**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Bo 5774**

Volume 5, Issue 19 3 Shevat 5774/ January 4, 2014

***For a free subscription, please forward your request to*** ***keren18@juno.com***

**Oldest Working Kosher Butcher Tells All**

**By Helen Chernikoff**

 At 93, Ernie Fleischman works part-time in a business that’s weaker than the one he entered, but may have bottomed out.

 When Ernie Fleischman was growing up in Germany in the 1930s, the plan was for him to attend the Realschule, the secondary education favored by pragmatic middle-class Jews because it prepared students for jobs in the sciences and skilled trades.

**No Jews Allowed to Attend Anymore**

 He was accepted, but by the time he was to have started, no Jews were allowed to attend. His family decided to try to find the boy a future elsewhere. Soon after landing in New York in 1937, at age 17, he learned that his host couldn’t afford to feed and house him.

 “I was like a little boy lost in the woods,” recalls Fleischman. He later lost his entire family in the Holocaust, but he found his feet in Depression-era New York by becoming a butcher. Today, at 93, Fleischman works part-time at Fischer Bros. & Leslie on West 72nd Street. As the city’s oldest working kosher butcher, his story of survival and struggle tells the tale of kosher meat in New York.

**Thousands of Butcher Shops in the City**

 “At that time when I went into the business, there were thousands of butcher shops here in the city,” Fleischman said. “Butcher shops and kosher delis used to be on almost every block.”

 Fleischman is the only Jewish butcher working at the shop today, but back then it was different. Demand for kosher butchers in New York was high, fueled by about two million Jews, who comprised about a quarter of the city’s total population. More Jews back then were working-class and immigrants like Fleischman, and the trade appealed to them.

Fleischman entered it for religious reasons.



Ernie Fleischman

**A Job Opportunity for Sabbath Observers**

 “At that time, the workweek [for other jobs] was six days a week. You couldn’t be a Sabbath observer. Saturday, the butcher shops closed, but Saturday night we worked until 2 in the morning,” he said. “People would stop in after going to the movies.”

 The butcher business was everywhere, unlike today, when kosher slaughterhouses sit in flyover country and the “Meatpacking District” is the misnomer for a cobble-stoned quarter of boutiques and clubs.

 But when Fleischman was starting out, “Meatpacking District” meant what it said. Live cows were shipped, killed and cut into sides there; New York was home to meat wholesalers, not just retailers. There were live poultry markets all over the city.

 Despite all those mom-and-pop shops, the butchering business of the time was quite literally cutthroat. Organized crime dominated the meat cutters unions, including the kosher ones. In the 1920s, as much as half the meat sold as kosher was not kosher, said Timothy Lytton, a professor at Albany Law School, and the author of “Kosher: Private Regulation in the Age of Industrial Food.”

 Kosher meat was one of the big criminal industries targeted by New York’s special prosecutor and later governor Thomas Dewey in his war against large-scale racketeering, Lytton said.

**Avoided the Industry’s Dark Side**

 True, the young Fleischman never became an engineer or a chemist, but he did manage to avoid his industry’s dark side. He was an assistant when he started out, and he learned the job on the job all those years.

 It guaranteed a decent income. Fleischman’s wife, a fellow German refugee he met through relatives and married in 1948, was a housewife all her life. He’s been a widower for 11 years and lives on his own.

 Around the time they married, Fleischman opened his own place after first getting an assurance from his boss in the shop where he was working that he could always come back. He didn’t need to; Fleischman was his own boss for 37 years, first on Sherman Avenue in Upper Manhattan and then on Jerome Avenue in the Bronx. Business was good in solidly Jewish neighborhoods.

 “A balaboosta [skilled housewife] wanted to see what she was getting,” he said.

**Made His Home in Washington Heights**

 The family made its home in the now-famous community of German Holocaust survivors in Washington Heights, sending three children to Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, also known as Breuer’s. Today, Fleischman has 17 grandchildren and 50 great-grandchildren — actually, 50 and a half, he said.

 “There’s one on the way as far as I know,” he said, with the weary bemusement of a patriarch.

 But in 2000, Fleischman’s business fell victim to the same dynamics that caused butcher shops to fail all over the city. He had survived the mass movement of urban Jews to the suburbs that started after the war, and the competition from supermarkets offering packaged meat and in-store kosher butchers. But, what suburbanization didn’t shutter, gentrification often did, said Menachem Lubinsky, CEO of Lubicom Marketing and Consulting in Brooklyn, which focuses on the kosher market.

 Fleischman had been paying $1,700 in rent; a new landlord wanted $4,500.

 “I couldn’t swing it,” Fleischman said.

 There’s another, healthier, but still new side of the business that thrives online in the form of companies like KOL Foods and Grow & Behold, which specialize in organic meat and pastured poultry. But most of the brick-and-mortar shops are gone.

 “The fact that you can count them on less than one hand tells the story,” Lubinsky said.

**Still Wanted to Work**

 Still, Fleishman wanted to keep on working. He called Fisher Bros. & Leslie and offered his services.

 “Ernie’s my go-to guy when I need something done just right. Of course he’s slowed down just a bit, but I know the customer will get a quality package,” said Paul Whitman, who is married to “Leslie” Neiderman’s daughter and now runs operations at the store, which is celebrating its 65th anniversary this year.

 Fleischman works three days a week, from 6:30 a.m. to noon, taking the bus up and down Manhattan from Washington Heights. In his off hours, he volunteers as a waiter for a program that serves meals to older people. He is aware of the irony.

 But he’s the last Jew behind the counter at Fischer Bros. & Leslie, doing the work of breaking sides of meat down into cuts like briskets, spare ribs and chops; soaking; salting and removing the veins for inspection by the mashgiach, or kosher supervisor.

**A New Interest from Young People**

 Lubinsky says the few remaining shops may well survive, having lived to see the revival of cities and a new interest from young people in the art of butchering.

 Whitman declined to share exact numbers, but said the 15-employee shop makes several million dollars in annual revenue. He sees the business’ strength in prepared foods, as well as its opportunity for growth in expanding its delivery customer base.

 Still, the kosher butcher shops of the future may not employ any Ernie Fleischmans, young or old.

 “Being a butcher is not high on the list of careers for a young Jewish person,” Whitman said.

*Reprinted from the December 17, 2013 edition of the New York Jewish Week.*

**A Slice of Life**

**Your Royal Garb**

**By Rabbi Avraham Berkowitz**

 It was September 2007 and I was in Monte Carlo for a friend's wedding.

 We prayed that Saturday morning at the local synagogue and later walked to the nearby Hotel de Paris. Entering the lobby, I was surprised at the large security presence. I soon learned that the legendary former South African president Nelson Mandela was a guest in the hotel. As it happened, he was sitting in one of the stately public rooms on the lobby floor as I passed by.

**Requested an Opportunity to Bless Mandela**

 I instinctively wanted to meet the iconic statesman. The slim chance of gaining access to meet Mandela did not stop me from asking the security guard at the door if I could please step in to bless the former president. Just then, a second member of the security detail approached and asked what I wanted. The first bodyguard explained that I was a rabbi who wanted to bless Madiba on the holy Sabbath. They agreed to let me go over to greet him.

 As I approached the former president, he looked up and beamed. I was dressed in the full Chabad Shabbat attire, the flowing black frock and black fedora, and since I had just left the synagogue my white and black tallit was draped over my shoulders.

**Appreciated “His Rabbi” – Chief Rabbi Harris**

 After we had been introduced, Mandela invited me to sit near him. He asked me to please bless him and mentioned how touched he was that I had blessed him on the Sabbath. President Mandela also told me how much he cherished it when 'his rabbi,' Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, would bless him back home.

 Looking across at the great man, who had suffered for decades, fought for freedom, and pulled a splintered nation together, I felt compelled to ask one question. Had he ever compared his story to that of the biblical Joseph?

 Without pause, Mandela replied that he felt a strong affinity with Joseph. Joseph had been imprisoned for life, yet he found strength in his positive outlook and had finally emerged to lead a nation. With twinkling eyes, Mandela laughed out loud: "But I spent many more years in prison then Joseph did!"

 I then asked him, "Is it in honor of Joseph's coat of many colors that you wear your trademark colorful "Madiba shirts"?

**Shirts Represent His People and Their Struggle**

 "No," he replied, "I wear these shirts to represent my people and their struggle and to represent the beautiful diverse cultures and traditions of Africa." He tenderly touched the African continent embroidered on his custom-made silk black shirt.

 We chatted easily. He commented on how I was dressed and said, "Seeing you dressed like this reminds me of that Saturday visit to the synagogue" a few days after being elected President. On the first Shabbat after he had been elected president, back in May 1994, he visited South Africa's largest synagogue, the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation in Cape Town. "His rabbi," Chief Rabbi Harris had invited him to attend morning services.

 Mandela recounted how he had addressed the packed crowd and had "appealed to the local Jewish community to implore their South African family members who had emigrated to return home to help rebuild a new democratic South Africa." He also reassured the local Jewish community not to be afraid of a Government of National Unity and promised that "together we will succeed."

**A Gift From a Jewish Woman**

 He then recalled, "When I returned to the motorcade, my driver handed me a gift from a woman who had attended synagogue that morning. It was a beautiful black shirt, with a colorful design of golden fish across it. I chose to wear that shirt to the opening of parliament of our new democratic government.

 "After I had worn that shirt, this same woman (South African designer Desre Buirski) would continue to send me shirts. We become good friends, and she designed hundreds of shirts for me. These shirts help me carry my message all over the world."

 He smiled and added, "And all because I went to synagogue on a Saturday morning."

 I stood up and thanked him for the generosity of his time and the honor of meeting him. Before I left, Mr. Mandela complimented the traditional look of my Chasidic dress. "I am happy to see you dressed this way; you should always be proud to wear the clothing of the Jewish faith as a mark of honor," he said.

 As I shook his hand, he told me, "Remember young rabbi, when you dress in your royal garb, you represent what the Bible stands for: How all humans are G-d's children, created in the image of G-d, regardless of ethnicity, color or faith."

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

[**Historian Says Bugs Bunny Might be Jewish**](http://matzav.com/historian-says-bugs-bunny-might-be-jewish)

**By Gidon Ben-Zvi**

**A noted Jewish-British cinematic historian has claimed that the world’s most famous rabbit displays prominent Jewish characteristics. According to film scholar David Yehuda Stern, Bugs Bunny was created by a Jewish producer, lived in a Jewish neighborhood, has a distinctly New York/Jewish accent and uses his wit and sense of humor to avoid all attempts to eliminate him.

 Stern revealed his findings at a lecture held recently at Britain’s University of Warwick, Israeli daily Ma’ariv reported. Stern, who watched thousands of animated shorts that feature Bugs Bunny, noted in his presentation that there are Jewish fingerprints all over the smart aleck cartoon character, including the very voice of Bugs Bunny - Jewish actor Mel Blanc.

 Stern’s exhaustive study even included the findings of one specific cartoon episode in which Bugs Bunny flashes back to his childhood. The New York neighborhood Bugs grew up in is teeming with obviously Jewish characters, such as ultra-Orthodox Jews and other stereotypically Eastern European figures from the turn of the 20th century.



Bugs Bunny's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Photo: Wikipedia.

 Stern closed his case for Bugs Bunny being Jewish by reminding his audience that the legendary rabbit’s arch nemesis is…Porky Pig. The pig, of course, is Judaism’s quintessentially unclean animal.

*Reprinted from the December 25, 2013 edition of the Matzav.com website. The brief article originally appeared in the Algemeiner Journal newspaper dated December 24, 2013.*

**Fearless Gush Etzion Doctor Makes House Calls In Palestinian Villages**

**By [Anav Silverman](http://www.jewishpress.com/author/anavsilverman/)**

**[Tazpit News Agency](http://www.jewishpress.com/author/anavsilverman/)**

 On a day when snow still covers the Judean hills, a Jewish doctor from Efrat drives into the Wadi Nis Palestinian village. He is greeted by the locals with smiles and warm hellos. “There’s the doctor,” says one woman to another as Dr. Yitzchak Glick lowers his car window to say hello.
 To the villagers of Wadi Nis and six other Palestinian villages in the Gush Etzion region, the kippah-wearing Dr. Glick is a familiar and welcome face. This U.S. born doctor, who made aliyah with his parents in 1974, makes personal house calls every week, providing medical treatment free of charge to Palestinian patientss.

 When Dr. Glick sees Mohammed, a construction worker he treated for injuries from a fall from a building a couple of years ago, he stops and gets out of the car. Wearing a red and white keffiyeh headdress, Mohammed greets Dr. Glick with a hug and the two converse like old friends.

 “The people here don’t forget what I and other doctors from Efrat have done," Glick says. "From treating expectant mothers and providing free medicine to saving lives, you become part of their families.”

 The connection runs so deep, that the Arab villagers have alerted Efrat authorities on several occasions against terror cells that were approaching the Jewish enclave.

 But Glick, a religious Zionist, not only provides medical care to Palestinians in the vicinity of their homes. In 2000, the Efrat doctor, who also travels once a month to work in a hospital emergency room in Cleveland, Ohio, founded the Efrat Emergency Medical Center (EEMC) during the second Intifada. Glick has been serving as the center’s medical director, as a volunteer, for nearly 14 years.



Dr. Yitz Glick in front of the Palestinian

village he visits every week.

Photo Credit: Natan Epstein, Tazpit News Agency

 The medical center serves both Israelis and Palestinians in Gush Etzion, treating anywhere from 50 to 100 patients a day, providing emergency care, Magen David Adom (EMT), radiology, pharmacy, and women’s health services. In total, EEMC provides medical care to about 50,000 people from the Gush Etzion-Hebron area

 “There have always been good neighborly relations between many of the local Palestinians and the community of Efrat,” says Dr. Glick.

 “In the medical field, doctors are used to treating patients from all walks of life. Here in Gush Etzion, it’s no different – everyone is treated with respect and accorded quality medical care,” Glick adds.

**Honored by President Shimon Peres**

 The doctor is also well-known for his treatment of Israeli terror and traffic accident victims, arriving first on scene. He has received the Presidential Award for Volunteerism from President Shimon Peres in 2009 and the Moskowitz Prize for Zionism in 2012.



Efrat Emergency Medical Center. Photo credit: Natan Epstein,

Tazpit News Agency.[/caption]

 Dr. Glick, along with his right-hand man and EEMC development manager Yossi Hass, describe how, during the recent snowstorm in Efrat, an ambulance volunteer discovered a Palestinian suffering from hypothermia in the Hebron area. The volunteer brought the man to the medical center, where he was treated and remained through the snowy night.

 “There are so many stories like this that happen daily,” said Dr. Glick. “They show another side of reality – where Jewish and Arab residents live together and do their best for each other.”

 According to Nave Dromi, a spokesperson for Blue&White Human Rights the public, both in Israel and abroad, has no awareness of such co-existence initiatives.

**Ensuring Human Rights for**

**All Citizens of the Region**

 “It is little known to even many Israelis, that there are Jewish residents in Judea and Samaria who ensure human rights for all the citizens in the region, specifically for Palestinians,” says Dromi.

 Established by the Institute for Zionist Strategies, Blue&White Human Rights works to provide equal medical care to Palestinians, as well as educate the public about the co-existence initiatives in the area.

 “There is a completely different side to the politics and conflict that mainstream media choose to cover in Judea and Samaria," Dromi explains, adding, "Politics has no place in the field of medicine and healthcare, and Jewish doctors take care of ‘the other’ every day.”

**The Universe if Big Enough for All of Us**

 Indeed, Dr. Glick, father of five children who has been a resident of Efrat for 20 years, believes that “the universe is big enough for all of us here.”

 Pointing at the local Rami Levy supermarket where local Jews and Palestinians work and shop, Dr. Glick says, “We go shopping for food together, we buy gas for our vehicles together, we get the same medical care and we work together – Jewish and Palestinian residents share a way of life in Gush Etzion.”

 “We aren’t going anywhere and they aren’t going anywhere - we are all here to stay,” Dr. Glick promises.

*Reprinted from the December 31, 2013 email of The Jewish Press.*

***Ask the Rabbi***

**Matter of Interest**

***From: Jonathan***

Dear Rabbi,

 About 10 years ago, before I became religious, I borrowed a significant amount of money with interest from a Jewish acquaintance. Now that the loan is due I’m prepared to pay back the loan, but the person demands I pay the interest too; otherwise he’ll sue me. If he takes me to court I’ll certainly lose, in addition to incurring all types of expenses and losing time from work – not to mention the anguish of going through the ordeal of a court case. Since I’ll end up paying more than the actual interest anyway, would it be permitted to pay it to the guy and good riddance? And since he’s not religious anyway, do I have to be concerned about his taking the interest?

**A Question of Great Interest!**

Dear Jonathan,

 This is a question of great interest! Although I intend to offer you an interesting solution, since the laws of interest are very complicated, you may only accept my words as a suggestion. For a definitive answer, you must consult a local expert who can work through all the details with you in person.

 First of all, you are correct that a Jew may not collect interest on a loan to another Jew. This applies even if the person is not observant since the Torah Law applies to all Jews. However, even if you would agree to pay him for the reasons you describe, you are not allowed to since the prohibition of interest applies not only to the lender’s collecting, but also to the borrower’s paying it.

**A Unique Answer When**

**Pressed by a Ba’al Teshuva**

 It’s for this reason that when asked a similar question, one of the great experts on these matters, Rabbi Ya’akov Bloi, zatzal, answered that a person would have to subject himself to being sued rather than paying forbidden interest of his own volition. However, in one particular instance regarding a long-term loan, when pressed by a ba’al teshuva who wouldn’t accept this solution, the rabbi referred him to another great scholar, Rabbi Israel Fischer, zatzal. When Rabbi Fischer heard the question, in his typically gruff manner he replied something like, “Those transgressors! You can pay him if you want to”.

 The person couldn’t believe what he heard. He replied,

 “Excuse me rabbi, I’m just a ba’al teshuva and may not understand properly. But even if the lender is not religious, he can’t collect interest; and I don’t see how I can pay him interest even if I want to.”

**There Was a Shemita Sabbatical Year Aspect**

 Rabbi Fischer replied, “Your being a ba’al teshuva is exactly the point! You say the loan was made 10 years ago before you became religious. Since then, there has been a shemita Sabbatical year which nullifies all loans. And as a non-religious person, the lender certainly made no prosbul agreement which would enable the extension of the loan beyond shemita. So he’s a transgressor by trying to claim a non-existent loan! On the other hand, since there’s no loan, there’s no interest either, and you can give him as much as you want in order to avoid being sued!”

*Reprinted from last week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**Story #839**

**Jewish Weightlifting**

**In Haifa**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000ntW0:001IkzNi00002F_9&count=1388609329&randid=1668140703&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1668140703##)

 It was Friday afternoon in Haifa, a famously secular city where workers would be soon leaving their desks, not for home or synagogue, but for cinemas and nightclubs. Nevertheless, two young students of the Chabad Yeshiva in Migdal HaEmek, Yitzchok Levin and Eyal Blau, faithfully combed the main street, as they did every week, in search of outreach activity. Since it was the Friday before 3 Tammuz, the anniversary of the passing of the **Lubavitcher Rebbe**, the students decided to extend their route in order to reach even more Jews and enable them to wrap tefillin, the phylacteries worn by men during prayer.

 That is how they heard the following story.

**An Open Dentist’s Office**

 I noticed a huge office building, Yitzchok began, and we decided to go in, even though it was almost Shabbat. As soon as we entered the first floor, I noticed an open dentist’s office. We walked in and saw the dentist sitting and talking on the phone.

 Just one look at him made us nervous. Those who go on outreach regularly know this type a mile away. You could see the angry eyes and the way he was getting ready to curse us out.

 Well, what we were afraid of came to pass. As soon as he finished his phone conversation, he bombarded us with questions, in an angry and even demeaning tone.

 We weren’t scared off, though. We’re used to reactions like this. I glanced at my watch and saw that it was almost Shabbat. As the man was plainly only listening to himself, I motioned to my friend to leave.

**“…But What’s With Your Soul?”**

 We were standing on the threshold when suddenly Ayal turned toward the dentist and shouted in the same number of decibels, “Hey, Jew! You’ve been in this world for forty years now. You eat and sleep, but what’s with your soul? You think you’re yelling at us, but you are really yelling at the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who has helped thousands of Jews do good deeds!” And he went on in this vein.

 In my mind’s eye I could picture the dentist getting up and hitting us, but that’s not what happened. When he heard the Rebbe’s name, he trembled, his face fell, and an uncomfortable look flashed in his eyes.

 After my friend finished his tirade, the dentist said in surprise, “Oh, you’re from the Lubavitcher Rebbe!?” His voice was so calm and quiet that we wondered if this could really be the same man we had just been talking to!

 “Sit down," he said. “You probably think I don’t know your Rebbe. Listen, and I’ll tell you who the Lubavitcher Rebbe is.”

 The anger in our hearts immediately changed to curiosity. We sat down and the dentist began his tale.

 “I grew up in Vienna, and my sole connection with Judaism was through the Zionist youth movement in our city. After I finished school I moved here, to Israel, and was drafted. During the Six-Day War I served as a combat officer on the front.

**Got to Know a Religious Girl from Boro Park**

 “In the course of my work as a dentist, I got to know a religious girl from Boro Park who was visiting here. We stayed in touch even after she returned home. At some point I returned to Vienna.

 “A few months went by and with her agreement, I decided to go to New York in order to meet her and ask her parents for her hand in marriage. I visited her home. Her parents were gracious, but when I left the house, the father came out with me. Placing his hand on my shoulder, he said I must break up with his daughter.

 “You don’t deserve to be my son-in-law,” he declared.

 “I was shocked. I truly wondered what was wrong with me. After all, I was a dentist, an officer, an Israeli, tall and good-looking, making nice money--in short, I had it all. He doesn’t know what he’s missing out on. I thought sadly. Other people would be proud to have a son-in-law like me. Not only that, but if I married his daughter, she would get me to become religious.

 “I was still thinking this over when my cousin Yaakov, with whom I was staying in America, appeared. Seeing me upset, he asked what was wrong, and I told him what had just happened.

**Suggests a Meeting with a Great Rabbi**

 “He brightened. “Listen, not far from here lives a great rabbi who everybody talks about. Maybe you should visit him and he can explain what happened, or maybe he would even agree to convince the father.”

 “A few weeks later I met privately with the Rebbe. The Rebbe listened with great interest as I told him at length about the area where I grew up, the Jewish community, my army service, and then finally, the reason I was there. I told the Rebbe about our desire to marry and the father’s veto.

 “When I finished my story, the Rebbe told me to get up. To my surprise he looked me over in satisfaction and said, “I’m pleased. Until now I was pleased. Now I’m even more pleased.”

 “Having no idea what the Rebbe was talking about, I waited for him to continue.

 “The Rebbe began by explaining that in the Jewish America of today there was unprecedented assimilation and intermarriage. People practically gave no thought as to the nationality or religion of their future spouses.

**Still a Jew in America Who Consider**

**The Torah More Important**

 “Now,” said the Rebbe, “if somebody were to tell me that an observant Jew took a dentist, who was also an officer and a nice-looking fellow, despite the fact that he was not observant, for a son-in-law, I wouldn’t be at all surprised. But when you tell me that here, in America, there are Jews who consider the Torah more important than the honor they would get when people heard they got a young man from Eretz Yisrael, I am very pleased.

 "That’s why I asked you to stand up -- so I could see how tall you are and how well-built. To believe that a Jew from Boro Park gave you up despite all your good qualities -- just because he wants an observant man for his daughter!”

 “I was in shock. I had come to tell the Rebbe my sorry tale, and here the Rebbe was telling me he was happy about it!

 “Despite what the Rebbe had said thus far, I kept trying. “Rebbe! Who knows? Maybe if I marry her, I would try to live more like she does, and I would even return to the faith. Why shouldn’t I get a chance?”

**The Rebbe Answers with a Parable**

 “The Rebbe answered with a parable. ‘There are two friends -- one on the top of a mountain where there are plenty of delicious fruits, and one on the bottom of the mountain without fruits. The one on top tosses a few fruits down to the one on the bottom, and when the one on the bottom tastes them he sees how good they are. With his friend’s help, he makes it to the top of the mountain. But this happened only because the one on the bottom tasted the fruits and saw how good they were. If he hadn’t tasted them, he would never have made the attempt to climb to the summit.

 “The Rebbe gazed at me penetratingly and said, ‘You’re not even willing to lift 200 grams, and you want to be a Boro Parker?’

 “I wracked my brains trying to figure out what the Rebbe was referring to when he said ‘you won’t even lift 200 grams, but came up with nothing. Had I tried to lift something weighing 200 grams and not succeeded?

 “With that my encounter with the Rebbe ended, and I left both confused and disappointed. Meanwhile my cousin was still waiting outside, and I told him what the Rebbe had said.

 “I had no idea what the Rebbe was referring to when he said I couldn’t even lift 200 grams, I explained.

**“Do You Wrap Tefilin Every Morning?”**

 Yaakov pondered it over for a few seconds and then jumped up. “Tell me, do you wrap tefilin every morning?”

 "No, I don’t. I’ve never even given it a second thought.”

 "Nu,” Yaakov declared, “that’s what the Rebbe meant! You’re not even willing to place 200 grams of tefilin on you. So what makes you think you’ll change your lifestyle and fulfill all 613 mitzvot simply because you’re marrying someone?

 “First, start doing mitzvot on your own -- just basic things like tefilin--and then with her help or the help of a good friend, see how far you can go.”

 “This time it was my turn to get excited. What a Rebbe! How wise he is!

**Married a Religious Woman**

 “Sometime later, I married a religious woman, thank G-d, we have three children, thank G-d, all yeshiva graduates. The first is named Menachem, after the Rebbe, of course. My daughter leads a religious life, and even though I still have a lot to work on personally, whatever I do have is in the merit of that meeting.

 We sat and listened to his story, concluded Yitzchok, and when he finished I asked him, “Nu, after a story like that about 200 grams, are you still not ready to put on tefilin?”

 The dentist looked at me slyly and said with a smile, “Since that encounter with the Rebbe, my morning exercise consists of lifting 200 grams on my arm.”

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a mailing of the Avner Institute <[Rebbebook@Gmail.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000ntW0:001IkzNi00002F_9&count=1388609329&randid=1668140703&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1668140703##)>.
Connection: Weekly Reading - Its ending (Ex. 13:1-10,11-16) consists of two of the four paragraphs written on parchment inside the tefilin boxes.

Biographical note: **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson**, the Lubavitcher Rebbe: 11 Nissan 5662 - 3 Tammuz 5754 (April 1902 - June 1994 C.E.)], became the seventh Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty after his father-in-law’s passing on 10 Shvat 5710 (1950 C.E.). He is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest Jewish leaders 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. His emissaries around the globe dedicated to strengthening Judaism number in the thousands. Hundreds of volumes of his teachings have been printed, as well as dozens of English renditions.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.*

[*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com)*ascent@ascentofsafed.com*