**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Toldos 5772**

**Who is the Boss of the Doctor’s Office?**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 Dr. Zev Zelenko (a Chabad Chassid) is the main doctor for the community of some 20,000 Satmar Chassidim in the city of Monroe, New York.

 The casual reader might not grasp the awesome novelty of this but I will try to explain.

 Satmar Chassidim are among the most charitable people in the world. Their acts of kindness and aid to the needy are of epic proportions and what is advertised is only a small percentage of what they actually do.

**Pride in Their Opposition to Zionism**

 But they take no credit, neither for this nor for their remarkable devotion to G-d and His Torah. Rather their pride is in their opposition to Zionism. To them, Zionism, Zionists and anyone that supports them are evil.

 Only Moshiach, they say (as do all other Jewish sources) will gather all the Jews, certainly not an atheistic based movement like Zionism, and they hate anything and anyone that disagrees with them on this.

 Therefore, years ago when the Lubavitcher Rebbe praised the Israeli soldiers that pulled off the Entebbe Raid, they came out with a strong condemnation and declared a 'cold war' on Chabad.

**Chabad Also Doesn’t Think**

**Zionism is the Final Answer**

 (Which is, in fact, totally unfounded, being that Chabad, especially through their Chassidic teachings, is devoted to bringing Moshiach against the basic tenant of Zionism: that Jews can solve all problems and end the 'exile' on their own.)

 What magnifies the novelty of Dr. Zelenko in Satmar is that he wears a Yarmulka that bears an embroidered declaration, in the spirit of Chabad, that he is waiting to coronate Moshiach.

 Just a few months ago Dr. Zelenko visited us here in the Yeshiva and told the miraculous story of his appointment.

 Several years ago he saw an advertisement that the Satmar community in Monroe was seeking a Doctor and, being that he had to provide for his wife and budding family, he applied and was called for an interview.

 When he arrived at the interview and they saw his credentials, portfolio and recommendations they were very pleased and were considering hiring him on the spot, until he took off his hat. Suddenly their eyes affixed on the letters decorating his Yarmulke "Long live King Moshiach" and for the rest of the conversation they heard nothing he said.

**Interview Ends with**

**A “Don’t Call Us!”**

 After a very short time they closed the meeting with, 'don't call us, we'll call you', didn't even shake his hand and that seemed to be the end of it.

Although things looked dim, Dr. Zelenko still had hopes.

 But after five weeks passed and he heard nothing he gave up and began searching again, but nothing better presented itself.

 Then, in the sixth week after his interview he received a telephone call. Satmar wanted him to come for another interview.

 This time when he arrived and sat down opposite them they did not beat around the bush, they pointed to his head covering and said, "That Kippa" (nickname for Yarmulka)….

**The Kippa is Part**

**Of the Package**

 But before they could continue he interrupted them, "My friends, this kippa is part of the package. If you want me you want it, and if you don't want it, you don't want me. This is the first time we are talking about this and the last. If you hire me then in my office I will be the boss and you cannot tell me what to do, but outside of my office, in your community, you are the boss."

 They looked at him blankly and again said. "We'll think it over."

 And, sure enough, a week later they called him and he got the job!

 Now the story begins.

**Influential Member of the Community**

**Complains of Stomach Pain**

 About a year later, one of the most influential members of the community came to him complaining of persistent stomach pain. It was rumored that this Chassid had over 100 million dollars in the bank, and he was in charge of all the finances of the community, assuring that everyone got paid fairly and on time etc.

 After a thorough examination, Dr. Zelenko gave him some pain pills to hold him over, and advised that he have a colonoscopy (a harsh intestinal examination) as soon as possible.

 A few weeks the same Chassid returned and asked for more pain pills. "Did you have the colonoscopy?" Dr. Zelenko asked. "Maybe later" was the reply.

**Orders Patient to “Get Out of My Office Now!!”**

 "Dr. Zelenko removed his glasses, stood, pointed at the door and said firmly, "Get out of my office …. NOW!"

 "Excuse me!" The Chassid said indignantly. "No one talks to me like that here! I can have you fired in a second, do you understand?! You're only here to serve us, so watch what you say!"

 Dr. Zelenko wasn't affected. "In my office I am the boss! If you don't like it then you can fire me! But as long as I'm here, you either do what I say or get out of this room. Either you leave here now, or you can fire me!"

 "Okay! We'll see who leaves!" said the Chassid as he angrily exited and slammed the door behind him.

**Returns with a Large Present**

 A month later the Chassid returned with a large present for Dr. Zelenko; a huge, pure silver, wine Cup of Elijah for his Passover table and a story.

 "I had the colonoscopy test like you said and they found a tumor. A malignant tumor! They said it was the last minute, that there still was hope and that another week it probably would have been be too late.

 They sent me to the operating room immediately and, well, thank G-d, they said that the operation was successful and they removed it completely! You were right. If you hadn't yelled at me I would have pushed it off and who knows…so you saved my life!"

 **“I Want to Tell You Something”**

 "Now I want to tell you something" The Chassid sat down and continued. "Do you know why it took six weeks for them to call you, back then when you were hired? Well I'll tell you.

 "Because when you took off your hat in that first interview and they saw that kippa of yours they thought you were crazy. I mean, you know what some people here think about Chabad. Well they figured you would hide your being Chabad and they would ignore it too. But not you! You threw it in everyone's face.

 "Anyway, no one wanted to hire you, but for the next five weeks they just couldn't find anyone that had your credentials. And, not only that but before you took off your hat they really liked you. So they came to me for advice what to do.

**A Test of the Doctor’s Integrity**

 "So I thought about it for a few minutes and told them like this. I told them to call you again and ask you if you're willing to change that Kippa. And that if you say 'yes', that you're willing to take it off they should NOT hire you because it's a sign that you don't believe in your principles. But if you refuse to remove it then it means you'll be honest with us and won't hide anything and they should hire you.

 "So it ends up that because of your stubbornness we hired you and because of your stubbornness you saved my life! Another doctor would have worried about his job and let me do what I wanted.

 "So it ends up that …. Well…. I saved myself!!! I gave them the advice to take someone as stubborn as you."

(Editor’s Note: Dr. Zev Zelenko was born in Kiev in the USSR in 1973. His family immigrated when was three-years-old to the United States. He grew up in Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn and attended Hofstra University, graduating at the top of his class, summa cum laude.

 He received a scholarship to go to SUNY Buffalo School of Medicine. While in medical school, Zev met Chabad of Buffalo under Rabbi Herchel Greenberg’s hashpo, and he started becoming frum. He took a year off to from medical school to learn in Yeshivah Ohr Tmimin in Kfar Chabad, Israel.

 He also learned in Hadar HaTorah during the summers and then joined Hadar Hatorah full time after completing medical school. After a year in Hadar Hatorah, he married his wife Sima Chana and moved to Long Island to do his residency in family medicine, again graduating at the top of his residency program.

 He was then hired by the Health Center of Kiryas Joel in upstate New York and worked there for five years. Currently Zev has his own thriving medical practice in Monroe and is medical director of Hatzolah of Kiryas Joel. Zev and Sima Chana have five children – Yitzi, Esther, Eta, Nochum Dovidand Shmuelly, ranging in age of near 9 to 1 years. The Zelenkos reside in Monroe, NY.)

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

**Story #730**

True Blindness

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000dLk0:001EnDpX00003l83&count=1322060863&randid=485364713&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=485364713##)

 Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz was once approached for advice and a blessing by a Jew from Danzig, in Germany; his daughter had suddenly become blind, and no doctor could fathom the cause.

 "The reason," said Rabbi Pinchas, "is that her father is also blind, and

this is a hereditary disease."

 "But my eyes are perfectly healthy," protested the German Jew. "Why, I don't even wear spectacles!"

**The True Blind Man is the Sinner**

 "The man who is really blind," explained the tzadik, "is the sinner. Thus we find that the prophet Isaiah admonishes 'the blind people that have eyes,' and the Mishna says: 'Samson followed his eyes, therefore the Philistines gouged out his eyes.'"

 Rabbi Pinchas went on to warn his visitor that all the members of his family who looked at him were also in danger of losing their vision; in the words of the Talmud: 'If a person gazes upon the face of a wicked man, his eyes grow dim.'

**Undertakes to Conduct His**

**Life According to the Torah**

 At these words the distraught man wept, and undertook at once to conduct his life according to the Torah. The tzadik then promised him that if he kept fully his new commitment, his daughter would regain her sight.

 He instructed him to give her honey from the Land of Israel for, in the words of the Talmud, 'Honey and other sweet things add light to one's eyesight.' This the Sages derived from the verse spoken by Yonatan, the son of King Saul: 'See I pray you, how my eyes have brightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.'

 The visitor returned to Danzig and made his entire household kosher in all respects. Subsequently, after his daughter became completely cured, she traveled to Koretz to see Rabbi Pinchas, and while there donated money for the writing of two Scrolls of the Torah.

 Source: Adapted/Supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition in A Treasury of Chassidic Tales(Artscroll), as translated by the esteemed Uri Kaploun from Sipurei Chasidim by Rabbi S. Y. Zevin.

 Connection: Weekly Torah - Gen. 27:1 with Rashi's explanation.

 Biographic Note: Rabbi Pinchas (ben R. Avraham Abba Shapiro) of Koretz (1726 10 Elul 1791) was considered to be one of the two most pre-eminent followers of Chassidism's founder, the Baal Shem Tov (along with his successor, the Maggid of Mezritch). His teachings appear in various collections (such as Midrash Pinchas), and are cited in the classic Bnei Yissaschar.

*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](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000dLk0:001EnDpX00003l83&count=1322060863&randid=485364713&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=485364713##)

**Passing Through**

***Dear Rabbi,***

 *What is Judaism’s view of how much a person may “indulge” in things of this worldly a nature? I’m not really asking about pursuing physical pleasures, but rather obtaining material possessions. Is there anything wrong with acquiring material possessions just for the sake of having belongings if that makes one feel good?*

**Dear Jordan**,

 In general, Judaism’s view about things of a material nature is to be minimalist. This our Sages expressed in teachings such as, “Learn to be satisfied with little” or “Who is truly wealthy, one who [accepts, and is therefore] happy with his portion”.

 The basic reason for this is that Judaism stresses that a person endeavor to be engaged with things of a spiritual nature, i.e. Torah study, performance of the *mitzvot*, prayer, and character refinement – all things that are viewed as elevating one’s spiritual essence which ultimately acquire for one a place and things of real value in the World to Come.

 However, since one’s basic needs must be fulfilled to sustain life in order to be able to engage in these things, and what’s more, according to Judaism, it is precisely through one’s use of the physical world that one acquires the spiritual, for this reason securing material benefit is unavoidable, and even desirable.

 Thus our Sages also taught, “If there’s no flour there’s no Torah”. This dichotomy of stressing the spiritual yet encouraging the physical results in a balanced approach of endeavoring to acquire materially only what’s needed in order to procure one’s spiritual well-being, while ensuring that one’s use of the physical is not one of material indulgence but rather directing it towards a higher purpose.

**People are on Different Levels**

**During their Spiritual Journeys**

 That being said, people are on different levels and at different places in their spiritual journey. Therefore, different people “need” varying degrees of material possessions. Some need more based on position, others based on society, and yet others based on age or personality.

 If these factors extend need beyond the basic essentials, the main thing is to be careful not to go too far, and to try one’s best to honestly direct the “excess” toward one’s service of G-d as well. So, for example, even one who just feels better and happier to have certain belongings (within reason) could excusably do so, if that contentment actually enhances his ability to be observant.

**The Example of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi**

 Another example of such excusable excess is recorded in the Talmud regarding Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, who is described as being fabulously wealthy, and who always had even out-of-season delicacies on his table. This was acceptable since his being the Exilarch representing the Jewish community to the non-Jewish authorities required him to receive world leaders on matters of great import, and it was necessary for the benefit the Jewish people for him to maintain an appropriate display of wealth and honor.

**No Personal Benefit from**

**His Immense Wealth**

 However, the Talmud also relates that upon his death, Rebbi (as he is referred to) raised his hands and declared that he had no enjoyment from the world with any of his ten fingers. One explanation of this seeming contradiction to his lifestyle is that he derived no personal benefit from his wealth — rather it was enjoyed only by those he was obligated to entertain. Another explanation is that, even if he did eat out-of-season strawberries (or benefit from any other of the trappings of wealth) while receiving visiting dignitaries and emissaries, he did not indulge in the pleasure for himself, but rather intended that his deriving benefit from these things was only for the service of G-d and the benefit of the Jewish People.

 Just as Rebbi’s degree of wealth was unique, so was his ability to avoid indulging in it. Most people, however, for all intents and purposes, are rather encouraged to take a minimalist, albeit individualized, approach to amassing wealth and material possessions.

**A Story of the Great Chafetz Chaim**

 And this is exemplified by a story regarding the great Chafetz Chiam: Once a certain wealthy man en route visited the rabbi’s house while traveling through town. He was astounded by the stark simplicity of his home and furnishings (or lack thereof).

 When he commented as such, the Chafetz Chaim remarked to his visitor that, given the size of his suitcase, his guest also lacked belongings. The man exclaimed, “What’s the comparison, I’m on a temporary journey and only take only what’s necessary for my trip. But I’m heading home to a mansion replete with a multitude of rooms and furnishings!”

 To this the rabbi replied, “I tooam only passing [this world] through and fear being weighed down by too much baggage. But I also look forward to such a homecoming [in the World to Come]as you describe!”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of ORHNET, the Orh Somayach Magazine of the Internet.*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Dangerous Journey**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 Many are the roads that lead to Jerusalem. But rarely is one as filled with danger as the one traveled by Eliezer.

 It all started with a long trek from his native Ethiopia to Johannesburg which included a tension-filled night in a tree surrounded by a pride of lions. The Johannesburg Jewish community, in which he would spend the next couple of years on his journey to Judaism, was a major stop in his journey to Jerusalem and Yeshivat Ohr Somayach.

 But before he reached South Africa he was held up by six robbers near the Swaziland border crossing. Rummaging through his meager belongings they came across a box containing his *tefillin* and demanded to know what was inside.

 “I got so angry when I saw them approaching my *tefillin*,” he recalls, “that I told them that if they touched them they would all die. They were so frightened by my attitude that they let go of the box, gave me some money to continue my journey and quickly ran off.”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of ORHNET, the Orh Somayach Magazine of the Internet.*

**The Indestructible**

**Jewish People**

**By Haim Shine**

 The U.S. city of Baltimore, MD houses one of the world's largest Orthodox Jewish communities. This wonderful community which revolves around the Ner Yisroel Yeshiva [religious school] is characterized by its piety, charity and love for the Land of Israel. It has lovingly adopted Holocaust survivors, refugees from Iran and individuals who became observant later in life. This past Shabbat in Baltimore was very special – let me tell you about it.

**Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon**

 A number of important synagogues in the city hosted Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, the rabbi of Alon Shvut South and a prominent religious scholar among Israel's national religious community. As a former student of the Har Etzion Yeshiva [A hesder yeshiva in the West Bank settlement bloc of Gush Etzion wherein students combine army service with Torah studies], he is able to incorporate his tremendous knowledge as well as the dictates of life in Israel into his religious rulings.

 In recent years, following the expulsion from the Gaza settlement bloc of Gush Katif, Rabbi Rimon founded a non-profit organization called JobKatif with the aim of helping the displaced individuals find employment and a steady income.

 Many families lost their livelihood as a result of the expulsion, shaking them to the core. Content residents who had made a decent living were suddenly just trying to survive. The Israeli establishment, which was most efficient in carrying out the evacuation from the settlements, was not prepared to deal with the traumatized people who had been removed from the settlements. Alongside others, JobKatif headed by Rabbi Rimon, was there to fill the gap.

 JobKatif's welcome activities won wide public recognition in 2008 when the NGO won the Presidential Award for Volunteerism. Many Gush Katif evacuees attribute their re-entry into the work force to JobKatif's volunteers.

**An NGO Requires Much Funding**

 The maintenance of the NGO requires much funding, and Rabbi Rimon visits Jewish communities around the world in efforts to raise funds for the cause. His travels took the rabbi to Baltimore this last Saturday. His address, given during Shabbat prayers at one of the big synagogues in the city, dealt with halakhic [Jewish law] questions posed to Rimon by observant soldiers serving in the Israel Defense Forces – soldiers who diligently observe all the laws of Judaism while performing every task required of them by the military.

 Just to illustrate I will mention that besides myself, there was one other religious combat soldier who completed officers training with me. When my son completed the same officers training a generation later nearly 60 percent of the graduates were religious soldiers from hesder yeshivas.

**Deeply Moved by the**

**Questions of the IDF Soldiers**

 The Baltimore congregation was deeply moved by the IDF soldiers' questions, like whether a soldier called on Shabbat for urgent duty was allowed to take his Tefillin [phylacteries] with him, or whether soldiers were allowed to use PowerPoint presentations for missions on Shabbat when the material can be presented on paper. The scholarly answers impressed all those present. For many, there was a touch of pride at seeing King David's soldiers resurrected in the state of Israel.

 The high point of Rabbi Rimon's visit was on Saturday evening when many members of the community gathered at Baltimore's Beth Tefillah Synagogue, one of the most beautiful in the world, to celebrate the joy of the commandments and helping one other.

 Musicians from congregations around the city entertained the crowd and between songs rabbis told stories of deeds that sanctify God's name and contribute to all Jews. Toward the end of the evening four rabbis sang the well-known song from the Passover Haggadah, "The one who stood by our forefathers and by us" and the entire audience stood up and joined together in a massive dancing circle.

 The hall was filled with a sense of elation and emotional tears could be seen in many eyes. The final dance, which refused to end, was a testament to the faith that even during tough times, Jewish unity is the most powerful force in the world and no-one can overpower it. The core of Israel's unity is stronger than anything else in the world.

**The Proof of Jewish Solidarity**

 At the end of the night large donations were collected for the Gush Katif evacuees and Jewish solidarity proved itself once again. No Jew in the world is without a savior. We are all brothers bearing together the indestructibility of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel.

*Reprinted from the Israel Hayom Newsletter of November 20, 2011.*

**The Power of Kiddush**

**By Avi Elkharrat**

 I am what they call a Sephardic Jew. My father was born and raised in Morocco, and my mother’s family moved from Tunisia to France when she was six years old. Until he turned sixteen, my dad was partly raised by his grandfather, a well-respected and learned rabbi.

 My parents met while studying medicine in Paris. At the time, neither of them was particularly religious. My dad, living on his own in Paris, had somehow lost most of the observance and tradition he had been raised with. My mom’s family was driven to weed out much of their Jewish tradition, so that they could fit in.

 For most of my childhood and adolescence I was raised by my Tunisian grandparents, while my parents, both physicians, were busy saving lives. My grandparents were so-called “traditionalists.” They kept whatever Jewish tradition fit easily into their lives, and discarded any practices that did not match the image of a suburban Parisian family.

 Kosher food, for example, was flexible and rather blurry, along with many other observances. After all, their children were doctors and intellectuals; why did they need some crazy rabbi telling them what to do and when to do it? I also recall celebrating Passover and other Jewish holidays on Sunday evening rather than the correct date, because that was the most convenient time for the family to gather.

**One Mitzvah Cherished by Grandpa**

 There was, though, one mitzvah that my grandpa cherished and upheld as far back as I can remember, and up until he became unable to stand: *kiddush*. The blessing sanctifying the Shabbat, recited over a cup of wine every Friday night.

 There is a Tunisian alcoholic beverage made from figs, called *bucha*. My grandpa (who didn’t have the opportunity to get a proper Torah education) used to recite the traditional wine blessing, *Borei p’ri hagefen* (“. . . Who creates the fruit of the vine”), on *bucha*, which certainly seems funny when one understands the meaning of the blessing, said over grape juice and wine.

 But to the youngster that I was, it made all the sense in the world.

**The Comfort and Protection**

**Of Family Togetherness**

 It meant Friday night. It meant “couscous boulettes” for dinner. It meant the comfort and protection of family togetherness, loving care and tenderness. When I recall those Shabbat dinners, I am filled with warm and wonderful memories.

 Grandpa used to sing *kiddush* with the melodic, beautiful tones of Tunisian liturgy, a surprising mixture of Arabic and Jewish sounds, recalling with both joy and envy the sixth day when creation ended and G‑d finally rested.

 Each cousin added his or her personal touch to our Friday night gatherings. One cousin sewed a *kippah* (traditional headcovering for men) with antennas for Grandpa, which he wore religiously. Sometimes we danced, sometimes we sang along with Grandpa, and sometimes we answered the traditional response, “Amen.”

 Then we grew up, and all the cousins carved out their own paths. I went to university to study physics. Somewhere along the road, I started recreating the link with my Jewish self.

 At twenty-six I decided it was time for me to find a nice Jewish girl to marry. My grandma’s sister said to me, “If you’re not willing to be even a little religious, you’ll never find a nice Jewish girl to marry.” Her words penetrated my solid heart, and little by little I started avoiding certain foods; I started reading about the weekly Torah portion; and that was just the beginning.

**Invited to Join a Team of Researchers in Prague**

 While working on my thesis, I was invited to spend a couple of weeks in Prague, working with a team of researchers whose subject of study was closely related to mine. I enjoyed having a lively bunch of fellow students to spend my free time with, but quite strangely, no one was available on Friday night.

 I decided to eat in a restaurant near my hotel, and right in the middle of this lonely meal, far from my family, I suddenly recalled that it was Friday night and that I was missing *kiddush*! I asked the waiter to bring me a glass of vodka (the closest thing to the traditional *bucha* my grandpa was using). Holding the glass of vodka in my right hand, I mumbled what I could remember of *kiddush* (and it was a pretty lousy amount), with the song-like tones that Grandpa used (these I remembered well).

 At that very moment, I felt connected.

**Feeling the Joy of Shabbat in a Lonely Restaurant**

 There, in a lonely restaurant in Prague, I felt the joy of Shabbat shine inside of me. I didn’t know it then, but I was changing. And *kiddush* had called me back. *Kiddush* reminded me that I was Jewish, that I had something special to do on this Friday evening, and that it was closely related to family, joy, singing, dancing and *bucha*.

 That experience became the turning point for me. I started becoming more observant. I went to the synagogue for Shabbat services, I bought *tefillin*, I ate kosher food. And when I recited *kiddush* on my own, I used the same beautiful tones that I had learned from Grandpa.

 How do I understand this story, now that I am fully observant?

 From where I stand now, I see that a broken *kiddush*, said wrongly, with little comprehension of the text and its meaning, kept the thread of Judaism alive in a boy who knew only that he was Jewish.

 This broken *kiddush* awoke the dormant sentiment of Judaism inside me, in an unlikely place, at an unlikely time.

 I call it the power of *kiddush*, but in more general terms, it is the power of a mitzvah. The power of *kiddush* taught me that no matter how religious one’s family, no matter how far one may be from Judaism, it is never too late to do a mitzvah. And who knows where that may lead?

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine. Avi Elkharrat lives with his family in Paris France where he works as an IT consultant. In 2002, after trying all sorts of spiritual experiences, he (re)-dicovered Judaism with Chabad.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Testing 1,2,3**

 The Torah tells us "So Yakov drew close to Yitzchok his father who felt him and said: The voice is the voice of Yakov, but the hands are the hands of Eisav." (Bereishis 27:22) The Midrash explains this powerful verse in an interesting way.

 The power of Yakov (who represents the Nation of Yisroel) is in its voice with prayer and Torah study, while the power of Eisav and the nations is in its physical strength. (Midrash Eicha Pesichta, Aleph,Beis) As the Prophet tells us "Fear not, O' worm of Yakov." (R.Amonon Yitzchok, Shlita, citing Yeshiyahu 41:14)

**Why the Comparison to a Worm?**

 Why is Yakov compared to a worm? The power of a worm is in its mouth. A tiny worm can bore through the strongest wood with its mouth. So too, the strength of Yisroel is in its mouth with prayer. (Rashi and Metzudas Dovid on Yeshiyahu 41:14) The nations may be bigger and stronger than we are, but we have the power of prayer, which is much stronger than their physical power.

 One of the ways we can use prayer is to help others. If we hear that someone is not well, G-d forbid or perhaps someone is looking for a marriage partner, we can help them by davening - praying for them. Sometimes, our prayer can positively affect others without us even realizing it.

 In 1983, Rabbi Aryeh Rodin, a graduate of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim in Forest Hills, New York, assumed the spiritual leadership of the newly formed Young Israel of Dallas, Texas. As a dedicated Rabbi he gave shiurim- Torah classes to the community at large, and with his painstaking outreach work, more families than ever before became committed to authentic Judaism.

**A Stranger Offers to Make**

**A Contribution to the Shul**

 One day Rabbi Rodin was sitting in his small office when a gentleman he had never seen before walked in. "Rabbi," he said in a deep Texan drawl, "Can I have a word with you?" "Sure," said Rabbi Rodin. "Please sit down." "My name is Leonard Fruhman," the man began, extending Rabbi Rodin a very firm handshake. Leonard and the rabbi spoke about Judaism and after a while Leonard said, "I would like to make a contribution to your synagogue."

 Rabbi Rodin was surprised. People do not usually walk into a shul off the street and give money without being asked. Rabbi Rodin expected to receive a check for $100.00 Instead, he was astounded when Mr. Fruhman told him the check would be for $2,000.00! "I do not have any checks with me," said Leonard with an easy smile, "but I will be back next week. You can count on that, Rabbi." Rabbi Rodin returned the smile and wished Leonard well.

**Doubtful that Leonard Would Return**

 In his heart, though, Rabbi Rodin was convinced that Leonard would not be back. He had no synagogue affiliation or commitment to Orthodox Judaism, and $2,000.00 was a substantial amount of money for a first-time donation. Rabbi Rodin thought that Leonard would probably rethink his pledge and decide he had been too generous. No one gives that amount to a shul with which he is unfamiliar.

 To the surprise of Rabbi Rodin, Leonard returned, but the check was not for $2,000.00. It was for three thousand dollars! "I thought about our conversation throughout the week, Rabbi, and I liked what you told me," Leonard said with enthusiasm, "so I increased the amount I am giving." Rabbi Rodin was speechless. When he regained his composure, he asked Leonard jokingly, "Perhaps you would like to come back next week?"

 That first donation began a long relationship between the Fruhmans and Rabbi Rodin. When the rabbi moved to Far North Dallas in 1986 to establish Congregation Ohev Shalom, Leonard came along.

 Leonard passed away tragically at the untimely age of 49, and shortly afterwards his mother and family made substantial donations to rebuild and renovate the Ohev Sholom synagogue in his memory.

**Leonard’s First Trip to Israel**

 At the shloshim of Leonard, a memorial held 30 days after his passing, Rabbi Rodin, in a moving eulogy, told the following remarkable story. In 1986 Leonard made his first trip ever to Israel. He was determined to "see all the sights." One morning he went to the Kosel (the Western Wall), where Jews the world over come to pray, and where many write "messages to G-d" on small pieces of paper and insert them in the crevices of the holy Kosel.

 Unfamiliar with the conventional text of prayers, Leonard walked up to the Kosel, and respectfully put his right hand on the stones of the towering wall. Leonard closed his eyes and in silent prayer expressed to G-d his innermost feelings.

**Inspired by a Yerushalmi Jew**

 After a while Leonard became aware of a Yerushalmi Jew standing to his right totally immersed in prayer. Wrapped in his tallis, the fellow was swaying gently to and fro, his eyes glued to the worn pages of his Tehillim. Every once in a while, the Yerushalmi Jew would close his eyes, raise his hands to Heaven and sigh.

 As Leonard observed the orthodox man, Leonard noticed the great happiness on his face, the peaceful simchah of a man connecting with his Maker. Leonard was overcome by a sense of spirituality he had never experienced before. He wished he could sense that bond between man and his Creator. If only he could touch it, feel it, or bottle it.

 Leonard wished he could give the man some money but he would not even consider interrupting those moments of holiness. Leonard left the uplifted and strengthened, but, in a sense, empty. Suddenly the Judaism he had not been close to meant more to him now than ever before. The noble experience stayed with him for the remainder of his trip in the Holy Land.

 When he returned to Dallas, Leonard went to the Jewish bakery to meet his friend, the owner, Mr. Abe Preizler. He told Mr. Preizler about his trip to Israel and then he described his emotional experience at the Kosel Hamaaravi.

 "Tell me," Leonard asked Mr. Preizler, "What synagogue in town do you think that man at the Kosel would feel comfortable praying in?" The reply came quickly, "In the synagogue of Rabbi Rodin." And that is how his friendship with the Orthodox community began, said Rabbi Rodin.  And from then on, Leonard and his family grew in their commitment to Judaism.

 Rabbi Rodin paused in his hesped - eulogy and then said with emphasis. "Imagine, for a moment, the scene when that Yerushalmi gentleman who was davening - praying at the Kosel comes to Heaven after his prescribed years in this world are complete. Hashem will tell him that he is about to be rewarded for being instrumental in maintaining and refurbishing a shul in Dallas.

 “The fellow probably never heard of Dallas, and if he did he certainly would not know where to find it. Yet, because he davened the way he did, where he did, it turns out that we in this community owe that Yerushalmi so much. And his reward in the Olam HaEmes will be immense." Good Shabbos Everyone.

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

**It Once Happened**

**The Shach Makes**

**A Shidduch**

 Hundreds of years ago there was no dependable mail service. Transportation was difficult, and communication between distant locations almost nonexistent. Shabtai Cohen was no different from many other lads who followed our Sages' dictum to "exile oneself to a place of Torah." Nonetheless, it was a wrenching experience to leave his widowed mother and sister for a foreign land.

 Despite the heartache, Shabtai's mother gave her blessing to her firstborn's departure. From an early age she had recognized that her son was destined for greatness. Only in a place of Torah could he live up to his vast potential and extraordinary talents.

 The lad arrived in Vilna, where he studied for several years in the city of Torah giants. When he reached marriageable age, he was taken as a son-in-law by one of Vilna's most respectable citizens and continued his studies. Within a few years he was a renowned legal authority and had authored the work Siftei Kohen, or as it is known by its initials, the Shach. However, his mother and sister knew nothing of this.

**The Terrible Chmielniki Attacks on Polish Jewry**

 It was at this time in history that the cursed Chmielniki and his followers began to wreak havoc in Europe. The destruction they brought to the Shach's hometown was beyond description. Countless Jewish men, women and children were brutally murdered. Their property was plundered and their homes burned to the ground.

 The Shach's sister managed to escape with the clothes on her back. In the course of her subsequent wanderings with a group of beggars, she arrived in the city of Vilna and sought shelter in a synagogue.

**The Compassion of**

**The Gabbai’s Wife**

 The gabbai's wife was immediately stricken by the young woman's obvious refinement, as evidenced by her bearing, speech and comportment. "How is it that you have been reduced to wandering?" she asked her kindly. "Why don't you remain here in Vilna? I will find you a respectable position, that you may earn your bread with honor."

 The young woman was delighted by the offer, and was hired as a domestic by one of Vilna's leading Jewish families. After all of her travails, she was happy.

 The mistress of the household was also soon impressed by the young woman's qualities. "The truth is that I really have enough domestic help," she told her. "But I have a special job for you, one that is not very difficult yet requires someone responsible. You see, my son-in-law is a Torah scholar, who studies Torah until very late at night. By that time, the rest of the household has already gone to bed, and no one is awake to serve him his supper. I would like to assign this task to you."

**Recalls Long-Forgotten Memories**

 And so, that evening the young woman sat outside the son-in-law's study door and waited for him to finish. She listened as he studied aloud, and the sweet melody resonated within her soul and awakened long-forgotten memories. For a brief second she imagined herself a child back at home; the voice sounded uncannily like her late father, Reb Meir, of blessed memory. But of course, he had died years before when she was very young.

 The contrast between the warm, pleasant dream and her present status as a poor orphan was suddenly too much to bear. A flood of emotion overwhelmed the young woman and her eyes filled with tears. Unable to control herself, she began to weep.

**The Son-in-Law Heard the Maid’s Crying**

 The son-in-law heard her crying and opened the door. When he asked her what was the matter, she dried her eyes and said, "It's nothing." The son-in-law went back to his studies. A few minutes later, however, she could no longer contain herself, as the sound of his learning was just too evocative. When he came out a second time she poured out her heart.

 The young woman told the son-in-law all about her illustrious family, about her father who used to learn with the same sweet melody, and the wonderful memories his learning had brought back. Then she filled him in on the rest of her sad story.

**Recognizing His Sister**

 She was so intent on her tale that she didn't notice how he had suddenly paled. The realization that the young woman was his sister almost made him faint. For the time being, however, he kept his emotions in check, and comforted her as best he could.

 At the request of the Shach, the young woman was elevated to the status of family member. No one knew why, but everyone respected his wishes. The young woman was soon beloved by all.

**Proposes a Shidduch**

 A while later the mistress of the household fell ill and passed away. After the mourning period, the matchmakers pressed the husband to remarry, as he was still relatively young. When he asked his son-in-law what to do, he advised him to marry the young woman who had come to live with them. "She is modest, wise, and from a good family," the Shach told him. "G-d willing, at the wedding I will reveal her true identity."

**Mother of the Famed Panim Meirot**

 And so it came to pass. The Shach revealed to everyone at the wedding that the bride was, in fact, his sister. As a wedding present the Shach blessed the new couple with a son who would illuminate the Jewish world; his blessing was fulfilled with the birth of the famous Rabbi Meir, author of the Panim Meirot.

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