

Rav Aryeh Levin זצ"ל



Rav Aryeh Levin was born on 6 Adar, 5645 (1885), in Urla, Poland. He was a *ben zekunim* to his father, Reb Binyamin Beinush, an *ehrliche* Yid who worked as a forester during the week and learned the whole Shabbos. Rav Aryeh went away to yeshivah when he was very young, learning in Slutzk under Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, in Halusk under Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, and in Volozhin under Rav Rephael Shapiro. At the age of 19,

Rav Aryeh braved the dangerous voyage to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Yerushalayim. He continued his studies there and received *semichah* from Rav Chaim Berlin, Rav Shmuel Salant and Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook.

Soon Rav Aryeh became known as the "Tzaddik of Yerushalayim" due to his huge heart overflowing with love for Yidden of every stripe – Yerushalmi, Sephardi, Mizrachi and even those who

were not frum at all. He did all he could to help his beloved people, whether it was visiting forsaken prisoners, cheering up hospitalized patients or collecting *tzedakah* for needy widows and orphans. Through his love and caring, Rav Aryeh brought many non-religious people closer to Torah.

Rav Aryeh was *niftar* on 9 Nissan, 5729 (1969).

Did You Know?

When Rav Aryeh read his *semichah* document from Rav Shmuel Salant and saw how glowingly Rav Shmuel described him, he feared he would become arrogant - so he tore up the document!

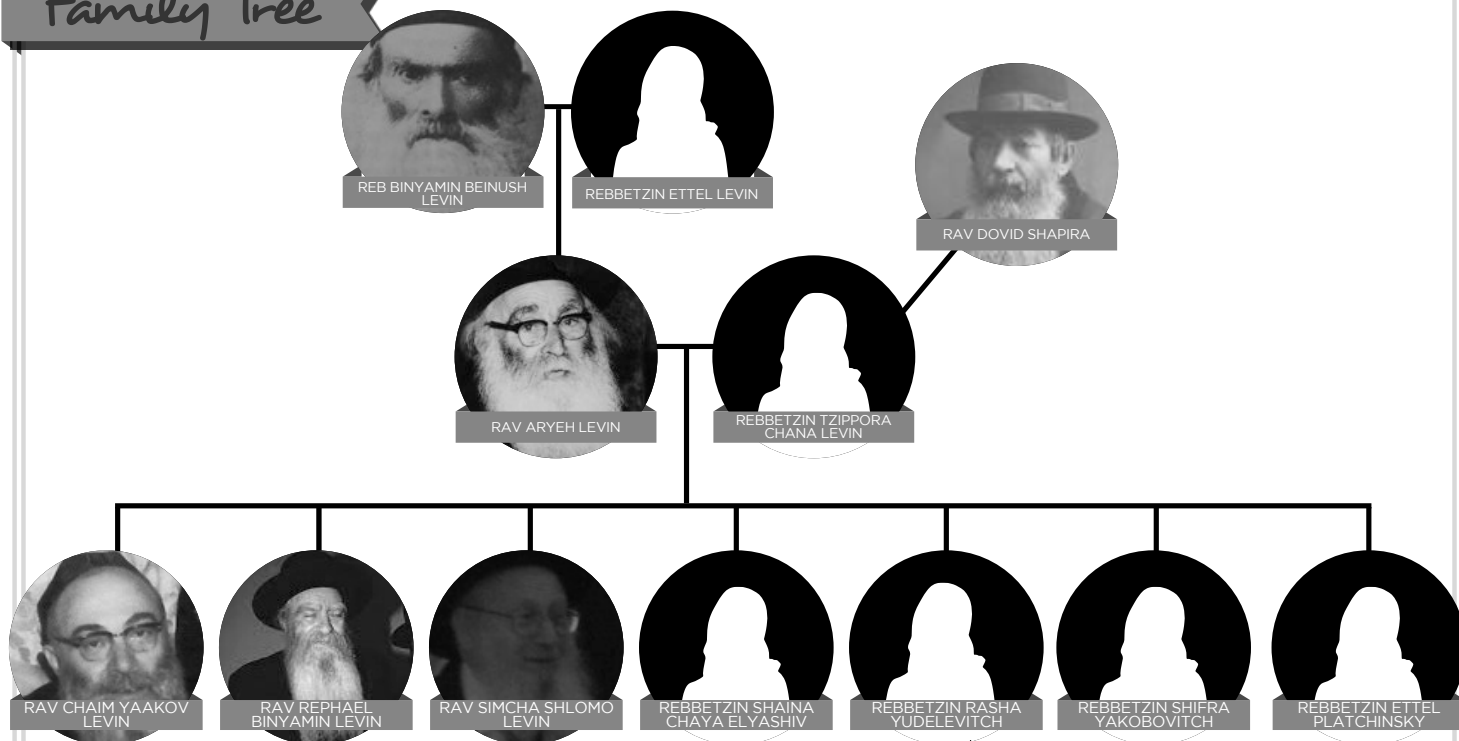
While Rav Aryeh was primarily known for his *chessed*, he was also a great *talmid chacham* who studied together with the famed *mekubal*, Rav Shlomo Elyashiv, the Leshem. Years later, Rav Aryeh's daughter would marry Rav Shlomo's grandson - Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv!

Many people came to ask Rav Aryeh for advice, yet he never asked their names. He felt that people would feel more comfortable talking about their problems if they could remain anonymous.

In 1948, Yerushalayim was under siege by the Arabs and there was little food. The Jewish soldiers (many of whom knew Rav Aryeh from when they were imprisoned by the British and he visited them) would bring food to Rav Aryeh. He would thank them and then give the food away to his neighbors!

Rav Aryeh used to say, "The word *da'agah* (worry) contains the first few letters of the *aleph-beis*, except for the letter *beis*. Why? Because if someone has the '*beis*' - *bitachon* in Hashem - he won't feel the need to worry!"

Family Tree



Rav Aryeh's parents, Reb Binyamin Beinush and Ettel, were known for their *yiras Shamayim* and hospitality. Reb Binyamin Beinush would even give up his own bed to a stranger and sleep on a bench in the kitchen if nothing else was available.

Rav Aryeh's wife was Tzippora Chana Shapira, daughter of Rav Dovid Shapira, rav of Kovno, and sister of Rebbetzin Malka Frank, wife of Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, rav of Yerushalayim. Rebbetzin Tzippora Chana was as warmhearted and full of *bitachon* as her husband. She had a pearl necklace, the only thing she had inherited from her father, that a visiting relative once admired. Rebbetzin Tzippora Chana promptly gave her the necklace as a gift.

Rav Aryeh and Rebbetzin Tzippora Chana merited to have

sons and sons-in-law who were outstanding talmidei *chachamim*. Their sons were Rav Chaim Yaakov, rav in Jersey City and later Pardes Chana, Eretz Yisrael; Rav Rephael Binyamin, dayan in Yerushalayim and rosh yeshivah of Beis Aryeh; and Rav Simcha Shlomo, known as one of the tzadikim of Yerushalayim. Rav Aryeh's daughters were Shaina Chaya, wife of Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, renowned *posek hador*; Rasha, wife of Rav Shmuel Aharon Yudelevitch, rosh yeshivah of the Dushinsky yeshivah and author of *Me'il Shmuel*; Shifra, wife of Rav Aharon Yakobovitch; and Ettel, wife of Rav Leizer Platchinsky, rosh yeshivah of Beis Aryeh. Many of Rav Aryeh's grandchildren are also well-known, including Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky, daughter of Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv.

SOME OF RAV ARYEH LEVIN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Rav Aryeh was *menahel* of Yeshivas Etz Chaim for over 50 years and guided hundreds of little Yerushalmi boys with love and devotion. Many times before Yom Tov he would bring a poor boy into his office, give him an easy test and then announce that the boy had won a special prize – a certificate for a new suit and pair of shoes!



Rav Aryeh visited sick people in the hospitals every week. Once, when visiting a psychiatric hospital, he noticed that one patient was badly bruised. When Rav Aryeh asked the other patients why, they told him that that patient had no family, so the hospital staff would take out their frustration on him. Rav Aryeh went to the head doctor and told him that the bruised patient was his cousin and should be cared for properly. From then on, every week, he would ask the doctors about "his cousin's" progress.



In 1925, Rav Aryeh became Jewish prison chaplain under the British who ruled Eretz Yisrael from 1917-1948. On Shabbos, he would daven *vasikin* and then trudge to the prison – whether it was cold and rainy or hot and sunny. The British favored the Arabs and many young Jews were imprisoned for rebelling against British rule. Rav Aryeh's visits infused them with *chizuk* and hope.



RAV ARYEH loved and tried to help every Jew he met – even those far from Torah. This was most obvious in his many visits to the prison. He would

warmly caress each prisoner's

hand while encouraging him and making him feel valued. Even though most of the prisoners weren't frum, they returned Rav Aryeh's love and respected him. They would scramble to put on yarmulkes before Rav Aryeh arrived and participate in the Shabbos davening that he led. However, there was one particularly nasty prisoner named Yaakov who was a communist. Whenever Rav Aryeh came on Shabbos, Yaakov would light a cigarette right in front of him and try to provoke him, but Rav Aryeh always remained calm.

One Shabbos, Yaakov snapped at Rav Aryeh, "Why do you keep visiting hypocrites and liars? The other prisoners walk around bareheaded and don't keep any mitzvos, but then they hurry to put on yarmulkes when you arrive!" Rav Aryeh responded, "You don't understand. I don't look at their heads – I only look at their hearts – and their hearts are open and full

of warmth!" Yaakov was so touched that he too began to put a yarmulke before Rav Aryeh came and join in the *tefillos*.

One Friday evening, as Rav Aryeh was walking together with his grandson to shul, a bareheaded man smoking a cigarette

"Rabbi," he said with deep emotion, "in all my life I have never listened to anyone. Yet you were so warm and kind to me, even though I was violating Shabbos in front of you. I promise I will never again smoke a cigarette on Shabbos!"

stopped him and in fluent Yiddish asked for directions to his hotel. Rav Aryeh sized him up and said, "The streets of Yerushalayim are confusing and it's easy to get lost. Let me walk you there." So off they went – Rav Aryeh in his *shtreimel* and the bareheaded man with his cigarette. Between puffs of his cigarette, the man told Rav Aryeh that he had grown up in a frum home in Europe and gone to yeshivah, but he had thrown it all away. Rav Aryeh listened patiently, remarked that it was Shabbos a few times and then kept chatting pleasantly. Finally, they reached the man's hotel. The man looked at Rav Aryeh and then threw away the cigarette. "Rabbi," he said with

deep emotion, "in all my life I have never listened to anyone. Yet you were so warm and kind to me, even though I was violating Shabbos in front of you. I promise I will never again smoke a cigarette on Shabbos!"

RAV ARYEH LEVIN'S DVAR TORAH

Supporting the World

The Gemara (*Ta'anis* 25a) tells that Rav Chanina Ben Dosa was extremely poor. It got to the point that his wife asked him to *daven* that they receive some of the goodness kept for tzaddikim in the next world. He davened and they were given a leg of a table made of gold. Afterward, in a dream, he saw tzaddikim sitting at tables with three legs, while their table had only two. When he awoke, he asked his wife if it was acceptable for their table to have just two legs. She replied that he should daven that the leg be taken back, and so it was.

We have a *mesorah* that the three legs of the tables Rav Chanina saw represent the three pillars of the world: Torah, *avodah*, and acts of *chessed* (see Maharsha on that Gemara). The leg that was given to Rav Chanina represented the pillar of *chessed*.

Let's think for a moment: Before Rav Chanina got the table leg, he had no money to give *tzedakah* or do *chessed*, yet his table had all three legs. After he received it, he had the opportunity to help many people with his new wealth. Why did his table lose its leg of *chessed*?

The answer is that while he was poor, he was able to do *chessed* for the whole world by sustaining it on account of his great righteousness (see *Ta'anis* 24b). This was an incredible *chessed* that reached every person. However, after he received the leg, he was seen as a wealthy man. True, he could now help many people with this money, but he would only be able to help in a limited way – he would no longer be able to help the entire world with his *tzidkus*.

(Based on *A Tzaddik in Our Time*, Simcha Raz, Feldheim, Thoughts on the Torah, p. 502, with permission from the publisher.)

Try This!

Rav Aryeh had a small notebook titled "To Learn from Every Jew" where he would write down what he learned from the behavior of people he met. He once wrote about small children: "They may fight, but a few minutes later they're the best of friends again! They don't bear grudges – we adults should be like that."

Observe the people around you and see what YOU can learn from them! Maybe your rebbi makes *brachos* with a lot of concentration; maybe your friend treats his siblings with kindness...