

IN THE CITY OF CRAKOW

FOR MANY YEARS JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS
WERE SUPPLIED WITH NON—KOSHER MEAT!

A TRAGIC STORY WHICH HAPPENED IN
THE TIME OF THE GAON AND TZADDIK
RABBI NOSON NOTA SHAPIRO, AUTHOR OF
THE BOOK "MEGALLAY AMUKOS".



By

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Machon L'Horaah B'Schitoth Uvdikoth.

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Brooklyn, N.Y., 5741

We appeal to you not to disregard this book by putting it aside but to read it from time to time, as well as to disseminate it among relatives, neighbors, and friends. By doing so, you too will have a share in *zikuy harabbim*.

Please be aware that the publication of this booklet is very expensive. We would greatly appreciate it if everyone would contribute according to his ability, to enable us to continue our holy work.

May the L-rd grant us the ability to do His will with a pure heart, so that no pitfalls result from our work, G-d forbid, and that we should merit that G-d's name be sanctified in the world through us, and that we should all live to see the *ge'ulah sh'lemah* in our days, in the very near future. Amen.

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 ר"מ תפארת ירושלים
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Endorsments

בע"ה

הנה ראיתי כמה מהספרים שנתחברו ע"י ידידי הרב הגאון מהר"ר שלום יודא גראס שליט"א הרב דק"ק האלמין מברוקלין, ביניהם הספרים אכילת מצות בישראל ו' חלקים, אפיית המצות השלם ג"ח, שו"ת זבחו זבחי צדק, אהלי ישראל, דבר משה, מזוח שלום, מגנת יהודה, קדושת ישראל, נפש ישעי' ועוד, וכולם נכתבו באופן וצורה שראויה לבני תורה לעיין בהם, שהגאון המחבר שליט"א אסף וביאר בחריפות ובקיאות נפלאה, ההלכות והשקפות ששייכים לכמה ענינים שהעולם, ר"ל, נכשלים בהם, ואף שלא שייך לי מחמת טרדת הזמן, אלא לעיין קצת בספרים, וממילא לא שייך לכתוב הסכמה לגבי החלטת הדינים, מ"מ כבר אתחזק גברא, שיש לסמוך על הגאון המחבר שליט"א, שחיבר ספריו לכבוד השם ותורתו, וממילא אני מקוה, שכל שומרי התורה יעזרו להגאון המחבר שליט"א, שבאמת מצוה גדולה לחזקו ולתומכו בכל האפשרות.

וע"ז באתי על החתום לכבוד התורה ולומדיה,

ביום י"ח לחדש סיון תש"מ

נאום משה פיינשטיין

I have seen many of the Seforim authored by Rabbi Sholom Yehudah Gross שליט"א, Rabbi of Holmin, from Brooklyn, with whom I am well acquainted. Among them are the works entitled: *Achilath Matzoth B'Yisroel*, 7 vol.; *Afiath HaMatzoth Hashalem*, 3 vol.; *Responsa Zivchu Zivchei Tzedek*; *Oholei Yisroel*; *D'var Mosheh*; *Mezuzath Sholom*; *Minchath Yehudah*; and many others. They are all written in a manner and form worthy of the attention of Torah scholars. The author, a Gaon, has organized and explained each topic with extensive erudition and profound understanding. These Seforim document the laws and ideas concerning many areas of Halacha in which observance has, unfortunately, become lax. Shortage of time has denied me the possibility to properly review his works. I, therefore, am not in a position to endorse his legal decisions. However, this Gaon, the author, may be relied upon since he has already displayed his ability in this field, and has authored his works without any ulterior motives, only for the honor of G-d and His Torah. I, therefore, hope that all observant Jews will assist the learned author of these books, for it is a great Mitzvah to encourage him and support him as much as possible.

I, therefore, affix my signature in honor of the Torah and those who study it, on the eighteenth day of Sivan, 5740.

Moshe Feinstein

In the author's previous works, among them Responsa Zivchei Zedek, Afiath Matzot, Achilas Matza B'Yisroel, Nefesh Yeshaya and Minchath Yehudah, letters of appreciation and support were printed from Geonim and Tzadikim of our generation, the authorities upon whom the House of Israel depends.

Rabbi Eliyahu Zlotnick - Zecher Tzaddik'bracho
Member of the Rabbinical court of the Ada HaChereydit in Jerusalem

Rabbi David HaLevi Yungreis - Zecher Tzaddik L'bracho
Member of the Rabbinical court of the Ada HaChereydit in Jerusalem

Rabbi Yishayahu Yishai Hacohen Greenfeld - Zecher Tzaddik L'bracho
A Rav and author of Seforim in London

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Greenwald - Zecher Tzaddik L'bracho
The head of the Rabbinical court of Kahal Arugat HaBosem

Rabbi Yisroel Yitzchok HaLevi Riezman - Zecher Tzaddik L'bracho
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Rabbi Simcha Bunim Greenberg - Zecher Tzaddik L'bracho
The head of the Rabbinical court of Pressburg, later a Rav in Brooklyn

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The Bobover Rebbe

Rabbi Shmuel Yehuda Panet

The head of the Rabbinical court of Daash

Rabbi Shmuel Zaeve Miller

The head of the Rabbinical court of Arad



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to take this opportunity to mention my dear mother, the personification of "A G-d fearing woman — she is to be praised." Esther ,יח the daughter of Rabbi Zev Wolf Mutzen ל"ד, the *shochet* of Arad, (who passed away on the eighth day of Tammuz, 5715). I beseech the Almighty to grant her long life in health and happiness, and may she have *nachas* from her children and grandchildren engaged in learning Torah and fulfilling mitzvos, until the coming of the Messiah speedily and in our days, Amen.

May my beloved wife, ,יח Taube, the daughter of Rabbi Chaim Eliyahu Bittman, שליט"א be blessed with the threefold priestly blessing, for exerting every effort to stand by my side and help me fulfill my aims; she enjoys immensely seeing me free to engage in the Torah, to write novelae, and to author *seforim*. May her reward from the L-rd, G-d of Israel, be complete, and may we both merit to raise our lovely children to learn Torah, to enter the *Chupah*, and to engage in good deeds. May our children: Yaakov Yeshayah Zev, Miriam Berochoh, Avrohom Chaim Elimelech, Chayah Soroh Feige, Pearl Malkah, Nissan Moishe, Dovid, Avigdor, Freide Bale, and Yoseph Yoel all merit long lives in happiness. I pray: Please, Almighty G-d, guard them from misfortunes and illnesses, and may we have much *nachas* from them. May they raise generations of upright Jews, blessed by G-d to be a glory to our holy forebearers.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express gratitude to the members of my congregation, Congregation Mogen Shaul of Halmin, and especially to the scholars of the kolel "Beis Yeshayah" of Brooklyn, who are dedicated to the study of the laws of *shechitah* and *bedikah*. They are all Torah observers and magnanimous people, who assisted me greatly in the publication of this book and other books. May G-d bless them, as well as all others who have assisted me in my holy task and grant them all the desires of their hearts for good.



Acknowledgements

I cherish this opportune time to express my sincere indebtedness...more than words could convey or acknowledge...to a most wonderful newly acquired Friend Mr. Alexander Tepfer, Shlita of

**Computerized Quality Separation, Inc.
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His wholesome good naturedness, total dedication and expertise combined with his helpful and high degree of talent in a highly specialized field enhanced the beauty of the illustrations in this book especially introducing the cover, and improved the quality of the text His sympathetic understanding of my educational aims and his ability to transfer them to the printed page are very much appreciated beyond the scope of understanding.

All those whom this book will pick up and therefrom learn the holy words of the Al-Mighty (due to the attractiveness of the cover) will do solely due to the credit of Mr. Shiyah Alexander Tepfer, and as recompense for such I implore Heaven to grant him reward in accordance to benefit derived therefrom. In the merit of such dedication administered here, may the Al-Mighty bless his beloved ones, too, along with him with ariches yomim (long life), with health and happiness, Amen.



We wish to commend Reb Chaim Shmuel Friedman without whose strenuous effort toward perfection in some of the art work here-in contained, this work would not have achieved the full appeal enjoyed by all. His Heavenly-granted artistic talent is vividly displayed in bringing out the fine points we strenuously derive to obtain. May his future be bright together with his spouse and children to see true Yiddish nachas from them.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harav Sholom Yehudo Gross Shlita, is an internationally renown author, a most distinguished and erudite Talmudical and halachic scholar and research specialist, having written on crucial issues impacting upon our obligatory daily mitzvoh observances concerning the **Torah's** Commandments dealing with, **SHABBOS, MEZUZOS** and **TEFILLIN, KASHRUS, GAN EDEN (Paradise) etc., etc.**

He has provided all the necessary information required to enable an individual to lead a true Jewish life.

His numerous and multi-faceted seforim, some 42 works relating to Jewish Law - encompass the diverse and wide-ranging areas of Jewish halacha.

Though a rav of the European school of thought - Rabbi Gross is extremely knowledgeable of the technological manifestations of the modern era. Living in a period of great discoveries which daily create new problems in many areas of Jewish Law, e.g., the field of Kashrus and other important areas.

Rabbi Gross is not satisfied with the thoroughness of his halachic findings; indeed he made inquiries by contacting various departments of the Federal and State governments, as well as physicians, veterinarians, etc., to discern and establish the **FACTS**.

First, he informs and advises what is best for us and then provides specific information based upon the dictums of our past sages and halachaic authorities. In addition, where policies he has elicited direct governmental response to arrive at his own determination.

Every one of Rabbi Gross' seforim has been acclaimed, in writing by the greatest Torah authorities, who concur with the results of his findings, and who make an impassioned plea to all rabbis and leaders to unite under one banner and support his quests and ideals.

It is the author's sincerest desire and prayer that the reader will achieve an awakened and heightened spiritualaty enabling him to attain the stature of being a beloved child to our Father in Heaven, Is this not everybody's wish?



A SONG OF THANKS

From the depths of our heart, we wish to express our sincere thanks to the great rabbis who gave generously of their time, and took the trouble to review this book, remark about it, and correct it according to their profound understanding. Moreover, they offered me appropriate advice on how to publish this book in the best possible manner, both the legal and ethical sections. so that it would be acceptable to the public. May the Al-mighty fulfill all their wishes for good, and may they prosper wherever they turn, and be privileged to disseminate the words of the Torah and sanctify it, in the vineyard of Israel untill the coming of the Messiah speedily and in our days, Amen.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE READER

This book is the result of much toil and hard work in collecting the scattered material, from various sources, one of the most difficult tasks in this field. The reader should know that any complaints he has, are on the books from which I quote these statements. I am clear of any blame, since all my work was to pour from one vessel into another. This statement is old, similar to that found in the introduction of **Mesilath Yescharim**.

I request you to study all the statements quoted in this book, **the benefit you will derive from it is unfathomable**, , with **Hashem's** help, it is full of statements which will serve as a remedy to the maladies of the soul and body. **By casually skimming over the material, this benefit cannot be realized.**

This holy tome is being published in the vernacular, in contrast with the practice of other generations, to print in the holy tongue, simply because it is human nature for one to be close to his mother tongue, the language he learned in his childhood. He will, therefore, find it easier to read in that language than in another language learned in later life, in which he is not so fluent.

Moreover, women and children will find it easy to read through. This is very essential for the desired result, that they take heed of the halachoth mentioned here, which apply to them. In addition to their own observance, they will assist their husbands and encourage them to follow suit, if it is not possible for the husbands to find time to persue this volume and study it thoroughly by themselves. In such cases, the wives will do the work for them.

May the words of **Sefer Chasidim** be fulfilled for us, that whoever repeats a statement made by those of earlier generations, they will pray for him and defend him in Heaven, (ch. 224).

May the merit of all the tzaddikim and saints quote here, with all the other tzaddikim stand us in good stead for us and for our posterity, so that we may cling to their ways and follow in their footsteps, to observe the holy practices transmitted to us by our forebears, and satisfy the Creator until the coming of our redeemer speedily and in our days, Amen.

Notice

We wish to note that we do not mean, G-d forbid, to find fault with any Jew. It is our mission to give assistance with practical examples from every day life to see that those Jews who truly wish to practice Judaism in the traditional manner, without compromise, but because of hurrying or lack of reflection do not notice the many pitfalls that come about daily, and therefore fail, are reminded that this is contrary to their desires and principles. We wish to show and explain to them that this is contrary to the statues of the Torah, and that through small deviations we endanger the entire structure of Judaism.

Simultaneously, we indicate these laws from Rabbinical teachings that these regulations are not merely pious practices, preferable behavior, or things which should be done from the outset, but stringent laws and regulations.

We present here a part of the introduction of the Sefer, *Eis Laasos* by the famous tzaddik, Rabbi Hillel Lichtenstein of Kalamaye, Hungary, o.b.m., which we deem appropriate for our booklet.

“My dear sefer (book), that has cost me so much time from learning Torah and so many tears, I send you out into the world, and I exhort you to avoid neither large cities not small towns. Do not say or even think, that in the brazen, impudent world of today, “Who will look at me? Who will take heed of my message? Where will I be able to accomplish anything? On the contrary, I will cause people to commit more sins, since they will regard me with disdain and mock me.”

“I say to yu, dear sefer, that even according to your view, your mission will not be fruitless, for even if you are unsuccessful in your attempts to influence men, you may influence women, whose hearts are softer and who are more impressionable. Should you fail to influence the youth, you may influence elderly persons; if you fail to impress healthy people, you may impress those sick and wracked with pain, as well as those whose fortunes have taken a turn for the worse.”

“I, however, am convinced that you will succeed in **all** your travels. Fear not! Don't worry! Do not be frightened off! Remember Abraham, concerning whom the Torah writes, “**And he believed in G-d**”. His belief was as strong as the Rock of Gibraltar. That faith is deeply rooted in his descendants as an inheritance, so that their name is always “**Maaminim b'ney maaminim**” (believers, the children of believers). I, therefore, am convinced that you will be very successful. Many Jewish children will kiss you, and many will shed tears while reading you. Even if certain elements

cast you to the ground and trample upon you, there will come a time when they themselves will pick you up and love you, because the time is drawing closer and closer when people will come to their senses and recognize the pure, unadulterated truth. Today, we find many who deviate from the teachings of the Torah, some completely and some partially. The morning of the redemption is at hand, when the *ruach hatumah*, the spirit of impurity, will be removed from the world, i.e. the *yetzer hara* will be completely eradicated, and the earth will be full of knowledge of the L-rd, i.e. the people will come to recognize the complete unadulterated truth. Then everyone will strive to follow all the teachings of both the written and oral Torah, the Bible and the Talmud with neither alterations nor abbreviations, but in the precise manner that they were observed from time immemorial, not as some groups claim, that their "rabbis" have the power to alter or disregard the *Shulchan Aruch*. Then, people will not allow themselves to be misled by various types of misleaders, or to be enslaved to such leaders who mean only their own monetary gain and their own glory. The time will come when the Almighty will fulfill His promise to "circumcise" our hearts, to remove the obstructions that clog our hearts spiritually. As the Bible teaches us, falsity lasts but a moment, whereas the true tongue will be established forever. I, therefore, assure you that you have no need to fear. You will surely succeed in disseminating and expanding the truth."



INTRODUCTION

Since the days of Teshuvo are approaching, we want to awaken Jewish hearts from their sleep.

For this reason we are presenting to you the story "In the City of Crakow". The reader will surely be amazed by it, and it will undoubtedly make a profound impression on him for the good, because from this story one can see the terrible punishment meted out to one who was the cause of people eating non-kosher meat. The story also reveals to us that because of this people die suddenly at a very young age (and unfortunately we have recently heard about such occurrences in our midst, the cause thereof we do not know). Posters admonish us to do Teshuvo, to say Tehillim, etc, but we do not even know how to go about it. The story further reveals that even a holy person and great Rov, like the "Migallay Amukos" of blessed memory, could be fooled to the extent that in his city everybody was being fed non-kosher meat for many years (may we be spared from such a fate)!

Therefore, everyone is urged in these days to give much thought to what is happening all around us and make an account for himself for the present situation. In order to facilitate this we have added at the end an excerpt from the Sefer "Bris Moshe" which was printed in the year 5461 (1701) which indicated that even in those times, as the author strongly states, Shechita was performed with considerable speed, and consequently, the meat was to be considered *actually* "Nevaylo Utrayfo". He adds that under such conditions the Shochtim tire easily and cannot examine the knives properly. Moreover, there are various other pitfalls possible. Certainly in our times when the pitfalls existing at that time have multiplied manifold every Jew has to be most careful to know what he eats.

We are also printing in the appendix a responsum from the Sefer "She-aylos Uteshuvos Bays Hillel" written by the Gaon and Tzaddik Rav Hillel of Kolomyja of blessed memory, from which we can learn that because of the sin of "Nevaylos and Trayfos" young children die, G-d forbid, and we are not considered G-d's children (even if one goes to the Mikva and studies Torah regularly).

In addition we have added excerpts from the Sefer of the Rov of Simlao of blessed memory, who mentions various matters concerning Shechita which one has to watch carefully and especially what he quotes from the Rov of Sanz of blessed memory that because of the sin of eating "Nevaylos and Trayfos" entire Jewish communities have deserted the Jewish way of life. Let us not fool ourselves to believe that we are better than they were, because not only in the generation that grew up in America but also in those who grew up in Europe a big difference is noticeable between the time they arrived here many years ago to the present. In spite of the fact that many of them started to wear chassidic clothing here (Shtreimlech and Bekitches)—whereas in Europe some of them wore beards—one should realize that this is only superficial, but inside they have become much worse. All this is due to the eating of forbidden food as can be found in the "Pri Chodosh" who comments on what the "R'mo" writes (*Yoreh Deah 81:7*) that a woman who nurses is not supposed to eat any food which is forbidden ("Taz" and "Shach" explain that this includes the case of a woman who is allowed to eat the otherwise forbidden food because of danger to her life but in that case she is not allowed to nurse the child. On this the "Pri Chodosh" comments "... and because in our times people are not careful in these matters, *the majority of the children desert the Jewish way* and a majority of them become most arrogant and even if one tries to admonish them they do not take heed." Chida, in his work entitled *Machazik Brocho*, emphasizes the same point).

If one beholds such statements written by these great Gaonim and Tzaddikim, it would only be proper to ascertain whether these things apply to us. Day by day, we hear about children coming from Orthodox homes committing such crimes that could only be expected of children who grew up in an unlearned family in a small village. Even if you want to counter that they write about a majority of children and in our case it is only a small minority, you should know that the percentage involved is much higher than you think and many more incidents occur than you hear about because not everybody becomes aware of all the stories. But unfortunately, their eyes have been blinded by the forbidden food and one does not hear nor does he see, as it is written in the “Degel Machanay Ephraim” (Parshas Aykev) in the name of the Rambam in the responsum in which he had answered those who had doubts concerning “Techiyas Hamaysim” (the resurrection of the dead). His answer, in brief, was that such doubts were created in the mind of a person caused by and resulting from eating forbidden food, “Nevaylos and Trafyos” etc. From this we can see how much a person can be affected by eating forbidden food, even to the point of doubting the thirteen fundamental beliefs.

One should bear in mind the famous statement of “Beayr Mayim Chayim” (Parshas Chayay Sorah): “In our present generation if a person comes with a slaughtering knife in his hands and claims to be an expert Shochet and Bodek, every one believes him. No one asks questions about him, and everyone assumes that all who occupy themselves with Shechito are experts. The same thing is true with respect to wine, milk, fish and other edibles which we have reason to fear that they may be forbidden. If one person gives to another food that require inspection for worms, the other person assumes that he is an observant Jew who wouldn't give him anything he is not allowed to eat. But if it comes to money matters, one doesn't believe the

other person until he investigates and inquires who and what kind of person he is and whether one can believe him, and finally, after all this, he brings witnesses to sign necessary papers while still fearing that he may not pay him. (The "Beayr Mayim Chayim" discusses the matter in greater detail).

Everyone should apply the same procedure when he goes to a store to buy something and he sees on an article the name of a Rov whom he does not even know, and even if he has heard of him, he still does not know what kind of person he is. In such a case a person should ask himself: "Would I trust him, with my money with the same blind faith." The same applies with respect to a caterer or to a restaurant.

It is also necessary that every Jew should be constantly reminded and be aware of what the Chofetz Chayim, of blessed memory, writes in his Sefer "Mechanay Yisroel" concerning the Jewish soldier who asked him about making a choice between two assignments. In one place he would be able to observe Kashrus but he would have to work on Shabbos, in the other he would not be able to eat kosher food but on Shabbos he would not have to work. The Chofetz Chayim told him to go to the place where he has to work on Shabbos and explained to him the reason. Although Shabbos is an "Issur Sekilo", however, when he will return home, he will have the opportunity to observe many Shabbosos, but if he will eat forbidden food (Nevaylos and Trayfos), "he will cause a permanent damage to his soul, a blemish which will remain forever."

If a person reflects upon these words, he should understand how careful one has to be not to eat Nevaylos and Trayfos, since this inflicts a permanent blemish on the soul. Nobody would be willing to take a chance if there is any doubt in physical matters and certainly should not do so in spiritual matters. Therefore, as long as a person is alive, he should be on guard as long as there is

still time, and certainly in the "Yemay Hateshuvo", the Days of Penitence, he should not fool himself with any excuses. Everyone should know that on every piece of meat one eats here in America, there hovers a doubt of "Nevaylos and Trayfos", regardless what kind of seal has been affixed to it. As far as poultry is concerned, every one must know who the Shochet is, how many chickens he slaughters in an hour, how many hours he slaughters without taking a rest, etc. and under no circumstances should he rely on the name that appears on the seal.

In the merit of Teshuvo we should all be rewarded with a "Kesiva Vechasima Tova" together with the entire Jewish nation. Omayn.



We appeal to the public at large to study Mishnayos for the benefit of the soul of Rabbi Chaim ben Zev o.b.m. The deceased was very active in the performance of mitzvos and good deeds, Also, many hundreds derived benefit from his acts of kindness, unaware of the power behind all his doing. The merit he gained by these deeds is unfathomable. In our sacred literature, we read that 'one who saves his fellow Jew is rewarded for all future generations descended from him, as well as he is rewarded for saving the person himself.' All these merits stand him in good stead, and he is elevated from one temple to the next. It is, therefore, a great mitzvah to learn Mishnayos for the benefit of this holy soul. It is indeed an act of kindness, especially since he informed us during his lifetime that he yearned for people to learn Mishnayos for his soul as much as possible. Since the letters of the word "Mishnoh" contains the same letters as the word "Nishomoh", therefore does it create merit for his soul.

In the well-known ethical work, entitled *Chovoth Halevavoth*, Duties of the Heart, in the section dealing with love of G-d, ch. 6, we read: ...Similarly, one who improves himself only, merits very little, whereas one who improves himself and many others, gains merits according to the number of merits of all those he recruited for G-d. As our rabbis stated: Anyone who leads the public to righteousness - no sin will come through him. They stated further: Moses was righteous and led the public to righteousness; the merit of the public is ascribed to him, as it is said: "(Deut. 33:21) He executed the righteousness of the L-rd, and His ordinances with Israel." Scripture says further: "(Proverbs 24:25) And for those who reprove it shall be pleasant, and a good blessing shall come upon them." And further, "(Malachi 2:6) The Torah of truth was in his mouth...and he brought back many from sin." And still further: "(Daniel 12:3)...and those who lead the public to righteousness are like the stars forever and ever." The Creator, therefore, commanded to admonish those who neglect their duties, as it is said: "(Leviticus 19:17)...you shall reprove your neighbor."

IN THE CITY OF CRACOW

Jewish households were supplied with non-Kosher meat for many years. A tragic story which happened in the time of the Gaon and Tzaddik, Rabbi Noson Nota Shapiro, author of the book "Megallay Amukos".

The Gaon Rabbi Noson Nota Shapiro was born in the year 5245 (1585). He was a grandson of the previous Rabbi Noson Nota, son of Rabbi Shimshon Shapiro, who was the Rabbi of Grodno and author of a commentary on the "Shaarey Duro" and also of a commentary on Rashi on the Torah with the name "Imray Shefer".

In the year 5377 (1617) he accepted a rabbinical position in Cracow. There he headed a large yeshiva, and amongst his students was also the Gaon Reb Shabse Cohen, the "Shach". Besides his erudition in the Talmud, he was also famous for his knowledge of Kabbolo, and everybody considered him a holy man.

His novellae on the "Rif", published under the name "Chidushay Anshay Shaym", were printed in all editions of the Talmud. But he became famous in the world on account of his commentary "Megallay Amukos", in which he interprets the word "Vo'eschanan" in 252 different ways. His commentary on the Torah bears the same name "Megallay Amukos".

He passed away in the year 5393 (1633) at the young age of 48. His tombstone bears the inscription: "He is the one about whom people say that he had personal encounters face to face with the Prophet Elyohu."

A butcher died in the city of Cracow in 5341 (1581) leaving an orphan, a young boy four years of age. The boy's uncle, also a butcher, took pity on him and took him into his home. This uncle was a brutal, coarse and cruel person, who, in addition to bringing up his nephew, brought up another orphan home. This "upbringing" consisted actually of forcing these two orphans to do the heaviest work conceivable without providing them adequately with food, clothing and shoes.

To start with, when it was still dark outside, the orphans had to get up from sleep and had to go to the butcher shop to do the heaviest work.



In winter their fingers became frostbitten since they had to wash the utensils with cold water. If they would have had enough sleep, the bitter cold would not have bothered them that much. But they never experienced what it meant to be satisfied. Their aunt wasn't any better than her husband. She used to beat them, and when one of them fainted because of hunger and cold, he was beaten back to consciousness. The beatings would also make sure that he would not loaf but do his work well.

The two children did not receive any education. They knew absolutely nothing about the Jewish religion; they could not recite the prayers; indeed, they didn't even know the "Alef Beis". When they became older, they realized their unfortunate situation: they were completely ignorant. Also, they were alone, without relative or friend to care for them. Their hard life made them very materialistic. They always looked starved like the wolves in the forest. Everybody tried to stay away from them because their appearance was wild, their clothing was tattered, and they were always barefoot, unwashed and unkempt.

At that time, the price of Kosher meat in Cracow was very high. Therefore, only rich people could afford to eat meat during the week. Poor people had meat on Shabbos only. As it is customary with rich customers, the butchers delivered their meat orders to their homes. This meant that the unfortunate orphans had a double job. Early in the morning they had to work hard for a number of hours in the butcher shop, and then at 8:00 or 9:00 A.M. they had to carry out the meat to the homes of the rich people.

After the boys got finished with their work in the butcher shop, taking off the skin and fats, chopping, cutting, soaking and rinsing the meat, then they put very heavy loads of meat on their young shoulders to deliver them miles away all over the city. If they asked for something to eat before leaving, they received a beating from their uncle and aunt for this "insolence", and were put out on the street, hungry as they were.

"When you bring home the money for the sold meat, you will get some grub", was the answer.

They had no choice in the matter and had to do as they were told.

At night, on their cold straw mattress, they shed bitter tears, the tears of helpless orphans—and nobody heard their crying.

One day, one of the boys found a large coin in the street. His first thought was to use the coin to buy some bread, so that at least once he should be able to eat his fill. But soon another idea hit him: "No, I want to use the coin to do business and earn some money, and only from these earnings, will I buy some bread!"

Then he went to a different section of the city where only Gentiles lived. There he bought a large cut of non-Kosher meat. The next morning, when his uncle gave him the kosher meat to deliver to the customers and bring the money, he also sold the piece of non-kosher meat as kosher and, of course, charged for it a much higher price than he had paid for it. He carefully hid the money which he has thus earned, and when his colleague, the other orphan, returned, they went together to a remote street. There, they bought bread, cheese and beer, and both ate their fill.

"Where did you get the money?" asked his friend. "I found it", was his answer, and his friend believed him.

Later that day, he again bought some non-kosher meat. The next morning he again mixed it with the kosher meat and again he earned a nice sum. In the afternoon, he went again together with his friend to a remote street and bought bread, cheese and beer, and again they had a good meal together.

"Where did you get the money today?" his friend asked once again. "Again I found some money" was the answer. This same procedure was repeated a number of days. He bought the non-kosher meat, mixed it together with the kosher meat, and sold it for a much higher price. All the Jews of Cracow bought from them with full confidence that the meat was kosher because they knew from which butcher shop the meat came and that their uncle was trusted with respect to kashrus and was under proper supervision.



The portion of non-kosher meat which he bought became larger day by day, which meant, of course, that the earnings automatically became larger. Continuously, day after day, the orphans had themselves a good time, until one day his friend said to him:

“I don’t believe anymore what you tell me every day that you found money. A person can find money once or twice, but not every day. Tell me the truth, where did not get the money?”

But the other one did not want to reveal the secret.

“Both of us have neither father nor mother”, he insisted. “We have no sister, no brother; we have the same problems being all alone. Can’t you at least confide in me?”

“Give me your word of honor that you will not tell anybody,” the one who supplied the non-kosher meat started to yield, “and I will tell you all about it.”

His friend gave him his hand, and then he took him into his confidence telling him what terrible things he did every day to earn this money.

In order to enlarge the “business”, he taught him to hold back one day some of the money which he collected, to buy with it non-kosher meat, to sell it for Kosher and to return the next day the money which he had held back and then to do business with the earnings which grew from day to day.

These two young orphans were coarse and ignorant. They did not comprehend the magnitude of the crime they were committing. Furthermore, they got assistance from Satan who was interested that Jews should eat non—kosher meat. The “business” developed nicely, expanding more and more. Slowly, countless Jewish households in Cracow unknowingly became non-Kosher.

The two friends continued this procedure for an entire year, mixing non-Kosher meat with the Kosher meat, in this way taking in much more money than they had to bring home.

When they had, in this manner, saved up a tidy sum, they agreed between themselves that one of them should pick a fight with the uncle and play insulted so that he would be fired. Then he should get himself a job with another Kosher butcher in another section of the city, far away, even if he wouldn't pay him much, even for board alone. It would not matter, it would pay for him anyway! In this way, they could get new customers and thus they would be able to enlarge the "business".

That is exactly what happened. The older of the two purposely started to loaf around, to create dissension and to talk back to his uncle. He didn't want to work, and when he made a nuisance of himself and became insolent, his uncle threw him out.

He left all his customers to his friend and went to the other end of the city of Crakow where he accepted a job with another Kosher butcher.

There he started the same shameful scheme again. When his new boss sent him to carry out a certain number of pieces of meat having a certain weight, he added a few pieces of non-Kosher meat, or else he made the portions larger. Thus he was able to make profit every day from the tremendous difference in price between Kosher and non-Kosher meat.

Although the two friends were separated, they still remained silent partners. They gave each other their word that they would not hide from each other even a profit of one penny. They met frequently in secret places in order to pool their profits and to discuss "business affairs": where to buy non-Kosher meat cheaper and where to get a better price for Kosher meat.

Satan helped along that they should avoid any suspicion and that people should like to buy from them meat with full confidence in Kashrus.

A long period of time had passed. Both friends had already accumulated quite a bit of capital. Then they decided that rather than work as employees for others they would open their own butcher shop and become independent butchers.

But how to go about it?

After long deliberation they came up with the following plan:

One day the older one came to the butcher shop, full of joy, and told his younger friend that he had found a bag containing one hundred gold coins.

When his former employer wanted to chase him out, he said loudly to his young friend:

“Come, get out here. Don’t stay any longer with your mean uncle. Since G-d was good to me and I worked myself up, I am going to take you in as partner in the butcher shop which I am about to open! You will go to the village and buy a calf and a cow and I am going to stay in the butcher shop, and sometimes we will switch around. You will surely be better off with me than here with your uncle. As time passes, we will work ourselves up and become big butchers! If we work as hard for ourselves as we worked here, we will certainly become rich!”

The younger fellow—as they had planned—immediately left his uncle’s employ and joined his supposedly “former” colleague as a partner.

They rented a butcher shop, had a Shochet slaughter a calf for them, paid him the slaughtering fee and also the other high Kashrus taxes which made the Kosher meat so expensive. At the same time they rented a place in a small street in a Gentile

section far away where they themselves killed another calf whose meat cost them next to nothing, mixed the two kinds of meat—and made a handsome profit.

The two did not lack customers, each one from his own employer. They delivered the meat to all sections of the city, even to the most distant ones. They charged a few cents less than other butchers, added bones to the order without charging for them and gave the customers good cuts. Nobody entertained the slightest suspicion that they would supply people with non-Kosher meat. After all, everyone had been buying from them for many years, and they never had heard a bad word about them.

They exercised great caution in their operation; they always made sure that the amount of meat in the butcher shop did not exceed the amount they had the Shochet slaughter for them. Accordingly, whenever there was an inspection by the Kashrus Commission, everything was found to be in the best of order. The non-Kosher meat was always kept hidden in the place in the Gentile street, from where they delivered it directly to the customers, or they would sometimes bring insignificantly small pieces to the store.

From week to week the business expanded. They even started to have larger cattle slaughtered by the Shochet—before a Shabbos or a Yomtov even several at a time. At the same time, they killed just as many animals at night in their secret place in the Gentile neighborhood, thus they were able to charge lower prices, at the same time giving their customers the choicest cuts. Soon it became known among the Jewish housewives all over Crakow, that the cheapest place to buy meat was the butcher shop of the two new butchers who “didn’t charge an arm and a leg” like the other butchers. In this way they attracted the richest families of Crakow as customers. Their own wealth grew from day to day. They bought their own home, complete with yard

and stable. Prominent people visited them on occasions suggesting to buy from them larger numbers of animals.

Because of them, other butchers became impoverished. They were driven out of their business, because nobody could compete. Our friends became the recognized experts in the butcher line. Nobody could take away any customers from them. They started dressing extravagantly. Matchmakers suggested for them highly respectable matches. They made most generous contributions to the various charities of the community. Yet, in the middle of the night, they worked hard in the secret chamber, killing animals, flaying the carcasses, and chopping and cutting up non-Kosher meat. In the morning, they were busy with the Kosher slaughtered meat in the butcher-shop, at noon when both the Kosher and the non-Kosher meat had been sold—they dressed up in fancy clothes and took walks in the city with great pomp and dignity.

Since they had no wives, no children and no servants, no one knew about their shameful act, and not the slightest suspicion fell upon them.

Later on too, even after they got married, they were able to cover up their activities so skillfully that no human being was able to find out anything about them. After they got married they lived in style, inviting many guests to their homes; in fact, any respectable visitor to the city benefitted from their hospitality. They lived in the most beautiful mansion in Crakow. Both partners occupied an entire large building. Children were born to them. As they grew up, the best teachers and pedagogues were hired for them. A number of rooms were set aside in their homes, for teachers, Yeshiva students and respected guests. They lavished upon their homes the most expensive vessels. Closets were filled with gold and silver, crystal and expensive china.

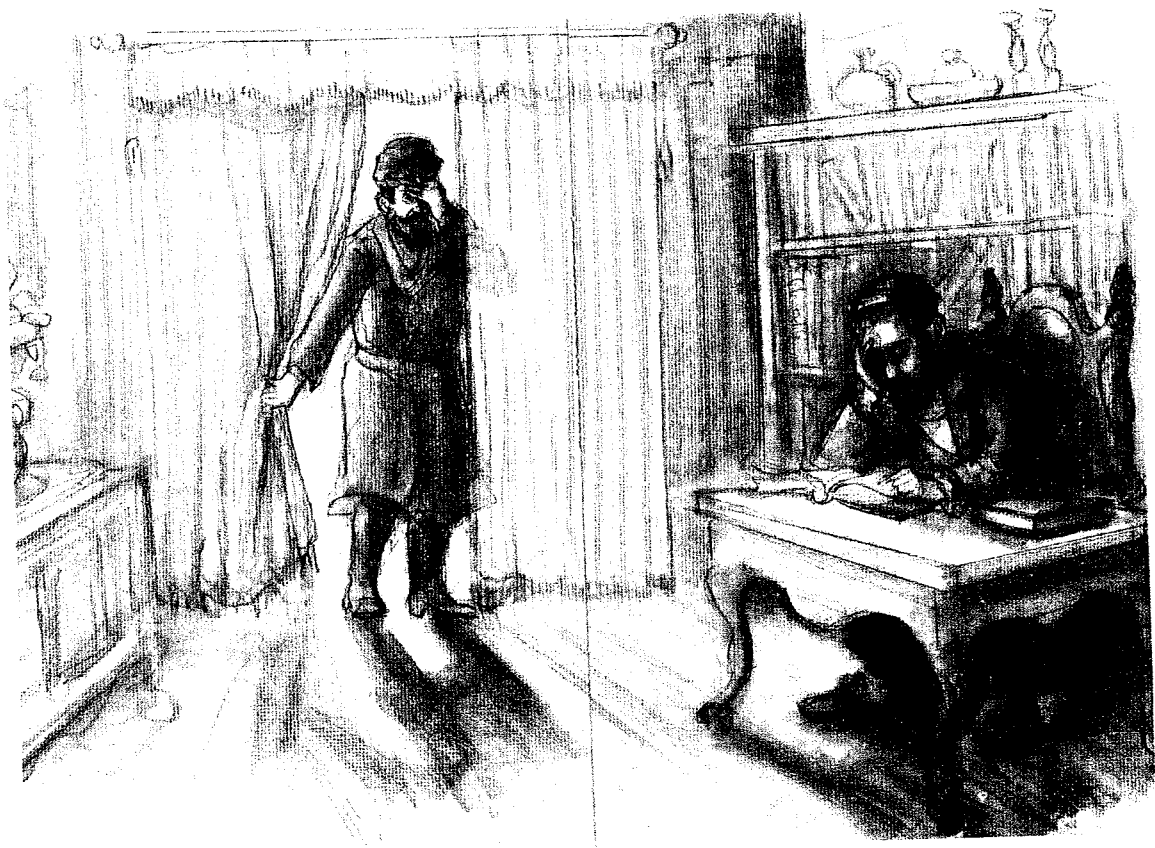
As soon as a child reached the age of 13-14, he or she was married off to partners from the most respected families. Sons-in-law and daughters-in-law were taken into the house and fully supported, leaving the dowry untouched. On the contrary, the dowry was invested so that they would receive interest. Their wealth increased more and more every day; even from the Kosher business their earnings were tremendous, let alone from the non-Kosher.

After many years, all of a sudden, their shameful business came to an end, and when that end came it was completely unexpected.

One day, one of the partners came home from a trip. Frozen through and exhausted, he walked straight into his son-in-law's room, where the latter was sitting, diligently studying the holy books. The father-in-law, unlearned as he was, was struck by the sweet melody of the Talmud coming from the mouth of his young son-in-law, like the sound of a little bell. All of a sudden he heard these words coming out the mouth of his son-in-law:

“If somebody eats non-Kosher meat or fats, his punishment is “Korays” (divine death penalty)! If he does “Teshuva” (he repents, mends his ways), he is forgiven! But if he doesn't do “Teshuva”, then he will die prematurely! But this death of “Korays” will bring about only partial forgiveness of his sin. To obtain complete forgiveness he must suffer in Gehinnom in the world to come until he is completely purged and cleansed from his sin.”

“The foregoing applies only”—the son-in-law continued—“if he ate the non-Kosher meat without knowing about it. In that case, Teshuvo produces forgiveness. But if a person ate it knowingly and willingly, and especially if one person gave



another non-Kosher meat knowingly, then there exists no Teshuva for his sins and he will be exposed to the sufferings of Gehinnom forever. Even when the resurrection of the dead will take place and all evil-doers will get up again, he who has sinned and led others to sin will not get up. Even when the fire of Gehinnom is extinguished, his punishment will continue.”

The unlearned father-in-law—who caused so many people to eat non-Kosher meat—lowered his head when he heard these words recited by his son-in-law from the holy books. He became very sad. He tried to recollect what was going to happen to him in the world-to-come, as punishment for making people eat non-Kosher meat. He knew there was no kind of Teshuvo open to him. Even when Moshieach would come and all the dead—even the worst sinners who have already received their punishment—would get up from their graves for the resurrection of the dead, he would continue to suffer in the depth of the nether world. The flames of Gehinnom would be extinguished already, but he would continue burning until eternity.

His world was coming to an end. He felt the bitter taste of the bile emanating from his gall bladder and spreading throughout his body. He came near to fainting and he barely managed to stand on his unsteady feet and walk into his room.

When his wife noticed the awful condition he was in, she started trembling. His usual ruddy complexion—characteristic of a butcher—had now become pale like a corpse; his features had become terribly disfigured, manifesting his intense suffering. He threw himself on the couch, face down, and broke out into heart-rending sobbing which sent chills throughout her body. He started producing weird sounds, similar to those of an animal about to die.

“What happened?” she approached him, not knowing the reason for his moaning and groaning.

But he did not give her any answer. He continued moaning and groaning; tears were streaming from his eyes: he beat his head with his fist, almost splitting it, and unceasingly he lamented, "Woe is to me, woe is unto my years!"

She ran quickly to call his partner, hoping that he would, perhaps, be able to draw out of him what had happened. The partner came and he, too, started trembling when he saw the dreadful spectacle and heard the heart-rending sounds.

"What happened to you?" he asked. "Say something! Were you robbed? Did you lose a large sum of money? So what of it? We are so rich that the loss wouldn't even be noticeable."

His wife, too, approached him again trying to comfort him with reassuring words:

"Thank G-d, we are not lacking anything. We have wealth, honor, power, good children and fine sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. Our house is the most beautiful in the city. The most respected guests come to our house, eat with us, and receive the most generous charitable contributions. So how can you be so depressed?"

After a long time he somewhat regained his composure and quieted down. He still looked terrible. He motioned to his wife to leave the room, indicating that he wanted to talk privately to his partner. After his wife left, he broke out again in a pitiful sobbing, going into spasm, indicating that he was on the verge of a stroke Frozen stiff with fear and with his eyes wide open, his partner was waiting anxiously to hear at least some explanation for that dreadful sobbing.

Finally he regained his composure, and gathering his courage he said to his partner:

“Come, let us go to our garden. Let us go far away so that nobody can hear what we are going to say!”

They went to their magnificent garden which was worth a fortune and the envy of the wealthy class. They went deep into the wooded area of the garden, and there, in a thicket, the stricken man finally commenced to speak.

“You should know, my dear partner, that Satan, the evil inclination, has caused our doom for eternity! All the gold, silver, diamonds and pearls, houses and gardens which we possess are of no value whatsoever, compared to the terrible punishment that is waiting for us in the near future, from which even death will not redeem us. We will soon have passed the one-half mark of our lives, but even if that were not so, we could not anticipate many more years, for both of us deserve the punishment of “Korays,” which means to be taken from this world before our time. Even if you want to tell me that you are not afraid of death, that nobody dies more than once, that everybody has to die once and that it doesn’t make much different to you whether you die a little earlier or a little later—then you should know that it is only after death that the most terrible suffering is awaiting us, suffering which no human being can imagine!”

Then he told him what he had overhead, what his son-in-law learned from the holy books, what terrible fate befalls a person who causes another person to eat non-Kosher meat and that for such a person there is no forgiveness and no Teshuva for his sins. He added with bitterness:

“Just remind yourself how many decades we have already made people eat non-Kosher meat, how many hundreds and thousands of Jews were led astray by us and brought to the worst sins!! See how strong the power of Satan is! Imagine a city like Crakow, full of scholars and pious Jews, and nobody has the slightest suspicion on us. Everyone eats from the meat of the

animals which we ourselves slaughter every night. *The most religious families buy from us.* At the fanciest weddings and Bris Mila celebrations where people wear Shtreimlach and silk and velvet clothes, our non-Kosher meats and fats are served. What do we gain from the great wealth which we possess? Do we eat with two spoons? Don't bread and onions fill you just as well as turkey and egg noodles? The few years we have yet to live will pass like a shadow, like smoke, and then we will enter the eternal world from which there is no escape. There they will inflict upon us terrible pain, worse than anything we can imagine. The time we spent in our uncle's home when we were young boys, poor starved orphans without proper clothing and shoes, will appear to us like life in paradise in comparison with the fire of Gehinnom to which our bodies will be exposed!"

When his partner heard these words, he, too, started to tremble. He broke out in cold sweat and was close to fainting for fear of the unavoidable fate awaiting him.

They sat there for a long time, their heads down, in fearful silence. They saw in their imagination the tremendous impact their arrival in Gehinnom would make on the black angels who are in charge of punishment of the sinners, how they would heat for them large cauldrons of boiling tar and hot pitch into which they would hurl them, then they would take them out from one cauldron and fling them into another. They realized that nobody would listen to their anguished cries of pain, and that all ears would be deaf to their suffering. Not the slightest bit of their laments would penetrate to the heavenly throne. All doors and gates would be closed to them because they are the worst kind of sinners. *Even the worst evil-doers in the world have not done as much evil throughout their entire lives as they have done in all those years in which they supplied non-Kosher meat to the people, leading astray hundreds and thousands of Jews and getting them to commit the worst sins.*



“You know what”, exclaimed one of the partners, “let us both go the Rov of the city and confess our sins to him. Let us tell him everything what we have done in the course of our lives. Maybe he will be able to think of a way for us to repent to obtain forgiveness. I am willing and ready to take upon myself the most severe afflictions and disgrace as long as I will be spared the terrible punishment of Gehinnom. What significance have the sufferings and the shame in this world in comparison with the endless and eternal punishment in Gehinnom. *Here in this world there is a limit to all suffering: however, in the world to come everything lasts until eternity.* There is no other way out for us. To continue our disgraceful business is of no use.”

Both partners cried their hearts out. Then they made the firm resolution to go that very same evening at a later hour to the Rabbi of Crakow to make a confession to him and to ask him to find an atonement for their great sin.

At the time when the previously told story with the non-Kosher meat happened, the Rabbi of Crakow was the holy Cabbalist and Tzaddik Rav Noson Shapiro, author of the cabbalistic book, “Megallay Amukos”. He was a man of G-d, a saintly and pure person, with his modest eyes wide open eyes which could detect all hidden things, and which could read a person’s innermost thoughts and intentions from his face. This sage could perceive the allusions and secrets hidden between the letters of the Holy Torah.

But in this case Satan had covered up his bright eyes to conceal from him the awful things going on around him in the city of which he was the spiritual leader, the terrible crimes committed by two members of the community who, in truth, were sinners and had brought many other people to sin, introducing into the most religious households meat which was not properly slaughtered, meat not fit for Kosher use and non-kosher fats, among the worst sins one can think of.

During this period there were a number of epidemics in Crakow, some of them among adults who suddenly fell ill and were confined to bed for a few days and some among children who had hardly started to enjoy life and who were torn away long before their time.

The Rabbi of the City, "Megallay Amukos", repeatedly decreed fasts, and assembled the people in the synagogues admonishing them to repentance, to do prayer and perform acts of charity. After such a fast the epidemic would stop for a while, with G-d's wrath seemingly abating. But after a while, the epidemic would return. People fell like flies during autumn, and in the cemetery many new graves were added, both for adults and for young children.

"The Megallay Amukos", the holy leader of his block, felt instinctively that there was a hidden fire burning someplace, that terrible sins were being committed, secretly, causing G-d's wrath to be rent on the city. But what it was, who was involved and where the matter was going on, that he could not find out. Satan used all his devilish powers to make sure that the bright eyes of the holy "Megallay Amukos" were completely shrouded.

Finally one evening he received in the chambers of the Beth Din the visit of the two richest people of the city, the two partners in the butcher business, who generously supported a great number of charity insitutions, Talmud Torah schools and Yeshivos.

They were welcomed by the servants with great respect. Without delay the "Megallay Amukos" was notified that the two most distinguished citizens of the city had come to visit.

Both partners were immediately shown the most exquisite room of the Rabbi's house. The "Megallay Amukos" received them with great honor as it befits such wealthy people. The Rabbi's wife placed refreshments on the table. But the guests

declined to partake of anything, saying that they had to discuss with the Rabbi an extremely important matter. At the same time they requested that the Rabbi ask all those present to leave the room or that he go with them to a place where they could speak about a matter of highest secrecy.

Without any delay the request was granted. The door was locked, and the Rabbi remained alone with the two.

With sadness and great shame they lowered their heads, and one of them, with a tear-filled voice, made a full confession that for years and years they had sold non-Kosher meat and that there was not one Jewish household in all of Crakow where the dishes were not made unusable through their fault.

They told him in detail all their experiences starting with their childhood as poor unfortunate orphans, until the time when they became so immensely rich. They told him how they first started to add small pieces of non-Kosher meat to the Kosher meat in their bags, then how they had a Shochet slaughter one calf, while they themselves killed another one in a secret chamber far away in the Gentile section, and how they extended their operation by killing first one animal and then more and more, and so on, and how they were able in this manner to accumulate barrels of gold and to acquire more and more real estate....

When the holy "Megallay Amukos" heard the words of their confession, everything turned black in front of his eyes. He broke out in a cold sweat and fainted away. His body started to tremble, he went into convulsions, and his teeth started chattering. With superhuman effort, he emitted a heart-rendering groan.

"Woe is me! How many good people, pure and holy souls, how many Yeshiva boys and small babies have lost their lives innocently because of this! How many times did I decree fasts and assembled everybody in the synagogue to recite Tehillim!

Oh, how I tried to be watchful that no sins should be committed in the city! But who would think that such a terrible thing could happen. Obviously there was a decree from Heaven that I should not find out about it. My eyes were tightly covered to make sure I should not see anything, that I should not hear anything and that I should not know about it.”

When the two partners heard these words of despair uttered by the Rabbi, they broke out in pitiful sobbing. The holy “Megallay Amukos”, too, kept on lamenting about how such a thing could happen while he was the Rov.

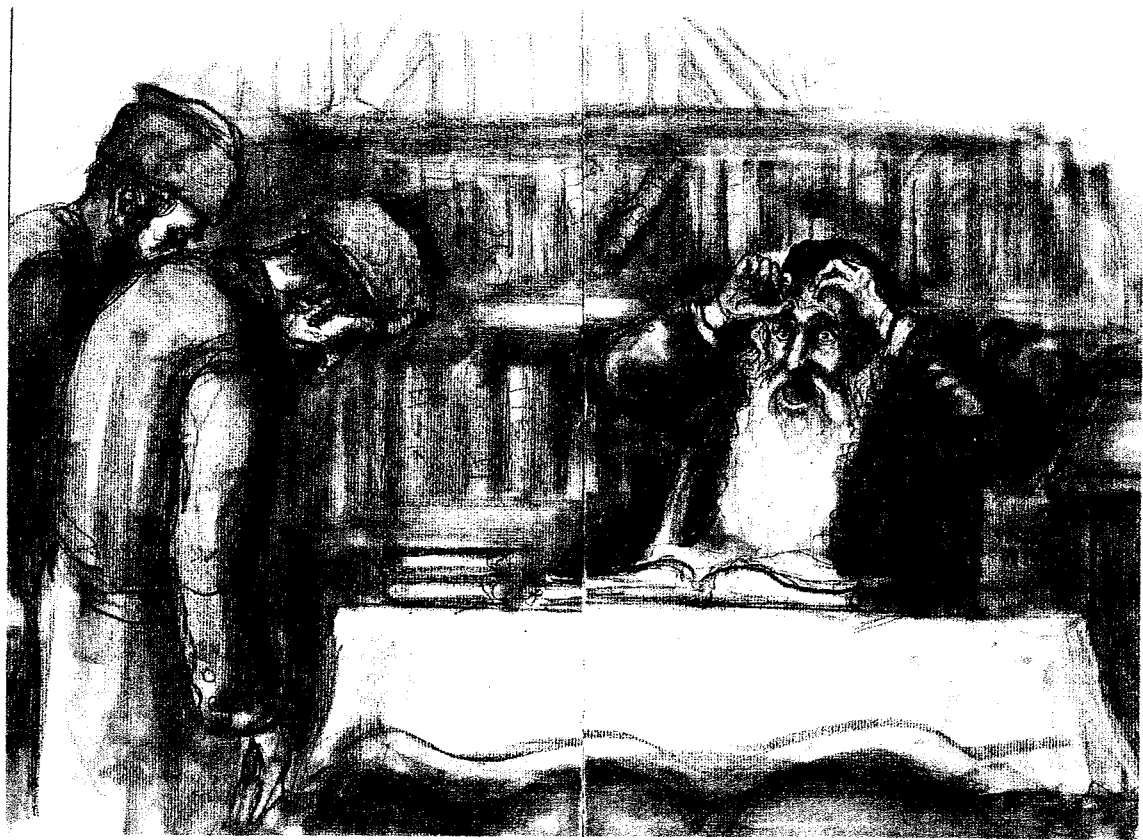
After their eyes had become swollen from the constant crying, and the source of their tears had started to dry up, the Rabbi addressed himself to them with a mournful voice and said:

“Now go home and break all your meat dishes, because, as you know, they are forbidden for use. After that, come back to me!”

As soon as they had left, the Rabbi sent out all his servants and employees throughout the city of Cracow to announce the decree of the Rabbi to break and destroy all vessels used for meat dishes during the year as well as those used on Pesach, without any exception, including those used for salting and soaking the meat. No questions were to be asked, and everybody was to comply with the Rabbi’s orders.

This same announcement was made the following morning in all synagogues, Botei Midroshim, and private *minyanim*, by order of the Rabbi, together with strict instructions not to buy any meat for the time being, but to eat only dairy food. To insure compliance, the Rabbi added that anybody who would not destroy all his meat utensils would be put in “Cherem”.

The entire Jewish community of Cracow got busy destroying all their meat utensils, and wherever people went, they could hear the noise made by the breaking of the dishes. It was truly an



amazing sight, men, women and children were constantly busy breaking plates, even whole sets of china, into tiny fragments. People took dishes out of storage and broke them without pity. Soon there was no meat vessel to be gotten in all of Crakow, not even for a sick person.

Then the two partners went once again to the Rabbi, full of shame and contrition, to hear what else they would have to do.

The Rabbi did not want anymore to look into their sinful faces, in accordance with the halocho that "one is not permitted to look into the face of an evildoer." He therefore faced the wall when he said to them:

"I myself am not capable of prescribing an atonement for you. You have committed a sin of tremendous magnitude. For this I must convene a court of great rabbis. Maybe they will have advice for you. In the meantime, go home. You are not to eat meat neither are you to drink wine, except on Shabbos to fulfill the obligation. I am going to call the rabbis to Crakow. Once they are here, you should come."

The two went home, dejected, their faces full of shame like thieves who have been apprehended.

In all of Cracow nobody dared to ask why the Rabbi had decreed to break all meat dishes. Everybody complied with his orders obediently because they knew that if their holy Rabbi tells them to do it, it surely was the right thing to do.

And the "Megallay Amukos" himself got busy sending out letters to many rabbis requesting them to come to Crakow on a certain day, in order to decide together a very difficult problem in Halocho.

A convention of rabbis in Crakow, of sages and scholars, called to consider a matter of importance to all Jews, was not an unusual occurrence. Crakow was a center for Torah and Jewish

learning. The reputation of the scholars and Gaonim of Crakow spread throughout the entire Jewish world. But the fact that this time so many rabbis were called together to a conference without telling them in advance what matter was to be considered, whether it was perhaps a decree by the government or a difficult problem concerning an *aguno*, so that the rabbis should be able to familiarize themselves with the subject matter to be discussed, was certainly a surprise to everybody. What really had happened?

On the stipulated day, after all the rabbis had already assembled in the house of the "Megallay Amukos", the Rabbi of Crakow, without being able to ascertain what this was all about, the Rov sent out the messenger of the rabbinical court to summon the two partners in the butcher business. Pending their arrival he asked all the rabbis to go to the big Beth Hamedrash and there to occupy the seats which had been prepared for them.

By the order of the Rabbi, the two partners went to the Beth Hamedrash without delay accompanied by the messenger of the rabbinical court. There they beheld an awe-inspiring picture: distinguished looking rabbis with long, patriarchal beards, twirled earlocks, broad-sleeved silken robes, silk belts and fur hats on their heads seated in a semicircle. Their faces expressed serious anticipation concerning the as yet unknown problem which would be presented to them.

The "Megallay Amukos" who—as the local rabbi—presided, then addressed himself with trembling lips and a face as white as the wall, to the two butchers, and exclaimed with a terrifying voice:

"Tell once more to the Great Court the awful thing which you have told me!"

For a considerable time a fearful silence prevailed in the Beth Hamedrash. Both partners lowered their eyes with a look of sorrow and shame on their faces. They could not cry anymore because their hearts had already turned to stone and the source of their tears had dried up. With a dull voice, like the voice of a dead person, emanating from the grave which asks forgiveness for his sinful soul, one of them started, and the other supported his words:

For many decades we have given the Jews of Crakow non-kosher meat to eat! We ourselves killed oxen and calves and sold their meat as Kosher! Our non-kosher meat was brought to all Jewish homes! There exists not one Jewish house in all of Crakow where the vessels and utensils were not made unfit for Jewish use because of us. In this way, we accumulated huge sums of money; we bought houses and gardens, diamonds, gold and silver vessels. Because of our wealth, we have intermarried with the most prestigious families; we have donated large sums of money to charitable causes. Now we regret our misdeeds. We are aware that because of our actions we will never be able to leave Gehinnom. Until now we have not know how terrible a sin we had been committing. We are ignorant, unlearned people. Nobody ever taught us anything. We lost both our parents when we were very, very young. Only now have we become fully aware of what we had been doing. Therefore, we ask you to show us a way of atonement. We are ready to accept upon ourselves the worst suffering in this world as long as we will be purified for the world-to-come.”

Before the two partners had completed their confession, the rabbis, agitated by the terrible story which they had heard, started to cry and rend their clothes. In their great anguish, many of them fell on the floor mourning as one mourns the destruction of the temple.

“Woe, woe!”. the rabbis lamented, “He who destroys one Jewish life is considered as if he had destroyed the entire world. How many Jewish people were taken from the world before their time because of them! Because of them who caused them to eat non-kosher meats and fats so many souls were meted out the terrible punishment of “Korays”. How can there exist an atonement for them!”

“There is not hope for them!”, exclaimed some of the rabbis in great despair.

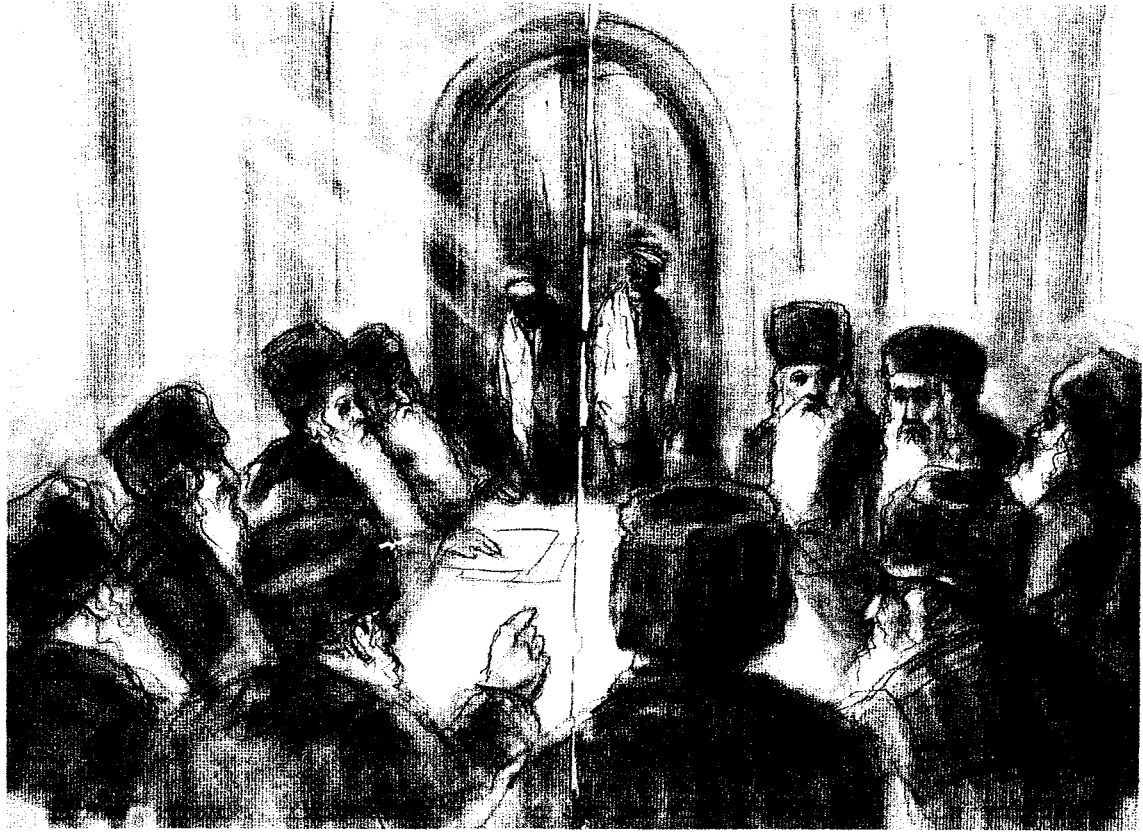
“They deserve all four types of capital punishment: stoning, burning, decapitation and strangulation”, some others of the rabbis added.

“No, even that won’t do them any good”, others replied angrily, considering the severity of their crime “for their souls there is no remedy! They will be lost forever in Gehinnom where they will flounder in the nether world.”

The two partners were standing there with their heads down, frozen with fear, listening to the frightening words which the rabbis unleashed on them in these first minutes when they were moved by zeal for the honor of G-d, the L-rd of Hosts. The two felt a heavy burden on their hearts and in their mouth a bitter taste just as if their bile had spread out all over their bodies.

With their last bit of strength they threw themselves on the floor and producing sounds like animals they started addressing the rabbis:

“Holy rabbis, have mercy on our souls! On our bodies you do not have to have any pity! Even if you give orders to cut pieces of flesh from our bodies and pour salt on the wounds, we would not say a word, as long as our souls will be saved and will not be condemned to Gehinnom for all eternity.”



When the "Megallay Amukos" observed the angry faces of the rabbis and heard the inhuman sounds of lament produced by the two brothers, he was gripped by a strong feeling of mercy. He turned to the rabbinical court and addressed its members with imploring words, assuming the role of defender:

"Esteemed rabbis! We have an established principle in our Holy Talmud which states that there is no transgression for which there does not exist some way of atonement. Teshuva penetrates all heavens and tears open all locked gates. We find that when Menashe, the King of Yehuda, who had put an idol into the Holy Temple, was seeking atonement, the angels locked before him all the gates of Teshuva in order to prevent that his repentance should be accepted. Thereupon the Almighty himself took pity on him and opened up for him a little door under His Holy Throne and accepted his Teshuva. If the Holy One, blessed be He, took pity on such a terrible sinner who had put an idol into the Temple, why shouldn't we have mercy on these two people and assist them so that their atonement should be accepted?"

The moving words of the "Megallay Amukos" had a softening influence on the hearts of the members of the Great Court and filled them with compassion for the two terrible sinners who were still lying on the floor, their faces buried in the ground. A few of the rabbis turned to the "Megallay Amukos", asking him in a shaky voice to send home the two butchers after telling them that the assembly would try to find a plan to save their souls from the fire of Gehinnom.

After the two evil-doers had left the Beth Hamedrash to return to their homes, the rabbinical court settled down to the serious business of finding a way of atonement so that after their death they should enter the world to come, completely purified from their awful sins.

It was not easy to work out such a plan, and it certainly did not go fast. Great rabbinical authorities exerted their mental efforts, turning over in their minds closets full of holy books, the Talmud, earlier and more recent commentaries, considering all the passages dealing with sinning and bringing others to sin, causing the public to stumble and with the terrible punishment of "Korays" meted out for eating and giving others to eat non-kosher fats.

The rabbis did not rely on their familiarity with all these passages from the Talmud and the book of ethics and their ability to remember them by heart. The tables of the Beth Hamedrash were piled high with the tomes taken from the shelves along the walls. The "Megallay Amukos", too, brought rare books from his house to show that there was still a way for these terrible sinners to obtain atonement.

The heated debates of the rabbis extended until late into the night. When the rabbis were completely exhausted, they decided to take the discussions until the next day and each one of the respected members of the Cracow community took along one of the rabbis and put him up for the night.

Soon after daybreak the rabbis rose from their sleep, said their prayers and had a bite to eat. After that they rushed back immediately to the big Beth Hamedrash to continue the debates which had been interrupted the day before, concerning what form of atonement would be proper for the two evil-doers.

One day after another passed and the rabbis still could not agree on a formula which would enable the two sinners to obtain purification from their sins in this world.

During that entire time, the two butchers had locked themselves up in their homes, without saying a word, without eating and drinking, crying bitterly from time to time, whenever enough tears had accumulated within them.

While all this was transpiring, the people of Crakow had not the faintest idea what it was all about, why all these rabbis had come to Crakow, and what connection their coming had with the two butchers. The "Megallay Amukos" conducted the deliberations of the rabbis in strictest secrecy. No outsider was permitted at that time to be in the big Beth Hamedrash of the community, except the messenger of the rabbinical court, who was under strict orders to keep his mouth shut and not to reveal the slightest hint concerning the awful discovery that the two richest butchers had supplied the community with non-kosher meat from many, many years, until the time when the matter would be made public.

The families of the two partners, their wives and children, their sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, implored them:

"Tell us what happened! Say something at least!"

They also didnt take any food, neither did they take care of their homes. But it was no use. Both kept silent and didn't say one word.

Finally, the day arrived when, in the big Beth Hamedrash, where the deliberations of the rabbis had taken place, the manner of atonement for the two partners who supplied the non-kosher meat, was written down with a goose-quill on a long sheet of paper.

Then the "Megallay Amukos" summoned the two partners to come and appear before the rabbis.

When the two came in, the rabbis could hardly recognize them, although they had seen them only a few days before. A terrible change had come over the two in the course of this short time. Their faces had become completely sunken-in and disfigured. They didn't look as though they were alive, but like people who were on the verge of dying, completely emaciated,

not a drop of blood in their faces, hardly able to support themselves on their feet.

When the rabbis beheld their horrible condition and saw how the two healthy ruddy butchers had changed in such a short period of time because they were consumed by their regrets and repentance for the deeds they had committed, they started crying in anguish and pain.

“They are already Baalay Teshuva, they are penitent and thus are considered Tzaddikim again!” exclaimed with great emotion one of the rabbis who was moved by his merciful heart.

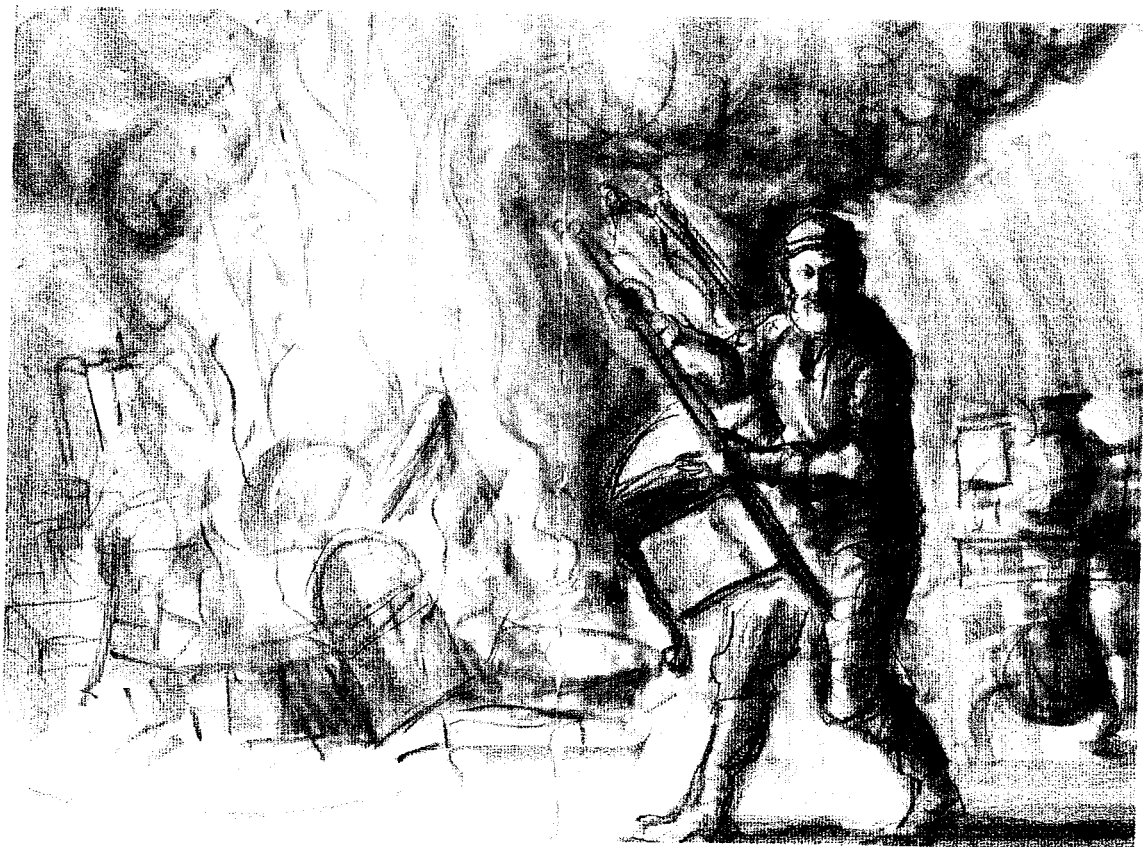
“Their flesh and blood, just like a “Korban Oulo” which was sacrificed completely, had already been consumed on the altar of repentance”, a second rabbi added in a trembling voice, tears in his eyes.

The “Megallay Amukos” addressed himself to the two, who had remained standing near the door, their heads turned to the floor:

“Well, are you ready to accept upon yourselves everything that we are going to command you?”

“Yes,” both answered with great emphasis, “even if you tell us that we have to let ourselves be cut up into piece while alive, we will gladly accept it. They wouldn’t even have to tie us up! We will lie still and bear the suffering silently without making a sound. All we are going to say is, ‘This should be an atonement for our sins!’”

“If that is so, then listen carefully, ” said the “Megallay Amukos”. “Give your children their belongings, their clothing and jewelry, and make them move out of your house immediately. However, your wives should be permitted to take only their clothes and their bedding, but not their jewelry. For yourselves you are not permitted to take clothes either, with the



exception of an old shirt, an old pair of pants, a Tallis Koton, an old pair of slippers and a plain old suit. Everything else shall be burned in a big fire in your yard. You must make sure that you throw everything into the fire, and you shall not spare a thing: clothing, jewelry, furniture, linen, carriage, sleds, expensive harnesses everything should turn into ashes, and not the smallest item should remain! Then you are to sell your livestock and your other belongings: the horse, the cattle, the birds, the houses, the gardens, the fields and the forest and the money which you will get for them you must—burn! You are not even allowed to distribute it for charitable purposes because this money is forbidden to be put to any use. Your wives should stay with the children. When you have carried out all this, then come back to me. I will tell you what else you will have to do!”

Both partners went home straight away and did what the “Megallay Amukos” had commanded them. They gave over to their children all their belongings and to their wives the most necessary clothes and bedding. They carried all the remaining objects out to the yard, doused them with petroleum and ignited them. While their valuable possessions which they had acquired in the course of many years were being burned, they experienced tremendous joy.

“Just like this, should our sins be consumed by fire”, they exclaimed filled with emotion. *“It is better that our possessions should burn rather than our souls in Gehinnom.”*

When the people of Crakow saw the two, who, only recently were among the richest people of the city, going around to the houses begging, the surprise and astonishment was tremendous. Although they looked horrible and their faces were disfigured, people recognized them and shuddered looking at them.

Out of pity many wanted to give them large coins, but they did not want to take more than a single penny.

“It shouldn’t be too easy for us to collect the money for our clothes,” one said to the other. “We shouldn’t be better off than strange beggars who come from other cities to beg in the houses! Otherwise it would mean that we derive a benefit from the time we were rich from selling non-kosher meat.

It took, therefore, a number of days until they had knocked at every door, receiving each time a penny, putting the money together until they had a few dollars.

Finally they appeared in the house of the “Megallay Amukos” wearing coarse cotton pants which did not fit them, torn and mended in many places, patched and sewn with big stitches. They wore old wooden shoes which made a clattering noise when they were walking, and on their heads old worn-out caps which looked as if they had come straight from the garbage dump. Not only their clothing looked horrible, their faces, too were yellow and wax-like because of their not eating and not sleeping, and they were covered with grime since they did not wash themselves.

When the “Megallay Amukos” took a look at them comparing their present looks with their aristocratic appearance only a short while ago, when they had come to him the first time, he almost fainted. Hot tears were running down his cheeks, and his heart quickly filled up with mercy on the Baalay Teshuvos who were experiencing such intense suffering.

“L-rd of the Universe!,” the “Megallay Amukos” exclaimed loudly, with his eyes raised and his hands spread out towards heaven, “just look what a wonderful nation You possess! See what great sacrifices the Jews are willing to bring for Your sake to sanctify Your name and to demonstrate Your greatness in this world and the world to come. You will never find that among any other nation, not even among the best of them! And certainly not among such coarse people as these two Baalay Teshuvos who

haven't learned anything and who do not even have a clear concept of what the Jewish religion is like. People who lost both parents in early childhood and don't even know how to say the prayers properly! ”

The “Megallay Amukos” wanted to inform them about the next part of their Teshuvo which had been prepared for them by the Great Rabbinical Court, but he was not able to open his mouth. His heart was bleeding as he watched the anguish of the two “Baalay Teshuvo”. He gathered all his strength and he began:

“I want you to know that during the entire time when your bodies are being consumed by Teshuvo and repentance, I myself don't suffer any less than you do! I eat hardly enough to keep body and soul together. I sleep only a few minutes a day! I do not stop crying and lamenting how such an awful thing could have happened where I am the Rov. I would have wanted very much to reduce your suffering and see to it that your shame is lessened! However, because you are my brothers, children of Avrohom, Yitzchock and Yaakov, I want you to be saved from judgment in Gehinnom. Therefore, I must control my feelings of mercy, and I must insist that you do exactly what the Great Court has prescribed! Just as a surgeon cannot consider the pain which he causes his patient when he operates on him, but he must penetrate with his scalpel deeper and deeper into the diseased tissues and excise them, down to the bone, and sometimes even scrape the bone, similarly, I am not allowed to take pity on your bodies, but I must subject them to the worst pains in order to save your souls from the eternal fire of Gehinnom.

“Therefore, listen to what you will have to do now: Both of you are to go to each synagogue and each Beth Hamedrash in Crakow at a time when they are packed with worshippers and to ascend to the Bimo and announce in a loud voice:

“Gentlemen! We are sinners. We have brought misfortune upon the Jewish people. For many, many years we have sold you non-kosher meat, and thus we have defiled you and your souls with non-kosher meats and fats! Who knows how many of your children or other relatives died prematurely, on account of this, how many had to suffer from the punishment of “Korays”? We are confessing this now publicly, and we implore you to forgive us and to pray to G-d that He, too, should forgive us!”

“You should remain on the Bimo and continue sobbing and lamenting and tearing the hair from your heads until all the assembled will be moved by your tears and your words to the point where they will grant you complete forgiveness and they will ask G-d that He, too, should forgive you.”

“After that, and before the services come to an end, you should lie down on the threshold of the exit door and ask all the people about to leave to step on you and to spit in your face.”

“During the entire time, while you are lying on the floor, and the people leaving step on you, you are to say Viduy, confession, which is part of the Yom Kippur prayers, and you are to beat your breast when you say the ‘Al Chayt’.”

When you have done the above in all of Crakow’s synagogues and Botay Medroshim, not omitting one single prayer house, then you should go out to the cemetery and throw yourselves on the graves of the righteous and the people who have died recently. You should ask forgiveness from the holy departed and implore them to pray for you and to intervene in your behalf before the Holy Throne.”

“After that, you are to leave Crakow for three years. You are to go by foot, never staying in one place more than twenty-four hours, except on Shabbos and on Holidays. Neither bad weather nor rain, hail, snow or storms should keep you from wandering around constantly. Where you spend the night one day, you are

not to spend the night the following day. In every town where Jews live, you are to go first to the synagogue, ascend the Bimo and exclaim:

“Fellow Jews, you should know that we are Jewish sinners! For many years we were the cause of people eating non-kosher meat! Now we are repenting, and we ask you pray for our souls that they should become purified.”

“You are not to eat meat or meat meals all week long. Only on Shabbos and Holidays you are permitted to eat some meat, but even then only a very small piece, the size of an olive, to fulfill the commandment. You are to sleep on the floor, a stone under your head. During the entire time you should go begging, but only barely as much as you need to sustain you for that day. You are, under no circumstances to leave anything over for the following day.”

“After you will have conducted yourselves in this manner for a period of three years, you should return to Crakow on foot. If I will still be alive at that time, I will tell you then what further things you will have to do. If, however, I will, G-d forbid, not be among the living anymore, then my successor will have in his possession a sealed envelope containing a letter with instructions for you, how you should conduct yourselves from then on.



IN THE CITY OF CRAKOW—PART II

After the Verdict of the Rabbinical Court The Verdict of the Heavenly Court

Leaving the study of the “Megallay Amukos”, the two Baalay Teshuvo immediately started out on their travels so that they could begin the atonement of their sins immediately. They didn’t even tell their wives and children that they were leaving. Without taking along anything, just as they were, they left their home town and started on the road of suffering.

The had no destination before them. It really didn’t matter where they went or when they arrived there, what the name of the place was or whether Jews lived there. On the contrary, they preferred to stay on the road longer, in a lonely field or forest, under the open sky, living on wild plants and berries and drinking water from the brooks. This was much better than begging alms from human beings.

When they had left the city and started to look around themselves, realizing that from now on any and every piece of soil would be their resting place and any and every stone their pillow, it came to their consciouness how foolish they had been, chasing after riches and honor, and in order to obtain those, to commit the most wicked deeds conceivable. Their free nature and their own insignificant needs first showed them clearly that the life goal of a human being is not to amass wealth and to strive for more honors, but to be an honest person, a person with an unblemished conscience, not to commit any crimes or acts of injustice against their fellow man.

With the courage resulting from their desire to accept suffering willingly; the two turned in and followed side roads, not knowing where they would lead. They walked along silently, with downcast eyes, each one occupied with his own thoughts.

“What time is it now? How long is it until night fall? How is the weather going to be? Will we get rain soon?” All these questions did not interest them in the least. When the night would arrive, they would lie down right then and there, and when they met up with a rain or storm, they would look for a shelter to seek protection for their naked lives.

From time to time they exchanged a few words, plain and coarse words, not like the two big businessmen who, only a few weeks before, had transacted tremendous business deals. The penitence which they had taken upon themselves wholeheartedly, transformed them all of a sudden into plain, simple-minded beings who had nothing in common anymore with normal human lives.

When they were completely exhausted from walking and their feet could not carry them any further, they threw themselves down on the naked earth, one next to the other, and fell asleep. When they woke up again, they were not interested to know how late it was. They got up with daybreak again and continued on their way.

When hunger pangs bothered them, they would scan the horizon, looking around for some place where they could beg for some food to keep body and soul together. A crust of stale bread and a jug of well water was enough for them. They wouldn't accept even milk or a small amount of cooked food from a Jewish farmer. If hospitable persons insisted that they should have lunch or supper with them and stay overnight with them, sleeping on a cot in their kitchen, they refused, explaining to them in a sad voice:

“Listen to us! We are Jewish sinners! We made other Jews eat non-kosher meat for many years! We aren’t even worth that you permit us to enter your house! Even the piece of bread and the water which you give us is too much! But that we must accept because we are completely starved!”

After these words they would turn around and leave.

When they reached a town or village on their way—even though they didn’t head there intentionally—they went straight to the Beth Hamedrash and waited there until the people would assemble for the afternoon services. Then they went up to the Bima asking those present to be silent for a short while, whereupon they exclaimed:

“Fellow Jews! You should know that we are Jewish sinners. We made other Jews eat non-kosher meat for many years! Now we are repenting, and we are trying to obtain forgiveness for our sins. Please, pray for us, dear fellow Jews, that our souls should be purified and should not be lost forever in Gehinnom in the world to come.”

After these words they would cry and beat their heads with their fists. After the end of the services they would stretch out on the floor on the threshold of the Beth Hamedrash and shout:

“Fellow Jews, have mercy on us. Do us a favor and step on us! Spit in our faces! That will help us to obtain forgiveness for our souls!”

In some places there were people who doubted the sincerity of their words and who assumed that this was some new gimmick of swindlers who in this way hoped to induce the people to give them more money. But they refused to accept even the smallest gift, with the exception of rare occasions when they would accept some leftover dairy dish which they would eat, standing in the entrance door. Then they would go straight to the shelter for transients where they would sleep on the floor with a stone as a

pillow, although cots and blankets were available for the poor people. When people noticed that, they realized that they were not cheats, that they did not want to swindle anybody, and they took pity on them and wished them that their Teshuvo should be accepted before the heavenly Throne like the biggest sacrifice and like fragrant incense.

Only Friday night and Shabbos morning they liked to go with the people who invited them to their houses. On Shabbos they looked more or less like human beings because on Friday afternoon they used to shake off the dust from their clothing and their shoes and to wash off the grime from their faces and their hands. They would sit at the end of the table and taste just a tiny bit from each dish that was brought to them, just enough to fulfill the obligation to eat in honor of the Shabbos. But they did ask for bread and water to satisfy their hunger. After they finished eating and saying grace, they went right away to the shelter in order to rest their limbs which has become fatigued and exhausted from wandering around all week.

They continued on in this fashion without any change and without attempting to make a little easier their suffering and discomfort, they went on for days and weeks and months. The seasons changed, and so did the weather, but there was no change as far as they were concerned. The same clothes—no matter whether it was hot or cold, day or night, weekday or Shabbos or Holiday—covered their emaciated bodies, and these had become completely dilapidated. From their faces had disappeared the last remainder of their previous comfortable life. They looked as if these had descended from generations of beggars, with the sole difference that they did not carry a knapsack on their shoulders—because they did not own anything which they could put into such a sack.

CITY OF CRAKOW

But in spite of all their suffering—cold, hunger, exhaustion—they did not lose their courage and determination to accept their suffering willingly. They would never attempt to take it easy during the week or to permit themselves to eat a little more once in a while. Quite often they were offered just that, not once did they smell the fragrance of the food that was being prepared while they were standing at the kitchen door begging for a piece of bread or a leftover dairy dish. (*Hard like a rock was their determination to continue their sufferings to make sure to atone for all their sins in this world.*)

Three full years passed in this fashion. They were three years of extraordinary suffering for the two partners, the Baalay Teshuvo. Their bodies, at one time strong and healthy as butchers' bodies usually look, had shrunk during this period and had become dried out and emaciated, and their backs were bent. They didn't have the slightest amount of enjoyment of life during the entire three years. On the contrary, they used to run away as far as they could from anything which could have given them any satisfaction so that they would not be exposed to any temptation. Not even once was there a smile on their faces during the entire three years. Never did they spend the day in the same place where they had spent the night. Constantly, without any interruption, they were wandering around—during the summer barefoot under the burning sun which shone mercilessly on their lean bodies. The soles of their feet became hard like leather, and there was no blood when they stepped on sharp-edged rocks. In the winter even the worst cold or the most severe snowstorms could not deter them from continuing their wandering on the roads and through the fields, exposed to the grim and cruel nature and the constant danger of freezing to death.

More than once it happened that they got sick, sometimes one, sometimes the other, with high fever and much pain. Sometimes they even imagined their end had come. But their hardened constitutions could withstand all bouts with sickness,

and perhaps it may even have been the merit of the holy "Megallay Amukos" which came to their assistance to help them endure the suffering of three years of repentance so that they might be purified for the world to come.

In the meantime, however, soot and dust had deeply penetrated the crevices of their shriveled skin, for throughout the three years they did not even once take a real bath, they hadn't cut their nails. No wonder that their hair looked wild and overgrown. They were always fatigued and exhausted, without stamina, dragging along their feet with sheer will power, determined to carry out the harsh atonement which had been prescribed for them to obtain forgiveness for their sins.

Only when they reached the last few months of their Teshuvo years, they started to pay attention to their present location, the name of the town where they were now, how far it was from Crakow, their home-town, how long it would take to get there from here. They now made it their business to head in the direction of Crakow, calculating how fast they would have to walk in order to reach Crakow at the end of the three years.

Their mood now became at times a little more hopeful since they realized that they had complied with the Teshuvo which the rabbinical court had decreed for them in all its details: they had not made it easier for themselves in the slightest detail. On the contrary, sometimes they made the penitence even harder upon themselves, fearing that otherwise it would not be considered fulfillment of their obligations.

It was, thus, just on the third anniversary of their leaving Crakow that they completed their wanderings and reached the city.

Two outrageously tattered beggars who made a horrible impression, two people who looked as if they had just arisen from their graves, their shrouds rotted long ago and only their

skeleton-like bodies moving, entered the city of Crakow heading directly to the house of the Rabbi of Crakow.

Horror filled the people who looked at them. But nobody recognized them. For when they had left, they were men in their middle years, but now they looked like oldsters, broken in body, their hair wild and unkempt, dressed in rags.

The holy "Megallay Amukos" had the two butchers, the Baalay Teshuvo, in mind every day of the past three years, suffering together with them all the pain which they had endured to obtain atonement, was impatiently awaiting their arrival on that day, the third anniversary of their departure. From early in the morning on he was standing near the window looking out, longingly awaiting their arrival.

As soon as the "Megallay Amukos" got a glimpse of them from afar, he immediately understood that these two horrible looking creatures must be the Baalay Teshuvo. He ran out into the street like a young boy, in his houserobe, to meet them, and with his hand outstretched, he called to them:

"Welcome back, holy Tzaddikim, you whose souls have been purified!"

Joyfully he greeted them and, sniffing them with spiritual pleasure, he exclaimed:

"Yes, yes, I smell the fragrance of Gan Eden coming from your direction."

He led them to his private room, and he himself brought them comfortable chairs and asked them to sit down. He embraced and hugged them with great feeling.

"Happy are you because you are full-fledged Baalay Teshuvo! Even the most righteous people will not be accorded as much honor and respect in the world to come as you! In the place were Baalay Teshuvo stand, even the most righteous cannot stand."



He brought them refreshments, and when he saw that they did not know whether they were already permitted to eat, he encouraged and comforted them:

“Eat, eat my children! From today on you are permitted! From now on you don’t have to wander around anymore. You can now remain in Crakow together with your wives! Only you will not be allowed anymore to occupy yourselves with business, but you will have to live from the honest work of your hands. You may become porters, wood-cutters, or night watchmen, or whatever job you will be able to find. I assure you that you will be able to make a living! I will ask the members of the community to assist you in obtaining employment, and nobody should remind you of, or blame you for, the sins you have committed in the past, because these sins do not exist anymore. They have been cleansed with the blood and marrow of your tormented bodies.

The Jews of Crakow had almost forgotten the story of the two butchers who had sold non-kosher meat for many years and for that the Rabbinical Court decreed that they had to destroy all their property and wander around in the world to obtain forgiveness for their sins. Since that happened three years had already passed, and it had already partially vanished from memory.

Now, all of a sudden the messenger of the Rabbinical Court made an announcement in all Botey Medroshim and houses of worship, by order of the Rabbi of the city:

“This is to notify all members of the local community that the two butchers, the Baalay Teshuvos have now returned to Crakow after their wanderings and after completing the severe conditions for atonement which were placed upon them. From now on they are to be considered righteous people who have been cleansed from their sins. The Rabbi—may he have a long life—has therefore ordered that all members of the community

should assist by finding work for them in order to make it possible for them to support themselves and their wives! As far as possible, everyone should look for jobs for them—like chopping wood, delivering packages, using them as night watchmen—and pay them for their work adequately. Nobody should G-d forbid remind or scold them for the sins they had committed in the past or bother them in any other fashion. On the contrary, they are to be treated with respect, and they should not be given too strenuous work since their bodies have been weakened by the great suffering they have had to endure for three years. There lies an obligation on each and everyone to watch out that they should have an opportunity to earn a livelihood and that nobody should take advantage of them. They, the two Baalay Teshuvo themselves, would surely not react to an injustice committed against them. Therefore it is essential that everyone should be careful with them.”

The “Megallay Amukos” lent the two Baalay Teshuvos a sum of money from the communal Free Loan Fund so that they would be able to buy simple clothes and to rent living quarters for themselves and their wives. They were to repay the loan within a longer period of time by taking off a few cents from all their earnings, so that they would not benefit from handouts of the people but live on the money which they had earned with their own hands.

The Jews of Crakow conscientiously obeyed the order of their great Rabbi. As soon as the two Baalay Teshuvos, who were once the richest people in town but now walked around dressed in simple, coarse clothes with a rope tied around their waist—showed themselves in the street looking around where they would be able to earn their first money to buy some bread, people were virtually fighting over them:

“Come to me! I have some work for you!”

“No, better come to me! The work which I have for you is not so heavy!”

“If you come with me, you will be able to make more money per day!”

“I have a job for you where you won’t have to do anything. You will just have to be a watchman, and you will be able to rest your weary bones!”

Both of them permitted themselves to be pulled by their sleeves, this one here, the other one there, without any resistance and without opening their mouths as if they had no will of their own. They did not ask any questions about the nature of the work and how much they would be paid for it. As soon as they got to the place of work, they started working with all their might. They were able to complete in an hour the work which they were supposed to finish in a whole day, and then they asked for more work—all this because they did not want to accept anything as a present, without working for it.

Out of wonderment and desire to learn a lesson from them, people used to come every day to their place of employment to watch with how much diligence and perseverance the Ballay Teshuvo were working. They were not much more than skin and bones but how much power they had in their hands! Those who remembered their aristocratic looks three years ago, their full figures and ruddy complexions, wiped a tear off their faces every so often because they were moved to take pity on their suffering that caused their skin to turn yellowish-brown like parchment and which made their cheek bones protrude through their skin. In order not to embarrass them, they observed them through the openings in the fences around the yards where they worked. They turned away their heads when they felt that the two noticed that they were being observed.

Slowly they became integrated again in the city, they became once again useful citizens who earned their living honestly doing only what was permissible. They rented living quarters in the outskirts of the city because they were ashamed to live amongst Jews in a Jewish neighborhood. They also did not want to cause shame to their children and grandchildren. Why should they, too, suffer because of their sins?

It happened one evening after a day of hard work. The two Baalay Teshuvos greatly worried, went to the house of the "Megallay Amukos" and waited modestly near the door until the holy Tzaddik would raise his eyes and call them over.

"Welcome children!" exclaimed the "Megallay Amukos" as soon as he became aware of their presence, "Why are you worried? Is there anything wrong with you? Did anybody embarrass you or perhaps do you an injustice? Tell me, and I will do anything in my power to alleviate your situation."

"Holy Rabbi!"—both of them started, crying bitterly—"Our hearts are full of fear because of the day of Great Judgment which is coming closer and closer. After all, we are not getting any younger, but older! It won't be long and the Angel of Death with his thousand eyes will call us to the place where we will have to account for all the actions which we have committed in this world. Who knows whether our three years of suffering were sufficient to wash off our great sins completely? When we remind ourselves of the terrible Gehinnom and the Angels of Destruction in the world to come, we start trembling and we would want to resume our wanderings, suffering hunger, cold, fatigue and exhaustion as long as we obtain atonement for our terrible sins!"

"Calm down, children!" the "Megally Amukos" tried to quiet their tears, "I assure you that you are considered completely righteous people. I wish upon myself to come to "Olom Habo" as purified as you will come after a hundred and twenty years. Your

share in Gan Eden will be greater than the one of the biggest Tzaddik, for a Baal Teshuvo is greater than a Tzaddik.”

“Holy Rabbi, but we are still so afraid!” continued the two, unable to stop the flow of tears—“Maybe it would be possible that we could get some indication, some sort of document which would serve us as an assurance?”

“Very well, I will give you a letter!”—the Megallay Amukos agreed, realizing that there was no other way to calm them down.

In the late evening hour, the “Megallay Amukos” sat down at his table, took the goose quill in his hand and wrote in Hebrew the following:

When the “Megallay Amukos” had finished reading the document to them, both of them stretched out their hands to take it. Each one wanted that document given to him, that he should be the one to hold on to it. The “Megallay Amukos” did not know to whom to give it. Finally he decided to give it to the one who first thought of doing Teshuvo.

Only then the two went home somewhat calmer.

Reassured by the letter which the “Megallay Amukos” had given them, stating that they had been completely purified from their sins and that the Heavenly Court may not punish them anymore for their making Jews eat non-kosher meat, the two Baalay Teshuvo worked hard and did the physical work which the people of Cracow gave them willingly and thus earned enough to support themselves and their wives honestly through the work of their hands.

Every night after work and Shabbos almost the entire day, they used to spend their time in the Community Beth Hamedrash where they listened attentively to what others learned from the Holy Books, paying special attention to the

words inspiring pious conduct and the fear of G-d which provided refreshment to their aching hearts and their sinful souls.

They considered it a privilege to be of assistance to those learning in the Beth Hamedrash, like bringing them a glass of water or delivering a message for them. With extraordinary joy, they ran whenever there was a Mitzva to be done. They answered innumerable times. "Omeyn, Yehay Shemay Rabbo" every day and especially on Shabbos. In general, they lived the last years of their lives working strenuously and serving the L-rd of the universe faithfully.

Although none of the people of Crakow who knew about their past, their former wealth and the long years of Teshuvo which they had undergone, ever tried to hurt their feelings or to insult them, still the two Baalay Teshuvo would always stand in a humble submissive way before every person, looking into everybody's eyes and trying to read what he might need at the moment, in order to serve him and fulfill his wishes quickly. Although they were old and fatigued, they used to run like young boys, and their faces showed the tremendous amount of satisfaction which they derived from it.

But the years and old age in the meantime showed their effect; especially on one of them, old age became noticeable at a fast pace. His feet became shaky; he could not keep his body straight; his hands began to tremble. He became weak and incapable of doing physical work, until finally one day he was not able to get up from his bed where he was lying without strength pining away. It was easy to observe that death was approaching at a rapid pace. It wouldn't be long, and he would have to go the way of all mortals.

This was the one who did not have the document written by the "Megallay Amukos" as testimony before the Heavenly Court.

When it became known in the city of Cracow that one of the Baalay Teshuvo had fallen ill, the rabbis and the scholars of the city came to visit him in his small and poor abode. When the sick man saw them, he was very much moved by the great honor accorded to him and he began to cry. The Rabbis thought that he was crying because he was afraid of his approaching death and the judgment before the Heavenly Court which he would have to face. Therefore they started to comfort him and to reassure him that he would not have to be afraid of anything.

“You are a perfectly righteous man, even greater than a Tzaddik”, they reassured him. “Your soul is as pure as the purest gold, without the least bit of dross. A golden chair is ready for you in Gan Eden, for you have suffered enough in this world to atone for all your sins!”

“But it is not I who has the letter, but my friend!” said the severely ill man amidst tears, “Oh, I am so afraid of the day of judgment! My whole body trembles with fear, and constantly I see in front of me the horrible Angels of Destruction who approach me with their long pointed forks ready to grab my body and fling it into the boiling cauldrons of tar in Gehinnom.”

Whereupon the Rabbi reassured the sick man once again and told him that in Heaven there is no need for a document. G-d examines the kidneys and the heart of man, his innermost parts, and He knows everything that is going on in the most secret places.

The rabbi and the scholars went away and left some money and refreshments for the patient.

A few days passed. The condition of the sick man became worse and worse. Death came closer, and the sick man was lying in anguish, constantly crying and lamenting that he saw the Angels of Destruction standing ready to grab his body with their long forks as soon as his soul would leave his body.

The Chevro Kaddisho could not bear watching the tremendous suffering of the dying man and decided to go to the "Megallay Amukos" and ask him to come along with them to comfort the dying man and to ease the anxiety of his heavy heart.

"Rabbi!"—the dying man could hardly get the words out of his already blue lips while streams of tears rolled down on the yellow parchment-like the skin of his face "I am fidgety; I am afraid maybe in heaven they will not recognize my Teshuvo. Then, woe unto my sinful soul! What is going to become of me then? I will never be able to get out of Gehinnon, I will be lost there for eternity! Maybe I will have to wander around in the wild woods, or I will be changed into a dumb animal and I will have to go through inhuman suffering!"

The "Megallay Amukos" was overcome with pity and called in the second Baal Teshuvo and ordered him to give over the document to the dying man so that he could take it along with him to the grave. In return, the dying man would give him his hand and promise that, as soon as possible after his death, he would appear to him in a dream and tell him in all detail what had happened to him from the time his soul left him until he arrived at his place of rest.

The second Baal Teshuvo obeyed the Rabbi's order and gave the document to his friend. In return, the dying man gave him his hand and promised that as soon as he would come to his rest, he would appear to him in a dream and give over to him everything that happened to him.

Only then did the dying man find peace, and a day later his soul departed peacefully. There was a radiant smile on his face as if he was experiencing indescribable heavenly bliss.

The people of Cracow saw to it that the deceased received an elaborate funeral. The Rabbi sent word to all synagogues and Botei Medroshim that a work stoppage had been proclaimed.

Accordingly, all the Jews closed their stores and places of business, and everybody, big and small, old and young, prominent or plain, participated in the funeral of the Baal Teshuvo.

All the funeral customs were performed for the deceased with great dignity. The deceased held the document in his hand and took it along with him into his grave. The "Megallay Amukos" himself delivered a fiery funeral oration which had a tremendous impact on the listeners who were deeply moved and shed torrents of tears. He pointed out the tremendous power of Teshuvo, which extends even to the heavenly Throne. Even the worst sinner to whom it seems that his soul is doomed, even he, as long as his eyes are still open, can do Teshuvo and can get to the other world purified from his sins. And he closed his address with the words: "Make place! A big Tzaddik is now coming to his eternal rest! A soul of gold is returning, just as pure as it was when it came down!"

During the entire Shiva week, the rabbi and the greatest scholars of Crakow came to the house where the deceased had died, to pray there and to listen to the Kaddish and to comfort the mourners, his widow and children. Of course, the small room and yard were packed with visitors during every Tefilla, and every one answered with great devotion, "Omeyn, Yehay Shmay Rabbo". After each service the Rabbi and all those present studied a chapter of Mishnayos, for the benefit of the soul of the deceased. The little room of the deceased was transformed into a place of holiness where holy Jewish words were uttered during the entire Shiva week.

The second Baal Teshuvo, the remaining partner, whose letter the deceased had taken along with him to the grave, was waiting throughout the Shiva week for his friend to appear to him in a dream, to tell him what was happening to him in the other

world—but in vain! The deceased did not contact him. Another week passed and another. The partner became very sad and anxious.

Finally, on the first night after the thirty day mourning period, as the remaining Baal Teshuvo was falling asleep on his straw mattress after a day of exhausting work, his deceased partner appeared before him.

He remembered very well that his partner wasn't anymore among the living, and he expected that his looks should be still more pained than when he was alive, especially in the last days before his death when his face was black and his features had changed completely because he was constantly crying and trembling for fear of the day of judgment.

But his partner whom he spent almost his entire life with, in joy and and in sorrow hardly recognized him. The face of the deceased shone brightly, a holy brightness emanated from him like the sun, blinding the eyes and making it difficult to look at him. His shrouds, too, were white as freshly fallen snow, a reflection from the sun, without a dot and a blemish. Altogether there emanated from him a purity associated with Divine presence befitting a Tzaddik, as though it were coming from Gan Eden.

And his voice? During the period of being a Baal Teshuvo, he had completely forgotten that his partner at one time used to talk in a lively voice. His voice had become sad and gloomy, he hardly spoke at all, and the few words which he did say sounded hollow and dull, just as if they were coming from a grave. But now—his voice had become mellow and full of satisfaction and happiness. It was not at all anymore the voice of a coarse butcher, awkward and unlearned and full of sin. It was the sweet voice of a refined person, refined from the constant occupation with the Holy Books and conducting a life filled with holiness and purity.

“My dear friend,” the deceased started saying happily “the world down there doesn’t realize at all who the “Megallay Amukos” is, how highly respected he is in Heaven, in how much esteem he is held and how much authority he has in the Heavenly household. The gates of the highest world stand open before him, and he walks in and out over there as he does in his own house! What he orders is carried out, and what he decides, that is the way it remains!”

And then the deceased started telling what had happened to him from the moment on when his soul left his body:

“Our fight was not without good reason! It would have been bitter for our souls until eternity if we hadn’t done Teshuvo in the lower world, for here, above, one cannot straighten out the bad things which one has done down there!

“Listen, my dear friend! As soon as my soul left my body, angels of destruction came flying towards me, as numerous as the sand near the ocean! Their looks were so terrifying that one could die ten times from fear merely by looking at them! Some of them had the looks of evil hungry wolves, others had the shape of poisonous snakes, spewing fire; another group looked like a mixture with murderous blood-thirsty eyes, carrying bloody spears in their hands ready to pick me up and fly away with me to a deserted place where I would have been lost forever without a chance to ever return!

“But in that very moment four white friendly angels positioned themselves next to me, one near my head, another

one near my feet, and the other two on both sides. They didn't leave me even for one second until after the Tahara purification so that the angels of destruction would not get near me and thus could not have any power over me. They all gritted their teeth and exhaled fire ready to consume me. But they were not able to come close to me.

“When they carried me out in the coffin and brought me to the cemetery, many angels surrounded and accompanied me, and although the black angels of destruction, numerous as the sand near the ocean, were just waiting to grab and fly off far away with me far away, they were not able to break through and to do to me anything bad to me.

“When they lowered me into the grave, before they could throw the first shovelful of earth on the grave, the angels of destruction pushed forward with a great commotion and loud noise and tried to grab me from there, but the holy angels stood firm like a brick wall, not moving away even for a second and not taking their friendly glances away from me.”

“Even after the closing of the grave, when the people who had to come to the funeral, headed by our holy Rov, had already returned to the city, even then the four friendly angels did not leave my grave and remained there to watch me to see to it that nothing bad should happen to my body.

“The four other friendly angels came and led my soul away to the heavenly Court.

“I was carried to heavenly heights, and I felt so light and flowing as if I were an angel with six wings.

“Soon I entered a place of such blinding brightness that you over there, in the lower world, cannot even imagine anything like it. Because of that I became so full of bliss and joy that it cannot possibly be expressed with words. There is nothing

like it in the lower world! If a person would enjoy all earthly pleasures at the same time, this would still not be any comparison to it!

“The four angels, my companions, took me to a palace made of pure crystal and gold, where the windows consisted of tremendous diamonds which sparkled with unusual beauty in all colors of the rainbow so that I became overwhelmed and speechless with delight. Outside, in front of the tremendous entrance door, above which there was a sign made out of fiery letters, reading “Place of Judgment,” there were posted lions and leopards who sniffed from all sides each and every soul which was brought there and, dependent upon how sinful the soul was, emitted a frightening growl.

“The four angels carried me on their wings inside, to the Place of Judgment, and there before my eyes unfolded such monstrous things that I didn’t know where to turn my eyes. The size of the hall was so tremendous that it was impossible to see from one end to the other. The walls, the ceiling and the floor were covered with shining precious stones which sparkled with such brightness that the sun which illuminates the earth is dark in comparison with it.

“In the midst of the hall there was a gigantic table around which the members of the Heavenly Court were seated—all of them fiery angels, above was a sign with large fiery letters proclaiming “The Torah of Moshe is the Truth” and on the table, lay an open Torah Scroll, both parchment and letters made of fire.

“To that table are led all the souls which have just been brought up from the lower world in order to judge them: to decide whether they would have to go to Gehinnom or whether they would be permitted to enter Gan Eden.

“As every soul is judged, they look up his page in the big Book of Divine Records, made of parchment, and read all the

good and bad things which he has done throughout his life and which he has inscribed in the book with his own hand. At every trial there are angels of mercy and angels of justice, defenders and accusers. The soul itself in most cases remains silent out of fear and trepidation and is unable to defend and justify itself in face of the sins it is accused of and the accusations which are hurled at it.”

“In most cases witnesses are also called at these trials. I have seen how in one trial they called the beams of the house which had witnessed the sinful act which the accused had committed secretly, thinking that surely nobody would see him.”

“The verdicts which were issued were of many different kinds. The verdict of some was: Gehinnom. But then it depended on what type of Gehinnom was decreed and also on the length of the term. Some were condemned to the lowest abyss of the nether world, others would be transformed into an animal or a tree and would have to wait an undetermined length of time until they would receive their atonement. As soon as such a soul gets its verdict, the angels of destruction grab it and carry it out to bring it to its destination. The soul laments, expresses its regrets and asks for mercy, **but there in Heaven, regrets about sins committed down on earth are of no avail!**”

The deceased continued telling his partner in the dream:

“Sometimes it happens that a soul comes here white as snow, pure as gold, without the slightest blemish, and it is judged innocent. In that case the Court issues the verdict “Go to Gan Eden!” The angels above them get up from their places and exclaim in a festive voice: “Happy are you and all is well with you for you have merited the Divine Eternity!” A group of friendly angels surround it and make space for it, pronouncing solemnly: “Make a place, straighten out a path, for a Tzaddik

is coming. Say to the Tzaddik that it will be good for him because he will enjoy the fruit of his good deeds.

“With great honor and an outstanding beautiful parade the Tzaddik is then escorted. All the righteous from Gan Eden come to greet and to enjoy with him the arrival of their new colleague. The sun, the moon and the stars illuminate the entire way shining brilliantly with an abundance of gold, silver and diamond rays. All plants bend down to the newly arrived Tzaddik in Gan Eden and exclaim with a melodious voice: ‘Happy is he and happy is his soul.’ ”

“But this happens rather infrequently here in Heaven. Most of the time the souls are adjudged guilty. Then woe unto such a soul. The Heavenly Court shouts with anger, and all tremble when they hear the frightening shouts:

“ ‘Villain! Sinner! How could you dare to transgress the Holy commands of the King of Kings? You were given a pure soul and you were told to keep it pure and holy. But you went, defiled and soiled it with your sins and vulgar desires! Woe unto you and woe unto your soul! Because of unworthy enjoyment which lasted only a few minutes, perhaps seconds, you were willing to lose eternal worlds of million fold spiritual pleasure!’ ”

“Upon hearing these shouts, groups of black angels of destruction come flying, looking like devils whose mere appearance causes the sinful soul to tremble, and they tear it away from the table of the Heavenly Court with great cruelty and lead it to Gehinnom or other desolate places where there is no possibility to return forever.”

“I,” the deceased continued his tale, “was standing there, huddled in a corner so that nobody take notice or pay attention to me. I was fidgety and trembling with fear. In my heart I had a terrible bitter feeling as if somebody had sprinkled

salt on open bloody wounds. I thought to myself: "Who knows what terrible verdict awaits me? Is it a trifling thing that I committed so many wrongs down on earth the greater portion of my life? Not only did I sin myself, but I caused others to sin as well! All the time I clutched the letter of our Rabbi, the "Megallay Amukos", firmly in my hand, clinging to it as my only salvation.

"They took care of one soul after the other. Some received a very strict verdict, others a milder one. Nobody left being declared completely innocent. And then, all of a sudden, I heard my name called and I was brought gently to the table of the Court, where one of the angels opened my page in the big parchment Book of Records. At once, I heard a horrifying voice which made me grow numb with fear."

" 'Who brought this wicked villain over here? All the fires of Gehinnom are not enough for him!' "

"My angels caressed me with their silk wings, which made me get out of the state of numbness, as I put the letter of our Rabbi on the table."

"What kind of talk is that, does the 'Megally Amukos' want to decree upon us to let this soul go scot-free? He has no right to command us to accept the Teshuvo of such a wicked person who not only sinned but made others sin as well making the Jews of an entire city eat non-kosher meat for many, many years!"

"Whereupon a group of angels of mercy, who defend the accused, shouted back in holy anger:"

"What else do you want from this tormented soul? Did he perhaps suffer too little during his lifetime? This soul, of its own free will, confessed its sins publicly, threw away all its wealth, which it had acquired during a lifetime, gave up voluntarily all pleasures of this world, suffered a hard and

bitter exile for three years, endured the most severe physical and mental suffering: hunger, cold, and embarrassment on top of it. You angels, if you would have been put in human bodies, and sent down to earth, you wouldn't have been able to endure such suffering under any circumstances. Undoubtedly you would have collapsed and you wouldn't have been able to endure such a Teshuvo! And now you want to throw yet into the fire of Gehinnom! The Tzaddik of our generation, the holy 'Megallay Amukos', has promised, both orally and in writing, that it is already pure and cleansed from all its sins, that it is even greater than a perfect Tzaddik, because where a Baal Teshuvo stands, a perfect Tzaddik cannot stand, and after all this, you call this person a wicked man?!"

But the angels of justice, the denouncers and accusers, shouted back with horrifying anger which caused all the worlds to tremble:

"Look at the abomination which this criminal soul has caused!"

At these words thousands and ten thousands of souls came flying from all sides who cried pitifully and lamented:

"We have died because of his sins!"

"I had to leave the world while I was still young"—one soul lamented—"because this wicked person made me eat non-kosher meat!"

"We were young Yeshiva boys. We never experienced the taste of sinning! We would have grown up to be great Torah scholars, but because of this Jewish sinner we died while we were still very young!"

"We were young housewives"—one could hear pitiful lamentations that would move even a stone—"we gave birth to children in holiness and purity and hoped to bring them up for Torah, marriage and good deeds, to see them grow up to

be scholars, pious and righteous people, but because of his sins we had to die while giving birth or shortly thereafter, causing our other little children to become orphans, and now we have no rest in our graves. The crying of our trembling children in the cradles wakes us up in our graves! Just like birds whose nests were destroyed, so we hover constantly over their cradles and little beds where they sleep. If they are maltreated by their nurses or stepmothers, their helpless tears scald our bodies. We don't need any Gehinnom. The pain and the suffering of our children who remained lonely orphans, in whom nobody takes an interest, is worse for us than the most terrible Gehinnom. We were already hoping for the day when that sinner would come here to see the revenge, how he is going to burn in Gehinnom. And now they want to forgive him and let him get away with it! No! Under no circumstances! Even if the Heavenly Court will forgive him, *we will not forgive him.*"

Suddenly flocks of cows and calves arrived, mooing and bleating. With their silent tongues they complained before the Heavenly Court:

"We were transformed into animals in order to atone for our sins on earth by being slaughtered in a Kosher manner by a Shochet who would make a Brocho over us! We always tried to make sure not to fall into the hands of a Gentile who would just kill us and make us non-kosher. Finally we succeeded, and a Jew bought us to bring us to the Shochet with a sharp knife without a nick. And then came this Jewish sinner who made people eat non-kosher food and led us to a secret stable, and there he killed us with an ace as one kills an unclean pig! Thus all our hopes to obtain atonement were now in vain, and we now continue wandering around in the netherworld and cannot find any rest."

"I was standing there, mute, speechless. There was nothing which I could answer them."

The deceased continued his story and told his partner in the dream:

“When my defender saw that things looked bad, he took the document from me written by our Rabbi, the “Megallay Amukos” and said:

“Don’t be afraid, wait here for me!”

“He started then flying higher and higher, stayed away for a short while and then came back with a large group of silver white angels who started to defend me:

“Did he perhaps suffer too little down on earth, when he tortured his body, when he underwent all kinds of suffering embarrassment and all that, in order to atone for his sins! Remember, he has a letter from the holy “Megallay Amukos” that he has atoned for all his sins on earth, and we have the rule “When he has received punishment, he is again just like your brother, and therefore is cleansed from all his sins.”.

“Then there ensued a long debate among the members of the Heavenly Court. Finally the verdict was announced. The decision reached by the rabbinical court down on earth has been accepted and been confirmed by the Heavenly Court. The verdict of the holy “Megallay Amukos” cannot be changed. The Baal Teshuvo is purified from all his sins and is considered just like a new-born child.”

“At the same time another verdict was issued by the Heavenly Court. All souls who were taken away from the world at a young age because I gave them non-kosher meat to eat and also those which were transformed to cattle which I killed, and thus made them lose both worlds, they all are now being forgiven, and the gate of Gan Eden will be opened for them.”

“Soon after, groups of angels came flying and each one of the souls, was taken separately with great fanfare to Gan

Eden, each soul to its proper place, the place which it earned with its merits. Some of the souls started to emit light, a light so brilliant that on earth one couldn't imagine it. Every soul was accorded such tremendous honor, the likes of which does not exist on earth."

"When they had all been taken care of, they started occupying themselves with me. I was put in a high place and around me there were only pure angels, and all were exclaiming in a beautiful melodious voice, a voice to whose beauty there is no comparison: 'This man has been adjudged to be innocent!'—and they specifically mentioned my name and the name of my father."

"Then a large number of heavens opened up where such splendor became visible that man could not imagine anything like it."

"From all sides one could hear the songs of the angels:"

"He is innocent! He is a complete Baal Teshuvo! Even the open Sefer Torah that was lying on the table joined in the singing and shouting, moreover the fiery letters announced that I am free of guilt."

And then the deceased continued with these words to his former partner:

"Do not tire of continuing the tortured life of a Baal Teshuvo. You should not regret for a moment that you have changed too, and are now going on a new and honest way! Remember! The worst pains during the entire life down on earth are better than one second of suffering in Gehinnom in the heavenly world! Life down on earth is transitory, but the Heavenly world will exist forever, for there, there are no limits of time."

“Go to the holy Rabbi, the “Megallay Amukos”, and tell him everything which I have given over to you. Although I am sure that he knows all this better than I, still go and tell him. He should publicize this wondrous story in the world. He should have it printed in a book and spread among the common people! Let everybody know the severity of committing a sin. Let everybody also understand how high the value of a Tzaddik is. Let everybody know the greatness of a Baal Teshuvo and the reward for good deeds ‘which no eye ever beheld.’ ”

“In such fashion they took me in a great parade to my place in Gan Eden.”

The deceased continued telling his partner how he was finally led to Gan Eden, the tremendous honor accorded him there, honor which a living person, even on the highest level of greatness and prosperity, cannot even slightly achieve. And who were the ones who dispensed this honor? These were the old Tzaddikim with radiant faces and crowns on their heads.

“Two oldsters brought me an immensely beautiful crown adorned with the most expensive diamonds which carried the words ‘Complete Baal Teshuvo’ in brilliant letters. They put this crown on my head with great fanfare, and then led me to the hall set aside for Baalay Teshuvo.

“The splendor and beauty of that hall cannot possibly be expressed with words. All the Tzaddikim, who accompanied me there exclaimed:”

‘Happy are you that you merit this!’

Brightness around me spread that even the sun in the middle of the day, in the middle of a summer day in the month of Tammuz, would be considered dark compared to it.

“More and more holy angels and Tzaddikim came out of

Gan Eden to welcome me as their new neighbor. They wore crowns on their heads, adorned with the most precious diamonds that gave forth fire of all colors.”

“Soon six fiery angels arrived carrying an immense and beautiful canopy, the poles made of cedarwood and its cover from pure gold, bearing the inscription in blinding letters: “For to G-d belongs the rulership”. Under this canopy an entire camp of singers and musicians, namely the holy Leviim, the band of King David began singing and playing on heavenly instruments.”

“They made me stand under the canopy. Words cannot describe the magnificent enjoyment one derives from this. A living person cannot endure such enjoyment and therefore cannot continue living.”

We are adding an excerpt from the Sefer “Matay Bris Moshe” on the Hagada Shel Pesach from the explanation of the “Chad Gadya”.

Since this matter came to our attention, I want to mention the great sin “that the meat is still between our teeth”, that we have eaten ‘*Nevaylos Utrayfos*’ until now because there was a great stumbling block since many Shochtim are not able to detect properly whether there is a nick on the slaughtering knife, and many of them treat this matter lightly and look over the knife hurriedly before the Shechita and certainly after the Shechita they examine the knife only superficially more cattle or fowl than the time allows them involved. It stands to reason that because they tire, their hands become clumsy, and they cannot inspect the knives properly. They slaughter too many animals with one knife. The pitfalls and the dire consequences resulting from this practice are innumerable. Great is their sin caused by the fact that the rabbis did not protest against these practices, but maintained the assumption that all Jews are

considered reliable and trustworthy until proved otherwise. Now that this assumption is no longer applicable, we see, looking back, *that this matter has caused our "Bays Hamikdash"* which has been destroyed, not to be rebuilt in our time and the Shechina (Divine Presence) to remain in exile because of our sins. In this area there are also many other faulty practices too numerous to mention. Even if someone ventures to say that even though we no longer assume that all Jews are reliable and trustworthy, we certainly do not assume that they are all untrustworthy. The answer is that nevertheless one must be watchful, because these things have to be done slowly and carefully, and since the work is hard, we find that many are not careful enough. This is, especially true concerning the slaughtering of sheep. Because of their wool, it is very likely that the Shechita is not done properly, and because the shoctim have to slaughter so many sheep, they are not careful enough and they slaughter quickly, thus increasing the possibility of causing people to eat "Nevaylos Utrayfos". If somebody will wonder concerning this and will ask: "Why is this man different from others and why is this time different from others?" and thus will treat the matter lightly, then he will act like his ancestors who demanded: "Who will give us meat to eat?" for which they deserved extermination since they asked for meat not properly slaughtered. Our ancestors sinned and they are not here anymore, and we, if we repeat their sinful actions and are caught up in their misdeeds, G-d forbid, woe unto us on the day of judgment, woe unto us on the day of reproof. We will have nothing to answer and who can tell what happened to us until now, how many bad things were caused by the Shoctim. They themselves did not know that they slaughtered with a knife on which there were nicks. Their own death will be compared to 'Nevaylos and Terayfo' about which it says that it is to be thrown to the dogs, G-d forbid, which means that his

soul will have to descend into a dog. Therefore they should be always aware of this great and terrible punishment, and they should compare their gain to the sin, and they should see to it that the fear of G-d should be constantly on their faces. In addition, they should remove themselves from suspicion in the eyes of their fellow Jews, they should, therefore show their knives to the scholars of their generation, before performing a Shechita as afterwards also every week. Then all good blessings be lavished upon them, and they will be rewarded with the many good things reserved for those who fear G-d. And now, praised by G-d, we have heard that in many communities in Germany honest and trustworthy individuals have been appointed to stand by at the Shechita and to inspect the knives immediately after the Shechita and also to show it to a scholar before the Shechita. Here in Berlin, too, the head of the Rabbinical Court found it necessary to establish regulations for the holy community so that they should not, G-d forbid, defile their souls, and remove this stumbling block from the Jews. Therefore whoever is G-d fearing and has the power to make improvements should see to it that the guilt should not fall on his head, and even he who does not have the power to make improvements, has the possibility not to eat the meat unless the aforementioned regulations have been observed, and even if this means that he will not find meat to eat on Shabbos and Yom Tov, he should not be lenient with himself on this account, G-d forbid, because it is almost certain that otherwise he would eat occasionally forbidden food. Therefore remembering that the end of everyone is vermin and the end will be bitter, one should not be ashamed of any human being and should sanctify himself with that which is permitted to him, only then will he be considered a holy person. (The above is taken from the Sefer "Bris Matay Moshe").

From the Sefer "Tiyul Bepardays" of the Rov of Simlao.

The Gaon Maharash Abohav, of blessed memory, in his 'Sefer Hazichronos' (Chap. 2 of Hilchas Shechito) writes that if it would be at all possible for the people to exist without meat, our rabbis would have abolished the occupation of Shechito long ago, especially now at the present time when there are so many who have chosen this occupation, and it is very easy that stumbling blocks arise both for individuals and for the entire community, and the fault lies with those in authority who give such permission, may G-d protect us.

The "*Chasan Sofer*" of blessed memory (*Orach Chaim* 205) writes that the *Yetzer Hora* (the evil inclination) sits on a chair with three feet. The first being the *Chazonim* who do not properly direct the prayers of the Jews in their congregation, the second the *Shochtim* through whose fault Jews eat "*Nevaylos Utrayfos*" and the third the scribes who write Tefillin and Mezuzos improperly, so that they are *posul*, and these three are sufficient for the *Yetzer Hora*.

We find similar things expressed by the '*Toldos Yaakov Yosef*' (*Parshas Noso*) and also by the *Vilna Gaon* (*Maasay Rav* 90) who writes that it is preferable to eat dairy food on *Shabbos*, rather than eating from a cow which was slaughtered by a *Shochet* who was not supervised by anyone during the Shechita.

The "*Divray Chayim*" (*Yoreh Deah* I, 7) mentions that he has seen many G-d-fearing men and Torah scholars who had become *Shochtim* and then deviated from the path of righteousness. He adds that because of *Shochtim* who were not conscientious, many communities in Germany gave up their orthodoxy, may G-d protect us.

From all this we see that if people are not very careful with respect to the Shechito to be G-d fearing, they will cause great damage. As the '*Tevuos Shor*' expresses it, a *Shochet* must be

outstandingly G-d fearing, and his fear of G-d should be noticeable from his face. Otherwise, he will go astray more and more and also lead astray others who eat from his Shechita and *they will be filled with impurity until they finally become heretics.*" I am sure that the reason laws have been made forbidding Shechita in our times is because we did not watch the Shochtim in the necessary manner. (The above is taken from the *Sefer 'Tiyul Bepardays'* of the Rov of Simlao).

Responsa "Beth Hillel"—Chapter 48

The following was written by the Gaon and Tzaddik Rav Hillel of Kolomiya, of blessed memory:

"You should know that the sin of '*Ne vaylos and Terayfos*' is a very severe one, much more than other transgressions because with respect to other transgressions our sages call those who sin "obstinate children", even though they sin, they are still called children of G-d—but *not so if the sin is eating 'Ne vaylos and Terayfos'*. We see this from Rashi's commentary on these verses: "And men of holiness you should be for me, and meat which is '*terayfoh*' you should not eat". Rashi, in the name of the *Chachonin*, explains that to mean that if you are holy and refrain from eating *Ne vaylos and Terayfos*, then you are mine, but if not, then you are not mine. Now if you are not careful, G-d forbid, not to eat '*Ne vaylos and Terayfos*', how can you say every Monday and Thursday in "Vehu Rachum" the words "Ovinu Malkaynu" (Our Father, our King) or "*Kerachaym ov al bonim*" (As a father has mercy on his children) and during the holy days *Onu bonaycho veato ovinu*" (we are your children and you are our father? How come you are not afraid that the L-rd of the Universe will say "I don't know you, and you are not mine because you are contaminated with *Ne vaylos and Trayfos*". Certainly in a time like this when many of our brethren are in the hands of the enemies of the Jewish people, it is understandable that we

must do everything within our power to see to it that we are considered children of G-d. Our *Chachomim* say also that the punishment which consists of children dying from diseases of the throat, G-d forbid, results from people eating ritually unclean food. Now I am asking you to have mercy on your children, that they should not suffer on account of you....”
(*Teshuvos “Bays Hillel”*)

We would like to ask every one who has the possibility and who understands the importance of alerting the public concerning forbidden foods, to please send us his contribution, as much as his means permit, so as to defray the expenses of publishing this booklet and to enable us to continue our work in this field. In the merit of this Mitzva may you be richly rewarded with blessings and success.

We do not send out envelopes since this is very expensive. We would rather use the money saved thereby to send this message to a greater number of people. Again we ask everyone to send in as much as he can, and he who sends in, above his means most certainly will be rewarded from heaven. Thank you in advance.