**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Devorim 5772**

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**The Homeless Jew**

**By Deborah Eichler**

*As a child of divorce, feeling tears on Tisha B’Av is easy. It’s finding hope that’s the real challenge.*

Last summer was the first Tisha B’Av I was not in synagogue listening to Eicha, the biblical Book of Lamentations. I was at home while my year-old son slept peacefully in his crib. I sat on the floor and read the English translation of Eicha.

In previous years I had always been taken aback by the gruesome images portrayed by the prophet Jeremiah – images of mourning and destruction; images of people lying destitute in the streets and of children begging for food.

This year felt different than it had in the past. I ate the meal of bread and ashes. I changed out of my leather shoes. But for some reason the air did not carry that same heavy sadness that it had previously. This time, the painful longing and mourning was still there, but a sense of hopefulness and life stirred in the recesses of my mind.

“G-d does not reject forever,” the prophet Jeremiah explains. “He first afflicts, then pities according to his abundant kindness…"

As a child of divorce, I understand the destruction of a home.

Tisha B'Av has been described as a challenge – a challenge to see that it is “not only a day for tears, but also a day for hope." In previous years I have always felt the tears of Tisha B’Av. As a child of divorce, I understand the destruction of a home. On Tisha B’Av, this is precisely what we mourn – the destruction of the ultimate Jewish home, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

While certainly not destitute, nor faced with gruesome death, I understood the pain of wandering all too well. I, too, had lost my home. I, too, felt as though I had been living in exile. Certainly, in some situations divorce is necessary and the Torah allows for it. But it still comes with consequences.

Milestones that would have otherwise been reason for celebration now had become fraught with tension. With whom would we celebrate my high school graduation? My mother’s side? My father’s side? Happy occasions were now exercises in diplomacy. The security of being a child had been taken from me as I had quickly become the negotiator, peacemaker, and supporter for my parents

Both my mother and my father eventually found new significant others and moved on with their lives. While I knew my parents loved me and cared for me, I often felt like the remnant from a marriage gone bad. Yes, I had a loving mother and father, but the feeling of belonging that comes with having a family and a home long eluded me.

I felt this pain most intensely after a particular summer when I had gone to live with my father. His new wife and I did not see eye to eye on most things. And while we tried our best to maintain a civil environment, our personalities clashed. I left my father’s house at the end of the summer feeling hurt and abandoned. His wife and I were like oil and water. I felt as though a stranger had moved into my house. I knew that we could work on our relationship and most likely come to a place of relative peace, but ‘home’ would no longer be ‘home.’

There were several very painful and lonely years. As a single young adult I felt as though I had no home base to go back to. I went out with various people with the hopes of building my own home, but date after date nothing seemed to be working out.

I ultimately became involved in various Jewish activities. I enjoyed the Shabbat experience, a loving community, the spiritual connection. Yet it was on my first real Tisha B’Av that I made the commitment to a Torah lifestyle. Reading Lamenations that time, and seeing those sitting around me with tears in their eyes over the destruction of the Temple, struck a chord in me.

I realized that Judaism must have something truly real to move people in such a deep and meaningful way. It was clearly far more than just eating bagels and lox. Torah encompasses all human experiences and emotions. I felt understood on Tisha B’Av. We had lost our national home, our closest connection to G-d. This was something to which I could relate.

This past year, however, Tisha B’Av was different for me. No longer sitting in synagogue, I finally had my own home. Now as a wife and as a mother, this chapter of my own personal exile has ended.

Yes, I still mourn the Temple and bemoan the fact that the Jewish nation is still in exile. I still feel that pain.

But I also know there is hope. I have a wonderful husband and a beautiful son. There were many challenging years, and at the time I never could have imagined anything good coming of my situation. But tremendous blessing did come. If I had not struggled through my parents' divorce, through those lonely and difficult years, I don't think that I would have sought out nor found the riches that I have today.

Living through my parents’ divorce forced me to realize that marriage takes more than just ‘romantic love.’ Divorce has unfortunately become so prevalent today. Yet, as I became more involved in the observant community, I found more and more intact families with healthy marriages.

Just as my personal exile has ended, our national exile will come to an end as well.

Certainly, the Orthodox world is not immune from marital difficulties or divorce, but I was finding that the people around me had the tools to better deal with challenges they experienced in marriage. The emphasis on *shalom bayit* (domestic harmony) and the belief that your partner is the one that G-d has intended for you were powerful concepts that impacted me deeply.

I also realized that dating for the sake of dating wasn’t going get me the home, the love, or the security that I was seeking. I needed to date with a purpose. I needed to find someone with similar goals and similar values. And I thank G-d every day that I finally found that person.

My experiences give me strength to face the challenges that I have today. Even if something seems “bad,” I know that G-d has a plan and whatever I am facing now is for my ultimate good.

As I approach Tisha B’Av this year, I try to take these lessons to heart. The suffering that we experience is not in vain. It is truly a part of a Divine plan. And I know that just as my personal exile has ended, our national exile will come to an end as well. May it be speedily in our days.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Aish.com*

**The Eighth Plague Again**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[editor@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000sCW0:001G2xx800000uyI&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1342984481&randid=1599258084&content=central)

Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the holy Ari [Lion], together with his students, made their way quietly from Tzefat to the grave of the prophet, Hoshea ben Beari.\*\* They were accustomed to study in the mountains, and occasionally the Ari would invite the members of his group to pray at the various cemeteries that were scattered throughout the area. They already knew that by such visits, one could attach his soul to that of the tzaddik, and learn secrets of Torah.

**Disagreement Over Burial Site**

\*\*[It would seem this was not the burial cave traditionally associated with the prophet Hoshea, because 1) that is in the Ancient Tzefat Cemetery, very close to the Ari’s home; and 2) the Ari was one of the few who never accepted that tradition, and insisted rather that it is the burial place of the Mishnaic sage, Rabbi Yehoshua. Zt”t]

The Ari stood near the grave of the Prophet in a long, silent prayer, surrounded by his students. Then they sat and listened to his discourse, words of Torah and Kabbalah that were beyond [most] human comprehension.

Suddenly, the students noticed that their Rav’s face had changed. The joy that always reigned turned to an expression of stressful concern. For quite a time the Ari was thoughtful, and then he turned to his students:

**Aware of a Terrible Decree**

"I have just been informed that a difficult decree is now hovering over the inhabitants of Tzefat. A plague of locusts will descend on Tzefat, that will eat all the grass of the land and consume all the fruit trees, until there will be no source of sustenance remaining in the area."

The students became very frightened and asked: "Rebbe, why has this severe

punishment been decreed? What sin have the residents of Tzefat committed?"

The Ari replied: "All this has come about because of one Jew, named Yaakov Altrin. He is terribly poor and has lost his source of parnasa [livelihood]. He poured out his grievance about his severe condition to the Al-mighty. When they saw from Heaven that none of the inhabitants of Tzefat had come to help him, the harsh decree was issued."

"But, Rabbi," the students called, "perhaps it is possible to do something, to save the whole town from distress, Heaven forbid. What should we do?"

**Orders His Students to Donate Money**

The Ari ordered each of his students to contribute a certain sum of money, which amounted to a respectable sum. Then the Ari summoned R. Yitzchak HaKohen, a close student, gave him the bundle of money, bidding him to take it and deliver it to the poor man.

R. Yitzchak HaKohen went out and searched the entrances to the city, until he located the house of the man. The external appearance of the house was quite miserable. The student knocked on the door, but was not answered. Only the sound of bitter weeping could be heard coming from the house.

**Encounters Yaakov Altrin Crying**

Strengthening himself, the student opened the door, and right away he saw R. Yaakov Altrin sitting in the center of the house, surrounded by his family. His speech was directed upwards, and he was crying.

The surprise entry of the Ari’s student immediately silenced R. Yaakov’s crying. He looked into the visitor’s face in wonder and, asked: "What do you want?"

R. Yitzchak told him that he was a student of the Ari, and he had just heard that R. Yaakov was in deep trouble and would like to help him. "What happened to you, and why do you cry?" asked R. Yitzchak.

**Tells of the Broken Ceramic Jug**

R. Yaakov poured out his heart before his guest. He told of his daily struggle to earn a livelihood, to bring bread home. He had a large ceramic jug, with which he brought water to the homes of his neighbors in the region. With the little he earned from this, he had managed to support his family. Now the jug had broken, and his livelihood went down with it. Without a jug, there was no point to go out to work, and he could no longer feed his children and family.

"In my distress, I turned to G-d," the simple Jew added. "I claimed: Is this proper for me? Has the penalty of hunger been decreed upon me and my family? Am I more evil than the rest of the world? Does He not sustain the whole world with grace, loving-kindness and mercy? Why did He take away the source of my income from me?"

The student was amazed to see how right the words of the Ari were. He took out the bundle of money collected by the students, turned to the Jew and said: "Listen R. Yaakov, G-d has heard your prayers, and from now on you will no longer lack anything. We, the residents of Tzefat, will support your family, for whatever is needed."

His face lit up, and his joy knew no bounds. He looked happily at his family, and at the coins placed into his hands, and did not stop thanking G-d and expressing his thanks to the guest who came just at the right moment, to save his family from the shame of hunger.

**Reproves the Poor Water Carrier**

However, R. Yitzchak was not interested in these words of thanks. With a serious face, he turned to the Jew in a tone of reproof: "Do you know that on account of you, almost all the residents of Tzefat were at risk of extinction and hunger?! When you come with your claims against us to the Almighty, they looked down from Heaven and saw that you were without any help from your brethren and neighbors, and so a harsh decree was cast. If not for our holy Rabbi who heard of this, and in whose merit all the residents of the city were saved...."

The man was very sorry about the things he said in his distress, and promised that henceforth he would put his trust in the Merciful One and complain no more. He departed from R. Yitzchak excitedly, and the latter returned to his friends to tell them the story of R. Yaakov.

**The Ari Reassures His Disciples**

The group of friends [the inner core of disciples] asked the Ari whether the decree had indeed been averted. He responded to them, that indeed, the charity money they had given to the poor man worked to remove the decree from the residents of Tzefat.

Time passed. Suddenly, one day, what seemed to be a heavy cloud of locusts was seen approaching the hills of Tzefat. Horror befell them all. The students turned to their Rebbe, and asked if the Divine decree had not been averted after all. The Ari’s face was peaceful and shining, and he did not seem to worry at all. "Continue to learn, my sons," he said, "and the cause for your concern will pass."

A few moments passed, and a strong wind appeared and moved the entire cloud of locusts out to the sea, until not one remained.

The story spread and made waves, everyone learned that in the merit of the holy vision of the Ari, the entire area was saved from a plague of locusts.

Source: Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the translation from Sichat HaShavua by my old friend Yitz, which he posted--along with the two graphics--on his blog for Chasidic music and history: //heichalhanegina.blogspot.co.il.

Connection: Hei Av (Mon. night - Tues.) is the yahrzeit of the Arizal.

Biographic note: 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.

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**A Portrait of Greatness**

**Who was Rabbi Yosef**

**Shalom Elyashiv?**

**By Gavirel Horan**



Last week, over 300,000 people flocked the streets of Jerusalem to mourn the passing of Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, age 102. Rabbi Elyashiv was the undisputed leader of the Lithuanian Torah community and to a great degree his legal rulings were respected across the board in Chassidic, Sefardi, and Modern Orthodox communities around the world. He was viewed by many to be the contemporary leading authority on halacha, Jewish law. Despite his exceptional scholarship and influence, Rav Elyashiv was neither the head of a congregation, yeshiva, or particular community.

**Destined for Greatness**

Rav Elyashiv was the son of Rabbi Avraham Erener and Chaya Musha, the daughter of the kabbalist Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv known as the Leshem. Born in 1910 in Šiauliai, Lithuania, Rav Elyashiv was the only child, born to his parents after 17 years of marriage. He arrived with them to British Mandate Palestine in 1922 at the age 12. His father adopted his father-in-law's surname, Elyashiv, in order to gain a certificate to enter the country at the advice of the famed Chofetz Chaim of Rodin, Poland.

At the time of his death, Rav Elyashiv had nearly 1,000 descendants and had seen the birth of a sixth generation of offspring.

In 1929, Rav Elyashiv married Sheina Chaya Levin, the daughter of the esteemed “Tzaddik of Jerusalem,” Rabbi Aryeh Levin, also known affectionately as the "father of the prisoners" due to the care he showed to the Jewish underground members incarcerated by the British during the Mandate period. The couple had 12 children – all of whom were raised in their modest two room apartment in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Meah Shearim. At the time of his death, Rav Elyashiv had nearly 1,000 descendants and had seen the birth of a sixth generation of offspring when one of his great-great-grandchildren gave birth to a son in 2009.

Although Rav Elyashiv never attended a formal yeshiva framework, he was recognized as a genius in Talmud study at a young age. He was appointed as a Rabbinic Court Judge (*dayan*) to the High Court of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel by Israel’s Chief Rabbi at the time, Rav Yitzchak Herzog – who exempted him from the rabbinical examinations due to his high level of scholarship.

He resigned from this position in 1972 and for the next 40 years of his life, held no official positions. Although he never wrote any Torah works, his family members and students wrote down numerous volumes of his halachic rulings and Talmudic insights, while he devoted all of his time to his incessant studies and daily lectures.

Although Rav Elyashiv was the spiritual leader of the Degel HaTorah political party for the past 30 years, he only entered politics at the behest of the great Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Menachem Mann Shach. He personally despised politics and only agreed to get involved because he felt that he was genuinely needed, as it says in Ethics of Our Fathers, “In a place where there are no leaders, strive to be a leader.”

“He had one interest – to help the Jewish people,” said Rabbi Nachum Eisenstein, the rabbi of the Maalot Dafna neighborhood of Jerusalem and a close disciple of Rav Elyashiv. “He had no ulterior motives or personal interests.”

**Maximizing Every Single Moment**

For the past 80+ years since his wedding, Rabbi Elyashiv's daily schedule began at 2 a.m. and included anywhere between 16 to 20 hours of intensive Torah study – despite the fact that he was stricken with several illnesses throughout his childhood and adult life. On one occasion, members of his household noticed that he had been standing during his learning and asked why he did not sit down. He answered that since he was tired, he feared that he may drowse while learning. If he stood, he would be sure not to doze off. Rav Elyashiv used to receive visitors from around the globe on a daily basis in addition to leading rabbis and politicians of Israel, answering their complex halachic inquiries. Despite his advanced age and illness, he continued responding to questions from rabbis around the world with total lucidity until the very end. Even when he was sick in hospital, he continued to rise at 2:00 a.m. for his regular studies.

For many years, Rabbi Hillel Weinberg, the Rosh Yeshiva of Aish HaTorah, would visit Rav Elyashiv almost every week, on Friday afternoons. Rav Elyashiv would receive people about an hour before the beginning of Shabbat, usually in the synagogue, where he would sit and study without interruption all day. “I always tried to arrive a little earlier than his official ‘office hours’ to watch him learn aloud,” Rav Hillel said. “Although he usually studied alone, he would explain the Gemara to himself, out loud, as if he were sitting with a study partner. He embodied the fulfillment of all the 48 Ways to wisdom which facilitate the acquisition of Torah, with an ear that listens, with lips that explain, and learning by teaching.

“He was meticulous about utilizing every moment of the day to study Torah, even during the hours he would receive people. When one person would leave the room and the next entered, Rav Elyashiv’s eyes would be on the page of the book before him, and his attention was wholly on the subject that he was presently studying to such an extent that one could stand before him for several minutes until he noticed that someone had come into the room.”

**Never Forgot a Word of Torah**

In his classes and writings he often quoted obscure texts entirely from memory. “If you have so much love for something, your brain remembers,” Rabbi Eisenstein explained. “Every word of Torah was so dear to him that he never forgot it. The only pleasure he had in this world was learning Torah.”

Whenever he issued a legal ruling, he made sure to examine the issue from all possible sides. When dealing with a question of technology he would always assign experts to research the situation in depth, so as to assure himself that he fully understood the facts before ruling.

**The Wisdom of Silence**

Despite his busy learning schedule, Rav Elyashiv used to meet with dozens, if not hundreds of people a day from every walk of life. Many were world renowned rabbis or politicians. “He would welcome all who came to him, treating them kindly and respectfully, and patiently answering any questions without hurrying the person who had come to seek his advice,” Rav Hillel recalled. “He also always gave priority to women and their questions.”

He made a point to never try to argue with someone unless he felt his opinion might be heeded. There are those who say that he attributed his long life to the fact that he never got angry. “He never told anyone what to do,”

Rabbi Eisenstein said. “If anyone asked his opinion, he would gladly tell them, but if someone came to argue with him, he always remained silent. He never raised his voice, never gave people admonishment, and never insulted anyone. Even if he disagreed with something someone said, he wouldn’t say they were wrong unless he knew that they wanted to hear his opinion. Many people left a meeting with him thinking that he agreed with them even though he was vehemently opposed, simply because he remained silent. Why try to convince someone of something if he knew they wouldn’t listen? He spoke only when he felt he could make a difference.”

There was one exception to this rule: his students. “He was very demanding from his students and never supported them in something that he disagreed with,” Rabbi Eisenstein continued. “He didn’t cover up for their mistakes and he was fast to tell them if he felt that they were wrong because he knew that they wanted him to guide them.”

One time, someone accidentally pushed into the Rav at a crowded event. The man was devastated and asked for permission to request forgiveness from the Rav. Rav Elyashiv’s response was that he didn’t feel a thing and therefore there was nothing to ask forgiveness for. He knew that even if he forgave the man, that he would still feel bad, so instead he acted as if the incident had never even happened.

**Gratitude for Life**

Eight years ago, a vein in his heart burst, and the doctors said there were two options: if they operated on him, the chances of success were only three percent. If the surgery were not performed, he would live no longer than three days. The decision had to be made there and then, on a Shabbat. The Rav’s relatives travelled to his son-in-law, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky in Bnei Brak on Shabbat, to hear his opinion on the matter, and he ruled that in the meantime, nothing should be done. On Saturday night, they found out about a specialist from the U.S. who could take care of the matter without anesthesia and surgery. The doctor, together with all his instruments, was flown to Israel and, miraculously, the treatment was successful. Everyone could see that God had answered the prayers of those hundreds of thousands who had prayed for Rav Elyashiv’s recovery.

He defied medical statistics again and again and attributed his recovery to the prayers of the Jewish people around the world.

“He defied medical statistics again and again,” Rabbi Eisenstein said. “There were many times that the doctors gave up, but he always pulled through. He attributed his recovery to the prayers of the Jewish people around the world.”

The Rav used to receive numerous invitations to serve as the *sandek*, or godfather, at circumcision ceremonies each day, but he traditionally only made rare exceptions to take time off from his busy schedule. After his miraculous recovery eight years ago, however, he began accepting every single offer that came to him. For the last eight years of his life he often attended three to five circumcision ceremonies each day – even when he was too sick to attend prayer services in synagogue. “He felt tremendous gratitude to the Jewish people for praying for him and wanted to pay back a minimum by becoming more accessible,”

Rabbi Eisenstein said. “Although it was difficult for him to walk or even go to synagogue to pray – he still accepted each invitation. He had given them his word that he would attend, and his word was set in stone.”

Rabbi Elyashiv didn’t want to accept gifts from anyone. Each year, Rabbi Eisenstein used to bring him a set of the four species for the holiday of Sukkot. Rav Elyashiv used to force him to accept a check in return for them. When he saw that the checks weren’t being deposited, he started giving cash.

A world renowned heart specialist from America used to check him whenever he was in Israel, but refused to take any money. Rav Elyashiv didn’t understand that this was the doctor’s greatest honor of his career. At the Bar Mitzvah of the doctor’s son, Rav Elyashiv had someone buy him a huge, beautiful leather bound set of books on his behalf. He was so happy to be able to finally pay him back.

On the inside cover of one of the books, he wrote a handwritten inscription. “It was probably the best present that the boy got,” Rabbi Eisenstein said, “but Rav Elyashiv didn’t realize that the greatest part about it was the inscription!”

Rav Elyashiv’s wish was that no eulogies be recited at his funeral and that he be buried at the Har Hamenuchot cemetery alongside his wife, despite the fact that a burial plot was reserved for him at the Mount of Olives – the traditional burial place for renowned Torah luminaries. This is testament, once again, to the fact that this Torah giant and leader of the Jewish people saw himself as nothing more than a simple Jew.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Aish.com*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**You’re Doing the**

**Right Thing…**

It states in the verse in this last week's parsha, "And you shall be guiltless before Hashem and Yisroel." (BaMidbar 32:22) From these words, our Sages teach us that a Jew must always be sure that his actions are understood as proper by the people who observe them. (Yoma 38a)

In other words, a Jew should not act in a way which may cause others to suspect him of wrongdoing. For example, one who is gravely ill heaven forbid, would be allowed to eat on Yom Kippur. However, such a person should eat privately so as not to raise the suspicion of others who may not know that he is gravely ill. Thus, such a person should not sit out on his front porch and eat on Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Yisrael Sekula, the late Sadavner Rav, was a man of great Torah scholarship, warmth, kindness, and personal integrity. He went to great lengths to avoid any hint of wrong-doing, both between man and Hashem, and man and his fellow. For many years, he was the mashgiach (kashrus supervisor) of a very successful Pesach hand-matzah bakery.

It was well known that the Sadavner Rav employed the strictest standards in making sure that the matzos were kosher for Pesach beyond any doubt. After many years, the bakery was put up for sale, and the Sadavner Rav decided to purchase it. It was assumed that he would remain as mashgiach (kosher supervisor;) he was universally respected as a talmid chacham - a Torah Scholar who could be relied upon. It seemed unnecessary to place the bakery under someone else's supervision.

The Sadavner Rav disagreed. "I am now running a business," he reasoned. "A businessman should not be deciding matters of Halachah in his own place of business." He, therefore, arranged for the renowned posek, Rabbi Moshe Bick, to serve as the bakery's mashgiach.

Toward the end of his long life, the Sadavner Rav suffered a stroke and was severely incapacitated. It was his custom to "shlag kaparos" before Yom Kippur at a place only a block away from his home. In his last year, this short trip was a very strenuous journey. It took one -half hour for his sons to bring him down one flight of stairs.But the Rav was insistent; he would go to do the mitzvah as in years past, only this time in a wheelchair.

By the time the Rav arrived at his destination, accompanied by his distinguished sons, there stood a long line of people waiting to purchase birds for the kaparos ritual. The Rav's sons knew that their father was in no condition to sit and wait on line for the hour or so it would take until his turn came. They suggested to their father that he allow them to wheel him to the front of the line. Surely, they reasoned, everyone would gladly allow an obviously ill person to go ahead of him.

The Sadavner Rav told his sons, "These people came ahead of me. I have no right to go ahead of them and make them wait that much longer. It is not worth it to do the mitzvah if this will cause a single Jew — even a child — any aggravation. I will wait my turn."

The Rav's son, concerned that the strain was already taking its toll on him, responded that they were positive that no one would be upset. The ailing Rav then replied, "If I am to go ahead of them, you must wheel me down the line slowly and allow me to ask permission of each person and apologize for inconveniencing him."

So, with a tube in his throat which made mere speaking a strain, the Sadavner Rav apologetically asked each person, including children, permission to go ahead.

When the Rav had completed the ritual, he said to his sons, "These people granted permission only for me to go ahead of them. You, however, were not given any such permission.

The world-renowned posek Rabbi Yosef Sholom Elyashev (who passed away last week at the age of 102), of Jerusalem, was granted a fitting partner in life. Rebbetzin Chaya Sheina Elyashev, daughter of the renowned tzaddik Rabbi Aryeh Levin, dedicated herself to the Torah study of her husband and children and to acts of kindness. R' Elyashev sets aside one hour a day to allow anyone to visit him in his small Meah Shearim apartment and ask questions in Halachah.

People were admitted into his study on a first-come, first-served basis. On a visit to Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Nosson Scherman sought to ask R' Elyashev a halachic question. As R' Scherman waited his turn, along with a number of others, Rebbetzin Elyashev appeared. She went over to each person in the room and said, "I must ask the Rav something. Excuse me for going in ahead of you." Only after saying this to each person individually did Rebbetzin Elyashev enter her husband's study. (from Shabbos Stories, p. 195, R. Shimon Finkelman)

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

**A Slice of Life**

**Close Your Business**

**On Shabbat**

**By Ami Pykovski**

As a young man, I ran a clothing business in Los Angeles. At the time I was early in my journey to Judaism and my business was open on Shabbat. On a typical Saturday, I would make $5,000 and this was a major portion of the weekly sales. I wanted very much to close on Shabbat, but I calculated that if I did that, I would lose $20,000 a month. After a lot of thought, I decided to close on Saturday. However, although it would be closed on Saturday, I planned on working until late Friday night.

I wrote to the Lubavitcher Rebbe about my decision to close the business on Shabbat without saying anything about Friday night. The Rebbe's answer was: "Start from before sunset and great is your merit to spread Judaism with joy." The Rebbe enclosed 18 dollar bills and wrote that I should give them to charity locally.

Now it was clear, the business would be closed the entire Shabbat. In order to do so, I had to break a contract with the landlord of the space I rented for my store. It was a huge area that was spread out over an entire block and the cost of canceling the contract was enormous. I tried convincing friends to buy the contract off of me, but nobody wanted to. When I saw that I had no option, I decided to inform the landlord that I was canceling the contract.

When I went to his office, I was told that he wasn't there. I went back to the store and a businessman whom I did not know walked in and said he wanted to buy the property from the landlord. The landlord had told him that he couldn't sell it since I had a 10 year contract. He could only sell it if I agreed to cancel the contract.

I was unsure how much money to ask from him for breaking the contract, when he offered an amount that was much higher than I would have dared to ask for. We signed an agreement and I evacuated the premises. With the money I got, I bought a building and set up a clothing factory that I never would have dreamed I could build. In the normal course of things, I would have had to work for decades in order to achieve such a thing; suddenly, the Rebbe had shortened the way for me. It was all in the merit of deciding to keep Shabbat.

Another example where I saw unimaginable success after I decided to keep Shabbat: I had an offer to open a chain of stores called Indian Head in Los Angeles, but I decided not to get involved in retail so I wouldn't have to work on Shabbat. Instead, I decided to invest in the manufacturing of clothing and to offer it to Macy's.

When I went to the buyer, she thought I would show her dozens of styles, as was to be expected from companies that do business with Macy's. I came with just one style. She was very impressed that I had come with just one style. She said that because I had the guts to come to them, she was eager to work with me and she placed an order worth $25,000.

That was the first time that I worked with a company on such a large scale and I was very excited. But when the clothing came from the dyeing process, I was devastated. They had mixed up the colors and every pair of pants came out in a different color. When I saw this, I began to cry. I was sure I had lost all my money, which was a large amount in those days, as well as the opportunity to work with Macy's.

After vacillating for a while, I decided to send them the merchandise anyway and I left the office for two weeks, afraid of the angry phone calls I would get. Upon my return, I found dozens of messages from the company on my answering machine. The phone rang just then and the company rep was on the line. "I've been looking for you for two weeks,' she said. 'Your pants were incredibly successful. They are totally sold out!"

In my youth, I was a promising soccer player in Israel. Over the years, I used my connections with friends in the world of soccer to spread Judaism.

On one of my visits to Israel, I met with my former soccer trainer, David Shweitzer, with whom I was very close. He asked me jokingly who would look at him when he went to heaven after 120 years. I told him, "When you get up there, tell them you are Pykovski's friend and they'll take care of you." The next day, I got a phone call from a friend who said that David had died. I was shocked. I thought - now I have to keep my promise to him from the day before he died. I decided to write a Torah in his merit.

When the Torah was completed, we brought it to the Chabad yeshiva in Ramat Aviv, but finishing it was also special. We wrote the last letters on the soccer field where David Shweitzer had served as a trainer. The Chief Rabbi at the time, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, attended the event. He said that he had attended hundreds of such events in his life, but he had never experienced a moving one such as this, with the soccer players on the field together with people writing letters in the Torah.

On one of my business trips to the Far East, I spent Shabbat at Chabad in Bangkok, Thailand with the Rebbe's emissary Rabbi Nechemia Wilhelm. At the Shabbat meal there were a few dozen young people. I announced that I would give tefilin as a gift to whoever would commit to putting them on regularly.

A young Israeli sat next to me who wore the red robes of the local idol worshipers and who looked like a Thai monk. He raised his hand and said he committed to putting on tefilin. I was shocked, but I kept my word and sent him tefilin.

Two years later I was visiting Israel and I spent a day studying in the Chabad yeshiva in Ramat Aviv. A young man approached me and asked me whether I recognized him. I said he must be mistaken since we had never met before, but he insisted that we knew one another. He brought me his tefilin and said that he was the fellow from Thailand to whom I had given tefilin and now he was studying in yeshiva.

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

**Is This Your Ten**

**Million Dollars?**

**By Aron Moss**

 Congratulations. Your email has been randomly selected to win a cash prize of $10,000,000.00 (ten million dollars). This lottery is sponsored by big computer companies to encourage internet usage.

To claim your prize please contact the claim manager Mr James Bell, and quote ticket number 012fg25/951 within 2 (two) weeks of receiving this notification.

Again, congratulations, and we hope to hear from you very soon.

**Vince Valentino**

**Winner's Notification Department**

**Email Lottery**

**Amsterdam**

**Dear Vince,**

I would like to thank you for 2 (two) things. Firstly, for spelling out the numbers for me, as I have trouble reading them otherwise. Secondly, for the kind offer to receive (ten million dollars). But I am afraid I will have to decline. I cannot accept this prize as it goes against my beliefs.

I do not doubt your sincerity, but I cannot believe that I have really won this prize. According to my tradition, if something is not earned, it is not really yours. The world we live in is called the world of toil. Nothing comes easy in this world, and if it does then it disappears just as easily.

Only what I have earned is truly mine. Even an inheritance, if not carefully guarded and actively protected, will wither away in time. To receive true blessing, I must create a vessel to contain that blessing. The vessel is my effort, and without it the blessing spills to the floor, never really becoming mine.

I know this because I have inherited a great fortune - I am Jewish. This means I am heir to 4,000 (four thousand) years of spiritual riches and moral achievement. My life is inspired by the wisdom and insight developed over 4 (four) millennia.

My marriage benefits from the accumulated experience of 500 (five hundred) generations of marriages. The richness of Jewish tradition belongs to me, but I dare not take this inheritance for granted.

If I am not actively Jewish, if I do not invest in my spiritual traditions, if I do not engage my mind and heart in my Jewishness and make it my own, then it will fade. If I want to keep this grand inheritance and bequeath it to my children then I have to work at it. I cannot rely on my ancestors' spirituality, I need to put effort into making my own spiritual connection.

This is why we refer to G‑d as "Our G‑d, and G‑d of our fathers". Only when we develop our own relationship with G‑d can we benefit from the relationship He had with our ancestors. When we experience Him as our G‑d, then we can also benefit from Him being the G‑d of our fathers.

So Vince, I must politely decline your offer. I didn't even so much as buy a ticket in your lottery, so I don't feel it can really be mine.

Anyway, with my Jewish inheritance, I am rich already.

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

**It Once Happened**

**Crying Out Against the Exile**

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses all came before G-d when they were told about the destruction of the First Holy Temple. Abraham spoke first: "Why have I been singled out from among all the people, that I have come to this shame and humiliation? Why have You exiled my children and delivered them into the hands of evil people? You have laid waste to the place where I brought my son as a sacrifice."

G-d replied: "They sinned, transgressing the entire Torah, and the message of the entire alef-bet."

Abraham then said: "Who testified against the Jews, that they have transgressed?"

"Let the Torah come and testify," said G-d.

The Torah came forward, but Abraham said to her: "My beloved daughter, are you not ashamed before my children? Remember the day that you were given; how G-d carried you to all of the nations, and none wanted to accept you, until my children came to Mt. Sinai and heard you. And today you want to offer testimony against them, during their troubles?"

The Torah was too ashamed to testify.

G-d said, "Let the alef-bet come forward."

The letters came forward, wishing to testify. The alef was first. But Abraham told her, "Remember the day when G-d gave the Torah and began with the letter alef - Anochi - I. None of the other nations wished to accept you except the Jews. And now you want to witness against them?"

The alef slunk back in shame. But the bet came forward. Abraham said to her, "My daughter, remember the Torah which begins with the letter bet - Bereishit - In the beginning. No one but the Jews would accept her and you wish to bring testimony against them?"

When the other letters saw this, they all remained silent.

Then Abraham said to G-d, "In my hundredth year, You gave me a son.

When he was 37, You commanded me to bring him as a sacrifice and I bound him! Won't You remember this and have pity?"

Then Isaac spoke to G-d, "When my father brought me as an offering upon Your command, I willingly let myself be bound. I stretched out my neck to be slaughtered. Will You have pity on my children for my sake?"

Jacob, too, spoke to G-d, saying "For twenty years I worked for Laban so together with my children and my wives I could leave him. And when I left Laban, I was met by my brother Esau who wished to kill my entire family. I risked my very life for them and bore much suffering because of them. Will You not have pity on them?"

Finally, Moses approached G-d. "Was I not a faithful shepherd over Israel for 40 years, leading them in the desert? And when the time came for them to enter the Holy Land, You commanded that I die in the desert and not lead them there. Yet, I did not complain. Do You expect me to quietly watch them go into exile?"

Moses called to Jeremiah the prophet, who stood together with him and the Patriarchs. "Come with me. I will take Israel out of exile."

When, by the rivers of Babylon, the people saw Moses they rejoiced. "Look, Moses has risen from the grave to redeem us from our captors!"

Just then, a heavenly voice declared: "It is decreed. It can be no other way."

Moses wept as he spoke to the people and said, "My beloved children, I cannot take you out for it has been decreed by the Master and only He can redeem you."

Then Rachel, our mother, came before G-d. "Your servant, Jacob, loved me dearly and worked for my father for seven years on my behalf. But my father wanted to trick him and give him my sister Leah, instead. I heard of this and told Jacob. I gave him a sign so he would know who they were giving him.

"But I took pity on my sister. I did not wish her to be humiliated. I taught her the signs and even spoke for her so that Jacob wouldn't recognize her voice; I was not jealous. Master of the World! I am but flesh and blood and I was not jealous of my sister. You, G-d, are merciful, full of kindness and compassion. Why are You jealous that Israel served idols? And because of this, You exiled my children and the enemy has killed whom they wanted."

Immediately G-d took pity on her and said, "Rachel, for your sake I will return your children to the land of Israel."

Based on the Midrash and reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.

**Blending Families: In Loving Memory of Our Father**

**By Rabbi Yakov Horowitz**

**These lines are written in loving memory of our dear father, Reb Shlomo Zev ben Reb Baruch Yehudah Nutovic a"h, whose first yahrtzeit is 7 Menachem Av. May the positive lessons learned from this essay be a zechus for his neshama.**

Nearly fifty years ago, our mother's life was turned upside down with the sudden passing of our father one spring evening in 1963. Suddenly she was transformed from a happily-married young woman to the single parent of three children under the age of five. With the active support of both extended families, our amazing mother made it through those difficult years with incredible dignity and grace.

In the summer of 1965, she married Abba, as we called him, and for the next 46 years, built a beautiful home together in an environment of mutual respect, tranquility and joy. Abba had a son from a previous marriage, and in 1966 Hashem graced them with a daughter together - so our blended family had the quintessential "Yours, mine and ours."

**Raised Three Sets of Children**

**As One Seamless Family**

To their enormous and eternal credit, they raised three sets of children as one seamless family - so much so that people often could not tell which children "belonged" to whom. Over the years that Hashem granted them together, they were a source of strength to us during our challenging times, walked each of us to our respective chuppas, and celebrated the lifecycle events of our children and grandchildren.

When Abba passed away last summer, the three of us individually and collectively decided to honor him for his dedication to and involvement in our lives by tearing kriah at his funeral and observing shiva alongside our mother and our two siblings who were his biological children. We felt that since he never distinguished between the five of us, it was only fitting that we all honor him the same way: together.

**Positive Feedback from Friends and Family**

Word of our decision spread and we each got positive feedback from friends and family - especially from members of blended families. With that backdrop, we thought it appropriate to record and share with the public our recollections of how our parents made their blended family a seamless nuclear unit in the hope that it will help others in similar circumstances. While some of these qualities are critical in any marriage, the fact that our parents achieved them despite the challenges of raising three sets of children is all the more remarkable and noteworthy.

**Bedrock Principles of Their Marriage**

As we collected and distilled our thoughts , the bedrock principles of their marriage (and indeed their lives) emerged clearly through our minds' eyes - respect, tolerance, selflessness, emunah, yashrus, ehrlichkeit and yishuv hada'as (faith, integrity, honesty and an overall sense of reflection/strategic planning in their decision making).

Abba and tlc"t our mother were so different in nature that one might have wondered how they ever met, let alone married and raised their families together. Abba was cerebral, reserved and proper; while tlc"t our mother is upbeat, funny, and spunky. Nonetheless, they navigated life's ups and downs together in the most harmonious way. They genuinely respected each other and never disagreed in front of us.

They modeled derech eretz in their reverential treatment of their parents during their golden years and in their interactions with all three extended families where we all attended each other's lifecycle events, biologically connected or otherwise. They "kept" the Horowitz surname for the three of us, (which was not common practice at that time), and always encouraged us to maintain our close relationship with our father's siblings and their families.

**The Term “Step” Child/Parent/Sibling**

**Was Never Used in Our Home**

The term "step" child/parent/sibling was never used in our home and they both did their utmost to be even-handed, never distinguishing among their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren based upon which part of the family they came from. In fact, when Abba's first biological grandchild was born, our mother remarked how happy she was for him now that he too reached this wonderful milestone in life, he remarked in all sincerity, "Dovid (born twelve years earlier) is my oldest grandchild!"

As we all reflect back with adult eyes, it is clear that everything our parents did was selfless and well thought out. Abba realized that kids never forget their birth parents and he very wisely never tried to "replace" our father.

**He Attended Every Yahrtzeit**

**Gathering in Memory of Our Father**

In fact, he encouraged us to respect and nurture the place our father held in our hearts and lives. Abba attended every one of the yahrtzeit gatherings held in memory of our father a"h, while our mother did not - out of respect for Abba. He drove us to our father's grave on his yahrtzeit and even occasionally took us to the shul where our father davened to say kaddish so we would benefit from the affection our father's friends showered on us.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the many bumps they each had in their lives, they were grateful, optimistic and full of thanks to Hashem who brought them together and gave them the fortitude to rebuild their lives. Abba's material success later in life only magnified his humility and sense of responsibility to help others achieve self-sufficiency, which he valued so deeply.

Abba was like the cars he drove; simple, rock-solid and reliable. In his low-key manner, he was extraordinarily generous to his children, extended family members and people in need. Though Abba very much appreciated his creature comforts, he and tlc"t our mother lived far below their means and nothing was ever done to impress others.

**Children Could Ask for No More**

Our parents were not exempt from the shortcomings all humans experience, and of course, there are things we all wish we had done differently during our formative years. Nonetheless, our parents had both the wisdom and love to raise us as the unique individuals we are and to provide us with the stable and nurturing upbringing upon which we were able to build our own lives and families. Children could ask for no more.

Abba; Dvora, Reb Yehuda and I are forever grateful to you for providing our mother with the bedrock of support she so badly needed in her most vulnerable hour, for treating her with such extraordinary respect over the years, and for raising us as your own children.

**Quite Confident that Our Father**

**Was the First to Greet You in Gan Eden**

I have no knowledge of the workings in Heaven and am always deeply suspicious of people who claim to, but I am quite confident that our father was the first to greet you in Gan Eden to thank you for taking such wonderful care of his three prized possessions.

May your memory forever be for a blessing. Yehi Zichrecha Baruch.

**This essay was written with the active participation of my family; my mother Beile Ganz Nutovic, my siblings Issac/Shifra Nutovic, Dvora/Chaim Ostreicher, Rabbi Yehuda/Etti Horowitz, Chantzie/ Volvie Rosenberg, and my wife Udi.**

Reprinted from this week’s Rabbi Horowitz’s kosherjewishparenting.com email.