**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Tzav 5775**

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**Complete and Utter Sadness**

**By Rabbi Ron Yitzchok Eisenman**

**Congregation Ahavas Israel, Passaic, NJ**

There are no words which can be said.

There are no words which can console.

There are no words which can ease the pain.

The heart is pained, the eyes are full of tears and the entire body is numb.

As we slept soundly in our beds on Friday night, a Beis HaMikdash was burning in Flatbush.

A holy Mishkan where the Shechina resided was engulfed in flames.

This time, His wrath did not consume just wood and stones; this time it consumed the Holy of Holies.

There is no Nechama, there is no consolation.

Seven precious, cherished and holy Jewish children were taken from us this past Friday evening.

Seven Neshamos went up to His throne as they were engulfed in the flames of Shabbos.

As I attempted to sleep last night, the sacrifices invaded my mind and would not allow me to sleep.

During my semi-sleepless night, the thought of the seven children kept pounding away at my mind precluding me from rest or sleep.

Of course, there are lessons to be had and they should be learned.

Check your home TODAY to make every room has a working smoke detector.

Indeed, before you do any Pesach preparations today, the first thing you must do is check the smoke detectors.

We have an obligation to be vigilant in the care of our family.

Do it for today as a Zechus (merit) for the holy sacrifices and for a refuah Sheleima for the mother and surviving sister.

Do it today; however, that won’t take away the pain; it won’t lessen the agony and it will not bring back the children.

Seven precious souls; seven precious children are no longer among us.

Hashem has poured out His wrath this Shabbos on our most cherished and precious treasure.

We must take stock of who we are and what we can all do to improve.

We must attempt to unify and grow together.

Right now though, there is only one possible emotion and that is complete and utter sadness.

It is a sadness which -like the flames which consumed the home- consumes our entire being.

We cry for our children which are gone.

We cry for a mother who must somehow go on.

And we cry for ourselves that this has befallen us.

There is nothing more to say except ….

Please hug your children today.

Hold them close to you and tell them how much they mean to you and how much you love them.

And if you have no children, give yourself a hug and remind yourself that you too are a beloved child of Hashem.

*Reprinted from the March 23, 2015 website of Matzav.com*

**L’Maaseh… A Tale to Remember**

**One Mitzvah Breader**

**Than the One Before**

The Ben Ish Chai (Chasdei Avos), relates an amazing true story.

A woman, who was a Yiras Shamayim, was baking bread in an outdoor oven in her yard, as she would do every day. One day after she finished her baking for the day, a poor man came to her with tears in his eyes, saying how hungry he was, and pleaded with her for something to eat. She immediately took out a freshly baked loaf of bread and gave it to him, and he couldn’t stop thanking her.

As he was walking away and still within her sight, another poor man approached her and said that he hadn’t eaten anything in two days, and asked her if she had anything that he could eat.

The lady took out another fresh loaf of bread and gave it to him. The man washed, ate, had something to drink, bentched, and gave many brachos to the woman who fed him.

When he left, the woman realized that she now didn’t have enough bread for her own family to eat, so she took a sack that was filled with wheat, and went to the mill which was located on the shore near the ocean, to grind it into flour. She then filled her sack with the flour, carried it over her shoulder, and started to head back home to bake more bread for her family.

As she was walking on the edge of the ocean shore, a fiercely strong wind came unexpectedly, and blew her sack of flour into the ocean! She was now left with nothing for her family to eat.

She realized that the series of events could not be unrelated, so she decided to seek Hashem, and went to the Bais Medrash that was located nearest to where she lived, to see if she could learn why Hashem had arranged the events like this. She told her story to the Rosh HaYeshivah, and he told her to please wait a while so he could try to uncover the answer for her.

A short while later, two men came to the yeshivah, and they were holding a pouch full of gold coins which they were dedicating to the yeshivah. They told the Rosh Yeshivah that they were just previously on a ship at sea, when their boat hit a large rock and began taking on a lot of water. They realized that in just a few short moments, their ship would sink, they would drown, and all their merchandise would be lost.

They immediately stood up and swore to Hashem that if He performed a miracle for them and saved them from drowning in the ocean, they would give a pouch of gold coins to the Bais Medrash! Immediately as they finished their pledge to Hashem, they heard something get stuck in the hole that was on the side of their ship, and the water stopped rushing in. They were able to then quickly get their boat to the shore and anchor it, saving them from peril and great loss. They came immediately to fulfill their promise to Hashem Yisbarach.

The Rosh Yeshivah asked them, do you know what it was that got stuck in the side of the ship that stopped the water from flooding the boat? The men told him, please wait for us to return, and we will investigate. When they examined their boat, they found a sack full of dough that had gotten stuck in the hole, and they brought it to the Bais Medrash. The Rosh Yeshivah asked the woman if she recognized it as hers, and she said that yes, it was indeed hers.

He said to her, “Now you can see the zechus that Hashem has arranged for you. For the mitzvah that you did in giving your bread to poor people, you merited saving an entire ship full of people from drowning, because the wind carried your flour into the ocean, and the water turned it into dough. It then plugged the hole that was in the ship.”

The Rosh Yeshivah told her, “This is Mitzvah Goreres Mitzvah! Praiseworthy are you and may all good come to you!” The woman was very happy with the words of the Rosh Yeshivah, and went to the market to buy food for a celebration and a festive meal with her family!

*Reprinted from last week’s email of “Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights” compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**Yemen’s Last Jews**

**A Visit with the Remaining 90 Jews.**

**By** [**Yvette Alt Miller**](http://www.aish.com/authors/84110707.html)

“G-d is great, death to America, death to Israel, damn the Jews, victory for Islam.”

The slogan of Yemen’s Houthi rebels, who took over the capital, Sana, in January 2015, is fierce. It is also puzzling that their hatred would so stridently and centrally be directed against Jews, considering that Yemen – which long boasted one of the world’s oldest and largest Jewish communities – is today almost entirely empty of the Jews who called Yemen home for thousands of years.

Yemeni Jews trace their community back to the time of King Solomon, when traders ventured far south into the Arabian peninsula and stayed there, establishing a rich, thriving Jewish community in what is today Yemen. Preceding both Christianity and Islam in the area, Judaism long defined Yemen’s history. For a time, 1500 years ago, [Yemen](http://tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/140366/himyar-yemen-al-qaida) was even ruled by a dynasty of kings who converted to Judaism.

Yemeni Jews were traditionally skilled craftspeople, sought out for their expertise in crafting ornate jewelry, swords, and other metalwork. Beginning in the 19th Century, however, a series of decrees made life increasingly difficult Yemen’s Jews. Jews were forbidden from wearing colorful clothes or riding animals, and Jewish orphans were forced over to Muslims to adopt. Despite the near-impossibility of travelling by foot, Jews began leaving Yemen; between 1881 and 1914, about ten percent of Yemen’s Jews fled for what is today Israel.



Young Yemeni Jewish boys learning Torah

Conditions worsened; a pogrom in Yemeni port city of Aden in 1948 killed 82 Jews and destroyed houses and businesses. When the State of Israel was established, one of the first actions the Jewish state took was the rescue of Yemen’s Jews. Over 45,000 of Yemen’s 50,000 Jews were airlifted to Israel in Operation Magic Carpet. Tragically, although the new Jewish state made a huge effort to bring Yemeni Jews to Israel, once there, they were often mistreated, urged to shed their deeply-held religiosity and integrate into a European-style, secular, ideal. It was only after many years that Israel’s Yemeni community began to finally feel valued for their unique, beautiful culture and their profound contribution to Israeli society. A smaller airlift from Yemen in the early 1990s brought another 1,200 Yemeni Jews to Israel.

**Under Attack**

As their community shrank, Jews remaining in Yemen have come under increased attacks; violence and fear have become routine. The Yemeni Jewish community is concentrated now in two cities: Raida, in Yemen’s north, and Sana, the capital. Violence has marked Jewish life in both places in recent years. In 2008, Moshe Yaish Nahari, the brother of a prominent Yemeni rabbi and a father of eight, was [shot](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/19/world/middleeast/persecution-defines-life-for-yemens-few-jews.html?_r=0) when he stepped out of his house in Raida. His assailant reportedly told him “Jew, here’s a message from Islam” before killing him.



Members of one of the few Jewish families still living in Yemen

A few years later, in 2012, Aaron Zindani was stabbed to death in a market in the capital city of Sana, as he shopped there with his children. And on January 21 2015, Houthi rebels stopped two Jewish men as they shopped for groceries in central Sana. Yousef Habib, one of the few remaining rabbis in Yemen, [described](http://www.yementimes.com/en/1861/report/4905/%E2%80%9CDamn-the-Jews%E2%80%9D-proving-more-than-just-a-slogan.htm) what happened next: “They were approached…by two men, who noticed them because of their *peyot* (long earlocks). The two men stopped them and ordered that they praise the prophet Muhammad, however the two refused. As a result they were then publically beaten, and had their possessions confiscated.”

As they consolidate power, Houthi leadership claims that Yemen’s few remaining Jews have nothing to fear, but some Yemeni Jews disagree. Haboub Salem Mousa, a 36-year old Jew, recalls how he and his family fled their home in the Yemeni city of Sa’ada in 2006 because of violence from Houthis: “Houthis pursued us everywhere we went. Attacks and even forced conversions were common at that time.”

**Visiting the Remaining 90 Jews**

Today, approximately 90 Jews remain in all of Yemen.

Those living in Sana are dwelling in virtual house arrest. They are refugees, having fled fighting in Yemen’s north, and arriving in Yemen’s capital between 2004 and 2010. The Jews in Sana live in a unique compound called Tourist City: a walled enclave housing foreign workers, guarded by Yemeni troops. The Jews there subsist on odd jobs and Government restitution payments for houses that were destroyed in the fighting.

An American professor at Brandeis University and frequent visitor to Yemen – who asked that his name not be used because of the precarious security situation in Yemen – visited the Jews of Sana in their walled compound in 2013, and in an exclusive Aish.com interview, described conditions there. The complex is “a city within a city,” comprising about 30 buildings. In addition to Sana’s Jews, foreign workers living in Yemen reside there, including Russian nurses and Iraqi diplomats. At any given time the population inside the complex can range from 200-300 up to 1200 people. The Jews live in relatively modern apartments, and physically, their lives are easier than many Yemenis. “There are modern apartments with running water there, which is better than most of city, which don’t often have luxuries like running water”.



Members of Yemen’s once dynamic Jewish community

The professor spent Shabbat with Sana’s Jews and has observed that they are maintaining their traditions and religious observance.

The situation for Yemen’s second community of Jews in the northern city of Raida seems less secure. The approximately 45 Jews there cling to their religious traditions, and continue in the ancient Jewish trade of silverwork. A *New York Times* reporter visiting in February 2015 observed that Raida’s Jews live behind sturdy, locked walls of their own, in a secure compound outside of town. They still receive daily threats. “What are you doing with that dirty Jew?” asked a seller of qat, a popular drug in Yemen. When the paper’s interpreter explained “He’s a human being after all,” the qat seller replied, “No he’s not.”

“We have no friends,” explained Abraham Jacobs, a 36-year-old Jew living in Raida. “So we just try to stay away from everyone as much as we can.”

The Brandeis professor describes how each afternoon in Sana, Jewish boys meet with their rabbi, whom they call “*mori*,” my teacher, to study Torah. The Jewish community – boys and girls – are all literate, which, he says, is a rarity in Yemen, where illiteracy is rampant.

**One Pair of Tefillin**

The Sana Jewish community had to leave most of their possessions behind when they fled fighting in the north of the country. “They were able to take out one Torah scroll. They smuggled it out in a black plastic garbage bag.” The community was also able to bring out only one tallis and one set of tefillin, which all the Jews in Sana share. When the professor visited in 2013, there was one boy, Gamil, who was about to be a bar mitzvah. “The boys knows Torah and Targum (an ancient commentary on the Torah) by heart,” the professor notes. They seem to have forged a special bond. When the professor left Yemen, he gave his own pair of tefillin and tallis to Gamil. “Gamil gave a big smile,” he recalls, before saying goodbye.

“This is now the oldest Jewish community in the world,” the professor says. “It has many old customs that have been lost in other communities…It’s a beautiful community.” He wants people to know that at least for now, the Jews in Yemen “are safe,” dedicated to their ancient traditions and way of life. But how much longer they can remain in Yemen is unclear. Houthi leaders have met with the Jews in Sana in recent weeks, and said they can remain in their walled complex for the time being. The Brandeis professor notes that, their fiercely anti-Semitic slogan notwithstanding, the newly-governing Houthis are more favorably disposed towards Yemen’s remaining Jews than many other political groups operating in the country, such as al-Qaida or ISIS.

The Houthis continue to consolidate their power in Yemen. President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi fled Sana on February 21, 2015, leaving Houthi rebels in control of the capital, although he maintains he is still Yemen’s president. The United States, Britain, and France have all closed their Yemen embassies in recent weeks. In the days since their takeover of Sana, more of Yemen’s Jews are fleeing.

A family of six left Yemen for Israel in February, shrinking the community further. For many of the remaining Yemeni Jews, their traditions and love of their way of life is enough to make them determined to stay – for now.

“Since last September (when fighting reached the capital), our movements have become very limited…and there are some members of the community who preferred to leave Yemen,” Rabbi Yahya Youssef said in Sana after the Houthis gained the city. Asked if he would flee too, the rabbi said no. “[We don’t want to leave](http://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Yemens-last-Jews-eye-exodus-after-Islamist-militia-takeover-391078). If we wanted to, we would have done so a long time ago.”

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Aish.com*

**A Jew’s Commitment Towards Honesty and Integrity**

Special Note Two: The following touching lesson from HaRav Shimon Schwab, Z’tl, was published in an issue of the Pirchei Weekly, under the title “*The Way of a Jew*”

HaRav Schwab was renowned for his integrity in all areas. In monetary matters, he went far beyond the strict requirements of Halacha, and in doing so, sanctified the Name of Hashem.

Once, HaRav Schwab visited his son Rav Myer when the latter was a student at Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin. The two then went to a subway station to travel to Manhattan. Rav Myer spotted a few quarters lying on the ground near the token booth. His father instructed him to give them to the clerk at the token booth.

Rav Myer was prepared to obey, but he was somewhat puzzled, for a subway station is considered a public domain and the Halacha clearly allows one to keep an item like money (which has no identifying characteristics) when it is found in such an area.

Respectfully, he asked his father for an explanation. HaRav Schwab explained to his son: “Certainly you are correct from a halachic standpoint, the money is yours. But in our day and age, we have to utilize every opportunity to be *Mikadeish Sheim Shomayim* and demonstrate what Torah Jews are all about. You hand the money to the man in the booth and I will stick my beard into the window so that he will see who we are!”

Years later, HaRav Schwab visited Rav Myer in Denver, where he serves as Dean of the city’s Bais Yaakov. One day, Rav Myer brought home two of his father’s suits from the cleaners. Upon examining the receipt and counting his change, HaRav Schwab realized that he had mistakenly been charged for only one suit.

When R' Myer checked the figures, he said, “Yes, it’s certainly a mistake. Tomorrow I’ll pass by the store and pay the difference.”

“It should not wait for tomorrow,” his father replied. “We should take care of it right now. I will come along.” At the time of his visit to Denver, R' Schwab was still able to walk, but with difficulty. Nevertheless, he insisted on accompanying his son to contribute his share to this *Kiddush Hashem*.

They arrived at the shopping mall and Rav Myer pulled up right in front of the cleaners so that the proprietor could see his father sitting in the front seat. Rav Myer entered the store, explained what had happened and paid for the suit. The proprietor turned to look out the window and HaRav Schwab smiled and waved at him from the car.

The proprietor told Rav Myer, “Rabbi, you didn’t have to make a special trip for this. You could have brought the money in tomorrow!”

“I know,” Rav Myer replied, “but to my father, the matter could not wait until tomorrow; it had to be rectified right away.” [Adapted from: “*More Shabbos Stories*” with kind permission from Artscroll]

*Reprinted from a recent issue of the Hakhel Email Community Awareness Bulletin.*

**Story** **#903**

**Customer Relations**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=ABC&msgNum=0000weG0:001L2LiG0000181z&count=1426862659&randid=325912361&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=325912361)

Gavriel Kogan once visited Rabbi Dovid-Tzvi Chein*, the chief rabbi of* Chernigov (1846 - 1926), known as *the Radatz*, a legendary Lubavitcher chassid, renowned for his scholarship and piety, at his home.  In the company of many others, the Radatz turned to him and suggested, “Why don’t you tell us the story of those non-Jews and the Rebbe’s promise?” Reb Gavriel agreed, and related the following story

“I live in the village of Dormilovka, near the city of Nezhin. Thank G-d, I manage to make a good living from my store.  Years ago I had a terrible argument with some gentiles who lived in the area.  They were so angry that they threatened to kill me.  That night, after I closed the store, I was so afraid to go home that I went elsewhere to sleep.

“The next day I heard a rumor in town that I was a marked man, and that those gentiles were after my life.  I was terrified.  For the next few days I kept moving, sleeping in a different location each night.  In desperation I decided to go to the Rebbe Reshab in Lubavitch.  This would be my first visit.

“When I got there, however, I realized that I was not the only one in town, for in those days Lubavitch was fairly inundated with guests. The Rebbe's *gabbai*, Reb Nachman, refused to let me in to speak with the Rebbe; there was a long list of people before me. The earliest I would be allowed to enter was several days hence.

“Although I thought I knew no one in Lubavitch, all of a sudden I recognized Rabbi Menachem-Mendel Chein (the son of Rabbi Dovid-Tzvi), the chief rabbi of Nezhin.  I ran over and told him my predicament, explaining that Reb Nachman would not let me in to speak to the Rebbe.

“Two seconds later Reb Menachem Mendel disappeared into a nearby room (I realized later it must have belonged to the Rebbe’s wife, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah).  The next thing I knew, Reb Nachman was calling out, “Where is the Jew from Dormilovka?”

“In a moment I was ushered in to the Rebbe himself. After I had blurted out my story, the Rebbe gave me his blessing that no harm would befall me.  But I was not satisfied. ‘Rebbe,’ I implored him.  ‘I am afraid to go home!  I want you to promise me that nothing bad will happen!’

“With a smile on his face the Rebbe looked at me and asked, ‘What do you want that all the non-Jews of the town should die?’

“During the entire exchange Reb Nachman was doing his best to evict me from the Rebbe’s room.  Not only was he calling me to leave, but he was pulling on my arm.  However, I was not ready to go.  ‘Rebbe! Promise me!” I pleaded again. ‘I am afraid to return to my house!’

“’And if I promise you, you won’t be afraid?’ asked the Rebbe.

“’No!’ I answered emphatically.

“’In that case, I promise that you will not be bothered by these Gentiles.’

“The minute I heard the Rebbe’s promise, stated in such clear and unambiguous terms, I was relieved.  When I returned home I learned what had happened to my enemies during my absence:

“One of them, riding his horse on the banks of the river while in a drunken stupor, had fallen into the water and drowned.  A second had been killed in another accident.  The four others, who had been involved in a plot to set fire to the *poritz’s* property, were arrested by the police and sentenced to Siberia for eight years. The Rebbe’s promise was fulfilled. I was no longer in any danger.

Eight years later, when the four prisoners returned from Siberia, my fears returned briefly, but they proved to be unfounded.  Not only were they quite friendly to me, but they became good customers of mine.

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***Source*:** Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition of Basha Majerczyk in *"Extraordinary Chassidic Tales"* -- her translation of *Shemuos Sipurim* by Rabbi Rafael Nachman Kahn, volume 1.]

***Biographical note:*** Rabbi Sholom Dov-ber Schneersohn [of blessed memory: 20 Cheshvan 5621 2 Nissan 5610 (Oct. 1860 - April 1920)], known as the *Rebbe Reshab*, was the fifth Rebbe of the Lubavitcher dynasty. He is the author of hundreds of major tracts in the exposition of Chasidic thought. In 1897, he established the *Tomchei Temimim* Yeshivah, the first institution of Jewish learning to combine the study of Talmudic and legal studies with the mystical  teachings of Chasidism, from which emerged the army of learned, inspired and devoted chasidim who, in the decades to come, would literally give their lives to keep Judaism alive under Soviet rule.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of KabbalahOnline.com, a project of Ascent of Safed.*

**Practical and Spiritual Advice**

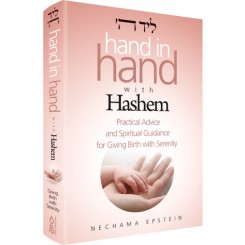
**For Giving Birth with Serenity**

**By Daniel Keren**

(“Hand in Hand with Hashem: Practical Advice and Spiritual Guidance for Giving Birth with Serenity” by Nechama Epstein, Feldheim Publishers, 218 pages hardback, 2014)

(“The Heart of Parenting: Understanding what it Takes to Raise Successful Children in Today’s Challenging Times” By Rabbi Moshe Don Kestenbaum, 2013, Targum Publishers/Menucha Publishers, 120 pages.)

Perhaps with the exception of one’s becoming engaged to marry, nothing in life is as exciting or as daunting as learning that one is expecting the birth of a first child. The hopes and dreams one conjures up for the yet unborn child, a new link in the family chain are also in the case of the future mother contrasted to her fear of the unknown – the pain and thrill of giving birth to a new human being.

[](http://www.feldheim.com/media/catalog/product/cache/1/image/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/7/0/7068.jpg)

To address this natural dichotomy of emotions, **Mrs. Nechama Epstein**, a veteran Jerusalem labor coach trained in the Swiss method has authored an easy to read book – “**Hand Hand with Hashem: Practical Advice and Spiritual Guidance for Giving Birth with Serenity**.” This important guide for both the expectant mother and her spouse was originally published in Hebrew.

The basic format of Mrs. Epstein’s book is that if a couple takes the effort to understand the process of pregnancy leading to childbirth in advance, they will know what to expect and many of their fears of the unknown will dissipate and the mother will be in better shape both emotionally/spiritually and physical than would otherwise be the situation.

Indeed in her introduction, the author declares: “Labor and delivery should be the most wonderful hours in a woman’s life. It is a time when she is invigorated from the excitement and joyful anticipation of her baby’s arrival. Sometimes, however, fear of the unknown can suppress her excitement and transform the birth into a frightening experience.”

While most books on the subject of giving birth offer the mother technically correct data and information “Hand in Hand with Hashem” also emphasizes the importance of having emunah and bitachon in the Hashem. This can in and of itself do much to alleviate the concerns of the future mother. Also it can help in the healing process when for reasons only Hashem’s knows the pregnancy doesn’t end successfully with a healthy baby.

Mrs. Epstein has broken down the process of pregnancy and preparing for birth into 21 chapters including in the appendices a section on the husband’s role. Among the subjects she addresses in “Hand in Hand with Hashem” are the hormonal system, how to achieve a calm childbirth, as mentioned before emunah and bitachon, the question of pain medication during labor, the value of prayer during delivery, the issue of inducing labor, breastfeeding and the importance of breast milk and the importance of a new mother taking care of herself.

Although seemingly written for the expectant first time mother, “Hand in Hand with Hashem” conceivably could be useful to a woman who has already given birth but perhaps and has not prepared herself intellectually and emotionally for this most important life cycle event. As such it would be a great gift for a spouse or parents of the couple to give.

So now that G-d willing, you or your wife have been blessed with a healthy child, how do you proceed to the next stage in life – that of successfully raising the child not only physically, but just as importantly – as an emotionally adjusted human being who we would like to see follow in our spiritual footsteps as a Torah loyal Jew?

Many child rearing books have been published. One of the more interesting ones is also an easy-to-read book titled “**The Heart of Parenting: Understanding what it takes to raise successful children in Today’s Challenging Times**” by **Rabbi Moshe Don Kestenbau**m.

Without a doubt, the challenge of raising a child to be a happy, productive and successful adult is infinitely harder and obviously takes more time than the nine-month delivery process. This reminds me of a joke I once read in an article or book written by Rabbi Berel Wein. Why do grandparents and grandchildren get along so well? Because they share the same nemesis.

Rabbi Kestenbaum is a rebbi in the Mesifta of the Yeshiva Ateret Shmuel in Waterbury, Connecticut. In a preface to “The Heart of Parenting, Rabbi Ahron Kaufman, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Waterbury Yeshiva notes that there are two methods of avodas Hashem, serving G-d that are inherently different from each other – ahavas (love of ) Hashem and yiras (fear of) Hashem.

Rabbi Kestenbaum’s major theme in “The Heart of Parenting” is that unlike previous generations where perhaps father knew best and children were to be seen and not heard, today’s challenge in raising successful children is quite different. And if you managed to be successfully brought up in such a scenario, to try and repeat that same process with your children is only courting disaster.

The main responsibility of a parent today in the confusing morale morass of a rapidly degenerating society surrounding us as Torah-true Jews is to raise our children (properly of course) to be happy if we have any hopes that they will turn out to be successful and productive adults (and loyal Jews.) The child has to know that the parents (both father and mother) will be there for him (or her) and absolutely loves and cares for them.

“The Heart of Parenting” is a collection of articles that Rabbi Kestenbaum originally wrote for publication in the Yated Ne’eman. A sample of his philosophy can be found the chapter titled “Emotional Nourishment.” Regarding the important quality of respect, the author writes:

“One of the greatest weaknesses affecting this generation is the lack of a healthy sense of self-esteem and confidence… Good parents take special care to raise their children with a strong sense of self-esteem and confidence.

“How do we accomplish this? Firstly, we need to treat our children with dignity and respect. That fact that they are children, or even our children, does not absolve us from the obligation of “Ve’ahhavta lerei’acha kamocha [love your neighbor as yourself] (Vayikra 19:18). On the contrary, we must be more careful when dealing with our children, as they are so emotionally dependent on us. We must be ever so careful not to embarrass them or hurt their feelings, just like we are mindful of the feelings of our peers.”

In addition to being available in Jewish bookstores, one can obtain “**Hand in Hand with Hashem**” by Nechama Epstein by contacting the distributor by calling (800) 237-7149 or clicking [www.feldheim.com](http://www.feldheim.com) For copies of “**The Heart of Parenting**” by Rabbi Moshe Don Kestenbaum try your local bookstore or call (718) 232-0856 or click [www.menuchapublishers.com](http://www.menuchapublishers.com)

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**Addenda to Shabbos stories**

**for parshas tzav 5775**

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**Remembering the**

**Sassoon Children**

**These seven beautiful children were my next door neighbors.**

**By** [**Rabbi Dovid Rosman**](http://www.aish.com/authors/99190594.html)

I just returned from the saddest funeral I've ever attended – burying seven pure souls. These beautiful children were my next door neighbors until they moved to New York a year and a half ago. My children played with them all the time. Our girls went to the same school. I still can picture David and Shuey (the name affectionately given to Yehoshua) reading on my couch on Shabbat afternoon and little Sarah (she was 4 at the time) holding my daughter's hand and skipping.

I remember when David, Shuey, and my son received new walkie-talkies and intercepted some random person's conversation. Just this past Shabbat afternoon, a few hours before hearing the horrible news, my oldest daughter told my wife, "If Rivka would still be living on the block we would be making a camp together for the week before Pesach like we did two years ago."

I'm [devastated](http://www.aish.com/jw/s/Crushing-Pain.html). We are all devastated. There are no words to describe the pain; we cannot begin to wrap our heads around this. People on the block cannot look at each other in the face. The pain is too overwhelming.

Gabby and Gail Sassoon are incredible parents. These children received so much love and attention. Look at their beaming faces. They did a fantastic job ensuring that their children were healthy and thriving. The family was an incredible unit always playing together and enjoying each other's company. They were each other's world.

**The Uniqueness of the Parents**

But what was so unique was that the parents allowed everyone to be part of their unit, to the extent that Mrs. Sassoon bought a larger C shaped couch so that children outside of the family could have room to sit on it.

And the Sassoon children were extremely inclusive of others. They were always sharing their new books, toys, and games. Even when they weren't home, they would let their friends come over and read the new books. Every Shabbat, the Sassoon kids organized games for all the other kids on the block while Mrs. Sassoon was distributing cut-up fruit to all the children.

In his heartbreaking eulogy given with superhuman strength and faith, Gabby Sassoon charged us to recognize that the entire Jewish People are one unit and that we should all love one another.

At the end of Gabby's eulogy he said that it's too much for him to speak about each child individually and that someone else would do it. That didn't end up happening, so I asked some of the children on the block if they could share some thoughts about their wonderful friends.

**The Children’s Talents in**

**Making Beautiful Paintings**

Many of the neighbors spoke about the children in a general sense. They described the children's talent evident in the beautiful paintings by Eliane, Tziporrah, Rivka, David, and Yehoshua lining the walls of the Sassoon home.

Their daughter Eliane was always happy for others, never jealous, and made sure to show her happiness for her friends' accomplishments and successes. She went out of her way to help others, often behind the scenes and never expected any credit for it. She was a very loyal friend and everyone knew they could trust her with their secrets. She was extremely responsible, devoted to her siblings, and had a zest for life.

Rivka was full of life, fun, outgoing, and sensitive towards others. She used her positive energy to make others happy. My daughter said that Rivka was the one to introduce her to the other girls on the block when we moved here. She was always volunteering to look after the children when her mother would go out for errands. Very often the older sisters would join their mother for errands and Rivka would offer to stay at home to watch the other kids. She was sensitive and mature beyond her years.

**A Peace Maker But**

**Yet a Regular Relaxed Child**

David, the leader of the Sassoon brothers, was very mature and level headed. He was a peacemaker, always happy to help things work out. At the same time, he was a regular relaxed child who was able to be so good with much ease.

Yehoshua was incredibly creative and always carried himself with a smile. He would include all the other children in his newest creative idea or project.

Moshe was curious and sweet. He looked up to his big brothers and was always happy to join their adventures with the other boys on the block, but he was happy to play with anyone and therefore everyone felt comfortable playing with him.

All the little girls on the block loved playing dolls with Sarah. She herself was very much a doll of a little girl, sharing her toys with her friends. In fact, one neighbor commented how much she looked like a porcelain doll.

Although at the time that he lived next door Yaakov was only three years old, he stood with such a presence, straight and confident. And, just like his big siblings, he showed his politeness in other people's homes when playing with their children.

Everyone who knew the Sassoon family speaks so highly of them. They were a model family, a true Kiddush Hashem.

In the eulogy given in New York, Gabby asked of us, "Please everybody, love your child, love your student, love the other children. That's all that counts, understand that." Reflecting on the beautiful Sassoon children, we can realize just how much love and dedication can accomplish.

*Please pray for the full recovery of Gila bas Francis and Tziporah bas Gila.*

*Readers can send the family their condolences in the comment section below*

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Aish.com*

**From Different Worlds, Sharing a Spiritual Journey, and Now Family Loss**

**By Vivian Yee and David W. Chen**



Gayle and Gabriel Sassoon, whose home caught fire on Saturday, with seven of their children in an undated photograph.

The couple came from far-flung corners of the Syrian Jewish diaspora: He was the son of a grandee in a Syrian Jewish outpost in Kobe, Japan, who attended a Canadian international school and spoke fluent Japanese; she was the daughter of a family with a comfortable life in southern Brooklyn, home to a thriving enclave of more than 75,000 Syrian Jews.

But when they met, in Israel, around 1998, Gabriel Sassoon and Gayle Jemal had arrived at similar points in their spiritual journeys. After his secular upbringing and her moderately religious one, personal blows and a deepening sense of devotion had propelled them to Israel, where he studied the Torah. There, they married and began raising the family that would grow to include eight children.

Not long ago, the man who had roamed across continents and the woman with roots deep in New York returned to Brooklyn with their children, settling into what promised to be a contented life not unlike the one she had grown up in — full of big Sabbath dinners in her childhood home and summers on the Jersey Shore.

Then came the fire: the relentless blaze that spread from a malfunctioning hot plate in the family’s first-floor kitchen to the upstairs bedrooms early Saturday morning, killing seven of the Sassoon children and critically injuring their sister and mother. Mr. Sassoon, who had continued studying the Torah after leaving Israel, was at a religious retreat in Manhattan at the time.

**Hard to Think About the Loss**

“Seven Sassoons are gone,” Mr. Sassoon’s second cousin, David Sassoon, said softly on Sunday, a few hours before a crowd of hundreds mourned the seven children at an Orthodox Jewish funeral in Brooklyn. “It’s very hard to think about that.”

Among the Syrian Jews who live in Midwood, Gravesend and along Ocean Parkway, the deaths are, collectively, a tragedy of stunning proportions. Ms. Sassoon, who remained hospitalized on Sunday, is one of their own, one of several siblings who grew up in the terra cotta-orange-roofed house at 3371 Bedford Avenue that is now a charred shell.

[Like other affluent Syrian Jews in Brooklyn](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/25/nyregion/25deal.html?_r=0), her parents spend summers in Deal, N.J., and winters in Florida. Like other observant Jews in their community, the Sassoons used an electric hot plate to keep their Sabbath meal warm on Friday night to adhere to religious prohibitions against cooking on the day of rest.

**Moving Back to Her Childhood Home**

The child of a community where weddings can draw crowds of 1,000 or more, extended families of 40 routinely sit down to Sabbath dinner and wealthy parents often buy extra homes near their own to give their children as wedding presents years later, Ms. Sassoon had returned to Brooklyn after more than a decade in Israel to reconnect with her family. She moved into her childhood home, across the street from two of her cousins.

The neighborhood where the family settled in is one whose residents observe the traditions of Jewish life and marriages to non-Jews are exceedingly rare. But Brooklyn’s Syrian Jews have integrated themselves into American life in other ways, founding businesses that include the jeans maker Jordache, the Century 21 department store chain and the real estate development firm Thor Equities. Ms. Sassoon’s family owns the garment maker Innerwear Brands International Inc., according to public records.

While several neighbors said they knew only that Mr. Sassoon’s work had something to do with finance or real estate, his ultrareligious devotion was obvious: He could always be seen rushing to synagogue early in the morning. When the fire broke out, he was at a “shabbaton,” a weekend retreat with Torah and Talmud classes, said David Ben Hooren, a Syrian Jew and publisher of The Jewish Voice newspaper. Ms. Sassoon stayed home and cared for the children, bonding with her cousin’s family across the street.

**The Kids Played with Each Other**

“Their kids were playing with each other,” said a neighbor and friend, Victor Sedaka, 46, whose wife grew up in Midwood with Ms. Sassoon. “Things were looking brighter for her.”

For a while before meeting Mr. Sassoon, Ms. Sassoon had lived with disappointment. She had married her childhood sweetheart, but he was “volatile,” Mr. Sedaka said, and they divorced before having children. Afterward, she embraced Judaism more fully and moved to Israel to explore her newfound devotion.

Mr. Sassoon seemed a more unlikely candidate for religious awakening. He, his brother and his sister grew up as one of just a handful of Syrian Jews in Kobe, Japan, where his father and his father’s cousin, sensing business opportunities, had moved from Aleppo as young men, Mr. Sassoon’s second cousin, David Sassoon, said. During [World War II](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/w/world_war_ii_/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier), Rahmo Sassoon, Mr. Sassoon’s father’s cousin, had been among a group of Kobe Jews who helped thousands of Eastern European Jews find temporary refuge in Japan from the Nazis.

**Established a Sephardic Orthodox**

**Synagogue in Kobe, Japan**

Rahmo Sassoon also helped establish the Sephardic Orthodox synagogue in Kobe. Mr. Sassoon’s father, also named David Sassoon, found success in real estate and served as a local liaison between the Japanese and their American occupiers after the war. (The cousins were not related to the wealthy Syrian Jewish banking family of the same name that is based in China and India.)

In the small but vibrant Jewish community of Kobe, the Sassoons were a prominent family. But they were secular, said Simon Elmaleh, a Moroccan-born chef whose Kobe restaurant was often the site of Sassoon family parties. The children attended the Canadian Academy, a private international school founded as a Methodist missionary school in 1913, and all spoke Japanese as though they were natives, Mr. Elmaleh said. The family was close, he said, especially after their Israeli-born mother died when the children were still young.

Mr. Sassoon, the oldest child, Mr. Elmaleh said, was “very responsible, even as a young man.”

The children’s lives were upended when their father died. Before long, they had left Japan. Rabbi Elie Abadie, who leads the Syrian Jewish congregation on the Upper East Side to which Mr. Sassoon’s sister now belongs, said Mr. Sassoon had spent time in New York before moving to Jerusalem to study at a yeshiva.

“They were never religious when their father was alive,” said Mr. Elmaleh, who now runs a restaurant in California, adding that they had had “a really hard time” after their father’s death. “Only after they left and went to Israel did they become ultra. That was a surprise to everybody.”

**Reflections of a Math Teacher**

In Brooklyn, the Sassoon children attended Ateret Torah, a yeshiva off Kings Highway. Dovid Leder, who taught seventh-grade math to David Sassoon, who died in the fire, said he was a studious 12-year-old who earned good grades and got along with his classmates. For Purim last week, David raised $30 from classmates for streamers and class decorations for the holiday, then stayed three hours after class ended to arrange the decorations.

Mr. Leder said that if he brought pizza for the class, David would be the one to figure out how much everyone owed the teacher. When he saw David for the final time, last Monday, the boy reminded him, “I still owe you $1.25,” Mr. Leder recalled. “I couldn’t believe it.”

“He was the only kid at the school,” he added, “that I learned from daily.”

Reporting on aftermath of the fire in Brooklyn was contributed by Al Baker, Joseph Berger, Angela Macropoulos, Sharon Otterman, Nate Schweber, John Surico and Alex Vadukul.

*Reprinted from the March 23, 2015 edition of The New York Times.*

**Netanyahu Offers Condolences to Grief-Stricken Father**

**By Ido Ben Porat, Cynthia Blank**

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu sent a condolence letter Monday to the Sassoon family, which tragically lost seven children in a [**deadly house fire**](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/192946) over Shabbat.

Elian (16), David (12), Rivka (11), Yehoshua (10), Moshe (8), Sara (6), and Yaakov (5) Sassoon died after a hot plate in their house in Flatbush, New York apparently malfunctioned.

Following a funeral procession that began Sunday in Brooklyn, the seven children were [laid to rest](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/193048) Monday afternoon in Jerusalem, where the family had lived before moving to the US.

In the letter, addressed to Gabriel Sassoon, Netanyahu expressed his sympathy to the grief-stricken father.

"Dear Gabriel, with deep shock I heard about the tragic death of your beloved children: Elian, David, Rivka, Yehoshua, Moshe, Sara, and Yaakov. From what I've heard about them, I learned they were valued children who were a source of pride and joy for you."

"Every one of your children was a world, unique and special. There is no greater grief than the loss of sons and daughters, and it's an even greater agony when it comes to young children," Netanyahu empathized.

"The people of Israel feel your pain," the Prime Minister stressed.

Netanyahu concluded the letter by wishing Gavriel the inner strength to cope with the disaster that struck the entire family.

"I wish a speedy and full recovery to your wife Gail and daughter Tzipora," Netanyahu wrote. Both escaped by jumping out of a window are currently being hospitalized in critical condition.

"Your people shares in the deep loss of your children, seven pure souls."

Reprinted from the March 24, 2015 edition of Arutz Sheva

**Complete and Utter Sadness**

**By Rabbi Ron Yitzchok Eisenman**

**Congregation Ahavas Israel, Passaic, NJ**



**Rabbi Ron Yitzchok Eisenman**

There are no words which can be said.

There are no words which can console.

There are no words which can ease the pain.

The heart is pained, the eyes are full of tears and the entire body is numb.

As we slept soundly in our beds on Friday night, a Beis HaMikdash was burning in Flatbush.

A holy Mishkan where the Shechina resided was engulfed in flames.

This time, His wrath did not consume just wood and stones; this time it consumed the Holy of Holies.

There is no Nechama, there is no consolation.

Seven precious, cherished and holy Jewish children were taken from us this past Friday evening.

Seven Neshamos went up to His throne as they were engulfed in the flames of Shabbos.

As I attempted to sleep last night, the sacrifices invaded my mind and would not allow me to sleep.

During my semi-sleepless night, the thought of the seven children kept pounding away at my mind precluding me from rest or sleep.

Of course, there are lessons to be had and they should be learned.

Check your home TODAY to make every room has a working smoke detector.

Indeed, before you do any Pesach preparations today, the first thing you must do is check the smoke detectors.

We have an obligation to be vigilant in the care of our family.

Do it for today as a Zechus (merit) for the holy sacrifices and for a refuah Sheleima for the mother and surviving sister.

Do it today; however, that won’t take away the pain; it won’t lessen the agony and it will not bring back the children.

Seven precious souls; seven precious children are no longer among us.

Hashem has poured out His wrath this Shabbos on our most cherished and precious treasure.

We must take stock of who we are and what we can all do to improve.

We must attempt to unify and grow together.

Right now though, there is only one possible emotion and that is complete and utter sadness.

It is a sadness which -like the flames which consumed the home- consumes our entire being.

We cry for our children which are gone.

We cry for a mother who must somehow go on.

And we cry for ourselves that this has befallen us.

There is nothing more to say except ….

Please hug your children today.

Hold them close to you and tell them how much they mean to you and how much you love them.

And if you have no children, give yourself a hug and remind yourself that you too are a beloved child of Hashem.

*Reprinted from the March 23, 2015 website of Matzav.com*

**Yehuda Avner, Veteran Israeli Diplomat and Author, Passes Away**

**By Hillel Fendel**



Yehuda Avner (Photo by Miriam Alster/Flash 90)

Yehuda Avner, who served as Israel's Ambassador to three English-speaking countries and as adviser to five Israeli prime ministers, passed away last night at the age of 87. Father of four, he will be buried in Jerusalem this afternoon.

Mourned by Yeshiva University as a "true Ohev Yisrael (lover of Israel)," Avner's biography largely tells the story of the history of the State of Israel.

**Born in England in 1928**

He was born Yehuda Haffner in England in 1928. Having experienced anti-Semitism there and being involved in the religious-Zionist Bnei Akiva youth movement, he moved to Jerusalem at age 19. He fought for the city during the War of Independence, and in 1949, he was amongst the founders of Kibbutz Lavi, a religious kibbutz in the Galilee.

Avner traveled to Britain to head the Bnei Akiva movement there, then returned to Israel in 1954, joined the Israeli Foreign Service, and ended up in the Prime Minister's Bureau. He wrote speeches and advised Prime Ministers Levi Eshkolo, Golda Meir, Menachem Begin, Yitzchak Rabin and Shimon Peres.

Among other functions, Avner served as the liaison between the various prime ministers he worked with and the Lubavitcher Rebbe. This was especially so with Menachem Begin during the negotiations for the 1982 Israel-Egypt peace treaty.

He was appointed Ambassador to Britain and Non-resident Ambassador to Ireland in 1983, serving for six years. From 1992 to 1995, he was Israel's Ambassador to Australia.

Among other writings, Avner authored The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership, a dramatic and historic inside look at the workings of the top echelons of Israel's government. In 1995, the Yehuda Avner Chair in Religion and Politics was established at Bar-Ilan University.

The funeral will take place today, Tuesday March 24, (4th of Nisan) at Bet HaHesped in Givat Shaul at 4:30 p.m.

Shiva will be held at Diskin 13, Villa 116, Jerusalem, until Monday morning March 30.

Reprinted from the March 24, 2015 email of Arutz Sheva.

**Lecture by Ambassador Yehuda Avner**

**The Rebbe, His Moral Vision as Statesman and Diplomat**

Before I delve into that I would like to tell you how refreshing it is to be just one of two speakers at tonight's grand occasion. I say this because just a few weeks ago I was invited to address a Jewish dinner in London, and I was the fourteenth speaker. When the evening began there were perhaps three hundred people in the hall, but as speaker after speaker droned on and on the hall gradually began to empty, so that by the time the eighth speaker went to the microphone there must have been about seventy people left. By the twelfth speaker we were down to twenty. And when I rose to speak — which was well after midnight — there were precisely two people left. But I made my speech. And when I finished I stepped down and asked the first fellow why on earth had he stayed, and he answered, I'm your chief security officer. And when I asked the second fellow, he said, I'm the last speaker.

This past year marked the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, and Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *OBM,* the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is an extraordinary chapter in the telling of this tale. It is an epic about the Jewish people's most extraordinary visionary in living memory — an immortal whose leadership sparked a torch of Jewish renewal across all continents — a man whose presence was so inspiringly strong it is sustained to this day in the devoted work of yourselves — the thousands of his disciples who dedicate your lives to the building of fortresses of Judaism, often in the most remote corners of our earth. Wherever Jews are - there we find you — the shluchim (emissaries) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.



**Yehuda Avner shaking hands with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, with Prime Minister Menachem Begin watching in the middle.**

**Not a Card Carrying Member of Lubavitch**

And though I am not a card carrying member of Lubavitch, I had the privilege to have been a sort of unofficial liaison between Rabbi Schneerson and the various prime ministers whom I served. And it is assuredly an interesting commentary on our political leadership that they sought, in one degree or another, to maintain some form of contact with this extraordinary luminary who lived under the chestnut and maple trees of Brooklyn rather than under the poplars and pines of Jerusalem to which, mysteriously, he never journeyed.

I never asked him why. I never asked him why because being a mere diplomatic practitioner I was intellectually humble enough to realize that he dwelt on an entirely different plane — a profoundly mystical plane — one to which I could never aspire. The Lubavitcher Rebbe was a theologian, not a political Zionist. But if Zionism is an unconditional, passionate devotion to Israel and to its security and welfare, then Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson was a fanatical Zionist.

**Few did More than Him to Enrich the Spirit of Israel**

Few men did more than him to enrich the spirit of Israel in virtually every walk of life, be it in the spiritual succor of our Israel Defense Forces, in the spread of Yiddishkeit, or the establishment of educational facilities.

The first Israeli leader I ever escorted to meet the Rebbe was Yitzhak Rabin when he was our ambassador in Washington in the late sixties - early seventies. One spring day in 1972, I persuaded him to call on the Rebbe in the name of our then President Zalman Shazar, to convey Israel's greetings on the occasion of the Rebbe's seventieth birthday.

Off we went to 770 Eastern Parkway, Crown Heights, where we were kept waiting for so long that Rabin became fidgety. This straight-as-a-die agnostic was distinctively uncomfortable among the multitude of bearded men bustling to and fro around him, all identically clad in black suits and fedoras, and all seemingly indifferent to the pealing paint and the cracked linoleum of the Tudor-style edifice that houses the headquarters of the world Lubavitch movement. Sitting there with a red silk yarmulke perched precariously on his head, Yitzhak Rabin looked like an alien in a foreign land.

When we were finally ushered into the inner sanctum the Rebbe’s face beamed a warm welcome. It was an angelic face, half curtained, so to speak, by a square gray beard, and topped by the trademark Lubavitch black fedora.

**Rabin Was Amazed by the**

**Rebbe’s Knowledge and Insights**

However, Rabin seemed unmoved. He displayed no interest when the Rebbe spoke to him of things celestial. But once the Rebbe began questioning him about certain of his strategic decisions during the Six Day War — Rabin, you will recall had been chief-of-staff — and then went on to talk in-depth of Washington affairs, Rabin was amazed at his knowledge and insights.

What lured Rabin the most, so he told me afterwards, were the eyes. Ask anyone who ever met the Lubavitcher Rebbe and they will talk about the eyes. They were wide apart, arched over by fine eyebrows, their hue a deep blue, intense and compelling, and exuding wisdom, awareness, kindness, and good fellowship. Yet, as I was later to witness, when the Rebbe’s soul grew somber those eyes could dim into an ominous gray, like a leaden sky.

I got to know those eyes rather well over the years, and gradually came to understand that they saw things that the average person like me could never see. They were the eyes of one who could discern poetry in the mundane, mystery in the obvious, and large issues hidden in small things.

**“Knows More about what is Going on in**

**Israel.than Most of the Member of Our Knesset”**

Said Yitzhak Rabin to me as we left, “I've just met an extraordinary leader of our people. That man knows more about what’s going on in Israel than most of the members of our Knesset."

A short while later, on a Purim eve, I escorted our president, Zalman Shazar, to meet the Rebbe. President Shazar had been born into the Hassidic Lubavitch enchantment and on his rare visits to New York he would abjure diplomatic protocol, choosing to call at 770 as the Rebbe's disciple rather than solicit the Rebbe to call on him at the Waldorf Astoria as a head of state. This greatly aroused the ire of our then prime minister, Golda Meir.

"What does Golda understand of these things?" Shazar grumbled as we drove to Brooklyn in a burnished limousine, escorted by NYPD outriders, sirens shrieking. "She wouldn't even know what a Lubavitcher Hassid looks like even if she saw one.”

Actually, that was not quite true. I heard her say so myself during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. On the third day of that most horrific war she toured the battle zone on the Golan Heights which the Syrian's had almost overrun. There, she addressed a group of soldiers waiting for their tanks to be replenished, and she asked them if anyone would like to ask her a question.

**A Yom Kippur War Challenges Golda Meir**

One young fellow, unshaven, unkempt, his uniform caked with black dust from head to toe, and soiled from cordite, gunpowder, and oil, said in a voice husky with exhaustion, "Golda, my father was killed in the 1948 war and we won. My uncle was killed in the 1956 war and we won. My brother lost an arm in the 1967 war and we won. Last week I lost my best friend here in the battle for the Golan and we're winning. But is all our sacrifice worthwhile, Golda? What's the use of our sacrifice if we can't win the peace?"

Those were his very words. I have them down on tape.

Golda returned the young soldier a long and compassionate look, and she said, "I weep for your loss, just as I grieve for all our dead. And I must tell you in all honesty, were our sacrifices for ourselves alone, then perhaps you might be right; I'm not at all sure they are worthwhile. But if they are for the *whole* of the Jewish people, then I believe that any sacrifice is worthwhile."

**Told the Following Story of Her Service in Moscow**

And then she went on to tell those battle-weary troops the following tale:

She said, and I quote, "In 1948 I arrived in Moscow as Israel's first ambassador to the Soviet Union. The State of Israel was brand new. Stalinism was at its height. Jews as Jews had no rights whatsoever. On the contrary – practicing Jews were persecuted.

"The first Shabbat after I presented my credentials," she went on, "my embassy staff joined me for services at the Moscow Great Synagogue. It was practically empty. But the news of our arrival in Moscow spread quickly. How did it spread? Lubavitch Hassidim spread the word though their covert network. Throughout the darkest Stalinist days these Hassidim kept the spark alive. So when we went a second time the street in front of the shule (synagogue) was jam packed, as was the inside. Close to fifty thousand people were waiting for us. Without speeches, without parades, they were showing their love for Israel and the Jewish people, and I was their symbol. People surged around me, stretching out their hands, and crying, '*Gutt Shabbos Goldele/'Sholem aleychem Goldele/ 'Goldele,lebn zolstu/.*And all I could say over and over again was, *'A dank eych vos ir zayt gebliben yidn.* ('I thank you for having remained Jews.'). And that was when I knew for sure that our sacrifices are worthwhile."

**Menachem Begin’s Close Relationship with the Rebbe**

In 1977 Menachem Begin was elected prime minister and he had a long-standing, close relationship with the Rebbe. Thus, on a balmy July day of that year he visited him at 770, to pay his respects and receive his blessing before continuing his journey to Washington, there to meet for the first time President Jimmy Carter. (In parenthesis I have to say that the Jimmy Carter of 1977 was not yet known as the perniciously prejudiced Jimmy Carter of 2008).

The Rebbe and the prime minister closeted themselves alone for a good hour, at the end of which it was decided I would return to New York after the White House talks to brief the Rebbe on how they had fared.

The Rebbe then escorted the premier to his front door where, amid a blaze of photo-flashes a hard-hitting reporter shouted out, “Mr. Begin, you are prime minister of Israel, so why do you come to see the rabbi? Surely, the rabbi should come to see you?”

"Why indeed?" said Begin with easy rapport. And then, in deep reverence, “I have come here because I am on my way to the White House to meet President Carter for the first time. So it is most natural for me to want to seek the blessings of this great sage of the Jewish people."

"How great is he?" asked another impudently.

**One of the Paramount Jewish Personalities of our Time**

"Rabbi Schneerson is one of the paramount Jewish personalities of our time," answered Begin. "His status is unique among our people. So yes, certainly, his blessing and counsel will strengthen me as I embark on a mission of acute importance for our Jewish future.” And off we drove to the airport for Washington and to the White House.

When I called on the Rebbe, as arranged, we sat alone in his wood-paneled chamber whose furnishings were so timeworn they were monastic. We spoke in Hebrew - the Rebbe’s classic, mine modern. And as he dissected my Washington report, his air of authority seemed to deepen. It came of something beyond knowledge. It was in his state of being, something he possessed in his soul which I cannot possibly begin to explain.

My presentation and his interrogation took close to four hours, and it was now after two in the morning, and I was utterly exhausted. But not the Rebbe. He was full of vim and vigor.

**A Question from the Rebbe**

He must have noticed my fatigue for he suddenly leaned forward, fixed me with his eyes, and said with a surprisingly sweet smile, “How come, Reb Yehuda, you visit us so often yet you are not a Lubavitcher. Why?”

It was true. This, probably, was my fifth or sixth encounter. I remember my taking a deep breath and daring to say, “Maybe it is because I have met so many people who ascribe to the Rebbe powers which the Rebbe does not ascribe to himself.”

His brows knitted, and his eyes grayed into something between solemnity and sadness. Softly, he said in Hebrew, *“Yesh k’nireh anoshim hazekukim l’kobayim* — there are evidently people who needs crutches.” By the way he said it, it was clear that he meant that out there in the world there are so many Jews who are looking for a meaning to their lives, are in need of spiritual support, who seek some sagacious advice, and possibly a helping hand — and he, the Rebbe, was there for them all.

And then, with an encouraging smile, he went on, “Let me tell you what I try to do. Imagine you’re looking at a candle. What you are really seeing is a mere lump of wax with a thread down its middle. So when do the thread and the wax becomes a candle?  Or, in other words, when do they fulfill the purpose for which they were created? When you put a flame to the thread, then the wax and the wick become a candle. And that, basically, is what I try to do – to encourage every Jew to fulfill the purpose for which he or she was created.

**To Ignite the Soul of Every Jew with the Fire of Torah**

His voice then morphed into a rhythmic Talmudic chant as he went on to say: “The wax is the body, and the wick is the soul. Bring the flame of Torah to the soul, then the body will fulfill the purpose for which it was created. That is my mission - to ignite the soul of every Jew with the fire of Torah.”

And then we went back to talking about the strategic pros and cons of offering the Americans our Haifa port facilities as a base for their Sixth Fleet.

When I rose to bid farewell the Rebbe escorted me to the door, and there I asked him, “Has the Rebbe lit my candle?” “No,” he said. “I have given you the match. Only you can light your own candle.”

There are times when I think back with deep nostalgia to those days when a prime minister of Israel would ask me to call on the Rebbe to mull over this or that issue of the day. I venture to say our present government could do with an injection of his wise counsel right now.

Let me end with a story. In March 1992 the Embassy of Israel in Buenos Aires was blown up by Arab terrorists. Many were killed, and among the missing was a young mother called Yael Michaeli. Amid the carnage and the havoc and the confusion of the wreckage, our own Mosad people could not find her. So her sister and brother-in-law in New York desperately phoned Rabbi Moshe Kotlarski to see if he could find Lubavitchers in Buenos Aires to find Yael Michaeli?

**The Lubavitcher Chasid Finds Her in a Hospital**

By this time it was well after midnight and Rabbi Kotlarski urgently contacted a number of Lubavitchers in Buenos Aires, among them a Rabbi Tzvi Grunblatt. Rabbi Grunblatt did find Yael Michaeli in a hospital. She was alive but severely burnt. He immediately called back Rabbi Kotlarski to pass on the news to her family. Rabbi Grunblatt did not leave Yael Michaeli's bedside for a moment. He sat with her throughout the night saying Tehillim (Psalms).

Friends – I understand Rabbi Tzvi Grunblatt is with us tonight. Please stand up Rabbi Grunblatt.

Rabbi Grublatt, I am the father of Yael Michaeli. My daughter is fine, thank G-d. She is living with her beautiful family in Israel.

I want to publicly thank you for the self-sacrifice and kindness which you displayed on that night, long ago. What you did was the very quintessence of what Chabad emissaries do all the time. This is surely the Rebbe’s legacy.

**A Legacy of Boundless Self-Sacrifice and Kindness**

It is a legacy of boundless self-sacrifice and kindness infused with the teachings of the Torah and love for humanity. It is this synergy which has made Chabad – Lubavitch the greatest movement for the spread of Jewish life anywhere and at any time. Day by day you are handing out matches to ignite Jewish souls the world over. This is what makes the Shluchim (emissaries) absolutely unique in the Jewish world.

And as for the rest of us, ours is the task, especially in these turbulent economic times, to guarantee that they will never lack the means to carry out and expand their sacred mission. We cannot afford to allow Chabad Lubavitch to suffer because of turbulent stock markets. It is far too precious an investment for that. Indeed the more they thrive the more we prosper.

Thank you.

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