

BSD

Rabbi Shalom of Kaminka: Peeling Potatos was Never so Lofty

Rabbi Shalom Rosenfeld, the rabbi of Kaminka and the founding father of the Chassidut of Kaminka, was born to the philanthropist Yaakov Yosef, and Yenta, the daughter of Rabbi Yehoshua Tzvi Heschel of Behr. He finished the entire Talmud at the age of 9. In his youth, he studied under the tutelage of Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Harif and Rabbi Shlomo Kluger and later became a chassid and disciple of Rebbe Naftoli of Ropschitz. Rabbi Shalom, who never officially served as a Chassidic rebbe, was known as a great and brilliant tzaddik. Many of his teachings are intertwined with witticisms that conceal supernal secrets. He passed away on the 20th of Cheshvan, 5612 (1851). His only son, Rabbi Yehoshua, succeeded him in Kaminka. His Torah teachings and stories about him were printed in the book, 'Ohev Shalom.'

After the passing of his Rebbe and teacher, Rabbi Naftoli of Ropschitz, Rabbi Shalom of Kaminka learned under the tutelage of Rabbi Sar Shalom of Belz. Once Rabbi Sar Shalom told Rabbi Shalom to prepare himself well to study a special unification for the time when a soul is departing this world. When he exited Rabbi Sar Shalom's room after learning the unification, Rabbi Shalom was confronted by Rabbi Sar Shalom's famously righteous wife, Malkah. "Did you ever learn such amazing revelations with your previous Rebbe?" she asked. Rebbe Shalom attempted to avoid answering her, but ultimately replied:

"Once I was sitting in the kitchen in Ropschitz with Rabbi Chaim of Sanz, peeling potatoes for everyone's meal. Suddenly, the holy Rebbe Naftali entered, put his hand on my shoulder and his other hand on Rebbe Chaim's shoulder and taught us the unification for peeling potatoes. This is the same unification that I now learned from Rabbi Sar Shalom."

What does the departure of the soul from the body have to do with peeling potatoes? We can imagine that the number of potatoes that needed to be peeled in Ropschitz was enough to make anyone's soul depart from their body, but that is not the only connection...

The departure of the soul from the body is the separation of the internal soul from the external body. This can be compared to separating the fruit from its peel. This is the secret of the verse (from which this unification is learned), "And you will go to your fathers in peace, you will be buried at a good old age,"^[1] which God said to Abraham. "And you will go to your fathers in peace" refers to the soul-fruit, which departs from the body, while "you will be buried at a good old age" refers to the burial of the body-peel. The numerical value of this entire verse equals **oneg** (123 - pleasure) times **to vah** (22 - good), which is also the last word in this verse.

Another story about the two friends, Rabbi Shalom of Kaminka and Rabbi Chaim of Sanz in the Ropschitz kitchen:

Once, Rabbi Shalom and Rabbi Chaim were peeling potatoes in Rebbe Naftali of Ropschitz's kitchen. The Rebbe entered the kitchen suddenly and vigorously threw a potato into the water-filled pot there. Water splashed everywhere and Rabbi Naftali said to them, "And I will throw upon you pure waters and you will be purified."^[1] From that time on, a spirit of purity dwelled upon them.

Since the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, we lack the purification of the purifying waters (*mei chatat*, prepared with the ashes of the red heifer). Only in the future will the verse that the Ropschitzer Rebbe said be fulfilled. But for true tzaddikim, even a *tapuach adamah* (potato) can serve the purpose of a *parah adumah* (red heifer. In Hebrew, *adumah* is cognate to *adamah*) – and can transform kitchen work to service in the Holy Temple in purity

^[1] Genesis 15:15.

^[2] Ezekiel 36:25.

.