**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Vayishlach 5771**

**Vol. 2 Issue #11**

**Ascent of Safat - Chasidic Story #677**

**Mission Impossible in Manhattan's East Village**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 The city was hot and sweltering on that summer eve in 1989. The Chabad rabbi looked incongruously out of place in Manhattan's East Village, with his long beard and black coat.

 Nevertheless, the Chabad rabbi was determined. He had made a promise to a grieving father in Southern California, a man who was a leader in the Jewish community of his city that he would find his runaway teenage daughter. "Sarah is in New York City, that's all we know. Can you find her for me?" the man had begged the rabbi during a recent visit.

**Someone Recognized the Photo of the Teenager**

 Mission impossible? Not for the rabbi. With a lot of effort and a little bit of *mazel* (luck), he finally found someone who recognized Sarah's picture. After that he was able to track her to an urban commune.

 He invited her to come to his home in Brooklyn for a Shabbat meal. She not only came but returned many times and began finding her way back to Judaism. After a while, she met a young man from Israel, who was also rediscovering Judaism.

 More time went by, and then…"We want you to marry us," Sarah told the rabbi.

 The father of the bride was delighted beyond belief, but the father of the groom less so. He was a holocaust survivor from a rabbinical family, but his experiences during the war had so alienated him from his faith that he had raised his children as a humanistic ethicist, completely devoid of spirituality or mention of G-d.

 The father made his son promise that he would not be asked to recite any blessings or prayers either at the ceremony or during the reception. Only on this condition would he attend the wedding.

**Informed the Rebbe of the Date of the Wedding**

 On the morning of the wedding, the rabbi wrote a note to *the Lubavitcher Rebbe*, to inform him about the marriage and to ask for a blessing for the bride and groom.

 The Rebbe, upon receiving the note, put it together with hundreds of others that he would read aloud that day at the *"Ohel,"* the resting place of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe.

 On this day, upon reading the note from the rabbi, the Rebbe wrote a few words on a paper and directed that it be given immediately to the rabbi.

 The Rebbe had written that today's date, the date that the young couple chose for their wedding, was the 14th of Kislev, the same day on which the Rebbe and Rebbetzin were married decades earlier, in 1928. The note explained that the groom's grandfather was a Rabbi in Warsaw then and had attended the Rebbe's wedding. As a wedding present the rabbi had given them a book that he had written. The Rebbe directed the Chabad rabbi to go to the Rebbe's office, find the book, and take it to the *chupa* (wedding ceremony canopy) that evening."

**Told the Story of the Grandfather’s Book**

 Of course, the rabbi did exactly as the Rebbe had instructed. Just before the ceremony, the bride asked the rabbi to say a few words. The rabbi decided to tell the story about the book he was carrying.

 He related how the Rebbe had asked that the book be at the *chupa* and explained that through the presence of the book the groom's grandfather, the former rabbi from Warsaw, would be spiritually represented at the wedding of his grandson, a grandson from whom he now has so much *nachas* (pleasure).

 Upon hearing these words, the father of the groom abruptly stood up and quickly left the room. The rabbi found him, a few minutes later, weeping quietly in a phone booth in the lobby of the hotel.

 "Rabbi," he sobbed "when I was a child, my father took me to *Cheder* (Torah elementary school for boys) where I loved studying, but I forgot everything. I wanted to forget. I made myself forget. Now I see that my father never gave up on me, even from Heaven. Won't you take me in hand and teach me again?"

***Source*:** Excerpted and edited by Yerachmiel Tilles from the full version that first appeared in *InsideOut Magazine*, and was subsequently posted on L'ChaimWeekly.org

*Connection*: Seasonal - 14 Kislev (21/11/10) [The wedding anniversary of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt”l.

***Biographical note*:** Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *the Lubavitcher Rebbe* (11 Nissan 1902 - 3 Tammuz 1994), became the seventh Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty after his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, passed away in Brooklyn on 10 Shvat 1950. He is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest Jewish leader of the second half of the 20th century. Although a dominant scholar in both the revealed and hidden aspects of Torah and fluent in many languages and scientific subjects, the Rebbe is best known for his extraordinary love and concern for every Jew on the planet. Hundreds of volumes of his teachings have been printed, as well as dozens of English renditions.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalahOnline.Org, a project of Ascent of Safat.*

**It Once Happened**

**A Time to Get Married**

 In a village, not far from the town of Kovna, there lived a Jewish innkeeper, a humble, G-d-fearing man. His daughter Sara had reached marriageable age but the chances for finding her a worthy husband in this distant village were scarce. However, the innkeeper trusted in G-d and knew that she would find her destined mate.

 Sara helped her parents at the inn. One day, the young son of the country squire stopped at the inn. The moment he saw Sara, he wanted her. He called on her to serve him one drink after another, and the more he drank, the more he liked her. When he was well drunk, he said to her, "Will you marry me?"

 Sara ignored his marriage proposal. But when he kept on telling her that he was serious, she told him, politely but firmly, that she was Jewish and would never marry out of her faith. For his part, the young squire said that he would return and insisted that he would definitely marry her.

**The Spoiled Squire Tells His Father**

 When the young squire told his father that he intended to marry the innkeeper's daughter, the old nobleman tried to dissuade his son but the young man remained adamant. The nobleman, who had spoiled his son all his life and catered to all his whims, gave in, but on condition the girl convert.

 The young squire raced back to the inn and told Sara that his father had consented to the marriage. Of course, there was the small matter of conver-sion, but once that was over, she would live a life of luxury and excitement.

 Sara was horrified. She told him she would never marry him and ran from the room. She decided not to say anything to her father in the hope that this was a passing whim. But she was wrong.

**The Threatening Letter**

 The young squire was not used to being refused. As to the old squire, his pride was hurt to think that a poor Jewish girl was turning down his marriage proposal! The squire sat down to write a letter to the innkeeper.

 In the letter, the squire stated that his son had graciously consented to marry the innkeeper's daughter. The innkeeper should set a date for the wedding. If the innkeeper refused, the lease on his inn would be revoked and his family would be driven off the nobleman's estates.

 The young squire went to deliver the letter, taking a few of his friends along. En-route, a storm broke out and they were soaked to the bone. The group stopped along the way at the closest inn until the storm subsided. The boisterous company began drinking until they became quite rowdy.

 A round of toasts to the young squire were offered. "Drink," his friends said, "once you marry the pretty Jewish girl, the innkeeper's daughter Sara, you will have to behave yourself!" Toasts and laughter followed.

 All this time, an older Jewish man was sitting in the corner. He was Rabbi Yosef, the teacher of the two sons of the innkeeper from this village. He listened as the young squire read the letter from his father to Sara's father.

**The Old Teacher Warns Sara’s Father of the Danger**

 When the young squires fell into a drunken sleep, Rabbi Yosef closed his book and traveled quickly to the next village where he immediately alerted Sara's father as to the situation at hand.

 "Rabbi Yosef," Sara's father cried, "You are wise. What is your advice?"

 "Sara must get married immediately. There is no time to wait."

 "But to whom? There are no Jewish men of marriageable age in this village," the innkeeper lamented.

 "Please understand, I would never have thought to make such a proposal. I am not a young man and I am a widower, and Sara deserves someone worthier. But, as a temporary arrangement, I am prepared to be the groom. When the danger is over, we will arrange for a divorce," said Rabbi Yosef.

**Awed by the Rabbi Yosef’s Courage**

 The innkeeper was awed by Rabbi Yosef, who surely knew how dangerous this could be. He asked Sara what she thought. "What can I say, father? Rabbi Yosef is ready to risk his life for us. I do not know if I have a right to accept such a sacrifice," she replied.

 "Then, all is settled," said Rabbi Yosef. "We have no time to lose."

 All of the Jews in the village were awakened and asked to prepare something for the wedding feast. The following morning when the young squire and his companions arrived at the inn, they were amazed to find that they came right in the middle of the wedding feast.

 "What welcome guests!" the innkeeper called to the new arrivals. The young squire was flabbergasted. He had come too late; Sara was already married. He and his friends quickly made their exit.

**The Old Rabbi Offers to Give a Divorce**

 Rabbi Yosef stood up. "We must be truly grateful to the One Above for this wonderful salvation. We celebrated this wedding in order to save the good Sara from a calamity. Now that the danger has passed, I am ready to arrange for a divorce so that Sara is free to marry the man of her choice."

 The innkeeper once again thanked Rabbi Yosef for his selflessness and thanked the guests for their wonderful cooperation. "Well my daughter, remove your bridal veil, for we are going to the rabbi," he said.

**A Special Righteous Child is Born**

 "G-d has brought us together, I am sure this marriage was made in Heaven. I am quite sure that I could not have chosen a more devoted and loyal partner, who risked his life for me!" Sara told her father.

 Shouts of "Mazal Tov!" rang out in the room.

 The following year, Rabbi Yosef and Sara were blessed with a son who grew up to be a great tzadik. He was known as the famous Rabbi Leib Sara's, so called in honor of his pious mother Sara.

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

**Created by G-d to be Good**

**By Jeff Jacoby**



Jeff Jacoby

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 It has become an annual tradition: The days grow shorter, the holidays approach, and the American Humanist Association rolls out an ad campaign promoting atheism and disparaging religion.

 Last year the organization placed ads reading "No G-d? No problem!" on hundreds of billboards and buses in more than a dozen cities. Its theme [in 2008](http://www.foxnews.com/story/0%2C2933%2C450445%2C00.html) was: "Why believe in a G-d? Just be good for goodness' sake."

 This year, the association is [taking a more combative tone](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/10/us/10atheist.html). It is spending $200,000 to "[directly challenge biblical morality](http://www.considerhumanism.org/pressrelease.php)" in advertisements appearing on network and cable TV, as well as in newspapers, magazines, and on public transit. The ads juxtapose violent or otherwise unpleasant passages from the Bible (or the Koran) with "humanist" quotations from prominent atheists.

 For example, a dreadful prophecy from the Hebrew prophet Hosea -- "The people of Samaria must bear their guilt, because they have rebelled against their G-d. They will fall by the sword; their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant women ripped open" -- [is contrasted](http://www.considerhumanism.org/ads/Punishment.pdf) with Albert Einstein's comment that he "cannot imagine a G-d who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation."

 Of course anyone can cherry-pick quotes to make a point. And of course it is true, as the humanist group's executive director Roy Speckhardt [maintains](http://www.considerhumanism.org/pressrelease.php), that there are "religious texts" that "advocate fear, intolerance, hate, and ignorance." Religion has often been put to [evil purposes](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZV2L0EM08I) or invoked to [justify shocking cruelty](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2007/10/31/what_can_we_learn_from_a_church_of_hate); the same is true of every area of human endeavor, from [medicine](http://www.boston.com/news/science/articles/2010/10/02/wellesley_professor_unearths_a_horror_syphilis_experiments_in_guatemala/?page=full) to [journalism](http://www.pulitzer.org/durantypressrelease) to [philosophy](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/peter-singer-some-people-are-more-equal-than-others-551696.html) to [the law](http://www.usconstitution.net/fslave.html).

 But it will take more than a few grim verses plucked out of context to substantiate the core message of the American Humanist Association's ad campaign: that G-d and the Judeo-Christian tradition are not necessary for the preservation of moral values and that human reason is a better guide to goodness than Bible-based religion.

 Can people be decent and moral without believing in a G-d who commands us to be good? Sure. There have always been kind and ethical nonbelievers. But how many of them *reason* their way to kindness and ethics, and how many simply reflect the moral expectations of the society in which they were raised?

 In our culture, even the most passionate atheist cannot help having been influenced by the Judeo-Christian worldview that shaped Western civilization. "We know that you can be good without G-d," [Speckhardt tells CNN](http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2010/11/09/humanists-launch-huge-Godless-ad-campaign). He can be confident of that only because he lives in a society so steeped in Judeo-Christian values that he takes those values for granted. But a society bereft of that religious heritage is a society not even Speckhardt would want to live in.

 For in a world without G-d, there is no obvious difference between good and evil. There is no way to prove that even murder is wrong if there is no Creator who decrees "Thou shalt not murder." It certainly cannot be proved wrong by reason alone. One might reason instead -- as Lenin and Stalin and Mao reasoned -- that there is nothing wrong with [murdering human beings by the millions](http://www.digitalsurvivors.com/archives/communistbodycount.php) if doing so advances the Marxist cause.

 Or one might reason from observing nature that the way of the world is for the strong to devour the weak -- and that natural selection favors the survival of the fittest by any means necessary, including the killing of the less fit.

 To us today, believers and nonbelievers alike, it may seem obvious that human life is precious and that the weakest among us deserve special protection. But would we think so absent a moral tradition stretching back to Sinai? It seemed obvious in classical antiquity that [sickly babies should be killed](http://praxeology.net/seneca2.htm). "We drown even children who at birth are weakly and abnormal," wrote the Roman philosopher Seneca the Younger 2,000 years ago, stressing that "it is not anger but reason" that justifies the murder of handicapped babies.

 No, reason alone is not enough to keep human beings humane. Only if there is a G-d who forbids murder is murder definitively evil. Otherwise its wrongfulness is no more than a matter of opinion. Mao and Seneca approved of murder; we disapprove. Who are we to say they were wrong?

 The G-d who created us, created us to be good. Atheists may believe -- and spend a small fortune advertising -- that we can all be "good without G-d." Human history tells a very different story.

*Reprinted from the November 15th email of the Jewish World Review. Jeff Jacoby is a columnist writing for the Boston Globe.*

**RABBIS' MESSAGES**

**Hashem Protects Those**

**Most in Danger**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*He put the handmaids and the children first.*” (Beresheet 33:2)

 Ya’akob Abinu gets ready for his confrontation with Esav. Despite the blessing that he received that he would prevail against Esav, Ya’akob did not rely on miracles. When he learned that his brother was coming towards him with four hundred men, Ya’akob became very frightened and distressed. He kept the children with their own mothers. He put Bilhah and Zilpah and their children first, followed by Leah and her children, and last were Rachel and Yosef. Rashi comments the further back, the more dear to Ya’akob (Midrash).

 It is difficult to comprehend that Ya’akob would do this. Would Ya’akob put one life in front of the other because he loved one more? This comment that Rashi brought from the Midrash is beautifully explained by the Dibrei Yehezkel (quoted in Hame’ir).

 He says that Ya’akob’s actions are explained by the rule “Hashem seeks out the pursued.” Hashem gives special protection to the one being pursued. Even if a saddik is pursuing a rasha, Hashem will seek out and protect the rasha!

 Now we can understand Ya’akob’s actions. G-d forbid, Ya’akob would never choose the life of one over another. He was utilizing the rule of the pursued to put forward the one most protected. Bilhah and Zilpah and their children were pursued by the regular wives and their children. The nature of the situation was that the handmaids and their children were given a somewhat lesser status and were, in a sense, chased and pursued. Therefore they weren’t in danger because Hashem protects the pursued. That’s why Ya’akob put them first. Similarly, Leah and her children were pursued by Rachel who was the main wife, so they went next. However, Rachel and Yosef, the ones that Ya’akob loved the most, were in the most danger. The fear for their lives was the greatest; therefore they were last. This was the intention of Rashi when he said, “The further back, the more dear to Ya’akob.”

 The words of the Dibrei Yehezkel should be a source of comfort to us Jews. Throughout history, no one has been pursued more than the Jews. Therefore we have the most protection from Hashem. The next time you hear an anti-Semitic slur, you should thank him, for he is blessing you with Divine protection!

**The Importance of Not Wasting Money or Time**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

"*And Ya'akob remained all alone*." (Beresheet 32:25)

 Rashi tells us that Ya'akob was alone that night because he went back to get some jars that he had forgotten behind. This led to his struggling with Esav's angel the entire night and finally emerging victorious. Although we know that Ya'akob was extremely wealthy, he still went back across the river to retrieve some inexpensive utensils.

 This is not to say that Ya'akob couldn't part with his money, because when it came to buying a burial plot from Esav, the Midrash tells us that he placed a pile of money at Esav's feet in order to purchase his right in the Me'arat Hamachpelah. We see from here that Ya'akob could spend a lot of money for something important. However, he didn't want to waste anything of value and he was even willing to go across a river to get his jars.

 This teaches us an important lesson. We are given money and resources to use properly. When buying something worthwhile, we may spend as much as necessary in order to obtain it. But we should never waste money or valuable items for no good reason. Especially today, in our throw-away society, we must teach our children the value of money and the value of our possessions. To throw away something of value is wrong.

 If we show our children by example that we appreciate our money and our valuables, spending them when necessary and saving them when not, we will be raising them in a proper way, so that they will have the correct attitude towards their possessions and will likewise do the same.

 The most important thing which we have to teach our children not to waste is time. With all of our “time-saving” conveniences, we have a lot of extra time on our hands. When we waste this valuable time, we are wasting our very life itself!

 Just as Ya’akob didn’t waste any resources, even something worth very little, we have to value everything Hashem gives us, especially our time in this world. The expression “to kill time” means “to kill life,” G-d forbid. This is the best lesson we can impart to our children. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Mama Rachel**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 Two Yahrzeits were observed in Israel on the 11th day of Marcheshvan, October 19th this year.

 Traditional Jews flocked to the Bethlehem tomb of the Matriarch Rachel to pray there on the anniversary of her passing just as she entered Eretz Yisrael.

 The secular media, however, focused on another Yahrzeit, the fifteenth anniversary of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin.

 There is an interesting historical anecdote linking these two. Back in 1995 two Knesset Members met with Rabin concerning plans for turning over the Rachel Tomb area to the Palestinians. While Hanan Porat was stressing the security and nationalistic ramifications of such a move, Menachem Porush stood up, approached Rabin, embraced him and burst into tears, sobbing and shouting. "It is Mama Rachel, how can you give away her grave?"

 Rabin was sufficiently moved to reexamine the issue and to decide to retain Israeli control over this sacred site. A few months later he was assassinated - on the eve of Rachel's passing.

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

**The Difference Between the**

**Names of “Jacob” and “Israel”**

**Adapted from the works of**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt”l,**

**The Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt”l**

 This week's Torah portion, Vayishlach, narrates Jacob's victorious struggle with the angel and the subsequent changing of his name to Israel. "Not Jacob shall your name any more be called, but Israel, for you have striven with G-d and with men, and prevailed."

 The names "Jacob" and "Israel" are used to refer to the entire Jewish people; each of the two terms emphasizes a particular characteristic of the Jewish nation. According to Chasidic philosophy, "Jacob" and "Israel" symbolize two levels in the Jew's relationship with G-d.

 Jews are referred to as both servants of G-d and as G-d's sons. As "servants," they are called "Jacob" - "Hearken unto Me, Jacob my servant." As "sons," they are called "Israel" - "My son, My firstborn, Israel."

 The difference between a servant and a son is obvious. When a son fulfills his father's wishes, he does so happily and out of love. A servant, however, is not necessarily overjoyed at the opportunity to carry out his master's command, quite frequently doing so only because he has no choice in the matter.

 Both situations apply to our own lives, in our own personal service of G-d. A Jew can pray, learn Torah, observe the mitzvot and serve his Father like a son, or he can perform the very same actions without joy, like a servant serves his Master. When a Jew stands on the level of "Israel," he willingly fulfills his Father's commands, experiencing no inner conflict with the Evil Inclination. When, however, a Jew is on the level of "Jacob," it means he is forced to grapple with the Evil Inclination in order to properly fulfill his Master's command, quite frequently doing so only out of a sense of obligation and submission.

 Obviously, the level of "Israel" is the one toward which we all strive, yet one cannot reach this level without first passing through the level of "Jacob." If a Jew is not always enthusiastic in his service, sometimes finding it difficult to serve G-d properly, he should know that this is only natural when one embarks upon a new course.

 The Evil Inclination is not vanquished all at once, and it takes time to transform the will of G-d into one's own personal will. At first (and this stage may last for years!), the Evil Inclination howls in protest, attempting to divert the Jew. But when a Jew consistently stands up for what is right and refuses to despair, the Evil Inclination is eventually conquered.

 This is also one reason why, even after Jacob received the name Israel, he is sometimes referred to in the Torah by his old name. For although the level of "Israel" is superior, the level of "Jacob" is nonetheless a necessary component in the spiritual life of the Jew.

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

**The Golden Column**

**Rabbeinu Yisshak ben Geiut zs"l**

 Around one thousand years ago, Rabbeinu Yisshak ben Geiut, zs"l, was active in Spain, a student of Rabbeinu Shemuel Hanagid zs"l. He was born in the year 1030 C.E. and through his tremendous abilities he rose quickly in the levels of Torah, until he became one of the leaders of the generation and his teachings spread throughout the exile.

 He settled in the city of Altuna. When Rabbeinu Yisshak Alfasi, the Rif, arrived from Fez, Morocco, to Spain, he settled in Cordoba so as not to infringe on the status of Rabbeinu Yisshak ben Geiut.

 When he was fifty-nine, Rabbeinu Yisshak ben Geiut fell ill, and he was taken to Cordoba to heal. After a short while, on the Shabbat, he returned his soul to its Creator. On Mossaei Shabbat, he was brought to his city of Altuna to be buried. When they arrived, at midnight, the city was lit with the light of glory, and by its light, his grave was dug. And he was buried for eternal rest. After his death, the Rif came to live in Altuna, where he led its great yeshivah.

 His nickname, Ibn Geiut, which means "Savior" proves the tremendous respect for the Rabbi and his instructions. He wrote Halachic decisions according to the order of the Talmud, some of which were published, and are often quoted by the Ramban, in his book "Torat Ha'adam."

 He wrote an explanation of some of the tractates of the Talmud, and our Rabbis quote his explanations (in the responsa of the Rambam Chapter 15, in the responsa of Rabbi Avraham ben Harambam, etc.). Rabbeinu Yedayah Hapenini (in "Igeret Hahitnasselut") brings down that he wrote an explanation for Tanach, songs and poetry, which were praised by the poet, Rabbi Moshe Ibn Ezra zs"l.

 His songs were not in the rigorous rhythm and patterns of the Spanish poetry, but they were songs that flowed from the heart and are filled with emotion and rich language. Rabbi Yehudah Alharizi writes about his poems for Yom Hakipurim in his book "Tachkemoni" that there are in them revelations of the awesome glory, "which were a sign that the spirit of prophecy rested on his songs."

*Reprinted from last week’s email of the Aram Soba Newsletter for Parshas Toldot.*

**The Night the Gabbai**

**Dressed in Priest’s Clothing**

**By David Bibi**

 I was reminded of a story today that Rabbi Abittan [z”l] used to tell by Rabbi Feinhandler. A designer was telling me about how sad she was coming across so many people who had literally gone from riches to rags in the past few years. Clients who could were comfortable yesterday were in danger of losing their homes. At the same time she was close to tears because even with all the pressure so many people who couldn’t afford it were begging and borrowing to keep up with the Joneses.

 She also told me of the super human efforts being made by some to help those less fortunate. And when Rabbi Abittan would tell this story he would tell it as if to ask, would we do the same?

 Rabbi Chaim of Zanz once arrived in a certain town and was walking down the street when he stopped in front of a house and said, "The scent of Gan Eden is emanating from this house. I must enter and find out what it is."

 The house belonged to a Reb Pesach, who was in charge of charity in the town. Rabbi Chaim knocked on the door, and when Reb Pesach opened the door, Rabbi Chaim entered and started walking around the house sniffing everywhere, until he came to one cabinet and said, "From this cabinet the scent of Gan Eden is entering my nostrils."

 Rabbi Chaim of Zanz asked that the cabinet be opened. Reb Pesach was astonished at Rabbi Chaim's behavior, but he was aware of the greatness of his guest, and thus complied with his request. He opened the cabinet and began emptying its contents. In it were old clothes, rags, etc. Suddenly Reb Pesach pulled out the clothes of a Catholic priest.

 At this point Rabbi Chaim of Zanz exclaimed, "This is it! This is it! From these clothes the scent of Gan Eden is emanating. Now tell me the whole story of how you come to have these clothes."

 Reb Pesach was confused, because he was afraid that Rabbi Chaim would admonish him for keeping the clothes of a priest in his house. But

seeing that he had no choice, he began to tell his story.

 Reb Pesach was the head of the local charity. Every week he had a set route for collecting charity to be distributed to the poor. Once, when he finished his usual route he returned home and found someone waiting for him. As he entered his house, the man began shouting at him, "Reb Pesach, I am in dire straits. I have tremendous debts, and my creditors are demanding their money. If I do not find the money to pay them, I am lost!"

 "I understand your situation," answered Reb Pesach, "but what can I do? Why did you come so late? I have just finished my rounds and have already seen all the people who normally contribute. To whom can I turn now? Do you expect me to find new people to donate money? I don't know to whom to turn!"

 The unfortunate Jew began crying uncontrollably and said, "Oy vey! I am so unfortunate!" Reb Pesach saw how the poor man was crying so bitterly and said to himself, "Poor fellow. I will go a second time. Perhaps I shall succeed, and if not, at least I will have done my best."

 On his second round, people complained that he had just been there to collect. Reb Pesach answered them, "You are right, but what can I do? In my house sits aman crying over his problems. What should he do? Do you wish him to come himself and cry in front of you?"

 People gave a second time. Some sighed, but they gave. He returned to his house, and gave the poor man the money he had collected. The man hugged Reb Pesach and kissed him, and there was no end to his happiness as he went on his way.

 Not more than fifteen minutes went by, and Reb Pesach heard another knock on the door. Another poor man was standing there and saying, "Save me, please. My situation is so desperate; it is a matter of life and death!"

 Immediately Reb Pesach told him, "My dear friend, this is impossible. What do you want me to do? To go a third time? They will throw me out of their houses."

 But all of Reb Pesach's explanations fell on deaf ears. The man sat and

cried and sighed, and Reb Pesach's heart was broken seeing the man's situation "If you don't save me," the man said, "I am lost. There will be no hope for me ever again."

 "But what can I do?" answered Reb Pesach. "Do you not understand that there is no way in the world I can go collecting from the same people three times in one evening? They will throw me out of their houses."

 They continued arguing, until suddenly Reb Pesach had an idea. Near his house was a tavern, where young people came to drink and gamble. Perhaps he would try his luck there. They might laugh at him, but he could try to rebuke them and tell them they were wasting their money, while a poor man was in such a desperate situation.

 With tremendous courage, Reb Pesach entered the tavern. He was immediately confronted with ridicule.

 "What are you doing here? You want more charity? More money?"

 "Last time, I asked the owner for money," said Reb Pesach, "and this

time I am asking you for money."

 Everyone laughed at Reb Pesach, who was pale from the confrontation. Then a young man who came from a wealthy family and who loved to make jokes spoke up and said, "Listen, Reb Pesach, I am willing tomake a deal with you. You want money that is clear. There was once a priest in our town, and he left his clothes behind. I will bring you those clothes. With you wearing the priest's clothing, we will walk around town, beating on cans to make noise. If you are willing to go through this ordeal, I will give you all the money you need."

 "But I need three whole rubles," said Reb Pesach.

 "Okay," answered the young man, "I will give you three whole rubles."

 Reb Pesach thought, "What should I do? What a crazy idea! Imagine Reb Pesach, the gabbai of charity, parading around town wearing a priest's garments, with all the pranksters and empty-headed people in town parading after him clapping hands and beating on cans. What will they say about me? They will say that I have become crazy.

 "But then, where else will I be able to get three rubles? Who will give me so much money? I see how I am greeted here when I am trying to make another collection. I will be greeted the same way everywhere I go. That would be a pity for the poor man sitting in my house and waiting for help. What is the big deal? I will suffer some disgrace. Is it not worth it to

save a Jew?"

 "I agree," announced Reb Pesach.

 The young man brought the priest's clothing and Reb Pesach put them on. The boys were bursting with laughter and preparing cans and sticks to make noise. Out they went, singing in the streets and making a tremendous commotion Everyone looked out their windows and saw the strange sight and laughed. They could not guess what had happened.

 It was not Purim. Why would Reb Pesach dress like that? He must have gone crazy. The pranksters continued this parade with Reb Pesach throughout the entire town. When they finished, the young man plunked the three rubles down on the table and said, "I promised and here is your money. Not only that, but you can keep the priest's clothes too."

 Reb Pesach accepted the clothes, thinking that through these clothes he had been able to save the life of a Jew. He decided to keep them as a reminder

 When Rabbi Chaim of Zanz heard this story, he cried and said, "That's

it, that's it. You did the right thing. Take these clothes and use them as burial clothes after the many years that you shall live. You don't need any your children to bury you in these clothes." And that is what his children did.

 Many years later, the Polish government wanted to make a road through the Jewish cemetery, and they had to move the graves to a new site. When they opened the grave of Reb Pesach, they found his body complete, except for one foot, since one shoe had been missing from the priest's clothes, and in that place, only his bones remained. The rest of his body had remained whole.

 OK maybe we didn’t need that last sentence. The Rabbi would remind us that Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh LaZeh. We are responsible for each other. Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Czech Mate**

 In this week’s parsha Vayishlach, the Torah tells us how Yakov fought with a malach - an angel until the break of dawn. On the simplest level, the verses are describing how Yakov had a knock down drag out fight with an angel. After fighting, the angel gave Yakov a new name, Yisroel. The name Yisroel can also denote "Yashar K[el]" meaning "direct to G-d."; every Jew can have an individual relationship with Hashem, a Jew needs no intermediaries.

 This week we begin to read the amazing true story of Shammai Davidovics as told by his daughter Tova Lebovits.

 "My father taught me to fight for life. He could not speak about what happened to him during the war, nor of his family who perished. He kept a life-long self-imposed silence, which I painfully learned to accept despite my need to know.

**Heard Stories from Survivors**

**Her Father Helped Save**

 Over the years, survivors and people he had saved would find us, and then I would hear their tales. It is only before his death that my father broke his silence and substantiated the stories my brothers and I had collected. And it was only then that he answered, painfully, some of our most heartrending questions.

 My father was born in 1912 to a chassidic family in Danilev (near Hust), a small Czechoslovakian town in the Carpathian Mountains. Like those around him, my father went to cheder (Torah school), spoke Yiddish, and led a religious life. Yet his curiosity and adventurous nature led him to seek knowledge in the big world outside the shtetl (village). He studied Hebrew and other secular subjects.

**Fluent in Twelve Languages**

 At age 16, he was accepted to a German gymnasium (high school) in Berne, while he continued his Torah studies on the side as well. From there he joined the Czechoslovakian army, and then was one of the few Jews accepted to the University of Budapest.  By the end of 1943, when the German army invaded Hungary, he was fluent in 12 languages, had completed his PhD. in sociology, and had received rabbinic ordination from Beit Hamidrash Lerabanim in Budapest.

 At the start, the Germans deported only those Jews who did not have Hungarian or Czech citizenship papers. Unfortunately, most Jews, especially those living in small villages, though having lived there for centuries, did not have such papers. My father and several of his friends organized an underground forgery ring, where they began producing forged citizenship papers and other necessary documents for Jews. They were financially backed by wealthy Jews, and worked with Raul Wallenberg, providing him with the needed documentation.

**A Master of Disguises**

 At this time my father also became a master of disguises, taking on various identities when necessary for his mission. Fortunately he looked Aryan, spoke a fluent German, and unlike some who could not see the writing on the wall, he believed that these times required desperate measures.

 His exploits were described to us by several survivors of my father's hometown of Danilev, and were later corroborated by my father.

 In those critical days of the German invasion, my father collected all the names of the Jews of Danilev without citizenship papers (half the town was related) and worked as fast as possible to forge those papers, several hundred in all. He knew that time was of the essence. It took almost five days to reach Danilev, and he knew the German army was now deporting Jews of nearby regions and would get to his hometown and family within weeks.

**The Entire Town Had Been**

**Herded Onto Cattle Cars**

 The entire town, including his family, had been herded onto cattle cars. With papers in hand, he set out to Danilev in great haste. As he neared his region, he heard that the Germans had worked much faster than anticipated and had most probably reached Danilev.

 He arrived at his hometown too late. The entire population, including his family, had been herded onto cattle cars and the trains were about to depart. When my father saw the German soldiers guarding the trains and taunting his people, he realized there was only one thing to do.

 On the scene arrives an impeccably dressed high-ranking German official. He walks with a quick sure gait and the self-confidence of a haughty personage. And he is furious. He approaches one of the guards, who immediately salutes him, and in harsh tones demands to see the highest-ranking officer in charge. He sends the guards scuffling off to obey his orders.

 A perplexed and harried officer quickly appears, and thus ensues a humiliating scolding and berating of the mortified officer in charge. This inevitably draws the attention of those around. "Do you realize you have blatantly disobeyed and violated military orders?" yells the arrogant stranger as he slams a stack of papers in front of the officer.

 This stranger was my father. The Jews who recognized him could not believe their eyes. On that day, through sheer chutzpah, he succeeded in reversing the decree. The Jews of Danilev were released from the cattle cars and returned to their homes (what was left after the looting, that is). They were now all legal citizens... *continued next week.*

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

**Beware of Homes without a Window on the East Side**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Boltan**

 This week the Torah tells us about the famous all-night battle between Yaakov and the angel.

 We have met with materialized angels before in the Torah; for instance the angel that spoke to Hagar and those that visited Avraham and then destroyed Sodom. But here it is not so clear what is really going on.

 First of all, No indication is given in the Torah why the fight; what are they fighting about?

 Second. It is known that Angels have no free will and are only messengers of G-d. Why did G-d send this angel?

 Finally, How can a human being fight an Angel? We saw, in the case of Sodom and Amora, that one angel can completely destroy several cities!! So how could Yaakov defeat one?

  Also, this week’s Torah portion comes just before the Chabad ‘Holiday’ of Yud Tes Kislev and a week before Chanuka. Is there a connection?

  I’d like to answer this with a story.

 Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (The first Rebbe of Chabad who over 200 years ago on the nineteenth (‘Yud Tes’) of the Hebrew month Kislev, was miraculously released from Death Row in Czarist prison) once sent one of his Chassidim on an important mission to deliver a large sum of money to a distant location.

**The Rebbe’s Mysterious Warning**

 The Rebbe blessed him with a safe trip but mysteriously warned him not to enter any house that has no windows on the east side. Early the next morning the Chassid set off happily on his journey. The first few hours went smoothly although snow was falling heavily but after a few more hours, ominous storm clouds darkened the sky and created an impression of impending nightfall. The wind grew stronger and colder from minute to minute and was becoming unbearable. He tried to speed up the horses hoping to reach some sort of an inn but agonizing hours passed and still nothing.

 He was numb and freezing, it was much colder than usual and the snow was falling so densely that he couldn’t really see where he was going. He prayed to G-d for some sort of miracle.

**A White Ocean of Swirling Snow**

  Suddenly through the white ocean of swirling snow he saw what looked like the outline of a house just off the road. With his last energy he forced the horses in the direction, and sure enough it was a house! It even had a Mezuza on the door! He thanked G-d for the good fortune as he jumped from his wagon onto the front porch and knocked on the door.

 An elderly woman opened the door and let him in to the warm house. Come in you must be freezing,” she said. “Come have a cup of tea, sit here by the stove. In just a minute my sons will return, they will put your horse in the barn, please sit down.” Just as he sat and began thawing out he remembered that it was almost night and he hadn’t yet prayed Mincha (afternoon prayer). So he asked the woman which direction was Jerusalem (all prayers face Jerusalem) and prayed, thanking G-d for his good fortune.

**Notices Something Wrong – A Wall with No Windows**

 As he finished, and was taking the three steps backward, he noticed that something was wrong; one wall had no windows … the east wall!

 Without hesitation he put on his coat and walked to the door saying apologetically, “I’ll be right back” but the door was locked. He went to a window but it too was locked. “I forgot something in the wagon,” he said to the old woman “Could you please open the door?” Suddenly a key opened the door from the outside, and four healthy young men entered the house from the freezing storm. As soon as they saw their visitor they immediately grabbed him, emptied his pockets, tied him up, laid him on the ground in a corner, and sat down to eat while their mother examined the booty.

 “Ho HO! She exclaimed. “Look what we have here!!” As she held up the pack of money she found in his wallet. “Looks like we caught a nice fish this time!!” One of the sons examined the money, went to the cupboard, took out a large bottle of vodka and put it on the table with a bang.

**A Time for the Wicked to Celebrate**

 “Brothers, let’s celebrate!! G-d has been good to us! We have enough money here to be happy for a long, long time! But first, let’s take care of our guest!!” He pulled a large knife from somewhere under his coat while one of his brothers was pouring him a drink. He took a cup of vodka in his free hand, raised it high and said, “To long life, except for you!” as he looked at the bound Chassid.

 One of the brothers, surprised by the joke, laughed so hard that the vodka came spraying out of his mouth on the others, and they all began to laugh, and then someone began a song and another toast, then another. Then the door opened again and it was their father. “Ah HAA!” He shouted as he looked at the money on the table and the bound victim on the floor.

**Became as Drunk as Lot**

 “Good work boys! Excellent! We’ll have to kill him though … I’m glad you left him for me. You know what? In the morning I’ll take care of him. Now let’s drink to our good fortune!!” And before long they were all drunk as Lot and forgot completely about our unfortunate hero.

 Late that night, when they were all sleeping soundly, the father woke, looked around to make sure that no one else was awake, tiptoed over to our Chassid, motioned him to be silent, cut his ropes and motioned for him to follow. Quietly he tiptoed to the door opened it and whispered in the Chassid’s ear as he gave him his coat, “Here is most of the money back” he pushed a wad of the stolen money into the Chassid’s coat pocket. “And here, tell your Rebbe to pray for me” he pressed a gold coin in the Chassid’s hand.

 “See, I’m giving charity! Tell him to pray for me. Now go! Get out of here! Go back as fast as you can … run for your life” he whispered aloud as the Chassid was leaving the house. The dawn was beginning to light the horizon, the storm had stopped, and our grateful hero was on the road back home.

 When he finally arrived and entered the Rebbe’s room, the Rebbe looked up at him and said, “I know what happened, you don’t have to tell me. You should know that the entire night I had to stay awake because of you.”

**Wedged the Gold Coin in a Crack in the Wooden Wall**

 The Chassid then produced the golden coin and told of the father’s request. The Rebbe took the coin and wedged it in a crack in the wooden wall next to his desk and said no more.

  Fifteen years passed and the Chassid, who was now married with a family, became one of the assistants of the Rebbe. One day he answered the door to a beggar and told him to wait. When he entered the Rebbe’s room and informed him that there was a beggar at the door the Rebbe pulled the gold coin from the crack where it had been for the last fifteen years and told the Chassid that this man was the ‘father’ that had and miraculously released him years ago.

**A Surprise Police Raid**

 It seems that when his wife and sons awoke and realized what he had done they beat him and drove him from the house just some hours before the police made a surprise raid and took the mother and boys off to jail.

 The father, who had been a murderer and thief all his life, began a life of wandering and repentance and now the Rebbe, in addition to saving him and causing him to repent, was repaying him for the favor of saving his Chassid.

 This explains the questions we asked earlier:

**Yaakov Was Not an Ordinary Person**

 Yaakov was not an ordinary person; he was the embodiment of all the Jewish souls that would ever be created. That is why his name was changed to Yisroel, meaning: ‘Yisr’- direct ‘el’- to G-d. And why the Jews are called ‘Bnai-Yisroel’.

 We can see this later in our parsha (33:14) when Aisov suggests that they travel together, Yaakov tells him to go ahead and he will catch up with him in a place called ‘Seir’. Rashi explains that Yaakov meant that they would meet thousands of years later with Moshiach!

 But Yaakov only lived 180 years…. How could he make such a promise?

  But Yaakov knew that he was not just an individual but an eternal ‘General Soul’ containing all the Jewish people for all generations. As the Talmud (Taanit 5a) says “Yaakov did not die.” (see Rashi on Gen. 49:33)

 Similarly his battle was not a personal one but rather an eternal battle between holiness and nature with the goal of revealing the Creator in every aspect of creation with the arrival of Moshiach.

 [These are also the themes of Chanuka when the Greeks wanted the Jews to be normal and the Jews wanted to illuminate the world with Holiness, and of Yud Tes Kislev when the Rebbe wanted to illuminate the world with the preparation for Moshiach and his opponents wanted ‘normal’ Judaism).]

**Able to Defeat an Angel**

 Therefore he was able not only wrestle and defeat the angel but also force the angel to bless him; because an angel, no matter how powerful, is only part of creation while Yaakov drew energy directly from his true source; The Creator. And the goal of the Creator is that the entire world will ‘see’ and ‘feel’ that there is nothing but G-d. (see Rashi on Deut.6:4)

 Just as the Rebbe in our story stayed up all night fighting spiritual battles to save both his Chassid and the criminal, (and the Tzadikim of all generations have been fighting the 2000 year-long ‘night’ battle of exile) so Yaakov fought all night for the welfare of all Bait Yisroel.

All the Evil People Will Turn to Hashem

 But it all depends on us. Just one more good deed, word or even thought can transform the world.

  And just as the Rebbe finally saw the ultimate fruit of his toil when the old man took back his golden coin, so will Yaakov Avinu rejoice when, as we say in Alenu three times a day, all the evil people will turn to HaShem. In the arrival of....**Moshiach NOW!!**

*Reprinted from this week’s email of a Chassidic story from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Israel.*

**As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

**Serving Hashem by**

**Loving One’s Family**

**By Sam Gindi**

“*And they wept*”  (Bereisheet 33:4)

 Esav and Jacob wept when they met each other.  Jacob wept when he encountered Rachel (29:11), And Joseph wept when his brothers came (43:30, 45:2, and 45:15).  Esav and Jacob kissed each other, Jacob kissed Rachel, and Joseph embraced his brothers and kissed them.  He fell upon the neck of Benjamin, and Benjamin wept on Joseph’s neck.  And Jacob “kissed and embraced” his grandchildren (48:10).

 We see that this family expressed their love of kin in highly emotional manner, and we learn there from that it is an excellence of the soul to love one’s kin with powerful emotion.  By loving one’s kin, one comes to love his kin’s kin, and eventually he attains the feeling that the entire house of Israel are his kin.

 The perfection of character toward one person tends to spread, and is subsequently broadened to include others.  The fact that even Esav ran toward his brother Jacob “and embraced him and fell upon his neck and kissed him, and they wept” demonstrates how deeply ingrained the fervent love of kin was in this unique family.

 We see from the conduct of this family that they expressed their affection by kissing and embracing. Instead of being cold philosophers (“Stoics”) that are ashamed of emotions, our Fathers expressed their love by acts of demonstrative affection.  And they thus served Hashem by encouraging the feelings of kindliness and love which cause Perfection of the soul.

Quoted from “The Beginning” by Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l.

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

**Kids of Chabad Shluchim**

**Attending Yeshiva Via Cyber-School**

**By Sandy Eller**



**A young Mendel Piekarski, from Bogota Colombia. picture is from 2008 at the Online School reunion for South America -in Barranquilla Colombia. Photo Credit: Chezky Altein.**

 New York - It is a safe bet that no matter where in the world you find yourself, there is going to be a Chabad House somewhere nearby. But while shluchim are happy to travel to all corners of the earth to serve the needs of klal yisroel, as time progresses they are faced with the difficult dilemma of finding appropriate schooling for their own children while based in some very remote locations.

 All that changed in 2006 with the creation of the [Online Shluchim School](http://www.shluchimonlineschool.com/main/default_os.asp)for both boys and girls. A project of Chinuch Yaldei Hashluchim, the school started with an enrollment of 80 students but has grown over the years to serve over 300 talmidim from Pre K through 8th grade.

 While the school is based in Crown Heights, the virtual nature of the school affords it the luxury of hiring the best teachers, no matter where they are located and talented professionals from Brooklyn, Detroit, Monsey, Florida, Wisconsin, Kansas, Europe and Israel, educate students worldwide via live audio/video internet classrooms.

 The school caters to children of shluchim who do not have proper schooling in their areas but children of non-shluchim may also be accepted under certain circumstances.

 The school is divided into three separate divisions: one serving North, South and Central America, a second division serving Israel, and a third division with students in Europe, the former Soviet Union, Asia and Australia.

 Students must have their own computer, webcam, microphone/earpiece combination headset and a secure, reliable internet connection to participate in classes. Students wear uniforms while they are online to give them more of a sense of “school”: navy blue vests with the school logo for the boys and burgundy vests with logos for the girls.

 Hours at the Shluchim School are typical of any other institution, with Pre K and first grade running from 11 AM to 1:30 PM. In the girls division, grades 2 – 8 run from 10 AM to 4:10 PM, while at the boys school, 2nd – 8th grade start at 10 AM, with 2nd graders ending at 4:10 PM and all older grades continuing until 5:15 PM.

 A Gan program for four year olds gives parents the opportunity to select one of four 45 minutes sessions for their preschooler. Tuition ranges from $900 annual for Gan, to anywhere between $2500 - $3800 for the older grades.

 Starting with davening, the online school offers an education that is comparable to what would be found in any mainstream yeshiva or Bais Yaakov. As in any other school, homework is part of the curriculum and is submitted via email. Tests are printed out by the student and either faxed or scanned back to the teacher. A lunch break and several recesses are offered throughout the day and students are encouraged use their breaks to get some exercise.

 In addition to a full staff of fifty teachers, the Shluchim school boasts a team of Brooklyn based high school girls who serve as “Homework Helpers” for the girls school and a virtual “Homework Room” for boys who need assistance with their assignment. An optional after school program focusing on Chabad concepts and history offers a supplementary education on chasidus.

 While there is no question that difficulties arise in a virtual classroom setting, the Shluchim school has found that there are advantages as well. Students who might be intimidated by teachers or other students in an actual classroom are much more comfortable participating in an online setting. To ensure that each student receives proper attention, class size is limited to fourteen students.

 As in any other school extra-curricular activities are part of the program at the Shluchim school. There are clubs, fabrengens and rallies for the talmidim and the special CROWNS program for girls meets is an after school club that meets weekly to enhance the girls talents and abilities. Twice a year students have the opportunity to meet in person, at the Day of Celebration, part of the annual Kinus Hashluchim/Kinus Shluchos and at the Camp Gan Israel Tzirei Hashluchim winter camp session held in Oracle, Arizona.

 While now in the midst of its fourth successful year, the school is still a work in progress, according to school principal Mrs. Gitty Rosenfeld.

 “Our clientele have unusual lives and the school has to fit their lives, not the other way around,” confessed Mrs. Rosenfeld in an interview with VIN News. “This is uncharted territory and our students and our parents are our pioneers. We can sit at a meeting and make up policy, but if the parents on the other side of the computer tell us that something isn’t working, we have to keep tweaking it until we fix the problem.”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Programs. Originally printed in the VIN News website.)*

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

**How to Deal with Riding the Subway During Rush Hours**

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**: |

How should one deal with the subway ride twice a day during rush **hours?**

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

|  |
| --- |
| Subway |

So as you’re hanging on to the strap and you're squashed in between people, imagine that you're in a forest. All around you are trees, you're among bushes. Close your eyes, of course see that your pocket book is under your coat, your purse is under your arm, and think of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, a very important opportunity. Like the *Chovas Halvovos* says, *L'hisbodaid Besoch Ha'hamon*, to have solitude in the midst of a throng.

 Hashem and you are together alone in that crowded subway, all around you is nobody. Of course don't kick anybody, don't jostle anybody, keep to yourself however, until your station comes and walk out, and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will walk with you.

*Good Shabbos To All.*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l” based on a transcription of a question to Rabbi Miller at a Thursday night lecture and his answer.*

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Vayishlach 5770**

**It Once Happened**

**G-d Teaches King David**

**The Importance of Insanity**

 Before King David was anointed king, he was a shepherd and he spent his time tending his flocks in the hills, fields and forests of the land of Israel. His brilliant mind delved into all that he saw, and he tried to understand G-d's world. Many of G-d's creatures were beautiful, others were useful to man.

 One day David saw a madman wandering through the fields. His clothing was torn, and the distracted look in his eyes bespoke a total loss of reason. David began to reflect on the man's condition. "G-d, You have created a world filled with beauty and perfection. Your creatures are wondrous to behold, but this I do not understand. Why did You create madness, which is good for nothing. Here I have seen a poor, destitute man who wanders completely bereft of reason. What purpose could insanity serve in Your world?"

 G-d replied to David, saying, "David, do you really believe that I have created insanity in vain? One day you will see what it is for. One day you, yourself will be in need of madness and you will pray that I grant it to you."

**Forced By King Saul to Flee for His Life**

 When David was anointed by the prophet Samuel he was force to flee from King Saul who sought to kill him. David fled to the land of the Philistines, where King Achish gave him refuge. Achish didn't know that David was the new king, and he had hoped that David would help him defeat Saul.

 Others in the king's court, namely the brothers of Goliath, whom David had slain, recognized him. They bided their time until they felt that the king would give David over to them, and said, "This is the very same man who killed our brother. Let us have our revenge on him."

 But the king was unwilling to have his guest murdered. After all, it was likely that the young warrior would help in the war to defeat the Jewish king. He responded to them by denying their identification of young David. "It couldn't be David. He would never come to us for help. Besides, even if it was him, he killed your brother fairly, in battle."

 The two brothers were angrier than ever and determined to get their revenge. They stirred up discontent among the other members of the king's royal guard, and taunted the king, saying, "Since one of the conditions of David's battle with my brother was that the winner would rule over the loser. Are you willing to become David's vassal?"

**Cross-Examined by the Philistine King**

 The king began to fear for his crown. He called David into his private chamber and cross-examined him about the death of Goliath. David saw that the king was no longer his ally, and he was frightened. He turned to G-d and prayed, "Please, Master of the Universe, help me now."

 "What are you asking of Me; what kind of help do you require?" G-d responded.

 "Let me become truly mad so that the king will not want to kill me."

 "Do you remember when you asked Me why I created insanity? I told you that one day you would ask me to make you insane. Now, that has happened and you understand very well."

 Immediately, David became obviously insane. The brothers of Goliath tried to bind him and bring him before the king, but he whirled and spun in circles. He spit and screamed and tore at his hair. He took a piece of charcoal and scribbled all over the palace doors, "Achish owes me a hundred times ten thousand pieces of silver. His wife, the queen, owes me fifty."

**The King is Unable to Tolerate the Ruckus**

 David ran through the palace from end to end. Achish had a daughter who was insane. She was kept in a locked room in the palace. When she heard David scream, she would scream back, and when she would scream, David would answer. The ruckus was unbearable to the king.

 "Aren't I surrounded by enough insanity? Do I have to have this madman here as well? Get him out of here! It is obvious that this can't be David. David is a brilliant scholar and soldier; this man is completely insane."

 Everyone at court agreed with him. Even Goliath's brothers saw that this was the wrong man. David was forcibly expelled from the palace. When he found himself free and no longer threatened, his sanity returned to him. And he understood that everything that Hashem does is good and has its purpose in the world.

**Story #103**

**The Umbrella Parade**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 Centuries ago, before the days of water pipes and irrigation, the residents of Jerusalem were dependent for all their water needs on the large cisterns they had dug out and lined. The winter rains would annually fill the cisterns, and the people would draw water from them the entire year.

 Once, in the early decades of the 5400's, there was a serious drought. One by one the winter months came and went, yet the skies remained as clear and pure blue as on a pleasant summer day. The earth was dry and cracked in the unyielding gardens and fields, and the water level of the cisterns was dropping at an alarming rate.

 More days passed. Already the winter season was drawing to an end, but still, no rain. Even the elders of the city couldn't recall such a rainless year as this.

**The Dreaded Specter of Famine**

 Jews, Moslems and Christians alike became increasingly worried. The dread specter of famine now loomed in addition to the immediate problem of water shortage. They gathered in their respective Houses of Prayer and prayed to the Al-mighty to have mercy on the holy city and its inhabitants. The rabbis of Jerusalem proclaimed days of fasting and special prayers. Hundreds of Jews made the excursion to the tomb of Rachel the Matriarch to light candles and pray for rain. Others went to the burial place of King David on nearby Mount Zion to beseech there.

 But, no rain. The cisterns had almost completely dried up, yet the heavenly sluices were still sealed shut. Not a cloud marred the perfectly blue sky. It was so close to springtime and the end of the rain season that many Jerusalemites were already girding themselves for a difficult, perhaps life threatening, period of famine and water shortage.

**The Jews Quickly Become the Scapegoat**

 All the worries generated a stream of rumors, and the rumors in turn led to increased tension between the different ethnic groups in the holy city. The Arabs started to blame the Jews for the lack of rain. This obvious choice of scapegoat required no accompanying reason or explanation for its acceptance to quickly spread throughout the Muslim community, and quickly became an absolute certainty in all their minds.

 The instigation against the Jews eventually reached the palace of the pasha, the governor, of the Jerusalem district of the Ottoman empire. Indeed, certain Jew-haters made it a point to repeatedly bring this 'information' to his attention.

 Soon thereafter, the pasha summoned the famed scholar and kabbalist, **R. Moshe Galante**, who had moved from Tsfat around 1655 and was now one of Jerusalem's leading rabbis, to appear before him. The rabbi entered with foreboding.

 Sure enough, as he feared, the pasha said, "I know that it is solely because of you Jews that G-d has not let it rain in Jerusalem. You people like to glorify yourselves that you are His chosen people; you call Him 'Father' and refer to yourselves as 'His children.' Therefore you are totally to blame.

 "So I am warning you. You people had better pray seriously to your G-d. If it doesn't rain by the end of three days, it will be clear that it is all the fault of the Jews; I shall expel every single one of you from Jerusalem."

**The Rabbi Calls for an Emergency Meeting**

 As soon as Rabbi Galante left the palace, he called an emergency meeting in the main synagogue, emphasizing that all the Jewish residents of Jerusalem should attend.

 Everybody came. Their faces reflected their worry over the situation. The whole population knew that Rabbi Galante had been summoned to the governor. When he informed them what had transpired, they groaned under this new burden. Was the trial of thirst they had already started to undergo not enough? Now they also had to have the wrath of the pasha and the entire Arab population hovering over them?

 Rabbi Galante declared a three-day fast, with the time to be spent in prayer and pleading before the Al-mighty, in the hope of abolishing the evil decree.

 A spirit of gloom descended upon the Jews of Jerusalem as the possibility of expulsion from the holy city loomed before them. With broken hearts and flowing tears they crowded together in the shuls to recite Psalms and pray for mercy from Above. Many also went down to stand before the Western Wall and exert themselves in further supplications. 'G-d, have pity on Your poor suffering people in Your holy city.'

**The Rains Don’t Fall**

 One day passed, and a second. On the third day the skies were as blue and cloudless as ever. Dread descended into the hearts of all the Jews - men, women and children-and further stimulated their prayers. Hungry and thirsty, still fasting, surely their desperate cries pierced through all the heavens.

 The sun marched inexorably across the sky, and now stood in the western sector of the sky. The final hours of the afternoon were slowly dwindling. Rabbi Galante announced that everyone should proceed together outside the city walls to the tomb of Shimon HaTzaddik, the great sage and high priest from the early years of the Second Temple, and there to pray one last time for rain. He also made another demand that startled all that were present. Nobody could believe what they imagined they had heard.

 What he had said was that everyone should put on their galoshes or boots, wear raincoats, and have umbrellas in hand! Why? Lest they get drenched in the expected downpour!

 Despite their shock and amazement, everyone complied faithfully. At the designated time the Jews of Jerusalem left the city through Damascus Gate, dressed in their boots and raincoats, and carrying umbrellas. When the police officer in charge of the area saw this strange parade, he burst into laughter.

**Police Officer Slaps the Rabbi’s Face**

 But then, when he heard they were marching through the streets dressed in their raingear only because their rabbi had ordered them to do so and promised them a heavy rainstorm, he became furious. He caught up to the rabbi, slapped him severely in the face, and screamed: "The people of the city are suffering so much, and you dare to waste their time and strength in such foolishness!"

 Rabbi Galante disdained to respond, and kept walking.

 When they arrived at the gravesite, the rabbi prostrated himself on the tombstone and remained there, immersed in profound concentration. All the other people cried out in prayer from the depths of their hearts.

 Suddenly, they realized that a breeze was blowing - a soft, gentle breeze, but still...a breeze! Then, rather quickly, the breeze became a real wind, which began to blow furiously. A storm wind!

**The Jews Open Their Umbrellas**

 The sky turned grey and filled with dark clouds. A few raindrops were felt. Then it began to drizzle, and soon after that to pour. The Jews opened their umbrellas. In no time at all, they were in the mist of a torrential shower. They joyfully hurried to take shelter under trees and next to the nearby houses.

 Peering through the deluge, they saw to their surprise a man running as fast as he could in the rain towards them. It was the police officer! By the time he reached them, he was so thoroughly soaked he seemed to be made more of water than of solid flesh. He made straight for Rabbi Galante and threw himself down in the mud before his feet. "Forgive me, please, for how I insulted you," he begged. "I didn't realize you were such a great, holy person."

 In order to display his sincerity and make amends, he lifted the rabbi onto his shoulders, marched with him at the head of the Jewish procession back to town, and carried him all the way to the door of his house.

 The rainstorm continued all the night. By dawn, all the cisterns were filled to overflowing. Later in the morning, the pasha himself came and apologized for threatening to expel the Jews. He proffered more words of appeasement and then stated emotionally, "Now I know that your L-rd is the true G-d, and that you Jews really are his treasured people."

Translated-Adapted from Sichat Hashavuah #204

**Biographical note:Rabbi Moshe ben Yonatan Galante** moved from ***Tsfat*** to Jerusalem around the year 1655. He was the grandson of Rabbi Moshe ben Mordechai Galente, who was one of four scholars of Zefat (along with Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of Shulchan Aruch) to receive semicha from Rabbi Yaakov Beirav in the 'renewal of semicha' controversy.

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**Weekly Parasha Insights** - **Parashat Vayishlah**

**The Reason Why Sadikim Love Their Money**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

 Parashat Vayishlah tells the famous story of Yaakob's fight against an angel that confronted him and attacked him as he made his way to meet his brother Esav. The incident itself is fascinating and requires in-depth analysis, but the background to this episode is also significant and worthy of study.

 The Torah tells that as Yaakob traveled, he and his family came upon the Yabok river, and Yaakob moved his family and all his belongings across the river. But then, for some reason, he was left alone on the opposite side. It was there, as Yaakob stood alone, that he was unexpectedly assaulted by the mysterious man who turned out to be an angel.

 What was Yaakob doing alone on the other side of the river? After he brought over his wives, children, servants and belongings, why didn't he join them on the other side and continue traveling?

**Going Back to Retrieve “Small Jugs”**

 The Midrash explains that Yaakob went back across the river to retrieve "Pachim Ketanim" - "small jugs" - that he had forgotten to bring over. He took the time to cross the river, and stood all alone in the dark of night, in order that he would not lose a number of small items that were left on the other side. The Sages of the Midrash make an astonishing comment on the basis of this incident: "The Sadikim - their money is as dear to them as their souls." The effort that Yaakob exerted to retrieve small, inexpensive possessions reflects the importance to which he - and Sadikim in general - afford their material goods.

 This statement appears to directly contradict the most elementary notions of Torah values and piety. We are always taught that the more righteous a person is, the less interest he has in material possessions, as he instead invests his time, thought and energy into the pursuit of spiritual excellence. The Sadik is the one who sacrifices a life of material comforts for spiritual greatness. What, then, do the Sages mean when they say about the Sadikim, "Their money is as dear to them as their souls"?

**The Story of an Indignant Man**

 The story is told of an indignant man who owned next to nothing. He could not even afford a cup for Netilat Yadayim, and it troubled him that he could not fulfill this Misva. One night, before he went to sleep, he prayed to G-d with all his heart to provide him with a washing cup. Sure enough, the next morning, he found a washing cup on the floor near his bed, with a note that read, "Here is the cup you requested. Sincerely, G-d."

 The man was exuberant. Besides receiving something that he desperately wished for, he had also received a special, personal gift directly from G-d. He cherished that washing cup from that day on, realizing that it was a personal gift from the A-mighty.

**The Man’s Becomes Wealthy**

 Years later, the man's fortunes were reversed, and he became wealthy. He was finally able to move into a large house, and he hired movers to transport his belongings to his new residence. As he unpacked, he realized that his beloved washing cup was missing. He called the movers, and it turned out that they didn't bother bringing the washing cup.

 "It's just an old, plastic cup, and we figured you didn't need it anymore," he was told.

 Of course, the man was dismayed. It may have been just a simple plastic cup, but it meant the world to him. It was a clear expression of G-d's unique love for him, and he wouldn't want to give it up for anything in the world.

**Direct Gifts from G-d**

 This is why the Sadikim love their money. They view everything they have, even the smallest items in their possession, as direct gifts from G-d. When one approaches his material assets from this perspective, he exercises extreme care not to waste or squander even a penny. Every morsel of food and every small gadget in his home was given to him by G-d Himself as an expression of love, affection and concern for his needs. How can he give it up? He wants to hold onto it forever!

 And when we view our possessions from this perspective, we also immediately recognize that everything we have is given to us for a spiritual purpose. If we would wake up in the morning and find some money on the ground with a note by G-d telling us He gave it to us, we would, without doubt, donate all of it to charity. After all, if G-d gave it to us, it must be for a lofty purpose.

**Our Possessions are Given**

**To Us for a Lofty Purpose**

 So why are the rest of our possessions any different? They, too, are given to us as a personal gift from Hashem, and we must therefore assume that they have been given to us for a lofty purpose, to serve G-d. The basketball net in our driveway is to help our children grow and have an outlet to enable them to learn. The treadmill in the basement is there so we can be healthy and able to serve Hashem. Our fancy chinaware is in our cabinets to give honor to Shabbat and the holidays. The fine clothing in our closets serves to give us a dignified appearance and thereby bring honor to G-d, the Torah and the Jewish people.

 This is why Yaakob afforded such importance to the "Pachim Ketanim." He understood that if G-d gave him these jugs, then they must serve some purpose, and he therefore was not prepared to let them go. Everything we have has been given to us for a purpose. Our challenge is to determine that purpose, and ensure to direct all our material assets towards that goal.

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