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Lizecher nishmas Esther Riva bas Moshe (Taanis Esther 2004)  
From her grandson, Aryeh Klonimus

לזכות רפואה שלמה לר' חיים יצחק בן חנה מינדל

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.

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## Secret to Annuling Decrees

In the Megillah we learn how Haman sent out letters across Achashveirosh's empire that there was going to be a future date, the 13th of Adar, when momentous news would occur that would forever change the world. Mordechai and Esther understood the severity of the situation and enacted a decree among all the Jews that they were to immediately begin a three-day fast to abolish the decree. Then Esther invited the king and Haman to a meal. Achashveirosh had a sleepless night, and Haman was sent to make Mordechai king for the day.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 16a) relates that Haman found Mordechai "דיתבי רבנן קמיה" – with **Rabbis** sitting in front of him, and Mordechai was demonstrating the laws of Kemitza to **the Rabbis**."

Despite the imminent threat of destruction looming over the Jewish People—or perhaps *because* of this very threat—Mordechai was teaching.

Fascinatingly, Rashi interprets the word

"the Rabbis" as "his students" (לרבנן). (תלמידיו). There are two questions on Rashi that stand out:

Why did Rashi need to change the interpretation of the word "the Rabbis" into "students"? When one reads the simple words of the Gemara, it could certainly be interpreted that Mordechai was giving a class to other rabbis. Why change the story to refer to his students?

Why did Rashi interpret the word as "students" only the second time the word רבנן is cited in the Gemara? Why not interpret the word רבנן as students the first time it appears?

One can answer that Rashi understood that Mordechai recognized the way to annul Haman's decree was through teaching students. The Gemara states that Rabbis were sitting in front of Mordechai, showing that they understood his greatness and therefore came to him and sat before him and requested guidance on how to navigate this severe situation. Mordechai took the lead when answering their question: Teach students. That was the road to victory. See [Rav Meir Shapiro](#) (*Shalal Rav, Esther* 6:13).

This means that the two times the Gemara uses the word "Rabbis," it is not referring to the same people. Rashi understands that had it been the same people, the Gemara would not have stated the word "Rabbis" a second time, but would have used the term "them." Rashi therefore explains that the *second* time the Gemara uses the word "Rabbis," it refers to Mordechai's students, as opposed to the first instance, when Rashi did not interpret it as students, because those first rabbis were not his students – they were the leaders looking for guidance. Mordechai did not focus on his own honor of having the leaders seeking his advice.

### RAV MORDECHAI MEIR ZANITZKY

This serves as an apropos introduction to another great Mordechai who followed his namesake. [Rav Mordechai Meir Zanitzky](#) was recognized and honored by the gedolim of his generation. When Rav Aharon Kotler would travel to Cleveland for any reason, he would say to everyone there, "I first want to hear a question from Rav Meir Zanitzky."

He was among the very few who became a true student of Rav Eliezer Silver. In

fact, Rav Zanitzky observed the *yahrtzeit* of the **Meshech Chochmah** because he felt he was a student of the Meshech Chochmah—Rav Eliezer Silver, rebbi.

Although Rav Zanitzky could have limited his association to only the *gedolim* of his time, he used all of his extraordinary talents and focused on teaching students. Some of them are now household names.

R' Yechiel Spero, who is among his students, writes: "Legend had it that he knew most of Shas by heart. He told me that he could recite Rashi on Chumash verbatim... backward!"

R' Tzodok Katz of Lakewood adds: "We knew that he could repeat the entire Shas both forward and backward, although he would not publicly admit it. But there was a time when he acknowledged that when he was younger, he could repeat the entire Tanach both forward and backward."

R' Nosson Joseph of Riverdale recalls learning with him one time when there was only one Gemara available. Rav Zanitzky told R' Nosson to use it for himself and to read the words aloud in front of his rebbe—both Gemara and Rashi. As he was reading a Rashi, Rav Zanitzky corrected him, noting that he had not read it correctly because the Bach on the side changed a letter.

The Gemara details that Mordechai HaTzaddik taught the laws of Kemitza, one of the most difficult areas to master. Rav Zanitzky was also known to teach difficult subjects to his students and never allowed them to escape challenges. In fact, the boys who studied with him had to hand in their watches and could not face the clock in the room. They had to understand that learning was everything and was not bound by time.

There were times when he made his students learn and repeat a Gemara by heart, both forward and backward. R' Spero explains that this enhanced appreciation for every word and every syllable – and he himself could recite these Gemaras 50 years later, verbatim. Rav Tzvi Einstadter of Ner Yisrael writes (*Meor Mordechai*) that Rav Baruch Sorotzkin would note how the students of Rav Zanitzky were easily recognizable by their careful reading of each word with proper *dikduk*. His students would say "*kol perek u'ferek*."

All his students recalled his wit, as he would encourage them to give tzedakah while saying, "*tzedakah tatzil mimovies*"—if you give a nickel to tzedakah, there is nothing left for the movies.

He called vaccine booster shots –*chazaras hashatz* – חזרת השי"ס.

His students noted that his words were constantly peppered with *maamarei* Chazal, and his humor added a *taam* of Torah. They learned that there was a person who's everything was Torah –every word, every thought, even when being humorous.

## Mazel Tov

NAFTALI AND CHANI EINHORN  
ON THE ENGAGEMENT OF THEIR DAUGHTER, MINDY,  
TO YITZY, THE SON OF ZEV AND FEIGI MARMURSTEIN.

SPECIAL MAZEL TOV TO  
THE EINHORN GRANDPARENTS,  
LONGTIME YIBE MEMBERS.

TZODOK AND HINDY KATZ  
ORIGINAL SUPPORTERS OF THE ZERA EMES PROJECT,  
ON THE ENGAGEMENT OF THEIR DAUGHTER,  
TZIPORA, TO YITZCHOK, THE SON OF AVROHOM AND  
LEAH MALKA WEISS.



### ר' מרדכי מאיר זניצקי

Rav Mordechai Meir Zanitzky was born on November 24, 1914, in Cleveland, Ohio, to his Litvishe parents, R' Elias from Ponovitz and Mrs. Rivka Zanitzky (née Buchalter) from Seltz. When the discussion arises as to who was the greatest *talmid chacham* born on American soil, those who knew him place his name near the top of the list.

He fondly spoke about the time Rav Elchanan Wasserman was in Cleveland and how he did not leave his side. Rav Elchanan asked him to join the Baranovicher Yeshiva, which was one of the few regrets Rav Zanitzky later expressed. See *Meor Mordechai* for a fascinating account.

As a young boy, he attended public school (as was the custom in those days in the USA) and afterward a Talmud Torah. His T.T. rebbi, Mr. Fine (a student of Rav Shimon Shkop), urged young Meir to join the New Haven Yeshiva, which was then located in Cleveland. He joined until it closed and then spent his entire life learning, without breaks or vacations.

He was part of the yeshiva when the "Russian Illuy," Rav Moshe Feinstein, was there. When asked whether Rav Moshe's reputation was deserved, he responded with characteristic humility that he was unable to judge the greatness of another, but that he saw something unique in Rav Moshe. While most people use the top corner of a *daf* Gemara to determine what page they are on, Rav Moshe would use the bottom corner of the *daf*.

He had a tremendous love for *talmidei chachamim* and would often speak of his special relationships with R' Lazer Silver, Rav Sheftel Kramer, Rav Hershel Levenberg, Rav Moshe Shimon Zivitz, Rav Moshe Tiktin, and many of the Telzer *roshei yeshivah*.

He married Leah Gross of Pittsburgh, PA, and served as a Rav in Braddock, PA. He was also a rebbi in the Hebrew Academy of Cleveland.

Rav Zanitzky was one of the world's experts in *dikduk* in both Hebrew and Aramaic. He delivered shiurim in *dikduk* to some of the most prestigious *talmidei chachamim*.

He passed away on 2 Adar 1998.

יהי זכרו ברוך