**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Noach 5771**

**To request a free email subscription, please**

**forward your request to keren18@juno.com**

**Story #670**

**A Rebbe's Shocking Fee**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

After 12 long years, his exile of penury was finally over. Forced by debt to leave his family and his small inn, the Jew had worked in a distant town as a melamed, a teacher of young boys. Now, having painfully amassed 900 rubles, he was anxious to return home and resume his life.

Being a chasid, the melamed first stopped in Berdichev, to secure the blessing of his rebbe, the great tzadik, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak. After prayers, the tzadik greeted the melamed warmly. Then, much to the melamed's surprise, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak said, If you would like, I will give you three words of advice. But for each, you must pay well. The first will cost you 300 rubles.

The melamed was shocked by the rebbe's request, but his faith didn't waver. And after all, isn't it written, Words of Torah are better than gold? He laid the money on the table.

When a man doesn't know which way to turn, he should always go to the right! the rebbe said. And then added, Now, for the next word of advice, you must pay another 300 rubles.

The melamed felt another tremor of shock at these words. What was the meaning of this costly advice? And another 300! But he couldn't refuse his rebbe, and so, he counted out the money.

An old husband with a young wife is half a death, said Reb Levi Yitzchak. And if you wish to hear the last word, you must pay the same amount once again.

This final demand left the poor melamed paralyzed. His years of struggle, his long awaited home-coming. With trembling fingers he opened his purse and spilled the contents on the table. But his sadness soon dissipated and was replaced by a strange feeling of joy.

Come what may, he had obeyed his beloved rebbe.

Remember, my son, to believe only what you see with your own eyes. This is my final advice. Now, go in peace.

The bewildered chasid began wandering the surrounding streets, when he heard the cry, Catch the thieves. There's a price on their heads! Have they gone to the right or the left? the pursuants asked the melamed.

After only a moment of hesitation, the melamed spoke up, To the right!

Later that afternoon, the melamed had 600 rubles in hand - his share of the reward for catching the thieves. Happily, he headed for home, but as it was nightfall, he decided to stay the night at an inn. The elderly innkeeper was about to admit him when a young woman appeared and sternly turned him away, saying, We have no room, go elsewhere!

An old man with a young wife, the melamed thought to himself and he resolved to take his rest huddled in the courtyard of the inn. Around midnight, he was startled by a wagon from which alighted two men, one carrying a glinting sword.

Emboldened by his rebbe's words, the melamed yelled, Murderers, murderers, catch them! The inn was roused, and the would-be killers fled into the darkness. The grateful old man, who had suspected a plot, rewarded the melamed with 300 rubles.

There was nothing left to do but to continue on his way. He arrived in his old town to find it unchanged. However, no one recognized him, so profoundly had his years of hardship altered his features. His inquiries about the innkeeper who had left many years ago to work as a melamed brought knowing looks from the townsfolk.

Yes, said one man, we remember him. A fine family. But, sad to say, his wife has gone off the straight path.

That night the melamed stood outside his house. In the pale moonlight he saw a young man stealthily enter the house. Hours later he left as secretly as he had come. And if it weren't for the echo of his rebbe's words, he would have left his home again, but this time, forever.

The following day he returned, laden with gifts, and was greeted with a welcome he had pictured in his imagination so many times. Only now, his heart was wracked with pain. When he and his wife were finally alone, the melamed turned to her and said, The whole town is talking about you. Why, I have even seen with my own eyes...

Stop! his wife pleaded. Have you forgotten our youngest son? Didn't you notice that he is not here? The Duke seized him years ago as security on our loan. All of my weeping and begging were to no avail. But we have been blessed with a good child. Each night he comes to me, and I teach him a little bit - some Torah, some blessings. Very little, but he knows he is a Jew.

The melamed wept in wonder and awe at all that had transpired. For it was wonder enough, thought the melamed, that my rebbe had the vision to see how the events would unfold, but he also had the wisdom to see into my heart. For had he not demanded so dear a price for his words, I do not think I would have been able to follow his advice. But the greatest wonder of all is that G-d enabled me, a simple Jew, to give up my entire fortune when I would have more easily surrendered my very life.

**Source**: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition on www.lchaimweekly.org (#962), with permission.

Connection: Seasonal - 201st yahrzeit

Biographic note: Rabbi Levi Yitzchak (Deberamdiger) of Berditchev (1740-25 Tishrei 1809) is one of the most popular rebbes in chasidic history. He was a close disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch. He is best known for his love for every Jew and his active efforts to intercede for them against (seemingly) adverse heavenly decrees. Many of his teachings are contained in the posthumously published, Kedushat Levi.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org , a project of Ascent of Safed* [www.ascentofsafed.com](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) [ascent@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailbb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1286235978)

“And the earth had become corrupt before G-d and the earth became filled with robbery.” (Beresheet 6:11)

**The Great Protection**

**Of “Honest” Money**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

The perashah of Noah teaches that dishonesty was the cause of the flood. The great Rabbi Hayim of Volozhin once said (quoted in Torah Ladaat) that “kosher money,” is indestructible. Money that is earned completely legally, honestly, without any trace of thievery or overcharging is completely secure. That money can never be stolen or destroyed by any accident. This statement of Rav Hayim was actually played out in an incident that happened in his home.

One day, the Rabbi was visited by a group of community leaders. They needed the advice of the great Rabbi on a subject of great concern. A Jewish person from their community had sunk to the lowest level that one can go to, and became an informer against his fellow Jews. This informer had caused them great financial losses. As they were pouring out their hearts to the Rabbi, someone accidentally pulled at the tablecloth and all of the dishes went crashing onto the floor. All the guests were horrified, imagining how much damage they had caused to the Rabbi.

The Rabbi immediately told them that they had nothing to worry about because all of these utensils were bought with pure kosher money, and they will never break. The guests quickly inspected all the glassware and, sure enough, nothing had broken.

The Rabbi added, “This accident didn’t happen for nothing. This was meant as a hint to all of you to answer your question. This incident is to teach you that if your money is kosher, you have nothing to fear from the informer! Just as you saw with your own eyes, so too the informer will not be able to take away or damage your money if it is kosher.”

Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin for Parashat Noah.

**The Time to Pray is**

**Before the Tragedy**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

When Noah left the Ark after the flood and saw the devastation to the world, he began to cry to Hashem and asked, “How can a G-d so compassionate cause such destruction?” To which Hashem answered, “Now you think of this? Why didn’t you cry when I first told you about the decree? I waited many years for your prayers on behalf of the rest of the world and only now you realize to pray for them?”

We see from here an important lesson. Noah was a righteous man and therefore deserved to be saved together with his family. But he did not express enough concern for others until it was too late. Had he prayed or cried out for the world before the flood, there may not have been a flood! Often we see difficult situations unfolding before us and we don’t think it’s our place to get involved. When the tragedy is a reality, we exclaim, “What a shame! I wish I could do something!” Had we exclaimed so a little earlier, we may have found a way to help prevent this tragedy.At the very least, we could always pray to Hashem that it should be prevented. A little more prayer and a little more concern could spell the difference between tragedy and salvation. Let us look around us and see what we could do, and let us pray for others!

Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin for Parashat Noah.

**The Newark Riots and a Match Made in Heaven**

**By Yossy Gordon**

spacer My uncle, Rabbi Sholom Gordon of blessed memory, was a Lubavitch emissary in New Jersey, starting in the early forties. Over the years, he touched thousands of lives.

Sometime around 1960, the mother of a former student of Uncle Sholom approached him with a problem. Her daughter, who had reached marriageable age several years before, was having a hard time finding a *shidduch* (match).

Aware of the Rebbe's greatness, the desperate mother asked Sholom to arrange a meeting for her with the Rebbe. Sholom complied, and even drove the mother, along with her son who was accompanying her, to meet the Rebbe, of righteous memory.

"When G‑d sends her *bashert*... then I will close the store"

My uncle waited outside. When the mother emerged from the Rebbe's office, she looked upset. "What happened?" Sholom inquired. "Well," answered the mother, "I went in to the Rebbe and asked him for a blessing for my daughter's *shidduch*. I was surprised when the Rebbe began to ask me questions about my life. He asked me what our source of livelihood is. I told him that we have a very successful store in Newark. The Rebbe asked me if the store is open on Shabbat. I told him that it is.

"Then, and this is what I really do not understand, the Rebbe suggested that since we are financially secure, we should close our store on Shabbat and that G‑d will then send our daughter her *bashert* (intended one). I countered that we need the store to provide for our daughter in case something happens to us and she does not get married. When G‑d sends her *bashert*... then I will close the store. The Rebbe disagreed.

"Rabbi Gordon," continued the woman, "I am from Europe. I know chassidic rebbes. I thought they just gave blessings and wanted a donation. I didn't come here for business advice..."

Years went by. 1967 arrived and with it came the Newark Riots and violence and vandalism. The store owned by Sholom's former student's parents was among those destroyed in the melee. Already nearing retirement age, and with her husband having passed away shortly beforehand, the mother decided not to rebuild the store.

The store was finally closed on Shabbat.

Within a few months, the daughter met her *bashert*. Today, thank G‑d, she is the mother of a well-respected family.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine*

As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l

**“And Noach Walked**

**With Elokim” (6:9)**

**By Sam Gindi**

The word “Hit’halech” (walked) is reflexive, meaning that Noach exerted effort and caused himself to walk with G-d.  The Torah is relating that Noach became very great by “walking with G-d”. The Torah is our instruction book to perfecting ourselves. We can achieve greatness through observance of mitzvot and  by studying the ways of Hashem as portrayed in Torah and Nature.

We are studying the great model of Noach who “Walked with G-d” and thereby became great. What was Noach doing during these walks which brought him to this exalted level of Yirat Shamayim/Awareness of Hashem that brought G-d to speak to him?

“And walk secretly/humbly with Hashem” (Micha 6:8). One way that we can accomplish this high ideal is to think about Hashem. When you practice this, no one is aware of what you have on your mind therefore it is a secret. Noach was constantly thinking about Hashem which was his system to greatness as revealed to us by the Torah.

We can utilize Noach’s system and become elevated by thinking about Hashem in the following ways:

(1) Contemplate all the good things that we are grateful to Hashem for, including the many times we were saved from all types of situations; or led to successful circumstances.

(2) Notice the wisdom of Hashem in nature and in the world all around us. Consider the endless wisdom and kindliness which demonstrate “plan & purpose” throughout the Universe thereby causing us to have awareness of Hashem.

(3) Think about the wonders and miracles that Hashem did for the Jewish nation throughout history. For example: Splitting Yam Suf; holding up the sun for Joshua; being fed by Mann from heaven…

Now we know a way to become great!

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l.”*

**The Golden Column**

**The Four Captives**

After the period of our Rabbis, the amoraim, who compiled the Babylonian Talmud one thousand five hundred years ago, Babylonia (modern-day Iraq) continued to be a center of Torah with its famous yeshivot, led by our Rabbis, the Geonim.

From all corners of the Jewish world, from Spain and Morocco, France and Germany, their questions were sent to Babylonia, where they were answered in detail, in the famous "Responsa of the Geonim."

At the end of that period, four of the greatest leaders of that generation went on a boat to collect moneys for a poor bride. From Heaven it was ordained that the King of Spain should command the head of his navy, named Ben Dimhin, to spread out on the coasts of Italy and Greece and take over any merchant ships.

**Legalized Piracy.**

Pirates took over the Rabbis' boat and they were placed in captivity and sold as slaves, another source of income or the Spanish Treasury. Again from Heaven it was ordained that they not be brought to the same place, but should be scattered amongst the important communities of Israel.

The first, Rabenu Shemaryah, was redeemed by the Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt. There he established a yeshivah and raised the crown of Torah. The second, Rabenu Hushiel, was redeemed by the community in Keruan, Tunisia. He immediately gathered around him all the sages of the place and become their leader. His greatest student was his son, Rabenu Hananel, of whom our Rabbis said "All his words were accepted tradition," that is, a direct link from the Torah of our Rabbis in Babylonia.

The pirates returned to their base, and the community of Cordoba, Spain redeemed the two remaining captives, Rabenu Moshe and his son, Rabenu Hanoch. Rabenu Moshe, in his modesty, hid himself and did not reveal his greatness. But after a short while he heard that the Rabbi was giving a shiur and giving over an incorrect explanation. He corrected him. At that very moment, in true greatness, that Rabbi appointed Rabenu Moshe in his place.

When the pirate heard that his captive was an amazing genius who had been

appointed as a Rabbi of the Jews, he tried to renege on the price he had demanded. But the king did not permit him to do so, and Rabenu Moshe, and his son, Rabenu Hanoch after him, turned Spain into a center of Torah. This is how the Divine Providence developed new centers of Torah.

*Reprinted from last week’s issue of the Aram Soba Newsletter that was emailed this week because of the Yom Tov.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Relax**

The verse tells us that "These are the offspring of Noach, Noach was a righteous man..." (Bereishis 6:9) Why does the Torah double the word "Noach?" Why not just say "These are the offspring of Noach, a righteous man...?"

The answer is the following: The verse tells us that Noach was called "Noach"- which means 'relaxed' or 'tranquil', because Noach was a righteous man. We reread the verse above to mean "These are the offspring of Noach, [who was] "Noach" - relaxed [because he] was a righteous man..."  We will see that those who uphold the Torah generally live more relaxed lives.

Noach distinguished himself in his generation as a righteous person who listened to Hashem. As the verses tell us "Noach walked with Hashem..."(Bereishis 6:9) "And Noach did according to everything Hashem had commanded him." (Bereishis 7:5)

On the merit of listening to Hashem, Noach's ark "drifted upon the surface of the waters." (Bereishis 7:18) While the world was destroyed, Noach floated peacefully on the water. Noach walked with Hashem, so Hashem only gave Noach the plans to build the ark, which saved Noach and his family. Therefore, we see that Noach lived a peaceful life because he followed Hashem's word.  By following the example of Noach, who listened to Hashem, we too can learn to float over life's difficulties and live virtually stress free lives.

**A Particularly Difficulty**

**Period in Jewish History**

The following amazing true story shows how one Jew managed to float through a particularly difficult period in Jewish history. Almost 30 years ago, Mordechai Shababo was a typical secular Israeli who lived with his family in Tzefas, in northern Eretz Yisroel. Mordechai had been training hard as a wrestler for the 1972 world competitions, which were to take place in Munich, Germany.

Mordechai was the only real hope for bringing home a victory for the Israeli team. Although Mordechai himself was not an observant Jew, his family had a long and illustrious history in the religious community of Tzefas. An ancestor of Mordechai was Reb Yehoshua Shababo, who had been a student of the Arizal, some 400 years previous. Mordechai's father was a member of the local Chevra Kadisha along with being a Shammas at the famous Alshich Shul.

**The Holy Alschich of Tzefas**

The holy Alshich (1508 - 1593?) was a pious scholar and rabbinical judge who had lived, taught and was later buried in Tzefas. Mordechai's father was responsible for the upkeep of the Alshich shul, which was next to the Alshich's grave. For a few days in the summer of 1972, Mordechai's father was unable to carry out his duties in the shul. The older Mr. Shababo therefore requested that his son Mordechai take care of the Alshich shul in his place. At first, Mordechai wanted to refuse his father's request, because the world competitions in Germany were quickly approaching.

However, something inside Mordechai's heart told him to help his father. Mordechai agreed to take care of the Alshich shul for a few days in his father's stead. One night, a couple of days later, Mordechai had a dream. The holy Alshich appeared to him, wearing all white. The scholar thanked Mordechai for making the shul so bright and clean, however, the saintly Rav added: "But where I lie, it is dark, filthy and neglected so that no one can approach my grave."

Mordechai woke up the next morning somewhat disturbed by the dream. However, Mordechai did not act on the Alshich's request to clean up the grave. But when the same dream occurred twice more over the next few nights, Mordechai became very alarmed. Mordechai's wife insisted that he do something about the grave of the holy Alshich.

Mordechai wanted to wait until after he returned from the world competitions in Munich. But Mordechai's wife insisted. So, 48 hours before the Israeli team was set to leave for the competitions, Mordechai hastily withdrew from the team, claiming that he was not feeling well. The team tried everything including bribery to force Mordechai to take part in the competitions. Mordechai, however, refused to join the team.

As his former team members boarded the plane for Germany, Mordechai was already busy cleaning up the grave of the holy Alshich in Tzefas. Several days later, news of the horrible tragedy in Munich reached Mordechai. Mordechai, along with the rest of the Jewish world was shocked by the report.

When he heard the news, Mordechai realized that the Hand of Hashem was upon him. He was spared from the tragedy in the merit of the saintly Alshich, of blessed memory. Mordechai began to become more and more Torah observant. His day began to revolve around the Alshich shul, where he prayed three times a day. Using his phenomenal strength, the wrestler Mordechai moved the heavy obstacles, which had blocked access to the cave where the grave of the Alshich was situated. After sixth months of backbreaking labor, Mordechai completed his restoration of the Alshich's gravesite.

**Continuing His Holy Work**

**For the Sake of Heaven**

Over the last 28 years, Mordechai has continued his holy work in maintaining several gravesites of tzaddikim in Tzefas. All of Mordechai's work is for the sake of heaven, for he receives no payment for his services. Today Mordechai lives a fully religious lifestyle with his family in Tzefas. (Jewish Tribune, [England] 08/24/00 p.4 Letters, R'M.Roberg)

Mordechai Shababo was able to ride out the tragedies which occurred in that horrible summer of 1972. Although Mordechai was distraught at the deaths of his teammates, Mordechai was able to recognize the amazing Hasgacha Pratis (divine providence) which led to his decision not to travel with the team to Germany.

Mordechai, like Noach was able to float peacefully above the destruction which rocked the world. By listening to Hashem's mitzvahs, we too can have peace of mind. Noach was "Noach" - relaxed, because he followed Hashem's word.  Once we realize that Hashem is watching over us, we will naturally live more relaxed lives. We will be less subject to the ups and downs of everyday life. Instead, we will have the inner peace of knowing that Hashem is our Father and Keeper. Let us therefore strive to follow Hashem righteously and then we will be better able to float over life's difficulties. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

***Reprinted from this week’s email of Good Shabbos Everyone***

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

Appreciating Our Eyes

**QUESTION:** Why should a person thank *Hashem* for his eyes, *Baruch Ata Hashem Pokeach Ivrim*, if animals can also see?

|  |
| --- |
| **ANSWER:** |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Plenty of people cannot see. Walk in the streets and see this man tapping his way with a cane, and ask him that question, what will he answer?

We have to thank *Hashem* for the animal’s eyes, too. But whatever there is in the world, is given for the purpose of making us aware of *Hashem*. And not only thank *Hashem* for the fact that we have eyes to use, but the eye itself is a testimony.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

You know; that *Rasha* himself, Darwin, *Yemach Shemo*, himself said, that when I come to the subject of the eye, I feel somewhat faint to think that such a contrivance could happen by itself. He felt somewhat faint, he should faint, he’s in *Gihenom* fainting right now.

The eyes are a wonderful thing, *Nisay Nissim* what an eye is, you have to talk about the eye, at length - to appreciate it. Wonder of wonders. It’s a camera taking pictures every second, color pictures, and it functions perfectly not only for close nearby pictures, but it can focus on far away pictures in the same minute. When I look at you, now the camera, I have to adjust it for far away, but immediately the eye adjusts for far away pictures, then I turn back to you, close pictures. Wonderful.

You're sitting in a car speeding down the road, you look at the speedometer right here, and then you look at the mountains miles ahead; you couldn't do that with a camera. The wonders of the eye would occupy volumes and volumes to explain. And the eye itself testifies to the endless wisdom of its great designer. And therefore when we thank *Hashem*, *Pokeach Ivrim*, not only for the happiness of the eye, not only for the joy of sight, we appreciate a life of color and motion. Great pity, a great sadness to lose sight.

Opportunity that sight gives us to gain understanding, to see people we love, to be able to guard ourselves against danger, when you have to cross the street, pitfalls. Eyes are not only useful for us in every sense but the eyes bring us the greatest benefit of all, the awareness of the great Designer who brought such a most complicated contrivance into existence.

Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l.”

**Story #671**

**Three Precious Gifts**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

When Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov was to begin his journey back to his home town, he took leave of his Rebbe, Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg. His Rebbe gave him three gifts: a loaf of bread, a coin, and his own white silk robe.

“You will understand soon enough what to do with them,” his Rebbe said, as he saw R' Moshe Leib off with his blessing.

On the road, R' Moshe Leib passed the large estate of a wealthy gentile landowner, or poretz. From a pit that had been hollowed out near the entrance, he heard bitter wailing.

R' Moshe Leib peered inside and found a Jew from the village there, a tenant who leased the landowner's inn. The Jew was crying with hunger: He had neither eaten nor drunk for

three days. Unable to pay his debts to the landowner, the man had been hurled into the pit by the furious poretz, with the warning that if he did not pay what he owed, he would be left there to die of starvation and cold.

R' Moshe Leib's heart nearly burst with pity. He threw in the loaf of bread for the man to eat.Then he approached the entrance to the mansion and asked the guards standing there for permission to speak with their master.The guards described R' Moshe Leib to the poretz as a man of tall stature with a handsome face that radiated light and goodwill.

Curious as to what business such a man might have with him, the poretz granted him an audience. R' Moshe Leib came to the point at once, asking that the poor Jew be released. The poretz raised his voice in wrath: “And do you really think I will overlook what is owed me?”

With no other option, R' Moshe Leib offered the single coin he possessed -- his Rebbe's gift. The poretz grew even more furious, and hit R' Moshe Leib with his stick.This was a signal to the poretz's servants to seize R' Moshe Leib and throw him out.To add insult to injury, they set their master's dogs on him. They were large ferocious dogs that patrolled the courtyard and attacked unwanted visitors.

To the servants' wonder, the dogs circled R' Moshe Leib but did not touch him. They ran to tell their master, and the gentile came out to see for himself. Still, he remained unmoved. It is obvious that this is no ordinary Jew. Let's give him one more test. If he passes it, I will set him free -- and also the Jew in the pit whose liberty he requested.

The poretz ordered his servants to throw R' Moshe Leib into a cage containing a pack of snarling, meat-eating wolves. R' Moshe Leib saw that the danger was very great; the wolves would tear apart and devour anything that came near them. Suddenly, he remembered something his Rebbe had told him. R' Shmelke had once explained that all wild creatures fear and dread a Jew who had not damaged his tzelem Elokim, his G-dly image.Even ferocious wolves will not harm such a man.

Calmly, R' Moshe Leib put on the white silk robe that his Rebbe had given him before they parted. The wolves backed away from him and cringed at the back of the cage. And there they stayed.

When the poretz's servants saw this, they were truly shocked and amazed. They ran to fetch their master, so that he might witness this miracle with his own eyes. Seeing R' Moshe Leib and the wolves in the cage, the poretz immediately issued an order that he be freed. He bowed deeply to the tzadik, saying, Now I know that you are truly a man of G-d. I will fulfill your every wish.

The Jewish tenant was helped out of the pit where he had languished for three days. Moreover, at R' Moshe Leib's request the poretz vowed never to punish any Jewish tenant again in this cruel manner.

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from Stories my Grandfather told me [Mesorah) by Zev Greenwald]

Connection: Weekly Reading about various animals.

Biographic notes: Rabbi Moshe-Leib of Sossov (1745 - 4 Shvat 1807) was the leading disciple of Reb Shmelke of Nicholsburg. He also received from the Maggid of Mezritch and from Elimelech of Lyzhinsk. Subsequently a Rebbe in his own right with many followers, he was famous primarily for his love of his fellow Jews and his creative musical talent. His teachings are contained in the books, Likutei RaMal, Toras ReMaL Hashalem, and Chidushei RaMal.

Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke HaLevi Horowitz of Nikolsburg (1726 - 2 Iyar 1778) was a major disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch along with his younger brother, Rabbi Pinchas, who became the Rabbi of Frankfort. Many of the leading rebbes in Poland and Galitzia were originally his disciples. Among the books he authored are Divrei Shmuel and Nazir HaShem.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.* [*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com)[*ascent@ascentofsafed.com*](mailto:ascent@ascentofsafed.com)

**Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim**

**Parshat Noach – Three Stories about Animals**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

The Torah is a book of lessons in life. In fact the word "Torah" means "teaching"; every story, idea, word and even letter contains hidden treasures of practical meaning. But it's not easy to figure out what exactly this week's story about the flood is teaching us when it tells us that G-d drowned all the animals together with the world's population (7:21).

It can't be teaching us that G-d not only exists but actually punishes those who disobey Him. Because if that is the lesson then why did G-d drown all the animals (Except those animals that made it into the Ark)? Animals don't have commandments! There must be some other lesson here.

To understand this I want to bring three short stories about animals.

The first is about lions.

Over 2,500 years ago in Babylon a "Tzadik" (very holy Jew) called Daniel had so many enemies in high places that they convinced the King of Babylon to throw him into a pit of starve-crazed lions. The pit was sealed, he remained there for an entire night, and when it was opened in the morning there he was still there…. miraculously untouched.

**The Enemies of Daniel are Quickly**

**Devoured by the Same Lions**

The king had Daniel lifted from the pit and, to disprove the theory that perhaps the lions simply were not hungry, he ordered that those ministers who caused Daniel to be thrown there in the first place be thrown there instead. At which point they were totally devoured by the ravished beasts before their bones hit the ground thus disproving any doubts as to Daniel's miraculous salvation. (Daniel chapt. 6)

Interestingly, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, over 2,000 years later in the 24th chapter of his masterpiece "The Tanya", says that it really was NOT a miracle in the normal sense of the word!

Animals, he says, are NATURALLY afraid of anyone who bears the spiritual form of "man" i.e. Tzadikim. (See Rashi on Gen. 9:2; animals fear man)

So Daniel, because he was devoted to the Creator, was saved. But his enemies were not, and so they were devoured.

Lesson: Animals can be affected for good or the opposite by the people around them.

**The Shabbat Observing Ox**

The second story is about an ox.

Some 1,800 years ago in Israel lived a Jew who, early one Friday afternoon, sold his ox to his gentile neighbor.

The ox was young, strong and healthy, so the Jew was surprised when early the next afternoon as he was sitting with his family enjoying his Shabbat meal, he heard an irate pounding on his door and when he opened it there stood his neighbor angrily demanding his money back.

"What happened?" asked the Jew.

"What happened!?" replied his fuming neighbor, "NOTHING HAPPENED! That's what happened! The ox refuses to work! He just sits in the barn and won't budge. I tried coaxing, prodding, yelling, beating, kicking… take him back!! You cheated me!!"

The Jew smiled, told the gentile not to worry, excused himself from his family, stood up from his meal, accompanied his neighbor to the barn where the ox was laying and when he saw that the beast really wouldn't move, bent down and said into its ear:

"Ox! Ox! Listen! You are no longer my property. True, all the time you were mine it was forbidden for you to work on Shabbat, but I sold you! Now you aren't mine any more, you belong to this non-Jew, and you must do what he says."

Before their eyes the ox dutifully rose and plodded over to the plow indicating he was ready to be harnessed.

**The Goy is Inspired to Convert**

**And Become a Torah Scholar**

When the neighbor saw this he began to think. "This ox does what it says in the Torah and I don't?! An ox that has no power of speech or mind of its own…. recognizes its creator and I, who was created in G-d's image, don't recognize my own Creator?!"

It wasn't long before he converted to Judaism and devoted his life to learning Torah. His name became Rabbi Yochanan ben Torta ("Tor" means "ox") (Psikta Rabasi 56b-57a)

The final story is about a donkey.

Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair, a son-in-law of Rabbi Shimon Ben Yochai (The author of the Zohar), was a very holy man that was devoted totally to the service of G-d (also about 1,800 years ago).

The Talmud (Chulin 7a) tells us that once his donkey was stolen. This grieved him as he was not a man of means. To his great happiness several days later the thieves themselves shamefacedly returned the emaciated but living animal to Rabbi Pinchas in person.

**Came to Find Out Why**

**The Donkey Wouldn’t Eat**

It seems that the entire time the donkey was with them it refused to eat. They gave it the best grains possible, but he would just not open his mouth. Finally when the poor thing got so thin and weak that they were afraid that it would die and smell up their hiding place - they had no choice but to return it. But, knowing the forgiving attitude of the Rabbi and being very curious as to why the animal refused to eat the quality grain they gave him, they decided to ask the Rabbi in person.

"All of you are Jewish, right?" Rabbi Pinchas asked the thieves.

"Yes" they replied" In fact, not only are we Jewish… we once learned in your school when we were children."

"Then that explains it," he continued. "You probably fed him grain that had not been tithed according to Torah law. Right?" (Produce cannot be eaten without first separating off small percentages of it called "Truma and Maaser" to be given to the Priests and Levites). "If you are Jewish you had an obligation from the Torah to tithe it. That's why he didn't eat!

**The Thieves Who Were Not Ignoramuses**

"Yes, Rabbi" they replied. "We know that! We might be thieves, but we aren't ignoramuses. We know it's forbidden to eat untithed produce and we would never eat such produce ourselves. But you taught us that it's permissible to give untithed grains to one's animals. Only people are forbidden to eat it."

"Yes" answered the Rabbi "That is true. But my donkey is very strict on himself."

From this comes the later saying of the Talmud:

"If the preceding generations were like angels, then we are men. But if they were men, then we are like donkeys. And not even the level of the donkey of Rav Pinchas ben Yair."

**Animals Are Affected**

**By the Behavior of People**

The common factor of all these stories is that animals can be affected to their very essence by people.

And that is the reason that the animals were wiped out in the flood.

The world was put into the hands of man.

The generation of the flood was so bad, that it actually affected the entire world for bad; even the animals. Animals have no free will; they cannot change themselves, and they cannot choose to serve G-d.

But how man acts does permanently affect them to the point that the Torah tells us that "All flesh has perverted their ways." (6:12). So when man was destroyed, so were they!

That is why Moshiach will be a man; because the fate of the world was given to man.

The job of Moshiach however will be to change the nature of all mankind; that they all should be like the above-mentioned Tzadikim, do the will of the Creator and not live selfishly as did the generation of the flood. (We pray for this thrice daily in the second paragraph of the Alenu prayer; "All the evil people will turn to G-d" etc.)

This is also why the prophet Isaiah (11:6) says that at the time of Moshiach the "Wolf will lie with the lamb" etc. Not that it is important to us what wolves will do, but to tell us that our good actions will affect the world, to the point that even the animals of prey will desire peace!

In fact this already happened……. in Noah's ark! Because the 'holiness' of the ark was akin to that of the 'Holy Temple" (a bit of that 'shines' in each Succa on the holiday of Succot as well) the animals lived in total harmony for one full year.

So we see that it is not bombs or philosophies or even religions that will transform the evil (as the Rambam points out in Laws of Kings Chapt. 12 that the transformed wolves refer to the enemies, spiritual and physical, of the Jewish people) but rather the good deeds, words, and even thoughts that we do now, because it is all in our hands to change the world, live according to the teachings of the Torah and bring…Moshiach NOW!

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim.*

**Ask the Rabbi**

**The Merchant of Vegas**

*Lee Vyner wrote:*

*Dear Rabbi,*

*The Talmud says that someone who earns their salary from gambling is invalid as a witness in a jewish court because the person who lost doesn't really pay with a full heart. Therefore, the money that he wins is considered theft. If so, what about the stock market? People literally gamble as to the price of a particular commodity or stock, and the person who has a holding of this particular item certainly does not want the price to deteriorate. So is someone who gambles on the stock market invalid as a witness? Lots of love, Lee Mandy and Laivy Avraham (the cutest baby in the world, thank G-d)*

Dear Lee and family,

Stocks are a legitimate investment. Buying stocks is essentially no different than buying diamonds, land, or wheat. True, the stock market has an element of risk, but don't confuse 'lost wages' with 'Las Vegas.' Do you know of any business which involves no element of risk? If so, do you know their phone 'number?

Gambling, on the other hand, is a game where each person hopes to guess the right number on the dice, or pick the right horse. Gamblers are invalid as witnesses in a Jewish court.

The Sages of the Talmud differ as to why gamblers are invalid. According to one opinion, someone who wins a bet is like a thief, because he collects prize money that he didn't `earn' and to which he has no true legal claim.

According to another opinion, only a professional gamester -- who has no other source of income - is invalid as a witness. His integrity is suspect, because he spends his day in pursuits which contribute nothing to society. According to this opinion, someone who gambles only part-time can be a valid witness, provided he's involved in some productive activity.

The following story is told about the Chafetz Chaim: A man once asked the Chafetz Chaim to bless him that he should win the lottery, but the Chafetz Chaim refused. "But you give blessings to people who gamble on stocks, why not when they gamble on lotteries?" the man asked. The Chafetz Chaim answered that he gives blessings to stock investors because if the stock goes up, no one loses money. But blessing one lottery ticket is a 'curse' upon the other lottery tickets.

Sources:

*Talmud Sanhedrin 24b*

*Code of Jewish Law, Choshen Mishpat 34:16*

*Story thanks to Will Shulman*

*Reprinted from the website of Ohr Somayach International – ohr.edu*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Reward of Return**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

The wife of a young Torah scholar in the northern Israel town of Rachasim decided to open a nursery in order to help support her growing family. Since the nursery would be located in their ground-level apartment and adjacent yard, they needed the approval of all the other residents of their apartment building.

*Sympathetic to the couple's financial struggles, all the neighbors gave their written* consent. Just before the nursery was to open one of the neighbors withdrew his consent. The noise from the nursery, he claimed, might be detrimental to his wife who suffered from high blood pressure. To aggravate the situation he had three sons who had strayed from being observant and he was afraid that his efforts to bring them back would be harmed by their seeing their mother suffer because of observant Jews.

The shocked young husband went to a local rabbi who informed him that since the reluctant neighbor had given his consent it constituted a vow on which he could not renege.

Upon hearing this ruling the neighbor insisted on personally speaking to the rabbi who repeated to him that he must stick to his consent. "But," added the rabbi as he held out a bottle of wine, "if you allow the nursery to function you will merit to pour wine from this bottle at the weddings of your three sons who will have returned to the fold!"

The consent was renewed, the nursery opened, and there were soon three weddings of three returned sons.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Ohr Somayach International in Yerushalayim - ohr.edu*

**A Slice of Life**

**Chabad Meets Napa Valley**

**By Jeff Morgan**

Rabbi Elchonon Tenenbaum, a 30-something Chabad rabbi fresh off the boat from Crown Heights, Brooklyn, moved to Napa Valley four years ago. The rabbi hadn't seen many vineyards in his life, and he hadn't drunk much kosher wine outside of the strange, sweet brew made from Concord grapes that gives kosher winemakers a bad name.

But he called me at our winery, and I showed him around the valley. We became friends, and we shared bottles of kosher wine made from high-quality grapes grown in some of Napa's greatest vineyards. Not surprisingly, the rabbi got bitten by the wine bug. One fall he harvested a few clusters from a friend's vineyard and crushed the grapes at his house. The resulting wine was pretty good, too - all 12 bottles.

Later, we found a small local vineyard that needed some TLC. Rabbi Tenenbaum took over the pruning and other maintenance and harvested the grapes that year to make one barrel (23 cases) of delicious red wine, a field blend of zinfandel, syrah and petite sirah. He has duplicated this feat two years in a row, and we are now drinking the fruits of his labor, which he calls Pardes Cuvée Chabad.

Rabbi Tenenbaum sat down with me recently to talk about his wine epiphany - Napa style.

Jeff Morgan: Within the Chabad community, does wine play any particular role in addition to being the chosen beverage for making Kiddush?

Rabbi Tenenbaum: Wine, for the most part, is relegated to Shabbat and holidays in most homes. The wine culture is not quite the same in Brooklyn as it is in Yountville (Napa Valley).

**The Role of Wine in Growing Up in Brooklyn**

JM: What role did wine play in your life in Brooklyn?

RT: Wine is a central part of many of our traditions. Shabbat is heralded in with the Kiddush, which is recited on a cup of wine. Kiddush is also made at life-cycle events, like a bris or a wedding. And let's not forget the four cups of wine on Pesach. However, growing up, I couldn't tell you the difference between a Concord grape and a zinfandel grape. We didn't have many vineyards in Crown Heights.

JM: Did you think about wine at all, when Chabad sent you to live in Napa Valley?

RT: When my wife and I began serving the Jewish community of Napa, I was only beginning to learn about the complexities of wine. I understood that there was more to wine than a sparkling moscato.

**What Prompted Your Current Interest in Wine**

JM: What prompted your current interest in wine?

RT: You sparked much of my interest in winemaking. We also found that wine is a good way of connecting with Jews living in Napa. It's a big part of the lifestyle and culture.

JM: What was it like to work in a vineyard? Physically? Spiritually?

RT: Physically, it was draining. The first time I pruned the vines for a day, I was not able to move for three days after that. Spiritually, it was a learning experience. I am fascinated by the process of something growing from the earth. The Torah says that man is like the tree of the field. A tree goes thorough a renewal cycle every year. Accordingly, every Rosh Hashanah and High Holy Day season we are blessed with a new energy for the year ahead. That concept became very clear while working with the vines.

JM: What makes wine holy?

RT: In the Scriptures, wine is described as "bringing joy to G-d and man." Every sacrifice offered in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem was accompanied by wine. Because wine is considered to be the "king of beverages," the rabbis coined Kiddush, a special blessing to be recited exclusively on wine.

JM: Would you say that wine should be used as a vehicle for spirituality among Jews?

RT: Yes, it should.

JM: How?

RT: By using wine in an appropriate way in Jewish ritual or by gracing a Shabbat or holiday table and other festive occasions.

JM: Do San Francisco Bay Area rabbis seem to have a different relationship to or understanding of wine than, say, rabbis that you have known in other places you've lived, such as New York and Israel?

RT: I would say that living in Napa Valley brings a greater awareness and appreciation of wine and winemaking.

JM: Are you a rabbi or a winemaker?

RT: Rashi was a great rabbi and winemaker; I am sure it only enhanced his commentary on the Torah. So I don't think winemaking and being a rabbi are mutually exclusive.

*Reprinted from this week’s issue of “L’Chaim”, a weekly publication of the Lubavitch Youht Orgranization that reprinted the article permission of the author from The Jewish Journal. Jeff Morgan is the winemaker and co-owner of Covenant and RED C Wines in Napa Valley; visit covenantwines.com.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Wooden Dishes,**

**Bowls and Cups**

Shaul, the merchant, had a beautiful home expensively furnished and decorated with fine works of art. His magnificent gardens displayed the rarest flowers, whose fragrance could be appreciated from afar.

Shaul's elderly father also lived in his home. The relationship between father and son had possibly never been the best; who is to know. But as his father grew older and weaker, he became a "burden" to the family and particularly to Shaul.

During meal times, especially, Shaul was repulsed by his father. The elderly man's trembling hands spilled soup and drinks on his clothing and the fine linens; oftentimes the china would fall on the floor and shatter. The patriarch's appearance and cleanliness was not what Shaul perceived to be appropriate.

**The Shattered Expensive Crystal Wine Goblet**

One day, as the family was sitting at dinner, an expensive crystal wine goblet fell out of the old man's hand. It shattered into thousands of splinters and red wine spilled all over the tablecloth. Shaul was livid. His patience was spent. He decided there and then to send his father away.

But, of course, Shaul couldn't just send his father packing and into the streets. That he would not do. When he overcame his anger, he came up with what he thought was a brilliant solution.

**Buying Wooden Dishes and Cups**

"Go out and buy wooden dishes and cups," Shaul ordered one of his servants. His father would use the wooden utensils, Shaul decided. There might still be spills, but at least none of the expensive china or crystal would be ruined. Of course, when company came his father could hardly sit at the table with them using his coarse dishes. But, that wouldn't be so terrible at all, thought Shaul.

Weeks passed. Shaul and his entire family, including the youngest children, dined together each night. Shaul and his entire family, including the youngest children, were served their delicious fare on fine china and quenched their thirst with drinks in expensive crystal goblets. The entire family that is, except for Shaul's father, who was served his meals in the wooden dishes, bowls and cups that Shaul had had his servant purchase.

One day, Shaul's youngest son, Yosef, went out to the store to buy candies. He was a sweet child with a good heart, loved by everyone who knew him. Suddenly he saw a group of beggars sitting on the street corner, eating out of wooden bowls from the soup kitchen just like his grandfather used at home. Yosef was touched but confused. Without hesitation, he took all the money out of his pocket and gave it to the beggar.

**Son Requests a Piece of**

**Wood and a Whittling Knife**

Yosef ran home. He asked his father for a piece of wood and a whittling knife. Then, he ran up to the attic, happy that his father had agreed to give him the supplies.

As he was whittling, Yosef heard his father's impatient voice. "What are you doing up there? Why are you taking so long?"

Yosef took the wood downstairs with him.

"What are you holding?" Shaul asked Yosef curiously. "Why have you asked for wood and a knife?"

"I am making a wooden bowl and plate and cup for you, Father!" replied Yosef sweetly. "That way, when you get old and start to break things and I have to give you wooden dishes like the beggars use, I'll have made them already," explained Yosef sincerely.

**Shocked by His Son’s Words**

Shaul was shocked by his son's words. For a moment he imagined himself in his father's place: old, helpless, and being treated without the least bit of reverence or respect. Shaul saw clearly his terrible behavior. He went to his father and begged forgiveness.

From that day on, the old man lived in comfort, honored by his son and grandchildren. He spent his last years pleasantly in his children's home. In time, when Shaul became elderly, he also enjoyed the honor and comfort which was given to him by his son Yosef.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*