



THE ARIEL


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לזכות הרה"ת ר' **אברהם צמח** הלוי שיחי'
רוזנפלד

בקשר עם יום הולדתו ב' **מנחם-אב**
הקב"ה יצליחו ללכת מחיל אל חיל בכל הענינים
ביחד עם זוגתו וכל צאצאיו שיחיו

נדפס ע"י **משפחתו** שיחיו

ZAL



In just two extraordinary years, the Arizal (HaEloki, Rabbeinu Yitzchok Zichrono Livracha [Luria]) altered the course of Jewish history, essentially unlocking and revealing the secrets of *pnimiyus haTorah* [the inner part of Torah] for the coming generations.

From his assuming leadership of the *mekubalim* in the summer of 5330*, succeeding the Ramak (Rabenu Moshe Cor-

dovero) after his passing—only a few months after the Arizal returned to Eretz Yisroel—through his passing in the summer of 5332*, the Arizal flicked the switch of *pnimiyus haTorah*. He crafted Torah and Yiddishkeit in its image, with his influence seen and preserved not only in his Torah, but in *hanhagos*, *minhagim*, *nusach*, *zemiros*, and more.

More than a century would pass before the Baal Shem Tov and the masters of Chassidus would take the revelation of the secrets of the Torah to the next level. Continued by Chassidus Chabad through the years, and specifically in our generation, the floodgates of learning and understanding of the inner part of the Torah have been broken open for everyone. But at its core, it was the Arizal, with his statement, “*Mutar vemitzvah legalos zos hachochmah*—It is permitted and a mitzvah to reveal this wisdom (Kabbalah),” that changed the nature and direction of *pnimiyus haTorah*.

It wasn't just the sheer proportion of revelation of Kabbalah that the Arizal is known for, it is also the new adaptation of Kabbalah that he spread that beckoned in the new age of Kabbalah and the world of *sod* [the secrets of Torah]. While much ink has been spilled explaining the different schools of Kabbalah, complete with arguments, disagreements, and differences of perspective, the Rebbe explained that

the Kabbalah of the Arizal includes and encompasses all the previous Kabbalah in it. In reality, everything is explained through the Arizal's Kabbalah, including Kabbalas HaRamak, which is often cited as an opposing view in many areas.¹

As with many of the *gedolei Yisroel*, especially those who pioneered and set into motion new processes and developments in the Jewish world, the Arizal's impact is not only seen in his Torah or through his students throughout the ages; rather it is also evident in his life story and his holy conduct in each aspect of life.

In connection with the Arizal's *yom hilula* on Hei Av 5332*, we will take a quick dive into the life and times of the Arizal through the lens of the Rebbe's Torah.

LIFE OF THE ARIZAL

The Arizal was born in Yerushalayim to his father Rav Shlomo, son of the prestigious Lurya family from Ashkenaz, and his Sephardic mother, in the year 5294*.

Following his father's passing, at the age of about eight, his mother uprooted their family and took them across the desert to Cairo, Egypt. There they were taken under the wing of her brother, the wealthy Rav Mordechai Francis, who cared for the family financially and ensured that the young Yitzchak had whatever he needed, allowing him to invest himself wholeheartedly in learning.

The Arizal's connection to his influential uncle only strengthened when he later married his daughter, at age fifteen.

During his early years in Egypt, the Arizal learned Torah from the great *rishonim* who lived in Egypt in that period, Rabbeinu Betzalel Ashkenazi, author of the “*Shitah Mekubetzes*,” and Rabbeinu Dovid ben Zimrah, the Radvaz. It was under their tutelage that he began to grow in his Torah study, both in the revealed parts of Torah and gradually, in its hidden secrets as well.

While there isn't much written about the Arizal's years in Egypt, what is known is that he was supported for the most part by his wealthy uncle and father-in-law. With the lack of financial burden, the Arizal was able to spend his days and nights

continuously climbing the rungs of Torah study. For years, he secluded himself and studied on his own in a small cottage on the Nile, at times venturing out to study away from home, returning only for Shabbosim.

Throughout these years, his study was often with *ruach hakodesh* and often accompanied by revelations from Eliyahu Hanavi.

It is interesting to note, that although the Arizal taught his Torah in Eretz Yisroel, his personal study and mastering of Kabbalah took place outside Eretz Yisroel, in Egypt. The Rebbe explained that after the times of the Mishnah, Torah is based in *chutz la'aretz*; even the Arizal, whose Torah seems to be from Eretz Yisroel, actually acquired his knowledge in *chutz la'aretz*.²

While the Arizal spent most of his life in Egypt, where his mastering of Kabbalah really took place, his role and impact as teacher of Kabbalah only essentially begins when he leaves Egypt and returns to Eretz Yisroel in the year 5330*.

Sometime in the first half of the year 5330*, the Arizal arrived in Tzfas, where he soon after joined the group of *mekubalim* led by the Ramak, which had previously been led by Rav Shlomo Alkabetz. Among this group of *mekubalim*, the Arizal also met his prize student, who would be entrusted with transcribing and transmitting all of his Torah, Rav Chaim Vital.

Tzfas in that period sported one of the most impressive line-ups of Jewish giants at one time in one place; including Rav Yosef Karo, the *mechaber* of the Shulchan Aruch, and Rabbeinu Moshe Alsheich. While they were primarily focused on different elements of the Torah, they encountered and interacted with each other and had much respect for one another.

That summer, after the Ramak's passing, the Arizal took his place as the leader of the *mekubalim* and for the subsequent two unforgettable years went on to teach them the secrets of the Torah through his unique lens.

The Arizal's time as teacher and leader was unfortunately short-lived. Only two years after the Ramak's passing, the Arizal himself returned his soul to his Creator, on Hei Menachem-Av 5332*, amidst a plague that swept through the city of Tzfas.

It may have been a mere two years, but the immense impact the Arizal had on the Jewish world during that short period is astounding.

THE ARIZAL'S LIMUD HATORAH

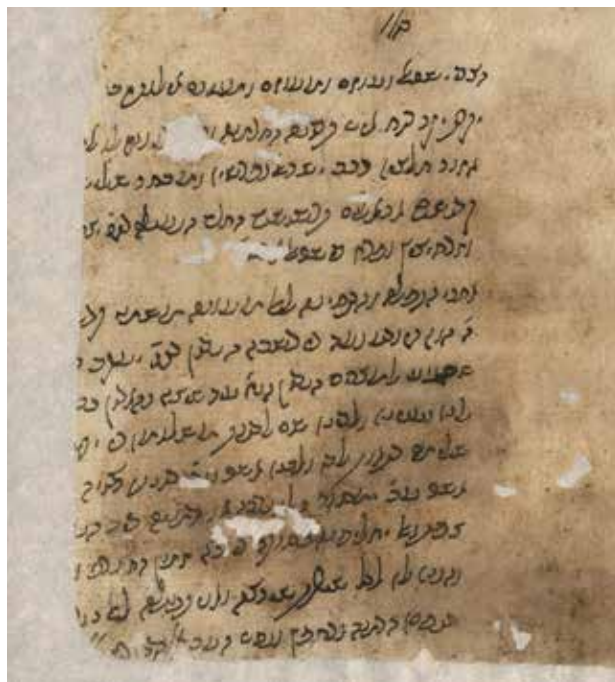
The lion's share of our knowledge about the Arizal is from his closest disciple, the great Rabbeinu Chaim Vital, who was charged by the Arizal with the writing of his Torah.

Those writings are primarily the Arizal's teachings, but here and there, sprinkled throughout the books, known as *Kisvei HaArizal*, are little glimpses into the life and character of his great and holy teacher.


The Rebbe spoke several times about the Arizal's greatness in learning, not only his *ge'onus*,³ but also the immense level of toil he exerted in his study, both in the learning of *nigleh* and Kabbalah.

The Arizal was an unbelievable giant in the revealed parts of the Torah. While there isn't much found of his writings in *nigleh*, from his correspondence with Torah scholars, and the responsa he wrote on concepts in *halacha*, the great proficiency he had in this field is evident. The Rebbe also pointed out the learning schedule that he prescribed in his writings, splitting the day, allotting a large portion to the study of *nigleh*.⁴

Rav Chaim Vital—one of the greatest masters of Torah in his time, as attested to by the *semicha* he received under the auspices of the revived *semicha* initiative of Mahari Bei Rav—describes in his writings, the greatness of the Arizal in *nigleh*. The Rebbe brings this fact as additional proof of the



THIS RECENTLY DISCOVERED LETTER, NOW PRESERVED AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ISRAEL, WAS ADDRESSED TO THE ARIZAL, THEN LIVING IN CAIRO, REQUESTING THAT HE SUPPORT THE FUNDRAISING FOR A CAUSE IN TZFAS



Arizal's mastery of *nigleh*.

Following this understanding, the Rebbe teaches that nothing from the Arizal's vast world of Kabbalah stands in contradiction with anything in *nigleh*.⁵

But more than the Arizal's knowledge and expertise in Torah, the Rebbe emphasized the Arizal's labor in Torah and his ceaseless toil to get to the bottom of what he was studying and arrive at the correct conclusion. While the Arizal was unburdened with financial worry due to the gracious backing he received from his family, and had all the time and mind space in the world to learn comfortably, nevertheless, he still learned Torah with extreme toil and sweat.⁶

One description, quoted by the Rebbe many times, tells of the Arizal's unique style of learning. The Arizal would study every concept by exploring it six different ways in *halacha*, working so hard on the *pilpulim* that he would physically perspire. Following the *halacha* versions of the study, he would learn it a seventh way—according to Kabbalah—corresponding to Shabbos that comes after the six days of worldly toil.

The Rebbe explained that while the Arizal's ultimate purpose was to reveal the secrets of Kabbalah, he nonetheless spent time and exerted strenuous effort in the world of *halacha* in order to break the *kelipos* of questions and difficulties. He continued to work it all the way through, until he refined and developed the *halacha* properly, and only then would he explore the concept in the world of *sod* as well.⁷

Yet, while much of the Arizal's Torah knowledge came through toil and hard work, he also merited to be gifted many secrets and insights from above. The story is told, brought in many places in Chassidus, that during a nap one Shabbos afternoon, many wondrous *chidushim* and secrets of Kabbalah in the *parsha* of Balak and Bilaam were revealed to him, enough that would take him 80 years to share!

Chassidus explains that this was because he merited a level of comprehension of *re'iyah* — where he “saw” the Torah and grasped it on a whole other level.⁸

The Arizal's mind worked at a different pace than the rest of the world. In truth, his brain flow was too advanced even for his most gifted students. The Rebbe related that in addition to the fact that the Arizal had a difficult time putting his Torah down in

writing, it was a challenge for him verbally as well.

It was for this reason that he entrusted the task of writing his Torah to his students, specifically to one student, Rav Chaim Vital, because even in his speech, there were those who were not fully able to understand his meaning.

THE TEACHING OF THE ARIZAL

As mentioned earlier, in the summer of 5330*, the Arizal was appointed leader of the holy group of *mekubalim* in Tzfas. From this point on, he began teaching the secrets of Kabbalah following his novel and unique path, which would later be known as the Kabbalas HaAri.

His teaching was limited to a small and exclusive gathering of *talmidim* who were referred to as *Gurei HaAri* (“the cubs of the lion” — the Ar”i).

The Arizal split his students into four groups and gave them *shiurim* at different times. The *shiurim* would often begin based on one concept, exploring a quote from Zohar or the like, and as the shiur would go on, they would travel from topic to topic depending on the subject and the *talmidim*'s involvement.⁹

In addition to the *shiurim* that he gave, the Arizal would also assign certain *kavanos* and *yichudim* to specific students, giving specific guidance to each *mekubal* fitting to who they were and the level that they were on.¹⁰

While the Arizal shared never-before-revealed secrets of Torah and to a full class of *talmidim*, it was still a confined and controlled revelation of *pnimiyus HaTorah* to a particular hand-picked few. So while he was the first to state that it is a mitzvah to reveal the secrets of Torah, at the point of his teaching, many of the previous generations' limitations were still in place.¹¹

In fact, students that were not fit or ready to hear certain secrets of the Torah, would fall asleep and miss the *shiurim* that discussed those concepts. The story is told that the famed *darshan* Rabbeinu Moshe Alshich who, as mentioned, also lived in Tzfas, once stayed on in the shul to hear a *shiur* from the Arizal.

However, he fell asleep and was not able to hear the *shiur*, because his *neshama* was meant for the world of *drush*, not Kabbalah.¹²

Even the *talmidim* that learned closely with the Arizal still needed to keep the Torah they learned to themselves, and were not allowed to share his Torah. This was to ensure both that it wouldn't be spread to people that it was not meant to be revealed to, and that they would transmit the Torah carefully and correctly. Rav Chaim Vital was the only one who was directed to transcribe the Torah of the Arizal, and even those *ksavim* were kept hidden for a long while before eventually being published.

Only later, with the revelation of Chassidus, would the work of the Arizal be completed, breaking down the walls around the inner part of Torah, revealing its secrets and its life to the entire world.¹³

THE ARIZAL IN VIEW OF JEWISH HISTORY

Understandably, the Arizal's mark on the Jewish world is unparalleled, both in terms of the Torah that he taught and in the scope of the various diverse communities that his Torah reached. He is hailed as the primary revealer of *pnimiyus haTorah*.

The Rebbe related that the Arizal's main purpose in life was to spread the secrets of the Torah. With his statement, "*Mitzvah legalos zos hachochmah*,"¹⁴ he essentially changed the tide of Jewish history, heralding a new era of Jewish life with an emphasis on revealing the veiled essence of everything. This began with uncovering the secrets of the Torah, and then eventually with the advent of Chassidus, revealing the soul of the entire world and everything in it.

In the first few generations, his Torah was spread quietly and to a select few, almost exclusively through the *ksavim* compiled by Rav Chaim Vital. But after a while, the Arizal's Torah slowly spread all across the entire

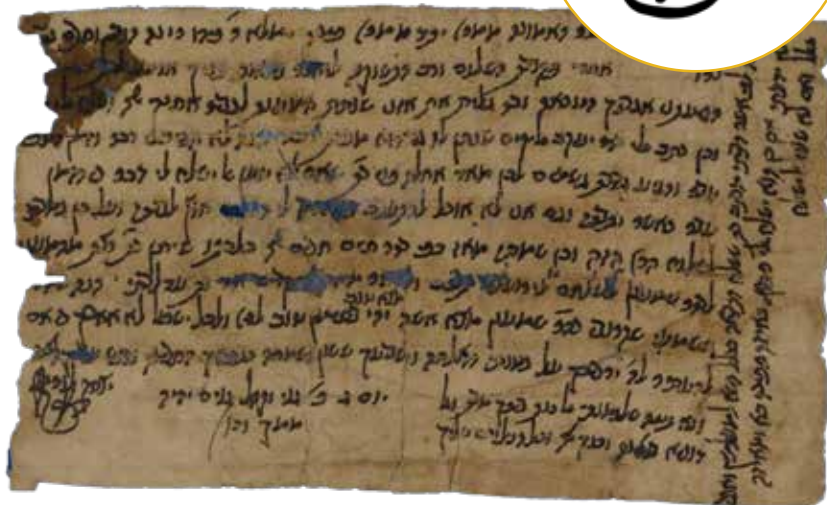
Jewish world, from Eastern Europe to Western Europe, in North Africa, and all throughout the Middle East, to both Sephardim and Ashkenazim and eventually also to Chassidim and *misnagdim*.

Even when fierce battles were waged against those learning and spreading Kabbalah, the Arizal always remained accepted by the entire Jewish people.¹⁵

The Rebbe referred to the Arizal as Moshiach ben Yosef,¹⁶ the redeemer that precedes the coming of Moshiach, tasked with preparing the world for Moshiach's imminent arrival. The Arizal accomplished this through disclosing and teaching the secrets of Kabbalah, readying the Jewish people for the coming of Moshiach.

And even though in the Arizal's times, his teachings were limited to his students and those around him, the ultimate goal of the Arizal's life-work was completed by the work of Chassidus Chabad, following through with the dissemination of *pnimiyus haTorah*.¹⁷

As the exceptional leader that he was, the Arizal's effect is timeless. He is often referred to as the *HaAri Hachai* (the living Ari), or even as the *Arizal Hachai*. The Rebbe explains that the terms *hachai* [the living] and *za"l* [of blessed memory] are not a contradiction, because his memory being a blessing doesn't mean that he is not alive and impactful. On the contrary, part of his lasting and ongoing impact is that his memory brings blessings.



A LETTER BEARING THE ARIZAL'S SIGNATURE (ON THE BOTTOM LEFT), DISCOVERED IN THE CAIRO GENIZAH AND HOUSED TODAY AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY.

The Rebbe also explained that the Arizal lives on in his Torah. And because today the Torah of the Arizal is meant to be spread, his Torah should be learned by everyone, including children.¹⁸

HANHAGOS AND NUSACH

While the Arizal's main contribution was teaching and revealing a whole new world of Kabbalah, his impact is felt, and in a way, even more seen, in a seemingly different area—in his *nusach* of davening and the many *minhagim* and practices that he followed or instituted. In fact, there are several customs of his that we follow, that many of us do not even know originated from the Arizal.

Additionally, there are the Shabbos *zemiros* that he composed: Azamer Bishvachin, Asader L'seudasa, and Bnei Heichala—the only *zemiros* included by the Alter Rebbe in his *siddur*, and consequently the only ones sung in Chabad, with the tune for Bnei Heichala even being composed by the Alter Rebbe himself.

In addition to carrying traditions from both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi homes of his parents, the Arizal primarily followed the way of Kabbalah. (This was, of course, without any contradiction to *halacha*, because essentially there cannot be inconsistency

between Kabbalah and *halacha*.) This fusion of *minhagim* can be seen in his *minhagim* and in his *nusach*. There are many versions of his *siddur* and *nusach* that came out through the ages, most importantly—the *nusach* of the Alter Rebbe, which is “*al pi*” [based] on the Arizal's *nusach*, though not his actual *siddur*.

Examples of customs and practices of the Arizal that have become part of our life include: Giving tzedakah before Shacharis (specifically by Vayevarech Dovid) and Mincha and not before Maariv,¹⁹ saying Hareini Mekabel before davening,²⁰ and wearing tzitzis under the clothes.²¹

Interestingly enough, the Rebbe notes that after the conclusion of *hakafos* in his shul on Shemini Atzeres, the Arizal would go to other shuls to continue celebrating *hakafos* with them.²²

In addition to these *minhagim*, there are several mitzvos that the Arizal was extra stringent with or careful about. The Rebbe mentioned these several times to emphasize their importance:

For one, the Arizal never haggled on the price of a mitzvah. No matter the cost, he would gladly pay the whole sum, not even browsing the market to find a better deal. At times he would give the sellers his pouch of money, telling them to take however much they want.²³ Similarly, when it came to tzedakah, the Arizal would just stick his hand into his pocket and give whatever money came out to the collector or the person in need.²⁴

Another practice of the Arizal that the Rebbe



THE MIKVEH WHERE THE ARIZAL WAS IMMERSED BEFORE BURIAL, SOME 100 YARDS FROM HIS TZIYUN.

mentioned many times was that he would recite *tachanun* on behalf of the rest of the Jewish people. Even though he himself certainly did not sin and the *tachanun* definitely wasn't for him, nevertheless as a member of the Jewish community, the Arizal continued to recite *tachanun*.²⁵

LESSONS FROM THE ARIZAL

Throughout the years, the Rebbe quoted the Arizal, sharing many stories and anecdotes about his saintliness and his holy conduct, often bringing a lesson that we are meant to learn from the Arizal.

A commonly mentioned and explained lesson from the Arizal, denoting a special *midah* of his that the Rebbe viewed as central in his life and achievements, was the *midah* of *simcha*.

The Rebbe explained that all the phenomenal revelations and gifts (i.e. *ruach hakodesh*, *giluy Eliyahu*, and the opening of the gates of *chochma*) that the Arizal was blessed with, were in the merit of *simcha shel mitzvah*—the joy he displayed in doing a mitzvah.²⁶

The Rebbe also explained that even though the Arizal recognized the importance of fasting and penance, he was still a major champion of *simcha*. For this reason, the Alter Rebbe quotes Arizal in regard to *simcha* even though there were earlier sources.²⁷

Another lesson to be learned from the Arizal is his *yegiah* [toil] in Torah. The Rebbe taught a lesson from the Arizal's seemingly unnecessary toil in Torah, that everyone should invest themselves in the study of Torah in the way of *yegiah*, which ultimately leads to true clarity. The Rebbe added that

now, after the Arizal already cleared the way for this intense mode of learning, by himself studying until he physically perspired, made it a lot easier for us to follow.²⁸

At a children's rally, the Rebbe instructed the children to learn three overarching lessons from the life of the Arizal: The first, as mentioned previously, was *simcha*. The second lesson emphasized the relationship of *tefillah* and *ahavas Yisroel*, seen in the reciting of Hareini Mekabel before davening. The third lesson the Rebbe taught is *tzedakah*, the generosity the Arizal exhibited by not counting the money, just giving whatever was in his pocket to the person in need.²⁹

CONCLUSION

The Arizal stands out among the *gedolei Yisroel* of the generations as a figure who had a most profound impact on the Jewish world, with an emphasis on his unique message and impact, the teaching and revealing of the soul of Torah—Kabbalah; and by extension, igniting the soul of the world.

The Rebbe showed a special affinity to the Arizal, instructing people to visit his *kever* on his *yahrtzeit*³⁰ and often mentioning lessons and anecdotes from the Arizal at farbrengens, especially in the weeks surrounding his day of passing.

The Arizal is in many ways the closest predecessor to the Baal Shem Tov and the masters of Chassidus, building and reinforcing the bridge that connects the centuries of hidden *mekubalim* and undefined Kabbalah with the age of the dawn of Chassidus.

The Rebbe connected the Arizal's work and the work of Chassidus Chabad, showing how the latter is the culmination and the fruition of the Arizal's seed work. Through teaching and spreading the teachings of Chassidus and the inner part of Torah, we will accomplish his initial goal — the coming of Moshiach. **T**

1. Sichas Yud Shevat 5723

2. Sichas Chai Elul 5716, p. 198

3. Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shemini 5718.

4. Sichas Yud-Beis Tammuz 5723.

5. Sichas Acharon Shel Pesach 5730.

6. Ibid.

7. Sichas Yud-Beis Tammuz 5723.

8. See for example Likkutei Torah, *maamar* Veheinif (Tzav).

9. Sefer Hachezyonos of Rabbi Chaim Vital, p. 210.

10. Shmona Shearim, 8:2.

11. Sicha Yud Tes Kislev 5722.

12. Sicha Shabbos Parshas Breishis 5721.

13. Sichas Vayeshev 5714.

14. Sichas Shabbos Parshas Devarim 5735.

15. Sichas Purim 5736.

16. Sichas Shabbos Chanukah 5727.

17. Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shelach 5739.

18. Sichas Shabbos Parshas Devarim 5736.

19. Sichas Chai Elul 5734.

20. Sichas 4 Av 5740.

21. Likkutei Sichos, vol. 33, Shelach 3.

22. Sichas Parshas Tzav 5729.

23. Sichas Parshas Vayera 5725.

24. Sichas 4 Av 5740.

25. Sichos Purim 5717, Acharon Shel Pesach 5726, 20 Av 5741, Haazinu 5742.

26. Sichas Shabbos Parsahs Tavo 5713.

27. Sicha Shabbos Parshas Dvorim 5735.

28. Sicha 15 Av 5739.

29. See Sichas Erev Rosh Chodesh Av 5735

30. Sicha 4 Av 5740