

THE
Zera Emes
זרע אמת
PROJECT

והגדת
לבנך
Keeping
Their
Torah Alive.



PARSHAS KORACH • JUNE 27, 2025 • 1 TAAMUZ 5785

The Zera Emes Project by Rabbi Moshe Hubner was created to honor and share the Torah of over 250 Gedolim who weren't zocheh to descendants of their own. Their legacy lives on through their words of Torah and emunah that continue to inspire and touch countless lives. By bringing their timeless divrei Torah and wisdom to life, we create a powerful connection to the past to help inspire today's generation.

For sponsorship opportunities or to sign up to the weekly newsletter, email weekly@zeraemes.com or visit www.zeraemes.com

Alive and Well

The Korach rebellion reached a point of no return. Hashem told Moshe (*Bamidbar* 16:20) that the time had come to punish the rebels. In *passuk* 28, Moshe announced that the proof that he was merely a messenger of Hashem—not someone who had seized power for personal gratification—would be evident in the manner of the rebels' deaths: "If Hashem creates a phenomenon that the Earth opens its mouth and swallows them, and they descend alive into the grave (שאלה)." The Torah describes how this miraculous event unfolded (*passuk* 33): "They descended alive into the grave." Rashi (*Bereishis* 37:35) explains the word "שאלה" as meaning "grave," or in a Midrashic interpretation, as "Gehinnom."

Many commentators focus on why Moshe emphasized that they would descend alive into the pit, and why the Torah highlights that this indeed occurred. Was it merely to teach that they would stay alive until the moment they were swallowed? That seems self-evident.

The *Ohr Hachaim* explains that the decree was not only that they would be alive as they were swallowed, but that they would remain alive within the pit. He notes that the Torah often uses the prefix "ה'" before a word, which can be equivalent to a "ה'" at the end. Here, the Torah uses the word "שאלה" with a "ה'" at the end, to stress that they remained alive even while inside the pit. Had the Torah used the prefix "ל'" (e.g., לשאל), it might have implied

that they would only remain alive until they were swallowed, and not beyond that point.

The *Ohr Hachaim* offers a reason as to why they remained alive in such a miraculous way. Naturally, one would expect them to have perished upon entering the pit. He cites the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 100b), which teaches that there are instances where Hashem gives strength to the wicked so that they can endure punishment—thereby enabling prolonged retribution. According to this interpretation, their continued life served to intensify their punishment, seemingly negative rationale.

However, *Rav Reuvein Margolis* (*Magolis Hayam, Sanhedrin* 109b, os 7) relates a teaching he heard in 1913, Parashas Koach, from Reb Yissachar Dov of Belz. Reb Yissachar Dov posed a poignant question: "Does Hashem desire to torture people?" He quoted his father, who explained that although Moshe understood the severity of the rebellion and the necessity of a harsh punishment, he



נחלת יצחק
בגבול גבעתיים-תל אביב-יפו

אור החיים

R' Chaim Ben Moshe Attar (4 Av 1696 – 15 Tamuz 1743), renowned as the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, was born in Morocco, where he studied under his grandfather, R' Chaim Attar. He first married Fatzunya, of whom it was said that she wore tefillin, following the example of Michal, daughter of King Shaul. Later, he married Esther, the daughter of Meir Kapas. In 1739, a severe famine compelled him to leave Morocco. He journeyed to Italy, where a yeshiva was established for him. In 1741, he set out for Eretz Yisrael with 30 students. Due to the epidemics prevalent at the time, he initially founded his yeshiva, *Knesses Yisrael*, in Acre, later relocating it to Yerushalayim.

Among his distinguished students was R' Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai—the Chida—who described his Rebbe's Torah mastery as capable of "uprooting mountains," and his holiness as awe-inspiring. He noted that R' Chaim's published works represented only a fraction of his vast knowledge. Approximately one year after arriving in Yerushalayim, R' Chaim passed away and was buried on Har HaZeisim.

was also a compassionate leader. Moshe knew that as long as a person is alive—even for a fleeting moment—there remains an opportunity to repent. Therefore, Moshe pleaded with Hashem that the rebels should remain alive in the pit, affording them the chance for teshuvah.

The Gemara (*Baba Basra* 74a) describes how in the area where the pit is where they were swallowed up if someone puts his ear to the ground he can hear, the statement, “Moshe and his Torah are true.” This statement of truth that they were able to see and repeat was a result of the tefillah of Moshe to ensure they did not pass away immediately.



R' REUVEIN WITH R' ARYEH LEVINE

Reb Yissachar Dov stated, “As long as a person is alive, even if only for one second, he can fully repent.”

It appears that Reb Yissachar Dov based this *drasha* on the Shlah HaKadosh in this Parasha:

Rav Reuvein adds that this principle is found in a Meiri who explains why we violate Shabbos to rescue someone trapped under rubble—even when we know they may survive only a short time. This is because during that sliver of time, they have the potential to fully repent.

Seen in this light, the rebels being kept alive was not purely for the sake of intensified punishment, it was also a profound act of compassion, preserving the possibility of teshuvah.

Some commentators even suggest that both explanations are true simultaneously: that what appears as punishment might, in truth, be an opportunity, because as long as there is life, there remains hope for repentance.

רב ראובן מרגליות

BY R' ELIEZER BRODT

R' Reuven Margolis (7 Kislev 1889 – 7 Elul 1971) was born in Lemberg (Lvov), Galicia. His first teacher was his father, who passed away when Reuven was just 14. To support his family, he began helping his mother run their store, all while continuing his Torah learning. He later studied under R' Moshe Mezuzah, whose Torah he eventually published in 1931 as a gesture of gratitude.

At the young age of seventeen, R' Reuven began publishing Torah thoughts in various newspapers and journals—a passion he maintained throughout his life. Over the next seventy years, he authored dozens of works across an extraordinarily broad range of topics, many of which were reprinted due to their enduring popularity. In Margolis Hayam (p. 70), he mentions a lost manuscript he wrote at the age of eleven on the *sugya* in Sanhedrin (33a–b). By 1931, he had already published over twenty works and listed many more he had planned—though sadly, not all survived.

In 1908, at age eighteen, he married Chaya Genendel Shain, who passed away on 27 Sivan 1930 without children. The following year, he published *Nefesh Chaya* in her memory, describing in the introduction how he wrote the sefer by candlelight under dire conditions during the Great War.

In 1912, he received semicha from R' Meir Arik, one of the preeminent Torah authorities in Galicia. R' Arik wrote: “He is an expert in all areas of Torah... and I spoke to him face to face about Halacha... seeing that he is fully competent to pasken.” R' Margolis corresponded regularly with R' Arik, sending him questions and manuscripts for review. In 1913, he published *Kav Besamim*, a work on the Tosafists' writings, which received a warm *haskamah* from R' Arik, complete with comments published only recently. He also received semicha from R' Moshe Babad of Lemberg.

While living in Lemberg, he was deeply involved in communal matters but earned a living through his seforim store—though some commented that it functioned more as a hub for intellectual discourse than a commercial venture. In addition to writing and printing his own works, he published those of others and distributed catalogs through a journal he called *Hamodia*.

His correspondence brought him close to many gedolim. He was known for his concise, clear, and engaging writing style, as well as his breathtaking breadth and originality.

In 1935, he immigrated to Eretz Yisrael and was appointed librarian of the Tel Aviv Library, where he built up its collection. Scholars often sought out his help, relying on his encyclopedic knowledge, which he generously shared.

Notably, in 1931, he received a glowing *haskama* from R' Kook for *Nefesh Chaya*, including beautiful remarks on the sefer. When R' Margolis arrived in Eretz Yisrael in 1935, one of his first visits was to the ailing R' Kook—who, upon hearing his name, made an exception to receive him. According to some accounts, R' Kook was so moved he recited *Shehecheyanu*. He encouraged R' Margolis to pursue his Kabbalistic writings, recognizing their significance.

R' Margolis later became renowned for his work in Kabbalah, composing thousands of notes on the Zohar and other fundamental mystical texts. His first published work, *Toldos Adam* (when he was 22 years old), focused on the Maharsha—not as a traditional biography, but a profound analysis of his methodology and library. The work reflects a complete mastery of the Maharsha's writings across Shas.

He continued writing prolifically. Among his best-known works are an encyclopedic study of *Sefer Chassidim*, an edition of *Tzavah R' Yehudah HaChassid*, and *She'elot U'teshuvot Min HaShamayim*. As a Chassid, he also published numerous chassidic seforim. In 1958, he released his monumental *Margalios Hayam* on Sanhedrin, a detailed commentary that is a standard by any one learning Sanhedrin.

His literary legacy reveals a staggering command of Torah and historical literature. R' Margolis had no children from either of his marriages—his first wife, Chaya Genendel, and his second wife, Esther (Litwak), who passed away on 26 Cheshvan 1982—but he left behind a vast intellectual heritage treasured to this day.