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Channeling the Ultimate Authority

Rabbi Zusha was one of the outstanding disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch and an intimate of the Alter Rebbe. Once, when Reb Zusha fell ill, the Alter Rebbe attended to him in person, and when the Alter Rebbe printed the *Tanya*, he sent a special envoy to Reb Zusha to seek his approbation for it.

The Rebbe, R. Shalom DovBer relates (*Torat Shalom p.84*):

The Alter Rebbe considered Reb Zusha of Anipoli a genuine Torah luminary-that he did so can be attributed to an incident that took place during their youth, in Mezritch, at a time when they were both students of the Maggid. It so happened that the Alter Rebbe and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev were deep in discussion of a difficulty in the *Rambam*. Their analysis was proceeding apace, each in his own way trying to justify the Rambam's position and reveal it in its true light, when along came Reb Zusha and silently observed them. At a given moment he drew near and asked them what it was they were discussing so intensely. At this question they could not conceal a smile-Reb Zusha was not one given to wrestling with the intricacies of *Nigleh* study! However, since he persisted in his inquiry, they told him what the *Rambam* stated and why, for a variety of reasons, it was so problematic.

Reb Zusha's approach-whenver the solution to a problem eluded him-was to shed hot tears and cry out: "Zusha doesn't know the explanation of this question!" The tears would continue to flow until he fell into a slumber. Once in this state, the author of the particular *halacha*, or the prophet Elijah himself, would appear to him and reveal the explanation that he sought. At this point he would immediately come to. And so it was: as soon as he was informed of the difficulty in the *Rambam*, he cried out: "Zusha doesn't understand what the *Rambam* means!" He fell into a slumber, the *Rambam* appeared to him in a vision, and presented him with the explanation. On awakening, Reb Zusha hastened to the Alter Rebbe and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and repeated what he had heard. It was indeed a revelation to his comrades.

For this reason the Alter Rebbe considered Reb Zusha a true Torah luminary. All other ways of explaining the *Rambam* were necessarily partial and prone to error. However, when the *Rambam* himself explained the *Rambam*, his words bore the stamp of ultimate authority. Therefore Reb Zusha merited this tribute, in that he received the explanation in its most authentic form, as heard from the lips of the author himself.

His final resting-place is in Anipoli, next to the tomb of the Maggid of Mezritch.

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Source: Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from *Days in Chabad*, as translated by Yosef Cohen from the original Hebrew publication of Rabbi Yosef Y. Kaminitzky,

*Biographical notes* (in order of appearance):

**Rabbi [Meshulam-]Zusha of Anapoli** [of blessed memory: ? - 2 Shvat 5560 (?-Jan. 1800 C.E.)], was also a major disciple of the *Maggid*. The seemingly unsophisticated but clearly inspired “Reb Zusha” is one of the best known and most beloved Chassidic personalities. He and his famous brother, the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk, spent many years wandering in exile, for esoteric reasons.

**Rabbi Dov-Ber** [of blessed memory: c.5460 - 19 Kislev 5533 (c.1700- Dec. 1772 C.E.)], the son of Avraham and Chava, known as **the *Maggid of Mezritch***, succeeded his master, the *Baal Shem Tov*, as the head of the Chasidic movement. Most of the leading chasidic dynasties originate from his disciples and his descendants. The classic anthologies of his teachings are *Likutei Amarim* and *Torah Ohr* (combined by Kehas Publishing as *Maggid Devorav l'Yaakov*), and *Ohr HaEmmes*.

**Rabbi Shneur Zalman** [of blessed memory: 18 Elul 5505 - 24 Tevet 5573 (1745 – Dec. 1812 C.E.)], one of the main disciples of the *Maggid* of Mezritch, successor to the *Baal Shem Tov*. He is the founder of the *Chabad*-Chassidic movement and the author of *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* and *Tanya* as well as many other major works in both Jewish law and the mystical teachings.

**Rabbi Levi Yitzchak** (Deberamdiger) **of Berditchev** [of blessed memory: 5500 - 25 Tishrei 5571 (1740 - Oct. 1810)] is one of the more popular rebbes in chasidic history. He was a close disciple of the *Maggid of Mezritch*, successor to the *Baal Shem Tov*. He is best known for his love for every Jew and his perpetual intercession before Heaven on their behalf. Many of his teachings are contained in the posthumously published *Kedushat Levi*.

**R. Moshe ben Maimon**; [of blessed memory: 4895 – 20 Tevet 4964 (1135-1204 CE)], known as the ***Rambam*** – the Hebrew acronym of his name, or as Maimonides. was one of the most important Torah scholars in the last 1000 years. Born in Cordoba, Spain, he fled with his parents and family from persecution to North Africa, passing through Morocco and Israel, and eventually settling in Egypt, where he became the Sultan's personal physician. His numerous books, including *Mishna Torah* and *Guide to the Perplexed*, were --and still are -- influential in the three fields of Jewish law, philosophy and medicine.

Connection: Seasonal -- The **2nd of Shevat** (this year: Tuesday, Jan. 8) is the 219th **yahrzeit of Reb Zusha** (and ten days prior to that, the 24th of Tevet/Jan. 1) was the 206th **yahrzeit of Rabbi Shneur Zalman**).