**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Ki Tisa 5772**

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**It Once Happened**

**The Melamed’s Din Torah Against The Master of the Universe**

One Friday afternoon a stranger appeared on the doorstep of the famous tzadik, Reb Yitzchak Isaac of Vitebsk, asking him to arrange a "din Torah" (a session of the Jewish court). It was already after midday and Reb Yitzchak Isaac was about to go to the bathhouse in preparation for the holy Sabbath. "Must the matter be attended to right now?" he asked the visitor. "Can't it wait until Sunday morning?"

**His Only Day to Plead His Case**

"I am a melamed," answered the man. "I teach little children from early in the morning until late at night, with a short break in the middle of the day for lunch. On Friday I teach only until noon. Today is the only opportunity I have to come to you!" he pleaded.

"But where is the other party in the lawsuit?" the Reb Yitzchak Isaac.

"He is already here," the man answered. "I wish to bring a lawsuit against the Master of the Universe."

**“Please State Your Complaints”**

Reb Yitzchak Isaac went back inside and put on the fur hat he wore only on Shabbat, holidays and other solemn occasions. He sat on his judicial chair and prepared himself to hear the case. "You, obviously, are the plaintiff. Please state your complaints," he said.

The melamed got straight to the point. "Our Sages teach in the Talmud that there are three partners in the creation of man," he began. "My wife and I have a daughter who has, thank G-d, reached marriageable age, but we do not have enough money to find her a proper match. The third partner, however, has unlimited funds, but He refuses to part with His wealth. That is the essence of my grievance," the man concluded.

Reb Yitzchak Isaac shut his eyes and thought the matter over. After a few minutes of reflection he pronounced his judgment. "You are right," he told the man. "You have won the case." The thankful melamed went home to prepare for Shabbat.

**Discovers an Elaborate Carriage**

**With Several Footmen**

The following Sunday, when the melamed returned home during his lunch break, he found an elaborate carriage with several footmen waiting in front of his house. His concerns were somewhat allayed when he learned why they had come:

On the same block where the melamed and his family dwelled lived a gentile boy who had recently been employed in the landowner's household. For almost a month the landowner's wife had suffered from a terrible toothache. None of the dentists they brought to her had been successful in alleviating her pain.

**The Servant Boy Mentions**

**The Jewish Woman**

When the servant boy saw the woman's suffering, he mentioned to the landowner that there was Jewish woman on his block who was able to "whisper" a toothache away (a popular folk remedy at the time). He suggested that the melamed's wife be brought to the great estate to attempt a cure.

At first the landowner just laughed at the boy's absurd suggestion, but after exhausting every other alternative he agreed to send for the Jewish woman. The melamed's wife was summoned to the great mansion.

**The Landowner’s Wife**

**Cries Were Pitiful to Hear**

The landowner's wife was beside herself in agony. Her cries and moans were pitiful to hear. After a short rest from the long journey the melamed's wife was brought to the suffering woman and asked to perform her cure. She "whispered" over the affected teeth and the painful toothache was miraculously gone.

The landowner and his wife were extremely grateful to the Jewish woman who had brought relief to their entire household. They asked her what she would accept as payment. "My husband is a teacher of small children," the woman answered. "His salary does not even begin to pay our many expenses. Our oldest daughter is of marriageable age, but we haven't the money with which to make a wedding."

"How much money would you need to marry her off?" asked the landowner.

"Five hundred rubles for the dowry, 300 for food, and another 200 for the wedding celebration," the woman said.

Without another word, the landowner gratefully paid the astonished woman the entire sum. And when, as an afterthought, the melamed's wife mentioned that she was also in need of pillows and linens, the landowner instructed his servants to fill his entire carriage with household furnishings and other gifts as tokens of his deep appreciation.

In such a manner was Reb Yitzchak Isaac's verdict carried out.

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

**The Best Kept Secret**

**In the World**

**By Yanki Tauber**

Life, as we all know, is a series of blunders. We never, never ever, get it right the first time.

Is it supposed to be this way? Obviously not. Why not? Well, if something is a blunder, then, by definition, it's something that should *not* have happened. But never mind semantics -- let's talk gut feeling. I trust my intuition more than any syllogism. Well, every time I begin to see another of my life's blunders developing, every filament in my gut screams: "Noooo! This should *not* be happening...!"

And yet, strip life of all its false starts, of all its wrong turns, missed opportunities, naive presumptions, fumbling first attempts and learned-it-the hard-way experiences, and what's left? Nothing worth writing home about, never mind going through all that trouble to live a life for.

Okay, then, let's say we put intuition and gut feeling aside and say that blunders *are* supposed to happen, as part of G‑d's grand plan to make life worthwhile. But if that's the case, we're back in the bland and meaningless space of a pre-programmed life that's not worth going through all that trouble for. Besides, how could my blunders be things that G‑d wanted all along to happen, if many, most, (all?) of them result from actions which G‑d specifically told me He doesn't want to happen?

That's the crazy thing about blunders. Without them, there's nothing. Yet if there's one thing we can about them say with absolute conviction, it's that they're not supposed happen. How can something not supposed to be and supposed to be at the same time?

G‑d knows, but He's not telling.

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

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Walk a Mile in My Shoes**

The verse in last week's Parsha Tetzaveh states: "Now you shall command the Bnai Yisroel that they shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil, for illumination, to kindle the lamp continually." (Shemos 27:20) This verse perhaps hints to the concept of the Jews being a "Light unto the nations." Hashem chose us to be "for illumination" to be a shining example for the Nations.

**Man Bites Dog is News**

Unfortunately, we know that the Jewish nation is not perfect. Although every Jew strives to be a shining example, some fall short. The misdeeds of Jews are often publicized with great fanfare. The explanation of this phenomenon is the following: Dog bites Man is not news. But Man bites Dog is front page news.

That means to say that Jews are a shining example, in contrast to other nations whose track record is not so clean. Thus, when a Jew does something wrong, it is big news. The following uplifting story shows one beautiful example of a Jew being a shining example. For over twenty years, Reb Sholom Mermelstein has been a full-time volunteer for Bikur Cholim, an organization which seeks to make more comfortable the lives of ill people. Indeed, the full scope of the chesed - kindness that Reb Sholom does is known only to Hashem.

What made R' Sholom dedicate his life to helping others? As R' Sholom recounts, the inspiration for his lifelong mission comes from an incident that occurred during World War II. Sholom was born in a small, poor village called Pavlovo, near the city of Munkacz. His father, Yitzchok, owned a small farm with just a few cows, yet this was more than many of the townspeople had.

**The Mother Would Wake Up to**

**Milk the Cow for Poor Mothers**

Sholom recalls how his mother would get up at five o'clock every morning and milk the cows, to give the poor mothers of the town some milk to feed their children. Sholom also recalls how his grandfather, R' Bentzion Mermelstein, was always performing chesed for others.

When World War II began, Sholom's comfortable life suddenly went haywire. Sholom was taken away from his family and placed in a work camp, where he struggled to survive.

Several tortured years later, when word filtered in that his hometown had been liberated by the Russians, Sholom decided that it was worth taking the risk to escape and head back home.

**A Long Hazardous Journey**

**Still Lay Ahead**

Sholom's escape was successful. But a long, hazardous journey still lay ahead. Pavlovo was 150 kilometers away, and since he couldn't risk taking a train, he needed to make his way there by foot—in the icy, frozen winter. With rags on his feet and the wind knifing through his thin clothes, Sholom nevertheless managed to walk six kilometers every day, seeking shelter wherever he stopped for the night.

One evening, Sholom staggered into a small town, only to discover that the place was filled with Russian soldiers. There was nowhere for him to lay his weary body down for a few hours' rest. Desperate, he started going from door to door, begging for a warm corner out of the freezing wind. But the answer was always the same: "We have Russian soldiers staying with us, and there is absolutely no room."

Sholom finally reached the last house in the village. The small hut was undoubtedly the home of an unruly peasant who wouldn't be pleased by the interruption. Sholom knew that he was risking his life by disturbing the man's rest. But his choices were few: either take the chance, or risk freezing in the frigid night air. So, he lifted his hand and knocked firmly on the door.

**Again Refused Hospitality**

The man who answered looked suspiciously at his unexpected guest. "What do you want?" he growled. "I'm sorry to disturb you," Sholom said politely, "but would you happen to have a place in your home where I can sleep out of the cold?" The man shook his head. "Sorry," he said gruffly. He opened the inner door, where Sholom could see a small room with a bed— and a sheep placidly standing in the corner.

"There's only enough room for one bed and my sheep." Sholom could see that the man really couldn't help him. "I guess I'll have to sleep in the woods," he sighed, as he turned to go.

**Warning About Wolves**

**That Roam in the Forest**

"Oh, you can't do that!" the man exclaimed. "There are wolves in that forest that would eat you alive!" Sholom shivered in fear.

"Could I at least stay beneath the ledge that overhangs your house?" he asked the peasant. "It will give me a bit of shelter." The man gave his consent and went back inside. Sholom, left outside in the frigid air, breathed a silent prayer to Hashem to keep him from freezing during the long, cold night that lay ahead of him.

A short while later, the door opened. "By the way, what's your name?" the peasant called out. "I am Bentzion Mermelstein's grandson," Sholom heard himself reply. He was momentarily puzzled: why had he said that? The peasant grew visibly excited.

**The Recollection of the Grandfather**

"You're Bentzion Mermelstein's grandson, from Pavlovo?" "That's right," Sholom confirmed. "Why, do you know him?" "Of course I do!" the peasant exclaimed.

"Over forty years ago, there used to be a big market day in Munkacz. Many of us would walk for days with our cows to get to the market, and we needed places to stay along the way. Your grandfather always let me stay in his barn, and in the morning, he would offer me a glass of whiskey to help me get through the day. I'll never forget what he did for me."

Then the man beckoned Sholom into the house. He prepared some potatoes, milked a few ounces of milk from the sheep, and handed the food to Sholom. Then he let Sholom sleep on the bed, while he slept on the floor beneath him.

Sholom awoke in the morning, feeling fresh and invigorated from his comfortable night. He thanked the man for his help—and then thanked Hashem for showing him this kindness which had saved his life, in the merit of the kindness his grandfather had performed for others.

Sholom lived to return home safely. He continued to live by his mother's parting words: "Sholom, be a good boy, and always go in the correct path." (Visions of Greatness V, p. 107 R. Yosef Weiss) Let us all be inspired to be a shining example, to be a "Light unto the Nations."

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

**A Slice of Life**

**And It Was**

**Turned Around**

**By Dr. David Lazerson**

My wife Gittel and I were going to Denmark for the "iJew" weekend sponsored by the Chabad House of Copenhagen. Figuring the kosher scene there left something to be desired, my e-mail to Rabbi Yitzi Lowenthal was short and sweet: "Is there anything we can bring you from Miami? How's a chocolate melt-away for dessert sound?"

Rabbi Yitzi responded quickly. "Some warm sunshine and some goodies for the Shabbaton and upcoming Purim celebration. We need 400 hamentashen and 150 chocolate chip cookies."

**Getting 550 Pieces of**

**Pastries Past Security**

How does one get 550 pieces of delicious goodies past security of a foreign country? "Denmark is different," Rabbi Yitzi assured me. "They won't even check you. Besides, you're coming to do some big mitzvot for the Jewish community of Copenhagen. The Danish people are righteous gentiles. They saved almost all the Jews of Denmark during the war. They're not going to give you trouble over hamentashen!"

I'd be speaking several times over Shabbat, giving a parent workshop on Sunday as well as another talk on my work in race relations, and putting on a concert to conclude the entire program. The special weekend would also include talks from Arthur Avnon, the Israeli ambassador to Denmark, Rabbi Bent Lexner, the chief rabbi of Denmark, and Edwin Shuker, who has some fascinating stories about his escape from Iraq when Saddam Hussein was in power.

**The Weekend Before Purim**

It was the weekend before Purim and the theme from the Megila of "v'nahafoch hu" seemed to come to life. These two Hebrew words mean "and it was turned around." Just when things seemed so gloomy and worrisome for the Jews of ancient Persia, the situation changed from one extreme to the other and they emerged totally victorious over Haman and all their enemies.

The events of Purim may have occurred long ago but they somehow came to life that weekend in Copenhagen. Rabbi Yitzi explained that the Chabad House used to be a headquarters for the Nazis. The tall, very Danish-looking building now housed a hyper-actively busy kosher kitchen, a Jewish library, a synagogue with Torahs, and a large social hall for Jewish events, discussions, and homemade Shabbat meals. In addition, several Jewish students rented apartments in the Chabad House building. It seemed as if the place was in action almost 24 hours a day.

**How the Danes Saved Almost All**

**Their Jews During World War II**

As we drove from the airport to the Chabad House, Rabbi Yitzi shared with us how the Danes saved most of their Jewish fellow citizens during the war, ferrying them in boats to Sweden. All this done in the still of the night, just days before the Nazis would deport those who remained.

"Denmark is a very interesting place," Rabbi Yitzi told us. "The Danes are a hearty bunch and it's very family-oriented here." I wasn't sure what he meant but found out throughout our five-days.

There were Jews as well as gentiles who had come from all over the world to participate in this weekend of Jewish Learning. At my table there were people from Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Israel, Bulgaria - and Miami! And that was just one of eight tables!

After my talk was over Friday night, Gittel and I went for a walk. It was almost midnight and what we saw was astounding. We bundled up like Eskimos, but what's a bit of frigid air to the Danes? They were out doing what they usually do - bike riding! To our astonishment, there were lots of people riding even at that late hour.

I couldn't help but marvel, knowing that if this were my hometown of Buffalo, New York, you'd have had to look hard to find even one lone soul out and about on such a dark, cold night.

**A Late Afternoon Concert**

The Weekend of Jewish Learning concluded with a late afternoon concert. As I picked up my guitar to entertain the large crowed gathered at the Chabad House, I couldn't help but marvel.

The room was filled with all these people who had come to learn and be inspired about Judaism and Torah. We sang and danced to my rather unusual blend of Jewish themes in various genres - rock, reggae, rap, even bluegrass - in the very building that had been used by the Nazis to plan their evil against us and humanity as a whole.

**Utilizing a Former Nazi Building**

**To Promote Yiddishkeit**

And yet, just a few generations later, the building is ours. They were defeated, their hoped-for "Thousand Year Reich" reduced to rubble, and here we were, thriving, growing, involved in positive endeavors and, in that irrepressible style of Chabad, doing it all with true joy.

Monday was our "day-off." There were many options to explore Copenhagen. We decided that when in Denmark, do as the Danes do: ride bikes. While we knew full well how to ride - in fact, we bike in Florida - we were total greenhorns when it came to the rules of the road in Copenhagen.

As I kind of zigzagged about, stopping here and there, even sticking my feet out to the side in utter joy, I finally realized that the hundreds of bell rings and whistles I was hearing were meant for yours truly, who came way too close to causing massive bike pile-ups throughout the city.

**Closing Time at 6 P.M.**

Later that day we stopped off at a natural juice place and just when we were settling in, the owner announced that it was 6 p.m. - closing time. I gave him a "huh?" kind of look. Pretty much the entire city, except for some restaurants and pubs, shuts down comes six o'clock.

I later asked a random store owner about this and he explained, "We work all day and the kids are at school all day, so at the very least we spend our evenings and weekends together. Time goes by too fast. Who can go through life and not get to know their own family?"

Good question indeed. I've worked with at-risk individuals for over three decades and much of what I see can be attributed to poor dynamics among family members. Maybe it's time we took some lessons from the Danes and started closing our businesses early and spending real quality time together.

*David Lazerson, or "Dr. Laz," is a renowned educator, author, musician and conflict resolution specialist. He currently directs an award-winning music/drama therapy program for special-needs students in the Broward County public schools. He was inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame in 2008.*

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

**Jewish School Loses in Final of**

**Texas Basketball Tournament**

**By Mary Pilon**

Houston’s Robert M. Beren Academy, which successfully appealed a scheduling conflict that nearly forced it to forfeit its place in a Texas basketball tournament this week, lost to Abilene Christian, 46-42, on Saturday night in the state championship game.



LM Otero/Associated Press

Beren Academy of Houston defeated the Covenant School of Dallas, 58-46, after their state semifinal game was rescheduled.

Only days ago, it appeared Beren Academy would not play in the tournament at all.

Beren Academy is an Orthodox Jewish school, and its players observe the Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. The school [was prepared to forfeit its semifinal game](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/sports/jewish-schools-team-refusing-to-play-during-sabbath-loses-trip-to-state-semifinals.html?scp=2&sq=beren%20academy&st=cse) against the Covenant School of Dallas, which had been scheduled for 9 p.m. on Friday, unless the starting time of the game was moved up.

Beren officials appealed to the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools, the group that organizes the tournament, but the association said it would not change the starting time, citing its bylaws.

But on Thursday, after a group of Beren Academy parents and students filed a lawsuit, the association, known as Tapps, [announced that it would comply](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/02/sports/orthodox-jewish-schools-game-expected-to-be-rescheduled.html) with Beren Academy’s request. It rescheduled its Class 2A semifinal game for Friday afternoon, and also agreed to reschedule the championship game until after sundown if Beren Academy advanced.

The final, originally set for Saturday afternoon, was played at 8 p.m. at Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth.

Beren Academy (24-6) trailed for much of the first two quarters before tying the score at halftime, 19-19. But Beren failed to keep pace with Abilene in the second half, trailing until the final buzzer.

“We’re just happy they had a chance to play,” Beren Academy Coach Chris Cole said.

*Reprinted from the March 4, 2012 edition of The New York Times.*

**Moshe Made it Better for Jew than Even Before the Terrible Sin**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*And Moshe pleaded before Has*hem.” (Shemot 32:11)

Our perashah describes Moshe Rabenu’s successful prayer. Moshe Rabenu gives it his all, to save the Jewish people from complete annihilation, due to the terrible sin of the Golden Calf. From this chapter we can learn some huge lessons on the power of our prayers and what to do if has veshalom one is placed in a very dangerous and difficult situation.

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zt”l says we can capture a few gems from this story. First of all the Gemara (Berachot 32b) tells that when Moshe saw the great anger of Hashem, he felt physically drained and unable to speak.

**Mustering Up All His**

**Strength to Beg for Mercy**

However, as soon as Hashem told him, “Leave Me so I can destroy them,” (Debarim 9:14) Moshe realized that it was up to him to try to prevent it from happening. Immediately he mustered all of his strength and begged for mercy. We can now learn that if a terrible situation arises and one feels unable to pray due to the anxiety of the situation, that is the most important time to pray and most likely to get a positive response.

Eventually it says, “And Hashem reconsidered regarding the evil that He declared He would do to His people.” OK, Hashem forgave. Moshe continues to push forward. Moshe wasn’t satisfied until Hashem agreed to restore the same level of love and blessings that existed before the sin. Moshe was still not satisfied. He asks for a greater revelation of Hashem’s mercy and he gained now what we know today as the thirteen attributes of mercy! Today we recite it all the time to activate Hashem’s mercy! The Sages are surprised. Is it possible that Moshe acquires more benefits after the sin than they had before the sin?

**The Answer is Yes!**

The answer is yes. Once Moshe had to pray so hard because of the terrible situation, he successfully opened the gates of mercy. Once that happened it was a good time to pray for even more than he had before.

If someone is fatally ill and the loved one prays and the person gets out of danger, then pray for complete good health. If someone is in deep debt and prays and finds a way to pay it off – don’t stop praying there. Pray for complete financial well-being; the gates are open.

If someone prays hard without letting up, the pasuk that says “May He grant you as your heart [desires] and may He fulfill your every plan” {Tehillim 20:5} will be fulfilled with him.

**Looking Back at the**

**Events of Our Lives**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

When Moshe asked Hashem to let him understand the ways of Hashem, Hashem told him He would show him the back (so to speak) and not the front of Hashem. The Rabbis tell us this is a metaphor. We have to realize that when we are in a situation, as it is unfolding, we cannot fathom the ways of Hashem frontward.

However, after the fact we are sometimes able to “see” from the back view what has already transpired. This will give us the necessary clarity of vision to realize what Hashem has done and to appreciate His wondrous ways. This should serve as a basis for us to have faith in Him.

For if we see in retrospect how He judges and runs the world, this will strengthen our trust in Him, which will help us overcome difficult situations. May we be privileged to appreciate Hashem “from the back” as we look back at different events in our lives!

**Dachau Survivor and Liberator**

**Meet Six Decades Later**

**By the Associated Press (AP)**

PHILADELPHIA — The way Ernie Gross and Don Greenbaum laugh and tell jokes with the ease of old friends, it’s easy to assume the dapper octogenarians have known each other forever.

In reality, they only met a few months ago. Their familiarity doesn’t come from shared memories of a childhood playground or a high school dance but a far darker place: Both men spent a single day at the Dachau concentration camp on the day its 30,000 prisoners were liberated by American GIs in 1945.

Greenbaum, 87, and Gross, 83, don’t think they met that day in Dachau but nevertheless share a bond. They met after Gross, who lives in Philadelphia, saw a mention in a local newspaper last November about Greenbaum, a Philadelphia native now living in suburban Bala Cynwyd.

“Ernie wanted to thank me for saving his life, quote unquote, even though there were 50,000 other men there with me,” Greenbaum said, with a hint of unease, during an interview at Gross’ home. “And we sat and had lunch together and discussed what happened 66 years ago.”

[](http://media.northjersey.com/images/030412dachau_dngnk.jpg)

*Dachau survivor Ernie Gross, left, and Dachau liberator Don Greenbaum speak amongst themselves during an interview with the Associated Press in Philadelphia. (Photo by AP)*

Gross, then all of 85 pounds after nearly a year of sickness, abuse and constant hunger, had no doubt April 29, 1945, was his last day on earth. Greenbaum, a soldier with Gen. George Patton’s Third Army 283rd Field Artillery Battalion, arrived that day at Dachau expecting to seize ammunition, clothing and food that was kept for the Nazis notorious SS forces.

They were both wrong, it turned out.

The men, who talk about their experiences at local synagogues and schools, now are working together to find other Dachau survivors and liberators in the area to share their stories. They acknowledge that recounting the horrors of the Holocaust isn’t easy but believe it’s their duty.

**Boxcars Full of Bodies**

“As we got near Dachau, about a mile outside the camp, there was an odor we couldn’t identify,” Greenbaum said. “When we arrived, I saw the boxcars. They were full of bodies.”

History would come to call it the Dachau death train: some 40 cattle cars holding more than 2,000 men and women evacuated from another camp — and left to die on the train — in the final weeks of World War II.

“We had at that time never heard the expression ‘concentration camp,’ we never heard of a death camp,” Greenbaum said. “None of us had any idea.”

**Told to Lie About His Age**

Gross, a Romanian Jew, was 15 when he and his family were taken from their home, deported to a ghetto in Hungary and eventually packed on a standing-room-only boxcar to Auschwitz in 1942. At the urging of a man next to him as they waited in line to be processed, he lied and told the SS officer he was 17.

Any younger and he’d be deemed incapable of hard labor and, he was told, immediately killed.

“The same guy who told me to lie said to me, ‘Do you see that smoke in the sky where the sun cannot get through? This is going to be your parents in about two hours,” he recalled. “My parents and younger brother and younger sister ... that’s the last time I saw them.” Of his two older brothers also sent to labor camps, one — his favorite — also died.

**In a State of Starvation**

In a state of starvation, and after months of daily beatings and backbreaking work, then-16-year-old Gross was shoved onto another boxcar, this time headed to Dachau, near Munich. It was supposed to arrive a day before the liberation, on April 28, but American bombings delayed the train.

When he arrived the next day, barely able to walk, Gross knew he would soon be murdered: hanged, shot, gassed, he didn’t know. He was so close to death that he didn’t care.

“We were standing in this long line and we already knew where we were going,” he said. “I was close enough that I could see the crematorium and, all of a sudden, I see the German soldiers throwing down their guns and running away.”

**The American Soldiers Arrived**

The first contingent of Americans had arrived.

“If they would have come an hour later, I would not be here to tell this story,” Gross said in accented English underscoring his eastern European roots. “They took me right away, they knew I am falling apart, and they put me in a sanitarium to recuperate.”

Greenbaum said his company arrived shortly after the first wave of American troops and spent only a couple of hours at Dachau before moving on to their next mission. The SS at Dachau were captured, killed or in hiding by the time he arrived.

“We met a priest there who took us through the camp. He showed us what was there; the prisoners were walking skeletons,” he said. “We called the troop behind us to notify them about what we had come across and to bring food and clothing and blankets and the whole bit. Then we left. We had to keep going.”

**Both Men Tried to Leave their**

**Wartime Nightmares Behind**

After the war, both men went on with their lives and tried to leave their wartime nightmares behind.

Gross came to the U.S. and settled in Philadelphia, where he started out slicing lox in a delicatessen and ended up owning three delis of his own, married and had three boys. His first wife, who died 19 years after they wed, was from Czechoslovakia and also spent time in a concentration camp. The couple never discussed those times — not even where they were imprisoned during the Holocaust — and his children only know his story by hearing him speak at public events.

“I never told my wife about myself, I never told my sons. I wasn’t up to it,” he said. “After so many years, I decided I better start speaking to people to know who I am and where I come from.”

After his second wife died about 15 years ago, Gross said “something in me was healing and I was able to overcome it.”

“When you are bitter, it takes energy,” he said. Constantly smiling and a consummate joke-teller, he says he tries to make one person laugh every day. Usually, he succeeds.

Greenbaum, whose military career also includes the Battle of the Bulge and a Purple Heart, returned home, married and also never discussed the war until he saw a Holocaust denier on television 20 years ago.

“That motivated me to speak because I saw what happened,” he said. “This fellow’s on TV saying it never happened. I was there and I saw it. Ernie and I, we both were there ... we know.”

*Reprinted from the Associated Press article that has been published in many American newspapers on March 4, 2012 that subscribe to this wire service.*

**For Jewish Sabbath, Elevators Do All the Work**

**By Elizabeth Harris**

“Don’t get in that one!” a woman cried, standing in front of an open elevator door, a quiet toddler in her arms.

But why? Was this elevator dangerous?

Well, no. But in a city where perhaps the dirtiest word of all is “wait,” it was close enough.



*Jeff Katz, an observant Jew aboard an express Shabbos elevator in the Seward Park co-op. “It speeds things up,” he said. (Benjamin Norman for The New York Times)*

“It’ll stop on like every floor,” said the woman, Shira Stember, standing in the lobby of a Seward Park co-op building on the Lower East Side. While she is happy the elevator is there for her neighbors, Ms. Stember said, she prefers to take the next car, because this open door leads into a Shabbos elevator.

From sundown on Friday until the sun sets on Saturday, many observant Jews refrain from certain activities, including pushing elevator buttons, following a restriction that comes from a [prohibition against creating sparks and fires](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/102032/jewish/The-39-Melachot.htm). So in some buildings, elevators are programmed to stop automatically on every floor during the Sabbath. That way, observant Jews can hop right in and, eventually, get where they are going.

These systems, long a fixture in hospitals as well, can be lifesavers for older people and those with disabilities, and they allow the observant to live on floors that are too high to hoof it. But they also slow down elevator traffic. A lot.

“It’s annoying,” one Seward Park resident howled.

“They take forever,” said Michael Bolla, a managing director at Prudential Douglas Elliman and an observant Jew who prefers to take the stairs. “For-e-ver!”

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| spacer Benjamin Norman for The New York Times  The elevator's schedule, posted outside the elevator banks. | . |

In recent years, some buildings have adopted speedier versions: an express Sabbath elevator, stopping only at specific floors requested in advance by observant families.

“It speeds things up,” said Jeff Katz, a sixth-floor resident who was riding one of the elevators in Seward Park on a recent Friday evening, his hands folded in front of him and a smile on his face. “It’s one of the attractions of living in these buildings.”

In addition to Seward Park, a four-building co-op with a high concentration of Orthodox Jewish residents, different versions of such express elevators, which Jacob Goldman, a prominent broker on the Lower East Side with LoHo Realty, refers to as smart elevators, can be found in a few new buildings around Manhattan.

**Shooting Up to the Penthouse**

At 535 West End Avenue, for example, a building where the cheapest apartment available at the moment is a five-bedroom listed at $8.5 million, one of its two elevators switches to Shabbos mode on Friday evening. But instead of creeping up from the lobby one floor at a time, it shoots up to the penthouse and then works its way down.

This arrangement gives the shortest ride up to those on the highest floors, who would have the toughest trek on the stairs. Not necessarily coincidentally, it also gives the speediest trip to those who have paid the most.

Another Upper West Side building, the Heritage at Trump Place, at 240 Riverside Boulevard, employs a still fancier express service. On the Sabbath, one of its six passenger elevators stops at prerequested floors, but then it goes into regular service mode for five minutes before doing another round of Shabbos stops.

**“They Want the View”**

“They want the view,” Gilad Azaria, a Prudential Douglas Elliman broker who has sold apartments at 240 Riverside, said of the residents. “But 15 floors is a lot of steps.”

While it is impossible to know how many New York City buildings have a Shabbos elevator, brokers say they are not common. And Rabbi Elie Weinstock, who lives on the 11th floor of his building, said most people made do without, sometimes by jumping into a regular elevator and hoping their fellow passengers are heading to a floor near their own destination.

“I have hitched before, and I have seen it done,” Rabbi Weinstock said. “Wherever they take you is going to be closer than you were before.”

More reliably, said Rabbi Weinstock, an associate rabbi at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, many doormen know where the observant people live and will push the appropriate button for them. But it is not acceptable, he said, to walk up to the doormen on a Saturday morning and ask them to do so. ([Some rabbis also do not consider Shabbos elevators to be acceptable.](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/10/nyregion/10elevator.html))

“The worst thing in the world is when someone new starts” as a doorman, Rabbi Weinstock said. “Someone will say, ‘I’m going up to 27,’ and they’ll hear, ‘That’s nice.’ ”

If finding a Shabbos elevator is a priority, the listings on a real estate Web site are not much help.

Many brokers say they leave Shabbos elevators off their advertisements because they are [concerned about violating the Fair Housing Act](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/29/nyregion/29appraisal.html), which prohibits discrimination against buyers and renters based on race, religion, disability or having children. Apartments must be marketed to the general public, and saying there is such an elevator could very likely be interpreted as targeting a single group and excluding others.

**Not Many People Use These Elevators**

But primarily, brokers say, not many people use these elevators, and their speed, like kosher molasses, might turn people off — even among those for whom they are intended.

“It’s still slow,” said Juda Engelmayer, an 11th-floor resident and Sabbath observer who was on the Seward Park board when the shift was made to smart elevators, about 10 years ago. “Even I sit there and get impatient.”

In his complex, Mr. Engelmayer said, the change to express service came in response to a growing proportion of secular residents. According to building management, the number of stops the 12 Shabbos elevators made dropped to 114 floors, down from 240.

**Stopping on Every Floor**

Two of Seward’s neighboring co-ops, Hillman Housing and East River Housing, also have Shabbos elevators, but they still stop on every floor.

Heshey Jacob, the general manager for those buildings, responded like a protective parent when queried about the relative smarts of his elevators, saying, “People like to make recommendations, but when you tell them it costs a million dollars, there’s nobody home.”

Seward Park switched to express during an overhaul of its elevator systems, and Mr. Jacob said he expected his buildings to follow suit in the next few years.

Despite the occasional anxious toe-tapping, Mr. Engelmayer said he was glad his building kept the Shabbos option for those who needed it, including some members of his own family.

“The dog likes the Shabbos elevator, too, because she ain’t walking up the stairs,” Mr. Engelmayer said of his 9-year-old black Labrador mix, Jessie. “Back in 2004 when we had the blackout, she did it, though she didn’t appreciate it.”

“Today,” he added, a tinge of sadness in his voice, “she probably couldn’t do it.”

*Reprinted from the March 5, 2012 edition of The New York Times.*

**Maturing Korean Jewish Community Gets its**

**Own Sefer Torah**

**By Tamar Runyan**

The dedication of a new Sefer Torah is always a cause for celebration. But for the small yet proud Jewish community in South Korea, just such a dedication Sunday meant so much more. Not only did it cap the community’s recent unprecedented growth, it welcomed what for Jews elsewhere in the world is almost a given: a Sefer Torah of their own.



*A supporter of the Jewish community in South Korea writes one of the first letters in a Torah scroll commissioned by the Chabad House in Seoul during a 2008 launch party in Israel.*

**Funded by the Community Members Themselves**

Often a Sefer Torah - which typically costs in excess of $10,000 and can cost as much as $30,000 - is donated by generous individuals in honor or in memory of a loved one, but according to Rabbi Osher Litzman, the South Korean Torah was funded by the community members themselves.

“We have been blessed with donations from locals, visitors and friends who have helped to cover a significant amount of the expenses,” said Litzman, who is still fundraising for the project. “The goal is that everyone in the community will have a share.”

Community member Pierre Cohen-Aknine agreed.

“It is a blessing for the community,” stated Cohen-Aknine, 53. “Everyone feels joy, pride and a sense of responsibility attached to owning such a diamond.”

***First Torah Dedication for***

***Many Jews Living in Korea***

Originally from Paris, Cohen-Aknine first came to Korea 30 years ago for his military duty at the French Embassy. Now a businessman who owns and runs three companies, Sunday’s celebration was his first-ever Torah dedication.

Though Litzman’s Chabad House in Seoul has been using borrowed Torah scrolls since the rabbi and his wife Mussy Litzman arrived in 2008, having a Torah scroll of its own means the world to members such as Cohen-Aknine.

Seemingly Like the Wedding Ceremony at Mount Sinai

He likened it to attending a wedding ceremony at Mount Sinai.

“It’s like living for the first time,” said Cohen-Aknine, who imagined what it must have been like to receive the Torah thousands of years ago. “If we were born only for that moment, it would suffice.”

Shelly Korn, who moved to Korea almost five years ago with her husband Yoav Korn, said that “the arrival of the scroll symbolizes an official recognition and validation of the Jewish community here.

“It also represents the initiation of a new phase in the spiritual development of the Jewish community here, which seems to be rapidly growing and evolving,” she added.

**Son Attends Chabad Daycare Program**

Korn should know. The native Israeli and her South African husband - who is on the Chabad House’s board of directors - were part of the initial group responsible for bringing the Litzmans to this part of Asia. The couple’s son, Raphael, who was born in South Korea and was circumcised at the Chabad House, now attends the daycare there.

“We volunteer, donate and promote the organization in and way we can,” said Korn, 39. “It’s safe to say that Chabad is an integral part of our daily life here. In fact, we probably wouldn’t have stayed as long as we did if they weren’t around.”

**Very Few Jews Live in Korea Permanently**

Korn, a human resources director currently on sabbatical, explained that the local Jewish community is comprised of many students and professionals who come for short-term assignments lasting about three to nine months. Others, she explained, come with their families for a two to five month work assignment. Only a few live in Seoul permanently.

“My family and I have never been to an event like this before and we are all very excited about it,” stated Korn, whose husband is an English professor at Hanyang University.

The celebration was also a first for Stephen Barton.

“I am very excited because it is such an important occasion,” said the 57-year-old, adding that writing a Torah scroll is counted as the last of its 613 commands, because doing so “contributes to the permanence … [and] continuation of Judaism.”

**Creates a Stronger Community Foundation**

Barton, who moved to Korea from Hong Kong in January with his wife Ursula Tamar, said that having a Torah scroll to call their own “creates a stronger foundation for the community.”

Litzman couldn’t agree more.

“Since our arrival in 2008 we have been using Torahs on loan from other Chabad Houses and now, finally, we are proud to welcome our very own,” said the rabbi.

The Torah scroll was paraded down the streets of Seoul - from the Grand Hyatt Hotel to the Chabad Jewish Community Center — with great fanfare by hundreds of people, including the Israeli ambassador and visiting rabbis from China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand and Israel.

**Everlasting Commitment of the Rabbi and His Wife**

According to Barton, an engineer who is involved in business management with the petrochemical industry, the Torah dedication “affirms that the hard work and commitment so far of Rabbi Osher Litzman and his wife Mussy will in fact be everlasting.”

Prior to their arrival almost four years ago, Jewish life in Korea was limited to the boundaries of the American army base, explained Litzman. Since World War II, a Jewish chaplain regularly attended to soldiers’ spiritual needs and opened up High Holiday services to others.

“The Torah is our road map,” said Barton. “It is our Constitution.”

*Reprinted from the March 6, 2012 website of Matzav.com.*

The Human Side of the Story

**Still Feel the Warmth**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

How is it that someone so distant from religious belief and practice shows such sympathy for the religious community?

In response to this question put to him by a rabbi, the chairman of the council of a pronouncedly non-religious leftwing settlement in Israel told the following story:

As an intellectually gifted youngster he sought to study in the Radin Yeshiva of the saintly Chafetz Chaim. The instructor who tested him for admission reported to the Chafetz Chaim that, although the applicant was well skilled in Talmud, he had some dangerous heretical ideas. Fearful of the negative influence this fellow might have on the other students, the Chafetz Chaim ordered him to leave immediately.

Since the last train from Radin had already left, the rejected youngster asked permission to sleep overnight in the yeshiva. That was impossible, was the reply, but an invitation was extended instead to spend the night in a spare room in the Chafetz Chaim’s own home.

That night, as our hero was trying to fall asleep, he saw the door to his room open and the Chafetz Chaim stealthily entering. Certain that his young guest was fast asleep the venerable sage stood there for a moment to test the temperature of the room on this winter night. Convinced that it was uncomfortably cold, he removed his fur coat and covered his guest to keep him warm.

And you know, the unreformed but sympathetic heretic concluded, I still feel the warmth of that coat.

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

**What’s the Right Thing to Do?**

**Visiting a Sick Enemy**

Question: Should one pay a sick visit to someone whom he hates as a mitzvah of *bikur cholim* and as an exercise of overcoming his negative feelings, or can such a visit be counterproductive?

Answer: This question has already been dealt with in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah 335*) where the Rema rules that one should neither visit a sick enemy nor pay a condolence visit when he is in mourning lest his visit be interpreted as an expression of joy at seeing the sorrow of the one being visited, and thus causing him pain rather than comfort.

Of course this depends on the degree of the enmity between the two parties. But another consideration has been raised by some of the halachic authorities. There is the possibility that the sick person may misconstrue the surprise appearance of his enemy as a sign that he must be mortally ill, thus causing his condition to deteriorate because of the psychological impact.

Perhaps the best idea is the one suggested by the *Aruch Hashulchan*. A message should be sent to the patient (or themourner) asking him if he would welcome a visit from hisenemy. If consent is granted, the above-mentioned fears areno longer relevant and a visit is very much in order.

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

**Who's Who**

**Ezekiel**

The prophet Ezekiel [Yechezkel] (622-570 b.c.e.) was one of the greatest leaders of the Babylonian exile period. Born of a priestly family in Jerusalem, he was amongst the first of the exiles to Babylonia by King Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel prophesied the destruction of the First Temple and promised his brethren that they would return to the Holy Land.

Perhaps his most famous prophecy is that of the Valley of Dry Bones, when he saw that the piles of dried bones rose and were vivified by G-d. In this way, he reassured his fellow Jews that Israel would enjoy new life and glory after the destruction.

*Reprinted from the Archives of L’Chaim Weekly.*

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

**The King’s Ring**

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| QUESTION: |

Why should the act of putting the king's ring on Haman's finger be more effective than the words of all the Nevi’im?[in causing the Jews at that time to repent of their sins against Hakodesh Baruch Hu]

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| ANSWER: |

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Ei’no Do’meh Shmi’ah L’riah; hearing is not similar to seeing. Don't you know, it's demonstrated constantly that there are many wise admonitions that people hear in their youth from their parents and their teachers, but in most cases until they experience the bitterness of irresponsible conduct, they never fully appreciate what their parents and teachers really meant.

However, the wise man learns from the experience of others. It's only the fool that waits until he himself undergoes the experience. But that's how human nature is. It doesn't mean that nobody repented, you can be sure that when Moshe Rabbeinu spoke, and when Yehoshua spoke, or when Rabbi Akiva spoke - the people listened, but there's always a certain element that takes things lightly; they're not impressed sufficiently. And therefore Hakadosh Baruch Hu has to bring upon them actual persecution in order that their hearts should turn to Him.

A man that is able to learn wisdom without undergoing personal suffering, that's the wise man. He doesn't need chastisement on his own person.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l” that was transcribed from a question posed to Rabbi Miller by a member of the audience to one of his classic Thursday night lectures at his Flatbush shul. To listen to the audio of this Question and Answer, please call (201) 676 -3210.*