

Moshe Zev (Velvel) Margolies/Margolin/Gluskin/Yaavetz

Moshe Zev also known as Wolf was born in Hlusk in 1767 to the chief Rabbi, his father Rabbi Eliezer Margolies. Moshe Zev is known as the father of the families with the surname Gluskin. In Russia it was an honor to have a child in the army but an only child was exempt from army service. Thus Rabbi Eliezer registered each child a different surname.

Moshe Zev was a genius in Torah and that was his focus, we do not find that he was involved in opinions for or against Chassidim. There was tremendous respect in the non-Chassidic world for Moshe Zev. He was very humble and did not like being called with a title.

When visiting Vilna, he would frequent the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) and they would spend time discussing Torah. He gave a eulogy for the Vilna Gaon, (*who passed away Monday the 3rd day of Chol Hamoed Sukkos 5558*) on Monday the 3rd of Marcheshvan 5558/1797 in Horodna. Moshe Zev was 30 years old when the Vilna Gaon passed away. Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Shklov son of Boruch Bendet famous student of the Vilna Gaon was a maggid in Hlusk. They were cousins as they both had the same ancestor Yehuda Yidel of Kavli.

Reb Chaim Volozhin (1749 – 1821) greatly respected Moshe Zev's father Rabbi Eliezer of Hlusk as illustrated in the following story. One-time Rabbi Eliezer had to pass Volozhin with one of his sons who had been called up to the army. He did not have time to go into the city to give respect to Reb Chaim. When Reb Chaim found out that Rabbi Eliezer would be outside the city he left the city to meet him on the road.

Moshe Zev Wolf left Hlusk in 5558/1798 to become a Rosh Mesivta and Av Beis Din (ab"d) in Horodna for approximately 15 years. While in Horodna he published his first book Maros Hatzovos in 5570/1810. This book made him very famous in the Rabbinical world and he received many letters asking how to deal with agunos or if a man can return to his wife where there is concern that she was with another man, etc. In many of the cases he was able to find a way to permit the wife to continue living with her husband or that she be allowed to remarry.

On the front cover, he writes his family history son after son going back to the Maharal of Prague.

Moshe Zev was in continual contact with Reb Chaim of Volozhin (1741 – 1821) and in fact asked him directly what he thought of his first book. Reb Chaim's words were, "**hu sefer mechubad lemevinim**" meaning it is a precious book for those who comprehend. Reb Chaim used to ask Moshe Zev his opinion in matters of halacha, community and regarding his yeshiva. Actually Leah the wife of Yosef, brother of Reb Chaim Volozhin, was the granddaughter of the sister of Moshe Zev's father Rabbi Eliezer of Hlusk. Thus, there was also a family connection.

One-time Moshe Zev was travelling through Volozhin with his brother the wealthy Reb Zalman of Paritz. When Reb Chaim heard they were in town he did not wait for them to come to him but went out to greet them.

One time a tailor came to him with a case against another person. After hearing the complaint, the Rabbi ruled for the defendant. The tailor would not accept it and said that he is going to take the man to the city court. When the Rabbi heard him say that, he remarked, "A person who does not listen to a Din Torah we already know his punishment." As soon as the tailor arrived home he instantly fell dead to the floor. The Rabbi sat in mourning for him for one hour.

In 5584/1824 he moved to Bialystok. His move also changed the scales and put Bialystok on the map and under his guidance became a more important Jewish community than Tiktin. The investiture of Rabbi Moshe Zev of Tiktin as Bialystok's fourth Rabbi signaled the city's transformation into the regional center for Jewish affairs.

When people spoke of him they referred to him with admiration, the Gaon Reb Velvele or simply Reb Velvele. He was also known by his book Reb Velvele Baal Maros Hatzovos, the Baal Maros Hatzovos or by the city that he was in as Reb Velvele Hatiktini or Reb Velvele Habialistoky.

In the responsa that were published after he died we find that Rabbi Akiva Eiger ab"d of Pozen addresses him as my beloved soul friend, the true Gaon prince of Israel and its beauty.

It happened one time in the area that he lived there was a person who was making trouble in the Jewish quarter by creating reports to the authorities that would hurt people. A group of community members came to the Gaon to discuss how to be rid of the problem. The Gaon asked that they bring the

person to him. When he came, the Gaon remained silent and just looked at him and that was all. The wicked man left and went to a restaurant to eat a nice piece of goose. When he started eating a bone got stuck in his throat and he choked to death. In this way, the Gaon fulfilled the saying of the sages *Talmud Brochos 58a*. "he looked at him and he became a pile of bones."

A question came before him about a man who travelled for business. The man wrote to his family that he is about to finalize a transaction but does not have the money to conclude it therefore they should send him the large sum of money that he needs. He signed his name and added the name Segal which is a common name for Levites but no-one in their family. Since the family did not know what to do they went to the Rabbi.

The Rabbi explained that he was kidnapped by thieves and they forced him to write the letter. Knowing that he cannot escape he sent a message by writing the extra name. The letters of the name Segal are an acronym for the words "Sakono Gedola Lee" meaning I am in great danger. Armed men were sent to the address and they released him from his captives.

Moshe Zev's father was Eliezer ab"d of Hlusk son of Yosef ab"d of Hlusk and Slutzk son of Menachem Mendel ab"d of Hlusk, Slutzk and Minsk son of Moshe Zev ab"d of Minsk who married a Margolies and took on his wife's family name.

Moshe Zev ab"d of Minsk was the son of Yehuda Yidel ab"d Minsk and Kavli, author of *Kol Yehudah* son of Moshe.

Moshe was a son of Tzvi Hirsh Saba son of Yosef Yaski ab"d of Lublin. His great grandfather Yosef Yaski Saba had a son Tzvi Hirsh Saba who married Tila a daughter of the Maharal of Prague. They had a son/grandson Yosef Yaski who was the ab"d of Lublin.

Zev Gluskin who was born in Slutzk on the ninth of Elul 5619/1859 writes in his memoirs that his father Eliezer Gluskin was born in Hlusk and that he is named after his ancestor Moshe Zev.

Zev joined Chovevei Tzion in Warsaw in the 1880's, became a member of Bnei Moshe and one of the founders of Menucha Venachaloh society that

established the settlement of Rechovot. He was one of the founders of Achiasaf publishing house. Participated in the establishment of the Carmel society (1896), to sell wine produced in the settlements and was its first director.

In 1901 he participated in Chovevei Tzion mission to Baron Edmond de Rothchild to persuade him to continue his settlement activities in Eretz Yisroel. In 1904 he was among the founders of the Geulah company, which was established for the private purchase of land in Eretz Yisroel and was its director from 1925 – 1946. Late in 1905 he took over directorship of Agudas Hakeromim (Vintners association) and its wine cellars in Rishon Letzion and Zichron Yaakov.

When world war 1 broke out, he went to Alexandria and helped organize aid for the Jews who remained there and for the refugees from Eretz Yisroel. He supported the volunteer movement for the establishment of a Jewish regiment in the British army from among Eretz Yisroel refugees.

Yehoshua Gluskin

One of Moshe Zev's grandsons Yehoshua Gluskin married a daughter of Don Slonim son of of Reb Isser Kises from Shklov, a chossid of Rabbi Shneur Zalman the first Chabad Rebbe (1745 – 1813). Thus Yehoshua Gluskin lived a period after his marriage in Shklov.

Yehoshua's wife was a daughter of Don Slonim son of Isser Kises of Shklov son of Eliezer Grayever (b. 9 Teves 5504 d.10 Teves 5591) author of **Mishnas Drebbi Eliezer** son of Yaakov a dayan in Pinsk. His wife was a daughter of Eliezer Lipman of Rozini son of Shimshon of Rozini son of Yisroel Zak who married the daughter of Yosef Yaski from Dubna. Yosef Yaski from Dubna son of Yehuda Yidel of Kavli was an ancestor of Yehoshua Gluskin's grandfather Moshe Zev. Thus Yehoshua and his wife Gita were actually distant cousins.

Approximately 358 years ago in the year 5420/1660, two Jews saved the Jews of their village. The Jews of Rozini were falsely accused of killing a non-Jew, after they threw a dead mutilated child into the house of a Jew. They warned the Jews that if they do not hand over the killers the whole community will be wiped out. Two Jews, Yisroel and Tuvia accepted death in order to save the other Jews of the town. The Jewish villagers then made a family tree for these two Jews. Yisroel was a

descendant from Rashi (1040 – 1105) and he was an ancestor of Yehoshua Gluskin wife's.

Aharon Gluskin

Rabbi Aharon son of Yehoshua Gluskin (1840 – 1908) received semicha from the Tzemach Tzedek (1788 – 1866). Aharon Gluskin became the Rov of Paritch after Reb Hillel who passed away in 1864. This would have made him about 25 years old.

The chossid Rabbi Aharon Gluskin was one of the few remainders who represented the greatness of the faith of the house of Israel. All his days, including when he was in business and a successful businessman, he dwelt in Torah and avodah. He was a famous and precious Chabad chossid. Many cities asked him to become their Rabbi but he refused.

After the passing of Rabbi Reb Hillel in 1864, the Chassidic townspeople of Paritch asked Rabbi Aharon Gluskin to succeed him. He refused, claiming that he was undeserving to fill the place of Reb Hillel and also did not want to support himself through the Rabbinate. He then had a sign from heaven when he lost everything to become Rabbi and he accepted.

Thus, he assumed the position of Rabbi after the famous Chassidic Rabbi Hillel of Paritch passed away in 1864. After taking on the Rabbinical position in 1865, Rabbi Aharon became known as a holy man. He was beloved by all. Once, two men came to him for a din Torah and after giving a verdict, the claimant asked the defendant to shake his hand upon his commitment to pay him by the time they agreed upon.

When the time came, the defendant refused to pay and Rabbi Aharon sent him a summons to come to the court – bais din. The man arrived but refused to pay. Rabbi Aharon told him; “since you obligated yourself with a handshake, if you do not pay – the hand will not be yours!” The man continued to refuse to pay and within a month his hand dried up and was paralyzed for the rest of his life.

Reb Mottel Rivkin related that which he heard from Avrohom Itche Glasman who married the youngest daughter of Aharon Gluskin. Once during a din Torah, Reb Aharon felt that one of the sides was not going to fulfill the verdict. Reb Aharon asked the defendant to give a tekias kaf – hand shake. In the end, the man did not fulfill his part of the judgement and his hand got cut off in an accident.

He had 8 daughters and one son. His oldest daughter Keila Liba was my ancestor. Married Jacob Yitzchok son of Shneur Zalman Helfgot d. 3 Teves /December 7 1945, eventually moved to Baltimore. Keila was fluent in Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish and German. She arranged private tutoring for her daughter through a Rabbi who came to the house to teach. They had 7 children. Yehoshua, Nathan, Greisha, Hirsh, Rochel, Miriam and Isser.

Aharon Gluskins daughter Nechama married Menachem Mendel Serebryanski from Brahin.

Reb Zalman also related the following story. There was once a wedding of his father's sister and the chosson was a son of a great Rabbi. Many great Rabbis came including Chaim Soloveichik/Brisker. After the wedding my father Mendel Serebryanski took him to the train station. While they were waiting, Reb Chaim said about Aharon Gluskin that he heard that he was a lamdan but did not know how great of a lamdan he was.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Gluskin

Menachem Mendel son of Aharon and Esther was born into a Chabad Family in the city of Loyev in Belarus/White Russia in 1878 and was named after the Tzemach Tzedek, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Shneerson. In 1909 Menachem Mendel Gluskin married Fradel the daughter of Rabbi Eliezer Rabinowitz of Minsk, granddaughter of the Minsker Gadol Rabbi Yehuda Yerucham Perlman. Mendel became Rav of many communities including Paritch, Prilooki and Nezhin. In 1924 his father-in-law Rabbi Eliezer Rabinovich Chief Rabbi of Minsk passed away and he was invited to become the new Chief Rabbi.

(Introduction by Dr Hillel Zaidman ob"m written in Hebrew and published in Eile Ezkoro volume 4, New York 5721/1961 p. 264 – 269 and reprinted in Ishim Shehikarti (Mosad Harav Kook 5730/1970) p. 370 – 376. Meorei Yisroel p.305-309)

HIS FIRST STEPS

“Rabbi Menachem Mendel Gluskin was a young man in a period when it was possible for a Rabbi to work and guide. This was before the Soviet Regime humbled all stature and silenced individual accomplishment. He therefore did not have the opportunity to exhibit the fullness of his capabilities and power of his influence. All that we know of him are his first steps, cautious and slow, due to the afflictions of

the time. The beginning of his Rabbinate predicted greatness but due to the oppression, the possibilities did not materialize. His light was extinguished in the darkness of the spiritual drought in the land and he was unable to enlighten the skies of Judaism.

He was also not given the opportunity to publish any of his writings and immortalize himself the way other writers do. This was due not only to the external circumstances but also due to the internal holding back of that which raged within him. It was not natural for him to spread his springs outward. His learning was concealed and closed with seven locks which he only let out in a time of need to teach and guide.

The very existence of his personality and being, his unique existence and movement upon the earth constitute a precious possession. Therefore, that which he inherits to future generations is not attached to a bundle of writings but with a bundle of life. There only remain individuals who conceal within their soul the contact they had with him, and they guard the rays of light of his personality. Come; let us contemplate this extraordinary man and his qualities that gave light into Russian Jewry at a period when it was fading.

LIKE SHIPS IN THE MIDST OF THE SEA

Rav Gluskin embraced his world in one unique point without diffusion or fragmentation. He was whole in his personality as well as in his studies. His focus on the main point allowed him to grasp matters of great scope and to sail great distances. At first glance and reflection he grasped the soul of the matter of that which he learned, the secret of its existence, the very essence and force that gave it life.

Shallow people can incorporate and fill the hollow of their soul with various thoughts and many theories, a little of this and a little of that, and the pit is not filled by its sand. Not so those who prefer the profound, they are of one spirit that conquers their being to the end and completely fills them. Rav Mendel Gluskin was one of these. Torah filled his whole being and from it he was able to look at everything that happened, he observed the manifestations of the world and time, with the changing times and vanishing eras. Particularly in times of emergency there awoke within him amazing powers that he had not previously imagined. Hard times break delicate people and strengthen those are built of steel. Rav Gluskin was a man of steel. Therefore, he shone during that period of darkness like a tower of light to all those who lost the way or were depressed. He was a man of few words and his main influence was with his personality, aristocratic behavior, refined feelings, and his relationship with people was a wondrous example.

There is no need to stress that in Soviet Russia it was impossible to organize orderly co-operation; the most that was possible was to connect with a hint or with words that hide their meaning and Rav Gluskin was an artist in this field. Thus, he was able to influence brothers in opinion and family in spirit without direct contact or words. Those who left Russia after the Second World War are able to relate about his way of connecting and of the influence of Rav Gluskin from Minsk.

From 1934 he influenced them from distant Leningrad. Even though the connection was weak and the meeting quick and silent, like ships meeting in the middle of a stormy night who hint to each other through flashes of light. Ships that meet in the middle of the sea and neither know what the other is carrying or what their destination is. It is similar for those who have Jewish spirit in the oppressive times of Russia with a tyrannical and hostile police force. But the travelers who came to safe shores know to tell what was hidden on those passing ships and what the hint was. Who knows what happened to them in the storm? A sigh breaks forth from the heart of the lucky story teller, who came to his/her place of safety, regarding those who sank in a drowning world.

This is the meaning of the regards given over by those who escaped Soviet Russia about the fate of the Rav of Leningrad who stood guard during the period of destruction. Even though it is now more than forty years since the Soviet revolution, there still appears some light in the darkness of the Judaism in Russia. There is felt a desire to return to the source. There is no doubt that the seeds that he planted at the beginning with the sweat of his brow and blood of his heart were not swallowed but sprouted and they are growing and giving fruit.

Rav Gluskin would derive insights into the words of the sages and clarify their opinions through cogent analysis. As he rose to greatness in Torah scholarship, he rose equally in his mastery of Chassidus. His humility resembled that of Moshe Rabbeinu. Although he frequently came up with new interpretations he never claimed any originality for his cutting-edge breakthroughs in Rabbinic thought. Anything he discerned, he attributed to the greatness of former Gedolim, on whose shoulders he stood to glimpse into the Pardes.

His inner light shone from the depths of an elevated soul and in conversation he shared hidden treasures of his vast knowledge and expertise in Halachah in a way that would ignite the other persons understanding. The range of his deep learning was multifaceted and wide. He shunned polemics, with the goal in order to do mitzvoth, realizing that if the Jews were divided through dispute they were vulnerable to their enemies as Haman yemach shemo knew in Megillas Esther.

He penetrated into the depths of Jewish matters in a straight forward manner. He employed objectivity without prior biases or prejudices or preconceived notions or side interests, a requirement of his functioning as Av Bet Din in Minsk. His analysis was like a chisel of logic. His life was one of dedication and self-sacrifice for all Jews with his soul filled with Ahavas Hashem, Ahavas Torah, and Ahavas Yisrael.”

In January 1926 a group of shochetim were arrested. In the local newspaper a letter was printed blaming Rabbi Gluskin, although he was not charged or arrested. It was to lay the ground to do more damage to the religious leaders. *Minsk Ir Vo'aim vol 2 p. 78-81*. A local play was made of the case and included Rabbi Gluskin.

At a certain point he became a member of a special group of four Rabbis who worked using all possible means in public and in secret to strengthen Torah and Judaism throughout Russia. At the head of this group was Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson until he left in 1927. They were in secret contact with people outside Russia who helped them financially.

On these letters the Rabbis did not sign their given names due to the fear of what the Russian sensor and secret police would do to them if caught. Instead they each chose a verse of Torah with which they signed. Rabbi Yaakov Klemes from Moscow signed Hakshivo Lekol Shavii; Rabbi Menachem Mendel Gluskin signed Migdol Yeshuos Malko; Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin signed Shir Hashirim; Rabbi Yechezkiel Abramski signed Yemin Hashem Romemo which is part of the verse that he would say for his name at the end of Shmonei Esrei.

In 1928 Rabbi Gluskin wrote: “the situation of those in our city who study Torah is fearful and menacing, since the situation with Jews here is hard pressed, even more than the problematic situations in the rest of the jewish settlements in the country.

After the death of his wife Rabbi Mendel Gluskin said to his daughter Gita that since they did not have any boys and she is the youngest, she should say Kaddish.

