

Introduction

It all began with a man named Reb Yisroel Zilberberg, who established an organization called Maftai'ach Shel Banim, which focused on offering spiritual assistance to couples still waiting to be blessed with children. His involvement in their lives began in a very modest way, with Reb Yisroel compiling Torah thoughts and ideas that he felt could serve as *chizuk* for those who were waiting for a *yeshuah*; *segulos* that he found in *Chazal* and other relevant Torah ideas, which he shared with those in need.

Reb Yisroel had a good friend named Yechiel who had been married for over ten years and had not as yet been blessed with children. Needless to say, the couple was utterly heartbroken.

Reb Yisroel saw a talented person with tremendous *kochos* who was suffering terribly. Although he was going through a very difficult time, Yechiel was very interested in the *vertlach* Reb Yisroel was working on and began helping him track down sources in *Chazal* pertaining to the topic of bearing children. After a while, Yechiel suggested that they begin distributing their Torah thoughts on a wider scale, so that more people could receive *chizuk* from their efforts.

At that time Reb Yisroel was a young man with no writing experience, but Yechiel was very persistent and in the end Reb Yisroel relented and began by distributing the Torah they had compiled in a weekly *chizuk* newsletter. They didn't write about the challenges of waiting for children, focusing instead on beautiful Torah ideas

that would help lift people out of their depression with thoughts of joy and hope. Their initiative succeeded and the list grew to include some seven hundred people around the world who enjoyed their writing and the words of *chizuk*. Some of the people were sent the newsletter in e-mail form, and others received hard copies in the mail. One friend brought another and their list grew from week to week.

This was when Reb Yisroel met a man named Reb Binyomin Paskesz from Williamsburg. Reb Binyomin came across the Torah content they were publishing, connected with what they were trying to do, and added another eighty names to their list—people whom he felt would benefit from being a part of *Maftei'ach Shel Banim*.

Reb Binyomin is a doer and, through his efforts, they were able to reach more and more people in need in the United States.

Meanwhile, however, Reb Yechiel had still not merited a *yeshuah* of his own. Reb Yisroel watched with sadness as Yechiel grew more withdrawn and hurt with the passing years. His hopes dimming, they seemed increasingly like a dream that would never come true.



Throughout those early years, Reb Yisroel Zilberberg received a number of phone calls from people who wanted him to write about assorted *sefarim* that had been instrumental in bringing *yeshuos* to people. The title of one *sefer* was *Zera Shimshon*.

“Why don’t you write about this *sefer* in your weekly newsletter?” they suggested, but he didn’t take them seriously. He had never heard of the *sefer*, he had plenty of material from other sources, and he simply didn’t get around to it.

And so while Reb Zilberberg’s organization was growing and he was helping more and more people with his work, he had still not opened a *Zera Shimshon*.



In the winter of 2007, a friend of mine approached me after davening on Friday night in Ramat Beit Shemesh and asked me if I had time to listen to a story that had happened to his father-in-law, who lived in Manchester. I was happy to hear his story, which

I went on to publish in *Hamodia* and, later, in my book *I Have an Amazing Story for You*.

This story would eventually serve as the catalyst to get me much more involved with the *sefer Zera Shimshon* as well.



No one knew what the problem was, but everybody knew that it existed. Things just weren't the same anymore. In the past, going to Bubby and Zeidy's house had been a pleasure, one of the greater pleasures of this world. But things had changed. Something had happened and the happy atmosphere was gone. There was a worry in the house, a tenseness that had never been there before. As though an ax was waiting to fall.

Normally, Shabbos at the *shver* is a time when the entire family relaxes together and shares all the latest news. The brothers-in-law sit around the dining-room table after the Friday night meal and sing and learn with much fist thumping and hand waving, and the sisters-in-law congregate on the two couches reading and shmoozing and having a great time. But the Shabbos that we first realized something was wrong was not like that at all. The candlesticks were as shiny and silvery as always, the olive oil in the little glasses was as golden as ever, and the food was as tasty as it always is, and yet, that Friday night just wasn't right and nobody knew why.

We all looked at each other to see if anyone had a clue as to what had occurred to make the atmosphere so very different, but every single member of the family was as mystified as the next one. The *divrei Torah* didn't go well that week and the schmoozing was stilted. We left on *motza'ei Shabbos* with a sense of unease, with the feeling that something was very wrong in our in-laws' home.

The next time we all got together was on Succos of that year. It was a cold and windy evening. The succah was decorated with the colorful pictures that all the grandchildren had drawn with love. The family was all there once again, determined to ensure that this time the atmosphere would be better, more lively, more *heimish*. We didn't understand yet what had gone so wrong the previous time, but we resolved to make up for it now that we were there again.

The meal began uneventfully, a fact that was appreciated by all. The food was great. The fish was perfect. The *divrei Torah* uplifting and inspiring. Everyone was animated and back to their old selves. But our father-in-law had a sad look on his face. He wasn't participating in his usual fashion. He was keeping to himself, very withdrawn, answering only in monosyllables and barely touching his food. Our father-in-law is a well-known member of the community and someone who very much appreciates a good *dvar Torah*. This silence was really out of character and the family was concerned. We looked at each other with troubled glances, trying to discern the problem. Even the grandchildren realized that something was wrong and weren't behaving like their usual selves.

The soup was served and there was a temporary silence in the succah as everyone settled down to the business of eating. That was when the *shver* laid down his spoon alongside his bowl, having taken about two spoonfuls of the steaming broth, and pushed back his chair with the strangest expression on his face. He stood up without looking at any of his children and left the succah, his shoulders sagging with anguish, his tread heavy, like a man much, much older than he was.

No one knew what to say. We had never witnessed such behavior from him before. He had always been the model of decorum and propriety. My mother-in-law rushed after him, leaving us all in the succah by ourselves. We couldn't help it. Our voices were raised in a tangle of questions and helpless shrugs of the shoulders as we were faced with what seemed like tragedy in the family. Relegated to silence by the very fact that we had no idea what was going on, we waited for our mother-in-law to return to the succah. When she entered, we all turned and stared at her, waiting in silence for an explanation.

There were tears in her eyes as she began to speak. "Daddy is very sick," she told us, her eyes brimming over with tears. One of the girls handed her a tissue. "It all started a few months ago," she went on. "Daddy was feeling a constant pain in his stomach. At first he ignored it, hoping that it would go away, but after a while he couldn't ignore it any longer. He went to our doctor, who sent him for a CAT scan.

“It was at the next visit that our entire world turned upside down. From one second to the next, *kinderlach!* The doctor examined the scan while Daddy sat there in his office waiting for the verdict, feeling as if he were on trial for his life.

“Then the doctor sighed to himself and Daddy knew that the news wasn’t good.”

“‘You have a tumor in one of your kidneys,’ the doctor said in a somber voice. ‘It looks as if I’m going to have to operate pretty soon.’ Daddy asked some questions but there really wasn’t that much to add.

“I know,” she went on, raising her hands toward us, “that you are going to say we should thank Hashem that the cancer is only in one of the kidneys. But once such a disease enters the human body, it very often causes more and more trouble.” Her voice trembled as she said these words and there was a flurry of motion as all my sisters-in-law descended on her with words of comfort and sympathy. This was much worse than we had imagined. The cold hand of illness had just touched our family and the feeling was none too pleasant. Finally, we understood the change in atmosphere and we wished that we had never heard anything about it in the first place.



As I previously mentioned, our *shver* was a well-respected member of his community, with many close friends. News such as this is not that easy to suppress, and he had informed a few of his friends about the situation. One of them is the owner of the Jewish bookstore in town.

This man has the perfect job. He loves his work. There is nothing he enjoys more than the world of *sefarim*, and besides selling them, he also knows them. There are those who are good salesmen and there are those who truly love the *sefarim* they sell, and this man definitely falls into the latter category. He always has a beautiful *vort* to relate on the weekly *sedrah* and he is familiar with the most obscure ideas and concepts, all culled from his immersion in the world of his profession. He is also a very kind man and his heart went out to Daddy, his friend. He thought about the matter for a long time, his friend’s face remaining at the forefront of his

mind, and finally he thought of an idea that would possibly cause a turnaround.

A few days later Daddy came into the store. He inhaled the heady aroma of freshly printed *sefarim* and enjoyed the sight of the shining gilded letters on the lustrous covers. He was checking out some of the newest books when his friend the *sefarim* seller pulled him into a corner and told him that he had a great idea. Daddy looked at him warily. What could his friend possibly do for him? But he was willing to listen.

“You know,” the man said, “that in the course of my work I come across thousands and thousands of *sefarim*, covering a multitude of topics ranging from the creation of the world to the laws of the redemption of the firstborn. I have come across something in one of the lesser-known *sefarim* that I think you should know about.”

Daddy motioned him to go on.

“You know, of course,” he said, “that there are many, many *segulos* and things to do for all sorts of ailments and assorted situations. Most of these ideas are fairly well known. Being that I’m constantly involved with my *sefarim*, I sometimes come across *segulos* that are off the beaten track, things that most people have never heard of. That was how I came across The Promise.”

Daddy looked at him questioningly.

“Yes,” he went on. “Exactly that! There is a *sefer* titled *Zera Shimshon*, written by Rav Shimshon Chaim Nachmani *zt”l*, who wrote a number of *sefarim*. This *tzaddik* had had one son, who passed away during Rav Nachmani’s lifetime. He therefore made the decision to leave behind *sefarim* for people to learn, and he writes in the *sefer’s* introduction that he promises all sorts of blessings to one who studies his *sefer*: ‘He will stand by his side; the person who learns the *sefer* will sit at his table surrounded by his children and family; beautiful blessings, all given wholeheartedly to the person who studies his *sefer*. A house filled with everything good... The *berachos* will begin in this world and carry on in the World to Come...’

“And all he asks in return for this promise is that you study his *sefer*. That’s all. Here,” he said as he removed the *sefer* from one of the shelves, “this is it, *Zera Shimshon* on the *Chumash*.”

And he handed the *sefer* to my *shver* with a flourish.

“This is not a well-known *sefer*, but people in the know say it has worked wonders in the past. It’s not the easiest Torah either,” his friend went on, “since Rav Nachmani quite obviously knew how to learn. Anyway, take it home and give it a shot. What do you have to lose?”



Daddy brought the *sefer* home and decided that he was going to give it a real chance. Without wasting any time, he opened it and began learning what the *Zera Shimshon* had written on that week’s *sedrah*. It discussed many fairly complicated *inyanim*, as the store-owner had said, but remembering his upcoming surgery, Daddy put his head and heart into understanding the *sefer*’s words. There was no time to lose. The operation was scheduled for the following week, and the doctor was going to remove his kidney. It was final. If learning this *sefer* was going to be a *meilitz yosher* for him in *Shamayim* then learn it he would.



He received the call from the hospital a few days later.

“Mr. Schoenblum, we are sorry to inform you that Dr. Simpson, the surgeon who was scheduled to perform your operation, has decided to take his vacation now and will not be available to operate on you. That being the case,” the relentless voice went on, “I am scheduling you to meet Dr. O’Keefe, his subordinate and close second. He will be taking over for Dr. Simpson at your surgery.”

The girl paused for breath before continuing her assault.

“Would it be possible for you to come into Dr. O’Keefe’s office to review your file together so we can make sure that everything is in order, and that the surgery can proceed at the scheduled time?”

“Yes,” Daddy managed.

“Good,” she said, and proceeded to give a time to meet with the doctor on the following day.

To Daddy this was infinitely worse than before. Not only was the

surgery going to take place, he was to be in the hands of someone he didn't know, whose medical credentials were not nearly as good as his first doctor's. He had no choice, however, so he went.



Dr. O'Keefe was a smiling Irishman in his mid-thirties. He led Daddy into his pleasant office and offered him a seat. The doctor had sandy-colored hair and intelligent eyes that looked out at the world through rimless glasses. He was sympathetic and kind, and asked Daddy if they might go over the history of his illness. They spoke for a few minutes and then O'Keefe asked his secretary to bring the files of the case and the latest CT and MRI results. The files arrived and O'Keefe studied them carefully.

He was quiet for a while, his brow furrowed in deep thought, a perplexed look on his face. He stared at the computer screen, clicking one view and another. Daddy grew increasingly apprehensive as the minutes passed and the man remained deep in thought. Had the previous diagnosis been incorrect? Had the tumor spread to both of his kidneys? His heart was pounding so loudly in his chest that he could feel it. What? What was going on?

Finally O'Keefe tore his eyes from the screen and looked at Daddy across the desk.

"Well, Mr. Schoenblum," he said, "I'm afraid Dr. Simpson's diagnosis was incorrect. According to my reading of these scans, there is absolutely no trace of anything on your kidneys, neither of them, and the only thing that may be there is a cyst. That's the worst possible scenario."

He watched as Daddy exhaled with relief. "There will be no removal of any kidneys, no removal of anything, in fact, except you from this hospital. Go home, Mr. Schoenblum, back to your family and be happy. You're a healthy man!"

Daddy left the hospital like a man in a trance, like Avraham Avinu exiting the fiery furnace healthy and whole, physically and emotionally. He went home to his beautiful family, all sitting around the table waiting...waiting. He told them the entire story. How he had begun learning *Zera Shimshon*. How the author of the *sefer* had

promised tremendous success to anyone who studied it. How his doctor, the noted consultant, had suddenly canceled on him and gone on vacation. How he had thought that was just terrible. And how the doctor who had replaced him had said that the illness had disappeared as if it had never been in the first place!



He paid a visit to his friend the *sefarim* seller later that day. The bell tinkled with a quiet sigh as he entered the door and he looked around at the mounds of *sefarim* with a lick of his lips. He was a free man! He could learn all these *sefarim*. For him there would be another tomorrow. His friend was busy pricing *sefarim* at the counter and he approached and waited silently until he looked up, and the gleam in his eye told the whole story before he had said a word. They spoke for a while and made a *l'chaim*, and then he asked his friend if he thought they should publicize the story, so that people would know about the *sefer*, know about the promise that the *Zera Shimshon* had given.

His friend didn't feel it was a good idea. He said that this was a little-known *segulah* and sometimes being less well-known was a good thing. The following week, however, he came to our *shver* and told him that he had thought it over and changed his mind, and that he now felt that as many people as possible should know about the *Zera Shimshon's* promise.



In the weeks following the story's publication, readers reached out to *Hamodia* and myself trying to get hold of the *sefer*—only to learn that precious few copies of it were still in existence. The majority of *sefarim* stores didn't carry the *sefer*, and those who did had them in storage. They were covered in dust and could be purchased at a low price.

Zera Shimshon, and its companion *sefer Toldos Shimshon*, had been written by Rav Shimshon Chaim Nachmani, who was a great *talmid chacham* and *tzaddik* from the Italian city of Modina. He had served as *rav* in various Italian communities—Modina, Pisa, Sienna, and Rego. Not only was he revered and respected in his own town,

but Rav Shimshon Chaim was appointed *rav* for at least five satellite towns as well.

Rav Nachmani was the grandson of Rav Yehuda Matzliach, one of the greatest of Italian *rabbanim*. Rav Nachmani studied under the father-in-law of the *Ramchal*, Rav Dovid Pinci, and was a *talmid* of Rav Binyomin HaKohen *b'inyanei Kabbalah*. He grew in Torah and was highly regarded by the greatest *gedolim* of his day. The *Chida* referred to him as “*chasida kaddisha*”—an extremely righteous individual, and writes, “I have heard that he was proficient in practical Kabbalah and that he requested that all his private writings on Kabbalah be buried with him when he passed away.”

Though the *Zera Shimshon* was blessed with a son, he passed away in Rav Shimshon Chaim’s lifetime, and this served as a source of motivation for the promise that he penned in the introduction to his *sefarim*. He also called the *sefarim Toldos Shimshon* and *Zera Shimshon* respectively, titles that indicate that he regarded his *sefarim* as a personal contribution to the world—they were his “children,” so to speak—and would serve to memorialize him for all time.

For years almost no one learned the *sefarim*. Hardly anyone had even heard of them. They had been published in an old-fashioned font and were very difficult to read and understand. But the article about the *sefer* printed in *Hamodia* in 2007 took the Torah world by storm. Suddenly everyone wanted a copy of the *sefer*. It became almost impossible to acquire a *Zera Shimshon* because they had all been bought. The *sefer* had gone from one that no one knew about, to something that everyone wanted. It was incredible to see.

But it didn’t end there. Months passed, then years, and people still called me and e-mailed me, asking, almost begging, for details about the *sefer*. I told them to get in touch with a Rav Wagschal from Williamsburg, because his was the contact name and phone number provided on the flyleaf of the lone *sefer* that I had. The number was an old one—six digits in all—although Rav Wagschal’s Williamsburg address was included. It seemed that those who wanted to possess a copy of the *Zera Shimshon* would have to work that much harder to obtain it. Five years passed. Still people got in touch, wanting to know how to track down the *sefer*. I heard that it had been reprinted

a number of times. And had been sold out again and again. But I had nothing really concrete to tell them other than that.



In 2012, Rav Yltzchok Yosef Zilberberg, one of the Roshei Yeshivos of Yeshivas Ohel Shimon — Erlau (and Reb Yisroel's father) visited Canada for a wedding. A *chashuve* rosh yeshivah, his father was closely acquainted with his son's friend Yechiel, having taught him in yeshivah, and was looking forward to hearing good news from his former *talmid*. During the course of the meal, someone shared a *vort* with him from the *Zera Shimshon*.

“Who is the *Zera Shimshon*?” Reb Yisroel's father wanted to know. He had never heard of the *sefer*, and here this person was sharing this *vort* with a real *bren*, as if the *Zera Shimshon* were a famous Torah work—yet he, a prominent rosh yeshivah, had never even heard the name mentioned.

The man who had told him the *vort* pointed at someone else who was just passing by.

“See that man?” he said. “His name is Reb Reuven Sharf. He's from Boro Park, and he was instrumental in the original publishing of the *sefer* many years ago.”

Reb Yisroel's father approached the man and asked him about the *sefer*. Reb Reuven listened and began enthusiastically telling the Israeli rosh yeshivah all about the *Zera Shimshon*.



“It all began about forty years ago,” Reb Reuven Scharf said, the nostalgia evident in his voice. “I was a *yungerman* who worked in the *sefarim*-printing business. One day, someone entered my store with a copy of the original version of the *sefer*.”

“‘Look here,’ he said to me. ‘This *sefer* was printed only once in the lifetime of the *mechaber* and never printed again. But look at what the author writes in the introduction... He really, really wants people to learn his *sefer*...’”

“I promised to take a closer look at the *sefer*. If it was that important to the author that Yidden learn his *sefer*, I decided that I would see what I could do. However, even with the greatest of intentions I

still had a problem, because it was going to take a large amount of money to publish the *sefer* and I had no idea if I would manage to cover the costs! Doing a *chesed* for the *mechaber* was one thing, but I didn't want to go into major debt either! I made a calculation and realized that I would need about five thousand dollars to print the *sefer*. So I visited a friend of mine who had been married for a while and still didn't have any children and I asked him for the money.

"Would you consider paying for the printing of this *sefer*?"

"He wanted to know why he should choose this *sefer* over any other. I told him about the *mechaber's berachah* in the introduction.

"Perhaps in the *zechus* of paying for the printing of this *sefer*, the *Zera Shimshon's berachah* will come true for you."

"My friend agreed, gave me the money, and, indeed, was blessed with a child later on that same year!

"With the money in hand," Reb Reuven continued, "I visited Reb Naftali Elimelech Wagschal from Williamsburg, who was also still waiting to be blessed with children, and I told him that based on what the *mechaber* had written it would be *kedai* for him to get involved. I asked him to head the team of *talmidei chachamim* who would review the entire *sefer*, make the necessary corrections, and help prepare the *sefer* for printing."

Reb Naftali Elimelech consulted with the Kashau Rav of Williamsburg, who advised him to spearhead the project. He then handpicked a team of three *avreichim* who, in addition to being outstanding *talmidei chachamim*, were all still waiting to be blessed with children. In an astonishing turn of events, all three had children even before the *sefer* was printed! Rav Wagschal too ended up with a beautiful family.



"Though a skeptical man by nature," Reb Yisroel continued, "my father was convinced by what Reb Reuven told him and excited by what he had heard. On the day that he returned to Eretz Yisrael, he called me and asked me to tell my friend Yechiel to make sure to begin learning the *sefer Zera Shimshon* as soon as possible!"

"Tatte," Reb Yisroel told his father, "Yechiel has already been married for almost fourteen years. He has heard about all the *segulos* already, davened at all the *kevarim* in the country, done every-

thing there is to do. He is wary. If I call him about this, he's not going to take me seriously. However, if you, his rosh yeshivah, write him a letter advising him to start learning *Zera Shimshon*, I have a feeling that would convince him to take your advice."

His father immediately sat down and wrote Reb Yechiel a letter extolling the virtues of the *sefer*. Reb Yisroel delivered the letter to his friend, who took his rosh yeshivah's advice seriously and agreed to learn the *sefer*.

There was still a technical problem for him, however, because there were no copies of the *Zera Shimshon* available in Eretz Yisrael. The two of them checked all the *sefarim* stores up and down Meah Shearim and came up with nothing. Even the stores that normally specialized in the most obscure *sefarim* were unable to help them. Reb Yisroel was finally given Rav Wagschal's phone number in Williamsburg, and he in turn gave him the address of a *sefarim* store in Yerushalayim that had a few copies. He visited the store and asked the owner about the *sefer*.

"I have some copies of the *Zera Shimshon*," the owner said, "but they are up in the storage loft, covered in dust. It will take me some time to get them down."

"We'll wait."

"Okay, I'll go look for them now."

He found them in the back of the storage loft—about twenty sets—and both friends purchased a set. It was Kislev, and Yechiel began learning it right away. Both found themselves connecting to the *sefer* immediately. Reb Yisroel also told Reb Binyomin Paskesz about this new development. Reb Binyomin had never heard about the *Zera Shimshon* and was very excited to learn about the *mechaber's* promise and how people who had taken upon themselves to help make the *sefer* well-known had seen *yeshuos* in a very short time.



"Besides publishing a weekly Torah newsletter for my organization, Maftai'ach Shel Banim," Reb Yisroel continued, "we also used to host a few parties throughout the year for the couples who were involved with our organization. Sometimes thirty couples attended,

sometimes fifty couples, with the main event taking place on Tu BiShevat, when around one hundred couples came. We felt that since Tu BiShevat was the Rosh Hashanah for trees, it was an especially ‘fruitful’ time for *chizuk*. That year we were expecting one hundred couples at the Tu BiShevat party, and Reb Binyomin and I decided that we would distribute the *Zera Shimshon*, hoping that this would provide an extra dose of *chizuk* to all the participants and a major *zechus* for Reb Yechiel and his wife.

Wanting to give each couple the *sefer* was one thing, but there was still the problem of obtaining copies for all the couples who would attend. Reb Yisroel returned to the store where he had purchased the *sefer* and bought all there were, but there still weren’t enough. Then one day his brother called.

“Listen to this,” he said. “I was just in a shul in Bnei Brak and I overheard someone mention that he had just published the *sefer Zera Shimshon*.”

After a little investigation it turned out that the man had published a similar *sefer* by the same author—*Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos*—and it had just been printed a few weeks earlier. It was so fresh that it hadn’t even been distributed to the stores! Here too the *mechaber* had promised *yeshuos* to those who learned his *sefer*, though the wording of his promise in the introduction to *Zera Shimshon* stressed the matter of children in stronger terms. (The difference in enthusiasm between the earlier and later promises can perhaps be attributed to the fact that *Toldos Shimshon* had been written fifteen years before Rav Nachmani passed away, while the *Zera Shimshon* had been published in the final year of his life, when he knew that he would not be leaving any children behind.)

In any event, they purchased one hundred copies of *Toldos Shimshon* and distributed them to the guests along with whatever copies of *Zera Shimshon* they could find, keeping in mind that everything they were doing with the *sefarim* would serve as a merit for Reb Yechiel and his wife.



Yechiel called his friend in the middle of Tammuz. Reb Yisroel remembers the call as though it were yesterday.

“Yisroel,” he said to me, “I just wanted to tell you the good news. My wife and I are expecting a baby.”

Reb Yisroel stood rooted to the spot, shocked beyond measure.

“I also wanted to tell you,” Yechiel continued, “that I have been learning *Zera Shimshon b'kviyus*, week after week, and *baruch Hashem*, we feel that is the reason for our good fortune!”

Yechiel and his wife had been waiting nearly fifteen years for this moment. When he'd seen his friend's number on caller ID, Reb Yisroel had vacillated between hoping for good news and telling himself not to get excited for no reason.

“I cannot accurately describe to you how incredibly happy Yechiel's news made me,” Reb Yisroel said. “For the last decade and a half my friend had been so down and depressed, and suddenly I could hear the newfound joy in his voice—and the lightheartedness that I'd never heard before made my heart sing!”

Almost automatically, Reb Yisroel began making calculations. The miracle had occurred right after the party they had made in Shevat, when they'd given out all the *sefarim*. He couldn't believe the turn of events. Tears of happiness came to his eyes and he wiped them away in a daze.

Reb Yisroel immediately called Reb Binyomin Paskesz in the United States and related the entire chain of events. He too was stunned and couldn't respond for a few minutes. Both of them stood there on opposite sides of the ocean and couldn't get over the significance of what they had just found out. They had been waiting for this for so long, hoping beyond hope, davening with all their hearts, and when they finally heard the news, it seemed almost too good to be true.

It was at that moment that Reb Binyomin and Reb Yisroel made a resolution. There was no question in their minds that the *sefer Zera Shimshon* was a powerful catalyst for *yeshuos*.

“We have to make sure that this *sefer* is available for everyone who wants to learn it—no matter the expense or time it takes!”

They also saw that it was imperative that *Klal Yisrael* be informed about the *sefer*, so that everyone could learn and benefit from it.

As Reb Binyomin said at the time, “When you see something so

amazing, a *yeshuah* so unbelievable, you have an obligation to do something about it!”

Reb Binyomin, having never really heard about the *sefer*, decided it was time for him to begin researching it—to find out more about the *sefer* and about its esteemed author, who had lived in Italy hundreds of years earlier.



As he began investigating the *Zera Shimshon*, Reb Binyomin heard about the article I had published in *Hamodia* in 2007. He read it in fascination. He then decided to call me to ask me to write another article about the *sefer*, so that people would know about the treasure in their midst.

And so the story really began. Because that was when Reb Yisroel and Reb Binyomin started including *vertlach* from the *Zera Shimshon* in their weekly Torah newsletter. They also began working on the publication of another beautiful version of the *sefer*.

And more and more stories began coming their way.

I was in the United States when Reb Binyomin tracked me down and asked me to meet him at the Agudah of 18th Avenue. He came equipped with the new *sefarim* he had printed and an entire list of stories that he wanted me to share with the world. Our meeting led to another feature in *Hamodia* in which I detailed what had come about since that first article had appeared. When this new story was published, Reb Binyomin’s phone began ringing off the hook.

This development would eventually lead to multiple *shiurim* in *Zera Shimshon* all over the globe, as well as a website devoted to its Torah. Today a person can listen to *shiurim* on the *sefer* in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English. At long last, people have become aware of what has lain dormant for so many years. *Baruch Hashem*, things have begun to spiral as more and more people hear about the *sefer*, learn the *sefer*, and benefit from its influence on their lives. In addition, Reb Yisroel and Reb Binyomin are constantly involved in numerous *Zera Shimshon* projects, such as the weekly “Zera Shimshon on the Parashah” newsletter and the development of the *Zera Shimshon HaMevuar*, with a beautiful *perush* of every segment of the *sefer*. The work is already in progress and parts of the *sefer*

have already been completed. But there is a tremendous amount of work left to do and anyone is welcome to become involved in numerous ways.

“All this started,” said Reb Yisroel, “with the *yeshuah* that came about from the Tu BiShevat party and the miracle that occurred shortly afterward—which we couldn’t and didn’t want to ignore. Reb Yecheiel’s personal *yeshuah* spurred us to make the *sefer* accessible to everyone who could benefit from it. It caused Reb Binyomin to reach out to Rabbi Wagschal and to ask him to reprint the *sefer*, for which Reb Binyomin raised funds. As it became more and more well known, they could feel that the *mechaber* of the *sefer*, Rav Shimshon Chaim Nachmani, was smiling down at them from *Shamayim*.”



“When the newest version of *Zera Shimshon* was published,” said Reb Yisroel, “someone suggested that I send a copy of the *sefer* to Rav Chaim Kanievsky. I sent it with Rav Shtiglitz, who publishes *sefarim* under the name ‘Asicha’ and who visits the *gadol* on a regular basis. Rav Shtiglitz informed me that Rav Chaim looked through the *sefer* and gave positive feedback.

“I usually visit Rav Chaim once a month and share with him a number of questions that I encounter. I told Rav Chaim that many of the questions that I discuss come from the *sefer Zera Shimshon* and he seemed to enjoy them very much.

“Recently,” Reb Yisroel continued, “we published *Zera Shimshon* on *Shir HaShirim*, in which the *mechaber* explains the Megillah word for word. We printed the *sefer* in a beautiful font, clarified any point that we felt might be unclear, and provided copious sources for everything written, turning the contents into a *sefer* anyone can understand.”

“Why don’t you bring the new *sefer* to Rav Chaim?’ Rav Shtiglitz suggested.

“So I did.

“Rav Chaim examined the *sefer* and his face lit up with a glowing smile.

“‘*Yasher koach, yasher koach*,’ he exclaimed, leafing through the pages with obvious enjoyment.

“Suddenly he turned to me and said, ‘The *Zera Shimshon* was an *adam gadol*.’

“From this statement, I understood that Rav Chaim was already familiar with the Torah of the *Zera Shimshon* and that he considered him to be a person of prominence and a *talmid chacham* of note.

“‘The *Chida* writes in *Shem HaGedolim*,’ I told Rav Chaim, ‘that the *Zera Shimshon* was a great *tzaddik*, and that he was an expert in Kabbalah studies, and even in practical Kabbalah.’

“Rav Chaim immersed himself in the *sefer*, and especially enjoyed studying the introduction that we had taken from the *sefer Zera Shimshon*. There the *mechaber* shows his knowledge of the entire Torah, since every phrase in the introduction is quoted from a different source, either *Chumash*, *Navi*, or *Gemara*, and he ties every word together in a delightful tapestry that is extremely enjoyable to read. This is something the earlier rabbis would have done, and not usually attempted in the last few hundred years.

“For our part, we decided to provide a source for every single one of the lines in the introduction, and when you read the long list of sources—430 of them—a person can truly begin to grasp who the *Zera Shimshon* was and why his *sefarim* resonate so deeply with *Klal Yisrael*. He based it on the *Rambam* and *Maseches Shabbos*, *Maseches Gittin*, and the Shavuot morning *Akdamus*. The list is varied and profoundly impressive, and Rav Chaim—a man who holds the entire Torah in the palms of his hands—connected to what the *Zera Shimshon* had accomplished.

“Rav Chaim looked through the *sefer*,” continued Reb Yisroel, “commenting as he did how nice it was and what a beautiful job had been done throughout. He then turned to me and repeated his earlier comment, ‘*Hu hayah adam gadol*’ (He was a great man), showing me his familiarity with the Torah of the *Zera Shimshon* and his esteem for a Torah scholar who had passed away a few hundred years earlier.

“Near the end of our meeting I said to Rav Chaim, ‘There are some people who feel they have managed to discover the *kever* of the *Zera Shimshon*, but it’s not conclusive.’

“‘In that case,’ he replied, ‘we certainly have to learn his *sefarim*.’

“I then told him of the *mechaber’s berachah* to anyone who

learns his *sefarim*, and asked him for an extra *berachah* for those who involve themselves in the printing and publishing of the *Zera Shimshon's* Torah.

“Rav Chaim didn’t hesitate, blessing everyone involved, those who learn the *sefer* and those who help spread the Torah throughout *Klal Yisrael*.”



As you can see, Reb Yisroel Zilberberg and Reb Binyomin Paskesz are people who never stop working toward the goal of helping *Klal Yisrael* appreciate that which had gone virtually unnoticed for so many generations.

Reb Binyomin Paskesz especially felt that there were many people for whom the *sefer* wasn’t accessible—at times it can be esoteric and complex and a challenge for the average person to understand. He therefore approached me and asked if I would be willing to partner with the *Zera Shimshon* team in a brand-new and unique undertaking. The *sefer* would be written in English and would include a number of *divrei Torah* from every *sedrah* in *Chumash*, along with a story connected to every *parashah* and quite a few additional stories about people who have seen personal *yeshuos* while making *Zera Shimshon* part of their lives. (This is not as easy as it seems, since we didn’t want to keep on repeating the same story over and over again. This meant we were on the lookout for a wide range of *Zera Shimshon* stories.)

The *vertlach* on Torah were handpicked by Reb Yisroel Zilberberg from the vast sea of the *Zera Shimshon*, to ensure that they were readily understood, and they were edited for clarity. Of course, they just give a *ta’am*, a taste of the *Zera Shimshon*, and I urge those who are capable of understanding it to read the original *sefer*.



“There’s another point to consider,” said Reb Yisroel. “Many people have told me that they learn the *sefer* for one reason: because a *tzaddik* asked them to. Not because of the *segulah* and not because of the promises in the introduction and not because of the countless miracles that we have heard about. Just because Rav Shimshon

Chaim Nachmani of Italy left a *tzavaah* asking *Klal Yisrael* to learn his *sefer*.

“Everything else (while a nice side benefit, perhaps) is secondary. The *Zera Shimshon* passed away without children. His *sefarim* are his children and he is filled with gratitude when we learn his Torah.

“Though there are many amazing stories about the efficacy of the *Zera Shimshon* for those looking for *yeshuos*, there is no such thing as an iron-clad *segulah* with guaranteed results. What is guaranteed is that you will read beautiful, profound, and inspiring *divrei Torah*—and fulfill the wishes of the author, a true *gadol b’Yisrael*. And, of course, there is no substitute for learning the actual *sefer* in *lashon hakodesh*.

“Recently, Rav Shtiglitz was visiting with Rav Chaim Kanievsky and asked him what the *Zera Shimshon* would most appreciate from people.

“Rav Chaim replied that the most important thing for the *Zera Shimshon’s neshamah* is for people to assist with the publication of his *sefarim* and in helping to spread his unique Torah to as many people as possible.”

And so I embarked on this ambitious project alongside the two founders of the Institute for the Study of Zera Shimshon, Reb Binyomin Paskesz, who can be reached at, mbpaskesz@gmail.com, and in the States at 347-496-5657, and Reb Yisroel Zilberberg, who can be contacted at, zera277@gmail.com, and in Eretz Yisrael at 052-716-6450.

It is the fruit of our labor that is now sitting on your Shabbos table, waiting for you to learn it.

May it serve as a *zechus* for the memory of Rav Shimshon Chaim Nachmani *zt”l*, the *Zera Shimshon*.

Rabbi Nachman Seltzer
Ramat Beit Shemesh, 2017

Note: An asterisk (*) next to a name indicates that the name has been changed.