**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Shoftim 5773**

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**Because of a**

**Second Chance**

**By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn**

Dov Hager\* is an exceptionally busy person. Aside from being a devoted husband and father to his six children, he is involved with local community affairs (yeshivah, Bais Yaakov, and the eiruv) as well as with national and international tzedakah organizations.

Dov runs a successful curtain and window treatment business with offices in his home and in downtown Boston. At times his phones seem like a blaring out-of-sync orchestra, as his house seems like a raucous whirlwind of activity.

**An Evening Appointment with**

**A Mrs. Silver in Nearby Lowell**

One night he had an appointment with a Mrs. Silver\* in the neighboring town of Lowell, to show her swatches of fabric for curtains and to discuss various options of draperies, valances, Chinese shades, blinds, and screens.

Much to Mrs. Silver's dismay, Dov did not keep the appointment; he simply forgot about it. His many responsibilities had become chaotic and he had neglected to enter the appointment in his calendar. At 10 o' clock in the evening, Mrs. Silver called his office and left a blistering message on his answering machine.

The next morning when Dov retrieved his messages, the wrath of the woman's voice on the phone was almost tangible. Immediately, Dov called Mrs. Silver to apologize. "I have no excuses," he said honestly. "I am simply overworked. I must have lost the note where I had penciled in our appointment. Please forgive me." Mrs. Silver was not in a forgiving mood. "You're a business- man," she said. "It's your job to have a better system of recording things. My time is just as valuable as yours."

"I am truly sorry," said Dov in embarrassed humility, "Please give me another appointment and let me make amends." He paused a moment and added," And this time I promise I will be there on time."
Mrs. Silver was not a religious Jew and Dov was concerned that his failure to show up at her home, aside from being poor business practice, was a chillul Hashem – a desecration of Hashem’s name.

**A Jew Should Always Give**

**Another Jew a Chance**

There was a long pause on the phone. For a moment Dov thought Mrs.Silver had disconnected him, but then he heard her sigh and say reluctantly, "One Jew should always give another Jew a chance. You can come Monday morning at 10 o' clock and I expect you to be on time."

"You can count on it," Dov said confidently. On Monday morning, at five to 10, Dov arrived at Mrs. Silver's beautiful home on Spring Lane in Lowell. He rang the doorbell and waited. Suddenly the door opened in a flash and a teenaged girl started screaming hysterically, "What are you doing here? I didn't call you. You don't belong here!"

Dov was shocked. "I have a 10 o' clock appointment with Mrs. Silver. Is this her home?"

**My Mother Just Collapsed in the Kitchen**

"My mother just collapsed in the kitchen," the girl cried. "We're waiting for an ambulance. I think she had a stroke!"

"I'm a medic," Dov said as he ran back to his car. Dov was a mainstay of Hatzolah (volunteer medical squad) of Boston. He was the most experienced of the crew.

He grabbed his medical kit, and ran back into the house. He saw at once that Mrs. Silver was barely breathing. Her neck muscles had become paralyzed and her tongue, which had fallen back, was not allowing her to breathe. Dov quickly opened up an air passage and got her to resume breathing. He saved her life!

A few days later when Dov visited Mrs. Silver in the hospital she said to him, "I thought I was the one giving you one more chance, but I realize now, that it was you who gave me one more chance - at life."
And it happened because Mrs. Silver understood that in the interest of harmony, a Jew should always give another Jew -one more chance. (Echoes of the Maggid, p.103 R. Paysach Krohn). \* All names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals in the story.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Eikev email of Good Shabbos Everyone.*

**A Miraculous Story from the Files of the Mahara’l**

**Of Prague and His Golem**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

Last week's Torah portion (Parshat Re’eh) warns us against the false prophet; a Jew who accurately predicts the future seems to be a holy man and even does miracles but really is a charlatan. Even more, the Torah tells us there is a REASON for G-d sending him; "To test us in order to know if we really love G-d with all our hearts and souls!!" (13:4)

**Why Tempt Poor Jews to Sin?**

At first glance this makes no sense. Why would G-d give someone supernatural powers only to tempt the poor Jews to sin? Don’t the Jews have enough problems as it is with anti-Semitism, poverty, expulsions, pogroms, internal confusion, politics and more? Why a false prophet?

And why does He have to test us? G-d is omniscient! Surely He knows our motivations without driving us crazy with false prophets.

**A Story that Occurred 300 Years Ago**

To understand this, here is a story that occurred some 300 years ago involving the famous Holy genius (Zadik) Rabbi Yehuda Levai (known as the Mahara'l of Prague) taken from the book Niflaot MaHaRal in HaChozrim B'Tshuva, Klapholtz pg. 216)

The Mahara'l, a direct descendent of King David, was not only a genius in all aspects of Torah and all fields of science but also a miracle worker who was able, as did the wise men of the Talmud a thousand years earlier, to actually create a human being who couldn't speak, the Golem, by use of the Book of Formation (Sefer Yetzira).

Our story begins in the city of Friedberg Prussia as Raizel the young daughter of a rich Jewish wine merchant by the name of Reb Michael, received a letter from the local Bishop as she was standing behind the counter of her father's wine store filling his place while he was away on a long business trip.

**The Bishop’s Hatred for the Jews**

The local Bishop was a wickedly intelligent man with a golden tongue, an unquenchable lust for power, an unfathomable hatred for the Jews and an obsession to convert Raizel.

He had been watching her and scheming for years. An expert in human character his patience finally paid off when he discovered Raizel's weakness… flattery. She blushed at even the slightest praise.

He made a plan. He began to buy large consignments of wine and pay at the end of every month in full. After a year or so of this he waited until her father went on a long business trip and sent a note to Raizel apologizing that he would not be able to pay as usual because there was a mistake in the bill she sent him which he had to discuss with her in person.

**Insists on a Face-to-Face Meeting**

**Over the Business Dispute**

She sent a messenger back with all of the receipts that he himself had signed to prove there was no mistake … but replied with a letter claiming that she sent several cases of vinegar rather than wine and if she didn't believe him she could come herself to check. He assured her he would remove all the religious icons and statues in his home so as not to offend her religion but it could only be settled face to face.

Raizel had no choice but to comply. After all, the Bishop had almost unlimited power and could refuse to pay anything if he wanted.

When she arrived at his palace escort by one of her servants she discovered that not only had the Bishop removed all the religious symbols, even the one hanging around his neck, but he was surprisingly friendly, intelligent, gracious, hospitable and …very flattering.

After checking the bottles in question and realizing he had made a 'mistake' he feigned surprise and embarrassment, paid in full and even added a large penalty for his 'foolishness'.

Meanwhile they conversed and Raizel began to enjoy this highly educated man who seemed to really appreciate everything she said. She had never received such attention and she liked it. The Bishop ended by again apologizing, telling her how immensely he enjoyed her company and invited her to return as soon as possible.

It seems he was also a bit of a sorcerer as well and even after she returned home poor Raizel couldn't stop thinking about his invitation. It wasn't long before she found all sorts of excuses to spend time in the Bishop's presence without her parents suspecting a thing. In fact she felt empty without his praises and after he cleverly dropped mentions of hell and eternal damnation she began worrying that perhaps she might be a sinner and that only he could save her. Several months later she left home altogether and he found her a room in his castle where she could rest, learn and listen.

**Parents Discover the Bitter Truth**

**Of their Daughter’s Disappearance**

When her parents saw she didn't return they notified the police and set the entire town to the search until they discovered the bitter truth. They went to their Rabbi the great genius Rabbi Yaakov Gintzberg, Rabbi of Friedberg for advice and when he heard what happened he began to actually tremble in fear. To stand against the evil Bishop was suicide. The only man that had that power, like Moses standing against Pharaoh, was the Mahara'l of Prague.

Meanwhile in his castle, with Raizel under his spell, the Bishop was completing his plans; nearby lived a powerful duke with an unmarried son.

This Duke was really the ultimate authority in these parts and up till now he had been a bit of a bone in the Bishop's throat. Now the Bishop could kill two birds with one stone.

**Persuades Duke to Let His Son Meet Raizel**

He approached the Duke, told him of the new 'potential convert' and began to praise and speak of her in such superlative terms that the Duke agreed to let his son meet her.

Sure enough, a week later when they met it was, unfortunately, love at first sight. She was like a breath of fresh air for the Duke-to-be and she saw in him a type of royalty she found captivating. That week they met several more times until, with the urging and 'blessing' of the Bishop, they decided to marry.

Things were desperate. In a week she was going to change her religion and a few weeks thereafter to marry into a life of luxury and royalty. Only a miracle could help.

At first the Mahara'l refused. Angering the Bishop and the Duke as well could mean death and destruction for the entire Jewish community but Raizel's father begged and her mother wept until the Rabbi finally agreed.

He gave them detailed instructions. They had to fast for three days in a row, having only a piece of bread and a glass of water at night and all this time they had to say Psalms non-stop with tears and supplication to G-d for mercy. In addition they had to prepare a light carriage with two swift horses, a trained driver and two strong young men to accompany her and find a place far from Prague where their daughter, if he succeeded in wrenching her from the clutches of the Bishop, could live incognito.

**A Seeming Mission Impossible**

It was mission impossible. First, she had to be convinced to forget about leaving Judaism. Then she had to be weaned away from the spell and flattery of the Bishop and the life of wealth and attention the Duke's son would provide. But to top it all off, the Bishop had put her in a room in the top of a tower with a heavy guard at the door to make sure no one would get to her.

But miracles began to happen

On the third night of her parent's fast Raizel had a dream: Her departed grandfather appeared to her weeping and begged her not to leave the religion of her forefathers that millions of Jews sacrificed their lives for and assured her that in just moments someone would come to save her.

She woke with a sweat and began to weep. Suddenly she realized how far she had fallen, but how could she leave? She was startled by a light tapping at the window and opened the drapes to see the huge face of a very large man who was clinging to the bricks that jutted from the wall… he must have climbed up five stories of sheer wall!

**This was the Mahara’l’s Golem**

This was the 'Golem'; the humanoid created by the Mahara'l for saving Jews by doing everything human but speak.

She opened the window, he climbed in, opened a large canvas sack before her and handed her a note which said. "The Bishop has gone for a week to an important meeting. If you want to return to the G-d of your fathers get into the sack and have no fear."

In fact the golem had been had been wandering the castle grounds the entire day searching for her until he noticed the window and began his climb. According to the story he remained unnoticed all this time due to a magical amulet hung around his neck by the Mahara'l.

She entered the sack, he exited though the window descended the wall, fled with her into the night and in less than an hour brought her back to her parent's home.

Her parent's joy was boundless but at the same time they had to move quickly. The Bishop's spies could be everywhere and they might be noticed even though it was three in the morning.

**Kissed their Daughter Goodbye**

They kissed their daughter goodbye, put her in the carriage they had prepared and many days and many harrowing episodes later she arrived in a distant but safe place.

Meanwhile in the Bishop's castle the next morning the guard at Raizel's door opened to bring her food and saw she was gone. He knew he had to act quickly or the Bishop would have him killed. He left the castle, changed clothes, ran to the local graveyard and when he was certain that no one was watching, dug up a skeleton, put the bones in a large sack, returned to the room put them in Raizel's bed and lit the room afire. By the time help arrived all that was left was ashes and bones. Raizel had burned to death.

The next day when the Bishop arrived and heard the terrible news he suspected everyone especially the guard, but with no proof had to keep quiet and wait for evidence…. which never came.

The duke's son, however, did not take the news so easily.

When he heard of her death his heart was broken and he fell into a deep melancholy. His father brought the best doctors and experts to no avail and even the Bishop had no idea what to do except to send him far from home to relax.

**The Duke’s Son Goes to Venice**

**And Discovers Judaism**

The Duke sent his son to friends in Venice hoping the open sea, new climate and friendly people would have a calming effect. In fact, after several weeks it did; but in an unexpected way. When is mind cleared and he began to think more deeply about it the idea suddenly occurred to him to learn about Raizel's religion; Judaism;

He found a Rabbi in Venice to talk to, asked questions, learned Hebrew and began to realize that the sentences of the Bible had different meanings than he had been taught.

It wasn't long before he began inquiring about conversion which in Italy, the very heart of the Church, could spell death to him and all the rabbis involved.

His Rabbi suggested that the only place for him was Amsterdam. There he could find many great Rabbis to teach him, no one would know who he was and he could even convert if he so desired. He gave him a letter of recommendation to several of his rabbi friends and the young man set off.

**Converts and Changes His Name**

One year later the duke's son actually converted, changed his name to Avraham Yeshurun and became such a Talmudic scholar that many wealthy Jews actually sought him as a potential match for their daughters but none of the girls really found favor in his eyes.

But one day was suggested to him a young girl who also came from a similar background as his; fleeing from her past, estranged from her parents a sort-of convert and a stranger in Amsterdam.

A meeting was arranged and it took him almost an hour to realize that this was the very Raizel who he was sure had burnt to death! It seems that the 'safe place' her father arranged for her was at the home of his brother ….. in Amsterdam!

The joy at their wedding was unlimited. Several years and several children later Avraham Yeshurun, the duke's son heard two things through the grapevine; first, that his father had passed away and (not aware that he had converted) left everything to him and second, that the evil Bishop had also died and he could return to Prague with no fear or worry.

**A Joyous Reunion with Raizel’s Parents**

When they arrived in Prague the happiness of Raizel's parents was unimaginable as was that of all the Jews in the area when the new duke announced that unlike normal royalty he would give charity, help the sick and poor Jew and gentile alike and would encourage Torah learning and prayer.

Raizel's parents lived to a ripe age and when they passed away Avraham Yeshurun decided to transform their home into synagogue which is called 'Bait HaMidrash Yeshurun' in Prague to this very day.

All this thanks to the miraculous intervention of Rabbi Yehuda Levai; the Maharal of Prague and the mercy of HaShem (G-d).

This answers our question; why would G-d send a false prophet?

The reason G-d created the world is so that we should improve it and make the entire creation into a 'Holy Temple' (this goal will be completed by Moshiach).

But to do this we must know how to deal with EVERY aspect of the creation…. even evil.

And one of the biggest and most tempting evils, indeed the source of all evil, is idolatry. (Avoda Zara, lit; Improper Service)

**The Essence of Idolatry**

In its essence, idolatry means feeling there is an authority other than the Creator…. even ourselves. Reliance on our own urges and feelings, if they oppose the Torah, is spiritual idolatry and eventually it can bring to actually bowing to creations.

As we see that the Jews felt unable to resist the Golden Calf even after experiencing G-d directly amidst soul shaking miracles in Egypt, at the sea and hearing Him personally say not to do so at Sinai!!

And so it continued until some 900 years later and some 500 years after that the First and Second Temples were destroyed till this very day as the Jews are dispersed around the world until Moshiach will gather them. Because human nature is often the exact opposite of what the Creator wants.

**Why G-d Sends Temping,**

**Convincing but False Prophets**

And that is why G-d sends tempting, convincing, false prophets that do miracles. Not so that HE should know,,,,,,, but rather that WE should 'KNOW' i.e. connect (Like Adam KNEW his wife. See Tanya end of Chapter 3) to G-d with a love that can withstand all forms of idolatry.

Like the duke's son and his wife in our story; when they realized how good the Creator is and how His Torah is true it gave them the power to resist idolatry as well as riches and power.

And so it will be with the arrival of Moshiach. He will strengthen the Jewish people and the entire world in the awareness of G-d and His Torah until all mankind will be transformed to worship only their Creator in joy, blessing and meaning.

And we can make it happen sooner! Even one more good deed, word or even thought can tip the scales to bring…..**Moshiach NOW!!**

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

**Assisting the Poor**

 The Torah exhorts us to have compassion upon the poor (Deut. 15:8). The Talmud (Bava Basra 10a) records that a wicked Roman nobleman named Turnus Rufus asked Rebbe Akiva, "If your G-d cares for poor people so much, why doesn't He provide for them?" Rebbe Akiva answered that G-d allows them to remain poor to provide us the merit of giving them charity.

**The Alter of Kelm’s Question**

 The Alter of Kelm questions Rebbe Akiva's explanation. Although the mitzvah of giving tzedakah is certainly a great one, aren't there enough other commandments that we can do? What is so unique and special about giving charity, and why must the poor suffer to enable us to specifically perform this mitzvah?

 The Alter explains that the mitzvah of tzedakah serves an irreplaceable function. Although one fulfills the technical letter of the law by distributing charity to those in need, in order to perform this mitzvah at its highest level a person must do more than this. It isn't sufficient to give charity simply because G-d commanded us to do so and we want to perform His will.

 A person dispersing tzedakah should feel the pain and plight of the poor as if it were his very own. Just as a person who feels his own hunger naturally responds by feeding himself, so too should we strive to identify with the pauper's anguish to the point that we would be moved to assist him even if we weren't obligated to do so.

**Knocking on the Door of a**

**Wealthy but Stingy Man**

 Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Meisels, the Rav of Lodz in Poland, was renowned for his concern for the poor and downtrodden. On one fierce winter day, he knocked on the door of a wealthy, but stingy, man in his town to solicit a donation.

 After exchanging greetings, the man gestured that Rabbi Meisels should enter, but he remained outside and began his appeal. The rich man was puzzled by the rabbi's behavior, but he attempted to listen out of respect. After a few minutes he grew so cold that he was unable to continue. He interrupted the rabbi and begged him to come inside.

 The sagacious rabbi explained, "I am here to collect money for a family which can't even afford to build a fire on a day like today. If we enter your warm home, you won't be able to relate to their suffering. Only by discussing their plight here at your door are you able to understand the magnitude of their pain." Appreciating both the rabbi's wisdom as well as the extent of the family's anguish, the miser gave a generous donation.

 It is difficult for most of us to relate to the daily suffering that many unfortunately know. Now that we understand that empathizing with their plights is an integral part of giving tzedakah, we should try our utmost, whether by volunteering at a soup kitchen or by walking through the park on a bitter winter night, to work on personally experiencing and feeling their pain. Our desire to generously assist them will naturally follow, and in so doing, we will be helping not only the poor but also ourselves.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbos Candle Lighting.*

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

**How Can a Woman Get Excited About Washing Diapers or Cleaning Dishes?**

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| **QUESTION:** |

How can a woman remain enthusiastic about her daily task of diapers and dishes, while her husband goes out every night to learn Torah?

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

|  |
| --- |
| laundry_basket |

Everybody is given a ladder to climb, and it's the same ladder. If you're washing diapers, you're not doing it for a doll, you're doing it for a future *ben Torah* or for somebody who will be married to a future *ben Torah*. Who knows whose virtue is bigger, your diapers or your husbands *shiur* that he goes to learn at night?

You might be washing diapers for a future *gaon oilam*, a future *rosh hayeshiva* who will say higher *shiurim (Torah lectures)* than your husband will ever say [or understand.] And even if you don't, your heart is in it and that's what you **want** to do, so *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* accepts your dishes and your diapers as *korbonos* if you do it with a pure heart. Of course you have to do it as offerings to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

**Who Says That’s All You Can Do?**

Now, does it mean that that's all you can do? Who says so! Instead of spending "only" two hours on the telephone every day, take off a few minutes and look in some worthy seforim (books). There are plenty of seforim that you can read. You can listen to good tapes, there are plenty of things women can do. You have time.

You have no time because it's all filled in. In between the diapers an hour phone call, in between the dishes an hour phone call. "Oh, I don't talk that much on the telephone; I only talk two hours a day not three hours." So talk one hour less and you'll be amazed at the opportunities that you have for perfection in many other areas besides diapers and dishes.

But if diapers and dishes do take up your time, let's say you have 13 children and diapers and dishes **do** take up your time, then rejoice, **revel** in that glorious opportunity. You're a *rosh hayeshiva* saying *shiurim*.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l” that was transcribed from one of his answers to questions from members of the audience at his classic Thursday night hashkafa shiurim in his Flatbush shul from the early 1970s until his petirah in 2001.*

**Can You Really See?**

**By David Bibi**

 I am always intrigued by the people who I meet and after engaging in some theological conversation, they close in saying that, “if there really were miracles and I saw what Benai Yisrael saw in Egypt and in the desert, I guess that I would be more observant”.

 But the fact is that although we say that “seeing is believing”, it takes more than seeing for something to truly enter the heart. There is a physical seeing and then there is a deeper emotional and spiritual seeing.

 Even our forefathers who experienced the plagues, the death of the first born, the exodus, the splitting of the sea, the revelation at Sinai, the well of Miriam, the clouds and the manna falling from heaven had their moments. Imagine crossing the sea and still carrying an idol in the knapsack as some mystical insurance policy. It takes much more than miracles.

 Last week’s portion began with the word Re’eh, The word is a directive to see. The Malbim brings down that this usage of the word “Re'eh” is because the blessing and curse described here by Moshe are not simply promises for the future but actually a visible property which exists amongst the Jewish people.

**Those Who Have Lives of Fulfillment**

**And Those Whose Lives are Mundane**

 He goes on to explain that one can actually see that people who observe the Torah have a sense of accomplishment, fulfillment and spiritual growth whereas those who go against it can be seen to live mundane lives which lack such achievement or satisfaction.

 But I believe that although the rest of the verse is directed in the plural, this word Re’eh is directed in the singular, because not everyone can really see. It may be in front of our face and on a physical level we see it, but it takes more than seeing with our eyes for the vision to penetrate our mind, heart and soul. And although many people may see and experience the same object or event, they will all walk away with something different.

**A Classic Israel Taxi Story**

 I am reminded of a true story that Rav Yechetzkel Levenstein told over.

 As he entered a taxi in Israel, his driver noticing the rabbi, turned to strike up a conversation.

 "You know, I have a very religious best friend. He wasn’t always religious, in fact we were army buddies and he was as irreligious as me. After the army as most of us did then, we went off to travel and found ourselves camping in the Amazon in South America. In the middle of the night we all woke up to hear muffled screams and we saw our friend with a huge boa constrictor around his neck squeezing tighter and tighter.

 “Of course we screamed at the snake and hit it with sticks but it was just going tighter around his neck. Nothing we were doing was helping and our friend was quickly losing consciousness. With nothing else we could do one of the friends shouted to him "say shema yisrael" – so with his last ounce of strength our friend said shema yisrael and all of a sudden the snake unloosened his grip and crawled away.

 It was a miracle!! – It struck him so deeply that when he returned home, he started learning about the Shemah, then praying every day, and then learning too. So now our friend wears a hat with a religious wife and kids in yeshivas."

**“Why Are You Not More Religious?”**

 "That's a great story" the Rav exclaimed "but why are you not more religious after witnessing all this?"

 "Well" said the taxi driver “the miracle didn’t happen to me!"

 When I tell the story, people are amazed that this guy could retell this story again and again and it’s just a story he tells to the religious guys that come into his cab and nothing more. He saw, but he didn’t see. But its not so amazing.

 Do you know anyone who still smokes? I was shocked that some of the most observant guys I know still smoke and allow their children to smoke. Aside from the halachic point of view, where Maimonides notes that a sound mind requires a sound body, and for this reason it is a religious obligation to take care of one's health and where the Shulchan Aruch brings a number of regulations enacted for health purposes and where the Talmud comments that in general, health regulations are treated with greater stringency than any other section of halacha, there is the box.

**What About the Warning on the Box?**

 One picks up a box with a clear warning label. One knows that smoking kills not only the smoker, but those around the smoker and one still smokes. How?

 We can see, we can know, but unless it enters us and becomes a part of us, we’re not really seeing. That was the problem of the generation that left Egypt. Their internal eyes were closed and thus they were condemned to die in the desert.

 Moses tells their children, speaking to each as individuals and in speaking to them, he is speaking to us. He begs us to strive with all our abilities to really open our eyes, our hearts and our souls and to see. We need to let that vision enter us and become a part of us and change us for the better.

 As we approach the month of Elul, the month of introspection and the month of change, let’s open our eyes to the point where each of us can answer as the holidays approach, “Ah, now I see”.

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

**Tefillin on the Train**

**By Yigael Yadin**

*Yigael Yadin (1917–1984) was a well-known Israeli archeologist and politician, and the second chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces.*

*At the age of fifteen he joined the Haganah (pre–State of Israel Jewish paramilitary organization), and served in various military positions during Israel’s War of Independence. He was appointed chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces in 1949.*

*At age thirty-five he left the military, and while he never completely left public life, he began his life’s work in archeology. As an archeologist, he excavated some of the most important sites in the region.*

*The following story is a translation from his book Chavayotav Shel Archeolog Yehudi.*

**An Ancient Pair of Tefillin**

**From the Second Temple Era**

Shortly after the Six-Day War, I purchased an antique object for the Shrine of the Book, a division of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The article I purchased turned out to be an ancient tefillin with all four of its parshiot (tefillin scrolls). This tefillin was later verified to be the oldest known tefillin in existence today, written during the Second Temple era.



**Yigal Yadin**

The ancient script was exceptionally small. When certain questions arose regarding these tefillin, it was necessary for the scrolls to be analyzed by equipment which at the time was to be found only in the central police lab in Tel Aviv. So, one day, carrying photocopies of the tefillin scrolls that had not yet been seen by anybody but myself, I found myself riding the train from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv.

**The Train Stopped at Kfar Chabad**

Kfar Chabad is one of the stops on the way. At the Kfar Chabad station, some young men boarded the train and starting making the rounds through the train’s cars. I was actually used to this scene: the Chabadniks would go from person to person, trying to get people to lay tefillin.

Soon it was my turn to be approached. I politely refused, but couldn’t help noticing the foreign accent of the young man who asked me to lay tefillin.

“Where are you from?” I asked.

He informed me that he was a recent immigrant from the Soviet Union.

“And did you lay tefillin in the Soviet Union?” I wondered aloud.

“I’ve been laying tefillin every day since my bar mitzvah.”

When I heard that, I reconsidered. “If you did this mitzvah in the repressive Soviet Union, I won’t be the one to refuse you now . . .”

Before getting off the train in Tel Aviv, a woman approached me. “Professor Yadin, I am glad that you agreed to the request of that young man—who obviously did not recognize who you are.



*Chabad Chassidim putting on tefillin*

*on the train from Kfar Chabad to Tel Aviv*

**Found Myself Fighting Back Tears**

“You see, my son, also a Chabadnik, was a paratrooper who was mortally wounded in battle near the Suez Canal. Before he died, the members of his platoon visited him in the hospital. His last request of them was that they lay tefillin. In my mind, when you donned tefillin today, you too joined in fulfilling my son’s last request.”

I found myself fighting back tears. “What a remarkable chain of events!” I told her. “I have in my pocket photocopies of the oldest known existing tefillin. I cannot think of anything more appropriate than to show them to you at this moment!”

Editor’s note: The fallen hero referenced in this story was Rabbi David Marasow, a resident of Kfar Chabad. Immediately after the Six-Day War, his widow, Shifra, spearheaded the Chabad effort to benefit the widows and orphans of the soldiers who perished during the war. She arranged holiday programs, a camp, and grand bar and bat mitzvahs for the orphans. Following the war, the family of every slain soldier received a financial compensation package from the government. Mrs. Marasow (Golombovitz) selflessly used this money allotted to her to purchase tefillin for all the orphans!

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

**After Career in Congress, Peter Deutsch Finds New Life in Israel**

**By Uriel Heilman**



*Eight years after leaving office, former U.S. congressman Peter Deutsch spends most of his time at his home in Raanana, Israel. (Uriel Heilman)*

RAANANA, Israel (JTA) — When U.S. Rep. Peter Deutsch lost his campaign for the U.S. Senate in 2004, forcing him out of Congress for the first time in 12 years, he didn’t quite know what to do with himself.

So he did something not entirely uncommon among American Jews who haven’t quite figured out their next step: He went to Israel.

More than eight years later, Deutsch is still here, living with his family in Raanana, a Tel Aviv suburb. His 22-year-old son recently completed a stint as a combat soldier in the Israeli army, and his 21-year-old daughter is studying at an Orthodox women’s seminary.

**Only Member of Congress to Move to Israel**

Deutsch’s move is more than just atypical; it’s unprecedented. He is the only member of Congress ever to have moved to Israel, and he may be the only living ex-congressman who is an expatriate.

He’s also unusual in one other respect: Deutsch is an Orthodox Jew, which helps explain his unorthodox choices.

“I’m heavily invested in being in Israel in a real way,” Deutsch told JTA during a recent interview at his home in a luxury high-rise with sweeping views of the Mediterranean coastline and the Judean hills. “My son was in a combat unit in the Israeli army. I have skin in the game in terms of Israeli society.”

Puttering around his apartment in jeans, gray T-shirt and black suede yarmulke, Deutsch, 56, hasn’t quite left America behind. He has declined to take Israeli citizenship and doesn’t speak Hebrew. He frequently travels back to Florida, where he spent 22 years in public service — first as a state legislator, then as a Democrat in Congress.

**Serves as Legal Counsel to Florida**

**Hebrew-Language Charter Schools**

Though no longer a politician, Deutsch still practices a form of public service as legal counsel to Ben Gamla, an 1,800-student Hebrew-language charter school network in South Florida that he founded. The work, for which he is not paid and which takes up nearly all his professional time, has him working American hours in Israel. His income comes from investments, Deutsch says. He also sits on the board of the Illinois-based Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Corporation, a publicly traded firm.

“I still clearly live in two worlds,” Deutsch says. “I feel very much at home in both places.”

Deutsch’s move to Israel began as a sabbatical after having spent five successive Augusts in Israel while in Congress. The first year stretched into a second, and then another. Soon Deutsch’s kids were starting high school in Israel. Before long he had bought two apartments in Raanana.

What propelled him to Israel, Deutsch says, was the opportunity to be part of the historic return of the Jewish people to the Holy Land. Deutsch notes that Israel recently surpassed the United States as the largest Jewish community in the world, the first time Israel has held that distinction in two millennia.

“When something happens for the first time in 2,000 years, I think you ought to at least think about it a little bit,” Deutsch said.

**Grew Up as a Secular Jew in the Bronx**

Deutsch sees a bright future for Judaism in Israel but a dark one for American Jewry, something he bases in part on his own experience growing up as a secular Jew in the Bronx.

Schooled at the elite Horace Mann School in the New York borough, Swarthmore College and Yale Law School, Deutsch moved to South Florida in 1982 because he wanted to get involved in politics and believed he could do best in a place with a rapidly growing population. It didn’t hurt that his parents owned a condo in Broward County, where Deutsch could live rent free. Almost immediately, Deutsch was elected to the Florida House of Representatives. He was just 25.

His Jewish awakening came later, and by the time he was elected to Congress at age 35, he was fully Orthodox. Though he belonged to a synagogue and sent his children to Jewish day school, Deutsch kept his observance quiet, in stark contrast to the other Orthodox member of Congress at the time, Sen. Joe Lieberman.

**Sees Jews as Viewing the Jewish**

**Background as Just a Footnote**

Deutsch believes that most American Jews today view their Jewish background much as he did when he was younger, and with the same dispassion as Americans of Greek or Polish or Italian extraction might view their ancestral origins: as little more than a footnote to their identity.

“Do they feel bad about marrying a gentile? It’s irrelevant,” Deutsch said. “They’re not in their minds going away from Judaism, rejecting their parents, struggling to become part of the mainstream society — they’re not thinking about that. It’s a non-event. In a sense, that is the American Jewish story today.”

The Ben Gamla charter schools are Deutsch’s effort to change that. He wants to give Jewish kids who otherwise would attend public school an opportunity to be in a Jewish environment and develop a Jewish identity — at taxpayer expense.

As public schools, the Ben Gamlas cannot teach religion, but the schools have a Jewish flavor. The Hebrew curriculum includes Israel education and Jewish history, and most of the schools are located on Jewish community campuses. Some 85 percent of the students are Jewish. Supplementary after-school religious programs take place onsite or nearby.

Deutsch is unabashed about using public money to support what he describes as Jewish identity-building. Out of Ben Gamla’s collective budget of $10 million a year, Deutsch says 80 percent serves Jewish communal purposes.

“To me, it is literally the best leverage that I’m aware of in Jewish communal stuff in the history of the Jewish people,” Deutsch says. “Jews need to be supportive of this endeavor.”

**G-d Rules the World**

Though he has been in Israel for nearly a decade, Deutsch says he has no interest in becoming involved in the country’s politics. Nor does he miss U.S. politics or regret foregoing easy reelection to the House of Representatives so he could run for Senate. (Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz now represents Deutsch’s district.)

“Your success or your failure is not your success or your failure because G-d rules the world,” Deutsch said. “All you can do is make the effort.”

*Reprinted from the JTA (Jewish Telegraph Agency) article submitted to numerous English language Jewish newspapers on July 17, 2013.*

**Who's Who:**

**Bat Sheva**

Bat Sheva, who lived around the year 2900, was one of the wives of King David. According to the Talmud, she was destined to be King David's wife from the six days of Creation. But because the time was not right, she married Uriah, a captain in David's army, first.

David saw, by prophetic inspiration, that his heir and successsor -Solomon - would be born to him through Bat Sheva. When Uriah was felled in batle, David took Bat Sheva as his wife.

When King David promised Bat Sheva that her son [Solomon], from all his other wives' sons, would carry on the dynasty, she declared, "Long live my Master, David, forever."

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