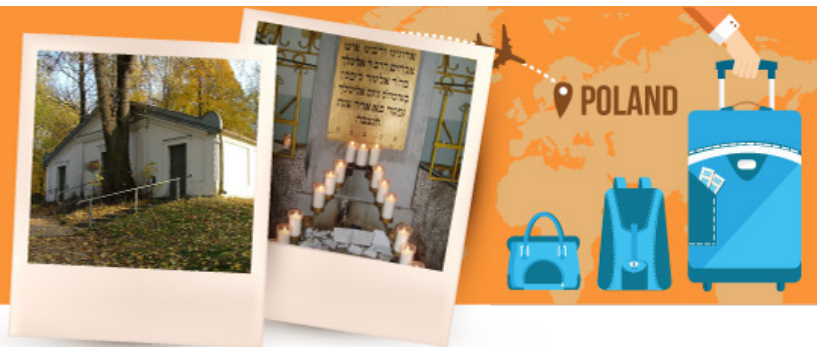


# KEVER OF R' ELIMELECH



## Basic facts about Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk

- ▶ One of the great founding Rebbes of the Chassidic movement.
- ▶ He was known after his hometown, **Lizhensk** in Poland.
- ▶ He authored the classic work, **Noam Elimelech**.
- ▶ He was known as a tzaddik who devoted his life to studying and teaching the Torah, as well as encouraging people to draw closer to God.
- ▶ To this day, his grave in Lizhensk, Poland, is visited by thousands of those faithful to Chassidism, particularly on the anniversary of his death, the 21st of the Hebrew month of Adar.

## Noach's Ark (Bereishis 6:16)

You shall make a skylight for the ark, and to a cubit you shall finish it to the top, and the entrance of the ark you shall place in its side; you shall make it with **bottom** [compartments], **second story** [compartments], and **third story** [compartments].

צַהַר תַּעֲשֶׂה לַתֵּבָה וְאֶל-אֲמָה תִּכְלֶנָּה מִלְּמַעַלָּה וּפְתַח הַתֵּבָה  
בְּצַדָּהּ תִּשְׂם תַּחְתִּים שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלִשִׁים תַּעֲשֶׂה:

## The Noam Elimelech on the Above Verse

### THE TZADDIK CAN RECTIFY ALL THREE LEVELS OF HUMANITY

These three physical levels in the ark hint at the three levels of mankind: the completely pious righteous ones, the average man, and the wicked evil ones.

The **lower level** hints at the **wicked**, for, as Rashi explains, it was used to store waste, since the wicked are constantly involved in wasteful and disgusting loathsome actions.

Rashi explains that the **middle level** was to be used for the animal dwellings. The **average man** lives and dwells in the pleasures of the physical animalistic world — though he is free of sin, he is immersed in the material aspect.

The **upper level** is for “adam,” man — the **completely righteous Tzaddik** who dwells in the upper worlds. The Tzaddik must rectify all of these levels with his holy deeds. Thus in this verse, the action verb *ta'aseh*, “you shall make,” is right next to *shelishim*, the word for “the third upper level.” **The Tzaddik must take action, actively doing all he can to repair and rectify all the levels of humanity.**

The three levels can also be seen as a **metaphor for man himself**. In his youth, man is engaged in lowly and loathsome pursuits. In his middle years, he is active in the matters of this world. By his final days, he must seek to rectify it all rather than sin and defile his soul.

## Stories of Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk

Rabbi Elimelech and Reb Zushya were staying at an inn. Each night non-Jewish peasants would enter their room and jestingly beat the one who lay nearest the fireside, Reb Zushya. One night, Rabbi Elimelech offered to change places with his brother so that he could take the beatings instead. Suggesting that Reb Zushya had suffered enough of this “Divine admonishment” the agreement was made and Rabbi Elimelech lay next to the fire instead. That night, the common gentiles again entered to begin their jest. This time, however, one of them said that the one by the fire had taken his fair share of the treatment,

and now it would be better to jest with the other one! Again Reb Zushya took the beatings. Afterwards, he told his brother that whatever is decided in Heaven transpires!

## THE JOY OF A MITZVAH

The two brothers, the famed Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk and Rabbi Zushe of Anipoli, often wandered about together, posing as simple beggars. They would mingle with the masses, listening, teaching, speaking, helping and guiding whomever and whenever they could.

Once, while they were traveling with a group of vagabonds, members of the group were accused of being thieves, resulting in the entire bunch being thrown into jail. Confident of their innocence and eventual release, the two brothers sat quietly. As the afternoon progressed, Rabbi Elimelech stood up to prepare himself to pray the afternoon service.

“What are you doing?” his brother asked.

“I’m getting ready for minchah,” replied Rabbi Elimelech.

Dear brother,” advised Rabbi Zushe, “it is forbidden to pray in this cell, because there is a pail that serves as a toilet nearby, making the room unfit for prayer.”

Dejected, the holy Rabbi Elimelech sat down.

Soon after, Rabbi Elimelech began to cry. “Why are you crying?” said Rabbi Zushe. “Is it because you are unable to pray?” Reb Elimelech answered affirmatively.

“But why weep?” continued Rabbi Zushe. “Don’t you know that the same G d who commanded you to pray, also commanded you not to pray when the room is unfit for prayer? By not praying in this room, you have achieved a connection with G d. True, it is not the connection that you had sought. Yet, if you truly want the divine connection, you would be happy that G d has afforded you the opportunity to obey His law at this time, no matter what it is.”

“You are right, my brother!” exclaimed Rabbi Elimelech, suddenly smiling. The feelings of dejection banished from his heart and mind, Rabbi Elimelech took his brother’s arm and began to dance from joy as a result of performing the mitzvah of not praying in an inappropriate place.

The guards heard the commotion and came running. Witnessing the two brothers dancing—with their long beards and flowing tzitzit—the guards asked the other prisoners what had happened. “We have no idea!” they answered, mystified. “Those two Jews were discussing the pail in the corner, when all of a sudden they came to some happy conclusion and began to dance.”

“Is that right?” sneered the guards. “They’re happy because of the pail, are they? We’ll show them!” They promptly removed the pail from the cell.

The holy brothers then prayed minchah undisturbed....