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### The Best that You Can Do!





Rabbi Shmuel Wosner and Rabbi Meir Shapiro of blessed memories

The Sefer Be'er HaChaim relates a story. Rav Yisroel Zicherman was once the Rav in the Mayanei HaYeshua hospital in Bnei Brak. One day, the great Tzadik, Rav Shmuel Wosner, came to visit. Many of the staff and families of the patients gathered respectfully to greet the great Rav when he came.

Rav Zicherman told him that just that day, an interesting question had come up. A fifty-year-old man who was in a difficult situation asked if he is allowed to say the Brachah of 'She'asah Li Kol Tzarki,' the Brachah where we thank Hashem for providing us with all of our needs. He said that since he is unable to move, do

any Mitzvos, learn Torah, and do things that he very much wanted to do, he asked if he should say this Brachah?

Rav Wosner understood that the man who asked the question needed a visit, so he made his way up to the top floor, where this man was resting. When Rav Wosner entered, the patient made a few attempts to stand up to greet him, but he was not able to.

#### A Story that Occurred 80 Years Ago

Rav Wosner said to him, "Your conduct reminds me of a story with my great Rebbi, Rav Meir Shapiro, zt"l. I myself witnessed it. Eighty years ago, I was going with my Rebbi to visit a chronically ill patient, R"L. When we came into the room, the patient gave us an unusually illuminating smile that lit up the entire room. I assumed that he was overjoyed about being visited from my great Rebbi, but soon after he explained himself."

He said, "The reason for my smile is that it's the best way to respect my Rebbi, and I'll explain what I mean. If my Rebbi would come to me when I was feeling well, I would prepare some nice food for him. However, Hashem has prevented me from doing that. Now that I am in this situation, the very best that I can do is to instead present you with a smile. Therefore, I am making sure to do it in the very best way possible. If I can do the best in my situation, then I am a complete success! That is what is expected of me, and I am going to do it the best I can, and I am so happy about that."

#### "Your Purpose is Complete"

Rav Wosner continued, "It is the same regarding your question about making the Brachah of 'She'asah Li Kol Tzarki.' You should definitely make the Brachah. If you do the best you can do, then you are fulfilling your purpose in this world, and therefore, that is why you are required to make that Brachah. Other people have other reasons why they were sent here, but your purpose is complete, since you did your best.

"If you do what is expected of you in your situation, not only are you completing your duty on this world, you can be even greater than one who did more than you, because you did your best. It could be that others haven't done everything that is expected of them, even if they may be doing more. It is all in the effort one puts into it!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Emor 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tehilah.

# The Late Shacharis Davening in Bialystok

By Yehuda Z. Klitnick



The Great Synagogue in Bialystok

Rav Asher Perlow, the son of Reb Aharon of Karlin, the Beis Aharon, was once traveling from Stolin with his gabbay. Although it was already late in the afternoon, the Rebbe had not davened shacharis yet, since his daily mikva immersion was a lengthy avoda, sometimes taking several hours.

They happened to be near the city of Bialystok, where the residents were strong opponents to Chassidus, and it was considered risky to venture into town in the afternoon, hoping to find a shul where one could daven shacharis. The Rebbe told his gabbay that Bialystok was where they would daven shacharis.

The devoted gabbay was quick to advise: "Rebbe, if we try to daven shacharis in a "misnagdish" shul at this late hour, they may to stone us". There's a little village not far down the road, where no one will take notice of us. Why not try davening there?"

"No," the Rebbe said. "It's Bialystok for us."

They found the main shul with no problem, but there was a large crowd outside. The gabbay found out that the Rosh HaKahal/President of the Shul was making a bris that day and all the prominent residents arrived to participate in the simcha.

The gabbay lead the Rebbe to a suitable place at the Eastern Wall, put down the Rebbe's Tallis and Tefillin, and proceeded to find a secluded corner for his own safety. The Rebbe made his preparations for tefilla and made the brocho on his tallis loud and clear.

#### Where is His Gabbay?

The Rebbe's putting on his tallis at that time of day caused a commotion in shul until someone suspected that "This must be a Chassidish Rebbe. So, where is his gabbay?"

They discovered the gabbay in his corner, immersed in prayer, and interrupted him. "Who is this Rebbe who dares to come in here to daven shacharis at this late hour well after the last permissible time to daven?"

The gabbay

identified his master as the Rebbe of Stolin who was traveling and needed a secure place to daven. This did not bode well, and the crowd, called for the Rosh HaKahal to put a stop to the grave violation of their minhag!

The Rosh HaKahal stepped up to do his duty, and confronted the Rebbe. "See here," he said with great respect. "As Rosh HaKahal, I cannot allow a breach in the minhagim of our shul. No, there will be no shacharis now."

This was met silence from the Rebbe, and the exchange was repeated. The Rosh HaKahal happened to be a talmid chacham, and rational person. However, out of aggravation, he stated for all to hear: "If these Chasidishe 'Rebbes' and their followers could at least learn Torah respectably alongside their strange practices, maybe we could overlook the illegal shacharis. But as everyone knows they neither daven nor learn properly!"

## "Can You Resolve the Issues to Everyone's Satisfaction?"

In an emotional state he blurted "Stoliner Rebbe" we were struggling with a difficult passage of Gemara this morning. If you can resolve the issues to everyone's satisfaction, I will honor you with being Sandek at my son's bris!"

"All right. Let's hear what the problem was," replied the Rebbe.

"We were bothered with a famous Gemara (Shabbos 118b)."If all Yisroel observed two Shabbosos, they would be redeemed", and this is the teaching when is spelled with a Yud. However, there is an alternative reading spelled with an aleph, which changes the meaning completely:

"If Yidden fail to observe two Shabbosos then they will be redeemed." How could we derive the opposite meaning just by changing one letter in the text?"

The listeners were keenly poised to see how the Rebbe whom they were convinced could not learn Torah would answer this challenging question from the Gemara.

#### The Rebbe's Brilliant Answer

The Rebbe had a captive audience when he delivered his wondrous resolution. Without thinking, the Rebbe explained: We have four occasions throughout the year which are ideal to repent. The first, and most favorable circumstance, is before closing our eyes to sleep for the night -- before the soul has ascended to Shomayim, where the day's sins can be recounted, and one does Teshuva.

The next most favorable circumstance is Friday afternoon, Erev Shabbos, when one can do teshuva for sins from the preceding week. Similarly, although not as having a striking effect, Erev Rosh Chodesh is the chance to do teshuva for the entire month just past. Unfortunately, most people simply rely on and wait for the last of the four times for real teshuva, and that is Yom Kippur, which the Torah terms, a Shabbos of Shabbasim"—our 'two shabbosos', in a different sense.

## Chazal Encourage Yidden to Not Postpone their Teshuva

Now look back at that Gemara with the aleph-spelling you asked about, building on that version of the text, Chazal teach us that if Yidden did not postpone their teshuva until the "two Shabbosos" (Yom Kippur) but would do so every night, or every Friday, or at least every Erev Rosh Chodesh, then they would have long ago been redeemed!" (The word "mishmarim" can mean "wait, delay" as well as "observe", as we see from Yaakov Avinu, "V'aviv shomer es hadavar."

The audience was overtaken by the Rebbe's novel and brilliant explanation. This marvelous drasha was enough to spur the people to do teshuva on the spot. The Rebbe was welcome to finish his Davening in peace. Afterwards, the Rebbe was honored with being Sandek at the bris as promised by the Rosh Hakahal. This episode according to the Stoliner chassid and gaon Reb Hersh Leib Asia z''l lead directly to the establishment of a major Stoliner shtibel in Bialystok which numbered over five hundred mispallelim before the War. Rabbi Asia's grandfather was the Rav in that Shul. The Rebbe was,niftar 15 days of Av 5673

Reprinted from the Parshas Emor 5783 email of Pardes Yehuda.

# **Everything is for the Best!**

#### By Rabbi David Bibi



This morning, after Tefilah, a friend asked me to assure him that everything that happens, happens for the best. The evening before, he was scheduled to take a call from an important, but very busy client in California at 8PM New York time. The call didn't come at 8, nor 9, nor 10, but finally came at 11 when my friend had fallen asleep. He suggested they reschedule, but the suggestion was met with a disgruntled response punctuated with how valuable his time was. My friend was obviously concerned.

#### Rabbi Akiva's Teaching – Everything Hashem Does is for the Best

I responded with the words of Rabbi Akiva, kol ma d'avid rachamana letav avid, which translates to me as, "whatever Hashem does must be for the best", assuring him that even if he perceived the situation as bad, he should not worry as eventually it would be for the good. Although Rabbi Akiva's words are a level below his teacher, Nachum Ish Gamzu whose name comes from his belief that Gamzu LeTovah, who saw everything as good, we can be assured that even a situation which may cause distress, will turn out for the good. (We'll expand on the differences between Rabbi Akiva and his teacher in our class).

What was strange is that I was pondering this question on Sunday evening and wrote pages of notes where I deliberate if it is my free will and a prior decision which places me in a situation which I perceive to be bad or does Hashem in fact, even given our errors or personal deficiencies, still insert Himself into the minutia of the events of each and every one of our lives.

#### Hashem is Infinite an Nothing is Beyond His Control

Rabbi Abittan often reminded us that Hashem is infinite and nothing is beyond Heaven's participation quoting the Midrash where Rabbi Shimon states: 'Every single blade of grass has a corresponding 'mazal' in the sky which hits it and tells it to grow." If every blade of grass demands Heaven's attention, how much more, we human beings with holy neshamot of kenesset Yisrael from below the throne, are the benefactors of Divine Providence.

A moment later I walked out onto the terrace and Rabbi Ariel Mizrahi shared a story he heard from our friend Terry Oved. Terry is a lawyer who was of tremendous help to my dad and Marvin Azrak, A'H when they were expanding the Ahi Ezer senior citizen centers and building the old age home. Terry has a way of making all around him feel good and what I love is that Terry is a collector of stories. Walking with him and sharing stories back and forth is always a tremendous pleasure.

Terry received a call from a dear friend. The man was due in court the next day and his license was subject to suspension. He panicked that he wasn't prepared, had no lawyer and begged Terry to accompany him. I know that most lawyers would have said that they don't do traffic and apologized, but Terry is always there for a friend.

#### A Religous Stumbled into the Courtroom Disheveled and Covered with Grime

Sitting in the court and awaiting to be called up they noticed a religious guy stumble in. He was disheveled, looked dirty, his suit was covered with grime and what appeared to be burn marks. His name was called and he stepped up. The judge looked at him, noted he was late and asked him how he could be so disrespectful to come into the court looking like he did.

The man apologized and asked the judge if he might explain.

"I live up in Monsey and left very early so that I might arrive early given the weather. Driving down on the thruway, I saw a car in front of me swerve, lose control and then flip over into the barrier. I quickly pulled to the side of the road. I am a trained paramedic with Hatzalah and ran to help. The car already caught fire and the driver in the inverted vehicle could not get out. I approached, spoke with the man and was able to pull him to safety before the flames completely engulfed the car. I

remained with the accident victim, stabilized him and waited for police and ambulance. Once they arrived, I proceeded to the city and my appearance."

Taking out his phone, he continued, "And your honor, if I may approach the bench, here are images, the name and badge and contact of the state Trooper who was the first at the scene and who took my report. He told me that the court should call him to verify".

An officer stepped up to take the phone, but the judge waved him off and invited the man forward taking his phone and looking at the images and had the stenographer note the officer's name and badge for the record.

### The Judge Banged His Gavel and Dismissed the Case

The judge looked at the man and asked, "so you are late because you just saved someone's life?" And without waiting for a response, banged his gavel and announced, "the case against you is dismissed. Just step up to the clerk to clear up the paperwork".

They then called up Terry's friend. He with Terry behind him approached then bench. He too had a kipah on and was dressed in a suit and tie, although not disheveled.

The judge looked at him and at the charges and at the Hatzalah guy standing by the clerk and said, "I guess you are with him. You know what, case dismissed, see the clerk."

#### **Hearing the Rest of the Story**

To say it was surprising would be mild. After seeing the clerk, Terry and his friend went out to find the Haztalah guy and they heard the rest of the story.

He told them that he was also a member of the chevra Kadisha in Monsey and about a year ago got a call from Manhattan. They needed someone to do a tahara (ritual preparation of the body) for someone who had passed and no one was around. He asked if they were sure that he was the closest as he was in Monsey and it was the middle of the night. They told him that not only was he the closest, he was the only one. So, he dressed, got in his car and drove down.

At that time there were few people on the road and he was speeding. He was pulled over and although as a paramedic, he would usually be sent off without a ticket, this time it was different. As he pulled away, he thought that this is very strange. Isn't one who is osek BeMisvah, involved in a misvah, and in this case of chesed shel emet in helping to bury a person, protected? Why did he get a ticket?

He then delayed the appearance as we are taught to delay puranut – negative things – for as long as possible. But finally had to appear today and scheduled

himself to get to the city and court on time, only to find himself in a lifesaving situation.

He then realized that perhaps Hashem orchestrated the ticket, while he was doing the misvah to help bury a person, so that a year later, he would be in the right place at the right time and have the opportunity to save a life. A year in advance, Hashem set the events in motion. It was up to him to act.

The fact that a minute after hearing the question from my friend, concerned about his client and responding with the words of Rabbi Akiva, kol ma d'avid rachamana letav avid, "whatever Hashem does must be for the best", that this story was shared with me was in itself an act of hasgachat peratit or Divine Providence.

Reprinted from the Parashat Emor 5784 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

## Is Anybody Home?

#### By Rabbi Yechiel Spero

It was a heat wave the likes of which Jerusalem had not seen for many years. The temperature had reached nearly 110 degrees and the air was stifling. Warnings were issued and signs were posted cautioning citizens to keep up their liquid intake, and not to venture out of doors unless it was absolutely necessary.

Reb Nota Weiss, a maggid in Jerusalem in the 1920's, spoke every week in a shul in Shaarei Chesed. His dynamic, fiery speeches inspired all who were privileged to hear them to make the extra effort, to go the extra mile. Reb Nota's derashot became a Shabbat afternoon staple for many loyal followers. However, this particular week Reb Nota walked into the bet midrash at 3:00 in the afternoon and not a soul was there! Apparently the oppressively hot weather was keeping everyone indoors.

#### A Custom is a Cutom

He decided to wait a bit longer to see if anyone would come, but when time passed and the room was still empty, Reb Nota made a decision: a custom is a custom. If the custom was for him to speak, then he would speak.

He walked up the steps toward the aron kodesh and adjusted his streimel. Though at first he felt strange speaking to an empty room, within moments his usual fire-and-brimstone pitch reverberated throughout the Shaarei Chesed shul. From the outside one would never have been able to detect that Reb Nota was speaking to himself! And speaking with the same energy and excitement as when the shul was full.

Forty-five minutes after he began his lecture Reb Nota stepped away from the aron kodesh and headed for the exit. Suddenly he heard a voice shouting from the balcony where the ladies' section was situated, "All right. I'll do teshubah! I promise I'll try to improve!" Reb Nota looked up and saw a young man about 18 years old. He was completely disheveled. Apparently, he had been sleeping in the ladies' section. The young man, who had been struggling with his learning and abodat Hashem, had apparently been searching for a place to escape from his problems, and had figured that the ladies' section would be an ideal place to catch a Shabbat afternoon nap. But in the middle of his nap, he had been awakened by the sounds of a fiery lecture - spoken only to him, in a seemingly empty room.

This lecture - that was almost not delivered - had made its mark. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "Touched by a Story 2")

# Leading by Example

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz



Rav Kaplan was waiting for his flight to Israel on a Thursday afternoon. Unfortunately, delay after delay arose to the point where he was unsure if he'd make it to Israel in time for Shabbos. Suddenly, the leader of a birthright group of 75 non-religious people approached him asking whether they should take the flight with the awareness that if they missed it, they would likely not be reimbursed. He was stumped and called one of America's leading Halachic authorities, Rav Yisrael Belsky, ZT"L. Rav Belsky told him not to fly and Rav Kaplan relayed this message to the birthright group.

Realizing he's a prominent Rabbi, the kids on birthright then approached him saying, "We have a problem. You live nearby and can easily return home. However,

we all came from across the country and had nowhere to go. If you go home, we are boarding the plane."

Rav Kaplan said, "No problem. You have a deal. Let us book a hotel together." He then tirelessly worked to make all the necessary arrangements of getting kosher food for the Shabbos meals. When Friday night came Rav Kaplan got up and said, "Normally, the Shabbos queen does not know if she's welcome. Tonight, when we gave up a flight knowing we might not get another one, when we sacrificed for Shabbos, she knows she is welcome. Let me tell you some of the basic laws of how to keep Shabbos properly and let's make this Shabbos one we'll never forget."

The Rav stayed up tirelessly, until 2:00 am, assuring that everyone was taken care of. After an incredible-yet-exhausting Shabbos, the airline called and surprisingly reimbursed them. Two years later, Rav Kaplan bumped into one of the kids from the trip. The kid told the Rav, "There were 75 kids on that trip. Ninetynine percent of us are Shomer Shabbos today because of that Shabbos!" One Shabbos can change a person's life.

Reprinted from the Parshas Emor 5784 email of Torah Sweets.

# The Rebbe and the Sinful Singer

The Rebbe of Tolna was very fond of music, and the most renowned cantors visited his court. The famous cantor, Nisi Belzer, occasionally led the services in Tolna. In Nisi Belzer's choir was a young boy, Meir, who had been orphaned from his father, a devoted Chassid of the Rebbe of Tolna, at an early age. Meir was very musical and had an unusually sweet voice, and Nisi relied on him for major solo renditions.

However, Meir had a wild streak, and being without a father to discipline him, often behaved mischievously. One Rosh Hashana, when Nisi signaled Meir to begin a solo, Meir purposely sang a totally different portion of the Prayer. Nisi became angry, but to everyone's surprise, the Rebbe signaled Meir to repeat the solo, and the Rebbe wept during his singing. After the service was over, the Rebbe said to the youngster, "May you always sing these sacred songs, and may they be your salvation."

Nisi could not contain the boisterous youngster, who gradually drifted away from Torah observance, and entered a conservatory of music. He became an outstanding opera star, and eventually married a non-Jewish woman. After many

years of success under the bright lights, Meir's fortunes declined. His wife left him, he became depressed, and his once dulcet voice lost its character. He was about to be released from the operatic group when he asked for one more chance to redeem himself at a concert.

He strode onto the stage, and suddenly began singing the liturgy of his youth, the very solo the Rebbe had asked him to repeat. The orchestra stopped playing and the curtain was promptly lowered, and Meir was shown the exit door. With no job and no home, Meir joined a group of beggars who traveled from town to town, and one Shabbos he found himself in Tolna.

#### No One Recognized the One-Time Child Wonder

He joined the throng of people who attended the Rebbe's Shabbos meal, and of course, no one recognized the one-time child wonder. When the Rebbe asked someone to sing one of the Shabbos songs, a voice suddenly rang out, "I will sing!"

The Rebbe then said, "Let the man sing. Perhaps the singing will be the rectification for his errant ways."

Meir began singing the liturgy which the Rebbe had asked him to repeat many years earlier, and both Meir and the Rebbe wept with the rendition. Only afterwards did a few of the older Chassidim recall the incident with the young choir boy, and realized that the Rebbe's words, "May this song be your salvation," were prophetic.

Meir remained in Tolna and became a sincere Baal Teshuva. Shortly after that, he died, and the Rebbe of Tolna personally assumed the responsibility of saying Kaddish for him.

Reprinted from the Parshas Emor 5784 email of Inspired by a Story by Rabbi Dovid Caro.

## **Assisting the Painter**

#### By Jonathan Nelson

The one private audience I had with the Rebbe was before my Bar Mitzvah. Having heard many stories about him, it was a special opportunity to finally be able to meet such a great person. He asked about where I went to yeshivah, and I told him that I didn't go to Lubavitch.

"That's okay," he said, and, after I told him about the yeshivah I attended, he went on to ask which tractate of the Talmud I was learning, and about my studies on the secular front. He also asked about my Bar Mitzvah speech, and while I only said a line or two, I got the impression that he was interested in what I had to say, and interested in me as a person.

Although I didn't learn in a Lubavitcher yeshivah, I do follow the customs of Chabad, and in fact my family has been deeply involved in Chabad for several generations.



**Rabbi Sholom Nelson** 

When my father, Sholom Nelson, was growing up in Brooklyn in the 1930s, Lubavitch did not yet have a yeshivah in America, and so he went to Yeshivas Chaim Berlin for elementary school. But after the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe came to America in 1940 and opened a yeshivah, he immediately transferred to Lubavitch, where he was one of the first six students to enroll.

He found that they offered a sense of inclusion, that they welcomed everybody and cared about every single student. My father also became quite close with the Previous Rebbe's family. He recalled that the Previous Rebbe used to sit near the window in 770, and when he saw my father walking by outside, he would occasionally ask for him, or send a message to him through his secretary, to see how he was doing.

After turning sixteen, in 1945, my father was one of the very few boys in the yeshivah with a driver's license. At some point, a car was donated to the yeshivah, and when someone needed a ride, my

father would be called on to do the driving. He would sometimes drive the Previous Rebbe's older son-in-law, Rabbi Shmaryahu Gurary, who was the head of the yeshivah, as well as his younger son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who would eventually become the Rebbe.

#### **Driving the Rebbetzins**

Often, he would also take their wives, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka and Chana, and even the Previous Rebbe's wife, Rebbetzin Nechama Dina. There were times he had plans to go out with his friends, but he would forget all about them once he got a call that the Rebbetzins wanted a ride somewhere. They would go out and enjoy public areas, going to parks, taking walks, and watching the water. Sometimes, he would drive them through Manhattan, or along the West Side Highway so that they could see the city lights.

It was a very interesting time for my father, in which he was able to become acquainted with the future Rebbe and his family. And, even after he assumed the position of Rebbe, this personal connection continued, while they also maintained a more traditional Rebbe-chasid relationship.

#### A Request to Learn Shechita

Once, in the early fifties, my father found out that the Rebbe wanted him to learn shechita, that is, how to become a kosher slaughterer. At first, he resisted the idea: A shochet is expected to meet the highest standards of personal piety, and

my father felt that he wasn't of the right caliber, that he wasn't holy enough to be shochet.

Through an intermediary, the respected chasidic mentor Rabbi Shmuel Levitin, the Rebbe told him: "I would still like you to learn shechita. The very fact that you feel unworthy of being a shochet proves that you are worthy of being a shochet!"

### Got Married and Took a Position with a Synagogue in Connecticut

He eventually learned the practice and it wasn't long before it came into good use: In 1953 my parents got married, and shortly after, my father got a position in an Orthodox synagogue in a little town in Connecticut.

The congregation didn't want to hire a formal rabbi, and so while he officially served as the cantor, my father took care of everything in the synagogue. While they were living there, my father was the only one who could slaughter kosher chickens — both for his own family as well as for others in the community.

Throughout my father's 7-year tenure there, in the 1950s, the Rebbe's office would often call him, at times late at night, giving him guidance and advice for working with the people of his synagogue.

#### My Grandfather's Connection with Chabad Went Back to Russia

But my family's relationship with Chabad extends even further back. My father's father, Yosef Nelson, began studying in Lubavitch — the Russian town of Lubavitch for which the movement is named — at the age of nine,

when his father sent him there to learn. While there, he too came to know the Previous Rebbe's family well, and he would frequent their home.

Although he received rabbinical ordination and served for a time as a community rabbi in his hometown of Babroisk, his upbringing in Lubavitch taught him to be humble and modest, and later in life, he preferred the title "mister."

Once in the United States — he immigrated in the 1920s — my grandfather never compromised on his Judaism. He played an instrumental role in establishing Chabad communal life in America but, as for his professional life, he left the rabbinate and became a house painter.

His work as a painter brought him in contact with another side of Lubavitch — and the Rebbe. It was at some point in the 1950s, after the Rebbe had succeeded his father-in-law.

#### A Gentle Tug at His Hand

My grandfather, by then one of the elder chasidim of Chabad, was at that time working at a job — painting the walls in 770. As he was walking up to the building carrying a collection of paint cans, my grandfather suddenly felt a gentle tug at his hand, as someone tried to take a few paint cans from him.

He turned around and saw that it was the Rebbe, who had just come out of his car. Seeing my grandfather carrying those cans, the Rebbe quickly came over to lighten his load, carrying several of the paint cans into 770 for him.

Reprinted from the Parshat Emor 5784 edition of "Here's My Story" [with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt"].