



How the Rambam's Tomb was Saved

Parshas Va'era

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

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During the winter of 1956, Israel was in a thrust of construction after the Holocaust and on the path to building its country.

During that time, the Religious Services Ministry of Israel began excavation work in Tiberius at the site of the Rambam's tomb, and soon many additional graves were discovered around the tomb.

The employees of the Department of National Roads Company of Israel continued to work despite the presence of graves.

Rabbi Yitzchak Zeev of Brisk was deeply troubled by these developments and asked the Ultra-Orthodox community to protest this apparent desecration. The construction ceased for a while.

However, the road works resumed and the Brisker Rav had learned that there were plans to relocate the Rambam's tomb.

Hearing of the news on a Friday, the Birsker Rav fell ill and refused to participate in the Shabbos evening meal. Seeing his plight, his sons called for my father, Rabbi Yisroel Grossman, who was close to him and whom he trusted.

Father immediately arrived, and the Brisker asked him what should be done. Rabbi Yisroel calmed him and promised to take care of the issue.

My father walked to the home of the Chief Rabbi, who had supposedly given his consent to the relocation of the Rambam's tomb, and protested outside loudly. Hearing the protests, the rabbi invited him in.

Father came in and shared with him the suffering the Brisker Rav was experiencing. The chief rabbi was shocked and said he would not support such a move and asked my father to return to the Brisker Rav and tell him the news.

Father returned to the Brisker Rav and updated him on the developments, and he finally calmed and joined the Shabbos meal.

We read in our weekly parsha about the significance of self-sacrifice for God's sake.

We read that before the plague of the frogs, Pharaoh is warned "the Nile will swarm with frogs, and they will go up and come into your house and into your bedroom and upon your bed and into the house of your servants and into your people, and **into your ovens** and into your kneading troughs."¹



From this Chananel, Mishael and Azarya learned that they too had to throw themselves into a fire and not worship idols.

"If the frogs did so on God's command, we, who are commanded to self-sacrifice ourselves to sanctify His name, all the more so," they

said.²

The three said that while they could have continued living and would have only pretended to worship the idol, they chose not to desecrate God's name and refrained from leaving behind a troubling legacy that would serve as a negative precedent for coming generations.

The next day, the Chief Rabbi arrived at the Brisker Rav's house as he was eating his Shabbos lunch. He was warmly welcomed.

The Chief Rabbi declared that he would not support the relocation of the Rambam's tomb, and the Brisker Rav thanked him for support.

After the Chief Rabbi left, the Brisker Rav said "what Rabbi Yisrael does, no one else can."

That was father, he was not ashamed of his Judaism, even at the price of self-sacrifice.

¹ Shmot 7:28.

² Talmud Tractate Pesachim 56b.