**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Ki TeitZei 5773**

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**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**On the Run**

**By Rabbi Yechiel Spero**

 It was World War II... grabbing their tefillin, the two young brothers then darted into the forest, dodging the gunfire from the German troops that had stormed and stampeded through their small village.

 They knew that many of their family and friends had been killed, and revenge was foremost on their minds, but now was not the time. Right now they needed to create as much distance as they could between themselves and the enemy.

**Taking Their Most Cherished Possession**

 Moshe and Chaim Lechovitch, the "fugitive" brothers, ran away as fast and as far as they could. After running for over five miles they finally stopped to catch their breath. They had barely had enough time to take their most cherished possession, their tefillin, but they had brought no food or drink, nor pictures of their loved ones. All they had now was their memories — their tefillin — and each other.

 For the first time since they had fled they looked each other in the eye. Their emotions overcame them and they held each other close, fearful of what the future held in store.

**Heard a Sudden Terrifying Noise**

 Suddenly they heard a noise. They listened for a few moments, trying to remain completely silent. It sounded like a group of men, there was some gunfire, and it seemed very, very close. The brothers were terrified. They had obviously run from one regiment directly into another.

 Moshe peeked through the overgrown marsh weeds and noticed that the men appeared quite different than German soldiers. He had heard that a growing number of partisan groups were roaming the area and assumed that this must be one. With no place to run, Moshe led his brother with their hands raised above their heads, toward the group.

 As soon as the brothers were spotted, the soldiers raised their guns and took aim, but then realized that these two young teenagers were not the enemy. The brothers' lives had been saved.

**Grateful that the Scraggly**

**Men Were Partisans**

 Moshe and Chaim surveyed the group of scraggly men, whose numbers kept increasing as others joined, one at a time. They were not the finest class of men, neither very well armed nor trained, but Moshe and Chaim were grateful that these partisans had found them. After a brief training session in using weapons, the brothers became members of the troop.

 Every morning they would wake up a few moments before the others and don their tefillin. The other members of the group, though mostly indifferent, thought that it was strange to practice religion in a world which to them was so obviously void of a G-d. But as long as it did not interfere with their movements and did not endanger the rest of the group's lives, it was fine.

 One morning, as Moshe and Chaim were about to put on their tefillin, they heard some bushes rustling in the distance. Immediately they awoke the others and it was quickly decided that everyone move out. Moshe and Chaim ran with the Partisans through swamp and forest for nearly three miles until they reached a safe area and were able to stop.

**Realized they Had Forgotten their Tefillin**

 When they unloaded their backpacks and placed their guns by their sides, Chaim and Moshe realized they had left behind their tefillin. They were absolutely devastated. Their one and only connection to their Yiddishkeit were those tefillin; without them, how would they differentiate themselves from their fellow soldiers, who were so bad mannered and boorish?

 They could not help but wonder why the Hashem had allowed them to forget their tefillin. They had shown such mesiras nefesh - self sacrifice in order to put them on, and had done so solely to maintain a closeness to Him — and now they were gone.

 Moshe and Chaim looked at each other and knew what they had to do. They were going back. They knew that they were risking their lives, but who knew when they would next find another pair? Who knew when this war would end, and if they would be victorious?

**Setting Out on a Dangerous Mission**

 They informed their comrades; the crude men laughed and dismissed their religious friends as fanatics, warning them that if the need came to move on, the troop would not wait for them. But the brothers remained steadfast, committed to retrieve their treasured tefillin. And so they set out on their dangerous mission.

 The three-mile hike was filled with moments of fear and apprehension. With each step that they took the battle within themselves raged on. Thoughts of second-guessing themselves for their foolish decision conflicted with the proud feeling of sacrifice for Hashem and His Torah.

 Finally, they reached their destination and there, untouched, were the two pairs of tefillin. But their mission was only half over; they still had to return to the troop. Frightened and wary, they began the return trek.

**They Saw an Unbelievable Sight**

 Just over the hill was where they had last seen the Partisan troop. They hoped with desperation that the men were still there. They trudged to the top of the hill and could not believe what they saw. The entire troop was dead. They immediately realized what had happened. The Germans had deceived the partisans into thinking that they were approaching from one angle while they were really preparing an ambush from the opposite side. The brothers did not say a word to each other. They were hit hard by the magnitude of what had transpired. They stared at the scene of wanton slaughter that lay before them and then looked at the tefillin they held in their hands. It all made sense now.

 But they could not waste time. After all, it was almost sunset and they had not yet donned their tefillin. (Reb Yechiel Spero,Touched by a Story p.296)

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

**No Jews Invited**

 A US Navy cruiser was anchored in Mississippi for a week's shore leave. The first evening, the ship's Captain received the following note from the wife of a very wealthy and influential local plantation owner:

 "Dear Captain,

 Next Thursday will be my daughter Melinda's Debutante Ball. I would like you to send four well-mannered, handsome, unmarried officers in their formal dress uniforms to attend the dance. They should arrive promptly at 8:00 PM prepared for an evening of polite Southern conversation. They should be excellent dancers, as they will be the escorts of lovely, refined young ladies. One last concern: No Jews, please."

 Sending a written message by his own yeoman, the Captain replied:

**The Captain Replied**

 "Madam, thank you for your invitation. In order to present the widest possible knowledge base for polite conversation, I am sending four of my best and most prized officers.

 "One is a lieutenant commander, and a graduate of Annapolis with an additional Masters degree from MIT in fluid technologies and ship design.

 "The second is a Lieutenant, one of our helicopter pilots, and a graduate of Northwestern University in Chicago, with a BS in Aeronautical Engineering. His Masters Degree and PhD. in Aeronautical and Mechanical Engineering are from Texas Tech University, and he also is an astronaut candidate.

**Degrees in Both Computer Systems**

**And Information Technology**

 "The third officer is also a lieutenant, with degrees in both computer systems and information technology from SMU and he is awaiting notification on his Doctoral Dissertation from Cal Tech.

 "Finally, the fourth officer, also a lieutenant commander, is our ship's doctor, with an undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia and his medical degree is from the University of North Carolina . We are very proud of him, as he is also a senior fellow in Trauma Surgery at Bethesda ."

 Upon receiving this letter, Melinda's mother was quite excited and looked forward to Thursday with pleasure. Her daughter would be escorted by four handsome naval officers without peer (and the other women in her social circle would be insanely jealous).

 At precisely 8:00 PM on Thursday, Melinda's mother heard a polite rap at the door, which she opened to find, in full dress uniform, four very handsome, smiling black officers. Her mouth fell open, but pulling herself together, she stammered, "There must be some mistake."

 "No, Madam," said the first officer. "Captain Goldberg never makes mistakes."

*Reprinted from an email sent to my by my daughter Adina.*

**The Black Congresswoman And the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 

Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm was the first black female to be elected to U.S. Congress. It happened in the mid Sixties when Black pride and Black Power were becoming major issues and Mrs. Chisolm was right in the middle of it.

She had been a teacher in New York but got interested in fighting for justice. She was intelligent, brave and assertive and proved to be a formidable and outspoken orator. So it was no wonder that when she won the election to the House of Representatives for Brooklyn it raised a lot of eyebrows and even before she arrived in Washington she already had a host of enemies

Especially the ultra-conservative Southern contingent in Congress; they were afraid of her determination and talents and were willing to do anything and everything to neutralize her.

And they found a way.

They assigned her to, of all things, the Agriculture Committee. It was a topic she knew nothing about, far from poverty, housing or education or anywhere that she wanted to make a difference and rendered her impotent to fight for the things she stood for.

She was angry and depressed; she had been cleverly outmaneuvered and totally defeated even before she had begun. The New York Times even poked fun at her in an article entitled, "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn?"

All her plans, dreams and goals went down the drain and there seemed to be no way out. This was all before she even began her stint in Congress.

 Then, early one morning, she received a phone call from the office of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem Shneerson. One of his secretaries was on the phone; the Rebbe wanted to speak to her.

She was familiar with the Rebbe. The Crown Heights district of Brooklyn where he and his Chassidim live was in her jurisdiction and when she had run for office she visited the Rebbe to request his endorsement. He refused her request saying that he did not get involved in politics but, she quipped afterwards, she must have done something right because everyone in Crown Heights voted for her.

She went to the Rebbe's headquarters, a large red brick building on 770 Eastern Parkway, was shown into his office and sat down at the front of his desk opposite him certain that he wanted to ask a favor.

The Rebbe welcomed her and got right to the point, "I understand that you have been assigned to the Agriculture Department and are not happy"

 "Not happy?" She replied "I'm miserable! I'm angry and depressed that they did such a thing to me and I don't know what to do! My career has been destroyed!"

The Rebbe replied "That is why I wanted to speak to you. You should realize that your appointment is a blessing from Heaven. There happens to be much surplus food in the United States. And there also is much poverty. In fact there are very many people in the United States that are actually hungry for bread. G-d has put you in the agricultural committee to feed these people. You must use this opportunity and your position to do your best."

Mrs. Chisolm left the Rebbe a bit confused but encouraged. First of all she figured that he was interested in his followers not in the poor of America. Also, she was still bitter about being sidelined and wanted either to quit or at least to put up a fight. She was having trouble digesting what the Rebbe said but slowly she realized that he was telling her how to transform the situation.

And sure enough things begin to happen.

As soon as she arrived in Washington a U.S. Senator by the name of Robert Dole approached her and began a conversation; he had a problem and needed help. The farmers in his State of Kansas had millions of bushels of surplus grain and other produce which, for years, no one could figure out what to do with. Maybe she a member of the House Agriculture Committee had an idea?

Suddenly she remembered what the Rebbe had said and it occurred to her that at that time there was a small, nascent program called Food Stamps that had barely gotten off the ground. She put the two together.

She expanded and developed the Food Stamp program into the Welfare Stamp program which eventually included millions of people. Because of it myriads of men women and children had meals three times a day.

She attained much recognition for this achievement but each time she was interviewed in the press or on the media she was careful to give credit to the Rebbe. And when she retired from Congress she was quoted as saying,

 "If there are poor babies and poor people that have food today it is due to a Rabbi in Brooklyn. He had the vision and optimism to transform everything to good."

*Reprinted from last week’s email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel. The above story is based on an interview David Lukens had with the late Congresswoman Chisholm that was produced by J.E.M. (Jewish Educational Media.)*

**The Legacy of Raoul Wallenberg**

**By Rabbi Yoseph Geisinky**



 The Midrash tells a story. The sage Rabbi Shimon ben Shatach found a precious stone of great value hanging around the neck of a donkey he had bought from a non-Jew. Refusing to yield to the requests of his disciples who urged him to keep the treasure Providence had sent him, he returned the stone, saying, 'I bought a donkey, not a precious stone.' The Arab witness to the Sage's integrity there upon exclaimed: “Blessed is the G-d of Simeon ben Shatach.”

 G-d's name becomes sanctified when those who claim to have a relationship with Him act in such a manner that makes it evident how faith transforms a life.

 About one such man, a true witness to G-d, who was born exactly 101 years ago, in August 1912, in Sweden. In the Guinness Book of World Records he has been credited with saving more lives than any other known individual in the history of mankind, and he did so without ever using a weapon.

 This man was Raoul Wallenberg. His story is one of the most remarkable in an era of endless bloodshed and ruthless cruelty.

**A Famous Family in Sweden**

 The large Wallenberg family was one of the most famous families in Sweden. That family contributed to Sweden bankers, diplomats and politicians during several generations. Some of his closest relatives aided Hitler’s regime by selling the Germans much needed materials from Sweden a country which officially maintained its neutrality during the war for the German war efforts.

 In 1944, at the young age of 32, Raoul Wallenberg took on the role of diplomat for his neutral home country, Sweden, in Hungry. Hungry was home to 750,000 Jews, who began being deported to Auschwitz after Passover of 1944.

 During that time, the Germans have perfected the efficiency of the gas chambers and crematoriums to the point that they could gas more than 20,000 Jews in a single day! Rudolf Hess, Auschwitz’s commander, prided himself in the swiftness of the process from which the Jews came off the cattle cars to the point of them turned into ashes.

 By the time Wallenberg arrived in Budapest in July 1944, the Germans, under the leadership of SS officer Adolf Eichmann, had already deported and exterminated more than 400,000 Jewish men, women and children from Hungary. Only about 230,000 Jews were now left.

**Eichmann’s Plans for Budapest**

 That same July, Eichmann was preparing a plan that in one day would exterminate the entire Jewish population in Budapest, the only Hungarian region remaining with large pockets of Jews intact. In a report to Berlin, he wrote that "the technical details will take a few days."

 In comes Raoul Wallenberg, fueled by his fervent belief in the moral responsibility he was entrusted with to outsmart the Nazis, not an easy fit. Upon his move to Budapest, Wallenberg began issuing elaborate, fabricated immunity passes to Jews (they were called Schutz Passes). He distributed these passes to many thousands.

 Wallenberg rented "Swedish houses," some 30 houses in Budapest, where Jews could seek refuge. A Swedish flag hung in front of each door and Wallenberg declared the houses Swedish territory, giving the false impression that they belonged to Sweden. The population of the "Swedish houses" soon rose to 15,000.

 He audaciously but effectively intervened in deportations and death marches bringing food, water, and the protective Schutz Passes to the victims despite death threats and attempts on his life.

 In the second week of January 1945, Wallenberg discovered that Eichmann planned a total massacre in Budapest's largest ghetto, filled with 70,000 Jews. The only one who could stop it was general August Schmidthuber, commander-in-chief for the German troops in Hungary.

**Threatens the German Commander**

**With Punishment after the War**

 Wallenberg sent a note to Schmidthuber explaining how Wallenberg would ensure that the general be held personally responsible for the massacre if it proceeded and that he would be hanged as a war criminal after the war. The massacre was stopped at the last minute thanks to Wallenberg's action.

 Two days later, the Russians arrived and found 97,000 Jews alive in Budapest's two Jewish ghettos. In total, 120,000 Jews survived the Nazi extermination in Hungary.

 Raoul Wallenberg saved as many as 120,000 Hungarian Jewish men, women, and children in just six months.

**Never to be Seen Again**

 In the same month, January 1945, he approached occupying Soviet troops for food and medical supplies for the survivors of Budapest. He was arrested by the Soviet secret police, and was never seen again. How and when he died remains a historical mystery. At the age of 33 years old this great human hero has vanished by the hands of the Communist despots. Raul Wallenberg ensured that a glimmer of divine light remain un-extinguished in a world of overwhelming darkness.

 He lived and died as a witness.

 And he serves as a witness to each of us what one young man can achieve if he puts his mind and soul to it. Today, there are close to one million Jews living because of this one individual. We pray that his memory serve as an inspiration to all of us on how we can become witnesses through our lives and actions that there is a G-d in the world, a G-d who desires and yearns that we turn our personal lives and His entire planet into a home for transcendence, truth, love and light.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of the Chabad of Great Neck’s Newsletter.*

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

**What to Think About**

**When Putting on Tefillin**



|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION:** |

What should you think about when you're putting on the *tefilin*, *shel yad* and *shel rosh*?

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

|  |
| --- |
| tefillin |

First of all think, *Hashem echod*. I am an *eved Hashem*, He's One in my life, of all the things in the world. I know I am loyal to my family, I’m loyal to my nation, I’m loyal to my *yeshiva* to my *kehila*, to my *rebbe*, I’m loyal to everybody. But *Hashem echod*, I am loyal to *Hashem*. Just think that one *machshovo*.

**Tefillin is a Demonstration of His Love for Us**

Another *machshovo* is, *bonim atem Lashem Elokeichem*. He has chosen us as His children, and He has given us these ornaments to demonstrate His love for us, on our arm and on our head, we're His children. Not only you, the next Jew is also putting on tefilin, he's also a child of *Hashem*, and even the women who don't have *tefilin*, they are children of *Hashem*. The Jewish nation is especially beloved by *Hashem*. *Ohavti eschem neum Hashem*, I **love** you *Hashem* said, there's nothing in the world that's as important to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* as the *Am Yisroel*.

Therefore, when He told us to put on *tefilin*, it's a **demonstration** that we are **especially** chosen and beloved by Him. You have to think these thoughts. There are other thoughts too, but the first two are the most elementary thoughts. First *Hashem echod*, He's the One that we are interested in our lives more than anything else. And the second is, that we are *bonim Lashem Elokeichem*, we are His children and that's why we put on these ornaments to demonstrate that He has chosen us.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l” based on a transcription of Rav Miller’s response to a question asked at his class Thursday night hashkafah lecture in his Flatbush shul.*

**Frum Guide to Talking Like an FFB, BT or an FFT Abbreviated Guide to Ultra-Orthodox Speech Patterns**

**By Philologos**

‘As the discussion above has shown,” writes the author of a recent book about linguistic issues, “BTs address this liminality in various ways. Some become FFT — at times even passing as FFB — and others highlight their BT identity.”

Some of you may immediately know who is being talked about. For those who don’t but would like to guess, here’s a simple multiple choice test. Which of the following do the mysterious initials for?

A) Speakers of “Basic Tahitian,” “Free-Form Tahitian” and “Free-Form Basic” Tahitian.

B) Multilingual West African speakers of Bayot and Tura; Fulani, Falor and Tura, and Fulani, Falor and Baga Mboteni.

C) Speakers of southwest German dialects along the Bruchsal-Tubingen line and in the Freiburg-Freudenstadt-Tuttlingen and Friedrichshafen-Freiburg-Basel triangles.

D) American Jews.

**This is a Jewish Language Column**

It’s a no-brainer, of course. This is a Jewish language column. The obvious answer is D.

A “BT,” for the unenlightened, is a “Ba’al-Teshuvah,” a formerly non-Orthodox Jews who has become Orthodox. An “FFT” is a “Frum From Teshuvah,” a Ba’al-Teshuvah who has gone all the way to ultra-Orthodoxy. An “FFB” is a “Frum From Birth,” an ultra-Orthodox Jew raised as such. The book I have quoted from is [“Becoming Frum: How Newcomers Learn the Language and Culture of Orthodox Judaism” (Rutgers University Press, 2012).](http://www.amazon.com/Becoming-Frum-Newcomers-Language-Orthodox/dp/081355389X/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1375291402&sr=1-1)

Its author is the sociolinguist [Sarah Bunin Benor,](http://becomingfrum.weebly.com/) who has written widely on American Jewish speech. By “liminality” (from Latin limen, threshold, as in “subliminal”), Benor means being situated between different levels of identity. And the main subject of her book is how newly Orthodox Jews in America partly express their religious identity by adopting or not adopting linguistic usages that characterize the communities they have joined.

These usages pertain to several ways in which the speech of Orthodox American Jews differs from the speech of their non-Orthodox counterparts (which itself sometimes differs, although far more slightly, from the speech of non-Jewish Americans).

The differences, as Benor points out, exist on a continuum that corresponds closely to that of Orthodox life as a whole — that is to say, the greater the stringency of one’s Jewish ritual observance, the more one’s speech tends to deviate from standard American English. To chart this continuum, Benor divides the world of American Orthodoxy into four basic categories: “Modern Orthodox Liberal,” “Modern Orthodox Machmir” (the Hebrew/Yiddish word has the sense of “strict-constructionist”), “Yeshivish Modern” and “Yeshivish Black Hat.”

**A Distinct Lifestyle and Attitude Towards Judaism**

Although the lines between them are often blurred, each category is marked by a distinct lifestyle and attitude toward Judaism, and — as Benor demonstrates — by its own way of talking.

Benor lists several features that make all Orthodox speech special, such as a high number of loanwords from Hebrew and Yiddish, far more than are found in the vocabulary of non-Orthodox American Jews; Yiddish-influenced phrasing, as in English sentences like “I want you should come right away” or “We’re staying by my in-laws on Shabbos,” and Yiddish-influenced phonetic deviations, such as a full “t”-sound at the end of words and syllables. (An example of this would be saying “right” with the same “t” as is heard in “today,” as opposed to the partially swallowed or glottalized final “t” of American English.)

**The Singsong “Talmudic” Intonation**

Two other peculiarities complete Benor’s list. One is a singsong “talmudic” intonation, particularly in sentences with logical reasoning expressed in dependent clauses like, “If you were going to the grocery anyway, why didn’t you buy some bread?” The other is what Benor calls a “hesitation click” — a “tsk”-sound used, like “um,” to give the speaker time to think of what to say next. (Although she is no doubt correct in ascribing this to Israeli influence, she errs in thinking that it is used this way in Israeli Hebrew.

The Israeli “tsk” simply means “No,” although when occurring in midsentence in what Binor rightly calls a “corrective click,” this “no” can have the sense of, “On second thought, that isn’t what I really wanted to say, so I’ll try to say it again.” This is probably how, misinterpreted by Orthodox American Jews exposed to Israeli speech, it became an American Jewish “hesitation click.”)

BTs — the abbreviation, like FFB and FFT, is not Benor’s own and is widely used by BTs, FFBs and FFTs themselves — have to work hard at picking up these features if they wish to blend into FFB life; Benor gives several interesting accounts, based on personal acquaintanceship and field work, of how some succeed, some don’t and some don’t always try to, whether it’s because they wish to retain elements of their BT identity or because they simply don’t like to speak what seems to them “incorrect” English.

**“Daven” Instead of “Pray”**

The resistance is rarely to the use of Hebrew and Yiddish words connected to Jewish ritual and study (for example, “daven” instead of “pray,” “learn” instead of “study,” etc.), which seem more authentically Jewish to all BTs; rather, it is to speech habits, like Yiddishized syntax, that have nothing intrinsic to do with Judaism.

Yet there are also many cases of what Benor calls “hyperaccommodation,” in which BTs so exaggerate FFB speech habits, as by saying things like borukh hashem,“Bless G-d,” in every sentence, that they give themselves away as BTs in their very effort to sound like FFBs.

Questions for Philologos can be sent to philologos@forward.com

Reprinted from last week’s email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Programs) Update. The article originally appeared in last week’s edition of The Forward.

**Making a Minyan**

**At the Cemetery**

**By Rabbi Al Lukacs**

I want to share a story about Hashem, Melochim, my Father, my Mother and myself. My Father's Yarzheit is on the 2nd day of Rosh Hashanah. My Mother's Yarzhiet is the 3rd day of Chol Hamoed Succos.

 Yes, they were niftar in the same year.

One year after they were Niftar, my Chavrusah and myself drove to the cemetery so I could speak to them, and light a candle as well. Soon after that, we saw a group of people, approximately 50 feet away.

We approached them, and introduced ourselves, and asking them, if they needed any help? The person told us that they needed a Minyan, so my Chavrusah asked them, how many do you need? The person told us that they had eight, and my Chavrusah said, perfect, I am nine and my friend Avrohom whose Yarzheit for his Mother is Today is 10, also needs to say Kaddish.

**After Saying Kaddish We all**

**Shook Hands with One Another**

So, I said the Kaddish and so did this person from the other group. Then after saying the Kaddish, we all shook hands with one another and went our separate ways. But then my friend said to me, we did not get their names, and when we turned around, we saw nothing, no cars, people. NOTHING!

So, my friends told me that we will drive up to the main office, and inquired about those people there. So, after washing our hands, we went into the main office, and inquired about that group of people, and the manager told my friend, take a look outside and tell me how many cars are parked in the parking lot?

My friend looked out and saw one car, ours.

Then the manager told my friend, take a look at the sign-in book, and tell me how many signatures do you see??

We both looked and there was no signatures.

This was eerie. And we got nervous too.

**Related the Story to Our Rav**

So my friend, told the manager, that he did not have his coffee today.

We drove back to the Shul, and we related this story to our Rav, and the Rav asked us a few questions such as:

How many of those people had a beard?

How many of them were wearing jackets or white shirts?

What was the color of the van or car?

We looked at each other, and do you know what, we did not know, even though we touched them. I had no clue, no answer for my Rav.

The Rav told us, that Avrohom needed a Minyan to say Kaddish for his Mother's Yarzheit, and Hashem got him that Minyan, because we all know who those people where don't we?

And this is not my first time going thru this, seeing Melochim. Every time, I have had surgery, my surgeons have told me that they have felt that there was someone in the room watching over me, that nothing goes wrong. This has happened to me four times already.

I have a gift from Hashem!!

Thank you for allowing me to share this story with you and your readers.

*Reprinted from an email sent last week by Rabbi Al Shamas, a long time subscriber to the Shabbos Stories for the Parsha.*

**90-Year-Old Survivor: I’m Still Walking Last living Survivor of Treblinka speaks.**

**By Maayana Miskin**



**Shmuel Vilenberg (Israel news photo: Hezki Ezra)**

 Shmuel Vilenberg, the last living survivor of the Treblinka death camp, took part in a ceremony marking 70 years since the Treblinka rebellion.

 Vilenberg was 20 when the camp was liberated. Despite his advanced age, he continues to tell his story to youth groups and IDF soldiers in order to pass on testimony from the Holocaust.

 He spoke to MK Avi Wortzman (Bayit Yehudi) during the ceremony. “I feel good,” he related. “It’s hard to walk, but I’m still walking.”

 “I’m a Polish hero,” he continued. “In Israel I’m not a hero, they have different heroes there,” he added with a cynical smile.

 He was briefly thrown off when a foreign journalist approached to ask him what his connection was to Treblinka. “What does that mean, ‘how am I connected to Treblinka?’” he asked in Hebrew.

 “I woke up in the hotel in the morning and said, ‘Let’s go to Treblinka,’” he told the journalist, who preferred not to ask further questions.

 Vilenberg explained how he survived the death camp. “I was here for ten months, and they ordered me to work on the fences. There’s no doubt that the job saved my life,” he said.

 His hope, and his parents, gave him strength to continue, he said.

 “Treblinka is just 130 dunams, and they murdered and destroyed almost a million people here. They didn’t count the children, but children are people, too,” he began.

**Retelling His Story in**

**The Heat and the Cold**

 “After the rebellion I ran because I knew where I was going, I knew I had a father and mother in the Warsaw ghetto and that gave me strength.

 “There were 67 Jews from here left after the war,” he added.

 His wife said, “My husband tells his story here in Treblinka, in the heat and the cold. I see the youth listening to him, emotional every time.

 “Now the historians are coming and telling their story – but it’s not the same thing. It’s important that there be a center where they see first-hand documentation, with pictures and documents on what the Jews went through in Treblinka,” she urged.

*Reprinted from the August 7, 2013 email of Arutz Sheva.*

**Even as They Die Out Everywhere Else,**

**Telegrams Persist in Israel**

**By Gil Shefler**



***(Photoillustration Tablet Magazine; original photos )***

*Despite their embrace of technology, when Israelis care enough to send the very best, they still do it the old-fashioned way*

 The call-center operators who work at the Israel Postal Company’s nerve center, housed in a big brown Mandate-era building in central Tel Aviv, spend most of their time providing a variety of standard mail services. But they also devote as much as 40 percent of their shifts to sustaining another communications technology that seems increasingly outdated: the telegram.

 If you’re lucky a particularly dedicated representative might even help craft a greeting. “You already have the word ‘love’ in the message itself so I wouldn’t sign off with that, too,” an operator advised last week. “Keep that at the end but add ‘wishing you lots of luck’ in the body of the text instead.”

**Telegram Service**

**Discontinued in India**

 Last month, India’s decision to shutter its state-run telegram service after 163 years set off waves of nostalgia, even among people who hadn’t sent or received telegrams in decades, if ever. In New Delhi, crowds of people gathered outside customer centers to send souvenir messages and witness the end of an era. India was only the latest to join a growing group of countries—including the United States, U.K., Canada, Germany, Australia, and Pakistan, to name a few—where telegrams are a thing of the past.

 But in Israel, a country famous for its embrace of technology, the antiquated form of communication stubbornly and rather improbably lives on, sustained by social customs shaped by both Jewish tradition and Israel’s history as an immigrant nation. Every day, dozens of couriers fan out across the nation on mopeds delivering telegrams to wedding halls, private residences, banks, hospitals, army bases, and courtrooms.

**Most Israeli Telegrams are**

**Letters of Condolence**

 More than 45,000 telegrams were sent in the past six months, according to Maya Avishai, a spokesperson for the Israel Postal Company—an overwhelming 60 percent of them letters of condolence, making death the telegram’s most successful business.

 Jewish tradition frowns on sending flowers to mourners, but telegrams are both tangible and fast—perfect for people too far away to make a shiva call in person. One Jerusalem-based nonprofit uses the service whenever longtime past or present employees, or their immediate family members, die. “It’s respectable,” said Mazal, the organization’s office manager, who asked that her last name not be used because she was not authorized to speak on behalf of her organization. “I would never send an email like that. Sometimes just one or two lines can mean a lot.”

 The other 40 percent of telegrams sent in Israel are either celebratory in nature—weddings, bar mitzvahs, brises, and Jewish holidays—or litigious, like debt-collection notifications and court summons. The postal service even offers greetings tailored to the event-filled Jewish calendar. “One of our more popular telegrams is printed on a card with a shofar that reads happy new year,” said Tehila Garasu, the deputy manager of the call center in Tel Aviv.

**Western Union Recognized the**

**Jewish Affinity for Telegrams**

 The tradition reaches back at least to the 1920s, when Western Union routinely announced that Jews sent more telegrams of congratulations than any other group. A 1928 item run by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency notes that some rabbis received as many as 500 messages for Rosh Hashana that year.

 Telegrams were also the best way for Jews living in Mandate Palestine—most of whom had family abroad—to send short bursts of information to faraway places quickly and affordably, in an era when international telephone calls were rare luxuries and even airmail remained too slow for urgent messages.

 “I remember we would often send telegrams to my husband’s parents who lived in Brussels in the 1950s,” recalled Batsheva Dagan, now 88, a Holocaust survivor from Poland who lives in Holon. “Later, when I was living overseas in Mexico, I was sent telegrams from Israel on occasions like my birthday.”

**Used to be Transmitted by Morse Code**

 Today’s telegram operators still take calls seated in the same room their predecessors did 70 years ago. “Back then they would write down messages word for word using a pen and pad and call clients back confirming the content of the message,” said Garasu, the manager, who has spent more than three decades with the post office. “Then they would take the messages upstairs to another department where they were transmitted by Morse code.”

 The so-called “singing wires” carrying messages coded in Morse were replaced by teleprinters—essentially early fax machines—in the 1960s. In the 1990s they were replaced, in turn, by computers. The postal service has experimented with ways of modernizing the service, though some ideas have caught on better than others:

 One automated service that generated generic messages for customers who could not be bothered to write them themselves was suspended after families in mourning started complaining about getting telegrams that said “mabruk,” Arabic for congratulations, according to an operator.

 The Israel Postal Company has worked to bring the telegram service into the 21st century. One of the most popular ways of sending telegrams today is, ironically, over the Internet: Customers fill out a form online and the telegram is printed out at the recipient’s nearest post office branch and sent out to its destination with a messenger.

**Telegrams Offer a Sense of Dignity,**

**Familiarity and a Personal Touch**

 But while telegrams offer a sense of dignity, familiarity and a personal touch in a world where human interaction can seem increasingly scarce, they can never compete with phone calls, text messages, or emails for speed. The postal service swears telegrams are delivered within four hours, but three telegrams sent recently all took longer to be delivered, and one arrived at its destination—just a 10-minute drive from the call center in Tel Aviv—six hours late.

 Telegrams were removed from an ”essential service” list of products that are subject to government regulation two years ago, leaving the postal company free to raise or lower the price—a flat rate of about $11 for 46 words—or to pull the plug altogether. The Israel Postal Company responded by doubling its price and limiting same-day deliveries to mid to large cities, but it still lost roughly $700,000 in 2011, according to a report in Haaretz last year.

**They Demonstrate that Somebody Paid**

**Money and Invested Time and Effort**

 “If I’m being honest, we’ve noticed a drop in the use of the product they call ‘the telegram’ for a long time,” said Yigal Levi, the director of Postal Regulation Division. “There’s no way of stopping it or ignoring the appearance of newer technology.”

 But the telegram’s biggest fans point to the enduring perception that the telegram will always offer added value over newer modes of communication. “It shows somebody paid money and invested time and effort sending it,” said Garasu. “People want to personalize their message and a text message simply isn’t a telegram—and it never will be.”

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**It Once Happened**

**A Most Special**

**Pair of Tefillin**



When Rabbi Yisroel, the Rizhiner Rebbe, lay close to death, he called his sons and entreated them to follow the true path. He told them that the most important thing was to always keep the Creator uppermost in one's mind to do His Will. The sons listened in absolute silence, and knew that their father was imparting to them the ultimate truths of life.

Rabbi Yisroel continued, saying, "Usually fathers leave their children some kind of legacy, but what can l leave to you? I don't have anything of importance, so I am leaving you parts of myself - to each one something else. But each one of you will not be limited by what I leave to you; you will

just have to work harder to achieve what your brothers have received."

**To You My Firstborn**

With that introduction, he proceeded. "To you my firstborn Reb Sholom Yosef, I leave my appearance; to you my son Avraham Yaakov, I leave my brain; to you my son David Moshe my wisdom; and to you my youngest son Mordecha'le, I leave my knowledge of G-d. I leave you all with the teaching that what a man achieves by dint of his own efforts has far more worth than anything that another gives him. When you strive through your own exertion to gain an understanding of the Creator, then you can finally say, "This is my G-d."

A short time later the Rizhiner Rebbe passed into the Next World. His sons decided to spend the entire year of mourning in the town where their father had spent his last days.

**A Dispute on Who Should Inherit their Father’s Tefillin**

The brothers were in harmony about most issues. They divided their father's estate between them without dispute, but when it came to the question of their father's tefilin, they could not agree. Each claimed the tefilin for himself.

The tefilin were unique, and their father had prized them far above any other possession. They had belonged to his great-grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, and had been meticulously written by one of the Baal Shem Tov' disciples. Then they passed from father to son, from Rabbi Avraham the "Angel," to his son Rabbi Shalom of Provitch, and down to Rabbi Yisroel of Rizhin. These tefilin were as perfect as the day on which they had been written, and although the Rizhiner Rebbe checked them regularly several times a year, they never needed repair.

Many wondrous stories were told about those tefilin. Once Reb Yisroel had been imprisoned by the Russian authorities. Fearing that some harm might come to his precious tefilin in prison, Reb Yisroel left them in the care of a trusted friend. The moment he was released, he hurried to this friend's house to reclaim his tefilin. He opened them up to check them, and to his horror, the parchments were covered with a thick, green mildew.

**In Panic He Sent for a Scribe**

Panic-stricken, he sent for a scribe who would have perhaps have some way to save them. Imagine his shock when the scribe arrived and examined the tefilin only to find that they were perfect the mildew had vanished. Reb Yisroel took this miraculous event as a sign that he should never again allow himself to be parted from his precious tefilin.

The brothers finally came to a solution. They would each write on a piece of paper what they were prepared to relinquish from their legacy in order to possess the tefilin. Whoever gave the most would receive the tefilin. Each wrote a note and sealed his paper in an envelope. But at the last moment, they decided to draw lots instead.

**Reb David Moshe’s Wins the Drawing**

Reb David Moshe's name was drawn, but he was not in the least surprised. He told his brothers, "In truth, these tefilin have been mine for many years. A few months before my Bar Mitzva, Father called me into his room and taught me all the laws of tefilin. When he had finished, he pinched my cheek and said, 'My son, l have hidden for you a pair of tefilin which are more precious than all the treasures on earth. I myself guard them, and I am keeping than for you.'

"Before my Bar Mitzva, Father called me to his room again, and there, a scribe prepared a pair of tefilin for me. I wondered to myself, 'How could these be the precious tefilin which my father had promised me?'

"For many years I wondered, until now, when I understand what Father meant. Finally, the precious, unique tefillin that our father promised me are mine."

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

**Thoughts that Count**

**You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. (Deut. 22:10)**

 We learn from this prohibition just how careful the Torah is to avoid causing pain or mistreating animals. The donkey is much weaker than the mighty ox; if the two animals were paired together with one harness, the donkey would have terrible difficulty keeping pace with its much stronger companion.

(Ibn Ezra)

**To you shall it be tzedaka [righteousness] (Deut. 24:13)**

 A person should give tzedaka while he is still alive, when the money is still in his possession. The Torah tells us not to behave in the manner of certain rich individuals, who amass great fortunes during their lifetimes, and then instruct in their wills that the money be put to good use after they pass away.

(Klei Yakar)

**You shall not take in pledge the garment of a widow... and you should remember that you were a slave (Deut. 24:17, 18)**

 When a Jew looks at all the commandments - you shall give to this one and to that one, treat the orphan in such and such a manner, give the widow special treatment - he may grumble, "How many demands does G-d make of us!" The Torah, therefore, addresses this complaint by saying, "You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt." You, too, knew great deprivation and endured many troubles. As slaves, you were among the most mistreated people on earth; therefore, you must treat others kindly for you understand their pain. (Panim Yafot)

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