

TODAY IN HISTORY

י"ב חשוון

In 5059/1298, Rindfleisch massacres claimed 200 Jewish lives, *Hy"d*.

In 5736/1975, the U.N. declared that Zionism is racism.

Yahrtzeiten

5448/1687, Harav Moshe

5752/1991

Harav Yehudah Tzadkah, *zt"l*, Rosh Yeshivah of Porat Yosef.

Harav Yehudah Tzadkah was born in Yerushalayim on 3 hevat 5670/1910. His father was Rav Shaul Tzadkah, the great-grandson of Rav Tzadkah Hutzin, author of *Tzedakah Mishpat*. The Tzadkah family lived in a small apartment in the Beis Yisrael neighborhood of Yerushalayim.

Rav Yehudah always credited his mother, who was a niece of the Ben Ish Chai, for guiding him properly in Torah.

When Rav Yehudah was only years old, he began to study a Talmud Torah near his home. After completing Talmud Torah, 12-year-old Yehudah enrolled in the Porat Yosef Yeshivah in Yerushalayim's Old City. Yeshivat Porat Yosef was founded to preserve Sephardi Jewry by producing outstanding Sephardi *talmidei chachamim*.

The young and brilliant Yehudah Tzadkah became very close with the great *Roshei Yeshivah* of Porat Yosef, Rav Yaakov Ades and Rav Ezra Attia. His relationship with Rav Attia was particularly deep.

Rav Yehudah quickly became Porat Yosef's top *bachur*. During the day he would learn in the yeshivah, and at night he'd continue learning in the Beer Sheva shul of the Beis Yisrael neighborhood. On Friday nights he would study in the Shoshanim Doyid shul, in the company of such renowned Sephardic *adolim* as Rav Yaakov Chaim Diner, *mechaber* of *Kaf Tachayim*.

Regardless of Rav Yehudah's illustrious background, he regarded himself

Kramer, *zt"l*, Rav of Vilna, grandfather of the Gra.

5548/1787, Harav Zev Wolf Kitzi, *zt"l*, disciple of the Baal Shem Tov.

5612/1851, Harav Yisrael Dov Ber, *zt"l*, of Stefan.

5626/1865, Harav Nachum of Shadik, *zt"l*.

5629/1868, Harav Aharon Zinger of Mattersdorf, *zt"l*, *mechaber* of *Tiferes Aharon*.

as nothing more than a servant of those who serve Hashem. Calling himself an "*iskupa hanidresset*" (a threshold trampled by the feet of *talmidei chachamim*), he effaced himself not only before *Gedolei Yisrael*, but before all who studied Torah.

Rav Yehudah married Fahima, the daughter of Rav Selim Tzalach Batat of Baghdad, and together they built a Torah home. The two were blessed with seven children, five boys and two girls, all of whom followed in their parents' footsteps. Fahima passed away when she was just 57. At his wife's *levayah*, Rav Yehudah spoke about her remarkable traits, saying that all of the Torah he studied was credited to her.

Later, Rav Yehudah married Tamar Asuderi, who cared for him faithfully until his final day.

After his marriage, Reb Yehudah continued to learn in Porat Yosef. In 5697/1937, when Chacham Eliyahu Lopes, one of the most venerable and respected Rabbanim in Porat Yosef, felt too weak to continue teaching, Rav Ezra Attia declared, "From now on Rav Yehudah will teach Rav Eliyahu's *talmidim*."

The other members of the yeshivah's staff were surprised by Rav Attia's suggestion. Rav Lopes was an elderly *talmid chacham*, while Rav Yehudah was still a young man. However, Rav Attia averred, "True, Rav Yehudah is young, but he possesses vast knowledge."

Among Reb Yehudah's first *talmidim* were Rav Bentzion Abba Shaul, Rav Yehudah Muraless, and Rav Ezra Ades, *zt"l*, and *yblch"t*, Rav Ovadiah

Yosef, *shlita*.

Although introverted and quiet by nature, Reb Yehudah was transformed into a different person when it came to Torah study. He would often pace the yeshivah's *beis medrash*, demanding of his *talmidim*, "Louder, louder," and wasn't at ease until the entire *beis medrash* buzzed with a *kol Torah*.

During the Jordanian siege of the Old City, Porat Yosef's *talmidim* continued to learn with valor. But in the end, the Jordanians gained the upper hand and captured the Old City. Among those taken captive by the Jordanians was the Rosh Yeshivah's son, Rav Yosef Attia.



Harav Yehudah Tzadkah, *zt"l*

Determined not to close the yeshivah, Reb Yehudah established learning sessions in shuls in Geulah, Katamon and the Bucharian quarter. Soon a plot of land was acquired, and plans were launched to construct a new building in the Geulah section. Reb Yehudah traveled abroad to raise funds for the building, despite the fact that leaving Eretz Yisrael was very difficult for him.

Eventually the yeshivah had enough money to build a new facility. At last the joyous day arrived: 26 Kislev 5715/1955, the day on which the cornerstone of the new building was laid. To this day, the Porat Yosef

Yeshivah in Geulah continues to flourish.

In 5730/1970, when Rav Ezra Attia was *niftar*, all of the staff of the yeshivah agreed that only one man could replace him: Rav Yehudah Tzadkah, with whom he had been so close.

At the yeshivah, many *talmidim* were tested by Rav Yehudah on the *halachos* customarily learned toward *semichah*. It is related that one time, when a *bachur* passed the test satisfactorily, Rav Yehudah was ready to issue him the standard *semichah*. He advised the young man to visit a certain scribe who served as the yeshivah's *sofer* to write and personalize the documents. The *bachur* returned the following day for the *Roshi Yeshivah's* signature.

As per custom, all *semichah* certificates bore the signatures of two of the yeshivah's foremost *Roshei Yeshivah*. In his humility, Rav Yehudah suggested that the *bachur* should first have Rav Bentzion Abba Shaul, an associate Rosh Yeshivah, sign it, and he would follow. The *bachur* visited Rav Bentzion, who graciously signed. The next morning he returned to Rav Yehudah, but to his dismay, the *Rosh Yeshivah* glanced at the document fleetingly, and refused to sign it.

"Pardon me a thousand times over for all the inconvenience I am putting you through," Rav Yehudah said. "However, I am sorry to tell you that I cannot sign a document which is not wholly truthful."

"In the very first *siman* of *Choshen Mishpat*, the *Tur* quotes the *Gemara*: 'Every *beis din* which adjudicates law in a true and truthful manner becomes a partner with Hashem in the Creation.' As you surely note, the expression 'true and truthful' seems redundant. But, in fact, it's not. It is stated twice — as though it were appearing in bold letters — for a specific reason: namely, to stress the primary importance we place on a *Dayan's* honesty.

"Upon closer examination, you will note that the date appearing on the certificate is incorrect. The text reads:

'Written and signed this 26th day of the month of Av, in the year ...,' when in reality, today is already the 27th day of Av."

Rav Yehudah's *talmid* fully appreciated his reservations in signing his *semichah*. In those short minutes, he gained a wealth of practical rabbinical experience, as *Chazal* state: "Attending to a *talmid chacham* is [often] more beneficial than studying Torah from him." He returned to the scribe, who changed the date. He then resubmitted it to Rav Yehudah, who welcomed him warmly, signed the certificate and wished him great success in his future role as a Rav and leader in *Klal Yisrael*.

During the final decade of his life, Rav Yehudah remained young at heart and had boundless spiritual energy. He closed the introduction to his *sefer Kol Yehudah*, which was first published in 5744/1984, with the *tefillah*: "Please, Hashem, give me the strength and the health to do Your Will and to continue my life mission with success. May I be able to continue to dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life."

During the last Elul of his life, Rav Yehudah would often visit the yeshivah, urging the *talmidim* to increase their Torah study and to grow in *yiras Shamayim* and *avodas Hashem*. On Rosh Hashanah 5752/1991, he *davened* in the Shaul Tzadkah shul, surrounded by his family and *talmidim*. He delivered a powerful *drashah* before *tekias shofar*, inspiring all in attendance.

On Motzai Rosh Hashanah, he was seized by sharp pains in his chest. He was rushed to the hospital. A few short weeks later, early in the morning of 12 Cheshvan 5752/1991, Rav Yehudah returned his pure soul to its Creator.

Rav Yehudah was buried in his family plot in the Sanhedriah cemetery in Yerushalayim. His *petirah* left Sephardi Jewry, as well as all of Torah Jewry, bereft of one of their greatest leaders.

Yehi zichro baruch.

This article was culled from material in a book on *Sephardic Gedolim* by Yehudah Azouli, currently being prepared for publication.