaron Walden (c. 1835–1912), in his work *Shem Hagedolim Hehadash*,³ tells that once, during the Hida's later years, a well-respected member of Livorno's Jewish community, who was a *kohen*, approached the Hida and other distinguished *dayanim* of the city and claimed that his wife had secluded herself with another man. The other judges were related to the woman, and thus preferred to cover up the incident. The Hida, however, promptly informed the man that he was bound by Torah law to divorce his wife.

"Rabbenu," the other judges protested, "tell us, how can you issue a definitive ruling if there are no witnesses to her seclusion? You can be certain only through prophecy, and we are not entitled to issue judicial rulings on the basis of prophecy."

The Hida ignored his colleagues' objections and reiterated his demand that the man divorce his wife. The other judges, seeing how the Hida flatly ignored them, went to other relatives of the woman, who were high-ranking city officials, and informed them of what had happened. Objections to the Hida's handling of the case were soon heard throughout the community.

In response to the complaints and protests, the Hida summoned the woman to come to his study, where he learned and prayed. The woman arrived, and the Hida brought a Torah scroll from the ark and opened it to the section discussing the *sotah*, a woman who is suspected of infidelity. The Hida began reading the verses, and the woman turned around to leave. Just then, the Hida read the verse that warns of the terrible suffering that would befall a *sotah* if she was indeed guilty (*Bamidbar* 6:27). Before the woman could even take a step, her face turned green, her eyes bulged, and she suffered the precise punishment described in the Torah.

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^{3.} No. 8, *siman* 29. *Shem Hagedolim Hehadash* is an encyclopedia that follows the model of the Hida's *Shem Hagedolim*, recording the names of important rabbinic figures and works of Torah literature that were either omitted by the Hida or that came after him.

The townspeople heard the woman's shrieks of pain and horror and came running to see what had happened. Upon witnessing this miracle they acknowledged the sanctity of the Hida and that everything he spoke represented the true word of Hashem. From that point on the people and judges in the city stood in awe of the Hida and never dared to challenge his authority. In commemoration of the miracle, wealthy members of the community donated money to plate the stairs to the Hida's study, where the woman had fallen, with gold.⁴

The Miraculous Child

Once, while the Hida was visiting Pisa, an eight-month-old baby who had been slightly ill was brought to him for his blessing. The Hida looked at the child for a brief moment, and then began to teach him the Hebrew alphabet. He recited each letter, and the infant, miraculously, repeated it after him. He then recited the alphabet in reverse order, followed by a Biblical passage. By this point, the baby was not answering. Seeing that the infant was not repeating his words, the Hida slapped himself in anguish, and told the mother to take the child back. That evening, the child passed away.

Several days later, the Hida attended a *brit milah*, where several guests were discussing the fact that Mashiah had not yet come. "Mashiah wants to come even more than we want him to come," the Hida said, "but our iniquities do not allow for it. Not long ago, Mashiah was born, but because of the iniquities of the generation, he passed away in his youth." Those present understood that he was referring to the eight-month-old baby that had recently died.⁵

The Hida and His Detractors

Although the Hida was humble, gentle, and caring by nature, there are numerous recorded instances where those who opposed him

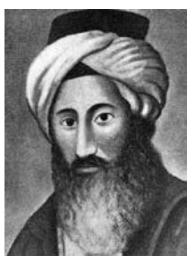
suffered death or calamity as a result. The Hida was very far from feelings of personal vengeance, and certainly did not wish evil upon his detractors. At the same time, however, he was aware of the fact that G-d visited retribution upon people who mistreated him.

In one instance, the Hida relates, "I wrote to a well-known man, and he responded improperly, and spitefully insulted me, and he will have to answer to G-d. And on the holy Shabbat, 24 Shevat, this man died suddenly, and the Senate ordered to open his head." Another story is told of several individuals in Avignon, France, who refused to give him money from the community's charity fund for the poor Jews

of Eretz Yisrael. That day, the wife of the man who led the opposition to donating grew suddenly ill with a high fever. The man hurriedly convinced all his friends to give the Hida the charity funds he requested, and his wife quickly recovered from her illness.

Empty Vessels

Besides his ability to perform miracles, the Hida was known for his especially sharp mind, which not only mastered the entire corpus of Torah scholarship, but also enabled him to resolve difficult dilemmas and



Portrait of Maran Hacham Haim Yosef David Azoulay

find creative strategies for even the thorniest and most intractable problems.

Once, a fellow who wished to collect charity money approached the Hida and requested that he write a recommendation letter. After speaking with the man, the Hida found that he was not worthy of a

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^{4.} This story appears in Rabbi Haim Kanievsky's *Orhot Yosher* (chapter 7). Rabbi Kanievsky adds that he heard that these golden steps remained intact until World War II.

^{5.} See Shivhe Harav Hida in Sefer HaHida, p. 189 [6].

^{6.} Manuscript Jerusalem 8:269, p. 111a; Ma'agal Tov, p. 85.

recommendation. The fellow persisted, however, demanding that the rabbi write him a letter, and the Hida finally relented and composed a letter extolling the man's virtues. And so, with the great sage's letter in hand, the fellow traveled from one community to the next, easily collecting donations by producing the letter written by the Hida.

His success would not last long. He eventually came to a town whose rabbi was an especially sharp scholar who quickly noticed that this man did not deserve donations - or the Hida's effusive praise. He read the Hida's letter carefully, and noted his comment that if this collector "had lived in the time of Elisha, the oil would never have stopped." Those who had read the letter before him had taken this sentence as a reference to the man's stature, but this rabbi immediately understood the Hida's intent. The prophet Elisha had performed a miracle for a poor widow by instructing her to collect empty utensils and then pour the small amount of oil in her possession into them. Miraculously, the oil's volume grew and it filled all the utensils she had collected, enabling her to sell the oil and pay her debts. The flow of oil ceased when there were no more empty vessels. The Hida meant by his comment about this collector that he was an "empty utensil," and thus the widow's oil would never have stopped flowing. Understanding the Hida's hidden intent, the rabbi gave him a minuscule donation and sent him on his way.⁷

Slices of Cheese

The Hida once found himself on a ship together with a wealthy Jewish merchant. The merchant wanted the Hida to write a certificate vouching for the kashrut of his cheese product, but the Hida, who had reason to suspect the permissibility of the cheese, did not want to accede to his request. This merchant, however, was an influential man and would not take "no" for an answer, and the Hida legitimately feared the consequences of refusing.

Realizing that he had no choice, the Hida composed a certificate for the merchant, which he concluded by citing the verse, "So shall you eat it – with your loins girded," which appears in the Torah's instructions concerning the paschal sacrifice eaten in Egypt on the night of the Exodus (*Shemot* 12:11).

The merchant came to a certain Jewish community to peddle his cheese, and produced the certificate authored and signed by the Hida. The rabbi read the letter and noted the peculiar citation with which the great sage had concluded the text of the certificate. He immediately understood the Hida's citation as a reference to the Aramaic translation of these words in the *Targum Onkelos: "hartzechon yehon asirin"* ("your loins shall be girded"). These words could also be read to mean, "Your slices [of cheese] shall be forbidden." The rabbi realized that the Hida had written the letter under coercion, and thus refused to authorize the sale of the merchant's cheese in his community.⁸

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^{7.} Shivhei Harav Hida, in Sefer HaHida, pp. 188–189 [4].

^{8.} Ibid, p.182 [1].



The Passing of a Torah Giant

Attempts to Return to Israel

The Hida's indefinite stay in Livorno remains an enigma. Biographers have suggested numerous explanations for why he did not return to his beloved land and his beloved city, though none are completely satisfying. Even during his travels on shelihut, the Hida always prayed to return to Eretz Yisrael. His journal is filled with such prayers, down to his account of his very last year of travel. Even in 1786 (5546), eight years after he completed his second shelihut, he wrote about his plans to go to Jerusalem that year.² These hopes continued to be expressed in writing until the end of his life.

In 1787 (5547) he was actually prepared to leave for Israel when news came of a plague which had broken out in Jerusalem and was spreading to other areas of the country. He planned another return

In loving memory of

Elias Benatar zt"l

and

Sarah Benatar a"h

May their souls be blessed and rest in Gan Eden.

Max & Anita Benatar and Family Mark & Claire Benatar and Family Esther Benatar

To our beloved

Zachary, Jordana and Gabrielle,

עולמך תראה בחייך

May Hashem continue to bless you with the zechut to reach the tremendous potential He has given each of you, and may He bless you with the spiritual growth to guide you, with the light of His Torah and mitzvot. May you be zoche to berachah, hatzlahah, health, long life and happiness for always, amen.

^{1.} See Kuntres Masa'ot, p. 77b, and Ma'agal Tov, p. 177.

^{2.} Pinkas Heshbonot 1, p. 27b.

in 1795 (5555), this time with his son Rabbi Avraham, who had come from Jerusalem on a *shelihut* mission. He planned to make the trip via Izmir, Turkey, and he had transferred money to be kept in the hands of a trusted dignitary there until, in his words, "I will get organized or I will go, with the help of the Almighty, in the summer." But these plans, too, were thwarted by a devastating plague, this time in Izmir. Once again, the Hida was forced to remain in Italy.

We know of no further attempts by the Hida to return to the Holy Land. Some scholars speculated that the Hida was hesitant to settle in Eretz Yisrael because there was interest in appointing him as *Nasi* – the highest rabbinic authority – over the rabbis of the Holy Land, a position which, in his humility, he desperately sought to avoid.⁴

Furthermore, Professor Meir Benayahu notes that the Hida's name was mentioned as a candidate for the prestigious position of Rishon LeTzion in 1802 (5562), after the passing of Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi, who had succeeded Rabbi Meyuhas Bechor Shemuel as Rishon LeTzion. Controversy arose over the selection of a new Chief Rabbi, with most leading rabbis at the time advocating for the Hida's appointment to the position, while others felt the honor should be conferred upon Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Meyuhas (known as "Mayim"), the son of the previous Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Meyuhas Bechor Shemuel. Thus, the Hida's hesitation to return to the Holy Land at this time may have been motivated not only by humility, but also by the desire to avoid controversy and strife in the holy city. (Rabbi Mordechai Yosef eventually received the appointment as Rishon LeTzion.)

Sixteen years earlier, in 1786 (5546), the rabbis of Safed invited the Hida to serve as Chief Rabbi of their illustrious community. At the time, it seemed certain that the Hida would soon leave Livorno and return to Eretz Yisrael, and their only doubt was whether he would

agree to accept the position of Chief Rabbi of Safed, or prefer to settle in his home city of Jerusalem. It seems from many passages in the Hida's own writings, especially his diary, that he had set his sights upon Jerusalem.

The Hida's Illness and Passing

The Hida's diary from 1795 (5555) mentions his wife taking ill. Her illness is mentioned again in his notes seven years later, in 1802 (5562), where he writes that because of her condition, he was compelled to speak to her in her native Italian, as opposed to the holy tongue, the language in which they had normally communicated. He apparently felt that speaking in her native language would avoid additional strain and discomfort. In his financial ledger for the summer of the same year he lists substantial medical expenses incurred for his wife's treatments. On 26 Kislev, 1803 (5564), she passed away. The Hida recorded his wife's death in a series of shakily written lines in his notes, which were clearly written in a state of grief and distress.

In a letter written at that time by Rabbi Yisrael Nahman Drobitcher to Rabbi Avraham Lulo of Livorno, he raises a question regarding a comment of the Hida in one of his works, and writes, "I cannot now... come in front of the sage, the author of *Birke Yosef*, to ask him his intention, for I cannot bear to see how a Torah scroll as he is steeped in pain...and mourning after the passing of his pious wife. May the Almighty comfort him."⁵

The Hida himself also suffered from poor health at various points during his years in Livorno. There were even periods when he was unable to leave his home for a month at a time due to illness. But it was after his wife's passing that his health began to steadily deteriorate. As evidenced by his manuscripts, his handwriting grew shaky, and he focused greater attention on preparing his remaining

^{3.} Rosenberg, Iggerot D'Rav Haim Yosef David Azoulay, zt"l, p. 62.

^{4.} Toledot Gedole Yisrael B'Italia, p. 113, cited in Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 73.

^{5.} Pekudat HaMelech, volume 1.

works for publication. The final work he published was *Mar'it Ha'ayin*, a commentary on *En Yaakov*, which was published in Livorno in 1805 (5565).

The Hida's condition worsened in the winter of 1806. News of the Hida's declining health rapidly spread throughout the Livorno Jewish community and then throughout the entire Jewish world. The Livorno community ledger for February 1, 1806 issued a call for the recitation on *Tehillim* on the Hida's behalf "in the first *midrash* of the Talmud Torah."

On Friday night, *Shabbat Zachor*, 11 Adar, 1806 (5566), amid the heartfelt prayers of thousands of Jews around the world, the Hida passed from this world at the age of eighty-three. In his belt was found a will he had prepared in his final days, in which he had written, "Each day, ten people should come to the study hall and study eighteen chapters of Mishnah [in his memory]." The scholars were to be compensated from a fund the Hida had set up for this purpose. This practice was followed for many years after his passing.

The leaders of the community gathered the very next day, on Shabbat, to organize groups of scholars "in order that the study of our holy Torah should not stop as long as the *niftar* (deceased) remains in his home." Twenty-six other scholars were assigned the task of making the preparations for burial.

On Motza'e Shabbat the Jews of Livorno accompanied the Hida on his final journey. He was eulogized in his study hall by Rabbi Yaakov di Medinah, and Rabbi Shelomo Malach delivered the eulogy in the Talmud Torah. At the burial, a eulogy was delivered by Rabbi Haim Shelomo Abulafia, the *shaliah* from Tiberias who was visiting Livorno at the time. The magnificent epitaph on his tombstone was composed by his close disciple, Rabbi Eliezer Hakohen. On the day after the burial, the members of the *Massari* (Livorno's local rabbinical council) announced that all planned festivities for Purim – which fell just three days after the great sage's passing – would be suspended that year out of respect for the Hida.

Additional eulogies were delivered in the weeks after the Hida's passing. As he died just over two weeks before the onset of the month of Nissan, when eulogies are forbidden, it was necessary for those groups who wished to organize memorial events to do so immediately. On the thirtieth day after the passing, traditionally a day of eulogy, special Torah study sessions were organized in memory of the Hida in lieu of eulogies, as the month of Nissan had already begun.

There was not a Jewish community in Italy where eulogies were not delivered for the Hida. He was also eulogized throughout Eretz Yisrael, Turkey, and North Africa, as well as in several communities in Germany and Poland. Rabbi Uziel al Haich, the outstanding scholar of his time in Tunis who had become acquainted with the Hida during his visit to the city, ruled that every Torah scholar was halachically considered a "talmid muvhak" (primary disciple) of the Hida, and as such, they were all required by halachah to rend their garments as a sign of mourning. When news of the Hida's passing reached the Jewish community of Tripoli, the community gathered in the great synagogue and recited *Tehillim*. Eulogies were not delivered, as the news arrived only after the onset of Nissan.

Several communities instituted annual memorial services for the Hida, a practice that was generally reserved for the cities' own rabbis. Annual commemorations were observed for many years not only in Livorno, but also in Jerusalem, Hebron, Ancona, and Algeria.⁹

Surprisingly, the transcripts of most of the eulogies delivered for the Hida are not available. A notable and valuable exception is the

^{6.} Toaff, Eduyot al Yeme Shivto Shel HaHida B'Livorno, in Sefer HaHida, p. 57.

^{7.} Calphon, Shivhe Harav Hida, in Sefer HaHida, p. 184.

^{8.} Toaff, Eduyot, in Sefer HaHida, p. 184.

^{9.} Benayahu, p. 80.

stirring eulogy delivered by Rabbi Daniel Tirani, a widely renowned scholar and author of the work *Ikrei Hadat*, who spoke about the Hida in Firenze, Italy, the day after the burial. Rabbi Tirani drew a fascinating analogy to the Roman Caesar Diocletian, who loathed the kingship and retired to village life. When the nobles of Rome came to return him to the throne, he told them that the smallest plants that he tends to on the farm are more precious to him than all the commotion and bustle of Rome. Rabbi Daniel Tirani built upon this story in lamenting the loss of the Hida:

The acronym of his [the Hida's] name, ehad – one, is especially appropriate for him, as it alludes to his honored name as well as his unique merit, for he was unique in the generation in embodying all areas of holy literature. Just reading his praiseworthy compositions, which are not few, will prove that his breadth of knowledge encompassed every area of our holy Torah - in other words, the simple meaning, hints, homiletics, and the secret wisdom - Pardes, which he wove together in spectacular fashion. And this is not the limited garden of Diocletian, but a garden, a pardes, that is without boundaries. He wrote on every topic, and all with wisdom, and few are those who would even come close to resembling him at all. *Ehad* is therefore a fitting epithet, for he was unique and singular in his generation... Now he will glean the pleasure of the goodly fruits that he devotedly planted in his garden which of course cannot be compared with Diocletian's vegetables...¹⁰

The Hida's Halachic Legacy

Although his soul departed from this world, the Hida remains very much a part of Jewish life through the lasting legacy of halachic

10. Jerusalem Manuscript, 328.

scholarship that he left future generations. The Hida's halachic rulings and customs became the final, authoritative word in many Sephardic communities, and remain so to this day. He was so revered that people would commonly say: "From Yosef to Yosef, there arose no one like Yosef," comparing Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay with Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488–1575), author of the authoritative *Shulhan Aruch*. Similarly, Rabbi Abdallah Somech (1813–1889), a renowned Iraqi sage who lived a generation after the Hida, writes in the name of Rabbi Moshe Haim¹² that "the decisions of the Hida have been accepted like the decisions of *Maran* [our master, Rabbi Yosef Caro]." The great Rabbi Haim Palagi (Chavif, 1788–1869), an outstanding Turkish scholar and a contemporary of the Hida, writes, "We always follow in his footsteps." 14

The Hida's halachic legacy made a profound impact upon Ashkenazic Torah scholarship as well. The renowned Polish scholar Rabbi Akiva Eiger (1761–1837) often cites the Hida's decisions in his comments to the *Shulhan Aruch*. Rabbi Akiva Eiger's son-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Sofer (the Hatam Sofer, 1762–1839), also had great respect for the Hida. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (the Hafetz Haim, 1838–1933), author of the authoritative *Mishnah Berurah*, frequently quotes the Hida's works *Birke Yosef* and *Mahazik Berachah*. The impact of the Hida's scholarship thus continues to be felt throughout the Torah world to this day.

^{11.} Ammer, Minhage HaHida, p. 48.

^{12.} Rabbi Moshe Haim was the grandfather of the renowned Ben Ish Hai (1832–1909).

^{13.} Zivhe Tzedek, ch. 110, no. 158.

^{14.} Kaf Hahaim, chapter 15, no. 31.



A picture taken of the tombstone of Maran HaHida Hakadosh – Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay zt"l (Jewish cemetery – cimitero ebraico "dei Lupi," Livorno [Leghorn], Italy)

English Translation of Tombstone¹⁵

Here rests / the wonder of our time / a wise man / greater than a prophet.

When he was called / this light of Torah / to the higher realms / my heart shattered.

Alas, for the general / has been hidden away.

Alas, my western light¹⁶ / is extinguished.

The secret of angels, / from which shines / all wisdom, / our teacher has taught.

Before the Supreme / within the canopy / his soul shall rejoice / with Rashbi.¹⁷

My beloved will return / with the secretive man / Eliyahu / from Tishbi.

Memorial

The burial of the holy man of G-d,

The wondrous rabbi, the wonder and glory of the generation,

The G-dly Kabbalist, disseminator of Torah in Israel

The pious and humble, leader of his place, and head of his yeshivah

The elderly rabbi, Rabbi

Haim Yosef David Azoulay

May the memory of the righteous and holy be blessed.

May his merit protect us and the entire holy community.

The light of our eyes was called up to Heaven on the holy Shabbat,

The 11th of Adar, 5566. May he rest in peace.

May his soul be bound up in the bonds of eternal life.

^{15.} See Benayahu, vol. 1, pp. 76–77.

^{16.} This refers to the western candle on the Menorah in the Bet Hamikdash which never burned out and from which the others were lit.

^{17.} Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Hida's Spiritual Character¹

The Hida observed numerous measures of piety that extended far beyond strict halachic requirements. Every morning he awoke before dawn to "indulge in supplication over the destruction of the Temple." He remained awake throughout the night every Thursday night studying Torah, and he published the content of these special study sessions as a book entitled *Hadashim Labekarim*. His grandson attests that there were entire years when he slept only on chairs, and not in a bed. He refused to nap on Shabbat, as he felt that this was allowed only for official, paid scholars.

The Hida would carry a special pouch on which the word *ma'aser* was printed, and whenever he received money, he would first put the *ma'aser* portion in the pouch. He distributed this money to the

the author of this wonderful series,

This chapter is dedicated to our dear friend,

Yehuda Azoulay s"t

Your commitment and perseverance to enlighten our lives through the examples set forth by our Sephardic *hachamim* is unprecedented.

May *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* provide you with many more opportunities and resources to continue your wonderful work.

May it be His will that our sons and daughters grow up in the ways of Torah and the wonderful *middot* of our *hachamim*.

B'abavab, Адат, Estber, anд Avrabam Yoel Obayon

^{1.} Most of the material in this chapter is translated from Benayahu.

^{2.} *Petah Enayim* part 2, p. 96c. He writes that even though "one great man" held that this practice is obligatory only for scholars, he maintained that it applies even to laymen.

^{3.} Kitve HaHida, 2d.

needy twice a year, before Pesah and before the Sukkot holiday. He also limited his consumption of meat during the week, as well as his consumption of vegetables, in order to avoid the risk of ingesting worms, in violation of the Torah.

The Hida wrote that one must study some *mussar* (religious admonition) daily.⁴ He also attributed great significance to not only the study of Talmud and halachah, but also the study of Tanach, Mishnah, and *Zohar*. Like the kabbalists of Safed, he spent a good deal of time studying Mishnah, and even wrote that the study of Mishnah would hasten the era of redemption.

The Hida's Lists

The ongoing process of self-improvement and quest for spiritual perfection stood at the forefront of the Hida's mind and at the top of his agenda throughout his life. Already at a young age, as a student of Yeshivat Bet El, he was described in the yeshivah's roster as "perfect in all good traits." Yet, he never rested on his laurels, and always strove to grow, advance, and move closer to spiritual perfection. He never felt content with what he had achieved, as he expresses in his prayer, "The air of the foreign lands, and lack of purity, and force of physical and spiritual exile – these have been to our detriment enabling our enemy, the *yetzer hara*, to succeed in pushing us away from Your Torah." Despite his high levels of piety, the Hida still felt he was influenced by his evil inclination and failing in his religious responsibilities.

The Hida had the practice of drawing up lists of the areas of personal and religious development on which he sought to focus. He would then return to the list later to assess his progress. It seems he began this practice in Egypt, and the earliest such list that has been preserved is from 1767 (5527). His conduct and written testimonies open a window into hidden parts of the Hida's personality that we would not have been able to discern from his printed books.

The Hida spent different years studying different books for the sake of self-improvement, and he kept a surprisingly detailed record of these books. He wrote which books he studied in which years, and which books he used for his spiritual preparation before and during festivals.

It is not entirely clear why the Hida kept written records of the books he read and special practices he observed. We can reasonably assume that he was not seeking fame or recognition through the publicity of his efforts at self-improvement. He himself admonished those practicing pious conduct "to conceal his good deeds and learning, and if they shall praise him, remember that he did not do one out of thousands of his obligations, and he should not, G-d forbid, become haughty, even one iota." It thus seems difficult to understand, on the surface, why he found it necessary to keep a careful account of his personal journey of spiritual growth.

One possibility is that this practice is the result of the influence of righteous members of the Ashkenazic community in Jerusalem (the community established by Rabbi Yehuda Hassid at the end of the seventeenth century). The Hida had in his possession the notes of a scholar from Hebron named Rabbi Moshe Halevi Nazir, who recorded special practices he observed, and the Hida explained that these practices were observed as part of Rabbi Moshe's ongoing efforts to raise his spiritual level. Elsewhere, the Hida writes:

I saw men devoted to good deeds, who in solitude in the days of repentance would decide upon some extra measure of piety and write it down. Then, the next year, they would observe whether their tryst of purity had

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^{4.} Tziporen Shamir 4:53, and Moreh Ba'etzba 1:17.

^{5.} Divre Shirah, page 7a.

^{6.} Moreh Ba'etzha 1:16.

increased, and they would add to it. But nonetheless, one should take care not to accept upon himself any conduct with an oath unless he stumbles, just make a condition that is without a trace of an oath.⁷

The Hida was thus clearly quite familiar with this practice of recording measures of piety taken upon oneself to allow for building upon those achievements in the future. His exposure to the *tzaddikim* who observed this custom may perhaps explain the lists he would make for himself. Although most of them kept records only of the practices they observed during the days of repentance, Rabbi Moshe Halevi Nazir wrote frequent warnings to himself throughout the year, and these records no doubt guided the Hida.

Another important factor is the Hida's keen historical sense. He left written accounts of virtually every area of his life for posterity, and it therefore should not surprise us that he also kept a record of the most important area of all – his relationship with G-d.

Self-Evaluation

These accounts reveal the Hida's constant, ongoing process of selfevaluation. He was always subjecting himself to rigorous scrutiny, carefully studying himself and his conduct to identify those areas which needed improvement.

It is told that once, when the Hida was visiting France on *shelihut*, he forgot his box of tobacco in the home of the philanthropist he had been visiting that evening. He did not realize that his tobacco was missing until he had already returned to his place of lodging. And so, late that evening, he went back to the donor's home to retrieve his tobacco. Afterward, he regretted having disturbed the man and, as a result, accepted upon himself to stop using tobacco from then on.⁸

This process of introspection and self-scrutiny was considerably intensified during the time between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur - the Ten Days of Repentance - most of which he spent in seclusion. During this period he hardly spoke, and on the weekdays he ate only non-bread wheat products and drank minimally. In 1781 (5542) he did not sleep at all on Rosh Hashanah, Shabbat Teshuvah, and Yom Kippur. He maintained this custom of solitude during these days even in the years when he traveled, and observed his eating restrictions even during the High Holiday period in 1786 (5547), when he was ill. He also minimized his speaking every Shabbat throughout the year, as well as on Shavuot. When he did speak on Shabbat and Shavuot, he spoke only in Hebrew. He fasted every Erev Rosh Hodesh (the day before the new month), and during the period of Shovavim, 10 and there were some nights during Shovavim when he refrained from drinking. (In his diary, the Hida describes how one year - 1775 (5536) - he felt too weak to finish the *Shovavim* fast. 11)

Respect for All

In fulfillment of the famous rabbinic dictum, "Greet every person with a pleasant countenance," the Hida made a point of greeting and speaking to all people warmly and pleasantly, especially those who came to pay their respects or to hear his words of Torah. When he disagreed with something he heard, he approached the matter with gentle tact, ensuring that he did not show disrespect or impinge

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^{7.} Mahazik Berachah, Orah Haim 603, p. 115c.

^{8.} Shivhe Harav Hida, in Sefer HaHida, p. 182 [1].

^{9.} In 1771 (5530), he went about fifty hours without water.

^{10.} *Shovavim* is the six-week period in the winter when we read the section of the Torah from *Parashat Shemot* through *Parashat Mishpatim*. (The first letters of these six *parashiyot – Shemot, Va'era, Bo, Beshalah, Yitro, Mishpatim –* form the acrostic עשבביים.) According to kabbalistic tradition, this period is an auspicious time for repentance, and many Jews observe fasts and recite special prayers during these weeks.

^{11.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 29.

^{12.} Avot 1:15.

upon anyone's authority and honor, and avoiding arguments as much as possible.¹³

Once, when he was in France, there was a man who frequently approached him with elementary questions on Rashi's Torah commentary. The Hida patiently addressed each question, responding with a detailed answer. The man, who was ignorant, did not understand the Hida's in-depth analyses, and actually grew angry with him. The Hida apologized profusely for not understanding his questions properly, but the man continued his tirade, as the Hida remained silent throughout, saying to himself that this distressing experience would serve to atone for his sins.¹⁴

Community Service

The Hida accorded great value to the devoted service of the community. Although he did not assume a formal rabbinical post and did not receive a salary for communal leadership, he faithfully tended to his community's needs and was available to help, guide, and offer advice whenever it was needed.

Once, his son, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah, wrote to his father complaining about the overwhelming burden of responsibilities he bore as rabbi of the Jewish community of Ancona. The Hida replied to his son to offer encouragement, reminding him that serving a community is an immense privilege that ought to be cherished. "A man who works for the benefit of the public – his soul is expanded," the Hida wrote. "He will see his descendants, live long, and succeed in the labor of his hands; he is desired by Hashem." ¹⁵

The Hida returned to this concept in a letter to Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah in 1795 (5555), after the latter received an offer to serve as rabbi in Siena for a higher salary than the one he received in Ancona. He wrote, "I feel compelled to write to my dear friend as a father to his son, that in my opinion, even though according to the letter of the law you can resign from the community of Ancona, still, my humble opinion is that … the honor of the city where you dwell is great, and out of respect it is not correct to leave them. I am revealing my opinion, but you choose, not I." The Hida viewed leaving a rabbinical post as an insult to the community, and thus humbly advised his son to remain in his current position.

Gratitude

The Hida was an exemplar of *hakarat hatov* – gratitude. Whenever someone did him a favor, he felt indebted to that individual for the rest of his life. Thus, for example, he always showed concern and friendship to the families that hosted him during his travels. Once, the two daughters of a man who hosted him in Alexandria took seriously ill. The Hida recorded in his diary how he reacted to the news: "I indulged in prayer and donated charity out of my own money ... and I was distressed for many days because of this." Rabbi Shimon Haim Levi Morili, his benefactor in Casalli, at one point expressed astonishment over the extent of the Hida's appreciation:

I do not know, my master, my dear teacher, why he put forth all this effort to thank me to such an extent, for that which I merited hosting the *Shechinah*, for I failed to do even a one-thousandth of my obligation towards such an important man; definitely I did not reach half the measure, and may he forgive... And may the master believe the servant that his departure from

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^{13.} Torat HaHida, p. 21.

^{14.} Ibid, p. 22.

^{15.} Shivhe Harav Hida in Sefer HaHida, p. 480.

^{16.} Iggerot D'Rav Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 64.

^{17.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 53.

my home has affected me, as though the heart within me was severed... for his separation is difficult for me.¹⁸

The Hida and His Family

The Hida deeply loved his family, and was very devoted to each and every family member. On one occasion the Hida accepted upon himself "to write to my sons and daughters, and to pray for them and for all that belongs to them." In his family relationships he was easygoing, tolerant, and kind, and it is clear from his letters that he forged warm, meaningful relationships with his children. He also taught that a man should be tolerant towards his household.

The Hida was also an especially devoted husband who treated his wife with deep respect and generosity. As he writes about his first wife's passing, he describes her as "the wife of my youth, the pious, intelligent, G-d-fearing woman, charitable and modest, the delight of my eyes..." After her passing, he writes, "My world has gone dark... I grew ill from this bad news ... I was distressed and mourning for the loss of this pearl; by my estimation she was nearly in a league of her own in wisdom, honor, great intellect, and charm, beauty, great modesty that cannot be imagined, and extreme cleanliness." ²⁰

His second marriage was a very happy one. He bought his second wife presents when he traveled, and spent large sums of money on her clothing and other delights, and later, on her health.

The Hida's Worldliness

When we think of great Torah personalities, we generally associate them with outstanding qualities such as intellectual prowess, extraordinary diligence, and extreme measures of piety. The Hida certainly embodied all these qualities, but he was also careful about more basic, elementary values, such as hygiene and cleanliness. As we saw, he listed "extreme cleanliness" as one of his wife's admirable qualities. When he traveled, he gave cleanliness high priority in his lodging preferences.²¹ In London, for example, he wrote that "even though the place was cramped, I was satisfied that it was clean."²²

He had an appreciation for aesthetics, as reflected in his description of his dwelling in Gaoris: "They brought me to the rooms of their royalty, the best of the homes, painted, molded, ornate, stylish, worthy of a prince, and I stayed there with great satisfaction." In his mind, there was no contradiction whatsoever between spiritual greatness and an appreciation of the beauty of the material and physical world.

Moreover, the Hida was a curious person and had a genuine fascination with everything new and out of the ordinary. He enjoyed touring gardens, and visiting museums and zoos. He often chose locations with water and verdant plants, and whenever he felt distressed, he would try to raise his spirits by taking a stroll and sightseeing. The Hida was also enchanted by new discoveries, inventions, and innovations. In one *Shabbat Teshuvah* sermon, for example, he described a microscope he saw in a laboratory in Pisa with which one can study the minuscule parts of a person's body.²⁴

The Hida's down-to-earth personality and wide range of interests enabled him to be friend people of many different backgrounds and speak about a wide variety of subjects. He was a brilliant conversationalist with a sharp wit and engaging sense of humor, and he loved sharing his experiences with other people. In his diary he bemoans the fact that the hostile captain of the ship he sailed on to

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^{18.} Y. Nacht, *Zion*, book 6, p. 119. Similar sentiments were expressed by Rabbi Shabbetai Elhanan; see ibid, p. 124.

^{19.} Ibid, p. 156, no. 31.

^{20.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 61.

^{21.} Ibid, pp. 54-56.

^{22.} Ibid, p. 31.

^{23.} Ibid, p. 89.

^{24.} Kise David, 9.

Tunis "did not allow the sailors to speak with me. I gave them beer and fruit so they would say something to me, since I was distressed on several accounts, and in hiding they would speak a little, but they were afraid of their master. And I was distressed... for I had no one with whom to converse."²⁵

Lover and Pursuer of Peace

In several places in his diary the Hida thanked G-d for assisting him in "politics." In his capacity as *shaliah* and then as unofficial rabbi of Livorno, he had to navigate difficult and delicate personal and communal issues, intervening to resolve conflicts, dealing with communal leadership, repairing troubled marriages, and negotiating with officials. Difficult decisions had to be made, and he always acted with patience and discretion, praying to the Almighty for assistance. For example, when he was advised not to go to London to raise money, he decided simply to wait until he made the right connections. He wrote at the time, "There is no doctor like time!" This was a profound truism that characterized much of the Hida's approach to resolving complex dilemmas – acting with patience and prudence, rather than raw impulse.

The Hida conducted his affairs with impeccable integrity and went to great lengths to eschew controversy, such as when he avoided the German communities of Altona and Hamberg because of the controversy that raged there at the time.²⁸ In his work *Petah Enayim*²⁹ the Hida notes that when Hillel famously admonishes us (*Avot* 1:12) to be "a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace," he does not instruct us to simply "love and pursue peace," but rather to become a person

who is by nature a lover and pursuer of peace. The Hida himself was such a person, who naturally sought to avoid controversy and to maintain peace within families and communities.

Measured Modesty

Another unique talent that the Hida displayed was the delicate balance between having genuine humility and maintaining his dignity and respect. While he never pursued fame and notoriety, we find in his diary numerous incidents where he found it necessary to protest infractions upon his honor. In one such passage, he describes how he attended a wedding in Amsterdam, and the city's Sephardic rabbi "passed in front of me and his face gave no sign of recognition... and then he passed right beside me and gave great honor to the community leaders." The Hida writes that he "was left full of shame."

Just as he was careful not to impinge upon the honor due to others, he insisted on receiving honorable treatment befitting a *shaliah* and Torah scholar, in order to ensure that people would give proper respect to Torah and to rabbis.³¹ In Bordeaux he refused to deliver a sermon until the community pressured him, because, he explained, "they were accustomed to donating a token amount there, thinking it was for the *shaliah*, and in the interest of discouraging disparagement and censure against the *shelihim*, the likes of which we have heard with our own ears, I did not wish to speak a second time until the leaders and influential members of the community begged me, and it became a great honor."³² In order to uphold the honor of the position of *shaliah*, and of rabbis, he showed little tolerance for disrespect.

Significantly, the Hida was also honest with himself, acknowledging the limits of his forbearance. He describes the resentment he felt for

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^{25.} Ibid, p. 54.

^{26.} Ibid, p. 36.

^{27.} Ibid, p. 31.

^{28.} See Benayahu, vol. 1, p. 35.

^{29.} Avot 1:12.

^{30.} Ibid, p. 129.

^{31. &}quot;May Hashem save us from people's chatter, and may the name of Heaven not be desecrated on our account" (Ma'agal Tov, p. 137).

^{32.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 36.

the disdainful treatment he received from certain communities when he visited them in his role as *shaliah*. He laments in his diary that his natural patience did not suffice to assuage his feelings toward these people.³³ These comments are revealing in demonstrating how the Hida did not shy away from recognizing his limitations and failings, and from acknowledging when he did not possess the qualities that were needed under certain circumstances.

"It Is Proper to Find Merit for Israel"

The Hida wrote, "A man must always defend Israel, both individually and communally; and justify Israel, and give them the benefit of the doubt." He championed the value of favorable judgment and giving the benefit of the doubt, and focusing one's attention on the admirable qualities of other individuals and communities, rather than on their flaws.

Once, after delivering a sermon criticizing the audience for paying insufficient attention to spirituality in their lives, he concluded with an elaborate apology:

And we know that Israel are holy, beloved by the One above, and their will is to serve G-d, and there is nothing more to be said. It is only in case of some amount of doubt, about the minority of the minority of the masses, and in the spirit of the sermon and nothing else, for Israel is holy to G-d, the sons of the living G-d, and the plants resemble their roots, and their origin is hewn from Him, Who hews the forefathers...³⁵

Even when offering warranted and pointed criticism, he made sure to emphasize the greatness and virtues of his audience.

The Hida expresses this admiration for the Jewish people in a halachic context, as well, in his response to a ruling by Rabbi David Pardo that shaving one's beard is forbidden even with scissors, in contrast to the widespread practice among many observant Jews to shave with scissors. The Hida wrote:

I was alarmed to see it [Rabbi Pardo's ruling]... How was his honor insensitive to the merit of Israel... when he is well aware of the conditions in this land? They must shave their beards, and how can I not search out the merit of tens of thousands of Jews...?³⁶

As a *posek*, the Hida expended great effort to find legitimate halachic justification for widely observed practices and customs, firmly believing in the greatness of the Jewish people and in the responsibility of a *posek* to recognize that greatness. He writes:

How pleasant and good it is when he will find a basis for a custom of Israel, that is according to the law, as Hashem desires that we justify them, that we justify His creations. And if the masses do not fulfill the stringencies, we will take comfort that their custom has a holy source in the halachah... and it is proper to find merit for Israel.³⁷

The Hida's love for his fellow Jews knew no bounds. He felt the pain of each Jew and helped the poor from his own meager earnings, and the downtrodden with words of comfort and encouragement. When he saw Jews veering from a Torah lifestyle, he sat with them, generously giving his precious time, in an attempt to inspire them to return to the path of mitzvah observance.³⁸

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^{33.} It should be emphasized that these feelings are not characteristic of the Hida's attitude in general. These sentiments were expressed in reaction to specific experiences.

^{34.} Tziporen Shamir 11:142, p. 53a.

^{35.} Lev David, p. 24a.

^{36.} Haim Sha'al, 2:27, p. 29c.

^{37.} Ibid, p. 31a.

^{38.} See Benayahu, vol. II, p. 466.

The Hida was especially attentive to the plight of women suffering abuse and injustice at the hands of their husbands. He frequently lent them his vocal support, and made a point of treating them and all women with courtesy and respect. While in Ferrara in 1777 (5537), for example, he wrote in his journal: "I went to Senior Moshe Haim, and thanked the women for their graciousness, and all the heads of Ferrara honored me." He harbored general feelings of respect and concern for all members of the nation, who reciprocated with honor and love that is reflected in the praise and accolades showered upon the Hida throughout the Jewish world.

^{39.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 90.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Hida's Inner World

"Blackness"

In honor of

Rabbi Shmuel

and Rabbanit Ruthy Pinto

For their constant dedication toward

the entire community of Toronto.

Ami e3 Tara Cohen

Life was not always kind to the Hida, and, like all people, he went through difficult periods of emotional hardship. True to his trademark self-effacing honesty and humility, the Hida was remarkably frank in describing these experiences in his journal.

At certain periods during the Hida's life, mostly during the years of his second *shelihut* mission, he suffered from what he termed *shehorah* – literally, "blackness" – which likely refers to melancholia, a kind of depression. He first mentions this "blackness" in a journal entry from 1774 (5534), which he wrote upon receiving the tragic news of his wife's passing: "I was extremely distraught, and this caused me to become ill with the blackness, because I could not speak."

Despite these occasional attacks the Hida was able to come and go and interact with people without external signs of sorrow. In fact, he

1. Ma'agal Tov, p. 61.

describes that even while beset with melancholy, he was once able to convince a caretaker to return to his post,² and, on another occasion, engaged in conversation with the governor.³

The Hida did not allow this condition to interfere with his life; despite it, his life was, overall, as described in several sources, including his own writings, harmonious, quiet, and peaceful. This was due in large measure to his being a private individual who fled from publicity, focusing his attention instead on improving his character and achieving holiness. The only internal restlessness he exhibited was in his ongoing quest for self-improvement. He did not struggle for notoriety or work to launch a new movement. To the contrary, he was convinced that he did not possess leadership qualities and that he was thus unfit for official positions of authority. He aspired to change himself, not necessarily to change the entire world, and this helped mold a life of serenity and fulfillment.

Messianic Hopes

On several occasions the Hida made vague references to his hope and expectation of receiving a revelation of sorts: "Soon I will merit and it will be revealed through me"; "Through me will the truth be clarified, and I will do some things and rectifications; just be strong and persevere"; "Through me will be revealed the truth and I will also retract something that I wrote"; "I will attain comprehension and retract some things that I wrote..."

While we have no knowledge of what kind of revelation the Hida anticipated, these aspirations may relate to the Messianic hopes that were awakened during his lifetime, specifically in association with him. There is evidence that the Hida's extraordinary achievements and profound influence triggered the anticipation among some of the imminent arrival of the final Redemption. This hope is expressed in the words written by Rabbi Avraham Brody, a member of the Hida's special society of scholars in Livorno, after the Hida's death:

I do not know if there is one in a thousand whose soul will be awakened to die for the Torah, for I have searched much and found not even one... I had found one, but he has been gathered [by G-d] – perhaps my sins are the cause, for his soul was tied to mine eternally. And he was unique in all the world! Praiseworthy are those simple inhabitants of Livorno, that they merited to have him buried among them, here in the holy community of Livorno, a city crowned with the glory of Israel, the joy of the entire land.

He was unique in the world in all good qualities, and blessed is G-d and blessed is His Name Who brought him close to here. For who can describe the greatness of our master, and his great strength in the entire Torah, about whom I doubt if from the days of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai who had the soul of Moshe, none arose like Moshe, except the Rabbi, the pious holy lamp, alone in the lower worlds in Torah and fear of Heaven, our master and rabbi, the Hida. I found him as I had hoped, that the paths of the revealed and hidden Torah are clear to him; there is none other like him before, nor will there be afterwards. May his merit protect us and the holy and pure city [Livorno] and all of Israel, so that they will unify their hearts toward the love of G-d, and of His Torah and His service, until the sorrow and heartsickness will be healed from prolonged hoping, as during long days we have hoped for light, and now found darkness. Perhaps He will yet soon have mercy to

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^{2.} Ibid, p. 117.

^{3.} Ibid, p. 96.

^{4.} Yosef Tehillot (New York, 1976).

establish and build His city, and we will yet see the light of Zion and the land will be filled of knowledge of G-d.⁵

In this passage, beyond extolling the Hida's unparalleled stature of greatness, Rabbi Brody alludes to the profound disappointment wrought by his esteemed mentor's death. With the Hida's passing the Jewish world not only lost an influential and inspiring spiritual giant, but also saw their hopes of redemption vanish. During the "long days" of the Hida's lifetime, Jews around the world "hoped for light," believing that the Hida's extraordinary character heralded the onset of the Messianic era, but alas, with his death, they "found darkness."

Rabbi Brody's remarks bear strong resemblance to the piercing lament uttered over two centuries earlier by Rabbi Yitzhak Hakohen, a student of the Arizal, upon the passing of his teacher: "Is this the hope for which we yearned in your lifetime, to see good and Torah and great wisdom in the world?" The Ari's students believed that he was Mashiah ben Yosef, and the Ari told Rabbi Yitzhak, "If the generation had merit, that year should be the true end [of exile], for from the days of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, there was no time as appropriate [as now] for the end [of exile]." Rabbi Brody spoke similarly about the Hida, suggesting that the Hida's disciples pinned their Messianic hopes upon their master much as the Arizal's disciples had viewed him as the harbinger of redemption.

The Hida's Two Worlds

The Hida, like other giants of Kabbalah, lived simultaneously in two different worlds – the practical world in which we all live and operate, and an inner spiritual world which was, for the most part, kept private and concealed. He may be compared to other towering halachic scholars, such as Rabbi Yosef Caro, who studied clandestinely with a *maggid*, but whose literary output and life's work did not, on the surface, appear to have been influenced by these encounters.⁸ On the one hand, the Hida was very much a man of this world, who appreciated the beauty of nature, delighted in the joys of human life, took interest in a wide variety of subjects, and could relate to the full range of human experiences just like ordinary laymen. At the same time, he nurtured an inner world of sanctity and mystical meditation, and it was this inner world that made the Hida a man of unequal vision and, in the eyes of his students, even gave him the potential of being Mashiah.

It was perhaps this rare combination of the practical and the mystical, of the worldly and the spiritual, of humanness and angelic purity, that so dazzled those who knew him and knew of him. He was firmly grounded both in the world of familiar human experience, and in the spiritual world of Kabbalah. He was thus described with epithets such as "the wonder of the generation," "the glory of the generation," "the leader of the generation," "the great light," "our pride," and even "a wonder of all generations."

The combination of the Hida's two worlds was aptly expressed by Rabbi Hananel Nifi, who wrote of him: "Who can tell his galloping praise, his laudation cannot be complete: about his quick wit, his strong memory, his great piety, his holiness, and humility which is vast. He was crowned with all the good traits ... and he was honored greatly by all the Diaspora of Israel." Rabbi Rephael Yosef Hazan, a great scholar of Turkey who later became Chief Rabbi of Israel,

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^{5.} Rabbi Avraham Brody, Devar Hamelech, p. 182d.

^{6.} Rabbi Haim Vital, Sefer Hahizyonot, p. 230.

^{7.} Rabbi Yaakov Semah, Naggid U'metzaveh, p. 3a.

^{8.} A notable exception is Rabbi Yosef Caro's work *Maggid Mesharim*, in which he records the material he learned from the *maggid*.

^{9.} Rabbi Matzliah Yehiel ben Rabbi Moshe Avid MaOvadiah, Hazon Ovadiah, p. 23c.

^{10.} Toledot Gedole Yisrael B'Italia, p. 113.

said about the Hida, "It is clear to all that he was the greatest of the generation, and left none like him in Israel or the Diaspora."¹¹

This aspect of the Hida's persona had a profound impact upon everyone with whom he came into contact, and especially upon the communities in which he lived and worked. It is likely that he would have earned his place as one of the great Torah luminaries even without his prolific literary output which continues to play a crucial role in Torah scholarship until today. For generations after his passing the communities in Jerusalem and Livorno spoke of him as someone whom they knew personally, and as an integral part of their respective communities' history and lore. He earned legendary status not only through his scholarly output, but also through his unique personality which combined the realities of life in this world with the holiness and spirituality of the upper worlds.

^{11.} Ma'arche Lev, part 11, p. 192c.

^{12.} See Shivhe Harav Hida, Sefer HaHida, pp. 178-198.



The Hida's Scholarship

The Hida was a traveler, fundraiser, historian, and bibliographer, but his true identity was that of a Torah scholar. His life revolved around Torah learning, and in several places in his writings he emphasizes the vital importance of diligent study and sacrificing worldly pleasures for the sake of scholarship. He writes that if a scholar "removes his attention from worldly matters... and does not think of eating and drinking, for his heart and mind are involved in Torah... certainly the Torah will reveal its secrets to him." Elsewhere, he exhorts that "one should occupy himself with Torah in joy and not waste his time, which is more precious than pearls, on the futilities of this world," and that "one whose soul desires Torah knowledge to the extent that day and night he thinks only of Torah and he throws away

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In loving memory of $old {Yosef Soberano} \ zt"l$ May his soul rest in Gan Eden, amen.

David ed Hanna Soberano

and Family

In loving memory of

Rachel bat Shulamit (Haber) a"h

The Haber Family

^{1.} Petah Enayim, Avot 6:4.

^{2.} Tziporen Shamir, no. 49.

the matters of this lowly material world... will attain a wondrous level."

While the impetus and goal of his travels was fundraising for the communities in Eretz Yisrael, the Hida leveraged his unique life situation towards his ultimate priority. He used his *shelihut*, which took him through over 150 cities, as an opportunity for him to view a large number of manuscripts and books, and meet numerous Torah scholars. Even without the structure and intensity of a yeshivah setting, he nevertheless managed to continue growing as a scholar, capitalizing upon his exposure to a wide variety of Torah texts and personalities.

Meetings with Leading Rabbis

Throughout his life, and especially during his years of travel, the Hida sought out leading rabbis and scholars, and was, in turn, warmly welcomed by them. When he was a young man he often visited the home of the righteous kabbalist Rabbi Gedaliah Hayun, who made a deep impression on him. In Egypt, he had the privilege of meeting the leading sage of the generation, Rabbi Shelomo Algazi, whose holiness and diligent study is described by the Hida in great detail.

During his second trip to Modena, Italy, he met the city's rabbi, Rabbi Yishmael Hakohen, a veritable scholar. The Hida befriended Rabbi Yishmael and visited him frequently during his stay in Modena, engaging in lengthy halachic discussions with him. Toward the end of his first trip to Livorno, the Hida met the famous scholar Rabbi Yehuda Ayash, who makes mention of the meeting in his book *Afra D'ar'a*.

While traveling in Germany the Hida met the rabbi of Ansbach, while he was a guest of the rabbi's father-in-law in Trelingen. He spoke with the rabbi "for about six hours in all kinds of subjects," during

which, the Hida writes, "I found that I had written some original ideas that he himself thought of, as well. I enjoyed his knowledge and intelligence."

He also met with Rabbi Shaul of Amsterdam, author of *Binyan Ariel*, and Rabbi Shaul, Chief Rabbi of The Hague, who showed the Hida great honor and spoke with him in Torah matters.

Visits to European Libraries

The Hida viewed a great number of manuscripts over the course of his travels, and acquired many others. He never squandered an opportunity to visit libraries or museums in the cities he passed through. The Hida's descriptions of the national Parisian library, which he visited for the first time in 1755 (5515), are quite illustrative. He writes, "I saw very strange Jewish books there, but they are the small minority here. But they have rooms full of books of all religions and wisdoms in all languages, an incredible collection." He returned to the library during his second visit to Paris, in 1778 (5538), when he received special permission to enter the manuscript department. He writes, "There are thousands of manuscripts from every type of wisdom ... and some of our holy books in manuscript, and some works of science, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and ancient mysticism."

Several days later he returned to the manuscript department. "I walked around the department in its entirety ... there are a few rooms full of writings in every language, and all wisdoms and religions... They told me there are more than 50,000 bindings of manuscripts. I did not visit the print library this time, but I did twenty-two years ago,

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^{3.} Ibid, no. 50.

^{4.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 15.

^{5.} In *Shem Hagedolim*, under "Rabbi Eliezer of Metz," he wrote, "and there are more than 2,000 of our manuscripts."

and the sheer size of it is a wonder. They say the Parisian library is the most special and largest in the world."

The Hida saw the municipal libraries in numerous cities, and described them in his travel journal.

Modena: He visited the Modena library for the first time in 1754 (5514),⁷ and he returned in Adar II, 1777 (5537). The library consisted of "two beautiful rooms with marble pillars, figurines, and beauty. And all the books are bound well. There are sixteen bindings of the Ramak's [Rabbi Moshe Cordovero's] *Or Yakar*."⁸

Turin: In Tevet 1755 (5516) the Hida visited the library of Turin together with the city's rabbi, Rabbi Yitzhak Formijini. "It is as a monkey beside a person in comparison to the Parisian one. I saw there the four sections [of the *Shulhan Aruch*] written in utter beauty with embossed gold lettering, written in Ferreira over two hundred years ago for a wealthy leader. There were more of our manuscripts there, but all in philosophy and science."

Pirinchi: In Kislev 1774 (5535) the Hida visited the library of Pirinchi and saw "some tractates of Talmud written on parchment, in 4937, *P'sikta Bereishit* and *Shemot* manuscripts, and books in every language – seven generous rooms."¹⁰

Venice: In Tishre 1776 (5537) the Hida visited the library and wrote that "it is very small, but there is a full room of male and female statues of marble."

The Hida also visited other libraries in the Italian cities of Venice, Modena, Ferreira, Mantova, Trieste, and Pissarro.¹²

The Hida was the first scholar to use what would later become known as the Munich Talmud, an edition of the Talmud from the Tosafist period written in full on parchment. He found the treasured manuscript in the library of Rabbi Leb, the leader of the Jewish community in Pfersee, Germany. The Hida was elated by the find, and later expressed his regret at having been unable to complete his study of the book.¹³

In Kalif he found the *Meshivat Nafesh* (by Rabbi Yaakov Semah); in Amsterdam, *Tzitzat Novel Tzvi* (by Rabbi Yaakov Sassportas); in Firenze, some parchment tractates; in Tunis, Rabbenu Yonah's commentary to *Sanhedrin*; and in Regio, an edited copy of his great-great-grandfather's work, *Hessed L'Avraham*. The Hida mentions these discoveries in his *Shem Hagedolim*.¹⁴

The Hida's Library

The Hida's own library began with the large number of books he received from his father as a child. His father's library included numerous books and manuscripts which he had inherited from his forebears. The Hida expanded his library considerably by purchasing books over the course of his two *shelihut* missions, especially in Italy and Germany. For example, in Iyar 1754 (5514) he bought a copy of *Shulhan Aruch Hoshen Mishpat* in Venice. That summer, in Frankfurt am Main, the Hida purchased a large number of books and left the boxes with his host, Rabbi Reuven Scheyer, who shipped them to

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^{6.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 124.

^{7.} Ibid, p. 7.

^{8.} Ibid, p. 91, and Shem Hagedolim, Or Yakar.

^{9.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 40.

^{10.} Ibid, p. 69.

^{11.} Ibid, p. 84.

^{12.} Ibid, pp. 8, 91, 90, 76, 96.

^{13.} See above, chapter 9.

^{14.} Torat HaHida, p. 13.

^{15.} Dr. Yeshayahu Zana in Cincinnati has the receipt. In the top of the frame of the frontispiece, the Hida wrote: "Belonging to the small servant, Haim Yosef David Azoulay. Venice, Erev Rosh Hodesh Iyar, 5513."

Amsterdam ahead of the Hida's arrival there.¹⁶ He then purchased more books in Amsterdam.¹⁷

The Hida seems to have carried a large number of books with him when he traveled. During his second *shelihut*, when he left France for Italy and was near Torino, he learned of the ban against bringing books into the Pope's borders. "When I heard his words," the Hida writes, "I trembled, because even though I was not carrying a Talmud or *Zohar*, I still had many books." And as he made his way to Avignon in 1756 (5516) he had "some small books of *En Yaakov* and two small Talmuds and such, and it was all very dangerous." He hid the volumes in his clothes, and when he came to Avignon, the community leaders told him, "In G-d's Name, you should not have any book, big or small." He had no choice but to send the books to the community leader to hide them. "

The Hida's library was scattered over different countries. When he embarked on his second *shelihut*, he left most of his books with his friend Rabbi Yosef Halevi Polako in Hebron.²⁰ When he settled in Italy, he bought more books and manuscripts.²¹ In his accounts the Hida lists his expenses for buying books and manuscripts and copying them, as well as the books that he traded or sold when he needed the money.²²

When he needed a manuscript or correct version of books he already owned, he wrote to communities near and far to find them. One such request was sent from Livorno to a rabbi in Morocco: "To the Hacham of the Ram family, Rabbi Yaakov Toledano, may Hashem bless him with life: May he send manuscripts of the minor tractates, in the cities of the inner west." When he did receive a manuscript from him, he noted that "in *Masechet Gerim* there are many changes and one good addition."

A list in the Hida's handwriting names 619 books, including manuscripts, which he owned.²³ This library was inherited by his son, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah, though some volumes were passed down to the Hida's grandson, Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah (son of Rabbi Avraham Azoulay), already during the Hida's lifetime. The library inherited by Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah Azoulay, to which his son, Moshe Azoulay, added, was sold in part to Rabbi Avraham David Hai Viyuanti, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah's student who succeeded him as rabbi of Ancona.

The rest was sold to Shemuel Sheinblum, a bookseller from Lemberg. In 1872 (5632) Sheinblum published a thirty-page catalogue²⁴ in Lemberg which listed fifty-six manuscripts (mostly from Italy), 1,030 printed Hebrew books, and eight books in Spanish. The bookseller distributed these books, scattering them over the world.²⁵ Some of the Hida's library was bought by Baruch ben Avraham Almanzi, in

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^{16.} Ma'agal Tov, pp. 25, 27.

^{17.} Ibid, p. 29.

^{18.} Ibid, p. 167.

^{19.} Ibid, p. 37.

^{20.} Ibid, p. 66.

^{21.} In his manuscript of Rabbi Yosef ibn Migash's commentary to *Masechet Shavuot* the Hida wrote, "I bought it here in Livorno from booksellers who bought it from the estate of Hacham Rabbi Yitzhak Lupis Pereira. Signed by the young Hida. Kislev 5540, with the help of G-d."

^{22.} In a manuscript of *Hapelia* found in the archives library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, a note appears below the signature of its owner, Yitzhak Atias: "I bought this from the perfect rabbi, the light of the Diaspora, the Hida. May Hashem

give him life and lengthen his years and may we both merit viewing the comfort [of redemption], studying Torah and being busy with *mitzvot* at the time of the redemption, and be famous and praised."

^{23.} Sefer HaHida, pp. 42-44.

^{24.} Catalogue d'une collection Anconienne don't la plus grande partie derive de la bibliotheque appurtenant aux celebres Mrs. C. J. D. Azulai et son fils Rafael, Rabbin a Ancone, arrange et mise en vente par Samuel Schonblum. The books were to be sold as a unit or individually.

^{25.} Shemuel Sheinblum's stamp is on many of the manuscripts in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary and in the British museum, indicating that they originated from the Hida's library.

Padua, for his son. Almanzi's books were bought by a man named Tzadner for the British Museum.²⁶ Several manuscripts in the museum bear the Hida's signature.

A large number of manuscripts from the Hida's collection ended up in the hands of Rabbi Yehuda Zerahiah Azoulay of Marakesh, who settled in Israel. Many are on parchment, and represent the only known existing copy of the work. These include Rabbi Shelomo Siriliyo's commentary to the



Signature of Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay

Jerusalem Talmud, the Rashba's commentary to *Masechet Menahot*, and Rabbi Betzalel Germani's *Shitah Mekubetzet* to *Kodashim*, among other important texts. Rabbi Yehuda Zerahiah sold some of these manuscripts, and tried to publish a few others. After his death, his inheritors sold the books and manuscripts. At the end of his copy of the Ran's commentary to *Masechet Rosh Hashanah*, a list appears of manuscripts that were bought from his estate and dispersed throughout the world. His grandson, Avraham Mandelbaum-Azoulay, transferred forty of these valuable manuscripts to the national library in Jerusalem.²⁷

Virtually every large library in the world hosts a manuscript that the Hida held, and most have notes and references in his handwriting.

^{26.} The Hebrew Treasures of England, Transaction of the Jewish Historical Society of England, vol. VIII, Elhanan Adler, 1918, p. 11.

^{27.} Kiryat Sefer, year 1, p. 85.



A Portrait of Prolificacy – The Hida the Writer

An Affinity for Writing

The Hida's strong affinity for books was matched by his love of writing, and these two traits combined to create his role as collector and author, expert scholar and researcher. He began his career in writing at a very young age, perhaps as young as seventeen, and continued writing and publishing throughout his life.

It appears that the Hida found writing very easy, and he enjoyed it. He wrote nearly everything he learned and thought of, and he wrote under all circumstances. His commentary to the Rambam's *Hilchot Sotah* was written in Egypt during a plague in 1768. During his dismal voyage from Alexandria to Tunis, when he endured the hostility of an irate captain and feared interception by Russian patrols, he did not relinquish his pen: "Throughout every hardship I would learn

This dedication is in honor of our beloved parents

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Rabbi Raphael & Simy Ohayon

who serve as an inspiration to us every day.

Moshe & Bat-Sheva Cohen Yedidya & Denise Ohayon Lazer & Mechal Klein Ari & Tirtzah Greenspan Aaron & Esther Ohayon Shani & Manuel Kanner Mutti & Miriam Reznick Diego & Esther Borghese Yossi & Suri Ohayon and Yaacov Ohayon

according to the time, and read the full Parashat Derachim, and I wrote down some thoughts, explanations, ideas, and homiletics, from Vayikra to Emor." In fact, when on one occasion the rigors of travel did not allow him to write, he made a note of it in his journal: "On Monday, at noon, we were in Phuns, and because of the chaos there I did not write." That night he reached Valencia, and made a hurried attempt to fill in what he had missed.

When he found himself without books, he still wrote and innovated from memory, jotting down reminders to himself to go back and check his work. For example, when he was in Pisa in 1786 (5546) he wrote in his journal, "I saw this in Livorno, and now in Pisa I have neither the Talmud nor the book mentioned - actually, no book at all - and I am writing from memory and must, b'li neder, review it with a Talmud and the book."

In 1785 (5545) the Hida was very ill, and yet he continued writing. In one entry from that year he wrote, "When I was ill in Nissan 5545, may that trouble not return, I could barely pray, let alone learn, and the book Kav Hayashar fell into my hands, and I saw something there and with Hashem's help, wrote down some crumbs of ideas."4 Interestingly, although he was too weak to pray or learn, he was still able to write, suggesting that he found writing easier than praying and learning. He then writes, "Whenever you see the likes of this, it is because I am writing in my sleep and my hand writes nonsense."5 The Hida apparently did not part from his notebook and pen at night,

to the extent that he ended up writing as he was drifting out of consciousness.

A Scholar's Imperative

The Hida felt that Torah scholars bear an obligation to put their scholarship into writing for the benefit of the Jewish people and its scholarly tradition. In his Shem Hagedolim⁶ he writes, "Some of the great men of Israel were careful not to print their novel insights during their lifetimes. But in truth, it has been said of caution not to be overly so, for this has unfortunately caused many writings to be lost." The Hida understood why Torah scholars would be hesitant to publish their work in the interest of humility, but he felt that this constituted excessive caution.

This was, quite obviously, the approach he followed. So much so, in fact, that the quality of his writings may have suffered due to the urgency with which he approached this undertaking. As the Hida did not know whether he would be remaining in Livorno permanently, and the prospect of his return to Eretz Yisrael - which would have hampered his ability to publish - always loomed, he rushed to print his works even before completing the final stages of editing. In stark contrast to his organized, punctilious nature, some of his books suffer from a lack of organization and precise citations. These flaws were the product of his nearly frantic efforts to publish before a possible return to the Holy Land. And these efforts were borne out of his strong conviction of a scholar's imperative to publish his Torah insights and contribute everything he can to the ever-growing corpus of Torah literature.

Reliance on Memory

There is testimony that as a boy the Hida ate an anacardium (baladhur), a plant that can enhance memory, but poses serious

^{1.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 54. These insights were later published in the Hida's work Rosh David.

^{2.} Kuntres Mas'aot, 272a, 253.

^{3.} Pisa had very few books, and Rabbi Azaryahu Fiyajo, its rabbi from 1607-1627 (5367-5387), mentioned that he had "only tractates Bava Kamma, Shavuot, Nazir, and some of the later commentators, but not the main ones" (introduction to Gidule Terumah, Venice, 1644).

^{4.} Manuscript Jerusalem, 24a, 234.

^{5.} Ibid, 99b, 382.

^{6.} Sefarim, Nishal David.

health risks, such as the risk of deformity. Indeed, Rabbi Avraham Calphon recounts that he studied at the Hida's study hall in Livorno, and noticed that the Hida could not use the middle finger of his left hand, perhaps a result of his consumption of the dangerous plant.⁷

Regardless, it is clear that the Hida was blessed with a phenomenal memory, and retained nearly everything he ever learned or read. The Hida himself did not appear to think highly of his memory, as he writes regarding his experiences with the Tunisian scholars, "I, in my poverty, am without much memory, yet they consider me to have a great memory."8 And to whatever extent possible, he tried not to rely on his memory. While he studied he would take notes which he referred to as "notebooks" or "memories," and from these notes he would later organize his books. These notes served like index cards that are often used today by researchers who take notes while preparing material for their books.

But the Tunisians were quite correct in their assessment. Many of the Hida's hiddushim (novel Torah insights) are the product of connections he drew between different areas of Torah, which required an extraordinary amount of readily accessible knowledge. And a quick review of detailed journal entries written from memory clearly demonstrates an extraordinary power of retention. In his works he accurately cites information and ideas he heard from the scholars of Jerusalem many decades earlier.9 And his books contain hundreds of ideas that he committed to writing many years after he heard them.

The Hida was forced to rely on his memory because he did not always have the books he needed. The indefinite nature of his stay in

Livorno upset his plans of putting his library in order, as he did not always purchase books and had to rely on short-term loans. These conditions adversely impacted his writing, and he apologizes for these defects numerous times. When Rabbi Avraham Hayun expressed his surprise that the Hida did not refer to the Sefer Hakavanot in a certain context, the Hida responds, "This kind of thing would be quite surprising were I living in my own home within my own walls filled with all the holy books. But I am a stranger in the land am missing many main books, and when I borrow a book, I must return it."10

These conditions enlighten us as to the seemingly peculiar amalgamation we occasionally find in the Hida's literature. Alongside his in-depth, intricate halachic dissertations, he at times inserts light homilies and *gematrios* that have no direct connection to the subject matter under discussion. Following the publication of a book the Hida often added notes and additions that he found in texts to which he gained access only afterward, and he would then publish this material in his next book, despite lack of context. Almost every book of the Hida's contains these notes on previously published books, and some also contain his comments on the works of other scholars.¹¹

There are very few instances where the Hida erred in identifying the source of an insight, but never in content. For example, in Mar'it Ha'ayin, the last of the Hida's books, which he wrote in the final year of his life, he cites the same quote in two separate places, attributing it to a different scholar in each context. In this same work, he recorded in four places a story heard from Rabbi Haim ben Atar.¹² This does not occur in any other of the Hida's writings.

^{7.} Sefer HaHida, p. 183.

^{8.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 57.

^{9.} In Shem Hagedolim, manuscript NY 0870, there is a comment that does not appear in the printed edition, under "Rabbi Eliyahu Hakohen" 1, 55: "I remember when I was very young, I heard Rabbi Avraham Yitzhaki speaking at his funeral in the year 5489." The Hida at that time was a mere five years old, yet he remembered the speaker.

^{10.} Haim Sha'al 2:10, p. 16a.

^{11.} See Kitve HaHida, 18b.

^{12.} Ta'anit 25, Sanhedrin 7, Temurah 7, Shavuot 30.

The Hida and His Contemporaries

In his scholarship the Hida showed great respect and reverence for the Torah scholars of previous generations and their writings. Whenever he disagreed with something written in an earlier generation, he took care to first study the issue in great depth before expressing his disapproval. He was also opposed to the introduction of new stringencies that are not mentioned in earlier writings. He held the Torah giants of earlier generations in very high esteem and would question their comments and rulings only after considerable hesitation.

This reverential treatment of scholars of the past stands in stark contrast to the Hida's attitude toward his contemporaries, for whose works he did not have high regard. He did not approve of their learning style, and there were certain scholars with whom he would not even enter into a discussion when they asked him a question regarding something he wrote. And when he mentions their opinion in his books, he usually does not quote them by name. The Hida's focus in his works was thus citing and elucidating the writings of earlier scholars, without paying much attention to contemporary scholarship.

For the same reason, the Hida wrote very few letters of approbation for books of his contemporaries. The notable exceptions are Rabbi David Pardo's Hasde David; the work Kehillat Yaakov by Rabbi Pardo's son, Rabbi Yaakov Pardo; Rabbi Mordechai Carmi's Ma'amar Mordechai, and Rabbi Yaakov ben Naim's Zera Yaakov. After 1784 (5544) the Hida did not write any official letters of approbation, though he did write introductions to several works, but these were only for works of earlier scholars.¹³ On some occasions, when a close colleague or accomplished scholar published a work, he wrote congratulatory remarks, or an essay regarding an idea mentioned in the book, instead of a formal letter of approbation.

The Hida would explain his reluctance to write approval letters by claiming that he felt unworthy of such an honor. In 1777 (5537) Rabbi Yosef Dimiliav from Carpantratz asked the Hida for an approbation to his book Otzerot Yosef, and the Hida refused, explaining, "I am not worthy of this."14 And when Rabbi Rephael Yosef ben Rabi, emissary of Jerusalem, asked the Hida to recommend his Derech Hamelech, the Hida replied, "For a certain reason I have accepted upon myself and I am not free to do so, especially since his honor is a great, wellknown rabbi ... and I am young and lowly, and who am I to stand in the place of the great?"15 It appears, however, that this was merely an excuse, and the real reason for his refusal to formally approve of this and other contemporary works was his low regard for their quality.

The Hida was especially careful not to give recommendations for any responsa, no matter how much pressure was applied on him.

The Hida's policy reflects his high scholarly standards; he demanded that Torah scholars produce quality, worthwhile works of Torah literature that were truly worthy of study. These are the standards he applied to his own writing, and which he wished his contemporaries would follow.

^{13.} An exception is an introduction he wrote for the republication of the Hiddushe *HaRitva* to *Yevamot*, which he called a letter of approbation.

^{14.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 102.

^{15.} Derech Hamelech, end of page 113:4. In other instances, he simply stated that this was his policy, without any explanation. When a close colleague urged him to write a commendation for Rabbi Haim Benveniste's commentary to the Haggadah, the Hida answered, "For years I have vowed not to write approbations. Believe me, that great people have pressured me to shame, and beloved ones from Tunis, as well, and I sent them away empty-handed, and though you are not less than them, but just like those great people, I therefore cannot fulfill this request" (Iggerot D'Rav Haim Yosef David Azoulay page 7, 5 Tammuz, 5547).



The Hida's Writings

The Hida's works are unique in several respects. Firstly, they generally do not have lengthy introductions, like most works of Torah literature, though some have a brief preface. Additionally, the Hida did not include letters of approbation from his contemporaries, as is customary. With the exception of the letters written by the great scholars of Israel for two of his first books, *Sha'ar Yosef* and *Birke Yosef*, he did not solicit letters of approbation, and had no desire to include approbations by scholars of other countries. This stemmed directly from his attitude towards the scholars of his time (as discussed in the previous chapter).

Comparative Text Analysis

Dedicated in loving memory of **Abraham Aaron Pinto**

(Abraham ben Izaak)

Esther Leah Nunes-Pinto

(Esther bat Benaim vaRibca)

May their neshamot rest in Gan Eden, amen.

Dr. Paul Senechal and Family

More significantly, however, the Hida's writings are unique in their reliance on unpublished manuscripts. Few rabbinic scholars used unpublished manuscripts as did the Hida, who was as proficient in manuscript texts as he was in printed books. In his preface to his first book, the *Sha'ar Yosef* commentary to *Horayot*, he makes a point of

mentioning his use of manuscripts of earlier commentaries. Many of the Hida's works are thus invaluable treasure-troves of manuscripts, some of which are no longer extant today and are available to us only through the Hida's writings.

The Hida regarded analysis of earlier manuscripts and verifying correct editions of texts as basic to the process of Torah study and halachic decision-making. And he objected to authors who challenged the claims of earlier authorities without determining which versions of the relevant primary sources were available to those earlier authors.

One example of how the Hida's use of manuscripts affected his halachic approach relates to an issue concerning *keri'at haTorah* (the public Torah reading). Rabbi Yosef Caro, in *Shulhan Aruch*, rules that although the congregational Torah reading is generally of rabbinic origin (as opposed to a Biblical obligation), two annual readings – *Parashat Zachor* and *Parashat Parah*² – are required on the level of Torah law. Many commentaries, while acknowledging the Biblical origin of the *Parashat Zachor* reading, question the assertion that *Parashat Parah* is also required as a Biblical obligation.

In truth, Rabbi Yosef Caro writes explicitly in his *Bet Yosef* that this claim is found in the medieval Tosafists' commentary to the Talmud. However, the *Bet Yosef's* comment only reinforces the commentators' question, as *Tosafot* mention the Biblical origin of only *Parashat Zachor*, and not of *Parashat Parah*. As a result of this question, the Gaon of Vilna rules that only *Parashat Zachor* constitutes a Biblical obligation, and speculates that Rabbi Yosef Caro had before him an imprecise version of the Tosafists' commentary, which mentions both *Parashat Zachor* and *Parashat Parah*.

The Hida solves the mystery by drawing our attention to the comments of Rabbi Shelomo Luria (the Maharshal), in his *Hochmat Shelomo* commentary to the Talmud, where he writes: "[The word] 'parah' is to be deleted... this is an error." The Maharshal clearly had the same text of *Tosafot* that Rabbi Yosef Caro saw, and claimed that the word "parah" was added erroneously. Subsequent editions were amended in light of the Maharshal's comment, and thus standard editions, including the one used by the Vilna Gaon, make no mention of *Parashat Parah*.³

The Hida's skills of textual analysis also enabled him to determine erroneous attributions of works. Interestingly, he was not always correct in his claims in this regard. He at one point contended that the work *Kanfe Yonah*, which was attributed to the Rama de Pano, was in fact not the work of the Rama, "for the language of the Rama is clear and pure." When it was verified that the work had indeed been written by the Rama, but hastily and without the author's characteristic eloquence, the Hida felt gratified that he had been able to detect the difference in the Rama's language, but regretted having reached the wrong conclusion.

Another unique aspect of the Hida's scholarship is his collections of marginalia of earlier scholars, which he printed in his own works. These include Rabbi Menahem di Lunzano's notes to the Jerusalem Talmud,⁵ as well as notes of other scholars that he found in the margin of the Jerusalem Talmud.⁶ In *Shem Hagedolim* (in the "hagahot" section) the Hida compiled a long list of marginalia that he found in the margins of books of known scholars, such as Rabbi Betzalel Ashkenazi's notes on the Jerusalem Talmud, Rabbi Suleiman ben Ohana's notes to the *Sifri*, Eliezer ben Arha's notes on *Mishneh Torah*,

^{1.} *Devarim* 26:17–19. This portion is read on the Shabbat before the Purim holiday.

^{2.} Bamidbar 19. This portion is read on the Shabbat two weeks before Rosh Hodesh Nissan.

^{3.} See Petah Enayim, Berachot 14b.

^{4.} Shem Hagedolim (Sefarim) no. 44.

^{5.} Kikar La'aden, 161b-164b.

^{6.} Ibid, 164b-176b.

and notes written by his great-great-grandfather, Rabbi Avraham Azoulay.

The Hida's works quickly earned popularity, and abridged versions began appearing already during his lifetime. Passages from his works are quoted extensively in the scholarly works of his contemporaries, and in fact his long-time friend and colleague Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi addressed many of the Hida's comments in *Birke Yosef* in his book *Hilchot Yom Tov*.

And, as with all scholarly works, the Hida's writings also invited criticism. Rabbi Mordechai Carmi, in his *Ma'amar Mordechai*, challenged many of the Hida's rulings in *Birke Yosef*, and the Hida responded to some of these objections in his *Mahazik Berachah*. Rabbi Mordechai, in turn, composed another work, *Divre Mordechai*, to respond to the challenges raised against his rulings in his earlier work. The Hida in his later writings makes no mention of Rabbi Mordechai Carmi's rulings, and Professor Meir Benayahu speculates that this was done to ease the tension that grew over the course of the debate.⁷ Significantly, after the Hida's passing, Rabbi Mordechai Carmi was among those who described him as "*mofet hador*" – "the wonder of the generation."

The Hida's Style

The Hida's language in his works is an interesting study in its own right. The Hida had a highly developed sense of language, and employed different writing styles in different contexts. Sometimes his writing is clear, simple, and descriptive, while in other places his style is dense with allusions and subtle references to Biblical verses and rabbinic sayings, making it difficult for readers with limited exposure to rabbinic literature. One consistent quality that runs throughout the Hida's writings is brevity. He had an uncanny ability

to incorporate numerous concepts succinctly into a single sentence without compromising lucidity. His works are thus worthy of study not only for their content, but also for the literary skills they display.

In his halachic essays the Hida follows the traditional Sephardic-rabbinic style, building upon the halachic rulings of his predecessors and preferring simplicity over innovative and convoluted *pilpul*. In his sermons his language is much more descriptive, and, like other sermons of his day, he often opens with a creative, engaging story, a product of his fruitful imagination. His travel journal contains thorough descriptions and displays a sense of humor. Throughout his writings the Hida employs allusions and references to verses, slightly modifying the Scriptural text to suit his needs, adding a playful, enjoyable element to the text. The Hida also applied new usages to a number of words, and even made up his own idioms.⁸

Mussar

The study of *mussar* (religious admonition) was always a fixture of the Hida's learning schedule. In his work *Moreh Ba'etzba*⁹ he writes, "Study works of *mussar* constantly." Elsewhere, in his *Birke Yosef*, ¹⁰ he elaborates further on the importance of studying works of *mussar*:

It is proper for every scholar to set aside a period from time to time to study *mussar*, for the greater one is, the greater is his negative inclination... Since he is involved with creating novel thoughts, it is probable that he will become conceited. I have a tradition that when the Sages said that Torah study is the antidote for the negative inclination, this refers to the *mussar* of both the earlier and later Sages.

^{7.} Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p.121.

^{8.} See Benayahu, pp. 100-105

^{9. 17.}

^{10.} O.C. 1:9.

In particular the Hida strongly advocated the study of *Masechet Avot*, considering it a valuable source of *mussar*. Other works of *mussar* which he studied include Rabbi Haim Vital's *Sha'are Kedushah*, and Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas' *Reshit Hochmah*. He advised studying one work of *mussar* at a time, learning it from beginning to end, and then proceeding to another. He writes, "Even if one has read a work [of *mussar*] several times, when he reads it again, he will become aware of things that he had not yet been aware of. Even if he was familiar with the idea, the time and situation in which he now stands will bring fresh meaning to the concept."

Not surprisingly, the Hida also composed several works of *mussar*, which earned widespread popularity and continue to be studied and cherished even today. Unlike some other leading Torah sages, whose writing was limited to high-level scholarship intended for the erudite elite, the Hida paid a great deal of attention to the unlearned masses who yearned for spiritual guidance and inspiration. He composed several works for this audience, directing them in the service of Hashem and inspiring them to raise the standards of their religious observance.

His most important work of *mussar* is his thirty-two-chapter book *Lev David*. He also composed two smaller books, *Moreh Ba'etzba* and *Tziporen Shamir*, in which he outlines basic laws and customs according to the calendar year to allow unlearned Jews who do not study halachic texts to access information needed to observe basic halachah. In *Moreh Ba'etzba* he also incorporates *mussar*, Kabbalah, and general guidelines for pious conduct. He also published a work entitled *Kesher Godel* on the laws of prayer geared for the layman, and a number of volumes of stories about the Sages of Israel.

One Sephardic scholar remarked that these works for laymen may have earned the Hida a greater place of distinction than his works of

11. Tziporen Shamir, no. 53.

halachic scholarship: "I do not envy him [for his larger works], but rather for his smaller works, like *Moreh Ba'etzba*, *Lev David*, and the like, which contain *mussar* and laws that are pertinent to all people. The layman can carry [it] with him and read it on his way, whether at sea or on land."¹²

Bibliographer and Historian

The Hida wrote two works of great import to the study of Jewish bibliography and historiography: *Shem Hagedolim* (1774), which provides the first scientific foundation for Jewish bibliography, and his travel journal, *Ma'agal Tov* (1834), which is unparalleled in Jewish travel literature. Both books showcase the Hida's exceptional historical sense, analytical skills, and keen, detailed scholarly approach.

Shem Hagedolim

Shem Hagedolim, which the Hida wrote – remarkably – while living in a quarantine camp upon his arrival in Livorno during his second shelihut – is a comprehensive catalogue of the names and works of Torah scholars from earlier generations. In this groundbreaking volume the Hida provides not only a thorough list of the sages and the works they produced, but also useful, accurate information about their chronology and the veracity of the various editions of halachic texts. His years of travel, which exposed him to a wide range of people, books, and manuscripts, combined with his genuine love of books and phenomenal memory to create this unique encyclopedia that has served as a valuable and cherished reference guide ever since its publication.

The book lists over 1,300 scholars and over 1,200 Jewish books, including many unpublished works. For the most part the Hida excluded his contemporaries, choosing instead to focus on the sages

^{12.} Rabbi Haim Palagi, *Mo'ed L'kol Hai*, cited by Rabbi Yaakov Hillel in his introduction to *Moreh Ba'etzba*.

of previous generations. Additionally, he lists only those scholars who left responsa or other works of Torah literature. In his list of books, the Hida identifies each work, explains how it came into being, and attempts to determine its date of composition and the extent of its acceptance as an authoritative text. Furthermore, he points out many instances of marginal notes that were added to the text by later scholars, but which the copiers and printers mistakenly incorporated into the body of the text without realizing that they were external to the work. The Hida's sharp literary sense enabled him to identify these and other printing errors that resulted in the corruption of several important works of Torah literature. His corrections of these errors are of great importance to the proper study of the texts in question.

The Hida felt that a bio-bibliographical work like *Shem Hagedolim* would be an important aid for Torah study. Knowing the publication dates of books and which manuscripts are accurate could prove invaluable in solving otherwise vexing difficulties. Determining the precise authenticity of texts is an important first step to reconciling seemingly contradictory sources, and bibliographic chronology is important for establishing which texts were accessible to scholars as they wrote their works. And while the Hida generally keeps his entries in *Shem Hagedolim* brief, he occasionally elaborates on how the information presented helps clarify halachic questions and difficulties that had been raised. The reader thus finds numerous enlightening halachic essays interspersed with the historical data.

Another objective of *Shem Hagedolim* was to correct mistakes that had been made by authors of several earlier bibliographic works, who had relied on the works of the authors who preceded them, thus repeating their mistakes. For example, the Hida frequently notes errors that had crept into the sixteenth-century historical work *Shalshelet HaKabbalah* and were repeated in the eighteenth-century text *Seder Hadorot*. In one instance he points out that the author of *Kore Hadorot* (Rabbi David Conforte, 1618–1690) had relied on the

author of *Tzemah David* (Rabbi David Gans, 1541–1613), who in turn had relied on erroneous information in the *Shalshelet HaKabbalah*. The Hida's research was characteristically thorough and exhaustive, enabling him to find mistakes that eluded other accomplished scholars.

Shem Hagedolim also contains numerous fascinating essays surrounding the history and authorship of various texts, including important discussions regarding the Ba'ale HaTosafot (Medieval Western European Talmud scholars). Several different commentaries of the Tosafists exist on the Talmud, beyond the standard collection of commentaries that appears in printed editions of the Talmud. In Shem Hagedolim the Hida discusses the history and authorship of these commentaries, and also notes discrepancies between the prevalent editions and older manuscripts. One scholar noted the impact of the Hida's treatment of this subject on later scholars:

The first modern study of the various schools of the Tosafists – that of Leopold Zunz in his *Gottesdienstliche Vortage* – is largely based on Azoulay's excurses on the subject, where he traces the authorship of the various collections of *Tosafot* and their relationship to one another. He also seeks to identify the authorship and editorship of the *Tosafot* to be found in the printed editions of the Talmud. Quotations in the works of early authorities that indicate the authorship of various *Tosafot* collections are carefully noted. Further, he compares the printed version of the *Tosafot* with the written manuscripts. This dissertation may still be consulted with profit by students of the subject.¹³

Another intriguing, and surprising, feature of *Shem Hagedolim* is a comprehensive discussion of book titles. While the choice of a title

^{13.} Friedman, Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, in J.B.A., p. 67.

does not, at first glance, appear to be a significant aspect of works of Torah literature, the Hida attributes great importance to titles, and delves into the "art" of choosing titles and, in particular, the question of whether or not an author should include his name in the title of his work. The Hida notes that the practice of naming a book with part of, or an allusion to, the author's name is an attempt to satisfy both opinions on the matter. The Hida himself adopted this practice, and the titles of all of his works either contain one of his names (e.g. *Haim Sha'al, Rosh David, Pene David, Birke Yosef*) or allude to his name by way of an acrostic or through *gematria*. The title of his work *Nahal Kedumim* alludes to his name both through an acrostic and *gematria*. The

Ma'agal Tov

The Hida's travel journal also occupies a worthy position in Jewish historiographical literature. Throughout his journeys the Hida jotted down any and all matters of interest, including noteworthy information he obtained and unfamiliar sights and people he came across. He described in his journal the customs of the communities and synagogues he visited, the ancient books he saw, the educational methods he observed, and his general observations about the people and societies he encountered. The second section of the book, which

The Hida also occasionally chose titles that alluded to the book's subject matter. "*Birke Yosef*" – the title of the Hida's commentary to the *Shulhan Aruch* – has the same numerical value as the word "*shulhan*," and "*Nahal Sorek*" – the title of his work on the *haftarot* – has the same numerical value (when we include the letters) as the word "*haftarot*."



Sefer Ma'agal Tov, printed in Livorno, Italy (1879), by Rabbi Eliyahu Ben Amzog

^{14.} The Hida made extensive use of *gematria* in his writings, yet he warns against expending a great deal of time in calculating *gematria*: "Understandably, we should not waste time and effort on *gematrias*...only if it comes easily from time to time" (*Shem Hagedolim – Sefarim, Gimmel*, endnote 2).

^{15.} As the Hida explains on the book's title page, the numerical value of "nahal kedumim" is 288, and when we add the two words ("nahal" and "kedumim"), and the three letters in the word "nahal," we arrive at 293, the numerical value of the name "Haim Yosef David Azoulay." The letters of "nahal kedumim" also form an acrostic for נימוקים חדשים לתורה ("New interpretations to the Torah, my limited knowledge and commentaries from famous giants of Israel").

covers his second *shelihut* trip (in the years 1773–1779), is far more detailed and extensive than the first part, which covers his first trip (1753–1758). The published journal is an adaptation of the notes he prepared on his actual travels, after editing out some of the personal details. Some of the information in *Ma'agal Tov* was written well after the Hida's trips, from memory. The detailed nature of *Ma'agal Tov* (particularly the second section), and the wide variety of topics it covers, testify to the Hida's unusually vast span of interests.

The description of Jewish life in the communities he visited – Egypt, Tunis, Italy, France, Germany, Holland, and England – are a silhouette of Jewish history in those locations in the eighteenth century. He bears witness to the level of their religious commitment, their economic condition, how they were treated by their governments, their position in society and politics, the unique character of each and every community, its general norms and protocols, and its attitude towards the Jews of Eretz Yisrael.

In forming his impressions the Hida did not rely on word of mouth. He asked questions and did extensive research in learning about the places he visited. This way, he ensured that his descriptions and accounts were precise and accurate. The opinions he expresses about his experiences are thus based on authentic facts and evidence, and are well thought out and sagacious.

The historical value of *Ma'agal Tov* extends beyond the narrow context of Jewish history. The Hida paid close attention to the political situation and events that took place, and carefully assessed the social and economic forces in the countries he visited. These astute observations are included in his journal. He writes about commerce; wars and their influence on business and culture; factories, schools, and universities; libraries; hospitals; manners and mannerisms, and the discussions and debates he held with the ministers of other religions. His accounts are often detailed and colorful, offering an informative glimpse into the societies he visited and providing useful historical insight into this stage of European history.

The Hida visited numerous museums and zoos, and was fascinated by the large animals not found in the East. He took particular interest in gardens and plants, especially those which he had not seen before. Generally speaking, the Hida strove to broaden his knowledge in every area, to see new things, and to get a sense of Europe's scientific and artistic achievements at that time. These observations, too, are included in *Ma'agal Tov*, making it a rich, informative, and enjoyable book that encompasses an astonishingly wide variety of aspects of eighteenth-century life in Western Europe.

Other Works

The Hida published three volumes of responsa, under the titles *Haim Sha'al*, *Yosef Ometz*, and *Tov Ayin*. At some point, possibly because of the large number of questions he received, he decided to limit his written responses to halachic inquiries.

Another area of literary activity in which the Hida excelled was the composition of *tefillot*. He was one of the great composers of prayers in his generation, and on several occasions when tragedy threatened the Jewish community in Livorno and elsewhere in Italy, Jews gathered to recite prayers that the Hida composed especially for the occasion. Several of his prayers have become part of the fixed liturgy according to some customs.

Among the Hida's most influential works is *Yosef Lahok*, which he published in Egypt in 1740 (5500). This work consists of additions to the daily *Hok L'Yisrael* text which is studied by many Jews throughout the world. The *Hok L'Yisrael* program, which involves the daily study of sections of the weekly Torah portion, Tanach, Mishnah, Talmud, and *Zohar*, was not very popular when it was first introduced. The Hida added basic *halachot* and words of *mussar* to the text so that laymen and youth reading it daily would learn the necessary *halachot* over the course of the year. With the Hida's additions and revisions *Hok L'Yisrael* earned widespread popularity. It became part of the daily routine in many synagogues, and scholars and laymen alike regularly

participated. Eventually the program was followed by nearly every observant Jew in the Middle East and North Africa, and even in some parts of Poland and Germany.

The Hida also composed several works of *derashot* – homiletics – which became favorites of congregational rabbis, including his *Ahavat David*. These works were published only once, and were thus difficult to obtain. In a letter written in 1829 (5589) Rabbi Moshe ben Yosef Abikhazir asks Rabbi Amor Abutbul of Sefrou, Morocco, who had connections with booksellers there, to "make every effort to fulfill my desire and attain these books for me: *Hok L'Yisrael* in five parts by Rabbi Azoulay... *Kise David* by Rabbi Azoulay, and *Rosh David* by Rabbi Azoulay." Three years later he repeated his request, indicating the limited availability of these works. ¹⁶ Because of that, the Hida's books were copied by hand in Baghdad, and a few handwritten copies were found even in Italy.

The Hida wrote a work called *Petah Enayim* on the aggadic portions of the Talmud, utilizing old manuscripts of the Talmud and early commentaries. The final work he published, *Mar'it Ha'ayin*, is also on the Talmud's aggadic sections. It appears that the Hida also had a commentary on the tractate *Keritot* which was never published.

In addition, the Hida composed a book on the Rambam's fourteen-volume halachic code, *Mishneh Torah*, by the name of *Pat Yadah*, which he spent many years writing, using old manuscripts of *Mishneh Torah*. Unfortunately, only the sections on *Hilchot Melachim* and other small portions have been published.

The Hida's *L'David Emet* on the laws of *sefer Torah*, which was based on Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Algazi's *Emet L'Yaakov*, was produced in small format, so it can be easily accessed as a reference guide in the synagogue. Another work of note is his *Brit Olam*, a commentary to the *Sefer Hassidim* by the medieval scholar Rabbi Yehuda Hehassid.

The Hida felt a special affinity for the Passover Haggadah, to which he authored numerous commentaries: *Simhat Haregel, Zeroa Yemin, Geulat Olam, Safah Ahat, Peh Ehad*, and *Batei Hanefesh*.

^{16.} Manuscript, cited by Benayahu.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Hida's Sermons¹

"The Redemption Depends on This"

The Hida was one of the greatest *darshanim* (sermonizers) in modern Jewish history. He is likely the only rabbi who left us a detailed, comprehensive list of all the sermons he ever delivered, from his days as a yeshivah student until shortly before his passing – 342 in total. His public speeches were very influential, and cherished by the people. In Livorno the community accompanied him en masse from his home to the synagogue, which was overflowing with hundreds of eager listeners who came to behold the rabbi's angelic appearance and hear his words that tugged at their hearts and made a deep impression upon them.²

The Hida attached great importance to the field of *derashot* (sermons), and urged scholars to accept this sacred task and not shy away out of humility:

- 1. Most of this chapter is taken directly from Benayahu.
- 2. See Benayahu, chapter 3, p. 59.

Donated by the Gottlieb & Nizri families, in loving memory of their parents

reactivament and reactive and re

Father of Hillel Gottlieb:

Moshe Aharon ben Shlomo Hillel z"l

Mother of Hillel Gottlieb: Perle bat Alexander *a*"*h*

משה אהרן בן הילל גוטליב ז"ל פרל בת אלכסנדר גוטליב ע"ה

त्यी श्राभित

Father of Yehuda Mordechai Eliyahou: Shlomo Mikael bar Hacham Yichyah zt"l

> Mother of Yehuda Mordechai Eliyahou: Rivkah bat Freicha *a"h*

שלמה מיכאל בר חכם יחיה נזרי זצוק"ל רבקה בת רבקה ע"ה

ימודת ערדכי אליתו נדרי

The tribes of Ashkenazim and Sephardim be as one!

rangananganganangangan bakkas (bakkas) bakkas b

When I was young, I heard of a great scholar in our generation who ceased giving public sermons in order to avoid haughtiness... But my lowly opinion is that while it is definitely a sin to take pride in the sermon one delivers and in the honor he receives, the institution of the sermon... is an extremely important and lofty and wondrous thing... He should take care to avoid all arrogance, and realize that his wisdom and original thoughts are like a mustard seed in comparison to those of the early Sages, and the fact that the audience gives him honor is a kindness from on High, as He covers up the deficiencies of human beings and grants him charisma.³

Recognizing the importance of *derashot*, the Hida invested time preparing his public lectures. When he spoke before a large audience he prepared a written script from which he read. On other occasions he would at least prepare an outline from which he spoke. He did not speak without first preparing his thoughts.⁴

The Hida would also pray to G-d to assist him in delivering his sermons. In a notebook in which he transcribed his sermons, we find a prayer he wrote asking the Almighty to ensure that he would not falter in his speech, that he would speak clearly with the right words, and that he would remember his ideas in the order in which he prepared them.

The purpose of a *derashah*, according to the Hida, is to influence the audience to change. In his view, the speaker's goal should be primarily to inspire and uplift his audience, as opposed to simply imparting Torah knowledge. He writes, "Although the speaker should speak some words of wisdom ... the main part of the sermon should be to warn the people of Israel about the details of the commonly committed iniquities." The Hida also quotes Rabbi Haim Vital as citing the Arizal's instruction that in his sermons "he should rebuke the people and turn them to repentance, for the redemption depends on this." This perspective on the function of *derashot* shaped the Hida's overall attitude toward the content and delivery of sermons, which he insisted must be geared toward this primary goal.⁶

Critique of Contemporary Homiletics

In each area of literature that the Hida dealt with, he noted what came before him and forged a new path for himself. This is true also of his *derashot*, many of which he committed to writing and which appear in his published works. In this area, as with all others, the Hida broke new ground and added a refreshing new dimension to the field.

He approached the subject of *derashot* very seriously, and paid close attention to the styles that were being used in his time. As he traveled through Europe, he researched the homiletics of the various communities, and in his travel journal he records synopses of sermons heard in Italy, Holland, and France, paying specific attention to their form and structure. For example, in his diary he rigorously scrutinizes the sermons of Rabbi Yisrael Gedaliah Kazis,⁷ the

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^{3.} Kise Rahamim, p. 112, 4.

^{4.} When the Hida reached Guastala, he found the community gathered in the synagogue for the memorial service for Rabbi Gur Pinzi. The Hida was asked to eulogize Rabbi Pinzi as well. "I asked them to wait just fifteen minutes, and Hashem aided me... and I spoke for about half an hour from the notes in my memory" (*Ma'agal Tov*, p. 8).

^{5.} Mahazik Berachah, 290:3.

^{6.} Interestingly, the Hida followed this approach in the sermons he delivered in Italy, but not those given in Eretz Yisrael and Egypt. In the latter countries his sermons consisted mainly of novel Torah insights, innovative interpretations of Biblical verses, and *pilpul*. These sermons remain completely unpublished, though the Torah thoughts therein are printed throughout his books. Apparently, he felt that advanced, intricate discussions were appropriate material for *derashot* for certain audiences, whereas for the unlearned masses rabbis should focus their attention on effecting practical change.

^{7.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 8.

sermonizer in Mantova, and Rabbi Shelomo Shalem, the Sephardic scholar in Amsterdam.⁸

The Hida did not hide his displeasure with the state of *derashot* in his time, noting several deficiencies in the sermonizing styles that were prevalent. For one thing, the rabbis in these countries often made use of rhetoric and pretentious language, which did not impress the Hida, who felt that sermons should present material that can be easily understood, appreciated, and absorbed by the audience. Similarly, he was critical of the Polish scholars who spent their sermons explaining obscure passages with complex, convoluted sophistry. He insisted that sermons were to be used by the speaker as an opportunity not to display his intellectual capabilities or vast knowledge, but to effect a change in the hearts of his audience, to teach them proper behavior and ethics, to highlight areas where change was necessary, and to guide the community in the proper way. To this end, he argued, sermons should be kept simple, direct, and straightforward. He was thus strongly opposed to the use of pilpul (sophistry) in derashot, as well as the focus on innovative readings of verses and passages, instead of the practical messages that must be conveyed.

The Hida was also critical of sermonizers who spoke only in abstract, theoretical terms, without directly applying the material to practically relevant issues affecting the audience. He expressed his disagreement with the comments made by Rabbi Eliyahu Shapiro of Prague (author of *Elyah Rabbah*) in defense of lecturers who avoid practically relevant issues and trust the audience to correctly apply their teachings to real-life issues and learn halachah from written texts. The Hida writes, "One cannot at all compare reading books to a person charged with instructing and warning the public regarding their transgressions." In his view, a speaker's voice, stature, appearance, personality, and charisma are all vital tools with which

to convey messages and effect needed change. Written texts are a poor substitute, he felt, for a passionate, eloquent sermon, which uses much more than mere words to express important ideas. And it is thus the responsibility of sermonizers to use the pulpit as a forum for directing their audiences toward proper religious observance.

Another aspect of *derashot* that the Hida emphasized is truth and honesty. He strongly denounced the practice of some speakers to "invent" rabbinic sources that did not exist. He tells of one such individual who asked Rabbi Avraham Yitzhaki to explain a perplexing saying of the Sages. Rabbi Yitzhaki, sensing that the man had "manufactured" the passage, cleverly replied, "I don't understand your question; a look at the end of the passage will explain everything." The Hida shared Rabbi Yitzhaki's disdain for fabrication, insisting that the Torah's messages must be inferred from an honest study of Torah texts and their faithful transmission..

For the same reason, he urged lecturers not to formulate their novel interpretations in a definitive fashion. He writes, "The sermonizer should not decide things, but present them merely as a possibility..." Rather than definitively assert that their interpretation of a given verse or passage is correct, rabbis should present their readings as possible interpretations, "for then even if the verse or saying did not intend that, as long as the concepts are true, they will be like hints." The Hida strongly emphasized the importance of truth in the art of homiletics: "There are many parts to these issues, and this [what I have just written] is but one out of a hundred [of what needs to be said], to remind one to be G-d-fearing and admit the truth."

The Hida's Homiletic Style

The Hida's sermons generally introduced the main topic of the presentation with a verse from the Torah, followed by a citation

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^{8.} Ibid, pp. 131-132, 135, 142. The Hida noted that the sermon took forty-five minutes.

^{9.} Mahazik Berachah, 290:3.

^{10.} Shem Hagedolim (Sefarim), Dalet, no. 62.

^{11.} Ibid, "Derashot Haran,"

from either the Midrash or Talmud. He would also include in the introduction imaginative stories that he used as analogies, and to engage the audience and draw their attention. These stories involved imaginary situations such as merchants traveling to Indian cities for commerce, acts of military heroism or chivalry, or the exotic flowers or other phenomena of far-away countries, such as America. Using the story as a foundation, the Hida proceeded to develop the ethical and religious ideas he sought to convey, laced with bits of Torah, Kabbalah, literature, and philosophy.

The next section of the *derashah* would be built upon three pillars, which the Hida would introduce by way of an acrostic. For example, he would use the Hebrew word בנה ("built") to introduce the themes of ברכות, נדיבות, הודאה (blessings, generosity, and gratitude). He would then proceed to develop each theme independently.

The Hida's main sermons in Livorno were delivered on the four major *Shabbatot – Shabbat Teshuvah*, *Shabbat Zachor*, *Shabbat Hagadol*, and *Shabbat Kallah* (the Shabbat before Shavuot) – in the study hall of Eliezer Hai She'altiel Recanati, from 1781 (5541) until his passing.¹³ These *derashot* underwent editing and revisions and were then published, with the sermons arranged in the order in which they were delivered.¹⁴ The editing process involved the deletion of details related to issues that were uniquely relevant to the community at that time, as well as ideas that he had already published.

The Hida also delivered a weekly sermon in the yeshivah of Michael Pereira de Leon. These were never properly edited into essays, remaining only in the form of notes, likely because he was speaking before a very small audience.

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^{12.} Interestingly, the Hida was enchanted by the reports about life in America. In his sermons and travels he tells of fruits, plants, and flowers which he saw that were "strange, from Hamirika." See *Ma'agal Tov*, pp. 70, 116, 151, and 155.

^{13.} These sermons are compiled in: *Devarim Ahadim*, *Kise David*, *Ahavat David*, and *Ru'ah Haim*. He dedicated *Kise David* – the collection of sermons delivered in the Recanati yeshivah – to Eliezer Hai She'altiel Recanati.

^{14.} See, for example, *Kise David*, sermon 13, p. 59b.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Hida and Kabbalah

As mentioned earlier, when the Hida was about twenty years old he began studying Kabbalah under one of the most famous scholars of Kabbalah of all time - Rabbi Shalom Sharabi (the Rashash) of Yeshivat Bet El. At around the same time his father gave him a manuscript of Etz Haim, the principal work of the Arizal's Kabbalah, written by the Arizal's closest disciple, Rabbi Haim Vital. This early exposure to kabbalistic wisdom set the Hida on a path which he would follow throughout his life, combining the worlds of halachic and kabbalistic scholarship.

The Kabbalah of the Arizal

The Hida had a very thorough knowledge of the Zohar, the study of which he made a point to complete at least once each year. He also achieved complete mastery of all the teachings of the Arizal as recorded by Rabbi Haim Vital. In one place, addressing another scholar's quote from the Arizal, the Hida writes, "I have not seen this, neither in the Sefer Hakavanot [of the Arizal] nor in the abridged works [of the Arizal]." Elsewhere, he writes, "Truly, I searched through

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עטרת זקנים בני בנים ותפארת בנים אבותם

(משלי יז, ו

Dedicated to our honored grandparents and parents,

whose commitment to Torah and Judaism has set the foundation

for ourselves, our children and grandchildren.

In honor of

Bernard and Estelle Blechman Manfred and Linda Sandler

Elie and Reina Oziel

With much love and appreciation,

Ariel and Shira

Eliyabu, Yekutiel, Nesbama,

Otniel and Shirelle Oziel

1. Birke Yosef 555:1.

the holy works of the Arizal – in manuscripts, the printed works, and the abridged works – and have not seen this which was attributed to the Arizal."²

The Hida was also aware of the works of other kabbalists, and had in his library the works of legendary kabbalistic scholars such as Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, Rabbi Yisrael Saruk, and others. However, he felt that the Arizal's teachings, as conveyed in the writings of Rabbi Haim Vital, represented the correct, proper understanding of Kabbalah, and the only true approach to the field. He takes this position explicitly in one of his published responsa:

I must humbly say that I do not put much stock in secrets that were not revealed by our teacher, the Arizal, himself. Even though Rabbi Moshe Zacuto zt"l was a very great man... still... whatever was not revealed by the Arizal, the great teacher who studied with Elijah [the Prophet]... should not be relied on."

Similarly, in his *Shem Hagedolim* he writes: "In the holy city [of Jerusalem] they study no Kabbalah other than the *Shemonah She'arim*, which was written down by Rabbi Haim Vital and his son, and the *Derech Etz Haim*, and nothing else. For even the other writings attributed to the Arizal are not [accepted as accurate]." At the same time, the Hida did not publicly rail against those who studied other kabbalistic works: "Although I have written about the words of certain rabbis... that they have not arrived at the truth, still I am careful not to speak publicly against those who do differently than the Arizal."

The Arizal's Kabbalah deals mainly with the theoretical study of the structure of the heavenly domain, and of the *sefirot*, or emanations,

through which G-d's presence enters our world. It addresses problems posed by the many schools of philosophy and provides a conceptual framework into which all theological ideas can be fitted.⁵

Additionally, the Arizal introduced several practices and customs on the basis of kabbalistic concepts, and the Hida accepted these as halachically authoritative. He frequently reached conclusions on matters of halachah and custom based on the Arizal's teachings, even when these practices ran in opposition to the rulings of the *Shulhan Aruch*, the authoritative Sephardic halachic code. As he writes explicitly in his *Birke Yosef*, "We often follow him [the Arizal] even when he rules contrary to Maran [Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the *Shulhan Aruch*], for the rabbis knew that if Maran had heard the words of the Arizal, he would have changed his mind."

The Hida attributed great importance to the Arizal's *kavanot* – special meditations during prayer – and recited all his prayers with these meditations. *Kavanot* are defined as "meditations upon doing a mitzvah; they involve contemplating how the mitzvah is rectifying the higher worlds." The Hida adhered to these meditative practices, particularly during prayer, likely a result of the influence of Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, who invested considerable effort into clarifying these meditations. In his *Shem Hagedolim* the Hida says of Rabbi Shalom, "He put the meditations of the Arizal in their clear and proper order, as they should be."

This was a time when the Arizal's *kavanot* received widespread popularity, to the point where virtually anyone with Hassidic or mystical leanings used prayer books that contained these meditations, regardless of whether they had any understanding of

^{2.} Ibid, 581:18.

^{3.} Haim Sha'al 2:10.

^{4.} Shem Hagedolim (Sefarim), Kuf, no. 95. See also in the same work "Kitzur Tokfo Kohen" and "Rabbi Haim Vital," as well as Kikar La'aden, 7, p. 157a.

^{5.} Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Meditation and Kabbalah, p. 1.

^{6.} Birke Yosef 421:1. Compare Yosef Ometz no. 82 and Haim Sha'al 1:56. See also Rabbi Yaakov Hillel's introduction to his Amude Hora'ah (Jerusalem, 1980).

^{7.} Rabbi Yaakov Hillel, Faith and Folly, p. 72.

^{8.} Shem Hagedolim (Gedolim), Shin, no. 17.

these esoteric concepts. The Hida, while he personally followed the kavanot, disapproved of the observance of these practices without understanding them. He wrote:

Although I am not worthy to admonish others, still, for the honor of G-d I will say simply that one who fears for his soul shall not say any [kabbalistic] prayer, or meditate on any of the meditations, unless he himself has seen it in the true holy writings, which is the *Sha'ar Hakavanot* of Rabbi Haim Vital... And for the common man it is forbidden to say the aforementioned prayers even if there is no error in them.⁹

Elsewhere, he writes, "At least ... one should recite blessings with due concentration. ...One should have in mind that there are higher meditations and that his blessing is according to those who know the meditations." He felt it was more important to concentrate on the basic meaning of the prayer text before engaging in meditation of concepts of which one has no understanding.

The Hida embraced the kabbalistic custom of declaring before performing a mitzvah, "L'shem yihud Kudsha Berich Hu u'Shechinteh," proclaiming one's intention to perform the mitzvah "for the sake of unifying the Holy One blessed be He and His Shechinah." He explained that "in this way one shows that his entire intention is for the sake of Heaven." The Hida disputed the position expressed by Rabbi Yehezkel Landau (author of Noda BiYehudah), the famed rabbi of Prague, who disapproved of this practice, claiming that someone performing a mitzvah can be assumed to be performing it for the sake of Heaven. While the Hida held Rabbi Landau in very high regard, he rejected his view on this issue and insisted on the value of reciting the "L'shem Yichud" declaration.

A Complex Approach

The Hida made a very significant contribution to the dissemination of Kabbalah, particularly in the area of prayer. The entrance of Kabbalah into the prayer books began already in the time of Rabbi Haim Vital and increased under the influence of Sabbateanism, and later under the influence of the anonymous work *Hemdat Yamim* which was popular in the Hida's time. However, the impact of Kabbalah on prayer reached new heights during and after the Hida's lifetime, as a result of his original prayers, which he composed on the basis of kabbalistic thought, and his brief kabbalistic insights into the text of the siddur. Much of this material was incorporated in prayer books and *mahzorim* that were printed in Livorno, and, later, in virtually all Sephardic prayer books and *mahzorim*. The prayers for Tashlich, *hakafot* on Simhat Torah, *hatarat nedarim*, and other occasions became an integral part of the eastern and some Hassidic *mahzorim*. The prayers

Ironically, however, while on the one hand the Hida was an accomplished scholar of Kabbalah and contributed immensely to its dissemination, he published only one work in the field of Kabbalah, a collection of notes to the *Zohar* entitled *Yesh Me'ayin* (which was later published under the title *Nitzotze Orot*). ¹⁴ Although kabbalistic

^{9.} Mahazik Berachah, 489, p. 99a.

^{10.} Mar'it Ha'ayin, Berachot 35.

^{11.} Simhat Haregel, Moreh Ba'etzba 1:1.

^{12.} The authorship and validity of *Hemdat Yamim* is subject to considerable controversy. While it achieved great popularity at this time, some, including Rabbi Yaakov Emden of Germany, claimed that it was a Sabbatean work written by Nathan of Gaza, the leading follower of the false messiah Shabbetai Tzvi. It is also told that the late Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, did not keep this book in his home because of these suspicions. Others, however, regarded the work as an authentic presentation of kabbalistic thought, and there are those who attribute it to the great sage Rabbi Yisrael Algazi of Izmir, the father of the Hida's friend Maharit Algazi. (See below, chapter 26.)

^{13.} Some Italian printing presses, especially in Livorno, and even some Turkish printing presses used the name "Hida" in the title page to gain wider distribution, even if they included only a single, short prayer written by the Hida.

^{14.} It should also be noted that – according to Rabbi Avraham Baruch Papirno – the Hida's grandson, Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah, had in his possession a detailed commentary

concepts interlace his works of halachah and homiletics, and he composed prayers on the basis of kabbalistic teaching, he did not compose an in-depth work of Kabbalah or complete commentary to kabbalistic texts. This dearth of kabbalistic literature from the Hida's corpus is especially pronounced given his extraordinary prolificacy as a writer. He published dozens of books on a remarkably broad range of topics, yet he did not write any works devoted to Kabbalah, except a collection of marginalia to the *Zohar*.

We find a similarly complex approach toward the involvement in "practical Kabbalah," the use of certain techniques to invoke supernatural powers through Divine Names and the like. ¹⁵ On the one hand, the Hida himself made use of holy Names of G-d to write amulets and perform miraculous acts. ¹⁶ In one section of his travel journal he makes references to mystical *segulot* ("charms") against the evil eye, sorcery, fear, illness, theft, and other evils. The Hida's engagement in this form of Kabbalah reached its height when he settled in Livorno and remarried after his second *shelihut*, and he even wrote amulets for others as a source of livelihood. And when his son Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah took ill, the Hida wrote to him, "It is unnecessary to instruct you that the amulets shall not leave you day and night. And if you like, after prayers recite eleven verses that begin and end with the letter *nun*... for these protect against the evil eye and the forces of evil." ¹⁸

The Hida also utilized the technique of the "dream question," praying with certain Divine Names before going to sleep in order to receive a dream answering a question he had, a practice that

had also been observed by his grandfather, Rabbi Yitzhak Azoulay. Additionally, the Hida approved of the practice known as the *goral haGra*, randomly opening a Humash to find an answer to a question in the verses that turn up.¹⁹

On the other hand, he strongly opposed the use of *tzeruf*, combining different letters of holy Names to trigger certain supernatural effects. Early kabbalists engaged in *tzeruf*, but the later masters of Kabbalah, especially the Arizal, discouraged this practice, which he felt could be harmful. Indeed, the Arizal never taught this area of Kabbalah to even his closest disciple, Rabbi Haim Vital, and although Rabbi Haim studied these subjects on his own, he followed his teacher's example and discouraged the use of *tzeruf*. Likewise, the Hida cites his great-great-grandfather, Rabbi Avraham Azoulay, as saying that the practical use of *tzeruf* could be dangerous and should not be used. Rabbi Avraham permitted the study of *tzeruf* for the sake of acquiring knowledge of G-d's greatness, but discouraged making practical use of this field.²⁰

As an illustration of the possible danger involved in using *tzeruf*, the Hida mentions a young scholar "in the cities of the West" who studied the wisdom of *tzeruf* from an elderly kabbalist and then used this wisdom for his own benefit. The young scholar passed away at a young age. "Therefore," the Hida writes, "this should be a warning that although there is much to this wisdom, one should not use it for his own sake."

The Hida thus strongly discouraged the use of *tzeruf*,²² and, more generally, condemned the widespread involvement in practical

to the *Zohar* by the Hida, which was lost in the great earthquake in Safed in 1837 (5597). See *Kitve HaHida*, p. 58b.

^{15.} See Meditation and Kabbalah, p. 2.

^{16.} See, for example, Kuntres Masa'ot, p. 315.

^{17.} See Benjamin Cymerman, The Diaries of Rabbi Ha'im Yosef David Azulai, pp. 172, 188.

^{18.} Iggerot D'Rav Haim Yosef David Azoulay, zt"l, 5551.

^{19.} Haim Sha'al 2:10, p. 141.

^{20.} Ma'ase Tzaddikim (Jerusalem, 2011), p. 531.

^{21.} Shem Hagedolim (Gedolim), Yud, no. 353.

^{22.} A rare exception to the Hida's stance on this topic was when he and his colleagues left Jerusalem to travel to Egypt, and near Kiryat Ye'arim were confronted by a band of Arabs. The Hida writes that the group faced imminent danger, and he thus had no choice

Kabbalah that had become popular in his time, noting that it was in opposition to the teachings of Rabbi Haim Vital.²³ Even in his own limited involvement in this area, he took care to maintain secrecy and avoided public acknowledgment of his proficiency. He did not wish to be known as a distributor of amulets or one who works with practical Kabbalah, and thus concealed his expertise in this area.

There are a number of different reasons for this ambivalent attitude toward practical Kabbalah. For one thing, it requires a high level of expertise and training to distinguish between genuine, authentic Kabbalah and black magic. As one contemporary scholar of Kabbalah wrote, "A thin line distinguishes practical Kabbalah from the black arts, and the exact guidelines are intricate. Those sages who used practical Kabbalah, Divine Names, or amulets knew how to do so in the permitted manner." Not surprisingly, some aspects of practical Kabbalah made their way to the non-Jewish schools of magic in Europe. In fact, while visiting Paris in 1778 (5538), the Hida befriended a gentile scholar who had some knowledge of practical Kabbalah, and even had in his possession several French books on the subject.

Furthermore, as we have seen, the Hida and earlier kabbalistic scholars recognized the danger of involvement in these areas without the proper training and before achieving the necessary spiritual level. Kabbalah teaches that the Almighty created forces of impurity in order to maintain a proper balance in our world, so that people would be

able to prove themselves worthy with complete free will. Misguided efforts to connect with the lofty spiritual powers could lead one to connect instead with this side of impurity. Rabbi Yaakov Hillel writes, "Inspiration from the side of holiness comes only through working hard at perfecting one's character, studying Torah, and fulfilling *mitzvot*, and even then it is extremely difficult to acquire." The Hida, following the tradition of the Arizal and his disciples, discouraged the use of practical Kabbalah because of its delicate nature and the dangers it poses to those who attempt to utilize it improperly or before attaining the necessary level of piety.

The Hida²⁸ records an incident that occurred in Salonika, where news spread of a certain man who had a *maggid* (angel) reveal the Torah's secrets to him. The rabbis of the city visited him and were amazed to find that he indeed had knowledge of certain profound secrets. Rabbi Yosef Kubo heard about the man and said, "Go see how this man acts in regard to eating and drinking."

He was told that this person indulged in food much more than ordinary people. "If so," the rabbi said, "the matter needs no further investigation. His knowledge comes from the side of impurity, for holiness does not rest on a person who eats indulgently. I decree that no one go to him."

Elsewhere in his writings, the Hida laments the unfortunate phenomenon of ignoramuses promoting themselves as great kabbalists: "In this orphaned generation ... if someone makes even a cursory reading of the book of the *Zohar*, he considers himself a kabbalist." The Hida exercised extreme care in his involvement in Kabbalah to avoid its misrepresentation and misuse by unseasoned novices who portrayed themselves as "kabbalists" after just a bit of reckless dabbling in the field.

but "to mention a holy Name for protection on the roads, and praise the Almighty, they did not come within our four cubits" (*Ma'agal Tov*, p. 47; see also *Shivhe Harav Hida*, in *Sefer HaHida*, p. 191 [1]).

^{23.} Zev Paretzky, The Chida, p. 156.

^{24.} Faith and Folly, p. 77.

^{25.} *Meditation and Kabbalah*, p. 2, 127. See Moshe Idel's article, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of Kabbalah in the Renaissance" in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Cooperman, pp. 186–242.

^{26.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 121.

^{27.} Faith and Folly, Rabbi Yaakov Hillel, p. 72.

^{28.} Simhat Haregel, 8b.

^{29.} Haim Sha'al 2:10.

Furthermore, the Hida feared that preoccupation in the lofty, mystical concepts of Kabbalah threatened to divert people's attention away from the more basic and foundational aspects of Torah life. He writes, "The true *segulah* for every matter is to be truly humble in heart and soul and to give charity according to his means and to be involved in Torah [study] for its own sake." Likewise, citing Rabbi Haim Vital, the Hida writes that one can yield more effective results through "the performance of good deeds with great joy" than through mysticism. He felt that instead of resorting to deep mystical *segulot*, people should commit to raising their religious standards in the more basic areas of humility, charity, and Torah learning.

A Manuscript of Rabbi Haim Vital

Further insight into the Hida's attitude toward Kabbalah can be gleaned from an incident that occurred while he was in Egypt, when he came across a manuscript of *Shemonah She'arim*, a record of the Arizal's teachings written by Rav Haim Vital and edited and arranged by his son, Rabbi Shemuel Vital. The manuscript discovered by the Hida was Rabbi Haim Vital's original, handwritten text, before it was edited by his son. In *Shem Hagedolim* the Hida describes the minor differences in arrangement between Rabbi Haim's own manuscript and the final text prepared by Rabbi Shemuel.

At the same time, the Hida also found another manuscript written by Rabbi Haim Vital, a work of practical Kabbalah and the wisdom of *tzeruf*. He began to study it, but then felt that his circumstances at that time did not allow him to achieve the high spiritual level this type of study requires. He writes:

I meditated on this book and began to comprehend ... and was greatly inspired. While I was studying it, I dozed off and saw our teacher, Rabbi Haim Vital *zt"l*. I asked him a question, and he

answered me and gave me a cup of wine to drink. Then I woke up and was very happy. [However,] in the evening I thought: Since I am [alone] here without my family, the entire evening I am forced to dine at the table of ... where they speak improper things, frivolity, sarcasm, and the like, and every evening until close to midnight, I remain idle, I hear, and I am silent. In addition, I am not [settled] in my own home. If I continue to study this book ... while I am not properly prepared, perhaps, G-d forbid, I will be in danger. I became convinced of this, and the next morning after prayers, I returned the book [to its owner].³²

As highly as the Hida regarded the study of Kabbalah, he insisted that this field must only be studied by exceptionally pious scholars and under conditions of pristine purity. He fully supported its study by worthy scholars, but strongly opposed its casual access and use by laymen and ordinary scholars.

Later that same year, when the Hida was in Tunis, he heard of a deceased scholar named Rabbi Hai Lombroso, who was said to have studied the wisdom of *tzeruf*. He borrowed from the scholar's widow a short manuscript on the topic of *tzeruf*, and he copied it. He writes, "It was very deep, but I did not want to devote myself to it until the Almighty would allow me time, at which point I will study it to know wisdom." He was very careful not to learn these lofty concepts until he was given the chance to delve into them thoroughly and give them the time and attention they require.

^{30.} Ibid. Compare Tziporen Shamir, no. 50.

^{31.} Yosef Tehillot 47:101.

^{32.} *Ma'agal Tov*, p. 59. The Hida relates that approximately nine years later, when he was again in Egypt, he was told of a certain man who had in his possession two manuscripts of kabbalistic texts, one of which turned out to be the same manuscript of Rabbi Haim Vital. The Hida urged the man to keep the manuscript and guard it "as you would a jewel," but the man insisted on giving it to the Hida. The Hida concludes this story by writing, "I gave thanks to the Almighty that I was privileged to receive this book."

^{33.} Ibid, p. 64.



Philosophy, Sabbateanism, and Hassidism¹

Philosophy

The Hida did not engage in the study of philosophy, as evidenced by the dearth of citations of philosophical works in his writings. Even in *Shem Hagedolim*, his seminal bibliographic work, he mentions very few works of Jewish philosophy. And in describing his visit to the library in Turin, he writes that he "saw our manuscripts, but they were all philosophy and science," suggesting a somewhat derisive attitude toward these disciplines.

His personal library in Livorno contained only a handful of philosophical books, including *Me'or Enayim* by Rabbi Azaryahu de Rossi.² The Hida was aware of the ban that Rabbi Yosef Caro had instructed Rabbi Elisha Gallico and Rabbi Moshe Alshich to issue against the book,³ and yet he kept it in his possession and even mentioned it in his writings. His library also included a number of

- $1. \ \ This \ chapter \ is \ taken \ almost \ entirely \ from \ Benayahu's \ \textit{Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay}.$
- 2. Sefer HaHida, p. 44.
- 3. Mahazik Berachah Orah Haim, Kuntres Aharon, 307, p. 133b.

In honor of

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Rabbi Raphael Attias zt"l

May his *zechut* bring Am Yisrael to the coming of Mashiach in our days!

Serge & Michelle Moyal and Family

Dedicated in loving memory of my dear father

Rabbi Yaakov Azuelos ben Moshe a"h

He was known to be a great *hazzan* and *paytan* of the Bet El Synagogue in Casablanca.

Avi e3 Francine Azuelos and family

In honor of

Jack Buzaglo

For his great dedication to the Sephardic Legacy Series – Institute for Preserving Sephardic Heritage.

May Hashem bless you with continued strength.

Anonymous

books on secular knowledge, as evidenced by his account of crossing a river in Nice during the summer of 1777 (5537), when some of his "clothes and books" on secular knowledge that were stored under the wagon got wet and were ruined.4

The Hida expresses his attitude toward general scholarship in several places in his writings. In his work *Homat Anach* he explains the fundamental difference between Torah and secular knowledge, as he addresses the question of why secular knowledge flourished during his time, while Torah scholarship was diminishing:

In other fields, if one possesses a good and straight mind, he can achieve greater knowledge [as time goes on] ... When it comes to Torah, however, besides a good mind, one needs Heavenly assistance to comprehend the Torah, which is spiritual. Unfortunately, inspiration has diminished in proportion to the worthiness of the generation. Because of this, the spirit of wisdom has been diminished."5

He notes another distinction in his commentary to Avot, where he writes that whereas the study of secular ethics and philosophy are purely intellectual exercises, Torah study empowers a person spiritually: "The negative inclination can be neutralized only through the Torah study of ethics."6

Later in that same work, the Hida posits that secular knowledge is not even needed to refute the arguments of heretics, because if one studies Torah diligently, he will be able to respond as necessary, "for the Almighty's Torah is complete; nothing is missing from it." The Hida here speaks from personal experience, having been confronted

with many philosophical questions by people of many different faiths and backgrounds during his travels, and answering them satisfactorily despite never having studied philosophy. In France, he writes, "many aristocrats came and asked me philosophical questions regarding the subject of souls and reward and punishment, and the Almighty, in His great mercy, gave me what to say, and I answered them."8 He also met there "a great philosopher who asked me several things in matters of religion, and I answered him." The Hida mentions that one philosophical discussion in which he engaged touched upon the concept of gilgul (reincarnation).¹⁰

Professor Meir Benayahu posits that although the Hida did not intensively engage in philosophical study, he did have general knowledge of the subject, as evidenced by his conversations with the Sephardic Jews in France and Holland. These Jews were interested in the philosophical issues of the generation, and they enjoyed discussing and debating these topics with the Hida during his visits.

In Bayonne a group of potential donors came to ask him philosophical questions about souls, rewards, and retribution.¹¹ The Hida wrote at the time, "Hashem, in His great mercy, gave me an answer for them and I responded to them." During his visit to Bordeaux the community dignitaries discussed philosophy with him at length. The Hida wrote in his journal, "The conversation drifted into philosophical discussion bordering on heresy, and I said all I needed to."12 The Hida was even able to successfully answer the questions of "major philosophers" versed in external texts with which he was not familiar.13

^{4.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 99.

^{5.} Homat Anach, Kohelet 25.

^{6.} Petah Enayim, Avot 1:1.

^{7.} Ibid, 2:19.

^{8.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 111.

^{9.} Ibid, p. 117.

^{10.} Ibid, p. 113.

^{11.} Ibid, p. 111.

^{12.} Ibid, p. 115.

^{13.} Ibid, pp. 117, 135.

It is clear that for scholars of philosophy who were not versed in Talmud, the Hida would not have been able to build an argument based solely on Talmudic and Midrashic material. He would undoubtedly have had to read at least Jewish works of philosophy that quoted the Greek and other philosophers in order to successfully debate philosophical matters. And thus although he did not devote much time or accord much importance to the study of philosophy, it appears that he had acquired enough proficiency in the field to be able to speak with accomplished philosophers.

Sabbateanism

During the seventeenth century, before the Hida's birth, world Jewry was shaken by the Sabbatean messianic movement, which was founded by a scholarly Jew named Shabbetai Tzvi who proclaimed himself the messiah. Large numbers of Jews throughout the world believed in his messiahship, and continued believing even after his formal conversion to Islam in 1666 (5426) and his death in 1676 (5437). The disastrous effects of this debacle continued reverberating throughout the Jewish world for many decades after Shabbetai Tzvi's passing.

The Hida's attitude towards Sabbateanism has been researched and studied at length.14 Professor Benayahu, in his treatment of the subject, notes an important distinction between the Hida's attitude toward the movement itself, and his attitude toward rabbis with alleged or verified Sabbatean leanings. With regard to the actual beliefs of the Sabbatean cult, it is abundantly clear that the Hida unequivocally rejected them. This rejection is stated explicitly in his discussion of the controversial claim made by Rabbi Yaakov Emden, an older contemporary of the Hida, that the Zohar was not written by Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai. The Hida writes:

At first, I was amazed at his words, especially since our teachers Rabbi Moshe Cordovero and the Arizal, masters of the holy spirit, to whom Eliyahu *z"l* revealed himself, stand against him... Therefore, I believe that the Rabbi [Yaakov Emden] zt"l knew the truth of the holy Zohar. However, in his zealousness against the cursed group [the Sabbateans], who violated all sorts of sins and based themselves on passages from the *Zohar* which they distorted, he, in order to crush them, allowed himself to raise these doubts. His intention was for the sake of Heaven. May the Almighty, in His mercy, judge him favorably."15

However, despite his firm rejection of the movement, he defended the Jews in Eretz Yisrael whom he felt were "wrongly accused" 16 of following Shabbetai Tzvi. The magnitude of the Sabbatean debacle resulted in an overreaction among some rabbis, who, in their zealous campaign to discredit the movement, cast allegations of Sabbateanism against anyone whom they had even a flimsy basis for suspecting of involvement in the cult. Unfortunately, many kabbalists who had little or nothing to do with Sabbateanism were falsely accused, and in some circles the Kabbalah itself became suspect.¹⁷ The Hida made a point of balancing firm opposition to the movement and avoiding unwarranted condemnation of specific scholars and kabbalists.

^{14.} See Tziyunim Lidemuto Shel Hida, Sefer HaHida, pp. 47-53.

^{15.} Shem Hagedolim (Sefarim), Zayin, no. 8. See also Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 144, note 109.

^{16.} Shem Hagedolim, "Kitzur Takfo Kohen." His words are directed toward Rabbi Yaakov Emden's accusations against Rabbi Yehonatan Eibshitz, one of the leading Torah sages of the eighteenth century, in Shevirat Luchot Ha'aven (Altona, Germany, p. 50b). Rabbi Emden's charge that Rabbi Eibshitz was a Sabbatean sympathizer triggered a fierce controversy that raged throughout the Jewish world at the time.

^{17.} The great Torah scholars who fiercely opposed Sabbateanism certainly had the good of the Jewish people at heart. Others, however, took advantage of the tragedy of Shabbetai Tzvi and used it to belittle traditional Judaism in general, and Kabbalah in particular.

Perhaps more surprisingly, the Hida accorded respect to Torah scholars with overt Sabbatean tendencies. He described Rabbi Avraham Rovigo, an Italian supporter of Sabbateanism, as "a G-dfearing rabbi of faith who was seduced, in our multitude of sins, by folly..."18 He also spoke respectfully of other rabbis who were sympathetic to Sabbateanism, including Rabbi Binyamin Hakohen, Rabbi Yehuda Sharaf, and Rabbi Y. Shemuel Perimo. The Hida even mentions Rabbi Perimo in his Shem Hagedolim and cites him in his own sermons.19

Several explanations have been offered for why the Hida showed respect for Torah scholars who were misled by the Sabbatean movement. For one thing, the Hida was able to recognize and appreciate the value of these rabbis' scholarly works as long as their Sabbatean tendencies were not integral to the works' content. He evidently felt that their mistaken beliefs concerning Shabbetai Tzvi did not detract from the quality and value of their Torah scholarship, as long as the material itself was not tainted by any Sabbatean beliefs.

This might also explain the Hida's regard for the anonymous kabbalistic work *Hemdat Yamim*, which he studied as part of his efforts at achieving spiritual perfection, despite the fact that parts of the book hinted at Sabbateanism. Hemdat Yamim was a very popular work during the Hida's time, but there were those who attributed it to Shabbetai Tzvi's chief disciple, Rabbi Nathan of Gaza. The Hida, like numerous other Torah scholars, 20 learned the book and even cited it occasionally in his writings, apparently unaffected by the questions surrounding its authorship. 21

Furthermore, the scholars with Sabbatean leanings whom the Hida mentions were no longer alive during his generation. As such, he may well have felt that expressing respect for them would not be taken as acceptance of the movement. Since these figures had already passed on and their writings were not directly identified or associated with the Sabbatean cult, the Hida chose to make use of their scholarly publications which bore no connection whatsoever to Shabbetai Tzvi.

Thus, while strongly opposing the false messianic movement of Shabbetai Tzvi, the Hida was careful not to allow this opposition to lead to unnecessary rejection or derision of admirable scholars and their writings. It seems that he sought to avoid the kind of zealousness that characterized the response of other rabbis of his time to the movement, preferring instead to condemn what warranted condemnation while continuing to respect and make use of worthwhile works of Torah scholarship.

Hassidism

The Hassidic movement was founded in the mid-eighteenth century by Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, and by his primary disciple, Rabbi Dov Ber (the "Maggid") of Mezritch. Hassidism taught the importance of building an emotional connection to G-d through singing, dancing, prayer, and connection to a tzaddik, or "rebbe." The movement grew rapidly in Eastern Europe in the decades following the Baal Shem Tov's death, especially among Jewish peasants who lacked the background and opportunities for advanced Torah study, and who thus welcomed the notion of connecting to the Almighty through other, more accessible, means.

^{18.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 9.

^{19.} In 1754 (5514), the Hida delivered a lecture in Guastala that was based on a sermon by Rabbi Perimo. See Ma'agal Tov, p. 8.

^{20.} See Spielman, *Tiferet Zvi*, part 4, pp. 64–73.

^{21.} At least on one occasion, the Hida's study of Hemdat Yamim provided fodder for an adversary. It is told (Shivhei Harav Hida, in Sefer HaHida, p. 189 [5]) that a German Jew

with a less than stellar reputation once visited Livorno, and the Hida, who was aware of this individual's record, did not greet him warmly. The visitor retaliated by penning a letter to German rabbis falsely stating that the majority of the Hida's study is devoted to Hemdat Yamim. Upon hearing of the charge, the Hida quipped, "I love Hemdat Yamim [literally, 'the delight of days'], but that man loves hemdat lelot ['the delight of night']." It

During the Hida's time, Hassidism had not yet spread to Sephardic communities, and Sephardic scholars did not read the works of Hassidic leaders or adopt their customs. The first contact between the Hida and Hassidim occurred when the Hida's works reached Hassidic communities. This is how he found out about the movement, and over time he became quite familiar with the works of its founders.

The Hida mentions Hassidism and its leading figures in several places in his writings. In Shem Hagedolim he observes that the Or HaHaim Torah commentary – written by his teacher, Rabbi Haim ben Atar - earned widespread popularity "because the holy, pious rabbi, the Baal Shem Tov, revealed the greatness of Rabbi Haim's soul."22 And in the context of his discussion of the work Tzofnat Pa'ane'ah by the Baal Shem Tov's student, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonne (1710–1784), he makes reference to "his rabbi, the famous rabbi renowned for his sanctity, our rabbi, Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov."23 He also quotes two of the Baal Shem Toy's students: Rabbi Gershon of Kitov, the Baal Shem Toy's brother-in-law who learned with the Hida in the Bet El study hall,²⁴ and Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Premishlan, who moved to Eretz Yisrael in 1764 (5524).²⁵ In his later sermons he references the books of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef - Tzofnat Pa'ane'ah and Toldot Yaakov Yosef.²⁶ In one place he quotes Rabbi Yosef, the father of Rabbi Yisrael

Nachman of Drobitch, noting admiringly that he was the student of the Baal Shem Tov.²⁷

Hassidic sources relate that the Hida was so influenced by Hassidism that when he discovered the works of Hassidic masters, he regretted not having visited the Hassidic communities. The Hassidim of Chernobyl and Ruzhin relate that toward the end of the Hida's life, a Hassid traveling to Eretz Yisrael brought the Hida a copy of the work Me'or Enayim by Rabbi Menahem Nahum Twersky of Chernobyl. According to Shai Agnon's retelling, "He went to him to greet him and showed him the book, and the Hida was laid in his bed, elderly and frail, as he had already reached his last years... He looked at the book, enjoyed it, and sighed, and said, 'I regret that though I have traveled to many places and to distant lands, I was never in those countries of the Baal Shem Tov's students."28 Regardless of whether this story is fact or legend, it demonstrates the strong admiration and affinity that the Hida felt toward Hassidism.

The Hassidim likewise held and still hold the Hida in very high esteem. His books were very popular in Brody, which was an important Hassidic center. Rabbi Yisrael of Brod spoke of the Hida's piety, saying that from the days of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai there was none like him. The holy Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, one of the earliest Hassidic rebbes, went so far as to say that the Hida was specifically sent from the heavens to neutralize the destructive forces of the Enlightenment:

During the period of time that smiled on the wicked, when the Enlightenment raised its head and the powers of evil gained strength, they sent to this world - to balance it out - the holy rabbi and sage, the Hida...

is also interesting to note that Rabbi Haim Palagi once speculated that the Hida was a "spark" of the soul of Hemdat Yamim's author. See Yeshayahu Tishbi, Tziyunim Lidemuto shel Hida, in Sefer HaHida, p. 53.

^{22.} Shem Hagedolim, Or HaHaim.

^{23.} Ibid, Tzofnat Pa'ane'ah. The Hida mentions the Baal Shem Tov in his writings with much praise and admiration, yet does not cite the Gaon of Vilna, his contemporary and the leading opponent of Hassidism, even once. This might simply be a function of the fact that the publishing of the Gaon's writings first began only toward the very end of the Hida's life. See Benayahu, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 145.

^{24.} Pene David, p. 35d.

^{25.} Yosef Tehillot, 32; Kikar La'aden, p. 289c.

^{26.} See Lehem Min Hashamayim, p. 93a; Kise David, p. 61d.

^{27.} Homat Anach, Shir Hashirim 1. Several years before the Hida's passing, Rabbi Yisrael Nahman Drobitcher stayed in Livorno for about half a year, during which time he grew very close to the Hida.

^{28.} From Benayahu, originally taken from the Sefer Yachas Chernobyl V'Rhuzhin.

There in Italy is one righteous man, who, through his holy compositions, nullifies all the books of heresy. If only all the Jews would diligently learn the Hida's works, they would not be moved one iota from their faith by the books of heresy.²⁹

The great Hassidic master Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov - more commonly known as the Bene Yissaschar, the name of his famous work - cites a bold theory regarding repentance which the Hida mentions in several places³⁰ in the name of earlier Sages. The Hida claimed that when the Talmud delineates the various "hiluke kapparah" – the means of achieving atonement for different categories of sins - it refers only to those who repent mi'yirah, out of fear of retribution. But sinners who repent me'ahavah, out of sincere love of G-d, can earn atonement through repentance alone, even without the sacrifices and forms of punishment listed by the Gemara. The Bene Yissaschar adds a parenthetical remark that reveals the esteem in which he held the Hida and the level of authority he accorded to him: "I do not know the source [for this theory]...but once the preeminent rabbi of his generation issued this ruling in the earthly court, this is the accepted ruling in the Heavenly Court."31

The Hida and Ashkenazic Torah Scholars

The Hida was also held in high esteem by the Lithuanian sages. In 1906 (5666) an edition of the Hida's Moreh Ba'etzba was published with a commentary by Rabbi Yehoshua Hakohen of Volozhin. The book included letters of approbation from several Lithuanian Torah scholars, including Rabbi Rephael Shapira, the rabbi in Volozhin and rosh yeshivah of the renowned Volozhin Yeshivah; and Rabbi Haim Ozer Grodzenski, rabbi of Vilna. They all refer to the Hida as "the holy sage."

The Hida mentions in his works many of the leading Ashkenazic Torah scholars of his time, such as Rabbi Aryeh Leib Gunzberg (Sha'agat Aryeh), Rabbi Yehezkel Landau (Noda BiYehudah), Rabbi Pinhas Horowitz (Hafla'ah), Rabbi Yosef Te'umim (Peri Megadim), Rabbi Rephael Hakohen of Hamberg (Torat Yekutiel), Rabbi Yeshayah Berlin, and Rabbi Yosef David Zintseim of Strasbourg. Likewise, numerous leading Ashkenazic sages of his time and the next generation frequently cite the Hida's writings in their works. These include Rabbi Ephraim Zalman Margolies, Rabbi Akiva Eiger, and Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Hatam Sofer).

In his introduction to Horah Gever on Masechet Horayot, Rabbi Betzalel Ronsburg expresses his admiration for the Hida, and his frustration over being unable to obtain a copy of the Hida's work on that tractate:

The well-known sage, author of Birke Yosef, wrote his book, Sha'ar Yosef, on this tractate, and with all my efforts to write to all places where there are book dealers, I still have not been able to achieve my goal of attaining this worthy book; I have only seen mention of it in Birke Yosef. How great was my anguish that I did not have this book when I composed this work, for who knows if I have not at times made a point similar to his, or perhaps his words would be a contradiction to mine. I say that if I do indeed come across this book, I will study this tractate again in order to compose a second edition.32

^{29.} Ohel Elimelech, 281, cited by Benayahu, p. 147, note 122.

^{30.} Midbar Kedemot - ma'arechet Tav, 18; Devarim Ahadim, 7, p. 29.

^{31.} Bene Yissaschar part 2, Tishrei 14:39.

^{32.} Interestingly, in the section on Horayot in Mar'it Ha'ayin, published in the last year of his life, the Hida mentions having seen Rabbi Betzalel's work on Horayot.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

In the Footsteps of a Giant - The Hida's Children

Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah Azoulay

managananananananan - menagai daga menggapanan daga menggapan beragai daga menggapan beragai daga menggapan ber

לעילוי נשמת שמחה בת זוהרה

In loving memory of Simone Delouya

From ber children

and grandchildren

The Hida related to his oldest son, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah, as both a parent and a dear friend. He refers to him as "my portion of delight and the light of my eyes," and "my soul and my spirit, the joy of my joy, my light and salvation."2 He wrote to him affectionately and respectfully, and held him always in his thoughts. Fifty letters that the Hida wrote to his son have been published.

The Hida quite frequently cites his son's insights in his books, introducing them with such phrases as, "My dear son, my eldest son, the wise and virtuous, Rabbi Yeshayah, may Hashem help him (yoshiahu)," and, "I heard from the beloved of my soul, both a son and a brother, the joy of my joy, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah."

^{1.} Most of this chapter is translated from Benayahu.

^{2.} Cited by Benayahu, p. 481, note *27.

Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah embarked on several *shelihut* missions, at least one of which seems to have brought him to Germany. The Hida writes that Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah was "a great scholar who studied extensively with the sages of Germany." He served as a shaliah for the community of Tiberias, concluding his fundraising mission in 1784 (5544), at which point he settled in Amsterdam, making his living by selling books. He first wife was named Simchah, and after her death he remarried in the summer of 1787 (5547) to the daughter of the rabbi of the Sephardic community of Amsterdam.

In 1784 (5544) Rabbi Haim Avraham Yisrael, the rabbi of Ancona, passed away; three years later the vacant position was offered to the Hida. The Hida declined, but suggested several possible candidates, including his son Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah, who was soon appointed rabbi of the city. He received a salary, a house, a study hall, and travel expenses.⁴ His responsibilities included deciding on matters of halachah, studying Shulhan Aruch with the congregants each morning after Shaharit, spending two hours studying with yeshivah students in the afternoon, and speaking publicly in Ancona's main synagogue. The Hida persuaded the community to allow his son to lead the prayers in the Sephardic synagogue on the High Holy Days, a privilege that had been granted to the previous rabbi as well.

In 1795 (5555) Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah was offered the position of rabbi of Siena, a job that would pay a considerably higher salary than the pay he received in Ancona. The Hida nevertheless advised him to remain in Ancona, which was an important community, and where he had already established himself. In the end, the community of Ancona agreed to raise his salary to the sum offered by Siena.

One year later, in 1796 (5556), Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah took ill. He wrote to his father about his condition, and the Hida responded with an emotional letter:

Upon seeing your letter and your pain, the anguish was unbelievable... I myself took ill... But know, my dear son, that Hashem is with you; nothing bad will happen to you... I pour out my soul before the Almighty regarding your recovery with tears in my eyes... He will accept [my prayers] for the good... Be strong, do not fear.5

The Hida was correct; Rabbi Rephael would live another thirty years after this illness.

Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah had a tiny Megillat Esther written by his great-grandfather - the Hida's grandfather - Rabbi Yeshayah Azoulay. One year, the scroll was stolen after the Purim evening prayers, and Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah was distraught over the loss of this priceless heirloom. That night, the Hida came to him in a dream and handed the scroll back to him. Upon awakening, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah understood that he would yet see the heirloom again. And so it was. In the morning a friend of his handed him the scroll, which a gentile had brought to his home with the request that he return it to its owner, since it had brought him nothing but suffering since entering his possession.

Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah wrote a book of responsa titled Imrei Noam. Some of the responsa in this collection were published by his son, Rabbi Moshe Azoulay, under the title *Tiferet Moshe* in Rabbi Moshe's work Zichron Moshe. Two of Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah's responsa were published in the Hida's works.

After leading the community of Ancona for nearly four decades, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah passed away in the month of Shevat 1826

^{3.} Rabbi Zev Paretzky, The Chida, p. 163.

^{4.} Shivhe Harav Hida, in Sefer HaHida, p. 480.

^{5.} Rosenberg, Iggerot D'Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 69.

(5586) at the age of eighty-three. The city of Ancona observed a lengthy period of mourning for their beloved leader, and two Italian scholars composed poems in his memory.

Rabbi Avraham Azoulay

Rabbi Avraham, the Hida's second son, left Jerusalem in 5542 (1782) with a servant, and it is unclear where he had planned to travel. It is known that he spent four months in Italy, probably to visit his father, and that he later sailed to Tripoli, where he fell overboard but was miraculously saved. In a letter to his brother, Rabbi Avraham speaks of the harsh travails he endured during his period of travel: "I was exiled and flung from pillar to post for the past year and a half, with almost no calm or quiet until I arrived here. A week later I left the quarantine camp. The entire time that I was in quarantine, I did not merit seeing the pleasant countenance of our father, our king, Abba."6

During Rabbi Avraham's visit to Italy the Hida was involved in the publication of his work Mahazik Berachah. Rabbi Avraham assisted him with the editing, and added a few of his own comments.

In his diary the Hida makes an ambiguous reference to a change that occurred in his relationship with Rabbi Avraham: "The two of us enjoyed ourselves until 20 Sivan, not inclusive." It is unclear why they could no longer enjoy each other's company after 20 Sivan. Regardless, Rabbi Avraham left Livorno on 25 Av.⁸

Rabbi Avraham married the daughter of the Italian kabbalist Rabbi Avraham Yisrael Hai Sanguinetti, who had come to Eretz Yisrael in the company of Rabbi Haim ben Atar. Like his brother, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah, Rabbi Avraham undertook several fundraising trips, during

which he distributed copies of his father's books. On one occasion his brother, who was then selling books for a living, asked him to take along several volumes to sell for him. During one *shelihut*, Rabbi Avraham was apparently accompanied by his brother-in-law, Rabbi Shemuel Sanguinetti.

On 12 Shevat, 1787 (5547) a major snowstorm struck Jerusalem, the likes of which the elders of the city had never seen. Many buildings were damaged, including the old Istanbul Synagogue. The synagogue remained in ruins for nearly three years, at which time Rabbi Avraham was sent to Western Europe to collect funds to rebuild it. Funds were needed not only for the actual building costs, but also for obtaining a building permit. Under Islamic law it was forbidden to put up a house of worship of another faith, and permission could be obtained only by bribing the Turkish rulers. Rabbi Avraham also had incurred large personal debts, which weighed heavily upon his mind and caused him considerable distress, and he sought to collect money to repay them, as well.

It seems that Rabbi Avraham first traveled to Italy, where he printed his certificate of shelihut. He also received a letter of approbation from his father, approving his collection of money to build the synagogue and to repay his own debts. In Adar 5550 (1790) he visited Ferrara and raised seventy pesas. He also went to Modena and Iskandiano, but these communities did not respond generously to his appeal. That summer he visited Ancona and was given forty scudis in addition to his travel expenses. In Kislev 1791 (5552) he was in Livorno, and, as the Hida described in a letter to Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah, Rabbi Avraham raised a "miraculous" sum in the city. Unfortunately, Rabbi Avraham would later lose four thousand pesos as a result of the rebellion against Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II,10

^{6.} Ibid, 8, p. 14.

^{7.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 180.

^{8.} Ibid.

^{9.} Iggerot D'Rav Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 14.

^{10.} It is unclear precisely how he lost the money, whether it was stolen or needed to pay his way out of the battle zone.

and he thus had to return to the Italian Jewish communities and raise additional funds.

After completing his mission for the Istanbul Synagogue, he was offered a shelihut on behalf of the Tiberias community. Though he was initially hesitant, he eventually agreed, likely due to his concern about his own debts. This shelihut took him to Germany and Poland, 11 and he joined forces with Rabbi Asher Ashkenazi, a shaliah for the Hassidim living in the Galilee. The communities they visited were impressed by the cooperation of the two emissaries, one Sephardic and the other Ashkenazic, which stood in stark contrast to the competition that normally existed between the emissaries of the two communities. Their cause was helped by the support of the Hida, who was famous even in the Ashkenazic world.

Upon reaching Frankfurt am Main, Rabbi Avraham and Rabbi Asher parted ways. Rabbi Avraham proceeded to Holland, where he spent several months, while Rabbi Asher moved on to Moravia and Hungary. Rabbi Avraham returned to Livorno in Tammuz 1793 (5553).12 It took him an entire year to return to Italy because of the wars that erupted in numerous areas. The trip did not help him repay his debts, as the money he raised was needed to bypass the war zones. He returned to Italy "entirely exhausted and spent, physically and financially."13

Three weeks later the Hida wrote to Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah that his brother might set out on another round of fundraising. And indeed, Adar 5554 (1794) found him in Tunisia, after which he returned to Livorno in order to go to Israel with his father. The ongoing wars delayed their departure, and so Rabbi Avraham remained in Livorno for ten months.

Following his rich family tradition, Rabbi Avraham was also an accomplished scholar. As mentioned, he helped his father prepare his Mahazik Berachah for publication, adding several notes of his own. He also helped with the preparation of the second part of Haim Sha'al, the Hida's work of responsa, which includes a responsum by Rabbi Avraham.

Rabbi Avraham passed away in 1799 (5559) in Eretz Yisrael at around the age of fifty, when his father was seventy-five years old.¹⁴

Rabbi Mordechai Shemuel Gerondi, the Chief Rabbi of Padua, described how the Hida reacted to his son's death even before receiving notice of the tragedy:

He [Rabbi Avraham] passed away in his [the Hida's] lifetime in Jerusalem. His father, touched by the Divine spirit, sensed when his son had passed away, and began mourning then in Livorno. Later, when they wrote from Jerusalem to inform him of the day and the hour of the passing, it was precisely when our teacher the Hida had removed his shoes and begun mourning.¹⁵

Rabbi Rephael Hakohen, author of V'shav Hakohen and rabbi of the communities of Altona, Hamberg, and Wandsbek, was greatly impressed by both of the Hida's sons when they passed through

^{11.} In two instances in his work Shem Hagedolim the Hida makes mention of his son's visit to Cracow, Poland. The first is in the context of a story told about the famous Polish sage Rabbi Heshel of Cracow, which he concludes by writing, "Such was told to me by my dear son, the light of my eyes, may the shield of Avraham aid him, as he heard it from great people when he was on shelihut mitzvah in the holy city of Cracow." The second instance is the Hida's entry on Rabbi Moshe Isserles, author of the glosses to the Shulhan Aruch, where he remarks that "my beloved son, may the shield of Abraham aid him" visited Rabbi Moshe Isserles' tomb in Cracow.

^{12.} Ma'agal Tov, p. 180. Rabbi Avraham's shelihut ledger is still extant, in its entirety. It was discovered by Professor Meir Benayahu in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

^{13.} Paretzky, p. 164.

^{14.} Ibid, p. 166.

^{15.} Toledot Gedole Yisrael B'Italia, pp. 110, 112.

Germany on their respective shelihut missions, and praised "their Torah, their fear [of Heaven], and their sincerity."16

The Hida's Daughters

The Hida's older daughter Sarah, with whom he stayed when he first came to Livorno, passed away on 22 Tevet, 1781 (5541). As mentioned earlier, his second daughter, Klara, passed away in Egypt as a young girl in Elul 1765 (5525).

In 1793 (5553) the Hida's third daughter, Simhah, married Rabbi Avraham Pardo, a young scholar who was close to the Hida since his arrival in Livorno. Rabbi Avraham was the son of the renowned scholar Rabbi David Pardo, author of several halachic works and rosh yeshivah of Yeshivat Hesed L'Avraham in Jerusalem. At some point Rabbi Avraham and Simhah moved to Eretz Yisrael, and Rabbi Avraham joined his father's yeshivah. The Hida and his son-in-law enjoyed close ties, and Rabbi Avraham visited Livorno often.

As mentioned earlier, the Hida succeeded Rabbi David Pardo as rosh yeshivah of Hesed L'Avraham. After the Hida passed away, Rabbi Avraham became the rosh yeshivah and served in this role until his death in 1820 (5580).

Rabbi Moshe ben Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah

When Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah's wife was expecting their son, the Hida advised Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah that if his wife would give birth to a boy, they should name him Moshe, "for Moshe was the seventh [generation] from Avraham" - just as this child would be a seventhgeneration descendant of Rabbi Avraham Azoulay, the Hida's greatgreat-grandfather.¹⁷ Indeed, the couple had a baby boy, whom they named Moshe.

Rabbi Moshe Azoulay grew to be an accomplished and renowned scholar. He published an index of passages from the Rambam, Shulhan Aruch, and Talmud that appear in the Hida's works. He also compiled a commentary on *Humash* called *Lehem Min Hashamayim* where he recorded his own and his grandfather's novel insights. Additionally, he authored Zichron Moshe, an abridged version of the Hida's Birke Yosef and Mahazik Berachah, which was published in Livorno in 1840 (5600).

Rabbi Moshe Azoulay inherited a walking stick from his father which had been in the possession of the Hida for many years. The walking stick was silver-plated and bore the inscription "Ya'aloz hasadeh v'chol" engraved on it. These words alluded to a holy Name of Hashem, and its use was seen as an omen for a successful journey. Recognizing the stick's value, Rabbi Moshe guarded it like the apple of his eye. Nevertheless, the stick was once stolen, and nobody knew its whereabouts. After a short time elapsed a non-Jew appeared in the home of Rabbi Moshe with the stick in hand. He explained that he had purchased it from another gentile, apparently the thief. He asked for an exorbitant amount of money in return for the precious stick, but Rabbi Moshe could not afford the enormous sum. There seemed to be little hope of ever retrieving the precious walking stick.

A year later, the man reappeared in Rabbi Moshe's home and returned the stick without a word. Rabbi Moshe offered to pay him the amount he had paid the thief for it, but the man refused to accept any money. Rabbi Moshe understood that this man suffered greatly while the stick was in his possession, and therefore realized he had no choice but to return it to its rightful owner.

^{16.} Zev Paretzky, p. 166.

^{17.} The Azoulay family had always treasured the memory of its saintly and revered patriarch, Rabbi Avraham Azoulay. In fact, Rabbi Moshe Azoulay at one point considered

selling his home in Jerusalem, but never entertained the possibility of selling the property he owned in Hebron, which had been in the family's possession since the time of Rabbi Avraham.

Yitzhak ben Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah

Yitzhak, who was named after the Hida's father, was Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah's oldest son. 18 At the beginning of the summer of 1767 (5527), when he was ten years old, his parents sent him to Livorno, to be with the Hida. It seems that two years later Yitzhak was placed under the care of the Hida's brother-in-law, Avraham Haim Levi, the brother of the Hida's second wife, whom the Hida gave a monthly allowance to cover Yitzhak's expenses.¹⁹ When Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah came to Pisa in 1782 (5542) the Hida went to greet him, together with Yitzhak, and returned Yitzhak to his father's care.

Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah traveled to Germany in 1783 (5543), and left Yitzhak in Berlin to study at the yeshivah there. The Hida did not receive any letters from Yitzhak for an extended period of time, during which he was very concerned about his grandson's wellbeing.²⁰ The Hida asked about Yitzhak repeatedly in numerous letters to his son, but Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah ignored his inquiries. On 15 Shevat, 1789 (5549) the Hida wrote to his son, "I have been unable to write recently. Tell me about your dear, wise son, Yitzhak. Where is he? I await an answer!"21

There is some speculation²² that Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah's avoidance of the question was the result of his estrangement from his son. While studying in Germany, Yitzhak devoted himself to the study of fields other than Torah, becoming a literary scholar and a writer. He used the pseudonym Yosef Leonini (Leonini was his mother's maiden name). His Spanish comedy, El Delinguente Honrado, was published in Berlin in 1796.²³

Unable to obtain information from his son about Yitzhak, the Hida asked his son Rabbi Avraham, who traveled to Germany in 1791 (5551), to try to find him. Unfortunately, he was unsuccessful. Upon his return, the Hida updated his son, Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah. He explained that neither Rabbi Avraham nor his friend Rabbi Asher, who also visited Germany, was able to locate Yitzhak. However, when Rabbi Avraham was in Amsterdam, he was told that Yitzhak was in Copenhagen, and the Hida resolved to try to find him there.²⁴ Regardless, about a decade later, in 1803 (5563), we find that Yitzhak Azoulay was in Berlin.²⁵

Yitzhak eventually left Berlin and settled in London. We do not know much about his life there, but we do know that he had three sons: Haim Vital, Moshe, and Yom Tov Bondi. Yitzhak passed away in London on 16 Tammuz, 1840 (5600), at the age of seventy-three, and was buried at the Old Mile End cemetery. His headstone reads: "In memory of Signor Yitzhak Leonini Azulay, M.A., Professor Regius at the Institute of Noble Cadets in Berlin for twenty-two years, tutor to H.R.H. the Princess Royal of Prussia, member of several learned societies, etc., etc. Born in Livorno. Died 16th Tammuz = 17 July, 1840."26

Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah ben Rabbi Avraham Azoulay

Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah, Rabbi Avraham's only child, was born in Jerusalem sometime before 1780 (5540).

^{18.} Rabbi Rephael Yeshayah also had two daughters about whom little is known. The older one was named Sarah for the Hida's mother, and the younger one was named

^{19.} The Hida's financial ledger includes a record of expenses allocated "to my brother-inlaw for my grandson's expenses."

^{20.} Iggerot D'Rav Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 24.

^{21.} Ibid, p. 29.

^{22.} Zev Paretzky, The Chida, p. 168.

^{23.} One copy of this play remains in the family's possession.

^{24.} Iggerot D'Rav Haim Yosef David Azoulay, p. 56.

^{25.} Zev Paretzky, The Chida, p. 168.

^{26.} As of the writing of Benayahu's book, Yom Tov Bondi's daughter, Mrs. Gertrude Azoulay of London, was, at age eighty-six, the last known descendant of Yitzhak Azoulay. Her siblings had all intermarried and left the Jewish community.

While in 1804 (5564) he was known as one of Jerusalem's scholars,²⁷ by the next year he had moved to Turkey. He served as head of the Rabbinical Court in Magnesia, near Izmir, where he became close with Rabbi Haim Palagi, Rabbi of Izmir, who quotes him several times in his works. Upon his return to Israel he became a member of the Safed Bet Din. It was there in Safed that he published his work Shulhan *Hatahor*, an elaboration on the work *Po'el Tzedek*²⁸ by Rabbi Shabbetai Cohen (Shach, 1622–1663) on the 613 mitzvot, citing relevant passages from the Talmud, the *Zohar*, and sources in halachic literature.²⁹ The Shulhan Hatahor is divided in such a way that it can be completed over the course of a month.

Rabbi Nissim and his family celebrated 7 Tammuz each year as a personal holiday of thanksgiving, as evidently Rabbi Nissim's life was saved on that day. No specific information is available about the incident.

On 24 Tevet, 1837 (5597), the community of Safed suffered a devastating earthquake. Many people lost their lives, among them Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah. The news of his tragic death precipitated widespread mourning and eulogies.³⁰ Rabbi Yisrael of Shklov,³¹ who had left Safed for Jerusalem just a few days before the earthquake hit, and thus was spared, had been a friend of Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah. He did his utmost to aid the devastated city and its residents. In an appeal that he sent to the community of Amsterdam, he made mention of several scholars who lost their lives in the catastrophe including: "... the great rabbis... Rabbi Avraham Anhuri zt"l and my colleague, Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah Azoulay zt"l, and Rabbi Haim Yosef Tzarfati zt"l."32

In a poem commemorating the tragedy, Rabbi Avraham Baruch Papirno of Livorno made specific mention of Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah, describing him as a "a pious, wholesome man." ³³

We have no information about the sons of Rabbi Moshe and Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah. Thus Rabbi Moshe and Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah are the last links in the seven-generation chain of notable scholars of the Azoulay line.

^{27.} See Arze Halebanon, vol. 2, p. 1717.

^{28.} The Hida was very fond of this work, and writes, "Happy is the one who studies it each week."

^{29.} The work's format resembles that of the Hida's Yosef L'hok, in which he elaborates upon the earlier work Hok L'Yisrael by adding relevant citations from halachic and homiletic literature.

^{30.} Toledot Gedole Yisrael B'Italia, p. 110.

^{31.} Rabbi Yisrael of Shklov was one of the chief disciples of the Gaon of Vilna and author of Pe'at Hashulhan and Taklin Hadtin.

^{32.} Ammer, Maran HaHida Hakadosh, 1:243.

^{33.} Cited by Benayahu, p. 504.



From Italy to Jerusalem: The Hida's Reburial

Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Livorno, Italy, on Via Del Carala. When the cemetery was expropriated by the Fascists in 1940-1941, the Hida's remains, together with his tombstone, as well as the remains and tombstones of other earlier Livorno scholars, were moved to a special section in the new cemetery.1

Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim

This chapter is lovingly dedicated by

Sammy & Debbie Oziel

and Family

in honor of our beloved grandparents

George and Bella Topas

And also in memory of our dear grandparents

Jacob and Cyla Goldlust z"l

Mendel and Goldie Grundman z"l

Samuel and Esther Oziel z"l

In 1956 (5716), on the 150th anniversary of the Hida's death, Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim, then Chief Rabbi of Israel and an ardent admirer of the Hida, launched an initiative to bring the Hida's remains to Jerusalem.

^{1.} The Hida's chair from the yeshivah of Pereira de Leon was kept in a museum in Livorno. Unfortunately, the museum, as well as the city's great synagogue, were destroyed in an air raid in 1944 (5704).



From left to right: Sephardic Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim; Rabbi Gershon Bruno Polaco; and the president of the community, Professor Cabib (Great Synagogue; Livorno, Italy, 1956)

In order to bring Rabbi Nissim's idea to fruition, the Agudat Ne'emane Yad HaHida foundation² was founded in Jerusalem in 1959. The founding members included Rabbi Nissim; Mr. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, President of the State of Israel; Dr. Umberto Shelomo Nahon, Chairman of the Italian Jews Society for Spiritual Activity; Professor Meir Benayahu, Director of the Ben-Zvi Institute, and noted educator and writer Rabbi Dr. S. Z. Cahana. Dr. Shelomo Nahon had strong connections to the Italian Jewish community³ and brought the matter before the Livorno Communal Council, which unanimously agreed to the transfer.





Members of the
Livorno Jewish
community digging
up the coffin of
Hacham Haim Yosef
David Azoulay –
cimitero ebraico
"dei Lupi," Livorno,
Italy (photo courtesy
of Gadi Polacco,
Livorno, Italy)



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^{2.} This organization was instrumental in obtaining permission from the Livorno Jewish community to bring the body of the Hida to Eretz Yisrael. It also arranged the entire funeral ceremony and took care of fundraising.

^{3.} Dr. Nahon also initiated a project to transport synagogues from Italy to Israel. He brought about forty arks to Israel and distributed them among synagogues throughout the country (including the Ponevezh Yeshivah in Bnei Brak, Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, and the synagogue in the Knesset building), and brought Judaica and manuscripts from Italy to Israel.



Members of the Livorno Jewish community eulogizing Hacham Haim Yosef David Azoulay - cimitero ebraico "dei Lupi," Livorno, Italy (photo courtesy of Gadi Polacco, Livorno, Italy)





Members of the Livorno Jewish community eulogizing Hacham Haim Yosef David Azoulay. Center: Rabbi Alfredo Toaff with his son Rabbi Elio Toaff (former Chief Rabbi of Rome, *Italy)* – cimitero ebraico "dei Lupi," Livorno, Italy (photo courtesy of Gadi Polacco, Livorno, Italy)

A committee was formed to make the necessary arrangements for the reburial. Its members included prominent politicians, academics, and rabbinical leaders.4

The task of reburying the Hida was not a simple one. Chief Rabbi Nissim and his son, Professor Meir Benayahu, were in contact with numerous dignitaries worldwide, both political and religious, to accomplish this task.5 Funding was also a concern, and money was contributed by a wide variety of individuals and institutions.⁶

^{4.} These included Mr. K. Luz, Speaker of the Knesset; Mr. Zalman Shazar, Executive Chairman of the Jewish Agency; Dr. Yosef Burg, Minister of Welfare; Rabbi J. M. Toledano, Minister of Religious Affairs; Mr. Bechor-Shalom Shitreet, Minister of Police; Mr. Haim Moshe Shapira, Minister of Internal Affairs; the writer Shmuel Joseph (Shai) Agnon; Rabbi J. L. Maimon; Professor B. Mazar, President of the Hebrew University; Rabbi I. A. Unterman, Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv; Rabbi Ovadia Hadaya and Rabbi Yaakov Ades - Members of the Supreme Rabbinical Court; Mr. Mordechai Ish-Shalom, Mayor of Jerusalem; Mr. S. B. Yeshaya, District Commissioner; Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin; Dr. Tuvia Bar-Ilan, Administrator of Bar-Ilan University; and Mr. Abraham Elmaleh, a prominent journalist and politician.

^{5.} Correspondents included Rabbi Eliyahu Toaff, Chief Rabbi of Rome; Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, President of Israel; Mordechai Ish-Shalom, Mayor of Jerusalem; Rabbi Saliman Sasson; Rabbi Solomon Gaon, Sephardic Rabbi and Hacham of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews of the British Commonwealth; Shwarz, Spaer & Toussia-Cohen, attorneys involved in the reburial project; Rabbi Solomon P. Wohlgelernter, Rabbi of Congregation Heichal Shlomo - The Jerusalem Great Synagogue; Minister Eliyahu Sasson, who served as the Israeli envoy and ambassador to Italy from 1953-1960; Levi Eshkol, Prime Minister of Israel; Ami Assaf, Member of Knesset; Pinhas Scheinman, Member of Knesset; Yuval Azoulay, Haifa Court; Rabbi G. Schlesinger, Rabbinate of Jaffa and Tel Aviv District; Rabbi Yehoshua Kaniel, Chief Rabbi of Haifa; Rabbi Aaron Klar, Rabbinate of Nahariya; Rabbi Y. Lebanon, Haifa Beit Din; Rabbi J. Azriely (Kushelevsky), Rabbi of Zichron Yaakov; J. Bandler, engineer involved with the reburial; Shimon Levi, Ohel Moed Synagogue in Tel Aviv; Dr. Shelomo Nahon, Jewish Agency representative; Rabbi Eliyahu Yosef She'ar Yashuv Cohen, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Haifa; Judge David Bartov, Judicial Courts; Minister Saul Legaziel, Milan, Italy; Officiants of the Burial Society for the Jerusalem Jewish Community (Har Hamenuhot); Rabbi Akiva Moshe Gotleib, Treasurer of Har Hamenuhot Cemetery.

^{6.} These included Israel Discount Bank; Bank Leumi of Israel; the State of Israel's Ministry of Education and Culture; The Jewish Communities of Italy; President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi; The Ben-Zvi Institute of Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi; The Sephardic Orphanage of

A National Commemoration

The Yad HaHida Society was committed to not only bringing the Hida's remains to Jerusalem for burial, but also ensuring that this event would receive the nationwide attention and publicity it deserved. The foundation enlisted numerous government agencies in the effort to make a countrywide commemoration of the Hida's contributions and honor his memory as his remains were brought to his homeland, Eretz Yisrael.

At the request of the Yad HaHida Society, the Ministry of Education and Culture directed all schools in Israel to devote an hour to the life and work of Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay. The Society printed a special booklet for this purpose, which was distributed in the schools by the Ministry of Education.

The Chief Rabbinate instructed all rabbis and synagogues to commemorate the Hida in the course of the services on the Shabbat of 17 Iyar. Newspapers published on the preceding Friday printed articles about him. Memorial meetings were held in conjunction with the Information Authority of the Government of Israel.

The central memorial service, Ma'amad HaHida, was held at 8:30 p.m., 19 Iyar, 1960 (5720), the evening preceding the reburial, in the Yeshurun Central Synagogue in Jerusalem. Speakers included Mr. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, President of the State of Israel; the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim: and Mr. Zalman Shazar. Executive Chairman of the Jewish Agency. Part of the ceremony was broadcast by Kol Israel Radio.

The Hida Returns Home

On Sunday, 20 Iyar, the coffin containing the remains of the Hida was removed from the Livorno cemetery. Among those present were

Jerusalem; The Diskin Orphanage of Jerusalem; Elderly Home in Jerusalem; Professor Meir Benayahu; Dr. Shelomo Nahon; and many anonymous donors.

members of the Communal Livorno Council and the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Dr. Elio (Eliyahu) Toaff. The coffin was then sent to Rome, where it arrived afternoon. the was positioned the entrance in Sephardic to the synagogue, and remained there until the next morning. During this time, shemirah (standing guard over the coffin) was done by a group of young men from the local Rabbinical College, several hazzanim, young and members of the Bnai Akiva youth



Members of the Bnai Akiva youth movement carrying the Hida's coffin from the Sephardic Synagogue in Rome, where the coffin was placed en route from its burial site in Livorno to Jerusalem. Rabbi Elio Toaff is behind them. The coffin was brought from the synagogue to Ciampino Airport, and from there it was flown to Israel.

movement. Three or four people stood on each side of the coffin in shifts of two to four hours per group. Everyone was dressed in dark pants and white shirts, with blue handkerchiefs around their necks (the traditional uniform of Bnai Akiva). The next morning Dr. Toaff delivered a eulogy in the presence of a large crowd, including prominent leaders of the Italian Jewish community, speaking about the Hida and the Livorno Jewish community at that time. The coffin

was then brought to the airport accompanied by Dr. Toaff and Dr. Umberto Nahon, leader of the Italian Jewish community in Israel.

A special delegation of rabbis and public leaders met the coffin at Lod airport on the morning of 20 Iyar. This delegation included the representative of the Italian Ambassador to Israel, as well as Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, who would later become Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel. Rabbi Nissim had appointed Rabbi Eliyahu,



Rabbi Elio Toaff speaking with Dr. A. Gatchi, secretary of the Italian Embassy, and Dr. Gorgo Romano, who came to greet him at the Lod Airport in Israel, after flying in from Italy with the Hida's coffin.

(Photo courtesy: Dr. Gisèle Lèvy, Rabbi Gianfranco Di Segni, and Gabriele Bedarida excerpted from the Israel Italian Magazine May 1960: N. 31)

an expert on the writings of the Hida, to oversee the reburial of the remains and ensure that they received proper respect.

That morning, Rabbi Eliyahu immersed himself in a mikveh in Jerusalem and then traveled by bus to the airport. Waiting at the airport with him were Rabbi Yitzhak Abuhatzera (Baba Haki)⁷ and

Rabbi David Laniado. When the plane landed, the group went up into the cargo compartment. There stood a wooden casket. Rabbi Eliyahu turned to the people accompanying it and asked that it not be lowered from the plane until he checked its contents. Dr. Nahon asked the Rabbi why he wanted to look inside, and Rabbi Eliyahu answered, "I am the emissary of Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim. I must complete my task. There are *halachot* concerning the casket, and I must ascertain that all is in order."

Inside the large wooden box there was a smaller one made of copper, about fifty to sixty centimeters long. Rabbi Eliyahu did not understand. "Where is the Hida?" he asked.

Those who accompanied the casket replied, "Right here in this box."

Rabbi Eliyahu was horrified. "The Hida is in this small casket?"

"Yes," came the reply. "We gathered the bones and put them in here." Rabbi Eliyahu had assumed that there would be a complete skeleton, and asked to be excused for a few minutes. Quietly, he asked Rabbi Yitzhak Abuhatzera if he could use the services of his driver to take him to a *mikveh*. He instructed those present not to do anything until his return.

After immersing in the *mikveh* Rabbi Eliyahu went to a hardware store and bought screwdrivers in all available sizes. He had noticed that the box was screwed together, but was not sure of the exact size of the screws. Rabbi Eliyahu returned from the hardware store to the airport, and told the people who were waiting to follow him and watch as he opened the copper box.

Everyone waited in suspense, aware of the holiness of the casket's contents. They tensely followed Rabbi Eliyahu's movements in

^{7.} Rabbi Yitzhak Abuhatzera (the Baba Haki, 1895-1970) was the brother of Rabbi Yisrael

Abuhatzera (Baba Sali). At the time of this story he served as the Chief Rabbi of Ramle, and was one of the individuals who laid the casket of the Hida to rest (Min Hahar El Ha'am, p. 279).

complete silence as he located the appropriate screwdriver. As he began loosening the first screw on top a loud noise emanated from inside the box. Everyone was terrified; some even fainted from fright.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu stood up and said in a trembling voice, "The Hida! The Hida! You wrote in one of your books [he named the book] such-and-such, and I did exactly as you wrote. I ask of you respectfully to please put an end to the noise." Silence was restored and the Rabbi continued opening the box. Again there was a frightful noise, and again the Rabbi said, "Harav Hida, what you wrote in your book, I followed exactly." When the box was open, Rabbi Eliyahu held his breath and requested of the Hida that the bones rearrange themselves. Suddenly he felt with his hands that the box was moving.

As if by their own accord, the bones were arranged next to one another until a complete skeleton was formed.8

A large convoy escorted the coffin to Ierusalem where it was placed in the inner court of the Yeshurun Synagogue. Rabbi Pinchas Epstein, head of the Eidah Haredit at the time, heard about the imminent arrival of the Hida's remains in Jerusalem, and wanted to call a halt to all work in the city so that everyone could



In the courtyard of the Yeshurun Synagogue, Rabbi Elio Toaff and Dr. Umberto Nahon stand in a line behind Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, accompanying the Hida to his final resting place. (Photo courtesy: Dr. Gisèle Lèvy, Rabbi Gianfranco Di Segni, and Gabriele Bedarida excerpted from the Israel Italian Magazine May 1960: N. 31)

pay their respects to the Hida. He first verified with Rabbi Eliyahu that indeed the bones were intact, and made the then announcement.

The cortege left at 4:00 p.m. Among those present were the President, the Chief Rabbi. the Speaker of the



Rabbi Elio Toaff, Rabbi Hugo Mashiah, and Dr. Umberto Nahon recite Tehillim facing the Hida's coffin, in the courtyard of the Yeshurun Synagogue in Jerusalem. (Photo courtesy: Dr. Gisèle Lèvy, Rabbi Gianfranco Di Segni, and Gabriele Bedarida excerpted from the Israel Italian Magazine May 1960: N. 31)

Knesset, members of the government, Members of the Knesset, judges, dayanim, rabbis, writers, and many members of the public. Standing in the doorway of the Yeshurun Central Synagogue,9 the President declared that the Jewish nation was paying a debt of honor to the Hida in reinterring his remains in the soil of his homeland.

A crowd estimated at tens of thousands, hailing from all parts of the country, accompanied the bier as it set out from the Yeshurun Synagogue on its way to Har Hamenuhot. The procession took a roundabout route to enable as many Jews as possible to participate in the mitzvah.¹⁰ It made its way past Yeshivat Etz Haim in Mahaneh Yehudah and ended at Har Hamenuhot in Givat Shaul.¹¹

^{8.} This account appears in Rabbi Shmuel Zafrani's biography of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, Doresh Tov L'amo (p. 145).

^{9.} David Brager, current Ritual Director at the Yeshurun Synagogue, mentioned to the author that he asked the older members of the shul, and unfortunately found no one alive today who could relate the story of the Hida's funeral.

^{10.} After much research the author was able to contact one of the last surviving hevra kaddisha members who attended the Hida's funeral. Hevra kaddisha members must remain anonymous, but he told the author in an interview, "In my lifetime, I have never seen such a respectful and dignified funeral for a tzaddik."

^{11.} The graves in Har Hamenuhot are divided into sections operated by various burial



Special entourage of people carrying the Hida out of the Yeshurun Synagogue. From right to left (front of coffin): Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim; unknown; Rabbi Ovadia Hedaya; unknown. Rabbi Elio Toaff and Dr. Umberto Nahon are standing behind the coffin.



The Hida's coffin passing through the streets of Jerusalem amid throngs of people, along his final journey to his resting place on Har Hamenuhot



The Hida's coffin passing through the streets of Jerusalem amid throngs of people, along his final journey to his resting place on Har Hamenuhot



(All photos taken during the Reburial of the the Hida in Har Menuchot are courtesy of Yad Harav Nissim Archives)



Throngs of people crowded around the final burial place of the Hida

The Speaker of the Knesset ordered the afternoon session of the House to be delayed for an hour to permit members to pay their last respects to the Hida. He opened the session commemorating the Hida's life and work.

The Hida's memorial has become a pilgrimage site. The construction of the mausoleum¹² over the grave was completed in a timely fashion, and arrangements have been made to accommodate large groups of visitors.

Media Coverage

The Hida's reburial received extensive coverage in the Israeli press. The following articles about the Hida's reburial are taken from *Davar* (Hebrew: דבר, lit. "word"), a Hebrew-language daily newspaper which

Davar Newspaper; Sunday, March 13, 1960: page 3

עצמות החיד"א יוטמנו בירוש

עצמות החיד"א (הרב יוסף היים דוד אזולאי), שמת בליבורנו לפני 154 שנים. יועלו מאיטליה לירושלים. הארון יונה בבית־הרכנות הראשית כיום ב׳, כ׳ באייר, וכ־4 אחה"צ יובא למנוחת עולמים כ.יד החיד"א" בחר המנוחות בסקס ממלכתי.

אור ליום בי ייעדך בכית הכנסת ברצבי קונים לדפותו החורנית מה" בו יפלו דברי הערכת נשיא המדינה גאמן של היישוב בארצות אי" ויושב"ראש הנהלת ווסוכנות היה

במסיבת פתונאים שהתקיימה אהסול ב.מכת ברצביי, העלה נשיא המדינה .ישורון" בירושלים מעמד ציכורית הדגולה של החיד"א. שחיה י. בן־צבי. הרב הראשי יצחק רופה ואפריקה־הצפונית ועשה למצון נ. שזר. מרדכי לכנון יקרא מ חיווקר של היישוב. בשנת תקכיד נבחר חבר המשלחת שיצאה מירושלים לקושטא לפצול לסילוק נצינם החקיף .פקידי ארץ־ישראל בקושטא". מוריון חשוב שתיבר יותר מארכעים ספר. חשיבות שיוחרת נודעת לספעלו כביבליונרף יהורי ראשון, אשר ביקו בספריות צרפת חונגלית וחקר כמבי

מאמני .יד החיד'א".

Davar Newspaper; Thursday, May 12, 1960: page 4

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societies (the Perushim, the Hassidim, the Sepharadim, and Kehillat Yerushalayim). There are eleven of these sections. The Hida is buried in the Kehillat Yerushalayim section and his gravesite is the first structure visible upon entering the old cemetery.

^{12.} The society secured a special plot of 600 square meters on Har Hamenuhot for the reburial of the Hida, and the construction of the ohel over the grave.

was published in Mandatory Palestine and the State of Israel between the years 1925 (5685) and 1996 (5756).

President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi chaired a meeting of the Yad HaHida Foundation at his home this past Thursday. Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim was also in attendance. At the meeting, the committee decided to return the Hida's remains to Jerusalem, his birthplace. The Hida passed away and was buried in Livorno, Italy, 154 years ago, on 11 Adar 1806 (5433).

On May 17, 1960 (20 Iyar, 5720), the Hida's coffin will be brought to a special plot on Har Hamenuhot in Jerusalem, his final resting place.

The remains of the Hida (Harav Haim Yosef David Azoulay), who passed away in Livorno 154 years ago, will be brought from Italy to Jerusalem. They will first be brought to the offices of the Chief Rabbinate.¹³ Then in a formal ceremony on Tuesday, 20 Iyar, at 4:00 p.m., they will be brought to eternal rest at Yad HaHida, Har Hamenuhot.

At a press conference yesterday at the Ben-Zvi Institute, President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi presented a brief biography of this distinguished religious and public figure, who, working to strengthen the yishuv [Jewish settlement in Palestine], acted as their faithful emissary to the European and North African countries. In 1764 (5524), he was chosen to be part of a delegation to Constantinople whose goal was to replace a controversial representative of the Israeli Sephardic community, then serving in Constantinople. Due to ongoing political maneuverings, though, the mission was cancelled. The Hida was an important writer and historian who composed over forty books. Additionally, he can be considered the first Jewish bibliographer. He visited libraries in France and England, and studied numerous

manuscripts. His biographical dictionary Shem Hagedolim serves as an important reference work to this day.

Meir Benayahu, who authored a detailed study of the Hida, and Dr. Shelomo Nahon, secretary of the Ne'emanei Yad HaHida foundation, spoke about the Hida's character.

Monday night, a ceremony honoring the Hida will be held in the Yeshurun Central Synagogue in Jerusalem, where President Ben-Zvi, Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, and Chairman of the Jewish Agency Zalman Shazar will address the audience and speak in praise of the Hida, while Mordechai Levanon will quote from the Hida's own writings.

The Hida's Coffin to Be Brought to **Israel from Italy on Tuesday**

On Tuesday, the coffin of Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, the Hida, a luminary of the previous generation, will arrive in Israel. It is being transported from Italy where the Hida passed away in 1806. A delegation from the Italian communities, headed by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Eliyahu Toaff, will accompany the body on its El Al flight.

A special delegation will leave on Tuesday morning to meet the coffin. A bus will leave for Lod from the Yeshurun Central Synagogue in Jerusalem at 6:30-6:45 Tuesday morning. The coffin will be brought to Jerusalem and left in the inner courtyard of the Yeshurun Central Synagogue, with people taking shifts watching over it and praying there.

The burial procession, which will include the President, the Chief Rabbi, Knesset Chairman, Knesset members, judges, rabbinic judges, rabbis, scholars, and the general public, will set out at 4:00 p.m. There will be no eulogies. The President will declare that the nation is paying the Hida the respect due him, by bringing him back to his birthplace. Chief Rabbi Nissim will recite Kaddish at the gravesite, while the Chief Rabbi of Rome will recite the Hashkavah prayer...

^{13.} The program was eventually changed, and the Hida's remains were brought to the Yeshurun Synagogue, and not the Rabbinate offices.

ארונו של החיד"א מחרתיים מאיטליה לישראל

ארונו של הרב חיים יוסף דוד אוולאי - החיד"א, גדול החכמים בדורות האחרונים, יגיע מחרתיים לישראל מאיטליה שבה נסטר בשנת 1806. עם הארון שיובא במטוס ..אל־על" תגיע משלחת של כהילות איטליה בראשותו של הרב הראשי ד"ר אליהו טואף.

מחר ב־6.30 בערב תתקיים עברת בבוקר לשוה התעופה כלוד לקבלת מרכזית לזכרו של החיר"א בביתיהכני הארוו. רכב ללוד יעמוד לרשות הק" |סת "ישורון" בירושלים. ישאו דברי הל ליד בית־הכנסת "ישורון" שבירו" הם נשיא המדינה, הראשון לציון הרב שלים ביום שלישי בשצה 6.30-6.45 הגאשי לישראל יצחק נסים, וז. שו"ר. בבוקר. הארון יובא לירושלים ויונה יו"ר הסוכנות. שידבר על אישיותו

כין האירועים החשובים ראויה לציון בסעה ארבע אחה"צ יצא פסע ההלי הוראת משרד החינוך והחרבות לכל ויה. שבו ישתחסו נשיא המדינה. הרכ בתי הספר בארץ להקריש שעה להעד לאת דמותו של החיד"א. לשם כך שופטים, דיינים, רכנים. סופרים והמוני (נדפסה מהדורה שניה של החוברת על ריו על מילוי חובת כביד של העם עוך והתרבות הפיץ אותה בכל בתיי לתיר"א עם החזרתו לאדמת פולדתו, הספר. סכון בן־צכי הוציא בהוצאת והרב הראשי נסים יאטר .. קריש" ליד מוסד הרב קוק ספר מקיף על החידיא

שבוע החיד"א יסתיים ביום ד' בעי יו"ר הכנסת חורה לדחות את ישיבת צרת עיון לוכרו שתתקיים באולם המי ורכלובסקי ום. בניהו.

משלחת מיוחדת הצא ביום שלישי בחצר הפנימית של ביתיהכנסת בישרי ופעלה רון" ולידו יוצבו סשסרות.

הראשי, יו"ר הכנסת. חברי ממשלה. העם. לא יינשאו הססדים, הנשיא יכי החיד"א מאת מ. בניהה ומשרד החיר הקבר. הרב הראשי של רומא יערוך מאת מ. בניהו, מנהל מכון בךצבי.

אחת"ב כשעה אחת. והיא תיפתת בש" כון למדעי היהרות של האוניברס שה עה 5. כדי לאמשר לחברי הכנסת לח" העברית בהרצאותיהם של ד"ר לוק כבוד לחיד"א.

Davar Newspaper; Sunday, May 15, 1960: page 3

Hida Week will come to a close on Wednesday with a study session in his memory to take place at the Hebrew University's Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies. Dr. Tzvi Vercholovski and Meir Benayahu will speak.

The interment ceremony of Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, the Hida, the greatest of sages of the last generation, will take place in Jerusalem. At daybreak, his remains arrived from Livorno, Italy. A delegation of rabbis and public personalities from all over Israel, headed by Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, set out to greet the coffin and accompany it to Jerusalem. Police motorcycles headed the convoy. The coffin will be placed in the courtyard of the Yeshurun Central Synagogue. The massive funeral procession will depart from there at 4:00 p.m. and escort the body to Yad HaHida at Har Hamenuhot.

Groups of rabbis and veshivah students will keep vigil over the coffin, reciting Psalms until the start of the procession.

There will be no eulogies, but the President will announce that the nation is repaying their debt to one of its heroes by bringing him to eternal rest in Jerusalem, the city of his birth. Chief Rabbi Nissim will say Kaddish beside

אוולאי (החידיא), גדול החכפים ברו־ רות האחרונים, תיערך היום בירושי באשמורת הבוקר עמד לחניע לנפל־האוויר בלוד פליוורנו שבאישלית. משלחת של רבנים ואישי ציכור פרחבי הארץ. בראשותו של הרב הראשי לישראל י. נסים יצאה לקבל את הארון וללוותו לירושלים. אופנרנים של משטרת ישראל נערכו בראש שיירת הפלווים. הארון יונה בית־הכנסת "ישורון" ומשם ייצא ססו החלווייה בשעה 4 אחרי תנהרים ברוב עם אל .יד החיד'א" בהר המנוחות.

משפרות של רבנים ובני ישיבות יוצבו ליד הארון עד לשעת החלווייה ריאמרו פרקי החילים

בשעת החלווייה לא יתיו הספרים. אלא נסיא חסרינה יציין בפתח החל ווייח, כי תאומה פורעת חוב לאחר מבדוליה ופביאה אותו לפנוחת עולם בירושלים, עיר פולדתו. הרב הראשי נסים יניד ,קריש" ליד הקבר. הברי וערת הביצוע של ההלווייה הם ם. בנידו וד"ר ש. א. נכון.

משמר החיר-א- כבית הכנסת

.מעמר החיד'א" החקיים אסש בבית הכנפת "שורון" בירושלים בהשתת" פות נשיא המדינה יצחק בן־צבי, הרב הראשי, יצחק נסים, יויר הכנסת. קרים לוו, ראס שירית ירושלים. ם אישישלום וראשי הציבור.

נשיא הפרינה עסד ברבריו על שיפיותו ופעליו של החידיא שהית שליח ציון אל יהדות הנולה ואשר ראה לוגר עיניו בעיקר את התסקיד להכיא להפוצות את דבר היסוב כא" רק"ישראל, ולגיים את עורת יהודי" אירופה וצפון־אפריקה לפובת השרץ. תנשיא ציין את פלחו השיבותן של פעולות החידיא מבחינה לאומית לשם תרמת קרן העם ואמונתו בנאולה. כן עמד הניםיא על סעליו הספרותיים והר הורניים של החיד"א אשר שרכם ב" מחקר דברי יסי ספרות שפנו הוא לאין ערוך ומהוזים יסוד לכל ציואתו

נם הרב נסים ח. שזר. יויר הנחלת הסוכנות היהודית בירופלים העלו את רסותו של חחיד"א, שהיה נערץ בכל פקום אשר חגיע אליו שמשו. בשל אופיר וענוותנותו ובשל פעליו

Dvar Newspaper; Tuesday, May 17, 1960: page 2

צרובו של הרב חיים יוסף דוד אזולאי (ההיד'א) הובא אתמול

בות מכל חלקי הארץ, חיו בין פלווי הארון בתחילת דרכו. בקהל נראו גם בננות מארנני העלאת הארח. הכנסח דחתה את ישיבתה בשעה אחת, כדי לאסשר לחברי חבית להשתתף בלוייה. בעבור המסע ליד בנין הכנסת, הצ־ דיע משמר כבוד

בשיירת המלווים, שהביאה את הא" טראף, שליווה את הארון פרופא ללוד, משלחות בתרהדין הרבניים סכל חלקי

תהילים. שעת ארוכה לפני מועד צאון הלווייה החל להתאסף במ"

Davar Newspaper; Wednesday,

May 18, 1960: page 6

the grave. The committee responsible for the reburial consists of members M. Benayahu and Dr. S. Nahon.

"The Hida Ceremony" at Yeshurun Synagogue

A ceremony for the Hida took place last night at Yeshurun Synagogue in Jerusalem with President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, Knesset Chairman Kadish Luz, Jerusalem Mayor Mordechai Ish-Shalom, and other public leaders.

The President addressed the Hida's personality and work as an emissary of Zion to Diaspora Jewry, explaining that the Hida viewed his main task as bringing the voice of the yishuv in Israel to the far reaches of the Diaspora, and enlisting the help of the Jews of Europe and North Africa for the benefit of the Land of Israel. The President pointed out the full significance of the Hida's activity from a national perspective, as he raised the morale of the nation and sustained their belief in redemption. The President also noted his inestimable contributions to literary, Biblical, and bibliographical studies which serve as the foundation of his spiritual legacy.

Rabbi Nissim and Zalman Shazar, Chairman of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, discussed the persona of the Hida, and the high esteem in which he was held by all communities with which he came into contact thanks to his sterling character, humility, and impressive achievements.

The coffin of Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay (the Hida) was brought to rest yesterday on Har Hamenuhot in Jerusalem.

In the convoy that accompanied the coffin to Jerusalem were the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim; the President's personal emissary, Meir Benayahu; the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Dr. Eliyahu Toaff, who brought the coffin from Rome to Lod; emissaries of the rabbinical courts from all over Israel, and public officials.

חתימת זקן. ההצטופסות סביב הסבר

להשתתף בכיסוין, ואכנים החלו זפות לעבר הסבר גם ממעלה הגבעה.

Rabbis and members of the rabbinical courts kept an ongoing vigil beside the coffin in the courtyard of the Yeshurun Synagogue, reciting Psalms until the procession was scheduled to begin.

After Kaddish was recited by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Rabbi Y. M. Toledano, the procession began, accompanying the Hida's remains to their burial plot on holy soil. The President, Y. Ben-Zvi; Chief Rabbi Y. Nissim; the head of the Knesset, K. Luz; and hundreds of rabbis and roshei yeshivot from all over the country were among those who took the first steps with the coffin. M. Shapiro and B. Shitreet were seen in the crowd, as well as MKs Rabbi Yashish, Y. L. Maimon, and many of Jerusalem's elders. Many Haredim joined the procession, ignoring the Neturei Karta posters denouncing the project's organizers. The Knesset postponed its afternoon session by an hour so that its members could join in the process. When the procession passed the Knesset building, an honor guard saluted.

Crowding by the Gravesite

The throngs of people who had joined the two-hour procession to the cemetery were crowded around the newly-dug grave, and the crush bordered on the truly dangerous. Rabbi Y. Abuhatzera, Rabbi of Ramle, lowered the coffin into the ground, after dozens of haredi youths vehemently opposed the clean-shaven member of the hevra kaddisha [burial society] performing this honor. Everyone wanted a part in covering the coffin; the congestion reached a new height, and rocks started flying towards the grave from the next hill over.

Protesting Youths

A violent protest by a few dozen youths forced the mayor, Mordechai Ish-Shalom, to take leave of the procession. When the coffin stopped near Shaare Zedek hospital, some youths tried to prevent the mayor's car from continuing, protesting his "audacity" at appearing at the ceremony despite having opened a mixed swimming pool. They were removed by other men, but one boy was left in front

of the mayor's car. The mayor's car started driving, pushing the boy forward. However, the next time the procession stopped, another round of youths pounced on the car, yelling and hitting it, and smashing one of the windows. The attack on the car continued even as it began to move again. At the first opportunity, the mayor's car "retreated" and left the procession.



Documentation from the Hida's Reburial

Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim collected and filed dozens of documents related to the Hida's reburial in Jerusalem, and these documents have been stored in the archives of the Yad Harav Nissim institute in Jerusalem. We present here just several of the documents found in this valuable historical archive.

Protocol

The joint meeting between the Yad HaHida Foundation and the Public Information Office that took place in the President's office at the Ben-Zvi Institute on Monday, 1 Iyar (April 28, 1960).

Foundation representative:

Mr. Y. Ben-Zvi, President, Mr. M. Benayahu.

Information Office representative:

Dr. Y. Melkman, Chairman, and Mr. Ayalon.

In honor of our beloved parents

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Mr. & Mrs. Yosef and Chani Cabessa

and

Rabbi & Mrs. Yehoshua and Rachel Bittan

We can never pay you back for the infinite amount of kindness that you have done for us every day of our lives. This should only be a sign of our appreciation for everything you do.

Thank you.

Shai e3 Nava Cahesa

In loving memory of

Messod & Hassiba Dadoun z"l

May their *neshamot* rest eternally in Gan Eden, amen!

Morris ed Gloria Dadoun

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The President:

We opened a foundation for the purpose of bringing the Hida's remains to Israel. There is no need to go into his awe-inspiring and multifaceted personality. This momentous opportunity is also our chance to fulfill a historic duty and must be taken care of properly, and involve all sectors of the nation. I have invited representatives of the Information Office to allow you to take part in organizing programs in different cities around the country, arranging for publicity in the papers and on the radio, creating an interest in the Hida's personality, and encouraging mass participation in his re-interment.

We approached the Ministry of Education about dedicating a day of instruction to the Hida.

We are publishing a small booklet in appreciation of his character.

The date of the ceremony was originally set for 20 Iyar. However, we determined this would not give us enough time, so we wired Rome to defer it for a month, to 20 Sivan.1

M. Benayahu:

We ask for your help in four areas:

- Organizing programs in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa on the Shabbat prior to the burial, meaning 16 Sivan (June 11), and in Jerusalem on the eve of the burial, Tuesday, 19 Sivan (June 14). Attendance of the program by the President, Chief Rabbi, and Chairman of the Jewish Agency has been ensured.
- Arranging for a special program and announcements on Kol Israel [radio].
- Requesting that newspaper articles about the Hida appear on Friday before the burial as well as publicity about the burial.

· Distributing the booklet about the Hida.

Dr. Melkman:

The Information Office will be happy to organize and take part in these activities.

It has been decided:

It would be preferable to make the main program in Jerusalem on the eve of the burial, in the Italian Synagogue. However, since it does not have enough space for the anticipated crowds, and since we need a place in the center of the city so all sectors will be able to participate, Mr. Ayalon's idea to organize this in the Kings Hotel has been accepted. Dr. Melkman suggests that Benayahu, the Hida's biographer, speak. Benayahu would like to add Agnon. There can also be a program in the Italian Synagogue on Friday night. We will coordinate the speakers with the synagogue management. In Tel Aviv on the Friday night before the burial there will be a program in Beit Hasofer. We will ask Dr. Burg, Prof. Dov Sadan, and maybe also Mr. Avraham Almaliah or Dr. De-Paris, to attend. In Haifa, in the Technion hall, on Shabbat 16 Sivan, at 11:00 a.m., writer Yehuda Burla, Rabbi S. Y. Zevin or Dr. Benedict from Haifa and Prof. Urbach or Prof. Shalom will speak.

No program shall be longer than seventy-five minutes.

Dr. Nahon, secretary of the Foundation, will represent his honor the President in approaching the speakers. The lectures will be organized by the Information Office. Mr. Benayahu will prepare some selections from the Hida's journal to be read at each assembly. The passages will be twenty minutes long, with the option for the reader to cut out up to ten minutes of the suggested materials.

^{1.} The date for the Hida's reburial would eventually be changed back to 20 Iyar.

His honor the President will hold a press conference at the Institute to release information about the project. After Independence Day, Dr. Nahon will contact Dr. Shapira of the Broadcasting Authority and cc. Dr. Melkman any correspondence. Dr. Melkman will discuss the program plans with him. Dr. Melkman suggests that Benayahu broadcast about the personality of the Hida as part of a special program. It has also been agreed that the program in Jerusalem on the eve of the burial be broadcast on Kol Israel.

The Foundation secretary will contact all the newspaper editors with information about the various events, and request that in the literary section on the Friday before the burial articles be published in honor of the Hida. Not only the booklet will be sent; it will be accompanied by a written summary of his biography. A press conference will also be held.

The Ministry of Education will distribute the booklet in the schools, while the Rabbinate will distribute it to the rabbis and synagogues. The Information Office requests 1,200 copies to distribute at the programs.

פרופוקול של ישיבה משותפת בין אגודבת נאמני "יד החיך"א" ומינתל ההסבהה פנתקיימה בחדר הנפיא בסכון בן-צבי ביום ב' דר"ח אייר (28.4.60) מסעם האבורה בוכחון סר י' בן-צבי, בשיא האבורה, מר מ' בביהו. מסצם מיבהל ההסברה: ד"ר י' סלקסן, סוחל מינהל ההסברה, ומר אילון. חבשיא פרשח: הקיסובו אבודה לשם הצלאת עצטומי ל החיד"א. אין צורך להרבות בדברים צל אישיותו הגדולה והסגוונת. דבר נפלה כזה, הוא תפקיד היסשורי עם תקופת קדינת ישראל וראוי לבצעו בצורה הסתאיסה, לפתף את כל חלקי האומה באורם זה. הזמנתי אחכם כדי שמינהל ההסברה יקח חלק בארבון עצרות בערי הארץ, בנתינת פירסום בעתונים ובקול ישראל, ריצירת אורירה מסביב לאישיותו של חיד"א ולהשתתפות בסוגית בחלויתו פנינו לסטרד החינוך שנסטגרת יום הסחנך ידובר בו בחיד"א. אנו סוציאים חוברת קסנה שתכיל הערכה על אישיותו. סועד ההלריה נקבע תחילה לכ' באייר. ברס, סחסת קוצר הזמן הברקנו לרופא לדחות זאת לחודש ימים, דחייבו לכ' בסיון. אנו מבקשים עזרתכם בארבעה עניינים: א. בסידור עצרות בירושלים, :17733 בתל-אביב, ובחיפה בשבת שלפני), הקבורה דהיינו פד בסיון (11.6.60) ובירושלים גם בערב הקבורה, יום גן ים בסירן (14.6.60). בעצרת זו חרבסחה השתתפרתם של כב' בפיא הסדינה, הראשון לביון ויו"ר הסוכנות. ב. תכנית סיוחדת ושידורים בקול ישראל. ב. פירסוסים וסאסרים בעתונות בערב שכת שלפני הקבורה. ד. הפצח החוברת על החיד"א. סיבתל ההסברה ישחתף ברצון בחעולות אלו ובארגונן. ר פלקפןו א. היה רצוי לקבוע את הפצרת (ב<u>ירושלים,</u> בפרב הקבורה בבית הכנסת האימלקי, אלא כירן שהפקום קפן מהכיל את הציבור ודרוש פקום בפרכז העיר ופכל החוגים יוכלו להשתחף, נתקבלה הצפתו של סר אילון לסור זאת בסלון המלכים. ד"ר סלקמן מציע שגם הביוגרף פל החיד"א, בבנהה ירבר. בביהו מציע להוסיף את עגנון. ברם, בביה הכנסת האיסלקי אשלר לכשות גם בליל שבת עצרת ולתאם עם הבחלת בית הכבסת פי יהיו הפרצים. בחל-אביב ים לערוך זאת בליל שנת שלפני הקבורה בנית הסופר ולבקש פן הפר ד"ר בורג, פרופ' דב סדן ואולי גם פר אברהם אלסאליח אר ד"ר רה-מרים, שיופיעו בעצרת זו. בחיפה. באולם הטכביון ביום שבת סד בסיון בשעת 11. יופיעון הסופר יהודה בורלא, הרב ש"י" זוין או ד"ר בנדיקט סחיפה. פרופ' אורבך או פרופ' שלוס. כל עצרת לא תיסשך יותר מ-75 דקות. סזכיר האגודה ד"ר בכון יפבה בשם כב' הבשיא אל הסרצים. ארגון ההרצאות בידי סינחל ההסכרה. מר בניהו יכין קשעים סיוסנו של החיד"א שיקראו בכל עברת בידי אמן. הקמעים יהיו ל-20 דקוח עם אפטרות של קיצון עד 10 דקות בידי האתן. ב. כב' הנפיא יכנס שבוע לפני מועד ההלויה ססיבת עתונאים בטכון ויססור כל המפכל. לאחר יום העצמאות יפנה ד"ר בכון לד"ר ספירא בשרות השידור וישלת הפחק לד"ר מלקמן. ד"ר מלקמן יבוא עמו בדברים (שם סידור התכנית. ד"ר מלקמן מציע שבניהו ישור על אישיות החיד"א וֹתחיה גם איזו תכבית מירחדת. הרסכם גם שההכרזה שתיססר בפצרת בירושלים ערב הקבורה תועבר לקול ישראל. ג. פזכיר האגודה יפנה אל כל פורכי הפתונים, יססור להם על הספעל ויבקם שבגליון הספנה?תי של יום ו', שלפני הקבורת יופיעו מאסרי א הפרכה פל החיד"א. אין להסתפק בפפלות החוברת, אשא ים להכין סיכום תולדותיו בכתב. הפירסום למפעל יבוא לשפר מסיבה הפתרבאים. ד. סשרד החינוך יפיץ את החוברת בבתי הספר, הרבנות - לרבנים ולבתי הכנסת. מינהל ההסברה מבקש 1200 הוברות להפיך בין משתחפי הקצרות.

Documentation collected by Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim pertaining to the burial of the Hida (courtesy of the Yad Harav Nissim Archive)

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Yad HaHida Foundation

3 Rehavia Gardens, Jerusalem

President: Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, president of Israel

Chairman: Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim

29 Nisan 5720

26 April 1960

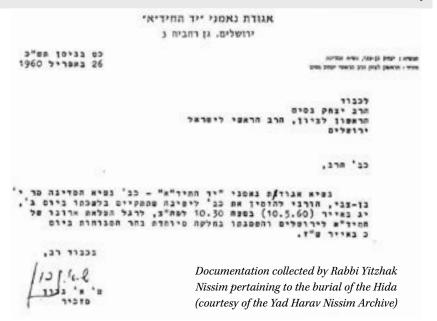
To Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim

Chief Rabbi of Israel, Jerusalem

Honorable Rabbi.

The president of Yad HaHida Foundation – his honor the President of Israel, Mr. Ben-Zvi, has instructed me to invite his honor to a meeting in his office on Tuesday, 13 Iyar, 10.5.60, at 10:30 a.m., on the subject of transporting the Hida's coffin to Jerusalem and burying it in a special plot on Har Hamenuhot on 20 Iyar.

> With much respect, S.A. Nahon, secretary



Yad HaHida Foundation

The coffin of

Rabbi Yosef Haim David Azoulay (HaHida) zt"l

The greatest of scholars in previous generations (Jerusalem 5484 – Livorno 5566)

will be brought from Italy and buried in the holy city of Jerusalem

The Hida Ceremony

will, G-d willing, be held in the Yeshurun Synagogue in Jerusalem on Monday, 19 Iyar, 5720, 8:30 p.m.

The coffin will rest in the offices of the Israel Chief Rabbinate

and on Tuesday, 20 Iyar, 5720, the 35th day of the Omer, at 4:00 p.m., will be brought to eternal rest at "Yad HaHida" on Har Hamenuhot.

אנורת נאמני ייד החידיא'

ארונו של

הרב יוסף חיים דוד אזולאי (החיריא) זציל

גדול החבפים ברודות האחרונים (ירושלים חבד-ליוזינו הקסים יועלה מאיטליה ויוטמן בירושלים עיר־הקורש

ייערך, ברצות חשם, בבית־הכנסת יישורוןי בירושלים ביום ב', ייט באייר התשיך, בשעה 8.50 בערב

הארון יונה בביה הרבנות הראשית לישראל וביום ב, כי באייר התשיך, ליה לעומר, בשעה 4.00 אחדי∡ יובא למנוחת עולמים כיוד החיריאי בהריהמנוהות

Documentation collected by Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim pertaining to the burial of the Hida (courtesy of the Yad Harav Nissim Archive) В"Н

18 Sivan 5715

8/6/1955, Rome

Lungotevere Cenci - Telef. 564.807

COMUNITA ISRAELITICA DI

ROMA

IL RABBINO CAPO

Ierusalem

p.o.b. 595

To the great sage and judge, Rishon LeTzion, Chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel, Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim.

After inquiring into his welfare, I am responding to his honor regarding the transfer of the remains of the Hida zt"l to the holy city of Jerusalem, the city of his birth, upon the 150th year from his passing.

I wrote concerning this matter to my teacher, my father, Rabbi Shabbetai Toaff, Rabbi of the holy city of Livorno, and he agreed wholeheartedly to transfer the Rabbi's remains to the Holy Land.

We are coordinating the details involved with finding the necessary means to transfer the coffin and the headstone to Israel with L'Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane [Union of Italian Communities].

At this time it is not possible to send the remains of other rabbis buried in the Livorno cemetery to Israel, for they are buried beside their ancestors, and we do not have the right to relocate them. I must add that the Livorno community maintains these graves with the greatest respect.

I will be in touch again with his honor to let him know what we decide.

> With all respect and many blessings, Eliyahu son of Rabbi Shabbetai Toaff

קיק רוטא יעיא

regolevers Cenci - Telef. 564-807

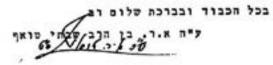
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לכב' מעלת החכם השלט חדיין המצוין ראשון לציון

אחדש"הם כראוי, הנני להשיב למע"כת על ענין העברת עצמותיו של הוב חיד"א זצוק"ל למקום מולדתו ירושלים ע"הק כשימלאו מאה וחמישים שנה לפסירתו. כתבתי בענין זה למורי אבי יצ"ו הר"הג שבתי הסכים בכל לבו לחעביר אחל עצמוחיה לארץ הקודש. של קהלות איטליה כדי למצוא במקום האמצעים הנחוצים להעביר הארבז ואת הסצבה לארץ.

הקברות האלה בכבוד רב.

אתקשר עוד הפעם עם כבודו



Documentation collected by Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim pertaining to the burial of the Hida (courtesy of the Yad Harav Nissim Archive)

The² body of the Hida, who passed away in Italy in 1806, will arrive in Israel from Italy, accompanied by a delegation from the Italian communities, headed by the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Dr. Elio Toaff, Italy. The El Al plane transporting the coffin will reach Lod on Tuesday, Iyar 20 (May 17th), at daybreak.

Coordinated with this event, the Hida's life was commemorated in Israel on Shabbat:

- The Council of the Chief Rabbinate instructed all community rabbis and leaders to mention the Hida in synagogue and to urge their communities to participate in the burial procession. The Yad HaHida Foundation and the Public Information Office organized large assemblies. On Friday night, Professor Shelomo Toaff, Professor Dov Sadan and Mr. Avraham Almaliah spoke in Beit Hasofer in Tel Aviv, and writer Yehuda Berla and Rabbi Dr. Binyamin Benedict spoke on Shabbat morning in the Haifa Technion hall.
- Israeli newspapers devoted columns in the Friday newspaper to articles about the Hida.
- One of the noteworthy events was the Ministry of Education's instructions that every school in Israel spend an hour studying about the Hida. A booklet about the Hida by M. Benayahu was reprinted for this purpose and the Ministry of Education distributed it in all the schools.
- The Ben-Zvi Institute, in collaboration with Mosad Haray Kook. published a comprehensive book on the Hida by M. Benayahu, Director of the Institute.3
- The main assembly will take place on Monday, 19 Iyar (May 16th) at 8:30 p.m. at the Yeshurun Synagogue. There will be speeches

- by the President, Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, and Mr. Zalman Shazar, Chairman of the Jewish Agency.
- · A special delegation of Rabbis and community leaders, headed by Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, and including a representative of the President and the Italian consul in Israel, will head for Lod on Tuesday morning to greet the coffin. A bus to Lod will service the public, leaving from the Yeshurun Synagogue at 6:30-6:45 a.m. The coffin will be brought to Jerusalem and will lie in the inner courtyard of the synagogue where it will be watched and prayed over.
- At 4:00 p.m. the burial procession will begin, and will include the President, Chief Rabbi, Knesset Chairman, government officials, judges, rabbinical judges, rabbis, writers, and the general public. There will be no eulogies. The president will declare that we have fulfilled our debt to the Hida by bringing him back to his birthplace, and Chief Rabbi Nissim will say Kaddish beside the grave. The Chief Rabbi of Rome will recite the *Hashkavah* prayer.

- 1. The Hida's coffin will arrive at Lod airport on Monday, 19 Iyar, the 34th day of the Omer. Rabbis from around the country, judges, and the heads of religious councils will go to greet the coffin in Lod.
- 2. That evening, a ceremony will be held announcing the interment of the coffin on Har Hamenuhot in Jerusalem. The announcement will be broadcast on Kol Israel radio.
- 3. On Shabbat, 17 Iyar, the Hida's memory will be commemorated in all synagogues throughout Israel. A booklet written by Meir Benayahu, published by the Yad HaHida Foundation, will be sent in advance to all rabbis, teachers, and schools in Israel.
- 4. The burial procession will take place in Jerusalem with multitudes of people on Tuesday, 20 Iyar, 35th day of the Omer. Rabbinate offices and Rabbinical Courts countrywide will be closed, and

^{2.} This document was found in Rabbi Nissim's personal files. It is not noted if, when, or where this was published.

^{3.} The publishing house offered a 30% discount on the book in honor of the occasion.

- all rabbis and judges will come to Jerusalem to participate in the procession.
- 5. Announcement of the event will be sent to all *yeshivot* together with the booklet, and the yeshivah principals and their students will be asked to participate in the procession.
- 6. The burial place is a special plot allotted at the entrance to Har Hamenuhot in Jerusalem.
- 7. The burial committee will be made up of the President, Chief Rabbi, members of the Council of the Chief Rabbinate, Knesset Chairman, Chairman of the Jewish Agency, the Mayor [of Jerusalem], and others.
- 8. The burial plot will be prepared and a mausoleum built by the famous architect Shmuel Toledano.
- 9. According to the program, the Hida's name will be commemorated in schools as well, and the booklet about the Hida will be sent by the Ministry of Education to all schools.
- 10. The burial committee will make a public plea to Jerusalem residents to participate en masse in the reburial procession and pay their respects to the distinguished son of Jerusalem and the faithful emissary of Israel to the Diaspora.
- 11. The daily newspapers will be asked to print material about the Hida on Friday, 16 Iyar.
- 12. Each and every community rabbi will call on his followers to go up to Jerusalem and be part of the burial.
- 13. A special program will be dedicated to the personality of the Hida on Kol Israel radio station.
- 14. Announcements of the burial will be published by:

The Chief Rabbinate of Israel
The Israeli government
The Jewish Agency administration
The Jerusalem Municipality
The offices of the Rabbinate in every city.

ארובר של הרב חיים יוסף דוד אזולאי - החיד"א, גדול החכמים ברורות האחרונים, יגיע לישראל פפיסליה פבה בפטר בשנת 1806, עם משלחת של קחילות איטליה בראפותו של חרב הראפי של רומא ד"ר אליהו מואף, משום אל על טיביא את הארון יביע ללוך ביום ג' כ באייר (17.5) באשמורת הבוקר.

בקשר לכך מופלה זכרו של החיר"א בישראל בשבת:

* רבנים, דייבים וראמי קהל העלד את זכרו בנתי-הכנסת על-פי הוראת טועצת הרבנות הראטית וקראו לפט להפתחף בהלוויה. עצרות עם בדולות בערכו מטעם אגודת נאסגי יד החיד"א ומינהל מהסברה. נאגן בליל שנת בבית הסופר בתל-אביב: פרופ' פלסת טואף, ערופ' דב סדן וכר אברהם אלמאליה, והעלו את דסותו. בשנת בבוקר נאטו באולם המכניון בחיפה הסופר יהודה בודלא בחרב ד"ר בבימין בנויקם.

אן התתרבות בישראל הקריטה בגליון יום ו' פאפרי הפרכה על תחיד"א.

- * בין הארועים החשובים ראויה לציון הוראה ספרד החיבון יהתרבות לכל בתי הספר בארץ להקוים שעה להעלאת דמותו של המיר"א. לפם כך בדפסה מחדורה שניה של התוברת על החיד"א מאת מ' בניהו, ומפרד המיבוך הפין אותה בכל בתי-הספר.
- * מכון בן-צבי הוציא בהוצאת טוסד הרב קוק ספר סקיף פל החיד"א מאת ט' בניהו, טנהל טכון בן-צבי ולרגל הפלאת שצמותיו הכריז בית ההוצאה על מכירה סוזלת בהנחה פל ₹30.
- העצרת המרכזית התקיים ניום ב, ים באייר (16.5) בשעה
 בערב בנית הכנסח ישורון בירוטלים. יסאו דבריהם בסיא המדינה,
 בערב בנית הראשי ליצראל יצחק נסים, מר זלפן סז"ר, יו"ר
 - שפלחת מיוחדת של רבנים ואישי ציבור בראשותו של תרב חרחשי בסים, מסתכלול בין הבאר נציב חצשיא רשבריר איפליה בישרחל, תצא בירם שלישי בבוקר לשדה התעופה בלוד לקבלח הארון. רכב ללדר יעמוד לרפות תקחל ליר בית הכבסת ישורון בירם שלישי בשעה 6.50-6.50 בבוקר. הארון יובא לירושלים ויונח בחצר הפניטית של בכבסת יטורון ולידו יוצבו סשמרות.
 - בצעה 4 אחח"צ יצא ססע ההלריה, שבו ישפתפו תבשיא, חרב הראשי, יו"ר הכבסח, חברי סמשלה, שופטים דיינים, רבלים סופרים והמכבי העם. לא ישאו הספרים. כב' הבעיא יכריז על מלדי חובת כבוד של העם ליו"א עם החזרתו לארסת מולדתו, וחרב תראשי בסים מאמר קדיש ליד הקבר. הרב הראשי של רומא יערוך

Documentation collected by Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim pertaining to the burial of the Hida (courtesy of the Yad Harav Nissim Archive)

- ארון החיד"א יגיע לפדה החעופה כלוד ביום כ', י"ם באייר ל"ד בעומר. רבנים פרחבי הארץ. דיינים וראשי הפועצות הדחיות יצאו לקבל
 - באותו ערב חיערך עצרת שבה יוכרז על העלאה ארון החיד"א והבאחו לפנוחות כירושלים. ההכרזה חועבר ב"קול ישראל".
- בשבח י"ו באייר, יקלו את זכר החיד"א בכל בתי-הכנסת כארץ. חוברת על החיד"א - מאת מאיר בניהו, בהוצאה אגודה נאמני יד החיד"ם, הישלה בעוד פועד לכל הרבנים ומורי-תהוראה בארץ
- חתלויית מיערך בירושלים ברוב עם, ביום ג' כ' באייר לת' לעופר. לשכות הרבבות ובתייהדין ברחבי הארץ יהיו סגורים - וכל הרבנים וחדיינים יעלו לירושלים לחשתחף בחלוייה.
 - הודעת על המאורע הישלה גם לכל הישיבות בארץ, כצרוף החוברת, וראשי הישיבות והתלפידים יחבקשו לחשחתף כמסק החלוייה.
- מקום חקבורת. חלקה פיוחדת שהוקצתה בכניסה לחד-המנוחות בירושלים.
- מורכב ועדת הלוייה בהשתתפות נשיא המדינה, הראשון לציון, חברי פועצה הרבנות הראשית, יו"ר הכנטה, יו"ר הנהלה הסוכנות היהודית, ראש חעיר ועוד.
- תחלקה שבה יושמן ארונו חוכשר לקראת הקבורה, ולאחר מכן ייבנה אחל על עברו לפי תכנית שעיבד האדריכל הידוע שפואל טולידאנו.
 - לפי החכניה, יועלה שפו של החיד"א גם בכתי-הספר, והחדברת על החיד"א תישלח על-ידי משרד החינוך לכל בחי-הספר.
- מסעם ועדת החלויית, חיערך פניה לחושבי ירושלים לחשחתף תמוניחם בחלויית ולחלוק כבוד לכן ירושלים חדבול ושליחת הנאמן סל א"ר לתפוצות.
- העתונות היומית חחבקש לפרסם חומר על אישיותו של החיד"א בגליון יום ו' - פין באייר.
 - כל רב ורב יקרא לצבור במקומו לעלוח לירושלים ולחשחתף
 - ב"קול ישראל" חוקדם תכניה פיוחדה על אישיותו של התיד"א.
 - מודעות על החלוייה התפרסמנה מסעם:
 - א. הרבנות חראש ח לישראל
 - ה. לשכות הרבנות בערים חשונות

Documentation collected by Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim pertaining to the burial of the Hida (courtesy of the Yad Harav Nissim Archive)

From the speech of the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Y. Nissim, at the Hida ceremony in the Yeshurun Synagogue, Jerusalem, 19 Iyar, 5720

Our generation has the merit, as do we ourselves, to pay respects to a giant of Israel, one of the greatest rabbis of all previous generations, by returning him to the ground of the Land which bore and raised him, from the Diaspora where he passed away.

"Who can recount his incredible praises? Such praises can never be complete – his quick wit, his impressive memory, his great piety, his vast holiness, and humility. He was crowned with all the good traits listed by the Sages." This was said about him by those scholars who met him; what can we possibly add after all that has been said by sages of Israel all over the world, during his lifetime and after his passing?

And yet, the memory of this *tzaddik* remains with us. This is important not just because we have a debt to repay him for his huge contribution to the nation, but also because we wish the nation to be aware of his activities so that he can light the way for us; let us learn from his ways, and cleave to his traits.

Israel has merited great scholars and rabbis in each and every generation. But the Hida is extra special. His greatness is seen in numerous areas. Excellence is difficult to achieve even in one area, and he excelled in all. His greatness lies in his personality and character, but not only in his personality; in his massive scholarship and wisdom, but not only in his wisdom; for his superlative piety and deep knowledge of the wisdom of Kabbalah, but not for this alone. Halachah was his expertise, and he integrated it with the practical. He defended his nation within Israel and without, and glorified the name "Israel" among the Jews and the nations of the world.

He was a rare, multifaceted personality, who symbolized the radiance, glory, and elegance inherent in Jewish creativity. Everywhere that the name of the Hida is mentioned, it is accompanied by praises; it is highly esteemed. He bequeathed a beautiful legacy to a forgotten nation. Jews of all types can enjoy his words and learn Torah and wisdom from them, and benefit from his erudite research. He was a master of self-control who excelled at patience and humility; his actions were exceptionally gracious and pure.

The Hida was the faithful emissary of Israel and sanctified its name. Firmly but pleasantly he demanded that the Diaspora participate in aiding the Land of Israel - not as a kindness, but to meet their obligation as Jews. He warned the complacent Jews not to be deceived by their freedoms. He warned them to always remember that they dwelled in exile, and this very awareness would guarantee their redemption. On his travels through the Diaspora he did not merely collect money; he passed ordinances and spoke out against breaches of Jewish law and wrongful conduct. Although he embarked on his journey to solicit contributions from communities abroad, he, in fact, contributed greatly to them.

He was a prolific writer and his many works, over forty of which he himself published, include halachic responsa, Talmudic novellae, Kabbalah, and prayer. The crowning glory of his research books is *Shem Hagedolim*, which is the focal point of any research into the history of Israel's scholars and their writings.

The Hida's books have joined our nation's holiest literature, alongside the *Humash*, *Hok L'Yisrael*, the prayer book, the *Zohar*, and En Yaakov. All Jewish communities have prayed and studied from them, and his name is mentioned daily by thousands of Jews.

May it be G-d's will that his merit and the merit of the mitzvah of bearing his coffin and returning him to his holy birthplace, Jerusalem, protect us and all of Israel.

זכה דורנו וזכינו אנחנו לחלוק כבוד לרב וגדול ביעראל, אחד מן הגדולים שככל הדורות האחרונים, להשיבו לעפר ארץ הצבי אשר הרחה וילדה אותו וגידלה את שעשועיה, מן הגולה שבה אבד כלי חמדתנו.

"מי יוכל לספר דהרות דהרות שכחיו ואין גומרין עליו את ההלל, על רוב חריפותו וחוזק זכרונו, ועל גודל חסידותו, קדושתו וענותו כי רבה. והיה פוכתר מכל מדוח טובות שמנו חכמים לצדיקים! - אמרו עליו, על הרב החיד"א. חכמי דורו שהכירוחו; ואנו מה נענה אחריהם ומה נכוא היום להוסיף על כל שנאמר עליו על-ידי הכמי ישראל בכל פווריהם בחייו ולאחר פטירתו?

ברם. זכרונו של הצדיק מוסל עלינו לא רק כשילומו של חוב לחרומתו הגדולה והמסועפת לאומה. אלא גם כדי שהעם יכיר את פעלו ולמען תאיר לנו דמותו את הדרך, ממעשיו נלמד ובמידותיו נדבק.

רבנים וגדולים קמו בישראל ככל דור ודור. ברם. מקום מיוחד נחייתד להחיד"א. גדולחו נובעת מכמה מקורות אשר קשה להגיע לאחד מהם והוא היה גדול בכולם. גדולתו היא באישיותו ותכונותיו ולא רק בשל אישירתו; בתוקף למדנותו וחכמתו הרכה ולא רק בשל חכמתו: משום חסידותו המופלגת וידיעתו הרבה בחכמת הקבלה ולא רק כשל כך. ההלכה היתה מנח חלקו

Excerpt from the speech of the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, at the Hida's reburial ceremony in the Yeshurun Synagogue, Jerusalem, 19 Iyar, 5720. Documentation collected by Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim pertaining to the burial of the Hida (courtesy of the Yad Harav Nissim Archive)



▲ The current exterior of the Hida's ohel in Har Hamenuhot, Jerusalem



► The current interior of the Hida's ohel in Har Hamenuhot, Jerusalem

מאת מופר ,חצופה" פיחושרום "יר חחיר"א" כתר חכנוחות בירושלים יפתח בכועםר נשיא הסרינה, הרב הראשי, שר ההתות,

של החיר"א חל בשבת חיקום וופכם חות. הוא פשהים על פסח של 200

כיום חכישי השבוש.

כידון שיום תוכרון ה־156 לפסירונין קבר מתרדא הוא בכניסה לחד תמנד של החיורים והל בשבת הדפרם חות הוא משרהים על שנה של 2000 ליום הפישי. החידים נשמר ביין משר הביין הדוכם אל הביקים הוא כני הוא אחר הקסיו בליותר שבאיטליה. ביין החידים מסרו אתרובת הוא בדיך ביין מסרו ביין הדיך ביין ביין החידים ביין החידים מסרו ביין המחל אלא התבורה לשלה כי לא נערך אבידה יוד החידים האול אלא התבורה ביין החידים האול אלא התבורה ביין האול אלא התבורה ביין המחל אלא התבורה ביין לעד המחלבות ביין המחל אלא התבורה ביין המחל מון ביין מעד המחלבות ביין המחל ביין אלף לשנו ביין אלף ליין הוכסף בא משרה והרווה. אלף ליין הוכסף בא משרה והרווה.

מקרן וולפסון ופאנשים פרפיים. דיב כתנא מסך כי ביום חוכרון לחיביא יועלו כדי ענה שמות ה נחלים שנספרו באותה שנה שכן החידיא כה הראצון אפר הוכר ספר בשם הבדולים" הכלל כיעליטרפיו על 1960 מיפרים ביפראי על נוסב ספרים החודא צותו גם באור שורי משרכם שושם את שרטי נמיצתו מירושלים לערי תבל במפיי .פענל מיב". כן עש בשינוד תנונמאות ב"

ספרו נחללם דברי ריר נכך שרה עומו ילין ליהרע שנאיטיה נלום שם נפטר החידים סיפר כי נביה קוח לפודנט באיטליה שאלין שלו נשום ביחות גם לא יוודיות לחטופות לבכם לברכו כפרי במנם. כיום, הקם ביווירני באלם יוודים, אשלת שנות, אובב החנודי להלברת ותנפות או לנתון ככן פיצו

כאת סופר הצופה בירושלים וכבית הסברות שכתר הסגד "יר החת"א נחנך אתכול חות שבירושלים, כפעטד הי

נשיא יו פויצפי, חוב הראשי חנר"י ונפים, חרב ר' אריח לחת חרם א. ו. איתטר מוכיר חרפנות חראשית, חכרי אגר הת נאסט יה החיד"א ושולי אימליה בישראל.

תנשיא אסר בדבריו כי בחקסת יד מחידים, תוספנו ספום קדום בו יוכלו יונדים לבוא ולהתפלל אחרי שהמקומות הקרושים נשמרו רוכם בעבר חשני.

חצב בסים שמר על דסותו של תחידוא, בוצד שד"ר א"י, כיליד ירור שלים, ועל הספרים שחיבר.

דמר ש. ז. מהנא. מנוול משוד הדתות קרא את שמות המחברים התורניים שנפטרו בשנה האחרונה. המקיד את הרשימה למשמרת בניד

ביום הוכרת לחידיא יועלו שמות המחברים התורניים שחלכו לעולפם במתח שנת. דרב שרית לחיק אסר "פלא רחמים".

370 A LEGEND OF GREATNESS Documentation from the Hida's Reburial | 371

ארונו של החיד"א הושמן בירושלים ירושלים אספה אל ארכתה את ארוני של בנה. הנאון רבי יופהן הישמה פונית של כנה עשרה בעיים דייר אונילאר התחיר א זביל משר הומא אלית לכמורות מאישלית חידים בינה את נאי הני כו כ. אים אלמים רבים לידו את דארת לאורך כל בשלול החלויה. אשר יצאה הן לה בת המילה, שפיי בדקי, ביקטו כבות הכנפת ישורתי ועמרייטה בחלקת הקבר הביוודרת בתר בעיים מודים לפנור את מולמי של פכי מית ראש העיר, בתביעם את כחאתם על לאמר אמירה עקריפו על ילי שר הנהוהן הכף בהלניה. בעבור מסק ההלויה לוך שהקדורי להופיק ביו, למרות שדופה עברי

חבונותות לא נישאו כל הספרים

דרה י פ. פילדאון נפתח כפה המניא פנין המנים, הפליה משמר פנור של אנשי כה המיינהי הפקורנה לוברים. חשיב מעומה מביות STREET THE BOTH FOUR

בשיא הפרופה מר ז כן צביג הרב הראו . נבים צבאו כל הורך כל המכוניה. שכל שי ה מיקב מייד הנומה כד כ לוה מאותן נכון, היכה מאות, כדי לקוור לשמיר. הנו שינה שמומי מטוריה של ראש הפיר רבוש וראשר לשיבות מכל חלפי הארון לחם אפרון מרכן תחילים ומרי פנם נכברן וצובה את כסנ נהחית. מיו בין פלדי הצרון בחוילה דרבה בקול הספק לאפורה נכויש" ליד בוני הכוסה. ביצור הם השרים ב ספרה זה שיפיים, היכול והרב שניו בפשך שנת ים כד הברי כנות, היב מימים, ז. ל. טימין ה' לפת הקבודה הצמיפה מכיב הקבר שנכיה רבים פרוזיקה יתושלים, משטך המשנ הצל שם הדרות הרב נכל בספנת נפטות. השירך סרטר אלית: רבים מתישבי השכונות התן הוכנס לקבר על ידי רבה של העיר רטלה, רדיות אשר לא שפו לברודים שרופול כל הוב ל אנד העידה ההפטיפטה לביב הי יניי פוצר נסודי קודום בצנות נוצרפי דולן קבה הניקה לשימה בנוסר ביקטו הכל להעד מאת הפתקה הכנסת דחות את ישיבות כי חוקי בניניתיו העבים החלו ענות לעבר הי שני העפרה כדי למסטר לחברי הבית להעד" קבך גם, מעולה הבכנה.

תחתשלות על השנחות מששטת גם כאשר חיא המשיכת בנסיקתה בפנת הרחוב הראי

מרוע חותרת העמרת עצמותיו

- מות בח - זבולוני

COST LATERT STURGES --

שלמונות אינולית במצו להפקוף את סקום מנוחוד על החדים כוציל בי ליורטי, ופל כן וורשו את הפברת עצי מוחני לירושלים - של פר צודף לי מוטרצו בירושלים.

כיחופ אין שלפונות איפלית פרשים להוציה מנבולותיה בויות שפקבור בי ארנה ונפרס אנשים מפריסמים, מסרא המירים הוא יוצא מן תכלל, משלפתות בליצורנו עמדו לרמלי שיפורים עשר סיצים לישר את הסקים בו היה פטון לחידיה כשלפי 154 שמה, דנושיו לי העבידו לסקום שתי. כשמדע החבר לי יהודי שישליה, התנוילו לפשל בדבר די סטרו על כך גם לישראל ואחרי פרים מינו הרשים להפכיר את החיףים ליירי

ארמים רטים ליון אתינול כ פולחו עם וחדמם הים נכל מסלי דריתינים את ארונו של דכי זה רבה של הצו ופיה הגם ה יומר דוד אודיני החדורים, ל חי רבה של הנו ופיה הגם ה אורך כך נסקוד החדורית אבייתניה ואחר שוסט בלומת אישריני רצאה בפית הבולם, האישר ליו הישה אל איש הוכי העבר המידור הבידור בורך המכולה. לאו מידי מוכי ומדיני ושם ארב אינו הדיד אביי לאו ללומי מו הניה במארה. בור מידום ליודולים בסירה מו הביד ביר הכנסת ישורים אל מת אורים איבו זמר מורים איבו את המו או

בניים מכל חלקי הפרץ. רבנים ושרי יון שמלפת את דרכת אך בקופנד חם"

חקחל הרב. עצשר ששחים עד לי

שיפים רבים ליוו שתכול בין שופית עם והיוום שים נכל בסק"

מהחית לאר המנוחה.

בישיות הכלויה שבראה של אוד ביניים חדרים שילבו את ראש פיי

בישיות הכלויה שבראה של אוד היו יריבו הדרים שילבו את ראש פיי

בין לאורות הכלויה שבתאה של אוד היו ביניים מוכני ביניים ביניים ביניים מוכני ביניים מוכני ביניים ביניים ליניים ביניים ביניים ביניים ביניים הרצוי ביניים בינים ביניים ב

למתר המירה עקרים" עליכון פור בש פרת עם שנב על מסוניתו הררות הרב" ב מולדונו ומרו בשרות בעירם שהומו פורה בכין מאות רכנים וראשי ישיבות סכל חלקי ושרץ. חיו בין פלווי הארין STREET, TOTAL

בשחל בראר גם חסרים ת. מ. שפר רום וב, שינורים, חברי יכומה, הרב מישים - ל. מימון ורבים פחזיקו יירישלים, בקבקי המסק דקסרש אליו רבים מתושבי משבונות שורי דינת. ששל לא שער לכרודים שליי פני עלחים חיני ענשרי סרואי כי בנות משרנני הפלשה השרוך, בעבוד ספע החמויה כיד בנין הכוכח, הצ" זים משבר כנוד של אושי משפר

בית הקברות, הבינוסף עבים חקבר

הכנסת מכבדת זכר החידיא לרגל משבנה אלון חדירא נד ת השקות של שים בנותה ש

שת הישיבה ושכה ירור חבומה. חצוברי השרעיעראלי בשוצות, וו אר את השתעתר על פרכזי המולה THE TOWNS THE PARTY TOWNS פנ כל הנוכחים קמד התייחור ברי של החירים.

לכריבה המפירבת לנכרים ונשים,

מנוניתו של ראש הפיריה בוולה



The Hida's Exegetical Works

Pene David

Pene David is a Torah commentary originally published in Livorno in 1792 (5552) and reprinted several times.

On the verse in Parashat Vayishlah which tells us that Yaakov Avinu "acquired the portion of land upon which he pitched his tent," the Hida writes:

> This is difficult. Since he did not plan to stay there permanently, why did he need to acquire the land? Did he acquire every piece of land upon which he pitched his tent?



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In honor of the **Ohr Ha'emet Sephardic School**

Joe Dwek

In loving memory of

Yosef Haim ben Nissim z"l

May his neshamah rest eternally in Gan Eden, amen!

It seems that he acquired this because he had built a *mizbe'ah* (altar) there, and he did not want the local populace to destroy it. Therefore, it was necessary for him to acquire the land. This was not necessary in other places where he or Avraham or Yitzhak built altars because the areas were generally ownerless, as, for example, when a *mizbe'ah* was built on a mountain.

Tzavare Shalal

Tzavare Shalal contains commentaries to the haftarot, and was

printed in the back of the original edition of *Pene David* published in Livorno in 1792 (5552). It was also published separately in Cracow in 1894 (5654).

Typical of the shorter pieces in this work, is the following explanation of the words, "Hashem wants for the sake of His righteousness that the Torah be made great and glorious" (Yeshayah 42:21):



Perhaps we can explain ... the Almighty showed Moshe *a*"*h* forty-nine ways to declare something pure, and forty-nine ways to declare it impure, all based upon truth. G-d allowed the decision to be made by the

sages of the generation. This is the meaning of "Hashem wants for the sake of His righteousness that the Torah be made great." There are many bases for each position, and they are all the words of the living G-d, Who wants the Torah to be glorified. This is accomplished by the sages in each generation. G-d thus gave them the power to reach decisions and determine the law. This determination is left to the sages, thanks to His will and His righteousness, which grants them the power to decide the halachah as they see fit.

Nahal Eshkol

Nahal Eshkol, a commentary on the five *Megillot*, was originally printed together with other works in 1796 (5556) in Livorno under the title *Pene Hamah*.

An example of the Hida's approach to elucidating the peshat (straightforward meaning) of texts can be seen in his commentary to MegillatEsther, where he explains the passage, "And when these days were completed, the king made a sevenday feast for all the people who were found in Shushan, the capital":



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The words "who were found" seem to be extraneous: the verse could have simply stated, "for all the people who were in Shushan." However, it makes perfect sense following the opinion in Masechet Megillah that Ahashverosh was considered a wise king because he made a feast for the entire population first, and only afterwards for the residents of the capital city. This was wise, because he knew that he would always be able to placate the residents of Shushan, since they were local, and thus easy to reach out to. This is the meaning of the verse, "And when these days were completed, the king made a seven-day feast for all the people who were found in Shushan, the capital." The passage is giving the reason why the feast in Shushan was held after the other feast: because "who were found in Shushan" - the residents of Shushan were easily found near the palace, and thus placating them was less urgent.

Nahal Sorek

Nahal Sorek, a commentary on the *haftarot*, was originally published together with other works in Livorno in 1796 (5556) under the title *Pene Hamah*.

Commenting on the words, "Was Esav not a brother of Yaakov – the word of Hashem – yet I loved Yaakov" (*Malachi* 1:2), the Hida explains, "Both were mentioned in one phrase when Hashem said to Rivkah, 'There are two nations in your womb,' and 'yet I loved Yaakov."

Yosef Tehillot

Yosef Tehillot, published in Livorno in 1801 (5561), is a commentary on *Tehillim*. In 1859 (5619) Rabbi Wolf Heidenheim published the book of *Tehillim* together with the *Yosef Tehillot* commentary.¹

Commenting on the verse, "Salvation belongs to G-d, upon Your people is Your blessing, *selah*," the Hida writes:

> This means that when salvation brought about via a person, it can he followed bv more subjugation. However, when G-d is the savior, then the salvation is everlasting.



This is what is meant by the words "Salvation belongs to G-d, upon Your people is Your blessing, *selah*" – the blessing is constant and without end.

Homat Anach

In 1803 (5563) in Pisa, the Hida published the five books of the Torah, the five *Megillot*, and the *haftarot* together with his commentary to

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^{1.} The Hida appears to have written other works on Tehillim as well, which, for whatever

reason, were never published. In his work *Kikar La'aden*, he mentions a work on *Tehillim* that he wrote called *Ohel Yosef*. This work was also mentioned by Rabbi Yosef David Zintzheim in his eulogy for the Hida. In addition, the Hida in *Petah Enayim* mentions a work on *Tehillim* called *Gufe Torah*, and in his notes he makes reference to a work *Tehillot Yisrael* which seems to have been a commentary on *Tehillim*.

these texts entitled *Homat Anach*. Shortly thereafter the commentary was published on additional parts of Tanach. *Homat Anach* on the Torah was reprinted several times.

In *Parashat Noah*, in reference to the words "the earth was fully dried," the Hida cites the following insight of the Maharal, in his *Netzah Yisrael*: "The *gematria* of these words equals 613 – "taryag," because the earth dried out in the merit of the 613 *mitzvot* that the Jews would eventually accept."

Simhat Haregel on Megillat Rut

The Hida published a commentary to *Megillat Rut* as part of his *Simhat Haregel* commentary to the Haggadah. The work was published in Livorno in 1789 (5549), and the Hida writes in the title page that it was intended mainly for Jewish youths.





Et Ratzon

Et Ratzon, a work on the *Humash*, remained in manuscript form for quite some time. Most of it was eventually published in Livorno in 1845 (5605), as part of a collection entitled *Lehem Min Hashamayim*.

There is also an as-yet-unpublished fragment of a book of the Hida called *Berachot Laad* on the *haftarot*. Another surviving but unpublished manuscript is *Shever Yosef* on the Torah. Parts of the manuscript *Peat Harosh* on the Torah were included in the Hida's work *Pene David*.

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Homiletic Works

Rosh David

In honor of the following rabbis who dedicate their lives to Torah & our community

Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Rabbi Reuven Semach Rabbi Eli Mansour

Rabbi Haim Benoliel

Rabbi Shlomo Malka

Rabbi Ezra Zafrani

Rabbi Hillel Haber

Rabbi Mayer Yedid

Rabbi Shlomo Diamond

Rabbi Joey Sutton

Rabbi Raymond Beyda

Rabbi David Ozeri

Rabbi David Sutton

Anonymous

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Rosh David, a collection of insights and derashot (sermons) arranged according the parashiyot, was published in Mantova in the years 1776-1779 (5536-5539). In one of his published letters the Hida writes, "I have been busying myself with the mitzvah of organizing and writing Rosh David. The work stalled for two years, and now they are pressing me, saying 'Finish your work." The Hida chose not to publish this work



in Livorno because of the difficulties he had there when publishing *Birke Yosef*.

In the introduction to a later reprint of *Rosh David*, Rabbi Yehezkel Roth writes:

In my opinion, this *sefer* is the very best of the Hida's books of sermons. In it he has paved a holy path, weaving together *aggadah* [homilies] and halachah. It is filled with insights, wisdom, and *mussar*. Throughout, it moves from *aggadah* to halachah, and back again. The two tablets of the covenant – the halachah and the *aggadah* – are paired, and give this work form. The holy author devoted himself to this work during the prime of his life.

It is known that the great preacher, our master, the author of *Bene Yissaschar zy"a*, in his holy and enlightening work *Bene Yissaschar*, makes use of ideas and principles borrowed from the Hida, and quotes him reverentially in many places, including, for example, his sermon for Sukkot.

This book is also a great treasure-trove of wisdom. The author quotes extensively from many *Rishonim* and *Aharonim* whose works he reviewed, as well as from explanations which he himself heard from the holy rabbis of his generation, including our holy teacher, the *Or HaHaim Hakadosh zy"a*.

In *Parashat Emor* the Hida addresses the question of why, of the three gifts the Almighty bestowed upon the Jewish people in the desert – the manna, the well, and the Clouds of Glory – we commemorate only the Clouds of Glory, on Sukkot. He answers that Hashem said to the Jewish people, "You have accepted Me as your G-d. You are thus like Jewish servants whose master is obligated to sustain them." As such, the manna and the well were things that the Almighty was

obligated, so to speak, to provide, whereas the Clouds of Glory were an absolute gift, an expression of His kindness.

Devarim Ahadim

Devarim Ahadim contains seven cycles of the Hida's sermons delivered in Livorno on the four occasions of Shabbat Zachor, Shabbat Hagadol, Shabbat Kallah (the Shabbat before Shavuot), and Shabbat Teshuvah. cycle begins The with Shabbat Zachor of 1781 (5541) and



ends with *Shabbat Teshuvah* of 1788 (5548), the year the book was published. It includes several other sermons as well.

The following is a passage from the second sermon in the book, where the Hida speaks at length about the philosophically inclined scholars of his time who, he felt, lacked sufficient respect for the Rabbis of the Talmud:

The Almighty has a quarrel with those who utilize philosophy to cast doubt upon the words of the Rabbis, may their memory be blessed. Foolish ones, rebellious ones, where is your philosophy? You are called "philosophers" – men who love wisdom – but

where is your wisdom and your understanding, if, in fact, you love wisdom? The Rabbis, who studied our Torah diligently day and night, and who possessed tremendous wisdom, enacted safeguards in accordance with their profound understanding. And you who are devoid of the Torah's wisdom and are like the children of other nations, you from whose lap heretical books fall, who desire French culture and Italian wine and other foreign things, do you think that without proper study of our holy Torah you will arrive at the truth and be able to contend with the Rabbis, the fathers of Torah, who devoted themselves entirely to Torah? Fools, lacking in sense, they have rejected fear of Heaven and have little wisdom.

Even those recent scholars among us who have studied Torah and feel that they have achieved a certain level in Torah learning, and who consider themselves to have pure, unsullied minds, are often filled with ideas taken from philosophy and secular disciplines. They come to argue with the Rabbis *z"l*; they have not realized that the holy Rabbis were Divinely inspired. Eliyahu z"l visited the academies of the Rabbis. They were privileged to hear Heavenly voices. Will they argue with the Rabbis, through whom the Divine spirit spoke? We have never seen nor heard that Eliyahu *z"l* revealed himself to scholars of philosophy, even when they were also scholars of Torah and G-d-fearing. Hazal, who were so great that Eliyahu z"l and angels of the Almighty were revealed to them, are far superior to these scholars when it comes to their connection to Hashem and their deep piety. Shall these scholars contend with the holy Rabbis who existed on an entirely different plane? They are like gnats attempting to confront a great lion.

Kise David

Kise David was published in Livorno in 1794 (5554). It includes the Hida's sermons on the four major Shabbatot over seven years from Shabbat Zachor of 1788 (5548) until Shabbat Teshuvah of 1794 (5554), the year of publication. The Hida published Kise David together with a work on the Haggadah called Ge'ulat Olam, which was later published separately with the text of the Haggadah.



In the eighteenth sermon in the book, commenting on the verse, "And also the nation that they will serve, I will judge" (G-d's promise to Avraham that He would punish Egypt for enslaving his descendants), the Hida writes:

The words "and also" come to include the nation's [Egypt's] heavenly angel [who would also be punished for Egypt's oppression of Avraham's descendants]. One might ask, if there is a concept of agency for sin [meaning, that one is held liable for sins that he

commissions], then the angel alone should be held responsible [for instigating the Egyptians to enslave *Bene Yisrael*], and the nation [of Egypt] should not. And if there is no agency for sin [and the agent alone bears accountability for his actions, even if done on behalf of his dispatcher], then the nation alone should be held responsible, and not the angel. Why, then, are both the nation and its heavenly representative punished?

The answer is given by the verse itself, which says, "the nation" [emphasizing that this is a gentile nation]. Among the gentile nations there is agency for sin, and thus the angel is held responsible in a human court, but the nation is also held responsible in the Heavenly Court.¹ This is the meaning of the verse's statement: "I will judge" – I, G-d, will judge, specifically in the Heavenly Court.

Nahal Kedumim

Nahal Kedumim, a commentary on the *Humash*, was published in Livorno in 1796 (5556), as part of the *Torah Or* edition of the *Humash*.

In *Parashat Vayehi*, Yaakov blesses Yosef's two sons, saying that the people of Israel would use their names when blessing their children: "May He make you like Ephraim and like Menashe." The Hida, following Rashi, explains that Ephraim had studied with Yaakov, while Menashe was very strong and was in charge of the house. Thus, fathers bless their sons with Torah, strength, and leadership: "May He make you like Ephraim," who was a scholar in Torah, "and like Menashe," who possessed strength and leadership. Ephraim is

mentioned before Menashe because the blessing of Torah is the most important of all blessings.

Ahavat David

Ahavat David was published in Livorno in 1799 (5559). It is the third collection of the Hida's sermons delivered in Livorno on the four major Shabbatot.

In the sixth sermon he writes:

How do we understand the verse. "The voice is the voice Yaakov"? The words of Rabbis the z"l can help us explain: "Yaakov these are the small children:



Yisrael – these are the big children..."² The Rabbis are basing themselves on the verse "How will Yaakov survive, for he is small?" (*Amos* 7:5). This is telling us

^{1.} Even in situations where halachah recognizes the concept of agency with respect to a sin, and thus a court administers punishment to the dispatcher, and not to the agent who actually committed the offense, G-d's Heavenly Court still delivers retribution upon the agent for committing the sin.

^{2.} Avot D'Rabbi Natan, 36.

that Yaakov survives and the world exists on account of "the small" – the words of the young schoolchildren. This is the meaning of "The voice is the voice of Yaakov." This refers to words without sin, which sustain the world.

Ru'ah Haim

Ru'ah Haim is another collection of sermons, which was not published in its entirety until 1985 (5745) in Bnei Brak.

In the eleventh sermon in the work the Hida comments on the verse, "And the Almighty tested Avraham":

Maharam Almosnino *z"l*, in his introduction to the work *Yedei Moshe*, poses the following question: Why do we give Avraham Avinu *a"h* so much credit for fulfilling G-d's command, "Take your son, please, your only one"? Do we not find many other examples of people who martyred themselves to sanctify the Name of the Almighty, such as the ten Sages who were killed by the Romans, and many others who were martyred during the expulsions from Spain and France and the like? Certainly there are those who would have done so if the Almighty had appeared to them and commanded them to do so, as He did with Avraham.

He answers that the esteem in which Avraham is held is due to the fact that he acted with joy and good spirit. We have a great principle from the Rabbis z"l (Pesahim 117a) that prophecy manifests itself only when a person is happy. Now we would have expected Avraham a"h at the time of the Akedah, when he took the knife, to have mixed feelings, including distress, but clearly this was not the case. For at that moment, suddenly, he prophesied – the angel said to him, "Do not stretch out your hand to the boy." If he had been feeling even

a hint of regret at that moment, prophecy would not have visited him. It is thus clear that his actions were undertaken with the utmost joy and good spirit, for at the moment that he took the knife he was able to see the angel.

Others, however, who were burned and murdered to sanctify the Name of Hashem most probably felt sorrow. Thus, Avraham Avinu *a*"h was on a very high level that no one else has ever attained. He sacrificed his only son, whom he certainly loved more than himself, without regret. This is the gist of his words...

However, while the Rabbi's answer is true ... there is another important point here. All those who sacrificed themselves, and were murdered and burned, to sanctify the Name of the Almighty, underwent this fate by the decree of the authorities or others who were coercing them. Avraham Avinu *a*"h, too, was thrown by Nimrod into the furnace at Ur Kasdim. Certainly, he reached a very high level then, as did Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and Daniel, and the ten Sages murdered by the Romans; the reward awaiting them is incalculable.

However, the *Akedah* was something more profound, for it was with Avraham Avinu's consent and not coerced, other than by the Almighty's command. Similarly, we find in the holy *Zohar* that Iyov's travails were not a comparable test, because they came upon him against his will. This contrasts with Avraham Avinu *a*"h, who willingly complied with the test of the Almighty. Furthermore, Avraham did not dwell on the fact that earlier G-d had promised him, "Yitzhak is the son through whom your descendants will be counted," which it would now seem would not come to fruition.

In addition, the attribute of Avraham Avinu *a*"*h* is pure *hesed* [kindness], without any admixture of *din* [strict judgment]. But now, in order to fulfill Hashem's command, he donned the cloak of *gevurah* [might] and harshness, going against his nature; this is an amazing thing.

Hadre Baten

Hadre Baten, another book of sermons, remained in manuscript form for many years. It was finally published in Jerusalem by Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Dzialovsky in 1990 (5750).

In the second sermon for *Parashat Vayera* (paragraph 25) the Hida writes the following:

"You will see it" (וראיתם) – the word וראיתם) has the same letters as the word "and you will be in awe of him" (ויראתם). This is a rebuke directed at those who talk in the synagogue. A certain degree of decorum is mandated in the synagogue because the Divine Presence is right in front of a person, as it were. One needs to comport himself there with gravity and humility, and not like someone loitering in the street or in a stadium, Heaven forbid. As the Divine Presence is there, misbehavior in the synagogue is especially deplorable.

Unpublished Sermons

Meir Benayahu, in his book *Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay*,³ writes that he saw a collection of the Hida's unpublished sermons in the British Museum. These include a manuscript known as *Kitzur Derushim*, an abridged form of seven sermons the Hida delivered in Livorno in the years 1797–1798 (5557–5558), which were printed in their entirety in his *Ahavat David*, as well as an abridged version of

3. P. 40.

the sermon delivered on *Shabbat Hagadol* in 1793 (5553). Another surviving manuscript known as *Ketzar Devarim* contains abridged versions of ten sermons delivered during the years 1781–1783 (5541–5543) which were published in their entirety in *Devarim Ahadim*.



Talmudic Works

Sha'ar Yosef

Sha'ar Yosef, a commentary to Masechet Horayot, was the Hida's first published book, which (according to some sources) was written when he was just seventeen years old (although published later). The book contains letters of approbation by leading rabbis of Jerusalem, including Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Algazi and Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim Shelomo Algazi, as well as letters from the rabbis of Hevron. Others rabbis who signed were Rabbi Yitzhak Haim ibn Dana di Brito, Rabbi Yehudah Ayash, Rabbi



In honor of

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Adele Chabot

May Hashem bless you with much berachah, and may your upcoming book, The Best Secret Revealed: A Year in Israel, inspire the masses, amen.

Anonymous

Dedicated to my father

Yitzhak ben Shlomo

May Hashem bless you with peace all the days of your life.

מבנך שלומי

Shlomo Ben-Naim

In loving memory of

Yehuda Bensalmon a"h

May we all learn from his exemplary character traits and continue to do good deeds in his memory.

Anonymous

Yonah Navon, the Hida's father Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah Azoulay, and Rabbi Nissim Berachah.

Sha'ar Yosef was published in Livorno in 1756 (5516). The Hida had wanted to publish this work in Amsterdam a year earlier, but these plans did not materialize. The work's publication in Livorno took an entire year and cost a substantial sum. The Hida sent several copies of the work to rabbis and community leaders he had met during his travels; community rabbis received it free of charge. The book sold well, and was soon difficult to obtain. In 1788 (5548) the Hida published a collection of additions to Sha'ar Yosef in the back of his book Devarim Ahadim, under the title Ahore Tar'a. Later, Ahore Tar'a was published together with Sha'ar Yosef.

In *Horayot* 10b, Rava asks the following question: "If the righteous were to enjoy both worlds [this world and the World to Come], would they find it distasteful?" Commenting on this question, the Hida writes:

The question here is clear – is it not better for the completely righteous to endure suffering [in this world] in order to greatly increase their eternal joy? It seems to me that Rava has in mind something similar to what we are told about Rabbenu Hakadosh [Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi]. He merited both tables [the material and spiritual], yet he derived no enjoyment from this world. At the time of his passing, he raised his ten fingers heavenward and testified that he had not derived enjoyment from this world at all, not even a pinky's worth. ... This is certainly praiseworthy, for he overcame his inclination. Even though he had immense material wealth at his disposal, he did not take pleasure in it. This is a cause for great joy. Perhaps this answers why Rashi z"l explains the phrase "they eat in two worlds" to mean that they have food in this world and in the next. They do not actually take pleasure in the food; they simply eat it. They do not take pleasure in it, like Rabbenu Hakadosh; certainly they experience great joy from the fact that they do not derive any pleasure from it.

Petah Enayim

Petah Enayim is a commentary on the aggadic sections of the Talmud, published in Livorno in 1790 (5550). It was published together with the *En Yaakov* by the Romm publishing house in Vilna in 1877 (5637) and in 1896 (5656).

Since the Hida had already published his commentary to the aggadic sections of *Masechet Sukkah* in his book *Simhat Haregel*, he only included a few short pieces from it in the initial publication of *Petah Enayim*. In a later edition, however, he decided to include his full commentary



on *Sukkah*. The section of *Petah Enayim* on *Horayot* includes material from *Sha'ar Yosef – Ahore Tar'a*, the Hida's comprehensive work on *Masechet Horayot*.

The following is one of the first of the Hida's comments in *Petah Enayim*:

The Gemara begins by discussing the nighttime *Shema* recitation because this is usually the first mitzvah undertaken by a boy who becomes bar mitzvah. The first mitzvah that generally comes his way is reading the evening *Shema*.

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Kikar La'aden

Kikar La'aden contains commentaries on the minor tractates – Avot D'Rabbi Natan, Masechet Kallah, Masechet Derech Eretz Rabbah, Masechet Derech Eretz Zuta, Masechet Sofrim, Masechet Semahot, and Masechet Gerim – as well as on Midrash Rabbah and Perek Shirah. (In fact, the Hida included in this volume two running commentaries on Avot D'Rabbi Natan, Masechet Kallah and Derech Eretz Zuta.) It also includes a number of responsa, comments to the Talmud Yerushalmi by Rabbi Maharam di Lunzano z"l (which the Hida had copied from the author's handwritten notes), and marginalia which the Hida found in an old manuscript written by a certain scholar in Jerusalem. Additionally, Kikar La'aden contains material that had been omitted from the Hida's Shem Hagedolim and Va'ad Lahachamim. Kikar La'aden was originally published in 1801 (5561).

In one passage in *Kikar La'aden* the Hida addresses the famous comment in *Derech Eretz Rabbah* (chapter 2), "Regarding those who are insulted and do not insult others, who hear their disgrace and do not respond, who act out of love and rejoice in their difficulties, the verse says: 'And those who love Him are like the sun rising in its strength." The Hida writes:

The phrase "who hear their disgrace and do not respond" is referring to a case where the one insulted is aware of the shortcomings of the one who has insulted him. This is often the case, since we know that people who possess a particular shortcoming are often quick to see it and point it out in others. Often, the one who has been insulted is aware that the person who is insulting him has the very same flaw he has objected to; nevertheless, he does not respond in kind.

"Those who act out of love" refers to those who serve the Almighty through Torah and *mitzvot*, out of love. This causes an increase in the Divine attribute

of kindness. "And rejoice in their difficulties" – for joy tempers the attribute of strict justice. It is very noble to intend to increase the attribute of kindness and to temper the attribute of strict justice. "About them the verse says, 'And those who love Him are like the sun rising in its strength" – the classic interpretations of this are well known, but I would like to add one of my own. The sun was offended by the moon's claim that two kings cannot wear one crown. Nevertheless, the sun kept quiet. As a result, the sun retained its size, while the moon was diminished. So too, those who offend and insult others will be diminished, while those whom they have offended will retain their dignity and become even greater. Additionally, just as the moon is not an independent light source but can only reflect

what it absorbs from the sun, similarly, those who offend others will need those whom they have offended.

Kise Rahamim

Kise Rahamim contains explanations and commentary on Masechet Kallah, Masechet Sofrim, and Avot D'Rabbi Natan. It was published in Livorno in 1803 (5563).

Commenting on the statement found in the first chapter of *Avot D'Rabbi Natan*, "Ben Azai said:



^{1.} The Talmud teaches that the sun and moon were initially created equal in size, until the moon protested that "two kings cannot wear the same crown," whereupon G-d shrank the moon's size.

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Be careful that your words not be frivolous," the Hida explains this seemingly straightforward remark in light of the statement that precedes it: "A person's speech should be judicious, rather than demanding." He writes:

Because it says, "A person's speech should be judicious, rather than demanding," Ben Azai now cautions us that while it is true that we should not be overly demanding when speaking with others, we should nevertheless make certain that our words are meaningful and not frivolous. Our words should be well chosen and helpful.

Mar'it Ha'ayin

Mar'it Ha'ayin is a small work, commenting on portions of the *En Yaakov*, published in Livorno in 1805 (5565). This is the last of the Hida's books published during his lifetime.

The Hida offers the following insight into the statement of the Gemara in *Masechet Yoma* (29b), "Thoughts of sin are worse than sin itself."

[Aside from the simple explanation,] this can be understood in light of the Rabbis' comment that there are three partners in



the creation of a person: his father, his mother, and the Almighty. The Almighty provides a person with his soul, and his ability to speak and think. A person who sins in thought is sinning with the portion of himself given to him directly by the Almighty. In contrast, if he sins in deed he is sinning with a portion of himself provided by his father or mother. Thus it makes sense that sinning with one's thoughts is considered graver than sinning in deed, for he is sinning with the portion granted to him by G-d. However, His mercy is overwhelming, and He does not, in fact, hold people accountable for sinful thoughts in the same way as He does for sinful actions. This, though, is because He is merciful, but in truth, it is a serious sin to damage the portion of ourselves that was given to us exclusively by the Almighty. Thus, "Thoughts of sin are worse than the sin itself."

En Zocher

En Zocher, an encyclopedia of Talmudic rules and principles, was published in Livorno in 1793 (5553) together with Midbar Kedemot in a volume titled Ya'ir Ozen.

In a letter of approbation for the 1865 (5625) edition of the book, Rabbi Yosef Shaul Nathanson, rabbi of Lemberg and author of *Sho'el U'meshiv*, writes:

I have seen a holy sight, the work *En Zocher* and *Ya'ir Ozen* from the rabbi and sage, the



brilliant light whose memory makes him a repository of the Torah knowledge contained in all the works

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of the Rabbis and their students and their students' students – the *tzaddik*, our teacher, Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay. He has presented principles from the *Talmud Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, and contributed to the blossoming and flourishing of Torah study, as is his holy way in all his books.

In section #16, under the letter *aleph*, the Hida cites Rabbi Yaakov Halevi as writing in a responsum (#62) that one should not base a law on reasoning alone, and should instead find support from the Gemara or the works of halachic authorities. The Hida points out that in this responsum, Rabbi Yaakov finds a source for this very halachah in a Gemara which first attempts to derive a law by reasoning, but later quotes a *beraita* as the source.

Midbar Kedemot

Midbar Kedemot, another encyclopedia of halachic principles, was published in Livorno in 1793 (5553), together with En Zocher, under the title Ya'ir Ozen. In a later edition, the second volume of Midbar Kedemot – entitled Devash L'fi – was added to Ya'ir Ozen.

In section #9, under the letter *kuf*, in the section entitled *Korbanot* (sacrifices), the Hida writes:

Sacrifices do not bring about atonement unless

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they are accompanied by repentance and confession of sins, as the Rambam states in *Hilchot Teshuvah*. Based

on this, the author of *Kotnot Or* (in *Parashat Ha'azinu*) poses a question and supplies an answer. He asks: If the Almighty promised Avraham Avinu *a"h* that the sacrifices would bring atonement, then why was the Bet Hamikdash, in which sacrifices were offered, destroyed?

Based on what we have said, however, we can understand this. The Rabbis tell us that the Almighty said to Jerusalem: "Why did I bring all these punishments? Because you said, 'I have not sinned." Since they did not confess their sins and did not repent, the sacrifices did not bring atonement. Thus, the Bet Hamikdash was destroyed.

Devash L'fi

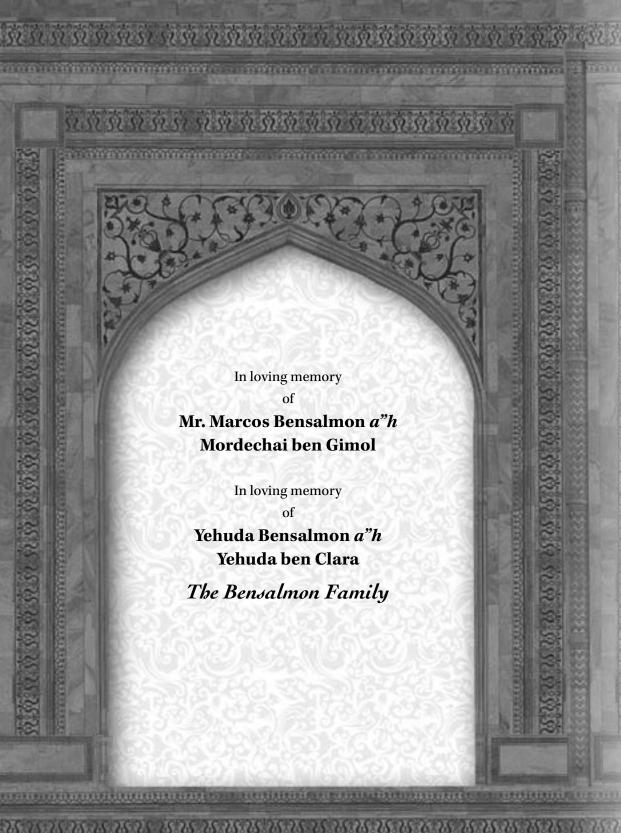
Devash L'fi, the second volume of Midbar Kedemot, was published in Livorno in 1801 (5561). The word devash (דבש, "honey") is an acronym for the Hida's Hebrew name, David ben Sarah (שרה דוד בן). The book was published together with Peh Ehad as well as some comments on the Zohar by the Hida. In 1957 (5517) the work was published with comments by Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira, author of Bene Yissaschar.

In section #4, under the letter *het*, in the section *Hiddushim* (novel Torah insights), the Hida



writes the following: "Later scholars are able to compose novel Torah thoughts that early scholars were not able to compose, because the proper time for those thoughts had not yet arrived."

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CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Haggadah, Pirke Avot, and Zohar

The Hida felt a special affinity for the Haggadah, and composed numerous commentaries on the Haggadah text.

Simhat Haregel

Simhat Haregel is primarily a commentary on the Haggadah, although it also contains material on Megillat Rut. It was published in Livorno in 1789 (5549).

Commenting on the famous words of the Haggadah, "And it is this that has stood by our fathers and us," the Hida writes:

Our master, the Ari z"l, explains "this" as referring to the Shechinah [Divine Presence]. It is connected to the verse that is mentioned earlier: "And afterwards they will go out with great wealth." This "wealth" refers to the holy sparks that were present in the land of Egypt. Since the Jews spread throughout the land, and endured a



difficult exile there, all the sparks of holiness there were released. This is the meaning of the words "with great wealth." ... The word "this" refers to the Shechinah which has always remained with us. Wherever we were exiled,



the Shechinah went with us. It released the sparks, and due to its power, our exile and our tribulations contribute to our ultimate freedom.

The Haggadah continues, "In every generation they rise against us to destroy us." "They" here refers to the heavenly princes of the lands where we are found, and the nations among whom we live. Yet, "the Almighty saves us from their hands." He saves us from both

the heavenly princes and from the nations themselves. All of this is for the honor of the Shechinah. This is what is meant by the words, "And it is this that has stood by our fathers and us." The Shechinah stands with our fathers. who had the merit of the Patriarchs. with us, even though we have less of this merit.

Zero'a Yemin

Zero'a Yemin is a short commentary on the Haggadah that was published together

with the Hida's Pene David in Livorno in 1792 (5552). In it the Hida cites an explanation of the perplexing words in the *Dayenu* prayer: "Had He brought us close to Mount Sinai and not given us the Torah, that would have been enough."

Our teacher, the author of the *Michtam*, explains that in the days of separation which preceded the giving of the Torah, secrets and wondrous things were conveyed to certain exceptional individuals among the Jewish people, which benefited them immensely. However, the Torah and mitzvot which were revealed to the entire nation benefited the entire nation and elevated them. Thus, the giving of the Torah and *mitzvot* showed the special affection G-d has for the entire people, and

ערו ע"ר דף כע ער כיח אבוחפיא

His concern for wellbeing. their With the Torah, the Almighty demonstrated His complete love for the entire nation as a whole.1

Ge'ulat Olam

Ge'ulat Olam is a commentary on the Haggadah which was originally published in Livorno in 1794 (5554) together with Kise David. In later editions Ge'ulat Olam was published on its own, along with the text of the Haggadah.

בכד עם" עדם

Commenting on the Haggadah's statement requiring that every participant mention the mitzvot of Korban Pesah, matzah and maror, the Hida writes:

This alludes to the *baal teshuvah* [penitent sinner]. Repentance requires first removing oneself from sin, and then reconnecting oneself to G-d, may He blessed. One also must always feel anxious because of his violation of G-d's commands, and for having fallen short in his

service. This accords with the words of the verses "My sin is before me constantly," and "because I speak of my wrongdoing, I worry because of my sin."

These steps are alluded to here. The Pesah offering alludes to withdrawal from sin, and indeed the Sages understood the Biblical directive to "reach [mishchu] and select a sheep" for the Pesah sacrifice to mean, "withdraw [mishchu] your hands from idol worship." Additionally, we know that no one who was uncircumcised was allowed to eat from the Pesah sacrifice.

Matzah alludes both to the Shechinah, as is written in the holy Zohar, and to our yearning to cling to the

Shechinah.

The concept of being worried and anxious about one's sins is alluded to by the maror, which is bitter. These are the three pillars of repentance.

Safah Ahat

Safah Ahat, yet another commentary on Haggadah, was published together with the Hida's Ahavat David in Livorno in 1799 (5559).

Addressing the passage in the Haggadah of "The



^{1.} The Haggadah's comment implies that we must give praise and thanksgiving to G-d for simply bringing us to Mount Sinai, independent of His giving us the Torah, and the Michtam explains that even before we received the Torah, while we encamped at Mount Sinai, the spiritual elite were taught profound secrets, and for this, too, we are grateful.

Egyptians did evil to us and they afflicted us, and they imposed hard labor upon us," the Hida writes:

The Rambam wonders why the Egyptians were punished if their actions were predetermined by the Almighty, as the verse states, "They [the Jews] will serve them [the Egyptians], and they [the Egyptians] will oppress them [the Jews]." The Rambam answers that the Almighty never said that Egypt specifically would oppress them. The Raavad disagrees, for whom else could this be referring to? We humbly suggest the following: All the nations were permitted to enslave the Jews, but the Egyptians were punished because they displayed ingratitude. Yosef Hatzaddik a"h was their ruler and sustained them; they were his servants. Yet, they enslaved his people. This was a great sin on their part, and they were punished accordingly. A different nation, however, would not have been punished.

Alternatively, had the Egyptians done what they did in order to fulfill the Almighty's decree, "They will serve them, and they will oppress them," they would not have been punished. However, their intention was specifically to torment the Jews, not to fulfill the word of G-d. Furthermore, they said, "Let us outsmart the Savior of Israel," and for this they were punished.

Another possibility is that when Moshe and Aharon came in the Name of the Almighty and demanded that the Jews be released, the Egyptians added to their workload instead, and for this the Egyptians were punished.

It is possible that these three reasons are alluded to in the verse quoted above. "The Egyptians did evil to us" may refer to the fact that Yosef Hatzaddik a"h helped

them tremendously, and they were his servants, and yet they harmed his descendants. "And they afflicted us" may point to the fact that they did not act with the intention to fulfill G-d's decree of oppression, and thus they deserved to be punished. Furthermore, "They imposed hard labor upon us" may refer to the fact that when G-d ordered them to send us out, they in their wickedness said, "Let the work become more oppressive." All of these are reasons for them to be severely punished.

Peh Ehad

The Hida's *Peh Ehad* commentary to the Haggadah was published together with *Devash L'ft* in Livorno in 1801 (5561).

Regarding the phrase in the Haggadah of "Ha lahma anya di"

("This is the bread of affliction which..."), the Hida comments:

> The numerical value of the last letters of these words is equal to that of the ehadword (thirteen), one for through the enslavement in Egypt accepted the kingship of G-d and His holy Torah, as the verse states:



"Who is like Your people Yisrael, a singular nation [gov ehad]!"

Bate Hanefesh

Bate Hanefesh is a commentary on the Haggadah published in the back of the Hida's *Mar'it Ha'ayin* in Livorno in 1805 (5565).

Noting the Torah's description of Bene Yisrael in Egypt as "a great nation," the Haggadah comments, "This teaches us that Israel was distinguished there." The Hida elaborates:

Perhaps we can say that the phrase "This teaches us" means that it teaches us a halachah pertaining to the laws of kashrut: Something that is discernible cannot

be nullified [when it is mixed with another food, even if it constitutes small portion of the mixture. Just as the Jews were discernible among the seventy nations did and not blend in with them ... we derive the principle in halachah that something that is discernible be cannot nullified.

סונטרים בתי הנפש

Hasde Avot/Rashe Avot

The Hasde Avot commentary on Pirke Avot was published together with Shem Hagedolim in Livorno in 1774 (5534). Rashe Avot, which contains addenda to *Hasde Avot*, was published in 1798 (5558).

The first mishnah in *Avot* reads: "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and handed it down to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets handed it down to the Men of the Great Assembly." The Hida comments:

My grandfather, the rabbi, Hesed L'Avraham zt"l, explains that the words of the mishnah "and handed it down to Yehoshua" mean that Yehoshua on his own would not have been wise enough to absorb all the wisdom of the entire Torah. It was only through the efforts of our teacher Moshe that it was handed down, as he placed it directly into Yehoshua's hands.

Following this line of reasoning, we must ask. why does it not say, "and Yehoshua handed down to the elders and the elders handed it down to the prophets"?

If we look at the Gemara in the second of chapter

הכוקב לא כשאבי ככתב ומשל כתיה הכובה" שם הנדולים הכו' סכור מינים כל הרובם ליטול כש"ם יכח ויטול חסרתי הגלם לחב לחכר ולפטרון . לא ברא סבל סט"ם אני ודענא כום אין שבין סל"ל כצשיתו וכל התנם את הם"ם פח ובוח אתו רכבן וכנרי סכותב ש"ם אליד את חסר"ון. כלא חשיב לחרשושי סכל יפנס פנוס ינח מיח דשלקי חכפברון ומולם סמיפו עלי ימר אוסב וריע שסם סרסיבוני ולקיים נורחם אסיקתים מום עוברם ואפיקים אסיק שמ"א מרפ"ם ועולה קורה בנרון. וחורי דווטה משכתי דרכי חופר לדכק קונם קמן חם סוח הם מוכין לבמור את הש"ם חני עשרון . ומוח חוכם חםן שירום קנת משכינת מסכת אכות אחד קראתיו אבות כת ם רכעי לפיסה חסירה ליקיים מילו רובות של כנכעל של כפרסטים ככידים וכלוריון. זעוד אחרת זאת סיתה ליכי אצירור כמ"ך חסרי אכות בימטרוא חר"א כר ורחים לל ונדיק ירון . איכרא רוד בשנים בצצמו ליצר כי נס זם מגד שמ"ח כתעשהו תשנו וושר וכפור רכרי תורם שמיים כן כם"ף נחשב ורתוקות כש"ף שור"ף משנה שברון ומונס לה נכרכה הלה למוקה כעלמה חדל כתר שת"ה ככנם אחרון - קכון תפלתי יסא רעות ווררס לי חלקי לשוכם ולברכם אתוא וכירם ואת וכרון . ווכר חפרי אכות לי בעודרו ניפלמל אלסים תווישני ארם חים סשיכם אכים מרכ כל אל מס קושך קרית ארכע סוא חברון. כור:

Temurah, we can explain this. The Gemara there states that several halachot and fine points of Torah were forgotten during the mourning period for our teacher Moshe, but Otniel was able to retrieve them through the power of his pilpul [rigorous study and analysis]. As Otniel was one of the elders and he was able to recover a portion of the Torah on his own (and it is possible that the prophets did this, as well), it does not say, "and Yehoshua handed it down to the elders and the elders handed it down to the prophets." This is to make it clear that the elders, even without the "handing down" of Yehoshua, recovered a portion of the Torah through their pilpul.

This is the explanation of the mishnah, "Moshe received the Torah." He received it, and he expended the effort to hand it down to Yehoshua. However, Yehoshua did not hand it down in its entirety to the elders; they needed to recover the lost parts through their *pilpul*. Thus the formulation is not "handed down." In a similar vein, it says, "and the elders to the prophets" [because the prophets obtained some Torah knowledge through their study, and it was thus not all "handed down" to them]. However, it then says, "The prophets *handed it down* to the Men of the Great Assembly," indicating a complete and precise transmission.

Yesh Me'ayin

Yesh Me'ayin is a collection of marginalia on the Zohar that was published in Livorno in 1791 (5551) together with the text of the Zohar. This work was later reprinted in Livorno in 1815 (5575) with some additions. It was reprinted several times after that, including the Vilna 1882 (5642) edition in which it is called *Nitzotze Orot*.

The Hida's grandson Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah (son of Rabbi Avraham Azoulay) owned a manuscript with a lengthy commentary on the *Zohar* by the Hida. He was planning to have it published with the help of the Farchi family of Damascus, but in the year 1837 (5597) a devastating earthquake rocked Tzfat, Rabbi Nissim Zerahiah's hometown. He was killed and his grandfather's commentary on the *Zohar* was lost in the rubble.

There are references made to a work *Sefat Haye'or* on Kabbalah by the Hida, but there are no known extant copies. The British Museum has a work called *Zahav Sagur* on Kabbalah in its holdings. Other Kabbalah-related unpublished manuscripts by the Hida are *Yosef B'seter* and *Likutei Torah*.

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Halachah and Responsa

Birke Yosef

Birke Yosef is a commentary to the Shulhan Aruch and was published in Livorno in 1774 (5534). During the process of publication the Hida continued to make additions to the work; these additions were published together with Birke Yosef under the title Shiure Berachah. The Birke Yosef is quoted extensively in later halachic works and was republished several times. The first publication after the Hida's passing appears to have been in Salonika in 1810 (5570) by Yosef Molcho. This edition includes cross-references to sources in the Hida's Shiure Berachah and Haim Sha'al.

In the following selection, excerpted from the beginning of the Birke Yosef, the Hida draws upon his vast knowledge of printed as well as manuscript sources. Commenting on the admonition of the Shulhan Aruch that upon arising in the morning one should "strengthen oneself like a lion," he writes:

Immediately upon waking, one should wash his hands properly. Maharam de Lonzano writes in his

In loving memory of our grandparents

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Charles Shalom and Sol Botbol Yosef and Hanna Anidiar Avraham and Fortuna Levi Jacov and Malka Neugewurz

Dedicated in honor of our parents

Isaac (Jack) and Clara Botbol Robert and Gitta Levi

Dedicated in honor of our siblings

Sally and Ariel

& our niece and nephews

Batya, Jordan, Ezra and Yehuda

In honor of my wife

Amarya

and our children

Raina Clara, Yarden Hanna Fortuna, **Lielle Sivan and Ness Noah**

Dedicated to our dear friend and author of this magnificent publication

Yehuda Azoulay

Charles Shalom and Amarya Botbol

Derech Haim that even one who does not wish to get out of bed yet should nevertheless wash his hands. The Bayit Hadash wonders why Maran [author of Shulhan Aruch] does not quote the Zohar (as the work Tola'at Yaakov does) that one who walks around in the morning without having washed his hands is deserving of death. But, in truth, this is not a question since these words do not appear in



our editions of the *Zohar*. Furthermore, Maharam de Lonzano, in his work *Shete Yadot*, writes that the work *Tola'at Yaakov* went too far without a clear source.

In truth, though, I must say that I have seen with my own eyes a manuscript version of the *Zohar* corrected by early scholars, and these words clearly appear: "For this is deserving of death at the hands of Heaven." I later saw that the work *Or Halevanah*, a collection of comments on the *Zohar* by my grandfather, the pious rabbi, our teacher, Rabbi Avraham Azoulay *z"l*, author of the *Hesed L'Avraham*, quotes this version. Thus the rabbi, author of *Tola'at Yaakov*, is correct, and the question of Maharam de Lonzano is no longer difficult.

In the work *Eliyahu Rabbah*, the author concludes that perhaps this halachah applied only in earlier times

(as is the case with certain other *halachot* such as *gilui*¹ and *zugot*²). His words, however, are not convincing. In our lands we see that most people are careful about this, although we have heard from older saintly rabbis that if water is distant, one is permitted to walk less than four *amot* even before washing his hands, as is mentioned in *Masechet Shabbat* 153b.

Shiure Berachah

Shiure Berachah, as mentioned above, is an addendum to Birke

Yosef that was published together with the original work after its initial publication.

Mahazik Berachah

Mahazik Berachah contains additional comments to the Hida's Birke Yosef and Shiure Berachah on the Orah Haim and Yoreh De'ah sections of the Shulhan Aruch. It was published in Livorno in 1785 (5545). It appears that at some point there was a manuscript of a second volume.



שורי ברכה

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^{1.} The prohibition against drinking water that had been exposed.

^{2.} The prohibition against doing things in pairs.

On the words at the beginning of *Shulhan Aruch*, "One should get up in the morning and strengthen himself like a lion," the Hida comments:

I saw that Rabbi Emden Yaakov wonders in his work Mor U'ketziah why the Zohar is stringent about rising at midnight reciting the and appropriate prayers when the practice is not even mentioned in the Talmud. After dealing with the issue



at length, he concludes that the *Zohar* was referring only to scholars living in the Land of Israel.

I do not understand why the Rabbi was not concerned that by saying these words and planting these doubts, he is weakening those who serve G-d, Heaven forbid. Everyone agrees that it is praiseworthy to rise at midnight, or, minimally, before daybreak, whether in the Holy Land or in the Diaspora. The *Reishit Hochmah* and *Da'at Hochmah* have already proven that this obligation is incumbent upon both scholars and laymen. In my small book *Petah Enayim* I have offered a partial explanation for why the Talmud did not mention several things about which the holy *Zohar* is strict. A pious individual should see what the pious Rabbi

Mahara de Vidas *zt"l* says in his holy works *Reshit Hochmah* and *Totza'ot Haim* regarding getting up at midnight.

L'David Emet

L'David Emet was first published in Livorno in 1786 (5546) together with Moreh Ba'etzba and Tziporen Shamir, under the title Horesh Mitzel. It is based on Rabbi Yaakov Algazi's work Emet L'Yaakov on the halachot pertaining to sifrei Torah. It has been republished many times.

In chapter 13 (#12) the Hida writes, "When a *sefer Torah* is brought from one community to another, it should preferably be accompanied by ten men."

Haim Sha'al

Haim Sha'al is a work of halachic responsa published in Livorno in 1792 (5552). The second volume was published in Livorno in 1796 (5556).

In the first volume, in responsa 3 and 4, the Hida addresses the situation of one who does not have a *kezavit*

לרוד אמת

בן כי קונטרים זה מ"ס וכמסה בית"מ המפסק למפים י מפי"ם.
בי"ם ד"מף מכים י"ודל"ל חוכל למיקס למדם כנמר כנטרטי" בייסק אינוף דינים הספרים ודמים מלו אל"ה מכטיריך י צעד ע"קסן תנורת הדמילימים ולידופיילטים מכיני ישראל מכירים מכיר למסר מיבור ישראל מכירים.

מונם בליוורנו זכא

נוסת לרוור אמה לא ישינ ממנה מפרי במנך לניק בי מים מכמים של מים בשיי"ר אלייעור מעדיון מיו



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(the required amount) of matzah to eat on the night of Pesah. Is he obligated to eat whatever he has, or, perhaps, since it is less than the required amount, there is no purpose to eating this small quantity of matzah?

Towards the end of responsa 4, he writes:

What emerges is that one who does not have a full *kezayit* of matzah or *maror* on the first night of Pesah should eat whatever he has, even though it is less than a *kezayit*; he should not, however, recite a *berachah*. G-d will see into his heart and understand that he had no choice, and had no way of fulfilling the mitzvah in its proper fashion.

Responsum 38 in the second volume of *Haim Sha'al* includes 101 brief discussions on various topics. The eighty-third piece in this responsum addresses the question of whether tobacco that is soaked

in beer must be locked away over Pesah, or if it suffices to construct a wall of sorts to block access to it during Pesah.

Kesher Godel

Kesher Godel was first published in Livorno in 1794 (5554). It was later republished a number of times, including twice more in Livorno. It contains halachot pertinent to the mitzvot of the morning: tzitzit, tefillin, and tefillah. Sources appear



in parentheses after each halachah. Sometimes the Hida quotes his own works.

In chapter 7 (#25) the Hida writes:

One should recite the version of *Baruch She'amar* that has "*paz*" (eighty-seven) words. Even if the congregation is reciting a different version, he should say the version with eighty-seven words to himself (*Mahazik Berachah*).

Tov Ayin

Tov Ayin, which contains essays on assorted halachic topics, was printed together with the Hida's Va'ad Lahachamim in Livorno in 1796 (5556).

In chapter 11 the Hida discusses the propriety of the custom of standing when the Ten Commandments are being read from the *sefer Torah* on the *Shabbatot* of *Parashat Yitro* and *Parashat Va'et'hanan*, as well as on Shavuot.



Yosef Ometz

Yosef Ometz is a collection of responsa that was published in Livorno in 1798 (5558). It appears that there was a second volume in manuscript form that was never published.

In responsum 89 the Hida discusses a fascinating question that arose regarding a certain scholar who suffered his entire life from misfortune. Feeling he was destined to be pursued by calamity, he

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feared that misfortune would follow him until the very end, and that he might one day fall ill and come so close to death that he would be brought for burial while he was still breathing, and the burial would kill him. He therefore instructed his family not to bury him immediately after his death, and to instead wait two days and two nights or more from the assumed time of death. And if the second day was Friday, he added, then he should not be buried until Motza'ei Shabbat. As it happened, he died on Thursday, and they waited to bury him until Motza'ei Shabbat



as he instructed. The Hida addresses the question as to whether the deceased's request should be honored in such a case, and cites different opinions on the matter from various halachic authorities.

Makom David

Makom David is a small work that locates the sources of statements in the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* and its commentaries. It was printed in the back of the third volume of *Zichron Moshe* in Livorno in 1840 (5600).

She'elot U'teshuvot HaHida

She'elot U'teshuvot HaHida, a collection of additional responsa, was published at the end of *Yosef Ometz* in Jerusalem in 1961 (5721).

Kuntres She'elot U'teshuvot

Kuntres She'elot U'teshuvot contains eight halachic responsa of the Hida, published for the first time in Jerusalem, from a manuscript, in 1965 (5725). The book contains eight responsa.

Responsum 8 was composed in the Hida's youth, and his teacher, Rabbi Yonah Navon *zt"l*, added his own comments to the responsum which are printed toward the end of the published work.

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Mussar

Dedicated in loving memory of

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Messod & Esther Azoulay a"h Yehuda & Luna Cohen a"h

and

In honor of our son

Yehuda Azoulay

We are so proud of our honorable son, Yehuda Azoulay, who, at a young age, has accomplished a great goal by writing his magnificent books on Sephardic hachamim!

The entire family is proud and privileged to have a special son like you, who carries great Torah values and extremely appreciates our beautiful roots and traditions.

May this publication succeed in strengthening our understanding of our Sephardic hachamim. And we pray that their zechut help us, our families, and all our descendants to find favor in the eyes of Hashem.

Joe & Esther Azoulay

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Moreh Ba'etzba

Moreh Ba'etzba was printed in Livorno in 1786 (5546), together with two other works - Tziporen Shamir and L'David Emet - under the title Horesh Mitzel. Later, the works were republished separately.

Moreh Ba'etzba contains words of mussar and worthy religious arranged based on practices the yearly calendar. The book is dedicated to Yaakov Pereira de Leon, son of the Hida's close friend Michael Pereira de Leon. Moreh Ba'etzba was republished many times, and was even translated into Ladino.

מורה באצבע (תקמ"ו)

Rabbi Haim Palagi of Izmir, in his introduction to his work *Mo'ed L'kol Hai*, writes:

I remember well the merit of Yosef, the very righteous one, may his name draw down goodness and blessing upon us. When I was young I used to attend to our master, the sage, my grandfather, Rabbi Yosef Rephael Hazan *z"l* [author of *Hikrei Lev*], who was like the light of the moon. He said to me: "When I see the vast Torah wisdom of the great and renowned rabbi, the Hida z"l – who authored many holy books of halachah, full of pure sayings and precious sermons - I am not envious. But of his small works such as Moreh Ba'etzba, Lev David, and similar works - which contain mussar and halachot that are accessible to all, scholar and layman alike - I am envious. People keep them by their side and read them when they travel, by sea or by land."

He was effusive in his praise of these works, even more so than about the Hida's other extraordinary books.

In the following piece from Moreh Ba'etzba, the Hida cites an admonition in the name of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero:

A person should strive to overcome his negative traits, for this is the purpose of mankind. He should think about the many times he has sinned and gone against the will of the Almighty, may He be blessed. He must be sure to correct the situation, lest he be held accountable. But how many penances can one undertake, and who has the strength to endure suffering? The solution to this problem was suggested by our teacher, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero *zt"l*. He suggested that we utilize the precious ability granted us to overcome our negative traits. This heals iniquity, and is much better than enduring penances and suffering. There is much more

to say about this matter, but I must be brief. Suffice it to say that this advice is a precious gem whose value cannot be overestimated; it is the cure for all ailments.

Moreh Ba'etzba was published with a commentary called Sha'are Hakodesh by Rabbi Yehoshua Meir Hakohen of Volozhin in 1907 (5667). In 1980 (5740) Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Hillel published Moreh Ba'etzba together with Sha'are Hakodesh. He also wrote a commentary on the works and supplied sources for them. This annotated volume was called Amudei Hora'ah and was published by Ahavat Shalom Publishing in Jerusalem.

Tziporen Shamir

mentioned above, *Tziporen* Shamir was published in Livorno in 1786 (5546), together with Moreh Ba'etzba and L'David Emet. It contains laws of prayer, words of *mussar*, and worthy religious practices. The book was republished many times, and was even translated into Arabic.

In chapter 3 (#43) the Hida writes:

> Do not take to heart what others say about

you, for this is the root of grave problems and damages the soul. A philosopher said: Many troubles come to a person who desires to be honored by others. This desire is very foolish. For what will a person gain if a thousand people honor him, and what will he lose if they speak ill

כם למפור משפרת כם תפירי למבר שרחל כ"ן עוכד לחים לא ימלישת ולא שירי כי מן לכם את ספרם באבכב שור ום פדכר מעם כרו כלרי וכלעורן פחוכר (חנכע פרים ג' גרגירים ברחם חבירי לקוסחו בינסו פיבור רול רחשבי ותחרונים חשר כם בסט לסקל ולסחפיר - וחני משימס דוכרו"ת בכלי סרואו וכילקום קבלם כובעיר • בקוממת ומך קולם טעה ומכסי לרחם בלסים לכו וולכם ער סחו מפר יכתר כן יתריב ולו לכרר וצלה שפלר



נסור ונשית והכו"ת וכלים פל ממקם פשר בשר סילם"ם

A LEGEND OF GREATNESS *Mussar* | 429 of him and denigrate him? Rabbi Levitas of Yavneh said: "Be very, very humble of spirit" (*Avot* 4:4). It may be that the first "very" alludes to man's desire for honor, while the second refers to the anguish a man experiences if others denigrate him. Thus Rabbi Levitas exhorts: "Be very, very humble of spirit." The pious author of *Hovot Halevavot* has already informed us that the goal of the trait of humility is to reach the level where one is equally indifferent to honor or degradation.

Yosef L'hok

Yosef L'hok contains a daily program for studying mussar and practical halachah. It was originally published together with Sansan L'Yair in Livorno in 1790 (5550). Later, in 1794 (5554), it was published together with the Hok L'Yisrael. This work was reprinted many times.

Lev David

Lev David contains thirty-two chapters of mussar, the first six of which are a transcription of a manuscript written by Rabbi Haim Vital. Some have maintained that the publication date was 1789

יוסף לחק פעפא דקרא · מוסר חלכה מח

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(5549), but Meir Benayahu persuasively argues that it was in fact 1794 (5554). Additions to the work were published in the Hida's *L'David Emet* in 1786 (5546). *Lev David* was published numerous times, at one point with material added by the Hida called *Torat Hashelamim*. In one edition it is published together with the Hida's *Brit Olam*.

In chapter 27 the Hida writes:

I have said previously that the punishment for wrongdoing is not the same for every person. The same is true for one who does a mitzvah: not everyone's reward is equal. Each person receives a reward according to his spiritual level, according to his intention, according to his connection to G-d while performing mitzvah, and according to the joy he experienced doing the mitzvah. The



Rishonim have used this concept to explain the verse, "And you shall serve Hashem your G-d, and He shall bless your bread and your water. ..." The question is clear: Why is it that the passage begins with a plural pronoun, "You shall serve" (vaavadetem), and ends with a singular pronoun, "He shall bless your bread and your water" (u'verach et lahmecha v'et memecha)?

Based on what we have said, however, it makes perfect sense. It says "You shall serve" in the plural form, for many indeed serve the Almighty, united together as one congregation. However, when it comes to reward, each person is judged individually. The Almighty determines reward based on the individual's spiritual level, his strengths, and his concentration while performing the mitzvah. This is alluded to by the use of the singular

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term, "He shall bless your bread and your water." Each one is addressed individually, for the Almighty sees into a person's heart, and the reward is based upon the purity of his service.

Brit Olam

Brit Olam¹ is the Hida's commentary to Sefer Hassidim, a work written by the medieval sage Rabbi Yehuda Hehassid. It was published together with the Hida's Lev David in Livorno in 1794 (5554). Later, several editions of Sefer Hassidim were published together with the Brit Olam commentary.

Mention is also made of a manuscript with another commentary by the Hida on *Sefer Hassidim* called *Tov Vahessed*. The Hida authored a third commentary on *Sefer Hassidim* called *Metzah Haratzon*. These were not published but exist in manuscript form.



Addressing the comment of *Sefer Hassidim* (460), "There are places where a child is not named after a living relative," the Hida writes:

This custom is hinted to by the verse (*Tehillim* 49:12) "*karu bishmotam ale adamot*" ["They have called lands by their own names," which can be read homiletically as] "they have called by the names of those in the ground," meaning, they have named after those who have been interred. However, all customs are in agreement that one should not name a son for himself. While I did visit a place where a Jewish man named Mordechai named his son Mordechai, this seemed very strange to me.

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^{1.} The Hida also mentions having composed a commentary to *Masechet Keritot* under the same title, *Brit Olam*.



Other Works

In honor of

Mora D'asra Rabbi Daniel Green

of Hamilton, Ontario

Dr. Jason & Evelyne Obayon and Family

Liturgical Works

Sansan L'Yair

Sansan L'Yair, a small collection of prayers for various occasions, was published in Livorno in 1790 (5550). The book begins with the order of prayers to be said and actions to be undertaken by a community in crisis. The work also includes tefillot to be recited under the huppah, at a sheva berachot, during childbirth, at a brit milah, and at a pidyon haben. The work concludes with a list of eleven practices to be observed on behalf of an ill patient.



Kerem Hemer

The word *hemer* (חמר) is an acronym for חינוך (education), מילה (circumcision), and רפואה (medicine). The book contains meditations and prayers for various occasions, and was published in Livorno in 1797 (5557).

Shomer Yisrael

Shomer Yisrael was published in Italy several times over the course of 1797 (5557). It includes *tefillot* for protection, as well as *tefillot* which the Hida found that had been written by early kabbalists for a variety of things, including long life.

Yosef B'seder

Yosef B'seder was published in Livorno in 1799 (5559), and presents prayers and religious practices for various situations, such as for one who became impure on Yom Kippur evening, for a holy group that wants to study Torah the entire night to atone for sins deserving of karet (excision from the Jewish nation), and for the six-week Shovavim period of repentance.





The book also includes prayers of thanks for a miracle, a prayer when accepting a fast upon oneself, prayers for the protection of a new mother and child, a prayer for the sick, and prayers for wisdom, for an improved memory, for livelihood, and for protection from a stormy sea and dangerous travels. The Hida writes that these prayers should all be recited in purity and with concentration. Also included are tefillot for times of crisis written by Rabbi Yehuda Hehassid and by an early kabbalist, and prayers for a heart open to wisdom, for protection, and for success in all of one's endeavors.

Kaf Ahat

Kaf Ahat was published in Livorno in 1802 (5562) and reprinted several times. It includes prayers for the birth of a son, for the healing of the sick, for finding a match, for encountering the authorities, for anxiety, for protection from the evil eye (a prayer written by Rabbi Yehudai Gaon), for protection



^{1.} Rabbi Yehudai Gaon was the head of the yeshivah in Sura from 757 to 761, during the Gaonic period of Judaism. He was originally a member of the academy of Pumbedita, but the exilarch Solomon ben Hisdai appointed him as Gaon of Sura as "there is no one there (at Sura) as distinguished as he is for wisdom."

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from bandits, and for livelihood. The book also includes prayers to be said when banging the *aravot* on Hoshana Rabbah, and prayers to be recited following the search for *hametz*. A lengthy alphabetical *vidui* (confessional) to be recited on Yom Kippur is recorded, as well as prayers to be said during *sefirat ha'omer* and Shavuot, prayers for protection while traveling, prayers for protection from the evil eye, and prayers for good health. Additionally, the book includes *halachot* pertaining to the holidays of Shavuot and Sukkot, and the intentions one should have when giving charity.

The last paragraph in the book (#32) reads:

A true *segulah* [charm] for all things is to be truly modest in heart and soul, to give as much charity as one can, and to be involved in the study of Torah for its own sake. An allusion to this can be found in the words of the verse "atzat Hashem hi takum" ["the decision of G-d shall prevail"]. "Atzat" [עצות] is an acronym for ענוה [humility], מורה [charity], and תורה [Torah]. These shall prevail.

May G-d in His mercy allow us to recognize our limitations and our lowly situation, and to be involved in His Torah – the Torah of life.

Bet Menuhah

Bet Menuhah contains the order of study to observe on the *hillula* for a parent. It was published in Livorno in 1802 (5562).



Historical Works

Shem Hagedolim

Shem Hagedolim, a biographical and bibliographical work that ranks among the Hida's most popular books, was composed during

the forty days the Hida spent in the quarantine station in Livorno, after he arrived there by ship from Tunisia. The book is an encyclopedia, arranged alphabetically, which discusses books and the scholars who wrote them. It has entries on more than 1,300 scholars and more than 1,200 books, many of which were still in manuscript at the time. The work focuses earlier scholars and books, and only occasionally mentions scholars from the Hida's own time. Only



scholars who wrote books or responsa are discussed.

Occasionally, the Hida digresses onto a halachic question which arises in the context of his discussion of a work. For example, towards the beginning of the book, when discussing the *Amora* (Talmudic sage) named Abba (which means "father"), he deals with the question of whether someone whose father's name is Abba can address his father as "Abba."

In *Shem Hagedolim* the Hida expends great efforts in accurately identifying books and in determining when they were composed. Using brilliant and painstaking analysis, he is often able to show when later additions inadvertently made their way into the actual text of a book, inserted by either copyists or printers. His wide travels, love of books, and phenomenal memory all contributed to this impressive work.

The Hida published the first volume of *Shem Hagedolim* in Livorno in 1774 (5534), and the second volume in the same city in

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1786 (5546). In 1796 (5556), also in Livorno, the Hida published *Va'ad Lahachamim*, which contains additions to *Shem Hagedolim*. Two years later he published a second edition with additions, entitled *Va'ad Lahachamim*, Volume Two. Later, the entire *Va'ad Lahachamim* would be published as part of *Shem Hagedolim*.

Many editions of *Shem Hagedolim* were published after the Hida's passing, the best known of which is likely the edition published in Vilna in 1852 (5612) by Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac ben Yaakov. This edition divided the book into two sections, one listing scholars and one listing books. Subsequent editions generally follow this structure, including (but not limited to) the edition of Menahem Mendel Krengel published in Cracow in 1930 (5690).

In 1864 (5624) Rabbi Aharon Waldman composed a work called

Shem Hagedolim Hehadash, listing the scholars and books since the Hida's time. Sometimes this book is sold as a companion volume to the Hida's Shem Hagedolim.

Ma'agal Tov

Ma'agal Tov is the name of the Hida's published travelogue. Parts of the book were published in 1879 (5639) in Livorno by Rabbi Eliyahu ben Amozeg. It appears that this publication has been reprinted several times. The first complete edition of the work was published with an introduction and notes by



Aharon Freiman in Jerusalem in 1934 (5694) by Mekitzei Nirdamim Publishing House, under the title *Ma'agal Tov Hashalem*. This edition

was reprinted in Jerusalem in 1983 (5743). *Ma'agal Tov Hashalem* was translated into English and annotated by Dr. Benjamin Cymerman and published under the title *The Diaries of Rabbi Ha'im Yosef David Azulai* by Bnei Yissaschar Press in Jerusalem in 1997 (5757); a second revised edition was published in 2006 (5766).

The lengths of the entries vary, and it is possible that this journal was intended by the Hida for his own use, rather than for publication. The entries that were published had been recorded in two small notebooks. The first section covers his first *shelihut* fundraising mission undertaken from 1753–1758 (5513–5518). The second section includes his impressions of the second mission undertaken from 1773–1778 (5533–5538). The book concludes with several stories of his life in Livorno, where he lived until his passing.

In his entry for 27 Iyar, 1777 (5537), written while on a fundraising mission in Italy, the Hida writes:

Tuesday. I hired a *calleso* (carriage) with the help of the wealthy members of the four townships. In the evening I went to examine a *sefer Torah* that the local rabbi, the son of the *shamash* of Ancona, had said might be invalid. However, it turned out that it was absolutely acceptable.

The Hida recorded in his journal many observations and accounts of his experiences, and it is thus a valuable source of information about the societies and communities that he visited.

There seems to have been another account of the Hida's travels, entitled *Divre Hayamim*. Professor Benayahu also mentions that the Hida wrote copious notes during his travels, portions of which he later included in various books. This collection, which has yet to be published, includes a manuscript called *Kuntres Masa'ot*.

There were apparently also two manuscripts of the Hida which told stories about great people, called *Hech Matok* and *Ma'asiot*.

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Hagahot (Marginalia)

The Hida wrote many notes in the margins of books that he owned and studied, and later published many of these comments in his various works. The Hida wrote comments on Rabbi Yaakov Algazi's *Ar'a D'rabbanan* which was printed together with Rabbi Yehuda Ayash's *Afra D'ara* commentary to *Ar'a D'rabbanan*. These comments of the Hida were eventually published in 1963 (5723) under the title *Hagahot HaHida*. They appear in the back of the edition of *Ar'a D'rabbanan* published in Jerusalem by Keren Yeshuah of Monsey, together with comments of Rabbi Natan Gestetner.

The Hida also wrote comments on Rabbi Haim Nissim Rephael Motziri's *Be'er Mayim Haim*. These comments were later published in his *Mar'it Ha'ayin*. The Hida's comments on Rabbi Malachi Hakohen's *Yad Malachi* were called *Heseg Yad*. These notes were eventually published by Machon Yerushalayim in 1977 (5737) at the end of the book *Ma'archot Divre Emet*.

The Hida wrote comments on Rabbi Immanuel Hai Rikki's *Mishnat Hassidim*, Rabbi Yehoshua Shababo Zin's *Perah Shoshan*, and Rabbi Rephael Travis's *Tzah V'adom*. The Hida's comments on Rabbi Yaakov Algazi's *Kehillat Yaakov* were published in his *Mar'it Ha'ayin*. He also wrote comments on the *Sedeh Ha'aretz* of Rabbi Avraham Meyuchas, which were also published in *Mar'it Ha'ayin*. Additionally, the Hida wrote comments on the *Hoshen Mishpat* section of the *Shulhan Aruch*, Simcha Hakohen's *Sefer Shemot*, and the responsa of the Rashba.



Published Letters

Iggerot Harav Hida ztk"l

Iggerot Harav Hida ztk"l, a collection of the Hida's letters, was published in Livorno in 1867 (5627) by the scholar Rabbi Yisrael Kosta

and his colleagues, who acquired the printing press of Moshe Tobiana Publishers and Booksellers. At the request of the publishers, Rabbi Yaakov Rokeach of Tripoli added an introduction, which included a biography of the Hida, and a listing of his works. The publishers also included the inscription from the Hida's headstone.

Iggerot D'Rav Haim Yosef David Azoulay

Iggerot D'Rav Haim Yosef David Azoulay contains letters of the Hida that were published for the first time with notes and sources by Rabbi Haim Rosenberg, rabbi of Ancona, in 1927 (5687).

Iggerot V'haskamot Rabbenu Hida

Iggerot V'haskamot Rabbenu Hida was published in Bnei Brak in 2006 (5766). It includes a biography and lists of the Hida's *sefarim* and letters.



Miscellaneous

He'elem Davar

He'elem Davar is a small book containing about 150 comments on medieval rabbinic works. It remained in manuscript form until 1958 (5718), when it was published in the periodical *Sinai*.

Avodat Hakodesh

Later printers combined several of the Hida's books – *Moreh Ba'etzba*, *Tziporen Shamir*, *Kesher Godel*, *Kaf Ahat*, *Yosef B'seder*, *Sansan L'Yair*, and *Shomer Yisrael* – into a single volume called *Avodat Hakodesh*.

Unpublished Works

In his book *Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay*, Professor Meir Benayahu lists over eighty unpublished works of the Hida that are

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mentioned in the Hida's writings or in the writings of others, and which are available in libraries, either in total or in part. Among these are *Or Haganuz*, *Orech Yamim*, *Bet Va'ad*, *Brit Menuhah*, *Ginat Bitan*, *Devash Misela*, *Divre Sofrim*, *Divre Shirah*, *Derech Haim*, *Hadar Zekenim*, *Sefer Hayahas*, *Sefer Halatzot*, *Zechut Avot*, *Ze'er Sham*, *Haverim Makshivim*, *Hadia D'aramuta*, *Ma'aseh David*, *Tabur Ha'aretz*, *Yosef Ometz*, *Kise Kavod*, *Leshon Rabbah*, *Lamenatze'ah L'David*, *Marpe L'nefesh*, *Nefesh Haim*, *Avotot Ahavah*, *Et Sofer*, *Ir David*, *Afrot Zahav*, *Eruv Parshiyot*, *Kuntres Emet*, *Kuntres Haruzim*, *Kuntres Heshbonot*, *Kuntres Haketavim Sheli*, *Ma'amarei HaTalmud*, *Kuntres Inyanim Shonim*, *Kuntres Katan*, *Kuntres Tashlumin*, *Kore Bagaron*, *Ketu'im*, *Keren L'David*, *Sefat Hanahal*, and *Pituhe Hotam*.

In the II Adar 5765 (2005) issue of the *Etz Hahaim* journal, a previously unnoticed booklet titled *Kuntres Shemu'ot Tovot* was published. It contains ideas that the Hida had heard from the sages of his generation, as well as material from earlier generations, and it relates to many areas of Torah including explanations of Biblical passages and halachah. The ideas are introduced by the authors' names. The Hida's father, Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah Azoulay, copied these materials from a manuscript written by his son. The *Kuntres* is included in a collection of Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah's writings entitled *Zero'a Yemin*, which remains in manuscript form.

The Hida quotes many of the statements in this work in his other books, saying, "I have heard the following from the mouth of the *hacham...*" Although this entire work is written by the Hida, in two places his father adds his own insights. In one place, Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah expresses reservations about one scholar's idea quoted in the book. The Hida adds, in his own handwriting, an explanation defending the scholar. He begins by saying, "I, the young one, his servant and son, feel that one can maintain the approach of the Rabbi *z"l.*" He signs the note "Hida." In one place the Hida writes "*Devarim Ahadim* 19," to indicate that he incorporated this thought into his work *Devarim Ahadim*. Indeed, the comment can be found there. On

one comment in the book the Hida writes, "This can [also] be found in Maharam Alshich."

While there is no clear date for when Rabbi Yitzhak Zerahiah copied the work, we do know when the Hida heard many of the ideas he recorded. The earliest material would seem to be from the year 1729 (5489), and is an idea taken from the Jerusalem scholar Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak, author of *Zera Yitzhak*. In *Shem Hagedolim*, in an addendum to the entry on Rabbi Eliyahu Hakohen, the Hida writes, "I remember that as a child who had reached the age of *hinuch*, I heard our teacher Harav Maharai [Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak] give a eulogy in the year 1729 (5489)." As the Hida was born in the year 1724 (5484), this would seem to indicate that he was recording Torah thoughts he heard at the age of five!

While many of the ideas presented in this booklet are mentioned in his other books, there are also many that are not mentioned elsewhere. One idea that does not seem to appear anywhere else is attributed to Rabbi Shmuel Primo:

The verse states: "[Because] the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and [because] their sin is very severe." The words "and their sin is very severe" seem to be superfluous. The explanation is as follows: Generally, the outcry over an act is disproportionate to the act that was committed; the severity of the outcry exceeds the severity of the event. Thus the verse means to tell us that here, in the case of Sodom, the opposite was true – the outcry did not match their sin, for their sin was very, very, severe.

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Collections and Works About the Hida

Collections

Sefer Mishpat Katuv

Mishpat Katuv was written by Rabbi Avraham Pinso zt"l, the author of Appe Zutra on the laws of Pesah. It is a collection of halachic decisions from the works of the Hida on the Shulhan Aruch - Birke Yosef, Shiure Berachah, and Mahazik Berachah. The book was published in Salonika in 1798 (5558), during the Hida's lifetime. He saw the work and even makes mention of it in his Kikar La'aden and Mar'it Ha'ayin. In one place the Hida writes: "I noticed that the author, in his work Mishpat Katuv, an abridged version of the Birke Yosef, omitted here what I wrote in the Birke Yosef."

Kemah Solet

Kemah Solet is a collection of halachot culled from various sources, especially the halachic works of the Hida. It was compiled by Rabbi Yehudah Ali and published in Salonika in 1798 (5558).

This chapter is dedicated to the everlasting memory of our beloved husband and father

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Shmuel Bendahan zt"l

who left this world on the 27th of Tishrei 5763/2003.

A great leader who toiled all his days with yirat Shamayim to build and support Torah, with tremendous respect for talmide hachamim, and one of the great founders of the Montreal Sephardic Community. May his memory be blessed and his merits stand forever.

In loving memory of

Isaac Stefansky zt"l

who passed away on the 12th of Kislev 5733/1973, tragically at a very young age. He is missed by his loving family. May his memory be blessed and his merits stand forever.

In honor of

Mrs. Alegria Bendahan

Wishing her and all her descendants much hatzlahah, refuot, and yeshuot. Wishing her a refuah shelemah & arichut yamim, amen.

In honor of

Mr. & Mrs. Iames and Tonia Frohwein

and all their descendants Wishing them all much hatzlahah, refuot,

yeshuot, and arichut yamim, amen.

Shiure Berachah

Shiure Berachah is the name the Hida gave to his additions to his Birke Yosef. In 1814 (5574) an anonymous scholar (apparently Rabbi Rephael Calamaro) published a work by the same name in Salonika, where he collected all the additions in one book and added many of his own comments in parentheses.

Zichron Moshe

Zichron Moshe was written by the Hida's grandson, Rabbi Moshe Azoulay. The book was published in Livorno, in three volumes, between 1834 (5594) and 1840 (5600). The work was published together with Mishpat Katuv, as an addendum to it. It cites additional halachic decisions from various works of the Hida, and details his customs. The additions are either placed in parentheses or introduced with the term "The Editor." Some materials were added at the end of the book; in a later edition, these were incorporated into the text within parentheses.

Lehem Min Hashamayim

Lehem Min Hashamayim is a collection of Torah insights from the Hida's books and manuscripts, collated by Rabbi Moshe Azoulay, the Hida's grandson. It was published in Livorno in 1845 (5605).

Torat HaHida

Torat HaHida is a collection of the Hida's commentaries on the Humash, gleaned from his many books and anthologized by Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Blum in five volumes, one on each book of the *Humash*. The set was published in Jerusalem in 1994 (5754).



Works About the Hida

Books

Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay

Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay is an extensive biography of the Hida written by Professor Meir Benayahu, which was published by Mosad Harav Kook in 1959 (5719), in Jerusalem. Volume 1 explores the Hida's life, while volume 2 contains studies and sources relevant to the Hida.

Maran HaHida Hakadosh

Maran HaHida Hakadosh is a two-volume work about the Hida written by Rabbi Reuven Ammer. It was published by Mishnat Hachamim Press in Jerusalem in 1988 (5748).

Rabbenu HaHida

Rabbenu HaHida is a book about the Hida's life written by N. Sefriel and published by Hamesorah Publications. The date of publication is unknown.

The Chida

The Chida: His Life and the Turbulent Times in Which He Lived is an English book about the Hida's life and times, written by Rabbi Zev T. Paretzky and published by Targum Press in 1998 (5758).

Articles

Numerous articles have been written about the Hida. Among them are the following:

• "Eleh Hadevarim," by Rabbi Gavriel Pereira de Leon, the Hida's student, published in the back of the second volume of *Birke Yosef* in Livorno in 1774 (5534).

- "Toldot Hagaon Morenu Harav Haim Yosef David Azoulay z"l," by Elyakim Carmuli, published in the Frankfort, 1847 (5607), edition of Shem Hagedolim.
- "Pe'ulat Tzaddik L'Haim," by Rabbi Avraham Calphon, appeared in the back of Rabbi Yaakov Rokeach's Ma'ateh Tehillah, which was published in Livorno in 1858 (5618).
- "Toldot Hida" (together with a poem containing the names of his works), by Rabbi Reuven Baruch, was included in an edition of Birke Yosef published in Vienna in 1860 (5620).
- "Ha'Azoulay B'Pariz," by Hirsch Leib Gordon in Ha'Ivri, 11:1, published in New York in 1921 (5681).
- "Birke Yosef," in Toldot Haposkim, by Shimon Moshe Hones, published in Warsaw, 1922 (5682).
- "Toldot Rabbeinu Hagaon Hakadosh Moreinu Harav Haim Yosef David Azoulay S"t," by Yaakov Mordechai Bambach in Lev David, published in Berlin, 1924 (5684).
- Entry on the Hida in Toldot Hachmei Yerushalayim, Volume 3, by Aryeh Frumkin, published in Jerusalem, 1929.
- "Yoman Masa'aot Ivri Mehame'ah Hayud-Het," by Avraham Ya'ari in Moznayim, Volume 3, 1935 (5695).
- "Hasefer Hayerushalmi Harishon U'mehabro," by Rabbi Yehudah Leib Fishman, published by Mishor Press, 1941 (5701).
- "Harav Hida z"l U'pa'alo," by Moshe David Gaon in Hod Hamizrach, 2:9, 14 Tishrei, 1943 (5703).
- "L'toldot Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay," by Shmuel K. Mirsky in Chorev, Volume 8, New York, 1944 (5704).
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Additionally, a pamphlet about the Hida was published on the occasion of the completion of the mausoleum over the Hida's new resting place in Jerusalem, on the eve of the day of memorial for the Hida, 9 Adar II, 1962. The pamphlet is available in the archives of the Yad Harav Nissim institute.

Meir Benayahu, the author of Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azoulay, also penned many additional articles about the Hida.



Biographical Sketches of Personalities¹

Rabbi Haim ibn Atar (1696–1743, Or HaHaim Hakadosh) was born in the city of Sale, Morocco, to a family of kabbalists and great Torah scholars. He eventually moved to Eretz Yisrael, where he established a yeshivah named Yeshivat Kenneset Yisrael, in Jerusalem. He is best known for his Torah commentary, Or HaHaim, which has become one of the classic Torah commentaries even today.

Rabbi ibn Atar also composed a work on the Shulhan Aruch entitled Peri To'ar, and two other works, Rishon L'Tzion and Hafetz Hashem. The Hida, a student of Rabbi ibn Atar, wrote that as profound as the Or HaHaim's written works were, "they revealed but a tenth of his wisdom. ... Wherever he went, an aura of holiness enveloped him."

Dedicated in loving memory of

Prosper and Chana Zagury a"h

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May their *neshamot* rest in Gan Eden, amen!

Joe & Ruth Bitton and Family

In loving memory of

Avraham Lugassy zt"l

Esther Lugassy zt"l

David Dadoun zt"l

Prosper & Karen Lugassy and Family

^{1.} This chapter presents biographical sketches of major personalities who are cited several times in the book. Generally, personalities mentioned less frequently have been omitted from this list.

Rabbi ibn Atar passed away on 15 Tammuz, 1743 (5503), when he was only forty-seven years old. He was buried outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives.

Rabbi Yaakov Hagiz (1620-1674) was a famed kabbalist born to a Spanish family in Fez, Morocco. He traveled to Italy to publish his works, and remained there until after 1656 (5416), supporting himself by teaching. In 1657 (5417) Rabbi Hagiz left Livorno for Jerusalem. Two of Rabbi Hagiz's students later became his sons-in-law - the renowned Rabbi Moshe ibn Habib and Rabbi Moshe Hayun. Rabbi Hagiz was active in the opposition to the false messiah Shabbetai Tzvi and was involved in his excommunication.

Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk (1680-1756, Pene Yehoshua) served in several prestigious rabbinical posts, including in Lemberg, Berlin, and Metz, and was eventually named Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt am Main.

Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua is best known for *Pene Yehoshua*, his commentary on the Talmud, which quickly became popular and to this day is among the most widely used such commentaries. Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua also wrote a commentary on the *Humash*, but it was never published.

Gedaliah Hayun (1690–1751), originally Rabbi Constantinople, founded the Bet El Yeshivah (better known as Yeshivat Hamekubalim) for the study of Kabbalah in the Holy City of Jerusalem in 1737 (5497). He was among the most renowned kabbalists of his time, and was the teacher of the great kabbalist Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, who would later assume the mantle of leadership at the yeshivah.

Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi (1727–1802, Maharit Algazi) was a noted kabbalist and halachist, and a close friend of the Hida. Both studied under Rabbi Yonah Navon and Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, and Rabbi Algazi also studied with his father, Rabbi Yisrael Algazi. Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi was sent on numerous missions on behalf of the Jewish community of Eretz Yisrael.

In 1772 (5432) he was named Rishon LeTzion, Chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel, in the capacity of which he ably led and guided the community through very difficult times. Following the passing of Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, Rabbi Yom Tov was elected rosh yeshivah of Yeshivat Bet El.

Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488-1575) was the Chief Rabbi of Safed and author of the Shulhan Aruch, which has always been the authoritative halachic code for all observant Jews. His family was expelled from Spain in 1492 (5252), when he was four years old, and they resettled in Turkey. In 1536 (5296) he immigrated to the Land of Israel, where he became the Chief Rabbi of Safed.

Rabbi Caro wrote a commentary to the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, and his magnum opus, Bet Yosef, an encyclopedic commentary on Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher's halachic code called the Tur.

Professor Meir Benayahu (1926-2009) was a renowned scholar who authored many important historical works. He was the son of Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, who served as the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel between the years 1955–1972.

Professor Benayahu was one of the founders of the Ben-Zvi Institute which is dedicated to the research of Middle Eastern Jewish communities. He received his doctorate from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and served as professor in Tel Aviv University. Later, he became director of the Yad Harav Nissim research institute, which was established in memory of his father.

His extensive biography of the Hida was published in Jerusalem in 1959.

Dr. Michael Pereira de Leon was an Italian descendant of Portuguese Marranos who returned to Jewish observance. He was a prominent member of the Livorno Jewish community, and served as president of the Massari (local council). He supported the Hida's work, allowing the Hida to devote his time to studying and publishing his works. Both of Dr. De Leon's children studied with the Hida for many years.

Rabbi Haim Vital (1543–1620) was a renowned kabbalist in Safed, and the foremost disciple of Rabbi Yitzhak Luria Ashkenazi (the Arizal). He put into writing much of the Arizal's teachings, which played a seminal role in their dissemination throughout the Jewish world.

Rabbi Hizkia (Hezkia) Da Silva (1659–1698, Peri Hadash) was a renowned rosh yeshivah and halachic scholar, most famously known for his Peri Hadash commentary to the Shulhan Aruch. He was born in Italy and emigrated to Eretz Yisrael as a young man. For the last six years of his life he served as rosh yeshivah of the Pereira Yeshivah in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Yaakov Shaul Elishar (1817–1906, Yisa Berachah) lived in Jerusalem and served as Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire (Hacham Bashi) from 1893-1904 (5653-5664). He was a devoted leader of the Jewish community and traveled on various important missions on its behalf. He composed many scholarly Torah works, including Simlah L'ish, Ma'aseh Ish, Sho'el Ish, and Ish Emunim.

Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim (1896–1981) was the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel from 1955-1972. Born in Baghdad, he immigrated to Jerusalem in 1925 (5685). He was a brilliant scholar who received halachic questions on a wide range of issues from Jews across the globe. In his capacity as Chief Rabbi, he worked to encourage dialogue and friendship among all demographic groups of Israel.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu (1929-2010) was the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel from 1983–1993. He was born in Jerusalem to the renowned Baghdadi kabbalist Rabbi Salman Eliyahu, whose wife was a relative of the Ben Ish Hai. At the age of twenty-eight Rabbi Eliyahu became the youngest man ever to serve as a rabbinical judge in Israel. Rabbi Eliyahu was loyal to the customs and halachic rulings of the Ben Ish Hai, and worked to apply these traditions to modernday realities.

Rabbi Yitzhak Luria (1534–1572, better known as the Arizal, or the Ari Hakadosh) is widely recognized as the greatest-ever scholar of Kabbalah. He began studying and mastering the *Zohar* as a teenager, and it is told that the prophet Eliyahu revealed himself to the Arizal and taught him the most profound secrets of Kabbalah. The Ari settled in Safed, where he taught a select group of students, the most prominent of whom was Rabbi Haim Vital. His disciples collected their notes from the Arizal's lectures and published them. The most famous of these collections is the eight-volume Etz Haim, which became a standard text of kabbalistic study.

Rabbi Haim Palagi (1788-1868, known as Habif) was the Chief Rabbi of Izmir, Turkey, where he also led a yeshivah. He wrote many important works, the first of which was written when he was just sixteen years old. At the age of sixty-eight he received the royal title

of "Nissan" from Sultan Abdul Majid, rendering his rulings legally binding upon the Jews of Izmir.

Rabbi Shalom Mizrahi Sharabi (1720–1777,² known as Rashash) is widely recognized as one of the greatest kabbalists who ever lived. Born in Sharab, Yemen, Rabbi Shalom moved to Jerusalem, where he studied in Yeshivat Bet El under Rabbi Gedaliah Hayun. He would eventually be named *rosh yeshivah*, a position in which he served for thirty years, until his death. Many of his students became leading rabbis and scholars, including the Hida, Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi, Rabbi Haim de la Roza, and Rabbi Gershon of Kitov.

Rabbi Yonah Moshe ben Rabbi Binyamin Navon (d. 1841) served as Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem and as Rishon LeTzion. He was the grandson of Rabbi Efraim Navon, author of *Mahane Ephraim*, as well as the grandson of Rabbi Yonah Navon, author of *Nehpah Bekesef*.

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^{1.} This bibliography does not include the Hida's works of Torah scholarship, many of which are widely cited throughout this volume.

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In addition to the sources listed here, many other materials collected in the Sephardic Legacy Series archives were used for this project, and, in addition, the author conducted extensive interviews with family members of the Hida to extract information that was not available in print and receive a more personal history of this unique rabbinical figure.