**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Devorim 5773**

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**Chassidic Story #814**

**Towers of Gold and**

**Palaces of Diamonds**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[editor@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000pCk0:001HpeOg000027s_&count=1373033187&randid=1999003792&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1999003792##)

In mid-afternoon of Shabbos Shuva (The Shabbat between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur), in the year 1755, **Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer**, ***the Baal Shem Tov***, was napping in his bed enjoying his Sabbath rest. Suddenly, while still asleep, he emitted a mighty cry that jolted his wife from her nap.

"Yisrael, Yisrael! Wake up! What's wrong?"

The Baal Shem Tov sat up with a start, and then sighed with relief. "Thank G-d you woke me! Another moment, and I wouldn't have awoken at all!"

**“Why Did you Scream**

**Out in Your Sleep?”**

"What are you saying?" gasped the Rebbetzin. "And why did you scream out in your sleep?"

The Baal Shem Tov composed himself and said, “First ask my attendant to go to those of my close chasidim who are in **Mezibuz** this Shabbos and ask them to come to me in the Beis Medrash (Study Hall). He knows where to find them. Then I’ll explain to you while I am waiting for them.”

When they were all assembled, the Baal Shem Tov related the following:

"Each Shabbos, when I recite the silent Musaf prayer, my soul ascends to the heavenly worlds. There I listen to the Torah being studied in the Yeshiva above, and I am later able to transmit part of what I have heard to you, my chasidim, during Shalosh Seudos (the Third Shabbat Meal, at the end of the day).

**Always yearned to Meet His Close**

**Friend Who Was in the World of Truth**

"I have always yearned to encounter there my close friend, the great tzadik, Rabbi Nachman Kassover, who passed on to the World of Truth years ago, but I have been unable to find him.

"Today, as my soul ascended, I soared to heavenly realms that I had never visited before. I saw towers of gold and palaces of diamonds. The sounds of Torah burst forth from within. As I entered, the souls within shone with brilliance and beauty, each one occupied in the study of the holy Torah. I asked one soul: “˜To whom belongs this glory? "Who is your Rosh HaYeshiva?”

"Our Torah study is in the honor of the chosen of G-d, Rabbi Nachman of Kassover,” the soul responded.

"And where is his hallowed place?” I asked.

One of the holy souls led me to Rabbi Nachman's chamber. There I saw my old companion aglow with fire and glory, surrounded by numerous other souls. His countenance shone like the sun. He was dressed in white, his tallis covering his holy head.

**“Who Are All the Souls**

**I See Around You?”**

I humbly approached, and asked, "Reb Nachman, I have been searching for you for quite some time. Who are all the souls I see around you?'

"My dear Reb Yisrael," he answered, "these souls belong to those to whom I showed the path of truth and righteousness while on earth. Some were righteous men who had transgressed, and others were evildoers whom I was able to guide to the path of repentance. It is these souls who praise and extol the Creator of All Things."

"My dear Reb Yisrael," he continued, "Do you wish to remain here with me? You can simply relinquish your body. You will not even have to experience the pangs of death. These righteous souls will take you to your eternal resting place. The decision is yours."

"How I was tempted to remain in the heavenly realms! But I could not decide. I went back and forth in my mind. On one hand, I desired to be buried in Eretz Yisrael, for a soul buried in the Holy Land ascends higher than one buried outside its holy boundaries.

**“Your Fate in Not to Be**

**Buried in the Holy Land”**

When I spoke this desire, Reb Nachman revealed to me, "Your fate is not to be buried in the Holy land, but in the land where you were born. I cannot disclose the reason, but if you decide to remain here with me, I will be then able to reveal to you this and many, many other secrets."

Then my thoughts turned to those whom I would leave behind. Could I leave loved ones, my holy wife and my dear children? My students? My chasidim? Could I leave them without directions and without guidelines for the future?

I decided I could not. Each person has his purpose to fulfill on earth, and I felt that I had not yet completed my assigned *avoda*h (service).

I told my beloved Reb Nachman that I was not yet the time for me to leave the physical world. He did not agree. He begged, cajoled, over and over until I could stand it no longer, and screamed with all my might."

**Returning to Its Rightful**

**Place in a Physical Body**

"That scream woke my wife from her sleep, and she woke me just in time. I could not have withstood Rabbi Nachman's urgings any longer. Thank G-d, she enabled my soul to return to its rightful place in my physical body."

*Source*: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition of his friend, *Tzvi Meir HaCohane* (Howard M. Cohn, Patent Attorney), on his website, //BaalShemTov.com.

*Connection:* In honor of Mrs. Shulamit Tilles of Tzefat and Mrs. Shira Weinstein of Beitar, who will be spending this Shabbat in Mezibuz, home and burial site of the Baal Shem Tov, in the Ukraine.

Biographical note: Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer (18 Elul 1698-6 Sivan 1760), *the Baal Shem Tov* ["Master of the Good Name"], a unique and seminal figure in Jewish history, revealed the Chassidic movement and his own identity as an exceptionally holy person, on his 36th birthday, 18 Elul 1734. He wrote no books, although many claim to contain his teachings. One available in English is the excellent annotated translation of *Tzava'at Harivash*, published by Kehot.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safad.* [*www.ascentofsafad.com*](http://www.ascentofsafad.com)

**The Power of Prayer When All Else Seems Hopeless**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*All her pursuers overtook her in narrow straits*.” (*Eichah* 1:3)

We will be reading *Eichah* while sitting on the floor on Monday night (July 15th), the night of *Tish’ah B’Ab*. These are days of deep mourning. We mourn the destruction of the *Bet Hamikdash*. We weep over a host of personal tragedies afflicting so many individuals in our community.

**An Opportunity for Spiritual Growth**

But simultaneously these are days that provide opportunities for spiritual growth – to cleave to Hashem. At first glance it seems that these two concepts, mourning and spiritual growth, are incompatible. But, in reality, this is exactly the time for growing. The *pasuk* from *Eichah* above says all of her (the Jews)pursuers overtook her. The simple meaning of the verse is that the three week mourning period (*ben hamesarim*) is a time when our enemies catch up with us.

But there is a hidden hint: Whoever is determined to make Hashem His King and “pursue” a close relationship with Him can succeed even more in the three weeks than during the rest of the year.

**A Parable About a King**

This can be explained in a parable. When the king sits in his palace, all are awed by him and certainly not just anyone can enter his private domain. However, when the king is outside his palace walking in the streets and the marketplace, then he is accessible to all and he listens to the requests of all who call out to him. During the three weeks, the palace of the King was destroyed; He is more reachable than ever.

*Tish’ah B’Ab* is an opportune time for prayer, especially while sitting on the floor mourning. In order for something to grow, a kernel must be placed into the ground. Only after the seed has rotted and deteriorated does the miraculous growth of a new sprout occur. On *Tish’ah B’Ab* we reach our “lowest” point and sit on the ground, yet it is from here that we reach the point of new spiritual life and growth.

In the book *Barchi Nafshi* Rabbi Y. Zilberstein tells this powerful story of prayer. In the summer of 2007, after 15 years of marriage, a childless *B’nei Brak* couple decided to get divorced. Shortly after the divorce, they learned that they were expecting a child. It would have been easily rectifiable through remarriage, since they had no conflict, if the man hadn’t been a *Kohen*. He is prohibited from marrying a divorcee!

**Asking Advice of Rav Elyashiv**

Shattered, the *Kohen* went to Rav Chaim Kanievsky. The Rabbi said he didn’t see any solution, and advised him to consult his father-in-law, Rav Elyashiv zt”l. Rav Elyashiv heard the pitiful tale and was visibly moved. He told the *Kohen* there is no way for a *Kohen* to remarry his former wife. “The thing I can tell you is to go to the *Kotel* and pray.”

He went straight to the *Kotel* and prayed his heart out to Hashem, crying uncontrollably. Suddenly, he felt a hand on his shoulder. A young Rabbi inquired what was the problem. The *Kohen* poured out his heart.

The Rabbi asked him, “Do you have a father?” The puzzled *Kohen* answered that he is in an old age home in the States. He is very old and doesn’t really communicate.

**Suggesting a Trip to His Father in America**

“If you ask me, travel to America and tell your father the whole story,” the stranger told him and walked away. The *Kohen* decided that since Rav Elyashiv told him to go to the *Kotel* and he met this stranger there, he would go.

After the long trip to his father’s nursing home, they told him he hadn’t spoken for months. With tears in his eyes, he told his father his troubles. Suddenly, with tremendous effort, the father spoke! He said, he never told him this, but he wasn’t his biological son and the son is not a *Kohen* at all!

The power of prayer when all hope is lost!

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*

**A Lesson in Controlling**

**One’s Temper**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

The first is about someone who we will call Mr. White. (The one telling me didn’t give the name). Mr. White was a religious Jew who kept all the commandments and holidays according to the book and appeared to be the picture of self-control and maturity. But he himself knew it wasn’t so. He had a problem; perhaps you could call it a character flaw; a bad temper.

A few times he got mad at work and people began shunning him… so he just justified himself and kept away from others. Then once he got mad at the boss and got fired. So he just found another job, made more excuses and vowed to pick his ‘battles’ more carefully.

**Everyone Suggesting He**

**Get Professional Help**

But then he ‘flew off the handle’ a few times at his next door neighbors, then at his clients, at his brothers and sisters, his parents, his wife (of course each time for ‘good’ reasons) but eventually he understood what everyone told him… he needed professional care.

So he went to doctors, therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, took alternative medicines, did meditation, underwent hypnosis and group therapy but nothing helped.

Finally someone suggested that he try the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Scheerson, in Brooklyn and, although he didn’t know much about Rebbes he decided he certainly couldn’t be less successful than what he had tried up to now and he agreed.

**Waiting in Line to**

**See the Rebbe**

He made an appointment and a few days later was standing in line before the Rebbe’s door in a large Victorian shaped building in the Crown Hights area of Brooklyn. The line was quiet, no one was talking or laughing. Rather some people were reading Psalms and everyone seemed to get more and more serious and nervous as their turn approached.

Finally he was next. The door opened, the man before him backed out eyes red perhaps from crying and he entered. He closed the thick highly polished door behind him and approached the Rebbe’s desk. The room was very quiet and brightly lit. The Rebbe told him to be seated, which he instinctively did not do, rather he took the short request that he had been told to write on a piece of paper and gave it to the Rebbe.

**Reading the Note Carefully**

The Rebbe read it carefully and looked up at him. “You have a bad temper and get angry? Is it really so bad that you must see me for this? Have you seen doctors?”

“Yes” he replied “But they didn’t help. But it is bad. Err, that is, sometimes get mad at my son and, well, I hit him. I know it’s wrong but I hit him.” Mr. White was crying a bit now but he continued. “So I want a blessing to stop and that’s why I came to you.”

“Tell me,” The Rebbe answered, “Would you beat your next door neighbor’s child if he acted like your son?”

**Explaining Why He Wouldn’t**

**Beat Up His Neighbor’s Child**

“My next door neighbor’s child!? No, Rebbe, I wouldn’t do that. I mean, I’m not that out of control. My next door neighbor’s child is not mine. He is someone else’s.”

“Your child belongs to G-d.” the Rebbe replied. “He doesn’t belong to you.”

Mr. White was stunned. It took him a few seconds to recover mumble some words of thanks and back out of the room. He never struck his child or lost his temper again.

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

**Chassidic Story #815**

**A Fail-Safe Financial Plan?**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[editor@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?session_redirect=true&userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1373376414&cf=SP2&randid=202922951##)>

During the first few years of his marriage, **Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum of Ujhely**, now known as the ***Yismach Moshe***, was supported by his father-in-law so that he could study Torah undisturbed. When his father-in-law passed away, he realized that he would need to find some way to support his family.

**A Delightful Idea**

He had an idea that delighted him: he would procure ten thousand silver reinish, and entrust it to some merchant for business purposes; from that he would have a reasonably secure means of respectable support.

There was only one problem with his bright idea: he had no way of securing such a sum!

One day, while trying without success to concentrate on his Gemara, R. Moshe began to cry over his situation.

Then he fell asleep over his large open volume and began to dream.

In his dream, he entered a great hall in which sat a charismatic-looking sage, engrossed in deep Torah study.

The man motioned to him to go into a side room. He went.

Another man who was there asked R. Moshe if he knew who the scholar was. When R. Moshe replied in the negative, the man exclaimed, "That is **Rabbi Yitzchak Luria**, the holy **Ari-zal** of Tzefat!"

**Advice from the Ari-zal**

When R. Moshe returned to where the tzadik was learning, the Ari-zal addressed him, "Young man, if a person should have ten thousand silver reinish, is he then no longer dependent on the favor of G-d? In any case, we are dependent--in order to be able to eat, talk, walk and live. And just as the Al-mighty grants you these favors, so too will He grant you a livelihood, even without ten thousand silver reinish!"

R. Moshe woke up, refreshed and at ease.

[Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from Lma'an Yishme'u #161. (In Sipurei Chasidim by Rabbi S. Y. Zevin, the source of this story is said to be Rabbi Chayim Halberstam, the famed Divrei Chayim of Sanz.)]

Connection: Seasonal -- **5th of Av** (2013: July 11-12) is the 541st yahrzeit of the holy Ari of Tsfat.

Biographic notes: **Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum** [1759-28 Tammuz 1841], known as the **Yismach Moshe** after the title of his book of Torah commentary, was famed both as a scholar and wonderworker. A disciple of the Seer of Lublin, he was instrumental in the spread of Chasidut in Hungary. His descendants founded the dynasties of Satmar and Sighet.

**Rabbi Yitzchak Luria** (1534-**5 Av** 1572), Known as "the holy **Ari**," revolutionized the study of Kabbalah and its integration into mainstream Judaism during the two years he spent in Zefat before his death at age 38.

**It Once Happened**

**Two Tales of the**

**Baal Shem Tov**

When the stranger entered the little synagogue, the regulars were curious - who was he and why had he come to their town. But he was in a great hurry and so, he was relieved to see a quorum of men already assembled, ready to begin the morning prayers. There was no rabbi there, and not wanting to wait, the stranger ascended the bima.

The "regulars" were surprised and offended that this unknown man presumed to lead the prayers. After all, who was this fellow, who didn't even have the courtesy to wait a few minutes for the rabbi or the president of the congregation?

**Berates the Stranger**

The stranger had already begun the morning service when the president arrived. Seeing a stranger at the bima, he rushed up to him and said, "What a chutzpa! Who do you think you are to begin the prayers before the rabbi or I have arrived!" And he continued berating the man in this fashion.

The stranger, however, just kept silent. But his refusal to respond infuriated the president even more and he blurted out, "Don't you see who's speaking to you?"

Finally the stranger replied in a quiet voice, "You also do not see to whom you are speaking."

**Suddenly Everything Goes Dark**

No sooner had those words been uttered than everything went dark before the president's eyes. He rushed to a doctor, then to a specialist - to several specialists - but no one could find a cause for his sudden blindness. He tried every treatment that was suggested to him, but nothing proved a cure.

Then, it dawned upon him: when had his blindness begun? After he had angry words with the stranger in the shul. Undoubtedly he had offended a hidden tzadik with his words, and this was the consequence of his anger.

In despair, he decided to travel to the Baal Shem Tov. He had heard about this great tzadik; maybe he could help.

**I Heard You Can Perform Miracles**

"Rebbe, I have heard that you can perform miracles. I have been blind since I angered a certain hidden tzadik. My problem is that I don't know who he is or where I can find him."

The Baal Shem Tov replied, "The man is my disciple, Reb Yaakov Koppel, and you sinned against him with your angry speech. Go to him and beg his forgiveness. If he forgives you, your blindness will be cured."

The man indeed traveled to Reb Yaakov, who accepted his apology. His sight returned as quickly as it had vanished.

The morning prayers had just ended. The Baal Shem Tov, who was an esteemed visitor in the town, was about to wash his hands before partaking of a meal, when a distraught woman approached him. She had waited throughout the whole service and could contain herself no longer.

"Rebbe! My husband has been missing for a very long time. I have done everything I can think of to try to find him, but I have no idea where he went. What will happen to me? Please, Rebbe, help me find him," the woman wept.

The Baal Shem Tov stood there, his washing cup poised to pour water on his hands in preparation for the blessing on bread, but instead of continuing, he stopped and responded to the woman.

"You will find your husband in the city of M."

Infused with new hope, the woman departed. But the rabbi of the city, who had heard a great deal about the Baal Shem Tov, had been watching the exchange. Now he had what seemed to him to be a serious question of Jewish law.

"I beg your pardon," began the rabbi, "I was watching your exchange with the woman, and it seems to me that you were saying words of prophecy to her. If that was true, I think you were required to have washed your hands before speaking."

**“If You Saw Chickens…”**

The Baal Shem Tov responded to the rabbi with a question: "If you saw chickens suddenly fluttering about your table set with expensive glassware, what would your reaction be? I think you would automatically reach out to chase them away."

The rabbi acquiesced, but he clearly was not following the Baal Shem Tov's logic.

"I did what came naturally to me," the Baal Shem Tov continued. "I saw standing before me a woman who was in utter despair almost to the breaking point. I knew where her husband was. Do you imagine that I should have continued washing my hands while she stood suffering before my eyes?"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5773 edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY. The stories were originally published in The Complete Story of Shavuot by Nisan Mindel, published by Kehot Publications*

**Inspiring Stories for**

**The Three Weeks**

**By Daniel Keren**

Torah Connections, a Flatbush-based organization has for the past 30 years been organizing inspirational programs for both the fast days of Shiva Asar B’Tammuz and Tisha B’Av, in an effort to inspire our community to feel the pain of Galus and exert ourselves in avenues of teshuvah that will bring the long-awaited Moshiach and the Geulah that we all pray for three times a day.

**When Brothers Don’t Get Along**

This past Shiva Asar B’Tammuz, at the start of the Three Weeks of Mourning Torah Connections arranged for an evening of Chizuk at Merkaz HaSimcha in Brooklyn. Rabbi Yaakov Bender, Rosh Hayeshiva of Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway spoke on the theme of “When Brothers Don’t Get Along.”

Rabbi Yaakov Bender started off by saying that he came to speak about what we can do to like our fellow Yidden better. In Parshas Yisro we read that when our ancestors came to Har Sinai, the pasuk says they were K’ish echad, b’lev echad (like one person, with one heart). A famous Rashi points out that they journeyed from Rephidim, and arrived at the Wilderness of Sinai, and encamped in the Wilderness and Israel encamped their opposite the mountain (Shemos 19:1-2).

Rashi comments that the words ba-u (they arrived,) va-yis-u (they journeyed) and va-yavo-u (they arrived) are all plural. Yet, suddenly the Torah uses the singular verb va’yichan to say “Israel encamped there.” At this point before the entire Jewish nation was to receive the Torah from Hashem, there was harmonious unity which had been missing from all of the previous encampments.

**Why Not at Krias Yam Suf?**

Rabbi Bender asked “Why don’t we hear that when the Jews were at Krias Yam Suf there was harmony? That is really not such a great achievement. There is no challenge to be together in unity with others when facing a common threat as was the case at Krias Yam suf.

The real difficulty is to behave in unity when things are comfortable and everything is going well. Rabbi Bender recalled hearing the story of a young Chassidic boy from Williamsburg who spoke at the chapel of a major hospital just before Neilah on Yom Kippur night. There were a large number of Jews who were there that night because they were looking after family members who had serious medical problems.

**Life is Too Short for Petty**

**Disagreements with Others**

The boy noted that with the exception of two men who were in the hospital that night because their wives had given birth to healthy children, everyone else was there because they were sharing a common tzoras – either a very ill spouse or parent or child. And we all have because shared heartache a sense of achdus with each other. What we should learn from our sorrow tonight that boy said is that when we return home, we shouldn’t lose sight of the lesson that life is too short and precious to get mixed up in petty disagreements with others.

While much of the talk today is about the seemingly growing split among Yidden in Eretz Yisroel, Rabbi Bender said he wanted to focus the direction of his Shiva Asar B’Tammuz talk on what we should to do in order to better get along with others in Klal Yisroel. Living and being the Rosh Hayeshiva of a prominent Far Rockaway yeshiva, Rabbi Bender suffered with much of that community when Hurricane Sandy unleashed her fierce devastation against numerous waterside communities this past October.

**The Damage to His**

**Basement Library of Seforim**

In his own home, power was quickly lost and he was fortunate enough to get someone to bring over a generator. However a large number of precious seforim in his library was totally destroyed when the waters of the hurricane flooded Rabbi Bender’s basement and simultaneously tossed his large filled refrigerator around the swirling waters like a beach ball.

And it was in the midst of such terrible calamities, (many families in his community have still not recovered from) that Rabbi Bender got so much chizuk from the stunning way that Jews from all over came to Far Rockaway and other similarly hard hit areas in order to help other Yidden whom they didn’t personally know in whatever ways they could.

**“Thank G-d for the Jews!”**

He recalled being told that a reporter interviewed residents in nearby Bel Harbor that was also hard hit and on national television a gentile declared: “Thank G-d for the Jews or otherwise I would have starved.” Without electricity, with many homes heavily flooded and no way to store food, it was the immediate assistance of Jews from outside the devastated neighborhoods that rushed in with hot meals that they served to their Bnei Acheinu Yisroel and to their gentile neighbors that came the hurricane victims much encouragement.

So much new clothes were donated that in the special clothing center established in Far Rockaway after just a few days announcements had to be made that no more donations were needed and that the center had no room to take any new shipments.

**A Man Offering Coffee to Others**

Rabbi Bender recalled that shortly after the Hurricane, he saw a man from Flatbush standing beside a parked van. He asked the Rosh Hayeshiva if he would like a cup of coffee and Rabbi Bender thanked him but said he was O.K. When a neighborhood woman walked by, the driver of the van made the same offer to her and she said, yes she would like some coffee.

He asked whether she wanted her coffee with caffeine or decaf (he had two large samovars in the van), with sugar or sweet and low. He then got a folding chair from his van and said, “Why should you stand when drinking your coffee?” And once he gave her the cup, he brought out a Danish pastry.

**The Fact that Other Yidden Cared**

Rabbi Bender asked if the man had family or friends in Far Rockaway and the answer was no. So why had he come? Because he wanted to help and he knew many residents were not able to make their own coffee. Even as refreshing as the coffee and pastry was to all whomhe served, what was even more important to the battered residents was that other Yidden cared.

Anybody who wanted a hot meal was able to enjoy three catered meals a day. Unlike other communities without Jewish populations that were damaged by Hurricane Sandy, the Jews had people constantly coming every day from the outside to deliver delicious food, warm clothes and help with the cleanup.

**Giving Out Ice Cream to the Children**

Rabbi Bender recalled how a Rabbi Mordechai Groner spent an entire day driving a truck giving out free ice creams to all the kids in Far Rockaway. He had approached Klein’s Ice Cream and asked if he could rent one of their trucks for a day. When they asked why and he explained his purpose they told him that they were donating an ice cream truck full of products for him to give out.

How can we after this experience, Rabbi Bender asked, just return to our petty disputes? We have to stop being jealous of others. One has to learn to be happy for the good that others have even if we would like to have it but currently aren’t able to obtain it.

**A Fancy Stretch Limousine**

**On Visitors Day at Camp**

Rabbi Bender recalled that in the boys’ summer camp that he runs, there is a rule that parents on Visitors Day must park their cars outside the camp and walk in to visit their children. On one such Visitors Day, some parents in the dining room noticed a beautiful white stretch limousine drive up to one of the bunks. Someone made a remark that obviously some people are more equal than others and because that parent was very wealthy obviously the camp had bent the rules to allow the father to drive into the camp.

Why must we be so limited? Rabbi Bender asked. Do you really want to trade your situation with that “rich parent.” If only that person who complained had known the truth. The father who was visiting was very ill and even coming by an ambulance would have been too painful. A stretch limousine however is built to allow a passenger not to feel the bumps or jolts of road travel.

**Helping Their Sick**

**Friend to Visit His Sons**

The friends of the very ill parent wanted their friend to have a chance to visit his two boys in camp, so they collected the money necessary to rent the fancy car. For a few hours the father had a chance to be with his children in their camp environment. He returned home and two days later, he was nifter.

Rav Chaim Shmuel Levitz, the mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Yerushalayim saw the talmidim back in July of 1976 reciting Tehillim on behalf of the hijacked Jewish passengers at the Entebbe Airport. But he was not impressed and he addressed the bochrim saying that one has to say Tehillim with such an intensity that it literally makes one sick so that you can empathize with the 140 plus hostages who were themselves no doubt very sick with fear for the futures.

**The Ordeal of Rav Yitzchak Hutner**

Rabbi Bender recalled the tragedy of another hijacking of a plane that also flew from Eretz Yisroel and was diverted by the murderous Black September, a Palestinian terrorist group to a hot desert in Jordan. On board the hijacked plane were a number of Jews including the prominent Rosh Hayeshiva from Yeshiva & Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin – Rav Yitzchak Hutner.

Finally after a number of weeks of brutal captivity, a number of the Jewish hostages including Rav Hutner were freed. When news that the Rosh Hayeshiva was going to land at JFK Airport in Queens, hundreds of bochrim from different yeshivas came to greet and welcome back Rav Hutner. There was even a band ready to play joyous music for the occasion.

**The Sensitivity of Rav Moshe Feinstein**

However, when Rav Moshe Feinstein came to the airport terminal and noticed the band, he gave instructions that the musicians were not to play. He explained that how could one be so insensitive as to be in a rejoicing mode when there were still other Yidden from that hijacked plane who had not yet been freed and were still in harsh captivity with their families still shaking in fear as to the ultimate outcome of their loved ones.

Such is the attitude that we have to endeavor to create in ourselves and in the merit of such ahavas Yisroel, love and concern for our fellow Jews regardless of the color or type of their yarmulkes, we should all be worthy of soon greeting the coming of Moshiach and seeing these Three Weeks celebrated in the near future as festive days.

*Excerpted from last week’s issue of the Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Playing Musical Coats**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

“I bought this coat here but it is not exactly what I want and I would like to exchange it for another.” This was the request made by a woman to the people running the Begged Yad-Le-Yad Used Clothing Center in Jerusalem.

Her wish was granted and she walked out with the coat she liked, leaving the old one behind. Soon afterwards another customer entered with a similar request, and she ended up exchanging the coat she was wearing for the one that the previous customer had left behind.

As if this were not enough, a third lady came soon afterwards and exchanged her coat for the one that her predecessor had discarded. This lady, however, spiced her visit with a humorous accusation that the *Gemach* (the Hebrew term for a service such as this) was causing her trouble!

She went on to explain that when she went to a government office to plead for a reduction in taxes based on her economic plight the clerk remarked that the nice clothes she wore belied her plea of poverty. In response she told the clerk that she purchased her clothes for virtual pennies at the *Gemach* and they did not reflect her real financial situation.

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**In Portugal, a Protector**

**Of a People Is Honored**

**By Raphael Minder**

CABANAS DE VIRIATO, Portugal — Lee Sterling knew that his sister had not survived the harrowing journey 73 years ago that allowed him and his parents to escape Nazism by traveling from their home in Brussels to Lisbon and eventually on to New York.

He was just 4 years old and is barely able to recall her now, but after consulting Portuguese archives, he found that his sister, Raymonde Estelle, had spent six weeks in a hospital before dying of septicemia, at age 7. “I hadn’t cried in years, but when I found out, I just couldn’t stop,” he said.

**An Emotional Pilgrimage to**

**Retrace their Families’ Pasts**

Mr. Sterling, who lives in California, was among 40 people who made an emotional pilgrimage last month to retrace their families’ pasts. They also wanted to pay homage to the man who saved their lives: Aristides de Sousa Mendes.

Mr. Sousa Mendes, Portugal’s consul in Bordeaux when Germany invaded France, provided about 30,000 people with Portuguese visas to escape Nazi persecution, according to the [Sousa Mendes Foundation](http://www.sousamendesfoundation.org), which is run by descendants of the visa recipients. His status as one of the most important protectors of the Jewish people, if not the precise number of visas, has been confirmed by Yehuda Bauer, a Holocaust historian at the [Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.](http://www.yadvashem.org/)

**Issued Many Visas Against**

**Orders of His Government**

He issued many of the visas personally and also persuaded some others on the Portuguese diplomatic staff stationed in France to do the same, against the orders of his own government, which was neutral but Fascist. When the government realized the scale of his disobedience, Mr. Sousa Mendes was recalled to Lisbon, tried and dismissed from the diplomatic service. Stripped of his pension rights, he died in poverty in 1954.

For his efforts, Mr. Sousa Mendes received some acknowledgment after his death, starting with Israel, where the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial honored him as a “[Righteous Among the Nations](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/index.asp)” in 1966. But the search for those who received his visas or their descendants began in earnest only much more recently, as part of a building campaign to grant him the recognition he deserves, particularly in his own country, where he remains relatively unknown.

**“Without His Help, My Parents**

**Wouldn’t Have Survived”**

“Without his help, my parents wouldn’t have survived, and I wouldn’t be here. It’s as simple, sad and lucky as that,” said Yara Nagel, a translator who was the first member of her Nagelschmidt family to be born in Brazil. She came from São Paulo, she said, because “I wanted to retrieve my past.”

Since December 2011, the Sousa Mendes Foundation has managed a database of those he helped, built in large part on a visa registry book discovered in Bordeaux. So far, the foundation has identified about 3,200 of the estimated 30,000 people saved by the Portuguese visas.

The foundation also helped organize the pilgrimage along the route taken by some of those who fled, one of the most poignant stops being this small town in central Portugal, where Mr. Sousa Mendes was born and is buried in a family crypt. There, the participants held a remembrance ceremony. Today the family’s former mansion is in ruins, with the roof collapsed, but its prominent place in the town is a reminder that family members were once powerful aristocratic landlords, until the war and Fascism changed their destiny.

**Many Were Unaware of Mr. Sousa Mendes**

Some of those taking part in the pilgrimage had not returned to Portugal since the war. Until they were contacted by the foundation, many descendants had in fact not heard of Mr. Sousa Mendes, either because their parents never spoke about their wartime experiences or because they probably never realized just what a crucial role he played in facilitating their escape.

Mr. Sousa Mendes started ignoring Lisbon’s orders and delivering his visas in 1939, several months before Germany’s invasion of France, in part because he had a twin brother, a fellow Portuguese diplomat, who was stationed in Warsaw and told him about Nazi atrocities there.

Many of his visas, however, were issued in the frantic month of June 1940, when the Germans were tightening their grip on France and the Portuguese government was scrambling to bring home its rebel consul from Bordeaux. Mr. Sousa Mendes eventually gave up his struggle and returned to Lisbon in early July, after the Portuguese had also instructed the Spanish border police to turn back holders of his visas.

In the 1980s, Portugal rehabilitated Mr. Sousa Mendes’s name and apologized to his family, while the Portuguese Parliament posthumously promoted him to the rank of ambassador.

**Foundation Wants Greater**

**Recognition for Mr. Mendes**

Still, Harry Oesterreicher, the treasurer of the Sousa Mendes Foundation, said that it was disappointing to see the limited recognition Mr. Sousa Mendes had received in Portugal and how his family mansion here had been allowed to fall into ruin. It was repossessed by creditors after his death.

The foundation is now hoping to turn the house into a museum of tolerance, with the Portuguese authorities pledging last month to make an initial contribution of about $400,000.

Asked about Portugal’s attitude toward Mr. Sousa Mendes, Celeste Amaro, an official from its Cultural Ministry, shrugged and said that “our democracy is young, and we still need to do a lot more to understand what happened in our past.” Portuguese people, she added, “really need to know better his history and what a great man he was.”

**Inauguration of a Temporary Exhibition**

Ms. Amaro was attending the inauguration of a temporary exhibition on the doorstep of the derelict house, with photos of the visa recipients posted on translucent panels built by Eric Moed, 25, an American architect whose family survived the Holocaust thanks to such Portuguese visas.

Also in attendance was Mr. Moed’s grandfather, Leon, another architect who said that he “very vividly” remembered “the incredible anxiety of my father” as the family lined up for visas to exit France.

As to Mr. Sousa Mendes, “my father said something about having gotten the visa from a special person, but that was it,” Leon Moed recalled.

Almost all the participants in the pilgrimage were Jewish. Mr. Sousa Mendes, however, was a Roman Catholic who fathered 15 children and made “no distinction between religions and whether people were rich or poor,” said Mr. Sterling, who is a retired American lawyer, but was born into a Brussels family of diamond brokers named Serebriany.

Indeed, Jews accounted for only about a third of the Sousa Mendes visa recipients, with the list also including members of the Hapsburg and Luxembourg royal families and Belgian cabinet members, as well as artists like Salvador Dalí and his Russian-born wife, Gala.

Several of the participants said the trip had inspired them to find out more about their family histories.

Jennifer Hartog, who lives in Toronto, said she wanted to write a book about her father and other members of her Dutch Jewish family.

Traveling for two weeks from Paris to Lisbon alongside others whose lives were saved by the Portuguese visas, she said, had also made clear to her the magnitude of Mr. Sousa Mendes’s own personal sacrifice.

“You hear about people who argued that they couldn’t help because it was wartime and they had their own family to worry about, but here was a man with a career, a wife and an incredible amount of children who certainly did do something for others,” Ms. Hartog said.

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