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**Communist-Era Torah Uplifts Small Albany, NY, Suburb**

**By Mussi Sharfstein**

**Tony German holds the Torah with Rabbi Mordechai Rubin**

**(Photo by Evan Lauber)**

 After years of waiting, an over 100-year-old Torah that was smuggled from communist Belarus finally found a home in a suburb of Albany, New York, at [Chabad of Colonie](https://www.coloniecjc.com/).

 The Torah was donated by **Tony**(Naftoli) and **Klara German**, Colonie residents. “It was through true sacrifice that Tony managed to smuggle the Torah out of the Soviet Union,” says Rabbi **Mordechai Rubin**, who directs Chabad of Colonie with his wife, **Chana**.

**Original Home was in a Modest**

**Shteibel in Gomel, Belarus**

 The Torah’s original home was in a modest *shtiebel* in Gomel, Belarus, where Tony’s father, **Chaim**, was the caretaker when the Soviets came to power. Chaim was not fully observant and his son even less so, but nevertheless, the small synagogue was dear to his heart.

 The congregation was an older one, and its members slowly passed on, leaving the *shtiebel*empty and services suspended. Chaim, knowing the Soviets would surely confiscate the premises and discard the precious Torah, took it home and kept it reverently wrapped and safely stored.

 Then Chaim fell ill. On his deathbed, he made Tony promise that if he ever made it out from behind the Iron Curtain, he wouldn’t leave the Torah behind. “Take it somewhere where people will really want it and use it,” he told Tony. Knowing full-well the dangers associated with this promise and understanding the importance of this request, Tony solemnly swore to take the Torah with him, should he ever get out.

**Took the Risk Despite the**

**Danger of Being Imprisoned**

 When he did, it was 1989 and still extremely risky to smuggle a religious article out of the Soviet Union. Even knowing he and his family would likely be imprisoned for the act and lose their chance to leave altogether, he selflessly hid the Torah among his belongings to bring to America.

 “I thought Judaism was over in Belarus,” he later told Rabbi Mordechai. “There was no future for the Torah there.”

 Thanks to a distraction he created at the border, Tony was successful in smuggling the Torah out. He brought it with him to the Albany suburb where he settled.

 It took thirty more years for him to find a proper home for the Torah. Though he did visit congregations in the area, he didn’t feel like the Torah would be treasured and used there, among the many other scrolls the synagogues already had. And so, he waited.

 Then the Rubins came along. The couple moved to Colonie just a year and a half ago, and despite their growing programming, like a thriving women’s group, weekly classes, Shabbat dinners, and children’s programs, they still focus on one-on-one interactions. “We’re a small town here,” Chana says, “and slowly building up a community.” Every day, the couple goes door to door with fresh challah, meeting Jews in the area. “It’s been amazing to meet all these wonderful individuals, but we never expected to be gifted something this major.”

 Rabbi Mordechai met Tony on one of his home visits. “We had a wonderful conversation,” he remembers. “I invited him to come to Shabbat dinner or services, but he politely declined. Then he told me that he has an old Torah he wanted me to see.” The rabbi expected to see a book, a worn copy of the *Tanach*or a *Chumash*, and was shocked when Tony showed him a genuine, complete Torah scroll and told him the story behind it.

**Risked His Life so the Torah**

**Wouldn’t be Forgotten or Destroyed**

 “I was so touched,” Rabbi Mordechai shared with *Lubavitch.com*. “I was emotional hearing how this Jew, who isn’t otherwise involved with Judaism, risked his life so the Torah wouldn’t be forgotten or destroyed and could be loved and used.”

 The Germans donated the scroll to the fledgling Jewish center. The Rubins restored the Torah, repairing the wear and tear, and brought it to their center in a grand celebration attended by 180 people on June 26. A silver crown was placed on the scroll, a gift from the **Massry**family, Colonie community activists. "This Torah, more than any Torah, embodies the message of our nation’s strength and victory in the face of oppression," Chana said at the event. "And that is what makes this occasion truly a joyous gathering."

 Rabbi Mordechai adds, “It gave us such a boost and really solidified our roots in this town. We weren’t ready to start hosting regular services, but after receiving the Torah, it pushed us to begin.” The nascent minyan meets on special occasions, such as holidays and *yahrzeits.*“Tony told me that if I am ever missing a tenth man for the reading of his Torah, I should let him know, and he’ll be there to complete the minyan.”

**Discovers a Jewish Rebirth Today in Belarus**

 Just before the celebration, Tony returned to Belarus for the first time since he left. He was amazed to see the Jewish revival happening in the place he thought Judaism had died. “I went to my father’s gravesite and told him I fulfilled my promise to him,” he told the Rubins. “After all these years, after all it’s been through, the Torah is in a place where it’s treasured, needed, and used.”

*Reprinted from the August 16, 2019 email of Lubavitch.com*

**The Shmuz onParshas Eikev**

**Limiting Beliefs**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheShmuz.com**



“*And now Yisroel, what is HASHEM, your G-d asking of you? Merely to fear HASHEM, to go in all of His ways, to love Him, and serve Him with all of your heart and soul*.” — Devarim 10:12

 In this posuk, Moshe Rabbeinu set before the Jewish people the categories of human growth and accomplishments.

 1. To fear HASHEM

 2. To go in all of His ways.

 3. To love HASHEM.

 4. To serve Him with all of you heart and your soul.

 Each category is a world in and of itself and would take man a lifetime to accomplish. Together these four groupings comprise all of service to HASHEM and are the measure of the perfection of the human.

 Yet amazingly, when Moshe introduces these concepts to the Jewish nation, he begins with an expression of, “What does HASHEM ask from you **but this**?” It’s as if to imply that it is but a small request.

 The Gemara in Brachos is troubled by this and asks, “Is fear of HASHEM a **small** thing?” The Gemara answers, “Yes, to Moshe it was a small thing. To a poor man, even small items seem valuable. However, to a wealthy man even vast sums seem small.” Since Moshe had attained such spiritual perfection, these things seemed simple to him; hence, he used the expression, “What does HASHEM want from you **but** **this**?”

 Why would Moshe Rabbeinu compare himself to the average person?

 The difficulty with this Gemara is that it implies that Moshe was using himself as the standard of measurement for the average person. It’s as if he were implying, “If I can reach this, then so can you.”

 Yet we know that Moshe towered over every other human ever created. He reached dizzying heights of perfection that no other human before or after will attain. After 80 years of unparalleled growth, he spent 40 days without food, drink, or sleep, and was taught the entire Torah by HASHEM.

 For the next forty years, he was engaged in teaching that Torah to the Jewish people. At this point in his life, he is a giant of a man, and in no way can he be compared to the typical person. So while these things may not have seemed lofty to him, to his audience they were gargantuan! Why would Moshe use his own experiences as the measuring rod against which the average person should compare himself?

 The answer to this question is based on a different perspective on human capacity. To gain that viewpoint, let us take a look at an interesting phenomenon.

**Being Tied to a Peg in the Ground**

 In parts of Asia, the elephant remains the beast of choice for lugging heavy loads. As part of its work day, an adult elephant will pull logs weighing thousands of pounds through long stretches of forest undergrowth. Yet at night, that same elephant will be controlled by being tied to a small peg in the ground.

 While it would be clear to you and me that a 14,000 pound creature can easily break away from the light ropes holding it, the reality is that it cannot. It cannot escape — not because it isn’t motivated, and not because it doesn’t want to, but because in the elephant’s understanding, it just can’t be done.

 In this part of the world, shortly after birth, the baby elephant is tied to a peg in the ground. At that stage in its development, it might weigh 250 pounds and isn’t strong enough to break the rope that holds it. From that point forward, every day of its life, the elephant will be tied to that peg in the ground. Even when the animal has reached maturity and will be called upon to lug felled trees weighing over 4,000 pounds, it will remain tied to a small peg. The understanding is firmly fixed in its mind: it can’t escape.

**Limiting Beliefs**

 Many times we are tied to pegs in the ground. There are many situations where we don’t reach up for greatness because we are contained — not by ropes, but by limiting beliefs that prevent us from breaking away from the habits and lifestyle choices that stunt our growth.

 Moshe Rabbeinu was providing an invaluable lesson to us. He was demonstrating the capacity of the human. He was showing us how great a person can be. At the end of the day, Moshe was made of the same substance as you and I. He was a person with drives, desires, and inclinations. He overcame them. He made himself great.

 He took the natural strengths and weaknesses that he was given, and by constantly making the right choices, he changed his inner nature. Finally, he reached the point that he could look at the absolute heights of perfection and say, “So what? This isn’t a big deal. It can easily be done.”

 The lesson to us is that we too have that capacity. All of life is but an opportunity to make choices. If from this moment forward, every decision that I made were the proper one, if I were to put away all of my self-interests and ask myself, “What do I think is the right way to act? What do I think HASHEM wants me to do in this situation? Not what do I want, not what do I desire, but what is the proper way?,” I have the intuitive sense to be able to answer correctly and the ability to find the right path.

 By attuning myself to that part, and by using role models who reached such plateaus, I too can reach the dizzying heights of greatness for which I was created.

*Reprinted from this week’s website on TheShmuz.com This is an excerpt from the [Shmuz on the Parsha book](https://theshmuz.com/product/shmuz-on-the-parsha-book/).*

**Thoughts that Count**

"*Yehuda ben Tema said: Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to do the will of your Father in heaven*" (Ethics 5:23).

 Human beings have the capacity to learn much from animal behavior: "He teaches us through the beasts of the earth, and makes us wise through the birds of the sky," said Job.

 If, when obeying the Torah, we are ridiculed, let us be as bold and fearless as the leopard. If we find ourselves in a milieu not conducive to the practice of the Jewish faith, let us flee like a deer to one that favors religious growth in observance. And if we see how shallow is the level of those around us in the practice of their religious heritage, let us rise as the eagle above the common level, on wings of perseverance and devotion.*(Ethics From Sinai)*

*Reprinted from the Parashat Eikev 5753/1993 edition of L’Chaim Weekly*

**The Mezuza’s Lesson About**

**G-d’s Protection of the Jew**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



 About the mitzva of mezuza, which is found in this week's Torah portion, Eikev, the Talmud relates that Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi once sent a mezuza as a gift to Artaban, king of Persia, explaining that the small scroll would protect him from harm.

 At first glance, Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi's gesture seems odd. The commandment to affix a mezuza upon one's door posts was given only to the Jewish nation. A non-Jewish king, therefore, would not be fulfilling a religious precept by possessing a mezuza. As such, he would also be ineligible for any reward resulting from the performance of a mitzva. Why then did Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi promise the gentile king that the mezuza would guard and protect him?

 A similar question may also be asked about the common practice, dating back to the time of the Mishna, of inserting a mezuza scroll into one's walking stick, also done for the sake of the protection it afforded.

 A walking stick is certainly not included in the commandment of mezuza. If there is no commandment, there is certainly no reward. How then, did the mezuza afford protection?

 A distinction must be made between the reward a person receives for performing a mitzva and the intrinsic attribute of the mitzva itself. When a person obeys G-d's command by fulfilling a mitzva, the reward he earns is a separate and distinct entity, additional to the essential nature of the mitzva. For example, the Torah states that the reward for the mitzva of mezuza is long life: "That your days be increased and the days of your children."

 Yet besides the reward promised by the Torah, each mitzva has its own special attributes and characteristics that have nothing to do with reward, but are integral parts of the mitzva itself. The mezuza's attribute is protection. Our sages explained that when a kosher mezuza is affixed to the door post, G-d Himself watches over the occupants of the house, even when they are not at home. A mezuza is written solely for the purpose of protection, and, by its nature, it protects.

 With this in mind, it becomes clear that even when no fulfillment of a religious precept is involved, a mezuza still possesses this attribute of protection, at least to some degree. It was for this reason that Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi sent the mezuza as a gift to the Persian king and that Jews took mezuzot with them wherever they went inside their walking sticks.

 In a similar vein, speaking about and studying the laws of mezuza afford similar protection. The Talmud relates that in the house of one Jewish king a special sign was made on those door posts which were exempt from having a mezuza.

 From this we learn the crucial importance of having kosher mezuzot. The Jewish people, likened to "one sheep among seventy wolves," is always in need of special defense. Every additional mezuza affixed to a Jewish home extends G-d's Divine protection to the entire Jewish nation, for all Jews are ultimately responsible for one another.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Eikev 5753/1993 edition of L’Chaim Weekly (Issue #275), a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

***Thoughts that Count***

"*With ten trials was Abraham our Father tested*" (Ethics 5:3).

 In general, G-d does not test a person in order to prove his faithfulness. Rather, when an individual overcomes the obstacles placed in his path, it strengthens his awareness and recognition of G-dliness. After successfully withstanding all ten trials, Abraham reached a level of perfection unattainable otherwise. *(\*Mili Dichasiduta\*)*

*Reprinted from the Parashat Eikev 5753/1993 edition of L’Chaim Weekly*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on the**

**Medicine Called Vacation**



 **QUESTION: The Rav has said that vacations aren’t always necessary. But aren’t diversions, such as eating out or going on vacation, useful as recreation to break up the humdrum of routine. Can't we say that vacations are necessary for a person to get a renewed and refreshed outlook when returning to his responsibilities?**

 **ANSWER:** Anything is necessary if a person needs medicine. But we're talking here about avoiding medicines. Certainly, sometimes you must go to the drugstore, chalilah, and take something that has very bad side effects. But you can’t help yourself - if you wouldn’t take it, it would be still worse.

 If somebody is so disturbed, if a woman is so meshuga that she cannot rest, she has to be a gadabout, running all the time here and there, it could be that there’s no other way of dealing with the situation. But it has to be recognized as a form of mental disturbance.

 To be happy with your house, that’s a perfection of character. Women should be happy that they’re able to be at home making recipes, able to bake cakes, able to sew dresses, able to clean their homes spic and span, or to take in orchim on Shabbos. There are a lot of things to do.

 Women really should have children. If they don’t have children, naturally they’re looking for things to do as substitutes. The ideal is to have a house full of children, and then grandchildren, and be busy always helping. Then life is useful and important.

 But when people have ruined their lives and they’re ill, they’re mentally imbalanced, sometimes it can’t be helped. Certainly, you need medicines, and if going places is a medicine, then there’s no alternative. But it’s a pity.

Reprinted from the August 13, 2019 email of Toras Avigdor, based on Tape #512.

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parashat Ekev**

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 In this week's Torah reading Moshe teaches us that he was instructed by heaven to construct an ark made of wood in order to house the two tablets of stone that he received on Sinai. I have written about this subject before and it is one that has been noted heavily by the commentators to the Torah. But I have become aware of an insight that I feel has great relevance to understanding many of the issues that confront us here in Israeli society and the world generally.

 Certainly, there was no shortage of gold, silver, bronze or any other type of valuable and special metal in the camp of Israel during their sojourn in the desert of Sinai. We know from the construction of the Temple/Tabernacle that large amounts of gold and silver as well as bronze were used in order to create that structure and the artifacts inside.

 So why would Moshe be instructed to fashion a simple and plain box of wood to house the most precious artifacts that humans have ever known – the tablets of Sinai?

 Is it not almost disrespectful to treat such holiness in a mundane and ordinary fashion? After all, the tradition in all Jewish communities and synagogues is to decorate and beautify Torah coverings, crowns, breastplates and pointers. And here, the two tablets of stone of Sinai are relegated to an undecorated plain wooden box! This fact alone should make us aware that there are great and profound lessons here.

 The wooden box that encased the eternal tablets of stone of Sinai represents the fact that the Torah itself requires no outside affirmations or adornments. It stands alone, it means what it says and is not subject to human improvement or editing.

 The fact that we decorate the appearance of the scrolls in our synagogues is to enhance our own respect in view of the contents. Over the centuries, and especially over the last few hundred years, there are those that wished to adorn the Torah with strange but temporarily popular crowns and decorations.

 There was a period in the 19th and even in the 20th century when there were those that claimed that the Torah was for socialism. Others claimed it was for capitalism or other forms of economic and government systems. Everyone attempted to adorn the Torah with its own brand of covering and decoration.

 By so exalting the Torah, they in fact cheapened it and made it factually irrelevant. The improvements became detriments and the unique message of Judaism was perverted if not lost completely.

 We are accustomed to homiletic interpretations of words and ideas of Torah. This is part of the “seventy faces” of Torah. However, we should always remember that the text means what it says. The Torah is carried in a simple unadorned wooden box. To we mere mortals, this is what makes it so meaningful

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Rabbiwein.com*

**Nourishing the Soul**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

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 The Torah tells us in Parashat Ekeb, “Ki Lo Al Ha’lehem Lebado Yihyeh Ha’adam” – “Man does not live on bread alone.” On the simplest level of interpretation, Moshe here speaks about the manna with which G-d sustained Beneh Yisrael as they traveled through the wilderness, and he points to the fact that G-d has no limits in His ability to sustain us. We do not depend only on ordinary bread, because G-d proved that He is capable of sustaining us and keeping us alive even when we were in a situation where we had no food.

 There is, however, a deeper interpretation of this verse, as well. Human beings are composed of two parts – a body and a soul; a physical dimension and a spiritual dimension. Our physical bodies, of course, are sustained by food and liquids. They provide our bodies with the vitamins and nutrients that they need to continue functioning properly. But how do we nourish and sustain our souls? Where do we find the spiritual sustenance we need to maintain the spiritual dimension of our beings?

 The Zohar teaches that when G-d created the world, He had to inject His spirit, His Kedusha, into everything. Nothing in the universe can exist without G-d. As opposed to an artisan or craftsman, who makes something which can then continue existing long after he stops working and even long after he dies, G-d continues sustaining every single aspect of existence.

 If G-d would cease creating for a millisecond, the universe would cease to exist. And this is why we describe Hashem as “Oseh Ma’aseh Bereshit” (“Who makes creation”), in the present tense.  He is constantly “creating” the world, and nothing can exist without His constant, ongoing infusion of His spirit into it.

 The food we eat, then, contains not only the nutrients needed for our bodies, but also a spiritual component, an element of Kedusha. After all, as mentioned, nothing in the world can exist without that spiritual dimension, without G-d’s spirit which sustains it.  And thus while the nutrients in our food sustains our body, its G-dly components sustain our soul.

 But this does not occur automatically. We need to extract this quality of Kedusha from our food in order for it to sustain our souls. And this only happens if we recite the Berachot. Our recitation of a Beracha is required not merely as requesting permission from G-d to derive benefit from His earth – though this is certainly an important aspect of Berachot – but also as a necessary means of nourishing our souls. We reap the spiritual benefits of food only by transforming the physical act of eating into a spiritual act, which we do by reciting Berachot.

 The importance of Berachot is indicated elsewhere in this Parasha, as well. In fact, this week’s Parasha introduces the only Beracha which is required on the level of Torah obligation – Birkat Ha’mazon – and also contains an allusion to the requirement to recite one hundred Berachot each day (“Ma Hashem Elokecha Sho’el Me’imach”).

 Parashat Ekeb should thus serve as a reminder to be especially vigilant with regard to this vital Misva which we often take for granted and neglect. Reciting Berachot over food is not merely a “nice thing,” and is even more than a Halachic requirement; it is the means by which we sustain and nourish our spirituality.

 It thus behooves us all to constantly review the laws of Berachot, ask a Rabbi when questions arise, and be mindful of the requirement to recite Berachot, so we ensure that our food has the effect of not only maintaining our physical wellbeing, but maintaining our spiritual wellbeing, as well.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of the Edmund J. Safra Synagogue in Brooklyn, NY.*

**18 Ways to More Effective**

**Prayer (Part Four)**

**By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**



 Let’s continue our crash course on superior tefilah. The Gemora in Berachos asks, “What time should a person do if he prays and his prayers go unanswered?” The Gemora answers, “Yachzor v’yispalel – Let him pray again! Shene’emar, Kavei el Hashem, chazak v’yameitz libecha, v’kavei el Hashem – Hope to Hashem, be strong and take courage, and hope again to Hashem.”

 The Gemora is educating us to the importance of multiple prayers for the same need. This is actually counter- intuitive., since by humans the opposite is true.

**If You Ask to Borrow My**

**Car and I Say No**

 If, for example, you ask me to borrow my car and I say no, and then you ask me again, you’re a pest. If you ask me a third time, I won’t answer the phone. But with Hashem it works to the contrary. Hashem desires to hear from us time after

 We are taught in this week’s parsha concerning Moshe Rabbeinu when he prayed to appeal the decree against him not to enter into EretzYisroel,“Va’eschanan el Hashem – And he offered supplication to Hashem.” The Baal Haturim, the Rokei’ach and others reveal that the gematria of va’eschanan is 515, teaching us that Moshe Rabbeinu prayed 515 prayers to enter into Eretz Yis- roel.

 Furthermore, if Hashem wouldn’t have told him, “Rav loch… al tosef – It’s enough for you… don’t add,” he would have prayed even more. The gematria of shira, another form of prayer, is also 515. This too is to convey the idea that when singing to Hashem we can have in mind for something specific many, many times over.

 In a similar vein, the Medrash asks, “Mipnei mah Imoseihen akoros – Why were our Matriarchs barren?” and the Medrash answers, “Mipnei shemisaveh haKodosh Boruch Hu lis’ filosom – Because Hashem yearns to hear their many prayers.”

**Why Leah was Bereft**

**Of Eyelashes**

 We are also taught, “V’einei Leah rakos – The eyes of Leah were bereft of eyelashes.” This is to convey to us that she said so many prayers that she shouldn’t fall into the lot of Eisav that her eyelashes fell out.

 From all of this we see that sometimes it’s not enough to ask Hashem for something once. Rather, He wants us to get closer to Him by storming the Kisei HaKovod, the Heavenly Throne multiple times.

 This means that we shouldn’t feel it’s sufficient to ask Hashem once for better shalom bayis. Rather, we should keep at it until we succeed. The same thing is true for our livelihood, for nachas from our children, and for better health. We should never feel that we are pestering Hashem. Rather, it gives Him great joy when He sees that we realize that He, and only He, is the true source of our blessings.

**A Lesson to Be Learned from**

**Our Prayers on Yom Kippur**

 We see this idea also on Yom Kippur when we repeatedly barrage Hashem with such petitions as k’ra ro’ah gizar di- neinu, tear up a possible evil decree, or kosveinu b’sefer chaim tovim, write us in Your book of good life. We say these requests in Avinu Mal- keinu many, many times over.

 One might wonder, since it says, “Ein shik’cha lifnei Kisei Kovodecha – There is no forgetfulness before Your Heavenly Throne.” Hashem already heard us. Why do we have to repeat it so many times? The answer is that Hashem yearns to hear from us, and to see that we realize that He is the Source of all our suc- cesses. In the merit of our learn- ing to pray better, may Hashem fulfill our requests and bless us with long life, good health, and everything wonderful.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Va’eschnan 5779 email of the Jewish VUES.*

**Transforming Chaim Eliav’s**

**Classic “In the Spider’s Web”**

**Into Cartoon Book Literature**

**By Daniel Keren**

(Chaim Eliav’s “In The Spider’s Web: A Suspenseful Saga of Nazi Intrigue and Divine Providence Across Two Continents and Two Generations, adapted by Avrohom Ohayon and illustrated by Dan Bar-Lev, Feldheim Publishers, 2019, 139 pages.)



 Feldheim Publishers has just come out with an excellent cartoon book version of Chaim Eliav’s classic 1996 novel “In the Spider’s Web” that was adapted by Avraham Ohayon and illustrated by Dan Bar-Lev. This book is no doubt translated from Hebrew, although no such credits can be found inside the book.

 My children when they were teenagers eagerly read the original non-cartoon novel. I never had the time to devote five or more hours to this challenge. But that is the beauty of Ohayon’s adaptation and cartoon artwork of Bar-Lev.

 I confess that when I was in junior high school I would read the Cliff notes of some of the classic English novels before doing my class reports. This type of cartoon art adaptations of real novels by Ohayon and more importantly with the enticing artwork of Bar-Lev reminds me of those Cliff Notes. It also brings back those days I would go into the back of neighborhood pharmacy and read off the racks the latest comic book issues of Superman and Batman.

 I started reading the new Feldheim cartoon version of “In the Spider’s Web” one night for about an hour until I had to go to shul for Maariv. When I came back after having prayed and also having studied some Bava Kamma, I went to sleep. The next evening, I managed to finish reading the latest version of “In the Spider’s Web.” Perhaps the total reading time was between two to three hours.

 While I can’t confess to having read the other popular novels of Chaim Eliav, I can admit to looking forward in the next few years to reading other cartoon book adaptions of his other suspenseful thrillers such as “The Run-away,” “The Mission,” “The Persecution” and “The Envelope.”

 Similar to the original novel published more than 20 years ago, the publisher describes the new cartoon book adaption as follows: Yitzchak Austerlitz, a Holocaust survivor who lost his first wife and three children, visits Yad Vashem and collapses in a faint when he discovers a picture of the Nazi who tortured him and murdered his family. At the same time, on the other side of the world, in bustling, teeming Brazil, the strands of Jewish lawyer Jairo Silverman’s life become intertwined with the mysterious death of Mr. Alberto Hunkes, and with the secret that shrouds his son Eduardo.

 **In the Spider’s Web** untangles the threads surrounding a secret Nazi organization as Divine providence orchestrates a drama that no one dared to dream of.

 This cartoon adaptation is great for teenagers or for adults who need a break from more serious reading of important commentaries of Tanach for example or when one just doesn’t have the energy to tear apart a sugya in either the Talmud Bavli or Yerushalmi.

 What gives the original novel and the new cartoon book adaptation relevance is that it takes place in the weeks leading up to the Six-Day War in Israel, an event that not only dramatically transformed life in the Jewish State, but also around the entire world for Jews. The focus is the search for high ranking German Nazi criminals who escaped to safe havens in South America.

 The Holocaust is a painful topic and Avrohom Ohayon in the preface to his successful cartoon book adaption of Chaim Eliav’s “In the Spider’s Web,” intriguingly clarifies this dilemma by writing that “It is not for us to question Hashem’s decrees. We are required to take stock of our situation, do cheshbon hanefesh, and correct our wrongdoings, to try and understand why this suffering befell us – yet never to doubt the justice of Hashem’s ways. “Keil emnah v’ein avel, tzaddik v’yashar hu – A G-d of faith without iniquity, He is righteous and just,” (Devarim 32:4).

 Both the original novel and the new cartoon book adaptation handle a tough and painful chapter in our nation’s history with delicacy. There are many surprises as not all who appear to be as the reader might have initially imagined.

 “In the Spider’s Web” by Chaim Eliav and adapted by Avraham Ohayon and illustrated by Dan Bar-Lev can be purchased in Jewish bookstores or on various online outlets or including the publisher by clicking feldheim.com or calling (845) 356-2282.

*Reprinted in the August 22, 2019 edition of The Jewish Connection.*

**Thoughts that Count**

"*By ten Divine pronouncements was the world created*" (Ethics of the Fathers 5:1).

 The letters of the ten Divine pronouncements uttered by G-d give each and every creation its life-force and vitality, bringing it into being from nothingness. Every created entity, from the highest celestial spheres to the lowest inanimate stone, is sustained by the various combinations and joinings of the letters of these Ten Utterances. The Hebrew name of an object, therefore, indicates the life-force it contains and reflects its true inner essence. *(The Tanya)*

"*There were ten generations from Adam to Noach, to inform us how great is His patience, for all those generations continued to anger Him, until He brought upon them the waters of the Flood*" (Ethics 5:2).

 In ancient days the Jewish people waged two different types of war--those in which they were commanded to completely destroy the enemy and his belongings, and those in which they were allowed to benefit from the spoils. On the spiritual front there are also two different types of evil which must be fought: That which is entirely evil and must be totally obliterated, and that which contains an element of good and thus the potential to be transformed and elevated to a higher level.

 The evil of the first ten generations of mankind was in the first category. G-d, therefore, sent the waters of the great Flood to utterly destroy and erase their depravity. The evil of the next ten generations, however, was of the second type, and was able to be corrected and elevated by Abraham. *(Lubavitcher Rebbe, Shlita)*

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