**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Yisro 5773**

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**Story #792**

**Envoys of the King of England And Queen Shabbat**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000k2W0:001H1umm00002WkA&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1359499496&randid=1854495048&content=central##)

It was mid-afternoon on a Shabbat in Bagdad when one of Iraq's highest-ranking treasury officials arrived with urgent haste at the office of the Chief Rabbi, **Rabbi Salman Mutzafi**. The official was accompanied by the British Consul, as well as a delegation of top-level businessmen who had come from England to conclude an important business deal. In light of the vital nature of the matter, the gatekeeper was sent over to R' Mutzafi's home to fetch him.

**Learning with His Teacher an**

**Important Kabbalah Book**

Not finding him there, the gatekeeper went to the Beit Midrash (the Torah-study Hall), where he discovered Rabbi Mutzafi sitting and studying together with his teacher, **Rabbi Yehuda Pesaya**, the important Kabbalah book, "Etz Chaim," compiled from the teachings of the holy Rabbi Yitzchak Luria of Tzefat by his main student Rabbi Chaim Vital. Totally immersed in the most elevated of matters, RabbiMutzafi was wrenched away by a summons to engage in secular matters with gentiles on Shabbat!

Hearing the summons, he thought at first, "What do I have to do with them?"

Then, suddenly, he had a second thought. "I will go and try to accomplish a glorification of the One G-d in their eyes (kidush Hashem)!"

R. Mutzafi's Shabbat garb was different from that of the rest of the week. On Shabbat, he wore a silk robe with a white coat over it, and a light-colored turban on his head. Dressed this way, he rose and went to his office.

When he walked in, everyone stood and bowed respectfully. He took from a cabinet his special and impressive watch that was always set to Israeli time. R. Mutzafi turned to the assembled group and said, "The sun will set in two hours, and about three-quarters of an hour after that the Shabbat Queen will depart and I will be able to attend to you gentlemen. I am a Jew, and I observe my G-d's commandments."

**A Simple and Candid Declaration**

His simple and candid declaration took the others by surprise. The British Consul said, "We respect your religion and your commitment to it, and your honesty. We will wait here until your Shabbat is over."

The Rav returned to his teacher, almost dancing with joy. He had never felt the holiness of Shabbat as much as he did that day, knowing that ten or so dignitaries awaited him, each of them now aware that there is a holy Shabbat Day in the world, that it was given as a sign by the Creator Himself, and that the Jewish nation observes the holy Shabbat day, the fourth of the Ten Commandments, and is pledged to maintain its existence forever.

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from "Stories my Grandfather told me" (Mesorah) by Zev Greenwald.

**The Fourth Commandment**

Connection: Weekly Reading--4th of the Ten Commandments

Biographical notes: Rabbi Salman Mutzafi (1900 - 17 Tevet 1975) was a descendant of an illustrious family of Torah scholars who first arrived in Baghdad during the Spanish expulsion. After serving many years as the cityâ€™s chief rabbi, he moved to Israel where he founded the Bnei Zion Yeshiva. Recognized as one of the great kabbalists of his generation, he is also the compiler of Siftei Tzaddikim: a guide for visiting the graves of special righteous Jews buried in Israel.

Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.com, a project of the Ascent Institute of Safad in Israel.

**In the Wake of Epic Tragedy, Rabbi Harry Berkowitz is Sent to Soothe Shaky**

**Subway Operators Who Witness Death**

**By Pete Donohue**

'Within 15 minutes of a traumatic event, they call me,' says the rabbi designated as a transit chaplain, who calms the mind of a worker after a troubling event. Berkowitz estimates he has responded to 1,600 calls for a '12-9,' the code used when someone is struck by a train.



*MTA Chaplain Rabbi Berkowitz with Andre George on S train at Grand Central January 27, 2013. Allison Joyce for the New York Daily News (Photo by Allison Joyce)*

When there's trouble on the tracks, transit workers turn to police, firefighters, paramedics — and The Rabbi.

There’s no need for his full name. Anyone who has operated a train, welded rails or directed traffic from a radio tower in the last three decades probably knows Rabbi Harry Berkowitz.

The 65-year-old has been a subway chaplain for 34 years. He started ministering to the men and women of the transit police force, whose trust he earned by spending midnight shifts going on patrol with them in stations and on trains.

**Head Chaplain of the NYC Transit**

For the past two decades, Berkowitz has been head chaplain for NYC Transit, leading a G-d squad of ministers who provide emotional and spiritual support to transit workers during trying times.

“Within 15 minutes of a traumatic event, they call me,” Berkowitz said last week after visiting a motorman in a Manhattan hospital.

The motorman was taken to an emergency room for trauma after a “12-9” — subway code for when a train hits someone. The motorman was entering the 42nd St. subway complex when the man jumped from the platform.

End of story for the jumper. The beginning of a psychological struggle for the motorman.

**Finding a Quiet Place to Sit and Talk**

If the crew is still on the scene, Berkowitz will find a quiet place to sit and talk. Usually, that’s an empty car on the train, away from the first responders — and the deceased.

“Sometimes they can’t even talk because they’re shaking so hard, they’re shaking like a leaf, because of what happened,” the rabbi said.

“It’s tremendous shock. You can imagine. The train operator is going about his business, coming into the station, and someone jumps. It’s a very traumatic thing.”

**Emphasizing that it Was Beyond Their Control**

If the transit worker asks to pray, then they pray. Primarily, the rabbi stresses to transit workers that there was nothing they could have done to prevent the tragedy. It was beyond their control.

“Sometimes, I don’t even talk about the incident, if they are not ready,” the rabbi said. “I start talking about family, other train operators, anything but that subject matter, just to calm them down a bit, just to get their mind away from it. I try to divert them, give them a sense of calmness and establish a relationship, a trust.”

Track tragedies — both fatalities and injuries — aren’t the only calls that come into the chaplain’s office, but they are the vast majority.

Berkowitz estimates that he’s responded to some 1,600 12-9 calls over the decades. If he doesn’t go, one of his volunteer clergy is sent. A transit chaplain — there are 85 — is strategically located within minutes of every station.

The chaplains include Catholic priests, Baptist ministers, Muslim imams and nondenominational members of the clergy.

“You name it, we have it,” he said.

Reprinted from the January 27, 2013 edition of the New York Daily News.

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**The Special Friday Classified Ad for Candle Lighting**

**By Rabbi Yechiel Spero**

J.J. Gross, an observant Jew, works as an advertising executive at one of the top marketing agencies in the New York area.

One day an inspirational thought crossed J.J.'s mind. What if the most widely read paper in the world, the New York Times, ran an ad across the bottom of the front page every Friday listing candle lighting time? Who knows how many people it may inspire? Just imagine the possible effects!

Among his many clients are some members of the Lubavitch community. Therefore, J.J. suggested the idea to some of the more influential members within the Lubavitch organization and before long, a Lubavitcher aggreed to donate $1,800 to sponsor the ad every week.

**Desperate Eleventh Hour Calls**

There were times when the production manager of The Times would contact Mr. Gross at the eleventh hour desperately trying to find out what time candle lighting was on that particular Friday evening. The man was of Irish Catholic descent and he was concerned that the paper would go to print before the time for candle lighting was listed!

From the mid-1990's until June 1999 the ad ran each and every week across the bottom of the front page. But then the philanthropist who had been sponsoring the ad cut back on his pledges, the candle lighting ad among them.

However, J.J. felt that the discontinuation of the ad mere days before the fast day of the seventeenth of Tammuz was just not appropriate. So he decided to sponsor it himself for just one more week. And that was the last time it appeared. Or so he thought...

**A Special Millennium Edition**

For a special Millennium issue, The New York Times ran three different front pages. One was from January 1, 1900. The second was from January 1, 2000 and a third projected future events for the beginning of the 22nd century — January 1, 2100. Among the news stories in this fictional issue was the establishment of the fifty-first state of the U.S.A.: Cuba. Another article covered the question of whether robots should be allowed to vote, and so on.

Although the candle lighting ad did not appear in the other two front pages, surprisingly it did turn up on the front page of the January 1, 2100 Friday newspaper. This odd inclusion piqued the curiosity of many individuals, including J.J.

When the production Irish-Catholic manager of The Times was questioned about the inclusion his response was astounding. "We don't know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But of one thing you can be certain — that in the year 2100 Jewish women will be lighting Shabbos candles."(Reb Yechiel Spero,Touched by a Story p.146**)**

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

**Who's Onkelos?**

Onkelos was a famous Roman proselyte, the nephew of the Roman emperor Hadrian, who became acquainted with Judaism through Jewish scholars who travelled to and from Rome.

He settled in the Holy Land, where he became a disciple of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya.

Onkelos is most famous for his Targum, the Aramaic translation of the Torah.

He feared that during the Babylonian exile many Jews had forgotten Hebrew, since they had become accustomed to using Aramaic and other dialects.

In addition to being a translation, the Targum is also a simple commentary .

*Reprinted from the archives of “L’Chaim,” (issue #303 – Parshas Yisro of 5754/1994.)*

**Mending the Hole Made On the Holiness of Shabbat**



It was a perfectly beautiful Shabbat day. The Jew strolled at leisure through the orchards and fields. The trees were heavy with their fragrant bounty. The bees swarmed about the blossoming flowers; each leaf glowed its own shade of green in the light. "How wonderful was the world which the Creator bestowed upon his creations," thought the man.

Then he reached the boundaries of his own vineyard.

**Noticing a Hole in the Fence**

"What's that?" he thought, as he noticed a hole in the fence.

"Why, how could I have failed to notice it before? I better come around early tomorrow morning and fix it before wild animals or thieves have a chance to go in and eat up the grapes. As it is, I have barely enough to support my family."

Then he suddenly stopped in his tracks and caught his breath.

"Today is Shabbat," he thought, "and I have just been thinking and planning my mundane affairs on this sanctified day."

**Shocked by His Transgression of the Holy Shabbat**

The Jew, who was a pious man, was shocked that he had just transgressed the sanctity of the day by actually planning to perform work which was forbidden on the holy Shabbat.

He turned his thoughts away from the fence and returned to his home and the joyous Shabbat meal that awaited him.

When Shabbat had come to an end the Jew remembered his vineyard and the broken fence, and he felt a great sorrow at having profaned his holy Shabbat with thoughts of repairing the fence.

He decided that to atone for his sinful thought, he would never fix the fence.

**The Harvest Time Approached**

The summer passed, and the harvest approached.

The vineyard was redolent with the fragrance of ripe grapes.

The man went out to his vineyard to gather in his harvest thinking, "There probably aren't many grapes left. I'm sure the foxes and rabbits must have passed through the hole and eaten them all."

But when he entered the vineyard he couldn't believe his eyes.

The grapes hung in gigantic clusters throughout the vineyard, and the smell of the ripe grapes was overpowering. Every grape was perfect, and there was no sign of any having been touched.

**Looking for the Hole in the Fence**

The man began to look for the hole in the fence. The damage had been quite extensive, and so he was sure to find it with little searching.

And so he did, but in the place where there had been a gaping hole, there was none.

Instead, completely covering the hole, there was a fully-grown caper bush. The Master of the Universe had caused it to sprout there, to cover up the opening with its bushy branches.

**The Miracle of the Caper Bush**

The caper bush had not only saved the grape crop from certain destruction, but it possessed a great value in itself. Every part of the plant could be sold at great profit. The caper buds were preserved in vinegar and savored as a tasty delicacy; the twigs and leaves were enjoyed as well.

The pious Jew benefitted from the wondrous bush for the rest of his life, earning from it a good livelihood to support his wife and children. He enjoyed the bountiful harvest from it every year and it was a reminder of the great holiness of the Shabbat and the miracle of G-d's creation.

**Rabbi Yonatan the Judge**

In the Holy Land, when the Romans ruled, Rabbi Yonatan was a judge in his city. He was known to everyone as a fair and honest man.

The court convened in his home which was situated next door to that of a Roman.

And just as the two houses were adjacent, so were their fields.

In Rabbi Yonatan's field there grew a majestic tree whose branches overspread the field of the Roman, but the Roman didn't mind, for he loved to sit under its welcome shade.

**Enjoyed Disparaging the Jews**

This Roman enjoyed disparaging the Jews, and he decided that it might be entertaining to listen to some of the cases brought to Rabbi Yonatan.

One day two Jews came to the court arguing about a tree belonging to one of them. The second Jew complained that the shade it created interfered with his crops. The first man cried, "For twenty years the tree never bothered you!"

The second replied, "That is true, but now it has become so large that it damages my crops." Rabbi Yonatan listened and then instructed the men to return the following day for the verdict.

**Intends to Embarrass the Rabbi**

The Roman thought to himself, "I bet the rabbi postponed his decision because I was here. He was probably afraid that I would demand that he cut down his tree. I'll show him. I will embarrass him in front of the whole court."

Rabbi Yonatan called a carpenter and instructed him to go at once and cut down all the branches of his tree which hung over his neighbor's field. When the verdict was read next morning, the Roman was there. "You must cut down the branches which hang over your neighbor's field, since they are disturbing him," ordered Rabbi Yonatan.

The Roman leapt up and yelled, "Why, then, don't you cut down your tree which is leaning over my property?"

"Go to the field and look at my tree. You will see exactly what this man must do to his tree."

The Roman went, and to his surprise the tree no longer hung over his field. He saw that Rabbi Yonatan made sure that he would not transgress a ruling which he laid on another person. From that time on the Roman had the greatest respect for Rabbi Yonatan and Jewish Law.

*Reprinted from the archives of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY (issue #303 from Parshas Yisro 5754/1994).*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Having an Impact**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

“We desperately need a kidney donor!” This was what the director of “Chai Lifeline” in New York, Rabbi Sholom Meir, heard from a rather exciting caller. He explained that although his organization dealt with a wide variety of medical and social services in the Jewish community, it did not deal with transplant candidates.

After repeated calls from the same party pointing out the urgency of the situation, the rabbi suggested that he place an ad in the local Anglo-Jewish weeklies asking for kidney donors.

**What Was the Motivation to Donate?**

Of the dozen responses the most suitable candidate turned out to be a 60 year-old man. When asked what motivated him to make this offer, he gave the following explanation:

“I never succeeded in becoming a wealthy man and always felt sorry that I could not contribute enough to the various appeals for funds to have any real impact on the cause at hand. Now I feel that I can have a real impact on someone’s life and after discussing it with my wife I decided to offer my kidney.”

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

**Do Women Have**

**Something to Hide?**

**By Rabbi Aron Moss**

**Question:**

Why does Judaism tell women to keep their bodies covered? Is there something shameful or evil about a woman’s body? If men can’t control their urges, then it’s their problem, not women’s. Why should a woman have to hide herself just so others shouldn’t be tempted?

**Answer:**

You are assuming that the only reason for modest dress is to avoid temptation. While this may be the case in other religions, for Judaism this is not true. The Jewish way of modest dress is not merely about how other people view women, but more about how women view themselves.

Covering something doesn’t always mean being ashamed of it. Have you ever noticed how we treat a Torah scroll? We never leave it lying around open. It is hidden behind many layers.

**The Torah is Kept in the Ark**

The Torah is kept inside a synagogue, in the Ark, behind a curtain, wrapped in a mantle, held tightly closed with a belt. It is taken out only when it is to be used for its holy purpose, to be read during the prayer service. For those special times we carefully draw the curtain, open the doors of the ark, bring out the Torah, uncover it and unwrap it. As soon as we have finished, we immediately wrap it up again and put it away.

Why do we do all this? Why do we go to such trouble to conceal the Torah? Are we ashamed of it? Is there something to hide? Is there something ugly about the Torah?

**The Opposite is True!**

Of course not. The opposite is true.

Because the Torah is our holiest object, because it is so sacred and special and precious, we never leave it exposed unnecessarily. We keep it under wraps because we don’t want to treat it lightly; we don’t want to become too casual with it. Were the Torah to be always open and visible, it might become too familiar and its sanctity minimized. By keeping it away from sight, and bringing it out only for the appropriate times, we maintain our reverence and respect for the Torah.

The same is with our bodies. The body is the holy creation of G‑d. It is the sacred house of the soul. The way we maintain our respect for the body is by keeping it covered. Not because it is shameful, but because it is so beautiful and precious.

**Laws of Modesty Apply Also to Men**

This is true for men’s bodies too, and laws of modest dress apply to them as well. But it is even more so for women. The feminine body has a beauty and a power that far surpasses the masculine. The Kabbalists teach that a woman’s body has a deeper beauty because her soul comes from a higher place. For this reason, her body must be kept discreetly covered.

In a world where the woman’s body has been reduced to a cheap advertising gimmick, we need no proof for the truth of this wisdom. Where all is exposed, nothing is sacred. But that which is truly precious to us, we keep under wraps.

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