**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas vayechi 5772**

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**Stop Lashon Hara**

**By Regina Brett**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Reginabrett.jpg)

**Regina Brett writes in The Plain Dealer of Cleveland:**

Practice restraint of tongue and pen.

Before you say anything about someone, ask yourself three questions:

Is it kind?

Is it true?

Is it necessary?

The answer to all three would make for a quiet conversation for most people — myself included.

Awhile back there was a national public-service campaign to stamp out gossip. A local rabbi created the “[Words Can Heal](http://www.wordscanheal.org/)” campaign to urge people to avoid loshon hora, a Hebrew phrase for “negative speech.” Rabbi Chaim Feld calls gossip the number one pastime in America. He wants to put an end to verbal violence.

The rabbi defined loshon hora as “any form of speech (gossip included) that might cause damage such as mental anguish, financial loss, physical pain, tarnished reputation, or the lowering of someone’s esteem in others’ eyes.”

His efforts caught on fast. Bumper stickers came out with the words PUT THE BRAKES ON LOSHON HORA. One day at a coffee shop a woman began to criticize someone who wasn’t present. The man across from her held up his hands to stop her and said, “We shouldn’t be talking about her. She isn’t here to defend herself.”

**“But It’s True”**

The woman objected: “But it’s true.”

The man shook his head: “It still isn’t right.”

She continued, so the man shook his head and turned his chair away from her. Good move.

Why not raise your standards? Feld’s book “Words Can Heal” offers these tips:

When it comes to offensive jokes, don’t repeat them and try not to laugh at them. When you get the urge to gossip, bite your tongue, change the subject, or walk away. When you’re joking around, ask yourself at whose expense it is. Don’t repeat anything you wouldn’t sign your name to.

And if those don’t stop you, this Spanish proverb should: “Whoever gossips to you will gossip about you.” That’s a scary thought.

**Learning What a Gossip**

**You Really Are**

You never realize what a gossip you are until you try to stop. At first, you catch yourself every time you make a critical remark about people you actually like. Then, you stop yourself from spreading gossip about people you don’t like. Finally, you find yourself getting uncomfortable as soon as someone else starts to gossip about anyone.

Gossiping is a tough habit to break. Putting someone else down lifts you up — for about five seconds.

Try stopping. I once put myself on a no-gossip diet. If you think trying to quit smoking is tough, try to stop gossiping. You don’t realize how addicted you are until you try to abstain. It’s harder to lose five negative thoughts than to lose five pounds.

**My Dad’s Remark – “That’s Not Very Nice”**

My dad did his best to discourage unkind words. The only phone in our house — and we had 11 children — sat right smack on his desk in the dining room. Every time he’d overhear me putting down someone, he’d scold, “That’s not very nice,” loud enough for the person on the other end of the line to hear.

Mom wasn’t any help. She would admonish, “If you can’t say anything nice about someone, don’t say anything at all.” Geez, Mom, if we all adhered to that philosophy, we’d all be silent as monks.

I’m not alone. Admit it. Don’t you kind of enjoy gossip? It’s one of life’s guilty pleasures.

I’m not as bad as some people who preface every comment with, “I don’t know if it’s true, but…” At least I have standards. The gossip has to be true before I pass it on.

**The Rabbi’s Food for Thought**

That was my lowly standard until the good rabbi gave me food for thought, the kind that’s good for you but not particularly tasty. He has made me ask myself those three questions before I open my yap.

Instead of every thought spilling out of my mouth like a gum ball, there’s a momentary pause when my conscience shows up and says, Don’t go there.

The diet hasn’t been perfect, but I do feel lighter.

*Reprinted from the January 5, 2011 website of Matzav.com. The article was originally published a few days ago in the Cleveland Plain Dealer. In 2008 and again in 2009,* [*Regina Brett*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regina_Brett)*, a popular Plain Dealer columnist was a Pulitzer Prize finalist for commentary. Her first book, "G-d Never Blinks: 50 Lessons for Life's Little Detours" was published in April, 2010 by* [*Grand Central Publishing*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Central_Publishing).

**Beneath the Layers of Filth**

**By Douglas Burgess**

**A Nazi Sympathizer Renewed My Waning Belief in**

**Mankind's Ability to Overcome its Senseless Hatred.**

Being easily identifiable as a Jew in one of Michigan's prisons, isn't always the smartest thing to do since it makes the person a perfect target for every bigot with an attitude. I know. I am an incarcerated Jew who wears a kippah (skullcap), beard and *tallit katan* (a small undershirt with ritual fringes attached) despite the inevitable heckling such attire draws.

Several years ago, at a weekly Torah study group, the prison's chaplain allowed me to lead, a new participant arrived late – one who I immediately knew wasn't Jewish. In our little group he stood out like a piglet among puppies. It wasn't that our group was exclusively Jewish either. We had men from several other faiths. It was his closely cropped hair and numerous tattoos displaying swastikas and other Nazi-like memorabilia that quieted our group and set him apart from us.

**Shock is an Understatement**

After a moment or two of staring at one another, he dropped his gaze to the carpet and asked in a barely audible voice whether or not he could join us for the evening. To say that I was shocked is an understatement, but I recovered quickly enough so I didn't gawk at him too long before rising and inviting him to take a seat across from me. What followed is something I would never have expected from within a prison's hard, cold walls.

I could only see the symbols that had doomed six million of my people to their horrible deaths.

**Only Saw the Symbols that**

**Doomed Six Million of My People**

Although it shames me today, I didn't treat Ron very well that first night. I could only see the symbols that had doomed six million of my people to their horrible deaths. Whether following my lead or through revulsion of their own, none of the other members tried to engage Ron in conversation, leaving him very alone in an otherwise crowded room. The next week was a repetition of the first.

Prior to the third session, Ron asked for a minute of the group's time.

"By now you're probably wondering why I'm here," Ron said in his quiet voice, fixing his gaze firmly on the tabletop. "I'm here to change. I'm here to learn how to stop hating others . . . to stop hating myself."

**Pouring Out His Heart About Having**

**Grown Up in a Dysfunctional Family**

Ron then spent the next half hour pouring out his heart to us about how he'd grown up in a dysfunctional, racist family in California, gotten busted for hate-related burglaries and ended up in some of California's toughest prisons, where he became a fervent member of the Aryan Brotherhood. After earning a delayed parole, Ron came to Michigan to escape his past, only to wind up falling back into his old patterns of behavior — a decision that led to his present incarceration. When Ron finished, he looked up. There were tears flowing down his cheeks. It was at that point that our group was forever changed.

We spent the first portion of each session over the next few months working with Ron, challenging his beliefs and exploring his reasons for wanting to change. It was a difficult task and one that I frequently thought he'd abandon. Ron continued to take great emotional and physical risks to come to terms with the things he'd done.

**Not the Same Man I First Met**

I knew Ron wasn't the same man I'd first met when he started walking the yard with me - an act that publicly shouted Ron's renunciation of hate to those who once counted him among their bigoted elite. To his credit, Ron silently withstood his ex-friends' taunts and continued seeking new ways to improve himself.

We pooled our money and paid to have Ron's tattoos covered up by one of the prison's best illegal artists.

Eventually, when our entire group was satisfied that Ron wasn't pulling some type of elaborate con game, we pooled our money and paid to have Ron's tattoos covered up by one of the prison's best illegal artists. We also put him in touch with several outreach organizations and convinced him to help others who were blindly stumbling down his old path.

**Ron Also Changed Me**

Ron had come to our group seeking positive change. He found it. He also became a person I am proud to call a friend. Ron, however, also changed me. He renewed my waning belief in mankind's ability to overcome its senseless hatred - to find its goodness buried beneath layers of encrusted filth. From this one individual, and from within an openly hostile environment, dozens have learned acceptance of that which is different. I will go to my grave knowing few greater accomplishments.

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It Once Happened

**A Mysterious Mission**

**To Rome**

Once, there was a wealthy man whose daughter had reached marriageable age. As befitting his station, he sought a groom who was a great scholar, and he travelled to one of the famed Torah academies to find such a young man.

The head of the academy recommended a worthy young scholar named Rabbi Yaakov, and upon meeting him, the prospective father-in-law was very pleased. The young scholar, however, made three conditions before agreeing to the proposal: he must have a room where he could study undisturbed; his wife must allow him unlimited time for his studies; and he would have permission to leave his wife for a year to take care of some important business.

**The Wealthy Man and His Daughter Agree**

The wealthy man agreed to the requests, but he returned home to obtain his daughter's agreement. After her father described the young man's excellent qualities, the girl agreed, and the couple was married. The groom studied Torah day and night, and his new wife was impressed with his character and his behavior. Indeed, the match was right in her eyes, and she was content.

After the first year of marriage had passed happily, Rabbi Yaakov reminded his wife and father-in-law of the promise they had made to allow him to travel on business for a year's time. They accompanied him to the outskirts of town, and he continued on his way to Rome and to his mysterious mission.

**The Roman Ruler’s Son is Betrothed to a Foreign Princess**

In Rome, the ruler had an intelligent son whom he had betrothed to a foreign princess. The princess was also bright, and she stipulated that she would only marry a man who was well-versed in all the knowledge of the world. She proposed that he undertake a course of study before their marriage, and she would do the same.

She began to study under the tutelage of a priest who was vicious anti-Semite. The priest instilled in the girl such a hatred of Jews, that she asked her future father-in-law to force all the Jews to convert, or else to expel them from his realm. He considered her request, and in addition, decided to invite the Pope to deliver a sermon against the Jews at the royal wedding.

On the very day that the royal wedding was announced, Rabbi Yaakov arrived in Rome. News of the arrival of a Torah scholar of great repute spread through the city, and even reached the ears of certain notables close to the Pope, who mentioned it at the Papal court.

**The Pope Wants to Meet the Young Jewish Scholar**

The Pope became curious to meet this young scholar, and summoned him. The Pope was very impressed with the depth and breadth of Rabbi Yaakov's knowledge. Soon, word of this wise Jew reached even the royal court, and he was summoned to the king.

Rabbi Yaakov received favor from everyone who saw and heard him, and of all the scholars in the kingdom, he was selected to instruct the betrothed prince. This was, of course, the mission for which he had come to Rome.

Elijah the Prophet at times reveals himself to certain select Jews, and now, he appeared to Rabbi Yaakov, saying, "The Pope is a secret Jew, a descendant of Marranos." Elijah told him where and when he could find the Pope deep in prayer, wearing his talit and tefilin.

**A Message from Elijah the Prophet**

When Rabbi Yaakov appeared at the door of that room, the Pope was filled with fear. Immediately, Rabbi Yaakov calmed his fears. "Elijah the Prophet has sent me to you on a matter of great importance to the Jews of Rome. You will be commanded to deliver a sermon attacking the Jews at the royal wedding. You must not speak until I come to you again."

The day of the wedding finally arrived, and guests from every realm filled the great halls of the palace. As word spread that the Pope himself would soon deliver a sermon, excitement began to build. The Pope, however, did not appear, as he was awaiting Rabbi Yaakov.

**Carrying a Closed Bag**

Suddenly the renowned Jewish scholar appeared before the guests - in the company of the Pope - carrying a closed bag. He summoned the prince, and in front of the entire assemblage, he announced that he would like to show them a wonder. He bid the prince put his hand into the sack and withdraw from it whatever he would find within. The prince put in his hand and withdrew a beautiful, gem-encrusted crown. The crowd cheered.

Then, he asked that the princess come and do the same. She was happy to oblige, but when she withdrew her hand, she was grasping a frightful snake, which at once entwined itself around her neck. She uttered the most horrible cries, but everyone was rooted to their place in terror.

**Conditions for Saving the Princess**

Rabbi Yaakov began to speak, "The prince has received what he deserves, and the princess has received her just reward as well. Princess, if you order the annulment of the evil decrees you have instigated, you will be saved, if not, you will perish."

Needless to say, the princess acquiesced to his demand. Rabbi Yaakov then departed; not a soul dared approach him. The King arose from his throne, still enthralled by what he had just witnessed. Before all his subjects and before the prince and princess, he vowed never to harm the Jews of his realm. Rabbi Yaakov, his mission completed, returned to his home and his happy wife.

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

**After 1,500 Years, an Index**

**To the Talmud’s Labyrinths, With Roots in the Bronx**

**By Joseph Berger**

The Talmud is a formidable body of work: 63 volumes of rabbinical discourse and disputation that form Judaism’s central scripture after the Torah. It has been around for 1,500 years and is studied every day by tens of thousands of Jews. But trying to navigate through its coiling labyrinth can be enormously difficult because the one thing this monumental work lacks is a widely accepted and accessible index.

But now that breach has been filled, or so claims the publisher of [HaMafteach](http://www.feldheim.com/hamafteach.html), or the Key, a guide to the Talmud, available in English and Hebrew. It was compiled not by a white-bearded sage, but by a courtly, clean-shaven, tennis-playing [immigration](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/i/immigration_and_refugees/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) lawyer from the Bronx.



Librado Romero/The New York Times

Daniel Retter teaching at Young Israel of the Bronx, has compiled an index to 63 volumes of rabbinical discourse.

The index’s publisher, [Feldheim Publishers](http://www.feldheim.com/), predicts it will be snatched up by yeshivas and libraries, but more important, it will be a tool for inveterate Talmud students — and there are plenty of those. Feldheim’s president, Yitzchak Feldheim, said the first printing of 2,000 books — a market test — sold out in a few days here and in Israel. More printings have been ordered.

**Over Six Thousand Topical Entries**

The index has 6,600 topical entries and 27,000 subtopical entries that point students to the treatises and pages of text they are seeking.

In these passages, sages analyze matters like whether one can remarry a former wife after she has been betrothed to another, or how one should handle a lost object found in a garbage heap. The index guides the student to significant laws about Sabbath and daily observance, as well as maxims, parables, commentaries and Talmudic personalities.

The English version costs $29.99, and the Hebrew, $24.99.

**Seven Years of Work in the Making**

The index represents seven years of work, but do not ask Daniel Retter why he undertook it, unless you have a spare hour. His answers are as meandering as the Talmud itself, with pathways leading to byways leading to offshoots that sometimes end in cul-de-sacs. Along the way, his voice sometimes rises and falls in Talmudic singsong, and his eyes glitter with delight at the saga’s oddities.

“My father was a man of letters,” he begins, then describes how his father, Marcus, had been dedicated to Talmud study during an epic life in which, as a child, he escaped the Nazis on the Kindertransports that rescued Jewish children from Germany and took them to British havens. He brought his family, including Daniel, to New York from London in 1949. (With his dry wit, Mr. Retter noted that his father had literally been a man of letters, since a dozen of his had been printed in The New York Times.)

**Studied to be a Lawyer**

Daniel Retter, 66, attended a yeshiva, enrolled at City College at night while studying Talmud in the daytime, then studied at Brooklyn Law School during the day while digesting Talmud at night.

He married another lawyer, Margie, an advocate for abused women seeking Jewish divorces; they raised four children and ended up in Riverdale, where he continued his Talmudic explorations.

**“I Can’t Waste a Minute”**

“I can’t waste a minute,” he said in an interview at the Manhattan offices of his law firm, Herrick, Feinstein. “If I’m on the immigration line waiting for a client to be called, I study the Talmud.”

But a puzzle nagged at him. He and other students sometimes needed help tracking down a specific passage, law or topic, or the thoughts of sages like Hillel and Shamai. Most of the time the student consults a loftier scholar.

“For the life of me,” Mr. Retter said, “I could not understand why the Talmud did not have an index.”

One 50-year-old translation of the Talmud, by Soncino Press, has an index, but its pages do not match those of the standard Aramaic text used by most students hunched over their dog-eared volumes.

More recent English translations are either not indexed or have not been completed. For three decades, Talmud students have been able to use a Nexis-like CD search engine, the Responsa Project, created by Bar Ilan University in Israel, that locates words by frequency and proximity. But like Google, it often produces irrelevant hits. Bar Ilan officials acknowledged that the CD had one major disadvantage: students cannot get access to it on the Sabbath, when much learning takes place. It also costs $790.

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| http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/misc/spacer.gif Librado Romero/The New York Times  The Talmud, Mr. Retter said, "had no punctuation, no paragraphs; it was a book that was to be transmitted orally." |  |

Mr. Retter said he believed that the Talmud, whose compilation was completed in the year 540, “was designed to be mysterious, designed to be locked — I call it the ‘book of mystery.’”

“The Talmud was written in exile, and it was the thread that kept Jews together,” he said. “It had no punctuation, no paragraphs; it was a book that was to be transmitted orally from father to son.”

Until 1445, the concept of an index was meaningless, since books were not being printed. But in the 16th century, the first complete editions of the Talmud were printed by a publisher from Antwerp, Belgium; the Vilna edition, printed in Lithuania in the 19th century, standardized pagination.

One effort to help students navigate the Talmud, Mesoras HaShas, provided cross-references alongside the Aramaic text toward similar ideas elsewhere in the Talmud. But, Mr. Retter wrote in his introduction, “it was not an index as that word is commonly understood, because one had to know the location of the initial reference to find the others.”

**The Study of the Talmud Should Not Be Made Too Easy**

Rabbi Benjamin Blech, professor of Talmud at Yeshiva University, said the rabbis believed that study should not be made too easy. “We want people to struggle with the text because by figuring it out you will have a deeper comprehension,” he said. “They wanted a living index, not a printed index.”

Nothing satisfied Mr. Retter’s needs. As he said: “I’m a lawyer, and if I want to know the law, I look it up in an index.”

Before he went — Talmudists should pardon the expression — whole hog, he took his wife’s advice and sought the approval of great sages so the work would be credible. HaMafteach includes letters of endorsement from a dozen, including Yisrael Meir Lau, the former Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel. Mr. Retter also recruited Rabbi Elchanan Kohn, a recognized Israeli Talmud scholar, as his editor.

**Potential Market to Thousands**

**of Daf Yomi Participants**

The index’s potential market is sure to include the thousands of Jews who participate in Daf Yomi, the page-a-day cycle in which everyone studies the same daf — two actual pages — every day for seven and a half years, until all 5,422 pages are completed, when they begin all over again. Some 90,000 people are expected at the Daf Yomi graduation of sorts that will be held in August at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

If readers find any errors, the index provides a very contemporary way of making suggestions for corrections that the ancient sages never foresaw and so could not have quibbled with: an e-mail address, [errorsandcomments@hamafteach.org](mailto:errorsandcomments@hamafteach.org).

*Reprinted from the December 28, 2011 edition of The New York Times.*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Anonymous Hero**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

The Israeli solder heard the sound of shots coming from a lonely spot in Hebron and rushed to investigate what had happened. There he saw another solider lying in a pool of blood, the victim of a terrorist attack.

He quickly administered first aid, summoned help and accompanied the ambulance to the emergency room of the hospital. The doctors told him that the patient would live only because of the initial medical attention he had provided.

**Parents Want to Thank Their Son’s Rescuer**

When the parents of the wounded man arrived at the hospital and heard the story of his rescue they wanted to thank his rescuer. But he was nowhere to be found and no one knew his identity. After a fruitless search for this anonymous savior they returned to their grocery story in Kiryat Malachi where they hung a big sign relating the story of their son’s miraculous rescue and asking for help in locating the hero.

One day a year later a woman from Beersheba entered their shop, read the sign and cried out “That’s my son!” A quick telephone call to her son was followed by a heartwarming meeting of the two families.

At one point the hero’s mother called aside the mother of the soldier he had saved and said to her:

**“We Met Twenty Years Ago…”**

“You don’t remember me but we met twenty years ago when I entered your shop and I struck up a nice conversation with you and your husband. In the course of our talk I mentioned that I was suffering from a difficult pregnancy and was planning an abortion. Both of you persuaded me to drop

this idea, pointing out what a blessing children are. You succeeded in convincing me, and the child to whom I gave birth was the one who saved your son!”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Magazine of the Internet (ohr.edu).*

**Story #736**

**A Soldier, a Survivor,**

**And a Song**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000nF00:001F0iDk000029s3&count=1325611907&randid=1833757664&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1833757664##)

In the fall of 1945, a Soviet soldier hoisted a 5-year-old boy aloft and paraded him through a Lithuanian synagogue that had been closed throughout a long Nazi occupation. For 65 years, the boy and the soldier carried that moment in their heads and hearts.

Unknown to each other, they each told the story to family and friends. A Toronto songwriter memorialized it in song. The boy became a man and included the anecdote in his 2003 book.

On Thursday, April 9, 2010, they met and embraced for the first time since then in Rabbi Leo Goldman's Oak Park living room. Abraham Foxman, left, and Rabbi Leo Goldman meet again after 65 years.

**Much More Emotional Than**

**I Would Have Expected**

"It was very emotional, much more than I would have expected," says the former small boy. He is Abraham Foxman, the New York-based director of the Anti-Defamation League. In that role, he is a public voice against racial and religious intolerance.

The soldier is Goldman, 91, an Orthodox rabbi in Oak Park and an educator who continued to work as a Beaumont Hospital chaplain until a few months ago.

**“We Tell This Story Every Year”**

"We tell this story every year," says Rose Brystowski, the rabbi's daughter, who says her father has become too frail to interview. "It's very moving to us, because it's about survival, about a child symbolizing the future of our people."

The memory remains vivid for Foxman: He had lived with his Catholic nanny, separated from his parents and concealed from the Nazis as a so-called "hidden child" for four years.

The nanny saved his life -- but also taught him to spit on the ground when a Jew walked by. In mid-1945, he was reunited with his parents. His father waited four months to take him to a synagogue on the holiday of Simchat Torah, an ancient and festive holiday that celebrates the completion of the annual cycle of reading the Torah on hand-written scrolls.

"That was very smart of him because it is a fun holiday for children," says Foxman, who remembers walking by a church and making the sign of the cross upon entering the synagogue for the first time.

**No Longer a Capital Crime to be Jewish**

For Goldman, who had been wounded twice as a soldier, and lost his parents to the Nazis, the return to the synagogue in Vilna that day was also momentous. The concentration camps had been liberated, Jews were reuniting with their families across Europe, and in Lithuania, it was no longer a capital crime to be Jewish. Most had been dispersed or exterminated. Only 3,000 of Vilna's 100,000 Jews remained.

"Are you Jewish?" the Soviet soldier, asked the boy. When he nodded yes, Goldman said, "I have traveled thousands of miles without seeing a Jewish child." Then he stooped down, lifted the boy and danced around the room with him.

**Neither Man Ever Forgot that Day**

Neither man ever forgot that day, that celebration of religion and survival under extraordinary circumstance. Getting to Thursday's reunion was circuitous. Only last summer did Foxman learn that the Jewish Soviet soldier he wrote about in his 2003 book, "Never Again?" was Goldman, still alive and living in the United States.

Three years ago, Foxman told the story at Yad Vashem, the Israel Holocaust Memorial Museum. There, an Israeli researcher, inspired by Goldman's story, embarked on a quest for the dancing man in uniform that Foxman described. Finally she tracked down the song, and the songwriter had credited the Michigan rabbi as the song’s inspiration.

**A Bittersweet Memory**

For Foxman, that day "was a memory, a bittersweet memory." The soldier -- a stranger -- had embraced him in public, in a synagogue. He had carried him like a trophy around the synagogue.

"That was for me the first time anyone took pride in me," says Foxman, who as "a hidden child didn't know who or what I was."

For both men, the memory was frozen in time, unattached to any living person.

"I thought that story was a kind of legend," recalls Brystowski. "I always believed it in my heart, but on another level, I wondered, did that really happen?"

She was stunned when she learned last summer, when Foxman called, that "this prominent, grown man" was the little boy she had grown up hearing about.

**The Mythic Boy Had Become a Famous Man**

The mythic boy had become a very real and famous man. "It shows us that any gesture, any mitzvah or good deed, can have an impact," she says.

On Thursday, the two men hugged and talked and recited a Hebrew prayer, a blessing that's a reminder of the importance of celebrating life in the moment.

"It is a privilege to have lived long enough to have this moment," Foxman says Goldman told him. Goldman's parents and older brother were killed by the Nazis. Foxman's early years as a "hidden child," living with secrets and lies, led him into a career of speaking out publicly against injustice and hatred.

**For Each Man, the Memory of the**

**Dancing Was a Pivotal Moment**

For each man, the memory of dancing in a Vilna synagogue was a pivotal moment. "I came home and told my father that I wanted to be Jewish," recalls Foxman. "It was the beginning of my life as a Jewish person."

Each man had a memory of a moment -- a dance in a synagogue -- that symbolized then and throughout their lives the promise of freedom and faith and life. At long last, the boy and the soldier, both of whom carried phantom memories, now know each other as two grown men who have, against the odds, survived to find each other.

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from an article in The Detroit News by Laura Berman, April 9, 2010, submitted by Avraham Leaf. Rabbi Goldman-may he live even longer years--married Avraham's parents and also was the mohel who did Avraham's brit mila.

Connection: The Fast Day of the Tenth of Tevet (Thursday, Jan. 5) is the accepted date for saying Kaddish for those Holocaust martyrs whose date of death is unknown.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org,*

*a project of Ascent of Safed*

[*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com)[*ascent@ascentofsafed.com*](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000nF00:001F0iDk000029s3&count=1325611907&randid=1833757664&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1833757664##)

**Worthy of a**

**Zechus Torah**

**By Rabbi Label Lam**

*And Zevulun shall dwell by the seashores. He shall be at the ship's harbor, and his end is at Sidon. (Breishis 49:13)*

Zevulun will engage in commerce (therefore he will be constantly at the harbor which is by the sea) and provide food for the Tribe of Yissachar while they are engaged in the study of Torah. (Rashi)

Zevulun and Yissachar are to have a symbiotic relationship. One is to work and journey and trade while the other stays put and devotes his energies to learning. This is already a famous arrangement. To the undiscerning eye though it may appear unfair. One man does all the hard work traveling the world to make money while the other is anchored to the pursuit of wisdom. Is that a just arrangement?

**Reb Elchonon Wasserman Came to America to Collect for His Yeshiva**

Recently I heard the following story about **Reb Elchonon Wasserman ztl**. He came to the United States from Europe before the Second World War to collect money to support his Yeshiva in Baronovitch. He was staying in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Someone told him about a successful Jewish clothing manufacturer in Manhattan that had many hundreds of workers but refused to give charity. Reb Elchonon took up the challenge of going to visit this businessman.

**Given a Less than Warm Reception**

When he arrived arrived at the workplace he was given a less than warm reception. The boss finally welcomed him into his office and anticipating the request for money, he curtly questioned him about why he had come. Reb Elchonon stood in full stature (he was a tall man) and showed him where a button on his jacket had become loose.

The man was stunned and relieved and so immediately he called over one of his workers from the coat manufacturing division and they ended up securing all the buttons on the Rabbi's coat. Reb Elchonon graciously thanked them and he left.

A short while later it dawned on this businessman the oddity of that visit. He called for Reb Elchonon and asked him, “Did you really come all the way from Williamsburg just get a few buttons sewn on your jacket.”

Reb Elchonon responded frankly, “No! I came from Baronovitch!” “Are you telling me, the manufacturer wondered, that you came all t

he way from Europe just to have a those few buttons put on your jacket?”

**What Was the Purpose of Your Long**

**Journey Down to This World?**

Reb Elchonon answered with a strong question, **“Are you telling me that your soul made the long journey down to this world, a much longer distance, only to sew buttons on coats?”**

The words penetrated the man's heart and he sent Reb Elchonon back with a handsome donation.

What happened here? Was it just that Reb Elchonon in his brilliance had managed to push the right buttons or maybe there's another explanation as well.

The Talmud in Brochos makes the following almost paradoxical statement; “It is greater to service (assist) a Talmud Scholar more than even learning from him!”

**Cleaving to G-d by Helping a Talmud Scholar**

Perhaps we can appreciate that the Mitzvah of cleaving to G-d is fulfilled by doing business with or in any way helping out a Talmud scholar. That way he can get back to and devote his talent and time to what he does best, Torah Learning!

In the grand scheme of things, and even in sports we can easily understand that the one who serves up the ball for a score gets an assist, and so it is with everyone who lends a hand in the team process. It's great when everyone knowing his or her specialty plays their critical role in getting the big job done.

With a simple swipe of a pen a wealthy person can easily earn almost unlimited Torah wealth.. Unfortunately not everyone has what's called a Zechus Torah - The Merit of Torah.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Shabbos Candle Lighting.*

A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l

**What Are the Benefits**

**Of Human Suffering?**

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| **QUESTION:** |

Why is suffering recommended and praised by the Torah?

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| **ANSWER:** |

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| images-4 |

The answer is, it's not recommended, certainly not. Nobody is urged to afflict himself. But suffering is praised, because it's one of the gifts of Hashem. The purpose of suffering is to make a man pay attention to something that he neglected, and I'll give one example, an extreme example that fits all cases.  
 When a man suffers from a headache, he thinks, “How good it was yesterday when I didn't have a headache!” That's what he's supposed to think. And he is supposed to think of all the yesterdays, there were a thousand yesterdays when he had no headache. “Why did I neglect to be happy and be grateful to Hashem for it?” So the headache makes you aware of what you once had. Isn't that a very great benefit?

If a man went through an operation Chas Veshalom; let's say the doctors did something serious to him. And now for the rest of his days he looks back to the glorious days when he had full use of his body. Now he looks back and sees what he once enjoyed. It's a very big thing to look back and understand what Hashem once gave him. Of course, if it's only temporary, and he can regain his full health, then he is able to live more happily afterwards as a result.

So when people suffer, one of the most important functions is to let them know how good it was before the suffering came upon them.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l.” This email is transcribed from questions that were posed to Harav Miller by the audience at the Thursday night lectures. To listen to the audio of this Q & A please dial: 201-676-3210*

**The Final Redemption**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Ani**

Yaakov called all his sons to his bedside together.

He wanted to reveal the redemption to them.

Hashem withheld this from Yaakov.

Why did the whole family have to be together?

Unity creates love and love creates forgiveness. Yaakov called his sons together to achieve "Achdut" ("unity"). Only when there is unity among the descendants of Yaakov can there be love between them.

And only when there is love among the descendants of Yaakov can there be redemption.

Shabbat Shalom

*Reprinted from this week’s email from Rabbi Shmuel Ani, director of the Sarah Dabah Elementary School and the Madison Torah Center in Flatbush.*

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

**The Key Factor in Prayer**

**Is to Think About Hashem**

**As Told Over by Sam Gindi**

“And Israel said unto Joseph: I had not thought to see thy face” (48:11)

The word “Pillalty”means “to think” (Rashi 48:11).

We can now appreciate the true significance of “L’hitpallel”, which is usually understood as “to pray”. “L’hitpallel is a reflexive verb which literally means: to cause oneself to Think. Thinking is the key factor in praying. Thinking about Hashem!

The first thing that the rabbis want us to think about is to state the fact that I could not even praise Hashem if He did not give my lips the ability to do so. So we ask Hashem for this ability in order to proceed with the Amidah.

The next thing to think about is that we have been given the privilege to address the King of the Universe as “You” (“Ata”) throughout the Amidah, instead of “Your Majesty” (the third person which is a sign of respect).

Think! You have been given the status of Children of the King (“Banim atem L’Hashem Elokechem”). And you are speaking to your Father who loves you and has unlimited power/kindliness to do everything you ask Him for.

In order to get maximum benefit from our prayers try the following strategy. Before we reach the “Modim” (Gratitude) prayer, prepare your mind with a different thought each day and thank Hashem with joy for what He is giving you. Such as: sight, ability to walk, parents, money, sanity … When we bow in this prayer, think and thank Hashem.

Now we are thinking and demonstrating to ourselves Emunah which is filling us with happiness and confidence and bitachon/trust. When we think in this manner three times daily and we teach our families to practice this as well, then we will be connected to the Source of life, blessings and successful living in this world and forever.

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

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Knock Knock**

Several years ago, Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Gruskin was once on his way to St. Louis, Missouri. He was driving through rural Iowa late one afternoon when he realized that the sun was setting, and he would have to find a place to pray mincha - the afternoon prayers.

He happened to be passing through a small town just then, so he pulled up to the post office and went inside. "Do you know if there are any Jews around here?" he asked the woman behind the counter. "There is a Jew who lives about a mile from here," she told him. "His name is Rosenfeld." (the name has been changed)

The woman in the post office gave Rabbi Gruskin directions and he was soon on his way to old Mr. Rosenfeld's place. Soon, Rabbi Gruskin arrived and knocked on the door. Rabbi Gruskin told Mr. Rosenfeld that he was looking for a synagogue to pray mincha. The old man laughed, telling Rabbi Gruskin that there were no synagogues anywhere nearby.

Rabbi Gruskin then asked the old man if he could pray in his house. After finishing praying, Rabbi Gruskin asked Mr. Rosenfeld if he minded if he also ate his supper in his house. Mr. Rosenfeld agreed, but he invited Rabbi Gruskin to instead join him for dinner at his table. Rabbi Gruskin refused the generous offer, telling Mr. Rosenfeld that he had brought food with him from home and that all he needed was a place to wash his hands.

**How an Arrest Transformed Mr.**

**Rosenfeld into a Shomer Shabbos**

"I know what you are thinking," said Mr. Rosenfeld. "But really you can eat with me. I am Shomer Shabbos." Rabbi Gruskin was floored. A Shomer Shabbos Jew in these parts?!? Mr. Rosenfeld smiled at the reaction of surprise. Mr. Rosenfeld then proceeded to tell Rabbi Gruskin the amazing story of how he became Shomer Shabbos after being arrested several decades earlier.

In this week's parsha Vayechi we read about the death of another famous Jew who was arrested - Yosef Hatzadik. Because of false accusations, Yosef was arrested and sat in an Egyptian prison.  After leaving prison, Yosef eventually became one of the most powerful men in Egypt. Although it was difficult for Yosef to be in prison, as he neared the end of his life, Yosef realized that even his imprisonment was for the good.

**Hashem Intended it for the Good**

As Yosef tells his brothers, "…Hashem intended it for the good; in order to accomplish - it is clear as day - that a vast people be kept alive." (Bereishis 50:20) If Yosef had not been arrested in Pharaoh's palace, he would not have interpreted Pharaoh's dream and he would never have become so powerful so that he could feed his father and their families. As Yosef neared death, he realized that everything that had happened to him was for the best.

We can learn from the example of Yosef, who recognized that everything that Hashem does is for the best. The Sages in fact teach us that one should practice saying "Everything the Almighty does is for the best." One who can internalize this message and the lesson of Yosef, will live a happier life.  Let us now return to our story.

Like Yosef, Mr. Rosenfeld also spent time in jail. Mr. Rosenfeld had immigrated to the United States shortly after World War II. As an immigrant with poor English skills, Mr. Rosenfeld resorted to becoming a traveling salesman. One day, Mr. Rosenfeld found himself in a small town near Akron, Ohio.

He knocked on doors and tried to sell his wares, but everyone in the town slammed the door in his face. He was baffled. He tried one last door - it turns out, it was the door of the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police arrested Mr. Rosenfeld on two counts: 1) for selling merchandise without a license, and; 2) for violating the Saturday ordinance laws. (The town was populated and governed by the Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists, who observe their Sabbath on Saturday.)

**Pleading Ignorance of the Law**

The next morning, Mr. Rosenfeld appeared before the court. Mr. Rosenfeld pleaded ignorance of the law. The judge told Mr. Rosenfeld that he would not mind acquitting him (letting him go) on the count of selling without a license. However, the judge could not understand why Rosenfeld - a Jew - was selling on Saturday.

"Surely you must know about Saturday ordinances, after all, they are Biblical prohibitions. For that I cannot pardon you. Fifty dollars or thirty days in jail." Said the judge.

**Promises to Faithfully**

**Observe His Sabbath**

"Please, I really did not know any better," pleaded Mr. Rosenfeld. "Rosenfeld," said the judge, "I will tell you what I will do, I will pardon you if you promise me faithfully that from today on, you will observe your Sabbath." Mr. Rosenfeld promised, and the judge released him on the spot.

The next Saturday morning, Mr. Rosenfeld woke up as usual and began to ready his horse and wagon for a day of peddling. As he walked to the horses, his mind went back to the previous week. He thought to himself: "last Saturday I promised to keep the Sabbath! How could I break my word?" From that point on, Mr. Rosenfeld was Shomer Shabbos. (From Visions of Greatness, R.Y.Weiss, p.32)

**Everything Hashem Does is for the Best**

It was through his experiences in jail that Mr. Rosenfeld became Shomer Shabbos. Although it was difficult for him at the time of his arrest, Mr. Rosenfeld realized years later that everything that Hashem does is for the best. Because he was arrested, Mr. Rosenfeld was introduced to the beauty of Shabbos.

He began to see Saturday as a day of rest from the noise of the workweek. Shabbos became a special time of happiness and inner peace. He was forever grateful to the judge who made him a Shomer Shabbos Jew.

Let us learn from Yosef and Mr. Rosenfeld. Everyday let us remind ourselves that "Everything the Almighty does is for the best."

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