



5 SHVAT - RABBI YEHUDAH ARYEH LEIB ALTER (1847-1905). THE SFAS EMES.

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R' Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter was born in 1847. His father, R' Avraham Mordechai Alter, died when Yehudah Leib was only eight years old, and his mother died before that. He was brought up by his grandfather, R' Yitzchak Meir Alter (known as the Chiddushei Harim). When he was ten years old, his grandfather took him to visit the Kotzker Rebbe, which left a lifelong impression on him.

He married Yocheved Rivka, daughter of R' Yidl Kaminer. When his grandfather, R' Yitzchak Meir, died in 1866, many of the Gerrer Chasidim sought to bestow the mantle of leadership upon eighteen year-old Yehudah Aryeh Leib. He refused that position, and leadership went to R' Chanokh Heynekh HaKohen Levin of Aleksander. However, after the death of the latter in 1870, the Chasidim succeeded in gaining R' Yehudah Aryeh Leib's assent to become their Rebbe.

During the Russo-Japanese War, many of his young followers were drafted into the Russian Army and sent to the battlefields in Manchuria. The Rebbe was very worried about them and would constantly write to them. His health suffered, and he passed away at the age of 57 on 5 Shvat 1905.

R' Yehudah Aryeh Leib was one of the greatest Torah scholars of his generation. His output was prodigious, and his works (all entitled Sfas Emes) deal with the Talmud, the ethics of the Midrash, and mysticism of the Zohar.

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