**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Lech Lecha 5773**

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True Grit

The Secret of Success

Is How We View Failure.

**By** [Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks](http://www.aish.com/search/?author=48865787)

 What makes some children succeed while others fail? More generally, what drives some people to great achievement while others languish, their dreams unfulfilled? That is the question that intrigued American writer Paul Tough. His answer is contained in his book How Children Succeed, published last month.



Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi. Photograph: David Sillitoe for the Guardian

 Tough discovered that what makes the difference is not intelligence, skill or native ability. It isn’t cognitive at all. The difference, he argues, lies in character, in traits such as discipline, persistence, self-control, zest, gratitude, optimism, curiosity, courage and conscientiousness. One dimension, though, matters more than all the others. He calls it grit: the ability to keep going despite repeated failures and setbacks. People with grit grow. People without it are either defeated by life’s challenges or – more likely – become risk-averse. They play it safe.

 I am fascinated by the stories of people who had grit, who overcame repeated failures and rejections. I think of the lonely single mother, close to destitution, who sat in coffee bars writing a children’s novel to earn some money, only to find that the first twelve publishers to whom she sent the manuscript rejected it. She kept going. You’ve heard of her. Her name is J. K. Rowling.

**Twenty-One Rejections**

 I think of another writer of a book about children who suffered even more rejections, twenty-one in all. The book was eventually published. It was called “Lord of the Flies,” and its author, William Golding, was eventually awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

 The most famous failure of our time was the late Steve Jobs. In his magnificent commencement address at Stanford University he told the story of the three blows of fate that shaped his life: dropping out of university, being fired from the company he founded, Apple, and being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Rather than being defeated by them, he turned them all to creative use, eventually returning to Apple and developing three of the iconic inventions of the twenty first century, the I-pod, I-phone and I-pad.

**No Future in Show Business**

 The house of the Chief Rabbi happens to be close to a street called Abbey Road. Fifty years after the group that made it famous had their first hit, you can still see crowds of tourists being photographed on the world’s most celebrated zebra crossing. Their first audition has passed into legend. They performed for a record company only to be told that guitar bands were on their way out. The verdict, in January 1962, was: “The Beatles have no future in show business.”

 J.K. Rowling, William Golding, Steve Jobs and the Beatles were not, as far as I know, religious people. Some people just have grit. It is part of their nature. But what about the rest of us? Can you learn grit? Can you acquire it if you were not born with it? I am not sure there is a general answer to that question, but here is a personal one.

**More than We Have Faith in G-d,**

**G-d has faith in Us.**

 I have known my share of failures. Early in my career I was turned down for almost every job I applied for. It took me two years after qualifying as a rabbi to find a congregation. From the age of twenty, one of my ambitions was to write a book. I tried and failed for twenty years. I still have a filing cabinet full of books I started and did not complete.

 Finally, energized by a statement of George Bernard Shaw that if you are going to write a book you had better do it by the time you are forty, I completed my first at that age and have written one a year ever since. I learned to embrace failure instead of fearing it.

 Why? Because at some point on my religious journey I discovered that more than we have faith in G-d, G-d has faith in us. He lifts us every time we fall. He forgives us every time we fail. He believes in us more than we believe in ourselves. He mends our broken hearts. I never cease to be moved by the words of Isaiah: “Even youths grow tired and weary and the young may stumble and fall, but those who hope in the L-rd renew their strength. They soar on wings like eagles, they run and don’t grow weary, they walk and don’t grow faint.”

 The greatest source of grit I know, the force that allows us to overcome every failure, every setback, every defeat, and keep going and growing, is faith in G-d’s faith in us.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Aish.com Jonathan Sacks has been Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the [British] Commonwealth since September 1991, the sixth incumbent since the role was formalized in 1845.*

**A Most Unusual Request**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*Hashem said to Abram, ‘Go for yourself from your land*.’” (Beresheet 12:1)

 Hashem told Abraham to travel and leave his land. Today we do a lot of traveling to far away places. Listen to a true story of a traveler as told by Rabbi David Kaplan.

 The dire financial situation in the Baranovitch Yeshivah forced the Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman zt”l, to make an extended fundraising trip to the U.S. There was a wealthy clothing factory owner in Manhattan whom Rav Elchonon had known as a child in Baranovitch. This man had left many years earlier and had done extremely well financially in the land of opportunity.

 However, America was also a land that presented the opportunity to abandon the religion and Torah values, which this man had done to the fullest. Rav Elchonon made an appointment to see him in his Manhattan office, which was situated on the top floor of his clothing factory. “Rabbi Wasserman,” the man said after they had exchanged preliminary pleasantries, “what did you come here for?”



Rav Elchonon Wasserman, H”yd

**“I’ve Come to Have a Button Sewn on My Jacket”**

 Rav Elchonon lifted his jacket toward the man and showed him where a button had fallen off. “I’ve come to have a button sewn on my jacket,” Rav Elchonon said.

 The man chuckled. “Really, Rabbi, why have you come?”

 Rav Elchonon’s expression did not change. “I came to have a button sewn onto my jacket.” The man decided to beat Rav Elchonon at his own game. “Excellent. Just come with me and I’ll have it taken care of for you.” He led Rav Elchonon down into the factory area where hundreds of workers were very busy making clothing. He figured when Rav Elchonon would see how vast his factory was, he’d be overwhelmed and would make an appeal, which was obviously the reason he had come.

 “Hey, Pete, could you sew a button on the Rabbi’s jacket?” he called to one of his employees. The man took the jacket and quickly did as the boss had requested. “Now, Rabbi Wasserman, you see what I’ve got going here. Tell me why you’ve come.”

 “I’ve told you, you’ve done it, thank you.” With that Rav Elchonon turned and left, and a waiting car drove him back to his host’s home. The next morning the telephone rang early. “Rabbi Wasserman,” the man practically shouted into the phone, “you cost me a night’s sleep. Why did you come?”

**What is Your True Purpose in Life**

 “Please come here and we’ll talk,” Rav Elchonon responded. The man drove right over. “You find it so hard to believe that I’d come all the way from Baranovitch to the United States to have a button sewn onto a jacket. But your soul came from underneath the throne of Hashem and traveled seven heavens to get here. Did it make that trip just so you could own a factory that sews buttons and makes clothes?”

 The man was shaken to the core by the great Rabbi’s words and the sincerity with which they had been delivered. He became totally observant and a loyal supporter of the Baranovitch Yeshivah.

 We have all traveled from very far away. Make it count. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin*

**Leaf-Peeping**

 Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, even parts of New York are deluged at this time of year with "Leaf Peepers" - people who travel specifically to view the awesome color changes in all the foliage.

 Red, yellow, orange, burgundy, purple, a whole spectrum of color arrays itself in front of our eyes.

 While it's easy to get caught up in contemplating the beauty of nature, it might even be more interesting to consider the Divine destiny of a leaf.

 The Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chasidism, told the following story to illustrate the extensive role Divine Providence plays in our lives:

 A person walks down a path and notices a leaf fall from the branch of a tree. "Leaf, leaf" he whispers, "why did you fall at this moment?"

 The leaf replies, "The branch shook and I fell. Go ask the branch."

 The person asks the branch and is answered, "A wind came and made me shake... go ask the wind."

 The wind gives a similar answer: "I don't know why, but the Source of the wind made me shake the branch, go ask it."



Autumn leaves in New England

 When the person asks the Source of the Wind, it says, "I am not the master. I just follow orders. Go ask G-d and surely He can tell you why."

 Finally the person addresses the question to G-d. "Why did the leaf fall?" he asks simply.

 "Lift up the leaf and you will understand why."

 The person raises the leaf and sees an ant carrying a large piece of food. He questions the ant, who explains, "I was tired and hot. This leaf came down, shaded me, and allowed me to rest before continuing my journey."

**G-d Demonstrates His Kindness**

**For Each of His Creations**

 G-d's kindness and care is exercised for the benefit of each of His creations. Even the smallest ant is included in His master-plan.

 Another leaf story illustrates this point:

 Once, when Rabbi Shalom Ber of Lubavitch was strolling with his son, Yosef Yitzchok (later to succeed him as Rebbe) they passed through fields of grain. "Every movement of each stalk is actualized by Divine Providence for the sake of a purpose known to heaven," exclaimed Reb Shalom Ber. Yosef Yitzchok became engrossed in contemplating this concept of Divine Providence. Deep in thought, he picked up a leaf and tore it into little pieces as he walked.

 "How can you treat an object created by G-d so casually?" his father rebuked him. "Just now we were speaking of Divine Providence. The leaf you tore was created by G-d for a particular purpose. In what way is the leaf less significant than you? Just as the human being has his own task to fulfill, so has this representative of the vegetable kingdom its function to perform--and both have a Divinely directed purpose."

 So, the next time we're looking at leaves, we might want to consider these stories and how concerned G-d is with every aspect of all creation, including each one of us!

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

**Don’t Blame the Animals!**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 The Torah is a book of lessons. In fact the word "Torah" means "teaching", but last week's Torah story about the flood seems to pose a big question:

 The obvious lesson that the Torah is teaching us here, is that G-d rewards whoever fulfills, and punishes whoever disregards His commandments (613 for the Jews and seven for the rest of the world).

 So why did G-d drown all the animals? (Except the ones which Noach took into his Ark)

 What can we learn from that? Animals don't have commandments!

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

 The first story is about lions.

 Over 2,500 years ago in Babylon a "Tzadik" (very holy man) called Daniel was thrown into a pit of hungry lions by the king of Babylon. The pit was sealed, he remained there for an entire night, and when it was opened in the morning there he was miraculously untouched.

**Maybe the Lions Were Simply Not Hungry**

 When Daniel's enemies suggested that perhaps the lions were simply not hungry and it was no miracle at all, the wise king disproved their theory, by the simple method of throwing them into the same pit and observing them being totally devoured by the ravished beasts.

 Interestingly enough Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, over 2,000 years later in his masterpiece "The Tanya", says that it really was NOT a miracle!

Animals, he says, are NATURALLY afraid of anyone who bears the spiritual form of "man" i.e. Tzadikim.

 Daniel, because he was devoted to the Creator, was such a person. But his enemies were not, and so they were devoured.

 Lesson: Animals are changed by the people around them.

**The Ox That Observed Shabbos**

 The second story is about an ox.

 Once there was a Jew, who, 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, and he heard an irate pounding on his door. Upon opening it he saw 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."

 The Jew 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, he bent down and said into its ear:

**Talking to His Former Ox**

 "Ox! Listen! You are no longer my property. All the time you were mine it was forbidden for you to work on Shabbat, but 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 walked over to the plow indicating he was ready to be harnessed.

 When the neighbor saw this he began to think. "This ox does what it says in the Torah and I don't?!"

 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") and he is mentioned in the Talmud.

 Lesson: Animals are changed by people even when the people are not around them.

**The Donkey of Pinchas Ben Yair**

 The final story is about Rabbi Pinchas Ben Yair's donkey about 1, 800 years ago.

 Rabbi Pinchas, a son-in-law of Rabbi Shimon Ben Yochai (The author of the Zohar), was a very holy man, and devoted totally to the service of G-d.

 The Talmud tells us that once his donkey was stolen, and it was returned several days later by the thieves themselves.

 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 thinner and weaker and they were afraid that it would die and smell up their hiding place, they had no choice but to return it.

**Asks the Thieves if They Are Jewish**

 "You are Jewish, right?" Rabbi Pinchas asked the thieves.

 "Not only are we Jewish" they replied "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 to tithe it.

 "Yes," they replied. "We know that! We might be thieves, we aren't ignoramuses Rabbi. 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 compared to angels, then we are men. But if they were men, then we are like donkeys. But not the donkey of Rav Pinchas ben Yair."

**Animals Are Affected by 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 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, because THE WORLD WAS PUT INTO THE HANDS OF MAN.

 That is why Moshiach will be a man. And why his job will be to change the nature of all mankind; that they all should be more like the above-mentioned Tzadikim, and less like the generation of the flood. (As we say in detail thrice daily in the second paragraph of the Alenu prayer "All the evil will turn to HaShem" 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; something like it was in Noah's ark.

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

*Reprinted from last week’s email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim, in Kfar Chabad.*

**112-Year-Old Man Shares**

**Secret to Long Life**

**By Maayana Miskin**

 Torah scholar Zechariya Brashi was born in 1900, and recently celebrated his 112th birthday. He spoke to Arutz Sheva about health, diplomacy, and his hopes for the future. The secret to long life, Brashi said, is proper eating. “Eating just enough,” he said. “One should wake up early and eat a slice of bread with water, only water. Even if he isn’t always hungry in the morning.

 In addition, he said, “one should take care with foods he enjoys, and be careful not to eat his fill.”\

 When asked if Israel will make peace with the Arab world, Brashi said, “I don’t think so… There’s no chance. There will never be peace between Esau and Yaakov.”

 He added that he hopes for peace in Israel’s future. “That would be wonderful,” he said. However, he added, “Prime Minister Netanyahu says our hands are extended in peace, but among the Arab countries there are those who do not want to hear us… Many years have passed and we remain in the same situation.”

 Brashi was born in Kurdistan, and came to Israel in 1936. He has lived in Jerusalem ever since. He spends his days studying Torah and writes books about the Jewish mystical text the Zohar. Brashi has many descendants, and is often visited by his grandchildren and greatgranchildren.

*Reprinted from the October 12, 2012 email of Arutz Sheva.*

**Good Shabbos**

**Shmuel’s Mother**

We see from [the following story] the greatness of the mitzvah of honoring one's parents. Because, it is through one act of the mitzvah of honoring one's parents that generations were affected for better or worse. The following inspirational true story illustrates the special relationship which Jewish parents have with their children and the blessings which emanate from such relationships.

**An Inspiring Sight to Behold**

 The middle-aged woman entered the dining room and let the sights and sounds wash over her. About thirty boys clustered around a long dining-room table, singing a slow, harmonious song. Some of them had their eyes squeezed shut, as if to block out anything but the heavenly sound they were creating together. They swayed to the tune, their young hearts clearly swept up in the moment. "

 So this is a Shabbaton," the woman thought. "My Shmuel will love it." Her 10-year-old son, Shmuel, stood by her side, and indeed, his eyes were locked upon the scene in front of him. All he wanted was a place at the table.

 After a few moments, the woman caught the eye of Rabbi Nissel, a Rabbi from Eretz Yisrael who had been invited specifically to help teach and inspire this group of NCSY boys.

 The woman approached the rabbi with Shmuel at her side and said, "Rabbi, I would like to introduce you to my son, Shmuel. Please watch over him. He is a great boy who loves to learn, and this is the first time he has ever been to a Shabbaton."

**The Rabbi Welcomes Shmuel**

 Then, the mother turned and left the house. The Rabbi looked at his young charge, who did not seem at all uneasy about having been placed in this situation. "Well, Shmuel, there's a seat for you right here," he said. "I'm sorry you missed the Friday night davening and meal, but you'll be here for the rest of Shabbos, and I'm sure you'll have a great time."

 Shmuel needed no convincing. He smiled a broad, utterly happy smile and joined in with the song the boys were then singing. When the others danced, he danced. When they davened, he davened. When they sat soaking up Rabbi Nissel's shiur, he sat among them, his eyes bright with interest.

 "So this is Shabbos," Shmuel thought to himself. It was his new, most precious possession, and he knew he would never let go of it. Launched so powerfully into religious life, it wasn't long before Shmuel began his career as a yeshivah student. His was an odd situation — a child of non-religious parents who nonetheless wholeheartedly supported his Torah learning and nurtured his success in every way.

**Keeping in Touch with a Special Boy**

 Rabbi Nissel played his part as well, keeping in touch with this special boy and encouraging his remarkable growth. The years passed and Shmuel made steady progress, never turning back to the non-religious life he had left behind. When he finished high school, he traveled to Eretz Yisrael to learn at a yeshivah there, once again finding inspiration and success. So impressed were the rebbeim by his dedication and enthusiasm that, at the age of 21, he was offered a fine shidduch with a young woman from Bnei Brak.

 Once again, Shmuel's path in life proved to be smooth and pleasant; a short time later, the couple was engaged. A few days later, the elated chassan was walking down a Yerushalayim street when he encountered his friend and mentor Rabbi Nissel.

**The Rabbi’s Question**

 "Mazel tov, mazel tov!" the rabbi greeted him. "I heard the great news!" The two spoke for a few minutes, discussing Shmuel's current learning situation and his plans for the future. As Shmuel spoke, Rabbi Nissel observed his young friend as if he had never met him before. Standing there before him was a young man who was every inch the yeshivah bochur in his dress, his expressions, his conversation. No one could see anywhere a hint of the uninitiated 10-year-old who had been led by his mother to the Shabbos table so many years ago.

 "Tell me something, Shmuel," Rabbi Nissel at last interrupted. "I've wanted to ask you this for many years. I'm looking at you and I see that you have grown into a fine bochur, but I've always wondered how it happened. I mean, you grew up in a home that was completely non-observant, and yet here you are today. Why did your mother even go along with all of this?" "Rav Nissel, there is a story behind my being religious today, but now is not the time for me to discuss it," Shmuel answered. "But I would like you to come to my sheva berachos, and that is when I plan on telling everyone my story."

 "B'ezras Hashem, I'll be there!" Rabbi Nissel responded. Two months later, he was indeed there, at Shmuel's sheva berachos, when the chassan rose to speak. With friends and family gathered together, he revealed his remarkable story.

**A Struggle to Start a Family**

 "When my parents married, they were not religious people," he began. "They really didn't know much about Judaism. There was no Shabbos or Yom Tov or kashrus in their home. Only on Yom Kippur did they attend services. But they had a difficult challenge that finally opened my mother to the idea of praying. The problem was that after five years of marriage, they still had not been blessed with a child. Both of them wanted a family, and they were heartbroken when it seemed it would never happen. "My mother started going to shul on Shabbos, hoping that if she prayed more, Hashem would grant her a child.

 One week, as she sat there in shul, the rabbi spoke about Chanah and Elkanah who, after many years, had not been able to have children. She heard how Chanah had prayed and prayed, all to no avail. And then, Chanah did something different. She not only prayed from the bottom of her heart, but Chanah vowed that if her prayer were answered with the birth of a son, she would dedicate his life to serving Hashem. Finally, Chanah was granted a son, Shmuel HaNavi.

 "As my mother sat there absorbing this story, she realized that she had the same problem as Chanah. She began to cry, and then she vowed right then and there that if Hashem would grant her a child, she, like Chanah, would dedicate his life to serving Him.

**No Knowledge on How**

**To Raise a Child Religiously**

 "I was born that year, and I was named Shmuel. My mother wanted to fulfill her vow, and she felt that the way to do it was to raise me as a religious Jew. However, since my parents had no knowledge in this area, they never quite knew how to make it happen. Finally, when I was 10, my mother found out about the NCSY Shabbaton and brought me there the way Chanah had brought Shmuel to Eli the Kohen. She has encouraged me every step of the way, and baruch Hashem, my parents have also become religious over the years. Now, as I start a new phase of life, I pray only that I will be able to fulfill my mother's promise and live a life that is truly dedicated to serving Hashem." (p.212 Stories for the Jewish Heart II, R. Binyomin Pruzansky)

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Good Shabbos Everyone.*

**It Once Happened**

**Celebrating Shabbat in**

**A Mysterious Village**

 The Baal Shem Tov sent Avraham, one of his disciples, on a trip. The ship on which Avraham was traveling encountered a terrible storm and capsized. Avraham was thrown into the tempestuous ocean and the next thing he knew, he was on the beach of a small island. Neither the wreckage of the ship nor the other passengers were anywhere in sight.

Avraham explored the island in the hope of finding someone who could help him. When Thursday arrived, Avraham went the deepest into the island he had gone yet. He found a little village that was eerily still, perfectly silent.

**The Village Had a Synagogue**

 Avraham explored the entire village which was comprised of a synagogue and a few dozen houses. He was astonished to see that the village was empty, yet each home was immaculately clean; not even a thin speck of dust was on any of the furnishings. The village was truly a mystery.

 Avraham decided to return to the deserted village on Friday and spend Shabbat there, albeit by himself. Friday morning, Avraham made his way to the village. But now the village was packed with people, all busy preparing for Shabbat. He grabbed one of the villagers excitedly and asked, "Where did all of you come from? I was here just yesterday and no one was anywhere in sight. It is as if you materialized our of thin air!" Avraham concluded.

 Politely but firmly, the villager responded, "Excuse me, but I am very busy preparing for Shabbat. Go to the synagogue this evening. There you will find our rabbi who will certainly tell you everything you want to know."

**Invited by the Rabbi to Be His Guest**

 Avraham did as he was told and after the evening services asked the rabbi for an explanation. The rabbi responded: "Be my guest this Shabbat and we will discuss this topic as well as many more interesting subjects."

 That Shabbat in the rabbi's home was the most sublime, the most exalted, the holiest Shabbat he had ever experienced in his life.

Avraham felt as if the Garden of Eden had been opened to him and he was partaking of the same Shabbat that the souls there experience. In fact, so unique was this Shabbat that Avraham forgot to ask the rabbi the question.

 As the end of Shabbat approached, the villagers gathered in the synagogue. The rabbi recited the special prayer (Havdala) separating Shabbat from the rest of the week. The rabbi and the villagers then dipped their fingertips into the wine of Havdala and passed their fingers over their eyes. And then, they all... vanished. Before Avraham even realized what had happened, everyone was gone. The entire village was deserted as before.

**Awoke to the Smell of Challah Baking**

 Avraham waited in the village the entire week for the holy Shabbat to arrive. When he awoke Friday morning, he smelled challah baking and chicken roasting. The village was once more busy with preparations for Shabbat. And once more, when Avraham tried to ask anyone where they had been the entire week, he received a polite but firm rebuff.

 Shabbat arrived and what a beautiful, magnificent, holy Shabbat it was. Avraham once more was the guest at the house of the rabbi. And once more, Avraham forgot to ask his question.

Demands an Answer to the Village’s Mystery

 But, when Shabbat ended this time, Avraham suddenly remembered that he must find out the village's story. When the rabbi had finished reciting Havdala, Avraham grabbed hold of his hand. "I will not let go of you until you unravel the mystery of your village for me," Avraham said.

 The rabbi had no choice and told Avraham this story: "Everyone in this village was a resident of a small town outside of Jerusalem when the Holy Temple stood. Shabbat was the favorite mitzva (commandment) of our town and we celebrated it gloriously. When the Holy Temple was destroyed our town was also destroyed and all of its inhabitants were killed.

 "When we went to Heaven, we all approached the Divine Throne, united as one, as we had always been united in our love for and observance of Shabbat. We protested: 'Heaven is totally spiritual and not a just reward for our community. Our true love has always been to uphold and celebrate the holy Shabbat which we cannot do in Heaven. Let us return to the world each week, on the eve of Shabbat, celebrate Shabbat there, and then we will return to Heaven.' G-d agreed and since that time, for these thousands of years, each Shabbat eve we return to the world and celebrate Shabbat."

**Wrote Various Letters on the Parchment**

 The rabbi then took a piece of parchment and wrote upon it various combinations of the letters of G-d's Name. He told Avraham to take this parchment to the ocean. Avraham was to close his eyes and begin walking into the ocean, all the while holding the parchment in his hand above the water. When he felt he could walk no further, Avraham was to throw the parchment into the air and he would find himself on the shores of the water near his home. The rabbi then passed his fingers over his eyes and vanished.

 Avraham made his way to the shore and did as the rabbi had instructed him. When the water was almost covering his nose he pulled back his arm to throw the parchment. But then he felt a hand grab hold of his arm. Avraham opened his eyes to find himself near his home.

**The Baal Shem Tov’s Explanation**

 The Baal Shem Tov was holding his arm. "This is why I sent you on the mission," the Baal Shem Tov explained to Avraham. "I will be able to use the kabbalistic formula written upon this parchment to arrive instantly (k'fitzat haderech) anywhere in the world. I will be able to help Jews wherever they are and further spread the teachings of Chasidism which will hasten the coming of Moshiach."

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