

Rabbi Tzevi Hirsch Barlas

Son of Mordecai Barlas, he was one of the last generation of leaders of the religious cultural world of the Lithuanian Jews. He was both a religious scholar and a wealthy man. Born in 1804 and deceased in 1882. A grandson of Rabbi Tzevi Hirsch Prilucker.

Like many of the descendants of that famous Rabbi, he did not rely on his rabbinical background for making a living. He was a successful businessman who had excellent business relations with Austria and Danzig.

He studied Torah every day of his life and researched the Talmud and the Kabbalah. He used to be known as Rabbi Hirsch Choker (Choker in Hebrew means 'researcher') and his real family name, Barlas, consists of the initials of the name Ben Rab Leib Sofer. His daughter married to Rabbi Abraham Moshe Grosslait, son of Rabbi Pinchas Michael, author of the book "Leket Hakozrim" and "Words of Pinchas". The two families, Barlas and Grosslait, took active participation in the cultural and economic life of the cities, owned many real estate properties and business concerns in the new city.

When Rabbi Jacob Meir Pavde, Rabbi of Brest Litowsk passed away, Rabbi Barlas was offered the position. He did not accept but took upon himself the responsibility to find a qualified replacement. Rabbi Tzevi Orenstein was his candidate and in 1861 became the Chief Rabbi of Brest Litowsk.

Rabbi Barlas' book "Or Ha-Tzevi" (the light of Tzevi) was printed in Lublin in 1875. It is a book of religious content but it also reveals great familiarity with philosophical literature of the middle ages. An edition of 500 copies was then printed. They were distributed free of charge to synagogues, rabbis and libraries. He requested in his will that the book should be printed again in 50 years later.

Rabbi A.L. Fainstein, his friend and contemporary, mentions in his book, "Ir Tehila" the epitaph on Rabbi Tzevi H. Barlas: "Great in the Torah, a reverence of the Lord, a friend of the sages, his knowledge and wisdom are preserved in his book, "Or Ha-Tzevi".

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