

THE LIFE OF RABBI CHAIM VITAL

Rabbi Chaim Vital (sometimes referred to as Rabbi Chaim Vital Calabrese, since his family was from Calabria, Italy) was born c. 1543 and raised in Safed. Rabbi Chaim is renowned primarily as the recorder and editor of the teachings of 'the Holy Ari' (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria), although he himself was also an accomplished kabbalist and writer.

Rabbi Chaim's father, Rabbi Yosef was famed as an expert scribe whose tefillin were much sought after, having been written in holiness and purity, and with special kabbalistic intentions. Rabbi Yosef Caro said in the name of his maggid (an angelic teacher) that half the world existed by virtue of Rabbi Yosef Vital's tefillin.

Rabbi Chaim studied the revealed aspects of Torah [Scripture, Talmud, Midrash, Jewish Law] under Rabbi Moshe Alshich, one of the foremost rabbis in Safed. Rabbi Yosef Caro [Author of Shulchan Aruch ["Code of Jewish Law"], at the behest of his maggid, advised Rabbi Alshich to invest as much effort in his young student as possible, for he would be Rabbi Caro's successor as the leading decider of Torah law.

At the same time, Rabbi Chaim studied Kabbalah under the leading kabbalistic luminary in the world in that period, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (Ramak). One of the senior kabbalists living in Safed, Rabbi Shabtai Lapidot, recognizing that Rabbi Chaim was destined for greatness, urged the young man to extract himself from all worldly matters and devote himself to the study of Kabbalah, promising him that he would reach unimaginably lofty levels.

Indeed, in the year 1569, at the relatively young age of 26, Rabbi Chaim began writing - based on the teachings of Ramak -- a commentary on Zohar, the primary text of Kabbalah. However, by the following year Rabbi Chaim's life took a completely different direction.

In the year 1570, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (the Arizal) came to Safed from Egypt. Initially Rabbi Chaim was not attracted to the Arizal, but after the passing of his teacher, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, he became attached to the Arizal, quickly becoming his chief disciple. He tells that Ramak appeared to him in a dream a few months after his passing, and when Rabbi Chaim adjured him to tell him the truth - whether they studied Kabbala according to his system or according to the Arizal's in the Heavenly Academy - his former teacher replied:

"Both approaches are true. However, my approach is the simple one, suitable for beginners in the wisdom of Kabbala, whereas the teachings of your teacher [the Arizal] are deeper and are the primary approach. I, too, in the Heavenly Academy, study only according to the approach of your master."

In the initial stages of Rabbi Chaim's initiation into the Arizal's new approach to Kabbala, Both the intensity of their learning and its tremendous quantity and

complexity affected Rabbi Chaim strongly. He confessed to his mentor that he could not retain or integrate all of the vast wisdom that was being bestowed upon him.

Rabbi Luria simply told him not to worry. He has a plan. The next day he announced that they would travel to Tiverya (Tiberias) together.

Upon arrival, they rented a small boat and rowed southward on Lake Kinneret [the "Sea" of Gallilee] in the direction of the Tomb of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess. About halfway there, the Ari slowed the boat and carefully scanned the water, searching for a certain spot.

At a point opposite the arches of the Ancient Synagogue of Tiberias, which appeared to Rabbi Chaim to be no different from the rest of the lake, the Ari stopped, lowered a flask into the water, filled it, and handed it to Rabbi Chayim.

"Drink this!" he ordered his disciple. "It is water from the well of Miriam from which our forefathers drank in the wilderness. They were called the 'Generation of Knowledge', and once you have partaken of this water, it will cure you and you shall forget nothing I teach you." [1] "From that time on," wrote Rabbi Vital, "I began to enter the depth of this wisdom."

Within a year of his initiation into the Arizal's teachings, Rabbi Chaim had become famous throughout Israel and the Diaspora as one of the great kabbalists. When the Arizal passed on in 5332 (1572 CE), a mere two years after Rabbi Chaim had begun studying with him, Rabbi Chaim was almost universally regarded as his successor. In fact, the Ari had already revealed to him that the reason he had moved to Safed is that Eliyahu HaNovi had instructed him to do so solely to teach Rabbi Chayim. [2] The Arizal was not accustomed to record his teachings in writing. Many of his disciples, however, recorded his oral teachings, despite the Arizal's explicit prohibition to do so. He had given only Rabbi Chaim permission to record his teachings.

After the Arizal's passing in the year 1572, when the population of Safed was decimated by a terrible plague, Rabbi Chaim gathered all the manuscripts of his fellow disciples and began editing and organizing them. Today these are known as Kitvei Arizal - the Writings of the Holy Ari. He began teaching the kabbalistic insights he had received from his master to his many disciples and thus he became the revered leader of a significant group of kabbalists. He also gained a reputation as a miracle worker, a healer and a master of practical kabbala. He was able to discern the nature and history of the souls of men.

In 1587 Rabbi Chaim was appointed a leading judge in the rabbinical courts in Jerusalem by his teacher, Rabbi Moshe Alshich. He remained there for several years and then returned to Safed. He moved to Damascus in 5354 (1594) where he passed away in 5380 (1620 CE) at the age of seventy-seven.

CONGREGATION
מחנה חודש
Machane Chodosh
SHAVUON WEEKLY NEWS

1 IYAR 5786 4/18/26

SHABBOS TAZRIA-METZORA/ROSH CHODESH IYAR

Our **86th**
Anniversary Year

Rabbi Emeritus
Manfred Gans z"l

Rabbi
Yossi Mendelson

President Emeritus
Herbert Jaffe z"l

President
Yehoshua Perl

MOSHIACH: JUST THE FACTS

1 hour prior to shabbos mincha with R. Mendelson.
All are welcome!



Sisterhood Paint Party

All are welcome to join on

Sunday, April 19th, 2:00 PM

\$20 includes all materials

RSVP to
Iris Goldberg

CONGREGATION
MACHANE CHODOSH
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Forest Hills, NY 11375
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MachaneChodosh.org



SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SHABBOS TAZRIA-METZORA/ROSH CHODESH IYAR

Friday, April 17

Candle lighting	7:00 PM
Mincha	7:00 PM

Omer: Friday night count 16

Shabbos, April 18

Shacharis.....	9:00 AM
Children's Program.....	9:30 AM
Moshiach: Just the Facts.....	5:50 PM
Mincha/Shalosh Seudos.....	6:50 PM

Pirkei Avot Perek 2

Shabbos Ends	8:21 PM
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WEEKDAY SERVICES

Shacharis

Sunday.....	8:00 AM
Monday & Thursday.....	7:05 AM
Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday.....	7:15 AM
Mincha/Maariv 4/19 - 4/23	7:30 PM

SCHEDULE OF TORAH CLASSES

Moshiach Shiur for All	Shabbat, 1 hour prior to Mincha
Rambam's Mishneh Torah.....	Daily following Shacharis
Practical Halacha.....	Daily between Mincha-Maariv
Friendship Club, Lunch with Friends.....	Wednesday 12:00 PM
The Rivka Kogan OBM Parsha Class at FC	Wednesdays 12:15 PM

SHABBOS ACHAREI-KEDOSHIM

Friday, April 24

Candle lighting	7:00 PM
Mincha	7:00 PM

Omer: Friday night count 23

Shabbos, April 25

Shacharis	9:00 AM
Children's Program.....	9:30 AM
Moshiach Shiur	6:00 PM
Mincha/Shalosh Seudos	7:00 PM

Pirkei Avot Perek 3

Shabbos Ends	8:30 PM
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UPCOMING EVENTS

SISTERHOOD PAINT PARTY

Sunday, April 19th, 2 PM

All are welcome to join. \$20. RSVP with Iris Goldberg Reserve your seat at: <https://www.machanechodosh.org/paint>

SPECIAL SISTERHOOD FRIENDSHIP CLUB

Wednesday April 29th & May 13th

The Sisterhood invites you to join a 2 part special Friendship Club program with the graduating class of Bnos Malka Academy. Join at 11 AM for a special program together followed by lunch at noon.

SISTERHOOD EISHES CHAYIL BRUNCH

Sunday, May 3rd, 12:00 PM

Honoring Jasmine Larian Katanov. \$36-includes Membership Dues. Raffles, delicious brunch, friendship and more! All women are invited to join. Reserve at <https://www.machanechodosh.org/product/eishes-chayil/>

THE LESSON OF ABRAHAM - JLI FOR ALL HUMANKIND

Wednesday, May 6th 6:00 PM

You are invited to join Rabbi Mendelson to hear this universal message to share with the world. All welcome. Register at MachaneChodosh.org/JLI

IN OUR SHUL FAMILY

Dr. Leonid Tsibulevsky, is currently in hospital, recovering from an illness. Please include Yehuda Leib ben Matla in your prayers.

THE WEEK AT CMC

The 6th session of RCS met on Tuesday evening. Mira Polvanova sponsored this session in loving memory of her father. Rebbetzin Mendelson led a discussion on faith in Hashem and intellect - how internalizing the Torah intellectually is a higher level in Divine service.

Rabbi Mendelson's new class, "Moshiach: Just the Facts," was well attended and well received. The discussion highlighted the fundamental nature of the Final Redemption as evidenced from the siddur