



The story of Aish Kodesh - Ramat Bet Shemesh

The story of Aish Kodesh – Ramat Bet Shemesh doesn't begin five years ago, it doesn't begin ten years ago, it doesn't even begin in Israel - It begins 85 years ago in pre-war Warsaw, Poland.

Warsaw boasted of a large array of Torah luminaries, but even among these giants the Piaweczna Rebbe - Harav Klonimus Kalman Shapira - stood out with astonishing brightness.

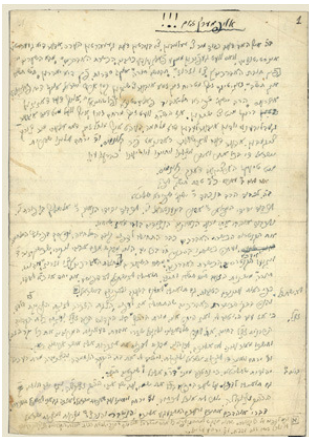
Combining Torah greatness with breathtaking sanctity, the "Aish Kodesh", as he is now known, displayed a towering intellect and a fiery, poetic soul. Loved by all and loving to all, he embodied true love for all Jews and a deep feeling and yearning for Eretz Yisroel. In fact, he was careful to have the first print of all his writings printed only in Israel. His chinuch masterpiece - Chovat Hatalmidim, ushered an era of new understanding of how to reach the youth of the modern age. But more than anything, the Aish Kodesh showed himself as the ultimate selfless leader, dedicated to his flock unto the death.



Huddled into the Warsaw Ghetto, he continued to lead the Jews who surrounded him. He led them with his teachings, his value for every Jew and life, and by example through his unwavering faith in Hashem. Continuing his weekly drashot until the very end he made unbelievable sacrifices to help Jews keep mitzvot in those terrible conditions.

All this glory was thrown into the crematorium by the Nazis, and turned into rubble, lost seemingly forever.

However, Hashem had other plans.



A Polish worker was removing mounds of rubble in post-war Warsaw when he came upon a sealed ceramic jug. For a reason no one can fathom, he didn't just chuck the earthenware away but instead opened it up. Inside he discovered a manuscript written in Hebrew. By a second miracle he didn't throw it away, but offered it to the Polish National Museum. A few years later it was discovered by some Jews searching for remains of Jewish life in Poland.

Attached to the manuscript was a letter - "Whoever finds this manuscript should please send it to Yeshaya Shapira, Tel Aviv, Palestine."

The manuscript was the Rebbe's gift to generations to come. It contained all of his weekly drashot delivered under fire in the Ghetto for three years. Page after page below a heaven-piercing cry of unfathomable holiness writ in blood, as the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto were methodically exterminated by the Nazi devil.

Reb Yeshaya Shapira had made Aliyah in 1920. He was a close friend of Harav Kook and kept in close touch with his brother - the Piazechna Rebbe, up until the war. Reb Yeshaya was known affectionately as the Admor Hachlutz- The Pioneering Rebbe. His chassidic background combined with a deep love of Eretz Yisroel helped him develop a unique approach to building the land. He traveled its width and length setting up torah based communities, preaching love of the land and keeping of torah and mitzvot. He setup the original banks in Israel and was instrumental in the organization of the Jewish National Fund.



The death of his brother and family was devastating to him and he passed away in 1945 and is buried on the Mount of Olives.

Our story continues with Reb Yeshaya's son - Reb Elimelech. Taking his father's place, Reb Elimelech dedicating his life to perpetuating the life and teachings of his father - Reb Yeshaya and his uncle - the Piazechna Rebbe. He organized and printed all the sefarim of the Rebbe - including Aish Kodesh, Chovat Hatalmidim, Hachsharat Haavreichim and Tzav Vziruz. From his small "shtiebel" in old Tel Aviv, the fire of the Piazechna Rebbe burned forth. Reb Elimelech attracted a wide variety of Jews to his circles. Bringing them closer to Torah and Mitzvot, he organized torah study programs in schools through Israel, and held famous public Friday night "tishim" including dancing to Shabbat songs in the streets of Tel Aviv. A Rebbe of the people - he brought the Piazechna Rebbe to life in his teachings and acts of kindness and love.

And then in the year 2000, our story moves from Tel Aviv to the newly expanding suburbs of Bet Shemesh. Reb Elimelech was niftar in 1997 and his son Rav Kalman Menachem Shapira assumed the mantle of the Piazechna Rebbe.

Rav Menachem, or we refer to him "The Rebbe" , setup his shtiebel in the new neighborhood of Ramat Bet Shemesh. For a few years the Rebbe ran his small minyan in an apartment and he was surrounded by a dedicated group of members. He held his weekly Seudat Shlishit for the youth of the neighborhood, he printed and gave shiruim on the sefarim of the Piazechna Rebbe and all was simple.



Then the word began to spread.

The small beis medrash suddenly became a portal for Jews from all corners of the world, of all ilks and leanings. Chassidim, Mitnagdim, Litivish, Balei Teshvah, Modern, Yeshivish, Olim Chadashim, native Israelis - stand, daven and sing enthusiastically together. Kipot Srugot assemble shoulder to shoulder with Shtreimles and Polish Spodik. Gerer Chassidim and Lubavitcher Chassidim sit together in communal shiurim. The singing during davening is infectious - as would the dancing be would there be place to move...



There may not be room – but everybody has a place in the Piaieczna shtiebel.

Like the original Piaieczna Rebbe and his father Rebbe Elimelech, the current Rebbe has a gentle soul and heart that goes out to whoever he meets, regardless of status or age.

Many a newcomer has been startled by the sight of Rav Shapira going around on *Seuda Shlishis* serving food to grownups and children alike. His custom of

having the children – age 3 and up – give divrey Torah during the third meal has empowered a generation of children to grow up loving Torah.

Only the needy know the incredible extent of Rav Shapira's chessed, kindness, and his sheer inability to say "no" to virtually anyone in need. The unique personae of the Piaieczna Rebbe has created a base of kindness and acceptance that make uncertain newcomers feel embraced instantly.

Eventually, however, the blessing became an impossible burden.

The tiny apartment that serves as the shul is jam-packed to the point it is impossible to move. Is soon became obvious that a new shul must be built to allow for the growing kehila needs as well as give the flux of new olim a place to call their home.

Our Rebbe Shlita, together with his Rebitzen, have poured their hearts into making Aish Kodesh the warm, inviting place for which it is renowned. They have literally opened their home to the shul for the past several years, welcoming each of us into kehillah with a smile, warmth and outstretched arms. Their influence has made our shul a friendly home to all who daven here. This is the tradition of Piacazena that our Rebbe Shlita instills into our kehillah, each of us, and especially into our children.



The new building will comfortably seat over 175 men and over 100 women, making our davening and tefilot all the more gratifying and special. The project is budgeted to cost approximately 4,000,000 shekel (\$1,000,000) and over 3,000,000 shekel (\$800,000) of this has been raised.



Keep in mind, that this building will not only be the realization of our aspirations, but in essence will be the fulfillment of the Piaczena Rebbe's Zt"l dream of building a place of Torah and tefillah that would attract Jews of all types providing a place to nurture and be "mechanach" our children. Our Aish Kodesh here in Ramat Bet Shemesh is the true continuation of the mesorah of the Rebbe Zt"l. The new building will be a living testament to the legacy of his Torah and teachings.

This is an opportunity to dedicate something in the building in honor of, in memory of, or in zchut of family and friends. Donations can be paid out over time and we can provide tax receipts for the US and Israel.

Please help us make the dream a reality!



Tax Deductible US Donations can be made online:

<http://aishkodesh.org.il/donate.html>

or checks can be mailed to:

American Friends of Aish Kodesh
 Huntington National Bank
 Private Banking
 917 Euclid Ave, (CM94)
 Cleveland, Ohio 44115
 Attention: Jennifer Buser

Dedication Opportunities:

Building Name		\$250,000
Foundation Stone		\$75,000
Cornerstone		\$50,000
Main Beis Medresh		\$100,000
Aron Kodesh		\$50,000
Shul chairs & tables		\$40,000
Mizrach Wall		\$15,000
Mechitza		\$10,000
Washing station		\$8,000
Doors to Building		\$12,000
Rebbe's Shtender		\$5,000
Windows		\$5,000/ea(x12)
Bookcases		\$4,000/ea(x6)
Main Vestibule		\$15,000
Ezras Nashim		\$75,000
Ezras Nashim Vestibule		\$12,000
Mother's/Children's Lounge		\$10,000
Children's Library/Education Center		\$5,000
Mikveh		\$75,000
Kailem Mikveh		\$15,000
Siddurim		\$18 each
Chumashim		\$54 each
Simcha Hall		\$75,000
Kitchen		\$35,000
Tables & Chairs		\$20,000
Washing stations		\$3,000/ea(x2)
Pergola/Succah		\$15,000
Aish Kodesh Garden and Courtyard		\$35,000
Main Front Steps		\$10,000
Main Lighting Fixture		\$8,500

