**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Ekev 5771**

**Volume 2, Issue #50 20 Menachem Av 5771/August 20, 2011**

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**Chassidic Story #716**

**The Tenth Man**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000g800:001E7OND00001mFF&count=1310563663&randid=1086093054&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1086093054##)



**Rabbi Levi-Yitzchak Schneerson**

Yekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk), 1935 in the Former Soviet Union

 Another winter night. Silence and fear rule dark desolate streets. A drunk staggers past the secret police. The chief rabbi of the city, the brilliant Torah scholar and kabbalist, Rabbi Levi-Yitzchak Schneerson, is awake, deep in his studies, after a day taken up with underground activities. For there are still Jews around who immerse in a mikvah, pray in a minyan, and teach their children Torah.

**Enjoying Precious Minutes Learning with a Sefer**

 Stealthy messengers come and go with coded notes. Bribe money changes hands. Earlier, when dusk descends, he thanks G-d for whatever successes there were. Then, too, the tension hits a steel trap always ready to slam shut. For a moment he permits the exhaustion to have its say, but his hands are already reaching for a sefer. His eyes find the lines they had left off last night; a smile flickers, and his strength returns. These are the times he loves the best.

 His hours of study soar and then minutes before midnight a soft knock on the door. Your heart stops then. Its never good news.

**The Rabbi Opens the Door for the Unknown Visitor**

 He sits, tense and ready. Another knock: weak, vacillating. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak exhales. No, its not the secret police. The NKVD’s style is: kick, and break through. This visitor needs help. He gets up and opens the door.

 A woman stands there, completely bundled up and very frightened. She enters quickly, as if pursued. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak closes the door after her. Once inside, she takes off her winter wraps, looking furtively into every corner of the house. No one’s there besides the Rabbi and his wife, so she begins to speak. “Rabbi, I’m very thankful to have reached here without being caught. I’m from a distant city, and now you must do a great favor for me.”

 Rebbitzin Chana offers her a chair, but she declines. She’s speaking quickly: “My daughter and her fiance wanted to get married in the government offices. But my heart wouldn’t let me agree to a marriage without a chuppah and kiddushin, the Jewish way. I begged and begged them and they finally consented to come to you for a true Jewish wedding.

**Asked to a Great Kindness for the Young Couple**

 “They’re frightened out of their wits: both are high-level Communist Party officials. If they’re exposed, they’ll lose their jobs if not their lives. They’re coming here exactly at midnight to get married. Please, Rabbi, do this great kindness; marry them. Put three souls at ease.”

 Minutes pass. The clock sounds twelve chimes. More quiet taps on the door, and a young fearful couple comes inside. The rebbitzin takes them quickly into an inner room; the rabbi sets out to find a minyan.

 It’s approaching 1 A.M. Even the NKVD has disappeared. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak moves swiftly and deliberately through the lonely streets, asking the Master of the Universe not to encounter a late-night police squad. Now he knocks on another door, leading the faithful from their beds to the wedding. He prays in his heart not to err regarding the minyan’s discretion as there’s no room for a tragic slip.

**But, Who Will Be the Tenth Man?**

 Nine faithful Jews are in the room. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak feels blessed. Nine faithful Jews in Yekaterinoslav that know how to keep their mouths closed. But, who will be the tenth? Who can he trust?

 His mind scans all the possibilities and decides upon a solution. Wait, he tells them as he leaves the apartment and goes downstairs. Grisha, Chairman of the

Residents Committee, lives on the ground floor by the entrance. For many years he

belonged to the large Yekaterinoslav shul, until the communist madness swept him away and he became a Party member.

 Now he worked hand-in-hand with the NKVD keeping an eye on Jews suspected of underground Jewish activities; reporting deviant behavior. His current assignment: Rabbi Levi Yitzchak his rabbinical activities, and everyone coming to and leaving his home. Grisha sees, writes, and reports everything.

 He dozes now in his observation post, his alertness dulled after a long day of spying. A sudden knocking at the door, and he rises with difficulty to open it. Reb Levi Yitzchak himself is standing there, smiling. Grisha feels confused; he invites the Rabbi inside.

 “Come, Grisha, the rav is holding Grisha’s hands warmly, come complete a minyan for a young Jewish couple. They’re getting married; building a family an eternal house in the path of our fathers.”

**A Flood of Emotions Touch Grisha the Communist**

 Reb Levi Yitzchak’s presence overwhelms Grisha. The elegant beard and noble countenance, and more than anything else his eyes: piercing eyes whose direct gaze looked into a man’s soul. A flood of emotions sweeps through Grisha’s heart. The Rabbi’s request is staggering:

 Grisha’s standing responsibility is to report misdeeds not promote them! But who but Grisha could fathom the personal risk the Rabbi is taking by asking his personal watchman to join and assist him in his underground work. The Rabbi’s willing self-sacrifice for Judaism’s continuation penetrates Grisha’s heart to the core.

 Yet, far beyond any of this, it’s the Rabbi’s trust in him; that look on his holy face that shows the total confidence he places in him. Grisha is overcome at once with pain as well as the greatest wealth he’s ever experienced. The Rabbi himself is counting on me, he thinks, tears filling his eyes...the Rabbi’s placing his trust in me. Me? whispers Grisha, choking. But the Rabbi knows that I... I. He can’t finish the sentence.

**A Voice Radiating Trust and Pleasure**

 Reb Levi Yitzchak hugs Grisha’s shoulders; a flash of awareness passes between them. Grisha locks his door and, as in a dream, follows Reb Levi Yitzchak up the stairs. There are ten kosher Jews here says the rav in a voice radiating trust and pleasure.

 He sits down to write the ketubah, the wedding contract; everything is quickly signed and readied. The rebbitzin produces a tallit, four men take hold of its corners; the wedding canopy is spread above the young couple.

 Reb Levi Yitzchak starts humming the soulful wordless niggun tune customarily sung at the chuppah. The chatan lowers his gaze. Now the kallah, with her mother and RebbitzinChanah Schneerson on either side, begins her seven circles. The chatan places the ring on her finger: Now you are my wife sanctified to me according to the law of Moses and Israel... he says in Hebrew, with a Russian lilt. A new eternal house rises in Israel a house built upon genuine self-sacrifice.

**The 67th Anniversary of the Yahrzeit**

**Of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson**

 Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the translation by Tuvia Natkin of the free rendition by Menachem Ziegelbaum in Kfar Chabad Magazine, and from Mother in Israel.â€

 Connection: Seasonal – The 67th yahrzeit of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson.

 Biographical Note: Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson [1878-20 Av 1944], father of the last Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt”l, was considered by the Rebbe Reshabto be one of his three greatest chassidim. An outstanding scholar and a leading Kabbalist of his generation, he was the Chief Rabbi of the major Ukrainian city Yekaterinoslav (today called Dniepropetrovsk) until his arrest and exile.

*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=0000hAk0:001E8r5r00001fEF&count=1310995411&randid=386480673&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=386480673##)

**The Night of the**

**Murdered Poets**

**By Nahma Sandrow**



**Itsik Fefer**, **hy”d**

 On August 12, 1952, thirteen major Soviet Jewish figures were executed for espionage, bourgeois nationalism, "lack of true Soviet spirit," and treason, including a plot to hand the Crimea over to American and Zionist imperialists.  In the group were famous writers such as Peretz Markish, [David Bergelson](http://www.jewishideasdaily.com/content/module/2010/1/21/on-books/1/the-end-of-everything), and Itsik Fefer—which is why the date has come to be marked annually as the Night of the Murdered Poets—but the murdered also included an actor, a former deputy foreign minister, a scientist, and a general.  A fourteenth defendant died during the four years the group suffered in Moscow's dreaded Lubyanka prison, and a fifteenth was merely sentenced to exile.

 Their ordeal of arrests, tortures, and trials was virtually secret at the time, but according to the many pages of testimony that became accessible in the 1990's, even the judges themselves seemed uncomfortable with the charges.  Now we know that though in the course of those four years all but one defendant confessed to at least some charges, at the final hearings people bravely recanted confessions, and one faced his inquisitors and called them Torquemada.

**Soviet Revolution Began**

**With Thrilling Hopes for Jews**

 The Revolution began with thrilling hopes for Jews. The USSR actually subsidized Jewish institutions, including Yiddish theaters and even theater schools.  Yiddish culture flourished, especially theater and literature. Then came the Five Year Plan and the Great Purges.

 By the 1930's, Jewish institutions were constricting; new rules, sometimes unspoken, controlled what could be written and how; the very spelling of Yiddish words was altered to erase traces of Hebrew roots, and thereby religion or nationality.  By the late 1930's, writers were vanishing.

**And Nobody Dared Ask Why**

 Actors, too, simply failed to show up for rehearsal, and nobody dared ask why. The war brought some domestic respite for the Jews, as the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee became an active arm in government propaganda and international fund-raising against the Nazis.  But after the war, terror gathered and grew.  The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 galvanized the denunciation of the Jews. That year, the Murdered Poets entered Lubyanka.  The show trial known as the "[Doctors' Plot](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Human_Rights/plot.html)" got underway the following year and it seems that Stalin's death in 1953 was all that prevented the total extinction of Jewish life in the USSR.

**Dangerous to Receive Letters**

**From Beyond the Iron Curtain**

 From our side of the Iron Curtain, it was virtually impossible to see what was going on.  In the late 40's, my own family was advised that corresponding with our family in Ukraine meant exposing them to danger.  And any official information was often a lie.

 An anecdote about Itsik Fefer illustrates how much was buried.  As chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, Fefer had visited the U.S. during the war and become friendly with the African-American performer Paul Robeson.  When Robeson visited Russia in 1949, he asked to see Fefer, who by then was a battered emaciated prisoner.

 The authorities stalled Robeson while they fattened Fefer and cleaned him up.  The room where the two men actually met was bugged, of course, so Fefer couldn't say anything out loud, but he repeatedly slashed his hand sideways across his own throat. The fact that much later Robeson told the story indicates that he understood what Fefer was trying to tell him.  At the time, however, he left Russia and said nothing; Fefer returned to Lubyanka, and his death.  In silence, as if they had never existed, the Jews of Soviet Union were "buried without a name, without a number, without a 'here lies.'"

**A Poet Collects Crumbs of Facts to**

**Memorialize Murdered Jewish Artists and Writers**

 Chaim Baider, the poet who wrote those lines, spent the last two decades of his life painstakingly assembling crumbs of facts memorializing the silenced Soviet writers, musicians, painters, actors, and teachers.  When he died in 2003, he left behind a massive archive, now at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.  Now two important Yiddish figures of our day, Boris Sandler, editor of the *Forward*, and Professor Gennady Estraikh, have realized Baider's mission by extracting from his notes the biographies of over four hundred writers, editing them, and assembling them as the *Leksikon fun Yidishe Shrayber in Ratn-Farband* (Biographical Dictionary of Yiddish Writers in the Soviet Union), published by the Congress for Jewish Culture with support from the Holocaust Museum and Baider's own widow and son.

**The Irony of Those Who Came Back**

**To Serve the Revolutionary Ideals**

 This lexicon lists dates of birth and death (when these are known), titles and descriptions of works, occasionally a photo. It names famous writers as well as many who didn't live long enough to establish a reputation.  As Itzik Gottesman, associate editor of the *Forward* and folklorist, points out, all these individual lives together produce a sense of the whole.  They provide enough information to distinguish patterns, such as the cresting waves of deaths, and the irony that in the 1920's, Markish, Bergelson, and others abandoned promising careers in Berlin to come home and serve the ideals of the Revolution.

 Last week was the annual commemoration of the Night of the Murdered Poets at New York's Center for Jewish History.  Because of the new lexicon, this year's event was different from any I'd ever seen.  Here at last was a memorial—and even a celebration!—for those buried "without a name, without a 'here lies.'"  Actor and Executive Director of the Congress for Jewish Culture Shane Baker recited a section of a Markish poem.  Yiddish theater stars Hy Wolfe and Yelena Shmulenson sang settings of lyric poems by Fefer and Moshe Kulbak, writers listed in the lexicon.  Chaim Baider's widow stood on the stage holding up her late husband's book.  *"Zayt gliklekh*—be happy," she cried exultantly. "Teach your children Yiddish.  May Yiddish live and sound over the whole earth!"

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Professionals) Update. The article originally appeared in the August 16, 2011 edition of the website:* [*www.jewishideasdaily.com*](http://www.jewishideasdaily.com)

**Joe Lieberman Scaled Political Heights, But Wants His**

**Legacy to be the Sabbath**

**By Ron Kampeas**

August 8, 2011

 WASHINGTON (JTA) -- Call Joe Lieberman the unlikely evangelist.

 The Independent senator from Connecticut -- and the best-known Orthodox Jew in American politics -- is probably more cognizant than most of his Jewish congressional colleagues about rabbinical interdictions against encouraging non-Jews to mimic Jewish ritual.

 Yet here he is, about to release a book advising Christians and others not to drive to church, to welcome their Sabbath in the evening, to cut off the wired world and to, umm, enjoy your significant other.

**Authors New Book on Shabbos:**

**“The Gift of Rest”**

 Upon meeting with Lieberman in his Senate offices last week, before the Aug. 16 release date of his new book, “[The Gift of Rest: Rediscovering the Beauty of the Sabbath](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1451606176/ref%3Das_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=j025-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1451606176),” he laughed at the term evangelical. But he also embraced it.

 “In a way it is” evangelist, he said.

 Not that he wanted to convert anyone, Lieberman emphasized.

 “This gift, I wanted not only to share with Jews who are not experiencing it, who haven't accepted it, but also in some measure to appeal to Christians to come back to their observance of their Sabbath on Sundays,” he said.

 Lieberman does so in a surprisingly engaging read -- surprisingly because books by politicians fronted by photos where they pose in studied, open-collared casualness are usually a recipe for a surfeit of encomiums packed with feel-goodness but bereft of intellectual nourishment.



 Instead, melding an unlikely array of tales ranging from 16th-century Safed to tension-soaked Republican and Democratic back rooms, Lieberman makes the case for a structured day of rest that offers freedom within iron walls.

 The book also provides a glimpse into how religion shaped this most adamant of congressional centrists, whose stubborn hewing to his beliefs brought him within shouting distance of the vice presidency before propelling him toward the end of his political career (Lieberman announced in January that he will not seek re-election in 2012).

**Liberation from His BlackBerry**

 One potent example of Lieberman’s championing of freedom through restrictions is how the dictates of the holy day liberate him from his BlackBerry.

 “Six days a week, I’m never without this little piece of plastic, chips and wires that miraculously connect me to the rest of the world and that I hope makes me more efficient, but clearly consumes a lot of my time and attention,” he writes. “If there were no Sabbath law to keep me from sending and receiving email all day as I normally do, do you think I would be able to resist the temptation on the Sabbath? Not a chance. Laws have this way of setting us free.”

 As it turns out, this has been a book Lieberman has been considering for a while. He says the seeds of it reach as far back as his first run for state senator in 1970, when his Sabbath observance first created logistical problems for his campaign staff.

**Greeted by Strangers on His Walk**

**To the Synagogue on the Sabbath**

 It emerged full force when Al Gore named him as his running mate in 2000. In Lacrosse, Wis., on a Saturday after the announcement, he found people coming out of their homes to greet him and wish him well as he walked to the local synagogue.

 Conversations with Christians and their curiosity about his observance crystallized the idea for the book, he told JTA in an interview.

 “This is something I thought about doing for a long time,” Lieberman said, “because the Sabbath has meant so much for me. It's really been a foundation for my life.”

 The book is published by Simon & Schuster’s Howard imprint in conjunction with OU Press. Lieberman co-wrote it with David Klinghoffer, a conservative (and Orthodox Jewish) columnist and author, and consulting with Rabbi Menachem Genack, who runs the Orthodox Union’s kashrut division and with whom Lieberman takes a weekly telephone class.

 Genack in an interview downplayed the book’s outreach to Christians.

 “He really wants Jews to read it; he wants to bring the beauty of Shabbos to his own constituency,” Genack told JTA. “But that message and that beauty has a universal theme as well.”

 Each chapter ends with a list of “simple beginnings” -- practices that could launch a reader’s observance: “Turn off the TV, computer, cell phone or all three"; light two candles; bless your children, “placing your hands on their head or shoulders”; and “consider choosing a congregation close enough that you can walk there and home again.”

 In one chapter he describes G-d’s “brilliance” in mandating conjugal sex during the Sabbath.

**Sabbath’s Connections**

**To His Political Career**

 Lieberman’s growth as an observant Jew and his frustrations and triumphs as a politician weave through the book. His Sabbath observance appears to be inextricable from his public career: He withdrew from observance at Yale University, writing in the book that he continued to lay tefillin because it was a private act, but Sabbath observance seemed too public for him.

 It “interrupted the weekend social flow of college life,” he writes.

 The death of his beloved maternal grandmother -- his “Baba” -- in 1967 returned him to the Sabbath observance of his upbringing. Within three years, at age 28 and with the campaigning skills of his Yale Law buddy Bill Clinton assisting him, he won his first elected office, Connecticut state senator.

 “I began to see myself in the larger context of history,” Lieberman said. “I came back step by step to observance.”

**“Easier for Me to be**

**Different in My Political Life”**

 In the book, he says his Sabbath observance “has made it easier for me to be different in my political life when being different is where my beliefs have taken me.”

 His Jewish observance inevitably seeped into his public life, writing vividly of how it influenced his decision in 1998 to chastise Clinton from the Senate floor for his affair with intern Monica Lewinsky. He recalls discussing with his family whether to be the first major Democrat to speak out. His four children said he should; Hadassah, his wife, was torn; his mother, who adored Clinton, urged him to keep silent.

 In the end, his rebuke that the president’s behavior was “immoral” and “harmful” and “too consequential for us to walk away from” made history.

 This break with the Democratic consensus helped lead Gore to choose him as a running mate in 2000; Lieberman represented a clean break with the scandals that had dogged Clinton.

 Many of these episodes seem bittersweet. He writes of the celebratory Sabbath he shared with Al and Tipper Gore on Dec. 7, 2000, when the Florida Supreme Court ruled in favor of a recount that almost certainly would have propelled Gore to the presidency and Lieberman to the vice presidency. The Liebermans rushed to the Naval Observatory, the vice president’s residence, just in time for Shabbat candle lighting, and after dinner the two couples walked the mile or so back to the Lieberman home in Georgetown.

**At the Door of History**

 “It was a night when we felt at the door of history and also very close to these two fine people,” he writes, and stops there. It’s as if he can’t bring himself to the denouement: The door that history opened was not to occupancy of the Naval Observatory but to a profoundly divisive U.S. Supreme Court decision overruling the Florida court that would put George W. Bush in the White House.

 It’s a fluke of the fates keenly felt by his friends; Genack corrects me when I call Lieberman “the first Jew on a major ticket.”

 “He was the first Jew elected vice president,” he says. “He was elected vice president.”

**Connection to Another Vice Presidential**

**Candidate – Sarah Palin**

 The same bittersweet sense borne of lost opportunity informs another recounting in the book of a failed vice presidential bid. Staff for the McCain-Palin campaign urged Lieberman to give then-Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin a pep talk at a low point in the campaign, when she seemed unable to absorb the briefing material for her vice presidential debate with Joe Biden.

 Lieberman talked of how the biblical Esther’s fate as a Jew differed from her destiny as a savior of Jews. The former was a covenant thrust upon her, while the latter was a covenant that handed her a choice. Palin, like Esther, now had a moment of choice: “The covenant of destiny is what we make of ourselves.”

 Palin ate it up, he said.

 How Lieberman concludes this tale, however, again suggests his frustration with history. The Republican candidate, his close friend Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), reportedly wanted to take Lieberman as a running mate, but the Republican establishment convinced McCain otherwise.

 Lieberman recalls urging Palin to “use all the ability you have to take advantage of the moment and realize your destiny,” and then concludes, “And she did.”

 Lieberman laughed when asked if what he meant was that losing was her destiny.

 “I meant that she worked hard and did pretty well in the debate,” he said.

 The book’s political content is hardly a settling of scores. If anything, it is what Israelis call a “heshbon nefesh,” an accounting of a soul.

**Reflections on His Democratic Party Past**

 Lieberman ends the Lewinsky episode by emphasizing that he did not vote for impeachment and regarded the former president as “capable of genuine goodness, even greatness.” He is effusive in his praise of Gore, although the former vice president shocked Lieberman by endorsing Howard Dean, Lieberman’s nemesis, in the 2004 election.

 The book’s fond recollections of Democrats throughout -- particularly Donna Brazile, Gore’s campaign manager -- obscure his painful break with the party in 2006, when he lost his state’s primary election and ran for senator as an Independent. Oddly, that episode is not mentioned.

**A Centrist American**

 The decor in Lieberman’s Senate office is a testimony to the path he chose right through the center of America’s deeply partisan divide. Dominating the entry wall is an invitation to a 2006 event he once hosted marking the 1787 Connecticut Compromise that set up America’s bicameral parliament, and “compromise” defines the photos below it: One of Lieberman with George H.W. Bush, one with Bill Clinton, two each with George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

 The magazine basket is topped with the conservative Weekly Standard; nosing out beneath it is the liberal American Prospect.

**Occasional Regrets Recalled**

 Occasionally a regret seeps through: Describing the village-like atmosphere of his Washington synagogue, Lieberman notes in the book that he and a journalist he once regarded as a friend now barely exchange hellos, and that another friend still chides him for voting to go to war with Iraq in 2002 -- a war that most American Jews eventually came to oppose.

 That’s not the only hint of the Joe Lieberman that has driven crazy many liberal American Jews who otherwise felt great pride in his rise. Lieberman praises John Hagee, the evangelical pastor who founded Christians United for Israel and whose excoriations of President Obama and other Democrats have turned off much of the Jewish establishment.

 And there’s material to drive Jewish conservatives crazy. Explaining his Sabbath compromises, he says that voting for social welfare programs on Shabbat amounted to “pikuach nefesh,” saving of lives, which mandates violating Sabbath prohibitions.

**No Regrets for Striking His Own Path**

 Lieberman says he does not regret striking his own path down the middle.

 “It’s certainly made me more productive as a senator,” he says.

 Perhaps, but it was his closeness to Bush and his Iraq War advocacy that drove him out of contention for the presidential nomination in 2004. The legacy he now longs for, exemplified by this book, has supplanted the legacy that his independence cost him: first Jewish president.

 “I feel that this book may be one of the most important things I do in my lifetime,” Lieberman said. “It’s from really inside me. I hope it affects people’s lives.”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the AJOP Update. The article originally appeared in the J.T.A. (Jewish Telegraph Agency), a wire service utilized by most English-language Jewish newspapers around the world.*

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

**The Joy of a Choson and Kallah to the Rebuilding**

**Of Yerushalayim**

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

What is the explanation of Chazal, Kol Hamesameich Choson V'kalah, K'eilu Banah Achas Meichurvos Yerushalayim? If you cause the Choson and Kalah to be happy, you're like rebuilding one of the ruined buildings of Yerushalayim.

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

|  |
| --- |
| **NTOCjewish-wedding-chuppah-jerusalem** |

Let me explain to you. What was the ancient Yerushalayim? It was buildings, but everything there was a personification of idealism. In Yerushalayim they were idealists. Idealism meant, there was spiritual values. In the houses of Yerushalayim you had Kedusha, you had Chesed, you had good Midos; every good thing was once practiced in ancient Yerushalayim. We have no idea how much Yerushalayim was perfect in human behavior in the days of old.

**Never Saying an Extra Word**

 N'Keai Hadas Shebi'yerushalayim. The Gemorah says, those pure minded men of Yerushalayim, didn't say one extra word, and even when they wrote their names as witnesses on a Shtar, they wrote Reuvain Ben Shimon and the word eid, they didn't want to add because eid is superfluous. They didn't waste that extra word. And so Yerushalayim in the ancient time was full of perfection. Ir Hasholaym, Yerushalayim, a city of Shlaimus.

 Now. Every young couple that starts their lives are starting out with the possibility of building a house of Kedusha. It's up to them. That's their chance. Kedusha requires of course: self control, Midos Tovos, to think about Hakadosh Baruch Hu always; everything you do in that house is L’ovdo Blaivov Sholaim. If a person makes up his mind, he and his wife, they're going to serve Hakadosh Baruch Hu, they'll bring up children Bderech Hatorah with Avodas Hashem, then that house is rebuilding one of the Churvos of Yerushalayim. It's restoring one of the things we once had.

 However, you start them off, the inauguration, the Simchas Choson V'kalah, if you have in mind how great is the building, this Binyan Adai Ad that you’re starting now. Understand that someday you’ll be grandfathers and grandmothers; you'll have a house full of Talmidei Chachomim.

**Present at a Wedding Many Years Ago**

 I have a picture of a certain family. I was present at their wedding many years ago. Today they have grandchildren. Their sons are Talmidei Chachomim, all Talmudei Chachomim, all of them, a family let’s say of ten children. All the boys are Talmidei Chachomim today. Their children, their grandchildren, all Talmidei Chachomim.

 It's a beautiful family. Now I was present at their wedding, they were a young couple without a beard. She was a frum girl. They're married, beautiful wedding, very fine. But did we think that someday it'll turn into a Mosad, Mamesh a Bais Hamikdash their home was. The house is a Bais Hamikdash where all these children grew up and became Bnai Torah.

**Reflecting On What a Marriage Can Turn Into**

 So therefore, when you are Mesameiach a Choson and Kalah and you have in mind what is going to turn into, what's it capable of being, it's like being Mesameiach at the Chanukas Bais Hamikdash. "Baruch Hashem" we say. Now this young couple is going to build from the future a new Bais Hamikdash. That’s one of the Churvos of Yerushalayim.

*Good Shabbos To All.*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt’l,” a transcription of an answer given by Rav Miller to a question from a member of the audience at one on his classic Thursday night hashkafah lectures at his Flatbush shul from 1975 till his petirah in 2001.*

**The Burial that Proved**

**The Existence of G-d**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 This week's Torah portion; the third in the book of Deuteronomy which is devoted to Moses preparing the Jews to enter Israel, contains eight new commandments among which are: not deriving any benefit from idols, to say 'grace' after meals, to fear G-d, to love converts, to pray to G-d and more.

 It also contains a clear indication that the dead will one day rise (11:21 see Rashi).

 At first glance these last two; praying to G-d and the Raising of the dead, don't make much sense.

**Why Should We Pray to G-d?**

 Why should we pray to G-d, and what good can it possibly do? G-d creates us, is infinitely good and knows what is best for us. So why not just accept what He gives? Why try to convince Him to do what WE want?

 And if we suppose that G-d isn't almighty or that He isn't infinitely good, then why waste our time praying? Maybe He wants us to suffer or just doesn't care or can't do anything about it?

 Also this idea of the dead raising is very hard to understand. It means that in the end of days all the souls will return to resurrected bodies. It's even one of the 13 basics of Jewish faith. But it seemingly makes no sense; why not just leave the souls in heaven? What do they have to come back to their bodies?

**A Story that Occurred in New York**

 To understand all this… here is a story I just heard from Rabbi Shmuel Hendel in Kfar Chabad, told to him by Rabbi Eliahu Segal of Rishon L'Tzion.

 It occurred just recently in New York. The phone rang one evening in the home of an orthodox Jewish family with bad news; their 90-plus year old mother, grandmother etc. who had been in a nursing home for the aged, passed away quietly in her sleep.

 Everyone wept, funeral arrangements were made, and early the next afternoon family and friends gathered from near and far to pay their last respects and bring their beloved relative and friend to her final resting place.

 After the funeral as everyone was leaving the gravesite it was announced that the family would 'sit shiva' (observe the seven (shiva) days of mourning) in their home and everyone was invited to comfort them and participate in the prayers thrice daily.

 The next few days were busy, the house was filled with visitors and those who were not able to come sent telegrams and called long distance. But on the afternoon of the third day one strange phone call stood out from all the others.

 The phone rang, one of the children answered and the voice on the other end said, "Hello! Is this Avi? Is everything all right? Are mommy and daddy there? What do you mean who is it? Don't you recognize your grandma? This is Avi right? Nu! So let me talk to your mom or dad. Why don't you come visit?"

**“Mom, is this You?”**

 Her son got on the phone and ….. hesitantly said "Mom, is this you?" "Of course it is!" She replied, "What's going on? Why doesn't anyone come to visit me for three days already? Is everything all right?"

 Mom was still alive! He burst out crying and joyously turned to everyone else, who already heard the boy's conversation. "Grandma didn't die!" He said with a wild look of disbelief "She's on the phone…. She's alive!"

 The joy was great! He told her they were on their way to visit her and in no time they were by her side explaining the whole thing. It had obviously been a terrible mistake.

 But suddenly it dawned on them …… they just had made a funeral and buried someone! Who was that someone? And who were her relatives?

**So Who Really Died?**

 They had been so overwhelmed with their own living grandmother that they hadn't thought about the dead one! So they called the manager of the nursing home and when he heard what had happened he got the secretaries working and in a short time they got to the bottom of it. Unfortunately things like this happen.

 In the same building was another patient with the same name as their grandmother. Both were holocaust survivors, both were in their nineties and both were very similar in build. So somehow the management confused the identities, made a terrible mistake and informed the relatives of the living one instead of the deceased. The management apologized profusely, agreed to pay the price of the funeral, damages, missed work etc. begged them to understand and set to finding the relatives of the deceased woman.

 After a short investigation they discovered that she had only one relative; a son who lived not far away and they all agreed that it would be best if the family of the living woman would deliver the bitter news. After all, they reasoned, probably the son would be angry and they could calm him down by assuring that she was given the utmost honor and respect, show them the gravesite etc.

 But they were in for a surprise.

 As soon as he picked up the phone and heard they were calling from the nursing home and would like to visit him he interrupted and said, "If you're calling to say my mom died no need to come. Just cremate her, throw away the ashes and send me the bill. Okay?"

 They were shocked. They had never experienced such callousness! But when they asked if they could come speak to him, he agreed and a half hour later they were sitting in his home trying to explain to him that cremation is forbidden according to Jewish law and that the custom is there should be a proper Jewish burial, there is the raising of the dead etc.

**Refuses to Believe in the Raising of the Dead**

 But he wanted no part of it on principle. Not only was cremation cheapest, most efficient, and space and time saving ……. it was realistic! All this business about souls, G-d, Judaism and raising of the dead was all nonsense as far as he was concerned. People were like plants or animals that live and die… it's nature. "THAT is reality!" He said emphatically.

 Finally they had no choice but to tell him the truth.

 That, in fact, his mother died several days ago. But by mistake they were told it was their mother and so they not only gave her a Jewish burial but they already sat three days of 'Shiva' for her. They were about to add he doesn't have to worry about money ….. but he didn't give them a chance.

 "What!?" He held his head in his hands and whispered "buried? Mom got buried?"

**A Strange Stunned Look on His Face**

 He had this strange, stunned look on his face. They couldn't figure out what he was doing. He closed his eyes, his face contorted and suddenly he burst out weeping uncontrollably like a baby! From time to time he said, "Oy! Buried!"

 After ten fifteen minutes he calmed down, sat down, asked for a glass of water, wiped his eyes, and explained.

 "My mother was a holocaust survivor. All her family got killed by the Germans along with my father and all his family. But she got out with me. I was just a baby then but we moved to America and after all that happened to her…... she still believed in G-d.

 "At first everything was okay but as I got older, like fifteen sixteen, and didn't want to be different from everyone else so I dropped Judaism. She started bugging me about how we are different, I should marry only a Jewish girl and eat kosher food etc. but it just made me mad.

 "We used to have big arguments until I got so fed up I told her that I'm not going to live a life like hers. As far as I'm concerned there is no such thing as G-d or afterlife or souls or Judaism and when I die I'm going to have my body cremated and that's what I'll do to her's also when she dies. I guess it was sort of cruel but I thought it was for her good, that she should start living in a real world and leave the 'superstitions'.

**Recalls the Deal He made with**

**His Just Departed Mother**

 "Finally I told her I'll make a deal. She should pray to G-d; if she's right and G-d exists then He'll see to it that she gets a burial but if not then… cremation. I was a hundred percent sure, no doubt at all, what the outcome would be.

 "Now I see I was wrong! All this time she was right! Do you understand what happened!? G-d listened to her prayers! She was right! " And he began weeping anew.

 On the spot he agreed to observe the seven days of mourning for her in the house of the previous 'mourners' and to begin learning about Judaism.

 This answers our questions.

 The commandment of prayer is twofold. First to raise our 'energy' i.e. thoughts and emotions to G-d (like a 'sacrifice'), and second to change G-d's will to be like what we want.

**G-d Wants Our Good Deeds and Prayer**

 True, G-d creates the world, and everything He does is for the good. But part of that infinite good, indeed, the very REASON He created the world, is for us to improve it though our deeds and ….. prayer. G-d WANTS us to change His will.

 In fact this, itself is a sort of 'enlivening the dead'!

 As we saw with the 'son' in our story; As soon as he realized that there is a G-d to pray to and that our prayers actually 'please' G-d and change His will so He actually responds….. he became alive.

 That is the reason that the souls will return to bodies: because, in fact, what we do here in this physical world is 'higher' than any of the spiritual heavens. As the fourth Rebbe of Chabad explained;

 "In heaven WE receive infinite spiritual pleasure. But here on earth our deeds and prayers give G-d infinite pleasure!"

 It all depends on us. Just one more good, deed, word or even prayer in THIS world can bring the Raising of the Dead both metaphorically and actually with…..**Moshiach NOW!**

*Reprinted from this week’s email on the parsha from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Cycles (Shimon Zeitlin)**

 Our portion this week Eikev contains some of the most powerful spiritual lessons of the entire Torah. For example, the Torah tells us this week, "Now, O Yisroel, what does Hashem, your G-d ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d to go in all his ways"(Devorim 10:12) The commentator the Chinuch explains that this verse is the source of the mitzvah to fear Hashem. (Mitzvah #432)

 In his commentary on this verse, Rashi quotes the Sages who saying "Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for Fear of Heaven." (Brachos 33b) The Vilna Gaon explains the meaning of the words of the Sages in a very inspirational way: (As heard from Reb Ephraim Wachsman) Hashem is the master of the Universe and everything in it, as Dovid HaMelech (King David) tells us in Tehillim (Psalms)

**The Only Thing We Can Give**

**Hashem is Our Fear of Him**

 "To Hashem belongs the earth and all it's fullness" (24:1) Thus, there is nothing we can give to Hashem because everything is His. However, there is one thing that Hashem does not have, that is fear of Himself. Therefore, we now re-read the words of the verse: "Now, O Yisroel, what does Hashem, your G-d ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d" The only thing we can give Hashem is our fear of Him.

 The Chinuch explains that the mitzvah to fear Hashem is one of the "continuous mitzvahs" which a person must fulfill 24 hours a day 7 days a week. What does it mean to "fear" Hashem? The Chinuch explains that it is a fear of punishment for violating the Holy Torah. The Holy Rambam explains that one of the foundations of the Jewish faith is believing that the wrongdoers will be punished.

**Understanding that Hashem**

**Is Watching Us Constantly**

 The essence of fearing Hashem is having in mind that Hashem is watching us constantly and that there are spiritual consequences for all of actions. If uncorrected, a violation of the Torah will require rehabilitation in a place in the spiritual world called Gehinom. Gehinom is primarily a place of cleansing, where violations of the Torah are scrubbed off of the soul.

 Thankfully, we can avoid being punished for our misdeeds by doing Teshuvah - repentance. The power of Teshuvah is so strong that it can fix a whole lifetime of violating the Torah. As the Rambam tells us, even someone who has for his whole life violated every mitzvah in the Book, can do Teshuvah at the end of his life, and he will not have any of his violations mentioned in his case above in the Supreme Court in Heaven. (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah, 1:3) The following incredibly inspirational story illustrates how one Jew did Teshuvah.

 Sam Zeitlin of Brooklyn, New York was one of the most successful Jewish members of the American National Cycling Team. Sam competed professionally and won many competitions in contests across America in the 1960's. Perhaps because Sam was so successful, he suffered from occasional incidents of anti-Semitism.

**A Turning Point in Sam’s Life**

 A turning point in Sam's life came in 1967 when he competed in the Grand Prix of the Americas, one of the most important races in America. Sam finished first - later to be disqualified. Citing a rule, which had never been enforced either before or since, the officials claimed that Sam had raised his hands in victory prior to crossing the finish line; the officials argued that by taking his hands off the handlebars of the bicycle, Sam had endangered the safety of the nearby spectators. Sam recognized the officials' decision for what it was: pure anti-Semitism.

 Sam decided to leave America to pursue his sports career in another country. Although totally secular, Sam felt a connection to Israel, so he decided to move there. Soon after his arrival in Israel, he contacted the local sports federation, which was more than happy to offer Sam a position on the cycling team. Sam began training again.

**Intrigued By the Way People**

**Prayed at the Western Wall**

 One night, after strenuous training, Sam went to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. He had never been there before, but he knew that it was a place where people prayed. When he arrived at the Wall, he saw that people seemed to be praying endlessly. What were they saying?

 He walked over to two religious-looking young men and began asking them religious questions. After a lengthy conversation, the brothers recognized that Sam was genuinely searching for guidance and inspiration. The two brothers recommended that Sam contact Rabbi Gershon Weinberger, a Chicago, Illinois native who had resettled in Jerusalem with his family.

 Rabbi Weinberger and Sam became close friends. Sam, Rabbi Weinberg and his family spent hours together around the Shabbos table singing and saying words of Torah. Eventually, Rabbi Weinberger suggested to Sam that he enroll in a yeshiva to learn more about his heritage. Sam agreed.

 Sam moved to Bnai Brak, where he began attending yeshiva. In the morning Sam would learn Torah, while in the afternoons, he would continue his bicycle training. As time passed, Sam grew in his Torah and mitzvah observance, at the same time improving his cycling skills. He enjoyed riding on the flat highways up and down the sunny Mediterranean coastline. As he road his bike, he would sing his favorite Shabbos song: Shabbos Hayom L'Hashem.

**Shocked by Scheduling of Olympic Trials on Shabbos**

 As the Olympics drew near, trials were to be held to determine which cyclists would represent Israel's team. The Israeli Sports Federation announced that the cycling trials were scheduled to take place on Shabbos. Sam was shocked. Participating in the cycling trials would involve violating Shabbos. Sam tried in vain to convince the organizers to change the day of the trials; however, the schedule was set. There would be no changes.

 Sam was torn. He had trained for several years to reach the Olympics. However, Shabbos was a holy day for Sam. In the end, Sam's decision was clear: He could not bring himself to violate the sanctity of the holy Shabbos. Life as a religious Jew meant more to him than that one blazing moment of fame.

**Tragedy at Munich Olympiad**

 In the summer of 1972, Israel did not send a cycling team to the 20th Summer Olympic games in Munich, Germany. The Israelis realized that their cycling team was not good enough to compete. During the games, Palestinian terrorists attacked the Olympic village. When the smoke cleared, several Israeli athletes lay dead. Back in Bnei Brak, Israel, Sam reacted to the tragedy with shock, outrage and sadness. As he reflected on the events of the previous couple of years, Sam thought of a phrase from another Shabbos song: If I safeguard the Shabbos, Hashem will safeguard me...

 Today, more than 25 years later, Sam [now known as Shimon] and his family sit around his own Shabbos table. As they come to sing the words of the song: If I safeguard the Shabbos, Sam says a silent prayer of thanks to Hashem for becoming a Shomer Shabbos Jew (a Shabbos observing Jew). (from, Echoes of the Maggid, R'Paysach Krohn p.105-9)

Who Knows When He’ll Die?

 Since none of us knows how long we will live, we really should do Teshuvah every day. As the Talmud explains, "Rebi Eliezer says, 'do Teshuvah one day before you die.' His students asked him rhetorically: 'Does a man know on which day he will die?" Rebi Eliezer answered his students, 'It then makes even more sense to do Teshuvah every day, on the chance that perhaps you should die tomorrow. Such a person will then live all his days in Teshuvah. (Shabbos 153a)

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

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parsha Eikev 5770**

**Story #661**

**The Broken Letter**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 A certain rabbi in Russia owned a pair of tefilin that had been written by Rabbi Moshe of Peshevarsk. It is known that Rabbi Moshe wrote every word of tefilin in holiness and purity, so every existing pair is considered extremely valuable.

 One day, as a sofer [writer of Torah, tefilin and mezuzah scrolls] at the request of the rabbi was inspecting the tefilin, he noticed a letter that seemed to be broken off, as though unfinished. The rabbi asked the scribe to complete the letter so that the tefilin would not be invalid, but the sofer said he could not touch his quill to tefilin scrolls written by the Rebbe of Peshevarsk.

**Another Sofer Declines**

**To Complete the Letter**

 The rabbi then brought the tefilin to another scribe with the same request. This sofer, too, declined. In desperation, the owner of the tefilin finally took them to a sofer without telling him who had written them. When the sofer dipped his quill in ink and extended his hand to repair the letter, a book suddenly flopped out of the nearby bookcase, landing on the scroll of tefilin that lay spread out before him and covering it with dust.

 Those present were startled. But this was nothing compared to the amazement they felt when they picked up the book. After brushing away all the dust from the tefilin parchment, they saw that the seemingly broken letter was actually complete! But even that astonishment paled beside the emotion they felt when, about to replace the book that had fallen, they discovered that it was none other than the famous Ohr P'nei Moshe, written by Rabbi Moshe of Peshevarsk himself!

 [Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from Stories my Grandfather told me (Mesorah) by Zev Greenwald]

 **Connection:** Weekly reading (this week and last) -- tefilin

 **Biographic note:** Rebbe Moshe of Peshevorsk (1720 - 12 Tevet 1806) was the predecessor of the Peshevorsk dynasty (which since 1956 has been based in Antwerp). He was held in high esteem by the brothers R. Elimelech and R. Zusha, and many other chassidic giants. It is said of him that Rabbi Moshe Alshich often appeared to him and taught him Torah. He was famous for the perfection and purity of the Torah, tefilin and mezuzah scrolls that he scribed, which were eagerly sought after and are extremely valuable. He is the author of the acclaimed Ohr Penei Moshe, commentary on the Five Books of Moses and the five Megillot, and a subsequent volume on the Talmud.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org is a project of Ascent of Safed*

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**It Once Happened**

**The Protection of**

**Being a Mohel**

 There was once a Jew who devoted himself to the holy work of performing brit milas (circumcisions) for Jewish infants, bringing them into the covenant of their forefather, Abraham. His honesty and wisdom came to the attention of the king and in addition to the Jew's sacred work, he was engaged by His Majesty to counsel him in the highest financial matters of the realm.

 In his capacity of royal advisor, he was privy to the most secret activities of the monarch, and his loyalty was unassailable. However, one particular minister was devoured by his jealousy of the successful Jewish minister who was so beloved by the king. He devised a clever plot by which he would see his enemy's downfall.

**The Not So-Loyal Servant**

 The Jew had a loyal servant whom he trusted completely, even giving him access to the keys to the king's safe. With a bribe of several hundred pieces of gold, the vicious minister obtained the servant's complicity. He took his employer's keys and regularly ransacked the king's most private documents, bringing them to his new master.

 One afternoon, when the minister had the ear of the king, he happened to mention some information which he could not possibly have known. "How do you know that!?" the king exclaimed in shock.

 "Why, the Jew told me," the devious minister replied. The king's visage noticeably altered, his fury apparent. The Jew had betrayed his trust and he would pay dearly.

 The very same day the Jew was summoned to the palace where the king handed him a letter. "This letter must be delivered by my most trusted servant to my general who is engaged in activities an eight-hour carriage journey from here. Please, deliver the letter yourself."

 The Jew obeyed at once, and, together with his servant, set off on the long trip. Unknown to him, the letter contained these instructions to the general: "The bearer of this letter must be executed at once. Do not regard his protestations of innocence, but seize him and kill him without delay."

**Arriving at a Small Village at Nightfall**

 At mid-journey, nightfall came upon them, and the two stopped at a small village. A Jew recognized the renowned Jew and ran up to their coach.

 "Shalom Aleichem, my master. It is only through the hand of G-d that you have arrived in our village today, for this is the eighth day after the birth of my son, and the day of his brit mila.

 Unfortunately, the mohel has not yet arrived, and it seems he will not come. I beg you to remain here long enough to allow us to fulfill this precious mitzva on the proper day."

 The Jew dismounted and walked to the man's home to examine the infant. The mother also entreated him to stay and perform the brit, and he agreed. The Jew summoned his servant and entrusted to him the king's letter, exhorting him to take the greatest care in carrying out the king's instructions. The servant continued on the garrison and presented the letter to the general.

**Gives the King’s Letter to His Servant**

 The Jew remained with the new parents and participated in the festive meal, then he, too, continued on to the military headquarters. He was greeted with great honor by the general who knew of the great affection the king had for his Jewish ad visor.

 "Why did your excellency trouble yourself to come all this way. I took care of the king's bidding, and your servant was executed as soon as I received the letter."

 The Jew was speechless, realizing the great miracle that he had just experienced. The general continued, "I have some interesting news for you, for your servant confessed his crimes before he died. He was a traitor against both the king and you, his master. Your servant admitted accepting the bribes of Minister S. He was well-paid to steal the king's confidential documents and bring them to his new master.

 Suddenly, the Jew understood the whole situation. Of course, the king considered him a traitor and a betrayer of his sacred trust. That is why the king sentenced him to a terrible death.

 The Jew returned to the capital and appeared before a very surprised king. "How did you get here?" the king blurted out.

 The Jew responded with a complete explanation. He told the king of his conversation with the general and related the plot hatched by Minister S., who had recruited his servant. And lastly, he told the king about the stolen documents. The king summoned his guards at once and the guilty minister was brought in chains to the royal palace. That very day he was executed in the courtyard of his own home.

 The Jewish advisor regained the trust of his king, and was awarded an even greater position. The name of G-d was elevated before the king and his courtiers and the Jew gave thanks for his salvation.

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

**RABBIS' MESSAGES**

**The Importance of Reciting**

**A Beracha with Kavana**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

 “Now Israel, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you?

Only to fear Hashem, your G-d.” (Debarim 10:12)

 The Torah teaches us that bottom line, after all is said and done, the fear of Hashem is the most important thing we can have. The halachah requires us to recite one hundred berachot a day. A berachah, said with proper concentration, makes us more aware of Hashem and we therefore hold Him in awe.

 Our Sages found an allusion to this law in the verse that we quoted. If we read the word mah as if it said me’ah (one hundred), the pasuk would be saying, “It is one hundred that Hashem asks of you.” The meaning is that berachot produce in a person the fear of Hashem, therefore the pasuk teaches that what Hashem wants is that we fear Him; therefore recite one hundred berachot a day.

 The Zohar teaches that a berachah without an Amen is like a letter that remains unopened. Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner would never recite a berachah when there was no one present to respond Amen. Rabbi Reuven Bengis of Jerusalem relates the following amazing story.

 Once, in the middle of the night, Rabbi Chaim became very thirsty. Everyone was asleep and he didn’t want to say the berachah Shehakol with no one to answer Amen. Suddenly there was a knock on the door. A student came to ask the Rabbi for some help on a difficult Gemara. The Rabbi invited him in and before discussing the Gemara, the Rabbi said the berachah on the water and the student responded with Amen. They discussed the Gemara and he thanked him for coming in the middle of the night.

 The next morning the Rabbi saw the student and thanked him again. The student had a blank look on his face that indicated he didn’t know what the Rabbi was talking about. After the Rabbi explained what had happened the previous night with the drink, the student replied that he had not been anywhere near the Rabbi’s house that night. This story spread like wildfire among the yeshivah’s students and has been passed down through the generations.

**The Power of Berachahs**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

 “And Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem ask from you, only to fear Him” (Debarim 12:10)

 The Gemara teaches us that one is supposed to say 100 berachot every day, based on the above verse. Besides reading it as “mah, what,” it can be read as “meah, one hundred.” In the course of a regular day, praying three times, eating three meals, we can usually come across 100 blessings. The question is, how is this law alluded to in this verse, since the words mah and meah are really different from one another?

 The purpose of saying a berachah before or after we eat is to acknowledge that everything comes from Hashem. If we could say the berachot with a little concentration, it will bring us to a greater awareness of Hashem and His might and goodness. This is the method that the Rabbis saw as the best manner for acquiring fear of G-d. If a person lives his life with Hashem’s Name on his lips, before and after eating, while praying and doing misvot, his fear of Hashem will develop and help him get close to Hashem.

 Let us make our berachot with a little more thoughtfulness so that we will acquire that most desired attribute: Yir’at Shamayim, Fear of Hashem.

**A Ray of Sunlight**

**By Rabbi Raymond Beyda**

 “You must stop pouting,” his mother chided twelve-year-old Abraham. “Reuven will be here any minute, and you don’t want him to see you in such a bad mood. It will ruin the day for both of you.”

 “I don’t care,” responded Abraham defiantly. “Besides, what do I have to do with Reuven’s feelings?”

 “When you are happy,” replied his mother in a soft voice, “you are able to cheer up other people. That is a great act of kindness. A happy person spreads positive feelings to others.”

 The Torah requires that people greet each other with a pleasant countenance. One Sage asked Eliyahu Hanavi a question: Who among those in the busy marketplace were destined for the World to Come? The reply designated two men who were jesters, people who spent their time making others smile.

The Power of One’s Mood

 Young Abraham did not understand the effect that his mood could have on another person, because children are very self-oriented. When people mature, however, they must consider others as well as themselves.

 A child can tell you that the sun is 93,000,000 miles from Earth. What a child does not consider is that in spite of its distance from us, the rays of the sun have the ability to warm the faces of denizens of our planet and give them a sense of pleasure and comfort.

 Everyone has the ability to serve as a shining sun to all others with whom they have contact. Each person can create a cloud or radiate light and warmth.

 Today, regardless of the weather, use you energy positively and bring a ray of sunshine into the lives of those around you. The reflection of your light will bounce back and warm you as well. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin*

**A Slice of Life**

**Rejuvenating Jewish Life in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine**

 Rabbi Shmuel and Chana Kaminetski are the Lubavitcher Rebbe's emissaries to Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. In the 20 years since they arrived in that city, together with the other couples that they have brought to Dnepropetrovsk, they have established an empire religious, social, educational, cultural and humanitarian organizations that serve the needs of the Jews of Dnepropetrovsk and its suburbs.

 The Kaminetskis are part of a network of hundreds of Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries in the former Soviet Union serving Jewish communities throughout the 15 countries of the CIS.

**The Lubavitcher Rebbe’s Father**

 On their website ([www.djc.com.ua](http://www.djc.com.ua)) the Dnepropetrovsk Jewish Community lists as their founder Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, the father of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who was the Chief Rabbi of Dnepropetrovsk from 1907 to 1939. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's outstanding scholarship, piety, and tireless efforts on behalf of the Jewish community were so renown that he was asked to be Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem. But Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and his wife Rebbetzin Chana chose to remain in Dnepropetrovsk and lead the Jewish community there.

 In 1939, the USSR census population took place. By that time, Communism had such a strong hold that Jews were afraid to state on the questionnaire that they were Jewish and many listed "none" as their religion. When Rabbi Levi Yitzchak learned about this he gave an inspired speech at the synagogue and persuaded Jews not to conceal their faith. The head of the Dnepropetrovsk NKVD heard about this and ordered Rabbi Levi Yitzchak to come to him and confirm that there was no discrimination in the city.

**The Rabbi Refuses to Lie and is Arrested**

 The rabbi refused to lie after which it was resolved to arrest Rabbi Levi Yitzchak for "disseminating active anti-Soviet propaganda, and anti-Soviet agitation of slanderous and defeatist nature." Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was arrested the following day, an act that so shocked the Jewish community that two members of the synagogue board passed away suddenly.

 Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was released but re-arrested eight months later. He was sentenced by a special tribunal to five years of exile in Kazakhstan. He lived in the impoverished village of Tzili, bereft of community, family and even the most basic human needs. Two years later, Rebbetzin Chana joined him.

 In April of 1944 the Schneersons were given permission to move to Almaty, a village with slightly better conditions than Tzili. But the hard life of exile had taken its toll. Four months later, during the night of 20 Av, 1944, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak awoke and asked for some water to wash his hands. When the water was brought to him, he said: "It's time to move to the other side..." These were his last words.

 Fast forward five decades from Reb Levi Yitzchak's arrest and the slow-down and eventually demise of Jewish life in Dnepropetrovsk. In June 1990, Rabbi Shmuel and Chana Kaminetski were sent to the city by the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

**A Remarkable Renaissance of Jewish Life**

 Starting from that moment, the renaissance of Jewish life in Dnepropetrovsk took off at a remarkable rate. In 1991 the Ohr Avner Levi Yitzchak Jewish day school, which quickly became the largest Jewish school in Europe, was opened. Charitable foundations and cultural organizations were opened that year, as well. In 1992, over 5,000 Jews took part in a grand Chanuka concert at the Meteor Ice Palace.

 A close relationship with the Jewish community of Boston was established, allowing for the opening of a women's clinic and a children's clinic in Dnepropetrovsk. The following years saw the establishment of: fund for loans to Jewish businesswomen; Big Sister/Big Brother program for children from single-parent families; a program for special needs children; Beit Baruch Assisted Living Facility for Seniors; the reconstruction of the Golden Rose Central Synagogue; the Beit Tzindlikht Children's Educational Center; Boys and Girls Children's Homes for orphans or children from dysfunctional homes; Soup kitchens and food pantries regularly aiding 6,000 needy families and elderly; Beit Chana Teacher's College... and this is a partial list! Today, construction is underway on the Menorah Center which, at 40,000 square meters will be the largest Jewish Community center in the world!

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

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

**Torah Vs. Chesed**

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

How should one divide his time between Torah and doing Chesed?

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

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| --- |
|  |

And you have to know this is a very difficult question. It's a big question that has occupied the minds of all great men. But there’s one Klal in the Rambam. The Rambam said, it’s a Mitzvah Sh'efsher L'asos Al Yedai Achairim, if something can be done by other people who are willing to do it, and you can spend your time on Torah, then do it, Learn Torah.

 Let others who are willing to do the Mitzvah of Chesed do it themselves. However - if there is a Gemilus Chasodim that has to be done , and there’s nobody around to do it, so it depends on the necessity, on the urgency, because you cannot give away all your life just to help other people.

 One of the greatest forms of Gemilus Chesed to the Klal Yisroel is to produce Lamdonim for them. And so when you’re a Yeshiva man, and you’re producing a Talmid Chachom out of yourself, you're also doing a Gemilus Chesed. Now whether you should go out on the streets and catch boys and girls and bring them into Torah, or spend your time studying Reshonim and Achronim on the Gemorah yourself, that's a question that's not easy to solve. And so we leave this to the Roshai Yeshivas or to individuals each one according to his understanding.

 In general however, if it's possible that somebody else is willing to do the Mitzvah, then let them do it, and you go back to your Gemorah.

 *Good Shabbos To All*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l” and based on a transcription of a question posed to Harav Miller by members of the audience at his classic Thursday night hashkafah lectures at his shul in Flatbush. To listen to the audio of the Question and Answer, please dial (732) 534-08868.*

**THE GOLDEN COLUMN**

**The Gaon Rabbi**

**Suleiman Mussafi, Zs"l**

 The holy Torah was the joy of the life of the Gaon Rabbi SuleimanMussafi, zs"l, from his youth, and he toiled in it with tremendous constancy. After his wedding though, his father fell ill, and he was no longer able to support his family and the additional family of six souls that he had adopted. The two families fell to the level of just a portion of bread.

 "The time has come for G-d, they have nullifiedyour Torah." Rabbi Suleiman, twenty years old, got up and went to the wealthiest man in Baghdad, Menahem Daniel. He offered himself to him as his assistant. He was hired and showed genius-like insight and astounding honesty. The blessing of G-d accompanied him in all his deals and he became the right hand of the wealthy man in all his dealings.

**Refuses to Take a Haircut During**

**The Days of Omer Counting**

 During the days of the counting of the Omer, he behaved according to the custom of the Ari, not to get a haircut until the holiday of Shavuot. His employer wanted to send him to an important business meeting with the mayor and demanded that he take a haircut for the meeting, since that was only an extra measure of righteousness.

 Rabbi Suleiman refused, and his employer conceded with one condition: If the mayor would be annoyed and insulted by his dishonorable appearance, he would be fired immediately! Rabbi Suleiman agreed to the condition.

 Lo and behold, the mayor was not only not angry, but he requested that the man would always send Rabbi Suleiman to him as his representative! He told his assistants that he was the most honest person that he had ever met!

**Constantly Learned the Holy Torah**

 Even during this period, when he was working as the assistant and right hand of the wealthy man, he constantly learned the holy Torah. For six hours a day he learned the hidden Torah with the Gaon RabbiYehudah Fetia, zs"l, and for many hours during the day he learned the revealed Torah with the Gaon Rabbi Nisim Kaduri.

 The wealthy man respected the time of his assistant and bought him a service car, rare in those days, so that he could travel quickly from place to place and devote most of his time to learning Torah. Every time he would enter the expensive car, he would whisper to himself: "Sons of death, why are you lifting your eye? There is no advantage to man over beast" so that he would not become haughty…

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Aram Soba Newsletter from Congregation B’nei Yosef in Flatbush.*

**The Flotilla Farce**

**By Danny Ayalon**

**Israel’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs**



 A couple of years ago, a Palestinian refugee camp was encircled and laid siege to by an army of tanks and Armored Personnel Carriers. Attacks initiated by Palestinian militants triggered an overwhelming response from the army that took the life of almost 500 people, including many civilians. International organizations struggled to send aid to the refugee camps, where the inhabitants were left without basic amenities like electricity and running water. During the conflict, six U.N. personnel were killed when their car was bombed.

 Government ministers and spokesmen tried to explain to the international community that the Palestinian militants were backed by Syria and global jihadist elements. Al Qaeda condemned the government and the army, declaring that the attack was part of a “crusade” against their Palestinian brothers.

 A Palestinian refugee collects metal and plastic objects at a garbage dump in the Palestinian refugee camp of Beddawi near Tripoli.

**Killings Took Place in Lebanon**

 While most will assume that the events described above took place in the West Bank or Gaza, they actually took place in Lebanon in the summer of 2007, when Palestinian terrorists attacked the Lebanese Army, which struck back with deadly force. The scene of most of the fighting was the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in Northern Lebanon, which was home to the Islamist Fatah al-Islam, a group that has links with al Qaeda.

 At the time, there was little international outcry. No world leader decried the “prison camps” in Lebanon. No demonstrations took place around the world; no U.N. investigation panels were created and little media attention was attracted. In fact, the plight of the Palestinians in Lebanon garners very little attention internationally.

**400,000 Palestinians Abused in Lebanon**

 Today, there are more than 400,000 Palestinians in Lebanon who are deprived of their most basic rights. The Lebanese government has a list of tens of professions that a Palestinian is forbidden from being engaged in, including professions such as medicine, law and engineering.

 Palestinians are forbidden from owning property and need a special permit to leave their towns. Unlike all other foreign nationals in Lebanon, they are denied access to the health-care system. According to Amnesty international, the Palestinians in Lebanon suffer from “discrimination and marginalization” and are treated like “second class citizens” and “denied their full range of human rights.”

 Amnesty also states that most Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have little choice but to live in overcrowded and deteriorating camps and informal gatherings that lack basic infrastructure.

 In view of the worsening plight of the Palestinians in Lebanon, it is the height of irony that a Lebanese flotilla is organizing to leave the port of Tripoli in the next few days to bring aid to Palestinians in Gaza. According to one of the organizers, the participants are “united by a feeling of stark injustice.”

**The Dishonesty of the**

**Whole Flotilla Exercise**

 This attitude exposes the dishonesty of the whole flotilla exercise. Whether it is from Turkey, Ireland or Cyprus, those that participate in these flotillas reek of hypocrisy. There are currently 100 armed conflicts and dozens of territorial disputes around the world. There have been millions of people killed and hundreds of millions live in abject poverty without access to basic staples. And yet hundreds of high-minded “humanitarian activists” are spending millions of dollars to reach Gaza and hand money to Hamas that will never reach the innocent civilians of Gaza.

 This is the same Gaza that just opened a sparkling new shopping mall that would not look out of place in any capital in Europe. Gaza, where a new Olympic-sized swimming pool was recently inaugurated and five-star hotels and restaurants offer luxurious fare.

**Markets Brimming with All Manner of Foods**

 Markets brimming with all manner of foods dot the landscape of Gaza, where Lauren Booth, journalist and “human rights activist,” was pictured buying chocolate and luxurious items from a well-stocked supermarket before stating with a straight face that the “situation in Gaza is a humanitarian crisis on the scale of Darfur.”

 No one claims that the situation in Gaza is perfect. Since the bloody coup and occupation by Hamas of Gaza in 2007, in which more than 100 Palestinians were killed, Israel has had no choice but to ensure that Hamas is not able to build up an Iranian port on the shores of the Mediterranean. Until Hamas meets the three standards laid out by the international community, namely renouncing violence, recognizing Israel’s right to exist and abiding by previously signed agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, Hamas will continue to be shunned by the international community.

**Israel’s Justification for the Blockade**

 While Israel’s policy is to continue to see that all civilian needs are addressed, it can not allow Hamas to rearm and use Gaza as a base to attack Israel and beyond. For this reason, Israel initiated a blockade, fully legal under international law, to ensure that no items can be appropriated by Hamas to attack innocent civilians.

 Organizations that wish to join the U.N. and the Red Cross to deliver goods or aid to Gaza are welcome to do so through the Kerem Shalom crossing or even through Egyptian ports. Those that refuse and seek to break the legal blockade to boost Hamas are interested in provocation.

 If Israel allows these confrontational flotillas to successfully open up a shipping lane for arms smuggling for an Iranian proxy, then the region will suffer from continuous conflict. Actions that embolden the extremists will be at the cost of the moderates and this will pose a grave danger to moving the peace process forward.

 The latest flotilla preparing to leave from Lebanon fully exposes not only the hypocrisy but the danger of these provocative vigilante flotillas. The Lebanese flotilla, whose organizers claim injustice while ignoring the dire human rights situation of the Palestinians in Lebanon, amply demonstrate that these flotillas have nothing to do with humanitarian concerns and everything to do with delegitimizing Israel.

*Reprinted from the July 29th edition of the Wall Street Journal as featured on matzav.com*

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

**Learning Why You should**

**Be Grateful to Hashem**

“*And You shall bless Hashem*” (Debarim 8:10)

 The word U’Berachta (you shall bless) is from barech, derived from berech (a knee). It literally means not “bless” but “to bend the knees” in humility of deep gratitude. When one receives a gift from a Donor to whom he is unable to repay, all that he can do is to demonstrate his humble gratitude (“bending the knee”) to his Benefactor. We bend our knees (Amidah) to Hashem because we are weighed down with all of the blessings He showers on us and that we owe him for.

**Just Walk Into an**

**Eye Doctor’s Waiting Room**

 If you have a hard time thinking of what He is doing for you, just walk into an eye doctor’s waiting room and take a look at the people sitting all around, one with bloody eyes, one with bandages, another wearing dark glasses. They are suffering. Did it ever occur to you how healthy your eyes are?

 Thank you, Hashem. “Baruch Ata Hashem pokeach ivrim”, Who opens the eyes of the blind.

 This principle of expressing our gratitude to our Benefactor is a cause of the greatest excellence in ourselves. “Sing, you righteous ones, to Hashem; for the upright, praise is befitting” (Tehillim 33:1). This means: for those who desire to be upright, it is for their benefit to praise Hashem. Those persons that develop the genuine attitude of appreciating Hashem’s countless forms of kindliness will thereby gain a love of the Benefactor. And as they continue to sing to Him and to express His praise, they come closer to Him and thereby gain excellence of mind and character.

 The secret is to spend time to learn how to thank Hashem. But first we must learn why you should be grateful to Hashem. For example: you have to learn to appreciate your shoes and even shoe laces.

**Appreciating Your Belt**

 Remember how you felt when one of your laces broke and you didn’t have a replacement? Did you appreciate the metal tips on the laces? Do you appreciate your belt? Do you have gratitude for the holes in your belt? Some of the holes are for “before breakfast” and others are for “after breakfast”. These,and thousands of similar items must be studied so that you can eventually learn to be grateful for them.

 To attain the state of true love of Hashem is the highest perfection. “He that sings (to Hashem) in this life is rewarded that he shall sing in the World to Come” (Sanhedrin 91b).

 “The righteous sit with crowns on their heads and enjoy the splendor of the Shechina” (Berachot 17a). “These crowns are the understanding of Hashem that they gained in this life” (RMBM).

Adapted from “Fortunate Nation” by Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l.

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

**The Blue Hats vs. The White Hat**

**A Testimony to Divine Providence**

**By** [**Sarah Azulay**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword.asp?kid=11385)

 Sometimes, huge "coincidences" float above our heads until, one day, they fall smack into our laps. The Baal Shem Tov once told his students, "A leaf doesn't blow in the wind unless the Divine Will commands it." I always wondered what that meant.

 Of course, the basic meaning is that nothing happens "by chance." If I stub my toe or get a promotion – all come from the same source, the Creator of the World.

 In Hebrew, it is called "*Hashgacha Pratis,*" or Divine Providence, and it is a mind-boggling concept. Essentially, what an ant will eat for dinner, to which nations will be at war, is monitored deeply and intensely by the Almighty – every second of every day.

My Workload Had "Happened" to Dry to

A Weak Dribble in the Early Part of 2009

This all sounded sweet and dreamy in theory, but I was unable to apply the concept first hand – to really feel what this meant – until last summer, when my own true story of Divine Providence unfolded like a five-part play, scripted, directed and produced by the Master Planner of them all.

 It all started like this. Right after Passover, I baked challah with a key inside, which, for kabbalistic reasons, is intended to unlock the gates of sustenance. I stayed up with my husband until 1am baking that challah and, exhausted but hopeful, I returned to work the next day only to "happen" to find a message in my inbox that the managing partner of my firm and direct supervisor wanted to meet with me.

**Didn’t Sound Too Good**

 That didn't sound too good. The financial market had crashed worldwide, and although I had been a star employee for eight years, my workload had "happened" to dry to a weak dribble in the early part of 2009. I had raised this concern with my supervisor, but he was busy hoarding the work himself, since there wasn't much to parcel out. He had all but ignored my pleas for more assignments. After reading the email, and without giving it much more thought than panicking, I walked into my supervisor's office and asked him directly about this upcoming meeting.

 "Your work has been slow," he "happened" to say, "and your salary is too high – the highest in the office – so I think they want to reduce it." To this day, I always wondered who "they" were. Let's call them the Blue Hats.

**Sole Support of Six Children**

 I felt my neck muscles constrict and my mouth go dry. As the sole support of six children, and in the middle of building our house, I couldn't afford any reduction in salary. A weird thought "happened" to cross my mind at that moment, and I emphasize this because I am not known for my outlandishly positive attitude. "This is going to be good," I thought.

 Where did that come from? I shook my head, but for some reason, the thought calmed me down. I argued a bit with my supervisor, but he said that it was not up to him and that I should wait until the meeting.

 "You are the only one in the firm who will take a pay cut," the managing partner informed me bluntlyThe meeting day came. I had been calculating how to live with a five or ten percent pay cut (the salary reductions I had heard about at other companies), and how to earn extra income to compensate. What a surprise awaited me! The Blue Hats did not want to reduce my salary by five or ten percent, but by thirty percent!

 "You are the only one in the firm who will take a pay cut," the managing partner informed me bluntly. As if the words came from somewhere else, I told him it would be better for me not to work at all than to take that kind of a pay cut. He spoke some other jibberish, but there would have to be a pay cut. We would talk about it further over the next few weeks and reach an agreement, he assured me.

**What About the Key in the Challah?**

 I left his office thinking: "What about the key in the challah?" A week after the meeting, and not having heard back from the Blue Hats, I telephoned a close friend and bemoaned my fate; right away, she "happened" to suggest that I look for another position. The thought had never entered my mind.

 "Look for another position?" I pondered. In the world's worst economy since the Great Depression? In Israel, which isn't known for its "golden opportunities"? And with a language barrier to boot? Who would hire me? Who would even look at my resume? I had previously tried for six years to find a position and had sent out hundreds of resumes. In the best of economies, nothing "happened" to come – despite my prayers, tears and efforts. Where would I find a position in the worst of economies?

**Sent Out Resumes the Next Day**

 I sent out three resumes the next day, including one to someone who had worked on the opposing side of a prior transaction in which I had "happened" to serve as a substitute for the vacationing attorney from our firm. Let's call him the "White Hat."

 After sending the resumes, I went to a park near the office and sat on a bench. I just looked up at the sky and said, "Master of the World, I don't know what is going on here, but please just give me faith to know that You run the world and everything is for the best." I sat for a while praying to the Almighty, and returned to the office.

**The Email from the White Hat**

 There just "happened" to be an email waiting for me – from the White Hat. "Come right away for an interview; we are looking to fill a position and need someone instantly." I rubbed my eyes in disbelief, and after saying a prayer of thanks, I wrote back to arrange a meeting date.

 The interview came and went; I was given a test assignment, which I completed quickly. The White Hat told me that I would have an answer in two weeks. In the interim, I spoke with a recruiter, who told me that there were only two positions of which she was aware for someone with my skill set; one with – you guessed it – the White Hat, and one with a company in northern Israel, out of my commute range. Talk about a tight job market.

 Dejected, I stared at the computer and "happened" to find a message in my inbox Three weeks passed, and I had not heard from the Blue Hats or the White Hat. Maybe the Blue Hats gave up, I wondered. Or maybe the White Hat changed his mind about hiring anyone. Suddenly, as if this thought "happened" to trigger the next chain of events, the managing partner "happened" to slither into my office and triumphantly inform me that the other Blue Hats would not reduce my salary by thirty percent, but only by twenty-five percent.

**Resisting Again a Salary Reduction**

 How generous, I cringed inwardly. I again resisted the salary reduction, and he said that he would get back with me. Dejected, I stared at the computer and "happened" to find a message in my inbox from the White Hat. Slowly, I took a deep breath and opened it. It read: "Would you like to come back to discuss the job?" I started to wonder if there was a message in all of this.

 While this drama was evolving, we were having extreme (and this is an understatement) difficulty completing our house construction, and I didn't anticipate moving in, if at all, until after Sukkot. It was mid-July, and I doubted the White Hat would want to wait that long for me to start.

**Chosen Over More than 25 Other Candidates**

 In short, at the meeting with the White Hat, I sat dumbfounded as I learned that I had been selected from over 25+ candidates, and I received a job offer which was better than my current employment, *and* they readily agreed that I could start immediately after Sukkot. The White Hat added that I had an extra advantage in the selection process since I "happened" to work opposite him in that earlier transaction.

 As I entered my office after accepting my new job offer, still in shock over how the pieces of a well-woven tapestry had fallen into place, my supervisor "happened" to walk into my office to tell me that the Blue Hats were willing to wait until – you guessed it – after Sukkot to reduce my salary. It was really too good to be true.

**A Generous Severance Package**

 Above all this – as if this wasn't enough – I was given a generous severance package by the Blue Hats which they were forced to give by law, and which we needed (although I didn't know it in July) in order to complete house construction. The Blue Hats had actually changed the company policy on severance at the beginning of the year, but the method in which they treated me "happened" to require them to give me a much larger severance package with a calculation based on the number of years I had worked there. What a turn of events; the Blue Hats had tried to save pennies, and instead, lost much, much more. Who could have dreamed of such exacting justice?

We did move into our house – one week before I started working, and I had just enough time to unpack and settle in.

 Sometimes, we are blessed with just a glimmer of the brilliance of Divine ProvidenceIn looking back at the incredible Hand that shaped this story, I realized the most powerful lesson of all: the Blue Hats and the White Hat were all on the same side. All of their actions were for the good. G‑d used the frugality of the Blue Hats and the generosity of the White Hat for my own good and, of course, none of them even knew that they were actors on a stage that had already been set.

**Sometimes One is Blessed with a**

**Glimmer of the Divine Providence**

 A person almost never sees the picture this clearly, but sometimes, we are blessed with just a glimmer of the brilliance of Divine Providence. In my case, it was so awe-inspiring that I feel compelled to share it and spread the light. Just look deep enough into your own "happenstances" and you will see that "a leaf doesn't blow unless the Divine Will causes it to happen."

*In memory of my father, Yaakov ben Yehuda Leib, and my mother, Annilee Patricia bat Rita.*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**An Offer You**

**Can Refuse**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 Avi is a Jerusalem cab driver who has a regular passenger whom he refers to as his "special mitzvah". Almost every day he transports a totally blind youngster from his home in Tel Aviv to a special school for the sightless in Jerusalem.



 A very special relationship has developed between the youngster and the cabbie who treats him like his own child.

 One day Avi had a rich tourist for a passenger who was so impressed with the kindness shown by the cabbie that he made him an offer he was sure could not be refused.

 "I have $10,000 here in my pocket," he said, "which I am prepared to give you if you sell me the merit of your mitzvah in dealing with this child."

 To his surprise Avi, a non-observant Jew with a Jewish heart, informed him that for even a million dollars he would not give up the merit of this mitzvah, which he saw as his passport to Gan Eden.

*Reprinted from the Ohr.edu, the website of Ohr Somayach International in Yerushalayim.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**The Meaning of Life**

 The Torah this week spells out the rewards for living a life dedicated to mitzvahs.  As it states in the opening verse of the Parsha, "This shall be the reward when you listen to these laws, and you observe and perform them; Hashem, your G-d will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers.  He will love you, bless you and multiply you... You will be the most blessed of all the peoples..."  (Devorim 7:12-14)

 Hashem has given us a limited number of days on this earth. Happy is the man who realizes the purpose of life and uses his limited time wisely.  The purpose of life is happiness in growing closer to Hashem, through the performance of mitzvahs.  We must therefore use our time wisely in this world by focusing on Torah and mitzvahs.

 There once was a man named Yankel who planned to travel from Eretz Yisroel to America by ship. A month before the sea voyage, Yankel noticed on the ship's itinerary that the ship would stopover in France for one day.

 Yankel was very excited at the possibility of visiting France. He immediately began to learn French, spending all of his free time mastering the language. Yankel also went to a tailor and had the tailor fashion for him a suit in the latest French styles.

 When it finally came time for the ship to sail, Yankel realized his mistake: Yankel had spent all his free time preparing for his one day in France, but he had neglected his final destination of America. It was too late; he boarded the ship without a word of English and with no clue of American customs.

 The ship soon arrived in France. Yankel's fellow passengers were envious of Yankel as he came down off the ship like a perfect Frenchman. Yankel was able to talk to the locals in their language and he was able to shop in stores.

 By the next day, it was already time for the ship to set sail. Yankel had enjoyed himself, but he dreaded the last leg of journey, because he was not prepared at all for life in America.  (adapted from The Midrash Says)

 Hashem should be kind to us and grant us long lives; however, we must know that our ships can sail at any moment to our final destination. This world is merely a preparation for the world to come, as the Mishnah says "this world is similar to a lobby before the world to come, prepare yourself in the lobby in order to enter into the banquet hall." (Avos 4:21) It is ironic that we often envy those whose success is in based on their wealth!  We would do better to envy those who are spiritually successful, because those people are best preparing themselves.  In this world we do mitzvahs which bring us closer to Hashem and prepare us for the World to Come.

 One of the most powerful mitzvahs we can do in this life is the study of the Torah.  In fact, the study of Torah is greater than all other mitzvahs of the Torah!  Why is that so?  Because it is only through learning Torah that we will know the correct path to take in life.  We therefore must utilize as much time as possible in life learning Torah.  The following amazing true story illustrates the importance that one great Torah leader  placed on the use of one's time wisely on this earth to learn Torah.

 He was a relatively young man; however, Naftali Trop's legendary ability to dissect a topic in the Talmud was enough of a qualification for the Chofetz Chaim to hire the young man as the Rosh Yeshivah of the Radin Yeshivah.   Reb Naftali was was commonly known as the "Granat" (an acronym for Gaon Reb Naftali Trop). The young men in the yeshivah loved their rebbi and eagerly drunk in every word of Torah that he spoke, always thirsting for more.

 Sadly, Reb Naftali's was struck with illness, and his physical condition began to deteriorate to the point where he was no longer able to teach as he had for over twenty-five years. The young men of the yeshivah, his devoted students, stormed the gates of Heaven, beseeching Hashem to grant Reb Naftali a complete recovery.

 But it was to no avail, as his condition worsened. Shifts were arranged for groups of students to recite Tehillim - Psalms for the recovery of their beloved rebbi.

 One group of young men even went so far as to take up a most unusual collection — asking fellow yeshivah boys if they would donate time from their own lives, to give to their rebbe. The boys quickly responded. Some gave days, other weeks and some were even willing to give up to a year.

 All told, the amount of time they had accumulated was over five years' worth of life. And now they wanted to approach the Chofetz Chaim, Reb Yisroel Meir Kagan, for a pledge.

 They knocked on the door to the Chofetz Chaim's room and presented their idea to the venerated sage. The Chofetz Chaim listened and then placed his hand over his forehead. The furrows of his forehead bore evidence of the burden of this critical decision. Reb Naftali was considered one of the "oros Shel olam" (lights of the world) and no one knew that better than the Chofetz Chaim.

 After a few moments the Chofetz Chaim looked up and announced that he had come to a decision. The young men waited breathlessly. "I've thought about it. Because of Reb Naftali's greatness I am willing to give — one minute of my life to Reb Naftali!"

 Had they heard correctly? They were astonished! The Chofetz Chaim blessed them and thanked them for their noble work on behalf of Reb Naftali. They exited the room and walked back to the beis medrash - study hall. But one notion dominated their thoughts. There is absolutely no one in the entire world who is more sensitive and giving than their rebbe, the Chofetz Chaim. And there is no one who is more aware of Reb Naftali's greatness than he. Yet all he would give was one minute of his life!

 How precious, then, is time! How precious is life! Perhaps what the Chofetz Chayim was teaching the bochurim - yeshiva students is that the greatest merit for Reb Naftali's recovery would be for them to use their time properly.

 They returned to the beis medrash, related what had transpired, discussed it and agreed to return to their learning with a new understanding of what a moment of Torah learning can accomplish. (Reb Yechiel Spero, Touched by a Story 2, p. 214)

 A Torah lifestyle is a rewarding path for every Jew.  Let us therefore take advantage of every minute, especially to perform the greatest mitzvah, the study of Torah which leads to happiness, mitzvahs and goods deeds.

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

**Parsha Perspectives: Choshen Mishpat**

**Grudges and Grievances**

**By Rabbi Yehonoson Dovid Hool**

 In *Parshas Eikev* (*Devarim* 8:10) we are given the commandment to recite *Birchas Hamazon* (grace after meals). The *mitzvah* as we practice it is comprised of four *brachos* (blessings). While the first three are mandated by the Torah, the fourth *brachah* was instituted by *Chazal* (our Sages), and there is a fascinating story about its origin.

 Learning that story will give us an important and possibly surprising insight into one of the most difficult challenges that one can face in the area of interpersonal relationships - bearing a grudge against someone who has wronged you.

**What Was the Significance of Tu b’Av?**

 The *Mishnah* at the end of *Ta'anis* relates that there were no *Yomim Tovim* (holidays) for *Klal Yisroel* (the People of Israel) that were greater than *Yom Kippur* and Tu b'Av (the fifteenth of Av). The Talmud explains that Yom Kippur was a significant *Yom Tov* because of the opportunity offered for all those who repent to be forgiven for their sins. But why was *Tu b'Av* such a special day? What was the source of the day's great celebration?

 Chazal give several answers to this question. One of them is that it was the day that those who were massacred in the city of Beitar were finally buried. The saga of Beitar is the story of the final episode in the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* and the exile from *Eretz Yisroel* (the Land of Israel).

**The Importance of Beitar**

 Beitar was a large city in *Eretz Yisroel* which retained independence for a full fifty two years after the destruction of the Temple. Moreover, an initially successful rebellion against Roman rule was launched from there, led by the famous Bar Kochba. So charismatic, powerful and successful was Bar Kochba that the great sage Rabbi Akiva believed him to be the *Moshiach* (Messiah).

 However, it was not to be. The Romans eventually brutally crushed the rebellion, destroying the city of Beitar and massacring all its residents. The blood of the victims ran so freely that for seven years the enemy had no need to further fertilize their vineyards. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel reports that before the massacre there were five hundred schools in Beitar, each with at least five hundred children.

**Romans Refused to Allow the**

**Dead of Beitar to be Buried**

 When the Romans overran the city, they wrapped every child in his scroll and set them on fire. "I," said Rabbi Shimon "am the only survivor." The Roman leader then refused to allow the bodies to be buried, and instead piled them up as a fence around a huge vineyard. Miraculously, the bodies did not decompose. Eventually, permission was given to bury the bodies. The day that they were finally brought to burial was the 15th of *Av*.

 Because of the great miracle on that day, the *Sanhedrin* (the Jewish High Court) instituted the *brachah* of *Hatov Vehameitiv* (He Who is good and Who bestows good), the fourth *brachah* of the *Birchas* *Hamazon*, in recognition that the bodies did not decompose and that they were finally brought to burial. They also instituted that whenever someone is drinking wine and then presented with a better quality wine, a special *brachah* of *Hatov* *Vehameitiv* should be recited before partaking of the better wine.

**What Was Unique About the Miracle**

**Of the Bodies that Didn’t Decompose?**

 At first glance the institution of these *brachos* would seem curious. Granted, that the bodies of the fallen in Beitar did not decompose was a great miracle, and the Heavenly kindness that allowed the bodies to be buried was also notable. However, the Jewish People have experienced a great many miracles since the nation's birth, and yet, none of them deserved to have a special *brachos* instituted for their commemoration.

 Why was the end of the saga of Beitar considered so significant that it merited this special distinction? For thousand of years, every time a Jew says Grace after eating a meal that includes bread he must recall the miraculous closure to the story of Beitar by reciting the fourth *brachah*. What was so unique about Beitar that justified this?

**An Incredible Lesson from**

**The Yerushalmi (Ta’anis 69)**

 To understand this, we need to examine the reasons for the fall of Beitar. The Talmud *Yerushalmi* in *Ta'anis* 69 tells us something incredible. We are told that after the destruction of Jerusalem the people of Beitar lit candles in celebration. The *Yerushalmi* explains that in previous years many of the residents had been conned out of their money in a financial scam perpetrated by some crooked politicians from Jerusalem, and they expressed joy that the people of Jerusalem had finally got their just punishment.

 To be angry at those who have stolen from you is only human and to be expected. Certainly, one may make any legal effort at his disposal in an attempt to retrieve one's losses. In fact, sometimes, even when the offending party is technically-speaking legally vindicated, the other side is still permitted to bear a grudge.

**Another Reason to Bear a Grudge**

 The *Mishnah* in the beginning of the sixth chapter of *Bava Metziah* states that if an employer hires a worker and fires him before the worker begins the job, the worker has no financial claim against the employer if similar work can be found elsewhere. Nonetheless, the *Mishnah* states, "*Yesh olov tar'umos*" - the employee is entitled to be upset with the employer for causing the extra bother of having to find work elsewhere.

 The great leader of the Mussar movement, Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, explains that usually it is forbidden for a Jew to bear a grudge against his fellow man. However, in this case, though he has no financial claim, the employee is entitled to be upset at being wronged. That being said, an especially pious person would want to forgive any person who had caused him a loss even if that person is not going to pay restitution. This is because *Chazal* tell us that one should be careful not to be the cause in any way for punishment to befall one's fellow man.

**Celebrating Another Person’s**

**Bad Fortune is Not Right**

 However, even for those of us who are not among the especially pious, being upset and having complaints against someone who wronged you is one thing, but being vindictive and actually celebrating the person's bad fortune is something very different. *Chazal* tell us that the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* was due to *sinas chinam* - baseless hatred.

 The final nail in the coffin of the *Churban* (Destruction) was when the people of Beitar not only didn't mourn the destruction of Jerusalem but actually reaped a grim pleasure in its downfall. Due to this, an unprecedentedly horrifying massacre consumed the town of Beitar and its residents, and the last vestige of hope for the Jewish people in *Eretz Yisrael* was snuffed out with it.

 And yet, in the midst of all of this, a miracle occurred. Despite being left exposed for years, the bodies of the victims of Beitar did not decompose and eventually they were allowed to be brought to burial. At the nadir of the terrible *Churban* and the devastation of Beitar, there was a remarkable sign from Heaven. *Hashem* made shine through the dark clouds of destruction and despair a ray of hope and anticipation. The miracle reminded the survivors that *Hashem* has not forsaken His people no matter what.

**The Turning Point for the Future Redemption**

 And thus *Tu b'Av* is the turning point that marks the seeds for the future redemption. It is the day when *Hashem* finally showed us that despite all that we had caused ourselves He is watching over us and will redeem us when we demonstrate that we deserve it. It is for this reason that the miracles of the aftermath of Beitar must be remembered every day. After praying in *bentching* (Grace after a meal) for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, we remind ourselves of the first miraculous sign that the exile will eventually end. It is not permanent.

 There is an interesting *halachah* regarding the *brachah* of *Hatov* *Vehameitiv* that is made over a superior wine. The *brachah* is recited only when at least two people partake of the wine; the connotation of the *brachah* being *Hatov* - *Who is good to me*, and *Vehameitiv - And who is good to others as well*.

**You Must Ensure that Others Can**

**Participate in Your Goodness**

 The message is clear. It is not sufficient to thank *Hashem* for the goodness that He has provided for you; you must ensure that others too can participate in this goodness. Only then can you rightfully express the thankfulness you have for your own good fortune. For if the punishment meted out to Beitar was due to their indifference and even happiness at the suffering of their fellow man, surely the atonement for this is to ensure that whenever we experience good fortune we share it with others.

 At the time of writing, *Mashiach* has not yet arrived, but if we internalize this message, as *Chazal* intended on a daily basis, we will surely merit the final *Geulah* (Redemption) speedily and in our days.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Bais HaVaad Institute of Talmudic Law’s Parsha Perspectives: Choshen Mishpat Insights on the Weekly Sedra.*