

The Pnei Menachem זצ"ל



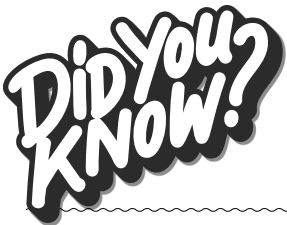
Rav Pinchas Menachem Alter was born on 21 Tammuz, 5686 (1926), in Falencia, Poland. He was the youngest son of the Imrei Emes, Rav Avraham Mordechai Alter, who was the Rebbe of Ger. His bar mitzvah was just before the outbreak of World War II in 1939. His family miraculously escaped Poland during the war and came to Eretz

Yisrael, where he learned in Yeshivah Sfas Emes under Rav Simchah Bunim Leizer son. He married in 1946, the first Gerrer *simchah* after the war, and settled in Yerushalayim. Although he was extremely poor, he refused to take money from anyone.

At age 30, he became the rosh yeshivah of Sfas Emes. He became Rebbe of Ger

in 1992. He was known for disliking all *kavod* — he used to call himself the “smallest chassid of Ger.” On the day that he was *niftar*, his children urged him to stop learning and lie down. He answered, “We have to be *moser nefesh* for our *Yiddishkeit*.”

He was *niftar* in Yerushalayim on 16 Adar, 5756 (1996).



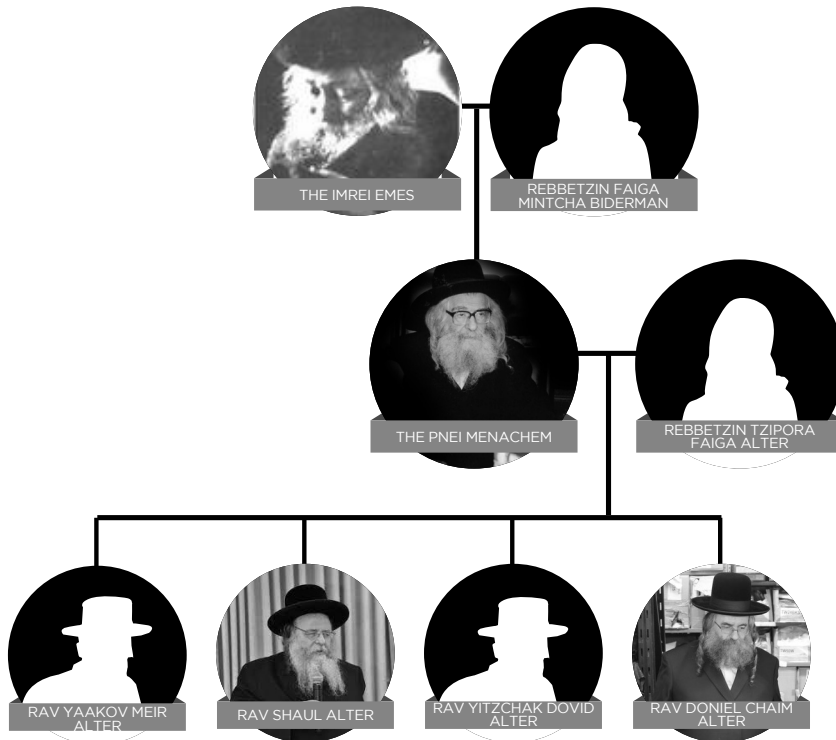
When the Pnei Menachem was young, he had his tonsils removed in Warsaw. When his father came to visit him, instead of telling him how much pain he was in, he said he was upset because the Jewish doctor had taken him downstairs using the elevator on Shabbos. He preferred to have been carried down the stairs even though it would have hurt him more.

When he became rebbe, he went up to Har Hazeisim where his father was buried. When his *shamash* told him to “come down,” he said a Yid must always “go up” and elevate himself. That was the message he lived by.

The Pnei Menachem used to tell people that the most important *segulah* when saying *Tehillim* is to say it with feeling. “It’s more important to say a bit of *Tehillim* with a bit of *kavanah* than a lot of *Tehillim* with less *kavanah*.”

The Pnei Menachem believed that all work done for the *klal* should be done *l’shem Shamayim*. Someone once asked him if he should take on a leadership position. The Pnei Menachem advised, “Only if you refuse to take a salary.”

Family Tree



Rav Pinchas Menachem's father, the Imrei Emes, the fourth Gerrer Rebbe, married his second wife, his niece, Faiga Mintcha Biderman, when he was almost 60 years old. He promised her they would have a son, and the Pnei Menachem was their only child.

Two of the Pnei Menachem's half-brothers (from his father's first wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Ruda) were rebbes before him: Rav Yisrael Alter, known as the Beis Yisrael, was the fifth rebbe of Ger, and Rav Simchah Bunim, the Lev Simchah, was the sixth rebbe.

The Pnei Menachem married Tzipora Faiga Alter, the daughter of Avrohom Mordechai Alter, his first cousin once removed. The *kibbud eim* they had for the Pnei Menachem's mother, who lived them for 16 years, was legendary. Rebbetzin Tzipora Faiga took care of her mother-in-law with incredible love and devotion.

The Pnei Menachem had seven children, two of whom tragically passed away at a young age. His sons were Rav Yaakov Meir, Rav Shaul, Rav Yitzchak Dovid, and Rav Doniel Chaim.

SOME OF THE PNEI MENACHEM'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

The Pnei Menachem became rosh yeshivah of Sfai Emes at age 30. At the time, he was the youngest rosh yeshivah of a major yeshivah in the world. Everyone was surprised when his brother, the Beis Yisrael, appointed him, because nobody knew what a *gaon* he was. When he delivered *shiur* for the first time, his audience was stunned by his brilliance and depth of knowledge.

The Rebbe had thousands of chassidim and treated each like a son. On the first few days after he was appointed rebbe, many people came to him with *kvittlach*. His sons saw him crying over each *kvittel*, because each Yid's pain felt like his own child's.



He was involved in the Vaad Hayeshivos, which was created to protect the yeshivos in Eretz Yisrael from the anti-religious government. He was also chairman of Agudas Yisroel in Eretz Yisrael, which had the goal of strengthening and uniting the frum community.

He established a special interest-free loan *gemach* for people who needed money. If someone didn't meet the qualifications for a loan, they would still get one, but it would be from the Rebbe's personal money instead.



There was a time in Eretz Yisrael when it looked like the *yeshivah bachurim* would be drafted. The Pnei Menachem was put in charge of negotiating with the government. He said, "If I am thrown in jail, I will go with joy." Baruch Hashem, he was successful in preventing the draft.



THE PNEI MENACHEM

had a knack for giving *tzedakah* in a way that the other person wouldn't feel ashamed. There was a poor, lonely man named Rachamim in the neigh-

borhood to whom no one paid any attention — except the Pnei Menachem. Every month, Rachamim had an appointment with the Rebbe to come and tell him all the news. Then the Pnei Menachem would “pay” him for his services. Not only did this allow Rachamim to feel as if he was earning money honestly, it also made him feel, for at least a few hours each month, that someone cared about his ideas and opinions.

Right away, the Rebbe spilled a bit of his own soup and said, “I spilled my soup! These things happen.”

The Pnei Menachem cared about everybody and was extra careful not to insult anyone. He once was sitting near a nervous *chassan* at his *vort* whose hand were shaking so much that he spilled his soup. Right away, the Rebbe spilled a bit of his own soup and said, “I spilled my soup! These things happen.”

Shalom was also very important to the Pnei Menachem. He used to say, “I came to this world to promote peace!” A man named Rafael was involved in a big argument with another person and then became deathly ill. When the Pnei Menachem went to visit him, Rafael asked him for a *brachah* for a *refuah sheleimah*. The Pnei Menachem exclaimed, “Shalom is the source of all *brachah*! If there's *sinas chinam*, the gates of *Shamayim* are shut!” Rafael got the message and made peace with his enemy. He was *zocheh* to a complete and miraculous recovery.

Try This!

The Pnei Menachem would always notice when a person needed a smile or a good word. Once, he walked into a small shul and called the janitor over and told him that he had never seen such a clean shul in his life. With these words, he made the janitor so happy.

Next time you see someone who looks down or like they could use a compliment or a hello, give it to them. Everyone appreciates a compliment, and you may just be making the other person's day!

THE PNEI MENACHEM'S DVAR TORAH *All We Need Is Ratzon*

It is written in the Gemara (*Megillah* 13b) that Hashem knew that Haman would give a lot of *shekalim* to try to kill Klal Yisrael (see *Megillas Esther* 3:9,11). Therefore, Hashem arranged that our *shekalim* would come first so we would be able to overpower Haman, as it says (*Shekalim* 2a): *On the first of Adar, we announce that shekalim will soon be collected for the Beis Hamikdash.*

The Maharsha (on that Gemara) points out that what came before Haman's *shekalim* was Hashem placing the idea in the hearts of the *Chachamim* to announce the *takanah* of the collection and not the actual giving — as the Gemara says: *On the first of Adar, we announce that shekalim will soon be collected...* However, the collection wouldn't take place until the 15th of Adar (*Shekalim* 3b). How was this able to overpower Haman, whose *shekalim* came on the 13th of Adar, before ours were collected?

The answer is that when Klal Yisrael would hear the announcement, they would make a decision to give. In *Shamayim*, this choice and *ratzon* was even more precious than the actual giving! And this is true in every generation when our enemies spend money to harm us: If beforehand we have the right *ratzon*, make proper choices, and accept upon ourselves good *kabbalos*, then we will be able to overpower them as well.

(*Otzar Drashos U'ma'amarim, Parshas Shekalim, siman 39*)