**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas tetzaveh 5774**

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**The Importance of Intent**

**And Tolerance**

**By David Bibi**

I am writing on Monday night from Salt Lake City Utah. I am deeply grateful to Rabbi Benny Zippel of the Chabad of Salt Lake City for putting together a minyan for me [so I could recite kaddish for my father] and to my friend Jack Azizo for taking an earlier flight to Salt Lake to be part of the minyan and for taking me to dinner in Park City. It’s amazing to find such a nice kosher restaurant in the middle of the ski lifts and trails.

Rabbi Zippel invited me to speak to a rather diverse group of guys who were doing me tremendous favor in coming.

**The Table of the Showbreads**

We read [last] week of the mishkan and the items Moses was assigned to make for it. One of the items is the Shulchan or the table where the Lechem HaPanim or the showbreads were placed.

I recalled a story that Rabbi Abittan told us about the showbreads. The story is brought in Moreshet Avot and by Rabbi Feinhandler in his Beloved Children series.

A Portuguese Marrano, who had been raised externally as a Catholic with very limited knowledge of his Jewish roots was able to leave Portugal and travel east to the Holy Land. He settled in Safed.

One day he sat and listened carefully to the Rabbi's lecture about the lechem hapanim, which used to be offered in the Bet Hamikdash every Shabbat. In his lecture, the rabbi sighed and said with anguish that now, due to our many sins, we do not have the Bet Hamikdash and we do not offer lechem hapanim.

This Marrano, who had not learned Torah and was very naive in his service of Hashem, heard this, went home and innocently told his wife that every Friday she should prepare for him two loaves of bread sifted thirteen times. He requested that she knead the dough in purity and bake it well in the oven, because it was his desire to offer the bread before the Aron Kodesh, and perhaps Hashem would accept the loaves which he would set before Him.

**Every Friday He Would Pray and Plead**

**With Hashem to Accept His Offering**

His wife baked him the loaves, and every Friday he would stand before the Aron Kodesh in the synagogue and pray and plead with Hashem to accept his offering. He would offer his supplication like a son entreating his father, after which he would set the two loaves down and leave.

The shamash would come every Friday and remove the two loaves, without inquiring where they came from. After Arbit, this G-d-fearing Jew would run to the Aron Kodesh, and since he wouldn't find the loaves, he would be elated and full of joy, and he would go home and tell his wife, "Praise and thanks to Hashem, may He be blessed, for He has accepted the bread. For Hashem's honor, don't be lax in making the loaves next week and be very careful, because we do not have any means of honoring Him other than with these loaves. And so we are obligated to give Him pleasure through them." This custom of the Marrano couple continued for a long time.

**The Rabbi Overheard the Man’s**

**Prayers at the Aron Kodesh**

One Friday, the rabbi who had given the lecture about the lechem hapanim lingered in the synagogue. At the same time, this man came into the synagogue, as he did every Friday, with the two freshly-baked loaves. He approached the Aron Kodesh, and began to pour out his heart in prayers and supplications, without noticing that the rav was present. He was filled with such enthusiasm and happiness as he brought this gift before Hashem that he didn't pay attention to anything else.

The rabbi kept quiet, and saw and heard everything the man said and did, and it angered him greatly. He called to him and rebuked him: "You fool! Does Hashem eat and drink? Of course it is only the shamash who takes these loaves, and you are foolish enough to think that Hashem is the one who accepts them."

The rabbi continued to rebuke the man until the shamash came as usual to take the loaves. The rabbi called the shamash over and he admitted that he was the one who removed the two loaves every week. Upon hearing this, the poor simple Jew began to cry and asked the rabbi to forgive him, since he had erred in understanding his lecture. Although he thought he had been doing a mitzvah, he now understood that he was really doing an aveirah – a sin.

**A Devastating Message**

**From the Holy Ari**

Immediately after this, a special messenger came to the rabbi from the holy Ari – Rabbi Isaac Luria, and told him: "Go home and leave a will for your household, because tomorrow, at the time when you are scheduled to give your lecture, you will die, for this decree has already been set."

Upon hearing these dreadful tidings, the rabbi was frightened and went to the holy Ari to ask him what had happened. The Arizal replied: "I have heard that your sin was that you have put a stop to Hashem's pleasure. From the day that the Bet Hamikdash was destroyed, Hashem never experienced pleasure as he did when the Marrano in his innocence would bring the two loaves of bread and offer them to His Aron Kodesh with the conviction that Hashem accepted them from him. Because you stopped him from bringing the loaves, death has been decreed upon you, and there is no way to avert this decree."

The rabbi went home and left a will for his family. On Shabbos, when it was time for him to give his lecture, he died, just as the holy Ari had foretold.

**An Incredible Insight**

**And Tremendous Lesson**

It’s a crazy story, but it gives us insight and a tremendous lesson in two areas.

Intention often outweighs actions. Look how powerful our intentions are. It was the intent of the Marrano that “pleased” Hashem. This makes me think about my own way of doing misvot.

When someone is called to Shamayim, we talk about doing misvot Le’Iluy Nishmato, to raise up his soul in heaven. Thus we have prayers in the home, reading Tehilim, learning Mishnah, giving charity and saying berachot or blessings. Considering this I realize how often my blessings sound like huhmahnah huhmanah without clear words. Grab something to eat, mumble some words with little thought and bite. But with this concept of raising the soul, we stop. We lift the food, we say that the blessing I will make that will raise the soul of my teacher, father Yosef ben Esther and then eat. That’s kavana and in fact we should do this every time we do a misvah. When we don a talet, or light candles or pray, we should begin by saying that I am coming to do the misvah of such and such and even if I don’t understand all the details, may Hashem accept my prayer or blessing or action. Intent is so powerful.

The second lesson is in tolerance.

**A Benefit for Those Who**

**Were Not Observant**

Saying Kaddish I am reminded of those who were not observant, but found their way back to Torah and Misvot through Kaddish. Many of those who worked on Shabbat and still came to early minyan to pray and say kaddish for a parent find themselves with observant children and even grandchildren studying in Yeshiva.

But imagine if when they came to the Synagogue on Shabbat they were rejected instead of being drawn in. Imagine if they were told that being nonobservant they had no place with the observant. In many communities this happened, but Baruch Hashem, Rabbi Yaakob Kassin [the late Chief Rabbi of the Syrian Jewish community in Brooklyn] set a beautiful example for many of us. I have heard he said that although I may not get the fathers, I will get the children and certainly the grandchildren. In contrast when one loses the father, he loses every generation to come.

**Reaching Out and Drawing People**

**With Love and Caring**

Being in the Chabad of Salt Lake, I saw this message of outreach and tolerance. I saw a rabbi reach out and draw people in with love and with caring. The lesson of Rabbi Kassin, the lesson I see in Utah is a lesson played over and over again. It’s a lesson that must be played over and over again if we hope to overcome the tide of assimilation and intermarriage which cuts of people from the Jewish body.

Someone said to me that my father was a man who looked at people and sought to build and not to break. In a world where we think everything is disposable, my father always sought to fix. I saw it in the Sifrei Torah cases and the other Judaica on his workshop. Pieces sent by Synagogues to the man who found time to repair these special objects. Very rarely is something beyond hope and until someone excludes themselves from the community we must strive with all we have to be tolerant and bring them back.

So this week let’s take upon ourselves to try having the proper intent and being more tolerant. Let’s try it for a week or even a day. We’ll be the better for it.

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

**Memories of Yerushalayim**

**By Rabbi Shlomo Katz**

R' Ben-Zion Yadler z"l (1871-1962; "Maggid / preacher of Yerushalayim”), describes in his memoir, B'tuv Yerushalayim, some outstanding members of Yerushalayim’s working class at the turn of the 20th century.R’ Shmuel Schneider, who sewed garments in the Yerushalmi style, conducted his business honestly and set aside much time for Torah and prayer. One who didn’t know him would think he was one of the great men of Yerushalayim and one of its dignitaries, for his wisdom shone on his face.

When R’ Yitzchak (Itzele) Blazer zt”l [1837-1907; one of the most prominent students of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter z”l] settled in Yerushalayim, he sent for R’ Shmuel to come and take his measurements so that R’ Shmuel could sew Yerushalmi garments for him.

**Mistook the Tailor for a Venerable Sage**

When R’ Shmuel arrived at his home, the sage thought that one of the rabbis of Yerushalayim had come to welcome him to Eretz Yisrael. Immediately, R’ Itzele stood up and invited his guest to sit, and they discussed Torah and mussar

(character improvement) subjects together for a long time.

Finally, R’ Shmuel got up and said, “Forgive me, rabbi. Please allow me to take your measurements as I was summoned to do.” R’ Itzele was astounded and said, “Indeed! This is the Yerushalmi tailor, and I had no idea. Fortunate are you,

Yerushalayim, that a tailor such as this lives in your midst.” . .

R’ Naftali Meller (the painter) and R’ Herschel Blecher (the blacksmith) both served as representatives of the congregation [i.e., chazzanim] in the large Menachem Zion shul in the churvah/ ruin of Rabbi Yehuda He’chassid on yom tov and the High Holidays. They were exceptional Torah scholars and possessed extraordinary awe of G-d. They were among the most important of the mussar scholars in Yerushalayim.

All of this and more were the fruits of the sacrifices that the earlier generations, who were like angels, made to attain awe of G-d. Even the youth who were apprenticed to tradesmen acted like mentschen and overflowed with Torah and awe of G-d. Alas, alas, for that which is lost but not forgotten! .

Reprinted from last week’s email of the Young Israel of Flatbush Bulletin.

**Story#844**

**The King, the Jews,**

**And the Rain**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=ABC&msgNum=0000vhG0:001IuDzU00000V3c&count=1391379330&randid=2011101134&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=2011101134)

The title and the story itself for that matter, might lead you to think this is one of my stories of 18th-19th century Eastern Europe, or 16th-17th century Tsfat or Jerusalem for that matter. The reality is that this episode took place a few weeks ago, in early 2014.

The first stages of winter in Morocco this year were unusually warm and dry, and as the days and weeks progressed, so did the worry that this could be a year of drought leading to serious famine, for the agriculture of Morocco (like many other countries in the Mideast) is dependent upon the winter rains.

The King of Morocco, however, Muhammad the Sixth, knew well the address to turn to in the season of such troubles: the synagogues of the Jews. He sent an official royal request to the head of each Jewish community in Morocco, asking them to convene a special assembly in their synagogues for the express purpose of praying for rain. In response, the members of CCIM (Council of Israelite Communities in Morocco) hurried to compose a letter that was dispatched to all the Jews in the country.

**In Response to the King’s Request**

“In light of the request of his Royal Highness, the King, there should take place in every synagogue [at the same time] a special prayer assembly to plead with the Master of the Universe that He should provide plentiful rain throughout the kingdom.”

It was decided that this prayer should take place in the synagogues on Shabbat, the tenth day of the Jewish month of Shvat in the year 5774 (Jan. 11, 2014), just before reading the weekly Torah portion called Beshalach. In every synagogue in the land that Shabbat, the Jews gathered and prayed with mighty devotion that the Al-mighty should release the rain upon the land.

The next day, Sunday, in the evening, their prayers were answered [in the affirmative]. Dense dark clouds slowly filled the sky, and soon thereafter heavy rains beat upon the earth everywhere within the borders of Morocco, and continued for several days without cease.

**Relaying the Gratitude of the**

**King to the Jewish Community**

The following week, important government officials in every city with a Jewish community met with the leader of the community in his city by order of the King to thank them in his name for their congregation’s prayers. \*

How did King Muhammad VI know to ask the Jews to help? Answer: He simply followed the family tradition. His father, Hussein II, often turned to the Jews for their prayers in times of need, and he enjoyed a warm relationship with a number of different Jewish community leaders.

Although only a fraction of the Jewish population remained in Morocco after 1948 (about 3000 out of approximately 350,000) Hussein II believed that even this greatly reduced number was a source of blessing for the country. Indeed, on the eve of Yom Kippur each year, he would send personal representatives, wearing the fancy robes of royal emissaries to their synagogues to request a blessing for the King.

Yaakov (Jackie) Kadosh, head of the Jewish community of Marrakesh, testified to Sichat HaShavua, one of Israel’s most popular Shabbat weekly publications, that the current King also has this great appreciation for the Jews in his kingdom.

“A few years ago we decided to repair and renovate our centuries-old Jewish cemetery from the damages of the passage of time. I and Rabbi Raphael Ben-Shimon wrote to the King with the details of our plan. In just a short time we received a response. He blessed our plan and even said that all the expenses for the work would be paid from the royal treasury. This was a sum equivalent to millions of dollars! He called it a holy project.”

Source: Translated and freely adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from Sichat HaShavua #1412.

\* Editor’s note: I’ll answer some astute reader’s question in advance to save them the trouble of writing: Yes, I know that the day before that Shabbat, millions of Muslims prayed in their mosques for rain too, also at the behest of the King.

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**SIGHT SEEING**

The saintly *Rosh Yeshivah* of Ponevezh, Horav Elazar Menachem Shach, zâ€l,, was an individual to whom Torah study was life itself. Though aged and physically weak, he received strength and succor from the time spent with his precious *sefarim*. Every line of *Talmud, Rambam, Rishonim* added strength to his frail body.

**A Visit from a Prominent Torah Educator**

One day, a prominent *mechanech*, Torah educator, visited and presented the *Rosh Yeshivah* with a difficult request. As an educator who via his educational programs came in contact with students from many *yeshivot* in Bnei Brak, he was able to organize a *siyum Mishnayot*, completion of the entire *Mishnah*, which would be attended by thousands of youngsters from the area.

The *siyum* was to be held in a hall adjacent to the *yeshivah*. Was there any way the *Rosh Yeshivah* could attend? No speeches, no fanfare - just to walk in and grant the children the treat of seeing the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah leader of the generation. It would mean so much to them and would be remembered their entire lives. Rav Shach apologized profusely, saying that he was simply physically exhausted. The *Rosh Yeshivah* was a centenarian upon whom every step took its toll. The *mechanech* felt bad, but understood that it was simply too much for Rav Shach.

After the gentleman left, Rav Shach turned to Rav Toib, his close confident and sort of aide, and asked him if he "agreed" with his decision not to attend the function. Out of deep reverence, Rav Toib hesitated, but, then respectfully said, "I must tell the truth, but I wish to do so by relating a story." The *Rosh Yeshivah* agreed to listen.

**Recalling a Father-in-Law**

**Who Survived the Holocaust**

"My father-in-law, Rav Michel Fried, survived the horrors of the European Holocaust. He lost everything - family and physical possessions. His world as he once knew it was gone. Despite the tremendous losses and mind-numbing emotional pain, he retained his strong *emunah*, faith, in the Almighty. I once asked him how he was able to persevere in his faith after all that he had suffered. So many others had weakened; what kept him going?"

He replied that as a child, the venerable sage of Radin, the *Chofetz Chaim*, visited his village, and the entire community went out to greet the great *Kohen Gadol*. "My father lifted me so that I could gaze at his radiant face and look into his piercing eyes. From that moment on, that image was seared into my mind," his father-in-law said.

He would never forget that image of holiness and splendor. His countenance stood before him during the most bitter and lonesome moments, when all was dark and gloomy. That image pulled him from the depths and gave him the strength to look forward with hope to the next day.

**Arose From His Chair**

Rav Shach listened intently to the story. He remained deep in thought for a moment, and then the elderly Rosh Yeshivah arose from his chair, donned his frock and hat, and went out to see the children. (*Peninim* on the Torah)

*Reprinted from last week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin. The story is reprinted from Peninim on the Torah.*

**Stories About**

**Kiddush Hashem**

**By Daniel Keren**

(*Editor’s Note: A few weeks ago on the legal holiday for Martin Luther King’s Birthday, an organization in Flatbush called Hakhel organized a morning-long Yarchei Kallah Event for those members of the community who were off work that day.**The second speaker was Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, internationally renowned Maggid Shiur and Rav of Congregation Bais Yitzchok who spoke on the topic of “Kiddush Hashem 5774.*” The following is a report of Rabbi Goldwasser’s lecture.)

A lot of times in this world a person can fool himself and justify his actions. We all have to reflect in our lives honestly about whether or not our actions bring kavod, honor to Hashem. Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler wrote in his classic sefer “Michtav Me’Eliyahu” that a person has to be careful not to commit a chillul Hashem.

Rabbi Goldwasser emphasized the fact that a Jew today has to realize that we are living in a fish bowl and everything that we do is being observed by all those around us. Therefore we must be careful not to do anything that would be a desecration of G-d’s holy name.

**Help from Above to**

**Overcome the Yetzer**

One who all his life is afraid of committing a chillul Hashem will in that merit when the occasion arises and one is truly challenged with temptation be helped from Above to able to overcome that yetzer and perform a true Kiddush Hashem.

Rabbi Goldwasser recalled that there was once a talmid chacham in Yerushalayim whose 12-year-old son became very ill on Shabbos. He went to a prominent doctor and asked him to come to his home and treat his son. The doctor who was not religious told him that he would come, but not only was his fee 500 shekels (a lot of money at that time), but he insisted on being paid immediately after his services were rendered (which in this case would be while it was still Shabbos.)

The talmid chacham agreed and the doctor accompanied him to his house where he successfully treated the child. The rabbi then wrote out a check and gave it to the doctor. The doctor was shocked when he saw the check was written out double the amount he asked for – 1,000 shekels. He told the father of his patient that he wrote the wrong amount.

**Offers to Give the Doctor an**

**Explanation After Shabbos**

The talmid chacham said that it was all right. The doctor insisted on knowing why the check was double the price he wanted. The father explained that it was Shabbos and for pekuach nefesh, to save the life of his child he was allowed to break the laws of Shabbos by writing a check. However, now that danger to his child’s life was over, he was not permitted to discuss business on Shabbos. However, if after the holy day, the doctor wanted to come back, he would give an explanation of his action.

Unable to control his curiosity, the doctor returned to the home of the talmid chacham after Shabbos and asked why the check was double the amount he was asking for. The Torah scholar answered that on Shabbos he wanted to lessen the act of writing which is normally forbidden on the holy day. If he would have written 500 shekels on the check, in Hebrew that would have been three words (hamesh meah shekelim) whereas by writing 1,000 shekels, it required only two words (elef shekalim).

**Becomes a Complete Baal Teshuvah**

The doctor was so stunned by the religious integrity of the Torah scholar that he asked if he could have the honor of learning Torah with him on a weekly basis. A weekly time was set up and the doctor was so impressed by what he learned that he eventually became a complete baal teshuvah. And all because of the sincere Kiddush Hashem of the father of the sick child.

Rabbi Goldwasser spoke of how Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l, had taught us that a Jew (even a single individual) must stand up against the rabim (the majority of the society around us) and protest those actions [even if they have been made “legal” by legislation] and thus defend the kavod of Hashem, thereby creating a Kiddush Hashem.

Even if we don’t think that we as individual Jews are important and we didn’t ask to be looked at, we must understand that others are indeed studying us and more importantly our actions.

**A Rabbi Comes to Dallas, Texas**

Another story told at last week’s Hakhel program by Rabbi Goldwasser was about an Orthodox rabbi who had just moved into Dallas, Texas in order to lead a shul and try and inspire the mostly assimilated Jews of that community to develop a stronger commitment to a Torah-based lifestyle.

He boarded a public bus and paid for his fare. He received his change and went to find a seat. Upon sitting down he again looked at his change and saw that the driver had given him a quarter of a dollar too much. He debated what to do? Should he bother himself to return such an insignificant amount? Obviously the bus driver hadn’t noticed.

**Gives the Bus Driver**

**The Extra Change**

Nevertheless when the bus arrived at his designated stop, instead of getting out of the more convenient rear exit, he made his way to the front and gave back the quarter, telling the driver that he had gotten too much change.

The driver then said, “You are the new rabbi in town! I wanted to see what you would do. I have been looking for a place to pray. I guess I will see you this coming Shabbos. Have a nice day!”

When the rabbi got off the bus, he grabbed a nearby pole to steady himself, thinking that for a measly quarter of a dollar he had almost alienated a Jewish neshama, perhaps forever!

**The Boyaner Rebbe in Dachau**

Rabbi Goldwasser also told the story of the Boyaner Rebbe who during the Second World War was rounded up and sent to the Dachau concentration camp. His followers raised a half a million German reichs and approached the Nazis in a bid to win his freedom. The Germans yemach shemam agreed to the deal and shortly thereafter, three Gestapo officers entered Dachau and came to the Boyaner Rebbe to inform him of his immediate freedom from the concentration camp.

The Boyaner Rebbe with his ruach hakodesh quickly surmised that this was not a cruel prank. But he declared that he wasn’t alone in the concentration camp. What about the other inmates in Dachau? The Gestapo officers retorted “Herr Rabbiner, look where you are? The deal was for you and not for everyone in this accursed camp. Make your decision. We will come back in three days and let us know what you have decided.”

**All the Inmates Pleaded**

**With the Rebbe to Escape**

During those three days, everyone in Dachau pleaded with the Boyaner Rebbe to escape and continue his avodas Hakodesh in the outside world. There would be nothing to gain for Klal Yisroel if he refused to go as his demand for the release of everyone else in the concentration camp was simply not rational. He owed it to them and all the Jews to survive and continue to serve Hashem.

At the end of the three days, the three Gestapo agents returned and asked the Boyaner Rebbe for his decision. He announced that he would not leave unless 10 of his fellow inmates were allowed to accompany him to freedom. The German officers radioed their commanders and were told the answer was absolutely no. The Boyaner Rebbe refused to escape by himself and he remained in the concentration camp where he soon died al Kiddush Hashem.

**The Ability to Change**

**One’s Very Nature**

Rabbi Goldwasser concluded his lecture by stating that Kiddush Hashem, the willingness of a Jew to even give up his or her life for the honor of Hashem constitutes the ability of a Yid to change one’s very nature. The Rambam writes that if a person who separates himself from an aveirah only because of Hashem, he is judged positively in Shomayim like Yosef Hatzadik was when he held himself back from the seductions of Potipher’s wife.

Reprinted from last week’s issue of the Jewish Connection.

**A Parable of the Merchant Who Floated to a Most Strange Island**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Boltan**

There was once a merchant traveling by sea to the Far East in search of precious gems. Such a trip was dangerous, but he was not afraid. In fact, the danger was what kept the competition down and his prices up.

One night, in the second week of his journey he was sound asleep in his cabin when he was abruptly awakened by a loud crunching sound. Everything around him was shaking and tilting, and he almost fell from his narrow bed into the thin layer of water that was rushing in under his door, covering the floor. The ship had struck a reef in the middle of the ocean.

**Rushed Up the Stairs Onto the Deck**

It took him a few seconds to remember where he was. He slipped his trousers over his pajamas, put on his shoes and jacket, opened his cabin door and rushed up the stairs onto the deck. It was dark outside; no moon just the infinite ocean. The weather was almost warm but he felt strangely cold. Very few people were there, running and yelling, maybe everyone else had already abandoned ship, he wasn’t taking any chances.

He stepped into one of the small lifeboats and waited for someone to say something to him. But suddenly the ship shook, heaved over and everything seemed to turn around. His boat slid down the deck, and the next thing he knew he was afloat. He looked around him and even called out several times into the darkness, but when there was no reply, he wrapped himself in few of the blankets there, curled up on the floor to keep warm, and fell asleep.

**Woke Up to the Laughter of Children**

Children were laughing, giggling! It was really disturbing. They must be right outside his window! He opened his eyes, and standing over him were people, natives, men women and children surrounding his boat. His lifeboat had come adrift on some tropical island!

It took him a few weeks to really recuperate, but the people were kind, and in no time he began to learn their language. It seems that there were several thousand living there, they had never seen a boat or a ship before, and were content with staying put on their quiet island.

One day he was walking around, when he noticed for the first time that the streets were filled with immense diamonds and precious gems!!

He couldn’t believe his eyes! At first he thought that they were only glass or something of no value but he knew a bit about gems. He picked one up, examined it closely, and discovered that....it was the real thing!! Each gem was worth millions, and the street was full of them!!!

First he stuffed them into his pockets, and when they were full, he opened his shirt, got down on his knees and began scooping them in.

He was so involved that he didn’t notice the group of children and several adults that had gathered around him. He looked up, they were laughing. He felt a bit ashamed there on his knees.

“What are you doing?” asked one of the adults, “Why do you gather these worthless rocks?”

“Ehh? Worthless?”

**His Core Values Were Shaken**

He realized there was something to what the man was saying; the streets were full of them.

“Well what IS valuable here?” He asked, as he began to stand, slowly emptying his pockets and brushing himself off.

“Oh you mean fish!” they smiled. “Here we use fish.” And one of them produced a small fish from his pocket.

“Fish?” said the merchant incredulously.

Within five years had made himself a small fortune; he had amassed thousands of tons of fish for himself. He even invented some sort of refrigeration to preserve them, (revolutionizing the island economy).

Then one day it dawned on him to go home. Home! He remembered his wife, children, friends, his house. A deep longing welled up within him. He had to go!

**Installed a Large Refrigerator**

**To Store His Entire Fortune**

He knew nothing of shipbuilding, sailing or navigation, but he knew he had to do it. He set himself to the task, hired workers, and after several years of planning and hard work, the ship was finished and he set sail. He even installed a refrigerator large enough to hold his entire fortune.

It was an arduous trip and he lost his bearings several times, but after several weeks, and a lot of luck, he saw dry land.

But when he docked, he received a very unfriendly reception. It seems his refrigerator didn’t work as well as he thought and because it happened gradually, he didn't notice the horrible smell; his fortune had rotted. All the sailors on the docks were holding their noses and trying to shoo him away. He barely managed to sell the ship, and with his last pennies traveled back to his home in Russia.

His wife and family were overjoyed to see him and so was he was to see them, but his heart was also broken. After so many years of hard work he had nothing to show for it.

“Well here is at least a little souvenir from the island, something for you and the kids” he said to his wife as he produced a few street stones he had absentmindedly put in his suitcase one day.

“What are you so excited about?” he asked her as she held the gems in the air and began jumping and shouting ‘we’re rich! We’re rich!!’

“They’re worthless, the streets are full of them.”

Needless to say he was richer than ever before.

*(The explanation of the parable is that the merchant symbolizes every Jew who comes down to this world to gather precious gems that are the Torah we study and the mitzvahs we perform. However because of free choice there is the danger that we can lose track of our true mission in life as a result of the influence of the non-Jewish world around us. In the above story, even a few mitzvahs can make us wealthy in the World to Come.)*

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

**Slice of Life**

**Joy Breaks Barriers**

**By Malka Touger**

Everyone loves Teddy, a big man with a big heart, whose outgoing personality and generosity endear him to others. So when Teddy first met Rabbi Chaim and Charna Mentz, of Chabad of Bel Air, California, they naturally struck up a friendship. Teddy enjoyed the lively spirit at Chabad House, and he and his wife Michelle became frequent attendees at Chabad events.

One Thursday, on a trip with his three young daughters to the East Coast, Teddy phoned Rabbi Mentz. "Rabbi, you're always talking about the Rebbe and we were in Queens so I decided to go with my kids to his grave site and say a prayer. I asked for a blessing for health and prosperity," Teddy continued, "so that I can continue to support all the good work you and the others are doing. It was really an uplifting experience."

"Great, Teddy!" Rabbi Mentz responded. "How about connecting the inspiration to a mitzva (commandment)?"

"You're right, Rabbi. Why don't you get tefilin for me? You'll teach me how to put them on when I get back."

That Saturday night, Teddy's wife Michelle called, frantic. "Rabbi, Teddy's in the hospital. The doctors don't know what it is. He's really sick. Please pray for him."

Early Sunday, Rabbi Mentz went to the hospital. "It's my leg, Rabbi," he mumbled. Someone in the room said, "It's a staph infection from a small cut that got infected."

Rabbi Mentz unzipped a velvet bag. "Teddy, let's put on tefilin." Teddy put the tefilin on, and after him, all the men in the hospital room did so as well.

On his way out after the visit, Michelle introduced Rabbi Mentz to the chief physician in residence, one of Teddy's childhood friends, Dr. Michael Chaiken.

The doctor said grimly, "The last few people who had this infection in the States didn't make it."

On Monday, Teddy's condition worsened. He was given strong medication, causing him to sleep a lot. When Rabbi Mentz came to visit on Tuesday, Teddy had been sleeping the entire day. The rabbi stayed at the bedside, hoping for a wake moment to put on Teddy's new tefilin. But nothing had changed by evening and Rabbi Mentz had to leave to give a class.

In the middle of the class, Michelle called. "Rabbi, you really have to pray now. All of the top doctors from S. Joseph, Kaiser and Sinai are here to study Teddy's case. They may learn something for others, but they say it's too late for Teddy."

When Rabbi Mentz came to the hospital the next morning, Teddy wasn't in his room. "He's been transferred to the intensive care unit," a nurse informed him.

Michelle, who was at the entrance to the ICU, looked desperate. "You must have faith," Rabbi Mentz told her. "You husband has always been a robust man. A perfectly healthy man goes to the Rebbe's grave site and gets sick? Stay positive and have trust."

On Thursday 60 people were assembled in a room adjoining the ICU. The atmosphere was somber when Rabbi Mentz arrived. Dr. Chaiken hastily approached him.

"Go on in and see him," he said. Dr. Chaiken accompanied Rabbi Mentz into the isolation room. The infection had spread mercilessly. "It will enter his lungs in 10-12 hours," he said sadly. "We've done all we can."

Rabbi Mentz said softly, "There is something else you can do. You can put on tefilin."

"Rabbi, I'm a non-believer."

"Do it for the sake of Teddy's recovery!"

"Look, Rabbi, I do my thing for him and you do yours. If you want to stay here and pray, I'll make sure the attendant doesn't interfere."

Rabbi Mentz stayed in the room and recited Psalms. When he came out into the lobby where the others were assembled, the atmosphere was heavy; people were talking about death as an inevitable part of life. Rabbi Mentz told Michelle that he would be back soon.

Once out of the hospital, Rabbi Mentz struggled for clarity. "What is this?" he thought. "Doctors are given permission to heal not to depress. The Rebbe said many times that positive thinking is powerful and can bring about positive results, that a person who makes a step toward Jewish practice has great merit, that joy breaks through all barriers. I will make a conscious decision to break through this barrier with positivity and joy."

A short while later, Rabbi Mentz returned with 18 boys from the Ohr Elchonon Chabad Yeshiva. They filed into the room where the depression was tangible.

Rabbi Mentz passed around a tzedaka (charity) box. "I propose an alternative to this negative atmosphere. Let's give charity, which our Sages say averts calamity. Let's generate positive energy in Teddy's direction, and focus on recuperation and health. Let's heal ourselves of our own negativity, and we may have an impact on Teddy's condition as well. Let's think good thoughts of miraculous outcomes and joyful thanksgiving. I'll go into Teddy's room with these yeshiva boys and pray, and you do your part in praying and positive thinking."

Rabbi Mentz fervently led the boys in prayer and Psalms. Then he told them: "We are taught never to give up hope, and to use positive energy and joy to overcome hurdles. Joy penetrates barriers, and we want to break through barriers. Join me in song and joy, here and now!"

The boys sang - hesitantly at first, and then strongly enough to bring a nurse running. Rabbi Mentz gestured to the boys to follow him down the hospital corridor, still singing. The astonished staff looked on as the strange procession returned to the room with the assembled crowd.

Rabbi Mentz addressed them. "We don't need to wait until we see the miracle. Let's celebrate Teddy's recovery now!" The rabbi's words fell upon ready ears. Rabbi Mentz led everyone in lively prayer and Psalms and shared a Torah thought. "May I suggest that we all go home with hopeful hearts and uplifted spirits, and may we meet again tomorrow to share good news."

Friday morning, Rabbi Mentz went straight to the familiar room next to the ICU. It was empty. Rabbi Mentz spotted Dr. Chaiken. "How's Teddy?" he asked anxiously.

"Before I answer you, I have a question," snapped Dr. Chaiken. "I know that rabbis make use of all kinds of kabbalistic formulas. What did you do here last night?"

Rabbi Mentz answered, "Nothing of the sort. I just tried to generate positive energy to affect a morbid situation."

"Teddy's condition took an unexpected turn; his body is fighting the infection. It looks like he's going to make it!"

"Is this a miracle?" inquired Rabbi Mentz.

"Yes! I must admit there is a supernatural force up there and it's not modern medicine. A sheer miracle."

Rabbi Mentz smiled, "Miraculous enough for you to put on tefilin?" The doctor paused, then nodded and rolled up his sleeve.

Two weeks later Teddy returned home. And five of his friends and relatives purchased tefilin and committed to putting them on regularly.

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